

# New Englander

## Chess Club Update – January 2026

### Chairman's Chatter

Happy New Year! The pressure is on! This month is dedicated to pressing on with the Club Championship. There are three scheduled rounds and a host of postponements to clear. Welcome back to the board after the festive break...

Paul Hanks

### Puzzle Problem

For a change, Black to play and avoid mate in 1. Then find best play for White!



Last Month's solution (Dreese 1947)

Position : 8/8/2KR4/2ppk3/2r5/5Q2/8/8

**1 Kd7 Rd4 2 Re6#** [1 ... Re4 2 Qf6#; 1 ... Rf4 2 Qxd5#; 1 ... other 2 Rxd5#]

### Diary Dates

4<sup>th</sup> February Round 4 of Club Championship deferred from 10<sup>th</sup> December by Fenland Trophy match

24<sup>th</sup> February Deadline for Group stage games in the Club Championship

1<sup>st</sup> March EACU Team Championship in memory of Patrick Ribbands, Moreton Hall Community Centre, Bury St Edmunds, 10am-5:30pm

14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> March [British Rapidplay Championship](#) at Holiday Inn, Thorpe Wood

### Website to Watch

The 2026 edition of the Tata Steel Chess Tournament takes place in Wijk aan Zee, Netherlands from 16<sup>th</sup> January to 1<sup>st</sup> February. It is billed as the youngest line-up of this long-running event with the field including Gukesh, Erigaisi, Praggnanandhaa and Turkish youngster Erdogmus. It feels like a changing of the guard and the rise of the next generation. Details can be found at <https://tatasteelchess.com/en>.

### Result Round-up

#### Cambridgeshire League

New England C	P	Peterborough C	P
Peterborough C	1	New England C	2
A Brookbanks	0	J Sutherland	1
L Galea	1	J Peoples	0
S Gnanasakthivel	0	A Thobani	1

#### Team7000

NE Patriots	P	Spalding	P
Re-scheduled on 18 <sup>th</sup> February 2026			

St Neots	1	NE Patriots	3
M Cooper	0	P Hanks	1
P Barkas	0	B Sivaraj	1
C Emery	1	E Knox	0
M Friday	0	J Sutherland	1

#### Fenland Trophy

New England A	0	St Ives	4
P Walker	0	R Coleman	1
R Illett	0	N Fleming	1
P Hanks	0	D Okorafor	1
P Spencer	0	S Caraway	1

#### New England Club Championship

Group A	EK	PW	JP	BS	AT	CR	Pts
E Knox	X		1	P	1	1	3
P Walker		X	1		1	P	2
J Peoples	0	0	X	0	1		1
B Stephens	P		1	X			1
A Thobani	0	0	0		X		0
C Russell	0	P				X	0

Group B	BS	RI	JS	PH	AN	DD	SW	PS	Pts
B Sivaraj	X		P		1	1		P	2
R Ilett		X	P		P	1	1		2
J Sutherland	P	P	X	½			1		1½
P Hanks			½	X		P	1	P	1½
A Neville	0	P			X	1		P	1
D Dhokia	0	0		P	0	X			0
S Walker		0	0	0			X	P	0
P Spencer	P			P	P		P	X	

White		Black	
P Spencer	P	Rd 1	A Neville
B Sivaraj	P	Rd 1	J Sutherland
E Knox	P	Rd 2	B Stephens
B Sivaraj	P	Rd 2	P Spencer
White		Black	
P Walker	1	0	J Peoples
A Thobani	0	1	E Knox
D Dhokia	0	1	B Sivaraj
S Walker	0	1	J Sutherland
R Ilett	P	Rd 3	A Neville
P Hanks	P	Rd 3	P Spencer
White		Black	
J Peoples	0	1	E Knox
B Sivaraj	1	0	A Neville
D Dhokia	P	Rd 4	P Hanks
S Walker	P	Rd 4	P Spencer
R Ilett	P	Rd 4	J Sutherland
C Russell	P	Rd 4	P Walker

#### New England Club Ladder

Position	Change		Player	Record @ 17/12/25
	Month	Overall		
1	-	+7	P Hanks	1
2	-	+1	B Sivaraj	1,0
3	+1	-1	P Spencer	0,1
4	-1	-3	M Patrickson	1
5	-	-	D Dhokia	0
6	+1	-	N Wedley	1
7	-1	-3	C Russell	0
8	-	-1	S Walker	0

Christmas Special : 17<sup>th</sup> December 2025

Player	Round				Total
	1	2	3	4	
J Sutherland	5	5	2	5	17
P Hanks	5	5	-	5	15
P Spencer	0	5	2	5	12
R Ilett	5	5	2	0	12
B Sivaraj	5	0	2	0	7
D Dhokia	0	0	2	5	7
J Peoples	0	0	2	0	2
C Russell	0	0	2	0	2

#### New England Grand Prix

Player	Champ	Ladder	League			Cup	Team 7000	Total	TPR*
			A	B	C				
B Sivaraj	2	1	2½			2	1½	9	1862
J Sutherland	1½		1	2	0	1	5½	1792	
P Hanks	1½	1	1	0		½	1	5	1764
P Spencer		1	1½	1½		1		5	1624
R Ilett	2		1½	1		½	0	5	1783
P Walker	2	½				1		3½	1924
J Peoples	1			2		½	3½	1523	
E Knox	3					0	3	1802	
B Stephens	1		0	1				2	1703
A Thobani	0			2				2	1443
M Patrickson		1	½	0				1½	1606
N Wedley		1						1	1916
A Neville	1							1	1574
S Walker	0			½				½	1361
C Russell	0	0	0	½				½	1403
D Dhokia	0							0	1278

\* Tournament Performance Rating is approximate

#### Eye Opener

Chess Olympiads are held every two years to find the world's strongest playing nation. It is a team event over 4 boards and you might think a young lad of 13 years old might be a little nervous appearing in the spotlight.

**Magnus Carlsen** (2581) v **Nurlan Ibraev** (2476)  
Calvia Olympiad ; 25.10.2004

1	d4	Nf6
2	c4	e6
3	Nc3	Bb4
4	Qc2	c5
5	dxc5	Bxc5

6	Nf3	Qb6
7	e3	Qc7
8	b3	b6
9	Bb2	Bb7
10	Nb5	

After some routine and almost symmetric development, White starts to be provocative. Maybe, you need youth on your side to be so confident. But watch how harmoniously White continues to play.

10	...	Qd8
11	0-0-0	0-0

This looks dangerous. Doesn't an ELO of 2582 deserve some respect, especially in a young player?

12	Ng5	Re8
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Already, White is posing serious problems with the threat of 13 Bxf6 and if 12 ... g6, 13 Qc3 Be7 14 Nd6 when Black must be prepared to answer a knight landing on e4.

13	h4	
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13 Bd3 also yields a massive attack against either 13 ... g6 or 13 ... h6.

13	...	e5
14	Nd6	Bxd6
15	Rxd6	h6
16	Qf5	Nc6

To stay in the game, Black must play 16 ... Qe7.

17	Rxf6	1-0
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Not 17 ... gxf6 18 Qh7+ mating, 17 ... Qxf6 18 Qh7+ Kf8 19 Ne4 and 20 Ba3+ or 17 ... hxg5 18 hxg5 g6 19 Qh3 Kf8 20 Qh7 etc.

### Match of the Month

This is the classic fisherman's tale – of the win that should have been there for the taking, but I just let it get away. Like most when playing team chess, I inevitably tend to be rather more cautious than in an individual competition, which I suspect is why my record is generally rather better at team chess! Similar to most chess patzers, I miss quite a bit, which is undoubtedly a sensible reason to play it safe. However, here is a game where I saw (nearly) all the right moves but because I was playing for the team, I just didn't quite have the courage of my convictions. Really, I should have been a bit braver.

#### Kevin Johns v Chris Russell

Peterborough B v New England B; 05.02.2025

1	d4	Nf6
2	c4	e6
3	Nc3	Bb4
4	Qc2	

The classical line of the Nimzo-Indian Defence. The intention is for Black to trade his supposedly superior dark-squared bishop for White's pinned knight in exchange for inflicting doubled pawns. Here, White attempts to annex the bishop pair without incurring structural damage but this is accomplished at the cost of neglecting minor piece development. My opening

book says that "the positions that result are rather sterile and opportunities for dynamic play are limited."

4	...	c5
5	e3	

Another quiet move. 5 dxc5 is almost an automatic reaction amongst grandmasters and on the White side of precursor games, you can find the names Karpov, Kasparov and Kramnik with games continuing e.g. 5 dxc5 0-0 6 a3 Bxc5 7 Nf3 Nc6. Fritz, however, is happy that sharper lines are playable, such as 5 a3 Qa5 6 Nf3 Nc6 7 e3 cxd4 8 Nxd4 Bxc3 which lead to aforesaid doubled/isolated pawns.

5	...	cxd4
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preparing a retreat for the bishop if necessary. Alternatively, 5 ... b6!? 6 a3 Bxc3+ 7 Qxc3 cxd4 8 exd4 0-0 9 Bg5 Bb7 10 Nf3 Nc6 with a good game – Black is comfortably ahead in development and has the half-open c file as an avenue to apply pressure.

6	exd4	Nc6
7	Nf3	0-0
8	Bd3	d5!
9	c5	Re8?!

This looked a good idea at the time as it sets up threats against the uncastled king, but it is not the best. Assuming 10 0-0 is to follow, 9 ... Re8 looks to be equivalent in terms of supporting e6-e5 but after exchanges on that square, my move leaves a rook there which can be hit with tempo by Bc1-f4 and that would not be possible if the queen occupied the centre. However, my move does set a trap for White. Fritz prefers 9 ... b6! 10 a3 Bxc3+ 11 Qxc3 bxc5 12 Qxc5 Na5 (threatening 13 ... Nb3) 13 Qc2 Bd7 14 b4 Nc4 which is rated as equal.

10	a3?	
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The trap is simply avoided by castling. If 10 0-0! e5 11 dxe5 Nxe5 12 Nxe5 Rxe5 13 Bf4 Rh5 as previously indicated but White takes the bait...



**10 ... Bxc3+?!**

Not this! Here is where I spent a lot of time trying to analyse the correct move and being unable to work out all the variations, I chickened out (sigh!).

Correct is 10 ... e5!! leaving White in real difficulties.

● 11 axb4?! Nxb4

- 12 Qd2/d1/c2 Nxd3+ 13 Qxd3 e4 regaining the material and with an embarrassing discovered check to come
- 12 Bxh7+?! Nxh7 13 Qa4 exd4+ with a strong initiative e.g. 14 Ne2 a5 15 Nfxd4 Nd3+ 16 Kf1 b6 17 cxb6 Ba6 18 b7 (18 Be3 Rxe3 19 fxe3 Qh4 20 Ng3 Nxb2+; 18 Qxa5 Nxc1) 18 ... Rb8 19 Qxa5 Qf6 20 f3 Rxb7

● 11 dxe5! (best) 11 ... Nxe5 and then,

- 12 Nxe5 Rxe5+ 13 Be3 Bxc5 14 0-0 Bxe3 15 fxe3 Rxe3 with extra pawns
- 12 0-0 Nxf3+ 13 gxf3 Bxc3 (13 ... Bxc5 14 Bg5 h6 is comparable) 14 bxc3 (14 Qxc3 d4 15 Qc2 Qd5 16 Kg2 Bh3+) 14 ... Nd7 and the pawn structure gives Black a clear edge e.g. 15 Bxh7+ Kh8 16 Bd3 Ne5 17 Be2 Bh3 and if 18 Rd1 Qf6 19 f4 Bf5 and 20 ... Qg6+) and eventually, White's pawns are indefensible.

**11 Qxc3?**

Another inaccuracy. If 11 bxc3 e5 12 dxe5 Nxe5 13 Nxe5 Rxe5+ 14 Be3 and Black's advantage is minimal.

**11 ... e5!**

**12 dxe5 Ng4??**

Cowardly! Again, this just loses all of my positional advantage. At the time, d5-d4 looked natural enough but I think I was unnecessarily worried about complications that might just cost me my knight but 12 ... d4! 13 Qc2 Nxe5 14 Nxe5 (14 0-0? Nxf3+) 14 ... Rxe5+ 15 Kf1 Qe7 wins the c pawn.

**13 Bf4**

13 0-0 was better.

**13 ... d4**

Solid but too late – White now castles to safety. I might even have tried the cheeky 13 ... Qf6.

**14 Qc2 Ngxe5**

**15 Nxe5 Nxe5**

**16 0-0 Nxd3**

**17 Qxd3 Qf6!**

Best – I need to give myself options against 18 Rad1 – but the game is back to level.

**18 Bd6?!**

The bishop looks awkward but it screens support for my d pawn.

**18 ... Bf5**

**19 Qd2**

If 19 Qb5, Qb3 or Qf3, 19 ... Qg6 looks promising e.g. 19 Qf3 Qg6 20 Qxb7? Be4.

**19 ... d3**  
**20 Rfe1 b6**  
**21 b4 Re6?**

Poor. Looking to double the rooks but best was 21 ... bxc5 22 Bxc5 Re2! 23 Rxe2 Qxa1+ 24 Re1 Qxa3. Note that 21 ... Re2 is not playable immediately because leaving a white pawn on b4, White could continue c5-c6.

**22 Rac1 Rae8**  
**23 h3?**

Trading rooks with 23 Rxe6 Rxe6 24 Re1 takes some pressure off.

**23 ... Qg6**

Had I tried 23 ... Re2 24 Rxe2 Rxe2, White would need to spot the resource 25 Re1 but it is virtually forced because 25 Qd1 d2 wins e.g. 26 Kh2 Be4 27 Bg3 Rxf2 28 Bxf2 Qg5.

**24 Kf1??**

Kevin tries to gift me the game one last time.

**24 ... h5??**

Throwing away the win that was there on the plate. Simply 24 ... Re2! should win. 25 Rxe2 Rxe2 26 Qf4! (if 26 Qc3 Be4 27 Bg3 h5; 26 cxb6 axb6 and Black wins) 26 ... Qe6! winning by 27 cxb6 axb6 28 Kg1 Re4 29 Qg3 d2.

**25 Rxe6 Rxe6**  
**26 Re1 Re2**

Too late!

**27 Rxe2 dxe2+**  
**28 Kxe2 Be4?**

The only way to keep any advantage is with 28 ... Qxg2 29 Qe3 Bd7.

**29 Qe3 Qxg2**

Fritz points out 29 ... Bxg2! 30 h4 Qc2+ 31 Ke1 (31 Qd2 Bf3+) 31 ... Bc6 but the endgame should be tenable by White especially as the clocks are running down.

**30 cxb6 axb6**  
**31 Bg3 b5 ½-½**

With a level position, it is difficult for either side to make progress. We were both running out of time, so I offered a draw.

*Chris Russell*