

THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT 5



GM-group

Round five became somewhat of a pause signal in the GM Swiss, as four out of the top five boards were drawn. The exception was GM Yuri Vovk, recovering from his loss yesterday by a 27-move win as black against IM Petter Haugli.

This round got one surprising game result as FM Anders Hobber with black won a messy attacking battle against still too shaky IM Nikita Meskovs. Hobber unfortunately cannot make an IM-norm due to his walk over draw yesterday, hence the tournament still has no obvious title norm candidate.

On the other hand the fight for the top prizes looks very exciting, as GM Andrey Vovk, GM Arturs Neiksans and GM Sam Shankland are now sharing the lead at 4.0/5 – only half a point ahead of GM Evgeny Romanov, IM Frode Urkedal, GM Yuri Vovk, GM Leif Erlend Johannessen AND IM Johan Salomon!



The first board GM Sam Shankland (2648) vs GM Andrey Vovk (2638) was a Sicilian in which white apparently had a promising position after he castled long and exchanged his bishop for a knight on f6.

After castling long himself and realizing the e5-break, black however reached balanced chances.

A tense struggle followed, as white had some kingside initiative while black tried to get a queenside attack despite his king on b8. White refused an interesting pawn sacrifice at move 23, and the very next move instead sacrificed an exchange for a pawn.

Somewhat disappointingly, the idea turned out to be a draw by repetition of moves.

Playing with an exchange for a pawn black probably was better and could have continued for a win, but not without risks in a chronically complex position.



On second board GM Arturs Neikšans (2607) and GM Evgeny Romanov (2635) played an Italian opening in which black went for a kingside attack with h6-g5-Nh5, hunting white's bishop around via h4 and g3 to f2. White looked slightly better due to his center, but as black hit back with a d5-break, the position after 25 moves was in some kind of dynamic balance.

Both sides later made many good and no really bad moves. Hence chances remained balanced all the way into a bishop endgame in which black had the better pawn structure, but due to opposite colored bishops had no winning chances whatsoever.



The Norwegian IM duel Johan Salomon (2452) vs Frode Urkedal (2507) started up with a Queen's Indian, but turned into a vacuum cleaner as all the minor pieces disappeared within 18 moves.

The game was drawn after 20 moves as the queens were about to be exchanged as well, leaving a very drawish double rook endgame with six pawns on each side.

Both players are doing well now, but after his slow start Salomon probably should have won

this game really to be in the GM-norm run.

GM Yuri Vovk (2611) was an odds one favorite as black against IM Petter Haugli (2244), and won in 27 moves. Still it was an exciting game.

Vovk appeared to have some kind of long preparation ready for this Rubinstein Nimzo-Indian duel, and spending only 13 minutes for 25 moves he came one hour ahead on the clock.

On the board was a tense position with queen, rook, bishop and seven pawns against queen, rook, bishop and six pawns, as black had sacrificed his c7-pawn to establish a passed pawn on d3.

Although black obviously had compensation, all three outcomes still were possible.

27.h4? however was a very serious mistake based upon a blunder, overlooking that black after 27... Qg4 28.Rc1?? could decide the game with a crushing 28... Bxg2!.

GM Nick de Firmian (2508) and GM Kjetil A Lie (2535) was a Sicilian game making an exciting start with an Accelerated Dragon setup. But then the players just exchanged two set of minor pieces and agreed to a draw after 15 moves.

IM Nikita Meskovs (2469) versus FM Anders Hobber (2326) started up as a Semi-Slav setup in which black appeared fine after getting the time needed to play Bg4 and Bxf3. White's search for a kingside attack with h4 soon backfired, as his own king at e2 became much more airy than the black king at g8. Having 15 minutes left for 17 moves in a still complex position, black by some helpful mistakes made the game exciting again. Still white had the more exposed king all of the time, and his position collapsed as black after 29 moves was about to open all the center files. With both players having three minutes left for six moves, black had the much easier position to handle, and he was about to win a ton of material when white after 37 moves stopped the clock. Hobber following his walk-over draw in the fourth round cannot make an IM-norm, but anyway has had a very promising comeback tournament so far. Meskovs of course is completely out of order as a GM norm candidate, and succeeds only in keeping his good mood so far.

Teammates FM Richard Bjerke (2109) and IM Nicolai Getz (2407) discussed a Classical and positional King's Indian line in which white established a space advantage with 9.d5. Probably white was clearly better both before and after he exchanged the d-pawn on c6. After 23 moves black however had got the necessary help to activate his pieces, and 24.Nd5?? was a much too loose piece sacrifice. Still a master of tactical calculations, Getz cashed in the piece and after 32 moves he had demonstrated a winning attack. 32.--- e3! by the way was a nice final stroke in this game, as white would lose his own queen and some more material within three moves if taking the black queen at f7.



Christiansen vs Gandrud (front) and Getz vs Bjerke (back).

FM Vegar Gandrud (2300) and IM Johan-Sebastian Christiansen (2401) started up with a Reti opening in which white got a pair of bishops and black a sound development.

13.—d4?! and 14.--- c5?! probably was overambitious, as white countered with f4 and got a kingside advantage. Black's ambitious plan however was rewarded after 17.dxc4?, as black could (and did) play d3! 18.Qxd3 Nc5 with a strong initiative.

This very hard-fought game became the longest of the GM-group so far, and continued to jump back and forth after white won two minor pieces for rook and two pawns.

Black had the better pieces in the endgame, but all pawns were gone when he finally got rook against bishop. With both players having less than five minutes left for the game, black continued for 60 moves, but white defended very well and got his well deserved draw after 114 moves – when white had two minutes and black less than one minute left for the game.

FM Eivind Risting (2102) and FM Lars Oskar Hauge (2393) entered a long and positionally complex Catalan line in which white came a pawn up, but with a somewhat vulnerable kingside as white had given up his fianchetto bishop on g2 for a knight.

Computer programs of course still claims that white was better in the middle game, but practically speaking the position was much easier to play for black. Hauge of course went for a kingside attack, but Risting for a long while defended well and the outcome still was open after 30 moves.

31.f4! probably would have given white a clear advantage. Instead 31.Rd1? was a serious mistake allowing black to intervene with 31.--- Qe3 – and then 32.e5?? was a terrible blunder overlooking a mate on e1.



Houska vs Ranaldi (front) and Hauge vs Risting (back).

Lucas Ranaldi (2132) versus IM Jovanka Houska (2387) was a Queen's Gambit leading to an isolated pawn position, in which white after exchanging three sets of minor pieces was slightly better due to his control on the key square d4. Houska probably was interested in playing for a win, but had no way to do so. Ranaldi on the other

hand had some chances to play for a win, but was not interested in testing them.

Hence the game was drawn upon black's suggestion after 25 moves, when white still was slightly better in a symmetric rook endgame.

FM Johannes Haug (2267) and Jens Hjort Kjølberg (2164) tested out some kind of a Kan Sicilian in which black after 17 moves had no piece or pawn ahead the third rank, but still probably was fine. H5-h4-hxg3 and d5 however was too active, as the position opened in favor of white. After 30 moves he just won black's d5-pawn with a clear advantage, and black's try to complicate with a piece sacrifice only made it even more complicated for him to survive.



Edit Machlik

The Tromsø junior meeting Tor Fredrik Kaasen (2209) vs Edit Machlik (2056) made a modest start with a relatively slow Rubinstein line of Nimzo-Indian.

Black's position looked sound after three sets of minor pieces were exchanged, although white kept a slight pressure as his bishop on d6 was more active better than black's knight d7.

With black about to run short of time, the position circled around a double edged white pawn on f6.

Computer programs consider the pawn

more weak than strong, but from a human perspective white had more tactical chances and the easier position to play. Even the computers preferred white after black weakened her kingside with 26... h5?

Six moves later black in a demanding position and short of time became too naive when taking the pawn at f6 with her king – as white immediately and elegantly finished off the game with 33.Rxg6+ > Rg8xg6 34.Qh6-f8 mate!

WGM Anastasia Gutsko (2154) versus Trygve Dahl (2201) was another typical Alekhine battle in which white had pawns in the center, while black had counterplay due to his active pieces. Black's remaining pieces became very active after an early queen exchange, especially as he after 30 moves succeeded doubling his rooks on the seventh rank.

Black eventually won a pawn, but despite his two passed queenside pawns he still had a hard time winning because of white's active rook and bishop. Dahl somehow somewhere should have been able to win this. Gutsko however fought on very well today, and succeeded to scrape a draw after winning back one of black's queenside pawns in the sixth hour.

WFM Anita Grønnestad (1957) as white against Henrik Øie Løbersli (2134) went for another Catalan opening, but not willing to run any risk she played Qa4+ and Qxc4 to get back the pawn when black took at c4. Winning some tempos for his queenside development by attacking the white queen, black soon had the more active position in the middle game.

After 25 moves black was better, but still far from winning, with queen, rook, bishop, knight and five pawns versus queen, rook, two knight and five pawns. A tense struggle circling around white's passed b-pawn and black's passed c-pawn followed.

Finally having won the white b-pawn, black anyway was winning when white in the rook and knight endgame overlooked a tactical 52... Rxf2+! and stumbled into a mating net.

Sigve Hølleland (2107) versus Joar Gullestad Pettersen (2062) saw another Catalan duel. This one remained closed, and although white had a pair of bishops black appeared fine after an early queen exchange. The position with rook, bishop, knight and six pawns versus rook, two knights and six pawns after 20 moves looked very drawish due to the symmetric pawn structure.

While white found no active play, black gradually improved his position and got a disturbing queenside attack in the double minor piece endgame. Probably white still should have been able to save this endgame, but black had all the chances.

Anyway as the game went, Pettersen in an inspired mood intervened with his king and won both the white queenside pawns.



16 year old Andreas Fossan (2069) was the given opponent in today's chaotic time trouble duel for 18 year old Monika Machlik (2055).

Andreas and his pair of bishops might have been slightly better from the Bogo-Indian opening, but Monika came up with the better attack in a complex middle game, and won a pawn before entering the endgame with rook and knight versus rook and bishop.

The position still was complicated and both players had spent way too much time. Creative Monika with half a minute left on the clock turned down some safe plans for a won rook endgame, and instead tried to mate white's king on h2. The plan did not work out too well as white via h3 and g4 got his king around to the center. On the other hand black again made her move 40 without losing on time – again with a one-second margin. Monika played very well after first time control today, and the second time trouble duel never came as black demonstrated the win with knight and five versus bishop and four. Another pole out for Andreas – while Monika so far has produced a lot of entertainment, plus a performance just above her too low ELO.

In case anyone is wondering what happened with GM Leif Erlend Johannessen (2497) today, he celebrated that the first half of the tournament is over by taking out a walk-over draw to go skiing.

And in case anyone is wondering what happened with Anton Darnell (2110) today, he had to take a walk-over win because Johannessen had requested a walk-over draw.

IM-group

The closed IM-group saw a hard-fought round five, as the white players won this round 4.5-0.5. GM Aloyzas Kveinys still leads alone, now at an outstanding 4.5/9 after he won within 20 moves and 90 minutes as white against FM Erlend Mikalsen.

GM Marc Narciso Dublan is back on track, although he needed 10 moves and two hours more to defeat WIM Sheila Barth Sahl.

Among the norm candidates, FM Joachim B. Nilsen strengthened his impressive case further as he won in confident style as white against Eric Moskow. Other norm candidates on the other hand are behind schedule, although 15 year old Sondre Merkesvik improved his ELO gain further with a short draw against GM Stellan Brynell.

FM Sebastian Mihajlov repaired somewhat as he turned a lost endgame into a won endgame against GM Heikki Westerinen, but still needs four more wins to make a norm out of this.



GM Aloyzas Kveinys (2534) as white against FM Erlend Mikalsen (2333) went for 4.e3 against a Nimzo-Indian opening, but apparently changed his mind about the set up as he afterwards played 6.f3 and 7.e4. Sacrificing a pawn at c5 first looked a little loose, but white soon had more than enough initiative for the pawn.

Feeling his position crumbling black after 16 moves tried to hit back in the center with 16...e5?, but after 17.d5! black suddenly had a

concrete problem with his knight on c6. Black succeeded exchanging the queens, but resigned after 20 moves as his knight on a5 was doomed.

This was a nightmare game in a so far depressing tournament for Mikalsen, while Kveinys at 4.5/5 is doing even better than expected.



FM Joachim B. Nilsen (2397) as white against Eric Moskow (2116) made a slow start with a symmetric English opening.

Black had sound development, and white's d4-pawn at best gave him a slight plus.

Offering an exchange of queens at d5 after 17 moves was too helpful, as white afterwards had pleasant pressure against black pawns at d5 and a7. Black's try to sacrifice a pawn with 24...a5? later was understandable, but still only helped to

accelerate the fall as white's passed a-pawn became much stronger than black's passed b-pawn.

As Moskow ran seriously short of time white just won the black pawn on b4, and his running a-pawn combined with the open b-file won decisive material after 33 moves.

1.0/5 still is about as expected for Moskow against five higher rated opponents.

Nilsen at 4.0/5 is well above expected score, ahead of schedule for his first IM-norm and unshared second in the tournament.

GM Stellan Brynell (2417) and Sondre Merkesvik (2230) discussed a Grunfeld-Indian line in which black sacrificed a pawn at c5. Black's position looked fine after 11 moves, as he had exchanged queens on d1 and was about to win back the pawn at c5. Still it was a bit surprising that the GM as white accepted a draw offer.

Brynell (according to Brynell) wanted to take back on d1 with the bishop, and realizing that he had taken with the rook he became so dissatisfied that he did not want to play more chess today. Still, white was in no way worse and it was not obvious that taking with the bishop was better than taking with the rook. Anyway, Brynell is fairly well satisfied with his +2, and Merkesvik after another GM draw very well satisfied with his +1.



GM Marc Dublan (2549) versus WIM Sheila Barth Sahl (2195) started up with 1.c4, but later transposed into a hedgehog-like Sicilian position. Although white had a space advantage due to his pawns at c4, e4 and f4, black's position appeared healthy after 12 moves. Black however had spent 45 minutes on the clock, and soon lost touch with this demanding position as she exchanged her knight at c6 against white's knight at c2. Dublan again was slow on the clock during

the middle game, but made rapid progress on the board as he soon could swing his rook around to the kingside with Rf3-Rg3. Having increased the pressure with Qh5 and Nd5, white anyway was winning when black collapsed with non-working tactics from move 26.

Dublan at 3.5/5 has accelerated and is in the fight for top three, while Sahl at 1,0/5 now must win all the remaining rounds to make her first WGM-norm.

FM Sebastian Mihajlov (2387) and GM Heikki Westerinen (2319) made an unusual start with 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 a6 3.a4, after which both spent more than 40 minutes for the first nine moves. Play transposed into some kind of London system in which the a6 move was not too useful, but neither was a4, and black could be very well satisfied after placing his bishop on e4.

19.Bxe4? was a strategic mistake, as black after 19.--- dxe4 followed by 20.--- f5 had a dangerous kingside attack coming up. Although chances for a mating attack in the middle game disappeared when the queens were exchanged, black due to his f-file possession and pressure against the f2 pawn still was much better in the rooks and knight endgame after 29 moves.

30.--- e3! probably would have given a knockout within a few moves. Having only five minutes left on the clock, Westerinen instead invited white back into the ring with 30.--- Nxf2+? and 31.--- Nd3?.

Within the next ten minutes the tide gradually turned in favor of white, as he got all time needed to activate his big queenside pawn majority. After the time control white's passed c- and b-pawn supported by his rook and knight soon won decisive material.

72 year old Westerinen for the first time had a won position today, but in the end suffered another setback and is below expected score at 1.5/5.

55 years younger Mihajlov at 2.0/5 also has had a disappointing start, but this win of course helped a lot – and if winning the remaining four games he can still make a norm...

Open Norwegian Championship

In the **Open Norwegian Championship**, so far so good Johannes Kvisla (2253) came under pressure as white against the young Tromsø talent Endre Machlik (2076) today.

Machlik refused when Kvisla offered a draw, and instead tried to win a slightly better endgame with two rooks and bishops versus two rooks and knight. The youngest Machlik sibling however tried too hard to win, sacrificing two pawns for a mating net which turned out not to exist – hence Kvisla could evacuate his king, keep the pawns and win his fifth game in a row.

Still Kvisla's first place is far from secure, after the inspired Frenchman David Maloberti (2021) again picked up a pawn and won in a convincing style, this time as white against Thomas Nyland (2018). Nyland is known as an endgame expert, but had to admit this one was just lost.

Third board with Håkon Bentsen (2058) vs FM Ward Al-Tarbosh (2160) on the other hand was abruptly and unnecessarily drawn after 26 moves, as white with a pawn up in the rook and bishop endgame saw some ghosts around his opponent's active rook and accepted a draw offer.

Fourth rated Christian Laverton (2096) recovered with an attacking win against Daniel Nordquelle (1932).

Following this Kvisla at 5.0/5 is leading ahead of Maloberti at 4.5/5, while Bentsen and Laverton strangely are the only players at 4.0/5. Needless to say, round six top boards Maloberti-Kvisla and Laverton-Bentsen will be two very important games.

Among the female players, Kimiya Sajjadi (1835) is still the star – and still unbeaten although she was under pressure as black against Håkon Haugsrud (1936) today.

Sondre-Andreas Hoel (1737) still is a surprise man, today defeating our Spanish guest Juan Prats Rodriguez (2023).

The Machlik brothers had a dark afternoon, as the oldest brother Jon (2027) following a less successful white opening blundered a rook and lost within 20 moves against the very talented 12 year old Afras Mansoor (1747).

15 year old Odin Nikolai Heier (1761) also had every reason to be satisfied after saving a difficult endgame a pawn down against Johannes Melkevik (2049).

Most other favorites won during another hard fought round in the Open.

All photos: Tom Eriksen