

# New Englander

## Chess Club Update – February 2022

### Chairman's Chatter

The Club Championship is going fairly well despite a few postponements. The draw for round 7 appears in this issue with two more scheduled in March and April. For only eleven participants, however, the Swiss system is failing. Of the four opponents not already encountered, you will face three in the remaining games. Normally, the pairing selection tries to minimise the relative scores between the players but as the options reduce, this criterion is ceasing to have much effect. As a result, please do not be surprised by the margins as the competition reaches its climax.

*Paul Hanks*

### Puzzle Problem

White to play and mate in 2



Last Month's solution (Hoek 1969)

Position : 8/8/8/1K1Q4/2B2k2/R7/5P2/2n5

**1 Ra4 Kg4 [1 ... N any 2 BxN#] 2 Bf1#**

### Website to Watch

The FIDE Grand Prix circuit is due to restart on 3<sup>rd</sup> February in Berlin. It will involve 16 top grandmasters in a World Cup-style format i.e. four qualifying groups of four followed by pool winners progressing to the knock-out stage. Website information is available at <https://www.chess.com/article/view/fide-grand-prix-2022> which directs you to a live broadcast on [Chess.com/TV](https://www.chess.com/TV).

Two more events in this series are planned with the next starting in Belgrade, Serbia on 28<sup>th</sup> February. More next month!

### Diary Dates

By February 17<sup>th</sup>, all teams in the Cambridgeshire Division One will have completed two matches against the other clubs. At that point, the schedule for the remaining third matches will be announced. Please be ready for new match dates in March and early April.

### Result Round-up

#### Club Championship

Round 3			
C Russell (1)	P	P	R Jones (2)

Round 4			
P Cooper (0)	0	1	C Russell (1+P)
R Jones (2+P)	P	P	R Ilett (3)

Round 5			
E Smith (1)	P	P	R Jones (2+2P)

Round 6			
P Walker (5)	P	P	R Ilett (3½+P)
P Spencer (3½)	1	0	R Jones (2+3P)
P Hanks (4)	P	P	C Russell (2+P)
N Wedley (1)	1	0	E Smith (1+P)
P Cooper (0)	0	1	J Jennings (1)
E Knox (2)	1	0	N Wedley (1) – Rd 7

Round 7			
P Hanks (4+P)			P Walker (5+P)
R Ilett (3½+2P)			J Jennings (2)
C Russell (2+2P)			P Spencer (4½)
R Jones (2+3P)			P Cooper (0)
E Smith (1+P)			E Knox (3)

#### Cambridgeshire League

New England A	3	Warboys A	2
P Walker	1	B Duff	0
R Ilett	0	S Caraway	1
P Hanks	½	J Beck	½
P Spencer	1	N Greenwood	0
C Russell	½	P Baddeley	½

<b>St Neots B</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>New England B</b>	<b>P</b>
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## Team 7000

Spalding	1	NE Patriots	3
M Dunkley	0	P Walker	1
T Nottingham	0	E Knox	1
J Smith	½	C Russell	½
R Coats	½	N Wedley	½

## New England Club Ladder

Position	Change		Player	Record @ 26/01/22
	Month	Overall		
1	-	+5	N Wedley	½,1,1
2	-	-1	E Smith	1,0,0
3	+1	-	J Jennings	1,0,0,½,1
4	-1	-	J Sadler	1
5	-	-3	P Cooper	0,0,0
6	+1	+1	R Ilett	½
7	-1	-2	C Russell	1
8	-	-	P Hanks	½

## New England Grand Prix

Player	Champ	Ladder	League	Cup	7000 Team	Total	TPR*
P Walker	5		5	1½	3	14½	2149
P Spencer	4½		5	2	1	12½	1786
P Hanks	4	½	3	2		9½	1872
C Russell	2	1	3½		2	8½	1634
E Knox	3		1	1½	1½	7	1592
R Ilett	3½	½	3			7	1855
N Wedley	2	2½	1	½	½	6½	1453
J Jennings	2	2½		1		5½	1343
R Jones	2		1½		½	4	1721
E Smith	1	1				2	1053
J Sadler		1				1	1750
P Cooper	0	0				0	725

\* Tournament Performance Rating is approximate

## Serious Study

Can you help me, please?

When thinking about endgames with opposite-coloured bishops, Bent Larsen remarked that they are drawish but when they are won, they are very won. This quotation from a recent issue of *New in Chess* magazine sprang to mind when idly perusing an old game - one of the last I played during our previous guise as Perkins Chess Club. I reached a position that

I thought was “very won” but even now, I struggle to work out how to proceed. Can you explain it better?

### S Walker v P Hanks

Perkins Club Championship, 04.04.2007

**1 d4 f5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 g3 e6 4 Bg2 Be7 5 0-0 0-0 6 c4 d6 7 Nc3 a6**

These early moves are fairly routine in the Fianchetto Variation of the Dutch Defence. The black side is not popular at the highest level but this position has been reached before and continued with either 7 ... a5 or 7 ... Ne4.

**8 b4 Ne4 9 Bb2 Nd7 10 d5 Nxc3 11 Bxc3 e5 12 e3 Qe8 13 h4 h6 14 Qc2 Nf6 15 Nh2 Qg6 16 c5 Ne4 17 Bxe4**

So far, the players are playing sensibly and the computer evaluation is showing only minor swings. The last move however has strategic significance. White could preserve his bishop pair with 17 Bb2 but chooses instead to exchange which gives Black freedom on the light squares around the white king.

**17 ... fxe4 18 Kh1 Rf7 19 cxd6 cxd6 20 Be1 Bh3 21 Rg1**



Here is the crunch of the matter. I have doubled pawns but to set against this :-

- the light-squares around White's king are extremely inviting
- my rook is on an open file and targets a weakness at f2 (which is currently well protected) and I can quickly double rooks
- half of White's army is tied down in defence and lacks mobility.

Surely, this is “very won” in the long term. Let us look at the game continuation before having a flashback to search for an improvement.

**21 ... Bg4**

My killer blow must come from a simple sequence involving :

- my bishop reaching f3 to be replaced by a pawn when it is removed by the white knight
- manoeuvring my queen to h3 with immediate checkmate if the rook remains on g1 or if it moves, leaves a coup de grace on g2.

Overconfidence causes me to gloss over even the simplest of defences.

**22 Nxg4**

Even if White allows Black a free hand with 22 Rc1 (say), the e pawn is pinned and 22 ... Bf3+ 23 Nxf3 cannot be followed by 23 ... exf3 due to 24 Qxg6.

**22 ... Qxg4**  
**23 Kh2**

White has correctly calculated that my threat of 23 ... Qh3# is easily met and his light squares are no longer a problem.

The moral of the story is psychological. However strong your conviction that your position is "very won", if you cannot see a path to a knock-out, you have to remain patient and objective.

Returning to the diagrammed position, Fritz does acknowledge I have an advantage that even my modest technique should convert.

**21 ... Rc8**

Instead of a sudden death conclusion, I should still accumulating small incremental improvements. This alternative develops a piece with tempo and asks White to make a decision. In fact, Fritz cannot differentiate between a range of queen moves but for a human, the mostly likely are 22 Qb2 (which keeps open lines but unpins the e pawn) and 22 Qb1 (which maintains the pin but blocks the rook). I shall defer the precise move for the time being.

**22 Qb1.5 Bd7**

Fritz's recommendation but why? I can only presume my plan from the game is being rehashed so that my queen infiltrates first i.e. Qg6-f5-h3 then Bd7-g4-f3. This line is only feasible with supine play by White and would be hampered in the 22 Qb1 option hitting e4.

**23 Rc1**

OK, this is only legal after 22 Qb2. It is designed to prevent Rc8-c4 supporting the crucial e4 pawn and allowing my queen to aim for h3.

**23 ... Rff8**

Another surprise! I would have placed the other rook on this square. Fritz is trying to hammer into its dim-witted student that there is no future in attacking f2.

**24 Rxc8 Rxc8**

No real argument here. If White declines the swap e.g. 24 Qb1, Black can just transpose with 24 ... Rxc1 25 Qxc1 Rc8 26 Qb1.5.

**25 Bc3**

This is rated as slightly best though White's alternatives lead to very similar play.

**25 ... Qf7**  
**26 Rd1 Bb5**

Wait a minute! That piece is needed on the kingside for my attack! Sadly, it eventually dawns on me. I have to change my outlook completely. All the points that made me think the position was "very won" have crumbled to dust. There was no realistic prospect of breaking through on the light squares when the white king is so strongly protected.

The important feature is that Black's bishop can occupy d3 or c4 to prevent the pawn on d5 being supported from d1 or b3 respectively. Black will win the pawn and have a strong centre. Hardly "very won" but highly promising.

I hope I have now penetrated to the essence of the position and taught myself a lesson about regrouping. It was stupid to bang my head against the brick wall on the kingside. The attack there was never going to succeed. Instead, I should have realised that White's solidity came at the price of a misplaced knight on h2 and that this piece would be needed to protect d5 since the white bishop cannot oblige. The knight takes at least four moves to manoeuvre in addition to the tempi required to contest the c file. Is the moral of the story that if one thrust fails, you should switch the point of attack?

For the remainder of the game, I thrash around on the kingside while White can probe on the other flank.

**23 ... Raf8**  
**24 Rg2 Rc8**  
**25 Qb2 g5**  
**26 Rc1 Rxc1**  
**27 Qxc1 Bd8**  
**28 a4 Rg7**  
**29 b5 gxh4**  
**30 Qa3 Qe2**

With my mind closed to everything but an assault on the enemy king, my move looks dangerous for White. Surprisingly, there are still echoes of the previous strategy change. I can scoop up the d pawn after 30 ... hxg3+ 31 fxg3 (31 Rxg3 Rxg3 32 fxg3 is similar) 31 ... Qh5+ 32 Kg1 Qd1.

**31 Qxd6 hxg3+**  
**32 Rxc3 Qh5+**  
**33 Rh3**

White might even try to win (and probably should) with 33 Kg1 Rxg3+ 34 fxg3 Qg5 35 Qe6+ Kg7 36 Qd7+ Kg8 37 Bf2. The d pawn that I ignored is now a monster!

**33 ... Qg5**

My final hurrah should have been 33 ... Bh4 to deter the white rook from interposing on g3. Would White have the nerve for 34 Qd8+?

**34 Rg3 Qh5+ 1/2-1/2**

*Paul Hanks*