

FAGERNES CHESS INTERATIONAL 2023

THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT

7



GM Group

Round 7 became an exciting Good Friday inside our playing venue, and three out of the top five boards today got a winner. While the top board meeting between Turkish GM Vahap Sanal and Armenian GM Samvel Ter-Sahakyan ended up as an intensive four-hour draw, Indian GM Abhimanyu Puranik as black against Norwegian IM Elham Abdulrauf on the second board reached a won rook endgame after sacrificing a piece to get an armada of passed pawns.

Today's sensation on the top boards was IM Tor Fredrik Kaasen winning a great attacking game as white against the top rated Indian GM Sethuraman Sethuraman, leaving the undefeated young Norwegian well ahead of schedule for a GM norm.

While the fourth board meeting between Indian IM Kouvas Chatterjee and Lithuanian GM Eduardas Rozentalis was rather safe four-hour draw, Indian IM Adithya Mittal on the fifth board succeeded in defeating Swedish IM Linus Johansson in another firework attacking game.

Puranik following this now is leading alone at an amazing 6.0/7, half a point ahead of Ter-Sahakyan, Sanal, Mittal and Kaasen. Norwegian GM Frode Urkedal heads the bigger group of players at 5.0/6 since he today was able to defeat veteran GM Stellan Brynell as black in an instructive queen endgame.

Although we will wait for official announcements about title norm chances until knowing the results of round 8 and the pairings for round 9, the tournament still has a remarkable number of title candidates and some of them already seems to be more or less granted a norm result after round 9! We look forward to a very exciting finish of the tournament, as top board pairings for round 8 are Puranik white against Kaasen, Ter-Sahakyan white against Mittal and Urkedal white against Sanal.

GM Vahap Sanal (2582) as white against the always dangerous **GM Samvel Ter-Sahakyan (2613)** tried to slow it down with 1.d4 2.Nf3 3.c3. Black could and did equalize without any pressure. After both players castled short, black searched for an attack along the half open e- and f-files. With two sets of minor pieces exchanged, chances were approximately balanced on the board and clock as white hit back against the black center with 25.c4.

Tactical complications followed as white afterwards played f4 and gave up his rook for two pieces. The position with queen, bishop, knight and three pawns against queen, rook, and four pawns after the first time control appeared lively at the first look, but at the second look black had a safe perpetual check and no time for more.



Sanal vs Ter-Sahakyan

IM Elham Abdulrauf (2519) versus **Abhimanyu Puranik (2599)** was a half-open Ruy Lopez in which white first apparently had got an edge. The wind however soon turned as white underestimated the dangers with 21.Qd4? c5, and then after 22.bxc5 dxc5 much too loosely sacrificed his center pawns with 23.Qc3?.

Puranik in a messy position repeated twice, but then sacrificed his knight to get three connected passed pawns on the queenside. White tried to sacrifice back material, but ended up in a dead lost rook endgame with two pawns extra for black. Elham has a performance just above 2500 following this loss and for now is out of the run for a GM norm.



Abdulrauf vs Puranik

IM Tor Fredrik Kaasen (2462) and **GM Sethuraman Sethuraman (2639)** had the second Norwegian-Indian duel on the top boards today, and this gave a more or less sensational win for the 16th rated player against the 1st rated. The start was a rather unconventional Catalan in which black put his dark-squared bishop at d6 and exchanged his knight at c3, leaving white with a notable space advantage. Kaasen showed no respect for the much higher rated opponent and went for a promising but risky piece sacrifice with 18.Bxh6! Sethuraman spent much time without finding the most critical defence, while Kaasen in an inspired mood threw more petrol on the fire by a knight sacrifice at g5. Following 28.Rd5! white had sacrificed two minor pieces for four pawns and offered his rook for the black knight to take. Sethuraman however had less than a minute on the clock and even with an hour he would not have been able to save his much too airy king at g8. Sethuraman stopped the clock after 31.f7+! as he was about to lose his queen without solving the problem with his king. Sethuraman after this second loss seems out of the fight for top three, while Kaasen is shared second in the tournament and well ahead of schedule for his second GM norm. 1.0/2 from now for sure will be enough for a norm and even 0.5/2 might well do with a high rated last round opponent. Black against Puranik in the next round however will be another critical test

Estonian **GM Eduardas Rozentalis (2504)** gave his positional Bogo-Indian opening another test as black against **IM Koustav Chatterjee (2520)**. It worked out fairly well as black exchanged some pieces, temporarily gave up a pawn and after 20 moves could recover the pawn at c5 with a balanced rooks and knight endgame. After 24 moves the endgame with two rooks, knight and five pawns on each side appeared drawish, although black had half an hour and white four minutes left on the clock. Draw agreed after 38 moves as the players were about to pass the time control and reach a dead drawn rook endgame with three kingside pawns each.

Both players of course can be very well satisfied with their result so far. Chatterjee is around schedule for a GM norm and this can be very important as he reportedly has two safe norms plus one which probably not will be fulfill all demands about opponents' federations. He will however still need 1.5/2 for a norm here.

IM Aditya Mittal (2505) versus **IM Linus Johansson (2463)** was a Sicilian Rossolimo in which the bishop was exchanged at c6, leaving black a pair of bishops and white the better pawn structure. White came slightly better after exchanging the dark-squared bishops at h6. Black creatively sacrificed an exchange at d5, eliminating white's disturbing knight and winning a pawn at d3. After 37 moves the position still was high voltage with queen, two rooks, knight and two pawns against queen, rook, bishop, knight and three pawns.



Mittal vs Johansson

The white king at g3 looked more open than the black king at g8. 38--- Qd4? however was a fatal time trouble blunder from black, as white after 39.Qc7! suddenly had decisive threats along the seventh rank. Black in desperation tried to sacrifice the queen, but white's king demonstrated the route to escape the remaining rook checks without blundering the queen to a knight fork. Mittal can make a GM norm with 1.5/2 and maybe also with 1.0/2 for the final two rounds, but this is less important as he has anyway qualified for the title.

GM Erik Blomqvist (2523) versus **IM Semen Mitusov (2412)** was a London system duel, in which black after 12 moves had the better pawn structure and two bishops for two knights. White reportedly still was better in this rather closed position, as he could park a dominating knight at e5 and had some chances for a kingside attack. This somewhat mysterious chess game got a somewhat mysterious end after 22 moves, as black snatched a pawn at a2 with his bishop and offered a draw, which white accepted. Computers evaluate the position as about equal but it definitely had a lot of possibilities for both players, as white was about to play hxg6 while black threatened to take a second pawn at b2.



Blomqvist vs Mitusov

Blomqvist was dissatisfied with his last move and unsure about the position with little time left, hence he was happy to accept. Mitusov has a solid plus result, but should have won round six or seven to be in the GM norm run.

IM Mohammad Fahad Rahman (2396) and **GM Bartosz Socko (2601)** meanwhile started up with a lively Queen's Indian fianchetto, in which black put his bishop in an active position at a6. The bishop was taken by a white rook as a part of later tactical exchanges, but white had no escape for the rook as black had pawns at a7 and b6 plus a bishop at a5. A draw was suddenly agreed upon black's suggestion after 23 moves, in a complex position which the computers give as better for white despite black's two extra pawns. The queens and the knights however were about to be exchanged, and the computer's main lines leads to a rook and bishop endgame which due to the opposite-coloured bishops would have been a likely draw.

The Scandinavian duel between **GM Stellan Brynell (2402)** and **GM Frode Urkedal (2527)** started up with a Nimzo-Indian-like Queen's Gambit in which black placed his bishop at b4. As black exchanged the above mentioned bishop at c3 and white his dark-squared bishop at f6, the players reached a typical position from a Queen's Gambit exchange line, in which white had a minority attack on the queenside and black some chances for an attack on the kingside.



Brynell vs Urkedal

As black threatened a mate with 20... Be4, white chose the slightly weakening 21.f3 instead of 21.Nf1. With the bishops exchanged, black soon had pressure against the backward white pawn at e3. 32.c7? although tricky was a mistake, as black could play 32... Rxb3 33.c8+Q Kh7 with an extra pawn. Brynell apparently resigned a bit early in the queen endgame, as he was only one pawn down and black's pawn still was at b5. White however was about to lose one more pawn and due to black's safer king had more or less no counterplay.

IM Jung Min Seo (2500) and **WGM Pallathur Nandhidhaa (2362)** had a very exciting and rather well-played King's Indian battle, although it eventually ended up with a draw. White castled long to go for a pawn storm on the kingside, and apparently had the better position before a tactical chaos started with 19.bxa6 Nxc3 20.Qxb7 Nxd1. As the smoke finally left some ten minutes later, black probably was slightly better with queen, two rooks and two pawns against queen, rook, knight and four pawns. White however had two connected passed pawns on the queenside, and after the queens were exchanged white was closer to a win in the passed pawns race. The mess finally ended with a draw by repetition after 63 moves – black now had a passed pawn at g3 while white had two at a6 and b5. Obviously Nandhidhaa strengthened further her chances for an IM norm with this result, and 1.0/2 probably now will be enough. Seo now definitely has lost his final GM norm out of sight for this week.

GM Raja Rithvik Rajavaram (2472) versus **FM Tanman Chopra (2351)** was a very rare Semi-Slav opening line with 5.Qd3 dxc4 6.Qxc4 b5. Black's way to handle this probably improved Meran was not the best, as white after 16 moves had got both the pair of bishops and a space advantage. Following a queen exchange white also took control over the d-file by castling long. Black obviously hoped to scrape a draw due to opposite-coloured bishops in the rook and bishop arising after 30 moves. Drawing chances due to opposite-coloured bishops however are overrated for endgames also including rooks, and white's two extra queenside pawns made this one a safe win. Chopra despite this loss is well in the run for an IM norm, and 1.0/2 probably will be enough for him as well.

WIM Savitha Shri Baskar (2411) versus **FM Aksel Bu Kvaløy (2266)** was a long, dry and important Ruy Lopez duel, demonstrating very good positional understanding by both these teenagers. Following a stream of sound exchanges white between moves 20 and 30 balanced safely on a wire into a dead drawn position with queen, rook and three kingside pawns on each side. Black at move 30 exchanged off the queens and offered a draw, which was of course accepted. Both players after the game could be well satisfied as they have very good title norm prospects. Kvaløy with a performance of 2560 for sure will make an IM-norm with 0.5/2, and even 0.0/2 might be sufficient if he gets a higher rated opponent in the last round. Even a GM-norm can be possible, although this will require at the very least 1.5/2 in the final rounds. Baskar with a performance on 2525 will need 2/2 for a GM-norm, but the third WGM-norm for all practical purposes is granted and 0.5/2 almost certainly will do for an IM-norm.



Baskar vs Kvaløy

Another highly dramatic Norwegian-Indian duel was played between **Shazil Shehzad (2212)** and **WGM Vantika Agrawal (2407)**, although this one got a winner in the end. The start was a Sicilian Najdorf in which white played inaccurately, allowing black to snatch a testimony pawn at b2 and then withdraw the queen with a sound extra pawn. White continued to play loose as he castled into a pin in the diagonal a7-g1, and this following a cool 20... e5! won a knight for black. White of course immediately went for a counterattack in the f-file against black's somewhat shaky kingside. Black however survived this by giving up his queen for white's two rooks. Black's king later remained somewhat airy, but his two connected rooks and bishop soon outnumbered white's lone queen in the endgame. Agrawal has done very well the last months and winning this game as black she for all practical purposes has completed an IM-norm two rounds before the end!



Shehzad vs Agrawal

Even a GM norm is possible if she can make 1.5/2 in the final rounds. Losing this game as white obviously was a set back for young Shazil, but he can still have chances for an IM-norm if he is able to hit back in round eight. 1.5/2 probably will do for him as well.

IM Moksh Amit Doshi (2397) versus **GM Tiger Hillarp (2513)** was a positional Anti-Meran line of the Semi-Slav opening, in which white first kept a slight initiative after the c- and d-pawns were exchanged. The fight here intensified after the queens were exchanged, as black in the fourth hour snatched white's loose pawn at h5 with his knight. White got enough compensation due to his pair of bishops and active rook at c6. During mutual time pressure white had the more easy position to play, and as black became too passive white after the time control had a strong initiative. The GM anyway was in deep trouble when he blundered by allowing the IM to finish the game with a very elegant knight maneuver: 46.Nh6!, 47.Nxf7, 47.Nh8! and 48.Ng6 mate!



Doshi vs Hillarp

Estonian **GM Kaido Kulaots (2494)** hit back from yesterday's lost game with a patient working day win as white against Serbian **WGM Teodora Injac (2391)**. Black probably was fine after exchanging the queens and two sets of minor pieces in this Scotch opening. Black however had to take care of his isolated pawn at a5 and white's more active rooks put a slight pressure upon black's kingside pawns. After the first time control the endgame with two rooks, one bishop and six pawns on each side should be a draw, but black had a more difficult position now and soon came under pressure on the clock too. White in the early sixth hour was able to establish passed pawns at e5 and f6, and later had a simple win in the rook endgame after forcing an exchange of the bishops.



Kulaots vs Injac

The Scandinavian duel between **IM Hampus Sörensen (2448)** and **FM Jens Evang Ingebretsen (2345)** was another six-hour duel, although this one started with an Italian opening and ended with a draw. White castled long but got no real attack on the kingside, and the position after 32 moves had balanced into a drawish endgame with queen, knight and six pawns on each side. With two rather open kings the position now became rather tactical. White for some moves in the sixth hour was a pawn up with an advantage. The position still was very difficult to win. Black in the end was closer to something as he had succeeded in establishing a very disturbing passed pawn at e3. Draw agreed by repetition of checks after 70 moves. Ingebretsen is doing fine, but probably should have won this game to save his norm chances.

Polish **GM Monika Socko (2440)** as white against the young Indian **Sakret Chakravarty (2327)** went for a positional Queen's pawn fianchetto without c4. It worked out fairly well as white after an early queen exchange kept a pressure and then won a pawn. The double rook endgame and the single rook endgame later both were in the borderline area between a win for white and a draw, as white had an extra pawn at a2 in addition to four kingside pawns for both players.



Socko vs Chakravarty

These rook endgame usually are drawn if the defender can place his rook in an active position behind the opponent's passed pawn, which was the case here. The margin still was very small. As Socko in the end tested out the critical plan of sacrificing her a-pawn to exchange rooks, it turned out that passive defence would have lost the pawn endgame for black – while active defence saved the draw with a one tempo margin. White in the end played on for a few moves with queen and h-pawn against queen and h-pawn, but black after 83 moves could exchange the final pieces and sign in a well-deserved draw.

Chakravarty has played opponents above 2400 for rounds 2–7 and now at 4.0/7 he will make an IM-norm with 1.5/2 in the final rounds. Even 1.0/2 might work out with a high rated last-round opponent.

The German veteran **Johannes Hentrich (2166)** sensationally defeated a nearly 40 year younger IM yesterday, and today for a long time did fine as black against **IM Emin Ohanyan (2434)**. White held only a very slight edge from this Bogo-Indian opening, and computers still gave the position with queen, rook, bishop, knight and six pawns on each side as equal after 25 moves. White however still had a center advantage and as the young lion tested out 26.d5!?, the natural 26.--- exd5? turned out to be a serious misunderstanding. White after 27.e5! suddenly had a direct attack on the black king, but he in turn failed to find the best continuation. Although white in the queen and minor piece endgame was allowed to hit in at g6 he had no clear continuation of the attack afterwards, hence black was much too respectful and resigned much too early at move 33.

FM Benny Aizenberg (2366) versus **Zhen Yu Cyrus Low (2425)** was another young lion duel and another messy Sicilian attacking race. Black suddenly had a decisive attack as he was allowed to hit in with a strong and elegant 25.--- Na3+! Running short of time in a complex position he however allowed the white king to survive as he played the rather mysterious 28.--- Bb4? instead of winning back the knight with 28.--- axb3! Although black within a few more moves won back the knight at b3, the position now was highly unclear and not without risks for black. Low pulled the brake abruptly and with style as he sacrificed a rook at b3, with the idea of promoting in a new rook he also sacrificed at a1 – with the idea of forcing a perpetual check with his queen and bishop. A draw here still was a good result for Aizenberg, as 1.5/2 from now on probably will be enough for an IM norm.

FM Lukas Dotzer (2416) versus **IM Erik Hedman (2323)** was a Sicilian Maroczy bind in which white had some more space and played for a win with a tactical 20.c5!? With both players running seriously short of time for 40 moves, black defended very well and walked around on the water in a position with many active pieces. As Dotzer ran down to seconds on the clock 29.Rxa3?! was mistaken and 31.Rd1? was a blunder, as black after Bb7! 32.Qb6 had a winning attack with 32... Rc2! or a clear advantage with 32... Ne5?! Hedman also short of time instead took the safe exchange road with 32... Bxa6?, after which the game soon was drawn by a relatively sound repetition.



Dotzer vs Hedman

IM Shete Sammed (2454) as white against **CM Adithya Chullikkad (2259)** went for some kind of delayed Veresov system with 1.d4 2.Nf3 3.Nc3 and 4.Bf4. Black for the first 15 moves played sensible and after 15... exd4 16.exd4 had some counterplay in the e-file. Then black however just collapsed, very strangely allowing white to intervene at d6 with his queen and take the black pawn at c6. As white afterwards put a bishop at b5 black tried to be consequent by sacrificing a rook, but then he admitted the failure for himself and the rest of the world by resigning.



Sammed vs Chullikkad

CM Andreas Skotheim (2228) and **FM Sambit Panda (2452)** entered a Caro-Kann and started to exchange off pieces. After 30 moves they had already reached a drawish endgame with queen, bishop and seven pawns against queen, knight and seven pawns. Exchanging the queens too at e5 reportedly was acceptable from white. If so he however immediately chose the wrong plan in the minor piece endgame afterwards, as black within a few more moves suddenly had established a passed pawn at b3 which, together with the more active king and minor piece, soon brought him a full point.

Shelev Oberoi (2226) as white in a Sicilian against **IM Prraneeth Vuppala (2437)** went for 2.c3, but then after 2... e5 soon accelerated for a direct kingside attack with 5.Ng5 and 7.Qh5. Although original, it looked a bit dubious, as black soon could castle short and take over the initiative with 14... f5! Later 19.f4? was too weakening for white's kingside, and black's all the more active pieces within five more moves gave him a dangerous attack. White stopped the clock as black with heavy threats coming up against the white king at g1 coolly answered 32.Rxe8+ with Kf7!

FM Emerik Roulet-Dubonnet (2215) versus **IM Kushagra Mohan (2400)** was a Dutch Leningrad in which black after 21 had taken over the initiative with e5–e4. By tactical means he had won a pawn and installed a dominating bishop at the d3 outpost. White tried to sacrifice an exchange at the d3 monster, but resigned as he a few moves later was just an exchange down in a hopeless endgame. Mohan later also won the slow blitz tournament and obviously had a terrific Friday.

The young teenagers **FM Bennet Hagner (2354)** and **CM Juan Gomez Aguirre (2206)**

discussed an open Ruy Lopez, in which black had all the more active rooks and bishops after the queens and knights all were exchanged. White soon won a pawn and obviously was much better after 30 moves, as the best thing to said about black's position was that he so far was able to block white's extra passed pawn at a5.

White later probably should not have allowed black to activate his pieces by sacrificing an exchange, as the endgame with two rooks and two pawns against rook, bishop and three pawns first gave black fair drawing chances. Exchanging off the rook however was a serious misunderstanding from black. White very soon picked up black's passed c-pawn and later had a trivial win with rook and two connected kingside pawns against bishop and two scattered kingside pawns.



Hagner vs Gomez Aguirre

FM Saad Elmi (2321) as white against **Morten Andersen (2156)** turned down the invitation to an open Sicilian theory duel, and instead went positional with 3.Nc3. The d5 outpost and better pawn structure later gave with a slight plus, although black had some counterplay in the f-file. It remains unclear whether white at move 28 overlooked that black could win a pawn by 28... Rxc4! White could and did win back the pawn at e5, but black now had got the help needed to reach a drawn rook endgame. No norm chances for any of the players, but still a remarkable performance above 2400 for 62 year old Andersen as the oldest player in this field.

The young teenager duel between German **Johannes von Mettenheim (2317)** and Norwegian **Shadi Sian (2137)** was a Catalan in which white first had a light pressure and then by tactical means could pick up a pawn at b7. White consequently got a sound extra passed pawn at d5 in the upcoming queen and rook endgame. Black proved able to exchange the d-pawn in the rook endgame and had some drawing chances after the first time control. White lagged half an hour behind on the clock but always had a sound pawn more on the board, and in the fifth hour succeeded in making a decisive rook intervention against black's kingside pawns.

CM Sauat Nurgaliev (2286) and **Pankit Mota (2101)** had an interesting French Winawer duel, in which white's pair of bishops and pressure against the backward pawn at e6 have him a pleasant edge after the queens were exchanged. Black was still in the game until a much too careless 25... a5 allowed white to open the e-file and make a decisive seventh rank intervention with 26.Bxf5! exf5 27.Re7+. Black proved able to exchange off the very disturbing rook, but white's passed h-pawn now became very strong and soon decided in the rook and minor piece endgame. 12 year old Nurgaliev can still make an IM-norm with 2/2 following this win, and even 1.5/2 might do with a strong last round opponent.

Max Dahl (2152) versus **IM Jonas Hacker (2455)** was another Sicilian duel, although this became a rather positional one as both players castled short. 18.e5?! here was just weakening, and black after exchanging off white's fianchetto bishop at g2 kept an initiative into the rook and minor piece endgame. Probably white somehow should have been able to save the endgame with rook, bishop and five pawns against rook, knight and five pawns. It was however truly unpleasant as black had both the best rook and the best minor piece. 40.Rd2? was a decisive time trouble mistake, as black after inserting 40... Nf6+! could exchange of the rooks and make a decisive king intervention via f5.

The Scandinavian junior duel between **FM Edvin Trost (2398)** and **Ben Samuel Groth Skaar (2103)** was another Rossolimo Sicilian, in which an early exchange at c6 left white with the better pawn structure and black with the pair of bishops. Black later was able to exchange one of the c-pawns, but white kept a slight pressure after black felt forced to exchange his light-squared bishop for a knight at c4. The position with queen, rook, knight and six pawns against queen, rook, bishop and six pawns after 25 moves appeared drawish. White left a repetition to play on for a win, and was rewarded as black soon allowed an a-file intervention with an overwhelming pressure against the key pawn at b6.

The generation duel between **Martin Øksendal (2060)** and **IM John-Paul Wallace (2384)** was a long Sicilian Kalashnikov theory duel. Afterwards black took over the initiative, and definitely got the upper hand as white either blundered or too loosely sacrificed his pawn at d5. Black first allowed more counterplay than necessary in the queens and rook position, but he always was a pawn up. Black's position should be winning as he at move 42 intervened on the sixth rank with his rook, establishing two passed pawns at d5 and e4. White still resigned a bit early, as he was only one pawn down and had fairly active heavy pieces.



Øksendal vs Wallace

Veteran **IM David Cummings (2318)** as white against **WIM Rucha Pujari (2195)** meanwhile started up with 1.c4, but soon transposed into a Queen's Gambit exchange line. As black played a weakening b5 on the kingside, white efficiently countered in the center with 16.e4 and 18.e5. Sacrificing a piece at h3 was a bit desperate from a black point of view. Cummings reportedly played somewhat inaccurately afterwards, but due to his passed b-pawn he still succeeded winning the endgame with rook, bishop and one pawn against rook and three pawns.



Cummings vs Pujari

Peder Marcus Aamodt (2022) and **FM Alexander Øye-Strømberg (2329)** agreed a draw after 20 moves in a Nimzo-Indian Rubinstein line without double pawns. White had a pair of bishops plus a passed pawn at d5 and could well have played on, but true enough he would have a long and thorny road to any winning chances.

CM Sverre Lye (2212) went for 3.Bb5+ and later entered a Maroczy bind as white in a Sicilian against **Valentina Verbin (2071)**. 14.f4? however was a blunder as black could win a pawn by a tactical 14... bxc4! White in the fourth hour was in a crisis, as he had two pawns less and his only remaining pawns were two isolated and weak g-pawns. Sverre Lye however fought on well and during mutual time pressure succeeded in getting a disturbing counterplay along the seventh rank. Verbin after the time control found nothing better than returning both her extra pawns. The remaining rook and minor piece endgame with two kingside pawns left on each side was soon agreed a draw.



Lye vs Verbin

CM Chinguun Bayaraa (2203) versus **Amadeus Hestvik Evenshaug (1930)** was another Queen's Gambit with Bf4, although the position here became more traditional as the white bishop continued via g5 to h4. Although black kept a material balance, white before move 20 established a dangerous passed pawn at c5. Black spent much time but defended well for the next ten moves, and after 30 moves still had fair drawing chances with two rooks, bishop and four pawns against two rooks, knight and four pawns. As white intervened on the eighth rank with 31.Rb8, black however should have used his chance to place the rook behind the passed pawn with 31... Rxb8 32.Bxb8 Rc2! Instead 31... Ra8? was a big mistake as white could now play 32.Rxa8 Rxa8 33.c6. Black resigned instead of making his move 36, realizing that he had to sacrifice his last piece for the passed pawn.

IM Mads Vestby-Ellingsen (2387) and **Evsuld Myagmarsuren (2139)** discussed a Semi-Slav transposing into a Queen's Gambit as white exchanged at d5. White first got a promising Pillsbury set up for a kingside attack with Ne5 and f4. Black's plan with c5-c4 did little to challenge this. Running short of time white however lost the thread, and black made a good practical decision as he sacrificed an exchange for white's dark-squared bishop and a pawn. Black and his bishop got promising compensation for the exchange and then 39.f5? was positional blunder. Black suddenly got two bishops, one knight and two pawns for two rooks – with an easy win as white had the much more exposed king.



Vestby-Ellingsen vs Myagmarsuren
(Photo: Anniken Vestby)

The teenager duel between **Arhan Chethan Anand (2285)** and **Martin Holten Fiskaaen (2040)** saw another Nimzo-like Queen's Gambit duel with a black bishop at b4. White exchanged at d5 and bravely/greedily snatched a pawn at c7 with his queen. Black's compensation soon vanished as he after exchanging queens was too helpful to exchange his active knight at e4 as well. Trying to be consequent black sacrificed another loose pawn, but he got more or less no compensation for this pawn either. As black tried to complicate things by sacrificing an exchange, white immediately returned the exchange to reach a safely won rook endgame with two pawns more.



Anand vs Fiskaaen

The German-Norwegian teenager duel between **FM Magnus Ermitsch (2277)** and **Sindre Ytrestøyl (1987)** started up as another French-like Caro-Kann with 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5?! White played much too careless from the opening, hence black after exchanging the light-squared bishop and taking a pawn at b4 with the dark-squared bishop was clearly better after 20 moves. Black appeared close to winning as he in the fourth hour could pick up the white pawns at d4 and f4 with his queen. 28.--- Rc5?? however was a blunder, after which white with 29.Rd4! suddenly was about to win a piece. Black's idea to give up the queen for other pieces with 29.--- Qc1? instead was creative, but would have lost the queen for only a rook if white had found the correct 30.Ng1! As white short of time instead went for 30.Nd2? black was invited back into the game again. As he in turn missed his final chance with 33.--- Re1!, white after all reached a won endgame with queen versus a badly coordinated rook and bishop.

Sourath Biswas (2265) versus **Jiahao Eric Ji (1959)** saw a rare London system version in which white put his bishop at b5 and exchanged the d-pawn at c5. Following early exchanges of the queens and knights, the endgame with one rook, two bishops and six pawns on each side first was rather equal and blocked. Exchanging the light-squared bishop with 32.--- Ba6? however was a decisive mistake, as white afterwards could set his queenside pawn majority in motion and create a passed c.pawn which soon decided.



Biswas vs Ji

Monika Machlik (2136) and **FM Mathias Unneland (2188)**

discussed a rare Modern line in which black almost immediately gives up his fianchetto bishop at c3 to leave white with a backward double pawn at c3 and c4. Although white got a pair of bishops and a space advantage, black with the center closed apparently had some promising attacking prospects on the kingside. As white just before 20 moves came up with some counterplay in her half-open b-file, Unneland however soon pulled the brake and offered a draw by repetition. Machlik following this draw is still in the run for a WIM-norm, although she needs a win in round eight.



Machlik vs Unneland

Vetle Bjørge Strand (2026) versus **FM Mahitosh Dey (2154)** was a closed Ruy Lopez in which two sets of minor pieces and no pawns were exchanged before move 22. White due to his pair of bishops had the slightly better long term perspectives, but as these perspectives were very long term he instead accepted a draw by repetition right away.

Jonas Hodneland Rasmussen (1976) and **Eivind Grunt Kreken (2144)**

discussed a London system in which black no longer risking an h-file attack was fine to exchange the dark-squared bishops at g3 after white had castled short. Chances remained about balanced, although black had no problems in the queen and rooks position after exchanging one more knight at g3 and a bishop at f3. The game for a while circled around the isolated black pawn at d4, but the pawn was about as much an asset as a weakness, and the game around move 40 appeared a likely draw.



Rasmussen vs Kreken

As white played 43.f4!?, 43.--- Qe7 however was a grave blunder as 44.Rh3! with the violent threat of 45.Rh8 now suddenly was very dangerous. Black in desperation tried to create an escape route for his king with 44.--- f5, but white completed the attack efficiently and won heavy material within three more moves.

Manmay Chopra (2113) as white against **Michael Emitsch (2047)** went for a rather untheoretical Sicilian with 2.Nc3 and 3.g3. The opening still saw some tactical exchanges, leading after 23 moves to an endgame with rook, bishop and six pawns against rook, knight and six pawns. White held a slight initiative, but black came up with some counterplay. White eventually before 40 moves won a pawn, but black could more or less force a dead drawn rook endgame with one versus two kingside pawns. White after all was a pawn up and continued until move 79, but still of course got nowhere.



Chopra vs Emitsch

The teenager duel between **Sigurd Lye (1980)** and **CM Jack Mizzi (2049)** was a Caro-Kann exchange line in which the queens early were exchanged at b3. White afterwards first had a slight initiative, although black later came up with some counterplay on the queenside. Reportedly white due to his better pawn structure still was slightly better when a draw was agreed by a repetition after the first time control, although it still would have been a long and thorny road for him to reach any winning chances.



Lye vs Mizzi

Saketh Pedagandham (2074) as white didn't want a Benoni against **Philip Rosol (2010)**, and went for a solid and rather unambitious 3.e3. Both players at this stage of their tournament were eager to exchange pieces. After 26 moves white offered a draw as the players were about to reach a dead drawn endgame with one bishop and three kingside pawns for each of them.

Finally, The Norwegian junior duel between **Linus Sandstad (1912)** and **Ask Amundsen (1937)** became a much more ambitious and exciting Benoni duel. White first came better due to his pressure against black's backward d6 pawn, after placing a bishop at f4 and redirecting a knight to c4. Withdrawing the knight to a3 and exchanging light-squared bishops at e2 however was a bit tame, and afterwards the e5-break here did not give white much. Black after 25 moves had realized his



Sandstad vs Rosol

counterbreak on the queenside with b5 and balanced the chances. Although tempting, a knight intervention at the c6 outpost here gave white no real attack. Later losing his key pawn at d5, white still found enough counterplay to reach a drawn rook endgame with three pawns on each side. With 14 minutes against 2 minutes on the clock white however stumbled in the very last hurdle, when the only pawns left were a white one at g6 and a black one at b3. While 53.Rb5 or 53.Rg3 both would have been sufficient for a safe draw, the much too careless waiting move 53.Rg4?? immediately lost after 53... Ra2! intending 54... b2 and 55... Ra1+ – as white had nowhere to hide his king at g1.

Håkon Bentsen (2088) for work-related reasons had requested a walk over draw in round 7. Following this **Alexander Rosol (2076)** also got a walk over draw. Both are in good health and will be back for round 8 tomorrow.

Open Group



Spanton vs Gaure

This year's Open seems to be changing suddenly on a regular basis, and after round 7 again has a new player leading alone. The fifth rated English representative **Tim Spanton (1806)** has recovered completely from his unexpected second round loss. Today Spanton efficiently used his chance as the young surprise man **Sigurd Lauvås Gaure (1616)** became overambitious in an exciting rook and minor pieces endgame on the top board.

13 year old **Rafe Rehman (1824)** on the second board soon hit back from an inferior opening and anyway was a pawn up with a promising position when his veteran opponent **Karim Ali (1773)** overlooked white's tactical win with 29.Nf7!

Third board meeting between **Sondre Stai (1722)** and **Sigurd Kittilsen (1822)** was an exciting Sicilian race which white won following a too creative queen sacrifice from black.

Rune Kleiven Rynning (1681) also efficiently used his chance as opponent **Erlend Entner (1571)** made an advanced tactical blunder in a tense Italian duel on the fourth board.

The white players remarkably made a 5–0 score on the top boards in the Open, as **Dag Arild Andersen (1776)** on the fifth board won by a late blooming kingside attack against **David Hellesøy (1606)**.



Gilsdottir vs Ji (front) and Lahlum vs Evenshaug (back)

29 year old **Sara Gilsdottir (1422)** is a late-blooming chessplayer and this week has confirmed her reputation as strongly underrated, but she still was outplayed by the highly talented 11 year old **Jiabao Eivind Ji (1704)** this round.

The main candidates for the best woman prize following this are the organizer's solid sister **Ida Lahlum (1628)**, undefeated at 4.5/7 as she today safely won a long endgame against **Ståle Jan Evenshaug (1291)** – and the heavily underrated 15 year old Mongolian **Bilguun Bayaraa (1267)**. Sister Bayaraa today won by a typical Sicilian counterattack as black against **Jan Ove Odden (1551)**, and following this also is at 4.5/7. Gilsdottir at 3.5/7 however is not out of the run for best woman prize, and neither is capable young **Elma Selvik (1623)** despite a disappointing result so far.

Top rated **Jon Arne Stokhaug (1843)** by the way got his first game win as black against underrated **Henrik Nome (1073)**, but at 4.0/7 Stokhaug still is not in the run for the top three prizes.

Spanton now is leading alone at 5.5/7, ahead of Rehman, Andersen Stai, Rynning and Gaure at 5.0.

Top board pairings promising an exciting round 8 now are Rehman white against Spanton, Rynning white against Andersen and Gaure white against Stai. Notably, despite the many talented young players in the Open, top two in the ranking after seven rounds are both veterans as Spanton is 66 and 60 year old Andersen has the best buchholz among the players at 5.0/7.

1 photo by Anniken Vestby (credited) and the rest by Tom Eriksen