

FAGERNES CHESS INTERNATIONAL 2024

THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT

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GM Group

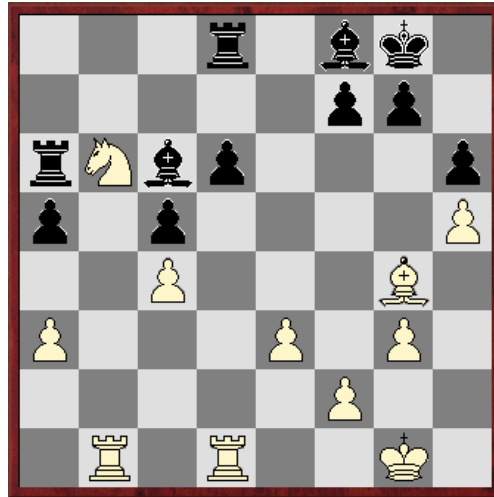
All the 100 expected participants and no one else showed up for the GM-group registration at Fagernes in the early afternoon of March 24. The field following this includes 14 players with a GM title plus 27 players with an IM title, and has a very healthy median Elo just above 2300. Title norm chances following this will be excellent for the many possible candidates.

Players from the lower half in the first round reached quite a few won positions, but in the end still failed to win any game: 37 games had a win for the higher rated player, while all the remaining 13 games were drawn. The GMs scored ten wins and four draws, but top rated GM Abhimanyu Puranik notably had to be happy for saving half a point as black against one of the many dangerous young lions.

The young Norwegian **FM Shazil Shehzad (2301)** as white against **GM Abhimanyu Puranik (2618)** made a slightly strange start with 1.d4 Nf6 2.Bf4 b6 3.e3 Bb7 4.c4. The game soon left opening theory and both players spent much time for the first 12 moves. Black following a long consideration decided to win the pair of bishops with Nh5 followed by Nxc3, but white due to his strong knight-squares at d5 and f5 came better afterwards. It turned out that the FM had made the better evaluation of this position as black's dark-squared bishop at f8 remained passive, while white controlling the open b-file and half-open d-file got a promising initiative both before and after the queens were exchanged. White still was clearly better when the scorsheets were signed with a draw after 33 moves. 17 year old Shehzad however had very few minutes left on the clock with no obvious way to realize his advantage on the board, and was happy to enter a repetition of moves against a GM above 2600.



Shehzad vs Puranik



The final position of Shehzad vs Puranik

GM Rinat Jumabayev (2598) as white in a King's Indian against **FM Vegar Koi Gandrud (2293)** went for a rather solid positional approach with 4.e3 and 5.Be2. White later marched the pawn forward to e4 and reached a Benoni position with a sound positional edge. 14... g5? was an understandable but still too weakening kingside advance. White following this after 20 moves had a winning kingside attack coming up. Giving up the queen for two minor pieces in this situation might well have been black's best practical try, but it still proved insufficient as white kept a decisive kingside attack.

Sondre Melaa (2285) versus **GM Krishnan Sasikiran (2578)** was a Sicilian Najdorf duel in which white castled long to start a pawn storm on the kingside, while black kept his king undeclared at e8. 17... Rxc3! was a very thematic exchange sacrifice, in this case leading to a clear advantage as white failed to find the best plan afterwards. White's king at b2 was under fire from move 24, and Sasikiran efficiently smashed through in the c-file within ten more moves.

The Indian duel between **GM Surya Sekhar Ganguly (2574)** and **FM Daakshin Arun (2283)** was a Classical King's Indian race: Both players castled short, after which white marched his pawns forward on the queenside while black went for counterplay on the kingside. The GM was considered an odds one favourite here as he played very fast, and after 18 moves was some 40 minutes ahead on the clock with a clear advantage on the board according to the computers. Black succeeded in opening the kingside, but Ganguly turned the open files against his opponent's king and won decisive material well before 40 moves.



Ganguly vs Arun

The Oslo teammates **FM Ward Al-Tarboush (2277)** and **IM Elham Amar (2567)** today discussed a rather positional Sicilian Dragon line, in which both players castled short. After exchanging one set of knights, white bravely accelerated on the kingside with 14.f4 and 15.e5. Black after exchanging the second set of knights however got a nice square at d5 for his bishop and due to his better pawn structure came slightly better.



Al-Tarboush vs Amar

Snatching a pawn with 21.--- Qxc2?

instead of winning an exchange with 21.--- Bc4! reportedly was a mistake from black. The remaining queen endgame with four pawns against five gave white reasonable chances for a draw, but it was still an uphill struggle with only a few minutes left on the clock. Creative Amar made a few mistakes along the road tonight, but still succeeded in marching up his king and let the passed e-pawn promote after 50 moves.

GM Ido Gorshtein (2536) as white against **FM Ritvik Krishnan (2277)** went for an English opening, but first without much success as black due to his pair of bishops was perfectly fine after exchanging the queen and both his knights before 15 moves.



Gorshtein vs Krishnan

White with a knight outpost at c5 and a rook in the open c-file still was slightly better around move 18.

One bishop exchange later, the position with two rooks, one knight and six pawns against two rooks, one bishop and six pawns after 27 moves still gave black fair chances for a draw. Sacrificing

a pawn at b5 to establish a passed pawn at a5 for white reportedly was a wrong plan after the first time control, bringing black within reach of a draw. The 17 year old black player in turn however lost his defensive line when giving back the pawn at e6. Later the GM and his passed a-pawn (despite a somewhat confused computer) had the win under fair control.

FM James Moreby (2260) versus **GM Frode Urkedal (2536)** was another Sicilian Najdorf duel, in which white invited a knight exchange with 13.Nd5. After exchanging the knight, black was slightly better on the board and some 20 minutes ahead on the clock. Although white after 27 moves had won the pair of bishops, material still was in balance and white apparently had a solid position. Moreby however had the more difficult position to handle with much less time on the clock, and so black after the first time control had a winning kingside attack.

Estonian **GM Kaido Kulaots (2534)** and Swede **FM Fredrik Lindh (2256)** discussed a rather positional Slav opening line, in which white got a slight space advantage as black exchanged his d5-pawn at c4. While the queens at b3 and b6 looked each other in the eye for many moves, white on the kingside unbalanced the position with 12.Nh4 Bxh4 13.gxh4 – leaving white with the pair of bishops in compensation for an inferior pawn structure. Lindh for a while more kept the position almost in balance, but white eventually won black's loose pawn at e4 and came a pawn up with queen, two rooks and six pawns against queen, two rooks and five pawns. Later white instructively marched his extra h-pawn up to h6 and achieved total dominance well before 40 moves.



Lindh vs Kulaots

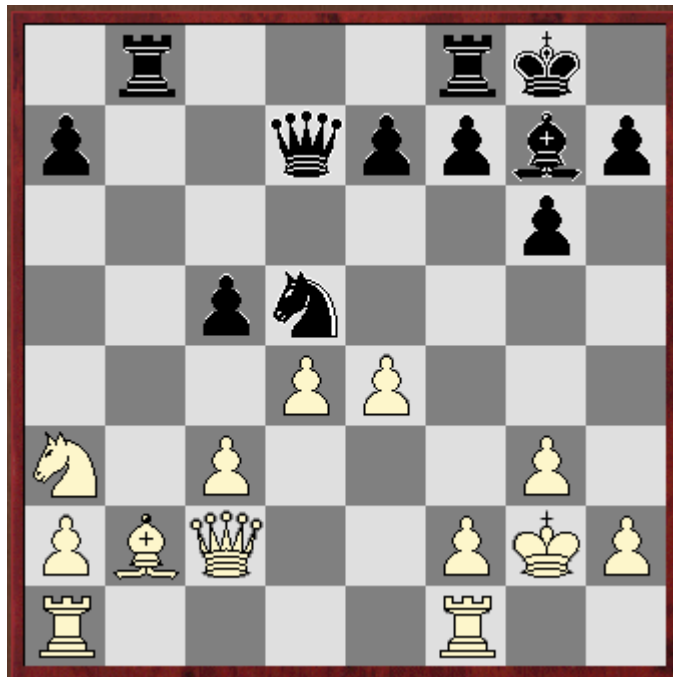
FM Casper Dahl Rasmussen (2244) versus **GM Raja Rithvik R (2532)** was a tactical Catalan in which both players made a fast start: White won back the pawn at c4 but sacrificed another pawn at c3 – with the well-known intention of sacrificing the rook at a1. Rithvik did not touch the rook and succeeded instead to hang on an extra pawn after exchanging off the queens. Black following this got a queeside majority, but still had a hard time making progress as white a strong knight outpost at c5. Raja Rithvik in a patient mood gradually released his pieces and reached a rooks and bishop endgame in which his passed a-pawn soon proved decisive.



Rasmussen vs Rithvik

GM Pranav Anand (2519) versus **Isak Vinh Brattgjerd (2228)** saw a Caro-Kann with 1...c6 and 3...c5?! under favourable circumstances for white. As black soon felt forced to exchange his light-squared bishop for a knight at e4, white due to his pair of bishops and pressure against black's isolated d-pawn had a clear advantage on the board with an extra half hour on the clock. This game later was rather one way driven, and Pranav Anand in an inspired mood was two pawns up with a passed pawn at d6 and all the more active pieces after 21 moves. 14 year old Brattgjerd definitely is a big talent, but still needs a better start than this to challenge the GMs.

Via 1.Nf3 d5 2.g3, the Nordstrand teammate duel between **Eivind Grunt Kreken (2215)** and **GM Erik Blomqvist (2511)** transposed into an approximately balanced Grünfeld Indian opening. White eventually won a pawn at c6, but black after exchanging the light-squared bishops had enough counterplay to balance the chances after 15 moves. Blomqvist sacrificed a knight at f4 to play for a mate. Kreken however defended well, more or less forcing his GM opponent to force a draw by perpetual check between g4 and f3:

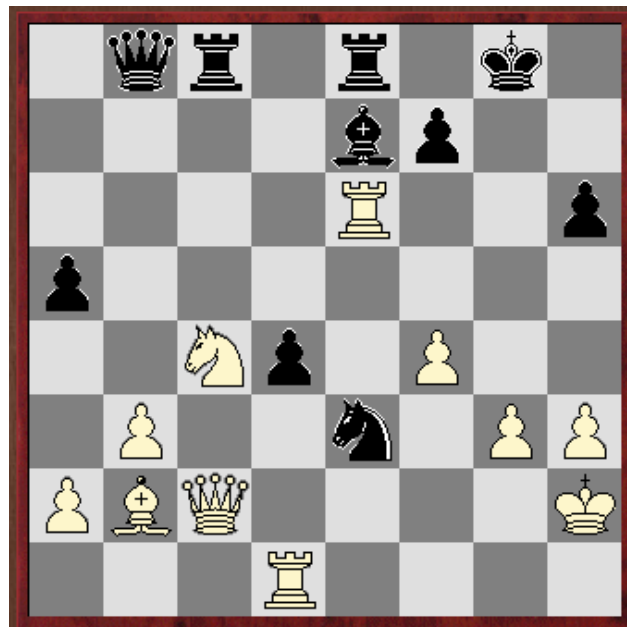


16.--- Nf4+ 17.gxf4 Qg4+ 18.Kh1 Qf3+ 19.Kg1 cxd4 20.cxd4 Rfc8 21.Qd2 Qg4+ 22.Kh1 Qf3+ 23.Kg1 Rxb2 24.Qxb2 Bxd4 25.Qxd4 Qg4+ 26.Kh1 Qf3+ – and black used his final chance to force a draw by repeating the checks.

Aniruddh Chatterjee (2182) as white against **GM Momchil Petkov (2500)** started up with a solid English fianchetto, but black played aggressively with e5-e4-d5 and soon established a space advantage. White following 8.d3 succeeded in blowing up the center, and the queens were exchanged a few moves later on. Following this white after 19 moves had reached an approximately balanced position with two rooks, two bishops and six pawns against two rooks, one bishop, one knight and six pawns. The GM stubbornly continued all the way into an endgame with rook, knight and two pawns against rook, bishop and two pawns, but white defended very well and finally got his well deserved draw as the players ran out of pieces after 59 moves.

The generation duel between 18 year old **IM Isik Can (2493)** and 63 year old **Morten Andersen (2178)** was a lively Sicilian Sveshnikov duel, in which white had a pressure and went on to win the loose black pawn at e4. Later white was clearly better on the clock as well as on the board, and he went on to win the queen endgame fairly safely after picking up a second pawn at d6.

GM Prraneeth Vuppala (2506) versus **CM Andreas Skotheim (2214)** saw a Queen's Indian finchetto in which black played 4... Ba6 followed by 5... Bb7. The players after two hours had reached a fairly balanced position circling around black's hanging pawns at c5 and d5. As black under pressure on the clock declared his center pawns by the d4-advance, white after a tactical 31.Rxe6 had a winning attack against the black king. The GM however also was about to run short of time in a still complex position, and Skotheim succeeded to get some counterplay with the tactical counterhit 31... Ne3!



Vuppala made the right decision to sacrifice an exchange with 32.Rxe3!, but failed to find the best plan afterwards. White still was much better until he blundered with the tricky 39.Qd7? instead of eliminating black's passed pawn with the simple and strong 39.Rxe3!. After the time control the computers always gave the position as «0.00», but the outcome still was far from obvious and both players spent a lot of time for the next few moves. The GM played hardball for a win:



White now had a repetition of checks with 45.Qg8+, but instead went for the ice cold 45.Rc1 e2 46.Bb6!?. Black in turn coolly replied 46... e1Q! – and this tense five and half hour game was finally drawn after 47.Qg8+ Kd7 48.Qd5+ Ke8 49.Qg8+ Kd7 50.Rc7+!? Kd6 51.Qd8+ Ke6 52.Qg8+ Kd6 53.Qd8+ Ke6 54.Qg8+ Kd6 55.Qd8+ Ke6.

The duel between Indian **CM Akshit Kumar J (2172)** and Norwegian **IM Semen Mitusov (2487)** saw even another Sicilian Najdorf duel. Players exchanged three sets of pawns but no pieces, leaving after 19 moves a roughly balanced position. Following sound moves from both players, a draw was agreed by a repetition in a rather deadlocked position shortly before move 40.

The British generation duel between 37 year old **IM Ameet Ghasi (2485)** and 12 year old **Rishi Vijayakumar (2156)** started up with a King's Indian Advance, reaching a symmetric pawn structure as black played d5 and then exchanged the d5-pawn at e4. Chances later were about balanced as white had a strong knight at the f5 square and black a strong bishop at the c5 square. Black creatively gave up a pawn for a queen and kept a disturbing initiative after exchanging the queens, as white still had a struggle completing his development. The experienced IM however defended by sound means and somehow succeeded in saving his loose extra pawn while exchanging it down to a rook and minor piece endgame. White eventually had to give back the pawn, but kept a promising advantage as he now had both the better combination of pieces (rook and bishop versus rook and knight) and the better pawn structure. Vijayakumar lost on time while completing 35... Ne7?, but in that position anyway was about to lose two pawns.



Ghasi vs Vijayakumar

The teenager duel between **Evsuld Myagmarsuren (2138)** and **IM Yahli Sokolovsky (2475)** started up with a Scotch opening in which both players ran fast on the clock. After theory ended, white came well ahead on the clock. Sokolovsky however made good use of the time, as his pair of bishops and more active heavy pieces soon dominated. After 22 moves black could safely exchange his bishop for a knight at g3, as black later had a decisive attack against the weakened white kingside.



Sokolovsky vs Myagmarsuren

GM Tiger Hillarp (2473) and **Sergey Eliseev (2131)** both spent much time from a positional Reti opening. As the players after more than two hours reached move 14, white and his pair of bishops had a slight pressure. Black spent much time without finding any real attacking prospects in the h-file, and white following this could pick up a pawn and play on with the safer king. Black's position definitely collapsed as he ran short of time, and white after 37 moves landed in a totally won endgame with rook and four pawns versus knight and three pawns.



Hillarp vs Eliseev

The very talented teenagers **Indy Southcott-Moyers (2120)** and **IM Tobias Kölle (2460)** discussed a Nimzo-like Queen's Gambit Exchange line with the black bishop at b4. Black reached approximately balanced chances after exchanging white's knight for a bishop at c3 and white's bishop for a knight at g3. The IM in the fourth hour played on with two rooks, one knight and six pawns left on each side, but still having made no progress he offered a draw immediately after the time control.

The Stavanger junior duel between **IM Aksel Bu Kvaløy (2454)** and **Martin Holten Fiskaaen (2118)** became another tense Sicilian duel, in which white's king at b1 after 20 moves appeared slightly more safe than black's king at e8.

White first made the better tactical calculations during mutual time pressure, and after 33.Bxd6+ had reached a won position.

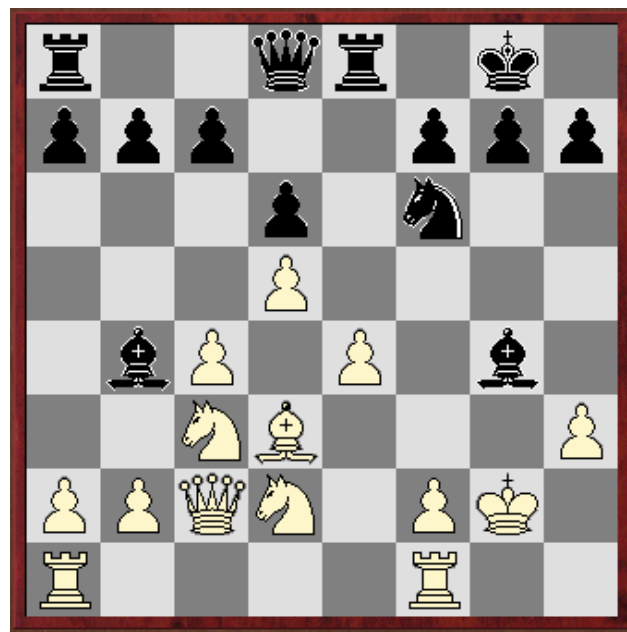
White could have won this easier, but after move 40 the remaining position with queen, rook and four pawns versus queen, rook and three pawns still was winning due to black's much more open king. Following a tense five hours struggle black resigned a bit unexpectedly at move 54, although white was a pawn up with a winning attack against black's airy king at d4.



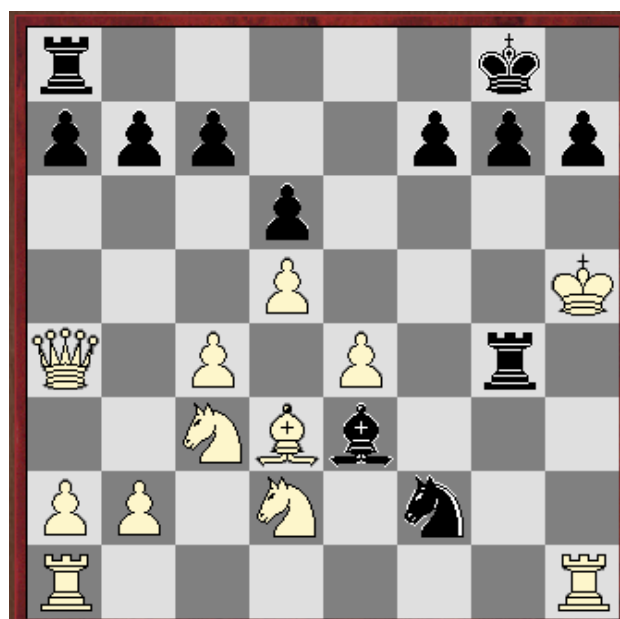
Kvaløy vs Fiskaaen
(Photo: Anniken Vestby)

16 year old **Martin Øksendal (2086)** made a promising start, scoring a 31-move draw as white against 50 year old **IM Frode Elsness (2437)**. The middle game was a tense and about balanced Ruy Lopez struggle in which black had some chances for a kingside counterattack. Elsness however found nothing better than exchanging the queen and sacrifice a pawn. Black had appriximately enough activity to balance the chances, but still a pawn down he was happy to accept a draw offer.

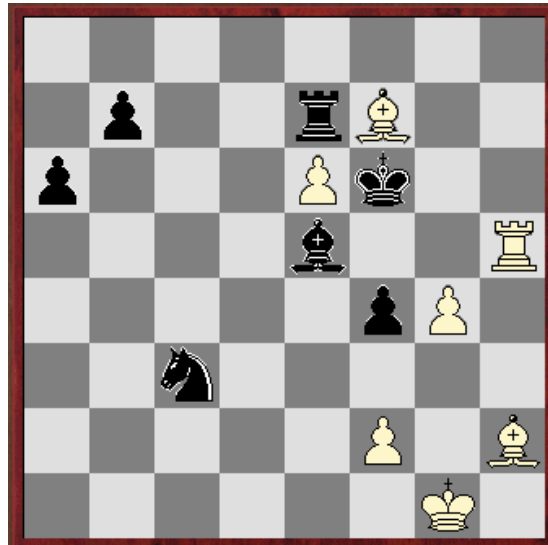
The young british **IM Jonah B. Willow (2446)** in his first game in Norway won confidently as black in a Classical Nimzo-Indian against even younger **Rounaiv Rana (2099)**. White got a space advantage, but black all of the time had enough counterplay and smashed through with a kingside attack:



16.--- Bxh3+! 17.Kxh3 Qd7 18.Kh2 Re5 19.f3 Bx5 20.Rh1 Ng4+ 21.Kg1 Rg5 22.Qa4 Nf2+ 23.Kh4 Qg4+!
24.fxg4 Rxg4+ 25.Kh5 Be3 0-1



The generation duel between **IM Nico Chasin (2447)** and **CM Svetoslav Mihajlov (2094)** saw a tense Slav battle in which black first did fairly well, and after 25 moves had reached an approximately balanced position with two rooks, bishop, knight and six pawns against two rooks, two bishops and six pawns. White's pair of bishops here did not give him too much, as his dark-squared bishop at h2 was staring at a black pawn at f4. Chasin still played on for a win by advancing his passed e-pawn to e6, and got some chances as black's king went a little astray around move 40. Black still could have had chances for a draw if sacrificing his rook for white's light-squared bishop and passed e-pawn with 43... Rxe6! As black missed that chance, white within a few moves could kick back the black king and decide by his running g-pawn.



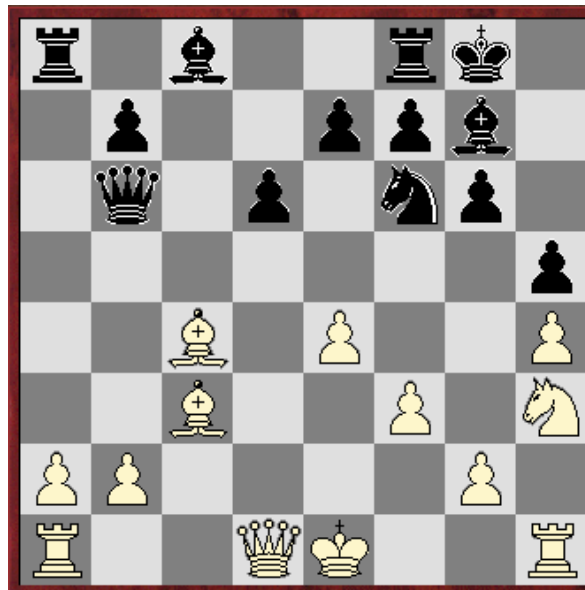
43... Ne2+? 44.Kf1 Nd4 45.g5+! Kg7 46.g6 Nf3 47.Rh7+ Kf8 49.Bxf4! 1-0

IM Edvin Trost (2432) versus **Victor Havik (2078)** for some 20 moves was an approximately balanced Queen's Gambit Exchange position with hanging center pawns at d4 and e4. Trost however was ahead on the clock with some initiative, and well before move 40 got the help needed to demonstrate a winning attack against the black king.

Harry Zheng (2077) and **IM Hampus Sørensen (2428)** discussed a rare Ruy Lopez line with 3... Nge7!? The opening was a success from a black point of view, as he was slightly better after exchanging the queens plus one set of knights and all the center pawns. Although black later got a pair of bishops, white still had sound pieces and hung on into a drawish endgame with bishop, knight and four pawns against two bishops and four pawns. Sørensen after five hours played on in a drawish bishop endgame, but Zheng still defended very well and 65 moves he could sacrifice a pawn to force a dead drawn endgame with bishop versus bishop and pawn.

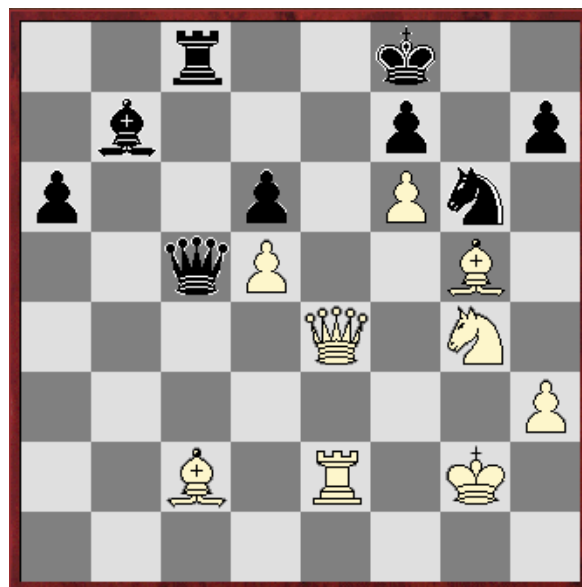
Swede **IM Linus Johansson (2427)**, as white in a Queen's Gambit exchange position against Norwegian junior **Shadi Sian (2076)**, creatively sacrificed an exchange at c1 to play on with bishop and pawn for a rook. White's pair of bishops combined with an octopus knight at d6 soon gave him a strong pressure, and he reached a won position well before 40 moves.

Greek **IM Stavroula Tsolakidou (2424)** made a convincing start on her first Fagernes tournament, winning in only 21 moves as black against talented Swede **Lavini Valcu (2070)**. 14 year old Valcu left her king on e1 much too long, and her position soon collapsed as black efficiently broke open the center:



15.--- d5! 16.exd5 Bxh3 17.Rxh3 Rfc8 18.Qb3 Qc5 19.Bxf6 exf6 20.Bf1 Re8 21.Kd1 Qf2 0-1

The teenager duel between **IM Hasan Huseyin Celik (2417)** and **Ask Amundsen (2069)** for three hours was a tense tactical Benoni duel. Under pressure on the clock black however blundered with 31.--- Nb6? followed by 32.--- Nc4?, and so white within three more moves won a piece. Celik just before the time control got the help needed to decide the game by a queen sacrifice:



38.Qe8+! Rxe8 39.Bh6+ and 1-0

Unpredictable **Per Fredrik Holand (2068)** as white against **GM Stellan Brynell (2406)** made an aggressive start with 1.e4 e5 2.Bc4 Nf6 3.Nc3 Nxe4 4.Qh5. The GM instructively gave back the pawn to get a sound positional edge, developing into a close to winning initiative as 11.f4? seriously weakened white's kingside. Although white came up with some counterplay on the kingside, black later had a clear advantage. After 23 moves Brynell could safely exchange queens, as the remaining endgame with two rooks, bishop and six pawns against two rooks, knight and five pawns was close to winning.

IM Jens Evang Ingebretsen (2402) won confidently as white after transposing his young opponent **Victor Lilliehöök (2060)** into a closed Catalan opening. White increased the positional pressure until winning a pawn at c6, and black's position anyway was strained when he at move 25 blundered a piece and resigned.

Amadeus Hestvik Evenshaug (2035) versus **IM Mai Narva (2399)** saw a classical Sicilian Dragon race, as white castled long and black short. Black obviously had the better knowledge to this as she following a powerful e5-break came much better on the board as well as on the clock. Black and her active bishops kept a strong initiative after exchanging the queens, and before 30 moves Narva could pick up an exchange with a totally won endgame.

16 year old **WFM Shivika Rohilla (2003)** made a surprise in the first round, drawing the game after 35 moves as black against **IM Mohapatra Sidant (2379)**. Black had the better handling of this London system in the opening, and the IM found himself in trouble as black steadily made progress on the queenside while white still came up with no real meat on the kingside. Black still had the better chances when accepting a draw, but a draw against an IM obviously was a tempting and string start for a young WIM norm candidate.



The final position after 35...Be7, leading to a three-fold repetition.



Vikram vs Audi (Photo: Anniken Vestby)

WCM Anishka Vikram (1995) as white against **IM Ameya Audi (2378)** made a rare and not too ambitious start with 1.d4 d6 2.c4 e5 3.Nc3 exd4 4.Qxd4 Nc6 5.Qd1. Black before 20 moves had established a clear advantage. Although white improved her play later on, black after 29 moves had all the more active pieces and a promising pressure with two rooks, knight and four pawns against two rooks, bishop and three pawns. Ameya however cramped between move 30 and 40, allowing Vikram to exchange one set of rooks and then win back the black pawn at b6. The remaining endgame with rook, bishop and three pawns versus rook, knight and three pawns after the first time control was drawish. Vikram now defended very well for two hours and after 80 moves appeared close to a draw. Audi in frustration pushed his luck too far by sacrificing a pawn, but understandably tired Vikram around move 90 did not test her chances to play on for a full point.

IM Sambit Panda (2377) and **CM Joel Paul Ganta (1993)** today discussed a positional King's Indian, soon turning in favour of white after black first weakened his kingside with g5 and then gave up his key dark-squared bishop for a knight at c3. Ganta creatively gave up his queen for rook and bishop, but Panda still had a decisive attack and went to win within 35 moves.

Sachi Jain (1992) as white in a French against **IM Sebastian Mihajlov (2373)** went for a King's Indian Advance set up with 2.d3. It did not work out too well, as white black by sound means established a structural advantage and then just cashed in an exchange at d5. A sound rook up, black completed his attack with a mate after 39 moves.

FM Yuval Yaniv (2368) versus **Gokul Thangavel (1990)** saw another Caro-Kann with 1... c6 and 3... c5?!, again leading white to a very promising attacking position and a clear advantage before move 15. Yaniv for a long time kept up the pressure, but invited black back into the game with a helpful and somewhat mysterious tactical exchange. Thangavel later defended very well, and after the first time control soon reached a drawn queen endgame.



Yaniv vs Thangavel
(Photo: Anniken Vestby)

Pantham Kaewpitakkun (1989) as white in a Sicilian Najdorf against **FM Theodor Kenneskog (2358)** made a speedy start and came clearly ahead on the clock. It turned out that white played a little too fast, as 13.Nd5? allowed tactical exchanges leading to a clear advantage for black within five more moves. Exchanging the light-squared bishop for a knight at c4 later lost further ground for white, as black after picking up the white pawn at a4 had a won position in the remaining endgame with two rooks and bishop against two rooks and knight. Pantham later fought on stubbornly, but still was unable to save the final rook endgame with two pawns less.

Indian **IM Moksh Amit Doshi (2353)** handled the white pieces against Norwegian junior **Lukas Dominik Gåsland (1985)**, and entered a positional English duel. This worked out well from a white point of view, as white was allowed to hang on an extra pawn at d5 with some advantage. Giving up the dark squared bishop for a knight with 20... Bxf4? was a positional mistake from black, as white later came a passed pawn up with a decisive attack on the dark kingside squares.

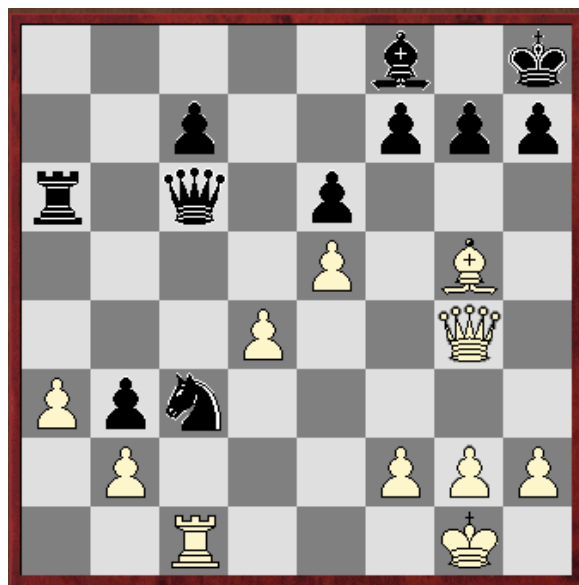


Doshi vs Gåsland

IM Ludvig Carlsson (2350) versus **Rion Okuno (1981)** was another Nimzo-like Queen's Gambit exchange line, in which tactical exchanges brought white a position which was strategically won after 20 moves – as white had all the better pieces plus the better pawn structure. Carlsson soon started a direct kingside attack and won the game within 35 moves.

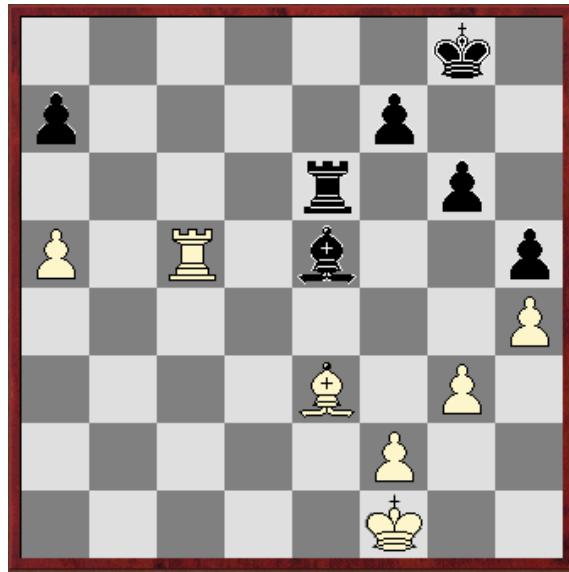
WIM Ioulia Makka (1983) and **FM Viktor Haarmark Nielsen (2351)** discussed a first rather closed Ruy Lopez line, in which white played too slow and passive. Black put a pawn at e4 with a promising space advantage after exchanging all the bishops. Later black's much more active knights soon gave him a direct attack against the weakened white kingside. Following the position after 30 moves, white apparently had improved her chances as she after 48 moves had got rid of the black knights and reached a small material advantage with queen, two knights and three pawns against queen, one rook and four pawns. Black's more active pieces combined with his kingside majority still gave a winning attack, and Nielsen after five hours completed the win rather safely.

Norwegian juniors **Håvard Eriksen Bech (1951)** and **FM Saad Elmi (2344)** meanwhile had an interesting discussion about a very modern Queen's Gambit line, in which black snatched a pawn at c4 and then gave it back at b5 – keeping a pawn at c4 and some pressure against the white center in exchange for his inferior queenside pawn structure. White came ahead on the clock and for a long time also was better on the board, but the tide gradually turned in favour of black during mutual time trouble. While black increased his pressure against the backward white pawn at b2, white failed to come up with any real attack against the unweakened black kingside. The game still remained exciting until white short of time overlooked a hidden tactical resource:



29.Bd2! Qe4 30.Qxe4 Nxe4 31.Be1, intending to trap the black knight with 32.f3, still could have made it difficult for black. Instead white soon stopped the clock after **29.Rxc3?? Qxc3! 30.bxc3 b2**, intending **31.Qd1 Rxa3** followed by **32.--- Ra1**.

FM Håvard Haug (2341) and **CM John Stark (1947)** tested out a Caro-Kann in which white established a space advantage with an early e5, but black was perfectly fine following an early queen exchange. Tactical exchanges before 30 moves resulted in a very drawish endgame with rook, bishop and four pawns on each side. Some 40 minutes ahead on the clock, white still continued playing for a win – and was rewarded as black went for a tactical trick with only seconds left on the clock:



36.--- Bxg3?? would have won a pawn for black after 37.fxg3?? Rxe3, but instead won the game for white after 37.Bd4! – threatening a highly unpleasant mate with 38.Rc8+ followed by 39.Rh8.



Skramstad vs Vestby-Ellingsen (Photo: Anniken Vestby)

Oda Kofoed Skramstad (1945) notably is the only female Norwegian player in this GM group. As white against **IM Mads Vestby-Ellingsen (2336)** she first held some space advantage following an aggressive 3.e4!? in a Queen’s Gambit Accepted. From move 20 the wind however soon turned in favour of black and his counterplay on the queenside, and white’s position soon collapsed after her key pawn at b4 was just lost.

FM Gunnar Lund (2335) and **Peder Marcus Aamodt (1941)** tonight investigated a double-edged Reti position in which black kept an extra pawn at c4, while white had two a-pawns and two fianchetto bishops. The position slowed down a bit as black after the opening gave back his extra pawn to avoid the dangers of a direct attack on his kingside. White was clearly ahead on the clock and kept a slight edge first due to his pair of bishops and then due to his extra pawn. Due to the opposite-coloured bishops, white still had no real winning chances with one rook, one bishop and five pawns against one rook, one bishop and four pawns.

Aidas Juodziukynas (1893) versus **IM Dushyant Sharma (2331)** first was a fairly balanced and rather closed Dutch Stonewall duel. White however underestimated the dangers on the queenside when castling long, and the IM efficiently opened the queenside with a winning attack before 30 moves.

Chess daddy and **IM Helge A Nordahl (2330)** in this GM group comeback considered his position promising as white in a Queen's Gambit against **Sebastian Lien (1885)**. Although white had the d-file and kept an initiative, the computers still considered black's position close to equal when he after 26 moves had exchanged three sets of minor pieces. Lien however had spent too much time on the clock and lost the thread in the fourth hour, allowing white to establish a passed c-pawn which soon won decisive material.



Lien vs Nordahl

Fredrik Valstad Elsness (1873) and **FM Nicolai Kistrup (2324)** for two hours had a tense duel in a Scotch opening, and white first had enough compensation after sacrificing a «testimony» pawn at b2. His search for a kingside attack with 18.f5? however proved overambitious as black immediately hit back on the queenside with a powerful 18...c5! and soon won decisive material.

IM Erik Hedman (2311) as white in a Sicilian against unknown **Sondre Stai (1842)** went for a positional fianchetto approach with 3.b3. 31 year old Stai lagged somewhat behind on the clock, but handled the situation well on the board. Players following this after 18 moves had reached a drawish endgame with two rooks, one bishop and five pawns on each side. White succeeded in winning black's isolated pawn, but black then got very active rooks and could more or less force a classical rook endgame with three against two kingside pawns. Hedman continued playing but found nothing except a dead drawn pawn endgame. Stai after 63 moves could cash in a well deserved draw, and following his first place in the Open last year he now gave himself a very inspiring start on his GM-group adventure.

15 year old Armenian **Ani Avetisyan (1840)** came slightly better from some kind of Old Indian opening as white against Israeli **FM Roy Vagman (2311)**, and after 18 moves the position with queen, two rooks, knight and six pawns still was approximately balanced. The offer of a queen exchange with 23.Qf4? however blundered a pawn, and as black also had the better pawn structure he later had few problems winning the game.

Finally, **WGM Pallathur V. Nandihaa (2305)** won confidently within three hours as white against **Rune Kleiven Rynning (1813)**. Black probably was fine from this Sicilian opening, but before 20 moves white sacrificed a pawn at e5 and got a decisive initiative due to her pair of bishops and more active heavy pieces.



**Round 1 in the GM-group
(Photo: Anniken Vestby)**

Open Group

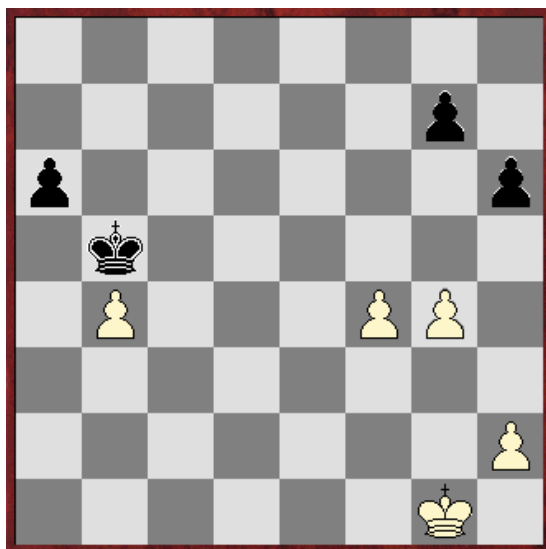
The Open includes 46 players, and has a rather open favourite field with eleven players rated between 1805 and 1963. The top eight boards in the first round as expected saw most of the higher rated players winning – more or less early and safely.

Top-rated **Andreas Skrede Hausken (1963)** arrived a bit delayed as black against talented **Christine Nordahl (1673)**, but soon equalized in a Classical Nimzo-Indian and gradually took over the initiative later on. Following some mistakes from both players, black kept the more dangerous attack and won by mate after 35 moves.

Third-rated **Sigurd Kittilsen (1910)** on the other hand was in deep trouble from his somewhat odd Sicilian opening as black against **Morten Smedsrud (1668)**, but got the help needed to exchange off white's threatening minor pieces and won some pawns while keeping the more active heavy pieces.

Fourth-rated **Dag Arild Andersen (1899)** dominated the board and won well deserved as white against **Bjørn Noralf Dybvik (1656)**, and so did fifth-rated **Morten Rolstad (1879)** as black against highly talented **Githiha Sathish (1656)**.

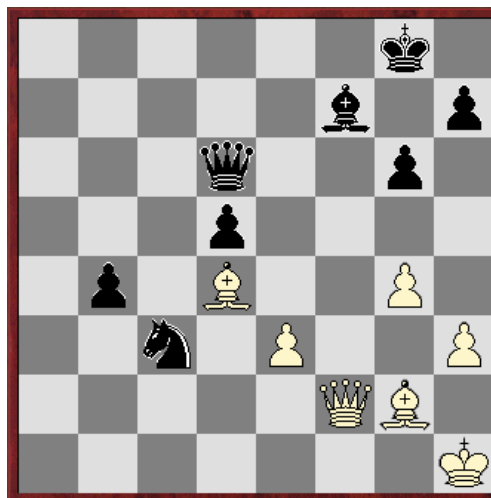
The notable non-winner favourite on the top boards was second rated **Ståle Andre Sending (1959)**, all the more unexpected as he after two hours had a winning initiative as white against **Alina Shehzad (1670)**. The talented 13 year old however fought on bravely, and got the help needed to escape from a lost bishop endgame into a drawn pawn endgame. Black during mutual time pressure later even was winning for a few moves:



Now white probably realized that 36.g5 hxg5 37.fxg5 Kxb4 38.h4 a5 39.h5 a4 40.h6 a3 is only a draw. He in frustration instead went for 36.Kf2? Kxb4 37.Ke2 Kb3 38.h4 and now 38.--- Kc4! 39.h5 Kd5 40.Ke3 a5 41.Kd3 a4 is a thematic win for black! Following some more time trouble errors the game was drawn after 38.--- a5? 39.Kd2? Kb2 (39.--- Kc4! still wins) 40.f5 a4 41.g5 hxg5 42.hxg5 a3 etc.

Board nine saw a small sensation in the longest game of the day, as 19 year old **Steinar Dieseth Skogholt (1611)** won a marathon tactical battle as white against **Benjamin Halvorsen (1848)**. Skogholt was down at 00.01 on the clock several times during the last hour of the game, but kept the board under reasonable control with a bishop more in the queen and bishop endgame. Black true enough had a close to winning position in the early middle game her, but white on the other hand was winning most of the game later on.

Board 12 came close to a surprise, as chess dad **Håvard Skotheim (1590)** in the endgame was a passed pawn up as black against our Ukrainian chessfriend **Mykhailo Kuzmenko (1747)**. Veteran Kuzmenko however had counterplay due to his queen combined with the pair of bishops, and instructively used his chance for a kingside attack when getting it:



48.--- Qb8?? 49.Qf6! Kf8 50.Qh8+ Bg8 51.Qg7+ 1-0

Board 13 also had a close to sensation as **Viswanathan Krishnan (1575)** after 36 moves was an exchange up with a winning attack as white against **Ida Lahlum (1755)**. Krishnan however made the classical mistake of playing too fast during his opponent's time trouble, and instructively blundered into a mating net himself:

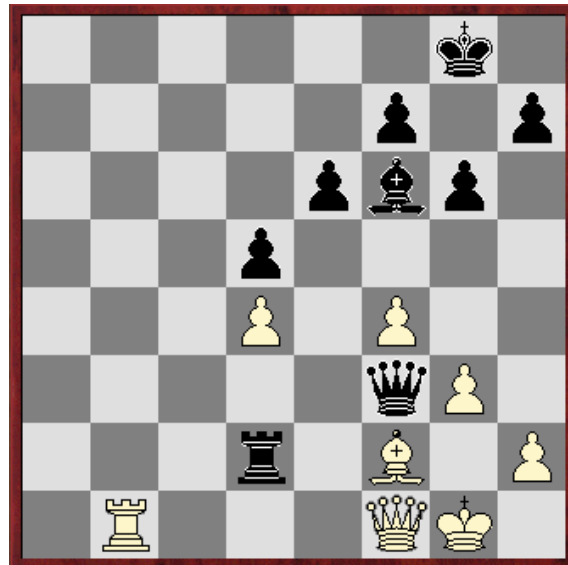


37.Rxe4?? Qxg3+ 38.Kf1 Qh3+ 39.Kg1 Qh2+ 0-1

Black true enough had been a piece up with a won position earlier in this entertaining game.

The middle boards also had the expected winner in most of the games, although chess dad **Terje Holten (1573)** due to opposite-coloured bishops saved a draw with a pawn less in a long rook and bishop endgame against **Jan Ove Odden (1723)**.

Board 23 saw a surprise win for the lowest rated player, 8 year old **Thea Alexandra Homtako (1450)**, as white against the very talented 12 year old **Frederik Nordahl (1675)**. Black in this game became too careless in a won position and was efficiently punished:



45.--- Bxd4?? 46.Rb8+! – and black suddenly resigned as 46.--- Kg7 47.Bxd4+ wins the queen for white!

Photos by Tom Eriksen and Anniken Vestby