

Lincolnshire's team in the Minor Counties competition played their last match in the Midland Counties group away to Derbyshire at the Mill Hotel in Clay Cross. Having won their first 3 matches a win would see Lincolnshire qualifying for the national stages as group winners whereas a win for the hosts, lying in second place on 4 points, would see them draw level.

On board 7 Lincolnshire's captain Nigel Birtwistle who lives near Boston but plays for Grantham in the Nottinghamshire Chess League was paired as black against Anthony Natt who plays for the local Clay Cross club and we pick up the game after white has just played 26. Nf3 (see diagram) materially equal with Nigel's more advanced pawns countered by his doubled pawns on the d-file - can you see Nigel's next move?

Nigel played 26. ...Nb5 with multiple threats. White played 27. Bb2 to counter 27. ...Nc3 but allowing Nigel to win the pawn with 27. ...Qxf4 28. g3 Qd6. White still had some counterplay with 29. Ne5 Rad8 30. Nxf7 Rxf7 31. Re6 Qc5 32. Re8+ Rxe8 33. Rxe8+ Kg7 34. Qg2 threatening the pawn on d5 34. ...Nc3 35. Bxc3 dxc3+ 36. Kh2 Rd7 37. Ra8 Qd4 38. Ra5 f4 39. Rxd5 Rxd5 40. Bxd5 and white has won back the pawn but Nigel played 40. ...fxg3+ 41. Kh1 (not 41. Qxg3 Be5 or 41. Kxg3 Be5+ 42. Kf3 Qxd5) and Nigel won a few moves later.

Wins also for Andrew Dyce, Claudio Mangione, Nick Stead, David Coates, Joe Kilshaw, Daniel Wells, Jiri Lhotka, Ivan David and Denis Georgiou together with draws for Chris Dorrington, Harry Russell and Graham Ladds gave Lincolnshire a comprehensive 11½ to 4½.

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

