

# New Englander

## Chess Club Update – Christmas 2023

### **Chairman's Chatter**

I was reading recently an article about the demise in 2025 of telephone landlines as we know them. A trial was conducted in Salisbury and Mildenhall with Ofcom commissioning research to review the effects. The statisticians warned against interpreting retrospective opinions too literally due to the "peak-end rule". What the dickens is that?

Apparently, the human memory selectively retains the extremes of an experience (both highs and lows) as well as the closing phase whilst glossing over the humdrum and routine remainder. During the course of 2023, the club completed 141 games in the county league and cup competitions and 113 games in the club championship and ladder events. I hope that, win or lose, you count them amongst the year's highlights but the undoubted star achievements (as reported in May) were the successes from our combined efforts. The A team retained the Cambridgeshire Division 1 title and were joined by the B team winning Division 2 and the Team7000 side topping the North division. Not bad for a small club!

But that leaves us needing something to remember the end of the year by. Although December is dark and the weather can be dismal, we can light it up with traditional but responsibly modest indulgence and conviviality that can be as unrestrained as you wish! I hope you enjoy the jovial and loving company of your friends and family over the coming days and finish the year with an unforgettable festive season.

The club continued its informal Masterclass "tuition" sessions and it has been a challenge to find suitable material for the participants. Then, my eye alighted on an article in *New in Chess* magazine. The WMOTB! The premise is a) you identify the Worst Move On The Board and b) avoid playing it. Still, 50% on a multiple-choice question would be an improvement on their usual performance. In a Ladder game against Peter Walker, my percentage score was a resounding zero which provided a sadly memorable low point for 2023.

One advantage of this type of puzzle is that software is of no use whatsoever! Granted, if the WMOTB allows a forced checkmate, Fritz will swiftly point this out but the WMOTB may not only be the fastest loss but also the largest swing in material or unique failures to win or draw.

As an illustration, a reader wrote to the magazine in a later issue to point out an instance from a game Golubev v Kotov. Black became a Soviet grandmaster best known for winning the 1952 Saltsjöbaden Interzonal but the next position is taken from his youth. Wanting to simplify when winning comfortably, Black played 1 ... Rxf7 but resigned after 2 Bd8+.



Got the idea? Not so easy after all! Here are some more game positions for you to try.

1 White to move



2 Black to move



The mistakes are all there waiting to be made ... or should that read "avoided". Maybe a good motto for your New Year's resolution.

Merry Chessmas!

*Paul Hanks*