

THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT 9



GM Group

The final hours of the top boards in this GM group became intense, but rather short. Second rated GM S. L. Narayanan of India at 6.5/8 before the last round was the first player to have an unshared lead. His game as black against GM Sethuraman Sethuraman on the first board was drawn before three hours by a rook sacrifice leading to a perpetual check for white.

Third rated GM Anton Demchenko, lurking half a point behind Narayanan before the last round, efficiently used his chance as an all the more powerful initiative turned into a won endgame as white against Norwegian GM Frode Urkedal. The very strong India team, including five GMs above 2600, still snatched two thirds of the top three prizes, as GM Abhimanyu Puranik shortly afterwards won as black on the third board against so far so good American IM Kirk Ghazarian. Needing only a draw to make his first GM norm, 16 year old Ghazarian probably became too eager to exchange off pieces.

The tournament finished without GM norms, but still with outstanding results for two young GM candidates, as 17 year old Norwegian IM Elham Abdulrauf needed a win and got «only» a draw as black against Estonian GM Kaido Kulaots in the last round. The Danish fourth board duel between GM Mads Andersen and GM Allan Stig Rasmussen despite a promising pressure for white became a three hours draw.

Following this Narayanan was declared first among equals due to his superior rating performance, but had to share the money prizes for the top three prizes equally with Puranik and Demchenko – with an outstanding 7.0/9.

Sethuraman hit back from a slow start to finish unshared fourth at 6.5/9. Top rated GM Praggandandhaa Rameshbabu despite a nice black win in the last round somewhat disappointedly finished shared sixth at 6.0/9. Remarkably this 17 year old chess gentleman still was first man forward to thanks the organizers for the tournament after the prizegiving.



Top-3: Demchenko, Narayanan and Puranik

His 21 year old sister IM/WGM Vaishali Rameshbabu following a last-round draw won the best woman competition, just ahead of IM/WGM Padmini Rout. India following this got both prizes in the best woman competition and five out of top six prizes in the tournament.

The 12 year old Ukrainian refugee Tykhon Cherniaiev had the best IM norm chances before round 9, but unfortunately he was unable to play the last game and so lost the norm chance. Cherniaiev still made a remarkable result, winning 75 Elo points, and can be congratulated with a very well deserved FM title. Talking about successful young Ukrainian war refugees, FM Semen Mitusov made his fourth IM-norm as he in the last round succeeded in winning a six hour endgame marathon as black against veteran GM Keith Arkell.



Sethuraman vs Narayanan

The first board meeting between **GM Sethuraman P. Sethuraman (2645)** and **GM S. L. Narayanan (2663)** started up like a rather closed and positional Ruy Lopez duel. As the position opened black temporarily sacrificed a pawn at b3, and was fine if not slightly better as he won it back at move 19. The position lit up as black four mover later got the chance to hit in at b2 with his queen, winning a pawn and threatening the white rook at a3. As white replied 24.Qg5 with the threat of 25.Qxg7 mate, black had a chance to play for a win and walk on a wire with a tactical 24.--- Nxd5!?.

Unwilling to run the risk of spoiling this great tournament result with a last-round loss, Narayanan instead went for the safer 24.--- g6. White following this efficiently used his chance to sacrifice a rook and force a draw by 25.Ra2! Qxa2 26.Ne7+ Kg7 27.Nf5+ Kg8 28.Ne7+ etc.

29 year old Sethuraman now in October, as in April, had a much lower score than expected after the first five rounds. He again repaired with an impressive spurt, as he made 3.5/4 in the final rounds and saved an unshared fourth prize at 6.5/9. The score still was only just above expected from an Elo point of view.

Narayanan started up with 3/3 and later he was shared or unshared first all the way. Following this last round draw he at 7.0/9 had to share the first prize money with two others, but still won the first place very well deserved as his Elo-performance of 2737 by far was the best. Winning nine more Elo points, 24 year old Narayanan continues his climb towards the 2700 mark.

GM Anton Demchenko (2645) versus **GM Frode Urkedal (2523)** was a positional Italian duel in which the dark-squared bishops were exchanged at e3 in move 7, while the light-squared bishops at c4 and e6 continued to look each other in the eye for a long time. Black spent one hour for the first 11 moves, and white was ahead on the clock with an edge on the board when he castled long in move 12. Immediately hitting in the center with 12.— d5? was natural from a black point of view. It still turned out to be mistaken, as this turned out to be one of the positions in which a center break could be well answered by a flank attack. White soon had a dangerous kingside attack running after 14.h4! followed by 15.h5 and 16.h6!.

Black succeeded in saving his king by exchanging off the queens at e3 a few moves later on. White however kept a strong initiative. Demchenko by gifted tactics soon forced his way to an endgame with rook and six pawns against bishop, knight and four pawns. This endgame not accidentally turned out to be an easy win for white, due to his active rook combined with a big pawn majority on the queenside.

35 year old Demchenko following a very demanding year outside of the board got a troublesome start in this tournament with his first-round loss, but later won five games in a row before settling for 2.0/3 in the final rounds. At 7.0/9 he reached shared first to third prize and won two more Elo-points. Urkedal also had a somewhat delayed start on this tournament as he due to the European Club Cup had to take a walk-over draw in the first round and play a postponed second-round game. After losing a marathon game in the fourth round he was more or less out of the fight for top three, but 5.5/9 in the end still was a solid result winning back two more Elo points.

Third board meeting between **IM Kirk Ghazarian (2446)** of USA and **GM Abhimanyu Puranik (2603)** of India was a Queen's Indian fianchetto opening. One set of knights plus the b-, c- and d-pawns were exchanged within the first 20 moves, leaving black with at least equal chances in a rather open position. Needing only a draw to complete his first GM norm, the 16 year old white player later probably became too eager to exchange off pieces. Due to his center pawn at e5 and more active pieces, black after 27 moves was clearly better



Ghazarian vs Puranik

with queen, two rooks, dark-squared bishops and five pawns left on each side. Without the white pawn at a4 and the black pawn at a5 this for sure would have been a draw, but black now had good practical winning chances. Under pressure on the board and clock, Ghazarian lost it as he became too eager to exchange the queens at b5 – allowing black to pick up a pawn at e2 and establish a passed a-pawn. Puranik later efficiently used his chances, and so the final position after 38 moves was a rook and bishop endgame in which only black had a bishop.

Ghazarian obviously blew a great chance for his first GM norm today. 5.5/9 with a performance of 2581 still was his best tournament so far, and he gained 17 more Elo points. 22 year old Puranik was the last of the GMs to register for this tournament. His acceptance of a last-week minute offer turned out to be a brilliant decision, as he undefeated at 7.0/9 shared first to third prize with Narayanan and Demchenko. Seventh rated Puranik finished in second place with a performance of 2721, winning a notable 14.5 new Elo points.

The Danish duel between **GM Mads Andersen (2604)** and **GM Allan Stig Rasmussen (2531)** was a positional 3.b3 Sicilian duel. The players know each other very well and played on the same team during the Chess Olympiad two months ago. Out of the opening books, both now spent one hour for the first 12 moves. Two sets of minor pieces were exchanged early. Black later had a pair of bishops, but white still was better as he came some three moves ahead in development. Somehow black succeeded in bolstering his position with the king at f7. As black played e5 and was about to establish a space advantage, white took the safe path by exchanging queens and one of the black bishops. White later apparently had a pleasant plus due to his control of the open d-file, but black had it fairly well under control and a draw was agreed in a balanced position after 25 moves.

Andersen was in the fight for top three until the second to last round, and in the end made a sound plus result with 6.0/9. Winning four more Elo points, he seems likely to stabilize just above 2600. Rasmussen not unexpectedly had more ups and downs. Starting up with a disastrous 0.5/2, he then won four turbulent games in a row before making a medium spurt with 1.5/3. At the end of the week he reached a small money prize at 6.0/9, losing only three points of Elo.

IM Linus Johansson (2461) and **GM Praggnanandhaa Rameshbabu (2687)** discussed a Nimzo-Indian Rubinstein variation, in which three sets of minor pieces and the queens were exchanged within the first 20 moves. White's advanced pawn at c6 was a weakness more than an asset in this position, hence black with two rooks, knight and seven pawns against two rooks, bishop and seven pawns was slightly better. Johansson fought on well and defended the c6-pawn into an endgame with rook, bishops and six pawns against rook, knight and six pawns. This still was very painful to defend due to white's inferior pawn structure. Praggnanandhaa patiently picked up two pawns and after 50 moves had reached a safely won rook endgame with four against two pawns.

First rated «Pragg» despite this final shot had a disappointing tournament, finishing sixth with 6.0/9 and losing nine Elo points. 27 year old Johansson also had his first start at Fagernes and also lost nine Elo points following a pole-out tournament. Playing only two draws he still contributed a lot to the entertainment value of the tournament.



Rout vs Sasikiran

IM/WGM Padmini Rout (2390) versus **FM Krishnan Sasikiran (2636)** was another Italian opening, in which black lagged half an hour behind on the clock. White got the pair of bishops, although black's bishop at g7 was the best one. Sasikiran came better due to his queenside space advantage after kicking back the white bishop via b5 and a4 to c2. Having mobilized his three versus two pawn majority on the queenside, black had reached a strategically won position after 26...c4!. White however was invited back into the game as black went

for a somewhat premature 28...b3?. As black four moves later went for a tactical pseudo-sacrifice with 32...Nxf3+?!, white in turn missed her chance to play 33.Qxf3! Bxc3 34.Rf2 with counterplay in the f-file and a rather unclear position. Instead 33.gxf3? Bxc3 left a materially balanced position, but white's weak pawns and more open king combined with black's dark-square dominance was decisive.

Padmini creatively sacrificed a pawn at e5 to establish a passed pawn at d6. Sasikiran despite time shortage however made the better calculations and after 51 moves had landed safely in a won queen endgame with two extra pawns.

41 year old Sasikiran following his first prize in April had a disappointing October tournament at Fagernes, now finishing seventh at 6.0/9 and losing six Elo points. Obviously it says a lot about his level when a performance of 2567 is a disappointment. Again playing many long and hard-fought games, he again was a key actor to follow. Padmini despite the last round loss saved all her Elo points and at 5.0/9 she won the second best woman prize.

GM Kaido Kulaots (2515) and **IM Elham Abdulrauf (2495)** discussed another Caro-Kann with 3...c5?!

White following the extra tempo got an improved French opening and had some advantage due to his e5 pawn. Black lagged half an hour behind on the clock, but after exchanging off the dark-squared bishop at e3 he had some counterplay due to white's weakened pawn structure.

White around move 18–24 had strong pressure, as black's king at c8 was much more in danger than white's king at g1. 25.Bf1? however was much too

slow, as black could play 25...c5! and kick away white's disturbing knight at d4. The position following this was tense and more or less balanced. White under mutual time pressure won a pawn at e5 just before the first time control, although the remaining endgame with rook, bishop and four pawns against rook, knight and three pawns was difficult to win due to black's more active pieces and passed pawn at d4. As Kulaots made his move 40 with a few seconds left on the clock, black was about to win back the pawn. After the rooks were exchanged, the remaining endgame with bishop, a-pawn and h-pawn versus knight, a-pawn and h-pawn was very drawish. White immediately accepted when black after 46 moves offered a draw.

46 year old Kulaots made a slightly disappointing result with 5.5 points and a performance of 2448, losing six Elo points. 17 year old Abdulrauf (still officially named Abdrlauf in the FIDE rating list) needed a win in the last round to reach his first GM-norm. Following a draw he still passed 2500 for the first time and settled for a very promising performance of 2549.



Kulaots vs Abdulrauf

English **GM Keith Arkell (2413)** as white against Ukrainian **FM Semen Mitusov (2415)** started up with 1.c4, but later transposed into a Queen's Gambit Exchange line. Black after exchanging three minor pieces reached a solid position, although white was half an hour ahead on the clock with a slight initiative on the board. The GM after 27 moves turned down the offer of a draw and instead offered an exchange of queens at c5. This however turned out to be a small turning point, as black got the more useful pawn structure and came better in a rather closed position with two rooks, knight and seven pawns against two rooks, bishop and seven pawns. Mitusov later made a good decision to open the position with a d4-break. As the players passed the first time control, black following this had promising pressure against white's too advanced pawn at c5. White probably did right to sacrifice the pawn at c5, but wrong to force a tactical exchange of the minor pieces afterwards.

Although double rook endgames often will offer the defending player good chances, black's passed d-pawn and active rooks here gave him a fairly safe win.

Endgame master Arkell succeeded in making an exciting passed-pawn race out of this, but still had to stop the clock after 75 moves.

The 61 year old English GM following this last- round stumble round lost nine Elo points and had a performance just above 2300 with his 4.0/8. Despite a turbulent year outside the chessboard, 16 year old

Ukrainian war refugee Semen Mitusov has had a great year on the chessboard. Like in April, his IM norm became the only title norm of the Fagernes tournament. This time the norm had no practical relevance as he already had the three norms needed to get the title. 6.0/9 with a performance of 2474 still qualifies as a success and gave him nine more Elo-points.



Arkell vs Mitusov

IM/WGM Vaishali Rameshbabu (2451) with the white pieces against **IM Kjetil Stokke (2307)** went for some kind of London system without c3, turning tactical in the opening as black snatched a testimony pawn at b2 with his queen. Black later succeeded in exchanging the queens, but had to give back the pawn at g7. The remaining position with two rooks, bishop and six pawns on each side was fairly drawish due to the opposite-coloured bishops, and a draw was agreed on white's suggestion after 22 moves.



Stokke

Vaishali following a hard-fought tournament bitterly lost her chances for the final GM norm when blundering from a won position in round 8. 5.0/9 with a performance of 2470 in the end gave her the best women prize and three more Elo points. Stokke's 4.5/8 following his delayed arrival after all gave an average result.

The game between **Joel P. Ganta (2031)** and **IM Tor Fredrik Kaasen (2445)** unfortunately never started, as Kaasen for health reasons was unable to play. 5.5/9 following this was a somewhat misleading sum of points for Ganta. Following a slow start and many shaky games he at 4.5/8 still reached a performance of nearly 2300, winning 52 more rating points and passing 2200 for the first time. Kaasen's 4.5/9 on the other hand also is misleading, as he following a strong start played against three GMs and reached his expected score.



Roulet-Dubonnet vs Nielsen

Emerik Vâpenstad Roulet-Dubonnet (2343) and FM Viktor Haarmark Nielsen (2384) via 1.c4 transposed into a Rubinstein line of the Nimzo-Indian, in which three sets of minor pieces disappeared following funny tactical exchanges within the first 15 moves. The remaining position much due to the c-file gave white an initiative, although it was a bit double.edged as white had two b-pawns and black an isolated pawn at d5. As the queens were

exchanged at d4 white also had an isolated d-pawn, and so the inferior structure.

Playing with two rooks, bishop and six pawns on each side, white still came better due to the c-file and his better bishop. Roulet-Dubonnet left a repetition after 31 moves, but for the next ten moves failed to demonstrate any progress in a rather closed position. White due to his two b-pawns now had an inferior pawn structure from a theoretical point of view. From a practical point of view black still had a hard time as his isolated pawn at d5 and backward pawn at a6 were the two weakest pawns on the board: White's pawns at b2 and b4 both were on safe dark squares and hidden from the black rooks behind a black pawn at b5. White after combined pressure succeeded in winning the pawn at d5 with a decisive advantage after 52 moves. In the fifth hour, both players made some mistakes. The position jumped back and forth between a win for white and a draw. Black several times had a draw within reach with rook and two pawns against rook and three pawns. Exchanging the queenside pawns to reach an endgame with two versus one kingside pawns however here was a decisive mistake, as white via h6 could transfer his king to g6 and reach a won endgame with rook and g-pawn versus rook.

Following many strong results from weekend tournaments this autumn, Roulet-Dubonnet had a demanding new chess challenge to defend an Elo close to 2350. He failed to do that following a slow start with 2.5/5, although 5.5/9 with a performance of 2264 still was a very decent result.

Our new Danish Chessfriend Haarmark Nielsen in his first Fagernes tournament had no draws for the first five rounds, but then three draws in a row. In the run for his second IM norm until failing to win a won endgame in round eight, he following the long last round loss had a performance of 2325 and lost 12 Elo points.



Ingebretsen vs Unneland

FM Jens Evang Ingebretsen (2363) versus **FM Mathias Unneland (2185)** was an English fianchetto in which black proved able to hang on an extra pawn at c4. However white due to his center pawns and pair of bishops got way too much compensation. About one hour ahead on the clock, white in turn might have been too greedy when winning an exchange at

a8 after 28 moves, as black now took over the initiative. After 31 moves, the endgame was rather complex and about balanced with two rooks, bishop and four pawns against rook, bishop, knight and seven pawns. As black was about to run short of time he made a serious mistake when taking back at e5 with the knight at move 33, as white after 34.Re3! established an e-file pin and soon won a key pawn at c7. The position still was complex and white in turn made a mistake with 36.Re7?, allowing black to save his knight and avoid a rook exchange with 35.--- Nf3+! followed by 36.--- Rc6. Black at this stage however was seriously short of time and soon lost another key pawn at b5. Following this white after all could force an exchange of rooks and reach an easily won endgame with rook, bishop and three pawns against bishop, knight and four pawns.

18 year old Ingebretsen had a somewhat shaky tournament and failed to make his third IM-norm. Winning ten more Elo-points he still moved one important step closer to the title. Unneland hit back following a disappointing World Youth Championship last month, and is back above 2200 after scoring 4.5/9 and winning back 24 Elo points at Fagernes.

IM Shiyam Thavandiran (2353) and **Sondre Melaa (2223)** discussed a Four Knights opening in which two sets of minor pieces were exchanged early. Black appeared to be over the worst as he proved able to exchange the rooks in the open d-file. White still was slightly better as his knight at f5 and bishop at e3 were superior to black's knight at f6 and bishop at e7. Somewhat strangely, black immediately decided to give up his pawn at a7 more or less for free. The game ended abruptly as white after 34 moves left a repetition and directed his bishop against a weak black pawn at e5. Realizing that he had no way to protect the pawn and so would end up two pawns down, black resigned only one move after the players left a repetition.

30 year old Thavandiran had remarkably few surprising game results in his first Fagernes tournament. Landing at a solid plus result with 5.5/9 and a performance of 2380 following the last round win, he won four Elo points. Melaa's 4.5/9 included an unfortunate walk-over win from round 8. Recovering well after starting up with 0.5/4, the current Norwegian junior champion still finished close to one point below his expected score with a performance of 2149.

Swedish **IM Ludvig Carlsson (2379)** started up with 1.g3 as white against Estonian **Dion Krivenko (2107)**, but the opening later transposed into some close relative of a King's Indian Fianchetto. White established a space advantage due to his pawn at d5, and kept an initiative with half an hour more on the clock after exchanging all the knights. Around move 20–25, white reportedly had a winning initiative. Black however hung on into a materially balanced endgame with queen, dark-squared bishops and five pawns on each side. Krivenko not unexpectedly ran short of time for 40 moves, and immediately made a blunder with 37... Bd8? – overlooking that white could reach a won bishop endgame by forcing the queen exchange with 38.Qd5+!. Carlsson efficiently used the chance and after the time control he soon demonstrated how to win a won bishop endgame.



Carlsson vs Krivenko

Despite this nice final touch, Carlsson was too uneven in this tournament and at 5.0/9 he finished half a point below expected score. Playing many entertaining games and always behaving like a perfect sportman, he is still a very popular guest at Fagernes. So is the situation with the talented young Estonian Dion Krivenko. This time he made a solid advance at 4.0/9 – winning 22 new Elo-points.



Frederic vs Sarkar

Frenchman **Clément Frederic (2234)** gave his rare fianchetto line another try as white in a Sicilian against American **IM Justin Sarkar (2350)**. Black early took space in the center with d5 and later had a sound advantage. Sarkar spent nearly 80 minutes for the first 20 moves, but still had an initiative in a heavy-weight position with 30 pieces on the board. After forcing a queen exchange at g7, black got a very promising space advantage with two rooks, two knights, one bishop and seven pawns left on each side. Sarkar understandably refused a

draw offer, but running short of time he entered exchanges which handled the initiative over to white. Frederic now in turned refused a draw offer and due to his very active pair of knight soon came much better in the fifth hour. White after 48 moves could safely exchange one of his knights as black would immediately lose his pawn at g7. After this the endgame with rook, knight and five pawns against rook, bishop and four pawns was a trivial win.

Frederic had only one draw in his eight games. Scoring 4.5/8 he won 11 more Elo points and made a performance of 2294. Sarkar understandably was frustrated about losing both his final games. As he did very well for the first seven rounds, 4.0/9 still was very close to his expected score.

20 year old Danish **FM Nicolai Kistrup (2274)** as white against 16 year old Norwegian **Shazil Shehzad (2224)** went for an apparently solid Classical Nimzo-Indian with 4.Qc2, but then accelerated in the center with e4 and e5. A tense struggle followed as white established a space advantage and chances for a kingside attack due to his pawn at e5, while his own king was a bit airy after a long castle. Both players spent much time as white after 19 minutes had left just above 40 minutes, and black just below 20. It however soon turned out that white had made the better use of the time, as black's queen at h3 was critically short of open and safe squares. 20.Bg5! Bxg5 21.Bf1! neatly forced the queen to sacrifice itself for two minor pieces. White played a little inaccurately when sacrificing an extra exchange afterwards. After 27 moves the position with queen, rook and six pawns against two rooks, knight and six pawns still was very difficult to defend for black, and white won by a kingside attack within only four more moves. Kistrup spent a bit too much time and suffered from time trouble mistakes in his first Fagernes tournament, but winning his two last games he still reached a very respectable score with 5.0/9 and a performance of 2224.



Kistrup vs Shehzad



Al-Tarboush vs Welling

Norwegian **FM Ward Al-Tarboush (2161)** and Dutch **IM Gerard Welling (2272)** started up with a rather solid Russian opening. White got the pair of bishops and went for a kingside attack. The heat increased as black opened the h-file by snatching a pawn at h4. Black after 23 moves was a pawn up and the computers gave him an advantage, although he had only 14 minutes against one hour on the clock. A tense struggle followed as white sacrificed his key pawn at d4 to establish a passed pawn at f6. This plan gave a jackpot for white as black in some kind of

panic sacrificed a knight for two pawns. Black first had four pawns for the piece, but white still had the much better position with an extra piece and the safer king – plus some 50 minutes more on the clock. 1–0 came a bit early after 38 moves, although white was about to force a queen exchange and reach a rook and minor pieces endgame which should be winning due to black's scattered pawns. Highly unpredictable Al-Tarboush once more made a very good result at Fagernes, as his 5.0/9 qualified for a performance of 2362 and won some 45 more Elo points. 63 year old Welling on the other hand was below expected score all the way, and at 4.0/9 he in the end lost 17.5 more Elo points with a performance of only 2122. Although an IM cannot be satisfied with such a result, it should be noted that eight out of his nine opponents were more than 30 years younger than him.

The highly talented Norwegian teenagers **Mathias Lind Schouten (2128)** and **FM Aksel Bu Kvaløy (2278)** discussed a Ruy Lopez line in which white came better after a strong Na3–Nc4–Na5 maneuver. White however should have taken the pair of bishops with 20.Nc6! and 21.Nxe7 instead of 20.Bg5? fxe4 21.dxe5, as the following tactical exchanges left black a pawn up with pressure against the white kingside. As white helpfully weakened his kingside with g4–g5–h4, black efficiently finished off the game with a violent 27.--- Rxc5+!



Schouten vs Kvaløy

Kvaløy soon lost speed following his very promising start with 2/2, but 4.5/9 following the last-round win was only very slightly below his expected score. Schouten following this loss failed to turn the tide from the World Youth Championship and at 3.5/9 he lost 21 more Elo points.

Jacob Templen Grave (2221) versus **Shadi Sian (2108)** was another duel between two highly talented Norwegian teenagers. This one saw a Catalan duel in which white went for a double fianchetto by putting his dark-squared bishop at b2. Although struggling with a slightly inferior pawn structure after taking back at f6 with the g-pawn, black apparently was fine as he after 15 moves had exchanged the queens and the dark-squared bishops. Black however still had problems developing his light-squared bishop. 16.--- b5? was much too weakening for the diagonal h1–a8, hence white developed a strong initiative. The computers soon gave white a winning advantage, although this was much less obvious from a human point of view. White gradually made progress and appeared close to winning as he after 30 moves won a pawn at f6 – leaving black to defend with rook, bishop, knight and five pawns against rook, bishop, knight and six pawns, without any kind of compensation.



Grave vs Sian

Then black suddenly had a lot of counterplay after placing his rook at c6 and knight at e5, while white parked his rook in a rather passive position at b8. As white ran short of time, black however went for a strange and slow plan with Ne5–Nd7–Nb6–Nd7. This allowed white to sacrifice the rook for a bishop and the key pawn at f5, with a promising double threat against the black pawns at h7 and e4. Grave at move 40 should have taken the h7-pawn to establish a passed h-pawn. Short of time he instead took the e4-pawn, after which black could save his h-pawn and reach a very unclear endgame with rook and three pawns against bishop and five pawns. Black even was winning for a few moves, before the shaken players after five hours exchanged down to a dead drawn endgame with bishop and three kingside pawns versus rook and one kingside pawn. Both players following this landed at a solid 4.0/9. Grave with a performance of 2177 lost some 11 points of Elo, while Sian with a performance of 2164 could be well satisfied to win 18 points.



Westrum

Eivind Grunt Kreken (2107) and **Kim Roger Hansen Westrum (2156)** saw a rare duel in an untheoretical French line with 3.Bd3. Black first was fine, but then became too helpful to exchange off pieces at d4.

White's active bishops following this gave him a pleasant pressure after 12 moves. White in turn was helpful as he after castling long invited a tactical exchange of the a-pawns.

Black consequently could intervene with his rook at a2 and get enough counterplay to balance the chances.

White helpfully exchanged one of his bishops for a knight, after which black

due to his pair of bishops was better when a draw was suddenly agreed after 19 moves.

Kreken got a demanding start in this tournament, as he due to a late arrival from the European Club Cup had to take a walk over draw in the first round and then lost a long postponed game in the second round. He still continued his good play from this autumn, winning 22 more rating points after scoring 4.0/9 with a performance of 2159. Westrum following 0.5/2 in the end also finished at 4.0/9, with a slightly disappointing performance of 2110.



Liabøtrø vs Stray

The Norwegian senior duel between 63 year old **FM Pål-Ole Liabøtrø (2145)** and 52 year old **Gunnar Stray (2015)** started up with 1.e4 and a Sicilian Taimanov duel. White castled short, while black kept his king at e8 while starting a bayonet attack on the kingside with h5-h4. White due to his much better development had a sound plus after eight moves.

9.Bf4?! was a mistake, as black could reply 9... e5 with a double threat against the bishop at f4 and a knight at d4. Resigning instead of making his move ten still was a very strange

blackout from white. The position would be about balanced after the rather obvious 10.Nxc6 – leaving for black a much less obvious choice about whether to take back the knight at c6 or the bishop at f4. The outcome of this game much strengthened the tournament result for both players: Stray now reached 4.5/9 with a very good performance of 2157, while Liabøtrø at 2.5/8 dropped all the way down to a performance of 1922.

Tobias Lang Nilsen (2280) as white against **Heine N. Johannessen (2033)** went for a modest 2.d3 in a Sicilian, but still kept an edge after an early queen exchange at d1. Black spent much time, but playing exf5 followed by f5 he succeeded in exchanging more pawns and reach a fairly balanced position. After 27 moves the position with two rooks, bishop, knight and six pawns on each side was about balanced, although still double-edged. White despite some risks played on for a win, placing his rook at b7 to attack the black pawn at b5 from behind. As black played 30... Ng4!? with a threat against white's bishop at e3, the tactical knight counterpunch 31.Ne6! reportedly could have given white a clear advantage. Instead the lame 31.Bd2?? was a game-losing blunder, as black after 31... Rxd4! 32.cxd4 Bxd4+ demonstrated an elegant mate in three more moves. Lang Nilsen had a promising result after six rounds, but «castling long» in the remaining three games he in the end had 3.0/9 with a disappointing performance of 2130. Heine N. Johannessen on the other hand hit back from a slow start in his first GM group. Following the last minutes firework he reached 4.0/9 with a performance of 2094 – winning some 27 new Elo points.



Nilsen vs Johannessen



Verbin vs Østensen

Valentina Verbin (2075) and **Nicolai Østensen (2136)** instead discussed a rather closed Ruy Lopez opening, in which the first exchange came as black at move 17 decided to give up his light-squared bishop for a knight at f5. Black's follow up was inaccurate, and so white after 24 moves had very promising attacking chances due to her pair of bishops and open g-file. 25.Bc2? however lost too much speed, and so black got the time needed to bolster his kingside and start a counterattack on the queenside. The tide turned in favour of black as he within a few more moves hit in

at b2. White kept the material balance by winning back a pawn at c4, although black later had pressure due to his dark-square dominance and better pawn structure. Verbin fought on stubbornly and kept the position in material balance when passing move 40. Black at that stage however had a winning initiative. White anyway was in deep trouble when she after 48 moves gave up a pawn at h4 with the idea of losing a piece afterwards. Østensen following this finished a rather shaky tournament at a high point, hunting the white king around the board to mate it at b4 in move 61. Østensen is the current Nordic U12 champion, and a few days before his 13th birthday now became one out of very few players to finish the tournament without a single draw. Following a way too slow start with 1.0/5, his 4.0/9 in the end still lost some 31 Elo points. Verbin continues her patient progress this year, winning four Elo points despite losing both her final games.



Strand vs Perkampus

The 14 year old Norwegian **Vetle Bjørge Strand (2053)** stayed true to his Veresov system with 1.d4 2.Nc3 3.Bf4 also in his last white game against **Laurin Perkampus (2123)**.

That however was no success as the German junior obviously arrived very well prepared, and much due to his c-file pressure came better from the opening. As white defended creatively but loosely with 16.Na2?, black could just have played 16... Nxc2!! 17.Rac1 Bh4! > 18... Ng3+ with a more or less winning attack. Black instead exchanged the knights and still had a promising

kingside attack running. This increased as white allowed a strong exchange sacrifice at c5. Black following this anyway had a winning attack when white overlooked 28... Be4! with the decisive threat of 29... Qxh3 mate.

Perkampus at 3,5/8 finished exactly at his expected score, while Strand at 3.0/9 had a performance equal to his current Elo of 2053. This qualifies as a good result, as he following a very good result in the World Youth Championship now had to defend an Elo above 2050 for the first time.



Austad vs Fiskaaen

The promising teenagers **Eirik Strøm Austad (1985)** and **Martin Holten Fiskaaen (2118)** discussed an English fianchetto line in which black for some moves after the opening kept an extra pawn at c4. White had sound compensation and due to his center advantage came slightly better after black returned the pawn.

Black however was perfectly fine after white invited to a queen exchange, and in the fourth hour he due to his passed pawn at c4 and rook at b2 came much better in the rooks and bishops endgame. White

however succeeded in blocking the passed pawn with a bishop at c3, and so black despite some more possibilities accepted a draw by repetition after 50 moves.

Austad at 3.5/9 demonstrated his potential with a performance just below 2100. Still 13 year old Fiskaaen had a tough new challenge to defend an Elo above 2100, following his very strong result in Prague this summer, and so 3.5/9 with a performance of 2074 was fully acceptable in his first GM group.

Sindre Lyngsaunet Ytrestøyl (2045) versus **FM Richard Bjerke (2096)** started up with an apparently safe French Exchange opening line. Although black had no problems after exchanging the light-squared bishops at d3, the pawn structure was symmetric and the position about in balance after 15 moves. White later came somewhat better as he was allowed to play b4–b5 and c4–c5 with a notable queenside initiative. Black succeeded in getting some counterplay in the e-file, as white was unwilling to exchange the second pair of rooks. 28.--- Re3? although creative was a dubious rook sacrifice, but both players under pressure on the clock later made some mistakes. After 34 moves white still was objectively better with a rook for three pawns, although his king at g1 was a bit exposed. 35.Qc2? was another mistake and black after 35.--- Be3+ had a promising attack. The position on the board still was rather messy when white in this situation hesitated too long and lost on time. 64 year old Bjerke as the oldest player in this group repaired much with 2.0/3 in the final rounds, although 3.5/9 and a performance of 2046 still was a bit below his expected score. 16 year old Ytrestøyl to the bitter end wasted too many promising positions this tournament, and so 2.0/8 was about one point below his expected score.



Ytrestøyl vs Bjerke

The young Norwegian lions **Ask Amundsen (1869)** and **Per Fredrik Holand (2024)** meanwhile discussed a complex Sicilian Schveningen position, in which black got the chance to place a knight at d4. After white exchanged off the knight for his light-squared bishop, his better pawn structure and e5-pawn first outweighed black's pair of bishops. White before 25 moves picked up both black's b-pawn and e-pawn, although the pair of bishops and open files gave a lot of practical compensation. Following this black won back



Amundsen vs Holand

one of the pawns at b2 and then forced an exchange of the dark-squared bishops to get a direct attack against the white king. White following the open b- and d-files after 28 moves had a hard time protecting his weak first rank, with only a few minutes left on the clock. 30.Rb6? was a decisive mistake, as black could play 30.--- Rfd8! with a decisive rook intervention at b1 or d1. After the rooks were exchanged white still was a pawn up, but black handling queen and bishop against queen and knight still had a winning position due to white's much too open king at f1. White avoided a direct mate by forcing a queen exchange, but this did not help him for long as the remaining minor piece endgame now gave black an extra pawn with an easy win.

Holand following this win reached 3.0/9 by winning three games and losing six. Winning seven more Elo points, he seems about to stabilize above 2000 – despite a not very stable playing style.

17 year old Amundsen finished 58th out of 60 players, but still could be fairly well satisfied as the lowest rated player – winning 18 Elo points at 2.0/9.



Grønnestad vs Myagmarsuren

Finally the game between **WFM Anita Grønnestad (1970)** and **Evsuld Myagmarsuren (1952)** transposed from a Semi-Slav opening into the rare Cambridge Springs-variation with 6... Qa5?! in a Queen's Gambit. As white avoided the traps related to this line, she first had a fairly sound space advantage. Black however got sufficient play and took over the initiative after white helpfully

exchanged off her knight at e5 for a rather passive bishop at d7.

While white did nothing black later took over the c-file, with his rooks. Following this white anyway was in trouble when she blundered with 26.Qd1? – overlooking a basic tactical 26... Nxf4! which won a key pawn with a strong initiative for black. White stopped the clock only three moves later on, as black was already about to win heavy material.

12 year old Myagmarsuren was rated 59 out of 60 in his first GM group, hence finishing 55 with a score of 3.0/9 qualified as a very good result and won him some 20 more rating points.

39 year old Grønnestad at 1.0/7 wasted way too many chances, and so finished 59 with a performance just above 1800.

The very young Ukrainian war refugee **Tykhon Cherniaiev (2239)**, representing Germany, highly unfortunately missed his chances for an IM norm as he was not able to play the last round. Undefeated at 4.5/8 with a performance of 2423, he still won 75 Elo points – more than any other player in this GM group. Cherniaiev following this passed 2300 for the first time and still aged 12 he could be congratulated with a very well deserved FM title.

18 year old **FM Andre Gjestemoen-Vonhirsch (2329)** for medical reasons missed both the final two rounds, and 3.5/7 with a performance of 2269 following this was a slight disappointment following his IM-norm earlier this year.

American **Matan Prilleltensky (2222)** withdrew before round 7, leaving with 3.0/6 with a performance of 2139.

Finally **Andreas Skrede Hausken (2050)**, although still a very promising junior player, had a nightmare tournament and left before round nine with 0.5/7 plus a walk over draw.

Open Group

The struggle for the top prizes in the Open was decided within three hours.

Second rated Swedish player **Mikael Aroven (1997)** was in the lead with 7.0/8, half a point ahead of top rated Norwegian **FM Joachim Solberg (2167)**. Aroven on the first board had black against 18 year old **Max Moe Pedersen (1881)**, while Solberg on the second board had black against 15 year old **Ben Samuel Groth Skaar (1704)**. Solberg under pressure to win went for a Sicilian duel, but facing a solid Maroczy set up he found nothing better than a stream of exchanges. A draw following this was agreed upon black's suggestion after 18 moves, as the players were about to enter a drawish endgame with two rooks, one minor pieces and four pawns in each camp.



Top-3 in the Open: Helland, Solberg and Aroven

Aroven in the meantime was not successful with his black Modern opening, as white after exchanging off the queens at d8 got the d-file and a notable initiative from the opening. As white failed to find the most critical lines black however somehow was able to stabilize the position. White was slightly better due to his pair of bishops and space advantage, but neither of them gave much in a rather closed position. The first board duel between Pedersen and Aroven following this was drawn by a fairly sound repetition after 35 moves, confirming a well deserved and unshared first prize for our Swedish chessfriend Aroven at 7.5/9.

44 year old Aroven following this picked up 17 Elo points and left Fagernes well above 2000. 47 year old Solberg for working reasons requested two walk over draws, and 6.0/7 on his remaining games actually was just below expected score. The top rated players above 40 handled the challenge from unrated junior opponents much better in this Open than in April.

The remaining question to answer was about the third player to qualify for the next GM group. Third place before the last round was shared between Pedersen, Skaar and **Philip Helland (1710)**. While Pedersen and Skaar could be well satisfied drawing higher rated opponents, this gave 16 year old Helland the chance to reach top three if winning as white against 18 year old **Gard Rye Høyforslett (1735)** on the third board. Helland used this chance very well as he established a promising initiative in another Sicilian Maroczy duel, winning a first pawn by a tactical 22.Nxb6! and the second with a tactical 28.Rxf7!. White later was two pawns up with an ongoing attack plus a passed c-pawn. White completed the attack against black's king at h6 after 44 moves. Following this hard-fighting Helland, finishing the tournament with seven won and two lost games, shared the second and third prize with Solberg. Winning some 90 Elo points here, he also passed 1800 for the first time.

Fourth prize at 6.5/9 was shared between the young lions Pedersen, Skaar and **Olai Dyrhaug Eriksen (1767)**, as Eriksen despite an exchange less succeeded in winning a complex endgame against **Rune Kleiven Rynning (1667)**.

All these players had a solid plus score. Skaar at 1985 had the third highest performance of the Open group and cashed in a small money prize plus a remarkable 130 Elo points.



Eriksen vs Rynning

Round 9 in the Open was a relatively peaceful round, as four out of the top ten boards were drawn. Curiously, the remaining six all were won by white. Ambitious young **Vinjar Hammari (1853)** made a plus out of an uneven tournament as he won a long endgame against **Morten Rolstad (1782)**.

60 year old **Dag Andersen (1796)** following too many draws against lower rated opponents in the end still reached 6.0/9, as he succeeded in winning a borderline rook endgame with an extra pawn against **Karim Ali (1696)**. The uncompromising and tactical veteran Karim Ali following this had five wins and four losses. Playing eight higher rated opponents he won 27 Elo points.



Andersen vs Ali

Today's surprise win on the top ten boards came as 13 year old **Even Huneide Hetland (1432)**, helped by his opponent's time shortage, efficiently used his chance to mate the king of **Ramona Golsta (1766)** in the thin air at g4. This outcome however was not too much of a surprise following the tournament so far, as Hetland at 5.5/9 in the end had a tournament performance above 1800 and won some 135 Elo points.

The biggest Elo gain of this group, and indeed the whole tournament, still belonged to Mosjøen junior **Sverke Linga Øfeldt (1411)** – as his 5.0/9 with a performance close to 1800 qualified for 149 new Elo points.

The top 20 players in the Open sadly all were men this year, but some of the female players still made good results. Most notably, 11 year old Sandnes player **Alina Shehzad (1380)** continued her progress and at 4.0/9 won 56 more Elo points.

Best among the unrated players was the local 12 year old **Mikael Ruud**, scoring 2.5/8 with an Elo performance of 1264.



Alina Shehzad

19 year old Porsgrunn player **Andreas Hagen**, scoring 2.5/9 with a performance well above 1300, also could be well satisfied.

The Open all the way had many hard-fought games, few drawn games and a friendly atmosphere. The organizer much hopes this was an inspiring experience for the many young players who played such an international tournament for the first time. We hope to be back on a similar level in April 2023. For 2022 our Fagernes chess year finally is done – thanks and goodbye to all our players in both groups!

Photos by Tom Eriksen