

Round 5

Wantage vs Rugeley

Round 5 of 4NCL online sees Rugeley face a team from Wantage, if my geographical codes serve me right that's in Oxfordshire.

Wantage			1714	Rugeley Rangers			1611
421	w	Robbings, Andrew MJ (<i>robbings</i>)	1975 c	-	Whatmore, Steve (<i>SteveWhatmore</i>)		1825 c
422	b	Carter, John P (<i>carterj79</i>)	1795 e	-	Carr, Matthew (<i>mattcarr2600</i>)		1705 e
423	w	Hemmings, Peter J (<i>PeterHemmings</i>)	1607 c	-	Sullivan, Luke (<i>death2rooks93</i>)		1525 c
424	b	Mills, Matt (<i>matthewmills83</i>)	1480 c	-	Wood, Ryan (<i>RyanWood01</i>)		1390 c
				- - -			

Another team that's stronger than us but the ratings are a lot closer than they have been in previous matches. This is one that has the potential to go either way I believe. So, with no further ado, let's check out what happened in the games.

Matthew in a strange twist of fate was the first to finish. I think that's the first time I've ever written those words!

In his usual fashion, he had a look at his opponents play and decided on an opening he wanted to use and felt reasonably confident about tonight's game. Then start time comes around and John is nowhere to be found. Having contacted the captain, he soon materialised and the game was the last to start but first to finish.

The game started normally, e4, e5, Nf3, then came something Matthew hadn't expected in his studies. Nf6. What a nice surprise, haven't seen the Petroff defence in years.

This specific variant is Russian Game: Stafford Gambit. Ironical given Rugeley is in Staffordshire.

Things were going along nicely until this point.



The threat looks to be knight comes in to g4 and ganging up on the poor f2 square. So quite logically Matthew gives the h3 pawn a push and my silicon friend starts losing its microchips. H3 is the worst move in this position as it allows Qd4. Only way to now prevent the loss on the f2 square is to castle and that's exactly what John wanted. Ng4 comes in anyway. So why can't you just take it with the h3 pawn? Matthew couldn't see the reason so played it. Then it was made clear. H5xg4, 10.Bxg4 and John plays Qe5 threatening to mate on h2.

My silicon friend says Matthew should sacrifice the queen to get out of this but Matthew hoping to find a small haven for the king decided to move the rook to e1 and make an escape square.

So, on came the queen and Matthew starts to run with his king into the centre and John starts bringing more pieces in. By running with the king to e2 it allows Bxg4+ and the pawn must block otherwise when the king moves off comes the queen.

Johns queen comes in again and calls a check, this time Matthew ran to d3 with the king and the bishop took the pawn now the queen is trapped. So, deciding rather to lose a rook than queen Matthew blocked it that way with the other idea that it threatened Johns queen. Maybe give him the inspiration to move it.

The thing is, it didn't move but in comes more pieces. It must be a good feeling to castle queenside and call a check at the same time? What do you think?



The king moves to c4 and now John moves his queen to g5 to protect the Bishop but also threaten to start a windmill with the rook, Matthew's answer was to push d3 and threaten the queen again but in comes another intermezzo, b5.

Matthew must go back with his king and Qf6, with the simple threat of Qe6 and Matthew's king is running out of squares. With the idea of trying to find or make a new escape square Matthew plays Nb1. In came Qe6 and the king goes to the square vacated by the knight. Now bishop calls a check and now the problem.



That was the last mistake. From here and with best play black Mates in 4. Matthew played Kb5 and it's a mate in 3. See if you can find the ways.

Matthew stopped playing the Petroff a few years ago. Based on that I can't see why?

Wantage 1 – 0 Rugeley Rangers

Luke was the next game to finish.

Luke had been threatening since he found out he was black that he was going to use the Black Lion. Has been hoping to use it for a while now and tonight Luke was not disappointed, he finally got the chance to unleash it. The black lion is where black pushes the minimum on the queenside and pushes the pawns on the kingside to unleash a very strong attack down that side of the board. Luke has been working on this for a long time and if he gets the chance can be very deadly.



From here Luke charged in with the knight to f4 attacking the queen. Bishop took it to remove the threat and now gxf4, the idea being to open the g file for an attack by the Rook on Peter's queen. Peter moved the king out of the way to h1. Now Luke develops his white squared bishop into the game, managing to bring it over to c4 and when it was threatened Luke had the in-between move Rd8 threatening the queen that was now sitting on d2. After exchanges happened Peter went a pawn up by combining the bishop and queen. Luke is a pawn down but has more active pieces as compensation.

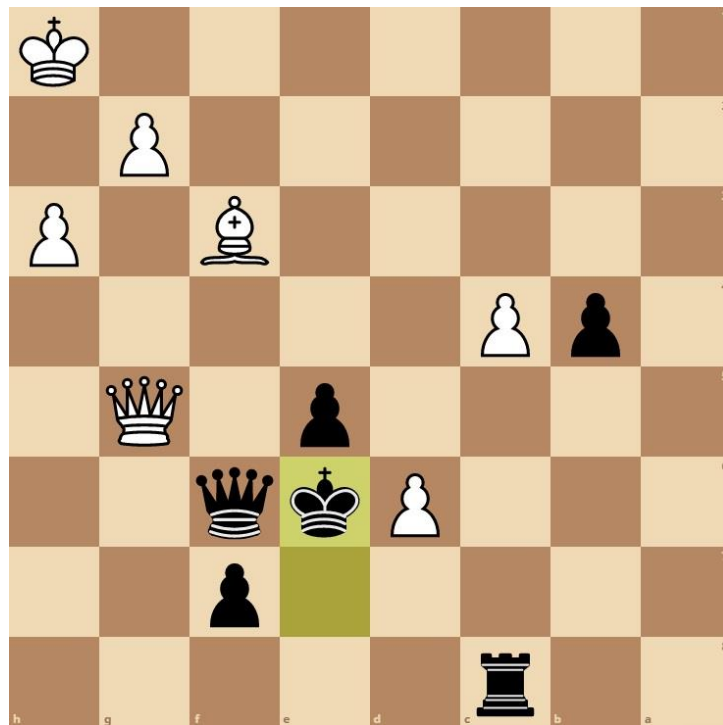
Luke decides it's time to push on the queenside. Up comes the b pawn and threatens the knight kicking it towards the centre where Luke's pawns should have it under tight control (assuming Luke isn't forced to move them). That knight finds its way to g1 and everything looks tightly packed on the Peters kingside when Luke makes a slight blunder.



Luke brought the knight away from the centre to the edge of the board, removing pressure on the centre and allowing Peter to bring his own into better squares while constantly hold off Luke's attacks. The pawns on the queenside were swapped until both Luke and Peter had a passed pawn and Luke kept piling on the pressure until finally the f2 square fell. Thing is there was a plan:



Nxf4 opens a discovered attack on the bishop on f2 thanks to the queen. Trouble is it moves back one square and forks the knight and bishop. The knight exchanges itself off on d5 and after the e pawn captures Peter may have two passed pawns but Luke is a rook exchange up then having achieved the advantage Luke threw it away. Luke put his queen on a square he thought was safe, trouble was, it allowed Peter to launch his own attack and using the passed pawns Luke was going to lose his own queen.



Bd5+ and no matter where Luke goes the queen drops. Resignation soon followed.

Wantage 2 – 0 Rugeley Rangers

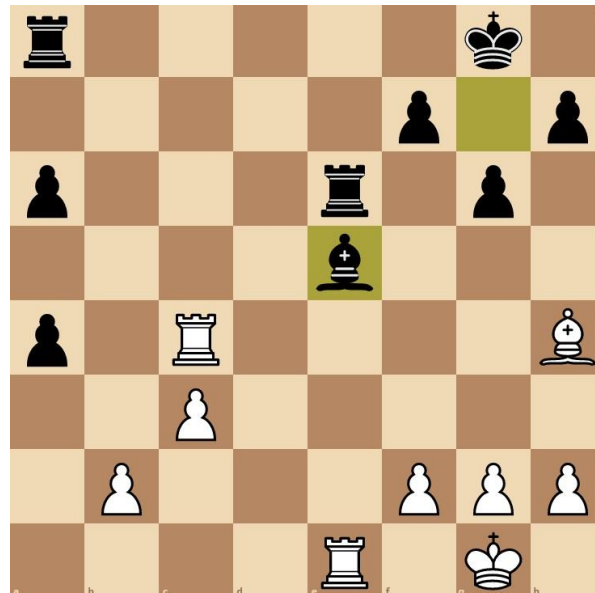
Ryan was the next game to finish.

My silicon friend gives this as a Queen's Pawn Game: Mason Variation but I see this as a London System with black locking down the queenside with his central pawns.

With the c pawn going nowhere Ryan decided to push in the centre to take control of the game.



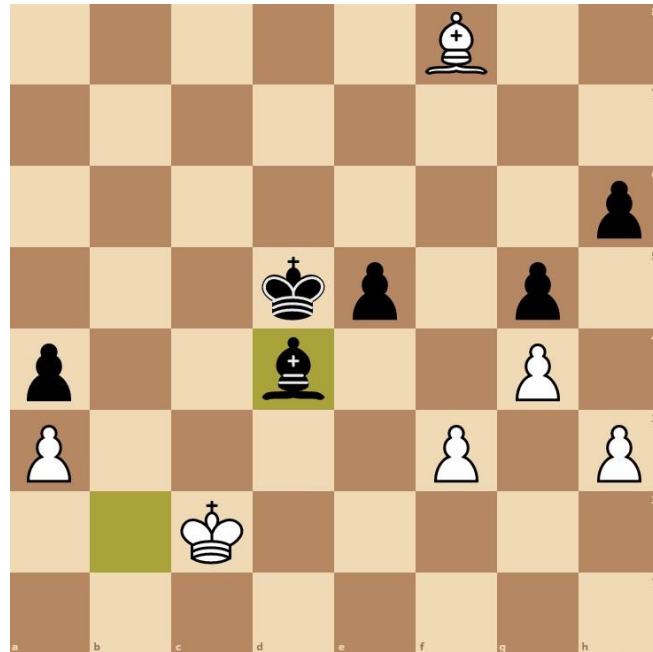
Ryan takes the pawn on d5, this allows the knight in to d5 as a response but now Ryan can bring the bishop in to e4 and potentially bring the queen in to c2 to back it up for an attack on the kingside. Matt locks down the centre with e6 and starts a push on the queenside. Ryan's answer was to start exchanging pieces to weaken the threat and give himself the advantage. Especially with the rook still sitting on e1. So, the exchanges started and then they kept going on and on until we reach this position:



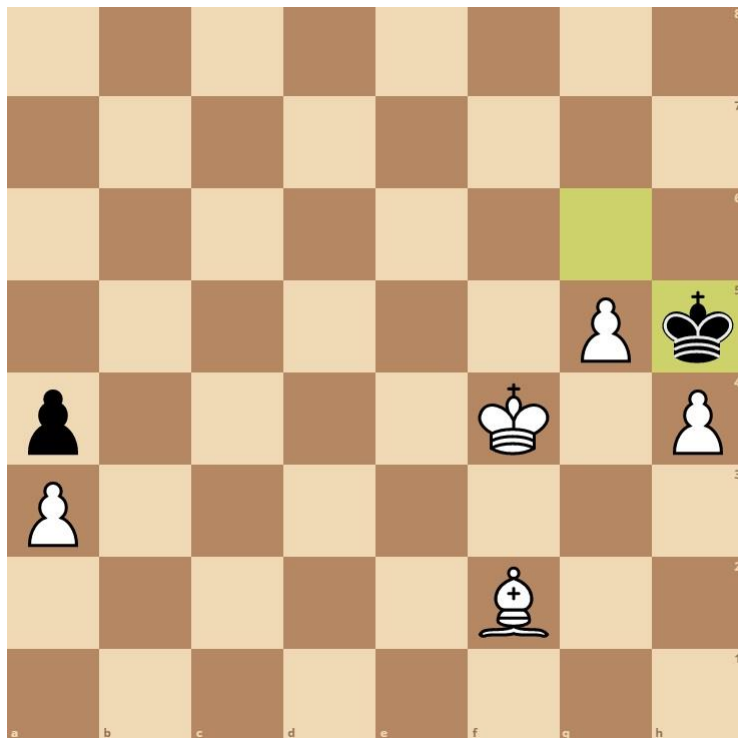
The attack on the queenside has been stopped and now there is a subtle threat. If it were Matt's move he could check Ryan's king with Bxh2 and pick up the rook or at least a pawn. Trouble is it's Ryan to move and here he can play f4 and now Matt cannot check the king because in pushing f4 it's now defended by the H4 bishop.

Ryan didn't see that though and played Rc-e4. This allows Matt to double the rooks and when the bishop moves brings it to a bishop ending.

So, the kings start running for the centre and Ryan gets the opposition first. Allowing him to run his bishop to attack Matt's pawns and defend his own at the same time. Ryan's king runs to the queenside and attacks a bishop on the side of the board that has very few squares to run to.



Now with the queenside safe and the centre under control Ryan can take the pawn on h5. Be3 protects the pawn but this allows h4 and it can't be taken. If gxh4 then Bishop picks up its counterpart on e3. Matt chose to push in the centre (e4), counter an attack on the wings with one in the centre. Bishop takes g4 and now exf3 sacrificing the bishop. The hope being that the pawn is so close to queening Matt can use the king to put pressure on the f file to get Ryan's bishop. Trouble is Ryan's king is too close simply play Kd2 and the position holds. All that was left was the cheapo move of trying to get stalemate.



Cheap but it worked.

Wantage 2½ - ½ Rugeley Rangers.

Steve was the final game to finish.

This time we have a Caro-Kann Defense: Advance Variation, Botvinnik-Carls Defense. Steve's pawns are pushed and clustered on the queenside with the queen on a5 and Andrew develops calmly on the kingside, castles and awaits Steve's attack waiting to see the best squares for the pieces.

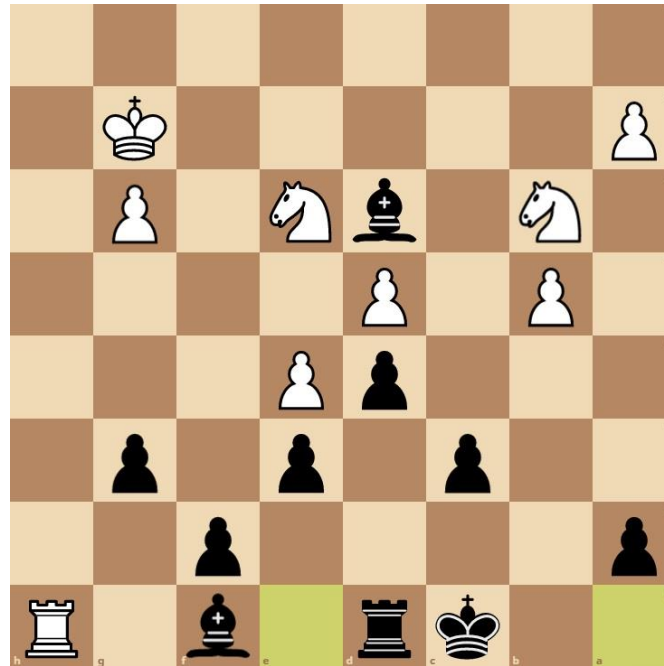


Looks like something I would expect to see from a French defence rather than a Caro.

Steve struck towards the centre taking the pawn on d4 but instead of the quick response of capturing it back Andrew threw in the intermezzo b4, threatening Steve's queen. It must move or be lost so Steve moves it to b6. Now queen recaptures in the centre and knight comes to g6 with the idea of getting to a better square and unleashing the bishop. Now Andrew brings plays Be3 and Steve has to make a choice. The choice was move the queen or take it, he chose the latter and after the captures are complete Steve brings his knight into f4. Andrew develops his knight to d2 and now comes the kingside attack.

Time to push Harry as a certain GM would say, so h5 runs for Andrew's king. When the pawn gets as far as it can it swaps itself for the g pawn and now Steve has an open h file for his rook.

But it was not to last, Andrew manoeuvred his pieces very well and so when the challenge came on the h file with Andrew's own rooks suddenly it was white that had the advantage there. The game shifted over to Andrew's favour then both players made a mistake.



Here Andrew played Rh7 hitting an undefended pawn. The correct reply (at least according to my computer) is Bxb4, bringing the bishop into the game and Andrew may get that f7 pawn but after the threat of exchanging the rooks it becomes a two-bishop vs two knights endgame. Sadly, for Rugeley Steve played Rd7, trying to save the pawn but the position was repeated, and on the second go Bxb4 wasn't missed.

The rooks were exchanged off and one of the knights did too. Andrew got himself a passed pawn on f6 but Steve had his on d4. Who would win this one was anyone's guess at this point.

The first blunder in the ending went to Steve. Pushing his pawn in the centre allowed Andrews king to come up and it was forced to retreat to the side of the board and granted the knight access to take Steve's g pawn. With no way of stopping the f pawn queening now with a very nicely played knight and a king guarding Steve's pawn the game was resigned.

Final score

Wantage 3½ - ½ Rugeley Rangers.

Well done to Wantage and good luck with the rest of the tournament.

League Table

Division 4

Group A

			rd 1	rd 2	rd 3	rd 4	rd 5	P	W	D	L	MP	GP
1	Uxbridge Knights A	uxka	bra2 3	cat3 1½	rgl1 3½	wig2 4	gond 3	5	4	0	1	8	15
2	Wantage	wan1	cat3 3½	wig2 2	mcsa 2½	bra2 1½	rgl1 3½	5	3	1	1	7	13
3	MCS Oxford A	mcsa	rgl1 4	gond 3½	wan1 1	cat3 2	wig2 2½	5	3	1	1	7	13
4	Catford Cosmonauts 3	cat3	wan1 ½	uxka 2½	wig2 3	mcsa 2	bra2 2	5	2	2	1	6	10
5	Gondaga	gond	wig2 4	mcsa 0	bra2 3½	rgl1 2	uxka 1	5	2	1	2	5	10½
6	Rugeley Rangers	rgl1	mcsa 0	bra2 3	uxka ½	gond 2	wan1 ½	5	1	1	3	3	6
7	Bradford DCA Knights B	bra2	uxka 1	rgl1 1	gond ½	wan1 2½	cat3 2	5	1	1	3	3	7
8	Wigston 2	wig2	gond 0	wan1 2	cat3 1	uxka 0	mcsa 1½	5	0	1	4	1	4½

If anyone is interested the line that John got Matthew Carr with is available on YouTube. It's tricky and hard to deal with, John Clarke couldn't recommend it enough. Anyone wants a look please feel free: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nH_fiqLLp2U

The games can be found at the following web addresses with analysis on all games.

Steve: <https://lichess.org/bDDmmejY/black>

Matthew: <https://lichess.org/O9BBN8FZ>

Luke: <https://lichess.org/bXwjJNvy/black>

Ryan: <https://lichess.org/B6jQzrx7/white>