

In recent years its almost become a tradition for Lincolnshire's county team to loose all their East Midlands round robin matches (but still qualify for the next round - as all teams go through) but this year we sensed a wind of change when the first match against Derbyshire was drawn. The second encounter took place at the picturesque Barkby Village Hall against Leicestershire. Despite being outgraded by about 25 points each, Lincolnshire's players felt that this could be their day.

On board 16 Boston Chess Club secretary Mark Stephens was matched as white against Bruce Denton with the opening following the Ruy Lopez Bird's Defence 1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 Nd4 4. Nxd4 exd4 5. d3 c5 6. Bc4 Qf6 7. h3 Ne7 8. Nd2 Nc6 9. Nf3 h6 10. a3 Be7 11. Qe2 d6 12. Bd2 Qg6 13. 0-0-0 0-0 with Mark electing to castle queens side with the view to setting up a pawn advance on black's king.

Play continued 14. Nh2 a6 15. f4 Qf6 16. f5 Ne5 17. Ng4 Nxe4 18. hxe4 Qe5 opening up h-file for the rook (see diagram) 19. Rh5 d5 20. Bxd5 Rd8 21. f6 Qxf6 22. Rf1 Qg6 23. Bxf7+ Qxf7 24. Rxf7 Kxf7 winning black's queen.

Mark took advantage with a neat finish 25. Qf3+ Kg6 26. Rh1 Be6 27. g5 Rf8 28. Qh5+ Kh7 29. g6+ Kg8 30. Bxh6 Rf2 31. Be3 and black resigned.

Wins also for Keith Palmer and David Coates amongst 9 draws meant that with 15 games completed the match was tied at 7½-7½. Jason Dilley on board 1 was the last to finish and was able to hold his nerve winning the deciding game.

