

The Reincarnation of the Fight Club (Berkeley International Wrap-Up)

January 19, 2011
by GM Josh Friedel



Gm Josh Friedel

So my roommate Arun Sharma and I had a bet going. I don't even recall what it was about or the exact terms. I think it had something to do with a blitz match score and if I lost I was going to have to do something awful like sleep on the patio, eat a spoonful of cayenne pepper, or clean up after my cooking. What I do remember is that I had to think of something equally undesirable after he lost. The first thought that came to mind was for him to do math all day, but then I realized he already does that for a living. The next thought involved going for a run in Richmond in the middle of the night, but that seemed a bit too cruel. Then a thought hit me - I should have him run a chess tournament! The result was the 2011 Berkeley International.

There have been a few Berkeley International events run previously by IM David Pruess. They were strong tournaments that resulted in many people achieving norms (including my first GM norm), but they were exhausting to organize and didn't get nearly enough players to make up for the prizes and appearance fees. I didn't envy Arun's task of trying to organize such an event, but I thought he would have decent chances of pulling it off. Though Greg Shahade is the commissioner of the US Chess League, many of the logistics are handled by Arun. His

attention to detail is very good, which in my opinion is crucial towards running a tournament. Of course it is impossible to do it on your own. David Pruess served as co-organizer, Sam Shankland and local families volunteered to house some of the titled players, a few people made financial contributions, and the Berkeley Chess School provided a playing venue. Despite all this, Arun was the one who had to pull it all together, as well as fix the snags that popped up along the way.

One of the major difficulties was transportation. The players were scattered all over the Berkeley area, and the nearest train station to the playing site was over a mile away completely uphill. Add to that the fact that nobody in Berkeley owns a car, and you have some serious issues getting everyone to the site. Arun's 90 car trips per day were probably more difficult than actually putting the tournament together. Negotiations with titled players about appearance fees can also be tricky. Not to speak badly of my own, but some of us can be difficult to deal with at times. Nevertheless, it came together beautifully, with 11 GMs, several IMs and FMs, and more than enough players with foreign federations. The latter in particular can be a huge obstacle for norm chasers, but it was a non-issue here, likely a contributing factor to the large number of norms achieved. All problems aside, the event came together without a hitch, and the players were treated well. The rounds started on time, snacks and drinks were provided, and nobody got killed or maimed. Mostly.

Chess-wise the tournament was a great success. The field was incredibly strong, including 2600+ GMs Erenburg, Gareev, and Hess, as well as former top 10 player Loek Van Wely. There were also an astonishing number of norms achieved. Denys Shmelov, Keaton Kiewra, and Sam Shankland earned GM norms. Sam in particular has been seeking his final

norm for a long time, so I'm sure it was quite the relief to finally achieve it. Roman Yankovsky, Conrad Holt, and Daniel Naroditsky scored IM norms, the third norm for each of them. Rarely have so many titles been achieved at a single event! There was also a great amount of fighting chess, and the winner wasn't determined until after Van Wely pulled off his last round win.

I'm getting ahead of myself, however. I'll at least make an effort to start by talking about round one, and move forward from there. There were a few upsets in round one. None other than Loek Van Wely was held to a draw by the much lower rated Keaton Kiewra. Also notable was A-player Matt Helfst taking down IM Alfonso Almeida.

Round two saw young FM Darwin Yang take down GM Timur Gareev on board 1. There were lots of draws in round three, and the only players to move to 3-0 were GMs Sergey Erenburg and myself. He did it with a win over the very strong IM Lev Milman with the black pieces, and I took down Darwin Yang.

After the first three rounds, Sergey and I were leading with a large chasing pack of 2.5s. Our round four game was an interesting encounter. He thought he had chances, I thought I had some, but in the end neither of us managed to make anything of it. This allowed GMs Hess and Van Wely to catch up with wins over IM Ravichandran and GM Panchanathan respectively.



GM Loek Van Wely

The structure of the tournament was a bit unusual. The first three days were two rounds a day, and then it switched to one round for the final four days. Thus, not burning out during the early rounds was crucial. As a result, Hess and Erenburg decided to draw quickly and rest up for the night round. This left Loek and I to fight it out for the #1 spot. I played a bit dubiously in the opening, and was punished by precise play from the elite player. Here is the game with annotations from the man himself.

Friedel,J - van Wely,L [B82]

Although I officially had announced that 2011 was going to be my sabbatical year, I still squeezed a tournament in. Touristic reasons were more important than being strict about my rule. Although this did leave the backdoor open for people to complain that I am still playing....

1.e4

It wasn't my intention to pick on Josh in this article, but somehow I liked this game from conceptual point of view.

1...c5 2.Nf3 d6

In my sabbatical I honored the principle: a dead man can eat anything, so the Najdorf was back on the menu :)

3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.f4 e6 7.Bd3 Nbd7 8.0-0 b5



Played after some long thinking. Somehow, I got distracted by grabbing the pawn on b2 with 8...Qb6 9.Be3 Qxb2 and started to compare the differences with the poisoned pawn variation. Although I couldn't find anything against it, decided to be practical this time.

9.a3 Bb7 10.Kh1?!

I am always happy to see these kind of moves. First of all its losing time, its not clear what this move is doing for white while the move is passed to Black. Secondly, Black has just put his bishop on b7, if there is any place where the White should be very uncomfortable, then it should be especailly on h1!

10...g6!

The most ambitious move, if Black can put his bishop on g7 and manages to castle, then he has reached his ideal set-up. At this point I was seriously down on time, which Robbie R interpreted as a sign of weakness. always funny to see how people project their own problems on you....

11.Be3 Bg7 12.Bxb5

Already a sign of slight panic, but what else to do? White had to something and it had to be done quickly.

12...axb5 13.Ndxb5 0-0 14.Nxd6 Bc6 15.e5 Ne8



I saw some fancy stuff with 15...Nh5 and bishop h6, but it seemed unnecessary.

16.Nce4 Ra4

16...f6 was another thematic approach.

17.c4 Qa8 18.Qc2 f5

My first intention was 18...Nxd6 19.Nxd6 f6 20.Bd4 fxe5 21.fxe5 but then realized taking on e5 is not so funny. Some of white pieces are locked out of the action.

19.Nc5



19.exf6 Ndx6 is what I wanted to reach

19...Nxd6 20.Nxa4 Bxa4 21.b3 Ne4! 22.bxa4 g5!



The position has transformed completely, from a piece vs. three pawns to two pieces vs. the rook and three pawns. White's pawn structure is destroyed and on top of that he won't be able to keep his pawn chain in the center intact.

23.Qb2 gxf4 24.Bxf4 Rb8 25.Qd4 Ndc5 26.Qd1 Rb2 27.Qf3 Qxa4 [27...Nd7!] 28.Rab1 Rxb1 29.Rxb1 h6 30.Rc1?

A mistake of course, but practically the position was very hard to defend anyway.

30...Nd3 31.Rb1 Qxc4 32.Bxh6 Bxh6 33.Qh5 Nef2+ 34.Kg1 Nh3+!



A nice finishing touch.

35.gxh3 Be3+

winning the queen or mating **0-1**

Also scoring a crucial victory in the round was Sam Shankland with a win over fellow IM Dmitry Zilberstein. Sam offers his thoughts on the game:



GM-elect Sam Shankland

Shankland, Sam (2498) - Zilberstein, Dmitry (2386) [E11]

Berkeley International (5), 04.01.2011

This game was a real test for me- I had blundered away a very easy win in the previous game and it would be important to bounce back. Furthermore, despite having the white pieces against a sub-2400, my opponent was playing extremely well this tournament, and this game would be his only loss (he played four GMs.)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3

It felt like a Catalan day rather than Nc3.

4...Bb4+ 5.Bd2 a5 6.Bg2 dxc4 7.0-0

7.Qc2 is all the rage, having been played tons of times, while 0-0 is less explored.

7...Nc6 8.e3

8.Bg5 is probably a better try.

8...0-0 9.Qe2



9...Bd6!?

9...b5 looks fine for Black 10.Ne5 (10.a4 Ba6 With interesting play) 10...Nxe5 11.Bxa8 Nd3 With fine compensation.

10.Bc3?!

I wanted to take on c4 with the knight 10.Qxc4 e5 11.Nc3 exd4 12.exd4 Bf5 White may be slightly more comfortable, but nothing too special.

10...Qe7

10...Qe8?! This move was interesting; now Nbd2 is impossible on account of b5. 11.Ne5! It's important for white to prevent e5, which would liberate black's pieces 11...Bxe5 12.dxe5 Nd5 13.Qxc4; 10...Nd5! 11.Qxc4 Ncb4= Black has good counterplay, with b6 and Ba6 on the agenda.

11.Nbd2

11.Ne5 Bxe5 12.dxe5 Nd5 13.Qxc4 Rd8 This is much less effective when Black can play Rd8, but it was probably better than the game continuation.

11...e5 12.dxe5 Nxe5

12...Bxe5 13.Nxe5 Nxe5 14.h3

13.Bxe5! Bxe5 14.Nxc4 Bd6

14...Bg4 15.Ncxe5 Qxe5 16.Nxe5 Bxe2 17.Bxb7 Rab8 18.Rfe1 Bh5 19.Bg2 Rxb2 20.Rec1±

15.Nd4?

15.Nxd6 Qxd6 16.e4 White advances his majority and gains a slight advantage 16...Re8 (16...Bg4 17.e5 Qe7 18.Qc4 Bxf3 19.Bxf3 Qxe5 20.Rfe1) 17.e5 Qe7 18.Qc4.

15...Bc5



Objectively speaking, Black has equalized, but there is still some slight pressure. He will have to find a few more good moves before a draw could be agreed.

16.Nb3 a4 17.Nxc5 Qxc5 18.Rfc1 Bg4 19.Qd3!

I sensed that doubling my a-pawns would be a strong idea in this position; Black's queenside would come under very strong pressure.

19...Rfd8 20.Qa3 Qb5

20...Qxa3 21.bxa3! c6 (21...Nd5 22.Rab1 b6 23.e4 Ne7 24.Ne3+-; 21...Ra7 22.Ne5 c6 23.Bxc6!? bxc6 24.Nxc6 Rdd7 25.Nxa7 Rxa7 26.f3 Be6 27.Kf2) 22.Rab1 Ra7 (22...Rab8 23.Na5) 23.Rb4 with good play for White

21.Qe7!



Cold calculation proves this computer-like move to be very strong.

21...Rd7!

21...Be6 22.Qxc7 Miraculously this pawn grab seems safe 22...Rd7 (22...Bxc4 23.Rxc4 Qxb2 24.Rcc1 Ng4 25.Qc2 Rd2 26.Qc8+ Rd8 27.Qxg4; 22...Rac8 23.Nd6) 23.Qf4 (23.Nd6 Qxb2 24.Qc8+ Rd8 25.Qxb7) ; 21...Nd5 was another path to equality.

22.Qe5 Qa6

22...c5 23.h3 Be6 24.Na3 Qe2 (24...Qb4 25.Rxc5) 25.Rc2 Rd2 26.Rxd2 Qxd2 27.Bxb7

23.b4!

Even though objectively speaking this move leads to an immediate draw, I correctly assessed that Black's difficulties were over. If, however, Black does not find the correct reply here (which involves a temporary queen sacrifice and is not so easy to see) he will come under very strong pressure. 23.Bf1 Re8

23...c6

23...axb3! Looks suicidal, but Black has a trick. 24.axb3 Qxa1! 25.Rxa1 Rxa1+ 26.Qxa1 Rd1+ 27.Qxd1 Bxd1=

24.Qa5!



24...Qxa5

24...Ra7 25.Ne5 (25.Qc5 The computer suggested this move, but Ne5 was my plan) 25...Qxa5 (25...Re7 26.Nxg4 Nxg4 27.Qd8+) 26.bxa5 Rd2 27.Nxg4 Nxg4 28.Rd1 Rxd1+ 29.Rxd1

25.bxa5 Rc7 26.Rab1 Be6 27.Rb4 Re7

27...Nd7 28.Rxa4; 27...Bxc4 28.Rcxc4 Rxa5 29.Rxc6!±; 27...a3 28.Rb3

28.Rxa4 g6

28...b5 29.Bxc6 bxa4 30.Bxa8 Rc7 31.Rd1!+-

29.Nb6 Rd8 30.h3

30.a6 was perhaps more accurate

30...Rd2 31.Nc4 Bxc4 32.Rcxc4 Rd1+ 33.Bf1

33.Kh2 Rd2 34.a6

33...Nd7 34.Rc2

34.a6 For some reason I never wanted to play this move, always pinning my hopes on doubling rooks on the b-file. Just shows what I know about this game.

34...Ne5 35.Kg2 Red7 36.a3 Rb1 37.Be2 Nd3 38.Bxd3 Rxd3 39.a6 Finally. 39...bxa6 40.Rxc6 Rb2 41.Rf4!+-



The first move after time control seals Black's fate. He has to either give up the a6 pawn for nothing or let White decisively penetrate to the 7th rank. 41.Rxa6 Rxe3 Black can probably hold a draw with precise play.

41...f5

41...Rxe3 42.Rc8+ Kg7 43.Rc7+-; 41...Rxa3 42.Rc8+ Kg7 43.Rc7+-

42.Rc7 Rdd2

42...Rxa3 43.Rd4 Rb8 44.Rdd7 I'm going to take all three of the kingside pawns; 42...Rxe3 43.Rd4 Re8 44.Rdd7 meets a similar fate.

43.g4 Rd5 44.gxf5 gxf5 45.Ra7 Rb6 46.Rc4 Rd8 47.Rcc7 Rh6 48.Rg7+ Kh8 49.Rgf7 Rg8+ 50.Kf1 Rxh3 51.Rxf5 Rh6 52.Rff7 Rb8 53.Ke2 Kg8 54.Rg7+ Kh8 55.Rgb7 Re8 56.Re7 Rf8 57.f4 Kg8 58.Kf3 Rh1 59.Rxa6 Rb8 60.Raa7 Rc8 61.a4 Rb8 62.a5 Rh6 63.a6 Rg6 64.Rab7 Rf8 65.a7 1-0

In Round 6, Van Wely secured his lead by winning an up and down game against Robert Hess. Erenburg also managed to win, though he was in serious danger against young FM Conrad Holt.



GM Sergey Erenburg

Round 7 saw the leader draw quickly with Erenburg. This allowed GM Timur Gareev and IM Sam Shankland to get within striking distance. Timur showed good form after his round two hiccup and demolished GM Bykhovsky, while Sam won a wild game against GM Axel Bachmann. Everyone and their mother thought Sam was lost or at least in big trouble, but it turns out things were never so simple, and in fact Bachmann was the one who had to play precisely to hold. This win left Sam in great shape for his norm, needing only a half point in his next two games. Round 7 was also an interesting round for myself, as I got to sacrifice my queen. The computer thinks I should be riding the short bus, but I'm still not convinced it was bad. I'll leave you to decide.

Round 8 saw Van Wely and Gareev draw, allowing Erenburg to catch Loek with a nice effort over Sam Shankland. This put a slight damper on Sam's norm chances, though quite obviously not a huge one. I have to learn to list the eventual winners at the end of the article, far more dramatic. Here is the game with Sergey's comments.

Erenburg,Sergey (2600) - Shankland,Samuel (2498) [B90]

Berkeley International (8), 06.01.2011

1.e4 c5

Surprise. I expected 1...c6, where Sam has achieved very good results recently. The point is that I don't really understand Caro-Kann, which was confirmed by some of the comments made by the US Chess League Game of the Year judges.

2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Be3 e5 7.Nf3



A more solid line. I felt that Sam might have been prepared better against the sharper 7.Nb3.

7...Qc7

preventing Bc4 and preparing b7-b5. 7...Be7 is considered to be a main line. **8.a4 Be7 9.a5** fixing black's pawns on the queenside. White prevented comfortable development of black's queenside, so now black's two logical plans are attacking white's a5 pawn and carrying out the d6-d5 breakthrough.

9...0-0 10.Be2 Nc6 11.Bb6 Qd7

Threatening with Bd8, which forces White to play

12.Nd2 d5 13.exd5 Nxd5 14.Nxd5 Qxd5 15.0-0

Black carried out d6-d5, but White still has some chance to get a slightly better position, thanks to the b6 outpost. 15.Bf3 is met by 15...Qb5.

15...Be6

covering the a2-g8 diagonal. [15...Bf5 is a reasonable alternative. White achieved nothing after 16.Nc4 Nd4 17.Bd3 (17.Ne3!?) 17...Bxd3 18.Qxd3 Bc5 19.Rfe1 Rae8 20.Ne3 Qd6 21.Bxc5 Qxc5= ½-½ Harikrishna,P (2645)-Volokitin,A (2671)/Lausanne 2005/CBM 108 ext (46)

16.Nc4

16.c3 Bd8! (16...e4 17.Qc2 Bf5 18.Nc4 Bg6 19.Ne3 Qg5 20.Qb3² 1-0 Smirin,I (2615)-Kuczynski,R (2515)/Moscow 1994/CBM 045 (29)) 17.Bf3?! (17.Nc4 is probably better) 17...Qb5 18.c4 Qb4 19.Bxc6 Bxb6 20.axb6 bxc6 ½-½ Krejci,J (2455)-Szabo,K (2506)/Chur SUI 2010/The Week in Chess 813 (66)

16...Qb5!

White is better after 16...Qxd1 17.Rfxd1

17.b3 e4!

Preparing the queen's transfer to the kingside.

18.Ra4N



In the preceding game White tried 18.Qd2 Qf5 19.c3 Bg5?! (19...Ne5!?) 20.Qc2 Qg6 21.f4 Bh4 22.Rad1 ½-½ Hennigan,M (2415)-Sadler,M (2535)/Hastings 1993/CBM 039 (33)

18...Qg5

18...Rad8!? This positional sacrifice is the first choice suggested by almost every engine. Black gets full control over the dark squares and his pieces get extremely active. However, Sam and I felt that eventually White should be better. For instance: 19.Bxd8 Rxd8 20.Qe1! (20.Qc1 Nd4 21.Bd1 Bg5 22.Qa3 Qd7 23.Qb4) 20...Nd4 21.Bd1

19.Ne3

Black's plan is to develop initiative on the kingside by pushing his "f" pawn. Therefore, I had to create some counterplay in the center. 19.Qd2!? deserved attention.

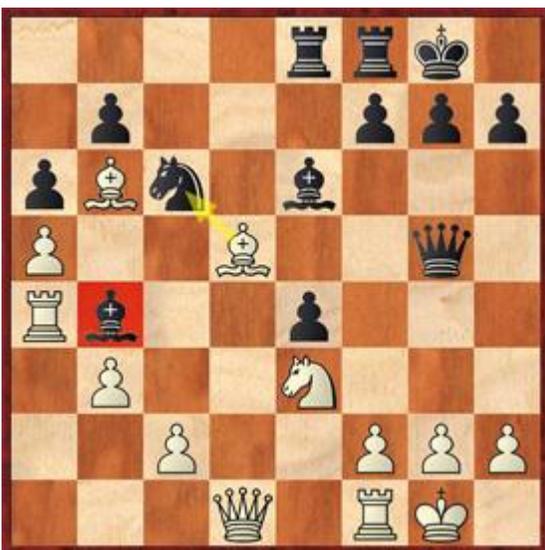
19...Bb4!

Leaving white's rook out of the game. In fact, I felt that my position was slightly better, but I underestimated this move. [19...f5 20.Bc4]

20.Bc4 Rae8

20...Bxc4 turns out to be playable as well. Black equalizes after 21.Nxc4 Rae8 22.c3! Bc5 (22...Bxc3?! 23.Nd6) 23.Bxc5 Qxc5 24.Nd6 Re5=]

21.Bd5!



21...Bxd5 22.Qxd5

22.Nxd5?! is met by 22...Bd6

22...Re5 23.Qd7 Bxa5?

Finally Sam goes wrong. Black could have equalized after 23...Re7 24.Qf5 Qxf5 25.Nxf5 Rd7! This move was overlooked by my opponent. (25...Re5 26.Nd4) 26.Nd4 Nxd4 (26...Bxa5 is probably worse: 27.Bc5 Nxd4 28.Bxf8 /=) 27.Rxb4 Ne2+ 28.Kh1 f5=

24.Qxb7 Bxb6 25.Qxb6 Re6 26.Qb7!

Apparently, this is the only move that gives White an advantage. White's superior pawn structure gives me a stable edge. [After 26.Qxa6?? Nd4 27.Qa5 Nf3+ 28.Kh1 Qf4 Black's attack proves to be decisive.; 26.Qc7? enables 26...Ne5]

26...a5

After 26...Rb8 27.Qc7 Black's pieces are paralyzed.; 26...Ne5? 27.Qxe4

27.Rc4!

It turns out that black's monarch is more vulnerable than his counterpart.

27...Qg6

27...Ne5 28.Rc8±

28.Nd5

At this point, I was close to get into time trouble, so I was happy to repeat a position once. The following continuations promise White an edge: 28.Kh1 Rd6 29.Rc5; 28.Rd1 f5 29.Nd5 Qh5 30.Re1; 28.Qc7

28...Ne5?!

28...Qg5 29.Ne3 (29.Rc5 Nd4) 29...Qg6 30.Kh1 (30.Rd1; 30.Qc7)

29.Rc8 Qg5

29...Nf3+ 30.Kh1 Qh5 31.Rxf8+ Kxf8 32.Qc8+ Re8 33.Qc5+ Kg8 34.Ne7+-

30.Nc7± /+-



Winning the central pawn. [30.Qa8 Nd7]

30...Rd6

30...Nf3+ 31.Kh1 Qf4 (31...Rg6 32.Rxf8+ Kxf8 33.Qa8+-) 32.Rxf8+ Kxf8 33.Qb8+ Ke7 34.Nd5+-

31.Rxf8+ Kxf8 32.Qxe4 Rd4 33.Qa8+ Rd8 34.Qe4

Same trick again. White wins some time before forty moves are completed.

34...Rd4 35.Qb7 g6

35...Rd7 36.f4 Nf3+ 37.Kh1 Qd8 38.Qxf3 Qxc7

36.h3 a4?

Black blunders in White's time trouble. Better is 36...Rd7 37.f4 Nf3+! 38.Qxf3 Qc5+± /+-

37.Qa8+?

I should have won on the spot after 37.f4! Rxf4 38.Ne6+! fxe6 39.Qb4+-

37...Kg7

37...Rd8 38.Qxa4 Nf3+ 39.Kh1 Qe5 40.gxf3 Qxc7 41.Qe4+-

38.bxa4 Rc4?!

Black's last chance was 38...Qe7 39.Nb5 Rc4.

39.Ne8+ Kh6 40.Nd6+- Rxc2



41.Nxf7+

It wasn't too late to make a mistake: 41.f4? Nf3+! 42.Qxf3 Qc5+²; 41.Qe4 Rc7 42.f4 Nf3+

41...Nxf7 42.Qf8+ Kh5 43.Qxf7 Kh6 44.Rd1

Special thanks go to my friends Sam Shankland and Timur Gareev for helping me to analyze this game. **1-0**

Norm seekers had their way in round 9. Shankland as White drew quickly with Van Wely, thus clinching his prize with a round to spare. It's difficult to know what to do against people chasing after norms. In one sense you want to be nice and not get in their way, yet at the same time they have all the pressure on them and if they only need a draw you can probably offer one even in a terrible position. I think it really depends on your level of sadism. Denys Shmelov had been having an incredible tournament, clinching his IM norm with ease, and scored his first GM Norm with a crushing win against Erenburg. Enjoy these annotations by Denys himself.

Shmelov - Erenburg [D11]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 a6 5.a4

Hardly the most testing line, but I wanted to avoid long theoretical lines, which my opponent knows very well.

5...e6 6.Nc3 c5

Now the game transposes to Queen's Gambit Accepted structures.

7.Bd3 Nc6 8.0-0 cxd4 9.exd4 Nb4



But this is dubious, although it will take some strong play from White to refute this idea. The natural 9...dxc4 10.Bxc4 transposes to a Queen's Gambit Accepted.

10.c5

10.Be2?! dxc4 11.Bxc4 Nfd5 justifies Black's idea - he's up a tempo in the main line, since it took white bishop 3 moves to get to c4.

10...b6 11.cxb6 Nxd3 12.Qxd3 Qxb6

The resulting position is rather unclear. Black has two bishops, and d4 pawn may become weak in the long run. However, Black wasted some time on knight maneuver, and White can establish some pressure on dark squares using his edge in development.

13.Bf4

13.a5 is more accurate, taking over dark squares immediately.

13...Bb4! 14.Ne5



14...Bb7

But this inaccuracy allows white to execute his idea. Bishop on b7 is very vulnerable and attacking it will become a main tactical theme in ensuing complications. [14...a5]

15.a5 Qd8

5...Bxa5 16.Na4 Qa7 17.Nc5 Bb6 looks precarious, but white doesn't have anything immediate. Rash 18.Nc6 Bxc6 19.Rxa6 runs into 19...Bxc5 20.Rxa7 Bxa7 21.Qa6 Kd7 22.Rc1 (looks like black is about to collapse) 22...Bc5! and black consolidates, while keeping his material.

16.Na4 Qxa5

Black doesn't want to allow Na4-b6 or Qd3-b3, but after this move white's initiative is just too strong.

17.Rfc1 Qd8



This move allows a pseudo-sac, after which white wins back his pawn.

18.Nxf7 Kxf7 19.Rc7+ Qxc7

19...Be7 20.Rxb7 is hopeless - weakness on e6 and shaky king will eventually doom Black.

20.Bxc7 Bc6 21.Nc5

With an extra queen White gets a little sloppy. It's understandable, that he wants to put some pressure on e6 or exchange dark-squared bishop, but now Black gets some chances.

21...Bb5 22.Qh3

Again, White wants to pressure Black, but he easily parries the threats, and gets a passed pawn.

22...Bxc5 23.dxc5 Rac8 24.Bd6 d4 25.Re1 Rhe8

Now that Black has some counterplay, White's best bet is to create direct attack (the black king is still weak very weak).

26.g4 h6 27.f4 d3 28.g5 d2 29.Rd1 Ne4 30.gxh6 Be2?



Unfortunately, Black blunders at the moment where he might have enough to salvage the game. 30...Nxd6 31.cxd6 Rc1 forces white to find 32.Kf2 and White has a lot of work to do before he can register a full point.

31.Qg2 Rg8 32.Qxe2 gxh6+ 33.Kf1



1-0



Keaton Kiewra

Keaton Kiewra also scored a GM norm in fine style, beating Robert Hess as black in a Dragon variation. Keaton had been a rock all tournament, not losing a game against very strong opposition, and defeating a strong GM with black was icing on the cake.

Young FM Daniel Naroditsky also snagged his final IM Norm by beating GM Dejan Bojkov with the black pieces, while Holt put the final touches on his IM title by beating Hungarian IM Sipos.

Going into the final round, all the pressure for norms had been lifted, leaving the leaders to fight it out for first place. Van Wely was once again ahead, with Erenburg, Gareev, myself, and Denys Shmelov half a point back. Loek decided being nice once a tournament was enough and beat Shmelov to clinch first place with 8/10.

Erenburg faced Gareev, and they played an amazingly complex ending resulting from a rather tame Exchange Ruy, with Sergey eventually coming out on top and finishing in 2nd with 7.5. I faced Magesh Panchanathan as black, and it was a back and forth affair full of blunders, oversights, and just plain stupidity. More of it was from my end than his, however, and he eventually came through with the full point. This allowed him to slip into clear 3rd with 7. There were a number of us tied for 4th at 6.5, and I'm far too lazy to name them, but I'm sure [Jenn will provide links to the crosstable](#).

Overall it was quite an interesting tournament with lots of fighting chess, rides to train stations and Turkish restaurants at midnight, and a lot of good fun. Hopefully Arun decides to hold another one next year. I'll see if I can get him to make any more foolish bets!