

FAGERNES CHESS INTERNATIONAL 2022

THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT

9



GM Group

20 year old Indian GM Aryan Chopra was the man able to decide first prize in round nine: Leading alone at 6.5/8 and playing white against a lower rated opponent qualified as a very promising starting point. It soon turned out that Chopra (very understandably) was not willing to run any big risks, while Norwegian GM Frode Urkedal continued his solid and strong play from the first eight rounds. The top board following this was considered all the more likely to end up with a draw.

As both German GM Alexander Donchenko and Indian GM Krishnan Sasikiran had a higher Elo average than Chopra, a winner in their internal meeting on second board could also win the tournament. Donchenko had the white pieces, but played first too carefully and then too recklessly. In the start of the fourth hour Sasikiran had won a pawn with very good chances to win the bishop endgame. Chopra and Urkedal not unexpectedly agreed a draw just before the time control, while Sasikiran played accurately all to the end of his game and won his first black game after five hours in the last round.



Urkedal, Hakobyan, Sasikiran and Chopra

41 year old Sasikiran following this ended up as the winner of the tournament. First and second prizes in accordance with the tournament rules were shared equally between him and Chopra, both having very strong performances at 7,0/9.

Third and fourth prizes at 6,5/9 in turn was shared between Urkedal and Armenian GM Aram Hakobyan, the latter winning confidently as white in a three-hour game against the 16 year old Ukrainian FM Semen Mitusov. Sensation man Mitusov following this second loss in a row failed to make a GM norm, but still made an IM Norm with nearly a full point overscore.

Sixth, seventh and eight prizes were shared between nine players reaching 6.0/9, while Kazakhstan GM Zhansaya Abdulmalik at 5.5/9 not unexpectedly won the prize for best woman player.



Sasikiran vs Donchenko (front) and Urkedal vs Chopra (back)

First board meeting between **GM Aryan Chopra (2592)** and **GM Frode Urkedal (2539)** made a fast start with a Scotch opening duel. Before 20 moves the players reached an approximately balanced but still interesting endgame with rook, bishop, knight and five pawns against two rooks and seven pawns. This endgame is known from many earlier games, most but not all top level tests ending with a draw. Curiously, chess superstar Levon Aronian has played this endgame to a draw as black in 2010 and as white in 2019!

In this new test white for the next two hours was slightly ahead on the clock as well as on the board. Black however proved able to protect his possible pawn weaknesses at a6 and c6 while keeping both his rooks disturbingly active, and the game was drawn by a sound repetition just before 40 moves. Chopra following this lost the first place on the final list, but at the same time assured himself a shared first prize. His Elo gain in the end was less than five Elo points, but 7.0/9 and a performance of 2618 still was a great achievement following his slow start with 2.5/4.

28 year old Urkedal at the end of the day had half a point less than Sasikiran and Chopra, but still made his best result for a very long time. Noteworthy, he at a remarkable 2672 had the highest Elo performance of the tournament.

Indian **GM Krishnan Sasikiran (2650)** notably had four wins with white and four draws as black on his record, when he today entered the ring to play black on the second board against German **GM Alexander Donchenko (2619)**. Young Donchenko went back to the old ages as he played 1.c4 2.Nf3 3.g3, entering an about 100 year old Reti opening line with the dark-squared bishop in a modest position at d2. Again spending much time from the opening, Sasikiran after exchanging one set of pawns and one set of knights had more or less equalized after 15 moves.

With a draw as the most likely result on board one, Donchenko played for a win in the game and the tournament as he accelerated in the center with 17.d4 and 19.e4. Sasikiran however had the necessary time to prepare for this and did fine after the position was opened during the next five moves. With the c- and d-file opened, white after 25 moves should have exchanged rooks at d7 with a draw as the most likely result. Instead 25.Nd5? was to overstretch the position. Due to the unprotected queen at b3, the knight already was in an unpleasant pin in the diagonal a2–g8 after Sasikiran's alert 25... Qg8!

Within a few moves white was forced to give up a pawn to avoid losing a piece. The remaining endgame with dark-squared bishops and six against five pawns was close to winning for black. Following an inaccuracy from white, black after 42 moves established a passed h-pawn with a winning position. Defending with two against three pawns, white could still hope to escape into a draw fortress with king against dark-squared bishop and h-pawn. Sasikiran however played accurately to the end of this very strong positional game, and after 56 moves Donchenko stopped the clock as he would soon end up in a lost endgame with bishop versus bishop, b- and h-pawn. Donchenko with very unfortunate timing suffered his first loss in the final round, leaving him with «only» a shared fifth prize and a performance just below 2600. Sasikiran on the other hand got his first win as black with a perfect timing, and at 7.0/9 he won the tournament as his average of opponents was three points higher than Aryan Chopra. Although it was of course an outstanding result, his performance actually was rather normal for such a strong player: To illustrate this Sasikiran won 2000 EUROS and one Elo-point after his nine games at Fagernes!



Sarin vs Erigaisi

Third board was an Indian teenager duel between **GM Nihal Sarin (2648)** and **GM Arjun Erigaisi (2675)**. It started up with a Classical Nimzo-Indian line, in which both played fast from the opening. Following an early exchange of queens, the remaining endgame with two rooks and light-squared bishops appeared slightly better for black, as white had two isolated c-pawns. White however had the more active pieces from the start, and following this he by a small tactical trick could exchange the first c-pawn for black's b-pawn. Following this the position was very equal. After 25 moves, with players still having spent only some 18 minutes each on the clock, black offered an exchange of bishops and at the same time a draw – which was accepted. Both first rated Erigaisi and third rated Sarin following this finished at 6,0/9 on a shared fifth place. Undefeated Erigaisi as the highest rated player reached his expected score, while Sarin was half a point below expected.

Armenian **GM Aram Hakobyan (2612)** had a pleasant starting point for this round – playing white against **FM Semen Mitusov (2274)**, who needed a win for a GM-norm. White made a modest start with 1.Nf3 2.g3 3.Bg2, but soon accelerated in the center with d4 and c4. This resulted in a Catalan-like position in which black's light-squared bishop was placed outside the pawn chain at g4. Something soon afterwards went wrong for black, as white after exchanging all the knights plus the light-squared bishops had a pleasant pressure against black's too advanced pawn at e4. Picking up the pawn and exchanging off the queens after a straightforward Rd1 and Rd4, white with an extra pawn was about winning in the remaining rooks and bishop endgame. As black still came up with nothing more than exchanges, the rook endgame before 40 moves was an easy win due to white's extra pawn and three against one pawn majority on the kingside. 16 year old Semen Mitusov following this double puncture in the final rounds did not reach a sensational GM-norm, but of course he still can be proud of his first IM norm and a performance of 2516. Hakobyan after winning all his first three games slowed down with five draws in a row. Following this last round win he reached a shared third prize and won six more Elo points from his first tournament in Norway.



Kulaots vs Sethuraman

Fifth board meeting between Estonian **GM Kaido Kulaots (2529)** and Indian **GM Sethuraman Sethuraman (2610)** saw another Sicilian duel with 3.Bb5, leading to another positional Rossolimo line duel. Although black got the pair of bishops, the position remained rather closed, and white due to his strong knight outpost at c5 kept a slight initiative. White just before 30 moves declined an invitation to a draw by repetition. According to the computer programs, white still was slightly better when accepting a repetition immediately after passing 40 moves. Although black's bishop at g7 still was closed in behind a black pawn at f6, his pair of bishops and overprotection of the isolated pawn at a6 at that stage made winning attempts very difficult for white. Following this draw both players landed on a solid result with 6/9 and a shared fifth prize. Kulaots although again losing some speed towards the end of the tournament scored a full point above expected in the end, while Sethuraman in his first Fagernes tournament was half a point below.



Blomqvist vs Can

GM Emre Can (2578) versus **GM Erik Blomqvist (2550)** was an Open Catalan duel, in which white's pair of bishops and half open c-file gave him compensation for black's extra pawn. White however became too eager to win back the pawn at c7, as black after f5-fxe4 meanwhile opened the f-file with a strong counterattack on the kingside. Blomqvist following this was in the driving seat for the rest of the game, with the safer king and eventually also an extra pawn. White however had some

counterplay due to his passed pawn at d6 and pair of bishop. Running short of time with his king in the air at g6, Blomqvist found nothing better than a draw by repetition of checks after the time control.

Both players following this was found in the crowd at 6,0/9, sharing the place. Like in the European Championship a few days earlier on, Can did better in the first than second half of this tournament, but still made a solid plus result. Picking up eight more Elo points at Fagernes, he seems very likely soon to stabilize above 2600. Blomqvist was unable to repeat his great success from the 2021 tournament at Fagernes, when he shared the first prize at 7.0/9, although a performance of 2497 still was solid and just below his expected score.



Hobber (front) and Brynell vs Abdumalik (back)

GM Tiger Hillarp Persson (2511) today was less successful with his handling of the Slav opening line as white against **FM Anders Hobber (2379)**. After playing Nh4-Nxg6 and castling long white true enough got a pair of bishops, but black still came better as he had a strong knight on c5 and the more dangerous attack. White after 27 moves had only two minutes left on the clock, but then was over the hill as black was helpful in exchanging queens. Due to his superior pawn

structure, black still was better when the game was agreed drawn by a repetition after 35 moves.

White's barking bishops however at that stage made winning attempts difficult for black.

Hillarp Persson, winning last year's tournament with an outstanding 7,0/9, in this much stronger field made a very strong first half with 4,0/5. Although slowing down with 1,5/4 in the second half, he still landed on a solid plus result. Hobber on the other hand repaired much following a too slow start. Never close to his final IM-norm, he in the end settled for a performance just around expected.

GM Stellan Brynell (2406) versus GM Zhansaya Abdumalik (2496) was a Semi-Slav Moscow line duel, in which white had a short-term center advantage and black a long-term pair of bishops.

The fight hardened as black later snatched a pawn at c4, although white after e5-exf6 got sufficient counterplay on the kingside. After a thematic but probably dubious 20... c5?!, white could have tested another promising center advance with 21.d5!. White instead took the pawn at c5, allowing black to activate his dark-squared bishop. Following this the game within a few moves was drawn by a rather natural repetition.

5,5/9 was very slightly above expected score for Brynell and below for Abdumalik, although the young Kazakhstani chess personality still won the best woman prize following this draw.

FM Elham Abdrlauf (2427) although getting the white pieces had a somewhat depressive pairing for the last round, as **IM Mads Vestby-Ellingsen (2370)** was just too low rated to give Abdrlauf a final shot for the IM title this week.

Via 1.Nf3 c5 2.e4 this Norwegian junior duel transposed into a Sicilian Najdorf, in which an early queen exchange left black and his pair of bishops slightly

better. Although black gradually succeeded in opening the position for his bishops, the price was exchanging all the more pawns, and the position with rook, bishop, knight and three pawns against rook, two bishops and three pawns after 33 moves was drawish. 34.Nd5? however was a mistake, after which white's king at c1 soon was under a direct attack. Following a tactical 38... b3! 39.Rxa4 b2, black sacrificed rook and bishop to get in a new queen. As white's king still was in trouble, black within a few moves won another exchange.

The remaining endgame with queen and f-pawn versus bishop, knight, g- and h-pawn still was not trivial. In the sixth hour this game from move 67 saw a very unusual pawnless endgame with bishop and knight versus queen. Although black for a while made little progress, the defensive task still was very difficult for white from a practical point of view. White resigned after 91 moves as black was about to win one of the minor pieces.

Having made two IM-norms within the last two months, 17 year old Abdrlauf despite a promising start landed just below expected score following this loss. 19 year old Vestby-Ellingsen made a very strong sprint by winning the last three rounds, and following this he after all reached a small money prize and a small ELO gain at 6.0/9.



Abdulrauf vs Vestby-Ellingsen (Photo: Anniken Vestby)

WIM Fiona Sieber (2248) if winning in the last round could have reached a performance about 2400. Unfortunately this still would not have qualified as her final WGM-norm, since her high-rated opponent **Ludvig Carlsson (2411)** while waiting for his IM-title does not qualify as a titleholder. The game was a rather dry French Advance duel, in which no piece or pawn had left the board after 35 moves. Black castled long and locked the queenside with c4, while white after castling short tried to open the kingside just before 40 moves. Black at that stage was far ahead on the clock, and soon came better when the position finally was opened. Having lost her key pawn at c3, white anyway was in deep trouble when she short of time allowed a queen exchange and stumbled into a dead lost double minor piece endgame after 63 moves.

Carlsson following his walk over bye in the first round had no practical chances for a GM norm, but scoring 5.5/8 later he made a strong performance of 2479 and added seven more Elo points. Sieber despite the last round set back made a strong performance of 2326 and won 16 more Elo points.



Schneider vs Sanal

WGM Jana Schneider (2263) as her roommate Sieber was lucky to get two white games in the final rounds, all the more important with a much higher rated opponent coming up. Her game versus **GM Vahap Sanal (2593)** was a Sicilian Kan duel, in which white first demonstrated the better

understanding. As black left his king exposed at e8 for too long, white after 14.f5! had a dangerous attack coming up. Following an elegant and strong 17.Ne6! it turned out that the knight was immune and the black king under fire. White could force a draw with knight checks between e6 and g7, but correctly instead took the rook at d8 to play on for a win.

White for many moves later was objectively winning, with an extra exchange and a safer king.

Black and his hard-working bishops however succeeded first in stabilizing the king at e7 and then to get counterplay against white's advanced pawns at d5 and f5. Running short of time for 40 moves, white lost both pawns, after which black instructively raised a winning attack and smashed through on the kingside with a tactical 41.--- Bxg2+!

Schneider following this cramp in the final hours landed just below her expected score. Sanal despite his successful comeback in the game finished nearly two points below expected score in this shaky (if highly entertaining) tournament.



Øye-Strømberg vs Kaasen (Photo: Anniken Vestby)

Believe it or not, but **IM Tor Fredrik Kaasen (2465)** finished off his tournament with even another Italian duel, this one as white against **Alexander Øye-Strømberg (2157)**. Obviously Kaasen has improved his knowledge to this opening during this week, and this last test gave him a jackpot win within 30 moves. Sacrificing the h3-pawn with 18.g3! was strong and instructive, as white within a few moves won back the pawn at g4 – and later

had a winning advantage due to the open h-file. Black sacrificed an exchange at move 25 with the idea of blundering the queen at move 26.

Still 16 year old Øye-Strømberg at 4,5/9 made a performance of 2345 and won nearly 80 more Elo points. 19 year old Kaasen, following a remarkably hard-fought tournament with only one drawn game, landed just around his expected score at 5,5/9.



Trost vs Roy

Edvin Trost (2342) versus **IM Prantik Roy (2368)** was Grünfeld fianchetto duel, in which something went seriously wrong for black within a few moves after an early queen exchange. White after 15 moves had the much better pawn structure and after 20 moves he was a sound pawn up. Black still had some practical compensation due to his barking bishops, and was rewarded as white helpfully forced himself to exchange off the rooks.

The remaining minor piece endgame after 25 moves was a clearcut draw due to white's misplaced knight at a4: Black could just exchange it for his light squared bishop, destroying white's pawn structure and leaving a dead endgame with opposite-coloured bishops.

Both players following this landed at 5.0/9 and just around their expected score.



Injac vs Unneland

FM Mathias Unneland (2254) versus WGM Teodora Injac (2406) was a closed

Catalan opening line, in which black had no problems after white helpfully exchanged at d5.

A draw following this was agreed by a sound repetition after 22 moves, in a rather closed and equal position.

White was half an hour ahead on the clock, but black still had 24 minutes left to handle a very solid position.

17 year old and highly unpredictable Unneland

following this draw after all finished on his expected score at 4,5/9, while 21 year old Injac following here disappointing finish with 0,5/3 came in a full point below expected score.



Galinsky vs Dahl

IM Timofey Galinsky (2358)

as white against **FM Trygve Dahl (2252)** made a rather slow Reti start with 1.Nf3 2.g3 3.Bg2 4.c4, followed by 5.e3 and 6.b3.

Finally accelerating in the center with 7.d4 still gave white a clear advantage, as black helpfully opened the position with 7...cxd4?.

Within a few moves black true enough won an exchange for a pawn at a1, but black's weak dark squares and exposed king later gave white the better

and much more easy position. Although black's kingside was about to end up paralyzed, sacrificing back a piece for white's pawn at f6 after 24 moves was a bit too desperate. Playing with bishop and knight for a rook with the more active pieces, whiter later had no worries in the endgame. Galinsky reached 5.0/9 after winning his two final games, and remarkably finished off the tournament without any draws. Losing against three lower rated opponents, he still had a score more than two points below expected. Also unpredictable Trygve Dahl also had a disappointing result and finished a full point below expected after the last round loss.



Kvaløy vs Machlik

Monika Machlik (2122) versus **FM Aksel Lund Kvaløy (2330)** was a Classical Nimzo-Indian duel in which white spent a lot of time and black even more from the opening. Black following this had only seven minutes on the clock after 18 moves. While white in this opening has a long-term advantage due to the pair of bishops, black in these lines often is ahead in development with the safer king. Following that, the idea of black sacrificing the c-pawn to open the position is well known.

11.--- Nbd7? still was misunderstood here, as white could have had a clear advantage with a tactical 12.c6! followed by 13.Nd4 and 14.Nxe6!. As white missed that (far from obvious) chance, black after an early queen exchange won back the pawn and held a slight initiative in the endgame with two rooks, one knight and five pawns on each side after 27 moves. Black at that stage had only some two minutes left on the clock, but still kept a slight initiative on the board.

With both players short of time, black at move 39 left a repetition – and at move 40 allowed a tactical 41.Nxe6!. Following this white again came a pawn up, although black's active pieces again gave him full compensation. A tense struggle followed as both players within ten more moves ran short of time again. After 50 moves white remained a pawn up with rook, knight and three pawns against rook, knight and two pawns. Black still was the one to play for a win as white's king at g1 looked a bit sweaty. Machlik although running short of time again however defended ice cold, picking up black's two last pawns to reach a dead rook endgame after 60 moves.

This was 13 year old Kvaløy's first draw in this tournament, but 4,5/9 with a performance of 2170 following his IM-norm in Kragerø of course was a disappointment. Machlik, although never really close to her third WIM-norm, in the end could be well satisfied with 4,5/9 and a performance of 2180. As her performance this tournament was much better than Olga Dolzhykova's, 24 year old Monika Machlik a few weeks before the selection of the Norwegian teams for the Chess Olympiad is top rated among the active Norwegian woman players.



Ingebretsen vs Elmi

FM Jens Evang Ingebretsen (2315) as white against **Saad Elmi (2092)** in a Sicilian made a slow start with 1.e4 2.Ne2 and 3.g3. Later building a center advantage with c3 followed by d4 and d5, white still had a promising pull from the opening. Intervening at the c4 outpost with a knight was a natural plan from a black point of view, but still left him with a permanently weak pawn at c4 after white exchanged off the knight. White later efficiently exchanged off

minor pieces to win the pawn at c4, and if black had some compensation it soon vanished. About to lose a second pawn at d6 with a white kingside attack coming up, black resigned after 34 moves.

Although losing the IM-norm out of sight during round eight, 18 year old Ingebretsen following this sound win won 13 more Elo points and can be well satisfied with 5.0/9 and an Elo performance of 2373. Facing eight opponents above 2200, 15 year old Elmi despite this loss could be very well satisfied with 4.0/9 in his first GM group start. Winning 63 more Elo points, he passed not only 2100 but also at the same week 2150.



Schwarz vs Shehzad

Shazil Shehzad (2195) versus **Dusan Schwarz (2295)** was a closed Ruy Lopez duel, in which black played g6 and then Bh6 to exchange the dark-squared bishops. White later had a pleasant initiative, and after exchanging queens he went on to win a pawn at d6. Black however succeeded in activating his pieces in the rooks and minor piece endgame. Although white again got an extra pawn in the fifth hour, the minor piece endgame with only

kingside pawns left at that stage was a fairly easy draw. Following some ups and downs for both players, 4,5/9 in the end was more than 40 points up for 15 year old Shehzad and just below expected for 41 year old Schwarz.

The German matchup **FM Frank Buchenau (2269)** vs **Bennet Hagner (2151)** also was a noteworthy generation duel, as white was 54 and black 13. Chances probably were rather balanced in this Caro-Kann opening duel, in which black castled long while white «by hand» castled short with Kf1-g1-h2. While both players spent a lot of time on the clock, black however took over the initiative with a violent bayonet attack as he played 22.--- h4!. Later 28.--- f6! reportedly would have been much more easy than 28.--- Bxe5? 29.Qxe5 f6, as white could now reply 30.Qxf6. After 30.--- Bxh3!? the bishop could be taken with both the knight at g5 and the bishop at g2, both leading to complications and a likely draw. Instead 31.Nf7?? was a blunder as black after 31.--- Bxg2+! 32.Nxh8 Qh3+ soon demonstrated a winning attack.

Having scored 1,0/5 against opponents above 2400 and 3.0/4 against opponents below 2200, Buchenau in the end landed just below his expected score –very respectable after playing nine opponents with an average age below 20!

Young Hagner on the other hand made a slow start with one win and three lost games, but winning four and losing one later on he reach a sound plus score and won nearly 20 Elo points.

IM Gerard Welling (2261) versus **Kim Roger Westrum (2046)** was another fascinating generation duel, as Welling is aged 63 and Westrum 17. The Dutch IM tried to leave theory with 1.d4 2.Nf3 3.Nc3 and 4.Bf4. He failed as the Norwegian junior had made a very good preparation and found a line more or less forcing a draw by repetition after 13 moves.

Westrum was very satisfied drawing an IM. Scoring 4.5/9 against an average of 2237 he won some 88 Elo points.

Welling like Buchenau could be well satisfied saving his Elo after dancing with young wolves for nine rounds.



Westrum vs Welling

FM Damien Le Goff (2290) versus **Afras Mansoor (2033)** was another modern Queen’s Gambit line with a black bishop at b4 (instead of the traditional e7). White had a slight initiative after exchanging three sets of minor pieces. Exchanging the queens at e4 was to overdo it, as black after 20 moves had equal chances in the rooks and knight endgame. Mansoor again ran short of time for 40 moves, but after he passed the time control the position with rook, knight and three pawns on each side still was drawish. White however still had the more easy position to play. As Mansoor lost the thread in the fifth hour, white pushed his pawn ahead to a7 with a won position. Black’s tactical defence later was creative, but still insufficient, as the end station was a hopeless endgame with two scattered pawns against a rook.

18 year old Mansoor at 3.5/9 still had nearly one and a half point above expected score after playing nine much higher rated opponents, while 34 year old Le Goff at 4.5/9 landed nearly two points below expected score after playing eight lower rated opponents.

WGM Olga Dolzhikova (2131) after a traditional 1.e4 e5 as white against **FM Nikolaj Zadruzny (2258)** early left the main lines with 2.Nc3 and 3.g3. Black first equalized, but as his h5-h4 attack weakened his own position too much, white came much better in the early middle game.

Black with his king stranded at e8 was in deep trouble around move 18–23. As white went astray by snatching a pawn at a7 with her bishop, black within a few moves won back the pawn and finally castled short at move 27. White still had some chances for a kingside attack, but with both players running short of time the game after 40 moves was drawn by a repetition of checks.

Dolzhikova had a troublesome first half of this tournament, scoring only 0.5/4 (plus a walk over draw). The second half with 3.0/4 repaired much, and in the end she at 4.0/9 was about half a point below expected – very respectable when taking into account that a war is going on in her former home country Ukraine. Zadruzny had a nightmare first half and although improving somewhat he at 4.0/9 finished more than two points below his expected score, making only a 50 % score against eight much lower rated opponents.



Dolzhikova (Photo:Anniken Vestby)

Eivind Grunt Kreken (2088) versus **Andreas Skotheim (2206)** was a closed Ruy Lopez, in which white first had a promising initiative after an interesting pawn sacrifice at e4. Black however hit back with an interesting piece sacrifice on the very same square, and got a strong kingside attack after white too naively accepted the offer. To avoid a mate white had to return a full piece, but the remaining rooks and bishop endgame with two extra pawns was winning for white. White probably played on hoping for some miracle draw due to the opposite-coloured bishops. After 40 moves white's bishop at a4 however became a lame duck piece, after which black on the kingside could sacrifice his bishop for a third pawn, forcing off all the rooks and leaving white's king unable to stop the armada of black pawns.

Kreken at 3.5/9 with a performance of 2161 still can be proud of his first start in the GM group, while 4.5/9 with a performance just above 2150 no longer is a good result from Skotheim.

FM Ward Altarbosh (2200) and **Andreas Skrede Hausken (1991)** discussed another closed Ruy Lopez position, in which black was fine after weakening the white kingside with 15... Bxf3. Snatching the pawn at f3 with the queen however proved too greedy, as white after forcing a tactical queen exchange won back the pawn and kept a strong initiative.

24... f6? later was way too weakening for black's passive position. As white had won two pawns with an ongoing pressure, black resigned only four moves later on.

Despite this rather lame finish, Hausken at 3.5/9 won some 30 Elo points after playing nine much higher rated opponents. Altarbosh had a rather jumpy tournament, but landing at 4.5/9 with a performance of 2278 following this last round win he was nearly one point above expected score.



Dahl vs Poysti

Max Dahl (2054) versus **Nathanael Poysti (2190)** was a classical Queen's Gambit exchange line duel, in which white however went for a direct pawn storm on the kingside. Black first was on his heels, but then came up with a lot of counterplay after sacrificing one of his rooks for a bishop at e4. Although still an exchange up, Dahl after 35 moves was in trouble as black had bolted his kingside and was marching forward with two

connected pawns in the e- and f-file. As both players ran short of time they understandably also made some mistakes, although black now was winning until he played 40... e2? (instead of the crushing 40... f2! followed by 41... e2).

As white in the game had access to the g1 square for his rook, fascinating complications continued in the fifth hour. White after 44 moves was a full rook up in this rooks and knight endgame, but still in danger of losing as black now had passed pawns at e2 and f2. Then the smoke within a few moves left the board, remarkably enough leaving a drawn knight endgame.

Creative 16 year old Max Dahl despite all his shaky time-trouble duels made six draws against higher rated opponents. At 4.0/9 landed nearly two points above his expected score and won 74 Elo points. Hard-fighting German representative Poysti also contributed a lot to the entertainment in his first GM group at Fagernes, but scoring 4.0/9 with six lower rated opponents he landed nearly a point below his expected score.

The game between **Stig K. Martinsen (2155)** and **Simen Sørensen (2070)** was drawn after 12 not too exciting Reti moves. Still this actually was great sportmanship from white, as he was not in his best shape and much in doubt about whether he could play the game early Sunday morning. 41 year old Martinsen was a bit rusty and at 4.0/9 finished nearly a point below expected. 21 year old Sørensen on the other hand continued his progress from the last months and won 29 more points at Fagernes.

Emerik Roulet-Dubonnet (2050) versus **Morten Andersen (2190)** was a Queen's Gambit exchange line in which white bravely castled long and went for a kingside attack with f3 and e4. A tactical queen exchange left the position approximately balanced, although white due to his center dominance still had pressure with rook, knight and six pawns on each side after 30 moves. After 35 moves white could play on for a win, but decided instead to exchange off two pieces at f6, after which the balanced minor piece endgame was immediately agreed a draw.

Although he lost a lot of speed in the second half of the tournament, 18 year old Emerik Roulet-Dubonnet at 4.0/9 actually made a great result – winning some 85 points after playing opponents with an average well above 2300. Our now 61 year old Danish chessfriend Morten Andersen made a sensational start with a draw against GM Aryan Chopra in the first round. Later scoring only 3.0/8 with seven lower rated opponents, he in the end had nearly two points less than expected.

Kumar Rahul (2204) versus **Thyra Kvendseth (1941)** first was a roughly balanced London system. Then black around move 21–28 gave white all the help needed to open the queenside with a decisive advantage. After the queens were exchanged, white invited black into the game again by playing 30.b4? instead of the more or less paralyzing 30.Rc7!. White became so thankful that she immediately opened the a-file for white's rook with 33... a5?. Following this white after intervening at a7 after all got his winning seventh rank attack before 40 moves. 4.0/9 for Rahul still was nearly a point below expected score. 19 year old Kvendseth at 3.0/9 following her surprise win in the eight round finished nearly one point above expected score, following a hard fought week without any drawn game.

Laurin Perkampus (2061) versus **Valentina Verbin (2037)** was a London system line which white better not try again. Black soon got the upper hand, as she after Nh5 followed by Nxf3 had both the pair of bishops and the better pawn structure. About to open the position with a powerful d5-break, black following this was clearly better when accepting a draw at move 18.



Perkampus vs Verbin (Photo: Anniken Vestby)

19 year old Verbin at 3.5/9 with eight higher rated opponents scored more than half a point above expected, but still had positions for some 1.5–2 points more and several times settled for a draw in much better positions. 18 year old Perkampus following this draw also landed on 3.5/9 and had a slight plus result.

Yoann Le Montagner (2035) versus **Sondre Melaa (2120)** was a Scotch opening duel in which black appeared to have the better preparation. After exchanging three sets of minor pieces he came far ahead on the clock and slightly better on the board. Then white somewhat strangely gave up a pawn to exchange some more pieces, leaving a double rook endgame in which black had an extra passed a-pawn. Looking disillusioned, Le Montagner within a few more moves gave up one more pawn to reach a lost rook endgame.

18 year old Melaa made efficient use of his chances today and at 4.0/9 he was nearly one point above expected. Le Montagner with three draws and five lost games had a cold first tournament at Fagernes, although he still lost no more than 14 Elo points after playing only higher rated opponents.

Vetle Bjørge Strand (2018) as white stayed true to his Veresov system with 1.d4 2.Nc3 3.Bf4 all this tournament. In his last try against **Håkon Bentsen (2078)**, white got a pair of bishops, but still not much of an advantage. Bentsen appeared to have the better preparation, and had spent less than 15 minutes on the clock when the game was agreed a draw in a fairly balanced position after 20 moves. 14 year old Strand much enjoyed this first GM group and appeared fairly well satisfied to win five more Elo points after 3.0/9. 42 year old Bentsen also made a small plus, but still left a bit disappointed after blundering from a won position in the eight round.



Grønnestad vs Røyset (Photo: Anniken Vestby)

Pål Røyset (2133) versus **WFM Anita Grønnestad (1941)** saw an accelerated Dragon Sicilian duel, in which white came clearly better from the opening. After 20 moves three sets of minor pieces were exchanged, leaving a position in which white's dominating pawn at e5 combined with his strong knight square at c5 and black's backward pawn at c6 gave white a pleasant advantage. White then made a strange decision when retreating his knight to d3, trading white's

key pawn at d4 for black's weak pawn at c6. Black following this was equal if not better in the queen and rooks position around move 30. As black later played inaccurately in the double rook endgame, white for a few moves just before the time control had a promising initiative due to his more active rook and passed a- and b-pawns. As black got the help needed to activate her rooks and exchange one of the passed pawns, white after 50 moves offered a draw in a very balanced position. Grønnestad happily accepted this and aged 39 she won 27 Elo points as one of the lowest rated players of this field. 48 year old Røyset improved somewhat with 2,0/3 in the final rounds, but having lost five games in a row before that he still dropped 51 Elo points this week.

Jeroen van den Bersselaar (2173) versus **Ola Liabøtrø (2101)** was an English fianchetto duel, in which the center by mutual agreement soon was blown up. White around move 15–20 had a pleasant plus with a center pawn at e4 and a knight at d5. Black's decision to sacrifice a pawn at c4 did not work out too well, as white later had an extra pawn plus the more active pieces. But then black suddenly got a lot of counterplay, as he just before 40 moves was invited to take over the open d-file and intervene at d1 with his queen. Due to his safer king and better pawn structure, black had a clear advantage after winning back the pawn with 39.--- Qxf3. Although tempting, winning another pawn with 40.--- Qxe4? was a mistake, as white could exchange off the queens and more or less force his way to a drawn rook endgame with two against three kingside pawns.

Both players lost way too much Elo with performances below 1900, as van den Bersselaar finished number 69 with 2.0/9 and Liabøtrø number 70 with 1.5/9. Such a low score for two strong master players illustrates very well the remarkable level of the lower boards in this field.

Sverre Lye (1994) and **Vladan Nikolic (2247)** unfortunately both were unable to play round 9 due to illness. While Nikolic at 2.5/7 was a full point below his expected score, 15 year old Sverre Lye at 3.0/7 actually was nearly a full point above expected and will be well above 2000 on the next list.

Indian **WIM Rakshitta Ravi (2240)** following a disappointing tournament requested a walk over loss in the last round, and so her tournament ended at 3.0/8 with a performance of 2125. **Thomas Sekkingstad (1979)** following this had to take a walk over win in the last round. Before that he had 1.5/8 and a score about one point below expected, although there should be a lot to learn from the games in his first GM group start.

Open Group

The top boards of the Open made a very sad start in the last round, as 15 year old Heine N. Johannessen (1907) on the second board was unable to start his game against 16 year old Ask Amundsen (1838) due to illness. Amundsen following this reached 7.5/9 and was guaranteed a place in next year's GM group before his competitors started their games.



Fiskaaen vs Myagmarsuren

The fighting spirit in this group was remarkable even in the last round, with no draws seen on the top seven boards. On first board, 11 year old **Evsuld Myagmarsuren (1888)** as black against 13 year old **Martin Holten Fiskaaen (1895)** came much better from a Semi-Slav opening duel, winning an exchange with an ongoing initiative. The outcome came in doubt as Myagmarsuren for a moment lost his concentration after 30 moves, and decided to exchange queens instead of winning another piece. White's pair of bishops combined with his passed pawn at d7 following this gave white good chances. Fiskaaen in turn however became too eager to win back the exchange of d8. Following this Myagmarsuren after all landed safely in a won rook and minor piece endgame with two extra pawns.

On third board, 12 year old **Nicolai Østensen (1875)** had a tough challenge as black against the second rated grown up **Terje Lund (2032)**. White first came slightly better in this Slav opening duel. Østensen however bravely snatched a pawn at h2 when getting the chance, and went on to win an exchange without losing the initiative.

The Open following this promoted three very interested players to the next GM group: Ask Amundsen has slightly better buchholz than Evsuld Myagmarsuren at 7.5/9, while Nicolai Østensen finished third as the only player at 7.0/9, Noteworthy, Myagmarsuren as the youngest player in the top, defeated both the other top three players and had the best Elo-performance with 2005.



Top-4 in the Open group: Stai, Østensen, Myagmarsuren and Amundsen

The dominance of the players below 18 actually was smaller on the final list than during most of the tournament, as the fourth prize at 6.5/9 was shared between two grown up players: 29 year old **Sondre Stai (1685)** actually had things fairly under control as white in an attacking battle as white against German **Johannes Reinhardt (1893)**, while 32 year old Australian **Jamie Cross (1735)** after winning a pawn in the opening went on to win the endgame against **Kristoffer Wang Strømhaug (1767)**.

Bord six was another attacking battle, in which the Bærum junior **Tormod Carlin (1620)** checkmated his German opponent **Pascal Paulien (1815)** after only 32 moves.

The Germans overall had a tough time in this group: Top rated **Irina Donchenko (2057)** in the end finished at 4.5/9 with a performance below 1500, following a 16-move last-round draw against **Benjamin Stenseng (1532)**.

Best woman player following this became 19 year old **Ulrikke Langvik (1563)**, reaching 5.5/9 following a patient positional win as black against **Martin K. Andersen (1565)**. Although losing the last round, 16 year old **Ariza Hina (1524)** also could be well satisfied at 4.0/9, winning 50 Elo points.

A grown up female player scoring well above expected was 25 year old **Andrea Schneider (1229)**, reaching 4.0/9 and winning 36 Elo points after scraping a draw in a difficult rook endgame against **Morten Smedsrud (1475)**.

Among the underrated players on the lower boards definitely was 13 year old **Tord Albrigtsen (1296)**, reaching 4.5/9 after instructively winning a pawn endgame as black against **Elma Selvik (1419)** today.

Although he lost both his final games, by far the biggest Elo gain in the tournament came from 14 year old **Lukas Dominik Gåsland (1474)**, who was rewarded with a remarkable 135 points for his 4.5/9 against an average well above 1800!



Lund vs Østensen (Photo Anniken Vestby)

Photos by Tom Eriksen and Anniken Vestby