

Chess Aotearoa

February - April 2025

Volume 3, Number 2

CHESS AOTEAROA MAGAZINE

Titles Galore: Success for Kiwis Overseas



Foreword

The season after Congress has always been a busy one, with its mix of local and international tournaments.

This year, Kiwi players did not disappoint, producing many memorable results both overseas and at home in long-running tournaments.

Read on to find reports of Kiwi success at the recent Oceania Zonals, stunning 5.5/6 results at the Wellington Open, and more!

Enjoy!
-Weiyang Yu



We now have a Lichess account!

Click [here](#) to see our new Lichess account, where you can find all games featured in the edition in our studies. We hope this will make our magazine more accessible and convenient for our readers. For direct access to this edition's study, please see the contents page.

Published seasonally; February, May, August, November

Many thanks to Christoph Thurner for his article submission. Please send any article submissions to chessmagnominations@gmail.com for consideration.

For any issues or queries regarding the puzzles, contact Felix Xie at felix2008xie@hotmail.com. Answers can be found at the back of this edition.

Click [here](#) to be added to the Chess Aotearoa Mailing List.

Click [here](#) to access our Chess Aotearoa Feedback form and help us improve our magazine/get to know our audience.

Click [here](#) to access the games of this edition in a Lichess study format.

Editorial

Founder: Weiyang Yu

Executive Team: Weiyang Yu, Charlotte Ray, Anya Thurner, Tyne Grant, and Michael Sole

Team Leader: Anya Thurner

Social Media Manager: Charlotte Ray

Outreach Officer: Weiyang Yu

Credit for the cover photo goes to Weiyang Yu. Credit for Oceania Zonals photos and photos from the Bay of Plenty Rapid goes to the NZ Chess News Facebook Page.

On the cover

Congratulations to FM Daqi Mao, who recently gained his title at the Oceania Zonals!

3 Puzzles Felix Xie

4 Recent & Upcoming Tournaments
Leo Malcolm

6 Oceania Zonals
Jack McConnell

12 Wellington Open
Karthik
Sethuramalingam

23 Latvian Rapid
Charlotte Ray &
Weiyang Yu

25 Bay of Plenty Rapid
Tyne Grant

27 Coach's Corner
Christoph Thurner

31 Chess Clubs
Anya Thurner





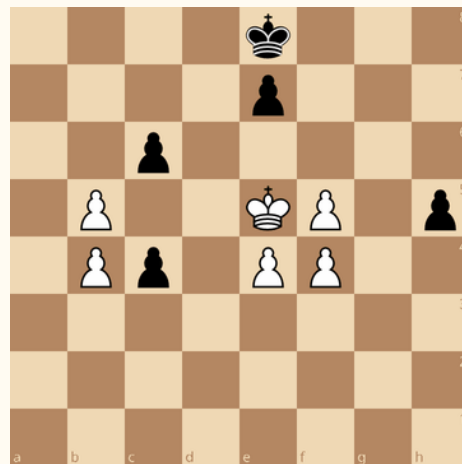
(1) White to move and win
Bruzon Batista, L - Onischuk, A.



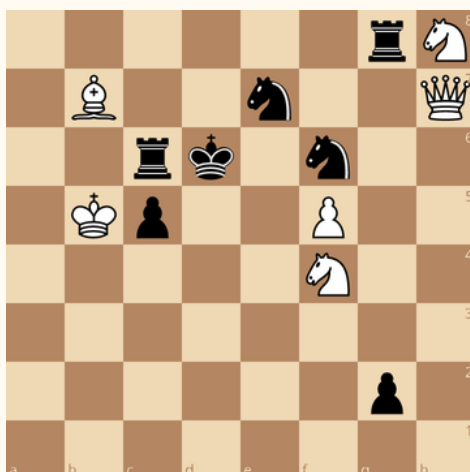
(2) White to move and win
Wei, Y. - Bruzon Barista, L



(3) White to move and win
Dominguez Perez, L. - Adhiban, B.



(4) White to move and win
Fontana, R.



(5) White to move and win
Nielsen, S. S.



(6) White to move and win
Miles, A. J. - Hort, V.

Recent Tournaments

Leo Malcolm

Auckland Waitangi Weekender 2025

6th - 9th February 2025

Auckland Chess Centre, Mt Eden

90+30 6-round swiss

1st place (5/6): Saptorshi Gupta, Ilias Angelo
(Leo) Baker

19th Bay of Plenty Rapid 2025

22nd February 2025

Mount Bible Chapel, Arataki, Mt Maunganui

25+5 6-round swisses (A, B)

1st place (5.5/6): FM Alphaeus Wei Ern Ang,
FM Felix Xie

2025 Latvian Rapid

15th March 2025

Te Tuhi, Pakuranga, Auckland

25+5 6-round swisses (A, B, C, D)

1st place (5/6): FM Daqi Mao, FM Felix Xie

Auckland Anzac Weekender 2025

25th - 27th April 2025

Auckland Chess Centre, Mt Eden

90+30 6-round swiss

1st place (6/6): FM Alphaeus Wei Ern Ang

Hawke's Bay Rapid 2025

8th February 2025

Greenmeadows East Community Hall,
Napier

25+5 6-round swisses (A, B, Junior)

1st place (6/6): FM Felix Xie

Otago Autumn Rapid

2nd March 2025

Otago Chess Club, Dunedin

20+5 6-round swiss

1st place (6/6): Richie Christie

Wellington Open 2025

18th - 21st April 2025

Wellington Bridge Club

90+30 6-round swiss

1st place (5.5/6): FM Ben Hague, IM Russell
Dive, CM Ollie Archer

Upcoming Tournaments

Leo Malcolm

Arie Nijman Memorial 2025

16th - 18th May 2025

Crockfords Bridge Club, Riccarton,
Christchurch

90+30 6-round swiss

NZCF and FIDE rated

Kapiti Rapid 2025

24th May 2025

Paraparaumu College

25+5 6-round swisses

NZCF and FIDE rated

47th Trusts Open 2025

31st May - 2nd June 2025

Te Pai Centre, Henderson, Auckland

90+30 6-round swisses (A, B, C, Junior)

NZCF and FIDE rated

Peter Stuart Memorial 2025

20th - 22nd June 2025

Spencer Hotel, Takapuna, Auckland

90+30 6-round swisses (Open, Reserve)

NZCF and FIDE rated

Upper Hutt Rapid 2025

21st June 2025

Hutt International Boys School, Upper
Hutt

25+5 6-round swisses (A, B)

NZCF rated (A grade)

The 2025 Oceania Zonal began on the 24th of January with 47 New Zealanders making the trip over the ditch to compete in Melbourne. Held only once every two years, this event is unique as it offers direct titles for making specific scores, as well as the chance to compete against the strongest opponents in Oceania. Players who scored 4.5 were eligible for the Candidate Master title, players who scored 6 were eligible for the FIDE Master title, winning offered a direct International Master Title, and placing 2nd or 3rd earned an IM norm. 11 of the 47 New Zealanders were competing in the Women's section, which offered corresponding titles (WCM, WFM, and WIM) for the same scores.

The tournament was hosted by the Box Hill Chess Club at the Huntingdale Golf Club in Monash, which gave players a scenic view of the course during rounds, with refreshments and food between rounds at the temporarily rebranded "Chess Café" in their facility. Because of space constraints, the entries by Australian players in the open section were restricted to those rated over 1900, which ensured a challenging field and high average rating compared to previous editions.

The first round began unfortunately for NZ, with two of our top players meeting immediately on the 4th board. CM

Isabelle Ning played a very stable King's Indian against 4th seed FM Alphaeus Ang, but found herself in a slightly passive rook and knight endgame, which the higher-rated player converted into a queenside breakthrough, promotion, and victory. The second highest seed from New Zealand, FM Felix Xie, played a very provocative line of the Nimzo-Indian on board seven, but his opponent Ethan Chang found that all the space grabbed in the opening rendered the position loose and rather threatening. A quick sortie by the queen saw Felix emerge up an exchange and a pawn in the endgame and secured victory. Other New Zealanders who started out near the top boards included IM Russell Dive and Markis Tew, who got off to rough starts with loses in the first round, and Winston Weng, who did well to split the point with his higher-rated Australian opponent Daniel Shen. In the Women's section, it was also a difficult start for NZ top seeds with 3rd seed Sarah Sun getting upset by 27th seed Australian Isabella Guan and 6th seed WFM Nadia Braganza being upset by 30th seed Grace Yin.

There were more New Zealanders in action on the top boards in round two, with many paired up against higher-rated opponents. On board one, FM Robert Smith had a crack at top seed GM Temur Kuybokarov but found his king caught in the centre once the GM broke through his Caro-Kann. CM Cohen Young faced

the Najdorf of IM Rishi Sardana on board two, but the Australian IM put him away with a thematic kingside attack. Alphaeus Ang and Felix Xie successfully continued their campaigns on boards four and six, each showing technical prowess in the endgame to defeat their respective opponents. On the Women's side, WCM Luna Xiahan Lu put on an incredible defensive effort in a lost rook endgame to survive 85 moves against top seed WGM Julia Ryjanova, but she was eventually taken down, as was WCM Luna Yuexiu Xu on board five against 9th seed WCM Jody Middleton.

In round three, Alphaeus Ang faced his first bit of difficulty when CM Tedric Li held him to a draw. The game featured an early queen trade and symmetrical pawn structure in the Queen's Gambit Accepted, with Ang clearly intending to outplay his opponent in the queenless middlegame. This strategy looked promising, and Ang eventually excavated a pawn-up knight endgame, but missed the conversion by allowing a sacrifice of the opponent's knight for his remaining pawns, which left him insufficient mating material. Symmetry also appeared in Felix Xie's game against fellow New Zealander Miles Lee, who played into the Symmetrical Variation of the English. However, Xie abandoned the mirroring early on, ending up with the lion's share of the centre and not

letting an exchange of queens prevent him from pursuing an attack. Though the tactical situation was at times unclear, the FM's relentless pursuit of a breakthrough finally forced a decisive mistake, and Xie progressed to 3/3. Sophia Feng faced 2nd seed WFM Zhiyuan Shen in the Women's competition and proved her theoretical knowledge in the modern 7.Qf3 line of the Taimanov Sicilian. The middlegame was incredibly complicated, but balanced throughout, and the only mistakes made by the New Zealander were in the eventual rook endgame that her significantly higher-rated opponent was forced to pursue to get the king out of trouble. Unfortunately, the pawns Feng had advanced in her attack proved a weakness there and she was unable to navigate the transition from attack to defence, eventually conceding, although for half the game, she had been the player with the better chances.

Round four saw the first split point for Felix Xie. His opponent FM Christopher Wallis played a very prudent Queen's Indian which gave Xie little opportunity to fight for an advantage. In fact, the New Zealander faced immediate carnage at a few points in the endgame, but his opponent overlooked the critical mating ideas, allowing Xie to escape with repetition and half a point thanks to Black's exposed king. Alphaeus Ang got back to winning ways with a King's Indian

against Tony Zheng, though he also had to take some risks to do so. Notably, on board twelve, Daqi Mao was mounting a climb to the top boards, which continued in this round with an upset win over a considerably higher-rated opponent, IM Stephen Solomon (though unfortunately this wasn't broadcast). It was two wins for the New Zealanders on the top 5 boards in the Women's section with Sarah Sun making efficient work of the Jobava London as black on board 4 and Luna Xiahan Lu upsetting 4th seed WFM Alaina Vincent on board five. Luna Yuexiu Xu and Sophia Feng both remained steady this round with half a point each.

The midpoint of the tournament finally saw New Zealand's two frontrunners in the open section brought together; Alphaeus Ang with White facing Felix Xie as Black. The game immediately erupted into a spectacle with Xie sacrificing a piece for three pawns on the queenside. The situation was roughly equal, but the passed a-pawn quashed any activity White's extra knight might have hoped for. Xie combined this with a central breakthrough after which the raking effect of his bishops on the queenside became irresistible and Ang fell into trouble, eventually leading to a result in Black's favour. Meanwhile, on board eight, Robert Smith played a

mind-boggling bishop and knight endgame against FM Luis Chan, which began on move 28 with seven pawns each and didn't end until move 77 with bare knights and a draw. In the Women's section, it was now Luna Xiahan Lu's turn to face Zhiyuan Shen, and again the Australian 2nd seed found herself in trouble against a young New Zealander. Lu played the Black side of the Tarrasch French excellently, finding a particularly nice manoeuvre with ...Bf4 followed by ...g5, which effectively netted her a full piece. This exposed the king, though, and in the chaotic position after Black won material, Shen managed to steal an attack and win a more decisive amount of material in the form of a queen, sealing the game. Sarah Sun proved resilient on board four to hold Elaina Qiang to a draw despite a temporary pawn deficit and keep her tournament moving.

In round six, Felix Xie finally faced defeat against the unconventional strategy of FM Sterling Bayaca, who neglected the centre and placed his king on f8, but found supreme utility in the advance of his h-pawn against the castled position of Xie's king. On board four, Miles Lee, who had done a good job of climbing back to the top after his earlier loss to Xie, gave GM Temur Kuybokarov very little out of the opening as Black in a Rossolimo. The New Zealander seemed to have every break locked down, but this comfortable situation was disturbed after a

manoeuvring period which saw the Grandmaster get in the d4 break, after which the Black king, which had castled queenside behind a plethora of hooks, fell to an attack. On board five, Alphaeus Ang dug himself out of a horrifying cramp thanks in part to a premature sacrifice by his opponent to win and rejoin Xie on 4.5. On board three in the Women's section, Sarah Sun benefitted dramatically from an oversight by her opponent Anya Song, who agreed to a draw even though she had a completely winning position, not seeing that White's pieces were far too tied up to attack her seemingly open king or even defend Sun's surprisingly lonely monarch. Luna Yuexiu Xu had a far cleaner win against the 5th seed Jennifer Morrison on board 4, winning a pawn through a tactical shot in the middlegame and converting it in the endgame.

It was much the same story for Xu in round seven, winning again after snagging a pawn in the middlegame, although here her opponent Zhiling Qian livened things up through a hasty exchange sacrifice to try and produce some complications. Sarah Sun also won, cementing her place among the top contenders through a glacial march of pawns on the queenside in a Caro-Kann, which her opponent was unable to hold up. In the open section, Ang was unfortunate to catch top seed Temur

Kuybokarov. They reached an equal endgame with a typical Grunfeld imbalance, but Ang found some difficulty escaping with his loot after he grabbed the supposedly hanging b7-pawn. With the rook on b7 tied down to the defence of a bishop c7, White was forced to return the pawn, and then give an exchange to survive, but the GM still had more than enough pawns on the board to convert the exchange into a full point. Felix Xie had an easier time on board five, playing a model game in the venomous Blumenfeld countergambit, which his opponent Ashvin Balavignan must have regretted fully accepting quite quickly, as Xie had full control of the centre and bishops angled at his king, occupying both b7 and b8.

Xie failed to roll over his opponent in quite the same way in round eight and was held to a draw by FM Yi Liu, while behind him, it was largely a story of New Zealanders holding steady toward the end of the tournament. Robert Smith continued his incremental progress with a draw against IM Gary Lane, though the sacrifice of a knight for the creation of an incredible duo of passed pawns almost netted him a win, and Russell Dive, who had by now risen to the higher end of the table after his first round upset, drew against Xie's victim from the previous round Balavignan. Alphaeus Ang wasn't held up for too long by his loss in round seven with a victory over Cedric Koh in 8,

and Miles Lee continued to play spoiler to Australian IMs with a win against Cameron McGowan. Having parted the field over the previous rounds, Luna Yuexiu Xu and Sarah Sun found themselves playing on the top two boards against the top two seeds respectively in round 8. Ryjanova gave Xu little chance against her Four Knight's Sicilian, but Shen found Sun an incredibly difficult opponent to put away, despite the New Zealander not getting the best position as White in a Sveshnikov Sicilian. Sun had fully fought back from a cramped position toward an equal endgame with winning chances for both sides when, under time pressure, tragedy struck and she hung a clean rook, after which the game ended immediately.

In a tournament offering direct titles, the final round is naturally the critical point, with many players needing an outright win to secure the desired result. Xie had a shot at an IM norm with a podium finish, which would require a win, but unfortunately he wasn't able to produce significant chances against IM James Morris, lost a pawn for nebulous compensation in the middlegame and found himself eventually in the rare losing rook and three pawns versus rook and four pawns endgame thanks to his major piece stranded on h6. Unable to return to the game without allowing an exchange and conversion

into a winning king and pawn endgame for his opponent, who went on to place second in the open section, Xie capitulated. Ang, chasing the same norm, fell just a half-point short of placing, though he was able to win his final game against CM Rheyansh Annapureddy elegantly on the White side of a King's Indian. Miles Lee, who entered the tournament without a title, needed only a draw on board 8 to reach six points, securing provisional FM. Unfortunately, he fell to IM David Cannon, though the score of 5.5 and his results in general had fulfilled all the requirements for CM. Daqi Mao came from behind in the tournament to deliver a huge result in the final round, upsetting GM Darryl Johansen, the 5th seed, to score 6/9 and secure provisional FM. Of those in pursuit of provisional CM and needing 4.5 points, Markis Tew and Oscar Cui made necessary draws, while Leo Baker scored the necessary full point, leaving these players only the rating requirement left to fulfil.

In the Women's section, Luna Yuexiu Xu needed a half point against Zhiyuan Shen to make 6 points and the corresponding WFM, but Shen dispatched a fourth New Zealander, and Xu was left that half-point short. Sarah Sun was in a tougher position, needing to win on demand against the 4th seed Alaina Vincent to get to 6. Though she didn't manage this, Sun still secured provisional WCM thanks to

her results earlier in the tournament. As did Sophia Feng, who had entered the tournament without a title. Luna Xiahan Lu finished strongly with a win to put herself on the same score of 5.5 as Luna Yuexiu Xu. Finally, Emily Gan made a critical draw which saw her move up to 4.5 points and earn provisional WCM as well.

Wellington is known for its strong winds, culture, and artistic reputation, but everyone knows that the most important thing that happens in Wellington is obviously the Wellington Open! The one and only annual classical tournament to happen in the capital is no small event. This year's edition hosted 82 players, with many new Wellington youngsters. There was even a special appearance by two European 2000-rated players. The Wellington Open is an amazing opportunity for new Wellington players to get a FIDE rating. 36 players in the field were hoping to achieve this by scoring a 1400+ performance rating. The event was held as usual at the Wellington Bridge Club and kindly organised by Bill Forster, Gordon Lyall, and their amazing team.

Nerves were high before the start of round one on the 18th of April. For many players, this was their first-ever classical tournament. Hence, unsurprisingly, round one saw very few upsets. The higher-rated players dominated the top eleven boards. The streak was broken on board twelve by Edison Yang holding a draw against a 2000-rated visiting French player, Guillaume Levesque; an impressive feat. The biggest upset of this round was Karthikeyan Annamalai's victory over Justin Wang. Wang's e4 was met by a Caro-Kann by Annamalai and the Two Knights Attack was chosen by White.

However, a few slow moves by White allowed Black to activate his pieces. Black had smartly exchanged his light-squared bishop (LSB) and created a wall of pawns on the light squares. White chose to go for a c3 d4 setup; however, this did not complement his dark-squared bishop (DSB). Out of the opening, Black's pieces were much more coordinated than White's, allowing Black to swarm the center and eventually win a piece. This was a great way to start the tournament for Annamalai and potentially a smart swiss gambit from Wang.

Round two was a significantly harder challenge for the top players. The top seed, FM Ben Hague, scored a clean win over WCM Luna Lu, and FM Nicolas Croad did the same against Dion Charles on board three. The two IMs, Anthony Ker and Russell Dive, were held to draws in two crazy games by Wei Kai Chen and your humble correspondent, respectively. Chen came to the board with the slightly unorthodox 1.b3 and boldly sacrificed two pawns against the former multiple-time NZ champion, Ker. The engine does not appreciate this sacrifice, but Black did have some trouble refuting it. White had almost gotten enough compensation for the material, and the engine was starting to bless his position. However, a few quick trades allowed Black to activate his pieces. Black had done a great job consolidating his position and was now completely winning

on the board, and also had a significant time advantage. However, with less than ten minutes remaining on his clock, White set a cunning trap, forcing Black to find an only move to keep his advantage. The gamble worked, and White was now up a piece and was completely winning. Playing against the experienced IMs is a challenge from move one to the very end. White's eagerness to trade pieces and potentially the clock situation allowed Black to exchange into a drawn endgame despite being down a piece!

Chen, Wei Kai (1/2-1/2) IM Ker, Anthony

Wellington Open 2025,

Round 2

Annotated by Leo Malcolm

1. b3 c5 2. Bb2 Nc6 3. e3 e5 4. f4 exf4 5. Nf3 fxe3 6. Bd3 exd2+ 7. Qxd2 An aggressive double gambit by White as usual leaves Black better but needing to find accurate moves to retain the advantage. For now development is the focus for both sides.

7... Nf6 8. O-O Be7?! 8... d5 was better, using the extra central pawn to keep White's active pieces at bay. **9. Re1+ Be7 10. Bxf6 gxf6** followed by **Be6** and **Kd7** would be one way to create attacking chances for Black.

9. c4! d5 10. cxd5 Qxd5 11. Nc3 Qd8 12. Rad1 White's lead in development and well-placed pieces almost compensate for the two sacrificed pawns, however for now there are no particularly vulnerable targets in Black's position.

12... O-O 13. Qf2 Qc7 14. h3 Be6 15. Ne4? White's material deficit means he should avoid exchanges. **15. Ng5 h6 16. Nxe6** is a favourable exception as after **16... fxe6 17. Nb5 Qb6 18. Qe3** a weakness has been created.

15... Nxe4 16. Bxe4 Rad8 17. Rde1 Nd4 18. Nxd4 cxd4 19. Bd3 Bf6 20. Qe2 Qe7 21. Qe4 g6 22. Qf4 Bg7 23. Bc1 a6 24. Qg3 Rc8 25. Bg5 Qc7 26. Bf4 Qa5 27. Re2 Rfe8 28. Rfe1 Bd7 29. Bd2 Qb6 30. Rxe8+ Bxe8 31. Bc4 Bb5 32. Bd5 Bc6 33. Bc4 Qc7?! 34. Qxc7 Rxc7 35. Bf4 Rc8 36. Re7 Rf8 37. Rc7 would have left White with the far better rook. Black is still better however not as clearly winning, and will probably have to give up a pawn in order to relieve the pressure against f7. For example: **37... d3 38. Bxd3 Bd4+ 39. Kf1 Bb6 40. Re7 Bd8 41. Re2.**

34. Bf4 Qd7 35. Bg5 Re8 36. Rf1 Bd5 37. Bd3 b5 38. Rc1 Be4 39. Rc7 Qf5?? 39... Qe6 would have held everything together but now White is completely winning.



40. Re7! A fork, as Black cannot capture the rook due to Qb8+ and Bh6.

40... Rc8 41. Rxe4 Qc5 42. Bd2 Qa3 43. Qe1 Qf8 44. a4 Bf6 45. axb5 axb5 46. Bxb5 Kg7 47. Re8 Qc5 48. Rxc8 Qxc8 49. Bc4 Qc6 50. Qf1 Qd6 51. Qf4 Qe7 52. Qh6+ Kg8 53. Qf4 Kg7 54. b4 Be5 55. Qf3 Bb8 56. Bf4?? Giving up the b-pawn to exchange Black's last bishop was clearly tempting, but not worthwhile.



56... Qe1+ 57. Kh2 Qxb4 58. Bxb8 Qxb8+ Now with two pawns for the bishop, Black has much improved chances to hold; there may already be no way for

White to win.

59. Kg1 Qc7 60. Qd5 Qf4 61. Qf3 Qxf3! Splitting the pawns guarantees a workable position for Black. White's king will need to babysit his pawns, while the bishop alone won't give black sufficient problems.

62. gxf3 f5 63. f4 h6 64. Kf2 g5 65. Bd3 Kf6 66. Kf3 Ke6 67. Bc4+ Kf6 With both players low on time and neither wanting to risk pushing for more, a draw is settled.

68. Bd3 Ke6 1/2-1/2

On board four, Dive played a Catalan against yours truly and surprised me with the rare 7.Nc3, aiming to lock down Black's position and compensate for the lost pawn with space and activity. White boldly lifted his rook from e1 to e4 in a scary attempt to lay siege against the Black king. However, Black's defenses were too strong, and White's rook was now misplaced. White desperately attempted to break open the centre, but this allowed Black to open up his pieces. Black was able to trade off the pieces into a winning endgame, but as usual, yours truly got into time trouble and lost the advantage.

On board eleven, WIM Layla Timergazi narrowly defeated rising youngster Aadhav Dhamodharan in a pawn-up but equal endgame. Our two visiting

Wellington Open

Karthik Sethuramalingam

European players were held to draws by local players Zachary Thirkell and Afique Nazeer.

In round three, Hague beat Nicholas Winsley with the White pieces, creating a menacing attack via the Wing Gambit against Winsley's Sicilian. The attack was so brutal that the Black king had to escape his castle and run to h4, only to meet his fate. Hague was even able to throw in a brilliant Botez gambit. Timergazi was faring decently against Croad's Grunfeld on board two, but a clever pawn sacrifice by Black threw White off balance, and the former NZ Champion led a brutal attack on White's king. CM Cohen Young and Matthew Ashton played an almost perfect game for 20 moves until an unfortunate hanging of a fork allowed Young to seize victory. Luke Chang smoothly won his game, cruising toward victory with superior positional play. There was not much to say about Archer's game. The recently crowned joint WCC Summer Cup champion played a near-perfect game with 98% accuracy and finished with more time on the clock than he had started with.

On board seven, Dion Wilson upset soon-to-be CM Leo Baker in a thrilling Winawer battle. The game went right down to the wire with both players getting into time trouble. Sai Somaraju held a draw against Ryan Winter.

After the halfway point, Hague, Croad, Young, Chang, Archer, and Wilson were leading the pack on 3/3, but Dive, Ker, and others were close behind on 2.5.

Round four was the last round before a much-needed rest day. A good win here could mean very good morale for the final day. The top boards had many star-studded pairings. On board one, young star Chang faced Hague with the White pieces. Chang put up a good fight against the top seed, but it was clear that Hague was in control. Expertly maneuvering his pieces to force an IQP, Black exploited the weakness and won a pawn. The rest of the game was pretty straightforward, but White certainly made Black work for the advantage in the endgame. Croad put pressure on Wilson throughout the game, and it eventually paid off when a miscalculation in time trouble allowed Croad to seal victory. Personally, the board three pairing between Archer and Young was what I was most excited for. The two former schoolmates had played many games in the past, including throughout many editions of this tournament. Last time, Young had come out on top, delaying Archer's path to the CM title. This year, Archer got the better of his opponent, continuing his incredible streak of high-accuracy games. This one was 99% accuracy with 3 ACL! The opening was fairly balanced, but some positional mistakes allowed

Wellington Open

Karthik Sethuramalingam

White's pieces to dominate the board. Board four hosted one of the most thrilling games of the tournament. It was a battle of youth vs experience as Somaraju faced Ker. Words are not enough to describe this game, so here it is for you.

Somaraju, Sai (0-1) IM Ker, Anthony

Wellington Open 2025,

Round 4

Annotated by Leo Malcolm

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. f3 d5 5. a3 Be7 6. e4 dxe4 7. fxe4 e5 8. d5 Bc5 9. Be2 Ng4 10. Bxg4 Qh4+ 11. g3 Qxg4 12. Qxg4 Bxg4 13. Nb5 Kd7?! Better was 13... Na6, where after something like 14. b4 c6 15. Nc3 Bd4 16. Bb2 Rc8 Black would have good pressure with White's king stuck in the center.



14. b4 Bd4?! This encourages the opening of the center where White's smooth development gives him a much easier position. After 14... Be7 15. h3 Bh5 16. g4 Bg6 17. Nf3 f6 Black keeps things locked in

the center and buys time to potentially expand on the queenside with 18. Nc3 a5.

15. Nxd4 exd4 16. h3 Bh5 17. g4 Bg6 18. Nf3 Re8 19. O-O a5 Delaying the capture on e4 does allow White the option of 20. e5, however after 20... axb4 he has no immediate threats while Black's a8 rook is somewhat developed.

20. b5 Rxe4 21. Bb2 Kd6! Making room for the knight to come to d7, where it will eye both c5 and e5 as well as prepare Rae8.



22. Ng5 Re7 23. Bxd4 h6 23... Nd7 would have been an instructive pawn sacrifice, as after 24. Bxg7 Black can combine ideas of h5 and Rae8 while not having to worry about White's c-pawn advances.

24. c5+ Kxd5 25. Rad1?! The wrong rook, 25. Rfd1 is better as after 25... Kc4 26. a4 Black's king is stranded behind enemy lines. Black could try 25... Rd7 however 26. Rac1 sees White's pieces all perfectly

Wellington Open

Karthik Sethuramalingam

placed while Black still is far from developed and will have to give back the piece to survive, for example 26... hxc5 27. c6 bxc6 28. bxc6 Nxc6 29. Bxg7+ Ke6 30. Re1+ Ne5 31. Rxe5+ Kd6 32. Rxc5 - White has regained the material with a clearly safer king and is close to winning.

25... Kc4 Dodging any discovered checks and threatening the b-pawn while White's knight on g5 remains attacked.

26. Nf3 f6?? There was no reason to not capture on b5, after which Black's king finds shelter while his knights development prospects multiply.

27. a4! Sealing the exit. Black's king has ventured too far, and cannot attempt an escape via the d-file due threats of Bxf6+.



27... Re2 28. Bf2 Bd3?! Places another piece on a vulnerable square, and white can win material by 29. Rc1+ Kd5 30. Rfd1 Ke4 31. Ne1 where the bishop is trapped. If 29... Rc2 white wins with 30. Rxc2+ Bxc2 31. Rc1 and either Nd4+ or Ne1+ after the

bishop is defended, and if 29... Kb3 30. Nd4+ simply picks up an exchange.

29. Rfe1?? Allows Black to bail out with 29... Rxe1+, where White's three remaining pieces are not enough to cause serious problems for the Black king - 30. Nxe1 Bg6 31. Rd8 leaves Black under pressure but not lost.

29... c6?? The same tactics as last move still apply.

30. Rxe2?? Similar to before, simplifying relieves sufficient pressure for Black to survive.

30... Bxe2 31. Rd4+ Kb3 32. Nd2+ Kc2 33. Nc4?? Another exchange means Black's king is now much more of an asset than a liability. There will be no mate threats with only two attackers, and for the first time Black is significantly better.



33... Bxc4! 34. Rxc4+ Kb3 35. Rd4 cxb5! 36. axb5 a4 In just a few moves Black's vulnerable king and undeveloped rook

Wellington Open

Karthik Sethuramalingam

have both become perfectly placed, with a clear plan to push the a-pawn.

37. Rd8 a3 38. Bd4 a2?? Allowing 39. Ba1 after which Black's progress is too slow, and White can create his own threats. The position is equal but tricky, for example 39... Kc2 would lose to 40. c6 Kb1 41. c7 Kxa1 42. c8=Q.

39. Ba1 Ra5 40. Rxb8 Rxb5 41. Bd4?? 41. Kf2 Kc2 42. Ra8 would have added enough defenders to a1. White is after all up a piece, with 42... Kb1 43. Bd4 Rb2+ 44. Bxb2 Kxb2 45. Ke3 a1=Q 46. Rxa1 Kxa1 47. Kd4 leaving him with the more centralised king but unfortunately no way to win.

41... Kc4 The bishop cannot maintain defense of a1 (42. Ba1 Rb1+) therefore is lost, and Black can arrange a material advantage.



42. Ra8 Kxd4 43. Rxa2 Kxc5 44. Kf2 Rb3
45. h4 Rh3 46. Kg2 Rxh4 47. Rc2+ Kb6
48. Rb2+ Ka7 49. Ra2+ Kb8 50. Ra4 h5 0-1

Russell, Winter, and Baker scored wins. Matthew Keith scored a big win against Levesque, grinding down a drawn endgame to force a mistake, in the spirit of Gukesh!

Aside from the broadcasted boards, Zachary Thirkell defeated Lu. Meanwhile, Aristotle Santos, Zikang Dai, and Finn O'Brien were building towards very high initial FIDE ratings. After round four, Hague, Croad, and Archer were the only players with a perfect score. Dive, Ker, and Winter were close behind, dropping only half a point.

After a well-deserved rest day, the top players returned to find some tough pairings. On the top board, Hague was paired against Croad in an exciting matchup. To everyone's surprise, Hague came to the board with the Fried Liver Attack; an opening which has probably graced the repertoire of most players in their beginner years. Both players knew the theory, so Black equalised pretty easily. However, White had successfully been able to steer Black into a position White had wanted. Black attempted to get active and start an attack, but because of Black's isolated c-pawn, White would be better in most endgames. White was able to defend the attack and trade off pieces. Black kept on rolling and sacrificed an exchange for tempo. Despite getting a scary horde of kingside pawns, it was not enough

Wellington Open

Karthik Sethuramalingam

compensation for the exchange, and White ended up winning. This game was a nice use of an interesting opening. On board two, Archer's deep prep with the black pieces allowed him to get a significant time advantage against Ker. Allowing White to get the bishop pair, Black made sure to place his pawns on the opposite colour of his remaining bishop. The early knight for bishop trade benefited Black in the ensuing closed position from the middlegame. Trading off the rooks, Black was able to grind down a comfortable endgame. This left only two players on 5/5: Hague and Archer. Both were in a great position for the final round. On board three, Dive emerged victorious against Winter after a late endgame mistake. On the lower boards, Wilson upset 7th seed Chang and Wang, Baker, Timergazi and Winsley all won their games. Keith continued his run against the European players by beating German visitor Fabian Zahn. Newcomer Isaac Abbott held an impressive draw against Somaraju.

IM Ker, Anthony (0-1) CM Archer, Ollie

Wellington Open 2025,
Round 5

1. e4 c6 2. Nf3 d5 3. exd5 cxd5 4. Ne5 I had played Anthony many times in this line previously so was able to do in-depth preparation for this game.



4... Nc6 5. Bb5 Bd7 6. Nxd7 Qxd7 7. d4 Nf6 Perhaps a more accurate move for Black is 7... a6, as White cannot retreat the bishop to the preferred d3 square: Bd3 can be met with Nxd4. Despite this I decided to continue with Nf6 as this would transpose into my preparation.

8. c3 e6 9. O-O Bd6 10. Nd2 O-O 11. Bd3 Rae8 Black is aiming to play an isolated queen's pawn position by striking in the centre with e5. Despite the weakness this would create on d5, Black's pieces would become very active and there would be more than enough dynamic compensation in the position.

12. f4 Anthony opts to avoid any such position.

12... Qc7 13. g3 Ne7 A plan I came across in preparation was to rotate the c6 knight to f5 supported by a light-squared pawn complex, effectively preventing the expansion of White on the kingside.

Wellington Open

Karthik Sethuramalingam

14. Qe2 g6 15. Nf3 Nf5 16. Ne5 h5 I achieve my desired structure.



17. Be3 Kg7 18. Bf2 Anthony brings his bishop to f2 to support the g3 pawn in an attempt to expand on the queenside with h3, g4. This plan is not very effective for White as Black is very well equipped to prevent any attack and will only create weaknesses for White. An alternative could have been an expansion on the queenside with a4, a5 preventing any a6, b5 expansions by Black.

18... Be7 By dropping the bishop back I open the d6 square for my f5 knight where it can clamp down on the e4 square with the f6 knight.

19. h3 Nd6 20. g4 hxg4 21. hxg4 Rh8 22. Kg2 Rh7 23. Rh1 Reh8 24. Rxf7+ Rxf7 25. Rh1 Rxf1 26. Kxf1 (D) I felt trading into this endgame was a good choice practically. Black is extremely solid and cannot really lose such a position.

26... Nfe4 27. Kg2 a6 28. Be3 b5

This further prevents counterplay for white. In some positions white could have played the c4 pawn break undermining the knight on e4, but the b5 pawn now locks down this square.



29. a3 Qc8 30. g5 This was a very committal move by Anthony; while it prevents black from any future f5 push, it significantly weakens the f5 square which could become an outpost for the d6 knight.

30... Qh8 31. Bf2 Bd8 32. Be1 Bc7 I felt it was useful to reroute the dark squared bishop to the c7 square where it can potentially be traded for the e5 knight or keep an eye on the f4 pawn if the e5 knight is to ever move away. A good plan for white now was to bring the e5 knight to c5 via d7, putting pressure against the strong e4 knight outpost.

33. Qf3 Qa8 I now bring the queen to a8 where it can apply defense to the e4 knight through the d5 pawn, this added defense frees up the movement of the

Wellington Open

Karthik Sethuramalingam

d6 knight allowing me to place it on the f5 outpost

34. Qh3 Nf5 35. Kf3 Bxe5 36. dxe5 Qa7 I now took the opportunity to trade my c7 bishop for white's e5 knight. This allows me to infiltrate with the queen on the dark squares.

37. Ke2 Neg3+ A fatal blunder by Anthony allows me to block the white queen's defense of the e3 square. The infiltration of the black queen is now inevitable and is decisive. The move 37. Kg2 put up more resistance for white as black has no immediate infiltration with the queen.



38. Bxg3 Qe3+ 39. Kf1 Qxd3+ 40. Kg2 Qd2+ 41. Bf2 Qxf4 42. Qh2 Qxg5+ 43. Kf3 Nh6 44. Bh4 Qh5+ 45. Kg2 Qe2+ 46. Kgl Qxh2+ 47. Kxh2 Ng4+ 0-1

Heading into the final round, Hague and Archer were the main contenders for the trophy, but Dive could catch them if they drew.

On board one, Archer and Hague made a quick draw to secure 1st equal with an amazing 5.5/6. With this result, Archer joined the 2100 club, a huge achievement for the young star.

This put the spotlight, and pressure, on Dive. Dive had to win with the White pieces against Young to join the champions on 5.5. Dive chose another Catalan setup, although this time with a double fianchetto. The opening was fairly balanced. After all the pieces were developed, both sides were looking to break the deadlock in the center. Unfortunately, Black chose to open the center in a way that didn't grant his pieces too much counterplay to compensate for White's dominant central control. White was able to paralyze Black's pieces and win an exchange as well. Black could not do much to stop White's attempts to trade pieces. However, White boldly gave back the exchange to promote a pawn. This was the right choice, but White had to use the pawn as a decoy to win pawns on the flanks. Instead, in time trouble, White chose to use the pawn to trade off the rooks. But there was one plan that could allow Black to save the game. However, it was difficult to find, and Black blundered.

Dive claimed a clutch victory to also share 1st equal. Seven players on four points were fighting to finish in the

prizes. Wilson, being paired down, fell courtesy of Winter, Baker beat Timergazi, Wang cruised to victory against Winsley and in an amazing show of nerves, Keith beat Croad in a long fight. Croad attempted to take the young Keith out of theory in the Catalan with 5.Qc2, but Black found the refutation and was able to keep the gambitted pawn. He found the perfect moment to give back the pawn and gain superior activity. Black won an extra pawn, created an outside passer, and won a complicated endgame.

Meanwhile, Thirkell held a difficult draw against Somaraju. After previously agreeing to a draw too early in an endgame, Dhamodharan ground down Mark Wilkins in an endgame, upsetting his 300-point higher-rated opponent. Abhinand Rajendran also upset Stephen Hatti.

Archer, Hague, and Dive shared 1st equal after an amazing run of 5.5/6. Baker, Wang and Keith bounced back from early losses to finish on a formidable 5/6 and win the 4th equal prize.

In the U1800 grade, the heavily underrated Keith secured an easy first place. Aidan Malcolm finished second on 4/6 - a great result before his move overseas. We wish Aidan the best in the future. Andrew Brockway, Daniel Winsley, Thirkell, Dhamodharan, and Rajendran finished 3rd equal on 3.5/6.

In the U1400 grade, Zikang Dai won with an outstanding score of 4/6 after an impressive victory over Timothy Ha. Finn O'Brien finished second, finishing on 3.5/6. Eason Lu, Isaac Abbott, and Aristotle Santos placed 3rd equal on 3/6. All of these players will get a very high initial rating after a great performance!

The Latvian Tournament is an annual rapid tournament organised by the Howick-Pakuranga Chess Club in the Te Tuhi art gallery. This year's edition, held on the 15th of March, attracted a whopping 137 players, including nine titled players in the A-Grade. Going into the tournament, the favourites to win it all were IM Paul Garbett and FMs Alphaeus Ang and Felix Xie.

In the first round, Garbett surprisingly lost to Markis Tew on board two, with the next prominent upset being on board nine as Sarah Sun defeated CM Cohen Young. Other upsets included David Zhu and CM Bruce Wheeler losing to Ryan Zhou and Martin Zhou, respectively, on neighbouring boards.

As all games were decisive in round one, 16 players entered round two on 1/1. Pre-tournament favourites Ang and Xie both won again to move to 2/2, while 4th seed Ralph Hart was toppled by Nunilon Fulo III. Although Tew continued his winning streak by upsetting the 5th seed, Filip Petreski, other players who scored upsets in round one were stopped in their tracks. On the lower boards, Buthsara Hettiarachchi held Garbett to a draw while Luka Hart beat the higher-rated Evguenia Charomova. Young, Zhu, and Wheeler all consolidated by defeating Caleb Wright, Olivia Li, and Timothy Ha, respectively.

After round three, three clear leaders emerged from the pack, namely Ang, Xie, and FM Daqi Mao, who beat Yanbo Jin, Kayden Loke, and Fulo, respectively, to move to 3/3. Close behind them, on 2.5/3, were William Liu and Tew, who drew each other. Six more players were on 2/3, including Young, Zhu, and Wheeler, who had all won two consecutive games after suffering upsets in the first round. Upsets this round were Mario Krstev and Jeremy Xu being held to a draw by Luka Hart and Lauren Ng, respectively, and Wright suffering another loss to a lower-rated opponent, this time Annie Yue.

In round four, Xie came out on top in the clash of the FMs, defeating Ang to move to a perfect 4/4. Following close behind were Mao and Tew on 3.5/4, as the former drew with Liu and the latter scored an upset over Young. Four players – Ang, Ralph Hart, Petreski, and Justin Wang – were within reaching distance, on 3/4.

Going into the penultimate round, Xie was the clear leader on a perfect score. However, he fell victim to Mao, who overtook him with a formidable 4.5/5. As Tew lost to Ang, the latter, Xie, and Petreski (who defeated Wang) followed within reach on 4/5. Though irrelevant to the outcome of the tournament, Luka Hart, Xu, and Sun each scored one of their many upsets, toppling Ryan Zhou, Charomova, and Wright, respectively.

With one round left to go, eight players were still in contention for the title, namely Ang, Mao, Xie, Petreski, Liu, Garbett, Tew, and Ralph Hart. On board one, Ang and Mao held each other to a draw, with the latter ending the tournament on 5/6. Joining him on 5/6 was Xie, who won on demand against Petreski. As Liu and Garbett drew, Tew was the only one to join Ang on 4.5/6 after beating Ralph Hart. As a result, the joint winners of the 2025 Latvian Tournament were FMs Daqi Mao and Felix Xie, with FM Alphaeus Ang and Markis Tew sharing 3rd place. In the B-Grade, Richard Liu, Xxavier Willoughby-Ansell, and Manuelito Lara came 1st equal. The C-Grade was won by Jacob Barry, with the runners-up being Quinn Song and Paul Yuan. Finally, the D-Grade was won by Edwin Zhou with a perfect score, followed by Jeremy Ye in 2nd, and Cheung Yi Zeng and Joshua Mayer sharing 3rd place. Find the full list of prizewinners below:

A-Grade

1st= FM Daqi Mao (5/6)
1st= FM Felix Xie (5/6)
3rd= FM Alphaeus Wei Ern Ang (4.5/6)
3rd= Markis Yao Zen Tew (4.5/6)
Under 1900: Junqing Jerome Tao (3.5/6)
Under 1750: Luka Hart (3/6)
Under 1750: Jeremy Xi Xu (3/6)

B-Grade

1st= Richard Jingjie Liu (5/6)

1st= Xxavier Willoughby-Ansell (5/6)
1st= Manuelito Lara (5/6)
4th= Brayden Ross (4/6)
4th= Oscar Cui (4/6)
4th= Dian Guan (4/6)
4th= Patrick Di Jiang (4/6)
4th= Oliver Sun (4/6)
4th= Antonio Krstev (4/6)
Under 1600: Ta Cong Minh Nguyen (4/6)
Under 1520: Rebecca Zhao (4/6)

C-Grade

1st= Jacob Barry (5.5/6)
2nd= Quinn Song (5/6)
2nd= Paul Yuan (5/6)
4th= Ayaan Bhatia (4.5/6)
4th= Ethan Tai (4.5/6)

D-Grade

1st= Dingxi (Edwin) Zhou (6/6)
2nd= Jeremy Jinhe Ye (5/6)
3rd= Cheung Yi Zeng (4.5/6)
3rd= Joshua Mayer (4.5/6)

It has been almost twenty years since the sunny Bay of Plenty offered respite to New Zealand's time-troubled, hosting the country's first incremented rapid tournament back in 2006, with the help of newly-introduced digital clocks. The 25+5 format remains popular nineteen years later, attracting 50 players across its two grades. In terms of favourites, FMs Alphaeus Ang and Felix Xie had a solid rating buffer between them and third seed Noel Pinic, with the up-and-coming FM Daqi Mao close behind in fourth. The B-grade was much closer, but the seedings put targets on the backs of Jack Barnes, Nyla Fulo, and David Holland.

The first round was fairly uneventful for the A-graders, with all but two games going as seedings predicted. Timothy Ha notably held a draw as black against Pinic on board three, while the unrated Praveen Thomas got off to a great start with a win against Graham Nolan. It was a similar story in the B-grade, the famous increment perhaps keeping upsets to a minimum. Again, only two of the thirteen games went against seeding, with Jacob Askin beating Russell Holland on board eight and John McRae splitting the point with Neil Howell on board twelve.

Despite much more even matches, it was a similar story in round two for the A-grade. The unfortunate Nolan

suffered a second loss against Pinic, who justified his seeding while Ang, Xie, and Mao defeated Justin Wang, CM Kendrick Zhang, and Nunilon Fulo III to stay half a point ahead on 2/2. The one notable upset was found on board eight, where 12th seed Paul McAvoy went down to 19th seed Brayden Ross. In stark contrast to the previous round, not a single win could be found among the top six seeds of the B grade. Paul Postma held Barnes to a draw on board one, while Fulo and Holland went down to Koki Hara and Daniel Guinto. Askin made another wave in the pool with a second upset win – this time against Thomas Gothorp – while on boards five and six, Vsevolod Kharlamenko beat Scott Smith and Marcus Chow beat Dylan Tran.

Round three brought an exciting match-up to the first board with a battle between the first and fourth seeds. Won by the former, Ang continued his momentum to claim a shared lead with Xie, who beat Dylan Piwari on the neighbouring table. Pinic shot down Arvin Mohammadi's attempt to maintain a perfect score, moving into sole third on 2.5/3. Down the road on board eight, Ha showcased his consistency as he continued his streak of three draws, with Thomas holding his own against the higher-rated crowd for the second time. Meanwhile, Askin solidified his underrated status with a third win, against Hara. Joining him on a perfect

Bay of Plenty Rapid

Tyne Grant

score were Geetham Addagada (who beat Kharlamenko) and Guito (who beat Chow). Losses from Barnes and Postma meant that the rest of the field were now a full point behind the leaders.

The A-grade's round four saw the top seeds go head-to-head on the upper boards, most notably Xie vs Ang on board one and Mao vs Pinic on board two. Perhaps, however, the closeness of the seedings should have given an indication of the results, with both matches ending in a draw. This allowed Mohammadi, Wang, Pinic, and Scott Macleod to creep up behind, the four now on 3/4. In the B-grade, the leading pack of three was cut down to two, as Askin took down Addagada and Guinto defeated Gothorp. Impressively, down on board nine, 16th seed Samuel Rose scored an upset win against top seed Barnes.

The race for the top spot was still far from decided by the penultimate round, with four players sitting within half a point of the two A-grade frontrunners. However, both Ang and Xie protected their precious half-point lead with wins against Mohammadi and Wang, respectively. Pinic beat Macleod to stay half a point behind on 4/5. Meanwhile in the B-grade, Askin went up against Guinto, both players on a perfect 4/4. In the end, the former was able to maintain his picket fence, while Caius

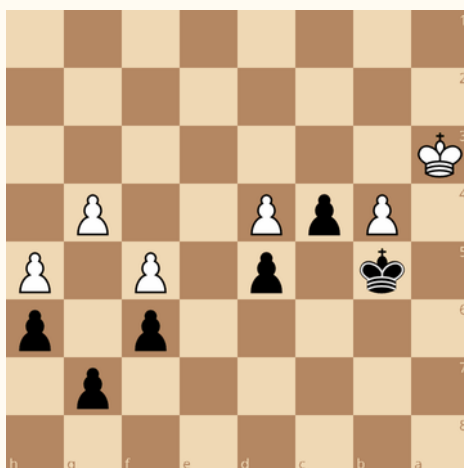
Zhou, Martin Smith, and Addagada joined the latter on 4/5.

Pinic faced Ang on board one in the final round of the A-grade, with Xie against Mao on board two. All except Mao had the opportunity to take first place, or, rather, a share of it. With Ang beating Pinic and Xie beating Mao, the two top seeds split the title of Bay of Plenty Champion. Third place was also divided up, the tie being between Pinic, Wang, Piwari, and Fulo. Pinic and Fulo shared the prize for Bay of Plenty Local Champion, and Ross won the U1800 prize. Askin was already guaranteed a share of first in the B-grade, but the completion of his picket fence against Zhou separated him from the rest of the field and secured him the B-grade title. Addagada and Smith split second, with wins over Guinto and Fulo. The U1400 prize was shared between Guinto, Kharlamenko, and Eric Yang.

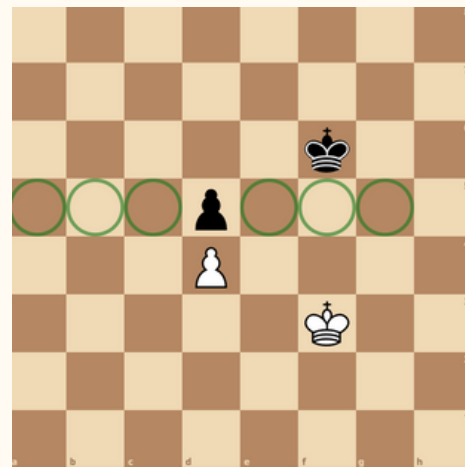


Thank you to Christoph Thurner for submitting this article. If you too would like to submit an article, please email chessmagnominations@gmail.com.

Hi all! I hope you remember the stuff learnt in the last two Coach's Corner articles, as you will need it here! Imagine having this position in a blitz/bullet game. What do you play? We will come back to this position at the end of the article.

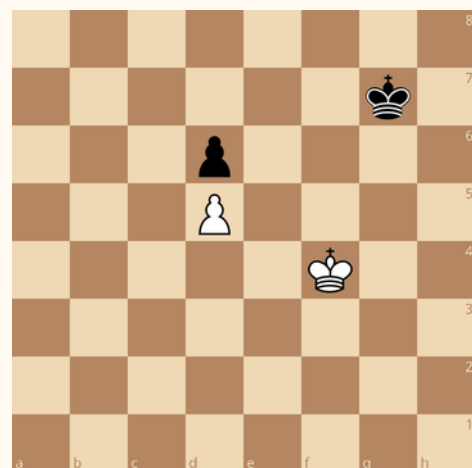


What are Critical Squares and why are they important? Critical Squares only apply if there are blocked pawns on the board. As shown, the Critical Squares for the black pawn are the three squares directly beside the pawn. If the white king can reach one of these squares without losing the white pawn in the process, White will win the black pawn using Opposition.

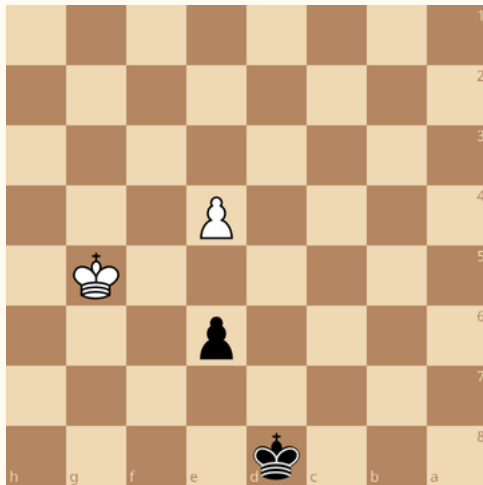


Therefore, White plays

1.Kf4 taking the opposition and gaining access to a Critical Square. You can play this out on your own. Now let's solve some puzzles to practice this.

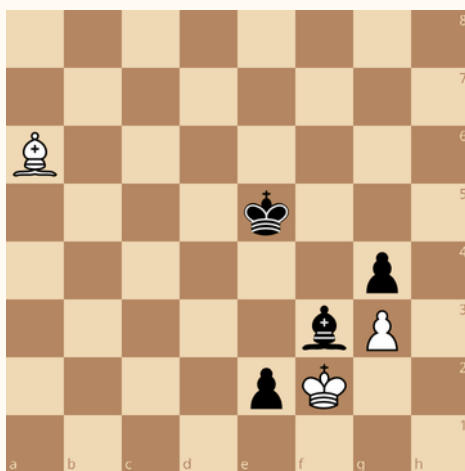


The Critical Squares of Black's d-pawn are - as we have just learned - the 3 squares beside it, so e6, f6 & g6. To access them White takes the opposition e.g. **1. Kg5 Kf7 2. Kf5 Ke7 3. Kg6 Kd8 4. Kf7 Kd7 5. Kf6 Kd8 6. Ke6 Kc7 7. Ke7** and the d-pawn falls with the white king being on a Key Square, therefore being able to promote the pawn.



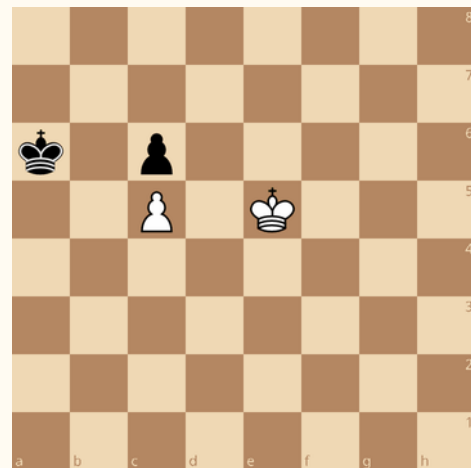
How does Black get a draw here? Well, Black cannot prevent the white king from getting to a Critical Square, so Black needs to make sure that the pawn is lost in a way so that the white king is NOT on a Key Square. This makes the decision easy and does not require much calculation (if you remember the Key Square lesson, that is)!

1... e5! 2. Kf5 Kd7 3. Kxe5 Ke7



Should White capture the e-pawn? You are only allowed to calculate 2 moves deep, then make your decision!

No, because here **1. Bxe2 1... Bxe2 2. Kxe2 Ke4** Black gets the opposition and will get to a Critical Square. Therefore the pawn is lost and this time the black king will be on a Key Square and Black will be able to promote the pawn.

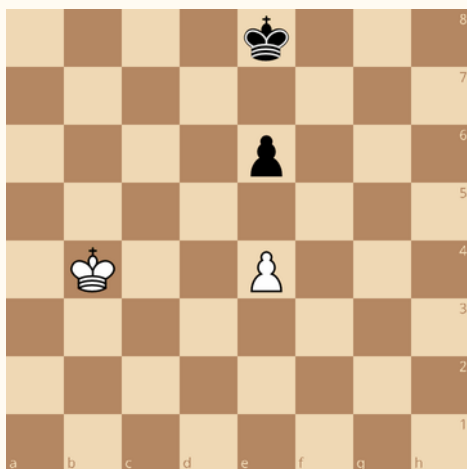


In the position above we see that both kings can get to a Critical Square. How does White play not to lose the pawn while hunting for Black's one?

It's Trebuchet time!

1. Ke6 Ka5 2. Kd7 Kb5 3. Kd6 Now we have reached a position of Mutual Zugzwang - whoever has to move, loses. Therefore, if White had played carelessly, it would've allowed Black to reach this Trebuchet position with White to move.

By the way, a Trebuchet is a French word describing a sort of catapult or siege engine from medieval times.

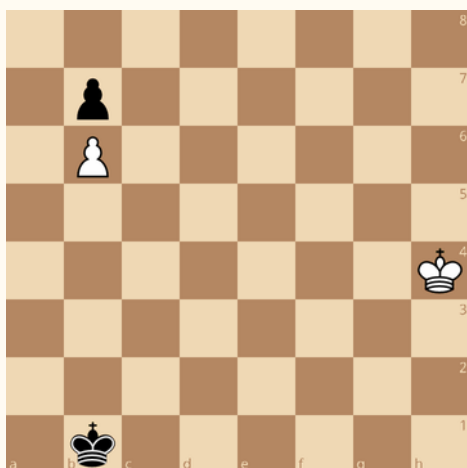


How does White win?

1. e5 1. Kc5 e5 2. Kd5 Kd7 and Black has the opposition as we have seen just a few diagrams ago.

1... Kd7 2. Kb5 Diagonal opposition.

2... Ke7 3. Kc6 and White has reached a Critical Square.



White to move, win, draw or loss?

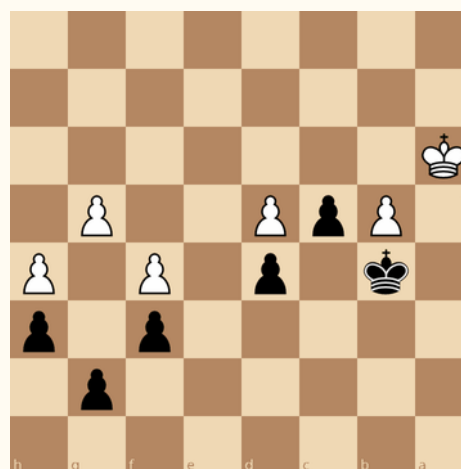
1. Kg4 If White tries to make a bee-line to the pawns, White loses the game e.g. 1... Kc2 2. Kf5 Kd3 3. Ke5 Kc4 4. Kd6 Kb5

5. Kc7 Ka6 Trebuchet time again.

We have just seen that White can not win Black's pawn or protect the b6-pawn. What to do?

If we imagine that the black king is on b6, which is not a Key Square of the b7-pawn, where does our king need to be? Obviously (I hope for you too!) the white king needs to get the Opposition and the only sensible opposition is on b4.

1. Kg3 Kb2 2. Kf2 Kb3 3. Ke2 Kb4 4. Kd2 Kb5 5. Kc3 Kxb6 6. Kb4 Mission accomplished!



Now, finally back to our first position. When I give this position to my students, a frequent comment is "I will certainly not play" **6... c3** but we now know that deflecting the white king will allow us to get to a Critical Square and therefore win the d4-pawn. Granted, we are not on a Key Square and without the pawns on the files f-h the game would be a draw, but we can use our d-pawn to

keep Black's king busy while we feast on White's kingside pawns.

In the game Khalifman, A. vs. Shaposhnikov, E., St Petersburg 1998
7. **Kb3 c2** followed and in view of
8. **Kxc2 Kxb4** 9. **Kd3 Kb3** 10. **Kd2 Kc4**
11. **Ke3 Kc3** 12. **Ke2 Kxd4** etc. White resigned.

Joining a chess club can be a great way to meet new people and learn new things, but a lot of people don't know how to go about joining one. Below is some information you might need to join your first chess club, taken and summarised from the NZCF Website (www.newzealandchess.co.nz/clubs) - more information on NZCF affiliated clubs and information regarding NZCF associated and other clubs can be found in the 'Chess Clubs' section of the NZCF website.

NZCF AFFILIATED CLUBS

Auckland Chess Centre - www.aucklandchess.nz

Canterbury Chess Club - www.chess.org.nz

Counties Chess Club - pukekohechess.co.nz

Hamilton Chess Club - hamiltonchess.net

Hawkes Bay Chess Club - www.hawkesbaychess.org.nz

Howick-Pakuranga Chess Club - www.hpchessclub.org.nz

Invercargill-Southland Chess Club - ISCC.nz

Manurewa Chess - info@manurewachess.org

Mount Maunganui RSA Chess Club - www.westernbopchess.weebly.com

New Plymouth Chess Club - chessclubnp@gmail.com

North Shore Chess Club - www.northshorechess.org.nz

Otago Chess Club - otagochess.org

Papatoetoe Chess Club - papatoetoechessclub.org.nz

Summit Chess Club - ywang@outlook.co.nz

Upper Hutt Chess Club - arh4108@gmail.com

Waitakere Chess Club - <https://waitakerechess.co.nz>

Wellington Chess Club - <https://wellingtonchess.club/>

(1) **1. Bxg7! Kxg7 2. Nd4 Re1+** (2... Qc4 26. Qg4+ Kf8 27. Ne6+) **3. Qxe1 Nxe1 4. Nxb5 axb5 5. Rxe1 Bxb4 6. Rb1 Bxa5 7. Rxb5 Bb6 8. g4 Ra2 9. Rf5 d6 10. Rb4 Re2 11. Kg2 Ba5 12. Rc4 f6 13. Rf3 Rd2 14. Rcf4 Rxd5 15. Rxf6 Rc5 16. Rf7+ Kg8 17. Rf8+ Kg7 18. R3f7+ Kg6 19. h4 Bc3 20. h5+ Kg5 21. Kh3**

(2) **1. Rxf7! Kxf7 2. Qh7+ Ke6 3. exd5+ Kxd5** (3... Bxd5 4. Bxg6 Bxg2+ 5. Kxg2 d5 6. Qf7+ Kd6 7. Qxe8) **4. Be4+! Kxe4** (4... Ke6 5. Qxg6+ Bf6 6. Qf5+ Kf7 7. Qh7+ Kf8 8. Bh6+ Rg7 9. Bxg7+ Bxg7 10. Rf1+) **5. c4!** (5. Qf7 Bf6 6. Bd2+ (6. Qb3) 6... Kd4 7. Be3+ Ke4 8. Qb3! Kf5 9. Rf1+ Kg4 10. Qd3 Bxg2+ 11. Kxg2 Qa8+ 12. Kgl Bg5 13. Qe2+ Kh4 14. Bf2+ Kh3 15. Be1) **5... bxc4 6. Qxg6+ Kd5 7. Qf7+ Ke4 8. Qxc4+ Kf5 9. Rf1+ Kg6 10. Qf7#**

(3) **1. Qh6! Ne6** (1... Re7 2. Bxf6 Qf8 3. Rxg7 Rxg7 4. Rgl) **2. Bxf6** (2. Rxg7! Nxg7 3. Ng5!) **3... Bf8 4. Rxg7 Bxg7 5. Ng5 Kg8 6. Qxh7+ Kf8 7. Rf1 Re7 8. Nxe6+ Rxe6 9. Bxg7+ Ke7 10. Be5+ Ke8 11. Qf7+ Kd8 12. Bf6+ Rxf6 13. Qxf6+ Kd7 14. Qf7+ Kd8 15. Rgl**

(4) **1. b6 Kd8** (1... Kd7 2. Kd4! h4 3. e5 h3 4. e6+ Kd6 5. b7 Kc7 6. f6 exf6 7. e7) **2. f6!** (2. Kd4? h4 3. e5 h3 4. f6 exf6 5. exf6 h2 6. f7 Ke7 7. b7 h1=Q 8. f8=Q+ Kxf8 9. b8=Q+ Ke7 10. Qc7+ Ke8 11. Qe5+ Kd7 12. Kxc4 Qc1+) (2. Ke6? c3 3. b7 Kc7 4. Kxe7 c2 5. f6 c1=Q 6. f7 Qxf4 7. b8=Q+ Kxb8 8. f8=Q+ Qxf8+ 9. Kxf8 h4 10. e5 h3 11. e6 h2 12. e7 h1=Q 13. e8=Q+ Ka7) **2... exf6+ 3. Kd6! Kc8 4. e5 fxe5 5. f5!** (5. fxe5? c3 6. e6 c2 7. e7 c1=Q 8. e8=Q+ Kb7 9. Qd7+ Kxb6 10. Qc7+ Ka6 11. Qxc6+ Qxc6+ 12. Kxc6 h4) **5... c3 6. f6 c2 7. f7 c1=Q 8. f8=Q+ Kb7 9. Qa8+!! Kxa8 10. Kc7 e4 11. b7+ Ka7 12. b8=Q+ Ka6 13. Qb6#**

(5) **1. Qf7! Rb6+** (1... g1=Q 2. Qxf6+) (1... Nd7 2. Nd5 g1=Q 3. Qe6#) **2. Kxb6 Nd7+ 3. Ka7 g1=Q 4. Qe6+ Kc7 5. Qd6+!! Kd8** (5... Kxd6 6. Nf7+ Kc7 7. Ne6#) **6. Qc7+!! Ke8** (6... Kxc7 7. Ne6+ Kd6 8. Nf7#) **7. Qd8+!! Kxd8 8. Nf7+ Ke8** (8... Kc7 9. Ne6#) **9. Nd6+ Kd8 10. Ne6#**

(6) **1. Bg5+! hxc5 2. hxc5+ Kxc5 3. Qg3+ Kf6 4. Qf4+ Ke6 5. Rxh8 Bxh8 6. Nc7+ Qxc7 7. Qxc7 Nb6 8. a4 Bd7 9. a5 Rc8 10. Qg3 Nc4 11. Qxg6+ Bf6 12. Qf5+ Kd6 13. Qd5+ Kc7 14. Qxc4+ Kb8 15. Qd5**