

New Englander

Chess Club Update – August 2021

Chairman's Chatter

Thumbs up! We have a new home - The Yard of Ale passed muster when members visited on 28th July. They were very favourably impressed by the room size, facilities and venue location. We shall be able to store equipment in our cupboard as previously and the midday opening time means we can access the room before matches at our leisure. This is a great opportunity, thanks to Chris Russell's efforts, and I hope you will return and continue to support the club's teams and competitions. See you on 1st September!

Paul Hanks

AGM Summary

The club Annual General Meeting was held on 8th July 2021 attended by seven members. The following brief notes summarise the business transacted :-

- Due to no expenditure during the past year, club funds remain unchanged. A contingency to increase the subscription to £50p.a. was approved but this may reduce depending on future venue costs and membership numbers
- The facilities at the Yard of Ale seem appropriate for a new venue and an inspection visit will be organised towards the end of July
- The operation of the proposed Covid-19 prevention protocol was approved (see appended text below) with no preference expressed to increase its rigour with such measures as face covering
- A league team would be entered into each CCCA division and one into the "550" competition (though two if there is sufficient demand)
- The Committee was re-elected en bloc but with Chris Russell becoming B team captain and Ed Knox captaining the "550" team
- A team would continue to play online if the call for volunteers was answered
- Other internal events would continue as previously.

CCCA AGM Summary

The County Association held its Annual General Meeting on 13th July with 13 members in attendance.

- League fees were waived for the coming season
- The Team550 competition has been revised to have a team aggregate limit of 7000 under the new ECF grading system

- Clubs are prepared to resume over-the-board play in September albeit with a reduced number of teams in each competition
- The Covid-19 Prevention Protocol (discussed at the club AGM) was adopted as a minimum standard with advice being given to consider face covering and externally vented air circulation in the event of shared travel by car
- A start date of no earlier than 20th September was decided with clubs advising the Fixture Secretary of any required deferment
- The committee was re-elected en bloc with vacancies for a Grading Officer and ECF Representative
- Tentative arrangements are in progress for the Cambs Rapidplay at Whittlesford in October and a revised EACU Team Championship (to be renamed in honour of Patrick Ribbands) in November. The County Individual Championship will be organised by Francis Bowers in Peterborough
- Players were asked to volunteer in support of the county teams (Open and U1850).

Puzzle Problem

White to play and mate in 2



Last Month's solution (Meinartz 1933)

Position : 7k/4N3/6K1/8/7p/7p/6RR/8

1 Rg3 h×g3 2 R×h3#

Website to Watch

The final leg of the Grand Chess Tour is the Sinquefeld Cup. Play starts on 17th August in St Louis with round 9 on 26th. Should any tiebreak play-off be required it will precede the closing ceremony on 27th. For details, see <https://grandchesstour.org/2021-grand-chess-tour/2021-sinquefeld-cup>.

The European Individual Chess Championship (11 rounds of the Reykjavik Open) advertised on <https://www.reykjavikopen.com/invitation-european-individual-2021/> has play for from 25th August.

Diary Dates

1st September Regular chess club meetings resume probably with a rapidplay tournament

8th & 15th September Club championship rounds 1 & 2 (to be confirmed).

Result Round-up

Iceni League

Linton	5½	NE U1700	2½
"chrisD24991"?	0½	C Ross	1½
"kirspykiwi123..."	10	P Spencer	01
"200orbustQueen"	11	P Hanks	00
"mariner235"	11	E Knox	00

St John's	5½	NE U1350	2½
"claytog"	11	M Tarabad	00
"CrumptonC"	1½	S Walker	0½
"canaryman37"	10	J Jennings	01
"Jamestherookster"	01	M Scott	10

Match of the Month

I may appear to be an easy-doing chap but occasionally, something happens that, in the family-friendly version, provokes my displeasure but in reality, makes me spit feathers to put it mildly. Please let me explain.

Last month, Chris Russell wrote about the frustration of blundering into a lost position against a nominally weaker opponent – even if a well-crafted swindle can come to the rescue. This month, exactly the opposite happens. After a reasonable but not faultless start, I achieved an excellent position against a strong player and then... Well, you had better read on.

BlankBrain v RORYDONS24

New England v Norwich Dons; Chess.com 17.06.21

1	d4	d5
2	Nf3	Nf6
3	c4	c6
4	Nc3	e6
5	Bg5	Be7

This is a solid response in the Semi-Slav Variation of the Queen's Gambit. Amongst the alternatives are 5 ... dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 (the Botvinnik System) and 5

... h6 6 Bh4 dxc4 7 e4 b5 8 e5 g5 (the Anti-Moscow Gambit). Both lead to extremely sharp play and loads of theory! See , for instance, the *Match of the Month* for September 2019.

6 e3 h6

Both sides are playing apparently standard moves but surprisingly, it is difficult to find a precedent game in which this sequence has occurred.

7 Bf4

This (rather than 7 Bh4), however, is unusual but not unique in concept.

7 ... 0-0

If the pawn on c6 were pushed forward one square, the resulting position was reached in 2020 and the grandmaster who was happy to accept my position as White was a certain M Carlsen!

8 Qc2 Bd6
9 Bxd6 Qxd6
10 cxd5

Fritz thinks this is a faint error and that White should continue with normal development e.g. 10 Be2 or even 10 0-0-0. I did not want to move the light-squared bishop and then lose a whole tempo having to recapture after 10 ... dxc4 11 Bxc4. The continuing restriction of its black counterpart by the pawn on e6, however, probably compensates.

10 ... exd5
11 Bd3 Re8
12 0-0 Na6
13 a3 Nc7

For the last few moves, both sides had options of virtually equivalent merit. Having reached the well-known Carlsbad structure, White has to choose a plan. Classically, that means either advancing e3-e4 under favourable circumstances or conducting a minority attack.

If 14 e4 comes immediately, 14 ... dxe4 15 Nxe4 Nxe4 16 Bxe4 Bg4 when I should be left with an isolated pawn and little chance of the aggressive advance d4-d5 before Black exploits my weakness e.g. 17 Rad1 Qf4 18 Rfe1 Bxf3 19 Bxf3 Rxe1+ 20 Rxe1 Qxd4.

The minority attack is so-called because White's two queenside pawns fearlessly stride forward against Black's superior numbers on that flank. The point is that eventually b4-b5 will either

- provoke c6xb5 or c6-c5 leaving Black's d pawn unsupported
- or allow b5xc6 when, after the recapture b7xc6, Black has a backward pawn on the open c file.

This latter strategy is certainly appealing here because White can establish a knight on e5 hitting the potential vulnerability on c6.

14 b4

Here goes...

14 ... a5

Black immediately tries to break up my advance.

15 Ne5 axb4
16 axb4 Be6

I admit it! With the fast time control, I overlooked 16 ... Qxb4. Seeing it while awaiting my opponent's response, I toyed with 17 Nxf7 but White does not generate a lasting initiative with 17 ... Rxa1 18 Rxa1 Kxf7 19 Bg6+ Kf8 20 Bxe8 Ncxe8 21 Ra8 Nd6. Instead after 17 Rxa8, Fritz gives me the slimmest advantage by continuing with my plan. 17 ... Nxa8 18 Rb1 Qd6 19 Na4 and when my knight reaches c5, Black's queenside pawns will be difficult to defend and care must be taken to avoid little tricks like 19 ... Qc7 20 Qa4 Nb6 Qa5.

17 b5

As previously noted, 17 Na4 would persevere with the positional threat to occupy c5. 17 ... Na6 (17 ... Qxb4 18 Rfb1 Qd6 19 Rxb7) 18 Bxa6 Rxa6 19 Nc5

- 19 ... Rb6 20 Ra7 Bc8 (20 ... Rxb4 21 Nxb7) when Black is being squeezed for space
- 19 ... Rxa1 20 Rxa1 b6 21 Nxe6 Qxe6 22 Qxc6.

These variations show how easily Black's pawn structure can become ragged.

17 ... c5
18 Rfb1

18 b6 would be a way to give up the pawn to weaken Black's queenside as described earlier - this time intentionally! Only later did I see the virtues of 18 Qb2 with its occupation of the b file and allowing the bishop to retreat to c2.

18 ... c4
19 Be2 Nd7
20 Nxd7 Qxd7
21 b6

I played this automatically not realising Black's queen and bishop battery suddenly threatened a skewer.

21 ... Bf5
22 e4

I had to think for more than 5 minutes over this complicated position and reckoned White had no realistic alternative here.

22 ... dxe4
23 bxc7 e3
24 Rxa8

My backstop variation was 24 Qb2 Bxb1 25 Rxa8 Rxa8 26 Qxb7 Rc8 27 Qxb1 exf2+ 28 Kf1 Qxc7 when I survive into the endgame which the computer assesses as drawn. I decided instead to see if Black could withstand the stress of a speculative sacrifice. After all, it is only a queen I am giving away.

24 ... exf2+
25 Kxf2

It was more sensible to leave the enemy pawn with 25 Kf1 to keep some shelter for my king.

I was expecting 25 ... Rxa8 26 Qb2 Bxb1 27 Qxb7 which would transpose into the earlier analysis except I have already committed my king to a perilous existence in the open.

As it was, Black's clock, initially at 6 minutes, started to tick down...(I checked the screen) ... and down... (I checked again – several anxious times) ... and eventually to zero. I HAD WON ON TIME! Yippee! My daring was repaid. But why was chess.com not congratulating me on my victory? I hurriedly typed a chat message to my opponent which simply vanished. The seconds dragged past and I was starting to worry about the unresponsive IT. What was going on?

Many agonising moments later, Black's 25th move flashed up on the screen for an instant, a pop-up screen appeared showing 0–1 and MY OPPONENT HAD WON ON TIME! How can it be possible to lose on time when it is not your turn to move? This is a definite bug in the website that is annoying in the extreme, as you may tell from my tone.

25 ... Bxc2

This was the move my opponent had played on his board which was invisible to me and he was equally bemused at my subsequent silence, particularly as he realised he was now in definite trouble.



Here we have the position for our post-mortem adjudication. How well was I doing when the website's foibles unfairly intervened? I have just parted with my queen and both rooks are en prise. Nevertheless, Fritz evaluates my advantage as worth over 4 pawns - a clearly winning margin. My intention was

26 Rxe8+ Qxe8
27 Rxb7

Apparently, 27 Bg4 is even better when the promotion can only stopped at greater cost to Black. Even so, my move is more obvious and still, the threat on the back rank and of promoting the passed pawn will give me a huge material plus e.g.

27 ... Qd7 28 Rb8+ Kh7 29 c8Q Qxd4+ 30 Kf1 Qxc3 31 Qg8+ Kg6 32 Rb6+ f6 33 Qxc4.

For once, I cannot complete the scoresheet with the game result. I was robbed! Grrrr!

New England Chess Club

Covid-19 Prevention Protocol

New England Chess Club shall :-

- designate two members as principal and reserve points of contact for matters concerning the Covid-19 pandemic. These nominees shall
 - liaise with the venue operators about any local procedures
 - stay abreast of developments in recognisable symptoms
 - circulate venue compliance measures and symptom updates to the membership
 - mandate members displaying symptoms, awaiting a test result or required to quarantine/self-isolate not to attend club events
 - be able to pass on information about testing and vaccination
 - notify the County Association of their contact details and responsibilities for onward forwarding to similar appointees at other clubs.
- See <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19>
- provide hand sanitiser for compulsory use on entry to the playing area
- maintain a register of everyone entering the playing area including contact details for visitors
- require members to inform the Covid designates immediately should they (or anyone in their household/support bubble) test positive for Covid-19 or strongly suspect infection due to their symptoms
- broadcast the potential for infection to all possible contacts on the register for the appropriate session(s) and the Covid designate for any visiting team.

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