

European Youth Chess Championships

Day 1 (Sunday 3rd of September, 2017)

Today, we had to get up at 1 am in the morning to catch our flight to Constanta (Wizz Air). We were meant to be at the airport at 4am, but according to Holiday Inn (our hotel) we needed to be there at 3am, and we went even earlier so that there were no problems with the IMMIGRATION. Also, because London Luton is quite a small airport, we wanted to avoid the crowd.

We had to wait for 2 whole hours before we had the chance to check-in. I was very tired, and at times I was on the verge of sleep. The security was quick, and I had some PHO for my breakfast. The boarding was at Gate 23, and there weren't even any seats at the gate! We stood there for over an hour.

As soon as I got into the plane, I fell asleep for 3 hours. I woke up to see a beautiful countryside out of the window. We were nearly in Romania! There were greens of different shades and there were golds and browns. This was the patch of countryside surrounding the airport. In around 10 minutes, we landed in the airport. The security was quite quick and we had our suitcases in no time.

The EYCC Committee provided us with our transport. We shared a minivan with the English Head of Delegation, Simon Metcalfe, and his son Charlie Metcalfe, who is playing in the U12 Boys section. They were staying in the Phoenicia Resorts.

When we first walked into the hotel, I was awestruck. The Phoenicia Luxury really was luxurious. Everything was made from cream coloured marble and there were huge glass chandeliers. There was a big garden in the middle of the whole building, with limestone statues of famous Romanian people. In the main reception, there were some helpful staff. The walls were covered with paintings, including Van Goughs famous masterpiece, *Sunflowers*.

Our room was also very nice. We took some time to unpack and get used to the room, after which I went downstairs to explore the vast hotel. I ended up taking a picture of nearly everything before going swimming. We went in the outside pool, and the water was absolutely freezing. I was out in less than 10 minutes. Later, we found out that there was a warm indoor pool.

After my mini swim, it was nearly time for dinner. There was a lot of food in our restaurant, which was a relief after Prague! I filled myself up to the brim, before returning to my room and writing this report.

Day 2 (Monday 4th of September)

This morning, I was very, very tired. It took me 20 minutes just to get out of bed! Breakfast was delicious, with a pancake and omelette station, along with pizza (!) and salads. There was also a full English Breakfast.

After filling myself up, I got to chess! I started with *Chess Combinations*. The puzzles were very hard, in the first section (Knight forks). After that, I went on to *Chess Endgames*. He showed some deep insight, and I learnt quite a lot of new practical ideas.

Before lunch, we went swimming. The outdoor pools were freezing, and the indoor one was boiling. It was quite hard to swim in boiling water!!

I then went to lunch, where we met Lavanya, and her Dad. We also met one of the English coaches. Lots of the England team had already arrived. The food was amazing, especially the cream of tomato and basil soup.

After coming back from lunch, I considered my possible Round 1 opponent, Kseniya Zeliantsova's games. She plays very sharply, and her games are very interesting. Because of this, I merged all her games, and I selected my favourite 11 positions from her chess career. I then labelled the evaluations. I will now study those positions before going into tomorrow's game.

Then, we went to dinner, where there was once again, a massive range of foods. The whole hall was now packed with teenagers and children, and it was very difficult indeed, to get a place to sit. The dinner, made up for it!

I then returned to my bedroom. After reading Garry Kasparov's inspiring book, *How Life Imitates Chess*, I wrote this report. I am now going to go to bed. Goodbye!

Day 3 (Tuesday 5th of September)

This morning, I got up earlier than normal, because of my Moms meeting. Breakfast was amazing, as usual, and the buses were very nice, with enough seats for all. My mom made friends with the Norwegian Chief of Delegation, and we are already friends with Simon Metcalfe (England's Chief of delegation). The organization was exceptional, except one gaping hole. During the game, the parents had nowhere to go!! In the blazing heat, they had to stand outside in the Sun for over 3 hours! Many parents found this outrageous. Also, there was a shortage of water.

After coming back at around 11.30 am, I went swimming straight away! The pool was freezing, maybe even -1 degrees Celsius! I think I may have even caught a cold!

Lunch was delicious once again, with 5* pizza, and tasty cream of cauliflower soup.

It was now time for the game. Before the game, there was a 30-minute speech, which resulted in a delay. I was playing against Mihaela-Ioana Trifoi. The game was very tense, in the first 30 moves, not even 1 piece was exchanged! In the end, I blundered in time pressure, having only 1 minute on the clock.

One of the most astonishing facts of the day was that the parents had nowhere to sit! They had to stand outside in the blistering sun, and there was no shade. There were buses waiting outside to take us back to the hotel. However, my friend from England, Lavanya Malakdar's (we were the only two British girls at the event), game went on for 5.5 hours! Her dad was the last one standing, and the buses had gone! They had to get a taxi back.

After having a tasty dinner, I returned to our bedroom, analysed and annotated my game, and wrote this report! Tomorrow, my opponent is Milena Stagno, who is from Malta. Good night!

Day 4(Wednesday 6th of September)

Again, I had a lazy morning, not wanting to get up. I had gone to bed at 11 PM, and I was tired. At breakfast, I had my normal foods, consisting of cornflakes and milk, scrambled eggs and mushrooms.

For training, I looked through my opponent's games, and selected some positions. I also started the Rook chapter of *Basis of Combination*, as well as carrying on the *Chess Endings*. After this, I was ready for my game against Milena Stagno.

Milena was very nice. We talked a bit before the game, and we exchanged our respective gifts. I gave her a Welsh Flag rubber, while she gave me a magazine and some pictures from Malta. Like me, she is only 10. She has only been playing chess for 3 years, and she has been representing Malta for 2!!

Afterwards, I rested for a bit, relieved I had won a game after Round 1's tragedy. I am now going to have an early sleep, and prepare for my next game. I am playing against Filipa Fortuna Pipiras who is rated nearly 150 points above me. She is from Portugal, and our Mum's know each other quite well from last year in Prague. Good night!

Day 5 (Thursday 7th of September)

Today, after a lovely breakfast, I started preparing for my game against Filipa Fortunas Pipiras. She plays quite well, so I needed to know what I was doing. After that, I studied a chapter of the Basis of Chess Combinations, and I went swimming.

Yesterday, Savin's Dad showed us a pool where the temperature was normal, but out of the 2 pools that we had been to, one was boiling, and one was freezing! The pool was heated, but it was nowhere near as hot as the other one. Finally, I could swim in peace!

After my swim, it was time for lunch. I didn't eat very much. Everyone, like me, was beginning to get tired with the same food every day. As we don't eat pork or beef, a lot of the options weren't available to us, and they didn't change the menu. My mum (who doesn't eat any meat except of fish) was joking that as soon as she returned to the UK, she probably wouldn't touch salad again for the rest of her life!

In the playing hall, I discovered something. As soon as the parents left, the room temperature flew up. Both me and the English team agreed that as soon as the parents left, the air conditioner was turned off! At the end of the games, both the parents and the children were flushed!

I drew my game against Filipa. It was a very long game (4 hours) and we were both fighting to win. We both made some mistakes with only minutes on the clock, and the game petered out into a draw.

My score is currently 1.5/3, fifty percent. Tomorrow, I am playing Katharina Katter of Austria. She is higher rated than me, but I am confident I can put up a good fight.

Day 6 (Friday 8th of September)

It's my birthday next week! I am very excited, I am turning 11! I was White today, so I prepared against my opponent, and left for breakfast. I wanted to improve my 50% score today, and if I was going to do that, I needed to be well rested before the game. After my daily morning swim, I went to have my lunch.

Today, we managed to get the first bus, so that we could arrive early. This meant that I could have a look at the book stall, and that I would get at least half an hour in the room before the air conditioner was turned off.

My opponent was very nice. I talked to her using my very small knowledge of German, and she could talk fluently in English, as all her school lessons were taught in the language. Like most people, I was starting to suffer in the heat, within 30 minutes, my face was flushed. I felt a bit dizzy, and the only remedy was splashing my face with water. Both me and my opponent were in time pressure, because time was wasted in the toilet. At one point, there were 11 people in the queue, because there were 5 toilets for nearly a thousand girls! The game again ended in a draw. My opponent had the edge, but I defended, and when she was a pawn up, I sacrificed my piece for it, so that I could get into a R+B verses R endgame which was drawn.

I was exhausted, and I went to bed very quickly.

Day 7 (Saturday 9th of September)

Today, I am playing Agata Murzina, who is from Russia. She has a high rating, and she is ranked 13th, but in this tournament, anyone can be beaten.

The tournament hall was boiling, and sun's rays were glaring at our skin. My opponent, was nice and smiled at me a lot. She played a dubious opening, but I misplayed it and ended up in a worse position. She started an attack, but went too far. It looked scary, but there was a way to defend it, which she missed. I won 2 pawns, and converted to winning endgame, and I found a nice tactic to finish the game off. She played until checkmate, and I think she was quite upset, because after she had realised that she was losing, she had started glaring at me.

I am really looking forward to the rest day tomorrow, as I am exhausted!

Day 8 (Sunday 10th of September)

Today was the rest day! First, the English team and I went to the pool for a swim. We had races, as well as making a stroke called the Doughnut stroke! My favourite part was the relays.

In the evening, we went on the cable car. The view was truly amazing, and we could see all the skyscrapers. The best part was that when we got on, the cable car was moving! After that we had some ice cream.

Tomorrow, I am playing Vesna Mihelic. I played her last year, but I lost from a winning position. That game effectively spoilt my tournament. We are friends, but I really want to win.

Day 9 (Monday 11th of September)

Today, our game was very interesting. I sacrificed a pawn, and in return, I got a wonderful position. Her problem, was that she couldn't really move. She took a lot of time trying to find a plan, but there wasn't really one to find. After this, she got frustrated, and made some errors, allowing me to win.

We went on the rooftop bus on the way back. It was very windy, therefore a welcome change in the temperature. There were two little girls letting leaves fly in the wind, one of them nearly caught my eye!

I was very happy with my win, it was probably my best game so far. Tomorrow I am playing Stephanie Matasaru, who is from Romania. We are both on 4/6.

Day 10 (Tuesday 12th of September)

Today, I lost because of an opening trap. I was very upset. I had never seen it before, and it was very difficult to find it over the board.

Tomorrow, I have got Nikoletta Toth, from Hungary. She is the 3rd seed, so it will be tough, but anyone can beat anyone in this tournament!

Day 11 (Wednesday 13th of September)

Today, my opponent tried **very** hard to beat me, and she came very close. I survived by the skin of my teeth, only because of tough resistance. She was a very nice person, however, and she has become my friend. The playing conditions are still very challenging, and I am already exhausted.

Last match tomorrow!

Day 12 (Thursday 14th of September)

Today, I played Maria Sovina of Russia. I lost, in a very interesting match. She played very well. The game was remarkably similar to my game against Vesna, and it was a very good learning experience.

I have learned a lot, and I am very glad I came here, fighting with the best of Europe. Tomorrow it is my birthday, I am excited to go back to school.

Day 13 (Friday 15th of September)

Today it's my birthday! Our bus to the airport left at 9am, for Constanta, and our flight was at 12 noon. The English team were also on the same plane as us. They sang happy birthday to me, and I was elated. I slept on the plane, and we reached London after 3 hours.

We then all parted our ways. We took the National Express back to Cardiff. We reached our house at 11pm, and I went straight to bed.