

I was there!!!!!!
Forget the "Thriller in Manilla".
The "Rumble in the Jungle" was just play-fighting!
Usyk v Fury would have been just little boys with their Teddy Bears.....

this week, Crewe Chess Club hosted the main event..... the

SHOWDOWN IN HIGHTOWN

Like all massive fights there was a lot of pre-match Media attention but all the participants were keeping their lips sealed; surprisingly not one TV or Radio interview. However behind the scenes there was plenty going on in the build up with rumours abounding about who may or may not be in the teams. (Skulduggery might be too strong a description of what happened. Shenanigans would probably be apt!!)

The Downtrodden D team came to the match as the massive underdogs in all but 5 people's eyes; mine and the players. The Cs were confident of victory which they felt would continue their push towards the Division 2 title.

Personnel on both teams had been "adjusted" to take into account the enormity of the evening.



The scene was set.....Seconds Out; game on.

As the four games started, a hush descended over the playing area, and battle was well and truly engaged. The especially commissioned, electronic, hi-tech scoreboard was eager to spring into life but after an hour all 4 games were very even and extremely tense.

The rest of the Mals was its normal busy self but as the match games progressed the room gradually became less dense. The intense concentration was etched into the faces of the players with no player wanting to be the first to concede ground.

Board 4 involved the C team's most experienced player, Nev, against the D team's newest protégé Richard. After 2 hours of battle Nev's ring-skill was beginning to tell and an unseen fork gave him a piece advantage. Richard tried to bob and weave and move around the ring but Nev was persistent and at last the all singing scoreboard whirred into life 1-0 to the Cs. Nev was caught on camera as he left the board after his match!



The other 3 games continued and each was anybody's game. However, my amateur eye was fearing the worst (as D team captain); it looked like it could be a 4-0 whitewash!

Board 2 had been a much talked up game between the C team captain, Dave Lambton and the pugilistic Lukasz. ("You'll be off book after move 1"; "I can't wait to see it"). Dave appeared to have gotten the better of the early, middle game. Apparently on analysis for a significant time Dave was around +8 as black and whilst trying to simplify had what would be called a senior moment (if he was as old as me) and Lukasz went in with the old one-two. He finished off the job and again the scoreboard sprung into life

1 – 1 and game well and truly on!! Fortunately, the ringside photographer captured Lukasz in his moment of glory...



It was now approaching 2 ½ hours and boards 1 & 3 were on knife edges. Karl for the Cs with white on 1 had Lee trying to cover many bases for a protracted time. Both players had set their stalls out to play to the bitter end but time was starting to become an issue; particularly for Lee. It looked like Karl was going to triumph but suddenly it was Lee who was victorious and I'm still unsure as to how! Both had battled to a standstill but Karl's post match photo showed the effects of a bruising game.

2-1 to the D team and the shock of the century was on the cards.



That left Carmel with white on board 3 against George. Both players went into the game with long-unbeaten records and both have developed reputations for playing in very considered fashions taking their games to the edge of time. Well the head to head was not going to disappoint. Extremely even throughout and a winner was impossible to call. Carmel knew that because of the electronic scoreboard pressure she had to win to salvage anything for her team. However the most unusual factor was that both players were playing with less than 10 seconds on the clocks and relying on increments to survive. There had to be a winner. George found a tricky fork which needed some thinking time and unfortunately Carmel was flagged.

3 -1 to the Ds. A fantastic evening's chess both for the players and the audience. Now both the Cs and Ds are chasing the division title.

For his part in bringing home the victory George was presented with his well deserved chocolate egg



after the game.