

NEW ENGLANDER

Chess Club Update – June 2010

Chairman's Chatter

Did I get the job? Obviously, being a chess pundit is not as easy as I made out in the last issue. In my defence, I blame Anand; he would have played much better if he had only followed my advice and opened 1 e4! With the championship contenders resting after their efforts, you may be tempted to do the same but summer is a good time for polishing your skills with the Masterclass sessions starting this month.

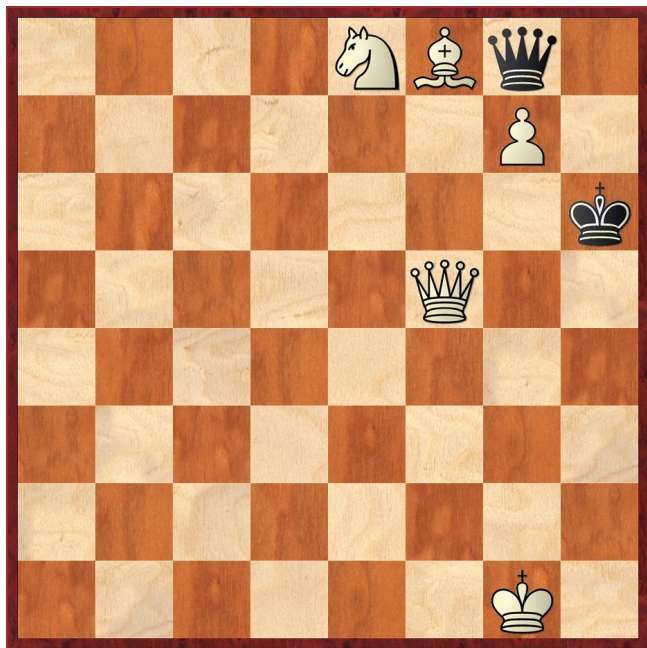
Paul Hanks

Diary Dates

The Annual General Meeting of Cambridgeshire Chess Association will be held at Warboys on 16th June 7-30p.m.

Puzzle Problem

White to play and mate in 2.



Last Month's solution

Position: 3Q2nr/2p4p/p1pP3p/2RP2n1/1PNk4/2N5/2K5/8
1 dxc7 cxd5 2 Qxd5#; 1 ... Nf6 2 Qxf6#; 1 ... Nf7 2 Qh4#; 1 ... Ne4 2 Ne2#; 1 ... Ne7 2 Qxh8#; 1 ... other 2 dxe6#. I thought 1 dxc6?? achieved the same end but 1 ... Ne6 2 Qh4+ Nf4 is only mate in 3.

Website to Watch

A 12 player round-robin tournament for the Poikovsky Cup takes place from 2nd to 13th June. Follow it on www.admoil.ru. From 26th June to 6th July, Jermuk, Armenia hosts an open tournament and the Women's Grand Prix event. Details can be found on www.chessacademy.am.

Result Round-up

Club Championship : at 02/06/10

Division One	CR	PH	FB	PT	RJ	MD	Total
C Ross	X	1 1	1 1	0 1	2	1 X	8 / 9
P Hanks	0 0	X	½ ½	1 1	2	X	5 / 8
F Bowers	0 0	½ ½	X	½ P	2d	X	3½ / 7
P Turp	0 1	0 0	P ½	X	1 P	X	2½ / 6
R Jones	0	0	0d	P 0	X	X	0 / 7
M Dunkley	X 0	X	X	X	X	X	0 / 1

Division Two	DL	CR	SW	AB	NW	JA	HC	MT	KT	DS	Total
D Lane	X	0	1	1	1 ½	1	1	1	1	0	6½
C Russell	1	X	1	1	½ 0*	1	1	1	1	1	7½
S Walker	0	0	X	½	0	1	1	1	1	0	4½
A Brookbanks	0	0	½	X	1	1d	½	1	1	1	6
N Wedley	0	½	1	0	X	1	1	0	½	1	5
J Alster	½	1*	0	0d	0	X	1	1	0d	0d	3½
H Currie	0	0	0	½	0	0	X	0	0*	P	½/8
M Tarabad	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	X	1	1	4
K Talnikar	0	0	0	0	½	1d	1*	0	X	½	3
D Sivell	1	0	1	0	0	1d	P	0	½	X	3½/8

* = game played in league match to count in both competitions

Cambridgeshire Chess Association

Division One	P	W	D	L	Games	Pts
Royston	10	8	2	0	35	18
Warboys A	10	4	4	2	27½	12
Cambridge	10	4	2	4	26	10
Peterborough	9	3	3	3	21	9
New England A	10	2	3	5	24	7
St Neots	9	0	2	7	11½	2

Division Two	P	W	D	L	Games	Pts
Warboys B	8	5	1	2	22	11
Spalding	8	4	2	2	15½	10
New England B	8	4	1	3	16	9
Buckden A	8	3	2	3	18½	8
Buckden B	8	0	2	6	8	2

Team 550

Team 1	Octavia Hill	New Eng 2	Warboys N	New Eng 2+	Octavia Hill	Warboys N	Royston	Score	Appearances
C Ross				½				½	1
P Hanks		½		½	1	½	0	2½	5
R Jones		½		½	1			2	3
C Russell	½		0	0	1	0	1	2½	6
M Tarabad	1	1	1	0		0		3	5
A Brookbanks	½	1	1	1	1	1	0	5½	7
K Talnikar	1		1	1			0	3	4
Total	3	3	3	3½	4	1½	1	18	
Team 2	Octavia Hill	New Eng 1	Warboys N	New Eng 1+	Octavia Hill	Warboys N	Default	Score	Appearances
F Bowers	1		1	½	½			3	4
P Turp	½	½	1	½	1			3½	5
J Alster				1				1	1
D Lane		½		½	1			2	3
S Walker		0		1	0			1	3
N Wedley			½					½	1
H Currie	1	0	0	0				1	4
D Sivell	1			0				1	2
Total	3½	1	2½	3½	2½	4		16½	

North Division		South Division	
New England 1	16½	Royston	13½
New England 2	15½	Cambridge B	13
Warboys N	10½	Cambridge A	13
Octavia Hill	5½	Ely/Warboys	8½

Play-off

New England 1	1	Royston	3
P Hanks	0	B Judkins	1
C Russell	1	D Hurricks	0
A Brookbanks	0	K Woodhouse	1
K Talnikar	0	N Parry-Evans	1

Jamboree				5th May 2010	
1=	New England A Linton	9	6=	Warboys B Godmanchester	4½
3	Royston	8	8	Warboys A	4
4	St Neots	7½	9	Octavia Hill	2
5	New England B	5½			

Match of the Month

The positions that arise during most chess games permit several continuations that are of roughly equal objective strength. The choice between them is a matter of style and the strategic plans of the contestants. Then there are critical positions in which one move stands out from the rest by either bestowing a significant advantage or avoiding a bombshell and giving a fighting chance. The outcome of the game often depends on your performance in these few crucial moments.

In this article, I will monitor the top two variations preferred by Fritz and try to identify those positions where the difference reaches significant proportions.

R Mann v P Hanks

Warboys A v New England A, 17.02.2010

1 c4 e5 2 Nc3 Nc6 3 g3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7 5 d3 d6 6 Nf3 Nge7 7 0-0 0-0 8 Bd2 Bd7

Fritz gives this opening the rather uninspiring name "English Opening vs King's Indian" but Chris Ross tells me it is the Botvinnik System. It would be nice to claim I was following my book knowledge up to this point but I was in the dark from move 2! I had, however, made a plan at that point a) to deter White from playing d2-d4 with complications in the centre and b) to advance my kingside pawns.

In the few examples that occur at grandmaster level, Black scores quite well. White has to respond on the queenside and often plays Rb1 and b4 on move 8-9 and sometimes as early as move 5-6. I have obviously stumbled into a decent line but at the moment, the computer evaluates the position as level. In the right column below, I shall give the difference in Fritz's assessment between its top two options for Black and the favourite move (if not played).

			Difference
9	a3	Qc8	0.06 - Nd4
10	Re1	Bh3	0.09 - Nd4
11	Bh1	h6	0.04 - Bg4
12	Rb1	f5	0.04 - a4
13	Nh4	g5	0.33
14	Ng2	f4	0.55
15	f3	h5	0.0 - Qe8
16	Ne4	Qf5	0.30
17	Nf2	Ng6	0.16 - Nd4
18	e4	Qd7	0.27
19	Rf1	Rf7	0.30 - Nd4
20	Nxh3	Qxh3	5.44
21	gxf4	gxf4	1.92 - exf4
22	Ne1	Nh4	0.12
23	Bg2	Nxg2	0.20
24	Nxg2	Bf6	0.10 - Nd4
25	Kh1	Rg7	0.00
26	Rg1	Nd4	1.75
27	Ne1	Rxg1+	#14
28	Kxg1	Kf7	#13

White resigned as his king is helpless e.g. 29 Ng2 Rg8 30 Qf1 Nxf3+ 31 Kf2 Nxd2 32 Qg1 Rxg2+ etc

The difference column indicates how critical the position is at that point i.e. whether an inferior move

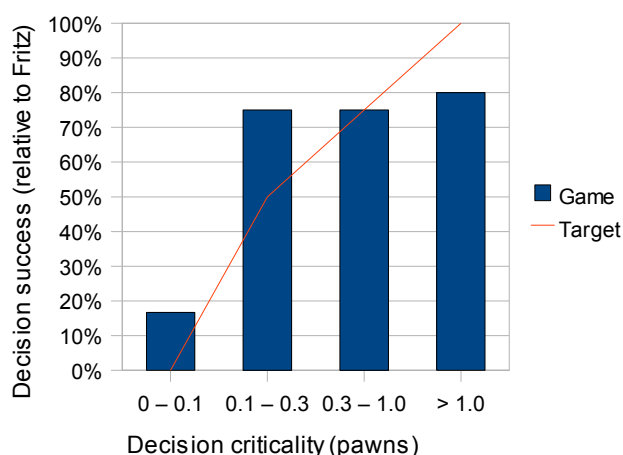
could have dire consequences. Sadly, the largest differences combine situations with tricky decisions of great importance and those that are plainly obvious such as simple recaptures (but you still have to get them right!).

So what can we conclude?

Firstly, the opening phase up to move 12 contains several opportunities to adopt an alternative but equivalent strategy. Note that computers are probably at their weakest in this task and varying from its recommendations is only natural.

Secondly, as the position becomes sharper after move 12, human and software agree more frequently. Still more importantly, the more critical the position, the better the correlation becomes (see graph).

Performance assessment



In fact, I have made so bold as to suggest a target (the "Hanks curve") for club players. If there is minimal objective difference in continuations, there is no need to be a slave to the computer and indeed, human schematic thinking may be superior. If the position rests on a knife-edge, it is imperative that the best move is played with a sliding scale between these extremes.

During the game, I felt there were several critical positions.

- The first was before 12 ... f7-f5. In the past, I have come to grief when White has opened the centre with d5. White's 11 Bh1 and ponderous play on the queenside did not suggest much ambition and I felt my committal advance was justified. White's 13 Nh4 (which I had not foreseen) encouraged me though I thought 13 ... g5 14 Nf3 might be the prelude to a sacrifice on g5.
- The next pause for real thought came when I contemplated 17 ... Ng6. There are several tempting lines - Fritz's Nd4 along with blasting open the kingside with g5-g4 or clearing the g file for a rook with Kg8-h7. My choice was swayed by the fact that White is bottled up by the pawn on f4 and reinforcing the square should free me to select one of the other moves according to White's reply. I had

visualised 18 e4 as a mistake giving me uncontested access to d4 and I am pleased that Fritz agrees.

- And finally, the big decision that I got wrong!



I had dismissed piece captures on f4 as in the subsequent exchanges, White would be eliminate his useless pieces and I played 21 ... gxf4. This is supposed to be considerably worse than 21 ... exf4 but why?

The point is White has to play 22 Bc3 (to prevent 22 ... Bd4+) when 22 ... g4 has the simple threat 23 ... g3 with mate on h2. A computer can obviously go through the potential defences and show they are all of no avail but I can't. It is easy to see Black's pieces are ideally placed for the attack but a knock-out blow is beyond my analysis horizon.

The best defence is 23 Ne1 g3 24 Qd2 Bd4+ 25 Bxd4 Nxd4 26 hxg3 fxf3 27 Nc2 Qh2+ 28 Qxh2 gxh2+ 29 Kxh2 Nxc2 30 Rf2 Nd4 31 Rg1 Kh7 32 Kg3 with a sufficient material plus to win the endgame. A more fitting end would be for White to vary from this line with 26 Qg2 Nh4 27 Qxh3 Ne2#.