

Chess Aotearoa

December 2025 - February 2026

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CHESS AOTEAROA MAGAZINE

Calm After the Storm



Foreword

Following the ever-important New Zealand Congress and the exciting Bob Wade Memorial Masters, the NZ chess circle had a relatively calm month in February.

However, in no way does this mean a lack of things to report on, with the Olympiad teams being recently announced and a plethora of international coverage of Bob Wade. We encourage our readers to check out the Chessbase and ECF articles in particular.

Without further ado, dive into your usual puzzles, reports, and more!

Enjoy!
-Weiyang Yu



2026 Olympiad Teams Announced!

A huge congratulations to the players selected to represent New Zealand at the 2026 Olympiad in Samarkand, Uzbekistan! Find the list of successful applicants on page 6!

Published seasonally; March, June, September, December

Please send any article submissions to chessmagnominations@gmail.com for consideration.

For any issues or queries regarding the puzzles, contact Felix Xie at felix2008xie@hotmail.com. Answers can be found at the back of this edition.

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Credit for the cover photo goes to Weiyang Yu.

On the cover

The special trophy made of pounamu for the winner of Bob Wade Memorial Masters - GM Mickey Adams.

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Olympiad Teams Announced!

Congratulations to the following players who have been announced as the players representing New Zealand at the 2026 Chess Olympiad in Samarkand, Uzbekistan!

Open Team (in board order)

1/ IM Felix Xie

2/ IM Sravan Renjith

3/ IM Tom Middelburg

4/ FM Daniel Gong

5/ FM Daqi Mao

Non-travelling reserve: CM Leo Baker

Women's team (in board order)

1/ WIM Isabelle Ning

2/ WFM Anya Thurner

3/ WFM Nadia Braganza

4/ WCM Sarah Sun

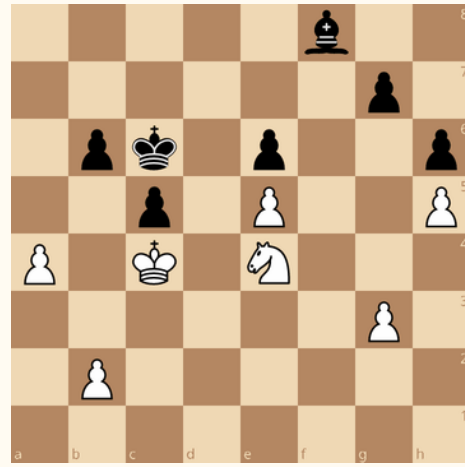
5/ WCM Emily Gan

Non-travelling reserve: WCM Luna Xu

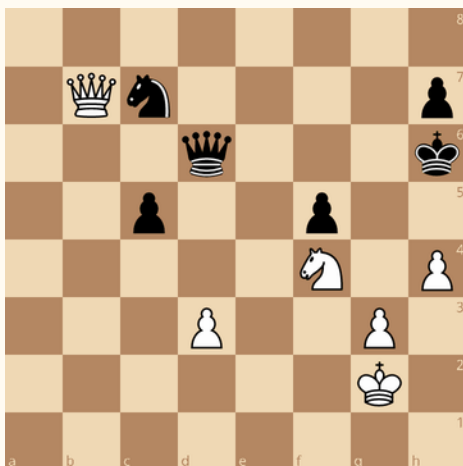
The Open and Women's teams' captains remain GM Dejan Bojkov and IM Herman Van Riemsdijk. This year, Paul McAvoy will be the Head of Delegation.



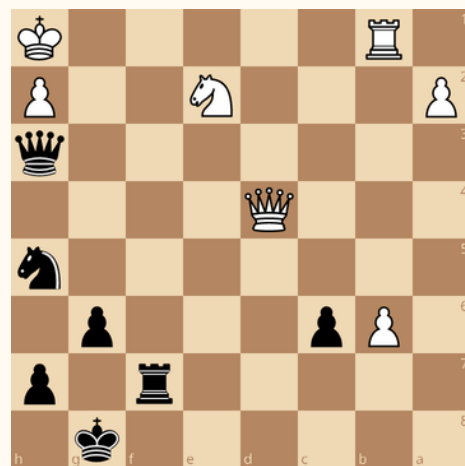
(1) White to move and win
Amonatov, F. - Mohammad, N.



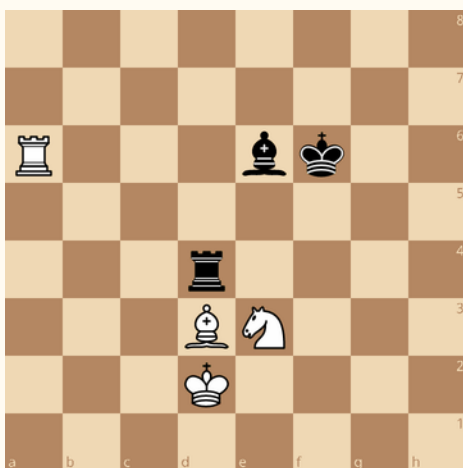
(2) White to move and win
Online game



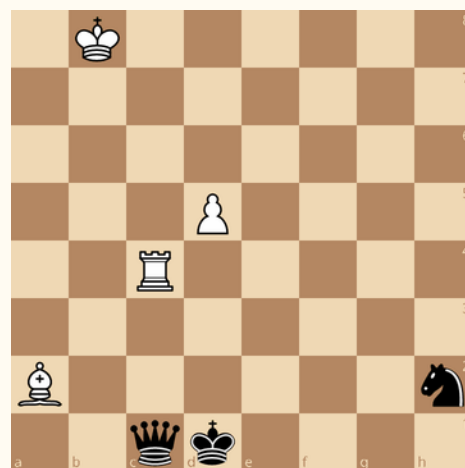
(3) White to move and win
Schwabeneder, F. - Nayhebaver, M.



(4) Black to move and win
Salomon, J. - Berg, E.



(5) White to move and win
Checa, N. - Arabidze, M.



(6) White to move and win
Study

Recent Tournaments

Anya Thurner

Wellington Junior Rapid 2025

6th December 2025

Wellington Bridge Club, Wellington

15+5 6 round Swisses (4 divisions)

1st place (6/6): Matthew Keith

NZ Major Open 2026

2nd - 10th January 2026

Ascot Park Hotel, Invercargill

40/90 + 30mins + 30 9-round Swiss

1st place (7.5/9): Elena Moshakova

NZ Blitz Championship 2026

11th January 2026

Ascot Park Hotel, Invercargill

3+2 9-round Swiss

1st= (8/9): FM Felix Xie, GM Daniel Fernandez

Bob Wade Memorial Masters 2026

15th - 21st January 2026

Waipuna Hotel and Conference Centre, Auckland

90+30 10-player round robin

1st place (6.5/9): GM Michael Adams

Peter Weir Memorial Masters 2026

15th - 21st January 2026

Waipuna Hotel and Conference Centre, Auckland

90+30 10-player round robin

1st place (9/9): CM Leo Baker

Hawke's Bay Rapid 2026

15th February 2026

15 Cathedral Lane, Napier

25+5 6-round Swisses (A, B, Junior)

1st place (6/6): IM Felix Xie

NZ Championship 2026

2nd - 10th January 2026

Ascot Park Hotel, Invercargill

40/90 + 30mins + 30 9-round Swiss

1st= (7.5/9): GM Daniel Fernandez, GM Jacek Stopa, FM Felix Xie

NZ Junior Championship 2026

3rd - 9th January 2026

Ascot Park Hotel, Invercargill

60+30 7-round Swiss

1st place (6/7): Richard Liu

NZ Rapid Championship 2026

11th - 12th January 2026

Ascot Park Hotel, Invercargill

25+5 9-round Swiss

1st= (7.5/9): FM Felix Xie, GM Daniel Fernandez

Hilton Bennett Memorial Masters 2026

15th - 21st January 2026

Waipuna Hotel and Conference Centre, Auckland

90+30 10-player round robin

1st place (9.5/11): FM Robert Smith

Arthur Pomeroy Memorial Masters 2026

15th - 21st January 2026

Waipuna Hotel and Conference Centre, Auckland

90+30 10-player round robin

1st place (9.5/11): Srirama Nimmakayala

20th Bay of Plenty Rapid

28th February 2026

Mount Bible Chapel, Arataki, Mt Maunganui

25+5 6-round Swisses (A, B)

1st place (6/6): FM Alphaeus Ang

Upcoming Tournaments

Anya Thurner

Otago Open Rapid Open

1st March 2026

Otago Chess Club, Dunedin

20+5 6-round Swiss

NZCF rated

Auckland Chess Academy Rapid Masters

March

14th March 2026

Freemans Bay Community Center,,
Auckland

15+5 6-round Swisses (Open, Under 1500)

FIDE and NZCF rated

Chessroad Tournament March 2025

28th March 2026

Mission Hall, Glenfield Community Center

10+5 5-round Swiss

NZCF rated

Oceania Youth Chess Championships

9th - 13th April 2026

Christchurch Town Hall

90+30 9-round Swisses (Open and Girls
Under 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20)

FIDE and NZCF rated

Summit Rapid (May)

5th April 2026

Mt Eden Memorial Hall, Auckland

25+5 6-round Swisses (Open, Under 1600,
Under 1000)

FIDE and NZCF rated

48th Trusts Open

30th May - 1st June 2026

Te Pai Center, Henderson, Auckland

90+30 6-round Swisses (A, B, C, D)

FIDE and NZCF rated

Summit Rapid (March)

8th March 2026

Mount Eden Memorial Hall, Auckland

25+5 6-round Swisses (Open, Under 1600,
Under 1000)

FIDE and NZCF rated

2026 Latvian Tournament

21st March 2026

Te Tuhi, 21 William Roberts Road,
Pakuranga, Auckland

25+5 6-round Swisses (A, B, C, D)

FIDE and NZCF rated

Summit Rapid (April)

5th April 2026

Mt Eden Memorial Hall, Auckland

25+5 6-round Swisses (Open, Under 1600,
Under 1000)

FIDE and NZCF rated

Auckland Chess Academy Rapid Masters May

9th May 2026

Freemans Bay Community Center,
Auckland

15+5 6-round Swisses (Open, Under 1500)

FIDE and NZCF rated

Arie Nijman Memorial 2026

15th-17th May 2026

Crockfords Bridge Club, Christchurch

90+30 6-round Swiss (Open, Under 1500)

FIDE and NZCF rated

As someone who has been playing chess for the majority of her life, I have heard and seen many different tools, pieces of advice, and little tips and tricks recommended by various people for chess improvement. With the huge rise of newcomers to the New Zealand chess scene, and many incredible results from our top players, I thought it would be a great time to ask some of these high-scoring players along with a couple coaches their opinions on some of the improvement techniques I've come across throughout my chess career. A big thank you to GM Dejan Bojkov, IM Felix Xie, CM Leo Baker, FM Kendrick Zhang, FM Ollie Archer, and FIDE Instructor Christoph Thurner for sharing with us their thoughts for this article.

Puzzles to train tactics without time pressure

4.67/5



Puzzles to train tactics with time pressure (e.g. puzzle rush)

3/5



Puzzles to train tactics with an opponent (e.g. puzzle battles or races)

3/5



Starting off with some puzzles! Unsurprisingly (to myself at least), the puzzles without time pressure ranked the highest with most giving it 5/5, while the other two methods got more mixed reviews, ranging between 2 and 4 stars, with both averaging out at a solid 3. 'A mix between non-timed and timed puzzles are best,' says Xie, 'non-timed to train long calculation skills and timed to train intuition and speed.' The difference between puzzles is also pointed out by Zhang, who agrees that 'puzzles are key', but that puzzle battle and rush should be carried out in moderation as they are best suited for improving scanning skills. Thoughts from others included that the puzzles should be challenging and that puzzles were the most critical to lower rated players, but have 'diminishing returns the higher rated you get'. Another common flaw cited was that in a puzzle, you are told that there is, or know that there is a clear and obvious answer, whereas you don't get the same clarification in a real game.

Blitz to help with time management issues

2.67/5



This was something I had heard about when I was younger, and here it seems that the opinions on it varied, though they were evidently skewed towards

the lower scores. With time management being an issue faced by many players in the chess community, and while this might work for some, it doesn't seem to be the most popular way of resolving it, with one player expressing that they had tried this and it hadn't worked for them. Bojkov gives setting time goals as a better alternative (e.g. setting a goal for yourself to still have at least ten minutes left on move 40).

Getting over the board experience rather than only playing online

4.67/5



This I included as a disparity between some player's online and over the board performance is something I've noticed particularly over the Covid years. 'OTB play offers a lot more experience than online ever will.' says Xie, 'plus you will find yourself taking it a lot more seriously.' I personally find that to be especially true. Sitting behind a computer playing for a rating which ultimately means nothing feels very different to sitting in a tournament hall face to face with your opponent. Zhang also points out the differences between the two. 'It's a different feel, and often time control. An ideal way is to play tournaments over the board and practice online.' Of course, while over the board is what counts, online chess is

a more convenient tool to help with practice. Despite this, there seems to be no disagreement that playing over the board is quite beneficial in improving your over the board chess.

Keeping physically active to help with focus during games

4.33/5



This is a piece of advice I come across often, and received generally positive reviews here. Comments on this included exercise raising cognitive abilities and that many world champions are 'very avid sports people', as Thurner describes, a fact which 'pays off in the 5th hour of any game!'

Bringing chocolates/small snacks for energy during the game

4.17/5



Again, something very common which I often see (and do!). With generally positive ratings. It is however important to note that by the responses, it seems to have varying levels of importance to different people, as Xie points out. Snacking on something during the game can help maintain blood sugar levels, helping with focus. As for what foods you should bring, Bojkov suggests complex carbs (like dates) and nuts, also highlighting the importance of drinking

lots of water.

Memorising opening theory

4/5



Of course, as Baker agrees, knowing openings is important. However, there seems to be more varied opinions on this form of study. Most of these comments surround going deeper than just memorising openings, with things like prioritising understanding over memorising and studying it together with the link towards the middlegame and endgame being mentioned. Archer, who comments that memorising opening theory should be done in conjunction with studying master games, also mentions the drawbacks of the Chessable style spaced opening memorisation - it draws more focus to the rote memorisation of moves rather than the ideas behind them. He highlights a pattern he has noticed of players who invest lots of time into Chessable lines tending to mix lines up more often as they are playing the 'right' move without putting enough thought behind it, likely as a result of being conditioned to memorise and play what they think they know rather than considering why those moves are good. Zhang also brings up that while it is certainly important, it is more important at higher levels, and that making an error in opening theory

doesn't necessarily equate to a lost game.

Memorising famous/instructive games

2.83/5



This was something that I had heard when I was younger, but never tried - I had thought that it was a waste of time and that it was more important to analyse them and understand the ideas. As it turns out, I was not alone in these thoughts, with most of the comments on this method suggesting that memorising and understanding the key ideas is more important.

Studying master games

5/5



As I expected, this (despite having similarities to memorising games) scored significantly higher with all participants giving it a perfect score. Comments on this include its helpfulness in understanding things like opening ideas. Thurner and Bojkov both also had ideas on how to do this, with Thurner suggesting focusing on classical games and Bojkov suggesting finding games annotated by the players themselves. Moving on to the other two methods with 5 stars...

Studying common endgames

5/5



Again, completely unsurprising to me. Many agree that it is very important to know the basic endgames and typical methods in them. In the endgame there is also the potential for time trouble considerations to factor in. As Thurner points out, often once you reach an endgame you won't have as much time left and might have to play on increment. In situations like this, it's easy to see why solid knowledge of how to play could be crucial in deciding what the final result will be. Zhang, however, points out that while of course studying the basic king+pawn and rook+pawn endgames are very useful, for players who aren't professionals the efficiency of studying the more niche and uncommon endgames drops. 'How many times do you see a theoretical endgame in your games?' he comments. 'And for non-theoretical [endgames], which are much more common, usually you just get a better feeling over time, while studying helps, it's very time consuming and not practical for non-professionals.' From these comments, it becomes quite clear that studying the common endgames is a very useful thing to do and is highly valued by our panel.

Analysing your games

5/5



Our final piece of advice - with a 5 star score, this is undoubtedly an extremely beneficial thing to do. As Xie points out, this is extremely important, no matter what the result is. Don't fall into the trap of believing that just because you won, you don't need to take a closer look at the game. Bojkov suggests analysing without computers and going as deep as you can. He also highlights the importance of being honest with yourself, something which I personally quite agree with. It is a lot easier to play off a loss as just a bad day or just a silly mistake without really thinking about if there is a more fundamental issue behind the result. Zhang comments on this, stating that 'finding your mistakes and improving on them is the single most efficient way to locate and overcome your own specific short and long term problems [...] both on the board and psychologically'.

And so we reach the end of our article. Again, a big thank you to all the players and coaches who made this article possible and I hope this is beneficial to our readers looking to improve their game!

For the second year running, the North Island Rapid Championships returned to Wellington last November. Featuring many strong talents, this year's edition gathered 48 participants. Last year's edition saw IM Anthony Ker take a massive victory with a perfect score. The question now was: would he be able to do it again?

The event kicked off on the 29th of November. A short schedule of only six rounds meant that a winner would be crowned that very evening. The top seeds all struck in round one, leaving us only with two upsets. Shockingly, newcomer Jun Lee defeated FM Nicolas Croad on board 2 in a complex Jobava London. Quickly clearing his pieces on the queenside and castling, Lee played an aggressive, open approach with the White pieces. Naturally, Croad navigated the opening quite well, showcasing his extensive theoretical knowledge. The position was equal, but White's position felt much easier to play with the simple plan of developing his remaining pieces to their natural squares. Black's compensation lay in the open lines and lack of defenders on the queenside and surrounding White's king. Black played flawlessly throughout most of the game, even winning a pawn with a nice tactic. However, a single passive move allowed White to obtain monstrous activity in the center with his rooks. The pressure kept building on

Black until a wrong trade allowed White to make his way into a winning endgame.

Meanwhile, on board 12, young Sreenikesh Miriyala beat Ian Sellen with the White pieces. Sellen had obtained the bishop pair, but Miriyala had closed up the position and managed to creep in and win a pawn. Once White managed to lodge his knight into the many holes in Black's position, the game was basically over.

Round two was no less exciting. Ker, Ryan Winter, and FM Ollie Archer continued their winning ways with another round of convincing wins. On board four, WIM Layla Timergazi faced Anjola Sigbeku, a strong talent who is relatively new to the competitive scene. The game featured a Grünfeld Defense. Sigbeku, playing with the black pieces, carried the game well, not allowing the experienced WIM to break through. The game remained equal for a long time until both players got low on time, which led to a back-and-forth rally resulting in a lot of exercise for the evaluation bar. Black picked up one pawn and another in the ensuing chaos, but White was not giving up, placing her rook on the seventh rank and restricting the enemy king. Both players were down to seconds, and Black was the first to make a mistake, losing a piece. However, the game remained in equality as Black had a phalanx of pawns in return. But, as always in chess, the last person to blunder loses. White captured a poisoned pawn, and this

distracted from the blockade on Black's pawns, which were free to run. This was an amazing win for Sigbeku, culminating in a thrilling finish.

On the following board, CM Thomas van der Hoorn was held to a draw by new Auckland arrival, Xxavier Willoughby-Ansell. Fellow Auckland, Benjamin Guo, had an impressive showing against Kayden Loke. Guo played a convincing game, navigating Loke's unorthodox opening strategy well and winning a pawn with a nice tactic.

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On board nine, Nicholas Winsley avenged Croad by beating Lee.

After two rounds, the tournament was gradually heating up. The top seeds now faced some closer competition. Despite this, the top three boards were won by the favorites. All three games were decided by game-ending blunders. On board four, Edward Tanoi gave CM Cohen Young some trouble out of the opening. Tanoi, playing with the black

pieces, opened up his kingside in the Kalashnikov and went into an intriguing dynamic position, where Black had good chances. However, a sacrifice gone awry gifted Young the point.

At the halfway point, Ker, Winter, Archer, Young, and Matthew Keith were leading with a perfect score. The fourth round was one of the crucial rounds of the tournament as Archer faced Ker and Young faced Winter.

Archer vs Ker was truly a spectacle of a game. Both sides went all out in an opposite-side castling battle. Black's attack was faster, but White's amazing piece coordination meant that he was able to bring his pieces back to the queenside to defend, and eventually win some material by targeting an overextended pawn.

FM Archer, Ollie (1-0) IM Ker, Anthony

North Island Rapid 2025

Round 5

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. f3
Archer chooses the f3 Nimzo, knowing Ker would go into the following line.

4... d5 5. a3 Be7

(5... Bxc3+ This is the mainline. 5.Be7 has only been played in 17% of games arising from this position.)

6. e4 White's idea of f3 is to enable e4 and g4 pushes in the future.

6... dxe4 7. fxe4 White now has a big centre which cannot be left unchallenged.



7... e5 8. d5 White has a lot of space, but the dark squares in the centre are currently weak. Black will need to try break the center via c6 at some point.

8...Bc5 9. Nf3 Bg4 10.h3 Bxf3 White chops off the knight relieving some pressure on the e5 pawn.

11. Qxf3 Nbd7 12. Bg5 a5 Black tries to gain space on the queenside and prevent b4, but this is a mistake. Black needed to delay White from castling, as this is what enables White to launch his pawns forward on the kingside. The correct plan would be to play Bd4 and threaten to take the knight on c3, making castling long awkward. Giving White an extra move now enables him to instantly castle, and now the idea of

Bd4-c3 doesn't work because White has Nb5, and the b2 pawn is now defended. White can still castle after moving the knight, but the bishop clearing the c5 square means Black can play c5.

(12... Bd4 13. Ne2 O-O 14. O-O-O c5)

13. O-O-O O-O (13... Bd4 14. Nb5) 14. g4 White starts his attack.

14... c6 15. Kb1 a4 16. Ne2 White reroutes his knight to the kingside, potentially to f5 via g3. However, this allows black to generate some counterplay as White's control of the queenside is compromised. One of the biggest contributors of White's advantage is Black's inability to quickly expand on the queenside.



16... Qb6 This is slightly inaccurate as now after cxd5 White can take back with the c-pawn and there is no b5.

(16... cxd5 17.exd5 (17. cxd5 b5 White's control of the b5 square was compromised after Ne2, which allows

Black to start his own, potentially more potent, attack. 17... Qb6 18. Ng3 White is fine here, but Black's pieces are now more coordinated.)

17. Ng3 Bd4 18. Rh2 A very nice move defending the 2nd rank.

18... cxd5 19. cxd5 White's passed pawn is a huge asset.

19... Rfc8 20. Nf5 White establishes a dominant knight outpost

20... Rc3 Only move. Black needs to play actively to stop White from storming the kingside. This move threatens Rxa3 and the queen; White is forced to play Rd3 or lose a pawn. Black does not want to trade the rooks as it lessens his attacking possibilities but is forced to as the rook has no good squares.



21. Rd3 White's pieces are so well coordinated that despite most of them being on the kingside, they can still play defensive roles.

21... Rxd3 22. Bxd3 Nc5 One slow move and White starts taking over. Bc5 threatening Bxa3 was the only move.

(22... Bc5 This threatens the a3 pawn. White is still better, but he has to trade some pieces to maintain the advantage, which relieves some of the pressure. 23. Rc2

(23. Kd1 Bxa3 24. bxa3 Qg1+)

(23. Bxf6 Nxf6 24. g5 Ne8 25. Kd1 Bf8)

(23. Bf1 Bxa3 24. Bxf6 Nxf6 25. g5 Nd7 26. Qxa3 Qg1 27. Rc2 Qxf1+)

23... Bxa3)

23. Rc2 Nfd7 24. Bc4 Preparing to open the a2-g8 diagonal.

24... f6 25. Bc1 Nb3 26. Bxb3

(26. d6+ Kh8 27. Bxb3 axb3 28. Rc7 The engine suggests this to provide a bigger advantage as the rook poses a lot of problems on the 7th rank. With the instant Bxb3, White doesn't get d6+ with a tempo and will not be able to place the rook on c7 at the end of the line.)

26... axb3 Black's attack needs to succeed if he wants to win this game. Any endgame should be favorable for White as the d6 pawn is such a huge asset. The problem, however, is that White's defense is quite strong, and Black has no opportunity to break through.

27. Rc4 Only move! White's control over

the c-file is critical to restrain Black. This is a great example of a dynamic advantage in which time is a huge factor.



(27. Rd2 If Black just gets a little bit of time, he is able to push White back and take the game back into equal territory. g6 28. Ng3 Qb5)

27... Bc5 28. Rc3 Black has no way of defending the b3 pawn and with the b3 pawn gone White can turn his dynamic advantage into a static advantage in the form of material.

28... Ra5 29. Rxb3 Rb5 30. Ka2 g6 31. Ng3 Bd6 32. Rxb5 Qxb5 33. Qb3 Qa6 34. Be3 Nc5 35. Bxc5 White chops off the Black knight as it is the only minor piece which can target White's light squared pawns.

35...Bxc5 36. d6+ Kf8 37. d7 Ke7 This seems very natural, but the correct way to defend was to cover the promotion square with the bishop. As well as

covering promotion, the bishop moves to a safer square.

(37... Be7 38. Qd5 Bd8)

38. Qd5 Gaining a tempo on the bishop.

38... Bd6 The other drawback of bringing the king into the center is that it allows White to immediately attack f5.

39. Ne2 It seems like the knight can't be taken as the White queen infiltrates, but miraculously, Black can survive. In fact he must take the knight.

(39. Qg8 Kxd7 40. Qxh7+ The d-pawn did not have much potential, so White's strategy is to trade it for the h-pawn. Now all he needs to do it trade queens taking the game into a good-knight bad-bishop endgame. 40... Be7 41. Qf7 White needs to cover the c4 square. (41. Qxg6 Qc4+ 42. Kal Qc1+ 43. Ka2 Qc4+))

39... Kxd7

(39... Qxe2 40. Qxd6+ Kxd6 41. d8=Q+ Both players probably saw this. 41... Kc5 This crazy move, bringing the king forward is the only way to survive. Black tries to walk the king to the center and kingside picking up pawns.

42. Qc7+

(42. Qa5+ Kd4 43. Qd5+ Ke3 44. Qxb7 Qc4+ 45. Qb3+ Qxb3+ 46. Kxb3 Kxe4)

42... Kd4 43. Qxb7 Qxe4)

40. Nc3 Despite giving up the pawn, White still has a big advantage because he can easily pick up Black's h-pawn.

40... Qc6 41. Qxc6+ Trading the queen's loses almost all of White's advantage. He is no longer a pawn up, and Black has a clear drawing plan of bringing his king to e6 and playing f5.

(41.Qf7+ Be7 42. Qxh7 Qc4+ 43. Kd1 Qf1+ 44. Nb1 White probably didn't go for this because the pieces seems quite inactive.)

41... Kxc6 42. b4 White entertains the possibility of creating an outside passed pawn on the queenside.

42... Bc7 Black needed to create counterplay on the kingside with the f5 push. Unfortunately, under time pressure, Black chooses the wrong path. Bc7 takes the bishop's eye off the b4 pawn, allowing a4 to be played quickly.



(42... Kd7 43. Kb3 (43. a4 Bxb4) 43... Ke6

44. Kc4 (44. a4 f5 45. gxf5+ gxf5 46. exf5+ Kxf5 47. b5 e4 48. a5 Kf4 49. a6 bxa6 50. bxa6 Bb8) 44... f5)

43. a4 Bb6 44. Kb3 Bd4 The bishop seems attractive on d5 but in reality it is actually not doing anything more than it was on b6. This gives White time to start attacking the f6 pawn.

45. Ne2

(45. Nd5 White should have immediately gone after the f6 pawn. 45... f5 46. gxf5 gxf5 47. Ne7+ Kd7 48. Nxf5)

45... Bf2 46. Kc4 b6 47. Nc3 Be1 The Black bishop can't hit any of White's pawns.

48. b5+ Kb7 Inaccuracy. Kd6 was best.

49. Nd5 Bh4 50. Nb4 Kc7 51. Kd5 The king now infiltrates.

51... Kd7 52. Nd3 Bg3 53. a5 bxa5 54. b6 a4 55. Nc5+ Kc8 56. Kc6 Bf2 57. b7+ Kb8 58. Nd7+ 1-0

Young's game against Winter also featured an opposite-side castling battle, this time in the Sicilian Defense. Both sides launched an attack on each other's kings, but Winter's pieces were much more coordinated, while White's pieces were tangled up and overloaded. This gave Black a slight advantage, which was aggravated by a blunder that allowed

Black to win material by exploiting White's overloaded queen and lack of defense of the crucial c2 pawn.

Meanwhile, Keith played van der Hoorn with the Black pieces. This was the game that attracted the most spectators of the tournament. Both sides played really well out of the opening and middlegame. Late into the middle game, White started pushing, but the advantage fizzled out. In the featured endgame, both sides had a queen and three pawns each. The crucial detail was that Black had an outside passed pawn. Nonetheless, it was still drawn, but both players were now down to seconds! Keith walked his king all the way from g8 to b2 amidst a barrage of checks from the white queen. Queen endgames are some of the most complicated types of endgames in chess and require extreme precision. Precision, which is almost impossible with mere seconds on the clock. Unfortunately for White, a small inaccuracy gave Black the win.

On board four and five, Croad and Timergazi scored wins over Daniel Winsley and CM Leighton Nicholls, placing them only a point behind the leaders.

In the penultimate round, the two Wellington College Boys, Keith and Archer, battled on board one. The game was relatively uneventful, ending in a

calm draw. Board two was a similar story; Loke and Winter also made a quick draw. This was great for the players on 3/4 points. Ker, Croad, Timergazi, and Young all won their games to only be half a point behind the lead going into the final round.

Going into the final round, Archer, Winter, and Keith were on 4.5/5 points, ahead of Timergazi, Croad, Ker and Cohen half a point behind.

On the top board, Archer and Winter made a draw. This meant that if Keith could beat Timergazi with the black pieces, he could jump the field and come in clear first with an extra half point. Everything seemed to be going his way as he obtained a significant advantage out of the opening, being a clean pawn up. But disaster struck as Black blundered and White won an exchange in an endgame. This completely flipped the script. It was now Timergazi's game to win. The conversion was clean, and Timergazi joined Archer and Winter in tied first. Now Croad, Ker, and Young were fighting to join the lead. On board three, the two legends, Croad and Ker, clashed in a fiery encounter. Ker employed his trademark accelerated dragon against Croad's 1.e4, and with some thematic dragon-style play, he obtained amazing piece activity. White defended well and made the right trades to force the game into an equal endgame. Mistakes were made by both sides, but Croad narrowly emerged on

top.

The final game that would determine the standings was Willoughby-Ansell vs Young on board four. Early on, the theme of the game was set with a very closed position. White tried to execute a kingside initiative, but Black's defense was uncrackable. Pieces were traded, and both sides shuffled, making slow, improving moves. White's earlier initiative had semi-opened the h-file, favoring Black in the resulting endgame. Black made full use of this commodity by doubling his rooks and putting pressure on the h2 pawn while simultaneously taking space on the queenside. White's pieces were forced back, and he didn't have any counterplay. Slowly but surely, Black brought in his knight to reinforce the assault on the White king. Once the h-pawn fell, it was game over.

Meanwhile, some family drama was taking place as the two Winsley brothers clashed. This time, it was Daniel Winsley who had the bragging rights. Guo also beat Sigbeku to put him in tied first in the U1800 grade along with Winsley.

Overall, we had five joint North Island Rapid Champions: FM Nicolas Croad, Ryan Winter, FM Ollie Archer, WIM Layla Timergazi, and CM Cohen Young (5/6). Honorable mention to Matthew

Keith, who narrowly missed out by half a point.

Daniel Winsley and Benjamin Guo won the U1800 section with 4/6. Xxavier Willoughby-Ansell, Zachary He, and Muhammad Mangera finished second with 3.5/6.

2025 was a year to remember for Wellington chess players, with a whole host of opportunities opening to play chess in the capital. There was the traditional Wellington open followed by many tournaments in and around Wellington, such as the Kapiti and Upper Hutt Rapids, the North Island Rapid and and the new Capital Chess Classic. While for our junior players, there was the recently started Kapiti Junior Rapid, which has proved to be very popular and successful in attracting Wellington's top titled juniors. The tournament was the creation of Gordan Lyall, one of the best coaches, arbiters and managers for chess around New Zealand.

Seeing this success, Gordon decided it was time to start the latest Wellington tournament, the Wellington Junior Rapid. A brand new tournament for players of all levels under the age of 20. The inaugural edition was attended by a great show of players, with the likes of FM Ollie Archer, CM Cohen Young, CM Thomas van der Hoorn and Matthew Keith making out the top of the field. . The tournament was split into three categories, the Open, the Senior and the Junior sections. The stage was set for a wonderful day of chess

Round one started with all the first four boards winning their games. First Ollie Archer on board one beat Jin Tan in a

clinical London where he got an advantage in the opening and never looked back. On board two Thomas played an amazing game in his favoured Queen's Indian Defense where he slowly built an advantage from the opening eventually turning it into a material advantage and winning the game. On Board three Cohen played me in a Ruy Lopez. As white he easily got an advantage out of the opening and performed a deadly kingside attack that secured the full point with Cohen ending the game with a bishop sacrifice. On Board four Matthew Keith beat Nathan Grace in the Noteboom variation of the Slav Defence, where he gained the advantage out of the opening and fought against strong resistance from his opponent during the middle game, before eventually winning two pawns and delivering checkmate. Arguably the biggest result of the round was the young Miriyala Sreeniksha, or just Sree as called by everyone, beat none other than Luke Chang in a Pirc. Sree got into a tense middlegame before eventually winning a stunning endgame up a pawn to take down the third seed.

Round two saw Ollie take down Joshua Lieser on board one in an exchange Caro-Kann where he managed to get a winning rook endgame with a few passed pawns and eventually performed checkmate, though it was still an extremely spirited defense by Josh to even hold an

advantage briefly through the game. On board two Thomas took down Abhinand Rajendran in a Vienna, building a passed pawn on the E-file eventually winning a rook for it and winning the game. On board three Cohen performed a clinical performance in an Alapin to win his game against Zachary He. On board four Matthew beat Sree with an English, playing a closed position he orchestrated a kingside attack, winning material then finally the game soon. On board six another upset with Nenian Bakiyaraj taking down Luke in a QGE by playing some opportunistic chess on the kingside to win by forced checkmate. Boards seven and eight saw wins for the higher rated players Finn O'Brien and Hoorad Farrokh.

Round three saw the first round where the top competitors clashed. On board one Matthew Keith took down top seed Ollie Archer in a clinical display, a Queens Gambit where he managed to eventually win an exchange for two pawns to head into a favourable endgame which he converted expertly to win a fabulous game. On board two Stanley Fitton was playing a lovely game against Thomas holding an advantage most of the game, until sadly hanging a piece to a pawn fork, losing the game. On board three Nenian similarly hung a piece to a pawn fork out of the opening, losing the game to Cohen Young.

Next up in round four we saw another clash at the top board between two heavyweights, CM Cohen Young and CM Thomas van der Hoorn. Here we saw a Sveshnikov Sicilian where a tense middlegame ensued. Cohen missed a skewer on his Queen and Bishop on the b6 and c6 squares, and against such a strong opponent being down a full piece is usually lights out. But just 4 moves later Thomas blundered straight back, hanging a full knight to a double attack on his backrank and knight, missing the difficult defensive moves required to save the piece. After a third match ending blunder by Cohen, he was forced to give up a queen for a rook, ending the game. Game two saw Matthew Keith take on Stanley Fitton in a Caro-Kann. Out of the opening Matthew seemed to have an advantage before Stanley with some good play fought back to an advantageous position. Matthew though, as sharp as ever, found a way to restore the position back to equality, before Stanley tragically blundered a rook, losing the fighting game he played against one of the best players in the tournament.

Round five started with a bang with the only two players on full points facing off: CM Thomas van der Hoorn and Matthew Keith. A Queens Indian Defense was played, but once again Matthew pulled a near perfect game where he outplayed Thomas in the middle game, pressuring him into blundering his bishop and

eventually winning the game. Board two was a tactically rich game between FM Ollie Archer and Finn O'Brien. Here Finn sacrificed a knight for a pawn thinking he could win Ollie's knight in the forthcoming pin, alas he could not, allowing Ollie to go and win the game. Board 3 was a match up between Joshua Lieser and CM Cohen Young where in a Caro-Kann we saw both sides castling queenside. Here Cohen slowly kept pressurising Joshua's position before eventually breaking through and winning the game.

The final round saw CM Cohen Young and our tournament leader Matthew Keith face off. Here we saw a Spanish, one where Cohen Young dominated through the middlegame where his pawns pushed through the board against Matthew's passive pieces, crashing through and creating a passed pawn. But then the final blunder that sealed the tournament. Cohen went for a pawn opening up the long diagonal to Matthew's queen and bishop, allowing Matthew to perform checkmate on h1! This blunder meant Matthew had now won the tournament with a perfect performance, going on to be the inaugural Wellington Junior Rapid Champion. After Cohen's defeat, a battle for second was raging on board two between FM Ollie Archer and CM Thomas van der Hoorn. In a Kan Sicilian, Ollie gained an advantage out of the

opening after Thomas played an English attack set-up. Ollie won a pawn and started attacking his queenside. Thomas decided the best way forward was to attack and did so. At this crucial point Thomas sacrificed a bishop but Ollie missed the refutation and ended up losing to a forced checkmate in a thriller that allowed Thomas to get sole second behind Matthew. On board three Luke completed an amazing comeback after losing the first two games to win the next four in a row, this time in a Fantasy Caro-Kann to get tied third. On Board four a back and forth game by Stanley Fitton and Zachary He for a fight for third ended up with a win for Zachary, completing a magnificent tournament for him, losing to only Ollie and Cohen. This meant that Matthew came sole first with 6/6. Next came Thomas with 5/6 only dropping a point to Matthew. Finally a 4-way tie for third between Zachary He, Ollie Archer, Cohen Young and Luke Chang rounded off the prize winners for the open division with 4/6.

Overall this tournament was an overall success with many new players playing as well as older players playing, leading to a tournament that really led to the growth of many junior players, a great initiative run by Gordon who has to be appreciated for running such a brilliant tournament. A final hats off to Matthew for winning as I sign off.

2026 has been declared 'The Year of Chess in Education' by the international chess body, FIDE. This follows on from the 2025 Year of Social Chess. However, I must admit that when hearing about this, as exciting as it sounded, I wasn't totally clear on what this actually meant. By comparison, when 2022 was declared as the year of Women in Chess, I was quite clear what the initiative was as the participation of women in chess is also something discussed and promoted in New Zealand chess, but being from a country where chess is not as widely integrated into school curriculums, the announcement raised a few questions on my side - questions I hope to answer for us all today.

Firstly, what does chess in education actually mean? The following is taken from the website of the Chess in Education Commission (which I have linked [here](#)):

'The focus of FIDE's Chess in Education Commission is to expand the global outreach for chess in education. Since children enjoy learning through play, chess is a powerful educational tool for the development of intellectual and 21st-century skills.

Chess can be implemented as a stand-alone subject or integrated into other subjects in the form of exercises, investigations, and chess-related

activities. Game-based education engages students and improves the quality of the learning experience. Motivated students thus gain skills for success in and beyond the classroom.'

So what are the benefits chess brings to students? As many will already know, chess helps with the improvement of various skills used both in an educational environment and in our day to day lives, including critical thinking, decision-making, focus, working under pressure, resilience and sportsmanship. Clearly, chess is an extremely useful instrument in the toolbox of the education and development of the young people in our communities - something which was recognised very early on by FIDE. In 1984, the FIDE Chess in Schools Commission was introduced, later morphing into the FIDE Chess in Education Commission in 2018.

However, Chess in Education is approached differently by various countries. In Armenia, it is a compulsory school subject! Singapore too has chess in their primary and kindergarten curriculum. Taking a slight detour to Europe, we see that in the majority of Icelandic schools chess is also a part of the school system. Other countries however view chess as a primarily a sporting activity, including India, Andorra, and Zambia. Here I feel it is important to make clear that seeing chess as primarily

a sport rather than an educational tool does not mean that chess is not a valued skill. India is likely the most famous example of this, with a large number of chess academies throughout the country and generally a very enthusiastic culture when it comes to chess.

Something else which piqued my curiosity about came from this line:

‘Chess can be implemented as a stand-alone subject or integrated into other subjects in the form of exercises, investigations, and chess-related activities.’

Chess as a stand-alone subject I was able to decipher with relative ease, however I had never come across chess integrated into other subjects before, and was curious about how this could look. A bit of research later and I came across ERASMUS+, an ‘EU program for education, training, youth, and sport’ (as described by themselves [here](#)) who in 2017 launched a project called ‘Chess and Mathematics in Primary Schools’ (linked [here](#)) The project spanned two years with the objective of creating ‘well-structured teaching chess in schools particularly related to connection of chess with mathematics and logic.’ On their project website, they had a pdf of exercises they used, some of which are pictured here.

6. Chess Arithmetic Individuals

Age 7+ Arithmetic, symbols, equations, pencil

Explain the conventional points value for each chess piece.

Explain: ♖ = ♘ + ♗ + ♕ because 9 = 5 + 3 + 1

♖ = 9
♘ = 5
♗ = 3
♕ = 3
♙ = 3
♚ = 1

Tasks:

- ♜ + ♞ + 1 = ?
- ♖ = ♘ + ♗ + ?
- Can you find four pieces that add together to the same value as a queen? What difference would it make if the queen was worth 10?
- These are the captured pieces during a game, which side is leading in material, black or white?



24. How Many Routes? [pawn] Pairs

Age 9+ Enumeration, spatial notions

The pawn can make any move one square forwards whether straight or diagonal. Note the pawn can also make a move by capturing an imaginary piece – hence diagonal moves must be counted as well.

Task: (Using printouts of these positions) How many different routes are there for the pawn:

| | From | To |
|-----|------|------------|
| (a) | a2 | Other side |
| (b) | d5 | Other side |
| (c) | d4 | d8 |

16. Race to the corner [rook] Pairs

Age 8+ Symmetry

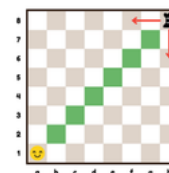
Use a chessboard, a rook, and counters to mark the moves. Place a rook on h8 and a marker on a1. This rook can only move South or West. Players take turns to move the rook. The first player to reach a1 wins the game.

This is a game that children like to play. Who wins – the first player or the second player?

Playing method

The second player has the winning strategy. He /she must move the rook to the a1-h8 long diagonal. Here is how to guide children towards the solution:

- First children should explore the game freely. Ask them to look for a way to win. Ask if they prefer to be the first or second player in this game.
- Play as second player with correct strategy against a child or a group of children.
- If the winning strategy is still not found, then tell them to think about the importance of the a1-h8 long diagonal.



48. The Invention of Chess Groups

Age 11+ Exponential Growth, Geometric Sequence

There is a legend about the invention of Chess. The modern version is this. When the inventor showed the Persian king his new game, the Shah was very impressed and offered him a choice of two rewards. Either the inventor could have €1 million for every square on the chessboard i.e. €64 million for the whole board, or he could have 1 cent for the first square, 2 cents for the second square, 4 cents for the third square, doubling each time, all the way up to sixty-four squares. Which option would you choose?

Small scale trial

To understand the inventor’s dilemma, use a reduced chessboard (4x4). Fill all the squares of the board with rice grains. Children can «feel» the very rapid growth through this simple procedure. The growth rate gets faster the more rice grains we get – the illustration of exponential growth. With a standard 8x8 board, we get the following which is impossible to handle manually.



Intermediate question

- Which is greater:
- The total of the grains of rice in squares 1-8
 - The number of grains of rice in square 9

The answers to these puzzles can be accessed on the PDF on the bottom of their website linked earlier, under the '01 50 Chess and Mathematics Exercises for School in the 'Practical & reusable resources for the practitioners' section.

What surprised me about this document was the variety of puzzles. Some, like the 'Race to the Corner' and 'How Many Routes?' had quite a lot to do with chess and required the active moving of chess pieces while the other two seemed to only use chess as a tool for the formation of the question. However, I can easily see how either kind of puzzle could be used as an exciting tool for the logic and mathematical skills they aim to enforce.

Now that we've covered the benefits of chess and some ways different countries have integrated chess into education, let's move on to some more details of what this initiative will look like in 2026.

It has been announced that the International School Chess Federation (ISCF) and FIDE will be organising the 'World School Team Championship League 2026', an international school team tournament which will consist of Continental Championships for Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Europe, and a Grand Final for the winners of these

tournaments. As a sidenote for those who may be wondering, New Zealand falls under Asia for FIDE tournaments, along with chess titans such as India, China, Iran, and admittedly Australia. Representing New Zealand this year will be ACG Sunderland and we wish them the best of luck!

There will also be a second global survey on Chess in Education, following the initial 2021 survey. As described by FIDE [here](#), 'the survey will help identify key trends in the field and provide essential insights for developing FIDE's Educational Strategy and Action Plan for 2027-2030.'

Hopefully reading this article has opened your mind to this new area of chess as much as writing it has opened mine - I am excited to see how this initiative pans out this year and in the many years beyond, and what kind of changes it will bring to our communities.

Joining a chess club can be a great way to meet new people and learn new things, but a lot of people don't know how to go about joining one. Below is some information you might need to join your first chess club, taken and summarised from the NZCF Website (www.newzealandchess.co.nz/clubs) - more information on NZCF affiliated clubs and information regarding NZCF associated and other clubs can be found in the 'Chess Clubs' section of the NZCF website.

NZCF AFFILIATED CLUBS

Auckland Chess Centre - www.aucklandchess.nz

Canterbury Chess Club - www.chess.org.nz

Counties Chess Club - pukekohechess.co.nz

Hamilton Chess Club - hamiltonchess.net

Hawkes Bay Chess Club - www.hawkesbaychess.org.nz

Howick-Pakuranga Chess Club - www.hpchessclub.org.nz

Invercargill-Southland Chess Club - ISCC.nz

Manurewa Chess - info@manurewachess.org

Mount Maunganui RSA Chess Club - www.westernbopchess.weebly.com

New Plymouth Chess Club - chessclubnp@gmail.com

North Shore Chess Club - www.northshorechess.org.nz

Otago Chess Club - otagochess.org

Papatoetoe Chess Club - papatoetoechessclub.org.nz

Summit Chess Club - ywang@outlook.co.nz

Upper Hutt Chess Club - arh4108@gmail.com

Waitakere Chess Club - <https://waitakerechess.co.nz>

Wellington Chess Club - <https://wellingtonchess.club/>

(1) **1. Nxb7! Ng4!** (1... Kxh7 2. Bf8+ Kg8 3. Rh8+! Kxh8 4. Qh6+ Kg8 5. Qg7# not the only win, but definitely the prettiest and most efficient!) **2. h3!!** (2. Rxc4? Kxh7! (2... fxc4 3. Nf6+ Kh8 is obviously just losing. 4. h3 is the quickest but White has countless ways to win) 3. Rh4 Kg8 4. Re1 Bd7! 5. Qd2 Rxe1+ 6. Qxe1 Re8 7. Qd2 Amonatov, F. - Mohammad, Nubairshah Shaikh, 1-0, 12th Mayors Cup Open 2019, <https://lichess.org/hl8dzjmt> Black is definitely struggling to some extent but is surviving - this is not a satisfactory solution.) **2... Nxb6** (2... Nxe3 3. Nf6+ Kh8 4. Bf8#) **3. Nf6+!** (3. Qxh6? Be5 covering all the important entry squares) **3... Kg7 4. Nxe8+ Rxe8 5. Qxh6+**

(2) **1. Nf2!** (1. g4? Be7 2. b3 Bd8 3. Nd6 Be7 4. Nf7 Bh4 5. Nh8 Bg3 6. Ng6 Bh2) (1. Nd2? Be7 2. Nf3 Bd8 3. Nh4 Bc7 4. Ng6 Bb8 transposes to 2.Nh3? line) **1... Be7 2. Nd3!** necessary and strong multi-purpose move (2. Nh3? Bd8 3. Nf4 Bc7! (3... Kd7?? 4. Kb5) 4. Ng6 Bb8) **2... Bd8 3. b4! cxb4 4. Nxb4+ Kb7 5. Kb5**

(3) **1. Qb8!** in a strange way, Black is in zugzwang. The first move is critical, now there are plenty of ways White can win (1. Qc8? Nd5! and Black equalises 2. Qe6+ Qxe6 3. Nxe6 c4 4. dxc4 Ne3+ 5. Kf3 Nxc4 Schwabeneder, Florian - Nayhebaver, Martin, 1/2-1/2, Mitropa Online Cup 2021, <https://lichess.org/xfVrOZmg>) (1. Qb3 { computer evaluates at +2, but allows a "move repetition" 1... Kg7 2. Qb8 Kh6

(2... Kf7 3. Qh8 is "strongest")) (1. h5? Ne6) **1... Qc6+** (1... c4 2. dxc4 Qd2+ 3. Kh3) (1... Kg7 2. Qxc7+ Qxc7 3. Ne6+) **2. Kh2 Ne8** (2... Qd6 3. Kh3!) **3. Qe5 Ng7** (3... Nf6 4. Qxf5 Kg7 5. Ne6+ Kf7 6. Nd8+) **4. g4!** with unstoppable mate

(4) **1... Qf3+ 2. Kg1 Nf4!** (2... Qxe2?? 3. b7) **3. Nxf4! Rxf4 4. Qd8+ Kg7 5. Qd7+ Kh6 6. Qd2 g5** (6... Kh5? 7. h3! Qg3+ 8. Qg2 Qe3+ 9. Kh1 the same idea doesn't work anymore as any rook move will result in Qg4+ and a draw 9... Rf2 10. Qg4+ Kh6 11. b7) **7. h3! Qg3+** (7... Qxh3?? 8. Qh2 Rg4+ 9. Kh1) **8. Qg2 Qe3+ 9. Kh1** (9. Kh2 Rf2) **9... Rf2!** (9... Rf3? 10. Rb2?? (10. Rb3! Qc1+ 11. Kh2 Qf4+ Black must take the draw) 10... Kg7?? (10... Rxh3+?? 11. Qxh3+ Qxh3+ 12. Rh2 was clearly White's point) (10... Qc1+ 11. Kh2 Qf4+ 12. Kg1 Rg3 wins the queen. White's rook is not secure on b2 so it will fall from a double attack at one point, so there's not enough time to promote the b-pawn) 11. Rb3 Qe1+ 12. Kh2 Qe5+ 13. Kg1 Qe1+ 14. Kh2 Qe5+ 15. Kg1 Qe1+ 16. Kh2 Rf2 Salomon, J. - Berg, E., 1/2-1/2, TCh-NOR Elite 2017-18, 2018, <https://lichess.org/vc2sZZcl>) **10. Qxf2** (10. Qg4 Qe5! mate on h2 cannot be stopped without giving up the queen (10... Rf4?! 11. Qg2 repeats, so Black is required to find the move Qe5)) **10... Qxf2 11. b7 Qf3+ 12. Kg1 Qg3+ 13. Kh1** (13. Kf1 Qd3+) **13... Qxh3+ 14. Kg1 Qe3+ 15. Kh2 Qf4+ 16. Kg1 Qb8**

(5) **1. Kc3** unpinning, self-explanatory **1... Rd8** (1... Rd7 2. Bf5 Re7 3. Nd5+) **2. Bf5!!** but only this way to attack the bishop works! (2. Bc4? looks so logical, but lets Black escape 2... Re8 3. Kd4 Kf7 unpinning 4. Be2 Re7 5. Bh5+ Kg8 practically White is pressing for a win, but it is a draw.) **2... Re8 3. Nc4!!** utilising the geometry on the board! **3... Re7** (3... Kxf5 4. Nd6+ Kf6 5. Nxe8+ Ke7 6. Nc7) **4. Bh3!** Black is left paralysed while White executes the winning plan of Kd4-e4, Ne5. Black will eventually be put in zugzwang as the only available moves are Re8-Re7 back-and-forth **4... Re8 5. Kd4 Rd8+ 6. Ke4 Re8 7. Ne5 Re7 8. Bf5 Re8 9. Bg4 Re7 10. Kf4 Re8 11. Nd7+** finally winning material **11... Kf7 12. Bh5+**

(6) **1. Bb3+!** (1. Rxc1+?? Kxc1 2. d6 the "obvious" solution here backfires, of course 2... Ng4 3. d7 (3. Be6 Nf6 4. Kc8 Kd2 5. Kd8 Ne4! 6. d7 Nc5) 3... Ne5 4. d8=Q Nc6+) **1... Kd2 2. Rxc1 Kxc1 3. Bd1!!** a beautiful deflection. Black is forced to take **3... Kxd1** (3... Nf1 4. d6 Ne3 5. d7 Black is far too slow to catch the pawn) **4. d6 Nf3 5. d7** the difference now is that White will promote with check.