

Round 3 Manchester Manticores 2 vs Rugeley Rangers

Tonight, sees the Rugeley Rangers facing down a monster of a team in Manchester Manticores. This team has been part of the 4NCL for a long time. I have long arbitred this team in Division 1 of 4NCL over the board and met most of the team before.

		Manchester Manticores 2	1689		Rugeley Rangers	1624
491	w	Potter, Steven (<i>Henny_Penny</i>)	1833	-	Whatmore, Steve (<i>SteveWhatmore</i>)	1810 c
492	b	Sheppard, Daniel C (<i>szveltz</i>)	1869 c	-	Carr, Matthew (<i>mattcarr2600</i>)	1688
493	w	Whitehead, Mark A (<i>mwhitehead54</i>)	1798	-	Sullivan, Luke (<i>death2rooks93</i>)	1571 c
494	b	Green, Tom D A (<i>tdagreen</i>)	1259	-	Wood, Ryan (<i>RyanWood01</i>)	1428 c
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My first thought on seeing this team was that this is a change from the last two rounds ive seen them play with Steve Potter moving up to board 1 and their team captain coming in to play Luke on 3. My first thought on that was "how is Mark Whitehead that low down?"

Tom Green while at first look may appear to be weaker than Ryan but I have seen his rating a lot higher than that. Somewhere in the 1800's like the others on the list. This is not going to be an easy one for us. Let's hope the Manticore doesn't kill the Ranger. Sorry, this is chess not Dungeons and Dragons.



Matt in a strange twist was the first to finish. Now to our regular readers last time that happened it was a quick loss to Matt thanks to the Stafford Gambit. Lets see what happens here.

Matt's weapon of choice this week was the kings pawn and Daniel replied with the Caro-Kann. To be exact it was the Caro-Kann Defence: Advance Variation, Van der Wiel A.

In this line white advances the e pawn when black challenges the centre, develops the queenside knight instead of the kingside one. As Daniel is the stronger player Matt wanted to try and get him out of book early on. The following position was the result.



Matt has mostly completed his development and ready to castle either side. Now Daniel played a move that caused Matt so much trouble throughout the game... Bb4 pinning the knight to the queen. So, Matt captured the developed knight on c6 and after the pawn takes back it gave Daniel doubled pawns, and Matt castled kingside intending for the attack to come down the now weakened queenside.

Daniel was prepared for it though, first making sure that little to no surprise was coming down the kingside as Matt prepared his charge up the queenside. The a and b pawns were pushed which led to Matt being able to double his rooks down the queenside but left his own severely threatened. One false move and the whole thing could crumble.



Daniel is starting to get his kingside pieces moving, Matt must act quickly to try and keep Daniel under pressure and remove what few pieces have been developed, so here he played Rb8. Seeing a

way to clear a square for the knight and defend the rook Daniel played Qc7 threatening Matts rook also. Trouble is that runs into a new problem for both players. Matt ever the bold one went R1b7. Daniel seeing his opportunity took the rook on b8 with his own rook, Matt took the queen, and the bishop took Matts rook.

So, Matt now has Daniels queen, but Daniel has Matts rooks. Which side would you rather play?

Matt decided he had to get his kingside moving, push the pawns in front of his king to remove the threat of checkmate and get more space so the queen can start moving.

Daniel brought the pieces he had active out down the queenside and put as much pressure on the weak queenside as possible.

Matt had to defend by bringing the knight back and countered in the centre.



Daniel started to develop the last of his pieces, here Ne7 was played but the problem is that runs into trouble. Ne7 can be met by Qa6 threatening Rook and bishop. As soon as Ne7 was played Daniel resigned.

A hard-fought game there, which side would you take from here?

Manchester Manticores 2 0 – 1 Rugeley Rangers

Luke was the second game to finish. Luke was taking on Mark Whitehead, a man known to play open sections in congresses. The opening was a C41 Philidor defence: Lion Variation, Lion's Claw. Ironic given a Manticore has the head and body of a lion.

Mark developed quite naturally, bringing out both knights and bishops to counter Lukes setup. Mark was almost ready to double his rooks when Luke struck.



Luke launches the kingside push with g4. When Mark captures back, Luke brings in the bishop pinning the knight to the queen or so you would think. Mark moved the queen anyway, so Luke takes the knight and when the pawn captures back Mark's king looks wide open on that g file.

Luke moves his queen to d7 to take advantage and Mark starts to run with his king back towards the centre and Lukes knights start jumping closer to it as Mark re-connects his rooks.

When Mark gets his king just out of reach, he unleashes an attack down Luke's queenside.



Seeing his own king now under threat Luke brings his queen back to hold the position. Mark brings the bishop in to support the queen, so Luke removes the queens from the board.

With the threat from the queen gone Luke returns his attention to the kingside, that pawn has a rook backing it up and nothing in front of it. CHARGE.

Mark seeing the problem brings both the rooks to the kingside to try and stop the pawn, but Luke is having none of it. The h pawn gets all the way down to h2 forcing one of the rooks out of position and leaving one to try and stop the pawns advance.



That pawn looks dangerous, but the question is how to get it that one square forward?

Luke went with Nh4. Looks like it loses the pawn but there is a devastating fork on f3 with that knight and that picks up the rook that just took the pawn.

Mark spotted it and played Rg3 to defend the pawn. Luke moved that knight from h4 to g2. Now the exchanges start. Mark uses his knight and bishop to exchange the knights on f4 so that the rooks can gang up on the h2 pawn.

Luke sees a chance to keep things level and moves the bishop to f6, taking advantage of the long diagonal. Mark stops it, a bishop there can cause a lot of trouble.

Now Luke has the idea to double the rooks and threaten a pawn in the process moving it to h3. Trouble is and its easily done (this reporter has done it more times than he will admit), he missed the bishop is on that diagonal. As Mark played Bxh3 Luke resigned. Up to that point it had been a drawn game. A horrible way to end an amazing game.

Manchester Manticores 2 1 – 1 Rugeley Rangers

Ryan was the third game to finish. Ryan had quite likely the toughest battle of all of us. While his opponents rating says 1259, having checked FIDE the more accurate is over 1870. Ryan is potentially facing the strongest opponent of all of us.

Ryan started this game off with the London System. Tom responded by using the king's Indian setup to face this opening. Ryan then took it down a slightly different route by moving the knight to c3 instead of the pawn and with that momentum pushed the e pawn into the centre. Making this a completely different game as both players missed a trick early on.



Here Ryan has played Be2 which is a blunder according to the computer. Here Tom can play cxd4 and if Ryan captures back with the knight or queen this allows e5 and Ryan is dropping a piece.

Thankfully for Rugeley, Tom missed it and played a blunder himself in Nc6 and the game is back to being drawn by both sides.

Ryan takes off the pawn on c5 and when Tom recaptures Ryan castled queenside, bringing as much firepower as possible down the d file.

Tom takes the chance and moves the queen off the d file to a5 to put pressure on the queenside and when the bishop moves that would allow him to bring his rooks to the d file himself.

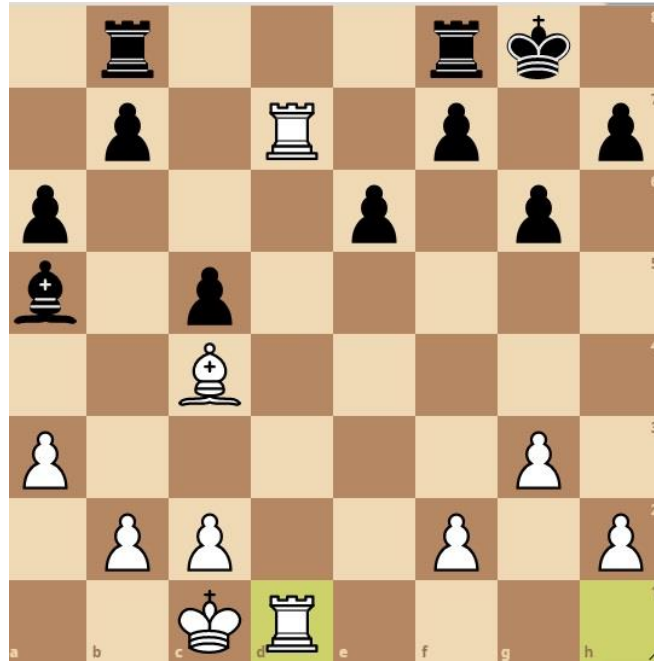
Ryan responds to this by pushing a3 so the knight can get out of the pin on the queen and Tom moves his own a pawn forward one to keep the knight out of his position.

Now the fireworks start.

Ryan pushes in the centre forcing the knight to come to g4 and as Ryan moves his bishop to a better square to defend his f pawn from the knight Tom pounced on the pawn Ryan just pushed. The knight, bishop and queen of both sides come flying off the board and were left with an ending of opposite-coloured bishops.

Ryan has control of the d-file and an active knight. But if Tom can get both bishops moving this could cause a lot of trouble for Ryan in the endgame.

Ryan refuses to let this happen and through careful movements of the knight gets the light squared bishop off the board, so we keep the opposite coloured bishop ending. Now it's the rooks turn for some action.

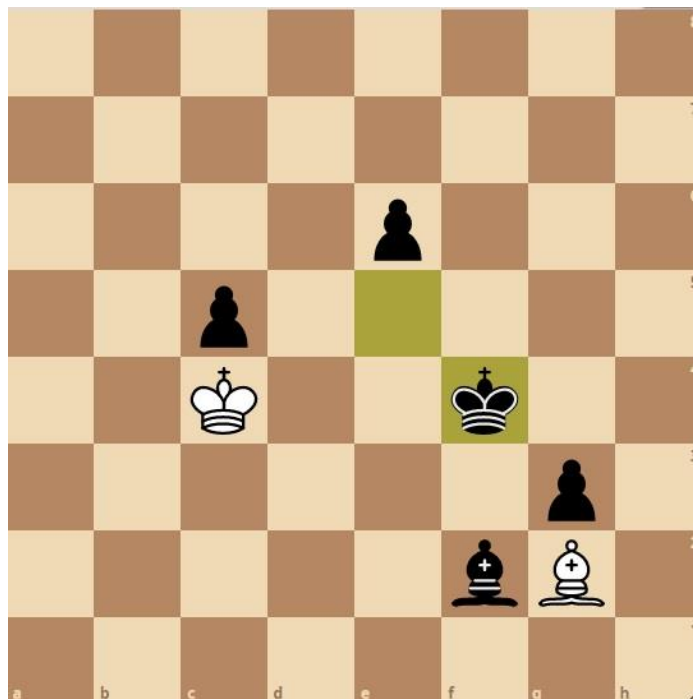


Tom moves his rook on f8 to d8 trying to contest the file. Ryan obliges and takes it but Tom isn't ready to exchange all the rooks off yet so uses the bishop to re-capture.

Ryan moves the bishop back to e2, planning to bring it to the long diagonal and Tom brings the bishop in for check and gets his king in the centre as Ryan completes his manoeuvre.

Now it's the pawns turn to move. Tom starts pushing his pawns towards Ryans king. Ryan pushes a4 to try and hold the attack but after the dust settles its Tom that comes out two pawns ahead with one passed pawn on the queenside and a pawn majority on the kingside.

Ryan refused to give up and pushed forward with his king and pawns exchanging off everything until we have this position.



Tom looks to be winning here, Ryan kept his king between the pawns making to sure to cover them if either of the c or e pawns starts running.

Tom had the idea of sacrificing the c pawn to allow the e pawn to go but the timing was wrong. A the c pawn left the board and the e pawn came forward Ryan brought his king back ready to slide over and combining with the bishop stop it in its tracks.

When the e pawn left the board and no way to push the g pawn without being taken a draw was agreed.

Manchester Manticores 2 1½ – 1½ Rugeley Rangers

Steve therefore was the final game to finish. Whichever Steve wins, that team gets it. Both of these gentlemen play a lot of congresses, I have no idea if the two have ever played each other before over the board but I promise you this was an exciting one to watch.

When it came to the point of 1½ each, I could not take my eye off this game. Neither could 9 other spectators for that matter.

This game was a Trompowsky attack. White plays d4 and on move 2 brings his bishop to g5 to threaten a knight of f6 if it comes there. An extremely aggressive opening, one I've fallen for many times sadly.

Though Steve Whatmore managed it nicely. Developing in the centre and acquiring a good pawn centre in the process and deciding to take his development and pieces down the queenside for his attack.



Steve Potter pushed a3 here and seeing the chance to win a pawn Steve Whatmore took it and Rugeley are a pawn up.

Steve Potter moved the queen to b1 to threaten the b pawn but Steve Whatmore simply moved the bishop to c6 bringing potentially to the long diagonal. If the pawn gets out of the way and the bishop on g2 is sorted that could prove to be very nasty.

Steve Potter pushed e4 to put pressure on the centre but Steve Whatmore simply pushed passed it. When the rook threatened it, Steve Whatmore castled queenside, backing up the pawn with a rook and with the bishop guarding the queenside it should be safe for the king there, for the moment.

Steve Whatmore started to secure his position in the centre as Steve Potter began to build his attack up on the queenside with a triple (Two Rooks and Queen on the same line).

Seeing that discretion was the better part of valour and so Steve Whatmores king started to make its way to the kingside. Once it was there Steve Whatmore doubled his own rooks and struck in the centre by pushing the d pawn.

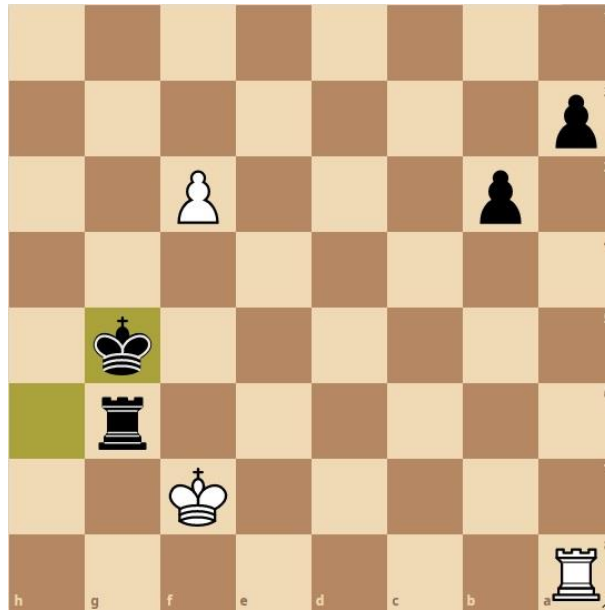


Steve Potter moved the rook to c3 to threaten Steve Whatmores queen but it stepped to the side (a4) and the pawn was taken and when the battle was over Steve W has his rook in the centre and ready to take the a pawn. So Steve Potter moves the queen to e2 and as Steve W picks up the a pawn, Steve Potter picks up the h pawn.

A few moves later even more exchanges take place. The queens and bishops come off leaving Steve Whatmore two pawns up but Steve Potters rook in his position and a h pawn running to become a queen.

Steve Whatmore defends against it by moving his king over to guard against the advance and then begins a push by his own a pawn up the board. Steve Potter cannot less this go unchallenged and brings the rook behind to defend it. Then the b pawn starts coming up the board. The rook is strong but it cant be on two files at once.

Then Steve Whatmore sets an interesting trap.



Here Steve Potter plays f4 threatening the king and Steve Whatmore takes it allowing Steve Potter to take the Rook on g6. Now comes b2, a queen is coming.

Steve Potter plays Rxa2 and the next move causes a resignation. What was it?

Fair to say this caused the ending of the game and match. The final score was:

Manchester Manticores 2 1½ – 1½ Rugeley Rangers

Thanks to Manchester Manticores for one hard and fun match. Good luck in the rest of the tournament.

In two weeks Rugeley take on St Albans 2. See you in the next report and if you want to check out the games in full you can find them in the links below.

Group C

		rd 1	rd 2	rd 3	P	W	D	L	MP	GP	
1	4 Gems	4ge	wok 2	rgl 2½	sa2 3½	3	2	1	0	5	8
2	Crowthorne 1	cro1	man2 1	hw3 3½	wok 4	3	2	0	1	4	8½
3	Rugeley Rangers	rgl	warb 4	4ge 1½	man2 2½	3	2	0	1	4	8
4	Manchester Manticores 2	man2	cro1 3	warb 3½	rgl 1½	3	2	0	1	4	8
5	St Albans 2	sa2	hw3 2½	wok 4	4ge ½	3	2	0	1	4	7
6	Warwickshire Bears B	warb	rgl 0	man2 ½	hw3 2½	3	1	0	2	2	3
7	Woking Warriors	wok	4ge 2	sa2 0	cro1 0	3	0	1	2	1	2
8	Harrow 3	hw3	sa2 1½	cro1 ½	warb 1½	3	0	0	3	0	3½

Steve – <https://lichess.org/KmAQQxWW>

Matt – <https://lichess.org/kSG8TDGm>

Luke – <https://lichess.org/RtZCdLTO>

Ryan - <https://lichess.org/FaOnIEKt>