The Road To Edgbaston

as walked with Philip Best

Most of you will by now be aware of our successful run in the County Championships, culminating in a famous victory over Middlesex in the National Final. This result was a great triumph for the club, and was brought about by the mixing of three major ingredients, necessary to bake a championship winning side.

Firstly, of course, we needed players of sufficient calibre — without 30 million pounds with which to buy them (not that that policy seems to work long–term.....) we had to rely instead on various Admissions Tutors. In 1994 they did a splendid job providing us with two IM's and a handful of 180+ players. Combining these with the club's strength–in–depth and, in particular, the willingness of, dare I call them our 'old–timers', to continue to represent us in crucial matches, we were capable of fielding a team worthy of competing with any other.

The second ingredient needed was luck. There are those that say that you make your own luck — this is undoubtedly true to some extent. For example, our relative youth gave us an advantage in time scrambles towards the end of a five hour playing session when older opponents were tiring, and indeed many matches were won right at the death that way. But given the number of occasions where we won matches 8½–7½, or even on board count, nobody is going to persuade me that we didn't have just a little bit of fortune on our side. Still, fortune favours the brave…

In my opinion, the area where we score most highly is the crucial third ingredient: team spirit and the will to win. Confidence ran high all year. Inspired by the upper boards, lower board players were also performing excellently, usually against stronger opponents. Team spirit remained high from the start, but never more so than in the semi–final when players were prepared to break from revision only days before their exams (or from hang–overs the day after their last exam) and in the final itself, when many travelled hundreds of miles to be present. The general attitude of the team was what clinched the trophy this season.

In this report I don't intend to dwell on our qualification as Champions of the SCCU, since this has been reported in bits and pieces elsewhere. Suffice it to say that it was achieved predominantly due to 10½–9½ victories over Kent and Essex, and a 12–8 squashing of Middlesex.

Nor do I intend to say much about our quarter–final match against Staffordshire, although for somewhat different reasons — as we fielded the strongest Cambridgeshire side I've ever seen (with all 16 players FIDE rated), I simply wasn't selected and can only pass on word–of–mouth information. It seems that although we outgraded Staffs most of the way down, this proved to be a close match. Both of the IM's, despite the presence of GM Jonathan Mestel allowing them to play one board lower than usual, clocked up their first losses for Cambridgeshire, but, as has become traditional, we pulled through in the end. Demis picked up the final half–point to secure an 8½–7½ victory.

Our semi–final match against Hampshire was scheduled for June 3rd, slap bang in the middle of the exam period, so was always going to be a tricky match to get a strong team out for. Fortunately, by arranging a venue in central London (the Chess and Bridge Centre on Euston Road), we were able to persuade our contingent of London–based players to play. This proved vital as we only managed to find 16 players in total, without so much as a reserve. In the absence of Dictator Hon to captain the side, I was appointed as his deputy, and also had the pleasure of driving the minibus for the first time.

The team was much weaker over the lower boards than in the quarter–final and, whilst filling in the team sheet, I overheard their captain confidently telling one of his players that they would outgrade us. Having seen our sheet, however, he quickly amended his comment to "Well, we'll outgrade them on the lower boards but they've got an edge at the top". Playing an IM on board four usually does give you an advantage there.

The combination of driving, struggling to park a minibus in central London, and captaining the side didn't do wonders for my chess, and I'm afraid I succumbed in a relatively short time — though not as quickly as Mr Boyle who gifted his opponent a rook in a fairly level middlegame. 2–0 down was not an ideal start. Although it gave me an opportunity to watch the other boards (something I'd been doing too much of whilst still playing my own game!), I didn't really feel I'd played a true Captain's innings.

On board eleven, Mr Noden emerged out of the opening two pawns to the good, but with his opponent having a lot of play. It looked to me that Nick gradually reduced the compensation to the point where he had two pawns for nothing, and when he finally got there he just seemed to give the two pawns away. Maybe his version of the story is different, but this game ended in a draw. At least we were off the mark.

On board ten, Ben Hague just seemed to get completely hacked up — rather a role reversal for him — but next to him, unperturbed, Mark won the best game prize for this effort (notes by MHT):

□ **Mark Thornton (Cambs, 196)**
■ **Matthew Anderton (Hants, 195)**
Modern Benoni Defence

Normally, when I annotate one of my games, I find that my play has not been nearly as good as I originally thought. It usually turns out my opponent had many oppurtunities to turn the tables on me, but didn't spot them. In other words, I played badly, but I won because my opponent played even worse. This game, however, is different. I didn't think it was that good at the time. But now I feel that, with the possible exception of my 12th move, I am happy with every move that I played. And all the things that I was scared of during the game turned out to be ghosts in the analysis. I also feel that it is typical of my style. First of all, I block my opponent's play on 'his' side of the board. Then, I slowly and logically carry out a plan on 'my' side of the board. In the end, the measures that he takes to prevent my plan are so extreme that his position falls apart in time trouble. If any of my games could be labelled "Thortonesque" then I feel that this is the one.

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 c5 4 d5 e×d5 5 c×d5 d6 6 ♘c3 g6 7 ♗g5 h6 8 ♗h4 ♗g7 9 e3 a6?!

Black tries to improve on the main line, which goes 9…g5 10 Bg3 Nh5 11 Bb5+ Kf8, when Bellin and Ponzetto (*'Mastering the Modern Benoni and the Benko Gambit'*) reckon that Black's loss of castling rights "has no great importance, especially as after …Nxg3, hxg3 the Rh8 is quite usefully placed." I disagree with this assessment, which is one of the reasons why I play this line.

10 ♘d2!

Preserving my Bh4 by taking control of the h5 square.

10…b5?! 11 a4! b4 12 ♘e4

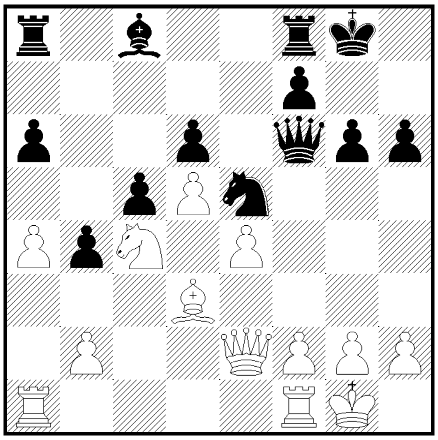
If White's K-pawn were on e4, then Black's Q-side expansion would be quite justified. At the time, using the vacant e4 square for my knight seemed very logical, but now I wonder whether the slower 12 Nb1!? may be even better, planning Nc4 and Nbd2. After 12 Ne4, 12…g5 13 Bg3 Nxe4 (13…Nxd5? 14 Nc4!±) 14 Nxe4 Bxb2 is poor. 15 Rb1 Be5 16 Bxe5 dxe5 17 Nxc5 or 15…Bc3+ 16 Nxc3 bxc3 gives White an advantage, but he can also try for more with 15 Be2!? threatening Nxd6, Bh5 and Nxf7. Taking the exchange would then be very dangerous for Black.

In the game, Black now sacrifices a couple of tempi to force some exchanges, which eases his position.

12…♗f5! 13 ♘×f6+ ♗×f6 14 ♗×f6 ♕×f6 15 e4 ♗c8!

d7 has to be kept vacant for developing the knight, and the Ra8 can always be developed by Ra7-e7.

16 ♗d3! ♘d7 17 0–0 ♘e5 18 ♕e2 0–0 19 ♘c4



If Black had ever taken on b2, White would have been compensated by a strong breakthrough in the centre, e.g 18…Nxd3 19 Qxd3 Qxb2 20 Nc4 Qf6 21 f4, and 22 e5 cannot be prevented.

White now conceived the plan which won him the game, which was to blockade his opponents Q–side pawn majority with his bishop on c4 and force the advance of his central pawn majority by f4 and e5.

19…♘×c4 20 ♗×c4 ♖e8 21 ♖fe1 ♖a7 22 ♖ad1 ♕f4?

Black's only method of preventing White's plan is to play …f5 and …fxe4 as quickly as possible, thus crippling White's central pawn majority. After 22…Rae7 23 f3 a5?! 24 Rd3 Qg7 25 Re3 White prevents this as 25…f5 26 Bb5 and exf5 gives him total control of the e-file. Black would then face a difficult defence. Hence, he should have considered 22…Rae7 23 f3 Qg7!?, when the threat of 24…f5 forces White to snatch a pawn. After 24 Bxa6 Bxa6 25 Qxa6 Qxb2 26 Qxd6, White is still better, but Black has randomised the position somewhat and can hope for counterplay with his queenside pawns.

The move played gives White some free tempi to consolidate his position and misplaces Black's queen.

23 g3 ♕g4 24 f3 ♕h3 25 ♖d3 ♖ae7 26 ♖e3

Black is now positionally defenceless, as 26…f5 loses a pawn to 27 Bxa6. He was also heading for terrible time trouble, with only 10 minutes left to reach move 40. In contrast, White had over an hour left on his clock.

26…a5 27 f4 ♕g4 28 ♕f2 g5?!

Desperate situations call for desperate measures. But 'waiting sensibly' would have been a more stubborn defensive strategy.

29 ♗e2 ♕h3 30 ♗f1 ♕h5 31 ♗g2!

White consolidates his K–side before the final push. He now threatens 32 e5, as 32…gxf4 33 gxf4 dxe5 34 fxe5 Rxe5 35 Qg3+! no longer loses the queen to 35…Rg5.

31…g4 32 ♕e2 ♗d7 33 b3 f6 34 ♕a6! 1–0

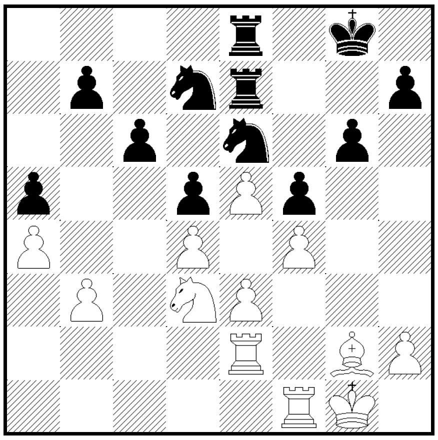
Perhaps a little premature, but after 35 Qxd6 his position is falling apart at the seams. The problem of playing the remaining 7 moves in well under a minute also influenced his decision to quit early.

Around the same time, Eddie Holland gradually succumbed, Richard Little agreed a draw with slightly the better of a closed position that was going nowhere, and Jonny Parker halved out on board three in a game that looked like neither player had any real desire to play. An exchange and pawns down on bottom board, Karsten looked to be in trouble until his opponent played what can only be described as a hideous blunder, managing to gift back not only the exchange, but also to get his king and other rook forked in the same manoever. A few minutes later Karsten cleaned up for a full point swindle. Those few minutes really turned the tide of the match as Mestel, Turner and Burgess all scored maximum points from some excellent games.

It was over another hour before another game finished. Phil Faulkner had hung on well on board 15, but his position had been gradually getting worse, and on board 6 an oscillating game finally went against Aron. So, we needed $1\frac{1}{2}$ points from the last two games to take the match on board count. Bill Hartston's game had reached a rook and pawn ending with Bill having a single extra pawn. When this reached rook and two against rook and one, I thought his winning chances were very slim but his position just seemed to keep improving. Board 8 was the real attention–grabber. Having advised Dave Lawson, as his captain, to take a draw if possible at the point when we were looking favourites at $6\frac{1}{2}$–$5\frac{1}{2}$ up and seen him return to the board and make what appeared to be the least drawish move possible, I watched along with everyone else as the following unfolded (notes by DDAL):

□ KDF Gregory (199)
■ DDA Lawson (2240)

The position below had arisen shortly after the time control, without any real change in the nature of the game (i.e. we were both still playing badly). White has a clear advantage due to his extra space, greater queenside potential and protected passed pawn, compounded by the fact that Black only has 13 minutes to allegro oblivion, compared to White's 17.



44 ♖c2 ♖a8 45 ♖fc1 ♖a6 46 ♖c3?! ♖b6

Black's rook on b6 is a touch more active than White's on c3, but they're both rather sad.

47 ♔f2 ♖g7 48 h4 ♔f7 49 ♗f3 h6 50 ♖h1 ♔e7 51 ♔e2 ♔f8 52 ♔d1

White is about to defend b3 with his king, free his c3 rook and turn the screw on the kingside; d5 would then be too weak to play for …c5 and Black's passivity would be complete. I had 5 minutes on my clock to my opponent's 8, so now was the time to consult our soothsayer, Phil Best. "A draw will probably secure us the match" said Phil, which seemed wise comment, "…so only play on if you don't risk losing." As I had been brushing against defeat since about move 12, these last few words appeared less perceptive than our captain's usual advice, so I ignored them.

52…g5 53 h×g5 h×g5 54 ♖h8+

This tempting excursion, although threatening mate, is misguided. 54 fxg5 Nxg5 55 Ke2, △Nf4±, or 54…Rxg5 55 Nf4± maintains White's advantage.

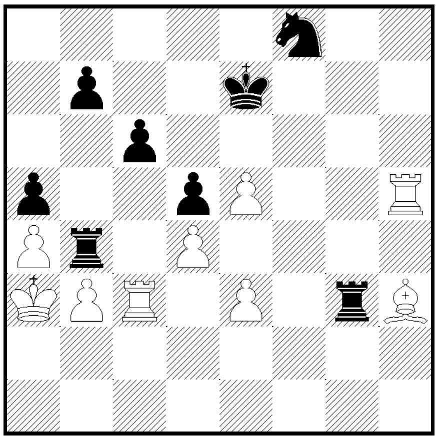
54…♔e7 55 ♗h5 ♘df8 56 f×g5 ♖×g5 57 ♗e2 ♖g1+ 58 ♔d2 ♖g2 59 ♘e1 ♖f2 60 ♘d3 ♖g2 61 ♔e1 ♖g1+ 62 ♗f1 ♖g7 63 ♖h6 ♘g5

With about 90 seconds to White's 150, I manage to exchange, without letting slip my positional disadvantage.

64 ♘c5 ♘e4 65 ♘×e4 f×e4 66 ♗h3 ♖g1+ 67 ♔d2 ♖b1 68 ♔c2 ♖g1 69 ♔b2 ♖g3 70 ♔a3

It isn't immediately clear how White can make progress, owing to the weakness of both e3 and b3. 70 Bc8!?, △71 Rh3 or 71 Bxb7!? is one idea. Perhaps bringing the king back to f2 and sacrificing b3 is another.

70…♖b4 71 ♔b2 ♖b6 72 ♔a3 ♖b4 73 ♖h5??



73 Kb2 Rb6 is a draw by threefold repetition, so 73 Bc8□ Rxd4 74 Bxb7 Rd3 should have happened, when the outcome may have rested with the clock.

73…♖×d4 74 e×d4 ♖×c3 75 ♖h6 ♖d3 76 e6 ♖×d4 77 ♖h8 e3 78 ♖g8 e2 79 ♖g7+ ♔e8 80 e7

80 Bg4 might have made the game go on for a few more dangerous moments.

80…e1=♕ 81 e×f8=♕+

81 Bd7+!!? Nxd7

81…♔×f8 82 ♖g2 ♕a1+ **0–1**

83 Ra2 Rxa4+ and mate next move.

When this was over, with only seconds remaining on each clock, we turned round to discover that Bill had also managed to convert his ending, and we took the match by $8\frac{1}{2}$–$7\frac{1}{2}$.

That wasn't the end of the day's entertainment. On the journey down we'd been through a very dark heavy shower on the M11 — you know, the sort that gets you to turn your lights on — but arrived in London in brilliant sunshine. You've guessed it. Flat battery! The sight of a dozen people trying to push–start a minibus was quite an amusing one, but sadly the attempts were unsuccessful. Perhaps this was due to one player (who will remain nameless) simply walking along the road. When Mr Noden accused him of lack of effort, both here and in his game, he replied "Nick, when you get *your* IM title, I'll push–start your minibus for you". Alas this is a promise he's not likely to be called upon to fulfill.

It was now time for most to go to the pub whilst those 'reponsible' waited for the RAC. Ninety minutes later it was a lively minbus that headed home.

The final, held in Birmingham on July 27th, was to be a return match against Middlesex. This date clashed not with exams but with Graduation Weekend and despite Mr Thornton's thoughts that some people might postpone graduation to play in the match(??), none did. Postgraduates and third–years who graduated on the Friday could travel from Cambridge whilst others travelled from as far afield as Aberdeen. Mind you, if you live in Aberdeen you probably take every opportunity you can to get out…

With Andy Hon sunning himself on Spanish beaches, I deputised as captain again, although remembering my last attempt to drive, captain and play, I elected not to play. Those that were playing all made it safely to the venue, although not necessarily safely through the first few moves:

□ **M Carlson**

■ **AR Jones (FM, 2300)**

Dutch

1 d4 f5 2 ♗g5 c6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 e4 d×e4 5 ♗c4 g6?! 6 f3 ♗g7 7 f×e4 ♗×d4

7…Qxd4 8 Qe2±.

8 ♕d2 ♗f6??

"A high-class blunder is more than just an oversight: it is an oversight firmly underpinned by inconclusive analysis of the moves that were not played" - Bill Hartston, writing in *The Independent.*

9 ♗f7+! **1–0**

And that was the end of board six. The Middlesex boards 15 and 16 hadn't even turned up yet.

As has become customary, things looked pretty bad at the start. The one board I thought looked to be in our favour (as did everyone else) was David Cristinacce on board 10, who was an exchange up for a little pressure out of the opening. Suddenly, whilst I was looking away, this game ended and David had lost. I'm still not sure quite what happened.

Hacker Hague was again one of the earlier finishers. This time, he played completely true to form in his favoured Morra gambit, simply sacrificing material until he found a way through to the king. Another of our earlier finishers was Graham on board 4:

□ **Ben Martin**
■ **Graham 'erudite' Burgess**
Alekhine Defence

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 ♗g4 5 ♗e2 c6 6 O–O ♗×f3 7 ♗×f3 d×e5 8 d×e5 e6 9 ♕e2 ♘d7 10 c4?!

According to Graham (who knows what he's talking about after all!) this move is bad. White should play 10 Nd2 (△Nc4) instead of depriving his knight of the useful c4 square. Black is happy to recycle his knight to g6 where it attacks the weak e5 pawn.

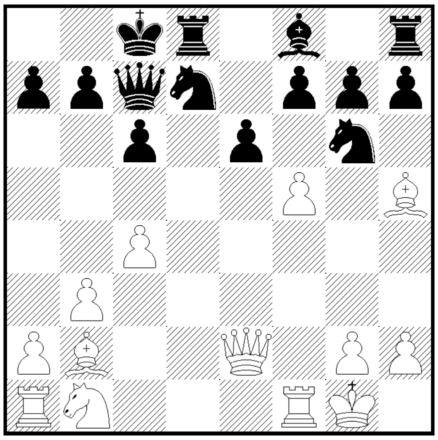
10…♘e7 11 b3?! ♘g6 12 ♗b2 ♕c7 13 ♗h5

After 13 Re1, 13…Bb4 14 Nd2 Ngxe5 wins the e5 pawn, so White complicates the position instead of trying to save the doomed pawn.

13…♘d×e5

This looked a dangerous pawn to capture, but Graham knew exactly what he was doing. A quick glance at the clocks showed him to have used only around five minutes to this point!

14 f4 ♘d7 15 f5 O–O–O!



Still in home preparation, Graham offers up his knight. However, after 16 fxg6 hxg6 17 Bf3 Bc5+ 18 Rf2 Qxh2+ 19 Kf1 Qh1# could be called compensation.

Now Black simply takes control in the centre.

16 f×e6 f×e6 17 ♗g4 ♘f4 18 ♕e4 ♗d6 19 g3 ♘c5 20 ♕e3 ♘fd3 21 ♗d4 ♗e5 22 ♗×e5 ♕×e5 23 ♕×e5 ♘×e5 24 ♗h3 ♔c7 25 b4

Time for the knights to go on a rampage…

25…♘cd3 26 a3 ♘×c4 27 ♗×e6 ♘e3 28 ♖f3 ♘e1! 29 ♖f7+

29 Rxe3 Nc2–+

29…♔d6 30 ♗b3 ♖hf8 31 ♘d2?

This moves ends White's agony quickly but 31 Nc3 Nf3+ 32 Kf2 Ng4+! 33 Kg2 (33 Kxf3 Ne5+ –+) 33…Nd4 34 Rd1 Ne3+ –+ merely allows Black's knights to frollick a little longer.

31…♖×f7 32 ♗×f7 ♘1c2 33 ♘c4+ ♔e7 34 ♘×e3 ♘×a1 0–1

By this stage the last two Middlesex players had arrived, and their board 15 was soon making mincemeat out of Mark Davey. On board 16, Richard emerged with a reasonable position from the opening but the grading difference eventual made itself felt, and he went down.

On the higher boards we matched them well. Mark Thornton survived an onslaught on his king and then began to develop a good queen–side attack. Those of us watching thought that this would be another 'Thortonesque' game, but he never quite broke though and the game ended in a truce. A better result for us was the following game on board 5 (notes by DDAL):

□ **DDA Lawson (2240)**
■ **PJ Sowray (213)**
Modern Defence

I have decided to annotate this encounter to dispel any notion that I only win games by snaffling a loose pawn and clinging to it until the 8th rank. Very few players can be categorised so easily, and to do so often misses the intricate multiple motifs that abound within such games.

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♗g7 3 ♘c3

I don't know much about the KID.....

3…d6 4 ♘f3

…or the Austrian Attack.

4…a6 5 ♗e2 ♘d7 6 O–O b5 7 a4!?

7 Re1 Bb7 8 Bg5+= is apparently Grunfeld – Soltis, Lone Pine 1979, but it's not in my nature to copy GMs, especially as the move played forces Black to begin choosing from a selection of plans.

7…b4 8 ♘d5 ♖b8?!

8…a5 looks better, when 9 c3/Bd3/Bg5 all seem to give White an edge.

9 a5

Fixing the weakness on a6

9…♘gf6 10 ♘×f6+ e×f6!?

After 10…Nxf6, my opponent was concerned about 11 Bd3 (11 e5!?) O–O 12 Bg5 Bb7 13 Re1, which does indeed look both promising and simple.

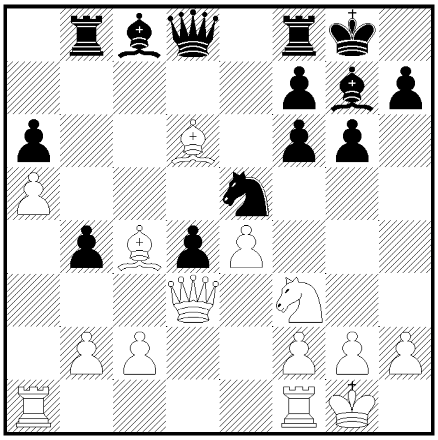
11 ♗c4 O–O 12 ♕d3 c5

12…Re8? 13 Re1 Ra8 14 Qb3+– and 12…Ra8 13 Bf4 Bb7 14 Rfe1 (△15 Qb3±) are not the way to make a fight of it.

13 ♗f4

Here is one of those multiple motifs: it's particularly embarrassing to balls up a position that you recognise to be intrinsically tremendous shortly after we've just gone 1–0 down in the match. Let's call this peer pressure. 13 Bxa6 Ra8 14 Bxc8 Qxc8 (△15…c4) 15 b3?! cxd4 (△16…Nc5/Ne5) and Black has compensation for the pawn.

13…c×d4□ 14 ♗×d6 ♘e5



15 ♗×e5

15 Nxe5 Qxd6 is hardly going to bring the crowd to their feet, but 15 Qxd4 appears convincing enough. However, 15…Nxf3+ 16 gf Re8?! (16…f5?! 17 Qc5 Qg5+ 18 Kh1 Qh5 19 Bxb8 Qxf3+ 20 Kg1 f4 21 Qg5 +–) 17 Rfd1 Rb7 18 Bxa6 +– or 16…Rb7 17 Bxa6 Rd7 18 Bxc8 Rxd6 19 Qxb4 Rd4 20 Qc5 f5∞, or even 15…Nxc4!? 16 Bxb8 Qxd4 17 Nxd4 f5! gives Black a very active game, although White should still win with 18 Ba7!

So here's another theme to bear in mind: never forget your opponent's feelings. It's a lot more depressing to be a pawn down for very little than a piece down for an illusory attack — we might call this hope.

15…f×e5 16 ♗×a6 ♗×a6 17 ♕×a6 ♖a8

After 17…b3, 18 Qd3 bxc2 19 Qxc2 d3! 20 Qd2 f5! is exceptionally viscious, and 18 cxb3 Rxb3 19 Rfb1 (△Nd2+–) Qb8 20 Qe2 (20 Ra2 Bh6∓) d3 21 Qd2 Rc8 22 a6 Rc2 23 a7 Qa8 24 Qe3 Bf8 25 Ra5 Rbxb2 26 Rxb2 Rxb2 27 g3 d2 28 Nxd2 Bb4 29 Rb5 Bxd2 30 Rxb2+– is far from compulsory, so maybe 18 Qd3 bxc2 19 Qxc2 d3! 20 Qc3 is best, answering 20…f5 with 21 Nd2±

18 ♕b5 ♕d6 19 ♘d2 ♖fb8 20 ♕d3 ♕c5 21 ♘c4 b3

If White is allowed to play this move then he will be able to discover a path to victory at his leisure. An additional point to remember: keeping the apperance of control and understanding, even when it doesn't exist, can be immensely entertaining — I have lost many games this way with a smile on my face.

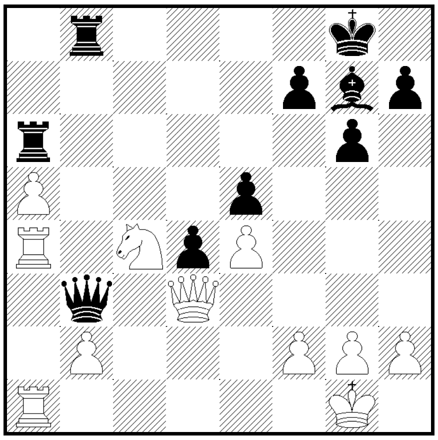
22 c×b3 ♕b5 23 ♖a4!

Planning 23…Qxb3 24 Qxb3 Rxb3 25 a6±

23…♖a6 24 ♖fa1

△b4+–

24…♕×b3



25 ♘e5

Looks risky, as the bishop now slices across the board, but White just manages to hold the set together.

25…♖b5

25…Qxd3 26 Nxd3 Rb3 fails to 27 Nc5+–

26 ♕×b3

26 Qc4 Bxe5 27 Qc8+ Kg7 28 Qxa6 Qxb2 wins for White, but 26…Qxc4 transposes to a variation similar to the game.

26…♖×b3 27 ♘c4 d3 28 e5 ♗f8 29 g3 ♗c5 30 ♔f1 f6 31 ♘d2! ♖×b2 32 ♘e4 ♗a7 33 e×f6

33 Nxf6+ Rxf6 34 exf6 Rxf2+ 35 Ke1 Be3 36 R4a2 d2+ 37 Kd1 Rf1+ 38 Ke2 Rc1 39 Rxd2 Rxa1 offers Black some chances.

33…♖c6 34 ♖d1 ♖b3 35 a6 ♖c2 36 ♔g2

White brings his last piece into play and Black goes to the wall in style.

36…g5?!! 37 ♔h3 h6 38 ♔g4 ♔f7 39 ♔h5 ♖e2 40 ♔×h6 g4 41 ♔g5 ♔e6 42 ♔×g4

This falls into the category of suppressing the opponent's counterplay.

42…♖c2 43 h4 ♖c8 44 f7 ♖d8 45 ♘g5+ ♔d5 46 ♖e4

The rook which has held White's position for 20 moves now enters the battle.

46…♖f8 47 ♖e8 1–0

47…Bc5 48 Rxf8 Bxf8 49 a7 Ra3 50 Rxd3+ would be enough, even without the 3 extra kingside pawns!

Doing a quick count up, the score has now reached 5–4 to Middlesex. The result on board seven soon levelled the match. Demis' opponent was making valient efforts to win an even position, eventually resulting in the loss of a pawn, and Demis perfunctorily cleaned up the queen and seven against queen and six ending.

Steve Foister had big problems out of the opening, but trapping his opponent's queen eased most of these. A misplayed ending left the position drawn. In time trouble, Eddie Holland's position crumbled whilst Jonny Parker's flag fell, although on reconstruction he had made sufficient moves. This was almost unfortunate, as he had one piece less than his opponent, but felt the need to play on. There were no such problems on top board, Jonathan Mestel winning for us again. Here's the game:

□ **GM Jonathan Mestel**
■ **IM Colin Crouch**
Slav Defence

1 c4 c6 2 ♘f3 d5 3 d4 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 d×c4 5 a4 ♗f5 6 e3 e6 7 ♗×c4 ♗b4 8 O–O O–O 9 ♕e2 ♘bd7 10 e4 ♗g4 11 ♖d1 ♗h5 12 ♘a2 ♗e7 13 b4 a5 14 b5 ♘b6 15 ♗b3 c×b5 16 ♕×b5 ♗g6 17 d5 e×d5 18 ♗e3 ♖a6 19 e5 ♘g4 20 ♗d4 ♘h6 21 ♘c3 ♘f5 22 ♘×d5 ♘×d5 23 ♗×d5 ♘×d4 24 ♖×d4 ♕b6 25 ♗×b7 ♕×b5 26 a×b5 ♖b6 27 ♗c6 ♗b4 28 ♖c1 ♗a3 29 ♖cc4 h6 30 ♔f1 ♗f5 31 ♔e2 ♗e6 32 ♖a4 ♗b2 33 ♖×a5 ♗×d4 34 ♘×d4 ♖d8 35 ♘×e6 f×e6 36 ♖a6 ♖bb8 37 b6 g5 38 b7 ♔f7 39 ♖a8 ♔g6 40 ♔e3 ♔f5 41 ♖×b8 ♖×b8 42 ♔d4 h5 43 ♗e4+ ♔f4 44 g3+ ♔g4 45 ♔c5 ♔h3 46 ♔d6 1–0

On board 13, Nick Noden showed why he's been scoring so well for Cambs all year, slowly increasing his advantage in a materially unbalenced position. When he finally won, we were left needing half–a–point from Matt (or Jonny Parker still battling on a piece behind). Matt's game can only be described as 'interesting'. Here's what *'Chess'* had to say about it:

"Cambridge showed impressive resilience in the face of adversity, no more so than on board two. After blundering his queen for a rook, I naïvely expected Turner to resign, or at least to look a bit ashamed of himself! Instead, fixing his opponent with one of his famous stares, he played on as if nothing had happened, and after White drifted in a major way, it was Matthew who was calling the shots"

In fairness to Matt, he didn't really blunder his queen for a rook. Instead, he first blundered a piece for two pawns and then later blundered his queen for rook and piece. But he wasn't phased and caused his opponent major problems by ramming his kingside pawns forwards. When the position finally reached king and queen vs king, rook, bishop and two pawns, Matt may even have had some winning chances, but a pawn was dropped and when his opponent offered a draw, he clinched the half–point we needed.

8–8 with a victory on board count is as close as they come. Now all we have to do is to retain the trophy…

PWF Chess Filespace

For those of you who don't know, since the death of Phoenix the chess filespace has now been moved to the pwf.

To access it from the pc's type: *socmap chess* and then *i:*

On the Mac's you have to open the folder */ux/soc/chess*

In the chess filespace you'll find up–to–date league and cuppers results, league rules, AGM minutes, CUCC constitution, etc etc, and, subject to the efficiency of the appropriate committee member, lists of forthcoming chess tournaments and CUCC matches and social events.