

Media Release: Defending Champion shares title with top seed at Ballarat Begonia Open Chess

By Paul Power, Australian Chess Federation

Defending champion James Morris and top seed UK's Gawain Jones triumph on the final day's play to share the title.

The third and final day of the Ballarat Begonia Open Chess Tournament requires endurance by players entering the most critical phase for final placings.

Round 6/7

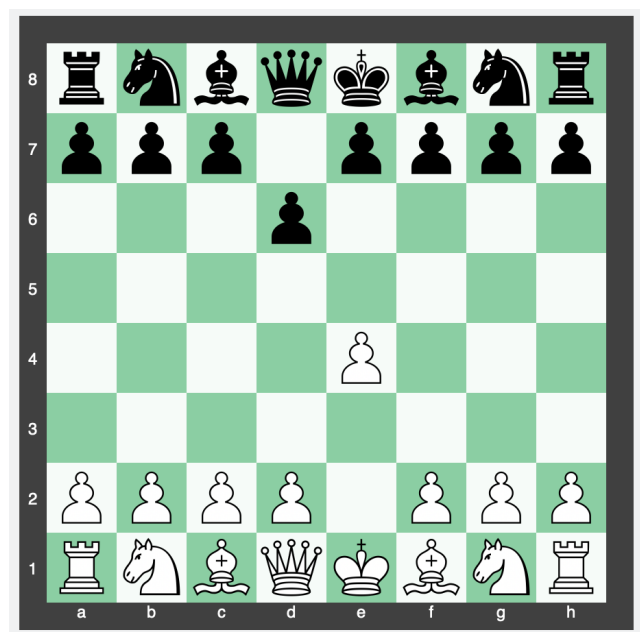
Board 1 sees defending champion Victorian International Master James Morris against Serbia's International Master Mihajlo Radovanovic.

Board 2 has UK compatriots Michael Fernandez and top seed Gawain Jones duelling.

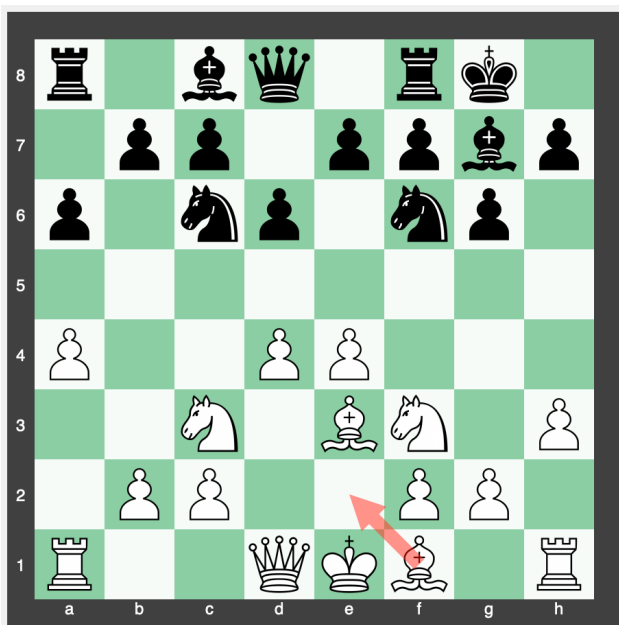
With another 12 players on 4/5, with two rounds remaining, the day promises an exciting finish.

Board 1

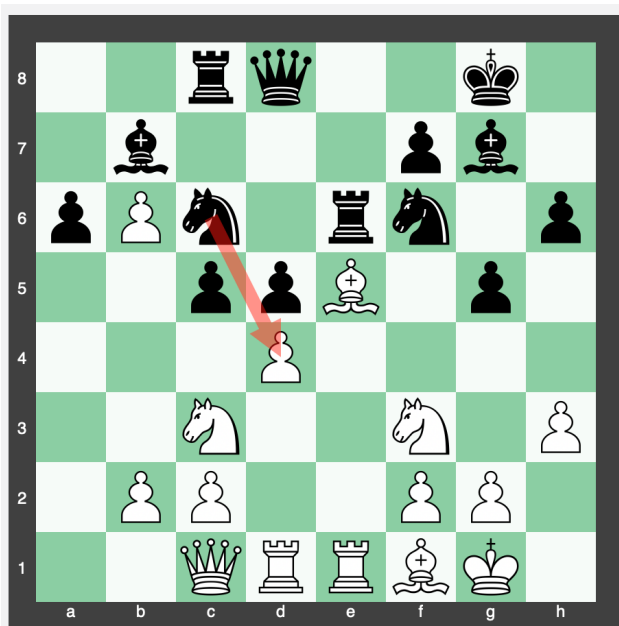
Morris (White) met a Pirc Defence from Radovanovic



Morris would not disappoint pundits, by playing the rare 4. h3 and 7. a4, arriving at the same position after 8. Be2 as Carlsen-Kramnik World Blitz Championship, Moscow, 2010



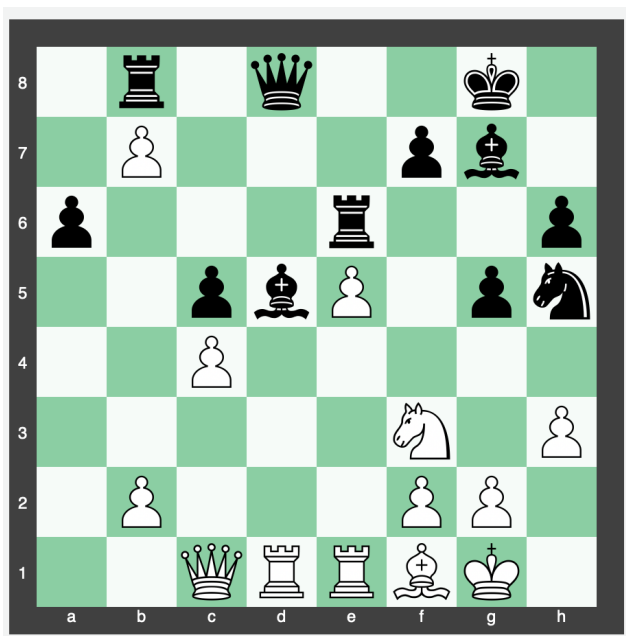
After manoeuvring by both, a critical position was reached at move 21



where 21... Nxd4 22. Nxd4 Rxe5! 23. Rxe5 cxd4 24. Rxd4 Qxb6 25. Qe3 Qxb2 26. Nd1 is equal

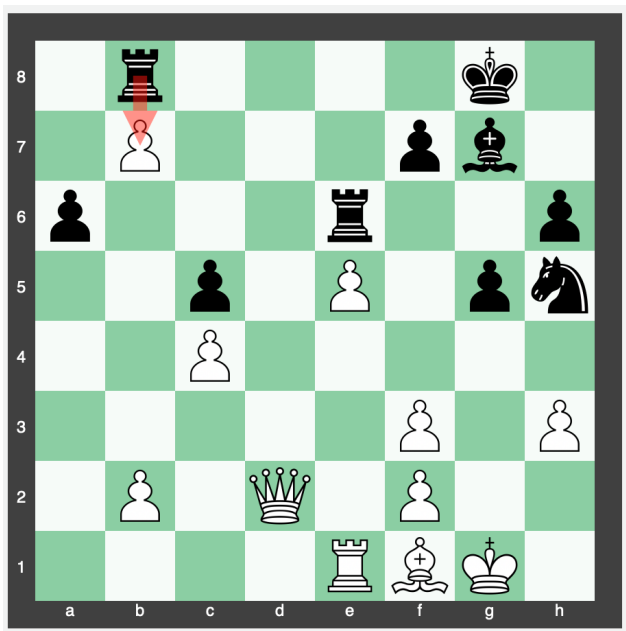
but, instead, Radovanovic played 21... **Nxe5**

Ever tactically astute, Morris pounced with 22. dxe5 Nh5 23. Nxd5! Bxd5 24. b7 Rb8 25. c4



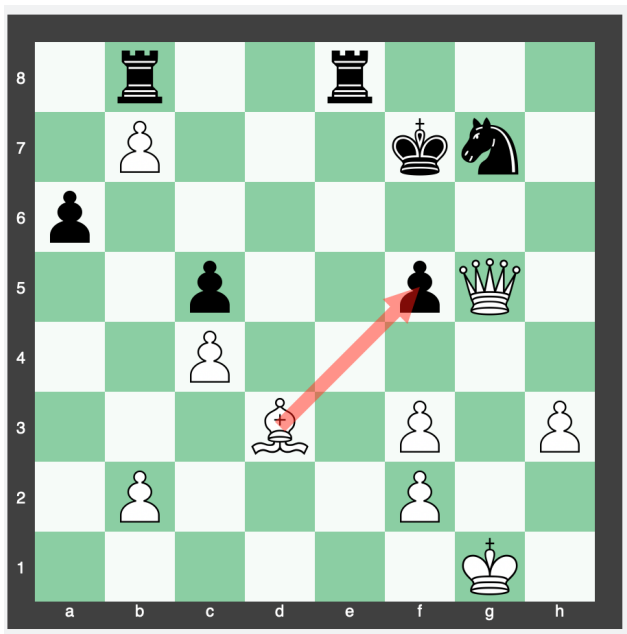
and Black must lose Queen for Rook and Knight.

There followed 25... Bxf3 26. Rxd8+ Rxd8 27. gxf3 Rb8 28. Qd2

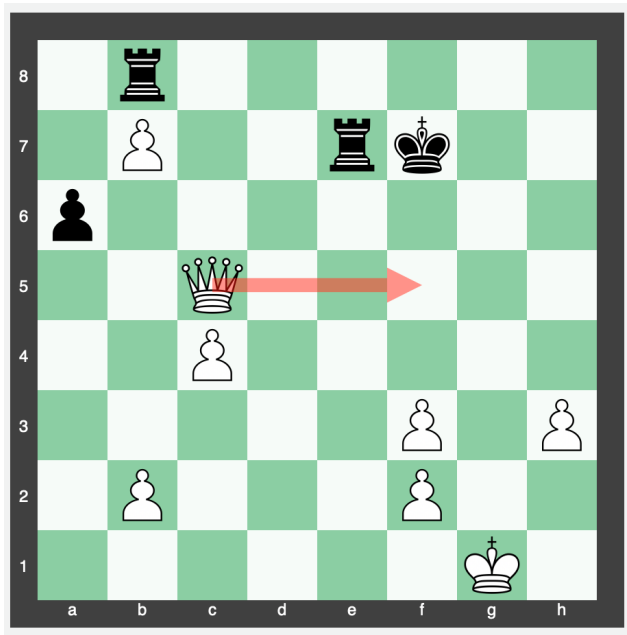


where Black should capture White's passed b-pawn, but, perhaps stunned by recent events, chose 28... Bxe5

It was all downhill for Black, as Morris finished crisply 29. Rxe5 Rxe5 30. Qd6 Ree8 31. Qxh6 Ng7 32. Bd3 f5 33. Qxg5 Kf7 34. Bxf5

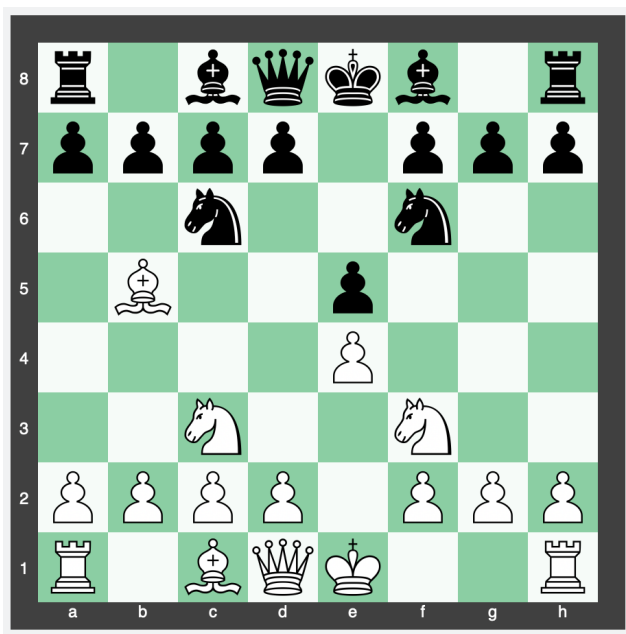


Black resigned at 38. Qf5+



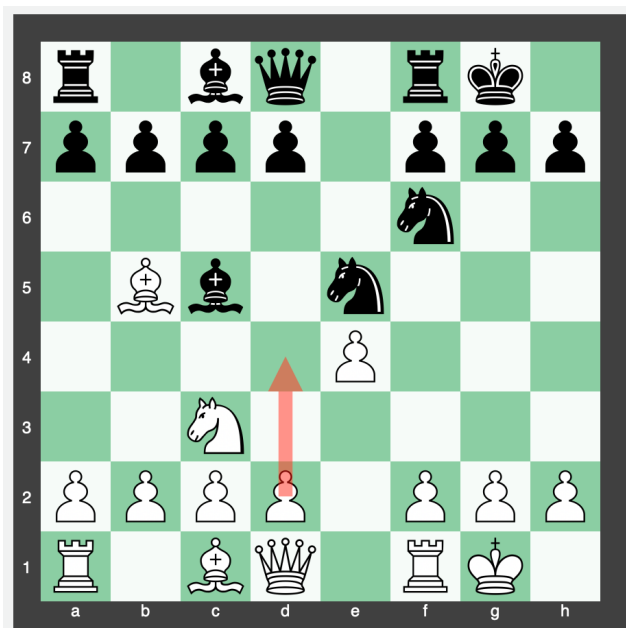
Board 2 saw an interesting Opening theoretical duel between UK compatriots Fernandez (White) and Jones.

A Four Knights: Spanish Variation



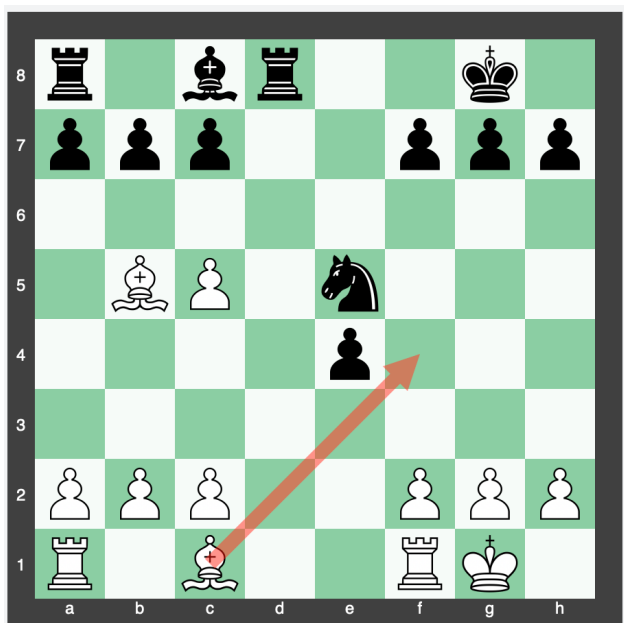
followed Short-Adams, English Championship Match, 1991

up to 7. d4



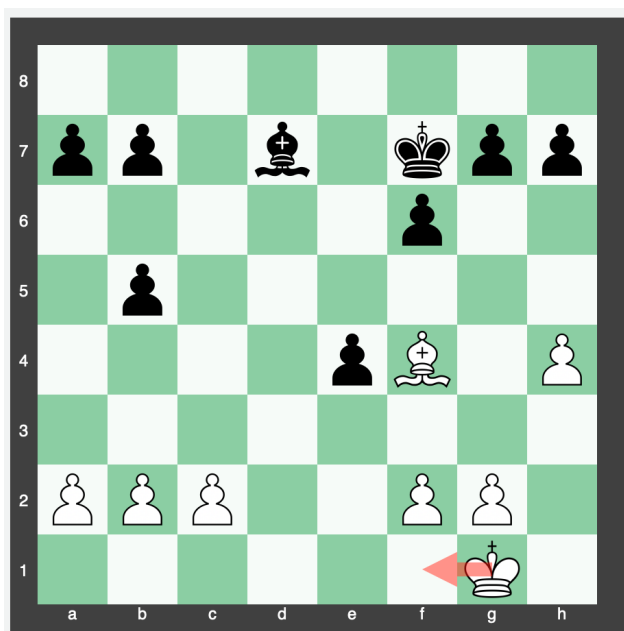
Adams played 7... Bd6 and Short went on to win. Jones chose 7... d5

There followed 8. dxc5 Nxe4 9. Nxe4 dxe4 10. Qxd8 Rxd8 11. Bf4

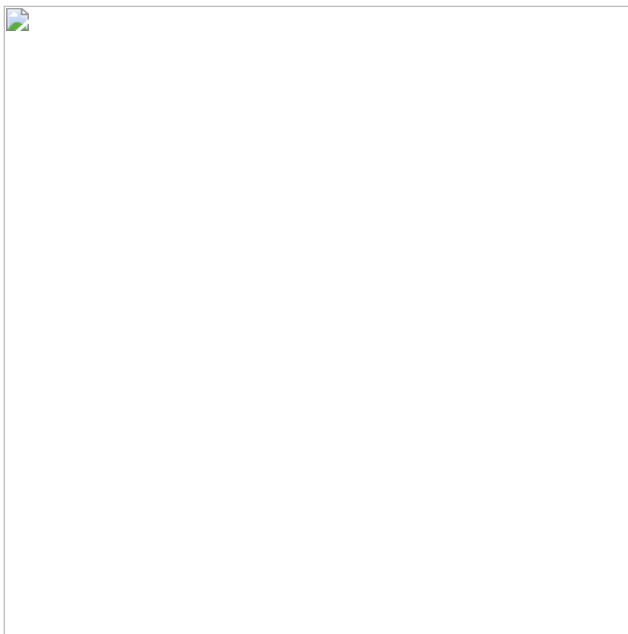


with an equal position.

After exchanges, by 21. Kf1, the game looked set for an "opposite coloured Bishops" draw.



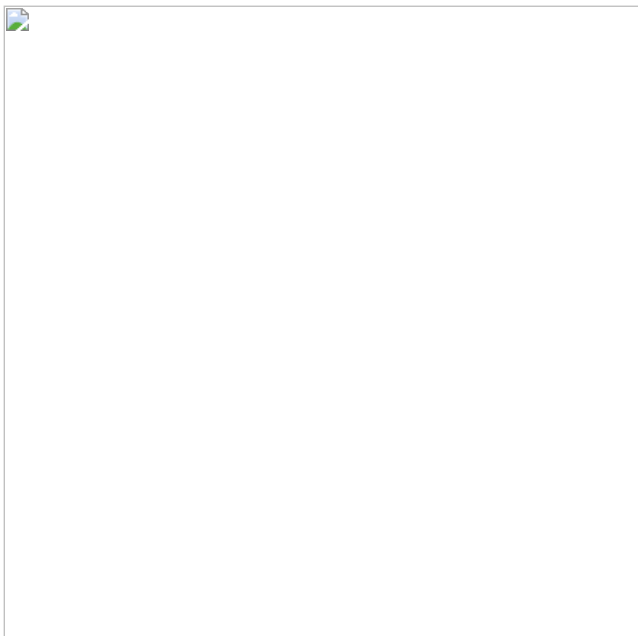
A critical position occurred after 25... g5



where 26. hxg5 fxg5 is equal, as both sides can achieve pawns and Bishops on the correct coloured squares.

But, Fernandez misstepped, unbalancing the position, playing 26. Be7, allowing 26... gxh4 27. gxh4

and, now, another critical position.

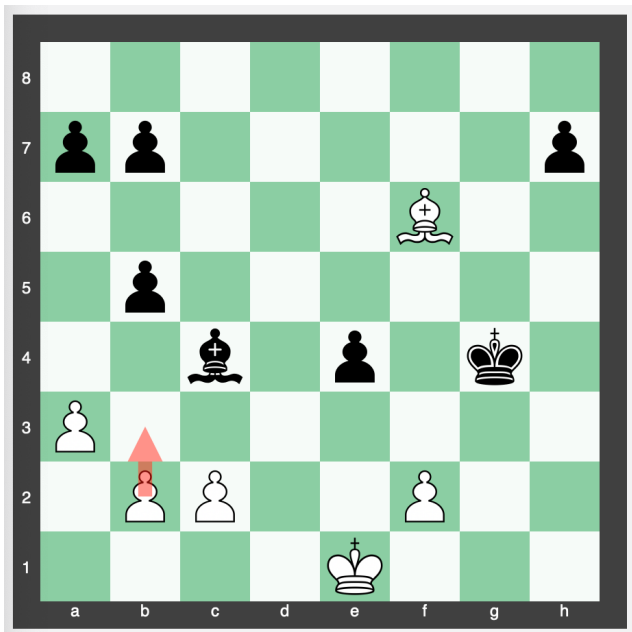


Should Black capture White's h-pawn, aiming to Queen Black's h-pawn, since Black's light squared Bishop can eventually support the h1 promotion, if it can advance that far? Or should Black preserve the potential e4-f5 pawn majority complex?

Jones chose the former.

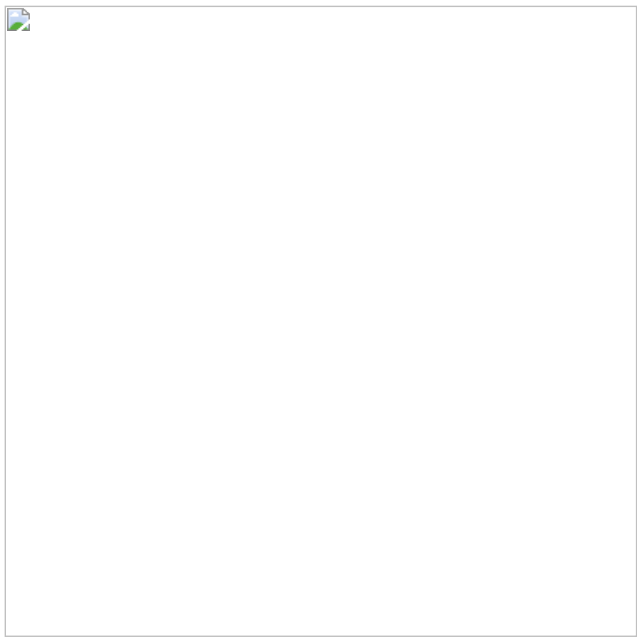
There followed 27... Kxh4 28. Bxf6+ Kg4 and now the battle is to achieve a superior King position.

White's King is currently inferior

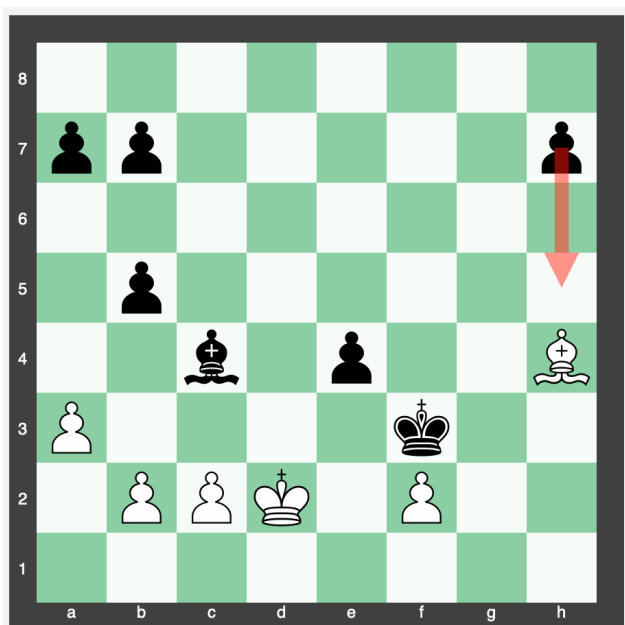


but can occupy e2 if playing 29. b3 Bf7 30. Bd4 a6 31. Ke2

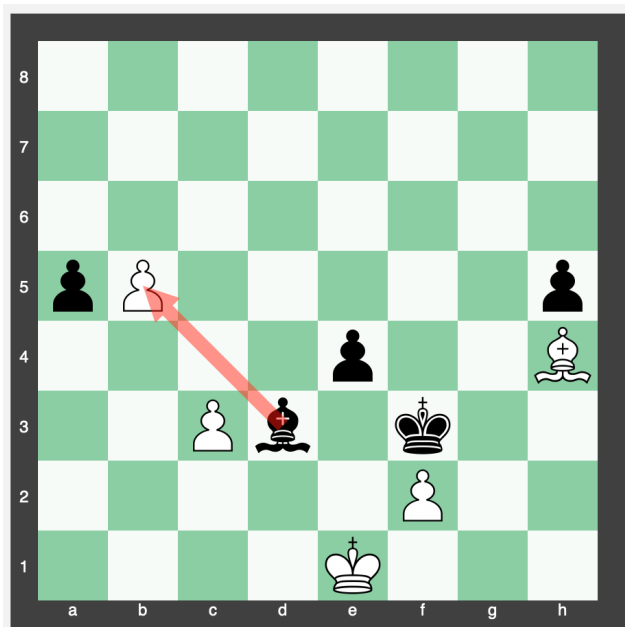
But, instead, played 29. Kd2 there followed 29... Kf3



Then on 30... h5



White felt compelled to take action on the opposite wing
 31. b3 Be6 32. Ke1 a6 33. a4 bxa4 34. bxa4 a5 35. Bd8 Bc4 36. c3 Bd3 37. Bh4 b5 38. axb5 Bxb5



which proved fatal.

Other games saw wins to Zhao over Wang, Chan over McClymont, So over Solomon.

So the leader board going into the final round was

Player		Rtg	Fed	Pts
1	GM Jones,Gawain	2618		5.5
4	IM Morris,James	2418		5.5
3	IM Radovanovic,Mihajlo	2464		5.0
2	GM Zhao,Zong-Yuan	2486		5.0
16	FM Soo,Kai Jie	2070		5.0
12	IM Cannon,David	2185		5.0
14	Testolin,Ryder	2097		5.0
9	FM Wallis,Christopher	2248		5.0
15	FM Chan,Kris	2071		5.0

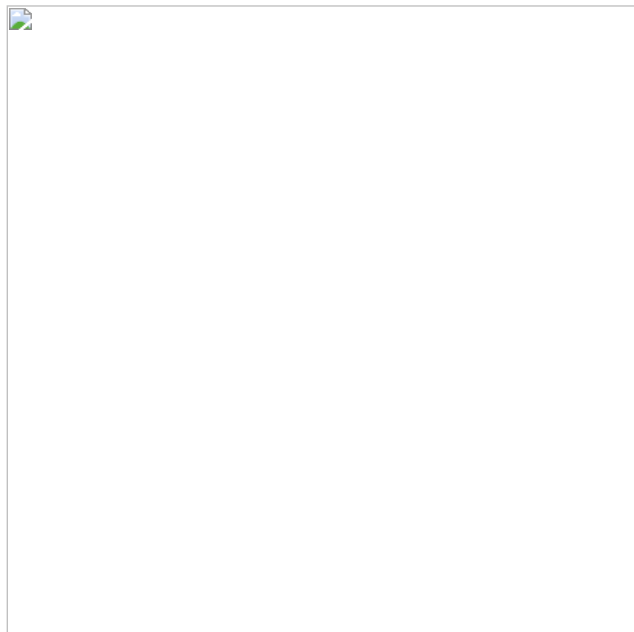
with pairings

Fed	White Player	Pts	Result	Pts	Black Player	Fed
	1 GM Jones,Gawain	5.5	...	5	15 FM Chan,Kris	
	9 FM Wallis,Christopher	5	...	5.5	4 IM Morris,James	
	3 IM Radovanovic,Mihajlo	5	...	5	2 GM Zhao,Zong-Yuan	
	12 IM Cannon,David	5	...	5	16 FM Soo,Kai Jie	
	6 GM Johansen,Darryl K	4.5	...	5	14 Testolin,Ryder	

Round 7/7

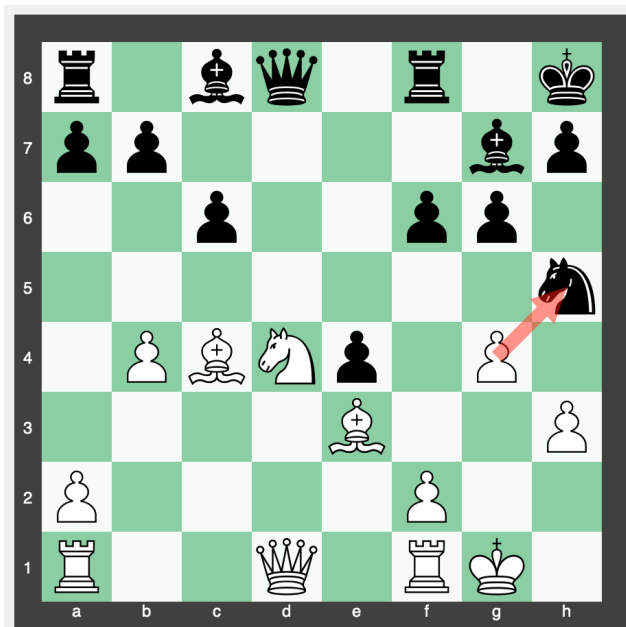
On **Board 1**, Gawain Jones' opponent, Kris Chan (Black), lost a Knight on move 16.

After 14... Nxe4



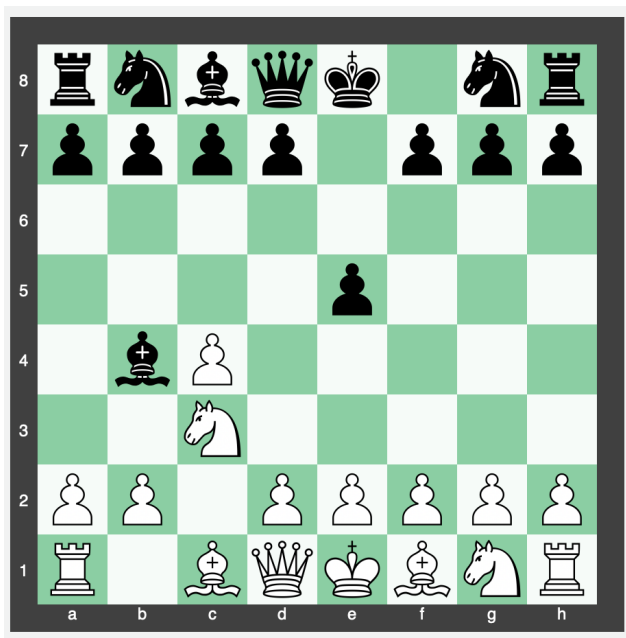
there followed 15. Nxe4 d5 reclaiming the Knight with the fork, then 16. g4 attacking Black's Knight.

Black responded 16... dxe4 and White 17. gxh5 winning a Knight and it was game over.

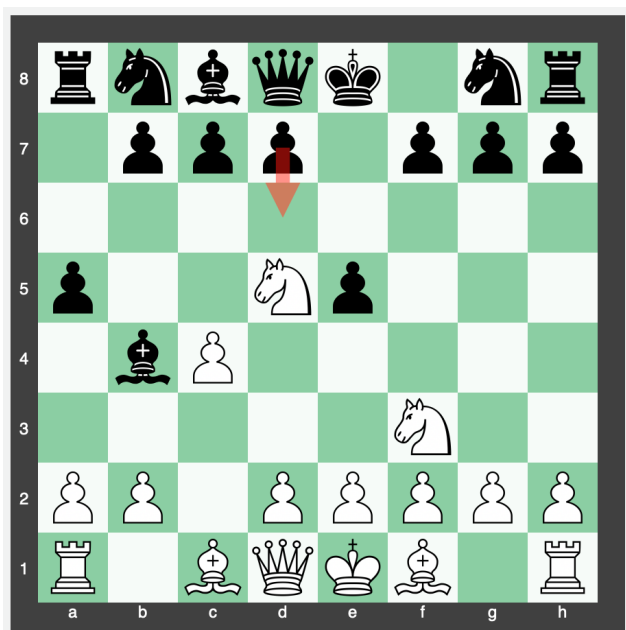


But, instead, Black could have played 16... f5 17. Ng5 (17. gxh5 f4 18. Bc1 dxe4 19. Bb2 Qg5+ with a strong attack) 17... dxc4 (17... Qf6 18. Bb3 f4 19. Bd2 Qxd4 20. gxh5 f3) 18. Nde6 Bxe6 19. Nxe6 Qxd1 20. Raxd1 Rfe8 21. Nc7 Nf6 22. Nxa8 Rxa8

Board 2 sees James Morris (Black) defending against an English Opening from Chris Wallis with a Kramnik-Shirov Counter-attack

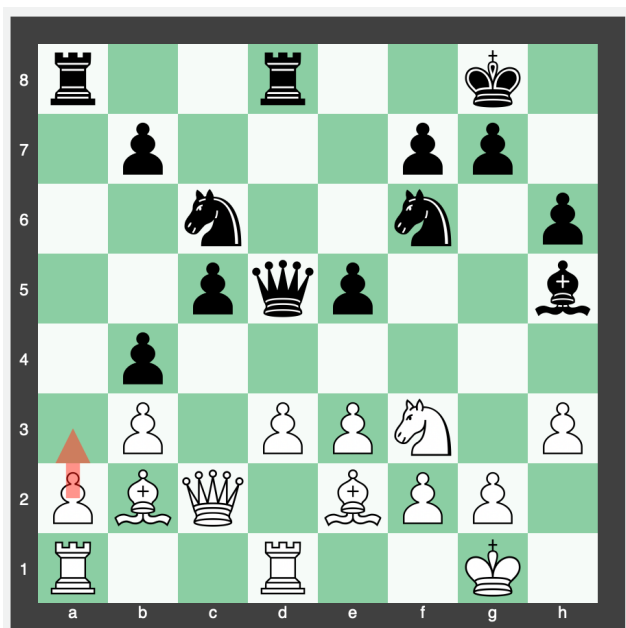


reaching the same position, after 4... d6 as Ian Nepomniachtchi vs Viswanathan Anand, Tal Memorial, Moscow, 2018



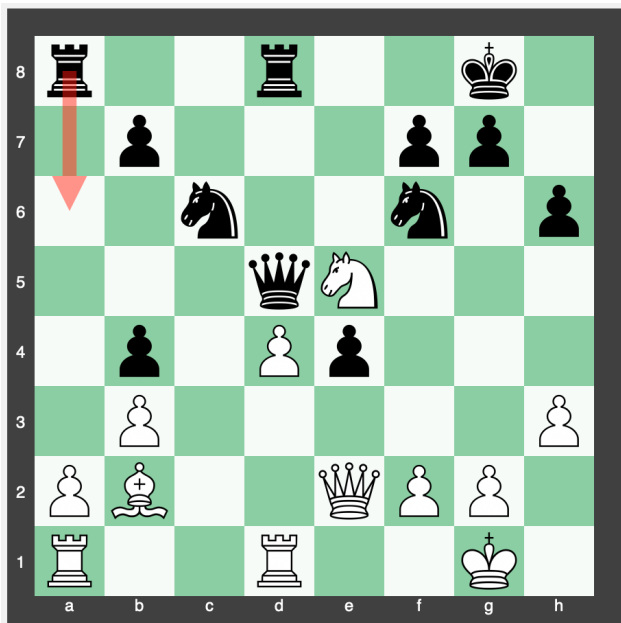
Nepomniachtchi continued 5. a3; Wallis 5. e3

A critical position was reached after 15... h6

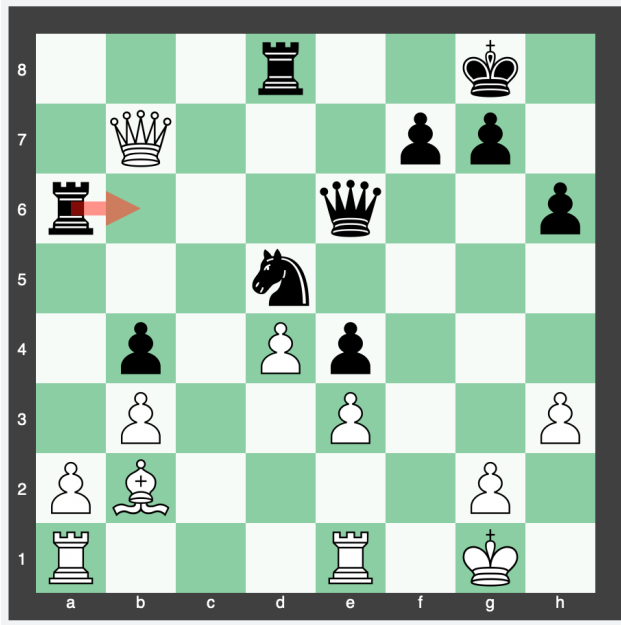


where White can resolve the negative antagonism with respect to the a1 Rook by 16. a3 bxa3 17. Rxa3

But, instead, chose 16. d4; there followed 16... cxd4 17. exd4 e4 18. Ne5 and Black can now play 18... Rac8 with advantage; but, instead chose 18... Bxe2 19. Qxe2 Ra6

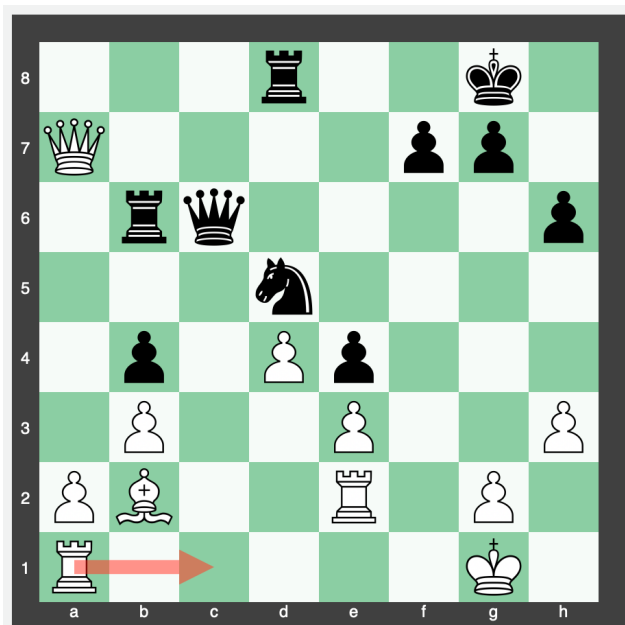


After some manoeuvring, by 25... Rb6



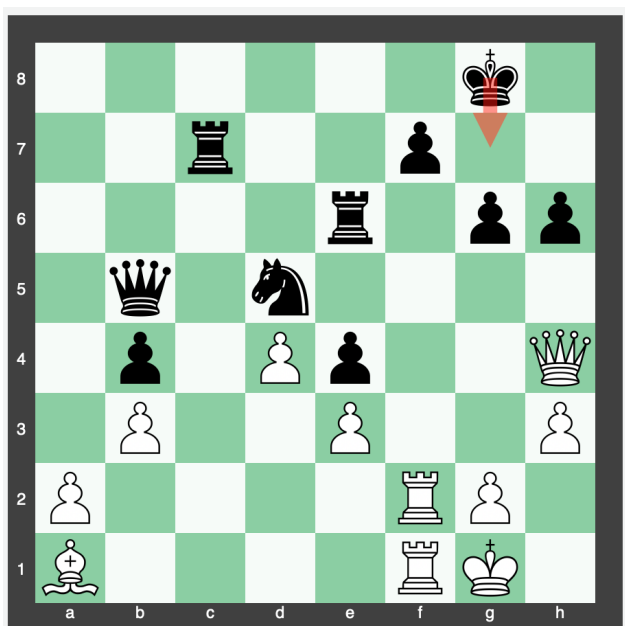
Black's pieces were much better than White's. White's Bishop is locked in and White's best chance is to activate Rooks on the open c-file

To this end, Black helped White by playing 27... Qc6



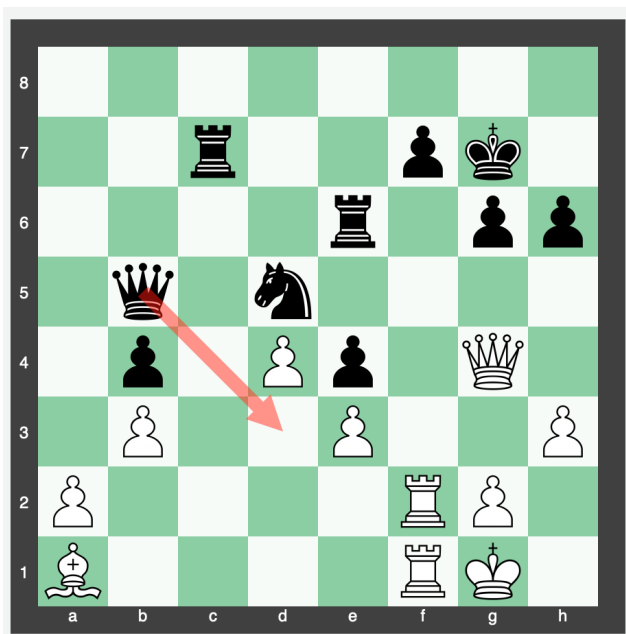
allowing 21. Rc1 and White some respite.

After further manoeuvring, by 40... Kg7

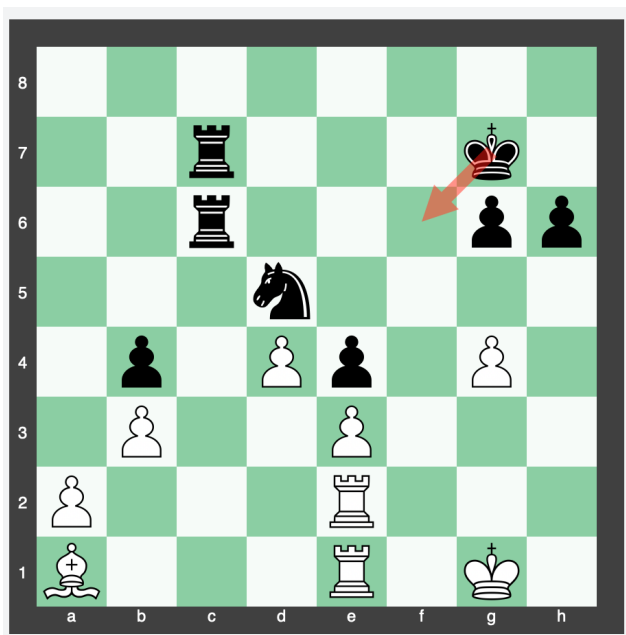


White's pieces were still misplaced and Black must find a way to take advantage.

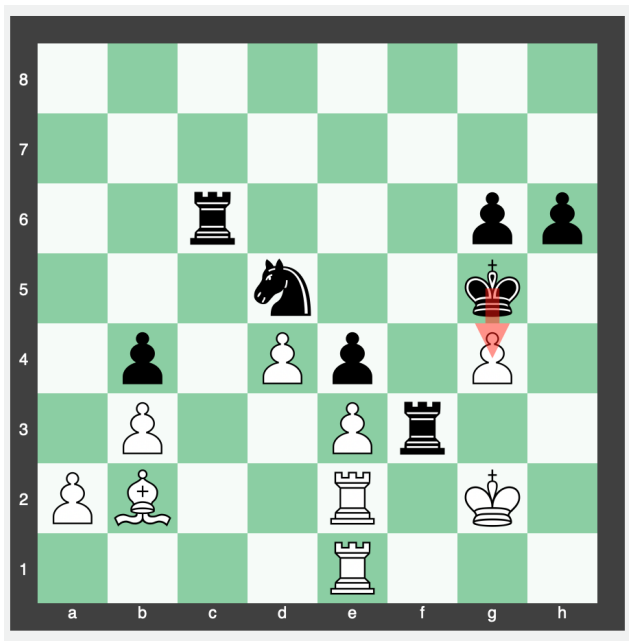
The incursion began with 41... Qd3



There followed 42. Qe2 Qxe2 43. Rxe2 Rec6 44. Rfe1 f5 45. g4 (a desperate misplaced bid for space) 45... fxg4 46. hxg4 Kf6 the King and Rook will join the incursion



and by 50... Kxg4



it was game over.

A great performance by Morris (whose only regret is that the event does not qualify for GM norms).

Top seed Gawain Jones and defending champion James Morris share the 2024 Ballarat Open title.

Final top standings:

Player	Rtg	Fed	Pts
1 GM Jones,Gawain	2618		6.5
4 IM Morris,James	2418		6.5
12 IM Cannon,David	2185		6.0
2 GM Zhao,Zong-Yuan	2486		6.0
6 GM Johansen,Darryl K	2350		5.5
21  Leaver,Kyle	2043		5.5
13 FM Chan,Luis	2147		5.5
32 CM Li,Tedric	1950		5.5
31 CM Salasan,Haran	1966		5.5

<https://www.ballaratchess.com/begonia/2024/index.html>

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