

# Harrow 3 vs Rugeley Rangers

Round 5 of the 4NCL online sees Rugeley Rangers taking on a Harrow, a team from London. Harrow constantly put teams in a lot of online league in the London area and have at least 5 teams I think in 4NCL Online and Junior 4NCL.

Their team captain is a good friend of mine and I have had the pleasure of working with him at many events over the years. Always kind but I imagine when he sees me coming towards him, he gets a sense of trepidation. Either im coming to pick his brain about a problem or his wallet.

On to the team. Harrow have 5 players that they could call upon. Having peeked at their previous board order I noticed they were consistent, and I had not seen their strongest player since the early rounds so I was expecting something like 2,3,4,5. Not to mention the third and fourth strongest players have apparently the exact same rating, so those two players could appear in any order. So, I figured Matt and Luke would have a little uncertainty. Then the pairings came out and what do I see:

		<b>Harrow 3</b>	1439		<b>Rugeley Rangers</b>	1624
491	w	O'Neill, Richard ( <i>RONchessplayer</i> )	1605 c	-	Whatmore, Steve ( <i>SteveWhatmore</i> )	1810 c
492	b	Barr, Joseph ( <i>barrj</i> )	1495 c	-	Carr, Matthew ( <i>mattcarr2600</i> )	1688
493	w	Nettleton, Robin ( <i>TurkeyBelly</i> )	1393	-	Sullivan, Luke ( <i>death2rooks93</i> )	1571 c
494	b	Walker, David J R ( <i>dave144</i> )	1264 c	-	Wood, Ryan ( <i>RyanWood01</i> )	1428 c
				- - -		

Another prediction goes out the window. That is 1,2,4,5 potentially one of the strongest teams Harrow 3 have ever put out. Well, Rugeley are a serious threat given were currently 1<sup>st</sup>= in the league (3<sup>rd</sup> on tie-break but we do not mention that).

So, the players were assembled, 7:30 came around let's see how the Rangers deal with the Harrow.

Luke was the first to finish, in the run up to this match he was so pumped. Ready to unleash the black lion on his opponent and gobble him up for dinner. There was one small snag to this, normally it requires the opponent to play e4 as their opening move. Robin must have heard of Lukes prowess with it as he opened with d4 and adopted the opening setup of the London System.

Luke began to develop quite quietly. Make a few pawn moves, get the knights and bishops developed and wait and see what the opponent did.

Now Robin started with the London System but once he was castled then the fun began. He decided to take the initiative and began pushing the pawns hard on the queenside. An army of pawns began marching their way slowly towards Luke's position. Luke struck out at this approaching mass with a pawn of his own.



Then something happened to which my silicon friend looks most upset. Robin played b5?? It considers taking the pawn to be the better move, keeping the tension in the centre.

It allowed Luke to take in the centre anyway with cxd4 and after the recapture with the pawn on e3 the rook came over to c8, now the rook has a semi-open file to work with.

So now Robin continues the pawn push, up comes the a pawn to support its colleagues. Luke castled, getting his king as far away from that push as possible and then Robin pushed the pawn again which makes good sense. It means Lukes two pawns up the corner must face off against the 4 connected ones of Robins.

Now a piece of advice I was taught to remember. An attack on the wing must be countered by an attack in the centre. While Robin is pushing hard on the queenside. Luke decides to strike back in the centre with e5. Robin takes it removing his d pawn from the board and after Luke recaptures forces the Bishop on f4 to move. Robin chose Bg5 as his move and Luke brings out his own bishop to a c5 pointing right at Robins king.

Luke begins to develop his pieces over on the queenside, quietly building up pressure there and through the centre. The d file is now open so a rook coming there would help put some pressure on the queen just sitting on d1.



Now Robin decided to play Bxf6 and my computer again goes insane. Now it looks like its getting rid of one of Lukes good knights which is putting pressure on the centre of the board and gets rid of a bad bishop. Sadly, walks into a trap.

Luke plays Nxf6, opening a double attack on the bishop on d3. It cannot move because then Luke can simply play rook takes queen. How is Robin going to get out of this one?

He plays Nb2, defending the bishop against the double threat. Luke piles on the pressure playing pawn to e4 now time to make a choice. Lose the bishop or lose the queen.

Robin chose to play Bc2 sacrificing his queen for control of the d file with his rooks.

Luke just keeps on coming, that e pawn that just went forward, comes forward again. Hitting f3 and threatening to open another file for Lukes queen or Rook.

Robin pushes past it to avoid that problem but Lukes pawn push had an ulterior motive. The pawn push opened up a discovered attack on the bishop sitting on c2. Luke said thanks very much and took the bishop.

A queen and a piece down he resigned on Luke here.



Robin played a good opening idea, putting pressure on Luke early. But when Luke found a way to counterattack the pawns that could help reinforce the pieces were nowhere to be found. Another piece of advice always remember pawns can't move backwards.

Harrow 0-1 Rugeley Rangers

Steve was the second game to finish. He informs me that he had not seen this before. Not a good sign when talking about a chess opening.

The opening was the Blackmar Diemer Gambit.



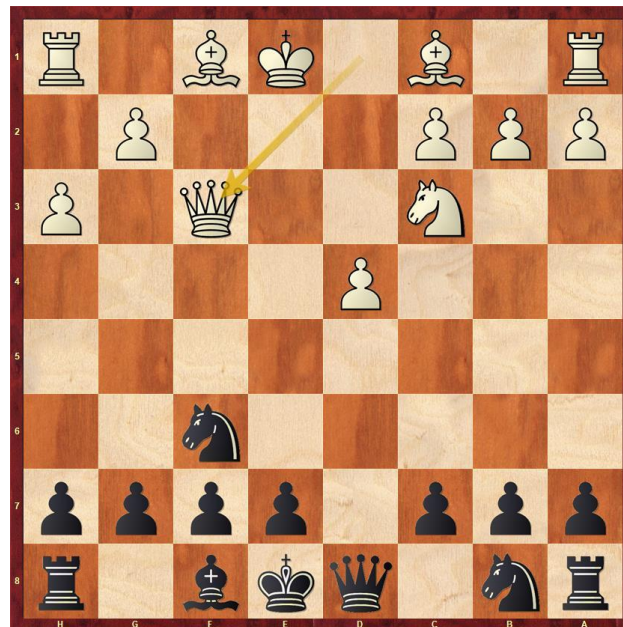
White plays this as an aggressive opening to develop the pieces quickly. Some say black has good chances if he can hold against white's onslaught.



Steve accepted the gambit and took the pawn so Richard as a token of thanks (continuing with the opening theory) pushed f3 offering Steve another one and being the gentleman he is Steve accepted.

Richard captured back with the knight on f3 and Steve pinned it with bishop to g4. Richard kicked it so Steve took the knight and out comes the Queen.

All this action and were only on move 7.



Richard has exactly what he wanted, his queen is developed to a good square, the bishops have free reign and the knight is on a good square while most of Steve's pieces are sat on their starting squares and the only piece that's really got going is the knight and the queen doesn't have much scope. But Steve has the extra pawn.

Having said that, I put this to my silicon friend who informs me it gives this position 0.0, it thinks this is a draw! How? This position looks so good for white. Which side would you like to play from this position?

Back to the game, Steve pushed c6 to stop the queen attack on the pawns and making it harder for the knight to penetrate the position on d5 or b5. Richard played Be3, defending the lone pawn in the centre. Steve pushed e6 to bring his bishop into the game and Richard castled queenside, helping the king become safe and bringing a rook right behind an advanced pawn.

From here both sides began developing their pieces. Steve got his knight developed while Richard got his bishop on to a longer diagonal. Thing is Steve has a plan. Steve is a pawn up, if he can swap off pieces, relieve the pressure it gives him winning chances in the ending. Now he starts that plan.

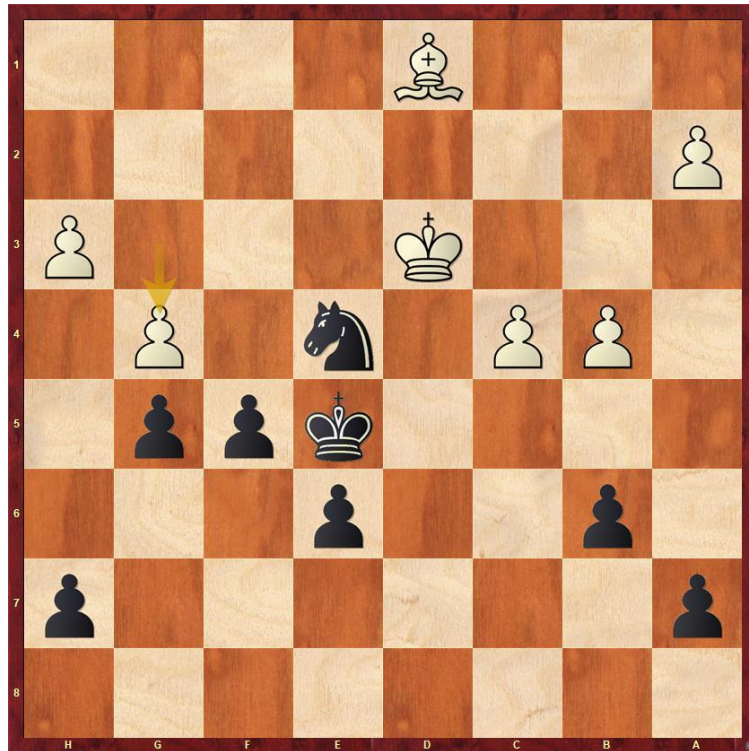


Bd6 threatens to take the bishop off or force it back meaning the rook is stuck on h1. Richard played Bxd6 and Steve captured back with the queen. Then in comes Ne4 from Richard and Steve removed that as well, now Richard's queen is sat on e4 Steve offered another exchange Qd5. Richard took it and Steve captured back with the knight.

Now Steve has control of the centre. That did not last long as after Steve castled queenside Richard played c4 to kick the knight, so it retreated to f6 and Richard was making his king aggressive putting it in the firing line with Ke3 now. Steve took aim at it with c5 with the idea the pawn can't be taken as it opens up a discovered attack on the rook sitting on d1. Richard instead moved the bishop to e2, double protecting the rook from the attack when he took the pawn.

Steve never gave him the chance, playing cxd4 with a mass of exchanges taking place, when the dust settled Steve had the open file and Richard's king was in the open with no cover. It began a tactical retreat to the kingside pawns.

The next few moves would see both sides preparing for the ending. Steve got his pawns on black squares, away from the white squared bishop and the rooks came off. Now the kings started coming towards each other and Steve putting the pressure on with his one pawn advantage. So much so a few moves in Steve found a great square for his knight.



Here Steve played Nf2 and the king is forced to retreat to get compensation for the bishop.

Trouble is once the bishop is taken now Steve's king comes running into the queenside pawns. Richard exchanges the g-pawn on f5 but after Steve takes back there's nothing he can do to stop Steve. The queenside pawns are coming off the board and the pawns are coming.

Which is exactly what happened. As Richard kept his king on the queenside, the g pawn began its run, became a queen and the rest is history.

Harrow 0-2 Rugeley Rangers

Here Matt offered a draw.

Ryan was the third game to finish. This game was another one of those London Systems. The computer calls it a Queen's Pawn Game: Mason Variation. This one saw the centre get ripped open incredibly early on, Ryan winning a pawn and taking the centre with the bishops.

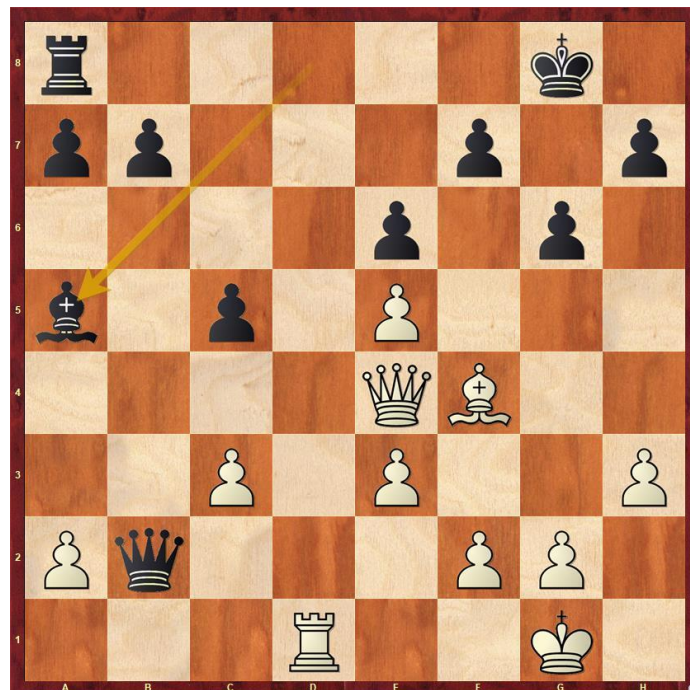


Ryan plays Rfd1 and proceeds to take control of the centre. Dave plays his own rook Rfd8 matching Ryan and trying for the same when the bishop moves. Ryan starts the process of doubling rooks Rd2, David plays Bc6 and Ryan continues simply bringing the other rook to the d-file. Trouble is this walks right into a trap.

David plays Bxe4, forcing the queen to take it back and then David plays Qxb2! Ryan cannot capture back because if he did then David plays Rxd1 checkmate. Brilliant move.

Ryan gets out of it by playing Rxd8 and when the bishop takes back Ryan pushes h3 giving his king some breathing space or allowing his king to escape, not falling into that again.

Here David played Ba5 piling more pressure and pieces on Ryan's queenside. Ryan must do something to relieve the pressure but what?





Here the computer suggests Bh6 locking the king behind the pawns and then the queen comes in and mates him in the corner.

Ryan had another plan. Rb1 threatening the queen, forcing her to move away, and move she did to d2 and now Ryan took the pawn on b7 with his queen, threatening the rook.

The threatened rook came over to d8 to support the queen. Ryan threatened it again, with the bishop playing it to g5. The rook advanced into Ryan's position and so Ryan took the pawn on a7 threatening the bishop.

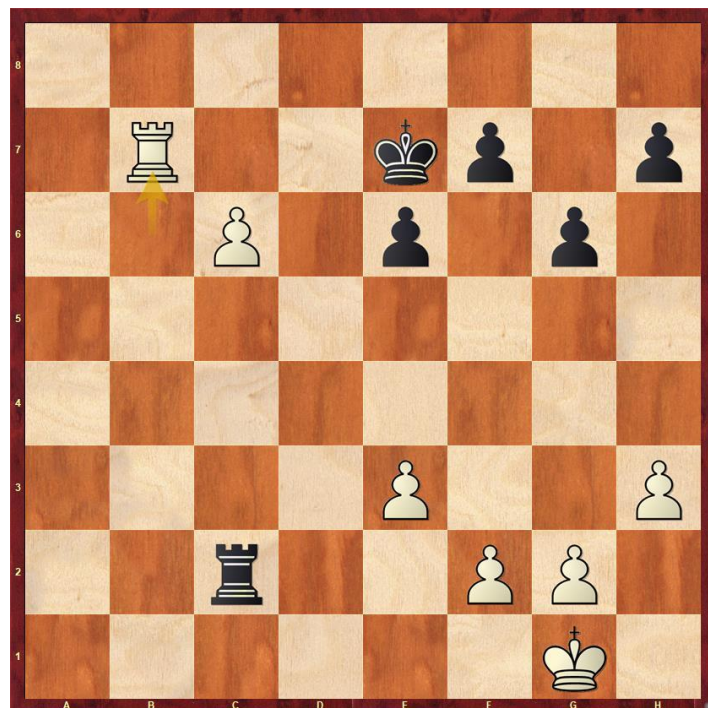
David retreated it to d8 and Ryan took with the bishop, removing an attacker from the game. When David captured back Ryan picked up another free pawn on c5 with his queen, though David did the same with the pawn on a2 and threatening Ryan's rook.

Ryan pulled his queen to b4 defending the rook and David brought his down to d2, threatening the pawn of f2.

Ryan offered the exchange of queens, twice as it happened but David kept moving his queen away, after turning the queen trade down three times (not a 3x repetition of position) Ryan pushed the c-pawn to block the queen out of his position.

Ryan was determined to get the queens off, it took his the sacrifice of one of his pawns but finally he could push the queen down to the back rank, call check and threaten David's queen at the same time. So off they came and Ryan's past c-pawn starts to run.

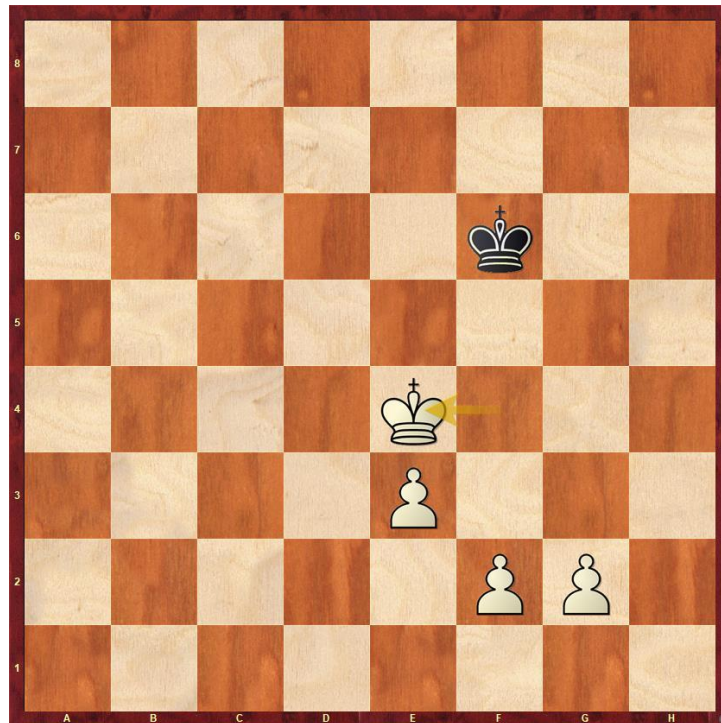
David brought his king over and put the rook behind it trying to stop it but Ryan had other plans than making that a queen.



Here Ryan has just pushed the Rook forward to threaten David's king. David brings it next to the pawn and Ryan picks up the f7 pawn. When David uses the rook to capture the c6 pawn Ryan goes for the h7 pawn.

Now Ryan has a winning ending. He pressurises the g6 pawn by playing Rh6 and begins to bring his king and his own h pawn up.

When Ryan gets the rooks off for the sacrifice of a pawn, he still has 3 connected pawns vs a king and the computer claims mate in 16.



Black to play. Can you find mate in 16?

Harrow 0-3 Rugeley Rangers

Matt was the last game to finish, and we had another London System. This time black didn't contest the centre, simply developing quietly and starting his own attack on the queenside as Matt developed normally. Joseph had fianchettoed the bishop on the kingside removing the normal line of attack for white to take but this did not deter Matthew from taking his own attack forward. Matt developed, castled kingside and then bringing said rook into the centre, began a pawn push for control of the centre.



Here Joseph retreated his knight to d7, to try and block Matt's pawn push and open up lines for his bishop down the long diagonal. Matt ignored the threat and pushed on trying to grab hold of the centre. The d-pawns were exchanged off leaving Matt with a lone pawn on e5 but seriously backed up. Now Joseph moved his knight to b6 unleashing a discovered attack on the bishop. Matt moved it to e4, hitting the knight and pinning it. If it moves, the rook comes off.

Now Joseph defends it with the bishop and Matt should have left it alone focusing on attacking the kingside. Instead, Matt played Bxc6??., allowing the bishop to take back.

Matt continued to develop his idea. Playing Qe2 to defend the pawn further and prepare the d-file for a rook. Joseph played Qc7 preparing to do the same. Matt pulled the bishop back to g3 seeing that if he moved the pawn forward, he could then threaten the queen with a discovered attack. Sadly, Joseph didn't give Matt the chance as next move it moved again to reinforce the bishop.

Matt now moved the knight to b3, and there was a mass of exchanges on f3, once the dust settled matt had a doubled pawn but there was nothing coming at his king.

Joseph took the chance to neutralise Matt's attack with the knight by using the rook to guard the pawn on c5.



Now Matt finally got what he had been trying for. Rad1 gets the open file.

Joseph played c4 hitting the knight, so Matt put it on d4. Now Joseph pushed e6 and the e pawn is going nowhere.

Matt decided to reinforce it with f4, intending to use the pieces defending it for other things.

Joseph had an attack plan of his own, playing Na4. Matt used the rook on e2 to defend it, fully planning to bring it to d2 at some point.

Next move Joseph moved the knight to c5 preparing to penetrate Matt's position. So that had to be countered so Matt played Nc2, planning to answer Nd3 with Ne1 and be able to kick it.

Trouble is Joseph instead played Rfd8 so Matt had to counter that now, so Matt doubled the rooks and suddenly there were only 1 rook each left on the board.

Joseph started to get his bishop into a better position and Matt centralised the king when Joseph offered to swap the other set of rooks and when Matt did, he offered the draw.





Lucky for Joseph he did not accept it as the computer went mad at Matt when he played Rxd8??

Joseph captured back with the bishop and Matt centralised the knight on d4. The knight came in to d3 and Matt pushed b3, when the Bishop attempted to come in, Matt pushed that b-pawn one further up.

Matt should have retreated the knight here and the position is at least a little harder. Trouble is he saw a pawn he could grab and played Nc6. Joseph took the chance to bring the king in and as Matt went after the pawn the king got closer and closer until Matt missed the fact, he couldn't extract the knight from a6. The pawn he grabbed he had to give back and now Josephs king was coming into the queenside to gobble the pawns up.

With the pressure on Matt building, he made one final mistake in the ending. Through one wrong move he put himself in Zugzwang. With no way to win out and the pawns and bishop dropping. Matt resigned.

## Final score

Harrow 1-3 Rugeley Rangers

A very tough couple of games there and the league table has Rugeley in the same position we were after the last match. 1<sup>st</sup> equal but third on tie-break.

My thanks to Harrow for some tough games.

Round 6 sees Rugeley take on Crowthorne which should be a very fun match.

## Group C

			rd 1	rd 2	rd 3	rd 4	rd 5	P	W	D	L	MP	GP
1	Manchester Manticores 2	man2	<a href="#">cro1</a> 3	<a href="#">warb</a> 3½	<a href="#">rgl</a> 1½	<a href="#">hw3</a> 3½	<a href="#">wok</a> 4	5	4	0	1	8	15½
2	Crowthorne 1	cro1	<a href="#">man2</a> 1	<a href="#">hw3</a> 3½	<a href="#">wok</a> 4	<a href="#">4ge</a> 4	<a href="#">sa2</a> 2½	5	4	0	1	8	15
3	Rugeley Rangers	rgl	<a href="#">warb</a> 4	<a href="#">4ge</a> 1½	<a href="#">man2</a> 2½	<a href="#">sa2</a> 3	<a href="#">hw3</a> 3	5	4	0	1	8	14
4	4 Gems	4ge	<a href="#">wok</a> 2	<a href="#">rgl</a> 2½	<a href="#">sa2</a> 3½	<a href="#">cro1</a> 0	<a href="#">warb</a> 1	5	2	1	2	5	9
5	Warwickshire Bears B	warb	<a href="#">rgl</a> 0	<a href="#">man2</a> ½	<a href="#">hw3</a> 2½	<a href="#">wok</a> 2	<a href="#">4ge</a> 3	5	2	1	2	5	8
6	St Albans 2	sa2	<a href="#">hw3</a> 2½	<a href="#">wok</a> 4	<a href="#">4ge</a> ½	<a href="#">rgl</a> 1	<a href="#">cro1</a> 1½	5	2	0	3	4	9½
7	Woking Warriors	wok	<a href="#">4ge</a> 2	<a href="#">sa2</a> 0	<a href="#">cro1</a> -½	<a href="#">warb</a> 2	<a href="#">man2</a> 0	5	0	2	3	2	3½
8	Harrow 3	hw3	<a href="#">sa2</a> 1½	<a href="#">cro1</a> ½	<a href="#">warb</a> 1½	<a href="#">man2</a> ½	<a href="#">rgl</a> 1	5	0	0	5	0	5

All games can be found at the following URL's

Steve: <https://lichess.org/HCGYVT3Y/black>

Matt: <https://lichess.org/13Obd5e9/white>

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

Ryan: <https://lichess.org/hqDqQAXa>