

Enci Limburg Open starts!

Relying on the general feelings in the tournament hall, the 4th Enci Limburg Open is going to be a very interesting encounter between top grandmasters and upcoming talents. However, the vast majority of players are those with a feeling all too familiar: we know, although secretly hoping otherwise, that we will always understand the beautiful game just to a limited amount but love to play. Local hero CM Joost Heltzel played on the first board against top seed Evgeny Miroshnichenko. In an odd opening variation of the sicilian black soon had a comfortable position with a nice knight f5. When Heltzel tried to put his own knight on g5, black just took it with his bishop and after white's recapture unleashed the nice 19...Nc6-a5!



The main point being 20.Bxc5, Bxg2 21.Bxf8 (21.Kxg2, Qc6+) Bb7! and after the retreat of the bishop on f8 22...Qc6 is devastating. This nuance forced 20.Bxb7 and in the resulting position black had two fantastic knights against a horrible bishop and a hopeless (k)night. Despite white trying his utter best Miroshnichenko finished off nicely. The question in the first round is always if an amateur player succeeds in beating a grandmaster. This honour was for Menno Pietersma, who defeated Andrei Shchekachev with the black pieces. Black countered white's unorthodox plan of Kf1, h4-h5 and Rh3-g3 with 0-0-0 after which it was highly dangerous to take on g7 and the rook on g3 was slightly misplaced. The the opposite castling guaranteed a complex game and it seemed white underestimated the intrusion of black's queen on the last row and had to sacrifice a piece for insufficient compensation. Pietersma played accurately until the end and gave his opponent no chance of saving the game. On the second board Fedorchuk soon had an active position to compensate for the hanging pawns. After the decentralizing ...Nh5 things get from bad to worse for black and after 34...Be7? 35.Nxg7 his position was beyond repair. The other grandmasters got some tough resistance. Dutch GM Nijboer, playing the black side of a sicilian, seemed to have a reasonable position in which the bishop pair could tell in the long run but even without queens the white storm on the kingside proved annoying enough for a very unclear endgame in which white had the better pawn structure and a nice knight on d5 but black very active rooks, attacking all white's pawns. Eventually Nijboer put good use of his activity and decided with his doubled g-pawns. Emanuel Berg and Daan Zult also ended up in a complicated endgame in which Zult's bishop pair might have been enough to save the draw against Berg's knights and extra pawn. However, black's desire to play actively cost him some more material and although Berg was forced

to sacrifice his knight, this led to a position in which white had 5 pawns against one pawn and a bishop for black. The free pawns on two wings proved too strong for the bishop and Berg gave his opponent no chance to save the endgame.