

Michael Adams



Shock rocks the league of nations

The 4NCL (Four Nations Chess League) opened with a shocking result in the first weekend, as defending champions Wood Green Hilsmark were held to a 4-4 tie by e2e4.org.uk in a match of eight draws.

The strong side assembled by the favourites would have normally scored a routine win, but e2e4 played a fine match and were unlucky not to win.

The game below from the Warwickshire Select v Guildford match could have featured an even more shocking development, but in this case the underdog misses his chance:



D. Mason - D. Smerdon
4NCL 2012

Both sides are attacking furiously, but it looks like Black will arrive first.

28... Bg4-e2

Black should have played 28...Qb6-b5 threatening Qb5-e2, but this looks very reasonable. As will be seen, the queen move has the additional defensive benefits of covering e8 and eyeing the rook on f1.

29.Nf7-h6+

White has an amazing

resource to turn the tables here: the beautiful 29.Qc1-h6 wins in all variations: 29...Bg7xh6 30.Nf7xh6+ Kg8-h8 31.Rf1xf8 mate, or 29...Rf8xf7 30.Re7-e8+ after 29...Be2xf1 the point is revealed 30.Qh6-h8+ Bg7xh8 31.Nf7-h6. This idea wouldn't work after 28...Qb6-b5 29.Qc1-h6 Rf8xf7 is one win, there is no check on e8 available.

29... Bg7xh6

White resigned, as after 30.Qc1xh6 Rf8xf1+ 31.Bg2xf1 Be2-f3+, he is just too late.

The combinational idea looked very familiar to me, as I was sure I remembered it from an old Mikhail Tal game, where his opponent also spurned the opportunity. After a while spent combing the database, I tracked down the position in question:



L. Schneider - M. Tal
Luzern 1982

29.Ng5-f7+ Kh8-g8

A rare tactical slip from Tal, who should have settled for a draw with 29...Kh8-h7 30.Nf7-g5+ Kh7-h8 as 30...Kh7-g8 31.Rd7xg7+ Kg8xg7 32.Qh3-d7+ wins for White.

30.g2-g3

Having seen the game above, it's easy to spot 30.Qh3xh6, which wins in a familiar manner. Possibly here this was a little easier to see as it involves a capture. The variations are 30...Rf8xf7 31.Rd7-d8+, 30...Bg7xh6 31.Nf7xh6+

Kg8-h8 32.Rf1xf8 mate, or 30...Rc6-f6 31.Qh6-h8+ Bg7xh8 32.Nf7-h6 mate.

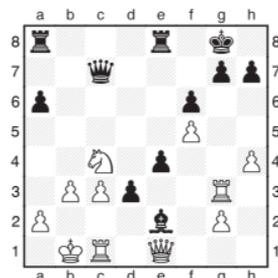
30... h6-h5
No second chances!

31.Nf7-g5 Qc2xb2
32.Ng5-e6
32.Rd7-d1 gave more hope.

32... Rf8xf1+
33.Qh3xf1 Bg7-f6
34.Rd7-d8+
34.Ne6-f4 was the last try.

34... Kg8-f7
35.Ne6-g5+ Kf7-e7
36.Ng5xe4 Ke7xd8
0-1

We finish with an abrupt conclusion to a game from the German league.



S. Kuipers - F. Vallejo Pons
Bundesliga 2012

White's position is creaking badly and Vallejo finds a swift finish.

32... a6-a5
Opening the 'a' line is the final piece in the jigsaw.

33.Rg3-e3 a5-a4
34.Kb1-b2 a4xb3
35.a2xb3 Qc7-a7

There was another spectacular solution in 35...Qc7xc4 as 36.b3xc4 Re8-b8 mate is a pretty conclusion.

36.Rc1-a1 d3-d2
This tremendous blow totally short-circuits White's position. He resigned, as the variations 37.Nc4xd2 Qa7xe3, 37.Ra1xa7 d2xe1 Q and 37.Qe1xd2 Qa7xa1+ are hopeless.