

THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT 8



GM Group

This year's very important second last round started up with a rather tame two-hour draw in the second-board duel between IM Moksh Dashi and top rated GM Rinat Jumabayev. But then it took another exciting turn – as English IM Jonah Willow on the first board got an initiative and went on to win as white against leading GM Sayantan Das. The English delegation had another very good day as IM Ameet Ghasi made a draw as black in a tense third board duel against GM Titas Stremavicius. The Norwegian GMs had a long and successful afternoon, as Elham Amar won as black against IM Svyatoslav Bazakutsa, while Frode Urkedal won as white against IM Benny Aizenberg. Norwegian champion IM Aksel Bu Kvaløy won fairly convincingly as black against veteran GM Tiger Hillarp.

21 year old IM Jonah Willow, number 16 in the starting list before the tournament, more or less sensationally is still undefeated and leading alone with an amazing 6,5/8, half a point ahead of GM Jumabayev and GM Das.

The bigger group at 5,5, including GMs Stremavicius, Urkedal, Amar and Raja plus IMs Ghasi, Kvaløy and Doshi, are also candidates at least for a shared top three prize before last round. Willow will get a tough final test as black against Kvaløy, while Das will be white against Jumabayev, Ghasi white against Urkedal, Amar white against Stremavicius and Raja white against Doshi.



Willow

Kvaløy was unlucky with the last round pairings and cannot reach the required rating performance of 2600 even in case of a last-round win. Willow however can score his important first GM norm with a draw – and Ghasi can score his decisive third GM norm with a win! English chessfans obviously should follow round 9 this year with particular interest.

Irish WIM Trisha Kanyamarala today scored a solid draw against a much higher rated IM, and following this keeps her unexpected one-point lead in the fight for the best woman prize.

The number of possible IM-norm candidates was reduced first to three following the round 8 results, and then further to two following the round 9 pairings. Estonian FM Dion Krivenko won his game fairly convincingly, but like Kvaløy he needed a higher rated last round opponent to keep the title norm hope alive. 15 year old Norwegian CM Martin Holten Fiskaaen made a draw in a short firework game as black against IM Semen Mitusov and will make his best tournament result so far – but still needs a draw as white against GM Tiger Hillarp to complete his first IM norm. 16 year old CM Martin Øksendal came close to a sensational win in a highly interesting five hours battle against GM Krishnan Sasikiran today. Since that game ended up «only» as a surprising draw, Øksendal now instead needs a full point as black against Israeli Benny Aizenberg to score his first IM norm. In short this year's round 9 will offer a lot of excitement about the top prizes as well as title norm chances!

The first board duel between **IM Jonah B. Willow (2420)** and **GM Sayantan Das (2471)** started up with a rare version of a French Advance, in which black played 5... a6?! and 6... Bb5 to exchange the troublesome light-squared bishop. White following this came some 20 minutes ahead on the clock with a pleasant space advantage on the board. Black came up with some counterplay in the a-file, and the outcome still was wide open when white at move 23 intervened at the seventh rank with his rook:



23... Ngxe5?? however was an unexpected blunder from Das, so far very solid in this tournament. 24.Rxe5! Qxe5 25.Qh5 Qf5 26.Rxd7 fairly straightforward won two minor pieces for one rook and one pawn, with a winning advantage for white. Willow ahead on the clock continued his inspired play and after 40 moves landed in a safely won endgame with rook, knight and pawns versus rook and pawn. Having had the tournament of his life so far, 21 year old Willow following this has 6,5/8 and a performance of 2652 – but still needs a draw as black against Kvaløy in the last round to complete his first GM norm.

IM Moksh Doshi (2377) and **GM Rinat Jumabayev (2577)** on the second board started up with a positional Bogo-Indian opening, reaching a symmetrical and rather static center as white at move 12 exchanged his d-pawn at e5. Chances were approximately balanced on the clock as well as on the board, when a draw suddenly was agreed upon white's suggestion after 16 moves. Both players are in the fight for top three following this draw, although Dokshi now needs a last round win to make it.



Jumabayev

Lithuanian **GM Titas Stremavicius (2541)** and English **IM Ameet Ghasi (2503)** meanwhile discussed the rare East Indian Defence, reminiscent of a King's Indian with a white pawn at c3 instead of c4. Black kept his fianchetto bishop active by exchanging the e5-pawn at d4, although white's pawn at e4 later gave him a space advantage. Ghasi in an inspired mood entered tactical complications which first favoured white:



Now 27.Nd2! Qd5 28.Nc4 Bd7 29.Nxe3 Bxd4 30.cxd4 Qxd4 31.f5 leaves white better with two minor pieces for one rook and two pawns. In the game black instead took over the initiative after 27.Bf2? Qxf4 28.Nc2 Bxh3! 29.Bxe3 Qg3. White now invited a repetition with 30.Bf2 Qf4 31.Be3 Qg3 32.Bf2 Qf4 33.Be3. Black however played on with 33.--- Rxe3!? 34.Rxe3 Bf5 35.Bd3 Bxd3 36.Rxd3 Qc1+ and had some pressure, although the GM defended very well and got a draw by another repetition soon after the time control. Both players are still in the fight for top three prizes following this draw – and Ghasi can qualify for the GM title if able to win as white against GM Frode Urkedal tomorrow!

The fourth board game between 16 year old Ukrainian **IM Svyatoslav Bazakutsa (2483)** and 19 year old Norwegian **GM Elham Amar (2540)** saw a positional King's Indian duel developing into a Sicilian Maroczy position, in which white came slightly better after exchanging one set of knights. Then the position suddenly changed following a creative sacrifice from black:



14.--- Bxh3!? and now 15.gxh3 Qg5+ 16.Kh1 Qh6 gives white the choice between a draw by repetiton and giving up the h3-pawn too. According to the computers this is better for white, but in no way easy to play for him. Bazakutsa spent more than 20 minutes and then instead sacrificed a pawn himself – with sufficient compensation after 15.Nd5 Nxd5 16.Bxg7 Nf4 17.Bh6 Qe5.



But now white should have preferred 18.Rb1! with compensation for the pawn, as 18.Qxe5?! Nxe2+ 19.Kh2 dxe5 20.Bxf8 Bxg2 21.Kxg2 Kxf8 gave black the better long term perspectives with rook, knight and seven pawns against two rooks and five pawns. Amar instructively increased the black advantage, picking up a third pawn after 35 moves, and finally winning back the exchange with a totally won rook endgame after 62 moves. Bazakutsa is definitely out as a GM-norm candidate and back on an average result following this result, while Amar despite his shaky start is fully in the fight for the money prizes.

Norwegian **GM Frode Urkedal (2559)** and Israeli **IM Benny Aizenberg (2423)** discussed a Grünfeld fianchetto line, in which the c-file was wide open and the rest of the board fairly closed. The symmetry was broken as black started a pawn storm on the kingside, winning some space without any real attack. Rooks were exchanged in the c-file within the first 27 moves, leaving white with a slight pressure as he had queen, two bishops and seven pawns against queen, one bishop, one knight and seven pawns. Offering an exchange of the minor piece interestingly here turned out to be the decisive mistake:



Urkedal



56.--- Ne4? 57.Bxe4 fxe4 58.Qf8 and black has a too open king plus too many advanced pawns. 58.--- Qxb5 59.Qf7+ Kh8 60.Qxe6 Qe2 61.Qe5+ Kg8 62.Qxd5+ would have lost, but still was a better try than the game continuation with 58.--- Kg6? 59.Qg8+ Qg7 50.Qxe6+. Urkedal like Amar has improved his play a lot during round 7–8 and might still reach a share of the top three prizes after round 9.

Irish **IM Tarun Kanyamarala (2369)** and Indian **GM Raja Rithvik R (2514)** discussed a Queen’s Gambit with a slightly provocative 3.--- h6?!, preventing the white bishop from reaching it’s traditional destination at g5. White developed the bishop to f4, and then exchanged it at d6 to establish a queenside space advantage following 8.c5. Black was happy about this as he could soon realize the classical center counterbreak with 12.--- e5 followed by 13.--- e4! Following the pawn structure white later opened the b-file for his rook, while black went for counterplay on the kingside. Chances gradually turned in favour of black, and before 30 moves the GM had a decisive attack:



29.--- g3! 30.h3? Bxh3! 31.Rf1 Bxg2 32.Qxg2 Nh3+ 0-1



Hillarp vs Kvaløy

Swedish **GM Tiger Hillarp (2455)** as white against the young Norwegian lion **IM Aksel Bu Kvaløy (2484)** went for a King's Indian Attack, but black following an early queen exchange at b3 easily equalized in a rather closed position.

Black later proved able to open the kingside in his favour, while white never found any queenside counterplay and was forced to defend a difficult position with scattered pawns. Kvaløy increased the pressure until winning an exchange at move 40, and a bit later could force a won

endgame with two rooks and four pawns against rook, bishop and four pawns.

Kvaløy following this win needed «only» a win as white against a player with at least 2534 to complete his decisive GM norm. Instead placed at the first board against underrated IM Jonah B. Willow with 2420, the 16 year old Norwegian champion cannot make a GM norm this week. He is however still in the fight for first prize and continues his climb towards 2500.

The young Swedish IM duel between **Hampus Sörensen (2423)** and **Ludvig Carlsson (2334)** started up like a Queen's Gambit Semi Tarrasch, but more or less transposed into an Accepted Queen's Gambit with a lot of exchanges.

White's pair of bishops after 22 moves gave him a slight long-term edge in the double minor piece endgame, although black due to the symmetrical pawn structure was very solid.

Sörensen although lagging behind on the clock fought on stubbornly for the full point, and succeeded in opening the position for his bishops:



Sörensen



39.--- bxa3 40.Bxa3+ would have reduced the number of pawns further and should have been sufficient for a draw, although white following 41.Bxh7 would have won a pawn. Instead 39.--- b3? 40.Bd2 b2 41.Kc2 Nc6 42.Bxh7 Ne7 also lost a pawn and allowed white to keep the a-pawn, which later was decisive for white in the final opposite-coloured bishop endgame.

CM Martin Øksendal (2271) versus **GM Krishnan Sasikiran (2571)** was a Ruy Lopez duel in which white was fast and black very fast for the first 14 moves. 14.--- c4!? is a known pawn sacrifice, although Sasikiran according to his clock did not appear to know it very well. Black's compensation for the extra white pawn at c3 was not obvious ten moves later on.

The young Norwegian underdog (and title norm candidate) at move 27 bravely left an invitation to a repetition, although he did it in a way which allowed the GM finally to get enough compensation for the pawn – due to his passed c-pawn and counterattack. The position remained tense and interesting during mutual time pressure before move 40:



37.Nxe5 c4 38.Rf1 c3 39.Qe8+ Kh7 and now the natural 40.Nxf7? actually was a time trouble blunder, as white with 56 seconds left on the clock failed to see that 40.Qc8! c2 41.Nd3 with a likely draw was needed. Having 38 seconds left on the clock, the GM however in turn failed to find the amazing win available with 40.--- c2! 41.Qh8+ Kg6 42.Nxd6 c1Q! Instead white suddenly came much better after 40.--- Bg3? 41.Qh8+ Kg6 42.Ne5+ Bxe5 43.Qe8+ Kh7 44.Qxe5. White's two extra pawns combined with his passed d-pawn for a few moves gave him a winning position, although it was still a disturbing pawn at c3 and a GM close to 2600 sitting on the other side of the board ... Both players spent much time for the next few moves. The decisive moment came at move 51, with less than four minutes left on the white clock and one minute more for black:



51.Qf3! c2 52.e5!, intending 52.--- Rxd7 53.Qa8+ Rd8 54.Rxc2! or 52.--- Qxd7 53.Qa8+ Kh7 54.Qe4+ Kg8 55.Rxc2, keeps a two-pawn advantage and should win. The game instead went 51.e5? Rxd7! 52.e6 Rd8 53.Qe4 Qc5 54.Qe3 Qxe3 55.fx3 – allowing the GM to escape into a drawn rook endgame with three against two kingside pawns.

Øksendal can still score his first IM norm, although he following this wasted chance for a full point as white now instead needs to win last round as black against IM Benny Aizenberg.

The highly talented Norwegian teenager duel between **IM Semen Mitusov (2486)** and **CM Martin Holten Fiskaaen (2259)** saw a Sicilian Najdorf opening, entering a poisoned pawn-variation as black at move 8 snatched testimony pawn at b2 with his queen. White spent much time for the next moves but soon won back the pawn at b7 with equal chances – and came better as white somewhat loose gave up his pawn at e7. Black probably believed he had this under control, but the position was even more tactical than it appeared to be:



Fiskaaen



19.--- Nxe4? worked out as planned, as the game was agreed a draw after 20.Qd7? Bf6 21.Bxf6 Nxf6 22.Qxe6+ Qxe6 23.Rxe6 Rxc2. Unnoticed white however had the much stronger 20.Rxg7+! Kxg7 21.Qd7+ Rf7 22.Qd4+ Nf6 23.Bxf6+! with a winning position, as 23.--- Rxf6? will lose to 24.Qd7+ Rf7 25.Qxc8. Fiskaaen following this draw kept his norm performance at 2465 for the first eight rounds, but to get his IM-norm he still needs at least a draw as white against GM Tiger Hillarp in the last round.

FM Kush Bhagat (2245) and **GM Erik Blomqvist (2483)** discussed the good old Mieses variation of a Scotch opening, and both players spent more or less no time for the first 13 moves. Then both however spent some 80 minutes for the next seven moves. Black did fine after exchanging one set of knights plus the light-squared bishops. The position however became very double-edged as white at move 19, still with his king at e1, established a passed pawn at e6. Black made the better decisions here and came clearly better as he within a few moves could exchange the queens and pick up white's advanced pawn. White fought on and for a few moves succeeded in getting enough counterplay in the rook and knight endgame. Exchanging the rooks however was a serious mistake, as the remaining knight endgame was close to winning for black due to his more active king.



Bhagat

Such technical endgames with relatively few pieces can be remarkably difficult to play accurately, even for very strong players. This was illustrated by the final moves of this game, which already had jumped back and forth between draw and winning for black a few times:



Here 58.--- Ke2! 59.Ne4 h3 60.Kc5 h2 61.Ng3+ Kf3 62.Nh1 Kg2 63.Kd4 Kxh1 64.Ke3 Kg2 is winning for black with a one tempo margin. The game instead took a final turn in favour of white with 58.--- Kg2? 59.Nc4! Kf2 60.Ne5 Kg3 61.Nc4! h3 62.Ne3 h2 63.Nf1+ Kg2 64.Nxh2 ½ - ½

FM Shubh Jayesh Laddha (2308) versus **FM Alexander Øye-Strømberg (2248)** was a game in which both players needed a full point to keep their IM norm chances alive. A bit surprisingly the game still ended up as a relatively early draw – but not for no reason. The opening was a fairly balanced Ruy Lopez in which all the bishops and one set of knights were exchanged within the first 15 moves. Later white played for a win with a kingside attack, while black had some counterplay against white’s queenside pawns. Then it all suddenly burned out:



26.Rxf7 Qxd3 27.Rxg7+ Kxg7 28.Qxe5+ Kg8 29.Qe6+ Kh8 30.Qxh6+ Kg8 31.Qg5+ – and white, a rook down, found nothing better than a repetition of checks, while black had no choice.

GM Torbjørn Ringdal Hansen (2415) and **IM John Paul Wallace (2373)** meanwhile had entered a modest French Tarrasch line with 3... Be7, but the game soon accelerated as white established a pawn at e5 and invited black to capture a pawn at b2. White kept an initiative after taking back the pawn at c5, although black after exchanging two minor pieces appeared to have found a safe home for his king at d7.



23... Nf7? however was too careless as 24.Nxe6! Qxe6 25.f5 soon gave white a strong attack. As both players ran short of time and made some mistakes, the position at move 40 was difficult to evaluate:



Now white should have kept the rook with 40.Rf8!, as black could start to play for a win after 40.Rxe7?! Qxe7 41.d5 Qc5+ 42.Kf1 Qxb5+. White however also played for a win, and a fascinating struggle after five hours came up – with queen and four passed pawns against queen, knight and two passed pawns.



Now 55.--- Nc8! intending 56.Qa1 Qa3 57.g7 Ne7 or 56.g7 Ne7 reportedly would have been drawish (!). Instead 55.--- Nf5? was a blunder as white and his passed pawn armada after 56.Qxf5 a1Q 57.Qf7+ was winning – despite the two black queens! Black in frustration now blundered one of his queens (!) with 57.--- Kd6? 58. Qf8+ Kxd5 59.Qxb4, and resigned after 59.--- Qa7+ 60.g7 Kxe6 61.Kh6 Kf6 62.Qf4+ Ke7 63.g8Q. The situation with two queens versus one in the first place is very unusual, and this extraordinary complicated and entertaining game is the only one I have seen in which both players had two queens against one queen!

FM Namitbir Singh Walia (2351) versus **FM Raem Sherman (2390)** saw a Classical French a la Steinitz. Black’s apparently creative idea with 10.--- g5!? followed by 11.--- d4!? is well known to theory and was played almost instantly. Something however went too fast for black, as white came clearly better after blowing up almost all the center and exchanging one set of knights plus the dark-squared bishops. White still repeated two times with queen moves afterwards, but then wisely decided to play on with 21.Qf3! instead of 21.Qf2. White later kept an initiative, although black improved a bit as his king found a relatively safe home at h8. Shortly before the first time control, white creatively gave up two minor pieces for a rook to open the kingside:



39.Nf7+! Rxf7 40.Bxf7 Qxf7 41.gxf5 Nxf5? 42.Qh2! Re8 43.Qf4 Bd7 44.Qc7 Re7 45.Rxd7! Rxd7 46.Qe5+ Kg8 47.Rxf5 1-0

Irish **WIM Trisha Kanyamarala (2160)** has really improved her playing following a shaky start on this tournament, and today made a balanced 19-move draw as white against Indian **IM Sidhant Mohapatra (2369)**. None of the players made obvious mistakes in a positional Semi-Slav Anti-Meran duel. White might have had had a very slight edge in a rather static isolated queen’s pawn position when black offered a draw. Trisha following this kept her full point lead in the duel for the best woman prize.





Myagmarsuren

CM Evsuld Myagmarsuren (2171) versus Dion Krivenko (2244) was a teenager duel in which both players needed a full point to keep their IM-norm chances alive. The opening was a symmetrical English in which white's fianchetto set up put no pressure. Black took over the initiative with 14.--- e4, and later happily exchanged the pawn to open the kingside against white's king. The materially balanced position after 28 moves obviously was painful for white, as his pair of bishops in no way compensated for his too active king at f3 and black's almost total dark-square dominance. Myagmarsuren understandably proved unable to find the best moves with almost no time left on the clock, and so black before 40 moves reached a minor piece endgame with an extra piece.

Krivenko following this win needed a last round win against a player rated above 2446 to score an IM norm, and this proved impossible as his last-round opponent has «only» 2369. Still of course a performance of 2399 one round before the end is great for the 18 year old Estonian. Not to forget: A performance of 2342 after eight rounds of course still is amazing for 14 year old and heavily underrated (if still somewhat unpredictable) Myagmarsuren.

CM Akhilseh Nagare (2245) versus Advaitt Srikant Koduri (2162) was a rather Grünfeld-like Slav Exchange, in which white despite the symmetrical pawns kept a pleasant edge – much due to his strong knight square at c5. The pawn symmetry was finally broken following a tactical rook exchange at a5 in move 23–24, and white due to his passed a-pawn following this appeared close to winning. During mutual time pressure black however succeeded first in blocking the pawn at a6, and then creating enough counterplay for a draw in the remaining queen and rook position.



Westrum

CM Kim Roger Hansen Westrum (2205) as white in a French against **IM Gerard Welling (2206)** went for a solid King's Indian Advance set up with 2.d3 and 3.Qe2. A tense struggle followed in the middle game, as white took space on the kingside with e5 – while black pushed his passed d-pawn forward all the way to d3 before move 15. White within a few moves proved able to win the pawn and black's pair of bishops did not last long. After 25 moves the remaining position with queen, one rook, one bishop and seven pawns against queen, one rook, one bishop and six pawns still was fairly easy to handle for black – as the bishops were opposite-coloured and the extra white pawn at c4 had no way to cross the overprotected c5-square.

White found no way to improve his position and black could «check-in» a draw after 46 moves.

CM Andreas Skotheim (2234) and **CM Neeraj Harish (2024)** discussed a positional Three Knights variation in the Grünfeld Opening, in which chances were almost balanced. White held a slight structural advantage due to black's isolated pawn at b6, and kept a slight edge as black came up with nothing but sound exchanges. Soon before 40 moves white finally won the b6-pawn, although the remaining rook endgame with four against three kingside pawns was a fairly safe draw.

CM Indy Soutcott-Moyers (2143) and **FM Ritvik Krishnan (2206)** had an interesting discussion about a Ragozin Queen's Gambit. White took two pawns at c7 and b7, and gave back one of them at b2. White following this logically came a pawn up, although black's active pieces including a seventh rank rook first gave him some counterplay. White proved able to activate his pieces while black proved able to exchange the remaining queenside pawns, leaving after 40 moves a drawish position with rook, bishop and five pawns against rook, bishop and four pawns.

White very understandably continued for a good while, but still finding no way forward he finally accepted a draw by repetition after 58 moves. Both players are in for a solid plus result, although Krishnan following this draw is definitely out as an IM norm candidate.



Krishnan



Gudbrandsen

FM Gustav Gudbrandsen (2197) and **Peder Marcus Aamodt (2126)** entered a positional Sicilian Moscow line, leading to very blocked position in which no pawn was exchanged for the first 30 moves. Black due to his fine knights at b4 and c5 first was better, and sacrificing a pawn at b4 to intervene at c1 with the queen later reportedly was a good idea. Black under time pressure however failed to find the best continuation of the attack, hence white got the time needed to organize a defence and push forward his passed a-pawn with a decisive effect. 1-0 after 56 moves.

Pantham Kaewpitakkun (2023) versus **CM Soham Datar (2188)** saw a Sicilian Scheveningen duel, leading to a position in dynamic balance after an early queen exchange of the queens, the light-squared bishops and one set of knights. The endgame with two rooks, knight and six pawns versus two rooks, bishop and six pawns still was unbalanced. White had the better structure and proved able to win one of the black e-pawns. Black first had reasonable compensation, but helpfully exchanged it down to a rook and minor piece endgame in which white had a sound extra pawn. White following this was clearly better when he in turn helpfully accepted a draw by repetition after 33 moves.

FM Siddhant Gaikwad (2039) and **Shadi Sian (2182)** entered an apparently relaxed Russian opening in which white after castling long immediately accelerated on the kingside with 9.g4!? and 10.g5. The first wave of white's kingside attack was not really dangerous, although white after exchanging three minor pieces still kept a kingside initiative – while black still had made no progress on the queenside.

24.--- e5? later was an instructive mistake from black, as 25.b3! Qe6 26.f5! gave white strong pressure. Black now finally got some counterplay due to his passed e-pawn, although white could leave one rook at e1 and continue the direct kingside attack with the rest of his army.



Gaikwad



35.--- d4?! 36.Rh4 Qe3 37.Qh5 Re4? 38.Qh7+ Kf7 39.Rxe4 1-0



Simonsen

Scotch veteran **IM Stephen Mannion (2142)** entered a Sicilian Najdorf and for a while had an initiative as white against **David Mindestrømmen Simonsen (1930)**.

The still 13 year old Norwegian however defended well and was efficiently exchanging off enemy pieces – hence he suddenly came better in the queen and knight endgame. Black following this was a sound pawn up with a winning position when he after the first time control forced a draw by repeating checks.

Lukas Dominik Gåsland (1905) and Rishi Vijayakumar (2172) this afternoon discussed a positional Zukertort opening, which suddenly turned very tactical:



14.Nf5!? Bxg2 15.Qg4 Kf7 16.Qh5+ Kg8 17.Qg4 Kf8 18.Qh5 and now the 12 year old black player jumped into the ice water and came up with a winning position following 18.--- g6! 19.Qxh7+ Ke6 20.Ng7+ Kf7 21.Nf5+ Ke6 22.Ng7+ Kd6 23.Kxg2 Rh8 24.Qxg6 Qh3+ 25.Kf3. So far brilliant from black, but instead of 25.--- Rag8! with a much better position he now stumbled into a lost position with 25.--- Kc7? 26.Qf5! e4+?! 27.Kxe4 Qg2+ 28.Qf3.



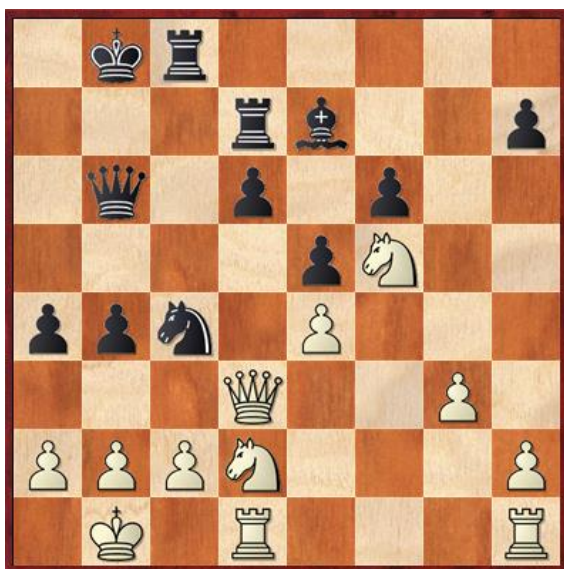
And now, in a highly unusual position with three extra pawns for white, the probably rather shaken white player offered a draw – which the still concentrated black player accepted.

Sigurd Kittilsen (1981) and **Sebastian Lien (1911)** this afternoon discussed a Caro-Kann Tartakower position in which white had the better pawn structure and a center advantage, although his king at c1 gave black some chances for a counterattack. Black indeed first was ahead in the following attack race, although the position was difficult to play from both sides. White took over the initiative as black chose a too slow plan with 25.--- b4? and 26.--- b3?



Now 28.Bxe4? apparently was weaker than 28.Rxe4!, but none of the players had seen a key black resource... 28.--- Qxg4! 29.Bf5 and now 29.--- Nf4! with the clever idea of 30.Bxg4 Nd3+ 31.Kb1 Nxf2 would have given black fine chances. Instead 29.--- Qg3? 30.Qxg3 Bxg3 was in accordance with the white plan, and following 31.Rg1? Bf4? 32.Bxc8 he won an exchange (and later also this jumpy game).

Norwegian junior **Kristoffer Wang Strømhaug (1960)** and German **WGM Fiona Sieber (2264)** today discussed a Sicilian Richter-Rauzer variation in which both players castled long. Black had approximately equalized after exchanging two minor pieces, and played hardball for a win with a pawn storm against her opponent's king. One of the problems about sacrificing a knight however is that your opponent can afford to sacrifice one back:



24.--- Na3+!? 25.bxa3 bxa3+ 26.Nb3 axb3 27.axb3 Bf8 and chances are about balanced.
 28.c4? however soon proved too weakening: 28.--- Rb7 and now



29.Ka2? Rxc4! 30.Rd2 with an extra pawn for black. Taking a second one with 30.--- Rxe4? however was tricky but not good – as white following 31.Rc1 Rb4 32.Rc3 e4? 33.Qd5 Qb5 34.Nxd6 soon won back both pawns. White even came a pawn up in the rook endgame a few moves later on, although black had the draw fully under control with one pawn against two pawns.

Aidas Juodziukynas (1917) versus **Olav Bjørkan (2022)** saw a Catalan opening backfiring for white, as he after helpfully exchanging the dark-squared bishop for a knight at f6, had less than no compensation for black's extra pawn at c4.



Now 15.d5? was the critical answer, but still dubious due to the strong reply: 15.--- e4! 16.Nd4 Nxd4 17.Qxd4 Qxd4 18.exd4 cxb3 19.Rd1 Bd3 with two extra pawns for black in the rooks and bishop endgame. Sacrificing an exchange at d3 probably was the best practical try, although black still won well deserved after 33 moves.

Elias B. Rustan (1941) and **Even Hetland (1970)** are two highly talented teenagers from the Horten chess club, both having wasted too many chances in their first GM-group. Instead of taking a draw they today used the chance to play an interesting Sicilian Najdorf game against each other. Remarkably the last board today probably had the longest preparation duel, as both players more or less blitzed out their first 20 moves. Following tactical exchange the players, when they started to think, already had reached a balanced position with queen, two rooks, one light-squared bishop, one knight and six pawns on each side. The position still was lively as white had castled long and black short. White's plan for winning this attacking race was creative, although still asked too much from the pieces:



25.g6? Nxc6 26.Rxc6? hxc6 27.Qh6 Qh5 28.Qf4 b3 29.a3 bxc2 and black was an exchange up with the more dangerous attack. Hetland this time completed the game convincingly.

FM Sergey Eliseev (2276) had withdrawn before round 8, and consequently **Jan Sørgerd (1966)** was given a walk over draw. Sørgerd is eager to play more chess and definitely will be back for round 9!



Open Group

Meanwhile, in the **Open** today: 17 year old **Håvard Eriksen Bech (1939)**, under pressure following a somewhat shaky round 7, hit back from the start of round 8. Bech won a pawn with a clear advantage from the Queen's Gambit Accepted opening duel, as white against top rated 35 year old **Mathias Nesheim (1981)**. White later increased his positional pressure and well before move 30 won decisive material after switching to a direct kingside attack:



31.Qg4! Ng5 32.h4 f6 33.hxg5 fxe5? 34.gxh6 Bf8 35.Rd7 Rc1 36.Rxg7+ Kh8 37.Rg8+ Kh7 39.Qg6 mate!

Bech's first prize still is no way given, as the French hope **Benjamin Spagnoli (1851)** won convincingly as white against talented **Edvard Reinertsen (1783)** on the second board:



14.--- b6?? was a decisive blunder in an otherwise interesting position – and white was alert to demonstrate why: 15.Ba6+! Kb8 16.Rxd6! Rxd6 17.Bf4 Rd8 18.Nb5 Bc8 19.Nxd6 Ng6 20.Nxc8+ Nxf4 21.Ne7 with a sound extra piece for white.

The third board duel between **Nikolai Olsen Wernberg (1906)** and **Aksel Elias Gjersvik (1693)** on the other hand was a tight, long and fairly sound draw. White had a light pressure and was close to winning for a few moves in the rook endgame, following an inaccuracy from black. 12 year old Gjersvik however still is playing far better than his elo and found his way to a draw with a pawn less.

Fourth board duel between **Tord Albrigtsen (1634)** and **Mikkel Damtoft Solbakken (1817)** also was a tight four-hour junior duel. Black however was slightly better from the start of this rook and knight endgame, and patient Solbakken in the end won it fairly convincingly.

Much the same pattern was seen in the fifth board duel between **Rune Kleiven Rynning (1818)** and the 68 year old Ukrainian veteran **Mykhailo Kuzmenko (1806)**. Black was slightly better from the start of this double-rook endgame, and got the help needed to win it.

The lower boards in the open has had remarkably few surprising results. 11 year old **Terje Kevin Lysen (1590)** however deserves attention for another strong win, this time following an instructive queen capture as black against **Bjørn Lie (1678)**:



12.Bh6? Bxh6 13.Qxh6 f4! 14.g4 Rf6 15.gxh5 g5! 16.Qxf6 Nxf6 and black soon won.

Bech following this has 7,0/8 at unshared first place, while **Spagnoli** is unshared second at 6,5 and **Solbakken** unshared third at 6,0. **Gjersvik** and **Wernberg** at 5,5 still are in the run for top three, which will qualify not only for a moneyprize but also for a place in next year's GM group!

Bech during round 9 will get an interesting test as black against uneven but highly capable Kuzmenko, while Spagnoli will be white against Wernberg and Solbakken white against Gjersvik.

There are no title norm chances to calculate in the Open group, but still much excitement as neither the first, second or third prize is given before the start of last round. Bech is above 2000 following his strong result here and has the best rating performance with a margin of more than 150 points. Very well deserved, this young player from Harstad before the start of last round can be congratulated with a safe place in top three and a ticket to the next GM group!



Bech



Lysen

Photos by IA Monica Lauvik Fjeldstad