

Dear Dragons,

Welcome to Edition 11 of the Weekly St George Club Champs newsletter! This one reports on our final round of catch-up games, thus enabling us to finally clarify the contenders before the upcoming breathtaking last round... Division 6 has now officially been won by Ethan Currie (7/8), with William Liu and Stephen Manwarring equal second on 5/8 (but Stephen has already played and won his last round game). We already knew Faaiz Malik had won Division 5 on 8/8; and Kevin Liu (6/8) needs only a draw in his final game to claim outright second. Division 4 is a thriller, with Sait Buzgan (6/8) leading by half a point from James Bullen (and maybe Chris Brown, who still has a game in hand); Chris and James play each other in Round 9... As for Division 3, this will be decided by the last round game between John Parissis (7/8) and Stuart Taylor (6.5/8). Michael Babic (equal leading on 6.5/8) is now favoured to win Division 2, as Celina Wu (also 6.5/8) has already played and lost her last round game to Mal O'Donoghue; but Michael still needs to beat the tailender in the final round, as he is only half a point ahead of John Karabatsos. Finally, Daniel Melamed and John Stuart Plant share the lead on 7/8 in the top division, by just half a point from Arthur Huynh – joint Club Champions, maybe? In any case, it also bodes well for some Round 9 thrillers; so let's see how they all caught up to get there!

Division 6

Ethan Riegman 1-0 Samuel Slingo: We begin with a rollercoaster Round 8 game between young Ethan and fast-improving Samuel; a topsy-turvy ride indeed! When Samuel erred on Move 3, Ethan won the exchange and a pawn and was almost mating. But then he gave back a piece to stop a knight fork, and Samuel was in front! After an error on Move 13, he was way behind again; but Ethan missed a chance to win queen and game, instead level after trading queens. But after a while, Samuel lost a piece; there were no more twists and turns, with Ethan checkmating on Move 31. See game below.

Riegman, Ethan - Slingo, Samuel (247), 2023 St George CC Division 6 Round 8, 16/05/2023

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Bd6 3.Bc4 Ne7 4.Ng5 0-0 5.Qh5 h6 6.Bxf7+ Rxf7 7.Qxf7+ Kh8 8.h4 Nec6 9.d3 Nd4 10.Na3 Bxa3 11.Rb1 Be7 12.g3 Qf8 13.Qg6 Bxg5 14.hxg5 Nf3+ 15.Kf1 d5 16.gxh6 Kg8 17.hxg7 Qxg7 18.Rh6 Bh3+ 19.Ke2 Qxg6 20.Rxg6+ Kf7 21.Rh6 Bg4 22.b3 Nd4+ 23.Ke3 Kg7 24.Rh4 Nxc2+ 25.Kd2 Nd4 26.Rxg4+ Kh8 27.Bb2 Nf3+ 28.Kc3 Nh2 29.Rh1 d4+ 30.Kc2 Nc6 31.Rxh2# 1-0

Mark Boan – German Mona: This Round 7 game will be played at a later date.

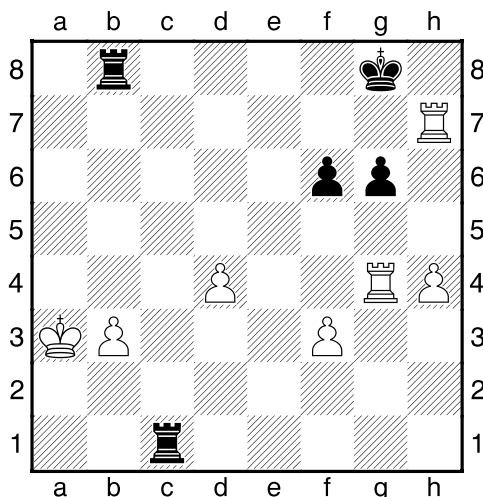
Basin Sorcerer 1-0 John Matson: A good Round 6 win by Basin! In a quiet opening, John blundered a pawn early, then left a knight en prise soon after. Thereafter, Basin never let him back in the game! Simplifying at every turn, he won another pawn and traded queens. When he deliberately gave the piece back, he was well up in a rook ending; and he eventually won all of John's pawns and the game.

Lisa Brandenburg 1-0 Stephen Manwarring: This Round 8 game saw Lisa solid as ever; and Steve fighting hard but not quite getting there! The opening was fairly even; but on Move 14, Lisa's flawed tactical sequence gave Stephen a chance at an advantage. When he missed it, Lisa instead wound up two pawns up. From there she just traded on the open d-file and won another pawn. Eventually Stephen gave up a piece; there was no doubt of the result after that, Lisa winning in 34 moves.

Division 5

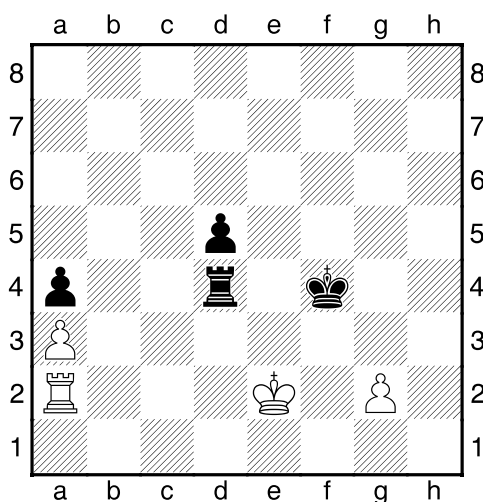
Ashton Li 1-0 Peter Swinton: A lengthy (66 move) Round 6 affair, with a very unfortunate finish for Peter! The early going was in Peter's favour, with a positional edge and more active pieces; but he traded too much, and Ashton was even by Move 25. Then on Move 31, Peter blundered a pawn, and Ashton was on top! An exciting double rook ending ensued, with both players having active rooks but Ashton's king far better placed. So he was winning; but very soon Peter's active rooks threatened to torment his king! This meant he had to be very careful, even though it looked like he was winning another pawn; and he gave Peter his chance in the critical position reached after Black's 58th move.

See diagram below.



Here, according to King Engine, apparently 59.Rh6 is the only move that preserves the advantage for White; it's hard to believe, but after what Ashton played instead, Black has a forced draw! Play proceeded 59. Rd7 Rc3 60.Rxg6+ Kh8 61.Rxf6; and here 61... Rcxb3+ draws for Black by perpetual check or perpetual mate threat. After 61...Rbxb3+ instead, Peter is on the back foot again! There followed 62.Ka4 Ra3+ 63.Kb4 Rab3+ 64.Ka5 Ra3+ 65.Kb6 Ra6+ 66.Kxa6 1-0. The unfortunate end referred to earlier – Peter popped his rook and resigned – but he was lost by then anyway...

Ken Eldridge 1-0 Ali Murtazaev: Another lost opportunity for the youngster in this Round 9 game played in advance, with Ali fighting back from a lost position and missing a forced draw! Mind you, Ken had been on top for much of the game, fighting back from an inferior opening to win a pawn on Move 17. From there he traded into what should have been an easily won endgame. But he swapped too much; and the rook ending was nontrivial! Finally Ali drummed up enough counterplay to win his pawn back; and they ended up in the even rook and pawn ending below.



After Ken's 43.Rd2, Ali can trade rooks; the pawn ending is dead drawn because of the presence of rook pawns! Even after he declined to trade and lost his d-pawn, Ali was still drawing. But not after he swapped rooks later; this time the pawn ending was won for Ken, and he prevailed in 50 moves.

Division 4

Euan Marquez Zarauz 0-1 James McGrouther: Another no-show with no notice, hence another forfeit by Euan in this Round 7 game; but it's OK, James was happy to get the night off!

Renal Inn Bloc – Chris Brown: A misunderstanding here meant that Renal was there, but Chris was not! Renal was the one who originally postponed this Round 8 game. Hence we will try to play this game at a later date, as Chris is still in contention to win this division!

Sait Buzgan 1-0 Elijah Udovitch: See game below. Sait was justifiably proud of this Round 7 game, especially his brilliant 12th move! His first ever !! move, in his first ever no mistakes no blunders no inaccuracies game... He got the better of a French; then Elijah's passive 11th move allowed his nice piece sacrifice. Elijah didn't take it, but things just got worse... In the end, a threatened knight fork crushed him; he resigned when his queen was nearly trapped, as 23...Qd7 allowed 24.e6 winning.

Buzgan, Sait (1419) - Udovitch, Elijah (1277), 2023 St George CC Division 4 Round 7, 16/05/2023
1.e4 e6 2.d4 c6 3.Nf3 d5 4.e5 c5 5.c3 c4 6.b3 cxb3 7.axb3 a6 8.Bd3 Ne7 9.0-0 Ng6 10.Ng5 Be7 11.Qh5 Nd7 12.Nxe6 Qb6 13.Nxg7+ Kf8 14.Qh6 Kg8 15.Nf5 Bf8 16.Qg5 h6 17.Qg4 Qd8 18.h4 h5 19.Qg3 Qe8 20.Ba3 Bxa3 21.Nxa3 Qe6 22.Nb5 Nb6 23.Nc7 1-0

Division 3

Small Clothes Maker 1-0 John Nichas: With several postponed games, Small played this Round 7 game earlier in the day on the Tuesday catch-up night; and happily for him, it was not too strenuous! A traditional French saw early equality; but John's risky 17...g5 then gave Small the advantage. But John got it back to equality; and everything was fine till he put his queen offside going for a tempting pin! As a result, he had to sacrifice a piece for two pawns. Small converted this advantage quickly and well; he efficiently forced off all the major pieces, and John resigned on Move 36.

Netra Bhatt 1-0 Sam Sharkawy: A crushing victory to Netra in this Round 8 game! He had the edge already by Move 5, then was winning by Move 8 when Sam walked into a pin. A discovery saw Netra winning a piece by force; so Sam tried to complicate. But he only made it worse! Instead of losing a piece, he lost his king; with his monarch on e7, he resigned on Move 13 one move before mate.

John Nichas 0-1 Ghassan Beydoun: An unambitious opening by White saw early equality in this Round 8 game, a state of play that was maintained until John's inaccurate 15th move. While Ghassan did not quite take full advantage of this, John helped him five moves later by moving the wrong rook! The result was that Ghassan won a pawn. A few moves later, a queen fork won him a second pawn. The resultant rook and queen endgame was dead winning; and Ghassan prevailed in 44 moves.

Darren Curtis 0-1 Stuart Taylor: Stuart's second game of the day saw him equalise easily in this Round 8 game, then win the exchange by Move 9 in a tactical melee. At various points it looked like Darren had compensation and was building up an attack; but Stuart always had it under control! In the end, Darren just didn't have enough pieces; and he resigned when he blundered his knight to a pin.

Netra Bhatt 1-0 Stuart Taylor: This Round 4 game was played on the Wednesday catch-up night; and perhaps fatigue finally got to Stuart. Mind you, Netra has been building up some fine form; and he certainly attacked viciously in this one! See game below. An innocent enough opening, and play was even early on; but Netra's 9.g4 indicated his intentions, and 12.Bxe6 set off the fireworks! Stuart's reply was wrong, and 13.Bxf7+ would have been winning. What Netra played instead, while optically pretty, gave Stuart a real chance! It would have been interesting to see the outcome had he played the correct 14...Ne8 instead of 14...Nh5. After that error, Netra was all over him – 15...Nf6 was Stuart's last chance – mate followed soon after, with the poor Black king stranded on g6! A startling way for Stuart to suffer his first loss of the event, but he still has a shot; will John Parissis feel his wrath?

Bhatt, Netra - Taylor, Stuart, 2023 St George Club Champs Division 3 Round 4, 17/05/2023
1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 d5 3.c4 e6 4.e3 Be7 5.Nc3 0-0 6.Bd3 dxc4 7.Bxc4 Nbd7 8.Qc2 a6 9.g4 Nxg4 10.Rg1 Ngf6 11.Ng5 b5 12.Bxe6 h6 13.Qg6 hxg5 14.Rxg5 Nh5 15.Rxh5 fxe6 16.Qxe6+ Rf7 17.Qh3 Rf8 18.Rh8+ Kf7 19.Qh5+ Ke6 20.Qd5+ Kf6 21.Ne4+ Kg6 22.Qh5# 1-0

Division 2

Pieter Stoltz 0-1 Srijan Badam: Played on the Tuesday night, this Round 4 game did not go so well for Pieter! Having said that, it was Pieter who was on top early, despite a quiet opening. But a bold g5 got Srijan in a spot of bother; he lost a pawn and had to move his king. He was still fine until he traded dark squared bishops; this was a mistake, and he was losing. Queens came off, and Pieter then won a second pawn; but he took the wrong one! This enabled Srijan to gradually build up counterplay on the enemy king with his bishop and two rooks. Before long, he actually had a mating attack! The White king managed to escape, but Pieter lost a piece; and Srijan went on to win in 46 moves.

Malachi O'Donoghue 0.5-0.5 John Karabatsos: Such a rock solid game by both players that this Round 8 game probably came across as dull! Dead equal already by Move 10, they then traded into a queen and opposite coloured bishop ending. Queens came off soon after, and there was nothing to be done; they played on for nearly 20 more moves, but a draw was always the inevitable result.

Celina Wu 0-1 Malachi O'Donoghue: Played on the Wednesday catch-up night, this Round 9 game played in advance was a critical loss for Celina! See game below. A standard French saw Mal equalise easily; then he was ahead after Celina's errant 19.g4. Perhaps frustrated by the boredom of his game the night before, Mal was determined to attack; and Celina let him! A skewer then a discovery won him the exchange and left White with a very exposed king. From there Celina tried to fight back, but mate threats were a serious concern – which may explain why Celina blundered into mate in one!

Wu, Celina (1649) - O'Donoghue, Malachi (1766), 2023 St George CC Div 2 Round 9, 17/05/2023

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 Nc6 5.Nf3 Bd7 6.Be2 f6 7.Be3 fxe5 8.Nxe5 Nxe5 9.dxe5 Qc7 10.f4 Ne7 11.Nd2 Nf5 12.Bf2 Be7 13.Nf3 h5 14.Bd3 g6 15.Rg1 0–0–0 16.Qc2 Kb8 17.0–0–0 Qa5 18.Kb1 Rc8 19.g4 hxg4 20.Rxg4 c4 21.Bxf5 gxf5 22.Rg7 Ba4 23.b3 cxb3 24.Qb2 bxa2+ 25.Ka1 Bxd1 26.Rxe7 Rc7 27.Rxc7 Qxc7 28.Nd4 Ba4 29.Nxe6 Qc4 30.Bd4 Bb3 31.Qf2 Rxb2 32.Qg1 Rh8 33.Bxa7+ Ka8 34.Bb6 Qxc3# 0–1

Pieter Stoltz 0-1 Brian Allison: The last of the Wednesday night catch-up games, this Round 9 game played in advance was a tough fight! Brian equalised early in a Dutch, then there were several moves of mutual manoeuvring. But having castled on opposite sides, Pieter failed to play a3 to stop b4; so Brian's attack crashed through! His pawn reached c3, winning a rook; then a pin won the exchange. Pieter had no chance after that; it took a while, but eventually Brian's queen and rook forced mate.

Division 1

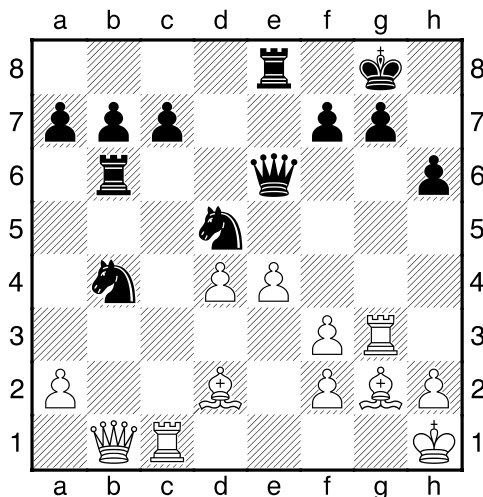
Daniel Melamed 1-0 Robert Kovacs: In this Round 6 game that Daniel desperately needed to win to reach equal first with JSP, Robert really made him work! See game below. After an early queen swap, Daniel could have got a significant edge with 10.Nf3; but he missed the chance. Thereafter it was Robert who had a small advantage, which he gave up by trading rooks on Move 21. But Daniel gave him another chance; and he could have been a clear pawn up with 24...Bd8. What he played instead just cost him a piece for two pawns, as his knight was trapped! What followed after that was hard work, but Daniel's technique was good; it took over 30 more moves, but he got there on Move 61.

Melamed, Daniel (2035) - Kovacs, Robert (1801), 2023 St George CC Div 1 Round 6, 16/05/2023

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 d6 3.Nc3 Nc6 4.e4 e5 5.dxe5 dxe5 6.Qxd8+ Kxd8 7.Ng5 Ke7 8.Bc4 Nd4 9.0–0 Ne6 10.Re1 c6 11.a4 h6 12.Nf3 Nd7 13.b3 f6 14.Nh4 Kf7 15.a5 Bb4 16.Bb2 Ndc5 17.Nf5 g6 18.Nd6+ Ke7 19.Red1 Rd8 20.Nxc8+ Raxc8 21.Na2 Rxd1+ 22.Rxd1 Bxa5 23.b4 Na4 24.Ba3 Bb6 25.Bb3 Nac5 26.bxc5 Nxc5 27.Nc3 Rd8 28.Rxd8 Kxd8 29.Bf7 g5 30.Kf1 Nd7 31.Ke2 Bc5 32.Bc1 Nf8 33.Nd1 Ke7 34.Bb3 a5 35.Ne3 h5 36.Nf5+ Kd7 37.h4 gxh4 38.Nxh4 Ne6 39.Bxe6+ Kxe6 40.f3 a4 41.Kd3 b5 42.c3 Bf8 43.Nf5 Kd7 44.Ng3 c5 45.Nxh5 Be7 46.g4 Kc6 47.Ng3 Kb6 48.Nf5 Bf8 49.Ne3 Ka5 50.Nd5 a3 51.Kc2 b4 52.Kb3 Kb5 53.cxb4 cxb4 54.Nxf6 Kc6 55.g5 Be7 56.Nd5 Bf8 57.Nxb4+ Kd7 58.Bxa3 Ke6 59.Nd3 Bg7 60.Kc4 Kf7 61.Kd5 1–0

Jim Mavroidis 0.5-0.5 Jose Escribano: Clearly both players were in a peaceful mood in this Round 4 game! Jose played the unusual 3...Nd4 in a Sicilian; Jim went about his business, and he was slightly better by Move 10. But he gradually let Jose back into the game! The queens were coming off, and the resultant ending was even. So the players agreed to an early draw; it was only Move 17...

Arthur Huynh 1-0 Graham Saint: Gifted two bishops against two knights in this Round 4 game, Arthur was fractionally better early on. But Graham fought as always, activated his knights and was doing OK. The critical position below was then reached after White's 22.e4.



Here Graham let loose some fireworks with 22...Nc3, a very creative move! Now after 23.Rxc3 Nxa2, 24.Qd3 would have given Arthur an edge; but after 24.Qc2 Nxc3 25.Bxc3 instead, it was Graham who was better. His 25...Qc4 was inaccurate, allowing Arthur the advantage again if he had played 26.d5; but he got into trouble with what he played! Play proceeded 26.h4 Rb3 27.f4 b5 28.Qd2 b4 29.Bb2 a5, after which 30.Bf3 was a losing blunder by Arthur. But after getting a winning position with 30...Qf1+ 31.Kh2 Qb1 32.f5, Graham missed the winning 32...Qxb2 33.Qxh6 Qxf2+ 34.Kh3 Qxg3+ 35.Kxg3 gxh6, instead playing 32...Kh7 33.Bc1 Rc3 – losing! He missed Arthur's trick, the brilliant mating finish 34.Rxg7+ Kxg7 35.Qxh6+ Kg8 36.f6 1-0. A thrilling game; what a way to finish!

So there we are – you now know how we reached next week's thrilling denouement, dear reader! But wait, I still owe you three things... Firstly, solutions to last week's nicknames, where the theme was initials! So Adelaide (SA) is Stevo Acevski; Pencil (SB) is Srijan Badam; England (Great Britain: GB) is Ghassan Beydoun; America (US is Etats-Unis in French: EU) is Elijah Udovitch; Morning (AM) is Ali Murtazaev; and Emergency (ER) is Ethan Riegman. How did you go with these? Secondly, I'll leave you to figure out the two nicknames and two anagrams interspersed throughout this newsletter. Thirdly and finally, a couple of jokes! As usual, these are from the stable of JSP; hope you like them!

Why did the chess tournament in the gym close? Because it was not working out...

Is the deciding game in an all horse chess tournament called the mane event?