

Following on from Lincolnshire's 8½ to 7½ win over Leicestershire in the Minor Counties qualifying section reported a couple of weeks ago, captain Nigel Birtwiistle has sent me his game. Nigel lives in Boston but plays for Grantham, champions of Nottinghamshire League Division 1, and has put together a formidable squad being finalists in the national stages in each of the last 2 seasons.

In this game Nigel, as white, was paired against Ray Burgess from Thurnby with the Reti Opening being followed in the initial stages 1. Nf3 d5 2. c4 Nf6 3. g3 e6 4. Bg2 Be7 5. 0-0 0-0 and both players castled to secure their kings 6. d4 c5 7. cxd5 exd5 8. Nc3 Nc6 9. dxc5 Bxc5 and after a series of exchanges black is left with an isolated pawn on d5.

Play continued 10. Bg5 Be7 11. Rc1 h6 12. Bf4 Bg4 13. h3 Be6 and both players threatened but did not capture the knights on f3 and f6 14. Nd4 Qd7 15. Nxe6 fxe6 and the pawn on d5 is supported but with a hanging pawn on e6. 16. Qd3 Rac8 17. Rfd1 Rfd8 18. h4 Bd6 19. Bxd6 Qxd6 20. Bh3 Ne5 and now Nigel attacks the pawn on e6. 21. Qd4 Nc6 22. Qe3 Kf7 bringing more pressure to bear and setting up a position to gain material (see diagram) - can you see it?

Nigel played 23. Nb5 Qe7 24. Nxa7 Nxa7 25. Qxa7 Ra8 26. Qb6 Rxa2 and it looks like black has won back the pawn but now Nigel played 27. Bxe6+ Qxe6 28. Qxd8 winning a rook and pawn for a bishop 28. ...Rxb2 29. Rc7+ Kg6 30. Re7 Qh3 31. Qf8 and black resigned as the knight is lost.

Lincoln Chess Club play at the Lincoln Labour Club, Grafton House, 32 Newland. LN1 1XJ on Wednesdays at 7.30pm.
www.lincolinchessclub.co.uk

