New Englander

Chess Club Update – November 2026

Chairman's Chatter

If I had a commercial brain, I would now be in clover. The English Chess Championship is not held every day within walking distance and had I listed my home on AirBnB, I could have tapped into the zillions the top players receive in appearance fees. I intended to visit and spectate during the week but sadly, no facilities were available. This hardly made it a spectacle to promote chess locally. Thankfully, to attract new members, we can rely on a busy and varied schedule and our friendly atmosphere.

Paul Hanks

Puzzle Problem

White to play and mate in 2.



Last Month's solution (Feoktistov 1970)

Position : 8/8/8/6B1/3KN1k1/2Q3P1/6R1/8

1 Qc6 Kf5/h5 2 g4# [1 ... Kf3 2 Nf6#; 1 ... Kh3 2 Nf2#]

Diary Dates

28-29th November — A five-round Swiss event at Christie Hall Wansford for the County Individual championship. Entry £25 (£15 juniors) before 20th November to james1blair@yahoo.co.uk

Website to Watch

The London Chess Classic returns to Novotel West in Hammersmith from 25th November to 4th December. Four UK grandmasters take on Abdusattorov, Aronian and Ivanchuk together with rising stars Sarin, Woodward and Samunenkov. Tickets are available from £10 but the start time of 4pm is inconvenient for a visit in person from Peterborough and spectators are only catered for during rounds 3 to 9. Details of viewing and the commentary team can be found at https://www.londonchessclassic.com/watch-live.

Almost unnoticed, a match for the World Championship also begins in the final week of November in Geneva. The first game between champion Gukesh and challenger Sindarov takes place on 24th November and if the event goes the full distance of 14 games and tiebreaks, it will finish on 12th December. It is disappointing that viewing options have yet to be announced.

Result Round-up

Cambridgeshire League

New England A	2½	Rookswood	2½
P Walker	0	J Sneesby	1
R Ilett	½	F Bowers	½
P Hanks	0	B Panter	1
P Spencer	1	L Levet	0
E Knox	1	M Teague	0

New England B	1½	Godmanchester	2½
P Spencer	½	D Hurricks	½
P Turp	0	J Barwise	1
C Russell	½	A Rankine	½
S Walker	½	R Jackson	½

Ely	1½	New England C	1½
B Johnson	1	J Sutherland	0
H Wheatley	0	J Peoples	1
R Burton	½	S Stuart	½

New England C	1	Ely	2
J Peoples	0	B Johnson	1
A Thobani	0	H Wheatley	1
S Stuart	1	P Jones	0

Team 7000

Peterborough	1	NE Patriots	3
R Hammond	0	R Ilett	1
N Chedd	0	P Hanks	1
B Rooney	1	J Sutherland	0
A Macleod	0	J Peoples	1

Fenland Trophy

New England A	1	Peterborough A	3
P Walker	0	F Biermann	1
R Ilett	0	D Walton	1
P Hanks	0	A Akintola	1
P Spencer	1	W Cheng	0

New England Club Championship

White			Black
P Spencer	1	0	E Knox
P Walker	1	0	N Foreman
J Sutherland	P	Rd 1	P Hanks
S Walker	P	Rd 1	C Russell
A Kenedler	P	Rd 1	A Neville
S Stuart	P	Rd 1	A Thobani
E Knox	P	Rd 2	S Stuart
A Neville	P	Rd 2	A Thobani
N Foreman	0	1	P Spencer
P Walker	P	Rd 2	A Kenedler
D Dhokia	0	1	P Hanks
J Peoples	P	Rd 2	J Sutherland
C Russell	0	1	R Ilett
S Walker	½	½	P Turp

Group stage

Group A	PS	PW	EK	NF	AT	AN	AK	SS	Pts
P Spencer	X		1	1					2
P Walker		X		1			P		1
E Knox	0		X					P	0
N Foreman	0	0		X					0
A Thobani					X	P		P	-
A Neville					P	X	P		-
A Kenedler		P				P	X		-
S Stuart			P		P			X	-

Group B	RI	PT	PH	SW	CR	JP	DD	JS	Pts
R Ilett	X				1		1		2
P Turp		X		½		1			1½
P Hanks			X				1	P	1
S Walker		½		X	P				½
C Russell	0			P	X				0
J Peoples		0				X		P	0
D Dhokia	0		0				X		0
J Sutherland			P			P		X	-

New England Grand Prix

Player	Champ	Ladder	League			Cup	Team 7000	Total	TPR*
			A	B	C				
P Spencer	2		1	1½		1		5½	1788
R Ilett	2		1½			0	1	4½	1906
P Turp	1½			1½				3	1679
J Peoples	0			0	1		1	2	1442
P Walker	1		1			0		2	1846
P Hanks	1		0			0	1	2	1667
S Stuart					1½			1½	1318
C Russell	0		½	1				1½	1538
J Sutherland			½	1	0		0	1½	1510
S Walker	½			½				1	1563
E Knox			1					1	1562
D Dhokia	0							0	1310
N Foreman	0				0			0	1000
A Thobani					0			0	1109
N Wedley									-
A Neville									-

* Tournament Performance Rating is approximate

Match of the Month

Crosswords, sudoku, wordle... Whatever your choice of brainteaser, they have one thing in common. One person compiles the puzzle, another solves it at leisure. Chess is different. Two people conspire to create a problem spontaneously on the board and derive mutual enjoyment from trying to solve it. Afterwards, we have a lifetime of learning trying to improve. For the competitive, the result is all but for the purist, it is the thrill of the chase.

The following game is a humiliating debacle that eliminated the A team from the Fenland Trophy. I found it very instructive and can only admire the effort by my opponent.

We are talking about the Saemisch Variation of the King's Indian Defence.

1	**d4**	**Nf6**
2	**c4**	**g6**
3	**Nc3**	**Bg7**
4	**e4**	**d6**
5	**f3**	

I wrote a *Serious Study* article on this subject in issue #105 of the newsletter in August 2015. Remember that? No, me neither. I do however recall the continuation :-

5	**...**	**0-0**
6	**Be3**	**Nc6**
7	**Qd2**	**a6**

8	**Nge2**	**Rb8**
9	**h4**	**b5**
10	**h5**	**Nxh5**
11	**g4**	**Nf6**
12	**Bh6**	

and Black's position is surprisingly difficult to play as a few lines in the article demonstrated. As my brain does not retain variations, I have to rely on positional themes expressed in words and the recipe in this opening is :

- create a queen and bishop battery on d2 and e3 to exchange the fianchetto bishop on g7 with Be3-h6
- castle on the queenside to give the white queen's rook freedom to reach the g or h file
- conduct a pawn storm on the kingside against Black's castled king.

How come then that none of this happened in the game?

P Hanks v **A Akintola**
New England A v Peterborough A
Fenland Trophy; 28.10.26

1	**d4**	**Nf6**
2	**c4**	**g6**
3	**Nc3**	**Bg7**
4	**e4**	**d6**
5	**f3**	**c5**
6	**d5**	

I recognised that Black's 5th move is unusual and slightly inferior because White obtains a pleasant game from 6 dxc5 dxc5 7 Qxd8+ Kxd8 8 Be3 Nbd7 9 0–0–0. Grandmasters are paid to grind something from such positions but it is hardly in the fighting spirit required for a satisfying evening of club chess.

6	**...**	**Na6**

This move is familiar and made me smile internally. As a schoolboy, I experimented with this manoeuvre and liked the knight reaching c7 where it puts pressure on White's pawn on d5, supports the push e7-d6 that is typical of Benoni-style formations and speeds up the b7-b5 option.

7	**Be3**	**Qa5**
8	**Qd2**	**h5**
9	**Bd3**	**Bd7**

I was expecting 9 ... Nb4 to encourage the retreat 10 Be2 but Fritz prefers 9 ... Nd7 aiming for an outpost after 10 Nge2 Ne5 created by my dubious 6th move.

10	**Nge2**	**Nc7**

It was only here that I realised how completely I had been hoodwinked. My game plan is in tatters. Black has safeguarded his dragon on g7, kept his king in centre to give my intended attack no focus and deterred me from queenside castling into an open long diagonal and soon, the b file.

I had to change strategic direction completely and decided my best prospects were to force the advance e4-e5 which would require f3-f4 with play down the central files.

11	**0–0**	

I had toyed with the idea of 11 a3 trying to trap the black queen which temporarily has no escape route. Attempts seem to fail as White has insufficient time before Black can play the useful a7-a6 and at worst, reach safety with Qa6-b6-a7. I should, however, have looked at the alternative tactics in the situation.

Firstly, 11 a3 b5 looks plausible (the b5 square has 3 white attackers and 3 black defenders) but is impossible because after 12 cxb5 Nxb5 13 Nxb5, the undefended queen cannot recapture immediately and 13 ... Qxd2+ 14 Bxd2 “removes the guard”. Is this oversight a hangover from my previous aversion to exchanging queens?

Instead, Black can reinforce his advance with 11 ... a6 but then 12 0–0 b5 13 b4 cxb4 14 axb4 Qb4 15 Rfb1 brings me full circle with the queen trapped so Black must play 13 ... Qb6 14 bxc5 dxc5 15 Rab1. The final position still leaves 4 v 4 pieces contesting b5 but Black has to answer both Nc3-a4 and e4-e5.

11	**...**	**b5**

Have I not just shown this move is *impossible*?

12	**h3**	

As before, 12 cxb5 Nxb5 13 Nxb5 would win a piece. Black would have to try the gambit 12 ... a6 or 12 ... Rb8 when 13 a3 would replicate much of the previous comment. 12 a3 might transpose but Black has options to vary. 12 ... Qa6 is not one of them because Black cannot recapture after 13 cxb5 e.g. 13 ... Nxb5 14 a4 and the alternatives are

- either 12 ... b4 13 Nb5 Nxb5 14 cxb5 Bxb5 15 axb4 Qb6 16 bxc5 dxc5 17 Bxb5+ Qxb5 18 d6
- or 12 ... bxc4 13 Bxc4 0-0 14 Rfb1 with b2-b4 to follow

but both leave White with a strong initiative.

12	**...**	**bxc4**
13	**Bxc4**	**Qb4**
14	**b3**	**a6**
15	**a3**	

My 12th move was motivated by slow preparation of e4-e5 starting with f3-f4 and precluding the response Nf6-g4. However, now is the time to strike. 15 e5 dxe5 16 d6 exd6 *(*16 ... Ne6 17 dxe7 Kxe7 18 f4) 17 Qxd6 shows up Black's vulnerable king and lack of co-ordination.

15	**...**	**Qb7**
16	**Rab1**	

16 f4 would be consistent but I wanted to avoid discovered attacks on the long diagonal despite 16 ... Nxe4 17 Nxe4 Bxa1 18 Rxa1 being favourable to me.

16	**...**	**Nb5**
17	**Qc1**	

Black's reply had come as a surprise If you had sufficient foresight, there is an enterprising exchange sacrifice. White's pieces swarm over the queenside e.g. 17 b4 Nxa3 18 bxc5 Nxb1 19 Rxb1 Qc7 20 c6

Bc8 21 Bb6 Qb8 22 Nd4 0-0 23 c7 Qb7 24 Nc6 Re8 (24 ... Nd7 25 Ba5) 25 Nd8.

17	**...**	**Nxc3**
18	**Nxc3**	**Bb5**
19	**f4**	**h4**

I had not reckoned on h5 being both a haven and a means of activation for the f6 knight. My pawn of f4 is solid at the moment but allowing Nh5-g3 is the stuff of nightmares. I decided to snuff out the possibility by threatening 21 Qxh4 but being alert to 21 ... Bxc3, my opponent plays it anyway.

20	**Qe1**	

Too defensive again! My fixed plan is has blocked my thoughts of earlier execution with 20 e5 when there is no direct win but all continuations look pleasant e,g, 20 ... Nh5 21 exd6 exd6 (21 ... Ng3 22 Re1) 22 Ne4 or 20 ... dxe5 21 fxe5 Nd7 22 e6.

20	**...**	**Nh5**
21	**Ne2**	**Bf6**
22	**Qf2**	

I felt 22 Bf2 was a distraction. Was a wing pawn worth setting aside the momentum started at move 11?

22	**...**	**Qc7**
23	**a4**	

I was being perturbed by Black not following the script. I had expected 22 ... 0-0 at last but as e4-e5 has been prevented, what am I now to do? Having contained Black, perhaps I should swallow my pride with 23 Rfc1 to protect my bishop and return to an offensive on the queenside with b3-b4.

23	**...**	**Bxc4**
24	**bxc4**	**Rb8**
25	**e5**	**dxe5**
26	**fxe5**	**Qxe5**

Another jolt. If Black wants to maintain his queen in a dangerous central position 26 ... Rxb1 is in order. However, it all contributes to my sense that I am losing the thread of the game.

27	**Rxb8+**	**Qxb8**
28	**Bxc5**	**0–0**

I had analysed 28 ... Ng3 and 28 ... Qb3 29 d6 and was losing faith in my calculations.

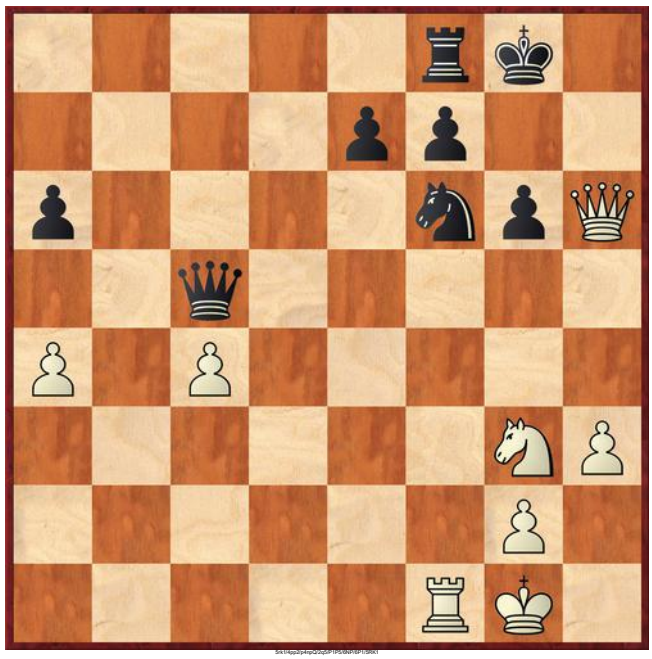
29	**Bd4**	**Qb4**
30	**Bxf6**	**Nxf6**
31	**Qxh4**	**Nxd5**

Time pressure was a factor but not yet desperate. Nevertheless, there is a crack in the record as I had overlooked another obvious continuation and my vaunted central pawns were about to disappear.

32	**Ng3**	

I can maintain equality apparently with 32 Qd4 Nb6 33 c5 Qxd4+ 34 Nxd4 Nxa4 35 c6 Rc8 36 Ra1. I am groggy from repeated lapses and I am having to relying on a sucker punch.

32	**...**	**Nf6**
33	**Qh6**	**Qc5+**
34	**Kh1**	



I now had a cunning plan but my move is a step in the wrong direction. Much better was 34 Kh2 and if 34 ... Qxc4 35 Rf4 Qc1 as in the game, there is a chance of 36 Nf5 gxf5 37 Qg5+ Kh8 38 Rh4+ Nh7 39 Qxc1. Black would have to try 35 ... Qc7 (pinning the rook after Ng3-f5) 36 Rh4 Nh5 37 Rxh5 leading to a perpetual check.

I thought, for the sake of safety, the position was crying out for 34 ... Rc8 when Black keeps the advantage by 35 Rf4 Qe3. But my opponent has regularly disdained my analysis, right?

34	**...**	**Qxc4**
35	**Rf4**	**Qc1+**

I have lost a tempo relative to the last note.

36	**Kh2**	**e5**
37	**Nf5**	

Gotcha! I can pull the trigger on my strategem because 37 Rh4 Qxh6 38 Rxh6 looks hopeless.

37	**...**	**Qxf4+ 0-1**

Ouch! What happened to 37 ... gxf5 (forced) 38 Qg5+ Kh8 39 Rh4+ Nh7 40 Qxc1. More faulty judgement at the end of a succession of errors. The learning point must be that high performance only results from the pressure of constant precision – not only objectively on the board but also psychologically by giving the feeling of being in control.

Paul Hanks