

# NEW ENGLANDER

## Chess Club Update – Christmas 2014

### Chairman's Chatter

Remember the winter of 1963? Maybe even 1947? Every time they are mentioned the snow gets deeper, the temperatures lower and they lasted for ages. Nostalgia is harmless and occasionally beneficial.

I was recently looking back on the game fragment below that is so old, I do not know when it was played but probably in my first year at Perkins Chess Club. I won the game but not before committing a horrible opening blunder.

**P Dansey v P Hanks**  
St Neots B v Perkins

**1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 b6 4 a3 Bb7 5 Nc3 Be7 6 Bg5**

So far a conventional Queen's Indian Defence but now 6 ... d5 would be normal.

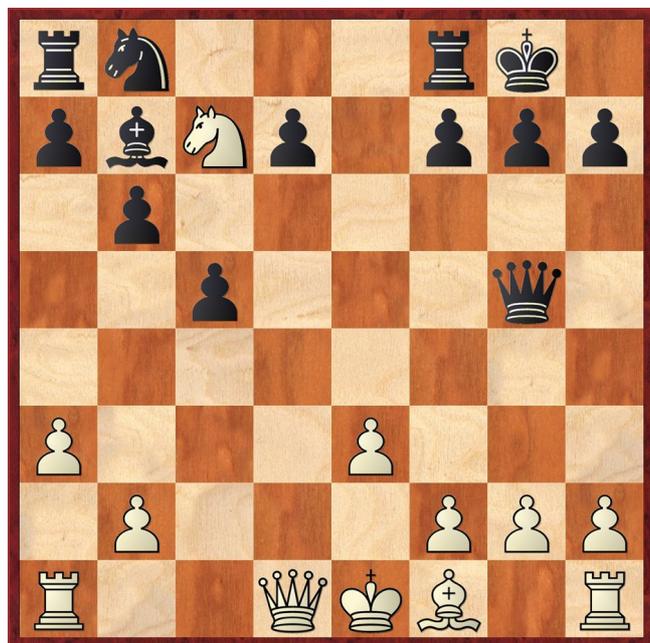
**6 ... 0-0 7 e3 c5**

Black needs to challenge White's centre and in reply, 8 d5 is impossible – it so *obviously* loses a pawn.

**8 d5 exd5**

But not like this! Let's look at 8 ... Nxd5 instead. An accurate move order is required by both sides i.e. 9 Nxd5 (9 cxd5 Bxg5) Bxg5 10 Nxg5 exd5 11 Qh5 (11 cxd5 Qxg5) h6.

**9 cxd5 Nxd5 10 Nxd5 Bxg5 11 Nxg5 Qxg5 12 Nc7**



Oops! My short-sighted analysis and lax attitude has cost me the exchange. So why does Fritz evaluate the position as level – in fact exactly 0.00?

I was surprised to see its continuation 12 ... Qe5 13 Nxa8 Qxb2

Wot? No recapture? If 14 Rb1 Qc3+ 15 Qd2 Qxd2+ 16 Kxd2 Bxa8, Black has sufficient material compensation so 14 Nc7 is the only try to keep the advantage. Then

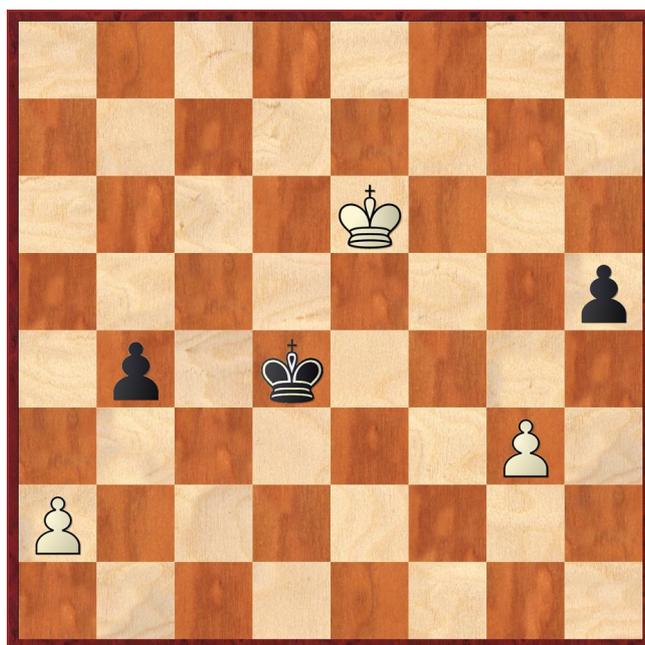
- i. 14 ... Qc3+ 15 Ke2 Qb2+ 16 Ke1 Qc3+ leads only to a perpetual check repetition because intervention by the white queen Qd1-d2 allows Qxa1 and
- ii. an attempt to escape by 16 Kd3 only walks into 16 ... c4+ 17 Kxc4 Be4 with a mating net after e.g. 18 Bd3 d5+ 19 Nxd5 Rc8+ or 18 Qd4 d5+ with ruinous material loss.

Opening theory tends not to feature mechanisms as in (i) that force a draw but knowing a few might rescue a valuable half point against a powerful opponent. A failing on my part but fortunately, I am not alone...

### A Ghost Story of Christmas

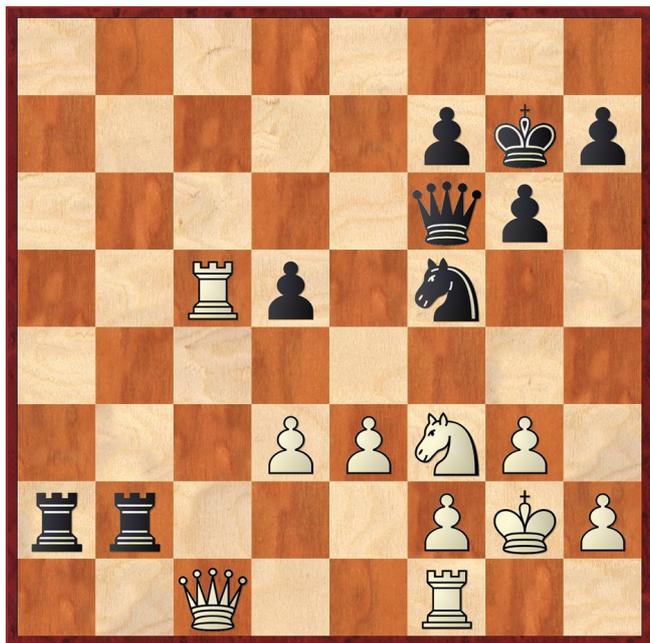
"More pieces, Master Cratchit!" exclaimed Ebenezer Snooze, "Bah humbug!" The miser huddled over the chessboard, occasionally rubbing his hands together for warmth before moving the icy pieces. His younger opponent was always complaining – sometimes about the air temperature in the freezing room, now about the simplicity of the positions they were studying.

Stifling a yawn, Snooze continued, "You can learn a lot from king and pawn endings. Take this position. It will quite get your pawns and your pulse racing..."



"It is Black to move ... oh dear ..." The old man's mind was drifting to the Siesta Variation. "I'm sure you can find ..." - the eyelids were drooping - "... how can Black ... manage to draw ... zzz."

The room had somehow changed. In the gloom, it was hard to make out the hooded figure sitting opposite. His face was shrouded by a generous cowl and a shaking bony figure pointed to the board.



"I recognise this position" Snooze stated growing in confidence. "It's from a Botvinnik game."

"Verily" said the apparition. "In ye game from 1958, the world champion playeth 27 ... d4."

"But didn't that overlook something ... a better move?"

With that, fingers of a chill mist swirled from the ground and obscured the view. The hooded figure faded and was gone. Snooze's time with the Ghost of Chess Miss Past was at an end and in place of the eerie silence, Snooze could hear a faint rhythmic beat. Turning, Snooze was startled to be confronted by a floating skull, baseball cap reversed on the cranium and mini-speakers plugged into the ear sockets.



"LOL dude. Chess is ☺, in it?" it said and if bare bones had lips, it would have smiled. The head swivelled and unseeing eyes gazed down on a reformed position.

"Ah! Magnus Carlsen." Snooze was equal to the task.

"Yeh man. He played 20 c3."

"No, no. He may still win in under 140 characters but it shouldn't it be mate in 3?"

Scarcely had Snooze uttered the words when the first rays of the morning sun shone through the window and the harsh glare temporarily blinded him. Lowering his hand from his eyes, he no longer saw the Ghost of Chess Miss Present but standing there was a short robot, the sun glinting on its gold metallic surface.

"Who are you?" Snooze ventured "R2D2?"

"No. I am d4f5" it replied.

"Pardon. Your electronic voice is hard to understand."

"d4f5" it repeated.

"You're talking Double Dutch," Snooze quipped. "What can I possibly know about a Chess Miss Yet to Come?"

Again the pieces moved – this time by a mechanical hand at inhuman speed. The humanoid jerked back to face Snooze.



"It is Black to play but you should recognise this position." The android had obviously been impressed by Snooze's chess knowledge.

"Yes. Dr Frank Poole resigned as White because his infallible opponent announced mate in two. Now, I come to look again, I think with best defence it takes a little longer..."

Snooze awoke with a start. The visions had gone and what remained was a steely determination to play more accurately and avoid errors in future.

Merry Combinations and a Happy New Year!

*Paul Hanks*