

Young guns on rise in federation ratings

The latest English Chess Federation (ECF) ratings list has been published showing the now standard upward march of younger brains at the expense of their seniors.

Oxfordshire has a fine record of producing promising juniors and presently boasts some of the most impressive young players in the country.

Of course, Marcus Harvey has blazed a trail recently and Marcus' new ECF rating of 230 is very impressive – but others are following.

At the British Championships in Coventry last month, 13-year-old Jake Holton – who lives in Eynsham and plays for Witney Chess Club – provided evidence for this by becoming the 2015 Under-14 Champion.

Jake remained unbeaten, and finished the tournament with three straight wins for a score of 5.5/7. He warmed up for the Under-14 event by playing in the preceding Under-15 tournament and scoring an impressive 4/7.

In the final round of the under-15 tournament Jake gave his confidence a boost by beating one of Oxfordshire's most talented juniors, Oscar Idle of Spires School and Cowley Chess Club.

The game is a superb, virtually flawless, positional and tactical demonstration – and,

CHESS

MATT ROSE

if they sell over the counter whatever Jake had for breakfast that morning, I want some.

White: Jake Holton
Black: Oscar Idle

1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 b6 4.Bg2 Bb7 5.0-0 Be7 6.b3 0-0 7.Bb2 c5 8.e3 d5 9.Qe2 Nc6 10.Rd1 Qc7 11.Nc3 Rfd8 12.Rac1 dxc4 13.bxc4 Black has completed his development and has a solid position.

For his part, White has an extra centre pawn and the obvious plan of advancing in the middle.

13...Rac8 14.d4 a6?! Perhaps Oscar is guilty here of underestimating the danger. Though decentralising is often a mistake in such concentrated positions, here.

14...Na5 makes sense: discouraging d5, pressurising c4 and increasing the scope of his light squared bishop.

15.d5! exd5 16.Nxd5 Nxd5 17.cxd5 Nb4 18.e4! White has a firm grip of the centre and his dark squared bishop is a monster.

He rightly ignores the fact that his a2 pawn is *en prise*.

18...Nxa2 19.Ra1 Nb4 20.Bh3! Ra8?!

Saving the exchange - but possibly 'getting on with it' by playing 20...c4!? was a better option.

Then after 21.Bxc8 Rxc8 22.Rac1 b5 Black's queenside pawns are more mobile than White's centre pawns and he has good compensation.

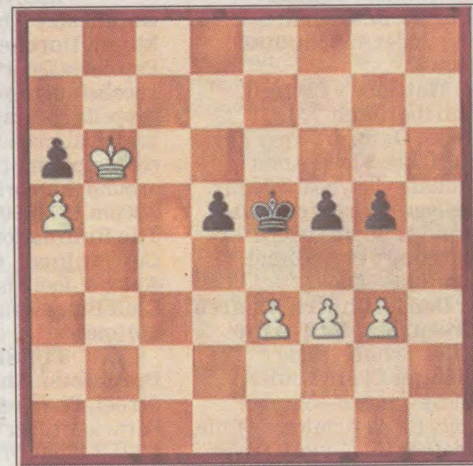
21.Ne5! b5 22.Nxf7! Brilliant! Black has shifted his pieces to the queenside and White takes his chance to make a deadly strike on the kingside.

22...Rf8 23.Be6!? One can't fault this for lacking imagination.

Alternatively, the simple 23.d6 Bxd6 24.Nxd6 would leave White material to the good and Black facing terrible threats to his king.

23...Rxf7 24.Qg4 Threatening checkmate in one!

24...Bf8 25.d6! That pawn has been the star -



Suba – Laiz Ibáñez, Spain 2015. It's Black to play after White has just played 43.Kb6. With best play, who wins? Answer: page 63

and just keeps on rolling.

25...Qd8 26.Qf5 Qe8 27.d7

1-0