

New Englander

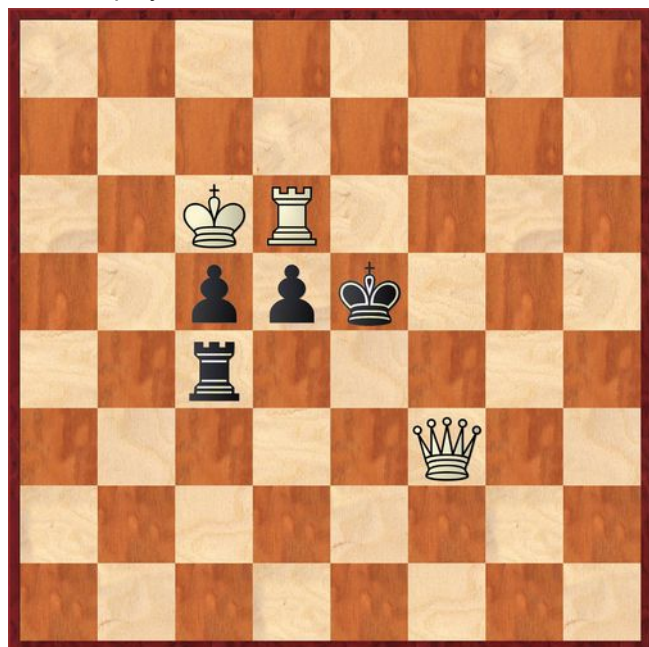
Chess Club Update – December 2025

Chairman's Chatter

It may seem early in the season but the coming weeks are packed with club championship games and league matches. The number of Wednesdays before the group stage of our internal event splits into the final sections on 25th February is quite limited and you will find it increasingly difficult to fit in any postponements. If you have free evenings, please clear the backlog to avoid problems in a month's time.

Puzzle Problem

White to play and mate in 2.



Last Month's solution (Chepizhny 1972)

Position : 4B1Q1/2K3B1p7/8/1k6/5N2/8/8

1 Nd2 a5 2 Qf8# [1 ... Kc5 2 Qc4#; 1 ... Ka3 2 Qb3#; 1 ... Ka5 2 Bc3#]

Diary Dates

17th December Club Christmas Special

Website to Watch

We are a bit late to the ball but there should still be plenty to watch at the London Chess Classic. It started on 26th November and continues until 5th December. Ten grandmasters are competing in an all-play-all event headed by Firouzja, Abdusattarov and Adams and the action can be seen online at <https://www.londonchessclassic.com/watch-live> or in person at the Emirates Stadium with tickets (£10/day) from <https://www.londonchessclassic.com/spectator-tickets>.

Result Round-up

Cambridgeshire League

St Neots A	3½	New England A	1½
A Mihalek	1	P Walker	0
A Chapman	1	R Ilett	0
J Vieira	½	P Hanks	½
P Barkas	0	P Spencer	1
C Emery	1	C Russell	0

Ely	1	New England B	3
B MacAndrews	0	R Ilett	1
S Ross	0	P Spencer	1
C Bolt	0	J Sutherland	1
A Harmon-Bishop	1	C Russell	0

New England C	P	Peterborough C	P
---------------	---	----------------	---

New England C	1	Bourne	2
S Walker	0	M Bailey	1
J Peoples	1	D Stanford	0
A Thobani	0	H Redhead	1

Team7000

NE Patriots	P	Spalding	P
Re-scheduled on 18 th February 2026			

Fenland Plate

Peterborough D	2	NE Patriots	2
F Kaichinger	1	R Ilett	0
J Bell	0	B Sivaraj	1
J Etonyeaku	0	P Spencer	1
S Diaz Ward	1	J Sutherland	0

New England Club Championship

White		Black	
P Walker	1	0	A Thobani
B Stephens	1	0	J Peoples
E Knox	1	0	C Russell
D Dhokia	0	1	R Ilett
P Hanks	1	0	S Walker
P Spencer	P	P	A Neville
B Sivaraj	P	P	J Sutherland

White		Black	
J Peoples	1	0	A Thobani
S Walker	0	1	R Ilett
A Neville	1	0	D Dhokia
J Sutherland	½	½	P Hanks
E Knox	P	P	B Stephens
B Sivaraj	P	P	P Spencer

New England Club Ladder

White		Black	
D Dhokia	0	1	P Spencer
N Wedley	1	0	S Walker
B Sivaraj	0	1	P Hanks

Position	Change		Player	Record @ 26/11/25
	Month	Overall		
1	+7	+7	P Hanks	1
2	-1	+1	B Sivaraj	1,0
3	-1	-2	M Patrickson	1
4	-1	-2	P Spencer	0,1
5	-	-	D Dhokia	0
6	-2	-2	C Russell	0
7	-1	-1	N Wedley	1
8	-1	-1	S Walker	0

New England Grand Prix

Player	Champ Ladder	League			Cup Team 7000	Total	TPR*
		A	B	C			
B Sivaraj	1	2½			2 ½	6	1816
R Ilett	2	1½	1		½ 0	5	1796
P Spencer	1	1½	1½		1	5	1642
P Hanks	1½	1	1	0	½ 0	4	1731
J Peoples	1			2	½	3½	1709
P Walker	1	½			1	2½	1953
J Sutherland	½		1	1	0	2½	1712
B Stephens	1	0	1			2	1703
M Patrickson	1	½	0			1½	1606
A Thobani	0			1		1	1391
E Knox	1					1	1938
N Wedley	1					1	1916
A Neville	1					1	1806
S Walker	0	½				½	1390

C Russell	0	0	0	½				½	1383
D Dhokia	0							0	1251

* Tournament Performance Rating is approximate

Match of the Month

Remember! Remember!... When playing chess on 5th November, you are culturally obliged to produced fireworks. Whilst not a banger, the following game is charged with plenty of treasonous intent as revealed in the post-mortem interrogation.

B Sivaraj v P Hanks

New England Club Ladder, 05.11.2025

1	d4	Nf6
2	c4	e6
3	Nf3	b6
4	Nc3	Bb7
5	Bg5	h6
6	Bh4	Be7
7	e3	0-0

At this point, Black faces a dilemma. Trick or treat, if you like. The game variant is the approach for solid rewards, 7 ... Ne4 the mischievous alternative. A demonstration of the ensuing witchcraft can be found in the game Bacrot v Anand, Sofia 2006.

8	Bd3	c5
9	0-0	Na6

Am I already losing the plot? This move departs from established protocol in the Queen's Indian Defence which would continue 9 ... cxd4 as in Gelfand v Leko, Monaco 2007. I was thinking of the computer's other recommendation 9 ... Nc6 but did not want to worry about d4-d5.

10 Rc1

White could play 10 a3 and indeed, Black could take advantage of the text move with 10 ... Nb4 but this seemed only to waste tempi after 11 Bb1 and 12 a3.

10	...	Nc7
11	Qe2	cx d4

This exchange forces White to make a decision. Proceed as in the game and forego e3-e4 or capture with the knight and have less central control. Perhaps, Black should have foreseen this and played 10 ... cxd4. A move earlier, 11 Nxd4 would allow the option 11 ... Na6-c5.

12	ex d4	d5
13	Bg3	dx c4
14	Bxc7	

14 Bxc4 would give Black more problems.

- 14 ... Bxf3, accepting the pawn gives White plenty of compensation but I think White was trying to avoid this line, 15 Qxf3 Qxd4 16 Bb3
 - 16 ... Ncd5 17 Rfd1 Qb4 18 a3 Qxb3 19 Nxd5 and the desperado tactic causes Black to give up his queen for assorted material
 - 16 ... Qd7 17 Qb7 Rfc8 (17 ... Ncd5 18 Qxd7 Nxd7 19 Nxd5 ex d5 20 Rc7) 18

Rfd1 and Black must return the pawn unfavourably with 18 ... Ncd5

- 14 ... Rc8 15 Ne5
 - the pawn is still taboo 15 ... Qxd4 16 Ng6 fxe6 17 Bxc7 Rxc7 18 Bxe6+ Kh7 19 Nb5
 - 15 ... Ncd5 with a level game typical of the isolated queen's pawn structure.

14 ... cxd3
15 Qe5

Black would be happy to continue the exchanges 15 Bxd8 dxe2 16 Bxe7 exf1Q+ 17 Kxf1 Rfe8.

15 ... Qd7
16 Qg3

White prevents the bishop being clapped in irons and lost to 16 ... Rac8. This becomes a recurring theme.



16 ... Bxf3

16 ... e5 is a problem-like interference. I did not spot it during the game and afterwards, was as startled as by an exploding firecracker. Then, 17 d/Bxe5 (17 Qxe5 Rac8; 17 Nxe5 Qxc7) 17 ... Nh5 18 Qh3 Qxh3 19 gxh3 Bxf3.

17 gxf3 Qxd4

The move played risks lèse majesté from a kingside assault and it was necessary to be confident that the defence would hold. 17 ... Nh5 18 Qg4 Qxc7 19 Qxh5 Rad8 is a quieter way to achieve an edge.

18 Be5 Qc5

18 ... Qd7 19 Ne4 Nh5 20 Qg4 g6 21 Rc7 looks dangerous but apparently is OK for Black because White cannot break through on g6. Mind you, even after my move, the position may blow up in my face.

19 f4 Rad8
20 Ne4 Nh5
21 Qg4 Qd5

21 ... Qb4 is largely equivalent.

22 Nc3

I cursed under my breath. I thought I was lost as I had not considered White going for this retreat. Abandon hope all ye who enter here.

22 ... Qa5

Had I read the instructions correctly, I should have retired to a safe distance with 22 ... Qd7. I dismissed this not seeing 23 Qxh5 f6 when the bishop has no squares, as mentioned before.

23 Rfd1

After 23 Qxh5 f6, the horizontal pin pulls my chestnuts out of the fire. White recoups the pawns by 24 Qh3 fxe5 25 Qxe6+ Rf7 25 fxe5 but still has to cope with the first in line of succession on d3.

23 ... f6??

A real damp squib. 23 ... Nf6 was my first thought but I was dazzled by 23 ... f6 24 Qxh5 fxe5 25 fxe5 Rf5 26 Qh3 Bg5. I have a tendency to blunder on move 23. Why change such a well-established tradition?

24 Qxe6+ Kh8

I seem determined to leave all my pieces en prise! 24 ... Rf7 25 Bc7 Rd4 26 Ne2 produces equality.

25 Bc7

The endgame following 25 Qxe7 fxe5 26 Qxe5 (26 Rxd3 Rde8 27 Qc7 Nxf4 with great activity) 26 ... Nf4 is supposedly best but I prefer 26 ... Rf5 when there is still work to do.

25 ... Bb4

I came to my decision using the principle of eliminating alternatives. I dismissed 25 ... Rde8 simply because 26 Rxd3 spikes my guns but I missed 26 ... Bd8 . 25 ... Bc5 26 Bxd8 Nxf4 27 Qg4 did not offer many prospects but remember, the bishop is in custody so 27 ... Bd6 is viable. After 28 Be7 h5 29 Bxd6 (29 Qf3 Qg5+ 30 Kh1 Bxe7) 29 ... hxg4 30 Bxf4, there is a strange material imbalance.

26 a3

The salvation of my rook depended on my offside knight of the realm making a dramatic re-entrance. The plot would be discovered by 26 Bxd8

- 26 ... Bxc3 27 bxc3 (27 Qg4 Bxb2) 27 ... Nxf4 28 Qg4 Ne2+ (at the end of the sequence I could see, the guy forks) 29 Kf1 Rxd8 30 Ra1 Nxc3 when Black is winning
- 26 ... Nxf4 27 Qg4 Qe5 28 Bc7 Qxc7 29 Nd5 Ne2+ 30 Qxe2 dxe2 31 Nxc7 exd1=Q+ 32 Rxd1 with better chances in the endgame.

26 ... Bxc3

Shame on me! The whole court retinue has so far shown itself ready to lay down its life for their monarch so why not the lord spiritual? I should have put his loyalty to the crown to the test by 26 ... d2.

- 27 Ra1 Bxc3 28 bxc3 Qd5 29 Qg4 Qd7 and to save the bishop, 30 Qxh5 Qxc7 nets Black more material
- 27 Rc2 Bxc3 28 b/Rxc3 Rde8 with a massive attack e.g. 29 Qg4 Re1+ 30 Kg2 Qd5+ 31 Kh3

31 f3 Rxd1) 31 ... Qd3+ 32 Kg2 Qf1+ 33 Kf3 Qe2+ 34 Kg2 Qxg4#.

- 27 axb4 dxc1Q 28 Rxc1 Qxb4 29 Bxd8 Rxd8 when White loses further pawns.

Instead, I decided to keep my powder dry.

27 Rxc3

The best chance. 27 bxc3 d2

- 28 Rc2 ignites the sparkler 28 ... Rfe8 29 Qg4 Re1+ 30 Kg2 Qd5+ 31 Kh3 Qd3+ 32 Kg2 Qf1+ 33 Kf3 Rd3#
- 28 Rb1 Rd3 29 c4 (29 Bd6 Rd8 30 Bb4 Nxf4) 29 ... Qc5 and White's head is on the block.

Or 27 Bxd8 Nxf4 28 Qg4 Ne2+ 29 Kf1 Nxc1 30 Be7 (30 Rxc1 Qd5 31 bxc3 [31 Rxc3 d2] 31 ... Qh1+) 30 ... Re8 31 Rxc1 Rxe7 32 Rxc3 Qd5 with total sovereignty.

27	...	Rfe8
28	Qg4	d2
29	Re3	

After the direct 29 Bxd8, Black set off the explosive 29 ... Re1+ 30 Kg2 Qd5+ 31 Kh3 Rxd1 32 Qxd1 (32 Bxf6 Rc1 [32 ... gxf6 33 Rc8+ draws]) 32 ... Nxf4+ 33 Kg4 (33 Kg3 Qg5+ 34 Qg4 (34 Kf3 Qh5+) 34 ... Ne2+ 35 Kh3 Qxg4+ 36 Kxg4 Nxc3) 33 ... Qh5+.

I worried about quiet moves such as 29 Kg2 Re1 30 f5 (30 Bxd8 transposes) 30 ... Qd5+ 31 Kh3 Rxd1 32 Qxd1 Nxf4+ 33 Kg3 Qg5+ 34 Kf3 (34 Qg4 Ne2+ 35 Kf3 Qd5+ 36 Kxe2 d1Q+ 37 Ke3 Q1d2#) 34 ... Qh5+ with another death sentence.

29	...	Rxe3
30	fxe3	Re8

30 ... Rd5 has similar threats but cuts out the defensive try 31 Qd7 Rxe3 32 Qxd7 permitted by the text move.

31	Kf2	Qc5
32	Qf3	Qxc7

Why not the simple 32 ... g6? I examined the move but only in the context of 33 ... Ng7 and overlooking that this was unnecessary! The white bishop is eventually doomed.

33	Qxh5	Rd8
34	Qb5	Qc2
35	Ke2	Qe4

With the threat of 36 Qg2#, my hopes were beginning to skyrocket but I did not realise how quickly I would bring the house down.

36 Rg1

I expected 36 Kf2 Rd3 37 Qh5 Qxe3+ 38 Kg2 Qe1 39 b4 Re3 and the virtual zugzwang allows 40 ... Re2+.

36 ... d1Q+ 0-1

White chooses not to prolong the torture but the royal cause is lost. 37 Rxd1 (37 Kf2 Qef3#) 37 ... Qg2+ 38 Ke1 Qg1+ 39 Ke2 (39 Qf1 Rxd1+) 39 ... Qxd1+ 40 Kf2 Rd2+ 41 Kg3 Qg1+ 42 Kf3 (42 Kh3 Rxh2#) 42 ... Qg2 and le roi est mort.

Paul Hanks

Eye Opener

I Zaja (2513) v P Iotti (2294)
Reggio Emilia Rd 9; 07.01.2001

1	d4	Nf6
2	c4	e6
3	Nf3	b6
4	Nc3	Bb7
5	Bg5	d5
6	cxd5	exd5
7	Qa4+	c6
8	Bxf6	gxf6

Not 8 ... Qxf6 9 Nxd5.

9	g3	Nd7
10	Bh3	a5
11	0-0	Bb4
12	e4	Bxc3
13	exd5	Bxd4

White is definitely regaining the piece because 13 ... Bb4 14 dxc6.

14	Qxd4	c5
15	Rfe1+	Kf8
16	Qf4	1-0



Material is level and there do not appear to any immediate threats. But Black resigns. Why?

One problem for Black is 17 Qd6+ and 18 Bxd7. Another is Nf3-h4-f5 and Qf4-h6+.

- 16 ... Ne5 17 Nxe5 fxe5 18 Qh6+ Kg8 19 Rxe5 is an overwhelming attack
- 16 ... Kg7 17 Nh4 Re8 18 Nf5+ Kh8 19 Rxe8+ Qxe8 20 Nd6
- 16 ... Kg8 17 Bxd7 Qxd7 18 Qxf6 Re8 (18 ... Qd8 19 Re7 Qf8 20 Rxb7; 18 ... Bxd5 19 Re7 Qc6 20 Qg5+ Kf8 21 Ne5) 19 Rxe8+ Qxe8 20 Re1 etc.

There is no defence but Black should have forced White into demonstrating how to defeat such moves as 16 ... Bc8.