

Chess Aotearoa

May - July 2025

Volume 3, Number 3

CHESS AOTEAROA MAGAZINE

Celebrating Moments in Chess: Old and New



Foreword

After the recent International Chess Day on the 20th of July, it's only fitting we explore the role of chess in people's life.

For some, chess can be a rewarding hobby, like in the case of FM Ollie Archer's journey to the top, covered in this edition.

Whether as a hobby or profession, the allure of chess to the population is undeniable.

Embracing our original mission to make chess accessible to everyone, you can expect to find a variety of articles in this edition of Chess Aotearoa.

Enjoy!
-Weiyang Yu



Portrayal of Chess in Art and Media

Ever picked up a book with beautiful marble chess pieces on the cover and then realised the story had nothing to do with the Royal Game?

This is certainly not the case in Nabokov's *The Defence*. In this edition of Chess Aotearoa, follow Jack McConnell as he deep dives into the story of a "troubled chess player", and other prominent portrayals of chess in art and media.

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.

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Credit for the cover photo goes to Karthik Sethuramalingam. Credit for the Trusts photo goes to the NZ Chess News Facebook page.

On the cover

Congratulations to FM Ollie Archer, who recently gained his FM title! Read more about his journey on page 7.

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Chess Sudoku

Weiyang Yu

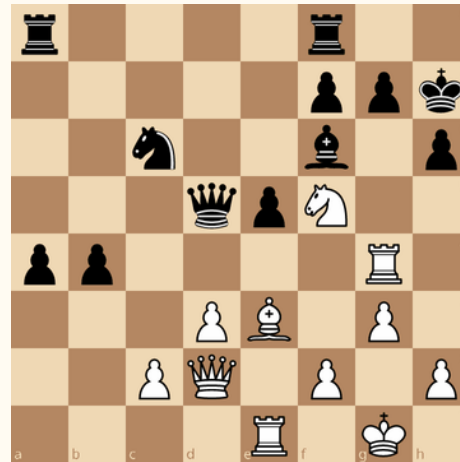
Instructions

Every rank and file must contain one of each piece: King, Queen, Rook, Bishop, Knight, and Pawn. No piece can appear twice in the same rank, file, or 3x2 section.



(1) Black to move and win
Anonymous



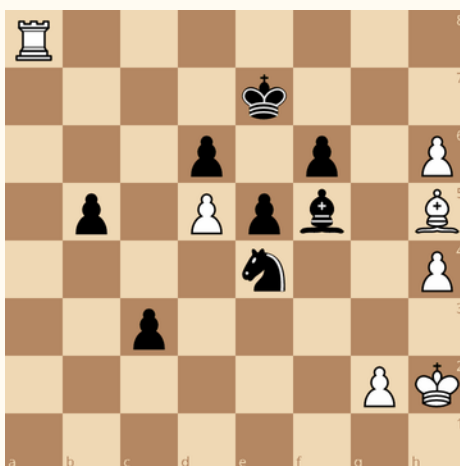
(2) White to move and win
Anonymous



(3) White to move and win
Anonymous



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



(5) White to move and win
Movahed, S. - Kozak, A.



(6) White to move and win
So, W. - Ding, L.

Recent Tournaments

Jeremy Coombe &
Leo Malcolm

Arie Nijman Memorial 2025

16th - 18th May 2025

Crockfords Bridge Club, Riccarton,
Christchurch

90+30 6-round swiss

1st place (5.5/6): CM Justin Zhide Wang

Kapiti Rapid 2025

24th May 2025

Paraparaumu College

25+5 6-round swiss

1st place (5.5/6): IM Anthony Ker, FM Ollie
Archer

47th Trusts Open 2025

31st May - 2nd June 2025

Te Pai Centre, Henderson, Auckland

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

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

Peter Stuart Memorial 2025

20th - 22nd June 2025

Spencer Hotel, Takapuna, Auckland

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

1st place (5/6): FM Daqi Mao, FM Alphaeus
Wei Ern Ang

Upper Hutt Rapid 2025

21st June 2025

Hutt International Boys School, Upper Hutt

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

1st place (5.5/6): IM Anthony Ker, Thomas
van der Hoorn

North Island Championships 2025

4th - 7th July 2025

Vogeltown Bowling Club, New Plymouth

90+30 8-round swiss

1st place (7/8): FM Alphaeus Wei Ern Ang

Upcoming Tournaments

Jeremy Coombe &
Leo Malcolm

National Interschool Finals 2025

20th - 21st September 2025

Christchurch Boys High School,
Christchurch

25+5 7-round team swiss

NZCF rated

South Island Chess Championships 2025

24th - 27th September 2025

The Leviathan Heritage Hotel, Dunedin

90+30 8-round swiss

NZCF and FIDE rated

South Island Rapid Chess Championships 2025

28th September 2025

The Leviathan Heritage Hotel, Dunedin

25+5 6-round swiss

NZCF and FIDE rated

New Zealand Women's Championship 2025

10th - 12th October 2025

Crowne Plaza Hotel, Auckland

90+30 6-round swiss

NZCF and FIDE rated

Merv Morrison Memorial 2025

25th - 27th October 2025

Auckland Chess Centre, Mt Eden

90+30 6-round swiss

NZCF and FIDE rated

New Zealand Chess is currently in a period of promising ascension, as the prodigious juniors of the past are taking over the big leagues. One such player in this elite group is the recently crowned FM Ollie Archer. With consistent results at NZ Championships and tournaments across the country, he now bears a reputation as a relentless chess player. Ollie reinforced his status by momentarily co-winning the Wellington Open this year and meeting the requirements for the FM title in the process.

Ollie's introduction to chess came relatively recently for a player of his calibre, making his rise even more incredible. Along with many others, Ollie's interest in chess was a result of the lockdown-time chess boom. "After seeing it become popular online, I became very interested in it and began playing a lot online in the hope of getting better," he said. Ollie rose quickly through the rating ladder, reaching 2000 online in 2 years. In 2021, he was ready to enter the world of classical chess. Entering Wellington College in 2021, Ollie was introduced to Josh Langford, Cohen Young, and Zachary Thirkell. All of these players are now very strong and are recognised across the NZ chess community. This led Ollie to the Wellington Chess Club, where he began his venture in classical chess. "I think a key turning point was being

introduced to the Wellington Chess Club, I feel playing classical there has helped my improvement the most." By 2022, Ollie was already an A-grade player and could hold his own against the "Big Three": IM Anthony Ker, IM Russell Dive, and FM Nicolas Croad.

His first test in the field was in the New Zealand Junior Championship in 2022. His debut went perfectly with him placing first equal. When asked about special moments throughout his career, he said, "Another very memorable experience was winning my last round game at the NZ Junior Champs 2022, which secured 1st place." The great results continued, and his rating rose extremely quickly. Later on in the year, he went on to win the Trusts Open with 5/6.

Oceania Zonals 2023 was his next breakthrough. Here he performed incredibly, finishing as the highest placing New Zealand player with a phenomenal 6.5/9, and this was only his first international tournament. This earned him the U2000 prize and qualified him for CM and FM direct titles once he passed the rating requirement. This was a huge moment for him, showcasing his humongous potential.

After a tough result at the 2023 Wellington Open, Ollie faced a setback in passing the 2000 Elo requirement for the CM title. His next opportunity was at the

2023 Truents Open. After a tough loss in round two, Ollie won his next two games on demand, against the top seed FM Ben Hague and WCM (Now WFM) Nadia Braganza, to pass 2000 elo on live ratings. He had now become a CM! "One of the experiences that is especially memorable to me was winning my fourth-round game at the Truents Open 2023, which secured the rating I needed for the CM title." Ollie went on to finish the tournament with a credible 4/6.

WCM Braganza, Nadia (0-1) Archer, Ollie

Truents Open A-Grade 2023

Round 4

Annotated by Ryan Winter

1. Nf3 1... d5 2. c4 2... e6 3. g3 3... Nf6 4.

Bg2 Ollie faces a taste of his own medicine, and faces the Reti. We'll see how he deals with being served his own food.

4... dxc4 5. Qa4+ 5... Nbd7 6. Qxc4 6... c5

Black gets in ...c5, and unlike in normal d4 positions white hasn't played d4 yet. It's a catalan position, but white hasn't yet played d4, and black will try to use the queen on c4 as a target to develop harmoniously.

7. O-O 7... Be7 8. d3 8... O-O 9. Nc3 9... a6

10. Qa4?! (10. a4 b5!? Is a funky move, relying on the queen's position to play ..b5 with tempo.) (10. Qb3! This gets the

queen out of dodge without allowing ...b5 with tempo. It also stops black playing ...b5, since then Ne5 is strong: 10... b5 11. Ne5 Nxe5 (11... Rb8 12. Nc6) 12. Bxa8) (D)



10... b5 11. Qd1 11... Bb7 Black exits the opening with an excellent position, thanks to the free tempo he picked up in the opening. On the other hand, white's position is also very solid.

12. b3 12... Qb6 13. Bb2 13... Rfd8 14. e3 Potentially weakening, although making space for the queen on e2 is important.

14... Rac8 15. Qe2 15... Nd5 16. d4? Allows Nxc3 and c4 which is just too nice for black. (D)



16... Nxc3 17. Bxc3 17... c4 18. b4 The stage is set for the middle game; White has central pawns, while Black has the passed c4 pawn and can hit White's b and a pawns. Unfortunately for white, Black has command of the light squares and Nf6-d5 is a massive annoyance. Even though White's c3 bishop sucks, it's currently holding White together on the queenside

18... Nf6 19. Rfc1 19... Nd5 20. a3 20... Nxc3 Removing the bad bishop in order to hammer the queenside pawns with ...a5.

21. Rxc3 21... a5 22. Rb1 22... axb4 23. axb4 White is in huge trouble. The b pawn is a massive weakness, she has no kingside or central play, and she can't really control the a file in any good way without hanging the b pawn.

23... Ra8 24. Ne1 24... Bxg2 25. Kxg2 25... Ra4 26. Nc2 26... Ra2 White's position kinda sucks. Nothing can really move.

The rook on c3 is bad, the knight on c2 is bad, and the rook on b1 is also bad.

27. Qf3 27... Qa6 28. Qd1 28... Qa4 29. Qc1 29... Bf6 Black prepares his pawn break ...e5. All his pieces are well placed, and he wants to break open the position.

30. Rb2 30... Rxb2 31. Qxb2 31... Qa8+ 32. f3 32... e5 33. Ra3 33... Qb7 34. Ra1 34... exd4 35. Nxd4 35... Bxd4 (35... Qe7 36. Kf2) 36. exd4 Another transformation. White's king is exposed, her d4 and b4 pawns are weak, and black's pieces are likely to be more active. Both sides have a passed pawn, but c4 is clearly stronger than d4.

36... Re8 It feels like white's position has improved drastically from before, although she is definitely still on the back foot.

37. Qf2 37... Qe7 38. Rb1 38... h6 39. d5 39... Rd8 40. Qd2 40... Qg5? White should be able to hold the rook ending; black has much better chances with the queens on. All rook endgames are drawn! (D)

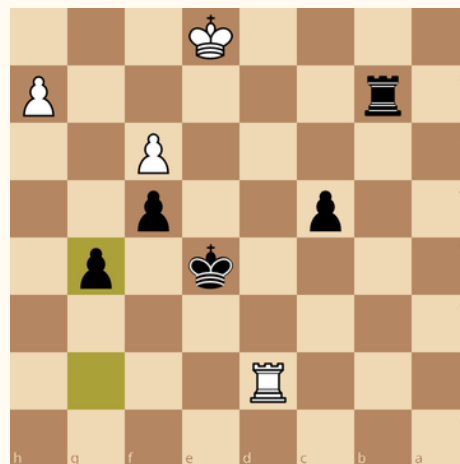


41. Qxg5 41... hxg5 42. Rd1 42... f5 43. d6!
 43... Kf7 44. Rd5 44... Ke6 45. Rxb5 45...
 Rc8 46. d7 46... Kxd7 47. Rd5+?? (47. Kf2
 c3 48. Rd5+ Ke6 49. Rd1 c2 50. Rc1 Kd5 51.
 Ke3 Kc4 (51... Rc3+ 52. Kd2 Rxf3 53. Kxc2
 Rf2+ 54. Kd3 Rxh2 55. Rc5+ Ke6 56. b5
 And this is apparently a draw. Not the
 easiest thing to see!) 52. Kd2)

47... Ke6 48. Rd1 48... Rb8! Now Black
 wins the b pawn and the c pawn
 remains strong. The difference
 between this line and the other is that
 the black pawn is on c4 here, and not c3.
 This means that it can be easily
 defended by the king, and it will be
 defended by the black rook after it takes
 on b4.

49. Kf2 49... Ke5 50. Ke3 50... f4+ From
 here, Ollie grinds the winning endgame
 to the end.

51. gxf4+ 51... gxf4+ 52. Kf2 52... Rxb4 53.
 Rd7 53... Rb2+ 54. Ke1 54... g5 White's
 king is condemned to the back rank.
 (D)



55. Rg7 55... Rxh2 56. Rxc5+ 56... Kd4
 57. Rg8 57... c3 58. Kd1 58... c2+ 59. Kc1
 59... Ke3 60. Ra8 60... Kxf3 61. Ra3+
 61... Ke2 62. Kxc2 62... f3 0-1 Black
 wins. The pawn will promote. White
 got herself into trouble out of the
 opening, and defended stubbornly
 until Black traded queens into a drawn
 rook ending, only to use some of that
 high rated player magic and win it
 anyway. 0-1

Alongside playing in classical
 tournaments, Ollie also played in
 numerous interschool events for
 Wellington College. He was a pivotal
 part in helping the school win the five
 regional championships in which he
 took part, and winning the national
 final for the first time in 2024. Ollie is
 also a perpetual attendee of the school
 chess club.

In 2025, Ollie had an exceptional
 performance at the Wellington Open.
 He won the tournament alongside

Hague and Dive and crossed the 2100 elo, meeting the requirement for a direct FM title! He also shared first place in the Wellington Chess Club Summer Cup.

Every player is famous for a particular trademark, whether it be endgames for Magnus, openings for Anish Giri, or calculation for Gukesh. For Ollie, his trademark style would be his immense knowledge of multiple openings and their ideas, and his ultra-deep preparation. Almost always, a time advantage in his favour is present. He is also no weak calculator and is very tactically astute. Here are some of Ollie's best games:

FM Archer, Ollie (1-0) CM Ning, Isabelle

NZ Championships 2025

Round 7

Annotated by FM Ollie Archer

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nc3 Bg7 4. e4 d6 5. Be2 O-O 6. Be3 I had decided before the game to play this semi-averbakh system against Isabelle's kings indian, a line which I have found success with in online play.

6...e5 7. d5 Na6 8. g4 Nc5 9. f3 a5 10. h4 h5 11. g5 We reach a structure very common in this system in which White has a space advantage but the position is relatively locked. In preparation I

found a game in which Isabelle opted for 9...h5 which allows Black to crack at the White pawn structure much faster (9...h5 10. g5 Nh7 11.h4 f6 12. gxf6 Bxf6) and Black gets immediate pressure on the h4 pawn. To avoid this I had prepared an interesting line 9...h5 10. h4!? This leads to a complicated pawn sacrifice after 10...hxg4 11. b4 gxf3 12. Bxf3 Alternatively Black can opt to play 10...a5 and after 11.g5 we transpose back to the game. (D)



11...Nh7 12. Qd2 f6 13. Nh3 The crucial tempo gained by including the move Qd2 allows White to play Nh3 without hanging the g5 pawn (9...h5 10. g5 Nh7 11.h4 f6 12. Nh3 Bxh3 13. Rxh3 fxe5 14. hxg5 Nxe5)

13...Bxh3 14. Rxh3 fxe5 15. hxg5 Here we reach the preferred structure for White, rather than allow unwanted pressure after 13. gxf6 Bxf6 White retains a bind on the position with a pawn on g5.

15...Qe7 Another interesting option for Black is the dynamic exchange sacrifice **15...Rf4!** It is dubious for White to accept this exchange sacrifice. **16.Bxf4 exf4** White loses their good dark-squared bishop and is left with a miserable light-squared bishop meanwhile Black's dark-squared bishop becomes a monster on g7 and has complete domination of the dark squares.

16. O-O-O a4 17. Kb1 Ra6 Isabelle plans to double the rooks on the a-file and create a potential attack with dangerous sacrifices such as **Nb3**

18. Rg1 Rfa8 19. Bd1 To counter Isabelle's plan, I bring my bishop to d1. In addition to preventing any **Nb3** ideas this move is designed to meet **a3** with **b4**: (**19...a3 20. b4 Nd7 21.Bb3**)

19...Nf8 20. Rgh1 Nfd7 Isabelle begins rerouting her knight to the queenside.

21. Qh2 The move **Qh2** creates some looming attacking threats with sacrifices in the air. An issue that I overlooked with **Qh2** is that it relinquishes control of the **d3** square which can be exploited with **21...a3 22. b4 Nd3!** Black both attacks the **b4** pawn and has an idea of putting the knight on **f4** where it can never be traded for the dark-squared bishop and sits comfortably.

21...Nb6 This move does not give enough respect to the incoming attack and leaves Black's king quite defenceless as most of Black's pieces are preparing to attack on the queenside.

22. f4! White prepares a bishop sacrifice on **h5**. In calculating **f4** I thought the critical line was

22...exf4 Isabelle instead opts to take on **f4**

(In calculating **f4** I thought the critical line was **22...Nxc4 23.f5 Rb6 24.Bc1 Nxb2** and the position becomes very double-edged with ideas of **25. Bxb2 a3**)

23. Bxh5! It is critical that White does not waste time recapturing on **f4**. Now that Black's dark-squared bishop has opened, the ideas of **Nxc4** and **Rb6** become much more dangerous.



11...Nh7 12. Qd2 f6 13. Nh3 The crucial tempo gained by including the move Qd2 allows White to play Nh3 without hanging the g5 pawn (9...h5 10. g5 Nh7 11.h4 f6 12. Nh3 Bxh3 13. Rxh3 fxe5 14. hxe5 Nxe5)

13...Bxh3 14. Rxh3 fxe5 15. hxe5 Here we reach the preferred structure for White, rather than allow unwanted pressure after 13. gxf6 Bxf6 White retains a bind on the position with a pawn on g5.



23... gxe5 24. Rxe5! The threat of Rh8+ is deadly and very difficult for Black to prevent. Black can try to run with the king but will not make it far (25...Kf7 26.Qxf4+ Ke8 Rh8+ Bxh8 Rxh8 Kd7 Qf5+) However, Isabelle tried another approach.

25...Bxc3 But this fails to stop the attack.

25. Rh8+ Bxh8 26. Qxh8+ Kf7 27. g6+

Kxe6 28. Qh5+ Kg7 29. Rg1+ Kf8 30. Qh8+ Kf7 31. Rg7+ Kf6 32. Qh6+ and Isabelle resigned with checkmate to come on the next move. 1-0

FM Archer, Ollie (1-0) FM Croad, Nicolas

Wellington Club Championship 2022
Round 5

Annotated by Karthik Sethuramalingam

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nc3 Bg7 4. e4 d6 5. f3 Ollie opts for the Sämisch variation of the Kings Indian.

5... O-O 6. Be3 c5

(6... e5 This is also possible, but c5 is more popular in this variation and is generally preferred by the engine, likely because e5 blocks in the dark-squared bishop until a potential f5 break is executed.)

7. dxc5

Quite a rare choice, probably preparation from Ollie. White usually locks the centre. The mainline goes (7. Nge2 Nc6 8. d5 Ne5 9. Ng3 e6 10. Be2 exd5 11. cxd5)

7... dxc5 8. Qxd8 Rxd8 Pieces are falling off the board so the pressure is on Black, the higher rated player, to stir up some complications.

9. Bxc5 Nc6 Black is down a pawn but White's kingside is not developed. Placing the pawn on f3 has the drawback of not being able to place the knight there. White's light squared pawn chain also hinders his bishop. In contrast blacks light-squared bishop can be easily developed to somewhere like e6 targeting the weak c4 pawn. Black's dark-squared bishop is a menace on g7. But a pawn is a pawn. In this position Black wants to target the c4 and b2 weaknesses, while White wants to develop his pieces and potentially target the e7 weakness.



10. Nd5 Ollie immediately jumps in with the knight, putting pressure on the e7 weakness

10... Nxd5 11. cxd5 Bxb2?!

Black has now regained the sacrificed pawn but perhaps he might have wanted to wait a little longer for White to commit his rook. (11... b6 12. Ba3 Nd4 13. O-O-O e6 Black is still down a pawn

but the open c-file looks very attractive.)

12. Rb1 The drawback of Bxb2 was that it opens up the b-file for white and the b7 pawn becomes a weakness.

12... Bc3+ (12... Bd4 13. Ba3) 13. Kf2 White is happy to put the king on f2 as it helps to connect the rooks in the future.

13... Bd4+ Black's idea was probably that with the king on f2, Bd4 comes with a check forcing the trade of bishops, while with 12.Bd4, White can decline the trade with Ba3. Note that Most of White's pawns are on light squares, so the dark-squared bishop is a valuable piece.

14. Bxd4 Nxd4 Black takes advantage of the weak dark-squares in White's camp

15. Rb4 Another way to challenge the knight.

(15. Ke3! Amazing move bringing the king forward challenging the knight. 15... Nc2+ (15... e5 16. Ne2 Nxe2 17. Bxe2 the king is one square closer to the centre and White now has a passer.) 16. Kd3 Na3 17. Rb3)

15... e5 16. Ne2 Although this seems like a simple move, the ideology of

trading the opponent's best piece for a mediocre piece is very instructive.

16... a5 White's pieces are going to get developed now and he has a dangerous e-pawn. Black's best hope in this position is to create some chances with the two on one on the queenside.



17. Rb2 f5 18. Nxd4 exd4 19. Rd2 fxe4 20. fxe4 Kg7 21. Rxd4 With the two connected passers, the rest is just simple conversion.

21... Kf6 22. Bb5 Ke5 23. Ke3 Bd7 24. Rb1 Rac8 25. Bd3 Rb8 26. Rb6 Rdc8 27. Bb5 Rc3+ 28. Rd3 Rxd3+ 29. Bxd3 a4 30. Bb5 Bc8 31. Bxa4 Ra8 32. Bb3 Ra5 33. Kd3 Rc5 34. Bc4 Ra5 35. g3 Ra4 36. h4 Bh3 37. Kc3 Ra7 38. h5 gxh5 39. Rh6 b5 40. Rxh5+ Kxe4 41. Bd3+ Ke3 42. Rxh3 Rc7+ 43. Kb4 Kxd3 44. Kxb5 Kd4 45. Kb6 Rd7 46. Kc6 Ra7 47. d6 Ra6+ 48. Kc7 Ra7+ 49. Kb6 Rxa2 50. d7 Ra8 51. Kb7 White wins. 1-0

An unseen part of Ollie's success is all

the intense hours of hard work put in behind the scenes. The reason he is at the top of NZ Chess is because of the hours he spends playing and studying chess. We asked him what he would do differently if he could restart his chess journey, and he said, "If I could go back to when I first started, I would integrate more structured study outside of just playing games into my routine. I would try to study a broad variety of areas such as tactics, pawn structures, endgame fundamentals, middlegame strategy, and openings. These are the most essential skills that I can think of to improve one's chess."

Ollie is currently ranked 14th in New Zealand and will no doubt continue to grow. We wish him the best for the future.

Every now and then chess is graced with the attention of some artist, author, or screenwriter. These figures find something in our game useful to the construction of a story, and occasionally the story goes on to produce an enlarged general interest in chess. The most recent example of this, obviously, was the Netflix drama *The Queen's Gambit*, adapted from a 1983 novel by Walter Tevis, which followed the life of a young American girl named Beth who discovered a talent for chess in an orphanage and gradually became one of the best players in the world. This show was what got me and several others into the game, but its format was not new, and this month I read an earlier version of the "troubled chess player" story written by novelist Vladimir Nabokov and published in 1930, titled *The Defense*.

The Defense begins by introducing Luzhin, a young boy, not yet familiar with the game which will go on to dominate his life. His father is a writer of moderate notoriety and the family is well-off in pre-revolutionary Russia. They've spent the summer at their picturesque residence in the country and are due to return to town, where Luzhin will begin school. Luzhin is introverted, standoffish and academically unremarkable, so school quickly becomes a place he hates. At a musical gathering hosted by his parents,

a guest happens to mention chess around the boy, comparing the combinations in the game to beautiful melodies. This intrigues Luzhin, who seeks out information on the game, stealing an unused chess set gifted to his father and rifling through old magazines in an attic after he chances upon a chess column in one of them. After some months of secret obsession, his father randomly decides to teach Luzhin the game and discovers that his son is amazingly proficient. That discovery sets the course of Luzhin's life as school is replaced by a whirlwind of tournaments, Luzhin's teenage years climbing the ranks in Russia and then Europe fly by and the novel jumps to him 16 years older and preparing for a tournament at a resort in Vienna. Time, and the narrowing of his life to the singular pursuit of chess, have been unkind to him. He's unwell, has been insulated from maturing by others taking care of the minutia in his life, and is beginning to feel the peak of his career falling behind him.

While *The Queen's Gambit* is focused on the rising years of Beth Harmon's career, *The Defense* is mostly interested in Luzhin's decline. Nabokov writes very insightfully about this feeling of falling behind, and it is clear he had an intimate knowledge of how this manifests in the chess world. Players will recognise the period of time when the novel is set as concurrent with the emergence of

Nimzowitsch, Reti, Tartakower, and the Hypermodern school of chess. Nabokov, when describing the style of Luzhin and his fictitious rival Turati, indicates that they too are Hypermodern, they “representative of the latest fashions in chess, opened the game by moving up on the flanks, leaving the middle of the board unoccupied by Pawns but exercising a most dangerous influence on the center from the sides.” Turati, a younger player than Luzhin, has gone beyond him in experimenting with this strategy though, and “Luzhin’s game, which in his early youth had so astounded the experts with its unprecedented boldness and disregard for the basic, as it seemed, rules of chess, now appeared just a little old-fashioned compared with the glittering extremism of Turati.”

This sentiment has been true of almost every generational shift in chess, especially in the 21st century as players have adapted to computers. Players such as Carlsen and Caruana, once considered the new guard for their use of engine analysis to construct deep bulletproof repertoires, now express surprise at how players like Gukesh, Praggnanandhaa and Erigaisi use engines to produce startlingly enterprising opening ideas. That Nabokov depicted such an intimate but universal experience for the chess player, especially in 1930, is quite

remarkable.

Another clear interest for Nabokov was the unique way that repetitive patterns dominate the life of the chess player. The narrowing of Luzhin’s world through his teenage years means that aside from games themselves, he mostly remembers hotels, resorts, and cafes, as well as perhaps a little décor from those places, the frosted windows or bathroom tiles upon which he visualises games while not at the board. This limitation means that Luzhin thinks of his life as a chess game. Whereas in the Queen’s Gambit the main difficulty for Beth was overcoming substance abuse, for Luzhin the biggest obstacle in his life was the narrowness of his experience. During the tournament he has been preparing for, he plays brilliantly but in the evenings between games, chess appears in the movement of cars on the street, patterns in the carpet, reflections, and tricks of the light. This encroachment of chess upon his senses dramatically increases until his game with Turati is adjourned, at which point Luzhin suffers a complete mental breakdown in the street and is unable to continue in the tournament on the following day, forfeiting the game. His fiancé, on the advice of a psychologist, decides that he must quit chess, and the final phase of the novel sees him attempting to begin a new life free from chess. In its absence, devoid of purpose, he still feels he is in a game but has ‘lost

the thread.'

A final point of comparison between The Queen's Gambit and The Defense is that both were modelled off the lives of actually chess players. The Queen's Gambit offered a heavily stylised version of the Bobby Fischer story wherein the highly individual American protagonist took on the Soviet chess machine and came out on top. The character of Luzhin was modelled off a more obscure but still notable chess figure Curt Von Bardeleben, who Nabokov knew personally. Nabokov gave his character the same death as the German master, who fell from a Berlin apartment window in 1924, and also gave Luzhin's tournament the same trajectory as Von Bardeleben's Hastings 1895 tournament. There, Von Bardeleben was leading the pack with 7.5/9 until an infamous game against Steinitz caused his tournament to collapse. Seeing the result of the final combination incoming, he apparently simply left the tournament hall rather than formally resigning, which Luzhin's failure to complete his game against Turati mirrors. Though many readers are probably already familiar with the 'Battle of Hastings,' for those that aren't it's well worth knowing, so I've included it here at the end of the article.

Steinitz , Wilhem (1-0) Von Bardeleben, Curt

Hastings 1895

Annotated by Jack McConnell

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.c3 Nf6 5.d4 exd4 6.cxd4 Bb4+ 7.Nc3 d5 Nowadays it's well known that Black should accept White's offer of the e-pawn, which gives them a perfectly sound game.

8.exd5 Nxd5 9.0-0 Be6 10.Bg5

Steinitz hits upon a plan to prevent his opponent from castling by making a series of exchanges.

10...Be7 11.Bxd5 Bxd5 12.Nxd5 Qxd5 13.Bxe7 Nxe7 14.Re1

Black's king is tied to the defense of his knight.

14...f6 15.Qe2 Qd7 16.Rac1 c6 17.d5

This clearance sacrifice allows the knight to be brought into the game.

17...cxd5 18.Nd4 Kf7 19.Ne6 Rhc8 20.Qg4

Aligning with the Black queen and threatening Qxg7+ with devastating consequences.

20...g6 21.Ng5+ Ke8

Now the position from which the famous final combination originates.

Nabokov's Queen's Gambit

Jack McConnell



22.Rxe7+ Kf8 23.Rf7+ Kg8 24.Rg7+ Kh8
25.Rxh7+ And this is where Von Bardeleben unceremoniously evacuated the tournament hall and allowed his time to run down, owing to the following mate which Steinitz showed spectators once he had won the game.

25...Kg8 26.Rg7+ Kh8 27.Qh4+ Kxg7
28.Qh7+ Kf8 29.Qh8+ Ke7 30.Qg7+ Ke8
31.Qg8+ Ke7 32.Qf7+ Kd8 33.Qf8+ Qe8
34.Nf7+ Kd7 35.Qd6# 1-0

Every year, during the King's Birthday long weekend, some of New Zealand's strongest chess players gather at Te Pai Centre to vie for the title of Trusts Open Champion. This year was no exception: a field of nearly 200 players across four grades arrived on the 31st of May ready for blood. The pre-tournament favourites included both up-and-coming prodigies and veterans, namely FMs Alphaeus Ang and Felix Xie, and the triad of IMs Paul Garbett, Anthony Ker, and Russell Dive. Potential dark horses were young masters FM Daqi Mao, and CMs Cohen Young, Zachary Yu, Kendrick Zhang, and Isabelle Ning.

In round one, most of the favourites came out on top. However, talented WCM Sarah Sun scored the first upset of the tournament by defeating 10th seed Gupta Saptorshi. While no other higher-rated players were toppled by lower-rated opponents, many were held to a draw, including Yu, Thomas van der Hoorn, Yanbo Jin, and Luna Lu, as they split the point with Butsara Hettiarachchi, WCM Sophia Feng, Matthew Keith, and CM William Liu, respectively.

In the B-Grade, upsets occurred much more frequently from the very start. Chris Joel beat 3rd seed John Robert Hall on board three, while 7th seed Robert Hurndell was defeated by 41st seed Nic Preiss. In a clash between

promising juniors, Dian Guan upset his 176 Elo higher-rated opponent, Martin Zhou.

More unexpected results began to surface in the A-Grade in round two. John Batucan and Garbett were held to draws by younger opponents, Mao and Zhang, respectively, on boards two and four. Liu followed up his earlier result with another upset, this time a win over Yu. From the Najdorf Variation of the Sicilian, Liu slowly gained a sizable space advantage and eventually forced small mistakes from Yu, culminating in the loss of two pawns and Yu's resignation. On board thirteen, Anya Thurner defeated CM Justin Wang after the latter overstretched in a winning position.

Heading into round three, only 5 players were on a perfect score. That number was reduced to just two when Ang overcame Ker and Xie toppled Dive, while Batucan ground FM Robert Smith down after the latter blundered into an unfavourable endgame. Joining Batucan on 2.5/3 were Liu and van der Hoorn, who, impressively, both defeated higher-rated opponents, namely Garbett and Mao. Lower down the list, Yu, Lu, and Hunter Po'e-Tofaeono recovered from previous losses and consolidated with wins over Keith, Justin Wang, and WCM Luna Xu, respectively.

With just 2 players left on 3/3, the faceoff

between the two leaders, Ang and Xie, was crucial in deciding the progression of the whole tournament. For this important game, Xie employed the Nimzo-Indian Defense as his weapon of choice. Xie equalised out of the opening, but one inaccurate pawn exchange left Ang with a significant space advantage. Xie fought to reactivate his pieces, but Ang's activity on the kingside left Xie's position compromised, eventually leading to the former conceding two pawns. Although Xie persevered, it took Ang another 10 or so moves to seal the game, putting himself in prime position to win it all.

FM Ang, Alphaeus Wei Ern (1-0) FM Xie, Felix

Trusts Open A-Grade 2025

Round 4

Annotated by Michael Sole

1. d4 1... Nf6 2. c4 2... e6 3. Nc3 Alphaeus continues his choice of allowing the Nimzo Indian which has allowed him to get the complex and dynamic positions that he excels in. (D)

3... Bb4 4. e3 4... O-O 5. a3 5... Bxc3+ 6.

bxc3 Much like the last few encounters of the young FMs, we have an early strategic imbalance. White has the crippled pawn structure but has strong attacking chances with the two bishops and centre control. Black will try and slow down White's attack and attempt

to win the c4 pawn with moves like b6-Ba6 and Nc6-Na5, in addition to opening the c file to put extra pressure from a rook on c8.

6... c5 7. Bd3 7... Nc6 8. Ne2 8... b6 9. e4 9... Ne8 10. Be3 10... Ba6 11. Ng3 11... Na5 12. Qe2 12... Rc8 Here we see the plans from both sides already in effect. The balance is roughly balanced but well set up for a decisive result.

13. Rcl 13... Qc7 14. d5 14... exd5?! This is an inaccuracy and hands the first advantage over to Alphaeus. By taking the d pawn, Black allows White to recapture with the doubled c4 pawn, and strengthens the centre. While Black is also now left with an isolated d pawn.



15. cxd5 15... Bxd3 16. Qxd3 16... c4 17. Qe2 17... Nb3 18. Rc2 18... d6 White now has a pleasant position and is not under any direct pressure. White can now start to build up a strong attack with natural developing moves such as O-O, Nf5 and Qg4.

19. O-O 19... Qe7 20. Qg4 20... Rc7 21. Nf5 21... Qd7 22. Bf4! A strong move, switching the focus from the kingside attack, to instead targetting the weak d6 pawn, with the bishop soon to be supported by the Queen with Qg3.

22... f6 23. f3 23... Nc5 24. Qg3 24... Nb7 25. Ra2! Unusual but brilliant and best. The idea with this rook move is actually a great example of prophylaxis. By playing Ra2, White is preventing the Queen from entering White's position as Qa4 can be well met by Rb1, sealing off the remaining b3 square. White also sets up the option of playing a4 and having a total prevention of the Black Queen on the queenside. (25. Nd4 This move while tempting, isn't as strong due to allowing potential counterplay with a later Qa4, as well as moving the knight away from the already great f5 square. 25... Qa4)



25... Kh8 26. a4 26... g6 27. Nd4 27... Rc8 28. Rb1 28... Ng7 29. Bh6 29... Rfe8 30. Qf4 30... Nh5 31. Qh4 31... Qf7 32. g4 32... Ng7 After continued pressure from White, Felix has had to make several concessions, including g6 with a weakening of the f6 square, and a heavily restricted Knight on g7. Black now faces a sad defensive task.

33. Qg3 33... Qd7 34. Qf4 34... Nc5? Felix gives up the key f6 pawn in an attempt for counterplay against the a4 pawn. However, this ruins the secureness of Black's position.

35. Qxf6 35... Rf8 36. Bxg7+ 36... Qxg7 37. Qxd6 White is now winning and has a clear path to win, given that Alphaeus contains Black's new activity from the opened files. (37. Qxg7+ Kxg7 38. a5 Was possible for a safer alternative.)

Trusts Open

Weiyang Yu

37... Qh6 38. Qe5+ 38... Kg8 39. g5 39... Qh5 40. d6 40... Rce8 41. Qd5+ 41... Kh8 42. a5 42... Nd7 43. Ne6 43... Rf7 44. Rf2 44... Qh3 45. Nc7 45... Ref8 46. Qd4+ 46... Kg8 47. Nd5 47... h5 48. f4 48... bxa5 49. f5 With the onslaught of pawns coming, Felix resigned. Smooth conversion by Alphaeus to secure a key win for the tournament standings, and a very well played game. 1-0



With a win over Liu on board two, Batucan overtook Xie and trailed Ang closely on 3.5/4. A chasing pack of players on 3/4 included Xie, Smith, Dive, Young, and Leo Baker. Baker, in particular, arrived on this score after defeating the 111 Elo higher-rated Zhang.

Entering the last day of the tournament, the competition was fierce at the top. While Ang further distanced himself from the rest of the field with a win over his closest chaser, Batucan, Xie regrouped by defeating Smith after a careless kingside pawn push by the latter

landed him in a mating net. Behind Ang on a perfect 5/5 and Xie on 4/5, there was a large group of players on 3.5/5, namely Batucan, Dive, Young, Baker, Ker, FM Leonard McLaren, and Markis Tew, who delivered yet another upset to Yu.

In the last round of the tournament, Ang only needed a draw to seal the crown, yet he pulled off a win over Dive to land himself on a spectacular 6/6. The game itself was no less impressive than the feat, as Ang maximised all of his pieces in a rook and knight endgame. Although Dive only made one significant mistake, his position became utterly helpless as Ang's pieces pushed his into passive roles. While the tournament winner had already been decided, there was still a fight for the rest of the podium. After exploiting a weakened kingside pawn structure, Xie defeated McLaren to finish on 5/6. A particularly exciting encounter was between Young and Batucan. While Young came out of the opening and early middlegame on top, he allowed Batucan's pieces to slowly infiltrate, with the White kingside eventually succumbing to Batucan's advances. With this result, Batucan finished on 4.5/6.

Perhaps shockingly, as the dust cleared, three clear podium finishers appeared. Ang, unsurprisingly, claimed first place. Xie was the runner-up, while Batucan capped off another great performance

with third place. Additionally, with his final score of 4/6 and a performance rating of 2224, Leo Baker crossed the 2000 Elo rating boundary required for direct CM. Congratulations to Leo and all prizewinners!

Full results are pasted below:

A-Grade

1st Alphaeus Ang 6/6

2nd Felix Xie 5/6

3rd John Ray Batucan 4.5/6

4th= Anthony Ker, Gupta Saptorshi, Leo Baker, Robert Smith, Markis Tew 4/6

Grade 1 1st= Cohen Young, William Rui Liu 3.5/6

Grade 2 1st= Anthony Fikh, Dion Wilson 3/6

Grade 3 1st= Matthew Keith, Roul Preeyansh 3/6

B-Grade

1st Richard Jingjie Liu 5.5/6

2nd Xxavier Willoughby-Ansell 5/6

3rd= Jenre Angelo Fabay, Lucas Hoang, Nathan Sun, Timothy Ha, Yanshuo Pei 4.5/6

Grade 1 1st= Alan Gaynor, Nahuel Lino Serron, Ningnan Wang, Vihaan Bala 4/6

Grade 2 1st Lauren Ng 4/6

Grade 3 1st Geetham Addagada 4.5/6

C-Grade

1st Senuk Rathayake 5.5/6

2nd Jasreman Preet Singh 5/6

3rd= Conghan (Kirby) Shao, Elvin Sun, Khim Tee Tan, Maksim Korolev, Nicole Xiaoyin Zhao, Vidhur Kannan, Zane Sarmad 4.5/6

Grade 1 1st= Franklyn Zhimu Zhang, Tairan (George) Wang 4/6

Grade 2 1st= Jayden Chen, Kyan Choi, Lucy Chen, Yucheng Ren 4/6

Grade 3 1st Edward Buisson-Hiriart 4.5/6

Junior

1st Jayden Hsu 5.5/6

2nd Agastya Iyer 5/6

3rd Brooklyn Sun 4.5/6

4th= Charles Zhao, Gideon Goh, Shawin Sasikaran 4/6

Under 10 1st Raphael Zhang 3.5/6

Under 10 2nd= Kane Luo, Keshav Venugopalan, Yunhan Chen 3/6

Under 8 1st Ryder Chen 3/6

Under 8 2nd Arthur Gyuan Zhou 2/6

While the recent floods meant that New Plymouth's winter weather was far from welcoming, almost sixty players still braved the swim to complete a strong, if soggy, competition. The favourites, according to seeding, hailed mostly from the main centres, with FM Alphaeus Ang and rising star FM Daqi Mao promised to be a pair of powerful forces from Auckland, and Wellington IMs Anthony Ker and Russell Dive planning to further extend their formidable legacies in the event, with Ker having won nine previous editions, and Dive having won four. However, underrated players from around the Taranaki region acted as hidden mines in the field, all but assuring some upsets somewhere in the eight rounds.

The first round, as first rounds tend to be in larger events, went by without much rating being won or lost. As expected, Ang beat Michael Ashe on board one, Ker defeated Anne Guo on board two, and Dive overpowered Ting Liang on board three. In fact, although some technical difficulties with the live boards may have suggested otherwise, every single game in this round went according to seeding, down to Brayden Ross taking the point against Geetham Addagada, over whom he held a three-point rating advantage. However, with eleven players going unpaired for the first round, there was still plenty of opportunity for unexpected results.

Indeed, the first day did not end without some excitement. The second round again saw Ang and Ker prevail, over Buthsara Hettiarachchi and CM Leighton Nicholls, respectively. However, on the neighbouring board, the young WCM Luna Xu dealt a blow to Dive's chances after a mistake from the experienced master allowed his essential f2 pawn to be taken, and the rest of Dive's kingside defenses fell in quick succession until he was forced to resign. Slightly further down on board seven, soon-to-be-CM Leo Baker was held to a draw by Ryan Zhou, despite having a small edge early on. The other matches went largely as expected, and the first day of the tournament came to an end.

By the third round, the Swiss pairings had begun to do their job, and the competition at the top was getting tougher and tougher. Ang and Ker continued to showcase their strength, dispatching CM Zachary Yu and Joshua Langford, respectively, relatively smoothly. Board three, however, once again turned out to be the most notable of the top tables, with FM Ollie Archer held to a draw by CM Justin Wang in a game that went longer than the live board indicated. While not a massive upset, this was the first draw we had seen on the top few boards. This helped spread the competition, allowing a small core of players to move into frontrunner positions on 3/3 – namely FM Robert Smith, who beat Dion Wilson,

and Mao, who beat Dylan Piwari. Moving down the room, some more impressive results could be seen. On boards 11 and 12, Liang defeated Grant Kerr and Xxavier Willoughby-Ansell went down to Kisara Hettiarachchi – both upsets of around 300 points. However, this paled in comparison to board twenty, where New Plymouth's Dang Pham leapt over a 657 rating gap to defeat Aadhav Dhamodharam.

Round four saw the four players still on a perfect score go head to head, balancing on their picket fences to see whose boards would be the first to break. An Auckland matchup was found on board one, with Ang white against Mao, while Smith took on Ker on the next board. Despite building a sizable positional advantage going into the endgame, Ang was unable to convert, with Mao trading off the minor pieces to leave a solid mass of pawns, rooks, and queens that meant the game ended in a draw. Meanwhile, both Smith and Ker made some inaccuracies on their way to a rook endgame, but with Smith running low on the clock, Ker managed to get a superior position, pick up some pawns, and trade off into a winning position. This meant that the Wellington IM was now the only player on a perfect score, putting him in a great position going into the second half of the tournament, especially considering his dominant 8/8 win back in 2024 could hint at a similar

run this time around. Catching up with Ang and Mao in second were Baker, who defeated Archer after the latter blundered checkmate, and Wang, who beat Zhou after the capture of a poisoned pawn left him open to a devastating attack.

The fifth round, however, saw Ker's two-year, twelve-game winning streak in this tournament come to an end. Making the most of white's initial initiative, he built up an advantage against Ang as his attack grew, and gave up a rook to complete its execution. However, with the winning Nh5 able to be played, he opted for a safe draw to secure the half point. You can see this rollercoaster of a game below.

IM Ker, Anthony F (1/2-1/2) FM Ang, Alphaeus Wei Ern

North Island Championships 2025

Round 5

Annotated by Michael Sole

1. e4 1... d6 2. d4 2... g6 3. Nc3 Ang again playing his modern which he is so well known for.

3... c6 4. Be3 4... Nf6 5. Qd2 5... b5 6. Bd3 Ang playing another offbeat line of the modern, this time with an early c6. White has scored well from here but the position remains extremely complex.

6... Nbd7 7. Nf3 7... e5 8. dxe5 (8. O-O Bb7 9. dxe5 dxe5 10. a4 a6) 8... dxe5 9. h3 Ang

has managed to grab an equal share of the centre and is now looking for space for his pieces.

9... Qe7 (9... Bb7) 10. Ne2 10... Bg7 11. O-O 11... Bb7 12. Ng3 12. a4 has been the approach followed by most of the master games in this position. White is trying to attack Black's extended pawn chain and open up the position to suit his lead in development. 12... a6 13. Rfd1 O-O 14. c4 as an example.

12... O-O 13. Bh6 Ker elects to focus on his kingside attack.

13... Bxh6 14. Qxh6 14... Rfe8 15. c3 15... a5 16. Rad1 16... Nc5 17. Bc2 17... b4 18. Rd2 18... bxc3 19. bxc3 19... Nfd7?! Moving pieces away from the kingside, aiding White's attack. Better was the unusual plan of Bc8-Ra7-Rd7, to contest White's central control. (19... Bc8 20. Rfd1 Ra7 21. Rd6 Rd7 22. Rxc6 Rxd1+ 23. Bxd1 Bd7 24. Rb6 Qd8 25. Rb1 Be6 As a possible line, where Black has excellent compensation for the c6 pawn.)

20. Rfd1 20... Nb6?! Again, not protecting from the kingside attack. White now has a big edge with Rd6! Due in part from the resource 20... Nf8 21. Qe3.

21. Bb3?! 21. Rd6! A great spot for the rook, actively helping the attack with the Nf5/Ng5 tactics. (21... Rad8??

Contesting the strong rook, but this allows a tactical shot. 22. Nf5! gxf5 23. Ng5 Threatening mate, with f6 now no longer defending due to the overloaded Queen. 23... f6 24. Rxd8 Rxd8 25. Rxd8+ Qxd8 26. Qxh7+ Kf8 27. Qf7#)

21... Qf8 22. Qh4 22... Nxb3 23. axb3 23... f6 24. Nh2 24... h5? Played to prevent Ng4 but the pawn shelter in front of the Black king is now too extended and White is able to use his well placed pieces to capitalise on this: 24... Bc8 25. Rd6

25. f4? However, this is still strong but leaves much more work to do. (25. Nxb3! Immediately crashing through. The Queen and the knight make for a great attacking duo. 25... gxf5 26. Qxh5 Qf7 (26... Re7 27. Ng4 Rh7 28. Qf5 28... Rf7 29. Rd6 And White cracks Black's defence, while the queenside pieces are left watching.) 27. Qh4 Bc8 28. Rd6 Qg7 29. Rxc6 Rb8 30. Rdd6 a4 and again with the same patterns.

25... exf4 26. Qxf4 26... Qc5+ (26... a4 27. Rd6) 27. Rf2 27... Rf8?! (27... Qe5 28. Qxf6 Qxf6 29. Rxf6 h4 30. Ngf1 Rad8 31. Rxc6+ Kf7 32. Rxd8 Rxd8 33. Rh6) 28. Rd6 28... g5 29. Qf5?! By offering the trade of queens, this move goes against White's attacking plans. Although the resulting positions are still very unpleasant for Black to deal with. (29. Qd2 a4 30. e5 Qxe5 31. Nxb3 Nd5 32. Rd7 axb3 33. Rxb7 Ra1+ 34. Nf1 Ra2)

29... Qxd6?? Alphaeus takes the poisoned rook! White now has the chance to take the game with the correct finish. (29... Qxf5 30. Rxf5 a4 31. bxa4 Nc4 32. Rd4 Rxa4 33. Nxb5 With Black having a tough task ahead. 33... Bc8 34. Nxf6+ Kh8 35. Rf1)

30. Qg6+ 30... Kh8 31. Qxh5+ 31... Kg8 32. Qg6+ 32... Kh8 And draw! Anthony fails to find the winning line and settles for the repetition. 33. Qh5+ Kg8 34. Ng4! The key idea missed by both players. With all of White's pieces working together, Black is unable to stop the threats with only a Queen and a Rook near the king. 34... Qe7 (34... Qd7 is the best the engine can find, allowing the easy Rxf6 with mate to come. 35. Rxf6) 35. Nh6+ Kh8 36. Nf7+ Kg7 37. Nf5+ Kg8 38. Qg6#
1/2-1/2

This left him open to be caught up to by players on 3.5/4, but luckily for him, the results on the top boards ended up favourable. Baker went into the endgame against Mao up a bishop for a pawn, but precise maneuvering by the Auckland FM allowed him to swindle the draw. Meanwhile, Dive, proving he had recovered from his early loss, won on board three against Wang.

Ker's chances were, for the first time, dealt a heavy blow in round six, when he lost to Baker in what was a very impressive game, grabbing a sacrificed

pawn early and holding onto it for the rest of the game. This win catapulted Baker into the lead on 5/6, where he was joined by Ang, Mao, and Yu, who beat Wilson, Dive, and Archer, respectively. An impressive win was seen down on board seven, where Ross beat Buthsara Hettiarachchi after forcing him to give up the exchange and winning the resulting endgame. Ross had played an impressive tournament so far, defeating the up-and-coming Jerome Tao in the previous round. Despite having a national rating of 1628, his performance at the end of the tournament was like someone with one of 1962.

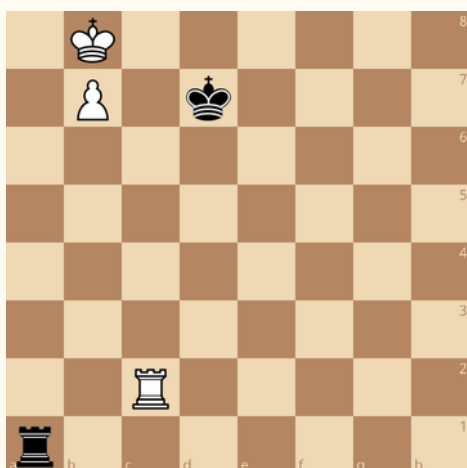
The penultimate round promised to turn the leading four into a leading two – a promise very easily broken by the completely reasonable possibility of draws, but since they didn't occur, we shall not worry about them. Baker held on against Ang for a while, but the first seed slowly but surely built up an advantage, picking up a pawn, before beginning to march his own down the board, prompting resignation. The game between Mao and Yu was closer, with both players having the edge throughout, but in the end Mao was the one who gained a material advantage, and pushed Yu's pieces back until checkmate was inevitable. Two players managed to stay close behind the leaders – Ker, who ended Ross' impressive run, and Smith, who defeated Wang.

The eighth and final round saw players filing in for one last game under the gaze of Mt Taranaki, at least when it was visible from behind cloaks of clouds and mists of rain. With the two frontrunners having already played, Ang was white against Smith on board one, while Ker took on Mao on board two. Both Ker, who needed a win, and Mao, whose required score depended on the other board, played extremely accurately in their last-ditch attempts to take the title, but neither stumbled from the other's pushes, and the game ended in a draw. This meant that, if Smith beat Ang, he would share the title with Mao, and that Ang only needed to not lose to ensure at least a share. And not lose he did. As pieces shuffled, the evaluation stayed steady, inching up at times but coming down just as fast. However, Ang remained precise, pushing the bar higher and higher until eventually, his bishop more powerful than Smith's knight, he pushed the black king into the corner and took out Smith's final pawns and, with them, the point. On 7/8, Ang took home the title of North Island Champion, followed closely by Mao on 6.5/8. Ker still made it onto the podium, sharing third with Yu, who beat Dive, and Joshua Langford, whose impressive end to the tournament culminated in a win against Baker to bring him to 6/8. Ross deservedly took home a share of the U1800 prize on 5/8, capped off with a draw against Archer in

the final round. This was shared with the equally-deserving Guo, who defeated Xu. Third equal in this category were the unrelated Ryan and Martin Zhou, along with Dinuga Wickramathanthri, who also earned the title of Best Taranaki player (all on 4.5/8). Last but certainly not least, best U1400 went to Aarush Khanolkar and Kotua Newton on 4/8, followed closely by Krishna Tanniru and Ruitong Wang on 3.5/8. With that, the North Island Championships drew to a close, and with weather conditions somewhat improved, the journeys home and since were, we hope, a little dryer.

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

In the last 3 issues of Chess Aotearoa we looked at some basics of pawn endings, now it's time to get into the most common ending in chess: the rook endgame. In this issue we will look at building a "Bridge" and the "Safe Squares" positions.



White to move and win. This is known as the 'Lucena' or 'Bridge' position. White's pawn is one square away from queening, but carrying out promotion is not a simple task.

1. Rd2+ It is important for White to push the Black king away so that Kb8-c7 is possible. I recommend giving this check immediately.

1... Ke7

(1... Kc6 , then 2. Kc8 and the pawn will queen.)

(1... Ke6 2. Rd4 White intends to use the rook laterally to provide eventual cover from the checks.

(2. Kc7 would result in a number of harassing checks from the black rook 2... Rc1+ 3. Kb6 Rb1+ etc. White must find a way to use the rook to shield the king and assist the monarch's flight.)

2... Ra2

(2... Ke5 3. Rb4 is decisive, as Black cannot defend against the white king stepping to the c-file and freeing up the pawn for promotion, e.g. 3... Kd6 4. Kc8 Rc1+ 5. Kd8 Rh1 threatening checkmate on h1, but 6. b8=Q+ the pawn promotes with check!)

3. Kc7 Threatening to promote. **3... Rc2+**

(3... Ra7 4. Kb6 Ra1 5. b8=Q Rb1+ Black can skewer, but the white king is close enough to the queen. 6. Kc7)

4. Kb6 Rb2+ 5. Kc6 Rc2+

(5... Rb1 White can build the bridge on the c-file. 6. Rc4 followed by Kc7

(6. Rd5 Rb2 (6... Rxb7!! 7. Kxb7 Kxd5) 7. Rb5 Rc2+ 8. Kb6))

6. **Kb5 Rb2+** The white king did zig-zag down the board, so that now the rook can build the "bridge". 7. **Rb4**)

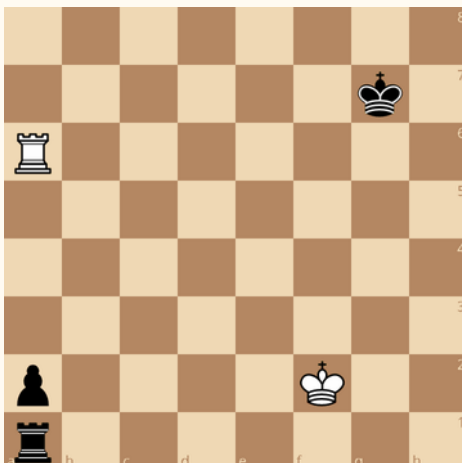
2. **Rd4 Ra2** For other moves see the sidelines after 1...**Ke6**, the motifs are the same.

3. **Kc7 Rc2+** 4. **Kb6 Rb2+** 5. **Kc6 Rc2+**

(5... **Ke6** sets the trap we've seen before. 6. **Rd5??** (6.**Rc4** is one of the many winning moves here. 6... **Rxb7**)

6. **Kb5 Rb2+** 7. **Rb4** The white rook blocks the check, and the 'bridge' has been constructed, and White's pawn will promote. Here another benefit of 2. **Rd2+** is revealed: Black's king is two files away from the pawn; thus, after 7... **Rxb4+** 8. **Kxb4** Black is one square too short to catch the pawn. 8... **Kd7** 9. **b8=Q**

Now for the "Safe Squares" position. Your task is to move the king - not the rook - and draw.



1. **Kg2** White draws. White will NOT give rook checks, the Black king needs to be kept cut off. The king can only move to h2 and g2, nowhere else. Let's have a look at why.

1... **Kf7** 2. **Kh2** is the way to a draw. The king can not leave the h2 and g2 squares as shown in the lines below.

(2. **Ra7+?** **Ke6** 3. **Ra6+** (3. **Ra5** etc, but let's see what happens if White does not play the correct way.) 3... **Kd5** 4. **Ra5+** **Kc4** 5. **Ra4+** **Kb3** 6. **Ra8 Rb1** 7. **Rb8+** **Kc4** 8. **Rc8+** **Kd5** 9. **Rd8+** **Ke6** 10. **Re8+** **Kf7** 11. **Ra8 a1=Q** 12. **Rxa1 Rxa1**)

(2. **Kf2??** then 2... **Rh1** 3. **Rxa2 Rh2+** 4. **Ke3 Rxa2**)

(2. **Kg3??** **Rg1+** 3. **Kf2 a1=Q**)

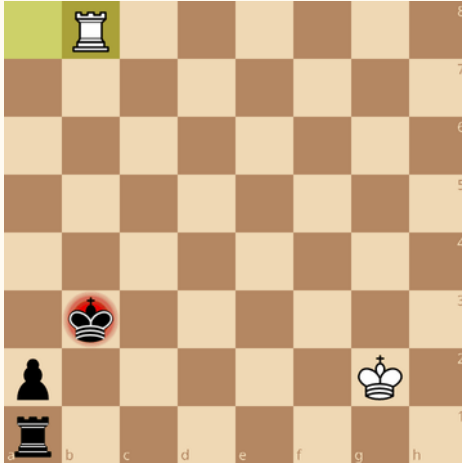
2... **Ke7** 3. **Kg2 Kd7** 4. **Kh2 Kc7** 5. **Kg2 Kb7** Now the rook has to move and White still needs to control the a-pawn.

6. **Ra3** Again the rook is under attack and needs to move, but still control the a-pawn.

6... **Kb6** 7. **Kh2 Kb5** 8. **Kg2 Kb4** 9. **Ra8 Kb3** Now we have to start attacking from behind and once the king has left b3, return to the a-file.

10. **Rb8+**

(10. Kh2?? would allow 10... Rb1 and Black now threatens to promote 11. Rb8+ Kc4 12. Rc8+ Kd5 13. Rd8+ Ke6 14. Re8+ Kd7 15. Ra8 a1=Q 16. Rxa1 Rxa1) (D)



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

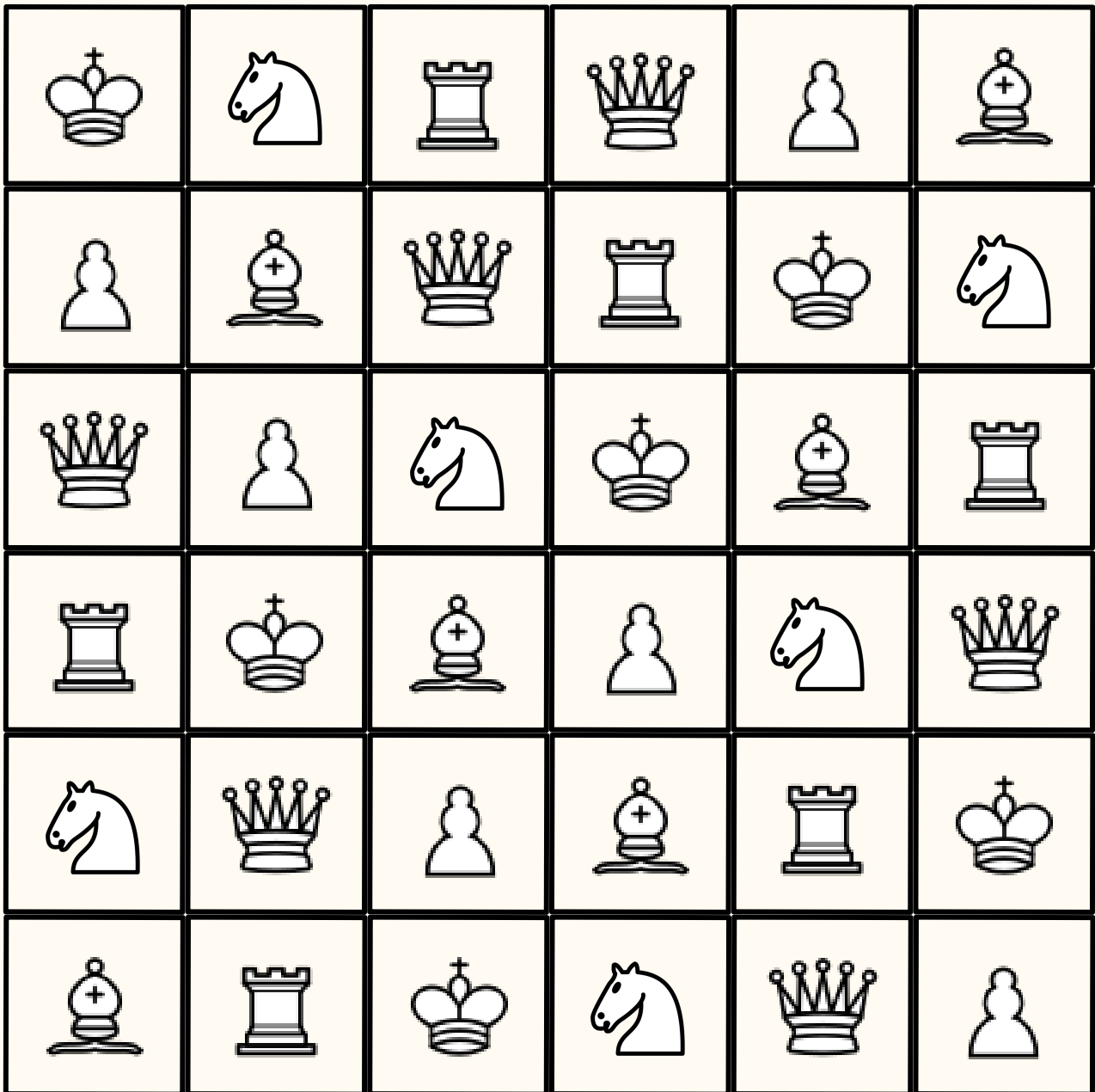
Upper Hutt Chess Club - arh4108@gmail.com

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

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

Answers

Weiyang Yu



(1) **1... Rb5!** with the deadly threat of Qc1!
2. Bxb2 (2. h3 if White ignores everything 2... Qc1+ 3. Rxc1 bxc1=Q#) (2. Bxh7+ Kxh7 3. Qd3+ Be4! 4. Qxe4+ f5) **2... Rxb2+ 3. Kxb2 Qc3+ 4. Kb1 Be4!**

(2) **1. Bxh6! Nd4 2. Rxd4** (2. Nxd4? exd4) **2... exd4 3. Bxg7! Bxg7 4. Qg5 Qxf5** otherwise the threat of mate is unstoppable 5. Qxf5+

(3) **1. Bc4+ d5** (1... Rf7 2. Bxf6 Qf8 3. Rhg6) **2. Nxd5** (2. Bxd5+? Qxd5 3. Nxd5 Nxd4) **2... Be6 3. Nxf6+! Kf7!** (3... Rxf6 4. Bxe6+ Kf8 (4... Rxe6 5. Rxc7+ Kf8 6. Rh8#) 5. Bxf6 gxf6 (5... Qxf6 6. Rxf6+ gxf6 7. Rg8+) 6. Rh7 Ne7 7. Rh8+ Ng8 8. Rgxc8+) **4. Bxe6+!** the best continuation is to keep it simple (4. f5? Nxd4) (4. Rxc7+? Kxc7 5. Rh7+ Kg6) (4. Rhg6? gxf6 5. Rg7+ Ke8) **4... Kxe6 5. Rxc7 Nxd4** (5... Rxf6 6. f5+! Kd6 7. Rxf6+) **6. Nd5+ (6. Ne8+) 6... Rf6 7. Rxf6+ Qxf6 8. Nc7+! Kd6 9. e5+**

(4) **26. Qh6!! Ne6** (26... Rg8 27. Bxf6) (26... gxf6 27. Bxf6#) **27. Rxc7!** (27. Bxf6 was also enough, and Dominguez went on to win 27... Bf8 28. Rxc7 Bxc7 29. Ng5 Kg8 30. Qxh7+ Kf8 31. Rf1 Re7 32. Nxe6+ Rxe6 33. Bxc7+ Ke7 34. Be5+ Ke8 35. Qf7+ Kd8 36. Bf6+ Rxf6 37. Qxf6+ Kd7 38. Qf7+ Kd8 39. Rg1 1-0 White wins.) **27... Nxc7 28. Ng5! Kg8 29. Qxh7+ Kf8 30. Bxf6** and mate next move

(5) **56. Re8+!** (56. Ra7+?? is what White played in the game, and went on to lose 56... Kd8 57. Ra8+ (57. Ra2 Nd2 58. Bd1 Nf1+ 59. Kg1 Ne3 60. Bb3 c2 61. Bxc2 Nxc2 62. Ra7 b4) 57... Kc7) **56... Kd7 57. Bg4!! Bxg4** (57... Kxe8 58. Bxf5 c2 59. h7 c1=Q 60. h8=Q+ Ke7 61. Qh7+ Ke8 62. Bxe4 Qf4+ 63. Kh3) **58. h7 c2 59. Ra8** very eloquent (59. Rg8 Kc7 (59... c1=Q 60. Rg7+) 60. h8=Q c1=Q 61. Rxc4) **59... c1=Q 60. Ra7+! Qc7 61. h8=Q** totally unnecessary but nice showoff **61... Qxa7 62. Qh7+**

(6) **31. Ncd1!** Black was threatening a6 followed by Bd7, expelling White's pieces (31. Qe8+? Kg7 32. Qc6 a6 (32... Kg8? repeats) 33. Bd3 Qh5) **31... a6 32. Qe8+!! Kg7 33. Qxd8!! Rxd8 34. Rxc7+ Bd7 35. Rxd7+ Rxd7 36. Bxd7 gxf3 37. Kh2** White's 3 minor pieces dominate the Black queen