

# FAGERNES CHESS INTERATIONAL 2023

## THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT

# 6



### GM Group

Round 6 became a relatively peaceful and hesitant Maundy Thursday in the GM group. Indian GM Abhimanyu Puranik accepted a two-hour draw as white against IM Koustav Chatterjee, while GM Vahap Sanal accepted a 20-minute draw as black against GM Eduardas Rozentalis.

Second rated Armenian GM Samvel Ter-Sahakyan used his chance to catch Puranik and Sanal at 5.0/6, winning an exciting four-hour battle as white against WGM Vantika Agrawal.

Eight players are following half a step behind at 4.5/6, hence we can expect a tight finish in the run for the top prizes. One of these eight players by the way is top rated GM Sethuraman Sethuraman, as he today won a tense six-hour GM duel against Estonian GM Kaido Kulaots. The round had quite a few surprising results and the tournament still has quite a few serious candidates for title norms.

**GM Abhimanyu Puranik (2599)** and **IM Koustav Chatterjee (2520)** for two hours made sensible moves in a closed Ruy Lopez. Then they agreed a draw upon white's suggestion after 19 moves. Chatterjee has a performance well above 2600 for the first six rounds and is en route for another GM-norm.



Puranik vs Chatterjee

**GM Eduardas Rozentalis (2504)** versus **GM Vahap Sanal (2582)** also was a Ruy Lopez, but this was an open line and lasted only 14 moves and 20 minutes.

The third board meeting between **GM Samvel Ter-Sahakyan (2613)** and **WGM Vantika Agrawal (2407)** started up with a Sicilian Najdorf, in which white castled long and played hard for a win. White first got a sound space advantage after black felt forced to exchange the knight at d5. White later lost some focus on the kingside attack as he played c4–c5 and Rxb4. Following this black around move 26–28 was alive and kicking again. 29.--- f5? however fatally weakened the black kingside after 30.gxf6 e.p. Later 31.--- Nxd3? was just a blunder as white instead of taking back the minor piece could win heavy material with 32.Rc8+. Black at that stage however anyway was in deep trouble on the board with only seconds left on the clock. Agrawal despite losing this game still has a performance well above the demand for an IM norm.

**IM Semen Mitusov (2412)** versus **IM Aditha Mittal (2505)** was another Sicilian Najdorf duel, although white here castled short and went for positional pressure against black's backward pawn at d6. Black first had enough counterplay due to his pair of bishops and c-file. White later got some pressure, but black took over the initiative with a tactical 32.--- Nxg4!?. Chances after 40 moves appeared balanced as white had two knights and four pawns against rook and six pawns. White in the fifth hour had some pressure, but black never appeared really close to losing.



**Mitusov vs Mittal**

In the end he could safely sacrifice his rook on the last white pawn, knowing of course that two knights without any pawns on the board cannot force a mate. Mittal is on schedule for a GM norm, but is already qualified for the title, while Mitusov although behind schedule is still in that run.

**IM Linus Johansson (2463)** versus **IM Tor Fredrik Kaasen (2462)** ended up a draw in 30 moves, but still for nearly four hours was a tense attacking game. The start was a Queen's Gambit in a modern fashion, as white put his dark-squared bishop at f4 while black had his at b4. Later black got a pair of bishops, but white had a promising kingside attack and increased the pressure after sacrificing an exchange. White in the final minutes of the game could have got a decisive attack with 30.Nh7! > 31.Nf6+. With only three minutes left on the clock, white decided instead to force a draw with the flashy 30.Rh8? Kaasen for the last two rounds has had pole in and following this escape is in a promising position for his second GM-norm.



**Johansson**  
**(Photo: Anniken Vestby)**



**Sethuraman vs Kulaots**  
(Photo: Anniken Vestby)

**GM Sethuraman Sethuraman (2639)** and **GM Kaido Kulaots (2494)** gave the Sicilian Najdorf another critical test. White got a pair of bishops plus the better attacking chances, although black had two useful knights at c5 and f6 and reportedly was fine after answering 22.h5 with gxh5. White within a few moves won back the pawn at h5 with some advantage, although his own king at e2 was far from secure. 30.--- Bf4? was a blunder after which 31.Qf5 > 32.Qf6 could have given white a decisive attack, but the position remained unclear as white instead walked around with his king. Exchanging the queens was a relief from a

white point of view, as he later had no worries for his king. The knight stronghold at e4 in the fifth hour gave white some advantage in the endgame with rook, knight and four pawns against rook, bishop and four pawns. Black still had some chances for a draw, but it was a long uphill struggle. Black's pain ended after 69 moves in a rook endgame where white's two connected passed pawns at d5 and c6 were superior to black's lone passed pawn at e3.

**GM Frode Urkedal (2527)** as white against **GM Raja Rithvik Rajavaram (2472)** went for a Trompovsky opening with 1.d4 Nf6 2.Bg5. Black got a pair of bishops as the bishop later was exchanged for the knight at f6, but white kept a slight initiative into the position with queen, two rooks and six pawns on each side. White for a while here pinned his hopes on his passed pawn at c6. Rithvik however defended very soundly and coolly exchanged queens to let the passed pawn reach c7, knowing well that he could attack the pawn from behind and force it to be exchanged. Draw agreed upon white's suggestion after 49 moves, as the players were about to reach a dead rook endgame with only two kingside pawns left for both.

**IM Zhen Yu Cyrus Low (2425)** as white in a Sicilian against the young lion **IM Elham Abdulrauf (2519)** chose a solid Maroczy bind as his weapon. White first had a slight edge due to his thematic pressure against the backward black pawn at d6. Black after exchanging the dark-squared bishops however came up with counterplay on the dark squares, and after 30 moves had planted a knight on the strong f4 square. The knight later redirected to d4, and as white exchanged it black got a protected passed pawn. White probably should have been able to hold this, but black in the fifth hour opened both the queenside and the kingside with notable pressure. As white's center collapsed, he after 60 moves had to give up heavy material in the rook and queen endgame.



**Low vs Abdulrauf**

**FM Tanmay Chopra (2351)** versus **GM Erik Blomqvist (2523)** saw a long theory duel in a Slav opening. Both players castled long and avoided the most critical variations, after which a draw was suddenly agreed in an approximately balanced position after 27 moves. Chopra with this GM-draw of course moved one step closer to an IM-norm.

**FM Aksel Bu Kvaløy (2266)** versus **IM Jung Min Seo (2500)** was a key game for the norm chances of both players. It started up with a long Sicilian Sveshnikov duel, in which went for a kingside bayonet attack with h4–h5. The position however slowed down after some pieces were exchanged. White due to his pressure against the backward black pawn at d6 still was somewhat better when a draw was agreed after 19 moves.

20 year old Jung Min Seo is lagging behind schedule for his third GM norm following this draw against a much lower rated opponent, while 14 year old chess fighter Kvaløy is still ahead of schedule for his second IM norm.



**Kvaløy vs Seo**  
(Photo: Anniken Vestby)

**GM Tiger Hillarp (2513)** as white in a Sicilian against **FM Benny Aizenberg (2366)** chose a Rossolimo and got a small edge from the opening. After 28 moves the players had exchanged all the rooks plus the dark-squared bishops. Although white had weakened his kingside with g4 and h3, his fianchetto bishop at g2 combined with the queenside pawn majority gave him some pressure.

16 year old Aizenberg however defended actively and after 40 moves had reached a drawish endgame with bishop, knight and four pawns on each side. White no longer had a queenside pawn majority, but kept a slight pressure against black's b-pawn. Although the game lasted well into the sixth hour Aizenberg still defended actively, sacrificing a pawn to get counterplay by his passed c-pawn in the final endgame with bishop against knight. This worked out well as the Tiger with one minute left on the clock after 65 moves had to play accurately himself to stop the pawn. Aizenberg hangs on well as an IM norm candidate following this marathon draw against a GM.



**Hillarp vs Aizenberg**

**GM Bartosz Socko (2601)** versus **IM Hampus Sörensen (2448)** was a Scotch opening line black is unlikely ever to repeat, as he after 13 moves had his king stuck on f7 next to a disturbing white pawn at g7. Black more or less in desperation tried to sacrifice an exchange on the pawn, but white kept a strong initiative, and after 27 moves completed the attack against black's king – which was now in the thin air at f4!



**Socko vs Sörensen**

Indian **WGM Pallathur Nandhidhaa (2362)** is also in the run for an IM norm after she today won convincingly as white against **IM Shete Sammed (2454)**. White got no center advantage but kept an initiative from this Pirc opening, and this turned into a direct kingside attack following a tactical break with 27.f5! Black tried to sacrifice an exchange, but white still had all the better pieces. After the time control she could force off the queens to reach a totally won endgame with an extra exchange and pawn for white.



**Nandhidhaa vs Sammed**

**FM Jens Evang Ingebretsen (2345)** versus **GM Monika Socko (2440)** was a typical English fianchetto duel, pitting white queenside attack with b4–b5 against black's kingside counterplay with f5–f4. As both players knew how to defend here, the position remained approximately in balance through a slow steam of exchanges. Black appeared closer to winning chances with queen, two bishops and three pawns against queen, bishop, knight and three pawns after 50 moves, although his knight was well placed at f3. It remains a bit unclear whether black blundered or sacrificed a pawn when allowing a tactical 55.Nxd4! Anyway white's extra pawn made little difference in the remaining endgame with queens and opposite-coloured bishops, and this was drawn by repetition of checks just before move 70.

**IM Praaneeth Vuppala (2437)** versus **Shazil Shehzad (2212)** was a half open Ruy Lopez in which black could place a knight at f4 with a promising pressure against the white pawn at d3. Black not much later later won that pawn. As white would not admit to have lost a pawn, he following tactical exchanges ended up overstretched and lost a full piece. The unpredictable 16 year old Shehzad soon was a piece up in the rook and minor pieces endgame. Following this strong black win he is on schedule to make his second IM norm in this tournament.



**Vuppala vs Shehzad**

**Sanket Chakravarty (2327)** and **FM Lukas Dotzer (2416)** made a slightly original start with 1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 d5. Although white exchanged the pawn at d5, black following a later knight intervention at d4 after 16 moves had a center advantage due to a pawn at d4. Placing a bishop at g2 and a knight at e4, white however could play around the center pawn and got some advantage. Black proved able to exchange the fianchetto bishop and other dangers, and due to his better pawn structure he after 33 moves was slightly better in the endgame with queen, bishop and six pawns on each side. White still had a solid position and the game was drawn by a not unnatural repetition just before 40 moves.



**Chakravarty vs Dotzer**

**WIM Savitha Shri Baskar (2411)** came back on track following yesterday's double loss, today winning convincingly as black against **FM Saad Elmi (2321)**. The game was a Sicilian in which black's active pieces all the more came to dominate. Baskar later ran short of time on the clock but still was in command at the board, and just before 40 moves she neatly sacrificed an exchange at d6 to divert white's queen from the square e3 – after which 37... Rxf1+ > 38.Kxf1 Qe3+ 39.Kh1 Qc1+ and mate forced white to resign. Baskar is just behind schedule for a GM-norm and well ahead of schedule for her first IM-norm and her third WGM-norm.

**FM Emerik Roulet-Dubonnet (2215)** as white against **GM Stellan Brynell (2402)** started up with 1.Nf3 2.g3 and 3.Bg2. As black did the same moves, white accelerated in the center and transposed into a King's Indian fianchetto. Black came better as he was able to play a4 and exchanged the white pawn at b3, leaving white with isolated pawns at a3 and c4. White had some counterplay against black's backward pawn at d6. Two weak pawns obviously are more troublesome than one, and not unexpectedly black after forcing a queen exchange won the a- and c-pawns for his d-pawn. Black following this anyway was a pawn up with a close to winning position when he won two pieces for a rook with a tactical 29... f5!

**Morten Andersen (2156)** as white against **IM Mohammad Fahad Rahman (2396)** gave his English fianchetto another try. It did not work out too well this time, as the young IM from Bangladesh greedily snatched a pawn at c4 and proved able to defend it. White got some center compensation due to the pawns at d5 and e4. Still black a pawn up with two connected passed pawns on the queenside was much better when he at move 19 exchanged off white's fianchetto bishop at g2. A counterattack on the black queenside pawns was a natural plan from a white point of view, but it backfired badly: Black happily exchanged the queenside pawns for white's extra center pawn, as he afterwards got the much more active pieces and soon had a decisive attack against the white king.

Indian **FM Sambit Panda (2452)** and German **FM Bennet Hagner (2354)** made a fast start with a critical Vienna line in a Queen's Gambit, as black placed his bishop at b4 and snatched the pawn at c4. White had just enough compensation for the pawn due to his more active pieces and black's weakened kingside pawn structure. Both players appeared to be well prepared, and black probably made a good decision when he returned the pawn and exchanged this game down to an equal rook endgame. Draw agreed after 24 moves, as the players were about to reach a dead rook endgame with four kingside pawns on each side.



**Wallace vs Ohanyan**

**IM John-Paul Wallace (2384)** and **IM Emin Ohanyan (2434)** discussed a heavyweight Nimzo-Indian Rubinstein position, in which white got a space advantage after playing e4 and d5. Black after exchanging three sets of minor pieces had no problems finding useful squares for his remaining forces and had some pressure against the backward white pawn at c4.

Black definitely came better after placing a dominant knight at c5, and made a positionally interesting choice as he after a rook exchange took back at a5 with the pawn instead of the queen. Black later had

two a-pawns, but controlled the b-file and got a nice outpost for his rook at b4. White's all the more cramped defence of the c4-pawn collapsed as black could force a knight exchange, and the remaining rook endgame with two extra a-pawns was only tram transport for black.

**IM Kushagra Mohan (2400)** and **CM Sauat Nurgaliev (2286)** entered an exciting Sicilian Scheveningen attacking race, as white castled long while black left his king at e8. While black's attack halted white got a strong pressure following a thematic e5-break. White sacrificed two pawns, but kept a lasting attack after black at move 21 finally decided to castle short. With both players running short of time in a complex position, white around move 30 had a decisive attack against the black king at g6. Black however made it difficult for white to complete the attack. 31.Rf6+? turned out to be a mistake as black could now hide his king at h5 (!) and then put the knight in an active position at f5 before returning the king to g6. As black just before 40 moves looked about to consolidate his position with two extra pawns, white pulled the brake and sacrificed a rook at g4 to force a perpetual check with Qf6+-Qh8+-Qf6+. 12 year old Nurgaliev is hanging on as an IM norm candidate after surviving from a hot black sea in this game.

**IM Erik Hedman (2323)** versus **FM Edvin Trost (2398)** was another teammate duel for the Swedish IM. This one was a Sicilian Rossolimo opening in which both players spent a lot of time in the middle game. White castled long and after exchanging two sets of minor pieces demonstrated a superior understanding of this complex position. White's king turned out to be perfectly safe at b2, while the kingside gradually opened around the black king. Opposite-coloured bishops here also favoured the attacking player. White before 40 moves could finally open the g- and h-file, after which black had to give up a full piece to avoid mate.

The generation duel between **IM Moksh Amit Doshi (2397)** and **IM David Cummings (2318)** started up with a Catalan in which white kept the dark-squared bishop on the board, instead placing his knight in between at d2 when black checked at b4 with his bishop.

White first came slightly better with a double fianchetto, although black with a well protected pawn at d4 appeared healthy in the isolated pawn position after 20 moves. White again got a positional advantage following a tactical 24.e4! Later 27... Nc5? was overstretching from black as his pieces on the queenside soon came under pressure.

Cummings for the first time in this tournament had to resign after 35 moves in this game, as white had won a pawn and was about to win a piece.

**WGM Teodora Injac (2391)** as white against the talented Mongolian teenager **CM Chinguun Bayaraa (2203)** today made a modest start with 1.c4, but soon turned aggressive as she established a center advantage and tried to start a direct kingside attack with 5.h4.

Black stopped the pawn storm by playing 5... h5, although white's bishops at a3 and b3 gave her a promising initiative. The position became messy as white sacrificed an exchange to hit in at f7 with a pawn. Bayaraa for a while had an exchange for a pawn, but struggled with the much less safe king and a weak pawn at e6. Following a successful seventh rank intervention white during mutual time pressure won the black queen for a rook. As the smoke left after the time control white had a winning attack with queen, bishop, knight and two kingside pawns against two rooks, bishop and two kingside pawns.



**Injac vs Bayaraa**

**WIM Rucha Pujari (2195)** versus **IM Jonas Hacker (2445)** was a Catalan opening in which black exchanged the dark-squared bishops at d2 and hung on his extra c-pawn by placing his knight at a5. White finally succeeded in winning back the pawn at c3 in the rook endgame, which was drawn by a repetition after the first time control.



German veteran **Johannes Hentrich (2166)** winning against the almost 40 year younger **IM Mads Vestby-Ellingsen (2387)** was the most surprising result in the GM group today. White first came better from this Kalashnikov Sicilian, but then allowed black to play 24... f4, 25... f3 and 26... fxe2 with a promising attack. Vestby-Ellingsen in turn failed to find the best continuation as he ran short of time, allowing white to get counterplay on the queenside by establishing a passed pawn at c6.



**Hentrich vs Vestby-Ellingsen**

Around move 35–40 the position with queen, rook, bishop and four pawns on each side was in some kind of dynamic balance. Black tried to win on the kingside with h4 followed by an e3-break, but this backfired as black blundered positionally with 54... Qb5? Now 55.Ra7! forced off the rooks, after which white suddenly had a dangerous attack against the black king. Hentrich felt the pressure and took the safe road later, winning a piece and picking up all the remaining black pawns to win the game after 75 moves.

The Norwegian teenager duel between **FM Alexander Øye-Strømberg (2329)** and **Max Dahl (2152)** was a French-like Caro-Kann Advance line with 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5?! White played a bit loose and black was better for some moves after snatching a testimony pawn at b2 with his queen, although white won back the pawn at b7 a few moves later on. A draw was agreed in an approximately balanced position with queen, rook, bishop, knight and four pawns on each side after 29 moves. Dahl remarkably had 15 minutes left on the clock at that stage.

**FM Mahitosh Dey (2154)** went for a fianchetto set up as white in some kind of Slav opening against **Johannes von Mettenheim (2317)**. Black had got his bishop outside the pawn chain at g4, and white's try to kick it back with 9.h3 and 10.g4?! backfired as black came three pawns up following a tactical Bxg4. Black however had some challenges with his king at e7, and invited white back into the game as he returned all three pawns to exchange the queens and get the king around to c8. White following this had a slight initiative in the endgame with two rooks, knight and four pawns on each side after 28 moves. White however first blundered a pawn and then following tactical exchanges became too passive in the rook endgame. Following this black towards the end of the fourth hour was an hour behind on the clock, but more importantly had reached a won endgame with two connected passed pawns against one passed pawn on the board.



**Dey vs von Mettenheim**

The Indian duel between **Pankit Mota (2101)** and **Arhan Chethan Anand (2285)** started up with an Alekhine opening, leading first to an approximately balanced isolated pawn position. Transforming into a hanging pawns position by exchanging the knight at c3 did not work out too well from a black point of view, as white due to his pair of bishops and center advantage soon had a promising kingside attack coming up. Having transported his bad light-squared bishop around to an active position at c6, black still had good chances until he overlooked a tactical knight sacrifice with 21.Nxf7! The rest was cramp from a black point of view, as white within a few moves won back the piece with a massive attack.



**Mota vs Anand**

**Shadi Sian (2137)** as white against **FM Magnus Ermitsch (2277)** in the Slav again went for a safe, symmetric and rather unambitious exchange line. It worked out very well as black became too eager to break the symmetry and play for a win with a5 and e5. Highly talented Ermitsch again had too little time left on the clock when the position became tactical, and again lost a piece. Sian although also short of time used his chances efficiently, and well before 40 moves was a sound knight up in an endgame.



**Sian vs Ermitsch**

**Håkon Bentsen (2088)** versus **FM Sourath Biswas (2265)** was a Caro-Kann exchange line which became a bit tame from a black point of view. White after exchanging the dark-squared bishops had a pleasant plus due to the e-file and the better light-squared bishop. As white was allowed to exchange a knight at f5 at move 20, he even got the better pawn structure. Black tried to reduce the dangers to his kingside by exchanging off the queens at e5, but white soon could pick up the loose pawn at d5 with a small combination. The rook and knight endgame with an extra pawn for white later was a technical win due to his big majority with three against one pawn on the queenside.



**Bentsen vs Biswas**



**Chullikkad vs Myagmarsuren**  
(Photo: Anniken Vestby)

**CM Adithya Chullikkad (2259)** and **Evsuld Myagmarsuren (2139)** meanwhile discussed a Sicilian Najdorf position in which white castled long and black short. Black's pair of bishops did not help him much, as white had a strong knight at d4 blocking out black's bishop inside the pawn chain at b7. White soon had the better attack, and after the queens were exchanged it soon turned out that white's much more active pieces still gave him a decisive kingside attack. White before 30 moves opened the g-file and won an exchange, after which his passed h-pawn safely decided the endgame.



**Ytrestøyl vs Skotheim**

**Sindre Ytrestøyl (1987)** and **CM Andreas Skotheim (2228)** made a slightly original English start with 1.c4 b6. Black later had no problems equalizing on the queenside and in due time started a counterattack on the kingside with f5.

As all the minor pieces disappeared, black after 24 moves had a slight initiative with queen, two rooks and six pawns on each side. The e-file possession after 30 moves probably should not be enough to win for black. White lost it as his tricky pawn exchange plan with 27.c5? was too tricky and just lost a pawn. The queen and rook

position with a pawn more for black was very difficult from a white point of view. As white too helpfully exchanged off the queens black due to his connected passed pawns had an easily won rook endgame.

**Amadeus Hestvik Evenshaug (1930)** and **CM Sverre Lye (2212)** discussed a long Sicilian Sveshnikov variation. The conclusion after 25 moves was a balanced position with queen, rook, opposite-coloured bishops and seven pawns on each side. The players exchanged the rooks and then agreed a draw after 29 moves.

**CM Juan Gomez Aguirre (2206)** as white in a Semi-Slav against **Vetle Bjørge Strand (2026)** transposed into a Queen's Gambit by exchanging at d5. White went for an ambitious Pillsbury set up with Ne5 and f4. A counterpush with c5 is very thematic in these lines, but still was not well timed here as white soon won the key pawn at d5. The rest was a hard uphill walk from a black point of view, as white kept the more active pieces as well. White picked up a second pawn at b7 and anyway was winning when black after 30 moves stumbled into a d-file pin and lost a piece too.

**Shelev Oberoi (2226)** versus **Monika Machlik (2136)** somewhat unexpectedly became a rather unusual Classical French, in which white left the pawn waiting at e4 while black played c6 instead of c5. Black got the pair of bishops after white exchanged his dark-squared bishop at f6, and finally realizing the thematic c5 break at move 14 she had equalized. White however got the chance to play a delayed e5 under favourable



**Oberoi vs Machlik**

circumstances just afterwards. As black had already played h6, f6 followed by f5 here weakened the black kingside too much. White's violent bayonet attack with 19.g4, 20.Rg1 and 21.g5 within a few moves gave him a decisive attack. Oberoi finished the game in style as he after 26 moves sacrificed his queen at h7 to mate the king with a rook to h8.

**FM Mathias Unneland (2188)** as white in a Sicilian against his teammate **Martin Øksendal (2060)** took back at d4 with the queen, and then went his own way as he put the pawn at b3 and the bishop at a3 before castling long. It worked out fairly well, as white after an early exchange of the queens got a light pressure against the backward black pawn at d6. Black in a somewhat passive position creatively sacrificed an exchange at h8



**Unneland vs Øksendal**

and got some compensation due to his strong dark-squared bishop. White was an exchange up and had a passed h-pawn after the first time control, but unwilling to sacrifice his pawn at b4 he instead accepted a draw by repetition.

The Norwegian teenager duel between **Eivind Grunt Kreken (2144)** and **Peder Marcus Aamodt (2022)** started up with a classical Queen's Gambit exchange line. White however went for kingside activity with 15.Rae1 and 16.f3 instead of the traditional queenside minority attack.

Black got some counterplay thanks to his knight at c4 and defended fairly well when white finally made the center push with 28.e4.

As black could take the sting out of white's kingside attack by forcing a queen exchange at g4, the remaining position with rook, knight and five pawns against rook, bishop and five pawns after 32 moves was approximately balanced. White chose the wrong plan from the start of this endgame, allowing black to open the queenside for his rook and win a pawn. The remaining rook and minor piece endgame despite the reduced material was winning for black, as white could not for long defend his too advanced pawn at g5.



**Kreken vs Aamodt**

**CM Jack Mizzi (2049)** versus **Ben Samuel Groth Skaar (2103)** was another closed Catalan duel. White established a queenside space advantage by playing c5, but black soon took over the initiative after hitting back in the center with a thematic 18... e5.

White later went for dubious tactics, and so black won two minor pieces for a rook. White true enough got an active rook on the seventh rank, but

black coolly gave back two minor pieces for the rook to reach a much better endgame with queen, knight and six pawns against queen, bishop and five pawns. The minor piece endgame was just won for black, as his knight was obviously superior to white's bishop. Mizzi after losing two more pawns tried a tactical trick with 44... Ba6, but immediately stopped the clock as black protected the pawn at b7 instead of taking the bishop.



**Mizzi vs Skaar**

**Valentina Verbin (2071)** and **Sigurd Lye (1980)** started up with a Sicilian, but transposed into an Italian landscape as black put his e-pawn at e5. White got a promising light-square dominance after exchanging two sets of minor pieces, while black failed to come up with any disturbing counterplay. In the fourth hour Verbin succeeded in winning two pawns on the kingside and hunt the black king over to c8. Sigurd Lye fought on stubbornly, but white later had this under control and promoted one of her passed kingside pawns after 52 moves.



**Verbin vs Lye**

**Philip Rosol (2010)** and **Manmay Chopra (2113)** started up with a Black Knight's Tango, but later transposed into a classical King's Indian race in which white had pawns running on the queenside and black on the kingside. During mutual time pressure, white after 35 moves had a pawn at c7 and a queen at d8, but as black had firm control on the c8 square he still had a winning attack if confronting white's kingside pawns with 35...g3!



**Rosol vs Chopra**

Instead 35... Qe6 36.Nxg4 left the position rather chaotic as black came a piece up while white had the dangerous pawn at c7 and could check around the open black king. None of the players (very understandably) noted that white had an ice cold shower computer win with 45.f3!!, and so the game was drawn by perpetual check a few moves later on.

**Jiahao Eric Ji (1959)** versus **Saketh Pedagandham (2074)** was even another Sicilian attacking race in which white castled long and black short. None of the players pushed their luck too hard for an attack and the chances remained balanced into a drawish rook endgame. Here black however made an instructive mistake as he became too eager to win back a pawn at f4. Although the material later was in balance, black had to park both his rook and king in passive positions to defend the weak pawns at a7 and d6. White took some time to find a winning plan, but in the fifth hour he exchanged some pawns and marched in with the passed d-pawn.

**Michael Ermitsch (2047)** and **Jonas Hodneland Rasmussen (1976)** did research on a rare and closed Ruy Lopez line with 3... Nf6 and 4... Ne7. An apparently quiet position suddenly accelerated as white went for a sacrificial 14. Bxh6!? Black reportedly was fine to allow the bishop sacrifice but made a big mistake when accepting it, as white later soon got a winning attack on the open kingside. White first creatively sacrificed another exchange at e4 to strengthen the attack, but then a few moves later chickened out with a perpetual check. White a rook down actually had a winning attack, but to find it over the board true enough was not easy.



**Ermitsch vs Rasmussen**

**Martin Holten Fiskaaen (2040)** versus **Linus Sandstad (1912)** was another closed Catalan, in which white's pair of bishops gives him some advantage as the position opened. Black in a crumbling position took an active approach, first sacrificing a pawn for exchanges and then sacrificing an exchange to get back the pawn. White in the fourth hour following this had queen, rook and five pawns against queen, knight and five pawns. Although taking his time he won this rather safely.



**Fiskaaen vs Sandstad**

Finally, Austrian junior **Alexander Rosol (2076)** went for 2. d3 in a Caro-Kann as white against Norwegian junior **Ask Amundsen (1937)**. This somehow provoked black to sacrifice a pawn with 7... d5 8. exd5 e6 9. dxe6 Bxe6. White later kept the pawn into a rooks and minor pieces endgame in which black overlooked or underestimated tactics leaving white one exchange and three pawns up.



**Rosol vs Amundsen**

## Open Group

The Open saw another big and sudden change in the top: 20 year old **Sigurd Lauvås Gaure (1616)** lost the Sicilian opening duel against 13 year old **Rafe Rehman (1824)** and came two pawns down in a rooks and bishop endgame, but still won the game as he efficiently used the chance to activate his rooks and win by an instructive attack against the black king.

In the final position after 29.Bd1! black's king was in the air at f5, and unable to stop 30.Bg4 mate in any sensible way. Gaure lost to a much lower rated opponent in the first round, but has now won five games in a row.



Gaure vs Rehman

Another jumpy Sicilian battle was seen on the second board as **Sigurd Kittilsen (1822)** first was a sound exchange up with a winning endgame against **Dag Arild Andersen (1776)**, but some two hours later Andersen after winning back the exchange had a win within reach in a complex opposite coloured bishop endgame. The game was eventually drawn after 46 moves.



Kittilsen vs Andersen

Third board game between **Tim Spanton (1806)** and **Lukas Gåsland (1813)** was a third Sicilian battle, but this one was less jumpy as white was better most of the time and won well deserved.

Gaure following all this now is leading the Open alone at 5.0/7, half a point ahead of Spanton at 4.5/7. Obviously a winner of their meeting on the first board tomorrow will get a solid grip on the first prize before the two final rounds.

Top rated **Jon Arne Stokhaug (1843)** by the way had a clear advantage as white against **Leiv Ole Bollestad (1401)**, but still ended up with his fourth draw in a row and at 3.0/6 he seems out of the fight for top three. Many entertaining games but no big sensations on the lower boards in this group today (too).

4 photos by Anniken Vestby (credited) and the rest by Tom Eriksen