

New Englander

Chess Club Update – September 2025

Chairman's Chatter

A new season awaits! With the opening match in the league being on 3rd September, we are sure to be busy from the outset and I hope that we can enjoy many pleasurable games in both county and internal competitions right through to May.

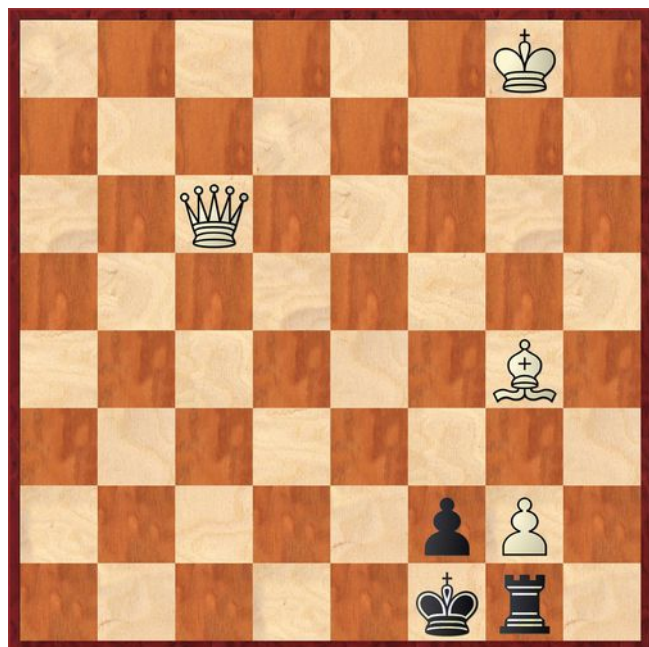
With the start of formal play, however, comes the inevitable need for funds. This is a reminder that you may possibly need to renew your ECF Membership and of course, pay subscriptions to New England. Chris will be happy to supply bank transfer details as required.

One point to note is that Cambridgeshire has regularly entered the Open Minor Counties competition (and are current champions!) and U1850 event. This year, the county team offering has been expanded to include entries into the U1650 and U1450 divisions. If you are able to participate (click [here](#) for the fixture list), please note that you will need to upgrade to ECF gold membership.

Paul Hanks

Puzzle Problem

White to play and mate in 2. This position comes courtesy of the British Chess Championship Solving Challenge in Hull 2024.



Last Month's solution (Eidem 1958)

Position : 8/3P1PBK/5P2/8/6K1/8/8/8

1 d8N Kg6 2 f8N#

Diary Dates

28th September County Rapidplay at Whittlesford Memorial Hall. Click for online [Entry details](#)

22nd-23rd November County Individual at Christie Hall, Wansford. Click for [Entry details](#)

Website to Watch

Our first evening of the new season coincides with the opening ceremony of the [FIDE and Women's Grand Swiss](#) events in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. From 4th to 15th September, an impressive field of 100+ top grandmasters will contest 11 rounds for a combined prize fund of \$855k and two qualification places in the Candidates tournament.

Result Round-up

[Friendly Rapidplay](#) : 27th August 2025

Pos	Player	M P	B S	P H	A T	P S	J P	Total
1	M Patrickson	X	1	1	1	1	1	5
2	B Sivaraj	0	X	1	0	1	1	3
	P Hanks	0	0	X	1	1	1	3
4	A Thobani	0	1	0	X	0	1	2
6	P Spencer	0	0	0	1	X	1	2
	J Peoples	0	0	0	0	0	X	0

New England Club Ladder

Position	Change		Player	Record @ 27/08/25
	Month	Overall		
1	-	-	M Patrickson	1
2	-	-	P Spencer	0

New England Grand Prix

Player	Champ Ladder	League			Cup Team 7000	Total	TPR*
		A	B	C			
M Patrickson	1					1	
P Spencer	0					0	

* Tournament Performance Rating is approximate

Match of the Month

Last month, the game featured in *Match of the Month* contained what I considered a faulty piece swap. Black voluntarily ceded the bishop in his kingside

fianchetto for White's knight on c3 – an idea famously played to great acclaim in Wojtaszek v Caruana, Wijk aan Zee 2021. This sparked Chris Ross's interest as a recent game of his had justified the exchange [editor].

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This game is intriguing on a number of counts. Black's startling opening surprise turns the game from a potentially tactical encounter into a slow positional drudge. White's choice of development is somewhat suspicious and he fails to open up the position to exploit the power of the bishop pair. The uncertainty created by Black's choice to delay castling doesn't make White's plight any easier. A subtle retreat by the black queen leads to a dominating position and when a sneaky attacking opportunity by White is deftly thwarted, the game enters a seemingly level endgame. Black declines the draw offer and proceeds to demonstrate that the accumulation of small advantages, as well as an superior management of the clock, can, more often than not, lead to an opponent yielding under tremendous pressure.

This game illustrates the craft of "shuffling", in an attempt to generate an advantage, whilst taking no risks to one's own position. A slow burner from the outset, this encounter is more instructive due to the capitalisation of the endgame that Black willingly enters. Although not particularly exciting, this is a quintessential example of how to grind down an opponent with incremental measures.

John Garnett v Chris Ross

Billingham Synthonia Synner v Thornaby Aces
Cleveland Cup Matches;15.04.2025

1 d4 c5

Black immediately takes White out of any opening preparation. By avoiding the main lines, Black deliberately puts White back onto his natural playing strength. The move 1 ... c5 can transpose into many variations, although some kind of Benoni Defence is the most likely. This should not cause White any challenges but as an opening surprise, it can flummox an opponent.

2 d5 g6
3 c4 Bg7
4 Nc3 d6

All appears well. White is under the impression that the opening will soon transpose into usual, main lines of the Benoni. Were Black in a cooperative mood, this could certainly transpire. However, if he's not, a spanner can be flung into the works.

5 e4

Continuing as per expectation. White takes control of the centre and gains vital space. Somewhat cramped, Black will have to consider to how he is to untangle his pieces and complete development.

5 ... Bxc3+

A move that has a degree of surprise value. This choice is enough to shock the unwary but with this simple capture, the trauma of being on unfamiliar ground is further emphasised. The "dragon" bishop,

developed at great pains, is readily given up. Not only has the bishop pair been willingly foregone but the dark squares around the black king have been voluntarily weakened.

All of which is true. However, there are much longer-term considerations to take into account. Positionally, this move is more than justified. White is rendered with doubled c pawns that are unable to advance or dissolve easily. The inflexible pawn formation (c4, d5 and e4) limit White's options, he is also hampered by an isolated pawn on the a file and his light-squared bishop (LSB) has very little scope. Ultimately, were Black able to exchange the LSB's, then the "good knight v bad bishop" endgame would be favourable for the second player. Due to the closed nature of the position, the weakening of the dark squares should not trouble Black too much. Naturally, if White were able to wrench the position wide open, the bishop pair will be of tremendous value and the dark squares would be fatally weak for Black. Black has no intention of allowing this without some compensating benefit.

Counterintuitive as this capture is, Black overrides the trepidation by the knowledge and appreciation that his prospects in any kind of endgame will outweigh yielding the Dragon bishop.

6 bxc3 Qa5

Black develops as rapidly as possible and puts the question to the hindmost of the doubled pawns. Intriguingly, similar to lines of the Nimzo-Indian Defence, this c3 pawn is not the intended focus of Black's play.

7 Qc2 Bd7

Again, Black rushes to develop. This bishop has little future on the h3-c8 diagonal. Playing b7-b6 and Bc8-a6 would be ideal but there is no way in which the b8 knight can wheel around to the a5 square, as in lines of the Nimzo-Indian, since the c6 square is controlled by White.

8 Bf4

A curious development by White. The only purpose to the move is to try and force through e4-e5 as quickly as possible. This is a valid endeavour, but is probably bettered by the pawn advance f2-f4, to give e4-e5 more vigour. This dark-squared bishop (DSB) should remain at home until it is perfectly clear to where its future lies. At the present, there is no obvious prospective diagonal, so its development is aimless at best, a waste of time at worst.

8 ... Ba4

An outpost of some worth for the black LSB. White could have considered 8 a4 to prevent this, but he would be tied down to the defence of the a4 pawn and that will not be easy. Nb8-d7-b6 would put three black pieces targeting the a4 pawn. Bf1-e2-d1 to add another piece to the defence isn't viable, due to the loose nature of the c4 pawn with the knight on b6.

9 Qd2

Justifying the DSB's development to f4, although the queen doesn't appear to have much effect on the c1-

h6 diagonal. Any retreat to the b file, with the intention of snatching on b7, is ineligible since 9 ... Nd7 10 Qxb7?? Rb8 simply traps the lady.

9 ... Nd7
10 Bd3 Ngf6

Developing and keeping the options open to where Black wants to castle. Since the queenside is blockaded and there are no possible pawn-storms for White, castling queenside for Black in these positions is thematic. The black king stands well on b8/a8 and b7-b6 can be played at any time to secure things. The black queen may become isolated on the queenside though, so a timely retreat with Qa5-c7 may be advisable first.

Black's king's knight is also preparing to step back to d7 once the queen's knight has ventured to b6 and from d7, the e5 square is given protection once again.

11 Nf3

Developing but not taking into account Black's whole game plan. 11 h3 was preferable both to offer a flight square to the DSB and to prevent Black's next move. Slow as 11 h3 is, the position is blockaded and quiet moves like this can be afforded.

11 ... Ng4

Seizing control of e5 and giving Black a distinct advantage. Positionally, White's development is looking slightly dubious. His pieces are on awkward squares and there is little coordination between them. Once this king's knight lands on e5, further pressure will be applied to the c4 pawn.

12 0-0 Qa6

A cunning repositioning of the lady. The focal point is not c3 but the c4 pawn. The queen re-directs her pressure to this target and once Nb6 or Ne5 has been played, the pawn will be coming under unbearable strain. The secondary purpose of the retreat and one not so obvious, is the queen gives support to the third rank, which will soon become very important.

13 h3

Forcing matters. It is difficult to appreciate to how White is to unravel his pieces and strive for any kind of purposeful play. 13 Nd2 to defend the c4 pawn would require the white queen to re-locate - either c2 or e2 would limit the scope of the LSB and give a knight on e5 even more pizzazz.

13 ... Nge5
14 Nxe5 Nxe5
15 Bxe5

A major concession. White returns the DSB while shattering Black's pawn structure. He hopes to open lines very quickly towards the black king. However, Black has taken this possibility into account well in advance and his sneaky 12th move now comes to fruition.

15 ... dxe5
16 f4

16 Rab1 to pressurise the b7 pawn would probably oblige 16 ... 0-0-0. White can eventually force b7-b6

but with the LSB cemented on a4, there is no way for White to lever open the position with a2-a4-a5.

16 ... Qd6

The queen scuttles across the third rank to fortify the centre and dominate the dark squares now that the bishops have been disappeared. Black cannot permit 17 f4xe5 unopposed or after 16 ... e5xf4, 17 e4-e5. This space-gaining push will inevitably lead to undesirable open files. My idea is now to capture on f4 and trade queens if possible.

17 fxe5 Qxe5

The black queen bestrides the centre, scrutinising both flanks. The c3 pawn is pinpointed, as well as the dark squares around the white king. The black king is offered suitable rearguard protection and penetration concepts of Qh6 by White are made futile. Just compare the relative power of the two queens!

18 Rf3 0-0

White is threatening to double rooks on the f file, targeting the f7 pawn which required protection. The black rooks have been connected and operations on the queenside with a7-a6 and b7-b5 are on the cards. This latter plan requires a degree of preparation. If White does nothing at all, Black can proceed at leisure, improve his pieces gradually and at a timely moment, begin to expand on the queenside. There is one little hurdle to avoid in the meantime.

19 Raf1 f6!

Not only putting another pawn on a dark square, bolstering the e5 outpost but averting a strong attacking threat by White. 19 ... b6 is the natural move, consolidating the pawn formation and keeping options open. Despite the lack of minor pieces, White could have whipped up a surprise and potent attack had Black not been cautious.

19 ... b6 20 Rf5! is an opportune sacrifice at White's disposal. The variation is quite long but it goes 20 ... gxf5 21 Rxf5

- 21 ... Qxf5 22 exf5 f6 has a computer assessment of +1 for White due to the continuing threat to the exposed black king
- 21 ... Qc7 22 Qh6 f6 23 e5 e6 24 dxe6 Qg7 25 Qh4 Rad8 26 exf6 Rxd3 27 fxg7 Rxf5 28 Qe4 Bc2 29 Qe2 Rd8 30 Qxc2 which is better for White.

A very complex line and one that was certainly not calculated by Black. Instinct alone indicated that 20 Rf5 was a distinct possibility and that circumspection was necessary.

20 Bc2

With Black having not lost a tempo with b7-b6, 20 Rf5 no longer works. The second rank has been opened up for horizontal protection and the attack no longer has any impetus.

The text move is a rather abject admission that his position is somewhat wanting. Black has no interest in trading the poorly positioned LSB. The white pawns

hinder the LSB's scope whereas they remain a target for the black prelate.

20 ... Bd7
21 Qe3

Aimlessly played. The queen has no purpose on e3. It simply forces Black into making a consolidating move, which he has wanted to play for some time. It is becoming more and more evident that White is void of any constructive ideas. His lack of ambition becomes more prominent over the next few moves.

21 ... b6
22 Qf4

Deciding that bailing out is his potentially best option. White should play 22 a4 and put the question to Black on how he wishes to progress. With the b6-b5 expansion held up, Black needs to reevaluate and formulate a plan.

22 ... Kg7

Confidently played with the forthcoming endgame in mind. Black determines that a total liquidation of the heavy pieces will give him winning opportunities in the bishop ending. White's intention to eliminate all the heavy pieces gives Black the motivation to pursue the type of position that is reached within another 12+ moves. Precise calculation is not necessary as a vague perception is more than enough to give him no fear of the endgame.

23 Qxe5

White initiates a stream of exchanges which he hopes will ease his defensive duties. With the heavy pieces removed from the board, the black pawns cannot be attacked at all. The crux of the game is whether Black has enough to create winning prospects.

23 ... fxe5
24 Rxf8 Rxf8
25 Rxf8 Kxf8
26 Kf2

Played with a draw offer! White is hopeful that the reduction in material will offer him drawing chances. Whilst those chances remain tangible, Black is in no hurry to agree. There is no danger at all that Black can lose this position. Pawn levers are still available to him, namely e7-e6 and b6-b5. While these probes are available, there is no need for Black to acquiesce to a lame conclusion. After all, the following moves can be played quickly, utilising minimum time on the clock and the onus is on White to stabilise and hold his nerve.

This was the type of endgame that Black envisioned a few moves earlier and for the time being, Black tests White's resolve.

26 ... Kg7

26 ... e6 immediately would begin the process of expansion. However, this lever can be played at any time and in the meantime, valuable time can be gained on the clock by inane shuffling.

27 g4

Completely blockading the kingside and yet again, placing a pawn on a light square. Black would have secured things on the kingside, before proceeding on the queenside but this just empowers Black to carry on with his game plan unhindered. 27 Kf3 was more prudent and keeps Black on his toes.

27 ... g5

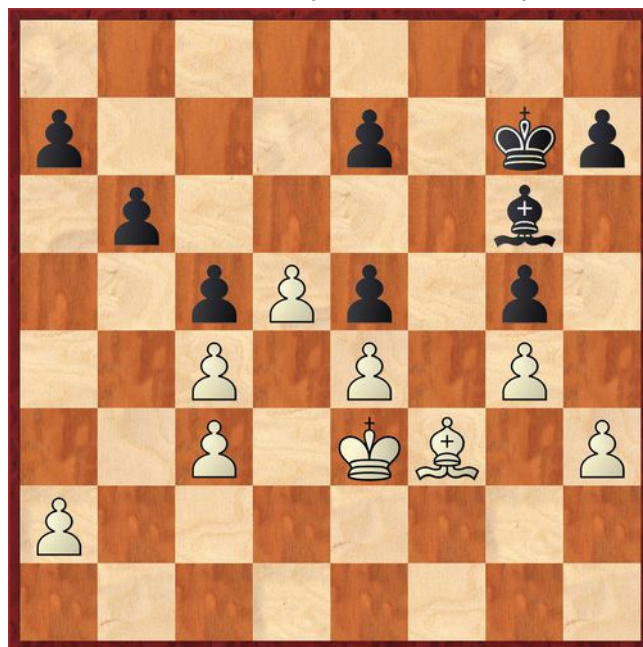
Another pawn on a dark square and ensuring that the white king can never penetrate on the kingside. Action will now switch to the queenside.

28 Bd1 Be8

Bringing the LSB around to pressurise the e4 pawn. This will keep either the white king or LSB tied down to the defence of the e4 pawn.

29 Ke3 Bg6
30 Bf3

White has clearly established a mindset of sitting, holding and hoping. 30 Ba4 was more ambitious and asks Black to how he will penetrate on the queenside.



30 ... Kf8

The sprint to the queenside commences. The target is the isolated white a pawn, of course. White must scramble his king to face off the black monarch.

31 Kd2 Ke8
32 Kc2 Kd8
33 Kb3 Kc7
34 Kc2 Kb7
35 Kb3 Ka6
36 Bg2 Ka5
37 Bf3 Be8

The black king is nicely poised to creep into the queenside if allowed. It is time to bring the LSB back into the action and potentially to prepare for b6-b5.

38 Kb2 a6
39 Be2 h6

Biding time on the clock. All of Black's moves can be played without any fear. The burden is on White to seek salvation. The accumulation of pressure, both

physically and on the clock, all take a toll on White. How long can he hold his nerve?

40 Kb3 Bg6

The only real purpose of this shuffling by the LSB is to gain time on the clock. White must remain vigilant at all times and as the minutes and seconds count down, his focus and hope begin to wane.

41 Bd3 h5

Taking the opportunity to expand this pawn lever. This will either leave the h3 pawn weak (if White trades with g4xh5) or isolate the g4 pawn. This is just yet another weakness in the White camp.

42 Bc2 hxg4
43 hxg4 Be8
44 Bd3?

Black's incremental accumulation of tiny advantages finally pays dividends. Under tremendous pressure to hold the position and prevent the clock from ticking disastrously low, White blunders into a lost position. The game concludes rather quickly and a lot sooner than Black anticipated.

The major question is to how Black is meant to make progress with more tenacious defence. The pawn levers e7-e6 and b6-b5 are still at his disposal but these need to be timed accurately. Whether it is conclusively winning for Black is hard to say. However, it is Black with the winning opportunities and White has the undesirable task of clinging on.

Here is one potential line. 44 Ka3 Bd7 45 Bd1 e6 46 Bf3 exd5 47 exd5

- 47... e4 48. Bxe4 Bxg4 and, more likely than not, the black g pawn will cost White his LSB
- 47 ... b5 48 Kb3 Kb6 49 cxb5 c4+ 50 Kxc4 Bxb5+ 51 Kb3 Bd3 52 Kb2 e4 53 Bg2 e3 54 Kc1 Bc4 55 a3 Kc5 56 Kd1 a5 57 Bf3 Bxd5 58 Ke2 Bxf3+ 59 Kxf3 Kc4 60 Kxe3 Kxc3 and I believe Black is winning the K+P endgame.

There are other ways in which White is able to make life more difficult for Black but this line illustrates how Black can prise open the White position. Ultimately, the weakness of the White's pawns is his undoing.

44 ... Ba4+
45 Kb2 Bd1

Winning the g4 pawn and the game. After the fall of the g pawn, there is nothing else White can do to salvage the game.

46 Kc1 Bxg4
47 Bc2 b5

The black king is denied entry via a4, so it must seek other ways in which to infiltrate. The extra g pawn can be used as a distraction while the queenside pawns are snaffled. An alternative would have been 47 ... Be2 48 Bb3 Bd3.

48 cxb5 axb5
49 Kd2 b4
50 cxb4+

With no time on the clock, White capitulates without any further resistance. 50 c4 would ask the black king

to run back around the whole board to penetrate on the kingside.

50 ... Kxb4
51 Ke3 Bd7
52 Kf3

Inertia forces White onwards. With a sizeable advantage on the clock, Black can play at will. Accuracy in the move choice is unimportant at this stage of the game.

52 ... Ka3
53 Bb3 Ba4 0-1

White finally throws in the towel. A victory carved out by persistence, an accumulation of small advantages, excellent clock management and determination.

Chris Ross

Eye Opener

Krause v Costin
 Switzerland 1914

1 d4 c5

The first reference to the rarer old form of the Benoni Defence appears in 1825 by the depressed author Aaron Reinganum from the Hebrew for "Son of Sorrow". Jacob's wife Rachel, before dying in childbirth, named her son Ben-Oni before he was re-named Benjamin by his father.

2 dxc5 Qa5+
3 Nc3 Qxc5

Black does not need to rush the re-capture and by doing so is exposing his queen unnecessarily.

4 e4 e5
5 Nf3 d6
6 Nd5 Ne7



7 b4 0-1

If 7 ... Qc6 8 Bb5 Qxb5 9 Nc7+ winning the black queen.