

New Englander

Chess Club Update – December 2021

Chairman's Chatter

More sad news arrived recently with the death of Marcus Connolly. Though living for a time in Yaxley, he never joined our club when we were based there. Instead, he devoted his time to Peterborough Chess Club where many members credit their continued existence to his organisational fervour.

Several of our players will know him as an abrasive character but also a doughty opponent. I have records of two games – one a Bird's Defence and the other a Stonewall Variation of the Dutch. Both were his trademarks openings and typified his solid, predictable approach. Over many years as captain and in other official club roles, his service will leave an enduring legacy in Peterborough chess circles.

Paul Hanks

Puzzle Problem

White to play and mate in 2.



When you have solved this problem, shift all the pieces one file to the right and start again!

Last Month's solution (Neukomm 1927)

Position : 5kB1/5NNP/8/5KB1/8/8/8

1 h8=R Kxg7 2 Bh6#

Website to Watch

Until 15th December (or possibly sooner), all eyes will be on the World Championship match between Carlsen and Nepomniachtchi in Dubai. Once finished, there are a number of tournaments around the Christmas period.

12th-23rd December Sunway Sitges International Chess Festival, Barcelona, Spain. The strongest event with young players well represented – including two from England! (www.sunwaychessfestival.com/en/live)

27th Dec - 5th Jan Rilton Cup, Sweden (<https://www.rilton.se/>)

29th Dec - 9th Jan Caplin Hastings Chess Congress (hastingschess.com)

Diary Dates

8th & 15th December Club Championship

22nd December Christmas Special!

Result Round-up

EACU Patrick Ribbands Team Championship

| U7200 | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|-----|
| Team | P | W | D | L | Pts |
| St John's Knights | 6 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 8 |
| Linton Zebras | 6 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 8 |
| Warboys | 6 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 7½ |
| Bury St Edmunds | 6 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 5½ |
| Bedford | 6 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 5 |
| New England | 6 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 4 |
| St Neots | 6 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 4 |

Club Championship

| Round 3 | | |
|----------------|----------|----------------------|
| C Russell (1) | P | P R Jones (2) |
| E Knox (1) | 0 | 1 R Ilett (2) |
| N Wedley (0) | 0 | 1 P Walker (2) |
| J Jennings (1) | 0 | 1 P Hanks (1) |
| E Smith (1) | 0 | 1 P Spencer (1) |

| Round 4 | | |
|------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| P Spencer (2) | | J Jennings (1) |
| P Cooper (0) | | C Russell (1+ P) |
| P Walker (3) | | E Smith (1) |
| E Knox (1) | | P Hanks (2) |
| R Jones (2+ P) | | R Ilett (2) |
| N Wedley (0) | 1 | 0 P Cooper (0) – Rd 5 |

Match night : 8th December

| Round 5 | | | |
|--|--|--|---------------|
| E Smith (1) | | | R Jones (2+P) |
| C Russell (1+P) | | | P Walker (3) |
| J Jennings (1) | | | E Knox (1) |
| R Ilett (2) | | | P Spencer (2) |
| P Hanks (2) | | | N Wedley (1) |
| Match night : 15 th December Next draw : 31 st December Next round : 5 th January | | | |

Cambridgeshire League

| New England A | 4 | St Neots A | 1 |
|---------------|---|------------|---|
| P Walker | ½ | P Brown | ½ |
| R Ilett | 1 | C Emery | 0 |
| P Hanks | ½ | P Barkas | ½ |
| P Spencer | 1 | J Greiller | 0 |
| C Russell | 1 | F Rock | 0 |

| Warboys B | 1½ | New England B | 2½ |
|------------|----|---------------|----|
| S Caraway | 0 | P Walker | 1 |
| P Baddeley | ½ | P Spencer | ½ |
| R Mann | 1 | R Jones | 0 |
| P Wells | 0 | C Russell | 1 |

Fenland Plate

| Godmanchester | 1 | NE Patriots | 3 |
|---------------|---|-------------|---|
| J Wright | 0 | P Spencer | 1 |
| M English | ½ | E Knox | ½ |
| A Rankine | ½ | N Wedley | ½ |
| B Smith | 0 | J Jennings | 1 |

Team 7000

| Peterborough B | 2 | NE Patriots | 2 |
|----------------|---|-------------|---|
| F Bowers | 0 | P Walker | 1 |
| C Masseron | 1 | E Knox | 0 |
| B Rhodes | ½ | R Jones | ½ |
| C Bengtson | ½ | C Russell | ½ |

Club Lightning Tournament : 10th November 2021

| Player | PW | PH | CR | JJ | Total |
|------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| P Walker | X | 1 ½ | 1 1 | 1 1 | 5½ |
| P Hanks | 0 ½ | X | 1 1 | 1 1 | 4½ |
| C Russell | 0 0 | 0 0 | X | 1 1 | 2 |
| J Jennings | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | X | 0 |

New England Club Ladder

| White | | Black | |
|----------|---|-------|------------|
| P Cooper | 0 | 1 | J Jennings |
| E Smith | 0 | 1 | N Wedley |
| P Hanks | ½ | ½ | R Ilett |

| Position | Change | | Player | Record @ 17/11/21 |
|----------|--------|---------|------------|-------------------|
| | Month | Overall | | |
| 1 | +4 | +5 | N Wedley | ½,1 |
| 2 | - | +2 | J Sadler | 1 |
| 3 | -2 | -2 | E Smith | 1,0 |
| 4 | +2 | -1 | J Jennings | 1,0,0,½,1 |
| 5 | -1 | - | C Russell | 1 |
| 6 | -3 | -4 | P Cooper | 0,0,0 |
| 7 | - | - | R Ilett | ½ |
| 8 | - | - | P Hanks | ½ |

New England Grand Prix

| Player | Champ | Ladder | League | Cup | Team 7000 | Total | TPR* |
|------------|-------|--------|--------|-----|-----------|-------|------|
| P Walker | 3 | | 3 | 1 | 2 | 9 | 2124 |
| P Spencer | 2 | | 2 | 2 | 1 | 7 | 1734 |
| C Russell | 1 | 1 | 3 | | 1½ | 6½ | 1662 |
| R Ilett | 3 | ½ | 2 | | | 5½ | 1910 |
| P Hanks | 2 | ½ | 1½ | 1 | | 5 | 1807 |
| J Jennings | 1 | 2½ | | 1 | | 4½ | 1359 |
| E Knox | 1 | | 1 | 1½ | ½ | 4 | 1529 |
| R Jones | 2 | | 1½ | | ½ | 4 | 1788 |
| N Wedley | 1 | 1½ | 1 | ½ | | 4 | 1457 |
| E Smith | 1 | 1 | | | | 2 | 1082 |
| J Sadler | | 1 | | | | 1 | 1750 |
| P Cooper | 0 | 0 | | | | 0 | 724 |

* Tournament Performance Rating is approximate

Serious Study

Our classical chess has a time limit of 70 minutes + 15 seconds/move from the start which, at 1 minute per move, is sufficient to think for 93 moves. Sounds plenty - after all, that must cover more than 99% of our games. So, would either more time or better use of time lead to a higher standard of play? Is it a myth that pressure causes mistakes and are we just clutching at excuses?

Here is a recent game that is rather unspectacular but may shed some light on our love-hate affair with the clock. Against each move, I compare the move played by White with the decision Fritz would have made

after a metronomic 1 minute of analysis. In each case, the ranking of the text move and its evaluation relative to the computer optimum will be given as a fraction of a pawn. Let's see how well a poor human performs...

P Hanks v R Ilett

New England Club Ladder; 17.11.2021

| | | |
|---|-------------|------------|
| 1 | e4 | d5 |
| 2 | exd5 | Nf6 |
| 3 | Bb5+ | Bd7 |
| 4 | Bc4 | Bg4 |

So far, my play has been inspired by Spassky v Weiss, Havana 1966 which appears in the book of the former World Champions's best games and continued 4 ... Bf5. From here onwards, I am out of my "opening book".

| | | |
|---|-----------|----------------------|
| 5 | f3 | 2 nd 0.15 |
|---|-----------|----------------------|

I dismissed the self-pin 5 Nf3 which is the software's third option but never thought about the leading 5 Ne2. Time can hardly be a problem yet, rather a lack of imagination. Apparently, I am now following Caruana (v Akobian, USA championship 2016).

| | | |
|---|------------|-----------------|
| 5 | ... | Bc8 |
| 6 | Nc3 | 1 st |

Akobian continued 5 ... Bf5 but made the retreat to c8 after a subsequent g2-g4. Black's text move had shocked me but I have a number of similar options 6 Ne2 or 6 d4 which are rated almost equally. Over the next few moves, there is little to choose between standard alternatives.

| | | |
|----|-------------|----------------------|
| 6 | ... | Nbd7 |
| 7 | Bb3 | 4 th 0.06 |
| 8 | Nge2 | 1 st |
| 9 | d4 | 1 st |
| 10 | Nxd5 | 5 th 0.22 |

It would be nice to conclude that all sensible early moves are equivalent and one need not agonise. There comes a point, however, when this no longer applies and here, a2-a4 or 0-0 (in either order) are favoured. White should be looking for a space advantage e.g. 10 a4 a5 11 Ne4 Be7 12 c4. I was thinking on these lines but only considered 10 ... Nxd5 in reply to my move when c2-c4 follows soon. Even this is inferior because the knight on b6 lacks scope and my version would have given it freedom.

| | | |
|----|------------|----------------------|
| 10 | ... | exd5 |
| 11 | Bf4 | 4 th 0.09 |
| 12 | 0-0 | 1 st = |
| 13 | Qd3 | 4 th 0.19 |

This may look strange when natural moves such as 13 Re1 and 13 Qd2 are available and indeed are the top choices. I wanted to prevent Bc8-f5 and to start building an attack based on c2-c3 and Bb3-c2. Only later did I realise how difficult it would be to break through Black's pawns on light squares e.g. after g7-g6. There may then be a weakness on the dark squares but I am facing the exchange of the bishop that might exploit it.

| | | |
|----|-------------|----------------------|
| 13 | ... | Be6 |
| 14 | Bxd6 | 8 th 0.05 |

I did not need to relieve the tension and should have tried to keep this bishop as noted above. Worrying about Nb6-c4 hitting b2 especially after c2-c3, I reckoned I should mobilise my knight so that the pawn could be defended by Rf1-f2 (which may also be a useful attacking move supporting f3-f4-f5 with doubled rooks). Perhaps spending time here would have been beneficial to crystallise the situation.

| | | |
|----|------------|-------------|
| 14 | ... | Qxd6 |
| 15 | Ng3 | n/a |

This or 15 f4 g6 16 Ng3 a5 17 c3 look consistent to the human eye with a focus on the thrust f4-f5. Neither occur in the 8 best options and drop the position assessment by between 0.15 and 0.3. Fritz is unimpressed by my assault and Ray calmly agrees! One problem is that the white queen is quietly running short of squares e.g. in the alternative variation, 17 ... a4 18 Bc2 Nc4 19 f6 Rfe8 and she has a long journey to reach h6.

| | | |
|----|-------------|----------------------|
| 15 | ... | Rae8 |
| 16 | c3 | 5 th 0.13 |
| 17 | Bc2 | n/a |
| 18 | Rfe1 | 2 nd 0.36 |

I am not being very precise in recent moves because I am staying faithful to a faulty concept. Black's 17th was a surprise when I anticipated 17 ... f5 or 17 ... g6. Either would give me the tempo to prevent Nb6-c5. I still should have done so with 18 b3 and allowed 18 ... Re3 as the penetration 19 Qd2 Rfe8 20 Rf2 Qc6 21 Bd3 is not too dangerous. The game has shifted from my kingside attack to contesting control of the e file. Was I in time? Have I moved the right rook?

| | | |
|----|-----------|----------------------|
| 18 | ... | Nc4 |
| 19 | b3 | 3 rd 0.04 |

I played this quickly and overlooked a tactical defence of b2 by 19 Re2 Nxb2 20 Qxh7+ Qxh7 21 Bxh7+ Kxh7 22 Rxb2. Extra time does not help you find something you do not suspect is there. Perhaps I should be more hopeful of finding saving resources.



19 ... Na3

Ray took a long time over this decision, perhaps 15 minutes. He had some interesting alternatives.

- If trapping the white queen by 19 ... Nb2 can be made to work, the game is over. In the post-mortem, we both thought 20 Nf5 was compulsory with our main line being 20 ... Qg6 21 Qd2 Bxf5 22 Bxf5 Qxf5 23 Qxb2. However, Black has much better in 20 ... Bxf5 21 Qxf5 g6 when the white queen still gasps for air.
 - A passive move like 22 Qh3 just lets Black pull the trigger with 22 ... Rxe1+ 23 Rxe1 Qd2
 - After 22 Qxd5 Rxe1+ 23 Rxe1 Qd2, White defends with 24 Qe4 but 22 ... c6 would again put the question to the queen and this time there is no answer.
 - My rook move on move 18 deliberately offered an alternative but it looked too feeble to be taken seriously. 20 Qf1 is in fact my salvation and play might continue 19 ... Nb2 20 Qf1 Qd2 21 Rxe8 Rxe8 22 Qc1 Qxc1 (22 ... Qxc3 23 Bxh7+) 23 Rxc1 Bb5 24 Rb1 Nd3 24 c4 Nb4 and the knight escapes.
- 19 ... Ne3 looks paralysing. White cannot force an exchange with 20 Nf1 due to 20 ... Bf5 but 20 Kf2 is possible because 20 ... Nxc2 21 Qxc2 Qxh2 fails to 22 Rh1 so 21 ... f5 would have threats. Other than a swap on c2, however, the knight is not doing much and White could proceed with 20 c4 and return to deal with it later.

The text move came as another surprise and leads to a welcome simplification.

20 Nf5 1st

Hoping for 20 ... Qf6 when 21 Ne7+ checkmates.

| | | |
|----|------|---------------------------|
| 20 | ... | Bxf5 |
| 21 | Qxf5 | 1 st Nxc2 |
| 22 | Qxc2 | 1 st Re6 |
| 23 | Rxe6 | 3 rd 0.07 Qxe6 |
| 24 | Qd2 | 1 st Re8 |
| 25 | Kf2 | 1 st h6 |
| 26 | Re1 | 1 st 1/2-1/2 |

The evaluation of the final position is 0.00!

"Foreman of the jury. What is the verdict on time management?"

- White took about 50 minutes over these move i.e. approximately 2 minutes/move = 40 moves in the time limit. At no point, therefore was there a scramble.
- There were four instances of significantly sub-optimal moves where the evaluation dropped by 0.2-0.3 which are not massive blunders. In many cases, these were in position with 4-8 reasonable alternatives and were decided by

poor positional judgement rather than the time required for analysis.

- There was one position which required lengthy evaluation of critical tactics (move 19). Adequate time was available and taken but still with a flawed conclusion!
- Most concerning was upwards of 5 occasions on which I failed to predict my opponent's next move!

All this suggests that time is not such an important factor. I need to spend more of it searching for my own candidate moves and for those of my opponent and taking a less blinkered view of tactical defensive possibilities.

Eye Opener

Kaiser v Benzel
Stuttgart, Germany; 1924

| | | |
|---|------|------|
| 1 | e4 | d5 |
| 2 | exd5 | Qxd5 |

Contrary to the main game, the Scandinavian Defence can lead to early tactical play based on the exposed position of the black queen.

| | | |
|---|-----|-----|
| 3 | Nc3 | Qa5 |
| 4 | d4 | Nc6 |

The main line is 4 ... Nf6 but if Black were to substitute this move and continue with his plan regardless, it would still end in disaster.

| | | |
|---|-----|-----|
| 5 | Nf3 | Bg4 |
| 6 | h3 | |



| | | |
|---|------|-------|
| 6 | ... | Qh5?? |
| 7 | hxg4 | Qxh1 |
| 8 | Ne2 | |

Despite having the freedom to choose any move, Black cannot escape.

| | | |
|---|-----|-----|
| 8 | ... | Nf6 |
| 9 | Ng3 | 1-0 |