

Fagernes Chess International 13-20 April 2014

THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT 4



The expected reaction after a firework round three to some extent came this afternoon, as two of the first five boards were drawn within two hours. Still all the other three got a winner, and as this round as well lasted five hours and 58 minutes, the fighting spirit still qualifies as remarkable.

Fourth seeded GM Evgeny Postny of Israel is now leading alone at 4/4, but he had to play more than nine hours today – and still is only half a point ahead of two GM-colleagues.

First board meeting between GM Sam Shankland (2616) and GM Evgeny Romanov (2642) following an interesting opening became a small and understandable anti-climax.

The game started as a Sämisch Benoni line with many similarities to a Benkö Gambit: White for some moves kept an extra pawn at b5, but black had sufficient compensation due



Draw on board 1 between Romanov and Shankland.

to his play in the a- and b-files combined with a disturbing bishop at g7.

White first gave back the b-pawn to get back the a-file, and then offered a draw at move 24 – in a balanced rook and bishop endgame.

Both players understandably were satisfied to rest on their +3 in the second half of the double round, and 3.5/4 at the end of this day turned out to be sufficient for shared second place.

The second board game between GM Benjamin Bok (2590) and GM Evgeny Postny (2630) was also considered a likely candidate for a short draw, but instead became a tense drama lasting into the sixth hour.

It all started as a positionally complex and closed Ruy Lopez Berlin defence, in which white half an hour behind on the clock looked slightly better on the board.



Postny takes the lead after beating Bok.

Breaking with 16... d5! was a creative try to equalize, which succeeded as white instead of the critical 17. exd5! allowed black to hit in at e4. Although black had established a passed pawn at d4, white after spending 90 minutes on 19 moves looked at least equal on the board.

Having accepted a disruption of his kingside pawn structure by exchanging the queens at h3, white for some moves had a promising initiative in an endgame

with rook, bishop, knight and six pawns on each side. While Bok suddenly became too eager to exchange minor pieces Postny during mutual time pressure used his chance to activate, and when white finally offered a draw after 34 moves black preferred to play for a win in the rook endgame. This turned out to be a good decision: Although Bok still had one second left on his clock after making his move 40 (compared to four seconds for Postny), black's active king combined with the passed d-pawn then was decisive.

This unexpected fourth hour cramp means today was not the day Bok for the first time passed 2600, but at 3.0/4 he is of course still in the fight for the top prizes.

While Postny leading alone with a 100 % score can be more than very well satisfied about his first Fagernes start.

Not unexpectedly, third board tonight gave a win for black. Sensation man Frode Lillevold (2182) made a fair try as white against GM Grzegorz Gajewski (2631) in a Nimzo Indian with 4. Nf3, and after 15 moves the position looked about balanced.

16. Ne5? however was a natural and careless move, overlooking or underestimating 16... Rh6! with a kingside attack coming up.



Gajewski beating Lillevold with the black pieces.

Gajewski immediately accelerated, and following some inaccuracies from white black neatly decided the game by 22.--- Nd2! – sacrificing the knight and delivering a killing attack against g2.

Gajewski at 3.0/4 is back in business after his unexpected bankruptcy in the third round, while Lillevold at 2.5/4 still looked very well satisfied with his stay so far.

As Lillevold was helpful driving GMs Kveinys and Rozentalis from the Oslo Gardermoen airport to Fagernes before the tournament, the arbiter and the friendly Lithuanian GMs before this round joked that they might have to drive him back after the tournament if he continued like this...

Talking about GM Eduardas Rozentalis (2624), his fourth board game against IM Rasmus Svane (2487) made a sensible start with a French Tarrasch line. Despite a clumsy looking 6.--- Qd7?!/!? black was close to equal after 14 moves.

White kept a tiny initiative and was far ahead on the clock, but still the position would have been about in balance if black at move 33 had protected the key squares on c7 and f7 by playing Qe7. Instead 33.--- Qf6?? was a blunder, as 34.Qxf6+ Kxf6 35.Rc7! with a double attack on c7 and f7 won a piece for two pawns. Having no problems demonstrating the endgame win afterwards, Rozentalis at 3.0/4 is in a promising challenger position.

Svane follows the Swiss waves up and down so far, and will soon have to leave them if he plans to reach 2500 and/or make a GM-norm this tournament.



Turov - Donchenko was a short draw.

What to say about the fifth board meeting between GM Maxim Turov (2593) and IM Alexander Donchenko (2471)?

Well - it was a sound English fianchetto game, drawn after 18 moves in a balanced position!

Sixth board between GM Aloyzas Kveinys (2543) and IM Torbjørn Ringdal Hansen (2469) became a much longer and more interesting King's Indian fianchetto game, pitting white's bishops and better structure against black's active pieces.

Play for a while circled around the black isolani pawn at c5. Defending well, black succeeded to keep the pawn and reach a drawish rook and bishop endgame – which was declared dead and buried after 54 moves.

Playing both c5 and f4, IM Frode Urkedal (2494) meanwhile established a space advantage as white against Johannes Haug (2096) in a very closed Rubinstein line of a Nimzo Indian opening. Later white was always better and always had more space. The big question was whether this was enough to win a position with blocked pawns all the way from the b-file to the g-file. White was still dominating but still without any clear road to a win when black blundered with 42... Kc8?, overlooking a tactical 43.Nxc6! which immediately decided the game. Hardly noticed by anyone except his game opponents and the round report writer, Urkedal now at 3.0/4 sneaks into the top boards – and again is within short reach of the 2500 demand.

Even more interested in getting his ELO up to 2500 is even younger IM Avital Boruchovsky (2492) - now lacking only a few ELO points to get his GM title.

Today playing white against IM Timofey Galinsky (2427) in a French Tarrasch, the 17 year old after establishing a space advantage with d4 and e5, coolly allowed black to take a testimony pawn with 13... Qxg2.

White could have forced a repetition of moves, but instead allowed black's queen to retreat and tried to demonstrate attacking compensation for the pawn. 19... Nf5? probably was a mistake from black, turning the position from unclear into very promising for white.

Sacrificing an exchange at f6 afterwards looked correct, but Boruchovsky might have taken back the exchange too early afterwards.

The following endgame with rook, knight and five pawns versus rook, bishop and four pawns was no way an obvious win. Having activated his pieces and advanced a pawn to f3, black around move 40 appeared closer to a draw.

Like in the second round Boruchovsky however played stubbornly on for a win, and was rewarded as Galinsky in the fifth hour lost touch and stumbled into a lost minor piece endgame.

Boruchovsky's ELO following this is 2495.50 – meaning a win as white against GM Benjamin Bok tomorrow will make him a GM...

IM Jovanka Houska (2410) and GM Jon Ludvig Hammer (2647) started up with some kind of Queen's Gambit Moscow line, in which black and his pair of bishops about equalized in the opening.

Houska playing with a nice knight on d4 still had an about balanced position after 19 minutes – when Hammer for some reason had spent 90 minutes on the clock.

The next 22 moves however was instructive as the 2600-GM during mutual time pressure instructively opened up the position for his pair of bishops and increased the pressure, until the position of the 2400-IM just collapsed.

As the players stopped their blitz war after 41 moves the material was still in balance, but black's pieces were overwhelming. Realizing this white at move 43 sacrificed a pawn at f6 - with the idea of resigning next move if black took the pawn. Which he did.

Houska despite two white games got a depressing double puncture today, while Hammer after all knocks on the door to the top boards.

IM John Paul Wallace (2402) and GM Leif Erlend Johannessen (2530) started up a French Winawer with 5.Bd2 b6, in which white got a space advantage on the kingside and black queenside counterplay in the c-file.

Black had no problems whatsoever after getting the necessary time to exchange his white squared bishop, but the position after 16 moves looked about equal.

17.Qxd4? however was a strange blunder, which was immediately punished by a 17.--- Nxc2 fork – leading within few moves to a won endgame with two rooks and seven pawns versus queen and six pawns. Having got his chance to win material Johannessen had no problems completing his first game win in this tournament. It remains to test whether that move will be a game changer for his tournament. Wallace meanwhile makes many of the good moves, but in between makes too many mistakes.

The game between Johan-Sebastian Christiansen (2207) and IM Frode Elsness (2483) started as an English fianchetto in which black played the very unusual 3.--- h6?!/!?.

White's pair of bishops probably gave him an edge from the opening, but true to his nature black went for active counterplay with e5-e4-e3.

A complex struggle followed in heavyweight position, with 16 pawns still on board after 20 moves. Not that surprising, exchanging the white squared bishop at h3 to place one rook on a5 and the other hand at h4, turned out to be wrong plan for white.

Black was not afraid to start a pawn storm in front of his own king, and was rewarded as he before 40 moves had a winning kingside attack.

Elsness is back on track after winning both his games today, while Christiansen despite losing his first game is in the run for an IM-norm.

In another game between one grown up IM and one junior hoping soon to be an IM, Espen Lie (2460) handling the white forces in a closed Ruy Lopez refused a draw and played for a win against Sebastian Mihajlov (2197).

The problem (that is, from a Lie point of view) was he did so in a wrong way. At first sight white had a promising position when intervening at a7 with his rook. In reality black however was better, having powerful counterplay against e4 and chances for disturbing flank attacks with b4 or g5.

After b4 forced white to remove the knight on c3 he lost the important e4 pawn, and having the better pieces as well black looked winning. Although Lie fought on well, Mihajlov still was a pawn up with a much better position when offering a draw again at move 38. This time Lie did not hesitate to accept. Meaning Lie despite an uninspired double round avoided a disaster – while Mihajlov despite jumpy games still draws games against title holders every round.

IM Aryan Tari (2387) and GM Rune Djurhuus (2447) cooperated in entering a double edged Dutch position, in which white is playing on the queenside and in the center, while black hopes for a kingside attack. Establishing a center advantage with e4-d5 proved a promising plan for white, and although 19.fxe4! would have been more critical than 19.Nxe4?!, white still looked somewhat better when offering a draw at move 21. Tari although a little respectful tonight has improved his play, while Djurhuus has a hard time winning against the young talents this tournament.

IM Nicolai Getz (2388) as white against FM Kristian Stuvik Holm (2321) played some kind of delayed Sicilian Grand Prix Attack, with 2.d3 followed by 3.Be2 and 4.f4.

A double edged and messy battle followed after black castled long and white short. White playing with pair of bishops versus pair of knights probably was better.

Creatively having sacrificed rook for pawn and bishop to open up against the black king, Getz anyway was rewarded as he at move 40 could sacrifice his queen to force a totally won rook endgame.



Getz (white) won against Stuvik Holm.

Alf Roger Andersen (2230) and Johan Salomon (2343) meanwhile discussed a muddy Scotch line, in which white is playing with two isolated e-pawns.

Andersen's solution of course was to sacrifice one of them. Accepting that challenge, black probably had the much better position before white delivered a strong candidate to the most mysterious piece sacrifice in this group.

After black forced a queen exchange three moves later on it was not much more to discuss, as only black had a knight in this rook and knight endgame.

This means Andersen is still playing too lose and far below his strong result in the Norwegian league, while Salomon will get one more chance against an IM next round.



Lars Oscar Hauge

FM Lars Oskar Hauge (2330) and WGM Olga Dolzhikova (2209) started up with a slow Russian opening, which Hauge (of course) soon accelerated by castling long and starting a pawn storm on the kingside.

Dolzhikova however succeeded forcing a queen exchange. Thanks to her active pair of knights and better pawn structure, black anyway was better in the rook and minor piece endgame when white at move 26 stumbled into forks winning decisive material for black.

Dolzhikova suddenly has a plus result after a double win in the double round, while Hauge following an amazing result in the Norwegian

League has been a disappointment so far this tournament.

The game between FM Brede Kvisvik (2300) and Ravi Haria (2207) made an original start with an Owen's defence, in which an early d5-d6 gave white a lasting pressure. Again lagging about 50 minutes behind on the clock, Haria got another demanding black game. This time he however succeeded to hang on into a double rook endgame balancing between draw and win for white. This game became the final countdown of this round as Kvisvik despite reduced material played on for a win, while Haria under pressure on board and clock still was not willing to give it up. As Kvisvik in the rook endgame forced black to sacrifice his rook for the now passed d-pawn, the remaining question was whether Kvisvik and his rook could reach back in time to catch in black's king and passed h-pawn. Haria looked relaxed even with five seconds left for the game. Kvisvik in this situation acted almost too sporty, avoiding all tries to play on his opponent's time. In the end he gently sacrificed his rook on the pawn, still not realizing he after Haria's 76.--- Kg1?? could have won by 77.Kf3! h2 78.Rg2+ Kh1 79.Re2 instead of the direct 77.Re2?? h2.

Line Jin Jørgensen (1926) and Peter Flermoen (2232) together tested out a Grünfeld Indian exchange line in which white proved able to uphold her center pawns at e5 and d4, but unable to advance them any further.

White still looked slightly better when offering a draw after 24 moves, but two draws in this double round of course qualifies as a relief for the lowest rated player in this field.

The next door game between Odd Martin Guttulsrud (2206) and Sondre Merkesvik (2042) was an Aljechin opening leading to a symmetrical center with d4 against d5. The position probably was close to balanced, although white having a pair of bishops and the better rooks kept a slight pressure. Guttulsrud (as usual) was about three quarters of an hour behind on the clock from the opening, and after 28 moves had only four minutes left to reach 40 moves.

Probably never having been 40 minutes ahead on the clock against anyone before, Merkesvik played too fast himself and made a blunder at move 28 – overlooking a Qc2-Qh7+ attack which won an exchange for white. Although black got a pawn and some counterchances, Guttulsrud reached move 40 without blundering and realized his material surplus before 60 moves.

Eivind Djurhuus (1977) and WIM Ellen Hagesæther (2204) started up the afternoon with a slow and closed Ruy Lopez position, in which white's pair of bishops and play against the backward d6-pawn probably gave him a small advantage. Black still played a sound game, and got some counterplay after intervening on b2 with her bishop in the endgame. After white refused to play for a win by taking the black a-pawn, a draw was agreed at move 62 - in dead drawn different colored bishop endgame. Ellen played better today but still loses some ELO points every round, while Djurhuus junior can be fairly well satisfied despite still wasting some chances.

Arne Hagesæther (2143) and FM Richard Bjerke (2194) jumped on a French Advance line in which white castled short and black long. Opening the queenside by a b3-break is a natural idea for white in this line, but in this case it did not work out too well as black first proved able to hold the pawn and then got his chance to play dxc4 - establishing a protected passed pawn on the sixth rank. During mutual time pressure black later switched his pieces to the kingside and won by attack.

Bjerke finally could be recognized without an ID-card this round, while Arne Hagesæther still is playing far below his usual standard.

Fourth round in the **Open Norwegian Championship** also was a hard fought one, with only one draw on the first 15 boards.

On the first board 14 year old Endre Machlik (1790), obviously still in a very creative mood, as white in a complex Modern opening just outplayed veteran Helge Theting (1943).

After the players had exchanged all the minor pieces and lost their respective pawn weaknesses at e4 and d6, the position left on board was positionally more or less winning for white - as he had both the safer king and the more active heavy pieces.

“Machlik IV” either has the tournament of his life or is already at a master level. Anyway he won this game convincingly after picking up all the black queenside pawns and advancing his passed c-pawn.

Endre however shares the lead with 17 year old Sigve Hølleland (1871), playing another very good game as he dismantled the Dutch position of opponent Trygve Dahl (1867). While black kept his queen locked out of play at b7, white in this game instructively opened up the kingside, winning an exchange with an ongoing attack.

The tournament following this has had a very interesting first half, with two young outsiders at 4/4 playing against each other tomorrow. The big sharks however are steaming up behind them: Second seeded Jens Hjort Kjølberg (2092) is luring just around the corner at 3.5/4 - as he following a slow English opening won a nice attacking game against Alseit Kizatbay ((1408)). Another dangerous challenger at 3.5/4 is Monika Machlik (1976) - as she after her obligatory time troubles today instructively won an apparently drawish rook and bishop endgame against Snorre Skrede (1729).

Third rated Christian Laverton (2080) has had a slow start with two draws, but now is in the hunting crowd at 3.0/4 after winning a Sicilian attacking game as black against young Arman Ghaderi (1843).

The top rated overall had a very good round, as first seeded Alexander Flaata (2111) and fourth seeded Håkon Bentsen (2074) also won their games more or less convincing.

The exception is the young and unpredictable Kjell Håkon Lien (2050) - still down at 1.5/4 as he despite an extra exchange failed to overcome well playing and hard fighting Kimiya Sajjadi (1503) today.

Among the entertaining games and surprising result further down the board ranks again was 11 year old Abil Kizatbay ((1144)), today defeating Ivar Mossin (1847) after a skilled h-file attack.

The Kizatbay brothers have no FIDE-ELO yet, but both are en route to get a promising one following this tournament.

Another young Stavanger player worth mentioning after this double round is 14 year old Andreas Fossan (1699) – in the third round defeating Lien, and in the fourth drawing from a totally won position as black against Terje Torgersen (1970).

No doubt many of these participants can do well in future GM-groups. The average quality of the games in the open obviously is much lower, but still a lot of interesting moves, exciting games and colorful playing characters to follow also in this group.