

New Englander

Chess Club Update – November 2024

Chairman's Chatter

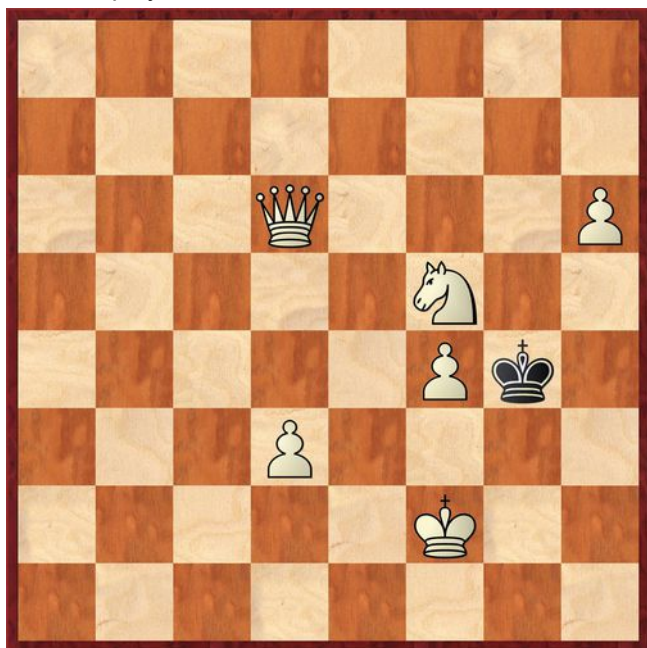
In the recent ECF newsletter, Cambridgeshire came in a creditable seventh in an informal ranking of the counties. Despite possible quibbles about the method and data, the purpose was to provoke introspection about the performance of local chess organisations. Is there anything we can do better? For example, with more arbiters, qualified trainers and a greater social media presence.

There are obvious gaps in our offering but they all require manpower. If you are able to volunteer or have suggestions for either club or county improvement, please let me know.

Paul Hanks

Puzzle Problem

White to play and mate in 2.



Position : 2n5/5N1p/1P5K/1N1p4/Qpp1kpB1/3pPR1n/3PP3/8

Last Month's solution (WCSC)

1 exf4 Nxf4 2 Re3# [1 ... d4 2 Qa8#; 1 ... b3/c3 2 exd3#; 1 ... Nc any 2 Nfd6#; 1 ... Nh any 2 Ng5#]

Diary Dates

23-24th November County Individual at Christie Hall, Wansford

Website to Watch

It's the big event at the end of the month! The World Championship match over fourteen games Ding Liren v Gukesh Dommaraju takes place from 25th November to 12th December in Singapore with Google as the

presenting sponsor. Despite the backing of an IT giant, it is remarkably hard to find viewing information! The best bet is on chess.com.

Result Round-up

Club Championship

White	Rounds 1-4		Black
P Walker	1	0	D Dhokia
P Hanks	1	0	J Peoples
B Stephens	P	P	A Neville
J Peoples	0	1	P Walker
S Walker	0	1	D Dhokia
C Russell	0	1	P Spencer
A Neville	0	1	R Ilett
J Sutherland	0	1	B Stephens
N Chedd	1	0	E Knox
P Walker	1	0	S Walker
D Dhokia	½	½	C Russell
P Hanks	1	0	P Spencer
A Neville	0	1	J Sutherland
B Stephens	1	0	E Knox
S Walker	1	0	C Russell

Group A	P W	P S	P H	D D	S W	C R	J P	Pts
P Walker	X		1	1	1		1	4
P Spencer		X	0		1	1		2
P Hanks	0	1	X				1	2
D Dhokia	0			X	1	½		1½
S Walker	0	0		0	X	1		1
C Russell		0		½	0	X		½
J Peoples	0		0				X	0

Group B	B S	N C	J S	R I	A N	E K	Pts
B Stephens	X		1		P	1	2
N Chedd		X	½			1	1½
J Sutherland	0	½	X		1		1½
R Ilett				X	1		1
A Neville		P	0	0	X		0
E Knox	0	0				X	0

Cambridgeshire League

Peterborough A	3	New England A	2
H Neumaier	1	R Ilett	0
F Fairhurst	½	P Walker	½
J Bell	½	P Hanks	½
A Kaszuba	1	B Stephens	0
D Walton	0	N Chedd	1

Fenland Trophy

New England A	3½	Peterborough A	½
P Walker	½	H Neumaier	½
R Ilett	1	J Bell	0
P Hanks	1	S Caraway	0
P Spencer	1	D Redden	0
NE Cavaliers	P	St Ives DM	P
Re-scheduled on 13 th November 2024			

Team 7000

NE Cavaliers	1½	St Ives WC	2½
R Ilett	0	D Okorafor	1
B Stephens	½	J Beck	½
E Knox	0	R Mann	1
C Russell	1	J Beck	0

Team 4200

March	1½	NE Cavaliers	½
T O'Keefe	½	J Jennings	½
G Pearl	1	J Peoples	0
A N Other	1	Default	0

New England Club Ladder

White			Black		
P Spencer	1	0	A Neville		
Position	Change		Player	Record @ 30/10/24	
	Month	Overall			
1	-	-	J Peoples	1	
2	-	-	D Dhokia	0	
3	-	-	P Spencer	1	
4	-	-	A Neville	0	

New England Grand Prix

Player	Champ	Ladder	League		Cup	Team 7000	Team 4200	Total	TPR*
			A	B					
P Walker	4		1½	½	½			6½	2013
P Hanks	2		1½		1			4½	1971
B Stephens	2		½	1		½		4	1905
P Spencer	2	1			1			4	1839
N Chedd	1½		1½	1				4	1904
R Ilett	1		1	½	1	0		3½	1901
C Russell	½			1		1		2½	1487
J Peoples	1						1	2	1491
D Dhokia	1½						0	1½	1355
J Sutherland	1½							1½	1659
J Jennings				0			½	½	1200
S Walker	1							1	1440
A Neville	0	0						0	1302
E Knox						0		0	1386
N Wedley								-	-

* Tournament Performance Rating is approximate

Match of the Month

Butterflies? Sweaty palms? For an experienced player, the weight of expectation when facing a newcomer is the stuff of nightmares. However, looking from the other end of the telescope is no less daunting!

John only joined the club at the back end of last season and the club championship this year will be his first experience of formal play since junior school. Drawing a veil over the number of intervening years, suffice it to say that the strength difference relative to his opponents in the initial rounds of the competition counts as a baptism of fire! Nevertheless, reviewing games is a great way to improve anyone's standard of play (with a little help from computer software and the newsletter editor).

John Peoples v Peter Walker

New England Club Championship Rd 2; 09.10.2024

JP - "I wasn't expecting to win a game against Peter, so I started with the modest goal of trying to play principled chess and not making it too easy for him!"

1 d4 Nf6
2 c4 d6
3 Nf3 Nbd7

This Old Indian Defence is a favourite response of Peter's against 1 d4. It has the advantage of not appearing regularly in grandmaster practice so that White is likely to be unfamiliar with it.

JP - "I didn't recognise Peter's opening, so I just tried to develop and was ultimately pleased that I was

allowed to activate all my minor pieces without too much bother."

4	Nc3	e5
5	Bg5	Be7
6	e3	c6
7	Bd3	

No-one at our level memorises the reams of theory that burden the lives of chess professionals but after the game, it is fun to search a games database to see if the move sequence bears the stamp of authority of the elite. In this case, the first game to catch the eye is Miles v Krasenkow, Las Vegas 1999 which continued 7 Qc2 0-0 8 0-0-0. Later, Tony played 15 Bf1-e2 and after he lost the game, his opponent recommended Bf1-d3. It was happy day to be following in such illustrious footsteps but the text move actually has a predecessor – Spassky v Nezhmedinov, Moscow 1959. Maybe, the scheme of natural development as played is on the right track.

7	...	0-0
8	Qc2	

JP - "I remember taking some time to decide whether to castle here. I was thinking that I played too passively in my game the previous week!"

8	...	a6
9	Ne4	

At this point, the computer drops the slight plus that White normally enjoys into negative territory. Software will base its preference for 9 dxe5 or 9 0-0 on the assessment of more variations than the human mind can visualise in a lifetime. So what general principle should apply as hands-on guidance?

White has the space to place the pieces at will for several more moves (e.g. connecting rooks and occupying files in preparation for an attack) whereas Black is cramped and cannot easily bring the queenside pieces into play. Unless it can win material, the text move encourages swapping pieces and this will favour Black by opening lines and freeing more squares.

In terms of concrete analysis, after 9 dxe5, Black cannot recapture by 9 ... Nxe5 due to 10 Nxe5 dxe5 11 0-0-0 with the threat of Bd3xh7+ either with a discovered attack on the black queen or winning a pawn after Bg5xf6. 9 ... dxe5 also looks awkward because White has 10 Bxf6 (along with other options) when 10 ... Nxf6 (otherwise 11 Bxh7+) 11 Nxe5. Given this prospect, perhaps Black should have chosen 8 ... h6.

JP - "If I remember correctly, my thought here was to add another piece to the attack and apply more pressure to h7 but after all the swapping off, I can see that Black's position is improved. I remember Peter taking some time to respond, which probably made me think it was a better move than it actually was!"

9	...	Nxe4
10	Bxe7	Qxe7
11	Bxe4	Nf6
12	dxe5	dxe5
13	0-0-0	Re8

14	h3	Bd7
15	g4	b5
16	Bf5	e4

Black may have been a little passive in the previous passage of play but both sides have been producing moves that are generally in the top two picks by the computer until Black's last which restores equality. Instead, 16 ... Bxf5 17 Qxf5 bxc4 aims for a queenside attack with c4-c3 and 17 gxf5 e4 18 Nd4 c5 has removed the fine outpost on f5 for the knight.

PW - "This was a lazy move by me, played without proper analysis. I should have played 16 ... g6, not allowing White's knight access to any good squares."

17	Bxd7	
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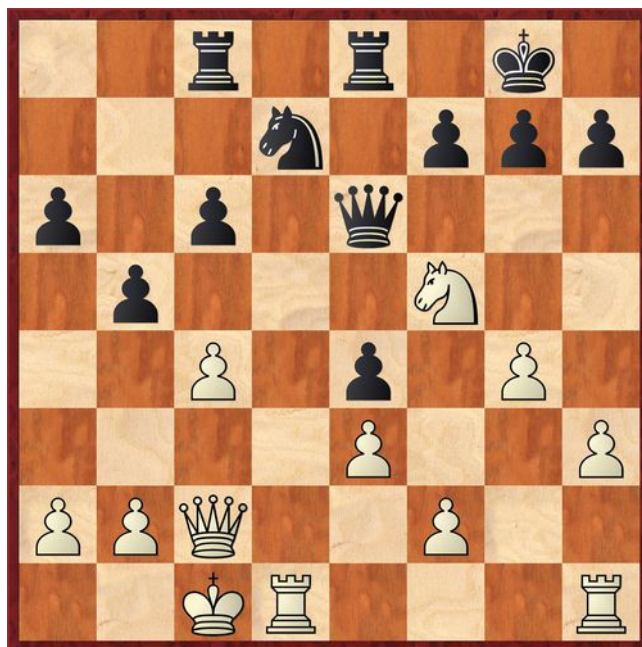
Here, there is an instructive mirage. It appears that 17 Bxd7 Nxd7 18 Nd4 *any* is interchangeable with 17 Nd4 *any* 18 Bxd7 Nxd7 but it is totally deceptive! In the former eventuality (and the game), Black has the time to play 18 ... Ne5 with the disruptive invasion of d3 but it is impossible in the latter move order. If, after 17 Nd4, Black reverts to 17 ... Bxf5, it is White that gains the tempi and mirrors the previous variation with 18 Nxf5 Qe5 19 c5 and 20 Nd6. This seems to allow 19 ... Nd5 but 20 Rd4 will concentrate White's forces on Black's weak advanced pawn.

17	...	Nxd7
18	Nd4	Rac8?

See the previous note on the advisability of 18 ... Ne5 19 Qxe4 bxc4.

PW - "As soon as my hand left the rook I noticed that this allowed a knight fork on d6. Too late!"

19	Nf5	Qe6
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20	c5?	
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20 Nd6 is tempting but Black does get some compensation after 20 ... Nc5 21 Nxc8 Rxc8

- 22 Rd4 Nd3+ 23 Kb1 c5 when White can return the exchange or run the gauntlet of the rook becoming trapped by 24 Rd5 bxc4

- 22 cxb5 cxb5 23 Kb1 (23 Qe2 Qxa2 mating) 23 ... Nd3 24 Qd/e2 (24 Qb3 Qxb3 25 axb3 Nxf2) with some pressure.

None of this is worthy of time spent on the clock. There is a huge miss with 20 Rd6 and the knight on d7 cannot be defended e.g. 20 ... Qxc4 21 Qxc4 bxc4 22 Rxd7. There goes the shock upset!

JP - "Clearly, the possibility of a massive upset got me overexcited! For some bizarre reason, I thought I needed another piece to support the knight fork. I remember sitting there kicking myself while waiting for Pater to make his next move. And if only I'd noticed Rd6 a move earlier..."

PW - "White is still winning!"

20	...	Rcd8
21	Rd6	

This is now too late to be decisive but there are pleasant threats on the open d file.

21	...	Qxa2
22	Rhd1	g6
23	Rxd7	

As on move 7, White is too eager to cash in. Black is again being restricted by the pinned knight and exchanges just relieve his position. There was no shame in retreating the knight.

PW - "After 23 Ng3 Re7 24 R1d4 Black is bound and gagged."

23	...	Rxd7
24	Rxd7	gxf5
25	gxf5	Qa1+
26	Qb1	Qxb1+
27	Kxb1	Re5

The smoke has cleared and we have a level endgame. Unfortunately, White's planning goes a little astray.

28	b4	
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A good move to restrain the queenside majority but John could try to hold the pawn with 28 f6 and hope Peter continues to chase it with 28 ... Rf5?? 29 Rd8#.

28	...	Rxf5
29	Ra7	

Rooks can reach their target square in two different ways and here, the route to a6 should be 29 Rd6 which would also create a passed c pawn.

29	...	Rxf2
30	Rxa6	Rf6
31	Kc2	Kg7
32	Kc3	Re6
33	Kd4	Kg6
34	Ra7	f5
35	Rd7	

Despite Black's extra pawn, this is not an easy endgame to win – or so the computer says. It may, however, be simple for White to lose... Peter wants to play 35 ... f4 and John to reply 36 exf4 allowing 36 ... e3 winning. Fortunately, 36 Rd6

- 36 ... Kf5 37 exf4 Re7 (37 ... e3 38 Rxd6 and White wins) 38 Ke3 and the game is on a

knife edge e.g. 38 ... Rg7 39 Rxc6 Rg3+ 40 Kd2 (40 Kd4 Rd3#) 40 ... Kxf4 41 Rf6+ Ke5 42 Rf8 when Black cannot escape the barrage of checks without his king wandering too far from the defence of the e pawn

- 36 ... Rxd6 37 cxd6 f3 38 d7 f2 39 d8=Q f1=Q may even give White the more comfortable side of a draw.

35	...	h6
36	Rd6	

PW - "I thought this was an excellent move and forced the draw as Black's rook is tied down."

36	...	Kf6
37	Rd8	Ke7
38	Rh8	Kf7
39	Rh7+	Kg6
40	Rd7	Kf6
41	Rh7	Kg5

Any spectators should have been cheering on the underdog. Black is making a last dash to spare his blushes using the only entry point for his king at h4. Had White played 41 Rd8, this attempt would be far more problematic i.e. 41 ... Kg5 42 Rd6 Rxd6 43 cxd6 and White queens with check after either 43 ... f4 or 43 ... Kf6 44 Kc5 etc.

42	Rd7	Kg6
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If 42 ... f4, 43 exf4 Kxf4 44 Rf7+ Kg3 45 Ke3 Kxh3 46 Rg7 when the computer cannot find a win.

43	h4	Kh5
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This might be trying too hard as noted above.

PW - "With less than two minutes left, I should have played 43 ... Kf6 leading to a draw by repetition but I decided to roll the dice and hope that John wouldn't take his chances."

JP - "I believe I was up by 15-20 minutes near the end. This was totally unexpected, and I should probably have taken more time to calculate my moves. I even started thinking that I should move quickly to give Peter less time to think during my turn. Clock management is clearly a skill that needs developing! Overall, I feel that my challenge somewhat fizzled out after the miss at move 20, and my lack of experience showed in the endgame."

44	Rd6	Re8
45	Rxc6	f4
46	exf4	

Having resisted the trap for so long, White finally cracks. With 46 Rf6, it would be Black having to defend carefully :-

- 46 ... f3 47 Rf4 Kg6 48 Kd5
- 46 ... fxe3 47 Kxe3 Kxh4 48 Rg6 where the previous scenario has changed due to the passed c pawn.

46	...	e3
47	f5	e2
48	Re6	Rxe6
49	fxe6	e1Q
50	Kd5	Qxb4

51	e7	Qc4+
52	Kd6	Qd4+
53	Ke6	Kxh4

There is a standard procedure for a queen to prevent promotion of a pawn on the seventh rank starting 53 ... Qf7 but it is complicated by the c pawn. Peter must have calculated he can win all the white pawns without risk.

54	e8Q	Qe4+
55	Kd7	Qd5+
56	Kc8	Qxc5+
57	Kd7	Qd5+
58	Kc7	Qc4+
59	Kb6	b4
60	Qa4	

White has a choice between stopping the pawns or trying to give perpetual check (60 Qe7+ etc). In view of the difficulty, the former is probably the wrong way.

60	...	Qd4+
61	Kb5	

Almost anywhere but here! Black can swap queens and the distant pawn, albeit on a rook's file, will bring down the curtain. 61 Ka6 and it is going to be a late night.

61	...	Qd7+
62	Kxb4	Qxa4+
63	Kxa4	Kg3
64	Kb3	h5
65	Kc2	h4
66	Kd2	Kg2 0-1

JP - "At the end of the day, as someone who has only played six or seven classical games so far, I was happy to be able to play even somewhat competitively against a player of Peter's strength."

Eye Opener

Kevin Spraggett v Werner Huebner
San Bernardino; 1986

1	c4	Nf6
2	Nc3	d6
3	d4	e5
4	Nf3	Nbd7
5	Bg5	Be7
6	e3	

So far, as in the main game.

6	...	0-0
7	Qc2	Ng4

Black is starting to neglect his development albeit with the intention of instigating exchanges to free his position. The text move invites 8 Bxe7 Qxe7 9 Nd5/Bd3/h3 all with gain of tempo.

8	h3	Bxg5
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The computer also comes up with the surprise suggestion of 8 ... Nh2. The move played is weaker, presenting White with many open lines.

9	hxg4	g6
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If 9 ... h6, the attack can proceed 10 Ne4 Be7 11 g5 encouraging 10 ... g6 in any case to avoid a discovered attack on h7.

10	dxe5	dxe5
11	0-0-0	Bf6
12	c5	Bg7
13	Bc4	Qe7
14	Nd5	Qxc5



At first glance, it looks like a standard position with Black having a typical slight disadvantage but there is hidden violence here.

15	b4	
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This move wins simply if you spot how few squares the black queen can flee to e.g. 15 ... Qc6? 16 Ne7+. The computer, however, ranks it behind 15 Rxh7 based on 15 ... Kxh7 16 Ng5+

- 16 ... Kh6 17 Rh1+ Kxg5 18 Rh5+ gxh5 (18 ... Kxg4 19 Qe2#) 19 Qf5+ mating
- 16 ... Kh8 17 Rh1+ Kg8 18 Ne7+ Qxe7 19 Qxg6 Nf6 20 Rh7 Ne8 21 Rxg7+ and 22 Qh7#
- 16 ... Kg8 17 b4 Qd6 (17 ... Qc6 18 Ne7+ Kh8 19 Nxc6 bxc6 20 Rh1+ Kg8 21 Qxg6 etc.) 18 Qxg6 Qxg6 19 Ne7+ Kh8 20 Nxg6+ fxg6 21 Rh1+ Bh6 22 Rxh6+ Kg7 23 Rh7+ Kf6 24 Ne4#.

15	...	Qd6
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White has a winning discovery on the d file but Black covers the knight's checking squares. White calmly removes this problem leaving Black helpless.

16	g5	e4
17	Qxe4	1-0