

New Englander

Chess Club Update – January 2023

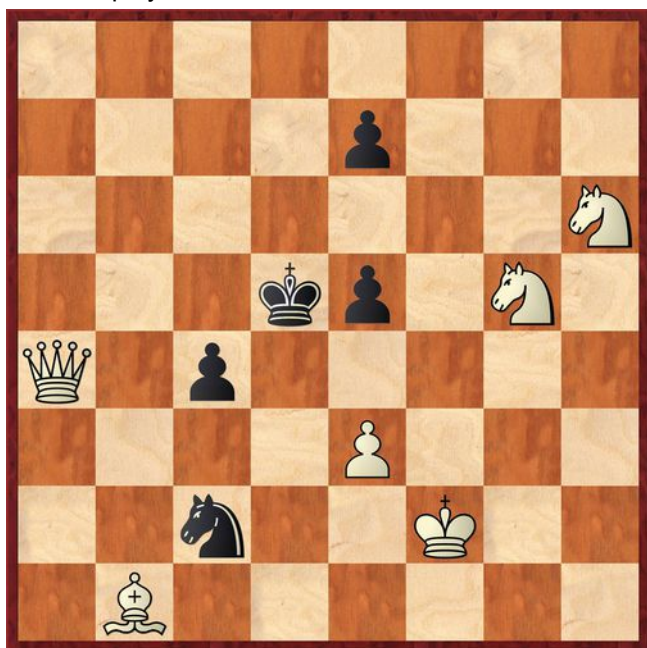
Chairman's Chatter

Happy New Year! Your resolution for 2023 is "I must play my club championship games. I must play my club championship games. I must..."

Paul Hanks

Puzzle Problem

White to play and mate in 2.



Last Month's solution (Fringin 1985)

Position : 8/4p3/1K6/1N1k4/3p4/6N1/8/5Q2

1 Qd3 e5 2 Qb3# [1 ... e6 2 Qe4+; 1 ... Ke6/5 2 Qf5#]

Website to Watch

At last, another major classical tournament! The traditional Tata Steel Masters takes place from 14th to 29th January at Wijk aan Zee, Netherlands (see <https://tatasteelchess.com>). The participants include Magnus Carlsen, Ding Liren (a challenger for the vacated world championship crown) and six other grandmasters from the top 20. The rising teenage stars are also well represented in this 13 round event.

Diary Dates

21st-22nd January '23 EACU Closed Championship at the Turner Hall, Newmarket. Details appear on <http://www.eacu.org.uk/> and navigate via the EACU Menu to "Fixtures and Events".

15th-19th February Cambridge International Open. For details, click [here](#).

Result Round-up

Club Championship

White		Black	
Previous rounds			
P Walker	P	Rd 1	E Knox
P Hanks	P	Rd 1	P Turp
E Knox	P	Rd 2	P Spencer
E Knox	P	Rd 3	P Turp
P Turp	P	Rd 4	P Spencer
E Knox	P	Rd 5	C Russell
E Smith	P	Rd 5	P Hanks
N Wedley	P	Rd 6	E Knox

Player	PW	RI	PH	PS	PT	NC	EK	JJ	NW	ES	CR	Total
P Walker	X		1		1	0			1	1	1	5
R Ilett		X		½				1	1	1	1	4½
P Hanks	0		X			1		1	1		1	4
P Spencer		½		X		1		1		1		3½
P Turp	0				X	1					1	2
N Chedd	1		0	0	0	X	½					1½
E Knox						½	X			1		1½
J Jennings		0	0	0				X	0	1		1
N Wedley	0	0	0					1	X			1
E Smith		0		0			0	0	0	X		0
C Russell	0	0	0		0						X	0

Cambridgeshire League

New England B	2	St Neots B	2
P Hanks	1	M Cooper	0
P Spencer	½	R McMorran	½
C Russell	½	J Greiller	½
R Lepley	0	T Holmes	1

Team 7000 competition

Peterborough	0	NE Patriots	4
A Kaszuba	0	P Hanks	1
D Redden	0	P Spencer	1
G Carver	0	E Knox	1
D Gostiev	0	N Chedd	1

NE Patriots	P	Spalding	P
Re-arranged on 15 th February			
Away match switched to 10 th January			

Fenland Trophy

Royston	3	NE Patriots	1
S Jackson	½	P Hanks	½
D Hurricks	1	P Spencer	0
M Johnson	½	E Knox	½
S Cage	1	N Wedley	0

New England Club Ladder

Position	Change		Player	Record @ 21/12/22
	Month	Overall		
1	-	+1	N Wedley	0,1,1
2	-	-1	J Jennings	1,0
3	-	-	R Lepley	0
4	-	-	B Stephens	½
5	-	-	R Ilett	½

New England Club Lightning : 7th December 2022

Pos	Player	PW	PH	BS	NC	EK	RL	CR	Total
1	P Walker	X	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
2	P Hanks	0	X	1	1	1	1	1	5
3=	B Stephens	0	0	X	1	0	1	1	3
	N Chedd	0	0	0	X	1	1	1	3
	E Knox	0	0	1	0	X	1	1	3
6	R Lepley	0	0	0	0	0	X	1	1
7	C Russell	0	0	0	0	0	0	X	0

New England Christmas Special : 21st December 2022

Pos	Player	Round				Total		
		1	2	3	4			
1	P Walker	5	5	2	2	0	2	16
2=	N Wedley	0	5	2	2	0	5	14
	N Chedd	5	5	2	2	0	0	14
4	P Turp	5	2	2	2	0	2	13
5=	P Spencer	5	0	2	2	0	2	11
	R Lepley	5	2	2	2	0	0	11
7	P Hanks	0	5	-	-	-	5	10
8	B Stephens	0	0	2	2	0	5	9
9	C Russell	0	0	2	2	0	2	6
10	E Knox	0	0	2	2	0	0	4

New England Grand Prix

Player	Champ	Ladder	League	Cup	Team 7000	Total	TPR*
P Spencer	3½		5	0	1½	10	1818
P Hanks	4		3	1	1½	9½	1951
R Ilett	4½	½	2½	1½		9	2028
P Walker	5		2	1½		8½	2032
P Turp	2		1		½	3½	1828
C Russell	0		3		½	3½	1634
E Knox	1½		0	1	1	3½	1587
J Jennings	1	1	0		1	3	1285
N Wedley	1	2		0		3	1446
N Chedd	1½		½		1	3	1619
B Stephens		½				½	1928
R Lepley		0	0			0	1023
E Smith	0					0	1032

* Tournament Performance Rating is approximate

Match of the Month

As I am not a very strong player, I have always struggled when trying to analyse my games. I well remember the old days, when games were adjourned, playing through positions on the train to work with other members of the team. We didn't have computers in those days and arguably got more out of looking at a game than just entering it in a computer, pressing the button and looking at the evaluation without really understanding the position.

When Paul asked me to submit a game for the newsletter originally several months ago, I thought I would take the opportunity to try the Decodechess website (www.decodechess.com) and see what I am able to get from it as an aid to analysing my game.

Decodechess attempts to put flesh on those reams of computer analysis by adding text to explain what is going on. This software is very young and still being developed but I think offers something especially to those learning or teaching the game. It uses the latest Stockish NNUE program. I have put the Stockfish comments in **[square parentheses]**. These are included in the text together with some analysis in **{curly brackets}** from a human observer aided by computer software. If you look at the site you will see that an attempt is being made to add descriptive content to evaluations and suggested moves/plans.

The game I chose was against S Doci. It is nothing spectacular but the guidance I want is not about missing clever tactical blows. I need to be steered through the nuanced positional decisions that make up the majority of play. At the time, my opponent was rated 197 (old ECF rating) and I think he is the same player currently listed as 2072 FIDE rating. Of the two

of us, I thought his should be the more accurate moves.

S Doci v P Turp

Royston v New England; February 2015

1	e4	d6
2	d4	Nf6
3	Nc3	c6
4	f4	

The Austrian Attack. I've played against this line a number of times, not always with success and decided to try something different.

4	...	Bg4
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There are 178 games in my database where this is played but apart from a few, the variation chosen by the strongest players is usually 4 ... Qa5.

5	Nf3	e6
6	Be3	

I have adopted a hedgehog-style approach which cedes the centre to White's pawns. A grave danger for me is that White can make a disruptive pawn thrust before my pieces can respond. Consideration of the move 6 e5 would therefore be opportune and justified.

{Back in January 2021, Decodechess gave the advice [6 e5 dxe5 7 fxe5 Nd5 8 Ne4 Nd7 9 Bd2 Bxf3 10 Qxf3 Qb6 11 Ng5 0-0-0 12 0-0-0 Qxd4 13 Qxf7]. The analysis ends without an evaluation but Fritz easily finds the tactical shot 13 ... Ba3 which will be decisive after 14 c3 Nxc3. Instead of 13 Qxf7, White had 13 Ba5 hitting both queen and rook or 13 Nxf7 with a fork. This cast sufficient doubt to delay the inclusion of this analysis in the newsletter and it serves as a reminder that computers are not infallible!

Time passes and by September, improvements at Decodechess meant its "Good moves" tab listed (in descending order) 6 h3, 6 Bd3 and only then, the cryptic continuation [6 e5 Nd5 7 Nxd5 cxd5 8 Bd3]. After a natural reaction sequence 6 e5 dxe5 7 fxe5 Nd5 8 Ne4, Fritz's assessment hovers around equality.}

6	...	d5
7	e5	Nfd7
8	h3	

[8 h3 is beneficial because it threatens to play 9 hxg4. White has a small advantage (0.29) but should beware of Black playing c5.] Correct, if basic. This position could be found in the Steinitz Variation of the French Defence except for me taking two tempi to develop my bishop outside the pawn chain. The challenge to White's centre with c6-c5 would then be thematic.

8	...	Bxf3
9	Qxf3	Qb6

[In this position, the best move is 9 ... c5. It :-

- threatens the white pawn on d4
- vacates c6 and enables Nc6.]

This is just starting to be perceptive commentary.

10	0-0-0	Na6
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In my database, the only game I can find with this position is M Sandu (2195) v R Trauner (2285) from Austria in 1997 which ended in a draw.

11	f5	0-0-0
12	fxe6	fxe6
13	Qf7	

Black's e6 pawn looks a bit fragile but it appears the immediate attempt to attack with 13 Qf7 is not the best way. [13 a3 - is good because it prevents playing Qxa2 and prevents threatening Qa1# (Qb6-a5-a2-a1). White has a big advantage (1.48) but should beware of Black playing Nc7.] Surely, few human players would consider checkmate on a1 was yet on the horizon.

13	...	Nc7
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[13 ... Nc7 is good because it threatens to play 14 ... Nxe5, supports the pawn on e6, escapes capture by the white bishop (14 Bxa6), controls e8]. The latter point is necessary to avoid losing material to 14 Bg5.

14	Be2	
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I must admit when he played this I immediately assumed I had missed something as I had calculated this was not possible. So in for a penny...



14	...	Nxe5
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winning a pawn. I was quite pleased to have got this far and winning the pawn was an unexpected bonus!

15	Qf2	Ng6
16	Bd2	Bb4
17	a3	Bxc3
18	Bxc3	Nb5
19	Bb4	Qc7

[Better is 19 ... a5 20 Be1 Nd6 21 Rf1 Rhf8 22 Qg3 Ne4 23 Qg4 Kb8 24 Rxf8.] I am sure my text move was to avoid 20 Bc5 which is not mentioned by Decodechess in its main variation. It is possible to enforce 19 ... a5 and from that position, request the website to "Dig deeper". It then recommends [the best line of Stockfish NNUE 20 Bc5 because it threatens to

play Bxb6 and escapes capture by the black pawn (20 axb4).] The website quotes the typical time to run a query is 90 seconds and this makes the process feel laborious – particularly if it ends as here with a confusing result.

20 Bg4 Qf4+

I was keen to swap off in this position.

21 Qxf4 Nxf4
22 g3

[22 g3 is a mistake (centipawn loss: 139). It wins material but White loses the advantage it had. Its shortcomings a) it does not lead to Rxf4 (Rd1-f1-f4) and b) does not lead to Bd1.

22 Rdf1 would be better. It threatens to play Rxf4, enables Rf7+, vacates d1 for the bishop and threatens 23 c3. The best continuation (1.41) is 22 Rdf1 g5 23 g3 h5 24 Bd1 Ng6 25 Rf6 Rdg8 26 c3 h4 27 Bc2 a5 28 Bxa5 hxg3 29 Rxg6 Rxd6 30 Bxg6.]

{In view of the time restraint mentioned above, it would be nice if eye-catching sub-variations were automatically included. In the website's best line, Black should assess 22 ... Nxg2 and find it leads to a very defensive posture after 23 Bxe6+ Kb8 (23 ... Kc7 24 Rf7+) 24 Be7 Rde8 25 Rf7 g6 26 Bf6 Rhf8 27 Be5+ Ka8 28 Rhf1 when Black has to parry back rank threats and 29 a4. Following this line is key to understanding why White can play the suggested alternative rather than the text move. Now options for White to penetrate down the f file disappear.}

22 ... h5
23 Bf3 Ng6
24 Rhe1 Nc7
25 Re3 b6
26 a4 a5
27 Ba3 Nf8

[Better is 27 ... Kd7.] Without queens to conjure checkmate, kings can be more adventurous. It is definitely a good idea to give support to the weak black pawns and allow the knight on g6 to re-route via e7 to a more active square as Decodechess explains.

28 Be2 Nd7
29 Bd6 Rde8
30 Bd3 Nf8

Stockfish calls this a blunder and Fritz 17 even goes so far as to simply state 'Loses the game'. I must admit I had not seen the suggested line. I wanted to bolster e6 but chose the wrong way to do it. Several transpositions are similar and what follows is a typical Decode explanation of the current position with a suggested best line and plan.

[30 ... Rh6 is good because it

- threatens to play e5
- prevents playing Bg6 by guarding square g6
- x-rays the white bishop on d6
- supports the pawn on e6.

The best play after 30 ... Rh6 is 31 Rde1 c5 32 c3 c4 33 Bc2 h4 34 g4 g5 35 Rf3 e5 36 Bxe5 Nxe5 37 dxe5.

30 ... Nf8 is a blunder (centipawn loss: 282). It loses a knight and now the opponent has a big advantage.

The best play after 30 ... Nf8:

- 30 ... Nf8 31 Rf1 Kd7 32 Ba3 Kd8 33 Rf7 Nd7 34 Bd6 g5 35 Bh7 Na6 36 h4 g4 37 c3 Kc8 38 Re1 Kd8 39 Rg7 Nc7 40 Rf1 Kc8 41 Rff7 Rd8 42 Be7 Ne8.]

{There is quite a bit to swallow here but at last, it is possible to discern coherent plans. The better move 30 ... Rh6 does protect e6 and offer a way to contest the f file from f6 to prevent White from penetrating. A more human continuation might be 31 Rf1 Rf6 32 Rxf6 gxf6 33 Bg6 Rh8 34 Bxc7 Kxc7 35 Rxe6 which is simpler and gives Black some prospects of holding the endgame.

On the other hand, my 30 ... Nf8 invites a squeeze. My knights have nowhere to go when White's rook reaches f7 and I slowly get strangled.}

31 Rf1 Kd7
32 Ba3 Kd8
33 Rf7 g5

I remember thinking I was busted in this position and I think the only advantage I had was White's clock. I seem to remember he was well down on time.

34 Rg7?

[White has a decisive advantage (5.03) but should beware of Black playing 34 ... g4.] {I don't think White need worry. After 34 Re5,

- 34 ... Rg8 runs into 35 Bd6 Nd7 (35 ... Na8 36 Ra7) 36 Bh7 Rh8 37 Rxg5 when 38 Rgg7 scares me
- 34 ... g4 when White can
 - continue the suffocation with 35 h4 b5 36 Bd6 Nd7 37 Rg5 Reg8 38 Bh7 Rxg5 39 hxg5 Ne8 40 Be7+ Kc7 41 g6
 - or go for a direct attack 35 Rg5 e.g. 35 ... gxh3 36 Bd6 Nd7 37 Rgg7.]

34 ... e5

My one chance to 'solve' the e6 pawn problem.

35 Bd6 Nfe6
36 Bxc7+ Nxc7
37 Rxe5 Ne6
38 Rb7 Nxd4
39 Rxe8+

[The best continuation (0.00) is 39 Rxg5 Re1+ 40 Kd2 Nf3+ 41 Kc3 Nxg5 42 Rb8+ Kc7 43 Rxh8 Nxh3 44 Rxh5.] White's recent exchanges have relieved the pressure and with good play, Black might even claim an advantage.

39 ... Rxe8
40 Rxb6 Nf3
41 b3

{A pawn could be won by 41 Rb8+ Ke7 42 Rxe8 Kxe8 43 Be2. To maintain a plus, I should have played 40 ... Kc7 41 Ra6 Re3 42 Kd2 (42 Rxa5? Rxd3) 42 ... Rxg3.}

41 ... Kc7

42 Ra6?

[In this position White played 42 Ra6 when 42 Rxc6+ would be better. It escapes capture by the black king (42 ... Kxb6), lures the black king to c6 and allows Bb5+ with check (Bd3-b5-e8), threatens to play Rc5+ or Bb5.]

42 ... Re1+
 43 Kb2 Rg1
 44 Bg6 Rxc3
 45 Bxh5 Rxh3
 46 Be8 Nd4
 47 Rxa5 Kb6

{Decode correctly calls 46 Be8 a mistake which I could now exploit with 47 ... Rh8. Any bishop move e.g. 48 Bg6 then allows 48 ... Kb6 49 b4 but the white rook is entombed for the remainder of the game while I advance the g pawn. White is forced into 48 Ra7+ Kd6 but the white pieces are very awkwardly placed to stop the passed pawn.}

48 Ra8 Rh2
 49 Kc3 c5
 50 b4 Ne2+
 51 Kd2 cxb4
 52 Rb8+ Kc5
 53 a5

{The best response is 53 ... g4 because the pawn race fails due to Black promoting with check i.e. 54 a6 g3 55 a7 Nf4+ 56 Ke3 g2 etc.}

53 ... Nc3+
 54 Kd3

{There is an amusing mating net if White tries to hide 54 Kc1 Rh1+ 55 Kb2 Rb1#.}

54 ... Rh3+
 55 Kd2 Rh2+ 1/2-1/2

Draw agreed BUT I think Black has all the advantage now but whether it can be turned into a win I don't know. Fritz seems to think 55 ... g4 is the way to go but for some reason Stockfish thinks otherwise.

I think Decodechess is a really interesting project and for the future may be a very useful tool. Certainly anyone learning the game or teaching it might find it useful. I have found a number of syntax issues when using this but I assume these will be ironed out. Worth looking at are the videos the American Grandmaster Sam Shankland has done.

Youtube Link for Sam Shankland Series.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5zEyP4_N4Y

That said, it is still a massive challenge to convert to a series of AI position assessments into logic and natural language. Maybe there is still room for the human touch after all!

Phil Turp

Eye Opener

N Tscharnuter (1897) v A Wengholm (2198)
 European Club Cup, Struga; 24.09.2021

1 e4 d6
 2 d4 Nf6

3 Nc3 g6
 4 f4 Bg7

The Austrian Attack normally plays out against a fianchetto opening such as the Pirc Defence.

5 Nf3 0-0
 6 e5

Here is the critical variation when White could have made simple developing moves with either bishop.

6 ... dxe5
 7 fxe5 Nh5

This move to the edge of the board goes against the general principle of maintaining mobility by e.g. 7 ... Nd5 but paradoxically, it contributes to the decisive phase of the game.

8 Bc4 c5
 9 d5

White has a classically strong position, provided he can maintain the centre pawns. The current game illustrates what can happen if Black breaks through with relative ease.

9 ... Bg4
 10 0-0 Bxe5
 11 h3

This is where it starts to turn sour for White. Instead, 11 Qe1 Bg7 12 Ne5 looks to give promising compensation for the pawn.



11 ... Bd4+
 12 Kh1

Not 12 Kh2 Qd6+ but 12 Rf2 was better though Black will still be winning.

12 ... Ng3+
 13 Kh2 Qd6
 14 Nb5 Nxf1+
 15 Kh1 Qh2+
 16 Nxh2 Ng3#