

This year's Midland Counties individual correspondence chess championship has come to a conclusion. Last July a strong 11 man field began an all play all tournament competing for the P C Gibbs Trophy.

My last and most interesting game was as black against Jim Miller from Leicestershire with the opening followed an unusual variation of the Sicilian Defence 1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. c4 e5 4. Nc3 Nc6 5. g3 Be7 6. Bg2 Nf6 7. 0-0 0-0 8. h3 Nd7 9. Nd5 f5 10. d3 Nb6 11. b3 Bf6 12. Bb2 Nxd5 13. exd5 Ne7 and white slightly is ahead with the pawn on d5 14. Re1 Ng6 15. Qe2 Bd7 16. a3 b5 17. b4 bxc4 18. dxc4 e4 and now I regained the advantage with the penetrating e4 allowing the knight to come into e5.

Play continued 19. Bxf6 Qxf6 20. Nd2 Rac8 21. Rab1 Ne5 22. bxc5 Rxc5 23. Rb7 Qd8 24. Reb1 a5 25. Ra7 a4 26. Ra6 Rc8 27. Qe3 Rf6 28. Bf1 Qe8 29. Rb7 Qg6 30. Qf4 Qh5 31. Rbb6 and Jim's rooks look very strong down the queen's side (see diagram) but I responded with a king's side pawn advance 31. ...g5 32. Qe3 f4 33. Qe2 Bg4 34. hxg4 Nxg4 sacrificing the bishop for a pawn but setting up the mate threat on h7.

With white's rooks out of position I took advantage 35. f3 exf3 36. Nxf3 fxg3 37. Rb7 Ne5 38. Qxe5 (loosing white's queen as 38. Nxe5 Rxf1 and 38. ...Nxf3 are both terminal) dxe5 39. Rxf6 e4 40. Rff7 exf3 41. Rxh7 Qxh7 42. Rxh7 Kxh7 regaining the queen but with the exchange and some menacing pawns down white resigned.

I finished with 8 points out of 10 putting me in 2nd place just ½ a point ahead of Jim who came equal third. The title went to defending champion Keith McLaughlin, also from Leicestershire on 9½ points.

