

FAGERNES INTERNATIONAL AUTUMN 2023

THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT

8



GM Group

No game was drawn on the top boards for the first two hours today – and neither were any other games! Second board duel between GM Krishnan Sasikiran of India and GM Kaido Kulaots of Estonia ended up with a tense four-hour draw, as black after the first time control felt forced to repeat checks with queen, knight and three pawns against rook, bishop, knight and three pawns. Third board game between GM Robert Hovhannisyan of Armenia and GM Ido Gorshtein of Israel also was a tight, although less dramatical, four hour draws. At that stage GM Mads Andersen of Denmark was about to complete his instructive attacking win as white against Norwegian IM Tor Fredrik Kaasen on the third board. GM Eltaj Safarli of Azerbaijan on the first board had already completed a sound 25 moves attacking win as white against so far successful GM Mitrabha Guha of India. Norwegian IM Elham Amar on the fifth board was still playing as white against Swedish IM Ludvig Carlsson, but white at that stage was clearly better and went on to win the endgame.

Following this remarkably hard-fought second to last round, first place at 6,0/8 is shared between start number 2 Safarli, number 3 Andersen, number 5 Amar and number 9 Kulaots. Kulaots white against Safarli and Amar white against Andersen are top board pairings for the last round. Start number 1 GM Robert Hovhannisyan remains undefeated, but following too many draws he is one out of eight players at 5,5/8. 12 players within half a point obviously can result in a very hard-fought or a not so hard-fought last round, although the higher rated players at boards 3–6 should have a very strong motivation to win their games.

There is still also an exciting German duel for the best woman prize, as WGM Josefine Heinemann and WGM Fiona Sieber both can be found at 4,5/8.

18 year old Amar can make a GM-norm with a draw in round 9, but this should not affect him too much as he already has completed four such norms within the last four months. Kaasen is definitely out of the run for his third GM-norm after losing his second game today, and the IM-norm candidates neither had a very good second to last round. Israeli sensation man Itay Sitbon lost some speed for the norm schedule, while winning a few more Elo points, following a draw as white against WGM Sieber. Sitbon following this still has an IM-norm within reach, but now needs to defeat GM Torbjørn Ringdal Hansen with the plack pieces in his last game. The 16 year old Indian FM Harsh Suresh despite a slow start in this tournament has had a strong second half. Suresh can still make an IM-norm as he today first won his black game against IM Frode Elsness and then got a very high rated opponent for round 9. Suresh however still has a long and thorny road to an IM-norm, needing a full point as black against top rated GM Hovhannisyan.

Today's first board duel between **GM Eltaj Safarli (2612)** and **GM Mitrabha Guha (2512)** started up with a solid Russian opening. Both players spent a lot of time from the opening. White accepted a double c-pawn, and got some space advantage after 12.c5. White started a kingside attack as he instructively exchanged a bishop at g6 and then went for a h4–h5-advance, confronting black's two g-pawns. Guha for once ran seriously short of time, and respectfully resigned as Safarli after 25 moves was about to establish his rook on the seventh rank with a winning attack to follow.



Safarli vs Guha

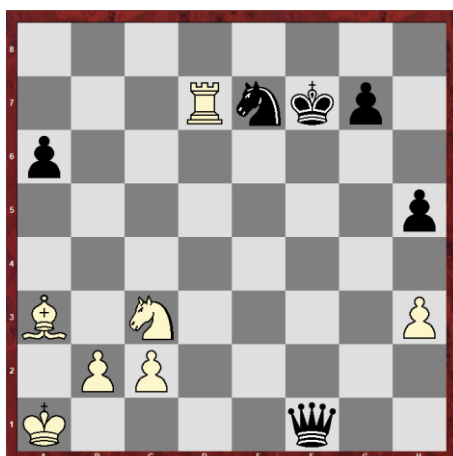


GM Krishnan Sasikiran (2595) versus **GM Kaido Kulaots (2508)** was a Sicilian Taimanov duel in which white demonstrated his attacking ambitions by castling long. Black of course went for tactical counterplay on the queenside, pushing his b-pawn forward to b4. Sasikiran apparently ran a big risk when later taking the pawn, but his idea turned out to be giving up the queen for one rook and one bishop afterwards. This left after 23 moves a highly complicated position with two rooks, one bishop, one knight and six pawns against queen, one rook, one knight and six pawns.



Sasikiran vs Kulaots

The queen sacrifice idea was known from an earlier games which former World Championship-finalist Nepomniachtchi. Both Sasikiran and Kulaots following this had been fast on the clocks so far, but now spent a lot of time for the next five moves. White following this ran short of time for 40 moves, but played for a win by advancing his e-pawn all up to e7. Kulaots and his queen still succeeded with their active defence and the game was drawn by a repetition of checks after 41 moves.



Draw agreed by repetition – as white considered his knight too passive and black’s passed pawn too dangerous in case of 42.Nb1?! Qxh3 43.Rxe7+ Kg8.

GM Robert Hovhannisyan (2616) and **GM Ido Gorshtein (2512)** discussed a Sicilian Najdorf in which three sets of minor pieces were exchanged within the first 20 moves, leaving an about balanced position with queen, two rooks, knight and seven pawns against queen, two rooks, bishop and seven pawns.

White was closer to something after the queens were exchanged. After 33 moves he had a potentially troublesome passed pawn at b5 in the endgame with one rook, one knight and five pawns against one rook, one bishop and five pawns. Black however succeeded in first stopping the pawn at b6 and then to exchange it by tactical means. White offered a draw as the players after 39 moves were about to enter a drawn rook endgame with three pawns in each camp.

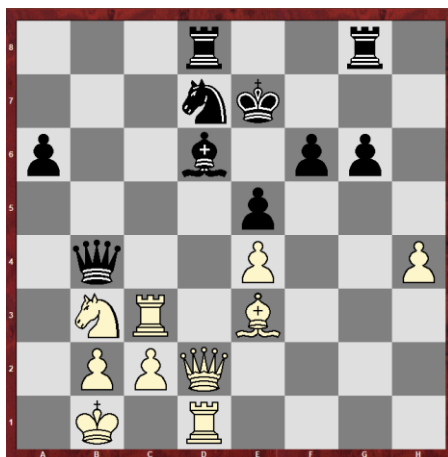


Hovhannisyan vs Gorshtein

The fourth board duel between **GM Mads Andersen (2606)** and **IM Tor Fredrik Kaasen (2469)** was a very different Sicilian Najdorf, in which two sets of pawns and none of the pieces were exchanged within the first 20 moves. White castled long and made the better considerations during some tactical pawn exchanges, as white’s control over the open d-file combined with active minor pieces made black’s king at e7 much more vulnerable than the white king at b1. Both players here ran short of time, but Andersen was ahead on the clock and steadily completed his attack on the board.



Kaasen vs Andersen



35.Na5! Nb8 36.Qd5 Qb5 37.Rc5! Qe2 38.Nb7 Qe3 39.Nxd6 Rgf8 40.Rc7+ Nd7 41.Nc8+ and 1-0 due to mate next move.

The junior duel between **IM Elham Amar (2568)** and **IM Ludvig Carlsson (2536)** started up like a rather sensible Caro-Kann main line, in which both players castled short. Black equalized by fairly sound moves after exchanging one set of knights and the dark-squared bishops. After the queens were exchanged as well, black kept a slight initiative because of his e-file rook. White however proved able to reorganize his pieces, and after 40 moves he due to his better pawn structure and queenside pawn majority had slightly better chances with one rook, one bishop, one knight and six pawns left on each side. White definitely made the better evaluation when black offered an exchange of his remaining bishop, and suddenly had a positionally winning endgame with one rook, one knight and five pawns against one rook, one bishop and five pawns. Black soon was forced to give up his bishop to eliminate white's queenside pawns, and resigned after 55 moves.



Amar vs Carlsson

GM Frode Urkedal (2519) as white against **FM Mohamed Anees Rabi (2309)** came far ahead on the clock in a Sicilian Richter-Rauzer duel. On the board white castled short, but following some early tactical exchanges the position slowed down with a queen exchange and reached about equal chances. White after 27 moves was one hour ahead on the clock and had an extra h-pawn, although black's pair of bishops and better pawn structure balanced the chances. Black later had to give up the pair of bishops, but won back the pawn and had enough counterplay to draw the remaining endgame with rooks and opposite coloured bishops.



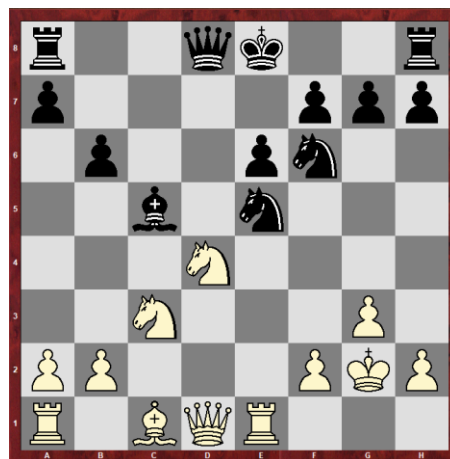
Rabi vs Urkedal

Urkedal has slowed down following a strong first half of the tournament, and following this draw is out of the fight for the top three prizes. 20 year old Rabi is stilling doing well above expected, but needed a win in this game to keep alive his hope for an IM-norm this week.

The «new Norwegian» duel between **IM John Paul Wallace (2365)** and **IM Semen Mitusov (2468)** was a Catalan in which a very early b6 and Bb7 worked out very well for black. White's pawn at e5 here was a weakness more than an asset, and black snatched it with his knight at move 13. The counterattack try with 14.Nxe6? was a blunder from white. The following tactics left black two sound exchanges up in the endgame, and so white stopped the clock after 27 moves.



Mitusov vs Wallace



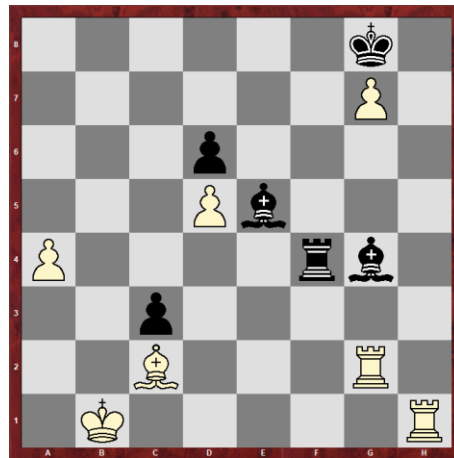
14.Nxe6? Qxd1 15.Nxd1 Nd3! 16.Nxg7++ Kf8 17.Ne6+ Ke7
18.Nxc5 Nxe1+ 19.Kf1 Nc2! and black soon won.

The Norwegian titleholder duel between **IM Mads Vestby-Ellingsen (2343)** and **GM Torbjørn Ringdal Hansen (2434)** saw a Trompovsky duel in which the queens were exchanged early, leaving white with a pleasant space advantage due to his d5-pawn. Black's search for counterplay gave up two pawns for loose compensation, hence white after 26 moves held a clear advantage with two rooks, one bishop, one knight and six pawns against two rooks, two bishops and four pawns. White gradually opened the kingside for his rooks and established a passed pawn at g6.



Vestby-Ellingsen vs Ringdal Hansen

Starting up his passed a-pawn as well, white anyway was much better when black at move 48 went for a rather desperate exchange sacrifice. White later probably had the full point under control, despite the reduced number of pawns. Vestby-Ellingsen efficiently decided the game early in the sixth hour, giving up his passed pawn pawn at g7 to open the g-file and win a piece:

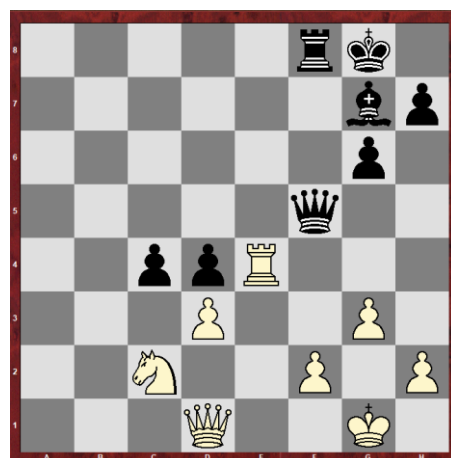


52.Rh8+! Kxg7 53.Rh4 Rb4+ 54.Ka2 1-0

Norwegian **IM Frode Elsness (2466)** in the meantime had given his English fianchetto a new try as white against **FM Harsh Suresh (2336)**. Black more or less equalized with a sound symmetrical set up. After 25 moves chances according to the computers were fairly balanced with queen, one rook, one knight and four pawns against queen, one rook, one bishop and four pawns. Black however now had the much more active pieces and increased the pressure by advancing his pawn to c4.



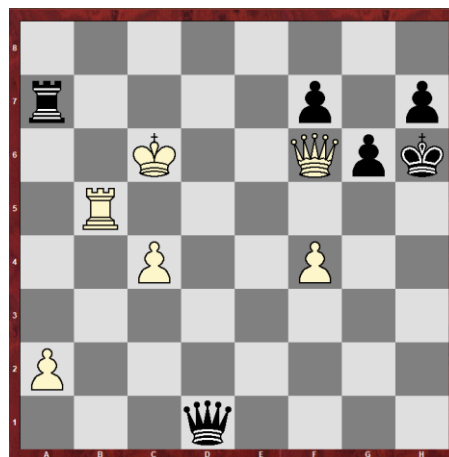
Elsness vs Suresh



27.Qd2? now was a blunder, as black after 27.... cxd3! 28.Rf4 dxc2 29.Rxf5 Rc8! decided the game.

IM Aksel Bu Kvaløy (2458) had his third Rogaland junior duel as white against **FM Shazil Shehzad (2296)** today. White in this Torre Opening soon started a kingside attack, but missing the most critical continuation he instead ended up sacrificing one rook for two bishops with a dubious position. Black in turn wasted time upon a strange queen maneuver, and felt forced to sacrifice back material. After the players unexpectedly cooperated to exchange queens, the remaining endgame with rook, knight and six pawns versus rook, bishop and six pawns was about equal. The game ended up like a draw by repetition just before the first time control.

16 year old **Sergey Eliseev (2083)** today got a 40 minutes advantage on the clock from move 1, as opponent **GM Andrea Stella (2447)** had not noted that the games today started at 13.00 instead of the usual 14.00. The GM however appeared much better prepared for this Sicilian Richter-Rauzer duel, and after 16 moves black had equalized the clocks and taken over initiative on the board following a powerful d5-break. The heat intensified as black a few moves later sacrificed his bishop at b2. White could not accept the offer and became vulnerable of the dark queenside squares, but still kept the material balance. After both players passed the time control after 40 moves with a small margin, a tense fight followed as both apparently played for a win in the queen and rook position with four pawns on each side. Eliseev needed a win to keep chances for a sensational IM-norm alive, and ran his king and passed pawns up the queenside. With both players below a minute on the clock, the brave king and pawn run however ended with a time trouble black out.



57.c5?? Qd7+ and white resigned without asking for 58.Kb6 Qc7/Qb7 mate 0-1.

Eliseev following this is out of the IM norm run, but still of course in for a big Elo gain.

IM Yahli Sokolovsky (2447) and **WGM Josefine Heinemann (2296)** entered a closed Ruy Lopez line, in which white disrupted black's pawn structure by a delayed exchange of the bishop for a knight at c6. Eager to open the kingside for his pair of bishops, black following 12...f5!? allowed white to win a pawn by a tactical 13.Nxe5!?. Following ten tactical moves the players reached a rook and bishop endgame in which white had an extra pawn, although opposite-coloured bishops and black's active rook here almost balanced the chances.



Heinemann vs Sokolovsky

As white found no way to avoid a rook exchange, black due to the opposite-coloured bishops probably had the draw under fair control in the bishop endgame. White still had a passed pawn at a5 and played on until black at move 66 could (and did) force a draw by sacrificing her bishop upon white's second last pawn – leaving the well-known endgame fortress with a-pawn and dark-squared bishop against king.

GM Lev Yankelevich (2399) versus **FM Ritvik Krishnan (2176)** saw a half-open Sicilian Moscow duel, in which white due to his pair of bishops kept a slight pressure after the queens were exchanged. Black succeeded to exchange one of the bishops, but had to accept a weakening of his pawn structure. This made the rook and bishop endgame challenging despite the opposite-coloured bishops. White following this soon won a pawn after the first time control, but still had a hard time winning the game due to the reduced material. From move 61 white had an endgame with c- and h-pawns versus c-pawn, with the extra pawn parked at h6. White first had promising chances but failed to find any plan to cross the h7-square, controlled from behind by black's rook and bishop. Krishnan defended remarkably well and after 111 moves he could demand a draw due to the 50 move rule. Yankelevich during this long game still felt ill, and after the game requested to be removed from the pairings for round 9.

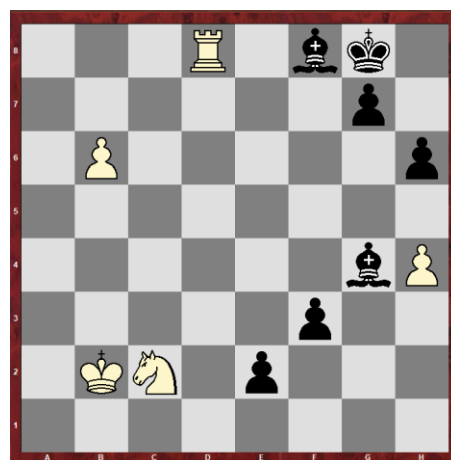
The teenager duel between Norwegian **FM Andre Gjestemoen-VonHirsch (2327)** and Israeli **FM Roy Vagman (2294)** was a rather untheoretical Queen's Pawn Fianchetto or King's Indian Attack, in which white following an e4-break got some more space and a pair of bishops. Black however hit back with a thematic e5-break in the center and approximately balanced the chances. White gave up his pair of bishops when exchanging the bishop for a knight at d5. After 31 moves white left a repetition of moves, but apparently had no advantage with queen, rook, knight and six pawns versus queen, rook, bishop and six pawns. Black however became too helpful when first disrupting his kingside pawn structure and then exchanging it down to a minor piece endgame. White definitely had the better chances here, and black after choosing the wrong plan soon lost both his weak f-pawns. 15 year old Vagman after losing this game is also out as an IM-norm candidate. Gjestemoen-VonHirsch never really was in as an IM-norm candidate, but following this nice win still is around his expected score.

Itay Sitbon (2163) and **WGM Fiona Sieber (2305)** today discussed a fairly typical Trompovsky position, in which white within the first five moves had exchanged his bishop for a knight at f6 to establish a center advantage



12.Nd6? was an advanced blunder worth remembering, as white soon would have had to give up his queen after 12... cxd6! 13.Qe4 Nf6 14.Qxa8 Qc7! White now instead got a pleasant positional advantage after 12... Nf6? 13.Nxc8 Qxc8. After 31 moves the players had reached a double minor piece endgame with four pawns on each side. White's passed a-pawn gave him a small edge, but black due to the opposed-coloured bishops here had the draw under control.

Israeli **WFM Michelle Katkov (2071)** and Polish **FM Jacek Szwed (2376)** had a French Tarrasch duel, in which white following an early queen exchange hung on an loose extra pawn at c5. Black got compensation due to this active pieces and won back the pawn at g2. After exchanging the queens black kept an initiative, and creatively sacrificed an exchange to get one pawn and an active pair of bishops. After 37 moves, the complex endgame with one rook, one knight and four pawns against two bishops and five pawns reportedly still was drawish. Black due to his big kingside majority with four against two pawns however had the more easy position to play, and after establishing a passed pawn at e3 he soon was winning from a computer point of view. The finish of the game still was an exciting passed pawn race from a human point of view:



48... e1Q! 49.Nxe1 f2 50.b7 fxe1Q 51.Rxf8+ Kxf8 52.b8Q+ Ke7 53.Qc7+ Bd7 54.Qc5+ Kf7 and 0-1 as white was a piece down and soon running out of checks.

FM Yuval Yaniv (2382) versus **Artyom Bogdanov (2270)** saw a closed Ruy Lopez line, in which white's space advantage first gave him a slight plus. White's e5-break here however only resulted in exchanges. The remaining rook and bishop endgame following this was approximately balanced: Black had an extra pawn, but his three f-pawns gave white structural compensation. The position later deadlocked with white's passed pawn safely blocked at d5, and a draw was agreed at move 50. 12 year old Bogdanov remarkably is still undefeated in this tournament, but this seventh draw in row (!) burned his last chance for an IM-norm this week.

IM Erik Hedman (2326) versus **CM Dion Krivenko (2234)** saw a Sicilian Najdorf opening in which black castled short, while white kept his king at e1 to start a direct pawn storm attack against the black king. White's classical Nf5-sacrifice here was interesting, and gave a jackpot as black failed to find the best defence. Hedman after castling long could open the kingside gate with a powerful 18.g6!, and soon he was ready for a big bang:



21.Rxg7+! Kxg7 22.Rg1+ Ng4 23.Bd4+ Rf6 24.Qg5+ Kh7 25.Rh1+ Rh6 26.Qg8 mate! 1-0

FM Reem Sherman (2299) versus **Kush Devnani (2221)** was another Sicilian Najdorf. In this one both players castled short, white however late and under some doubt. After two sets of minor pieces were exchanged, black for some moves was a pawn up. White due to his active pieces and pressure against the d6-pawn however had some compensation. In the end black paid back the extra pawn to reach a drawish endgame with queen, one bishop and five pawns against queen, one knight and five pawns. The players exchanged one set of pawns, passed the first time control and then agreed a draw.

Indian **FM Aniruddha Deshpande (2284)** as white against the young Mongolian **CM Chinguun Bayaraa (2206)** went for a Veresov attack. All knights plus the dark-squared bishops were exchanged early, but white much due to his open h-file later kept an initiative all into the rooks and bishop endgame. White eventually won a pawn at g5, but black came up with counterplay on the queenside and established a disturbingly passed a-pawn. White after forcing an exchange of black's passed pawn had an extra pawn after the time control. Few remaining pawns combined with active black pieces still made this endgame a fairly safe draw.

The junior duel between **Rohit Saravana Prakash (2226)** and **Kim Roger Hansen Westrum (2243)** started up like another closed Ruy Lopez duel. This one took a dramatical turn as white snatched a pawn at b5 with his queen. Black had compensation due to his active pieces, but white hung on his extra pawn for some 12 moves. Black finally won back the pawn after 25 moves. A balanced position with queen, two rooks, one bishop and three pawns on each side was agreed a draw the very next move.

Eivind Grunt Kreken (2237) versus **Akhilesh Nagare (2076)** was a Benkö Gambit in which white felt forced to give up his fianchetto bishops for a knight at c3. White later came a sound pawn up, although black still had a solid blockade of the extra a-pawn. Opening a second front on the kingside with the e5-break was a winning plan for white. Some inaccurate moves afterwards allowed black to escape into a difficult, but still not hopeless, endgame with rook, knight and three pawns against rook, bishop and four pawns. Black later became too eager to get rid of white's passed queenside pawn at c3, hence white could eat the black kingside pawns and let his new passed pawns on the kingside decide.

Indian chess artist **CM Joel Paul Ganta (2169)** unfortunately believed that this round as well would start at 14.00, and consequently arrived 55 minutes delayed for his white game against **CM Neeraj Harish (2076)**. Ganta although almost one hour behind on the clock still had 45 minutes plus the increment, due to this tournament's generous time limits.

As white in a Caro-Kann Advance he raised a promising kingside attack after castling long. 13 year old Harish succeeded to keep the material balance, but had a hard time developing his kingside pieces. After black finally succeeded to develop and exchange his minor pieces, white after 30 moves still had a strong initiative with queen, rook and five pawns on each side. Time however took its toll in the end here, as Ganta with less than a minute left of the clock first lost his advantage and then just blundered with 38.Rxf7?? Black after 38... Qe5! lost on time, while realizing that the threats against white's king at b1 could not be parried.

Evsuld Myagmarsuren (2107) and **FM Gustav Gudbrandsen (2275)** discussed a Modern opening in which black accepted a queen exchange at d8 and exchanged his fianchetto bishop for a knight at c3. Black here obviously hoped for a long term structural advantage due to white's two isolated c-pawns.

13 year old Myagmarsuren however had made the much better evaluation here, as his pair of bishops and more active pieces proved more important than the pawn structure. White was able to open the kingside thanks to a tactical f5-break, after which his seventh rank rook and pair of bishops before 40 moves completed the attack against black's king.



Myagmarsuren

Dutch veteran **IM Gerard Welling (2244)** gave his Colle System another try as white against the young Norwegian **FM Emerik Våpenstad Roulet-Dubonnet (2164)**, but the position soon opened as white took a pawn at c5. Black came up with counterplay in the center, and allowed white to win an exchange at a8. White obviously hoped to decide the game by a kingside attack when he intervened with 25.Qh7+. It soon turned out that white's stranded queen at h8/h7 was more in danger than the relatively safe black king at e7.



Roulet-Dubonnet vs Welling

Although black had got two pawns for the exchange and had taken over the initiative, white would still have been well in the game if he had played 33.Nh4! (preventing black from capturing the queen with 33... Ng6) instead of losing on time.

Roe Pelech (2087) versus **CM Andreas Skotheim (2211)** was a closed Ruy Lopez which soon opened, and white first had a normal space advantage. Black however came up with all the more queenside counterplay in the middle game, and following a strong pawn sacrifice with 20... c4! he soon won an exchange. Skotheim later instructively returned the exchange to destroy white's kingside pawn shelter and got a winning attack with queen, rook and four pawns left on each side. Then black, after winning a pawn, instructively exchanged the queen and rook to force a won pawn endgame.

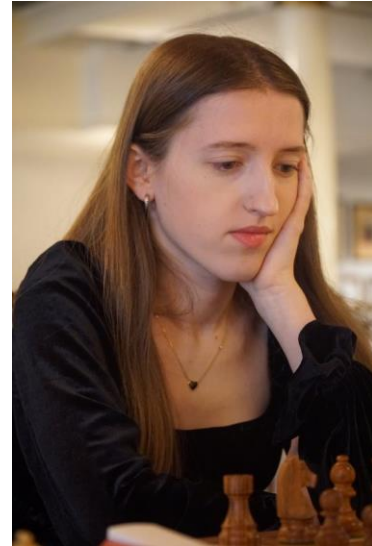


Pelech vs Skotheim

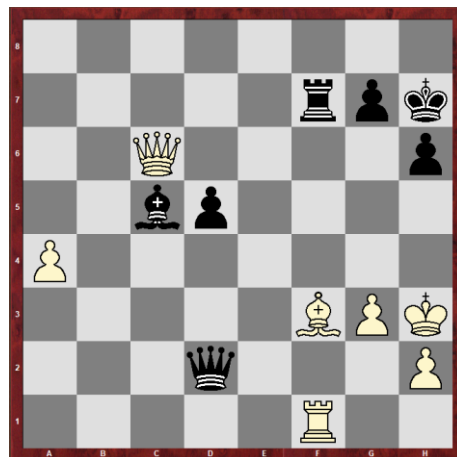
WGM Varshini Velavan (2217) versus **Randhiya Velavan (1852)** was a highly unfortunate duel between two long travelling sisters. Both accepted this without protests and the game became a hard-fought one. Varshini chose a positional Queen's Pawn Opening as her choice, and after exchanging all the knights soon got a pleasant advantage due to black's isolated pawn at d5. Randhiya for a long time defended well and protected the pawn. Black's position however soon collapsed as white in the fourth hour also started a kingside attack. After winning an exchange, white could force a safely won endgame before 40 moves.

Finnish **FM Oliver Wartiovaara (2321)** as white against the Norwegian-based Moldovan **WFM Valentina Verbin (2085)** went for a positional English fianchetto. White here kept an edge although black due to her pawn at e4 got a space advantage. Playing with two e-pawns, black came up with counterplay in her half-open f-file. 23... e5? although positionally natural in fact was a blunder. As white missed his chance to attack black's pawn at d5 with 24.Nc3!, black however got the time needed to play 24... exd4 and take over the initiative.

After 29 moves, the remaining position with queen, one rook, one bishop and five pawns on each side appeared drawish, especially taking into account the opposite-coloured bishops. Running short of time on the clock, Verbin in a double edged position however fell into a tactical trap:



Verbin

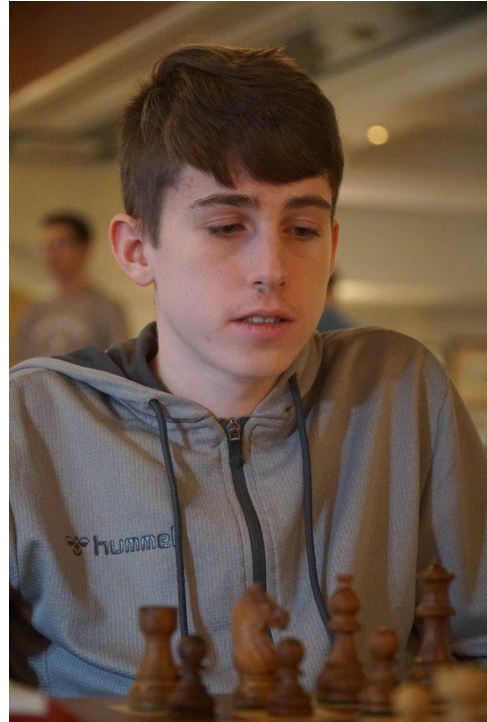


After 36... Qd3? 37.Be4+! white won an exchange, and the game ended within a few more moves.

This tournament's one and only Scottish duel between **Rishi Vijayakumar (2096)** and **IM Stephen Mannion (2179)** also was a great generation duel, as white is aged 11 and black 58. The game was a hard-fought Benkő Gambit in which white took the pawn, and much due to his knight stronghold at c4 also gradually got the better pieces. Black found reasonable defensive positions for his pieces, but he remained a pawn down and also had some worries about his pawn at d6. Young Rishi after stabilizing the queenside instructively turned to the kingside, and before 40 moves opened the position with a decisive e-file intervention. Mannion felt exhausted following a week with many long games, and with permission from the arbiter he was left out of the pairings for round 9.

The teenager duel between **Indy Southcott-Moyers (2022)** and **Mads Lind Schouten (2147)** started up like a rather slow King's Indian Averbakh duel, but as white castled long and black short the attacking directions still were given.

White first held an initiative. As black was able to close down white's pawnstorm on the kingside after exchanging three sets of minor pieces, black came slightly better. 32.f4! was a creative try for white to open the kingside, but black instead of taking the f-pawn hit back by a tactical Nxe4. Following this the players just before the first time control had reached a very tense position with queen and one rook left on each side: Black was a pawn up with two connected passed pawns on the kingside, but still could risk losing due to his much more open king. The natural 39.c5? however turned out to be a blunder, as black after 39... Rf6! suddenly made it very difficult for white to avoid a queen exchange without running into a dangerous attack himself. White at move 40 allowed a queen exchange, and black later had a controlled win in the rook endgame's passed pawn race.



Schouten

Norwegian **Shadi Sian (2146)** as white in the young teenager duel against Suisse **Cristian Arsenie (2091)** started up with 1.c4, but later transposed into a closed Catalan. Given the time to play Nh5 and exchange white's bishop at f4, black and his pair of bishops later had an advantage. Black's position appeared close to winning as he after 25 moves had exchanged one of the bishops and won an exchange for the other one. Black clearly was winning after the first time control, but trying to be elegant he within a few moves more invited white to give up his queen for two rooks. The remaining endgame with queen and three kingside pawns against rook, bishop and three kingside pawns was in no way an easy win. White here got the help needed to exchange two of his opponents three remaining pawns. Later the endgame with rook, bishop and f-pawn versus queen and g-pawn was a fortress draw.



Arsenie vs Sian

The Trøndelag junior duel between **Kristoffer Wang Strømhaug (1946)** and **Martin Øksendal (2123)** was even another Sicilian Najdorf duel. Both players here castled short. White and his pair of bishops first had some advantage. Exchanging the dark-squared bishop for a knight at b6 however was a positional misjudgement, and then 23.Na5?? was just a blunder – overlooking 23... Ne4! 24.Qe1 Bh4!, after which white could not defend both his kingside and the loose knight at a5.

Israeli **WFM Ronit Levitan (2114)** as white in Four Knights Opening against Norwegian **Peder Aamodt (2047)** demonstrated a good understanding with the first exchanges, as her space advantage and active pair of knights proved more important than black's pair of bishops. Black however gradually took over the initiative after opening the h-file, and reached a won position as he just before the first time control could intervene on the eight rank with his queen and win a key pawn at c2. 40.--- Bd1?? however was a time trouble blunder turning the board all around, as white after 41.Nxd6+ soon got a decisive attack against the black king.

The young English **CM Sohum Lohia (2177)** as white in a Sicilian Maroczy Bind against Norwegian veteran **FM Richard Bjerke (2074)** exchanged one set of knights and then played hardball for a kingside attack with f4 and g4–g5 just after the opening. Black pawns appeared a little lose after he played f6 to exchange white's pawn at g5. Black however hit back with the center break 28.--- e5!? and after 29.fxe5 would have had a sound position if simply taking back with 29.--- dxe5. Black instead helped white to improve his positions before taking back – and then sacrificed an exchange as white had got a strong knight at d5 and bishop at c5. White kept the more active pieces after winning the exchange and soon after the first time control demonstrated a winning kingside attack. White's more active pieces included a powerful «Alekhine's gun» with one queen and two rooks in the g-file. Unable to stop the threats against his king at g8, black instead stopped the clock after 47 moves.

CM Juan Gomez Aguirre (2065) and **Krithigga Kasi (1989)** discussed a Queen's Gambit Exchange line with white's bishop at f4. White had the better pieces both before and after a queen exchange. The position however remained rather closed with 14 pawns still on the board after 30 moves, when white had two rooks and knight versus two rooks and bishop. Black's advanced pawn at h4 was a weakness, but as white mobilized all his pieces to win it, black could switch to the queenside and open the a-file. A draw was suddenly agreed after 39 moves, in a balanced but still interesting position with one rook, one knight and five pawns against one rook, one bishop and five pawns.

Finally, **Max Moe Pedersen (2064)** versus **Rune Kleiven Rynning (1712)** saw an Anti-Dutch Opening starting up with 1.d4 f5 2.Bg5 g6. Predictably white's dark-squared bishop within a few moves were exchanged for a knight at f6, but black's bishops were not very active and white soon got a promising pressure due to black's weakened pawn structure. Exchanging the queens only made things even more difficult for black, and after 22 moves white had already taken black's pawns at d6 and f5 with a won position. Black's try for counterplay with a bishop sacrifice was understandable but pure desperation, and after a further blunder black resigned after 28 moves.

Open Group

In the **Open Group**, the first board duel between third rated **Ståle Sending (1951)** and top rated **Trond Thorgersen (2106)** soon turned tactical. Black appeared to have the better preparation for this Von Hennig Schara line of a Queen's Gambit Tarrasch, and came well ahead on the clock. After black had played 8... Nge7, 9.0-0-0?? was too clever by half:



9... Nxd5! 10.Bxd8 Nxc3 11.Rxd6 Ne4 now would have won decisive material for black. Instead 9... Bf4+? 10.e3 Nxd5 11.Bxd8 Nxc3 would have left the position in material balance after 12.bxc3. White instead lost material and the game within a few more moves after 12.exf4? Nxd1.

Second rated **Terje Lund (2008)** in the meantime got a positional pressure and then won a pawn as white in a Symmetrical English against 11 year old **Fredrik Elsness (1634)**. Black fought on well and was reported close to a draw in the rook endgame with three against four kingside pawns. Remarkably this however was more or less winning for white, as his control over the f-file locked black's king at c8 out from the battleground. Lund won the endgame safely after 46 moves, reaching his 6,5/8 two hours later than Thorgersen.

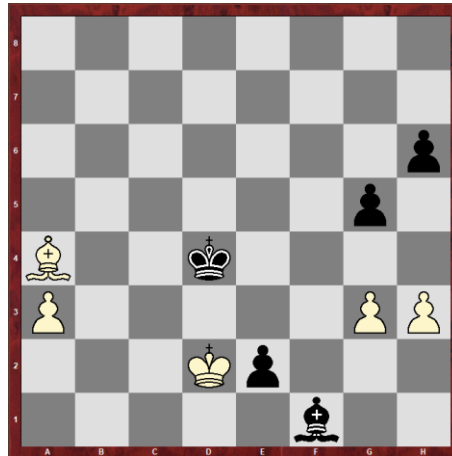


Lund vs Elsness

The run for first prize all the more became a duel between veterans Thorgersen and Lund, as third board duel between **Elias Rustan (1625)** and **Sigurd Kittilsen (1807)** ended up with a draw after five hard-fought hours. Black here had a winning initiative with one rook, one knight and four pawns against one rook, one bishop and four pawns, but white demonstrated a draw in the minor piece endgame after black helpfully exchanged off the rooks.

Our new French chessfriend **Benjamin Spagnoli (1752)** is still doing very well and today won a 30-move attacking game as white against veteran **Ole Smeby (1844)**. Spagnoli now at 5,5/8 still is a full point behind Thorgersen and Lund.

Fifth board duel between 12 year old Israeli **Liel Levitan (1425)** and 20 year old Norwegian **Sebastian Lien (1706)** following a slow Caro-Kann start turned into a six-hour drama. Lien won a pawn in the middle game, but during mutual time pressure gave it back before the first time control. Black again got the upper hand in the rook and bishop endgame, and winning a new pawn he had a straightforward win in the bishop endgame after five hours. Lien however spent much time without finding any good plans, and his decision to sacrifice back the pawn was a failure.



With 10 minutes against less than 1 minute on the clock, white now would have had the better practical chances in a drawn position after 64.Bd7 > 65.Bg4 and 66.Bxe2. Instead the careless 64.Bb5?? lost the bishop and the game after 64... e1+Q! 65.Kxe1 Bxb5.

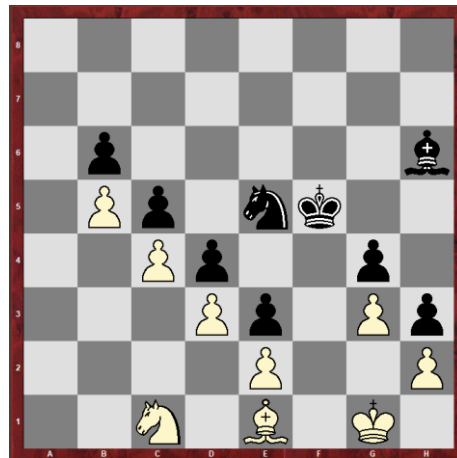
Today's most surprising result in the Open came on the sixth board, as veteran **Ole M. Wig (1697)** won in only 13 moves and 45 minutes as white against fourth rated **Even Huneide Hetland (1900)**.



11... Nxd5?? suddenly lost a piece after 12.Qe4! f5 13.Qxd5+, and black immediately admitted the failure by signing the scoresheets.

Seventh board saw a confident material win for **Tor Wetle Hoem (1874)** as white against **Roaul Abrahamsson (1850)**. Following this the third place at 5,5/8 is shared between Sending, Kittilsen, Spagnoli, Lian and Rustan. Top three board pairings for round 9 will be Kittilsen white against Thorgersen, Sending white against Lund and Lian white against Spagnoli.

No big surprises were seen on the lower boards, although the veteran duel between **Aage Mella (1635)** and **Mykhailo Kuzmenko (1652)** still saw a creative endgame from both players:



Black tried to run down the big white fortress with 63.--- Nf3+!? 64.exf3 gxf3, but white immediately raised another one after 65.Ne2! fxe2 66.Kh1. Now white's only possible plan is to move the king back and forth between g1 and h1, but this qualifies for a safe draw. Remarkably 89 year old Mella here made a much better evaluation than some computer programs, still claiming a win for black in the final position. The only thing needed for white to remember here, is to take back with the h-pawn in case black tries to sacrifice his bishop upon the g3 pawn.

Photos by Anniken Vestby