

FAGERNES CHESS INTERNATIONAL 2025

THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT

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GM Group

First board duel today was a short draw and second board duel was a long draw ... But then all the next eleven boards had a winner! Apart from the fighting spirit, the most remarkable this round was a mediocre score of 8–5 for the GMs.

IM Aksel Bu Kvaløy defeating GM Normunds Miezis no longer qualifies as a surprise, but the top boards today saw two close to sensational results: Norwegian FM Sondre Melaa realized his extra endgame pawn as black against GM Erik Blomqvist, while the young Scottish FM Rishi Vijayakumar won by a smashing attack against GM Tiger Hillarp!

The GMs from Sweden obviously had a hard day. On the other hand, IM Linus Johansson has had a very good start following an elegant endgame win against much higher rated Ukrainian IM Svyatoslav Bazakutsa. Most surprising draws today were Norwegian FM Vegar Koi Gandrud as black against Estonian GM Kaido Kulaots and English CM Indy Southcott-Moyers as black against GM Eduardas Rozentalis. Nine players are sharing the lead at 2,0/2, while the three top rated GMs all can be found among the 12 players at 1,5/2.

The Hungarian first board duel between **IM Balázs Csonka (2459)** and **GM Gergely Kántor (2578)** finished within half an hour. Both players played very fast in this Ruy Lopez opening, and a draw was agreed after 18 moves in a well-known endgame with rook, knight and six pawns against rook, bishop and six pawns. The outcome was not unexpected as the players travel together and obviously know each other well from earlier tournaments.

The result at this early stage of the tournament was fairly logical for both players: Kántor playing for a top prize was fine to draw a potentially difficult black game, while Csonka playing for a GM norm was happy with 1,5/2 including a draw against a top-rated GM.



Mitusov vs Gopal

Norwegian **IM Semen Mitusov (2459)** and Indian **GM Gopal Narayanan (2556)** had a much longer discussion in a positional Sicilian Najdorf line. White apparently had the better preparation and came well ahead on the clock. Black however did fine on the board after exchanging all the bishops plus one set of knights, leaving after 18 moves an about balanced position with queen, two rook, knight and seven pawns on each side.

Black's backward pawn at d6 was a visual weakness, but from move 22 this was balanced by white's isolated pawn at e4. These pawns soon were exchanged in the rook endgame, leading before the first time control to a drawish rook endgame with only three pawns left for each player. White still was very slightly better due to his passed pawn at c6. Black after 44 moves gave up one of the kingside pawns to exchange the passed pawns and reach a drawn rook endgame with two versus one kingside pawn. Stubborn Mitusov continued playing until move 107. Gopal spent some time on the clock, but never really appeared close to losing on the board.



Urkedal vs Zhou

Norwegian **GM Frode Urkedal (2550)** as white in a Grünfeld-Indian opening against English **IM Yang-Fan Zhou (2418)** went for positional exchange line with 8.h3. The game later turned tactical as black played Qa5+ and snatched the white pawn at a2, although white immediately won back the pawn at b7 and afterwards also picked up black's last queenside pawn at a7. Urkedal found a clever was to force tactical exchanges by temporarily giving up his rook for a

bishop at a4. After 24 moves black formally was up with an exchange for a pawn, while he actually was a pawn down with enough compensation. Sacrificing a second pawn at e7 however was a mysterious decision:



24.--- Bd4?? 25.Bxc2 Rxc2 26.Bxe7 Ra2 27.Qb4 and white's extra pawns decided the endgame within a few more moves.



Dotzer vs Jumabayev

15-year-old **IM Lukas Dotzer (2453)** as white in a Sicilian against **GM Rinat Jumabayev (2549)** went for a rather slow positional set up with 2.Nc3 and 3.Nge2. Both players spent some time from the opening, and chances were approximately balanced as the queenside rooks after 12 moves were exchanged in the a-file. White went for a kingside attack with 13.h4!?, 14.h5 and 16.h6, but this backfired as the pawn at h6 became a weakness. Black at

move 30 was clearly better, as he after winning the pawn got the help needed to force off the queens. Dotzer made clever attempts to create counterplay against the black king, but the GM defended very well during mutual time pressure.

After the first time control, black was a sound pawn up with the more active pieces and the less weak pawns. Black in the end here actually ran out of pawns, but still won safely as he had two pieces more. 35-year-old Jumabayev obviously enjoys Fagernes a lot as he won both our tournaments last year, and following this tight win has a remarkable score of +12=8-0 for his first 20 games at Fagernes!

The Indian duel between **GM Raja Rithvik R (2538)** and **IM Aradhya Garg (2387)** started up with a positional Slav line, turning double-edged as black snatched a pawn with 15.--- Bc2 and 16.--- Bxa4. White clearly was better after winning back the pawn at c6 a few moves later on. Destroying his own pawn structure with 21.--- bxa4? and then offering a queen exchange only increased black's problems. Consequently white well before 40 moves eliminated both the black a-pawns and reached a totally won rooks and minor piece endgame.

54-year-old **GM Normunds Miezis (2409)** as white against 16-year-old **IM Aksel Bu Kvaløy (2481)** went for a solid positional English double fianchetto. The opening apparently was more surprising for white, as he after 19 moves lagged some 40 minutes behind on the clock. The position was in a tense balance, as white had a passed pawn at d5 and black an advanced pawn at e4. Black demonstrated the better understanding as he took over the initiative with 21.--- h5!? and 22.--- h4 – temporarily sacrificing a pawn to open the kingside. Returning the pawn with 25.h5? was sound from a white point of view, but 26.h4? afterwards was much too weakening.



Miezis vs Kvaløy

Following this black after 35 moves was a pawn up with the safer king, in the remaining position with queen, rook, bishop and five pawns against queen, rook, bishop and four pawns. This rather open position still had some tactical dangers. Kvaløy however was well ahead on the clock and in the fifth hour safely forced his way into a rook endgame with two extra pawns.

GM Erik Blomqvist (2475) and **FM Sondre Melaa (2344)** had entered a closed Ruy Lopez, which was approximately balanced until the GM suddenly overlooked a well known tactical trick. The FM immediately used his chance:



15.Qf3? Nxe4! 16.dxe4 Qxh4 17.exd5 Rf6 18.Nf5 Qxf2+ and black suddenly had a sound pawn more in a rooks and minor piece endgame.

21 year old Melaa later became a bit too passive here, and so Blomqvist due to a d-file pin after 36 moves had a draw within reach. With less than one minute left on the clock, the GM however overlooked a tactical plan for black to release his d-file pieces:



37.Kg3? Nc5! 38.Rc8 Ne6 39.Bc5 Rd3+ 40.Kg2 Rxc3 41.Rxc6 Nf4+ 42.Kf2 Nd3+ 0-1



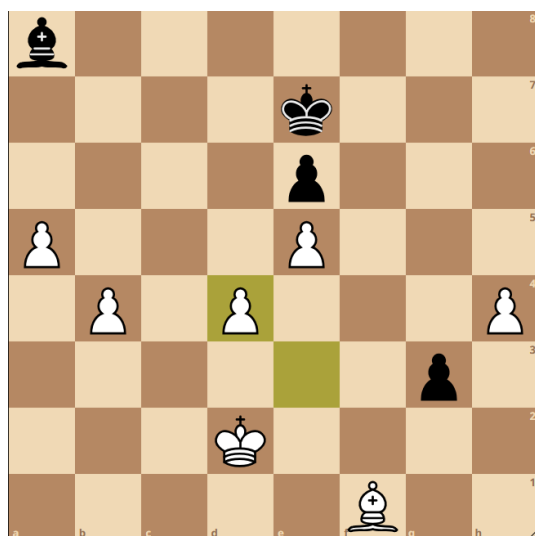
Johansson vs Bazakutsa

IM Linus Johansson (2392) and IM Svyatoslav Bazakutsa (2474)

today set sail with a positional Nimzo-Indian Rubinstein line. White was some 40 minutes ahead on the clock when he made the thematic center break 15.e4, although black had found fair squares for all his minor pieces with about balanced chances on the board. Sacrificing a pawn at h2 later was objectively dubious from a white point of view, and so black around move 25–35 was a pawn up

with a clear advantage. White still had a disturbing pair of bishops, and black's extra pawn was difficult to convert after exchanging all the rooks. Bazakutsa at move 40 left a repetition to play on for a full point with queen, bishop, two knights and six pawns against queen, two bishops, knight and five pawns.

In the fifth hour white reached full compensation after exchanging his dark-squared bishop, as his strong knight on the c5 outpost was superior to black's rather tame light-squared bishop at a8. Although still a pawn up, black had only one minute left on the clock and was under pressure on the board after 55 moves. Accepting an invitation for a queen exchange now turned out to be a decisive mistake, as white immediately won back a pawn at a6 with a winning advantage in the remaining knight and same-coloured bishop endgame. Black sacrificed several pawns to establish a passed g-pawn, but this creative plan still proved insufficient. White could (and did) sacrifice his bishop on the pawn and let his pawn armada run over black's king and bishop:



- 66.--- g2
- 67.Bxg2 Bxg2
- 68.b5 Bf1
- 69.b6 Ba6
- 70.Kc3 Kd7
- 71.h5 Bb7
- 72.h6 Be4
- 73.a6 Kc6
- 74.a7 Kb7
- 75.Kb4 1-0



Grave vs Willow

Norwegian **FM Jacob Templen Grave (2337)** and English **IM Jonah B. Willow (2471)** discussed a Hyper-accelerated Dragon, leading to an approximately balanced position with an isolated white queen's pawn at d4. As black had some pressure against the pawn, white at move 18 tried to pull the brake and went for opposite-coloured bishops by giving up his dark-squared bishop for a knight at a5. This however turned out to be a mistaken plan, as black soon won a

pawn and could play for a win without any risks. After 30 moves the endgame with rook, bishop and four pawns against rook, bishop and five pawns still should be a draw for white. The defence no way was easy to find with two minutes left on the clock. Willow in an inspired mood picked up a second pawn before move 40 and advanced his a-pawn with decisive effect before move 60.

IM Arystanbek Urazayev (2467) versus **FM Adarsh K (2317)** saw another rare positional Sicilian line. The light-squared bishops were exchanged within the first ten moves, and black first did fine despite his two e-pawns. 11.--- e5?! however was dubious, limiting black's fianchetto bishop at g7. White after placing a knight on d5 came better partly due to the knight and partly due to his better bishop. Black succeeded to kick away the bishop with 16.--- e6, but white then instead could exchange the knight at b4 and get a promising c-file pressure. Urazayev increased the pressure until winning a pawn at move 40. Soon afterwards he could pick up one more pawn with a fairly safe win in the rook and minor pieces endgame.

GM Diptayan Ghosh (2573) versus **FM Evsuld Myagmarsuren (2305)** saw a rather positional Meran duel in the Semi-Slav opening. Something went wrong here for black soon after the opening moves, as white got a promising pressure against the black pawn at e5. Ghosh spent much time from the opening today, but after 18 moves he had won the e5-pawn for loose compensation. Ghosh after 30 moves was a pawn up with queen, two rooks and five pawns against queen, two rooks and four pawns – and had the chance immediately to win another pawn at a5. Myagmarsuren following this was in the game again but still had a difficult position to defend with only seconds left on the clock. Ghosh won a second pawn soon after the time control, and at move 48 he could force a queen exchange to reach an easily winning rook endgame.

13-year-old **FM Rishi Vijayakumar (2317)** and 54-year-old **GM Tiger Hillarp (2462)** today discussed a King's Indian Semi-Averbakh system with 8.h3. White bravely castled long and started a kingside pawn storm with 12.g4!?. Both players spent much time for the next 15 moves, but the young FM gradually came better as the GM failed to come up with any real counterplay on the queenside. Vijayakumar instructively mobilized all his pieces for the kingside battle and then smashed through with a classical knight sacrifice:



30.Nf5! gxf5 31.exf5 f6 32.g6 Qd7 33.Bh6 Nxg6?! 34.fxg6 e4 35.Qf4 and the GM stopped the clock. White obviously had too tough threats coming up against the black king – 35.--- Bh8 fails to 36.g7, 36. Bf8 or 36.Bg5. Rishi has had a great start on the new chess year, but this win still must rank among his very best games – so far.

FM Sergey Eliseev (2226) versus **GM Denis Makhnev (2537)** saw a typical Sicilian Rossolimo duel, in which white exchanged his light-squared bishop for a knight with 8.Bxc6. Black later had a pair of bishops, while white had the slightly better pawn structure. Black had taken over the initiative as he at move 11 could place his remaining knight on the strong f4 square. A tactical queen exchange later resulted in an interesting and first balanced endgame with two rooks, two knights and seven pawns against two rooks, two bishops and seven pawns. Eliseev for a long time kept the balance but spent too much time. Following this the game was decided immediately before the time control, with one minute left on the white clock. Black creatively tried to open the position for his bishops – and got the help needed:



White should not lose after 38.Kf3!, but overlooked the importance of that square: 38.e5?! Rxd2!? 39.Rxd2 f3 and now 40.Rd5! fxe2 41.Kxe2 Kg6 42.Rxc5 still offered good chances for a draw. The game instead went 40.Ra2? fxe2 41.Kxe2 Bxh3 42.Rxa7 Be6 and black's pair of bishops soon outclassed white's rook. 0,5/2 against two GMs above 2500 is a score above expected for Eliseev, but it is of course a frustrating feeling that he had endgame positions for 1,5/2.

Estonian **GM Kaido Kulaots (2510)** from the start played hard for a win as white in a Sicilian Najdorf against **FM Vegar Koi Gandrud (2273)**. White here castled long and started up a kingside pawn storm with 12.g4 and 13.h4. Gandrud however was well ahead on the clock and instructively hit back in the centre with 13... d5! After 20 moves black was ahead on the clock and due to his pair of bishops he was slightly better on the board. As black against a GM above 2500, Gandrud very understandably decided to force a draw by another tactical center advance – leading to an airy repetition of checks:



21... e5 22.Nf5 Bxf3 23.Qxc4 Bxh1 24.Nxg7+ Kf8 25.Ne6+ Ke8 and ½-½



Kaewpitakkun vs Ghasi

Pantham Kaewpitakkun (2026) and **GM Ameet Ghasi (2502)** investigated a complex Sicilian Taimanov variation. White here came ahead on the clock and bravely castled long. He however moved too fast, and black soon came much better as white failed to find the critical continuation following a tactical 12.--- Bxa3! Somewhat strangely white in this game offered an exchange sacrifice at d5, and then resigned as black took the exchange with 19.--- Bxd5.

The resignation came a little early, but white's pair of bishops here obviously gave insufficient compensation for black's extra exchange and pawn.



Rozentalis vs Southcott-Moyers

Lithuanian **GM Eduardas Rozentalis (2481)** as white against English **CM Indy Southcott-Moyers (2227)** went for a rare Four Knights opening line, and after eight moves exchanged his bishop at f6 to weaken black's kingside pawn structure. Chances for a direct kingside attack disappeared following a queen exchange, but both the black bishops soon were exchanged. White after 20 moves kept a very slight structural advantage in an endgame with two

rooks, one knight and seven pawns on each side. 16-year-old Indy defended well and after 43 moves had found his way to a drawn rook endgame with three pawns left for each player.



Kaasen vs Brattgjerd

IM Tor Fredrik Kaasen (2472) and **Isak Vinh Brattgjerd (2202)** discussed a Caro-Kann with 1.--- c6 and 3.--- c5?!. White due to his pawn at e5 got a space advantage, but black reached a solid position as he was allowed to exchange white's bishop at d3 for a knight with 11.--- Nb4 and 13.--- Nxd3. With three minor pieces exchanged, white due to his control over the c-file had a slight pressure after 20 moves. Brattgjerd in this situation became too eager to

exchange heavy pieces – and consequently ended up in a very difficult minor piece endgame. White's knight within a few moves could pick up the black pawn at a7 with a winning advantage, due to his two versus one pawn majority on the queenside. White with less than a minute left on the clock chose the wrong plan however, allowing black's king to reach the f5-square with disturbing counterplay. The minor piece endgame jumped back and forth a few times between winning for white and a draw. White however was winning most of the time, and got the change to demonstrate a classical zugzwang win in the pawn endgame:



46.Nxc6! Kxc6 47.Kd3 e5 48.Kc4 Kb7 49.b5 Kc7 50.b6+ Kc6 51.h5 Kd6 52.a6 Kc6 53.a7 Kb7 54.g3 Ka8 55.Kc5 Kb7 56.Kd6! d3 57.a8Q+ Kxa8 58.Kc7 1-0

CM Andreas Skotheim (2229) as white in a Sicilian against **IM Mads Vestby-Ellingsen (2398)** avoided the main lines for a positional 3.Bb5+. Black had no problems equalizing, although chances following an early queen exchange remained approximately balanced. White's passed pawn at c5 for some moves gave him an advantage, but black succeeded to exchange the pawn and balance the chances again. The players after 40 moves had landed safely in a dead drawn bishop endgame.



Skotheim vs Vestby-Ellingsen

The game between the young lions **IM Moksh Doshi (2369)** and **IM Eshaan Hebbar (2175)** saw a classical King's Indian attacking race, in which white was running ahead on the queenside while black went for counterattack on the kingside. White demonstrated the better understanding here and soon had a real pressure against black's key pawn at d6, while black's attack on the kingside was too slow. White's king still was fairly healthy after 28 moves, when his pieces had picked up the black pawns at d6 and c5. Doshi instructively succeeded in hiding his king at h1, helped by a black pawn at h2, while completing his own attack:



37.d7 Rg8 38.d8Q! Bxd8 39.Qd7 1-0

FM Eivind Grunt Kreken (2326) and **Lukas Dominik Gåsland (1994)** started up with a long theory duel in a Sicilian Löwenthal variation. Both players spent a lot of time in a tactical position after the prepared moves. Taking a knight of course was tempting for black, but still turned out to be a mistake:



Securing the e5-pawn and opening an evacuation square for the king with 16.--- f6! here would have given black equal chances. Instead 16.--- Qxc7? ran into hot water following 17.Bb6! Qd6 18.Rad1 Bg4 19.Qe3! Qe6 20.Qc5+ Ke8 21.Qc7 Qc8 22.Qxe5+ and white soon reached a winning position. Gåsland however fought on bravely after giving up his queen, and after the first time control he had reached a drawish endgame with bishop, knight and three pawns against rook and four pawns. White's passed pawn at b6 still gave him the best chances, and black became too careless with his move 41:



41.--- Nd5? 42.Rc2! Nxb6 43.Rxa2 and white had few problems to convert his extra exchange.

FM Gunnar Lund (2341) as white against **CM Nikolay Den Roover (2004)** started up with a typical Trompovsky attack, exchanging his dark-squared bishop for a knight with 2.Bg5 and 3.Bxf6. White got a positional edge due to his fianchetto bishop at g2 combined with the strong knight outpost at d5 and the isolated black pawn at d6. Black due to his pair of bishops and dark-square dominance still was well inside the ring until he went for a loose pawn sacrifice with 13... f4? Den Roover spent much time without finding much compensation following a queen exchange, and after 22 moves was a very sound pawn down with only one minute left on the clock. Lund efficiently cashed in an exchange and won within ten more moves.

FM Martin Holten Fiskaaen (2283) and **Lars Tormod Haugen (1988)** discussed another Hyper-accelerated Dragon Sicilian. White's pawn at e5 in this one gave him more space and some chances for a kingside attack. Black came up with counterplay against the e5-pawn, but white creatively countered this by a positional exchange sacrifice at c6. Black's tactics on e5 later asked too much of the position, but following inaccurate play from white he after 22 moves had reached a highly unclear position with mixed material:



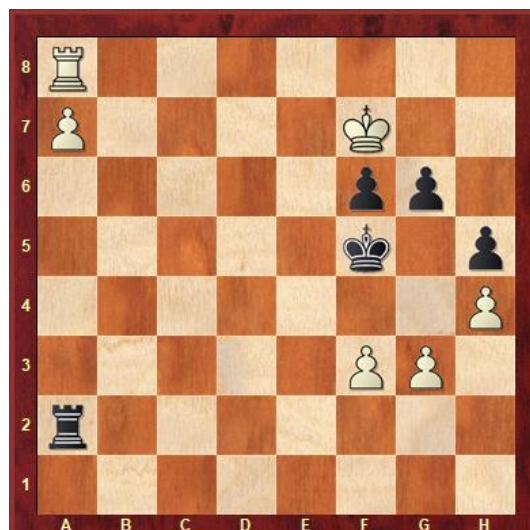
Now 23... Qb4! and white probably has nothing better than a repetition of checks with 24.Nf6+ Kg7 25.Ne8+ Kg8 26.Nf6+. The game instead finished in a hurry with 23... Rxb2?? 24.Qd4! Rb4 25.Nh6 mate 1-0

Swedish **IM Erik Hedman (2276)** as white against Norwegian junior **Nikolai Olsen Wernberg (1893)** took a positional approach, with a closed and positional Sicilian line. The position with an isolated black queen's pawn at d5 here slightly favoured white. Original tactical exchanges later won a pawn for Hedman, following a long calculation:



14.--- Ne4?! 15.Qxc6 bxc6 16.Bxd8 Rfxd8 17.Ne5 f6 18.Nxc6 Rxc6 19.Bxe4 Rb8 20.Bxd5 Rxd5 21.Rxd5 Rxb2 22.Rc1 Rxc2 23.Rxc2 Rxc2 24.Rd8+ Kf7 25.Rd7+ and 26.Rxa7.

The remaining rook endgame is known as a theoretical draw, but still not a trivial task to defend. The position jumped back and forth between win and a draw a few times. In the end the IM instructively could march his king all the way up to h7 and then give up his passed a-pawn to establish a new passed h-pawn:



51.Kg7 g5 52.Kh6 gxh4 53.gxh4 Ra3 54.Kxh5 Ra4 55.Rb8 Rxa7 56.Rb5+ Kf4 57.Kg6 and white soon won.



Østensen vs Arvola

The Norwegian teenager duel between **FM Nicolai Østensen (2260)** and **Daniel Arvola (2088)** saw another Classical King's Indian attacking race. Black here was able to open the kingside rather early. While black failed to find the critical attacking plans, white proved able to consolidate his kingside while continuing his queenside attack. White's position turned winning as he won black's key defence pawn at d6 move 30. Black tried to sacrifice an

exchange, but it was just a cramp as white later had more material plus the more dangerous attack.

The game between **Eirik Berget (2041)** and **FM Ethan Pang (2257)** was drawn after 22 moves, but still this draw was no way a boring one. It all started up like a tense Sicilian Lasker-Pelikan duel, in which white sacrificed a pawn at c3 to go for a direct attack against the weakened black kingside. Taking the pawn with 12.--- Qxc3+ first was sound for black, but as he chose a wrong plan afterwards, white around move 17–18 was well ahead on the clock with a promising attacking position. White in turn was too fast and chose the wrong attacking plan, after which the game finished with an airy perpetual check:



19.Nxd6? Ne2+ 20.Kh2 Nf4 21.Ne8+ Kh7 22.Nf6+ Kg7 ½-½

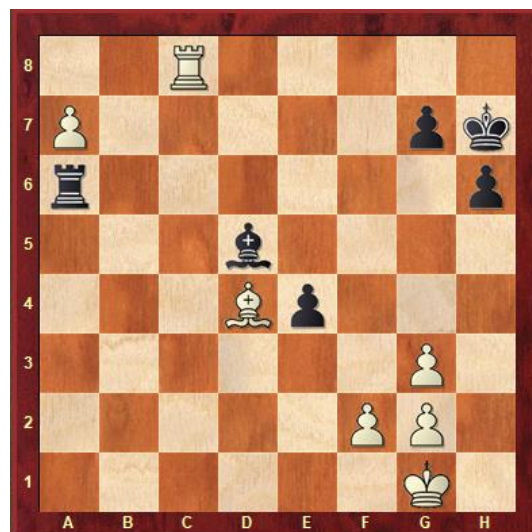


Øksendal vs Holand

Norwegian lions **FM Martin Øksendal (2250)** and **Per Fredrik Holand (2070)** had a lively duel in an open Ruy Lopez. Tactical exchanges here were a part of the preparation at least for black, and after 17 moves he was about 40 minutes ahead on the clock. The remaining position with queen, rook, knight and seven pawns against queen, rook, bishop and seven pawns still was rather messy. To illustrate this, black after 23 moves had pawns at a3, a6 and

h3. The queen and minor piece endgame was considered drawish, although white was short of time with the most open king. Øksendal very understandably made a time trouble mistake at move 40. Holand first demonstrated a winning attack, and then accepted a queen exchange to land the game in a safely won minor piece endgame.

Sigurd Kittilsen (2010) and **Peder Marcus Aamodt (2242)** entered a Sicilian O'Kelly line, leading to a Maroczy Bind in which white's pressure against the backward pawn at d6 gave him some advantage. Black forced himself to exchange the dark-squared bishop for a knight at c3, and following this white's pair of bishops gave him a substantial advantage. Black succeeded in exchanging off the queens but still had a hard time to defend, as white had the pair of bishops and the better pawn structure. Kittilsen made a good decision to exchange his pawn at b4 for the black pawn at a6, as white's passed a-pawn supported by the bishops later was decisive. The last test was to come around black's control over the promotion square at a8:



41.Rd8! Bc6 42.Rd6 e3 43.fxe3 and 1-0 as 44.Rxc6! is next.

Morten Andersen (2200) and **David Mindestrømmen Simonsen (2034)** a few hours earlier on had entered a fairly balanced Zukertort opening, leading to an early exchange of the c- and d-pawns. Following this the players after 14 moves agreed a draw in a very balanced position.

Andreas Skrede Hausken (2002) and **CM Kim Roger Hansen Westrum (2193)** discussed a French Tarrasch with 3.--- Be7, later developing into a balanced exchange line position with both e-pawns gone. Black here had some space advantage with pawns at d5 and c4, while white had solid pawns at d4 and c3. A draw appeared the likely outcome as all the rooks after 20 moves had been exchanged in the open e-file. Then white suddenly went for a creative but still dubious knight sacrifice:



24.Nh5?! gxh5 and now 25.Bxh7+! Kf7 26.Nh4 Ke8 would have been truly messy, while 25.Qxh7+ Kf8 26.Nh4 Be8 27.Bg5? left black a piece up. Black in turn invited white back into the ring with 27.--- Qg8? 28.Qc7! Nxf5 29.Nxf5, although black still had an extra piece and got the help needed to win.

The Norwegian teenager duel between **William Alexander Olsen (2188)** and **Kristoffer Wang Strømhaug (2020)** started up with some Zukertort and Queen's Pawn relative – leading first to a fairly balanced and not too exciting position.

The position suddenly became much more double-edged as black was allowed a tactical 19.--- Ngxe3!?, giving up two knights for one rook and two pawns.

White somewhat mysteriously gave up one more pawn ahead his king, and so black anyway was clearly better when white blundered:



24.Ba3? g6! 25.Qf6 Re2 26.Qg5 and now the not invisible 26.--- Rxd2+! would have been a mate in three, although 26.--- Re1+? 27.Nxe1 Qxg5 28.Bxf8 Kxf8 29.Rxb7 Qd2 was also a very safe win for black.



Skaar vs Lilliehöök

Ben Samuel Groth Skaar (2167)
and **Victor Lilliehöök (1993)**

obviously were prepared for a rare and closed Sicilian with 7.--- g5!?, as both were fast on the clock for the first 11 moves.

Black's kingside pawn storm did not give much, and white kept a pleasant initiative after exchanging the queens as well as the dark-squared bishops.

White's d-file possession gave him an initiative in the rooks and minor pieces endgame after 30 moves,

although black here had a fairly sound position with no weak pawns or lame pieces. Black's position still was practically difficult to defend, as he was rather passive on the board with two minutes against 50 minutes on the clock. Black blundered his key pawn at f6 at move 35, and within a few more moves white also won an exchange.



Halvorsen vs Tørfoss

The Tromsø junior duel between **Benjamin Halvorsen (1966)** and **Sivert Schanche Tørfoss (2141)** started up like a classical Italian duel with 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5. White however postponed his short castle for too long in this open position, and consequently black for some moves held a dangerous initiative. Black in turn failed to uphold the pressure, and so white at move 16 could save his king by castling. For no obvious reason, black afterwards gave up

his pawn at a7. Black's active pieces and light-square dominance first gave him about enough compensation, although white with an extra pawn now obviously was closer to winning chances. Both players were short of time for the first time control but still avoided blunders. White following this still was a pawn up and slightly better at move 41. Halvorsen however first allowed too much pressure against the isolated d4-pawn and then made a dubious decision when sacrificing an exchange. The remaining endgame with two rooks and three pawns against rook, knight and four pawns obviously was clearly better for black, and at the same time difficult to handle for both players with a few minutes left on the clock. Halvorsen for a long time defended well, and after 86 moves he had exchanged it all down to a drawn endgame with knight against rook. Tørfoss of course played on for a win, and suddenly was rewarded 30 moves later on:



116.Ke1 still is a draw – while 116.Ng3?? Rf3! is not. Worth remembering. 0-1



Khoo-Thwe vs Kaushik

14-year-old **Louis Khoo-Thwe (2118)** and 9-year-old **CM Ashwath Kaushik (1958)** meanwhile discussed a delayed Sicilian Alapin position, in which both players castled queenside. Black around move 20–25 had a slight initiative due to his d-file control. Kaushik however lost grip in a still tense position as he around move 30 was down to one minute on the clock. Khoo-Thwe used his chance to win an exchange and after the first time control had reached an easily

winning position with queen, rook and three pawns against queen, knight and three pawns.

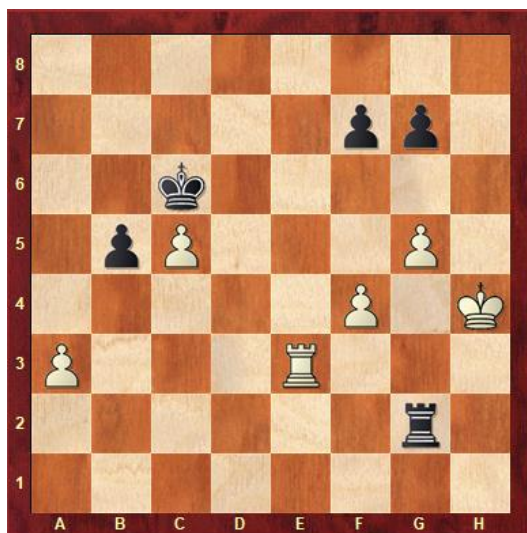
Amund Pihl Strand (1914) and **WFM Valentina Verbin (2113)** started up with an English opening, transposing more or less into a Queen's Gambit Tarrasch as white later went for d4 and black for d5 and c5. The game after 20 moves had reached a fairly balanced position with hanging black pawns at c5 and d5. White's plan for an attack in the long fianchetto diagonal a1–h8 was logical, but still backfired badly in his face:



21.Qb2? Nde5! 22.Nxe5 Bxe5 23.Qb1 h4 24.h3?! hxg3 25.hxg4 Qh4 and black's attack decided within a few more moves.

Open Group

The Open group today took a sensational turn, as the top three boards saw all the top three rated players losing! The first board game between Norwegian **Sondre Stai (1786)** and Swede **Mikael Aroven (2145)** was a rare duel between two former winners of the Open group. First rated Aroven was the given favourite, but lost a pawn with a wrecked position after blundering with 5.--- h6? in an Italian opening. Aroven fought on well and reached a drawish rook endgame, only to stumble into a lost pawn endgame:



44.--- Rd2? 45.Re7 Rd7? 46.Rxd7 Kxd7 47.g6 f6 48.Kg4 Ke6 49.c6 1-0

Second board was a junior duel between **Tomas Engkvist (1969)** and **Thobias Gotaas Hansen (1805)**. Their game saw a tense French battle, which was about balanced until white overlooked a key square inside his own position:



29.Rc2?? Qd3+! 30.Kf2 Bh4+ 31.Kg2 Qe4+ 32.Kh3 Qf3+ 33.Kxh4 h5! 34.Qg1 hxg4+ 35.Kg5 g3 0-1 A blunder from white, but still a very nice attack from black!

Third board duel between 57 year old **Vidar Aleksander Kopperud (1778)** and 13 year old **Isai Sivaparan (1944)** was a sound and fairly balanced game until the rooks and knight endgame – in which black first got a promising queenside advantage, but then underestimated the dangers on the kingside. Kopperud used his chance efficiently during the decisive half an hour after the time control:



41.--- Rfb8? 42.f5+ Kf6? 43.Kf4 Re8 44.g5+ Kg7 45.f6+ Kg8 46.Nf5 and white soon won.

Fourth board duel between **Roaul Abrahamsson (1920)** and **Christian Neukamm (1776)** saw another patient endgame win for 70-year-old Abrahamsson.

Fifth board had a nice endgame win for 12-year-old and highly talented **August Solbu (1887)** as black against **Rune Kleiven Rynning (1776)**, while veteran **Karim Ali (1876)** won a somewhat shaky attacking battle as white against teenager **Daniel Vollheim (1764)** on the sixth board.



Abrahamsson vs Neukamm

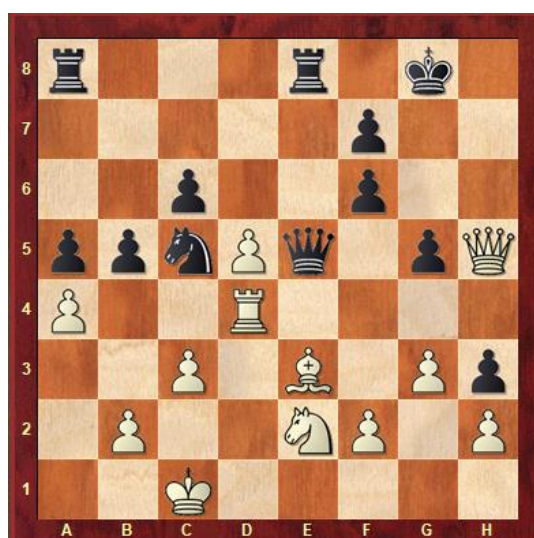


Yilmaz vs Gilsdottir

Seventh board saw **Abishan Arulmaran (1858)** winning a drawish rook and knight endgame as black against **Mykhailo Kuzmenko (1747)**, while **Guttorm Andersen (1842)** suddenly demonstrated a powerful attack as black against the first round surprise man **Leiv Ole Bollestad (1585)** on board eight.

The first draw today came on board nine, as **Kazim Yilmaz (1818)** succeeded in transforming a highly dubious middle game into a drawn rook endgame as white against **Sara Gilsdottir (1738)**. Sara truly improved her play a lot from yesterday and came close to winning this game as black.

11-year-old **Terje Kevin Lysen (1667)** is a young dark horse to follow in this group, and had another attacking win as black against **Benjamin Lien (1733)** on board ten:



22.Rg4!? Nd3+ 23.Kb1 Nxf2! 24.Bxf2 Qxe2 and now 25.Rxg5+! fxg5 26.Qxg5+ could have forced a perpetual check for white – while instead 25.Bd4?? led to a mate in three with 25.--- Qd1+! 26.Ka1 Qxa4 27.Kb1 Re1.

All the lower boards again had a winner, although almost all of them also had the expected winner. A surprise worth a note was **Anne Grete Nebell (1561)** winning a tense and interesting knight endgame as white against **Henrik Johansson (1730)**.

Following another entertaining and hard-fought round in the Open, first place at 2/2 is shared between Abrahamsson, Solbu, Ali, Arulmaran, Andersen, Hansen, Stai, Kopperud and Lysen, while all the top three rated players can be found in the crowd at 1,0/2. This sensational start should promise a very exciting run for the top three prizes in this group.

Photos by Tom Eriksen