

New Englander

Chess Club Update – August 2024

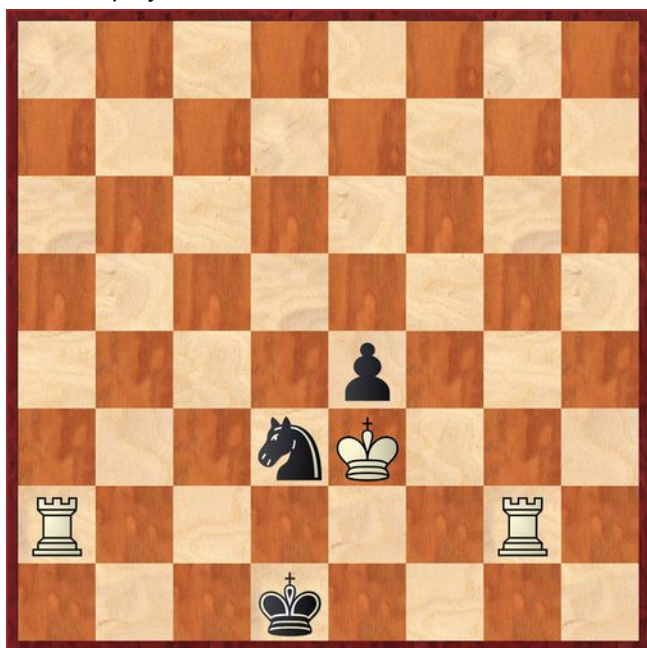
Chairman's Chatter

Summer is a time for holidays ... and holiday reading. The featured game is a sequel to that in the last issue and shows what a rich and varied pastime we enjoy.

Paul Hanks

Puzzle Problem

White to play and mate in 2.



Position : k7/pq1N4/3R3K/8/8/8/6B1/8

Last Month's solution (Daniel 1906)

1 Rc6 a5/a6 2 Ra6# [1 ... Qxc6+ 2 Bxc6#; 1 ... Qc7 2 Rxc7#; 1 ... Q other 2 Rc8#]

Diary Dates

4th September Start of season Rapidplay

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

23-24th November At Christie Hall, Wansford, CCCA Individual Championship. Queries to Jimmy Blair by phone (07966 717825) or email entry (james1blair@yahoo.co.uk).

Website to Watch

The Sinquefield Cup is a highlight of the Grand Chess Tour which brings together ten top grandmasters to play classical chess. The event is hosted between 18th and 29th August by the St Louis Chess Club but their website is hardly user-friendly as they prefer to broadcast via [Twitch](https://www.twitch.tv/stlouischessclub) or [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/stlouischessclub).

Serious Study

This article is a continuation of the self-improvement process started last month. As then, the featured game will be examined first without the computer and the findings checked only later by Fritz. These steps will be denoted by

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

{analysis} in curly brackets constitutes the computer's verdict.

Most importantly on this occasion, as a sting in the tail, the investigation goes deeper in a search for the types of error that are persist across several of my games and could crop up at any time. As a result, this game has been chosen to be a stark contrast to last month's and in place of pure tactics, there is the slow grind of positional manoeuvres. With a lower tempo, there should be less need to delve into sharp variation ... or so I thought!

P Hanks v J Bell

New England A v Peterborough A, Bd 3; 18.04.2024

1	d4	Nf6
2	c4	c5
3	d5	

This is not my usual way of meeting the Benoni Defence but Peterborough had fielded a strong team and I felt I should opt for the solidity of a main line.

3	...	b5
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Oops! This came as a surprise as I had forgotten the Volga/Benko Gambit is a possible continuation. I had nothing prepared but remembered that once, Kasparov played this opening as Black because he knew that his opponent did not accept the offered pawn. The world champion was then confident of Black obtaining a superior position and that thought, at least, determined my next two moves!

4	cx b5	a6
5	bxa6	Bxa6

Now it was a time to think. Black's idea is to fianchetto a bishop on g7 and combine the diagonal pressure against b2 with rooks occupying the open a and b files. The strategy I concocted was to construct a small pattern of piece development to block the vertical threats and manoeuvre my dark-squared bishop to confront its counterpart. The light-squared bishops can be easily swapped and the b5 square becomes key - available for a knight outpost to shield my queenside pawns.

6	Nc3	d6
7	Nf3	g6
8	e4	Bxf1

9 Kxf1 Bg7
10 g3

Being completely ignorant of the theory, I hoped my "natural" moves would pass muster and surprisingly, they do in some guise. In fact, we follow Belous (2569) v Andriasian (2611), Moscow 2014 for two more moves. In some other games, White somehow tried to find time for 10 h3 and Kf1-g1-h2.

10 ... 0-0
11 Kg2 Nbd7

So far, both sides have played as expected to give scope to the minor pieces and rooks. Black's last move, however, shows that my opponent has not considered my plan. From the knight's current deployment, it is very difficult to contest the b5 square and the routes (e.g. Nf6-e8-c7) delay the second rook from joining the fray. Firstly, I need to bolster the pawn on e4 to free my knight from its defence.

12 Qe2

In the cited grandmaster game, White tried 12 Re1 which has a similar concept but does not prepare the occupation of b5 or defend b2.

12 ... Nb6
13 Bd2 Qc7

Black's king's rook aims for b8 without loss of tempo and although the black queen's position fails to attack b5, there is still a path for the knight Nb6-c8-a7 – again with move order interference with the rooks and more long-winded than Nb8-a6-c7.

14 Rhb1

14 Nb5 was tempting but did not seem to lead anywhere at the moment. {Here and on the adjacent moves, White could throw in a2-a4, probably through the computer's lack of fear of Black's latent pressure.}

14 ... Na4
15 b3

I was pleased with this despite the apparent risks. I rebuff the forward knight as 15 ... Nxc3 16 Bxc3 should allow eventual simplification and I have an extra passed pawn! However, in retrospect, I might not have been very thorough with 15 ... Nxe4 but either 16 Nxa4/Nxe4 Bxa1 17 Rxa1 leave me with a material advantage. {Despite my satisfaction, 15 Nb5 Qb7 16 b3 would be similar but avoid lines with 15 ... Nxc3 which is the best continuation for Black after the text move.}

15 ... Nb6
16 a4 Nbd7

I did not intend 17 a5 - I am playing positionally, believe it or not!

17 Nb5 Qb7
18 Bc3

I have achieved my objectives in blockading the open files and Black has not justified the gambit.

18 ... Rab8
19 Nd2

Time for another review. Black does not seem to have any coherent way to break open the position. The

most likely is e7-e6 but I can deter that with pressure on d6 and slowly build up to the thrust e4-e5.

19 ... Rfe8
20 Nc4 Bf8
21 f4 Nb6

Because 21 ... e6 loses to 22 Ncxd6 Bxd6 23 Nxd6, Black has to undermine my grip on d6 but sadly, doing so also removes the protection for the knight on f6 so that e7-e6 can be answered by Bc3xf6.

22 Na5

There is no extra pawn from 22 Ncxd6 exd6 23 Bxf6 Nxd5 or 22 Nbx6 exd6 23 Nxb6 Nxe4. {I eventually noticed the tactic 22 Bxf6 exf6 23 Nbx6 Bxd6 24 Ncxd6 on move 29 and 24 ... Qxd5 25 Nxe8 Rxe8 26 exd5 Rxe2+ 27 Kf3 is a won ending.}

22 ... Qd7
23 Qf3

23 e5 is premature due to 23 ... Nfxd5 so the d pawn needs protection. By now, I was getting overconfident. My game plan was working and I thought Black was bottled up with no freeing options.

23 ... Ra8
24 Rd1 Rec8
25 Nc6 Qg4
26 Qe3

Having overlooked Black's last move, I do not react well. {It is not obvious that other options are better e.g. 26 Qd3 Qh5 27 h3 Nbx6 28 exd5 Nxd5 29 Qxd5 Qe2+ when there is no perpetual check but 27 ... Nh5 starts to divert White's efforts.} {This was a time for cool heads. The combination 26 Nxd6 is still available.}

26 ... Qh5

Another oversight. The threat of 27 ... Ng4 is a nasty wake-up call. 27 h3 Nbx6 28 exd5 Nxd5 was as far as I looked and it seemed convincing for Black [*but 29 Qe4 Nf6 30 Nxe7+ Bxe7 (30 ... Kg7 30 g4) 31 Qxe7 Nd5 32 Qxd6 and White is winning.*].

27 Qf3 Qxf3+

Now if 27 ... Ng4, 28 h3 is OK.

28 Kxf3 h5
29 Nxd6 exd6
30 Bxf6 Rc7

The threat to get behind Black's pawns with 31 Ne7+ Bxe7 32 Bxe7 can be met by 32 ... c4 33 bxc4 Nxc4.

31 a5

The text move probably improves the defensive position of Black's knight but 31 e5 fails to 31 ... Nxd5 32 Rxd5 Rxc6.

31 ... Nd7
32 Bc3 Bg7
33 Bxg7

{It is amazing how the same move crops up time and again. 33 e5 is a good try here.}

33 ... Kxg7



34 e5

I am not sure how much I analysed here. This move just looked so right.

34 ... dxe5
35 fxe5 Nb8

35 ... Rxc6 36 dxc6 Nxe5+ 37 Ke4 Nxc6 possibly gave more of a fighting chance.

36 Nxb8 Rxb8
37 Rd3 Ra7

I expected 37 ... Rcb7 but either the passive 38 Ra3 [or the aggressive 38 a6/d6] would suffice.

38 d6 Kf8
39 Rc3 Rb5
40 a6 Ke8
41 Ke4 Kd7
42 Rf3

I wanted to play 42 Kd5 but disliked 42 ... c4+ 43 Kxc4 Rxe5 when I expected to lose my d pawn and allow Black to concentrate his defence against the queenside pawns. There is no cause for alarm with either 44 Rd3 or acquiescing with 44 b4 Kxd6 45 b5 Rc7+ (45 ... Kc7 46 Kd4+) 46 Kb4 Rxb5+ 47 Kxb5 Rxc3 48 a7 but the latter is trickier than I want to analyse at a late stage.

42 ... Kc6
43 Ra3 Rb4+
44 Ke3 Kd5

44 ... g5 45 Rf5

45 d7 Rxd7
46 a7 Rxa7

I expected 46 ... Rxb3+ 47 Rxb3 Rxa7 when I have to figure out how to defend the pawn on e5.

47 Rxa7

I can relax. It is all over now... Where have I heard that before?

47 ... Rxb3+
48 Kf4??

What am I doing? Instinctively, my move looked risky so I double-checked it but only so far as 48 ... Rb4+ 49 Kg5 to ensure there was no checkmate. Instead, I worried 48 Kf2 might end in perpetual check or loss of my e and h pawns [but 48 ... Rb2+ 49 Kg1 Rb1+ (49 ... c4 50 Rc7; 49 ... Kxe5 50 Raxf7) 50 Rf1 ends Black's hopes].

48 ... c4

Immediately, I spotted that 48 ... g5+ would neutralise all my efforts and might even be more disastrous. I had to sit there and put on my best poker-face. As it happens, the position is a difficult endgame to hold after 49 Kxg5 Rxf3 {but objectively drawn}. Psychologically, after such a blunder, it would be almost impossible to put up much resistance.

49 Rxb3 cxb3
50 Rb7 Kc4
51 Kg5 1-0

Phew! As it happened, all the other four boards were drawn and this game decided both the match and secured us the CCCA Division 1 title.

How did I do? Are there common threads to my many lapses in this and last month's game?

The points that stick in my memory are the two blunders – both made in easily winning positions (see move 48 here and 42 last month). I must remember that it is still hard to find good moves when placed advantageously and just as easy to play bad ones!

Furthermore, my weakest play was in the endgame. This is probably more to the point. Once the direct winning attempts had dissipated, I tend to consider that pawn promotion is the only focus. I forgot that checkmates, tactics to win material and strategic placement of pieces still apply with the added complication of those pesky pawn advances. No wonder I find endings so difficult!

Paul Hanks

Eye Opener

R Kaufman (2276) v D Abrahams
Toronto Open; 17.04.2009

1 d4 Nf6
2 c4 c5
3 d5 b5
4 Nf3 Bb7
5 Nfd2 Qa5
6 Qc2 e6
7 e4 bxc4
8 Nc3 exd5
9 exd5 Qc7

5 ... b4 is a decent alternative.

If 9 ... Nxd5 10 Qe4+ Ne7 11 Qxb7 or 9 ... Bxd5 10 Nxd5 Nxd5 11 Qe4+ Ne7 12 Qxa8 so Black defends his bishop.

10 Nxc4 Nxd5
11 Qe4+ Ne7
12 Qxb7 1-0