

New Englander

Chess Club Update – June 2023

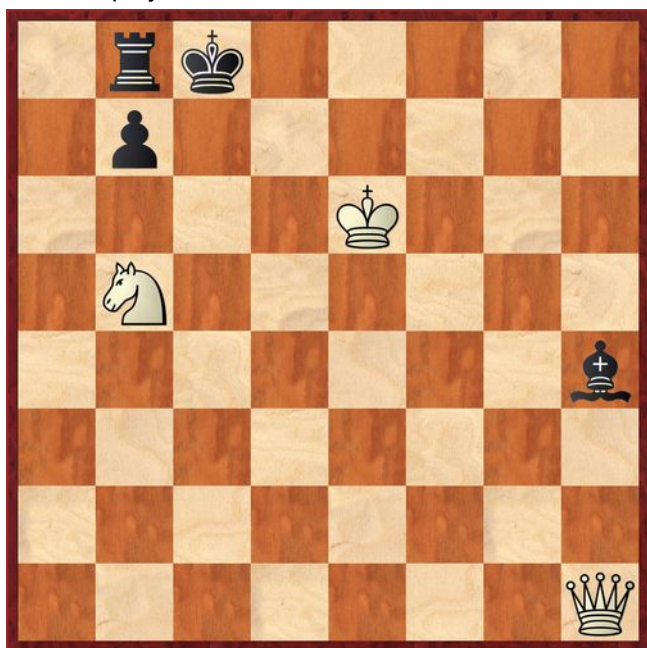
Chairman's Chatter

The Annual General Meeting reviewed our recent club performance rather in the mould of an Ofsted report, The one word summary - Outstanding!

Paul Hanks

Puzzle Problem

White to play and mate in 2.



Last Month's solution (Maleika 1982)

Position : b2k2n1/1B3P2/3K4/8/8/8/4Q3/8

1 Qg4 f5 2 Qxg8# [1 ... Nf6/Ke8 2 Qc8#; 1 ... other 2 Qd7#]

AGM Summary

The club Annual General Meeting took place on 10th May with ten members in attendance either in person or online. The principal discussion points were :-

- with the increased membership in the past year, the club had made a modest profit which reversed the loss of the previous year. Room hire charges were thankfully not being increased and subscription fees due in September could remain at could £60p.a.
- captains reported team successes in both CCCA Division 1 and 2. The club also won the north division of the Team7000 competition but despite drawing the match, lost out in the play-off due to having higher grades than Royston.
- as reported in the newsletter, internal competition had been successfully completed

including a giant club championship won jointly by Ray and Phil

- team entries to the Cambridgeshire competitions and internal events will mirror the activity of the past season. The club will support the CCCA initiative to institute a lower graded competition (e.g. Division 3, Team 4500 or similar) if so decided at its AGM on 27th June
- the committee was re-elected en bloc with Jim Jennings taking responsibility for the putative division 3 team and our Facebook presence.

Website to Watch

The strongest tournament on the calendar is currently Norway Chess – not least because Magnus Carlsen is obliged to play. He will be joined by nine other grandmasters mostly in the world's top 20 for nine rounds from 20th May to 9th June. The details appear on <https://norwaychess.no/en/program-2023/> which has a link to "Chess.com Live" to follow the action i.e. <https://www.chess.com/events/2023-norway-chess>.

Diary Dates

27th June Cambridgeshire County Chess Association AGM in St Ives

Result Round-up

Team 7000 competition - play-off

NE Patriots	2	Royston	2
B Stephens	0	S Jackson	1
P Hanks	0	B Judkins	1
E Knox	1	S Pride	0
C Russell	1	M Johnson	0

Royston win due to being the lower graded team

End of Season Rapidplay : 3rd May 2023

Player	BS	PH	NC	EK	JJ	IG	AN	DD	Total
B Stephens	X	½	1	1		1			3½
P Hanks	½	X	½	1				1	3
N Chedd	0	½	X		1	1			2½
E Knox	0	0		X	1		1		2
J Jennings			0	0	X		1	1	2
I Goodwin	0		0			X	1	1	2
A Neville				0	0	0	X	1	1
D Dhokia		0			0	0	0	X	0

New England Grand Prix

Player	Champ	Ladder	League	Cup	Team 7000	Total	TPR*
P Spencer	6½	1	10	0	4½	22	1798
P Walker	6½	5	3	1½	1	17	1918
R Ilett	8	½	6	1½		16	2006
P Hanks	6	½	6	1	1½	15	1860
N Chedd	4½		5½		4½	14½	1669
C Russell	4	1	6½		2½	14	1655
E Knox	6½		2½	1	3	13½	1731
B Stephens		8	3		2	13	1870
P Turp	8		3		½	11½	1815
N Wedley	3	4½	½	0		8	1407
J Jennings	1	4	½		2	7½	1335
A Neville		4				4	1240
I Goodwin		4				4	1258
G Barham-Smith		2			0	2	1230
E Smith	1	½			0	1½	1083
D Dhokia		1				1	1063

* Tournament Performance Rating is approximate

Match of the Month

P Hanks v D Rice

New England A v St Neots A; Board 4, 01.03.2023

I am not a fan of so-called "Sports Psychology". Most top sportsmen and women now seem to have a support team whose job is to maximise the star's performance through improving their physique and technique. Increasingly, however, mental attitude is being added to the list - even though the implied emotional fragility and homespun methods of remediation probably stem from matters considered insignificant from the standpoint of an amateur observer. The following game has caused me to pause for thought...

1	d4	Nf6
2	Nf3	d5
3	c4	e6
4	Nc3	Be7
5	Bf4	

This classical treatment of the Queen's Gambit is fairly unambitious. Apart from vain hopes of tickling the pawn on c7, White is not applying any pressure.

5	...	0-0
6	e3	

The premature 6 Nb5 is a good example of early aggression being easily rebuffed by a counter-attack with 6 ... dxc4 7 Nxc7 Bb4+

- 8 Bd2 Bxd2+ 9 Nxd2 Qxc7

- 8 Nd2 e5 9 Nxa8 (9 Bxe5 Ne4 10 Bf4 Qf6 11 Be3 Bxd2+) 9 ... exf4 10 Qc2 Qa5
 - 11 Rd1 Qxa2 12 Nc7 c3
 - 11 0-0-0 Bf5 12 Nxc4 Rc8 13 Qb3 b5 which is just about as big a mess as White can engineer inside 13 moves!

More importantly, the lesson to learn is that White needs to hide the king away from attacks on the a5-e1 diagonal if the queenside minor pieces wander away.

6	...	a6
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It would be nice to say that the phantom threat has caused Black to waste a tempo but this move is generally useful to support a queenside pawn advance. 6 ... c5 is a common grandmaster continuation.

7	Rc1	Nbd7
8	cxd5	exd5

At last! The focus on c7 has at least narrowed Black's choice because in most other circumstances, many elite games prefer the capture 8 ... Nxd5 but here, 9 Nxd5 exd5 10 Bxc7.

9	Qb3	c6
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The text move looks almost automatic but 9 ... c5 was also an option because if White follows up consistently with 10 Nxd5 Nxd5 11 Qxd5 Qa5+ 12 Nd2 Nf6 13 Qc4 Be6 14 Qc3 Qxa2, Black enjoys better development.

10	Bd3	Re8
11	0-0	Nh5
12	Nxd5	

Success! My opening is justified by a basic tactic 12 ... cxd5 13 Bc7 trapping the black queen.

12	...	Nxf4
13	Nxf4	

Initially, I was euphoric. I had won an important pawn, good development and prospects of central control with e3-e4 as well as my pieces massing for a kingside assault.

13	...	Bd6
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Already, doubts were starting to creep in. As I analysed, I realised Black had compensation. His pieces are also well placed to invade the kingside. The thrust g7-g5-g4 will disperse my knights, there is the rook lift Re8-e8-h6, Qd8-h4 and Nd7-f6 activates the bishop on c8. I had a choice of solid defence or try to continue the initiative. The game shows that both approaches require vision and alertness beyond what I can muster.

14	Bc4	Qe7
15	Rfe1	

I desperately wanted to maintain the pressure on f7 with 15 Ng5 but I could not convince myself e.g.

- 15 ... Qxg5 16 Bxf7+
 - 16 ... Kh8 17 Bxe8 Nf6 18 Bf7 Bxf4 19 exf4 Qxf4. This looked sufficient especially had I seen further that 20 Qb4

or 20 Rfe1 Qxd4 21 Rcd1 are in the offing

- 16 ... Kf8 17 Bxe8 Kxe8 when I did not see 18 Qg8+ Nf8 (18 ... Ke7 19 Qe6+; 18 ... Bf8 19 Ne6) 19 d5 opening files for an attack on the king.
- 15 ... Rf8 16 h4 h6 when I thought retreat was the only option but Fritz points out 17 Ng6. The whole idea, however, is not recommended by Fritz because Black can ignore it with 16 ... Nf6.

15 ... b5

I had hoped for the alternative 15 ... Bxf4 16 exf4 blundering into 16 ... Qf8 17 Bxf7+ Qxf7 18 Rxe8+. Instead, my opponent rightly forces me backwards. My attack has failed and I start to slip into a despondent view of my position.

16 Bd3 Bb7
17 Qc2 h6
18 Ne2

By rejecting 17 ... g6, Black has allowed 18 Bh7+ Kh8 18 Bf5. Even in the post-mortem, it is hard to see what White has achieved but vacating d3 for the knight on f4 will permit e3-e4 e.g. 18 ... Nf6 19 Nd3 g6 20 e4 gxf5 21 e5. Other variations lead to minor piece exchanges after Nf3-e5 to dampen Black's attack so that the extra pawn will eventually decide the game for White.

18 ... c5
19 Ng3 Bxf3
20 gxf3 cxd4



This is probably the most critical position and it consumed most of the remaining time. If I re-capture with 21 exd4, Black can trade his queen 21 ... Qxe1+ 22 Rxe1 Rxe1+ 23 Kg2 with an unclear endgame or try for more with 21 ... Qf6. On the surface, attacking d4 and f3 should snuff out my hard-won pawn advantage and leave me with a worse structure.

My optimism of just 8 moves ago was by now a distant memory and the disenchantment with my progress fogged my brain into missing simple resources such as 21 exd4 Qf6 22 Be4 hitting the rook on a8. I dipped into the murky waters of 22 Qc6 but came to no favourable conclusion after 22 ... Bxg3

- 23 fxg3?? Rxe1+
- 23 Qxf6 Rxe1+ 24 Rxe1 Bxh2+ 25 Kxh2 Nxf6
- 23 Rxe8+ Rxe8 24 Qxd7 Bxh2+ 25 Kxh2 Qh4+ 26 Kg2 Qg5+ 27 Kh2 (27 Qg4/Kf1?? Qxc1) with perpetual check.

One problem was that there were other possibilities.

21 Nf5

Depending on Black's reply, much of the foregoing analysis might still apply but with my knight more aggressively placed.

21 ... Qe5

I expected 21 ... Qg5+ 22 Kh1 when the threat to the bishop and an open g file were enticing but afterwards, it does not appear so promising with 22 ... Qh5 23 Nxd6 (23 f4 Qf3+ is assessed as level) 23 ... Qxf3+ leading to perpetual check because the escape attempt 24 Kg1 Qg4+ 25 Kf1 Qh3+ 26 Ke2 Qg4+ 27 Kd2 dxe3+ 28 fxe3 Qb4+ drops the knight on d6. Instead, Black tries to keep the pin on the e file but it gives me some breathing space to consolidate.

22 f4 Qf6
23 Qc6

23 Nxd4 allows 23 ... Bxf4 but I also overlooked 23 Red1 which is justified by 23 ... dxe3 24 Nxd6 Qxd6 25 Bh7+. This discovered attack would similarly bring 24 Nxd4 back into consideration. In fact, after the quiet rook move, most of Black's activity is brought to a halt e.g. 23 ... Rad8 24 Nxd4.

23 ... Bb4

If 23 ... Nc5, I needed to investigate the long but equal exchanging sequence 24 Nxd6 Nxd3 25 Nxe8 Qxc6 26 Rxc6 Nxe1 27 Nd6 whereas 24 Bb1 would leave me with my extra material and better pawns after 24 ... Bf8 25 Qxf6 gxf6 26 Nxd4.

24 Qxd7

24 Red1 is satisfactory but would concede my material lead.

24 ... Bxe1
25 Rxe1 Rad8

At a distance, I feared 25 ... dxe3 26 Rxe3 Rxe3 27 fxe3 Rd8 seemingly winning the bishop on d3 but I managed to foresee 28 Ne7+ when White wins! As it is, all my pieces are vulnerable and my position hangs by a thread.

26 Qc7

I should re-inforce the e3 square with 26 Qa7 dxe3 27 Rxe3 Rxe3 28 Qxe3. My move adds an exposed king and weak pawns to my woes.

26 ... dxe3
27 Qc2 exf2+
28 Kxf2 Qb6+

I was happy not to see 28 ... g6 when 29 Nxh6+ is not possible due to 29 ... Kg7 30 Ng4 Qxf4+.

29 Ne3 Qd4

29 ... Rd4 30 Kf3 Qd6 was slightly better but it hardly matters. Black attacks the bishop on d3 and threatens 30 ... Qxf4+ winning the knight on e3. I can interpose 30 Bh7+ Kh8 but if I then protect f4, 31 ... g6 will trap my bishop. Time for me to resign, I'm afraid.

At this point, I learned the team was trailing 2½-1½ with only this game remaining. Only a complete reversal of fortune would do. No pressure, then!

Press the "Re-start" button. Switch off the brain and switch it back on again. Let's try to emphasise any positive features and review this "won" position with a fresh outlook.

After 30 Bh7+ Kh8 31 Kf3, my knight is solid and it covers many points that the black queen wants to occupy e.g. d5, c4 etc. I can repel the black pieces from my second rank with 31 ... Qd2 32 Re2.

It is not so obvious how Black proceeds and maybe, his win is not so straightforward. It took the computer to indicate 31 ... Qb4 32 Re2 (otherwise 32 ... Rd2) Rd4. It looks bad but if White plucks up the courage for 33 Nd5, 33 ... Rxe2 is not sufficient due to 34 Qc8+ and 35 Nxb4. Black needs to find 33 ... Qf8.

Without seeing this, Black's easy option is to trap the bishop and enjoy a material plus for the first time. But does that not open opportunities against the black king? Not so bad, eh?

30 Bh7+ Kh8
31 Kf3 g6
32 Bxg6 fxg6
33 Qxg6 Qg7

There was some pressure to play quickly and the text move (instead of 33 ... Qd6) is the first protection of h6 that comes to mind. This is another small ray of light. My opponent is starting to think in terms of passive defence rather than maintaining some activity that would limit my options. I must try to keep him thinking like that by a succession of minor threats.

34 Qxa6

My mood was improving greatly. I have nothing to lose and inveigling three pawns for the piece is small step in the right direction.

34 ... Rg8

Although I had no firm continuation in mind, this move came as a surprise. I could not see the entry point Black aimed for on the g file but I did notice a rejoinder that might have an impact.

35 Rg1 Qf8

Not 35 ... Qxg1?? 36 Qxh6#. I no longer thought I was losing (another step forward) and might still have slim winning chances after 35 ... Ra8 36 Qc6 Rgc8 37 Rxc6 38 Rb7 Rxa2 39 Rxb5.

36 Rxc6 Kxc6
37 Qxb5 Rd4
38 Qe5

Bit by bit, I am gaining the upper hand, I prefer my share of the balance of material that has arisen and Black's attacking force has been reduced though still dangerous.

38 ... Qg7??
39 Qe6+??

I hope no-one was watching or that we moved too swiftly for the audience to guffaw at our mutual mistakes. Of course, 39 Qxg7+ Kxg7 40 Nf5+ brings down the curtain. Why would I want to win solely due to a one-move blunder by my opponent? Surely, it is better to conceal my incompetence beneath a veneer of skill...

39 ... Kh7
40 Nf5

Objectively, with the fall of the h pawn, Black will be struggling to draw. There are two contrary factors for White. My exposed king has to avoid checkmate or perpetual check and a time scramble is always a lottery.

40 ... Qb7+
41 Ke3 Rb4
42 Qxh6+ Kg8
43 Qg6+ Kh8

I am trying to gain time on the clock by repetition when Black has no choice – 43 ... Kf8 44 Qf6+ Qf7 (44 ... Ke8 45 Nd6+; 44 ... Kg8 45 Ne7+) 45 Qd6+ - and of course, there is a chance Black may go astray.

44 Qh6+ Kg8

The combination of queen and knight is very potent and ideal for keeping Black on his toes, for instance 44 ... Qh7 45 Qf8+ Qg8 46 Qf6+ Kh7 47 Qh6#.

45 Qe6+ Kh8
46 Ne7

Fritz tells me I can afford the luxury of 46 b3. This is a strange case in which the Q+N is stronger than Q+R and the king in the centre is safer than his counterpart in the corner. A long endgame is not to be recommended with only a minute left and pragmatically, I tried to force the issue.

46 ... Qa7+

46 ... Qb6+ 47 Qxb6 Rxb6 would be drawn but despite the lure of text move covering g8 with tempo, the difference of one square means that now, Black is beyond hope.

47 Kf3 Qa8+
48 Ke3 Qa7+
49 Kf3 Qa8+
50 Kg3 Qf8

Black needs to cover h6 because the escape 50 ... Kg7 does not work. I had only planned 51 Qg6+ Kf8 52 Qg8+ Kxe7 53 Qxa8 but 51 Nf5+ Kh7 52 Qf7+ Kh8 53 Qg7#

51 Ng6+ 1-0

51 ... Kg7 52 Nxf8 Rb7 (52 ... Kxf8 53 Qd6+) 53 Nd7 and White will still checkmate shortly.

Paul Hanks

Cambridgeshire County Chess Leagues

A Team	Fenland		Cambridgeshire League									Score	Appearances	Grading	
	Peterborough 6 th Oct	Cambridge 9 th Nov	Peterborough A 21 st Sept	Warboys A 26 th Oct	St Neots 28 th Nov	Peterborough A 19 th Jan	Warboys A 7 th Feb	St Neots 1 st Mar	Peterborough A 22 nd Mar	Warboys A 4 th Apr	St Neots 26 th Apr			Opponent Average	Performance
Ray Ilett	1	½	1	½	1	1	1	½	0	1	0	7½	11	1941	2077
Peter Walker	1	½	0	1	1	0	1	0		0		4½	9	1905	1905
Ben Stephens							1	0	1	1		3	4	1808	1996
Paul Hanks		½	1	1				1	0	1		4½	6	1771	1959
Paul Spencer	0	0	1	1	1	½	0	1	0		0	4½	10	1767	1730
Chris Russell				1							0	1	2	1701	1701
Phil Turp					0				½		1	1½	3	1653	1653
Ed Knox	½		0			½					1	2	4	1641	1641
Neil Chedd					½	½	1			1		3	4	1603	1790
Total	2½	1½	3	4½	3½	2½	4	2½	1½	4	2	31½			
Sum of opponents' grades	7318	8284	8223	8821	9374	9013	8821	9123	8576	8682	9123	based on September grades – excludes defaulted games			
Sum of New England grades	7382	7552	9240	9114	8987	8932	9072	9380	9105	9323	8669	* includes estimate			
B Team	Ely 12 th Sept	Godmanchester 17 th Oct	Warboys B 22 nd Nov	St Neots B 14 th Dec	Peterborough B 11 th Jan	Ely 1 st Feb	St Neots B 20 th Feb	Warboys B 15 th Mar	Peterborough B 30 th Mar	Godmanchester 12 th Apr	Score	Appearances	Grading		
													Opponent Average	Performance	
Paul Hanks				1		1					2	2	1811	2186	
Phil Turp	½		1		½						2	3	1711	1836	
Ben Stephens								½	0		½	2	1686	1498	
Paul Spencer	0	1	½	½	1	1	½	1		1	6½	9	1678	1849	
Chris Russell	1d	½	1	½	1		1		1	½	5½+d	8	1568	1613	
Neil Chedd		0			1	½	0	1	1		3½	6	1550	1613	
Jim Jennings	0	0	0		0				½		½	5	1491	1176	
Ed Knox										1	1	1	1485	1860	
Norman Wedley										½	½	1	1367	1367	
Rob Lepley				0			½				½	2	1354	1167	
Ed Smith								0			0	1	1076	701	
	1½	1½	2½	2	3	3	2	2½	2½	3	22½+1d				
Sum of opponents' grades	5612	5771*	6691	6485	6404	6181	6485	5751	6382	5838	based on September grades – excludes defaulted games				
Sum of New England grades	4872	6718	6434	6569	6241	6899	6261	6240	6321	6440	* includes estimate				

Cambridgeshire Team 7000 Competition

NE Patriots	Plate	Team 7000							Score	Appearances	Grading	
	Royston 19 th Dec	Warboys WC 27 th Sept	Spalding 15 th Feb	Peterborough 8 th Dec	Warboys WC 25 th Jan	Spalding 10 th Jan	Peterborough 8 th Mar	Royston 2 nd May			Opponent Average	Performance
Peter Walker					1				1	1	1817	2192
Paul Hanks	½	½		1				0	2	4	1792	1792
Paul Spencer	0	½	1	1	1				3½	5	1723	1873
Ben Stephens						1	½	0	1½	3	1636	1636
Ed Knox	½			1	0	1	½	1	4	6	1618	1743
Chris Russell		½	1					1	2½	2	1610	1860
Norman Wedley	0								0	1	1547	1172
Gary Barham-Smith							0		0	1	1522	1147
Neil Chedd			1	1		1	½		3½	4	1499	1781
Rob Lepley			1		0				1	2	1097	1097
Jim Jennings		1				1			2	2	1097	1475
Total	1	2½	4	4	2	4	1½	2	21			
Sum of opponents' grades	6640	6450	5731	6529	6450	5731	6269	6700	based on September grade without 1450 as fixed minimum			
Sum of Patriots grades	6736	6549	6261	6844	6855	6447	6357	6939				