

New Englander

Chess Club Update – February 2026

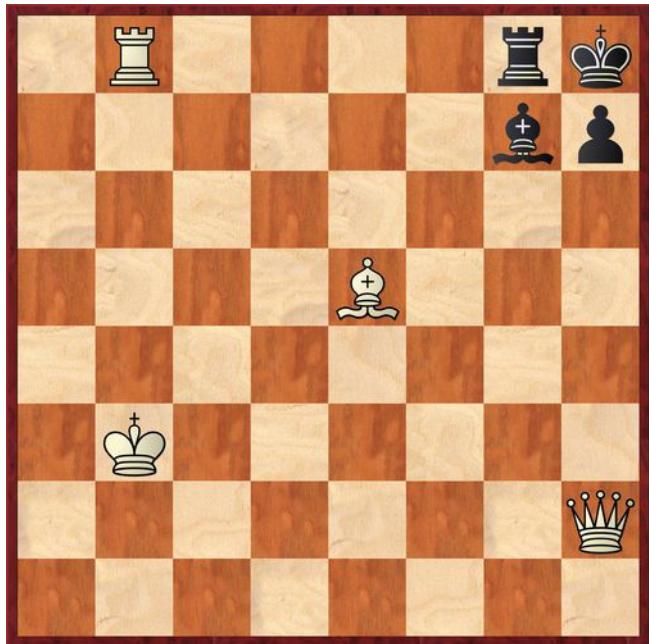
Chairman's Chatter

The preliminary stage of the Club Championship has become rather unbalanced due to some unfortunate withdrawals. Group A seems to have two clear qualifiers for the "Champions League" finals but as for the second section, no wonder the pundits have coined the expression the "Group of Death".

Paul Hanks

Puzzle Problem

White to play and mate in 2.



Last Month's solution

Position : 4n2b/4np2/Q7/2P1k3/6P1/2N5/3R1R2/4K3
1 ... f5 but it is mate in 3 e.g. 2 Rde2+ Kd4 3 Rf4+ Kxc3 4 Qc3# . 2 Nd5 and 2 gxf5 work but less forcing

Diary Dates

4 th February	Round 4 of Club Championship deferred from 10 th December by Fenland Trophy match. Deadline for group stage games is 24 th February
1 st March	EACU Team Championship in memory of Patrick Ribbands, Moreton Hall Community Centre, Bury St Edmunds, 10am-5:30pm
14 th -15 th March	<u>British Rapidplay Championship</u> at Holiday Inn, Thorpe Wood

Website to Watch

Although lightweight in terms of top-flight chess, February has the Prague International Chess Festival

from 25th until 6th March. The field includes the world champion Gukesh and nine other elite grandmasters (Abdusattarov, Keymer) for a 2700+ average rating. <https://praguechessfestival.com/en/2026> has details.

Result Round-up

Cambridgeshire League

St Ives	4	New England B	0
D Okarafor	1	R Illett	0
M Rippon	1	P Hanks	0
N Greenwood	1	J Sutherland	0
R Ling	1	C Russell	0

New England C	P	Peterborough C	P
New England C	2½	Rookswood B	½
J Sutherland	½	D Laker	½
J Peoples	1	L Levet	0
A Thobani	1	M Teague	0

Team7000

NE Patriots P Spalding P
Re-scheduled on 18th February 2026

New England Club Championship

White		Black	
P Spencer	P	Rd 1	A Neville
B Sivaraj	P	Rd 1	J Sutherland
B Sivaraj	P	Rd 2	P Spencer
R Ilett	1	0	A Neville
P Hanks	½	½	P Spencer
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

White		Black	
P Walker	1	0	E Knox
A Neville	0	1	P Hanks
J Sutherland	1	0	P Spencer
B Sivaraj	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	R Ilett
S Walker	P	Rd 5	D Dhokia

White		Black	
R Illett	0	1	P Spencer
A Thobani	0	1	C Russell
A Neville	1	0	S Walker
B Sivaraj	½	½	P Hanks
J Sutherland	P	Rd 6	D Dhokia
White		Black	
B Sivaraj	1	0	S Walker
P Spencer	1	0	D Dhokia
R Illett	½	½	P Hanks
J Peoples	½	½	C Russell
A Neville	P	Rd 7	J Sutherland

Group A		PW	EK	CR	JP	AT	Pts
P Walker		X	1	P	1	1	3
E Knox		0	X	1	1	1	3
C Russell		P	0	X	½	1	1½
J Peoples		0	0	½	X	1	1½
A Thobani		0	0	0	0	X	0

Group B		BS	RI	PH	PS	JS	AN	SW	DD	Pts
B Sivaraj		X	½	½	P	P	1	1	1	4
R Illett		½	X	½	0	P	1	1	1	4
P Hanks		½	½	X	½	½	1	1	P	4
P Spencer		P	1	½	X	0	P	P	1	2½
J Sutherland		P	P	½	1	X	P	1	P	2½
A Neville		0	0	0	P	P	X	1	1	2
S Walker		0	0	0	P	0	0	X	P	0
D Dhokia		0	0	P	0	P	0	P	X	0

New England Club Ladder

Position	Change		Player	Record @ 28/01/26
	Month	Overall		
1	-	+7	P Hanks	1
2	-	+1	B Sivaraj	1,0
3	-	-1	P Spencer	0,1
4	+5	+5	J Peoples	1
5	-1	-4	M Patrickson	1
6	-	-	N Wedley	1,1,0
7	-	-3	C Russell	0
8	-3	-3	D Dhokia	0,0
9	-1	-2	S Walker	0

White		Black	
D Dhokia	0	1	N Wedley
N Wedley	0	1	J Peoples

New England Grand Prix

Player	Champ	Ladder	League			Cup	Team 7000	Total	TPR*
			A	B	C				
B Sivaraj	4	1	2½			2	1½	11	1867
P Spencer	2½	1	1½	1½		1		7½	1666
P Hanks	4	1	1	0		½	1	7½	1757
J Sutherland	2½		1	2½	0	1	7	1750	
J Peoples	1½	1		3		½	6	1505	
R Illett	4	1½	1			½	0	6	1760
P Walker	3		½			1		4½	1945
A Thobani	0			3			3	3	1449
E Knox	3					0	3	3	1757
C Russell	1½	0	0	½				2	1491
A Neville	2							2	1550
N Wedley		2						2	1617
B Stephens	1		0	1				2	1703
M Patrickson		1	½	0				1½	1606
S Walker	0			½				½	1333
D Dhokia	0							0	1270

* Tournament Performance Rating is approximate

Match of the Month

Online chess is almost another universe. For a start, the time limits tend to be much faster – the following game was played at 10 minutes/player – but you still get a record of the moves! There have been allegations that the format allows some sharp practice but as with the over-the-board game, a post-mortem with an analysis engine can dispel such ideas by pointing out a stream of missed opportunities.

Peter9974 v FiL1p02 (2255)
Internet 10 minutes; 28.12.2025

1 c4 e5
2 Nc3 Nf6
3 Nf3 e4

This looks to be a natural way to disrupt White's development and to occupy the centre. As with Alekhine's Defence, it can be shown that those pawn advances create weaknesses that can be attacked and here, Black is a tempo behind. Riffle through a dozen issues of *Informator* magazine and it is hard to find examples of grandmasters making this choice. One game went 1 c4 e5 2 g3 Nf6 3 Bg2 c6 4 Nf3 e4 5 Nd4 Qb6 (So v Caruana, St Louis 2019).

4 Ng5 b5

A sideline in a sideline. Black is prepared to give up a flank pawn to stabilise the d7-d5 push.

5 d3

If 5 cxb5 d5 or 5 Nxb5 c6 and Black gets what he wants.

5 ... exd3

Old versions of Fritz give a strong preference for 5 ... bxc4 but if you switch to a newer update, there is little difference.

6	cxb5	h6
7	Nf3	dxe2
8	Bxe2	Bb7

This is curiously inconsistent. Having angled for 8 ... d5, Black refrains when given the chance. He had faith in the open diagonals for his bishops but neglects to give his queen's knight an outlet on d7 and effectively plays on two pieces down.

9	0-0	Bc5
10	Be3	

By now, the computer indicates a healthy advantage to White recommending 10 Nd4 0-0 11 Be3.

10	...	Bxe3
11	fxe3	Qe7
12	Qd4	0-0
13	Bc4	

If White were a slave to the computer, 13 Nh4 d6 14 Nf5 Qe6 15 Nxh6+ would have been the continuation.

13	...	Re8
14	Rae1	c5
15	Qd3	Ng4

This is where the position evaluation plummets. Black should be trying to activate his static forces with 15 ... a6 but White would still be comfortable after 16 e4 axb5 17 bxb5 Nc6 18 e5 Ng4 19 Nd5 though 17 ... Qe6 would be better when 18 e5 can be met by 18 ... Nd5.



16 Nd5

White now has a range of strong moves but best is 16 Ng5. With h7 and f7 under attack, Black has to accept the knight but

- 16 ... Qxg5 17 Bxf7+ Kh8 18 Bxe8
- 16 ... hxg5 17 Rxf7 Qxf7 18 Bxf7+ Kxf7 19 Qc4+.

16	...	Qd8
17	Qf5	Nf6
18	Nc3	

Again, White has an aggressive knight move with 18 Ne5 and then,

- 18 ... Bxd5 19 Bxd5 Nxd5 20 Qxf7+ Kh8 21 Qxd5
- 18 ... Nxd5 19 Qxf7+ Kh8 20 Bd3 mating e.g. 20 ... Nf6 (20 ... Qg5 21 Qxe8#) 21 Rxf6 gxf6 22 Qh7#
- 18 ... Rf8 19 Nxf7 Rxf7 (19 ... Bxd5 20 Qxd5) 20 Nxf6+ Qxf6 (20 ... gxf6 21 Qg6+) 21 Bxf7+.

18 ... d5

At last ... but too late! White invades on the d file.

19	Rd1	Rxe3
20	Nxd5	Nxd5
21	Bxd5	

21 Rxd5 Bxd5 22 Bxd5 was an alternative.

21	...	Bxd5
22	Rxd5	Qe8
23	Rfd1	g6
24	Qf4	Nd7

Black sheds enough material for the game to be over but there is an amusing zugzwang after 24 ... g5 25 Qf6 Re6 26 Qc3 Qf8 27 Rd8 Re8 28 Qf6 and 24 ... Kg7 25 Ne5 Re2 26 Ng4 is also hopeless.

25	Rxd7	Rb8
26	Rxf7	Rd8
27	Rxd8	Qxd8
28	Qxe3	Kxf7
29	Qxc5	Qd1+
30	Kf2	1-0

Peter Walker

Eye Opener

Although based on computer analysis, the commentary to the main game is unimpressed by the alternative at move 5 but there are some tactical tricks to note.

Wolfgang Uhlmann (2488) v Victor Lainburg (2278)
World Senior Championship Rd 8; 19.09.2000

5 ... bxc4 6 dxe4 h6 7 Nxf7 Kxf7 8 e5 c6

Any knight move allows 9 Qd5+ winning the rook on a8.

9 e4 Ne8 10 Bxc4+ Ke7 11 Qh5 d5 12 exd5 Kd7 13 Bf4 Kc7 14 0-0-0 g5 15 dxc6 1-0

If 15 ... Qe7 16 Nd5+.