

The annual Louth Rapidplay took place recently, renamed the Alf Newman Memorial Rapidplay, following Alf's death in April. A good turnout saw 21 of the county's finest pitting their wits in a six round swiss tournament under the gaze of the towering steeple of St.James Church.

In round 3 it was my pleasure to be matched against Nick Louth who, as white, started with Bird's opening 1. f4 d5 2. Nf3 e6 3. e3 c5 4. b3 Nf6 5. Bb2 Be7 6. h3 0-0 7. Nc3 a6 8. Ne2 reaching the position in the diagram. Bird's opening can give white attacking opportunities with the pawn on f4 but does expose the king which I was able to exploit - can you see how?

I played 8. ...Ne4 9. d3 Bh4+ 10. g3 Nxg3 11. Nxg3 Bxg3+ 12. Ke2. However, I was not out of the woods 12. ...Bh4 13. Rg1 Bf6 and Nick still had some counterplay with 14. Ne5 Nd7 15. Kd2 g6 16. Qf3 Nxe5 17. fxe5 Bg7 18. Bg2 blocking off white's bishop on b2 and I was later able to go two pawns up by capturing the pawn on e5 and won the game.

Coming into the final round, Lincoln's Ayman Hammam led the tournament on 4½ points with last years champion Joe Kilshaw from Grimsby, David Coates and yours truly on 4. Unfortunately my winning streak came to an end losing to David who shared first place with Joe who, on count back, became the first holder of the Alf Newman Shield with Ayman having to settle for third.

Duncan Wallace, also from Grimsby, won the Under 100 grading prize on 4 points whereas, I (sound of violins) went home with nothing.

