University Championships, 1996

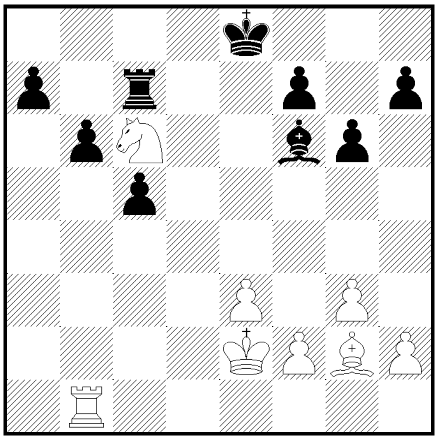
by The Tourney Sec

This year's Univ Champs were held in the Bowett Room, at Queens', which proved an excellent venue despite being located directly next to the squash courts. The turnout of 19 competitors was reasonable and, although neither of our confirmed IM's was competing, a strong field was headed by Mark Ferguson who'd just obtained his third IM norm at Hastings, so was practically there - well done Mark!

Unlike last year, the first round was not devoid of surprises. Newcomer Tan Boon Keong took a flying start in his first ever tournament by beating Martin Hasenbusch, Chris Kreuzer extracted half–a–point from your humble scribe, and Edward Griffiths had to work exceedingly hard to gain his expected quota of points from Martin Ogden.

The second round continued in much the same vein. Demis Hassabis and Fred Pollitz each dropped half–a–point to Mssrs Griffiths and Tan respectively whilst, upfloated to play "The Ancient One", I played out the following ending:

□ M.H.Thornton (183, but no Koala)
■ P.N.Best (172 + water bottle)



After electing to play a perhaps dubious sacrifice in a 5 g3 Grünfeld, leaving me with two pawns for a piece, but including 3 passed queenside pawns, I'd been having problems getting the pawns into any sort of motion. However, they were about to come into their prime.....

25...c4□

Otherwise Kd3–c4, and White can win at leisure.

26 ♔d2 ♔d7 27 ♘d4?!

27 Nb4 is probably better as d5 looks like the natural square for the horse.

27...♖c5 28 ♗b7 ♖a5!

Preventing Ba6, after which Black would have nothing.

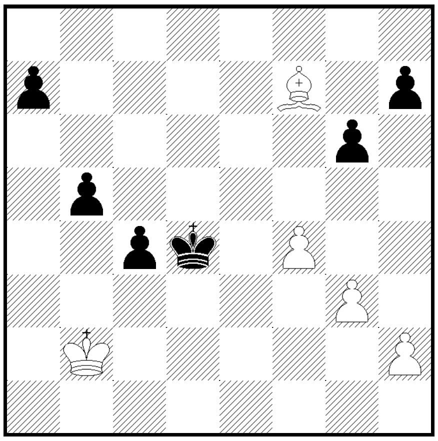
29 ♔c3 ♔c7 30 ♗f3 b5!?□ 31 ♔c2

Hitting b5 and threatening Bd5, hitting f7.

31...♔b6 32 ♗d5 ♖a2+!? 33 ♖b2

Or 33 Kc1 Bxd4 34 exd4 Rxf2 35 Bxc4 a6+=

33...♖×b2+ 34 ♔×b2 ♔c5 35 ♗×f7 ♗×d4+ 36 e×d4 ♔×d4 37 f4



[Quote: "If I had to pick someone to win an ending like this, it would be Mark Thornton" — PNB to RML about MHT's ending in the Kent match (he subsequently drew it).]

My illusions about Mark's endgame technique having been shattered weeks ago, I have to play for a win....

37...a5! 38 ♗g8?

Mark also plays for a win. But once the pawns reach a4, b4 and c4 there's no stopping them. The best White can hope for is a draw with 38 Be8, keeping Alfie at a5. White can't win even then, since to progress towards queening he has to play f5 or h5. Black can then exchange and win the f–pawn by pushing his queenside pawns to force the bishop away from its defence. Harry queens (or rather fails to queen) on the wrong–coloured square.

38...b4! 39 ♗×h7 a4 40 ♗×g6 c3+ 41 ♔c1 b3

△...a3–a2–a1.

42 ♗f7 ♔d3

Intending 43...b2+ 44 Kb1 c2+ 45 Kxb2 Kd2 −+. After 46 Ka3 c1(Q)+ 47 Kxa4, the ending might be playable for White if only his King wasn't so trapped. eg Black has 47…Qc5 threatening …Kc3, and can no doubt check the White king until he forks the bishop.

43 ♗g6+ ♔c4

△…Kb4 and then …a3–a2–a1.

44 ♗b1 a3 45 f5 a2 46 f6 a1(♕) 0–1

The board next to this saw Christopher Kreuzer continuing his way towards the top boards (notes by CK)

□ **C.Kreuzer (128)**
■ **A.Stille (139)**
Modern Defence

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♗g7 3 ♗c4 c6 4 ♘c3 e6 5 ♘f3 d5 6 e×d5 c×d5 7 ♗b5+ ♗d7 8 ♗×d7+ ♘×d7 9 0–0 ♘e7 10 ♘e2 0–0 11 ♗f4 ♖c8 12 c3 ♘c6 13 ♕d2 ♘a5 14 b3 ♘f6 15 ♗h6 ♘c6 16 ♗×g7 ♔×g7

With the demise of Black's bishop, holes begin to appear in his kingside. However, my c3 pawn is a terminal weakness on the queenside which Black proceeds to target.

17 ♘g3 ♕b6 18 ♖fe1 ♖c7 19 h4 h5 20 ♕g5

Maybe a slower attack involving g4 is more prudent, but I decided on a swift and "decisive" onslaught. Really I am bluffing here! I could see no clear attack other than sacrifices on h5 followed by g4. I also need to be aware of the following: 20…Nh7 21 Nxh5+ Kh8 22 Qh6 gxh5 23 Ng5 f6 24 Nxh7 Rxh7 25 Qxf8 mate. The important thing here is to retain my knight on f3, ready to leap into g5 in the above variation.

20…♘e7 21 ♖e3 ♖fc8

Actually 21…Nh7 is playable now as in the above variation 23 Qh6?? loses a piece to Nf5. In the text line, both armies are committed to attacks on opposite sides of the board.

22 ♘e5 ♖×c3

If instead 22…Nh7 23 Nxh5+ Kg8 24 Nf6+ wins a pawn and exposes Black's king. If 23…Kh8 instead then 24 Nxf7+ Kg8 leaves three of White's pieces en prise, but after 25 Nh6+ Kf8 26 Qf4+ Nf5 (or 26…Ke8 after which both 27 Qf7+ or 27 Ng7+ are good) 27 g4 this must favour White. So 22…Nh7 is bad, but aggressive play does need to be justified against moves like this, and indeed against the text....

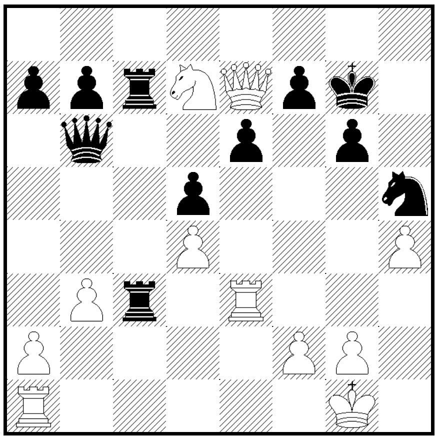
23 ♘×h5+ ♘×h5 24 ♕×e7?

Before this, White has to play Rxc3 to avoid losing to the variation mentioned below. After this move the resulting variation and perpetuals are similar to the game line. (*In fact, White needs to play this before Nxh5+ since 23 Nxh5+ Nxh5 24 Rxc3 can be met by 24…f6! — PNB*)

24…♖8c7?

Missing a win with 24…R3c7, keeping the back rank defended. The text move 25 Nd7 now loses a piece to 25…Qc6, and after 25 Qg5 Rc1+ 26 Rxc1 Rxc1+ 27 Kh2 Qxd4 (threatening 28…Qf4 and an exchange of queens), White's attacking days are over and he is losing.

25 ♘d7



25…♕×d4

Equally possible is 25…Rxe3, since White needs his rook in some variations. White now has no better than perpetual check after 26 Qf8+ Kh7 27 Qxf7+ and now:

(i) 27…Kh6 28 Qf8+ Kh7 29 Qf7+
(ii) 27…Kh8 28 Qf8+ Kh7 29 Qf7+
(iii) 27…Ng7 28 Nf6+ Kh6 29 Ng8+ Kh7 30 Nf6+

Not playable, however, is 25…Qc6? as then 26 Qf8+ Kh7 27 Qxf7+ and now:

(i) 27…Kh6 28 g4! +–
(ii) 27 …Kh8 28 Rxe6! +– (if 28…Rc1+ 29 Kh2!)
(iii) 27…Ng7 28 Nf6+ Kh6 29 g4! g5□ 30 hxg5+ Kxg5 31 Re5+ leading to mate.

Back to the game line:

26 ♕f8+ ♔h7 27 ♕×f7+ ♕g7?!

27…Ng7 perpetuals. After 27…Kh8 or Kh6, White cannot play 28 Rxe6 because of 28…Rc1+ 29 Re1 (29 Kh2 Qxh4#) Rxa1.

28 ♘f8+ ♔h6 29 ♕×g7+ ♘×g7 30 ♘×e6 ♘×e6 31 ♖×e6

The tornado has spun away! I am a pawn up, and Black has weak d and g–pawns. He needs both his rooks to exploit his passed pawn, so 31…Rc1+ should help me. (*I don't agree. 31…Rc1+ 32 Re1 (or 32 Rxc1 Rxc1+ 33 Kh2 Rc2, winning back the pawn) 32…Rxa1 33 Rxa1 Rc2 is not easy for White to win — PNB*)

31…♖d7 32 g4 ♔g7 33 ♖ae1 ♔f7 34 g5 d4 35 ♖f6+ ♔g7 36 ♖ee6 d3 37 ♖×g6+ ♔h7 38 ♖d6 ♖cc7 39 ♔f1

Necessary to stop the d–pawn. The text reply is forced, but gains me the tempo needed to circle my f–pawn.

39…♖c1+ 40 ♔g2 ♖cc7 41 ♔f3 d2 42 ♖h6+ 1–0

On the top board, however, Mark Ferguson maintained his 100% record, even if he did look a little sheepish after move 35. (Notes by Mark Davey)

□ **M.Ferguson (216)**

■ **M.Davey (171)**

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♗b5 d6 5 d4 e×d4 6 ♘×d4 ♗d7 7 O–O ♘×d4 8 ♗×d7+ ♕×d7 9 ♕×d4 ♗e7 10 b3!?

A cunning idea: the long term threat on the long diagonal poses numerous problems for Black, mainly because the White queen on d4 is strong and difficult to budge.

10…O–O 11 ♗b2 ♕g4 12 ♖ad1

Allowing Rd3–g3/h3 as an attacking manoeuvre.

12…♖fe8 13 ♖fe1 a6 14 a4 h5

Intending …h4, to prevent a rook from using g3.

15 ♖d3 h4 16 h3 ♕g5 17 ♗c1 ♕g6

Black is just generally stuck here — I don't see that he has a decent plan, or indeed any plan at all due to his Be7 being in the way, and White's threat of a future f4.

18 ♔h1 ♖ac8 19 ♖f3 ♘d7

Deciding to take the e5 square since White can't play f4 immediately. This should hassle the exposed white rook somewhat to offset the tempo lost shifting the knight when White does play f4 sooner or later.

20 ♘d5 c5?!

I thought this would give me some play, but it weakens d6 horrendously.

21 ♕d2 c4

Not good, but it's hard to see good moves for the dark side.

22 b4

I was expecting something like Rf5 (△Nf4), where the Black queen is in trouble. 22…Nf6 would simply lose the d–pawn.

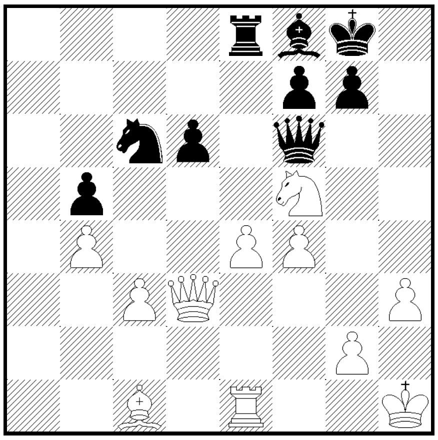
22…b5 23 a×b5 a×b5 24 ♖a3

24 Rf5 is still playable. Black is a little short of time now, so is rolling off the moves relatively quickly.

24…♘e5 25 ♖a6 c3 26 ♘×c3 ♖c4 27 f4 ♘c6 28 ♘d5 ♘d4 29 ♘e3

I'd completely missed this move. Now White can just clean up.

29…♖c6 30 ♖×c6 ♘×c6 31 ♘f5 ♗f8 32 ♘×h4 ♕g3 33 ♘f5 ♕g6 34 c3 ♕f6 35 ♕d3?



This gives Black the glimmer of a chance....

35…♕×f5! 36 e×f5 ♖×e1+ 37 ♔h2 ♖×c1

Although Black has rook, knight and bishop for the White queen, his pieces are unco-ordinated and his queenside pawns are difficult to defend and likely to be picked off in the near future.

38 ♕e3 ♖c2 39 ♕d3 ♖c1 40 ♕d2 ♖a1 41 ♕d5!

A great square for the queen. Now watch all of Black's pieces become tied up trying to hold on to the queenside pawns.

41…♘a7 42 g4

The kingside attack will kill Black who has no useful pieces to defend himself with.

42…♖a6 43 g5 ♖c6 44 g6 ♖c7 45 h4

Qf3–h5 may finish the game sooner.

45…♘c8

The knight comes over to defend, but at the expense of a rather important b–pawn.

46 ♕×b5 ♘e7 47 h5 d5

A vain attempt to release the bishop.

48 ♕b8 ♖×c3 49 ♕e8 ♖c8 50 ♕×f7+ ♔h8 51 f6 ♘g8 52 f×g7+ ♗×g7 53 ♕×d5 ♖c2+ 54 ♔h3 ♖c3+ 55 ♔g2 ♖c2+ 56 ♔f3 ♖c3+ 57 ♔e2 ♖c8 1–0

The following morning saw everyone arrive fresh and ready for round 3. Well, apart from Mr Cristinace of course, who staggered in twenty minutes late as usual. He was soon awakened by the sight of Mark F playing the dark side of the Marshall gambit against him: when the dust finally settled three–and–a–half hours later, Mark emerged with Q+3 vs Q+2, all on the king–side, and managed to convert it.

Mark Davey's 12:30 game of American Football looked in doubt at midday as in his game against the President each player had ominously advanced passed pawns, but somehow he managed to swap everything off and agree a draw. I ended Tan's successful run, whilst Chris Howell took Mark Thornton's tournament from not good to bad (soon to become worse). The game Pollitz – Griffiths can only be described as bizarre (notes by Fred Pollitz):

□ **F.Pollitz (2199 ELO)**
■ **E.Griffiths (E170)**

1 e4 e6 2 d3 d5 3 ♘d2 c5 4 ♘gf3 ♘c6 5 g3 g6

This looks like a new idea to me. Usual is …Nf6, …Be7 etc.

6 c3 ♘f6 7 ♕e2 ♕e7 8 ♗g2 ♗g7 9 O–O O–O 10 ♖e1 ♖e8 11 ♘f1 b6 12 e5

I thought about 12 Bg5, but after 12…h6 13 Bxf6 Bxf6 14 e5 Bg7, I didn't see any way to improve White's position.

12…♘g4

I think Black is taking an unnecessary risk putting the knight on g4, where it is undefended, instead of d7.

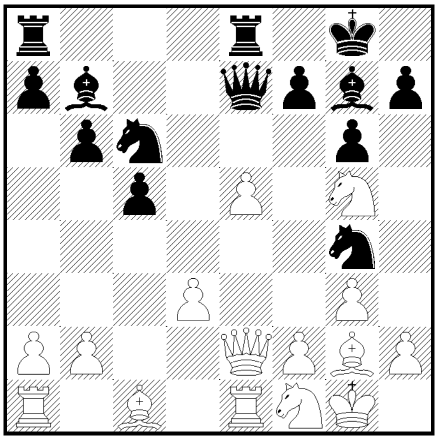
13 c4?

With Black's unprotected KN and my white-squared bishop staring down the h1–a8 diagonal I thought this would put a monkey wrench into Black's position. Actually the opposite is true. After 13 Bf4 f6 14 exf6 Nxf6 (14…Bxf6 15 h3) 15 Ne5, White has an iron grip on the centre. If Black had played 12…Nd7, then after 13 Bf4 f6 14 exf6 Bxf6 White would have to consider 15 d4, eg. 15…cxd4 16 cxd4 Bxd4? 17 Nxd4 Nxd4 18 Qd3 followed by Bxd5.

13…♗b7! 14 c×d5

Consistent but suicidal. White has to play 14 Bf4, though after 14…f6 15 exf6 Nxf6 16 Ne5 Nd7, White cannot maintain his centre.

14…e×d5 15 ♘g5



15…♕×e5!

Even 15…Nge5 is convincing.

16 ♕f3! ♕×e1 17 ♕×f7+ ♔h8 18 ♕×b7

18 Bd5 (aiming for the smothered mate with 19 Qg8+ Rxg8 20 Nf7 mate) doesn't work because of 18…Nce5 (covering f7) 19 Qxb7 Qf2+ and mate next move.

18…♘d4! 19 ♘h3

To prevent …Ne2+ and …Nxf2 mate.

19…♘e2+ 20 ♔h1 ♗d4?!

Aiming for mate with 21…Qxf2. However, this gives White a chance to seriously complicate the game. After 20…Nxc1 I might have resigned (although post–game analysis showed that White still has some chances).

21 ♗e3!! ♕×a1 22 ♘g5 ♗g7 23 ♘f7+ ♔g8 24 ♕d5

Seeing that Edward had less than 5 minutes on his clock for his next 13 moves I offered him a draw. With a few seconds left on his clock he accepted.

½– ½

How should Black play for a win? 24…Bd4 25 Ng5+ Kh8 26 Qb7 repeats the position after White's 22nd move. If 24…Kf8 then 25 Ng5 actually wins for White. 24…h6 looks like the only promising try. Then 25 Nd8+? Kh7 28 Qxa8 Rxe3 loses for White, but after 25 Nxh6+ Kh7 26 Nxg4 it will be very difficult for Black to consolidate. For example 26…Qxb2 27 Be4 Rad8 28 Qg5 Rxe4 29 dxe4 Re8 30 Nd2 and the situation is still critical: 30…Re6 31 Qh4+ Kg8 32 Qd8+ or 30…Qxa2 31 e5 or 30…c4 31 h4 c3 32 h5 are all dangerous for Black!

In the afternoon the players were inspired by the sight of the great Matthew Turner proudly carrying in the Championship Trophy (sporting its new base) in a couple of Sainsbury's bags. Actually it only inspired Mark and Demis to take a quick draw, but your (by now not quite so humble) scribe managed to move into the joint lead by getting the better of James Wright in a knight, bishop and pawns ending. Together with Demis, the other players only half–a–point off the pace were David Cristinacce who had finally put an end to Mr Kreuzer's run, and Martin Hasenbusch who had continued his recovery from the bad start by beating Fred Pollitz in another bizarre game. Edward Griffiths and Chris Howell stood a further half–point back after their game ended in a truce.

The Graduate Centre proved the ideal venue for the night's entertainment with the possibility of the Univ Champs being decided over a game of darts! As the evening drew to a close, Mr Griffiths, Mr Ferguson and myself were the only remaining survivors of a giant game of killer when Edward, on killer, came out with the amazing gambit: "Mark, there's a good chance we'll meet tomorrow afternoon — if I aim for Philip rather than for you will you promise to play 1 e4"! As Mark also reached killer, offers went the other way also, leaving me to survive the onslaught. Sadly for the two of them, by the time they'd got as far as 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nd2 Nf6 4 e5 Nfd7 5 f4 c5 6 c3 Nc6 7 Ndf3 Qb6 8 h4!! (I have blatently added these exclamation marks for effect: see article on Werfen congress, this issue) I put together a few good (lucky??!) sets of darts and killed them both off.

[*It only remains to note that the two players didn't meet the following day anyway, but that the following evening revenge was had when, in an 8-way killer, all the other 7 players (apart from IM Matthew Turncoat) decided to kill me off first and I found survival a little tricky!*]

Round 5, and another day. Mark Thornton complained about being drawn on board 5 again, as it hadn't done him many favours so far — and wasn't about to as he took the silver medal against James Wright. On board one, Best–Ferguson was not going according to plan for the second player:

□ **P.N.Best (172)**

■ **M.Ferguson (216)**

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗c4 ♘f6 4 d3

Call me a wimp if you like....but I'm sure he knows more theory than I do!

4…♗e7 5 O–O O–O 6 c3 d6 7 ♗b3 ♘a5 8 ♗c2 c5 9 h3 b6 10 ♗e3

I thought this was theory so played it despite the fact I couldn't see what it was really doing there. No harm can come of it, but the tempo could have been more usefully used.

10…♗b7 11 ♘bd2 ♖e8 12 ♖e1 h6 13 ♘f1 ♗f8 14 ♘g3 g6 15 ♘h2 ♔h7?!

In keeping with the highly aggressive game!? I'd rather expected 14…d5 although 14…g6 is OK. But 15…d5 really needs to be played.

16 f4 ♗g7 17 ♘f3

Mark thought this should go to g4 later, but I had my eye on the h4 square. I'm not sure which is better - certainly this way seemed to work.

17…♘c6 18 ♗b3 ♕d7 19 f5 d5 20 ♘h4!?

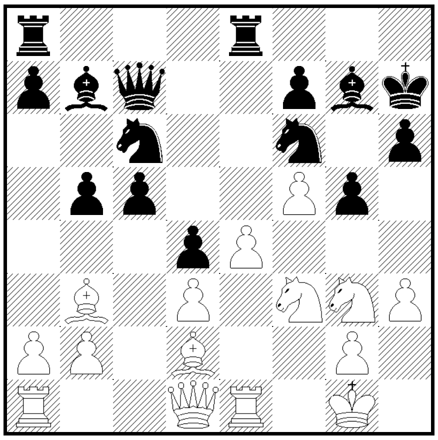
Keeping Derek at d5. eg 20…dxe4 21 Bxf7! (then not 21…Qxf7?? 22 fxg6+)

20…♘a5 21 ♗a4 b5□ 22 ♗c2 d4 23 c×d4 e×d4□

Mark confessed that he nearly played 23…cxd4?, but after 24 Bd2 Nc6 25 Bb3 Black has real problems.

24 ♗d2 ♘c6 25 ♗b3 g5□ 26 ♘f3 ♕c7□

White was threatening all sorts of sacs on g5, but this move hits the g3 knight.



27 ♘h5!! ♘e5

27…Nxh5? 28 Nxg5+ hxg5 29 Qxh5+ Kg8 30 f6! Bxf6 31 Rf1 and it's all over. Also Black had to guard against the renewed threat of 28 Bxg5.

28 ♘×f6?!

Better was 28 Nxe5 Rxe5 29 h4 when Black's position looks set to crumble. The move played also works, but makes it more difficult for White. I was running a little low on time after spending a long time making Nh5 work.

28…♗×f6 29 ♘×e5 ♖×e5 30 ♕h5 ♔g7 31 h4 ♖h8 32 ♕g5 ♕d8 33 ♗f4 ♕e7

33…Rook moves, 34 e5 followed by f6 is a little terminal. Black has to give up the exchange.

34 ♖ac1

Patience! The Re5 is going nowhere so I might as well put my pieces on good squares.

34…h5 35 ♕g3 g4 36 ♖f1 ♔f8 37 ♗×e5

Mr Turner suggested that I still don't have to take the rook, claiming Bxh4 is nothing to worry about. Maybe so, but my pieces are on ideal squares now, so why not get on with it?

37…♗×e5 38 f6!

The move I'd been setting up. If White doesn't play this he'll have big problems.

38…♕d6 39 ♕f2

Intending 40 Qf5, or if 39…Bc8 then 40 Qc2.

39…♖h6

For some reason I now had an unexplicable block. After 40 Qf5 Rxf6 41 Qxh5 I was worried that my queen was well away from defending my king (whereas more pertinent is the fact it's killing his on f7, and White is totally winning!), and so missing Black's sacrificial tactic I opted instead for:

40 ♕c2? c4! 41 d×c4 d3! 42 ♕d2□ ♖×f6 43 ♖×f6□ ♕×f6

Decision time:

(a) 44 Qg5 (not 44 Qf2? Bd4!) Bd4+ 45 Kh1/h2 Qxg5 46 hxg5 Bxe4 and Black should have at worst a draw. I thought this was probably lost, but looking at it further, White has reasonable drawing chances.

(b) Some random toss to demonstrate that White is no better than 172 coz he occasionally (frequently??!) blunders:

44 ♕×d3?⊕>♮ ♗d4+ **0–1**

On board 2, Demis finally defeated David. Although he had a winning position, he only had 1 second left on his clock when David's flag fell! Martin Hasenbusch also moved to four points by beating Ed Griffiths, when the latter player dropped a piece as the time control approached.

In the final round, Mark clinched the title by destroying Martin Hasenbusch, whilst Demis took second with a draw against your (more humble than he would have been if he'd beaten Mark) scribe. David, Fred Pollitz and Mark Davey all won to take a share of third prize. The round also saw the shortest game of the tournament:

□ **M.Ogden (115)**
■ **B.K.Tan (E155)**

1 d4 d5 2 c4 d×c4 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 e3 ♗d6 5 ♗×c4 ♗×c4 6 ♕a4+

Winning back the piece?

6...b5!

No!

0–1

So, the final scores:

1st	5½/ 6	Mark Ferguson
2nd	4½/ 6	Demis Hassabis
3rd=	4 / 6	Philip Best
		David Cristinacce
		Mark Davey
		Fred Pollitz
U165 Grading	4 / 6	Martin Hasenbusch
U140 Grading	2½/ 6	Cristopher Kreuzer