

THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT 4



GM-group

Although IM Frode Urkedal and GM Evgeny Romanov made a short draw, the second half of the double round became a hard-fought one on the top boards as well. The sharks steam upward as first-rated GM Sam Shankland gradually overcame GM Kjetil A Lie with the black pieces, while GM Andrey Vovk succeeded realizing his extra pawn against GM Nick de Firmian.

Shankland and Andrey Vovk at 3.5/4 share the lead with fifth seeded GM Arturs Neiksans, deciding a strong positional game with a beautiful tactical blow as black against the older Vovk brother Yuri.

The group of hunters at 3.0/4 in addition to Romanov and Urkedal includes Norwegian GM Leif Erlend Johannessen and IM Johan Salomon, as Johannessen completed a sound win while Salomon succeeded turning the tide in a shaky game today.



GM Kjetil A Lie (2535) on the first board against first rated GM Sam Shankland (2648) today made modest start with a Reti opening, but then accelerated with a pawn storm on the kingside.

Shankland after castling long had no problems equalizing. Black definitely came better as white after 25 moves forgot to insert an exchange on f6 before playing b4. The crowded endgame with two bishops, one knight and six pawns on each side still

appeared to give white fair drawing chances.

Having five minutes left for eleven moves Lie however lost his remaining control of the pieces, and he was anyway lost when blundering into a mating net after 35 moves.

GM Nick de Firmian (2508) gave his Alekhine a critical test as black against GM Andrey Vovk (2638). Black apparently was fine from the opening, but white's pair of bishops gave him the better long term perspectives. Black got rid of the bishop pair problem by exchanging his dark squared bishops, but was under heavy pressure on the light squares when giving up a pawn with 25.--- Ne7?.

Andrey Vovk efficiently cashed in the pawn, and although black resigned a bit early after 40 moves white's extra a-pawn should be decisive in the endgame with queen, bishop and four pawns versus queen, knight and three pawns.

IM Frode Urkedal (2507) and GM Evgeny Romanov (2635) much earlier went from an approximately balanced Catalan opening to a very balanced endgame with two rooks, bishop and four pawns against two rooks, knight and four pawns.

The third board players quietly left the venue with a draw and a solid 3.0/4 after one and a half hour.



The fourth board with Ukraine GM Yuri Vovk (2611) vs Latvian GM Arturs Neiksans (2607) continued as a Queen's Indian with 4.Bf4, in which black equalized completely by a direct 7... Nh5 and 8... Nxf4.

A complex strategic battle followed, but black and his bishops gradually came better as white never found any kingside attack. The diagonal h1-a8 became all the more vulnerable for white, and this proved decisive as Neiksans neatly decided with a

tactical 29... Qxd2! > 30.Qe2xd2 Ba8xf3 followed by 31... Rh8-h1 mate.

The Norwegian prestige duel between IM Johan-Sebastian Christiansen (2401) and GM Leif E. Johannessen (2497) started as a Queen's Indian fianchetto opening, and continued with a tense middle game fight.

White's decision to sacrifice an exchange at c7 at move 25 was creative but probably also dubious, as black gradually could improve his position and landed in a safely won endgame.

Johannessen celebrated the win by taking out a walk-over draw for the fifth round, while Christiansen so far looks much more convincing as black against untitled opponents than as white against GMs.

The IM duel Jovanka Houska (2393) vs Johan Salomon (2452) was an accepted Queen's Gambit in which black exchanged his bishop for a knight at f3, after which white's pair of bishops and center space gave her a promising advantage. The advantage looked close to winning after white by 19.d5 opened the position for her bishops.

Black came back into the game as white for still mysterious reasons gave up her a3-pawn a few moves later. The endgame with one rook, two minor pieces and four pawns on each side later looked drawish – until white overlooked a tactical trick, and forced herself into a lost endgame with rook and four pawns versus two knights and four pawns.



IM Johan Salomon

IM Nikita Meskovs (2469) vs FM Vegar Gandrud (2300) started as a Symmetric English in which white gave up his bishop for a knight on c6, after which black with a fine pair of bishops and a nice knight on d5 first appeared fine.

White succeeded activating his knights and had a strong initiative around move 25-30, but the advantage jumped over to black as white tactics gave black queen, two bishops and one knight against queen and two rooks.

Further tactical complications from white further improved black's position, and after 55 moves the position with queen, two bishops and two pawns against queen, rook and two pawns appeared winning for black.

The position still was very demanding to handle for both players, and after black allowed a queen exchange he failed to win with two bishops and e-pawn versus rook and d-pawn. A game of many mistakes, this still was an extremely interesting and hard-fought 95 moves draw.



IM Nicolai Getz (2407) and Lucas Ranaldi (2132) also had a long and hard draw, starting as a Sicilian Najdorf duel in which white castled long and apparently had a promising position.

Around move 25-30 white for sure had a winning attack. Although exchanging queens was unnecessary, white playing with the better pawns and the more active pieces still looked close to winning with rook, two bishops and seven pawns against

rook, bishop, knight and seven pawns. Ranaldi however fought on bravely, and as Getz ran short of time black got the necessary help to escape into a drawish minor piece endgame.

FM Lars Oskar Hauge (2393) versus FM Richard Bjerke (2109) started as a French Tarrasch duel, in which white's space and bishops gave him a promising advantage. Black's position still was hard to crack in a rather closed position, and as Hauge failed to find the critical plans black escaped into an opposite colored bishop endgame which was a dead draw.

Edit Machlik (2056) and IM Petter Haugli (2244) tested out a Semi-Slav Anti-Meran line in which white played e4 with a space advantage.

White probably was better from the opening, but Haugli efficiently countered with 18...c5, 19...cxd4 and 20...f6 in a tactically loaded middle game.

Sacrificing a knight for two pawns with 21.Nxg6!? was consequent from white, but not really believing in it she failed to find the critical continuation afterwards.

Although a natural attack on black's disturbing knight on f4, 26.g3? was a losing mistake as black after 26...Qc6! suddenly had killing threats in the diagonal a8-h1.

A great game by the practical fighter Haugli, but Edit Machlik is still in the WIM-norm run after losing it.

Trygve Dahl (2201) and Eivind Risting (2102) discussed a long Sicilian Sveshnikov line for 20 moves, but then agreed to draw it in a dynamically balanced position with opposite colored bishops.

FM Johannes Haug (2267) and WGM Anastasia Gutsko (2154) quarreled about a Caro-Kann advance line and continued for some hours more. Following some tactical exchanges white had two ugly looking d-pawns, but due to his active knights and pressure against e6 he still was clearly better. Gutsko however defended well in a difficult position, and white found nothing better than a double edged line in which he got rook and two pawns for two knights. White still was closer to something when he offered a draw after 45 moves.

Jens Hjort Kjølberg (2164) versus Joar G. Pettersen (2062) was a Dutch fianchetto opening in which white got a strong knight outpost on e5 and a promising pressure against black's backward e6-pawn. 17.--- b5? was a blunder losing the e6-pawn with check, after which white soon had an extra pawn AND a killing attack.

Both players made some mistakes during the next ten moves, but the result was not much to discuss as white was winning all the time and about a wood up in the final position.

18 year old Henrik Løbersli (2134) and 13 year old Tor Fredrik Kaasen (2209) investigated a Classical French opening line in which white failed to come up with anything disturbing on the kingside, leaving black with a promising queenside pressure.

Although black's position was very pleasant after queens and the light squared bishops were exchanged, white after 22 moves still appeared to have drawing chances in the endgame with two rooks, knight and six pawns on each side. Kaasen however succeeded demonstrating that white's c2-pawn was fatally weak, and the double-rook endgame was not too exciting as black's passed pawn on b2 won a rook within a few moves.



Monika Machlik (2055) versus WFM Anita Grønnestad (1957) was a Semi-Slav Anti-Meran line having many similarities to the above mentioned game E. Machlik – Haugli. White came better after realizing e4, but stumbled into problems as she allowed a tactical e5-advance.

As both players ran short of time for 40 moves black made the better calculations, and as both players passed the time control she had a won endgame with two rooks and

four pawns against two rooks and two pawns. While Grønnestad became too careful, Machlik fought on well, and escaped into a drawish endgame with rook, g- and h-pawn versus rook, b-, g- and h-pawn.

With both players having less than five minutes left to complete the game the position jumped a bit back and forth between a draw and win for black. Finally ahead on the clock in a wild time trouble duel, Machlik for some confused moments refused a draw. This catfight still ended up with a well deserved draw, as Grønnestad with one second against eight seconds on the clock demanded and got a draw.



Anton Darnell (2110) as white against Sigve Hølleland (2107) went for a solid London system, which became much less solid as white exchanged on e4 and opened the-file for black.

Hølleland in an optimistic mood started a kingside attack, snatched a pawn on b2, and following some tactical exchanges landed safely in an overwhelming rook and bishop endgame before 30 moves.

IM-group

In tonight's round of the closed IM-group, GM Aloyzas Kveinys was worse after 13 moves - but still won within 26 as black against Eric Moskow. Second rated Kveinys following this had made a very strong start with 3.5/4, and is leading alone.

First rated GM Marc Narciso Dublan finally succeeded winning a game after five hours of a closed and complex French battle against FM Erlend Mikalsen. Mikalsen at 1.0/4 is more or less out as an IM-norm candidate, and so is FM Sebastian Mihajlov following another tactical collapse as black against Sondre Merkesvik.

15 year old Merkesvik at 2.5/4 can still make it with a strong second half, and FM Joachim B. Nilsen at 3.0/4 is ahead of schedule for the magic 6.0/9 IM-norm after a short draw with black against GM Heikki Westerinen.

Nilsen shares second place with GM Stellan Brynell, as the Swedish GM convincingly dismantled the apparently solid position of WIM Sheila Barth Sahl this round.

The young teenage duel Sondre Merkesvik (2230) vs FM Sebastian Mihajlov (2387) started with a modern black double fianchetto vs the g3-Kings Indian, offering more or less equal chances after 14 moves.

14.--- Qb7?? however was a blunder, as the bishop on e4 was short of squares after 15.f3!. Black in panic tried to complicate with 15.--- g5?!, but lost an exchange without any compensation and soon drifted into a lost endgame.

Mihajlov following this very disappointing double round now needs 5/5 to make a norm, while Merkesvik at 2.5/4 is still in the run.

FM Erlend Mikalsen (2333) and GM Marc Narciso Dublan (2549) made a complex start with a French Winawer line which black plays 3.--- Bf8-b4, 4.--- b7-b6 and 5.--- Bb4-f8.

In a very closed position, black castled long and got his kingside counterplay with 19.--- f6!.

It followed a tight five-hour battle in which white was better on occasions and black was better most of the time, while both failed to make anything concrete out of the advantage when they had it.

After 50 moves black was a pawn down, playing with two isolated c-pawns and two isolated f-pawns – but the position still was in dynamic balance.

Black came better after his king coolly picked up a pawn at a6 a few moves later on.

Taking into account that black had only two minutes left on the clock, white still had chances until he blundered with 59. Qe1?? – overlooking a tactical Bxf4+ 60.g3 Bxg3+! which immediately decided the game.

Mikalsen also has had a disappointing start and also needs 5/5 to make an IM- norm out of this, while Dublan finally won a game and is lurking at 2.5/4.



Eric Moskow (2116) and GM Aloyzas Kveinys (2534) discussed a Modern opening in which white got a space advantage and probably was better around move 12-13. Exchanging of the dark-squared bishops with 14.Be5?! and 15.Bxg7?! only helped black, but the position after 18 moves still appeared balanced.

The next moves however revealed black's superior understanding of the position as

white's Qf4-Qg4-Qh3 only hit some holes in the air on the kingside, while black after Rac8 and Bc4 had a real attack on the queenside.

White in a crumbling cockpit collapsed with 24.Kh2? and 25.Nb1?, and admitted the failure by 26.resigning.

1.0/4 still is above expected for Moskow, while efficient Kveinys has had a great start with 3.5/4.

GM Heikki Westerinen (2319) and FM Joachim B. Nilsen (2397) agreed to a draw after 13 moves in a Ruy Lopez.

72 year old Westerinen was satisfied to draw a higher rated opponent after losing in the first half of the double round, while Nilsen was satisfied to keep his +2 as black against a GM.

Sheila Barth Sahl (2195) versus GM Stellan Brynell (2417) was another French Winawer duel, in which black had no problems after exchanging his "bad" light squared bishop with Bc8-a6.

With three sets of minor pieces exchanged, white still looked solid and the position still looked close to equal after 20 moves. Black however soon got an attack after placing his remaining knight on f4. About to run short of both time and moves white blundered with 26.c4? – overlooking a tactical Rxd4!.

The rest was a study in pain for Sahl, ending after 36 moves as white's tactical cramps turned out to win a queen for black.

Open Norwegian Championship



The meeting between the two top rated players in the **Open Norwegian Championship** unfortunately became an anti-climax, as FM Ward Al-Tarbosh (2160) played much too fast and carelessly in a demanding Ruy Lopez line, and stumbled into a decisive attack before 20 moves as white against Johannes Kvisla (2253). Kvisla completed very efficiently and is leading very well deserved at 4.0/4.



Kvisla is leading alone as the wild tactical King's Indian duel between Christian Laverton (2096) and David Maloberti (2021) in the fifth hour more or less unbelievably ended with a draw.

Maloberti for sure missed some wins today, but still of course can proud of his 3.5/4.

The hunter group at 3.5/4 also includes Endre Machlik (2076) and Håkon Bentsen (2058), both winning fairly impressively against lower rated opponents today.

16 year old Tromsø junior Endre Machlik will be another interesting opponent for Kvisla tomorrow.

The last challenger at 3.5/4 is Kristiansund player Thomas Nyland (2018), who after six hours succeeded winning an extremely interesting and changing endgame against 12 year old Jens Ingebretsen (1755).

17 year old Kimya Sajjadi (1835) is still undefeated, and this means that the very solid second rated Terje Lund (2157) still struggles to defeat his lower rated opponents.

Fifth rated Arne Hagesæther (2081) also is down at 2.5/4 with a long walking distance to top three, as he today failed to defeat the heavily underrated Sjakknytt-editor Kristoffer Gressli (1717). The fighting spirit was remarkable also in the second half of this double round, as only five out of 30 games in the Open ended without a winner.