

4NCL Telford - Weekend 5 (by Steve Burke)

With the recent announcement of the relocation of Divisions 3 and 4 South next season, there may be some adjustments as some of the more northerly midlands teams elect to migrate to Division 3 North. However, for the purposes of this report, I've assumed all things will remain as they are.

Division 3 South

Pool C

West is Best romped away with the group winning all three matches in the final weekend to finish with 13 points from 14. In fact, only the Midland Monarchs managed to take a point off them all season. Hearty congratulations to them!

Midland Monarchs also won all three matches to put in a late challenge for the second promotion spot. But, despite beating them on Saturday, they were unable to catch Warwickshire Select 2, who finished a point ahead of them on 9 points after securing a draw in their last match.

Pool D

The top two, Rhyfelwyr Essyllwg and The Rookies, secured their places with apparent ease, while Leeds University Old Boys had a good weekend scoring 5 points to finish third.

The bottom three (Oxford 2, MK Phoenix 2 and CSC Rhinos 2) never really looked like saving themselves. However the Poisoned Pawns still had a chance going into Monday. They needed a big win and Surbiton to lose heavily against the group leaders. However they were unable to defeat the LUOB team and so Surbiton survive despite losing.

Division 4

West is Best 2, Throw in the Tal 1 and Barnet Knights 1 put in storming finishes, winning all three matches, but were too far behind to catch the top three teams.

With just two of Sussex Martlets 2, Iceni 1 and The Full Ponty guaranteed promotion it was a hard fought final weekend. Iceni closed the gap on Saturday as the other two lost, and all three teams then closed out the last two rounds with big wins.

So Sussex Martlets clinched the Divisional title with 18 points, while Iceni took second spot on game points. The Full Ponty will have to await developments to see where they end up next season.

Star Game

One of my previous “victims”, Laurence Cooper, suggested this one, and I haven’t found anything better than this nice attacking game. It is also an opening line that I have played a couple of times myself as white, so had added interest at least for me.

Byron,Alan M (2124) - Freeman,Richard C P (2033) [B27]
4NCL 3 South pool D Telford, ENG (9.99), 30.04.2016
[Burke,Steven J]

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 g6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Qxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 Nc6 6.Qa4 Diagram



6...Bg7?! The main line is 6...d6 7.e5 dxe5 8.Nxe5 Qd4 9.Nxc6 Qxa4 10.Nxa4 bxc6 11.Bd3 with a small edge for white due to black's inferior pawn structure. My games have gone 6...d6 7.e5 Ng4!? 8.exd6+/- leading to some wild possibilities.

7.e5 Ng8 8.Bf4 f6!+/- Black has to fight back immediately if he isn't to be badly worse.

9.exf6 Nxf6 10.Bc4 d5 11.0-0-0 e6 Diagram



12.Nxd5!? White has been playing actively and now offers a piece to keep the initiative rolling. The engines' alternative is 12.Bb5 when black should himself sacrifice a pawn for some compensation with 12...0-0 13.Bxc6 bxc6 14.Qxc6 Bd7 15.Qc7+/=

12...exd5?? Black picks up the gauntlet, but really should have played 12...Nxd5! to force white to exchange his white-squared bishop, 13.Bxd5 exd5 and now there is a long forcing line of "only" moves, 14.Rhe1+ Kf8 15.Qa3+ Kg8 16.Qb3 Na5 17.Qb5 a6 18.Re8+ Kf7 19.Rxd8 axb5 20.Ng5+ Ke7 21.R8xd5+/= and Komodo says that white has more than enough compensation for his bishop.

13.Rhe1+ Kf8 14.Qa3+ Kg8+- Diagram



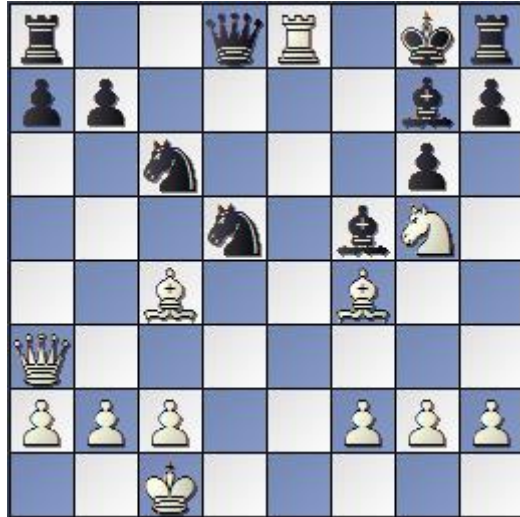
Black is almost okay, but white has one killing blow...

15.Ng5!! Bf5 Black develops the bishop and defends the back rank, but it's not enough if white continues to find the best moves. Komodo initially gives 15...Bf8 as surviving, but after a short while finds 16.Rxd5! Nxd5 17.Qf3!!+-

White needs to see things through to the end here in order to play...

16.Rxd5!! Nxd5 In particular, he needs to see the follow-up...

17.Re8+! Diagram



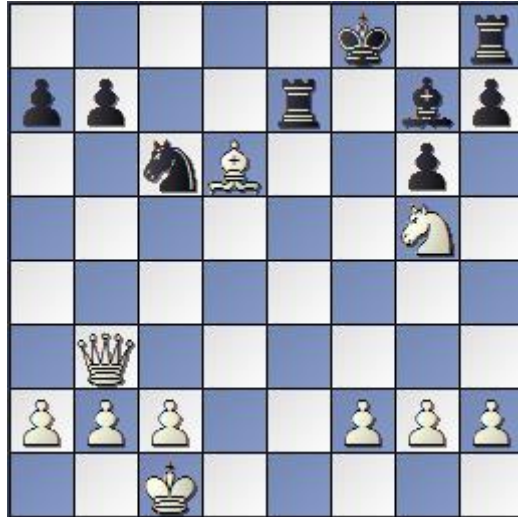
Now there is no defence.

It was still quite possible for white to throw the game away with a suboptimal move such as the plausible 17.Qb3?? Nce7 18.Rd1 Kf8 Diagram



19.Bxd5 (19.Rxd5?? Nxd5 20.Bxd5 Qe7 21.Bd2 Rc8 22.Ne6+ Bxe6 23.Bxe6 Rd8-) 19...Qb6 20.Bxb7 Qxb3 21.axb3 Re8 22.Be3 Bc8-/+

17...Qxe8 18.Bxd5+ Be6 19.Bxe6+ Qxe6 20.Nxe6 Re8 21.Qb3 Re7 22.Ng5+ Kf8 23.Bd6 Diagram



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One of My Own

I hope you've found my reports informative and enjoyed the games I've analysed. My own season has seen several interesting games, though the results have been less than good from my side!

An example of this is my game from the last round and, as the Star Game is somewhat shorter than usual, I thought I might add this one, as I have already analysed it for myself.

Homer, Stephen J (1987) - Burke, Steven J (1902) [C00]

4NCL, Ashfield-Br v West is Best (11), 02.05.2016

[Burke, Steven J]

1.e4 e6 2.d3 d5 3.Qe2!? Most people choose 3.Nd2 here, but this move is more popular than I thought.

3...d4 4.f4 c5 5.Nd2 Nc6 6.Ngf3 Diagram



6...Qa5!? Playing against Nc4. 6...Nge7 7.g3 e5 8.Nxe5 Nxe5 9.fxe5 Nc6 10.Nc4 Be7 11.Bg2 0-0~/=

7.Kf2!? A surprising choice, when he could simply play 7.g3

7...b5 8.g3 Nf6 9.h3 Bb7 10.Bg2 Qb6= Diagram



This introduces possibilities on the diagonal to white's king.

11.a4 a6 12.axb5 axb5 13.Rxa8+ Bxa8 Diagram



14.g4?=/+ I thought white might simply remove his king from the central pressure with 14.Kg1 Be7 15.Kh2 0-0 16.Nb3=

There is also the option to play aggressively with 14.e5 Nd5 15.Ne4 Be7 16.f5~~

14...Bb7 15.Nf1 After his last move, I now expected a different king exit, 15.Kg3 Be7 16.c3 dxc3 17.bxc3 0-0 18.Kh2 Rd8=/+

15...Be7=/+ As well as this move, I have several other good options here.

15...c4 16.Kg3 cxd3 17.cxd3 Nd7 18.Kh2 Be7 19.Bd2 0-0 20.Ng3 Nc5=/+

15...Nd7 16.Ng3 Be7 17.Kg1 0-0 18.Kh2 Ra8 19.g5 Ra2 20.h4 Qc7 21.h5 Nb6=/+

16.Ng3 Diagram



16...h5!? Played with the intention to sacrifice a pawn as in the game, which is okay, but apparently I may be doing better with other ideas.

16...c4 17.Rd1 cxd3 18.cxd3 0-0 19.Kg1 Nd7 20.e5 Rc8 21.Bd2 Nc5=/+

16...0-0 17.Kg1 Ra8 18.g5 Nd7 19.Kh2 Ra2 20.h4 Qc7 21.e5 Nb6=/+

17.g5?! Not the best response to my pawn advance.

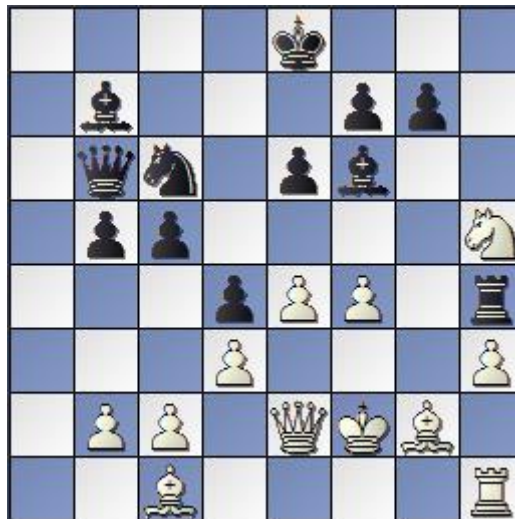
17.e5!? hxg4 18.Ng5 (One line I saw here was 18.exf6 gxf3 19.fxg7 Rg8 20.Qxf3 Rxc7 21.Qh5 Nb4~~)
18...Nd7 19.Qxg4 c4 20.Nh5 Rg8 21.Nxe6!? fxe6 22.Qxe6 Rf8 23.Nxg7+ Kd8 24.Rd1~/=

17.Nxh5 Nxh5 18.gxh5 c4 19.Kg3 Qc5 20.Rd1=

17...h4!? Komodo likes the idea 17...Nd7! 18.-- c4=/+

18.Nxh4! Rxh4 19.gxf6 Bxf6 The alternative capture is better than we thought, 19...gxf6 20.Nh5 Nb4
21.Rg1 Nxc2 22.Kg3 f5 23.exf5 Bxg2 24.f6 Rxh5 25.Qxh5 Bxf6 26.Kxg2 Nb4~/=

20.Nh5 Diagram



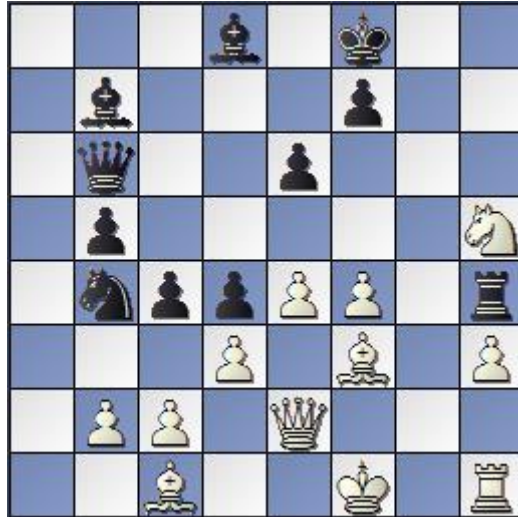
20...Bd8?! This gives white some advantage. I played this because in some lines after 20...Be7
21.Nxg7+ Kf8 22.Nh5 I may want to play 22...Rxh5 23.Qxh5 but here white gains a tempo as he is
threatening mate in one.

However 20...Be7 21.Nxg7+ Kd7! is a better way to keep the bishop, 22.Bf3 c4 23.Kg3 Rh8~/=

Komodo also gives the surprising idea 20...b4!? 21.e5 Be7 22.Nxg7+ Kd7 23.f5 b3 24.cxb3 Qxb3
25.Rd1 c4~/=

Probably the safest way is 20...Kf8 21.Nxf6 gxf6 22.Kg3 Rh8 23.Kh2 Ne7=

21.Nxg7+ Kf8 22.Nh5 Nb4 23.Bf3! c4 24.Kf1? Diagram



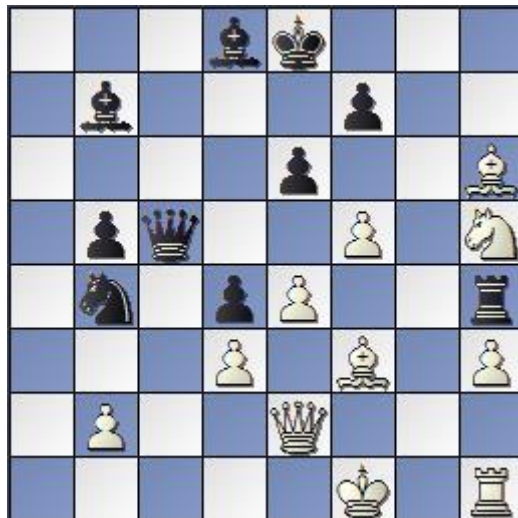
[24.Kg3! f5 25.Kh2!+/=]

24...Qc5!~/= After some quite lengthy analysis I found the best move, but there were at least two other enticing options.

I could switch the pressure to the white diagonal with 24...Qc6 but white is better after 25.Kg2! (Here 25.f5? is well met by 25...exf5= covering h6.) 25...f5 26.Ng3 Qc8 27.exf5 exf5 28.Qe5 Bxf3+ 29.Kxf3 Qc6+ 30.Kf2+/=

I could also open the c-file first, 24...cxd3 25.cxd3 Qc5 26.Bd2 Nc2 27.Kg2 Ne3+ 28.Kh2+/- (28.Bxe3? dxe3 29.Re1 b4 30.Qxe3 Rxh5 31.Bxh5 Qxh5 32.Qd4 Ke8~/=)

25.f5! cxd3 26.Bh6+ Ke8 27.cxd3 Diagram



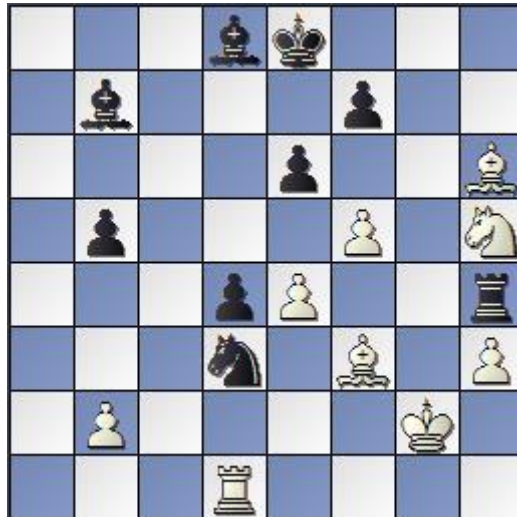
27...Qc2?? White has been finding some important moves and now I made a bad choice. The only good move here is 27...exf5! 28.Ng7+ Kd7 29.Nxf5 and now 29...Rxh6! 30.Nxh6 Qc1+ 31.Qe1 Qxb2~/=

28.Rg1?+/= Luckily this time white didn't find the best move! We both missed 28.Qxc2! Nxc2 29.f6!!+-

28...Qb1+ Things are also very complicated after 28...Qxe2+?! 29.Bxe2 Rxh3 30.fxe6 fxe6 31.Rg8+ Kd7 32.Bg4 Rh1+ 33.Kg2 Rxh5 34.Bxh5 Nxd3 35.Kf3+/- but white seems to be getting the upper hand with best play.

29.Kg2?! [29.Kf2? Nxd3+ 30.Kg2 Qxb2 31.Qxb2 Nxb2 32.fxe6 fxe6 Here I would be doing very well if white didn't have 33.Kf2!!~/=; 29.Qd1! Qxd1+ 30.Bxd1 Rxh3 31.fxe6 fxe6 32.Bg4 Rh2 33.Ng7+ Kd7 34.Bxe6+ Kc6 35.Rg6 Kb6 36.Nf5+/=]

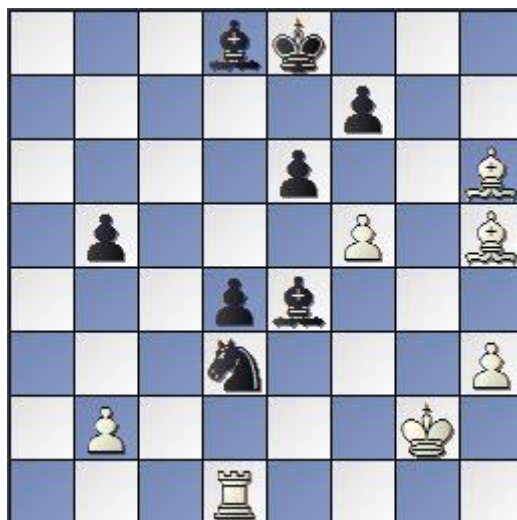
29...Qxd3 30.Qxd3 Nxd3 31.Rd1! Diagram



Otherwise I am better.

31...Rxh5! It seems that I can also try 31...Ne5!? 32.Ng7+ Kd7 33.fxe6+ fxe6 34.Rxd4+ but I have to see 34...Kc6!! and it might still be worse than the game after 35.Nxe6 Rxh6 36.Nxd8+ Kc5 37.Rd1+/-

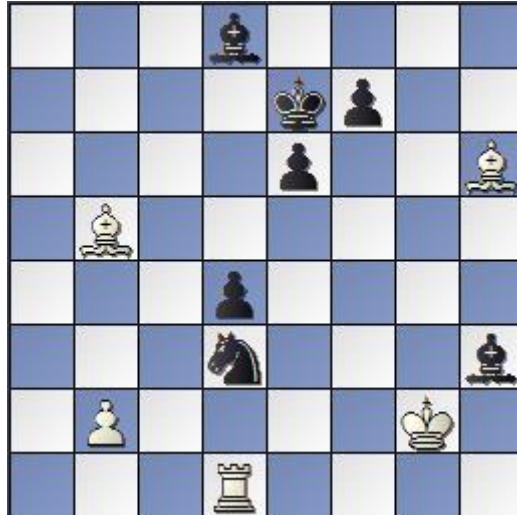
32.Bxh5 Bxe4+ Diagram



33.Bf3?!= [33.Kg3! Bc7+ 34.Kh4 Bxf5 35.Be2 Bd8+ 36.Bg5 f6 37.Bh6 Ne5 38.Bxb5+ Kf7 39.Kg3 Bb6+/=]

33...Bxf5?? This is where I chose the following forcing variation. I didn't like the split pawns after 33...exf5! and say 34.Kf1 Nxb2 35.Re1 Kd7 36.Bxe4 fxe4 37.Rxe4 Bf6= but this should probably draw as the black pawns aren't so easy to win, and can even be dangerous.

34.Bc6+ Ke7 35.Bxb5 Bxh3+ Diagram

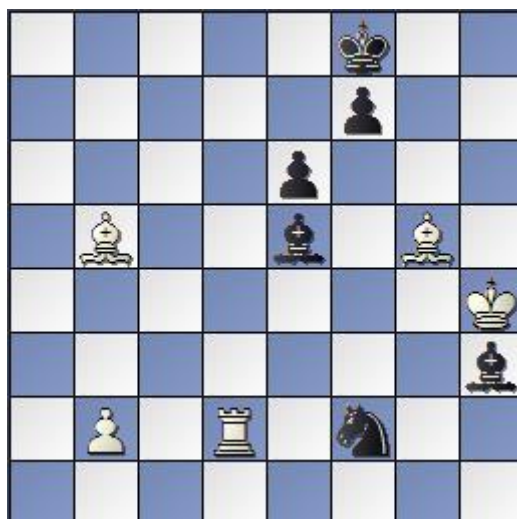


36.Kg3! Anything else here is losing for him.

36...Bc7+ 37.Kh4! I had missed this when heading for this line. However I thought I had a way out anyway.

37...Nf2 38.Rxd4 Be5 39.Bg5+ Kf8+- The alternative was 39...f6 40.Rd7+ Kf8 41.Bh6+ Kg8 42.Be3+-

40.Rd2?? Diagram



White missed a win here with 40.Be3!!

40...Bg3+?? With a few seconds left to play this last move of the time control, I suddenly somehow thought this would chase his king from attacking the bishop on h3, which is of course just crazy.

I had intended to play the correct 40...Ne4 41.Kxh3 (If white wants to play on, he should probably try 41.Re2 Nxg5 42.Kxg5 Bd4+/=) 41...Nxd2 42.Bxd2 Bxb2 which the computer gives as +0.6, but even without the two pawns it is a draw.

41.Kxg3+-

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