

Lincolnshire's final match in the Midland Counties Open Division 2 took place at the neutral venue of The Old School in Thurmaston village just north of Leicester against Staffordshire. Having lost to Derbyshire and beaten Wiltshire a win was needed to finish second in the league and qualify for the national Minor counties competition.

Staffordshire, however, had fielded a strong team outgrading us by an average 23 points. Undaunted, Louth's Keith Palmer was paired as white on board 7 against Nicholas Walker from West Bromwich with play commencing with the English opening 1. c4 Nf6 2. Nc3 e5 3. Nf3 Nc6 4. g3 Bc5 5. Bg2 d6 6. 0-0 Be6 7. d3 a6 8. a3 Qd7 9. b4 Ba7 10. Re1 Bh3 11. Nd5 Nxd5 12. cxd5 Ne7 and in the games first exchange has opened the c-file.

Play continued 13. e4 Bg4 14. Be3 Bxe3 15. Rxe3 0-0 16. d4 Ng6 17. Rc1 f5 and the centre of the board is hotly contested by pawns on both sides (see diagram). Keith saw a combination of exchanges 18. dxe5 Bxf3 19. Rxf3 Nxe5 20. Rxf5 Rxf5 21. exf5 Qxf5 22. Rxc7 winning the pawn 22. ... Nd3 23. Qe2 Ne5 24. f4 Nf7 25. Qc2 Qf6 26. Qc3 Qf5 27. Be4 (black cannot take as 27. ...Qxe4 28. Rc8+ leads to mate) 27. ...Qg4 28. Qc2 g6 29. Kg2 b5 30. Bf3 Qf5 31. Qxf5 gxf5 32. Bh5 Nh6 33. Rd6 Ng4 34. Bxg4 fxg4 35. Rxd6 and Keith won a few moves later.

Unfortunately, Keith's was Lincolnshire's only success and with draws for Nick Payne, Francis Bowers, Denis Georgiou, Geoff Collyer, Lee Hall and yours truly meant that we lost 12-4 and will have to wait for next season.

