

CHESS

January 5th 2008

Michael Adams



Sadler traps the white lady with typical flair

I was shocked when, eight years ago, Matthew Sadler told me he was quitting professional chess for a career in computing; he felt that at the ripe old age of 25 it was time to find a proper job.

He has since been very successful in his second career with an IT company in Holland, but his retirement has left a big hole in English chess. His absence is particularly felt in team competitions, as Matthew was perhaps the most successful player ever for our national team.

Over four team competitions he scored a whopping 31/43 despite having been dealt more than his fair share of blacks.

Matthew seemed to find it just as easy to win with either colour, being especially deadly on the Black side of the Queen's Gambit Accepted. His inspired form helped to create the momentum which culminated in our team collecting gold at the European Team Championship in 1997.

In this game, against one of the best Spanish players who is renowned for his high-quality opening preparation, amazingly Matthew wins in only 11 moves.

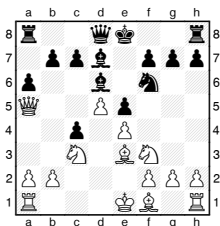
Illescas, M - Sadler, M
Linares, 1995

1.d2-d4
2.c2-c4
3.e2-e4
4.Bc1-e3
5.Nb1-c3
6.d4-d5
7.Ng1-f3
8.Qd1-a4+

d7-d5
d5xc4
Nb8-c6
Ng8-f6
e7-e5
Nc6-a5
Bf8-d6

Safer was 8.Nf3-d2 0-0 9. Nd2xc4 Na5xc4 10.Bf1xc4, but Illescas doesn't see Matthew's subtle idea.

8... Bc8-d7
The Spaniard was anticipating 8...c7-c6, but instead the knight is sacrificed to encircle the White queen.
9.Qa4xa5 a7-a6



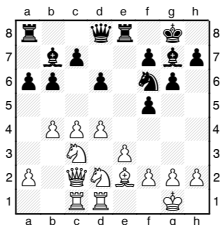
Closing the trap on the White queen; b7-b6 is threatened and as White prepares an escape route other problems arise.

10.Nc3-b1
Most sensible was 10.Nc3-a4, aiming to return material to achieve a playable position. The other way to evacuate the lady, 10.b2-b4 b7-b6 11.Qa5-a3 a6-a5 12.Qa3-b2 a5xb4 13.Nc3-d1 b6-b5 enables the rolling maul of queenside pawns to gather pace.

10... Nf6xe4
11.Ke1-d1
Hoping to withdraw the queen to the king's starting place, but this meets with a powerful interruption. 11.b2-b4 was a slightly better hope.

11... c4-c3
White resigned. The only way to continue the game was 12.b2-b4 b7-b6 13.Qa5-a3 a6-a5 14.Qa3-c1 a5xb4, so it is understandable that Illescas decided to save himself further suffering.

The second game shows Matthew in his usual scintillating form for the national team.



Zagorskis, D - Sadler, M
Elista Olympiad 1998

14... Nf6-g4
15.h2-h3
Zagorskis doesn't believe Matthew's idea but the less macho 15.Nc3-d5, trying to block the long diagonal, was wiser.

15... Ng4xf2
16.Kg1xf2 Qd8-h4+
17.Kf2-f1
If 17.g2-g3 Qh4xh3 18.Nd2-f3 Bg7-h6, more forces join the attack.

17... Re8xe3
For a minimal material investment Black has an enduring initiative.

18.Nd2-f3 Qh4-f4
19.Nc3-d5 Bb7xd5
20.c4xd5 Ra8-e8
21.Be2xa6 Re3xf3+

The sacrifices keep coming, and the chronic weakness of the dark squares means that Black's small army is enough to finish the job.

22.g2xf3 Re8-e3
23.Ba6-e2
The best hope was 23.Kf1-g1 Re3xf3 24.Ba6-f1 Bg7xd4+ 25.Rd1xd4 Qf4xd4+ 26.Kg1-h1 Qd4xd5 but Black has collected too many foot soldiers for White to save the game.

23... Qf4-h2
24.Qc2-d2
The natural 24.Rd1-d3 leads to a pretty denouement: 24... Bg7-f6 25.Rd3xe3 Qh2-h1+ 26.Kf1-f2 Bf6-h4 mate.

24... Bg7-h6
25.Qd2-e1 Qh2-h1+
26.Kf1-f2 Qh1-h2+
27.Kf2-f1 Qh2xh3+
28.Kf1-g1 Re3-e4

Another neat finesse: the rook cannot be captured due to 29.f3xe4 Bh6-e3+ 30.Qe1-f2 Qh3-g3+, but now it is switched across to the 'h' line, creating an unstoppable initiative.

29.Rc1-c3 Re4-h4
30.f3-f4 Qh3-h1+
31.Kg1-f2 Rh4-h2+
32.Kf2-e3 Qh1-e4+
White resigns as 33.Ke3-d2 Bh6xf4+ mops up most of the White army.

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January 12th 2008

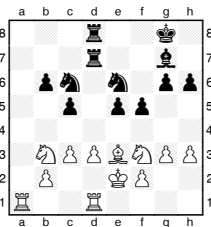
Michael Adams



Off-beat variations are key to Moroz's success

The Russian Championship at the end of last year was a resounding triumph for Alexander Morozevich, who finished a point ahead of the field with 8/11.

Moroz is more adventurous in his opening choices than many other top players. He tries to draw his opponents away from the main theoretical highways into obscure positions where his tactical skills are hard to match. It is easy to underestimate how much work goes into playing these off-beat variations. This was brought home to me once during a post-game analysis when, after a series of (for me) unexpected developments in a little-known variation of the French Defence, he revealed that only at that point had I deviated from a training game he had played at home against a computer.



Timofeev, A - Morozevich, A
Moscow 2007

27.Nf3-e1

Timofeev would have been

better off trying for some activity with: 27.Ra1-a6. Although he would lose a pawn following 27...e5-e4 28.Nf3-d2 e4xd3+ 29.Ke2-f1 it is a small price to pay for consolidating his position.

27... f5-f4
28.Be3-d2 e5-e4
29.d3xe4

White underestimates the strength of the pin down the 'd' line or he would have preferred 29.Bd2xf4 e4xd3+ 30.Ke2-f1.

29... c5-c4
30.Nb3-c1

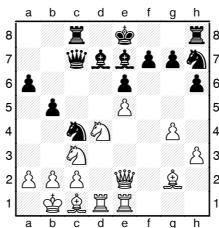
The fact that the best try is giving up a piece for insufficient compensation with 30.Bd2xf4 Rd7xd1 31.Ra1xd1 Rd8xd1 32.Ke2xd1 c4xb3 shows how desperate things have become.

30... f4xg3
31.f2xg3 Ne6-c5

White's pieces huddled on the first two ranks make a miserable sight and Morozevich's initiative proves uncontainable.

32.Ne1-f3 Nc5xe4
33.g3-g4 Rd8-e8
34.Ke2-f1 Rd7-f7
35.Kf1-g2 Re8-f8
36.Rd1-f1 Nc6-e5
0-1

In the women's championship there was a four-way tie for first place between Kosintseva, Tairova, Ovod and Korbut. Perhaps the most talented of these players is Tatiana Kosintseva. She has been trained, along with her sister Nadezhda, by Yuri Dokhoian who is famous for seconding a little-known player called Garry Kasparov.



Kosintseva, T - Shadrina, T
Moscow 2007

18.Nc3-d5

Qc7-d8

Black was probably better off crossing her fingers and capturing the knight. After 18...e6xd5 19.e5-e6 (19.Bg2xd5 is also interesting) 19...Bd7xe6 20.Nd4xe6 f7xe6 21.Qe2xe6 there is good compensation for the piece.

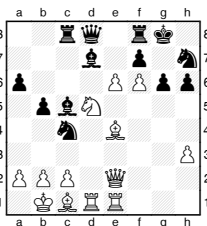
19.Nd4-f5
The mundane 19.Nd5xe7 Qd8xe7 20.Qe2-f2 with h3-h4 to follow is not bad, but this is much more spectacular and harder to meet in a practical game.

19... e6xf5
20.g4xf5 0-0
21.f5-f6 Be7-c5

Capturing is also very dangerous after 21...g7xf6 22. Bc1xh6. Black's survival chances look slim.

22.Bg2-e4
White should have grabbed the opportunity to denude the Black monarch immediately. 22.f6xg7 Kg8xg7 23.Qe2-h5 is decisive.

22... g7-g6
23.e5-e6



23... f7xe6

The only hope was to capture with the bishop. After 23...Bd7xe6 24.Nd5-e7+ Bc5xe7 25.Rd1xd8 Be7xd8 26.Be4xg6 Bd8xf6 White is running out of ammunition. Instead, the highly confusing 24.Be4xg6 is more difficult to meet.

24.Qe2-g2 Rf8xf6
25.Nd5xf6+ Qd8xf6
26.Re1-f1

This move harassing the White queen is much stronger than the immediate 26.Rd1xd7.

26... Qf6-g7
27.Rd1xd7 Qg7xd7
28.Qg2xg6+ Qd7-g7

Or 28...Kg8-h8 29.Rf1-f7 is also decisive.

29.Qg6xe6+
1-0

CHESS

January 19th 2008

Michael Adams



Fearless play entertains the home crowd

The Hastings Masters this year heralded an all-too-familiar story: the foreign players headed the table and the locals trailed in behind.

Perhaps the brightest spot from an English point of view was Simon Williams completing his Grand Master title. Although his rating only briefly touched 2,500 during the event, his "crash or crush" maximalistic style provides great entertainment for spectators. His fearless play and lack of trepidation when facing big-name opponents have brought him some notable scalps in the past. His aggressive play was a welcome antidote to the super-pacifism displayed by the leaders as they halved out their games in single-move figures in the closing rounds.

In this game Simon has castled on the opposite side to his opponent, a typically risky strategy, but when Afek fails to respond vigorously enough Williams quickly takes advantage.

10...
11.Bc1-f4

**Ng8-h6
Bf8-e7**

Simon hurries to mobilise his forces.

12.a2-a3

Afek should have followed suit with 12.Nb1-a3; the text-book move is too slow in this dynamic position.

12...
13.Bd3-c2
14.Bf4-g3

**c5-c4
Rd8-f8**

It's understandable that White wants to hang on to the bishop but it was time to swallow his pride and play: 14.Bf4xh6 g7xh6 15.Nb1-d2.

14...
15.Ra1-a2

Qc7-b6

As the 'b' pawn is advanced next go anyway, 15.b2-b4 was more flexible.

15...
16.b2-b4
17.Bc2xb3
18.Bb3-c2

**g7-g5
c4xb3
Nh6-f5**

The alternative 18.Bb3-a4 is very well met with 18...h7-h5.

18...

Nf5xg3

The logical 18...h7-h5 19.Bc2xf5 Rf8xf5 is also strong but Simon shows his tactical alertness by finding an even better continuation.

19.h2xg3
20.Nf3-d4
21.a3-a4

**g5-g4
Be7-c5**

After 21.Bc2-a4 Nc6xd4 22.c3xd4 Bc5xd4 23.Ba4xd7+ Kc8xd7 White is a pawn down with a lousy position.

21...
22.a4-a5

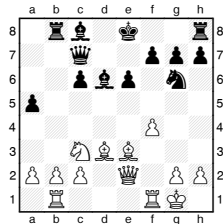
**Nc6xd4
Nd4-f3+**

Afek was relying on 22...Qb6-c7 23.c3xd4 but the intermediate knight check is decisive.

23.g2xf3

Bc5xf2+

White resigned as 24.Kg1-h2 Qb6-c5 is no fun at all.



**Rudd, J - Kakkanas, E
Hastings 2008**

15.Nc3-e4

White has a pleasant edge after 15.Qe2-f2 but Rudd goes for a much more enterprising idea.

15...

Bd6xf4

If the gift is declined 15...Bd6-e7 16.Qe2-h5 is unpleasant.

16.Be3-c5

Keeping the black king in the centre.

16...

**Bf4xh2+
f7-f5**

Better was 17...Bh2-e5. The game move proves a pointless weakening as the knight is never captured.

18.Qe2-h5
19.Rb1-e1

**Bh2-e5
Rb8-b4**

Black tries to return material to dampen the initiative.

20.c2-c4

But White doesn't acquiesce.

20...

21.Rf1xf5
22.Ne4-d6+
23.Re1xe5

**Rb4xb2
e6xf5
Ke8-d8
Ng6xe5**

It looks like the cascade of sacrifices has finished off the game but the computer points out the surprising defence of 23...Rb2xg2. White stays on top after 24.Bd3xf5.

24.Qh5-g5+

Qc7-e7

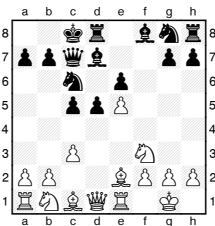
Or 24...Kd8-d7 25.Bd3xf5 mate

25.Nd6-f7+
1-0

**Afek, Y - Williams, S
Hastings 2008**

10.Be2-d3

Moving the bishop loses time: 10.Bc1-f4 or 10.c3-c4 were better.



CHESS

January 26th 2008

Michael Adams



Spotting the stars of the future at Corus

The main focus of attention at the Corus tournament in Wijk aan Zee is the top section, which boasts seven out of the top 10 players. With little room for improvement there, the organisers have increased the strength of the B and C groups, giving chess fans the opportunity to spot the stars of the future at an embryonic stage of their development.

The B group is very strong in its own right with two 2,700 players, as well as two-time former winner Nigel Short. Nigel has successfully continued his campaign to uphold the honour of the Evans Gambit, using it to acquire two victories already, but he suffered a setback against the female Chinese super-talent, 13-year-old Yifan Hou.

16.Nf3xg5 h7-h6 17.Ng5-f3 doesn't look very enticing but it was the best available.

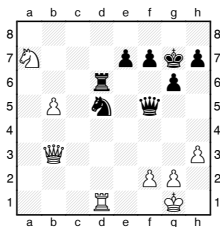
16.e5xf6 Bg4-h5
Perhaps Short intended 16... Nb7-c5 but then 17.f6-f7+ is catastrophic.

17.Qe2-e3 Bf8-h6
If 17...h7-h6 18.Nf3xg5 is deadly but now the knight leaps forward another way.

18.Nf3-e5 Re8xe5
19.Bg3xe5 Bh5xd1
Black's position is a wreck and the game is swiftly concluded.

20... Qd8-e8
21.Be5-c3 Nb7-d8
22.f6-f7+ Qe8xf7
23.Ne4-f6+ 1-0

The young German player Arik Braun made a dazzling debut, winning his first four games.



Peng Zhaoqin - Braun, A
Corus C Wijk aan Zee 2008

The position looks quite drawish due to the reduced material but Braun quickly drums up an attack with his remaining troops.

29... Rd6-f6
30.Qb3-b2
It would have been an excellent practical decision to jettison a pawn with 30.Qb3xd5 Qf5xf2+ 31.Kg1-h1 Qf2xa7 32.Qd5-e5, simplifying the position with good drawing chances.

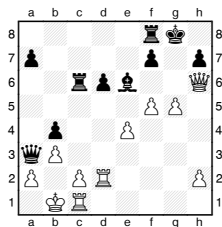
30... Nd5-f4
31.f2-f3
The only hope was the cold-blooded 31.Na7-c6 Qf5-g5 32.f2-f3 Nf4xh3+ 33.Kg1-h2 Nh3-f4 34.b5-b6 Qg5-h5+ 35.Kh2-g1 Qh5-c5+ 36.Kg1-h2, retaining some

pawn cover around the king and threatening to queen the 'b' pawn, but this is a very difficult defensive line to find.

31... Nf4xh3+
32.g2xh3 Qf5xf3
The pawn cover is destroyed and the White monarch can't hold out long.

33.Rd1-a1 Qf3-g3+
34.Qb2-g2
Moving the king to keep the Black rook pinned also doesn't help: 34.Kg1-h1 Qg3xh3+ 35.Kh1-g1 Qh3-e3+ 36.Kg1-h1 e7-e5 37.Na7-c6 Rf6-f5.

34... Qg3-e3+
35.Kg1-h1 Rf6-f2
36.Qg2-g4 Qe3-e5
0-1



Negi, P - Carlsson, P
Corus C Wijk aan Zee 2008

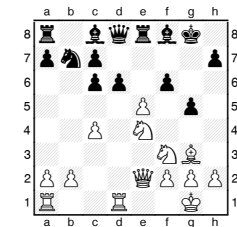
A sharp game from the first round. White only needs two moves to end the game f5-f6 and Qh6-g7 but Black's attack comes in the nick of time.

27... Be6xb3
28.a2xb3 Rc6-a6
29.c2-c3 b4xc3
30.Rc1xc3
The pawn must be captured as 30.f5-f6 Qa3xb3+ is mate next go.

30... Qa3-a1+
31.Kb1-c2 Ra6-a2+
32.Kc2-d3 Qa1-f1+
The fatal check. Now it is clear Black's attack arrives first.

33.Kd3-e3 Qf1-e1+
34.Ke3-f3 Qe1xd2
35.f5-f6 Qd2xc3+
36.Kf3-f4 Ra2-f2+

White resigned as the king is finally cornered after 37.Kf4-g4 Qc3-f3+ 38.Kg4-h4 Rf2xh2 mate.



Hou Yifan - Short, N
Corus B Wijk aan Zee 2008

15... Bc8-g4
Nigel has been playing with fire during the opening phase of the game and now he gets his fingers burnt. 15...f6xe5

CHESS

February 2nd 2008

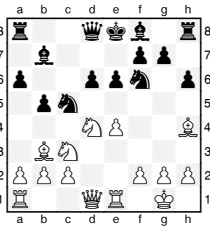
Michael Adams



Fischer: the king of revolution

The announcement during the Wijk aan Zee tournament of the death of Robert James Fischer, the 14th world champion, came as a body blow to the chess world. Countless players were inspired to life-long devotion of the game through following his historic victory against Boris Spassky in 1972. Three decades on, it is hard to put into the context of the time what a monumental achievement this was.

Let's enjoy some of his beautiful play again in one of the many systems where he revolutionised theoretical knowledge: 6.Bf1-c4 against the Najdorf.



Fischer, R - Rubineti, J Palma de Mallorca Interzonal 1970

Rubenetti has unwisely left his king in the centre, Fischer is quick to take advantage.

12.Bb3-d5 e6xd5

If the bishop sacrificed is declined, a few moves later White detonates another bomb on d5: 12...Bf8-e7 13.Bd5xb7 Nc5xb7 14.Nd4-c6 Qd8-c7 15.Nc6xe7 Qc7xe7 16.Nc3-d5.

13.e4xd5+

The king sets off on his travels as 13...Bf8-e7 14.Nd4-f5 is immediately decisive.

14.b2-b4
15.Nc3xa4
16.c2-c4

Ke8-d7

Nc5-a4
b5xa4

The pawn front marches forward in the direction of the displaced monarch.

16... Kd7-c8
17.Qd1xa4 Qd8-d7
18.Qa4-b3 g7-g5
19.Bh4-g3 Nf6-h5

19...Bf8-g7 was the last hope.

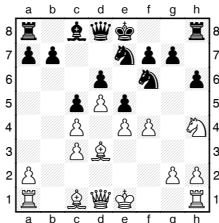
20.c4-c5 d6xc5
21.b4xc5 Qd7xd5

If 21...Bb7xd5 22.Qb3-b6 Qd7-b7 23.Qb6-a5 Nh5xg3 24.h2xg3 Qb7-d7 25.c5-c6 is decisive.

22.Re1-e8+ Kc8-d7
23.Qb3-a4+ Bb7-c6
24.Nd4xc6

Black threw in the towel as 24...Qd5xc6 25.Ra1-d1+ wins the queen, or 24...Kd7xe8 25.Ra1-e1+ Bf8-e7 26.Nc6xe7+ Qd5-d7 27.Ne7-g6+ Ke8-d8 28.Qa4-a5+ Kd8-c8 29.Ng6-e7+ is carnage.

Fischer's victory over Spassky was exceptional as his opponent was aided in his preparation by virtually all the top Soviet players of the time. Fischer successfully countered this by employing many opening variations that he had rarely used before, such as the Nimzo-Indian defence in this game. His great talent enabled him to master them immediately, without needing to build up playing experience like lesser mortals.



Spassky, B - Fischer, R World Championship Reykjavik 1972

11...

Spassky would have welcomed 11...e5xf4 12.Bc1xf4 g7-g5 13.e4-e5 opening the game for his bishop pair.

12.Nh4xg6 f7xg6
13.f4xe5

Ne7-g6

It was better to play 13.0-0 retaining the option of f4-f5.

13... d6xe5

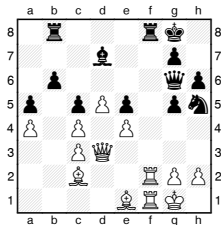
The protected passed 'd' pawn isn't a big factor and there are no targets for the bishops.

14.Bc1-e3 b7-b6
15.0-0 0-0
16.a2-a4 a7-a5
17.Ra1-b1 Bc8-d7
18.Rb1-b2 Ra8-b8
19.Rb2-f2 Qd8-e7
20.Bd3-c2 g6-g5

Fischer gains space on the kingside and creates a handy outpost for his queen.

21.Be3-d2 Qe7-e8
22.Bd2-e1 Qe8-g6
23.Qd1-d3 Nf6-h5

The knight has the advantage over the bishop in this type of position as its greater flexibility enables it to manoeuvre to promising outposts.



24.Rf2xf8+ Rb8xf8
25.Rf1xf8+ Kg8xf8
26.Bc2-d1 Nh5-f4
27.Qd3-c2

Dispirited by the way he has drifted into a depressingly passive position with White, Boris makes a careless error. Still, after the correct 27.Qd3-b1 Black has very promising prospects. He would probably transfer his king to c7, freeing up his other pieces for further probing.

27... Bd7xa4

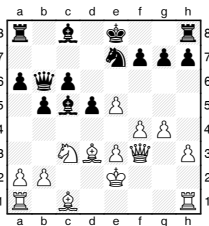
White resigns as after 28.Qc2xa4 Qg6xe4, the queen-knight combination is deadly.

Michael Adams



Pressure play outflanks cut-and-run defence

The foundation for Levon Aronian's success in Wijk aan Zee was based on his expertise in a rare sideline of the Slav Defence. In the second round, he improved Black's play to score an impressive victory over Boris Gelfand. Then, nine rounds later, Loek Van Wely cheekily tried his own invention against him, but Aronian was happy to demonstrate a strong possibility for White.



Aronian, L - Van Wely, L
Corus A 2008

Playing black against Gelfand in the second round, Aronian won a nice game that continued 15.Bc1-d2 0-0 16.Ra1-c1 f7-f6 when his king had found safety and the White pawn mass was neutralised. Later, White's monarch was caught in some crossfire in the centre.

15.Ra1-b1 a6-a5

The point of Levon's subtle last move is that this pawn advance leaves the b5 pawn vulnerable after exchanges on d5.

16.e3-e4
17.f4-f5
18.e4xd5
19.Bc1-e3
20.Rb1-c1
21.d5xc6
22.Nc3-e4

Now would have been a good time to evacuate by playing 22...0-0 then 23.Rc1-c5 keeps the pressure on.

23.f5-f6
24.Rc1xc6

This unexpected exchange sacrifice is very difficult to meet.

24...
25.Rh1-c1

Van Wely cracks under the pressure. The queen should have retreated in the other direction 25...Qc6-b7.

26.Ne4-d6+

This audacious knight leap forces the win of Black's queen.

26...
Qd7xd6

Capturing with the bishop was even worse 26...Be5xd6 27.Qf3xd5 Qd7-e6 28.Bd3-b5+ Ke8-f8 29.f6xg7+ Kf8xg7 30.Qd5-g5+ Qe6-g6 31.Be3-d4+ wins the house.

27.Bd3-b5+
28.Be3-c5
29.Ke2-e1
30.Bc5xd6+

Bc8-b7
Bc5-d4
Bd4xe5
Qb6-c7
b5-b4
Bb7xc6
Ra8-d8

Ne7-d5

Qc7xc6
Qc6-d7

Ke8-f8
Nd5-f4+
g7xf6
Rd8xd6

Van Wely has acquired a reasonable amount of stuff for the queen, but his unhappy king position is problematic especially while he is low on time.

31.Rc1-c8+
32.Rc8xh8
33.Qf3-b7
34.Bb5-e8
35.Qb7xf7
36.Qf7-b3

Kf8-g7
Kg7xh8
Kh8-g7
Kg7-h6
Nf4-g6
Ng6-f4

36...Kh6-g7 was a tougher defence.

37.Qb3-g8 Rd6-d4

37...Rd6-d8 was the last chance to resist.

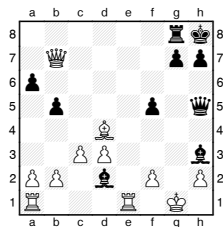
38.h3-h4
39.Ke1-e2

Nf4-g2+
Ng2xh4

40.g4-g5+
41.Qg8-e6+

f6xg5

1-0



Smeets, J - Bacrot, E
Corus B 2008

27.Re1-e7

It was hard to see the fantastic response to this move. White should have played 27.Kg1-h1 Bh3-g4 28.Bd4xg7+ Rg8xg7 29.Qb7-b8+ Rg7-g8 30.Qb8-e5+ Rg8-g7 31.Qe5-b8+ with perpetual.

27...
28.Re7-e1

Bd2-c1

This ignominious retreat is necessary as 28.Bd4xg7+ Rg8xg7+ 29.Re7xg7 Qh5-d1 or 28.Ra1xc1 Qh5-g5+ 29.Kg1-h1 Qg5xc1+ 30.Re7-e1 Qc1xe1 are both mate.

28...
29.Re1-e3
30.Bd4xe3

Bc1-f4
Bf4xe3
Rg8-e8

Black has regained most of the material and White's king is destined to die of exposure.

31.Be3-d4
32.Kg1-h1
33.f2-f4

Qh5-g4+
h7-h6

Another neat variation was 33.Ra1-g1 Qg4xg1+ 34.Kh1xg1 Re8-e1 mate.

33...
34.Qb7-a8+
35.Bd4-e5
36.Ra1-g1
37.Rg1xg4
38.d3-d4

Re8-e7
Kh8-h7
Qg4-e2
Bh3-g4
f5xg4

38.Qa8-e4+ Qe2xe4+
39.d3xe4 g7-g5 also offered little hope.

38...
Qe2-f1 mate

CHESS

February 16th 2008

Michael Adams

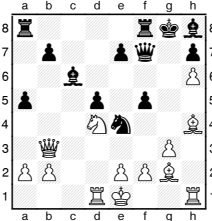


Stefanova on song at Gibtelecom Masters

Hikaru Nakamura impressively triumphed in this year's Gibtelecom Masters. Well off the pace with 3/5 at the half-way mark, he put together five consecutive wins to catch up with runaway leader Bu Xiangzhi and then won two more games against him in the rapid playoff to take the title.

From an English point of view it was nice to see Jon Speelman enjoying a resurgence, picking up a couple of 2,600 scalps. Gibraltar has always placed special emphasis on giving opportunities to the top female players, and former Women's World champion Antoaneta Stefanova had a spectacular start, defeating three world-class opponents in succession starting with Mikhail Gurevich.

Stefanova, A - Gurevich, M Gibtelecom Masters 2008



21.g3-g4

Earlier in the game Stefanova had challenged The Dutch defence by a rapid advance of her 'h' pawn. This is still a thorn in Black's side but he has good central control to compensate.

She continues in enterprising style with this pawn thrust aiming to open up more lines towards the well-ventilated Black monarch.

21... Bh8xd4

Gurevich chooses incorrectly although 21...f5xg4 looks dodgy, after 22.Bg2xe4 d5xe4 23.Nd4xc6 b7xc6 24.Rh1-g1 Qf7xb3 25.Rg1xg4+ Kg8-f7 26.a2xb3 Rf8-g8 Black seems to be all right.

22.Rd1xd4 e7-e5

23.g4xf5 Mikhail was anticipating 23.Rd4-d1 f5-f4 keeping the kingside closed but Antoaneta abandons the rook to its fate.

23... e5xd4

24.Bg2xe4 Ra8-e8

The bishop can't be captured due to 24...d5xe4 25.Qb3-g3+ Kg8-h8 26.Qg3-e5+ Kh8-g8 27.Rh1-g1+ so a small investment in material terms has left Black positionally bankrupt.

25.Qb3-g3+ Kg8-h8

26.Be4-d3 There is no way to prevent decisive infiltration on the chronically weak dark squares.

26... b7-b5

27.Qg3-f4 Qf7-a7

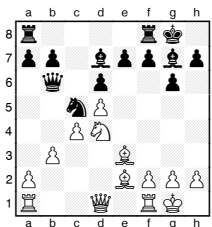
28.Qf4-d6 Qa7-f7

29.Rh1-g1 b5-b4

30.Rg1-g7 Qf7-h5

31.Rg7-g8+

Black resigned as after 31... Kh8xg8 32.Qd6-g3+ he must give up his queen to prevent mate.



Socko, M - Bologan, V Gibtelecom Masters 2008

17... f7-f5

After the standard 17...a7-a5 White would have a pleasant edge and a very safe position. Viktor comes up with an inspired plan to advance his kingside pawns, which creates

too many practical difficulties for his opponent to solve.

18.f2-f3

With the benefit of hindsight 18.f2-f4 might have been a good idea, the light squared bishop can go to f3 to cover e4 if necessary.

18...

19.Be3-f2

20.Ra1-b1

21.Rf1-e1

The rook move is too casual. Both 21.a2-a3 and 21.Be2-d3 would have challenged Black's audacious idea.

21...

22.Be2-f1

Not 22.f3xg4 Nc5-e4, but I would have been tempted by 22.Kg1-h1 g4-g3 23.Bf2-g1 g3xh2 24.Bg1-f2, when the Black pawn shields the White king from danger.

22...

23.h2xg3

24.Bf2xg3

Understandably Monika doesn't want to leave the Black pawn in place but she didn't have a choice. The position is not that clear after 24.Bf2-e3.

24...

25.b3-b4

Capturing en passant isn't possible as 25.d5xe6 Nc5xe6 wins a piece, 25.Nd4-e2 had to be tried hoping for 25... Nc5-d3+ 26.Kg1-h1 Nd3xe1 27.Qd1xe1, but much stronger is either 25...Nc5-e4+ 26.Kg1-h1 Ne4xg3+ 27.Ne2xg3 Rf8-f6 or 26...Ne4-f2+ 27.Bg3xf2 Qb6xf2 when White's king is under immense pressure.

25...

26.Nd4-c2

Now 26.Nd4-e2 is met by the very unpleasant 26...Bd7-a4 setting the White queen up for a vicious discovered check next go.

26...

27.Kg1-h2

28.Kh2xg3

29.Re1-e4

The White king is also a goner after 29.Kg3-h2 Bh6-f4+ 30.Kh2-h1 Rf8-f6.

29...

Nice touch!

0-1

f5-f4

a7-a5

g6-g5

g5-g4

g4-g3

f4xg3

e7-e5

a5xb4

Nc5-e4+

Ne4xg3

Bg7-h6

Qb6-g1

CHESS

February 23rd 2008

Michael Adams



Nervy Ukrainian genius goes on the blitz

Stamina is not normally a quality associated with being a successful blitz player, as most games finish pretty quickly. However, for participants such as myself, who successfully staggered through 22 games in two days and qualified for the final of the World Blitz Championship last December, it was a quality needed in abundance.

A further 38 games at the prestigious GUM shopping centre overlooking Red Square awaited in the main event. The time control of four minutes plus two seconds a move is a little more generous time-wise than a traditional five-minute game. I would have tipped Vishy Anand to bring home the bacon, but in the decisive last-round game he was swindled by Vassily Ivanchuk, who therefore won the title.

The Ukrainian genius hasn't fulfilled his potential in the classical World Championship cycle due to his bad nerves. Perhaps this quicker form of the game made it easier for him to overcome the tension.

Vlad scored a small psychological point before the upcoming match between the two players with this miniature. Kramnik exploited his lead in development and the pin on Black's knight by playing:

13.Be2xa6 Rc8-a8

After 13...b7xa6 14.Nf3-e5 Qd8-b6 15.Nc3-e2, White regains the piece and stays a pawn ahead. Still, it was a better bet than the game continuation.

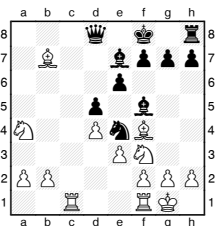
**14.Ba6xb7 Ra8xa4
15.Bb7xc6+ Ke8-f8
16.Nc3xa4**

With a rook, knight and two connected passed pawns for the queen, White has a good deal in terms of material. However, Vishy's big problem is that it is impossible to bring his rook into the game.

16... Nf6-e4

There is no time to make some luft as 16..h7-h6 is met by 17.Bc6-b7. Instead, 16...Bf5-d3 was the last hope to hang on.

17.Bc6-b7



Now there is no good way to prevent the rook penetrating to the eighth rank and causing chaos.

17... Ne4-d6

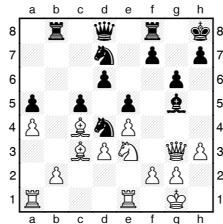
If 17...Qd8-d7 18.Rc1-c8+ Be7-d8, 19.Nf3-e5 wins a ton of stuff.

**18.Bf4xd6 Qd8xd6
19.Rc1-c6**

Vlad cleverly forces Black's queen to an inferior square before giving the check.

**21... Qd6-d7
20.Rc6-c8+ Be7-d8
21.Nf3-e5
1-0**

Accidents in blitz are commonplace and in this game I created an unusual self-mate for my queen — embarrassing.



Adams, M - Kamsky, G World Blitz Moscow 2007

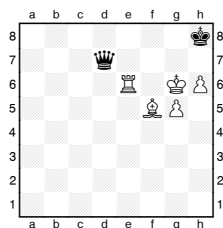
24.Ra1-d1

Despite a relatively long ponder I couldn't find 24.Bc3xa5 Qd8xa5 25.Qg3xg5, which would have been a good way to give my queen a bit of breathing space. Instead, I unintentionally removed its only flight square.

**24... Bg5-f4
25.Qg3-g4 h7-h5**

The lady had nowhere to go and I resigned a couple of moves later.

The most amazing game was this marathon. Vassily has been edging toward victory for some time but at this stage was probably mainly concerned about perpetual check. Peter seizes the opportunity to show another idea.



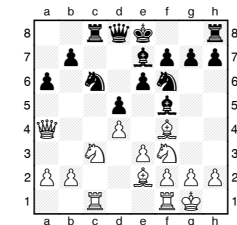
Ivanchuk, V - Leko, P World Blitz Moscow 2007

215.Re6-e4

With the very accurate 215. Kg6-h5 Qd7-d1+ 216.Bf5-g4 Qd1-h1+ 217.Kh5-g6 Qh1-a8 218.Bg4-f3 White should eventually triumph. Now Leko seized his chance to collect half a point.

215... Qd7-f7+

A draw was agreed, as after the queen is captured 216.Kg6xf7 leads to stalemate.



Kramnik, V - Anand, V World Blitz Moscow 2007

CHESS

March 1st 2008

Michael Adams

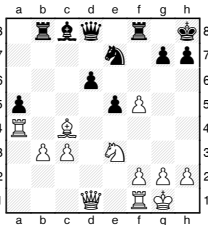


Sicilian defence comes in for a battering in Mexico

The first half of the Morelia-Linares event has been more bloodthirsty than usual with a good percentage of decisive results. Some commentators have rather uncharitably suggested that some of the players were suffering from jet lag after their flight to Mexico and this could be the explanation.

I am not that convinced, but in the interests of gathering more data I (and no doubt many other self-sacrificing GMs) would be willing to undertake to play a series of events in Hawaii or Fiji to test the theory.

Peter Leko got off to a good start with this win against the Sveshnikov variation of the Sicilian defence, which came in for some rough treatment in the competition. Shirov defeated Topalov in the same line.



Leko, P - Radjabov, T
Morelia 2008

20... Bc8xf5

Black would prefer to capture with the horse but 20...Ne7xf5 21.Ne3xf5 Bc8xf5 22.Qd1-d5 snaffles a pawn.

21.Ra4-a2
22.Ra2-d2
23.Rf1-e1

Bf5-e4
Rb8-b6

Carlsen, M - Anand, V
Morelia 2008

After both 23.Qd1-g4 d6-d5 or 23.Qd1-a1 d6-d5 Black gets some activity, so Peter increases the pressure on the Black pawn centre.

23...
24.Qd1-a1
25.Re1-d1

Qd8-b8
Qb8-c7
h7-h6

At some stage Radjabov had to scramble for a pawn-down ending 25...d6-d5 26.Bc4xd5 Ne7xd5 27.Ne3xd5 Be4xd5 28.Rd2xd5 Rb6xb3 should be holdable.

26.h2-h3

Be4-b7

The last chance for 26...d6-d5. Now Leko puts on the big squeeze.

27.Qa1-a3
28.Bc4-e6

Rf8-d8
Qc7xc3

This attempt to break out swiftly rebounds. Black should wait with 28...Rb6-a6 but his position is creaking.

29.Rd2xd6
30.Rd1xd6

Rb6xd6
Qc3-e1+

The queen had to scurry backwards but after 30...Qc3-c7 31.Rd6xd8+ Qc7xd8 32.Qa3-c5 White's pieces dominate their counterparts.

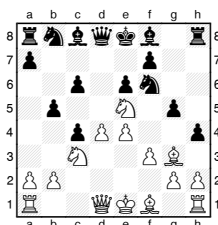
31.Kg1-h2
32.Rd6-d7

Rd8-e8
Ne7-c6

Teimour was presumably intending 32...Qe1xf2 but 33.Rd7xe7 Qf2-f4+ 34.Kh2-h1 leaves White a piece ahead. Now Peter mops up efficiently.

33.Be6-f7
34.Rd7xb7
35.Bf7-d5
36.Rb7-f7
37.Bd5xc6
1-0

Re8-a8
Qe1xf2
Ra8-c8
Qf2xe3



The Norwegian teenager has quickly established good results against most of the world's top players, but thus far Vishy has been a difficult opponent for him. The trend continued in this brilliant game by the World Champion in which he breaks virtually every classical rule and wins effortlessly. He has started the game with nine pawn moves out of 10.

11.Bg3-f2
12.Bf1-e2
13.Ne5xd7
14.0-0

Bc8-b7
Nb8-d7
Nf6xd7
e6-e5

A lesser mortal might have tried to continue development with 14...Qd8-c7 but Anand judges there is no danger to his king and fights for space in the centre.

15.a2-a4
16.d4-d5

a7-a6
Rh8-h6

Castling is off the agenda as the rook finds gainful employment along the third rank.

17.d5xc6
18.a4xb5
19.Ra1xa8
20.Qd1-c1
21.Rf1-d1

Bb7xc6
a6xb5
Qd8xa8
Rh6-g6
Bf8-c5

Development is smoothly completed by exchanging the dark-squared bishops and Black is a pawn up for nothing.

22.Bf2xc5
23.Qc1-e3
24.Qe3-b6
25.Rd1xd4

Nd7xc5
Nc5-b3
Nb3-d4

Magnus has to eliminate the knight but the extra material tells in the end.

25...
26.Nc3xb5
27.Qb6xb5+
28.Qb5-e5+
29.Qe5xd4
30.Qd4xb6
31.Be2xc4
32.g2-g3
33.Bc4-e6

e5xd4
Bc6xb5
Qa8-c6
Rg6-b6
Qc6-b6
Re6xb6
Rb6xb2
f7-f6
Ke8-e7

The first move of the Black king begins the successful conversion of the endgame advantage that Vishy completed with impeccable technique 26 moves later.

CHESS

March 8th 2008

Michael Adams



Twinkle, twinkle little stars

This year's Aeroflot Open contained fewer star names than previous tournaments, but was still formidably strong. Ian Nepomniachtchi, another young talent fresh off the Russian production line, took first place with a very solid performance.

The strength in depth of the event was demonstrated by 13-year-old Hou Yifan making a GM norm with "only" 4.5 out of 9. A spectacular achievement from this young woman. And it was good to see popular arbiter Geurt Geissen back on his feet and braving the freezing temperatures of Moscow once again after suffering a nasty fall on the ice there during the Tal Memorial.

pointing towards the White monarch.

12... Nd7-e5
13.Qe2-d2

After 13.Bc1-e3 Bd4xe3 14.Qe2xe3 Ne5xc4, compensation for the pawn looks a bit shaky.

13... Bd4-a7
14.b2-b3 Bc8-g4
15.Bc1-b2 c7-c6

Preventing the knight landing on d5.

16.Nc3-d1 Qd8-f6
17.Ra1-c1 Ra8-d8
18.Rc1-c3

Ionov should have seized the opportunity to expel the bishop with 18.h2-h3.

18... Qf6-e6
19.Nd1-e3 h7-h5

Bringing a foot soldier into the attack.

20.Ne3-c2

White's last few moves make a strange impression, but it is very difficult to effectively co-ordinate his army. He would like to ease his position through exchanges, but after 20.Ne3xg4 h5xg4 the advanced 'g' pawn cramps his kingside.

20... f7-f5
21.e4xf5 Qe6xf5
22.Nc2-e3 Qf5-f7

It looks like 22...Ne5-f3+ was required, but instead Jobava uncorks a very imaginative concept, which ramps up the pressure on his opponent.

23.f2-f4 d6-d5
24.c4xd5

Surprised by this inspired idea, White misses the opportunity to shut the influential bishop out of the game with 24.c4-c5 if 24...d5-d4 25.Ne3xg4 d4xc3 26.Qd2xc3 h5xg4 27.Qc3xe5 the tactics are quite favourable for him. A better option for Black is 24...Ne5-f3+ 25.Bg2xf3 Bg4xf3 with an unclear position.

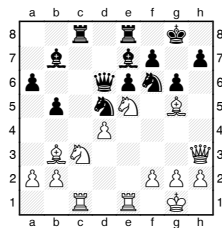
24... Rd8xd5
25.Bg2xd5 c6xd5
26.f4xe5 d5-d4

Black is a rook down, but his remaining forces are so powerful that White has only slim chances of survival even

if he finds the only move 27.h2-h3.

27.Rc3-d3 d4xe3
28.Rd3xe3 Bg4-h3

White resigned as 29.Qd2-e2 Ba7xe3+ 30.Qe2xe3 Qf7-f1+ 31.Re1xf1 Rf8xf1 is mate.



Rodshtein, M - Kotanjan, T Aeroflot Open, Moscow 2008

19... b5-b4

Black's best hope was to try to ease the pressure through exchanges with 19...Nd5xc3 20.b2xc3 Bb7-d5.

20.Ne5xf7

This sacrifice looks dangerous, but somewhat surprisingly it seems to win by force.

20... Kg8xf7
21.Nc3-e4 Qd6-b6
22.Bg5xf6 Be7xf6

It appears more logical to capture with the knight to keep h7 protected, but then the White knight infiltrates 22...Nd5xf6 23.Ne4-g5+ Kf7-g7 24.Ng5xe6+ Kg7-h8 25.Qh3-h6 Nf6-h5 26.g2-g4 with decisive effect.

23.Rc1xc8 Bb7xc8
24.Bb3xd5

24.Qh3xh7+ Kf7-f8 is not so clear-cut.

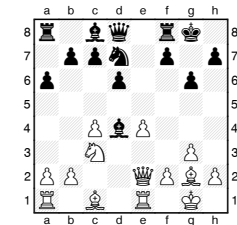
24... e6xd5
25.Ne4-g5+

This audacious knight check causes the Black position to collapse.

25... Bf6xg5

25...Kf7-f8 isn't any better: 26.Qh3-h6+ Bf6-g7 27.Re1xe8+ Kf8xe8 28.Qh6xg7. 26.Qh3xh7+ Kf7-f6 27.Re1xe8

The queen and rook give mate or win a lot of material, so 1-0



Ionov, S - Jobava, B Aeroflot Open, Moscow 2008

The games of the top Georgian player Baadur Jobava normally provide good entertainment value due to his in-depth preparation and aggressive style. Here the normal move would be to retreat the bishop to the kingside 12...Bd4-g7, but Jobava recognises it is doing a good job on another diagonal

CHESS

March 15th 2008

Michael Adams



The lasting power of inspiration

When I became a professional chess player, in those distant pre-computer days, I had no idea how much of my career I would spend trawling through unfeasibly large databases to track theoretical developments. It is not normally a very entertaining way to spend your time, but occasionally you come across an inspired game that brightens up your day.

Recently I discovered a couple of little beauties, which I am sharing with you here today. Both feature impressive attacks with enduring initiatives that gradually overwhelm the opponent's resistance. We start with a very energetic game by Mark Hebden, who has maintained an enviable quantity and quality of play into his fifth decade.

to develop a strong initiative, which gathers pace throughout the game.

12.Bf1-h3
13.Bc1-b2
14.Ke1-f1

Qe7-f6
Bf8-b4+
Qf6-h6

Black maintains the momentum by hitting the bishop.

15.e6xd7+
16.Kf1-g2
17.a2-a3
18.Rh1-e1
19.Qe2-d2

Kc8-b8
Rd8xd7
Bb4-c5
Rd7-e7
f5-f4

Another piece joins the assault.

20.Bh3-g4

It is even worse to capture the knight after 20.c4xd5 f4-f3+ 21.Kg2xf3 Qh6xh3 the White monarch is stranded.

20...
21.Qd2xe1
22.h2xg3
23.Bg4-f3

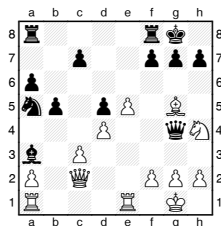
Re7xe1
f4xg3
Rh8-f8
Ba6-c8

A large part of White's opening strategy was blocking this piece out of the game, so it is fitting that when it joins the rest of Black's forces in the attack it signals the end of the game.

24.g3-g4
25.Kg2xf3
26.Kf3-e4
27.Nb1-d2
28.Ke4-e5
0-1

Rf8xf3
Qh6-h3+
Bc8xg4
Bg4-f5+
Nd5-e7

In the second game, White takes the brave decision to part with material in order to open up the black king while his forces are a long way offside.



Deepan, C - Negi, P
Indian Championship 2008

18.f2-f4

In a previous game, White had acquiesced to the exchange of queens with 18.Qc2-f5

Qg4xf5 19.Nh4xf5, but in this encounter Deepan has a much nastier idea in mind.

18...
19.Bg5-f6
20.Nh4-f5

h7-h6
g7xf6

Giving up the bishop has peeled away the cover from the Black king and White's rook and knight swarm into the holes. Suddenly the two black minor pieces look a long way from the action.

20...
21.Re1-e3

Kg8-h8
Na5-c4

21...Rf8-g8 denying the White rook access to h3 was worth a try if 22.Nf5xh6 Qg4xf4 23.Nh6xf7+ Kh8-g7 24.Re3-g3+ Kg7xf7 25.Qc2-h7+ Kf7-e6 26.Rg3xg8 Qf4-e3+ Black starts to develop counterplay.

22.Re3-h3
23.Ra1-f1

h6-h5
Nc4-d2

23...Qg4-g6 24.Qc2-e2 is even worse and otherwise 24.Rh3-g3 traps the lady.

24.Qc2xd2
25.Qd2-e2
26.Rh3xh5
27.Rf1-f3

Qg4xf5
Kh8-g8
Qf5-e4

Not the only way to win but it is the most visual.

27..
28.Qe2-f1

Qe4-b1+
Qb1-g6

The Black king is still fatally boxed in after 28...Qb1xf1+ 29.Kg1xf1 Rf8-e8 30.e5xf6.

29.Rf3-g3

Now White has a big material edge as well as the attack.

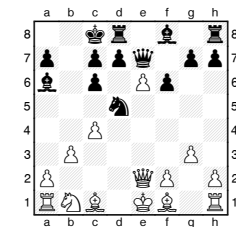
29...
30.f4-f5
31.h2xg3
32.Qf1-e2
33.Qe2xh5
34.e5xf6+
35.Qh5-e2

Kg8-g7
Qg6xg3
Rf8-h8
Rh8xh5
Ba3-c1
Kg7xf6

The queen withdrawal finishes Negi off.

35...
36.Qe2-e1
37.Qe1-e5
38.Qe5-g7+
39.Qg7xf7+
1-0

Kf6-g5
Bc1-a3
Ba3-d6
Kg5xf5



McDonald, N - Hebden, M
Jack Speigel Memorial 2007

11... f6-f5

Accepting the pawn sacrifice with 11...d7xe6 12.Bf1-g2 would enable White to castle into safety and turn his attention to the ugly structure on the queenside. Mark looks

CHESS

March 22nd 2008

Michael Adams



Bunratty festival proves to be a Clare winner

It's not just the Guinness which is better in Ireland; the quality of their weekend chess tournaments has also edged ahead of those in England. At one time, these were the life-blood of the English game, but now you have to cross the Irish Sea to find some of the most enjoyable events of the year.

The Bunratty festival pulled off a coup by enticing Peter Svidler to participate in its excellent event. He duly dispatched the opposition, dropping only one draw to his former compatriot Alexander Baburin.

Here we see him in action against the talented English grandmaster Simon Williams. This pairing was repeated in the final of the Sunday night blitz tournament with the same result.

9.e2-e4
10.d4-d5

Peter quickly starts action in the centre.

10... f5xe4
11.Nd2xe4 e6xd5
12.Ne4xf6+ Be7xf6
13.0-0

The key move catches the king in the middle.

13... d5-d4

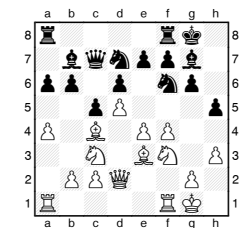
Better was 13...d7-d6 although 14.Qd1-h5+ g7-g6 15.Ne5xg6 h7xg6 16.Qh5xg6+ gives a very strong attack similar to the game. Black can't evacuate the centre as 13...0-0 14.Bg2xd5+ Bb7xd5 15.Qd1xd5+ Kg8-h8 16.Ne5-f7+ Rf8xf7 17.Qd5xf7 wins the exchange for nothing.

14.Bg2xb7 Ra7xb7
15.Qd1-h5+ g7-g6
16.Ne5xg6 h7xg6
17.Qh5xg6+ Ke8-f8
18.Rf1-e1 d7-d5

18...Nb8-c6 was a slightly better try but after 19.Bc1-h6+ Rh8xh6 20.Qg6xh6+ Bf6-g7 21.Qh6-h5 the denuded Black monarch is living on borrowed time.

19.Re1-e6 Nb8-d7
20.Bc1-f4

Black resigned. A possible finish was 20...Rb7-b8 21.Ra1-e1 d5xc4 22.Bf4xc7.



Jones, G - Wolferink, F Bunratty 2008

Black has played the opening passively and Gawain starts action on the kingside.

13.f4-f5 g6xf5

It's not easy to offer good advice but voluntarily removing the pawn cover is suicidal.

Bc8-b7

14.Be3-h6

Once the bishops are exchanged, Black's king is defenceless.

14... f5xe4
15.Bh6xg7 Kg8xg7
16.Qd2-g5+ Kg7-h7
17.Nc3xe4 Rf8-g8

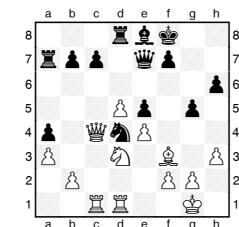
17...Nf6xe4 18.Qg5xh5+ Kh7-g7 19.Qh5-g4+ is no better.

18.Ne4xf6+ Nd7xf6
19.Bc4-d3+

1-0

The Blackpool weekender held a couple of weeks later is perhaps the closest English rival to the Irish events. I have always enjoyed playing at the Winter Gardens, a venue that will be familiar to very many darts fans.

Here is a nice finish from this year's event, which attracted some strong international players who rode off with most of the prize money.



Rausis, I - Radovanovic, J Blackpool 2008

23.Nd3xe5 Nd4-b3

If 23...Qe7xe5 24.Qc4-c5+ White can choose whether to capture the knight or rook next go with a material edge.

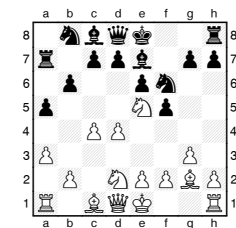
24.Qc4-c3 Nb3xc1

After 24...f7-f6 25.Ne5-g4 Nb3xc1 26.Rd1xc1 White has massive compensation for the exchange.

25.Ne5-c6

But this bolt from the blue is rather more serious. Black must lose his queen and various other lumps to prevent Qc3-h8 mate.

1-0



Svidler, P - Williams, S Bunratty 2008

Simon has an admirable wish to play original chess even if it involves running risks. However, when you are playing Black against someone as strong as Svidler, hunkering down in a more solid system might be a better option.

CHESS

March 29th 2008

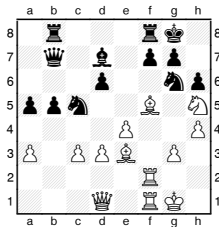
Michael Adams



Guildford and Baden-Baden are leaders of the pack

Prior to the final Four Nations Chess League (4NCL) weekend, Guildford looks in good shape to grab the top two spots on the podium.

It is a pity that the greatly expanded league, which now includes a junior section, has not managed to maintain more sponsorship and is now missing many of the high-rated players that used to frequent it.



Kosten, A - D'Costa, L 4NCL 2008

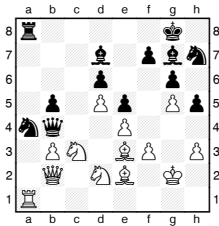
The whole of the white army is hovering ominously in the vicinity of the black monarch and Tony finds an accurately calculated sequence to finish the game.

26. Be3xh6 g7xh6
27. Qd1-d2 Bd7xf5
28. Rf2xf5 Kg8-h7

The only way to avoid mate is 28...f7-f6 but 29. Nh5xf6+ Rf8xf6 30. Rf5xf6 will be decisive.

29. Nh5-f6+ Kh7-g7
30. Qd2xh6+

Black resigned as 30...Kg7xh6 31. Rf5-h5+ Kh6-g7 32. Rh5-h7 is mate.



Conquest, S - Hennigan, M 4NCL 2007

25. Ra1-a2 Ra8-c8

The crafty point of this amazing, quiet move is that following 25... Na4xb2 26. Ra2xa8+ Nh7-f8 27. Nc3-a2 the Black queen is out of flight squares. If instead 25... Na4xc3 26. Ra2xa8+ Nh7-f8 27. Nd2-f1 there is insufficient compensation for the exchange.

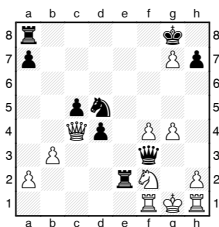
26. Nc3xa4 b5xa4
27. b3xa4 Qb4xb2
28. Ra2xb2 Bd7xa4
29. Nd2-c4 Bg7-f8
30. h3-h4

Material is level but the ineffectual knight on h7 means that the d6 pawn will drop off, shortly followed by the game.

30... Rc8-c7
31. Rb2-b4 Ba4-d7
32. Rb4-b6 Bf8-e7
33. Nc4xd6

White won a few moves later.

The overall strength of the German Bundesliga contrasts with the 4NCL, but this league also looks very likely to go with seeding as the monstrously powerful Baden-Baden team has produced a perfect performance so far. Player of the season has been Arkadij Naiditsch, whose score of 8.5/9 is not far short of a 3,000-rating performance.

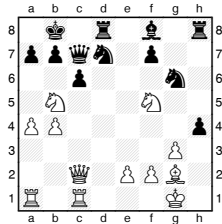


Degraeve, J - Mueller, K Bundesliga 2008

31... Ra8-e8

This move is good enough to get the job done but there was a very rare finale available: 30...Re2-c2 31. Qc4xc2 Nd5xf4 32. Qc2-e4 Qf3-g2+ 33. Qe4xg2 Nf4-e2 mate and the White king is totally hemmed in by his own forces.

31. b3-b4 Re2xf2
32. Rf1xf2 Re8-e1+
33. Rf2-f1 Qf3-e3+
0-1



Kasimdzhanov, R - Predojevic, B Bundesliga 2007

19... Qc7-c8

It looks more natural to play 19...Qc7-b6 20. a4-a5 Qb6xb5 but after 21. Nf5-d4 the black queen is in trouble. If 21... Qb5-a6 22. b4-b5 traps the lady as 22...c6xb5 23. Qc2-c7+ is not possible.

20. Qc2-b3 h4-h3

Black might as well have opened up White's kingside with 20...h4xg3. However, following 21. Qb3-e3 g3xf2+ 22. Kg1-f1 c6-c5 23. Ra1-b1 there is too much artillery trained on the queenside for black to survive.

21. Qb3-e3 c6-c5
22. Bg2-e4 Nd7-f6
23. b4xc5 Nf6-g4
24. c5-c6 Rd8-d1+

Capturing the queen immediately 24...Ng4xe3 25. c6-c7+ Kb8-a8 26. c7xd8Q Qc8xd8 27. Nb5-c7+ Ka8-b8 28. Ra1-b1 leaves the king looking lonely again.

25. Rc1xd1 Ng4xe3
26. Nf5xe3 b7xc6
27. Ra1-b1 c6xb5
28. Rb1xb5+ Kb8-c7
29. Ne3-d5+

Black resigned as 29...Kc7-d8 30. Nd5-b6+ leaves White a lot of loot ahead.