

Lincolnshire's team in the Open section of the National Online County Championships, set up to replace the Over-the-board equivalent during the lockdown, has done very well to reach the final when they met Northumberland. Captain Nigel Birtwistle has assembled a strong team throughout the tournament as shown by the previous results where Lincolnshire won all but one of their group games and easily overcame Norfolk in the semi-final.

The 12 matches commenced with all players sat in front of their home computers moves were transmitted using the chess.com and it is Nigel's game that we follow where he was paired as white on board 4 against Tim Wall with the opening moves following the Reti advanced variation 1. Nf3 d5 2. c4 d4 where black's pawn on d4 tries to make life awkward 3. b4 Bg4 4. Qb3 a5 5. b5 f6 5. e3 e5 6. exd5 exd5 and black maintains the pawn on d5 but the e-file is now open.

Play continued 7. Be2 Bc5 8. 0-0 Nh6 9. h3 a4 10. Qc2 Bf5 11. Bd3 Qd7 12. Re1+ Kf7 and black forfeits the chance to castle 13. Ba3 b6 14. Bxc5 bxc5 doubling black's c-pawns 15. Na3 Re8 16. Rxe8 Kxe8 17. Nh4 g6 18. Bxf5 gxf5 and now black's f-pawns are also doubled 19. Re1+ Kf8 20. Qd3 c6 21. Qf3 Ra7 22. Qf4 (see diagram) and before Nigel can seek to take advantage of black's pawn structure he is presented with an opportunity with both black's knights en prise and black resigned.

However, this was not to be Lincolnshire's day as our only other winner was Paul Cumber which, together with draws for Jason Dilley, Nick Stead and David Coates meant that Northumberland were worthy winners by 8.5 to 3.5.

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.lincolncchessclub.co.uk

