

NEW ENGLANDER

Chess Club Update – September 2010

Chairman's Chatter

The format of some of the County competitions could be different in the coming season. In particular, the changes being proposed are

- i) creation of a banded Cambridgeshire "Game of the Season" competition
- ii) reduction of the Fenland Knock-Out to four players per team with a plate competition for first round losers
- iii) instigating an Individual County Blitz Competition either with a fixed time limit e.g. 10mins/player or a time handicap such as partitioning 30mins between players according to grade differential
- iv) reviving the Individual Championship as a Swiss tournament with a modest entry fee, offering a grading prize and eliminating scheduled nights or having a weekend event
- v) holding a prize-giving event in the summer
- vi) improving communication via mailing list for all active players.

The club's response will be discussed at the Annual General Meeting.

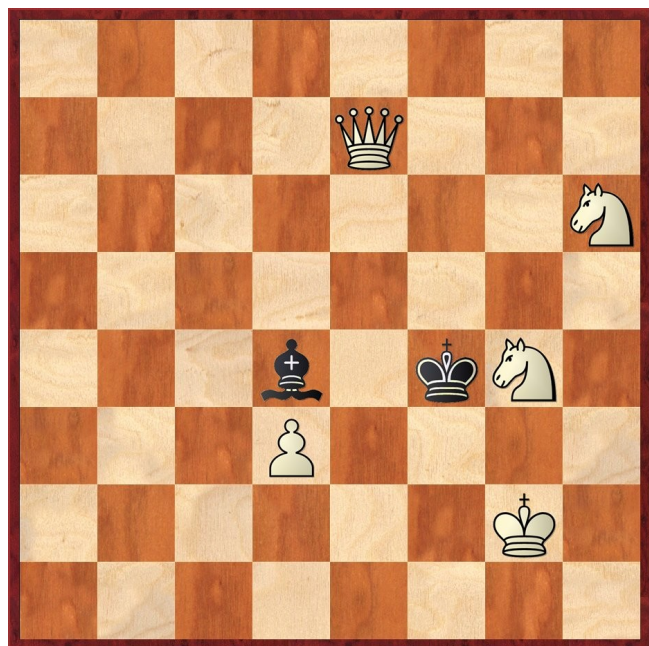
Paul Hanks

Diary Dates

The club's AGM will take place on 8th September starting at 7-30pm. The County Association holds its Executive Committee meeting on 16th September in Godmanchester when the composition of the leagues and the format of other compositions is decided.

Puzzle Problem

White to play and mate in 2.



Last Month's solution

Position: 5r2/8/8/8/6k1/1Q5R/BK1B4

1 Qh8 Rxh8 2 Be5# [1 ... Rb8+ 2 Qxb8#; 1 ... Rf4 2 Qh3#; 1 ... Kf4 2 Qe5#; 1 ... R other 2 Qh4#]

Website to Watch

In September, you can look forward to the World Chess Olympiad which takes place in Khanty-Mansiysk from 19th September to 4th October. Its website is <http://ugra-chess.com>.

Early in the month (3rd to 8th), Shanghai hosts a Masters event to determine qualifiers for the Bilbao supertournament next month. I have not found a dedicated site yet.

Match of the Month

A lot of you already know I recently participated in the Lichtenbergersommer 2010 tournament in Berlin. I came joint 2nd with 7/9 making it the best chess performance to my career to date.

This interesting struggle against GM Robert Rabiega occurred in round 3 before he eventually won the tournament with 7½/9. Even we mere mortals can "out-theory" a grandmaster from time to time...

Robert Rabiega (2508) v Chris Ross (2207)

Lichtenberger Sommer, Berlin 09.08.2010

1 e4 c5 2 c3 d5 3 exd5 Qxd5 4 d4 e6 5 Nf3 Nf6 6 a3 Nc6 7 Bd3 cxd4 8 cxd4 Be7 9 Nc3 Qd6 10 0-0 0-0 11 Be3 b6 12 Qe2 Bb7 13 Rad1 Rad8 14 Rfe1 Rfe8 15 Bg5 Qb8 16 Bb1

All played in 4 minutes. Both of us were obviously well prepared and perfectly aware of what the other was ready to play. I gained the impression though that I was playing the more confidently and was the one with the more potent weapon up my sleeve.

So far, following the main line. Black plays against the IQP and White tries to attack. The other line I had prepared was : 16 Bc4 h6 17 Bh4 Qc8 18 Bg3 Nd5 19 Bxd5 exd5 20 Qd2 Na5 21 Nb5 Nc4 22 Qc3 Bf8 23 Nxa7 Rxe1+ 24 Rxe1 Qd7 25 b3 Ra8 H Stevic (2415) v C Lutz (2565), Vienna 1996 [1/2-1/2 after 54 moves]

16 ... g6

Still according to plan. White should now play 17 Ba2 or 17 Be4. Other moves are not in the books.

17 g3?

And on move 17, my grandmaster opponent deviates from the known theory, coming up with a poor novelty! A very strange decision indeed. I didn't even consider this in my pre-match contemplations and in contrast to our initial blitz, it was time to settle down and have a good long ponder. The pace of the game from now onwards became very ponderous indeed!

So, the purpose of 17 g3. To support Bf4? No, that is not a great positional move - the black queen is happy to hide on a8 and exert pressure on the long diagonal. Is it to permit h2-h4 with the idea of opening lines on the kingside? If so, why does White not get on with that plan immediately? Playing g2-g3 is not a necessary prelude to launching the h pawn.

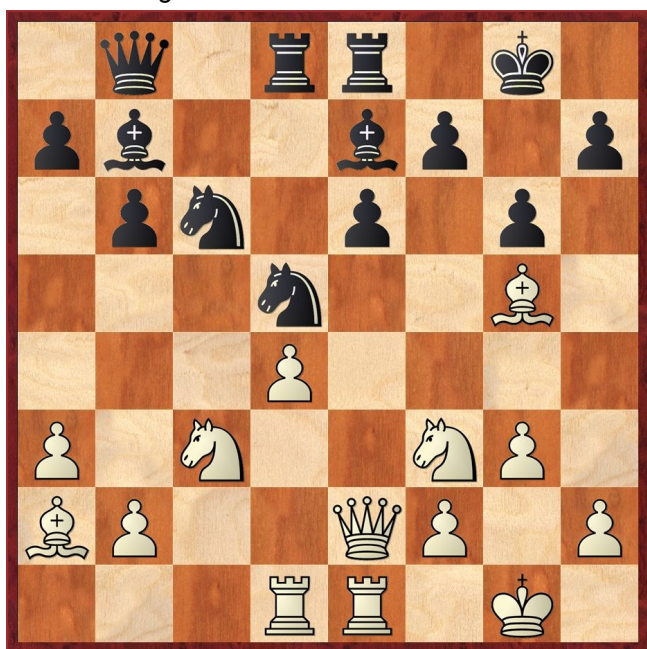
There seems no really logical reason for this pawn push. I understood it as a waste of tempo but failed to exploit it to the maximum.

I knew that 17 Ba2 was the latest theory, although I had also prepared for 17 Be4. Both bishop moves target the d5 square and have tactics on d5 if the black knight lands there. If the theory believes this necessary, surely, the occupation of the blockading square is the correct plan?

17 ... Nd5
18 Ba2

Now alarm-bells began to ring, very seriously, but nothing I thought of seemed to work. We have reached a theoretical position in which it should be White to move, but it isn't. It is actually Black to move since the move g2-g3 has been thrown in.

Obviously, I need to discover why theory has rejected this as a viable position for White. It needs considerable thought and is probably the pivotal point to the whole game.



Concentrate on a single strand. In this textbook position, it is meant to be White to move not Black. Why? What is immediately wrong with the position? Solution to come...

18 ... Kg7?

In the theoretical lines, Black plays Nh5 or Kg7 to relieve the pressure along the h4-d8 and a2-g8 diagonals - the black king can become vulnerable from the latter. There are other variations where Black allows exchanges and then Kg7 prevents a knight sneaking to f6 via e4.

Prophylactic moves are all fine in themselves but this move is a perfect example in why caution is inferior to concrete knowledge. There has to be a fundamental flaw in the white position for theory to reject it. Is Kg7 an active move to exploit a defect in White's game? No, it is not. Kg7 then, is a poor move for that reason alone.

So, we turn our attention to tactics. A combination that was beyond me at the time is glaringly obvious now.

Naturally, the whole concentration of the game is the IQP. White is attempting to maintain and advance it. Black is trying to blockade it and exert enough pressure for it to become ultimately weak.

Let's combine all the ideas so far outlined and then we get the incredible variation: 18 ... Nxd4! 19 Rxd4 Nxc3 20 bxc3 Bxf3 21 Qxf3 Bxg5 giving Black a clear pawn advantage and a much superior position! With the opposite coloured bishops, White has lots of drawing chances, but what an amazing way to exploit the fundamental positional weaknesses in White's set-up.

Having seen his blunder, White thought for a long time. I probably wouldn't miss it second time around but how do you avoid this continuation?

19 Nxd5 Bxg5
20 Nxc3 Bxf3

Annoyingly, Black has a weak queen's pawn now, but White is at pains to secure and defend his own d4 pawn. I considered this equal for black, but as you will soon see, white now demonstrates how the slightest of positional advantages is enough for him to create more penetration opportunities.

21 Qf3 Rxe1+
22 Rxe1 Qc7

Defending and attacking simultaneously. The d pawn cannot be taken due to Nxd4 tactics (which I had belatedly seen!). Now, how does White defend his weak pawn and attempt a penetration?

23 Qc3!

Perfectly played! White defends the d4 pawn and sees it is the c file that is actually the avenue for penetration. White correctly switches from the kingside to the queenside. Such is the pressure down the c file that ultimately, holes will appear down the e file. A very neat and clever way to exploit a central weakness by pressurising the a weakness on the opposite flank. For this, I give White much credit.

The variation 23 Bxd5 Nxd4 24 Qxf7+ Qxf7 25 Bxf7 Kf6 is winning a piece for Black. A neat trap, but White had figured out that in short order!

23 ... Qd7
24 h4

White demonstrates his dominance of the position. Black is struggling for moves as White has the luxury of being able to probe. I was expecting 24 Nf3 h6.

24 ... Qg4
25 b4 Rd7

Black is really grovelling. White is correctly expanding on the queenside to create a weakness there. The c5

square cannot be allowed as an outpost for the white queen or rook. White is now intent on a good knight v bad bishop ending, which Black can hardly avoid.

26 Nf3 f6

Not a move Black really wants to make because my light-coloured squares have become weak but the e5 square has to be protected. If White establishes a knight there, he will dominate even more territory. White's plan is a very illustrative way to force a clear advantage. Where is the focus for his attack?

27 Bb3 a6
28 Ba4 Rc7

Black is still clinging on but White will complete the first piece of his plan by ridding himself of his apparently poor bishop. This bishop is actually fine but he wants to render the bishop on b7 even worse.

Which square is White's target? Amazingly, it's g6!

29 b5 axb5
30 Bxb5 Qc8
31 Bxc6

So, with this exchange, White rids himself of the pressure on d4 - Black's only hope. More importantly, the dark squares have become White's playthings and the white queen is ready to target the g6 square.

31 ... Bxc6
32 Qb4 Qb7

Defends the b6 pawn and prevents Re7+. But why is the queen on b4? Easy, it's heading for b1!

33 h5!

Again, well played. White has coordinated his pieces excellently and targets the correct weak point.

33 ... Rf7
34 Nh4

More pressure on g6. White is going to play Qb1 next which will leave the white squares, including g6 and f5 too weak to hold. Superb positional play by White.

34 ... Qd7

Simply giving up on the b6 pawn in a desperate hope to gain some space and activity. No better is 34 ... Qb8 35 Qb1 gxh5 36 Re6 and White crashes through.

35 Qxb6 g5
36 Ng2

Calm to the finish. Nf5+ tactics are unnecessary, as I would love to exchange my poor bishop for that excellent knight. The knight is heading for f5, sure, and I can't prevent it. Clever patient play by White.

36 ... Bb7

I could not see anything here. I simply wanted to protect the bishop and attempt to get some activity with the rook and queen. Not to be though. I reasoned that 36 ... Kg8 37 g4 would just cement White's advantage.

37 Ne3 Qh3

A final bluff. White has to be careful of flash tactics, but all are in vain. White has more than enough to cope with any dirty last-minute tactics that Black may throw at him. 37 ... g4 does nothing and White can

advance his outside passed pawn if he so wishes with 38 a4 and I have no attacks on h5 or the light squares.

38 Qd8

Again, penetrating on the dark squares. Equally good was 38 Rc1 Bc8 39 Rc7 and White has penetrated with his rook. However, the queen has now entered into the black camp. There is little to do now.

38 ... Qe6

Again, looking for tactics down the e file. I thought a slower squeeze would be 38 ... Qd7 39 Qxd7 Rxd7 as White can plonk a knight on f5 and slowly bring his rook in. White has that passed a pawn too, don't forget!

39 g4 Rd7

Can Black hope to live?

40 Nf5+ Qxf5

Ah, Black got a dirty trick up his sleeve! Surely, White has not missed this simple resource?

41 Re7+ 1-0

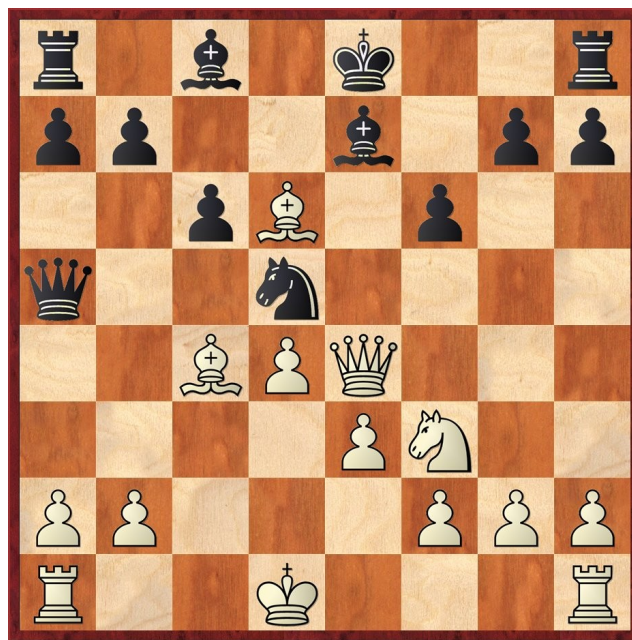
Oh! OK then, maybe he hasn't. In all variations, the white queen can deliver check and the black queen will be left en prise. A very clever game, from which I have learned a great deal.

Chris Ross

Eye Opener

Ahman v Malmgren
Correspondence, 1947

1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 c4 c6 4 Nc3 e6 5 cxd5 exd5 6 Bg5 Be7 7 e3 Nbd7 8 Qc2 Ne4 9 Nxe4 dxe4 10 Qxe4 Qa5+ 11 Kd1 f6 12 Bf4 Nb6 13 Bd6 Nd5 14 Bc4



It looks like Black's gambit has actually allowed White to grab a dangerous initiative but...

14 ... Bf5 0-1

White loses the piece on d6 because 15 Qxf5 Nxe3+