

White Rose 2 and the 4NCL

When people talk about Yorkshire folk they can become stereotypical when describing them. They think Yorkshire folk are emotionally dysfunctional, never leave the county to broaden their horizons, are often miserable, hard to befriend and will never put their hands in their pockets to buy a drink. The White Rose second team tried their best to dispel those misconceptions in this season's 4NCL campaign. With perhaps the exception of our manager Rupert Jones.

I agreed to run a second team in this season's 4NCL campaign. The first team won the second division last season and agreed to support us with helping with our entry fee. Yorkshire folk showing generosity.

My remit for running the team was to give an opportunity to aspiring players in the county to play top class high pressure team chess. This it certainly did!

White Rose 2 didn't lose a match after the first weekend despite being heavily outgraded in many of them. Almost every match went down to the wire where every half point was crucial. But a great team spirit was being formed and the players were playing for each other as a team.

This was never highlighted more than in the final match of the final weekend. Needing a draw against Oxford 2 to gain promotion we suffered two early defeats from Ihor and Nick. Peter Shaw saw a promising attack fizzle when his opponent found a lucky defence. Peter had to bail out with a draw so we were 2 points down with three to play.

Matthew Webb had left himself 4 minutes to make 18 moves before reaching the first time control and was shaking his head in dejection. Jon Arnott had a dull position where his highly rated opponent seemed to have numerous ways to force a draw. Tom had a slight edge in his game but could not see a clear way of making progress.

All attention was on Matthew as he banged out quality move after quality move. He was focussed on his task to make the time control while maintaining a fighting chance of holding the position. Move 40 was made and Matthew had held off a dangerous attack and was a pawn to the good. What a relief for his watching team mates.

Jon's opponent was now trying to win his game which gave Jon a sniff of a chance as it started to get complicated. Jon sacrificed a Knight for an attack with Queen and Rook and his opponent tried to run for safety but missed a devastating resource which earned Jon a full point.

Matthew could not win an opposite Bishop ending and took a draw which left Tom to bring home the bacon. Tom with a massive space advantage set up his Knights to control the board and then improved the position of his Rook. Finally he marched his King into the enemy camp to force resignation.

Joy for the Yorkshiremen and Nick and Ihor were holding back the tears while hugging the youngsters who shone so brightly.

You will see from the stats of the season the team had 4 top scorers this season with 5½ points although as I've said before everybody played a vital role.

Peter Shaw was an ever present and always played on the top three boards. Towards the end of the campaign he was even seen sampling the delights of an Indian meal with the rest of his team. Jon Arnott brought solidity and confidence to the team. We played him as high up the order as we could because he knows no fear.

He was also excellent at pillaging the pub quiz machines. Nick Faulks graced us with his presence all the way from Bermuda. This honorary Yorkshireman only missed one weekend and his numerous wins always seemed to arrive when we most needed them. Matthew Webb had a disastrous first weekend but soon his confidence and quality began to show through. His win against Littlethorpe 1 was the crush of the season and his last game time scramble was simply awesome.

Tom Whitaker took to the 4NCL like a ferret to a warren. He remained unbeaten throughout the campaign and handled the pressure in the last round with a maturity beyond his years. Tom deservedly achieved the best percentage score in the team. Richard Archer often suggested mixing the boards he played on and offered to take 2 blacks in a weekend in order to confuse the opposition's preparation for the team. Richard is the self appointed head of the entertainment committee and not just for his witty banter. Gareth Anthony, David Adams and Prasun Chakravorty each played one weekend for us and none of them lost. Their appearances at the top of the order was vital for the team to get the results they did. Rupert actually scored a creditable 50% for the team and his guidance was vital for a new captain. Ihor is the proud and happy captain. I started with 4 wins in my first 5 games but perhaps found the nervous pressure too great towards the end of the campaign.

I can honestly say this promotion ranks equally with winning the Woodhouse Cup with Bradford as my greatest chess achievement.

Thank you to everyone who made it all possible.

Ihor Lewyk.