

Lincolnshire's team in the Minor Counties competition reached the national semi-finals for the second year running. After winning all their matches in the Midland Counties group stage and a comfortable win against Norfolk in the national quarter finals they had home advantage at St.Guthlac's Church Hall in Market Deeping against reigning champions Hertfordshire they were hoping to go one better than last year when they lost to Middlesex at the same stage.

On board 2 Lincoln's Paul Cumbers was paired at black against Steve Swanson from Hertford and we pick up the game after white has just played 21. b4 (see diagram).

Paul decided to spice things up by playing 21. ...c3 22. Bxc3 Nc4 preferring to give up the pawn in order to give his knight a key position on c4 23. Ng5 Bxg5 24. hxg5 Rxa3 and Paul won back the pawn whilst opening up white's queen side.

Play continued 25. b5 Nxe5 (winning another pawn for black threatening 26. ...Rxc3) 26. Re3 Nc4 27. Re1 Qd6 28. Nf4 Qe7 29. Qh5 Rb3 30. Nd3 Qa3 31. Ra1 Qe7 32. Re1 Nd6 33. Bb4 pinning Paul's knight but this allowed Paul to win a piece after 33. ...Rxc1+ 34. Nxc1 Rxb4 (or 34. Rxc1 Rxd3) and he went on to win a few moves later.

Wins also for Grimsby's Nick Stead, Samuel Milson from Louth and Francis Bowers from Peterborough together with draws for Chris Dorrington, David Coates, Harry Russell, Nick Payne, Ivan David, Geoff Collyer and Ian McDonald in a very tightly contested match but it was not quite enough as Hertfordshire ran out winners by 8½ to 7½.

