



# Winning Ways

## Danny Gormally enjoyed returning to the winners' enclosure at the second 4NCL Congress in Wakefield

There's an interesting thread on the English Chess Forum about the cost of playing in congresses. The consensus seems to be that the cost of playing these events, the hassle of booking accommodation and travelling sometimes hundreds of miles to tournaments is off-putting for the majority of players. Certainly entries are down across the board. Even long-established events are struggling to attract people.

The second 4NCL weekend tournament, held at the Cedar Court Hotel just outside Wakefield, also didn't get fantastic numbers (36 played in the Open, for instance), but it was a very pleasant event. Held in a nice hotel with helpful staff (typical of Yorkshire, where people tend to be much more open and friendly in general, not like the scowling service you might receive in other places I could mention), the whole event went very smoothly, and was in great contrast to some of the draughty and untidy halls you can play chess in these days.

I hadn't won a tournament for what seemed like an ocean of time. To win any tournament you need a slice of luck. I certainly got that in my round two game.

### D.Gormally-P.Shaw

Round 2

*Pribyl Defence*

1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 c6 4 f4 ♖a5  
5 ♗d2 e5 6 ♗f3 exd4 7 ♗d5 ♖d8  
8 ♗xf6+ ♖xf6 9 ♗c4



9...♗e6??

Strangely enough I had this position on my

computer before the game, although what was perhaps even more amazing was that I got up early enough to prepare. This move might look natural, but it's a terrible blunder.

10 f5!

I couldn't believe my luck, Peter had walked straight into my preparation. That rarely happens and in a sense I was lucky as 9...♗e6 looks like the most natural move, and at 10 in the morning it's hard to be tactically sharp.

10...♗xc4 11 ♗g5 ♖xg5

11...♖e5! was a much better way to resist. After 12 ♗xe5 dxe5, unlike in the game, White has no obvious way of breaking down the black position. Of course, he should be winning in a technical sense, but if Black gets mobilised, with ...♗d7, ...f6 and queenside castling, anything could happen.

12 ♗xg5 c5 13 b3 ♗e7 14 ♖h5 h6  
15 h4 ♗xg5 16 hxg5 ♗b5 17 f6



Now it's easy for White as it is impossible for Black to keep the position closed.

17...g6 18 ♖h2 ♗d7 19 gxh6 ♖h7

A horrible square for the rook, but it's probably already gone in any case.

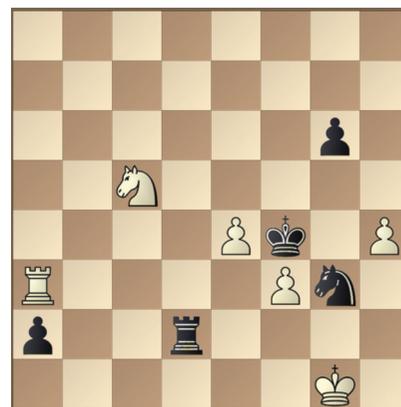
20 e5! ♗c6 21 ♖h3+ ♗c7 22 exd6+ ♗xd6  
23 0-0-0 ♖e8 24 ♖he1 ♖e5 25 ♖h2 1-0

The next game against Peter Sowray proved to be a battle royale. I got a huge advantage in the opening, proving once again that it's useful to prepare even for weekend games. The fact that the game against Shaw had ended so quickly meant I had time to go back to my room, switch the computer back on and prepare for Peter's favourite line against the Nimzo-Indian; a huge advantage as Peter was still trying to grind out a win while I was preparing for him.

Eventually though, the usual Gormless technique set in and I let him back into the game. However, the ending became incomprehensibly complicated and inevitably further mistakes ensued. We eventually reached a position where Black should be winning because of the strength of the far-advanced a-pawn:

### P.Sowray-D.Gormally

Round 3



51...♖d1+?

The only downside of the position for Black is the relatively poor position of the knight on g3, which can become vulnerable. Therefore it made sense to reroute it with 51...♗e2+! 52 ♖f2 (after 52 ♗g2 ♗d4+ 53 ♖h3 ♗xf3 54 ♗e6+ ♖xe4 Black will eventually win) 52...♗d4+ 53 ♖f1 ♗c2 and White loses his rook, but unlike in the game lacks any clever counterplay.

52 ♖f2

Here 52 ♗g2! a1♖? (Black should repeat with 52...♖d2+ 53 ♗g1 - if 53 ♖h3 ♗f1 54 ♗e6+ ♖e5 55 ♗g5 ♖h2+ 56 ♗g4 ♖g2+ 57 ♖h3 ♖g3# - 53...♗e2+! returning to the position we discussed earlier, which is a trivial win) 53 ♖xa1 ♖xa1 54 ♗d3+ ♖e3 is a position that I had calculated from afar and had assumed was winning for Black, but allows a study-like defence: 55 ♗b4! and I certainly don't see a win for Black.

52...♗h1+

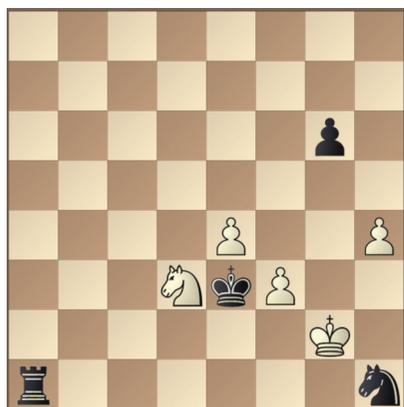
My original intention had been 52...♖f1+ 53 ♗g2 a1♖ 54 ♖xa1 ♖xa1, but now the awful truth dawned on me that I was no longer winning after the study-like 55 ♗d3+



FM Peter Sowray is never an easy man to put away in any type of endgame.

♠e3 56 ♟b4!, reaching a position we've already analysed. A remarkable line and a good example of how chess is so inexhaustible – there are resources in even the most hopeless of situations.

**53 ♠g2 a1 ♖54 ♜xa1 ♜xa1 55 ♟d3+ ♠e3**



**56 ♟e5?**

Sowray gets tempted by the g6-pawn, but this proves to be taboo. Given Peter's fighting qualities and his ability to find tactical resources (perhaps exemplified by a remarkable game where he lured Simon Williams into a stalemate trap), I was sure he would find 56 ♟b4! when to win Black has to drive his king into the heart of the opponent's position: 56...♠e2 57 ♟d5 ♠e1!! 58 ♠xh1 ♠f2+ 59 ♠h2 ♠xf3. Black should be winning as the White's king is dominated and his h-pawn will inevitably fall, but nervous and short of time, I'm not at all convinced I would have played this.

**56...♟f2 57 ♟xg6 ♟d3 0-1**

In the same round a now regular visitor to these shores, Jahongir Vakhidov, defeated James Jackson:

**J.Vakhidov-J.Jackson**  
Round 3



The opening has seemingly gone quite badly for Black. His bishop on b5 aims at nothing, while by contrast the white bishop on b2 is a potential monster and, combined with the rook, queen and knight, is likely to wreak havoc on the kingside. Aware of this, James immediately tries to block the important a1-h8 diagonal:

**19...d4! 20 ♜h3 h6**

20...dxe3 21 ♟g4! ♟xg4 22 ♖xh7+ ♠f8 23 ♖h8+ ♠f7 24 ♖xg7+ is an example of how things can quickly go wrong for Black.

**21 ♖g3**

21 ♖g3 also looked very promising when I was watching the game and around here James looked noticeably uncomfortable, which is hardly surprising given how quickly Black's fragile defence could fall apart. After 21...♠h7 22 e4!? White has the idea of later relocating the bishop to c1, where it can still aim at the kingside after a subsequent f4-f5.

**21...♟d7 22 ♟g4 ♠h7 23 exd4 cxd4 24 ♟xd4 e5!**

A good practical try.

**25 fxe5**

25 f5 exd4 26 ♟xh6 allows Black to escape into an ending with 26...♖e3+ 27 ♖xe3 dxe3 28 ♟f7+ ♠g8 29 ♟xd8 ♜xd8 30 ♖xe3, although even here White should be close to winning due to having so many more pawns.

**25...♜c6!**



Despite being two pawns down, Black has some slight counter-chances, as if White is not breaking through then the rook on h3 just looks rather stupid. However, from here on Jahongir shows very good technique.

**26 a4! ♟a6 27 ♖e3 ♖g6 28 ♟f2 b6 29 ♜g3 ♜xg3 30 hxg3 ♟f8 31 a5!**

James said afterwards in the post mortem that he considered resigning here. The only tiny hope is to reach an opposite-coloured bishop ending, but that's a long way off.

**31...♟b7 32 axb6 axb6 33 ♟xb6 ♜c8 34 ♜a7 ♖d7 35 e6 ♟xe6 36 ♖e4+**

36 ♜xb7 ♖xb7 37 ♖xe6 also should be winning, but the game continuation is just as simple.

**36...♟xe4 37 ♜xd7 ♜c6 38 ♟e3 ♟g6 39 b4 ♜c7 40 ♜d6 ♜e7 41 ♠h2 ♟e8 42 ♟c5 ♟d7 43 d4 ♖f7 44 ♟d3 ♟xc5 45 bxc5 ♟b5 46 ♟e5 ♖f2 47 ♜b6 ♟a4 48 ♜b4 ♜a2 49 c6 ♟c2 50 c7 ♟f5 51 g4 ♟e6 52 ♜b6 1-0**

Going into round four, there were three of us on 3/3, Jahongir, me, and a junior who seems to be improving all the time, Andrew Horton. I was white against Horton while Jahongir got the downfloat.

I was pretty nervous before the game and struggled to sleep the night before; I think that's because I hadn't won a tournament for such a long period of time. In my darkest moments I was wondering if I would ever win a tournament again; it had become that bad.

In the game I played fairly well even though paralysed by fear; I struggled to calculate a single variation and was playing mainly by instinct. By the time we join the game, Horton was down to about six minutes for the rest of the game (with a 30-second increment), whereas I had over fifty minutes left. However, this didn't stop me producing an appalling blunder.

**D.Gormally-A.Horton**  
Round 4



**25 ♟c4??**

Before I played this, I said to myself: 'OK, check ♟c4. Make absolutely sure that everything is OK, as you have so much time on the clock you can do that.'

With a bit more time invested, I might



Uzbek Grandmaster Jahongir Vakhidov has been a regular tournament victor up and down the country of late.

have found the clever sequence 25 ♖f5! ♖b4 26 ♙d7! ♖xb3 27 ♜f1 when White is breaking through.

**25...♖e5?**

I dodged a bullet. As soon as I played my last howler, I realised that I had given Andrew the chance to turn around the game completely with 25...♖b4!. In that horrible period while I was waiting for him to move, he reached for his queen and I thought, 'Oh, no! I've blown it! I'll have to wait another 12 months before I get a chance to win another tournament.' But much to my eternal relief, he put the queen somewhere else.

After 25...♖b4 26 ♙e2 (26 ♜xd5? ♖e1+! 27 ♙f1 ♜c1 is a cold shower), already Black has a pleasant choice between 26...♖xb3 and 26...♖xg4 27 ♙xg4 ♜c3, which should be a comfortable ending for him.

**26 ♙xd5**

What a relief.

**26...♙d8 27 ♙c4 ♜xd1+ 28 ♖xd1 ♙c5 29 g3 ♖e4 30 ♖h5 ♖b1+ 31 ♙g2 ♖e4+ 32 ♖f3 ♖e7 33 ♖f5 ♙g7 34 h4 h6 35 ♙d5 a5**



During the game this position reminded me of the famous finish to one of the Kasparov-Karpov games. I couldn't recall whether it was in the 1986 or 1987 match, but I remember that Kasparov needed to win and got a similar ending to this one, before eventually breaking through. The win isn't that simple though, as Black can just wait passively and hope later to inflict some kind of perpetual checks on the white king if I open up the position too quickly.

**36 g4 ♖c7 37 f4?!**

37 g5! would actually have been strong.

**37...♖e7 38 ♙f3 ♙e6 39 ♙e4 ♖b4! 40 ♖h7+ ♙f8 41 ♖xh6+ ♙e7 42 g5 fxg5 43 hxg5 ♖e1?**

After 43...♖xb3! 44 ♖f6+ ♙f8 45 ♖h8+ ♙e7 46 ♖a1 White is much better, but Black can still fight.

**44 ♙d3!**

Finally I calmed down and found a good move. Now Black doesn't have any useful checks.

**44...♖d1+ 45 ♙e2 ♖xb3 46 ♖f6+ ♙d6 47 f5 ♖d5+ 48 ♙f2 ♖h1 49 fxe6 ♖h4+ 50 ♙g2 1-0**

In the last round I was paired with Vakhidov. We both had 4/4 so a quick draw was predictable. Of course if they eventually introduce anti-draw rules for all tournaments such an outcome wouldn't be possible, but from my perspective I was just delighted to get into the winners' enclosure again after months of misery.

James Jackson is one of the nicest guys you could meet in chess and the following win, against another very good young player in Daniel Abbas, helped complete a generally well played tournament for him.

**J.Jackson-D.Abbas**  
Round 4



**17...b4?**

I don't see what Black gains from this push. In fact he seems to hand White the time to attack on the kingside. 17...♙c4! would have been more in keeping with Black's previous play. After 18 ♙xc4 (if 18 ♖e2 ♙xa3!) 18...♜xc4 Black seems to have a very good position, as there is little danger to his king while the important white d-pawn is solidly blockaded.

**18 axb4 ♙xb4 19 ♙g5! ♙e7 20 ♖d3!**

All standard stuff, and very effective.

**20...g6 21 ♙a2 ♙d5**

A desperate attempt to relieve the pressure, as Black would have been very concerned about possible sacrifices on f7, but the play in the middle works out very well for White.

**22 ♙xd5**

22 ♙xe7 ♙xe7 23 ♙xf7 ♜xf7 24 ♙xe6 was also quite interesting, but not really necessary as the game continuation is much simpler.

**22...♙xg5 23 ♙xb7 ♙xb7 24 ♖xa6**

White has won a pawn while retaining all the advantages of his position. The rest of the game didn't last long:

**24...♙d6 25 d5! ♜a8 26 ♖d3 exd5 27 ♖xd5 ♙f5? 28 ♙d7! ♜e8 29 ♜e8+ ♖xe8 30 ♙e4 1-0**

In general the second 4NCL Congress was fantastically well run and I just wish more people had turned up. Mike Turan seems very enthusiastic about running some more events and has one planned for the summer in Birmingham (17-19 July). Like with the e2-e4 events, the playing conditions were excellent in Wakefield. Indeed, the only downside was that, like a lot of chess venues these days, the hotel was away from the town centre. Sometimes you like to wander into a town, have a beer and soak up the atmosphere. That would be my only gripe, although these days I'm too old to really contemplate going drinking when I've got a game at 10 in the morning and have to play five games in three days.

*Leading Scores:*

**Open:**

- 1-2 Jahongir Vakhidov (UZB), Danny Gormally (Alnwick) 4½/5,
- 3-7 Peter Sowray (Wood Green), James Jackson (Northampton), Andrew Horton (3Cs), Daniel Abbas (3Cs), Mike Surtees (Bolton) 3½.

**Major:**

- 1 Farshad Ai (Sheffield) 4,
- 2 Mitchell Burke (3Cs) 3½,
- 3-5 Mark Whitehead (Rochdale), Ron Plater (Gosforth), Jim Vickery (Alwoodley) 3.

**Minor:**

- 1 Mark Kirkham (Sheffield Uni.) 4½,
- 2 Michael Johnson (Wakefield) 4,
- 3-5 Lincoln Tomlin (Leeds), Paul Gelder (Alwoodley), Derek Simpson (Stockton) 3½.