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British talent shines in Sheffield

The outstanding efforts of ECF president C. J. de Mooi have resulted in the strongest field at the Darwin Strategic British Championships, Sheffield for many years. By now the final results will be in. However, as I write with six rounds completed it is hard to pick a winner with eight players and most of the pre-event favourites within half a point of the lead.

Here are a couple of convincing attacking games from the first week.

G. Jones - R. Bates

Darwin Strategic British Championships, Sheffield 2011

1.e2-e4 c7-c5
2.d2-d3 Nb8-c6
3.f2-f4 g7-g6

This revised Grand Prix attack has become an English speciality. It has also been successfully used by Luke McShane and is much more dangerous than it looks. I think Black would be well advised to challenge in the centre with 3...d7-d5.

4.Ng1-f3 Bf8-g7
5.Bf1-e2 d7-d6
6.O-O Bc8-g4
7.Qd1-e1 c5-c4

Gawain had noticed that his opponent had played this move before and hoped for a repeat. I don't think there will be a third outing.

8.d3xc4

The previous game had continued with the passive 8.Kg1-h1.

8... Qd8-b6+
9.Kg1-h1 Bg7xb2
10.Bc1xb2 Qb6xb2
11.Nb1-c3

Black has regained his pawn, but faces an unenviable task as White's pieces have developed alarmingly quickly.



11... Bg4xf3

The critical line was 11...Ng8-f6 trying to complete development, but Black's forces lack coordination as the line 12.Ra1-b1 Qb2xc2 13.e4-e5 d6xe5 14.f4xe5 Nf6-d7 15.Nf3-d4 Nc6xd4 16.Be2xg4 Nd7-c5 17.Rb1-d1 Ra8-d8 18.Qe1-e3 shows.

12.Be2xf3 Qb2-b4
13.Ra1-b1 Qb4xc4
14.Rb1xb7 Nc6-d4
15.Nc3-d5 Ra8-c8
16.Rb7xa7

Simple and effective, but 16.Bf3-g4 and 16.Rb7-b4 were also strong.

16... Nd4xc2
 16...Nd4xf3 17.Rf1xf3
 Qc4xc2 was the last chance.

17.Qe1-b1 Qc4-c5
 The queen has to retreat as 17...Ke8-f8 18.Nd5-b6 wins.

18.Qb1-b7
 The invasion of the seventh rank ends proceedings, the game concludes with a pretty finale.

18... Qc5-c6
19.Nd5-c7+ Ke8-d7
20.Qb7xc6+ Kd7xc6
21.e4-e5+ Kc6-b6
22.Rf1-b1+ Kb6xa7
23.Rb1-b7 mate.



R. Britton - S. Williams

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24.c2-c4

With his weakened queenside, White has to tread carefully and should have challenged the queen with 24.Qd3-d2. Now Simon exploits the airy dark squares, grabbing an initiative that continues to the end of the game.

24... Re5xf5
25.e4xf5 Qa5-e5
26.Qd3-d2 Qe5-a1+

White's king begins his travels.

27.Kb1-c2 Qa1xa2+
28.Kc2-d3 Qa2xb3+
29.Kd3-e2 Qb3xc4+
30.Qd2-d3

White's king might as well have continued his journey with 30.Ke2-f3.

30... Ra8-e8+
31.Ke2-f3 Qc4-h4

There is a moment of respite, but it's not easy to get White's major pieces working together.

32.g2-g3 Qh4-h5+
33.Kf3-f2

33.Kf3-g2 Re8-e2+ 34.Kg2-f1 Re2-b2 doesn't look very enticing, but it was the only chance.

33... Bf6-d4+
 The bishop sacrifice finally corners the monarch on the other side of the board.

34.Qd3xd4 Re8-e2+
35.Kf2-g1 Qh5-f3
O-1