

Having been relegated from Division 1 of the Midland Counties Open competition Lincolnshire's first game in Division 2 was against Derbyshire at the A... canteen at Spondon. Lincolnshire fielded probably their strongest side for a few years and matched Derbyshire with both teams having an average grade of 151.

On board 2 Boston's Nigel Birtwistle was paired as black against Simon Gilmour with the opening following the Modern Defence 1. e4 g6 2. d4 Bg7 3. f4 d6 4. Nf3 c5 5. c3 Nf6 6. dxc5. Nigel could not play 6. ... dxc5 7. Qxd8+ Kxd8 but instead played 6. ...0-0 7. Bd3 Nbd7 8. 0-0 Nxc5 recapturing the pawn.

White still controlled the centre with pawns on e4 and f4 but Nigel had the edge in development 9. Qe2 Bd7 10. Nd4 Qb6 11. Kh1 e5 12. Nf3 Nxd3 13. Qxd3 d5 14. Be3 Qxb2 forcing white to loose the pawn in order to develop the bishop.

Nigel swapped off a few pieces 15. Nbd2 Nxe4 16. Nxe4 dxe4 17. Qxe4 Bc6 18. Qc4 Bxf3 19. gxf3 exf4 20. Bd4 Rac8 21. Qd3 Bxd4 22. Qxd4 b6 23. a4 Qxc3 24. Qxf4 Rc4 25. Rfc1 Rxf4 26. Rxc3 Rd8 and the queens also go with Nigel enjoying a two pawn advantage (see diagram).

Nigel still needed to press home the extra pawns 27. Kg2 Rd7 28. a5 b5 29. a6 b4 30. Rc5 b3 31. Rb5 Rd3 32. Rb7 Rdx3 33. Rxa7 and white sees a glimmer of hope in the pawn on a6 but Nigel wins with a neat finish 33. ...Rf2+ 34. Kg1 b2 35. Rb1 Rf1+ and white resigned.

Wins for Denis Georgiou and David Coates and eight drawn games were not quite enough as Derbyshire won 9-7.

