

The Nottingham Rapidplay held at the Rushcliffe Leisure Centre recently was the setting for a very exciting and closely contested event. Lincolnshire county player Nigel Birtwistle, who plays for Boston and Grantham, was one of a very strong field of 26 in the open section including IM Richard Tozer.

In the sixth and final round Nigel, graded 176, was matched against FM Adam Collinson (grade 217) from the Nottingham Gambits club. Nigel, as white, opened with the queen's gambit 1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nc3 Bg7 4. e4 d6 5. Nge2 a6 6. Ng3 c6 7. a4 a5 8. Be2 Na6 9. h4 h5 10. Bg5 Qc7 11. Qd2 e5 12. d5 Nc5 and Nigel's advanced pawns are starting to pose a threat.

Play continued 13. Ra3 Nfd7 14. 0-0 f6 15. Be3 Nb6 16. Rd1 Bf8 17. f4 exf4 18. Bxf4 Bd7 19. Qd4 Qd8 20. e5 fxe5 21. Bxe5 Rg8 22. Bf6 Be7 23. Nce4 Nxe4 24. Nxe4 Bf5 25. Re3 c5 26. Nxc5 dxc5 27. Qxc5 Nc8 and the knight sacrifice gave Nigel a strong position with black's bishop on e7 pinned by the rook (see diagram).

Nigel now applies more pressure 28. d6 Qb6 29. Rxe7+ Kf8 30. Qxb6 Nxb6 31. c5 Nd7 32. Bg5 Rh8 33. Bc4 Nxc5 34. Rd5 Ne4 35. Bf4 Re8 36. Rxf5+ gxf5 and another sacrifice opened the way for the pawn on d6 37. Rf7+ Kg8 38. d7 Rd8 39. Bc7 Rh7 40. Rxh7 Kxh7 41. Bxd8 and black resigned.

This brilliant win enabled Nigel to share the first prize of £220 in a four way tie with Alan Edwards of Wigston, Paul Cumbers of Sheffield Nomads and A.Pozenmenikov a Russian student at Notts University, each having 4½ points out of 6.

Nigel will no doubt be happy to discuss his moment of glory with you at Boston Chess Club who meet every Thursday at Fidell House or at Grantham Chess Club who meet at the Shirley Croft Hotel every Wednesday.

