

Lincolnshire's team in the Open section of the National Counties Online championship played their final match in the group stages. Having won all four of the previous matches Lincolnshire were guaranteed a place in the semi-final but needed a win to finish top of the group. The match also had a bit of needle in that the two counties should have met in the final of the National Minor Counties championship last year but Devon withdrew complaining about the distance to travel.

With no such restrictions this time Devon put out a strong team and on board 8 Lincolnshire's Paul Cumbers was paired as black against Paul Hampton from Seaton and we pick up the game after white has just played 20. Rfe1 (see diagram) with Paul a pawn up but having doubled pawns on the d-file.

Paul played 20. ...h6 21. Nf3 Bxf3 22. gxf3 and white now has doubled f-pawns and the g-file is open 22. ...g5 23. Qf2 and white retreats rather than exchange pawns 23. ...gxf4 gaining another pawn 24. Kh1 Rg8 25. Qh4 Bd6 26. Rg1 h5 27. Rg5 Rxc5 28. Qxc5 Rg8 29. Qh6 Qb7 30. Be4 Qb2 attacking both the rook and bishop but perhaps overlooking 30. ...Nxe4.

White responded 31. Rd1 Bxa3 32. Qxf4 Bd6 but now the bishop can see the pawn on h2 33. Qh4 a3 34. Qe1 a2 35. Ra1 h4 36. Bd3 h3 and Paul's pawns on a2 and h3 are posing major threats 37. Bf1 d3 but with only seconds left on the clock white played 38. Bc3 Qxh2 mate.

A win also for David Coates and draws for Matthew Turner, Chris Dorrington, Jason Dilley, Samuel Milson, Nigel Birtwistle, Stephen Prior and Adam Robinson was not quite enough as Devon narrowly won 6.5 to 5.5. However, Lincolnshire still topped the group and play Division 1B runners up Norfolk in the semi-final.

Lincoln Chess Club play at the Lincoln Labour Club, Grafton House, 32 Newland. LN1 1XJ on Wednesdays at 7.30pm. Although we are yet to meet due to the lockdown [www.lincolnchessclub.co.uk](http://www.lincolnchessclub.co.uk)

