

Letchworth & Hitchin 1 v Hertford 1

Division 1A – 17-01-22

There is a tendency to blame Covid for many things these days, but how else do you explain Watford sitting at the bottom of Division 1B with a record of played 3 lost 3, including a loss to the St Albans second team! Our own first team has got a bit lucky in our previous two matches so started 2022 at the top of Division 1A. Our opponents last night, Letchworth & Hitchin, had already drawn their first two matches against Little Heath and Bishop's Stortford so a tight encounter was anticipated.

I was dragged out of captaincy retirement for the evening so spent a bit more time than usual wandering round the other boards to see how we were doing. One game in particular, or at least the opening sequence, caught my eye - no make that unable to believe my eyes.

My apologies to Simon Morris if I have got the move order wrong but this is what I recall seeing....

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 f5?! 3. Nxe5 Qe7 4. d4 Nc6 5. Nc3 leading to the following position.



Now my opening database has 9 games with this unusual position where Black has played either 5.....Nxe5 or 5.....Nf6 scoring a grand total of 1.5 points out of 9, but no, these moves must have looked far too routine for Simon who uncorked 5.....Qb4?! Now White has the crushing 6. Qh5+ at his disposal, but that didn't happen and about 10 moves later I began to quite like Simon's position and he went on to a fine win. So Simon, have I got something wrong here or did this actually happen?

On Board 2 Paul gave his opponent just a little bit too much initiative for the sacrificed pawn and lost. Ian won a pawn early on but was unable to convert in the double rook ending and agreed the draw. Mark's game was going on directly behind me and though I saw the early stages where he was doing well it all turned later on and Mark lost in the ending.

My own game was quite tight but, as I mentioned in my previous article, I have intentionally been playing quite quickly with this time-control so as we reached the position below after

playing 29. Ra1-d1 I still had 20 minutes left while my opponent had less than 5 minutes. The computer evaluates this position as equal but White has some definite threats including Bc2 followed by Qe4. However, after a couple of minutes thought Black just gave away a pawn with 29.....Qc6? and there followed 30. Qxc4 Rc7 31 Bxc5 Qxc5 32. Qxc5 Rxc5 33. Rd4 Rd8-c8 34. Rf1-d1...and in this lost position Black ran out of time.



So, a drawn match and we retain our leading position in the division for now. Little Heath are our next opponents at home on the 25th of the month.

	<u>Letchworth & Hitchin</u>			Hertford
1	M Fletcher	0	1	S Swanson
2	J Abrams	1	0	P Byway
3	I Nelson	0.5	0.5	I Capes
4	J Barnes	0	1	S Morris
5	S Burton	1	0	M <u>Buswell</u>
		2.5	2.5	