

New Englander

Chess Club Update – July 2024

Chairman's Chatter

What a difference a month makes! In the past four weeks, we have reviewed a new venue, held an Extraordinary General Meeting, decided to move and shifted all our equipment. Thanks to Ed for taking the initiative and Chris for organising the transfer to the City of Peterborough Sports Club.

With some sadness, we bid farewell to the Yard of Ale which has treated us with great fairness and friendship over the past three years. We wish them well with their future business and our fervent hope now is that we can be equally happy and continue to play so enjoyably in our new home.

With the change come some new opportunities. Ed is keen to establish a Junior Club which we shall try to formalise before the next season starts in September. If you are able to offer assistance, please make it known to Ed and we shall endeavour to structure the curriculum accordingly. Let us hope that it will be the start of the injection of new blood that chess needs. We have exciting prospects in store!

Paul Hanks

CCCA AGM Summary

The Cambridgeshire County Chess Association held its Annual General Meeting at St Ives on 18th June 2024 and the main points were :-

- the county teams were competitive within East Anglia but not successful in progressing to the final stages. Matches are to return to 16 boards which will put pressure on forming a full team. If you are interested in playing at either Open or U1850 levels, please contact the captains Paul McMahon and Neil Greenwood respectively
- Paul Kemp retired from the Committee and was thanked for many years of sterling service. He is superseded as treasurer by James Cole of Linton. The remainder of the Committee were re-elected en bloc with the exception of position of Junior Organiser which remains vacant
- the aggregate grade limit for the Team 4000 competition was raised to 4200
- March and Bourne affiliated as new CCCA clubs and were awarded a grant to fund equipment purchase
- team entries for next season were as last year but with the addition of the new clubs in the Team 4200 (North) and Godmanchester replace Peterborough in Team 4200 (South). Linton were hopeful of entering the Fenland

Trophy Open (subsequently confirmed) and Cambridge may re-enter Division 1. League finalisation and notification of any date restrictions are due from teams by 1st August

- rule change proposals to avoid leagues being decided by match defaults and reducing division 1 teams to 4 boards were defeated.

Please note that after their meeting an enquiry was received from a new club formed in Northstowe.

Puzzle Problem

White to play and mate in 2.



Position : kr6/BR6/B7/8/8/7K/8/Q7

Last Month's solution (Schiffert 1928)

1 Qh1 Rxb7 2 Qxb7# [1 ... R any8 2 R any7#]

Diary Dates

4th September Start of next season (to be confirmed)

29th September Cambridgeshire Rapidplay will be held at Whittlesford. Online entry is via www.cambschess.co.uk/Rapidplay

23-24th November Tentative date of the County Individual at Wansford

Website to Watch

As the month opens, you can catch the final rounds of the Grand Chess Tour tournament in Bucharest. Starting on 26th June, the classical event continues until 5th July with a line-up of ten grandmasters including Caruana and title challenger Gukesh.

Games will appear on the online channels for St Louis Chess Club – click for YouTube and [Twitch](#).

From 16th to 25th July, Biel hosts a tournament with a “triathlon” format which includes blitz, rapid and classical games. Explanatory details can be found [here](#).

Serious Study

Regular readers of this newsletter (if any) may have noticed that a whole season has passed without having to suffer one of my games. Thanks are due to all the contributors in the preceding months but all good things do come to an end.

It is now the closed season and our thoughts should be turning to how we can quietly improve our standard of play so that we return stronger than before. In particular, a first step must be to acknowledge our failings and fortunately, my efforts during this year provide plenty of suitable material.

While leafing through *New in Chess* magazine, I espied an article in which trainer Nate Solon offered some novel advice on reviewing your games (see issue 2024#1). I will paraphrase his method (which will introduce my own bias) and try it out for the newsletter in this and the next edition. Basically :

Step 1 Switch off your computer

A chess engine is fine for showing you better moves to play but a continuation based on analysis depth far beyond human capacity rarely highlights the thinking that a mortal player should adopt in any specific position under match conditions.

Step 2 Record your thoughts in your post-mortem

As soon as possible, review your game (or, if time presses, the critical positions), note the variations and strategies you considered and above all, record your feelings. At the end of the day, it is often your state of confidence, annoyance or some other psychological factor which determines the direction you take.

Step 3 Deepen your understanding with variations

Playing out and writing down the options will substantiate (or otherwise!) your objectivity during the game – possibly with assistance from other players.

Step 4 Summarise and look for common ground

Distil the factors that were important in deciding the game and add the findings simply and honestly to a register of your games. For me, the reason for this is the most enlightening – to investigate whether a theme runs across the narrative of a series of recent games. The important thing is to discover and correct a systematic flaw in your thought processes that emerges in many of your games rather than to attend just to the one-off blunders.

Step 5 Switch on your computer...

In this article, I intend to take one example game through steps 1 to 3 and next month, I shall see whether I have been successful drawing general conclusions in Step 4 when comparing my performance across several games.

Please note the convention :

[analysis] in square brackets has been constructed only during the manual post-mortem

{analysis} in curly bracket constitutes the computer's verdict under Step 5

^{1,2} superscripts refer to footnotes that expand my conclusions in specific positions.

P Hanks v J Beck

New England A v St Ives A Bd 3; 30.04.2024

1 d4 b6

I had half-forgotten this move was one of John's favourites. A distant memory warned me of tactics following 2 e4 Bb7 3 Bd3 f5 aiming for Bb7xg2. I paused to decide how to proceed.

2 e4 Bb7

3 Nc3 e6

4 Nf3 Bb4

5 Bd3 Nf6

6 Qe2 h6

This was more or less what I expected during my thoughts at move 2 but here, I became irritated. It all seemed very familiar. Had I played this in an earlier encounter? I was repeating myself with subconscious predictability and afterwards, John confirmed that in 2022, our game continued 6 ... 0-0 7 Bg5 h6 8 Bh4.

7 Bd2 0-0

Worse still, I had no idea of what happened next in that ghost from the past and had vague recollections of rejecting e4-e5 unnecessarily...

8 0-0-0

... and I did so again mostly from fear of the complications that I could not recall¹. Over the board, I should have been able to fathom the main lines of 8 e5

- 8 ... Nd5 is the most natural and then 9 Qe4
 - 9 ... g6 10 Bxh6 but I worried there might be a sting in the tail with 10 ... Nxc3 [*but Black has almost everything en prise after 11 Qxb7*]
 - 9 ... f5 10 exf6
 - ◆ 10 ... Nxf6 11 Qxb7
 - ◆ 10 ... Qxf6 11 Qh7+ Kf7 [12 Bg6+ Ke7 (12 ... Qxg6 13 Ne5+) 13 Nxd5+ exd5 14 Bxb4+]
 - ◆ 10 ... Rxf6 11 Qh7+ Kf8 [12 Qh8+ Ke7 13 Nxd5+ exd5 14 Bxb4+]
- 8 ... Ne8 looks passive² and [9 Ng5 (*with the threat 10 Nh7*) is possibly unnecessary (*but fun!*) and after 9 ... hxg5 (*amongst several others*) 10 Qh5 yields a massive initiative e.g. 10 ... g6 11 Qh6 Bxg2 12 Bxg5 f6 13 Qxg6+ Ng7 14 Qh7+ Kf7 15 Bg6+ but 11 ... Be7 is tough to crack. 11 Bxg6 f6 12 Qxg6+ Ng7 13 Bxg5 Qe8 also rebuffs the attack so 10 h4 is probably best when 10 ... gxh4 11 Qh5

- 11 ... f5 12 exf6 Nxf6 (12 ... Qxf6 13 Bh7+ Kh8 14 Bg6+) 13 Qxh4 Qe8 (13 ... Be7 14 Bg6) 14 Qg5 Be7 15 Bg6 Ne4 16 Qh5] {No! 14 ... Bxc3 15 Bg6 (15 Bxc3 Be4) 15 ... Bxd2+ 16 Kxd2 Ne4+}
- [11 ... g6 12 Bxg6 fxc6 13 Qxg6+ Kh8 14 Bg5] {No! 13 ... Ng7 14 Bg5 Qe8 transposes into an earlier refutation. The attack is unsound. White has plenty of better choices e.g. 9 0-0 or 9 a3.}

This highlights how many red herrings there are!

- 8 ... Nh7 9 h4² with either a pawn storm or similar attack to the previous note e.g. 9 ... Nc6 10 Ng5 hxg5 11 Bxh7+
- 8 ... Bxc3 9 bxc3 Nd5 10 Qe4 f5/g6 11 c4 Ne7 12 Qxb7 {though 11 Qh7+ Kf7 12 Bg6+ Ke7 13 Bxh6 is stronger because 11 c4 allows 11 ... Nf4 12 Qxb7 Nxg2+ with a little compensation.}

8 ... a5
9 g4

Black is still refraining from piece development and that needs to be punished! With that in mind, despite my previous timidity, I felt justified with this blatant hack.

9 ... Nh7

If Black accepts the pawn 9 ... Nxg4 10 Rdg1, White either regains it quickly (10 ... f5 11 h3 Nf6 12 Bxh6) or gets a fearsome attack 10 ... h5 11 h3 Nf6 12 e5

- 12 ... Ne8
 - when sadly a hidden option 13 Nh4 fails to 13 ... Qxh4 14 Bg5 [14 ... Qxd4] {but Black needs to be extremely careful. 15 Nb5 Qc5 removes the response Qd4-f4+ to a bishop exchange of f6 so 16 Qxh5 f5 (16 ... g6 17 Bf6) 17 exf6 Rxf6 (17 ... Nxf6 18 Bxf6 leads to checkmate)}
 - 13 Ng5 g6 [14 Bxg6 fxc6 15 Nxe6 dxe6 16 Rxc6+ Kf7 17 Qxh5] {and there is no realistic defence.}
- 12 ... Nd5 when 13 Rxc6+ looked good. I would only analyse the consequences if we reached that far but in this type of position, it should be a standard procedure I can execute in my sleep. {Yep! After 13 ... Kxc6 14 Rg1+ Kh8 15 Ng5, I can dream about 16 Qxh5.}

10 h4 Be7
11 e5

Already, I felt stuck as though my attack has run out of steam and did not want to venture the text move. My reasoning was that I was killing the knight on h7 and would in effect be a piece up provided I did not overlook a trick on the long light-squared diagonal.

The natural continuation 11 g5 appeared to lead to a pawn sacrifice and exchanges ending with my king in check. After 11 ... hxg5 12 hxg5 Nxg5 or 12 ... Bxg5³, I searched for the tactical knock-out blow but failed to

find it, always reaching positions with no clear forcing continuations. Even in the post-mortem, I could not find anything obvious until I started moving the pieces around. I knew it would be dangerous for Black but reaching a clear advantage for White was over my horizon. Eventually and after several refinement attempts, I found a clear path

- 12 ... Bxg5 when 13 Rxc6 was a distraction from the direct 13 Nxg5⁴ Nxg5 14 Qh5 [14 ... f6 15 f4] {15 Bxg5 fxc6 16 e5 is more forceful}
- 12 ... Nxg5 13 Nxg5 Bxg5 14 Qh5 [14 ... Bxd2+ (14 ... Bh6 15 Bxh6 gxf6 16 Qxh6) 15 Kxd2 f5 (15 ... f6 16 Rdg1 Qe7 17 Qh7+) 16 Rdg1 Qf6 17 e5 Bxh1 18 exf6 Bb7 19 Rxc6#]

These variations show that sometimes you have to trust your instinct and work out the possibilities as you go along⁵. The actual analysis, although apparently straightforward, was rather laborious because White often had enticing options along the way and contrary to what I believed, the best one was not necessarily my hard-wired first choice. All this is galling because practically, it was a waste of time since Black can duck the issue with 11 ... h5 and some effort should have been put into assessing 12 g6 [12 ... fxc6 (12 ... Nf6 13 gxf7+ Rxf7 14 Ng5 Rf8 15 e5) 13 Rdg1 Rf6 14 Rh3].

11 ... f6
12 Rh3

I liked this move because it vacates the diagonal, reinforces the knight on f3 from the discovery f6xe5 and gives the option of doubling rooks on either g or h file.

12 ... Na6
13 a3

Having played to prevent 13 ... Nb4 (which John never intended), however, I realised I had become fixated by Qe2-e4 and failed to notice 12 Bg6 with the intention of 13 Qd3. It is not so easy to meet [e.g. 13 ... fxe5 14 dxe5 Bxf3 15 Rxf3 Rxf3 16 Qxf3 Nf8 when 17 Bf7+ Kh8 18 g5 looks dangerous for Black. Clearly, Black's 16th move is not forced but a neutral move like 16 ... Nc5 runs into 17 Bxh6 so 16 ... Bxh4 17 Qf7+ (17 Bxh6 Bg5+) 17 ... Kh8 18 Be4 Rc8 (say) 19 Rh1 (19 ... Be7 20 Rxc6) 19 ... Bg5 20 f4.]

13 ... c5

I stopped liking my position here after two containing moves. Black is putting my centre under pressure which is a bad sign for White in these Hedgehog systems. I judged it best to exchange some pieces.

14 Be4 Bxe4
15 Qxe4 cxd4
16 Qxd4 Nc5
17 Rg1 fxe5
18 Qxe5 Qe8
19 g5

At last! Before I played this, I saw it might have been refuted by 19 ... Rf5 but delved into 20 gxf6 Rxe5 21 Rxc6+ Kf8 22 Nxe5 when Black can return the queen and remain an exchange and two pawns down or

save her at ruinous expense 22 ... Qh5 23 Ng6+ Ke8 24 Rxe7+ Kd8 25 Rxh7 Kc7 (otherwise 26 Rh8+) [26 Rg7 when the advanced pawn adds to Black's deficit. This is quite fancy but I also had to think about 20 ... Bf6 when 21 Rxg7+ Kh8 22 Qg3 gets me out of gaol.

19	...	h5
20	g6	Nf6
21	Nd4	

Only now did I realise it is not so easy to dislodge the knight of f6 and simply checkmate with Qe5xh5 e.g. 21 Bg5 Qxg6. I wanted to get a rook to f3 to sacrifice but my queen will be chased away in the mean time.

21	...	d6
22	Qe2	e5

Suddenly, I have a chance to dislodge the defender on f6...



23	Nd5	Ncd7
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In the confession booth, I have to admit my analysis was based on 23 ... Nxd5 24 Qxh5? when I overlooked the return 24 ... Nf6 which has been my downfall on many previous occasions. While John was thinking, I cooked up the alternative 24 Qc4 when 24 ... exd4 25 Qxd5+ Kh8 26 Qxh5+ justifies my sacrifice. Have I found an escape?

After 23 ... Nxd5 24 Qc4, I have reached my least favoured scenario. My opponent has a full board of options to meet my aggression but this brings difficulties for both defender and attacker. White has a healthy initiative and making space by 24 ... Rxf2 leads to 25 Qxd5+

- [25 ... Kf8 26 Bh6 Bf6 (26 ... gxh6 27 g7#; 26 ... exd4 27 Rf3+ Rxf3 28 Qxf3+ Kg8 (28 ... Bf6 29 Qxf6+) 29 Qd5+ Kh8 30 Qxh5 Kg8 31 Bf4]
- [25 ... Kh8 26 Rf3 Bxh4 (26 ... Rxf3 27 Qxf3 exd4 (27 ... Bf6 28 Nf5) 28 Qxh5+ Kg8 29 Qh7+ Kf8 30 Qh8#) 27 Nf5 Qd8 28 Rxf2 Bxf2 29 Qf3 etc.]

24 Nxf6+

There are so many complications which may gain the exchange that I grasped at a simpler line has the same effect. Perhaps I was tiring and could not be bothered with another promising variation 24 Nc7

- [24 ... Qc8 25 Nxa8 exd4 26 Qxe7 Qc6 27 Qe2 (to avoid 27 ... Re8)]
- [I did not suspect 24 ... Qd8 25 Nc6 Qxc7 26 Nxe7+ Kh8 27 Rg5 with Anastasia's checkmate to follow⁶.]

24	...	Nxf6
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If 24 ... Bxf6 25 Qxh5 and 24 ... Rxf6 25 Qxh5 Bd8 (25 ... exd4 26 Qh7+ Kf8 27 Qh8#) [26 Qh7+ Kf8 27 Qh8+ Ke7 28 Nc6 + Ke6 29 Qxe8+] so Black submits to a small material loss.

25	Ne6	Rc8
26	Rf3	

Given the problems with closing out the attack, it must be time to cash in with 26 Nxf8. Instead, I give Black a second chance.

26	...	Qc6
27	c3	Qe4

I think Black can avoid giving up material as 27 ... Rfe8 28 Rxf6 (28 Rf5 Qe4) leads nowhere [28 ... Bxf6 (28 ... gxf6 29 Qxh5) 29 Qxh5 Rxe6.]

28	Qxe4	Nxe4
29	Nxf8	Rxf8
30	Rxf8+	Kxf8

This ending should be won for White. Don't read on if you don't have to. Please!

31	f3
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Much better would have been variations along the lines of [31 Be3

- 31 ... b5 32 f3 Nc5 33 Bg5 Bf6 34 Bxf6 gxf6 35 g7+ Kg8 36 Rg6 Nd7 37 Kd2 d5 38 b4 a4 39 Kd3 f5 40 Rd6
- 31 ... Bxh4 32 Bxb6 a4 (32 ... Bxf2 33 Rf1) 33 Rh1 Bg5+ 34 Kc2 h4 35 Be3 Bf6 (35 ... Be7 is similar) 36 Kd3 Nc5+ (36 ... d5 37 c4) 37 Bxc5 dxc5 38 Kc4 Be7 39 Kd5 and the bishop cannot protect all the pawns.]

31	...	Nc5
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32 Bg5 Bf6 33 Bxf6 gxf6 34 Kc2 Kg7 35 b4 axb4 36 cxb4 Ne6 37 a4 Nd4+ 38 Kd3 Nxf3 39 Rg3 Nxb4 40 a5 bxa5 41 bxa5 Nf5

I can relax. It is all over now...

42	a6??
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I can actually drop a rook and still be winning!

42	...	Nxg3
43	a7	Kxg6
44	a8Q	e4+
45	Ke3	h4
46	Qg8+	Kh5?
47	Qh7+??	

I wish I could blame time trouble⁷. My opponent was down to the 15 second increment but I still had about

7 minutes remaining. I was scared of a few checks and although 47 Kf4 sprang to mind, I was only thinking of the impossible Qg8-g5# [and did not associate the king move with the threat 48 Qh7#. Black can only delay the inevitable by 47 ... Ne2+ 48 Kf5 Ng3+ 49 Kxf6 and 50 Qg6#].]

47	...	Kg4
48	Qd7+	Kg5
49	Qg7+	

My confidence was shattered by not seeing 49 Qxd6?? Nf5+ until my hand was about to reach out.

49	...	Kf5
50	Qd7+	1/2-1/2??

Phew! That was hard work! It took almost a day to annotate the game without computer help and in almost every instance, I had to re-work the analysis due to a faulty assumption (or two...). But this is what I have learnt so far.

¹ I worry about my lack of knowledge whether it be opening theory or experience from past games. Maybe some bygone sage must have invented the witticism "If you have a poor memory, forget it!" A hazy recollection may be worse than none. What counts is the board in front of you.

² Grandmasters are particularly adept at presenting deep analysis with very few side variations. They are much better at pruning the dead wood. If your opponent has to expend a tempo without enhancing the position, you should be happy with the progress and not need to delve deeply looking for too great an advantage.

³ When there are several alternative moves, it is tempting to try to eliminate the weaker options as quickly as possible and concentrate on perfecting the one you intend to play. This leads to vacillation – moving back-and-forth between superficial snapshots to decide the superior continuation – and can induce panic. I need to be more systematic in making an initial ranking of candidates and testing out each in turn.

⁴ I assume that finding tactical resources is akin to solving riddles. We do revel in chess puzzles but game situations are different. In many cases in the above game, I went looking for the clever trick (such as the queen sacrifice at move 19) when the direct route was plain and decisive. Don't overcomplicate!

⁵ The post-mortem analysis often went well beyond the limited visualisation I expect from myself at the board. The assessment process of what lies beyond my horizon is hard to define but there is a difference between instinct and hope. To my way of thinking, the former applies to the positions in the indistinct distance and hope is what you bring to concrete analysis that you should be foresee but frequently cannot crystallise. I need to improve my instinct by regular play and reduce the need for hope ... by regular play!

⁶ Checkmate may not occur very often on the board but many variations in this game could be

debunked by this sudden death – the # symbol appears 6 times! Know your checkmate patterns!

⁷ I need to take stock of my behaviour as the time control approaches. If I accelerate with around 10 minutes remaining (here moves 31 onwards), I do make mistakes through fatigue. First and foremost, points 1-4 above should improve my efficiency but I need to be less afraid and keep a clear head when running on time increments.

I have bared my soul in revealing the game and the fragility of my post-mortem analysis under the gaze of our friend Fritz. Next time, I hope this candour can be turned to constructive use. I have much to learn!

Paul Hanks

Eye Opener

Davor Rogic (2582) v **Branko Vlaic** (2304)
Sibenik; 20.05.2010

1	e4	b6
2	d4	Bb7
3	Nd2	e6
4	c4	Bb4
5	Qc2	Qh4

Black is showing the same mentality as in the main game i.e. rapid piece development to attack the pawn centre if White chooses to expend tempi there. In fact, Fritz prefers Black's position by the merest shad, possibly due to the continuing pressure from 5 ... f 5 when the natural 6 Bd3 can be met by 6 ... Nf6 7 f3 Nc6 with easy development.

6	Bd3	f5
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Here, however, White can gain respite by chasing the enemy queen whereas 6 ... Qg4 probably forces the awkward 7 Kf1.

7	Ngf3	Qg4
8	0-0	fxe4
9	Nxe4	Nf6

It looks fairly peaceful but other plausible continuations also run into trouble e.g. 9 ... Nc6 10 d5 Nce7 (10 ... exd5 11 cxd5 Nce7 12 Qc4) 11 h3 Qh5 12 Ng3 Qf7 13 Qa4 Bd6 14 Ng5 Qf8 15 Nxe6 etc.

10	Ne5	Qh5
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The queen is running out of squares, for instance 10 ... Qh4 11 Bg5 Qh5 12 Be2.

11	Ng3	Qh4
12	d5	exd5

It may look crude but the best way to avoid the trap is 12 ... Ng4 13 Nf3 Qe7 14 Bg5 Nf6 15 a3 Bd6 when Fritz rates White's position as better by the equivalent of 3 pawns. This is hard to imagine when there is actually no material deficit and only a lead in development. 16 Rae1 may justify the assessment by mounting an assault on Black's uncastled king in a time frame longer than human analysis.

13	Nf5	1-0
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