

The Lincolnshire County Championships took place at the RAOB Club recently with a small but select group of the counties finest competing in a five round swiss tournament.

The pick of the earlier stages came in round 3 when the joint favourites Kevin McCarthy from Boston and Lincoln's Ayman Hammam locked horns. Play began with Kevin as black playing the French Defence 1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. e5 Nfd7 5. f4 c5 6. dxc5 Bxc5 7. Qg4 g6 8. Nf3 Qb6 9. Bd3 Bf2+ 10. Ke2 preventing white from castling.

Kevin looked to take advantage of the exposed white king 10. ...Bc5 11. Na4 Qc7 12. Nxc5 Nxc5 13. Qh4 Nxd3 14. cxd3 Qc2+ 15. Bd2 Nc6 16. Qf6 0-0 17. Rhc1 Qxb2 18. f5 exf5 19. Kf1 Nxe5 20. Rab1 Qxa2 21. Bh6 but a counter-attack by Ayman looks to have black on the ropes (see diagram).

But Kevin pulled off a master stroke, did you see it, 21. ...Qf2+ 22. Kxf2 Ng4+ 23. Ke2 Re8+ 24. Kd2 Nxf6 leaving Kevin four pawns up and went on to win.

However, there was a twist in the tail. Coming into the last round Kevin was in pole position on 4 points. Needing only a draw against Lincoln's David Coates he came unstuck in a thrilling game which I shall describe next week. This allowed Ayman to come up on the rails and the championship and £85 prize money was shared. David Coates' was rewarded with £25 for third place on 3½ points.

The Under 130 grading prize was also tightly contested with Boston's Allan Marshall, Grimsby's Mike Kelly and Rick Davey from Scunthorpe sharing the £18 on 2½ points.

