

WCSC 2013

Round 1

They have met each other many times, Shredder and Junior. They have both been world champion with currently Junior holding the WCCC title. Their contests are always interesting. The current game does not form an exception. A quiet but still complex French start of the game resulted in black attempting to take the initiative. Shredder replied cautiously but black continued with challenging moves. The result was complex position even though the queens had already left the board. On the square millimeter the fight continued. Junior played quite inventively and succeeded to widen its initiative to pressure on the white position. Even with a few pawns and only a rook and a minor piece there were huge complications. Black was able to complete the series of pressure moves by a nice bishop sacrifice which could not be accepted by white. Declining the offer did not get any relief and after five more strong moves white resigned.

The game Pandix – Merlin started with a psychological move 1. A4. Black replied in the normal mode but had to play without opening book. The game continued as reversed Ruy Lopez. White clearly had some difficulties and although black's play was strong it was not convincing. Despite its first move which weakened the queen side black could not keep the advantage on the table. Slowly white came into the game and turned the tables. From that moment onwards the white player continued to expand space, initiatives and threats. For black there was no opportunity to stop the stream of ideas and threats which came to him. Finally he lost by an elementary regrouping of pieces.

Hiarcs – Jonny started as a Nimzo-Indian game in which both players followed well known paths. They did not challenge each other to a large extent. Many pieces were exchanged and many straightforward attempts were set up but did not realize in practice. Both sides were alert and did not give each other much space to employ initiatives. This being so, they still continued their fight up to the last pawn. It was not an exciting game but it was a game that showed their fighting spirit. Draw.

Standing: 1,2. Junior, Pandix 1; 3,4. Hiarcs, Jonny 0.5; 5,6 .Shredder, Merlin 0.

Round 2

The game Merlin – Hiarcs opened in a peaceful way but soon tactics played a part. In such cases it is advisable to combine the search process with a good evaluation function. Obviously Merlin possesses a not fully tuned evaluation function and so it agreed with decisions that maneuvered the program into difficult positions. Hiarcs played professionally and won the game accordingly.

Junior played white to Jonny and had to agree with scoring only half a point. Although the program tried to find holes in the black position, Jonny remained to hold itself. A pawn sacrifice by Junior did not change the situation essentially.

Black was a pawn up but white had active play and the only tangible result Junior could aim of was winning the pawn back and playing thereafter for another 20 moves to see whether Jonny found the correct moves. Since it did so, the game ended in a draw.

Shredder and Pandix both saw the opponent possibility to obtain a full point. Since they are not playing very aggressively it became a game full of subtleties. However both opponents are seasoned computer programs that know each other's tricks quite well. Although the game was of high caliber it was not very exiting for the observers. All exchanges were predictable and there was no unequal material balance. At both sides the programs to be fighters since they played on up to very end game of two pawns versus two pawns. Then a draw was agreed.

Standing: 1,2,3. Junior, Hiarcs, Pandix 1.5; 4. Jonny 1; 5. Shredder 0.5; 6. Merlin 0.

Round 3

Jonny is a strong program that is able to find weak spots in the opponent's software. In this round Merlin felt what such a statement means. The opening was played in an easy way by both programs but Jonny kept an eye on solving all small obstacles, which it faced by Merlin's opening play. So we saw that a double c-pawn was transferred into double d-pawn, resulting in much influence in the center. That was the basis for opening up the position. Soon Merlin saw that it was unable to defend against the penetration of the white pieces. It had to give its queen for a rook which implied resignation.

Hiarcs was playing the aggressive Sicilian with g4 and h4 against Shredder. Of course the whole variation was in black's openingsbook too. So the game soon came in a double-edged mid-game position, white had the initiative but black more than sufficient counterplay. Black decide to sacrifice a pawn for initiative and dynamical play. Maybe it was possible to regain the pawn but then he would lose the initiative. Now the mid-game position resulted in an end-game with a pawn down for black. Yet the game should have been ended in a draw. Pawns and rooks were exchanged and a bishop ending with two black squared bishops occurred on the board. On move 57 Shredder blundered by playing the bishop to the wrong diagonal. Thereafter it took some moves but the game was over and white won.

Pandix – Junior was a game for the public. After a quiet English opening Junior pushed its pawns in the direction of the white king. For Junior the opponent's king always act as a magnet for his pieces. After some time a black pawn was on f3 and a black bishop g2, the white king on g1. To achieve this remarkable position black had sacrificed two pawns. Many observers had the question whether such an artificial position was worth two pawns. Moreover white managed to exchange the queens and also one pair of rooks. However with the remaining pieces Junior was able to attack all squares around the white king. White could prevent the worst by sacrificing a piece. But then the further continuation was in professional hands by Junior. It won convincingly this marvelous game.

Standing: 1,2. Junior, Hiarcs 2.5; 3. Jonny 2; 4. Pandix 1.5; 5. Shredder 0.5; 6. Merlin 0.

Round 4

Junior was facing an old variation of the Sicilian, the Dragon. The game followed well-known paths which implied that white has clear initiative. On move 18 Junior had a break possibility in the center. Black decided not to play defensive and sacrificed a piece for two pawns. This was insufficient and in a professional way Junior secured the full point.

Pandix – Hiarcs was a contest that was dominated by surprisingly strong moves. The strategy followed by both sides occurred to be difficult to be interpreted. After a quiet opening white tried to take the initiative but black countered continuously. White opposed a threat to win the exchange and black let it happen. Meanwhile other complications started to emerge and soon the number of indirect exchanges was numerous. Nowadays we have computers to forecast the consequences of the exchange sequences. As play was going on the board Hiarcs turned out to be the program that was able to analyze more deeply. Again a complex exchange of pieces resulted in an end game that was won for black. White resigned.

Some games are exciting to play, but less exciting to replay. The game Shredder – Jonny is an example of such a game. In the Ruy Lopez opening they followed the closed variation and then in its most closed form. White had some advantage over the open a-file but it turned out that the two white rooks could not create any threat. Black compensated this initiative by an action in the center. A couple of pieces disappeared from the board but many remain to continue moving forward and backward. Obviously both programs had a plan but they were not give to realize the plan. The interaction was nice to see but after some time the repetition of patterns was no longer fascinating. However two companions decided to fight up to the last pawn. And when the situation was there Jonny refused for some moves to take the last pawn, because this always can be done. Whatever the argumentation the game ended in a draw.

Standings: 1,2. Hiarcs, Junior 3.5; 3. Jonny 2.5; 4. Pandix 1.5; 5. Shredder 1; 6. Merlin 0.

Round 5

If programs were humans then they run the risk to become a victim of hubris when everything in the tournament is going in their favor. So far Junior had t suffer only one lost game and was credited for many fantastic maneuvers that resulted in a win. In accepted Queen's Gambit both programs followed the classical path to the mid-game. From both sides they showed their ingenuity and tried to outclass each other. Hiarcs put his knife on Junior's throat by playing 20. Bf5 with a threat Ng5. Junior accepted the challenge and sacrificed its queen for a rook and a knight. In the scrimmage that occurred it could have taken an extra pawn but it neglected any additional material. Junior played for the white king

but in this game that king turned out to be untouchable for the black pieces. Hiarcs did what every professional player would do, namely simplifying the position, exchanging material and aiming for an end game that is easy to win. Hiarcs fully succeeded in this task and won the game without any further difficulties.

Not many times we see the pattern white king on g1, black bishop on g2 protected by a pawn on f3 or h3. In the game Merlin – Shredder this pattern occurred for the second time in this week. Obviously the white king is then confined in a very small area. One check is sufficient to win the game. In both cases there was no mating involved but it was a start of considerable material gain. Merlin had no chance and Shredder accepted the full point with gratitude.

The game Jonny – Pandix opened with an English variation such as been seen many times in this tournament. This time it was particular since both players found a path along which they could exchange as many pieces as possible. Finally a hand full of pawns remained on the board together with a black square colored bishop at both sides. Where grandmasters would have agreed on a draw did computer programs play as beginners to exhaust each other. However, computers cannot be exhausted and therefore they could not escape a draw.

Standing: 1. Hiarcs 4.5; 2. Junior 3.5; 3. Jonny 3; 4,5. Shredder, Pandix 2; 6. Merlin 0.

Round 6

An intriguing question is: what is the value of the initiative? If you play quiet and exchange pieces and are prepared to lose the initiative is that sufficient for a draw? In the game Merlin – Pandix it seemed for a long time that the answer would be positive. Yet Pandix succeeded in collecting small advantages and all of a sudden it was able to arrive an end game with two bishops against two knights and each side a rook. The two bishops and the rook had a saturation that paralyzed the white position completely. By lack of proper moves white tried to reach an end game with very robust material that was not winnable for black. It was in vain. Black won deservedly.

Junior – Shredder was a Sicilian game in which Shredder prevented Junior to employ full kings attack. Shredder was active at the queenside and Junior had to take notice of it. Shredder wisely exchanged some pieces so that a difficult to handle end game came on the board. However the technique of both programs is of high standard and therefore the balance remained equal at both sides. At the time that the material was reduced so much the players started to be awake and continued in a drawn position for many moves. It did not change the outcome. Draw.

In Jonny – Hiarcs Jonny took the lead with original ideas and well thought maneuvers. However Hiarcs was on the alert and even the penetration of the black position by a white pawn did not upset Hiarcs. It defended calm and after some time and many moves it eliminated the pawn on f7. The beginning of the

end game was characterized by a small advantage by white. However where Jonny looked for an opening Hiarc's defended adequately. This pattern was the main theme of the game but Hiarc's hold it self quite well and could be happy in the end with the draw.

Standing: 1. Hiarc's 5; 2. Junior 4; 3. Jonny 3.5; 4 . Pandix 3; 5. Shredder 2.5; 6. Merlin 0.

Round 7

The game Pandix – Shredder followed for a long time theoretical variation in the Sicilian (Scheveninger). It showed that Pandix has a real opening book and does not only play to get the opponent as soon as possible out of book. Pandix played aggressively which was countered solidly by Shredder who picked up two pawns at the queenside. That action would bring Pandix into trouble if he would continue with his attack to the black king. Therefore Pandix decided to chose the better thing (half a point) instead vague chances. He repeated the moves by perpetually attacking the black queen. It is remark that black had no choice of escaping from the continuous attack. Hence draw was agreed.

It is remarkable how a strong program when facing a weaker program can form easily a situation in which it has attacking chances. After a quiet opening Hiarc's did so and soon it was looking for combinations around the black king. There were many of them and Hiarc's was at liberty to look for the most elegant one. It did so and selected an attractive mating variation from all continuations available. Merlin stopped in time and was happy with the resistance it had offered.

It is a top performance to repeat in so many games attractive and aggressive play. With computers at stake nowadays people are inclined to think that chess is in principle a strategic game. However Junior seems to see it as its task to prove that there are tactics, which last over 20 plies. Relying on these tactics it plays a refreshing type of play that is also difficult to handle for its companion programs. In this round Jonny was facing the typical Junior style of play. Originally white's position looked fine and black's pieces were hold back. That was not what Junior wanted. Therefore it sacrificed a pawn and wishes to expand its reign over the board. Since Jonny is a tough contender there was a real fight on almost every square. It must be said that Junior had more tricks in his vocabulary than Jonny and so we saw clear progress for black. First more space then penetration and finally cashing, first cashing of pawns and then cashing of the full point.

Standing: 1. Hiarc's 6; 2. Junior 5; 3.,4 Jonny, Pandix 3; 5. Shredder 3; 6. Merlin 0.

Round 8

Playing a game in a tournament is like doing examination, for which you should be well prepared. In the fourth round of the WCCC, on August 14, Pandix played with black against Junior a fascinating game, however it lost the game and at home Gyula analyzed that Pandix could have done better. Instead of 14. ..., Nxb2 it

should have played 14. ..., Rc8. The difference is that after 15. Bb3 the square d3 is available for the knight after 15. ..., Nxb2, 16. Qc1. Therefore white has to play Qc2. Of course Gyula implemented this in his opening book and four days later in this round he had success with subtle improvement. The game was not over but Junior had additional difficulties to face. As usual Junior was able to complicate matters considerably. Yet Pandix could manage the attack and worked towards a solid position with an advantage of two pawns. That was sufficient for a win and took Junior out of the race for the title. With two rounds to go Junior is 1.5 points after Hiarcs.

In Shredder – Hiarcs we saw again a revival of the old Shredder. It played the opening well and played the transition from opening to middle game very well. Hiarcs was offered very difficult problems to solve. The only thing it could do was wait for the opponent where he would like to enter the black position. And also when. The last question turned out to be of crucial importance. Shredder hesitated for one moment 29. Bf5-h3. Nobody understood why a well-positioned bishop be brought to another square. The better move here was 29. Qf4. Obviously the program must have seen this move since it played this move on move 30. However that was too late since one tempo was sufficient for Hiarcs to save its life. It did so quite accurately; Shredder was not given any chance to rebuild his advantageous position. The game continued as an equal fight and ended alike. Draw was agreed in an end game where both sides had weak and strong pawns but no one could force a decision.

Once spotted as the weakest program of the tournament the task is even more difficult since each opponent program plays with aggressive intentions even if the start is quiet. Here too Merlin managed to exchange many pieces but every exchange had a small disadvantage in it. It summed up in spatial advantage for black, resulting in more combinatorial possibilities. Finally it was time to harvest for black resulting in being two pawns ahead, which led to an easy win for black.

Standing: 1. Hiarcs 6.5; 2. Junior 5; 3,4 Pandix, Jonny 4.5; 5. Shredder 3.5; 6. Merlin 0.

Round 9

The ninth round was full of tension. The result was three games with a decision. One level higher the result was the tournament is still open. Junior won according to expectation against Merlin, but Hiarcs surprised us by losing a remarkable game against Pandix. In that game that game the Queen's Gambit appeared in its Tartakower variant. This implies dynamic positions with fast changing goals to aim at. Hiarcs was doing well by clearly pointing a black weak c-pawn on c6. The square c5 was achievable for its knight. Black had two bishops which were locked. However positional advantage is not sufficient to win a game. Hiarcs moved forwards and backwards but could find another weak spot in the black position. Black meanwhile had other ideas. It moved its king from the eighth rank to the seventh emptying the back row and giving the program to switch the queen from the a-file where it was accompanying the black rook via a8-h8-h5 to e2. That put real pressure on white's position. Many combinations were possible

and white had difficulties to keep the material balance. By opening the position black bishops came alive and exerted great force towards the white king. The active black queen in the white position was a pain in the arse. It resulted in losing the pawn on h3 transferring the game to an end game that was prosperous for black. In the end a remarkable fact occurred. White played e7-e8=B and black could not enter that move with his mouse via Winboard. This led to some commotion. However Gyuala showed that by typing in the move via the keyboard there was no difficulty at all. After capturing a new born bishop by 90. .., Bxe8 white resigned. This recognition caused that the final round will be exiting since Hiarcs and Junior are meeting each other. Meanwhile Jonny won against Shredder implying also a big fight for the third place.

Standing: 1. Hiarcs 6.5; 2. Junior 6; 3,4. Jonny, Pandix 5.5; 5. Shredder 3.5; 6. Merlin 0.

Round 10

In the last round Junior was the real contender and it played its role with enthusiasm. It sacrificed a pawn and obtained an agreeable position with variety of small advantages. However Hiarcs was on the alert. So close to the championship and then losing in the last but one round was already a shock. And now it would not like to be overruled by Junior. The countermeasures were adequate and although Junior regained its pawn and won an additional pawn it was not sufficient for a win. Hiarcs managed to keep all threats under control and safely reached a drawn rook ending. Soon the draw was agreed and Harvey Williamson was congratulated together Mark Uniacke for winning the WCSC tournament in Yokohama 2013. Shredder completed the tournament by winning against Merlin and Pandix did the same against Jonny. So the second placed is shared by Junior and Pandix with 6.5 points.

Final standing:

- 1 and World Champion Software Hiarcs 7
- 2 Junior, Pandix 6.5
- 4 Jonny 5.5
- 5 Shredder 4.5
- 6 Merlin 0