Alpine Adventures Part II: The Faaker See

by Philip Best

In complete contrast to Werfen, Finkenstein is a smallish town in the Austrian Alps, about 5 km south of Villach. The surrounding peaks are not snow–topped, but the nearby Faaker See adequately compensated for the water shortage. The CUCC party, Andy Hon, Nick Jakubovics, Dr Gooding and myself, learning from last year's lesson of arriving in Austria sleepless from an overnight train journey, instead arrived by plane at 11.00pm and spent a sleepless night playing cards and football in Vienna airport.

A five hour train journey afforded a little sleep before we arrived in the glorious surroundings of Faak, just in time for everywhere to close for lunch. Despite the presence of a perfectly adequate youth hostel, it seemed a little foolish not to use the small tents that we (or more precisely, Nick) had carted all the way from England, and so we pitched down in one of the several campsites along the lake shore and went to explore the water. Swimming the one hour round trip to the island was only hampered by having to avoid the windsurfers, and by a slight navigation error on the return journey.

The evening and following morning gave plenty of time to discover the multitude of mini–golf courses, find the 'local' supermarket with its crates of fizzy yellow stuff, and set up a cricket wicket, before it was the trek to the appropriately named 'Latschach' for the tourney: this involved about 20 minute's climbing to scale the 'hill' between the campsite and the venue. Thank goodness it was only one round per day most days!

The tournament, the 13th Finkenstein Open, was well organised with evening rounds during the week to leave days free, and a reasonable prize fund. There was also a bar at the venue which stayed open each evening until we'd drunk it out of beer and eaten it out of Würstel (usually about 2.00am). The 105 entrants ranged in strength from a couple of IM's at the top down to about 1400 (100 BCF), with Andy and Nick seeded 13th and 15th respectively. The only thing that was really lacking in the tournament was any high quality games by the British participants, as you'll discover below when you see the barry that constitutes the 'highlights'.

Round 1 was not much to be proud of: Ian got bashed up by a 2325; I had to rely on claiming a win on time at the time control against a local 1540, in an ending in which I was barely better; Andy woofed out with a draw against a 1760, having opted against a winning line; Nick did a little bit better, extracting the full point from his 1760 opponent in the following way *(notes by NSJ)*:

□ **Prof. A. Sommerbauer (1760)**
■ **N. S. Jakubovics (2205)**
Finkenstein Open, Round 1
Four Knights

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 d4 e×d4 5 ♘×d4 ♗b4 6 ♘×c6 b×c6 7 ♗d3 O–O 8 O–O d5 9 e5?!

9 exd5 is standard.

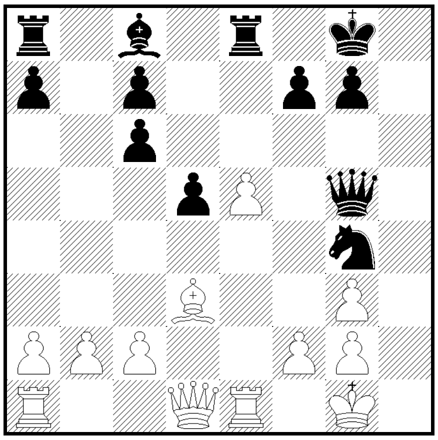
9…♘g4 10 ♗f4 ♖e8

The clash of the big 'V's (V. Knox *vs* V. Anand, British Ch. 1988) continued 10…f6 11 exf6 Qxf6 12 Bg3 Bc5 =+ and White duly got shafted.

11 ♖e1 ♗c5

Not 11…d4?! 12 a3 dxc3 13 axb4 cxb2 14 Rb1 (14.Ra5!?), when Black's knight near the rim is dimmer than is good for it. Neither 14…f6 15 e6! nor 14…Qd4?? helps.

12 ♗g3 h5 13 ♘a4 h4 14 ♘×c5 h×g3 15 h×g3 ♕g5!?



15…Rxe5 16 Rxe5 Nxe5 17 Qd2 is hardly adventurous.

16 f4 ♕h5 17 ♕f3 f6 18 ♖ad1

18 e6 f5 19 Rad1 Qh2+ 20 Kf1 Qh6 21 Kg1 Bxe6 22 Nxe6 Rxe6 23 Rxe6 Qxe6, and White is still getting buggered up the h–file (e.g. 24 Qe2 Qh6–+ or 24 c4 Re8 25 cxd5 Qh6–+)

18…f×e5 19 ♖×e5 ♖×e5 20 f×e5 ♕h2+ 21 ♔f1 ♘×e5 22 ♕e3 ♗g4 23 ♗e2 ♕h1+ 24 ♔f2

Or 24 Qg1 Rf8+ 25 Bf3 Rxf3+ −+.

24…♖f8+ 25 ♗f3 ♕×d1 **0–1**

ARZT!

At least all the games were over early enough for us to get in a swim and a few games of table footie before unpacking the meths and solid fuel stoves to cook tea. Slightly less luxurious than last year's fitted kitchen, but the meals were still the same and tasted just as good: better, some would say, after they'd been doused in Chilli–Senf.

Rounds 2 and 3 were both on the Sunday, and the first started at the ridiculous hour of 9.00am. Mind you, the campsite had got up with the sun at about 7.00am, and so sleeping in wasn't an option. I found myself playing Ian's opponent from the previous day, and lost rather more quickly than he had when I miscalculated a combination. Nick continued his winning form whilst Andy and Ian both found theirs, although Ian didn't manage to get his opponent to smile once in the whole 6 hours he dragged the game out against her. There was enough time for a refreshing swim between the rounds, which woke me up enough to bash up a local 1800 in round 3. Nick was unlucky not to get at least a draw against IM Videki, seeded 2. All four of us finished the day at 2/3.

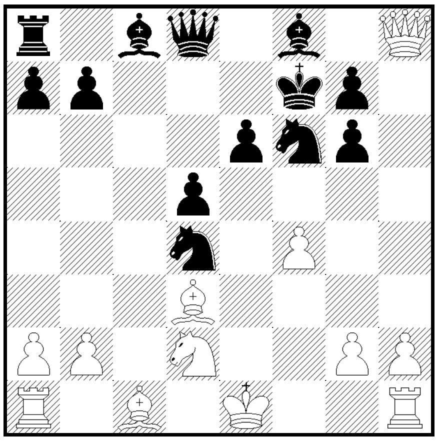
Monday was wet. It poured down all day. Writing postcards and playing cards gets boring after about 7 hours, and so we decided to ignore the weather and go for a swim regardless. After all, the lake was warmer than the rain! In the evening, a bit of king–side barry was sufficient for me to collect the full quota of points, as my opponent flailed helplessly. Andy's opponent behaved similarly, but Ian's opponent was a totally different kettle of fish…

□ **Nick the Fish**
■ **Ian the Arzt**
Finkenstein Open, Round 4
French Tarrasch

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘d2 ♘f6 4 e5 ♘fd7 5 ♗d3 c5 6 c3 ♘c6 7 ♘e2 c×d4 8 c×d4 f6 9 ♘f4

An old line which used to be played frequently, but has now gone out of fashion thanks to Black finding a good defence. However, Nick had spotted a "ace move" in Informator 63. He had subsequently shown Ian this line 3 weeks previously during the Monmouth congress…

9…♘×d4 10 ♕h5 ♔e7 11 e×f6+ ♘×f6 12 ♘g6+ h×g6 13 ♕×h8 ♔f7 14 f4



The new move. Naturally, Ian had gone away having been shown this line, got out his books on the French, and looked up a refutation: 14…Nc6! This move was not considered by Informator and is better for Black. The trouble was that over the board he couldn't see how to defend against 15 Nf3 △Ne5/g5 (15…Bb4+ winning the queen not being good enough for him!), and so after a long think he opted to play some barry instead:

14…♕b6? 15 O–O ♘c6+ 16 ♔h1 e5 17 ♘f3 e4 18 ♘e5+ ♘×e5 19 f×e5 e×d3 20 e×f6 ♗f5 21 f×g7

und Schwarz gab auf.

1–0

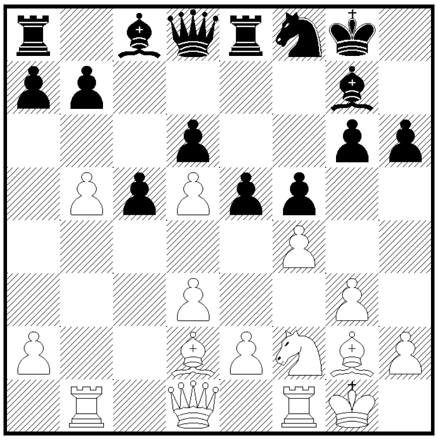
A visit to the local minigolf course on Tuesday allowed me to get revenge for last year's defeat by Mr Hon, seeing him finish comfortably fourth. Ian's third place seemed to be the highlight of his day. Sadly for me, Friday's outing around a different course saw Andy clinch back the title by two shots with an entirely skillful finish to the 18th. In the cricket, the overnight rain left the wicket with an unpredictable bounce, giving the bowlers the edge: as if bowling from 12 yards at a dustbin being protecting by a small stick didn't give them enough of an advantage already.

Tuesday also saw a visit to the giddy heights of Finkenstein castle. Wednesday saw us hiring bikes to explore the surroundings: the weather was hot and sunny, and the lake we passed on the way was all too tempting, even though we didn't have swimming gear with us……three of us remained decent, but the good doctor's boxers were really too short for him to try to cycle them dry! Thursday saw the return of the rain as we were halfway up the Türkenkopf whilst, on Friday, the attempt to drown Ian in the lake was nearly successful.

Meanwhile, the evenings' Würstel–eating and beer–drinking activities were still being interrupted by the chess. In round 5, I couldn't keep up with big Dr Harold Hicker's Würstel eating, but his decision to play a dodgy sacrifice allowed me to escape with the points. This was just in time to watch Andy analyse his game with his opponent, whose broken English seemed to be struggling as Andy tried to explain to him that Nh5 was a bad move because knights on the rim are dim, and that he should have pushed Freddie instead.

I had my own problems with Mr Hon's English in round 6, when I was drawn to sit opposite him and he elected to open 1 c4. Too much barry was played in the opening by both players for it to be worth printing; the following position was reached:

□ **A. H. L. H. R. H. Hon**
■ **P. N. I. M. Best**
Finkenstein Open, Round 6
English



I was feeling moderately happy.

15…♕b6!? 16 ♕a4?!

The response I'd expected. Andy's thinking, as he admitted afterwards, was 'well, it's Phil. He's probably missed that his queen will have no squares after Ba5'.

16…a6! 17 b×a6

This time, Andy had apparently thought I might not have noticed my rook was threatened! Time to teach the boy some manners.

17…♕d8□ 18 a7

There are many other interesting variations here, but all of them favour Black I think, e.g. 18 Ba5 Rxa6 19 Bxd8 Rxa4 20 Bc7 exf4 21 gxf4 Rxa2 22 Bxd6 Bd4∓.

18…♗d7 19 ♕a5□ b5! 20 ♕×d8 ♖e×d8 21 f×e5 ♗×e5 22 ♗a5 ♖dc8 23 ♗b6 b4

With his bishop trapped, White's position looks dodgy. I thought I was winning here, and Andy thought he was worse. He decided to try to bash through a sacrifice:

24 e3 ♗b5 25 d4!? ♘d7

Accepting the sacrifice actually leads to a fairly drawn position, eg. 25…Bxf1 26 Bxf1 Nd7 27 Ba6 Nxb6 28 Bxc8 Rxc8 29 dxe5 dxe5 30 Nd3 Nd7 31 a3. The move played gives me what I thought was a good chance to win.

26 ♖fc1 ♘×b6 27 d×e5 ♖×a7 28 e×d6 ♖×a2

However, I had overlooked one tactic…

29 e4 f×e4 30 ♘×e4 ♗d3? 31 ♖×b4!

and with my position rapidly crumbling, Andy gratefully collected the points.

1–0 (36)

On the nightly trek back to the campsite that evening, the more compassionate side of Andy's character was discovered when we were followed down the mountain at 2 in the morning by an apparently lost kitten. Despite efforts to make it go home, and Ian threatening to eat it for breakfast, it insisted on staying with us all the way to the campsite, and was discovered sleeping on the roof of the tent during the night (let's see if we can avoid all of the pussy jokes, shall we?). The cute little thing was spoilt rotten by the Tossers, those hard men of chess, and stayed with us through Wednesday morning, but wasn't seen again after it was fed some Würstel mit Semf for lunch. We didn't see a squashed kitten on the roadside, so maybe it's doing OK for itself.

Andy's victory over me took him to 5/6, and the top board, where he was duly ground down by the top seed in an ending that he might have won. Indeed, this game marked a turning point in Andy's tournament, scoring no points from any of the last three games. Meanwhile, away from the stage, Ian was busy clocking up points against the kiddies, beating a 13 year old and a 14 year old in rounds 7 and 8 to get back up with the big boys. Nick's tournament continued to go well: his win in round 7 took him to 5½ points, and put him on top board for round 8. My round seven game got me a diagram in the tournament book (wow!, I hear you say):

□ **P. N. Best (1976)**
■ **P. Bergen (2155)**
Finkenstein Open, Round 7
Pirc Defence

1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 g6 4 f4 ♗g7 5 ♘f3 O–O 6 ♗e2 c6 7 O–O b5 8 a3 a6

All pretty standard stuff up to this move. 8…a6 is a bit passive — Black is protecting b5 before playing …Bb7 and …c5. My reply is equally woofy.

9 h3?! ♗b7 10 e5□ ♘d5?

This move is total Barry. Black just gives up the centre.

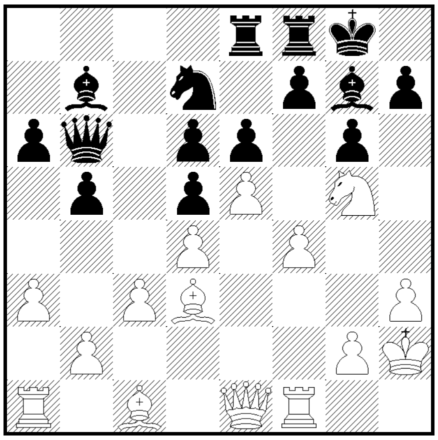
11 ♘×d5 c×d5 12 c3?!

Again, unnecessarily passive. Black has to play f6 sometime soon, and I've just gifted him another tempo with which to organise it — not that it really needs any organising, and can probably be played now.

12…e6 13 ♕e1 ♘d7?! 14 ♗d3 ♕b6?!

Black had to play f6 one of those two moves. Even next move it's necessary, but Black would have to recapture with the rook and White would still be better. Is this man really '2155 ELO'?

15 ♔h2 ♖ae8 16 ♘g5!



This move prevents 16…f6 (as the game line shows). Neither can Black play 16…h6 because of 17 Nxf7! Rxf7 18 Bxg6 winning ♖ and 2 pawns for ♗ and ♘, as well as opening the Black king up, or 17…Kxf7 18 Qg3 Kg8 *(18…Ke7 19 Qh4+ Kf7 20 f5±)* 19 Qxg6 Rf7 and White has 20 Qh7+ Kf8 21 Bg6 even if there's nothing better.

With 17 Qh4 as a threat if Black does nothing, he is forced to play 16…f5, when White has all the time in the world to win on the kingside with moves like Qh4 and g4. Because Black's light–squared bishop is so useless, White is essentially a piece up.

Anyway, in the game line Black chose a quick but rather pretty way to die.

16…f6 17 ♘×h7! ♔×h7□ 18 ♕h4+ ♔g8

18…Bh6 doesn't work: 19 exf6 Nxf6 20 f5 Ng8 21 fxg6+ Kg7 22 Bxh6+ Nxh6 23 Rxf8 Rxf8 24 Qe7+ was the winning line I'd analysed before playing Ng5, but there's probably a cleaner one.

19 ♗×g6 ♖f7□ 20 ♕h5 ♖ee7□ 21 ♕h7+ ♔f8 22 f5!

△Bh6

22…f×e5

Developing a horsey square on f6.

23 ♗h6 ♘f6 24 ♗×g7+ ♖×g7 25 ♕h8+ 1–0

25…Rg8 26 Qxf6 leads to a quick finish, but 25…Ng8 26 fxe6 is cuter.

In round 8, Nick had a chance to avenge Andy's loss to the top seed in the previous round, and was again unlucky to come away with no points. He made up for it with a fine win in the last round over an 1854 who sacked a piece for no reason and no compensation. This took him to sixth place overall, and into the money. Ian failed to score any points from his last game, and so finished on 50%, half a point behind Andy. My round nine game completed a 100% record for me with the white pieces:

□ **P. N. Best (1972)**
■ **M. Susnik (2235)**
Finkenstein Open, Round 9
Taimanov Sicilian

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 c×d4 4 ♘×d4 ♘c6 5 ♘c3 ♕c7 6 ♗e2 a6 7 O–O ♘f6 8 a3

Perhaps a little passive: 8 Be3 or 8 Kh1 are more usual, and are met by 8…Bb4. I preferred to play something that would get him out of theory (since I was practically out of mine).

8…♗e7 9 ♗e3 O–O 10 f4 d6 11 f5

And why not…?

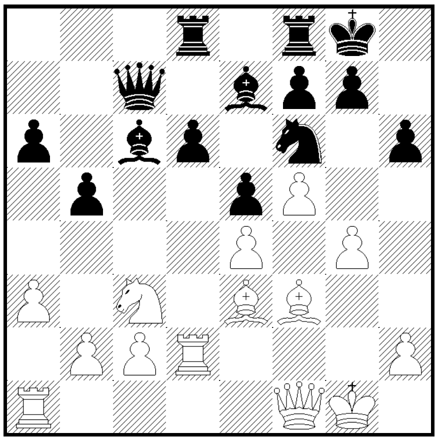
11…♗d7 12 g4

Fortune favours the brave and all that. Afterwards Andy informed me that this was too weakening if Black just opens up the centre. I don't think it's that clear: certainly in the post–game analysis we didn't find anything obvious. Deeper analysis may well find something for Black, but I think this move gives White good practical chances.

12…h6 13 ♖f2!

Allowing Qf1–g2 and Raf1 to promote the attack, or defend Ernie if necessary (as later on), or alternatively allowing a later Rd2 to put a stronghold on the d–file, depending upon how Black plays.

13…♘×d4 14 ♗×d4 e5 15 ♗e3 ♗c6 16 ♗f3 ♖ad8 17 ♖d2 b5 18 ♕f1



18…Qb7 can now be met with 19 Qg2. I think White is much better here. Black has little play, and White can soon continue his king–side attack. My opponent, apparently, shared this view since he decided to sacrifice to break open the centre — in fairness, there were few other choices.

18…d5 19 e×d5 e4 20 d×c6 ♗c5 21 ♖e2□ ♗×e3+ 22 ♖×e3 ♕f4?⊕

Black's attacking chances peter out completely with this move.

23 ♖×e4! ♘×e4 24 ♘×e4 ♖fe8 25 ♖e1 ♔h8

△…Rd4. If he'd played 25…Rd4, then 26 Nf6+! wins. The finish is relatively straightforward.

26 c3 ♕c7 27 ♘g3 ♖×e1 28 ♕×e1 ♕b6+ 29 ♕f2 ♕c7 30 ♕e3 ♕d6 31 ♘e2 ♕d1+ 32 ♔g2 ♕d6 33 ♘d4 ♔g8 34 ♕f2 ♔f8 35 ♕g3 ♕c5 36 ♕c7 ♖e8 37 ♕b7 ♕e5 38 c7 1–0

With 5/5 as White and 1/4 as Black, I finished in joint 11th place. There were 10 prizes. (I did get a rather large and tacky consolation trophy though, and a part-ELO in excess of 2200).

And so, the end was nigh. Just enough time for a few beers by the river in Villach, and then a rather nice goulash (plus a large part of Nick's rather nice goulash which he was too tired to eat) before we were homeward bound. Any takers for Alpine Adventures Part III?