

# Chess Aotearoa

Tuesday 2nd to Friday 12th January 2024

Congress Edition

**CHES AOTEAROA MAGAZINE**

## 131st NZ Chess Congress



### Submission Update

We are now accepting chess-related creative entries! Submit any piece for the chance to be published in the next edition of the Chess Aotearoa magazine.

See more information on the next page.

### Foreword

The 2024 New Zealand Congress was again successful, with over 100 players from just the New Zealand Championship and the New Zealand Major Open.

The Championship was won by FM Nicolas Croad; the Major Open by Dion Wilson; the Junior Championship by Kayden Loke; the Rapid Championship by GM Gawain Jones; and the Lightning Championship jointly by Jones and IM Sravan Renjith.

Many thanks to FM Mark Noble and the Manawatu Knights Chess Club for organising this wonderful event, arbiters Ying Wang, Peggy Wang, and Mark for their help and of course, all players involved for making this Congress enjoyable.

Enjoy!  
-Weiyang Yu

[READ MORE](#)

**Published seasonally; February, May, August, November**

Please send best game entries, article submissions, and chess-related creative entries (i.e. poetry, prose, artwork) to [chessmagnominations@gmail.com](mailto:chessmagnominations@gmail.com) for a chance to be featured in the next issue!

### **Editorial**

Lead Editor & Founder: Weiyang Yu  
Designer & Editor: Charlotte Ray  
Proofreader: Anya Thurner

A thank you to Michael Sole, Ryan Winter, Leo Baker, Anjola Sigbeku and Jack McConnell for annotating games.

### **On the cover**

'Chess Pieces' is an oil-on-canvas painting by Weiyang Yu



**3 Word Search**  
Anya Thurner

**4 Best Game**  
Anya Thurner

**12 Rating Updates**  
Charlotte Ray

**13 NZ Championship**  
Leo Malcolm

**23 Major Open**  
Jack McConnell

**30 Junior Championship**  
Anya Thurner

**38 Rapid Championship**  
Jack McConnell

**42 Blitz Championship**  
Weiyang Yu

---

# Word Search

---

Anya Thurner

K N Y H N V L N L A B Y U T S  
J U D M G D I S Z B H X H W U  
Z K V X L N O A R H A L P O Y  
A T I H E A Q Z G N I E M M M  
G G E T E L P N U Y Q H F C L  
W Y E G K K I L N E V E S B K  
J E B Q O C G Y D V I C Y R R  
N O K M L U R E F A D P D Q Q  
V R N M E A X O U W O X F E J  
J L M E W P Q O S B M R C Z F  
Q A I G S F S H J B Q X C C I  
E F N S B M J B V C D E R V T  
G W V F B F C A C J Y K V J R  
W I L S O N V E V I F X E Z H  
D U K P I X Z I D V X D X J S

## Clues

- Surname of 2024 NZ Champion
- Surname of 2024 Junior Champion
- First and Surname of 2024 NZ Schoolgirl Champion
- Surname of 2024 NZ Major Open Champion
- Surname of 2024 NZ Rapid Championship Winner
- Number of 2024 Blitz Champions
- Number of Titled Players in the NZ Championship
- Number of Rounds in the Junior Championship
- Slang for City of Congress 2024
- City of Congress 2025

# Best Game

Anya Thurner

This year's congress was exceptional, with many, many good games to choose from. In the end, our judges (Michael Sole, Ollie Archer and Ryan Winter) selected 3 submissions from the classical section of the tournament to share the best game prize and 1 winner from the rapid/blitz section.

A special thank you is owed to Cohen Young and Weiyang Yu who nominated the majority of the games, thank you to Michael Sole for annotating the games and, as always, a huge thank you to all our judges.

If you'd like to nominate any games for our next edition, please send them to [chessmagnominations@gmail.com](mailto:chessmagnominations@gmail.com) by April 20th. The criteria for games are that they must be played after the cut-off date for the previous edition (so after the 20th of December) and needs to be played OTB featuring at least one Kiwi player, though any games played in Congress will *not* be viable.

## CLASSICAL

**Metge, J Nigel (0-1) FM Croad, Nicolas**

New Zealand Championship 2024, Round 1

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. e3 O-O  
5. Bd3 d5 6. Nf3 c5 7. O-O cxd4 8. exd4  
dxc4 9. Bxc4



Arriving at the famous isolated queen's pawn (IQP) position that is commonly reached in the Nimzo Indian but can also be reached through other openings such as the Panov variation in the Caro Kann. In IQP positions, White has accepted a weaker structure in return for open lines for his pieces. Black, however, is solid and will have good prospects if the minor pieces can be traded.

9... b6 10. Qe2 Bb7 11. Bg5 Bxc3 12. bxc3 Nbd7 13. Racl Qc7 14. Bd3 h6 15. Bh4 Nh5 16. Bb1 Qf4



# Best Game

Anya Thurner

Black is starting to get active, creating threats of Bxf3 to damage White's pawn structure. Black's play revolves around his very strong bishop on b7.

**17. Qd3 g6 18. Bg3 Qf6 19. Ne5 Nxe5 20. Bxe5 Qg5 21. g3** Played in order to prevent mate with Stockfish's approval, but opens up the light squares around White's king.

**21... Rac8 22. c4 Rfd8 23. Qe2** This puts the queen in a vulnerable spot to later Nf4 ideas. (23. Qa3 gives White a pleasant game with the bishop pair and strong hanging pawns.)



**23... Rxd4** The start of a lovely tactic by Black, making use of White's now misplaced queen.

**24.f4** Possibly rattled by the previous miss, White tries to actively defend and win material back, but Black has a tactical refutation. (24. Bxd4 Nf4 was the idea with the aesthetic mating

threat of Nh3+ that forces White to give up the queen.)

**24... Nxd3 25. fxe5 Nxe2+** Saving the exchange while keeping the two-pawn advantage. Black now has an easy task that is done in style.



**26. Kf2 Nxc1 27. Bxd4 Rxc4 28. Rd1 Bd5 29. gxh6 Rb4 30. Be3 Rb2+ 31. Bd2 Nb3** Forcing the trade of as many pieces as possible.

**32. axb3 Bxb3 33. Rc1 Rxd2+ 34. Ke3 Rd1 35. Rxd1 Bxd1 36. Kf4 a5 37. Kg5 a4 38. h4 b5 39. Kf6 b4 40. h7+ Kxh7 41. Kxf7 b3 42. Bxg6+ Kh6 0-1**

# Best Game

Anya Thurner

## IM Ker, Anthony (0-1) CM Tang, Hao

New Zealand Championship 2024, Round 4

1. e4 c5 2. Nc3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Qxd4 Nc6 5. Qd2



White employs a petline of Carlsen's. This is the start of an aggressive plan involving queenside castling and b3-Bb2.

5... Nf6 6. b3 g6 Black is too slow to counter-fianchetto. White has scored very highly from this position and now has the advantage.

7. Bb2 Bg7 8. O-O-O O-O 9. f3 Qa5 10. Kb1 a6 11. g4 b5 12. g5 Nh5 13. Nge2 Be6 14. Ng3 b4 15. Na4 Bxb2 16. Nxb2 Ng7 17. h4 Na7 A very tense position has arisen with balanced chances. White is looking to play on the kingside by playing h5 with the purpose of opening up the h-file to play Qh2. Meanwhile Black has

clear plans on the queenside with moves like Rfb8, d5, and Nb5 (targeting a3 and c3). Black's moves seem easier with the attack coming faster.

18. a4 Played to prevent Nb5 but, as we will see, doesn't achieve this objective.



(18. Nd3 Rfb8 19. Nc1 was better to allow for Bxb5 without allowing the a2 pawn to be attacked.)

18... Nb5 19. Ka1 Nc3 20. Re1 Rac8 21.h5 Nxa4 A brilliant move, sacrificing against the twice-protected pawn in order to open up White's king.



**22. bxa4 Rc3** Correctly following up with Rc3. Black is threatening to crash through on c2 with either Rfc8 or b3. The position is however still equal with White having multiple paths to maintain equality.

**23. Re3** Wanting to defend against Ra3. However, this fails to both Qc5 and Qxg5. (23. Bd3 is likely easiest. White increases the protection of c2 and plays for the regrouping of his pieces to the kingside with Ne2. (23... Ra3+ 24. Kb1 Ba2+ 25. Kc1 Rc8 26. hxg6 fxg6 (26... hxg6 27. Qh2 would be a surprise-winning continuation for White. Qxg5+ 28. Kd1) 27. Ne2 and Black will find it hard to continue the attack.)

**23... Qxg5** Pinning the rook and picking up a pawn.

**24. f4 Qc5** Refuses the temptation of grabbing another pawn and correctly plays for the attack. (24... Qxf4 would have allowed the sneaky 25. Bd3 where Black's attack slows down.)

**25. Bd3 b3** Again best. Black is combining all of the ideas in the position to remove the shelter around White's king.

**26. cxb3 Rxb3 Rfb8** and Qa3+ is the threat.

**27. Kb1 Rfb8 28. Re2 Qa3 29. Rd1** White is lost here. Black can win material at

will with White tied down like this.

**29...Rc3** (29...Qxa4 might have been easiest but Black converts cleanly anyway.)

**30. Qxc3 Qxc3 31. f5 Bb3 32. Rc1 Qb4 33. hxg6 hxg6 34. fxg6 fxg6 35. e5 d5 36. Rc6 Qa3 37. Nf1 Bxa4** with more material losses coming. **0-1**

**Thurner, Anya (1-0) WIM  
Timergazi, Layla**

New Zealand Championship 2024,  
Round 5

**1. e4 c6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 dxe4 4. Nxe4 Bf5**  
The start of a very theoretical and sharp opening variation. The following sequence has been the established mainline for decades.

**5. Ng3 Bg6 6. h4 h6 7. Nf3 Nd7 8. h5 Bh7 9. Bd3 Bxd3 10. Qxd3 e6** This position is usually reached by default after Bf5 is played. White now has a choice here between Bd2 and Bf4.

**11. Bd2** Going for the more modern choice. The benefit of this move choice is that Qa5+ is prevented.

**11... Ngf6 12. O-O-O Qc7!?** Going for the lesser-played Qc7 option. Be7 is the more popular move with increased flexibility on the queenside with options like Qd5 being possible after a trade of

knights on e4, or playing Qb6 with increased attacking pressure. With Qc7 Black's most popular option is to castle queenside

**13. Ne4 Be7** (13... O-O-O 14. g3 Nxe4 15. Qxe4 Bd6 16. c4 c5 with this being one of the mainline continuations after Qc7. Black has good play here and remains solid.)

**14. Kb1 Rd8** Committing to the more risky option of castling kingside and facing White's pawn storm. White has the thematic plan in this line of Qe2, Ne5, and g5.

**15. Nxf6+ Nxf6 16. Qe2 O-O?!** While not objectively much of an inaccuracy, White gets to continue a straightforward plan while Black will have to defend very precisely. (16... c5! 17. dxc5 Qxc5 18. Ne5 Rd4 19. f4 This option starting with the counter-attacking c5 would have given Black better practical chances than the game continuation of 0-0.)

**17. g4** Starting the attacking plan. The threat is g5 and opening the g-file for the d1 rook to occupy.

**17... Nxc4?** Too greedy. Black needed to play the passive-looking Nh7 to try and hold the position and prevent g5. As it is, Black is in trouble and will be forced to return the material immediately.

(17... Nh7 was best but still has Black on the back foot after the following nice combination. 18. Ne5 Rxd4 19. Bxh6! Rxd1+ 20. Rxd1 with the bishop being immune due to the threat of Rd7.)



**18. Rhg1!** The correct rook. Black is now forced into playing f5 as Bxh6 cannot be allowed. (18. Rdg1 f5 19. Qxe6+ Rf7 20. Ne5 Nxe5 This was the issue with playing the other rook to g1. The bishop on d2 is undefended without the rook on d1. )

**18... f5 19. Qxe6+ Kh8?** A natural move but allows the following combination. (19... Rf7 20. Ne5 Nxe5 21. dxe5 would have kept Black in the game with equal material but still an inferior position. )

**20. Ne5 Nxe5 21. Rxc7!** A striking sacrifice, ripping apart Black's pawn cover. Black is losing here and faces an undesirable choice to either allow a winning attack or suffer with the material losses.





**21... Qd6** Going for the endgame. Likely the best choice practically but objectively losing as well. White will be two pawns up but could run into issues on the kingside with the soon-to-be-passed f-pawn if misplayed. (21... Kxg7 22. Qxh6+ Kg8 23. dxe5 Rd4 24. f4 Rf7 25. Rg1+ This Stockfish continuation shows the danger of White's attack if the sacrifice is accepted.)

**22. Rxe7 Ng4 23. Qxd6 Rxd6 24. Rxb7 Nxf2 25. Rf1 Ne4 26. Bb4 Re6 27. Rxa7 f4 28. Ra3 Rb8 29. Be1 Nd6 30. Bc3 Nb5 31. d5+** A smart choice. Removing the last bit of danger and allowing the rooks to contain Black's pawns.



**31... Nxc3+ 32. Rxc3 cxd5 33. Rcf3** With White's three connected passers on the queenside, there is no hope for Black.

**33... Rf8 34. a4 Re4 35. b3 Rf6 36. a5 d4 37. a6 Rxa6 38. Rxf4 Rxf4 39. Rxf4 Rd6 40. Kc1 d3 41. c3 d2+ 42. Kd1 Rd3 43. Rc4 Kg7 44. b4 Kf6 45. b5 Rd7 46. b6 Rb7 47. Rc6+ Kg5 48. c4** A dominating game showcasing excellent preparation as White against Black's sideline choice, which put Black under great pressure.

## RAPID/BLITZ

**FM Croad, Nicolas (1:0) Gan, Emily**

New Zealand Rapid Championship, Round 4

**1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nc3 Bg7 4. e4 d6 5. h3** A very trendy line against the King's Indian Defence (KID) called the Makogonov. White has a few different ways of playing this such as setups with

Be3 or Bg5, without Nf3, or, as in the game, transposing back into the traditional way of playing with Nf3. One of the ideas is to play g4 and use White's kingside pawns to blockade Black's thematic f5 push, with a later attack of h4-g5-h5 coming.



5... O-O 6. Nf3 e5 7. D5 a5 8. Bg5 Following the traditional mainline. (8. g4 is more in line with the previously discussed modern plan. )

8... Na6 9. Nd2 Nc5 10. Be2 Rb8 Deviating from the typical plans of the pawn structure. Black is unlikely to be able to get the b5 break in, with the move b6 being more commonly played in order to prevent White's queenside expansion with a3-b4-c5. (10... Bd7 11. O-O h6 12. Be3 Nh7 13. Nb3 b6 is an example of the b6 idea. Black has slowed White's play and has equal chances in this position with his kingside play getting started with moves like Qh4 and f5 coming. )



11. a3 Stronger now as Black can no longer play a4 to prevent b4 due to the rook leaving the a-file.

11... Bd7 12. b4 axb4 13. axb4 Na6 14. Qb3 White has a dream position here with the queenside play being well-advanced and no fear of Black counterplay.

14... h6 Further helping White get in c5 by giving a tempo to reposition the bishop to e3.

15. Be3 Ne8 16. c5 The key break. Black is nearly powerless to stop the advance at this point.

16... Ra8 17. c6 More precise play by White to force concessions.

17... Bc8 18. b5 Winning material as the following sequence doesn't work for Black.

---

# Best Game

---

Anya Thurner



**18... Nc5 19. Rxa8 Nxb3 20. cxb7** The idea behind b5. White regains the material with interest.

**19... Bxb7 21. Rxd8 Nxd2 22. Kxd2** The material won is too much with Black's pieces still on the back rows. 1-0

The long-awaited inflation is finally looming with just a month between us and our shiny new ratings (at least for the majority who are under 2000 FIDE). However, the one-time adjustment to our classical ratings isn't the only change to be implemented, FIDE will also be raising the rating floor and adding calculation improvements to combat deflation.

The formula for the rating increase is as follows:

$$(0.40) \times (2000 - \text{Rating})$$

This means players will gain between 0 and 400 Elo points depending on their initial rating with lower-rated players gaining more and higher-rated players gaining less. For example, my classical FIDE rating as of the January update sits at 1425. Inputting my rating into the formula gives  $(0.40) \times (2000 - 1425) = 230$ . This means as of March, I will be rated 1655.

These new ratings also mean a number of players will qualify for their conditional titles such as WCM and WFM.

This ties into the goal to compress the ratings of under 2000 players to the 1400-2000 range without affecting the order of the players.

The other proposed adjustments include changes in how initial ratings are calculated and the reinstatement of the 400-Points Rule. The rule states that "A difference in rating of more than 400 points shall be counted for rating purposes as though it were a difference of 400 points, with no restrictions on how many times it can be applied during a single tournament...". The way initial ratings are calculated will be changed so that unrated players will now not be able to attain an initial rating over 2200.

The changes (excluding the standard rating inflation) are expected to extend to Rapid & Blitz Ratings Regulations.

The 2024 New Zealand Championship began with 50 players, of which 27 held NZCF ratings of above 2000. Initial favourites included 2022-2023 title holder FM Daniel Gong, as well as top seed FM Ben Hague, FM Nicolas Croad, and IMs Anthony Ker, Tom Middelburg, and Russell Dive.

The 9 round Swiss began on January 2nd, and round one saw the expected dominance of the higher seeds - however a few upsets still occurred, most notably Euan McDougall taking reigning champion FM Daniel Gong to a drawn opposite bishops endgame on board three.

The standout game of round two was a win by Yolanda Chang over the mighty IM Russell Dive, annotated below by Ryan Winter.

## IM Russell Dive - Yolanda Chang

New Zealand Championship 2024, Round 2

Annotations by Ryan Winter

1. **c4 e6** 2. **g3 Nf6** Russell pulls out his patented method of playing juniors; pulling out some kind of Catalan setup while delaying d4.

3. **Bg2 d5** 4. **b3 d4!** Black is doing all the right things; playing into a reversed

Benoni is definitely the most principled option.

5. **Nf3 c5** 6. **e3 Nc6** 7. **exd4 cxd4** 8. **O-O Bd6** 9. **d3 O-O** 10. **Na3 e5** 11. **Nc2 Re8** 12. **a3 a5** 13. **Rb1 Bf5** 14. **b4 axb4** 15. **axb4**

The lines are drawn; White has a queenside majority and play on that wing, while Black has the centre and ideas of ...e4.



15... **Rc8** 16. **b5 Na5** 17. **Bg5 h6** 18. **Bxf6 Qxf6** 19. **Nh4 Bh7** 20. **Bd5 e4!** 21. **dxe4 Bxe4** 22. **Re1 Bh7** 23. **Rxe8+ Rxe8** 24. **Qd2 g5** 25. **Ng2** 25... **b6** 26. **Nge1** 26... **Rc8** 27. **Rd1 Nxc4** 28. **Qxd4 Be5** 29. **Qg4 Bf5** 30. **Qe2 Nd6** 31. **Ne3 Bd7** 32. **Ng4 Bxg4** 33. **Qxg4 Rc5** 34. **Nf3 Nxb5** 35. **Nxe5 Qxe5** 36. **Bxf7+**



Russell sees something that isn't there; the Black king is safe, and White only has two pieces to hunt for the Black king.

36... Kxf7 37. Rd7+ Kf6? (37... Kg6! was even better; White does not even have any checks, and everything is defended.

38. Qh5 Leaving the rook on d7 undefended; Yolanda promptly exploits this.

38...Rc1+ 39. Kg2 Qe4+ 40. Kh3 Qf5+ 41. Kg2 Qxd7 42. Qxh6+ Kf5 43. g4+ Ke4 44. Qxg5 Qd1 45. Qg6+ Kd5 46. Qf5+ Kc4 47. f3 Qc2+ 48. Qxc2+ Rxc2+



With the trade of queens, Yolanda quickly cleans up and notches a nice win against IM (hopefully her first of many!)

49. Kg3 Nd4 50. h4 Rc3 51. h5 Rxf3+ 52. Kh4 b5 53. h6 Nf5+ 54. gxf5 Rxf5 55. h7 Rf8 0-1

Round three saw FM Nicolas Croad and IM Tom Middelburg defeat CM Isabelle Ning and Yolanda Chang, respectively, becoming the only two players on full points after three rounds. On board five CM David Cilia Vincenti scored an impressive win with Black against Gong.

## FM Daniel Gong - CM David Cilia Vincenti

New Zealand Championship 2024, Round 3

Annotations by Leo Baker

1. d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 a6!? Vincenti opts for the Janowski QGD, which has become quite popular in recent years. The idea is to potentially hold onto the pawn with ...dxc4 and ...b5, while delaying the knight's development to f6 does not allow White the usual Carlsbad development with Bg5.

4. cxd5 exd5 5. Bf4 Nf6 6. e3 c5 7. Nge2 Nc6 8. h3!? Gong comes prepared with an interesting opening novelty.



8... Be6 9. g4 h6 10. Bg2 c4?! This move is pointed out by the engine as inaccurate, although Black cannot continue developing without allowing White to gain a tempo capturing on c5.

(10... cxd4 11. Nxd4 Bc5 is Black's most accurate continuation, however after 12. Nxe6 fxe6 13. O-O O-O 14. Rcl Qe7 15. Bg3 White retains a slight advantage as the kingside space advantage is now clearly a strength rather than a weakness, and Black's central pawns remain somewhat inflexible and therefore more of a liability. White can continue with Qd3, Kh1, and f2-f4, with somewhat better chances.)

11. g5?! White responds to Black's inaccuracy with another inaccuracy. Instead, 11. O-O Be7 12. Be5 is one idea for White to gain a serious advantage, with the point that a capture on e5 would give White an extremely dangerous central majority, and

otherwise White's position is quite pleasant, with some plans to choose from, such as f4-Ng3-g5, or the simple Bxf6 followed by Nf4. In contrast, Black's queenside counterplay would be quite slow, and White would be assured of the easier game.

11... hxg5 12. Bxg5 Qd7 13. Bxf6 gxf6 14. Nf4 Bb4 15. Qf3 O-O-O 16. Kf1 Bxc3 17. bxc3 f5 18. h4 Qe7 19. h5?! Very logical, but inaccurate. The only move for White to keep the balance was 19. Qe2! allowing the capture of the h-pawn 19... Rxh4 20. Rxh4 Qxh4 however after 21. Qb2 the position remains level as Black's extra doubled f-pawn is not felt, and White may generate some counterplay against Black's king.



19... Qa3 After this move, Black infiltrates into the White queenside and begins to take over, as Black's queenside

initiative is more important than the potential of the passed h-pawn.

**20. Ne2 Qb2 21. Rc1 Rdg8 22. a4 Na5 23. Rd1 Nb3 24. Ke1 Rg5 25. Rh4 Rg4??** (25... b5 was immediately winning for Black, simply pushing the b-pawn to create a passed c-pawn which would further tie down the White pieces.)



**26. Rh2** (26. Qh3 would have let White back into the game, with ideas of either Qh2 or Qh1 to target the d5-pawn, although this is not at all easy to evaluate as a human.)

**26... Qc2 27. h6 Rh7 28. Rh5 Rg6 29. Rh2 Rgxh6** White loses his h-pawn and with it his main source of counterplay, after which Vincenti converts his advantage in clinical fashion.



**30. Rxh6 Rxh6 31. Qf4 Rh8 32. Qe5 Rd8 33. Nf4 Qxc3+ 34. Kf1 Qc2 35. Re1 Nd2+ 36. Kg1 Rg8 37. Kh1 Nf3 38. Bxf3 Qxf2 39. Rb1 Qh4+ 0-1**

A draw between Croad and Middelburg on board one in round four saw each move to 3.5/4, where they were joined by Vincenti as well as CM Hao Tang who beat 14-time NZ champion IM Anthony Ker.

In round five Croad and Middelburg both won, again becoming joint leaders on 4.5/5. FM Ben Hague, IM Russell Dive, FM Michael Steadman and IM Sravan Renjith all won on boards 3-6, taking them to 4/5, half a point behind the leaders. Significant upsets on the lower boards included Yolanda Chang beating



Christopher Burns, Hayden Steele defeating NZCF president Nigel Metge, and Anya Thurner taking down New Zealand's top-rated female player, WIM Layla Timergazi.

## CM Hao Tang - FM Nicolas Croad

New Zealand Championship 2024, Round 5

Annotations by Michael Sole

**1.d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 d5 3. c4 e6 4. Nc3 Bb4 5. cxd5 exd5 6. Qa4+ Nc6 7. Bg5 h6 8. Bxf6 Qxf6 9. e3** We are following one of the mainlines of the Ragozin. There is a Carlsbad pawn structure with some unique Ragozin features. White has invested some time to misplace the Black knight and block the desired c-pawn advance to c6. Black will try to reorganise his pieces with moves such as O-O, Ne7, Bf5, and c6, while White will continue to pressure the queenside and attack the often backwards c-pawn.

**9... O-O 10. Be2 Be6 11. a3 Bxc3+ 12. bxc3 Ne7**



Black has an equal game here with no significant concerns. Black has a range of ideas including the interesting Nc8-Nd6, placing the knight on its ideal square in this pawn structure and preventing White from removing his weakness. (12... a6 13. O-O b5 14. Qd1 Na5 15. a4 Nc4 was a more ambitious continuation, with Harikrishna beating Georgiev in a smooth Knight v Bishop endgame from this position in Georgiev, Ki - Harikrishna, P., 0-1, World Blitz 2017)

**13. c4 c6!?** Keeping more play on the board than the forcing c5.

**14. Rb1?!** (14. c5 was stronger, fixing Black's b-pawn and making the idea of Rb1 harder to counter. White is on the front foot here.)

**14... b6 15. Qc2 Rac8?!** Natural but not necessary. Black could have played c5 immediately due to tactical justifications. As it is, Black hands over

time for White to again play c5. (15... c5 16. cxd5 Nxd5 17. dxc5 Nc3)

**16. c5 b5 17. O-O Bf5 18. Bd3 Bxd3 19. Qxd3 Ng6?!** (19... a5 was an improvement to advance the two v one on the queenside in any later endgames and to respond to a4 with b4.)

**20. Qc3** The threat looks scary but Stockfish isn't convinced and still gives many Black moves as equal.

**20... a5?!**



Stockfish suggests a slight refinement of the idea with a6! and Nh4, the idea being that it takes White an extra tempo to extract the queen out of the a file (20... a6 21. Qa5 Nh4 22. Nhx4 Qhx4 23. Qxa6 Qf6 24. Qa5 Ra8 25. Qb4 and calls this position equal with Black having enough pressure on the pawn.)

**21. Qxa5 Ra8 22. Qc3 Ra6 23. Rfe1 Rfa8 24. Rb3 Qe6 25. Qd3 f5 26. h3 Ra4**

**27. Nd2 Nf4 28. Qb1 Nh5 29. Qd3 Nf6 30. Nf3 Ne4 31. Ne5??** The natural move falls to a surprise tactic in such a quiet positional battle.

**31... Nxc5!** Winning a key pawn and obliterating White's centre. Black now crashes through easily.



**32. dxc5 Qxe5** Black's pieces are far too active and White's weak pawns will fall.

**33. Rc1 Rc4 34. Qb1 Raa4 35. g3 Rxc1+ 36. Qxc1 Rc4 37. Qb2 Qxb2 38. Rxb2 Rxc5 39. Kf1 Rc4 40. Ke2 Kf7 41. Kd3 Ke6 42. h4 h5 43. Rb3 Kd6 44. Rb2 Kc5 45. Rb3 Kb6 46. Kd2 Ka5 47. Kd1 c5 48. Kd2 Ka4 49. Rd3 d4 50. f3 Rc3 51. e4 fxe4 52. fxe4 Rxd3+ 53. Kxd3 Ka5 54. a4 bxa4 55. Kc4 Kb6** 0-1

With Croad and Hague drawing in round six, Middelburg seized the opportunity to take the sole lead, which he then

extended to a full point lead in round seven after beating Anthony Carpinter while Renjith and Croad drew on board two. Two other players joined Croad on 5.5/7, Hague after beating Vincenti and Steadman with an exciting win over FM Robert Smith.

## FM Robert Smith - FM Michael Steadman

New Zealand Championship 2024, Round 6

Annotations by Anjola Sigbeku

**1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 Bb4** Black's last move marks the start of the Winawer French, one of the most complex and tactical openings. Here Black exchanges his "good" dark-squared bishop for White's knight on c3 to cripple White's pawn structure. White typically attacks on the kingside while Black does so on the queenside.

**4. e5 c5 5. a3 Bxc3+ 6. bxc3 Nc6 7. h4 Qa5** A very important move by Black. With Qa5, he makes sure White has no comfortable way of defending the c3 pawn. By forcing Bd2, Black prevents White from playing a4 and getting his dark-squared bishop to a3. If White can successfully get his bishop to a3 without any repercussions, Black will simply suffer on the dark squares.

**8. Bd2 Qa4** Another important move. Although the queen on a4 may look silly,

it prevents the a4 Bc1-a3 plan which could prove to be very devastating for Black.

**9. h5** Expanding on the kingside and threatening to play h6 at the right moment.

**9... cxd4 10. Nf3**



White could have gone for a messy tactical position with 10.Qg4 but he decides to take a seemingly safer approach with 10.Nf3.

**10... f6 11. h6** Excellent move by White, inducing a kingside weakness by forcing the g-pawn to move.

**11... g6 12. cxd4 Nxd4 13. Bd3** Black is up a pawn but his position is a mess as he has two pieces yet to develop while White has a clear space advantage with good piece activity.

**13... Nxf3+ 14. Qxf3 d4 15. O-O Qxe5 16. Rfe1 Qd6 17. Rab1 Kf7 18. c4 dxc4**

**19. Rxb7+??** In a moment of impatience, White loses all his built up advantage as he fails to recognise the strength of Black's defensive resource of Ne7 after Bxb7 and Qxb7+.



**19... Bxb7 20. Qxb7+ Ne7** While the position is objectively equal, White is now on the defensive and has to find only moves to secure a draw.

**21. Bb4** This move might look good at first but it is one of the fastest ways for White to lose as Black can now force a series of exchanges with Rab8 or Rhb8.

**21... Rhb8 22. Qxa8 Rxa8 23. Bxd6 cxd3 24. Rb1 Rd8 25. Bf4** When the dust settles White is down two pawns and will likely lose another in the event of g5, Kg6. Interesting how a move that strengthened his position several moves ago is now a major weakness.



**25... Rd7 26. Kf1 g5 27. Bd2 Nd5 28. a4 Kg6 29. a5 Kxh6 30. g3 Kg6 31. Rb3 Ne7 32. a6 Nc6 27. Rb7 Rd6 34. Ke1 h5 35. f4 Kf5 36. fxc5 fxc5 37. Rg7 g4 38. Kf2 Ke4 39. Rh7 e5 40. Rxh5 Rf6+ 41. Kg2 Nd4 42. Rg5 Rxa6 43. Rxg4+ Kd5** White resigns as he will be unable to stop both of Black's passed pawns. His passed pawn on g3 won't count for much as Black's pawns are faster and Black's king is also close enough to cover the promotion square if needed. 0-1

Round eight blew the standings wide open as a win for Hague against the then-undefeated Middelburg coupled with Croad triumphing against Steadman left Hague, Middelburg and Croad each with 6.5/8, and Renjith half a point behind. After continuing his run of good results with a draw against Dive in round eight, Hayden Steele found himself paired against the 745-point

higher-rated Croad in round nine.

## FM Nicolas Croad - Hayden Steele

New Zealand Championship 2024, Round 9

Annotations by Leo Baker

1. Nf3 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nc3 d5 4. Qa4+! An annoying check which forces a piece to come to d7, disrupting Black's harmony.

4... Bd7 5. Qb3 Now the retreat forces Black to surrender the centre.

5... dxc4 6. Qxc4 Nc6 7. d4 Bg7 8.e4 White has managed to construct a very impressive central pawn duo, yet the engines think this position is not actually so bad for Black.



8... e5?! Black must have felt the pressure of getting squeezed by White's

strong centre, and decides instead to begin complications and muddy the waters. (8... O-O The machine points this out as Black's best move, with the important point that 9. e5 can be met by the intermezzo 9... Be6! and after any queen move, Black follows up with ...Nd5 with a slightly favourable position.)

9. d5 Na5 10. Qb4 c5 11. Qxc5 Rc8 12. Qd6 Ng4 13. Bb5 Rc7?? Black was already worse, however after this move, White gains a winning position. (13... Nc4 was the most accurate move, although it would be an admission of the failure of Black's opening concept, as after 14. Bxd7+ Qxd7 15. Qxd7+ Kxd7 16. h3 White is simply up a full pawn in an ending.)

14. Bg5!



14... f6 15. Qe6+ Kf8 16. Bxd7 Qxd7 17. Qxd7 Rxd7 18. h3 Nh6 if (18... Nxf2 19. Kxf2 fxe5 20. Rac1 Black's knight is in

danger of getting trapped while White's knight will find a way into e6, and here White is objectively winning.)

**19. Be3 a6 20. Nd2 b5 21. a4 Nc4 22. Bc5+ Kf7 23. axb5 Nxb2 24. Ke2 Rc7 25. Bb4 Bf8 26. d6 Bxd6 27. Bxd6 Rxc3 28. bxa6**  
Although the position has changed in nature, White's advantage has in fact only grown, as the a-pawn will tie down Black's pieces.

second on 7/9, and a three-way tie saw Hague, Renjith and Dive share third place with 6.5/9.



**28... Ra8 29. Bb4 Rcc8 30. Rhb1 Nc4 31. Nxc4 Rxc4 32. Bd2 Ng8 33. Rb7+ Ke6 34. a7 Ne7 35. Rb8 Rc8 36. Ra6+ Kf7 37. Rb7 Rc4 38. Bb4 Rxe4+ 39. Kf1**  
White will win the knight on e7, and probably also a rook, so Black resigned.  
1-0

With Middelburg and Hague both dropping points in a draw with Renjith and a loss to Dive respectively, Croad's victory over Steele saw him claim the New Zealand Champion title for a third time with 7.5/9. Middelburg finished

The 2024 Major Open tournament featured 56 players representing a broad range of ratings, from 2045 NZCF Classical (top seed Kayden Loke) to several unrated players playing their first-ever classical games. One might expect that this broad range meant top seeds had an easy time in the first round, which often features the most disparate pairings, but that proved not to be the case on the first ten boards where half of the games were upsets on paper. On board one, Kayden Loke lost to 29th seed Richard Jingjie Liu; on board three, Jack McConnell was held to a draw by 31st seed WCM Eva Lourenco; on board four, Bernard A Carpinter lost to 32nd seed Olivia Li; on board six, Philip E Rossiter lost to 34th seed Taylor Sussex, and on board seven, Karthik Sethuramalingam lost to 35th seed Martin Zhou. This set a precedent for the volatile tournament which was to follow.

The two most notable results in the second round were the draw between Joy Ulm (22nd seed) and Dion Charles (5th seed) on board two, and Tracy Tang (27th seed) taking down Cazna Campbell (12th seed) on board seven. Both lower-rated players in these games went on to have excellent tournaments and these were only the first of several upset results they would score.

In round three, as the number of players

on perfect scores began to shrink, some of the eventual contenders for the title who were seeded slightly lower began to float to the top boards. Board one featured a significant clash between Alex Coates with White and 2nd seed Levi Paxton with Black, which was won by Coates. Boards two and three saw high-rated Karl Holdo and Aidan Malcolm maintain a perfect score, while Tang and 18th seed Dion Wilson scored upset wins to stay level with them.

Round four was a more peaceful affair with draws on boards one, two, and four. This left the way open for the winner on board three to become the tournament's first sole leader, which turned out to be Coates, who scored a win with the Black pieces against Wilson.

By the halfway point in the tournament, many of the players who'd dropped a point earlier on had clawed their way back to the top boards but were met with strong resistance. Wilson bounced back from his previous round's loss by defeating Loke, who'd made it back to board four after his first-round defeat. On board five and six other top seeds who'd had first-round disappointments, McConnell and Sethuramalingam, were upset once again by John Pakenham and Joy Ulm respectively. Meanwhile, Coates successfully defended pole position from Holdo with a win with White, while on board two Tang experienced what would be her only defeat of the

# Major Open

Jack McConnell

tournament, losing to Jonathon Hookings.

## Alex Coates - Karl Holdo

Major Open, Round 5

Annotations by Jack McConnell

**1.d4 f5** An ambitious start to the game by Holdo, employing the fighting Dutch defence.

**2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 Be7 5.h3** A curious slow move by White which takes the game out of well-trodden theoretical ground.



**5...0-0 6.e3** White solidifies a modest center.

**6...Ne4!?** Holdo ambitiously goes ahead with the typical Stonewall plan, placing a knight on e4 where it can be firmly supported by ...d5.

**7.Bd3 d5 8.0-0 c6 9.Bd2** White places their bad bishop on d2, coaxing Black to

exchange their well-posted knight for it.

**9...Nd7 10.Rc1** A natural move, although according to my database, this is the move that takes the game into truly novel territory.

**10...Ndf6 11.a3 b6** Black seems to have maximised their position, and now looks for a way to develop the troublesome light-squared bishop. Unfortunately for Holdo 11...b6 appears to be a mistake because of the continuation chosen in the game.

**12.cxd5 exd5** After 12...cxd5 the c-file would open to White's benefit and Black's bishop would remain locked behind the troublesome e6-pawn.

**13.Ne5** Now, however, the c6-pawn appears to be critically weak.



**13...Bb7 14.Ne2** Coates continues to play accurately, increasing the pressure on the c-pawn.



# Major Open

Jack McConnell

**14...c5** Black is effectively forced into this advance.

**15.Nf4** Both of White's knights find excellent squares.

**15...Qd6 16.Be1!** Incredibly precise, now threatening to maroon the Black knight on g5, given Black has occupied its other escape squares.

**16...g5!?** Realising the danger, Black gets desperate and decides to lash out with this flank pawn push.

**17.Nh5 Nxh5 18.Qxh5 Qe6** Black's position is unstable, but for the time being their attack has some poison.

**19.f3 Nd6 20.h4** White begins the poke at the extended Black kingside.

**20...Nf7 21.f4!** Intensifying the pressure on the g-pawn.

**21...Nxe5 22.fxe5 c4 23.Bb1 h6** Unfortunately for Black the advance of this pawn makes a queen trade far more difficult to engineer, and such a trade is necessary if Black's king intends not to get checkmated.

**24.Bg3?!** Not a particularly useful move, which will soon be reversed.

**24...b5 25.hxg5 hxg5 26.Be1 a5 27.g4!** White fearlessly throws forward the kingside pawns to further break down Black's defences.

**27...Qf7** Black offers a queen exchange, as they have nothing better. This will lead to a fairly unpleasant pawn-down position where White has two passed pawns and all the winning chances.

**28.Qxf7+ Rxf7 29.gxf5 b4 30.axb4 Bxb4 31.f6 Bc8 32.Bf5 Ba6 33.Be6 c3 34.bxc3 Bxf1 35.cxb4 Bc4 36.Bxf7+ Kxf7 37.bxa5 Rh8** White has simplified into a clearly winning position, and though there are still a few bugbears to overcome, it only requires a little patience.





**38.Kg2 Ke6 39.Bg3 Rb8 40.Ra1 Bd3  
41.a6 Rb2+ 42.Bf2 Be4+ 43.Kg3 Rb8  
44.a7 Ra8 45.Kg4 Bd3 46.Kxg5 Rg8+  
47.Kf4 Be2 48.Rg1 Ra8 49.Rg7 Rxa7  
50.Rxa7 Bd3** Holdo has the decency to play the position out until the nice mating finish.

## **51.Re7# 1-0**

Momentum finally stalled for Coates in round six, when Hookings managed to hold him to a draw. Coates still had a nice buffer between himself and the rest of the field thanks to his previous five consecutive wins but there were players in the chasing pack building momentum which he'd have to look out for going forward. Wilson caught Hookings in second place with a victory over Malcolm, while Joy Ulm saved a position where checkmate was on the board against Sussex thanks to the blunder of a rook with check, which also placed her in second equal.

Hookings' good run came to an end against Wilson on the second board in round seven, but most of the round's intrigue concerned the top board battle between Coates and Joy Ulm. Fairly early in the game, Ulm got the advantage with the Black pieces, which would last into a complicated knight endgame going beyond the hundredth move. Coates managed a lucky escape in the end when Ulm allowed the sacrifice of his knight for her extra pawn. While this was a comparatively good outcome for Coates, the second draw in a row had allowed Wilson to draw level with him and the tournament now had two leaders on 6 points, with Ulm trailing on 5.5 accompanied by Malcolm and Tang who had won on boards three and four.

In round seven, board one saw yet another draw, this time between Tang, who continued her excellent tournament, and Coates, while board two saw Joy Ulm with White experience her first defeat of the tournament when faced with Wilson's Two Knight's Tango. This opening, and its spiritual counterpart the Nimzowitsch Defence against 1.e4, served Wilson extraordinarily well throughout the Major Open, and he scored 4/4 with the black pieces.

## Joy Ulm - Dion A Wilson

Major Open, Round 8

Annotations by Jack McConnell

**1.d4 Nc6** This interesting line was Wilson's preference against d4 during the Major Open, and proved an extremely effective weapon.

**2.c4** White can respond to Black's provocative play in a few different ways. Perhaps the most critical is to play a sort of mirrored Alekhine type 2.d4-d5, although such a move leads to independent lines which Black is invariably more comfortable with than White. Therefore, many other players with the White pieces tend to prefer either 2.c4, as Ulm plays here, or 2.Nf3.

**2...e5** Staunchly insisting upon the advance of the d-pawn.

**3.d5** This is the only move to retain an advantage. 3.dxe5, on the other hand, leads to a very tame and equal position.

**3...Nce7 4.Nc3 Ng6** The knight must quickly progress to g6 so that it does not obstruct the development of Black's kingside pieces.

**5.e4** While this is by far the most commonly played move here, it is potentially an inaccuracy as Black can develop very fast play against the f2-pawn. Stockfish suggests that White

should play 5.a3 to anticipate the development of Black's bishop to c5, though I feel such a slow move wouldn't occur to most players over the board as a critical attempt to prove an advantage.

**5...a6** This is an understandable move, but also probably an inaccuracy given White now has time to contest the c5-square with their own dark-squared bishop. Black should play 5...Bc5 here, where after 6.a3 a5 it will be difficult for White to prove Black has any problems.

**6.Nf3** As previously stated, 6.Be3 was most critical to prevent ...Bc5.

**6...Bc5 7.Bd3 Nf6 8.h3 0-0 9.0-0 d6 10.a3** The game has progressed to a somewhat equal middlegame position where White has the advantage of space in the center, but Black has a very clear kingside attacking plan.



**10...Nh5** Clearing space for the advance of the f-pawn.

---

# Major Open

---

Jack McConnell

**11.Ne2?!** This is probably the first significant error in the game. White logically wants to prevent ...Ng3 from coming at an inopportune moment, but for the time being such a move is only a ghost. In startling at it, White has been prompted to place a minor piece awkwardly where it will interrupt the coordination of her remaining pieces, until it can be tucked away onto the passive g1-square.

**11...f5** A logical continuation, though 11...Nh4 (made possible by the e2-knight's obstruction of the White queen's view to that square) also would have made White's life very difficult, as the queen gets onto the kingside and Black's attack plays itself rather quickly from there.

**12.b4 Ba7 13.Qc2?** Allowing the closure of the kingside with ...f4 is a serious strategic error.

**13...f4** This move renders the battery just formed by White inert, and now Black has a clear path forward to checkmate.

**14.Kh2 Nh4 15.Neg1** A sad move to have to make, but the best (by far) which White has available.

**15...Kh8!?** The usual procedure for preparing ...g7-g5, although in this case

such a slow plan is not necessary because of White's four inert pieces on the queenside.

**19.Qe2!?** A clever idea, intending to meet ...g5 with Nxe5, although the move is flawed if Black defends against the threat. An interesting, and potentially equalising attempt for White was 19.g4!/? blockading the kingside to slow down Black's attack.



(19.g4!/? Note that this move is now possible because Black's rook doesn't see the White knight on f3. 19...g5!/? After 19...fxg3 20.fxg3 White's pieces finally have some lateral mobility, and should be able to not only hold the kingside but potentially turn the tables on Black. 20.c5 20.gxh5 leads to disaster. 20...Bd7 At some point Black must take time to develop the queen's bishop and rook. 21.Kg2 Nf6 22.Rh1 h5 23.Rag1 hxg4 24.hxg4+ Kg7 25.Nxg5 Kf8 26.Ne6+ Bxe6 27.dxe6 Rxg4+ 28.Kf1 Rxg1+ 29.Rxg1

---

# Major Open

---

Jack McConnell

Qxe6 After a line such as this the position has simplified quite dramatically. Both kings find themselves fleeing to the queenside for safety, although there White's earlier c4-c5 does some good work to generate an attack. Things stand roughly level.)

**19...Nf6! 20.Nh4?** Things now begin to slip quite dramatically for White.

**20...g5 21.Nf5 Bxf5 22.exf5 g4 23.c5 Rae8 24.Rae1 Qg7 25.Rg1 g3+ 26.fxg3 Qxg3+ 27.Kh1 Ng4!** A beautiful way to finish things off. With this move, White is forced to give up their queen to prevent checkmate, so Ulm resigns. 0-1

Champion, with Alex Coates the sole runner-up. Third equal was shared between several players: Aidan Malcolm, Tracy Tang, Karl Holdo, Levi Paxton, and Joy Ulm.



Going into the final round Coates trailed Wilson by half a point, and after Wilson ended his game with Tang on the top board in a draw Coates needed to win on board two. However, Malcolm held him to a draw, meaning that Dion Wilson became the outright 2024 Major Open

---

# Junior Championship

---

Anya Thurner

The 2024 New Zealand Junior Championships was held every morning from the 3rd to the 9th of January and hosted a total of 46 juniors – many of whom also participated in either the Major Open or the NZ Championship, both of which were held in the afternoon. With four players having a NZCF rating of over 2000 and the Middlegame Foundation offering a \$1000 scholarship to go towards the expenses of the 2024 NZ Junior Champion's chess travels, it was bound to be an exciting, high-stakes tournament. Interestingly, the three highest-rated players from this year's pool (Thomas van der Hoorn, Cohen Young, and Kayden Loke) all originated from Wellington – a theme that resurfaces later in the tournament.

Round one saw three upsets on a total of twenty-two boards: Valentino King won against Olivia Li on board twenty, Joshua Barnes beat Jonothan Hookings on board twelve and, on board one, Harrison Meng held his own and drew against top seed Thomas van der Hoorn. All other results went as expected, with results on the top boards including Cohen Young's win over Jeremy Xu, Kayden Loke's win over Edison Yang, and WCM Nadia Braganza's win over Anne Guo.

Most results were as expected during round two, with the top four boards featuring Young's win over Abigail Rowe

on board one, Loke's win over Dion Wilson on board two, Braganza's win over Tracy Tang on board three, and Leo Baker's win over Jerome Tao on board four. The next four boards, however, were more interesting, with three out of the four games featuring an upset of some kind. Leo Malcom beat Azra Saglam on board five, however, on board six, a draw occurred between Richard Liu and Anya Thurner, and – on boards seven and eight – Martin Zhou and Great Lau beat Karthik Sethuramalingam and Zachary Thirkell respectively. On board twelve, van der Hoorn won against Lauren Ng, bouncing back from his minor hiccup in round one.

Round three held some more interesting results on the top boards, with Luna Xu upsetting Young on board one and Ryan Hwang scoring a win against Braganza on board 3. Other than this, the other top boards went about as expected, with Loke defeating Cazna Campbell on board 2 and Baker beating Lau on board four. After round three, we began to see the standing form, with Baker, Xu, Hwang, Loke and Malcolm all on 3/3, while van der Hoorn followed closely behind on 2.5.

Pairings became quite interesting in round 4, with some of the aforementioned players facing off. Loke beat Malcolm on board one while Baker scored a win against Xu on board 2. This

# Junior Championship

Anya Thurner

round saw the amount of players with a 100% win rate drop from 5 to 2 as van der Hoorn defeated Hwang on board three, continuing his winning streak. Young and Braganza both made comebacks with respective wins against Tang and Saglam.

## Karthik Sethuramalingam - Great Lau

New Zealand Junior Championship 2024, Round 4

Annotations by Anjola Sigbeku

1. **d4 Nf6** 2. **c4 g6** 3. **Nc3 Bg7** 4. **e4 d6** 5. **Be2 O-O** The starting position of the Normal variation of the Kings Indian Defense where Black gives White a space advantage in the centre and tries to use his kingside space advantage to attack the White king. White uses his queenside and central edge to cause problems for Black on the queenside.

6. **h4** White tries to force some kingside weaknesses for Black with h4 and h5. In doing this, Black's usual kingside pawn storm idea will be harder to achieve. White also keeps Black guessing on what direction he will castle.

6... **c5** 7. **d5 e6** 8. **h5 exd5** 9. **h6 Bh8** 10. **exd5 Bf5** 11. **g4** Here White is the one pushing on the kingside rather than Black, the engine doesn't hate this plan as Black has no way of punishing this play. The only drawback for White is that castling on the kingside might no longer be an option as his g and h-pawns are so far advanced.



11... **Bc8** 12. **g5** Again White keeps pushing, wedging his pawn to g5. They have to be very careful of over-extending as Black now has good control of the central dark squares and Black's king is arguably safer than White's.

12... **Nfd7** 13. **Qc2 Nb6** 14. **Bf4 Ne5** Supporting it with Nbd7 was probably the best practical move for Black instead of Nb6.

14... **Bf5** 15. **Qd2 Re8** 16. **Kf1 f6** 17. **Nb5 a6** Big blunder by Black as now they will either be down an exchange and a pawn or have a crippled kingside pawn structure and still be down a pawn.

# Junior Championship

Anya Thurner



18. Nxd6 fxc5 19. Nxe8 Qxe8 20. Bxc5 Na4 21. Re1 Qf7 22. Bd3 Bxd3+ 23. Qxd3 Nxb2 24. Qe4 Nd7 25. Qe6 Re8 Another blunder by Black as the White will be up heaps of material after Qxe8.

26. Qxe8+ Qf8 27. Qxd7 Be5 28. Rxe5 Nd1 29. Re8 Nxf2 30. Qg7# A beautiful mate to seal a purely one-sided game.



Round five saw the two top scorers face off, with a draw occurring between Loke and Baker on board one. Another interesting pairing happened on board two, with Young defeating van der

Hoorn, bringing Young only half a point behind the tournament leaders. A double upset occurred on the lower half of the top four boards, with Dion Wilson and Hwang scoring upsets against Braganza and Malcolm. In other pairings-related news, round five saw a family face-off between Luna Xu and Anne Guo on board six, with Xu defeating her younger sister.

## Ryan Hwang - Leo Malcolm

New Zealand Junior Championship 2024, Round 5

Annotations by Ryan Winter

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Bc5 4. c3 Nf6 5. d4 exd4 6. e5 d5 7. Bb3?! The bishop is worse here than it would be on b5 or e2.



7... Ne4 8. cxd4 Bb6 (8... Bb4+ This is a slightly cleverer move, taking advantage of the fact that White's bishop is on b3 and not b5, and so the c6 knight is not pinned. Black can follow up with ...Bg4 ideas, with a great position.)

9. Nbd2 (9. Bd2 Nxd2 10. Nbx d2 Bg4) 9... Bg4) 9. h3 O-O 10. O-O Ne7 11. Nc3 Bf5



# Junior Championship

Anya Thurner

**12. Re1 h6** A very good move, but does create a hook... (Foreshadowing)

**13. Bc2** The bishop is back in the game.

**13... Ba5 14. Re3!** White has a dream, and he will eventually take on h6 or g7. (14. Nxe4!? Bxe1 15. Nf6+ gxf6 16. Nxe1 Completely ripping open the kingside for the cost of an exchange.)



**14... Nxc3 15. bxc3 b5?** Completely ignoring the possible danger on the kingside.

**16. Nh4! Qd7??** (16... Bxc2 17. Qxc2 And White is significantly better, with Black's bishop locked out of the game and with Rg3 and Ba3 as ideas, but Black is not immediately getting mated, unlike in the game continuation. 17... Qd7 18. Rg3.)

**17. Rg3** (17. Nxf5 Nxf5 18. Rf3 Ne7 19. Bxh6 is also crushing.) **17... Kh7 18. Nxf5 Nxf5 19. Rxc7+!!**



**19... Kxc7 20. Qg4+ Kh8 21. Bxf5 Qc6 22. Qh5 Kg7 23. e6!** Blocking the queen, Black's sole defender, out of the kingside.

**23... Rh8** Hanging mate in one, but there was no hope. If Black tries to run with the king, he loses everything. (23... Kf6 24. Qxh6+ Ke7 25. Bg5+ Ke8 (25... Kd6 26. exf7#) 26. exf7+ Rxf7 27. Qxc6+)

**24. Qxf7#**

## Cohen Young vs Thomas van der Hoorn

New Zealand Junior Championship 2024, Round 5

Annotations by Leo Baker

**1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5!** White decides to avoid Black's famed Kalashnikov, instead opting to steer the game into more positional waters with the increasingly trendy Rossolimo.

**3... Nf6 4. Nc3 Qc7 5. O-O a6 6. Bxc6 dxc6**

# Junior Championship

Anya Thurner

**7. h3?!** Not the most accurate way for White to play, as Black is now permitted to construct a solid central formation with pawns on c5 and e5. This pawn move could also prove to be a weakness, as Black has not castled kingside yet and still maintains the option to attack White's kingside with and g5-g4 thrust. (7. e5 was more accurate, not allowing Black to place his pawn on e5, and after 7... Nd5 8. d3 Bf5 9. Ne4 e6 10. Qe2 White's space advantage is more important than Black's bishop pair in this closed position, and White is slightly better.)

**7... e5!** Exploiting White's unwillingness to play e5, Black plays it himself, and the position is now even slightly in Black's favour



**8. d3 Be6** (8... Rg8!? is another option Black has in the position, preparing g5-g4 with a complex battle.) **9. Ng5 Bd7**  
**10. f4 h6** **11. fxe5 hxg5** **12. exf6 Bxh3?!**



Extremely tempting, but also inaccurate. (12... gxf6 13. Qf3 O-O-O leads to a situation where the kings have castled on opposite flanks, but with the bishop pair and the already open h-file, Black's position is surely easier to play. An interesting line could arise after 14. Qxf6 Rxh3!!, the rook cannot be taken because of 15. gxh3 Qg3+ 16. Kh1 Qxh3+ 17. Kg1 Qg3+ 18. Kh1 Bd6 where White loses all of his pieces due to the threats of ...Qh2 and ...Bh3, and otherwise White must allow Black to infiltrate with ...Qh2+ and ...Qg3+, where the position is terrifying for White albeit objectively equal with precise play.)

**13. Qf3** Of course, 13. gxh3 Qg3+ 14. Kh1 Rxh3# would be pretty embarrassing

**13... Be6** **14. Bxg5 g6** **15. Ne2 O-O-O** **16. Bf4 Bd6** **17. Bxd6 Qxd6** **18. Qf4 Qd7** **19. Qe3 g5?!** (19... Qc7 would have kept Black's disadvantage to a minimum, as

---

# Junior Championship

---

Anya Thurner

after 20. Qxc5 Rh5 21. Qe3 Qh2+ 22. Kf2 Qe5 Black will win back one pawn and keep some threats against the white king)

**20. Qxc5 Qc7 21. Qe3 Qh2+ 22. Kf2 Bg4?**  
Being two pawns down, Black goes all-in on the attack, however, it proves easily diffusible

**23. Ng3!** Cutting off the queen's escape, with the not-so-hidden threat of Rh1, winning a queen.



**23... Rh6** Intending to meet Rh1 with ...Rxf6+, however this move just further entombs the queen and after **24. e5!** Black has no defense against Rh1. (24. Qxg5 was also good, simply winning a third pawn)

**24... Re8 25. Rh1 Rxf6+ 26. exf6 Qxg2+ 27. Kxg2 Rxe3** At this point Tom realised he was down a full rook, and resigned.

Going into the penultimate round, standings were still relatively close, with Loke and Baker leading with 4.5/5 each. Xu, Wilson, Young and Hwang followed closely behind on 4 points with four more players on 3.5/5. On board one, Loke defeated Xu while Baker suffered a defeat to Wilson, placing Loke as the sole leader going into the final round. On board three, Young defeated Hwang while van der Hoorn defeated Sethuramalingam on board four, putting van der Hoorn in the running for a placing as the two other players on 3.5 (Liu and Tao) drew against each other.

The seventh-round results were vital in determining the final standings, with Loke and Young finally facing off. Loke only needed a draw to secure himself first overall, while Young needed a win to secure first for himself. Ultimately, Loke got his draw and became the 2024 NZ Junior Champion. With a win against Wilson, van der Hoorn placed second equal, sharing the title with Young. The Leos found themselves paired against each other on board three, with the game ending in a draw, while another draw occurred on board four between Thirkell and Hwang.

# Junior Championship

Anya Thurner

## Thomas van der Hoorn - Dion Wilson

New Zealand Junior Championship 2024, Round 7

Annotated by Michael Sole

1. **e4 Nc6** A rare move with some interesting transpositions possible in this opening such as mainline e4 e5, the Mexican defence, the French, or more commonly as seen in the game, the Scandinavian.

2. **Nf3 d5** 3. **exd5 Qxd5** 4. **Nc3 Qa5** We have transposed into a more common line with a dubious reputation but is tricky for White to exploit.

5. **Bb5** The best move. White has scored very well in this line and forces Black to slow down and react to White's threats.



5...**Bd7** 6. **d4 a6** 7. **Bxc6 Bxc6** 8. **O-O O-O-O** 9. **Ne5** Gaining a tempo on the misplaced bishop on c6. White has a large advantage here.

9... **Be8** 10. **Qf3 f6** 11. **Nc4 Qh5** 12. **g4** Keeping the queens on the board and not letting Black exchange their way out of their lack of space and development.



12... **Qg6** 13. **Na5** Forcing Black to weaken his pawn cover.

13... **c6** 14. **d5 f5** 15. **dxc6 Bxc6** 16. **Nxc6 fxc6** The fatal mistake. The inbetween move of fxc6 fails to Na7 and Black can't collect the knight. White is now a piece up.

17. **Na7+ Kb8** 18. **Qg3+**



---

# Junior Championship

---

Anya Thurner

**18... e5** (18... Kxa7 19. Be3+ Ka8 20. Qc7 would have led to disaster.)

**19. Be3** The dark-squared weaknesses made by the combination of a6 and c6 are beginning to show.

**19... Bd6 20. Qg2 Ne7 21. Rfd1 Nf5 22. Nc6+** Sacrificing the extra material for an attack.



**22... bxc6 23. Qxc6 Bc7** (23... Nxe3 24. Qb6+ Ka8 25. Qxa6+Kb8 26. Qb6+ Kc8 27. Nb5 Bb8 28. Qxe3) **24. Ba7+** Cleanly winning the rest of Black's pieces.

**24... Kxa7 25. Qxc7+ Ka8 26. Rxd8+ Rxd8 27. Qxd8+ Kb7 28. Qd5+ Ka7 29. Qxe5 h5 30. Qc7+ Ka8 31. Rd1**

The Under 8 Champion title was shared between Lau and Guo, who both finished on 3.5/7 points while Zhou took out the Under 10 title. Hwang and Tang shared the Under 14 title, with both players scoring 4.5/7 points. Luna Xu

took out the NZ Junior Girls Champion title, the NZ Schoolgirls Champion title, and shared the NZ Under 12 Champion title with Liu, as both players ended on 4.5/7. Loke won the Under 16 Champion title and, of course, won the tournament outright on 6/7 points, followed by Young and van der Hoorn who shared second equal on 5.5/7, meaning the final standings of the top three players were the exact inverse of the initial rankings! Congratulations to all of the prizewinners and a huge thank you to the organisers and arbiters for making this tournament possible.

# Rapid Championship

Jack McConnell

The 2024 New Zealand Rapid Championship featured a massive field of 108 players representing several federations. Naturally, many titled players were in attendance including GM Gawain Jones, IMs Stefan Fruebing, Anthony Ker, and Russell Dive, and the newly-crowned New Zealand Classical Champion FM Nicolas Croad.

In the first round, results on the top ten boards were generally consistent with seeding; only 64th seed Ilias Angelo Baker upset his 10th seed opponent FM Robert Smith with a Maroczy Bind in the Sicilian. Top seeds won in the second round too, with Jones taking down Bernard Carpinter on board one, and Fruebing beating William Rui Liu on board two. Ker, Dive, Croad, and FM Michael Steadman also scored wins.

## Ilias Angelo (Leo) Baker - Robert W Smith

New Zealand Rapid Championship 2024, Round 1

Annotations by Ilias Angelo Baker

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. f3!? I was not really in the mood to lose in some sharp line, and was hoping this sideline could surprise my opponent enough for me to get a solid position.



5... Nc6 6. c4 e6 7. Nc3 Be7 8. Be3 Bd7 9. Be2 O-O 10. O-O a6 11. Qd2 Nxd4 12. Bxd4 Bc6 13. Rfd1 Kh8 14. Kh1 At this point, I was quite happy with the position I got out of the opening. White has a nice space advantage and I'm not exactly sure how Black is supposed to challenge it, since ...b5 and ...d5 both seem hard to organise.

14... Qa5 15. a3 Rfd8 16. Qe3 Qh5 17. b4 Be8 18. a4 Nd7 19. Qf2 Bf6 20. a5 Rac8 21. Bxf6 Nxf6 22. Rac1 Kg8 23. Qb6 Winning a pawn

23... Rb8 24. Rxd6 Nd7 25. Qe3 Qh4 26. Rcd1 Ne5 27. Rxd8 Rxd8 28. Rxd8 Qxd8 29. Kg1 Nc6 30. Na2 h6 31. Kf2 e5 32. Qd3 Qd4+ 33. Qxd4 Nxd4 34. Bd3 Ba4 35. Nc3 Bb3 36. Ke3 Nc6 37. Nd5 Kf8 38. Kd2 Nd4 39. b5 axb5 40. cxb5 Bxd5 With little time on the clock, I missed this idea of winning the a5-pawn. Fortunately for me, it has a refutation.

**41. exd5 Nb3+ 42. Kc3 Nxa5 43. b6!**

Suddenly Black's knight is trapped. There is no defence against Kb4-Kxa5, and White will win the knight and the game.



**43... Ke7 44. Kb4 Kd6 45. Kxa5 g6 46. Kb5 f5 47. g4 e4 48. fxe4 fxg4 49. Be2 h5 50. Kc4 g5 51. Kd4**

Black resigns 1-0

Higher seeds began to meet in the third round with Fruebing suffering a defeat on the Black side of a King's Gambit which was essayed by Miles Lee. Croad's tournament also slowed down somewhat as he was held to a draw by Joshua Langford after the latter launched a fearsome kingside attack in the Italian which resulted in perpetual check. Jones continued to win, however, employing a Reti to take down Cohen Young on the first board.

The fourth round saw Steadman and Jones meet on board one, where Jones eventually won a queen and knight

endgame. The encounter on board three between Lee and Dive in an Alekhine went to over 80 moves but Dive eventually triumphed in the bishop endgame, while Nunilon Fulo made it to move 59 in a knight endgame before Anthony Ker forced resignation.

At the close of the first day of the tournament three players, Jones, Ker, and Dive, remained on a perfect score, with Jones due to face Ker in round five. In their encounter, Jones won quickly after Ker accepted a poisoned b-pawn which led to Black's queen getting trapped on the edge of the board and resignation in only twenty moves. Board two saw Dive gradually escort a passed d-pawn up the board, which eventually caused CM Kendrick Zhang to lose material and the game, setting up an encounter between the two frontrunners in the following round.

Dive's game against Jones began as a quiet affair in the Queen's Gambit Declined, but quickly turned tactical after Jones sacrificed a bishop Greek-gift style to draw Dive's king into the open. Dive returned the piece, and though he was eventually forced to give up his queen for a rook and a knight, his king might have been able to find safety in the centre if it weren't for back-to-back pawn sacrifices by Jones which stripped it of all shelter, prompting resignation soon after. On board two Croad made a draw with Ralph Hart,

meaning that Jones had now established a full-point lead over the rest of the field.

## Russell Dive - Gawain Jones

New Zealand Rapid Championship,  
Round 6

Annotated by Jack McConnell

**1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 a6 4.cxd5 exd5** In 2012 John Watson called this position "really just a Queen's Gambit Exchange Variation with the less-than-optimal move ...a6." Of course, in the last ten years, these slow pawn moves have become more regular experiments and have proven to be playable ideas. One particular champion of this line seems to be Dmitry Andreikin, who has contributed several of the most recent games in my database.

**5.Bf4 Nf6 6.e3 Bd6** A typical theme in these QGD lines for Black is that slow moves like ...a6 preserve the opportunity to play ...Bd6 in one tempo and trade a pair of minor pieces if White develops their bishop to f4.

**7.Bg5** White intends to prove that without the dark-squared bishop on its most classical square (e7), Black has a hard time dealing with the pin.

**7...Be6 8.Bd3 Nbd7 9.Nge2 h6 10.Bh4** This is the most common move, but it has actually proved far less successful than Stockfish's first choice Bf4.

**10...0-0 11.Rc1** This move is a novelty, but it seems well-founded, given Black may be planning a ...c7- c5 break at some point as is often the idea in these modern QGD lines.

**11...Re8 12.0-0?** The problem with this move is addressed by 11.h3, which is usually played in place of Dive's novelty. Black is active enough, and White's dark-squared bishop placed awkwardly enough, that a Greek Gift sacrifice is quite possible and strong.

**12...Bxh2+ 13.Kxh2?!** In this case, accepting the sacrifice is worse than playing Kh1 and making peace with the loss of the h-pawn, although things look dire for White there too, so Dive tries the usually correct method of meeting a Greek Gift.

**13...Ng4+ 14.Kg3 g5!** Without this resource to meet Kg3, Black's sacrifice would be unsound.

**15.Bxg5 Qxg5 16.f4** Preventing Black from making use of the discovery by attacking the queen, while also trying to produce an escape square for the White king.

**16...Qg7 17.Kf3 Ndf6 18.Qd2 Bd7!** Jones realises there is ample time for Black to play this slow-looking move, opening up the rook's attack on the e-pawn, which White has no sound way to defend.



**19.Rh1 Rxe3+ 20.Qxe3 Nxe3 21.Kxe3**  
White already suffers from a slight material deficit, but now the second hammer falls.

**21...c5! 22.dxc5 d4+! 23.Kxd4** White's king is drawn out further into the open.

**23...Rd8 24.Bb1 Bb5+ 25.Ke3 Qxg2 26.Rh4 Nd5+ 27.Kd4** And here, realising that White's position is hopeless, with Stockfish calling out a mate in 7, White resigned.

0-1

Croad floated up to board one in the seventh round to face Jones, who once again used the Reti system, with which he had previously beaten Young and Ker. Both sides embarked on sacrificial attacks against each other's kings, but eventually, Jones came out on top as Croad succumbed to pressure on the clock and the board. On board two, Young and Dive faced off with Dive coming out on top, while on board three Ralph Hart made a draw against William Liu. Board four saw Zhang score a win over Fruebing on the White side of a topical line in the Scotch after pressure on an isolated queen's pawn led to a tactic winning the exchange.

Jones proved the Four Knights isn't necessarily so drawish by winning on the Black side against Hart in round eight, while Dive, back to board two,

drew with WIM Layla Timergazi in a fianchetto Nimzo-Indian. On board five Ker faced Young in a rematch of their final-round game in Wellington's Estonian Rapid, where Young won with Black against Ker's preferred Anti-Sicilian line. The players followed their previous game until move 7, where Ker deviated first, and eventually came out on top.

Results in the 8th round meant that Jones secured the title with a round to spare, but there was still plenty to play for in the 9th with three players going into the round tied on 6.5 points. One of these players, Miles Lee, became the final victim of Jones' Reti system on board one, making Jones' score 9 wins from 9 games. Second place was decided in the direct encounter between Dive and William Riu Liu, which was also a Reti, with Dive winning a pawn in a middlegame tactical skirmish which after further intrigue was converted into a winning king and pawn endgame. Clear third was secured by Ker, a half point behind Dive, who won a lengthy game against FM Robert Smith's London System.

The 2024 New Zealand Lightning (blitz) Championship was held on the morning of the 11th of January after the classical portion had finished the day before. Both players from the previous events and new players were featured in the field, with significant additions being GM Gawain Jones and German IM Stefan Fruebing.

In the very first round, three of the pre-tournament favourites unexpectedly lost to lower-rated oppositions. Aidan Malcolm, Jeeva Praveen, and Sarah Sun defeated IMs Anthony Ker, Russell Dive, and FM Nicolas Croad, respectively. FM Ben Hague withdrew from the event at the last minute, thus giving Hayden Steele a free point. Other upsets included Buthsara Hettiarachchi's win over Nigel Metge, Zachary Yu conceding a draw to Eden Xu, Jens Paulsen falling to Joshua Barnes, Luke Chang defeating Anya Thurner, and Winston Weng losing to Adam Harris.

In round two, the remaining top seeds continued to win their games, except for 12th seed Kayden Loke, who drew with Aaron Wang, and 15th seed Ollie Archer, who suffered a defeat to Ryan Hwang. Other upsets included higher-seeded players Justin Wang and Richard Dare drawing with David Zhu and Steele; Praveen, Sun, and Chang continuing their winning streaks against the higher-rated Thomas van der Hoorn,

Cohen Young and Nicholas Winsley, respectively. Ker and Croad were both able to stop the bleeding, with the former drawing with Zachary Yu and the latter beating Abigail Rowe. Dive, however, lost again, this time to Eden Xu. Metge and Weng both also lost again, allowing Great Lau and Didi Xue to get onto the scoreboard.

Heading into round three, 19 players were on 2/2. CM Isabelle Ning was defeated by Praveen, who added another upset to his name. Chang also continued his winning streak, this time defeating Loke. Some other upsets included Steele defeating CM Hao Tang, Archer suffering another upset at the hands of Duncan McDonald, Alex Coates beating Nicholas Winsley, and CM Bill Forster falling to Jerome Tao. Dive avoided another upset, defeating Kisara Hettiarachchi.

In round four, Jones was held to a draw by IM Sravan Renjith on board one, while the other international, Fruebing, also drew, with Nunilon III Fulo on board two. These results allowed FM Daniel Gong and Ralph Hart to emerge as leaders with 4/4 after beating WIM Layla Timergazi and Praveen, respectively. Significant upsets included Euan McDougall defeating Miles Lee, Michael Sole losing to David Zhu, van der Hoorn falling to Emily Gan, and McDonald scoring a win against Briene

Membrere.

The leaders faced off against each other in round five, with Hart coming out on top, defeating Gong and becoming the sole leader on 5/5. By losing, Gong was overtaken by a group of three players now on 4.5/5, namely Jones, Renjith, and Chang, who defeated Fulo, Fruebing, and FM Michael Steadman, respectively. 6 other players apart from Gong were on 4/5, including Oscar Qin, Aaron Wang, Gan, and Praveen who each scored an upset. Dive had now won three games in a row since losing his first two games, improving to a more respectable 3/5.

In round six, Jones beat Hart to overtake the latter along with Renjith, who defeated Chang to improve to 5.5/6. Jones and Renjith were followed closely by five players on 5/6, namely Hart, Gong, Croad, Leo Malcolm, and Praveen, the last of whom scored yet another upset, this time against Fruebing. Another five players on 4.5/6 trailed the aforementioned players. Significant upsets in this round included Hwang beating Timergazi, Daniel Winsley defeating Richard Dare, Cohen Young falling to McDonald, and Martin Zhou beating Joshua Langford.

In round seven, Jones upped the game by defeating Malcolm, while Renjith responded by upsetting Hart, further

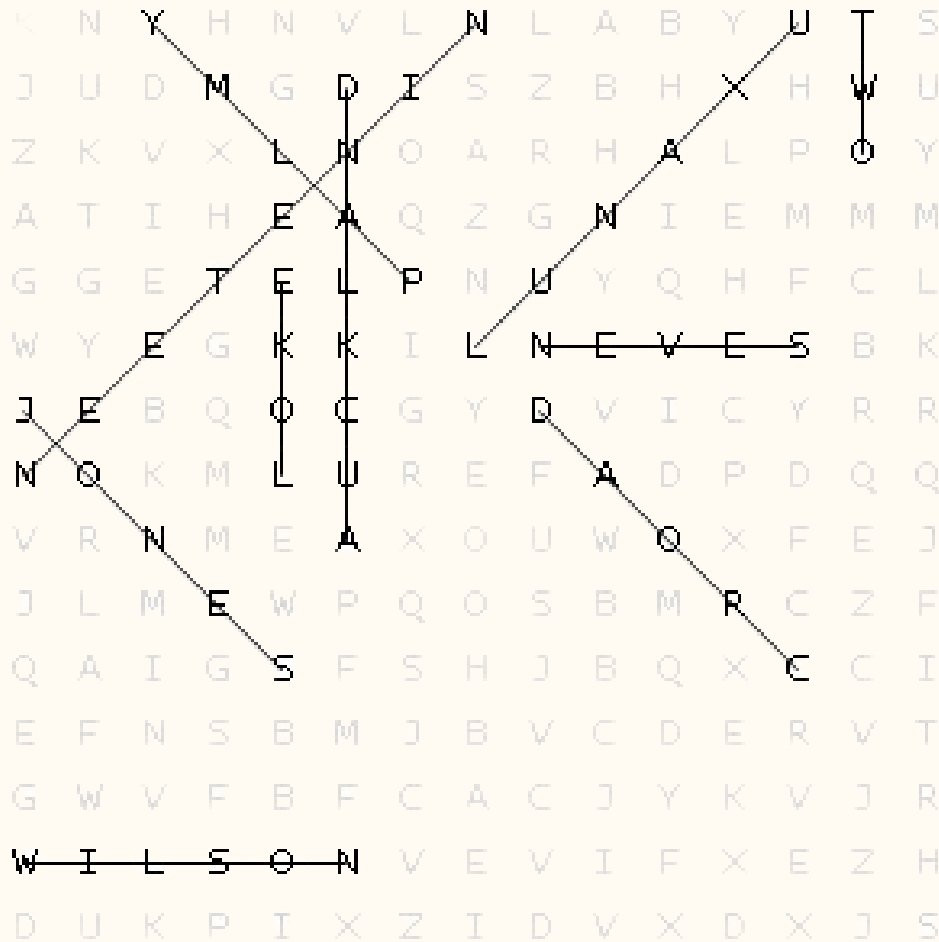
distancing Jones and Renjith from the rest of the field. Only one player, Croad, was still trailing the aforementioned two by half a point, with two more players, Praveen and CM Kendrick Zhang, trailing by a full point. Notably, Eden Xu, earlier a black horse, having beaten three higher-rated players in the first three rounds, got back to the winning ways after suffering two losses in a row by beating Nicholas Winsley. Other upsets were Coates defeating Dare, Leo Baker beating Forster, Weiyang Yu losing to Lau, and Paul Connors winning against Ronald Hamalala.

On board one for the penultimate round, Renjith defeated Croad to keep up with Jones, who beat Gong to continue co-leading with Renjith. They were trailed by only one player, Zhang, who won against Praveen to remain one point behind the leaders. Six players followed behind on 6/8, namely Croad, Ker, Hart, Malcolm, Qin, and van der Hoorn. Malcolm and Qin both scored an upset, against Loke and Sole, respectively. Two female players, Ning and Thi Dieu Mi Le, both beat higher-rated opponents. Eden Xu won again, this time against Aaron Wang.

Heading into the last round, Zhang had to win his game against Jones to have any chance of winning the tournament. However, he lost, allowing Jones to

claim equal first place along with Renjith, who beat Ker to finish on 8.5/9. Following his loss, Zhang was overtaken by van der Hoorn and Hart, who both finished third equal. Van der Hoorn in particular scored a strong upset against Croad. Five players finished on 6.5/9, including Eden Xu, who scored another impressive upset, this time beating Gong, and Praveen, who upset Steadman. Other significant upsets included Zachary Yu beating Loke, Timergazi losing to Coates, Chang defeating William Liu, Weng winning against Lee, and Sarah Sun beating Membrere.

Renjith and Jones were crowned the 2024 New Zealand Lightning Champions, with Hart and van der Hoorn taking third equal. The best U2000 prize was shared by Ning and Zhang. After scoring upsets against many strong oppositions, Praveen and Eden Xu won the U1700 and U1400 prizes, respectively.



## ANSWERS

Surname of 2024 NZ Champion - Croad

Surname of 2024 Junior Champion - Loke

First and Surname of 2024 NZ Schoolgirl Champion - Luna Xu

Surname of 2024 NZ Major Open Champion - Wilson

Surname of 2024 NZ Rapid Championship Winner - Jones

Number of 2024 Blitz Champions - Two

Number of Titled Players in the NZ Championship - Nineteen

Number of Rounds in the Junior Championship - Seven

Slang for City of Congress 2024 - Palmy

City of Congress 2025 - Auckland