

Fagernes Chess International 13-20 April 2014

THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT 2



The second round in the GM-tournament became a short and normalizing one, following the upheavals of the first round. All the games this round finished within four and a half hours, and the eleven GMs made an outstanding score of 10-1 – based upon nine wins and two draws. Eight players all found within the top twelve at the rating list are now sharing the lead at 2/2. Still of course this round as well saw some surprising results, and still of course much more can be said about today's games...

To tell the truth, the first board meeting between IM Rasmus Svane (2487) and GM Evgeny Romanov (2642) became an anticlimax. White played slowly on the board as well as on the clock in a Reti double fianchetto, and after 14 moves black had equalized without feeling any pressure. Then 15.Nd4? was a tactical blunder from white – overlooking that black after exchanging his bishop on g2 could start a direct woman hunt for the white queen at h4 by playing g5 and g4. Observant Romanov used this chance, and reached a winning position as his opponent had to sacrifice two minor pieces for a rook. Svane threw in the scoresheet after 28 moves, as Romanov by an elegant Nxg4! demonstrated he still had a winning attack. Disappointing day for the still somewhat uneven young German - while second seeded Romanov has made a promising start by defeating two talented young IMs.



Romanov betting Svane on the top board.

The second board game GM Gregorz Gajewski (2631) - IM Anatoly Donchenko (2471) gave another win well within four hours for the strong and experienced GM against the up and coming IM, but with a much more exciting game. Facing an Accepted Queen's Gambit white soon accelerated with f4 and e5, and then at move 18 creatively sacrificed an exchange at f5 to open up the kingside. Black tried to hit back by a tactical Nd5-Nxc3. On board after 26 moves was a highly interesting position in which white was playing with queen, rook, bishop and three pawns versus queen, two rooks and five pawns, without any



Donchenko with black against Gajewski.

threats – and probably still was close to winning due to the airy black king. The silent 27.h3! anyway proved a brilliant challenger, as black unable to find the critical answer with 27... h5! lost decisive material within a few moves.

Many Norwegians today wondered around the third board, where IM Espen Lie (2460) was playing white against Evgeny Postny (2630). The IM's slow Reti start however failed to put any pressure upon the GM in this game (either), and Postny equalized with a sound Bg4 set up. The game accelerated just after the opening as white played e4 followed by e5, but black had sufficient counterplay. After a queen exchange black came slightly better due to his pressure against white's backward pawn at d4. Probably white should have been able to hold this, but black definitely had the easier position to play. Anyway Lie short of time first lost the d-pawn and then stumbled into a lost pawn endgame. So far so good for so solid Postny, while Lie now needs better score (and better play) during the double round tomorrow to remain a GM-norm candidate.



Postny beating Lie with black.

Playing white against IM Jovanka Houska (2410) in a Caro Kann, GM Eduardas Rozentalis (2624) preferred the rare Fantasy line with 3.f3?!/!?. White got some pressure from the opening, but 12.Qb3?! followed by 13.Qxb7 was a risky and perhaps too greedy plan. Black first activated her pieces and then won back a pawn at b2 with about equal play. White's position some moves afterwards appeared promising, as he was a pawn up on the board and 40 minutes ahead on the clock. Black's active bishops however gave her disturbing counterplay, and having returned the pawn the Lithuanian GM offered a draw without testing a very drawish endgame after 21 moves.



Rozentalis – Houska was drawn in only 21 moves.

IM Timofey Galinsky (2427) as white apparently tried to bore GM Sam Shankland (2616) to death with a slow Torre set up. Realizing the thematic e5-break Shankland by sound means equalized before 10 moves and came better before 20. While white still considered what to do in this game, black first built up a space advantage and then got an all the more dominating pair of bishops. Fully acclimated and obviously inspired, Shankland went on to advance his e-pawn – and then temporarily sacrificed his queen to force a double minor piece endgame in which his machine gun bishops and passed pawn soon decided. Lame game from Galinsky, but Shankland truly looks powerful so far.



Shankland beating Galinsky.

The game between IM John Paul Wallace (2402) and GM Benjamin Bok (2590) started as a Queen's Indian, but still turned into this round's most exciting time trouble duel. Black spent 65 minutes for the first 11 moves but probably was better, after white made a risky decision to castle long. Although understandable white's e5-break at move 23 probably was some kind of misunderstanding, as black later could combine a queenside attack with a powerful e4-advance. As Bok first continued to spend much time upon finding strong moves, and then accelerated when the clock forced him to, black completed the attack just in time to mate at move 40. Both players had only seconds left then, but seen in retrospect Bok appears to have been in reasonable control in this game (too). The young Dutchman following his good play so far will knock on the 2600-door for the first time tomorrow, while Wallace is following the Swiss waves so far.

Still optimistic after his successful counterattack against Hammer yesterday, IM Nicolai Getz (2388) today gave his Old Indian opening a critical test as black against GM Maxim Turov (2593). Something however went seriously wrong for black somewhere after an early e5, as white without any worries got a strong outpost on d5 and a promising queenside pressure. Having snatched a pawn at b7, white forced a queen exchange to reach a more or less won rooks and minor pieces endgame before 20 moves. Turov has been either lucky with his opponent's openings or successful with his own in the first two rounds, and anyway looks convincing so far.

The generation duel between GM Aloyzas Kveinys (2543) and Ravi Haria (2207) started as a Vienna-like Queen's Gambit line, in which black challenged the white center by 4... Bb4+ followed by 5... dxc4 and 6... c5. Black's next plan with Nc6 and g5 however appeared too ambitious, as white after taking on c4 and c5 got an extra pawn AND a strong initiative. Black following this true enough had a serious problem about where to hide his king. Still "e7" definitely turned out to be the wrong answer to that important question, as Kveinys demonstrated a decisive attack before 20 moves and won the game after 25. The Lithuanian veteran played much better today and has had a promising start on this come back on the Norwegian chess scene. 1 out of 2 against average well above 2500 of course still is a very promising start for 15 year old Haria, competing in the IM-norm class.



Kveinys (right) easily beating Haria.

The whiz-kid duel between 13 year old Johannes Haug (2096) and 16 year old IM Avital Boruchovsky (2492) started as a Ruy Lopez Exchange with an early queen exchange, pitting white's better structure against black's pair of bishops. White eventually won the black pawn at c5, but now having the better structure and an active rook on e2 black still was the one to play for a win in the double rook endgame. Boruchovsky's patience paid off in the end, as he after winning back the pawn reached first a very promising rook endgame and then a totally won pawn endgame. 1 out of 2 against one GM and one IM of course still qualifies as a splendid start for Haug, while 2 out of 2 for Boruchovsky means he can complete his GM title



Haug lost the endgame vs Boruchovsky.

and pass 2500 if winning next round as well. It will be very interesting tomorrow to see this highly talented Israel player enter the ring against a 2600-player tomorrow.

The Norwegian duel between Sebastian Mihajlov (2197) and GM Leif Erlend Johannessen (2530) started as a Budapest gambit, in which black regained the pawn and equalized without any problems. Due to his two active bishops black if anyone was closer to something in the early middlegame. White's decision to sacrifice a pawn at c4 looked loose but was a creative try, as white's kingside counterplay and g-file later gave him some compensation. Accepting a draw offer at move 24 still looked a bit too careful from Johannessen, as black after exchanging queens still had a pawn up and the pair of bishops. For obvious reasons Mihajlov can be well satisfied to draw players around 2500 – while Johannessen for obvious reasons cannot be satisfied to draw players around 2200 (even if they are very young and very underrated!).



Mihajlov drawing Johannessen.

The first Frode meeting of this tournament came in the game between Frode Lillevold (2182) and IM Frode Elsness (2483), and then started as a Nimzo Indian with 4.Nf3. Although white won a pawn at c5 black probably was fine from the opening preparations, as black's better structure and development gave fair compensation. Spending several moves to win back the pawn at b2 might have been a dubious plan for black, as white after completing his development got some advantage from his b-file control.



Lillevold beating Elsness.

Still black was well inside the game until he blundered with 19.--- Qc7??, overlooking that white could win an exchange and a pawn with a violent 20.Bxh7+! Lxh7 21.Qxf8. Curiously this was the same tactical trick that former world champion Vladimir Kramnik overlooked against Peter Svidler in the World Candidates Tournament a few weeks ago (and even more curiously I was about as shocked to see Elsness missing it today). Lillevold did not look very surprised, only a little bit satisfied, as he crashed in at h7 at move 20 and convincingly completed the attack at move 30. Elsness at 0.5/2 following this terrible start is more or less out of the run for his third GM-norm, while Lillevold at 1.5/2 is well ahead of schedule for his first IM-norm.

Johan-Sebastian Christiansen (2207) started up with an apparently slow English fianchetto as white against IM Torbjørn Ringdal Hansen (2469). He however accelerated both himself and the game before move ten, as he left his own king at f1 to go for a bayonet attack with h4-h5. In an overall messy game white first had some initiative, but black rapidly improved after being allowed to park his knight on g4. Obviously in a sacrificial mood this week, Hansen at move 26 gave up his queen for one rook,



Ringdal Hansen missed a win against Christiansen.

one bishop – and a winning attack. Christiansen however defended creatively by sacrificing back an exchange on the g4-monster. Then both players suddenly seemed fair enough satisfied as the endgame with queen versus two rooks and almost no pawns left was drawn just after 40 moves. Christiansen of course can be well satisfied with a performance around 2500 on the first two games, while Hansen is slipping away from the very important 2500-mark again...

Top seeded GM Jon Ludvig Hammer (2647) today appeared to have forgotten the bitter loss from yesterday, as he immediately challenged the Blumenfeld Gambit line of WGM Olga Dolzhikova (2209) by countersacrificing his pawn at e4. Clearly having made the better preparation Hammer was much better before Dolzhikova at move 11 sacrificed a knight for two pawns at d5. Afterwards white's position looked more or less winning. Hammer's decision to go for a knock out on the kingside with 12.Nfg5 was obviously not necessary and probably not correct. It still worked out very well as Dolzhikova soon lost control and ran short of both minutes and pieces before 30 moves.



Hammer won against Dolzhikova.

IM Frode Urkedal (2494) also successfully rehabilitated himself after the first round loss, as he in a Dutch with 2. Bg5 established a clear advantage against WIM Ellen Hagesæther (2204). Struggling with her king at e8 black anyway was worse before overlooking a tactical 16.Nd6+!, and realizing the failure she afterwards just resigned.

GM Rune Djurhuus (2447) too is back on the track after winning with the black pieces against still too unpredictable Alf Roger Andersen (2230). As Andersen played 2.a3?! and 3.b4 against a Sicilian he could hardly complain when black got a center advantage, and was still in the game for some 30 moves. Again Andersen however lost his play when running short of time, and at move 40 just managed to resign before getting mated playing a rook down.

The higher rated Norwegians on the lower boards overall had a very good round. IM Aryan Tari (2387) again spent much time from the opening and again got involved in a messy battle. This time he did it as white against FM Richard Bjerke (2194) in a Benoni position circling around white's key pawn at d5. Tari just before 30 moves lost the d-pawn, but still won the game as he before 40 moves won back three other pawns.

Johan Salomon (2343) meanwhile appeared to be in reasonable control against still young but now rusty Odd Martin Guttulsrud (2206), as black came slightly better on the board and much ahead on the clock from a rare Ruy Lopez line. Following a thematic knight sacrifice at h3 black won a pawn without losing the attack, and after 40 moves landed safely in a won rook endgame.

FM Lars Oskar Hauge (2330) also worked out much better today. Handling the white stones against Arne Hagesæther (2143), Hauge established a center advantage and queenside pressure from the Caro Kann opening. Following a tactical 18.b4! followed by 20.Rxc6! white won two pieces for a rook, and helped by his barking bishops he completed the attack well before 40 moves.

Even boards 19-21 got results about as expected this round. The teenager meeting between Eivind Djurhuus (1977) and Peter Flermoen (2232) was an English duel in which white was somewhat better

from the opening, but instructively having demonstrated the potential of his pieces black was totally winning in the late middle game – before blundering into a drawn endgame with rook, bishop and three pawns versus rook, knight and three pawns.

FM Brede Kvisvik (2300) playing white against Line Jin Jørgensen (1926) for some reason spent 90 minutes on the clock for his first 20 moves, but on the board he had realized e4 and established a sound pressure as white in a closed Catalan. Although Line Jin again made a sensible try, she again gradually was pushed backward and lost decisive material before 40 moves.

FM Kristian Stuvik Holm (2321) as black against Sondre Merkesvik (2042) meanwhile demonstrated a more dynamic black plan in the Catalan, as he by 7... Nc6!? sacrificed the pawn structure to activate his pieces. Later black instructively directed his pieces against the white queenside, and in the end just before 40 moves black's "weak" c4-pawn decided the game by advancing all the way to b1 (!).

The last game of the **Open Norwegian Championship** finished nearly one and a half hour after the last game of the GM tournament this round. The remaining battleground after five and a half hours was the first board. Second seeded Jens Hjort Kjølberg (2092) having failed to win a won middle game against Karim Ali (1797), now had a hard time accepting that the (dead) drawn rook endgame was drawn despite white's extra g-pawn... At 1.5/2, young Kjølberg will still be half a point ahead of first seeded Alexander Flaata (2111) when the latter finally enters the playing hall tomorrow. Also in the crowd at 1.5/2 is third seeded Christian Laverton (2080), following a very solid and sound (read: deadly boring) draw as black against junior Henrik Øie Løbersli (1857) today.

This round's first game winner on the top boards somewhat unexpectedly became Løbersli's NTG schoolmate Snorre Rygg (1821) – as Rygg suddenly got all the help needed to win a lost rook and bishop endgame. His opponent Vidar Taksrud (2052) despite some 50 years more experience suddenly collapsed as he sacrificed his rook to get in a new queen with check - failing to realize in time white would also get in a new queen within two moves, and then could play on a sound rook up...

Another surprise from a rising star came on the fourth board as Endre Machlik (1790) in a Dutch fianchetto duel first established a strong bishop pressure, and then coolly cashed in an exchange at b8 – safely hiding his king at h1 ahead a black pawn at h2. His French opponent David Maloberti (2048) resigned a bit surprisingly after only 25 moves. Although the board still looked like my home office desk, white behind the mess was totally winning – and probably played a great game.

Sister Monika Machlik (1976) today failed to win, but at the same time also avoided to lose, in a tense Trompovsky battle as black against Eivind Risting (1743). Black's counterattack on the kingside in this game proved just sufficient to balance white's counterattack. Monika despite being a pawn down thought for more than half an hour before accepting the draw offer after the time control, but probably should be happy about the outcome - as her position a pawn down appeared risky at best between move 30 and 40.

The Tromsø chess club still has two players at 2/2, as the heavily underrated 11 year old Tor Fredrik Kaasen (1527) came much better from the opening and went on to win two pawns against Edit Machlik (1913). Although Edit fought on well, Kaasen played like a grown up master player and safely won the endgame.

Also some older players surprised and kept their 100 % score today. 42 year old Snorre Skrede (1729) was one of them, immediately using his chance when opponent Willy Kristiansen (2017) overlooked a tactical trick in a probably drawish rooks and knight endgame.

Another one again was Erling Skjelstad (1667) - today succeeding with his optimistic (read: dubious) Latvian gambit, as usually solid Terje Torgersen (1970) became confused and lost sight in the tactical complications. Despite Torgersen's collapse the deep south of Norway still has a representative at 2/2, as veteran Leif Bjornes (1873) patiently realized his extra pawns in the endgame against Karl Juriloo ((1718)).

The middle of Norway also will have a very interesting player present on the boards tomorrow, as 13 year old Trygve Dahl (1867) today made the better calculations and won an entertaining attacking battle as black against 10 year old Bjørn Robertsen (1185)! Overall many surprises from tomorrow's players today as 15 year old Kimiya Sajjadi (1503) kept balance all the way into a drawn bishop endgame against Håkon Bentsen (2074), while the young Stavanger brothers Alseit Kitzabay ((1519)) and Abyl Kitzabay ((1144)) both defeated higher rated opponents by gifted attacking chess today.

In short: Although this Open Norwegian Championship has far too few players (read: two) from other countries, it demonstrates an exciting mixture of young and old players from all over Norway! Eight players are sharing the lead after this fighting round two – and still seven more rounds to go 😊.