

New Englander

Chess Club Update – September 2021

Chairman's Chatter

Is this the end of an era? In terms of our venue, certainly and we can only hope that our time at the Yard of Ale will be as enjoyable as the past decade at the Lancaster Club.

I was instead referring to whether or not we shall be putting the experiment with online chess behind us. As with the regulations concerning international travel, the shifting sands of the pandemic are making everything uncertain. The Cambridgeshire leagues have already lost several teams and with opposition dwindling for over the board play, there may yet be a role for the internet in some future competitions. Perhaps, this issue's *Match of the Month* will serve as a reminder that our foray into the virtual world over the past year filled a void thanks to organisation by Paul Spencer - and was not without suspense, excitement and comedy.

Paul Hanks

Puzzle Problem

White to play and mate in 2



Last Month's solution (Kubbel 1940)

Position : 8/8/4BRpp/6k1/5R2/4K3/8/8

1 Bf7 h5 2 Rxc6# [1 ... Kh5 2 R6f5#]

Website to Watch

September has a feast of events. From 7th to 18th, <https://norwaychess.no/en> is the place to find out about "The World's Strongest Chess Tournament" in Stavanger. It includes champion Magnus Carlsen and

challenger Ian Nepomniachtchi but the field is missing some big names from former years.

Immediately afterwards (17th to 25th), the European Chess Club Cup takes place in Struga on Lake Ohrid in North Macedonia. If you visit the website <http://europeanclubcup2021.com.mk/>, you will see the opposition would be slightly too strong for New England to compete!

A smaller grandmaster competition in Malmo, Sweden has some English interest with Gawain Jones and Nigel Short playing. From 23rd to 29th, they can be followed on <http://www.tepesigeman chess.com/>.

Diary Dates

1st September ECF membership renewal due

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

8th/15th Sept Club championship rounds 1 & 2

25th September CCCA Rapidplay at Whittlesford. Entry by either a downloadable form or an online application can be made via <http://www.cambschess.co.uk/index.html>.

27th/28th November Cambridgeshire Individual County Championship at Peterborough Bridge Club, Lincoln Road. Visit <http://www.cambschess.co.uk/CambsChampionships2021.pdf> for an entry form.

Result Round-up

In past issues of the newsletter, the Grand Prix column included a column headed "TPR" standing for Tournament Performance Rating. This has recorded the ECF grading that the classical games in our internal competitions would merit for each member. The ECF has now converted to a 4 digit grading system which may be too complex to mirror here. I propose to use the following equivalence process :-

Previously, for N games between relatively well-matched opponents (± 40 points), the TPR was calculated by the formula

$$tpr = 1/N \sum_{n=1}^N (g_n + 50 \delta_n)$$

where g_n is the old ECF grade of your nth opponent and $\delta_n = -1, 0, 1$ depending respectively on whether you lost, drew or won the game. Given that now your opponent's grade is given by G_n where

$$G_n = 7.5 \times g_n + 700$$

the updated TPR would be

$$TPR = 1/N \sum_{n=1}^N (G_n + 375 \delta_n)$$

Match of the Month

"A good player is always lucky." This pronouncement by Capablanca refers to occasions when the elite succumb to an oversight but serendipitously make an escape. Its basis in truth is that for grandmasters, chess intuition operates at such a high level that apparent dangers are subconsciously suppressed when they are in fact harmless.

We can forgive the world champion from 1921-27 this philosophical lapse. He obviously never had the chance to see the following game.

Neil_Hickman (1561) v **BlankBrain** (1561)

Wyomondham v New England; Icen League, 30.06.21

1 e4 c6
2 d4 d5

Why am I playing the Caro Kann? It has the reputation for being very drawish but I suppose a lightweight online tournament is a good time to be experimental.

3 exd5 cxd5
4 c4

This is the Panov-Botvinnik Attack which is so well known that every player of this opening as Black should know how to meet it.

4 ... Nf6
5 Nf3 Nc6
6 Nc3 Be6

Until this move, both sides have followed a sequence that has occurred many times in grandmaster practice. It would be nice (but incorrect) to say that I knew this but playing the text move, I was desperate to get away from standard theory so that my opponent was in the same state of total ignorance as me.

The main alternatives are 6 ... Bg4 7 cxd5 Nxd5 8 Qb3 or 6 ... e6 7 c5/cxd5.

7 c5 g6
8 Bg5

Only after the game did I learn that this position had been reached previously. Potkin v Riazantsev, 2010 continued 8 Bb5 Bg7 9 Ne5 which gives White immediate pressure against c6. Much the same can be said for 8 Qb3 Qc7 9 Nb5 Qd7 10 Bf4 with c7 as the target.

8 ... Bg7
9 Bb5 0-0
10 Bxc6 bxc6
11 Ne5 Qc7
12 Qd2

I was expecting White to choose 12 Qa4 to be consistent with his previous moves but instead, he is intending to switch to a kingside attack. Not without reason because it is hard to see if Black can generate any counterplay

12 ... Rab8

12 ... Ne4 is a great favourite with Fritz. I failed to see the point and worried about being stranded with an isolated pawn after 13 Nxe4 dxe4. What I failed to spot is that f7-f6 not only threatens to fork two pieces

but even if the bishop moves beforehand, the knight has no flight square. The most straightforward option is to buy time with 14 Bf4 Qb7 and secure c4 for the retreat with 15 Rc1 although 15 ... Bxa2 wins a pawn.

13 b3 Bb4

I have a cramped position so I made this move to activate at least one piece. It does delay the normal removal of the bishop fianchetto by 14 Bh6 Bxh6 15 Qxh6 by 15 ... Rxd4.

14 h4

I was lucky that the unprotected status of the rook could not be exploited by 14 Nxd5 due to 14 ... Nxd5 but from my next move, you will see that this is just a mistake waiting to happen!

14 ... Nh5

I could again take advantage of the 'Dragon' bishop by 14 ... Ne4 15 Nxe4 Rxd4 - I would never consider this because the return on the material investment is long-term piece activity – 16 Qxd4 Bxe5 17 Qd1

- not 17 ... Bxa1 18 Qxa1 dxe4 19 Bh6 when White gets material compensation for the awkward placement of his king after 19 ... Qa5+ 20 Kf1 f6 21 Bxf8 Kxf8
- 17 ... dxe4 18 Rc1 Bb2 (or 18 ... Rd8) 19 Rb1 Bc3+ 20 Kf1 Rd8 when although White must be very careful, there is still a lot of work for Black to justify the imbalances.



My aim is simply to threaten f7-f6.

15 Nxd5

Whoops! Only now did I see my "error" and I needed a stroke of luck. On reflection, it is not as clear-cut as it appears. White's analysis at the fast time limit probably stopped after his next move when he has pocketed the exchange but not addressed the threat of f7-f6.

15 ... Bxd5
16 Qxb4 Bxe5

The obvious 16 ... f6 is also good for me. On the previous evening, however, I conducted a Masterclass session on the subject of "Double Attack" and maybe the test positions helped me find an opportunity to practise what I preach.

17 0-0

Here is another happy misadventure. After 17 dxe5 Qxe5+, I assumed I was winning the rook on a1 but this time, it was my horizon that was short-sighted. My analysis did not reach 18 Kd2 (protecting the rook) but by great good fortune, the game could have continued 18 ... Rd8 which leads to a typical position where the uncastled king is slaughtered. Indeed, this is the case here because a rook will be forfeited if ever the white king returns to the back rank (e.g. 19 Kc1 Qxa1+) :

- 19 Rae1 Bxb3+ 20 Qd4 (20 Kc1 Qa1#) 20 ... Qxd4+ 21 Kc1 (21 Ke2 Qd3#) 21 ... Qa1#
- 19 Rab1 (to cover b3) Bxg2+
 - 20 Kc2 Qe2+ 21 Kc3 Rd3+ 22 Kc4 Bd5#
 - 20 Kc1 Bxh1.

In the light of these dangers, White decided to move his king to safety but 17 0-0-0 Bf4+ 18 Bxf4 Nxf4 may have been the better choice. Castling on the kingside looks suicidal but at the time, I doubted if there was anything decisive. Time for another slice of luck...

17 ... Bh2+
18 Kh1 Nf4

If you were worried about computer-assisted cheating being at work, rest assured that Fritz points out an even bigger advantage results from 18 ... Ng3+ 19 fxg3 Qxg3. White has to defend the g2 pawn but either 20 Qd2 or 20 Rg1 run into 20 ... Qh3 when checkmate by 21 ... Bg3+ or a deadly discovered check 21 ... Bf4+ are unavoidable.

I did look at the start of this combination but missed the queen arriving at h3 until after my next move. Instead, I had to look around, forlornly at first, and discovered by sheer chance that my move gives rise to the possibility of 19 ... Bxg2+ (though 19 ... Nxg2 may cause greater problems).

19 Bxf4

19 Kxh2 allows the discovered attack 19 ... Nd3+ winning the white queen – all thanks to my dubious move 13!

19 ... Qxf4
20 Qc3 Qxh4 0-1

Black has a huge advantage and my opponent sportingly resigned without testing me. In a final irony, after a king's rook move, I was unsure whether I would emerge with more than a few extra pawns. An ensuing endgame with a time scramble would be a lottery despite the material situation. Could I have relied on my lucky streak continuing?

Objectively, Black is winning easily. However, several lines judged to be best play by the computer entail quiet moves that are difficult for humans (even lucky ones!) to evaluate. For instance, after 21 Rfd1, it is best to cut off the white king's escape by opening the

e file by 21 ... e5. Fortunately (by now, my motto!), Black can also proceed by the most obvious route

21 ... Bg3+ 22 Kg1 Qh2+ 23 Kf1 Qxg2+ 24 Ke2 Qxf2+ (24 ... Bxf2) 25 Kd3 Qf5+ 26 Ke2 Qg4+

- 27 Ke3/Kd3 Qe4+ 28 Kd2 Bf4+
- 27 Kf1 Bf3
- 27 Kd2 Bf4+ 28 Kc2 Qe2+ 29 Rd2 Be4+ 30 Kc1 when White is helpless against slow play by 30 ... Rd8 and 31 ... e5 or cashing in with 30 ... Qe1+ 31 Kb2 Qxd2.

Eye Opener

S Jugirov (2675) v D Paravyan (2653)
Russia 2020

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 d4 Nxe4 4 Bd3 d5 5 Nxe5 Bd6 6 0-0 0-0

Happy to offer a draw here? The Petroff Defence is a standard if Black wants to share the point. Boring!

7 c4 Bxe5

The symmetry cannot continue e.g. 7 ... c5 8 cxd5 cxd4 9 Bxe4 Bxe5 10 Bxh7+ Kxh7/Kh8 11 Qh5 etc.

8 dxe5 Nc6 9 Bf4 Be6 10 Re1



10 ... Nxf2
11 Kxf2

11 Bxh7+ Kxh7 12 Qc2+ is an option but 12 ... Kg8 13 Qxf2 dxc4 with a safe pawn ahead or 12 ... Ne4 13 cxd5 Bxd5 14 Nc3 Nb4 if you want to have fun.

11 ... Qh4+
12 Bg3

12 g3 Qxh2+ makes the king advance into danger due to 13 Kf1 Bh3# e.g. 13 Ke3 d4+ 14 Kf3 g5 15 Bxg5 Nxe5+ 16 Rxe5 Qh5+.

12 ... Qd4+
13 Re3 f5

Now White loses material.

14 cxd5 f4 15 Bxh7+ Kxh7 16 Qxd4 Nxd4 0-1