

CHESS by Alan Dommett

DIAGRAM 1

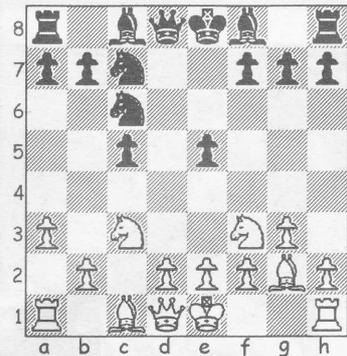
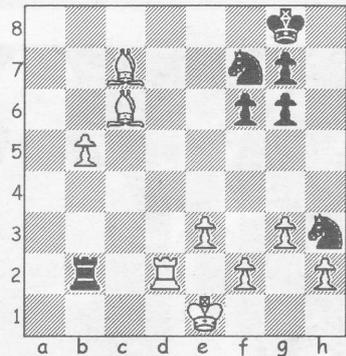


DIAGRAM 2



A REVIEW of the final tables in Divisions 3, 4 and 5 of the Bournemouth League only adds to the growing belief that the new four-board team format provides close finishes throughout all levels of play.

In Division 3 the runaway leaders, Wimborne F and NM Chessnuts A, were eventually separated by only a single point, with the New Milton team missing out to a Wimborne side set to join two others from the same club in the higher division next season.

In Divisions 4 and 5 the inclusion of the new teams, Ringwood B and C in allocated positions, proved to be justified as both finished top of their respective tables, ahead of Southbourne D and NM Chessnuts B, with New Milton suffering a similar fate to their A team by finishing a point away from the title, while having a superior games difference to the ultimate title winners.

The following game is taken from the 4NCL Division 3 match between Wessex 2 and FCA Solutions and a fine win for Weymouth's top board Allan Pleasants demonstrates the longer-range power of bishops, compared to the shorter-range limitations of knights.

Pleasants, A – Matthews, A
4NCL Hinckley Island, 2010
Symmetrical English (A34)

1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.g3 d5 4.Bg2 Nc6 5.cxd5 Nxd5 6.Nc3 Nc7 7.a3 White prioritises expansion on the queenside rather than continuing with either 7.0-0 or 7.d3, the main line alternatives. 7...e5 (Diag 1) 8.Rb1 In Berg-Bjerke (Hamar Open, 1983) White dispensed with the preparation and played 8.b4 immediately, relying on a sharp line that, after 8...cxb4

9.axb4 Bxb4 10.Nxe5 Qf6 11.Nxc6 Bc5 12.0-0 bxc6 13.Qa4 Qe7 14.Bxc6+ 15.Ne4 Bd4 16.Bxd7+ Qxd7 17.Nd6+!, won a piece and the game. 8...Be7 9.b4 cxb4 10.axb4 f6 11.b5 Nb8 12.0-0 Nd7 13.Qc2 0-0 14.d4! White emerges from the opening with more space and freedom to contest the centre. 14...exd4 15.Nxd4 Nc5 16.Rd1 Qe8 17.Ne4 N5e6 Black offers an alternative exchange of knights to relieve the mounting pressure, but his opponent has yet another swap of minor pieces in mind. 18.Nf5!? Kh8 19.Ned6 Bxd6 20.Nxd6 Qg6? Removal of the queens only aids White's cause, as the following passage of play and further liquidation reveals. 21.Qxg6 hxg6 22.Be3 Nd8 23.Nxc8 White not only wins a pawn, but also leaves Black's two defensive knights struggling to compete with a powerful bishop pair. 23...Rxc8 24.Bxa7 Nce6 25.Bb6 Rc2 26.Kf1 Kh7 The irrelevance of this move shows how quickly Black has run out of viable options... 27.Rd7 Re8 28.e3 Kg8 29.Rbd1 Nf7 ...and eventually there is nothing for it but to let a second pawn go. 30.Rxb7 Rb2 31.Bc6 Rc8 32.Ke1 Neg5 At last one of the knights advances to the fourth rank, but neither of them have the scope to influence play and White soon finds a way to bring about a swift conclusion. 33.Rc7 Rxc7 34.Bxc7 Nh3 35.Rd2 (Diag 2) and it was here that Black resigned, as both White's bishops dominate the opposing knights and a clear run has been created for the passed b-pawn.

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