

NEW ENGLANDER

Chess Club Update – September 2009

Chairman's Chatter

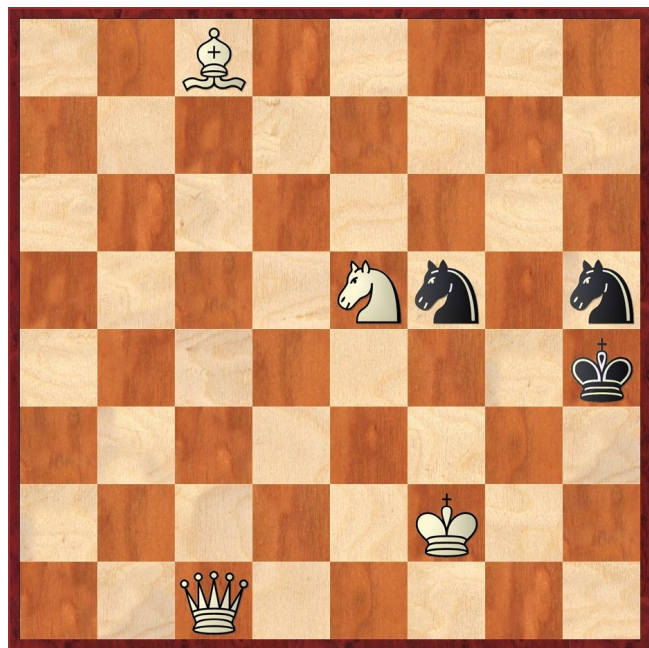
Sadly, the record of my playing career is incomplete but I know that against top opposition, I should have been ecstatic to achieve an occasional draw. This amplifies Chris Ross's accomplishment of hitting 50% in the Open section of the British Championships. I have included his diary of the event as a tribute and fascinating insight into this great performance.

The new season is upon us and I hope to see you all at the Annual General Meeting detailed in the Diary Dates section.

Paul Hanks

Puzzle Problem

White to play and mate in 2.



Last Month's solution

Position: 7B/8/p2ppr2/R1b2kr1/2Pn4/1P1P1NP1/3P1K1N/1BQ5
1 Nh4+ Ke5+ 2 N2f3+ Nxf3+ 3 d4+ Nxd4+ 4 Nf3+ Nxf3+ 5 d4+ Nxd4+ 6 Qf4#. No less than 11 consecutive checks!

Diary Dates

Final call for the AGM at 7-30pm on 3rd September. The County leagues will not be decided until 16th September and the fixture list will not be available until a week later. As a result, there will be three club nights to prepare ourselves for the season ahead. I suggest the following interim timetable :

3rd Sept	Club AGM
10th Sept	Mini-lightning tournament
16th Sept	Casual games
23rd Sept	P'boro v Cambridge @ Warboys

Of course, you will all be eager to pay your subscriptions for the new season during the month.

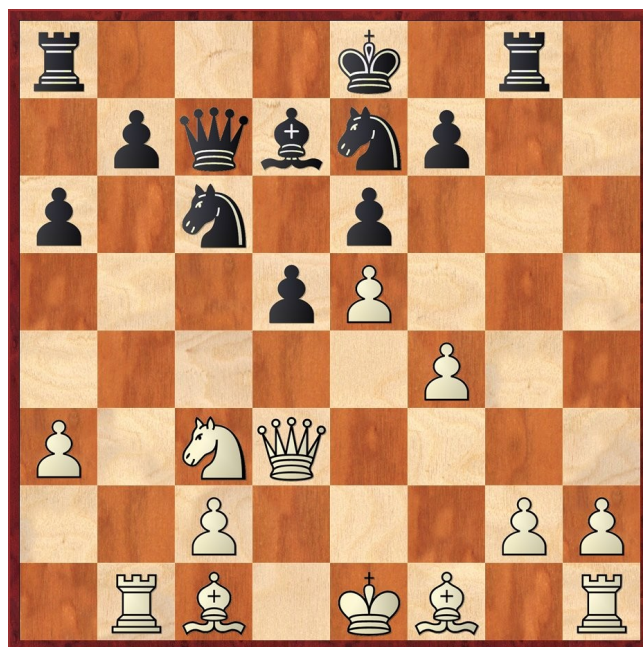
Eye Opener

Occasionally, a distant alarm bell rings in the back of your mind. Should you worry? Can we trust our human software for pattern recognition? Here is an example from the end of last season.

D Brown v P Hanks

Peterborough B v New England A, 01.04.2009

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 Bxc3 6 bxc3 Ne7 7 Qg4 Qc7 8 Qxg7 Rg8 9 Qxh7 cxd4 10 Ne2 Nbc6 11 f4 Bd7 12 Qd3 dxc3 13 Nxc3 a6 14 Rb1



Black's natural continuation is 14 ... 0-0-0 but a sense of danger gripped me. Of course! 15 Qxa6! So **14 ... Nf5?!** but my instincts failed me later in the game.

Website to Watch

The next big event is the Grand Slam final in Bilbao. The competitors should have been the winners of the year's elite tournaments but global financial uncertainties have curtailed the qualifying events. Nevertheless, the field is Anand, Topalov, Carlsen, Ivanchuk, Aronian and Radjabov. It can be followed between 2nd and 13th September on a smart website www.bilbaofinalmasters.com/en_index.asp.

What were you doing 25 years ago? Keenly awaiting the first Karpov v Kasparov encounter? To celebrate the anniversary, an exhibition match of 4 rapid and 8 blitz games has been organised between the legends on 21st-24th September in Valencia. Fast games are not easily followed on-line but if an official website is announced, they should be very interesting.

The British Championships

27th July 2009 : Round 1

Graham Smith (2119) v Chris Ross (2203)

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 Bb4+ 4 Nd2 0-0 5 Bg2 d5 6 Nf3 Nbd7 7 a3 Be7 8 Qc2 c6 9 0-0 b6 10 b3 Bb7 11 Bb2 c5 12 dxc5 Nxc5 13 Ng5 Ncd7 14 Rad1 h6 15 Nh3 Qc8 16 Qb1 dxc4 17 Nxc4 Bxg2 18 Kxg2 Rd8 19 Nf4 Nc5 ½ - ½

OK, off and running. A fairly short game today, but I am perfectly content with the draw.

I had a bit of a dodgy opening and my opponent very quickly got on top. I had to contend with some mating threats on h7 very early on and my poor centre and lack of development were proving irksome. However, my opponent had to retreat an aggressively-placed knight but he put it on an odd side-of-the-board place, thereby allowing me to obtain equality. A couple of exchanges later, I offered the draw, which White duly accepted.

So, I am happy with that. A draw with black in the first round - quick, saving energy and now I can't end up with 0 points! I feel more comfortable now and my game can kick-on tomorrow, when I have white.

The venue here is nice. Lara Barnes has proved a great help and she's in joint control of the Open. Everything seems to be run extremely efficiently.

My accommodation is only an easy 10 minute walk away from the venue. I have been very lucky in that regard.

So, round one done. Onwards and upwards!

28th July 2009 : Round 2

Chris Ross (2203) v Andrew McClement (1893)

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 b6 4 e3 Bb7 5 Bd3 c5 6 0-0 cxd4 7 exd4 Be7 8 Nc3 d5 9 Bg5 0-0 10 Re1 Nbd7 11 Rc1 Rc8 12 cxd5 Nxd5 13 Nxd5 Bxg5 14 Rxc8 Bxc8 15 Nc3 Bb7 16 Ne4 Be7 17 Qe2 Nf6 18 Neg5 Bd5 19 a3 h6 20 Ne4 Qa8 21 Ned2 Rc8 22 Ne5 Bxg2 23 f4 Bd5 24 f5 Rc7 25 Rf1 Qc8 26 Ndc4 exf5 27 Ne3 Be6 28 Nxf5 Bf8 29 Nxe6+ gxh6 30 Rxf6 Rc1+ 31 Rf1 Bh3 32 Re1 Bc5 33 dxc5 Qxc5+ 34 Kh1 Qd5+ 35 Be4 Qb5 36 Nd3 Rxe1+ 37 Qxe1 f5 38 Qg3+ Bg4 39 Bg2 Kh7 1 - 0

This was not as easy as it sounds. Andrew McClement is an up-and-coming junior, who has a ridiculously low rating. Very knowledgeable, very aware with the situation and more than a pushover, he can consider himself exceedingly unfortunate not to have racked up a full, well-deserved point against an opponent 300 ELO points above him.

Andrew played exceptionally well, positionally soundly and was simply undone by the sheer lack of experience. I can fully understand how he feels now and I feel no satisfaction in beating him in a way that I, previously, considered unjust.

Before that, however, I dedicate my win yesterday to two people, Justin Mulrooney and Steve Hilton. The first for wishing me the best of luck on the first anniversary of his marriage to Maria from Kazakhstan

and the second for giving me some helpful hints in my opening preparation against my opponent.

Simply put, I had a reasonable opening, set up solidly, and fought to obtain an IQP, which I thought would confuse my opponent. However, he showed excellent maturity and composure and fended off all my aggressive intentions and easily obtained the d5 outpost, the bishop pair and every positional advantage he could have wished for.

After 20 moves, I realised that my position, although poor, had some tactical resources, and I began to play quickly keeping my opponent guessing for many a move. Inevitably, my opponent, aged 14, began to consume a lot of time. As we entered the time scramble, I played resourcefully and basically, forced the inaccuracies from my opponent. I did not play ambitiously, but slightly restrained and put the onus on my young opponent to finish off his more experienced, perhaps wiser, opponent.

By move 36, my opponent had about a minute on the clock. I was a pawn down, positionally, significantly worse and entering complications. I won my pawn back and went for an ending that I should, in all reality, be able to hold. However, tactics were still flowing but I punted a draw offer on move 36, which took up seconds on my opponent's clock.

A few years ago, I condemned Tyson Mordue in extremely cutting language for this tactic and was very critical of such behaviour in an article which I posted in the B.C.A. Gazette. I must now apologise profusely. I didn't appreciate the in-depth experience behind such a tactic or until lately, recognise the effectiveness of such a punt in practical play.

The punt of a draw was cheeky but effective. In the time scramble, my opponent naturally took time to consider the offer. Being young, having the fire in his belly for the victory of a considerably higher-rated opponent than himself, he got over-excited. He came out with some weird, aesthetically pleasing tactics which unfortunately for him, backfired since he didn't have time to calculate them entirely.

I now have 1½/2, not played well, but have ridden my luck in the past 2 games and have the results to show!

29th July 2009 : Round 3

I think there are only 7 people on 2 points, but the field is certainly well spread out. I play Graham Buckley next, who is 2398 grade...so, it isn't going to be easy. I am on board 8 and am certainly right in the mix!

IM Graham Buckley (2398) v Chris Ross (2203)

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 b6 5 Bd3 Bb7 6 Nf3 Ne4 7 0-0 f5 8 Ne5 0-0 9 Nxe4 fxe4 10 Bc2 Qh4 11 c5 bxc5 12 a3 Ba5 13 dxc5 Qg5 14 f4 exf3 15 Nxf3 Qxc5 16 b4 Bxf3 17 Rxf3 Qe5 18 Bb2 Qxb2 19 Bxh7+ Kxh7 20 Rxf8 Qe5 21 bxa5 1 - 0

A disappointing loss - especially so since the number of moves was relatively low. Although the game lasted nearly 4 hours, both of us getting down to the last few minutes, the result was in no doubt towards the time control.

In short, I had prepared well for my opponent, whereas his preparation was entirely wasted. He had seen my games in the database and expected the Queen's Gambit Declined but I whipped out a line of the Nimzo-Indian in which I had found fault in his previous games.

So, the game trundled along according to theory for a while. That is up to move 8, when he came out with Ne5, which I hadn't seen before. I had only ever seen 8 Qc2. Amazingly, my natural response to avoid 9 Qh5+ is not the best! Surprisingly, 8 ... Nf6, the retreat and avoidance of the exchange on e4 is best. Amazing!

After that, my aggressive play met with nothing. The point of my 15 ... Qxc5 was that I thought I had 16 .. Qc3 as a follow-up, hitting the rook, but 17 Bd2 hits the queen and defends the rook. It is lost after that, of course. I don't feel too bad at least... I was just out-theoried, that's all.

30th July 2009 : Round 4

Chris Ross (2203) v Roger De Coverly (2127)

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 b6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Bb7 5 Bd3 e6 6 0-0 a6 7 c4 d6 8 Nc3 Nf6 9 f4 Be7 10 Be3 Qc7 11 Rc1 Nbd7 12 b4 0-0 13 Qe2 Rfe8 14 Nb3 Bf8 15 g4 g6 16 g5 Nh5 17 Qf2 Rac8 18 Be2 Ng7 19 h4 Qd8 20 a3 f5 21 gxf6 Qxf6 22 Qg3 d5 23 f5 exf5 24 Bg5 Qd6 25 Bf4 Qe7 26 Bg5 Qd6 27 Bf4 Qe7 28 exd5 Nf6 29 Rfe1 Qd7 30 Qf2 Nfh5 31 Bh2 Qd8 32 c5 Be7 33 Bxh5 Nxh5 34 c6 Bxc6 35 dxc6 Rxc6 36 Rcd1 Qc8 37 Nd5 Re6 38 Nd4 Rxe1+ 39 Rxe1 Bf6 40 Nxf6+ Nxf6 41 Qa2+ Kh8 42 Be5 Kg7 43 Qb2 Kf7 44 Qb3+ Kg7 45 Nf3 h6 46 Qb2 Rf8 47 Bxf6+ Rxf6 48 Re7+ 1 - 0

First, can I thank all of those who are sending me messages and their good luck pick-me-ups? I am receiving them all, but I am so bogged down with preparation and the sheer momentous occasion that I simply don't have the time to answer individuals. But thanks in any case!

If you ever wondered the definition of the word "hack", then simply look no further than my game from yesterday. My win was a sheer "hack"!

Many years ago, I would have condemned such play but this game was bred from sheer determination to win. But hey, how many times have I had folk on the England Grand Prix weekend congress circuit go for hacks against me? When they are in a decent position and when nothing else is available, they push their g pawn. So, do as is done to you, right?!

I wanted to keep my opponent on the back foot since he is an aggressive player, having played the Marshall Gambit in the Ruy Lopez and other such things. I wasn't expecting 2 ... b6 in the Sicilian though!

So, my 15 g4! was born out of the wish to get the game over with as quickly as possible and the sheer fact that I could not see any other plan apart from initiating the attack.

To be fair though, I thought my opponent fended off the hack quite well. Move 20 ... f5 certainly caused

me to pause and at that point I had 15 minutes to reach move 40!

You will note that on move 27, we repeated the position. My opponent even offered a draw at that point...but with 5 minutes on the clock, I was confident of making the time control and remaining on top, although the tactics were complicated. 34 ... Bxc6 is probably forced, since if he retreats to a8, then I simply push my d pawn down to d7 and will fork there.

This game shows though, doesn't it, that around an ECF grade of 180, you can play in this manner and still beat people. You have to be a class above that to be able to fend off such crude attacks. And that leaves us with the principle that hacks like this shouldn't work, surely?

I am actually very pleased with this game, although it certainly is not my usual style of play.

31st July 2009 : Round 5

Today, I am on board 8 and play Grandmaster Simon Williams, who is a formidable player. I have played him before at a rapidplay congress in Richmond, where he played 2 a3! against the Sicilian. I don't think he will play that today, but it will be an incredibly tough game.

Well, 2½/4 is certainly a good start. Let's hope that I can get something from today...

GM Simon Williams (2527) v Chris Ross (2203)

1 c4 e6 2 Nc3 d5 3 d4 Nf6 4 Nf3 Nbd7 5 Bf4 dxc4 6 e3 Nb6 7 Bxc4 Nxc4 8 Qa4+ Bd7 9 Qxc4 Bd6 10 Bg5 0-0 11 0-0 Be7 12 Ne5 Ne8 13 Bxe7 Qxe7 14 Ne4 Rc8 15 Rfc1 Nd6 16 Qb4 Rfd8 17 a4 Kf8 18 Nc5 Be8 19 a5 a6 20 Ra3 Bb5 21 Rac3 Ne4 22 R3c2 Rd5 23 Qb3 Nxc5 24 Rxc5 Rxc5 25 Rxc5 Rd8 26 Qc2 f6 27 Rxc7 Qb4 28 Nf3 Qxa5 29 Qc5+ Kg8 30 h4 Rd7 31 Rc8+ Rd8 32 Qe7 Rxc8 33 Qxe6+ Kf8 34 Qxc8+ Kf7 35 Qxb7+ 1 - 0

The game was good, I played a cramped, but decent position for some time. I played exactly like James Cobb, who drew with Williams in round 3. But then, I managed to blunder a pawn and it went down hill quickly after that.

Got 2½/5, so still on 50%. I'm having to move digs, so I may go off the airwaves for a while, but I'll get news to you all somehow...

1st August 2009 : Round 6

OK, I lost to Grandmaster Simon Williams yesterday but I'm playing Bonafont today. Tough, but not scary.

Chris Ross (2203) v Philip Bonafont (2124)

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Qa4+ Nc6 5 Nc3 Nd5 6 e4 Nb6 7 Qd1 Bg4 8 d5 Ne5 9 Bf4 Bxf3 10 gxf3 Ng6 11 Bg3 e5 12 dxe6 fxe6 13 Qxd8+ Rxd8 14 a4 Bd6 15 a5 Nd7 16 a6 bxa6 17 Bxc4 Nde5 18 Bxe6 Nxf3+ 19 Kf1 Nf4 20 Ba2 Rf8 21 Nd5 c6 22 Nxf4 Bxf4 23 Kg2 Ne5 24 Rhd1 Ke7 25 Rxd8 Kxd8 26 Bb3 Kc7 27 Rxa6 Kb7 28 Ra4 g5 29 Be6 Rd8 30 Ra5 Nd3 31 Bf5 h6 32 Kf3 Kb6 33 Ra3 Ne5+ 34 Ke2 Rd2+ 35 Kf1 Rxb2 36 Be6 a5 37 Kg2 Kb5 38 Bxf4 gxf4 39 Rh3 Kb4 40 Rxh6 a4 41 Rh8 a3 42 Rb8+ Kc3 43 Ra8 Kb4 ½ - ½

Yeah, I'm back on the airwaves, having successfully moved to my new digs and connected to a wireless network from BT Openzone thanks to Shafeeq...

Round 6 saw me up against Philip Bonafont - a tough draw as Phil can mix things up tactically or positionally and has played some good chess over the years. I prepped well and found a line in the Queen's Gambit Accepted that I liked for White and which I thought gave me great pressure.

The opening went as expected, but Phil deviated quite quickly, giving up his bishop pair voluntarily. I gained a massive centre and the bishop pair for the Queen's Gambit c4 pawn. I realised that my a pawn would prove very strong and threw it down the board to create weaknesses. My target was the a7 pawn, of course. If I could snatch it, that would prove very annoying for Black. Phil didn't push past with b7-b6 though and simply took it, giving himself a horrible pawn structure, but clinging on to his material gallantly!

In the late middle game, however, I mishandled my minor pieces and allow Black far too much activity and Black soon went on the offensive. As we passed the time control, I was still my pawn down and struggling to hold the ending, despite having compensation and a potentially dangerous outside h pawn. Phil just couldn't quite find the right squares for his pieces and he allowed my rook to become my saving grace; it became active on the back rank and a forced repetition of the position salvaged the draw.

2nd August 2009 : Rest Day

This latest game gives me 3/6, which is a 50% scoring rate. I'm happy with this, since my 2 draws have been hard-fought and my two losses have been to two very strong titled players, who are doing well in the tournament. My ideal would be to obtain another 3 points in the final week which starts tomorrow. That would give me 6/11, which would be tremendous, but we'll have to wait and see who I have tomorrow. The pairings are not yet up.

Today has been the "rest" day and I have been...well, resting! I've done practically nothing today, but lounge around, read and now I'm off for some food and a quick drink.

3rd August 2009 : Round 7

Monday morning and I am fully rested after a day of sheer relaxing.

Today I shall be playing a player who is slightly weaker than me but he is one of the Jones brothers, the youngsters from London. The B.C.A. have met these guys in the 4NCL and they are certainly up-and-coming players. This isn't going to be easy, but I'm expecting an open Sicilian, probably a Taimanov, Kan or Paulsen or something of the kind. So, let's hope I can start the second week with a flying start.

William GE Jones (2052) v Chris Ross (2203)

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nc6 5 Nc3 Qc7 6 Be3 a6 7 Qd2 Nf6 8 0-0-0 Bb4 9 f3 Ne5 10 Nb3 Bxc3 11 Qxc3 Qxc3 12 bxc3 Nc6 13 c4 0-0 14 Bc5 Re8 15 Bd6 Rd8 16 e5 Ne8 17 f4 Nxd6 18 Rxd6 Kf8

19 c5 b6 20 Be2 b5 21 Kb2 Bb7 22 Ra1 Ke8 23 a4 b4 24 a5 Rdc8 25 Ra4 Rab8 26 Kc1 Ke7 27 Kd2 f6 28 exf6+ gxf6 29 Kd3 e5 30 g3 exf4 31 gxf4 Rg8 32 Bf3 Rg1 33 Kc4 Rf1 34 Bxc6 Bxc6 35 Rxb4 Rxb4+ 36 Kxb4 Rxf4+ 37 Kc3 Rf3+ 38 Kb4 Rf4+ 39 Nd4 Rh4 40 c4 Be4 41 Rxa6 f5 42 Ra7 Kd8 43 a6 Rh6 44 c6 Bxc6 45 Nxf5 ½ - ½

A very tough game. With black, I chose a Sicilian and gave up the dark-squared bishop to shatter my opponent's pawn structure and king. Surprisingly, he swapped off queens and simply outplayed me positionally. For a tactical player, he played impressively well and I thought I was struggling from move 11 onwards until the final moments of the time control. However, in the time scramble, he started messing around a fair bit, especially with his king, allowing me to open things up and start seeking activity. What's that adage, "Never allow your opponent counter-play"? Well, that is what he allowed me and suddenly, I became very active and punted another draw in the time scramble!

The draw was declined and the time control just about reached, but not before I had achieved equality in a difficult ending. Some accurate play by both sides in the ending finally resulted in a draw, but I thought I salvaged yet another half-point by clever, experienced play. So, 3½/7, maintaining my 50% record.

4th August 2009 : Round 8

Today, I have Charlie Storey - a known tactician and a player who plays on, even when considerable material down. It's another tough pairing (highly likely going to be a "Modern") and I think I will be once again live on-line, as I will be on board 15.

Chris Ross (2203) v Charles Storey (2279)

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 g6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Bg7 5 Nc3 d6 6 Be3 Nf6 7 Qd2 Ng4 8 Bg5 Qb6 9 Nb3 Be6 10 h3 Ne5 11 Nd5 Bxd5 12 exd5 Na6 13 Be3 Nc5 14 Be2 Ned7 15 Rb1 Qc7 16 Nxc5 Nxc5 17 Bb5+ Kf8 18 0-0 a6 19 Be2 b5 20 c3 h5 21 Rfe1 Bf6 22 Bf3 Kg7 23 Bd4 Rhe8 24 Bxh5 Nd7 25 Be2 Rab8 26 a3 a5 27 Rbc1 Nc5 28 Rcd1 Nb3 29 Bxf6+ exf6 30 Qc2 Nc5 31 Bf1 Rec8 32 Rd4 Nd7 33 Qd2 Ne5 34 Kh2 Rh8 35 f4 Ng4+ 36 Kg1 Nh6 37 Bd3 f5 38 Bf1 Ng8 39 Be2 Nf6 40 Bf3 Nd7 41 Qe3 Nb6 42 Rd2 Rhd8 43 Qd4+ Kg8 44 Qf6 Nd7 45 Qg5 b4 46 axb4 axb4 47 cxb4 Qb6+ 48 Kh1 Qxb4 49 Rde2 Qd4 50 Rc1 Nf6 51 Rcc2 Kg7 52 Red2 Qa7 53 Qh4 Rb4 54 Qf2 Qxf2 55 Rxf2 Rxf4 56 Rfd2 Nd7 57 Rc7 Ne5 58 Be2 Rb8 59 Ra7 Rfb4 60 Ra6 Rxb2 0 - 1

A heavy defeat. I am still finding it difficult to understand and accept. Devastating loss and one that I should not have suffered.

It was bizarre. A poor opening by Black, and I did everything right. My whole instinct told me that I was just hugely better. I won a pawn with a neat tactic, had the bishop pair, the stronger position.

Analysis with some friends has shown that maybe, I should have been more aggressive in my play. Although I thought long and hard about it, it never seemed possible. Oh well, I guess that I should just

get on and ensure to get the best out of my remaining games. It's hard to come to terms with a loss like that though.

5th August 2009 : Round 9

Oh well, got Black today against another junior...

Victor GL Jones (2076) v Chris Ross (2203)

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nc6 5 Nc3 Qc7 6 Be3 a6 7 Qd2 Nf6 8 0-0-0 Bb4 9 f3 Ne5 10 Nb3 b5 11 Kb1 Nc4 12 Bxc4 bxc4 13 Nc1 Rb8 14 g4 d6 15 Ka1 Qa5 16 N1e2 0-0 17 h4 Nd7 18 g5 Nb6 19 Bxb6 Qxb6 20 Rh2Qb7 21 h5 d5 22 Rb1 dxe4 23 fxe4 Qc7 24 Rg2 Bb7 25 Qe3 Bc5 26 Qh3 Qe5 27 Qg4 Bc6 28 g6 fxc6 29 hxg6 h6 30 Rh1 Rb7 31 Rgh2 Be3 32 Rh5 Qf6 33 Qh3 Bd2 34 e5 Qxc6 35 Rg1 Qxc2 36 Qxe6+ Kh8 37 Rb1 Rf1 38 Qc8+ Kh7 39 Qxb7 Rxb1+ 40 Nxb1 Bxb7 41 Nd4 Qd1 42 Rh4 Bg5 0 - 1

A nice win. I was playing the brother of William Jones, an earlier opponent in the tournament. Victor played the same opening and did exactly the same as his brother (who got a great position against me). But I had learned from my mistake, having analysed it in depth. I had a sneaky suspicion that he may try the same trick and it was I who varied first. A typical Sicilian game occurred with opposite-castled kings, but my attack was that bit quicker. White whipped up quite an attack towards the time control and some clever defensive tricks and the final counter-attack, with some neat tactics secured the point for me.

So, I was pleased with that. After my disappointing loss the day before, I was delighted not to have it affect my chess. I think I am strong-minded enough not to allow things like that affect me as a general rule, but I can't help subconscious consequences. But not to be. I played well and restored my belief in my ability, not having understood my loss against Storey.

This gives me 4½/9, restoring my 50% record, which is absolutely fine.

6th August 2009 : Round 10

Today, I think I am playing yet another junior, which will be my fourth in the tournament. He seems quite a tactical player and is doing quite well here, having taken out two 2200+ players already. So, this is no push-over. I expect a difficult game - probably a 3 Bb5+ Moscow variation of the Sicilian.

Chris Ross (2203) v Ryan-Rhys Griffiths (2137)

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 a6 3 c3 d5 4 exd5 Nf6 5 d4 cxd4 6 cxd4 Nxd5 7 Nc3 Nc6 8 Qb3 Nxc3 9 bxc3 e6 10 Bd3 Qc7 11 0-0 Bd6 12 c4 0-0 13 Bb2 b6 14 Rac1 Bf4 15 d5 Ne7 16 Qc2 Ng6 17 Rcd1 Rd8 18 Qc3 f6 19 Qb3 Kh8 20 Rfe1 Nf8 21 Be4 Rb8 22 Nd4 Bd7 23 Ba3 Bxb2+ 24 Kh1 f5 25 Bb1 Be5 26 dxe6 Nxe6 27 Nxf5 Nc5 28 Qe3 Bf6 29 Bc1 Re8 30 Qf3 Bc6 31 Qg4 Rbd8 32 Rxe8+ Rxe8 33 Bf4 Be5 34 Nd6 Bxf4 35 Nxe8 Bxe8 36 Qf5 g5 37 Qf8#

Two straight wins in a row! And back to my targeted 50%! I have 5½/10, so even a loss in the last round will mean I have achieved the 50% objective.

I am delighted with my last two games. I have played well in both of them, playing aggressively and setting out with sheer determination to win.

7th August 2009 : Round 11

Today, I face Michael White, an attacking player himself, who is not scared to sacrifice material to gain the initiative. I will probably play a "Modern" defence against him to take him into unexpected waters. I've seen a couple of his games as White in the Modern and he hasn't handled it brilliantly.

So, a last push and that will be that. Tonight, I'll be out hopefully watching the Middlesbrough v Sheffield United match, and will return home early tomorrow.

Michael White (2259) v Chris Ross (2203)

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nc3 d6 4 f4 Nd7 5 Nf3 a6 6 Bd3 b5 7 e5 Bb7 8 Ne4 c5 9 c3 cxd4 10 cxd4 Qb6 11 Qe2 Nh6 12 Be3 Nf5 13 Bf2 Qa5+ 14 Kf1 O-O 15 g4 Nh6 16 g5 Nf5 17 Ng3 Nh4 18 Nxe4 Bxe4 19 Nxe4 f6 20 Be4 Rad8 21 Bd5+ Kh8 22 Nxe6+ hxg6 23 Qg4 1 - 0

On reflection...

OK, just about recovered from my exploits at the British now. I've taken these past few days to recharge myself...and I've certainly done a lot of sleeping in the last 72 hours!

I ended up with 5½/11, which gave me my targeted 50%. Although I was slightly disappointed with my final round loss, I think my whole performance was just about what I expected and hoped for. It was my very first time in this prestigious event and I have never played in an eleven round Swiss before either. I think the experience was excellent and will certainly prepare me for future attempts.

I was seeded 40th and finished 42nd, tying with several others. I think I have lost a couple of ELO points from the tournament, but considering the strength of the tournament, I am not unduly worried about that. My rating and position indicates that I played at my strength and my games were extremely interesting. My style of chess during the tournament was rather aggressive and I am pleased to demonstrate to myself that I can play a variety of styles. My aggressive style of chess hasn't really been exploited in the past and I will endeavour to explore that side of my ability in the near future.

Well, thanks to one and all for all the comments that were sent to me during and after the tournament and I will now begin to annotate the games and slowly send them out for everybody to peruse.

Chris Ross