

New Englander

Chess Club Update – March 2026

Chairman's Chatter

The end of the season will be very busy! There have been more match postponements than in any year I can remember. The re-arrangement schedule is very tight and I urge you to take every opportunity to clear any outstanding internal games. We need to maximise availability for what few club evenings remain so that we can fulfil our league commitments.

Paul Hanks

Puzzle Problem

White to play and mate in 2.



Last Month's solution

Position : 1R4rk/6bp/8/4B3/8/1K6/7Q/8

1 Bb2 Rxb8+ 2 Qxb8# [1 ... R other 2 RxR#; 1 ... Bxb2 2 Qxb2#; 1 ... B other 2 BxB#; 1 ... h6/5 2 QxP#]

Diary Dates

- 1st March EACU Team Championship in memory of Patrick Ribbands, Moreton Hall Community Centre, Bury St Edmunds, 10am-5:30pm
- 14th-15th March [British Rapidplay Championship](#) at Holiday Inn, Thorpe Wood
- 24th October [2026 English Championship](#) until 1st November also at Thorpe Wood

Website to Watch

After the world championship match, the Candidate's Tournament is the next most chess important event. It

involves Caruana, Nakamura and Giri but the other 5 grandmasters are not the names you might expect. Starting on 29th March in Paphos, Cyprus, look at <https://candidates2026.fide.com> for details.

Result Round-up

Cambridgeshire League

Cambridge	P	New England B	P
Godmanchester	2	New England B	2
D Hurricks	0	R Ilett	1
J Barwise	1	B Sivaraj	0
J Wright	1	P Spencer	0
G Silk	0	C Russell	1

New England C	P	Peterborough C	P
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Team7000

Spalding	P	NE Patriots	P
NE Patriots	½*	Spalding	1½
P Walker	1	D Thompson	0
P Spencer	0	C Robinson	1
E Knox	½	J Moseley-Hutchinson	½
J Sutherland	1	M Walters	0

* 2 points deducted for exceeding the 7000 aggregate rating

Peterborough D	P	NE Patriots	P
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Fenland Plate

Rookwood E	P	NE Patriots	P
Match cancelled by road closures			

New England Club Championship

White		Black	
P Spencer	1	0	A Neville
B Sivaraj	P	Rd 1	J Sutherland
B Sivaraj	P	Rd 2	P Spencer
D Dhokia	0	1	P Hanks
S Walker	0	1	P Spencer
R Ilett	½	½	J Sutherland
C Russell	0	1	P Walker
S Walker	½	½	D Dhokia
J Sutherland	P	Rd 6	D Dhokia
A Neville	P	Rd 7	J Sutherland

White		Black	
P Walker	P	Rd 8	P Spencer
E Knox	P	Rd 8	P Hanks
J Peoples	1	0	D Dhokia
A Thobani	0	1	A Neville
C Russell	P	Rd 8	S Walker

Group stage

Group A	PW	EK	JP	CR	AT	Pts
P Walker	X	1	1	1	1	4
E Knox	0	X	1	1	1	3
J Peoples	0	0	X	½	1	1½
C Russell	0	0	½	X	1	1½
A Thobani	0	0	0	0	X	0

Group B	PH	PS	RI	BS	JS	AN	SW	DD	Pts
P Hanks	X	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	5
P Spencer	½	X	1	P	0	1	1	1	4½
R Ilett	½	0	X	½	½	1	1	1	4½
B Sivaraj	½	P	½	X	P	1	1	1	4
J Sutherland	½	1	½	P	X	P	1	P	3
A Neville	0	0	0	0	P	X	1	1	2
S Walker	0	0	0	0	0	0	X	½	½
D Dhokia	0	0	0	0	P	0	½	X	½

Final stage

Champions League	PS	PH	RI	BS	PW	EK	Pts
P Spencer	X	½	1	P	P		1½
P Hanks	½	X	½	½		P	1½
R Ilett	0	½	X	½			1
B Sivaraj	P	½	½	X			1
P Walker	P				X	1	1
E Knox		P			0	X	0

Challengers	AN	JP	CR	JS	DD	SW	AT	Pts
A Neville	X			P	1	1	1	3
J Peoples		X	½		1		1	2½
C Russell		½	X				1	1½
J Sutherland	P			X	P	1		1
D Dhokia	0	0		P	X	½		½
S Walker	0			0	½	X		½
A Thobani	0	0	0				X	0

New England Club Ladder

Position	Change		Player	Record @ 25/02/26
	Month	Overall		
1	+3	+8	J Peoples	1
2	-1	+6	P Hanks	1
3	-1	-	B Sivaraj	1,0
4	-1	-2	P Spencer	0,1
5	+1	+1	N Wedley	1,1,0
6	-1	-5	M Patrickson	1
7	+3	+3	J Sutherland	1
8	-	-3	D Dhokia	0,0
9	-2	-5	C Russell	0,0
10	+1	+1	P Walker	1
11	-2	-4	S Walker	0
12	-	-	A Rouf	0

White		Black	
C Russell	0	1	J Sutherland
A Rouf	0	1	P Walker

New England Grand Prix

Player	Champ	Ladder	League			Cup	Team 7000	Total	TPR*
			A	B	C				
B Sivaraj	4	1		2½		2	1½	11	1829
J Sutherland	3	1		1	2½	0	2	9½	1778
P Spencer	4½	1	1½	1½		1	0	9½	1643
P Hanks	5	1	1	0		½	1	8½	1769
R Ilett	4½		1½	2		½	0	8½	1766
P Walker	4	1	½			1	1	7½	1994
J Peoples	2½	1			3		½	7	1602
E Knox	3						½	3½	1703
A Thobani	0				3			3	1404
C Russell	1½	0	0	1½				3	1532
A Neville	3							3	1592
N Wedley		2						2	1617
B Stephens	1		0	1				2	1703
M Patrickson		1	½	0				1½	1606
S Walker	½			½				1	1348
D Dhokia	½							½	1300
A Rouf		0						0	1574

* Tournament Performance Rating is approximate

Match of the Month

For the most part, club veterans playing in the higher CCA divisions meet the same players year after year. In the past two years, however, this has become less true with new faces cropping up in the opposing teams. A welcome injection of new blood into the game certainly but it does raise an unfamiliar question. How do you plan a game when you do not know the style or strength of your opponent?

Knowing the board order helps but will you face a theoretician and need to avoid preparation, a natural player with an attacking flair or a positional maestro with an embrace like a boa constrictor? Maybe, you should just focus on your own strengths (if any). The following game shows how I approached the problem.

A Akintola v P Hanks

P'boro v New England, Fenland Trophy; 22.10.25

1	Nf3	d6
2	c4	e5
3	Nc3	f5

This response to the English Opening is a variation in which I have some experience but may catch out my opponent. It is unusual but not outrageously unconventional. If White gets pre-occupied with gaining space on the queenside, it can give Black attacking opportunities on the other flank.

4	d3	Nf6
5	b4	

We are now "out of the book" – one which I was sure I had never read! A hazy memory led me to an old game anthology which mentions this "Anglo-Dutch Opening" as a favourite of Nimzovich's. However, there is nothing relevant in his book *Chess Praxis* and the closest precedent I can find are games by Nigel Short. Fischer also gave Black's formation an outing but wrote a question mark next to his own moves!

5	...	Be7
6	e3	

6 g3 is expected as the fianchetto will eventually support the push e2-e4. This was the direction taken in Aronian v Short, Gibraltar 2018.

6	...	0-0
7	Be2	c6

The problem with Black's opening is that, when the time is right, White can throw in Nf3-g5 hitting e6 or Nc3-b5 aiming at c7. I intended Qd8-e8-g6 hopefully starting a kingside attack but that can leave Black vulnerable to losing the rook on a8 so I covered b5.

8	0-0	Qe8
9	a4	Qg6
10	c5	Nbd7

There was no need to panic. Now that Nf3-g5 is not imminent, I could develop naturally with 10 ... Be6 but instead I have blocked my bishop.

11	cxd6	
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11 Nh4 Qg5 12 cxd6 Bxd6 13 g3 f4 is an alternative which supposedly favours White but Black seems to have a slight initiative.

11	...	Bxd6
12	b5	

12 e4 f4 13 d4 Bc7 (13 ... exd4 14 Qxd4 and Black has ceded control of the centre) 14 d5 would be a forceful way for White to proceed.

12	...	e4
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In advance, I expected to lose a pawn but when failing to find an alternative, I noticed 13 dxe4 Nxe4 (not 13 ... fxe4 14 Qxd6 exf3 15 Bxf3 as initially analysed) 14 Nxe4 fxe4 15 Nh4 Qh6 giving some menacing options for White to ponder (e.g. g7-g5) but 16 f4 is a defence viz 16 ... exf3 (16 ... Qxh4 17 Qxd6) 17 Nxf3.

13	Nh4	Qg5
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As a potential Bc8-h3 is a long way off, I should have realised h2 is a better target in the long run and played 13 ... Qh6. I think I was worried by pressure building on f5 despite 14 Nxf5 Qxh2#. This would not have been a problem with the alternative move 10.

14	g3	Bc7
15	Ba3	

15 f4 exf3 16 Nxf3 Qh6 17 Nh4 shows how White can focus on f5 e.g. 17 ... g6 18 e4 Qg7 19 exf5.

15	...	Re8
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I overlooked 15 ... c5 - good intuition in hindsight! 16 Qb3+ Kh8 17 Nd5 Nxd5 18 Qxd5 and pawn weaknesses are starting to be laid bare.

16	Qb3+	
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Strangely, White can take advantage of the light-squared diagonal in a different way. 16 dxe4 fxe4 17 Bc4+ Kh8 18 Bf7. After 18 ... Re5,

- 19 f4 exf3 20 Nxf3 is not yet playable due to 20 ... Qxe3+ but
- 19 Bd6 Bxd6 20 Qxd6 when Black struggles to resolve the issue of c6.
 - 20 ... cxb5 21 Nxb5 with threats e.g. 22 Rac1 and 23 Nxa7
 - 20 ... c5 21 Rad1 and there is a subtle back rank mate if the black queen can be dislodged (21 ... Qh6 22 Qxe5) so f2-f4 may become viable.

16	...	Kh8
17	Qf7	

This felt paralysing.

17	...	c5
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If 17 ... Ba5, 18 Bd6 and how do you prevent 19 Bf4 trapping the black queen? I now know there is a lot of material to be had by 18 ... exd3 19 Bf4 dxe2 20 Bxg5 exf1Q+ 21 Rxf1 Bxc3 22 Nxf5 Rg8 23 Nd6 when I would probably miss the smothered mate after 24 Qxd7. Nevertheless, this is probably my best try.

18	dxex4	
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I worried unnecessarily about 18 Bxc5 Bxg3 (18 ... Nxc5 was my first variation but 19 Qxc7 Nxd3 20 Bxd3 exd3 leaves the d pawn isolated and 21 Rfd1 is hard to meet) 19 hxg3 Nxc5 and Black has swept away many problems.

18 ... fxe4
 19 Rad1 Rf8
 20 Qe7 Re8
 21 Qf7 Rf8
 22 Qc4 Re8
 23 Nd5

This looked like a dangerous invasion.

23 ... Nb6

If 23 ... Nxd5 24 Rxd5 Qf6, White has to retreat with 25 Qc2 in the face of 25 ... Nb6 but Black is still cramped and is alarmingly exposed on the kingside.

24 Nxb6 axb6
 25 Bb2 Be6
 26 Qc2

I felt happy to have some activity at last.

26 ... Bh3
 27 Ng2

But here I ran out of ideas about how to exploit any initiative I possessed.

27 ... Rad8

Having opened the a file, 27 ... Nd5 would attempt to win that pawn by chasing away the protection from the white queen. The temptation is not without risk - 28 Qc4 Nb4 29 Rfe1 Rxa4 30 Qf7 Rc8 31 Nf4. This may appear to be an innocuous position but 31 ... Bf5 32 Nh5 is mating and 31 ... Bxf4 32 exf4 Qg6 33 Qe7 with 34 Rd6 to follow.

28 Rxd8 Rxd8
 29 Rd1

With the endgame looming, the extra pawn arising from 29 Bxf6 is worth considering.

29 ... Rxd1+
 30 Qxd1 Qd5
 31 Qc2

31 Qxd5 Nxd5 is probably drawn.

31 ... Bf5
 32 Qc3

32 Bc4 is a more aggressive choice but after 32 ... Qd8, White cannot undermine the e4 pawn immediately by 33 Nh4 and 34 Bxf6 due to 33 ... Bh3 with the back rank mate providing a tactical defence.

33 ... h6

I thought it wise to protect against g3-g4-g5.

33 Nf4 Qa2
 34 h4

34 Bd1 is solid but 34 Nh5 provokes the crisis on the long diagonal after 34 ... Nxe5 35 Bxe5. Fortunately, Black has the defence also seen later 35 ... Qb1+ 36 Kg2 Bh3+ 37 Kxh3 Qf1+ 38 Kg4 Qd1+ 39 Kh3 (39 Kh4 Bd8+ 40 Kh3 Qxh5+ 41 Kg2 Bf6) 39 ... Qxh5+ with perpetual check.

34 ... Qb1+

By now, time was getting short. White had almost 20 minutes whilst Black was approaching just 2. I played this move hurriedly without looking properly at 34 ... Qxa4 but 35 g4 seems to involve complications which you should avoid in a scramble. 35 ... Bxf4 just about

holds the balance otherwise 35 ... Bxg4 36 Bxg4 Qxb5 37 Ng6+ Kh7 (37 ... Kg8 38 Be6+ Kh7 39 Nf8+ Kh8 40 Qxf6) 38 Ne7 Ne8 - to avoid transposition - 39 Bf5+ Kh8 40 Bxe4 and White should win.

35 Kg2

After White 34th move, I was hoping mistakenly for 35 Kh2 when at a distance 35 ... Be5 appeared to win. Image my disappointment when I noticed the g4 square was guarded by the white bishop! Instead, the game would have proceeded 35 ... Bxf4 36 exf4 Bg4 37 Bxg4 Qf1 when White can avoid 38 Qd2 Nxe4# but only by allowing 38 ... Qxf2 with perpetual check.

35 ... Bxf4



36 gxf4

The correct recapture. If 36 exf4 Bh3+ 37 Kh2 (37 Kxh3 Qh1#) 37 ... Bf1 38 Qd2 (38 Bxf1 Qxf1 39 g4 Nxe4+ 40 Kg3 Qg1+ 41 Kh3 Nxf2#) 38 ... Bxe2 39 Qxe2 Qd3 40 Qe1 Ng4+ 41 Kg1 e3 42 fxe3 Qc2 and White has to be very careful.

36 ... h5

36 ... Bh3+ is playable now. 37 Kh2 will almost transpose into the comment above and 37 Kg3 Qh1 leads to checkmate 38 h5 (38 f5 Qg2+ 39 Kf4 Qh2#) 38 ... Qg2+ 39 Kh4 Bf5 - mate next move.

37 Qe5

37 Qd2 would avoid the complications viz 37 ... Bh3+ 38 Kh2 Ng4+ (38 ... Bf1 39 Bxf6) 39 Bxg4 Bxg4 40 Qc3 when 40 ... Bf3 is a move too late.

37 ... Bh3+ 1/2- 1/2

38 Kxh3 with perpetual check by the queen on g&h1.

After the game, my opponent was of the opinion that 38 Kh2 led to catastrophe after 38 ... Bg4 but the result would stand because 39 Qb8+ Kh7 40 Bxf6 Qe1 (White turns the tables after 40 ... gxf6 41 Bc4 Bf3 42 Qg8+ Kh6 43 Qf8+ Kh7 44 Bg8+ Kg6 45 Qf7+ Kh6 46 Qh7/f6#) 41 Bxg4 (41 Bc4 Qxf2+ 42 Kh1 Bf3#) 41 ... Qxf2+ is another perpetual check.