

COMMERCIAL CHESS LEAGUE OF NEW YORK

The COVID Years:

Three Seasons of
Online Play, 2020-23



Table of Contents

CCLNY Teams.....Page 3

Season Results.....Page 4-11

Records and Statistics.....Page 12-17

Game Highlights.....Page 18-54

Contact.....Page 55

CCLNY Teams

The **Brooklyn Pawn Stars** team was created in 2018 as a merger of the Brooklyn Tea Lounge who entered the League in 2009-10 and New York Chess & Games who entered the League with a Brooklyn playing site in 2013-14 where they won the B Division. The Pawn Stars established themselves as the dominant team during the CCLNY Internet era.

Consolidated Edison Company of New York (Con Edison) first entered the League in 1937 and has been playing in the CCLNY without interruption since 1964, winning four CCLNY Championships and retiring the rotating trophy once (1940). Con Edison won the B Division in 2003-04. Since 2021-22 Con Edison has been playing as **Mating.Net**.

Ladies Knight, the first all-women's team in the League, entered in 2017-18 and quickly established themselves, finishing in the top three in their divisions in each of their first three seasons. In the first season of CCLNY Internet play, 2020-21, the combined Ladies Knight/Chess Connections team took second place, behind only Brooklyn Pawn Stars.

Swiss Re entered the League in 1984-85 and played a couple of seasons and then reentered for the 2010-11 season where they won second place in the C Division. Swiss Re won the company team title in the B Division in 2011-12, the B Division outright in 2016-17 and the CCLNY Internet team tournament in 2022-23, ahead of Pawn Stars.

Chess Connections started out as a private Facebook group that connects players globally on and off the board, with new members having to know someone in the group to be approved. They entered the League in 2010-11, initially in the B Division, and took second place in the A Division four times throughout the 2010s.

Ladies Knight/Chess Connections was a temporary amalgamation of the Ladies Knight and Chess Connections teams in the 2020-21 season to ensure a sufficiently large player pool, taking second place behind champions Brooklyn Pawn Stars. In 2021-22 and 2022-23 Ladies Knight and Chess Connections played as separate teams again.

Metropolitan Life Insurance Company (MetLife) entered the League in 1947 and has played in the CCLNY ever since. MetLife has won the CCLNY's Championship 11 times and retired three rotating trophies (1954, 1972 and 1985). MetLife won the B Division in 2002-03 and the company team title in the A division in 2011-12.

Terminators entered the League in 2019-20 and led the B Division with two rounds left to go when play was stopped because of the pandemic. They participated in the CCLNY Internet team tournaments in 2020-21 and 2021-22, taking fourth and third place respectively.

2020-21 Season

Final Standings – Cross Table

Rank	Team	1	2	3	4	5	6	Match Points	Game Points
1	Brooklyn Pawn Stars		3.5-0.5 2.5-1.5	3.5-0.5 3.5-0.5	3.5-0.5 2.5-1.5	1-3 4-0	3.5-0.5 3-1	9.0	30.5
2	Ladies Knight/Chess Connections	0.5-3.5 1.5-2.5		1.5-2.5 3-1	3-1 2.5-1.5	3-1 2.5-1.5	3.5-0.5 2-2	6.5	23.0
3	MetLife	0.5-3.5 0.5-3.5	2.5-1.5 1-3		2.5-1.5 3-1	3-1 3-1	2-2 2-2	6.0	20.0
4	Terminators	0.5-3.5 1.5-2.5	1-3 1.5-2.5	1.5-2.5 1-3		1-3 3.5-0.5	4-0 3-1	3.0	18.5
5	Swiss Re	3-1 0-4	1-3 1.5-2.5	1-3 1-3	3-1 0.5-3.5		1-3 3-1	3.0	15.0
6	Con Edison	0.5-3.5 1-3	0.5-3.5 2-2	2-2 2-2	0-4 1-3	3-1 1-3		2.5	13.0

Includes games won/lost by forfeit.

2020-21 Season

Individual Top Scorers

Rank	Name	Team	Wins	Losses	Draws	Points	Games	%	ACC ¹	ACL ²
1	Simon Rudowski	Brooklyn Pawn Stars	7	0	1	7.5	8	.938	89%	36
2	Boris Golubov	Brooklyn Pawn Stars	6	1	2	7.0	9	.778	88%	30
3	Masha Mozlin	Ladies Knight/Chess Connections	5	2	1	5.5	8	.688	87%	40
4	Ashok Gandhi	MetLife	4	2	3	5.5	9	.611	87%	35
5	Oliver Paredes	Terminators	5	0	0	5.0	5	1.000	92%	27
6	Andrey Krasnov	Brooklyn Pawn Stars	4	0	2	5.0	6	.833	87%	29
7	Nick Kleszczewski	MetLife	3	3	4	5.0	10	.500	84%	36
8	Boris Izrayelit	Brooklyn Pawn Stars	4	4	1	4.5	9	.500	83%	51
9	John Brendel	MetLife	4	5	1	4.5	10	.450	85%	49
10	Vladimir Gramagin	Brooklyn Pawn Stars	4	0	0	4.0	4	1.000	90%	31

Only includes games actually played. Excludes games won/lost by forfeit.

¹ Accuracy, as published by Lichess for each game. Weighted by moves per game.

² Average Centipawn Loss, as published by Lichess for each game. Weighted by moves per game.

2021-22 Season

Final Standings – Cross Table

Rank	Team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Match Points	Game Points
1	Brooklyn Pawn Stars		2-2 3-1	3-1 2-2	3.5-0.5 3.5-0.5	2-2 2-2	4-0 2-2	3-1 3.5-0.5	9.5	33.5
2	Chess Connections	2-2 1-3		2-2 1.5-2.5	1.5-2.5 2.5-1.5	4-0 1.5-2.5	3.5-0.5 2.5-1.5	3.5-0.5 2.5-1.5	7.0	28.0
3	Terminators	1-3 2-2	2-2 2.5-1.5		2.5-1.5 4-0	2.5-1.5 1.5-2.5	2-2 1.5-2.5	4-0 2-2	7.0	27.5
4	Ladies Knight	0.5-3.5 0.5-3.5	2.5-1.5 1.5-2.5	1.5-2.5 0-4		3-1 2.5-1.5	2.5-1.5 3.5-0.5	4-0 3-1	7.0	25.0
5	Swiss Re	2-2 2-2	0-4 2.5-1.5	1.5-2.5 2.5-1.5	1-3 1.5-2.5		3-1 3.5-0.5	2-2 3-1	6.5	24.5
6	MetLife	0-4 2-2	0.5-3.5 1.5-2.5	2-2 2.5-1.5	1.5-2.5 0.5-3.5	1-3 0.5-3.5		1.5-2.5 3-1	3.0	16.5
7	Mating.Net	1-3 0.5-3.5	0.5-3.5 1.5-2.5	0-4 2-2	0-4 1-3	2-2 1-3	2.5-1.5 1-3		2.0	13.0

Includes games won/lost by forfeit.

July 20, 2023

CCLNY Internet 2020-23

2021-22 Season

Individual Top Scorers

Rank	Name	Team	Wins	Losses	Draws	Points	Games	%	ACC ¹	ACL ²
1	Igor Yeliseyev	Brooklyn Pawn Stars	9	1	2	10.0	12	.833	88%	39
2	Bahar Hallaeva	Ladies Knight	7	2	2	8.0	11	.727	86%	37
3	Luis Rodriguez	Terminators	6	0	4	8.0	10	.800	87%	36
4	Lev Zilbermintz	Chess Connections	4	3	5	6.5	12	.542	83%	42
5	Oliver Paredes	Terminators	6	1	0	6.0	7	.857	91%	30
6	Ryan McHale	Swiss Re	5	2	2	6.0	9	.667	89%	30
7	Philip Lehpamer	MetLife	6	5	0	6.0	11	.545	86%	45
8	Yvette Fannell	Ladies Knight	5	3	1	5.5	9	.611	84%	50
9	Rooney Simonaitis	Chess Connections	5	3	1	5.5	9	.611	84%	53
10	Boris Izrayelit	Brooklyn Pawn Stars	5	2	0	5.0	7	.714	88%	36

Only includes games actually played. Excludes games won/lost by forfeit.

¹ Accuracy, as published by Lichess for each game. Weighted by moves per game.

² Average Centipawn Loss, as published by Lichess for each game. Weighted by moves per game.

2022-23 Season

Final Standings – Cross Table

Rank	Team	1	2	3	4	5	6	Match Points	Game Points
1	Swiss Re		1-3 2-2	2.5-1.5 2.5-1.5	3.5-0.5 3-1	2.5-1.5 2.5-1.5	3-1 3.5-0.5	8.5	26.0
2	Brooklyn Pawn Stars	3-1 2-2		1.5-2.5 4-0	3.5-0.5 2-2	3-1 4-0	2.5-1.5 3-1	8.0	28.5
3	Chess Connections	1.5-2.5 1.5-2.5	2.5-1.5 0-4		3.5-0.5 2-2	1.5-2.5 2.5-1.5	2.5-1.5	4.5	17.5
4	MetLife	0.5-3.5 1-3	0.5-3.5 2-2	0.5-3.5 2-2		1-3 3.5-0.5	2-2 2-2	3.0	15.0
5	Mating.Net	1.5-2.5 1.5-2.5	1-3 0-4	2.5-1.5 1.5-2.5	3-1 0.5-3.5		2-2 1.5-2.5	2.5	15.0
6	Ladies Knight	1-3 0.5-3.5	1.5-2.5 1-3	1.5-2.5	2-2 2-2	2-2 2.5-1.5		2.5	14.0

Includes games won/lost by forfeit.

2022-23 Season

Individual Top Scorers

Rank	Name	Team	Wins	Losses	Draws	Points	Games	%	ACC ¹	ACL ²
1	David Epstein	Swiss Re	6	1	1	6.5	8	.813	87%	34
2	Bahar Hallaeva	Ladies Knight	4	0	4	6.0	8	.750	87%	32
3	Igor Yeliseyev	Brooklyn Pawn Stars	5	3	1	5.5	9	.611	87%	34
4	Vladimir Gramagin	Brooklyn Pawn Stars	4	0	2	5.0	6	.833	83%	51
5	Ryan McHale	Swiss Re	3	0	4	5.0	7	.714	82%	47
6	Lev Zilbermintz	Chess Connections	4	2	2	5.0	8	.625	84%	35
7	Steve Mitlitzky	Chess Connections	2	1	6	5.0	9	.556	89%	25
8	Lorenzo Nahum	Mating.Net	3	2	4	5.0	9	.556	88%	24
9	Julio Vazquez	Swiss Re	4	0	1	4.5	5	.900	81%	57
10	Yvette Fannell	Ladies Knight	4	4	1	4.5	9	.500	84%	47

Only includes games actually played. Excludes games won/lost by forfeit.

¹ Accuracy, as published by Lichess for each game. Weighted by moves per game.

² Average Centipawn Loss, as published by Lichess for each game. Weighted by moves per game.

2020-23 Total

Team Statistics

Rank	Team	Match Wins	Match Losses	Match Draws	Match Points	Game Wins	Game Losses	Game Draws	Forfeit Wins	Forfeit Losses	Game Points
1	Brooklyn Pawn Stars	23	2	7	26.5	76	24	23	5	0	92.5
2	Chess Connections ¹	16	11	4	18.0	56	41	23	1	3	68.5
3	Swiss Re	16	12	4	18.0	51	48	27	1	1	65.5
4	MetLife	8	16	8	12.0	36	59	29	1	3	51.5
5	Terminators	8	10	4	10.0	35	33	18	2	0	46.0
6	Ladies Knight ²	8	10	3	9.5	29	34	16	2	3	39.0
7	Mating.Net ³	4	22	6	7.0	30	74	16	3	5	41.0

¹ Including Ladies Knight/Chess Connections (2020-21 Season)

² Excluding Ladies Knight/Chess Connections (2020-21 Season)

³ Including Con Edison (2020-21 season)

2020-23 Total

Individual Top Scorers

Rank	Name	Team	Wins	Losses	Draws	Points	Games	%	ACC ¹	ACL ²
1	Bahar Hallaeva	Ladies Knight	13	2	7	16.5	22	.750	88%	34
2	Igor Yelisseyev	Brooklyn Pawn Stars	14	4	3	15.5	21	.738	87%	37
3	Ryan McHale	Swiss Re	11	3	8	15.0	22	.682	86%	38
4	David Epstein	Swiss Re	13	8	4	15.0	25	.600	86%	37
5	Lev Zilbermintz	Chess Connections	10	9	10	15.0	29	.517	81%	40
6	Boris Golubov	Brooklyn Pawn Stars	11	5	5	13.5	21	.643	86%	34
7	Boris Izrayelit	Brooklyn Pawn Stars	12	6	3	13.5	21	.643	85%	41
8	Vladimir Gramagin	Brooklyn Pawn Stars	12	1	2	13.0	15	.867	85%	42
9	Steve Mitlitzky	Chess Connections	9	5	7	12.5	21	.595	88%	34
10	Lorenzo Nahum	Terminators / Mating.Net	9	11	7	12.5	27	.463	86%	35

Only includes games actually played. Excludes games won/lost by forfeit.

¹ Accuracy, as published by Lichess for each game. Weighted by moves per game.

² Average Centipawn Loss, as published by Lichess for each game. Weighted by moves per game.

Individual Records

Record Type	Record Achieved	Record Holder(s)	Details
Most Games Played	32	Richard Fireman (Mating.Net)	
Most Games Won	14	Igor Yeliseyev (Brooklyn Pawn Stars)	
Most Checkmates Delivered	4	Yvette Fannell (Ladies Knight) Asher Gordon (Swiss Re) Vladimir Gramagin (Brooklyn Pawn Stars)	
Most Games Drawn	10	Lev Zilbermintz (Chess Connections)	
Most Points Scored	16.5	Bahar Hallaeva (Ladies Knight)	16.5/22 (13 Wins, 2 Losses, 7 Draws)
Most Moves Played	1228	Lev Zilbermintz (Chess Connections)	
Highest Scoring Percentage ¹	.950	Simon Rudowski (Brooklyn Pawn Stars)	9.5/10 (9 Wins, 0 Losses, 1 Draw)
Longest Winning Streak	9 games	Oliver Paredes (Terminators)	12/16/2020 to 01/12/2022
Longest Unbeaten Streak	14 games	Igor Yeliseyev (Brooklyn Pawn Stars)	11/10/2021 to 12/14/2022

¹ Minimum of 10 games played.

Individual Records (cont'd)

Record Type	Record Achieved	Record Holder(s)	Details
Quickest Win	14 moves	Bahar Hallaeva (Ladies Knight) Gregory Rotsenmar (Terminators) David Epstein (Swiss Re)	vs Leo Solal (Terminators), 12/01/2021 vs George Capella (Mating.Net), 04/06/2022 vs Richard Fireman (Mating.Net), 11/02/2022
Longest Game	100 moves	David Epstein (Swiss Re) vs Ashok Gandhi (MetLife)	11/04/2020 – draw by threefold repetition
Biggest Upset Win	Rating Difference of -790	Philippe Krasnov (1198) vs Daniel Cooper (1988)	Brooklyn Pawn Stars vs Swiss Re, 02/08/2023
Biggest Surprise Draw	Rating Difference of -442	Johnny Bouyou (1394) vs Chris Potts (1836)	Chess Connections vs Swiss Re, 05/04/2022
Highest Accuracy – Overall ¹	92%	Oliver Paredes (Terminators)	
Lowest Average Centipawn Loss – Overall ¹	29	Oliver Paredes (Terminators)	
Highest Accuracy – Game	99%	Simon Rudowski (Brooklyn Pawn Stars) Tom Atkins (Mating.Net)	vs Vel Parvath (Swiss Re), 12/02/2020 vs Daniel Katz (Swiss Re), 01/25/2023
Lowest Average Centipawn Loss – Game	5	Tom Atkins (Mating.Net)	vs Daniel Katz (Swiss Re), 01/25/2023

¹ Minimum of 10 games played.

Team Records

Record Type	Record Achieved	Record Holder(s)	Details
Most Players Used ¹	15	Swiss Re	
Fewest Players Used ¹	7	Mating.Net Terminators	
Most Match Points Scored ¹	25.5	Brooklyn Pawn Stars	
Most Matches Won ¹	23	Brooklyn Pawn Stars	
Most Game Points Scored ¹	88.5	Brooklyn Pawn Stars	
Most Games Won ¹	73	Brooklyn Pawn Stars	
Longest Winning Streak ¹	6 matches	Brooklyn Pawn Stars	12/16/2020 to 03/03/2021
Longest Unbeaten Streak ¹	22 matches	Brooklyn Pawn Stars	12/16/2020 to 12/14/2022
Highest Average Rating ²	2188	Brooklyn Pawn Stars	vs MetLife, 11/10/2021

¹ Over all three seasons (2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23)

² In a match

Player Ratings

By Team

Team	Minimum Rating	Average Rating	Maximum Rating
Brooklyn Pawns Stars	1192	2042	2292
Chess Connections	1394	1923	2271
Ladies Knight	1524	1885	2291
Mating.Net	1039	1807	2134
MetLife	1501	1858	2226
Swiss Re	1331	1913	2231
Terminators	1597	1872	2235
Total	1039	1903	2292

By Board

Board	Minimum Rating	Average Rating	Maximum Rating
Board 1	1766	2120	2292
Board 2	1690	1978	2243
Board 3	1168	1863	2169
Board 4	1039	1641	2070
Total	1039	1903	2292

Taking into account all games played by rated players in the 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23 seasons. Unrated players disregarded in the calculation of average ratings.

Player Ratings (cont'd)

By Season

Season	Minimum Rating	Average Rating	Maximum Rating
2020-21	1346	1959	2271
2021-22	1039	1894	2292
2022-23	1167	1856	2269
Total	1039	1903	2292

Taking into account all games played by rated players in the 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23 seasons. Unrated players disregarded in the calculation of average ratings.

High-Level Opening Frequency

ECO ¹ Category	Description	Games Played	White Wins	Black Wins	Draws	%
A	Flank openings	101	38	38	25	.500
B	Semi-Open Games other than the French Defence	118	60	38	20	.593
C	Open Games and the French Defence	75	36	23	16	.587
D	Closed Games and Semi-Closed Games	79	33	32	14	.506
E	Indian Defences	16	8	7	1	.531
Total		389	175	138	76	.548

¹ Encyclopaedia of Chess Openings (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclopaedia_of_Chess_Openings)

Game Highlights

Rook swap

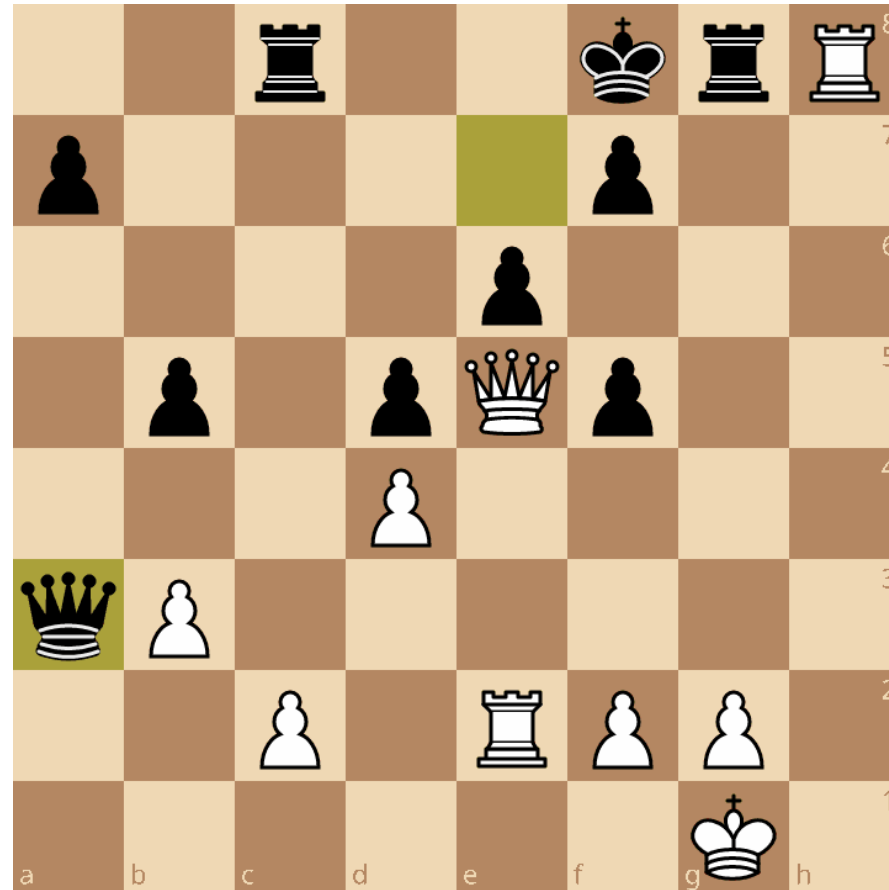
○ NM Ashok Gandhi (2083)	½
● FM Andrey Krasnov (2250)	½

CCLNY Internet 2020-21 | Round 1 | October 28, 2020
MetLife vs Brooklyn Pawn Stars

Andrey has just audaciously taken a pawn on a3. Ashok responded with 1.Re3, bringing the rook into play, and after 1...Ke7! 2.Rxg8 Rxg8 3.Qc7+ Kf6 4.Qe5+ Ke7 5.Qe7+ the game ended in a draw by perpetual check.

Had Ashok swapped rooks first with **1.Rxg8+ Kxg8**, to push the king in the corner and leave the remaining rook on c8 unprotected, **2.Re3!** one move later would have been decisive – the simple threat is 3.Rh3 and 4.Rh8# (or 4.Qh8#).

Black doesn't have time to flee with his king as 2...Kf8 3.Qh8+ drops a rook, and bringing the queen back with **2...Qf8** comes too late as White gives mate with **3.Rg3+ Kh7 4.Rh3+ Kg6 5.Qg3+ Kf6 6.Qh4+ Kg6 7.Rg3#**.



Marshall Gambit

○ WFM Yun Fan (2189)

1

● NM Ben Katz (2197)

0

CCLNY Internet 2020-21 | Round 2 | November 4, 2020
MetLife vs Swiss Re

Ben has played the Marshall Gambit – very apposite for a New Yorker – against Yun’s Ruy Lopez, and White’s last move, queen to d3, was a theoretical novelty, albeit not a very promising one, objectively speaking.

The thematic **1...f5!** would have given Black a strong initiative. If White doesn’t want to allow **2...f4** she has to play **2.f4** herself but then Black has the typical Marshall Gambit tactic **2...Bxf4!** with **3.gxf4 Rfe8** winning back the piece. According to the computer the best continuation for White is **4.Nd2** but after **4...Rxe3 5.Qf1 Qg4+ 6.Kh1 bxa4!** (to prevent White from opening the a-file with **7.axb5** and to free up the b5-square for the bishop) Black is clearly on top as he has the more active pieces and the safer king.



Pawn race (no. 1)

○ NM Nick Kleszczewski (2009)	½
● Ryan McHale (1972)	½

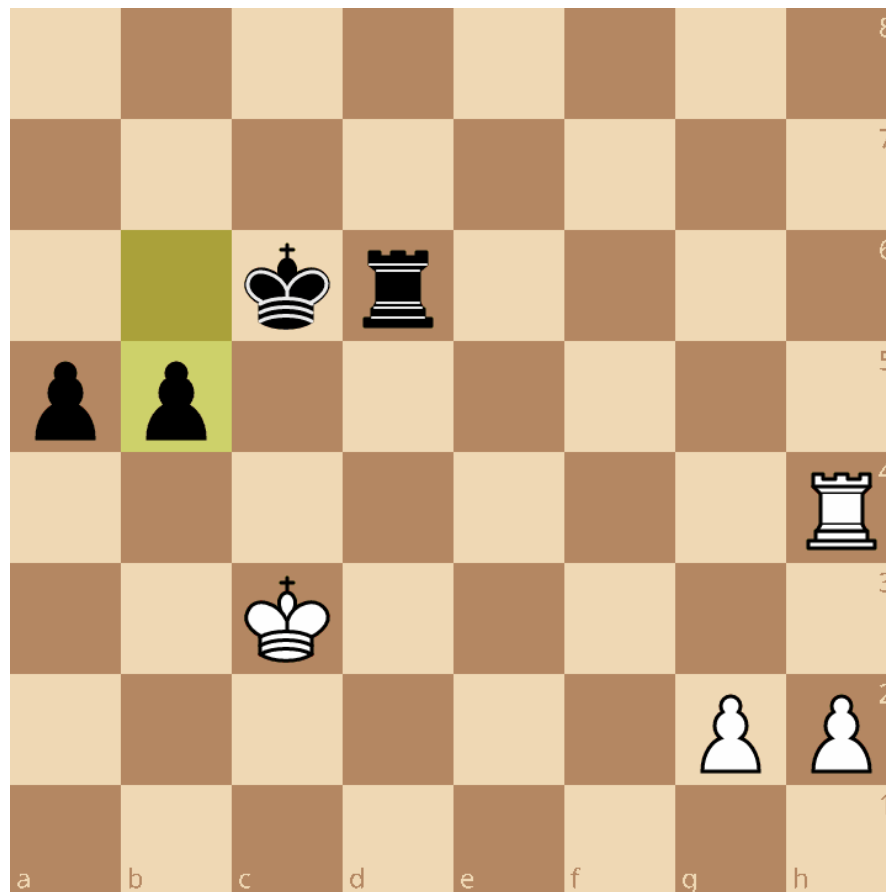
CCLNY Internet 2020-21 | Round 2 | November 4, 2020
MetLife vs Swiss Re

A peculiar position has arisen in the endgame – both sides have connected passed pawns on opposite sides of the board.

Assessing the fact that Black's king is far away from White's pawns more important than the fact that the pawns on a5 and b5 are more advanced than those on g2 and h2, Nick offered a rook swap with **1.Rd4**.

Ryan could have proved him wrong with **1...b4+! 2.Kd3 Rxd4+ 3.Kxd4 Kb5!** when Black gets a new queen first, but after 3...b3? 4.Kc3 a4 5.h4 Kd5 6.h5 Ke5 7.g4 Kf6 the game ended in a draw.

In the diagram, 1.Rf4! would have kept the game level.



Queen sac

○ David Epstein (1988)

1

● Leo Solal (2014)

0

CCLNY Internet 2020-21 | Round 3 | November 18, 2020
Swiss Re vs Terminators

Dave has just played the tempting 1.Nde4, putting pressure on d6-pawn and on the pinned knight on f6, but this was in fact a mistake as Leo could have freed himself with the queen sacrifice **1...Nxe4! 2.Bxd8 Nxc3**.

After **3.Qd2 Nxe2+ 4.Qxe2 Rxd8** or 3.Qa5 Ne2+ 4.Kh1 Nxd5 Black has three minor pieces for the queen while after 3.Qa5 Ne2+ 4.Kf2?! Bd3! 5.Qxc7 (or 5.Bxc7) e4! he only has two minor pieces but a very strong initiative.

In the game Leo swapped on f3 first, 1...gxf3 2.Bxf3, but then 2...Nxe4? didn't work anymore as Black can't swap minor pieces with check on e2, and after 3.Bxd8 Nxc3 4.Qa5! Dave had a queen against two minor pieces and converted his material advantage.



Backward move (no. 1)

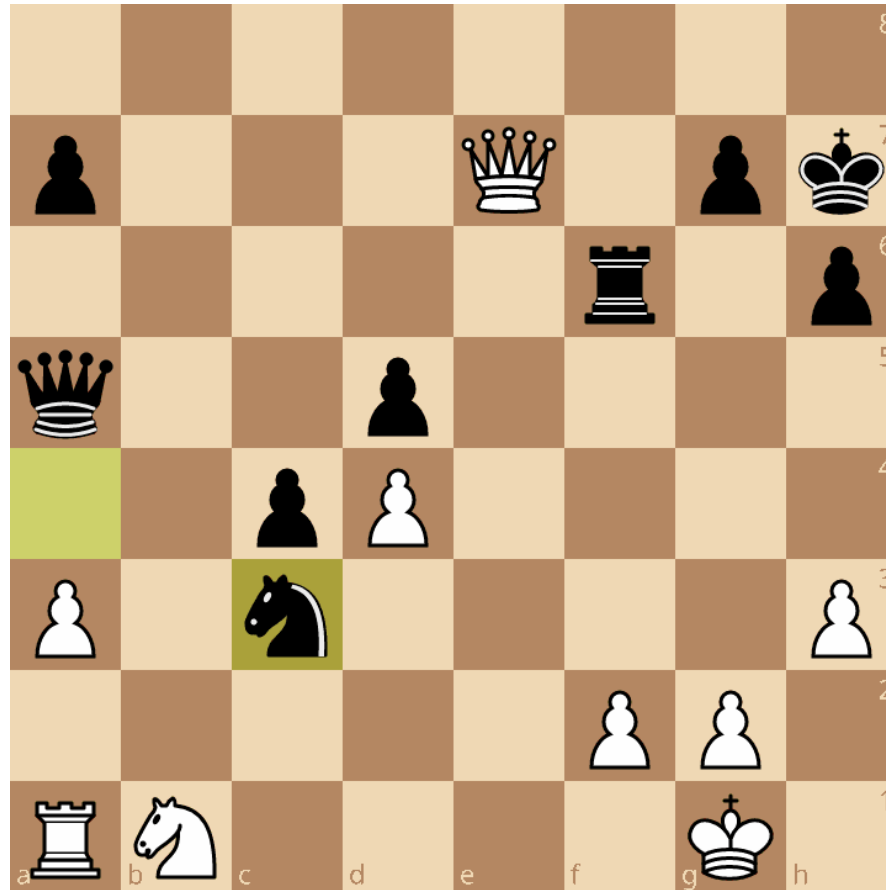
○ Ralph Frisch (1717) 0
● Rooney Simonaitis (1958) 1

CCLNY Internet 2020-21 | Round 3 | November 18, 2020
MetLife vs Ladies Knight/Chess Connections

Backward moves are notoriously hard to find.

In this position Ralph could have exploited the fact that Black's queen and knight are on the same diagonal and that Black's queen is undefended with the surprising **1.Qe1!**, pinning and winning the knight.

Rooney ended up with the full point when after 1.Nd2 Nb5 2.Nf3 Qc3 Ralph lost on time.



Piece improvement

○ Lorenzo Nahum (1624)

0

● Steve Mitlitzky (1677)

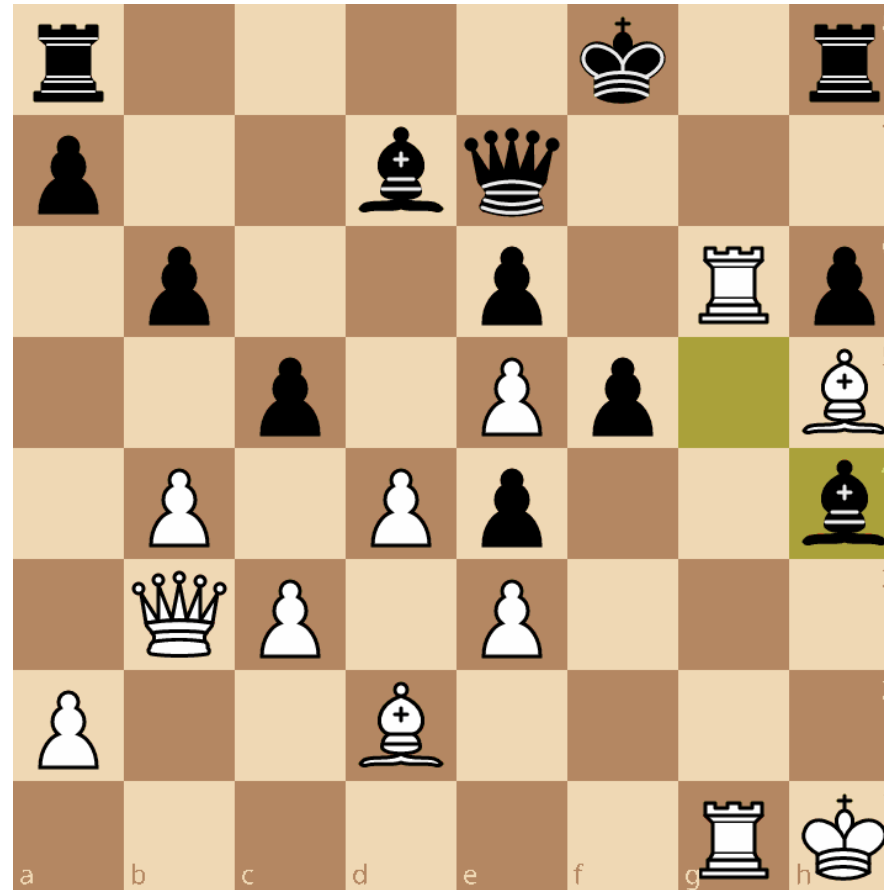
1

CCLNY Internet 2020-21 | Round 4 | December 2, 2020
Terminators vs Ladies Knight/Chess Connections

One maxim in chess is that one should try to improve the position of one's worst-placed piece, and here Lorenzo could have done this with **1.bxc5!** with the idea **1...bxc5 2.Bc1!** and **3.Ba3!** when the previously useless bishop suddenly becomes very strong.

After 1.bxc5! Black is objectively busted. He has no active plan and if he doesn't take back on c5 White can either take on b6 or advance his pawn to c6 to dislodge Black's bishop from the defense of the e6-pawn.

In the game Lorenzo played 1.Rg7?! but after 1...Qxg7 2.Rxg7 Kxg7 Steve's two rooks eventually proved to be stronger than a queen.



Backward move (no. 2)

○ Ryan McHale (1993) 1
● Richard Fireman (1971) 0

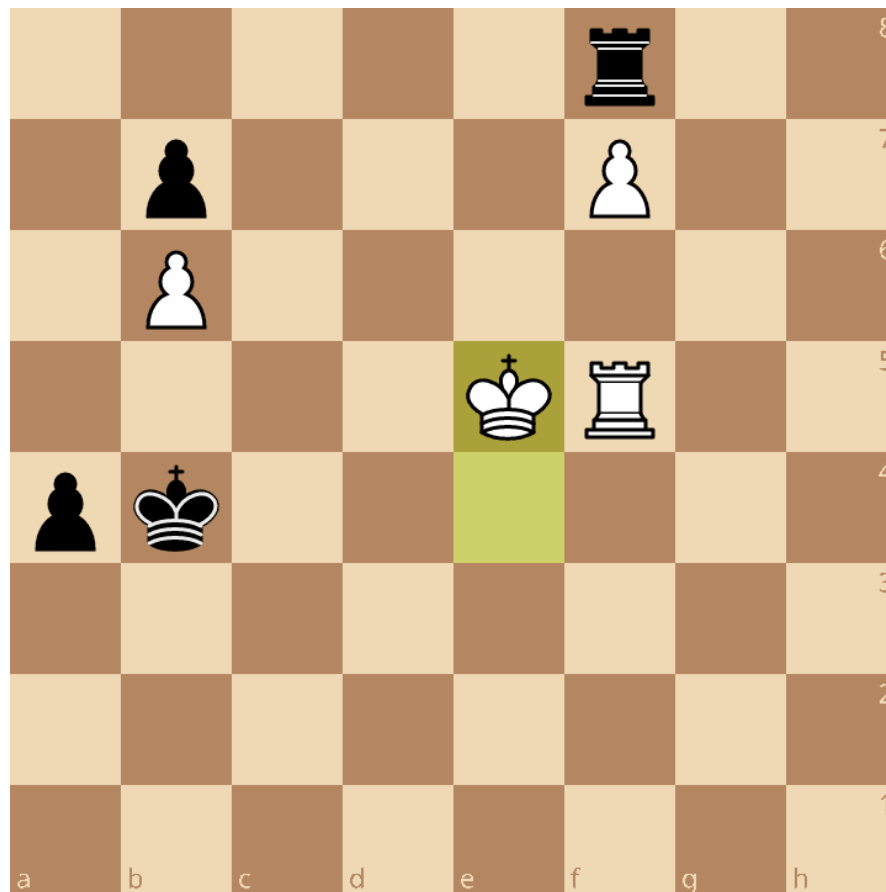
CCLNY Internet 2020-21 | Round 5 | December 16, 2020
Swiss Re vs Con Edison

Backward moves are notoriously hard to find.

In this position all three backward moves – 1...Kc5!, 1...Kb5! and 1...Ka5! – would have saved the draw for Black.

The point is that White's king will need to cross the sixth rank to support the f7-pawn, and once it does that Black's king stands ready to capture the b6-pawn which will give Black enough counterplay. One sample line goes **1...Kc5 2.Ke6 Kxb6 3.Ke7 Rxf7+ 4.Kxf7 a3 5.Rf3 a2 6.Ra3 Kc5 7.Rxa2 b5** with a draw.

Richard played the 'natural' 1...a3 but after 2.Ke6 Ryan won thanks to the b6-pawn still being on the board.



Trapped rook

○ David Diamond (1914)

1

● Chris Potts (1930)

0

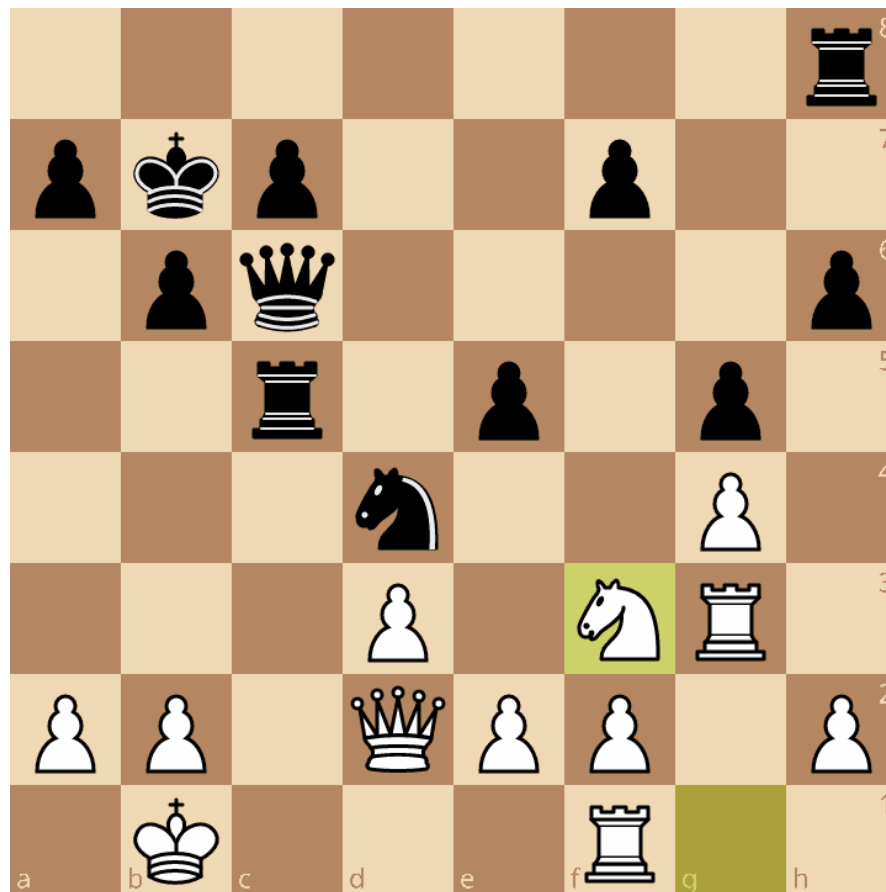
CCLNY Internet 2020-21 | Round 5 | December 16, 2020
Con Edison vs Swiss Re

In this position Black has a slight advantage – if he makes a quiet positional move such as 1...Qe6, 1...Rd8 or 1...Ne6.

Instead, Chris played the attractive-looking **1...Rc2** which unfortunately for him doesn't work tactically.

After **2.Nxd4! Rxd2 3.Nxc6 Kxc6 4.Re1** the 'active rook' on the second rank turned out to be a mirage as it will get trapped on the next move with 5.Kc1.

Full point to David.



Zugzwang

○ Aigboje Aregbeyen (1717)

½

● Luis Rodriguez (1826)

½

CCLNY Internet 2020-21 | Round 6 | January 6, 2021
Con Edison vs Terminators

White has an extra pawn but this doesn't seem relevant as it's not a passed pawn, and going in with the queen doesn't look promising as Black has lots of checks with his queen. The game ended in a draw a few moves later.

First impressions can be deceiving, though, and Aigboje could indeed have won the game by playing **1.g5!** The winning idea is for White to bring his queen, via f8, to h6 with check, because if this happens Black's pawns on g6 and e6 will fall with check.

The only way for Black to thwart this plan is to cover the h6-square with his queen by playing **1...hxg5 2.fxg5 Qh5** but then White can bring his **queen to e7** with a few checks and play **Kg3!** which puts Black in zugzwang.



Long diagonal

○ NM Ashok Gandhi (2121) 0
● CM Neil Fairclough (2104) 1

CCLNY Internet 2020-21 | Round 9 | February 17, 2021
MetLife vs Con Edison

If it is was his move White would be OK, but with Black to move Neil decisively opened the long diagonal with **1...Bxe5 2.dxe5 d4!**.

Ashok parried the mate threat on h1 with **3.f3** but then Neil's follow-up **3...Ng4!** was very strong – Black threatens 4...Qh2#, 4...Qe3+ and 4...Ne3, and the knight can't be taken in view of 4...Qh1#.

After **4.Bc4 Qe3+** Black won material and converted ten moves later.



Underpromotion

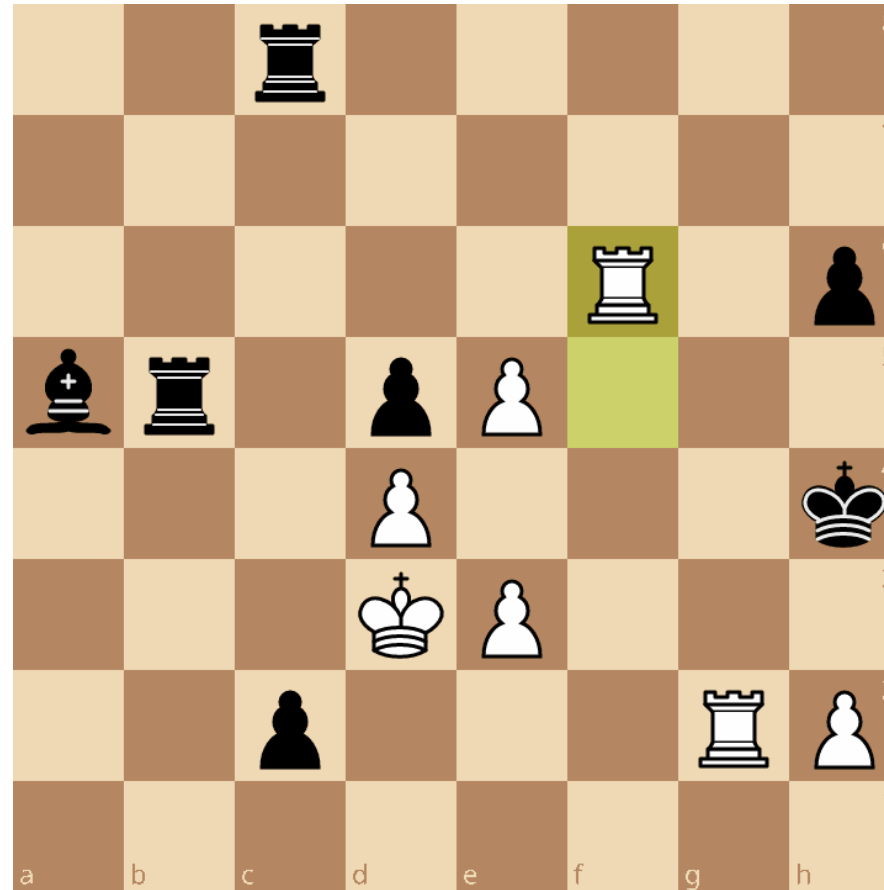
○ WFM Bahar Hallaeva (2271) 1
● LM Sergey Shchukin (2215) 0

CCLNY Internet 2020-21 | Round 10 | March 3, 2021
Ladies Knight/Chess Connections vs Brooklyn Pawn Stars

Both players are in extreme time trouble. There is a checkmate threat on h6 so 1...c1Q is too slow but by underpromoting with **1...c1N!**# Black can give mate first.

However, Sergey had *Promote to Queen automatically* set to "Always" in Lichess so ...c2-c1 would have resulted in him getting a queen and Bahar checkmating him with 2.Rxh6#. Down to 15 seconds, Sergey didn't have time to figure out how to switch off the auto-queen feature and went for the draw by repetition with 1...Kh5 2.Rf5+ Kh4 3.Rh6 Kh5 4.Rf5+.

What both players missed in the heat of the moment was that **1...Kh3!** also would have won prosaically – the g2-rook is hanging and **2.Rxc2** loses to **2...Rb3+**.



Good knight vs bad bishop

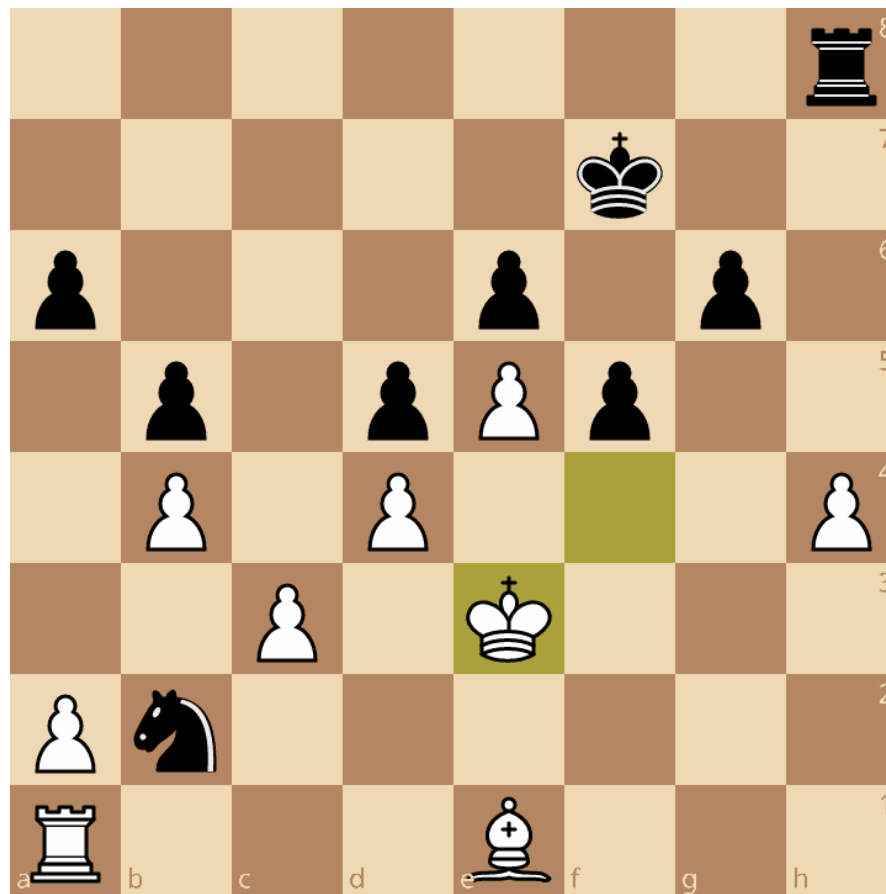
○ Lorenzo Nahum (1632) ½
● Adam San Marco (1501) ½

CCLNY Internet 2020-21 | Round 10 | March 3, 2021
Terminators vs MetLife

Lorenzo has just moved his king away from the f4-square where it was preventing ...g5, and Adam could and should have seized the opportunity to play **1...g5!**.

The h4-pawn can't be defended so White is forced to play **2.hxg5** but then Black can free his king with **2...Kg6** and **3...Kxg5** leading to a classic good-knight-vs-bad-bishop position which the engine, even though material is equal, evaluates at -5 so totally winning for Black.

Black's small army of rook, knight, pawn (on f5) and king is going to win material and/or force a trade of rooks and minor pieces into a pawn endgame that is won for Black.



Stalemate trick

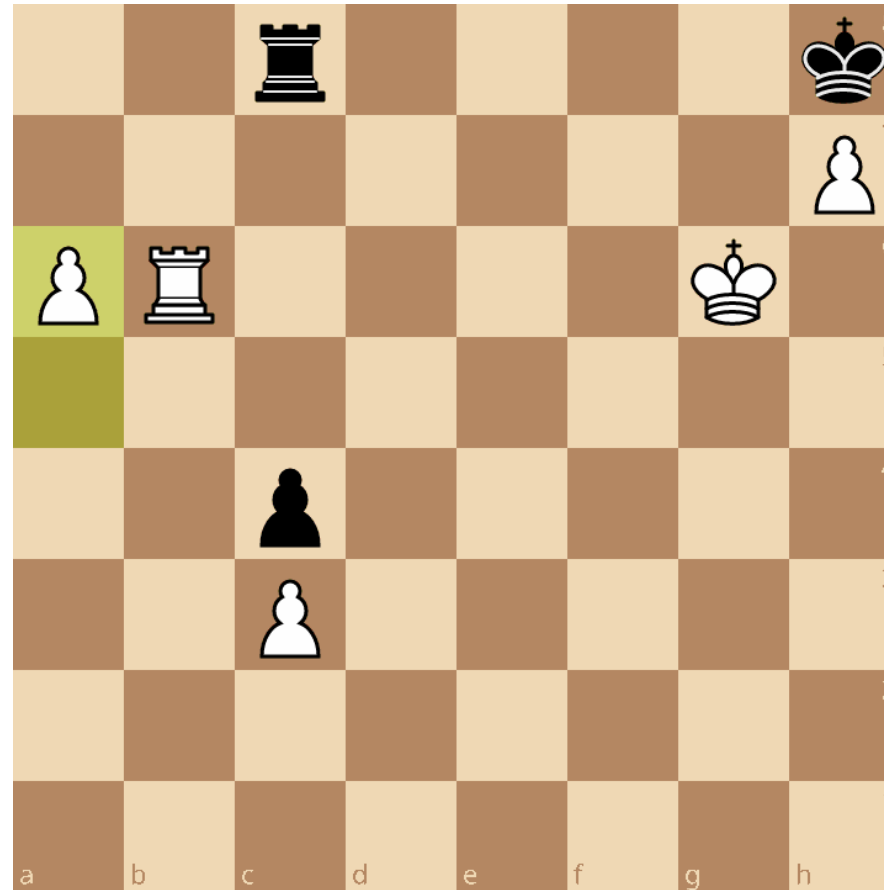
○ Adam Milat-Meyer (1763)	½
● Richard Fireman (1824)	½

CCLNY Internet 2021-22 | Round 7 | February 8, 2022
MetLife vs Mating.Net

Adam had been winning for some time but after the careless 1.a6? which leaves the b6-rook unprotected Richard got away with a draw: **1...Rc6+!**. White is forced to take the rook **2.Rxc6** and it's a stalemate.

In positions where the enemy king can't move, special care is needed to ensure there's no stalemate trick.

The most straightforward winning plan for White would have been to march with the king from the kingside to the queenside to support the passed a-pawn.



Mouse slip

○ Leo Solal (2005)

1

● WFM Bahar Hallaeva (2274)

0

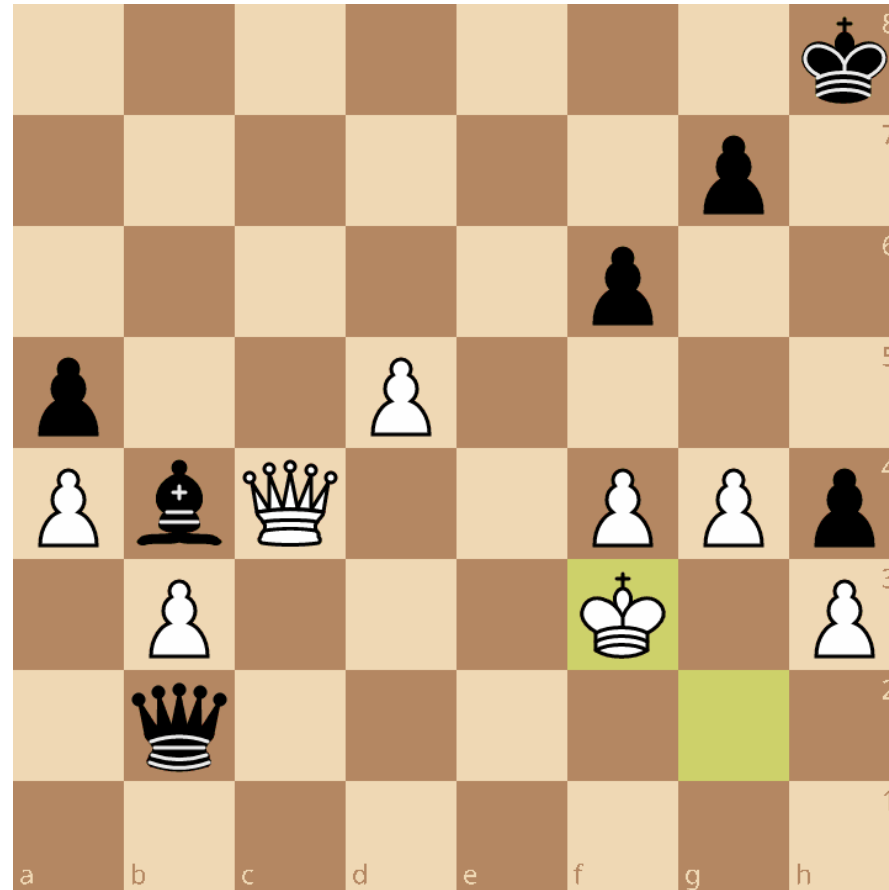
CCLNY Internet 2021-22 | Round 9 | March 9, 2022
Terminators vs Ladies Knight

Bahar was going to swap queens with 1...Qc3+ but the unfortunate mouse slip 1...Qxb3+?? 2.Qxb3 immediately ended the game in Leo's favor.

After **1...Qc3+ 2.Qxc3 Bxc3 3.d6** things would have gotten interesting.

Stopping the d-pawn with 3...Bb4 only leads to a draw after 4.d7 Be7 5.Ke4 Bd8 6.f5!, and 3...Bd4? is even worse as after 4.Ke4 Bb6 5.Kd5 only White has winning chances.

The right continuation for Black is **3...f5!** which after **4.gxf5 Kg8 5.d7 Bf6 6.b4! axb4 7.a5 b3 8.a6 b2 9.a7 b1Q 10.a8Q+ Kh7 11.d8Q Qf1+!** leads to a won queen ending.



Choice of two checks

- Ralph Frisch (1686) 0
- Daniel Cooper (1972) 1

CCLNY Internet 2021-22 | Round 10 | March 23, 2022
MetLife vs Swiss Re

White's position looks scary as Black threatens mate on g4, but there was a way to save the game.

Having to choose between two queen checks on the seventh rank, Ralph went for 1.Qd7+? but had to resign after 1...Kg6 2.Qe8+ Kh6 3.f3 Re2.

1.Qc7+! would have been the right defense as from c7 the queen covers the crucial squares on g3 and h2.

1...Kg6 2.f3! Rh4 3.Rd2 and White survives, for example **3...Qh1+ 4.Kf2 Qh2+ 5.Qxh2 Rxh2+ 6.Ke3 Rxd2 7.Kxd2** and the ensuing ending with rook against bishop and two pawns should be a draw with correct play.



Overload

○ Thea Cook (1879)

0

● Igor Yelisseyev (2113)

1

CCLNY Internet 2021-22 | Round 10 | March 23, 2022
Ladies Knight vs Brooklyn Pawn Stars

Material is equal but White is under pressure as her queen is tied to the defense of the f3-knight which is being attacked by a queen-and-bishop battery on the long diagonal.

Igor exploited this circumstance by playing **1...Bc5!** when it turned out that White's queen doesn't have any good squares to go to.

2.Qd3 runs into 2...e4 while 2.Qc3 is met by 2...Bxf2+! with the idea 3.Kxf2 Ne4+, and after 2.Qd2 or 2.Qg5 Black simply takes the knight with 2...Bxf3.

Thea resigned.



Lure of the hanging queen

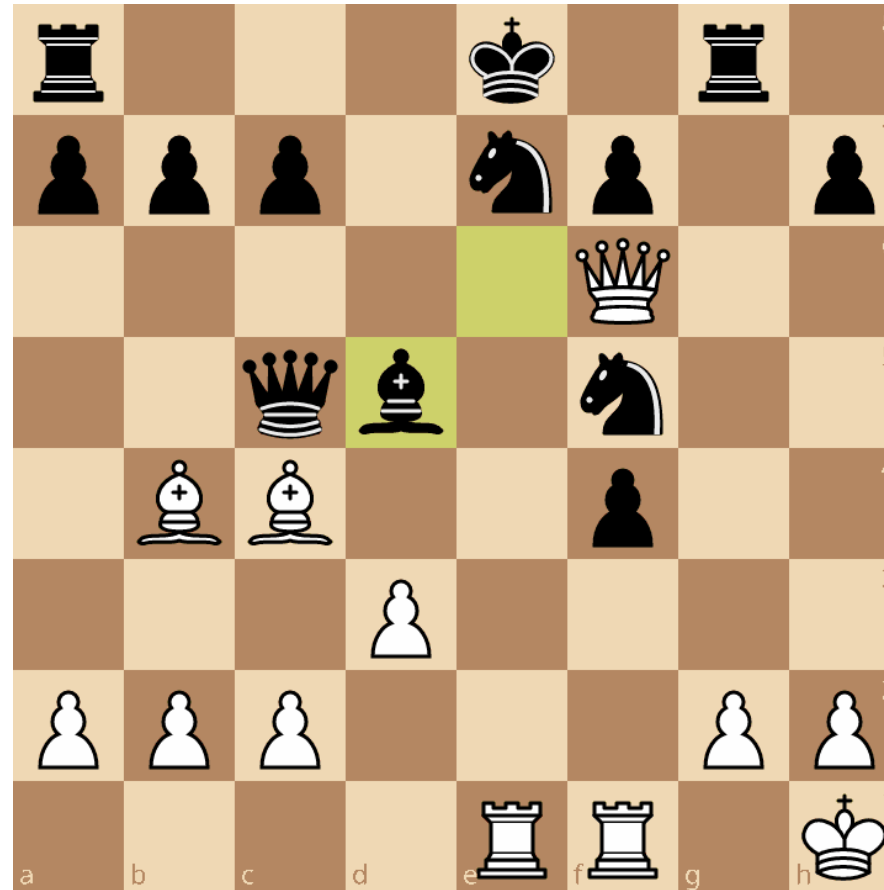
○ John Brendel (1841) 0
● WFM Bahar Hallaeva (2249) 1

CCLNY Internet 2021-22 | Round 11 | April 6, 2022
MetLife vs Ladies Knight

John's King's Gambit has worked out very nicely and Black is on the proverbial ropes. After Bahar's last move, taking a knight on d5, John only needed one more accurate move to finish the game off: **1.Bxd5!**.

Black has nothing better than **1...Qxb4** but then after **2.Bxf7+ Kf7 3.Qe6+ Kd8 4.Bxg8** the contest is over.

Unfortunately for John the lure of the hanging queen was too strong and after **1.Bxc5? Bxg2+ 2.Kg1 Be4+ 3.Kf2 Rg2#** he ended up getting checkmated.



Queen sortie

○ Lev Zilbermintz (2072)

0

● Boris Golubov (2201)

1

CCLNY Internet 2021-22 | Round 11 | April 6, 2022
Chess Connections vs Brooklyn Pawn Stars

An unusual position has appeared on the board in which both sides have a minor piece in enemy territory. Black is a pawn up, but it is White to move.

The queen sortie **1.Qe7!** would have been the winner.

To counter the threat of 2.Qxd7 Black needs to move the d7-knight or protect it, but none of the defences work – after 1...Nf6 or 1...Nf8 White has 2.Ne5! followed by 3.Qxf7+; other knight moves are met by 2.Qe8#; 1...Qc6 and 1...Qa4 leave the f1-knight hanging; and **1...Qb5** loses to **2.Qe8+! Nf8** (forced) **3.Qxb5**.

In the game Lev played 1.Qf2 and after 1...Rxd8 2.Rxf1 f5! Boris ended up winning.



Beware of the pin

○ Luis Rodriguez (1925)

1

● Boris Izrayelit (2010)

0

CCLNY Internet 2021-22 | Round 13 | May 4, 2022
Terminators vs Brooklyn Pawn Stars

White has established a pin on the a4-e8 diagonal which looks unpleasant for Black as he has no way of expelling the c6-bishop.

Not wanting to lose the a7-pawn Boris played **1...a5** but then **2.Ne5!** tightened White's grip on the position – Black can't castle or move his f6-knight as that would leave the d7-knight hanging.

After **2...Bd6 3.Bxd7+! Nxd7 4.Nc6** Luis won the exchange and eventually the game.

1...0-0 was called for – Black does lose a pawn but after 2.Qxa7 Bd6 the game is by no means over as White is behind in development and his queen is offside.



Queen in the crosshairs

○ Richard Fireman (1852) 0
● Adia Onyango (1927) 1

CCLNY Internet 2021-22 | Round 13 | May 4, 2022
Mating.Net vs Ladies Knight

Things are not looking good for White – he is a piece up against two pawns but the knights on d4 and f5 are unstable and Black threatens both ...Qxf5 and ...g6. Richard couldn't produce a saving idea and after 1.Rd1 Qxf5 Adia won easily.

A saving idea did exist, however, in the shape of **1.Qe3!** which simultaneously feels logical, as it protects the hanging knight, and counterintuitive, as it puts the queen in the crosshairs of Black's bishop and rook.

Surprisingly Black does not have any strong discovered attack or way of increasing the pressure on the pinned knight on d4. The computer gives **1...Nd6 2.Qc3! Ne4! 3.Qe3** with a draw by repetition as the best line.



Impenetrable fortress

○ Ryan McHale (2045)

1

● Lev Zilbermintz (2070)

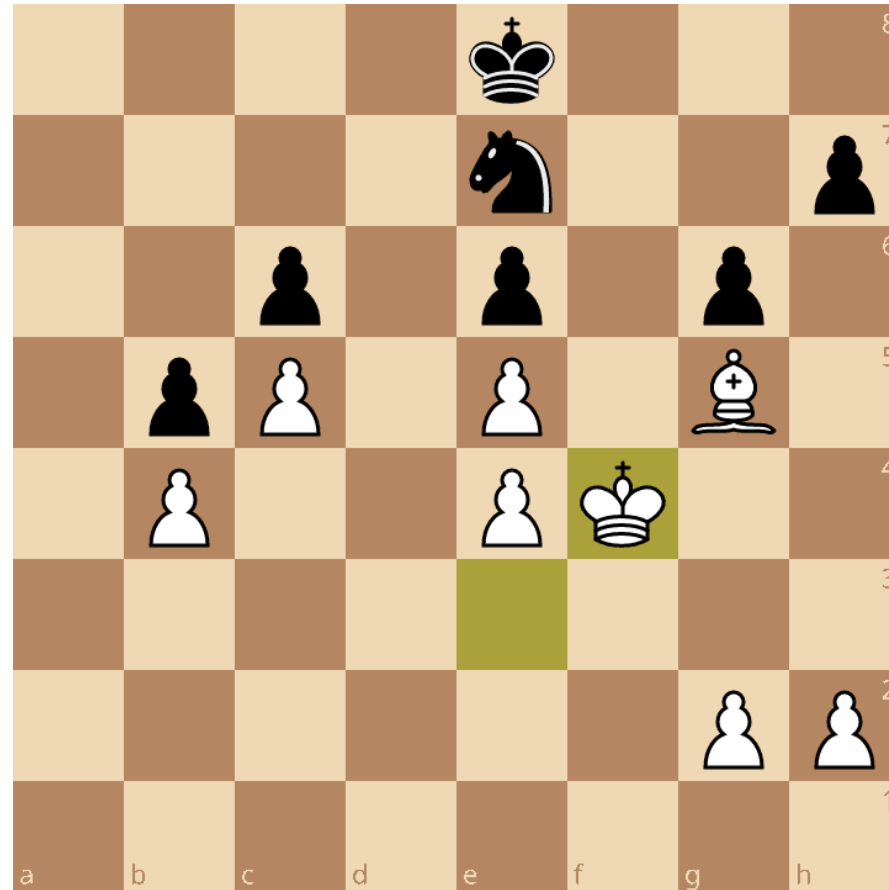
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CCLNY Internet 2021-22 | Round 13 | May 4, 2022
Swiss Re vs Chess Connections

Black is a pawn down and his knight is very passive and doesn't have any good squares to go to – but it's actually next to impossible for White to make progress as he has the 'wrong' bishop.

With **1...Ng8!** Lev could have built an impenetrable fortress – White's bishop has nothing to attack, and White's king is unable to get in as the knight on g8 is covering the crucial squares on f6 and h6.

In the game Lev played 1...Kf7? and Ryan happily swapped off the minor pieces with 2.Bxe7! as the ensuing pawn ending is won – White will bring his king to h6, force the exchange of the g- and h-pawns, and eventually pick up the e6-pawn.



Pawn race (no. 2)

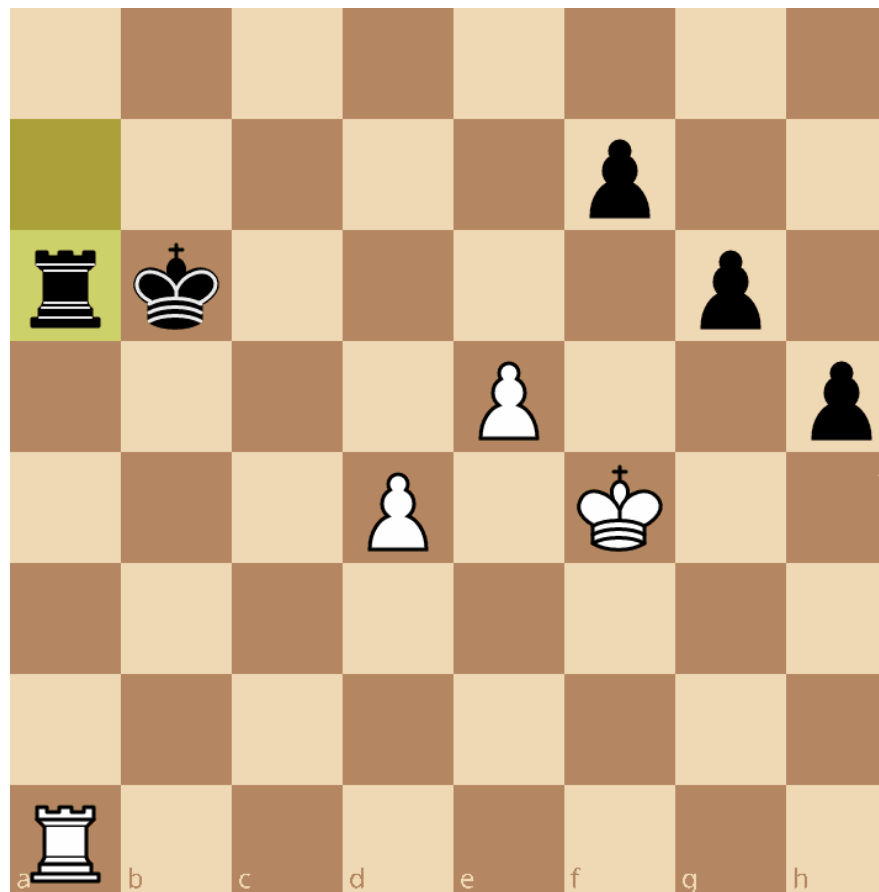
○ David Diamond (1853)	½
● Igor Yelisseyev (2070)	½

CCLNY Internet 2021-22 | Round 14 | May 18, 2022
Mating.Net vs Brooklyn Pawn Stars

Swapping pieces when behind on material is normally a bad idea – but there are exceptions.

In this position **1.Rxa6+!** would have given David good winning chances. Yes, White is a pawn down, but his pawns are further advanced than Black's which means that in a pawn race White will get a queen first.

After **1...Kxa6** play could continue **2.d5! Kb6 3.Kg5! Kc7 4.Kf6! h4 5.Ke7 h3 6.d6+ Kb7 7.d7 h2 8.d8Q h1Q 9.Qd7+**, and after a couple of checks White will win the f7-pawn and reach a pawn endgame in which his passed pawn on the e-file is further advanced than Black's on the h-file so that only two results are possible.



Intermediate move

○ Boris Izrayelit (1990)
● Richard Fireman (1839)

1
0

CCLNY Internet 2021-22 | Round 14 | May 18, 2022
Brooklyn Pawn Stars vs Mating.Net

Richard has played the adventurous Schliemann-Jaenisch Gambit (3...f5) against Boris's Ruy Lopez. Black has lost the right to castle and is a pawn down but it's his move and White's minor pieces on g5 and f7 are unstable.

The immediate 1...h6? that Richard played allowed Boris to play 2.dxe4! when the ensuing complications favored White.

Very strong for Black would have been the intermediate move **1...exd3!** intending 2...dxc2 or 2...Nxc2+. If White takes back **2.cxd3** then **2...h6!** wins a piece without any compensation for White as the d-file is now closed.



Backward move (no. 3)

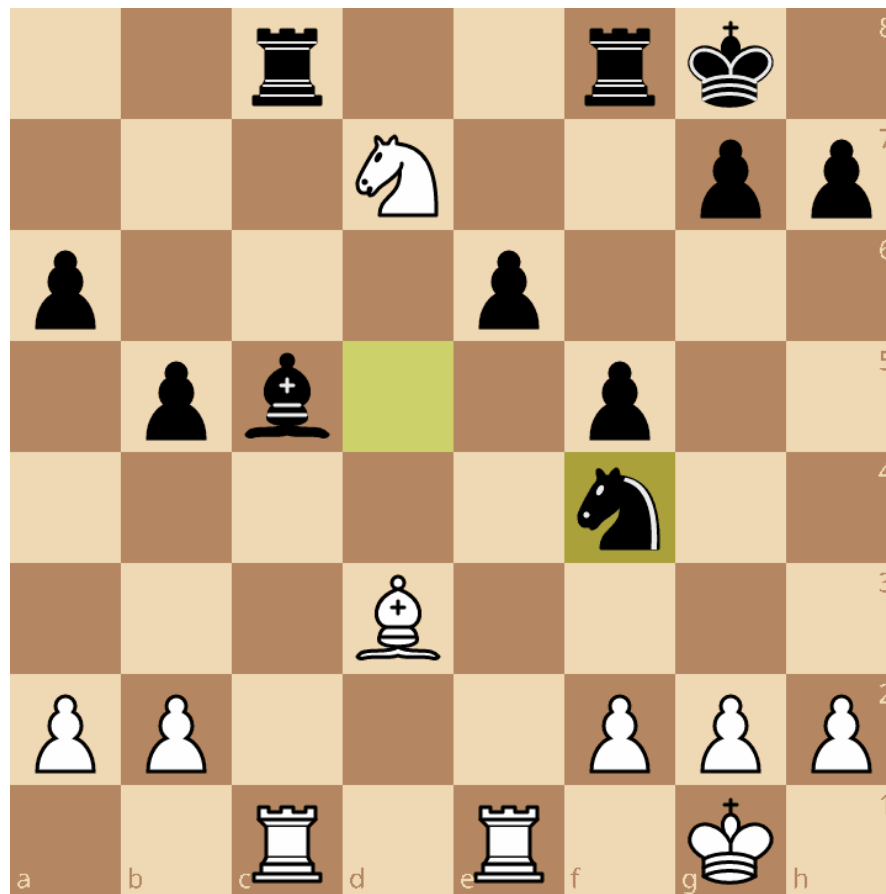
○ George Capella (1106) 0
● Vladimir Gramagin (1958) 1

CCLNY Internet 2021-22 | Round 14 | May 18, 2022
Mating.Net vs Brooklyn Pawn Stars

Backward moves are notoriously hard to find.

1.Bf1! would have been the winning move here – there's a bishop hanging on c5 so Black doesn't have time to rescue his f8-rook, and after **1...Bb4** (or another bishop move) **2.Nxf8 Rxf8 3.Red1** White is clear exchange up in the endgame without any counterplay for Black.

George took the rook immediately with 1.Nxf8? but then 1...Nxd3 turned the tables as suddenly everything is hanging in White's camp – c1, e1, f2 and f8. Vladimir scooped up the full point 20 moves later.



Queen-and-knight combo

○ Philip Lehpamer (1735) ½
● Vladimir Gramagin (1959) ½

CCLNY Internet 2022-23 | Round 1 | November 2, 2022
MetLife vs Brooklyn Pawn Stars

Queen and knight are known to form a formidable attacking combo, and in this position – in which he only had about two minutes left on the clock – Philip could have utilized such a combo to deliver checkmate:

1.Nf8+! Kg8 2.Ne6++ Kh7 3.Ng5+ Kh6 4.Qh5#.

1...Kh6 2.Qh5# is even quicker.

In the game Vladimir escaped with a lucky draw a few moves later.



Bishop vs knight

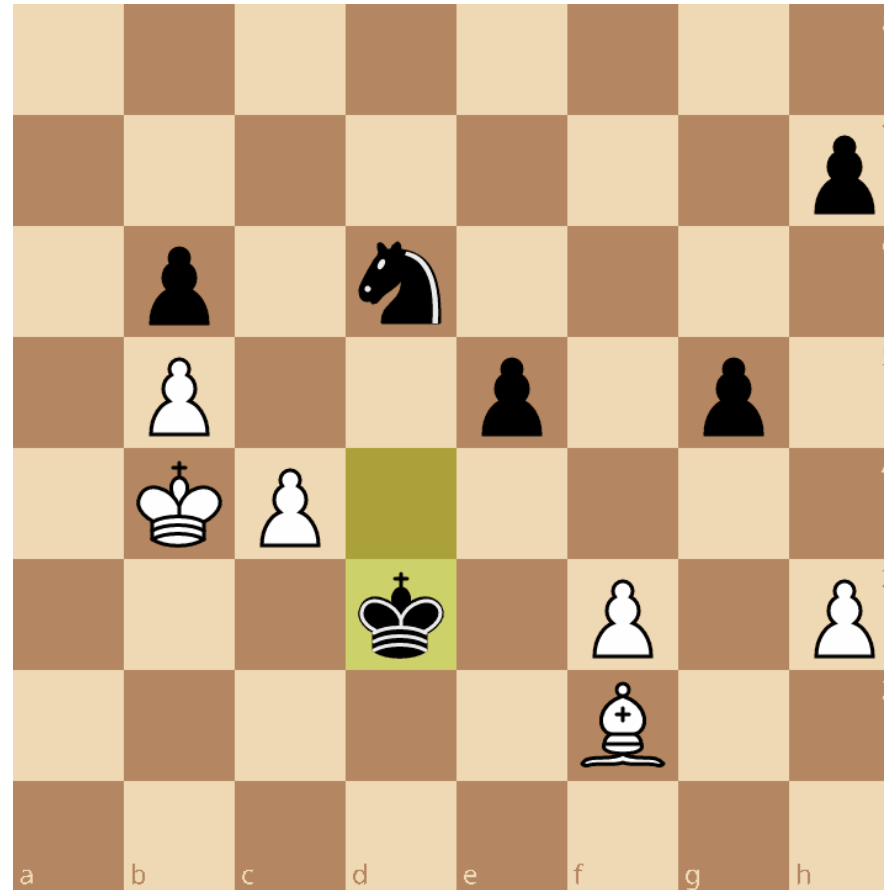
○ David Diamond (1864)	½
● Ryan McHale (2054)	½

CCLNY Internet 2022-23 | Round 1 | November 2, 2022
Mating.Net vs Swiss Re

Black's b6-pawn is hanging but so is White's c4-pawn. Should White go ahead with this indirect pawn swap, or would it better to push the c-pawn to create a passed pawn on the b-file?

David's decision to play 1.c5 was the wrong one. Ryan responded 1...bxc5+ 2.Kxc5 Nxb5! when it became clear that White didn't have enough pawns left over to win the game – 3.Kxb5 Ke2 4.Bg3 Kxf3 5.Bxe5 Kg2.

1.Bxb6! Nxc4 2.Bd8! would have won thanks to White's passed pawn and the superior coordination of White's king and minor piece, for example **2...h6 3.Kc5** or **2...Kd4 3.Bxg5** – Black's problem is that his king must defend the knight and can't go marauding on the kingside.



Mate on the h-file

○ David Epstein (1983)

1

● Richard Fireman (1830)

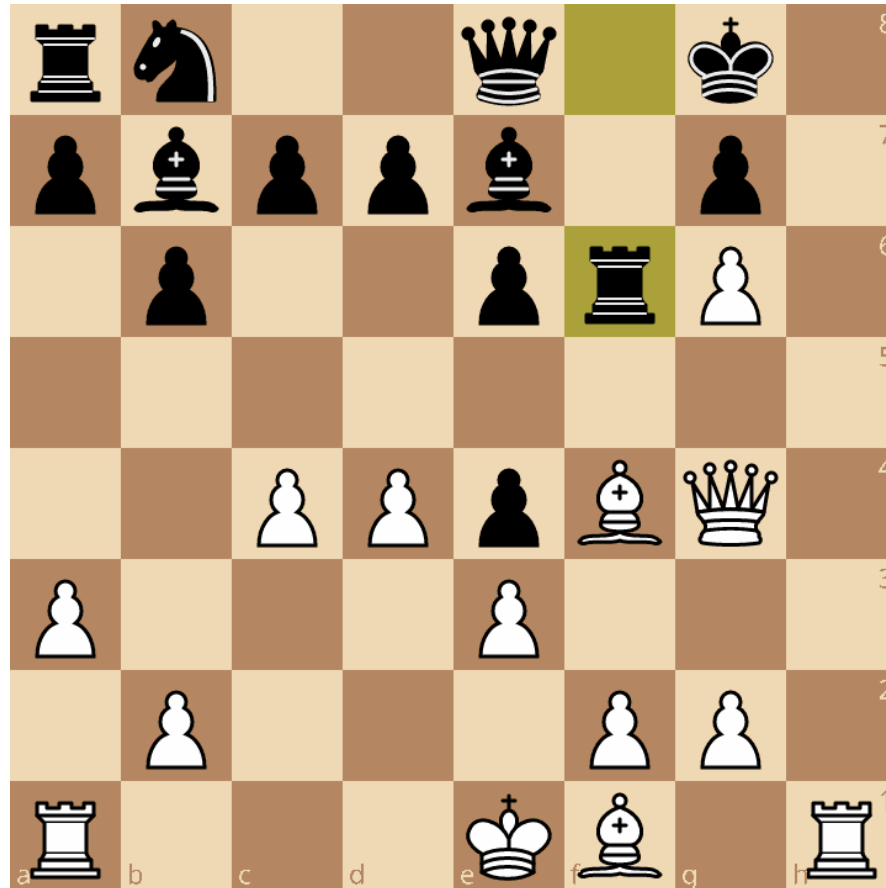
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CCLNY Internet 2022-23 | Round 1 | November 2, 2022
Swiss Re vs Mating.Net

After sacrificing a piece on g5 to open the h-file Dave finished this game in classic fashion:

1.Rh8+! Kxh8 2.Qh5+ Kg8 3.Qh7+ Kf8 4.Qh8#. Ouch!

The rook sacrifice was necessary to get the queen on the h-file with check. If White starts with 1.Qh5 instead, Black can play 1...Qxg6 and flee with his king to f7.



Greek gift

○ Lorenzo Nahum (1650)

1

● Alan Kuras (1574)

0

CCLNY Internet 2022-23 | Round 1 | November 2, 2022
Mating.Net vs Swiss Re

Alan's pawn advance to f6 has decisively weakened the white squares around his king and Lorenzo immediately capitalized with a 'Greek gift' sacrifice of **1.Bxh7+!**.

Accepting the sacrifice with 1...Kxh7 leads to mate after 2.Qh5+ Kg8 3.g6 so Alan played **1...Kh8** instead but after **2.Bg6 Nxe5 3.Qh5+** he was still about to be checkmated and resigned.



Pawn capture

○ Kevin Trapp (1550)
● George Capella (1171)

1
0

CCLNY Internet 2022-23 | Round 1 | November 2, 2022
Swiss Re vs Mating.Net

The bold pawn capture **1...Qxd4!** would have given George a clear advantage.

Snatching pawns in the opening is often risky, but in this particular position the capture on d4 is safe because White can't move his bishop away with check to win Black's queen. Moreover, if White 'does nothing', the e5-pawn will fall as well on the next move, increasing Black's advantage.

Kevin's relatively best reply in terms of damage limitation would have been **2.Bxg6 Qxd2 3.Bxf7+ Kxf7 4.Nxd2**, but after **4...Nxe5** Black is a clear pawn up in the ensuing queenless middlegame.



Pinned pawn

○ Daniel Halpern (1988) 0
● WFM Bahar Hallaeva (2261) 1

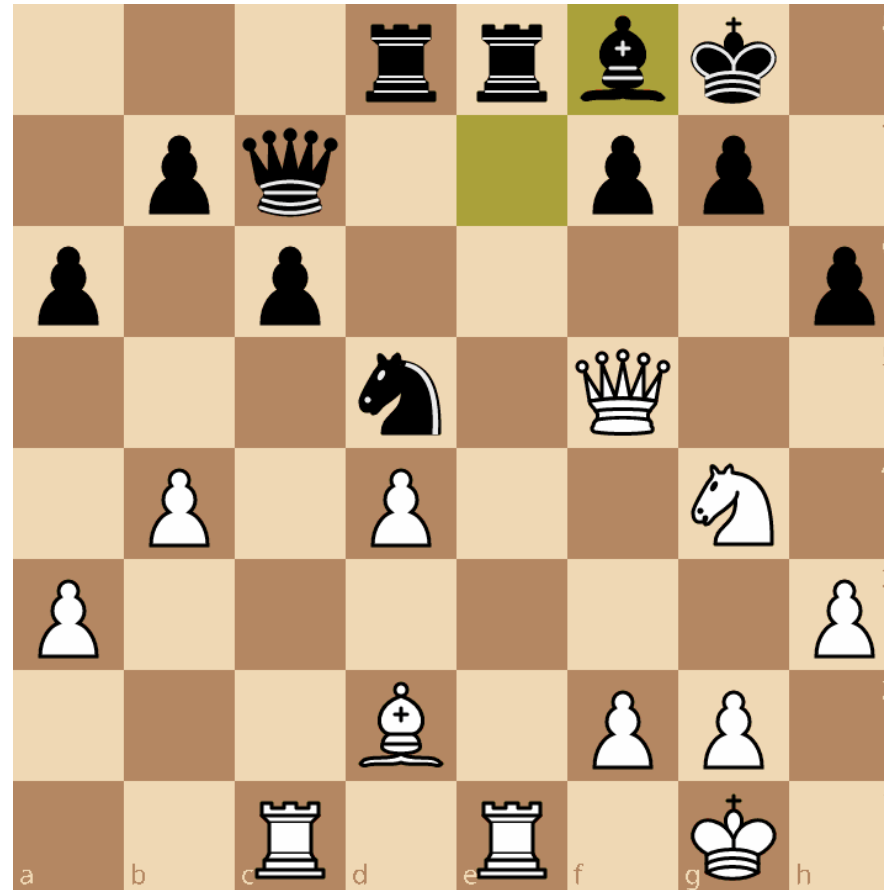
CCLNY Internet 2022-23 | Round 2 | November 16, 2022
MetLife vs Ladies Knight

Here Daniel missed a golden opportunity to beat one of the top players in the League:

1.Rxe8 Rxe8 2.Qxd5! wins a piece – the c6-pawn is pinned, and after **2...cxd5 3.Rxc7** White would have a decisive material advantage.

After 1.Rxe8 Black also doesn't have time for any clever intermediate moves, for example 1...g6 2.Qe4 or 1...Ne7 2.Rxf8+.

After surviving this scare Bahar went on to win the game.



Pinned knight

○ Yvette Fannell (1577) 0
● Dakota Williams (1548) 1

CCLNY Internet 2022-23 | Round 2 | November 16, 2022
Ladies Knight vs MetLife

In this position Yvette could have exploited the fact that the c6-knight is pinned by playing **1.d5!**

To avoid losing the knight Black would have had to capture **1...exd5** but that would have opened the e-file so that **2.Bxc6 Qxc6 3.Qxe7** wins the bishop on e7, with an extra piece for White.

Dakota later won the game.



Back-rank weakness

○ Lev Zilbermintz (2066)

½

● Daniel Halpern (1983)

½

CCLNY Internet 2022-23 | Round 3 | November 30, 2022
Chess Connections vs MetLife

Black's back-rank is temporarily vulnerable – Daniel's last move, putting the bishop on e8, has disrupted the connection between knight and rook – and Lev could have exploited this with **1.Bg5!**

Black can't take on g5 or move his bishop back to d8 because of 2.Qxf8#, 1...Bb4 loses a piece to the simple 2.a3, and 1...Ng6 doesn't work in view of 2.Bxe7, so the only way to avoid losing the e7-bishop is to defend it with **1...Qd8** or **1...Qc7**.

However, White then has a tactical shot in the form of **2.Bxe7 Qxe7 3.Qxf8+! Qxf8 4.Bxh7+! Kxh7 5.Rxf8** which results in a decisive advantage for him in the endgame thanks to his extra pawn and better minor piece.



Bishop vs knight

○ Steve Mitlitzky (1713)

1

● Paul Birnbaum (1588)

0

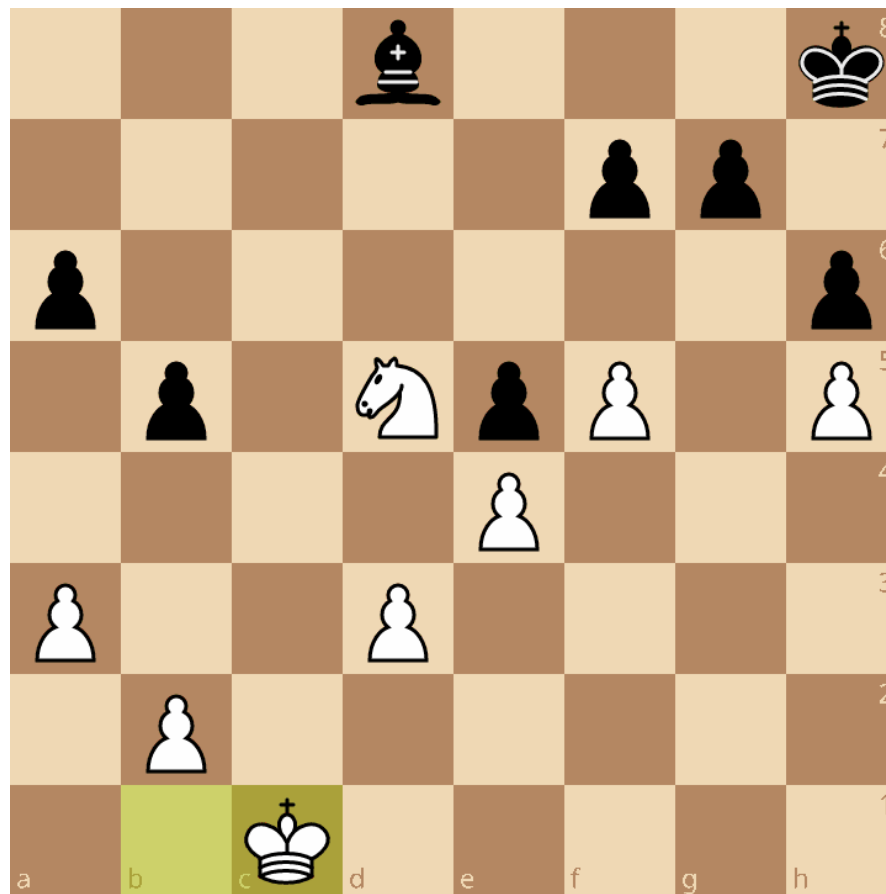
CCLNY Internet 2022-23 | Round 3 | November 30, 2022
Chess Connections vs MetLife

This looks at first sight like a classic good knight vs bad bishop position, and after 1...f6? 2.Kc2 Steve did indeed win without too much trouble.

With **1...g6!**, however, Paul would have swapped off two pairs of pawns and obtained sufficient counterplay to hold the draw: He will get a passed pawn on the h-file which will tie up White's king and/or knight.

2.fxg6 fxc6 3.hxc6 does not win a pawn as Black can simply play **3...Kg7** followed by 4...Kxg6.

The computer evaluates the position after 1...g6! as dead equal – 0.00.



Exposed king

○ Asher Gordon (1605)

1

● Johnny Bouyou (1611)

0

CCLNY Internet 2022-23 | Round 4 | December 14, 2022
Swiss Re vs Chess Connections

Black has sacrificed two pieces to try to get to the exposed white king.

Was Johnny able to see Asher's trash-talking in the Lichess chat window and got distracted by it? With a clear head he surely would have seen that **1...Nh2+!** **2.Ke1 Nf3+!** **3.Kf1 Qh3#** is checkmate. Unlucky!

White ended up converting his material advantage.



Spectator room Notes

AsDaGo Really? Saccing two pieces?

AsDaGo I don't see anything for Black

AsDaGo I think he's just losing

AsDaGo Not sure what he thought he had

AsDaGo Clearly he just likes giving checks

AsDaGo Expecting Qh3+ next

AsDaGo (Which does nothing)

AsDaGo Now Rg1+

AsDaGo Which loses a rook

AsDaGo He probably won't play that

AsDaGo But it would be nice

AsDaGo Hmm, that's a good move

AsDaGo Re5 was possible

AsDaGo Honestly, Rxf6+ would be an easy win as well

AsDaGo But might as well be precise

AsDaGo Actually, maybe I'll just play it

AsDaGo Nah

AsDaGo This seems easier

AsDaGo Always a chance I mess up

AsDaGo Not necessary, but why not?

AsDaGo It's nice how everything's protected

AsDaGo My position has a nice symmetry

AsDaGo Isn't that mate?

Please be nice in the chat!

Dark-square dominance

○ WFM Bahar Hallaeva (2264)

1

● NM Nick Kleszczewski (1959)

0

CCLNY Internet 2022-23 | Round 7 | February 8, 2023
Ladies Knight vs MetLife

White has won the strategic battle by successfully establishing a blockade on the dark squares, and Bahar found a nice way to end the game by tactical means:

1.Bxh6+! allows White's queen to enter the g5-square with decisive effect. Nick resigned after **1...Nxb6 2.Qg5+ Kf7 3.Qxh6 Rg8 4.Bxf5!**

If Black doesn't take on h6 but moves his king away White plays 2.Qg5 anyway.



Backward move (no. 4)

○ WFM Bahar Hallaeva (2269)	½
● Ryan McHale (2088)	½

CCLNY Internet 2022-23 | Round 8 | March 1, 2023
Ladies Knight vs Swiss Re

Backward moves are notoriously hard to find.

In this position **1.Nh4!** would have been very strong: The knight threatens a queen fork on g6, and the c2-bishop also attacks the h7-rook.

As neither Black's queen nor Black's king can defend the hanging rook – 1...Qh5 is refuted by 2.Rxf6+! – Black has nothing better than 1...Rg7 but then 2.Ng6+ Rxc6 3.Qxc6 leaves White a pawn up in an open position, and according to the computer Black won't last long.

Bahar played 1.Bb3 instead and the game later ended in a draw.



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