

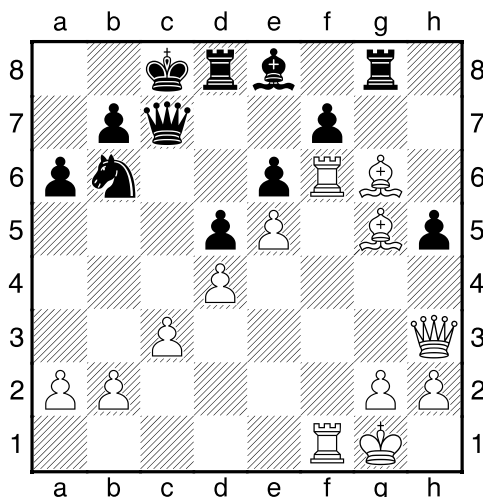
Dear Dragons,

Welcome to Edition 10 of the Weekly St George Club Champs newsletter! We are really reaching an exciting climax now, with several divisions building towards a thrilling last round finish. But first, we must tell you what happened in Round 8, followed by reporting on the final round of catch up games next newsletter which will clarify where we really stand... For now I will keep you all in suspense regarding the critical Melamed-Plant game in Division 1; but I'll tell you that Division 2 has become a three horse race, with Michael Babic and Celina Wu on 6.5/8 leading by just half a point from John Karabatsos on 6. No real change in Divisions 3 or 4, with the leaders all winning; and Division 5 sees us congratulating Faaiz Malik on an 8/8 perfect score, having now won the event after Kevin Liu's upset loss. Finally Ethan Currie's win over Carpet Daughter has him on 7/8 having Division 6 all but wrapped up. Some fascinating chess played as always; so let's see how it all transpired in Round 8!

### Division 3

**Netra Bhatt – Sam Sharkawy:** This game was postponed by Sam, who was ill.

**John Parissis 1-0 Louis Jeff:** John has been travelling along quietly undefeated, building towards a critical last round game; and he got off to a strong start here! A tame opening saw early equality; but then John gradually got the edge, with a better pawn centre and superior activity. Louis chose not to castle kingside; and by the time he castled queenside, he was struggling! Then he lost a pawn to a pin, thinking he'd win a piece via a skewer. He did; but he was still losing in the critical position below.



Here, after 21.Bxf7 Rxc5, John is winning after 22.Bxe8, as recapturing and allowing 23.Rxe6 leads to mate or huge material loss. 22.Qxe6+ and 23.Qxb6 also wins; but instead, John let Louis back into the game! Play continued 22.Bxe6+ Kb8 23.Bf7 Nc4 24.Qh4 Rg7 25.Bxe8 Rxe8 26.Qxh5 Reg8 27.Rf8+ Rxf8 28.Rxf8+ Ka7 29.Rf2. Four pawns for the piece; but 29...Nxb2 gives back the piece to win all the pawns back! They were even after 30.Rxb2 Qxc3 31.Rb1 Qxd4+ 32.Kh1 Qe4 33.Rg1 d4 34.Qh6 Qxe5. Unfortunately, nine moves later, Louis blundered a rook and lost – a sad end to a great game!

**Darren Curtis – Stuart Taylor:** This game was postponed by Stuart, who was still away for work.

**Colin Goldsmith 0-1 Ludwig Wolf:** An upset – and a good game by Ludwig! Better by Move 10, he was winning once Colin gave up two pieces for a rook. Having recaptured the wrong way, Colin had no counterplay. Eventually Ludwig gave him a piece for a pawn via a discovery, thus letting him back into the game. But when he got a second pawn for the exchange, his position got better and better; and finally after queens came off, Ludwig's two connected passed pawns decided the game in his favour.

**John Nichas – Ghassan Beydoun:** This game was postponed by Ghassan, who was interstate.

## Division 5

**Ashton Li 1-0 Aaron Hu:** In his own words, Aaron had no idea what hit him here! A normal Ruy Lopez went awry for him when he played 6...Nxe4, as he lost a piece a couple of moves later to a Bd5 bishop fork (he had already played b5). He then sacrificed his knight on f2, thus opening the f-file and allowing Bxf7+! From there he lost his queen to a skewer, and his king got chased all over the board. It ended up on d6, and White won with 18.Rd2 mate – a disastrous game for poor Aaron!

**Faaiz Malik 1-0 Peter Swinton:** See game below: I am indebted to Peter for his description of this game, in which he congratulated Faaiz on winning the tournament! “Faaiz Malik won Division 5 with a round to spare after scoring his eighth straight win, here over the highest rated player in the division. Peter half expected a King’s Gambit from Faaiz but got the Bishop’s Opening instead, which transposed into a boring set-up for both. Peter broke the symmetry on Move 9. Faaiz showed his intent to attack with g4 on Move 15; but Peter managed to defend well laterally.

When Ken Eldridge defeated Kevin Liu on an adjacent board, Faaiz needed only to draw this game to win the division. So Peter offered a draw to him in a balanced position (Faaiz was actually better, due to his protected passed f-pawn and the Black king’s lack of pawn protection – CZ). But Faaiz played on; this proved the right choice because Peter, thinking to prove the lengthy game drawn, impetuously moved his queen forward on Move 31 to block a discovering pawn advance. Unfortunately, he forgot that he had Her Majesty helping guard a minor piece! A simple king move would have been enough... Now a piece down, Peter saw but rightly rejected a queen sacrifice on Move 38, realising that it led to a lost ending. He resigned two moves later, congratulating Faaiz on his play throughout the event”.

### **Malik, Faaiz (1217) - Swinton, Peter (1241), 2023 St George CC Division 5 Round 8, 09/05/2023**

1.e4 e5 2.Bc4 Nf6 3.Nc3 Bc5 4.Nf3 Nc6 5.a3 a5 6.0-0 0-0 7.d3 d6 8.h3 h6 9.Be3 Nd4 10.Bxd4 Bxd4 11.Nxd4 exd4 12.Ne2 c5 13.f4 Be6 14.Bxe6 fxe6 15.g4 Nh7 16.Qe1 Qe7 17.Qg3 Rf7 18.Rf2 Raf8 19.Raf1 Rf6 20.Kg2 b6 21.h4 g5 22.hxg5 hxg5 23.f5 exf5 24.gxf5 Qe5 25.Qh3 R8f7 26.Rh1 Kf8 27.Kf1 Ke7 28.Rfh2 Kd7 29.Qg4 Qe7 30.Ng3 Kc6 31.Qf3 Qe5 32.Rxh7 Rxh7 33.Rxh7 b5 34.Qh5 Qf4+ 35.Kg2 Rf8 36.Qf3 Qe5 37.Rh6 c4 38.Re6 Qc5 39.e5+ Qd5 40.Rxd6+ 1-0

**Kevin Liu 0-1 Ken Eldridge:** This loss cost Kevin any chance of winning the tournament, and even endangered outright second place for him; it was a particularly big upset considering it was Ken’s first victory of the entire tournament! He surprised Kevin with a Budapest, reaching equality by Move 8. From there he missed a chance to win material; but he was still positionally a little bit better in the ending after queens were swapped off. Soon after that, Ken won a pawn to a pin; then he put pressure on and eventually won Kevin’s isolated e-pawn. After that, he just traded into a won rook ending; and finally he converted it into a winning king and pawn ending and went on to win in 51 moves.

**Ali Murtazaev 1F-0F Zain Mokhtar:** As stated last time, Zain has withdrawn; so a night off for Ali!

**Geoff Hyde 0-1 Dimitrios Stathos:** A very easy night for Dimitrios! He had early equality after Geoff moved a piece twice in the opening, a situation which persisted for ten moves or so. Then he had a big advantage when his queen reached b2 and won the enemy c3 pawn. Two moves later, White blundered another two pawns to a queen fork. For Geoff, this was just too much: he resigned on Move 22.

## Division 2

**Andrew Li 1-0 Pieter Stoltz:** A good game by Andrew! He got a small advantage from a Queen’s Gambit Accepted; but Pieter had equalised by Move 16. After a few trades, the position was dead equal – till Pieter blundered a piece! He overlooked that his “defending” pawn was actually pinned to his queen, so could not recapture. It was easy for Andrew from there: he went on to win in 41 moves.

**Malachi O’Donoghue – John Karabatsos:** This game was postponed by John due to ill health.

**Brian Allison 0-1 Michael Babic:** A critical game for the fate of this division! See game below. Brian essayed 1.f4, and play was largely even early on. But Michael's 15th move was an error that left Brian with an advantage, albeit a small one; but pushing e5 on Move 18 or 19 would have been better than what he did. Before long they were even again; then Brian would have regained the advantage had he played 27. Nd7. Failing to do that, he began a collapse with 28.f5; this ended up costing him far more than a pawn! Five moves later, a piece down, he resigned; a big win for Michael...

**Allison, Brian (1704) - Babic, Michael (1732), 2023 St George CC Division 2 Round 8, 09/05/2023**  
1.f4 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.Nf3 c5 4.Bb5+ Bd7 5.Qe2 Nc6 6.Ne5 g6 7.0-0 Bg7 8.Nxd7 Qxd7 9.c3 Ne4 10.d3 Nd6 11.Ba4 b5 12.Bc2 0-0 13.e4 dxe4 14.dxe4 b4 15.Be3 Nb7 16.Ba4 Qc7 17.cxb4 Nxb4 18.a3 Nc6 19.Nc3 Nd4 20.Qa6 e6 21.e5 Qb6 22.Qd3 Rfd8 23.Bxd4 cxd4 24.Ne4 Rac8 25.b4 Bf8 26.Nf6+ Kg7 27.Qh3 h6 28.f5 exf5 29.Rxf5 d3+ 30.Kh1 Qe6 31.Bd7 Rxd7 32.Nxd7 Qxf5 33.Qxf5 gxf5 0-1

**Peter Bogdanoski 0-1 Celina Wu:** An unambitious queen's pawn opening by Peter still gave him a small early edge, until he allowed Celina to equalise with 10...c5. Thereafter Black gradually got the advantage, grabbing the open c-file and planting her pieces on a c4 hole. Celina went on to double Peter's f-pawns; then her queen and knight invaded to attack White's king. Peter went passive, and the end was nigh! He lost a knight to a queen fork, finally resigning on Move 33 one move before mate.

**Albert Tjahja 1- Srijan Badam:** A typical game for Srijan in this event! His French equalised easily; then he had a big edge by Move 10 when he won a pawn to a queen fork. But Albert fought on; and soon Srijan returned the pawn to leave us in an even ending. It looked drawish, then Albert could have won a pawn – but he didn't take it! Instead he got a rook to the seventh; the resultant rook ending was winning for White, and Srijan resigned when Albert mobilised his connected passed a and b pawns.

## Division 6

**Reno Sciberras 0-1 Mark Boan:** This game was played in advance; see Newsletter Number 4.

**Ethan Riegman – Samuel Slingo:** This game was postponed by Ethan.

**William Liu 1-0 Mary Hunt:** A crushing victory to William! Mind you, the opening was quite even; but Mary's troubles began on Move 10 when she castled queenside. This cost her a key central pawn; then she lost a piece when she misplayed a tactic. Soon after she blundered another piece. The finish was then mercifully quick: she resigned on Move 18 when facing forced mate.

**Lisa Brandenburg – Stephen Manwarring:** This game was postponed by Lisa, since she was still recovering from her sports injury; chess is so much better!

**Ethan Currie 1-0 John Matson:** A tame opening saw not much happening until Move 10, when John gambited a pawn. But rather than taking it, Ethan set a trap – that John fell right into! He lost a pinned knight; and queens came off soon after. John tried a pin of his own, but managed nothing more than a few trades. The ending a piece up was then easily winning for Ethan, who prevailed in 40 moves.

## Division 4

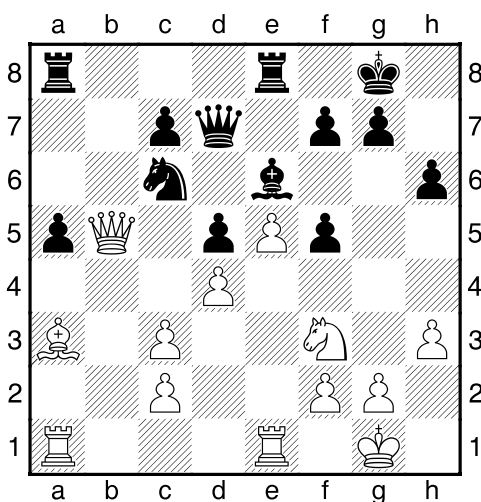
**James Bullen 1-0 Elijah Udovitch:** Trying out a strange French with 2...c6 then a delayed c5, Elijah was a bit worse initially, but managed to reach equality by Move 20. He then got a bit overambitious in advancing his kingside pawns; but he was still fine until he "won" the two bishops! It was actually James who was better after that; and three moves later, Elijah blundered the exchange. His rook was trapped and lost on f8. Thereafter, James was very efficient in converting his material advantage; he won a couple of pawns to boot, and Elijah resigned on Move 45 when queens were being traded too.

**Brian Connell – Chris Brown:** This game was postponed by Brian, who was away.

**James McGrouther 0-1 Sait Buzgan:** James' unusual 1.e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3.c4 opening saw him in a bit of trouble early on, but nothing too serious; and all was fine until he gambited a pawn on Move 10! This was not sound; and Sait compounded his problems by taking the open a-file. Then he forced a trade of queens and won another pawn. Two pawns down was already bad enough for James; but it got worse! When he resigned on Move 31, he was about to lose his last pawn; Sait still had six pawns...

**Mario Parissis 1F-0F Euan Marquez Zarauz:** Euan had to stay back at work, but gave his opponent insufficient notice; so unfortunately this game had to be scored as a forfeit win to Mario.

**Huey Teng 0.5-0.5 Anthony Lopes:** Yet another French, but this one was a Winawer; and White was definitely better early on. But he did not play with maximum accuracy; so Anthony had equalised by Move 18. Then they reached the critical position below; Huey's slip-up here could have been fatal...



After 19.Rad1, Black won a crucial centre pawn with 19...Nxe5. Play proceeded 20.Qe2 Nxf3+ 21.Qxf3 Qa4 22.Bc1, and Anthony won the c2 pawn too. This should've been decisive; but for some reason known only to himself, Anthony gave up his f-pawn with f4, followed by allowing Bxc7! Both pawns given back; and queens were swapped off too. The opposite coloured bishops then made the position pretty drawish; they played on for several more moves, but ended up drawing on Move 44.

## Division 1

**Jim Mavroidis 0.5-0.5 Graham Saint:** This long game was one of the most fascinating of the entire round, swinging up and down as it did like a fiddler's elbow! See game below. I am very much indebted to Jim for his perspective below, which saved me a whole heap of time in describing such a marathon! From Graham's perspective, he could only think afterwards of his missed opportunity to win right at the end, where he played the wrong king move on Move 73 (instead of Kf2, 73...Kg2 was winning). As he said himself, chess is a very hard (and cruel!) game...

### Mavroidis, Jim (1819) - Saint, Graham (1767), 2023 St George CC Div 1 Round 8, 09/05/2023

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 d5 3.exd5 e4 4.Qe2 Nf6 5.Nc3 Be7 6.Nxe4 0-0 7.d4 Re8 8.Nxf6+ Bxf6 9.Be3 Qxd5 10.Qc4 Qa5+ 11.c3 c6 12.Be2 Be6 13.Qd3 Nd7 14.0-0 Rad8 15.Qc2 Bg4 16.Rfe1 Nf8 17.Nd2 Qh5 18.Bxg4 Qxg4 19.Qd1 Qg6 20.Nf3 Ne6 21.Qb1 Qh5 22.Qc2 Nc7 23.Bf4 Nd5 24.Bg3 Qg4 25.Re2 h5 26.h3 Qd7 27.Rae1 g6 28.Ne5 Bxe5 29.Rxe5 Kg7 30.Qe2 Rxe5 31.Qxe5+ Kg8 32.Bh4 Rf8 33.a3 f6 34.Qe6+ Qf7 35.Qxf7+ Kxf7 36.Kf1 Nf4 37.Bg3 Ne6 38.Ke2 Rd8 39.Rd1 Rd5 40.Kd3 b5 41.Ke3 g5 42.b3 c5 43.Ke4 Rd7 44.d5 Kg6 45.Rd3 f5+ 46.Ke5 Nd8 47.f4 Nf7+ 48.Ke6 Rd6+ 49.Ke7 g4 50.c4 a6 51.Bf2 bxc4 52.bxc4 Rb6 53.Bxc5 Rb2 54.hxg4 hxg4 55.d6 Rxc2 56.d7 Rc2 57.d8Q Nxd8 58.Kxd8 Rxc4 59.Bb4 Rxf4 60.Rd6+ Kf7 61.Rxa6 g3 62.Ra7+ Ke6 63.Rg7 Rd4+ 64.Ke8 f4 65.Be1 Ra4 66.Re7+ Kf5 67.Rg7 Rxa3 68.Bb4 Ra8+ 69.Kf7 Ra7+ 70.Be7 Ke4 71.Ke6 Kf3 72.Rg6 Rxe7+ 73.Kxe7 Kf2 74.Kf6 g2 75.Kf5 f3 76.Kf4 Ke2 77.Rg3 ½-½

“This game basically had four phases! Phase 1: Black plays a dubious gambit in return for a slight initiative, which is gradually neutralised. Phase 2: White methodically creates a passed pawn, pushes it up the board and is winning. Phase 3: White overlooks the loss of two pawns but gains a piece; the win is now problematic... Phase 4: The comedy of errors begins! White allows the Black pawns to advance too far; but Black in turn fails to exploit this accurately. At a couple of points, Black had a win; but in the end, White scrambles for a draw!”

**Richard Eccles 0F-1F Robert Kovacs:** Having gone overseas, Richard has to forfeit his last 2 games.

**Stevo Acevski 1-0 Jose Escribano:** A sad one for Jose! He equalised easily in a Sicilian, but then was worse after an inaccurate 6...a6. From there he lost a pawn in a rook and bishop (Stevo) vs rook and knight ending; but Stevo’s doubled pawns meant that Jose was still close to equality. Unfortunately for Jose, he then let Stevo get a winning pin! If that wasn’t bad enough, he made the finish even easier for Stevo: after walking into a tactic dropping a piece to a bishop fork, he resigned on Move 34.

**Mario Falchoni 0-1 Arthur Huynh:** After getting a slight advantage early on, Arthur was better for much of this game, gaining a pawn to a similar tactic to Lopes. With Mario’s pawns doubled, this gave Arthur a big edge – but he relaxed too much! Soon he gave the pawn back, and Mario equalised. But instead of a drawing rook check, he tried a trap with a tricky knight move; Arthur saw and defended it easily, and he was better again! Once he got a rook to the seventh, there was not much Mario could do; Arthur’s passed a-pawn ran, and Mario resigned when he could not stop it from queening.

**Daniel Melamed 0.5-0.5 John Stuart Plant:** Nothing like saving the best until last – well, the most important game for the title of Club Champion, in any case! See game below. Thanks as usual to JSP for his thoughts below. They are rather longer than usual, as there are some general thoughts on preparation: appropriate for such a crucial game in this event. All very interesting...

“This game could be called “the value of prep”! I’ve been away from comp for a couple of years, but one thing (in many ways the most energy sapping, but also in many ways the most fun thing) was knowing who I would play beforehand and if they were really good. Because then I would prepare! In other words, I would try to find some niche idea, similar to what I do already mostly, or sometimes completely different out of the opening and practice it.

This is what I did for my earlier game vs Arthur essaying the Slav (really practicing for the Meran system – even if not fully reaching it), getting just a rock solid position as Black. For this game with Daniel, I found something totally different and funky again! Daniel’s previous game vs Mario was my yardstick; this was ultimately very similar to one of my favourite systems, the Black Lion. Their game reached a form of the Lion by transposition: 1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.Nf3 Nbd7. Here after 3. Nc3 (preparing e4), I found a pretty neat idea given by the engine: the move I found now was 3...d5!?

The d-pawn moves twice; but it makes perfect “enginey” sense, I guess, to restrict e4 and just create a rock solid position. I found some master games with this idea too. The advantage of me preparing this before the game was that I was fully expecting the game to go the way it went until at least Move 10! This gained me 20 minutes up on the clock at one point too. Black does not fear losing their light squared bishop for any piece, as long as the h-file can be opened up; and the road to equality is fairly easy knowing the plans. In fact Black has already equalised after 3 or 4 moves in this system.

When the game drifted away from prep and became a chess game, I was just really happy with my position. Daniel created a new tack though (as strong players will often do) from around Move 15 to Move 20, when he tried to create a big pawn clamp basically over the position. This was against the backdrop of my doubled rooks on the semi-open h-file, which Daniel was keeping at bay for the time being. But I decided to try to activate them rather than timidly accepting such a pawn clamp! The position was still equal, but still... So I lashed out with 21...Ne4; the point is that after the trades, Daniel’s queen would no longer be defending the h3 pawn, and my rooks could take it.

I decided to try and push further still by trading queens and then taking this pawn; but this saw me overlook one neat trick where if I did take back h3 with my rook, I would in fact lose my rook to a neat zwischenzug (in between move) attacking my queen in the centre first. So I was a pawn down, but still pretty equal in a closed position. I then jumped in with my queen to also bear down on Daniel's h-pawn (joining my rooks) when my queen went to g2. Perhaps sensing at least the imbalance or potential danger in the position, Daniel repeated moves by perpetually attacking my queen. He then offered me a draw, which I gladly accepted; certainly an action packed 28 moves!"

**Melamed, Daniel (2035) - Plant, John Stuart (2147), 2023 St George CC Div 1 Rd 8, 09/05/2023**

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 d6 3.Nc3 d5 4.Bf4 Bf5 5.h3 e6 6.Nh4 Bg6 7.Nxg6 hxg6 8.e3 Bd6 9.Bd3 Nh5 10.Bxd6 Qxd6 11.Nb5 Qb6 12.a4 a6 13.a5 Qc6 14.Na3 Nd7 15.c3 Qd6 16.b4 c6 17.g4 Nhf6 18.f4 Rh4 19.Qf3 0-0-0 20.0-0-0 Rdh8 21.Nc2 Ne4 22.Bxe4 dxe4 23.Qxe4 Qd5 24.Qd3 Qg2 25.Rdg1 Qf2 26.Rf1 Qg3 27.Rfg1 Qf2 28.Rf1 Qg3 ½-½

So JSP and Daniel go into the last round equal first on 7/8, as long as Daniel can win his postponed game with Kovacs. You'll have to wait until the catch-up newsletter to find out about that one! But no, I have not quite finished with this newsletter yet... We have a few more nicknames for you to figure out first! Want some chocolate? Then you will have to tell me who are Adelaide; Pencil; England; America; Morning; and Emergency? Sorry, no clues this time – see how you go anyway!