

New Englander

Chess Club Update – January 2025

Chairman's Chatter

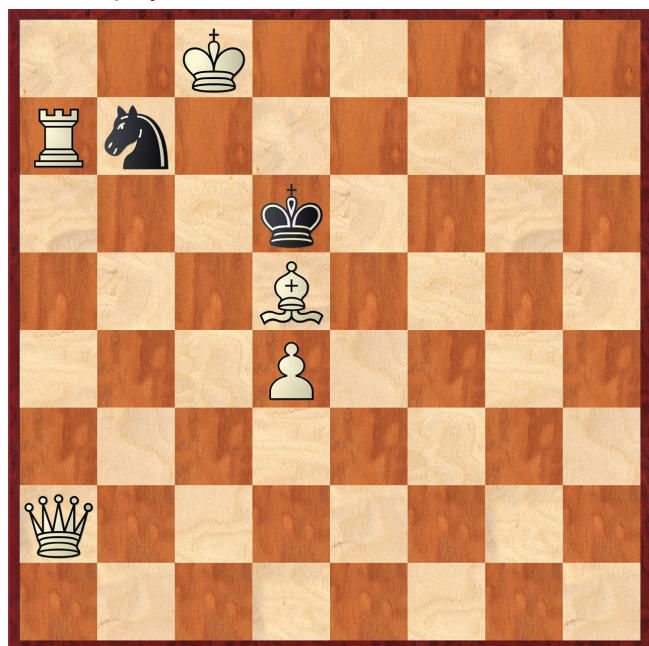
Happy New Year! What's new for 2025? Well, chess on the BBC apparently for the first time since *The Master Game* in the 1980s. Look out in the Spring for *Chess Masters* hosted by Sue Perkins and let's hope that it can do for our sport what *Great British Bake-off* does for our waistline.

Please note that the club championship enters its second stage next month. Any postponed games need to be completed by the end of January so that the tables for the group stage can be finalised and the draw made for the concluding rounds.

Paul Hanks

Puzzle Problem

White to play and mate in 2.



Position : 8/4Q3/8/6rp/7k/8/7K/8

Last Month's solution (Schwartz 1927)

1 Qe1+ Rg3 2 Qxg3# [1 ... Kg4 2 Qe4#]

Diary Dates

18-19th January EACU Closed Championship 2024-25, Newmarket

9th February Norfolk Rapidplay, Horstead

2nd March EACU team Championship, Bury St Edmunds

For details, please visit <http://www.eacu.org.uk/> and follow "Fixtures and Events".

17-21st April Easter Congress, Southend Adult Community College, SS1 2UN

Website to Watch

If the coming of another year does not make you feel old, the ages of the grandmaster line-up at the Tata Steel Chess Tournament certainly will. With the world champion only 18 and several top players 20 or less, there should be plenty of energy for exciting games! <https://tatasteelchess.com/en/masters/latest> carries details of the event from 18th January to 2nd February and hopefully will have live game coverage.

It would seem sad not to mention another congress with a comparable heritage. The Caplin Hastings International runs until 5th January continuing a tradition dating back to 1895 but despite boasting several grandmasters on the participant list, it no longer attracts world champions and candidates. It can be followed on chess.com or lichess.com.

Result Round-up

Club Championship

White	Rounds 1&5		Black
B Stephens	P	P	A Neville
P Walker	P	P	C Russell
S Walker	P	P	P Hanks
J Peoples	0	1	D Dhokia
N Chedd	P	P	R Ilett
J Sutherland	P	P	E Knox

Group A	P W	P S	P H	D D	S W	J P	C R	Pts
P Walker	X		1	1	1	1	P	4
P Spencer		X	0		1	1	1	3
P Hanks	0	1	X	1	P	1		3
D Dhokia	0		0	X	1	1	½	2½
S Walker	0	0	P	0	X		1	1
J Peoples	0	0	0	0		X	1	1
C Russell	P	0		½	0	0	X	½

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

Christmas Special : 11th December 2024

Player	Round				Total
	1	2	3	4	
Peter	1	1	1	1	4
Andy	1	0	1	1	3
Ray	1	1	1	0	3
John	1	0	1	0	2
Jamie	0	1	0	1	2
Paul	0	1	-	1	2
Dak	0	0	1	0	1
Chris	0	0	0	0	0

Cambridgeshire League

New England A	4½	St Ives A	½
P Walker	½	B Okorafor	½
P Hanks	1	D Rice	0
R Ilett	1	N Greenwood	0
B Stephens	1	R Mann	0
N Chedd	1	P Baddeley	0

Rookwood	2	New England B	2
F Bowers	1	B Stephens	0
L Levett	1	P Spencer	0
D Gamsby	0	C Russell	1
M Teague	0	J Peoples	1

Team 7000

Spalding	1	NE Patriots	3
S Prior	½	R Ilett	½
C Robinson	½	B Stephens	½
C Dunne	0	E Knox	1
C Featherstone	0	J Sutherland	1

Team 4200

NE Cavaliers	0	Spalding	3
J Jennings	0	J Moseley-Hutchinson	1
J Peoples	0	L McKenna	1
D Kabut	0	K Davis	1

Fenland Trophy

NE Cavaliers	2½	St Ives DM	1½
P Walker	1	D Okorafor	0
P Hanks	0	D Rice	1
J Sutherland	½	P Baddeley	½
C Russell	1	D Champion	0

St Ives A	P	New England A	P
Being re-scheduled in 2025			

New England Club Ladder

White		Black	
S Walker	1	0	S Farrington
A Neville	0	1	N Wedley
N Wedley	1	0	D Dhokia

Position	Change		Player	Record @ 25/12/24
	Month	Overall		
1	+5	+4	N Wedley	1,0,1,1
2	-1	-1	J Peoples	1
3	-	-	P Spencer	1
4	-2	-2	D Dhokia	0,0
5	-	+3	C Russell	1
6	-2	-2	A Neville	0,0
7	+3	+3	S Walker	1
8	-1	-2	B Stephens	1
9	-1	-2	P Walker	0,1
10	-1	-1	R Ilett	0

New England Grand Prix

Player	Champ	Ladder	League		Cup	Team 7000	Team 4200	Total	TPR*
			A	B					
P Walker	4	1	2	½	1½			9	1995
B Stephens	2	1	1½	1½		2		8	1888
P Hanks	3		3		1			7	1920
P Spencer	3	1		1	1	½		6½	1740
N Chedd	1½		3½	1½				6½	1832
R Ilett	2		2	½	1	1		6½	1891
C Russell	½	1		3	1	1		6½	1558
N Wedley	1	3					1	4	1757
E Knox	1			1		1		3	1648
J Sutherland	1½			0	½	1		3	1628
J Peoples	1			1		0	1	3	1319
S Walker	1	1						2	1440
D Dhokia	1½						0	1½	1403
J Jennings				0			½	½	1139
A Neville	0	0						0	1295
D Kubat							0	0	616

* Tournament Performance Rating is approximate

Match of the Month

In a recent Masterclass session, we examined a game played by Magnus Carlsen played online during the Covid lockdowns. The former world champion sacrificed a piece but used the subsequent kingside attack not to force checkmate but merely to denude the enemy king of pawn cover. A second wave when the rooks joined in then proved decisive.

By coincidence, our top board Ray played a game recently along very similar lines.

R Ilett (1890) v **S Prior** (2151)
New England Cavaliers v Spalding, 03.12.2024

1	d4	Nf6
2	c4	e6
3	Nc3	Bb4
4	Nf3	

This move was used to great effect in the titanic 1985 world championship clash Kasparov v Karpov.

4	...	c5
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4 ... d5 is slightly more popular but both moves in the Nimzo-Indian Defence appear frequently at grandmaster level. The main difference is that with 4 ... d5, White knows that any doubled pawns arising from Bb4xc3 can be undone by c4xd5.

5	e3	0-0
6	Bd3	d5
7	0-0	cxd4
8	exd4	dxc4
9	Bxc4	b6
10	Qb3	

If you want a heavyweight predecessor, match game 9 of the world championship match Anand (2787) v Topalov (2805), Sofia 2010 reached this position by slight transposition. White chose 10 Bg5 whereupon a hectic draw ensued although White had the winning chances. Grandmasters obviously study their databases and see the value of Anand's alternative in rapid occupation of the c file because most elite games have subsequently followed suit ...

10	...	a5
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... except for the Ukrainian champion who also liked 10 Qb3 but had to meet with 10 ... Bxc3 [Korobov (2656) v Wojtaszek (2733), Poikovsky 2016].

11	Rd1	Bb7
12	Ne5	

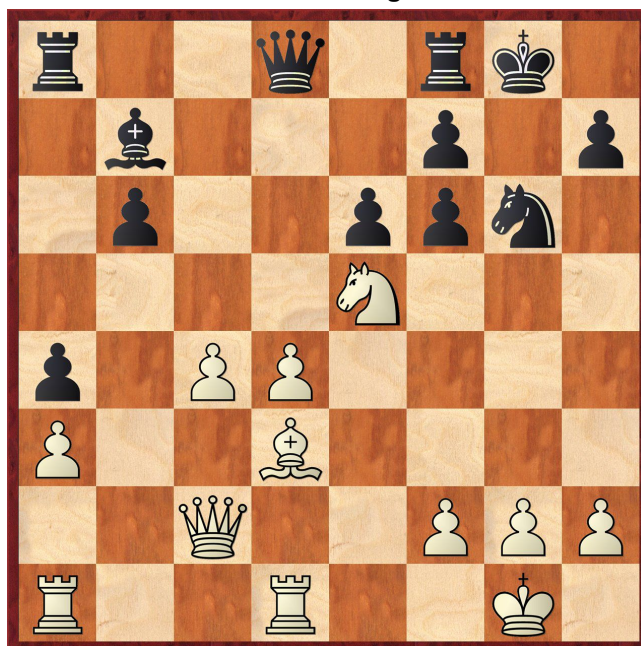
12 d5 is indicated by Fritz as marginally best when the exchanging sequence leaves White with a development advantage e.g. 12 ... exd5 13 Nxd5 Nxd5 14 Bxd5 Bxd5 15 Rxd5 Qc7 (15 ... Qf6 16 Bg5) 16 Qd3 and 12 ... b5 13 Bxb5 exd5 transfers the problem of an isolated queen's pawn to Black.

12	...	Nd5
13	a3	Bxc3
14	bxc3	a4
15	Qc2	Nd7
16	Bd3	N7f6

The computer evaluation has remained steady with a small plus to White for the last few natural moves but

here, it takes a sharp upturn. Instead, Black can remove my outpost with 16 ... Nxe5 not fearing 17 Bxh7+ Kh8 18 dxe5 g6 19 c4 Qc7.

17	c4	Ne7
18	Bg5	Ng6
19	Bxf6	gxf6



20	Nxg6	
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So far, I have found the computer's antidote to 16 ... N7f6 but it prefers the "sacrifice" 20 Bxg6 fxg6 21 Nxg6. In either this or the game variation, the second piece cannot be captured due to the mating attack 21 ... hxg6 22 Qxg6+ Kh8 23 Rd3 and a likely continuation is 21 ... Rf7 22 Nf4.

20	...	fxg6
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The recapture 20 ... hxg6 21 Bxg6 f5 still leaves the bishop trapped (22 Bh5 Qg5) and taking a second pawn 22 Bxf7+ Rxf7 improves the defence of Black's open kingside.

21	Bxg6	f5
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Had there been a knight on g6, it would be attacking the rook on f8 and Black would not have the tempo for this pawn push.

22	Bxh7+	
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White cannot back out with 22 Bh5 Qg5.

22	...	Kxh7
23	Rd3	Rg8
24	Rh3+	Kg7
25	Qc3	Kf8
26	d5	Rc8
27	Re1	exd5
28	Qb4+	

White has a tempting target but getting pieces close to Black's exposed king is an issue while also attending to threats to c4 and g2. As it happens, 28 Rh7 is possible because

- 28 ... Rxc4 leads to checkmate by 29 Re8+ Kxe8 (29 ... Qxe8 30 Qf6+) 30 Qe5+ Kf8 31 Qxf5+

- 28 ... Rxc5 29 Kf1 (29 Kxc5?? d4+) 29 ... d4 (preventing 30 Qh8+) 30 Qh3 and with Qxf5 again in the offing, Black cannot save the bishop e.g. 30 ... Be4 31 Rxe4.

28 ... Rxc5
Good/forced. 28 ... Kf7 29 Re7+ Qxe7 30 Rh7+ wins.

29	Re5	Qf6
30	Rhe3	Rxc5
31	Kxc5	d4+
32	Kf1	dxe3
33	Rxc5	bxc5
34	Qxb7	Qa1+
35	Kg2	e2
36	Qc8+	Kg7 1/2-1/2

Ray Ilett/Paul Hanks

Eye Opener

M Sadler (2626) v Y Pelletier (2604)
Bundesliga Germany; 23.11.2003

1	d4	Nf6
2	c4	e6
3	Nc3	Bb4
4	e3	O-O
5	Bd3	d5
6	Nf3	c5
7	O-O	

So far, this looks to be standard stuff that might appear in one of our league games ... and indeed, it has! Instead of Black exchanging centre pawns to saddle White with an isolani, here Black lets White initiate captures aiming for a totally different pawn structure.

7	...	Nc6
8	a3	Ba5
9	cxd5	exd5
10	dxc5	Bxc3
11	bxc3	Bg4

Given that both players are grandmasters from the computer era, it is hard to imagine that these moves were not foreseeable from move 7 even if they were had not been analysed during game preparation.

Having played d4xc5, White has exposed himself to Nc6-e5 when the f3 pin might become awkward. As a result, Fritz recommends resolving the situation with 12 h3 but a range of moves (e.g. 12 a4) hover around equality.

12	Rb1	Qc8
13	Qc2	Bxf3
14	gxf3	Qh3

So White has self-inflicted air-conditioning around his king and a pair of pesky attacking knights can be hard to reckon with. Even so, it is hardly credible that catastrophe will strike within a few moves. Would you be happy with White's position? Or is complacency the problem?

15	Be2	
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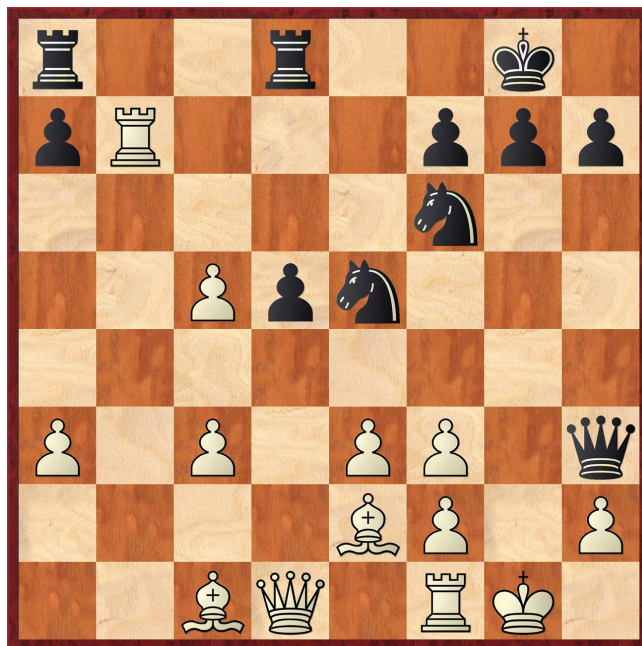
An automatic reply? White could look at 15 f4 to keep one knight on the queenside because 15 ... Ng4 16

f3. Black would be advised to take the offered perpetual check with 15 ... Qg4+ and 16 ... Qf3+. Most of us would be satisfied with a draw against Matthew Sadler!

15	...	Ne5
16	Qd1	Rfd8
17	Rxb7	

17 Kh1 was possibly a safer defence so that g2 can be protected if needed – for instance, if Black plays 17 ... Ng6 and 18 ... Nh4.

What follows must be put down to psychological factors.



17	...	Ne4
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An unexpected coup but not necessarily a cause for panic. First of all, do not trust your opponent – it could be a bluff. Acceptance by 18 fxe4 dxe4 opens the d file and removes the tempo for defending against 19 ... Nf3+ with a pawn push f2-f3/4. However, 19 Qb3 hits f7 in the event of 19 ... Nf3+ 20 Bxf3 exf3 and 19 ... Rf8 allows 20 Qd5 providing the X-ray reinforcement of f3. Sadly, 19 ... Kh8 is sufficient for Black although 20 Rxf7 Nf3+ 21 Bxf3 exf3 22 Rxf3 Qxf3 brings about an interesting material imbalance. The position must be easier for Black to play as the rooks will again join a second wave of attack.

18	Qd4	
18	...	Ng6 O-1

19 Kh1 is too late, 19 ... Nh4 20 Rg1 Nxf2#.