

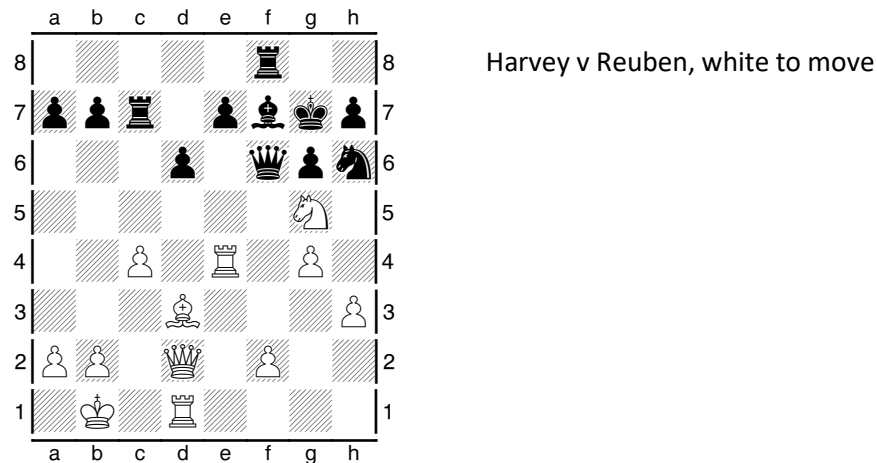
Merry Christmas to all our readers

A little bit of nudging has released the Sunday moves, so I'm now in a position to report on a successful 1st weekend of the MK Phoenix teams. The First Team won both their matches for the first time since 2012-3. The seconds scored only a half game point less, but only won 1 match.

Our top team met old adversaries on Saturday. The teams are usually closely matched on paper, but we had lost the last on the last three meetings. This time LUOB were blown away.

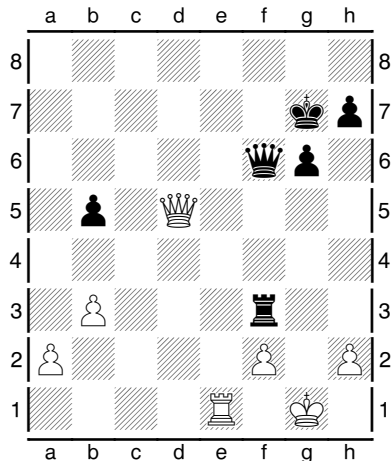
MK Phoenix 1	2025	Leeds University Old Boys 2003	
331 w Tippleston, Charles E	c 2085 1 - 0	Hall, John	f 2200
332 b Fraser-Mitchell, Jeremy N	2054 1 - 0	Pickard, Charles	2150
333 w Brown, Alan M	2031 1 - 0	Mossong, Hubert	f 2085
334 b Smith, Graham	2017 ½ - ½	Wojciechowski, Paul	c 1908
335 w Freeman, Richard C P	1997 ½ - ½	Birkin, Mark H	1967
336 b Reuben, Stewart	c 1971 1 - 0	Harvey, John	1710
	5 - 1		

Stewart's position was dire, but his opponent contrived to drop a piece.



Here white played 20.Rf4?? and Stewart grabbed the N. White had 20. Nxh7 Kxg7, 21. g5 and 22.Rh4.

Richard's game was fairly level throughout. Graham's game looks like a steady contest where his opponent mostly had most of the chances...until the machine is let loose.



Wojciechowski v Smith, white to play

Here white played 30. Qxb5 and after 30...Rxf2 Graham had enough counterplay. However 30. Qd7+ allows a forced, but scary win, e.g. 30...Kh6 31. Re7 Qg5+ (Qh8 32. Qd2+) 32.Kh1 Qf5 33.Rh7+ Kg5 34. h4+. More about the rich opportunities in our game rather than a let off.

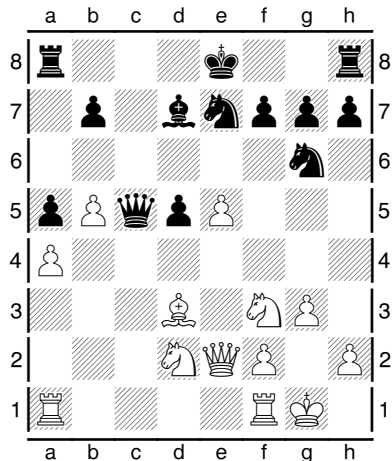
Alan used better opening knowledge to gain an advantage and he remorselessly converted it. Jeremy got the better of his adversary twice in complex mutual piece grabbing lines. In the first he missed the denouement in the second he queened a pawn. On the top board, Hall dropped a piece and Charles made heavy weather of it but gained the point.

The seconds made light work of their games. Adrian Matthews gained his point while still on the motorway. His opponent had to withdraw through illness on the journey.

MK Phoenix 2	1859		Iceni 3	1655
471 w Elwin, Adrian G	1979	1 - 0	Lightfoot, Malcolm J	1860
472 b Valentine, Brian J	1951	1 - 0	Jones, Robert L	1822
473 w Adebajo, Olufemi	1921	1 - 0	John, Adam	1653
474 b Matthews, Adrian M S	1809	1 - d	Collicott, Peter J	1657
475 w Whiteside, Robert	1800	1 - 0	Rowles, Sarah	1507
476 b Miller, Max C	1697	e 1 - 0	John, Amy	1435 c
		-1		
		6 - -1		

Both Max and Rob played solidly and their opponent's positions consistently went downhill.

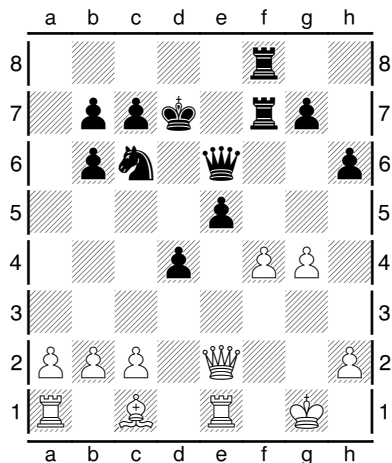
Femi's opponent clearly hadn't appraised Femi's playing style.



Adebajo v John, black to play

Here 19..0-0 avoids the worst, but he played 19...h6 against Femi! 20.e6 fe6 21.Nxe6 Bxe6 22.Qxe6 Nf8 23. Qe5 is winning, and 23...Kf7? didn't help.

I drifted into defending a Max Lange and fluffed my lines. My computer on a low horizon mode doesn't notice, but a precise line of play would have busted me. Fortunately, white interpolated a couple of moves and I wriggled free.



Jones v Valentine, Black to play.

Here my assistant recommends 22..Qg6 with a clear advantage, but I had something more diabolical in mind. 22...Qd5 23. fe5 Nxe5! Since as played 24. Qxe5 Rf1+ is catastrophic 0-1.

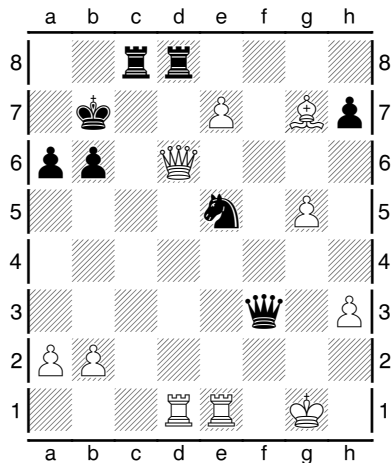
With the match decided Adrian's opponent offered a draw, where Adrian had a fairly immaterial advantage. Adrian turned down the offer and was rewarded immediately by some weak moves from his opponent and very quickly wrapped it up.

The return to Daventry was local enough for most to return home, eliminating the usual team dinner on Saturday night for most. Hopefully we can organise something a few times this season.

On Sunday on paper the firsts were outgunned. For instance, our top board had spent most of last season in the seconds. Nevertheless, the team pulled out a famous victory.

Check Innmates 1	2115	MK Phoenix 1	1991
321 w Martin, Lewis	2173 0 - 1	Brown, Alan M	2031
322 b Richmond, Peter	2093 0 - 1	Smith, Graham	2017
323 w Headlong, Timothy c	2140 ½ - ½	Freeman, Richard C P	1997
324 b Truran, Michael C	2156 0 - 1	Reuben, Stewart	c 1971
325 w Richmond, Jane	wf 2054 1 - 0	Elwin, Adrian G	1979
326 b Hackett, Dave G	2075 ½ - ½	Valentine, Brian J	1951
	2 - 4		

I was rewarded for my rare outing in the top team by sitting next to Stewart due to an issue with table legs (too complicated to expand on here). Stewart was wrapped up for the cold and wearing a winter hat. About move eight he whimpered out a draw offer. The ECF CEO took affront turned it down and thereafter was trounced. Was this the Reuben bluff?

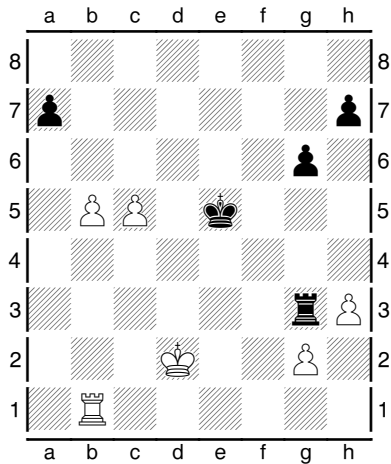


Reuben v Truran, white to play

Here Truran returned the draw offer, what would you do? The rule-writer claimed 2 extra minutes! With some theatre Stewart waited for the arbiter to adjust the clocks, reached over the board, took on d8 and replaced his pawn with a Knight. The only winning move.

Richard was under strong pressure from early on and was 2 pawns down at one point, but kept enough activity to stay in the game and was rewarded by his opponent losing the thread. Graham invested his first four moves in fianchettoing both bishops. He grabbed a queen side pawn and weathered a king side attack where black threw in more material to keep it alive. Eventually Graham exchanged off enough to extinguish all risk. Alan energetically replied to 1.e4 with e5, twice the effort of his usual response. He then plonked out 12 moves of opening theory. Soon he grabbed a pawn, proceeded to swap off a lot of material and converted a bishop ending. Adrian appeared to be surprised by an unusual second move: 1.e4 c6 2. Ne2, he responded 2...e5 and was always up against it after 3.d4. After some stout defence he succumbed.

With the match already decided, I missed a golden opportunity. Having returned the exchange to eliminate a pawn on the 7th, I reached this position:



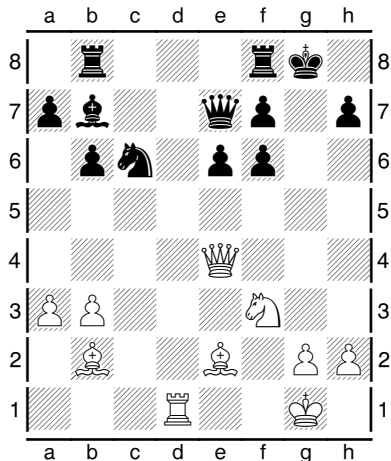
Valentine v Hackett, Black to play

After 44...Kd4, I was confronted with a lot of counterplay involving mate threats and played 45.Ke2?. I managed to draw, although Adrian pointed out an improved plan for black. There is nothing to worry about here if I notice the winning idea. 45.c6! Rxc3+ 46.Kd1 Kd3 47. Rb3+! Kb4 48. c7! (48.b6 is also good but less clean.

A splendid upset, leaving the 1st team 3rd in the table half a game point behind the leaders.

Watford 1	1903	MK Phoenix 2	1842
451 w Nelson, Omowale	2027 e 1 - 0	Adebajo, Olufemi	1921
452 b Karamazondo, Ernest	1930 e 1 - 0	Meichel, Eric B	1937 c
453 w Lancaster, Roger	1960 e ½ - ½	Williamson, Kevin J	1873
454 b Dunlop, Neil J	1900 e 0 - 1	Obi, Marc On	1826
455 w Papathanasopoulos, Nikolaos	1847 e 0 - 1	Whiteside, Robert	1800
456 b Sloan, Cecil	1757 e 1 - 0	Miller, Max C	1697 e
	3½ - 2½		

Rob's game was mercifully short as most of the scoresheet must have been filled up with his opponent's surname! Rob efficiently delivered his mating combination which came after a scare.



White to move, Whiteside on the black side.

White has sacrificed the exchange and a couple of pawns and would have been rewarded after 19. Qg4+ Kh8 20.Qh4 e5 21.Rd7 Qe6 22.Bd3 f5 23.Ng5 and black's defences fall apart. However white played 19.Qh4 and our man was up for the defence. 19...e5 20. Bd3 f5 21. Qg3+ Kh8 22.Ne5 f6 and the attack has dissipated. Rob soon gave back the exchange on g8 and overwhelmed g2.

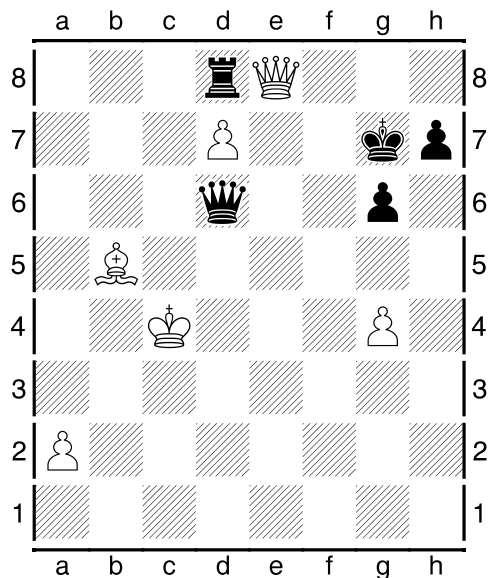
Max got in Bxh7+ which netted a pawn, but should have been refuted. Almost immediately he missed a nasty pin and dropped the exchange. There was no coming back.

Marc came out with a strategic advantage in the opening; fewer pawn islands and no doubled pawns. He still controlled the key important open file and this converted into an extra pawn. Marc coolly nurtured the position and converted.

After some steady defending, Kevin emerged with a fairly complex position with equal chances. His opponent then made a poor move, after which Kevin plonked out the refuting move and offered a draw!

Despite all the energetic ideas of his opponent, Eric emerged from the opening with a clear advantage. At this point he got his queen in a bad spot, but should have got two rooks for it. He chose to throw in an extra piece and went down in flames.

This leaves us with the titanic struggle on the top board. Early on in a Kings Indian Femi allowed white a bit much infiltration on the queen side and dropped a pawn. This seldom matters in the KID; what matters is momentum! Femi sacrificed the exchange and got back to an equal position. It looks as though both players were in time trouble and Femi's 40th was poor. Nevertheless the game was just starting. By move 50 white had connected passed pawns, one on the 7th, then he erred. Femi got back to unclear equality only to miss his best chance. Again, Femi got back to computer equality after now 18 moves with that pawn still on the seventh.



Nelson v Adebajo, black to play.

To give a flavour of the heroic difficulties beforehand we set out the final crucial period, probably with very little free clock time left for the complexity. Here 66...Rb8 or 66...Qf4+ maintain dynamic equality, but Femi chose 66...Qc7+ 66.Kd5 Kf6? (66...Qb7 is best) 67.a4?(Qe6 and swapping Qs wins) Rb8 – a move too late, Qb7 is equal now b3 is uncontrolled- 68.Qe6! The idea is till on and after the Q exchange it's relatively straightforward. Femi still carried on till move 97 before accepting the now inevitable.

The 2nds end up top of the group on 2 points by virtue of game points, giving the probability of good chess next time out. Next round: 12/13th January, Adrian will be in touch.

Brian Valentine

5th December 2018