

Fagernes Chess International 2019

THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT

6



GM-A

Round 6 again was a very hard-fought one in the GM-A, and white in the end won three out of the first four boards. Player number 1 Anton Demchenko again looked very impressive as he outplayed so far solid GM Frode Urkedal.

Following this Demchenko again is leading alone – now at 5.0/6. Although IM Timofey Galinsky wasted a won position against GM Andyi Vovk, the title norm candidates overall had a very good round. Norwegian IM Lars Oskar Hauge was today's sensation man, and shares second place with Vovk after winning a strategic masterpiece as white against GM Evgeny Postny.



GM Anton Demchenko vs GM Frode Urkedal

Hard fight on the first board this round: First rated Russian GM Anton Demchenko (2661) as expected played for the full point as white against Norwegian GM Frode Urkedal (2513). Urkedal played hard with a g5-g4 advance in this Italian opening, and hardball tactics started as black instead of moving his knight from f3 attacked black's knight on c6 with 12.b5!. A bunch of tactical exchanges followed, leaving after 20 moves a materially balanced position in which white had a

pleasant initiative. Within a few more moves white mobilized his remaining forces for an attack on the black king at e8. 28.Ra1! more or less decided the game as black's queen on a7 could not take the rook due to 29.Qe7 mate, while the counterblow with 28... Nf4+ lost an exchange and forced a trivial endgame with rook and three pawns versus bishop and three pawns. Demchenko as white again outplayed his GM opponent well within four hours, and very well deserved he is now leading alone at a stunning 5.0/6.



IM Erlend Mikalsen vs GM Evgeny Alekseev

Second board on the other hand became a surprise draw and was not that far from a sensation, as second rated GM Evgeny Alekseev (2649) as black came under some pressure against the unpredictable Norwegian IM Erlend Mikalsen (2397).

In this Kan Sicilian line black established a center advantage with d5-d4, but nothing much more happened on the queenside, while white with f4 and e5 soon had a kingside attack coming up.

Smelling the danger and/or staying true to his strategy about winning white and drawing black games, Alekseev offered a draw which was accepted after 24 moves.

White could well have played on as he was some 40 minutes ahead on the clock and better on the board. But the road to winning chances would have been long and thorny, and a draw against a 2650-GM understandably was too tempting even for Mikalsen.

Mikalsen has improved a lot and is doing very well, but should have won this game to be really in the run for a GM norm.

Third board meeting's Ukrainian duel between GM Andryi Vovk (2616) and IM Timofey Galinsky (2378) was a turbulent five-hour battle, starting as a French Tarrasch line in which white got a pawn on e5 with some advantage before 15 moves. Following various inaccuracies from white, black soon took over the initiative and created all the more problems for white in the key diagonal h1-a8. After 28 moves the diagonal was wide open and white's king in serious danger on h3. Black in turn became too eager when he snatched a pawn at c3 with his queen, as white by sacrificing his bishop on b3 suddenly got dangerous counter play along the diagonal a1-h8.



GM Andryi Vovk vs IM Timofey Galinsky

White after 35 moves had a winning attack against the black king on e8, but the margin was small and the winning advantage jumped back and forth several times. Black at this stage was winning most of the time, and having nine minutes left for move 40 he missed two flashy wins with 40.--- Bg2+! or 40.--- Bxh4! (plus a third and more boring one with 40.--- Bf8!). As black missed his chances before the time control, a positionally complex and tactically loaded position came on the board.

Black was a pawn up with queen, two rooks, bishop and five pawns against queen, two rooks, bishop and four pawns, but the bishops had opposite colors and both kings were in the danger zone. Black was obviously better as he succeeded exchanging queens and advance a passed a-pawn, but white set his kingside pawn majority in motion and both kings still were in danger. After 60 moves black had two pawns more, but white still had taken over the advantage as he had the more active pieces and a dangerous passed pawn on g5. Black then blundered in a still complex position, entering a tactical line which ended with an extra bishop and a safe win for white.

Vovk still walks around on water and now shares second place at 4.5/6, while Galinsky down at 3.5/6 lags behind schedule for a GM-norm following this wasted chance. It was a big one.



IM Lars Oskar Hauge vs GM Evgeny Postny

IM Lars Oskar Hauge (2472) on the other hand is fully in the run for a GM norm as he today won an inspired game against GM Evgeny Postny (2612).

Hauge after this white game jokingly remarked that “the opening variation I played today is not a good one, but hopefully I played fairly well after I equalized”. Black indeed was fine if not just better from the opening, some rare London system line in which plays c4 instead of c3, but has to place his king

awkwardly on d1. Around move 15 white had stabilized his position with the king not that misplaced on e2. As queens were exchanged a few moves later on, the active king became a plus factor.

White came better at latest as he after 28 moves intervened on c7 with his rook, and suddenly got a clear advantage as black chose a much too passive set-up with Rb8.

Hauge methodically increased the pressure by marching on with his queenside pawns, and black’s position was more or less paralyzed when he just before the first time control went for a dubious pawn sacrifice.

Hauge efficiently cashed in two pawns without giving up his initiative, and as black tried to complicate with a piece sacrifice white coolly returned the piece to reach a totally win minor piece endgame with two extra pawns.

Postny has had unusual problems with his black openings this tournament, while Hauge today demonstrated his strategic strength.

Maxim Turov (2584) versus Evgeny Romanov (2576) was a Russian GM duel which not unexpectedly was drawn early in the second hour, by the way after 14 not too exciting moves in a Catalan. Following this both players are still in the fight for top three, but both now lag a full point behind top one.

GM Erik Blomqvist (2496) first came slightly better as white against FM Mads Vestby-Ellingsen (2333) in a positional Sicilian Alapin line. White's knight on e5 and chances for a kingside attack first appeared more important than black's pair of bishops, but this gradually changed as Blomqvist spent a lot of time without finding any better plan than exchanging more pieces. Black was slightly better in the double minor piece endgame. Still of course having a long road to any winning chances and being black against a GM, the 16 year old was satisfied with a four-hour draw.



GM Erik Blomqvist vs FM Mads Vestby-Ellingsen

Vestby-Ellingsen following this remained ahead of schedule for his second IM-norm, but probably he still needs 2.0/3 to make it.



Olli Sisättö vs GM Benjamin Arvola Notkevich

Overall this was a very good round for the title norm candidates (in the GM-A, that is). A new one suddenly entered the scene as the so far low-profile Finn player Olli Sisättö (2276) today won his white game against GM Benjamin Arvola Notkevich (2495)!

White did not get much (if any) advantage from this Nimzo-Indian line with 4.Nf3, but he still came a pawn up as Notkevich sacrificed to get a c-file pressure and slightly more active pieces.

Sisättö returned the pawn at c3 to exchange off the rooks, and after 24 moves the players already had reached a drawish endgame with queen, knight and five pawns on each side. White got a small advantage following some inaccuracies from black around moves 26-29 – and then suddenly a win as black made a grave tactical blunder with 29.--- Ke7??, stumbling into 30.Nc6+ with a winning attack! White could have won just by taking black's knight on d7 after 30.--- Kf6, but took his time and found a mate in six starting with 31.Qd6+!. Notkevich following this collapse seems more or less out of the fight for top three, while Sisättö is in the run for an IM-norm.



FM André Nielsen vs IM Erik Santarius

Another sensation revealing another possible IM norm candidate came some half an hour later on board eight, as FM André Nielsen (2201) won in convincing style as white against IM Erik Santarius (2411).

White played for a win by castling long in a messy Sicilian Najdorf duel, and was rewarded as black failed to find any safe haven for his king. After 25 moves black felt forced to castle long for the price of three pawns. Still having the more active pieces,

Nielsen later took the safe road to a won minor piece endgame.

16 year old Nielsen has recovered from a slow opening and at 4.0/6 is also in the IM-norm run. But like Sisattö he still needs a strong spurt - and will be black against a GM tomorrow.

IM Eirik Gullaksen (2324) and WGM Marsel Efroimsky (2287) meanwhile made a sound 30 moves draw. Black appeared healthy from this solid Queen's Gambit opening. The middle game suddenly became more interesting as white accepted an isolated pawn at d4 to destroy black's kingside pawn structure, while black accepted to destroy her kingside pawn structure to get the pair of bishops. The situation soon calmed down as white found nothing better than exchanging queens on g5, repairing the black pawn structure with a marginal plus for white. Draw agreed on white's suggestion after 31 moves, as the players were about to enter a dead drawn endgame with opposite colored bishops and five pawns on each side.

Tenth board had a winner and it was another surprising one, as Pål Røyset (2167) after 71 moves completed another endgame win against FM Anders Hobber (2295). Five and a half hours earlier on, the opening was a Scandinavian with a slightly eccentric black bishop on e6. White and his more active bishops got a pleasant middle game initiative, and just before 40 moves cashed in two black queenside pawns. The endgame with queen, bishop, knight and six pawns against queen, two bishops and four pawns later for sure was won, and black's position anyway was hopeless when he went for a dubious piece sacrifice.



Pål Røyset vs FM Anders Hobber

Røyset also at 4.0/6 has a score well above expected, but he probably needs another win in round seven really to be in the norm run.



GM Evgeny Voriobov vs Isha Sharma

Russian GM Evgeny Voriobov has had a demanding first half of his first Fagernes tournament, but today hit back with a convincing win as white against WIM-candidate Isha Sharma (1989) of India. White came better from a strange relative of a King's Indian opening, in which black played d6 followed by g6 and b6 within the first five moves. A dominating pawn on d5 combined with e-file pressure gave white space and initiative, and black's position more or

less collapsed as she after 27 moves lost her key pawn on e7. Black went for a kingside counterattack afterwards, but as it turned out to weaken black's king more than white, it all ended with a mating attack against black's king in the queen and rook endgame just after the first time control.

Sharma's sum of points did not increase today, but as her ELO average increased a lot she is still in the run for her third WIM-norm.

IM Sebastian Mihajlov (2361) has not had his best tournament so far, but repaired somewhat by an inspired win as white against veteran FM Richard Bjerke (2156) today. White came clearly better from this Nimzo-Indian Sämisch line, as he got the help needed to hang on an extra pawn at c5. Having intervened on the b6 outpost with his rook, white true enough gave away most of his advantage as he played the tricky 22.Rxe6?! instead of the simple and strong 22.Rxb7!. Black in turn helpfully exchanged off the queens a few moves later on, after which white won a pawn on e5 and soon had a won rooks and knight endgame.

The game turned acrobatic as black just before the first time control succeeded to activate his rooks and get some counter play against white's king.

Tactically gifted Mihajlov within a few moves however demonstrated that his attack (including the acrobatic king!) was the much more dangerous one.



IM Sebastian Mihajlov

Many decided games and many underdog wins were seen in this GM-A today. Abyl Kizatbay (2108) delivered another one as he won a tactical battle against Jens Evang Ingebretsen (2300). The opening was a Scotch Gambit line in which black came better after returning the pawn. So far so good from an Ingebretsen point of view, but sacrificing two pieces for a rook with 15.--- Bb5? 16.Nxc3 Bxf1 17.Nxf1 was a very strange decision black never succeeded justifying later on.

Although black within a few moves won a pawn on e5, white's pair of knights soon outnumbered black's rook in a rather closed position. With Kizatbay running short of time Ingebretsen understandably tried to get counter play against white's king with a sacrifice. It was just a bluff, and Kizatbay safely reached move 40 with two knights more.



FM Trygve Dahl vs Elham Abdrlauf

The meeting between Elham Abdrlauf (2123) and FM Trygve Dahl (2275) probably was the game of today least likely to be drawn (except possibly for some perpetual check).

The opening was an unbalanced Sicilian Taimanov line, in which white accelerated on the kingside with g4-g5 well before ten moves. It was probably unsound, and black first came a pawn up with a clear advantage.

Matters turned complicated as black unforced sacrificed an exchange on d8, and white came

better as he was allowed to take a pawn on d5 after 30 moves. Black's idea probably was a kingside counterattack with 30.--- Qf5?, which however turned out to blunder a piece after 31.Nxe7! (following some further tactics). Later playing with a bishop extra, Abdrlauf soon after the first time control demonstrated the more dangerous attack as well.

FM Daniel Nordquelle (2264) versus Noam Vitenberg (2203) was another highly entertaining teenager battle also won by the lower rated player in the end.

White had more space and some advantage from this Caro-Kann Advance line. Both players however spent more and more time while the position became more and more messy. White went for a kingside attack and hit a pawn on h5, while black snatched a pawn at b2 with his queen and intervened on c3 with his rook. Black made the better position decisions and calculations in the critical fourth hour and after taking three pawns he sacrificed an exchange to win by a direct attack against white's king.



FM Daniel Nordquelle vs Noam Vitenberg



Monika Machlik vs WGM Olga Dolzhikova

Monika Machlik (2059) on the other hand took a safer path as white against WGM Olga Dolzhikova (2231), and even was reported ahead on the clock at some stage. Dolzhikova surprisingly went for a Budapest Gambit, but as white did not blunder a smothered mate she after returning the gambit pawn kept an edge due to her pair of bishops. Black equalized as she got the chance to exchange her knight for white's dark squared bishops, and later both players made sensible moves into a drawn bishop endgame. Monika Machlik is still in the run for a WIM-norm performance, but will need both more foreign opponents and more points to make it.

Today's draw for Håkon Bentsen (2155) was against Sigve Hølleland (2024), and again came from a long Sicilian Sveshnikov line. As his knight on d5 was better than any of the black bishops, and as black's pawn on a5 was more vulnerable than the white pawn on b2, white got a pleasant advantage in this middle game. After winning the a-pawn white for some moves was a pawn up, although black succeeded getting counter play and win back the pawn at e4.

The endgame with two rooks, one bishop and five pawns on each side after 34 moves was balanced and probably drawish, especially taking into account the opposite colored bishops. Still 34.--- Rxc3? was a dubious move to offer a draw with, as white could then have exchanged one set of rooks and take back the pawn on e4 with a clear advantage in the remaining rook and bishop endgame. Bentsen accepted anyway.

Our Danish friend Morten Andersen (2223) of course was involved in another Catalan opening duel, this time as black against Andreas Skotheim (2182). Black this time was allowed to hang on his extra pawn at c4, and got some advantage although white's center gave him some compensation. After white missed some chances to get full compensation for the pawn he decided to sacrifice an exchange as well. The compensation turned out to be dubious, as black could immediately exchange one of the potentially disturbing white bishops. Somewhat disillusioned Skotheim helpfully exchanged off the queens as well, and soon drifted into a depressive endgame with rook, bishop and five pawns against two rooks and four pawns. Andersen might have played inaccurately in the opening stage of this endgame. He later however demonstrated good endgame understanding, and anyway was winning when white stumbled into a lost pawn endgame with the apparently elegant 44.b5?.

Frode Lillevold (2076) versus Aleksander Lindbøl (2139) was a Dutch Fianchetto transposing into some kind of heavyweight Stonewall position, in which the position for a long time remained closed and chances about equal. White had space advantage with pawns on e5 and c5, but making use of it looked more or less impossible. Then suddenly around move 25 white got a clear advantage, since black very helpfully opened the a-file for him.

Lillevold first played his hand excellent, taking over the a-file on the queenside and then finding a tricky e4-break to open the kingside as well.

After 37 moves white had a totally winning position, but again short of time he lost the grip in one move with 38.Nxf5?? - probably overlooking that black after Nxf5 39.Lxf5 had a tactical hit with 39.--- Rxc3+!. Lindbøl efficiently used his chance and came two pawns up, but still had a hard time winning because of the opposite colored bishop. As black had to give back the extra pawns the bishop endgame with two pawns on each side reportedly first was a draw. Black however had the more advanced pawns and in fact was totally winning when he offered a draw after 56 moves (by the way gently although not clever done, as he had 30 minutes against 1 on the clock). All taken together, I guess somehow a draw was a well-deserved outcome of this game.

Sigurd Loe Grøver (2020) versus Sander Fuglestein (2000) started as a fairly balanced Caro-Kann isolated pawn position. After white's d4 pawn became an e5-pawn, a tense middle game struggle followed. As both players missed some chances for a lasting advantage, an about balanced position with queen, rook, bishop and six pawns came on board after 30 moves. Bishops were opposite colored, favoring the attacking player, and the game definitely turned in favor of white as black weakened his kingside with 31.--- g6?. Grøver instructively hit it with h5 immediately, and although black could exchange the rooks white soon had a decisive kingside attack in the queen and bishop endgame – with the black bishop left offside on b5.

WFM Anita Grønnestad (1954) requested a walk over draw before round 6, and so Edit Machlik (2109) had to accept a walk over win. Both will be back fit for fight in round 7.

GM-B (ROUND ROBIN)

“The problem in this group is that everyone defeats everyone – apart from Greenfeld”, one of the GM B players remarked today. GM Alon Greenfeld is at 5.0/6 following today’s patient win against FM Alexander Betaneli, leading with a remarkable 1.5 points margin three rounds before the prizegiving.

The two other GMs recovered somewhat as Eduardas Rozentalis won against Oskar von Bahr and Felix Levin won against Andreas Garberg Tryggestad.

Meanwhile the last theoretical chance for GM-norms disappeared as IM Kristian Stuvik Holm lost against Tor Fredrik Kaasen, while IM Sergei Kazakovskiy despite an extra pawn failed to win against Gunnar Lund.

Rozentalis, Holm, Kaasen and Kazakovskiy share second place at 3.5/6. Remaining chances for IM-norms are Lund making 2.5/3 and Tryggestad making 3.0/3 from now on.



GM Alon Greenfeld vs FM Alexander Betaneli

The hegemon of this closed GM-group the day after his 55th birthday (Congratulations, by the way!) still was GM Alon Greenfeld (2514) of Israel. His opponent FM Alexander Betaneli (2235) probably had a fine position for the first few moves after the opening transposed from an English Fianchetto into even another Catalan.

Still Greenfeld this time was not clearly worse from the white opening, and he kept an initiative from the early middle game all into the endgame.

26.--- f5? was a way too dramatic solution to black’s problems, as white replied 27.exf6 e.p. and within a few moves won the pawn. At first sight black had some practical chances with queen, rook and five pawns versus queen, rook and four pawns, but as black had the more open king white could force a queen exchange. And as he had a three to one pawn majority on the kingside, the remaining rook endgame was not too difficult for a 2500-GM with an ongoing tournament momentum.



IM Kristian Stuvik Holm vs IM Tor Fredrik Kaasen

IM Kristian Stuvik Holm (2467) needed a win as white against IM Tor Fredrik Kaasen (2385) today to fight for a GM-norm.

The players both started to fianchetto both their bishops in some kind of Reti opening, but white then played c4 and d4 with some more space. Exchanging the dark-squared bishop for a knight on c5 however proved a grave strategic mistake, as black soon activated his pair of bishops and mobilized for a kingside

attack. Kaasen in his best game of the tournament so far efficiently opened the board for the bishops and completed the attack against white's king just after the first time control. Fairly illustrating for this tournament, Kaasen's very strong win today was too little and late to give him any norm chances, but still enough to deprive Holm his last theoretical chance.

Keeping aside Greenfeld, 18 year old IM Valeryi Kazakovskiy (2440) has had the most solid results of this group so far. His allergy against winning games however continued as white against 16 year old Gunnar Lund (2271) today. White got a space advantage from the probably Pirc opening, got a promising kingside attack in the middle game, but failed to find a winning plan. In fact he for one move nearly found a losing plan, at move 30 allowing a strong d3-break. Lund played it one



IM Valeryi Kazakovskiy vs Gunnar Lund

move delayed and with the wrong idea afterwards, hence white again came slightly better in the rook and minor piece endgame. When white finally won a pawn after 52 moves the remaining rook endgame with three against two pawns still was impossible to win – which Kazakovskiy finally admitted some 40 moves later.

Lund is still scoring well above expected and is the best hope for a norm in this group, but it is not a very strong hope as he needs a remarkable spurt with 2.5/3.

First rated GM Eduardas Rozentalis (2568) finally came back on track with a new game win this round, and although the game was considered chaotic he seen in retrospect probably had it all under control.

Following too slow play from IM Oskar von Bahr (2404) in an English Fianchetto opening, black gradually took over the initiative, and around move 15-20 started to attack with c4 on the queenside and f5 on the kingside. Losing his vital d-pawn white hoped for counter play with 24.Bc3, but this backfired as Rozentalis sacrificed a rook on the bishop.

A shaken von Bahr went for a queen exchange, but found himself in a hopeless endgame as black within a few moves had got four pawns for the exchange. The final endgame with six pawns versus bishop and a-pawn is very unusual, but still not very interesting.



FM Andreas Garberg Tryggestad vs GM Felix Levin

GM Felix Levin (2476) seems to have recovered from his nightmare start, and won his second black game in a row today. His play however is still a bit shaky.

His young opponent, FM Andreas Garberg Tryggestad (2305), went for a Ruy Lopez Exchange line and first came slightly better from the opening. After 25 moves Levin allowed white's queen to snatch a pawn on a7,

and went for a kingside attack. Although black had some compensation, white still was slightly better when he blundered a piece with 30.Qa4??, somehow overlooking a tactical b5!. Levin efficiently used his chance and later had no problems completing the win.

OPEN GROUP (SWISS)

Draw on board four in the Open today – but still decided games on all the top three. The results means that our always smiling tournament troubadour Alf W. Lundberg now is leading alone at an outstanding 6.0/6. The first prize no way is given following this, as he has three tough challengers coming up and is only one point ahead of three other players.



Jonas Hodneland Rasmussen vs Alf W. Lundberg

hours were exciting more because of the clocks than because of the board position, as black was a piece up with a killing attack. Rasmussen had seven seconds left on the clock when he made his move 40. “Mate – I believe it is” Lundberg added as he made his move Qh2 with 23 seconds left. In between the guitar concerts Lundberg is continuing his chess success at Fagernes this week, and now is a full point ahead of the challengers.

Lundberg will however get a new tough test tomorrow, as second rated Jo Kristian Løberg (2045) finally qualified for first board after winning another patient and fairly controlled game as white against Omer Amir Akdag (1901) today.

Another hot candidate is the highly talented 13 year old Gunnar Brandshaug Dale (1903), winning a piece in the middle game and realizing it in the end game against the Hell representative Torbjørn Dahl (1917).



Jo Kristian Løberg vs Omer Amir Akdag

Following today's results Løberg and Dale together with Rasmussen is on the run at 5.0/6, not more and not less than one point behind so far so good Lundberg.

Third rated and 12 year old Shazil Shehzad (2024) also moved in closer today, as he instructively won a rook endgame with an extra pawn against underrated grown-up Vidar Gjære (1655).

First rated Henrik Øie Løbersli (2102) still is a potentially dangerous shadow man at 4.0, as he today was lucky to save a draw from a difficult position as white against the steadily increasing Groruddalen guy Haakon Wright (1849).

In short: We can look forward to three very exciting final chapters on the story of this Fagernes Open!



From the Elo-group

All photos by Anniken Vestby