

Round 7

Woking Warriors vs Rugeley Rangers

This is it, the final round of the pool stage. Top team goes through to play in the finals. Nobody wants to lose it at the last hurdle but that is what Rugeley plan to put the pressure on and force.

For those that have not seen the league table this is what were facing.

Group C

			rd 1	rd 2	rd 3	rd 4	rd 5	rd 6	P	W	D	L	MP	GP
1	Manchester Manticores 2	man2	cro1 3	warb 3½	rgl 1½	hw3 3½	wok 4	4ge 3½	6	5	0	1	10	19
2	Crowthorne 1	cro1	man2 1	hw3 3½	wok 4	4ge 4	sa2 2½	rgl 2	6	4	1	1	9	17
3	Rugeley Rangers	rgl	warb 4	4ge 1½	man2 2½	sa2 3	hw3 3	cro1 2	6	4	1	1	9	16
4	Warwickshire Bears B	warb	rgl 0	man2 ½	hw3 2½	wok 2	4ge 3	sa2 3	6	3	1	2	7	11
5	4 Gems	4ge	wok 2	rgl 2½	sa2 3½	cro1 0	warb 1	man2 ½	6	2	1	3	5	9½
6	St Albans 2	sa2	hw3 2½	wok 4	4ge ½	rgl 1	cro1 1½	warb 1	6	2	0	4	4	10½
7	Harrow 3	hw3	sa2 1½	cro1 ½	warb 1½	man2 ½	rgl 1	wok 3	6	1	0	5	2	8
8	Woking Warriors	wok	4ge 2	sa2 0	cro1 -½	warb 2	man2 0	hw3 1	6	0	2	4	2	4½

So 6.30pm came and the pairings were published.

		Woking Warriors	1450		Rugeley Rangers	1624
491	w	Beckett, Chris J (chrisbeckett)	2246	-	Whatmore, Steve (SteveWhatmore)	1810 c
492	b	Seet, Joshua (SlowPowerfulPinkie)	1246 c	-	Carr, Matthew (mattcarr2600)	1688
493	w	Wicks, Alexander (AlexW_Chess)	1258 c	-	Sullivan, Luke (death2rooks93)	1571 c
494	b	Seet, Leanne (Brainybean)	1050 u	-	Wood, Ryan (RyanWood01)	1428 c

That is not something I expected. The bottom three contain two of the three players I was expecting to be there but that top board. Sorry Steve I think we're going to be asking a lot from you for that 4-0 victory.

Just in case you're interested this is what our rivals are up against this evening.

		St Albans 2	1363		Manchester Manticores 2	1855
511	w	Pines, Chris (notabishop)	1536 c	-	Lonsdale, Jon I (jon3001)	1922
512	b	Feldman, Keith (KeithFeldman)	1351 c	-	Sheppard, Daniel C (szveltz)	1869 c
513	w	Deland, Stephen (ste_del)	1327 c	-	Potter, Steven (Henny_Penny)	1833
514	b	Harris, Stuart (StuartH130)	1240 u	-	Whitehead, Mark A (mwhitehead54)	1798
						Top
		Crowthorne 1	1827		Warwickshire Bears B	1467
521	w	Johnson, Derek R (nobodyIknow)	2020	-	Wong, Tristan (Ranger440)	1586
522	b	Taylor, Mark V (voklorok)	1841	-	Vaidyanathan, Adithya (gengobandchess)	1453 c
523	w	Green, George D A (CrowthorneGG)	1797	-	He, Tom Junde (ChessTom2020)	1406 u
524	b	Love, James (stitch99)	1652	-	Amir, Zain (zain_amir)	1425 c

Just as a reminder for you, if Rugeley are going to sneak past the other two teams, we need Manchester to Lose and Crowthorne need to at least 1½ points less than Rugeley. Lets find out what happened in the games.

Luke finished first and to say that this was a weird one is an understatement. The 7:30pm deadline came and went with no sign of a challenge from the opponent. So after asking the captains advice Luke challenged the opponent, seeing the game started with no problems Matt the captain went back to playing his game.

About 5 minutes later Luke contacted Matt again. "I won".

To say Matt was shocked was an understatement, he didn't know what to say, he quickly went and took a look at Lukes board and again just couldn't believe his eyes.

The game was over in 7 moves!



This was the final position on the board and white simply resigned here?

Having investigated the matter, it seems a force far stronger than the player was at work on them this evening. I will not go into detail but Alex was unable to finish his game so had to go. Nothing bad don't worry. Given we need 4-0 the reporter in me is sad I can't give this game its usual spread Luke gives me the chance to do but as the captain I will not complain.

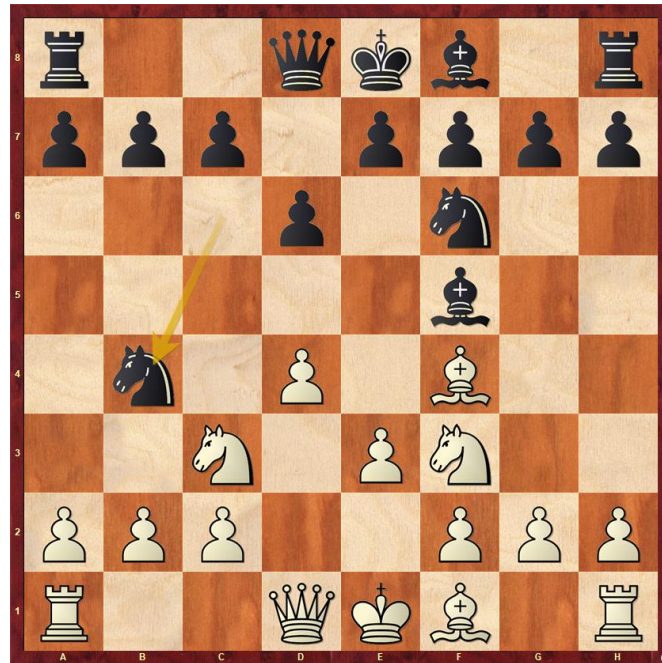
Woking Warriors 0 – 1 Rugeley Rangers

Ryan was the next game to finish. About half an hour after Luke did.

This was an Indian game according to my silicon friend. Ryan opened with a setup similar to the London system but instead of putting a pawn on c3, he put a knight there instead, opening up interesting possibilities for it on the queenside.

His opponent Leanne developed both her knights and white squared bishop and immediately tried to put pressure on Ryan's queenside.

Do not start an attack early on otherwise it gives the opponent a chance to harass your pieces. So, the attack started fast but Ryan had it under control.



Leanne launched an early attack, but this is easily fended off with Bd3?! My silicon friend gives this as an interesting move. Strangely it likes better Rc1 here. But surely that just hands over a rook and pawn to the opponent for knight and bishop? Good or bad I don't know, ill leave that up to you to decide that one.

Leanne takes off Ryan's bishop and the recapture happens with the pawn, Ryan is now poised to have a strong centre if he can get e4 in at some point, not to mention there is now a free check on for Ryan if he wants it.

Leanne began to play it safe now, deciding to push a pawn and develop her bishop so she could castle kingside. Ryan takes the chance to get his king safe with the same idea and sets up a little trap for her.



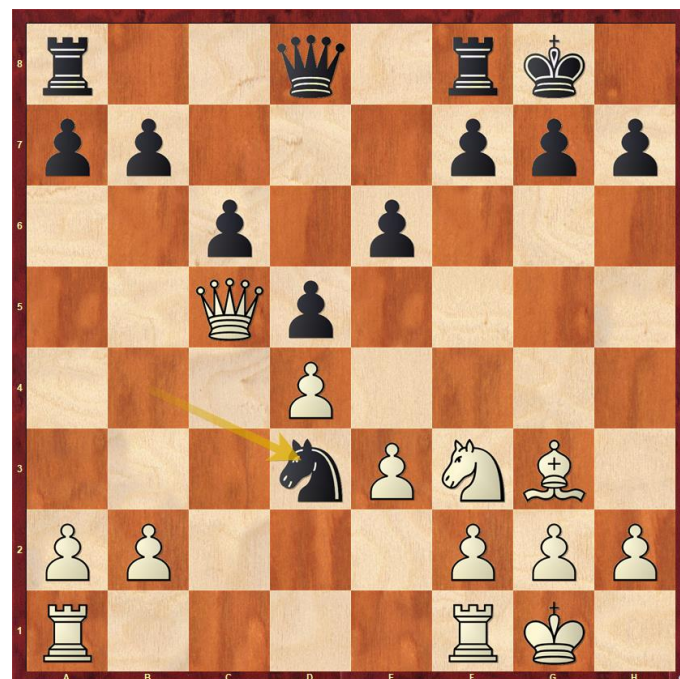
Ryan moves his queen out threatening the knight but also leaving a pawn undefended. Leanne seeing the free pawn and a way to save her knight took the d3 pawn. Slight problem with that though, the pawn is poisoned.

Ryan claimed that free check I mentioned earlier, Qb5+ and after she blocks the check with c6, Ryan picks up the knight.

Leanne castles kingside and Ryan prepares to launch an attack on her kingside only now its Leanne's turn to try attacking Ryan.

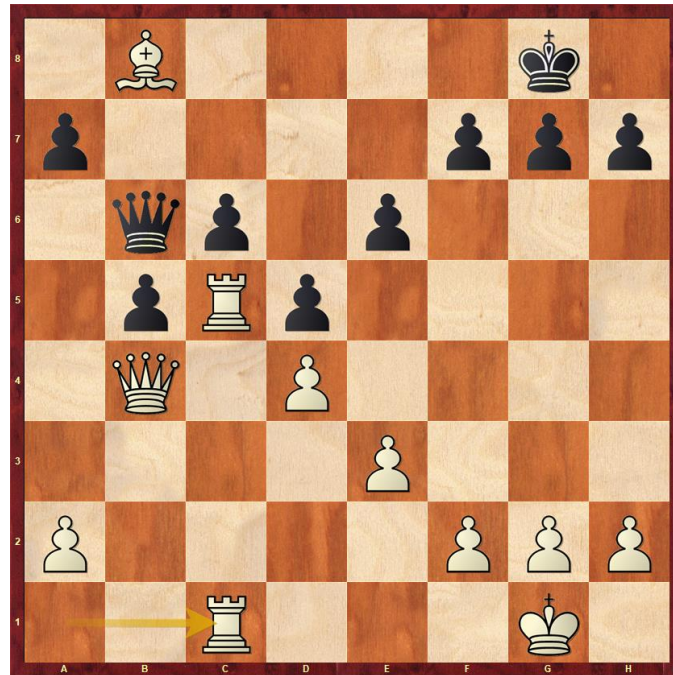
Leanne brings her knight into d5 attacking the bishop, Ryan retreats it to a less safe square, the knight moves again hitting the queen. Ryan moves it to a safer square and attacks the knight at the same time. Now the pawns start charging forward the knight is undefended but with the push of a pawn Leanne defends the knight and dislodges Ryan's knight on e4.

The bishop and knight get exchanged off but as Leanne starts another attack, she uses the knight to get into Ryan's position but it's wandered to far from its friends and without support.



Ryan plays Qc3 here and traps the knight in, with nowhere to go it sacrifices itself for the pawn on b2 and Ryan goes two pieces up.

Now it becomes a simple mopping up exercise. Ryan starts exchanging pieces off and a few moves later gets the opportunity he has been waiting for. A shot at checkmating the king.



Ryan is leaving the bishop en prise here because it sets up the chance to checkmate the king or at worse capture the queen.

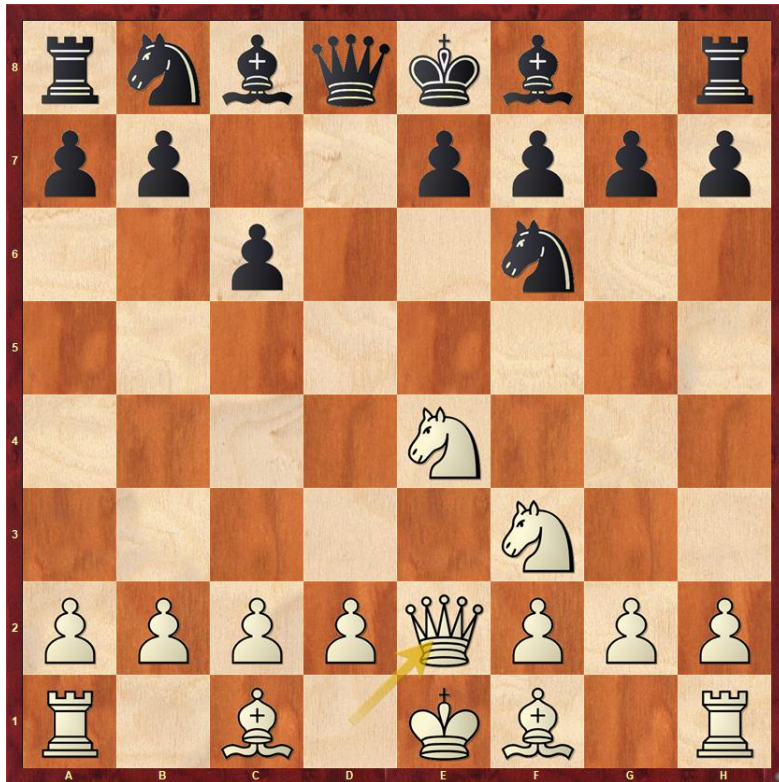
Leanne ignored the bishop and played Qa6 here. After the rook takes there is no way to save her so Leanne played Qa2 and Ryan played Rc8#

Woking Warriors 0 – 2 Rugeley Rangers.

Matt was the third game to end. Matt had a look at his opponents' games when the pairings were announced and noticed an interesting pattern.

No matter what opening was played Joshua always played the same thing. So, looking up that line Matt was ready tonight with an opening trap.

It was the Caro Kann and Matt got the exact opening he wanted except for where the opponent fell into the opening trap.



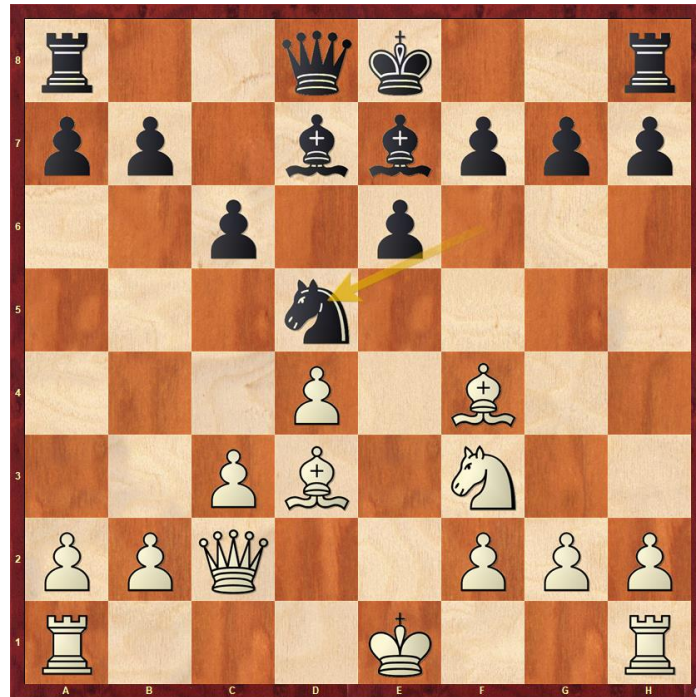
This was the exact opening in Matt's game and here Joshua played e6?

Can anyone spot the worst move on the board and what the immediate follow up is? Answer at the end.

Joshua didn't fall into the opening trap but played a bad move anyway, Matt at this point according to the computer returned the favour. He played d4, aiming to take control of the centre of the board with pawns, the knights may be needed elsewhere at some point.

Joshua developed his other knight and dark squared bishop as Matthew cemented his control in the centre and got his own dark squared bishop developed. Then a little help came Matthew's way. The queen is developed but it's stopping the bishop getting out, Joshua took the knight on e4 allowing Matt to capture with the queen. When Joshua's other knight threatens it by going to f6, Matt can pull the queen back to c2.

Joshua develops the other bishop and Matt develops his, pointing quite nicely down at Joshua's kingside. With Rook and knight defending the h7 pawn it should be quite safe, until Joshua plays Nd5?!



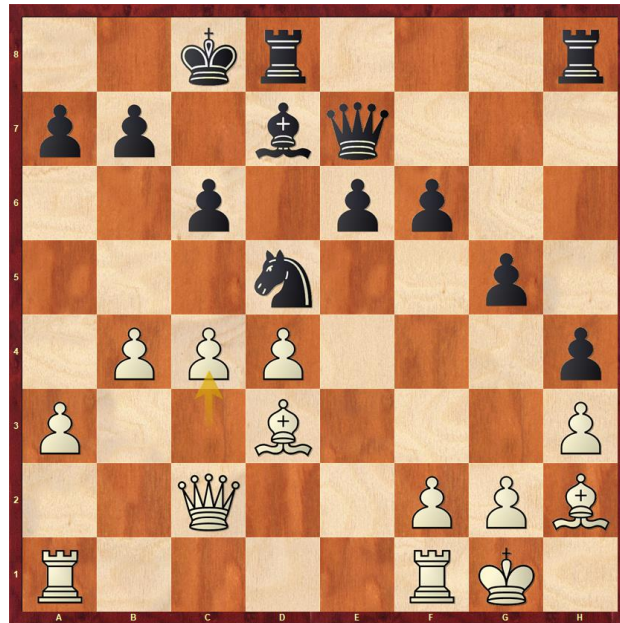
Is Bxh7 a trap? Certainly, feels like it. Push g6 and yes you get an attack on the king but Matt only has his queen. Looked to dangerous for Matt so he retreated the bishop to g3 and waited for the next move. When it came it was h6, stopping a knight or anything coming towards the queenside and freeing up the pawn from attack. Not to mention could be the start of a pawn storm against Matt's king which on this move castles kingside.

Joshua develops the bishop to f6 so Matt takes his chance to put a knight on e5, right in the middle of the board. Joshua plays h5, he wants to remove a defender from that knight. Matt just plays h3 so when the pawn comes the bishop just backs off one more square still defending the knight and ready to defend the king if necessary.

That might be needed as a few moves later Joshua castled kingside. Now the tactic was clear. When castling on opposite sides of the board occurs get pieces and pawns pushed as fast as you can on that side. First one to break through wins. So that's what Matt did, up comes a3 and b4.

Joshua wanted some freedom for his pieces so took off Matt's knight in the centre, when Matt took with the bishop it allowed Joshua to threaten it with a pawn but that's fine, Matt put the bishop back on h2, its still doing its job. Pointing quite nicely down at Joshua's king.

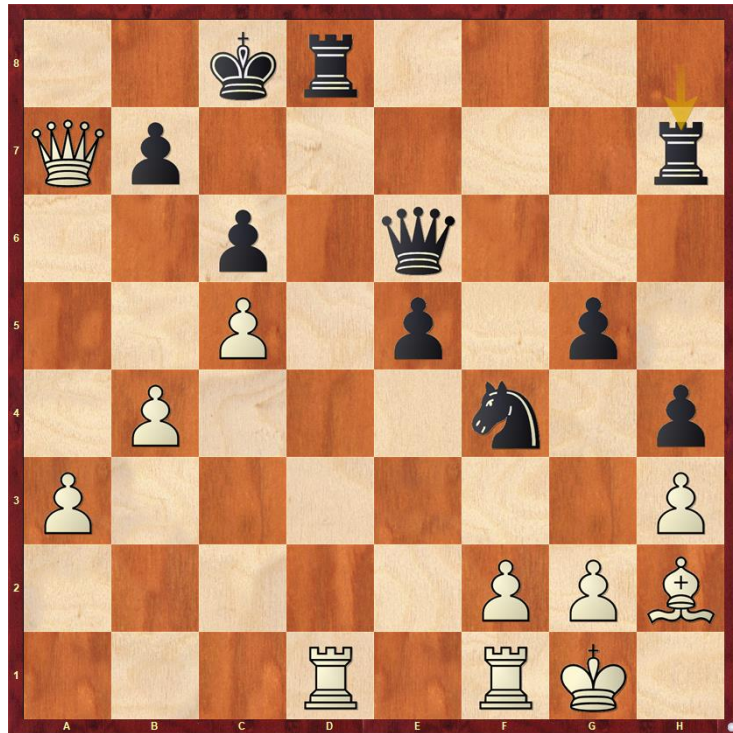
Now Joshua pushed g5 getting the kingside pawns moving but Matt is ready with his own attack so its time to launch it.



Pawns are coming closer to the king. The knight moves to a safe square Nb6, but Matt pushes the c pawn again to threaten it. Yes, this allows the knight back but now the king is running out of escape squares. Matt missed a trick here; he should have played Bd6 threatening the queen before he did the move he played.

He played Qa4 aiming for the enemy kings' defenders. Joshua saw a way to hold the position and played the correct move e5, blocking out the bishop. Matt captured it and Joshua took it back with the pawn on f6 and Matt finally went and grabbed the pawn on a7.

Joshua really wanted to keep the bishop out and played Nf4, bringing more pieces towards Matt's king and threatening the bishop. Matt moved it to c4 but Joshua really wanted to remove some of Matt's pieces so hit it with his own bishop. After the capturing was complete Matt moved a rook to the open file to contest it. Now the final error of the game crept in. Joshua mouse slipped and it was sadly a fatal one.



Joshua's mouse slip played Rh7. How about another puzzle for this edition? White to play and mate in 2.

Woking Warriors 0 – 3 Rugeley Rangers

At this point Matt looked over at the scoreboard of Crowthorne and Manchester. Manchester still had all their games going and Crowthorne had lost their bottom board game. Fate or whatever you call it, was being kind to Rugeley so far. Let's see how far Lady luck was on our side.

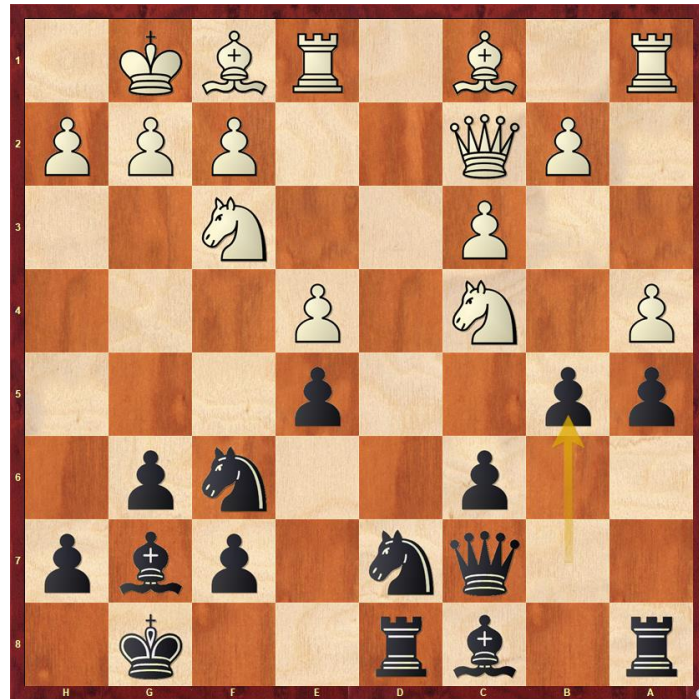
Steve was the last game to finish. Now last time that Chris was picked for battle he defaulted, unfortunately for Rugeley he turned up.

It was a Caro-Kann opening again. According to the computer it is a B10 Caro-Kann Defense: Breyer Variation

White develops both knights and black captures the pawn in the centre and fianchetto's the black squared bishop.

Pieces started flying out and both players castled kingside. The pieces were getting strategically placed but who would launch the attack first?

It was Steve.



Steve pushed the pawn forward kicking the knight back, it came to e3. Steve now had a little problem, if Chris had the chance, he could take the b pawn and let his rook and bishop into the game. That could not happen so he took the pawn on a4 and the knight that was just kicked came racing back to c4. Now though Steve's bishop can come to a6 allowing it to develop along the side.

Chris took his chance to move the queen and used that to take the pawn sitting on a4. Steve used the bishop to threaten the queen and with that one move double defend the a5 pawn. The queen retreated and both players took the chance to re-arrange their pieces.

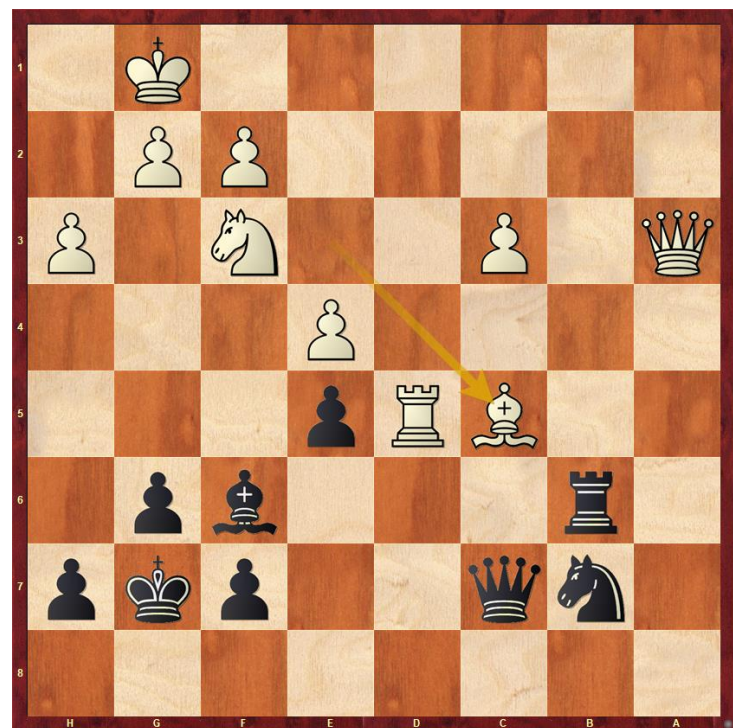
In all the chaos the knight on c4 came off and was replaced by the bishop. Both players using their pieces to control the centre and then it was the rooks turn. Chris lined up their rooks on the d-file and the inevitable chaos ensued. But only one pair of rooks was traded. Steve had other plans for his, it was protecting a nice semi-past pawn on the edge of the board and the Chris's king had all the pawns sitting right in front of it. Chris has the centre but Steve was about to make his life awkward.



Chris couldn't ignore the threat of a passed pawn so captured it; Steve took back threatening to check the king. Chris covered this by bringing the queen to b2 hitting the rook. The rook came back to a6 defending laterally and in that time, Chris pushed a pawn giving an escape square to his king.

Steve went from defence to attack, moving the rook again to hit the queen. When it went to a3 Steve came forward with his king not allowing a potentially annoying check on the back rank.

Then with three pieces attacking a pawn Chris pounced.



Here he played Bxc5?? The computer doesn't like it. Chris just threw away his advantage.

The captures ensured on c5, Steve took it with the knight and the re-capture came with the Rook.

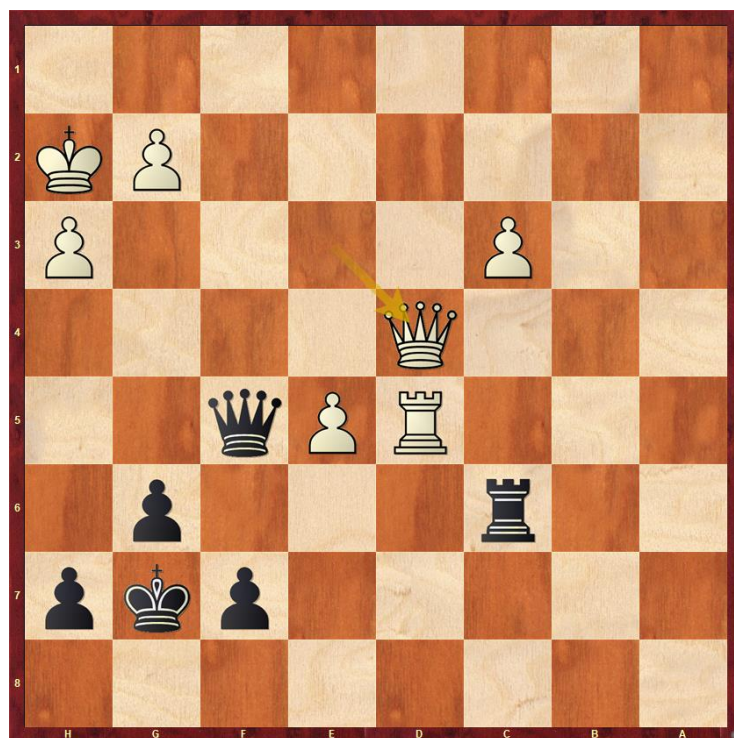
Steve moved his queen to d6 and now another bad move Qa5?? Steve is winning. In theory he should play Be7, if the rook captures the pawn, then Rb1+, Kh2 and f6 wins the rook, sadly that wasn't seen in the battle. Steve played Ra6 threatening the queen leaving the position dead level.

Chris started to try and swap off the queen being a pawn up. Steve wouldn't have any of it but in avoiding losing his queen, the pawn on e5 bit the dust a few moves later.

The position was dead level and the result was in for one of the other two games. Crowthorne had drawn their match against St Albans 2, that means that with Rugeley already 3-0 up we were guaranteed second place.

Insert the image of Matthew doing a happy dance here.

With just seconds on both players clocks Steve made a blunder.



Here Steve played Qe6. It looks good holding the pawn at bay but it runs into the problem of Rd6 hitting both Steve's queen and rook.

Steve took it with the rook and that walked into exd6+, discovered check from the queen. Steve decided to push f6 to block the check and Chris moved d7 and there is no way to stop that pawn from queening. Steve resigned.

A very tough fight that right up until the end. Bad luck Steve.

Woking Warriors 1 – 3 Rugeley Rangers.

The Manchester match was still in play at this point but with a refresh three of the games were reported. Manchester had won 3 of their 4 games with one still going so there was nothing Rugeley

could do now. Manchester went on to win their match 4-0 and are the winners of the pool but with Crowthorne dropping a point on the last match Rugeley become the clear 2nd in the group.

Since round 4 Rugeley have stayed in third pressing the other two teams hard and the season is decided in the last round. What a way to finish off the season.

The final league table looks like this.

Group C

		rd 1	rd 2	rd 3	rd 4	rd 5	rd 6	rd 7	P	W	D	L	MP	GP	
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5	4 Gems	4ge	wok 2	rgl 2½	sa2 3½	cro1 0	warb 1	man2 ½	hw3 1	7	2	1	4	5	10½
6	Harrow 3	hw3	sa2 1½	cro1 ½	warb 1½	man2 ½	rgl 1	wok 3	4ge 3	7	2	0	5	4	11
7	St Albans 2	sa2	hw3 2½	wok 4	4ge ½	rgl 1	cro1 1½	warb 1	man2 0	7	2	0	5	4	10½
8	Woking Warriors	wok	4ge 2	sa2 0	cro1 -½	warb 2	man2 0	hw3 ½	rgl 1	7	0	2	5	2	5

The games can be found at the following links:

Steve: <https://lichess.org/9CvV3q4h/black>

Matt: <https://lichess.org/Oq6HiKcV/white>

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

Ryan: <https://lichess.org/B5RZuwha/white>

Answer to the puzzles:

1. Worst move on the board is Nbd7 allowing Nd6#
2. Qa8+ (Matt's opponent offered a draw here.) Kc7, Qxd8#