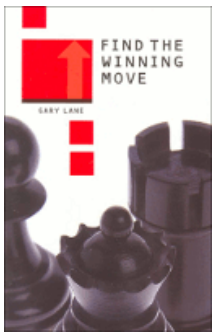




## SKITTLES ROOM

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## From the Archives...

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## The 1999 British Championships, Part One

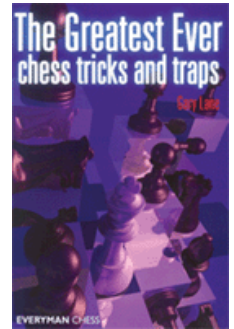
by Gary Lane

The 86th British Championships have started in the English seaside resort of Scarborough. A record entry of over a thousand players in the various competitions has so far produced a memorable chess festival and a positive ambience. The main attraction is the title of the British Champion, which has encouraged ninety-two players to enter the championship by having an Elo of at least 2360 or by taking part in one of the many qualifying tournaments around the country. Some observers thought that the absence of the top five English players in Las Vegas, Adams, Miles, Short, Sadler, and Speelman, would lower the standard of the tournament. In fact, it has encouraged more titled players to challenge for first place, creating a higher than usual strength in depth.

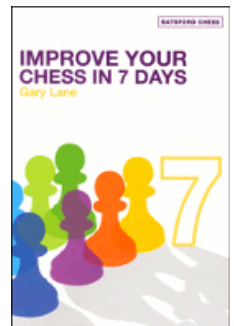
One of the attractive features about the contest is the cosmopolitan nature of the competitors. The contest is open to members of the Commonwealth, which is why a group of players from Bangladesh and India are welcome visitors headed by GM Praveen Thipsay. Also playing is Alexander Baburin, who now represents Ireland, and Joe Gallagher, who, despite playing for Switzerland in the Olympiad, is eligible as a result of dual citizenship. The early leader is pre-tournament favourite Julian Hodgson with a score of 5.5/6. The race for the title over eleven games will be tough, especially as the honour of being champ is made more alluring by the prospect of winning £10,000 - the richest prize in Britain. This motivating force is made possible by the sponsor, the Smith and Williamson Group, who combine a firm of chartered accountants with an investment management and private banking house.

The attraction for many players of the tournament is the social aspect with the nearby bars filling up with people who spend more time discussing the Sicilian than the weather. A commentary room analysing the top four boards provides an insight for the spectators, and any top player wandering into the room is soon persuaded to give an impromptu lecture. Chess is not the only attraction as the traditional cricket match takes place on the rest day. This basically means the amiable captain IM Andrew Martin spends a week persuading anyone who will listen to wear their 'whites' and take part in a friendly game against a local club side. Sadly, the chess players record in recent years has been less than impressive mainly due to excessive laughter but I am assured that this year it will be different.

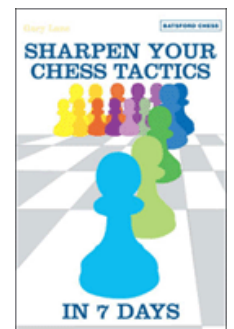
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If sport is not to your taste, then it is possible to reserve a seat for a piano concert to be given by Welsh international Francis Rayner. The local tourist board have kindly arranged for an impressive theatre for the performance and posters featuring a chess set and piano can be seen around the town. I cannot confirm or deny rumours circulating that next year Nigel Short will reform his teenage pop band The Urge for a special performance! Other attractions include nightly quickplay events and a chess trivia quiz. I can almost guarantee that next year the name Christopher Bellin will be the answer to one question. This is because his shared first place in the Under-8 section is unusual in that his parents are former British champion Robert Bellin and former British ladies champion Jana Bellin. All in all, the British is the perfect holiday tournament.

Results thus far:

- **First (5½/6)**
- J. Hodgson
- **Second - Fourth (5)**
- B. Lalic
- P. Wells
- D. Gormally
- **Fifth - Tenth (4½)**
- C. Ward
- J. Rowson
- J. Gallagher
- Z. Rahman
- A. Baburin
- M. Turner
- **Eleventh - Twenty-first (4)**
- J. Emms
- M. Hebden
- P. Thipsay
- S. Conquest
- A. Al-rakib
- H. Hunt
- R. Bin Sattar
- G. Lane
- A. Kosten
- M. Heidenfield
- K. Sasikiran

#### **D. Gormally (2476) - J. Emms (2586)**

British Championship  
Sicilian Scheveningen [B82]

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 a6 5 Bd3 Nf6 6 Nc3 Qc7 7 Qe2 d6 J.**

Howell-J. Emms, Cappelle la Grande 1994, saw Black try 7...Bc5 to push the central knight back to b3. After 8 Nb3 Emms played solidly after 8 Be7 9 f4 d6 10 a4 b6 11 Qf3 Nbd7 12 Bd2 Bb7 13 Qg3 0-0 14 Rael d5 15 exd5 Nxd5 16 Nxd5 Bxd5 17 Qh3 f5 18 Kh1 Bf6 19 c4 Bxc4 20 Rc1 b5 21 Na5 Nc5 22 Nxc4 Nxd3 23 Qxd3 Rfd8 24 Qe2 bxc4 25 Bc3 Bxc3 ½-½. **8 f4 Be7** After the game Danny Gormally told me he was more worried about 8 Nbd7 with the idea of b7-b5 and Bb7. Perhaps Emms was wary of facing an improvement on his game from 1994, when in Cappelle la Grande he played 8 Nbd7 against Roth followed by a kingside fianchetto. The game continued: 9 Nf3 g6 10 0-0 Bg7 11 Kh1 0-0 12 Bd2 b6 13 Rael Bb7 14 Qf2 b5 15 Qh4 b4 16 Nd1 a5 17 f5 Rae8 18 Bh6 exf5 19 Ng5 fxe4 20 Bb5 Nh5 21 Bxg7 Kxg7 22 Ne3 when White had insufficient compensation for the material. **9 Nf3 0-0?!** Black mistakenly invites a lightening attack by not taking seriously the threat of e5 which will oust the defender of h7. 9 Nbd7 should be considered. **10 e5 Nfd7 11 h4!**



[FEN "mb2rk1/1pqnbpPP/p2pp3/4P3/5P1P/2NB1N2/PPP1Q1P1/R1B1K2R b KQ h3 0 11"]

This is enterprising play by Gormally who has a reputation for playing sharp openings and signals his desire to attack. It is also a good choice against Emms who always seems to be up to date in the main lines. **11...dxe5 12 fxe5 Nc5** Black pins his hopes on avoiding a calamity by exchanging the bishop which is aimed at the vulnerable h7-pawn. **13 Bf4 Nxd3+ 14 cxd3 Nd7 15 Ng5 h6 16 Qe4!** The direct approach pays dividends because Black has no reserves to bring in to defend the position. **16...Bxg5** What else? If 16...hxg5, then 17 hxg5 opens up the h-file for the white rook with deadly effect after 17...g6 18 Qe3 followed by Qh3 with a big advantage. 16...f5 17 exf6 Nxf6 18 Bxc7 Nxe4 19 Ngxe4 or 16 g6 17 Nxe6! fxe6 18 Qxg6+ Kh8 19 Qxh6+ Kg8 20 Rh3 wins. **17 hxg5 Nc5 18 Qe3 hxg5 19 Qh3 f5 20 exf6 Nxd3+ 21 Qxd3 1-0**



[FEN "r1b2rk1/1pq3p1/p3pP2/6p1/5B2/2NQ4/PP4P1/R3K2R b KQ - 0 21"]

**K. Arkell (2462) - S. Conquest (2555)**  
British Championship  
Queen's Gambit Accepted [D23]

**1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 d5 3 c4 dxc4 4 Qa4+ c6** Black prefers to play quietly. The passive 4...Nbd7 allows White to have a space advantage after 5 Nc3 e6 6 e4. A good practical choice is 4...Nc6 to put pressure on the d-pawn. For example, 5 Nc3 Nd5 6 e4 (6 Qxc4 is a safe alternative) 6...Nb6 7 Qd1 Bg4 8 d5 Ne5 9 Qd4 Nxf3+ 10 gxf3 Bxf3 11 Rg1 Qd6 12 Qe3 Bh5 13 f4 e6 14 Rg5!? g6 15 Qd4 Rg8 16 Bxc4 h6 17 Re5? (voluntarily trapping his own rook although 17 Rg1 0-0-0 is better for Black) 17...0-0-0 18 Be3 Bg7 19 Bb3 exd5 20 exd5 Rge8 21 Ne4 Qd7 22 a4 Qf5 0-1, C. Crouch-C. Duncan, Hampstead 1998. **5 Qxc4 Bg4 6 Nbd2 Nbd7 7 g3 e6 8 Bg2 Be7 9 0-0 0-0 10 e4** In the post-mortem Arkell was not too convinced by his idea of e4 and e5 because his pawn centre is soon undermined. A good alternative is 10 Ne5 to prepare the advance e4. The game N. Rashkovsky-E. Najer, St. Petersburg 1998, continued 10...Bh5 11 Nxd7 Nxd7 12 Nb3 Bd6 13 e4 Qe7 14 Be3 Kh8 15 a4 a5 16 Bd2 Nb6 17 Qc2 Bb4 18 Be3+-. **10...Rc8 11 e5 Nd5 12 Ne4 c5!** Black wastes no time in trying to open the position. **13 Bg5** Ambitious. White wants to exchange the dark-squared bishop in order to install a knight on d6 but the plan is flawed. **13...cxd4 14 Qxd4 Bxf3** The key to Black's game is this exchange which seriously weakens the e5-pawn allowing it to be captured in just a few moves. **15 Bxe7 Nxe7 16 Bxf3 Nc6 17 Qa4 Nb6**



[FEN "2rq1rk1/pp3ppp/1nn1p3/4P3/Q3N3/5BP1/PP3P1P/R4RK1 w - - 0 18"]

The white queen is now hounded around the board allowing Black to improve the position of his pieces. **18 Qb5 Nd4 19 Qd3 Nc4 20 Bg2 Nxe5** Black is now a pawn up and wraps the game up in style. Personally, I thought Black had won the psychological battle before a move had even been played. This is because Arkell was visibly surprised to see Conquest stride up to the board wearing a large leather 'bush ranger' hat, which he had bought on a recent holiday in Australia. Keith could not keep his eyes off this addition to Stuart's wardrobe, at least that is his official excuse! **21 Qd1 Rc2 22 Qh5 f5 23 Nc3** White had wanted to try 23 Ng5, but it fails miserably to 23...Qxg5! 24 Qxg5 Nef3+ and Black wins a piece. **23...g6 24 Qd1 Qb6 25 Kh1 Ng4 26 Nb5 Ne2!** It appears that Black has lost the plot because the rook has been left unguarded. For instance, 27 Qxc2 Nxf2+ 28 Rxf2 Qxf2 29 Qd3 leaves Black a whole piece down. The explanation for Black's apparent act of madness is the spectacular 27...Qxf2!!



[FEN "5rk1/pp5p/4p1p1/1N3p2/6n1/6P1/PPQ1nqBP/R4R1K w - - 0 28"]

This offers the queen in exchange for mate. The queen is taboo due to 28 Rxf2 allowing 28...Nxf2 checkmate, which means White's position is hopeless in view of the twin threats 28 Nxc3+ uncovering an attack on the white queen and the conclusive 28 Qg1+ 29 Rxc1 Nf2 mate. **27 Qd3 Nxf2+ 28 Rxf2 Qxf2 29 Na3 Rd2 0-1**

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This article first appeared at [ChessCafe.com](http://ChessCafe.com) in August, 1999.

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