

New Englander

Chess Club Update – March 2025

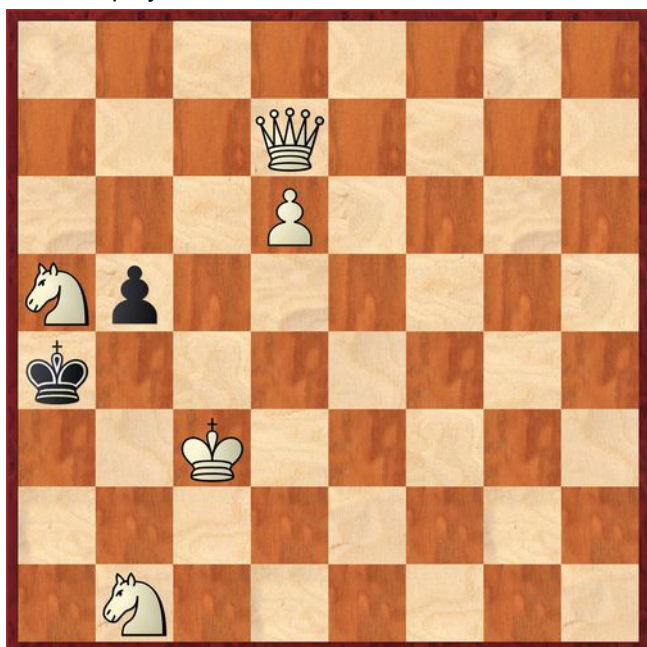
Chairman's Chatter

The lighter evenings are a clue to the fact that the end of season is on the horizon. The club fixtures are scheduled to end on 30th April i.e. in 8 weeks time! By then, we need to clear a mounting backlog of postponements in the club championship as the number of results sent to me for Round 8 is particularly meagre. If there are any missing results, please let me know.

Paul Hanks

Puzzle Problem

White to play and mate in 2.



Position : 4kr2/2K2n2/6Q1/3b4/8/B7/8/8

Last Month's solution (Fedorovich 1986)

1 Qf5 Ne5 2 Qxf8# [1 ... Be6/Bc6 2 Qe6# 1 ... B/R other 2 Qd7#]

Diary Dates

17th-21st April [Easter Congress, Southend](#) Adult Community College, SS1 2UN

26th-31st May [3rd Cambridge International Open](#) for players with a FIDE rating > 1600

Website to Watch

The American Cup takes place in St Louis from 15th to 23rd March. It reportedly features the top players from USA in an "exciting double-elimination format" (which is quite confusing). Details and live games can be found at a rather spartan [website](#).

Result Round-up

Club Championship

| White | February | | Black |
|--------------|----------|-----|------------|
| B Stephens | P | Rd1 | A Neville |
| N Chedd | P | Rd5 | R Ilett |
| J Sutherland | P | Rd5 | E Knox |
| R Ilett | 1 | 0 | B Stephens |
| N Chedd | P | Rd7 | A Neville |
| P Walker | P | Rd8 | N Chedd |
| P Hanks | P | Rd8 | B Stephens |
| P Spencer | ½ | ½ | R Ilett |
| D Dhokia | P | Rd8 | A Neville |
| S Walker | P | Rd8 | E Knox |
| J Peoples | 1 | 0 | L Townsend |
| B Stephens | ½ | ½ | P Walker |
| R Ilett | P | Rd9 | P Hanks |
| N Chedd | 0 | 1 | P Spencer |
| A Neville | 0 | 1 | C Russell |
| E Knox | 1 | 0 | D Dhokia |
| L Townsend | P | Rd9 | S Walker |

| Champions League | P W | P S | R I | B S | P H | N C | Pts |
|------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-----|
| P Walker | X | 1 | | ½ | 1 | P | 2½ |
| P Spencer | 0 | X | ½ | | 0 | 1 | 1½ |
| R Ilett | | ½ | X | 1 | P | P | 1½ |
| B Stephens | ½ | | 0 | X | P | ½ | 1 |
| P Hanks | 0 | 1 | P | P | X | | 1 |
| N Chedd | P | 0 | P | ½ | | X | ½ |

| Challengers | D D | J P | E K | C R | S W | A N | L T | Pts |
|-------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-----|
| D Dhokia | X | 1 | 0 | ½ | 1 | P | | 2½ |
| J Peoples | 0 | X | | 1 | P | | 1 | 2 |
| E Knox | 1 | | X | | P | 1 | | 2 |
| C Russell | ½ | 0 | | X | 0 | 1 | | 1½ |
| S Walker | 0 | P | P | 1 | X | | P | 1 |
| A Neville | P | | 0 | 0 | | X | | 0 |
| L Townsend | | 0 | | | P | | X | 0 |

Cambridgeshire League

| St Neots A | 4 | New England A | 1 |
|-------------------|----------|----------------------|----------|
| A Mihalik | 1 | P Walker | 0 |
| A Chapman | ½ | P Hanks | ½ |
| R Gompelman | ½ | R Ilett | ½ |
| P Barkas | 1 | B Stephens | 0 |
| M Cooper | 1 | N Chedd | 0 |

| New England B | 2½ | Peterborough B | 1½ |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------------------|-----------|
| P Spencer | 1 | S Caraway | 0 |
| E Knox | 1 | C Masseron | 0 |
| C Russell | ½ | K Johns | ½ |
| J Peoples | 0 | G Hristov | 1 |

| St Neots B | P | New England B | P |
|---------------------------------|----------|----------------------|----------|
| Re-scheduled to 28th April 2025 | | | |

Team 7000

| Peterborough D | ½ | NE Patriots | 3½ |
|-----------------------|----------|--------------------|-----------|
| F Fairhurst | 0 | R Ilett | 1 |
| J Bell | ½ | B Stephens | ½ |
| C Masseron | 0 | N Chedd | 1 |
| W Cheng | 0 | C Russell | 1 |

| St Ives WC | P | NE Patriots | P |
|--|----------|--------------------|----------|
| Being re-scheduled, date to be confirmed | | | |

Team 4200

| NE Cavaliers | P | March | P |
|---|----------|--------------|----------|
| Re-scheduled to 19 th March 2025 | | | |

Fenland Trophy

| St Ives A | 2½ | New England A | 1½ |
|------------------|-----------|----------------------|-----------|
| R Coleman | 1 | P Walker | 0 |
| D Okorafor | ½ | P Hanks | ½ |
| N Greenwood | ½ | R Ilett | ½ |
| J Beck | ½ | B Stephens | ½ |

New England Club Ladder

| White | | Black | |
|--------------|---|--------------|----------|
| N Wedley | 0 | 1 | D Dhokia |
| P Walker | 1 | 0 | E Knox |

| Position | Change | | Player | Record @ 26/02/25 |
|-----------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| | Month | Overall | | |
| 1 | - | - | J Peoples | 1,1 |
| 2 | +1 | - | D Dhokia | 0,0,½,1 |
| 3 | -1 | +2 | N Wedley | 1,0,1,1,½,0 |
| 4 | - | +4 | C Russell | 1 |
| 5 | +4 | +6 | P Hanks | 1 |
| 6 | -1 | -3 | P Spencer | 1 |
| 7 | -1 | -3 | A Neville | 0,0 |
| 8 | -1 | +2 | S Walker | 1 |
| 9 | -1 | -3 | B Stephens | 1 |
| 10 | +1 | -3 | P Walker | 0,1,0,1 |
| 11 | -1 | -2 | R Ilett | 0 |
| 12 | - | - | L Townsend | 0 |
| 13 | - | - | E Knox | 1 |

New England Grand Prix

| Player | Champ | Ladder | League | | Cup | Team 7000 | Team 4200 | Total | TPR* |
|---------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|----------|------------|------------------|------------------|--------------|-------------|
| | | | A | B | | | | | |
| P Walker | 6½ | 2 | 3 | ½ | 1½ | | | 13½ | 1958 |
| B Stephens | 3 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1½ | 2½ | | 12 | 1919 |
| R Ilett | 4½ | | 3½ | ½ | 1½ | 2 | | 12 | 1920 |
| P Hanks | 5 | 1 | 4 | | 1½ | | | 11½ | 1937 |
| P Spencer | 5½ | 1 | ½ | 3 | 1 | ½ | | 11½ | 1805 |
| C Russell | 1½ | 1 | | 3½ | 2 | 1 | | 10 | 1604 |
| N Chedd | 2 | | 3½ | 2½ | | 1 | | 9 | 1796 |
| J Peoples | 3 | 2 | | 1 | | 0 | 1 | 7 | 1400 |
| N Wedley | 1 | 3½ | | | | 2 | | 5½ | 1625 |
| E Knox | 2 | | | 2 | ½ | 1 | | 5½ | 1673 |
| D Dhokia | 2½ | 1½ | | | | 0 | 4 | 4 | 1446 |
| J Sutherland | 1½ | | | 0 | ½ | 1 | | 3 | 1603 |
| S Walker | 1 | 1 | | | | | | 2 | 1407 |
| J Jennings | | | | 0 | | | 1½ | 1½ | 1238 |
| A Neville | 0 | 0 | | | | | | 0 | 1275 |
| L Townsend | 0 | 0 | | | | | | 0 | 1192 |

* Tournament Performance Rating is approximate

Match of the Month

If you were wondering about progress at the Junior Club, the following impressive consultation game will give you an idea. The format was Ed's brainchild with the juniors being split into two teams and an experienced club member acting as a mentor (Paul

and Peter). The adults suggested two moves in each position and it was up to the juniors to make the selection. The choice, however, need not be always between the best candidate moves determined after long thought (if only!) and sometimes a rogue move (denoted with a ?) was thrown into the mix. The children had to keep on the alert!

The moves played appear below in bold typeface with the rejected alternative in [brackets]. Sadly, the scoresheet with options for the Black side has gone astray.

Thomas & Joseph v Sophie & Harry
Junior Consultation game, 15/22.01.2025

| | | | |
|----------|------------|-------|------------|
| 1 | d4 | [e4] | Nf6 |
| 2 | c4 | [e4?] | e6 |
| 3 | Bg5 | [Nf3] | Be7 |
| 4 | Nf3 | [Nc3] | c5 |
| 5 | e3 | [d5] | |

If 5 d5, Black could win a pawn with 5 ... Nxd5 6 cxd5 (6 Bxe7 Nxe7) Bxg5 7 Nxg5 Qxg5. That's the first hurdle cleared!

| | | |
|----------|-----|------------|
| 5 | ... | 0-0 |
|----------|-----|------------|

So far, with an insignificant change in move order, the game is following the grandmaster game Rozentalis v Akesson, Rilton Cup 2007 which continued 6 Nc3. Although the positions in the consultation game have a familiar feel, it is the delay in developing the queenside knight that gives this game its unique character.

| | | | |
|----------|------------|--------|-------------|
| 6 | Bd3 | [Nc3] | b6 |
| 7 | 0-0 | [Qc2] | d5 |
| 8 | Qc2 | [Nc3] | h6 |
| 9 | Bh4 | [Bxf6] | Nbd7 |

During this phase of the game, the computer ranking shows that several move options in each position are equally good but nevertheless, a series of sensible choices is being made by both sides.

| | | | |
|-----------|-------------|-------|-------------|
| 10 | cxd5 | [Nc3] | exd5 |
| 11 | dxg5 | [Rd1] | bxg5 |
| 12 | Nc3 | [e4] | |

Strange things are happening! Now that the standard knight move has been played, a search of a database with nearly 2 million games reveals that the position has indeed been reached before - in an obscure game in France between players of comparable strength to the mentors. In 2005, Tseveendorj (2061) v Appavou (1940) went 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Nbd7 5 e3 h6 6 Bh4 e6 7 cxd5 exd5 8 Bd3 Be7 9 Qc2 c5 10 Nf3 0-0 11 0-0 b6 12 dxc5 bxc5. The difference? In that game, it is White to move; in our's, it is Black! As will be seen, timing is very important.

| | | |
|-----------|-------------|-------------------|
| 12 | ... | Bb7 |
| 13 | Rac1 | [Rfd1] Rc8 |
| 14 | e4 | [Qb3?] |

The choice here has hidden depth. If 14 Qb3, Black can counter with 14 ... c4 (attacking both queen and bishop) 15 Qxb7 Nc5 (attacking the queen) 16 Qxa7 (16 Qb4 Nxd3 forks the queen and rook) 16 ... Ra8

and the white queen has no escape squares. This is post-mortem computer ingenuity, of course.

Surprisingly, the provocative text move that was played is actually worse objectively! It was suggested in order to make the position more open and put an end to manoeuvring. From now on, there is often a definite tactical reason behind the move selection.

| | | |
|-----------|-----|-----------|
| 14 | ... | c4 |
|-----------|-----|-----------|

A quick count shows that the pawn on e4 is attacked three times but defended three times. Immediate exchanges will there leave White as the last man standing i.e. 14 ... dxe4 15 Nxe4 Nxe4 16 Bxe4 Bxe4 17 Qxe4. Thankfully, the final capture by the white queen also defends the bishop on h4 which, by the same logic, is now attacked twice by Black's bishop and queen but supported twice by the white knight and queen.

Black, however, has an intermediate move that chases off one of the defenders of e4 and tips the balance in their favour.

| | | |
|-----------|------------|--------|
| 15 | Be2 | [Bxf6] |
|-----------|------------|--------|

This concession is the right choice. After 15 Bxf6,

- the straightforward sequence of captures 15 ... cxd3 16 Bxe7 dxc2 17 Bxd8 Rfxd8 18 exd5 leaves White with at least an extra pawn
- Black does not have to be so compliant and 15 ... cxd3 16 Bxe7 Qxe7 17 Qxd3 dxe4 looks dangerous for White because it ends with both the queen and knight forked by the pawn but 18 Qe3 (pinning the pawn) prevents the capture 18 ... exf3 due to 19 Qxe7
- Black's simplest continuation is to avoid these complications with 15 ... Bxf6. After 16 Be2, the pawn on e4 has lost a defender but Black also has one fewer attacking pieces. Sadly, Black can play 16 ... d4 (now defended against 17 Nxd4 by the bishop on f6) and when the white knight moves, 17 ... d3 forks queen and bishop.

An instructive position to study.

| | | |
|-----------|-------------|-------------------|
| 15 | ... | dxg4 |
| 16 | Bxf6 | [Nd4] Nxf6 |

Here is another series of exchanges. Black could simplify the position with 16 ... exf3 17 Bxf3 Bxf3 18 Bxe7 Qxe7 19 gxf3 when material is level. Most players would favour Black in the final position. The white king is exposed to 19 ... Qg5+ and there is a weak pawn on f3 that can be attacked with 19 ... Ne5.

| | | |
|-----------|-------------|------------------|
| 17 | Rfd1 | [Ne5] Qb6 |
| 18 | Ne5 | [Nd4] e3 |

White is a pawn down and has been trying to generate compensation by placing his pieces aggressively on forward squares and on open files. Even so, Black can counterattack.

| | | |
|-----------|-----------|--------|
| 19 | f3 | [Nxc4] |
|-----------|-----------|--------|

Correct and not easy. Attacking the black queen with 19 Nxc4 appears to have advantages but after 19 ... exf2 20 Kf1, Black can sacrifice with 20 ... Rxc4 21

Bxc4 Ng4 with a horrible threat of 22 ... Ne3+ (more forks!). It is not simple to prevent e.g. 22 Qe2 allows 22 ... Nxh2 checkmate! White could try 20 Kh1 but with 20 ... Qe6, White might overlook the crafty 21 ... Qh3 (the g2 pawn is pinned by the bishop on b7).

19 ... Ba6
20 Na4 [Nd5]

OK. The mentor did miss the option 20 Nd7.

20 ... Qb8
21 f4 [Nxc4]

The computer thinks that 21 Nxc4 is safe.

21 ... Bb7
22 Nd7 [Nxc4]

Here, maybe 22 Bxc4 should have been the other option. It would threaten Bxf7+ if the rook on f8 moved though further pressure with 23 Qg6 would fail to 23 ... Rxc4.

22 ... Nxd7

Black attends to the fork of the queen and rook but by 22 ... Qxf4, White has no time for 23 Nxf8 due to mate in two 23 ... Qf2+ 24 Kh1 Qxg2#. White would need to defend with 23 Rf1 where 23 ... Qg5 still makes 24 Nxf8 impossible and the knight on d7 is undefended.

23 Rxd7 [Bg4] Qxf4

Black pulls the trigger but is probably a move too late.

24 Rf1 [Rxe7?]

The deliberate alternative was to force the White allies to foresee the checkmate. Sadly, it also misses the best defence 24 Rxb7 which also removes the threat. It looks that Black is in trouble with two unprotected pieces on the second rank.

24 ... Be4

Fiddlesticks! Black has found a way out with 25 Rxf4 Bxc2 25 Rxe7 Bxa4 and the position is level after 26 Rxc4 since the pawn on e3 will fall soon. This may have been preferable to the assault by Black that ensues.

25 Qc3 [Rxf4] Qg5
26 g3 [Bf3]

This is safer than 26 Bf3 when Black has many possibilities e.g. 26 ... e2

- 27 Rf2 Bxf3 28 Qxf3 e1=Q+
- 27 Re1 Bb4 28 Qxb4 Bxf3 when 29 g3 is too late because of 29 Qe3#.

26 ... Bf6
27 Qb4 [Qe1] Be5

Black wants to sacrifice in g3 in view of 28 ... Bxg3 29 hxg3 Qxg3#. One reply is to offer an exchange of queens before this can happen 28 Qe7 when Black's only route to avoid this 28 ... Qg6 allows 29 Qxe5. Or White can also go for the jugular.

28 Bxc4 [Qe7] Bxg3

The computer states that Black has a forced checkmate from this position. Can you find it?



29 Bxf7+ [Qxf8+]

White is facing checkmate by any dark-squared bishop move e.g. 29 Rd2 Bf2#. The text move is White's only hope.

What followed can best be likened to a time scramble. The session was coming to an end and some of the juniors were on a tight schedule. In the confusion, it was not clear what the formal next move was. Black has three legal choices. Two of them win and one loses...

- 29 ... Kh7. This allows White to escape because 30 Qxe4 is check! Black then has to face a devastating loss of material after 30 ... Kh8 31 hxg3 when the attack has evaporated.
- 29 ... Rxf7 is best and maintains the momentum of the assault. Black thought 30 Rxf7 gave the white king an escape square on f1 but 30 ... Bh4+ 31 Kf1 Qg2#. Instead, 30 Qxe4 only postpones matters by 30 ... Be5+ 31 Qg2 (31 Kh1 Rxf1#) 31 ... Rxf1+ 32 Kxf1 Rc1+ 33 Ke2 Qxg2+ 34 Kd3 Qc2+ 35 Kxe3 Re1+ 36 Kf3 Qe2#.
- 29 ... Kh8 should also win for Black but is nothing like as clear. White has a material advantage but 30 Qxe4 Rce8 supports the advanced pawn e.g. 31 Qd5 Bf2+ 32 Kh1 e2 or 31 Qf3 e2 32 hxg3 Re3. It takes a computer to sift through the variations but Black's attack should carry the day.

With time reaching the end of the session, the game was adjourned in this cliff-hanger scenario. On the balance of play, honours are about even and a draw was agreed so that the sessions could move forward to another topic. Hopefully, the juniors will learn from the game and its subsequent analysis because the mentors certainly did!