

Fagernes Chess International 2019

THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT

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GM-A

Six GMs and one WGM are sharing the lead after this second round, as the sensation on the top board was WGM Marsel Efroimsky efficiently using her chance to turn the board from a difficult black position against GM Erik Blomqvist.

IM Lars Oskar Hauge is on schedule for a GM norm following a highly entertaining draw against second seeded GM Evgeny Alekseev, while all the other GMs rated within top seven has won both their first games.



GM Anton Demchenko

First rated GM Anton Demchenko (2661) as white against GM Benjamin Arvola Notkevich (2495) made a slow start with 1.d4 2.Nf3 3.Bf4 and a standard London system, but still came better as black exchanged his c5-pawn at d4 and spent too much time tricking his knight around via h5 and g7 to f5.

White's kingside play later looked more promising than black's counter play on the queenside, but the position still probably was in dynamic balance around move 25-30. Intervening with

29.--- Nd2!? might have been fine from a black point of view, but if so 31.--- Rh8? was to overstretch as white came much better after a tactical 32.Nxg5! f5 33.Qxd2 Qxg3+ 34.Qg2. White following this anyway was better in the endgame with two rooks, knight and five pawns on each side, but the game remained exciting until black at move 39 blundered an exchange.

IM Lars Oskar Hauge (2472) as white showed no respect for second seeded GM Evgeny Alekseev (2649), and went for an ambitious Sicilian Grand Prix attack with 2.Nc3 and 3.f4. Alekseev apparently was not prepared for this and became too passive.

White around move 25 had a promising position with a loose extra pawn at c5. Returning the pawn at c6 to play for an attack with queen and two active knights was interesting, but 29.c4? proved inaccurate as black could exchange the pawn and then active his bishop on the d5 square.

Both players looked fairly satisfied as the game was then drawn by an airy repetition of checks with 31.Nd6+ Kd8 32.Nf7+ Ke8 33.Nd6 etc.



IM Lars Oskar Hauge

GM Andriy Vovk (2616) versus IM Erik Santarius (2411) was a provocative Caro-Kann Advance line with 3... c5, in which white came better partly due to his active bishops and partly due to black's slightly awkward king on f8. Snatching a pawn a5 with the queen might have been inaccurate from a white point of view, but if so black in turn was wrong to exchange queens – as the remaining rooks and minor pieces endgame was very unpleasant at best for him. The position with two rooks, bishop and five pawns versus two rooks, knight and four after 25 moves probably was just winning for white, more due to his active pieces than the extra pawn at f2. Having no other plan black bravely went for counter play with Nf3-Nxh2-Nf1, but it could not work out – and did not, as white's attack before 40 moves won decisive material.

IM Sebastian Mihajlov (2361) came much closer to a sensation as white against GM Evgeny Postny (2612). White got a lot of compensation after black greedily snatched a pawn at e4 in an Italian opening. Black hang on to the extra pawn, but his position looked like a pancake and white was reported close to winning as he opened the board for his pair of bishops with 24.d6.

Sacrificing an exchange for a second pawn probably was Postny's best try at this stage, but Mihajlov still had a strong initiative. His position looked close to winning with queen, two rooks and four pawns against queen, rook, knight and six pawns after 30 moves.

Not for the first time Postny however defended stubbornly, and was rewarded as he just before the time control succeeded to activate his queen via b8 to b5. Mihajlov was hit by a boomerang as he suddenly had the more exposed king. After picking up the advanced white pawn at h5, Postny some mutual mistakes later went on to win a complex endgame with queen, knight and six pawns versus queen, rook and three pawns. 56.Ra7? (instead of 56.Rb1! covering the h1 square) was a blunder as black could (and did) decide by a brilliant tactical 56... Nxf4+! > 57.gxf4 Qxf3 or 57.Qxf4 Qh1 mate, but black anyway was winning then.



GM Maxim Turov vs FM Mads Vestby-Ellingsen (2333)

inaccurate as white for some moves kept an extra pawn at e5 with chances for an advantage. Vestby-Ellingsen however played hardball as he undermined the white e5 pawn by a g5-break, and after 31 moves he had exchanged of the queens and won back the pawn. The GM was impressed enough to offer a draw, without playing out a very balanced minor piece endgame with knight and four pawns versus bishop and four pawns.

Russian GM Maxim Turov (2584) a few years ago worked as a chess coach in Tromsø, and met one of his pupils again as he today played white against FM Mads Vestby-Ellingsen (2333). White first appeared better in this Symmetrical English, but although black had an ugly isolated pawn at c6, he could balance the chances by sufficient counter play against white's isolated pawn at d4.

Exchanging the d4-pawn probably was



FM Anders Hobber vs GM Evgeny Romanov

Although black got some kingside attack, the position remained double-edged until white much too naïve went for an exchange win with 35.Ne6? – overlooking or underestimating 35...h3!, with a highly dangerous attack which smashed through immediately after the time control.

FM Anders Hobber (2295) and GM Evgeny Romanov (2576) meanwhile discussed a slow Queen's Pawn opening variation with e3 and b3, giving white a solid position and black no problems. Although 9.cxd5 exd5 looked misunderstood from a white point of view, chances were roughly balanced around move 15-20. The following position with hanging black pawn at d5 and c5 looked slightly better for white, but anyway offered more chances for both

GM Evgeny Vorobiov (2565) probably played a very good white game today, although his young opponent Jens Evang Ingebretsen (2300) was definitely in the ring after 12 moves of a positional Queen's Indian. Due to the pawns on e4 and d4 white got a space advantage, which he following some inaccuracies from black instructively increased by 18.g3! followed by 19.d5! and 20.dxe6. Later black had a hard time to defend his weak e6-pawn and the king, and he threw in the scoresheets after 28 moves as white intervened on the seventh rank to win decisive material.

Norwegian GM Frode Urkedal (2513) also looked convincing in a 34 moves win as black against Olli Sisättö (2276). Black reached a sound position from the Nimzo-Indian opening, and instructively hit back in the center when white went for a too ambitious kingside pawn storm. 16.--- Ne6?! and 19.--- Nd4?! in turn was an overambitious black plan inviting white back into the game, and the position was messy when white in this too ambitious game went for a too loose knight sacrifice with 22.e4? (instead of saving the knight on g5 with 22.Ne4!).

Urkedal cashed in the piece with 22.--- g6 23.Qb5 hxg5, and helped by his extra piece he had no real problems to defend afterwards.



GM Erik Blomqvist

Today's sensation came on board eight, as WGM Marsel Efroimsky (2287) won as black against GM Erik Blomqvist (2496). It came a bit unexpected following the opening, a Caro Kann Exchange line in which white first had a slight edge from his better pawn structure. Having parked his knight on d4, ahead of the isolated black pawn at d5, white still appeared slightly better with queen, rook, knight and six pawns on each side around 25 moves.

It was expected to end up with another long working day win for the GM, as black too easy gave up her pawn on b4 after 30 moves. Black had some counter play on the kingside, but white was a pawn up with two passed queenside pawns. 36.Kf2?? however was a way too careless blunder, as white with his queen misplaced on b7 suddenly was unable to handle the double threat of 37.--- Nf4 and 37.--- Qe3+ after 36.--- Qe5!.

This time, for a change, the GM made a one move blunder and the lower rated opponent immediately user her chance.

Fair enough and well deserved according to the iron laws of chess. Efroimsky has had a great start on the tournament following this win, and the Israel delegation is still at 100 % with 6/6.

IM Erlend Mikalsen (2397) was the first player to win in the GM A today, as he succeeded in less than 90 minutes. Meaning opponent Sigve Hølleland (2024) was brought efficiently back to earth following his draw against an IM yesterday. Still black probably was fine from this Sicilian Najdorf opening after 10 moves.13.--- b4? however was a much too naïve move, really asking for the thematic 14.Nd5! exd5 15.exd5 with a crushing e-file pressure against the black king on e8. If the position was not already lost for black, it definitely became so after 15.--- Bxd5? 16.Qxg7, and Mikalsen efficiently smashed through with 17.Rxe7+! - to win decisive material and attack within two more moves.

Eirik T. Gullaksen (2324) versus Timofey Galinsky (2378) was an unexpected IM duel, which even more unexpectedly started with a Budapest Gambit line in which white returns the pawn to get a safe positional edge from this pair of bishops. Black came up with enough activity to balance the chances, but white and his bishops still was closer to an advantage when white suddenly blundered a rook with 28.Rc1?? – somehow overlooking 28... Qc6! with the highly unpleasant double threat of Rc5xc1 and Qxg2 mate.



Abyl Kizatbay vs Edit Machlik

Abyl Kizatbay (2108) and Edit Machlik (2109) was an interesting duel between two capable young 2100-players. Black had a fairly solid position from the Caro-Kann opening, but white still had a sound pressure first due to his pair of bishops and later also due to his e5-pawn. Move 33 was a critical moment as white had a rolling kingside attack, but invited black into the game again with 34.Be5?.

Now 34... Bxe5! 35.fxe5 Qc7 would have defended with a double edged position, while 34... Nxe5? 35.fxe5! (as played) gave white a decisive attack. White missed the direct sacrifice win with 36.Rxh7+!, but instead found 37.Bxg6! and completed the attack before 40 moves. Abyl Kizatbay for sure is underrated, but can he be an IM norm candidate?

Håkon Bentsen (2155) and FM Trygve Dahl (2275) discussed a Sicilian Sveshnikov opening line, in which black first was perfectly fine in a symmetric structure with e4 versus e5 without d-pawns. White came slightly better after black for mysterious reasons closed off his queenside play by 19... a3?!, but black again came better as white disrupted his own pawn structure by offering a queen exchange on d3. Black's initiative vanished and the endgame with bishop, knight and six pawns appeared drawish, as white was given the time to free himself with 31.f4.

Black still had a slight initiative until he for very mysterious reasons just gave away his h5-pawn just before 40 moves. White efficiently cashed in the pawn and could have had a winning advantage if advancing his passed h-pawn with 42.h5. Instead he retreated with 42.Ne3? – inviting black in for a lot of queenside counter play with 42... Bc3!. As black chose the wrong continuation afterwards white still reached a won knight endgame with three against two pawns. Now for a change running too fast with the passed h-pawn, he lost it and ended up in a dead draw with knight and pawn versus knight and pawn.

By far not the best game played in this group today, this still was an exciting game with many instructive moments.

FM Daniel Nordquelle (2264) versus Aleksander Lindbøl (2139) was a duel between two very talented teenagers from Oslo, and not unexpectedly it became a very messy tactical battle. White first appeared to have got the upper hand of a Caro-Kann Advance, as he established a big space advantage with e5 and c5. A tense struggle followed as black played f6 and bxc5 with counter play on both wings. The changing moment came at move 19, as white allowed a powerful e5-break which within a few moves left white's king on f2 in hot water. Lindbøl in an inspired mood went on to sacrifice a piece, but gave up some of the steam by exchanging queens. Later white was a pawn up, and although black still had a decisive initiative it was not easy to play for anyone. It appears that black just blundered as he played 31... Bxh5? 32.Bxh5+ instead of 32... Rxh4+ with a decisive win of material. As white in turn missed his chances in a highly unclear endgame, black after the time control after all had won a pawn. Due to his passed e-pawn he then had a trivial win with rook, bishop and two pawns versus rook, bishop and one pawn.



Elham Abdrlauf

Elham Abdrlauf (2123) versus WGM Olga Dolzhikova (2231) lasted 108 moves and became the longest game of this round, but still the only relevant question for the last 54 or so was whether young Elham would be able to mate with king, bishop and knight versus king. The win was well deserved as white got an initiative from the Modern opening and kept it all the way into an unusual endgame with four minor pieces and six pawns on each side. After white increased the pressure by an e4-break black's defense collapsed just before 40 moves, and she had to give up a piece for insufficient compensation. The remaining endgame with bishop, knight and one a-pawn versus bishop and two g-pawns was a trivial win, given the fact that white was able to mate with bishop, knight and king versus king within 50 moves. In the end, he did it with a 14 moves margin.

Morten Andersen (2223) and Frode Lillevold (2076) had even another Catalan discussion. In this one something went seriously wrong for black, as white after opening the c- and d-file was able to park an octopus knight in d6 with a more or less decisive initiative.

Lillevold escaped the immediate dangers as he was given the help to exchange queens on a3, but as the pawn on b6 was about to collapse black still went for a dubious knight sacrifice. Playing with a piece for two pawns, white was winning before he at move 28 invited black into the ring with 28.Nd7? Bxf3 28.Bxf3 Rb2+ - highly disturbing as black got an active rook on b2 and could have had a hyperactive knight on d4.

For unknown reasons black decided to passivate his rook instead of activating his knight, after which white and his extra piece regained control and won without further difficulties.

Monika Machlik (2059) and Noam Aviv Vitenberg (2203) started up with some creative Ukrainian line in the Modern Defence, reportedly known as the Beefeater.

White before ten moves had sacrificed an exchange on h5 and a pawn on c3 to open lines against the black king. Whether the sacrifice plan was objectively correct remains a disputed matter. Black anyway lagged behind in development with his king stuck on e8 and felt forced to offer back an exchange on g6.

Machlik would have had a lot of compensation for the pawns if taking back the exchange, but instead played bravely on for an attack with her active minor pieces. She was rewarded as Vitenberg helpfully opened the position with a d5-break at move 18. The understandable idea was to castle long, but it was not a good one as black's king turned out to be even more exposed on a8 than e8. White played very well until about 30 moves, but again used way too much time and then failed to find any of the many wins in a still messy position.

During mutual time trouble 35.Bxc6! followed by 36.d8Q+ would have given white a queen more, but instead the direct 35.d8Q+?? gave a messy endgame with queen, bishop and four pawns on each side.

White still had a draw by repetition of checks after the time control, which both players passed with a few seconds to spare. After thinking for some 40 minutes on move 42 Machlik continued to play for a win, but instead blundered it all away as the apparently elegant pin move 48.g4?? lost a piece to the even more elegant 48.--- Kc3! (threatening both 49.--- Kxc2 and Qd2+).

It is truly a pity that Monika Machlik once more failed either to speed up in time to win the game or to pull the strike in time to draw. Still she remains a very colorful and creative chess entertainer.

Vitenberg, like Vestby-Ellingsen in the first round, of course did nothing wrong as he fought bravely on for a draw and efficiently used his chance to win when he got it.



FM Andre Nielsen

FM Andre Nielsen (2201) versus Sander Fuglestein (2000) was another Norwegian teenager duel, in which white's better pawn structure and pair of bishops gave him a pressure all into the endgame. In the double minor piece endgame black came up with some counter play against white's c4-pawn, forcing white to enter a somewhat better bishop endgame with six pawns on each side.

As black got the time to play c5 and raise some kind of fortress, he should have been able to save this one. Nielsen however still had a passed a-pawn, and won well deserved after advancing the pawn to a7. In the end just before 60 moves, white instructively sacrificed the a-pawn to intervene on the kingside with his king and force a won pawn endgame.

Sigurd Loe Grøver (2020) as white against Andreas Skotheim (2182) chose some kind of suspect Reti-Colle-mix, in which white's much too slow queenside play with b3-a3-a4 gave black an initiative from the opening. After three sets of minor pieces were exchanged, black's c-file possession gave him a pleasant initiative, while white's pawn on e5 was only a weakness. Skotheim in an inspired mood went on with his queenside attack, won a pawn on a4 and then exchanged down to a minor piece endgame in which his passed a-pawn soon decided.

Pål Røyset (2167) as white against WFM Anita Grønnestad (1954) gave his Alapin line another try against the Sicilian, but without too much success as the flashy 11.Nf5 followed by 12.0-0-0 could have backfired and given black an advantage.

Black in turn failed to find the best plan, hence white got a pleasant d-file pressure after black four moves later took the knight on f5 and gave back her better knight on d5. Røyset woke up and played very well from that stage. After 20 moves white's pair of bishops, combined with his more active rook and better pawn structure, gave a winning initiative. 1-0 came up on board 20 before 30 moves, as black was about to lose heavy material and still was unable to get her king away from the open center.



Pål Røyset vs WFM Anita Grønnestad

Isha Sharma (1989) handling the white stones against FM Richard Bjerke (2156) went for 1.e4 and a closed Sicilian Moscow line, in which all pieces were still on board after 17 moves. 19.Nh2? was a bit too passive from white in a dynamic position, hence black's kingside attack soon gave him an advantage.

Allowed to jump in on d3 with his knight, black eventually won an exchange on e1 with a winning advantage from a computer point of view. Still of course a lot of work remained to be done at the board. While Bjerke struggled to find a new plan, Sharma gradually achieved counter play on the kingside and picked up black's too advanced pawn on h4. Completely losing the thread black misplaced almost all his pieces, and so white around move 30-35 suddenly had an overwhelming attack.

Sharma played very well with the f5 break at move 35, but then for mysterious reasons hesitated to go on with a winning fxe6. Having won back the exchange Sharma could have won the game by continuing the attack, but fearing for her own king she instead exchanged queens. White had a pawn up in the remaining rook and bishop endgame, but without any real winning chances as black had opposite colored bishops and his king in a blockade position on e6.

GM-B (ROUND ROBIN)

In one sentence: The second round also was a very good round for the two top rated GMs and for the three IM-norm candidates - while it was also a very disappointing round for the GM-norm candidates.



Very experienced GM Eduardas Rozentalis (2568) and very talented IM Tor Fredrik Kaasen (2385) discussed a Ruy Lopez Exchange line in which white exchanged a bishop for a knight on c6, while black exchanged a queen for a queen on f3. While white could immediately repair his pawn structure by playing f4, black had to play on with a double c-pawn, but he still was healthy from the opening.

GM Eduardas Rozentalis vs IM Tor Fredrik Kaasen The endgame with two rooks, one knight and six pawns on each side looked about balanced after 20 moves. That is, until black creatively trapped his own knight on b2 three moves later on. The idea turned out to be a counterattack on white's d4 knight with c5. It however soon was revealed that white could take back the pawn on d4, and then some moves later cash in the knight on b2. This leading to a double rook endgame, in which white had a pawn up and two connected passed pawns in the center. Still having strength well above 2600 in technical endgames, Rozentalis had no problems winning this one.

Following the first round draw against Holm, Swedish IM Oskar von Bahr (2404) had a key game for his GM norm chances as white against GM Alon Greenfeld (2514) today. For a long while it seemed like a good shot, as the players entered an English Fianchetto race in which white's kingside attack looked more dangerous than white's queenside counter play. Around move 25-30 black had a slightly disturbing rook on a2, but white controlled the e-file and had a kingside pressure due to his pawns on g5 and f5. 32.f6? however was a strange positional mistake, more or less closing off the kingside attack. Following some inaccuracies from both sides black definitely came better as he got the chance to exchange off the queens. As white now had the weaker pawns black anyway was clearly better when he parked an octopus knight on the e3 outpost after 37 moves. Realizing he was about to lose decisive material, a disillusioned white player stopped the clock after the first time control.



IM Kristian Stuvik Holm

IM Sergey Kazakovskiy (2440) versus IM Kristian Stuvik Holm (2467) was another key game between two possible GM norm candidates. It became another draw, meaning that both drifted away from the norm.

The start was an English opening, in which the players after exchanging one set of knights and the dark squared bishops ended up in a fairly balanced isolated pawn position.

Black's way to exchange the final minor pieces probably was inaccurate, as white for some moves had a disturbing initiative with queen, two rooks and five pawns on each side.

Kazakovskiy however played slightly inaccurately, and Holm efficiently used his chance to force an exchange of the queens as well.

After 29 moves white in a double rook endgame won a pawn at d5. But then he at the same time offered a draw - realizing that black would within a few moves regain the pawn with a very drawish rook endgame.

Teenagers FM Andreas Garberg Tryggestad (2305) and Gunnar Lund (2271) meanwhile played a possible key game for the Norwegian IM norm chances.

A draw was no disaster as both are then in the run. Still it was an early and disappointing stop following a promising start. The opening was some kind of Philidor-like Pirc, in which white after



FM Andreas Garberg Tryggestad vs Gunnar Lund

12 moves had a space advantage and was about to start a pawn storm on the kingside.

The tide suddenly turned after 18 moves as black was invited to play b4 followed by Bxa2+.

The bishop sacrifice came, but then the game was immediately drawn by a tricky repetition with 19.---- Ba2+ 20.Ka1 Bb3 21.Kb1 Ba2+ etc. 20.--- b3!/? or 20.--- Ng4!/? appeared promising for black, but Lund again was happy to draw as black.

Today's sensation man in the GM B was the lowest rated player, American FM Alexander Betaneli (2235), winning an interesting five hours battle as black against German GM Felix Levin (2476).

Levin in his first white game went for a positional Reti queenside fianchetto, transposing into some kind of Queen's Pawn opening as he later played d4. Well versed with such position from his white games, Betaneli had no problems equalizing, and with a nice knight on e4 he even looked slightly better after 17 moves.

Exchanging off the other knight at c5 later might have been a mistake, as white then could open the diagonal for his fianchetto bishop with dxc5. After exchanging three sets of minor pieces black's knight on e6 still did fine compared to white's bishop on b2, and pawns on d5 and f5 gave black a space advantage with some chances for a kingside attack. Black following this anyway had the easier position to play when white short of time made a positional blunder with 33.Qc3??, allowing 33...f4! with a powerful kingside attack.

As black for strange reasons did not answer 35.g4 with the principal and critical 35...h5!, white got into the ring again by playing 36.h5 himself. Black's creative idea turned out to be sacrificing a rook on e4. Although the sacrifice could not be accepted, declining it in the correct way probably would have forced black to force a draw by perpetual check.

In a still messy position after the first time control, 41.Rxe4? turned out to be a fatal blunder as black could win an exchange with a not particularly invisible 41...Nf4!.

Black still had some train transport to do with queen, rook and five versus queen, bishop and six pawns, but as white had advanced his kingside pawns he in the long run had no chance to stop black's heavy pieces from intervening.

0-1 after 60 moves as white would lose his bishop. Meaning that: Betaneli at 1.0/2 playing two GMs with black has had a very promising start, while Levin at 0.0/2 is far below his usual strength so far.

OPEN GROUP (SWISS)

Second round was another hard fought one with much entertainment and few draws in the Open group. Ten players are still sharing the lead at 2/2, but remarkably only one player rated top five can be found among them.

Still we have a surprising start in this Open, as two out of the top three boards were drawn despite notable ELO differences.

First board meeting between Hallvard Hauge Flatebø (1801) and 12 year old Shazil Shehzad (2024) was a Benkö Gambit duel in which white gave back the gambit pawn with success. Due to his passed a-pawn he was better most of the game and apparently close to winning with the pawn on a6 after 40 moves.

Shehzad eventually succeeded blocking the pawn with his rook on a7 and creating some counter play, hence chances were about balanced when a draw was agreed after four hours. (Rumors that white accepted a draw in a winning position are unfounded as Flatebø offered a draw himself after 51.Re4, and 51.--- Ra6?? was a technical mistake never played in the game.)



Shazil Shehzad

Second board game between Jonas H. Rasmussen (1993) and our new Romanian chess friend Tiberiu Orban (1817) first was a closed and fairly balanced Grünfeld-Indian duel. White first came a sound pawn up and then went on to win after black very strangely gave up a pawn on c6 instead of just taking back with 20.--- exd5. Rasmussen had been gradually improving last year, and seeded fourth he now is the highest rated player at 2/2.

Third board was a fascinating meeting between a young lion and an old fox, in which 15 year old Sondre Lillestøl Melaa (1991) as black wasted a much better middle game position and had to scrape a draw in the rook endgame with a pawn less against 76 year old Jan Svenske (1781).



Afras Mansoor

Fourth board on the other hand saw a crushing attacking win from 15 year old Afras Mansoor (1965) against 62 year old Hans Rånby (1787): White smashed through on the kingside before 25 moves and in the end after 33 mated the black king up in the air on e5.

Again we had some surprising draws on the middle boards in the open, one of them being highly talented 11 year old Elma Selvik (1317) securing a pawn endgame draw as black against 70 year old Roger Granum (1628). Grown up Lars Erik Brobakken (1841) arrived some 40 minutes delayed and probably regretted that decision as he ran seriously short of time for 40 moves, but he still passed the time control and saved a draw as black against surprise man Jarle Sivertsen (1595).

The last 13 boards all had a winner and all were won by the highest rated player, demonstrating both the fighting spirit and the varied level in this very open group. The Fagernes festival is and will (if it continues) always remain open for chess players at all levels.

All photos by Anniken Vestby