

Lincolnshire's county team completed the East Midlands round robin with their only home match against Warwickshire at the RAOB Club on South Park. Our illustrious opponents are one of the strongest teams in the Midlands and indeed the country, able to draw their players from large centres of population like Birmingham and Coventry, so this had the makings of a very one sided affair.

However, Warwickshire had taken a leaf out of Arsenal's book in the Carling Cup and took the opportunity to blood some junior players. A case in point was the game on board 16 between Bernard Pratten from Scunthorpe, playing white, and fifteen year old Matthew Emery from Rugby with the opening following the two knights defence 1. e4 e5 2. Bc4 Nf6 3. d3 Nc6 4. Nf3 h6 5. Nbd2 Bc5 6. c3 d6 7. a4 a6 8. 0-0 Bg4 9. Re1 0-0 with black the more advanced.

Play continued 10. Nf1 Qd7 11. Ng3 Ne7 12. b4 Bb6 13. d4 exd4 14. cxd4 Ng6 15. a5 Ba7 16. Ra3 Rfe8 17. Bf1 Re7 18. h3 Bxf3 19. Rxf3 Rae8 and black looks to have the upper hand putting pressure on the e4 pawn (see diagram) but Bernard saw a counter attack with a neat finish 20. Bxh6 gxf6 21. Rxf6 Qc6 22. Qd2 Kg7 23. e5 Qd7 24. Nf5+ Kh7 25. Qxh6+ Kg8 26. Qg7 mate.

There were wins also for Boston's Mark Stephens and Lincoln's David Coates against Warwickshire rookies but Kevin Shutt and Ayman Hammam had good wins against senior players whose games I shall feature later in the year. These, together with draws for Francis Bowers and captain Denis Georgiou meant that Lincolnshire were respectable 10-6 losers.

