

# New Englander

## Chess Club Update – August 2026

### Chairman's Chatter

This newsletter will be short as befits the quiet season. I hope you are enjoying the dry weather and coping with the heatwave spikes. By the next edition, autumn evenings will be upon us and we shall be re-starting club sessions. See you then!

*Paul Hanks*

### Puzzle Problem

White to play and mate in 2. At a recent Masterclass session, we were discussing a game from a book by a well-known chess trainer. I wondered whether the participants without prior knowledge would recognise the tactical possibilities and put into practice their problem-solving experience in a game context.



Last Month's solution (WBSCS Starter 2026-27)

Position : 2R2b2/N1pkp1nR/3P4/1P3P2/2Np3p/3K3B/8/8

**1 Kxd4 Ne8/Nh5/exd6 2 f6#** [1 ... Nxf5+ 2 Bxf5#; 1 ... Ne6+/e5+/e6 2 fxe6#; 1 ... c6/c5+ 2 bxc6#; 1 ... cxd6 2 Nb6]

### Diary Dates

22-23<sup>rd</sup> August [Fifth Cambridge FIDE Congress](#) at Whittlesford with U2300, U1800 and U1550 sections

2<sup>nd</sup> September Start of new season

24<sup>th</sup> October [2026 English Championship](#) until 1<sup>st</sup> November at Holiday Inn, Thorpe Wood

28-29<sup>th</sup> November A five-round Swiss event at Christie Hall Wansford for the County

Individual championship. Entry £25 (£15 juniors) before 20<sup>th</sup> November to [james1blair@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:james1blair@yahoo.co.uk)

### CCCA AGM Summary

The Cambridgeshire Annual General Meeting took place at St Ives on 14<sup>th</sup> July with the following main points of business :-

- Cambridgeshire won the national Minor Counties championship for the third time in four years
- Junior development is progressing apace in the south of the county with Linton having a European champion in one of the age ranges
- The bulk of incumbents on the Committee were re-elected
- Entries increased with joining Division One Rookwood and Bourne in Division Two. Several more teams swelled Division Three and the grade-limited competitions. A new Fenland Knock-out section for U2000 teams was approved.
- Rule changes were enacted to affect eligibility of players competing in more than one division. In future, after one opportunity to play in any higher division, anyone rated above 1850 will be unable to play in Division Two and above 1650 in Division Three.

### Website to Watch

The 53<sup>rd</sup> Sparkasse tournament in Dortmund takes place from 1<sup>st</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> August. It does not seem to be attracting the elite as it did when Kramnik was a regular winner but there are plenty of other strong grandmasters which may make it more competitive and exciting. Please see <https://sparkassen-chess-trophy.de/en/>.

The highest ranked players will be heading to the [Sinquefeld Cup](#) which takes place in St Louis, Missouri from 10<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> August. It can be followed at <https://www.chess.com/events/2026-gct-sinquefeld-cup>.

There has been some frustration that this Grand Tour event clashes with the [eSports World Cup](#) in Paris where there is a chess section with \$1.55M in prize money – all for 10 minutes work! There is a "Last Chance Qualifier" competition from 4-6<sup>th</sup> August for the last five hopefuls to join Carlsen et al and the main event runs from 11<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup>. Follow it on [chess.com](https://chess.com).

## Match of the Month

I played some really bad chess during the past season and this is reflected in the last place position of the A team in the Cambridgeshire Division One. It also makes it difficult to pick out episodes of any interest for this column! However, I am sufficiently shameless as to wash my dirty linen in public in the hope of a) encouraging contributions from other club members and b) showing that being critical of previous efforts is a route to improvement (hopefully).

The following snippets come from game in the final match of a long and tiring season.

### C Emery v P Hanks

St Neots v New England Patriots; 27.05.2026

It started :

|   |    |    |
|---|----|----|
| 1 | e4 | e6 |
| 2 | f4 | c5 |

*Lesson 1* : Remember your opponent's favourite openings. He played this way against me in 2009.

*Lesson 2* : Remember what grandmasters play. This transposition into a Grand Prix Attack against the Sicilian Defence is probably just what White wants. Almost invariably, top flight games continue 2 ... d5.

|   |      |      |
|---|------|------|
| 3 | Nf3  | Nc6  |
| 4 | Nc3  | d5   |
| 5 | exd5 | exd5 |
| 6 | d4   | Nf6  |
| 7 | Bb5  | Be6  |

I played this move because 7 ... Be7 seems to waste a tempo if White continues 8 dxc5 Bxc5. However, the computer ranks my alternative as considerably worse and in the postmortem, I had to investigate why.

*Lesson 3* : Beware of pawn pushes. My choice invites 8 Qe2 threatening 9 f5. If I then block the e file with 8 ... Be7 9 dxc5 cannot be answered by 9 ... Bxc5.

After just 13 moves, I found myself in the position below :



This already looks bad due to the difficulty of bringing my rook on h8 into play but I did not realise just how early I should have been going home.

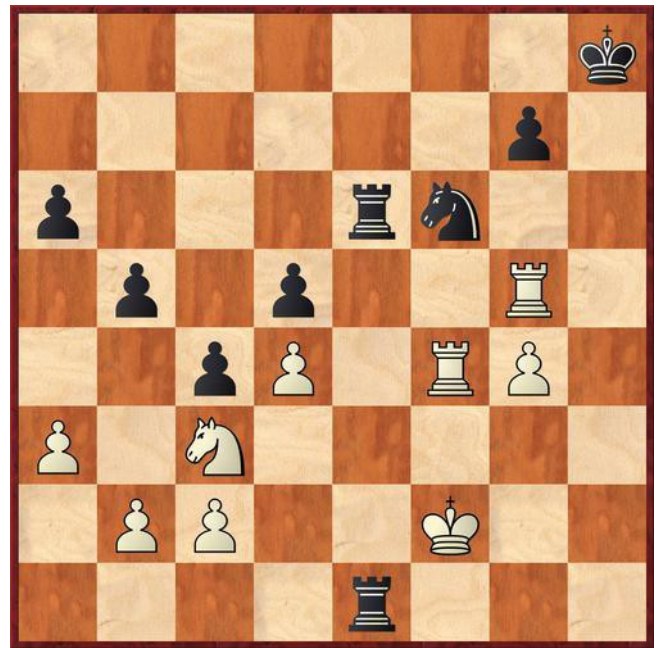
|    |      |      |
|----|------|------|
| 14 | Rxf6 | gxf6 |
| 15 | Nxd5 | Qxb5 |
| 16 | Qh5  |      |

and the threat of 17 Bh6# forces

|    |     |      |
|----|-----|------|
| 16 | ... | Qxd5 |
|----|-----|------|

giving up my queen. Fortunately, my opponent was not Fritz and when he continued 14 Bxc6, I was able to struggle on.

*Lesson 4* : Play the position in front of you. Early mistakes should not dent your confidence if you emerge unscathed. Fortunately, the danger did pass and I was able to reach :



Fritz slightly prefers Black in this endgame though a draw is the most likely outcome. So how did I manage to lose? I have to find the correct plan to relieve pressure on my d5 pawn.

*Lesson 5* : Do not exaggerate your opponent's threats in your own mind. It can lead to passive defence when active options are available.

Here, I never imagined I could ignore the loss of the pawn and take advantage of my own plus points e.g. penetration with my rooks. If 32 ... Kh7 (say), 33 Nxd5 Nxd5

- 34 Rxd5 R6e2+ 35 Kg3 Rxc2
  - 36 Rf2 Re3+ 37 Kf4 Rxf2+ 38 Kxe3 Rxb2
  - 36 Rd6 Rxb2 37 Rxa6 c3 when White has to be very careful and find the only move 38 Rf5 aiming for a perpetual check
- 34 Rh5+ Rh6 35 Rxd5 Rc1 36 c3 Rh2+ 37 Kg3 Rxb2.

Instead, I thought the only way was

|    |     |      |
|----|-----|------|
| 32 | ... | Ne4+ |
|----|-----|------|

which is stupid because simply 33 Kxe1 Nxc5+ 34 Kd2 Rd6 35 Rf5 and the threat has not been averted.

35 ... Ne4+ 36 Nxe4 dxe4 37 Ke3 Re6 38 d5 Re8 39 Rf4 Re5 40 Kd4 is reminiscent of the how my game quickly went downhill.

|           |             |              |
|-----------|-------------|--------------|
| <b>33</b> | <b>Nxe4</b> | <b>R1xe4</b> |
| <b>34</b> | <b>Rxe4</b> | <b>Rxe4</b>  |
| <b>35</b> | <b>c3</b>   | <b>Kh7</b>   |

My problem will be White's passed d pawn and 35 ... Kg8 will bring my king closer to intervening. I was scared by eventual checks on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> ranks after the unstoppable Rg5xd5.

|           |            |            |
|-----------|------------|------------|
| <b>36</b> | <b>Kf3</b> | <b>Re6</b> |
|-----------|------------|------------|

This is where the game becomes irretrievable. Again, counter-attacking aggression was called for with 36 ... Re1. Then, 37 Rxd5 Rb1

- 38 Rd6 Rxb2 39 Rxa6 Rc2 40 d5 (40 Rb6 Rxc3+ 41 Ke4 Rxa3 42 Rxb5 Rg3) 40. ... Rxc3+ 41 Ke4 Rd3
- 38 Rh5+ Kg6 39 Rh2 still gives Black hope. 39 ... Kf6 40 Ke4 Ke6 41 d5+ Kd6 42 Kf5 Kxd5 43 Kg6 Ke4 44 Kxg7 Kf4 45 Rg2 Kf3.

The play was not perfect thereafter and I missed further opportunities for my rook to cause havoc on the second rank. However, it was my strategy of try to build a passive fortress that caused my downfall.

|           |             |            |               |
|-----------|-------------|------------|---------------|
| <b>37</b> | <b>Rxd5</b> | <b>Kg6</b> |               |
| <b>38</b> | <b>Kf4</b>  | <b>Kf6</b> | [38 ... Re2!] |
| <b>39</b> | <b>Rc5</b>  | <b>Rd6</b> | [39 ... Re2!] |
| <b>40</b> | <b>g5+</b>  | <b>Ke6</b> |               |
| <b>41</b> | <b>Re5+</b> |            |               |

My chances on the e file have gone but 41 Rc7 g6 42 Ke4 Rb6 43 Rg7 would have shortened my suffering.

**Lesson 6 : Study endgames!**

In the book *100 Endgame Patterns You Must Know*, Spanish grandmaster Jesus de la Villa summarises Pattern 72 as follows :

*"Experience has amply demonstrated that it is almost always preferable to activate the rook, even at the cost of losing the pawn it was defending, although on occasion it is necessary to wait for the appropriate moment... If the side which is a pawn down has an active rook, they will almost certainly not lose."*

## Eye Opener

**A Marciniak v J Dobosz**  
Poland 1974

|          |             |           |
|----------|-------------|-----------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>e4</b>   | <b>c5</b> |
| <b>2</b> | <b>f4</b>   | <b>e6</b> |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Nf3</b>  | <b>d5</b> |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Bb5+</b> |           |

This marks a significant strategic departure from the featured game. Normally, with a pawn on e6, Black's light-squared bishop finds it hard to find useful deployment so it makes no sense for White to exchange it so freely.

|          |              |             |
|----------|--------------|-------------|
| <b>4</b> | <b>...</b>   | <b>Bd7</b>  |
| <b>5</b> | <b>Bxd7+</b> | <b>Qxd7</b> |
| <b>6</b> | <b>exd5</b>  | <b>exd5</b> |
| <b>7</b> | <b>0-0</b>   | <b>Nc6</b>  |

|          |           |            |
|----------|-----------|------------|
| <b>8</b> | <b>d4</b> | <b>Nf6</b> |
| <b>9</b> | <b>b3</b> |            |

When the centre can open up so easily, every tempo becomes important for development. Here, White could choose 9 Nc3 or 9 Re1+.

|          |            |             |
|----------|------------|-------------|
| <b>9</b> | <b>...</b> | <b>cxd4</b> |
|----------|------------|-------------|

Immediate recapture with 10 Nxd4 becomes an embarrassment. After 10 ... Bc5, Black is continuing naturally whereas White struggles to bring the queenside pieces into play e.g. 11 Be3 Ng4, 11 c3 blocks the long diagonal that the previous move tried to occupy, 11 Bb2 means the knight on b1 cannot emerge to c3 or d2 for some time and trying to avoid these problems with 11 Re1+ Ne4 12 Be3 0-0 leaves Black with an initiative. Note that seeking relief by exchanging 13 Nxc6 Qxc6 14 Bxc5 Qxc5+ leads to checkmate by Philidor's Legacy!

|           |             |            |
|-----------|-------------|------------|
| <b>10</b> | <b>Bb2</b>  | <b>Bc5</b> |
| <b>11</b> | <b>Kh1</b>  | <b>0-0</b> |
| <b>12</b> | <b>Nxd4</b> |            |

As it is, Black still has a comfortable lead in development. His rooks are connected whereas it will take White at least two more moves to achieve this. The knight on b1 continues to be immobilised as even Nb1-a3 loses a piece to Nc6xd4.

|           |            |            |
|-----------|------------|------------|
| <b>12</b> | <b>...</b> | <b>Ng4</b> |
|-----------|------------|------------|

Fritz prefers 12 ... Ne4 with some nasty threats e.g. removing the problem knight with 13 Nxc6 Qxc6 14 Nc3/d2 would allow 14 ... Ng3+ mating.

|           |             |              |
|-----------|-------------|--------------|
| <b>13</b> | <b>Nxc6</b> | <b>bx c6</b> |
| <b>14</b> | <b>Qf3</b>  | <b>Rfe8</b>  |



|           |             |                |
|-----------|-------------|----------------|
| <b>15</b> | <b>Qc3?</b> | <b>Nf2+</b>    |
| <b>16</b> | <b>Rxf2</b> | <b>Bd4 0-1</b> |