

4NCL Online Round 9

Rugeley vs Hertford

In today's match Rugeley have been drawn against Hertford. This is an odd pairing at first glance because Hertford are currently 3rd in the League and Rugeley are 8th. However, when you consider that were at round 9 out of 10 and that most of the top teams have already played each other it makes sense that the top lot should play teams a little lower down. For Rugeley it seems the chess gods are not in our favour this week as we got paired with the team that is seed 1 and when you look at their ratings you can see why.

Rugeley			1604	Hertford			1942
521	w	Whatmore, Steve (<i>SteveWhatmore</i>)	1817 c	-	Borman, Philip (<i>Dr_PJB</i>)	2190	
522	b	Carr, Matthew (<i>mattcarr2600</i>)	1692	-	Cheal, Barry A (<i>nacimora</i>)	2193	
523	w	Sullivan, Luke (<i>death2rooks93</i>)	1585 c	-	Judkins, Brian D (<i>BrianJWx</i>)	1697 e	
524	b	Wood, Ryan (<i>RyanWood01</i>)	1322 c	-	Wooster, Nick (<i>Claret62</i>)	1690 c	

Rugeley have faced worse odds, we've had a good run so far so at last a true test of our skill. How will Rugeley do? Let's find out.

Matt was the first game to finish. I know a rarity. Having done some research he found that his opponent liked the English opening and so he started prepping a load of opening and middlegame traps to try and catch out his opponent. Trouble is he found most of them. Why is it your opponent never does what you want them to do?



From here both sides decided to develop their pieces, castle kingside and prepare for the middlegame. White managed to take the initiative faster than Matt and began an attack down the

kingside. Matt's plan was to slowly build the pressure in the centre, figuring that whites own pieces will block their own attack if they continue and when they think they're ready to spring their attack, Matt will make like the Empire and strike back.

Which brings us to this position.



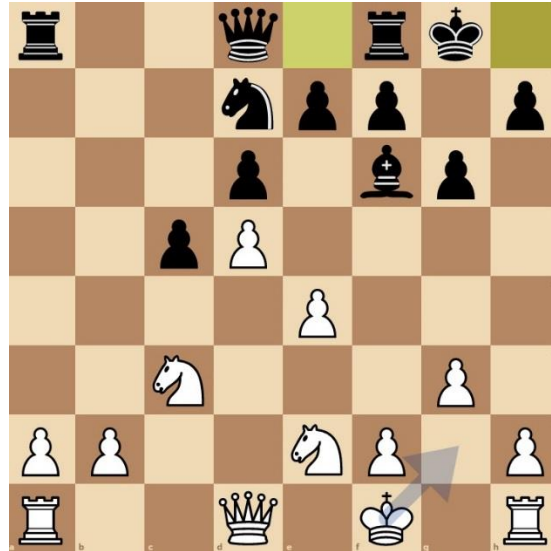
White has just played Bf5 I assume with ideas of checking with the bishop, moving the knight and bringing the queen in. However, Matt had ideas of letting it happen. Here he played cxd4.

Now for another Matt Carr tip - The best laid traps are the ones they want to fall into.

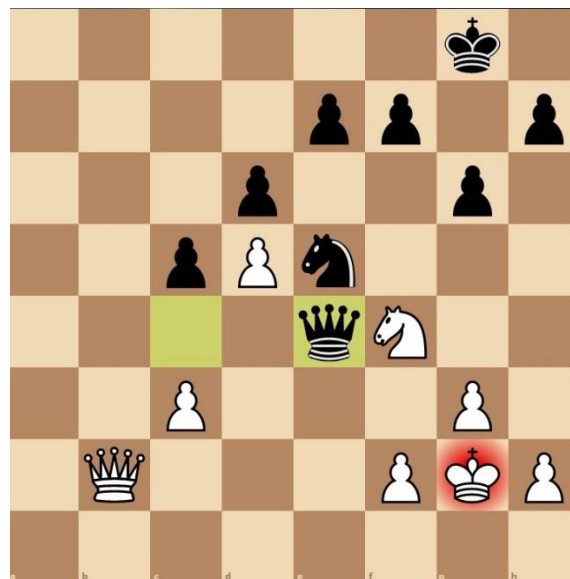
So, white played the move Be6, Matt responded by taking it! After Rook takes back it looks like Matt is the exchange down but now Matt goes Qxc3, threatening the Rook on a1. After the queen takes queen Matt has two passed pawns in the centre and the exchange is equal. White back peddled with the Rook to try to stop and hold the pawns. It was here Matt missed a chance to go the exchange up with White allowing a potential fork of Rook and Knight. Having missed it White then started to slowly take the pawn centre apart using the attacking power of the rook and versatility of the knight. The knight blocked out the bishop and Matt couldn't get his pieces where he needed them. With the central pawns gone and white a whole Rook up. Matt resigned.

Rugeley 0 – 1 Hertford

Steve was the next game to finish. Steve for his trouble got a Benko gambit which he accepted. I remember this one with mixed feelings, this was taught to me many years ago at Newcastle chess club. This must be played accurately by both sides.



Here you can see my silicon friend wants to play Kg2 but Steve chose another move, he decided to do Nf4 bringing more of his pieces into the centre to get an advantage. This turned out to be an error with the bishop taking the knight of c3 and after the pawn re-captures the rook and queen begin to cause havoc on the a file. The rook coming to a3 pressuring two pawns and the queen backs it up on a5 with the potential later for the other rook to make its way into an attack on the queenside via a8. Steve stopped this threat but not before an enemy knight and queen managed to get into Steve's position and cause some trouble.



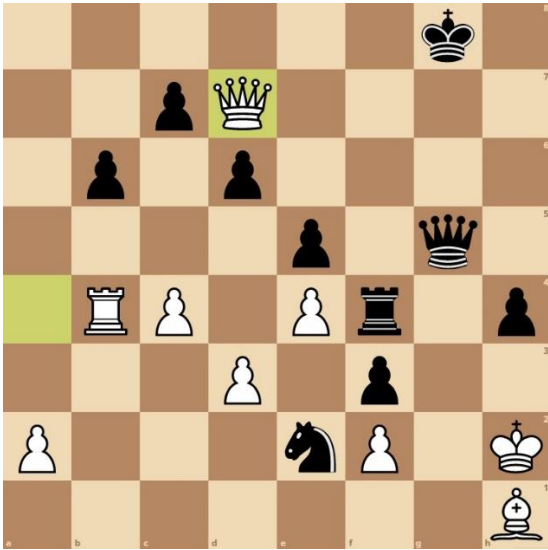
How does one get out of this predicament? The opponent at one point didn't even see there was one. Repeating the position at least twice before finding the win. Steve played Kh4 and then came g5 and something must give. A few moves later it was Steve's resignation. See if you can find the win in this position?

Rugeley 0 – 2 Hertford

Luke was the next game to finish. It was the English opening, his go to against strong opponents and this one was definitely in that category. Both players pushed the pawns they needed. Black pushing pawns on the kingside for the attack and a few on the queenside to stop Luke advancing his there.



Here the bishops were traded off on g7 and Luke began moving his knights towards the enemy king and black began his pawn push. Luke held on tight as black's attack came in. Luke locked up the position in the centre but black just ignored it and kept coming on the kingside opening up Luke's king and prepared to threaten it Luke missed that black had a mating threat. See if you can find it?



Black to play and Mate in 2.

Rugeley 0 – 3 Hertford

Ryan was the final game to finish. Ryan having researched his opponent found that he liked to play the d4 opening and it seems was on a roll having won his last 5 games in the league. Can we go for number 6?

Ryan's prep was right, the game started as a queen's gambit declined, but both sides went aggressive from the start, both sides making strikes on the others position, both players trying to gain an advantage. White could get the centre with their pawns but Ryan's pieces were definitely the more active.

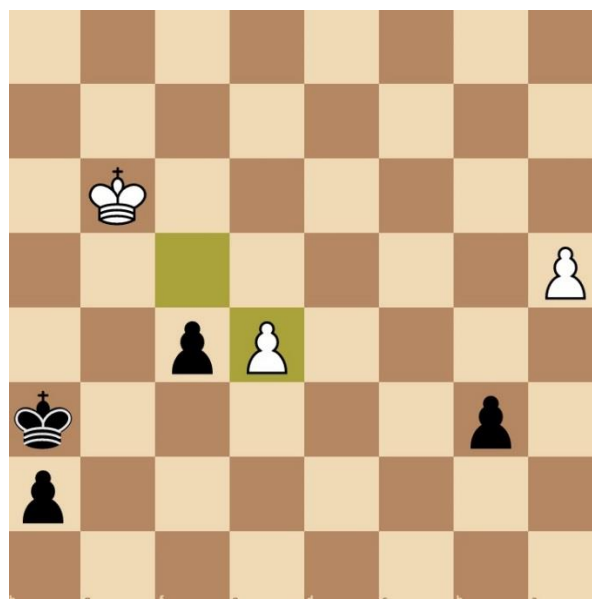


According to my silicon friend Ryan's game was following the same line as a game from 1991 by two players rated around 2300. It only differed from that game when we got to move 16! If anyone's interested you can find it here: <https://lichess.org/4lg9TFPQ/black>

Both players put their rooks on the open C-file and Ryan sent his queen down to a3 to put pressure on the position. When white tried to defend the pawn, it was Ryan who decided to exchange the rooks first. White re-captured with the queen and Ryan pulled the other rook over to threaten it. When the queen got out of the way the rook moved again all the way down to Whites back rank. White thinking, he needed to ease the pressure made a hole for his king to escape to, preventing a back-rank mate threat. The rooks were exchanged off and Ryan piled on the pressure bringing everything in to attack the pawns in the centre. Ryan's light squared bishop was traded for white's knight so Ryan's could come to a beautiful outpost in the centre. White attempted to break into Ryan's position by combining the queen and bishop but it was an easy pawn push that brought that attack to a halt. When white tried to defend his pawn from Ryan's queen this allowed a fork using the knight and white needed to do something quick. When in doubt, attack.



White chose to check the king. It's the kind of thing I would try but it does take the queen away from where it's needed in the centre. With a tricky manoeuvre with the knight Ryan picked up the d pawn for nothing and began attacking the bishop. The knight and bishop were exchanged off in the centre and we were well and truly in an endgame now. Ryan always had to be careful not to allow a perpetual check and cautious he was and thankfully it was never allowed. Both sides began manoeuvring their queen with Ryan through a combination of checks was able to pick up another pawn, all he needed to do now was get the queens off and with a two-pawn advantage should be able to convert it to a win. A few moves later that's exactly what happened.



White brought the king forward hoping to make use of his advanced king and the passed pawn now on e5. Ryan advanced the h-pawn forcing the king to stay where it was otherwise risk the h-pawn queening. Ryan captured white's passed pawn and left the h-pawn alone sending the king off to pick up the white a-pawn. The king can't follow as it must capture the h-pawn first. The king can't be in two places at once. Once Ryan got his king to b4 White resigned gracefully. An absolutely beautiful game Ryan. Well done.

Rugeley 1 – 3 Hertford

This is the first loss Rugeley has had for some time. We've had draws and wins but we haven't lost for the last 6 weeks. It took the strongest team in the league to bring us down.

Division 5

		rd 1	rd 2	rd 3	rd 4	rd 5	rd 6	rd 7	rd 8	rd 9	P	W	D	L	SB	Pts	
1	Hertford	her	wim3 2½	bud 3½	csc5 2	bau1 3½	wlv 1½	mjub 4	wesc 3	nun2 2½	rgl 3	9	7	1	1	143	15
2	CSC 5	csc5	bau2 4	kesd 3½	her 2	marb 2	chw 2½	gond 2½	wlv 2	tps 4	nun2 2½	9	6	3	0	163	15
3	Gonzaga D	gond		ekb 4	wim3 3	mcs 3	bub 3	csc5 1½	chw 2	kesd 3	wlv 2½	8	6	1	1	122	13
4	Wirral League Wanderers	wlv	bln1 4	dah 2½	dod 3	baw 2½	her 2½	nun2 1½	csc5 2	wfja 3	gond 1½	9	6	1	2	133	13
5	Temple Sutton	tps	sabc 2½	uxb 2½	bau1 1	bub 2½	mjub 2	rgl 2	warb 2½	csc5 0	marb 3	9	5	2	2	120	12
6	Nottingham University 2	nun2	she 4	bub 2	mjub 2	bud 2½	kesd 3	wlv 2½	baw 2½	her 1½	csc5 1½	9	5	2	2	117	12
7	St Albans 2	sta2	mjub 1½	hatb 4	ecoc 3	kesd 1	ekb 1	grg 3	dah 2½	bub 3	baw 2½	9	6	0	3	100	12
8	Uxbridge Knights 1	uxb	wfjb 3	tps 1½	wesc 1	4gc 3½	mcs 1½	sta4 4	dod 3	ekb 3½	warb 3½	9	6	0	3	96	12
9	Kent KJCA Kestrels D	kesd	wfja 3½	csc5 ½	warb 3½	sta2 3	nun2 1	bau1 2½	rgl 2	gond 1	wig2 3½	9	5	1	3	113	11
10	Manchester Juniors B	mjub	sta2 2½	rgl 2	nun2 2	wfja 3	tps 2	her 0	bsp 4	baw 1	mcs 2½	9	4	3	2	113	11
11	Bolton & Worsley	baw	shu4 3	warb 2½	chw 3	wlv 1½	marb 3	wesc 2	nun2 1½	mjub 3	sta2 1½	9	5	1	3	108	11
12	Maryport Assassins B	marb	sta3 2	wig2 2½	ydr 3½	csc5 2	baw 1	ekb 2	oxf4 3½	wesc 3	tps 1	9	4	3	2	106	11
13	Rugeley	rgl	hatb 3½	mjub 2	bub ½	bau2 3½	brh1 2½	tps 2	kesd 2	chw 2½	her 1	9	4	3	2	88	11
14	Warwickshire Bears C	warc			grg 2	bln2 4	ecoc 1	wfjb 4	brh2 2½	brh1 3	bau1 2½	7	5	1	1	68	11
15	Watford Juniors A	wfja	kesd ½	bau2 2	bln2 4	mjub 1	har4 4	brh1 3	ecoc 4	wlv 1	wat3 3	9	5	1	3	64	11

Rugeley currently sit in 13th place with one round still to go. With the potential to finish on 13 points we still have a shot at a top 8 finish. How will the final round turn out, who knows but one thing for sure, it will be nothing but fun.

Steve: <https://lichess.org/cwFBY248/white>

Matt: <https://lichess.org/fSyvv0Lk/black>

Luke: <https://lichess.org/bu8sYqgw/white>

Ryan: <https://lichess.org/28DNtOYP/black>