

FAGERNES CHESS INTERNATIONAL 2024

THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT 7



GM Group

The big winner on the top board games of round 7 was second rated GM Rinat Jumabayev of Kazakhstan, winning a rather shocking 28-move attacking win as black against so far very solid Estonian GM Kaido Kulaots on the first board. The second winner was top rated GM Abhimanyu Puranik of India, defeating GM Erik Blomqvist on the fifth board in another very original and entertaining attacking battle, with three queens on the board after 27 moves.

Second board duel between GM Surya Shekhar Ganguly and GM Frode Urkedal was a relatively solid draw, and so was the third board duel between GM Ido Gorshtein and GM Krishnan Sasikiran. English IM Ameet Ghasi as white against GM Raja Rithvik R on the fourth board had a light pressure, but the GM efficiently gave up a pawn to reach a well-known draw in the rook endgame.

The sixth board young Norwegian IM duel between Aksel Bu Kvaløy and Elham Amar saw a convincing win for black, and Indian GM Pranav Anand on the seventh board also dominated the board when defeating IM Frode Elsness. The young IMs Isik Can and Yahli Sokolovsky won as white, while the biggest surprise on the top 15 boards today was Estonian IM Mai Narva cashing in all the more material to win as black against GM Tiger Hillarp.

The GM norm candidates had a fairly good round, meaning that Ghasi almost certainly can make his third norm with 1,5/2, that Sokolovsky might be able to make a GM norm with 1,5/2, while Can will need 2/2 but still can make it.

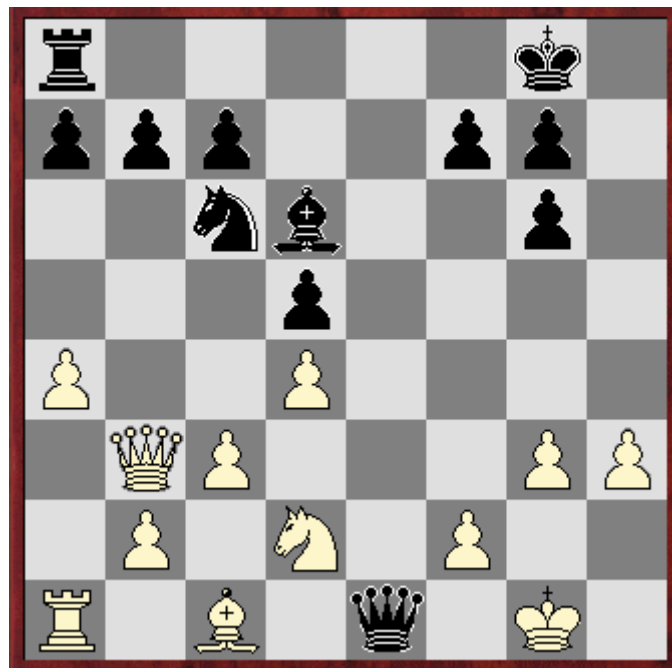
A surprising win on the middle boards was young Indian FM Ritvik Krishnan winning as black against IM Ludvig Carlsson, although Krishnan here won on time in a drawish endgame. Krishnan following this is in the run for an IM-norm, and so is Dane FM Viktor Haarmark Nielsen as he succeeded in winning a long endgame as white against heavily underrated Peder Marcus Aamodt.

Norwegian FM Saad Elmi is around schedule for his third IM norm after hitting back with an inspired win as white today, and so is Eivind Kreken following a firework draw as black against IM Sambit Panda. Solid WGM Pallathur Nandhidhaa today scored her sixth draw against a titleholder in a row, but probably needs to win one more if she wants to make an IM norm.

The lower boards had many hard-fought games but no really surprising results this round. It is illustrating of the strength of this field that young Indian WFM Shivika Rohilla and WCM Anishka Vikram down at 2,5/7 are well in the run for a WIM-norm, and 15 year old Armenian Ani Avetisyan at 3,0/7 despite a slower start might also reach it with a strong spurt.

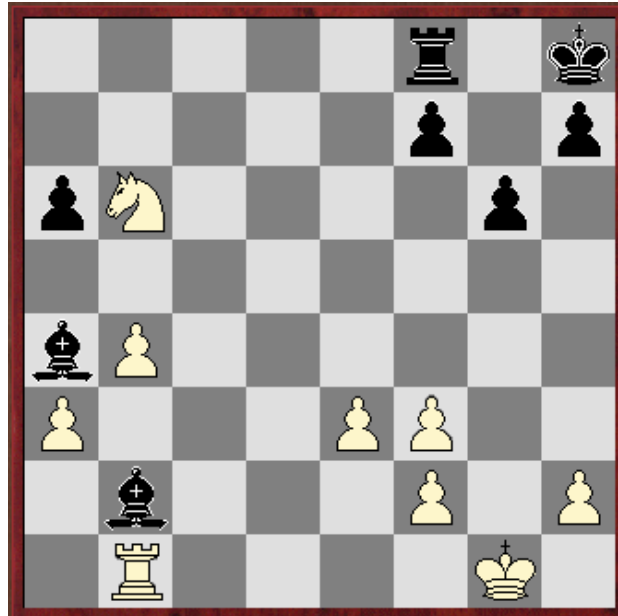
Jumabayev following this is now leading alone for the first time with 6/7 and an outstanding performance of 2770. Norwegian Frode Urkedal is unshared second at 5,5/7, and his round 8 game as white against Jumabayev can be crucial for the top two prizes here. 12 players are sharing the third place at 5,0/7. Boards 2-7 for round 8 will be GM Rithvik white against GM Puranik, GM Sasikiran white against GM Anand, IM Can white against GM Ganguly, IM Amar white against IM Ghasi, IM Sokolovsky white against GM Gorshtein and IM Narva white against GM Kulaots.

The first board duel between **GM Kaido Kulaots (2534)** and **GM Rinat Jumabayev (2598)** started up as a Ruy Lopez Berlin, in which both players spent well above 80 minutes for the first 19 moves. One set of rooks, one set of knight and the light-squared bishops at that stage were exchanged, leaving an approximately balanced position. At move 20 white spent less than two minutes, but should have given the position a second thought:



20.Nf1! Re8 21.Qa2 followed by 22.Be3 is almost balanced. Instead 20.Kg2?? ran into an unexpected wall: 20... Bxg3! 21.Kxg3 (or 21.fxg3 Re8) Qg1+ 22.Kf3 Re8! 23.Qb5 Qh1+ 24.Kg3 Qg1+ 25.Kf3 Re1 26.Qxb7 Qh1+ 27.Kg3 Rg1+ 28.Kf4 Qxh3 and white stopped the clock.

GM Surya Shekhar Ganguly (2574) as white against **GM Frode Urkedal (2536)** made a slow positional start with 1.Nf3 2.e3 and 3.b3. Black equalized without any pressure and chances were about equal following an early queen exchange. Tactical exchanges made the game more exciting around move 22-27, but the conclusion was about to become a balanced rook and minor piece endgame when a draw was agreed after 28 moves:



GM Ido Gorshtein (2539) versus **GM Krishnan Sasikiran (2578)** was a Queen’s Indian fianchetto in which black spent much time from move 7, while white slowed down around move 12. Black greedily snatched a pawn at b2 with his queen after the opening, but after returning the queen via c3, a5 and a4 to c6 he apparently realized that white had enough compensation – and consequently offered a draw which was accepted.

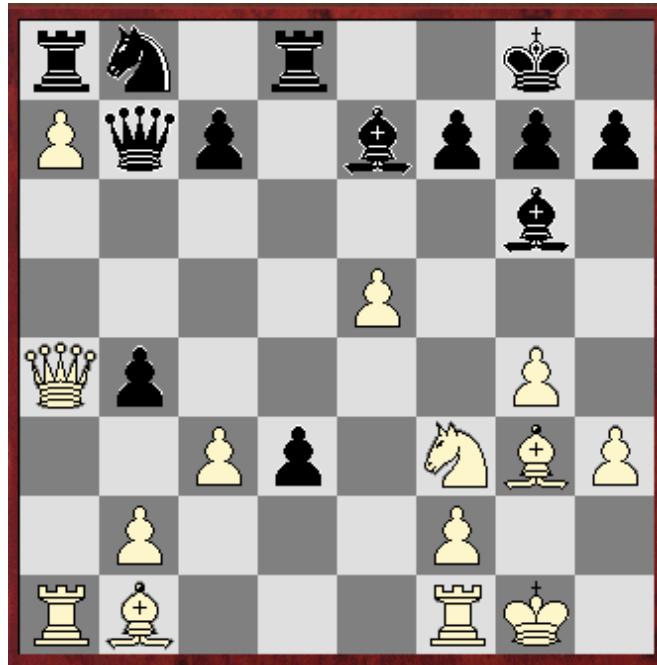
IM Ameet Ghasi (2485) as white against **GM Raja Rithvik R (2532)** today started up with 1.Nf3 2.g3 and 3.Bg2, but then accelerated in the center with 4.d4, reaching some kind of Grunfeld in Advance. Both players appeared to be in a preparation for the first 17 moves. White later spent much time, but following an early queen exchange he kept a slight pressure. White first had a pair of bishops, but gave up this to win a pawn. Players well before 40 moves reached a classical rook endgame with



Rithvik vs Ghasi

three against three pawns on the kingside and a lone white a-pawn on the kingside. Rithvik trusted this to be a draw as he could place his rook in an active position behind the white pawn, and Ghasi soon had to agree that this was a correct observation.

GM Abhimanyu Puranik (2618) and **GM Erik Blomqvist (2511)** both played fast from their Open Ruy Lopez opening, but slowed down around move 18. The position soon became complex as white had an extra pawn at a6, while black had a passed pawn at d3. Tactical complications followed as the pawn reached a7:



24.axb8Q? Rdx8 wins material for black, hence white instead went for 24.Nd4!? Black now should have played 24...c5! to kick the knight away immediately, as 24...Bc5? proved too slow: 25.e6! Rxa7 26.e7 Rf8 27.e8Q! and black resigned a rook down after 27...Rxa4 28.Qxa4. In case of 27...c6 white also wins a rook with 28.Qxa7 Bxa7 29.Qe3.

IM Aksel Bu Kvaløy (2454) versus **IM Elham Amar (2567)** obviously was a key game for both the Norwegian teenage stars. The opening was a closed Catalan in which white surprisingly gave up his dark-squared bishop at f4 for the knight at b8. White after 25 moves had some play against an isolated black pawn at c6, but black had counter pressure against the white pawn at b2 and came better much due to his strong knight at the d4 outpost.



Amar vs Kvaløy (Photo: Anniken Vestby)

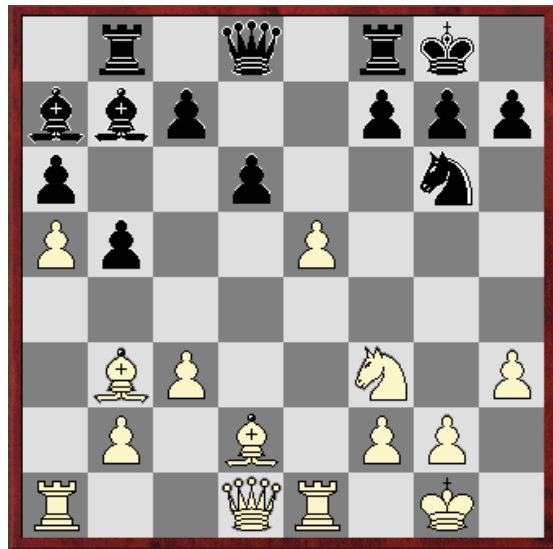
White after 30 moves had a long uphill walk with only a few minutes left on the clock, and Amar in an inspired mood completed the attack against white's king before 40 moves:



31.--- Rg4 32.Rg3 f5! 33.exf5 Rbg8 34.Kf1 Qxh4 35.Qf7? Rf8 36.Qd7 Nxf5 37.Rxg4 Qxg4 38.Kg1? Qd1+ 39.Kh2 e4+ 0-1.

18 year old Elham Amar following this win is a hot candidate for the top five prizes, but question about a GM norm here has no practical relevance as he scored five norms in 2023 and is only waiting for formalities to get the title.

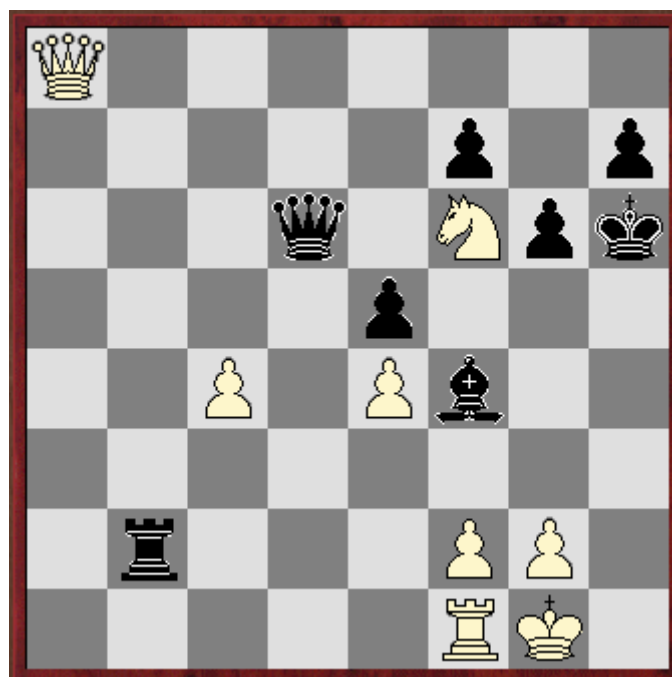
GM Pranav Anand (2519) versus **IM Frode Elsness (2437)** was another Ruy Lopez Morphy line, in which white came ahead on the clock with some kingside pressure on the board. The position turned tactical before 20 moves:



17.Ng5! h6 18.Qh5 Nxe5 19.Rxe5 dxe5 20.Nxf7 Rxf7 21.Bxf7+ and white came a pawn up with an ongoing attack. Elsness fought on well for the next ten moves, but white had the much easier position to play and after the first time control could force a won rook versus bishop endgame.

IM Edvin Trost (2432) versus **GM Momchil Petkov (2500)** was a Steinitz Deferred duel of a Ruy Lopez opening. Black apparently had the better preparation and kept a slight initiative after exchanging the queens and light-squared bishops. Trost however defended actively and the game was in more or less dynamic balance all the way to a drawn rook endgame.

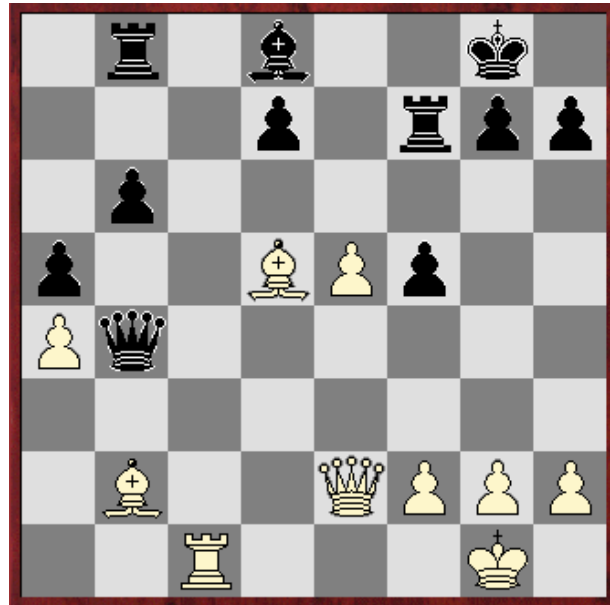
IM Isik Can (2493) and **IM Jens Evang Ingebretsen (2402)** made a fast start in a Sveshnikov Sicilian, but then slowed down around move 13. Tactical exchanges within a few more moves left a materially balanced position with queen, two rooks, knight and four pawns against queen, two rooks, bishop and four pawns. As white finally castled short at move 23 he had a slight edge due to his knight on d6 and passed pawn at c3. Black soon went astray with a too optimistic 24.--- Rb2?, allowing white to play 25.Ra8+ and 26.Rxf8+ with an ongoing attack. White completed the attack with style:



30.Qh8 Rb8 31.Qxh7+ Kg5 32.Ng8 Qf8 33.g3 Kg4 34.f3+ Kxg3 35.Qh2 mate 1-0

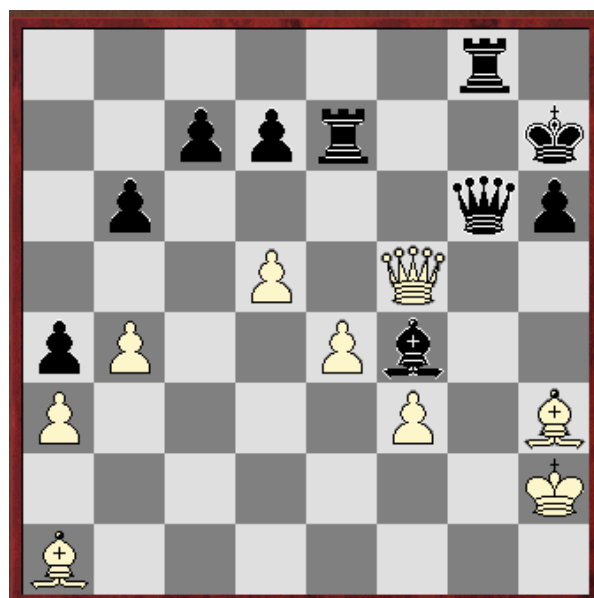
IM Mohapatra Sidhant (2379) versus **IM Semen Mitusov (2487)** was a solid and not too exciting d3-line in the Ruy Lopez. The position remained approximately balanced through a stream of fairly sound exchanges. Then after the first time control a draw was agreed in a still rather closed and balanced position with queen, rook , knight and six pawns against queen, rook, bishop and six pawns.

The young Israeli **IM Yahli Sokolovsky (2475)** needed a win as white against Greek **IM Stavroula Tsolakidou (2424)**, but made a relatively slow start with a closed Sicilian opening. The position soon opened after all the knights were exchanged, and white kept a pressure due to his center advantage and more active bishops. Following a tactical d5-break, white temporarily sacrificed an exchange and then decided the game with a powerful attack:



27.Bxf7+ Kxf7 28.e6+! dxe6 29.Qe5 Lf6 30.Rc7+ Kg6 31.Rxg7+ Bxg7 32.Qxg7+ Kh5 33.Qxh7+ Kg5 34.Qg7+ Kh5 35.h4?! Qd2 36.Qf7+ Kg4 37.Qg6+ 1-0

Swede **GM Tiger Hillarp (2473)** and Estonian **IM Mai Narva (2399)** meanwhile discussed a Nimzo-Indian Rubinstein in which white's double fianchetto first gave him a slight plus. White however lost the thread when weakening his queenside with 22.b4? and 23.Rc2?, and following this black suddenly won an exchange with a better position. The Tiger following this cramped and gave up more material for nothing. Mai following this had two rooks for a bishop, plus the safer king, in the final position after 35 moves:



IM Nico Chasin (2447) versus **WGM Pallathur Nandhidhaa (2305)** was a Queen's Gambit Ragozin, in which white bravely castled long. This is considered a dubious plan, but worked out fairly well as black came up with no dangerous threats against the somewhat airy white king, and white kept a slight initiative into a double-rook endgame where his active king was an asset. White due to his more active king and more advanced pawns had some practical chances in the endgame even with only two pawns left on each side. Nandhidhaa however succeeded in activating her rook and finding a blockade with the white pawns at b4 and a6, hence white offered a draw after 50 moves.

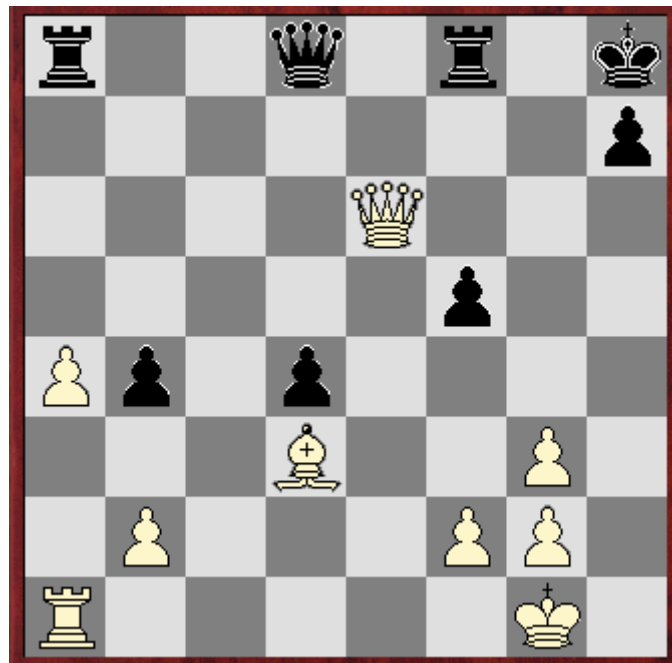
IM Jonah B. Willow (2446) versus **IM Dushyant Sharma (2331)** was a Ruy Lopez duel in which black delayed his castling, even when the center was blown up. Exchanging the queens reduced risks for black, but white still gave him a pressure after he regained a sacrificed pawn at f7. While white played too slowly, black however efficiently reorganized his pieces with the king at b8. White felt forced to exchange one of the bishops, reaching a balanced rook and minor piece endgame which was agreed a draw.



Willow vs Sharma

The Swedish duel between **FM Fredrik Lindh (2256)** and **IM Hampus Sörensen (2428)** was known Sicilian Najdorf theory for the first 16 moves. Chances were about balanced after exchanging three sets of minor pieces. Black played aggressively on the kingside by running his pawn up to h3, but white's king remained fairly safe at h1. White after 30 moves picked up the loose pawn at h3, although black won back the pawn at b2 and kept the balance. 31.g5? afterwards was a mistake from white, as it turned out black could snatch one more pawn at c3 without running into a mate in the h-file. As white found nothing better than exchanging queens afterwards, the double-rook endgame was very painful at best seen from his side of the board. Black after the time control had two extra pawns, and the remaining question was about white's passed d-pawn. White resigned at move 50, as it turned out black could safely control the pawn at d7 from behind.

The Scandinavian duel between **IM Linus Johansson (2427)** and **FM Nicolai Kistrup (2324)** saw a Semi-Slav Meran opening, in which well-known tactical exchanges after 19 moves left white with approximately enough compensation for a sacrificed pawn. Black made first a slightly strange decision to give up his strong bishop at b7 for the knight at f3, and then a very strange decision to move his knight away from the kingside. White following this had a perpetual check against the black king, but happily sacrificed an exchange at a1 to continue his attack.



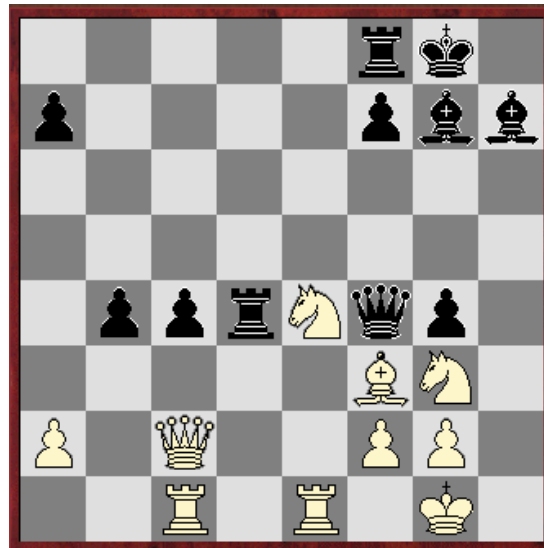
The position remained double-edged and difficult to play from both sides with queen, bishop and four pawns against queen, rook and two pawns after the time control. White however had the less difficult position to play and early in the sixth hour his kingside attack combined with the running a-pawn finally decided this complex and creative game.

The young lions duel between **IM Hasan Huseyin Celik (2417)** and **FM Shazil Shehzad (2301)** started up with a rare English opening in which black won the pair of bishops following Nc5-Nb3-Nxc1 in the opening. White in the meantime got an initiative and used it to exchange one of the black bishops, leaving white with a pleasant structural advantage after 20 moves. Shehzad defended by active means, giving up a loose pawn on the kingside to mobilize for counterplay on the queenside. Black succeeded in winning back the pawn at a5 immediately after the time control, and a roughly balanced rook and minor piece endgame was drawn by a repetition some 15 moves later on.



Shehzad (Photo: Anniken Vestby)

FM Gunnar Lund (2335) versus **IM Ameya Audi (2378)** was a Queen's Gambit Declined which soon turned positionally messy, as black kicked back the white bishop with 4... h6 and 5... g5. Black and his pair of bishops later did fine despite the weakened kingside. The heat intensified further as Audi in party mood after 20 moves had sacrificed his knight to destroy white's two center pawns and open the position for his pair of bishops. The decisive moment here came under mutual time pressure after 28 moves:



29.Ne2 Rxe4! is messy to say the least. White instead blundered with 29.Nh5?? and lost decisive material after 29... Qh6 30.Bxg4 Bxe4. The game remained tactical and entertaining later on, but black now had a winning advantage all of the time and white resigned as he after 43 moves was about to lose his rook.

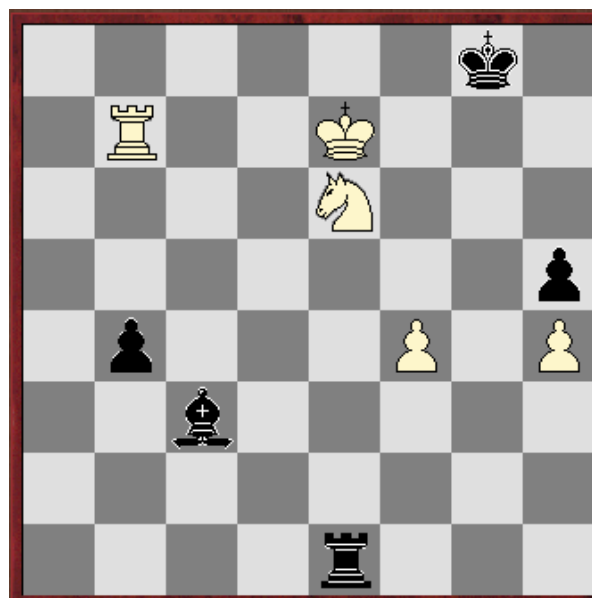
The young lions **IM Sambit Panda (2377)** and **Eivind Grunt Kreken (2215)** today discussed a Queen's Gambit Semi-Tarrasch in which something went seriously wrong for black, as white following a thematic pawn sacrifice with 20.d5! exd5 21.e5 had a winning kingside attack. As both players ran short of time in a still complicated position, the IM however lost the thread and went off track with his attack, while black activated his remaining pieces for a counterattack. The finish before the time control was dramatic:



Now 33.Qe7! Qd5 34.Be4 Qd7 35.Qxd7 Rxd7 36.Bxb7 Rxb7 37.Rxe6 is a drawish endgame. White instead went for 33.Qxa7 – and then black could trap the queen with 33... Qc3! 34.Rf1 Qc6! 35.f3 Ra8. Both players understandably overlooked this and the game instead had a dramatic draw finish with 33... Rf8 34.Rf1 Bxg2!? 35.Kxg2 Qg4+ 36.Kh1 Qh3+ 37.Kg1 Qg4+ 38.Kh1 Qxh5+ 39.Kg1 Qg4+ 40.Kh2 Qh4+ 41.Kg2 Qg4+ 42.Kh2 Rf3 43.Qb8+ Kg7 44.Qc7+ Kf6 45.Qd8+ etc.

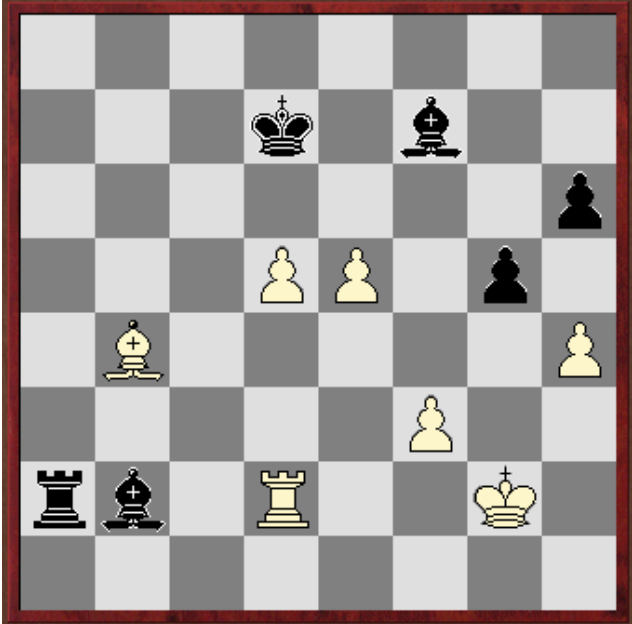
IM Moksh Doshi (2353) as white against **Morten Andersen (2178)** started up with 1.Nf3 and 2.e3, but then suddenly accelerated on the kingside with 6.h4, 7.h5 and 9.h6. White following a somewhat confused reaction from black got a strong initiative, and kept it after a queen exchange at move 23. Material after 30 moves was still in balance with rook, two bishops and four pawns against rook, bishop, knight and four pawns, but the pair of bishops plus better pawn structure plus seventh rank rook combined gave white a decisive advantage. Both players for the next ten moves made some mistakes, but white was clearly better all of the time and after 39 moves had a sound extra bishop.

FM Viktor Haarmark Nielsen (2351) in search of an IM norm was unlucky to get the strongly underrated and unpredictable **Peder Marcus Aamodt (1941)** as his opponent, and absolutely needed a win as white in this game. The opening was a Catalan in which white took a pawn at c4 but later returned it at c7, following an early queen exchange reaching a position about in balance. White kept a very slight initiative, but the endgame with rook, knight and four pawns against rook, bishop and four pawns around move 33 was considered drawish. Material after the first time control remained in balance with a reduced number of pawns, but the position became more tense as black established a passed pawn at b4 while white had a passed pawn at f4 and a direct attack against the black king. Black after five hours had the more difficult position to play with only a minute left on the clock, and in the end it proved too difficult:

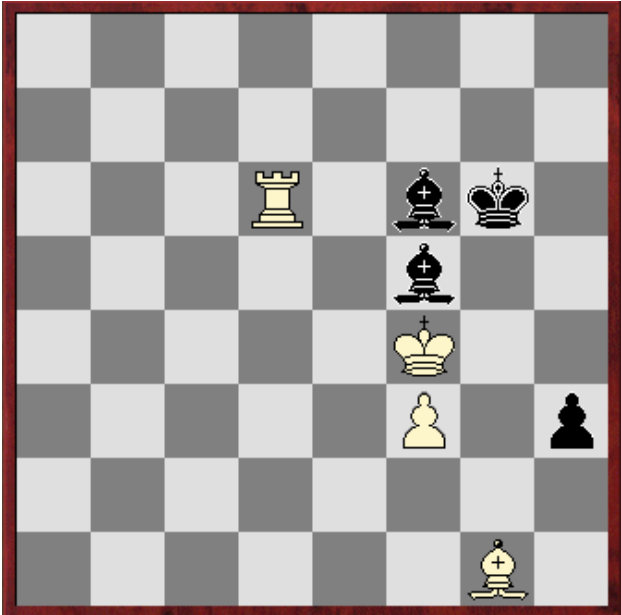


47... Kh7? 48.Kf7 Rf1 49.Ng5+ and black resigned as 49... Kh6 50.Rb6+ will be mate next move while 49... Kh8 50.Rb8 already is a mate.

Norwegian **Sondre Melaa (2285)** and Costa Rican **IM Sebastian Mihajlov (2373)** today discussed an Italian opening which left theory around move 10, leaving black with two bishops and a slight initiative. White demonstrated some counterplay on the kingside, and chances were about balanced following a queen exchange at move 19. The game turned tactical around move 27, and white here sacrificed a bishop for two pawns to reach a strange situation in which black had a hard time moving his rook or dark-squared bishop.



The position probably is drawn, but black was not convinced and gave up his rook for the white center pawns with 40.--- Bxe5? 41.Rxa2 Bxd5. The remaining endgame with rook, bishop and f-pawn versus two bishops and h-pawn gave black good practical chances. Melaa although short of time however played stubbornly on for a win, and was finally rewarded well into the sixth hour:



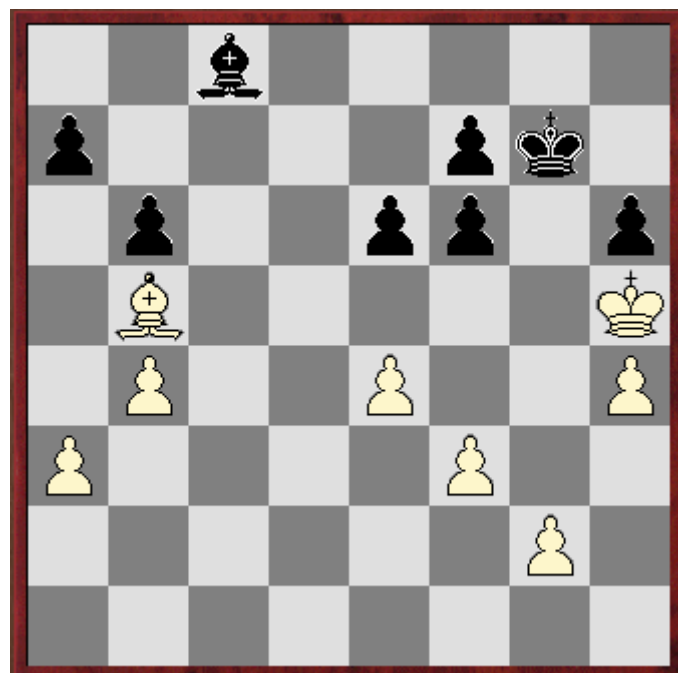
80.--- Bc8?? 81.Bd4! h2 82.Rxf6+ Kh7 83.Rf8 1-0.

FM Theodor Kenneskog (2358) versus **FM Daakshin Arun (2283)** saw a Sicilian Najdorf variation in which both players castled long. Both players made 15 moves without spending any time at all, and white before that had sacrificed a pawn at d5. Then black spent almost half an hour and white more than one hour for the next three moves. And then black sacrificed back the pawn at e4, with a draw offer which white decided to accept. The final position probably was about in balance, but no way without chances.



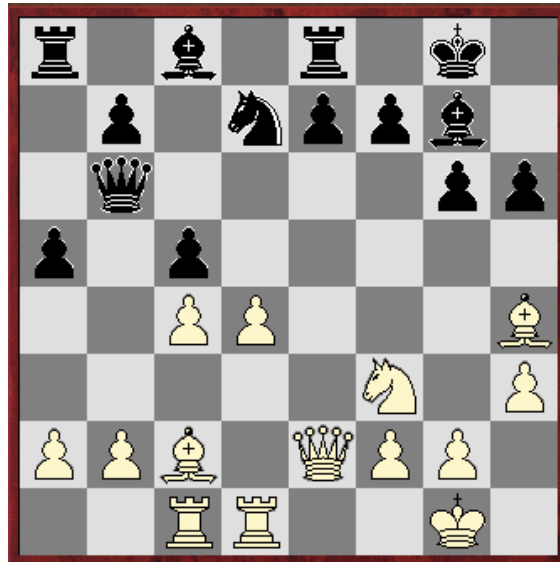
Kenneskog vs Arun

IM Ludvig Carlsson (2350) and **FM Ritvik Krishnan (2277)** discussed a Queen's Gambit Ragozin line, in which the players after 21 moves had exchanged down to an endgame with two rooks, bishop and six pawns on each side. The game had few dramatic moments on the board but a true drama on the clock, as Carlsson at move 38 somehow lost on time in a very drawish bishop endgame. Carlsson usually has at least half an hour left at move 39, but for some reason spent a lot of time today and then forgot about the clock.



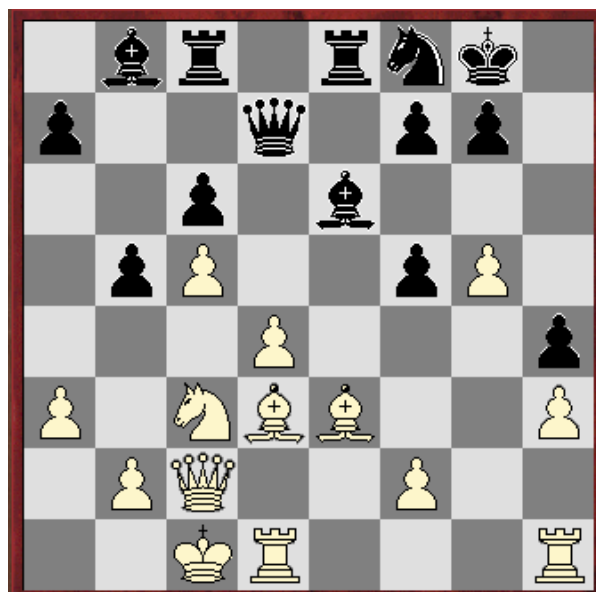
The final position where white lost on time.

17 year old Norwegian **FM Saad Elmi (2344)** came back on the track with his run for the IM norm today, winning fairly confident as white against 14 year old **Isak Vinh Brattgjerd (2228)**. The opening was Caro-Kann Two Knights variation, in which white had a slight plus and black a fairly sound position after exchanging one of the knights. The not unnatural 19... Qb6? here turned out to be a serious mistake, which white immediately called:



20.Ba4! cxd4 21.c5 Qc7 22.Bg3 e5 23.Nxd4! Qd8 24.Nb5 with a winning initiative for white. Elmi later kept the position in an iron grip, winning an exchange after 34 moves and after the first time control had an easy win in the rooks and minor pieces endgame.

FM Håvard Haug (2341) today tested out the white side of a Caro-Kann Tartakower against underrated 15 year old **Ani Avetisyan (1840)**. White soon started a kingside attack with 17.g4 and 18.g5, and efficiently used his chance when black chose the wrong defensive plan with 18... f5:

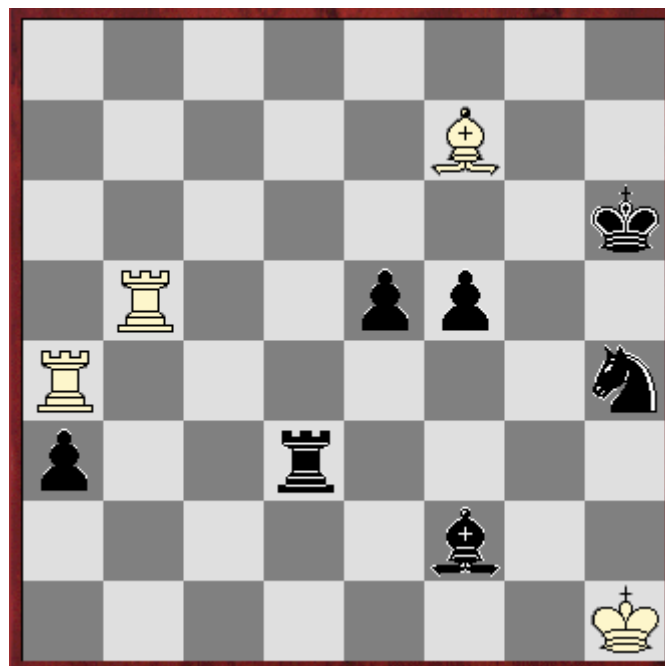


19.d5! cxd5 20.Bxb5 Qb7 21.Bxe8 and white suddenly was an exchange up. White later had it all under control and reached a won endgame well before 40 moves.

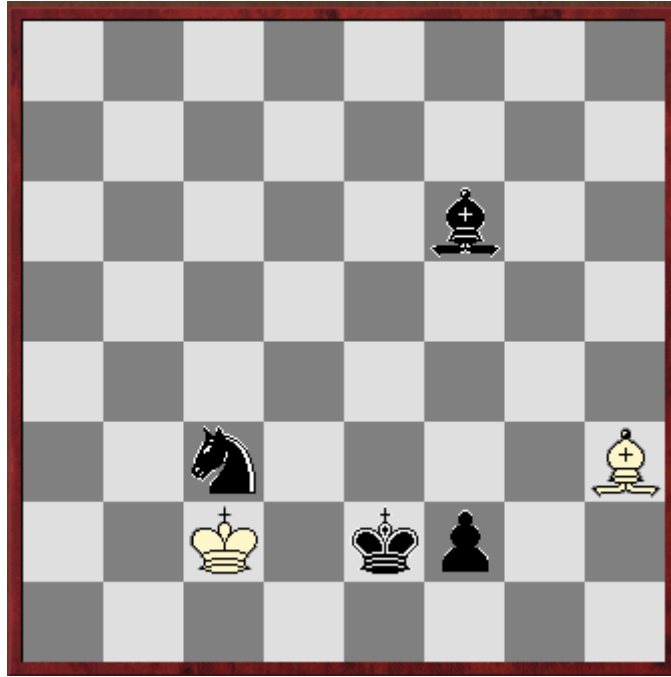
FM Ward Al-Tarboush (2277) versus **IM Mads Vestby-Ellingsen (2336)** by far became the last game to finish this round, lasting 111 moves and close to 6½ hours. Both players spent much time from this complex Sicilian Najdorf opening, but black demonstrated the better understanding and came much better. White realized the danger and sacrificed a pawn to force a queen exchange, and following some mistakes from both players they reached a rather messy position with two rooks, bishop and four pawns against rook, bishop, knight and six pawns. Black still was much better, and reached a won position as he could pick up white's b-pawn and get two connected passed pawns on the queenside. Around move 50 the game was not last much longer, as black had three pawns for the exchange and a direct attack against the white king.



Al-Tarboush vs Vestby-Ellingsen

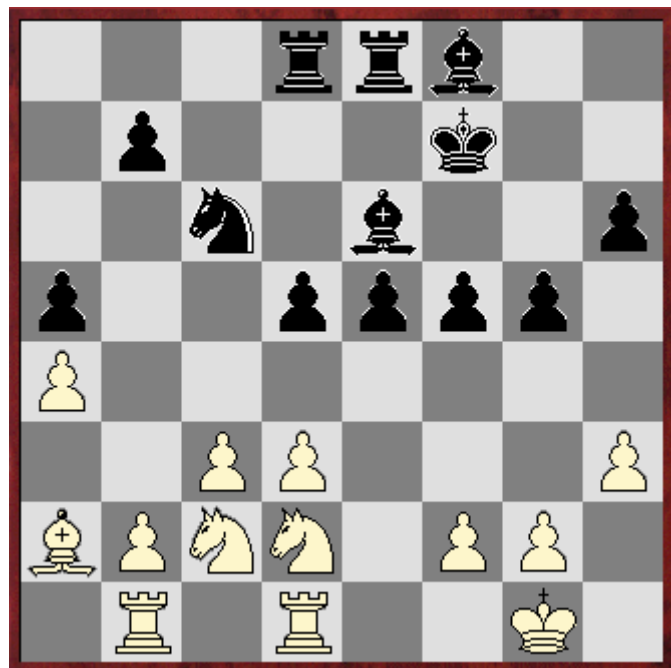


52.Kh2? gave black a smashing mate in three with 52... Bg3+ 53.Kh3 Bf4+ 54.Kxh4 Bg5 mate. Vestby-Ellingsen however had less than a minute on the clock and went for the more positional 52... Bd4? Following 53.Rb3! Rxb3 54.Bxb3 Kg5 55.Rxa3 white suddenly was close to a draw. The IM with the two connected passed pawns of course played on and was rewarded as Al-Tarboush also ran seriously short of time. Black definitely reached a won position as white after 100 moves gave up his rook for one of the black pawns. Still the win was not trivial and many people believed the game would continue for some 35 moves more as the IM would have to demonstrate the well-known but not trivial mate with bishop, knight and king versus king. Vestby-Ellingsen however instructively demonstrated that this was not necessary:



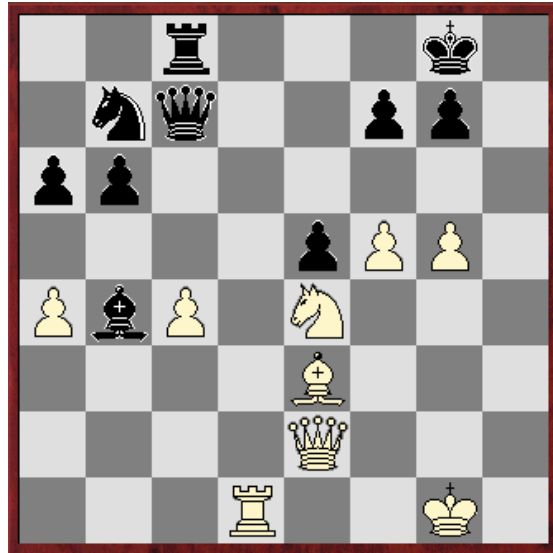
109.--- Be5 110.Bg2 Ke1 111.Bh3 Nd5 and white resigned as 112.--- Nf4 would force the white bishop to give up his short diagonal f1-h3.

IM Erik Hedman (2311) and **CM Andreas Skotheim (2214)** discussed an Italian opening in which both spent much time. White here became much too passive, and black following an early queen exchange got a clear space advantage with pawns at d5, e5 and f5.



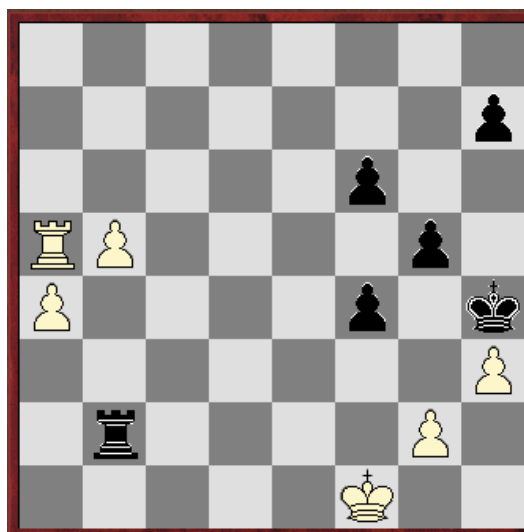
27.--- Bc5? however was an instructive mistake, as white could (and did) break up the black center with 28.d4! – as 28.--- exd4 29.Nb3 works fine for white. Chances later were approximately balanced, and draw was agreed in a dead rook endgame after 47 moves.

The teenager duel between Israeli **FM Roy Vagman (2311)** and Norwegian **Martin Holten Fiskaen (2118)** saw a Sicilian Najdorf opening in which both players castled short. White started an early pawn storm on the kingside, but black balanced the chances by a thematic d5-break. Black was fine if not better after 26 moves, but then underestimated remaining dangers on the kingside:



27.--- Qc6 28.Qg4 Nd6 29.Nf6+! Kf8 and now 30.Nd5! could have given white a dangerous attack. With a few minutes left on the clock, white instead went for 31.Nh7+? Kg8? 32.g6? Bc5 with a black advantage. During mutual time shortage black later came two pawns up in the rook and knight endgame, but white still scraped a draw due to his active pieces and the reduced material.

Pantham Kaewpitakkun (1989) versus **GM Stellan Brynell (2406)** was a Classical French duel in which white went for a lot of early exchanges, leaving after 20 moves a drawish endgame with two rooks, bishop and six pawns on each side. Black however had a slight edge due to white's loose pawn at e5, and the GM before the first time control reached a promising rook endgame. White here was in trouble despite his two connected passed pawns on the queenside, which fairly well illustrates the importance of an active king in such endgames.



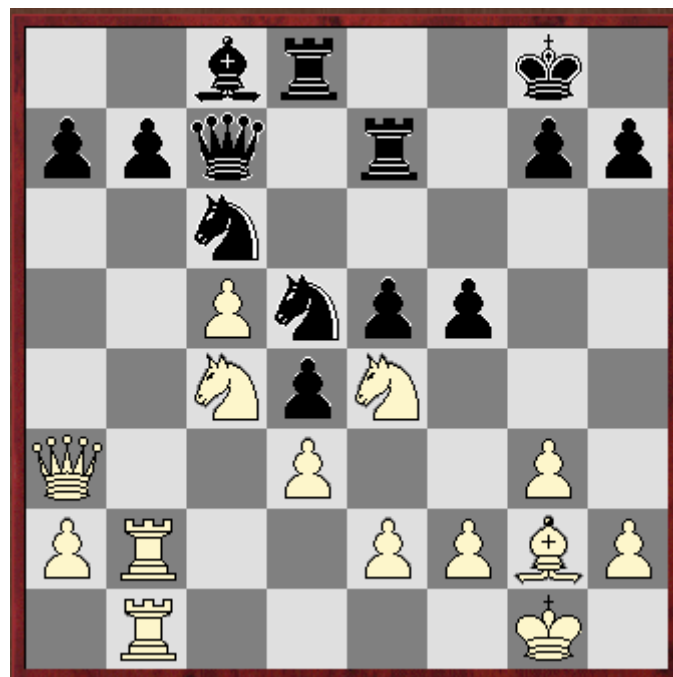
36.Ra6 Kg3 37.Rxf6 Rb1+ 38.Ke2 Kxg2 39.Rf5? f3+! and black soon won.

FM Yuvul Yaniv (2368) versus **CM Svetoslav Mihajlov (2094)** was a French Burn variation in which white castled long, sacrificed a pawn and went for a kingside minor-pieces attack which did not work out – leaving black a pawn up with a better position. Black in turn became too helpful when exchanging the last minor piece at f3, and following this had to give back the pawn. He still had a structural advantage when a draw was agreed after 26 moves.

IM Helge A Nordahl (2330) and **Shadi Sian (2076)** tested out a Queen's Gambit Declined, leading to a balanced position following an early queen exchange. The structure was almost symmetrical after exchanging the c- and d-pawns, and a draw was agreed by a fairly sound repetition after 27 moves.

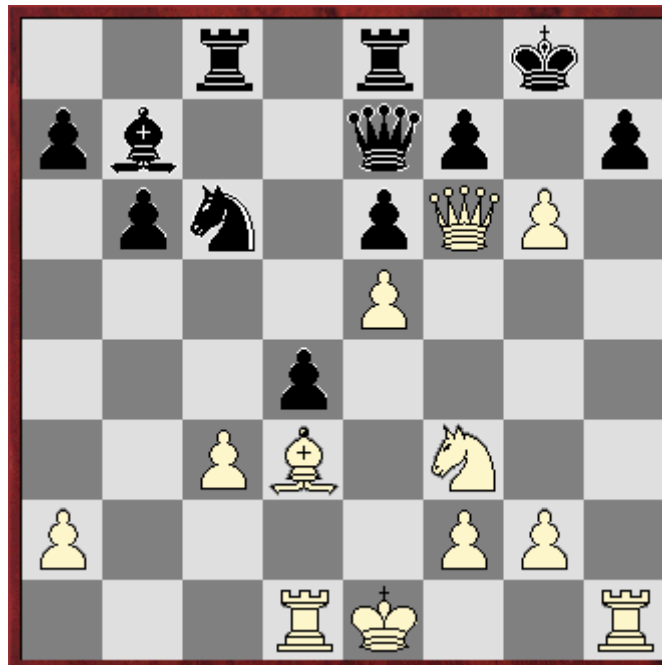
Indy Southcott-Moyers (2120) versus **FM Vegar Koi Gandrud (2293)** saw an English opening which soon became rather messy, as white first gave up both his bishops for knights and then invited black's queen in to win a pawn at a2. White's active pair of knights gave him a lot of compensation, and so black gave up an exchange to activate the bishops and get rid of one white knight. Black later won back one more pawn, and after 40 moves the remaining endgame with two rooks and two pawns versus rook, bishop and four pawns was in some kind of dynamic balance. Black obviously was closer to something in the final version with two rooks against rook, bishop and two pawns, but white efficiently sacrificed back an exchange to reach a dead drawn endgame with rook versus rook and f-pawn.

FM James Moreby (2260) as white against 16 year old **WFM Shivika Rohilla (2003)** started up with 1.Nf3, but soon transposed into an English opening. Black got a center advantage, but white came better due to his more active knights and used them instructively:



22.Ng5! h6 23.Nd6 Nf6 24.Rxb7 Bxb7 25.Rxb7 forced white to give up the queen for insufficient material. White's passed c-pawn decided well before move 40.

The Indian duel between **Aniruddh Chatterjee (2182)** and 16 year old **WCM Anishka Vikram (1995)** saw a London system in which white left his king at e1 and established a space advantage with e4 and e5. White however won a pawn on the queenside and after 20 moves had balanced the chances. 21.--- d4? however was overambitious, and white following this got the time needed to start a direct attack against the black king. It is noteworthy that exchanging the queens here only made life more difficult for black, as white had a dangerous attack without the queens:



25.--- Qxf6? 26.exf6 hxc6 27.Ng5 Red8 28.Rh7 and white soon had a decisive attack. Vikram like Rohilla has lost a lot of speed following a promising start, but both are still in the run for a WIM-norm.

CM Akshit Kumar J (2172) of India and **CM John Stark (1947)** of New Zealand discussed a modern and slightly provocative French Tarrasch line with 3.--- h6?! While black marched forward on the kingside with his pawns, white sacrificed his pawn at e5 and tried to open the center. White soon had a dangerous attack and before 30 moves reached a won rook and bishop endgame with three extra pawns.

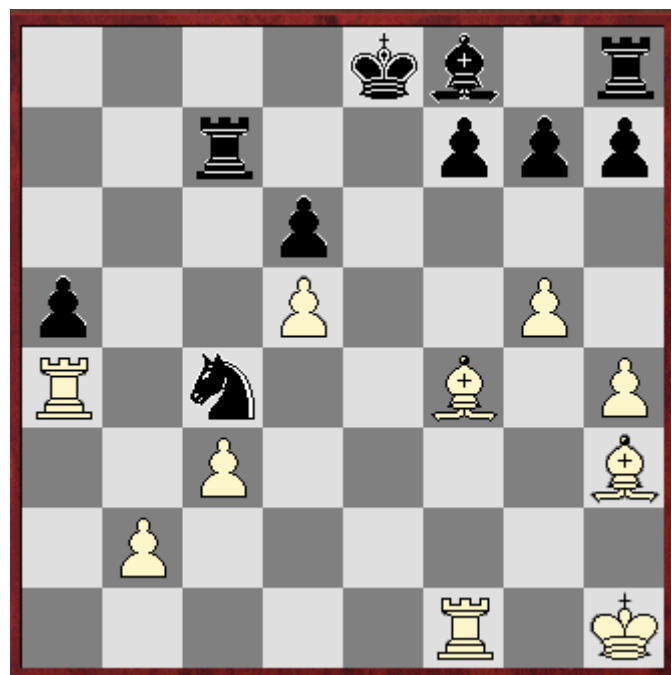
13 year old **Evsuld Mygmarsuren (2138)** as white in a Sicilian Najdorf duel against **CM Joel Paul Ganta (1993)** immediately accelerated on the kingside with 7.g4!?

Ganta's 7... b5 reportedly was mistaken, although the position a few moves later appeared very unclear. White's king was a bit open behind his advanced pawns at h4 and g5, but as black exchanged queens white's pair of bishops gave him a safe initiative. 21... Nc4? was a mistake as white could later open the queenside with a big advantage. The game later was rather one-way driven. Black never got the time to complete his kingside development, and white's active rooks and bishops completed a direct attack before 30 moves:



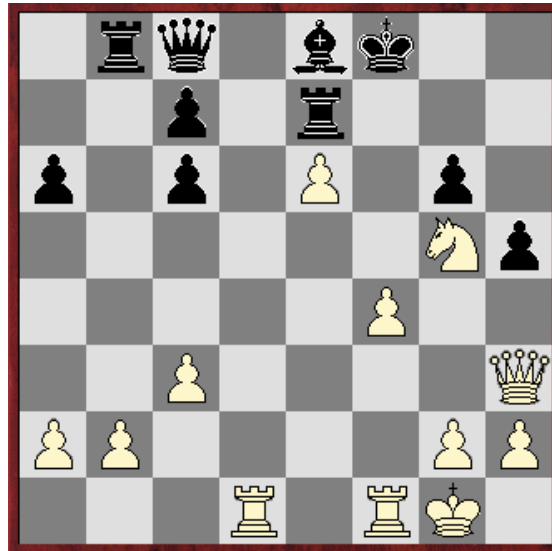
Ganta vs Mygmarsuren (Photo: Anniken Vestby)

24.Re1+ Kd8 25.Re4 Nb6 26.Rxa5 Rc5 27.Ra7 Nxd5 28.Rd7+ Kc8 29.Re8 mate 1-0



24.Re1+ Kd8 25.Re4 Nb6 26.Rxa5 Rc5 27.Ra7 Nxd5 28.Rd7+ Kc8 29.Re8 mate 1-0

Norwegian teenagers **Sergey Eliseev (2131)** and **Oda Kofoed Skramstad (1945)** meanwhile discussed a rare Ruy Lopez Steinitz line with 5... f5?! Later 8... f4? asked for too much and following the natural 9.d4! white had a dangerous attack coming up against the king at f8. Black had a pair of bishops but never succeeded in activating them, and white in the final position after 26.f4 was a pawn up with a crushing attacking plan.

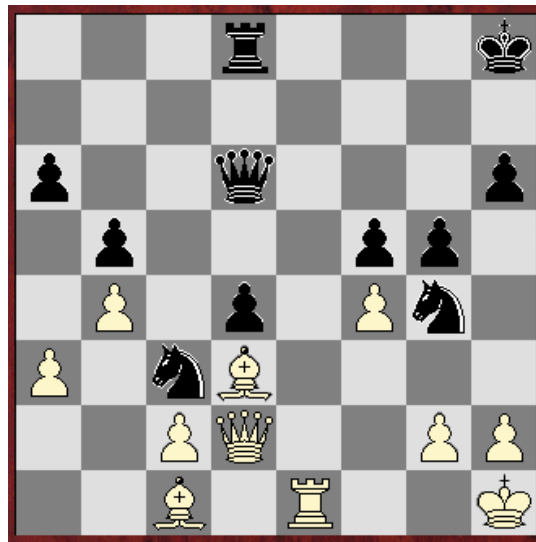


Per Fredrik Holand (2068) versus **Rishi Vijayakumar (2068)** was a Colle opening in which white made no tries to realize the e4 center break, but instead sacrificed first one loose pawn at c3 and then one more loose pawn at b6. White had a pair of bishops and a c-file, but his compensation for two pawns without queens on the board was obviously insufficient. Vijayakumar in a greedy mood first completed his development, and then demonstratively snatched a third loose pawn at h2. White took the hint and stopped the clock as he after 29 moves had no compensation for the three missing pawns.

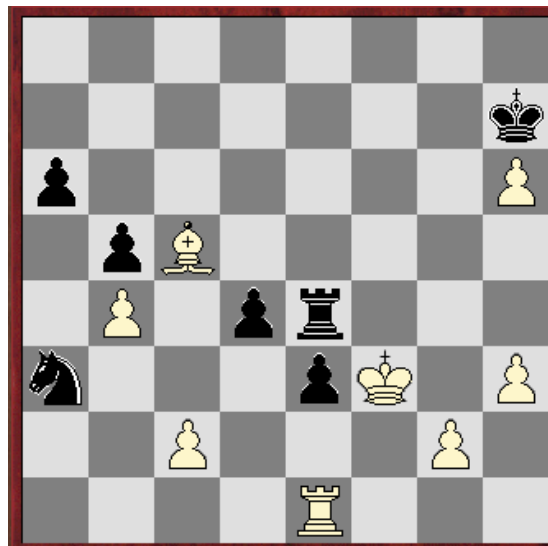
Victor Havik (2078) versus **Gokul Thangavel (1990)** saw a Bogo-Indian opening in which something went seriously wrong for black in the opening, as white after 17 moves was some 45 minutes ahead on the clock with a very strong initiative on the board. White however turned down several promising continuations in favour of a trick line where black soon won back the pawn and even came better in the rook and bishop endgame. Black could well have played on from the final position after 32 moves, but Gokul was half an hour behind on the clock and probably still shaken by the opening disaster.

The game between teenagers **Harry Zheng (2077)** and **Rion Okuno (1981)** was another Sicilian Najdorf in which both players made their first 20 moves with an amazing speed. The preparation here even included tactical exchanges around move 20-24, leading to an approximately balanced rook and knight endgame which was agreed a draw after 29 moves,

Greek **WIM Ioulia Makka (1983)** and 13 year old Indian **Rounaiv Rana (2009)** discussed a Sicilian Four Knights in which black got active pieces, but white's better pawn structure and pair of bishops still gave her an advantage after 15 moves. While white later struggled to find an active plan and placed her bishops in not too active positions at c1 and f1, black gradually activated his knights and reached a double-edged position around move 35.

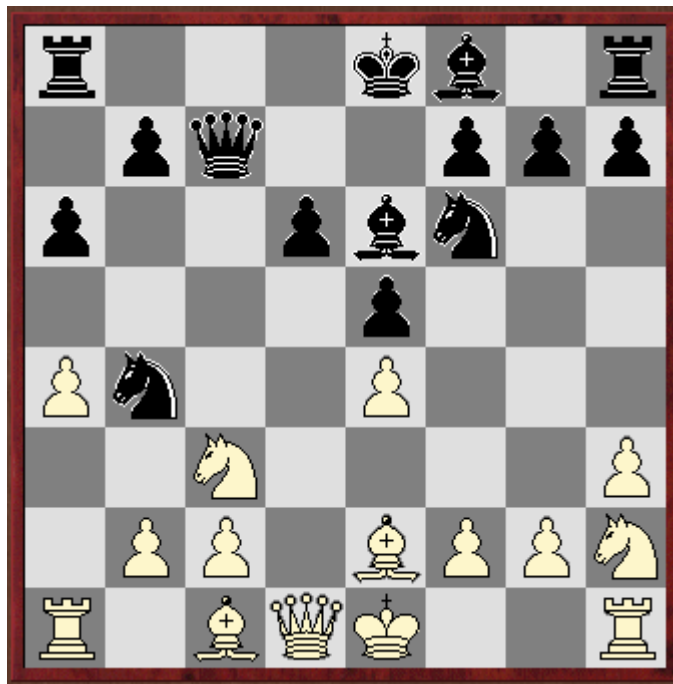


39.--- Qd5? actually was a time trouble mistake which could have given white a clear advantage after 40.h3!, but Makka too was short of time and still came better with 40.fxg5? The queens were exchanged soon afterwards, leaving a rook and minor piece endgame in which black was two pawns down, but had a lot of compensation due to his passed pawn at d3 combined with the active pieces. Chances were about balanced, but the position still complicated, when both players after 53 moves ran short of time again.



53.--- Re6? was a mistake, as black should have snatched the pawn with 53.--- Nxc2 54.Kxe4 Nxe1 55.Kxd4 Nxc2. White in turn however missed her chance to protect the pawn with 54.Re2!, and instead black suddenly had a winning attack after 54.Ke2? Nxc2 55.Rd1? Rf6! – as 56.Bxd4 now would lose to 56.--- Rf2+ 57.Kd3 e2 58.Kxc2 Rf1. The game lasted all until move 79, but black for the last 20 moves or so had an easily winning endgame with rook for bishop.

Fredrik Valstad Elsness (1873) versus **Martin Øksendal (2086)** saw a Sicilian Najdorf in which the highly talented 11 year old Elsness played much too fast and somehow mixed up lines in the opening:



11.Ng4? Nxe4! 12.Nxe4 Nxc2+ 13.Kf1 Nxa1 14.Bg5 f5 15.Nef6+ and white apparently resigned without waiting for the obvious 15... gxf6 16.Nxf6+ Kf7, leading to a decisive material advantage for black.

Ask Amundsen (2069) versus **Lukas Dominik Gåsland (1985)** also was a very fast game obviously based upon a long home preparation for both players. The opening was a King's Indian Advance with a lot of early exchanges, leading within 22 moves to a dead drawn double rook endgame with four kingside pawns for each player.

Dane **FM Casper Dahl Rasmussen (2244)** today obviously had the better English preparation as white against **Sondre Stai (1842)**, and white after 14 moves had won a sound pawn at b7 with a decisive advantage. White later picked up one more pawn at e7 and of course had no problems winning the rooks and minor pieces endgame with two extra passed pawns at c4 and d5.

The young chess queen duel between **WCM Sachi Jain (1992)** and **Lavinia Valcu (2070)** saw a Caro-Kann opening in which black established a space advantage in the center, but white due to her better pieces still held an advantage. White got a very pleasant endgame advantage after exchanging the queens and blowing up the center, leaving only an isolated and rather weak black pawn at e5. Sacrificing a knight for two pawns was rather desperate from a black point of view – but still worked out as white forced herself to sacrifice back a bishop upon black's passed c-pawn. White still was closer to something with knight and three pawns against bishop and three pawns, but Valcu here defended well and after 73 moves saved a draw from this troublesome black game.



Lien vs Evenshaug

Sebastian Lien (1885) versus **Amadeus Hestvik Evenshaug (2035)** was a fairly sound and positional Queen's Gambit Declined, for the first four hours balancing between equal chances and an edge for white. Towards the end of the fourth hour, white under mutual time pressure was slightly better with queen, knight and six pawns on each side. For sure it should have been a draw, but Lien fought on stubbornly and around move 50-55 had a troublesome attack on the kingside. Most of the advantage disappeared following an inaccurate queen exchange, but white still was a

pawn up in a rather blocked knight endgame – and got the help needed to win as his opponent lost another pawn.

Rune Kleiven Rynning (1813) and **Victor Lilliehöök (2060)** investigated an English opening with many early exchanges, leading after 24 moves to a drawish position with queen, rook, bishop and four pawns against queen, rook, knight and four pawns. This was agreed a draw upon black's suggestion two moves later on.

Finally, board 49 between talented Norwegian teenagers **Aidas Juodziukynas (1893)** and **Håvard Eriksen Bech (1951)** started up with a long theory line from the complex Botvinnik line of a Semi-Slav opening. White definitely had the better preparation here: After exchanging two sets of minor pieces, he due to the strong knight at e4 had overwhelming compensation for black's extra pawn at c4. White completed his attack convincingly:

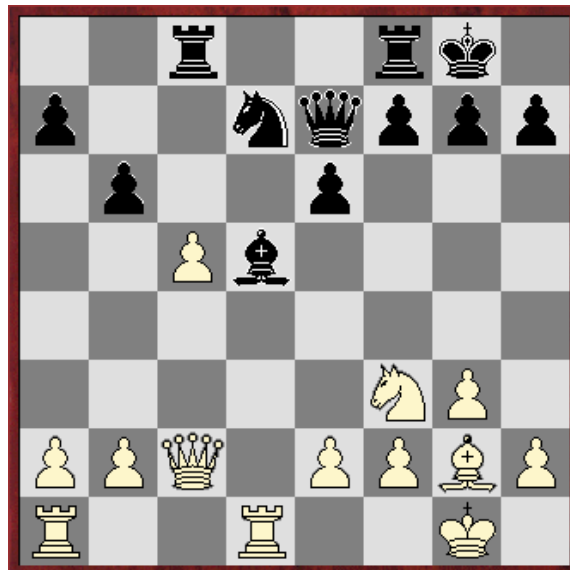


16.Qg5 Kf8 17.Nc5 Qc7 18.Nxb7 f6 19.exf6 Qxb7 20.fxg7 Qxg7 21.Qd8+ Kf7 22.Bh5+ and black stopped the clock instead of giving up the queen.

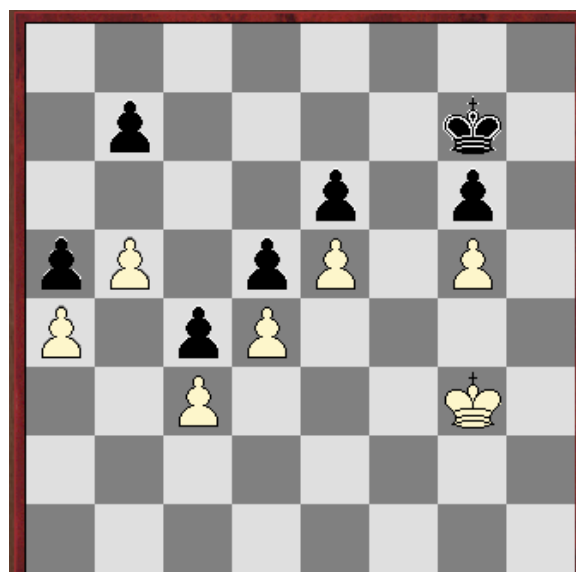
GM Praneeth Vuppala (2506) and **IM Tobias Kölle (2460)** both had requested a walk over draw for round 7. Unfortunately it turned out that none of them were fit to rejoin the tournament from round 8.

Open Group

The Open as the first surprise today had a remarkably unambitious start on the first board game from top rated **Andreas Skrede Hausken (1963)**. As white in the key game against **Amund Pihl Strand (1860)** he went for a solid Catalan opening, exchanged some pieces and offered a drawn in a balanced position after 14 moves:



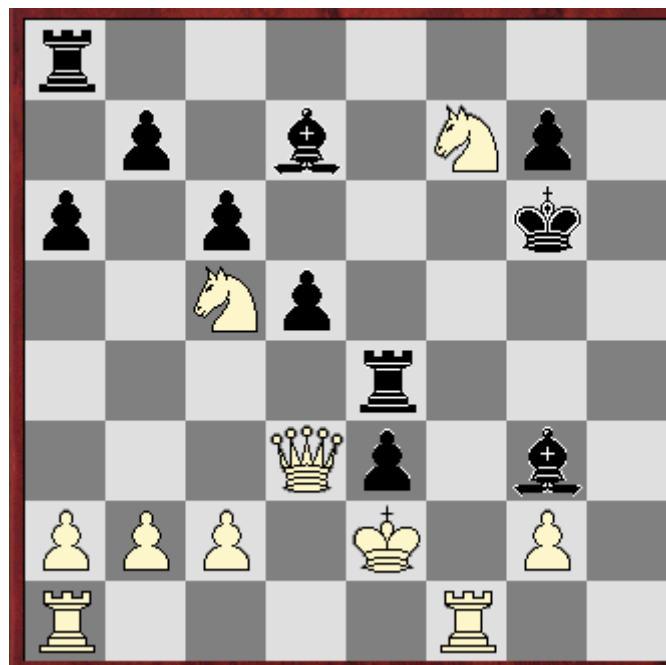
Second board duel between 42 year old **Reddy Sushrutha (1707)** and 12 year old **Isak Vinh Brattgjerd (1689)** was a French Advance duel in which black came better from the opening and had a promising h-file attack in the middle game. White got the help needed to exchange the rooks and the players after 63 moves had exchanged down to a bankbox drawn pawn endgame:



Third board duel between **Benjamin Halvorsen (1848)** and **Morten Rolstad (1870)** was another long draw following a tense and roughly balanced Sicilian battle.

Third rated **Sigurd Kittilsen (1910)** on the fourth board soon got the upper hand as black in a Queen's Pawn game against **Henrik Johansson (1736)**, and black after 22 moves was a sound rook up in the rook endgame.

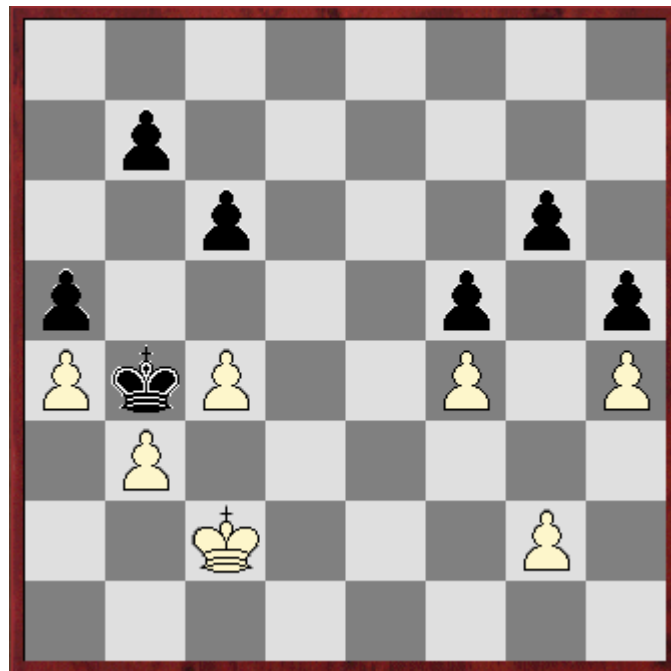
Fifth board between 64 year old **Karim Ali (1855)** and 12 year **Frederik Nordahl (1675)** was a wild attacking battle, in which Karim got a winning attack by the classical bishop sacrifice 10.Bxh7+. Black felt forced first to return the piece and then to give up his queen for insufficient material. White's king had to run away from the h-file, but after 26 moves white was a queen up and about to win even more material. However, to win a game of chess you must keep up the concentration for every move and always remember to check out whether your opponent's last move creates some new threat...



26.--- Bf2?! will loose even more material in case of 27.Ne5+! or 27.Nxd7, but still creates one final trap... Which gave a jackpot as white following a few seconds not too careful consideration instead went for 27.Nxe4??? Bg4 mate!

Sister **Christine Nordahl (1673)** a few hours later was a pawn up in endgame against **Kazim Yilmaz (1805)** on the sixth board, but Yilmaz defended well by sacrificing a second pawn to reach a dead drawn opposite-coloured bishop endgame.

Seventh board duel between **Hafsteinn Agustsson (1825)** and **Ståle Sending (1959)** also ended up a long draw and was balanced most of the time, although black got his chance and then missed an instructive win in the pawn endgame:



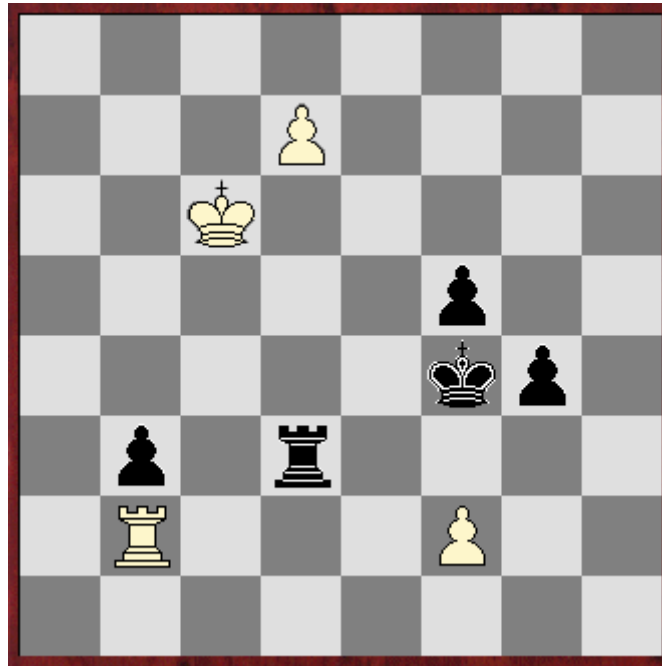
Black short of time chose 37.--- b6? and the position soon was drawn after 38.Kb2 Kc5 39.Kc3. Instead 37.--- Ka3! 38.Kc3 c5 39.Kc2 Ka2 40.Kc3 Kb1 wins for black.

The young girls overall are doing well here and 11 year old **Sophie Damiano (1691)** today won a long game as white against **Ida Lahlum (1755)**. White here came better from the opening and won the endgame after five hours, although black in the meantime came up with an exchange sacrifice which for a long time balanced the chances.



Lahlum vs Damiano

Also 11 year old Norwegian **Githiha Sathish (1656)** in the end efficiently decided a jumpy rook endgame against 68 year old **Mykhailo Kuzmenko (1747)**:



58.--- Kf3! 59.Kc7 Rd4! 60.d8Q Rxd8 61.Kxd8 f4 still was a draw. White instead got her chance and used it well after 58.--- Kg5? 59.Rxb3! Rxd7 60.Kxd7 f4 61.Ke6 Kh4 62.Kf5 g3 63.Kxf4 g2 64.Rg3 1-0

Last spring junior **Steinar Diseth Skogholt (1611)** also is doing well above expected and today scored a draw as black against **Tim Spanton (1876)** – despite a «highly original» opening with 1.Nc3 d5 2.d4 h6?! Both players missed some chances before landing in a drawn rook endgame after 69 moves.

Amund Pihl Strand following this kept a full point lead at 6,5/7. **Hausken** is unshared second at 5.5/7, while third place at 5,0/7 is shared between **Sigurd Kittilsen, Morten Rolstad, Reddy Sushrutha, August Minth Brattgjerd** and **Frederik Nordahl**. Strand is a big favourite for the first prize and Hausken a favourite for the second prize, but both will get well qualified opponents with Strand versus Rolstad, Brattgjerd versus Hausken and Kittilsen versus Sushrutha coming up as the top board pairings for round 8.

Photos by Tom Eriksen and Anniken Vesby