

THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT 2



GM-group

The low percentage of draws in this GM Swiss tournament is remarkable so far – and so is the overwhelming score of the favorites. The first board with IM Frode Urkedal and GM Sam Shankland was one out of only two drawn games this round, and the only decided games not won by the highest rated player were two games in which a 2000-player defeated a 2100-player. Before the double round tomorrow, the pole position at 2.0/2 following this is shared between six GMs all rated within top seven...

The first board IM Frode Urkedal (2507) - GM Samuel Shankland (2648) started up with a Grünfeld-



Indian exchange line. Black made 16 moves on 16 minutes, and had about sufficient counterplay against the white key pawn on d4.

After exchanging two sets of minor pieces white played for a kingside attack with h4-h5-h6 and e5, but black had a strong outpost on d5 and reasonable control. Black appeared closer to something as he around move 30 started to advance his queenside pawn majority. White's pieces

however still were disturbingly active, and so black a few moves later allowed white to force a perpetual check by sacrificing a rook.

GM Andrey Vovk (2638) as white against GM Leif Erlend Johannessen (2497) went for a Scotch and came slightly better from the opening.

Black after 11.--- d5 still had a fair position, but probably overestimated his compensation when allowing black to snatch a testimony pawn at b7 a few moves later. Black had some compensation even in the rooks and knight endgame, but his long term perspectives were depressing, as white was a pawn up with a three versus one majority on the queenside.

Struggling to find a plan, Johannessen had 18 seconds left on the clock after 30 moves, and was about to lose on time when resigning a lost position after 37 moves.

IM Nikita Meskovs (2469) as white against GM Evgeny Romanov (2635) opted out of the long theory discussions with 1.Nf3 2.e3 and 3.b4.

Given time to establish a space advantage with 10.--- d4, black had no problems equalizing. Chances still remained about balanced and the position double-edged around move 16-17.

18.cxd5? however was a misunderstood tactical exchange, as black soon got dangerous pressure in the diagonal a8-h1. 22.Rxg7+?! in turn was a creative but still insufficient exchange sacrifice from white – as black got an extra exchange AND the much more dangerous attack...

GM Yuri Vovk (2611) and IM Johan Salomon (2452) discussed a Queen's Indian opening line with 4.Bf4, in which black aggressively went for kingside counterplay with 9.--- f5. Probably it was too aggressive, as white's natural plan with 10. exf5 11.d5 and 12.Nd4 soon gave him a clear advantage. Although black in the endgame succeeded getting some counterplay against the white king of f4, white upheld the pressure, which turned into a winning advantage as he just before 40 moves won two bishops for rook and pawn.

As white's pair of bishops was about to become machine guns, black after 40 moves gave up one of his rooks for one of the bishops, hoping to scrape a draw with rook versus rook, bishop and "wrong" h-pawn. The older Vovk brother (of course) kept his stone face and demonstrated excellent knowledge of this difficult endgame.

IM Johan-Sebastian Christiansen (2401) as white against GM Arturs Neikšans (2607) went for a careful Reti opening, which looked symmetric, equal and rather boring after an early queen exchange. The GM however made up the better planning afterwards, and 17.b4?! might have been too weakening for the white queenside.

22.Bf4? was a creative tactical exchange plan from white, but still it increased black's advantage as the following endgame with rook, knight and five pawns versus rook, bishop and five pawns was much easier to play for him.

After winning one of the loose white kingside pawns after 24 moves, black had remarkably few problems winning the rook endgame with c- and h-pawns versus c-pawn.



FM Lars Oskar Hauge (2393) played 1.e4 against GM Nick de Firmian (2508) and somewhat unexpectedly got an Alekhine opening back.

A typical Alekhine struggle followed, in which white had a space advantage, and black some active pieces.

Black was at least equal after 14.--- e5 and came better after 19.Nc3? Qa5!, as black got a promising initiative for the sacrificed pawn.

25.Bc4? actually was a blunder white got away with, as both players somehow overlooked 25.--- Rxc4! 26.Qxc4 Re2 with a decisive threat against g2. Black anyway kept an attack, and within a few moves forced white to give up his queen for insufficient material.

GM Kjetil A. Lie (2535) unexpectedly played 1.g3 but did not get much water out of the white stones against IM Jovanka Houska (2387) – as black equalized with a sound Bg4-set up.

White still kept a very slight initiative all the way into a queen and rook endgame circling around white's passed pawn on d6. Allowing a queen exchange with 34...fxg3? probably was the decisive mistake from black.

The rook endgame anyway proved too difficult for Houska, as she could never eliminate the d7-pawn without stumbling into a lost pawn endgame.

The Norwegian duel between IM Nicolai Getz (2407) and FM Vegar Koi Gandrud (2300) was a Sicilian Najdorf, in which black despite his backward pawn at d6 appeared healthy in the middle game. As white for some unknown reason first gave black the pair of bishops and then opened up the position, black was clearly better around move 27-33.

Under pressure on the clock with a double-edged position on the board, Gandrud however first put his king in an exposed position on f6 – and then blundered it all away with a much too loose rook sacrifice on h3.

FM Anders Hobber (2326) as white against FM Eivind Risting (2102) went for a patient London system. White got a space advantage as black exchanged on d4 and allowed white to play d5. Later white most of the time had an initiative, which during mutual time pressure turned into a decisive attack on the black queen.

1-0 after 42 moves, although black still had three pawns for a piece – as his kingside was about to collapse.

FM Johannes Haug (2267) and Monika Machlik (2055) meanwhile discussed a rare and provocative Caro-Kann line with 3...c5?!. Something went wrong with black's arguments as she proved unable to keep her extra pawn at c4, and soon came under pressure after returning it.

Later 16...Nxe5? was a natural but still much too helpful exchange, as white got a direct attack on black's b7-pawn. Having picked up the pawn and exchanged down to a rook endgame, white due to his three to one queenside majority had a short and pleasant journey to the full point.



Anton Darnell (2110) today tried to blow up the Dutch opening of IM Petter Haugli (2244) with 3.h3?! and 4.g4?!.

It all backfired badly as white spent 90 minutes for 12 moves and still came clearly worse on the board, after black instructively hit back in the center with Ne4 and c5. With his king stuck on e1 white had to sacrifice a pawn to exchange queens. While Darnell speeded up and fought on well, Haugli made some inaccuracies, hence the given 32.Rxe5 probably could

have scraped a draw in the rook endgame. For unknown reasons Darnell preferred to eliminate the a-pawn, after which black's two connected pawns in the center soon decided the game.

Tor Fredrik Kaasen (2209) versus FM Richard Bjerke (2109) was another refreshing generation battle. It all started with a Trompovsky opening in which white had the better pawn structure and a space advantage, while black had a pair of bishops and some kingside chances.

In a middle game with white's king stuck on f1 and black's queen stuck on h2, the position jumped back and forth between messy and much better for white.

White played on for a win in the endgame, and was rewarded as black short of time allowed promotion of white's a-pawn.

Then white however started to make time trouble mistakes, and after 42 moves a demanding position with queen, rook and one pawn versus rook, bishop, knight and two pawns came on board. As black's pieces remained disturbingly active, a draw was agreed by repetition of checks a few moves later on.



Andreas Fossan (left) and Trygve Dahl

The Norwegian junior duel Sigve Hølleland (2107) vs Trygve Dahl (2201) started up with 1.c4 f5. This "Anglo" version of a Dutch opening used to be considered over-ambitious for black, but worked out very well as white remained hesitant on the queenside, while black soon accelerated with f4 on the kingside.

As black had played g4 and f3 without having to worry about the queenside, he reached a winning position well before 20 moves. 0-1 after 28 moves and two hours – as black was a piece up and about to mate the white king.

Jens Hjort Kjølberg (2164) and Andreas Fossan (2069) made a slow start with a closed Slav, in which white after Nh4xg6 got a pair of bishops and a slight initiative.

After the position opened, it for two hours circled around white's hanging pawns in the d- and e-file. Ultimately the hanging pawns became too strong after advancing to d6 and e5. As black's passed pawn on a3 never became more than slightly disturbing, white won an exchange in the fifth hour and used it to complete the attack in the sixth hour.

Edit Machlik (2056) and WGM Anastasia Gutsko (2154) both delayed development in a Classical Nimzo-Indian opening. White definitely had the better excuse for not developing, as she had a pair of bishops and after d5 established a promising space advantage.

The space advantage turned into a winning positional advantage as white after 29 moves was allowed to play 29.fxe5+ followed by 30.e6, especially after black wasted her chance to sacrifice a piece for the pawn monster.

A tense time-trouble duel followed, as white's king on h2 was a bit exposed after the kingside opened. Probably Edit Machlik (and her e6-pawn) had it all under control, and anyway she in the fifth hour completed the attack with an instructive Rg2-Rg4 maneuver – leaving black's paralyzed pieces in the h- and g-file.

Gutsko stopped the clock and went for dinner after 52 moves, as black had to give up her queen for a rook without solving the problems of her king.

Henrik Øie Løbersli (2134) as white against Joar Gullestad Pettersen (2062) went for a closed Catalan without e4, in which black equalized without any problems in the opening. In the middle game something went seriously wrong for white, as black's d-pawn advanced all up to d3 with a strong initiative. White probably was in trouble anyway when he during mutual time pressure blundered an exchange with 32.e5? d2!. Cashing in the exchange and controlling his clock better today, Pettersen in the fifth hour had no problems realizing the win with queen, rook, bishop five pawns versus queen, bishop, knight and four pawns.



Ranaldi – Grønnestad with E.Machlik and Løbersli in the background.

WFM Anita Grønnestad (1957) versus Lucas Ranaldi (2132) was an English fianchetto looking all the more like a King's Indian Fianchetto.

While white spent 50 minutes for the first 12 moves without finding a good middle game plan, black instructively directed his pieces against white's c4-pawn - and took it. Sacrificing an exchange on c4 later was an overreaction from white, although a very understandable one. As Grønnestad ran short of time while Ranaldi efficiently used his chances, black was a sound rook up in endgame when white stopped the clock after 33 moves.

IM-group

Whether 15 year old Sondre Merkesvik is considered an IM-norm candidate or not, he has had a great start on this IM-group after drawing GM Aloyzas Kveinys from a better position.

The higher rated IM-candidates had a troublesome start today: After three hours FM Erlend Mikalsen had been crushed by GM Stellan Brynell, while FM Joachim B. Nilsen was still in deep trouble against WIM Sheila Barth Sahl – and FM Sebastian Mihajlov was about to get in trouble against GM Marc Narciso Dublan.

Within one and a half hour Mihajlov however turned the tide and scraped a draw in the endgame, while Nilsen turned the board all around and won following a tactical blow at move 41. The game between GM Heikki Westerinen and Eric Moskow was a sound draw, hence Merkesvik, Kveinys, Brynell and Nilsen are now sharing the lead at 1.5/2.



Nilsen vs Sahl with Brynell on the next board.

FM Erlend Mikalsen (2333) and GM Stellan Brynell (2417) discussed a Classical French in which white had a tempting knight on d6, but black was fine if not better as he got the thematic counterplay with f6-g5.

15.fxe5?? was a positional and tactical blunder, as black could sacrifice his knight on e5 for two center pawns and a killing attack.

After 22 moves white had a piece for two pawns, but stopped the clock as his offside knight on h4 could no way help to defend the king on d1 – and so the alternative was to give up the queen for about nothing.

WIM Sheila Sahl (2195) played hard for a win with a razor blade preparation against FM Joachim B. Nilsen (2397) and his Sicilian Dragon opening. White bravely castled long and went for a kingside pawn storm with 15.g4 and 16.h5.

Nilsen soon lagged 50 minutes behind on the clock, and appeared to be in deep trouble on the board after sacrificing an exchange on d5. In a critical position 19... e6? was a mistake, allowing white a decisive attack with 20.Bxg7! Nxg7 21.Bb3!. As white mysteriously did not want to exchange on g7 until black could take back with the queen, black still got some counterplay with both players about to run seriously short of time.

From a computer perspective, white with an extra exchange and a passed pawn on b5 was winning around move 25-34. From a human perspective, the position still was very demanding to handle for both. White won her battle against the flag, but along the road made some inaccuracies in between move 35 and 40. Following this the position with queen, two rooks and four pawns versus queen, rook, knight and four pawns after the time control was very messy.

White considered the position for ten minutes and then blundered with 41.Rf1?!, overlooking a beautiful tactical 41... Nd1! > 42.Qb2xQd4 Rc1 mate.

Nilsen in turn considered the position for nine minutes, but then placed the knight on d1 – and white had to throw in the scoresheets two moves later.

GM Marc Narciso Dublan (2549) versus FM Sebastian Mihajlov (2387) was a Slav in which the queens were exchanged on b3 after 7 moves, leaving black with the better pawn structure and white with the a-file.

Mihajlov decided to repair white's pawn structure by exchanging a knight on c3. The remaining endgame with two rooks, one bishop and six pawns on each side looked drawish. White due to his a-file however still had a slight initiative, and succeeded to increase his advantage by breaking up the queenside.

Having only two minutes left on the clock, Dublan however chickened out with 34.e5?, when the passed b-pawn appeared promising for white after 34.Rxc6!. Mihajlov immediately used his chance to safeguard c6 while exchanging various other pawns, and Dublan agreed to draw the game by repetition of moves immediately after 40 moves.

Sondre Merkesvik (2230) and GM Aloyzas Kveinys (2534) were the two only players winning in the first round. Their opening now was some kind of King's Indian fianchetto, in which black went for an unusual plan with Qa5-Qa6-b5.

Black was able to secure his position with 13... d5, but white got first a slight initiative and then a pair of bishops. With white about to run short of time, black probably did right to hit in the center with 21... e5. Exchanging the bishop on e5 next move however looked dubious, as white and his remaining bishop got a promising pressure against the black isolani pawn on d5.

Draw agreed in a hurry after 23 moves – as Kveinys was not satisfied with his position, and as Merkesvik although enjoying his position was short of time and (understandably) satisfied to draw a 2500-GM.

GM Heikki Westerinen (2319) and Eric Moskow (2116) meanwhile discussed a Sicilian with 3.Bb5+, looking all the more like a French opening after black played 9... d5 and white replied 10.e5.

Both players spent much time exchanging all the minor pieces, and then agreed to a 26 moves draw – fair enough as black's counterplay against the c3 pawn still balanced the chances.

Open Norwegian Championship

Following the very pleasant welcome evening, the top ten rated in the Open Norwegian Championship got a much more painful afternoon on the second day. At the end of the day, only two players from top eight of the ELO list was among the eight players left with a 100 % score!

The favorites looked shaky from the start today.

Second seeded FM Ward Al-Tarbosh (2160) true enough dominated a Sicilian Dragon duel against Yonne Tangelder (1925), and demonstrated a winning kingside attack before 30 moves.

Following one of his less successful black openings, first rated Johannes Kvisla (2253) at that stage however was a pawn down with an awkward position as black against the talented 13 year old Daniel Nordquelle (1932). As Nordquelle was about to run short of time, Kvisla however efficiently used his chance to open the kingside against white's king with a tactical 31...g5!

And as white was hit by panic, black within a few more moves had a decisive attack plus a material advantage.

So far so good from a top rated player point of view.

Keeping aside that seventh rated Håkon Bentsen (2058) won a patient working day win as black against veteran Jan Arne Bjørgvik (1827), the rest of the favorites however got little to celebrate.

Third rated Terje Lund (2157) had an active position from the opening as black against 12 year old talent Bjørn Robertsen (1919), but found nothing better than exchanging down to an endgame in which white was closer to winning chances than black.

Fourth seeded Christian Laverton (2096) got nothing as white against 15 year old August Berntsen-Øybø (1862), and the game later balanced into a drawn endgame.

Fifth rated Arne Hagesæther (2081) became too eager to snatch kingside pawns with his queen, and lost as black after his 17 year old opponent Kimiya Sajjadi (1835) first forced black to give up the queen and then used her queen to complete the attack against black's king. This game qualifies as a small sensation and a very good performance from Kimiya, although she is obviously underrated.

Sixth seeded Endre Machlik (2076) meanwhile had an initiative in the knight endgame but failed to overcome the stubborn defence of the Finn representative Tomi Tocklin (1832), while eight seeded Jon Machlik (2027) was lucky to scrape a draw from a lost endgame against unpredictable Bjarne Engevik (1780).

Kai-Roger Johansen (1968) refused a draw and tried hard to win a drawish endgame against Aina Marie Svendsen (1690). It turned out he tried too hard, as Aina Marie suddenly won all his remaining pawns in the knight versus bishop endgame.

In short, the favorites today won on the top two boards in this group, but struggled on most of the others. Among the surprising results was unrated chess daddy Karl Sebastian winning as black against Johannes Melkevik (2049), after Melkevik suddenly blundered in a drawish double rook endgame.

Sjakknytt-editor Kristoffer Gressli (1717) also looked very well satisfied with life and chess today, winning first an exchange and then the game against Roaul Abrahamsson (1988).

First place at 2.0/2 following this is shared between Johannes Kvisla, Ward Al-Tarbosh, Håkon Bentsen, Kimiya Sajjadi, Aina Marie Svendsen, Kristoffer Gressli, David Maloberti and Håkon Haugsrud (the two latter winning more or less as expected against lower rated opponents).

Some more draws in this group today, but almost all the draws were hard fought surprise games – and 21 out of 30 games still had a winner.

Expect many more surprises and much more entertainment from this unpredictable group during the double round!!

All photos: Tom Eriksen