

Rugeley Rangers VS Gondaga

Round 4 of 4NCL Online sees Rugeley taking on a team from Ireland. This team is the weakest of the Gondaga team that take part in the higher divisions of 4NCL online and min 4NCL. This is going to be a fun match.

So 6:30pm comes around and Rugeley are facing this:

		Rugeley Rangers	1611		Gondaga	1783
441	w	Whatmore, Steve (<i>SteveWhatmore</i>)	1825 c	-	Cullen, Ben (<i>Bazzerbear</i>)	1888
442	b	Carr, Matthew (<i>mattcarr2600</i>)	1705 e	-	Goss, Alex (<i>Kek2000</i>)	1828
443	w	Sullivan, Luke (<i>death2rooks93</i>)	1525 c	-	Moran, Hugh (<i>Idebeil</i>)	1711
444	b	Wood, Ryan (<i>RyanWood01</i>)	1390 c	-	Hunter, Sean (<i>Seanhunter</i>)	1706

Gondaga are the division 4 name for another team known as 4NCL Gonzaga. These are a 4NCL main team whose players can be usually be found in Division 1. This was going to be quite an evening.

Luke finished first. His first response in seeing his opponent was that his opponent has a rapidplay of 140. He sounded as he was looking forward to this so let's jump right in and see what happened.

Luke's game was an English opening, his general style. Amazingly that's all the computer gives it as! A10 English Opening. I've only ever seen that kind of thing in my games where all sorts of weird and wonderful stuff gets played. But I'll try to bring a little more information to this. As Luke pushed pawns in the centre and queenside, his opponent Hugh pushed pawns on the kingside adopting a kind of Dutch opening style with his pawns and development. Luke's own development was quite natural, fianchettoing the kingside bishop and developing the knights. Though strangely enough the kingside knight went to the side of the board... to h3! What is it that our chess teachers like to drill into us? Knights on the rim are...



We join the game here and black has just played move 11. Both sides appear to be making claims for the centre but not willing to push pawns just yet. First one that pushes a pawn loses it so they're trying to control it with pieces. Here Luke showed why the knight is where it is. If the knight were on its natural square f3, the bishop loses its control and black would have had more of a free run in the centre. Here Luke can play the attacking move 12. Ng5 hitting the bishop and taking away one of Hugh's defenders in the centre and Luke gets rid of a knight that was previously not doing much on the edge of the board.

Hugh retreats the bishop and Luke develops his from its starting square, giving him options on which side to castle and with a pawn push on h6 Luke picks up the bishop on f7. Next the knight on c3 comes into the centre and the knights get swapped off on f6. That rook is seeing a lot of action but now it's on f6. Is it possible there could be a rook lift and line up with Luke's kingside or use it as backup for a push on f4 with the pawns and pile up the pieces on the f file? Time will tell.

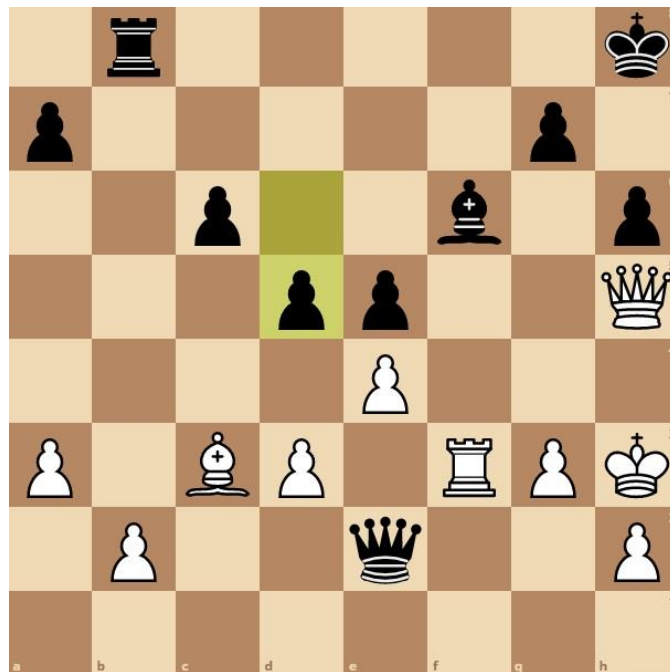
Luke brought the queen back to d1. It's done a good job on the queenside so it's time to come over to the kingside and try to exploit over there and up comes f4! Now Luke gets castled kingside just in the nick of time, with a pawn exchange on e3 the rooks now face each other and Hugh brings his queen to f8 and prepares to take control of the open f file.

Trouble is when your queen is involved at some point you must watch out, she can easily be harassed by the weaker pieces and forced to move. That's just what Luke did. Exchanging rooks on the f file, Luke moves his queen out of the way and one move later it's now Luke that has control of the f file.



Now Luke has the advantage but how to take advantage of it. He does it through centralising the bishops, bringing them more into the centre to take advantage of the long diagonals. Hugh attempts to block the f file with his bishop and stop Luke's control of the centre. Hugh started an attack on the queenside and brought his queen in and exchanged off Luke's light squared bishop.

Luke went for the kingside. If he can break that lock on the f file, the king would be wide open to attack. Hugh thanks to that queen move put a pin on Luke's Rook after it advanced to f3. Move the rook and Hugh picks up Luke's queen.



Now we reach move 32 and my silicon friend says that d5 was a blunder. Luke comes in with his bishop and picks up the e5 pawn starting to break down the king's defences and the Bishop can't take it back. If it does then Luke can play Rf8+ and pick up the queen. This pin can sometimes work both ways. So, Hugh has to do something, he captures the pawn on e4, Luke takes back and Hugh brings his rook to f8. Luke captures the bishop and after all the exchanges the black queen is now on

e4. Luke simply plays Bxf6 and Hugh takes the pawn on e4. Final blunder of the game, Luke plays Qxh6. It cant be taken thanks to the pin and now comes the checkmate. Bxg7+, cant take it, the queen is pinned. When the king moves Rxf8 is checkmate.

Well done Luke.

Rugeley Rangers 1 – 0 Gondaga

Ryan second to finish, It started as C50 Italian Game: Giuoco Pianissimo normally it develops with both sides symmetrical pawn structures in the centre. Ryan altered slightly and pushed the d pawn straight into the centre to pressurise Sean’s position and stake a claim in there. My computer seeing this immediately classed it as a blunder. It looks like it helps control the centre but Sean has a nasty trick. Developing a rook into the centre and putting a lot of pressure on Ryan’s pieces, after playing f6 to hold the pawn centre, Sean played d4 threatening the bishop and the centre pawns. Ryan has a tricky problem to solve now.



How would you get out of this?

Ryan found his way out by moving the knight on d5 to threaten the bishop. Now if pawn takes bishop, knight takes bishop and all is still even.

Sean retreated his bishop from the knight threat and Ryan moved his back to d6 to hold the centre.

Sean then brought more pieces into the centre starting with the queen and then advancing the knight to cause trouble. The knight managed to make its way into g6 and Ryan had to go the exchange down, that way he gets a knight for it, if he tries to save it then he loses it for nothing.

Now Sean plays a simple trick, when you’re the exchange up swap off pieces, simply down so your opponent has fewer chances to retaliate and take control of the game with the stronger piece you have. In the centre, everything got exchanged off.



Ryan found himself in this position trying to defend the pawn from the double attack. He chose c6 threatening the bishop. Sean took the pawn anyway with his own bishop and Ryan took back. The rook comes in and Ryan moves but as he moves his king to d7 it locks his bishop in also. Ryan advances the king but now the rook comes down to the back rank and locks Bishop and Rook in place. With the threat of the back rank coming apart and two pieces locked in at their starting squares Ryan resigned. Unlucky Ryan, hard game.

Rugeley Rangers 1 – 1 Gondaga

Matt was the third of the rangers to finish. Matt looked at his opponent and saw that he had been practicing with the French defence, Matt's usual opening. Either his reputation preceded him or Alex enjoys playing it. Thing is and I'm sure the members of Rugeley can attest to this, no amount of preparation can prepare you for Matt.

It was indeed the dreaded French defence, more specifically French Defence: Tarrasch Variation, Closed Variation. Standard development for the French, then things started to get interesting or well different.



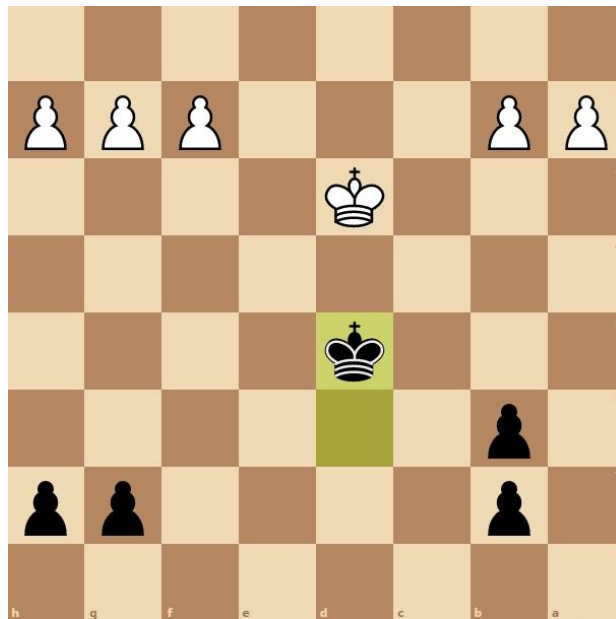
Alex played Nf4 here and the computer advises that black sacrifice here. Ndx5 is the right move because if you take back with the pawn then fxe5 is on and a move later the pawn forks the knight and bishop. Matt missed it!

Matt played nb6 defending the pawn with the bishop but taking that knight away from the action. The centre was broken open a few moves later now the d5 pawn is protected Matt can play e5 with few problems. The centre was exchanged and Matt got an attack pointing down at f2 with only Alex's king and queen to defend it. That didn't stop him making life hard for Matt. With the queen coming to the centre it attacked a set of doubled pawns on Matt's queenside.



Matt brought the Rook up to defend the b6 pawn from the queen and to prepare to double the rooks. Alex had Re5 threatening Matt's queen and so it had to move to c2. The pawn on d5 came off the board with the rook and Matt followed up by doubling the rooks forcing the a1 rook to spring to f1 adding another protector to the pawn. Matt has to find something so spots a small line he can try.

Alex had an answer to all the attacks Matt tried and found his way into an endgame a pawn up after the queen and rooks were all swapped off.



The ending was pretty harsh on Matt, the queenside was shut down with b4 and the kingside pawns were pushed. Matt was forced to bring his king over to stop the advance of the kingside pawns and Alex brought his king into the queenside to take off both pawns on the b file and finally the b pawn runs for a queen. When it became obvious Alex couldn't be stopped from queening the pawn Matt resigned. Hard fight. Well done Alex.

Rugeley Rangers 1 – 2 Gondaga

This means that Steve was the final game to go. He wins, we draw the match, he draws or loses we lose. Good luck Steve.

The game started with you'll be surprised to read, not a Dutch! We have for a change in Steve's games a Grunfeld Defence: Three Knights Variation, Burille Variation. Both sides developed on the queenside with the centre secured. Everything going very well for both sides when Steve spots an undefended pawn.



9. Bxe7 taking the sacrificed pawn was a risk as it gave him impetus. Ben brought the knight into e4 threatening the pinned knight. Steve brought the rook over to add another defender and after Re8 the bishop can't move, otherwise the knight comes into b4 and all kinds of chaos will ensue for Steve. There must be another move and thankfully for Steve there is. 11... b4 is the only move that saves Steve's position, he gives back the pawn but the pressure on the queenside is greatly reduced after the exchanges.

Next the centre is busted open and Steve appears to get an advantage by harassing the queen and bringing his pieces to active squares. Then on move 17 an unexpected opportunity arises.

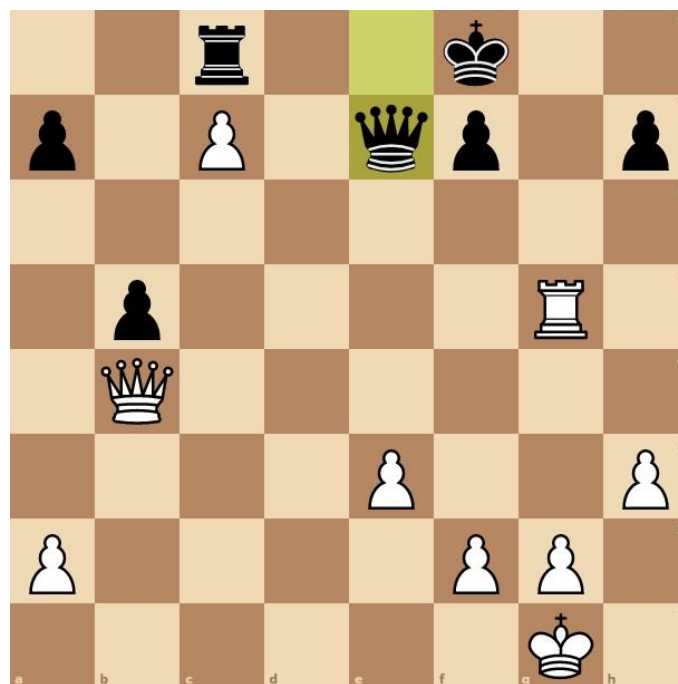


Ben pushed c5 to try and isolate one of Steve's pawns or at least break open the centre for the rook on e8. Trouble is with 18. Qb3 puts Steve in control as he then has constant pressure on f7. The pawn was pushed to g5 to allow the queen to defend it but this ties the queen to the defence of f7 and deprives her of a potential escape square. Steve took the pawn on c5 and developed his bishop

to the centre defending the knight from a queen and bishop attack on it. Ben should do something about it so offers a trade this simply trades one problem for another. Ben gets the exchange of bishops but Steve gets a passed pawn, backed up by a rook and the other one takes over the open d file. All that pawn needs is a chance to go forward and the games over.



28. h3 was played with the intent of getting Steve an escape square. Where Ben puts the queen helps Steve's attack greatly. Ben played Qe4 which allows Nxf3 and the Bishop must take, otherwise Ben goes a rook down at least. So, Bishop takes knight and Rxf3+ and the king must move. With the bishop no longer guarding a key square Steve goes in, Rd8+ and the rook on e6 comes back to defend its king, one more exchange and the queen comes back to hold the back rank. Now comes the sacrifice.



Can you see it? Solution at the end.

Because of the sacrifice the final score ends up.

Rugeley Rangers 2 – 2 Gondaga

My thanks to all the players who played today, it was a lot of fun. If you want to have a look at the games the links to them can be found below as always.

The league table is as follows:

Division 4

Group A

		rd 1	rd 2	rd 3	rd 4	P	W	D	L	MP	GP	
1	Uxbridge Knights A	uxka	bra2 3	cat3 1½	rgl1 3½	wig2 4	4	3	0	1	6	12
2	MCS Oxford A	mcsa	rgl1 4	gond 3½	wan1 1	cat3 2	4	2	1	1	5	10½
3	Gondaga	gond	wig2 4	mcsa 0	bra2 3½	rgl1 2	4	2	1	1	5	9½
4	Wantage	wan1	cat3 3½	wig2 2	mcsa 2½	bra2 1½	4	2	1	1	5	9½
5	Catford Cosmonauts 3	cat3	wan1 ½	uxka 2½	wig2 3	mcsa 2	4	2	1	1	5	8
6	Rugeley Rangers	rgl1	mcsa 0	bra2 3	uxka ½	gond 2	4	1	1	2	3	5½
7	Bradford DCA Knights B	bra2	uxka 1	rgl1 1	gond ½	wan1 2½	4	1	0	3	2	5
8	Wigston 2	wig2	gond 0	wan1 2	cat3 1	uxka 0	4	0	1	3	1	3

Steve: <https://lichess.org/vrwcQ67k/white>

Matt: <https://lichess.org/xocWh3Rt/black>

Luke: <https://lichess.org/04BeelOj/white>

Ryan: <https://lichess.org/vtEGzZPd/black>

Solution to the problem – Rg8+ and after king takes, QxQ for nothing.