

New Englander

Chess Club Update – September 2024

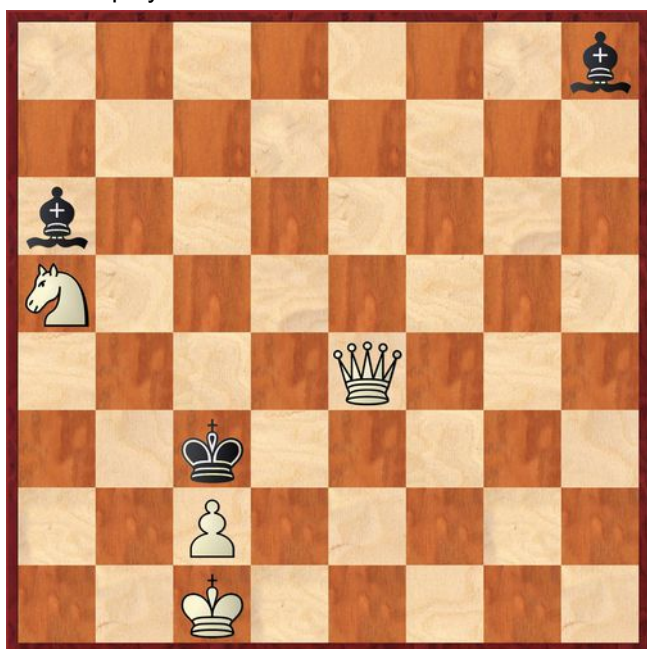
Chairman's Chatter

They say two things are unavoidable – death and taxes. At the start of a new season, there is a third. Subscriptions! Both fees to the club and ECF look excellent value when you look at the appended programme of events scheduled over the winter months. There is plenty to forward to!

Paul Hanks

Puzzle Problem

White to play and mate in 2.



Position : 8/8/8/8/4p3/3nK3/R5R1/3k4

Last Month's solution (Lewis 1985)

1 Rge2 Nc1 2 Rad2# [1 ... other 2 Ra1#]

Diary Dates

4th September Start of season Rapidplay

11th September New Members' Night

18th September Junior Club launch

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

23-24th November County Individual at Christie Hall, Wansford. Click [here](#) for the entry form.

Website to Watch

11th September is a infamous date in history but this year, it marks the start of play in the 45th Chess Olympiad in Budapest Hungary. Details can be found

at <https://chessolympiad2024.fide.com/> and the action will finish on 22nd after 11 rounds. Come on England!

Match of the Month

Do you think you're hard enough?

As I child I got into a load of fights, especially with school bullies. I never could resist the challenge of "Come and have a go if you think you are hard enough!"

Curiously, chess is much the same. There are some openings where, rather than a gentlemanly skirmish, you just have to stand toe to toe with your opponent and slug it out!

Alekhine's Defence is one such line. It is as if Black sees the white pawn advance to e4 and puts up two fingers! The black knight can get driven around the board allowing White to quickly build a pawn centre. But Black then counter-attacks that centre from the sides, leading to a complex game.

White has several opportunities to direct the game into safer lines, but in spite of the fact that Peter has soundly thrashed me three times with this opening, I invariably want to take up the challenge! Fourth time lucky?

Chris Russell v Peter Walker

New England Club Championship Rd 4; 07.01.2024

1	e4	Nf6
2	e5	Nd5
3	d4	d6
4	c4!?	

A highly aggressive response. Black invites attack, urging White's central pawns on, until they are so far advanced that they create a 'hollow centre' that can be attacked from the sides. There are a number of complex lines that need to be considered and consequently, it is not a variation for the faint-hearted. But it can be avoided. Other less provocative lines are a) 4 Nf3 dxe5 (4 ... Bg4; 4 ... g6) 5 Nxe5 and b) 4 exd6 exd6.

In a book I recently bought with a chapter on Alekhine's Defence, these were the only lines they considered. I suppose I should have taken the warning! However, given my childhood experience, this opening is a red rag to a bull and I usually cannot resist taking it on!

4	...	Nb6
5	f4	

A weird alternative we should all know is 5 ... g5. It is the Cambridge Gambit!

5	...	dxe5
6	fxe5	

This is known as the Four Pawns Attack, for obvious reasons. Here Black can play 6 ... Nc6 but Peter opts for the sharpest line, forcing the advance of the d pawn creating a so-called hollow centre.

6 ... c5!?
 7 d5 g6
 8 Nc3 Bg7
 9 Bf4 0-0
 10 Qd2!

All of this is book theory. In my previous game with Peter, I attempted 10 h3 and lost as my king got stuck too long in the centre.

As second best, Fritz proposes 10 Nf3 Bg4 11 h3 Bxf3 12 Qxf3 N8d7 13 Qe4 Qb8 (13 ... Qc7 14 e6 Ne5 15 0-0-0 fxe6 16 Bh2 [Black threatened 16 ... Rxf4 17 Qxf4 Nd3+] Rf5 17 Be2 exd5 18 cxd5 c4 19 Bg4) 14 e6 Ne5 15 Bh2 f5. This does, however, depend on your version of the software as 10 Be2 is also favoured. It shows how little there is to choose between the various alternatives.

10 ... e6
 11 Nf3?

Careless. For some reason, I thought I had an extra move before castling. Correct is 11 0-0-0! After the game, Peter showed me 11 ... exd5 12 cxd5 Bg4 13 Re1 c4 14 h3 Bf5 15 g4 Bd3 16 Bxd3 cxd3 17 Qxd3 when White has won a pawn but Black has compensation. 17 ... Na6 18 d6 Nb4 19 Qb5 Rc8 20 Kb1 (if 20 Qxb4? Rc4 21 Qb3 Rxf4=) 20 ... Rc4 21 Be3 Nd3 with a complex position.

11 ... exd5
 12 cxd5 Bg4
 13 h3??

Oh dear. This badly weakens my kingside pawns and plans to remove a defender of the e5 pawn. If 13 Ng5 h6 14 h3 hxg5 15 Bxg5 Qe8 16 hxg4 Qxe5+ 17 Be3 Qg3+ 18 Qf2 Qxf2+ 19 Bxf2 Re8+ 20 Kd2 N8d7 with a level game.

13 ... Bxf3
 14 gxf3

14 Bg5 is slightly better according to Fritz.

14 ... Re8??

In a charitable mood (?), Peter helps me out. After 14 ... Qh4+!! 15 Kd1 Nc6

- 16 dxc6 Rad8 17 Bd3 Rxd3 18 Qxd3 Rd8 19 Qxd8+ Qxd8+ 20 Kc2 bxc6 gives Black chances due to my exposed king e.g. 21 Rad1 Qh4 with 22 ... Qf2+ threatened and 22 Be3 allows 22 ... Bxe5
- 16 Bg5 Qg3 17 Qg2 Qxg2 18 Bxg2 Nxe5 19 Kc2, the game should be lost.

15 Bb5?!

Trying for tactical complications but overlooking Black still has 15 ... Qh4+! Again, 15 0-0-0! is correct with a level game e.g. 15 ... Bxe5 16 Bxe5 Rxe5 17 f4.

15 ... N8d7

Second best. Peter realised he had missed Qh4 after the game.

16 0-0-0!

Finally!

16 ... Bxe5
 17 Rhe1?

Another mistake which amongst other things leaves my h pawn unguarded so that Qd8-h4 could be played with tempo in an appropriate variation. I have to exchange bishops with 17 Bxe5 Rxe5 18 f4 Rf5, when 19 d6 gives me some threats with the advanced pawn.

17 ... Bxf4

Not best according to Fritz. If 17 ... Bd4! 18 Rxe8+ Qxe8 19 Re1 Qd8 20 d6 a6 with advantage.

18 Qxf4 f5?

Peter has the small improvement 18 ... Rxe1! 19 Rxe1 Qf6! Now I am feeling a bit better about the game.

19 Re6

Logical, but missing the best move. The key point of White's position is the invasion of the d5 square with the knight and many tactical possibilities. If 19 d6!

- 19 ... Qf6 20 Bxd7
 - 20 ... Nxd7 21 Nd5 Qg7 (say) 22 Re7 Rxe7 23 dxe7 when the passed pawn is overpowering e.g. 23 ... Nf6 24 Qd6 Ne8 25 Qd8 etc.
 - 20 ... Rxe1 21 Rxe1 Nxd7 22 Nd5 Qd4 23 Qxd4 cxd4 24 Re7 Rd8 25 Rxd7 Rxd7 26 Nf6+
- 19 ... a6 20 Bc4+ Kh8 (not 20 ... Nxc4?? 21 Qxc4+ Kf8 22 Nd5 when the threat is 23 Nc7 and if 22 ... Rc8 23 Re7) 21 Bd5 with a similar attack.

19 ... a6!

Best. Peter thought for a long time here which should have given me a clue that I had some good options. What should I have played here?



20 Rxe8+?

Not this! Now I am losing the initiative. After the game, Peter told me he was worried about 20 Rxb6! Nxb6 (if 20 ... Qxb6?? 21 Bxd7 or 20 ... axb5 21 Rxb5 b6 22 d6) 21 Bxe8 Qxe8 22 Qc7 when the game is still in the balance.

20 ... Qxe8
21 Bxd7 Qxd7
22 Qe5?

Another mistake. 22 h4! keeps White in the game. If 22 ... Rd8 23 h5!

22 ... Re8
23 Qf6??

The losing move. Though after 23 Qf4 I am just a pawn down without compensation.

23 ... Nc8
24 h4

Much too late!

24 ... Qe7
25 Qxe7 Rxe7 0-1

With a plainly lost endgame so I resigned.

Editor's note : But is White lost? Sure, White is a solid pawn down but many endgames can be drawn with that deficit. Fritz evaluates the position between -1 and -1.5 (i.e. Black is better than a pawn ahead) but if you leave the software running to delve ever deeper, it should see Black's advantage increasing as progress is made towards the win.

Please draw your own conclusion as to whether you would fight on – if you're hard enough!

Chris Russell

Eye Opener

When searching databases of chess games, it is quite hard to find contests between elite players that open with Alekhine's Defence and have interesting tactical skirmishes. You can find Anand and Nakamura on the White side and Nepomniachtchi and Rapport for Black but mostly in Blitz or Bullet tournaments.

H Van der Spek v A Van Oosten
Utrecht, 1990

1 e4 Nf6
2 e5 Nd5
3 d4 d6
4 Bc4 Nb6
5 Bb3 g6
6 Nf3 Nc6
7 Ng5

Though not objectively best, we are still talking of fine margins between the options and this tactical approach will probably be effective in practical play.

7 ... e6

More fine margins but the computer prefers 7 ... d5 and most human players would agree based on the text move weakening the f6 square. If White continues in the same vein with 8 Qf3 (8 Nc3 or 8 0-0 are the top picks) 8 ... Bf5 (8 ... f6 is ugly but playable) 9 g4 Nxd4 10 Qf4 Ne6 would beat off the attack.

8 Qf3 Qe7
9 Ne4 Nxd4

For reasons that will quickly become clear, the computer recommends 9 ... h6.

10 Qc3 Nxb3

On the surface, Black has removed his knight from being en prise, captured a piece and after 11 exd6 cxd6 12 Qxa1, 12 ... Nxa1 or 12 ... Nxc1 keeps the material balance. However, things are not that simple.



11 exd6

Suddenly, Black's position becomes exceedingly awkward.

11 ... Qh4

Sadly 11 ... cxd6 is bad due to the aforementioned problem with f6 which White can exploit ruthlessly by 12 Bg5 f6 (12 ... Qd7 13 Nf6+) 13 Nxf6+ Kf7 14 Ne4 Qd7 15 Qxh8 Nxa1 16 Nf6

- 16 ... Qc7 17 Qxh7+ Bg7 18 Qg8+ Ke7 19 Qe8#
- 16 ... Qd8 17 Qg8+ Ke7 18 Qxh7+ Bg7 19 Qxg7#

Instead, Black has to calculate the long sequence 11 ... Nd5 12 dxe7 (12 Qxh8 may transpose) 12 ... Nxc3 13 exf8Q+ Kxf8 14 Bh6+ Ke7 15 Bg5+ Kf8 16 Nbxc3 Nxa1 17 Bf6 Nxc2+ 18 Kd2 Rg8 19 Kxc2. This is a strange position. Fritz gives White a 2 pawn advantage but this is not obvious, especially at a distance. Black's difficulties start with the need to expend a tempo defending against Rg1-d1-d8# and with the aid of a fork on f6, this can develop into a nasty pin on the d file e.g. 19 ... Bd7 20 Ng5 h6 21 Nh7+ Ke8 22 Bd4 Ke7 23 Bc5+ Kd8 24 Nf6 and 25 Rd1. Rather deep analysis...

12 Nf6+ Kd8
13 Qxc7#

New England Chess Club Fixtures 2024-25

Updated 29th Aug 2024

Club Championship		League Match		Internal Event		
H = home A = away		Fenland Trophy		County Event		
Day	Date	All Club	A	B	Patriots	Cavaliers
W	04/Sep	Rapidplay	←	←	←	←
Tu	10/Sep			A v St Ives B		
W	11/Sep	Club Ladder	←	←	←	←
Tu	17/Sep		A v St Ives A			
W	18/Sep	Club Ladder	↔	↔	↔	H v Rookwood
W	25/Sep	Round 1	←	←	←	←
Th	26/Sep			A v Pboro B		
Su	29/Sep	County Rapidplay, Whittlesford				
W	02/Oct	Club Ladder	↔	↔	H v St Ives WC	←
W	09/Oct	Round 2	←	←	←	←
M	14/Oct					A v March
W	16/Oct	Round 3	←	←	←	←
Th	17/Oct		A v Pboro A			
W	23/Oct	Club Ladder	H v Pboro	←	←	←
W	30/Oct	Club Ladder	↔	↔	H v St Ives DM	←
W	06/Nov	Club Ladder	↔	↔	H v Pboro D	←
M	11/Nov			A v Godmanch'r		
W	13/Nov	Round 4	←	←	←	←
W	20/Nov	Club Ladder	H v St Neots A	←	←	←
Th	21/Nov					A v Bourne
S/S	23-24/Nov	County Championship, Christie Hall, Wansford				
W	27/Nov	Club Ladder	↔	H v Ely	←	←
M	03/Dec				A v Spalding	
W	04/Dec	Round 5	←	←	←	←
W	11/Dec	Xmas Special	←	←	←	←
Th	12/Dec			A v Rookwood		
W	18/Dec	Club Ladder	H v St Ives A	↔	↔	H v Spalding
W	25/Dec	No meeting	←	←	←	←
W	01/Jan	No meeting	←	←	←	←
M	06/Jan			A v St Neots B		
W	08/Jan	Round 6	←	←	←	←
Tu	14/Jan				A v St Ives WC	
W	15/Jan	Round 7	←	←	←	←
W	22/Jan	Club Ladder	↔	H v St Ives B	←	←
W	29/Jan	Club Ladder	H v Pboro A	←	←	←
Th	30/Jan					A v Rookwood
W	05/Feb	Club Ladder	↔	H v Pboro B	←	←
M	10/Feb		A v St Neots A			
W	12/Feb	Club Ladder	↔	↔	↔	H v March
W	19/Feb	Round 8	←	←	←	←
Th	20/Feb				A v Pboro D	
W	26/Feb	Round 9	←	←	←	←
Tu	04/Mar		A v St Ives A			
W	05/Mar	Handicap	←	←	←	←
W	12/Mar	Club Ladder	↔	↔	H v Spalding	←
W	19/Mar	Club Ladder	↔	H v Godmanch'r	←	←
W	26/Mar	Club Ladder	H v Pboro A	↔	↔	H v Bourne
M	31/Mar			A v Ely		
W	02/Apr	Round 10	←	←	←	←
M	07/Apr		A v St Neots A			
Tu	08/Apr					A v Spalding
W	09/Apr	Club Lightning	←	←	←	←
W	16/Apr	Club Ladder	↔	H v Rookwood	←	←
W	23/Apr	Club Ladder	↔	H v St Neots B	←	←
W	30/Apr	Round 11	←	←	←	←
W	tbc May	Club AGM	←	←	←	←