

A European Chess Adventure

by Bill Forster

In recent years Easter has been a time of increased chess activity for me as I've played not only the Wellington Open but the Sydney International as well. Unfortunately (maybe not unfortunately actually) this year my wife and I had a European holiday planned. Not to worry, clearly I should play chess in Europe instead!

An email to GM Hans Joachim Hecht, with whom I shared an apartment during the last Queenstown Classic, produced a list of potential events. Eventually we settled on the Kaiserbrunnen Easter Cup, an annual event held in the pleasant region of Westphalia, in the north west part of Germany.

We stayed at the hotel where the tournament was held, along with many of the other participants. The hotel is situated in a lovely rural environment of rolling hills, forests and lakes. The small, picture perfect town of Brakel is an easy walk away. Talking to some of the players I learned that the hotel regularly hosts tournaments and that they attract players from all over Germany due to the comfortable accommodation, the good food, the good conditions, the convivial atmosphere. The tournaments are most popular with average players, they are not renowned as particularly strong events. The scoresheets aren't collected

and so none of the games end up in the databases.

As the players gathered for the first round, it was obvious I was very much an outsider. This is not a big international event with a diverse multinational contingent. There was only one other non-German, and he was from Denmark which is really just up the Autobahn. However there was a certain comfortable familiarity about proceedings. Chess players are chess players everywhere. The group was slightly more unfashionable, more unkempt, more well fed, more shortsighted than the average population. The demographics featured a big range of ages but a dominance of one sex.

I didn't understand a word of the players' meeting but this didn't seem to matter (what does this say about players' meetings?) and right on time (this is Germany, not NZ) the first round commenced. The first deviation from normal experience was the time control. Two hours for 40 moves, then 30 minutes to finish the game, with no increment. I haven't played a serious game with no increment for many years. I suspect that this is a reflection of the German desire to keep to a strict schedule, of course increments make it possible for unruly games to drag on almost forever.

The next deviation was more welcome; Formally attired waiters and waitresses coming around taking drink orders. I could get used to that.

The information on the noticeboard featured each player's title, local and FIDE ratings, chess club and birth year. Top seed was FM Martin Forchert, 46 years old, FIDE 2416 from the Bielefelder Schachklub von 1883. It was surprising how many clubs were represented, 56 players yet 43 different clubs. Perhaps if it had been renamed to the Wellington Schachklub von 1876, my own club wouldn't have looked so out of place.

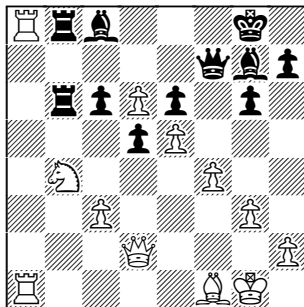
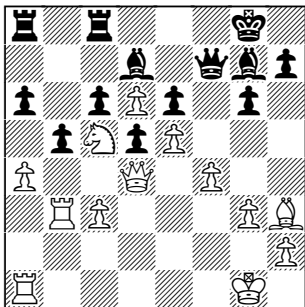
I was seeded 14th, but I realised this was probably rather optimistic even before being very lucky to escape with a draw in the first round. Seedings were based on local ratings, which I didn't have. My FIDE was used as a proxy for a local rating, so many players with higher FIDEs than me were seeded lower down.

Despite this, I was disappointed in my performance and my ultimate result; 3.5 from 8 (1 win, 2 losses, 5 draws) for 39th place. I am not normally an excuse maker, but the latter part of the tournament was somewhat blighted for me by a nasty dose of gastro. I've never withdrawn from a tournament and after coming this far I was determined not to start here. Nevertheless wearing three pairs of underpants and using 95% of available brain capacity to maintain a rigorous clench was not conducive to good chess!

I observed one local custom that I found particularly charming. If a game's finish attracts some spectators, and if those spectators are impressed by what they see, they tend to offer congratulatory handshakes to one or both players once the game is over. My best game, and my most exciting finish were recorded in rounds 2 and 5 respectively, and I shall present both games here. On both occasions I scored a handshake or two, although as we will see, in the latter case it was scarcely deserved.

Bill Forster, Bill – Herman Wraga

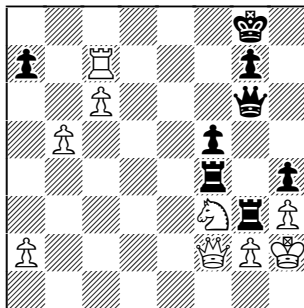
1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 Bg7 4.Bg2 0-0 5.0-0 Nc6 6.Nc3 Rb8 The first indication that I am actually playing a tailender. He made a few puzzling moves, but no outright mistakes, so I had to play my best chess to win. **7.d4 e6 8.e4 d5 9.e5 Ne4 10.Qe2 Nxc3 11.bxc3 Ne7 12.Rd1 c6** This move invites my bad bishop into d6, where it is transformed into a source of strength **13.Ba3 Re8 14.Bd6 Ra8 15.c5** Intending to retain a presence on d6 for the rest of the game. The idea is to permanently cramp black **15...Nf5 16.Rab1 Qa5 17.Rb3 Nxd6 18.cxd6 b6 19.Qb2 b5 20.Ne1 f6 21.Nd3 fxe5 22.dxe5 Qb6 23.a4 a6 24.Ra1 Bd7 25.Qa3 Rec8 26.Qc5 Qd8 27.f4 Qf8 28.Qd4 Qf7 29.Nc5 Be8 30.Bh3 Bd7**



This is one of the more successful outcomes of the "Russell Dive lite" style of play I have been cultivating recently. For more than ten years I've been watching Russell obtain crushing positions like this against lower rated opposition at the Wellington Chess Club. Inevitably Russell proceeds to painlessly (for Russell) dispatch the hapless victim. Can I manage something similar, just for once? **31.Rba3 bxa4 32.Rxa4 Rcb8** I thought I could hear a voice communicating with me on some kind of astral channel. I think it was Russell. "You are in control, don't take the a pawn, it's not going anywhere, don't allow counterplay" **33.Qd2 Rb5 34.Nxa6 Bc8 35.Nb4 Rab8 36.Bf1** "Use all your pieces" said the voice **36...R5b6 37.Ra7 R8b7 38.Ra8 Rb8**

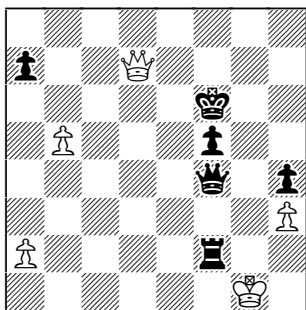
"It is okay to take the material if you retain absolute control" said the voice. **39.Rxb8 Rxb8 40.Nxc6** "That actually wins at least an exchange as well as the second pawn. If you still need me there's absolutely no hope for you, so over and out" said the voice. **40...Rb6 40...Rb7 41.Nd8** is only slightly less fatal **41.Ne7+ 1-0**

Martin Rischmueller– Bill Forster



An exciting and unbalanced struggle is approaching its climax. I have whipped up an attack, but it needs to bear tangible fruit, since all endings are winning for white. There were five moves to make before the time control. An entertaining

mistake fest ensues. **35...Qd6?** A natural move creating the potential for a devastating discovery **36.Rd7!** Necessary but sufficient **36...Rxf3** As I waited confidently for 37.gxf3 I realised to my horror that simply 37.Qxf3 forces one of those lost endgames I was talking about. **37.gxf3??** Phew! now black is winning again. Now we can see why Qd6 was a mistake, I should have reversed my last two moves. **37...Qf4?** This was my idea but it has a big flaw that could have been avoided with Qe5 instead. I wanted to prevent f4 but I should have been encouraging it as it leads to a beautiful mate; 37...Qe5 38.f4 Qa1 39.c7 Rxh3+ 40.Kxh3 Qh1+ 41.Qh2 Qf3+ 42.Kxh4 Qg4# **38.c7?** Instead 38.Rd8+ Kh7 39.Rd4 wins for white **38...Rxf3+ 39.Kg1 Rxf2?** I should have played Qc1+ and taken the queen with check, but luckily I am still winning **40.c8Q+ Kh7 41.Rxg7+ Kxg7 42.Qd7+ Kf6**



Draw agreed ½–½. For a few moves now I had been anticipating victory. But now with the time control met, I thought for 15 minutes and then played Kf6 and offered a draw in this winning position. I had been assuming there would be no

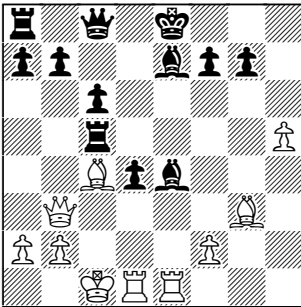
perpetual, since normally an unobstructed king can escape from a corner when attacked by a lone queen. But annoyingly here the escape path takes my king through e5, when White picks up Rf2 with Qc5+. Most of my 15 minutes were spent looking at bad possible K+P endings after that. So I accepted an inevitable perpetual. When I showed this game to Gawain Jones, who is coaching me at the moment, he took no more than 2 seconds to realise that my 15 minutes were a complete waste of time, since White doesn't get to play Qc5+ at all. If now Qc6+ then black plays Kg5!! a move I never considered because it is not normally part of black's plan of escaping from the corner. But in that particular position Kg5 wins on the spot because white has no follow up check. Such is the nature of talent in chess. Two seconds of a grandmaster's time outweighs 15 minutes of a patzer's. If I had simply played on for another move I might have spotted 43...Kg5!! if 43.Qc6+??. Otherwise the game might have continued 43.Qd8+ Ke5 44.Qe7+ Kd5 45.Qf7+ Ke4 46.Qc4+ Ke3 47.Qc3+ Ke2 48.Qc2+ Ke1 49.Qb1+ Kd2 50.Qb2+ Kd3! White is about to run out of checks so 51.Qxf2 Qg3+ 52.Qxg3+ hxg3 This is a much better K+P ending than the ones I looked at. With the black king now dominant the advanced connected passers outweigh the outside pawns and black wins.

Meanwhile there were people at this tournament who can actually play good chess! In the last round seeds 1 and 5, the joint leaders, met on board 1 and

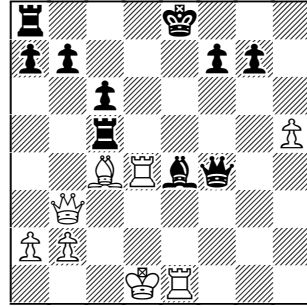
produced a sparkling game to decide the tournament.

Marcel Juegel – Martin Forchert

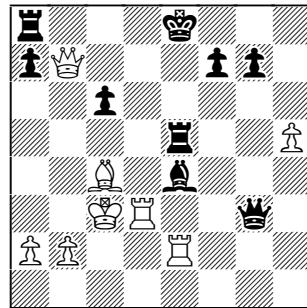
1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.c4 c6 4.e3 Bg4 5.Qb3 Qb6 6.Ne5 Bf5 7.c5 In such a well trodden opening we have had a succession of less often played alternatives and are now in virgin territory according to my database. 7...Qc7 8.Nc3 Nbd7 9.Nxd7 Nxd7 10.e4 An enterprising pawn sac 10...dxe4 11.Bc4 e6 12.g3 Be7 13.Bf4 Qc8 14.g4 Bg6 15.h4 h5 16.gxh5 Rxh5 17.0–0 e5 18.Bg3 exd4 19.Nxe4 Nxc5 20.Nxc5 Rxc5 21.h5 Be4 22.Rhe1



The engines are unimpressed and consider black's material advantage as more important than white's development advantage and open lines, but for a human it is easier to play white. 22...Qg4 22...Bd5 or 22...f5 hold things together better. 23.Rxd4 Bg5+ 24.f4 Bxf4+ 25.Bxf4 Qxf4+ 26.Kd1



26...Re5? Black stands on the brink of a precipice. White threatens Rxe4 and Black's position will collapse if he allows Qxb7. If Black were made of silicon he would see that he can avoid both problems, surviving (and indeed prospering) by 26...Qg4+ 27.Kd2 Qg2+ 28.Re2 Qg5+ 29.Kc3 b5 simultaneously securing b7 and winning the Bc4 in exchange for the Be4 27.Qxb7 Qg4+ 28.Kd2 Qf4+ 29.Re3 Qh2+ 30.Re2 Qf4+ 31.Kc3 Qg3+ 32.Rd3



1–0. White threatens Qxf7#, Qxa8+ and Rxg3 and black has no more checks. Clearly 32...Bxd3 is the only chance but it is not hard to see that Black is then cut to pieces. For example 33.Qxa8+ Ke7

34.Qxa7+ Kf6 35.Qxf7+ Kg5 36.Rg2!
prettily winning the queen.



Marcel Juegel and Martin Forchert get ready to rumble before the featured game. Photo © Gerd Densing

Postscript: The photo illustrates well the convivial atmosphere at Brakel. During the final round I noticed a big crowd building around the top board clash and afterwards I asked Marcel if I could photograph his winner's scoresheet, anticipating the possibility of this article. I recently was pleasantly surprised when Marcel contacted me by email. He provides the following interesting links;

Super GM Boris Avrukh annotates our featured game !;

<http://www.djk-aufwaerts-aachen.de/partien/Partien%20des%20Monats/Juegel%20-%20Forchert/avrukh.htm>

Chessbase tournament report (in German, use the Google Chrome browser for an automatic translation);

<http://www.chessbase.de/nachrichten.asp?newsid=10239>