



Tradewise Gibraltar Chess Festival 2017

Monday 23 January - Thursday 2 February 2017

Round 3 Report: Thursday 26 January 2017 - by John Saunders (@JohnChess)

How to Draw with Your Dad

Nine players – Mickey Adams (England), Nikita Vitiugov, Vadim Zvjaginsev (both Russia), Sam Shankland (USA), Eduardo Iturrizaga (Venezuela), Emil Sutovsky (Israel), Maxime Lagarde (France), Kacper Piorun (Poland) and Ju Wenjun (China) – share the lead on 3/3 after another tough round of chess in the Tradewise Gibraltar Masters at the Caleta Hotel in Gibraltar.

The elite 2700+ players are still finding it very hard to impose themselves on the group of players rated 200 or 300 points below. Veselin Topalov picked up this point in his master class on Wednesday, stating that these days there is little or no difference in the quality of the first 10 to 15 opening moves between 2300-rated players and the elite. So the big names have to work harder to get their points, perhaps adopting a Carlsen-style approach, avoiding long, forcing lines in the opening and outplaying their opponents in endgames. This has been exemplified in Gibraltar by the only two 2700+ rated players to figure in the group on 3/3, namely Adams and Vitiugov, who have been grinding out the wins in long games.



Mickey Adams ground out a long win against Bogdan-Daniel Deac (Romania)

Perhaps the most enjoyable game for the audience in round three was the battle between Peter Svidler and Nitzan Steinberg. The 18-year-old IM from Israel has made quite an impression in Gibraltar, drawing with the second seed Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and now the sixth seed. He is one of a number of hot prospects who could make a name for themselves at

the world's strongest open tournament. The game ended in a draw but the advantage swung wildly in both directions and could easily have resulted in a win for either player.

Tradewise Gibraltar Masters, Round 3

N.Steinberg (2486) - P.Svidler (2748)

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 e6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Be3 Nf6 7.Be2 d6 8.0-0 Bd7 9.f4 Be7 10.Nb3 b5 11.a3 0-0 12.g4 Bc8 13.g5 Nigel Short played 13.Qe1 and won an important game in the 1997 FIDE World Knock-Out Championship against Andrei Sokolov. **13...Nd7 14.Rf3 Bb7 15.Rg3 Re8 16.Bf1 Bf8 17.Qg4 g6 18.Rd1 Rc8 19.Rh3 f6** It doesn't look obligatory to make this advance - if the queen and rook attack down the h-file, Black could play his bishop to g7 when Qxh7+ doesn't give mate and the king can sit safely on f8 awhile - but Svidler prefers to defend more actively. **20.Qh4 Qe7 21.f5 exf5** Exposing the black king to an attack with 21...gxf5? **22.Rg3** looks inadvisable. **22.Nd5 Qf7 23.exf5 Nce5 24.Bg2 Rxc2**



The position is getting very messy and hard to calculate. **25.Be4 Rc4** The nerveless analysis engine goes on taking material with 25...Rxb2 but the human brain fears the power of 26.Na5 fxe5 27.Qxg5 Ba8 28.Rg3, etc. **26.Nd4 fxe5 27.Bxe5 gxf5 28.Bxf5 Ng6** 28...Bxd5? and Black will soon get mated after 29.Bxh7+ Kg7 30.Bb1 **29.Bxg6 Qxg6 30.Rg3 Bxd5** Black has no option other than to try to get as much material for the queen as possible should White reveal a pin on the g-file. At the moment the price for the queen is such that Black should be OK. **31.b3** If White tries 31.Bc1? Black has 31...Re4! and gets a rook and two pieces for the queen. **31...Rc3?!** An alternative to this visually attractive but risky deflection is 31...Re4 32.bxc4 Rxh4 33.Bxh4 bxc4 34.Rxg6+ hxg6 when Black emerges with two pawns for the exchange, but not enough to win. **32.Rxc3 Re4** The computer finds 32...Nf6!? (or 32...Nc5), getting the knight to e4 to aid the defence. **33.Rg3 Kh8 34.Qh3!** Now Black doesn't have enough compensation for the exchange. **34...Bg7 35.Qxd7 Rxd4**



36.Qd8+? After the game Steinberg mentioned 36.Rc1 as a possible improvement, but the computer finds even stronger possibilities; 36.Bd2! seems to be a killer, which Steinberg also mentioned in passing at his post-game interview: 36...Qf7 37.Qd8+ Qg8 38.Qxg8+ Bxg8 39.Rxg7! Kxg7 40.Bc3 is the end. **36...Bg8 37.Rf1 Rd3 38.Rg2 Bd4+ 39.Kh1** Now Black has to find one more good move to save himself. He succeeds... **39...Rf3! 40.Rd1 Qf7**



Suddenly the tide seemed to have turned and Black is threatening mate. But a member of the audience in the commentary room, Odin Blikra Veia, spotted a saving resource. Watching Steinberg on the overhead webcam, it seemed as if the Israeli teenager was worried. But a sense of relief and excitement visibly pulsed through his body. Commentators Simon Williams and Jovanka Houska were willing him on - "is he going to play it? Go on, Nitzan!" ... **41.Rdg1!** Yes! He found the neat combination which saves a half-point. **41...Bxg1 42.Bf6+! Rxf6 43.Rxg8+ Qxg8 44.Qxf6+ Qg7** ½-½ Of course it is now an easy perpetual check, with the white queen swinging back and forth from d8 to f6.

The great wheel of fortune swung round for another talented Israeli youngster in this round. After his fortuitous technical knock-out against Vasyil Ivanchuk in round two, Ori Kobo suffered a moment of chess blindness and went down quickly against women's world number two Ju Wenjun. Truly, Caïssa giveth, and Caïssa taketh away...

Tradewise Gibraltar Masters, Round 3

O.Kobo (2482) - Ju Wenjun (2583)



As Simon Williams pointed out in the commentary room, this is like one of those retrograde analysis puzzles that appear in chess magazines. How did the bishop on f1 come to be missing from the board? But, more to the point is the temptation of the e5-pawn. To take or not to take? White was tempted... **21.Nxe5?? Nxe5 22.Qxe5 Rd5! 0-1** Oops. The only move not to lose the queen is 23.Qe4 when 23...Bf5 skewers a whole rook. And did you get the answer to the retrograde analysis puzzle? Not too difficult: the f1 bishop was captured by a knight which had come from e3.

One intriguing feature of round three was the pairing of Juan Manuel Bellon and his daughter Anna Cramling Bellon. The Bellon Cramling family have been to all fifteen Gibraltar tournaments. OK, technically, Anna wasn't actually alive at the time of the first tournament but she was present in an unborn state.

The family was not in the least put out by the pairing. Anna was positively delighted, saying "I'm going to beat my dad!" She didn't, but she didn't lose either. A draw with a GM at 14 – good result.



Juan Manuel Bellon plays his daughter Anna Cramling Bellon

Women's world champion Hou Yifan has played exclusively against women players so far and in round three she faced women's world number three and 2016 Tradewise Gibraltar women's first prize winner Anna Muzychuk. A cagey draw ensued. Ju Wenjun with her 3/3 still leads the hunt for the £15,000 first women's prize.

A selection of photos of round three can be downloaded from my Flickr account at <https://flic.kr/s/aHskMHwGfS>

Video footage and interviews from today's round are available to embed from our [YouTube Channel](#).

Report Ends

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