

Lincolnshire's county team in the Under 120 grade competition began their campaign this season. A new venture at this level with John Grasham, Louth Chess Club and County secretary, stepping forward to captain the team with the aim of giving some of our up and coming junior players some experience at county level.

The first match, in the Midland Counties group stage, was against Staffordshire Bulldogs played at the neutral venue of the Thurmaston Old School in Leicestershire. Lincolnshire is one of six teams in the all-play-all format with the top two teams going forward to the national stages.

On board 5, John himself was paired as white against Mike Savin and we pick up the game after black has just played 31. ...Nc6 having just gone a pawn up so John has it all to do (See diagram).

Play continued 32. f4 Nxe5 33. Nxe5 b5 34. Kd4 b4 35. Kc4 bxa3 36. bxa3 Be7 37. a4 Kf8 38. Nc6 Bd6 39. Kb5 Ke8 40. Kxa5 Kd7 and John regained the pawn with the king keeping the knight to defend black's kingside pawns 41. Kb6 Kc8 42. Ne5 Bc7+ 43. Kb5 f6 44. Nc6 e5 45. fxe5 fxe5 giving black a passed pawn 46. Ne7+ Kb7 47. Nd5 Bd6 48. Kc4 Ka6 49. Kd3 Ka5 50. Ke4 Kxa4 and John gives up the a-pawn concentrating on black's kingside.

Play continued 51. Ne3 Kb5 52. Ng4 Kc6 53. Nxe5+ Kc7 54. Kf5 Bb4 55. Kg6 Bc3 56. Nd3 Kd6 57. Nf4 Bd4 58. Nh5 Be3 59. Nxc7 winning the pawn and the game a few moves later.

John's was Lincolnshire's only win but there were draws for Ian Scott, Chris Cumbers, James Kelly and Joe Scarborough and despite the Bulldog's defaulting on the bottom two boards it was not quite enough as Staffordshire ran out winners 7-5.

