

# Rugeley Rangers vs Catford Cosmonauts

The penultimate round of 4NCL Online sees Rugeley take on Catford Cosmonauts. This team primarily comprises players from Lewisham chess club and a strong one it is.

		<b>Rugeley Rangers</b>	1611		<b>Catford Cosmonauts 3</b>	1723
431	w	Whatmore, Steve ( <i>SteveWhatmore</i> )	1825 c	-	Alvares, Owen ( <i>Quagmire66</i> )	1810 c
432	b	Carr, Matthew ( <i>mattcarr2600</i> )	1705 e	-	Oyvat, Cem ( <i>coyvat</i> )	1735 c
433	w	Sullivan, Luke ( <i>death2rooks93</i> )	1525 c	-	Sedykh, Stakhey ( <i>Stakhey</i> )	1780 e
434	b	Wood, Ryan ( <i>RyanWood01</i> )	1390 c	-	Foreman, Anthony ( <i>Taratakover</i> )	1570 c
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So far both teams are mid table and the rating averages are close but again Rugeley's opponents have the advantage in rating average. The gap though is not as large as we have seen in previous rounds, this one could be a close one, if nothing else this experience should be out of this world for both teams. I mean let's face it, nothing on earth can prepare you for Rugeley Rangers.

Steve Finished first. Makes a change from usual where he has on occasion been one of the last. The opening was a D11 Slav Defence: Modern Line and for my experience I've never seen anything like it. It looks like both players wanted to try the Benko gambit from both sides. The queenside pawns were devastated. Steve had the d pawn and Owen had the a pawn. Trouble is when Steve has an open rook in the game that is not always going to cause trouble. Not to mention the other key exchange one move later, both queens came off. So, we have this position:



What to do here? It looks like Steve got the better out of the opening. The rook on the open file, Bishop and knight developed and ready to castle kingside. The knight and bishop sitting at home can get to good squares quickly but its Owen to move here. He chose e6, opening a line for his bishop and preparing to develop the rest of his pieces.

Steve castled and as Owen developed his pieces, Steve started taking them off or threatening to. Owens light squared bishop was exchanged for Steve's advanced knight and as Owen castled, Steve brought his castled rook over to the open c – file.

Owen not wanting to let Steve have as much control offered the exchange of rooks and with the retreat of a bishop to cover a check Steve pushed his rook right to Owens back rank. Locking the bishop in place and the knight. If it ever moves the rook comes off the board. Thankfully Owen had a get out. By moving a knight, he then protects it so when the knight moves the rook has some protection.

Now you know the old saying passed pawns must be pushed. That's exactly what Owen did.



Now follows what my silicon friend would call a set of interesting moves.

22..a6?? you would think looks good, backed up by a rook looks good. Trouble is it fails to Nc5, the knight comes to a good square and the pawn is going nowhere. Trouble is Steve missed it, playing Bc1?? trying to stop the pawn if it advanced one more. As a final twist Owen played Nd5?? And let Steve off the hook. Now Steve plays Bc6 and the knights are coming off the board. From there Steve did one of those tactics he's famous for now. The sacrifice, here we go:



33. Ne6+ fxe6, 34. Bxf8+, Kxf8 and 35. Rxa1 leaves Steve a whole rook up going into the endgame. It took another 15 moves but Steve walked away with the win. Well done Steve.

### Rugeley Rangers 1 – 0 Catford Cosmonauts

Ryan was the next to finish. Ryan got the Reti opening. Ryan should be used to this one the number of times Luke has thrown this one at us. So, by move 10 both players had developed their pieces and Ryan had gotten pretty boxed in thanks to Anthony's big pawn wedge right across the board.



Ryan played Na7 here, with the intent of opening lines for the bishop and potentially locking up the position. Anthony had other ideas, there was a free pawn on offer so he took it. Trouble is this leads to the line where Ryan can trap that bishop out of the game. Anthony had foreseen this and began pushing the a pawn to give that bishop some protection. Yes, the bishop is out of the game but now after the exchanges on the a file the bishop becomes defended and attacked by rooks, that should keep them occupied for a little while.

Now comes the action in the centre. While Ryan is busy locking down the bishop, in comes the kingside knight and the centre is about to burst open. Everything starts flying off the board, the knights get removed, the bishop that's trapped sacrifices itself so when the dust settles Anthony has the bishop controlling the centre and pointing right down at Ryan's king with the extra threat of the queen coming in at any moment, and now with the bishop no longer needing to be defended, the rooks can come into the game and come they did.



Ryan had to hold off everything.

Ryan moves the queen to the edge of the board, giving Anthony the chance to move a rook down to c7 and on the next move with Ryan having to defend the bishop (otherwise we get a windmill) the rooks are doubled on the C-file. You know what's coming next.

In comes the checks, and all the rooks come off the board and a queen comes in checking the king. The position looks ominous for Ryan.



But looks can be deceiving.

Anthony is charging in trying to checkmate Ryan's king but there is a key factor that's been overlooked. If Anthony isn't careful there is a back-rank mate on. That cannot be allowed to happen. After Ryan moves his king out of check to e8, f4 was played giving the white king the breathing space it needs, but allows Qxe3+.

Safest place for a king to be when attacked by a lone queen is as close to the queen as it can manage so Ryan sees a chance and picks up the bishop on e5 using the pin of the f4 pawn to his advantage. Resignation soon followed.

### Rugeley Rangers 2 – 0 Catford Cosmonauts

The Rugeley team was ecstatic at this point, all we needed was a draw and we win the match. Let's see if they can get it.

Matt was third to finish, the game started out according to my silicon friend as D00 Queen's Pawn Game: Mason Variation. I have no idea what this is, but to my eyes this looks like both players were going for a London System style setup, Matt mirrored the position for a few moves before branching off developing knights and bishops into the position. Cem followed the standard rules for a London system setup and soon enough both players were ready to start the middlegame.



Cem has the central pawns and Matt has managed to get the bishop to a good square. Now is the time to start bringing more firepower into the position. Matt tries here f5, offering en-passant. Cem, decided it's a good idea to un double the pawns so takes it and in comes Matt's rook into the game. Trouble is Cem now plays Bd3. So, Matt the ever opportunist sees a little trick and brings the a rook to d8, idea being that if bishop takes bishop, when the pawn recaptures the rook is threatening the queen.

Queen moves out of the way and backing up the bishop, now Matt chose to push the e pawn and try to grab control of the centre using the rooks, missing g3 was playable in the position. Taking account of the fact it opens a rook up Matt still carries on and takes the f-pawn, then brings the f6 rook behind the bishop, protecting it from the double attack from Queen and Bishop.

Now the trouble starts. Matt tries to bring his queen round to start causing trouble on the kingside and misses the trick Cem has of doubling rooks on the g file. Missing twice to take one of the rooks and reduce the threat. This is the one time looking after your own pieces does not look after you. The toll had been taken on Matthew and when this position came Matt missed his saving move.

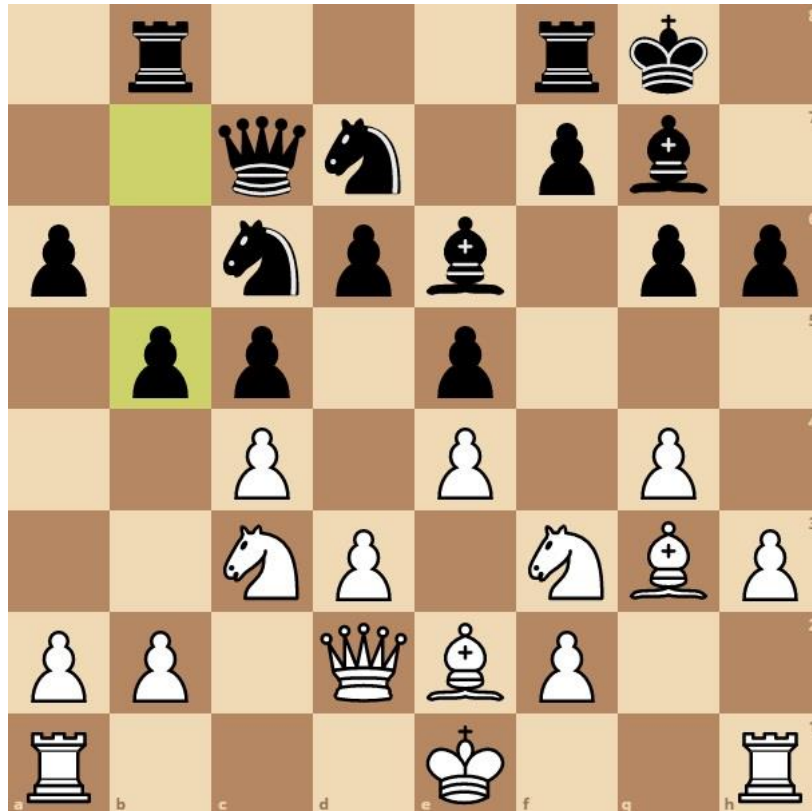


Instead of moving the rook to block the check, he moves the king. Then trying an intermezzo threatening the rook, misses a check from the queen and the king must start running. When the rook checks the king and next move is about to lose the queen it's time to resign.

#### Rugeley Rangers 2 – 1 Catford Cosmonauts

Luke was the last game to finish. This one started out as a Reti opening which he is famous for, and developed into something called: A04 Zukertort Opening: Sicilian Invitation. Sicilian invitation sounds a bit risky to me.

Luke and Stakhey developed their pieces pushing pawns towards the centre and locking down the c file. Luke had pushed his kingside pawns to try and put some pressure on Stakhey's castled kingside. That was a plan for later, keep the enemy guessing so to speak, now there were other tricks floating around. As Luke locked the centre down ready for his move Stakhey struck on the queenside.



Luke not one to be intimidated by a push took it and when the a pawn captured back, thrust his own up the board to meet the now advancing b pawn. Stakhey took the a pawn allowing Luke's a rook into the game. Stakhey doubled his rooks on the b file attempting to come down for the backwards b pawn. With a castle kingside and a rook move, Luke put an end to that idea. Stakhey tried to come in with the rooks but had to retreat when the bishop threatened his rooks, so the knights had to come in and probe the position to see if it could find a weakness.

And now for something completely different:

Chess is a game but also an art form. Now I don't know about you but I have rarely if ever seen so many pieces on the same line.





Very cute position, it certainly made this writer smile.

Back to the game:

Luke had to retreat his knight from b5, to try and defend it pins a rook in place. After that there were exchanges taking place on d3 allowing Stakhey to get a queen and knight into the position backed up by the rooks and bishop.



Everything was going to well for Stakhey then came a slight miscalculation. The queen retreated to a5. Allowing Luke to swap off the rook on c3 for both a knight and bishop. When you've made small

blunder like that the best thing to do sometimes is attack and attack Stakhey did. The rooks came in attacking Luke's queen and pinning the pieces down. This play brought both players back to an even number of pieces and Luke began setting up his queen for a strike on Stakhey's kingside when the fatal error occurred.



Luke played Qd5 here aiming for the loose f7 pawn but this allows Rd4, threatening the queen and forcing it to move. Luke took the pawn and thus removing the queen from the defence of the queen.

White to play and mate in 5. Can you find the way readers?

Final score

Rugeley Rangers 2 – 2 Catford Cosmonauts.

Well done to Catford and Rugeley on some excellent games and good luck to Catford in the final round.

League table on the final page.

The next issue will be the final report of the season and Rugeley face Wigston 2.

## Division 4

### Group A

		rd 1	rd 2	rd 3	rd 4	rd 5	rd 6	P	W	D	L	MP	GP	
1	Uxbridge Knights A	uxka	<a href="#">bra2</a> 3	<a href="#">cat3</a> 1½	<a href="#">rgl1</a> 3½	<a href="#">wig2</a> 4	<a href="#">gond</a> 3	<a href="#">mcsa</a> 2	6	4	1	1	<b>9</b>	17
2	Wantage	wan1	<a href="#">cat3</a> 3½	<a href="#">wig2</a> 2	<a href="#">mcsa</a> 2½	<a href="#">bra2</a> 1½	<a href="#">rgl1</a> 3½	<a href="#">gond</a> 2	6	3	2	1	<b>8</b>	15
3	MCS Oxford A	mcsa	<a href="#">rgl1</a> 4	<a href="#">gond</a> 3½	<a href="#">wan1</a> 1	<a href="#">cat3</a> 2	<a href="#">wig2</a> 2½	<a href="#">uxka</a> 2	6	3	2	1	<b>8</b>	15
4	Catford Cosmonauts 3	cat3	<a href="#">wan1</a> ½	<a href="#">uxka</a> 2½	<a href="#">wig2</a> 3	<a href="#">mcsa</a> 2	<a href="#">bra2</a> 2	<a href="#">rgl1</a> 2	6	2	3	1	<b>7</b>	12
5	Gondaga	gond	<a href="#">wig2</a> 4	<a href="#">mcsa</a> 0	<a href="#">bra2</a> 3½	<a href="#">rgl1</a> 2	<a href="#">uxka</a> 1	<a href="#">wan1</a> 2	6	2	2	2	<b>6</b>	12½
6	Bradford DCA Knights B	bra2	<a href="#">uxka</a> 1	<a href="#">rgl1</a> 1	<a href="#">gond</a> ½	<a href="#">wan1</a> 2½	<a href="#">cat3</a> 2	<a href="#">wig2</a> 2	6	2	1	3	<b>5</b>	9
7	Rugeley Rangers	rgl1	<a href="#">mcsa</a> 0	<a href="#">bra2</a> 3	<a href="#">uxka</a> ½	<a href="#">gond</a> 2	<a href="#">wan1</a> ½	<a href="#">cat3</a> 2	6	1	2	3	<b>4</b>	8
8	Wigston 2	wig2	<a href="#">gond</a> 0	<a href="#">wan1</a> 2	<a href="#">cat3</a> 1	<a href="#">uxka</a> 0	<a href="#">mcsa</a> 1½	<a href="#">bra2</a> 1½	6	0	1	5	<b>1</b>	6

Games available at the following links.

Steve – <https://lichess.org/zgZNNCaP/white>

Matt – <https://lichess.org/Q4rkO9KZ/black>

Luke – <https://lichess.org/XoG986sk/white>

Ryan – <https://lichess.org/yxVJSPYF/black>