

Chess

Antoine Clarke

The proliferation of weekend chess tournaments in and around London has improved standards at all levels of the game. The usual format is either one day consisting of six rounds of rapidplay, or two days with five rounds of longer play. Rapidplay involves each player having 30 minutes to complete all his moves: if no checkmate or drawn position is reached, then the first player to run out of time generally loses, regardless of the position. Longer play gives each player about 90 minutes to complete 30 or 36 moves (reaching "time control"), with the players given an extra 15 minutes after reaching time control to finish the game with rapidplay rules. All players play in all the rounds, what is known as a Swiss system, except when there is an odd number of players causing a different player each round to score a bye.

The 7th Annual Metropolitan Chess Congress held on 4-5 October at the Bishopsgate Institute in the City involved three playing sections with over 150 contestants. The top (Open) section saw several Grandmasters and International Masters, including Luke McShane who needs one more good result against top class opposition to become the world's youngest ever Grandmaster, at twelve years of age. Libertarian Alliance subscriber Jeremy Kaye unsuccessfully defended his title won last year in the Major section. The Minor section was won by another LA member - Al Baron - with the only maximum (5 out of 5) score of any contestant. Mr Baron won £150 for his performance. Speaking to Mr Baron during the event, I discovered that he had given up chess for nearly two decades, and had only recently resumed competitions, winning a share of the lead in two previous rapidplay tournaments. The Metropolitan Congress was Mr Baron's first long play tournament since the last Labour government!

The following game was Al Baron's second win of the weekend and comes with his own commentary. A game from the Kensington Rapidplay, featuring a stunning knight attack by Mr Baron, appeared in the 1st October issue of *The Times*.

7th Annual Metropolitan Congress (Minor Section), 5 round Swiss Tournament.

Round 2: Andrew Clark vs Alexander Baron, Board 71.

Sicilian defence, Dragon Variation, Yugoslav Attack.

This is the first time I've played the Dragon in a serious game for over two decades, and if this is the sort of response it receives I'll be playing it a lot more! [Editor's note: This happens to be World Champion Gary Kasparov's favourite defence so it can't be bad.] *Seriously, this guy - who was ungraded - said this was only his second tournament game in fourteen years. Obviously this guy has a lot of theory to read up on; I was flirting with playing an off-beat variation, e.g. developing the Queen's Knight to Q2, but decided to stick with the book - up to a point - and was soon rewarded.*

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| 1. P-K4, P-QB4; | 4. NxP, N-KB3; | 7. B-QB4, O-O; |
| 2. N-KB3, P-Q3; | 5. N-QB3, P-KN3; | 8. P-B3, N-B3; |
| 3. P-Q4, PxP; | 6. B-K3, B-N2; | 9. N(4)-K2? (1) |

(1) *This can't be good; I thought he was heading for Q5 but he said afterwards he was thinking of using this knight to support the kingside attack. At any rate, it proved far too slow, and his attack never got underway.*

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| 9. ... , B-Q2; | 11. P-QR3, P-QN4; | 13. N-Q1, Q-B2; |
| 10. Q-Q2, P-QR3; | 12. B-R2, R-N1; | 14. P-KN4? N-K4; |
| | | 15. K-B2? (2) |

(2) *Necessary was the horrible N-N1, after which I may well have sacrificed on KN5 or KB6, brings me two or three pawns for the piece and an attack of sorts, plus stranding his king in the centre.*

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|-----------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| 15. ...BxP! (diag. 1) | 17. N-B3, BxR; | 19. 0-1 (White resigns). |
| 16. N-Q4, BxP! | 18. RxB, QxN!! | (diag. 2) |

Black is the exchange and three pawns to the good, which is surely decisive after this picturesque simplification.

Diagram 1 (after 15. ... , BxP!)

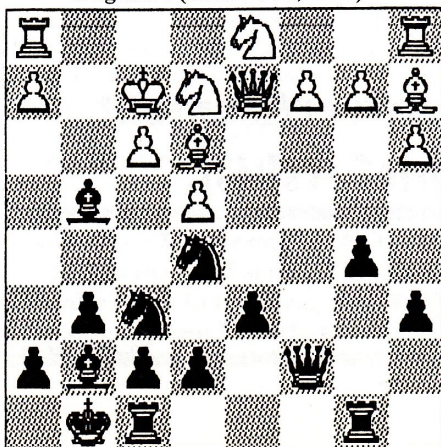


Diagram 2 (Final position)

