

Fagernes Chess International 2019

THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT

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GM-A

Top rated Russian GM Anton Demchenko as expected assured himself a very well deserved first prize at 7.0/9 today, drawing a sound black game against GM Maxim Turov after two and a half hours. A tense struggle for second and third prize on the other hand continued until the end of the sixth hour, when second-rated GM Vadim Alekseev of Russia and fourth-rated GM Evgeny Postny of Israel both won long endgames and finished at 6.5. GM Maxim Turov of Russia and GMs Andriy Vovk of Ukraine neither were much of a surprise at shared fourth with 6.0. All the more surprising was 21. rated Olli Sisättö of Finland sharing the money for place fourth to sixth after he won a fascinating attacking battle as black against IM Erik Santarius. Disappointedly the tournament following the many GM- and IM-norms from last year produced no norms this year, but Sisättö at least will get a very well-deserved FM-title following this result!



Alekseev, Demchenko and Postny



GM Maxim Turov vs GM Anton Demchenko

Leading with a full point before the last round, first rated GM Anton Demchenko (2661) needed “only” a draw as black against GM Maxim Turov (2584) to assure unshared first prize of 2000 Euros. The not unexpected draw came on board after 19 moves, but the game still lasted two and a half hours.

Facing 1.d4 black went for a King’s Indian set-up with Nf6-g6-Bg7-00-d6 but landed in some kind of Pirc-like landscape as white played e4 instead of c4. After the queenside opened white finally seemed to have got a small advantage due to his pair of bishops after 19 moves, but then he offered a draw which was of course accepted.

Demchenko’s first prize was extremely deserved and his result was nothing but magnificent as he had not only more points than the competitors, but also a much higher average of opponents. To illustrate this Demchenko’s Elo performance this week was 2752, compared to 2610 and 2591 for the second and third players.

Turov remained undefeated with an average result following this draw, losing a few points of Elo but winning a few hundred Euros.



GM Evgeny Postny vs GM Frode Urkedal

The second-board game between GM Evgeny Postny (2612) and GM Frode Urkedal (2513) on the other hand was a tense six-hour duel, on the board as well as on the clock.

White entered a positional Queen's Gambit line with 5.Bf4, and after playing c5 he kept an edge due to black's slightly weak pawn at c6. After queens were exchanged on d3 after 36 moves, the remaining position with rook, two knights

and five pawns on each side still was drawish.

With Postny having seven minutes against one and a half for moves 39 and 40, both players played inaccurately and Postny missed his first chance to get a clear advantage by exchanging one set of knights. Urkedal helpfully exchanged at move 41, leading within a few moves to a rook endgame in which white had more active pieces while black still had some worries for his c6-pawn. Again, spending too much time, Urkedal again was about to run short of time around 60 moves, but he had then reached a drawish rook endgame with three pawns on each side.

Postny in this situation creatively gave up a pawn to play for a win with rook and a passed pawn on c6 against rook, d- and f-pawns. With one minute left for the game Urkedal sacrificed his rook on white's passed c-pawn to run with his king and f-pawn, reaching a well known endgame in which black to avoid mate has to promote his pawn at f1 into a knight with check.

Having about ten seconds left on the clock with knight versus rook, Urkedal demanded a draw and argued the position was a theoretical draw. Postny, still having three minutes left, opposed the demand and argued the position still could give practical winning chances. The chief arbiter decided the game should continue with a five- second increment, which was immediately accepted by both players. Unexpectedly the game finished within five more moves, as Urkedal defended inaccurately and resigned as he after 95 moves was about to go mate or lose his knight.

Following his higher Elo Postny made only a zero result on Elo, but still was very well satisfied with a shared second prize. Starting with 3.0/3 followed by 0.5/3 and then again 3.0/3, Postny in this tournament had a very strong opening and endgame, but ruined chances to fight for the first prize with a poor middle game.

Urkedal at the prize giving got only a book and some very few Euros following this wasted last round chance, but still made a performance above 2550 and won back a few points of Elo following some demanding months.

Third board duel between 16-year-old FM Mads Vestby-Ellingsen (2333) and 33-year-old GM Vadim Alekseev (2649) also became an interesting six-hour battle, although in this case black was clearly better from the third hour and winning for the fifth and sixth.

Needing a win for an IM-norm following a very unlucky last-round opponent, Vestby-Ellingsen still gave it a try and played for a kingside attack with f4 against double-edged Sicilian Kan set-up.

White first had some space advantage, but black soon took over after he was allowed to play 14... Nc5 followed by 17... Nxd3, winning the pair of bishops and opening the c-file for his counterplay. After 20 moves white's chances for a kingside attack disappeared as queens were exchanged on h5, and later black's advantage gradually increased as the position opened for black's bishops.

As black had a powerful kingside initiative coming up white creatively tried to get counterplay by sacrificing a knight on g3 at move 31. Although white got three pawns for the piece black's bishops later dominated. Alekseev took his time on the board, having seven seconds left when making his move 40. He then spent 40 minutes more for the next ten moves but remained in control on the board. Black kept his two final pawns and reached a totally won minor-piece endgame with an extra piece before 60 moves.

No point and no norm today for Vestby-Ellingsen, but still a very promising performance above 2400 by the 16-year-old, who immediately acclimatized to the classical time limits. Hard-working Alekseev lost 1.5 point of Elo, but still was very well satisfied with his first Fagernes tournament after reaching shared second prize. For the record, Alekseev finished second as his average of opponents was notably better than Postny's.



FM Mads Vestby-Ellingsen vs GM Vadim Alekseev

GM Andriy Vovk (2616) and GM Evgeny Vorobiov (2565) had a tense four-hour Accelerated Sicilian Dragon duel, in which white before 20 moves sacrificed a piece for a kingside attack. Black gave back the piece for a queen exchange, after which white due to his better pawn structure came slightly better with two rooks, knight and five pawns versus two rooks, bishop and five pawns.



GM Andriy Vovk vs GM Evgeny Vorobiov

26.Nf5?! was too impatient from Vovk, missing that Vorobiov could (and did) play Be4! followed by a tactical Bxc2, leading to a very drawish rook endgame with three pawns on each side.

Vovk remarkably stayed undefeated at 6.0/9 despite a shaky tournament and shared fourth prize at 6.0/9, while Vorobiov at 5.5/9 finished more than a point below expected in his first Fagernes tournament.



GM Evgeny Romanov vs GM Erik Blomqvist

GM Evgeny Romanov (2576) played aggressively for a win as white against GM Erik Blomqvist (2496), as he after 1.d4 2.Nc3 3.Bf4 soon started a kingside pawn storm. Black however did fine after exchanging two sets of minor pieces and castling long, and black if anyone was better before the position around move 30 turned into a bankbox. Romanov's decision to sacrifice an exchange on f5 after 41 moves looked more like a losing attempt than a winning attempt,

but Blomqvist respectfully pulled the brake and closed the bankbox again by exchanging one of his rooks to shut down the e-file a few moves later on.

5.5/9 following this was slightly below expected from Romanov and exactly as expected for Blomqvist.

The Norwegian IM duel between Lars Oskar Hauge (2472) and Erlend Mikalsen (2397) was agreed a draw within 20 moves and 40 minutes, but still in no way was a boring game. The game was a Classical Nimzo-Indian in which white played e4 and e5 with a space advantage, but black hit back with Ne4 and c5. Following some tactical exchanges, the final position after 19 moves looked messy, but the line still was well known and the position reportedly in some kind of dynamic balance.



IM Lars Oskar Hauge vs IM Erlend Mikalsen

White spent less than half an hour and black less than a quarter on the game.

No GM-norm for any of the players this tournament, but still a solid plus result for both.

Hauge continues his march towards 2500, and Mikalsen is back above 2400.



IM Erik Santarius vs Olli Sisättö

Needing a draw as black against IM Erik Santarius (2411) to pass 2300 and finally achieve his FM title, 37-year-old Olli Sisättö (2276) bravely entered a tactical and double-edged Queen's Gambit Tarrasch Gambit line. White first lagged behind on the clock, but came ahead on the board as black's first new move was a dubious (if still interesting) 9... Bc5?!

Although white after 15 moves had a slightly awkward king on d1 and

struggled to complete his queenside development, he was three pawns up and objectively better. 16.Ke2? and 17.f4? however was a totally misunderstood plan which black immediately punished by 17... Rxf4!

Accepting the rook sacrifice with 18.exf4? in no way cured the pains for white, but instead shortened them as black within five more moves completed the attack.

Santarius following this unexpected collapse had a disappointing performance well below 2300 this year, in contrast to his excellent 2500-performance from last year.

Sisättö on the other hand accelerated following a mediocre start and made his best result so far with a 2419-performance. In the end lacking only half a point for an IM-norm performance, the Finn at 6.0/9 sensationally finished in shared 4.-6. place and completed his FM-title with a margin of 11 ELO points.



IM Timofey Galinsky vs Pål Røyset

IM Timofey Galinsky (2378) was expected to play for a win as white against Pål Røyset (2167).

He however got nothing whatsoever from a slow opening with 1.d4 2.Nf3 3.b3, later transposing into some kind of delayed Colle system.

The draw agreed after 18 moves was sensible as black would be closer to an edge in the following endgame with two rooks, bishop and six pawns versus two rooks, knight and six pawns on

each side. Galinsky dropped down to an average result following his dramatic sixth round loss to Vovk, while 44-year-old Røyset kept up the speed and is well back above 2200 after this tournament.

IM Eirik T. Gullaksen (2324) and IM Sebastian Mihajlov (2361) agreed a draw after 14 moves. The start was a not too exciting Slav Exchange line, and the end a well-known repetition of moves.

5.0/9 following this was slightly above expected for 52-year-old Gullaksen and average for 19-year-old Mihajlov.

GM Benjamin Arvola Notkevich (2495) as white went for a patient English Fianchetto line, against which Isha Sharma (1989) chose a rather impatient set-up with e5-e4 followed by d5. Black probably was healthy for the first 10 moves, but 11.--- a6? then was much too slow and weakening – meaning white had time to open the kingside with a clear advantage after the thematic 12.f4!. As black in reply went for a dubious tactical queen exchange, white won a pawn with a more or less won rooks and minor pieces endgame.



GM Benjamin Arvola Notkevich vs Isha Sharma

As Sharma continued to search for tactical counterplay, Notkevich increased his material advantage until reaching a won endgame with rook, knight and three pawns versus rook and five pawns. Then he however lost the thread, returning the knight for two pawns.

A drawish rook endgame with b-, g- and h-pawns for white against a-, g- and h-pawns for black was on the board after the first time control.

The endgame still became very tense as black played 43.--- a4?!, allowing white's pawn to pass with 44.b4!. Probably black still could have saved the draw, but white's king on the queenside was obviously better placed than black's king on f7.

Following some more mistakes from both players, white within ten more moves could instructively block the black a-pawn with his rook and escort his b-pawn with the king.

This tiny endgame win saved the day but still not the week for still unpredictable Notkevich, as he despite another promising start this year ended up with a disappointing performance just above 2300.

18-year-old Sharma despite losing this game reached a performance above 2250. Having had above 2200 earlier on and already having two WIM-norms, she would have been assured the title if she had met a non-Norwegian IM or GM with an ELO above 2470 in the last round. Unfortunately, although she met players from three federations outside her own, she met seven Norwegian players and following this could not make a title norm.

The problem unfortunately is well known for WIM-candidates: Although this group of 42 players included 14 players from eight different federations outside Norway, most of the foreign players were GMs fighting on the upper boards, meaning that players with a performance around 2150-2250 could risk playing almost only Norwegian players on the lower boards.

Sharma met a foreign titleholder in the first round but losing that game she still was unlucky to play seven Norwegian opponents for the next eight games. All in accordance with the rules of course, but still a very unhappy situation for the player and the organizer.

We can only hope that Isha Sharma after winning nearly 50 ELO points this tournament will soon find the inspiration for another result on the same level and then complete her WIM title.

The somewhat uneven Modern opening of WGM Olga Dolzhikova (2231) today did not work out too well as black against FM Anders Hobber (2295), as the c-file gave white a pleasant initiative in the middle game. 22.--- b5? did not work out as planned, whatever the plan was, as white increased his positional advantage after 23.Nc5 and soon went on to win black's pawn at a6. With both players under slight time pressure white came a pawn up with the more active pieces and the safer king. Following this Hobber anyway was winning when he just before 40 moves was given the chance to pseudo-sacrifice his queen and force a bishop endgame in which the a-pawn would promote within two more moves. Hobber scored slightly below expected at 5.0/9 and Dolzhikova a full point below expected at 4.0.

24-year-old WGM Marsel Efroimsky (2287) of Israel and 15-year-old Norwegian Junior Champion Noam Aviv Vitenberg (2203) meanwhile discussed a rather untheoretical French with 3.Bd3, in which chances were fairly balanced until black at move 15 misplaced his knight on a6. Later white and her pair of bishops came better due to black's passive knights, but after white took black's key pawn on e5, black was allowed to balance the chances again by winning back the pawn at c4. Later black took over the initiative while both players ran seriously short of time. After 30 moves white had left one minute against three minutes for black, in a still complex position. Black anyway had won a pawn with a better position when white blundered a piece with 35.Qg4??



WGM Marsel Efroimsky vs Noam Aviv Vitenberg

In the end of the first time control Efroimsky had two seconds left and Vitenberg four seconds left after move 40, leaving an apparently not too interesting position in which black had queen, two rooks, bishop and four pawns versus queen, two rooks and four pawns. Efroimsky however got the help needed first to create some confusion by sacrificing her two rooks for queen and pawn, and then to get some real counterplay by advancing her passed h-pawn. Due to white's passed pawn on h6 the position with queen and four pawns versus two rooks, bishop and three pawns suddenly was rather drawish and a bit messy after 58.Qg7+ Rd7, as white could play 59.Qe5+ followed by 60.Qxf5.

Efroimsky however instead tricked herself completely with 59.Kxf5??, somehow missing that black after the very straightforward 59... Rxc7 60.hxc7 Bd5 could stop white's passed pawn at g7 and stay a rook and a bishop up.

As she already has three confirmed IM-norms, Efroimsky was not too depressed about losing the game, but still felt too shocked to eat her lunch after blundering the queen.

Taking into account an average of opponents well above 2400, 4.0/9 for her still was a solid plus result after which she is well back above 2300.

Still apparently unshaken Vitenberg amazingly landed on his feet again, and at 5.0/9 he won more than 50 points of Elo on this chaotic tournament.



FM André Nielsen vs FM Trygve Dahl

The Norwegian young teenager duel between 16-year-old FM André Nielsen (2201) and 18-year-old FM Trygve Dahl (2275) was a Sicilian Taimanov in which the queens were exchanged, and a draw agreed after 16 moves. Nielsen can be very well satisfied to have won nearly 30 Elo points with a performance close to 2350, while Dahl hardly can be satisfied with performances below 2200 any more.

Elham Abdlauf (2123) versus Håkon Bentsen (2155) was a Queen's Gambit Exchange line, with the white kingside knight on e2 instead of the traditional f3. Black equalized as white somewhat inaccurately placed the queen on d2 instead of c2 at move 10, inviting a freeing Ne4. Later white due to a traditional queenside minority attack still came slightly better. 19.Rdc1? however was a careless blunder, allowing 19... Ng4! 20.g3 Nge5! (or 20... h4!) with a strong attack.

Bentsen after nearly one minute consideration instead retreated the knight with 20.--- Nf6?, but still kept some attack after white had weakened his kingside. Abdlauf woke up in time and succeeded continuing his counterplay on the queenside while consolidating his kingside, reaching a drawish position with two rooks, knight and five pawns on each side after 36 moves. 37.Nd2? however was a blunder, allowing a tactical 37.--- c5! with a strong initiative for black. Although white avoided a loss of material his king (now on h3) still was in trouble after the time control. Instead of regrouping for a h-file attack, Bentsen went for a c-file pin leading only to rook exchanges.

Draw agreed in a dead drawn knight endgame after 44 moves means Bentsen after too many draws landed just below expected score, while 14-year-old Abdlauf following some shaky games made a gain of more than 80 points and left Fagernes as a 2200-player.

WFM Anita Grønnestad (1954) and Sigve Hølleland (2024) today started up with a fairly balanced Queen's Gambit Tarrasch isolated pawn position, in which black suddenly won a pawn with a clear advantage after white missed a tactical 13.--- d3! followed by 14.--- dxe2.



WFM Anita Grønnestad vs Sigve Hølleland

The passed pawn at e2 won an exchange with

the queens exchanged after 20 moves. As Grønnestad later fought on bravely while Hølleland overlooked several shorter cuts, the game lasted 65 moves and five hours, but black was probably winning all the time. In the end he safely returned the exchange to force a totally won pawn endgame.

Grønnestad still reached a small plus result after winning both round 7 and 8, while 22-year-old Hølleland at 4.5/9 was among the true surprise men of the tournament and won 45 Elo points.



FM Richard Bjerke vs Abyl Kizatbay

FM Richard Bjerke (2156) and Abyl Kizatbay (2108) meanwhile discussed a positional Benkő Gambit line in which three sets of minor pieces are exchanged before 25 moves. The remaining pair of bishops were opposite-coloured, and black's dominating bishop on d4 combined with his more active pieces gave him more than enough compensation for white's rather lame extra pawn at b3.

While Kizatbay failed to find any

good plan Bjerke succeeded exchanging the rooks without returning the pawn, but as black then could force off the queens as well, a draw was soon given in the bishop endgame. Due to his strong start Kizatbay finished more than a full point above expected at 3.5/9, while 61-year-old Bjerke at 4.0/9 honestly finished half a point below expected in this young field.

Morten Andersen (2223) of course went for another Catalan duel when he got the chance as white against Jens Evang Ingebretsen (2300) in the final round. White first appeared slightly better after winning back the pawn at c4, but black came close to equal after a tactical queen exchange on move 11-12. Exchanging the dark-squared bishop for a knight on b6 afterwards was a mistake from white, as black after winning the pair of bishops could castle long with pleasant pressure. White with his king stuck on d1 had a hard time defending against the active black bishops in the third and fourth hour. Exchanging half of the bishop pair for a knight on c3 might have been dubious, but still worked out fairly well as black kept a pleasant initiative in the endgame with rook, bishop and six pawns in each side.

The rook endgame looked close to winning as white after 40 moves lost his long-time pawn weakness at a4. While Andersen defended brilliantly by active counterplay in the fifth hour, Ingebretsen lost the thread completely as he misplaced his rook first on d4, and then later h2. White's passed pawn on e6 after 50 moves gave him enough counterplay for a draw. As black still a pawn up failed to realize the dangers in time, he blundered it all away with 51.--- Ke5?? – allowing white to turn the board all around with 52.Rf7! followed by 53.e7 and 54.f6. 55.Rf8 was a mistake from a computer point of view, but still very convincing from a human point of view, as black after 53.--- Kd7? 54.g5! was left paralyzed and more or less in zugzwang.

58-year-old Andersen following this repaired the blunder from last round and finished half a point below expected score. 15-year-old Ingebretsen on the other hand had a blackout tournament and lost nearly 60 points of Elo, but fortunately had qualified for the FM-title before this tournament.

Frode Lillevold (2076) and Monika Machlik (2059) investigated a Rubinstein Nimzo-Indian line with symmetric pawns, in which black soon took over the initiative as white spent way too many moves regrouping his minor pieces on the kingside. After the rooks were exchanged after 24 moves white already was in trouble due to his all the



Frode Lillevold vs Monika Machlik

weaker d4-pawn. Exchanging the dark-squared bishops with 27.Be5? more or less was a blunder, as black's active queen combined with the passed d-pawn after 27.--- Bxe5 28.dxe5 Qf2! gave her total dominance in the queen and minor pieces endgame.

As Monika Machlik today avoided critical time pressure and kept her play up very well on the board, she anyway was about to promote the d-pawn in the queen and knight endgame when Lillevold at move 38 formally lost on time.

Lillevold himself considered the time spending was only a symptom of his problems communicating with the pieces this tournament, leading to a performance below 1900 and a loss of nearly 40 Elo points.

21-year-old Monika Machlik on the other hand overcame her problems communicating with the clock at the start of the tournament, and in the end won 24 Elo points with a hopeful performance of 2166. The first WIM norm should be within short reach for her now.

Andreas Skotheim (2182) versus Aleksander Lindbøl (2139) was another heavyweight Dutch Stonewall duel in which all the queenside pawns were exchanged early in the middle game, leaving after 20 moves a position in which black had an initiative on the board and some 45 minutes more on the clock.

21.--- Bc3? actually was too fast and impatient, but still won a pawn as white missed the critical tactical reply with 22.Ra2! Later playing with opposite-coloured bishops, white succeeded getting enough counterplay in the diagonal a1-h8. Although consequent, 28.Bxg7?? was a tactical blunder which black efficiently punished with 28.--- Be2! 29.Bxf8 Rxf8, deciding the game as white had no reasonable defence against the threat of 30.--- Qxf2+.

Lindbøl's performance following this win was just below his current Elo, while Skotheim had a struggling week and suffered a hard set-back after his strong result from last year.

Sigurd Loe Grøver (2020) at first got nothing out of his English Four Knights opening line against Edit Machlik (2109), but 13.--- b5? was a very serious misunderstanding as white could just win a pawn with 14.dxc6! Qxc6 15.cxb5. Later Grøver played only sound and sensible moves, hence Edit Machlik was never invited back into the game again, and white's passed b-pawn easily decided the bishop endgame in the fourth hour.

Grøver after all still made a sound plus result and a performance close to 2100 out of this. Edit Machlik after the promising first round had a pole out result all the way and consequently landed on a performance well below 2000.

FM Daniel Nordquelle (2264) despite all his wasted chances played for a win in an ambitious Caro-Kann advance line as white against Sander Fuglestein (2000), and first had an advantage from the opening. Obviously white had decided to avoid another time trouble situation, but instead he then played too fast – as black while lagging half an hour behind on the clock took over the initiative on the board in between move 20 and 29.

Fuglestein however made a strategic mistake with 30.--- Rc4?, as white could close the c-file and reach about balanced chances with 31.Rxc4. Later able to advance his center pawn with d5, white came clearly with queen, rook, knight and six pawns versus queen, rook, bishop and six pawns around move 40.

Fuglestein made his move 40 still with three seconds left on the clock, and at the same time found an interesting pawn sacrifice on e3 – opening the position with some counterplay against white's king. After 45 moves the position probably was drawish as white was two pawns up, but had a very hard time hiding his king from the black queen checks.

Very strangely Nordquelle in a critical position spent only one of his remaining 76 minutes on the clock. He then went for a tactical 46.Rxd3?? which would have worked out very well after 46.--- cxd3?? 37.Qxc8+ or 46.--- Qxd3?? 47.Qxd3 cxd3 48.Kxd3, but which soon lost decisive material due to the airy white king on d2 after 46.--- Re8!

14-year-old Fuglestein after this final pole in got a performance above 2050 and a plus result out of his first try in the GM Swiss, while 16-year-old Nordquelle's tournament remained a nightmare finally ending in last place with an Elo just above 2100 after this final blunder. Fortunately, this great young fighter and chess entertainer usually hits back soon following setbacks.

For sure we will during the next year hear much more about both these two young lions – and all the other 40 players in this group. Hopefully, we will then meet most of them again for another and even stronger GM-A at Fagernes next year!

GM-B (ROUND ROBIN)

Last round of the GM-B not that unexpectedly became a slightly disappointing one on the top boards, as both Rozentalis-Greenfeld and Levin-Holm were drawn within half an hour.

Both the unshared first prize for GM Alon Greenfeld and the unshared second prize for IM Kristian Holm following this were in danger for a few hours. Both in the end were saved as first challenger IM Tor Fredrik Kaasen failed to hold a worse endgame against still climbing FM Andreas Garberg Tryggestad, while second challenger IM Valeryi Kazakovskiy failed to win a better four knights endgame against IM Oskar von Bahr.

Following this Greenfeld won first prize at 6.5/9 ahead of Holm at 6.0, while Kaasen and Kazakovskiy had to share third prize at 5.5. Remarkably, although two out of three GMs made a very disappointing result and finished below 50 %, none of the title norm candidates succeeded as they all of the time defeated each other. The problem is well known from earlier editions on this group, and one norm in three years makes it is a relevant question whether the round robin is a wise use of resources.

To end on a happy note, the GM-B tournament on the final day produced a new titleholder, as Tromsø junior Gunnar Lund following his convincing win against FM Alexander Betaneli just reached 2300 and qualified for the FM title. Not to forget, chief deputy arbiter FA Anniken Vestby also fulfilled her well deserved last norm for the IA title in very confident style.



Kaasen, Greenfeld and Kazakovskiy



GM Eduardas Rozentalis vs GM Alon Greenfeld

GM Eduardas Rozentalis (2568) versus GM Alon Greenfeld (2514) was agreed drawn after seven moves in a positional Sicilian with 3.Bb5+.

Last year's winner Rozentalis had no chance for a money prize anyway, and his final result with 4.0/9 this year was shocking especially as he started with two impressive game wins.

Greenfeld on the other hand kept up the speed, finished half a point above his expected score and assured himself at least shared first prize with this draw.

GM Felix Levin (2476) neither had anything to play for in the final round against IM Kristian Stuvik Holm (2467), and after 12 moves as white in a closed and fairly balanced Grünfeld he offered a draw. Having no chances for a GM-norm, sensible Holm declared himself satisfied with 6.0/9 and a safe prize. Still "too solid", steadily climbing Holm at 2474 seems likely to reach 2500 without making any GM-norm. 60-year old chess gentleman Felix Levin felt tired and got a disastrous start on this tournament, and although improving later on he in the end made no try to explain away 4.0/9 as a disappointing result.



GM Felix Levin vs IM Kristian Stuvik Holm

Following this IM Tor Fredrik Kaasen (2385) had the chance to pass Holm and share first prize with Greenfeld if able to win as white against FM Andreas Garberg Tryggestad (2305). Tryggestad however surprised his opponent with a rare Sicilian opening line in which black plays e6, a6 and then g6 – not for no reason reportedly listed as the Swiss Cheese variation!? White anyway failed to find a good plan, and black came better from the opening due to his pair of bishops including a strong fianchetto bishop on g7. Black in an inspired mood sacrificed his pawn on b7 to intervene on d3 with his knight and win back the pawn on b2.

As pawns were symmetric white appeared to have good drawing chances with queen, two rooks, two bishops and four pawns against queen, two rooks, bishop, knight and four pawns after 22 moves.



IM Tor Fredrik Kaasen vs FM Andreas Garberg Tryggestad

Black however

remained better due to his active bishop and knight and refused a draw offer to play for a win. Then black blundered with 25.--- Rfc8?, overlooking a highly disturbing tactical 26.Nxf7!

White however failed to find the best continuation afterwards. Although white had an extra pawn in the endgame after exchanging queens, black still was better due to his more active pieces and eventually won back the pawn.

With both players slightly short of time for 40 moves exchanging rooks with 36.Rc6? and 37.Rc8 was a mistaken plan, as black's powerful bishop combined with his passed a-pawn gave him a clear advantage in the minor pieces endgame. Tryggestad creatively tricked his bishop in at b2 to help the a-pawn to advance, and in the end after 60 moves landed safely in a won endgame with knight and pawn versus two pawns.

Paradoxically Tryggestad first gave up his final norm chance with a short draw as white in round eight, but then played hard for a win as black in round nine. Although Tryggestad seen in retrospect was tearfully close to an IM-norm (a draw in a totally won bishop endgame against Greenfeld in round five would have been sufficient given the later game results), he can be very well satisfied with 4.5/9 and a performance well above 2400.

Kaasen of course was dissatisfied to drop down below 2400 again and to finish third following this last round loss, but still a performance close to 2500 was a long step in the right direction for him.

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Kaasen of course was dissatisfied to drop down below 2400 again and to finish third following this last round loss, but still a performance close to 2500 was a long step in the right direction for him.

The IM duel between Oskar von Bahr (2404) and Valeryi Kazakovskiy (2440) was another closed Catalan, in which black despite white's extra space did fine after exchanging the queens and the light-squared bishops. After white helpfully opened the queenside it was revealed that his pawn at a4 was more exposed than the black pawn at b6, and black after 40 moves had won the a-pawn and got an extra pawn in the endgame.

Four-knight endgames however are often difficult to win even with an extra pawn, as the defender if necessary can sacrifice both his knights to eliminate the attacker's final pawns. Von Bahr defended well and after five hours the game was drawn as the players ran out of pawns.

Von Bahr following this finished at 4.0/9 and just below his expected score, where he had been almost all of the tournament.

Kazakovskiy at 5.5/9 was half a point above his expected score, shared third prize and remained the only undefeated player in the GM-B group. Still he finished one and a half point behind the GM-norm because he, like in the last game, struggled with winning games.



IM Oskar von Bahr vs IM Valeryi Kazakovskiy



Gunnar Lund vs FM Alexander Betaneli

Gunnar Lund (2271) as white against FM Alexander Betaneli (2235) played for a win with a patient London system, and came better from the opening after black under not too good circumstances exchanged pawns on d4.

White increased the pressure with h4-h5-hxg6 on the kingside, and after 22 moves won a very sound pawn as his rook sacrifice on e6 could not be accepted. White for sure could have made a shorter cut afterwards, but still the rook

and bishop endgame was close to winning with an extra pawn and more active pieces.

As black mixed up something when he just before 40 moves went for tactical pawn exchanges on the queenside with 37...c5?, the bishop after the time control was totally won for white and he passed a-pawn.

Reportedly never ever having lost four games in a row, Betaneli now lost six and finished in a distanced tenth place with a score nearly a point below his expected.

16-year-old Lund wasted too many chances and had to wait all until round nine for the first win, but still was a happy young man today as 3.5/9 was just what he needed to reach 2300 and get the FM-title! Lund this time finished one and a half point behind the IM-norm, but for sure will soon come closer to it.

OPEN GROUP (SWISS)

The fighting spirit of this year's group remained remarkable all the way to the prize giving:

In the final round the top ten boards had nine game winners and one stalemate draw! Last round became a triumph for the youngest players on the top boards as 13 year old Bærum player Gunnar Brandshaug Dale and 15 year old Oslo player Elias Hulleberg Sidali won the first and second prize at 7.5/9 after winning their white games against much more experienced opponent Alf W. Lundberg and Jonas Hodneland Rasmussen.

Undrawn at 7.0/9, the colourful tournament troubadour Lundberg very well deserved finished third and also qualified for next year's GM group (if there is one).



Sidali , Dale and Lundberg



Gunnar Brandshaug Dale vs Alf W. Lundberg

13-year-old Gunnar Brandshaug Dale (1903) made an aggressive start on the first board: After opponent Alf W. Lundberg (1932) much too optimistically castled long at move 7 in a Sicilian, white opened the center with a dangerous attack after 12 moves.

15.Bxc5? was a mistake as black with a tactical Nxd5! could have helped his poor development, but anyway white would have been much better – and as black missed that chance he came a pawn down with a hopeless position.

Those seeing this position after 17 moves was surprised the game lasted 51 moves, but on the other hand no way surprised that white won it. True to his sensible and patient style Dale again took the long and safe road by exchanging queens, but one pawn up with all the more active pieces he had no problems winning this endgame.

Winning 100 new Elo-points from his best tournament result so far, Dale also passed 2000 for the first time. My guess is he also passed the master mark for the last time, as I doubt he will ever fall below again.

Despite this loss, Lundberg a few weeks before his 40-year birthday won 78 Elo points and also passed 2000 - in between all his concerts.

Lundberg's problems on the first board meant Jonas Hodneland Rasmussen (1992) on the second board could win the tournament if able to win as black against Elias Hulleberg Sidali (1944), since Rasmussen following his strong start had more Buchholz points than Dale. Sidali however came ahead on the clock and the board from the opening, and kept an initiative all the way. The rook and bishop endgame after 35 moves still was drawish, although black still had some headache with his offside bishop at h7. Unnecessarily having weakened his kingside with f5 and exchanged a key pawn on e6 to activate his bishop, Rasmussen anyway was in trouble when he at move 40 unnecessarily lost on time - having had six minutes left for three moves and 36 seconds for the final one.



Elias Hulleberg Sidali

Very disappointingly having lost his first round, Sidali today was very happy finishing an outstanding long spurt to reach a share first place at 7.5/9 and qualify for next year's GM-group!

6.5/9 following this lost game was a sad end for Rasmussen following his fantastic start with 5.0/5. But as he won some more ELO points and now is well above 2000 in his live rating, there should be a good chance he too can be found in the GM-group next year. Rasmussen as always behaved excellent, and sportily congratulated his young opponent with the success after the game.

The stalemate draw came on the third board as second rated Jo Kristian Løberg (2045) dominated the game from the Caro-Kann opening as black against Sondre Melaa (1991), and eventually won a pawn, but failed to find anything better than a drawn rook endgame with three against two kingside pawns. Having defended very well, Melaa confidently exchanged rooks to draw with king versus king and pawn in the pawn endgame. 15-year-old Melaa also passed 2000 and became a master player following this draw.

On the fourth board 18-year old Per Fredrik Holand (1849) declared himself unmotivated by offering a draw while making his first move as black; 12-year old Shazil Shehzad (2024) was all the more motivated and won in a crushing attacking style within 25 moves. Shehzad following this reached 6.5/9. So did another talented young player, 17-year old Haakon Wright (1849), winning a noteworthy 72 new ELO points following today's win as black against still unpredictable Øyvind Ukkelberg (1939).

In the order of Buchholz points (= sum of opponent's points in the tournament) Rasmussen finished fourth ahead of Melaa at fifth, Løberg at sixth, Wright at seventh and Shehzad at eight. We will for sure see more strong results from all of them the upcoming years.

In the shadow of the top boards, we had many interesting games and more surprising results on the lower boards also in the final rounds. Two such games in the final round was 14-year old Alisha Shehzad (1547) winning with a crushing attack as black against Øyvind Mørkedal (1697) and 11-year old Elma Selvik (1317) winning on time in a still complex endgame against the Swedish chess gentleman Gusztav Lang (1745). Elma following this reached 5.0/9 and won an outstanding 128 Elo points, more than anyone else in this year's Fagernes tournament.

Alisha with 66 points won also continues her fast improvement.

13-year-old Ariza Hina at +62 following her last round draw also made a hopefully inspiring improvement of her much too low Elo.

A very young talent always worth to mention is Eric Ji Jiahao (1666), reaching 5.0/9 and winning 54 more Elo points this tournament – although he is still only an eight-year-old!!

Meanwhile the oldest player, 76-year-old Jan Svenske (1781), despite an unnecessary last round loss made a solid comeback at 4.0/9. We much hope to meet against young Eric, veteran Jan and as many other players as possible again for another memorable Open at Fagernes next year. Thanks for now to all the participants for their contribution this year!

All photos by Anniken Vestby