

# Fagernes Chess International 13-20 April 2014

## THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT **6**



Round 6 in the GM-group became another loaded and awaiting round, as four out of the first five boards were drawn. Leading GM Evgeny Postny took another important step towards the first prize as he saved a worse position as black against second seeded GM Evgeny Romanov, but no prize is decided yet as four other GMs are shadowing half a point behind Postny.

While it is too early to tell who will win the tournament, it might now be possible to say something about who will not win the tournament – as top seeded GM Ludvig Hammer and last year's winner GM Eduardas Rozentalis both seem out of that run following today's results.



Postny held on with black against Romanov.

In the sixth round's very important top meeting between GM Evgeny Romanov (2642) and GM Evgeny Postny (2630), white played to win the game and to take over the lead. The start was a Ruy Lopez Berlin defence in which white had a slight initiative and the slightly better structure, as black played with two c-pawns. After white exchanged his pawn at e4 for one of the black c-

pawns, an endgame with two rooks, one knight, one bishop and six pawns on each side came to circle around black's isolated pawn at e4. White's advantage looked promising as he also got some pressure against the black pawn at a5.

Postny however succeeded to keep all his four pawn islands floating, and just before 40 moves used the chance he got to exchange down into a dead drawn position.

Draw in this game at this board today was a small win for Postny and a small loss for Romanov. Still Postny is under pressure and Romanov can very well end up as the tournament winner.

The second board game between GM Grzegorz Gajewski (2631) and GM Sam Shankland (2616) was an English Four Knight's line, leading to a balanced but still interesting isolani position.

The position became much less interesting but even more balanced as white's isolani pawn at d4 was exchanged for the black pawn at c7, leaving a pancake-flat double rook endgame which was drawn after 20 moves. Both the players following this draw are still in the group half a point behind the leader, and Postny-Gajewski in the next round might be another key game for the tournament.



Gajewski - Shankland was a short draw.



Bok beating Rozentalis with black.

Today's drama on the top board was the third board game between GM Eduardas Rozentalis (2624) and Benjamin Bok (2590).

Another Ruy Lopez Berlin duel, this gave white a slight initiative on the board and half an hour extra on the clock. Rozentalis played on for a win and got the tempos to increase the pressure on the kingside, as black for very mysterious reasons played 20.--- Kf7 followed by 21.--- Rhf8

and 22.--- Kg8 instead of just 20.--- 0-0. While Rozentalis lost the thread somewhere around move 25-30, Bok suddenly started activating his pieces for a counterattack on the kingside. The tide definitely turned as white at move 36 took a poisoned pawn at c5, walking into counterthreats that within a few moves won two minor pieces for a rook. Although white got a pawn for the exchange the endgame after 40 moves was nothing but lost, as black had the more active pieces and a very disturbing passed pawn e-pawn. 0-1 after 55 moves means 19 year old Benjamin Bok has increased his unofficial ELO to 2599, and is now shared second in the tournament with 4.5/6. 50 year old Rozentalis following this loss is behind expected score and has only theoretical possibilities left to defend his first place from last year's tournament. The shaky fourth hours of this game might be very important for the outcome of this tournament.

Fourth board game between GM Maxim Turov (2593) and Leif Erlend Johannessen (2530) somewhat disappointingly was drawn within 75 minutes and 20 moves. This result however was fair enough and not that unexpected following the moves.

Somewhat unusually both players castled long in a Queen's Gambit exchange line, but as all the minor pieces were exchanged the remaining position true enough was very balanced and risky trying to win for both players.

Johannessen has definitely done much better in rounds 4-6 than 1-3, but still has lost a few ELO-points before taking a walk over draw to go skiing during round seven. Turov at 4.0/6 with three games left to play is still in the fight, but will need a strong sprint to reach top three.



Hammer was unable to beat Boruchovsky.

First seeded GM Jon Ludvig Hammer (2647) had reached fifth board this round, and played for a win as white against IM Avital Boruchovsky (2492).

The opening was a Queen's Gambit Semi-Tarrasch in which the c- and d-pawns were exchanged, leaving a rather drawish pawn structure. White still was 45 minutes ahead on the clock with a slight initiative in the endgame, playing with two rooks, knight and six pawns versus two rooks, bishop and six

pawns. Increasing the pressure by exchanging one set of rooks and advancing his kingside pawns, white seemed close to something around move 23-28.

Boruchovsky however again defended stubbornly in a worse position and succeeded to reach a drawish minor piece endgame with bishop and four pawns versus knight and four pawns. An inaccurate bishop move from black gave white one last chance to play for a win with 36.g5!? or 36.Kh4!? - but as Hammer instead played 36.Kf4? black immediately used his chance to force a drawn pawn endgame.

17 year old Boruchovsky following this successful defence has an unofficial ELO of 2498.90, and whether he can pass 2500 and get his GM-title will be a big question for the next round(s).

Hammer's 3.5/6 of course is disappointing following his strong results recently, and winning this game probably was his last chance to fight for the first prize.

The board six meeting between GM Aloyzas Kveinys (2543) and IM Espen Lie (2460) also became a disappointment for the Norwegian home crowd, as Lie is definitely out of norm schedules after losing an apparently drawish position.

White had a space advantage from this King's Indian Fianchetto opening, but the position appeared very equal and drawish after safe driving Kveinys at move 17 played  $dxe5$  and then exchanged queens at  $d8$ .

White however kept an initiative, and as black became too passive white made a decisive c-file intervention before 40 moves. Black succeeded to keep material balance, but the rook and minor piece endgame left after the time control was an easy win for white as he had all the best pieces.



Kveinys beating Lie in the endgame.



Urkedal – Djurhuus

The Norwegian duel between GM-candidate Frode Urkedal (2494) and GM Rune Djurhuus (2447) was a Sämisch King's Indian with  $Bg5$ , in which black's  $a6$  and  $b5-b4$  turned out just to weaken his position after he fatally spent time to park his queen in a misunderstood position at  $a5$ .

Playing  $d5$  and controlling the c-file without having to fear counterplay, white

following this had a more or less strategically won position after 15 moves. Exchanging the queens at  $c5$  five moves later on probably was another mistake, as white's dominating knight on  $c4$  and passed pawn at  $d6$  later gave him a decisive advantage.

As Djurhuus fought on well, and as Urkedal made some inaccuracies, the game lasted five hours and fifty minutes. Still Urkedal playing with an extra bishop in minor piece endgame probably was in control, and won very well deserved.

Urkedal for sure will not make his third GM-norm this tournament, but fulfilling the ELO-demand at 2500 after this win can be a realistic goal for the final rounds of this tournament.

Djurhuus of course do not have to worry about the GM-title, but 3.0/6 against an average below 2300 is no good news for his candidacy to the Norwegian teams in the Tromsø Olympics.



Elsness taking the full point against Galinsky.

Another candidate for the Norwegian teams in the Tromsø Olympics, IM Frode Elsness (2483), might be about to strengthen his chances despite the difficult start.

Today he won convincingly as black against IM Timofey Galinsky (2427). After 15 moves chances seemed about balanced in 3.Bb5+-Sicilian, with white playing for a kingside attack and black for a queenside attack.

21.b4? followed by 22.Nd5? however was position collapse for white, after which black soon had an exchange AND the more promising kingside attack.

The whiz-kid duel between 13 year old Johannes Haug (2096) and 16 year old Alexander Donchenko (2471) was a Sicilian Alapin isolani position in which white first had a slight initiative.

After exchanging queens black however made the better mobilization of his pieces. To exchange black's all the more disturbing pair of knights, white had to enter an endgame with two rooks, knight and six pawns versus two rooks, bishop and six pawns, in which black had both the better pieces and the better pawn structure.



Haug - Donchenko

Haug tried to complicate with a tactical Ng5-Nxf7, but making the better calculations as well Donchenko before 40 moves landed safely in a won minor piece endgame with two extra pawns. Still undrawn Haug is still doing a great result, but at 3.0/6 he is now again behind schedule for a sensational IM-norm.

Donchenko making his best result in Norway so far climbs slowly towards 2500, but will probably need 2.5/3 in the end to make a GM-norm.



Svane won with black against Lillevoid.

Donchenko's roommate, IM Rasmus Svane (2487), also won convincingly as black against a lower rated Norwegian today.

Playing black against Frode Lillevoid (2182) in a rare Grünfeld Indian line with 5.Bg5 Ne4, black got an initiative from the opening as white hesitated too long with his kingside development. 16.Bf4? was a blunder overlooking a tactical hit at d4, which won a center pawn with an overwhelming advantage for

black. As white's bishop (now locked in behind white pawns at g3) remained a problem, Svane later had no problems handling this endgame.

0-1 after 35 moves means start rocket Lillevoid has now lost three games in a row, but with an average of opponents well above 2450, he at 2.5/6 is still in the run for an IM-norm.

Svane following this win is doing about as expected – needing a medium miracle to make a GM-norm, but having fair chances to increase his ELO further.

The IM duel between John Paul Wallace (2402) and Torbjørn Ringdal Hansen (2469) suddenly got everyone's attention when the ice water glass of white accidentally hit the floor and was shattered in the fourth hour. The game then had been a firework for several hours.

It all started as a Sicilian Scheveningen in which white castled long and went for an ambitious kingside pawn storm with e4-f4-g4. 11.Nd5?! was a probably dubious sacrifice, but still gave black a lot to think about. Placing with an extra piece black was better if not winning most of the time, but his king remained exposed and white's running h- and g-pawn gave him some new counterplay. Exchanging his queen for two rooks probably was a wrong idea for black: Although he got two rooks and a bishop for the queen, white's passed g- and h-pawn afterwards made his position easier to play.

Many people wondered why white suddenly won after 36 moves, as the final position although better for white is still very complex and probably not lost for black. It turned out however black had touched his rook on f8, and realizing too late that moving it would blunder the f-pawn and his other rook at h3 to 37.Qxf5, he immediately resigned.

Wallace's result after this turbulent game is about as expected, while a performance well below 2400 so far might be fatal for Ringdal Hansens plan to become GM and/or his plan to play the Olympics this year.



Houska black against Tari.

The IM duel between Aryan Tari (2387) and Jovanka Houska (2410) was less turbulent, but still an interesting and exciting draw. White apparently had the better preparation for this Caro-Kann opening, and following some tactical exchanges kept a lasting initiative.

Black improved somewhat after getting the necessary help to exchange queens. Following too slow play from black, white and his passed queenside pawns pushed on for a win in the endgame with two rooks and one minor piece at each side. White in turn however stumbled into tactical problems just before 40 moves, and was lost for some moves just before and after the first time control.

The game was suddenly agreed drawn after 46 moves in a still interesting position.

Playing with two rooks versus rook and knight black probably was still better, but white's passed pawns at b5 and c6 at least made it risk for her to play for a win. Jumpy game, jumpy tournament, but about average result for both players so far.



Dolzhikova - Getz

WGM Olga Dolzhikova (2209) and IM Nicolai Getz (2388) started up with a well known and probably about balanced Italian position.

White spent 90 minutes for 17 moves, but then was about to get a positional grip as black's Ng6-Nf4 maneuver gave him more advantages than disadvantages. The position however remained complex, and black suddenly took over the initiative as white for

mysterious reasons in move 28 placed her knight offside at a3 instead of onside at e3. Black's decision to sacrifice the knight at f4 instead of withdrawing it was principal and creative, but still white playing with a piece for three pawns came closer to winning chances in the endgame. The game ended with an exciting race between numerous passed pawns - and then with a comedy of errors as white after missing the win a few moves earlier on blundered it all away by 70.Nc4?, allowing black an instructive win with 70... g2+ 71.Kf2 Kg4 followed by 72... Bg3+. Getz preferred 70... Ke4?, after which almost all the passed pawns suddenly disappeared and the game was declared drawn two moves later on. Getz is now below expected score despite a fantastic start, while Dolzhikova is above expected score despite a terrible start. Still of course three more games to play for both of them...

Yes, we had many hard fought draws this round. Another one was the teenager meeting between Johan-Sebastian Christiansen (2207) and Johan Salomon (2343).

Following an English opening black established a center advantage, but white's bishops and c-file still gave him an edge. White seemed close to winning as he by playing Na5-Nxb7 won the black b-pawn, but black's counterplay on the kingside arrived just in time and the game was drawn by a repetition after the first time control.

Still at -1 both players are still behind schedule for an IM-norm, but not without chances to reach it.



Salomon black against Christiansen.



E. Hagesæther - Hauge

WIM Ellen Hagesæther (2204) as white against FM Lars Oskar Hauge (2330) got a more critical test of her King's Indian Advance set up against French. Although black activated all his minor pieces, white with knights on c4 and e4 looked fine. Black's decision to sacrifice an exchange for one of the knights hardly was objectively correct, but still gave him very active minor pieces and an initiative.

White should have been able to save this game somehow somewhere, but her king became all the more airy and black's bishops all the more active in the endgame. Just before move 40 black creatively sacrificed one of his bishops to complete the attack with queen and dark squared bishop.

The game between Sebastian Mihajlov (2197) and Peter Flermoen (2232) was a Queen's Gambit with Bb4, leading to an interesting isolani position.

White's barking bishops gave him an initiative both before and after the queens were exchanged, and white anyway was much better when black a few moves before the time control stumbled into tactics and lost an exchange.

Mihajlov following his first win in the tournament is still well in the run for an IM-norm, while a still rusty Flermoen now must concentrate upon playing better chess and saving his ELO.



Flermoen - Mihajlov



Guttulsrud turning the tide against Kvisvik.

The game between Odd Martin Guttulsrud (2206) and FM Brede Kvisvik (2300) started as a Sicilian O' Kelly line which white after the game concluded had been a "disaster".

Not without reason, as black after 9.--- Qe5 and 10.--- Qxe4 came a pawn up with a much better position. The wind however soon changed at Kvisvik blundered with 17.--- f5?? overlooking a highly unpleasant 18.Qd4! with the double threat of 19.Qxh8+ and

19.Ne4-f6+ Bxf6 20.Qxf4...

White following this suddenly was an exchange and two pawns up. Although black later succeeded to activate his bishops, and although white of course again ran short of time twice, white in the end reached a won bishop endgame.

Guttulsrud seems to enjoy this comeback all the more, while Kvisvik really needed a day off chess after this shock.

The “youngster meeting” between Eivind Djurhuus (1977) and Ravi Haria (2207) was a Reti double fianchetto line, in which black spent 97 minutes on the first 16 moves, but after parking a knight on e4 probably was fine.

Following some tactical exchanges the position with one queen, two rooks and five pawns on each side looked drawish. Djurhuus true to his family traditions however played on, and efficiently using his chance when offered the c-file, he established a passed queenside pawn and went on to win the queen endgame.

Young Haria unfortunately has cramped totally after his first round win, while Djurhuus despite his first round loss is now well above expected score.

The generation duel between Sondre Merkesvik (2042) and FM Richard Bjerke (2194) was some kind of Queen’s Pawn opening, in which white’s try for a double fianchetto backfired as black playing 9.--- Ne4 followed by 10.--- Bxa1 won an exchange. White won a pawn at d6 and got some counterplay, but black still won the game in 30 moves as he first consolidated the extra exchange and then revealed Merkesvik’s try for tactical



Merkesvik - Bjerke

complications as bluff and/or blunder. Veteran Bjerke having scored 2.5/3 in his last three games can still make a plus result out of this, while talented Merkesvik is still struggling to score against opponents at this level.

Alf Roper Andersen (2230) as white against Line Jin Jørgensen (1926) against tested out his Scotch line with the two e-pawns – again with the idea of sacrificing one of the pawns later on. It worked out much better this time, as white hit in with a creative knight sacrifice at c6. Although black survived, the tactical carousel ended up with an extra pawn and the safer king for white in the queen and rook position. Black still had drawing chances until blundering her queen for his rook at move 44. Line Jin too is struggling to complete her positions this tournament, while Alf Roger at 2.0/6 still looks likely to finish undrawn with many entertaining games and a score somewhat below expected.

Invited to join the tournament as a substitute after FM Kristian Stuvik Holm had to withdraw, Jo Kristian Løberg (2039) today had a very promising start to his tournament as black against Arne Hagesæther (2143). Not knowing his Sicilian line well enough Hagesæther gave up two pawns for loose compensation in the opening, and although black had to play with his king on e7 he soon consolidated the position. 0-1 after 26 moves – as black had won a third pawn and was about to force and exchange of queens.

Hagesæther for some reason has been out of order the whole week and was happy to get a bye in the seventh round. While Løberg following this unexpected win in this unexpected game, seems very motivated to continue the tournament.

Monika Machlik (1976) again was the young “drama queen” of the **Open Norwegian Championship** today. Playing black against so far so good Sigve Hølleland (1871), Machlik equalized in an English opening. But once more running short of time, she also ran into a dangerous kingside attack when being helpful to exchange the bishops and invite the white king in on the kingside.

17 year old Hølleland for a while used his chances very well, and having placed his queen in a very threatening position at h6 he was totally winning when sacrificing a knight with 30.Ndf6+! – after 30.- -- exf6, 31.Rxd7 Qxd7 32.Nxf6 would be crushing and 31.Nxf6+ just winning.

White’s idea instead turned out to be 31.exf6? Ne6 32.c5? – after which black suddenly was a piece up with sufficient control on the g7 square. Short of time Machlik however invited white into the game again by playing 37.--- Qf4? instead of the totally winning 37.--- Qe5!. Forcing a queen exchange of course was tempting, but turned out to give white good drawing chances in the endgame - as his advanced pawns on c6 and f6 nearly compensated the knight.

White probably still was in shock and played much too slow the next moves, allowing black to release her king via h7 and g6. Later winning this endgame without many worries, 16 year old Monika Machlik is now leading alone at 5.5/6. Despite her key wins in round 5 and 6, she still of course has a long way to go for winning the tournament.

The main threat might well be turn out to be the solid third rated Trondheim player Christian Laverton (2080), as he by a nice tactical hit at d4 got a winning advantage more or less from the opening as black against Trygve Dahl (1867).



Dahl – Laverton

Monika’s next challenger on the board however will be – her three years younger brother Endre Machlik (1790).

Endre again playing creative chess of a GM group level as he today crushed unpredictable Willy Kristiansen (2017) in 20 moves. In a worse position Kristiansen went astray with a knight sacrifice at g5, and anyway was in deep trouble when blundering a mate in move 20.

Hølleland, Laverton and Endre Machlik now are the only players at 5.0/6, as Henrik Løbersli (1857) overlooked a perpetual check in a totally won position with three pawns up against veteran Helge Theting (1943).

Another capable veteran, Vidar Taksrud (2052), was less lucky and lost the game against 12 year old Arman Ghaderi (1843) after sacrificing two pawns too loose in the opening. Ghaderi together with Trygve Dahl (1867) are youngsters more experienced players at 4.0/6 better watch out for.

The group of players at 4.0/6 also includes the slow starting first seeded Alexander Flaata (2111), today deciding by a smashing knight sacrifice on e5 against Yonne Tangelder (1829).

Also in this group are second seeded Jens Hjort Kjølberg (2092) and fourth seeded Håkon Bentsen (2074), after drawing each other in a long and tense game today.

Several female players are doing well. For example, Alena Ayzenberg (1929) has improved her play much after the first round loss, and also joined the “quad band” as she won a nice attacking game against Snorre Skrede (1729).

In short the big sharks are still steaming upwards, but odds for a sensational winner now are good – as three out of top four on the results list are seeded outside top eight on the ELO list.

Many expected results on the lower boards today, although 11 year old Abyl Kizatbay ((1144)) once more produced a surprising result by drawing a messy attacking battle against Kjell Håkon Lien (2050).