

Lincolnshire's Team in the Midland Minor Counties competition group stage got underway in this season's campaign with a match against Derbyshire played at the Lindum Group atrium at North Hykeham. In the last two seasons Lincolnshire have won the Midland Counties group stage and gone on to the National competition only to lose in the semi-finals.

Captain Nigel Birtwistle has again put together a strong squad of players with the average grade of 173 being just 7 below the 180 average limit for Minor County teams, compared with Derbyshire's average of 156, so were looking for a good start to the campaign and in this week's featured game Paul Cumbers (graded 190), who now lives in Sheffield, was paired as white on board 4 against Derek Jarvis (graded 171) and we pick up the game after black has just played 22. ...c4 (see diagram).

Paul played 23. Qf3 Nf8 24. gxh4 winning the pawn although with doubled h-pawns but this has opened up the g-file in front of black's king 24. ...Ne6 25. Rc2 Qh4 26. Rf1 Red8 27. Rg2 which Paul now takes advantage of 27. ...Rc6 28. Be1 Qe7 29. Qg4 Qf8 30. f5 Nc7 31. Bb4 and black resigned as 31. ...Qxb4 32. Qxg7 is mate.

Wins also for Chris Dorrington who now plays for Bath University, Nick Stead and Stuart MacDonald from Grimsby, the Louth trio of Samuel Milson, Keith Palmer and Harry Russell and also Ian McDonald of Lincoln together with draws for Claudio Mangione, Denis Georgiou, Ivan David, Alistair Summers and Geoff Collyer gave Lincolnshire a comfortable win by 10½ points to 5½.

