

Lincolnshire's team in the Minor Counties competition were in action against Norfolk in the national semi-finals played at the neutral venue of Peterborough Bridge Club in New England. Lincolnshire lost to Norfolk in last season's final so were hoping to turn the tables in this season's encounter.

On board 9 Lincoln's Murray Smith was paired as white against Daniel Freat from the Broadland Chess Club in Coltishall and we pick up the game after black has just played 27. ...cxb6 (see diagram) after an exchange on knights. Murray's king now concentrated on the pawn on h6 whilst his knight and bishop held off any attack from black 28. Kh4 b5 29. Kh5 b4 30. cxb4 Kb5 31. Kg6 Bxb4 32. Ke7 Ne7 33. Bxh6 winning the pawn for white and now Murray's pawn on h3 has a clear run.

Play continued 33. ...Nc6 34. h4 Nd4 35. h5 Bxd2 36. Bxd2 Nxf3 37. h6 Nxd2 38. h7 Nxe4 39. h8(Q) and Murray went on to win a few moves later.

Wins also for Chris Holt and Andy Hebert both from Grantham and Nick Stead from Grimsby plus draws for Chris Dorrington, Samuel Milson, Paul Cumbers, Jason Dilley, Harry Russell, Stuart Williams, Keith Palmer and Kevin McCarthy who was drafted in as a last minute replacement meant that the result was drawn 8-8.

So the tie now had to be decided on board count where the board numbers of the winning players (2, 9, 13 and 16 for Lincolnshire and 5, 10, 11 and 14 for Norfolk) are added together (Lincolnshire 40, Norfolk 41) which meant that Lincolnshire, with the lower total, by 1 point, went through and now play Suffolk in the final.

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

