

Fagernes Chess International 2019

THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT

3



GM-A

The first half of the double round became a remarkably hard-fought one this year, with only one short draw among 21 games. Although there was a real fight for at least three hours on all the first four boards, GM Evgeny Postny on third board in the end was the only player able to reach 3/3. Five GMs, two IMs and one WGM are sharing second place at 2.5/3, hence a tight run can be expected for the next rounds.



GM Evgeny Romanov vs GM Anton Demchenko

The first board game between Russian GMs Evgeny Romanov (2576) and Anton Demchenko (2661) was a positionally tense three and a half hours draw. It started like a Four Knights English Opening and then became some kind of fairly balanced fianchetto. White exchanged his dark-squared bishop at f6 to play for an

advantage based upon the d-file combined with his active knights on e4 and c5. After exchanging the knights, he kept a slight d-file initiative with queen, rook, bishop and six pawns on each side.

Black still had a solid position, and Demchenko defended it by sound means into a dead drawn opposite colored bishop endgame which was buried after 31 moves.

The second board meeting today was GM Frode Urkedal (2513) versus GM Andriy Vovk (2616), which became a fascinating six hours chess drama.

Facing an aggressive Dutch opening with 1.--- f5, Urkedal gave his sharp Anti-Dutch with 2.Bg5 another try – after which Vovk immediately started to hunt the bishop with 2.--- h6 and 3.--- g5.

9.--- f4!? later was a natural idea, but the continuation with

10.gxf4 g4? was very surprising and probably not sound. White got the time needed to defend his d4-pawn, and kept an extra pawn all into the endgame.

Although white played with a bishop on g3 locked in behind pawns at f4 and h4, his king on h1 was very safe. Consequently the position with queen, two rooks, bishop, knight and six pawns against queen, two rooks, bishop, knight and five pawns around move 20-25 was clearly better for white. A few exchanges and subtle maneuvers later on, white after the first time control appeared close to winning with queen, rook, bishop and six pawns against queen, rook, knight and six pawns, much because black still had the more airy king.

Vovk as usual defended stubbornly, and Urkedal spent a lot of time without finding any winning plan between move 40 and 60.

Sacrificing the f4-pawn to bring in the bishop for a kingside attack finally was a promising plan, and a few moves later black's defense collapsed as he overlooked a tactical 65.Rxb7! As Vovk more or less in desperation threw out a pawn sacrifice with 65.--- g3+!?, Urkedal however underestimated the dangers and took back with the pawn instead of the bishop. Following this Vovk found a tactical resource and escaped into an endgame with rook and one pawn versus bishop and four pawns. It was lost, but still worth a try with Urkedal running short of time for the game.

With passed pawns on g5 and h5, Urkedal might have sacrificed his bishop too early on the last black pawn. He still reached an easily won position with four pawns against rook, after Vovk took back with the rook instead of the king.

In the horror final countdown, Vovk having a few minutes and Urkedal less than half a minute left on the clock, white complicated the win further and after 86 moves could not get anything better than queen versus rook without pawns. Realizing he would need much more than his remaining six seconds to win this, Urkedal after 86 moves offered a draw - which was sportily accepted (following a silent minute in search of a miracle win).



GM Andriy Vovk vs GM Frode Urkedal

Fourth rated GM Evgeny Postny (2612) of Israel became the only player on the top boards to win this round, and consequently the only player in this group to reach 3/3.

White against slightly lower rated GM Evgeny Vorobiov (2565), Postny played for a win in a modest Queen's Gambit Accepted. He was rewarded with a jackpot, as white following too slow play from black reached a clearly better isolated pawn position.

Something went astray for so far so solid Vorobiov this black game, as white developed a strong initiative while black never found the time to develop his knight on b8.

Snatching a pawn at a4 obviously was asking for too much without development. After intervening on c8 with his rook, white went on to win decisive material and the game before 25 moves.



GM Evgeny Postny vs GM Evgeny Vorobiov (front) and WGM Marsel Efroimsky vs GM Maxim Turov (back)

Obviously enjoying the Fagernes tournaments a lot, WGM Marsel Efroimsky (2287) made another game surprise with a white draw against GM Maxim Turov (2584) today.

The game true enough was a good game of chess more than an exciting game of chess.

Within the first 17 moves, the players from a closed and fairly balanced Sicilian made natural exchanges all the way into a drawish double rook endgame with all pawns still on board.

Draw agreed on black's suggestion just before 40 moves, as the single rook endgame also proved too balanced and closed.

On the fourth board, second rated GM Evgeny Alekseev (2649) of course was the odds one favorite as white against Norwegian junior Abyl Kizatbay (2108). The GM made a modest start, placing a pawn on c4 in his first move and then five other pawns on the third rank later in the opening. Black developed his pieces to natural squares and had a fair position after 10 moves, but failed to come up with a defense plan or a counterattack plan as white with 12.g4! suddenly accelerated on the kingside. While black did nothing white methodically marched on with his kingside pawns, and when black finally did something his counterstrike with 24... e5? turned out just to give white a free hand on the kingside after 25.f5. 1-0 ten moves later on as white was about to start a mating attack in the h-file, while black's pieces still were paralyzed onlookers on the queenside.

The IM duel between Oslo teammates Timofey Galinsky (2378) and Lars Oskar Hauge (2472) surprisingly started with a boring and symmetric French Exchange line, in which white's e-file control gave him a slight plus from the opening. White established a space advantage with c4-c5, although black still looked solid around move 20-25.

Black's double g-pawns first was considered a minor detail, but turned out to be important as white suddenly sacrificed his c-pawn and switched to a direct kingside attack with 26.Ng5 and 27.Qh4. Taking the first pawn on c5 was sound from a black point of view. The second pawn snatched at b2 however truly was a testimony pawn, as 29.Nxf7! followed by 30.Qe7 within two moves gave white a killing attack against the king on g8.

The game lasted 20 more moves, but Hauge's tactical defenses all were cramps and white had four pawns more in the queen endgame.



FM Mads Vestby-Ellingsen vs IM Erlend Mikalsen

IM Erlend Mikalsen (2397) truly has recovered from his nearly fatal first round, and today won a strong black game against FM Mads Vestby-Ellingsen (2333). Black equalized for free from a Queen's Indian Fianchetto line, and took over the initiative by placing his knight on e4 after 14 moves. 17.Bxe4?! probably was the first serious mistake from white, as black soon won back the pawn at d4 with a strong dark square dominance.

Vestby-Ellingsen for a while defended well, and appeared close to a draw in the endgame with two rooks, one bishop and five pawns on each side after 28 moves. Trading his e5-pawn for the black pawn at b6 however resulted in bankruptcy for white, as his bishop and rook in the b-file ran into a pin which won an exchange for black. Later Vestby-Ellingsen again defended well, but Mikalsen in an inspired mood had no problems advancing his passed c-pawn and win the game.

Morten Andersen (2223) following yesterday's success gave his Catalan another try, when he today got the chance to play white against GM Erik Blomqvist (2496). The Swedish GM however did fine with a solid closed set up, and came better as white exchanged on d5. The position still was only slightly better when white played the positionally dubious 17.e4? with the idea of making a tactical blunder with 18.Nxe4? Blomqvist efficiently played 18...f5!, forking white's knights on e4 and g4. Although black had to play with a king on h6 for some moves, he had no problems defending his extra piece, and Andersen resigned after 28 moves in a depressive position.



GM Benjamin Arvola Notkevich vs FM Andre Nielsen

GM Benjamin Arvola Notkevich (2495) today played white against his former Alta teammate FM Andre Nielsen (2201). True to his ambitious nature Notkevich went for a thematic pawn sacrifice on d5 in a Queen's Indian opening. It gave a jackpot as black fatally weakened his kingside with 13...g6?, and Nielsen anyway was in trouble when he three moves later on blundered with 16...Bc8? – allowing 17.Qh6! followed by Ng5 with a knockout attack.

IM Erik Santarius (2411) as white against Pål Røyset (2167) got some advantage from his Catalan opening, since white's space advantage following the center pawn on e5 was more important than the black pair of bishops.

Røyset however came up with some counter play in the d-file later on. Although white came slightly better after exchanging off the queens, he still had a long and thorny road to a win after 30 moves.

White however improved his position further by exchanging off one knight and found an active position for his rook on c6.

Hence the endgame with rook, knight and six pawns versus rook, bishop and six pawns after 40 moves was clearly better for him. Røyset in the fifth hour for a long time defended well, and appeared close to a draw as he succeeded exchanging the second last queenside pawns. White still kept a pressure as his knight had two strong outposts at d6 and f6.

Røyset after 55 moves found a tricky way to exchange the rooks. The drawback however was that he afterwards found himself caught in a totally lost minor piece endgame.



IM Erik Santarius - Pål Røyset

Noam Vitenberg (2203) as white against IM Sebastian Mihajlov (2361) entered a symmetric King's Indian exchange line not considered critical by opening theory. After queens were exchanged black sacrificed his pawn at e5 to play for activity. White made a safe decision when he returned the pawn, reaching an about balanced rook and knight endgame. As the players were anyway about to run out of pawns, they after 46 moves agreed a draw

The very young lions Jens Evang Ingebretsen (2300) and Elham Abdrlauf (2123) meanwhile went for an unbalanced and Owen-like English opening with 1.c4 b6.

White first had some advantage partly due to his center pawns at d5 and e4, and partly because black's bishop at c5 was a bit exposed. Black however hit back and took over the initiative, redirecting his bishop to b4 and occupying the important e5 square with his knight. 16.--- g5?! might have been a bit too weakening, but still worked out well as white misplaced his bishop on c4, allowing Bc5 and b5 with a very strong initiative for black.

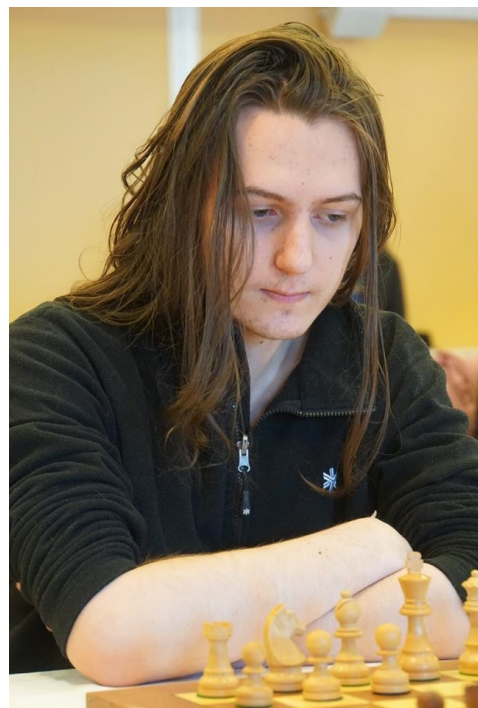
Following this black anyway was much better when white collapsed with 30.Qf3?, inviting a queen exchange on poor conditions. Black efficiently exchanged queens on f3, then exchanged his knight on h5 for the bishop on g3 - and then put his rook on h2 with a winning attack.

Andreas Skotheim (2182) and FM Anders Hobber (2295) transposed from 1.c4 c6 into a Caro Kann Panno opening line.

The isolated pawn position probably was fine for black, but 14.Bg5-c1? still was a strange retreat as black later had a very pleasant pressure against white's hanging pawns on c3 and d4.

Black swung his queen and rook around for a kingside attack and was close to winning as he after 27 moves picked up a pawn on f4.

Black probably should have found something better than a rook endgame with an extra pawn, but still won it after 59 moves with reasonable control.



Andreas Skotheim

The game between Aleksander Lindbøl (2139) and Olli Sisättö (2276) saw the first Alekhine opening of this GM group, but it did not last long. White exchanged his e5-pawn at d6, but still got a space advantage after playing both d4-d5 and b4-b5. Following this white probably was slightly better when a draw was agreed by a repetition of knight moves after 21 moves.



Edit Machlik vs IM Eirik Gullaksen

Edit Machlik (2109) as white against IM Eirik Gullaksen (2324) declined a Benkö Gambit, and instead claimed a slight positional edge due to her pawn on d5 and outpost on c6. White had some advantage after placing her knight on c6 after 26 moves, but chickened out with a queen exchange as black pretended to have some chances for a kingside attack. Without queens black came slightly better, as the d5 pawn now became a target.

Again running short of time for the first time control, Edit Machlik had lost the d5-pawn and anyway was in a difficult endgame when she at move 40 blundered a piece and resigned.

The teenager battle between FM Trygve Dahl (2275) and Isha Sharma (1989) started up as a relatively slow closed Sicilian, but later turned into a rare tactical mess. White came better from the opening after establishing a center advantage with d5 and e4 versus d6 and e5. Then white however became too eager to trap the black queen - too late realizing that black would get one rook and two minor pieces for her majesty...

White understandably tried to complicate by a queenside attack, sacrificing even more material. Consequently after 25 moves the game had a very rare material situation, in which black had four minor pieces for a queen. Although black had much more wood, the position remained messy as white had a disturbing passed pawn on d6, while one of black's minor pieces was a knight captured behind the white pawns at g2.

White however took back a rook on a8 in a wrong way, after which black could hit out her knight from g2 and reach an easy won (but still highly original and entertaining) endgame with four minor pieces and three pawns versus queen and two pawns.

Despite currently rated below 2000, Isha Sharma has made two WIM-norms and is in the run for a third one following this surprise win.



Isha Sharma

FM Richard Bjerke (2156) versus Håkon Bentsen (2155) was an Accepted Queen's Gambit, reaching a fairly balanced isolated pawn position which was agreed drawn upon white's suggestion after 14 moves. No further comments needed.



Sigve Hølleland

Sigve Hølleland (2024) and FM Daniel Nordquelle (2264) on the other hand played hard for four hours.

White apparently had the much better preparation for this Dutch opening, as black got an awkward king on f8 and struggled to find positions for his pieces.

After 16 moves white's rook had intervened on c7 with a winning attacking position. Following a number of tactical exchanges white came two pawns up in the rooks and minor piece endgame.

As black finally activated his pieces, white still had some technical problems to solve with rook, bishop and seven pawns versus rook, knight and four pawns after 31 moves. While both players ran seriously short of time for the first time control, further tactical complications followed.

White actually blundered a piece at move 38, but it was too late and too little for black, as the remaining endgame

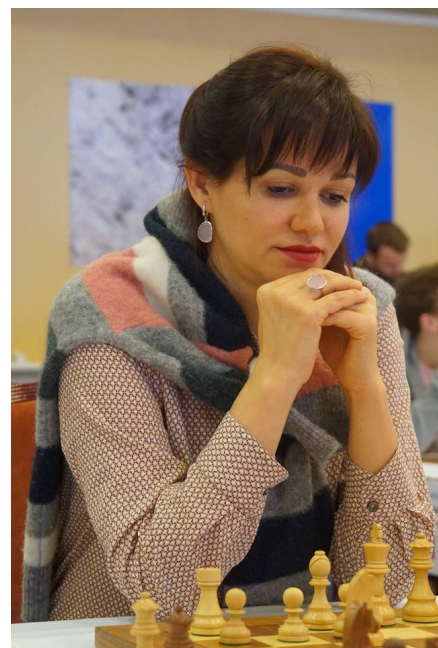
with five pawns versus knight and one pawn was a self-explanatory win.

Nordquelle at 0/3 is definitely out of the IM norm race, while Hølleland at 1.5/3 definitely qualifies as a surprise man.

WGM Olga Dolzhikova (2231) versus Sigurd Loe Grøver (2020) apparently was another intense tactical battle won by the lower rated player.

In reality it was however just a blunder based upon an inadequate opening preparation: Dolzhikova entered a tactical French Advance line in which black sacrifices a knight to get a draw by repetition of checks, but suddenly unwilling to accept the draw she instead ran into a decisive attack with 14.Kf2?? Bc5+ 15.Kg3.

Grøver could hardly believe his own eyes, but still completed the attack in great style – mating the white king on h3 with 21.--- e5+!



WGM Olga Dolzhikova

Frode Lillevold (2076) and Sander Fuglestein (2000) meanwhile discussed a Queen's Gambit Tartakower line, known as an about balanced hanging pawns position if black takes back with the pawn after 16.dxc5. As black instead took with the knight, the conclusion became instead an isolated pawn position considered slightly better for white. Black instructively equalized the position by realizing d5-d4 to exchange the isolated pawn. The position with queen, rook, bishop and five pawns on each side after 25 moves looked very well balanced. Still it was a dynamic and tactically loaded position. White could try to snatch a pawn with 26.Rxa7!?, but definitely overstretched as he continued with 27.Qd7??. White had no threats on his seventh rank, while black got decisive threats on his eight rank after the ice cold reply 27... Rc1!. White formally lost on time at move 31, but the clock at that stage made no practical difference as black anyway was about to win a ton of material.



WFM Anita Grønnestad vs Monika Machlik

WFM Anita Grønnestad (1954) and Monika Machlik (2059) both had a double pole out in the first two rounds, but still played bravely for a win in the third. While white tried to do a sound English Fianchetto set up, black went her own way early with 3... a6 followed by 4... b5. 6... Nxd5?!

> 7.cxd5 Qf6 later was creative, but probably dubious as white came better after returning the piece with 8.Nc3.

Although black hung on to an extra pawn white got a very strong initiative, and the advantage was obvious after she won back the pawn at c5 in move 21.

Black would have had a long uphill walk if white had moved the knight first one step backward with 23.Ne4! and then two steps forward with 24.Nd6.

Instead 23.Qg4? was a blunder losing the iron grip, as black could (and did) win a pawn with a tactical Nxe5. Although she (of course) ran seriously short of time again, Monika Machlik this time handled both the clock and the pieces very well later on, and gradually outplayed Grønnestad in the queen and bishop endgame. 0-1 after 47 moves due to mate in a corner, but then black anyway was three pawns up.

GM-B (ROUND ROBIN)

Both the top rated GMs had a much more shaky third round, but in the end GM Aron Greenfeld recovered from a terrible opening to save a difficult endgame against IM Valeryi Kazakovskiy, while GM Eduardas Rozentalis happily accepted a draw offer in a terrible endgame against Gunnar Lund. The GM norm candidates still have a hard time to win games in GM B, but IM Kristian Stuvik Holm is nearly back on the track as he today won in a nice style against FM Andreas Garberg Tryggestad.

Greenfeld and Rozentalis following this are sharing the lead at 2.5/3, half a point ahead of Holm. IM Tor Fredrik Kaasen is back on 50 % after a convincing win against still stumbling GM Felix Levin, while FM Alex Betaneli remains on 50 % following a long draw against IM Oskar von Bahr.



Gunnar Lund vs GM Eduardas Rozentalis

Gunnar Lund (2271) as white against GM Eduardas Rozentalis (2568) first went for a slow London system, but then accelerated with e4 and got a space advantage in a very closed position.

Although a pair of bishops was not much of a help in the short run, black probably was better when he after 21 moves succeeded exchanging white's bishop on f3 for a knight. Opening the kingside with 21... f5?! 22.exf6 e.p. however

turned out to be a serious misunderstanding, as white within a few moves got a kingside attack and despite black's bishop dominated on the dark squares.

White's position became more or less winning as he a few moves later won the backward black pawn on e6. Although Rozentalis escaped immediate mating dangers by a tactical queen exchange, the remaining endgame with rook, bishop, knight and seven pawns against rook, bishop, knight and six pawns was a study in chess suffering. Basically Lund at least after move 20 in this game played excellent - until he after the first time control suddenly made a draw by repetition, instead of playing on with the better pieces and a strong passed pawn on d5. Computer evaluation of +4 in the final position might be too much from a human perspective, but still white for sure was close to winning.

16 year old Lund at 1.5/3 is on schedule for his first IM-norm, but for sure with somewhat mixed feelings as the final positions were one safe advantage, one unclear advantage and one winning. Rozentalis of course used his chance to pull the breaks and is still sharing the lead at 2.5/3.



GM Alon Greenfeld vs IM Valeriy Kazakovskiy

GM Alon Greenfeld (2514) versus IM Valeriy Kazakovskiy (2440) was an English Defense in which white played much too tame, hence black could do e5-e4 with a space advantage. The situation appeared disastrous from a white point of view as black before 15 moves could take the important d4 pawn with a clear advantage. Greenfeld fought on and succeeded to get some counter play in the b-file.

Following some inaccuracies from black, white won back the pawn on e4.

Black still had an initiative from the start of the endgame with two rooks, bishop and five pawns on each side. The rook endgame on the other hand for sure was drawish, and white even held an extra pawn for a few moves before it all dried out after the first time control. 18 year old Kazakovskiy should have used this golden chance better to be in the norm run, while 54 year old Greenfeld at +2 is still sharing the lead.

IM Kristian Stuvik Holm (2467) on his third attempt got the first game win today, meaning that FM Andreas Garberg Tryggestad (2305) had to accept his first loss.

From an English opening the game transposed into some kind of Grünfeld-Indian, in which black exchanged his bishop for a knight on f3.

Although white's kingside pawn structure was weakened, his center advantage combined with the pair of bishops and the c-file gave him a pleasant advantage.

Holm in an inspired mood increased the pressure by instructive means. Well before 40 moves he reached a rooks and bishop endgame in which the passed d-pawn decided, as black's bishop on g7 was locked out of everything.



IM Kristian Stuvik Holm



IM Tor Fredrik Kaasen vs GM Felix Levin

IM Tor Fredrik Kaasen (2385) also got his first win on the third attempt. This meaning that GM Felix Levin (2476) had his third loss on three attempts, and so far seems completely out of order.

White came slightly better from a closed Ruy Lopez opening, and this time the Nf5 maneuver worked out very well as the pair of bishops after Bxf5 exf5 came to dominate the open position. As white started a direct

kingside attack, black at move 27 exchanged off the queens. It did not help much as white's active pieces completely dominated the remaining endgame with two rooks, bishop and six pawns against two rooks, knight and six pawns. In a probably excellent game from a white point of view, Kaasen picked up two loose pawns with Re7-a7xa5xd5, and without any problems completed the win before the first time control.

FM Alexander Betaneli (2235) as white against IM Oskar von Bahr (2404) went for a closed and solid Botvinnik set-up from an English opening. When the position gradually opened in between move 10 and 20, white got an initiative after exchanging first the d-pawns with d4 and then the c-pawns with c5.

Sacrificing the loose a4-pawn was an interesting choice, as white's pair of bishops later dominated the board. White for sure had several promising continuations around move 20-30, but found nothing better than winning back the pawn to reach a drawish endgame with rook, bishop and four pawns versus rook, knight and four pawns.

As white gave himself a pawn weakness by playing an overambitious e6 he in the end succeeded to be a pawn down, but still not to lose the game – as the final endgame with bishop and pawn versus knight and two pawns was a deadlock draw.

Bahr has had a troublesome start on this tournament, and now must win all the remaining games to copy his GM-norm from last year.

Betaneli at 1.5/3 is on schedule for a sensational IM-norm.

OPEN GROUP (SWISS)

First half of the double round was remarkably hard-fought also in the Open. As all the top five boards got a winner, five players are now sharing the lead at 3/3. This group includes only one player rated within top five, and overall the tournament seems very open at least within the top 12-15 rated players.

Fourth rated Jonas Hodneland Rasmussen (1993) still defends the first board in this Open, today demonstrating a patient black win in an interesting rooks and opposite colored bishop endgame against Ingvar Gundersen (1896).



Afras Mansoor vs Per Fredrik Holand (front) and Jonas H. Rasmussen vs Ingvar Gundersen (back)

Second board also was a long and hard fought endgame, and also gave a win for black - as 15 year old Afras Mansoor (1965) due to his guarded passed pawn on d3 could realize his rook endgame advantage against Per Fredrik Holand (1849).

Third board on the other hand was done within 23 moves with a win for white: Øyvind Ukkelberg (1939) following an aggressive attack anyway was a pawn up with the much better position when his opponent Bjørn Robert Unhjem (1847) blundered a rook and resigned.

No draws on the top five boards today as tournament musician Alf W. Lundberg (1932) delivered a great sound as black against Karim Ali (1838), while the new Kirkenes player Omer Amir Akdag (1901) violently mated the king of eight year old Eric Jiahao Ji (1666) in the h-file just before 40 moves.



Omer Amir Akdag vs Eric Jiahao Ji

Rasmussen, Mansoor, Ukkelberg, Lundberg and Akdag following this are sharing first place at an outstanding 3/3, half a point ahead of the young lions Sondre Lillestøl Melaa (1991), Shazil Shehzad (2024) and Gunnar Dale (1903) all at 2.5/3.

The big group of 24 players at 2.0/3 includes first rated Henrik Øie Løbersli (2102) and second rated Jo Kristian Løberg (2045), meaning both still have the top boards within sight.

The lower boards saw several surprising draws, while the only really surprising win was 16 year old Sigurd Lauvås Gaure (1584) defeating Tiberiu Orban (1817) with the black pieces.

All photos by Anniken Vestby