



# Crazy Conq

## A good, old slugfest between Stuart Conquest and James Cobb was the highlight of the fourth 4NCL weekend

Wood Green turned out their strongest team of the season for the fourth 4NCL weekend in late March. Jacob Aagaard returned to head them up, while new fixture on the UK circuit, the Uzbek GM Jahongir Vakhidov, and Norwegian FM Benjamin Arvola bolstered a side which had even been defaulting the odd board. The result was a side which could easily command a place in the championship pool, but after seven rounds Wood Green found themselves sliding into the relegation pool.

The many-time former champions did destroy South Wales Dragons 7-1 in their final Pool A match, with Vakhidov and Arvola among the winners, as well as Jon Speelman, John Shaw, Neil McDonald and Sarah Hegarty, and at least carried through that result plus victories over the AD's and Warwickshire Select. Arvola, McDonald and Vakhidov all won the next day too, as Wood Green all but secured their First Division future with a 5½-2½ victory over Hackney, despite Bob Eames launching a lightning attack to knock out John Shaw.

Barbican II will surely also stay up after beginning their sojourn in the relegation pool with a hard-fought 5½-2½ victory over the AD's, captain Jonathan Rogers leading the way by outmanoeuvring David Anderton. In contrast, their opponents, as well as Hackney and Warwickshire Select, will need a vastly improved performance and some magic to

survive come the final weekend. Warwickshire at least began their survival quest with a draw against Cambridge, partly inspired by a crushing win with the Keres Attack for Geoff Lawton.

One side who did give themselves a chance of beating the drop were e2e4.org. Sean Hewitt's side drafted in Stuart Conquest for the second weekend at Birmingham Airport, Mr Gibraltar leading them to a 5½-2½ win over the hapless Dragons in round 8 after throwing the kitchen sink at James Cobb.

### S.Conquest-J.Cobb e2e4.org vs South Wales Dragons



Pictured back in February watching the action alongside Gibraltar Tourism Minister Samantha Sacramento, Stuart Conquest wore an even more pensive expression against James Cobb.

Here most players would castle kingside, not that Black has anything to fear after 18...♘c5 followed by ...e4, but not the ever-creative Conquest.

**18 0-0-0!? ♘e5**

Now Black threatens to remove an important defender and part of the bishop-pair with ...♙e4. Objectively, White shouldn't have castled, but I'd be surprised if Stuart hadn't planned his next in advance.

**19 g4?! ♙e4**

Cobb sticks to positional principles, but might Black not have grabbed? Indeed, 19...fxg4! 20 hxg4 (20 ♘g5 h6 leads to nothing, so White does best to speculate with 20 ♘d2!? ♙xh1 21 ♖xh1 gxh3 22 ♖xh3 ♘f6) 20...♖xf3 doesn't seem to give White enough for a piece, whether he goes for 21 ♙xh7+ ♗f8 22 ♖c2 ♖f6 23 g5 ♖d6 or 21 ♖xh7 ♖e6 22 ♖dh1 ♘f6.

**20 gxf5 ♖xf5 21 ♘h4**

White really is determined to attack, but even here Black retains the upper hand.

**21...♖f7 22 ♖hg1 ♖e7 23 ♖g4!?**

Continuing to randomise, although this also helps Black activate his dormant knight on d7. As such, White might have gone in for 23 ♙xe4 ♘xe4 24 ♖h5! when 24...♘dc5? (24...♖e6 is correct) 25 ♘f5 suddenly drums up some rather serious threats.

**23...♘f6 24 ♙xe4 ♘fxe4 25 f3**

Kicking the knight away from its central post, but Cobb is not to be bluffed.

**25...♘xb3+! 26 ♙c2 ♘ec5**



**27 ♖d5?!**

A classic case of right idea, wrong execution. Of course, White needs to get his unopposed bishop playing, but to justify his 23rd move, he needed to find 27 f4!. Conquest may well have been put off by 27...h5, and if 28 ♖g2 ♖d8.

Here it's hard to see anything other than 29 ♖f5! (29 ♖g5?! ♗xd1 30 ♜xd1 ♞d7+ sees the initiative changing hands) 29...♗xf5 30 ♗xg7+ ♞xg7 31 ♗xd8+ ♜h7 32 ♗xg7+ ♜xg7, which is a piece-down endgame in which White hasn't even a pawn as compensation. However, after 33 ♗c8! matters are actually far from clear, with White's bishop and rook dominant, and Black badly hamstrung by his inability to relocate his front knight.

### 27...♞e8!

The Bristol-based IM seizes his chance and goes over to the attack.

### 28 ♗xe5 ♞xa4 29 ♜b1 ♞b4

Now there are ideas of ...♗d2+, as well as ...a4-a3. Knowing both players, I dare say that a time scramble royale was underway by this point and in such a situation one never knows which king will perish.

### 30 ♖f5

Not the only way to hit g7, but after 30 ♗eg5 Black might just drop a knight back to e6, although he can also try 30...♗a4!?, and if 31 ♗xg7+ ♗xg7 32 ♗xg7+ ♜f8 when even 33 ♗g8+! ♜xg8 34 ♞g2+ ♜f8 35 ♞g7+ ♜e8 36 ♞g8+ ♞f8 37 ♞e6+ ♞e7 38 ♞c6+ ♜f7 39 ♞xa8 ♗d2+ 40 ♜c2 ♗xc4 leaves White struggling.



### 30...a4?!

Cobb underestimates the danger or, more likely, fails to find a way to trouble the white king. Again, Black might have hurled forward another attacker with 30...♗a4!?, but the most forcing move was 30...♗d2+. Then 31 ♜c1 h5! would be tough to spot with a hanging flag, but does overload the g4-rook and after 32 ♗g5 ♗d8 33 ♗xg7 ♜f8 34 ♜4 ♞a4 the machine opines that, however amazingly, White will come up short.

### 31 ♗xg7!?

Highly tempting, although starting with another quiet move in 31 ♞g2 would also have packed some danger. Following 31...♜f8 32 ♗xg7 Black would have had to find a neat sequence to force a draw: 32...♗d2+ 33 ♜a1 ♗cb3+ 34 ♜a2 ♗c1+! 35 ♜a1 ♗cb3+.

### 31...♗xg7?

Disorientated, Cobb throws away the game. Once again, Black's king would have been surprisingly safe after 31...♜f8!, with the knight on c5 and rook on f7 excellent defenders. With 32 ♗f5 White threatens the beautiful 33 ♗g8+! ♜xg8 34 ♗e8+! ♗xe8 35 ♞g2+ ♜f8 36 ♗g7+ ♗xg7 37 ♞xg7#, but

32...♗d2+ 33 ♜c1 h5! frees an escape square on h7 and, if anything, White is lucky that he has perpetual check after 34 ♗g8+! ♜xg8 35 ♗e7+ ♗xe7 (or 35...♜f8 36 ♗g6+ ♜g8 37 ♗e7+) 36 ♞g2+ ♗g7 37 ♗e8+! ♜f7 38 ♞xg7+ ♜xe8 39 ♞g8+ ♜d7 40 ♞d5+.

### 32 ♗xg7+ ♜xg7 33 ♗xc5+?

Good enough with only 30 seconds a move, but with more time Conquest would have spotted that 33 ♞g2+! ♜f7 34 ♗f5+ ♜e6 35 ♗f6+ ♜d7 36 ♞g4+ prevents the black king from escaping and so forces mate.

### 33...♜f8 34 ♗f5+ ♜e8 35 ♞d3 ♗d2+?

Even here the amazing tactics aren't over, with Black missing 35...♞e1+ 36 ♜a2 ♞a1+!. This would certainly have prolonged the game, although White emerges with a clear plus in the arising endgame after 37 ♗xa1 ♗c1+ 38 ♜a3 ♗xd3 39 ♗h5.

### 36 ♜a1?

Underestimating Cobb's horizontal defence. 36 ♜c1! was correct, and if 36...♗a5 37 ♗c3.

### 36...♗a5!



### 37 ♗a3?

Rolling the dice, but this might even have lost. White does, of course, want to continue attacking and, as such, 37 ♗f6 is the obvious move when Black would have had to find the amazing 37...♗e5! (37...♞xc4 38 ♞xd2 ♗d5 39 ♞c1 defends) 38 ♞xh7 (38 ♗xe5? blobs the queen to 38...♗b3+ 39 ♜a2 ♗c1+) 38...♗xc4, whereupon it seems that neither side can avoid a repetition, such as with 39 ♗xe5 ♞a3+ 40 ♜b1 ♞b3+ 41 ♜a1 ♞a3+.

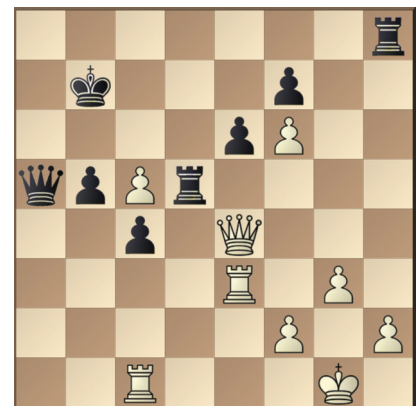
### 37...♞xc4??

The wheel stops on Conquest's number. Now it's mate. What both players had missed (hardly surprisingly with no time) was 37...♗b3+ 38 ♜b2 (or 38 ♜a2 ♗c1+! when the rook cruelly falls after 39 ♗xc1 ♞b3+ 40 ♞xb3 axb3+ 41 ♜xb3 ♗xf5) 38...♗c5+, which would have seen Black emerging the exchange ahead with an easy win.

### 38 ♗f8# 1-0

Elsewhere the 2013 World Chess Diving Champion (a variant in which a board is placed at the bottom of a swimming pool and one can only think while under water), David Jameson, showed that a king is always safest surrounded by its pawns, even if that means being in mid-board.

## J.Rudd-D.Jameson e2e4.org vs South Wales Dragons



No prizes for guessing that the opening was a Botvinnik Semi-Slav. Those familiar with Matthew Sadler's work on that opening may remember a variation of his where the black king's only hope of survival was to rush off the back rank and shield itself alongside the advanced queenside pawns. Perhaps the same line inspired Jameson here.

### 27...♜c6!?

Up against a somewhat lower-rated player, Jack Rudd is happy to give up f6 to try and trouble the black king, but White is drifting into trouble.

### 29...♞xf6 30 ♗a6+ ♜xc5 31 ♞e2?

This turns out OK, but White should have first covered his back rank with 31 ♗e1. Then 31...♗hd8 32 ♞e2 ♗d2?! is not the way to go as the white queen can suddenly spring into the attack via 33 ♞e3+ ♗d4 34 ♞a3+.

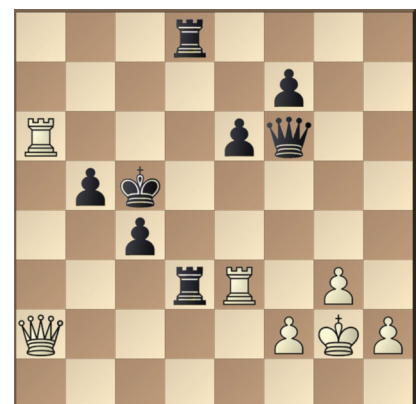
### 31...♗hd8

Jameson too wants to attack, but 31...♞d4! would have been much more annoying for White. Black simply wants to swap queens and then push his queenside duo. Moreover, White lacks a particularly good riposte with 32 ♞a2? failing to the standard Botvinnik tactic 32...♞d1+ 33 ♜g2 ♗xh2+!

### 32 ♞a2

Rudd seizes his chance. Around about here one might wonder about the wisdom of placing the black king on c5, but it is still safe enough.

### 32...♗d1+ 33 ♜g2 ♗1d3!





Preventing the check on a3 and aiming to remove a useful defender.

**34 ♖e2?**

The losing move. White had to go in for 34 ♖a5! ♜xe3 35 ♖b6+ ♚b4 36 ♖a5+ when Black can either go back and allow a repetition or brave 36...♚b3, which also leads to a draw after 37 ♖xb5+ ♚c3 38 ♜a3+ ♚d2 39 ♜xe3 ♜d3 40 ♖xc4 ♜xe3 41 fxe3 ♚xe3.

**34...♖d4! 35 ♜e5+ ♜d5**

Black's position is a picture of harmony and there is only the one king which might land up in trouble.

**36 ♜e4 ♜d2 37 ♖f3 ♖d3 38 ♖f4 ♚b4!**

As cool as a cucumber, the king strides away from potential hassle from c7, leaving White faced with the threat of ...♜f5.

**39 g4?**

This loses mundanely, but even 39 ♜e1!? ♜f5 40 ♜b1+ likely wouldn't have saved the game as Black remains in control on the queenside after 40...♖xb1 41 ♖xd2+ ♚b3!.

**39...♜d4 40 ♜xd4 ♖xd4 41 ♖f3 ♖d5 0-1**

the top boards. The Aussie GM cheekily employed 1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e4 b5!? 4 a4 c6 5 axb5 cxb5 6 ♜c3 a6!?, a shocking exchange sacrifice which had given Edouard himself a memorable victory at the end of last season (see pp.11-12 of the June 2014 *CHESSESS*), but which fared much worse as the French GM swapped sides. However, Guildford II did avoid the whitewash, as Zivile Sarakauskiene gradually turned round a Hedgehog to win against Sophie Milliet, while Sarakauskiene's sister Dagne Ciuksyte clung on to hold Nick Pert.

Two teams vying to be on the plane to this year's European Club Cup in Skopje are Barbican and Blackthorne Russia. The former edged their round 7 encounter in Pool A 5-3. Sam Collins found Danny Gormally's bishop-pair too strong on top board, but that was more than cancelled out by crushing wins for Jonathan Parker and Lorin D'Costa. The match would have ended differently, though, but for a sudden turnaround on bottom board.

After more than 10 years away from the board, Hungarian-born WIM Rita Atkins is currently regaining her previous strength. Here she has outplayed Kanwal Bhatia and has just doubled on the seventh. White, recognising the threat of ...♜f2 and ...f3, realised that her only hope was a desperate counterattack.

**35 ♜d6! ♖c2!**

An excellent response, bringing the queen back into play and eyeing the f5-pawn.

**36 ♖a8+ ♚h7 37 ♜xf7 g5??**

A horrible moment for both Atkins and her team. During the 30-second increment, she no doubt saw 37...♜xg2+ 38 ♖xg2 ♖xd1 39 ♖g6+ ♚g8 40 ♜xh6+ ♚h8, when White has a couple of ways to force a draw, and was determined to avoid it.

The only winning move would have been the consistent 37...♖xf5 when White's rook can't invade and 38 ♖h8+ ♚g6 (even in front of its pawns, the black king is, of course, well shielded) 39 ♖g8 is nothing to fear on account of, amongst others, 39...♜xg2+! 40 ♚xg2 ♖e4+.

**38 ♜d7 ♚g7?**

Collapsing in the run-up to the time control. Black had clearly missed White's last, but again 38...♖xf5 was correct, and if 39 ♜xg5+ ♚g6 40 ♖g8+ ♚h5. Once again, we see the black king hiding on the other side of its foot soldier from the white queen. Admittedly, here White does have 41 ♜d5, but after 41...♜xg2+! 42 ♚xg2 ♖c2+ 43 ♚f3 hxg5 44 ♖f7+ ♖g6 winning the resulting endgame won't be a walk in the park.

**39 f6!**

Decisively levering open the seventh rank. **39...♖c3 40 ♜xg5+ ♚g6 41 ♜xg7+ ♚f5 42 ♖d5+ ♜e5 43 ♖d7+ 1-0**

Barbican continued their fine run the next day, overcoming Grantham Sharks 5½-2½,



South Wales Dragons' David Jameson took on IM Jack Rudd in a sharp tussle, and won.

Over in Pool B, Guildford welcomed back Nigel Short who spearheaded their 6½-1½ victory over Oxford. Credit, though, to Oxford's ever dangerous Aidan Rawlinson, who outplayed Spanish IM Alberto Suarez Real, and to Francesca Matta, who fought tremendously despite being outrated by some 547 points to hold the draw against Glenn Flear.

Guildford II topped Pool A and had to face their first team at the outset of the promotion pool. For a while they were in danger of being clean swept, with Gawain Jones and Romain Edouard outplaying Yang-Fan Zhou and David Smerdon respectively on

**K.Bhatia-R.Atkins**  
Barbican vs Blackthorne Russia



Kanwal Bhatia was all smiles after turning her game around in a time scramble.



exemplified by Jonathan Parker outclassing Tom Rendle on board 2. A good final weekend might even see them challenge for second, as well as book one of the three European Club berths. More likely, though, Cheddleton will hang on to second place behind Guilford. They wobbled against Hackney after Simon Williams made one queen sacrifice too many, but prevailed 4½-3½ thanks to victories for Jonathan Hawkins, Keith Arkell and Ezra Kirk. The whip was cracked the next day and Cheddleton responded, overcoming Blackthorne Russia 6-2, led by fine wins on the top boards for David Howell over Danny Gormally and Jonathan Hawkins against Chris Duncan.

White Rose also entertain European hopes. After a dismal February weekend, the Yorkshire side bounced back, crushing Warwickshire Select 6-2 before overcoming a weakened Oxford 5-3, led by James Adair who took his tally for the season to an impressive 7½/8 as he simply outclassed John Pitcher and David Zakarian.



James Adair made a GM norm in the 2012/13 season and is well on course for his second.

### J. Adair-D. Zakarian

White Rose vs Oxford  
Nimzowitsch Defence

**1 e4 ♘c6 2 ♗f3 d6 3 d4 ♗f6 4 ♘c3 g6!?**

This unusual line is a Zakarian speciality.

**5 d5 ♗b8 6 h3 ♗g7 7 ♗c4 0-0 8 0-0 ♖e8**

A slightly mysterious move, but Black may have been put off by his opponent's rapid tempo. One might have expected 8...c6 or 8...e5, with a reasonable enough version of the Pirc in either case.

**9 ♗g5 c6 10 ♖e1 b5!?**

Charging forwards, but creating weaknesses.

**11 ♗b3! b4 12 ♗a4**



**12...♗fd7?**

Zakarian must have disliked 12...♗b7 13 a3 a5 14 c3 when the queenside opens to White's advantage, but the text contains a rather large tactical hole.

**13 dxc6 ♗xc6 14 ♖d5**

Oh dear. Suddenly the knight and f7 are forked, and Black is already rather desperate.

**14...♗b7 15 ♖xf7+ ♗h8**

At first one might assume that matters aren't so bad for Black, with ...♗f8; ♖e6 ♖xf3 one

possibility, but calculation is a very much an Adair strength and he now found a clinical sequence.

**16 ♗d2 ♖f8 17 ♗g5!**



A neat way to ignore the attack on the queen and already it's pretty much game over.

**17...♗ce5?! 18 ♖xg7+ ♗xg7 19 ♗e6+ ♗h8 20 ♗xd8 ♖axd8 21 ♗xb4**

Two pawns to the good, Adair was never going to mess up from here.

**21...g5 22 ♗d2 g4 23 hxg4 ♗xg4 24 f3 ♗ge5 25 f4 ♗g4 26 ♗c3+ e5 27 ♖ad1 ♖xf4 28 ♖xd6 ♖f6 29 ♖ed1 h5 30 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 31 ♖xd7 ♗xe4 32 ♗c5 ♗c6 33 ♖e7 1-0**

The final 4NCL weekend may even be taking place as you read these words. Spectators will be very welcome over May 2-4 at the Hinckley Island Hotel, or you can follow all the action via [www.4ncl.co.uk](http://www.4ncl.co.uk). Will Guildford come first and second in the top flight, who will go down, and who too will go

up from Division Two?

In the second flight, youthful 3Cs currently lead the way with 7/8, but lurking back on 50% are a certain Guildford III who may be pretty handy as their top teams strengthen. Division Two also sees a pretty tight relegation scrap, in which KJCA Kings boosted their survival chances with a round 8 victory over BCM Dragons, aided by the following lively encounter.

### Notes by Alexis Harakis

#### C. Fegan-A. Harakis

BCM Dragons vs KJCA Kings  
Colle System

**1 d4 ♗f6 2 ♗f3 e6 3 e3 b6 4 ♗d3 ♗b7 5 ♗bd2 c5 6 0-0 ♘c6**

Unusual, but it narrows White's options.

**7 b3**

7 c3 is surely better as now White has a couple of weaknesses which Black can exploit to obtain a good game.

**7...cxd4 8 exd4 ♗b4 9 ♗e2 ♗bd5 10 ♗b2 ♗f4 11 ♗c4**

White may be best off just giving up the bishop-pair when he can't be worse.

**11...♗e7 12 ♖e1 h5!?**

White wants to play ♗f1, g2-g3, ♗g2 and get rid of the knight on f4, but ...h5-h4 disrupts that and threatens to build an initiative.

**13 g3?!**

I felt this was too risky, opening the a8-h1 diagonal and inviting ...h5-h4.

**13...♗h3+ 14 ♗g2 h4!**





Now it looks like White has to take it or let Black have a strong attack for free.

**15 ♖xh3 hxg3+ 16 ♖xg3 ♖c7+**

The position is extremely dangerous for White and hard to defend – there are potential mates everywhere.

**17 ♖g2**

After 17 ♖e5 ♖h5+ the only move is 18 ♖h3 when White will have to give up his queen soon enough. Instead, 17 ♖e5!? 0-0-0 18 ♖e2 ♖h5+ 19 ♖g2 g5 20 ♖f1 g4 21 ♖g1 ♖f4 is a sample line. The computer gives 17 ♖e5 as best, but it's very unlikely White has any chance to survive.

**17...♖xh2+?**

Probably good for a draw at least, but the worst of the three options and the last I considered after failing to find forced wins in the other two more promising continuations:

a) 17...♖g4 hopes for 18 ♖f1? ♖xh2+! and intends to continue attacking with 18

♖f1 ♖xh2+ 19 ♖e2 ♖xf3 20 ♖xf3 ♖f4 21 d5 ♖h3 22 ♖g1 ♖h2.

b) 17...♖xh2+ 18 ♖f1 ♖f4 (18...♖h3+ 19 ♖e2 ♖h5 20 ♖h1 ♖f4+ is just a draw) 19 d5 ♖xd5 20 ♖e5 ♖f5 21 ♖d3 ♖f4 22 ♖xf4 ♖xf4 23 ♖e4 d5 24 ♖d3 ♖c5 25 ♖e2 ♖h3 26 ♖ed1 d4 27 ♖g1 ♖e3 28 ♖h5 0-0-0 29 ♖e2 ♖f6 is a long sample computer line where Black still has a raging initiative.

**18 ♖f1 ♖h5?**

This doesn't work, but it's complicated and I had seen a nice mating pattern in one line where the king runs to the queenside.

**19 ♖g1 ♖xf2 20 ♖xf2 ♖g3+ 21 ♖e3 ♖f4+ 22 ♖d3 ♖f5+**



On this or the previous move, White looks to be winning if he returns to e2, which is not obvious given it seems Black should have at least a draw. However, Chris was low on time and I was very seduced by the coming mate

which is easy to miss.

**23 ♖c3??**

Natural as White is one move (e.g. a2-a4) away from consolidating, but allowing Black to mate while creating a strong visual impression.

**23...♖b4+ 0-1**



*IT whizz Alexis Harakis is well known in the London chess scene and was quick to spot a lovely mate against CSC's Chris Fegan.*



### 2014/2015 4NCL Division 1 - Championship Pool

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	GP	Pts
1	Guildford I		4½-3½			6½-1½	6½-1½		6-2	23½	8
2	Cheddleton	3½-4½					4½-3½	6-2	4½-3½	18½	6
3	Barbican 4NCL I				4-4	3-5		5-3	5½-2½	17½	5
4	White Rose			4-4		4½-3½	5-3	3½-4½		17	5
5	Guildford II	1½-6½		5-3	3½-4½			5-3		15	4
6	Oxford	1½-6½	3½-4½		3-5				5-3	13	2
7	Blackthorne Russia		2-6	3-5	4½-3½	3-5				12½	2
8	Grantham Sharks	2-6	3½-4½	2½-5½			3-5			11	0

### 2014/2015 4NCL Division 1 - Demotion Pool

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	GP	Pts
1	Wood Green				7-1		4½-3	4½-3½	5½-2½	21½	8
2	Barbican 4NCL II			4-4		4½-3½	5½-2½		5-3	19	7
3	Cambridge University		4-4			4½-3½		4-4	5½-2½	18	6
4	South Wales Dragons	1-7				2½-5½	5-3	5-2½		13½	4
5	e2e4.org		3½-4½	3½-4½	5½-2½				4-4	16½	3
6	The AD's	3-4½	2½-5½		3-5			5-3		13½	2
7	Warwickshire Select	3½-4½		4-4	2½-5		3-5			13	1
8	Hackney	2½-5½	3-5	2½-5½	4-4					12	1