

Dear Dragons,

Welcome to Edition 1 of the Weekly St George Club Champs newsletter! Now in our third year back to our traditional divisional round robin format, this year sees an excellent turnout of 70 players; with seven divisions of exactly 10 players each, most divisions are likely to be very competitive given the closeness of all the ratings. For example, in Division 1, all players have ACF ratings between 1900 and 2100... We welcome some new players, some who have never played competitive chess over the board at a long time control, and some players returning after “layoffs” of various lengths. Playing the top division for the first time are veteran Geoff Barker, rising 14 year old superstar Vu Ky Anh Nguyen and university student Ian Stalker. Previous winners are top seed Daniel Melamed, Arthur Huynh and Frank Tefanis; while perennial contender and club stalwart John Stuart Plant is always in the mix but is still trying to win his first Club Champs. It all makes for a great deal of fun...

In Division 2, Jim Mavroidis is top seed, with Vincent Qiang and Ertan John Huseyin playing their first Club Champs in this format; and the same is true of Nikola Vujasin in Division 3, where Netra Bhatt is top seed. Division 4 sees Paul Jovanovski and Abhishek Anand as “Club Champs newbies”, with junior Ashton Li as top seed. In Division 5, Boris Paceskoski, top seed Stephen Elliott and Michael Punzet are new, while Huey Teng is the only junior in the field. Division 6 sees two juniors, Ethan Currie and top seeded Club Champs debutant Trilok Shenoy; Marshall Scott and James Yossef are also new to the Club Champs, while James McQueen makes his return after a longish absence from the club. Finally, Division 7 sees 5 players in their first Club Champs – Tom England, Matthew Waugh, Mena Soliman, Evgeny Glukhikh and Trilok’s brother Dhyan Shenoy – with Evgeny as the top seed. We wish all of them, and indeed all players, a highly enjoyable and competitive event!

To explain to the newcomers, each week I will write a newsletter describing that round’s happenings, varying in length from 2-3 pages (on catch-up weeks) to 4-6 pages (on most weeks). What I give is a brief description (at least one sentence long) of *every* game, so nobody feels left out; most weeks I will also include at least 4 games, and at least 2 positions from other games. To do so I photograph scoresheets and positions from some games, and make my own notes on others. This year I have fantastic help from Deputy Arbiter Geoff Hyde; but we need your help too... If you think that you have played a good game, send it to us please; it saves us time, and we would love to receive it. To spice things up more, I will even add a few anagrams of players’ names at the end, or nicknames, or alliteration, or all of the above; I know not everyone likes this, but I do! So without further ado, let’s see how things went in Week 1; already lots of fun games, hence a thrilling first edition...

Division 7

Dimitrios Gourlas – Reno Sciberras: Dimitrios actually played a Round 1 game, losing a tough battle to higher rated fellow junior Isaac Wang. However, Isaac then withdrew from the event, his father citing difficulties in Isaac making the club on Tuesday nights due to some sort of clash with Isaac’s coaching. Happily, Reno Sciberras was then able to come in as a replacement; as a result, there was a first round postponement between Dimitrios and Reno.

Dhyan Shenoy 0-1 Mark Boan: No offense to Dhyan; but it is good to see that juniors do not always win! Playing hyperaggressively as Black, Mark emerged from a sequence of exchanges with a bishop fork winning the exchange as early as Move 11. He then trapped the enemy bishop and wound up a whole rook ahead! It took a while longer, but there was no doubt of Mark’s victory from there; Dhyan resigned when his exposed king was on the verge of being checkmated. See game below.

Shenoy, Dhyan - Boan, Mark (875), St George Club Champs Div 7 Round 1, 04/03/25

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Bc5 4.d3 h6 5.Be2 d6 6.0-0 g5 7.Re1 Bg4 8.b3 Nd4 9.Nxd4 Bxd4 10.Bxg4 Bxc3 11.Bd2 Bxa1 12.Qxa1 Nf6 13.Bh3 g4 14.Bxg4 Nxc3 15.Re2 Qh4 16.h3 Nf6 17.Be1 0-0-0 18.f3 Qg5 19.Bf2 b6 20.c4 Rhg8 21.g4 h5 22.Qe1 Kb8 23.Bh4 Qg6 24.a4 Rde8 25.b4 Re6 26.Qa1 hxg4 27.hxg4 Nxc3 0-1

Tom England 1-0 Mena Soliman: An easy win for Tom, kicking Mena's queen from pillar to post then winning a piece to a knight fork! Mena left a knight en prise soon after, then had to give up the exchange to avoid mate. More material loss followed, ending with a queen and rook mate on Move 36.

Matthew Waugh 0-1 John Matson: After some confusion at the start (the board was set up the wrong way round!), John showed his superior experience here! He won two pawns, then simplified. When John swapped off all the pieces and had two pawns against nothing, Matthew resigned...

Evgeny Glukhikh 1-0 Samuel Slings: As Evgeny sacrificed a piece unsoundly on Move 8, Samuel was actually winning this one early on; but he never took the knight! He won a pawn instead, so he still had the better position; but eventually he let Evgeny equalise. Then he let his queen get trapped! Evgeny in turn missed this, then missed mate; but Samuel still had to give up his queen for a rook to avoid mate. Finally, a queen fork by White won a rook; and Evgeny won by checkmate on Move 53.

Division 6

Aaron Hu 0-1 Trilok Shenoy: Aaron won a pawn early to a removing the guard tactic, and was doing well despite Trilok having the two bishops as compensation. Then Aaron emerged from a tactical sequence with seven pawns against three! Just when he should have been winning easily, his king moved to e1 instead of c1 on Move 28, giving two of the pawns back and allowing strong pressure against his king. In the end Trilok got all his pawns back; but it was still pretty much even until Aaron blundered on Move 40! He lost a rook to a skewer; he resigned five moves later.

Marshall Scott 0-1 Peter Swinton: Poor Marshall blundered a piece to a discovered attack as early as Move 8! This is not the sort of advantage you can give to someone as solid as Peter. White actually won the piece back via a discovered attack of his own; but two pawns down with his opponent having the two bishops, he was still lost. Soon after, Peter was able to trade into a winning bishop vs knight ending a pawn up. Thereafter, the end was nigh: Marshall resigned when his knight got trapped on a2.

Nihal Scammell 1-0 William Liu: A crazy game! After a quiet opening, William invaded with his queen, won a pawn on Move 14 then built up a winning attack against the enemy's queenside castled king. Just when he looked like he was crashing through, he started trading, then let the White queen in with a check. Still winning, he then allowed a 34. Nxf7 sacrifice which was drawn with best play. But instead he took the knight, allowing a forced mate in five which Nihal found; see game below.

Scammell, Nihal (1297) - Liu, William (1168), St George Club Champs Div 6 Round 1, 04/03/25

1.c4 c5 2.Nc3 d6 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 g6 5.Qa4+ Bd7 6.Qb3 Nc6 7.a3 Rb8 8.Nf3 Bg7 9.d3 0-0 10.Bd2 Qc8 11.e4 Bh3 12.Bxh3 Qxh3 13.0-0 Qg2 14.Nh4 Qxf2 15.Rdf1 Qd4 16.Qc2 Qe5 17.Bf4 Qe6 18.Nf3 a6 19.Qd2 b5 20.Ng5 Qd7 21.Rf2 b4 22.axb4 Rxb4 23.Qd1 Ng4 24.Rc2 Bxc3 25.bxc3 Ra4 26.Kb1 Rb8+ 27.Rb2 Rxb2+ 28.Kxb2 Na5 29.Qb1 Nf2 30.Rf1 Nxd3+ 31.Kc2 Nxf4 32.Qb8+ Kg7 33.Rxf4 f6 34.Nxf7 Kxf7 35.Rh4+ Kg7 36.Qh8+ Kf7 37.Rh7+ Ke6 38.Qg8+ Ke5 39.Qd5# 1-0

Ethan Currie – James McQueen: This game was postponed by James.

James Yossef 1-0 Ralph Mitchell: This game was even for much of the first 20 moves, with a lot of focus around mutual weak isolated d-pawns. Eventually James won one, but initially it was not enough for an advantage. Still, James kept building; but just when he had a winning advantage, he went for tactics that just wound up giving the pawn back! After fighting so hard, Ralph then traded queens into a worse bishop v knight ending; but again he fought back to equality. It was sad, then, when he moved his knight to the wrong square; and Ralph resigned when James was queening his d-pawn by force.

Division 5

Maan Beydoun – Sam Sharkawy: This game was postponed by Maan.

Dimitrios Stathos 0.5-0.5 Michael Punzet: Our first draw in this newsletter saw Michael essay the Centre Counter Gambit, reaching dead equality by Move 10. From there the players traded rooks on an open e-file, maintaining the balance. With the position locked (and the engine evaluation at 0.00!), the players agreed that there was no progress to be made: they agreed a draw on Move 21.

Ken Eldridge 0-1 Huey Teng: After equalising early, Huey got an edge after Ken unnecessarily gave him the two bishops on Move 16. Playing too passively, White then dropped a rook after moving into a knight fork based on a pin. From there it was easy: Huey simplified, and Ken resigned on Move 28.

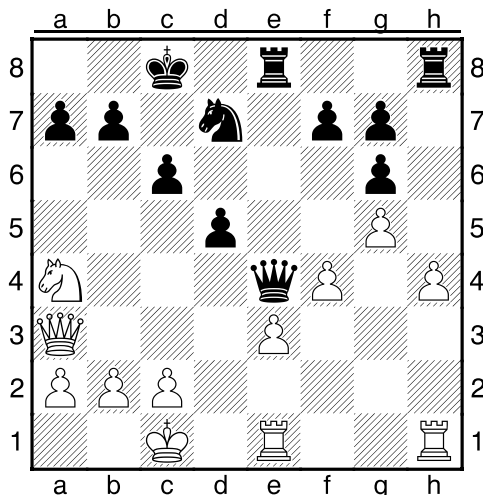
Boris Paceskoski 1-0 Chris Brown: This 20 move miniature looked fairly even until Chris' errant bishop retreat on Move 13 gave Boris the edge. From there Boris took advantage of an open h-file to basically force mate! Chris was losing the house when he resigned; see game below.

Paceskoski, Boris (1370) - Brown, Chris (1300), St George Club Champs Div 5 Round 1, 04/03/25
 1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 g6 3.Nf3 Bg7 4.Bc4 d6 5.h3 Nf6 6.d3 0-0 7.Nd5 a6 8.Nxf6+ Bxf6 9.h4 b5 10.Bb3 Nc6 11.h5 Bg4 12.hxg6 hxg6 13.Qd2 Bg7 14.Qg5 Bxf3 15.gxf3 e6 16.Qg2 Qe7 17.Qh3 f6 18.Bxe6+ Rf7 19.Bh6 Kf8 20.Bxg7+ 1-0

Stephen Elliott 1-0 Ralph Shaw: Stephen played the King's Gambit, moved his king on Move 7 and was -2 by Move 8! Yet somehow all of this seemed to throw Ralph, despite the fact he won a second pawn. In an open position, White gradually fought back against the exposed enemy king and queen. He won queen for rook and knight, and the position was equal by Move 25. Then Ralph blundered his bishop, and it was all over 12 moves later; Ralph resigned upon losing his rook to a queen fork.

Division 4

Paul Jovanovski 0-1 Ashton Li: A quiet opening saw not much happening here until Move 20, when Ashton got a slight edge due to central pressure with his heavy pieces. A backward White e3-pawn was a target, and Ashton piled up on it! Eventually, they reached the critical position below.



Here Black played 24...d4, met by 25.Rh3? After 25...dxe3, he could not recapture due to 26...Qxf4, and his entire kingside falls! Then the e-pawn was decisive; the game ended 26.Qd6 Re6 27.Nc5 Nxc5 28.Qxc5 Qxf4 29.Qxa7 e2+ 30.Kb1 Qd2 31.Rhh1 Rd8 32.a4 Re4 33.c3 Qd1+ 34.Ka2 Rxa4+ 0-1.

Emmanuel Vardakis 0-1 Abhishek Anand: Not much happened for the first 8 moves here, with both players developing normally. But then Emmanuel moved his knight to the wrong square, enabling his opponent to grab the centre with pawns on d5 and e5. From there Abhishek won two pieces for a rook, then Emmanuel blundered a whole knight! With three minor pieces for a rook, Abhishek was then winning easily; it only took 8 more moves, Emmanuel resigning when mate was inevitable.

Pieter Stoltz 0.5-0.5 Darren Curtis: With both players taking their time, this was one of the longer games of the night despite only lasting 37 moves! White had a slight edge by Move 12, pressuring Black's g5-pawn after the players castled on opposite sides. But Black fought back, finally equalising when queens were traded. Then Black won a pawn; but it was never quite enough to win! Soon after, Pieter won the pawn back with a rook fork; at this point he offered a draw, which Darren accepted.

John Parissis 0.5-0.5 Tibor Lendvai: A similar draw to the previous game! A locked pawn centre was resolved with an en passant capture, leaving White with advantage after winning a pawn. Just when he could have converted with a decisive check, John instead left his bishop trapped on h7 and was worse! But Tibor was too quick to take it, losing his own bishop in return. In the resultant ending, opposite coloured bishops made the extra pawn meaningless; a draw followed about 15 moves later.

Ramu Srinivasa 1-0 John Nichas: Sadly for John, this game speaks for itself! It went 1.d4 Nf6 2.Bf4 c5 3.e3 g6 4.c3 Bg7 5.dxc5 Ne4 6.Qd5 Nf6 7.Qf3 0-0 8.Bc4 Na6 9.Bxa6 1-0. In an even position, forgetting his pinned b-pawn, John blundered his knight on a6; he resigned immediately in disgust...

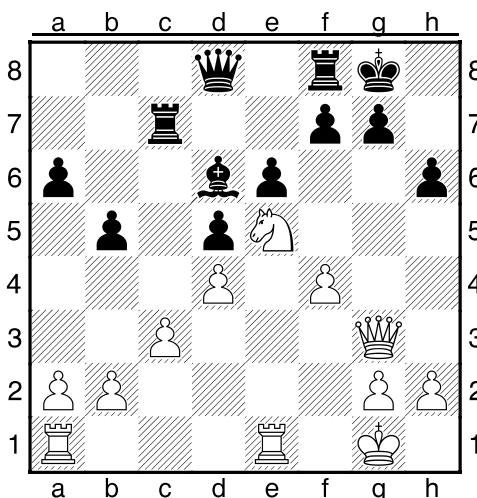
Division 3

Nikola Vujasin 0-1 Netra Bhatt: Nik was solid for much of this game, beginning with a small space advantage by Move 10. He won a pawn, and seemed on the way to victory until he pushed his d-pawn unnecessarily! This enabled Netra to then successfully challenge his centre; the extra d-pawn was isolated, and the position was level. It could have been a draw, but Black kept on fighting, getting a winning advantage when the White queen wandered too far away from her king! Netra won a pawn, then the exchange, then hounded the enemy king, finishing with mate on Move 36.

Celina Wu – Malachi O'Donoghue: This game was postponed by Malachi.

Brian Allison 0-1 John Karabatsos: A solid opening by John saw him with an early edge, which grew to a very big advantage when he won a pawn via a double pin on Move 12! From there he just simplified, maintaining his extra pawn and pressuring Brian's backward c-pawn. Finally, he advanced his passed e-pawn; and Brian resigned when forced to sacrifice a rook to stop it from queening.

Ghassan Beydoun 0-1 Andres Perez: Play was even for the first 20 moves here. Then Andres got a slight positional edge. He was playing for a minority attack when they reached the position below.



In chess, you must always be tactically alert! After 23...b4, 24.Rac1 bxc3, White erred with 25. Rxc3? The tactics after the skewer 25...Bb4 were in Black's favour. Play proceeded 26.Rxc7 Bxe1 27.Rd7 Bxg3 28.Rxd8 Bxh2+ 29.Kxh2 Rxd8. Black was now an exchange and a pawn up; he still had to work a little bit, but he won in 20 more moves.

Graham Saint 0-1 Christian Lagarez: This game completed an amazing statistic: Black won every game played in this division tonight! Here White, with a superior pawn centre, was a bit better after 12 moves. But Black recaptured a piece the wrong way on Move 18 to allow equality. Then he unguarded the b3 square! A knight fork there was terminal; losing his queen, he resigned two moves later.

Division 2

Ted Power 1-0 Jim Mavroidis: A Giuoco Piano was even for the first 18 moves, at which point Jim made a tactical inaccuracy that allowed Ted to win a pawn. There was not much doing for Jim from there... He tried to mix it up, but there were not enough pieces left (queens had been traded off); after Ted forced a winning king and pawn ending, Jim resigned on Move 39.

Michael Babic 0-1 Fady Gerges: The defending champ had a tough start, as Fady ground him down in 69 moves... A slow manoeuvring game saw equality for the first 25 moves, when White allowed some tactics winning a pawn. They reached a knight and pawn ending with Fady a pawn up; it was tough, but he forced a knight trade on Move 51 and was able to convert a won king and pawn ending.

Vincent Qiang 0.5-0.5 Jose Escribano: In his first Club Champs game, Vincent found out how solid Jose can be! In a c3 Sicilian that was even much of the way, Vincent finally grabbed the advantage with a d5 pawn break on Move 28. But just when he had reached a won position, he traded rooks unnecessarily on Move 31! They reached an even queen and knight ending with nothing on. Vincent tried for a while, but to no avail; he accepted the last of a few draw offers by Jose on Move 38.

George Morgan 0.5-0.5 Ertan John Huseyin: An intriguing battle between two experienced players! Like the previous game, they were even for much of the game; but then things began to spice up on Move 22! In an open position with all the heavy pieces and a pair of opposite coloured bishops each, play was sharp and dangerous. Ertan missed some chances, then averted disaster when his simple rook trade walked into a back rank mate in two! But fortunately for him, in time pressure George did not see it, so just recaptured the rook; and the game finally petered out to a drawn rook and bishop ending.

Sarwat Rewais 0-1 Nick Kordahi: Sarwat is usually solid, while Nick is aggressive – and it was the aggressive one who prevailed here! After an equal opening, Nick got a space advantage and began to push on the kingside. Sarwat was too passive, and his king got in trouble! Then Nick penetrated with his queen and rook on an open h-file. Sarwat resigned after allowing mate in two; see game below.

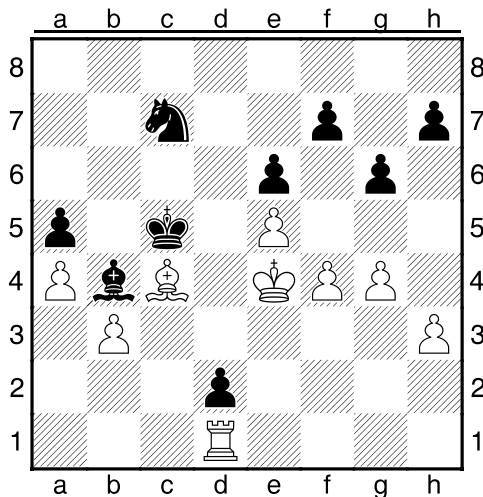
Rewais, Sarwat (1867) - Kordahi, Nick (1804), St George Club Champs Div 2 Round 1, 04/03/25
1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 e5 3.g3 Bb4 4.Nd5 Bc5 5.a3 a5 6.Bg2 c6 7.Nc3 0-0 8.e3 Re8 9.Nge2 d6 10.0-0 Be6 11.b3 Nbd7 12.Bb2 Ba7 13.d4 Bf5 14.Rc1 Qe7 15.Qd2 e4 16.h3 h5 17.b4 axb4 18.axb4 Nb6 19.Nb1 Qe6 20.Na3 g5 21.Kh2 d5 22.c5 Nbd7 23.b5 Bb8 24.Qb4 h4 25.Rc3 Kg7 26.Rh1 Rh8 27.Kg1 hxg3 28.fxg3 Bxh3 29.Rc1 Bxg2 30.Kxg2 Qg4 31.Qe1 0-1

Division 1

John Stuart Plant 0.5-0.5 Geoff Barker: Here are JSP's thoughts on this draw with fighting veteran Geoff! "This game I did everything but basically win it! I had a +6 position often at different times in the middlegame, going into and entering the queens and rooks + my knight v his bishop endgame with pawns. That is, I established a strong bind on his king with my knight (knights do have horsepower :)), where his castled kingside position was also shattered to boot. The "ever engine(ous)" engine wanted me to keep this bind forever – well, certainly longer than I did – which was a long time though, certainly what I thought! But sadly, it still was not long enough... I forgot that such binds in chess do pay off if you just keep them forever; however, all credit to Geoff too! He certainly proved a tenacious defender in the queen endgame, and he caused me just enough problems (muddied the waters just enough) so I that could not see anything concrete. I thus incorrectly swapped off into a dead draw! Not a bad result, but something to build on for sure in the rounds ahead!".

Stevo Acevski 0-1 Frank Tefanis: A convincing win by the 2021 Club Champion, who was never in danger here against his opponent's Exchange French. By Move 15 he was a pawn ahead, and easily winning with more active pieces. Stevo kept fighting, but the open a-file killed him; and in the end, even with queens off the board, his king was checkmated on the unusual square of c4!

Ian Stalker 0.5-0.5 Jeremy Plunkett: A crazy, thrilling, topsy-turvy marathon! After an even start, Jeremy sacrificed a pawn for activity, but miscalculated a tactic and lost the exchange, with queens swapped off to boot. He got a passed d2-pawn, which gradually gave him counterplay. After much subtle manoeuvring, the players eventually reach the following critical position.



Here Ian is better after 42.h4; but after 42. f5 instead, the position was actually level! Play proceeded 42...gxf5+ 43.gxf5 exf5+ 44.Kxf5 Nd5 45.Bxd5 Kxd5 46.Kf4 Kd4 47.Kf3 Kd3 48.h4, and Black is now winning! A bishop move or h5 does the trick; but sadly for Jeremy, the natural 48...Kc2 (as he chose) does not... When White played 49.Ke2, the position was actually drawn. Jeremy kept trying, but Ian defended well (see game on website); and in the end, a thrilling fighting draw was the result!

Vu Ky Anh Nguyen 1-0 Mario Falchoni: A sad one for Mario, who fought hard but with both hands tied behind his back! He blundered into tactics losing a piece for two pawns on Move 14. Thereafter he made Vu Ky Anh work, but not enough! Gradually the 14 year old simplified into a won position. When he forced the queen trade on Move 45, the end was nigh; Mario resigned two moves later.

Arthur Huynh 1-0 Daniel Melamed: In this battle of two former Club Champions, it was Daniel who went wrong: worse by Move 15, he was a pawn down with doubled isolated c-pawns by Move 20. From there Arthur gradually forced a won queen endgame. It still took effort, but the finish was pretty (see game below): Arthur underpromoted to a knight on Move 45, then checkmated 4 moves later.

Huynh, Arthur (1976) - Melamed, Daniel (2006), St Geo Club Champs Div 1 Round 1, 04/03/25
 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 d5 4.Nc3 Bb4 5.Qb3 a5 6.Bg5 Nc6 7.a3 a4 8.Qc2 Ba5 9.e3 0-0 10.Bd3 h6
 11.Bh4 Re8 12.0-0 dxc4 13.Bxc4 Bxc3 14.bxc3 e5 15.Bb5 e4 16.Ne5 g5 17.Bg3 Re6 18.Nxc6 bxc6
 19.Bxa4 Ba6 20.c4 Qe7 21.Bb3 c5 22.Be5 cxd4 23.exd4 c5 24.Rfe1 Bb7 25.Bxf6 Qxf6 26.d5 Rb6
 27.a4 Ba6 28.Rab1 Rab8 29.h3 Qg6 30.Ba2 f5 31.Rxb6 Rxb6 32.Rb1 Kf7 33.a5 Rxb1+ 34.Qxb1 Qf6
 35.Qb8 Qa1+ 36.Kh2 Qxa2 37.Qa7+ Kg8 38.Qxa6 Qxf2 39.Qg6+ Kf8 40.Qxh6+ Kf7 41.Qe6+ Kg7
 42.Qe5+ Kf7 43.d6 g4 44.d7 gxh3 45.d8N+ Kg6 46.Kxh3 Qe2 47.Qe6+ Kg5 48.Nf7+ Kf4 49.Qh6#

So there you have it – a great first round! In the top division alone, Plunkett's Pleasant Play drew with Stalker's Stunning Staunchness; Cowboy Hat Tree could not crack Dog Sound Maker; and Stiffen a Rank convincingly defeated Evasive Stock. I wonder what next week will have in store for us?