Dear Dragons,

Welcome to Edition 9 of the Weekly St George Club Champs newsletter! Just when we thought the last two catch-up nights had clarified things, there were a few reversals and upsets in Round 7. Now several divisions look like they are in for even more exciting finishes! Division 1 sees JSP still leading on 6.5/7, now by a full point from Daniel Melamed after his upset draw; but Daniel still has a game in hand... In Division 2, Michael Babic, John Karabatsos and Celina Wu now share the lead on 5.5/7, after Brian Allison (5/7) drew with Celina. Division 3 is unclear, as Stuart Taylor (4.5/5) now has two games in hand; John Parissis (6/7) leads and plays Stuart in the last round. Division 4 is even more unclear after an upset loss by Chris Brown, who now shares the lead with James Bullen on 4.5/7; but Sait Buzgan and Elijah Udovitch (both 4/6) have a game in hand... The only division with no change is Division 5, a two-horse race between Faaiz Malik (7/7) and Kevin Liu (6/7). Ethan Currie (6/7) still leads Division 6; but an upset loss saw William Liu drop to third on 4/7 behind Stephen Manwarring on 4.5/7. All very thrilling; so let's see how the players reached this state of affairs in Round 7!

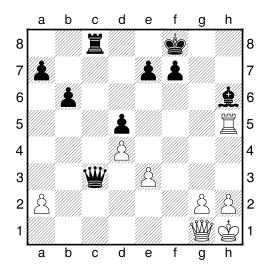
Division 5

Geoff Hyde 0.5-0.5 Ashton Li: A lucky escape for Geoff! After an even opening, an inaccurate 13th move (unlucky for some!) by White gave Ashton the two bishops and a crushing position. He missed a chance to break decisively in the centre, but soon traded bishops and won a pawn. He seemed well on the way to victory when he won a second pawn. But he gave one back, traded too much and allowed the enemy queen to invade! The result was a perpetual check: a great never say die effort by Geoff...

Dimitrios Stathos 1-0 Ali Murtazaev: A rather easy game for Dimitrios! After trading queens early, he put pressure on f7; not only did he win this pawn, but by Move 10 he had also won the exchange. It was quite easy from there; he simplified gradually and went on to win in 39 moves.

Zain Mokhtar 0F-1F Kevin Liu: Unfortunately Zain has had to withdraw due to school and sport commitments; so all of his remaining games will be scored as forfeit losses.

Ken Eldridge 0-1 Faaiz Malik: The only player left after tonight on a perfect score, Faaiz was made to work a bit by Ken in this one! A quiet opening saw easy equality, but nothing more until Move 15; then Ken got a bit passive, and Faaiz got the edge in activity. Eventually he won a pawn via a pin; Ken sacrificed a piece for insufficient counterplay, so was dead lost when they reached the position below.



Here Faaiz got careless! Dead winning with 30...Qd2, for example, he took the bait with 30...Bxe3 instead – and lost his extra piece after 31.Rh8+ Kg7 32.Rxc8 Qxc8 33.Qxe3. This meant that he had to win a queen ending a pawn up – never an easy task. He managed it – but it took him nearly thirty more moves... In the end, a cross check traded queens and forced a pawn promotion – hard work!

Peter Swinton 1F-0F Aaron Hu: Sadly Aaron had exams, and insufficient opportunity to catch up any postponed games (Peter still has one); so he reluctantly had to forfeit this game.

Division 4

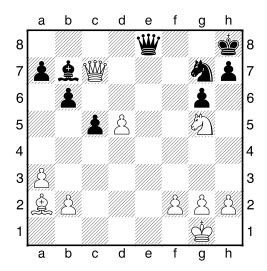
Chris Brown 0-1 Huey Teng: A major upset that cost Chris the outright lead – and a great game by Huey! First he equalised as Black with solid development; then he got the edge by expanding on the queenside and in the centre. Chris thought he was doing fine because of Black's isolated d-pawn; and he did manage to restore equality briefly. But then queens were traded; he lost one pawn, then another fell due to a pin. Despite winding up in a pure opposite coloured bishop ending, the position two pawns down was still dead lost for Chris; and Huey went on to prevail in 47 moves.

Sait Buzgan – Elijah Udovitch: This game was postponed by Elijah.

Anthony Lopes 1-0 Mario Parissis: Tony was always better here, despite his early queen deployment with 6.Qf3! But Mario returned serve with 6...Qf6, and later had to swap queens to his detriment to avoid disaster on his long diagonal. With the two bishops, Tony was on top after that. He trapped the enemy rook on c8 to win the exchange, then won a piece via a rook fork. A whole rook up, he was winning easily; and Mario resigned when forced to give his last piece for Tony's passed a7-pawn.

Euan Marquez Zarauz – James Bullen: This game was postponed, though I don't know by whom!

Brian Connell 0-1 James Bullen: One of the reversals referred to in the introduction; outplaying his opponent all the way, the end was heartbreaking for Brian! Mind you, play was largely even for the first 25 moves or so. But James got himself into trouble when he refused to trade queens! Putting his queen on a4 was a big error by Black, as the White queen invaded to set up serious mate threats (aided by her knight). James did his best to hang on; but Brian was winning easily in the position below.



There are many ways for White to stop mate: Ne6 (swapping and taking is impossible due to back rank mate); or Nf7+ and Ne5; or even more defensive moves like Nf3 or h3 or h4 or g4. But Kf1 is not one of them! After Ba6+, White resigned due to mate on e1 next move – a very sad finish for Brian...

Division 1

Mario Falchoni 1-0 Jim Mavroidis: Jim will not thank me for publishing this; but I had to show how easy it is to get into trouble as Black! Too many early pawn pushes by Jim tempted Mario to sacrifice a piece – unsoundly, as it turned out. The refutation was 7...Bc5+; Jim's 7...Bh6 instead was poor. But Mario gave him another chance: 8...Qg5 was also good. The last straw for Jim was 10...Qc5??, walking into a discovery losing queen and game. See game next page – a cautionary tale!

Falchoni, Mario (1961) - Mavroidis, Jim (1819), 2023 St George CC Div 1 Round 7, 02/05/2023 1.e4 e5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.f4 exf4 4.Nf3 g5 5.Bc4 g4 6.0–0 gxf3 7.Qxf3 Bh6 8.Qh5 Qe7 9.d4 Nxd4 10.Nd5 Qc5 11.Nf6+ Nxf6 12.Qxc5 Nc6 13.Bxf4 Nxe4 14.Rae1 1–0

Robert Kovacs 0.5-0.5 Stevo Acevski: Incredibly, the previous game wasn't the shortest of the night! This one was a 9 move draw – clearly neither player wanted a long game... Play went 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.0–0 d6 5.c3 Bg4 6.h3 Bh5 7.d3 Qf6 8.g4 Qg6 9.Nh4 Qf6 ½–½. Robert could've won a piece with 9.Ng5. He was still +2 with what he played. But he was the one who offered the draw...

Arthur Huynh 1-0 Richard Eccles: The first 17 moves seemed normal enough here; but then Arthur self-pinned by taking a pawn on c5, and all hell broke loose! Richard missed a chance to win with an immediate 18...d3, but was still better. He gave away his lead and allowed equality with his 21.Qc7, then was worse when he lost his e-pawn. Arthur allowed him to get back to level; and the advantage fluctuated until queens came off. Thereafter Arthur was winning, with a rook on the seventh and a powerful passed c-pawn; and Richard resigned when he was losing a rook by force. See game below.

Huynh, Arthur (2053) - Eccles, Richard (1797), 2023 St George CC Div 1 Round 7, 02/05/2023 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 Be7 5.e3 0–0 6.Nf3 b6 7.cxd5 exd5 8.Bd3 c5 9.Qc2 h6 10.Bh4 Nc6 11.a3 Bg4 12.dxc5 Bxf3 13.gxf3 bxc5 14.0–0 d4 15.Na4 Ne5 16.Bxf6 Bxf6 17.Be4 Rc8 18.Nxc5 Nd7 19.b4 Nxc5 20.bxc5 dxe3 21.Rad1 Qc7 22.c6 e2 23.Qxe2 Qf4 24.Rd5 g6 25.Qb5 Rfe8 26.Rfd1 Rb8 27.Qc5 Bd8 28.Qd6 Bc7 29.Qxf4 Bxf4 30.Rd7 Rbc8 31.Rxa7 Ra8 32.Rxa8 1–0

John Stuart Plant 1-0 Graham Saint: A solid win by JSP, albeit with a couple of careless errors at the end! Thanks as usual for the description below. Melamed vs Plant should be thrilling next week!

"This game I was quite happy with the opening and middlegame and the setup of my attack, which got me close to a winning position after 15 moves. Not that Graham wasn't setting traps; he was setting up very clever traps with his queen and bishop, and I had to be quite careful, but I was seeing through all of them. I was happy when queens came off, as I had a winning advantage, securing a knight in the centre and picking up a second pawn to boot. Graham's kingside also had not developed yet. But then on move 27 I completely missed that his doubled rooks could come down to the seventh rank, as the d2 square was guarded by his bishop; this meant he was winning one pawn back and getting his pieces active. I was still winning, but I knew I had to switch myself very much back on when this occurred.

Luckily, I found an excellent way to do just that: I established a strong anchor knight on e4 that held my position together like glue, guarding almost every pawn and making his rook and bishop totally ineffective. Graham, perhaps sensing this, decided to sacrifice his bishop for a couple of my dangerous pawns. I saw this idea before it happened and knew I was still winning with my knight, as I would win Graham's h-pawn and secure the path to its promotion. That was the plan which saw me win; but I only saw this one winning plan and stuck to it! It was enough; but on move 38 I completely missed a knight fork of his king and rook, which would have won me the game 12 moves earlier than I did! So overall, it was a good game, but it was punctuated by a couple of mistakes at the end by me..."

Jose Escribano 0.5-0.5 Daniel Melamed: A thrilling upset draw! Daniel equalised early; better by Move 8, he attacked with 10...h5. Jose countered in the centre and equalised again. But after 14.Ne5, Daniel set off some fireworks: sacrificing the exchange, he left Jose's king with no pawn protection! This was good for Daniel, but he found Jose more resilient than expected; and after an inaccurate 27th move by White, Jose was better. So Daniel offered a draw, and Jose accepted; see game below.

Escribano, Jose (1861) - Melamed, Daniel (2035), 2023 St George CC Div 1 Round 7, 02/05/2023 1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.f4 e6 4.Nf3 Nf6 5.e5 Nd5 6.Nxd5 exd5 7.g3 d6 8.exd6 Qxd6 9.Bg2 Be7 10.0–0 h5 11.Re1 Bf5 12.c3 0–0–0 13.d4 h4 14.Ne5 hxg3 15.Nxf7 gxh2+ 16.Kh1 Qd7 17.Nxd8 Rxd8 18.Be3 Bh4 19.Rf1 c4 20.Qh5 Bf6 21.Rfe1 Bg4 22.Qg6 Bf5 23.Qh5 g6 24.Qe2 Ne7 25.Bf2 Rh8 26.b3 Bg4 27.Qf1 Qc7 28.bxc4 ½–½

Division 6

Mary Hunt 0.5-0.5 Reno Sciberras: A solid game by both players! This was played in advance a few weeks ago; and neither player ever had any real advantage. In the end they reached a locked position where neither side felt they could make progress; so they agreed a draw on Move 25.

Stephen Manwarring 1-0 Samuel Slingo: A long, grinding, 93 move win! Not much was happening for either player until Move 18, when Samuel sacrificed a pawn. From there Stephen just gradually simplified! Queens came off, then rooks, then he won another pawn. It took him another 60 moves, but Stephen ground Samuel down in the ending, finally mating with king and two queens against king.

Mark Boan – Lisa Brandenburg: This one was postponed by Lisa, who suffered a concussion while playing sport – as she herself said, this is why chess is a superior game!

Ethan Currie 1-0 Ethan Riegman: The battle of the Ethans saw a convincing finish by the outright tournament leader! He had struggled a bit earlier, after an even opening saw Black slightly ahead when White prematurely advanced his passed d5 pawn to d6. Riegman could have taken it earlier; by the time he did, Currie got the Black c5 pawn in return. So they were level, till a passive bishop move got Black in trouble. He lost a pawn, then tried to win it back – and walked into mate in one on h8!

John Matson 1-0 William Liu: See game below: a fighting effort by John! He was lost for much of this game; but his never say die attitude got him through... Black's 11th was a mistake, but John chose the wrong recapture; and before long William had the chance to win a piece. Even when he did not, he was a pawn up with a vastly superior position; then he won the enemy bishop on d6 anyway! Winning easily, William threw it all away by not taking a free rook on Move 26. Then John just played the rook ending better, mobilising his connected passed pawns and winning a rook to prevail in 46 moves.

Matson, John (920) - Liu, William (553), 2023 St George CC Division 6 Round 7, 02/05/2023

1.e4 c5 2.Bc4 d6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.d3 g6 5.Ng5 e6 6.d4 cxd4 7.Qxd4 Nc6 8.Qd1 Bg7 9.0–0 0–0 10.Re1 Rb8 11.Bf4 Nxe4 12.Rxe4 Bxb2 13.Bxd6 Bxa1 14.Re1 Qxg5 15.Bxb8 e5 16.Bd6 Rd8 17.Qf3 Be6 18.Bxe6 fxe6 19.Rd1 Nd4 20.Qxb7 Rxd6 21.Kh1 Nc6 22.Re1 Bc3 23.Nxc3 Qd2 24.Qc8+ Kg7 25.Qc7+ Rd7 26.Rd1 Rxc7 27.Rxd2 Nb4 28.a3 Rxc3 29.axb4 e4 30.h4 e3 31.fxe3 Rxe3 32.Rd7+ Kf6 33.Rxa7 h5 34.b5 Rc3 35.Ra2 Rc5 36.b6 Rb5 37.Ra6 Ke5 38.c4 Rb4 39.c5 Kd5 40.Ra5 Kc6 41.Kg1 Rc4 42.Kf2 Rxc5 43.Rxc5+ Kxb6 44.Re5 Kc6 45.Rxe6+ Kd5 46.Rxg6 1–0

Division 2

Albert Tjahja 1-0 Andrew Li: Another "reversal" where a player who was better walked into mate! At least Andrew allowed mate in two rather than mate in one... His Caro-Kann equalised quite early on, and play was level for much of the game. But then Albert lost his h4 pawn, leaving Andrew with a significant advantage. So Albert doubled rooks on the half open h-file, then pushed g5 to try and fully open it – a trap which Andrew fell for, allowing a Rh8+ rook sacrifice followed by Qh7 mate!

Srijan Badam 0-1 Malachi O'Donoghue: A tough one for Srijan! He was better early, and still ahead on Move 16 when all minor pieces had been traded off except for White's d4 knight, which was better than Black's light squared bishop. But then he allowed Mal to break in the centre and gradually get the advantage! A passive Nf1 move by Srijan let Black attack, doubling rooks on the open f-file. From there mate or loss of material was inevitable; and Srijan resigned when losing his queen to a pin.

Celina Wu 0.5-0.5 Brian Allison: Who said draws are boring? See game next page: this 60 mover was fascinating, despite early equality after queens came off. But then Black got an edge, with beautiful centralised knights and the White king nearly in trouble! Celina did well to save it, but ended up losing a knight for 3 pawns. From there Brian was better, but could not cash in; and an intriguing struggle ended up with Celina's connected passed pawns good enough to force a draw by repetition.

Wu, Celina (1649) - Allison, Brian (1704), 2023 St George CC Div 2 Round 7, 02/05/2023

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Nf6 3.Bb5+ Bd7 4.Bxd7+ Qxd7 5.c4 c6 6.dxc6 Qxc6 7.d3 Qxg2 8.Qf3 Qxf3 9.Nxf3

Nc6 10.a3 0-0-0 11.Ke2 e5 12.Nc3 h6 13.b4 g5 14.h3 Bg7 15.Bb2 Nh5 16.Rad1 Nf4+ 17.Ke3

Nd4 18.Ne1 Nf5+ 19.Ke4 Nh4 20.Ke3 f5 21.f3 Rhe8 22.Ne2 Nhg6 23.Ng3 Nh4 24.Rh2 Ne6

25.Nh5 f4+ 26.Kf2 Bh8 27.Ng2 Nf5 28.h4 e4 29.fxe4 Bxb2 30.exf5 g4 31.Ngxf4 Nxf4 32.Nxf4

Be5 33.Rg2 Bxf4 34.Rxg4 Rd4 35.Kf3 Re3+ 36.Kf2 Re5 37.Rg8+ Rd8 38.Rxd8+ Kxd8 39.Kf3

Rxf5 40.Ke4 Rf7 41.h5 Bg5 42.Rh1 Rf2 43.Rh3 Ra2 44.d4 Bc1 45.Rc3 Bxa3 46.b5 Be7 47.c5 Rh2

48.Ra3 Rh4+ 49.Kd5 b6 50.Rxa7 bxc5 51.Ra8+ Kd7 52.Ra7+ Ke8 53.dxc5 Rxh5+ 54.Ke6 Bd8

55.Kd6 Rg5 56.Rh7 Rg6+ 57.Kd5 Be7 58.b6 Rg5+ 59.Ke6 Rg6+ 60.Kd5 Rg5+ ½-½-½

John Karabatsos 1-0 Peter Bogdanoski: A King's Gambit Declined resulted in early equality; but John was already better by Move 10. From there he just activated his pieces – till Peter undefended his knight on a7 and blundered a piece! He tried tricks to win it back; but none worked. Soon queens came off, and his position was hopeless. It took John 20 more moves, but he prevailed in the end...

Michael Babic 1-0 Pieter Stoltz: See game below: a lucky escape for Michael, scoring him the joint tournament lead! After a quiet opening, he earnt a slowly increasing advantage; but from Move 15 on, Pieter began to come back... By Move 22, the evaluation was back to 0.00; then tactics left Pieter two whole pawns ahead, and he was well on top! This persisted till Move 30, when he blundered a rook to a discovery. The rest was sad for Pieter; he fought for 20 more moves, but the result was inevitable.

Babic, Michael (1732) - Stoltz, Pieter (1508), 2023 St George CC Division 2 Round 7, 02/05/2023 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.c4 dxc4 4.Nc3 a6 5.a4 Nc6 6.e4 Na5 7.Ne5 c5 8.Be3 cxd4 9.Bxd4 e6 10.Bxc4 Nxc4 11.Nxc4 Bb4 12.Nb6 Rb8 13.0–0 Bxc3 14.bxc3 Qc7 15.f4 Bd7 16.Qd3 Rd8 17.Rae1 h5 18.Qg3 Kf8 19.a5 Bb5 20.Rf3 h4 21.Qf2 Bc6 22.Be5 Qe7 23.Qc2 Qc5+ 24.Kh1 Bxe4 25.Qf2 Qxf2 26.Rxf2 h3 27.Bd4 Ng4 28.Rd2 Bxg2+ 29.Kg1 Nf6 30.f5 exf5 31.Bc5+ Kg8 32.Rxd8+ Kh7 33.Rxh8+ Kxh8 34.Re7 f4 35.Rxf7 Ne4 36.Bd4 f3 37.Rxb7 f2+ 38.Bxf2 Nxf2 39.Rb8+ Kh7 40.Kxf2 Bc6 41.c4 Kg6 42.Rc8 Bg2 43.c5 Kf6 44.Re8 Bc6 45.Re3 Bg2 46.Nc4 Kf5 47.Ne5 g5 48.Nf3 Kf4 49.c6 g4 50.c7 gxf3 51.c8Q Bf1 52.Qf8+ 1–0

Division 3

Ludwig Wolf 0-1 John Parissis: John equalised early, then got the edge by Move 10 via a powerful pin. He doubled and isolated Ludwig's c-pawns, then put pressure on the kingside and in the centre. When Ludwig took a poisoned a6 pawn, John just attacked his king! He won two pawns, then forced Ludwig to sacrifice his queen for rook and knight to avoid mate. He had no trouble going on to win the game from there, forcing Ludwig's resignation with a queen fork winning a rook.

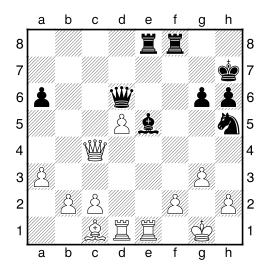
Stuart Taylor – John Nichas: This game was postponed by Stuart, who was away for work.

Louis Jeff 0.5-0.5 Darren Curtis: Despite arriving late, Darren still managed to equalise by Move 6; and the game remained largely level after that! They traded queens and most of the minor pieces by Move 20; and both pairs of rooks came off soon after that. The resultant pure opposite coloured bishop ending was dead drawn; it took 15 more moves, but they finally agreed to a draw on Move 39.

Ghassan Beydoun 1-0 Sam Sharkawy: A good game by Ghassan! He got a small edge by Move 12, then a significant advantage when Sam sidelined his knight. Soon a powerful knight on d6 made it an even bigger advantage! Then he just attacked the enemy king... Before too long, the advantage was decisive; and Sam resigned when he lost his queen and was facing forced checkmate.

Colin Goldsmith 0.5-0.5 Netra Bhatt: Yet another exciting and interesting game, with Netra missing a golden (pardon the pun, maybe Goldsmithian?) opportunity at the end... The game began normally enough, with a level position after 19 moves. It was at this point that Colin sacrificed a piece for three pawns! He won a fourth; and after a few more moves, they reached the intriguing position below.

See diagram below.



Here Netra's 29...Nxg3 counter-sacrifice was even more interesting! The engine gives White a big edge after 30.hxg3; but instead he played 30.Rxe5 Qxe5 31.hxg3 Qh5 32.Qc7+ Kh8 33.Qc3+ Kg8 34.Qd2 Re2 35.Qxh6 Rfxf2 36.Qxh5 gxh5, evaluation 0.00. But White played 37.Bf4 instead of the drawing d6, for example; and after Rg2+ 38.Kf1, Black was winning! He just plays Ref2+ and Rxc2, and the d-pawn is harmless. But fearing it, Netra offered a draw, and Colin accepted – what a game!

Finally, I am sure you are all looking forward to some anagrams! I have mixed up the divisions, so no clues this time... Still one player from each division, though! Who are Urchin Eater; Wow, Full Dig; Harmonica Foil; Short Mastoiditis; Banal Sirloin; and Civil Judo Heath? Some good ones there; have fun solving them! Who knows, I may yet provide that chocolate reward to the first reader still resident in Sydney who emails me with all the correct answers...