

FAGERNES CHESS INTERNATIONAL 2022

THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT

8



GM Group

This round also became somewhat mixed as three out of the top five boards were drawn, although none of them lasted less than two hours and only two lasted less than four hours.

The only Norwegian hope, GM Frode Urkedal, continues to do very well and won on the sixth board as black against Turkish GM Vahap Sanal. Overall this however was a very good day for the top players from India. On first board 20 year old GM Aryan Chopra as black succeeded in winning a marathon endgame against the young Ukrainian sensation man Semen Mitusov. 41 year old GM Krishnan Sasikiran as white on the third board made the better calculations and won a tough attacking battle against Swedish GM Tiger Hillarp Persson.

Still after round eight it remained unclear whether the tournament winner would be a player from India, Germany – or Norway. Chopra at 6,5/8 was leading half a point ahead of Sasikiran, Urkedal and the young German GM Alexander Donchenko, with top round pairings Chopra-Urkedal and Donchenko-Sasikiran coming up for round nine.

The remaining norm candidates overall did well on the board in the second last round, but were unlucky with the pairings for the last round. Following this Semen Mitusov will be the only player to score a title norm in this tournament, and he now must win as black against GM Aram Hakoyban in the ninth round to make a GM norm.



Mitusov vs Chopra

16-year old **FM Semen Mitusov (2274)** as white against **GM Aryan Chopra (2592)** on the first board went for a slow Italian opening. Black by a d5-break blew up the center early, leaving a fairly balanced position with an isolated pawn at d4. White after 15 moves sacrificed the key pawn at d4, and first had reasonable compensation due to his bishop and active rooks in the very open position with queen, two rooks, one bishop and five pawns against queen, two rooks, one knight and six pawns.

The compensation gradually vanished, leaving black a sound pawn up after 25 moves. Before 40 moves the players reached a borderline queen endgame, in which both players had two queenside pawns, while black had three against two pawns on the kingside. Young Chopra in a patient mood instructively increased the pressure by advancing his kingside pawn majority, and later sacrificed his passed pawn on the kingside to run his king over to the queenside. Black following this won first one and then some 25 moves later on the second white queenside pawn. The first board today became the last to finish: Mitusov finally stopped the clock after 95 moves, when discovering that he ran out of checks with queen versus queen, a- and b-pawn. Chopra was leading alone after this win. Mitusov following his extremely strong results during round 2-7 already had confirmed an IM-norm (with an overscore!) before this game. Despite this loss Mitusov would have another shot for the GM-norm in the last round, but having lost with white he needs a win with black.



Donchenko vs Erigaisi

Top rated Indian **GM Arjun Erigaisi (2675)** as white against German **GM Alexander Donchenko (2619)** started up with the relatively solid London system, but then played aggressively for a kingside attack with Ne5-f4-Ndf3. White however failed to come up with any frightening continuation on the kingside. Black consequently came better, as he after exchanging a knight at e5 and the light-squared bishop at a6 started

a counterattack on the kingside. Both players used a bit much time, although after 20 moves white had left 45 minutes and black 30. Black after 23... h5! appeared to have a promising pawn storm against the white king at g1, but Donchenko then chickened out by offering a queen exchange the next move. Later the position remained rather closed and fairly balanced until a draw was agreed by a repetition just before 40 moves.

GM Krishnan Sasikiran (2650) versus **GM Tiger Hillarp Persson (2511)** was a Sicilian Najdorf duel with the unusual 6.Qd3, in which black first played g6-h5 and then after all castled short. White castled long and around move 16 was ahead in the attacking race. Sasikiran however again lagged behind on the clock and had only about 25 minutes left in a very double-edged position. The heat intensified as black creatively sacrificed an rook for white's knight at c5, winning the pair of bishops and some squares for an attack against white's king at b1. With both players running short of time Sasikiran proved able to drive back the black pieces while establishing a passed d-pawn. After 30 moves he was observed walking confidently around although having only one minute left on the clock. Black apparently reactivated his pieces during the next moves, but it still turned out that white now had the critical variations under control. After 34 moves Sasikiran elegantly sacrificed his queen for a knight at c4 – forcing a tactical queen exchange which would give him a won endgame.

In another Swedish-Indian duel, **GM Erik Blomqvist (2550)** and **GM Nihal Sarin (2648)** meanwhile discussed a rare Ruy Lopez line with 3... Nge7.

White first had a slight advantage. Black however gradually improved and after exchanging two sets of minor pieces the position after 20 moves was approximately

balanced. After the second set of knights

left the board a few moves later on, the remaining position with queen, two rooks, one bishop and seven pawns on each side was slightly better for white and solid for black – resulting in a draw by repetition just before 40 moves.



Sarin vs Blomqvist

GM Sethuraman Sethuraman (2610) versus **GM Aram Hakobyan (2612)** was another Italian opening duel on the top boards. In this one white realized the d4 break before black could play d5. White following this got a slight space advantage, and Sethuraman after 20 moves creatively sacrificed his pawn at e4 to go for a kingside attack with f5 and Qg3.



Sethuraman vs Hakobyan

Hakobyan in turn

sacrificed an exchange with 24... Rxe3!?, winning the pawn at f5 and reaching a fairly balanced position in which black had a knight and two pawns for a rook. White upheld an initiative in the fourth hour, but in the rook and minor pieces endgame black for some moves came better after white somewhat mysteriously gave up a three pawns. White's active rook still made winning attempts dangerous for black. A draw was agreed after 48 moves, as the players were about to reach a drawn endgame with rook and two pawns against bishop and four pawns.



Urkedal vs Sanal

GM Vahap Sanal (2593) versus **GM Frode Urkedal (2539)** was even another Italian opening, in which white went for a pawn storm on the queenside. Black did fine with a knight stronghold at f4 and some chances for a kingside attack. As all rooks were exchanged in the open d-file, black after 29 moves was slightly better on the board with queen, bishop, knight and seven pawns on each side, and had 35 minutes against 16 on the clock. After 40 moves the position was still in material balance.

Black with the more active pieces and the better pawn structure still had a promising pressure with queen, bishop, knight and five pawns on each side. True to his active and practical style Sanal at move 41 tried to sacrifice a pawn. As white still failed to come up with any real counterplay against black's remarkably safe king at h7, black could coolly pick up another pawn at g5. Two pawns down with a decisive counterattack coming up against his own king at g1, Sanal after 54 moves resigned the game and all chances of a top three prize in this tournament.

FM Emre Can (2578) versus **IM Tor Fredrik Kaasen (2465)** saw a Catalan opening in which black for a while hung on the extra pawn at c4. Black was probably fine after 15 moves, still a pawn up after exchanging two sets of minor pieces. 16.--- c5? however strangely invited white to win back the pawn, after which white soon had a strong initiative. Can still in an inspired mood went for a direct attack and won within 27 moves, as black under increasing pressure lost a bishop at h4. Kaasen in retrospect found it fascinating that his apparently sound position after 17 moves in fact was hopeless, as black had no way to complete his development.



Kulaots vs Prantik

IM Roy Prantik (2368) and **GM Kaido Kulaots (2529)** discussed an English fianchetto in which black demonstrated the better understanding, as his center advantage soon proved more important than white's half open b-file and pawn at c5. Having established a dominating knight at e4, black anyway was much better when white after 20 moves overlooked that 20.--- Ba4! won an exchange. Although white had a potentially disturbing pair of bishops, the closed center limited their

possibilities, and black had no problems forcing a won endgame before 40 moves.



Abdumalik vs Ingebretsen

GM Zhansaya Abdumalik (2496) versus **FM Jens Evang Ingebretsen (2315)** was a Ruy Lopez duel in which black sacrificed a pawn at b5. Abdumalik took the pawn and kept it with some advantage, although Ingebretsen and his pair of bishops came up with some counterplay on the kingside. White turned down an invitation for a repetition after 24 moves, although black then was about to get a real attack on the kingside. 28.Rb4? reportedly was a blunder as black could

exchange the rook and then play 28... h4! with a powerful attack. White at this stage had only 12 minutes left on the clock. Black however blundered back with 28... Qh7? – threatening to win the white queen at d3 with 29... Ng3+, although overlooking a brilliant tactical stroke with 29.Bxf7+!! The position remained loaded and approximately balanced as white also missed this possibility. Black anyway was second best in this position when he went for a defect piece sacrifice with 30... Ng3+? 31.hxg3 Qh5 – probably missing the tricky and strong answer 32.Qg6!. Although black won back the knight at d2, white within a few moves could force the queens off and reach a rook and minor pieces endgame with three extra pawns. Losing this interesting game with honour, Ingebretsen still lost it and following that was out as an IM-norm candidate.



Abdrlauf vs Shehzad

The Norwegian junior duel between **FM Elham Abdrlauf (2427)** and **Shazil Shehzad (2195)** was another Najdorf Sicilian lightening up around move 11, as white played a powerful e5-break and could have had a decisive advantage if playing 13.Nf5! afterwards. Instead 13.Nxe6? made the position very messy: White won an exchange with 14.Qxa8, but black due to his pair of bishops and strong knight at d4 had a lot of compensation afterwards. White felt forced to sacrifice

back an exchange on the d4 knight, although black's center pawns and pair of bishops gave him a clear advantage with a material balance. Abdrlauf however came up with some counterplay. Then black overlooked a tactical 24.Ne6!, after which white could force off the queens and win two pawns in the rook and minor pieces endgame. Curiously in this game white played a tactical Ne6 two times, with the second try deciding the game despite the complications created by the first.

Ludvig Carlsson (2411) versus **FM Frank Buchenau (2269)** was a French Tarrasch duel in which black avoided the most critical lines, leaving white with a sound initiative after the queens were exchanged. 25.--- e5? following this was a creative but still dubious escape attempt from black. White increased the pressure and within a few more moves came a pawn up in a won rook and knight endgame.



Carlsson vs Buchenau

13 year old **FM Aksel Bu Kvaløy (2330)** and 59 year old **GM Stellan Brynell (2406)** had a French Winawer duel in which black played b6 before c5. Having succeeded in exchanging off the often troublesome light-squared bishop at a6, black did fine due to his counterplay in the b-file. As white found no way forward for his kingside attack, the game from move 20 was a battle for survival from a white point of view. Black eventually picked up the white pawn at e5 with a winning advantage, but then suddenly gave white the help needed to create a lot of noise in the queen and knight endgame. Kvaløy following this had fair chances for a draw until he short of time blundered with 39.Qf7? – overlooking that 39.--- Qg7! (threatening 40.--- Qxg2 mate) forced an exchange of queens. The GM efficiently used this chance and afterwards had an easy win in the knight endgame.



Sieber vs Injac

German **WIM Fiona Sieber (2248)** versus Serbian **WGM Teodora Injac (2406)** was a Four Knights Opening with many exchanges, leaving after 16 moves a fairly balanced position with two rooks, one bishop and seven pawns against two rooks, one knight and seven pawns. After exchanging one set of rooks the endgame became more exciting as both players intervened on the seventh rank with their rook – white winning a pawn at b7 and black at g2. It soon turned out that white had made the better

evaluation, as white's passed pawn at a5 became more dangerous than black's pawn at h4. Black for some moves defended well, and might have had a draw within reach with knight and four pawns against bishop and four pawns after 35 moves. Short of time and good moves black however chose a too passive plan with Na8-Nb6. After forcing black to give up the knight, white after the time control had no problems demonstrating the winning plan with bishop and two pawns against four pawns.

Winning this game, Sieber for an hour or so was in the run to make her final WGM-norm this tournament. The chance unfortunately passed as she in round nine was paired against Ludvig Carlsson – who despite an Elo well above 2400 did not count as a titleholder ...

FM Anders Hobber (2379) versus **IM Gerard Welling (2261)** saw a Modern opening in which white first had a sound positional advantage, turning into a tactical initiative after black castled long. The game was somewhat of a strategic disaster for veteran IM Welling, as he after entering an attacking race failed to come up with any kind of counterplay against white's king at g1. Apparently more inspired after losing all his chances to become an IM this week, Hobber by instructive means opened the queenside and won by attack after only 32 moves.



Welling vs Hobber



Vestby-Ellingsen vs Unneland

IM Mads Vestby-Ellingsen (2370) as white in another Norwegian junior duel against **FM Mathias Unneland (2254)** started up with 1.d4 2.Nc3 3.Bf4, but then accelerated with g4-g5 to go for a kingside attack. White soon had a promising attack against black's king at e8, although his own king at b1 was not safe from black's counterattack.

Black instructively sacrificed a knight at a3 to open the queenside, after which white instructively sacrificed a knight at b3 to close it again. Black still was in the game until he asked too much from the position with 23... e5?: White took the pawn at move 24, hid his king at a1 at 25, picked up an exchange with a check at 28, and demonstrated a winning attack against the king at e8 within three more moves.

Edvin Trost (2342) versus **Stig K. Martinsen (2159)** was a rather one way driven King's Indian attacking race. White kept his own king fairly safe at c1 while opening the kingside with a winning attack before 20 moves. Black following this anyway was completely lost on the board, with one hour less on the clock, when he blundered a piece and resigned after 25 moves.

Dusan Schwarz (2295) versus **Monica Machlik (2122)** saw a Nimzo-Indian Sämisch line duel, which white appeared to have the much better preparation for. White got a clear advantage as he first had the pair of bishops and then promising attacking chances against the weakened black kingside. Black for a long time had to defend passively, and Machlik after 30 moves had only three minutes left on the clock. Having exchanged three sets of minor pieces, black however succeeded in getting some counterplay in the g-file. Following tactical exchanges, white after 34 moves was only slightly better with queen, rook and six pawns left on each side. Having just reached a drawish queen endgame, black with seconds left on the clock blundered with the greedy and natural 40... Qxc3? – overlooking that white could give himself a decisive initiative with 41.Qf7! (threatening 42.Qf8 mate). Schwarz in turn missed this golden opportunity although getting 40 minutes extra on the clock. As his queen in move 41 landed on e8 instead of f7, black within a few moves was a pawn up. White's passed pawn at d5 still made winning attempts much too risky for black, and the game was drawn by a repetition of checks after 53 moves.



Kreken vs Schneider

WGM Jana Schneider (2263) and **Eivind Grunt Kreken (2088)** meanwhile discussed a very closed Ruy Lopez line, in which all 16 pawns remained on board until move 25. Black then got a slight edge after opening the a-file for his rooks. White's decision to sacrifice a knight in the air at h5 to open the kingside was creative, although objectively dubious. Black's plan with Ne8 followed by Bd8 however in turn was much too passive, allowing white's queen and

rook to intervene with a winning attack. White's running h-pawn later won decisive material and gave her an extra piece in the rook and minor pieces endgame.

Kim Roger Westrum (2046) versus **FM Trygve Dahl (2252)** was an Open Sicilian duel in which white tested out a rare gambit with 4.c3!?. White for some moves had a threatening initiative, although black succeeded in exchanging off the the knights and castle short. Sacrificing back a pawn at d5, black could well have played on from the final position after 19 moves. A draw still would be the most likely result in the remaining position with queen, two rooks, bishop and four pawns on each side.

Alexander Øye-Strømberg (2157) versus **Max Dahl (2054)** was a Classical French duel, in which white's space advantage and pressure against the backward pawn at e6 first gave him some advantage. With Dahl again running seriously short of time, Øye-Strømberg in the fourth hour first established a strong knight on the c6 outpost, and then established a decisive passed pawn at g6. Øye-Strømberg following this nice win again stayed in the IM-norm run for some two hours more. However he still needed to win against one of the GMs above 2600 in the last round, and this plan failed as the parings gave him an opponent with «only» 2465.



Mansoor vs Galinsky

Afras Mansoor (2033) and **IM Timofey Galinsky (2358)** started up with 1.d4 d5, but later transposed into a Dutch Stonewall. White first came better after exchanging off the dark-squared bishops at a3. Black however was able to open the position by exchanging the c- and d-pawns, taking over the initiative. As black had weakened his kingside with f5 and e6, the outcome still was open until white underestimated the d-file and blundered an exchange with 23.Nc6??. Then it was all over as black after winning an exchange could force

off the queens, leading after only 28 moves to a totally won endgame with rook and six pawns against knight and six pawns.



Kumar vs Elmi

Saad Elmi (2092) versus **Rahul Kumar (2204)** was a Modern opening in which the queens and light-squared bishops were exchanged early, while all 16 pawns were still on after 22 moves.

When the position finally was opened, white creatively sacrificed two pawns for a strong initiative. Although black remained two pawns up, he after 37 moves still was in trouble partly due to his many weak pawns and partly due to white's more active pieces. The game was definitely decided as black blundered with 37.--- Nc7??.

overlooking 38.Rxc7! Rxc7 39.Nxe6 and 40.Nxc7 with an extra piece for white.

Simen Sørensen (2070) and **FM Ward Altarbosh (2200)** today investigated the slightly exotic Owen's defence with 1.--- b6 and 2.--- Bb7. True enough it turned a bit too exotic with a loose f5-gambit line, as white after ten moves came a pawn up with the more dangerous attack.

White failed to find the most critical continuations afterwards, but for a while still kept some advantage due to his extra pawn. Black gradually took over the initiative and won back the pawn, although white due to his two passed kingside pawns again came better in the endgame.

As both players ran short of time with rook, knight and four pawns against rook, bishop and four pawns, both missed that white with 40.Ne3! could have forced off one set of pieces – after which the passed pawns would have been decisive. After passing the time control white eventually won a pawn, although black's active pieces then saved a draw fairly confidently.

German **Nathanael Poysti (2190)** as white against Norwegian **Emerik Roulet-Dubonnet (2050)** played 1.c4 and went for an English fianchetto, in which white with a knight stronghold on c5 first was slightly better. Giving up his fianchetto bishop for the black knight on e4 at moves 18 however was a strategic mistake, and within a few moves black and his pair of bishops dominated the board. Roulet-Dubonnet later won a pawn due to a tactical Bxe2. As white after 25 moves exchanged his dark-squared bishop for a knight at b6, black instead of taking back could have won by a cunning 25... Qe6! – threatening 26... Qh3 with mate at g2 to follow. Black after 29 moves still was a pawn up in the queen and rook endgame. As the extra black pawn was a passed pawn at d4, white was obviously in deep trouble. Black's decision to sacrifice his extra pawn at h5 to advance the d-pawn was sound, although he afterwards missed the chance to exchange off the queens with a more or less winning rook endgame. As black got his passed pawn to d2, while white went for counterplay against the black king, the position for a while jumped back and forth between a draw and a win for black. Then black somehow cramped and became much too passive in a drawish position with queen, rook and two pawns on each side. Losing the passed pawn at d2 he in the sixth hour had to defend with one against two kingside pawns in the queen endgame. This endgame from a computer perspective jumped a bit back and forth between a draw and a win for white. Black eventually lost his last pawn, but was able to force a draw by sacrificing his queen for a stalemate after 72 moves.

The young teenager duel between German **Bennet Hagner (2151)** and Norwegian **Vetle Bjørge Strand (2018)** had a somewhat strange story before the start. Hagner first was to play white against Sverre Lye, while Strand had black against Vladan Nikolic. As both the opponents had to forfeit due to illness, the arbiters asked Hagner and Strand whether they would like a walk over win or instead play against each other. Both the young lions wanted to play chess, and this caused no problems for the tournament as they had almost the same sum of points.



Hagner vs Strand

As the game started, the opening was a Caro-Kann with 3... c5?! and white soon got a strong initiative due to his pawn at e5. After opening the kingside with a flying h-pawn, white transferred his queen up to h6 with a winning attack after 32 moves. After 29 moves white had two minutes left on the clock and black four minutes, but by then the position was totally winning for white anyway.

Andreas Skrede Hausken (1991) and **WGM Olga Dolzjikova (2131)** not unexpectedly discussed a rare Modern opening line in which white first came slightly better. Hausken played hard for a win, first opening the h-file with h4-h5 and then hitting in the center with e5 and d5. White had a promising attack after he got the chance to play 19.exd6 and 20.dxe7, although only for a few minutes as white missed the best continuation afterwards. Following this black in turn got the time needed to exchange off the queens and win back the pawn at e7, reaching a balanced endgame with rook, bishop, knight and four pawns on each side.

Håkon Bentsen (2078) and **FM Damien Le Goff (2290)** tested a Slav fianchetto line in which black gave up his light-squared bishop at f5 for the undeveloped knight at b1. Winning back the pawn at c4 just afterwards, white got a pleasant plus due to his center advantage.

With Le Goff running short of time for move 40, white's advantage became a winning attack as he got the chance to open the d-file with d5 followed by dxe6 and then intervene on d7 with his rook. Bentsen however blundered it all away from a totally won position as he after a sneaky 33... Ne2+ instantly replied with 34. Kh2??, overlooking a tactical 34... Rxh4+! which turned the game all around. White had to give up his queen to avoid mate, and Le Goff then within a few moves demonstrated a winning attack.

FM Nikolaj Zadruzny (2258) versus **Yoann Le Montagner (2035)** was an English Botvinnik line duel, leading to a Maroczy-like position in which black weakened his own position too much when searching for counterplay with f5. Inviting a queen exchange afterwards did not improve the situation from a black point of view, as white after accepting the queen exchange soon picked up the backward pawn at d6 with a clear advantage. Le Montagner following this anyway was in trouble when he blundered two minor pieces for a rook. Although black was able to activate his rooks afterwards, Zadruzny this time had no problems realizing his material advantage in the endgame.



Ravi vs Melaa

Sondre Melaa (2120) and **WIM Rakshitta Ravi (2240)** investigated a Queen's Gambit with 4... a6?!, losing a tempo as she later had to play a5. White after exchanging on d5 following this came slightly better with a standard queenside minority attack. White's advantage became winning as black searching for

counterplay on the kingside blundered a pawn. As double rook endgames are known to offer very good drawing chances if you are a pawn down, exchanging down to such an endgame obviously was not optimal from a white point of view. Black in turn was helpful when allowing one of the rooks to be exchanged, as the rook endgame with two against one pawn in the start was winning for white. Melaa however immediately chose the wrong plan as he sacrificed his h-pawn to advance the d-pawn. Although white in the end forced black to sacrifice his rook upon the passed d-pawn, black's g-pawn moved ahead just in time to save a draw.



Grønnestad vs Skotheim

WFM Anita Grønnestad (1941) and **Andreas Skotheim (2206)** started up with 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 b6, after which black came equal if not better with a double fianchetto. After exchanging three sets of minor pieces black had sound pressure against white's hanging pawns at c4 and d4, and his structural advantage increased as he following an e5 break exchanged white's pawn at d4.

Opposite- coloured bishops still gave white some chances with queen, rook, bishop and five pawns on each side after 32 moves. Black however had the

safer king plus a dark-square dominance, and won a pawn as white in move 33 overlooked a tactical Bxh2. Still white after forcing an exchange of queens had some chances in the rook and bishop endgame, but it was a long uphill battle. Black instructively established a passed pawn at h4 and activated his pieces. He then finally decided the game by sacrificing back his extra pawn at b5 to create a fast running passed pawn in the a-file. White's bishop at d5 apparently had an active position in the middle of an open board, but remained a more or less passive spectator to this endgame.

Morten Andersen (2190) versus **Laurin Perkampus (2061)** was a Grünfeld opening in which white did not exchange at d5, after which black instead exchanged at c4. White had the better bishops and pawn structure after an early queen exchange, and had some advantage both before and after the rook exchange. White still had a thin edge when he offered a draw at move 38, although the remaining endgame with two bishops, one knight and five pawns on each side should not cause black many problems.



Verbin vs Sekkingstad

Valentina Verbin (2037) as white against **Thomas Sekkingstad (1979)** came much better from the opening, as the center plus the pair of bishops gave white a clear advantage in this Caro-Kann variation.

Although exchanging off the dark-squared bishops was a very natural plan from a black point of view, 16.--- Bd6? still was a tactical blunder – as white instead of exchanging the bishop at d6 could just take the pawn at h6. Having a pawn in addition to a pair of bishops and all the more active pieces, Verbin this time had no problems winning a won position.

Thyra Kvendseth (1941) although not winning the tournament is likely to win the prize for the fastest mate, finishing off her white game against **Jeroen Van den Bersselaar (2173)** with a brutal 15.Qg7 mate after only one hour. White went her own way from the opening with 1.d4 2.Nf3 3.g3, playing some kind of Grünfeld in Advance.



Van den Bersselaar vs Kvendseth

Black had no problems

equalizing, although white with an extra pawn tempo got sufficient pressure against the center pawns at d5 and e5. Weakening the kingside with g6 probably was a mistake from black, and as white played 13.Bh6 black automatically replied 13... Re8. Then as white took the pawn at d5 with her knight, black automatically took back with the knight at f6 – and then white instead of taking back at d5 moved the queen from d4 up the diagonal to g7.

Taking the knight at d5 with the bishop instead of the knight by the way would have given black approximately enough initiative for the pawn. Van den Bersselaar has handled his depressive result in this tournament with very good humour, and continued to do so after this game. The Dutchman later explained that he discovered the mate at g7 while he still had the knight in his hand, but became too shocked to redirect it to h5 in time ...

The Norwegian disappointed-master player duel between **Ola Liabøtrø (2010)** and **Pål Røyset (2133)** was a Sicilian Kan duel in which chances were roughly balanced after the queens, one bishop and one knight were exchanged early. 21.f5? however closed off the kingside in favour of black, who soon had strong pressure on the queenside.

Finally getting a good position, Røyset enjoyed it a lot and found a lot of strong moves. As white's rook at a1 was almost paralyzed, black efficiently sacrificed an exchange on c2 to make a decisive intervention with his remaining rook and minor pieces. Curiously in the final position after 42 moves, when black about to mate white's king at f1, white still had rooks on a1 and h1 with a knight in between at b1 – although the rook at a1 had started up at h1 and the h1 rook at a1!

As mentioned above, Swedish **Vladan Nikolic (2247)** and Norwegian **Sverre Lye (1994)** both informed before the start of round eight that they were unable to play due to illness, and it later turned out that both would also be unable to play round nine.

Open Group

In the Open group, **Evsuld Myagmarsuren (1888)** as white against **Heine N. Johannessen (1907)** on the first board demonstrated his superior understanding of a Sicilian Maroczy position and had a winning kingside attack before 20 moves. As white failed to find the best attacking continuations, black however succeeded in avoiding mate and exchange queens for the very reasonable price of a pawn. White kept an extra pawn into the rook and bishop endgame, although opposite-coloured bishops made this a rather easy draw for black.



Myagmarsuren vs Johannessen

Ask Amundsen (1838) as white against **Misha Galinsky (1748)** on the second board meantime had no problems whatsoever completing his attack, after generously being invited to intervene at h6 with his queen before 20 moves.

Another violent attack was seen on the third board as **Martin Holten Fiskaaen (1895)** as black outplayed his grown up German opponent **Johannes Reinhardt (1893)**, mating the white king at a1 after 31 moves.

Nikolai Østensen (1875) also accelerated after losing some speed in the recent rounds, and after winning a pawn in the middlegame went on to win the rook endgame confidently as white against **Max Moe Pedersen (1789)**.

The eight round overall became a short and intensive one the top boards in the Open, as **Terje Lund (2032)** as black on fifth board won a convincing 30-movs win as black against **Rune Kleiven Rynning (1666)**. Curiously, this was Rynning's first long game ever against a master player, and he found it an inspiring experience although the outcome was an expected loss.

Despite second rated Lund's nice win today, the top rated players still has had a hard tournament. Fourth rated **Hallvard Haug Flatebø (1917)** in an uphill black game against **David Luangtep Vangen (1648)** finally won a piece in the endgame, but then became so thankful that he immediately blundered back the piece, after which the game after all was drawn.

First rated **Irina Donchenko (2057)** was in trouble as black against heavily underrated **Edvard Andersen (1555)**, but due to opposite-coloured bishops still scraped a draw with a pawn less in the endgame.

Following all this it was obvious that the Open would be won by a Norwegian well below age 18, but all the more unclear what would be his name: 11 year old Evsuld Mygmarsuren and 16 year old Ask Amundsen were sharing the lead at 6,5/8, only half a point ahead of 13 year old Martin Holten Fiskaaen, 15 year old Heine Johannessen and 12 year old Nicolai Østensen – with top board pairings Fiskaaen-Mygmarsuren, Johannessen-Amundsen and Lund-Østensen coming up for an exciting round nine!



Galinsky vs Amundsen



Pedersen vs Østensen



Andersen vs Donchenko

Photos by Tom Eriksen