

Fagernes Chess International 13-20 April 2014

THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT **3**



The first half of the double round this year became a remarkably hard fought one, with only two short draws – and four games still in play after five and a half hours. Even more remarkably all the first five boards got a winner: White won all the first four, while the fifth gave a very surprising black win to a true sensation man. Four GMs above 2590 are sharing the lead after winning all their first three games, but (if not already informed) you will have to read the next page of this report to find out their identity.

First board was a Russian top meeting between GM Evgeny Romanov (2642) and GM Maxim Turov (2593) which started with a positional Caro Kann line. Black had a minority attack running on the queenside, but playing with a pair of bishops and the a-file white still was slightly better from the opening. Demonstrating his positional strength today Romanov methodically increased the pressure, and after 30 moves had a more or less winning position as black's vital b5-pawn was about to fall. Turov tried to complicate by sacrificing his remaining piece instead of losing the pawn, but got only one pawn for the piece. Although it took some three hours and some 50 moves more, white later won without any real doubt about the outcome. Romanov still looks both solid and dynamic, while Turov got a disappointing first meeting with his GM-colleagues this tournament.

Second board meeting between GM Benjamin Bok (2590) and GM Gregorz Gajewski (2631) was a Sicilian Najdorf in which white spent 10 minutes and black 70 minutes for the first 20 moves. Obviously having made the better preparation, white allowed black to hit in with 16... Qxc2 with, as white soon hit back with 17.Rfc1 followed by 18.Rc7 and 20.Rxb7. White got a clear advantage for free as black chickened out, withdrawing his queen with Qf5 instead of testing out the critical line with Qxb2. Strangely black a few moves later on changed his mind, and played Qf5-Qc2 followed by Qxb2. White probably could have won faster later on. Still he was winning all of the time and before 40 moves neatly finished off the game by sacrificing his knight on f6 and his queen at g6 to mate the black king at g8-h8. Obviously working out well after achieving the GM-title too, 19 year old Bok following this win has an unofficial ELO of 2599 and is an obvious candidate to become a member of the 2600-club.

Meanwhile the third board game between GM Evgeny Postny (2630) and GM Aloyzas Kveinys (2543) started as a Catalan with 5.-- a6, in which black after exchanging the queens first appeared healthy.

10.--- b5?! probably was overambitious, as the pawn at c4 one tactical exchange later became an attacking target for white and his pair of bishops. Much enjoying such low flame positions, Postny turned on the grill, and gradually increased the temperature until reaching a material balanced endgame

with one knight, one bishop and four pawns on each side – in which white’s active king made all the difference. Although Kveinys is now rated below 2550 he came from a won tournament in Germany and is a rock solid player usually losing about one game every fifth year in Norway. Hence this win qualifies as very impressive for so far so good (and so positional) Postny.



Kveinys vs Postny

The youngster duel between GM Sam Shankland (2616) and IM Avital Boruchovsky (2492) started as a positional Queen’s gambit line with Bf4, but soon accelerated as white after allowing Nxf4 played exf4-f5 with a direct attack on e6.

19.--- a5?! probably was a weakening waste of time from black, as white could anyway play 20.b4 with a strong initiative. Having a pleasant choice about whether to take the e6-pawn with Qxe6+ or Bxe6+ at move 22, white for still mysterious reasons preferred a more positional approach with 22.Qe5-d6?! - allowing black to save the pawn and exchange off the queens. Later on black probably could have saved the rook endgame if answering 29.Ba6?! with bxa6!, but came under some pressure after missing that chance. Allowing an elegant exchange sacrifice after 35 moves proved the decisive mistake, as white within a few moves forced a won pawn endgame. Boruchovsky again lost the magical 2500-border out of sight, while Shankland won one more game despite playing a little more shaky today.



Shankland - Boruchovsky

The most obvious white favorite on the top five boards today became the only one to lose, as IM Jovanka Houska (2410) went down in a tight five-hour battle against Frode Lillevold (2182). As black in a London system Lillevold proved able to equalize with 13.--- c5, as he could three moves later answer g5 attacking the knight on f6 with 16.--- Bb5! - counterattacking the white queen at e2. Houska took a very long break and then blundered into a pin by 17.Nd3?, allowing black to play Qc2 and win some pawns. A tense fight followed as white tried to demonstrate compensation,

while both players ran all the more short of time. After white missed some chances just before 40 moves, black forced a queen exchange to reach a won endgame when the player stopped blitzing at move 45. Immediately returning the extra pawn with 45... h3? was a mistake, giving white chances to save the draw. Houska in her turn offered a draw in a still difficult rook endgame at move 47 and blundered in move 48.

As Lillevold later became too careful, white got one final chance to save the endgame with rook and pawn versus rook and pawn: 58.Kg4-g5! would have saved the draw, as white then could have sacrificed her rook on black's passed d-pawn and had just enough time for her king to escort the g-pawn.



Instead 58.Kg4-f5? allowed a thematic win with 58... Rf2+!, after which black won the tempo needed for his rook and king to catch in white king and g-pawn. In short this unexpected fifth board meeting was a game of many mistakes, but still a very exciting and instructive one. Black in the end won fair enough, as he had the better position most of the game and was more concentrated in the decisive moments. Houska following this is lagging far behind as a GM norm candidate, while Lillevold having started with the sprint of his life is well ahead of schedule for a sensational IM-norm.



Hammer - Rozentalis

First seeded GM Jon Ludvig Hammer (2647) and fifth seeded GM Eduardas Rozentalis (2624) were a bit unlucky to meet this round, as Rozentalis had 1.5/2 and Hammer 1.0/2. The result not that unexpectedly became a 17-move draw.

Still it was a theoretically interesting Nimzo Indian game in which both players took a humble approach: Hammer accepted as he believed his position to be inferior, and Rozentalis obviously was well satisfied drawing the top seed with

black. Hammer has recovered after his bitter first round loss, but still at 50 % he still has a long way to reach top three.

The generation duel between GM Leif Erlend Johannessen (2530) and IM Aryan Tari (2387) was some kind of closed Grünfeld Indian double fianchetto, in which white had a small space advantage. As the position opened up black demonstrated sufficient counterplay against white's center pawns at d4 and e4, and then a draw was agreed in a balanced position after 26 moves.



Johannessen - Tari

Although fighting for his place in the Norwegian team for the Olympics 2014

Johannessen is struggling to be anything more than sound so far this tournament, while Tari has had a fair start of April after some disappointing results in March.



Getz - Urkedal

The Norwegian IM duel between Nicolai Getz (2388) and Frode Urkedal (2494) started as closed Ruy Lopez position, in which white plays against the backward black pawn at d6 and black against the white pawn at e4. Black came ahead on the clock and held a slight initiative in the middle game, but the endgame with rook, bishop, knight and five pawns on each side still looked drawish. Creatively having sacrificed his last queenside pawn to exchange the bishops and reach the eight rank with his rook, black anyway was much better when white blundered at move 46 and resigned at move 47.

The German-Norwegian teenager meeting between Johan Salomon (2343) and Rasmus Svane (2487) started as a Sicilian with 4.Qxd4. Black spent one hour for the first 12 moves, but was fine on the board and kept a slight edge all the way into a knight endgame.

With three pawns left on each side this still looked very drawish. Svane however played on and was rewarded as white chose the wrong defence plan, allowing black's knight to intervene at f4 after 52 moves. Probably Salomon too late realized black had a thematic sacrifice plan with Nxf2! - answering Nxf2 with h3-h2. This tactical possibility made all the difference, and in the bitter end white playing with knight versus knight and h-pawn was unable to sacrifice his knight on the pawn.

Pole in for Svane, still playing for an ELO of 2500 and/or a GM-norm. Pole out for Salomon, still however having chances for an IM-norm in this very strong field.

Another German-Norwegian teenager duel between IM Alexander Donchenko (2471) and FM Lars Oskar Hauge (2330) started with a razorblade line in a Botvinnik Semi-Slav, in which black in the opening sacrifices an exchange at h8. As white for many moves played with a knight stranded on h8 and as black got three connected pawns on the queenside, he was reported back in the game around move 25-30. Always an exchange up with three connected pawns on the kingside, including a running f-pawn, Donchenko still looked clearly better all the time. After four hours he landed safely, as he returned an exchange to reach a totally won knight endgame. The still 16 year old German probably played a very good game, and anyway managed to look remarkably relaxed behind the apparently chaotic board.

IM Torbjørn Ringdal Hansen (2469) fair enough won his first game today. Playing white against FM Brede Kvisvik (2300), Hansen was better almost all of the first four hours and won safely the rooks and knight endgame in the fifth. Still Kvisvik gave him a fight and might have missed his drawing chances just before 40 moves.



Ringdal Hansen - Kvisvik

FM Kristian Stuvik Holm (2321) and IM Espen Lie (2460) on the other hand first made a promising start with a Classical King's Indian line, but then agreed a draw on black's suggestion after 007 moves.

The game between GM Rune Djurhuus (2447) and Johan-Sebastian Christiansen (2207) was a Classical French duel. Playing against hanging black center pawns at d5 and e6, white spent 55 minutes for 15 moves, but after 15.dxc5 appeared slightly better due to his d4 square. As Christiansen was allowed to exchange several pieces and win back the pawn at c5, white however failed to keep up his pressure. The endgame starring one queen, one rook and three pawns on each side looked very drawish. As white still was very slightly better and as Rune Djurhuus still is Rune Djurhuus, play continued for nearly 60 moves more. White for some moves played with h- and g-pawn versus h-pawn in the rook endgame, but still without any winning chances due to black's active king and rook. In the self-critical final minutes Djurhuus creatively sacrificed both his pawns to force an exchange of rooks, and played on until stalemate with king versus king and h-pawn.

The game between Ravi Haria (2207) and IM Timofey Galinsky (2427) was a French Tarrasch duel. Young Hari did not seem to be a personal friend of this line yet, as black after exchanging three sets of minor pieces had a pleasant pressure against white's d4-pawn – and was nearly one hour ahead on the clock.

Probably white still should have been able to save this. Black however definitely had the more inspiring position to play and went on to reach a won rook endgame with two connected passed pawns against one.

While Galinsky is still doing all the expected game results, Ravi Haria is well back on earth but still in the run for an IM-norm.



Galinsky beating Haria with black.



Haug black against Flermoen.

Today's third Classical French duel also was a youth duel between former whiz-kid Peter Flermoen (2232) and current whiz-kid Johannes Haug (2096).

An exciting race came on board as white castled long and went for a pawn storm on the kingside, while black castled short and went for a pawn storm on the queenside. In the middle game black sacrificed a pawn, and got standard attacking compensation due to his open a- and b-file.

White reportedly was better most of the time and also after returning the pawn to get a counterattack in the fifth hour. Being best in the final position still is the most important thing in chess. That definitely was black, efficiently turning the tide and then deciding by a tactical hit on e2 as white collapsed around 50. Flermoen in his comeback on this level is playing well but struggling to complete his games, while Haug is playing a bit shaky but fighting and scoring very well.

The generation duel between Sebastian Mihajlov (2197) and IM John Paul Wallace (2402) was a complex King's Indian struggle, in which white after castling long sacrificed a pawn at e4 to open up the kingside against black's king. The idea after 16.--- Nd3+ turned out be sacrificing an exchange with 17.Rxd3 exd3 18. Qxd3. A short comedy of error followed when white at move 19 too creatively sacrificed his knight at h7, as none of the players noted black could just take the knight with his king. With both happily unaware this detail, the game continued with an about equal and very tense position – as white's octopus knight on e6 more or less compensated for the exchange. Following some inaccuracies from white, black was winning for some moves in the endgame with rook versus knight. Having got the necessary help to exchange the few remaining pawns, Mihajlov with a steady hand defended 50 moves with lone knight versus lone rook to claim the draw at move 94.

IM Frode Elsness (2483) as white against Eivind X Djurhuus (1977) chose 4.f3 as his weapon against a Nimzo Indian. As white played with two c-pawns black got some counterplay in the c-file and against the white c4-pawn, but white's space advantage proved more important.

Although the game was a tense four-hour battle white probably was better all of the time, and his passed pawn at f6 combined with a h-file attack decided just after 40 moves.



Elsness beating Djurhuus jr.

FM Richard Bjerke (2194) gave his 3.Bb5+-line another chance as white in a Sicilian against Alf Roger Andersen (2230). It worked out somewhat better today, as white reached a balanced hedgehog position with some pressure against black's backward pawn at d6. Bjerke was the one to set fire on the game as he during mutual time pressure played for a kingside attack – but then fired himself from the game as he just before 40 blundered a piece.

WGM Olga Dolzhikova (2209) and Arne Hagesæther (2143) started up with a very French-like Caro Kann Advance. As black had his bad white bishop inside the pawn chain at d7 and played too passive, white established a space advantage without much of a risk. Although black succeeded exchanging some pieces and get some counterplay on the queenside, white still kept a kingside attack and crashed through just after 30 moves.

Second last board today was occupied by Line Jin Jørgensen (1926) and Odd Martin Guttulsrud (2206), starting as a King's Indian four pawns attack. The position calmed down somewhat as the d-pawns were exchanged, leaving a symmetrical center with e4 versus e5. Guttulsrud around move 20 against was about to run short of time, and white seemed close to winning after getting the chance to win two rooks for a queen a few moves later on. The position still remained messy, and black fought his way into a still complex endgame with queen, knight and three pawns against two rooks, bishop and three pawns – which was then drawn by repetition after 45 moves.

Last board today was the meeting between WIM Ellen Hagesæther (2204) and Sondre Merkesvik (2042), which also became the last game to finish. Obviously playing for a win Ellen accelerated her King's Indian Advance with an early f4 against Merkesvik's Sicilian set up. White got a lasting space advantage after realizing e5, and although black had some disturbing counterplay on the queenside white upheld the pressure.

In the fifth hour white played a pawn up in the rook endgame, but still had difficulties advancing her pawn and activate the king. Merkesvik fought on well and after five hours and 58 minutes assured his first half point - as white with one minute left for the game found a repetition of moves better than a risky winning attempt. Ellen improved her play but still lost a few more ELO-points this round, while Sondre won a few ELO points still without playing close to his best.

In the **Open Norwegian championship**, 17 year old Masfjorden player Sigve Hølleland (1871) became the first player to reach 3/3, as he and his powerful bishops within 20 moves demonstrated a winning attack as black against surprise man Erling Skjelstad (1667).

Hølleland's unshared pole position did not last long, as 65 year old but still hard kicking Helge Theting (1943) well before lunchtime completed his queen and knight attack against nearly 50 years younger Snorre Rygg (1821).

Meanwhile 14 year old and terribly underrated Endre Machlik (1790) on the second board walled down so far solid Leif Bjornes (1873) with a nice kingside attack.

Last but not least important, 13 year old Trygve Dahl (1867) patiently completed the endgame win against 11 year old Tor Fredrik Kaasen (1527) in the sixth hour, after winning two pieces for a rook some 50 moves earlier on. Despite some mistakes this was a complex and very impressive game by both the very young players.



Bjornes beaten by young Endre Machlik.

Three upcoming juniors sharing the lead with one happy go lucky grandfather for sure will give exciting top board duels in the next round too.

In the shadow of the top boards second rated Jens Hjort Kjølberg (2092) hit back by winning decisive material before 20 moves as black against Henrik Tallaksen (1743), and at 2.5/3 definitely is still in the run for the first prize.

First rated Alexander Flaata (2111) on the other hand has a long way to go even after driving to Fagernes: Finally entering the scene today after two walk over draws, he lost a tense six hours battle as black against heavily underrated Alseit Kizatbay ((1408)).

The younger brother Abyl Kizatbay ((1144)) also is playing well above his modest rating, but still went mate after losing decisive material against an inspired Monika Machlik (1976) today. Competition to become best Machlik is very hard, as Monika's twin Edit (1913) in the fifth hour squeezed a win out of a drawish minor pieces endgame against talented Sigve Sundsbø (1663).

Only 29 games played in the Open Norwegian Championship this round, as five players avoided this morning round by using their chance for a walk over bye. All of them however will be back for more fighting chess in the fourth round tonight, and the atmosphere in this very mixed group qualifies as very good.