

Fagernes Chess International 2019

THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT

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GM-A

First rated GM Anton Demchenko of Russia narrowly saved his unshared first place today, as he following a chaotic game suddenly had his draw offer accepted in a lost position as black against GM Andriy Vovk of Ukraine.

Demchenko at a still outstanding 5.5/7 now leads half a point ahead of Vovk, GM Evgeny Alekseev and IM Lars Oskar Hauge.

Alekseev today crushed Swedish GM Erik Blomqvist in another impressive white game. Hauge made a controlled draw against Maxim Turov and probably can make a GM-norm if scoring 1.5/2 on the remaining games. This round too saw a few surprising results and we still have many possible title norm candidates before round 8 and 9.



GM Andriy Vovk vs GM Anton Demchenko

GM Andriy Vovk (2616) as white against GM Anton Demchenko (2661) first went for an apparently quiet Italian opening with 3.Bc4, but then suddenly accelerated with 4.Ng5!?. Black hit back with d5 and appeared to have available the better preparation for a razor blade Two Knights Opening, as he made 11 moves in two minutes and then sacrificed his e5-pawn. Vovk not too convincingly spent 45 minutes and then sacrificed his b-pawn instead of taking

the black e-pawn. Tactical complications followed as Demchenko a few moves later played Qd4 followed by Qxa1, winning an exchange but parking his queen on a1 for many moves to come (as it turned out, for the rest of the game).

Reportedly the position first was better for black, at least from a computer point of view. It was however extremely difficult to play even for 2600-humans, and Demchenko now also spent a lot of time without finding any useful plan.

20.--- c5? became a turning point as black for mysterious reasons gave white a second pawn for the exchange, and at the same time gave him a potentially dangerous passed pawn.

White took the pawn, gradually advanced his passed pawn to c7, and was winning when a draw was agreed after black's move 31.

Demchenko considered the position probably lost but still complicated, and threw out a draw offer hoping his opponent would either accept or spend some more minutes thinking on this move. Vovk spent three of his remaining six minutes and then accepted, considering the position to be very promising but still very complicated. 31.--- Re8?! actually was another mistake, hence white could have reached a won position with 32.Qf2 followed by 33.Bxf4 or a direct 32.Bxf4.

Second board meeting between GM Maxim Turov (2584) and IM Lars Oskar Hauge (2472) transposed from English into some kind of closed Grünfeld-Indian, in which chances were more or less balanced after the queens were exchanged on b3 after 10 moves.

Both players continued making sensible exchanges; hence a very drawish rook endgame came on board after 23 moves. White had two

b-pawns, but black had a more exposed isolated pawn at d5. It remains uncertain whether black had to give up the d5-pawn, but anyway it was sufficient as he could exchange down to a drawn endgame with three kingside pawns against two kingside pawns.

Turov gently (and practically I guess) did not try to play on this for some hours more, and a draw was agreed after 44 moves.

Hauge at 5.0/7 probably can make a GM-norm with 1.5/2 from now on, but black against Demchenko tomorrow obviously will be a critical test.



GM Maxim Turov vs IM Lars Oskar Hauge



GM Evgeny Alekseev vs GM Erik Blomqvist

No one was surprised when GM Evgeny Alekseev (2649) played for a win as white against GM Erik Blomqvist (2496), and few became surprised when he won. White got a strong initiative from this Sicilian Taimanov opening, as both the black bishops were rather passive and white had strong pressure against the backward black pawn at d6. Although the game lasted more than three hours on the clock it was all over after 21 moves on the board,

as Blomqvist respectfully resigned when realizing that he could not stop a tactical 22.Rxd6.

GM Evgeny Romanov (2576) was odds one favorite as white against Olli Sisättö (2276), but the Finn again played well above his rating and the game became a tense five-hour draw. The opening was some kind of Tarrasch-like Queens Gambit, leaving white with a three against two majority on the queenside – while black got a pair of bishops and a small center pawn at e6.



GM Evgeny Romanov vs Olli Sisättö

The middle game later balanced all into a queen and opposite colored

bishop endgame, in which white played hard for a win when snatching a pawn on b7 after 32 moves. Although white just before 40 moves had passed pawns on b5 and c6 he still was in danger of losing, as black could block the pawns by his bishop and had a lot of counter play on the dark squares.

After both players passed 40 moves with a small margin on the clock, none of them appeared willing to risk losing on the board. A few moves later the queens were exchanged and a draw agreed in a dead drawn opposite colored bishop endgame.

Following the pairings of round 8, it turned out that Sisättö following his average start should have won this game really to be in the IM-norm run. Everything fine about that, as our new Finn chess friend for now considers himself an FM-candidate. Scoring 1.5-0.5 against GMs in round 6-7 he now has the 2300-border within short reach.



GM Frode Urkedal vs IM Erlend Mikalsen

GM Frode Urkedal (2513) versus IM Erlend Mikalsen (2397) was a game between two roommates, but still became a tense six-hour struggle with a deserved winner.

Chances first appeared balanced in the Queen's Indian Fianchetto opening, but due to his slightly better pawn structure white had a small edge after queens were exchanged at move 19. Black for some moves had a pair of bishops, but black's bishop at b2 and knight at d6 were the

two best minor pieces. White still exchanged off his knight for one of the bishops, leaving a rook and equal colored bishop endgame in which white's d-file control and better pawn structure together gave him a clear advantage.

Black however succeeded finding a good square for his king on d5 and his compact forces appeared close to a draw after 40 moves. Mikalsen however became too optimistic when he at move 46 attacked the white a2-pawn with 46... Re6-a6?. White happily sacrificed the pawn with 47.Re4! followed by Re5+ and Re6, after which black's kingside pawns soon collapsed.

The endgame still was an exciting race in the sixth hour, as white's passed h- and g-pawns were running against black's passed c-pawn. Although again short of time Urkedal appeared to be in control then. After playing with queen and rook versus queen a few moves, he could exchange queens and after 75 moves landed safely in a won rook versus pawn endgame – still with one minute left on the clock.

FM Mads Vestby-Ellingsen (2333) versus Pål Røyset (2167) was a key game for the tournament of both players – and a duel between two team mates from Tromsø SK. Maybe that was the reason why white avoided his usual lines and took back on d4 with his queen in this Open Sicilian. Black got a pair of bishops, but white still was slightly better due to black's potential pawn weakness on c6. Chances became very well balanced as black exchanged his dark squared bishop for a knight on b6, giving up the pair of bishops but repairing the pawn structure.



FM Mads Vestby-Ellingsen vs Pål Røyset

As white played passively for the next moves, black could take over the open d-file with a slight initiative. The following endgame with rook, bishop, knight and six pawns on each side first appeared equal, and due to the opposite colored bishops, also very drawish.

After 48 moves white left a repetition of moves to play for a win. But as he left with a dubious plan, black suddenly could fix the queenside with an advantage.

Exchanging knights in turn probably was a mistaken plan for black if he wanted to play for a win, as white had a blockade defense in the rook and opposite colored bishop endgame.

Draw agreed after 63 moves in a hard-fought Tromsø derby means Vestby-Ellingsen is about on schedule and Røyset still behind schedule for an IM-norm. Both of course are scoring very well above expected.

Vestby-Ellingsen almost certainly will need 1.5/2 for his second IM-norm, while Røyset will need 1.5/2 or 2.0/2 depending on his round 9 opponent.



GM Evgeny Postny vs FM André Z. Nielsen

GM Evgeny Postny (2612) versus FM André Z. Nielsen (2201) was a Queen's Gambit Exchange line, in which Postny succeeded keeping a loose extra pawn at c5 all into a queen and rook endgame.

Nielsen should have excellent drawing chances if eliminating the c5-pawn at move 30, although white of course could have played on for long with queen, rook and three

kingside pawns versus queen, rook and two kingside pawns.

Instead 30.--- Rd1?! followed by 31.--- Qd2? gave white the chance to keep the c5-pawn as well, and two pawns up with the safer king he had no problems winning the queen endgame.

Postny is still below expected score, but again in the fight for top three prizes following this win. Nielsen for sure can still make an IM-norm if winning both his remaining games, and might be able to do with 1.5/2 in case of another very strong opponent in the last round.

WGM Marsel Efroimsky (2287) played her fifth GM as she got white against GM Evgeny Vorobiov (2565) today.

Black probably was fine from a positionally complex Sicilian opening, and as white's chances for a kingside attack disappeared, black was considered better after queens were exchanged at f7 after 25

moves. Although 26... Bxa4 was a nice tactical shot, white

could win back the pawn at a5 and balance the chances. Later they remained about balanced until black under time pressure before 40 moves entered dubious tactics.

In the rook and double minor piece endgame after the time control white had two active bishops and some chances to play for a win, although only three kingside pawns were left on each side. Efroimsky was understandably satisfied to draw another 2500-GM, hence she forced a rook exchange and offered a draw.

Efroimsky is well back above 2300 and needs at worst 1.0/2 to make an IM-norm, but the norm here is not too important as she already has made all the necessary three norms.



GM Evgeny Vorobiov vs WGM Marsel Efroimsky



IM Timofey Galinsky vs IM Sebastian Mihajlov

The Norwegian IM duel between Timofey Galinsky (2378) and IM Sebastian Mihajlov (2361) was drawn after 10 moves in an about balanced Slav Exchange line.

The position in fact was about to become interesting as black while offering a draw exchanged a bishop on f4, breaking the symmetry of the pawn structure. Galinsky however considered his GM norm chances gone following yesterday's disappointing loss,

and Mihajlov understandably was satisfied to draw as black against an IM in a rather boring opening.



IM Eirik T. Gullaksen vs GM Benjamin Arvola Notkevich

GM Benjamin Arvola Notkevich (2495) versus IM Eirik T. Gullaksen (2324) was complex Sicilian Kalashnikov duel, in which white after exchanging three sets of minor pieces put his rook on a7 with a slight initiative. White's chances apparently improved after he by tactics exchanged his d5-pawn for black's h7-pawn, as the black king later was a little exposed. Notkevich of course went for a kingside attack

with g4, but this proved double-edged as the pawn also became an attacking target.

The tide turned as white too optimistically accepted a knight sacrifice on f6, as black suddenly had a lot of counter play after 27.--- Qxg4.

White should have sacrificed back the bishop on b3, as the natural 29.Rg1? ran into a strong queen sacrifice with 29.--- Qxg1+! 30.Kxg1 bxc2.

Black first had only rook and two pawns for a queen, but still was winning due to his strong passed pawn on c2. Although the computers for a while considered the position drawn, black actually was totally winning with rook and five pawns against queens and two pawns: White had to keep his queen passive on c1 to block the passed pawn, and although it would take many moves black's king and pawn majority would march forward to victory.

Notkevich fortunately scored two GM norms at Fagernes before he started to blunder here, but obviously is very uneven even as a GM. Gullaksen following this win suddenly has a clear plus results, but following his slow start is still without chances for a GM-norm.

IM Erik Santarius (2411) probably was better prepared than Abyl Kizatbay (2108) for this open Grünfeld-Indian defense, as white got a clear lead on the clock and board from the opening.

The middle game was very short, as the players before 20 moves had exchanged down to a rook endgame in which black's double a-pawn was a fatal weakness. As he due to the poor pawn structure could not enter the pawn endgame, black had to move away his rook from the c-file and allow white to play Rc7.

White played a little bit carefully and did not take the shortest cut in the rook endgame, but his active rook combined with the advanced center pawn majority still decided after 41 moves.

FM Anders Hobber (2295) gave his patient London system another try as white against the young and aggressive Elham Abdrlauf (2123). White first had a slight positional advantage, growing as black went for dubious tactics to get his knight into the d3 outpost. 21.cxd6? however was a careless blunder from white, somehow overlooking that black could play 21...c6! and win the knight on b5. Hobber woke up immediately, found a tactical resource and made the very best out of the situation, but black still won bishop and knight for rook and pawn with a clear advantage.

The first endgame with two rooks and five pawns versus rook, bishop, knight and four pawns was very difficult for white, and the second endgame with rook and four pawns versus bishop, knight and four pawns probably was lost. Hobber and his active rook however fought on well, and they were rewarded as Abdrlauf played much too fast and blundered a piece. The remaining endgame with rook and three kingside pawns versus knight and three kingside pawns obviously was much better for white, but also obviously it was no way an easy win. Whether black actually had a fortress remains a mystery, as Hobber felt relieved and offered a draw right away.



FM Anders Hobber



Morten Andersen vs Monika Machlik

Even another Catalan opening for Morten Andersen (2223), today as white against Monika Machlik (2059). Although white first had a space advantage with e4-d5-c4, black instructively hit back with c6-cxd5 and achieved promising counter play against the c4-pawn. Within a few more moves all the center pawns disappeared during tactical exchanges, after which an almost symmetrical position was drawn upon white's suggestion in move 23.

Monika Machlik following this draw still has a 2250-performance within reach, but unfortunately can no longer make a WIM-norm as she is unlucky to get her sixth Norwegian opponent in round 8.

WGM Olga Dolzhikova (2231) and Noam Aviv Vitenberg (2203) meanwhile investigated an obscure French line with 3... h6?!. Exchanging on d5 hardly is white's most critical reply, and chances with symmetric pawns in a French Exchange line turned out to be fairly balanced even if black had spent a tempo on h6. All the minor pieces were exchanged before 30 moves, but due to his control over the e-file white still had a lasting initiative. Although white's idea of breaking up the pawn symmetry was understandable, 31.c4?! probably was a mistake as black after 31... dxc4 32.bxc4 Rd8 got disturbing counter play against white's pawns at c4 and d4. The double rook endgame first appeared drawish, but white still had a slight initiative and succeeded winning a pawn following some inaccuracies from black. The remaining rook endgame with three kingside pawns on each side and an extra c-pawn for white would have been winning if white had her rook placed behind the pawn, but now was a borderline case as it was placed ahead of the pawn. Vitenberg reached a drawn rook endgame with f-pawn versus f- and h-pawn, but then created some minutes extra excitement for the spectators as he gave up his f-pawn without demanding back white's h-pawn. Probably the position still was a draw due to black's active pieces, and a few moves later on black got another chance to win the h-pawn and force a draw. Lasting 5 hours 57 minutes and 86 moves, board 13 by far was the longest game of this round – illustrating well the still remarkable fighting spirit of this group.



WGM Olga Dolzhikova



Isha Sharma vs Håkon Bentsen

Isha Sharma (1989) and Håkon Bentsen (2155) discussed a heavyweight Italian opening in which black did fine until he much too fast played 22... Nf4, overlooking a powerful tactical 23.d4! forcing black to give up a piece for a pawn. Black nearly got back into the game as white unnecessarily gave up a second pawn at a4, and could have had some chances for a draw if using the chance to exchange queens afterwards.

After black failed that chance, white efficiently used her extra piece to start a direct kingside attack, and won well deserved after 46 moves. Unpredictable Sharma has fallen below 2000 in ELO after making two WIM-norms, but is now again well above 2000 and close to a third norm after this key win. Still she needs to keep her performance above 2250 for two more rounds and to play one more non-Norwegian player plus one more GM, IM or WGM.



Sigve Hølleland vs Jens Evang Ingebretsen

Sigve Hølleland (2024) versus Jens Evang Ingebretsen (2300) made a solid Catalan start, but later became everything but solid. 14.--- Bd5? was a blunder, and although white did not find the piece win with 15.Qb5! he still came much better after 15.e4!?. Some tactics later white's two bishops combined with the passed d6-pawn were far more valuable than black's rook and two kingside pawns. White later spent much too much time without finding anything concrete on

the kingside, and black succeeded creating some counter play and two passed pawns on the queenside. White still had a winning advantage until he first allowed a very disturbing 35.--- Re1+ and then blundered one of the bishops with 36.Bf1??. Ingebretsen although short of time himself immediately used his chance with 36.--- Qb5!, and won about a ton of material plus the game within three more moves.

The teenager duel between FM Trygve Dahl (2275) and FM Daniel Nordquelle (2264) not unexpectedly became a firework attacking duel decided within three hours.

The opening was a Sicilian, developing into some kind of Maroczy in which black made an inaccurate exchange on e4, leaving white with a pleasant advantage following his pair of bishops and pressure against black's backward pawn at d6. About to win the d6-pawn white anyway was much better when black at move 24 fatally placed his knight outside everything at a4 instead of inside the defense area at e6. Dahl of course did not hesitate to mobilize his bishops and heavy pieces for a direct kingside attack, and crushed through to the black king well before 40 moves.

Aleksander Lindbøl (2139) versus Sigmund Loe Grøver (2020) started up as a long theory duel in a French Tarrasch line. Black at move 16 hit in with a thematic exchange sacrifice on f3, but white instead took back a piece on h5 and later kept a slight advantage. After 30 moves the position with queen, two rooks, knight and three pawns on each side at first sight appeared better for black due to his passed b-pawn. On second thought however – it was better for white due to the weak light squares around black's king. During mutual time pressure black blundered by overlooking 39.Nd7 with a fork on black's rooks.

White in turn blundered in move 40 and allowed white to escape with the loss of a pawn after a misunderstood queen exchange. Having got an hour more on the clock, black had no problems defending with rook, knight and two kingside pawns against rook, knight and three kingside pawns. White should have kept the knight if he wanted to play on for a win, as the rook endgame was a rather trivial draw.



FM Richard Bjerke vs Edit Machlik

Now aged 61, FM Richard Bjerke (2156) at his best still can play great strategic chess. He demonstrated this again today, as he following a fairly balanced Nimzo-Indian opening more or less outplayed Edit Machlik (2109) in the middle game. White instructively lined up behind his hanging center pawns at c4 and d4, directed his pair of bishops against the kingside and efficiently cashed in a pawn with a winning advantage when black tried to exchange queens.

But still you have to keep concentration all the way to win games on this level.

With Edit Machlik running short of time in a lost position, Bjerke first gave away his positional advantage by exchanging off his important dark squared bishop for a knight at move 35 – and then at move 36 blundered a pawn. Machlik although short of time found the combination with 37.--- Rxd3! – winning back the pawn and forcing a drawn rook endgame. Bjerke kept his mask surprisingly well, and quietly offered a draw soon after.

WFM Anita Grønnestad (1954) and Frode Lillevold (2076) started up by throwing out more than 15 theory moves in a Semi Slav Meran line. Both still succeeded running short of time for 40 moves as the position afterwards is very complex and double-edged. After queens were exchanged at move 18 white picked up a pawn at h7 and for some moves probably had an advantage. Black, now with his king on b5, however had serious counter play coming up on the queenside when he blundered an exchange at move 27.

During mutual time pressure both players later made some mistakes, but white was probably winning all of the time. Following another time trouble mistake from Lillevold, Grønnestad just before 40 moves could sacrifice back the exchange to reach a totally won pawn endgame.

Sander Fuglestein (2000) versus Andreas Skotheim (2182) for the first hours was a roughly balanced Catalan, in which black had sufficient counter play against white's center pawns. White gradually built up a pressure in the middle game, and got a clear advantage as black sacrificed a pawn at b6 without having any strong continuation.

Although he would have had a long way to win the queen and rook endgame, white was still a pawn up with a clear advantage when he offered a draw after 32 moves.

GM-B (ROUND ROBIN)

Round 7 became another troublesome one for the GMs in the GM B: Felix Levin is definitely out of the fight for top three as he failed to win a drawn endgame as white against IM Oskar von Bahr, and GM Eduardas Rozentalis is down at 50 % again as he lost another turbulent game against IM Valeryi Kazakovskiy.

Today's main sensation still was leading GM Alon Greenfeld getting his first loss against IM Tor Fredrik Kaasen. Among the IM norm candidates Gunnar Lund is definitely out after he lost a difficult endgame against IM Kristian Stuvik Holm today. FM Andreas Garberg Tryggestad is the only one with a theoretical norm chance, after winning from an inferior position as black against FM Alexander Betaneli today.

We can look forward to a very exciting finish for the top three prizes, as Greenfeld at 5.0/7 now leads only half a point ahead of the young IM-lions Holm, Kazakovskiy and Kaasen.



FM Alexander Betaneli (2235) vs FM Andreas Garberg Tryggestad

FM Alexander Betaneli (2235) started with an English Fianchetto. FM Andreas Garberg Tryggestad (2305) replied with 1... f5 and an aggressive Dutch Leningrad set-up. Black weakened his position too much; hence white much due to this knight on f4 was clearly better around move 15-20. White however started to lose the thread when exchanging off the knight on g6, and black took over the initiative at latest when exchanging off the

other white knight on f4 at move 26. After three sets of minor pieces were exchanged white eventually succeeded winning the black pawn on a5, but despite an extra pawn he was in trouble as black used the opposite colored bishops to get a dangerous attack on the white kingside squares.

After placing a dominant bishop on f3 black missed the first chance for a direct attack, but white's position still was too demanding to play. As white's defense line suddenly collapsed just before 40 moves, black within a few more moves won a queen for a rook.

Tryggestad following this is the last title norm candidate of this group, but he still needs to defeat both von Bahr and Kaasen to make an IM-norm out of this.

IM Tor Fredrik Kaasen (2385) and GM Alon Greenfeld (2514) entered a Classical Sicilian Richter-Rauzer line, in which black had the pair of bishops and white the more active pieces after an early queen exchange.

Black apparently was not worse until he suddenly at move 19 sacrificed his d6-pawn. As black afterwards found nothing better than exchanging one of his bishops for a knight on c3, the remaining question was whether black could scrape

a draw with two rooks, bishop and six pawns against two rooks, bishop and seven pawns. Many pawns and equal colored bishops both favored white. Greenfeld still should have had fair drawing chances if he had kept the remaining pieces, instead of helpfully exchanging down to a rook endgame in which white had the much more active rook.

Kaasen instructively activated his rook to b6, won the black pawn on b7 and then decided the game simply by moving forward his passed c-pawn. Kaasen's spurt started too late for him to reach a GM-norm, but in time for him to join the fight for top three prizes.



IM Tor Fredrik Kaasen vs GM Alon Greenfeld



Gunnar Lund vs IM Kristian Stuvik Holm

Gunnar Lund (2271) made a humble start with 1.b3 against IM Kristian Stuvik Holm (2467). The game later transposed into some kind of English opening in which white played a passive set-up with a3, d3 and e3. Following this black came slightly better with some more space and pleasant pressure against white's d3-pawn.

Black later kept an edge into the endgame with rook, knight and five pawns versus rook, bishop and five

pawns. This for sure was a draw, but black's slightly better pieces and passed b-pawn still gave him something to play for. Short of time white blundered a pawn with 39.Nc4?, as black could win the d3-pawn with 39.--- Rc3+ followed by 40.--- e4. The endgame then suddenly was falling apart for an apparently shocked white player, who tried to make an illegal move next move and resigned five moves later.

Holm following this win strengthened his chances for a money prize, while Lund at 2.5/7 is without chances for an IM-norm but still above expected score.



GM Eduardas Rozentalis vs IM Sergei Kazakovskiy

GM Eduardas Rozentalis (2568) as white against IM Sergei Kazakovskiy (2440) went for a Four Knights Opening, in which black slightly strangely played Bd6 followed by Bc5. White first had a slight edge, but after exchanging one set of knights and the light squared bishops, black soon got promising counter play on the dark squares. Exchanging the dark squared bishops probably was the wrong plan in this situation, and white again held an initiative around moves 25-33.

Snatching a pawn with 33.--- Qxa3? was overambitious as white could have got a strong attack with 34.Rg4!, but he instead sacrificed an exchange on d5 to reach a highly unclear position. Black had an exchange for a pawn and was about take over the kingside attack when white short of time blundered it all away with 39.Qe4??. After 39.--- Qg3+ 40.Kh1 black missed the instant and massive material win with 40.--- Rf4!, but he still kept a winning attack and neatly finished off the game with a tactical 45.--- Rxd4!.

18 year old Kazakovskiy is the last undefeated player in this group, and fully in the fight for top three after his second game win.



GM Felix Levin vs IM Oskar von Bahr

GM Felix Levin (2476) made a speedy start with a lot of theory moves as white in an open Grünfeld-Indian line against IM Oskar von Bahr (2404).

White's center advantage did not make much of a difference after all the heavy pieces were exchanged, but white first had a slight initiative and then (after exchanging one of his bishops on c6) a slightly better pawn structure. Black took the safe course by giving up a pawn and

exchanging one of his bishops for the strong white knight on c5, leading to a bishop endgame in which white's extra pawn had no practical importance due to the opposite colored bishops.

OPEN GROUP (SWISS)

The fighting spirit in this group was even more remarkable today, as nine out of the first ten games got a winner. Second rated Jo Kristian Løberg today recovered from a totally wrecked position to defeat so far fabulous Alf W. Lundberg.

Following this we can look forward to a thrilling spurt in this tournament, as Løberg and Lundberg now shares first place at 6.0/7 – half a point ahead of five other players.



Alf W. Lundberg vs Jo Kristian Løberg

True to his principles even at the first board, guitarist and chess artist Alf W. Lundberg (1932) again played 2.Qf3?! and 3.Qg3?! against a Sicilian opening.

Opponent Jo Kristian Løberg (2045) for sure did fine from the opening, but white's center pawns became all the more dominant in the middle game, and after 30 moves he was totally winning with an extra passed pawn on d6 and a dominating pair of bishops. After 40 moves white additionally was a piece up with an ongoing attack and had an advantage of +1000 according to the computer programs. White unnecessarily allowed black to win back some material following a bishop sacrifice on g2, but the remaining endgame with rook, two bishops and four pawns against two rooks and five pawns still was an easy win.

While Løberg kept up his concentration and fought bravely on, Lundberg however burned out completely in the end of the fifth hour, blundering first a bishop and then a rook.

Second board also saw a long fighting game and a miracle escape, as Jonas Hodneland Rasmussen (1993) succeeded saving a completely lost endgame with four pawns versus queen and two pawns against 13 year old Gunnar Brandshaug Dale (1903). True enough yes black had an advanced passed pawn which made the win more difficult. And yes in an earlier chapter the endgame with rook, knight and five pawns versus rook, bishop and five pawns was very drawish before black blundered the bishop. Following this Rasmussen and Dale both hangs on at 5.5/7, half a point behind Lundberg and Løberg.



Gunnar Brandshaug Dale vs Jonas Hodneland Rasmussen

Another young player now fully inside the fight for the first prize is still improving 17 year old Haakon Wright (1849), as he today paradoxically succeeded winning a drawn bishop endgame after failing to win a won middle game. Wright will play black against Lundberg on second board tomorrow, while Dale will enter first board against Løberg.

Third rated and 12 year old Shazil Shehzad (2024) today suddenly stumbled out of the fight for the top prizes, as he in clearly better position as white against Elias Hulleberg Sidali (1944) overlooked a tactical 21.--- Re1+! and lost decisive material.

First rated Henrik Øie Løbersli (2102) even more definitely is out of the fight for top three, as he today lost a long game against still well playing Omer Amir Akdag (1901). 15 year old Sidali at 5.5/7 on the other hand is fully in the fight for top three. So is another young player with a slow start in this tournament, as 18 year old Per Fredrik Holand (1848) today defeated Tobjørn Dahl (1917) in another long and hard-fought game. Overall the lower rated players won more games this round.

The probably most entertaining game today was seen on board ten, as underrated grown up Rune Kleiven Rynning (1581) won an extremely complex endgame race against Eirik Aarnes (1907). In the first passed pawn race black promoted into a queen first, but white then promoted with check and hence could play on with queen and rook versus queen and seventh rank passed pawn. In the second passed pawn run, after the queens were exchanged, white won with a one tempo margin as he against promoted with check.

In short: Many more entertaining games and a great finish coming up in the Open group.

All photos by Anniken Vestby