

FAGERNES CHESS INTERNATIONAL 2025

THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT

5



GM Group

The second half of the double round saw a relatively quiet evening on the top boards. The first-board duel between GM Rinar Jumabayev and GM Raja Rithvik R was a one-hour draw, while the sixth-board duel between IM Balázs Csonka and IM Arystanbek Urazayev was a five-minute draw. The third-board duel between GM Denis Makhnev and IM Lukas Dotzer lasted somewhat longer but still was a sensible draw, and the fifth board IM Jonah B. Willow - IM Moksh Doshi was also agreed a draw well before 40 moves. On the fourth board GM Ameet Ghasi and IM Linus Johansson played 56 moves and four hours, but still this also qualified as a relatively safe draw.

The big winner (and in fact only winner) on the top six boards tonight obviously was Norwegian GM Frode Urkedal, hitting back immediately from his last round loss by winning very convincingly with black against so far so good IM Aksel Bu Kvaløy.

Second rated GM Diptayan Ghosh of India steams upward following a confident win as black against Norwegian FM Eivind Grunt Kreken on the seventh board, while first rated GM Gergely Kántor got his draw offer in a somewhat worse position as black against IM Yang-Fan Zhou accepted.

The lower boards had many more decided games this round, but no sensational outcomes. Following today's results many IMs are still in the run for a possible GM-norm, although none of them are on schedule following Kvaløy's loss.

17-year-old Norwegian FM Sergey Eliseev is en route for an IM norm following a long draw against GM Normunds Miezis, and FM Sondre Melaa is just behind schedule as he after six hours succeeded in squeezing a drawish rook endgame against a lower rated opponent.

13 year old FM Rishy Vijayakumar remarkably has a performance close to 2400 although his score is only 2,5/5, after losing a tense four-hour battle as black against IM Semen Mitusov. Several other players also can have an IM-norm within reach with a strong second half.

GM Rinat Jumabayev of Kazakhstan, the winner of both Fagernes tournaments from last year, is midway leading this one alone at 4,5/5 – half a point ahead of GM Frode Urkedal of Norway and GM Raja Rithvik R of India. A bigger crowd of 12 players can be found at 3,5/5. Having scored a win against a Urkedal and a draw against Raja, Jumabayev for round 6 will be black against the new English GM Ameet Ghasi – while Urkedal will get the white pieces against Raja on the second board. Obviously nothing is decided and things can change rapidly, as we have 15 players within one point with four rounds to go.

The first board duel between **GM Rinat Jumbayev (2549)** and **GM Raja Rithvik R (2538)** was agreed a draw after 13 moves in a Reti-like English opening. Notably the game still lasted one hour and black was 45 minutes ahead on the clock in the final position. Running into a rare and an unexpected line white spent 30 minutes for his move 13, but then forced a knight exchange and offered a draw with 13.Ne5.



Jumbayev vs Rithvik



The final position of Jumbayev vs Rithvik

Second board was a Norwegian duel between **IM Aksel Bu Kvaløy (2481)** and **GM Frode Urkedal (2550)**. Facing a solid Catalan opening, black hinted about ambitions by trying to unbalance the game with a rare line: 4.--- Bb4+ followed by 5.--- Nc6 and 6.--- a5. White established a space advantage on the queenside with 10.c5, but had no objective advantage from the opening. Instead black could open the c-file, and held a slight initiative following a queen exchange at move 21. This white game turned into a nightmare for Kvaløy as black within a few more moves developed a close to winning initiative, and after 30 moves had an passed pawn at a3. Forcing an exchange of the light-squared bishops here was a good idea from black, as he could afterwards force an exchange win:



34.--- Bb5! 35.Bxb5 Nxb5 36.Kg2 Nc3 37.Rdc1 Rb1 38.Rxa2 Rxa2 39.Rxc3 and black had an easy winning endgame. Urkedal later sacrificed back the exchange to reach a trivial rook endgame with two extra pawns.



Makhnev vs Dotzer

The board three duel between **GM Denis Makhnev (2537)** and **IM Lukas Dotzer (2453)** lasted one and a half hour, but still ended up with a 17-move draw. The opening was a Nimzo-Indian Three Knights variation, in which the 15 year old black player came ahead on the clock and equal on the board. Makhnev offered a draw as the last minor piece was about to be exchanged, leaving an almost symmetrical position with queen, 2 rooks and 6 pawns one each side.



Ghasi vs Johansson

The fourth-board duel between **GM Ameet Ghasi (2502)** and **IM Linus Johansson (2392)** started up with a rather slow Zukertort opening. White at move 18 left an invitation to a repetition, and due to black's backward pawn at d6 got a positional edge after exchanging two sets of minor pieces. Black however had a strong knight square at e5, and came up with enough counterplay to balance the chances. Following some sensible exchanges, the players before

move 40 reached a drawish bishop endgame with five pawns for each player.

The GM-norm candidate duel between **IM Jonah B. Willow (2471)** and **IM Moksh Doshi (2369)** started up with a Ruy Lopez exchange, in which white again had the slightly better pawn structure and black the pair of bishops. White obviously had the better preparation here and after 20 moves was some 45 minutes ahead on the clock. He tested out an interesting positional pawn sacrifice with 16.e5 fxe5 17.Qg4, known from very few earlier games. Black for a long time found sensible moves, but 21.--- Qa5? after castling long was a bit awkward.



26.Nxc4 was a tricky way to win back the pawn, as 26.--- Bxc4?? 27.b4 would trap the black queen. 26.--- Qc5 27.Nxb6 Qxb6 28.Rd7 g6! however gave black an initiative. White suddenly was behind on the clock and had only three minutes left when he at move 31 offered a draw, which was accepted in an approximately balanced position with queen, two rooks, bishop and five pawns on each side.

Sixth board duel between **IM Balázs Csonka (2459)** and **IM Arystanbek Urazayev (2467)** was the shortest game of the tournament so far – agree a draw after 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3. Following this both players at 3,5/5 are below schedule for a GM norm, but both still can make it with a strong spurt.

FM Eivind Grunt Kreken (2326) and **GM Diptayan Ghosh (2573)** entered a Caro-Kann Panov variation, in which white for a good while tried to hang on a loose extra pawn at d5. As black finally won back the pawn with 16... Nbx d5, white within a few moves won another pawn at b4. Black's active pieces gave him full compensation, and he due to his pair of bishops kept a slight advantage after winning back the pawn in move 27. Kreken pulled the brake and gave up one more pawn to exchange queens. As the queenside pawns all were gone, white after 31 moves had a good hope of saving the double rook and double minor piece endgame with three kingside pawns against four kingside pawns. Defending such a position against a GM close to 2600 still is a nightmare, all the more as black here had a powerful pair of bishops.



Computers consider 36.Bd3? the losing move, not unlogical as 36... Bxf3! 37.gxf3 Bd4 now won a second pawn for black – and white eventually just resigned after 38.Rd6 Rxf2+ 39.Ke1 Be3. The position before the blunder however was already difficult, and Kreken should look over this opening line before the next test against a GM.

IM Yang-Fan Zhou (2418) versus **GM Gergely Kántor (2578)** started up like a very closed Italian opening, in which no piece or pawn were exchanged for the first 20 moves. Black apparently had an advantage, as he behind the front had mobilized two knights and the queen for an attack against the white king at h1. 22... h5? however was a positional mistake, as white after 23.f4! gxf3 e.p. 24.Nxf3 could open the kingside against the black king at g8. Black realized the dangers in time and at move 26 offered a draw, which white accepted in a better position.

IM Aradhya Garg (2387) and **GM Kaido Kulaots (2510)** today discussed a positional King's Indian fianchetto, leading to symmetrical King's pawn structure with a pawn at e4 for white and e5 for black. White after 20 moves had two rooks in the open d-file, but black could exchange the rooks if needed and had the better minor pieces. With half an hour against six minutes on the clock, white invited to tactical complications with 22.g5 fxg5 23.Nxe5. Entering this diagonal pin soon turned out to be a mistake:



23.--- Rxd2 24.Rxd2 Qe8! 25.Rd1 Bf7 and white's only try was to give up the queen instead of losing the knight. 26.Nxc6! Bxc3 27.Nxb8 Qxb8 28.bxc3 Be6 and white had some practical chances with rook, two bishops and six pawns against queen, bishop and six pawns. Kaido despite his time shortage played for a win, but shortly before move 40 made a mistake which allowed white to escape



38.--- Qd2! still is difficult for white. Instead 38.--- Bxg4? resulted in an immediate draw after 39.Bd5 Qd2 40.Rf7+ Kh8 41.Rf8+.



Vestby-Ellingsen vs Rozentalis

Norwegian **IM Mads Vestby-Ellingsen (2398)** and Lithuanian **GM Eduardas Rozentalis (2481)** discussed an Italian Two Knights Defense, in which two e-pawns and four minor pieces left the board before move 15. White's pair of bishops afterwards gave him a slight initiative, although black had a solid position and could equalize the center with 18... d5. White later found nothing better than exchanging all the rooks in the e-file, and offered a draw at move 26.

IM Svyatsolav Bazakutsa (2474) as white in a Queen's Gambit against **FM Jacob Templen Grave (2337)** gave his Exchange line with 5.Bf4 Bd6 6.Bxd6 another try. Grave should have been prepared, but spent much time from move 10. A tense struggle followed as black put his king at e8, while white castled long and then moved his king to d1. After 18 moves white's king had reached f2, while black's king had reached f8. Black at that stage had a slight pressure, as white had backward pawn at e3 and due to his king could not realize the e4-break. Chances were roughly balanced after two more sets of pieces left, even when white's backward pawn at e3 still appeared more vulnerable than black's isolated pawn at d5. Black during mutual time pressure found his chance to win the e3-pawn, although this failed to create any winning chances:



34.--- Rxe3!? 35.Rxe3 Qc1+ 36.Kh2 Rxe3 37.Rd1! Qxd1 38.Qxe3 h6 39.Qc5+ Kg8 40.Qc8+ Kh7 41.Qf5+ and draw by perpetual check.



Myagmarsuren vs Kaasen

FM Evsuld Myagmarsuren (2305) and **IM Tor Fredrik Kaasen (2472)** moved fast in their Scotch variation of a Four Knights opening.

White had about as much time after his move 18 as he had before move 1. In the meantime, tactical exchanges had eliminated three minor pieces and three pawns from each camp – leaving a fairly balanced position with queen, two rooks, bishop and five pawns against queen, two rooks, knight and five pawns. The players now

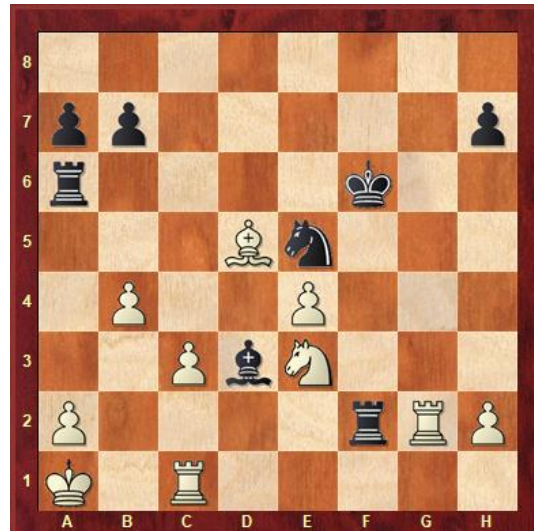
started to spend time. They discovered only more exchanges, leading after 31 moves to a dead rook endgame with three kingside pawns for each player.

The game between **GM Tiger Hillarp (2462)** and **FM Gunnar Lund (2341)** started up with a Queen's Gambit Exchange line in which white first put the bishop in its traditional position at g5, but then went for 8.h3 and 9.Bf4. Black put his bishop at d6 and did fine after exchanging all the bishops and one set of knights. The game then suddenly accelerated, as black allowed white to play 24.Nf5 and 25.Rxg7+. It appeared risky at best, although black according to the computers had enough counterplay to walk the tight rope across the Niagara falls.



Black reportedly could have been fine with an ice-cold 34.--- dxe4! 35.Rg8+ Kh7, the idea being 36.Rxe8 Rxb2+ 37.Kxb2 Qd4+ 48.Kc2 Qc5+ 39.Qc3 Qf2+ and white's king cannot escape the checks. Black had only five minutes left on the clock and instead lost within a few more moves after 34.--- Rf6? 35.exd5 Qb5. Lund has done well recently, but probably needed a score here to keep real chances for an IM-norm.

IM Semen Mitusov (2459) and **FM Rishi Vijayakumar (2317)** entered a potentially sharp Italian Two Knights Defence with 4.Ng5 d5 5.exd5 Na5 6.Bb5+. Black sacrificed first one pawn and then one more, and after 30 moves he due to his active pieces still had a lot of compensation in the endgame with two rooks, bishop, knight and four pawns against two rooks, bishop, knight and six pawns. Black with two pawns less still had a hard time keeping up the pressure, and Mitusov gradually succeeded to untangle.



With one minute left on the clock, 36.--- Rf3? now was the decisive mistake. Mitusov efficiently used his chance and following 37.Re1! b5 38.Ng4+ Nxg4 39.e5+! Nxe5 40.Bxf3 Nxf3 41.Rf2 reached an easily won endgame with one exchange and one pawn more.



Eliseev vs Miezis

FM Sergey Eliseev (2226) and **GM Normunds Miezis (2409)** meanwhile discussed a delayed Alapin line of the Sicilian opening, leading to an isolated pawn position in which white's better structure following a queen exchange gives him a slight advantage. The GM came up with enough counterplay to balance the chances in the rooks and knight endgame after 25 moves, and the single rook endgame after 40 moves was a fairly obvious draws.

Eliseev is on schedule for an IM-norm following this GM-draw.

FM Sondre Melaa (2344) today was white against **William Alexander Olsen (2188)**, and made a patient winning attempt with an English double fianchetto. Melaa following an early queen exchange spent much time without finding anything but exchanges. Following this the players after 33 moves had reached a drawish endgame with two rooks, bishop and three kingside pawns against two rooks, bishop and three kingside pawns.



Melaa vs Olsen

White still held a pressure with two rooks on the seventh rank. Black had almost half an hour (against two minutes) on the clock, and did not appear to be in trouble – until he suddenly played too fast and blundered a pawn.



34.--- Ra8? 35.Bxf7+! Bxf7 36.Rxf7 Rxa7 37.Rxa7 and now this rook endgame according to the computers should be a draw, but from a human perspective the advanced pawn at e4 makes it difficult to defend. Melaa of course played on, and after 76 moves succeeded in winning a drawn but still difficult rook endgame with e- and g-pawn versus g-pawn. Melaa needed this win to really fight for an IM norm, and finally got it after almost six hours.

FM Adharsh K (2317) versus **Sigurd Kittilsen (2010)** was a Sicilian Najdorf in which black either mixed up something in the preparation or played too fast after the preparation: 13.--- b5? 14.a4! anyway gave white a strong pressure and he soon won a pawn at b5. Black apparently was back in the game after winning back a pawn with 20.--- Bxc2, although the idea turned out to be a blunder:



21.--- Bf5 22.Ra6 Nc8 is a bit passive for black, but far from over. Instead 21.--- e4? 22.Qxc2 e3 23.Bxe3 Nxd5 24.Bd2 Bf6 25.Ra6 left white a piece up with a won position.

FM Ethan Pang (2257) and **FM Martin Holten Fiskaaen (2283)** made a somewhat original start with 1.Nf3 d5 2,g3 Nd7 3.d4 Nb6. White spent much time from the opening and the plan with 14.cxd5?! and 15.f4 gave black a great outpost at e4, hence black came ahead on the clock as well as on the board. Following 27.g4!? white apparently had reorganized his forces and was about to start a kingside attack. Fiskaaen however was still well ahead on the clock, and had a plan to protect his kingside while advancing the passed a-pawn on the queenside. This rather open game remained exciting until white lost sight well into the fifth hour:



45.h6? Rxh6+
46.Kg3 Qc7
47.Rfa2? Rg6!
0-1



Khoo-Thwe vs Hedman

The game between **Louis Khoo-Thwe (2118)** and **IM Erik Hedman (2276)** was a complex and somewhat mysterious Sicilian O'Kelly battle. White came better from the opening and around move 20 appeared to have a winning queenside attack. Khoo-Thwe became too eager to push the c-pawn forward and black came up with a creative exchange sacrifice which made the position rather unclear. Then a draw suddenly was agreed upon black's suggestion

after 33 moves, when a passed pawn at e4 combined with the active minor pieces gave him approximately enough compensation for the exchange.

David Mindestrømmen Simonsen (2034) versus **Erik Blomqvist (2475)** saw a French Advance duel in which black soon took over the initiative, White was still in the game when black realized the thematic e5-break, but suddenly collapsed afterwards:



27.dxe5! Bxe5 28.Rh1 Bxg4 29.Rxh8 Bxf3+ 30.Kxf3 Bxh8 looks risky at best, but reportedly is playable after 31.Qh1!. Instead 27.e4? asked for much too much from the position, and the GM soon had a winning attack after 27.--- Bxg4 28.Nxe5 Bxe5 29.dxe5 Nd2.



Gandrud vs Hebbar

FM Vegar Koi Gandrud (2273) and **IM Eshaan Hebbar (2175)** entered a long theory line in a tactical Slav line, in which white castles short and black long. Black had the longer preparation and following 18.--- h4 was ahead in the attacking race. White however was able to stop the attack by exchanging pieces, and after 30 moves the players had reached a drawish endgame with rook, bishop, knight and two pawns against rook, two knights and two

pawns. The double minor piece endgame after 40 moves at least was very drawish. For some 30 moves it was later mysterious which player that saw any winning chances, as white had bishop and knight versus bishop and knight. A draw was finally agreed after 87 moves.

The game between **Peder Marcus Aamodt (2242)** and **Eirik Berget (2041)** saw another modern Catalan line with black's bishop at d6 and his knight at c6. This one immediately collapsed as black underestimated the dangers in the h1-a8 diagonal:



10.--- dxc4? 11.Ne5 Bxe5 12.dxe5 Qxe5 13.Bxc6 Rb8 14.Qc2 and white had won a piece for two pawns with a winning position. The game lasted 28 more moves, although Aamodt had the full point under full control all of the time.



Skaar vs Øksendal

Ben Samuel Groth Skaar (2167) and **FM Martin Øksendal (2250)** discussed a delayed French exchange line leading to a rather unbalanced structure as white after 12 moves had two isolated c-pawns and black one isolated d-pawn. Black following this kept a slight structural advantage after exchanging the dark-squared bishops and one set of knights. With both players having spent much time on the clock, tactical complications suddenly hit:



22.--- Rfe8? was a rather strange mistake from such a gifted tactical player, as 23.Bb5! obviously was dangerous with a knight at a4 and a rook at e8. Black however defended creatively with 23.--- Bd7!? and was rewarded with an almost equal position following 24.Bxd7 Rxe5 25.Bxc8? Qxf4! – while instead 25.Rb1! would have saved the first rank with a close to winning advantage after 25.--- Ree8 26.Bxa4. White still was a piece up in the game, but black now had a lot of compensation and the game was suddenly drawn a few moves later on.

A transmissions error added further complications here, but black offered and got accepted a draw after 28.--- Nc5 – when white had a piece for a pawn, but black after 29.Ra3 Nxa6 30.Rxa6 Rxc3 31.Rxa7 Rxc2 would have two pawns and active pieces. White at this stage had less than one minute left on the clock.



Verbin vs Skotheim

WFM Valentina Verbin (2113) and CM Andreas Skotheim (2229)

entered a rare Catalan opening in which black was allowed to establish a center advantage and then to exchange his knight for white's dark-squared bishop at e3 – leaving white with scattered pawns at c4 and e3. Something soon afterwards went wrong for white, as black had taken over the initiative after 15 moves and after 22 moves had won a pawn. Having accepted a queen exchange, white

at move 25 should have used her chance to exchange one of the black bishops for a knight – as the remaining endgame with two rooks, bishop and three pawns against two rooks, bishop and four pawns would have offered fair chances for a draw. Later black had a dominating pair of bishops and soon won another pawn.

16 year old **CM Indy Southcott-Moyers (2227)** suddenly had a much lower rated opponent, and consequently had to play for a win as white against **Kristoffer Wang Strømhaug (2020)**. The opening was an apparently quiet and closed Semi-Slav position, in which white following a thematic e4-break could open the center in his favour after 13.--- Bb7?



14.c5! bxc5 15.Bc4 cxd4 16.Qxd4 Nb6?! 17.Bxe6+ Kh8 18.Qh4 and white had won back the pawn with a decisive initiative. White won by a rook sacrifice at g6 some ten moves later on, but the strategical road to the winning attack here is more interesting.



Brattgjerd vs Lilliehöök

Isak Vinh Brattgjerd (2202) and **Victor Lilliehöök (1993)** discussed a Sicilian Rossolimo line in which white develops his light-squared bishop from f1 to b5, but then three moves later withdraws it to f1. White in the meantime had castled short, and exchanging a bishop for a knight at f3 here is a well-known try to weaken the white kingside. It did not work out too well in this game as white's king at g1 remained fairly safe, while black's king at e8 was more uncomfortable

following a powerful center break with 15.d5. White after 20 moves was a pawn up with a strong initiative, and his attack smashed through against the black king within five more moves.



Den Roover vs Andersen

Nikolay Den Roover (2004) and **Morten Andersen (2200)** started up with an English opening which transposed into a Kings Indian fianchetto. White had spent almost half an hour and black more than a quarter after 13 moves, when a draw was suddenly agreed. The position is known to theory and considered slightly better for white. Compare another game comment below, it can be rather interesting.



Haugen vs Østensen

Lars Tormod Haugen (1988) versus **FM Maxime Østensen (2260)** saw a duel between two team mates from the strong Porsgrunn team. The opening was a positional Italian Two Knights, in which white spent time to exchange his light-squared bishop for a knight at c6. Black more pointedly exchanged his light-squared bishop for a knight at f3 to weaken white's kingside pawns. Finding no way forward on the kingside black instead invited to

a queen exchange. White probably should have exchanged the queens at e6, as he following some transmission errors (the game went 22.Rxd1 Rxb3) lost the backward pawn at b3. Having won the pawn and exchanged the rooks black suddenly had everything, as he was a passed pawn up with a winning kingside attack.

CM Kim Roger Hansen Westrum (2193) as white against **Daniel Avola (2088)** started up with an English opening, but got a big center advantage as he later played e4 and d4. White also made the better calculations after having forced a queen exchange, and his queenside pawn majority decided well before 40 moves:



30.--- Nc4? was revealed as a tactical mistake by 31.Nxe6! Nxe3 32.Nxd8 Rxd8 33.Rxb7 Nc4 34.a6 Nd6 35.Rxd7! Rxd7 36.b6 Bd4+ 37.Kh2 Bxb6 38.Rxb6 Kg8 39.Bxd5+ Kf8 40.Rxd6 1-0

Sivert Schance Tørfoss (2141) and **Lukas Dominik Gåsland (1994)** investigated further the King's Indian fianchetto which Den Roover and Andersen had agreed a draw. Black apparently had taken over the b-file and equalized after 20 moves, but then made a mistake and was instructively punished:



21.--- Qb6? 22.Bc3! Nb7 23.Qc6 Qa7 24.Bxe5! Bd7 25.Qc7 dxe5 26.d6 Bg4 27.Bxb7?! Bxd1? 28.Bf3! 1-0

Nine-year-old **CM Ashwath Kaushik (1958)** castled long to start a pawn storm on the kingside, and first had a very promising initiative as white in a Pirc against **Benjamin Halvorsen (1966)**. White was close to winning after 20 moves, but then retreated in the critical moment:



21.axb5! cxb5 22.Qxh6 would have left white a pawn up with the much better position, but it was not easy to see that 21.--- hxg5? 22.Bc4+ Be6 23.Rxe6! gxh4 24.Rxf6+ here does not work out for black. White instead retreated three pieces in a row with 21.Nh3? g5 22.Qg3 Qe7 23.Rd2, leaving the position rather unclear. Both players later missed another elegant attacking continuation for white:



31.--- Nf4?? was a blunder as 32.Nxf4 exf4 33.Rxh6! now wins for white, since 33.--- Kxh6? 34.Qh5+! Kxh5 35.Rh2 is a very elegant mate! White instead went for 33.Rhd1??, when 33.--- a3! gave black a winning counterattack. Black in turn overlooked his winning lines and this highly entertaining game ended up with a very airy perpetual check draw after 49 moves. Fair enough as both deserved something for this entertaining game.

Finally, on board 32 **Nikolai Olsen Wernberg (1893)** and **Andreas Skrede Hausken (2002)** played a four-hour firework and one of the most entertaining games today. It all started as a Catalan-like Zukertort fianchetto in which black was too careless when exchanging the c- and -pawns, leaving white with a strong d-file initiative. White first was aiming for a brilliancy prize with a great exchange sacrifice:



16.Rxd5! exd5 17.Nxd5 Qb7 18.Nce7+ Kh8 19.Nf6! Qc7 20.Qh4 with a totally winning attack.

Black in desperation went for 20.--- Bxf2+ 21.Kxf2 Qc2+ 22.Kg1 Qd1+ – and was invited back into the game as white now instead of 23.Bf1! went for 23.Kf2 Qc2+ 24.Ke1?? Ba6! 25.Ng6+? Qxg6, after which black suddenly had a winning material advantage. Black in turn after 26.Be4 missed the instantly winning 26.--- Nxe5! > 27.Bxg6 Nf3+, and instead gave up the queen with a very complex position after 26.--- gxf6 27.Bxg6 fxg6 28.e6? Rfe8. Black had the final laugh as the deceive blunder came from white four moves later:



31.Rd1?? was too creative, as black accurately demonstrated with 31.--- Rxe3! 32.Rxd7 Re2+ 33.Kg1 Re1+ 34.Kf2 R8e2+ 35.Kf3 Rf1+! 36.Kg4 Re4+ 0-1

GM Gopal Narayanan (2556) for health reasons has had to withdraw from this tournament, while **Per Fredrik Holand (2070)** and **Pantham Kaewpitakkun (2026)** both had requested a walk over draw for round 5. Consequently **Amund Pihl Strand (1914)** got a walk over bye from the pairings. Gopal has left Fagernes, while Kaewpitakkun, Holand and Strand are present in good health and all will play round 6.



Open Group

The **Open** group to the contrary had another hard-fought round, with no less than five winners on the top seven boards. In the key game on the first board **Thobias Gotaas Hansen (1805)** came better from the opening as white against **Sondre Stai (1786)**, but then became too eager to win the black queen:



19.Bxc5? dxc5 20.Nf6+ gxf6 21.Rxd8 Raxd8 22.f5 Ne5 and black was very well satisfied, having won one rook and two minor pieces for one queen and one pawn. White following this anyway was in deep trouble when he short of time blundered a mate after 35 moves.



Hansen vs Stai



Arulmaran vs Ali

Second board duel between **Abishan Arulmaran (1858)** and **Karim Ali (1876)** was a French Tarrasch duel in which white also came better from the opening, but the tide here also soon turned in favour of black. White's try to open the e-file instead resulted in a granite black passed pawn at e3:



15.f3? b5 16.Ne3 f4 17.Bxe6 Qxe6 18.Nef1 e3 19.Ne4? Nxe4 20.fxe4 0-0! and black had an iron grip which he held for the rest of the game.

Third board veteran duel between **Guttorm Andersen (1842)** and **Vidar Kopperud (1778)** on the other hand was a sensible game, agreed a draw after 19 moves in a balanced rooks and minor piece endgame.

Fourth board draw between **Christian Neukamm (1776)** and **August Minh Brattgjerd (1845)** came from a bankbox closed position, but black still missed a good chance with his final move:



Brattgjerd retreated the knight to b6 and offered a draw, while 31.--- Nxc3! 32.Rxc3 Bxb4 33.Rb1 Bxc3 would have been a promising winning try, offering black one rook and two passed pawns for the two minor pieces.

Fifth board saw today's sensation, as first rated **Mikael Aroven (2145)** lost as black against 17 year old **Daniel Vollheim (1764)**. It came a bit unexpected, as black had a winning attack before 15 moves:



Black has sacrificed a piece here, but would have had a decisive attack after 16.--- Nf6! threatening 17.--- Nexg4. The direct 16.--- Nxg4? allowed 17.Ne4! Qh4 18.Ke2! with the threat of 19.Rh1, and now suddenly white was close to winning!

Black later got the chance to save himself with two minor pieces less, but again played it much too fast:



25.--- Bxe3! 26.Nxd6+ cxd6 27.Bxe3 Qh1+ 28.Kf2 Qxa1 29.Qxd6 Qxa2+ could have been a likely draw. In the game white instead got the chance to evacuate his king and won due to his material advantage after 25.--- Rh1+? 27.Kd2 Bxe3+ 28.Kc2 Qd1+ 29.Kc3 Qd4+ 30.Kb4. White completed his attack after 35 moves, with his own king fairly safe in the air at a4.

14 year old and second rated **Thomas Engkvist (1969)** on the other hand was lost from the opening as black against **Catherine Jørgensen (1609)**, but still won in the end. Fighting on bravely he succeeded not only in reaching a drawish rooks and minor piece endgame, but also in due time to win it. Catherine lost the game, but should be praised for many strong moves and remains a hot candidate for the best woman prize in this group.

13-year-old and third rated **Isai Sivaparan (1944)** had a very good day, dominating the game and winning well deserved as white against highly talented 11-year-old **Terje Kevin Lysen (1667)**.

Seventh board was a tight generation battle won by the future, as 12-year-old **August Solbu (1887)** won a drawish queen and rooks position against 70-year-old **Roaul Abrahamsson (1920)**.

32 year old teacher Sondre Stai, representing Stjernen Chess Club in Oslo, winner of this group in 2023, following this now is leading alone at 5,0/5. He is a full point ahead of Hansen and Ali. The always bigger group at 3,5/5 here includes Sivaparan, Solbu, Andersen, Kopperud, Neukamm and Vollheim. White against the older chess lion Ali will be next critical test for the frontrunner, while Hansen will get black against Sivaparan on the second board.

No way to forget: Board 18 today saw the youngest and lowest rated participant in the Open, 10 year old **Liana Wen (1404)**, winning with a very nice attack as white against 53 year old **Håvard Skotheim (1548)**:



40.Rh2! Qe8 41.Rxh6! Kxh6 42.Rh1+ Kg7 43.Rh7+ Kf8 44.Bd5 Rxd5 45.exd5 Qb5 46.Rh8+! and black resigned as 47.Qh3! with an unstoppable mate threat will follow.

Photos by Tom Eriksen