

FAGERNES CHESS INTERNATIONAL 2025

THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT

8



GM Group

Six out of the top seven boards in our GM group today were drawn, although with a very mixed length and level of intensity. GM Rinat Jumabayev on second board played for six hours and well above 100 moves, unsuccessfully trying to realize his extra pawn in a drawn rook endgame against IM Balázs Csonka.

The first-board duel between GM Diptayan Ghosh and GM Frode Urkedal on the other hand was a fairly safe and sound draw done within three hours, and so (more surprising) was the third board duel between GM Raka Rithvik R and FM Eivind Grunt Kreken. Sixth board game between GM Kaido Kulaots and IM Yang Fan-Zhou Fifth also came in the medium long draw category, while fifth board duel between IM Moksh Doshi and GM Denis Makhnev was an exchange line draw confirmed well within one hour.

Seventh board game between Norwegian IM Tor Fredrik Kaasen and English GM Ameet Ghasi on the other hand was a highly entertaining attacking battle, in which both players missed some winning chances. The game finally was drawn after 110 moves – when Kaasen had defended for 50 moves with rook versus rook and bishop. Ninth board by the way saw Swede IM Linus Johansson playing another marathon game for a full point as white against Norwegian IM Semen Mitusov, although this too was a draw in the end.

First-rated GM Gergely Kántor of Hungary in short was the only player on the top seven boards to win his game today, as he following a hardball attacking game won as white against English IM Jonah B. Willow. Eight board however also saw a win for white, as Kazakhstani IM Arystanbek Urazayev following a successful opening succeeded in winning a borderline bishop endgame as white against IM Aksel Bu Kvaløy.

Following all of this GM Urkedal and GM Jumabayev still share the lead, now at 6,0/8 – but the group of hunters half a point behind now includes GM Kántor, GM Ghosh, GM Raja, IM Csonka, IM Urazayev and FM Kreken. Eight players within half a point hopefully should make an exciting last round here. Top four board pairings for round 9 are Urkedal white against Kántor, Kreken white against Jumabayev, Urazayev white against Ghosh and Csonka white against Raja. Jumabayev might be the favourite for another first prize as he by far has the lowest rated opponent, but on the other hand Jumabayev will have the black pieces and 18 year old Kreken has been playing like a 2500-player all this week.

Following his draw today, Kreken had confirmed his second IM-norm even before the start of last round. The only other remaining IM-norm candidate is 16-year-old CM Indy Southcott-Moyers, as he in round 8 had a long and hard-fought draw as black against GM Normunds Miezis. Southcott-Moyers will be white in his round 9 game, but to score his first IM-norm he needs a full point against IM Lukas Dotzer.

The top four boards will be exciting also about GM-norms as 28 year old Hungarian Balázs Csonka can make his third norm and complete the title if scoring a full point. There is however also a second and much more unexpected GM-norm chance: 27 year old Arystanbek Urazayev had somewhat of a double miracle Saturday as he first won a drawish rook endgame against Kvaløy, and then got second rated GM Ghosh as his opponent for the last round – meaning that Urazayev too can make his third GM-norm if winning in the last round! As a smaller third miracle, he even got white for the second round in a row.

In short we have hardly seen a more exciting situation before any round 9 at Fagernes: Eight players can be found within half a point at the top of the list, and two of them are also needing a win to reach their third GM-norm!

Standings after Round 8:

Pl	Name	i- Rtg	Club	Fed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Score	i- AvgRtg	i- Performance
1	GM Frode Olav Olsen Urkedal	2550	Offerspill		+▲ 49	+▲ 11	+▲ 18	-▲ 02	+▲ 19	-▲ 04	+▲ 14	-▲ 05	6,0	2474	2666 (+12,00)
2	GM Rinat Jumabayev	2549			+▲ 52	+▲ 21	+▲ 06	+▲ 01	-▲ 04	-▲ 14	+▲ 10	-▲ 03	6,0	2449	2641 (+9,60)
3	IM Balazs Csonka	2459			+▲ 37	-▲ 07	-▲ 05	+▲ 27	-▲ 06	-▲ 15	+▲ 21	-▲ 02	5,5	2441	2581 (+13,90)
4	GM Raja Rithvik R	2538			+▲ 46	+▲ 22	+▲ 39	-▲ 12	-▲ 02	-▲ 01	-▲ 05	-▲ 08	5,5	2439	2579 (+5,20)
5	GM Diptayan Ghosh	2573			-▲ 54	+▲ 40	-▲ 03	-▲ 11	+▲ 08	+▲ 23	-▲ 04	-▲ 01	5,5	2416	2557 (-0,90)
6	IM Arystanbek Urazayev	2467			+▲ 47	+▲ 30	-▲ 02	+▲ 39	-▲ 03	-▲ 13	-▲ 12	+▲ 19	5,5	2411	2551 (+9,70)
7	GM Gergely Kantor	2578			+▲ 35	-▲ 03	-▲ 24	-▲ 11	-▲ 11	+▲ 39	-▲ 13	+▲ 18	5,5	2392	2550 (-1,40)
8	FM Eivind Grunt Kreken	2326			-▲ 55	+▲ 62	+▲ 16	-▲ 09	-▲ 05	+▲ 17	+▲ 25	-▲ 04	5,5	2364	2505 (+40,40)



Ghosh vs Urkedal

The very important first board game between **GM Diptayan Ghosh (2573)** and **GM Frode Urkedal (2550)** started up with a Nimzo-Indian Rubinstein duel, in which white played with two c-pawns and two bishops. White established a space advantage with 11.d5 and 12.e4, and came slightly better in a rather closed position with 16 pawns still on the board after 16 moves.

A draw was agreed upon white's invitation three moves later, as

none of the players found any plan to strengthen their position.

GM Rinat Jumabayev (2549) as white against **IM Balázs Csonka (2459)** started up with 1.Nf3 and a Zukertort opening, first reminiscent of a reversed Grunfeld-Indian and then a Catalan. Black was able to exchange the c- and d-pawns and then the often troublesome light-squared bishops with 12... Bc6 13.Bxc6 Rxc6.

White was given an edge by the computers, but black spent almost no time for his first 14 moves and was obviously well satisfied. Further exchanges followed, and black when castling short after 20 moves had reached an at first sight completely equal queen and rooks endgame. It turned out however that white's c- and d-file initiative still gave him something of a pressure:



21.Rac1 Rxc1 22.Rxc1 b6 23.Rd1 h6 24.Rd7 Qc5 25.Rxa7 Qc1 26.Kg2 Qxb2 27.e3 b5 28.Qe4 Qd2 29.Qb7 with some seventh rank and b-pawn challenges for black. Csonka pulled the brake with 29.--- Qd5+ 30.Qxd5 exd5 31.Rd7 Ra8, leading to a rook endgame with four against three kingside pawns. Four against three pawns in such an endgame offer more winning chances than three against two pawns, but still is known as a draw. Stubborn Jumabayev continued for 80 (!) more moves, but Csonka demonstrated a very good defensive technique and finally got his half point by instructive means:



99.--- Rb7! and white cannot make progress, as the pawn endgame after 100.Rd7+ Rxd7 101.Kxd7 Kf6 is a draw. The game went 100.Kf5 Rb5+ 101.Ke6 Rb7 102.Rd4 Ra7 103.Ke5 Ra5+ 104.Kf4 Ra7 and Jumabayev offered a few moves later on. Csonka following this long saving draw can score a GM norm, but will need a win as white against GM Raja in round 9.

Talking about Indian **GM Raja Rithvik R (2538)**, his white game against **FM Eivind Grunt Kreken (2326)** started up with a Queen's Gambit Tarrasch, circling around black's isolated pawn at d5. White at move 9 exchanged his dark-squared bishop for a knight at f6, and his pair of bishops later approximately balanced the chances. White however moved much faster, and after 15 moves he was half an hour ahead on the clock. The GM later took an almost respectful and safe approach here, exchanging first his knight and then the isolated black pawn. A draw was agreed after 33 moves in a very balanced endgame with rook, bishop and five pawns on each side. Kreken following this was out of the run for a GM-norm, but at the same time before the last round already could be congratulated for his second IM-norm! Fagernes obviously is Kreken's favourite chess area, as he made his first IM norm in the same venue last year.

IM Jonah B. Willow (2471) as usual discussed a French, this time as black in a Classical line against top rated **GM Gergely Kantor (2578)**. White took an aggressive approach on both flanks, sacrificing a queenside pawn with 11.a5!? Nxa5 12.b4 and then starting a kingside attack with 14.h4. White's plan with 16.Kf1? followed by 17.Nh5 and 18.Rh3 was objectively dubious, but still put pressure on the black kingside. Black was a pawn up in a tense position until he worried more about his king than he had to do:



The ice cold 25.--- Rg7!, intended to free the f7 square for the king, leaves everything unclear. Instead the game continuation 25.--- Bxf6+? 26.gxf6+ Ke8 27.Rxb4 Qa5 28.Rh8+ Nf8 29.Qh6 won back the pawn with a decisive attack for white, and black resigned after 29.--- Qc7 30.Qxg6 a3 31.Rb1 Kd8 32.Qg7. Kantor had a slow start this tournament, but following this key win still is in the fight for the top three prizes.



Doshi vs Makhnev

IM Moksh Doshi (2369) as white against **GM Denis Makhnev (2537)** entered a Classical King's Indian exchange line, exchanged the queens at d8 in move 8 and offered a draw which was accepted in move 11.

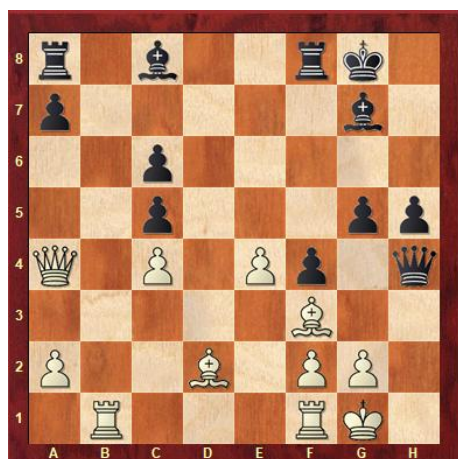
Doshi still could have reached a GM norm if winning both his last games, but following yesterday's loss he obviously focused on a solid plus result.

GM Kaido Kulaots (2510) and **IM Yang Fan-Zhou (2418)** made a closed and at the same time somewhat modern Sicilian start with 1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 a6 3.Nge2 d6. After exchanging one set of knights, white got the intended d5 square for his remaining knight.

Black however had reached a flexible and rather balanced position after 13 moves.

14.--- f5?! was not the best timing for a natural idea, and the position was slightly better for white when black offered and got accepted a draw after 19 moves.

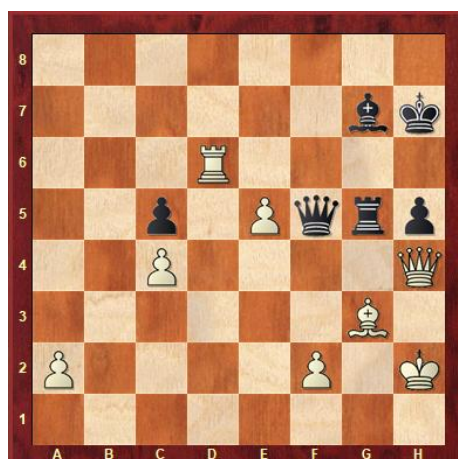
IM Tor Fredrik Kaasen (2472) and **GM Ameet Ghasi (2502)** discussed a complex King's Indian Semi-Averbakh system, in which white's kingside bayonet attack with 7.h4 was blocked by 7.--- h5. Both players later castled short and white kept a slight space advantage. All the knight were exchanged within the first 20 moves, leaving black a pawn up with an inferior structure and some chances for a kingside attack ...



22.Qxc6? g4! 23.Qxa8 gxf3 24.e5 fxg2 25.Qxg2 and now black had been much better if taking back the missing exchange with 25.--- Bh3, while retreating with 25.--- Rf5? 26.Qh2 Qd8? 27.Bxf4 gave white a clear advantage.

Kaasen now correctly refused a draw offer, and a few moves later sacrificed back the exchange to have an extra pawn and a promising attack.

With both players short of time to reach move 40, the GM however made the better calculations:



38.Rd5! planning 39.e6 is close to winning with two extra pawns for white. Instead 38.Qf4? allowed a tricky h4! 39.Qxf5+ Rxf5 40.Bxh4 Bxe5+ 41.Bg3 Rxf2+!? 42.Kh3 Rf3 43.Rd5 Rxc3+ 44.Kh4 Rxe3 45.Rxc5 – and black some 15 moves later had rook and bishop versus rook.

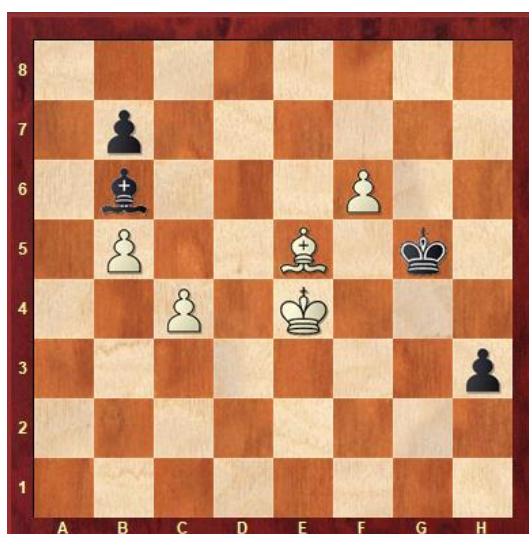
This pawnless endgame is known as a theoretical draw, but a very long list of strong players have failed to defend it over the board. Ghasi succeeded in creating some pressure, but Kaasen found the right defensive moves in the critical positions and after

110 moves could claim a draw in accordance with the 50-move rule. Curiously the claim was refused as it was only 49,5 moves, but the outcome at that very late stage was given.

IM Arystanbek Urazayev (2467) as white in a French Advance against **IM Aksel Bu Kvaløy (2481)** had prepared an interesting sacrifice of his e5-pawn. It worked out fairly well as black spent some time without finding the critical reply, and so white within a few moves won back the pawn at e6 plus another pawn.



17.Rxe6 Qd7 18.Qxd5 Bxg3 19.Qxc5+ Bc7 20.Re7 Qd6 21.Qxd6 Bxd6 22.Re4 gxh5 23.Bxh6 Rhg8+ 24.Kh1 Rg4 25.Rxg4 hxg4 and the players had reached a borderline rook and bishop endgame with an extra pawn for white. Exchanging rooks afterwards reportedly was a mistake from white, but the equal-coloured bishop endgame with a pawn less for black still was difficult to defend. Both players ran short of time for 40 moves. Kvaløy avoided blunders before the time control, but after it made a mistake – which Urazayev failed to call. The decisive moment instead came ten moves later, when Urazayev had one minute left and Kvaløy ten minutes:



53.--- h2! 54.Bxh2 Kxf6 is a draw, although still not a trivial one. Instead Kvaløy went for 53.--- Bd8? 54.f7 Be7 55.Kd5 Kg6 56.Ke6 Bc5 57.b6 Bf8 58.Bh2! Kg7 59.Bg1 Bb4 60.c5 1-0

This tiny endgame win turned out to be even more important than expected for Urazayev, as the pairings for last round gave him second rated GM Diptayan Ghosh. This suddenly increased Urazayev's average of opponents to 2435, while 2434 is required for scoring a GM norm at 6,5/9. Urazayev following this rejoined the GM-norm run before last round, although defeating so far unbeaten Ghosh of course will be very difficult.



Johansson vs Mitusov

IM Linus Johansson (2392) to keep his GM-norm chances alive needed a win as white against **IM Semen Mitusov (2459)**, but did not get much of a preparation advantage as the opening moves went 1.d4 a6?! 2.e4 c6. The game later reached a Caro-Kann-like position under favourable circumstances for white, as he after 15 moves had a space advantage and a pair of bishops.

White however had his king slightly awkward at f1, while black kept his king undeclared at e8. Having exchanged all the rooks, Johansson kept an edge with queen, two bishops, knight and five pawns against queen, bishop, two knights and five pawns. The triple minor piece endgame appeared very drawish as the queens too were exchanged at move 34, but Johansson had a pair of bishops and fought on for his GM norm chance. White got some pressure as the position opened, and after 50 moves he suddenly had two connected passed pawns. Black however had exchanged one of the white bishops and now had a cunning plan to reach an opposite-coloured bishop endgame:



51.Kc2! now would have protected the queenside pawns with some winning chances. Instead the natural 51.f4? ran into 51... b4! 52.axb4 Nxb2+! 53.Nxb2 a3 54.Kc2 axb2 and the opposite-coloured bishops saved the day for Mitusov. Johansson is also out as a GM norm candidate following this draw, but both players might reach a nice price if winning their last-round game.



Rozentalis vs Hillarp

GM Eduardas Rozentalis (2481) versus **GM Tiger Hillarp (2462)** was a bit of a final for the best veteran prize. Born a Sicilian opening, this game grew up as fairly balanced and close position. Black following 11.Nxe5 dxe5 had two e-pawns, but it was not much of a disadvantage as white had backward pawn at d3. Black had a potentially great outpost at d4, although his knight from f6 had a long travel to reach it. For a few moves black had a pressure, but

white in the late middle game came up with enough counterplay in the half open g-file. With both the GMs running short of time, they still made impressive tactical calculations:



36.exf5 exf5 37.Bxf5 gxf5 38.Rg7+ Rxg7 39.Rxg7+ Qxg7 40.Bxg7 Bc6+ 41.Kh2 Rg8 42.Be5 Be7! 43.h4 – and draw agreed as it more or less impossible for any side to make winning tries. Curiously, the Tiger gave up his queen for a rook and a minor piece for the second round in a row, again with a draw as the result.

FM Gunnar Lund (2341) and **IM Svyatoslav Bazakutsa (2474)** discussed a French-like Sicilian Alapin position, in which an early queen exchange left the situation after 12 moves balanced on the board as well as on the clock. The endgame with bishop, two knights and five pawns on each side after 30 moves still was drawish. Black's more mobile pawn majority gave him a slight pressure, but as both players made their move 40 the knight endgame still was given as «0.0» by the computers.



Lund vs Bazakutsa



A much higher level of accuracy still was needed from white than from black. 41.gxf4! gxf4 42.a4 Nd4 43.c5! > Nxb3? 44.c6 should have been a draw, but was no way easy to find even with 45 minutes on the clock. Lund after 10 minutes instead went for a direct 41.a4? and lost after 41.--- fxg3+ 42.Kxg3 Nd4 – as 43.c5? in the game now lost to Nxb3! 44.c6 Nd4 45.c7 Nf5+ 46.Kg4 Ne7!

IM Lukas Dotzer (2453) and **FM Jacob Templen Grave (2337)**

started up with a closed Ruy Lopez, in which the queenside following 12.axb5 soon opened. After exchanging the a- and b-pawns white held a center advantage, although black had about enough counterplay to balance the chances. 15-year-old Dotzer played hard for a win with 20.d5!? and was rewarded as 20.--- c6? 21.e5! Nfxd5? 22.exd6 soon gave white a close to winning



Dotzer vs Grave

advantage with a strong passed pawn at d7. Dotzer however spent much time without finding a way forward afterwards, while black and his bishops came up with counterplay. After 31 moves the position was in very dynamic balance, with two minutes left for Grave and less than one minute for Dotzer.



32.Qc6? and now 32.--- Qe2! could have won a piece, although the game continuation with 32.--- Qxc6?! 33.Nxc6 Rxd7! gave him a safe pawn up with a clear advantage. Dotzer and his active knights later did their very best to make life difficult for black, and following some time trouble inaccuracies white escaped into a drawn endgame with knight and three pawns against bishop and four pawns. Grave has a solid plus result after this draw, but lost his final chance for another IM norm.

GM Normunds Miezis (2409) as white against **CM Indy Southcott-Moyers (2227)** started up with 1.c4, but soon transposed into a French exchange line with an isolated white pawn at d4. Southcott-Moyers was very fast for the first nine moves, but then remarkably spent some 50 minutes for the next three moves. Chances on the board in the early middle game were approximately balanced, although white had some advantage on the clock. Black then mobilized all his pieces against the white d-pawn. Tactical exchanges eliminated the d4-pawn, and left after 20 moves a drawish endgame with two rooks, bishop and five pawns against two rooks, knight and five pawns. White had a very slight plus due to his passed b-pawn, but 16 year old Southcott-Moyers defended well and during mutual time pressure exchanged it down to a dead drawn endgame with rook and two kingside pawns on each side.



Miezis vs Southcott-Moyers



32.Raa7 Rf6 33.Rc7 Rxc7 34.Rxc7 d5 35.f4 Rxf4 36.Rd7 Rc4 37.c7 Kg7 38.Rxd5 Rxc7 39.Rxg5+ Kf8 40.Kg2 Rc3 and very soon ½-½

16 year old Indy Southcott-Moyers following this GM-draw qualified for the FM-title by passing 2300 for the first time! He will get his first shot for an IM-norm tomorrow, but a full point against IM Lukas Dotzer of course is a hard demand.



Østensen vs Vestby-Ellingsen

FM Nicolai Østensen (2260) versus **IM Mads Vestby-Ellingsen (2398)** was another closed Ruy Lopez which soon became rather open-minded. Having exchanged a knight at d4 and a bishop at e6, white after 21 moves had an edge due to his better pawn structure – plus an extra half hour on the clock. Østensen found no way forward, and following a rook exchange offered a draw which was accepted six moves later on.



Fiskaaen vs Garg

Norwegian **FM Martin Holten Fiskaaen (2283)** as white against Indian **IM Aradhya Garg (2387)** started up with 1.c4, but following 5.d4 transposed into a rather positional Semi-Slav opening. Black felt no pressure and was fine if not slightly better when exchanging his dark-squared bishop at move 15. The players after 22 moves had exchanged the queens and reached an approximately balanced position with hanging

white pawns at c4 and d4. 26.c5 from white clarified the situation, leading to a drawish endgame with two rooks, knight and five pawns on each side. Black had the better structure, but some worries about his isolated pawn at a5 – and fair enough accepted a draw after 29 moves.

17-year-old Norwegian **FM Sergey Eliseev (2226)** needed 1,5/2 for an IM norm, and played for a win with a long Sicilian preparation as white against 14-year-old Indian **FM Adharsh K (2317)**.

The opening saw a Richter-Rauzer-variation in which white castled long, exchanged his bishops for two knights at c6 and f6, and started a kingside attack with 13.f4 and 14.f5. After 18 moves white was almost 45 minutes ahead on the clock, with a promising if still double-edged position on the board. Offering a queen exchange however was a strategic mistake, and black came better as white weakened his pawn structure when allowing black also to exchange his light-squared bishop for a knight at c4. Adharsh started a counterattack on the kingside and came much better following a well-timed center break:



33.Rb3?! d5! 34.cxd5 Bc5+ 35.Kd3 cxd5 36.exd5 and now 36.--- e4+?! was a mistake according to the computers, but still gave a jackpot as white blundered with 37.Kxe4?? – losing a piece after 37.--- Re8+ 38.Kd3 Re3+ 39.Kc4 Bd6 40.Rd4 Rhxe2. Both players following this result is in for a plus result and a solid 2300-performance, without chances for a title norm.



Blomqvist vs Myagmarsuren

GM Erik Blomqvist (2475) as white in a Sicilian against **FM Evsuld Myagmarsuren (2305)** first entered a positional Sicilian Moscow line with 3.Bb5+, but then sacrificed his pawn at e4 with 8.d4!? Myagmarsuren bravely took the challenge by snatching the pawn and then exchanging his light-squared bishop for a knight at b1. 10.--- e6?! afterwards was inaccurate as 11.Bxf6! gxf6 12.d5 e5 gave white too much compensation on the light

squares. Black saved his king by castling long and kept the extra pawn, although the rather lame extra pawn at f7 was less important than white's light-square dominance and more active pieces. White got a promising pressure against the black kingside pawns, but a tense struggle followed as the black queen went for white's queenside pawns. After 27 moves, black was two pawns up in a very tense and double-edged position – with both players under pressure on the clock. The GM however instructively used his chances when black underestimated the queenside dangers for his king and queen:



28.--- a4 29.Rb1 Qa5 30.Rh3! Rg4 31.Rc3 Kc8 32.Rb5 Qa8 33.Ra3 Ba5 34.Rxa4 b6 35.Nxd6+! and white soon won.



Vijayakumar vs Aamodt

FM Rishi Vijayakumar (2317)

needed a win as white against **Peder Marcus Aamodt (2242)**, and went for a King's Indian fianchetto. Black at move 7 greedily snatched a pawn at c4 and managed to keep it, but white due to his center pawns at d4 and e5 first had very promising compensation.

The situation was tense when white started a kingside bayonet attack with 16.h4 and 17.h5. Black after 26 moves had exchanged three sets of minor pieces and

established a passed pawn at b3. Black's king at g8 was a bit exposed, but in the short run fairly safe with a bishop at g7, a white pawn at g6 and a black pawn at h6. Aamodt left a repetition and went for the advanced white pawn at g6, but underestimated the dangers as white opened the g-file:



34.g4! and now 34.--- Kh7 35.gxf5 Qxf5 was the correct defence plan, as 34.--- fxg4? 35.Rxg4 Qc2+ 36.Qe2 Qxe2 37.Kxe2 Kh7 38.f5 in the game gave white a dangerous attack even without queens. Black short of time blundered with 38.—Rf8?, and white won a bishop following 39.Rag1 Bh8?! 40.Rg6! Rxg6 41.fxg6+ Kg8 42.g7! Bxg7 43.e6.

13-year-old Vijayakumar continues his strong form from the last months and might pass 2340 if winning his last round game against IM Mads Vestby-Ellingsen.

An IM norm however is outside of reach, as Vijayakumar needed an opponent well above 2500 for round 9.

49-year-old **IM Erik Hedman (2276)** and 10-year-old **FM Ethan Pang (2257)** today discussed a French-inspired Sicilian with 2... e6 and 4... d5. Pang again spent a lot of time from the opening, and white after 15 moves was some 50 minutes ahead on the clock. On the board, white after exchanging the queens plus one set of pawns kept a promising pressure against black's isolated pawn at d5. Black's king following the queen exchange here was slightly awkward at d7. Black after 17 moves was under pressure, but still not without chances:



17... Kc8! was needed - as illustrated by the game continuation 17... Kc6? 18.Ba3! Nc8 19.cxd5+ Bxd5 20.Rxd5 Rxd5 21.c4 1-0.

IM Eshaan Hebbar (2175) and **FM Sondre Melaa (2344)** today had a rather long discussion about a dynamic positional line in a Semi-Slav Anti-Meran. The game was reported still within theory with rather balanced chances after 17 moves, when white had spent just above 15 minutes and black just above 10. Melaa used many more minutes for move 18 and 19, but his invitation to tactical exchanges was sound:



19.--- c5!? 20.Bxc5 Nxe4 21.Bxe4 Bxe4 and now 22.Qc1 Bxc5 23.Nxc5 Bc6 would have been equal, while the game continuation with 22.Qc3? Qg5! gave black an initiative.

Black for the next moves held a strong kingside pressure, turning into an overwhelming attack following a powerful bishop sacrifice with 30.--- Bxh3!. 13 year old Hebbar however fought on bravely, while Melaa running short of time lost his attack thread. During mutual time pressure, white at move 40 got his chance to force a draw by repetition of checks.

William Alexander Olsen (2188) and **FM Vegar Koi Gandrud (2273)** entered a modern Sicilian line in which black spent time from move 6. White obviously had the better preparation and kept a pleasant initiative after exchanging one set of knights. Gandrud understandably wanted to soften his defence by exchanging some of the enemy minor pieces, but overlooked something and weakened his kingside much too much.



19.--- Nd7? 20.Nxd7! and now 20.--- Bxb2? 21.Nxf8! Bxa1 22.Rxa1 Bc6 23.Nxe6 fxe6 24.Qxe6+ would have left white two pawns up with an easily winning position. Black instead tried 20.--- Bxd7, but 21.Bxf6 gxf6 22.Qh6 f5 23.Qg5+ Kh8 24.Qf6+ Kg8 25.Rad1 Qd8 26.Qxd8 Rfxd8 27.Bxb7 gave white a pawn more and all the better pieces in the rooks and bishop endgame. Olsen took his time but won fairly confidently after 56 moves.



Øksendal vs Tørfoss

The talented Norwegian teenage duel between **FM Martin Øksendal (2250)** and **Sivert Schanche Tørfoss (2141)** saw a rather patient closed Ruy Lopez line, in which the a-pawns and the queenside rooks was the only victims before move 18. White at that stage had maneuvered his knight around to the f5 square with some advantage. White exchanged the knight for black's dark-squared bishop and for some moves had an advantage due to his pair of bishops. Black however made

a good decision when he, despite the white bishops, opened the center with 28.--- d5! White's bishop at h6 following this was in danger for a few moves. As he got the help needed to exchange the bishop for a black knight and the queens, the game dried up with a drawish rooks and minor pieces endgame.

CM Andreas Skotheim (2229) today discussed a rather open Grunfeld-Indian Three Knights opening with the talented 14-year-old **David M. Simonsen (2034)**. Sacrificing a pawn with 12.--- c5?! here appeared a bit loose, as white after exchanging all the knights could hang on the extra pawn with some advantage.



22.--- b6? was an interesting idea with bad timing, as 23.Rxd5! Rxd5 24.Rc1 > bxc5 25.e4 now could have given white a big advantage, and exchanging at b6 after exchanging the rooks would keep an extra pawn. White instead helpfully went for 23.cxb6? Qxb6 24.Rxd5 Qxb3 25.Rxd8+ Kg7 with balanced chances. Draw agreed after 40 moves, with two rooks and four kingside pawns against queen and four kingside pawns.

Highly talented Norwegian teenagers **Ben Samuel Groth Skaar (2167)** and **Isak Vinh Brattgjerd (2202)** today went for a Caro-Kann Two Knights Attack, in which a rather acrobatic white knight first could take a pawn at c6 and then exchange itself for a bishop at d6:

11.Nxc6 Qc7 12.Nd4 a6 13.Nf5 0-0 14.Nxd6 Qxd6. It is known to theory and black has some compensation for the pawn, as white has an issue with his undeveloped bishop at c1. Black won back the pawn at a4 a few moves later on, and despite his inferior pawn structure left an invitation to a draw by repetition after 25 moves. Chances remained balanced and after 40 moves the queen and rook endgame with five pawns for each player was drawish. This was agreed a draw seven moves and one rook exchange later.



The Scandinavian senior duel between **Morten Andersen (2200)** and **Lars Tormod Haugen (1988)** made a slow start with 1.Nf3 and 2.e3, but accelerated into a Benoni-like position as white soon went for c4 and d4-d5. Black could be fairly satisfied after exchanging his light-squared bishop for a knight at f3, especially as white later weakened his dark kingside squares with 15.f3. White's bishop at c1 became rather passive and black after sacrificing a pawn had an attacking running between move 30 and 40. Both players short of time made understandable mistakes here:

Computers here gives 36.Ke1! as best, but white of course did not want to give up the pawn at g2.

36.Rg1? Nf6 37.Kf1 Rf8 38.g4?! Nd7 39.Bf5 Nc5 40.e4 and now 40.--- Qc2! would have made life difficult for the white pieces.

With seconds left on the clock black instead went for 40.--- Nxb3?, and white came a piece up after 41.Qxb3 Bd4? 42.Be3! Qxh3+ 43.Ke2 Qh2+ 44.Kd1.



Louis Khoo-Thwe (2118) and **CM Kim Roger Hansen Westrum (2193)** entered a solid Italian line, exchanged all the bishops and then upon black's suggestion agreed a draw in a very balanced position after 13 moves.

Daniel Arvola (2088) and **WFM Valentina Verbin (2113)** meanwhile investigated a Sicilian Four Knights variation in which black's maneuver with 7... Ke7 and 10... Kf8 might look a bit awkward. It is however well known and considered fully playable. This double edged position suddenly turned in favour of black as white underestimated the dangers to his king at e1:

11.Nd5? Qa5+! 12.Bd2 Bxf2+ 13.Kxf2 Nx4
14.Ke1 Qxd5 and black was two pawns up with an overwhelming position. Verbin within a few moves forced exchanges leading to a totally won rooks and minor piece endgame with two extra pawns.



Victor Lilliehöök (1993) and **Per Fredrik Holand (2070)** started up with a King's Indian Advance a la French with 1.e4 e6 2.d3. White established a center advantage with a pawn at e5, although black after exchanging the d-pawns had enough counterplay. Black soon got the upper hand following an instructive pawn wing break:

White now should have completed his development with 13.Nc3, as 13.Re1 g5!
14.hxg5?! hxg5 15.Nxg5 Nd4 16.Qd1 Bxg5
17.Bxg5 Bxg2 18.Kxg2 Qc6+ 19.f3 Nxf3! 20.Qxf3
Rh2+ won a queen for rook and knight.

Lilliehöök fought on bravely and succeeded in establishing a passed f-pawn, but black still had the win fairly under control with queen, knight and four pawns against two rooks and four pawns.



Eirik Berget (2041) and **Benjamin Halvorsen (1966)** entered a Sicilian Alapin, leading to a fairly equal and symmetrical position after exchanging the c-pawns and e-pawns. Black was a bit careless when allowing tactical exchanges around move 12-14, as white later had a pair of bishops and a backward pawn at c6. White in turn found no better plan than exchanging both his bishops, and so a draw after 20 moves was agreed in a fairly balanced position with queen, two rooks and six pawns on each side.

The junior lions **Pantham Kaewpitakkun (2026)** and **CM Ashwath Kaushik (1958)** entered a double-edged Sicilian Najdorf opening line, in which black made the first mistake. White following this could castle long with a promising initiative. Black's center push later was objectively dubious, but still gave a practical jackpot ...



Kaewpitakkun vs Kaushik



14.--- d5?! and now the greedy 15.Qxb4! could have given white a clear advantage as 15.--- e5 16.exd5! exd4 17.Bxd4 is very dangerous for black and 15.--- dxe4?! runs into 16.Bb5+ axb5 17.Qxb5+ and 18.Qxb7. White instead went off the rail with 15.b3? dxe4 16.Nc6?? Bxc6 17.Bg5 e3! 18.Qxe3 Qc3 0-1

Sigurd Kittilsen (2010) today was back to his original plan with a Sicilian opening, now as black against unpredictable junior **Kristoffer Wang Strømhaug (2020)**. Black apparently had the longer preparation here and was fine after exchanging the queens at d8. The first important decision after the preparation however came much too fast:



9.Rd1+?! (9.0-0-0+ is the usual thing here) Ke8?? 10.Nb5! and black suddenly had a serious problem finding squares for his king. The game continued 10.--- Bd7 11.Nc7+ Kd8 12.Nxa8 Nxe3 13.fxe3 and white from the opening was an exchange up in the endgame. Kittilsen fought on well from this depressing start point, but Strømhaug after returning the exchange landed in a safely won bishop endgame with two extra pawns.

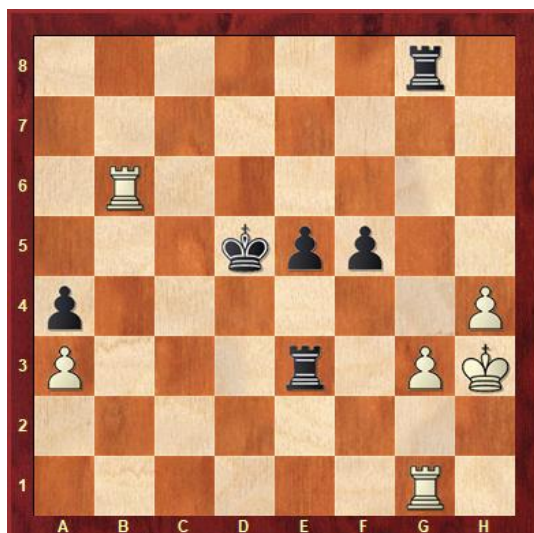




Den Roover vs Wernberg

The teenage talent duel between **CM Nikolay Den Roover (2004)** and **Nikolai Olsen Wernberg (1893)** to the contrary entered a rather closed and Reti-looking English opening, in which black took over the advantage as white went for a too weakening 11.e4?! dxe3 e.p. 12.Bxe3 Bxe3 13.fxe3. White for the next moves struggled with a backward pawn at d3, but suddenly got a lot of counterplay as he was forced to play 21.b4!, kicking away the annoying black

knight at c5. White later developed first a strong initiative and then an attack against the black king, but during mutual time pressure black came over the worst as he returned his extra pawn to exchange queens. The double rook endgame with three pawns for each player afterwards was drawish, but much easier to play for black since he had both the more active rooks and the more active king. White was in trouble following a time trouble mistake at move 40, and definitely lost it two moves later on:



42.Kh2! now was necessary to stop the threat of 42...f4. The game instead went 42.h5? f4! 43.Rg6?! Rxg6 44.hxg6 Ke6 and black soon reached a won pawn endgame.



Gåsland vs Strand

Finally, on board 33, **Lukas Dominik Gåsland (1994)** and **Amund Pihl Strand (1914)** set sail with a modern edition of a Queen's Gambit exchange line. Instead of the traditional queenside minority attack with b4-b5, white here went for a strong center and kingside attack with 11.f3, 13.e4 and 15.e5. White following this got a promising space advantage, although black after 17.--- f5 in a short-time perspective managed to block the kingside. White instead started a

second attack on the queenside. Black more or less in desperation gave up at pawn with 24.--- Nc4?!, but was rewarded as white somewhat strangely gave back the pawn with some counterplay for black. White still was better after taking black's queenside pawns, but the position now was risky for both. An exciting finish came as both players ran short of time while trying to attack the opponent's king on the kingside:

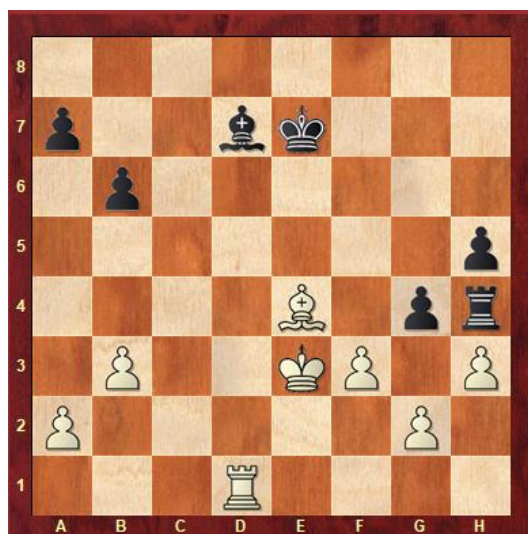


36.--- d4? was a mistake, as 37.Qh6 now gives a strong pressure against the black king. With four minutes on the clock white instead went for 37.Rd7?, when 37.--- Rxf4! 38.Rxf4 Re6! > 39.Qf1 Qe3+ 40.Rf2 Rc8 would have been highly unclear. Black had less than one minute on the clock and lost it all with 37.--- Bc4? 38.Qxc4 Rxf4?, as the straightforward 39.Rxf4 Qxf4 40.Qxd4+ Qxd4 41.Rxd4 now gave white a totally won rook endgame.

Andreas Skrede Hausken (2002) had a bye his round, but is in good health and will be back for round 9.

Open Group

The **Open** had a hard-fought and in fact rather normalizing round, following a week with many surprising results on the top boards. Second rated **Tomas Engkvist (1969)** obviously entered the first board well prepared to meet the Russian Defence of leading **Sondre Stai (1786)**. White made his first 14 moves without spending any time and following an early queen exchange kept a pleasant initiative into the endgame with two rooks, one bishop and six pawns on each side. White's advantage became obvious as black after 23 moves gave up a pawn, and 14 year old Tomas later completed the endgame win in an impressive way:



37.Kf4! gxf3+ 38.Kxf3 Bc8 39.Rd4! Bxh3 and now 40.Kg3! was best, but 40.gxh3 Rxh3+ 41.Kf4 also won with a very safe margin.



Ali vs Sivaparan



Solbu vs Digernes

Second board saw a much more turbulent attacking battle, but also was won by the higher rated player from the younger generation. 13 year old **Isai Sivaparan (1944)** as black against veteran **Karim Ali (1876)** first was clearly better, then clearly worse – but then efficiently used his chance to win by tactical means;

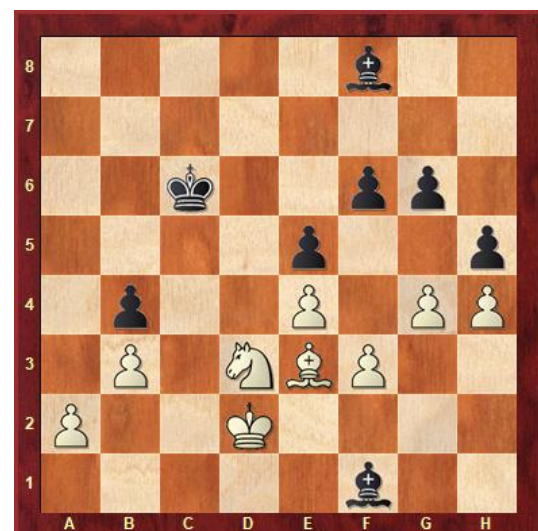


22.--- Bxg3! and now 23.Bxe8 Rxe8 would have been highly unclear, while 23.fxg3? Qxg3+ 24.Kh1 Qxh3 would have been mate. Karim unexpectedly tried 23.f4? and soon lost after 23.--- Re7?! (directly 23.--- Bxf4! was even stronger as 24.Bxe8 Rxe8 25.Bxf4 Nxf4+ 26.Kh1 Ne2 is very good for black, but this was no way easy to calculate over the board) 24.Rf3? Bxf4 25.Qf1?! Bxc1 26.Rxc1 Nxc1 27.Qxc1 Re2+ and white resigned.

Third board on the other hand saw an unexpected win from a dark horse of the older generation, as 54 year old **Christian Neukamm (1776)** as white against **Thobias Gotaas Hansen (1805)** first took an exchange which black probably sacrificed, and then took a piece which black definitely blundered – in an otherwise exciting position.

Fourth board today witnessed a tense young talent duel between 12 year old **August Solbu (1887)** and 17 year old **Mikael Digernes (1781)**, in which August instructively used his chance in a drawish double minor piece endgame:

40.--- Bh3? 41.g5! Be7 42.gxf6 Bxf6 43.Bg5! Bxg5 44.hxg5 Kd6 45.Nxb4 and white won safely with knight and five pawns against bishop and three pawns. Black's defence here collapsed remarkably fast, despite the two bishops.



The younger generation also took a full point on board five, as 13 year old **August Vinh Brattgjerd (1845)** won a messy attacking battle against 59 year old **Guttorm Andersen (1842)**. White anyway was winning when black allowed a nice tactical finish:



35.--- Re6? 36.Ng6+! Rxd6 37.Re8+ and black could only avoid the mate by resigning.

First rated **Mikael Aroven (2145)** today had forgotten that round 8 started one hour earlier, and consequently arrived 40 minutes delayed for his black game against **Kazim Yilmaz (1820)**. The game became a tight battle ending up in a drawn endgame. Aroven was not stressed by his late arrival and had a safe margin on the clock. Kazim however made a new Fagernes record, having some 2 hours and 20 minutes left on his clock in the final position after 57 moves!

Following this we look forward to a very tense fight for the top prizes also in the Open, with Stai, Neukamm, Sivaparan and Engkvist (in order of ELO-performance, which will decide in case of equal points) are sharing the lead with 6.0/8. First board in round 9 will see a rising star duel with Sivaparan white against Engkvist, while Stai on the second board will get the white pieces against Neukamm. The only two other players with a potential for a top three prize here are Solbu and Ali at 5,5, playing against each other on the third board. Moneyprizes will be shared in case of equal points, but only the top three players will be guaranteed a place in the next GM group!

The lower boards today today had no sensations, but many exciting games and some surprises. Local 14-year-old **Mikael Ruud (1588)** produced a surprise win as white against **Rune Kleiven Rynning (1776)**, true enough because Rynning blundered from a winning position:



Black has sacrificed a piece, and has a winning attack after 33.--- Rbb6! or 33.--- Nh4! The game instead went 33.--- Ng3?? and Mikael efficiently used his chance with 34.Qxg6+! > Kxg6 35.Nf4+.

The well-known mountain climber **Anne Grete Nebell (1561)** today won well deserved despite a rook less in a very interesting game against chess dad **Terje Holten (1566)**:



36.b6! and now 36.--- Rd7! would have been very unclear and truly fascinating, while the too greedy 36.--- Rxc5? was instructively lost after 37.Ra7! Rc1+ 38.Kh2 Qb8+ 39.g3. The game concluded 39.--- Qc8?! 40.Qd4+! Ke8 41.Qe4+ Kf8 42.Qe7+ Kg8 43.Qxg7 mate. A great finish from 59 year old Anne Grete, and we are so happy that she following some health problems are well back on the chess scene!

Photos by Tom Eriksen