

Lincolnshire's team in the Minor Counties competition ventured to the neutral venue of Brampton in Cambridgeshire to play Essex in the quarter-finals of the ECF national stages. Having won the Midland Counties qualifying competition beating Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Greater Manchester and Worcestershire Lincolnshire felt that they were in with a chance particularly as Essex had lost all their matches in the Southern Counties qualifiers.

Nick Stead, who is captain of this season's Division 1 champions Grimsby, was paired as white on board 6 against Ivan Myall from Writtle just outside Chelmsford and we pick up the game after black has just played 14. ...Qh4 (see diagram) threatening 15. ...Qxh2 mate next move.

Nick's only option is 15. Bf4 Be7 16. Bg3 Qh6 but black's last move has limited the options for black's knight on g4. Nick played 17. Bf5 Qg5 and now black's queen is harried with 18. h4 Qh5 19. Nf4 Qh6 20. Bxg4 and can no longer defend the knight but wins back a pawn with 20. ...Bxh4 21. Kg2 Bxg3 22. fxxg3 Qg5.

Nick offered an exchange of queens declined by black 23. Qf5 Qd8 24. Bf3 Ra7 25. Nd5 Nd7 26. Be4 g6 but now Nick sees an opportunity for further gains with 27. Qxd7 Qxd7 28. Nf6+ Kg7 29. Nxd7 Rd8 30. Bc6 and black resigned.

A win for Joe Kilshaw also from Grimsby was Lincolnshire's only other win. Draws for Stephen Prior from Grantham, Daniel Wells and Graham Ladds from Newark, Harry Russell and Keith Palmer from Louth, Ian McDonald from Lincoln and Grimsby's Steve Allott meant that Essex won by 10½ to 5½.

Lincoln Chess Club play at the RAOB Club, 58 South Park on Wednesdays at 7.30pm. www.lincolnchessclub.co.uk

