

Round 2

New Zealand 3-1 Kuwait
 Hopewell 1-0 Al-Rashed
 Noble 0-1 Al-Qallaf
 Ker 1-0 Bin Ali
 Freeman 1-0 Al-Ostath
 India 4, Brunei 0; China 4, Malaysia 0;
 Bahrain ½, Bangladesh 3½; Philippines 2, Pakistan 2. The Philippines in poor form, with Mascarinas on board two ability.
 Hopewell and Ker crunched through quickly with aggressive play. Freeman's opponent played good sensible chess all the first session, sealed an anti-positional shocker and self-destructed with remarkable rapidity in the second session. Noble's opponent played some imaginative chess but Mark got on top and at one point wrote the winning move on his score sheet. Unfortunately he crossed it out, found himself plagued by a quite unreasonable number of passed pawns, and couldn't quite find a swindle.

Round 3

Brunei ½-3½ New Zealand
 Hj Damit ½-½ Carpenter
 Rahman Yusof 0-1 Hopewell
 Hj Halim 0-1 Ker
 Jaafar 0-1 Freeman
 Kuwait 0, Philippines 4; Bangladesh ½, China 3½; Pakistan 2, Bahrain 2; Malaysia ½, India 3½.
 I accidentally fell into a grotty position but recovered and nearly won. Hopewell quickly won a pawn while keeping a good position. Ker blew a fuse in a winning position and found his queen pinned to his king but, with some adjournment help from Noble, won a strange ending with rook plus two pieces versus queen and extra pawns. Freeman was always dominant.

Round 4

New Zealand ½-3½ Malaysia
 Sarfati 0-1 Liew
 Carpenter 0-1 Hon
 Noble 0-1 Tay
 Freeman ½-½ Goh
 Bahrain 0, China 4; Philippines 4, Brunei 0; Pakistan 3, Kuwait 1; India 2, Bangladesh 2.
 A bad day. Sarfati and I both found

that one careless move is all that is needed to spoil a good position, while Noble was the exchange up when he donated a rook to a one-mover. Freeman was probably losing at the adjournment but his opponent unwittingly repeated the position three times.

Round 5

Bangladesh 1½-2½ New Zealand
 Murshed ½-½ Sarfati
 Alam Khan 0-1 Hopewell
 Hassan 1-0 Noble
 Haque 0-1 Ker
 Malaysia ½, Philippines 3½; Brunei 0, Pakistan 4; Kuwait 2½, Bahrain 1½; China 3, India 1. Mascarinas again stumbled for the Philippines, while in the first meeting among the big three India's IM Thipsay on board two continued his 100 per cent record to score his country's sole point against China.

Sarfati was pleased to score his first half-point, with Black against IM Murshed, who offered the early draw when he realised he had overpressed. Hopewell's opponent had no idea what to do against the King's Gambit and was positionally squelched as Michael marched to 4/4.

Noble seemed to be doing all right in a most unclear position until an enemy invasion by queen and bishop mated him before he could queen his advancing pawns. Ker was better at the first adjournment and lost at the second. However, there followed a free day during which Ker, Noble and Sarfati found some imaginative swindling attempts; in the third session Rezaul Haque made two blunders and Ker only one, so the match swung our way.

The standings after five rounds were: China 18½, Philippines 17½, Pakistan 14, India 14, New Zealand 11½, Bangladesh 8½, Malaysia 7½, Kuwait 5, Bahrain 3, Brunei ½. Our points total was all right but we had not yet played any of the big three.

The four-man Philippines team was well led by Torre, who had scored 100 per cent although he was looking quite unhealthy, but were handicapped by Mascarinas' erratic play. China had six players (plus an interpreter and manager) but were playing their top four almost all the time.

The first rest day followed, on which

we were provided with a rough but worthwhile four-hour bus trip to the beautiful Taj Mahal and the huge Agra Fort.

Round 6

New Zealand 0-4 China
 Carpenter 0-1 Qi Jin Xuan
 Hopewell 0-1 Li Zu Nian
 Noble 0-1 Ye Jiang Chuan
 Freeman 0-1 Lian Jing Rong
 Bahrain 0, India 4; Kuwait 2, Brunei 2; Pakistan 1½, Malaysia 2½; Philippines 3½, Bangladesh ½.

Our only whitewash, perhaps not surprising in view of the strength of the opposition (all rated around 2400) but disappointing nonetheless. I attacked Qi Jin Xuan, found a nice manoeuvre he had missed, but failed to work out a complicated tactical win found by Noble afterwards. Insufficient preparation saw Hopewell lured into an opening variation his opponent had already used to crushing effect earlier in the tournament. Noble opened the h-file only to see his opponent get there first and Freeman suffered a hallucination in a position that was inferior but not clearly lost.

Round 7

India 3-1 New Zealand
 Barua 1-0 Sarfati
 Thipsay 1-0 Carpenter
 Mohanty ½-½ Noble
 Rafiq Khan ½-½ Ker
 Malaysia 4, Kuwait 0; Brunei 2, Bahrain 2; Bangladesh 1½, Pakistan 2½; China 2, Philippines 2.

Torre won yet again, with Black in a Ruy Lopez, but Mascarinas lost and the other two games were drawn, leaving China with a healthy points lead.

Our performance was more respectable than in the previous round. Sarfati had a difficult manoeuvring game in a closed Giuoco Piano but adjourned with what looked like a satisfactory position. However, it was not as good as we thought and a slip allowed Barua to infiltrate and mate with queen and knight.

I had an equalish position against Thipsay and a big time advantage, then general debilitation caused my brain to cease functioning. Noble was grovelling in the middle game on the black side of

a QGD Exchange but grovelled extremely well and was nearly winning at the second adjournment. Ker always had the upper hand but couldn't get through.

Round 8

Bahrain ½-3½ New Zealand
 Farooqi ½-½ Sarfati
 Al-Gashra 0-1 Carpenter
 Ajlan 0-1 Ker
 Dhaif 0-1 Freeman
 Brunei 0, Malaysia 4; Kuwait ½, Bangladesh 3½; Pakistan 2½, China 1½; Philippines 2, India 2.

Pakistan struck again and indeed nearly scored 3½ but the Philippines were held by India and remained a point behind the Chinese. Torre maintained his 100 per cent score against Barua, but Thipsay did the same against Mascarinas. Yap beat Mohanty and Rafiq Khan beat De Guzman.

Sarfati had another closed Giuoco Piano and when his position started going sour accepted his opponent's respectful draw offer. I won the exchange but then my head went fuzzy again and I played very badly until Freeman got me some coconut biscuits and I started seeing things again. Ker's pressure eventually netted a pawn. Freeman calculated some nice tactics and felt disappointed when his opponent preferred to lose simply.

Round 9

New Zealand 1½-2½ Philippines
 Sarfati ½-½ Torre
 Hopewell ½-½ Mascarinas
 Ker 0-1 Yap
 Freeman ½-½ De Guzman
 China 4, Kuwait 0; India 3, Pakistan 1; Malaysia 3, Bahrain 1; Bangladesh 3, Brunei 1.

So China won by 2½ points and qualify for the World Cup; this was the first time the Philippines had not won the championship. India beat Pakistan to make sure of third, though Thipsay surrendered his 100 per cent score when Omar Khan held him to a draw.

Sarfati had his moment of glory when he held Torre to a draw. The grandmaster, who had scored 8/8 before this game, had the initiative but Sarfati defended resourcefully. Hopewell seized the initiative with a pawn sacrifice and the pressure was enough to win the pawn