

Lincolnshire's team were in action in the Open section of the National Online County Championships semi-finals against Norfolk. Lincolnshire have won all but one of their group stage matches finishing top of Division 1A. Norfolk, runners up in Division 1B, are clearly a useful outfit but captain Nigel Birtwistle as assembled a competitive team throughout the campaign.

It is Nigel himself whose game is featured as he is paired as black against Daniel Frean from Broadland with the opening following the Benko gambit 1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 c5 3. d5 b5 4. Qc2 b4 5. e4 d6 6. f4 g6 with white's central pawns dominating the centre countered by Nigel's queen side pawns making an advance 7. Nf3 Bg7 8. Bd3 0-0 9. 0-0 Nbd7 and both sides have castled 10. a3 Re8 11. f5 Ng4 12. h3 Ne5 13. Nxe5 Nxe5 14. Nd2 a5 15. Nf3 Bd7 16. Rb1 e6 and now Nigel confronts the white pawn advance 17. dxe6 fxe6 18. fxg6 hxg6 19. Bf4 Nxf3+ 20. Rxf3 Rf8 21. Rbf1 Bd4+ 22. Kh1 e5 and Nigel's bishop on d4 is looking very strong 23. Bh6 Rxf3 24. Rxf3 Qh4 25. Qd2 and white queen supports the bishop on h6 (see diagram) but this provides Nigel with an opportunity - can you see it?

Nigel played 25. ...Bxb2 26. Bg5 Bc3 27. Bxh4 Bxd2 effectively exchanging queens but with Nigel having gained a pawn 28. Be7 Re8 29. Bxd6 bxa3 30. Bxc5 a2 and white has regained the pawn but after 31. Rf1 Bc3 white resigned unable to stop the pawn promotion without loss of material.

Wins also for Jason Dilley, Paul Cumbers, Kevin McCarthy and David Coates plus draws for Matthew Turner, Murray Smith, Daniel Wells, Joe Kilshaw and Nick Stead gave Lincolnshire a comfortable win by 7.5 to 4.5 and now play Northumberland in the final.

Lincoln Chess Club play at the Lincoln Labour Club, Grafton House, 32 Newland. LN1 1XJ on Wednesdays at 7.30pm. Although we are yet to meet due to the lockdown [www.lincolnchessclub.co.uk](http://www.lincolnchessclub.co.uk)

