

The 4NCL season finished with the final series of matches for Division 4 being played at the West Bromwich Park Inn over the May Bank Holiday. David Coates, a regular with Slough Sharks for the second half of the campaign, finished with a creditable 3 wins and 2 draws from his 7 games.

In his final match he was paired as white against Mark Campbell from Cambridge University with the opening following the Sicilian Defence 1. e4 c5 2. c3 Nf6 3. e5 Nd5 4. d4 cxd4 5. Nf3 e6 6. cxd4 b6 7. Nc3 Nxc3 8. bxc3 Qc7 and black made a solid response to David's 2. c3 variation who now has to defend the hanging pawn on c3.

Play continued 9. Bd2 Bb7 10. Bd3 d6 11. 0-0 Nd7 12. Re1 dxe5 13. Nxe5 Nxe5 14. Rxe5 Bd6 15. Rh5 g6 16. Rh3 0-0 and David's defence of the h-pawn with 15. Rh5 has set up a king's side attack 17. Bh6 Rfe8 18. Qg4 Rac8 (not 18. ...Qxc3 as 19. ...Bxg6) 19. Rc1 e5 20. Bg5 exd4 (see diagram). David cannot play 21. cxd4 as 21. ...Qxc1+ 22. Bxc1 Rxc1+ 23. Bf1 Ba6 wins for black. Can you see white's next move?

White played 21. Rxh7 f5 (not 21. ...Kxh7 as 22. Qh4+ and 23. Bf6 is terminal) 22. Rxc7 fxg4 23. Rxb7 (winning a piece) dxc3 24. Bxg6 Re2 and David finishes the game with a nice combination 25. Bh7+ Kf8 26. Bh6+ Ke8 27. Bg6+ Kd8 28. Bg5+ Be7 29. Rd1+ Rd2 30. Bxe7 mate.

Unfortunately, Slough Sharks lost the match 1½ to 4½ and finished in 20th place out of 32 teams although a win in the last match would have put them in 10th position.

