

New Englander

Chess Club Update – December 2023

Chairman's Chatter

It is always extremely sad to record the death of a club member, especially so in the case of our longstanding companion Mahmoud Tarabad. He was one of eight people at the inaugural Annual General Meeting in 2007 where he was elected as B team captain. In post for 5 years, he was able to pass on a team that won the division the following season.

Mahmoud was always a fervent proponent of giving opportunities for match games to lower graded players and he would have been proud this year to see his idea of a novice league come to fruition in the guise of the Team 4000 competition. It is a pity that he never managed to participate in it. Our internal competition to favour weaker players is the Handicap Tournament and Mahmoud is the current holder having won the event in 2017 – the last time it received sufficient support to be viable.

Above all, Mahmoud will be remembered for his sense of fun. He would make outlandish and provocative statements and after waiting for the shock to sink in, his eyebrows would go up and a sardonic chuckle would betray that he had outwitted you. R.I.P.

Paul Hanks

Puzzle Problem

White to play and mate in 2.



Last Month's solution (Lincoln 1990)

Position : k7/1p1N4/8/2B5/8/8/6K1/2b3Q1

1 Qf1 Bf4 2 Qa1# [1 ... Bb2/a3 2.Qf8#; 1 ... b6 2 Qa6#; 1 ... b5 2 Qf3#]

Website to Watch

The London Chess Classic is becoming a forgotten tournament now that world champions are no longer on the list of competitors and sadly, it is no longer open to the public. Running from 1st to 10th December, <https://www.londonchessclassic.com/> will carry all the action with England's new No 1 Vitiugov being second seed behind Gukesh.

As a diversion from the Christmas hangover, the FIDE World Rapid and Blitz Championships take place in Samarkand from 26th to 30th December. Details can be found at <https://worldrapidandblitz2023.fide.com/>.

Diary Dates

19-24th February [Cambridge International Open Chess Tournament](https://www.cambridgeinternational.com/Events/Chess/Open-Chess-Tournament) for players rated 1600+.

Result Round-up

Cambridgeshire League

New England A	3	St Ives A	2
P Walker	1	S Caraway	0
R Ilett	½	N Greenwood	½
B Stephens	½	J Beck	½
P Spencer	0	D Rice	1
N Chedd	1	R Mann	0

Peterborough B	2	New England B	2
H Neumaier	½	P Walker	½
M Dunkley	½	B Stephens	½
B Rooney	1	P Spencer	0
C Bengtson	0	C Russell	1

Team 7000 competition

St Ives WC	1½	NE Patriots	2½
N Greenwood	½	B Stephens	½
R Coleman	0	P Spencer	1
R Mann	½	E Knox	½
J Beck	½	C Russell	½

Team 4000 competition

NE Cavaliers	2½	Rookwood	½
N Wedley	1	L Levet	0
J Jennings	1	G Pearl	0
D Dhokia	½	T O'Keefe	½

Club Championship

White	Postponed		Black
A Neville	0	1	P Hanks
J Jennings	P	P	E Knox
I Goodwin	P	P	N Chedd
C Russell	P	P	P Walker

White	Round 5		Black
D Dhokia	1	0	S Reid
I Goodwin	0	1	B Stephens
C Russell	P	P	P Spencer
J Jennings	½	½	N Wedley
P Hanks	½	½	R Ilett

White	Round 6		Black
P Spencer	½	½	P Walker
B Stephens	0	1	N Chedd
S Reid	1	0	C Russell
D Dhokia	P	P	I Goodwin
R Ilett	½	½	E Knox

White	Pre-played		Black
P Hanks	1	0	J Jennings

Player	N C	P S	B S	P W	I G	D D	S R	C R	Pts
N Chedd	X	1	1	1	P		1	1	5
P Spencer	0	X	1	½	½	1	1	P	4
B Stephens	0	0	X	1	1	1	0	1	4
P Walker	0	½	0	X	1	1	1	P	3½
I Goodwin	P	½	0	0	X	P	1	½	2
D Dhokia		0	0	0	P	X	1	1	2
S Reid	0	0	1	0	0	0	X	1	2
C Russell	0	P	0	P	½	0	0	X	½

Player	P H	R I	E K	N W	J J	A N	Pts
P Hanks	X	½	1	1	1	1	4½
R Ilett	½	X	½	0	1	1	3
E Knox	0	½	X		P	1	1½
N Wedley	0	1		X	½	0	1½
J Jennings	0	0	P	½	X	1	1½
A Neville	0	0	0	1	0	X	1

New England Club Ladder

White		Black	
E Knox	1	0	A Neville
P Walker	1	0	N Chedd
N Wedley	1	0	D Dhokia
C Russell	1	0	I Goodwin

Position	Change		Player	Record @ 29/11/23
	Month	Overall		
1	-	-	P Walker	1,1,1
2	-	-	P Hanks	0
3	-	-	P Spencer	1
4	+1	+3	C Russell	1,1
5	+4	+4	E Knox	1
6	-2	-2	I Goodwin	0,0
7	-	-2	J Jennings	1,0
8	-2	-2	A Neville	0,0
9	-1	-1	R Ilett	0
10	-	-	N Chedd	0
11	-	-	N Wedley	1
12	-	-	D Dhokia	0

New England Grand Prix

Player	Champ	Ladder	League		Cup	Team 7000	Team 4000	Total	TPR*
			A	B					
N Chedd	5	0	2	2½	0	1		10½	1911
P Walker	3½	3	2	½	½			9½	1950
B Stephens	4		1½	1½		1		8	1746
P Spencer	4	1	0	½		1		6½	1664
C Russell	½	1		2	½	1½		5½	1488
P Hanks	4½	0						4½	1900
E Knox	1½	1			1	½		4	1751
J Jennings	1½	1		0			1	3½	1495
D Dhokia	2						1½	3½	1427
I Goodwin	2	0		½			1	3½	1434
R Ilett	3	0	½					3½	1676
N Wedley	1½						1½	3	1583
S Reid	2							2	1322
J Sutherland							1	1	1909
A Neville	1	0						1	1352

* Tournament Performance Rating is approximate

Match of the Month

Editor's Note : I smelt a rat on move 3 but in actual fact, the problem started even earlier. Perhaps, the warning signs were already there when I received an email from Stuart (with a jpeg photograph) stating :

"I'm attaching my scoresheet, but my notation doesn't make entire sense, and I struggle to reconstruct the actual game from my notes. (This was one of the first games I ever wrote down, at the same time as learning to play OTB and use a chess clock, so I'm going to cut myself some slack for the errors!)"

The detective story started immediately. Initially, I read 1 c4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 which is obviously illegal. Then, I realised I had misread the handwriting and the game must open with the Ruy Lopez...

B Stephens v S Reid

New England Club Championship Rd 4; 04.10.2023

[The reconstructed game can be followed via on the link [Lichess Link](#).]

1	e4	e5
2	Nf3	Nc6
3	Bb5	Bc5

"The main thing about my handwriting seems to be that a letter 'c' might actually be a letter 'e'! I now know that he opened with the Ruy Lopez but, as I didn't know this opening, I played what felt to me like principled moves."

This Cordel Defence is not as popular as a deferred version 3 ... a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Bc5 (the Moller Defence). As played, White has the option 4 Nxe5 Nxe5 5 d4 whereas by delaying, 6 Nxe5 can be met with 6 ... Nxe4. Black, however, has other options after 4 Nxe5 e.g. 4 ... Qe7 5 Nf3 Qxe4+ 6 Be2 or 4 ... Qg5 5 Ng4 with several tactical possibilities.

Fischer popularised the Exchange Variation 3 ... a6 4 Bxc6. White cannot retain the pawn after either 4 ... dxc6 5 Nxe5 Qd4 or 4 ... bxc6 5 Nxe5 Qg5/Qe7.

4	c3	a6
5	Bxc6	bxc6
6	0-0	

If 6 Nxe5, do the extra moves make this different from the exchange 4 Bxc6 mentioned above? 6 ... Qg5/Qe7 looks similar but White can stay calm with 7 0-0 Qxe5 due to 8 d4.

6	...	d6
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This was the first difficult moment. The script had the continuation 6 ... d4 7 d6. Initially, I surmised that these were both 7th moves due to the common mistake of omitting Black's move but I could not see anything reasonable to insert that did not occur later. The penny eventually dropped that the move order was at fault. *"Yes! Exactly right - just a couple of moves transposed."*

The computer dabbles with 6 ... d5 as a way to undouble the c pawns but a human would balk at 7 Nxe5 dxe4 8 Re1 f5 9 d4 or 8 Nxf7 Kxf7 9 Qh5+.

7	d4	exd4
8	cxd4	Bb6

9	h3	
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White has a range of natural moves at each turn e.g. 9 Be3, 9 Nc3. All maintain a slight edge.

9	...	Ne7
10	b3	0-0
11	Na3	Re8

White's last move took the knight away from the centre in order to reach the c4 square. Black would like to remove the weakness of the doubled c pawns and 11 ... d5 would be effective in both respects. For instance, 12 e5 Bf5 when Black can plan to put pressure on e5 and undermine it later with c6-c5. The game follows similar lines.

12	Nc4	d5
13	Nxb6	cxb6
14	e5	Ng6

In such positions, computers vote for 14 ... Bf5 because the natural move 15 Qc2 will otherwise prevent it and here this rejoinder would come with tempo by attacking c6.

"During the game, my entire plan was to play mostly defensively and make improving moves. The only time I saw a possible line of attack was when I started manoeuvring my knight on move 14 towards h4. I hoped I would be able to take his knight on f3 at a point where he'd be forced to recapture with his g pawn and open that file. It never came to anything because he always had f3 covered either by his queen, rook, or both."

15	Bb2	Nh4
16	Rc1	Bb7

As a consistent alternative, Black has temporarily better access to the kingside with his pieces and could contemplate 16 ... Re6 or 16 ... Nxf3+ 17 Qxf3 Re6 with thoughts of an attack against h3 (Rg6, Qh4 etc.)

17	Rc3	Rc8
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OK. 17 ... Rc1 is the sort of slip made by the dinosaurs among us – old enough to remember descriptive notation...

18	Bc1	h6
19	Nh2	

Perhaps roles could have been reversed with 19 Nxh4 Qxh4 20 Rg3 when White eyes up the h6 square.

19	...	Nf5
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With White aiming to flood the kingside, the thematic counter is to cause trouble in the vacuum left elsewhere. 19 ... c5 would force White to re-focus on the centre before attacking threats can materialise.

20	Qg4	Qd7
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20 ... g6 is more solid. After the text move, 21 Rf3 would force the same move with White having gained a tempo. My self-pin also loses a pawn.

21	Bxh6	Qe6
22	Bd2	

22 Bg5 would be more aggressive though Black can prevent Bg5-f6 tricks e.g. 22 ... Qg6 23 Rf3 Nxd4.

22	...	c5
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23 dxc5 d4
24 Rc2 Qxe5

Black has several choices. 24 ... d3 and 24 ... Rxc5 give White less time to breathe and co-ordinate his pieces. 24 ... bxc5 yields a supported passed pawn but with 25 Nf3, White regains some equilibrium.

25 Re1 Qd5
26 Rxe8+ Rxe8

"The main issue for Ben was the time control. By move 26, he had 7:17 left on his clock, while I was still on 18:33. My strategy was to make solid moves as quickly as I could, after being sure they felt safe enough, to run down his clock and make him think on his own time rather than on mine."

27 cxb6

White takes a second pawn but could be disruptive with 27 c6 because 27 ... Bxc6 28 Rxc6 Qxc6 29 Qxf5 is usually a favourable material advantage. Instead 27 ... d3 28 Rc1 Bc8 29 Qc4 or 29 Nf3 gives White more activity than in the game.

27 ... d3
28 Rc1

28 Rc1 carries the threat 29 Rxb7 as before.

28 ... Nd4
29 Bc3?

This turns out to be the losing move for the virtually invisible reason that it takes cover away from g5.



29 ... Ne2+

Surprisingly, 29 ... Re4 traps the white queen. She can move to only two unguarded squares but both have fatal drawbacks – 30 Qg3 Ne2+ and 30 Qd1 Re1+ 31 Qxe1 Qxg2#. Had White played 29 Rc7, the bishop on d2 gives the defence 29 ... Re4 30 Qg5.

30 Kf1 Nxc3

"This is the move I'm most proud of. I intended to take the rook but did spot that this would lead to him mating my king (30 ... Nxc1 31 Qxg7#). It would have

been easy to throw the whole game away if I'd made a different choice on this move."

31 Nf3

If 31 Rxc3 d2 and mating threats on g2 and pawn promotion are overwhelming.

31 ... d2 0-1

"I still had around 11 minutes left when the game ended whereas Ben resigned with 4 seconds left on his clock."

Stuart Reid/Paul Hanks

Eye Opener

R Gonzalez (2550) v S Shankland (2547)
Florida State Championship, 2009

1 e4 e5
2 Nf3 Nc6
3 Bb5 a6
4 Ba4 Nf6
5 0-0 Be7

As noted previously, the Ruy Lopez seems to abound with free pawns but here 5 ... Nxe4 can be dangerous e.g. 6 Re1 d5 7 Bxc6 bxc6 8 d3 Nf6 9 Nxe5 so 6 ... Nc5 returns the pawn immediately.

6 Bxc6 dxc6
7 d3 Nd7

8 Nxe5 was threatened!

8 d4 exd4
9 Nxd4 0-0
10 Be3 Re8
11 f3 Bf6
12 Nc3 Nb6
13 Qd3 Re7

Black leaves himself open to a desperado combination.



14 Nxc6 1-0