

The Pittsburgh Chess Club's
TUESDAY NIGHT BULLETIN
Vol. I, No. 1: Richard Abrams Memorial, 2008, Round 1
(edited by Federico Garcia)

Overview

29 players (and Mike Holsinger, always there to play for the house and avoid unrequested byes) signed up for the twentyfirst edition of the Richard Abrams Memorial Tournament, played over six Summer Tuesdays (May 20th through June 24th).

The demographics of this tournament is refreshing. There are many die-hards of several years, but also many names who only now (or recently) have started to become Tuesday night regulars: Spence, Medrano, Weber, Gilby, Reilly, Milliern, Turner, Laboon, Kent, Taylor, Kobily. Welcome, or welcome back, as the case may be!

There were 14 games in the first round of the Richard Abrams Memorial on May 20, 2008 (Daniel Kirk and Mr. Holsinger with byes for the first round). The lower-rated part of the wallchart had a fantastic representation: 4 upsets—almost a 30% of the games—were registered in the first round.

To appreciate how tall this figure is, it is enough to realize that the average rating of the higher seeds was 1798. The lower seeds averaged 1028. That's more than 732 points in difference—the magic number that in Professor Elo's rating system says the higher player should win a 100% of the time!

We'll be reporting these upsets in detail in our next issue.

The openings

Eight of the White players chose 1 e4 to start the game; two preferred a Queen's pawn opening (either direct or by transposition); only one went for an English (starting immediately with 1 c4); the remaining three games saw White adopt a King's Bishop Fianchetto, with an early g3.

Opening break-up

1 e4: 8 games

- ⊣ Double King's Pawn: 4 games
 - ⊣ Scotch
 - ⊣ Gambit: 1 game (0-1)
 - ⊣ Game: 1 game (1-0)
 - ⊣ Petroff (by tr.): 1 game (0-1)
 - ⊣ 2 d3: 1 game (0-1)
- ⊣ Sicilian: 3 games
 - ⊣ Closed: 1 game (1-0)
 - ⊣ Grand Prix: 1 game (1-0)
 - ⊣ Open: 1 game (0-1)

- ⊣ Caro-Kann: 1 game
 - ⊣ Advance: 1 game (0-1)
- ⊣ Scandinavian: 1 game (tr. into a Petroff)

1 d4: 2 games

- ⊣ Queen's Gambit Declined: 1 game (1-0)
- ⊣ Double Queen's Pawn: 1 game (1-0)

1 c4: 1 game (1-0)

King's Bishop Fianchetto: 3 games

- ⊣ Black plays ... e5: 1 game (1-0)
- ⊣ Black plays ... d5: 2 games (1-1)

Opening statistics

Class	<i>n</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>H</i> : <i>L</i>
DKP	3	33% (+1-2)	2:1
KP defenses	5	40% (+2-3)	2:3
DQP	2	100%	2:0
KBF/English	4	50% (+2-2)	1:3

DKP Double King's Pawn

KP defenses Defenses to 1 e4

DQP Double Queen's Pawn

KBF King's Bishop Fianchetto

n number of games

P performance for White

H : *L* rating ratio: number of games where White was higher rated to number of games where Black was.

In these statistics, we've grouped the English openings in the same class as the early g3 openings, all under 'KBF.' These are openings where White chooses a safe opening setup, almost playing his pieces to their predesigned squares without much concern for what Black does, and hoping to postpone the fight to the middle-game.

The upsets were scored:

- by a Sicilian;
- by one of the KBF openings;
- against a Sicilian (White choosing the Closed Sicilian);
- and against a Scotch Gambit.

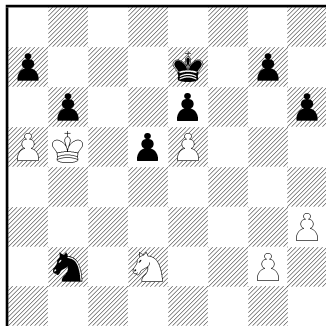
Now for some real chess

These are three positions that I came across during the time I was at the club in round 1. I'm sure there were other interesting positions during the round (I wonder particularly about the game Meigs-Kobily, that looked crazy for a while—as if that was surprising in a game of Don's!). Hopefully players will feel

inclined to share their interesting moments with the rest of us in this bulletin.

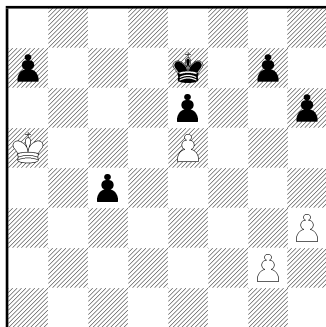
In our first position, White just played 1 a5!? Black is obviously ahead with one more pawn, and the endgame will be (and was) eventually won by him. But beyond knowing that, how would you handle this position?

Sims–Szurek



1...?

1... bxa5! 2. ♖xa5 ♘c4+! 3. ♘xc4 dxc4, and we have the pawn ending in the diagram.



Analysis after 3... dxc4

Black has in effect sacrificed a pawn to get here, but it is a won endgame due to the outside pawn—the White king is torn between preventing the Black king from penetrating, and keeping the a-pawn from promoting. The variation is forced, too, because after 1... bxa5 there is the threat of 2... a4, so White has no time to do anything useful.

When Black tries something different from the given line, things are not so easy. Oh, that white knight can still give a lot of trouble, with the d4 square and the weakness of e6. Black's winning, of course, but there is no forced win in sight. For example: 1... ♘c4?! 2. ♘f3!

Now, after the obvious capture 2... ♘xa5?! the Black pieces are really uncoordinated. The Black king will find no easy way to penetrate: f6 is perennially covered by the check on d4, and b5 will be prevented in time by b4. White should play 3. ♘h4!, and now:

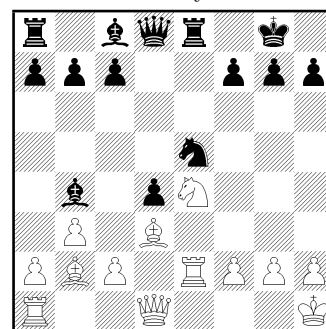
- 3... ♘c4 4. ♘f3 ♖d7 5. ♖b4 a6 (5... ♖c6?! 6. ♘d4+) 6. ♖a4 ♖c7 and Black has yet to make progress. Or

- 3... g5 4. ♘f3 ♖d7 ♗c6 5. ♘d4 h5? ♗g4 6. g4 hxg4 7. hxg4 ♘f3=.

Black wins more easily with 2... bxa5! He still has to find the way, but at least the white knight doesn't enjoy as much liberty. However, the sole fact that such an odd-looking move is required to make progress, in my view, tips the balance toward the simple, forced, and winning pawn ending offered above.

In principle, chess endgames are driven by one overpowering force: the arrival at simple, theoretically winning positions. Some of these positions involve pieces—but the majority of them are simple pawn endings. That is the beacon that should guide your endgame play (I'd say). With the knights on the board, and such key points as d4 and e6 being weak, the position in the game Sims–Szurek is winning, but not won. Removing that White knight—not promoting a pawn, or winning another, or mating the king—is what this endgame is all about!

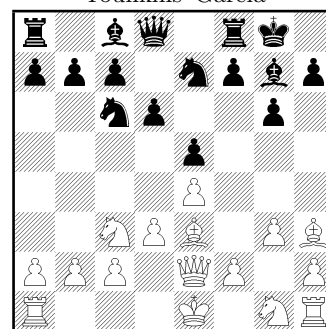
Bell–Taylor



1...?–+

Here we witness a nice combination by Taylor, made possible by the odd position of the White rook on e2: 1... ♖g4 2. f3 ♘xf3! 3. ♖f1 ♘h2!–+

Younkins–Garcia



1...?

I was surprised by the aggressive position of the ♗h3. Luckily it turned out in my favor after 1... ♘d4! 2. ♗xd4 (2. ♖d1 f5=) 2... exd4 3. ♘b5? (3. ♘b1=) 3... ♗xh3 4. ♘xh3 ♖d7 (× ♘b5, ♘h3)–+