

Lincoln's team in Division 1 belatedly got their season underway when Scunthorpe were the visitors to South Park. Having on the Division 1 title for the last 3 seasons Lincoln could be forgiven for being in confident mood, particularly as Scunthorpe had held the wooden spoon for the same period of time. However, with a number of Lincoln's top players unavailable this was not a foregone conclusion and when, after 3 games had finished, Scunthorpe led 2-1, with Geoff Collyer gaining Lincoln's only point, the reigning champions had it all to do.

This was compounded when Lincoln's Herman Kok, playing white against Scunthorpe's Bill Egan, found himself in a difficult position after black had just played 35. ...b5 (see diagram) followed by 36. Ne3 (not 36. cxb5 Kxd5) 36. ...b4 37. Nd5 a4 38. Nf4 b3. Herman is threatening 39. Ne6+ or 39. Nxc6 but black is threatening 39. ...bxa2 or 39. axb3 a3.

Herman played 39. a3 b2 40. Kc2 Kxc4 41. Nxc6 maintaining his pawn advantage 41. ...Bd4 42. f4 b1(Q)+ 43. Kxb1 Kb3 and it looks like black can take the pawn on a3 and then shepherd in the pawn on a4. Herman played 44. Ne5 Kxa3 45. Kc2 Kb4 and it looked like there was nothing to stop black's pawn. However, Herman played 46. Nc6+ Kc4 47. Nxd4 Kxd4 completely turning the game round 48. g4 hxg4 49. hxg4 and black resigned as Herman's linked passed pawns won the day bringing the match to 2-2.

In another knife edge encounter with both players having only seconds on the clock Lincoln captain David Coates also won his game to start Lincoln's title defense with a 3-2 win.

Lincoln Chess Club play at the RAOB Club, 58 South Park on Wednesdays at 7.30pm. www.lincolinchessclub.co.uk

