

New Englander

Chess Club Update – March 2023

Chairman's Chatter

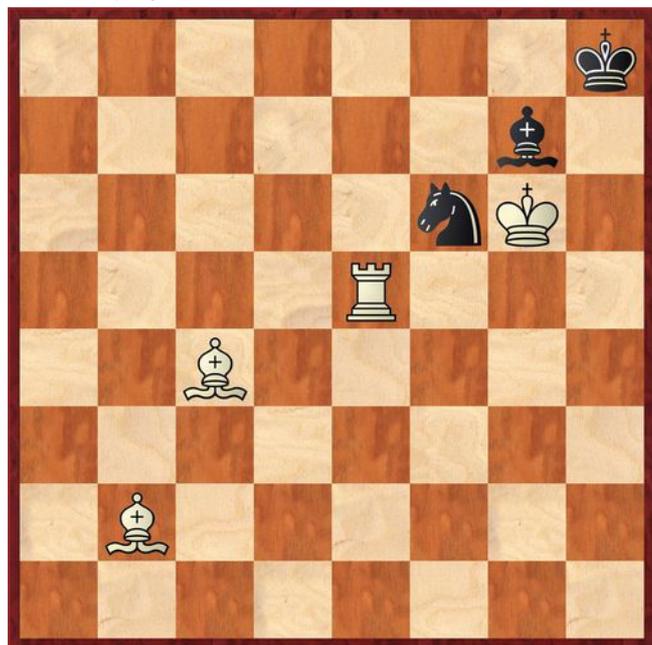
Congratulations! The Patriots squad appears to be uncatchable in the North division of the Team 7000 competition. A play-off match against the southern winners will be arranged and was scheduled in the original fixture list as taking place in w/c 24th April.

We have a number of new recruits who have appeared in the last month. Welcome! They are probably not versed in the folklore of the club and may not know of our heroics in the 2010-11 season of the Cambridgeshire division 1 when we interrupted a mighty Royston in their otherwise decade of success. That year, Chris Ross headed the team on board 1. He is now comfortably esconsed in Sheffield but still keeps abreast of our activities from afar and he has kindly contributed a game for this newsletter.

Paul Hanks

Puzzle Problem

White to play and mate in 2.



Last Month's solution (from lichess.org/study)

Position : 8/p7/k1K5/8/1p3P2/5R2/8/4B3

1 Rb3 Ka5 2 Ra3#

Website to Watch

The European Individual Chess Championship takes place from 3rd to 13th March in Vrnjacka Banja, Serbia. Over 500 players have entered including 138 grandmasters! The website <https://eicc2023.com/> does not indicate whether it will carry live games and you may need to use your preferred viewer.

Diary Dates

Cambridgeshire Division 1 completes its initial cycle of matches in March when dates will be announced for the remaining 3 matches starting in w/c 20th March.

Result Round-up

Club Championship

White		Black	
P Turp	P	Rd 4	P Spencer
E Knox	P	Rd 5	C Russell
N Wedley	P	Rd 6	E Knox
R Ilett	P	Rd 8	P Walker
E Smith	P	Rd 8	P Turp
Round 9			
P Spencer	P	P	P Hanks
C Russell	1	0	N Wedley
N Chedd	0	1	E Smith
R Ilett	½	½	E Knox
P Turp	1	0	J Jennings
Round 10			
P Spencer	0	1	N Wedley
E Smith	0	1	C Russell
J Jennings	0	1	N Chedd
P Walker	P	P	E Knox
R Ilett	P	P	P Turp

Player	PW	RI	PH	PS	PT	NC	EK	JJ	NW	CR	ES	Total
P Walker	X		1		1	0		1	1	1	1	6
R Ilett		X	1	½			½	1	1	1	1	6
P Hanks	0	0	X		½	1		1	1	1	1	5½
P Spencer		½		X		1	1	1	0	½	1	5
P Turp	0		½		X	1	1	1	1	1		5½
N Chedd	1		0	0	0	X	½	1	1	½	0	4
E Knox		½		0	0	½	X	1			1	3
J Jennings	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	X	0		1	1
N Wedley	0	0	0	1	0	0		1	X	0		2
C Russell	0	0	0	½	0	½			1	X	1	3
E Smith		0	0	0		1	0	0	0	0	X	1

Cambridgeshire League

Warboys A	1	New England A	4
J Beck	0	R Ilett	1
N Greenwood	0	P Walker	1
R Mann	0	B Stephens	1
B Duff	1	P Spencer	0
P Baddeley	0	N Chedd	1
New England B	3	Ely	1
P Hanks	1	B Tarlow	0
P Spencer	1	A Stewart	0
P Turp	½	S Ashworth	½
N Chedd	½	M Kowalczyk	½
St Neots B	2	New England B	2
R McMorran	½	P Spencer	½
J Greiller	1	N Chedd	0
M Cooper	0	C Russell	1
T Holmes	½	R Lepley	½

Team 7000 competition

NE Patriots	4	Spalding	0
P Spencer	1	J Moseley-Hutchinson	0
N Chedd	1	S Mitchell	0
C Russell	1	K Davis	0
R Lepley	1	L McKenna	0

New England Grand Prix

Player	Champ	Ladder	League	Cup	Team 7000	Total	TPR*
P Spencer	5		8	0	3½	16½	1799
P Walker	6	5	3	1½	1	16½	2030
R Ilett	6	½	4½	1½		12½	2069
P Hanks	5½	½	4	1	1½	12½	1933
N Chedd	4		3½		3	10½	1624
C Russell	3	1	5		1½	10½	1714
P Turp	5½		1½		½	7½	1818
E Knox	3		½	1	2	6½	1616
B Stephens		4	1		1	6	2014
J Jennings	1	2	0		2	5	1286
N Wedley	2	2		0		4	1427
R Lepley		0	½		1	1½	1179
E Smith	1					1	1134
I Goodwin		0				0	1021
A Neville		0				0	1475

* Tournament Performance Rating is approximate

New England Club Ladder

White		Black	
B Stephens	1	0	P Walker
P Walker	1	0	R Lepley
I Goodwin	0	1	P Walker
B Stephens	½	½	P Hanks
A Neville	0	1	P Walker

Position	Change		Player	Record @ 22/02/23
	Month	Overall		
1	+1	-	J Jennings	1,0,1
2	+1	+2	B Stephens	½,1,0,1,1,½
3	-2	+3	P Walker	1,1,0,1,1,1
4	-	+5	C Russell	1
5	-	-2	R Lepley	0,0,0
6	-	-4	N Wedley	0,1,1,0
7	-	-	E Smith	0
8	+2	+2	P Hanks	½
9	-1	-4	R Ilett	½
10	-1	-2	I Goodwin	0,0
11	-	-	A Neville	0

Match of the Month

This encounter is extremely intriguing. White plays the English Opening confidently and pursues many stereotypical objectives of the opening's principles. Interestingly, these generic endeavours lead to weaknesses and ultimately, the loss of the game.

Graded 2321 at the time, White is a strong young player who had performed well during the season having racked up some considerable scalps. This game, however, was his first loss.

S Brozel (York A) v **C Ross** (Sheffield A)
Woodhouse Cup; 28.01.28

1	c4	e5
2	g3	Nc6
3	Nc3	g6
4	Bg2	Bg7
5	d3	d6
6	e4	

There are many other perfectly acceptable variations of the English Opening, such as 6 Rb1 and even 6 Nf3. By 6 e4, White has indicated that he will play the so-called Botvinnik variation and the ideas are quite simple. White will play a normal type of English, establishing the d5 square for the white queen's steed, fianchettoing the light-squared bishop, eventually pushing the queenside pawns to create weaknesses on that flank and opening up the scope of the g2 bishop. All very sensible, thematic and perfectly logical.

With White's intentions clarified, Black now knows what he needs to counteract. Having some counter-measures in one's armoury can give a player constructive guidance on how to tackle an opponent's setup. There is nothing novel in Black's approach here, as the ways have been trialled and tested many times but having seen things played successfully before, Black gains a tremendous amount of confidence to tackle the issues that he faces.

6 ... **Nge7**

Avoiding the launching of the f pawn, which is going to be inevitable to create space. The knight on c6 is lent a hand, but importantly, this e7 knight has a more critical duty to accomplish later.

7 **Nge2** **0-0**
8 **0-0** **Be6**

Since the white pawns (c4 and e4) stand on light squares, Black would like to exchange the light-squared bishops to weaken support for the pawn formation. A classic method of exchange is chosen – looking ahead to move 17! Alternatively, Black can exchange this light-squared bishop for a knight and head for a good knight v bad bishop endgame.

9 **Nd5**

White inaugurates his strong knight outpost. Impressive as the knight looks, its true worth has to be carefully considered. True enough, this knight restricts the black forces and tactics have to be avoided. The exchange of the light-squared bishop with 9 ... Bh3 is not possible due to the loose nature of the c7 pawn.

9 ... **Qd7**
10 **Bg5**

A somewhat curious move. White rejects 10 Bh6 as this exchange would only benefit Black. With the dark-squared bishops off the board, that good knight v bad bishop endgame is one step closer.

11 Nf6+ is threatened, which Black cannot allow, and forces Black into the advance of the f pawn. This was within his plan, although the exposed position of the black king has to be taken into account.

10 ... **f6**
11 **Be3** **f5**

Black has to calculate the position carefully. White has possible tactics, with the b7 pawn being potentially vulnerable if the long diagonal clears e.g. by exf5 and Nxe7+ if the knight on c6 wanders away. Likewise, should White allow his knight outpost to stray, Black has fxe4 and the c4 pawn could drop off.

12 **Qd2**

White develops and protects the b2 pawn. This is important for were White to snatch the pawn with Bxb7 at some point, Black might have the option of Rab8 and winning the pawn back on b2 with a penetrating rook. So, White develops, holds up any possible f5-f4 by Black and prepares the advance of the queenside pawns.

12 ... **Rae8**

Centralising the queen's rook. 12 ... Rf7 and Raf8 is possible, but there is little future down the f file. Indeed, Black judges that once things become open in the centre, with White inevitably pushing with f2-f4, it will be the e file that will prove more productive.

13 **Rae1**

White does likewise with the centralisation of his queen's rook. The rook is removed from the a1-h8 diagonal and is not left vulnerable in a tactical exchange. The e file is given some cover for the future opening up of those central files.

With all of the pieces successfully developed, a middlegame plan is needed by both sides. However, and importantly, it is Black to move.

13 ... **Nc8**

An idea adopted by Masters in the past and in some lines of the Closed Sicilian. Indeed, it could be argued that in the current setup, Black has a reversed Closed Sicilian position but with White having inserted e2-e4. It could be argued in fact, that the inclusion of e2-e4 has not helped him since, as a generic rule, e7-e5 does not aid Black in the Closed Sicilian. So, does White have a poorer variation of the Closed Sicilian?

There are even more advantages to the adoption of the text move. The knight removes itself from any Nxe7+ tactics, as described before, thereby releasing the potential pressure on b7. When Black goes about evicting the knight on d5, White no longer has the easy Nxe7+ option and must consider alternative retreats for the knight.

Also, once White goes about challenging the c6 knight, the a7 pawn may be left vulnerable to the dark-squared bishop on e3 and that pawn has been safeguarded. Finally, on e7, the knight has no obvious future plans. By removing it, the rook on e8 will become more active and the knight can look for an alternative target.

14 **exf5**

White takes the opportunity to capture on f5 since the re-capture Nxf5 has been taken away. Had Black been able to re-capture on f5 with the knight, the d4 square would have been completely controlled.

14 ... **Bxf5**

In King's Indian-style positions, 14 ... gxf5 would be typical but 15 f4 would leave the black central pawns slightly awkwardly placed. The re-capture with the light-squared bishop keeps the option of exchanging it on h3 and furthermore, pressurises d3 which, after exchanges, prevents Bh6 by White exposing the black king.

15 **b4?!**

Surprisingly, this is a considerable positional inaccuracy. Unwittingly, White carries on with the strategy of advancing on the queenside and opening up the h1-a8 diagonal for his fianchettoed bishop. However, Black has taken active steps to neutralise the expansion.

White would have been better advised to take a more cautious approach with 15 b3, which would maintain his pawn structure integrity. Black initiates his next stage of the pre-planned manoeuvres.

15 ... Nd8

Curiously, the black knight retreats out of harm's way, but in so doing, reveals that the White forces are overstretched. The eviction of the knight on d5 is instigated and the b7 pawn given some protection. The c6 knight was going to be driven away by b4-b5 in any case, so moving it first gives White the opportunity not to play b4-b5, which is a telling factor. With b4-b5 not necessary, White has the option to consider alternatives.

15 ... Nd4 is not an option for Black, since White can eventually take with Bxd4 and after the capture exd4, the f4 square is given to either of the white knights.

16 f4 c6
17 Ndc3 Bh3

With the d5-knight having been driven back, the c7 pawn is no longer loose and Black can go about exchanging the light-squared bishop. This exchange will leave the white king that little bit more exposed.

18 fxe5 Bxg2
19 Kxg2 Bxe5

The position is slightly better for Black but White should have no difficulties in being able to hold it with careful play. He has certainly become over-extended and has not accomplished his English Opening strategy. Not realising this, White makes a series of fatal positional decisions.

20 d4

Gaining space but importantly, removing protection from the c4 square. Had White played 15 b3, this would not be as serious an issue but as it is, the white pawns have become very compromised.

20 ... Bg7
21 Rxf8+

A seemingly innocuous move but again, not fully appreciating the weakness of his queenside pawns. White obviously wished to exchange pieces to ease the load on his setup, but this exchange only provokes Black to re-position one of his own to a better square.

21 ... Bxf8

The best capture. Re-capture by the king only exposes it and the rook is needed on the e file to pressurise the white pieces. Black has options of Ne7/Nf5 or an eventual Nf7/Ng5 (or Ne5 if White pushes d4-d5). The black pieces, although lurking on the back rank, are in a more fluid position to spring to good squares in comparison to the white counterparts.

22 Nf4?

After which, White is just lost positionally. In fairness, he puts up a brief tactical battle in an attempt to salvage the position but with careful play, Black will bring the point home.

22 ... Nb6

The knight re-emerges from its adventure to c8. From e7, it had no future, so it went another way to come back into the game - the c4 pawn is targeted. Advancing with c4-c5 would only put it on a dark-square and allow Nc4. Black would have the option of snatching on e3 or playing the more desirable d6-d5, leaving white pawns on dark-squares and with a horrible bishop in the endgame. Black would have all the fun and the weakened d4 pawn would finally succumb.

23 Qd3



23 ... d5

With this simple idea, Black breaks the position. Again, White has to decide what to do with the c4-pawn. Advancing gives him that grovelling endgame. The alternative is a bit of a tactical flurry.

24 cxd5

White seeks complications. However, Black has everything under control.

24 ... Bxb4

The constant annoyance for White is the exposed nature of his king on the g2. If that wasn't so weak, the tactics wouldn't work for Black. As it is, Black can remain calm and go for the good knight v bad bishop endgame.

25 Bd2

White is losing a pawn. 25 dxc6 Qxc6+ picks up the knight on c3.

25 ... Rxe1
26 Bxe1 Bxc3

If White re-captures on c3, Black will play Nxd5 and the endgame is trivial, with Black a pawn up and a good knight v bad bishop. White has no interest in such a miserable position, so tries a few tactics to salvage his position. Calmness is Black's best play.

27 dxc6 Qxc6+
28 d5

White has seemingly found a way to hold the pawn and open up lines. However, that annoying white king is yet again his downfall.

28 ... Nxd5

Calmly taking the pawn. Any queen move will allow Bxc3 and White is better.

29 Nxd5 Bxe1

And frustratingly for White, 30 Ne7+ winning the black queen is not possible, since the knight is pinned.

30 Kf1

Unpinning and trying to regain his piece. A bit of calculation here is needed to maintain the material, but once the black pieces have retreated and regrouped, it is an easy conversion.

30 ... Qe6
31 Nf4 Qe7
32 Nd5 Qe5

Now the black queen cannot be further harassed and any Nf6+ and Ne7+ tactics do not work, as the queen capture defends the knight on d8.

33 Qc4 Kg7

Calmly stepping off the a2-g8 diagonal and avoiding any tactics. The a1-h8 diagonal is controlled and the king is safer there. He could even slip out to h6 if necessary.

34 Nf4 Ba5

35 Nd3 was threatened and the knight on d8 is given extra protection. Black is a piece up and needs to avoid further tactics.

35 h4 Bb6

Securing the bishop, controlling the g1 and f2 squares and restricting the white king.

36 Qa4 Qa1+
37 Ke2

37 Kg2 Qg1+ 38 Kh3 Qh1+ 39 Kg4 h5+ will cost White the knight as 40 Kg5 Nf7# is mate.

37 ... Qb2+
38 Kd3 Nc6 0-1

With the black pieces secure, regrouped and ready for Qd4+, the tactics have all been snuffed out.

A convincing and authoritative demonstration of how to plan a counter-strike against an opening strategy and importantly, how the player opposite needs to adapt in response.

Chris Ross

Eye Opener

C Kottnauer v J Holas
 Zlin, 1945

1 c4 e5

The slower character of the English Opening allow Black great freedom in response but transpositions arising from 1 Nf3 discourage variations with e7-e5.

2 Nc3 Nf6
3 Nf3 Nc6
4 d4

The Four Knights Variation is popular with 4 g3 d5 being a favourite continuation. If you turn to the games of the world champion for guidance, Magnus has recently been trying 4 e4 but the pawn structure did not develop as in the *Match of the Month*. Carlsen v Caruana, Isle of Man 2019 went 4 ... Bc5 5 Nxe5 Nxe5 6 d4 Bb4 7 dxe5 Ne4 8 Qf3 in what turned out to be an exciting and theoretically important game.

4 ... exd4

4 ... e4 looks tempting but did you know it is called the Bradley Beach Variation? It is so called after a tournament in the New Jersey resort which hosted a tournament in 1929 featuring Alekhine. Most knight moves by White equalise but it appears 5 d5 generally leads to trouble.

5 Nxd4 Bb4
6 Bg5 h6
7 Bh4 Bxc3+
8 bxc3 Ne5
9 f4 Nxc4

Kibitzers on chessgames.com struggled to find another example of the text move. Most explained this simply by saying it is just bad.

10 e4 Ne3
11 Qe2 Nxf1

Re-capture is not automatic - the knight is trapped!

12 e5 0-0



Pins, pins, pins! The knight on f6 obviously cannot move without losing the black queen but 13 exf6 allows 13 ... Re8 when the white queen goes back in the box.

13 Nf5 d6

The lightweight attack is surprisingly effective. 13 ... Re8 makes no difference i.e. 14 Bxf6 Qxf6 15 exf6 Rxe2+ 16 Kxe2.

14 Bxf6 gxf6
15 Qg4+ 1-0