

Lincolnshire's county team were in action recently. Captain Nigel Birtwistle has put together a strong squad and having won the MCCU minor counties round robin by winning all their matches they were in confident mood against Norfolk in the quarter finals of the national competition.

On board 11 Lincolnshire's Francis Bowers, who now lives in Peterborough, was paired as white against John Allison from Norwich with the opening following the French Defence 1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. Qg4 Nf6 5. Qxg7 Rg8 6. Qh6 dxe4 7. Bg5 Nbd7 8. 0-0-0 Bxc3 9. bxc3 Qe7 10. Kb2 and honours are even after an unusual continuation.

Francis now played 10. ...Ng4 forcing an exchange of queens 11. Bxe7 Nxe6 12. Bh4 Nf5 13. Bg3 Nxe3 14. hxg3 Nf6 and after a further exchange both players have weakened pawns although Francis now has an open h-file for his rook.

Play continued 15. Re1 Bd7 16. Rh6 Ke7 17. Nh3 Bc6 18. Nf4 Rad8 19. Be2 e3 20. fxe3 Rxe3 and black is putting pressure on Francis's pawn on g2 (see diagram) but has presented an opportunity for Francis - can you see it?

Francis played 21. Rxf6 Kxf6 22. Nh5+ Ke7 23. Nxe3 winning a piece and went on to win a few moves later.

Wins also for Lincoln's David Coates and Claudio Mangione, Louth's Harry Russell and Samuel Milson and Grimsby's Stuart MacDonald together with draws for Chris Dorrington, Paul Cumbers, Nigel Birtwistle, Nick Payne, Nick Stead, Daniel Wells, Geoff Collyer, Denis Georgiou and Ian McDonald gave Lincolnshire a comfortable 10½ to 5½ victory and now go forward to meet reigning champions Hertfordshire in the semi-finals.

