

European Schools Chess Championship

Report 2

Day 2 of the 2024 ESCC has been a showcase of talent at the tournament, the day saw many upsets as those who won their first game fought against stiffer competition in this round it was marked by longer games with more tactical battles and understandable blunders lead to a lot of dynamicism in the results.

G7

The Girls' Under 7 section saw its first draw today, in the Icelandic derby where black's knight made a kamikaze run, landing on h1 by move 9. A draw was a slightly unexpected result given white was a rook up in the end position, although both sides were running very low on pawns.

The top seed Maria-Ioana Ramureanu made it safely to 2/2, mating with a queen on h2, and she's joined by Miray Akinci of Turkey, who beat the home player Aarvi Bharadwaj, making her debut after having the bye in round 1. Aarvi went wrong in this position, where black has just trapped her rook. How to continue?



It's tempting here to try trap the black queen, but it just about has enough squares to escape to - 1.Bc1 Qb4 (Qa4?? 2.Bb5 and the queen is trapped) 2.Nbxd4 Qa4. But the Greek Gift is on - 1.Bxh7+ Kxh7 2.Ng5+ Kg6 (the only move for black) 3.Qg4 and white, a piece and pawn down, can force repetition and take a draw - for example 3...Nf5 (forced) 4.Ne4+ Kh7 5.Nf6+ PxN 6.Qh5+ Kg8 7.Qg4+ Kh7. Instead, white went for a direct attack with 1.Ng5?, but after 1...Ng6 2.Qh5 h6, white's attack is over and the rook is still trapped. But these kind of learning points - the Greek Gift pattern, and the idea that checks and captures can be more forcing than other moves - are the building blocks of chess progress, for both players.

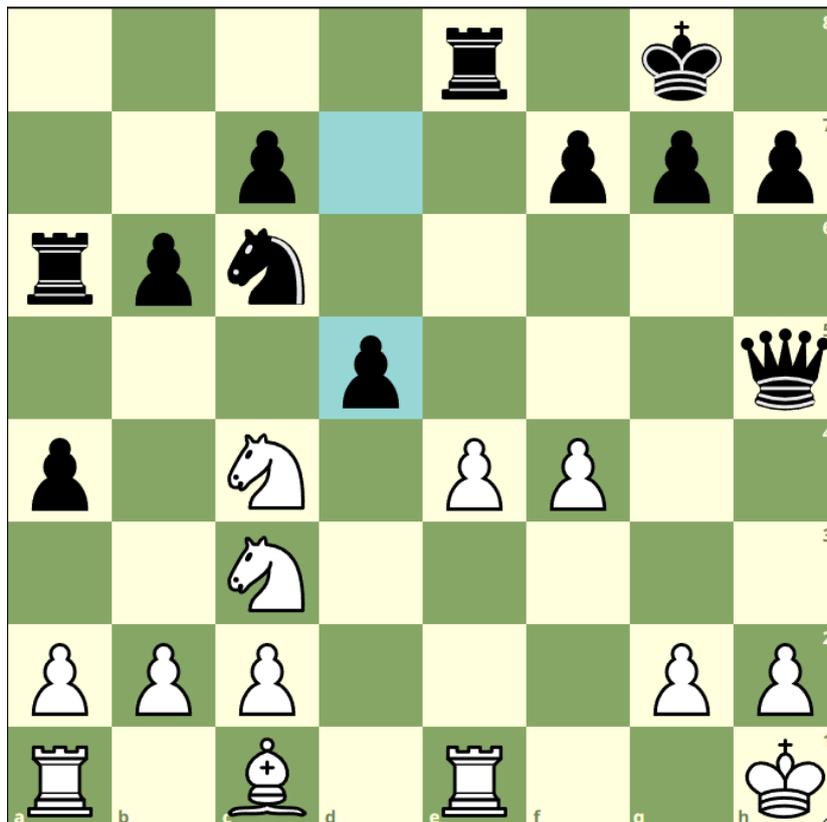
Both players promoted in the Turkish derby Islek v Yildiz - unfortunately for black, her queen was immediately captured, while white's promotion a few moves later delivered mate.

Round 3 sees two Icelandic derbies, while Maria-Ioana has the chance to go clear at the top as Miray has the bye.

O7

In the open under 7's three leaders emerged with a score of 2/2. Omer Taha Dede of Turkey, Samuel Redmond of Czech Republic and Amandeep Singh of England.

Amandeep had an incredibly eventful game, his Greek opponent, Appolonas Pachatiroglou blundered a piece early on only for amandeed to later blunder his queen!



The following position demonstrates the central theme of the game. Both players struggled with backrank threats and that same thing led white to victory in the end. If either side had taken the time to play a move like h6 or h3 that would've relieved the threats and allowed for play to continue normally.

G9

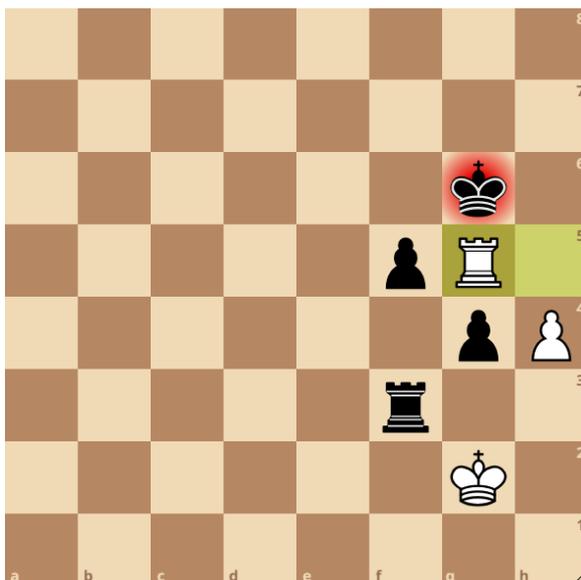
In the Girls' U9, the top seed by some 200 points, Anne-Sophie Constantin-Ciuntu, was held to a draw, having opened with a provocative line of the Dutch where after five moves she had pawns on h6, g6, f6 and f5 - though it did exist in the databases. While white sought to take advantage of this, black calmly developed her queenside pieces and castled long. The game came down to a rook and pawn ending, where both had f/g/h pawns (black had an

extra, doubled, f-pawn), and although it looked drawn from a long way out, the evaluation did change twice. First white erred, going from a drawn ending to a lost one here -



Here, white marked time with 1.Rb5, which is far from clearly a mistake. Better was to go after the backwards h5 pawn with 1.Ra8; black can only hold it with the passive 1...Ra6. 1.Ra7, keeping the black king out of f7, was also playable. Instead, the game continued 1...Kf7 2.Kf2 Kg6 3.Ke3 Re6+ 4.Kf2 Kf6 5.Rc5 Re4 6.Rc6+ Ke7 7.Rh6 - but now black has considerably improved her position compared to the immediate plan of going after h5.

But then in this position -



- black gave the half-point back in time trouble with 1...Kh6?? The black king needs to be active and support the pawns; Kf6 (or even Kf7) were both wins still. Rook and pawn endings are tricky, even for much older players!

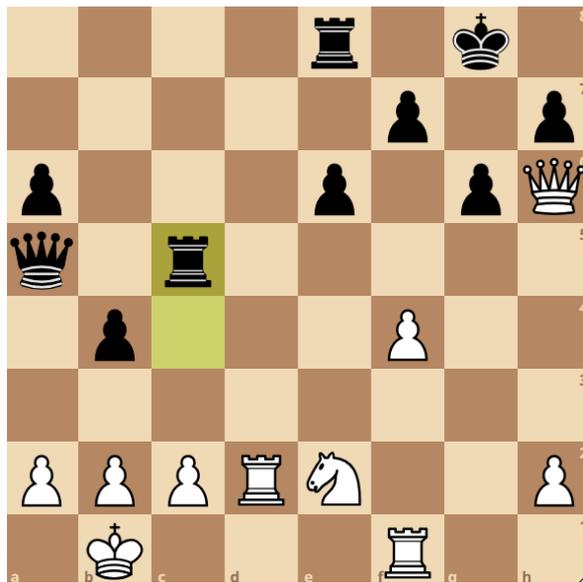
Maria Pavlova (Bulgaria) and Irmak Keser (Turkey) lead on 2/2 after quite differing days today. Maria had a straightforward win against Ireland's Khushi Maddu, taking advantage of her opponent developing her queen too early and pinning it to the king on move 11, while

Irmak had a much harder time of it against compatriot Eslam Tolan and appears to have won on time in a position where she had Q+5 v Q, N+3. They all count though!

Maria v top seed Anne-Sophie is the big match tomorrow

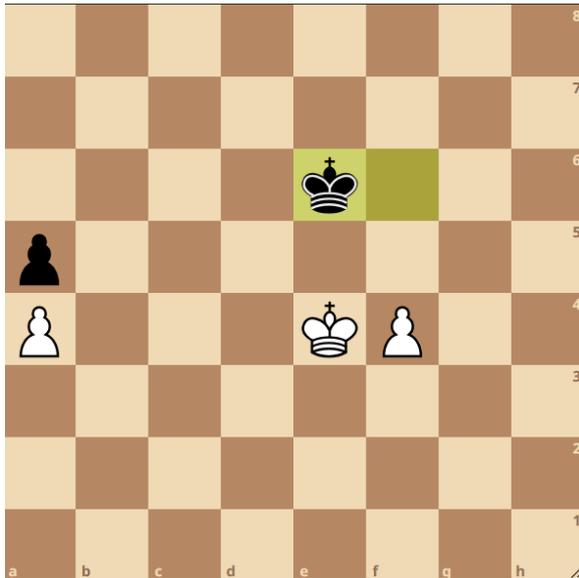
O9

The three top seeds moved to 2/2 after today's second round. Lucas Zheng of Wales had a let-off when hanging a piece, and then escaped on the right side of a mutual blunder here.



Black - piece for pawn down - should have played 1...b3, winning the rook, and indeed did play this on his next move. Now white has the chance to play 2.f5, defending the rook and also threatening the nasty f6 and mate on g7. Black's only way out of this is to swap, but then white is piece for two pawns up and while the position isn't trivial, white has a great position. Instead, after 2.Qh3??, b3 more or less decided things for black. Ata Peray, one of the large Turkish contingent in Limerick, was allowed double up rooks on the seventh against Krish Bhattacharjee, which was quickly decisive, while Ireland's Sreeyan Andhurthi had a derby win over Adhvik Kumar in a game where he quietly improved his advantages across the board without ever really allowing his opponent a way back into things.

A pawn ending went wrong for Omur Hisir, playing the white pieces against England's Adamjeet Singh. In this position -



- he pushed f5, which is an immediate draw; bringing it closer to the king costs a vital tempo. Instead, black is helpless after 1.Kd4 Kd6 2.Kc4 Kc6 3.f5.

Round 3 sees the ties start to get tasty, with the top four seeds all going head-to-head. Things may well be a lot clearer in the next 24 hours!

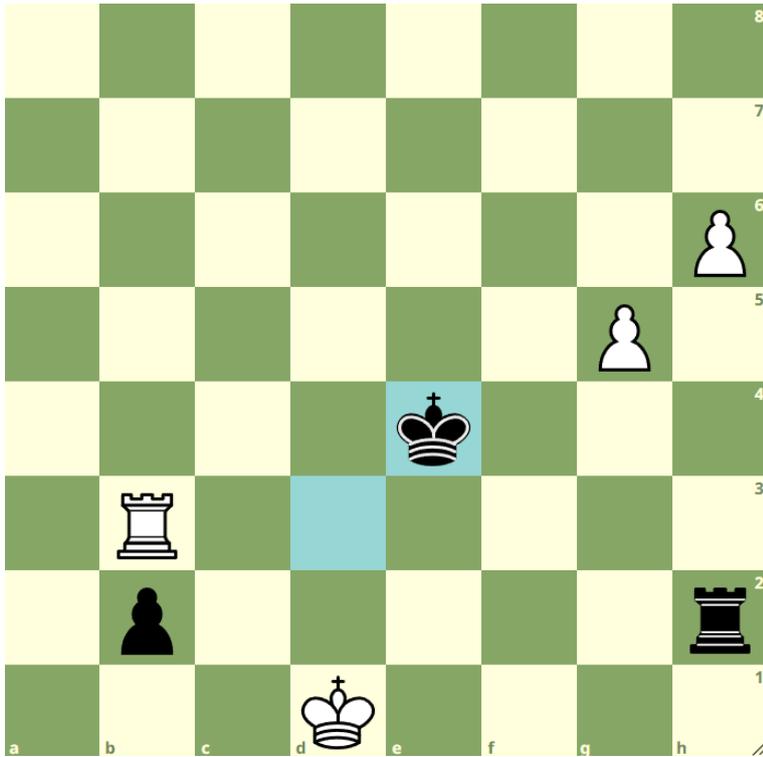
G11

Round 2 in the girls under 11's was very successful for the Turkish delegation who played only one game and it was against another Turkish player. In a shocking turn of events the top seed Emma Cretescu lost against Israel's Ester Galmidi. The game was a grand prix attack and after black's Queenside advancements were slowed, she faced an unwavering attack on the Kingside which was very difficult to defend against. A small misplay in defence led to black's position crumbling and Emma has to lose her queen to save her king.

Meanwhile the Turkish derby resulted in a win for Elif Deniz who managed a victory after her opponent overextended on the kingside in a caro-kann position.

O11

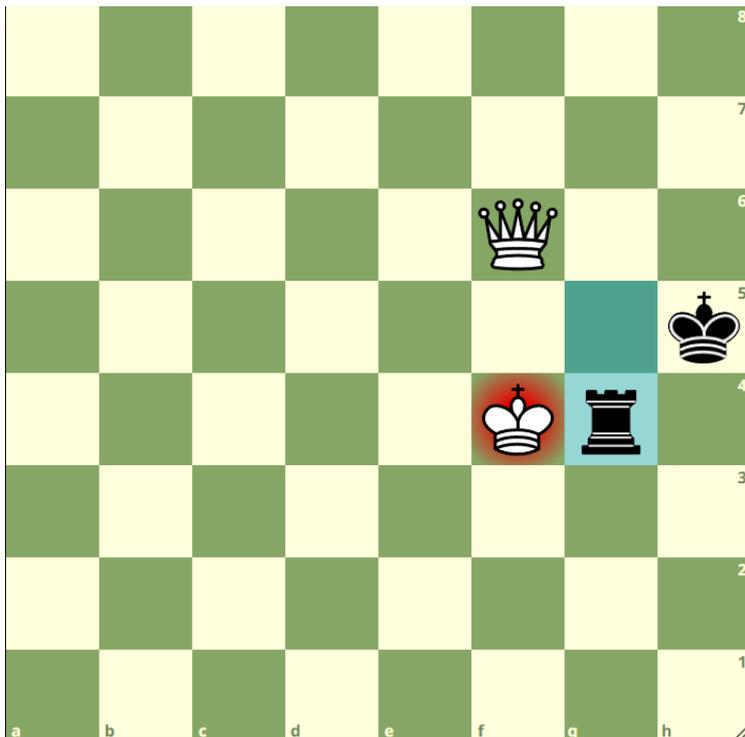
The Open under 11's saw a change in leadership as Ali Poyraz Uzdemir drew a long game Polands Adam Wites. The game was over 4 hours long and took 85 moves to complete. The rook ending at the end was incredibly challenging for both players



In this position white played 1.

Rxb2 correctly identifying that the two pawns will beat black's rook to the finish line if black recaptures. What should black do to stop the pawns?

The best move is actually 1... Rh1+ giving black one extra tempo to play 2... Kf5 and although this is a theoretical draw, accuracy is still required. Black instead played Rh5 and ended up capturing white's rook as queening could not be prevented. In a final fluke the following position occurred.



In this position white played

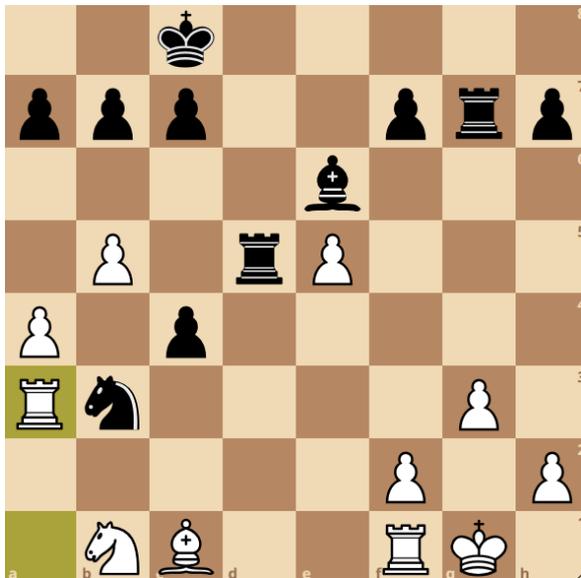
1.Kf5? allowing black to snag the draw from the clutches of defeat with 1...Rf4+!. An easy oversight to make in time trouble after 4 hours of bone crunching play. Although a draw was

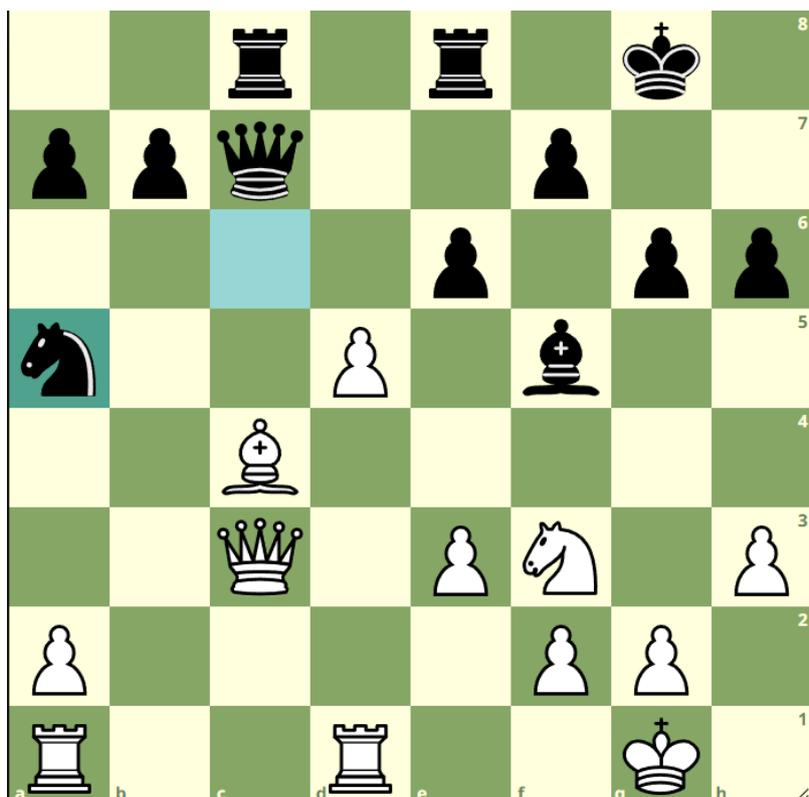
well earned by both players you can't help but feel for Adam who was so close to gaining a large upset against the top seed. It goes to show the level of consistency and accuracy it takes to beat the top players.

G13

Turkey are dominating the Girls' U13, having the only three players on 2/2 as well as the only player on 1½/2. Caglu Yudum Sahin beat local player Bedhbh Doolin after getting a huge pawn mass rolling through the centre of the board, Zumral Yazici beat the Croat Ena Kovac when the latter threw in a check in an exchange sequence, only for her opponent to block with the piece she was due to recapture, while Ipek Dogan had plenty of pressure against her Romanian opponent even before spotting a tactic to win two pieces for rook.

That of course means the Turks have four players on the top two boards for round 3 - and the Turkish top seed is lurking on board 3, although she was frustrated and held to a draw for a second time today, this time against Nemhain Doolin. The key moment was here -





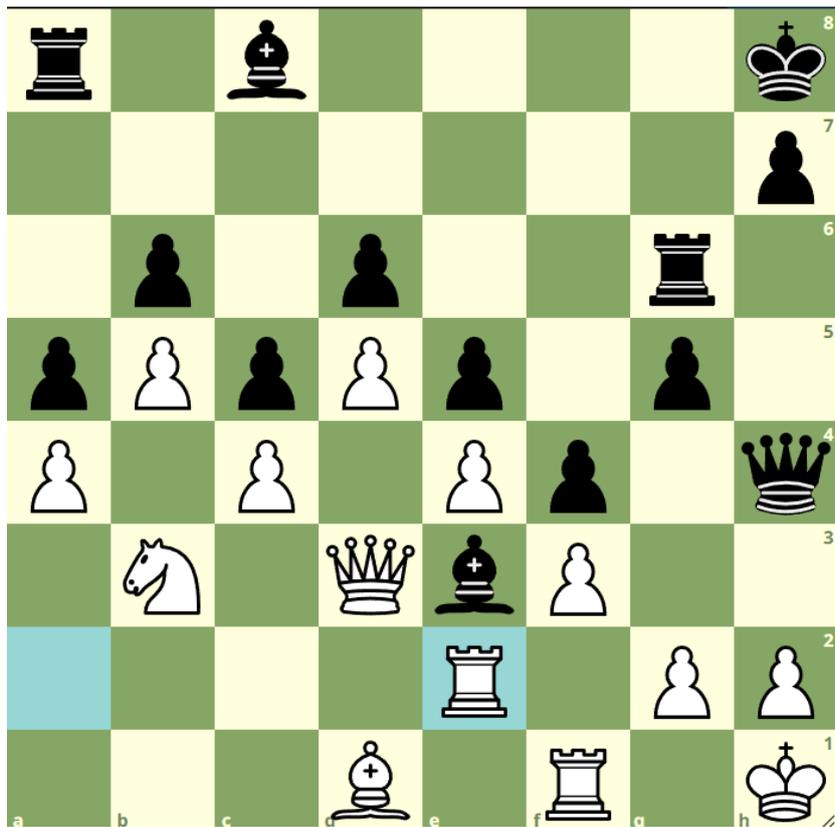
Black has just played Na5 with the intention of taking the pinned bishop. However white has a way out with 1.d6! This move turns the tables and in fact leads to white gaining a piece instead of black. 1...Qxc4 2.Qxa5 Red8 3. E4! Bxe4 4.Nd2 and the black queen is overloaded with the defence of the rook and the bishop. 4...b6 can be met by 5.Qe5 and the problem persists.

G15

The girls under 15 had no one on 2/2 which is rather unexpected for this type of tournament. In fact only one person is on 1.5/2 meaning that the tournament is wide open and all to play for. The current leader is Lilian Eshkol from Israel, she played the french defence and managed to get a favourable position after exchanged the light-squared bishop for a knight on g6, allowing Eschol to recapture with the h-pawn unlocking the rook towards the white king on h1. From there the Blacks pieces became substantially more active than whites. After maintaining the advantage on both sides of the board she was able to take a victory.

O15

The open under 15's by comparison is a lot tighter at the top with 6 players on a score of 2/2. Oliver Barnes ended in a stylish checkmate with the following position which arose from a King's Indian Defence:



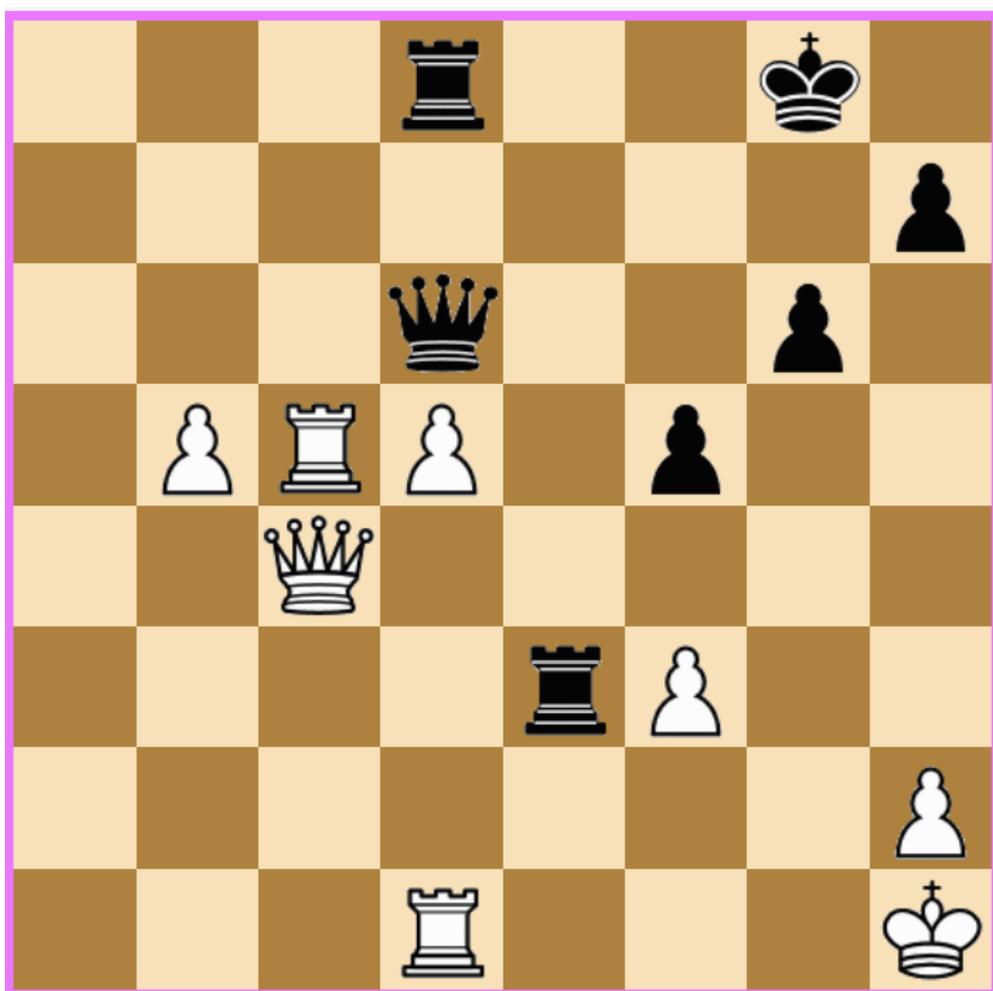
Black to play, mate in 2.

Other notable games were from Lukian Hoshpit who lost an unfortunate game in the Caro Kann in which black built up significant pressure against the white king, as well as

G17

The Girls under 17 event is an all play all, 10 player tournament, with only one local player participating, that's Lara Putar.

In the top game today, the two Turkish girls faced each other, Ecrin Tuama Engel with white, and Hatice Asli Matsu with black. The following position occurred after White's 43rd move.



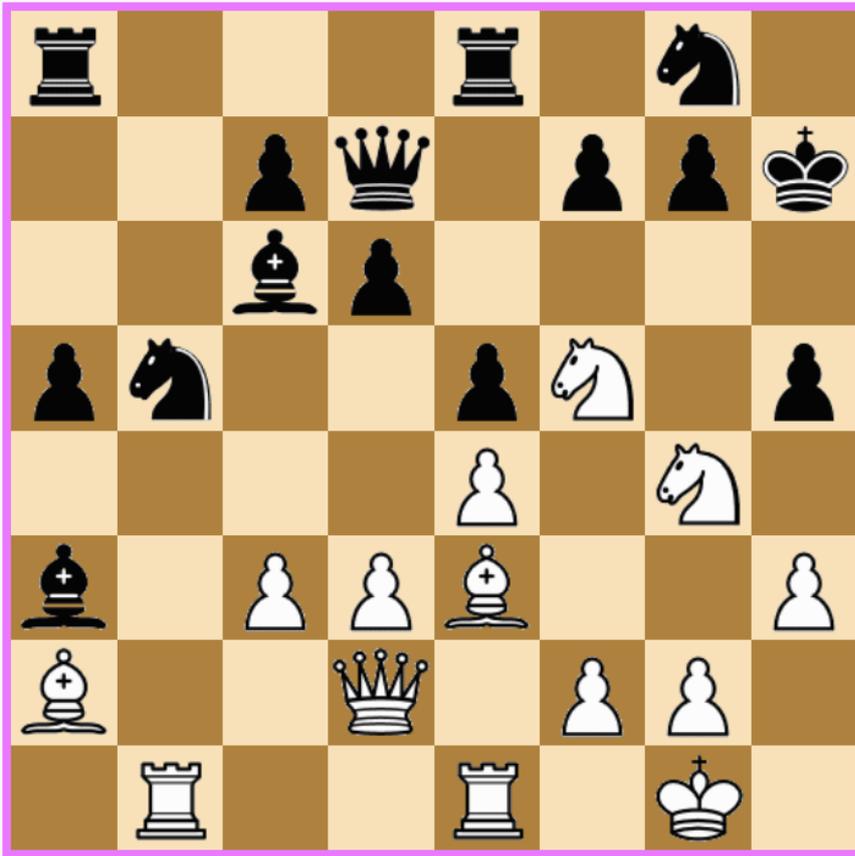
In her rush to restore material equality, Black played 43.....Rxf3? And it's met by 44.Rc6! Qe5 and the 45. D6+ and the pawn is just too strong for Black to deal with. Instead of 43....Rxf3, Rde8 would have been better.

The standings after round 2 can be seen [here](#).

O17

The Open Under 17 is the strongest event of the 2024 ESCC and 5 of the players are over 2000, two of them are IMs (both from Turkey) You can see the draw and results for this round [here](#).

On top board, Staroseiak 1983 from Poland had white against our top seed, IM Adar Turhan from Turkey and after 23 moves, I'd certainly prefer White's position.



Here White played the unfortunate 24.c4 but Adar found the correct reply, 24.....Nc3!
 Szyman followed up with the now flawed plan of 25.Nxg7 but had he played that as this 24th move, from the diagrammed position, he's probably better, i.e. 24.Nxg7! hxg4 (or Kxg7, 25. Bh6+ Kh8 26. Qg5) 25.Nxe8 Rxe8 26.hxg4. However, after the game, 25.Nxg7 Black has Nxb1 and White must lose significant material. So close and yet so far.



IM Adar Tarhan from Turkey, pictured in round 3.

Ireland's Ben Sheahan is doing well, reaching 2/2 and the standing after round 2 can be seen [here](#).
