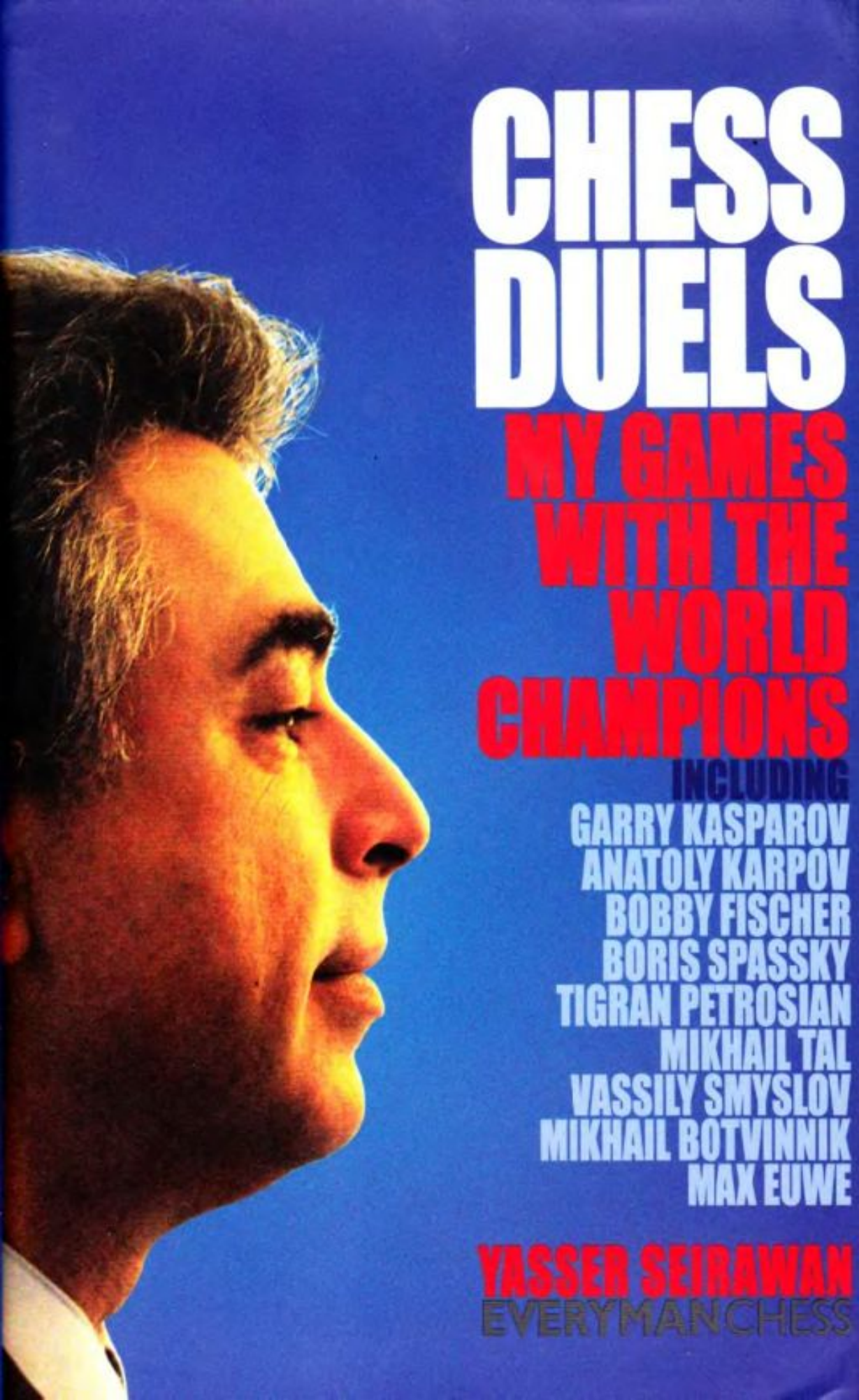


CHESS DUELS

MY GAMES WITH THE WORLD CHAMPIONS

INCLUDING

GARRY KASPAROV
ANATOLY KARPOV
BOBBY FISCHER
BORIS SPASSKY
TIGRAN PETROSIAN
MIKHAIL TAL
VASSILY SMYSLOV
MIKHAIL BOTVINNIK
MAX EUWE

YASSER SEIRAWAN

EVERYMAN CHESS

What separates the world chess champions from players who never quite reached the summit? Yasser Seirawan has played frequently against all the recent world champions, and in this book he discusses those games, and his opponents, in great detail and with refreshing candor. From his close personal contact with the champions he is able to offer many shrewd observations on their careers and personalities, and the book also relates his involvement as a 'mover and shaker' in chess administration and politics. Any enthusiast interested in top-class chess will find *Chess Duels: My Games with the World Champions* a fascinating read.



Yasser Seirawan is one of the top-ranked chess players in the USA and was twice a candidate for the World Championship title. He is a former World Junior Champion, four-time US Champion, the 1989 Western Hemisphere Champion, and ten-time member of the U.S Chess Olympiad team. His achievements distinguish him as one of only a handful of players to have defeated world champions Mikhail Tal, Anatoly Karpov and Garry Kasparov in tournament play.

CHESS DUELS

MY GAMES WITH THE WORLD CHAMPIONS

YASSER SEIRAWAN

EVERYMAN CHESS

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This book is dedicated to grandmaster Bent Larsen.
My one true chess hero.

Introduction

Memories of Syria

I was born March 24, 1960 in Damascus to a Syrian father, Muyassar Seirawan, and an English mother, Margaret Elvin. My parents met during my father's student days when he was earning his advanced University degrees in England. He studied artificial intelligence and computer programming at the Boots Institute in Nottingham. While in Nottingham he met my mother and married. Their marriage was not one made in heaven. My father came from a Muslim nation and, while not a practicing Muslim or particularly religious, was observant. My mother went to the Church of England and was raised in a Judeo-Christian culture although, like my father, she wasn't particularly religious either.

My standard joke is that my mother and father were gamblers, a trait that they passed to their children. That my parents played genetic dice and came up winners; thanks to my father, from the waist down I was a Bedouin Arab and, thanks to my mother, from the waist up I was an orthodox British gentleman. You laugh, but this is a dangerous game. You certainly don't want to get the genetic blueprint mixed up or reverse the correct move order. A British gentleman from the waist down? That would be a disaster.

My father was quite clever and earned a scholarship program whereby his western education was paid for by the Syrian State. In return, after he completed his studies my parents went to Damascus, where my father was obliged to serve as an officer in the Syrian military for a few years as repayment for his student loans.

The Seirawan family was shocked that my father brought home a bride, especially without the family's permission. No doubt he did not ask because he would have been refused. In so doing my father invoked the ancient tradition forgiveness rather than permission. His new bride had numerous strikes against

her: she was not Muslim; she did not speak Arabic and certainly suffered from culture shock. Nor did she endear herself when her first-born was a daughter, my sister Runda. Fortunately, with my birth, a son, all was forgiven. My mother's position literally went from near-outcast to queen overnight. This fortuitous event worked well for both of us.

In Damascus, our family lived in an apartment on the ground floor of a large apartment building with its own internal courtyard. The apartments were mainly occupied by extended Seirawan family members. Everyone fretted over all the others, keeping a careful lookout especially for the young. Meals were communal affairs, as were shopping, cleaning, schooling, holidays and the like.

I was a big baby, nearly nine pounds, whereas my mother, a slight woman at five feet, six inches tall and barely over one hundred and ten pounds, had to keep tabs on my sister and me, as well as others in our family apartment complex. She learned to speak Arabic, wore the Hijab, the headscarf for women, and passed for a local. It was customary for friends and strangers to stop and praise yours truly. "No," my mother would say, shaking her head sadly, "he is sickly and underweight." This customary response was intended to ward off the Evil Eye and not to attract attention.

My earliest two memories, and indeed the only ones from Syria, consist of pleasure and pain. I thought they were myths created in my imagination, but my parents confirmed them. The pleasurable memory begins in the living room of our apartment on the carpeted floor. On a table that was too high an unreachable box of chocolates resided. Able to resist everything except temptation, I wondered how to get the box. My solution was to tug the table cloth and keep pulling to the point that the chocolate box fell off the table, along with everything else on the table cloth. I then took the box, hid myself behind the couch and ate them all. I've had a love affair with chocolates ever since.

My second memory is again being on the carpeted living room floor playing "blocks" with another child from the complex. I looked up at the wall and saw cracks starting to appear, then a sudden and sharp pain happened to my ribs. In mid-air as the wall collapsed, I looked behind me to try to understand who or what caused the sharp pain to my ribs and was shocked to discover it was my mother. That was the end of my memory; the whole of it.

Later my mother explained what had happened. The courtyard needed repairs with the services of a bulldozer. During the height of the day's heat the driver took a nap. During his rest his knee hit the gearshift, and the bulldozer slipped into neutral. It began to roll down and away from the courtyard, crashing into our apartment building, smashing through the wall and stopping in our living room. The bulldozer came to rest directly on top of our play blocks. My mother had grabbed me with one arm and my playmate with the other, snatching us sharply moments before the wall would have toppled down upon us both.

Pleasure and pain. A common twinning.

Again, it should be mentioned that in our apartment building the families were all rather large with numerous children; misfortune with a lost child or even a lost mother was not uncommon in those days. In one family, a mother lost her life during delivery and the child, a girl, Haifa was born. The families gathered and decided, collectively, that my mother, who was nursing me, was also to be given the duty of nursing Haifa. In the Arab tradition a "mother" is not necessarily the birth-mother but can be the one who gives milk, who nurses the child. In this situation, Haifa became a sister to me and a second daughter to my mother.

England

In the early 1960s, Syria was buffeted by social strife. Government leaders rose and fell. Military squads as well as gangs with guns patrolled the streets, and my mother and father became concerned that Syria was spiraling into social chaos. They decided to leave Syria and return to England. It wasn't easy and indeed at the time it was a dangerous undertaking. My father had a special passport thanks to his student and military careers, and was considered a vital person. He needed special permission to leave the country, something his true passport would not allow. He therefore bought passports on the black market and the family pretended to be British tourists. On the way to the airport, we were sternly told by my mother to speak English only, an instruction that neither my sister nor I could remember. Our memory is only that we obeyed it, and the family arrived in England on March 11, 1964.

My brother Nabeel, or rather Daniel, was born October 27, 1964, a few months after our arrival in Nottingham. Nabeel or Nabil in Arabic means noble. Such a marvelous ordination to start one's life would be welcomed one would think. My brother would have none of it though. Virtually from the time he could speak, he christened himself. "My name is Daniel," he would politely say. "Please, call me Daniel." If we called him Nabeel he would refuse us, and soon we would all call him Daniel.

I relished England. Here memories spring to life easily. Early schooling, coloring books, the joys of riding a scooter, playing conkers, marbles, wellies (rubber boots), climbing trees, hot water bottles for bedtime and treacle pudding all come rushing to mind. It seems I was particularly adept at marbles, which my mother despised. I'd come home every day with a pocketful that I had won at school from the other boys. My mother would make sure I went to school without any marbles, but I'd consistently come back with a pocketful as I'd borrow a first marble from a friend and then start winning them from the other boys. I have one quite distinct memory; one boy frustrated with his losses threw his marble as far away as possible in order not to lose. Not to be outdone I threw my marble after his. It was one of those impossibilities. His marble went into a groove, as did mine. My marble clicked against his and I had won. My circle of friends laughed for days.

My father had many friends from his student days and one whom he liked very much would come for family gatherings, a certain Ken Whyld. They kept in contact with one another for decades. Towards the end of his life Ken visited Seattle, where we all had lunch together. For those who don't know, Ken Whyld is considered a great chess historian, having co-authored the *Oxford Companion to Chess*. We live in a small world.

The New World

In 1967 my father was hired by Boeing, the famous airline manufacturer, which is how the family came to live in Seattle, arriving on June 1, 1967. We moved into a home in the Queen Anne Hill neighborhood, where I started on my path in the American educational system at Queen Anne Elementary School.

Chess had no part in my life during this early period. My father liked the game and tried to teach me. While attracted to the physical appearance of the pieces, it was physical sports that held my fancy and in America I soared. American football, baseball, dodge-ball, wrestling and bicycle riding were my new worlds. The days of scooters, marbles and conkers were long gone. The New World offered new sports, and I decided they were all exciting

I was extremely athletic and a fast runner. Sprinting, track and field, and jumping all told of a potentially promising

one year of our arrival, in March 1968, my mother and father separated and were divorced within a year. The children lived with my mother and as the years passed my Arabic language skills melted away so completely that I now speak only a few words. In 1970, my mother married for the second time, to Richard Valance. A man as different from my father as two people could possibly be

Valance was a tall man, well over six feet, bald-headed, a flaming red-beard and penetrating blue eyes. He had been born in Detroit, where he roamed with street gangs; a particularly violent clash with rivals had cost his best friend his life. Valance felt he would be next. He decided to leave America, went to Thailand and became a Buddhist monk. In Thailand, for the first time in his life, he was at peace. His spirits soared with his studies, and long peri

brought him inner harmony. He was confounded when his Abbot told him he had learned all he could and that he was to return to America, where his destiny awaited.

In my father's household order reigned supreme. Everything from sleep, to bathing, to meals, to school, to playtime held a schedule. With Valance there was no schedule whatsoever and everything was played by ear. From Seattle, the family traveled down the Pacific coastline through Oregon to California, settling in Palm Springs for a few months, then Corpus Christi, Texas and finally Virginia Beach, Virginia in 1970 became our destination. Our constant moving played havoc with schooling, but somehow I wasn't dreadfully impacted. Within weeks I had caught up with my classmates, and my sports ability made me a favorite in class.

Of all the places we stayed, I liked Virginia Beach the most. Now it was my turn in heaven. The allure of the ocean was a siren's call. I body-surfed and used a surfboard as often as I could. I had always loved swimming, but it was in Virginia Beach that I really found my calling. I endeavored to help the lifeguards as best I could and volunteered to assist them at pools. The beach was my new world.

How was it that the family moved to Virginia Beach, of all places? Needless to say, my mother's marriage to Valance had an unusual impact upon her, and suddenly her interest in spirituality and mysticism flamed brightly. Meditation and mysticism were enormously attractive fields of interest to her. Guests to our home included yoga teachers, astrologists, numerologists, homeopaths, Buddhists, Hindus, Born-again Christians and folks from just about every walk of life. The famous somnambulist Edgar Cayce, "The Sleeping Prophet," had set up the Edgar Cayce Association for Enlightenment (ARE) center in Virginia Beach, and my mother felt a calling to go and study there. Edgar Cayce would lie down to rest and put himself in a trance and while "under" he spoke with a "voice" to help people cure themselves. Thousands of readings were recorded with advice on how to treat virtually every type of sickness and disease. My mother wanted to study the readings. The very first day that we drove to Virginia Beach in our station-wagon we went to the ARE center, and the first person we met was Hugh Lynn Cayce, the son of Edgar Cayce. That very afternoon we were in our first home, at Hugh Lynn's invitation.

In Virginia Beach, I went to W. T. Cooke Elementary School and became a newspaper boy to earn a little extra money. I took my duties very seriously indeed and delivered my newspapers during Hurricane Lisa. The winds against me were so strong I couldn't pedal my bike, front-loaded with plastic-bound newspapers, which stood transfixed by powerful wind gusts as I tried to push my pedals downward. I delivered my whole route by foot, straining against the lashing winds. My mother was absolutely beside herself with worry as the hurricane gyrated against our taped-opened windows. When I returned home she was about to give me a good tongue-lashing until she noticed that I was totally pale and as cold as an ice-cube. She told me that I needed a hot bath and that I should get undressed as she prepared the tub. She turned on the cold water tap only, and as I dipped my foot into the water I complained to her that she had made it too hot. I drained some of the water and again turned on the cold tap. A half-hour later I drained more water and turned on the warm tap this time and stayed in the bath for over an hour. Eventually, my body temperature returned to normal levels. I don't know how low my temperature actually fell, but with hindsight I was probably quite lucky that I hadn't done any permanent damage. (The family joke, of course, is that serious damage *was* done.)

I don't know where my competitive nature comes from. Whether in sports, school or as a newspaper boy, I endeavored to be best. Not just best, but excel-

lent. Yes, I wanted to win and not just within the rules, but within the spirit of the rules as well. If I felt a referee made a bad call, I would give the ball back to the other team, not always endearing myself to my teammates in the process. This aspiration for excellence got me in trouble in other ways as well. Most often in the classroom. An "A" or "A+" while appreciated wasn't enough, I wanted one hundred percent. Most of my classes were rated on a sliding scale with the extremes determining the letter grade. My scores of one hundred percent were resented. Oftentimes I was encouraged "not to get them all right." Disputes I found frustrating and vexing. What was the point? Many teachers found ways of giving me extra homework or different assignments, mostly book reports.

Back To Seattle

Again, my very happy world was tossed upside down in 1972. My mother decided that she had completed her studies and research at the ARE Center, her marriage to Valance wasn't faring well, and it was time to return to Seattle. I was heartbroken. My memories of Seattle weren't endearing; in particular, it rained a great deal and although it is on the Pacific Coast I didn't remember doing any surfing as there were no waves in the Puget Sound. I resisted but failed, and the family moved to Seattle in the summer of 1972 when the school year ended. At the time, I considered myself an outdoors person; television had little interest for me except if my favorite American football team, the Dallas Cowboys, was playing. That and professional wrestling of course.

My worst fears of Seattle were realized upon arrival. Hot summer days were brief. Overcast clouds common. The family washed up on the shores of Lake Washington near Sand Point, an area north-east of the University District. A few miles further north down the road, Sandpoint Way, was a "beach". A place on the lake where there was a large float that you could swim out to and dive from, using the low and high diving-board. This lakeside park with its picnic benches was my boring solace. When it rained, as it frequently did, the children were stuck indoors.

Since many of our belongings hadn't yet arrived, the family took to visiting our upstairs neighbor, David Chapman, a paraplegic who had a wonderful television on which we could watch the Olympic Games. It was David who taught me the peculiar game of chess, where I fumbled badly trying to figure out the strange hops of the knights. David defeated me easily, and in order to get competitive I would visit a coffee-shop, The Last Exit on Brooklyn, in the University of Washington district, where other chess players met to play blitz. Chess had arrived in my life.

At this point, I'd like to fast forward by six years to 1978/79. My mother had married for the third time, to a Hawaiian, Kelena Nakata. The family was now living in a condominium in a large complex on Rainier Beach, this time not on the northern part of Lake Washington, but on the most southern part, miles

away from downtown Seattle and even further from the University of Washington, which is north of downtown. I mention the latter point just to emphasize that anyone who was to study at the "U-W" (locally pronounced as the "U-Dub") would definitely not live in Rainier Beach as that would be at least 40 minutes away, with good traffic, from campus.

As is universally known, the British are the worst cooks in the world, and my mother is a particularly bright-shining example of this truism. Her failing was a blessing. For purposes of self-preservation the children all learned to cook well. One day I came upon my mother in the kitchen, always a dangerous sign, and suspiciously asked her what she was doing. She explained that neighbors had just moved in below us and she wanted to make the new arrivals feel welcome and was therefore baking a pie. Needless to say, I was rather dubious and wondered if after tasting the pie our new neighbors would ever be seen again. I needn't have worried. Triumphantly, my mother took her pie downstairs and knocked on the door. A nice lady opened it. My mother dropped her pie on the floor and began crying. So did the other lady. They cried hard and openly, hugging one another hysterically and with strength. It was Haifa. After nearly two decades apart, mother and daughter recognized one another instantly.

Haifa had married a man, Mohammed, who was studying at the University of Washington. In a city of nearly one million inhabitants, Haifa came to live underneath her mother. It is a story which if it came from a novel would be laughed at as ridiculous. Truly, life is strangerthan fiction.

My Chess Career

In 1979, my career received a huge boost when I won the World Junior Championship (under 21 years old) in Skien, Norway. While I had scaled the ranks in the US, it was this result that brought me to the attention of organizers around the world, and in January 1980 I was invited to the élite event in Wijk aan Zee, Holland. As a rookie in the big leagues how would I fare? "Wijk" was a breakthrough event for me. I tied for first, earning my final grandmaster norm in the process. Seven and a half years after taking up the game I became a grandmaster. It was quitearide.

Besides the grandmaster title, Wijk aan Zee 1980 brought me something extra special as well: a deep friendship with Victor Korchnoi that has lasted decades. At that time Victor was the world's second highest-ranked player. He invited me to work with him in his 1980-1981 Candidate Matches and World Championship campaign. We worked hard, and thanks to him my chess knowledge soared. By the middle of the 1980s I qualified through the Interzonal cycle and became a Candidate (Montpellier 1985). For the rest of my career I played in élite matches and events around the world, eventually breaking into the ranks of the world's top ten players.

In 1988, I started a chess magazine, *Inside Chess*, which had a twelve-year run.

I sold the business to Hanon Russell in 2001. During the 1990s playing on the professional chess circuit while simultaneously running a bi-weekly magazine was hard work, and I was constantly busy and often quite tired. It wasn't easy to find the time to train properly and prepare for duels with the world's best players. Oftentimes at the board I found myself playing on my fundamental knowledge of the game. No spectacular opening novelties from me – just hard-nosed chess. At the end of 2003 I retired from the tournament circuit, a 30-plus-year career that brought me friendships and wonderful memories from around the globe.

Mine has been a strange life, with lots of sharp moves both to the left as well as to the right. Journey with me now as we embark into the world of chess and to a special sphere: the world of the élite. Meeting and competing with not just the best, but the best of the best, the World Champions. In my career I've been blessed. I have met and spoken with Max Euwe and Mikhail Botvinnik, analyzed with Robert James Fischer, and played against Vassily Smyslov, Mikhail Tal, Tigran Petrosian, Boris Spassky, Anatoly Karpov and Garry Kasparov. That is nine out of the thirteen World Champions, whose line extends back to 1886 and Wilhelm Steinitz. It is in these duels, the games played at classical time-controls against these champions, that I judge my playing career. Chess players often ask: "who was the best ever?" as well as "who were the top ten?" The best of the best? Universally, three names are always included on such lists: Fischer, Karpov and Kasparov. Not always, but sometimes, the lists include Spassky, Smyslov and Tal as well. Truly, I have lived in a time of giants.

Presenting the material in this book raised awkward problems, to say the least. Should I present the games in the chronological order in which they were played? If I did that, I would find myself jumping back and forth from one player to the next and would have difficulty giving a complete picture of my opponents. For example, my first game with a World Champion was in 1980, against Boris Spassky, followed a month later by an encounter with Mikhail Tal, then a game with the reigning World Champion Anatoly Karpov, and so on, and so forth, with players getting constantly mixed around. It seemed best to create a separate chapter for my duels with each player. In this way I could devote a full chapter to giving an overall impression of them as people, as well as discussing their chess styles.

That decision made, one logical approach was to present the giants in chronological order, starting with Paul Morphy and working my way through Wilhelm Steinitz, Emanuel Iasker... I would pause when I reached Vassily Smyslov, the oldest giant with whom I dueled, five times, keep going, eventually getting to Bobby Fischer, Anatoly Karpov and Garry Kasparov. However, such a presentation didn't appeal to me. For one thing, I didn't have any games against Bobby, so after presenting chapters featuring games suddenly there would be a chapter with no games at all. More importantly, I was the product of the "Bobby

Fischer boom" in 1972. Bobby was the beginning of my career. It was far more attractive and accurate for me to start with him. So I have.

After Bobby, I give my impressions of our great World Champions, trying to share my first-hand and second-hand stories while reaching back into history. With Vassily Smyslov, Mikhail Tal and Tigran Petrosian I'm on solid ground.

The bulk of this work focuses upon three players: Boris Spassky, Anatoly Karpov and Garry Kasparov, the three giants I played most often. There are two chapters about Karpov: the first covering his reign from 1975 to 1985 and the second dealing with the period when he became the FIDE World Champion again. There are also two chapters about Kasparov: the first concerns his reign from 1985 to 2000 and the second the "after death" when he lost his title to Vladimir Kramnik. I go backwards and forwards a great deal, because I played against the players often and sometimes in the same event. Then there are breaks of many years before I dueled with them again.

The greatest chess rivalry of all time was between Karpov and Kasparov. It lasted for decades, and between them they played an unprecedented five World Championship matches. But the chapters devoted to them include much information about other players as well. The resulting book is a virtual stew of stories, anecdotes and games with the giants. Trying to separate them into a neat chronological order would have taken away much of the enjoyment I derived from writing the book. Coupling stories and games together made this book much more fun to write, and, I hope, fun to read. It turns out that a chess career is much like an interesting game – not as neat and tidy, simple or easy to follow as some would wish. My hope is that this book is all the better for not being a neat tidy work. Any failings are entirely my own.

The final chapter concerns the Fédération Internationale des Échecs (FIDE) or World Chess Federation, and the very important function that this organization serves. I've offered my views on its successes and failings, and how it might function better in the years ahead.

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This work would not have happened without the gentle persuasion of the Everyman Managing Editor Dan Addelman and without his willingness to extend my due dates. It took well over a year, as I worked slowly. My thanks to chess historian Edward Winter, of *Chess Notes* fame, for his advice and much encouragement besides. Thanks too to Hanon Russell of the Chess Café for permission to reprint my annotations from *Inside Chess*. I also owe a debt of gratitude to my life-long friends Bruce Harper, who kindly traded his author's hat for that of copy-editor, and John Donaldson, for all his research help. Gentlemen, my deepest thanks to each and every one of you

In the games presented in this work I've endeavored to make it clear when the games were classical, the greatest test of chess mastery, when the games

were rapid (an hour or less per player) and when they were blitz games (five minutes per player). In my annotations I've paid particularly close attention to the classical games, less so to the rapid and even less to the blitz. Those five-minute games are to be enjoyed and not to be taken too seriously. More often than not, I came away with my jaw needing a reset, but I got in some punches and a few jabs of my own.

Finally, I'd also like to give a special word of thanks and recognition to Robert Anthony Karch and Bill Goichberg. Robert ran open Swiss events for decades in the Pacific northwest, and I cut my teeth on his events. He really was "Mr. Northwest Chess" for ages and if he hadn't organized competitions my opportunities to compete early in my career would have been slim indeed. In a similar measure, Bill of "World Open" fame ran tournaments across the nation. I competed in many of his Continental Chess events, earning my FIDE norms at times. Thank you both very much!

Enjoy,
Yasser Seirawan

Chapter One

Bobby Fischer

While I was at Seattle's Garfield High School, my physics teacher had the class write an assignment on the "Big Bang" theory of creation. In his lectures he seemed especially enthusiastic about the theory, praising it in glowing terms. I didn't share his enthusiasm, having doubts about the theory, but nevertheless I dutifully wrote an essay titled "In the Beginning". It expressed the concept of the Big Bang and I wrote in a supportive way of how much sense the theory made. I was awarded an "A+" for my paper and have thought about the "Beginning" ever since.

The Fischer Legend Begins

"The Big Bang," not just for my chess career but for many American chess players, was the success in 1972 of Robert James Fischer (1943-2008). That year he became the eleventh World Chess Champion, according to the World Chess Federation. His victory in his 1972 match against the Soviet Union's Boris Spassky played a central role in my enthusiasm for chess. His success thrust chess upon the American people as his match with Spassky became front page news for months. Soon everyone knew the story: he was the lone American who "single-handedly" took on the Soviet Union's chess juggernaut, beat them all in succession and won the crown, becoming the World Champion. My close circle of chess friends were in a tizzy. "Bobby," as he was affectionately known to one and all, was simply the toast of the times. The Bobby Fischer phenomenon was extraordinary. *Life* magazine did a major cover story on him, while the media seized on his every move on and off the chessboard.

After his victory in Reykjavik, Iceland in 1972, Bobby was honored by a New York City ticker-tape parade and was given the keys to the city; he appeared on Johnny Carson's *Tonight* show; he did a skit with Bob Hope; President Nixon

hailed him as a national hero... And then, at the height of his acclaim and professional accomplishments, he left the stage and disappeared.

Where was Bobby?

To say that the situation was vexing would be an understatement. Every chess fan in America eagerly awaited his next game, tournament and match. His sweeping march through the World Championship cycle and title match had been so dominating that there was simply no question he would win the next tournament or event in which he competed. We all shared a collective anxiety while waiting for the announcement of when and where he would play next. This pause in his chess career coincided with my starting to play and gave me a chance to play catch-up. I learned to replay his greatest victories, including the "Game of the Century" against Donald Byrne. Wow! Played when he was only 13 years old.

I thrilled to stories about his US Championship game versus Robert Byrne. Bobby had sacrificed a piece, and grandmasters commentating on the game as it was being played sagely told their audience that he had gambled too loosely and was now lost... Then, to their disbelief, Byrne resigned. The stories were all so very inspiring. It was as if Bobby was in a world of his own.

As months passed still there was no word on Bobby's expected triumphant return to the chessboard. Concern grew. Hadn't Bobby himself told everyone that as World Champion he would play often and keep an active role? Playing in all the biggest and strongest events? "All I ever want to do is play chess" Bobby was widely quoted as having stated in an interview. Where was he? In this period of chess darkness it seemed that he went into hiding – specifically avoiding all the press and paparazzi. He seemed especially camera-shy. What was he doing? Was he studying? Was he playing "private training matches" to keep his edge? Bobby was not just missing – he had disappeared completely. A chess vacuum had been created. The parade had stalled, the leader was AWOL.

In 1974 a new book appeared, written by Brad Darrach, the reporter for *Life* magazine, called *Bobby Fischer vs. the Rest of the World*. It caused a sensation amongst my circle of friends. I eagerly devoured the book, relishing all the insights into Bobby's views and behavior. I laughed out loud at various passages and could only imagine what Bobby had to endure during the maelstrom swirling around him. "Keep the Russians off my back" is what he had told Colonel Ed Edmondson, his Delegation Chief, and the saying took on a life of its own. "Get off my back!" could be heard around the chess clubs and Last Exit coffee shop, where I learned to play and use a chess clock to play blitz or five-minute chess games.

Speculation as to what Bobby was doing or not doing seemed to grow and become wilder as time passed. Garner Ted Armstrong's Worldwide Church of God seemed to play a central role in Bobby's life. This Church seemed to be a kind

of doomsday cult of Christian Fundamentalists who believed in the prophecy of the New Testament. Apocalypse was upon us, and only the true believers would be saved. Rumors circulated that Bobby had donated his World Championship purse winnings to the Church. His private Secretary "Claudia," a member of the Church, was responsible for contacting Bobby and passing along invitations and commercial offers. She seemed to be the only conduit for contacting Bobby. Rumors spread about lawsuits with Chester Fox, the man who had the film rights to the 1972 match, as did talk of a lawsuit against the publishers of Darrach's book. Any details were eagerly shared.

I learned that Bobby had received a one million dollar offer to endorse a shampoo for a commercial. A million dollars! What an astonishing amount of money! Easy pickings to be sure. One only had to become World Chess Champion and sponsors and commercial offers would beat a path to your door. How had Bobby reacted to such a wondrous offer? The answer which astonished us all was that Bobby declined. Declined a million dollars? Was it possible? And, if so, why? The answer was that Bobby refused the commercial offer for the simplest of all reasons: he didn't use that particular brand of shampoo. This stunning answer caused us minutes of incredulous silence followed by bursts of laughter. It hardly seemed possible! "Really??" we all asked. Yes, we were told – Bobby is a very "pure" person, who, would never endorse a product that he didn't personally believe in. Hmm.

Such stories made me reassess the whole notion of commercial endorsements. Would I be so pure? Reject a million dollar offer because I didn't use the underlying product? Certainly not! I didn't own a Rolls Royce automobile or a Rolex Midas wristwatch either, but for a million dollars I'd certainly advise one and all that they were indeed excellent products, especially if a few samples were provided as part of my endorsement! After all, I should get a feel for the controls.

Stories about Bobby abounded. It was impossible to sort myth from fact. Reporters wrote whatever they fancied, and there was no one to correct them. Tons of garbage was spewed and constantly recycled. Fiction became fact, repeated by one writing after another. Friends who were dismayed by these reports urged Bobby to write letters to correct the writers, but usually to no avail.

My Seattle chess circles were eager for any news of Bobby. The recycled wisdom was that he was with the Worldwide Church of God, that Claudia conducted his business affairs and that instead of chess training he was focused on suing over the Brad Darrach book. There were no commercial endorsements, no tournaments, no news releases. We were painfully empty of stories to report to one another.

Articles constantly repeated and hyped the following: Bobby despised the press, refused all interview requests and didn't want people to know where he lived; that he was very much a loner living in Pasadena, California, using public

transportation to make trips to the Los Angeles Public Library to do research for his lawsuit; that his friends were all pledged to secrecy; and that he was estranged from his family.

While it is only speculation on my part, it seems that Bobby's lawsuit against Brad Darrach played a central role in his life for several years and ended in disaster for him. The June 1977 *Chess Life & Review* magazine reported:

"Bobby Fischer's $5 million invasion of privacy lawsuit against author Brad Darrach, Time-Life International and Stein and Day Publishers, Inc., has been dismissed in California by U. S. District Court Judge Matt Byrne. Fischer had accused the author and publishers of breaking written and oral promises not to publish details of his private life. Incensed at the outcome, Fischer told Judge Byrne: 'I'll not pay a penny of federal income tax until I get justice in this case.'"

Striking and telling words from Bobby. His deep-seated antagonism toward the US federal authorities had started.

The 1975 Match

One day a bolt of lightning had energized us all: Bobby had a letter published in the November 1974 *Chess Life & Review* in which he proposed new, or perhaps old, rules for his scheduled 1975 match title defense. Instead of the best of 24 games match rules that he used to defeat Boris Spassky, Bobby wanted to revert one hundred years to the rules of Wilhelm Steinitz, proposing a match of the first to win ten games, draws not counting. These rules included the proviso that if the defending World Champion (Fischer) won nine games, he could not lose the match. The World Champion would have to win ten games to win the match, as would the Challenger – but if the World Champion won nine games the worst that could happen would be a tied match at nine wins each. The prize fund would be split equally in case of a nine wins tie, but the World Champion would retain his title.

Bobby's proposal evoked enormous discussions in chess circles and magazines. Mathematicians wrote at length about how a tied 12-12 match score with the Champion retaining his title was a greater advantage to the World Champion than the must win ten-games rules. In *Chess Life & Review* Fischer explained that as draws did not count, both players would be motivated to play for a win in every game.

It was all very exciting. Bobby was coming back! He wouldn't just be playing 24-games either. Who knew how long a match against the young Soviet Challenger Anatoly Karpov would last? He would be playing for months. Or would he? The chess body that would have to approve the rule changes was FIDE and, like many international bodies of the time, it was dominated by the Soviet Union (USSR) and its allies. Would Bobby's proposals be accepted by the national delegates to FIDE's General Assembly or would Bobby's proposed rule changes be thwarted? Suddenly folks who never knew about FIDE would be learning about

its Central Committee, rules and voting procedures. It was all very strange but somehow fascinating as well.

About the time when the debate was raging as to whether Bobby's proposals were more fair to the Challenger than a match of fixed duration, where draws brought the leader closer to the coveted title, rumors swirled that the Filipino dictator Ferdinand Marcos would offer five million dollars to host the 1975 World Chess Championship match. This was an astronomical sum, especially in 1975. Everyone turned to the FIDE – surely thedelegates would approve the rule changes, Bobby would play and millions of dollars would be at stake. With twenty percent of the purse going to FIDE it would be an offer too good to refuse. We were giddy with excitement. The FIDE vote would be a formality.

Then the chess world was swallowed by a Black Hole. The former World Champion Max Euwe, then President of FIDE, convened a special FIDE Congress to vote on Fischer's World Championship match proposals. The vote was very close. My friend Colonel Ed Edmondson, who was a former Executive Director of the USCF, told me his insider's story which I've summarized as follows:

"The vote was going to be very close. Both sides were pulling out all the stops. The Soviets were twisting arms and elbows, and the western nations were doing the same. This was our big chance to bring chess to new heights. The prospects of a five million dollar match contested in the Philippines, a match pitting an American against a Soviet, would put chess firmly on the front page of newspapers all over the world once more. The match would likely last months. We lobbied like there was no tomorrow. Indeed, there would be no tomorrow.

"I knew Bobby well. He wanted the Steinitz rules and genuinely believed they were the fairest rules for both players. He wanted them even before he played Spassky, but as Challenger he had no chance to get the rules changed. I knew, I just knew, that if the Steinitz rules were not approved, Bobby would resign or forfeit his title. The stakes were that extreme. Before the vote I was nervous but confident. I thought we would win, but just barely. We lost by a very narrow margin. Apparently, the Mexican delegate changed his vote at the last possible second. A year later a delegation of Soviet grandmasters visited Mexico on a goodwill tour conducting seminars and simuls for free. The Soviets got their *win*, but pushed chess backwards a decade or more."

Remember this vote occurred at a time when the Soviets and their satellites routinely won votes at the United Nations by resounding margins. It really is a testament to how strongly the USCF lobbied that the vote was so close. The outcome of FIDE's decision couldn't have been more cataclysmic. The most dire forecast happened: virtually the moment the vote count was known and the rule change motion lost, Bobby announced his resignation as the FIDE World Chess Champion. Later, though, Bobby would maintain thathe resigned "only" his FIDE title and that he was still World Champion.

Instead of approving the "must-win-ten-games" Steinitz rules that Bobby

wanted, FIDE delegates sought a compromise and passed a "must-win-six-games" set of rules. In case of a five-five tie, the match would continue until the next decisive game was played. The must-win-six-games rules were favored by José Raúl Capablanca and often called the "London Rules."

This was typical of FIDE's decision-making then and since. Given a choice between "A" or "B" invariably FIDE's delegates approved a plan "C," which was a hybrid between the two choices which usually highlighted and combined the worst aspects of the original two choices while having no redeeming qualities of its own.

At the time and since, I thought that a 24-game match was more than sufficient to determine the better player. I liked the must win ten-games system for the drama, as both players would have to take risks to win the match, but the idea of an "open-ended" competition worried me. Such a match could run for months and months, potentially ruining the sponsor's budget and boring the public as well. The organizers of a ten-win match could get financially killed in fixing a playing venue. What if the match was a wipeout and over in a few weeks, while the site was rented for many months? Conversely, what if after many months the score was a mere six wins for one player? How to extend the contract or find a new site? And how would a really lengthy match that lasted many months affect the three-year cycle? In principle, the loser of the match had to enter the cycle at the beginning stages, but they might already be underway.

After Bobby's resignation in April 1975, the Soviet Challenger Anatoly Karpov was declared World Champion by forfeit. American chess fans were bitterly disappointed, feeling, no doubt as did Bobby, that they and the whole chess world had been cheated of an exciting duel. The new World Champion, Anatoly Karpov, would spend a career trying to overturn the public judgment that he wasn't a truly worthy champion.

The Legend Grows

Despite the forfeit, interest in Bobby Fischer was so palpable that when I played in the 1976 American Open in Santa Monica a false rumor swept the tournament hall that a "bearded man thought to be Bobby" was in the building. The tournament hall practically emptied. This was no mean feat to accomplish in a large Swiss event where a four-alarm siren can hardly budge the players from their boards. (Keep in mind that Pasadena, Bobby's home-city, was only an hour's drive from Santa Monica.)

Finding a comparison to illustrate the impact of Bobby's absence is more than difficult, but let me try. Today we are blessed with a number of truly outstanding chess talents the world over: Yifan Hou, the 15-year old lady from China is showcased as a future World Champion; Parimarjan Negi from India, Sergey Karjakin of the Ukraine, Teimour Radjabov of Azerbaijan, Hikaru Nakamura of the US, Daniel Stellwagen of Holland and David Howell of England all stand out; and of

course the most promising prospect of all is Magnus Carlsen of Norway. How thrilling it is to see all these young stars compete and edge their way towards the highest honors. While it is hard to recapture the times of 1974 and 1975, to put the interest in Bobby into perspective, take away all these promising stars of today and have them collectively say they are giving up chess for good. The disappointment felt by Bobby's absence couldn't be greater. I, for one, was completely deflated.

After 1975, I had to console myself by playing through Bobby's *My 60 Memorable Games*, as well as listening to stories from colleagues who had known Bobby personally. Here, then, is a list of "Bobby Stories" that I've always enjoyed. Most I'm sharing for the first time...

The first two are from Robert Byrne, who besides being one of America's most successful grandmasters wrote for the Gray lady, the *New York Times*, for decades. I'll summarize two Byrne stories as follows:

"It was during the 1971 Candidates' Finals match in Buenos Aires with Tigran Petrosian. I was in the press center preparing my column. All the Soviets were there watching the monitors and analyzing the game openly on one of the central tables. Miguel Najdorf was holding court and kibitzing after every move. Miguel thought that Bobby had a good position in the sixth game and then almost unbelievably he played this move, Nc5xd7, trading this really powerful, impressive c5-knight for one of the most miserably bad d7-bishops a position is likely to see...

"Najdorf practically flew out of his chair. 'My God! He is crazy!' he started yelling. 'Trading such a knight for such a bishop!' Najdorf held up the knight for all to see. 'He understands nothing, nothing about chess!'

"The Soviets practically laughed and embraced themselves; they were so delighted with what they all agreed was a terrible trade. A trade that would get Petrosian off the hook, you see?

"They all looked to me, expecting that I as an American would try too defend Bobby's decision, but I just kept quiet, explaining that I had a column to write and was simply too busy to come over. Secretly, I knew precisely what Bobby was thinking because I had analyzed with him so often. For Bobby it was all so simple: he prized bishops above knights. Full stop. For him, in the resulting position his bishop was much better than the black knight. He could see that he could centralize his king, blockade Black's d-passer and then his rooks and bishop would coordinate better than the rooks and knight and the game is over. For Bobby, that capture of knight for bishop was like putting the last nail in the coffin.

"A few moves after the trade I was looking at GM Alexey Suetin, Petrosian's coach, and his mouth was open and just getting more and more agape. By the time Petrosian was about to resign his jaw was nearly on the table when he whispered, 'he plays so simply.' I tried so hard to contain myself, to be polite and not to laugh but it just wasn't possible. You see, that was the way Bobby played. Simple classical chess."

There is just something about this story that strikes a deep chord with me, the idea that the World Champion is a clear cut above the rest in his understanding. He has his concepts and with his moves says: "This is what I'm about. Refute me if you can."

Byrne's second story was from 1966:

"We played in Havana at the Olympiad. The Cubans were really marvelous hosts. The happiest moments for me were when Bobby held court. He had a nice large apartment suite and the whole team would file in after the round. Bobby would replay his game for us and show us how he had won and why. It was just magic. His analysis was amazing. It was like the moves just flowed from his finger tips. You know he had large hands and the pieces just moved around, practically dancing and it was all so special. Then disaster struck for all of us... Bobby was showing the team a game and he paused and started laughing, and he kept laughing harder and harder. Trying to speak he said: 'And now you know what the patzer played? He played... You won't believe this...' Bobby moved the piece and disappeared below the table in a fit of convulsive laughter.

"So the team was all studying the position in a frenzy. We couldn't understand Bobby's laughter and wanted to share. But damn it. The move his opponent played looked completely sensible and I was having a hard time understanding where the refutation was. By this time Bobby had recovered from his laughing fit and somehow managed to make it off the floor and back up to the board. He played his move. Damn! It was right under our noses and so obvious too. I had missed it. But as I instantly realized how it totally undermined the opponent's strategy I too had to break out into laughter. A few seconds later someone else started laughing then soon everyone in the room had joined in as well. But I tell you, Yasser, for those few seconds that I didn't see the move I was in a flat-out panic. I didn't want Bobby thinking that I was a patzer too."

The dark side of analyzing chess with a genius. You don't want to be called to the mat to explain a move.

Anyone who ever met "Don" Miguel Najdorf, the Polish-born, Argentine grandmaster, knows he was a man of passions. Silver-quick to make a far-reaching decision in a tenth of a second, Miguel would tell me stories about the Champions for hours and hours. I couldn't understand why someone didn't interview Miguel for a few hundred hours, as he was a marvelous story teller. I loved our times together. He had countless Bobby stories, many of which I've unfortunately forgotten. Miguel had opinions on everything, and the following one we discussed often and at length.

We were in a Buenos Aires restaurant having our usual steak "Lomo" dinners when Miguel said to me, "Jasser!" (in Spanish, the 'y' is often treated as a 'j' and Miguel liked the sound of Jasser better than Yasser; so for Miguel – and only Miguel – I remained Jasser) "You know Bobby has no style."

Now that is an opening gambit for a conversation between chess players if I

ever heard one. "Huh? I don't understand you Miguel. What do you mean?" I asked.

Miguel's opinions were always strongly held, and he delighted in baiting me and drawing me into animated, emotional discussions. He was a passionate man who loved chess very much. He explained his theory, which I've thought about often. It went like this:

"You see, when you show me a game of Capablanca, I think, 'Aha. Very nice. Very smooth. Logical moves. Beautiful play. Must be a game of Capablanca!' Then you show me another game, I think, 'My God! Who is this bandit playing the White pieces? Look at these reckless, daring sacrifices. And this quiet move as well! Incredible! Down two pieces and he stops to make such a move. And he won! Of course, I realize, this is Tal.' And another game. 'I can't understand what the player is doing. He is taking extraordinary precautions and his opponent isn't even attacking. Now he has maneuvered his pieces backwards and then forwards again to nice squares. He improves his position but has done nothing concrete. My God! The opponent is suffocated and is simply dead! Where was the mistake? Of course, that is Petrosian.' You see, Jasser! I recognize style. But when I play a game of Bobby's, I see nothing. There is no style. Bobby played perfectly. And perfection has no style."

Perfection has no style. Quite an interesting concept if you give it a lot of thought. We argued for hours and in the end I found Miguel's theory quite convincing.

Today, with the advent of computers, this discussion about whether perfection has a "style" could be taken up again. I've always enjoyed playing blitz chess and these days I play online. Sometimes after a win, my opponent angrily accuses me of using a computer and places my handle on "ignore" unaware of who I am. When I replay the game I won, it may seem "stylish," but some of the moves were actually second best. Do the two go together?

Some use the term "computer-like" to describe a move, a strategy or the finish of a game. It is this latter part that I find interesting. The term "computer-like" has a strong connotation of precision and perfection. But computers win in a complicated way. They do not trade when ahead in material, a natural human tendency and a well-established practice to reduce the potential for chaos. Computers just pile complications on top of more complications, knowing how they will come out. Such dynamic play often leads to computers winning more quickly than do humans, who trade when ahead material. And, provided they stay within their limits, computers will never make an error due to fatigue. What humans see as "complications" are, for a computer, simply the demonstration of a theorem. Is there style in such perfection? Bobby won many complicated games and indeed he seemed to revel in tactics, but he was also happy to simplify to a technical win. Did he play perfectly? Many of his colleagues thought so, although later computer analysis has shown that even Bobby played inexactly at

times. But perfection and style are in the eye of the beholder, and in a real sense Bobby's play transcended style.

In the late 1970s I often went to the Big Apple to play in events and to seek out opponents for blitz. I even visited the famous "Flea House" near Times Square before settling on the Manhattan Chess Club as my preferred haven for blitz. When in town I would try to hook up with Asa Hoffman, a famous local blitz master who knew a vast number of Bobby stories and we spent hours together as he would recount to me how he hustled Bobby, getting odds that not even Bobby could overcome. "He gave me five to one money odds and draw odds as well. No time on the clock. We both played with five minutes each. He won the game scores, I won the money" is how Asa describes their sessions.

On one of my visits Asa introduced me to Jackie Beers. Jackie was bearded and had a disheveled appearance that day. Nevertheless, he was introduced as a close confidant of Bobby. We settled in for a nice chat when Jackie told me he had received a recent call: "Bobby asked me if I could lend him 50 bucks." I was shocked. "I told him if I had it, I'd certainly send it but I told him the truth, I didn't have the 50." I believed Jackie was telling the truth, that he didn't have 50 bucks, but could it really be true that Bobby was so destitute that he needed to borrow money from friends who could ill-afford even such a modest request for help?

It seemed so utterly incongruous. How was it possible? Here was a man who could make tens of thousands of dollars in a single day playing in tournaments, performing simultaneous exhibitions or even giving a lecture. It would be so simple, yet Bobby preferred to borrow from friends? Living a life of poverty? What on earth was going on? I was utterly confused.

During one of my visits to New York I stayed with a family. The husband was a doctor from Switzerland, "Dr. Rudy." He had a great interest in chess as his two sons played. He had been in touch with Claudia and wanted to help Bobby come out of his self-imposed retirement. He arranged to meet with Bobby and paid $5,000, in advance, for the privilege of meeting and speaking with him. The discussions were to be strictly private and no photos could be taken. Dr. Rudy had undertaken the adventure and come away with an extremely positive view. Bobby was ready, willing and even eager to play, but he insisted on the Steinitz Rules for match play. Disappointingly, he wasn't interested in tournament play.

Over the years I would meet numerous people who had done the same as Dr. Rudy, paying Bobby $5,000 for the privilege of a meeting together. Most of these meetings seemed to have gone very well and folks came away encouraged. Encouraged or not, all came to naught.

Was There Any Hope?

My favorite story of "paying for the privilege of meeting Bobby" comes from Arnfried Pagel. Mr. Pagel was a German industrialist in the cement business who had made a home in the Netherlands close to Beverwijk. With a keen interest in

chess he sponsored a local club, the Koningsclub. In no time, Mr. Pagel had decided that his club was destined to become the Club Champion of Holland and he eagerly sought "mercenaries," grandmasters whom he would hire to play for his squad. In those days it took time to promote a club to the highest league level, but Mr. Pagel was anxious for his team to win the League Championship "ahead of time". He decided to bypass the usual qualification process and sent a direct challenge to Volmac, the perennial Dutch Club Champions. The Volmac team accepted his challenge, and I was hired by Mr. Pagel, on the advice of Lev Alburt, to play for his Koningsclub.

Mr. Pagel was a splendid host, and as luck would have it the outcome of the two-day match hinged upon the result of my second game versus Raymond Keene. If I won, the Koningsclub would win the challenge match and indeed that is precisely what happened. Mr. Pagel was over the moon and invited me, as well as Victor Korchnoi, a Volmac player, to dinner and bridge. That evening, Mr. Pagel told us the following story, again in my summation:

"After I started sponsoring the Koningsclub I began to realize that a dream come true for me would be if Bobby Fischer played just one game for the team. I wrote to Claudia and made the offer to pay Bobby $100,000 for playing just one single game. As we were in the lower levels at that time Bobby's opponent would be a completely random true chess amateur. I got a positive answer that Bobby was willing to discuss my offer, but wanted to meet with me to get the details. Would there be a 'gate fee' for the audience? Would the game be filmed? And so on. I would have to pay $50,000 to meet with Bobby to sort out the details and fly to Pasadena. I unhesitatingly agreed.

"The first day I met Bobby we got on very well. We talked about many details and reached a broad agreement. I spent a few hours with him the first day and Bobby paid me the compliment that he enjoyed my company immensely and asked if we could meet again the next day so that he could have some time to think over our discussion and the major points. I of course agreed. We met again and seemed to make much progress. This continued, but I had this very uncomfortable feeling that despite what I thought was a very generous offer somehow Bobby was looking for a reason to say no. If that were to be the case, I realized my trip would be in vain and that I would return to Holland empty-handed. Worse, I hadn't any proof at all that I had even met Bobby. One of the conditions of our meeting was that there would be no cameras, no photos and no discussion of our meeting with the press. I had agreed. But what to do now? I didn't want to return completely empty-handed.

"In the end I decided to hire a private detective. His job would be to take a photo of Bobby and me from a distance, unbeknownst to him. I would of course keep the photo strictly private and only use it as proof that indeed I had met and discussed with Bobby the idea of his playing a game for the club.

"During the meetings our discussions were getting bogged down in details.

Bobby was raising questions for which I had no answers and the possibility of reaching agreement was receding. We would make one final attempt at a third and final meeting, as I needed to return to Holland. We were to meet in a park at a particular bench at noon. I was there sharp and on time. No Bobby. Indeed, 15 minutes passed and I began to have doubts that I was at the right place. Up to this time Bobby had always been prompt as well. So I'm sitting on a park bench beginning to have doubts when I hear a 'Pssstt' coming from the trees behind me. This persisted and I looked into the trees and saw Bobby.

'Bobby! What are you doing in the trees? Come on out,' I said.

'No,' said Bobby. 'You come in here.'

So I went into the trees, where Bobby was hiding and we began to whisper in conspiratorial tones. 'Why are we hiding like this?' I asked.

Bobby seemed very agitated and was looking around. 'I'm being followed!' he said.

"Of course I immediately understood that Bobby had discovered he was being followed by the private detective I had hired to take our photo. I couldn't say a word without revealing myself. Somehow we crept along the tree line and lost our pursuer. Eventually, I did get my photos, but Bobby never played for my team. After this trip I understood that Bobby would not play chess again."

Pagel's story, which he told to me in May 1982, came as a grave disappointment, humorous as it was. Although ten years had passed since Bobby played a public game of chess, we all held out hopes that he would return to the chess arena, but Pagel's story seemed to put the kibosh on such a prospect for good. After all, what could be simpler? Play one single game in the Dutch League against a 1200-rated chess amateur for a $100,000 fee. No world title at stake; no Soviet intermediaries to deal with; no FIDE-endorsed competition; no adjournments, lengthy time-outs or postponements; just two people playing an afternoon game at a local club. Heck, they could even buy one another a round of beer during play, which is actually common practice. If that offer wouldn't be accepted, what hope was there for a more serious world-class event? Pagel's story sunk me completely.

One final detail of Pagel's story is worth sharing. He had arranged through Claudia to meet with Bobby for a $50,000 fee. This fee included an agreement that Bobby would become an honorary member of the Koningsclub. When it was time for Pagel to pay Bobby his fee, he presented five neatly-wrapped bundles of $10,000 each. Bobby, who liked Pagel, returned three of the bundles, explaining that $20,000 was enough. Bobby had a complicated personality. If he liked you, he would waive his fees and be generous; if not, regardless of the amount of money involved, he simply would refuse, including offers of one million or even five million dollars.

Why did I harbor any hopes at all of a return to the board by Bobby? My faint hopes over time had been nurtured by grandmasters Eugene Torre of the Philip-

pines and Miguel Quinteros of Argentina. Both were close friends of Bobby's and, more importantly, his confidants. At various times and places they seemed to have met with Bobby for a few days of banter and good times, and of course a chess board would inevitably be pulled out. Bobby still went through the games in *Chess Informant* and he delighted in picking apart the analysis of Karpov (referred to by Bobby in a derogatory "Kar-pitch") and the young Kasparov. Bobby would begin: "Okay, let us see how the so called World Champion Mr. Kar-pitch plays chess... Now in this position, Kar-pitch says equal. Really? I wonder what he would have done if he faced this move? Perhaps the so-called World Champion would like to resign?" Or "Oh and this is good. Here he say's he is winning. Interesting. After this move, can't we agree to a draw?"

I pledged to both Eugene and Miguel not to tell a soul and was delighted to be taken into their confidence. I never revealed what they showed me even when bursting to do so. Of course, I've forgotten the many positions they showed where Bobby dismantled the analysis of the "so-called World Champion," but one thing was clear: Bobby had found fault with his analysis. No ifs, ands or buts. "Why was he studying the games of Anatoly Karpov so intently if he wasn't determined to smash him off the board?" I would think. Then I would reflect on Pagel's story and be lost. I mean, here was a perfect sponsor. A German-born industrialist ready, willing and able to pay top dollars, to accept every term and condition that Bobby demanded, a person who had struck up a friendship with him and yet still no agreement could be reached. And what of Jackie Beers and the need to borrow $50? It was so damned confounding!

On another occasion Miguel Quinteros told me a fantastic story that went like this. He and Bobby arranged to visit Las Vegas and enjoy a short holiday. Bobby didn't like the idea of settling into one of the major casinos and preferred to stay in a hotel that was off the strip. They shared a double room and went off to play the slot machines, have a buffet and take in a show. Miguel explained how he had several large Samsonite suitcases packed with his expensive tailor-made suits, whereas Bobby had packed a light one as well as a small briefcase-like bag that he kept locked and placed under his bed. This special case contained Bobby's prized Mexican comic books, which he loved, as well as some vitamin supplements. One night, when they returned to their room, they realized that they had been the victims of a burglary. Naturally, the thieves had not taken Miguel's expensive suits and indeed the only thing missing was Bobby's small locked case hidden under his bed. Bobby moaned: "The guy steals my comic books and leaves your suits alone? What's up with that?" Miguel has been chuckling for years.

One final nice story from Miguel Quinteros. One of his dearest and closest friends is his countryman Jorge Rubinetti. They played in the 1970 Buenos Aires round-robin tournament with Bobby. The game was to be played in the afternoon and just around lunchtime there was a knock on Miguel's hotel door. There

was his dear life-long friend Jorge. In a few hours he was to face the great Bobby Fischer. "Please," said Jorge, "you must help me prepare! Today, I have Black against Bobby and you have to show me what I have to do." So what did dear, close, brotherly friend Miguel advise his closest friend in his desperate moment of need? He smiled, cocked his head and said, "Jorge, let me explain. This guy is going to kill you. He studied his whole life to beat patzers like us. You have no chance. There is nothing I can advise to prevent the inevitable. Please, let us not waste our time, but instead go have a very nice lunch together. Afterwards, you can show me how you lost."

We've all been told that Bobby had a great capacity for hard work at chess, that he studied late into the night and spent most of his waking hours reading chess books and magazines. The following story has been told by others, but I'm happy to confirm its authenticity. It was told to me by Allen Kaufman. Allen was the long-time serving Executive Director for the American Chess Foundation (ACF), now the Chess-In-Schools Foundation. In the old days the ACF began as a foundation to support the efforts of Samuel Reshevsky in his quest for the World Championship. I'll summarize Allen's story:

"I knew Bobby quite well and I would see him all the time around New York City, in clubs and at tournaments. We got along well together. At the time that he was preparing for his match with Spassky he would carry around his famous 'red book'. This was the German series (*Weltgeschichte des Schachs Volume 2?*) edition that had Spassky's games in it (over 350 of them). It was a kind of game that Bobby loved to play with people, including me. He would hold out the book and give it to us. 'Pick a game' he would say. So I'd open the book and pick one. 'Tell me the game number, the opponent's name and where the game was played.' So I'd tell him. Then Bobby would recite back the game and the exact moves. You could literally put your finger on the page, follow the moves to the diagrams and Bobby told you when he would resign. It really was the most amazing thing. Keep in mind, the players would sometimes repeat a move or two just to get some time on the clock, and Bobby would get the score right. I can only explain it as a photographic memory because Bobby had the whole book memorized."

Personally, I found this a truly impressive feat. I can hardly remember my own games, let alone memorize them move for move. To do that for another player? Be serious. No way!

Meeting Victor Korchnoi

In many ways this book is really about three World Champions, Boris Spassky, Anatoly Karpov and Garry Kasparov, as I played against them most often. But it is hard to mention them without also thinking of Victor Korchnoi, who plays a crucial role in this story, and so I ask for your indulgence, dear reader, as I digress for a few moments from my discussion of Fischer. After all, Victor also played crucial matches with all three of these great World Champions, and especially Karpov.

Let us not forget that Victor lost the 1974 Candidates' Finals Match in Moscow by a single point to Anatoly Karpov (12½-11½), a match that effectively decided the World Chess Championship as Bobby forfeited his title the following year. In 1978 and 1981 Victor challenged Karpov in World Championship match play. Three brutal matches for the World title! Along the way he defeated Boris Spassky in the Candidates' matches.

Victor was scheduled to play Kasparov in Pasadena, California in the Candidates' Semi-Finals match in 1983. He won in a walkover when Kasparov was not permitted by the USSR chess/sports bodies to compete in the USA. Korchnoi very sportingly agreed to a replay of their match in London. If Korchnoi had wanted, he could have kept his forfeit victory and Kasparov would have been out of the 1981-1984 cycle. Victor wanted to play. Kasparov won the "rematch" and became the Challenger. Victor was a towering figure in the chess world for decades. I was strongly tempted to include my games with Victor in this volume but decided not to, perhaps because it would have become two volumes.

As I've said in the Introduction, in 1980 I played in my first really big "super-tournament," the Hoogoven's Chess Festival in Wijk aan Zee, Holland, having won the World Junior Championship the previous year. I was still in the hunt for grandmaster norms, as I didn't have the title. As great fortune would have it, I had a tremendous result, tying with my countryman Walter Shawn Browne for first with a superb 10-3 score (what chess insiders call a "+7" result). With several rounds to spare I clinched my third and final GM norm. After my game with GM Guðmundur Sigurjónsson of Iceland the organizers did a most amazing thing: after Guðmundur's resignation they stopped the clocks in the other games and invited the players to join in a champagne toast to their newest colleague. It was a magnificent gesture and one I appreciated immensely.

Remarkably, my future father-in-law, Jan Nagel, was in the audience as well. He too partook of a glass of champagne. I tease him that he has been "on my account" ever since.

I had rushed from the Hastings tournament in 1979 to get to Wijk in time, but I missed the opening ceremony – one of the only times that has happened in my career. If I recall properly, in my stead Hans Bohm picked my "number" for the A Group. Hans did me the great favor of picking number 1. This meant I would begin the tournament with the white pieces in two consecutive games. Nursing the traditional cold that every competitor in Hastings collects as punishment for participating, I went to Wijk laid low by my condition. When I arrived I was informed that I would play John van der Wiel in round one and tournament favorite Victor Korchnoi in round two. I hoped my cold would be gone by then. Much to my great surprise, I won both games.

In my game with Victor I was incredibly lucky. At that time my opening repertoire was terribly weak. Indeed, I hardly knew how to study openings. In those openings that I did play I tried to develop my own ideas, laying what I hoped

would be traps for unsuspecting opponents. Victor walked smack dab into one of my best-prepared novelties. He was in deep trouble right out of the opening, spent huge amounts of time (the time control in those days was 40 moves in two and a half hours per player, followed by adjournment when each player received one hour for 16 moves until the finish) and was just fighting his way out of his troubles when I landed a key tactical shot. With virtually no time on his clock, Victor failed to hold the position.

Needless to say, while I was delighted with the result Victor was less so. He hates to lose and is notorious for becoming genuinely upset after blowing a game. I didn't know this at the time and I merely asked happily, "Would you *like* to analyze the game?" Ah, such sweet innocence. (Try to imagine Victor "liking" the prospect of analyzing a loss, especially just after the game.)

Of course Victor did *not* want to analyze the game with me. If Victor hates losing a game there is only one thing worse: losing to a junior. He has a firm belief in "beating 'em while they are young" and losing to a junior patzer – even the World Junior patzer – didn't matter. Principles are principles.

As Victor himself will tell you, he has a very complicated character with a streak of both sadism and masochism. In this case, if we didn't analyze together, Victor could comfortably go back to his hotel room and berate himself alone for being such a colossal idiot to have lost. So Victor had a better thought: "let me analyze with this idiot and torment myself with my lousy moves."

We moved to one of the analysis rooms and began our post-mortem. As mentioned, Victor the Terrible was terribly unlucky in our first game. He had walked into one of my very best opening surprises. I knew the opening front and back, up and down, left to right. Victor would say that he had made such and such a bad move and he should have played *this* instead. My response was to say that, indeed, I had expected that move. But I had a refutation for it and would show a sequence of moves that won. This kept going on for quite some time and very gradually Victor came to realize that in fact his time had been very well spent. He had been walking an amazingly careful tightrope for many, many moves and had found the best possible lines of defense. In truth, I couldn't believe he had nearly saved the game as I considered my novelty to be decisive and a near refutation of the whole variation.

Victor was stunned. The junior patzer knew what he was doing. After our post-mortem Victor was quite complimentary. He nodded his head towards me and said, "Very good game. Not bad. Not bad at all."

As the tournament progressed, Victor took an increasing interest in my games and would often question me about the other games as they were in progress. "Yasser, what do you think of Timman's position?" he would ask. Glancing at the demonstration board, I'd give my answer and again Victor would nod his head in broad agreement. This continued to the end of the tournament, when I had the surprise of my young life.

An Unexpected Offer

Victor took me aside to speak with me in private. He explained he would soon be playing his Candidates' Match against an arch-rival, Tigran Petrosian. "Would I like to be his second?" I was dumbfounded and didn't know how to answer. I'm quite sure nothing came out of my mouth as I stood there in shock. I can honestly say that my tumultuous thoughts centered around one concept only: how much would it cost me and could I afford it?

Victor completely misunderstood my silence. "Oh!" Victor said, "Sorry. The conditions are: I pay your travel, hotel and meal expenses. While you are working with me, I pay you 500 Swiss francs a week..."

Now I was convinced I was dreaming. Did I understand that right? Victor was offering to pay me? To train *him*? What on earth could I teach Victor Korchnoi? I gratefully accepted and stuck out my hand in agreement. Shake.

Two months later, in March 1980, I journeyed to Zurich to begin work with Victor Korchnoi and to help him prepare his campaign for the World Chess Championship title. To say I was excited is an understatement. While I've made many transatlantic flights from my home in Seattle to Europe, this time I could hardly sit still. I got not a wink of sleep and arrived happy if exhausted. Victor and Petra, his future wife, were there to meet me at the airport, and we all burst into happy smiles. Petra and I became instant friends.

Petra drove us to Victor's apartment, where we had dinner and talked the night away. Petra left and returned to her apartment, and Victor and I discussed a concrete training schedule. Trust me, whatever my previous notions about chess training may have been flew out of the window during my time with Victor. He worked hard. Very hard. At some point during that first evening Victor suddenly realized I was jet-lagged, and it was late anyway, so he said, "Let us get some rest and we'll pick up in the morning after you wake up." Good plan.

So we walked down the hallway and we both went into the guest room. I asked Victor what he was doing. "I'll sleep here. Please. You take the master-bedroom," he said. No, no, no. I was more than pleased to sleep in the guest room and was not about to boot Victor out of his own bedroom. No, I insisted. Victor would sleep in the master-bedroom, the guest room was fine with me. Victor kept refusing and I kept insisting. This went on for quite a while, with neither side giving ground. Finally, Victor confided. "Okay. This is the situation: I have a bad back. Petra bought me a special mattress. A 'firm' mattress that I'm supposed to sleep on and is supposed to be good for me. But I sleep in the guest room as I prefer the bed here."

Hmm. Okay. That made sense to me. I'd be doing Victor a favor by taking the master-bedroom. Done! At last we were saying our final parting "good nights" to one another and Victor added a very peculiar thing: "I hope you are not nervous" and closed the door. So there I was standing outside the guest room door looking like an idiot, wearing a frown and wondering "what does *that* mean?" Instead of

knocking on the door and asking Victor to explain himself, I took it as some kind of a challenge. A riddle that I – displaying Sherlock Holmes-like deductive reasoning brilliance – would single-handedly solve. Although I was exhausted from the jet-lag the riddle stayed with me before I fell asleep. It would dog me for the next two weeks.

Did I mention that working with Victor was serious? Well, I mean it. Our days for the next eight days or so consisted of waking up, showering, then having a breakfast of cheese, eggs and bacon, toast, muesli with yoghurt, and tea. This was followed by some serious blitz sessions and a good brisk walk. Then we would look at a specific opening line and analyze it deeply. We might break for lunch or not. Petra would come make us dinner and we would stop to eat. Sometimes, to Petra's dismay, we ate and analyzed blindfold. Then back to the board until sleep became insistent. Day after day.

I must say that I fancied myself a blitz player. Indeed, I genuinely believed that at that time I was one of the best in the world. Playing Victor was a rude awakening, to say the least. He was a monster when White and I think that "overall" I managed a 45% score, which I felt was a disaster for me as I thought I was the best... Victor didn't pretend: "No. I've always been under-rated at blitz. Actually, I am very good. Of course, Fischer is far better at blitz."

As it was around Easter and we were, after all, in Switzerland, a very large chocolate Easter bunny made its way into Victor's apartment. Where it came from I couldn't say, but it was a welcome guest. As it was a large, fine specimen of Swiss delicacy, we agreed that the winner of each blitz game could break off a chunk of the Easter bunny. Steinitzian rules; draws didn't count. Over the next two weeks we whittled it down pretty well, and while Victor had more, I received my fair share too. Trust me, chomping through a Swiss Easter bunny you earned by beating Victor Korchnoi in a game of blitz chess is something you relish doubly.

One day, something very strange happened. After breakfast we started our usual blitz game session and I won with White, earning a piece of the bunny. Then a very big surprise: I won with Black. That earned me a double portion. I then won with White. Wow! Three wins in a row. This had never happened before. Victor was getting steamed and boldly stated: "Okay, if you win this game, you lose a partner and we walk!" I roared with laughter. "Oh no! I'm going to lose a partner!" I retorted. And sure enough I won and we walked.

Our work that day wasn't particularly inspired, and it was clear that Victor had other things on his mind. What was it? "Tonight the Mayor is holding a reception and we are celebrating my birthday." Great, I thought. Seattle's Mayor could learn a thing or two...

When Petra came over she was disappointed to see that I didn't have a proper jacket and tie for the reception. She marched me to Victor's wardrobe and pulled out jacket after jacket. All were quite ill-fitting, but one had to do. We went to

the reception, descending the stairs of a large restaurant into a cavernous basement that had huge oak barrels hoisted high against thick walls. There were many people, and I sat at a table with Victor, the birthday boy. There were speeches in German or Swiss-German (Schweizerdeutsch), which everyone, including me, applauded. The Mayor, wearing his large ornate chained medallion, made his speech, which seemed well received. The evening promised a merry time for one and all. Victor kindly translated many of the speeches, something he would do for the next year and a half. Then came the food and we all indulged ourselves.

At some point the Mayor took the trouble of visiting each and every table, shaking hands and wishing every one of his guests a good dinner, and eventually arriving at our table with of course the guest of honor. He seemed like the jovial sort, thrusting out his hand with a big grin with words of welcome in German. I replied in English thanking him for the wonderful dinner and the very nice reception. "Ah. American! Yes. Well. Welcome." By this time he was beginning to size me up, my ill-fitting jacket, long hair and youthfulness got the best of him. "If you don't mind me asking," he began, "What are you doing here?"

"I'm Victor Korchnoi's trainer," I responded, pointing to Victor who was sitting next to me. The Mayor was taken aback. He moved away from me and huddled close to Victor and stated in a loud voice: "So you train *our* Victor?" The Mayor chuckled as if he had made an inside joke which everyone could enjoy with thought. The tone implied a mocking "what could you possibly teach our Victor?" Which indeed seemed like a very reasonable question to me and to the Mayor's growing audience. Even the waiters seemed to have slowed to a quiet tip-toe. The Mayor seemed genuinely fond of Victor and proud that he had taken up residence in his locale.

"Yes!" was my one-word response to the question of training, leaving no further elaboration. The Mayor pursued his quary: "Well. Have you ever actually *played* Victor? In a *tournament game*, I mean?" The Mayor placed heavy emphasis on certain words. Out of the corner of my eye I could see Victor sinking in his seat. He intuited what was coming.

"Why, yes. We have played. We played a serious tournament game in a major competition in January." Leaving the key point sealed for the moment.

"Really?" The Mayor beamed. "And who won?" He addressed this question to the large group of listeners, arms up and hands open as if the answer was a foregone conclusion.

"I did." I answered with a broad smile.

The Mayor was now thrown off-kilter and needed to regain his composure. "You won?" he sputtered. He turned to Victor for confirmation, and Victor sank lower in his chair. Now the Mayor was caught having to play to an audience that seemed to have pressed closer. "Well, when you train... do you ever play *blitz* with Victor?" The Mayor pressed. Oh dear. Things were getting worse, and Victor

seemed to have gone level with the table.

"Why most definitely we do!" I happily stated. "In fact we had a fantastic blitz session this very morning." Again leaving the answer sealed and in need of an unwrapping.

Now the Mayor was definitely back on terra firma. His questions evinced a knowledge of chess beyond that of the average politician. "Well, our Victor is a marvelous blitzer! How did you play?" Oh my. Victor was sinking under the table.

"Well. We played four serious blitz games today. I won them all..." By this point the Mayor realized there were other tables to be visited and shimmied away as fast as possible

Upon the Mayor's conclusive departure Victor seemed to have miraculously regained his height. "Yasser, we are going to play blitz tomorrow and I'm going to crush you!" I laughed for the rest of the evening. The next day, we played and Victor was true to his word. Despite my thrashing, I was over-the-moon with my circumstances. Here I was analyzing with and playing against the player I thought would win the World Championship. Victor had lost in 1974 and 1978 to Anatoly Karpov by a single point each time; he was at the top of his game and would start to prove it by qualifying through three grueling Candidates' Matches. Victor was at least the second best player in the world by ranking and he was gunning to be number one with a determination that could move mountains.

During our first two weeks together, after intense training and lengthy walks, several things became crystal clear to me about Victor and his views of the world. He was, of course, a very important defector and a serious threat to the Soviet State's treasured "Chess Crown" and Anatoly Karpov. His defection and the threat that it created couldn't be overstated. Victor was stone-cold convinced, and there were no ifs, ands or buts about his conviction, that the KGB would assassinate him. He had been involved in two mysterious car accidents – I was a passenger in the second one. Victor's certainty of his inevitable demise at the hands of a KGB assassin was unshakable and absolute.

Now I understood what Victor meant when he said to me on that first night: "I hope you are not nervous." What he was really saying to me was: "Listen, Yasser, if the KGB is going to hit me tonight, they are not going to shoot the guy sleeping in the guest room, they are going to shoot the guy sleeping in the master bedroom!" Once I correctly solved the riddle, reveling in my new-found awareness, I became nervous.

During the 1980-81 Candidates' Cycle, GM Michael Stean and I were Victor's seconds. In time, we were joined by GM Lev Gutman and GM Leonid Shamkovich, as well as IM Igor Ivanov, for a stint during the 1981 World Championship Match against Anatoly Karpov in Merano, Italy. During this 22-month period I had the opportunity to know Victor very well. We spoke at length about Bobby and the "must-win-ten-games" system. What would have happened if Korchnoi had de-

feated Karpov in the 1974 Candidates' Final and had to play Bobby in 1975 with the ten-games condition? In Victor's words: "Bobby would have won ten-five. But along with 32 draws!"

I mentioned that Victor had two mysterious auto accidents. The one that I was involved in wasn't serious – a bit of a fender-bender, really. (In the first accident the car actually rolled over and Victor's right hand was seriously injured.) I have it in my mind that we were going to Austria for his 1980 match versus Tigran Petrosian. Petra was driving and Victor was a passenger in the front seat while Michael Stean and I were in the back. We were hit in the back of the car, but Petra kept control. The other driver dashed off and no one was hurt. All the conversations Victor and I had about the KGB came back to haunt my thoughts, but fortunately nothing further happened. (Full disclosure: at the time of writing, Victor is still going strong but I can't vouch for all his houseguests...)

Korchnoi on Fischer

While we were driving to Austria another interesting question was put to Victor: "What would have happened if in 1974 you had won the Candidates' Final Match against Anatoly Karpov and become World Champion?" Victor hardly hesitated in forming his answer. "Yes, let's see... Oh, in that case, everything is quite clear, Karpov would have defected and he would be riding in this car!" We all roared with laughter.

Victor and I spoke about Bobby Fischer often. In the 1970s Victor played in the Lone Pine tournament sponsored by Louis D. Statham. After the event he went to Pasadena and met with Bobby in a park. Bobby brought with him a new hand-held radio that received Radio Free Europe and many other international broadcast signals as well. Victor had a very concrete proposal: he had an interested sponsor, and would Bobby like to play a match with him? Victor spoke airily about a "million dollar prize fund" and lofty details. Bobby listened to Victor's presentation until Victor had divulged all he had to offer. Now it was Bobby's turn to respond and Victor held his breath in great expectation.

"D'ja see this radio?" asked Bobby. "How much do you think it costs?"

Victor's mind was racing high in the clouds and the question caught him completely flat-footed. "Eh, I don't know. One hundred dollars?" Victor shrugged.

"Nope! $39.95!" answered Bobby gleefully.

Victor was sunk. Here he thought he was negotiating when, where, how and why a million dollar match might be fought; monies to be deposited in an account; guarantees for specific actions; and Bobby's mind was on the price of his new radio toy. Needless to say, the match never occurred.

Victor had tremendous respect for Bobby's play. In fact, Victor was really the first person to tell me that Bobby was a hero in the Soviet Union. What? How was that possible? Bobby was an *American* hero. Our hero. Victor explained that there was a large group of dissidents in the USSR and they too had been rooting

for Bobby in 1972. Bobby's victory was a defeat for a Soviet system they despised. It was an awakening moment for me. Suddenly, the faceless Communist nation didn't seem so faceless at all.

To my teenage mind this was hard for me to comprehend. Soviet Communists rooting for an American Capitalist to defeat their comrade? That would be like Americans rooting for the Soviet basketball team to defeat the Americans in 1972. (A sporting result, incidentally, that still sticks in my craw.) Were there such persons in both nations? Victor set me straight: "Well actually, only a small minority of people in the Soviet Union are Communist Party members. Most aren't Communists at all." I started growing up fast.

Victor showed me a letter he received from Bobby congratulating him on his defection and welcoming him to the West. But Bobby's budding friendship with Victor didn't last. Victor mentioned in passing to a journalist that he had met with Bobby, which was duly reported. Bobby saw the article and sent Victor a polite letter pointing out that they had mutually agreed to keep their meeting a secret and certainly out of the press. The prickly Victor, having come from a totalitarian State, responded that if Bobby didn't value a free press they had nothing in common. Correspondence between them ceased shortly thereafter.

Bobby's World View

Bobby had also sent Victor a series of books that I borrowed from Victor and read completely. These presents from Bobby included *The Elders of Zion*, *The Protocols of Zion* and five other titles, all speaking darkly about the "Illuminati" They all held the same basic message: the world was being victimized by an over-arching conspiracy of bankers, many of whom were Jewish. These books were poorly written, with numerous sentences typed in capital letters to emphasize various key points and the like. The books professed that the global (Jewish) Banking Conspiracy was determined to bring about a one-world totalitarian government which would enslave us all (through debt).

The books wove together various institutions, including the Rothschilds, the Bank of England, the Federal Reserve (private) Bank, the founding of the Internal Revenue Service, the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the Trilateral Commission, the Bilderberg Group, Yale's Skull & Crossbones secret society, Freemasons and on and on. Historical events were described in ways that made them necessary to advance the goals of the Illuminati. Every international group was viewed with suspicion, and all were driven by the desire to make debt-slaves of us all and thereby control the world and the whole of mankind. At the deeper end of the conspiracy, the leaders of this cabal had created a time machine that allowed them to be transported to key moments in history to tweak the outcome. It was a pretty depressing find. There were many passages that Bobby had helpfully highlighted so that Victor could realize the truth. Oh dear.

After I had read these works over several weeks, two things leapt immediately to mind. Firstly and most importantly, how could anyone take these books seriously? Secondly, how could I join the Illuminati? After all, the books painted a pretty bleak picture of the inevitability of the cabal's success. If we can't beat 'em we might as well join 'em. Being caretaker for, say North America, didn't seem like such a bad beat if we were all doomed anyway.

At the time I blamed Bobby's political, economic and world views on his particular brand of fundamentalist Christian faith – a near doomsday belief system that awaited the horsemen of the apocalypse as foretold by the New Testament to come forth and stomp us all out. This faith, incidentally, is highly supportive of Israel and Zionist expansion. After he broke with his church it became clear that Bobby reversed his views about Israel, as well as the Jewish people. In his later Philippine radio broadcasts posted on the Internet we would discover that Bobby's views of "the Jewish conspiracy" had hardened and he spoke bitterly about them, his country and the American people. It was physically painful to listen to them.

At some point in the mid 1980s, I came across a pamphlet I had previously only read about. It was called *I Was Tortured in the Pasadena Jailhouse!* by Bobby Fischer, the World Chess Champion. If ever I had read a cry for help, this was it. The copyright was from 1982 and it was published by Bobby Fischer. The price list was one dollar. The paragraphs are preceded by headings in large bold type. The headings tell the complete story of what happened:

Bank Robbery...
Serious...
Arrested...
Brutally Handcuffed...
False Arrest...
Insulted...
Choked...
Assailant Description...
Stark Naked...
No Phone Call...
Horror Cell...
Isolation & Torture...
Mental Hospital...
Starving & Freezing...
Inside Mattress...
T.V. Dinner...
No Water...
Sick Cop...
Police Indecency...
Threats...
Same Questions & Answers...
Police Crimes...
Phone Call...
Fingerprints...
Signed Unread...
No Written Charges...
(No) Money Back...
Sham...
Unasked Questions...
True Events...

The pamphlet was signed with a facsimile "Robert D. James" Helpfully, underneath the signature is the explanation: "Robert D. James (professionally known as Robert J. Fischer or Bobby Fischer, The World Chess Champion)"

Reading this pamphlet you couldn't help but want to reach into Bobby's life and rescue him from himself and his surroundings. The basic facts were that he was walking in a nice neighborhood in Pasadena late at night. A bank robbery had occurred earlier in the day. The police were on the look out for people who appeared out of place. When stopped for questioning Bobby gave the police an attitude about his Constitutional rights under the Fifth Amendment not to incriminate himself. He was arrested. He dug in his heels, refusing to cooperate, and things got progressively worse.

Where were Bobby's friends? Why weren't they trying to help him? Couldn't he be persuaded to enter counseling? The pamphlet was, in my view, the final straw. I couldn't envision Bobby coming out of his self-imposed isolation. More than anything this pamphlet exposes the myth of Bobby and his single-handed defeat of the Soviet empire. Single-handedly when facing the Pasadena police he made an ass of himself and got arrested. If he had simply said, "I'm Bobby Fischer. President Nixon declared me a national hero. I beat a Russian in the 1972 World Chess Championship and won the title for America," the police would likely have stopped dead in their tracks in shock, asked him for his autograph and offered him a lift back to his home. Clearly Bobby engaged in a lot of self-destructive behavior and was, at times, his own worst enemy.

My next Bobby story comes from Bessel Kok. As a backdrop to this story, we begin in Dubai during the 1986 Chess Olympiad. The then World Champion, Garry Kasparov, and Bessel Kok, the President of the Brussels-based SWIFT Corporation, decided to launch the Grandmasters Association (GMA). I was invited to become a founding director – a task I eagerly accepted. In February 1987 we had our first Directors' meeting, in Brussels, and the GMA was founded. The early years brought considerable success, and the GMA founded its own "World Cup" series of events. Many have referred to the years 1987-1991 as a "Golden" era for chess. Bessel served as Chairman for the GMA and he got it in his mind that he would very much like Bobby to join the GMA as a member. (Dues were $20 a year.) He invited Bobby to visit Brussels, and the following is my synopsis of Bessel's story.

"I invited Bobby to come to Brussels, where we could get together and talk about the possibility of him joining the GMA as a member, as well as to discuss any chess projects in which he might be interested. Bobby came and stayed at my house for about a week. He was very worried that he would be recognized and that the press would make noises. So more or less out of fear of being found out he basically stayed inside the house, which rather drove me crazy as I wanted to get out and show him the city. While we talked about the GMA and possible chess projects, these talks were really going nowhere and nothing was going to happen.

"Suddenly and quite surprisingly at the very end of his week-long stay Bobby decided that he wanted to go to a bar. What he called a 'girly bar.' As fortune

would have it, I happened to know one. We went and I ordered a bottle of overpriced champagne. No problem, I was just happy to be outside the house. Soon Bobby was talking to one girl while I was to another. We had our backs to each other, but I kept an ear out for the conversation going on behind me.

"It was the usual kind of small talk that takes place at such moments, until the lady asked a heart-stopping question: 'So. What is it that you do for a living?' I'm sure that the champagne had a smoothing effect, but I could feel Bobby lifting himself up and straightening his back.

'I am an International Grandmaster of chess!' Bobby said straight-forwardly. I was surprised by his admission but the lady responded enthusiastically.

'No! Really? I play chess too! I know the names of many grandmasters. What's yours?'

"By this time I had to interrupt my conversation and to turn around to listen what was going on behind me. It had become far too interesting. Bobby seemed genuinely delighted that the lady knew something of chess.

'Well, my name is Robert James Fischer. I am the World Chess Champion!' exclaimed Bobby, with a definitive voice.

'Come on,' said the lady. 'Stop making jokes. You are not Bobby Fischer! Yesterday we had Dali, today, now, we have Fischer.' She pouted. 'But look, buy me another glass of champagne and I'll call you Bobby for the rest of the evening.'

"Bobby was of course shocked that the lady didn't believe him, whereas I was in convulsive laughter. Bobby was poring through his wallet and jacket trying to find some papers that would prove to her who he was. He had been spending years denying his identity and the one moment that he desperately wants to prove who he is he cannot. Even when I tried to rescue him and say, 'Yes, this is really Bobby Fischer,' we both received a disbelieving look. It was one of the funniest experiences of my life. Fischer couldn't prove who he was."

Bessel, who has an easy-going nature and laughs often, always tells this story with enthusiastic laughter. One gets a sense in his telling of how hard he must have laughed. Bessel's story always gets a chuckle from me whenever he retells it, or if I do. It is the story that I'd like to remember Bobby by, one where he is proud of who he was and wants to prove his true identity, rather than hide behind the mask he made for himself.

For me Bobby is an enigma; a mythical person. A hero who became a bitter man and scorned the world. A man who wrestled with and fought against demons, real and imagined. A man who tilted at windmills. But worse, far worse, he was a man of extraordinary potential that went unfulfilled. Bobby could have been the Mohammed Ali of the chess world. He could single-handedly have pulled the sport up and placed it upon the world stage. He declined such an heroic role and preferred to escape to his own private, secluded world. The loss to the chess world was simply immeasurable.

Bobby Returns

Bobby was, of course, a chess god. Had he continued playing, no one can say what he would have achieved, what matches and tournaments he might have won, whether he would have gone on to make an unassailable match and tournament record, and whether he would have reigned supreme for a decade or longer.

But in 1992 Bobby shocked the world. He came out of retirement, playing a rematch with Boris Spassky. It was a match that Garry Kasparov, amongst many others, bad-mouthed, declaring the games to be of poor quality and examples of "old men's chess". It was said that Bobby belonged to a different era and should not have played again, as his play damaged his legendary status. Surprisingly, it was a line taken up by *Chess Life*, the official USCF publication. Annotators seemed especially eager to criticize the moves played. I visited the match, met with Bobby for a day and wrote a book about it, *No Regrets*.

Let's put this 1992 match into its proper context, shall we? Bobby had not moved a pawn in public in 20 years. To call him "rusty" would be an understatement. It would be as if a cyclist like Lance Armstrong retired for two decades and then announced he would compete in the Tour de France. An impossibility. So what could I expect? I expected Bobby to win, but to do so in a very sloppy contest. Instead, I challenge everyone to replay Game One of that match. It was incredible! Not just a gem, this was an outstanding game. Every single move of Bobby's was right on. Perfect! I was staggered. Then we go to Game Two. Again, for about the first 60 moves, Bobby played perfect chess. Just perfect. He built up a winning position, but in the sixth hour of play allowed Boris a tiny escape-hatch, which he found and eluded defeat. Amazing. Bobby came back to chess and played his first 100 moves perfectly. Let me repeat that: perfectly. Who knows what he could have done had he been active for 20 years, but those first 100 moves in 1992 convinced me he had the potential to be the best ever.

I had a conversation with my father in the early 1980s about Bobby. I had spoken about my admiration for Bobby, and my father had been almost vehemently dismissive. I was taken aback and asked why he harbored such a strong and negative opinion about him. To quote: "Bobby won the World Chess Championship. He fought and won it once. Once. I was a parachutist. Any idiot can jump out of a plane. You got respect when you did it the second time because you know your fears and what you have to face."

Strong and telling words indeed.

Meeting Bobby Fischer

I went to Yugoslavia for part of the 1992 Fischer-Spassky match and met Bobby, spending a day with him. Our short time together was, from my point of view, a very enjoyable experience. I was elated to have met him at all and am grateful to him for the time we spent together: one whole day. I'll treasure it. He personally

thanked me for having traveled to Sveti Stefan for the match. He lamented that I was the only American grandmaster to do so. He felt that his return had not received the acclaim it deserved.

I say this as background to the feedback I received from the grapevine that Bobby was apparently angry with me because I wrote *No Regrets* and hence benefited from his return. I joined the legions of others who profited from him. While *No Regrets* brought me neither fortune nor fame, I was quite proud of the work and received a fantastic compliment from Boris Spassky, who purchased 47 copies. Clearly this was a case of "damned if you do and damned if you don't". It saddens me to think that Bobby thought poorly of me before his passing.

It would be foolish for me to write again about my one-day meeting with Bobby here, as I chronicled it completely in *No Regrets*. Looking back, I would say that two things stood out from our meeting. The first was how Bobby complimented me on my *Five Crowns*. That book deeply analyzed all 24 games of the 1990 Kasparov-Karpov match. In well over two hundred pages of analysis Bobby found two mistakes. Mistakes I too had discovered after publication. He knew the games and where I had gone astray. I was amazed.

The second thing was that before I met him in his suite both Eugene Torre and Svetozar Gligorić told me that Bobby was sore with me. I had written in *Inside Chess* a line he didn't like. I wrote about him as "the ghost of Pasadena". As Bobby complained, "I'm not a ghost. I'm a man." I therefore resolved to apologize to him and receive his forgiveness. When we went to shake hands I held on to his while apologizing. I didn't let go until he said, "Let's forget the whole thing."

Once that was out of the way, Bobby was animated, spoke quickly and laughed easily. We shared stories of the martial artist Bruce Lee, whom we both admired. To read the full account of my meeting Bobby, I refer readers to *No Regrets*. After 1992, I never met, spoke with or had any correspondence with Bobby.

One book I will always treasure, even if the cover jacket has broken off, is Bobby's *My 60 Memorable Games*. There are stories for every game played and this one just tickled my funny bone. Arthur Bisguier relates the following incident at the New York State Open, held in Poughkeepsie, NY in August-September 1963. The following is from *The Art of Bisguier, Selected Games 1961-2003* (Milford, 2008):

"Paired against Bobby in the New York State Open that year, I noticed that he was taking a long time to move. Then I saw that he'd fallen sound asleep. In a few minutes the flag on his clock would fall, and he'd lose on time. That's not the way I like to win games, tourneys or titles. So I made what some called my biggest blunder of the tournament. I awakened Fischer. Bobby yawned, made a move, punched his clock and proceeded to beat me. It ended up as Game 45 in his *My 60 Memorable Games*. Later I heard that Fischer had stayed up late the previous night playing speed chess for money."

I don't think I've had an opponent fall asleep at the board, but some sure have

come close. I have sometimes been concerned that's an effect of the positional aspects of my style. I wonder what I would have done. I strongly believe in informing my opponents to press their clock if they have failed to do so, as well as letting them know that the time control has been reached (if I'm sure myself). But if Bobby fell asleep I might have felt that the poor fellow needed an hour's rest...

In closing this chapter, I place Robert James Fischer as the third greatest chess player of all time. He was a giant who devoted himself to chess and left a breathtaking legacy of games behind. I fear he will be remembered more for having abandoned the game prematurely than for what he gave the game. In chess, we remember our losses much more than our wins. Bobby's absence was the biggest loss that chess suffered since Paul Morphy. The road to recovery is still ongoing.

There is an Icelandic video on Bobby Fischer which I thought was very good: http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=8110762384845644778.

Chapter Two

The Giants

The great British scientist Sir Isaac Newton wrote that "If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants." While we started with Bobby Fischer, Bobby too stood on the shoulders of giants. When I look at the pages of chess history, Paul Morphy (1837-1884) is where the line of World Chess Champions really begins. Although he was not officially World Champion, for me and for many others Morphy was the first truly great player of world class and was simply the best player of his time. How better to define a World Champion? After a meteoric career defeating all his contemporaries, Morphy announced his retirement and stopped playing serious chess in public in 1859. It could be claimed that he was one of the earliest world celebrities.

A Brief History

When Paul Morphy stopped playing, the recognized leading player of the time was Adolf Anderssen (1818-1879), who had decisively lost a match to Morphy in 1858. Some seven years after Morphy's retirement, in 1866, Anderssen lost a match more narrowly to Wilhelm Steinitz (1836-1900). Following his victory, Steinitz was considered the world's leading player. However, it wasn't until his match with Johannes Zukertort in 1886, where the contract specifically stated that the match was "for the Championship of the world" that Steinitz came to be regarded as the first official World Champion. Should this recognition extend from 1866 or from 1886? Your choice. Regardless, from 1866, Steinitz dominated all of his rivals.

The match between Wilhelm Steinitz and Johannes Zukertort in 1886 was played according to what would be referred to as "the Steinitz Rules" These called for the winner of the match to score ten wins, with draws excluded. Steinitz won the match by a decisive score: ten wins, five draws, five losses. Steinitz defended his title frequently and successfully against strong competi-

tion, and in so doing gave the World Championship title a luster that lasted for more than a century.

Steinitz lost his title in 1894 to Emanuel Lasker (1868-1941). Lasker won the match convincingly by ten wins, five losses and four draws. In 1896/97 Lasker and Steinitz contested a rematch which Lasker won even more decisively, by ten wins, five draws, and two losses. Lasker went on to hold the title for the longest of all the champions, keeping it for 27 years. He too was active in defending his title, despite the absence of an official, organized system for determining who the most suitable challenger was at any given time.

In March-April 1921, Emanuel Lasker was defeated by José Raúl Capablanca, (1888-1942) in Havana, Cuba. Lasker resigned the match after game 14, having lost four games without a single victory. Lasker's supporters, of whom there were many, pointed to his poor health, but Capablanca was at the peak of his strength, and Lasker himself was gracious in defeat.

Capablanca held the title from 1921 to 1927, when he lost it to Alexander Alekhine (1892-1946), in a match played at Buenos Aires, Argentina from September to November 1927. The rules had changed to the "first to win six games" under the "London Rules." It proved to be the longest match played for the World title up until modern times. Alekhine won a titanic struggle with six wins, three losses, and an incredible 25 draws. Who knows how long the match might have lasted had it been contested until the first ten wins had been scored.

Alekhine's victory was a stunning surprise to the chess world, as Capablanca was considered a big favorite and, even, "invincible". Many hoped for a rematch While much has been written about whether or not Alekhine dodged his rival, the reality is that they never played another match for the title.

In 1935 Alekhine unexpectedly lost his title to Machgielis (Max) Euwe (1901-1981) by a score of nine wins, thirteen draws and eight losses. They played a rematch, and Alekhine regained the title from Euwe in December 1937 by a decisive score: ten wins, four losses and eleven draws. The reason for the lopsided final score is that Euwe lost four of the last five games. After these two matches, Alekhine didn't defend his title again but held it until he died in 1946. With the death of Alexander Alekhine, we are coming closer to the moment when I'm able to reach back across time and offer a few glimpses of our great predecessors.

If we pause for a moment and recognize Steinitz as World Champion from 1866, extending his reign backward instead of from 1886, then the first five holders of the World Championship title kept it for 80 years, with Euwe holding the title for merely two of those years. As we move to the post WWII period and the start of the new millennium, the title would change hands at a much faster pace.

It is through the Polish-born grandmaster Miguel Najdorf that we catch our first story. I've been a witness on at least three occasions when Najdorf has told it. Chess historians have sought to check the veracity of this tale but with no success. The essentials go like this.

While in Poland, Miguel played for a club that hosted a simultaneous display by Alexander Alekhine. The event was for forty players, but the club deliberately contrived that ten players were missing. They sought redress with Alekhine for the missing players and the lack of entry fees. Would he be willing to play twenty regular simultaneous games as well as playing another ten while blindfold? Thirty players in all and the fee for forty boards would be fully paid. Alekhine agreed with the change. The club then secreted its very best players, including Miguel, into the room where the blindfold board games would be played. Meanwhile 20 weaker players would play the regular simultaneous games. While Alekhine mopped up the 20 sacrificial lambs, he had trouble in the ten blindfold games. In fact big trouble. In his blindfold game, Miguel played a Sicilian where he made a stock exchange sacrifice against White's c3-knight. Alekhine declined it, but there followed a ...Rc3xa3 sacrifice which couldn't be refused. Miguelwon.

Many years later Miguel and Alekhine contested a tournament game in Buenos Aires. The game ended in a draw and the two went out for dinner and ended up drinking together late at night. Giving a toast, Miguel saluted Alekhine as follows: "To the greatest chess player in the world, Doctor Alexander Alekhine, long health! Just remember I have a plus score againstyou." With that Miguel downed his drink. Alekhine shook his head and responded, "Miguel, I may be completely drunk, but a draw doesn't give you a plus score against me." And he in turn drained his glass.

Miguel then asked Alekhine if he remembered a particular simultaneous display tourthat he had made in Poland. Alekhine frowned and puzzled, trying to remember. Several minutes passed by. "I don't remember playing against you." Racking his brains, Alekhine tried to place Miguel's face. Miguel reminded him that indeed they had not "met" in the physical sense as he was in another room playing blindfold games. Again Alekhine frowned, shaking his head and fell deeply into thought. Finally he asked, "Did you give me the Rxc3 and Rxa3 sacrifice?"

Miguel turned cold. "My God, Jasser. How is this possible? He gave a simultaneous game manyyears earlier, a random blindfold game and he remembers my sacrifice! You see, Jasser, that is what makes them (World Champions) so great. They have a fantastic memory and they don't forgive or forget a loss!"

It really is a marvelous story and I desperately want it to be true because it goes to the heart of chess greatness: all the world champions I've met do have great memories and they all hate to lose

MaxEuwe

From Alekhine we continue to Machgielis (Max) Euwe. While playing in one of the Lone Pine tournaments in the late 1970s I met "Mr. Euwe." Our conversation was light and pleasant. At that time he was the President of the FIDE. What struck me was that he followed the games intently and enjoyed kibitzing and analyzing in the post-mortem/analysis room. He appeared a dignified elderly

gentleman from whose lips came some really excellent suggestions. Somehow to my teenage mind it seemed incongruous, I don't know why; chess players were supposed to be tough, *young* guns fighting hand-to-hand type of battles. Such sage, dignified men were not to be so actively engaged. Yet there was Mr. Euwe, throwing patties with the best of the young lions. It was easy to be admiring, especially when his moves were consistently proven to be right.

For the Dutch, of course, Max Euwe was a chess giant bringing the game's eternal flame to the attention of the Dutch public, where it became engrained. Today, Holland is one of the best countries in which to be a chess professional. All of Holland's professional players are deeply indebted to Euwe for his legacy. The Dutch GM Hein Donner wrote of Euwe that he was "The Good," as well as "The Wise" and "The Just". And so forth and so on. That, "all things good sprang from Euwe." Indeed, after writing such a chapter about Bobby Fischer I'm elated to reach out and to write similarly glowing things about someone I barely met. But then there is BentLarsen..

For those who don't know, the Danish grandmaster Bent Larsen is my one true hero, and this book is dedicated to him. Of all the masters I've ever known I admire Bent the most. It is not just the strength of his character, his extraordinary mind, his gift for languages, his wonderful sense of humor, and his absolute fighting determination for victory at the board. It is that he has all of these qualities and much, much else besides: he is a man of character, of principle and, most importantly, he is truly a kind, warm person as well. If it is possible to say so, he is as worldly and as decent a person that there possibly can be. I love him!

And Bent Larsen hated Max Euwe.

Again we return to those Lone Pine days of closed Swiss tournaments of extraordinary strength and rich in title norm possibilities. The later editions featured nine rounds of play, but the playing schedule was utterly ridiculous. We would play five rounds in a row, followed by two rest days and then the remaining four rounds. "Why?" everyone asked. Why not play for three days, then a free day, then three more rounds, then a free day and then play the final three rounds? Why not indeed. The answer was Sammy Reshevsky. Sammy was an Orthodox Jew and to accommodate his Sabbath, Sammy needed Fridays and Saturdays off. So that was the schedule of play. While these consecutive free days created an excellent opportunity for Louis Statham, the driving force behind the great Lone Pine tournaments, and his wife Dorothy to throw a party, most players had little else to do but prepare and wait. Poker games and blitz sessions broke out at the Dow Villa Motel where I stayed, and some more adventuresome sorts made the drive to Las Vegas. It was during one of these free days that I received an urgent messagefrom Bent Larsen to join him for a drink...

When I arrived at his room Bent was more than a little toasty and he poured me a rather generous glass ofwine to start with. He began, "Yasser, do you think I'm a boring person?"

Now, while much has been said about Bent, boring? Hardly. "No. Of course I don't think you are boring. What on earth would make you say that?"

Now the conversation took on an intensity as Bent explained himself. "I've been told that the Sioux Indians measured the worth of a man's life by the enemies he had. If he had a great enemy he was in turn great to have been worthy of such an enemy."

Needless to say, I was confused. Bent continued. "You see, Yasser, I have no enemies. None at all. I began to wonder if perhaps I'm not a boring person. A man without enemies? What does it say about me? And then I remembered, yes, I do have one enemy after all. Max Euwe! And he is dying." Bent went on to explain that Max Euwe was in poor health and that he had received a telegram from Euwe. It asked him, Bent, to forgive him so that he might pass in peace. That day, Bent had sent back a one-word telegrammed response. "No." Ouch. I had stepped into a pretty harsh situation, and now Bent was becoming seriously drunk to ameliorate the pain of doing something he would otherwise never countenance. What had happened?

To fully understand Bent's angst we have to realize that the 1970s was a bipolar world. There was East and West. The Soviets dominated chess and considered the World Chess Championship a "Soviet title". From the West there were really two potential Challengers, Bent Larsen and Bobby Fischer, as Sammy Reshevsky was well past his prime. And between them, who was to say who was better? Larsen or Fischer? Indeed, in the 1970 "Soviet Union versus the Rest of the World" match, often described as the "Match of the Century," it was Fischer himself who stepped aside and allowed Bent to play board one for the World Team. There is absolutely, positively, no way in blue blazes that Bobby would have done such a thing if he didn't truly and profoundly believe that Bent deserved to "lead" the rest of the world team. Again, this wasn't the ordinary chess fan flipping a coin between two deserving grandmasters, allowing Bent to play board one. This was Bobby, the chess god, Fischer himself who made that historic decision: Bent played ahead of him, on board one for the rest of the world team.

No doubt Bent will be remembered for his 1971 Denver Waterloo where he was blanked by Bobby 6-0 in their Candidates' Match. But before that débâcle the rivalry between the two was keen and on an even level. Bent harbored great dreams of facing Boris Spassky, and later the young Anatoly Karpov, and winning the world title. To become Challenger there was just one small obstacle that Bent had to overcome: the World Championship cycle itself. Zonal qualification was no problem, but the really hard step was the Interzonal tournament. This competition, a round robin of some 20 players, was really grueling. To qualify for the Candidates' event, a player would have to make it to the top three places and sometimes only the players in the top two places advanced further. In a lengthy tournament of all grandmasters and other very capable national champions, surprises or crueler upsets would abound. A week-long cold during the event

could end the campaign, as could poor preparation, lack of sleep, poor food and the rest. Failure to qualify meant that the three-year cycle would have to run its course before starting again.

Bent was convinced that he could qualify and become a Candidate again, but *not* if he was forced to play an Interzonal inside the Soviet Union. To play in the cycle successfully his one and only condition was simple: "Do not put me in the SovietInterzonal!"

As there were two Interzonal tournaments, one played in the West and the other in the East, this was no problem for FIDE and for its President Max Euwe. Bent as one of the greatest stars in the West, would play in the Western Interzonal. Simple. According to Bent, Max Euwe gave him an absolute, stone-cold, personal guarantee that he would not have to play in a Soviet Interzonal. However, in the 1970s, Bent was forced to play in not one but two Soviet Interzonal tournaments, Leningrad 1973 and Riga 1979. Bent did not qualify in either. His dreams of World Championship glory ended.

Why did Max Euwe give Bent his solemn personal promise and then "break his word"? I have no idea. I don't know how the drawing of lots was conducted or the politics of FIDE, and I don't pretend to know. All I know is that Bent held the 1973 Leningrad Interzonal against him and wouldn't forgive him even while Euwe's failing health turned critical...

Not exactly what we would call a "beautiful" story is it? Or even a nice story. Rather a cruel, cold story that leaves us mystified and sad, although it sheds some light on the passion that potential and actual World Champions bring to their pursuit of the highest honor. If Bent had had an opportunity to play in a Western Interzonal and had he qualified (or not) the two men might well have parted the very best of friends. Certainly chess history would have been different. By the middle of the 1970s there was no Bobby Fischer and nobody knows how far Bent might have traveled, absent the player who knocked him out of the 1969-1972 cycle. Bent was an awesome player and at the board a force to be reckoned with.

A New Era

Turning to a nicer story... we continue our travels with Max Euwe. After winning the World Championship title from Alexander Alekhine, Euwe lost the title in a rematch. Alekhine died in 1946 as the title holder. What to do? After much discussion, the FIDE General Assembly decided to award the title back to Max Euwe, with the expectation that as Champion he would defend the title against a credible Challenger. Euwe accepted FIDE's offer and was World Champion for a day. The following day, the Soviet delegation arrived late at the General Assembly meeting and the motion was opened again for discussion. The previous motion awarding the title to Euwe was rescinded and instead a tournament of the world's strongest players, including Euwe, would be held to determine a new World Champion. Mikhail Botvinnik was the winner of the five-player round robin (the American

Grandmaster Reuben Fine declined to play), scoring 14/20, three points clear of the field and became the new World Chess Champion in 1948.

Botvinnik's victory ushered in a new era in the chess world. Henceforth, FIDE would administer a three-year cycle under its auspices which would produce a Challenger to the reigning Champion. The previous periods of willy-nilly World Championship matches being staged based on the ability of a Challenger to find a sponsor would pass for the time being. More on this story in our final chapter. Under the new FIDE cycle any National Champion could enter the cycle by qualifying through a Zonal tournament event, which would lead to an Interzonal tournament, the winners of which would qualify for a Candidates' tournament, later to be modified to Candidates' matches, at Bobby Fischer's insistence to prevent collusion. The winner of the Candidates' tournament/matches would become the official Challenger, earning the right to a Championship match. The Championship would be a 24-game match with the Champion having "draw odds" (in case of a 12-12 tie, the Champion retained his title). If the Challenger failed in his quest to unseat the World Champion, the Challenger would have to start the next cycle all over again, perhaps even from step one, the Zonal event.

Mikhail Botvinnik also insisted upon one further perk for the Champion: should the Champion lose the title match, within one year the Champion had the right to a return match as Challenger. The essentials of this system would remain in place until 1993.

Privately, top players joke about "Championitis". It is a strange virus that afflicts players only when they are World Champions, although early symptoms are detectable at the Candidate and Challenger stages. Essentially, the title or even the closeness of the title goes to their heads. Their egos become so inflated they lose their humanity and cease to respect others. Not all are susceptible to the disease. However, when it flares up the results are not pretty...

Mikhail Botvinnik

Mikhail Moiseyevich Botvinnik (1911-1995) has been dubbed the "Patriarch" of Soviet Chess. It was largely as a result of his influence that the 24-game match system, as well as the advantage of a "return match for the defeated World Champion" was put in place after Alekhine's death. In various writings, including his own, Mikhail was portrayed as a stern and rigorously correct figure. "Iron logic" ruled his style of play, and this same "ruthless correctness" marked his public character. At least this was how his public image was presented and how he was perceived by the public. A stern, correct figure, fixated on dedicated hard work under the rules of iron logic.

Once asked about "blitz chess" Mikhail was very clear in his views: blitz chess was bad. It leads to sloppy play and poor habits. The time would be better spent on hard study! (Poor me. I spent my whole career playing blitz.)

I met Mikhail on three occasions, although I can't seem to place them all pre-

cisely. The first time was at a GMA SWIFT tournament in the late 1980s, and the whole Botvinnik public image crumbled before my eyes. No longer World Champion, here was a smiling, gentle man, who spoke to me with a twinkle in his eyes. He had brought me a gift from Moscow, a bottle of Armenian cognac. At another meeting, on September 14, 1994, he gave me a copy of his best games with a best wishes personal inscription. It seemed that whenever we met Mikhail wanted to compliment me on my play and had several questions about my games.

We didn't speak English together. Mikhail usually brought his nephew with him, who dutifully translated everything. Each meeting with him was an extremely pleasant experience. Mikhail was gracious, warm and charming towards me. I have no idea why, but I very much enjoyed his company. We discussed chess and analyzed together blindfold. He didn't miss a move. Considering his advanced age I was deeply impressed.

While I never analyzed or played with Botvinnik on a board, I had the very strong impression from our conversations that he followed the games of the top players closely and was up-to-date on many chess matters, including FIDE politics. Mikhail also had one great source of pride: he was very fond of one of his students, Garry Kasparov. When Garry's name was mentioned Mikhail's face positively beamed with delight.

Garry Kasparov once told me a story which went like this: he had an adjourned ending in which he had pawn and bishop for the exchange and was worried whether he could hold the position. He telephoned Botvinnik and after explaining the material imbalance got a question in return. "Does your bishop have a square on which it is firmly anchored?" asked Botvinnik. "No," Garry told him. "Then you are lost." This discussion took place before Garry had given him the actual position. Indeed, further analysis by Garry proved Botvinnik to be correct. "Yasser, it was extraordinary. He immediately put his finger on the very heart of the position. I've never forgotten."

It is strange to correlate the public image of Botvinnik with the private one which I saw from our meetings. Then again, I didn't know him when he was Champion and whatever "Championitiis" might have afflicted him had passed away.

One story I've always loved. It was in the 1973-1975 cycle. Boris Spassky had lost his title to Bobby Fischer, and the authorities of the Soviet Chess Federation fretted about how to win the title back. The Federation sent a letter to all its top grandmasters and trainers to request their opinions on the players in the cycle. Botvinnik responded with detailed analysis and dossiers of each of the players. Pages and pages on Spassky, Karpov, Korchnoi, appraising their strengths and weaknesses from a point of view that was simply unique. Botvinnik came to Lev Polugaevsky and according to Korchnoi wrote only four words: "He has good health." I always smile when recounting this story and when I tell it I laugh. Mikhail had a sense of humor but he kept it deeply hidden.

Vassily Smyslov

One of the kindest and most outstanding of the World Champions, yet perversely one of the least known to the western world is Vassily Vassilievich Smyslov (who held the title in 1957-1958). While Mikhail Botvinnik has been extolled both at home and abroad as a chess giant, Vassily was one of the four other players to compete in the 1948 World Chess Championship match-tournament, won by Botvinnik. Folks remember who won, but tend to forget that Vassilywas second with an 11/20 score. In 1953, Smyslov won the Neuhausen-Zurich Candidates' tournament (18/28), two points ahead of David Bronstein, to qualify for a 24-game match with Botvinnik. The 1954 match ended in a 12-12 draw and Botvinnik kept the title.

Three years later, in 1957, Smyslov again won the right to be Challenger. This time, Smyslov won the match, defeating Botvinnik by a 12½-9½ score and became the seventh officially recognized World Champion. The following year Botvinnikexercised his right to a "return match" and prevailed by a 12½-10½ score. What is remarkable is that in the West "Iron Mike" Botvinnik has a justified reputation as a great player and an overarching influence on the "Soviet School of Chess". All true. But consider that in their three World Championship matches, Smyslov won 18 games to Botvinnik's 17 (with 34 draws), and yet he was champion for only a single year. Who was the better player? During his tenure Botvinnik described his status as "first amongst equals". I'm sure he had Vassily Smyslov in mind when making that statement.

At last with Smyslov I'm on firm terrain. We played five tournament games together and in the next chapter we'll look at my duels with the seventh World Champion.

Mikhail Tal

Our next World Champion is everyone's favorite, Mikhail Tal (1936-1992), "Mischa" to one and all. Blessed with a charming personality and an easily pronounced name, Mischa was dazzling at the chess board. A comet that burned so brightly he nearly consumed himself. His chess was dazzling, exciting, sacrificial and above all edgy. At the board there was always a type oftension, which kept Tal's opponents on the edge of their seats. They had to be extra carefull and not allow even a whiff of opportunity. Tal brought energy into the position and infused it with daring as well as breathtaking beauty. It was impossible not to admire his bravery. In 1960, at the mere age of 23, Mischa took the measure of Botvinnik, winning the match decisively 12½-8½. Tal's book *Tal-Botvinnik 1960* gave a fascinating insider's view on the match and it considered (certainly by me) one of the very best chess books ever written.

Again, Botvinnik availed himself of the rematch clause, and in 1961 he won the return match. So the 8th World Chess Champion too held the titlefor a short year.

Mischa and I met for the first time in Riga in 1979 during the Interzonal tour-

nament. We played together for over a decade, with five tournament games and one informal blitz training session. We will rejoin Mischa in Chapter 4.

Tigran Petrosian

In the early 1950s a new potential World Champion Candidate emerged, Armenia's Tigran Vartanovich Petrosian (1929-1984). He went on to play in a remarkable ten consecutive three-year cycles, beginning in 1953 and ending in 1980. In 1963, he earned the right to challenge Botvinnik and won the match with a 12½-9½ score. Prior to that match, FIDE had recognized that giving the Champion both draw odds *and* the right to a return match was simply too great an advantage. Botvinnik was denied the right to a return match, about which he would bitterly complain.

Tigran was a completely different kind of World Champion, one not seen by the world before or since. He was a cautious, patient player who avoided tactical clashes, preferring long, maneuvering games where deep strategic planning dominated. In such maneuvering games he was literally unbeatable. When his opponents lost their cool and lashed out with a risky move or impetuous sacrifice Tigran would pounce and punish the aggressor. He would accept the sacrifice, neutralize the dynamics in the position and then press the material advantage home in the endgame. That was the "label" and how he was described to the chess public. As we will see, it is a shallow assessment indeed.

One of the great quips about the World Champions and their sacrifices goes like this: "When Tal sacrifices, grab the material and then think. When Botvinnik sacrifices, think first, then take the material. When Petrosian offers a sacrifice, you are already lost."

I greatly admired Petrosian's style of play, even if I couldn't imitate it. It seemed that he had an ability to "play your game as well as his own." In other words, he was looking for your opportunities first before looking for his own. I found it remarkable that Tigran managed to go through the 1961-1962 Interzonal and Candidates' tournaments without a single loss. As far as I'm aware, he is the only player to have achieved this incredible feat.

Bobby paid a wonderful tribute to Tigran: "Petrosian has an incredible tactical view and a wonderful sense of the danger... No matter how much you think deep... He will 'smell' any kind of danger 20 moves before."

It was this "defense wins" approach that was completely new to me. I had always thought that to win a game you had to take risks and gamble. Petrosian's approach was that of the counter-puncher. He built up a quiet position and let the opponent flail about. Then when opportunity allowed, he pounced swiftly and decisively. As great a strategic player as he was, Tigran could also play tactically when needed. In truth, he was a great tactician as well.

More praise, this time from Bori Spassky, who played two World Championship matches against Tigran: "It is to Petrosian's advantage that his opponents

never know when he is suddenly going to play like Mikhail Tal."

Another humorous quote is from Robert Byrne: "Petrosian was so strong, he was playing a defensive combination to trade pieces long before you realized you had an attack."

In 1966, Tigran Petrosian successfully defended his title against Boris Spassky, winning the 24-game match by a 12½-11½ score. In 1969, Spasskywas back, and this time he won, with a 12½-10½ score, becoming the 10th officially recognized World Champion.

Before passing on to Boris Spassky let me just echo the sentiments expressed nearly unanimously by all of my colleagues, as well as those of the Champions and Challengers: Tigran Petrosian was the toughest player to beat in the history of the game.

Boris Spassky

Boris Spassky must have been dealt one of the strangest hands of fate of any chess player ever. After winning the World Chess Championship in 1969 for a purse of about 6,000 Russian rubles, three years later he was thrust, dramatically, on to the world stage where $250,000 would be at stake. It was an astonishing transformation. Boris was caught up in a whirlwind where he was but a light leaf in a gusting storm.

In my circle of friends, we all wanted Bobby to win and "kill the Russian!" No one was even sure if we were pronouncing Spassky's name correctly or not. He wasn't really a competitor or a sportsman – he was just Bobby's opponent, a player who stood in the way of his winning and bringing the World Chess Championship title to America. It was a cruel and unfair treatment of Boris Spassky. I'm proud to say that over the decades I've gotten a chance to know Boris quite well and consider him a good friend. Only later, when I started to improve at the game did I have a chance to admire his chess and his character.

At one time, Bobby Fischer set a record that seemed so implausible as to be positively unbreakable: he became a grandmaster at 15 years old. Jaw-dropping, unbelievable. How was it possible? Today, Bobby's record is routinely broken, and now it stands around the 12-year-old mark...

When I became a grandmaster (January 1980) aged 19 years and ten months, I was quite proud of myself, having started to play in the summer of 1972. I was anxious to compare myself to other "youthful" grandmaster title earners. Of course, there was Bobby. He was the youngest. Who was next? I was surprised to learn that, at that time, Boris Spasskywas the second youngest grandmaster and the third youngest was Henrique Mecking from Brazil. I was the fourth youngest grandmaster.

If we go back 30 years there were just 100 or so grandmasters: today there are over 1,200. When I started playing chess, grandmaster norm opportunities were few and far between, but now tournaments where norms are available are si-

multaneously held all over the world.

In 1972 Boris Spassky was no mere opponent ready to fall by the wayside. This guy was serious. He had twice fought his way through the cycles, convincingly demolishing some of the best players in the world on the way. He had come up against the unbeatable Tigran Petrosian and on his second attempt won through. Spassky had smashed against iron, and the iron gave way.

Going into the 1972 match, Boris had never lost to Bobby and had won three wins of their previous five games. Boris had defeated Bobby twice in the Grünfeld Defense, got him in a King's Gambit, and when Bobbywas White had drawn twoina Ruy López.

I've watched videos and read interviews where Bobby claimed that the Russians held him back, colluded against him, that he was the world's best player prior to winning the 1972 match and so on and so forth. All perhaps well and good but, prior to their match, their head-to-head record favored Boris heavily. Boris was no spring chicken ready to be plucked. He held a serious upper hand. I'm absolutely convinced that Boris was confidentand thought he would win the match. Bobby had no World Championship match experience and Boris had been steeled in that oven twice before.

Boris had a nearly universal style. He was comfortable attacking, defending, playing deep strategic games or dynamic tactical games. With a sound opening repertoire, a strong middlegame and good endgame knowledge, he had no obvious weaknesses and he had every reason to beconfident. Whywouldn't he win?

The events that swirled around the 1972 match were so intense that any one of them could have put anybody "off his game" When it all comes rushing at you at once and you are so totally unprepared for a maelstrom such as this match caused, it is easy for things to go wrong. Boris, the friendly, charming, easy-going person, was simply blown off course. Whereas all the chaos and hoopla seemed to feed Bobby's combative nature and desire to win, Boris had to try hard to find his bearings and to play his best chess.

While much has been written about the 1972 match, and while I write with perfect hindsight, I think Boris Spassky made a huge strategic error in the match that would cost him dearly. Obviously, the Icelandic organizers had gone all out to host the most prestigious kind of match they could. They had a lovely hall and stage where spectators could watch the players and where the games were filmed. In Game One, in a level position long destined for a draw, Bobby, as Black, spectacularly grabbed an undefended white h2-pawn with his bishop, allowing it to be trapped. Spassky bolted upright in his chair, wondering for a moment whether he had been wrong in believing thatthe pawn was poisoned. It was. Despite Bobby's daring error, it was probably not a fatal mistake. That would come later and Boris won game one of the match.

After the game, Bobby harshly complained that noise from the cameras filming the game had interfered with his concentration and he demanded the cam-

eras be removed. Every step was taken to make the cameras as noiseless and as invisible as possible, but they were not removed. Bobby forfeited game two. Spassky now had a two-point lead in a draw-odds match and his opponent was throwing the biggest chess tantrum ever seen. The camera crew had purchased the contractual rights to film the match on stage and Chester Fox insisted on keeping the contractual rights to what had blossomed into a world-wide event. A new solution had to be found if the match was to continue.

Would the players agree to play the game in a "janitor's closet room" off the side from the stage? That way, the Icelandic hosts were not in breach of their contract to allow the stage area to be filmed. Bobby couldn't complain that the cameras interfered with his concentration. The decision to accept the change of venue rested with Spassky.

In my view, Boris was not just the World Champion; he represented the *office* of the World Champion as well. It was his duty to insure that the proper *staging* of the match occurred in world-class conditions. Playing in a janitor's closet is beneath the dignity of the World Chess Champion as well as the staging of the World Chess Championship itself. He had to reject the offered solution.

But he didn't. Boris agreed to continue the match off-stage. Again, I'm sure that Boris felt that whether he played Bobby on a stage, in a closet or in a swimming pool naked, he was the better player and would prove it. Bobby won game three, and the Soviets would spend the rest of the match trying to determine the cause of Spassky's poor play, going so far as to conduct X-ray tests of the players' chairs. The rest is history.

Boris, after leading two games to none, might have stood up and said: "Gentlemen, sorry, please excuse me. I am the World Chess Champion. I came to play this match on the stage where the players agreed to play beforehand. I want the whole world to see how World Championship Chess can be showcased and presented to fans all over the world as an exciting, dramatic sport. I wanted an event of which we could all rightfully be proud. At this time, I am prepared to play on the stage and only on the stage.

"If my opponent again refuses to meet me on the stage, I will take my leave and return to Moscow. Please, I understand that much sacrifice has been made by all Icelanders and I most sincerely thank my hosts for all their efforts and hospitality. I'm genuinely grateful. I do not insist that I be paid the winner's purse in case of further forfeitures. Such funds can be used to help recover the costs of the event. I'm sorry such things took place. Truly. But I am the World Chess Champion. I must treat chess with the respect it deserves and, I'm sorry, I will not play in a janitor's broom closet."

Had Boris said this, or something similar, the whole world would have understood, and by God he would have been right. He did not. And legends were born.

The chapters on the 10th, 12th and 13th World Champions will be lengthy. Let us skip any further broad brushstrokes and get started on our duels.

Chapter Three

Vassily Smyslov

The first truly world-class chess player I ever saw was Paul Keres. It was in 1975. Vancouver, a beautiful city just across the border from Seattle, hosted a large open tournament. In those years I often traveled north to Vancouver, British Columbia and south to Portland, Oregon, playing in as many open events in the Pacific Northwest as I could squeeze in between my school classes. I was a "Class A" to "Expert" player at the time, meaning I sported a 1900-2100 rating which jumped around a great deal. The Vancouver tournament, a near two-week long event, ran through my school classes and it was a difficult decision to pass on this fine event, especially when I learned that the legendary Paul Keres would be participating. With the event about to begin, friends were driving up for the day to watch the opening round. I caught a ride as well. Our eyes were all glued on Paul Keres as we watched his every move. He was a well dressed, dignified man with what might be called a noble bearing. He deeply impressed our whole party.

In his game, Keres' opponent was Denis Allan, a strong Canadian master who employed the Petroff Defense and was a tough man to beat. We were all anxious to see how Keres might gain an advantage so that we could use the same idea ourselves. After all the announcements the game began 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nf6, and now, without any hesitation at all, Keres played 3.d3, as if this was a killer-refutation. We were sunk. The game continued 3...Nc6 4.Nbd2 Bc5 5.c3 d5 6.Be2 dxe4 7.dxe4 a5 8.0-0 0-0, and Keres won smoothly in 25 moves. It was a thrill to watch a world-class player in action. His manner, his bearing, his unhurried approach to the position, the accuracy of his moves, and the precision and manner in which he physically played his moves all made a deep impression. I was especially drawn to observing his physical movement of the pieces, as he carefully put them correctly in the middle of the square so as not to annoy his opponent. In fact, I went home to practice so that I could mimic his movements as well and

to endeavor, as best I could, to play chess "properly" at the board; neither to disturb my opponent nor to win by underhand methods of distraction. In short, I wanted to be world class and to behave like a world-class player. I wanted to be, atleast in manner, likePaul Keres.

In my youthful imagination I thought that all world-class players moved their pieces with the same grace, precision and accuracy as Paul Keres. Many in fact do and I was shocked to discover that some do not.

The most shocking was Vassily Smyslov. Our first game was played in Montpellier, France, during the 1985 Candidates' tournament. We came to the game, shook hands warmly, sat down and filled in our score-sheets. In time a gong sounded, and an arbiter started our clocks. The very first move was a shock. Vassily, quite a tall man with large hands, grasped his d2-pawn and, fumbling, stumbling, rumbling, it somehow made its way to the d4-square, where it was plopped down rather shakily, released with a doubt and the clock was slapped. This was not the smooth precision of a well-oiled machine trained to make thousands of moves with fluid movements. Rather, this was the movement of someone who hadn't learned the rudiments of how to grasp the pieces at all. Each of his moves had the same quality: unfamiliarity with grabbing, holding and moving the pieces. Trades were rather strange affairs: Vassily would grab my pawn or piece with his hand, lift and remove it from the board, and then grasp the capturing piece or pawn as awkwardly as possible setting it upon the captured square. While this was immensely disconcerting at first, eventually I got used to his way of movement and soon forgot about it, concentrating on the game itself.

Later, I would understand: Vassily was losing his eyesight. Indeed, he had very thick lenses in his glasses which would make him look hard, almost myopically at his scoresheet to be certain of the time control. I would tell him when the time control was met. Unfortunately, this debilitating blindness has continued and at the time of writing he is nearly blind.

Regardless of how his pieces reached their intended squares, Smyslov's play was never lacking in grace, elegance and efficiency. The longevity of his career stems, at least in part, from the fluid and easy style of his play.

Vassily Smyslov-Yasser Seirawan
Montpellier Candidates', 1985
Bogo-Indian Defense

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 e6

Through most of my career I've preferred the Nimzo-Indian Defense, enjoying the rather positional struggles that ensue. At the time I preferred an early kingside fianchetto even more, a defense I called the "Modern" or the "Rat". However, for the Candidates' tournament the Rat was too risky a choice and would have to

wait. When I wanted to "force equality" the Queen's Gambit Accepted was my choice.

3.c4 Bb4+ 4.Nbd2 b6 5.e3 Bb7 6.a3 Bxd2+

Heading for a position which I've played with both sides and with which I've had a lot of experience. I could also play 6...Be7, retaining the bishop, but after 7.Bd3 d5 8.0-0 0-0 9.b4, White has a slight pull.

7.Qxd2 0-0 8.b3?!

A modest move. As White, I usually play 8.b4, grabbing a little more space on the queenside. For some reason, Smyslov's move filled me with confidence and brought out my most aggressive nature.

8...Ne4 9.Qc2 f5 10.Bd3 (Diagram 1)

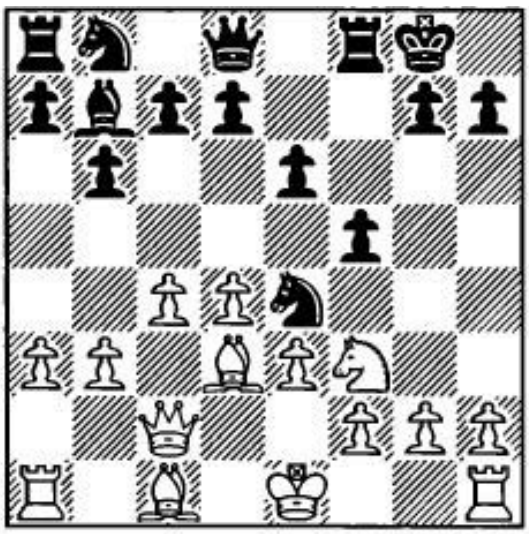


DIAGRAM 1. Black to Play

10...d6

Remarkably, Black has arrived at a key moment rather early in the game. The crucial question is: should Black choose on move ten to make his rook lift? The point is that after the immediate 10...Rf6, Black's rook is not yet in the fire of a b2-bishop, which takes the sting out of a d4-d5 advance. Suddenly, and without there being any open lines, the position takes on a sharp character. For example, 10...Rf6 11.0-0?! Rh6, and White has really put his king into the line of fire. What made me hesitate was 10...Rf6 11.Bb2 Rg6 12.Rg1, when White will castle queenside. After the further moves 12...d6 13.0-0-0 Nd7, besides the thematic sacrifice, 14.d5 with Nf3-d4 to follow, I began to wonder what my g6-rook was doing and whether it was cleverly placed.

Another entirely different line of play was 10...Ng5 11.Nxg5 Qxg5 12.f3, when White has the two bishops and a slight pull. But even here, things aren't so clear. Black would continue 12...d6 13.0-0 Nd7 14.e4 f4, when he intends ...e6-e5, find-

ing a square for his knight.

With the text, I wanted to wait for White to declare an address for his king before deciding on where to commit an attack. In the parlance of the time, I decided "to keep my options open"

11.Bb2 Nd7 12.0-0

In the words of movie hero, Ace Ventura Pet Detective, "Alrighty then!" Now that we know where the target is, it seemed natural to launch the rook lift.

12...Rf6?!

Looks good, but the timing is wrong. A better, more restrained choice was to play first 12..Qe7 and ...Ra8-e8, aiming for ...e6-e5 and quietly completing my development. The possibility of this rook lift is not going away.

White now faces a very severe attack and is compelled to respond in the center, or else Black will just shift student body right, to the kingside with ...Rf6-h6, ...Nd7-f6-g4, and using just normal building moves will sack White's kingside.

13.c5!

I completely underestimated this move. White must react in the center, but the line I focused upon was 13.d5 Rg6 14.Bxe4 (14.dxe6 Ndc5) fxe4 15.Qxe4 Nc5 (the drawback of 8.b3), when Black will win back his pawn with a good game.

Now I had regrets that I didn't complete my development prior to the rook lift. While the position after 13...bxc5 14.dxc5 Ndxc5 15.Bxf6 Qxf6, offered fair compensation for the exchange, I didn't fully trust the line.

13...Bd5 14.cxd6! cxd6 15.Rfc1!

Highly annoying. Besides threatening an invasion on the c7-square, when any queen trade ends my incipient attack, White vacates the f1-square for a defensive bishop retreat. While just out of the gate, I was beginning to feel frustrated.

15...Rg6 16.Bc4 Bb7

I was determined to keep as many pieces as possible – if only to justify my rook lift. Possibly 16...Ndf6 17.Bxd5 Nxd5 was a better choice.

17.d5!

An excellent move to throw off my attacking ambitions. I had pleasant dreams of playing 17...Ng5 18.Ne1 Nf3+ 19.Nxf3 Bxf3 20.g3 Qh4, with ideas of a mating attack. Notice the spectator's role played by the b2-bishop in such a line of play.

17...e5 18.Bb5!

Darn it again! White doesn't miss his opportunity to take the punch out of my attack. I harbored hopes of playing ...a7-a6, and then completing my development with ...Qd8-e7 and ...Ra8-f8, with dark storm-clouds gathering on the kingside.

18...Bxd5 19.Bc6! Bxc6 20.Qxc6 (Diagram 2)

White's pawn sacrifice wasn't just timely, it was brilliant. Let us not forget that chess is a fight, a battle of ideas. Since the start of play, I've been looking to the kingside to build up an attack there and White's play has completely pulled

me away from such ambitions. Indeed, Black now needs to play a few good defensive moves to determine the validity of White's sacrifice.

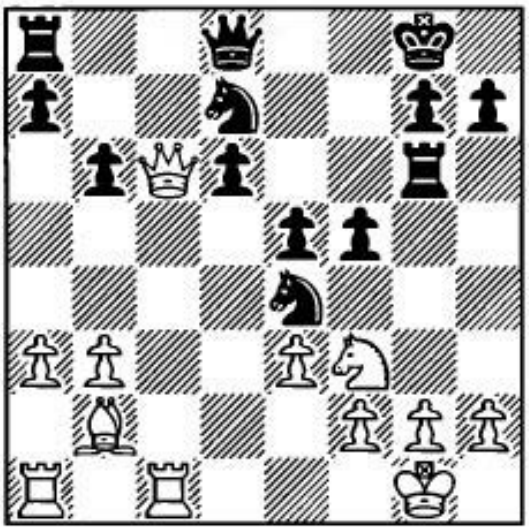


DIAGRAM 2. Black to Play

20...Qe8?

And this is not one of those good moves. With this move I thought I would craftily return the pawn to regain the initiative. Instead, I made it easier for White to play.

Now was the moment to give up my kingside attacking ambitions and instead nurse my extra pawn. The correct move was 20...Re6!, bringing my rook back into play. I feared the line 21.Qd5 Qe8 22.Rc7 Ndf6 23.Qb7 would be favorable for White. Not true. Firstly, in the position Black has 23...Qf8, simply protecting the g7-pawn. Far more importantly, after 20...Re6! 21.Qd5, Black has 21...Kf7!, a fine move that protects the e6-rook and keeps the c7-square covered as well. Black is ready for ...Nd7-f6, and ...Re6-e7, covering all the vital entry points. White would still have to prove sufficient compensation for his pawn sacrifice.

21.Nh4! Re6 22.Nxf5 Ndc5!

This is the move into which I put great stock. In order to avoid material loss, White is kicked backwards and I thought my initiative would roll onwards.

23.Qd5 Nf6 24.Qc4 d5 25.Qc2 Rd8

This was the position I had envisioned on my 20th move. It all seemed to be good. White's pieces are huddled on the queenside while I have the center, good development...

26.Rab1! (Diagram 3)

A highly cautious move and yet another really annoying one. I had hoped for something like 26.b4 Na4 27.Rd1 Rc8, when I could seize the c-file and trade off White's dangerous bishop. The text prepares a bishop retreat to the a1-square

and poses the question: "What are you going to do?"

The text also foils my potential threat of 26...Qb5 27.b4 Nd3, with an initiative, as now 26...Qb5 27.Ba1 is a simple reply.

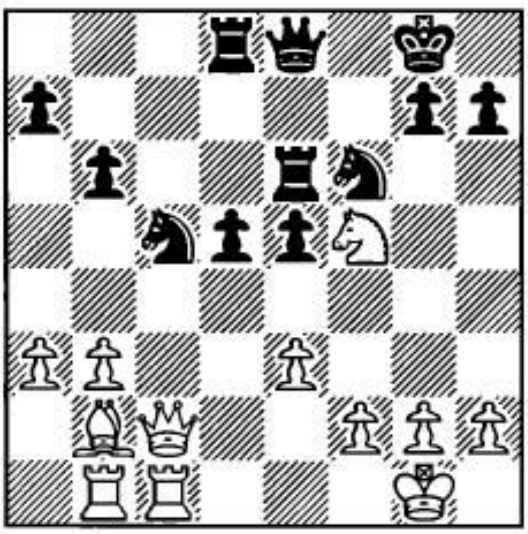


DIAGRAM 3. Black to Play

26...e4!?

Definitely not the move I wanted to play in this position. As I made my move the Fischer quote "to get squares ya gotta give 'em" came to mind. Yes, I win control over the d3-square, but I give up the long diagonal as well as the d4-outpost in return. Such a trade strikes me as favorable for White. Quite simply, I made this move out of frustration. I was unsure of how else to continue. The direct 26...g6 27.Ng3 d4 28.exd4 exd4 29.Qc4 is a show-stopper, while 26...Qb5 27.Ba1 Nd3 28.Rd1 leads nowhere. What else to do?

My biggest problem was that at this point I thought I stood better and was anxious to press my advantage home. A cooler, more objective view of the position was necessary. In truth, the position is about even and rather than my highly committal text, something like 26...Qg6 or 26...Qh5, activating the queen, was called for.

27.Qe2!

An important nuance. It is vital for White to keep a rook on the c-file after ...Nc5-d3, as otherwise Black would, in time, take possession of the c-file.

27...Qg6 28.Nd4 Red6 29.h3 (Diagram 4)

Hitting yet another road-block. Again, I didn't see a proper way forwards other than what I played, which allows an immediate draw. To keep the tension, now was a good time just to "tuck away my king" and await developments. A line like 29...h6, followed by ...Kg8-h7, was the most sensible idea, with approximate equality. Patience is a virtue.

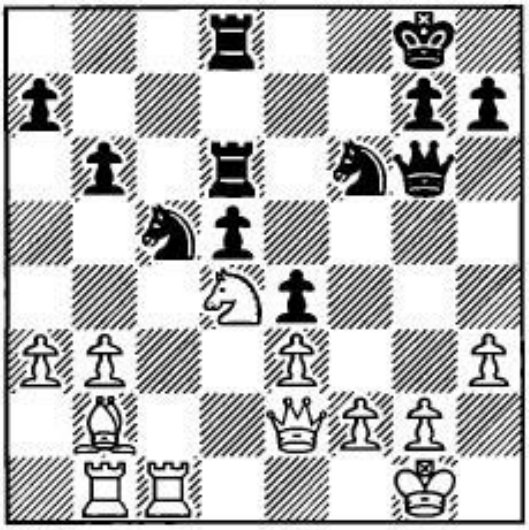


DIAGRAM 4. Black to Play

29...Nd3?! 30.Rc7! R8d7??

Oh no! This was not the way to force a repetition. The correct line was 30...R6d7 31.Rc6 Rd6, with a likely draw in the offing.

31.Rc8+ Rd8?! 32.Nc6!

Pow! I simply missed this shot. Why didn't I tuck away my king earlier? Now I lose material by force and am lost. With a heavy heart I have to part with my lady.

32...Rxc8 33.Ne7+ Kf7 34.Nxg6 hxg6 35.Rd1Rdc6 36.Rxd3!

Simplest. With the elimination of the knight, all of my pawns become targets and the combination of queen and bishop will dominate the position.

36...exd3 37.Qxd3 Rd8 38.f3 Rd7 39.Kh2 Rec7 40.h4 Rc641.g4

The game was adjourned here, and I spent a difficult night berating myself. My seconds Ulf Andersson and Miguel Quinteros tried many types of "fortress," but we couldn't make anything work.

41...Re6

The sealed move.

42.Bd4 Ne843.Kg3 Ke7 44.a4 Kd8

This was the best defense we could conjure up. Black hopes that his rooks will hold the center and kingside, while his king will protect the b6-pawn. For sure, staying on the kingside would in time lead to a pawn avalanche and a mating attack.

45.a5

By no means a bad move, but it does allow me to achieve the hoped-for defensive set-up. The move I feared most was 45.Qa6!, when I would play 45...Ke7, returning with my king.

45...Nc7! 46.axb6axb6 47.f4 Kc8! 48.f5 gxf5 49.Qxf5 g6! (Diagram 5)

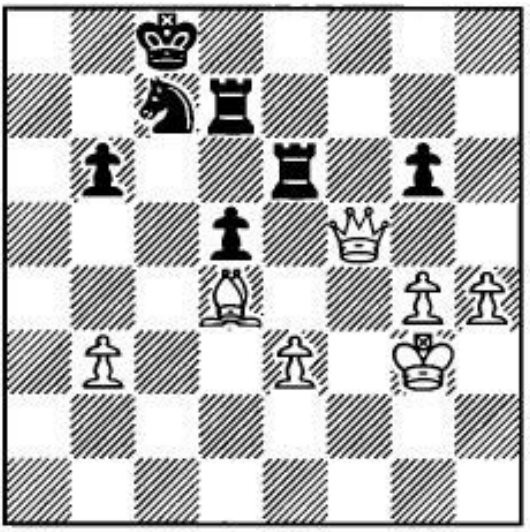


DIAGRAM 5. Black to Play

It was with a tremendous sense of relief that I was able to move this pawn to a light square. While still badly off, I'm out of the "clearly lost" zone. Better still, I'm making it as difficult as I can for Vassily to win. Putting up good resistance in a bad position can drain your opponent of his killer instinct.

50.Qf8+ Kb7

Further solace. Now my king is safe.

51.Qg8 Rde7 52.Qd8 Re8 53.Qd7 R6e7 54.Qd6 Re6 55.Qb4 Rc6 56.Qd2 Rce6 57.Qd3 Kc6 58.Qc2+ ½-½

With his last move, Vassily proposed a draw, which I eagerly accepted. A narrow escape. In the final position, the move ...Nc7-b5, is very annoying to face.

My overall impression of this game was that I found it quite confounding. I thought that my opponent had difficulties facing a potentially serious attack, and somehow by his making a defensive sacrifice I was thoroughly outplayed from a position of strength. I failed to "shift" my thinking and to give up my attacking ambitions when it was better to nurse the advantage of an extra pawn. It wasn't often that I was outplayed when having an "advantage" or, at least, a position I liked. Vassily made it look easy.

Our next meeting took place at the 1987 New York Open. Louis Statham had passed away, and the strongest "closed" Swiss event in America was organized by Jose Cuchi, who put on a truly fine competition. I tried to play as often as I could, but missed many of his events. To win a Swiss you really need to make a big score. It seems that Vassily wasn't in an ambitious mood and chose a stock drawing-line against my Pirc Defense, which didn't really help either of our chances.

Vassily Smyslov-Yasser Seirawan
New York Open, 1987
Pirc Defense

1.d4 d6

The move I wanted to play in our Candidates' encounter, but I couldn't find the daring. I was curious to see how Vassily would treat this line.

2.e4

Quite a surprise, as I had expected him to play something like 2.Nf3, or even 2.g3, in keeping with his style of closed positional play.

2...Nf6 3.Nc3 g6 4.Nf3 Bg7 5.Be2 0-0 6.0-0 Bg4 7.Be3 Nc6 8.Qd2 e5 (Diagram 6)

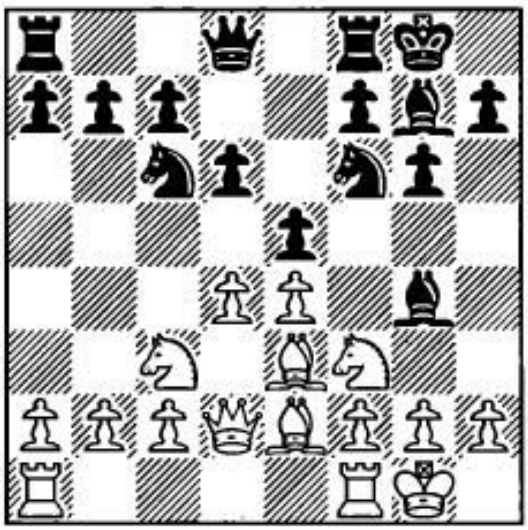


DIAGRAM 6. White to Play

9.dxe5

With this move the music stops, as wholesale trades take the life out of the position. Instead, with 9.d5 White keeps a small plus.

9...dxe5 10.Rad1 Qc8 11.Qc1 Rd8 12.Rxd8+ Qxd8 13.Rd1 Qf8 14.h3 Bxf3 15.Bxf3 Rd8 16.Rxd8 ½-½

Drawn on Vassily's proposal.

Once more it was back to playing in the World Championship cycle. This time we played in the Interzonals, a step below the Candidates', held in Biel, Switzerland, an absolutely beautiful location. And I was White this time.

Yasser Seirawan-Vassily Smyslov
Biel Interzonal, 1993
English Opening

1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 d6 3.e3

An attempt to give the game a different twist. In hundreds of tournament games 3.g3 has been my automatic choice. I wanted to throw Vassily off any preparations he may have made for our game.

3...g6 4.d4 Nd7 5.Nge2 Bg7 6.g3 Ngf6 7.Bg2 0-0 8.b3 Re8 (Diagram 7)

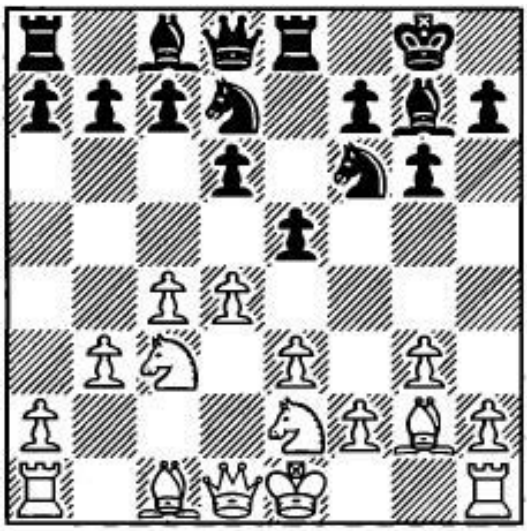


DIAGRAM 7. White to Play

The game has become a kind of French Defense in reverse, where Black plays a King's Indian Attack formation. White would like to see Black commit himself to playing ...e5-e4, especially before White has castled on the kingside. So I need to spend a tempo on a useful move.

9.a4!?

It is hard to say if this is good or bad. I wanted to retain the option of castling long, in case of ...e5-e4, and to keep the option of Bc1-a3, in case the a3-f8 diagonal became useful.

9...e6 10.h3

The waiting continues. Again I'm hoping to entice Black to extend centrally.

10...exd4

Black has run out of useful moves. The direct 10...e4 11.g4 h6 12.Ba3 Nf8 13.Ng3 d5 14.cxd5 cxd5 15.Nb5 was the type of line I hoped to play. If Black tries

to keep the tension by 10...h5, a questionable move, then 11.Ba3 Nf8 12.dxe5 leads to an advantage for White. Note that in this last line 12...dxe5 13.Qxd8 Rxd8 14.a5! would fully justify my ninth move.

11.exd4

After 11.Nxd4?! a5! Black would have a fine King's Indian position, as he has excellent control of the c5-square.

11...d5 12.a5! Ne4 13.Nxe4dxe4 14.0-0 c5!

Black must not delay this advance. White is ready to play Bc1-e3, Qd1-d2 and Ne2-c3, with a very harmonious position. Black has to accelerate the pace of play and to fight for squares while completing his development, as otherwise his game will become difficult.

15.Be3 cxd4 16.Bxd4 Ne5 (Diagram 8)

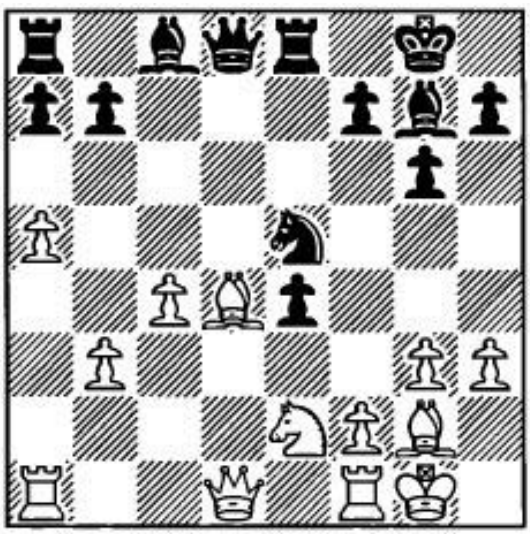


DIAGRAM 8. White to Play

The position is quite tense and the outcome of the game hangs in the balance over the next few moves. What to play? At first blush 17.Bxe4 is attractive, as the forcing 17...Bxh3 18.Bxb7 Bxf1 19.Qxf1 appears to be a fine exchange sacrifice. But if we continue the line a move or two further, we discover that 19...Rb8 20.a6 Rxb7 21.axb7 Nf3+ 22.Kh1 Nxd4 wins a piece for Black. Annoying. Neither is 17.Bxe4 Bxh3 18.a6 satisfactory, as with 18...bxa6! Black would be happy to sacrifice an exchange himself.

Black's threat of 17...Nf3+ compels me to do something. There was the prophylactic idea of 17.Kh1, sidestepping the threat of check. Ha! Brilliant!! But how good is White's position after 17...f5 18.Nf4 Be6? I wasn't sure there was much of an advantage at all. Another problem is that 17.Kh1 Nd3! 18.Bxg7 Kxg7 19.f3 e3! is simply better for Black. This variation reminds me of the saying "Be careful of the tiger you invite for dinner. He may eat you."

17.Bxe5!?

A rather radical solution, choosing to give up the two bishops to pursue a queenside initiative.

17...Bxe5 18.Qxd8 Rxd8 19.Rad1 Bc7 20.RxdB+ Bxd8 21.Ra1

Threatening 21.Bxe4, as after 21...Bxh3, White's rook would no longer be attacked, and White could continue with 22.Bxb7, grabbing a pawn.

21...Rb8 22.Nf4

White renews the threat of Bg2xe4, by protecting his h3-pawn.

22...f5 23.b4 (Diagram 9)

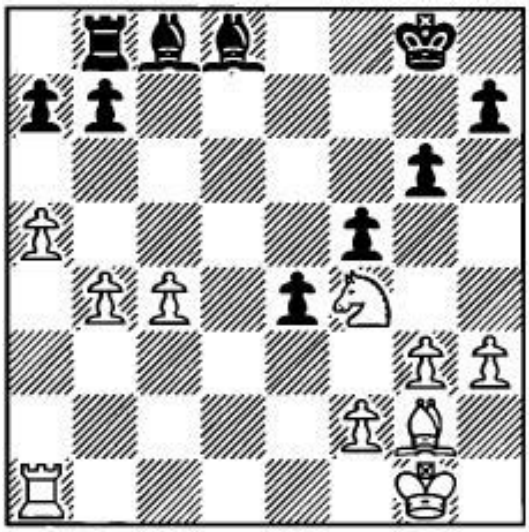


DIAGRAM 9. Black to Play

This was the position for which I was aiming. If I can slip in Ra1-d1 and f2-f3, Black's bishops can easily become dominated.

23....8d7 24.Nd5 Be6 25.Rd1 Bxd5?!

Going for the bishops of opposite colors ending would not have been my choice. Vassily worried that with f2-f3, and a future c4-c5, he would be suffocated. I didn't share his certainty that things would be so cut and dried. For example, 25...Kf7! 26.f3 exf3 27.Bxf3 Bg5 28.c5 Rd8, although passive (the b7-pawn is a constant worry), offered a lot of kicking chances.

26.Rxd5 Be7 27.c5!

With this move Black has problems to solve, as White is obtaining serious queenside pressure. I now expected 27...Rd8! 28.Bf1 Rxd5 29.Bc4 Kf8 30.Bxd5, winning the b7-pawn. Even so, the opposite-colored bishop endgame may allow Black to draw. I harbored some hopes for the win because Black's kingside pawns are all on light squares. As Black, I would have jumpedat that ending.

27...b6?

A bad move that allows White a passed a-pawn. As noted, Black should have

traded rooks. If you are going to defend a bad ending, choose the one featuring opposite-colored bishops only. The drawing chances there are almost always much higher.

28.cxb6 axb6 29.Rb5!?

While it was attractive to step up the queenside pressure, the immediate 29.a6! was stronger. I missed the fact that after 29...Bxb4 30.a7 Ra8 31.Rd7 b5 Black doesn't have time to execute ...Bb4-c5xa7 as 32.Rb7!, with the threat of 33.Rb8+, wins.

29...Bd6

Hoping to set up a blockade on the b8-square blockade after 30.axb6, which I must definitely avoid.

30.a6!

The passed a-pawn, on the other hand, is a winner.

30...Bc7 31.Bf1 Kf8 32.Rd5 b5

Black's b-pawn falls anyway. This is Black's only chance for a blockade, as otherwise White will play Bf1-b5-c6, then simply push the a-pawn home.

33.Bxb5 Bb6 34.Rd6 Ba7 35.Rd7 Ra8 36.Rxh7

A bit sadistic. In bishops of opposite colors endings it is a good idea to grab as many pawns as possible. Instead, 36.Bc6 Bxf2+ 37.Kxf2 Rxa6 38.b5 was sufficient for the win, but I didn't want to take any risks, so I captured the h7-pawn.

36...Bd4 37.Rd7 Bb6 38.Rb7 Bd4 39.Rd7 Bb6 40.Rd6 Ba7 41.Bc6

Now I felt "brave enough" to carry out this move.

41...Ke7 42.Rxg6

Same comment as above. Keep grabbing while the grabbing is good.

42...Rf8 43.Rg7+ Rf7 44.Rxf7+ Kxf7 45.Kf1 Kf6 46.Ke2 Ke5 47.f4+ exf3+ 48.Kxf3 Kf6 49.Bd7 1-0

After the game, Vassily told me, "I don't know how I lost this ending." I must confess it felt awfully good to defeat one of the most renowned endgame players in history in an ending.

In the 1980s and 1990s the Interpolis tournament in Tilburg, Holland, was a calendar highlight. Invariably it was a closed round-robin tournament of the highest caliber. In the 1994 edition, though, the organizers switched to a knockout system of mini-matches, and I was paired with Vassily. These would be our last two games against one another.

Yasser Seirawan-Vassily Smyslov
1st matchgame, Tilburg, 1994
Bogo-Indian Defense

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Bb4+ 4.Nbd2

Reversing roles from our 1985 Candidates' tournament encounter.

4...c5?!

I don't like this combination of moves. Black willingly gives up his dark-squared bishop and weakens his d6-square. Surprisingly, at the time this system was quite popular. Later 4...0-0 5.a3 Be7 6.e4 d5 7.e5 Nfd7 would be favored.

5.a3 Bxd2+ 6.Bxd2 d6?!

My feelings about this move are not just a matter of taste – it certainly lands Black in trouble. The usual choice was 6...cxd4 7.Nxd4 d5, liquidating the center pawns.

7.dxc5! dxc5 8.Qc2! Nbd7

Black is heading into a lifeless position. Vassily wanted to avoid blocking the long a1-h8 diagonal with 8...Nc6 9.0-0-0 Qe7 10.Bc3 e5, which surrenders the d5-square, but that was a better choice.

9.0-0-0

Not bad, but not best. Here I spent time looking at 9.g4!, initiating play on the kingside. The point is that White has to ask himself a larger question: "What am I going to do with my f1-bishop and how should I complete my development?" It is nice to think that 9.e4, 10.Bd3 and 11.e5 might be played with central domination. The problem is that 9.e4 e5 gummies up the position and leaves me wondering what to do with my f1-bishop. Again, another not so bad idea is 9.g3 b6 10.Bg2 Bb7 11.0-0 0-0, completing my development. But in this case the light-squared bishops neutralize one another and I thought the position wouldn't be anything more than a small plus for White. Hence my hesitation and search for a sharper solution.

In fact 9.g4! is a very strong move as it forces Black to answer the threat of g4-g5, while also giving the f1-bishop a little flexibility. For example, 9...0-0 10.g5 Nh5 11.Bh3 could quickly lead to disaster. Equally 9...Nxg4 10.Rg1 Ngf6 11.Rxg7 is a very favorable trade for White. As soon as Bd2-c3 is played Black will have severe difficulties on the long diagonal. This leaves 9.g4 h6 10.Rg1 b6 as the most likely line of play. But then 11.g5 hxg5 12.Nxg5! Qe7 13.Bg2 Rb8 14.0-0-0 leaves Black in a quandary – where is he going to put his king? At the cost of weakening the h2-pawn, White has completed his development, and all his pieces are actively placed. Black's game would be difficult.

9...Qc7! (Diagram 10)

I rather underestimated this move when castling. Black tries to prevent Bd2-f4-d6, when White is dominating. I was expecting 9...Qe7 10.Bc3 0-0 11.e3 b6 12.Bd3 Bb7 13.Ng5, when I could apply "pleasant pressure" to the position.

At this moment I had the distinct impression that Vassily had seriously mixed up his opening move order and that some punishment was to be meted out. The combination of Black's moves ...c7-c5,...Nb8-d7 and ...Qd8-c7, including giving up the dark-squared bishop, creates a woeful impression and I was now on the warpath. How to crack the whip?

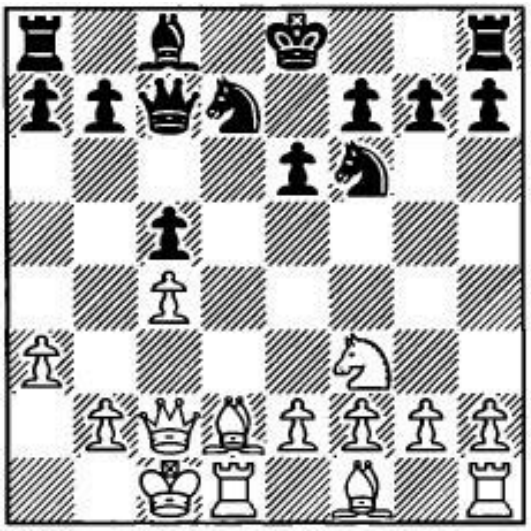


DIAGRAM 10. White to Play

10.g3!?

Looks like a good start. I wanted to play Bd2-f4, to induce ...e6-e5, which wouldcreate weaknesses in Black's camp.

10...Ng4?!

Highly provocative indeed. Without completing his development Black is relying on tactics to solve his strategic problems. I fe't that now a winning combination "must" exist.

11.Bf4

The most tempting, but again second best. I could avoid the complications after the text and opt for a safe and clear advantage by 11.Bc3! 0-0 (11...Nxf2 12.Bxg7 RgB 13.Qxh7 Rxg7 14.Qxg7 Nxh1 15.Ng5! is very dangerous for Black) 12.e3, when White has the two bishops and the superior development. The line could continue 12...b6 13.Ng5! g6 14.Bh3 Ngf6 15.Rd2 Bb7 16.Rhd1, when White's game is the picture of harmony. Sacrifices against the e6-pawn are in the offing and Black's defense would be difficult. The text was based on my certainty that a winning combination would soon be on offer.

11...e5 12.Bh3 h5 (Diagram 11)

Once again, Black can't afford to take the f2-pawn: 12...Nxf2? 13.Bxd7+ Bxd7 14.Bxe5, followed by 15.Bxg7, with a large advantage for White.

We have arrived at the position that I felt just had to contain a winning combination. After all, Black's development is terrible, he hasn't castled and his rooks aren't connected. I kept racking my brains but I couldn't find the win and began feeling a growing sense of frustration.

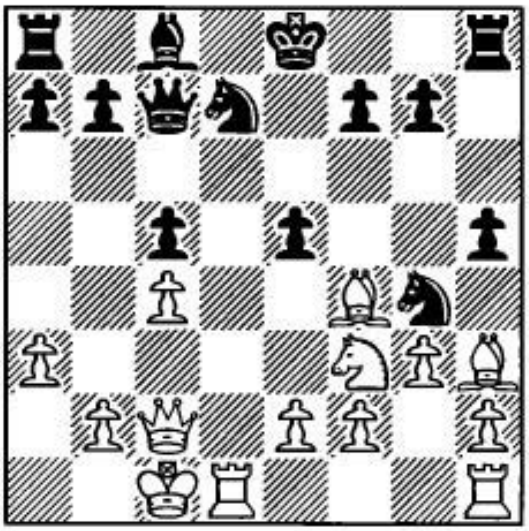


DIAGRAM 11. White to Play

13.Bxg4!

I could have played 13.Be3, with a roughly even game, but I was determined to burn my bridges at this point. There was no going back!

13...hxg4 14.Nxe5!

Riding the back of the tiger. Again, I felt compelled to "go ahead" The exchange sacrifice 14.Rxd7 Qxd7 15.Nxe5 Qe7 16.Rd1 0-0 unfortunately seems to lead to a dead end.

14...Nxe5 15.Rd5 Rh5!

Clearly the *only* defensive move. After 15...f6 16.Bxe5 fxe5 17.Qg6+ Kf8 18.Rhd1 Black is lost

16.Rxe5+?

Releasing the tension and making Black's defensive task much easier. I have an old and wise expression: "When attacking, invite everyone to the party." Hence, the most natural move in the position is also the best: 16.Rhd1! brings the h1-rook into the attack. To stay in the game, Vassily would have to find 16...Kf8!, a very counter-intuitive move. The natural choice and the one I feared was 16...f6?. Then 17.Bxe5 Rxe5 18.Qg6+ Qf7 19.Rxe5+ fxe5 20.Rd8+ Ke7 wins for White. Embarrassing to admit, I simply didn't see the win after 20...Ke7. I was looking and looking, but with both my queen and rook now *en prise* I thought the line was a dead end. But 21.Qd6!, solves all of White's problems, since it is both check and mate.

While 16.Rhd1 Be6 17.Rxe5 Rxe5 18.Qh7 is a much superior version of the game, Black would give back a whole rook with 18...Rd8 19.Rxd8+ Qxd8 20.Bxe5 g6, when Whitewouldhave an extra pawn and good winning prospects.

So, after 16.Rhd1! would Black have been able to hold? Good question. After

16...Kf8! 17.Rxe5 Rxe5 18.Qh7 f6 19.Bxe5 fxe5 20.Qh8+ Kf7 21.Rd8 I'm a piece down, but Black is in a nasty pin without an escape. In practice, I would rate White's winning chances much higher than Black's drawing chances.

16...Rxe5 17.Qh7 f6 18.Rd1?

Late, and bad as well. The necessary line was 18.Bxe5! Qxe5 (18...fxe5?? 19.Qg8+ Kd7 20.Rd1+ Kc6 21.Qe8+ wins) 19.Rd1 Kf7 20.Rd8, with an equal position as I will win back the c8-bishop.

18...Kf7!19.Qh8? (Diagram 12)

Oh my, when it rains, it pours and blunders abound. Sad to admit, this was the position I was playing for with 16.Rxe5?, as in my mind's eye I thought Black was helpless to prevent Rd1-d8, after which White could harass Black's king. Again, with 19.Bxe5 fxe5 20.Qh5+! Kf6 21.Qh8!, intending Rd1-d8, the game should be drawn.

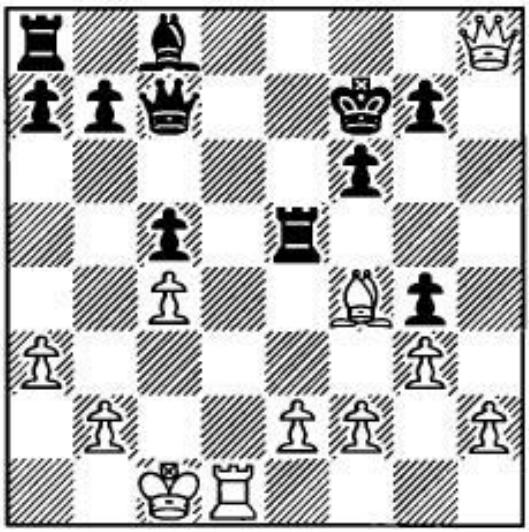


DIAGRAM 12. Black to Play

19...Qc6!

This cool defensive move came as a cold shock. My intended "win" of 20.Bxe5 fxe5 21.Rd8 overlooked 21...Qh6+!, trading queens and ending my attack. Clearly, I had lost control over the game.

20.Rd8?

Now I've entered some kind of a "spin cycle" where I'm groggy with bad moves. Black would still have to work for his victory after 20.Bxe5 fxe5 21.Qh5+ Qg6 22.Qxe5 Be6 23.Rd6, with two pawns for the bishop.

20...Re8!

And now it is just game over. Black is a whole rook to the good and the attack is over. My winning combination has gone up in smoke.

21.Qh5+ Ke7 22.Rd6 Qe4 23.Rd3 Be6?!

After waiting for so long, Vassily was understandably anxious to develop. Frankly, I didn't see what I could do after 23...Kf8!, when Black intends to skip with his king to the g8-square. The text, however, is good enough. The final moves were my thrashing about, unwilling to admit defeat.

24.Bd6+ Kd8 25.Be5+ Bd7 26.Qf7 Qf5 27.Bf4 g5 28.Be3 Qe6 29.Qg7 b6 30.Rd5 Qe7 31.Rxg5 Qxg7 32.Rxg7 Kc7 33.b3 Rxe3!

Vassily goes for the same type of simplification as in our Candidates' game. This time there is no miracle defense.

34.fxe3 Rh8 35.e4 Rxh2 36.Kd2 Rg2 37.Rf7 Rxg3 38.e3 Rf3 39.Ke2 0-1

This game was a truly nasty blow. You can imagine how distraught I felt when back in my hotel room I discovered the line 16.Rhd1! f6? 17.Bxe5 Rxe5 18.Qg6+ Qf7 19.Rxe5+ fxe5 20.Rd8+ Ke7 21.Qd6 was checkmate. Groan. The only satisfaction I could derive was that my instincts had been right – the position did allow a strong combination. Now, to stay in the two game mini-match, I had to win with Black.

Vassily Smyslov-Yasser Seirawan
2nd matchgame, Tilburg, 1994
Caro-Kann Defense

1.e4!

I've long thought that the best move when you need to draw with White is 1.e4, as it is very difficult in many of the main forcing lines for Black to obtain decent winning chances.

1...c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 g6

An attempt to keep the game as lively as possible. The main lines tend to lead to a stale equality or a slight plus for White. The text is an attempt to take advantage of White's third move. Indeed, in my opinion, the most exact is 3.Nd2, which allows a future c2-c3, keeping the long a1-h8 diagonal closed.

4.h3 Bg7 5.Nf3 Nh6 6.Bd3 0-0 7.0-0 f6 8.Re1 Nf7 9.b3!? Re8 10.Bb2 e6

Trying to keep the position both quiet and as long-lived as I can.

11.Ne2

Planning c2-c4, to make the play as concrete as possible. White could also play 11.Qe2!, to prevent Black from developing his b8-knight, with the better game.

11...Nd7 12.c4 dxe4 13.Bxe4 f5 14.Bc2 (Diagram 13) 14...c5!

The only way to imbalance the position is to create a central majority.

15.Rb1 cxd4 16.Nexd4 e5 17.Nb5 e4 18.Bxg7 Kxg7 19.Nh2

Okay, it isn't much but I savored the achievement of having driven the knight to the passive h2-square. Vassily continues with his plan of simplification.

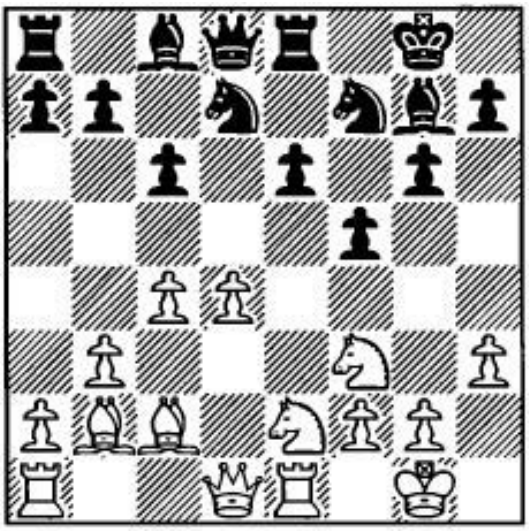


DIAGRAM 13. Black to Play

19...Nf6 20.Qxd8 Rxd8 21.f3 Bd7 22.Nc3 exf3 23.Nxf3 Bc6 24.Rbd1 Bxf3

Again doing my best to create an imbalance. Splitting up White's kingside pawns and playing for the dark squares is my most promising choice.

25.gxf3 Rxd1 26.Rxd1 Ng5 27.Kg2 Re8 28.h4 Ne6 29.Ne2 Rc8

Keeping an eye on the queenside so that White isn't allowed an easy b3-b4 and c4-c5 expansion.

30.Kf2 Kf7 31.Nd4 Nxd4 32.Rxd4 Ke7 33.Ke3 Rc6 34.b4?! a5! (Diagram 14)

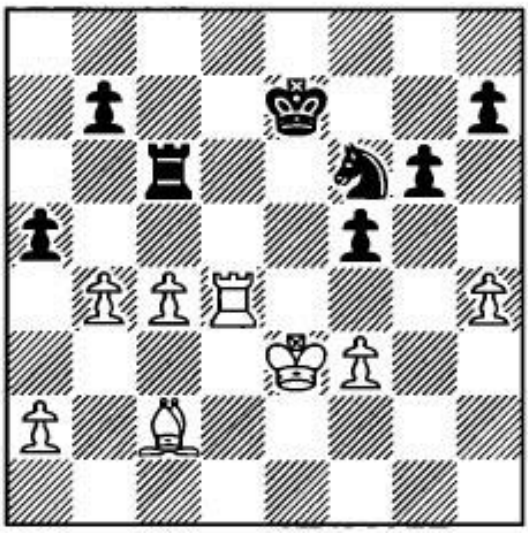


DIAGRAM 14. White to Play

35.Ba4

White is having a few problems and has to allow his queenside pawns to be split as well. He must avoid 35.a3? axb4 36.ab4 Rb6! 37.b5 (37.c5? Rxb4 38.Rxb4 Nd5+ wins a pawn) 37...Re6+, when Black continues with ...Nf6-d7, earning the fine c5-outpost. With the follow-up ...b7-b6, White's queenside majority would be fixed in Black's favor.

35...Ra6! 36.bxa5 Rxa5 37.Bb3 Nd7

All in all, I was now delighted with the outcome of the opening and middlegame. I've managed to earn a clear plus as the knight is a better piece in this position than the bishop. Furthermore, White's scraggly pawn structure offers Black good targets.

38.Rd2 Nc5 39.Kd4 Ne6+ 40.Kc3 Re5 41.Kb4 Nc7 42.Bd1 Na6+ 43.Kc3 Nc5 44.a4 b6 45.Kb4 Na6+ 46.Kc3 Re1!

Black activates his rook, while inviting White to trade rooks in order to simplify further. In fact, I hoped for 46.Re2+ Rxe2 47.Bxe2 Kd6 48.Kd4 Nc5 49.Bd1 Ne6+ 50.Kc3 Kc5, with a clear advantage.

47.Rd5 Nc7 48.Rd2 Rh1 49.Be2 Rxh4 50.Rb2 Rh2 (Diagram 15)

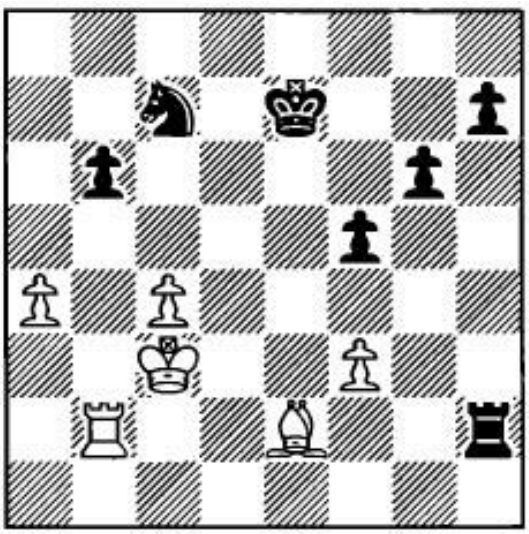


DIAGRAM 15. White to Play

51.c5

Vassily had placed his hopes on this move, gambling that a second pawn sacrifice would allow sufficient counterplay with the passed a-pawn. I was happy to accept another pawn.

51...bxc5 52.a5 Kd6 53.Rd2+ Ke5?!

Much too naïve. I was dreaming about 54.a6? Nxa6 55.Bxa6 Rxd2 56.Kxd2 Kf4 57.Ke2 Kg3, escorting my h-pawn home. Instead, the simple 53...Kc6 54.a6 Nd5+ 55.Kb3 Kb6! was a better way to play for the win.

54.Kc4! Rh4+ 55.Kxc5 Ra4 56.Kc6 Ne6 57.Rd5+!

A key move that I had underestimated. I had focused on 57.a6 Nd4+ 58.Kb6 Nxe2 59.Rxe2 Kf4 60.Rh2 Kxf3 61.Rxh7 g5 as my key line, where I thought I had some chances to win.

57...Kf4 58.Kb6 h5 59.a6 h4 60.a7 h3 (Diagram 16)

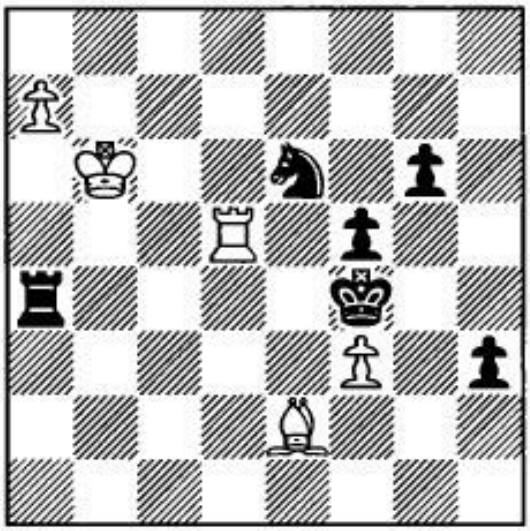


DIAGRAM 16. White to Play

61.Bf1!?

The most quiet line. I was trying to figure out both 61.Ba6 h2 62.a8=Q h1=Q, which should favor Black, and the far more complicated 61.Bb5!? Rxa7 62.Kxa7 Nc7 63.Rd4+ Ke5 (63...Kg3!?) 64.Rb4 (64.Rh4) Nxb5+ 65.Rxb5+ Kf4, when I wasn't sure if I could win or not but I liked my chances.

61...h2 62.Bg2 Kg3 63.Rd2!

Obvious, but also the only move. After 63.Bh1? Ra1 64.Kb7 Rxh1 65.a8=Q Rb1+ Black promotes his pawn as well

63...Nc5?

This tosses away my last chance to win. I had to try the direct 63...Nf4! 64.Bh1 Ra1 65.Rb2 Rxh1 66.a8=Q Rf1 67.Rxh2 Kxh2, when I would have rook and knight versus queen with the potential for protected passed pawns and good king safety.

64.Bh1 Kh3 65.f4 Ne4 66.Rd8 Kg3 67.a8Q Rxa8 68.Rxa8 Nf2 69.Ra3+ Kg4 70.Ra2! Kg3 71.Ra3+ Kg4 72.Ra2 Nxh1 73.Rxh2 Ng3 74.Rh6 Kxf4 75.Rxg6 ½-½

While a close call, close doesn't score points. Vassily won our mini-match, to knock me out and advance in the tournament. An interesting pair of games with many absorbing ideas.

Post-mortem

At the Moscow Olympiad in 1994, I scored a gold medal for an individual board prize (8½ points from 10 games). The closing ceremony, though, was a rather chaotic affair. As a medal winner, I was invited to one of the Kremlin Palaces where the ceremony was to be held. However, my team would not be allowed to join me. I've never been to an Olympiad where the teams weren't invited, and so I declined to attend the "closed" closing ceremony with only the Russian teams and other medalists. When my name was called to receive my gold medal I wasn't there. After a second attempt, Vassily Smyslov stood up and took my place. He received my medal, mailed it to Elena Akhmilovskaya-Donaldson in Seattle, and Elena gave it to me. In turn, I gave all my Olympic medals to the World Chess Hall of Fame Museum in Miami, Florida.

This tells you a great deal about the grace and class which marked the seventh World Champion.

I will close this picture of Vassily Vasilievich Smyslov with a quote from Garry Kasparov: "Smyslov was a practitioner, while Botvinnik was a researcher. Vassily Vassilievich played more intuitive chess. Botvinnik wanted to study all the nuances, and Smyslov's playing was like a stream of chess consciousness. Though in his best years his principle was quite simple: I make 40 good moves, and if my partner also makes 40 good moves, then there's a draw."

Classical Games versus Vassily Smyslov

Smyslov-Seirawan, Montpellier, France 1985: ½-½
Smyslov -Seirawan, New York, USA 1987: ½-½
Seirawan-Smyslov, Biel, Switzerland 1993: 1-0
Seirawan-Smyslov, Tilburg, Holland 1994: 0-1
Smyslov-Seirawan, Tilburg, Holland 1994: ½-½

Seirawan: one win, one loss, three draws. Classical score 2½-2½

Chapter Four

Mikhail Tal

Of all the World Champions Mikhail Tal, "Mischa" to one and all, was the most liked, admired and, yes, loved by colleagues and chess fans the world over. He was a strikingly kind and nice person. He had a soft voice and a lovely, self-deprecating wit. I never heard him utter a harsh word in his life, even when he lost a tough game. His sparkling eyes would light up whenever a chess board was in sight. His writings showed him to be a worldly, caring person. I don't know how many languages he spoke, but his English was excellent. As crowds gathered in press rooms he held court, easily shifting from one language to another. He walked and moved his pieces with a near-careless ease, ready for any opportunity life presented on and off the chess board. Even when the tensions at the board were at a fever pitch his moves were fluid.

The first time I saw Mischa was in Latvia, in 1979. I went to the Riga Interzonal as the second for America's James Tarjan, affectionately known as "Toejam" to his friends. I had spent the summer of 1979 as Jim's guest at his Hollywood, California apartment. I could write many stories of our summer together. One I dearly enjoyed went like this. We usually got up late, around noon, after spending a long evening analyzing. Such sessions often lasted into the early hours of the morning. When we woke, if we were up to the task, we would climb into his old weather-beaten white Volkswagen "bug," or Beetle car if you prefer, and tool down to Venice Beach for cappuccinos, where we would ogle rollerblading girls as they went by.

One day, half asleep, we had gotten into his car and started our routine journey. Jim's eyes were on the road and I was waking up and beginning to look around the car. "Far out, Jim," I said, "You've cleaned up the car." I admired the unexpected cleanliness. "What?" said Jim, who kept driving. More time went by and I noticed a necklace hanging from the rear-view mirror. At the bottom there

was a picture of an attractive lady in a pendant. "Who's the lady?" I asked, pointing to the picture. "Oh s**t!" cried Jim. We were in the wrong car. We high-tailed it back to his apartment and parked the car in exactly the same spot where we had found it. This in itself was quite something as parking spots in Hollywood were always at a premium.

Relieved to be out of the hijacked car, we looked at the white bug again and it was as close to weather-beaten as Jim's as possible. Even the rust spots were in the right places. We went off to hunt for his car. Jim's car key had worked just fine, and we spent the rest of the day laughing off the incident. Had we been arrested for car-theft I wondered if a judge would agree with our defense: "You see, your honor, we couldn't tell the difference. Can you?"

Back in those days the Interzonals were lengthy round-robin tournaments with 20 players or more. Factor in adjournment days, free days and the like, and the Riga Interzonal lasted over a month. It was my first journey into the Soviet Union and I got quite a dose of the Communist giant.

Like all travelers to the USSR, my first stop was in Moscow and a stay at the Metropol Hotel for a few days before being "cleared" to journey onwards to Riga. After being okayed, I then went to an "internal" airport in Moscow and flew to Riga, where we all stayed at the Hotel Latvia. It was a tall high-rise, fortress-like hotel with security guards everywhere, including on the individual floors of the hotel. I was given a hotel guest card and was warned to keep it with me at all times. It was checked whenever I came into the hotel or went to take my room key. Even after staying over a month the security guards, all of whom knew my face well, would still check my hotel identity card with the intensity of a first-timer.

Of course, the Interzonal was in Mischa's home town of Riga and as he was the tournament favorite the crowds watching the games were simply huge. Many days the hall was a sell-out, with standing room only. Mischa had the type of tournament we can only dream about. Everything went in his favor. Simply everything. Bad positions he either saved or won; good positions he exploited fully. He cruised to victory in absolutely breathtaking fashion. It all seemed so easy. Truly a romp to the finish line. At the closing ceremony he was weighed down in flowers and trophies for victory as well as for "Best Game," "Brilliancy," "Best Novelty," and the like. One has to imagine a half-dozen trips from seat to stage and so Mischa's chair was completely full by the end of the ceremony, where he sat on its edge. The crowd cheered lustily with each prize-giving, stomping their feet. These scenes repeated with every prize given are something I've never seen in my life, before or since, at any other chess event. It seemed to me that Riga had a real hero in Mischa and he loved them in return.

Mischa has been described as a "chess playing machine," which I found to be an unfair characterization. It doesn't do him justice, because it overlooks the emotion he brought to the game. He loved chess. He was willing at anytime, day

or night, to analyze, play, solve problems, suggest moves and talk about chess. He loved analyzing, playing and writing about chess. And it showed.

In Riga, Mischa had a team of helpers and seconds. One of his coaches was a young fellow, about my age, a local Latvian named Aleksander Wojtkiewicz. "Sasha" and I became close friends during my stay. His English was simply excellent and we spent a part of our day in the Press Center playing blitz, analyzing the games or just talking. During one of our blitz sessions Mischa rushed by on his way to a press conference, stopping to comment: "I think he is very good," referring to his second Sasha. This comment encouraged me to redouble my effort in the game. Mischa tallied just long enough to exclaim "I think you are very good too!" We all laughed. Sasha made introductions while we continued to blitz away. Mischa twinkled that if "I needed any help for anything while in Riga, I would only have to ask for help and he would put in a good word to the authorities." He soon left and even though we did not shake hands it felt nice to have Riga's hero on "my side."

One day I went to the Playing Hall and found it unusually jam-packed. It was hard to enter as the doorway was blocked by a throng of people who could hardly move. Struggling through that group, I found it hard even to find any standing room against the walls. Somehow I managed and saw Sasha pinned to a wall by bodies everywhere. I squeezed my way to him and found myself trapped as well. He said to me excitedly "It's more crowded than a bus in Kiev!" Although I had never been to Kiev I got his point. Why the excitement? That day's round featured the match-up between Tal and Bent Larsen. Although he was Black, Bent had the better chances before a fighting draw was settled. The crowds loved the exciting game and applauded loudly as Mischa saved the game and fended off an important rival.

As mentioned, our stay in Riga was a lengthy one. Jim got off to a good start, playing well against the Soviet contingent, on whom we had concentrated our preparations in Hollywood. But by the second half he simply ran out of gas. American grandmasters were not used to such lengthy tournaments. Our diets are primarily Opens, the longest of which, the US Open, lasted two weeks. The US Championship was a round-robin, but with only 12 or 14 participants. Most of our tournaments were the seven or nine rounds of play variety. Conversely, the Interzonals were 18 or 20 rounds of play. A brutal grind of preparation, play, adjournment, analysis, play, preparation, adjournment and analysis non-stop for over a month. There was always work to be done. These grueling events were in fact more or less unique. Toss in our fortress circumstances and the not-so-good food, and by the month's end we were completely worn out.

America's Edmar Mednis competed as well. Edmar was Latvian-born and "escaped" to the US to naturalize. Edmar needed help, and I would assist him when Jim felt sufficiently prepared. While I enjoyed the extra work, I felt exhausted when the event finished.

There was one very funny story that in a way was so strange it somehow managed to capture properly the highly peculiar Communist/Capitalist rivalry that existed then and much else besides. It went like this: Edmar had a relative in Riga, a great-aunt whom we visited. She was quite diminutive in size and it seemed that life's woes had greatly weighed her down. Edmar wanted to give her a gift and asked her what she wanted most. Her face lit up. She would like to go in the "special store," the one for foreign shoppers only – those who paid in American dollars. She would like to have a pair of thick boots. Men's boots. The ones that were weather proof and kept the feet warm in the darkest days of winter. Could we do that? Shopping inside the store was something she could only imagine. We looked at each other. Why not?

Edmar, Jim, "our" great-aunt and I went to the shop. The three Americans were all greeted warmly by the sales staff, whereas they looked very darkly at our great-aunt, who seemed to shrink in size under their glares. Our presence gave her courage. Overcoming her fears, she persevered and went to the men's shoe department where she tried on boot after boot after boot. It took her several hours to be absolutely sure that she had chosen the right size and best model. During this time Edmar had a thought: how much cash *did* we all collectively have? Pooling our resources, we found that we had, remarkably, a grand total of exactly $100 and no more. Edmar asked about the exchange rate and, as the ruble was stronger than the US dollar, our "buying power" was roughly 96 rubles. While we all had plenty of rubles we were not allowed to use them. Edmar asked how much the most expensive pair of boots cost. The good news was that in the whole store the most expensive was just a little over 95 rubles and some kopeks. We had it covered.

More time went by trying on various boots, when at last Edmar's great-aunt pronounced herself satisfied. She had found the perfect pair of boots. We went to pay. To our horror we were told that the ruble had strengthened in the hours that had passed. Our $100 left us exactly 25 American cents short of the purchase price. We would be unable to buy the boots. Our hearts sank and we quickly wondered if any of us had any change back at the hotel. Just at that moment another American tourist, who had nothing to do with the chess tournament, entered the special shop. We asked him for a quarter. "No problem!" He happily gave us the two bits and the purchase was made.

Once she had the boots our great-aunt immediately put them on, while still in the shop, putting her own shoes in the shoe-box for the boots. At last, we left the shop. The strangeness of the whole afternoon continued. Our elderly, diminutive great-aunt began searching for puddles. As soon as she spied a puddle she would immediately go and step in it and bounce around, child-like, to be sure that her new boots were indeed "water-resistant." She was elated that they performed as guaranteed and she showed one of the sweetest smiles of an elderly lady I've ever seen. Keep in mind these were men's thick, heavy-soled, leather

"army" boots, laced high above the ankles, being worn by an elderly lady bouncing around in a puddle. It is an image I'll always remember. I was very pleased with Edmar that he allowed me to contribute to such a special gift. It was the best money I've ever spent.

One other remarkable memory from Riga came from the game between Bent Larsen and Ruben Rodriquez from the Philippines:

Ruben Rodriguez-Bent Larsen
Riga Interzonal, 1979
Grünfeld Defense

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.Nf3 Bg7 5.Qa4+ c6 6.cxd5 Nxd5 7.e4 Nb6 8.Qc2 Bg4 9.Ne5 Be6 10.Be3 0-0 11.Rd1 N8d7 12.Nf3 Qc8 13.h3 f5 14.Ng5 Nf6 15.f3 Kh8 16.Nxe6 Qxe6 17.Qb3 Qxb3 18.axb3 fxe4 19.fxe4 Nh5 20.g4 Ng3 21.Rg1 Rf3 22.Rxg3 Rxg3 23.Kf2 Rxe3 24.Kxe3 Bh6+ 25.Ke2 Rd8 26.Bg2 Bf4 27.e5 g5 28.Be4 Nd7 29.Bf5 Nf8 30.Na4 Kg7 31.b4 b6 32.Rd3 Bh2 33.Rd1 Kf7 34.Bc2 Ng6 35.Bxg6+ hxg6 36.Nc3 Bf437.Ne4 Ke6 38.b3 Rh839.Rd3 Ra8 40.Rd1 Rh841.Rd3 Kd742.Rf3 Kc7 43.Kd3 a6 44.Kc3 Kd7 45.Kc4 Ke6 46.Kd3 Bc147.Nc3 Ba3 48.Kc4 Rd8 49.Na4 b5+ 50.Kd3 Bxb4 51.Nxg5+ Kd5 52.Nf7 Ra8 53.h4a5 54.h5 gxh5 55.gxh5 a4 56.h6 axb3 57.h7 Ra1 (Diagram 17)

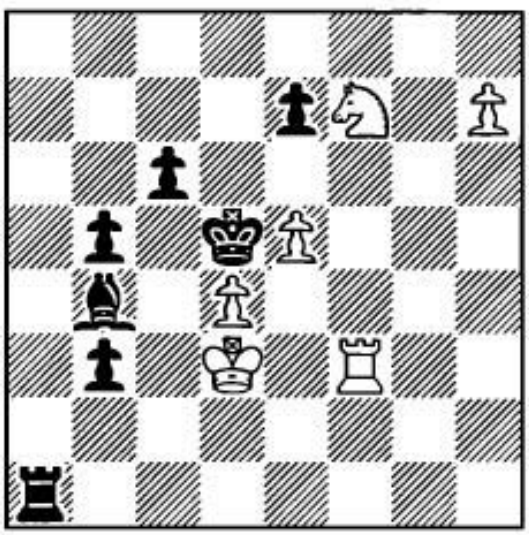


DIAGRAM 17. White to Play

58.h8=Q b2 59.Qd8+ Bd6 60.Ke3 b1Q 61.Nxd6 Qc1+ 0-1

When the diagrammed position arose after Black's 57th move I happened to be

sitting in the playing hall. As it was an adjournment session the hall was rather empty and I managed to secure a front-row seat with a clear view of the players. Ruben was pondering the position and reached across the table to pick up the white queen for promotion. He held it and twisted it around in his fingers while thinking. It was clear to me that if he promoted his pawn he would lose. On the other hand, if he played the simple defensive retreat 58.Rf2, he would draw. The minutes ticked by and Ruben kept calculating and rubbing the queen. Bent sat perfectly still, a completely blank expression on his face. Stoic as a rock. Finally, Ruben promoted his pawn and pressed his clock. Bent won a few moves later.

At dinner that night I told Bent that I had carefully watched what had happened and I had a question for him. "While Ruben was twisting the white queen in his hand, what were the *exact* thoughts going through your mind?" I asked.

"I was thinking about the touch-move rule," Bent answered. "Could I go to the arbiter and say 'my opponent has touched his queen which is off the board and he must promote his pawn?' I didn't think that the touch-move rule applied. If I had tried to force Ruben to promote, it would have raised his suspicion and perhaps he would have seen the bishop retreat which blocked his check. I decided not to try to enforce the rule and instead tried to remain as calm as possible." We both shared a good laugh.

My first proper meeting with Mischa came a year later, during the Malta Olympiad. The American teams stayed in an apartment block outside Valletta. The apartments were large but rather sparse. I shared a two-bedroom apartment with Larry Christiansen, but we had a big problem: Larry was way too tall for his bed and he ended up mostly sleeping on the living-room couch. The couch widened with every passing day as Larry "grew" into it, pushing the sides further agape with his feet. My other memory it that, for some reason, our apartment would receive two loaves of bread a day. This was more than we could possibly eat, and the loaves piled up as the event wore on.

This was my first Olympiad and in the back of my mind, as well as that of the team, we dreaded, yet also looked forward to, a pairing against the formidable Soviet squad. "Dreaded?" you ask. Well, consider that the sixth board for the Soviets was Garry Kasparov...

Pal Benko, our captain, spent some time each evening checking the leader boards to see if a USA vs. USSR pairing might be imminent. If so, we would want as much preparation time as possible to choose our line-up and so on. The American team hadn't done that well or that badly, so it wasn't even clear whether we would meet. Naturally, the pairing happened when it was least expected.

I was sleeping contentedly when there was a loud pounding outside my bedroom door. It was Larry and he shouted, "We play the Soviets! You play Lev Polugaevsky. You are White!" Groan. At that precise moment I certainly didn't feel like playing against anyone, much less the Soviets. And what did I know about the games of Lev Polugaevsky anyway? I knew he had a line in the Sicilian named

after him, but what did he do as Black against the English Opening? While musing in bed I tried to remember Lev's games at the Riga Interzonal, searching for any insights. The rest of the morning was spent going through all the *informants*, which were the chess player's bible in those days. Each team member had lugged a suitable number to the event to make a complete set. After being sure to go through every Polugaevsky game that I could find, I was nearly late for the big match. Waiting for me at the board was Mikhail Tal. I was done in. All my preparation out the window – no one could say that Tal and Polugaevsky played the same. Virtually at the time I arrived at the table, the gong sounded and the games were underway. Mischa and I shook hands...

...and for the first time, I realized Mischa had a birth defect known as *complex syndactyly*. On his right hand, Mischa's little finger and ring finger were fused together, as were his index finger and middle finger. The effect of this was seemingly to give him two thick fingers and a thumb.

"So what?" you might say. And rightly so. But the revelation came as a shock to me and was so unexpected that I spent the early part of the game pondering this fact. Why wasn't his condition well-known to the chess world? In all my readings about Mikhail Tal, including his own writings, I couldn't recall any mention of his condition. In the many photos it seemed that he tucked his hand away. Why the secret? Was it shame or embarrassment? There was nothing to be ashamed of – he had been born that way and it was no big deal.

My thoughts were everywhere as I contemplated the human condition rather than the position in front of me. Mikhail could be a poster boy for everyone who happened to be different. He had overcome his affliction, if that's what it was, and become World Champion. Mischa was the living embodiment of the truth that any achievement by anyone was possible. We are more limited by what we believe than by our physical attributes or what others might think of us. What an inspiration he was to millions of chess players. Had he not hid his condition, might he have been to millions of others? But who was I to say? It was very much his business, not mine.

So many thoughts were swirling through my head that even as my clock ticked away I found it very hard to concentrate on the game. I also tried to put on hold devising a suitable punishment for Larry for having misguided me into studying Polugaevsky's games the whole of the morning...

Yasser Seirawan-Mikhail Tal
Valletta Olympiad, 1980
English Opening

1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Nf3 Nc6 4.g3 d5 5.cxd5 Nxd5 6.d3?

Huh? What kind of move was this? I have no explanation for why I played this

move. In hundreds of games, I've played the standard 6.Bg2, provoking Black's d5-knight to run away by 6...Nb6, and only then continuing with d2-d3 at some point in the future. By failing to include 6.Bg2, there is no reason for the d5-knight to move, and White achieves precisely nothing from the opening.

6...Be7 7.Bg2 Be6!

Now to my horror I realized the effect of having committed my d-pawn prematurely. For example, the correct move order 6.Bg2 Be6 7.0-0 Be7 8.d4! would give White a known opening plus. Now 8.d4, with White having lost a tempo, makes no sense.

Angry with myself, I knew it was time to forget about Tal's physical condition, he seemed happy enough, and to forget about my wasted preparation and concentrate on the damned game. In no time my concentration was indeed focused.

8.0-0 0-0 9.a3 Qd7 10.Bd2

With Black's knight on the active d5-square, as opposed to the passive b6-square, it makes it that much harder for White to develop a queenside initiative with b2-b4 and further expansion. It was probably a better idea to continue 10.Nxd5 Bxd5 11.Be3, playing for equality.

10...f6 11.Rc1 Rfd8 12.b4 Nxc3 13.Bxc3 Bd5 14.Qc2?!

A rote decision and a poor one at that. It was better to play 14.Qd2 a5!? 15.bxa5 Bxa3 16.Ra1, when White stands slightly worse.

14...a5! 15.b5 Nd4 16.Bxd4 exd4 (Diagram 18)

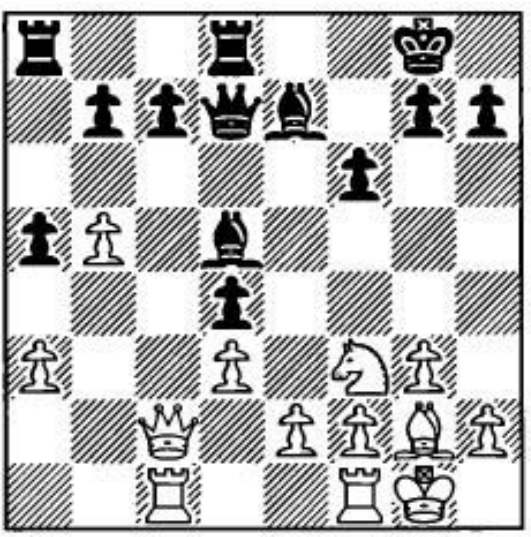


DIAGRAM 18. White to Play

Without doubt the opening has gone in Black's favor. He has a good hold of the center, the two bishops and prospects of exploiting White's advanced queenside pawns as well.

17.Qb2

Covering the a3- and b5-pawns. White certainly cannot play 17.Qxc7? Bxa3!, trading the c7-pawn for the a3-pawn, as after 18.Rc2 Bb4 I reckon I'd be close to lost, with Black's a5-pawn ready to zip down the board. Of course 14.Qc2 was designed to put pressure on the c7-pawn with pretensions of being an active move. With the text I now "seize the defensive."

17...c6

Certainly a reasonable choice and perhaps even one of the best moves on offer. Yet for some reason I was happy to see it. I was more concerned about 17...a4! when I feared being eternally handcuffed to the defense of my a3-pawn. For example, consider the position after 18.Nd2 Bxg2 19.Kxg2 b6 20.Nc4 Bc5. White should be pleased, right? He has a terrific c4-knight, after all. But if we examine the position a little more closely, we see that in fact that is all that White can boast. Black's c5-bishop is great and it is clear that Black will soon train his major pieces against the e2-pawn and White will be in for a long, grim defense.

18.bxc6 bxc6 19.a4!

Although I have nothing to be proud of, I was really happy to play this, as now I don't have to worry about being anchored to the defense of my a3-pawn.

19...c5 20.Qc2 Rab8 21.Nd2! Be6 22.Rb1 Rb4 23.Rxb4!

Without prejudice I cede Mischa a protected passed pawn and the long-term advantage. In any case, there wasn't much to be done. If White didn't exchange rooks, besides threatening to snip the a4-pawn, Black would double on the b-file with a dominant position.

23...cxb4 24.Rc1! Qd6 25.Qb2!

With the text I have dreams of playing Rc1-c6 and Nd2-c4, with good play on the light squares.

25...Rc8!? (Diagram 19)

Again, perhaps this is a good move and maybe the best in the position. But personally, I was quite glad to see it and considered it dubious. The line that concerned me most was 25...Qe5! 26.Bf3 Bc5 and I just didn't see how I could play for a win. For example, 27.Nc4 Qc7 28.Nd2, inviting a repetition, could be declined by 28...Qa7 when Black has a small plus. By allowing me to trade rooks and pull the e6-bishop away from the control of the b3-square, I thought my game had improved.

According to my scoresheet, with his 25th move Mischa offered me a draw. Of course I was relieved that my early error hadn't caused a major accident and I could "escape" with my skin intact. Our match strategy consisted of the following plan: "In case of any draw offers, we should go to our captain, Pal Benko, inform him and ask what to do. Perhaps a combined draw on other boards could be offered." That was the deep thought before the match. So, in keeping with our grand, over-arching match strategy and as a good team soldier, I went to Pal to inform him of the excellent news. Pal didn't look good at all. Indeed, he looked

like he had swallowed a disagreeable-tasting frog. Lev Alburt on board one had been brutally smashed by Anatoly Karpov, and Garry Kasparov was strategically winning on board four. Board three would be drawn and I had stood worse since the opening gong. Pal obviously feared a 3½-½ débâcle.

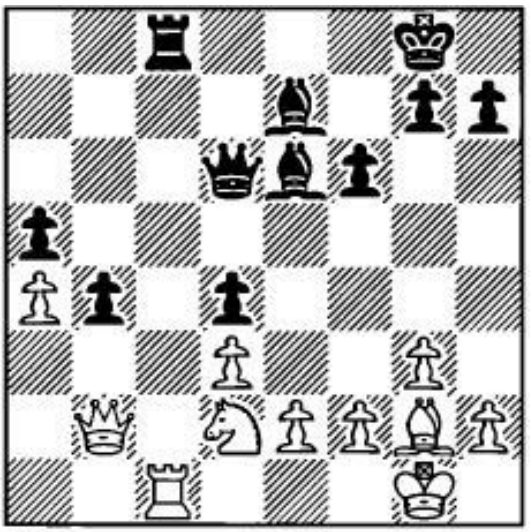


DIAGRAM 19. White to Play

"Pal. Tal offered me a draw. What should I do?" Pal's mood and face lightened considerably. "Really? That's good!" Clearly, Pal understood, as did I, that I stood worse and he wanted me to accept the draw. Equally, Pal made it clear the choice was mine as there was nothing to "negotiate" on the other boards.

I returned to my game. Tal stood up and, leaning towards me, held his hand halfway out for a handshake and an agreed halving of the point. "I'd like to play," I said. Mischa gave me a face that spoke volumes. What was wrong with me? Didn't I understand I stood worse? And by the way, who was I to turn down an offer from a former World Champion? Yes and yes. Truly I understood it all.

Yes, Black stands well in the position. But, you see, there are many positions where a player can stand "worse" and feel quite comfortable. For me, our game was just such a position. For the first time since the start of play, I actually felt comfortable. I had nice play on the light squares and I didn't see how I could lose. For example, if a move or two earlier Black had played 24...Rc8 25.Qxc8+ QxcB 26.Rxc8+ Bxc8, then 27.Bd5+ Kf8 28.Nb3 Bd7 29.Nxa5 Bxa4 30.Bb3 would leave Black's b4-pawn firmly blockaded for life.

Actually, the continuation I had been worried about was a tough concession for Black to make; earlier he should toss away his pride and joy, his protected passed b4-pawn, by 24...b3! 25.Nxb3 Qxa4 26.Qc7 Bxb3 27.Qxe7 Qd7 with a likely draw. Certainly, if any player had winning chances here it would have been Black

So I played on.

26.Rxc8+

Visibly annoyed, Mischa pursed his lips, gave me his famous "Tal stare" and turned up his "punishment mode" frequency. This young whippersnapper had to be taught a lesson. Mischa bore down and really started to concentrate on the game. Out of the corner of my eye I saw that Pal had thrown his hands up in the air and was chatting with someone in truly animated fashion. Of course, I understood his dismay: I stood worse and didn't "understand" that the draw offer was a gift to be embraced and accepted. Inside, I had to laugh. I just knew Pal was cursing himself for having accepted the role of team captain without "conditions." Two of which he could write down now:

1. Players must not annoy the team captain.
2. They will accept draw offers in positions where they stand worse.

26...Bxc8 27.Nb3!

My point. Now both the d4- and a5-pawns are hit. With the rooks on the board, the d4-pawn really wasn't vulnerable. Now it is.

27...Qe5 (Diagram 20)

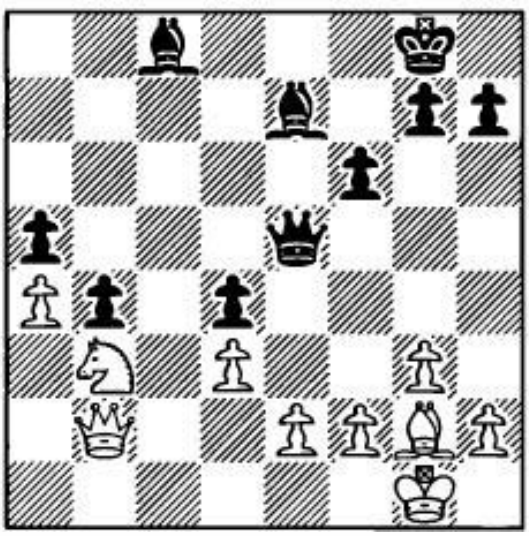


DIAGRAM 20. White to Play

28.f4!

A dream move for me. In many cases White is happy to have the extra f2-square as luft for his king. The f4-pawn can become very useful, especially if the d4-pawn falls and protected passers appear. Finally, by luring the black queen to the e3-square there is a possibility that she can be trapped. A move with triple benefits. Outstanding!

The prejudice that I had to overcome in making such a move is that I weaken the e3-square. True. But it isn't as if the queen is so powerful sitting there on her

own. If Black had a knight in the position, obviously I'd have second thoughts about this move.

28...Qe3+ 29.Kf1 g5?

Mischa is now sinking fast and didn't realize his advantage had disappeared. Instead of still "playing for the win," or continuing in "it's time to punish the young whippersnapper mode," it was time to consider defense: 29...Bd8! 30.Qxd4 Qxd4 31.Nxd4 Bb6 32.Bd5+ Kf8 33.Nc2 was my main line. Here Black should go after the h2-pawn by 33...Bh3+ 34.Ke1 Bg1 and should be able to make a draw. For this reason, I would probably have played 33.Ne6+, inviting a bishops of opposite colors position which I thought held some chances for me.

30.Nxa5!

Suddenly the situation for Black has become very serious indeed. Besides winning a pawn and gaining my own passer, I can harass Black's queen by Na5-c4 and Qb2xd4, winning a second pawn with additional threats as well.

30...Be6 31.Nc6! Bc5 32.Nxb4! (Diagram 21)

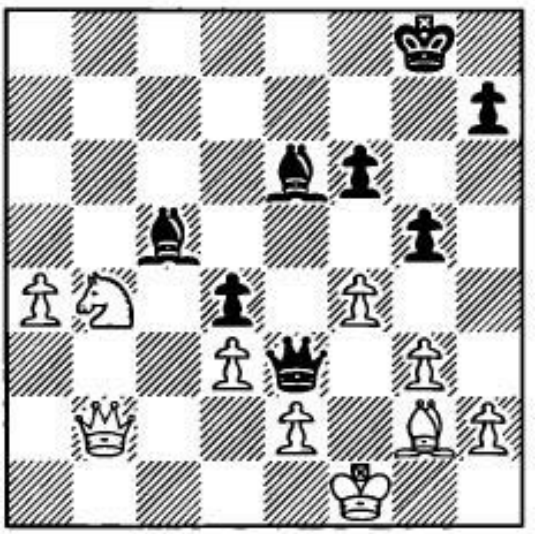


DIAGRAM 21. Black to Play

My knight is a working-class hero. Black's once powerful protected passed b4-pawn and whole queenside has been swept bare. Better still, I didn't see any dangers to my king and two extra pawns are, after all, two extra pawns.

32...gxf4

At last, Mischa follows up on his "threat," as it was about the only thing he could do. But it turns out to be a rather empty threat.

33.Nd5! Bxd5 34.Bxd5+ Kg7 35.Qb7+

This queen and bishops of opposite colors position is a completely unequal battle. As is well known, in such positions the attacker has a huge advantage as there is no way the defender can match his opponent on "his colored squares." I

must point out that when I played 25.Qb2, I couldn't dream about making such a move. Mischa now had four minutes remaining to reach the time control at move 40.

35...Be7?

Time pressure rears its ugly head. Again. I felt Black's last chance to fight was 35...Qe7, going for an opposite-colored bishop ending. I wasn't sure if I would allow that or play 36.Qc8, keeping queens on the board. Most likely, I would have kept the queens.

36.Be4!

Now the position is won.

36...Kf8 37.Qc8+ Kg7 38.Qg4+ Kf8 39.Bxh7!

As before, not just grabbing a pawn but gaining yet another outside passer to boot.

39...Bd6 40.gxf4! Bxf4 (Diagram 22)

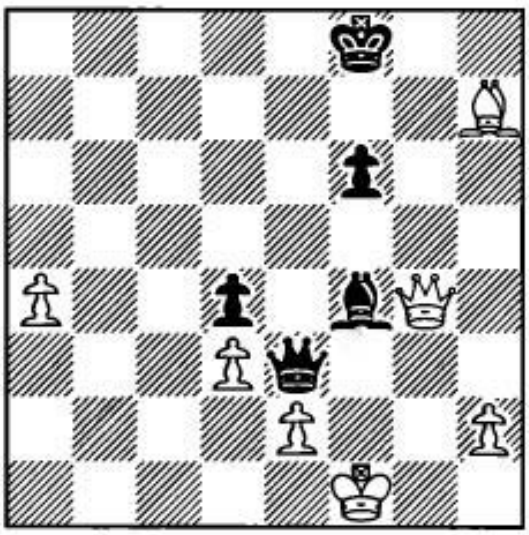


DIAGRAM 12. White to Play

It was a great feeling to be grabbing pawns on the last two moves of time control.

41.Kg2

And keeping the booty too. White's king is wonderfully safe. This was my sealed move and analysis confirmed that Black couldn't hold the position.

41...Bd6 42.Be4 Qd2 43.h4 Be5 44.h5 Ke7 45.Bf3 Kd6 46.Qg6!

Simply escorting the h-pawn to coronation. Black has no way to harass my king.

46...Qf4 47.h6! Qh2+ 48.Kf1 Qh3+

If 48...Bg3, I would play 49.Bg2, blocking the threat of 49...Qf2 mate, when Black hits a solid wall. I particularly liked the fact that Black has an f6-pawn which prevents his bishop from covering the h8-square.

Now we play a game of "ring around the mulberry bush" where the pieces swing around and I keep winning a tempo with each swing.
49.Bg2 Qc8 50.Kf2 Qc1 51.Bf3 Qe3+ 52.Kg2 Qf4 53.h7 Qh2+ 54.Kf1 Qh3+ 55.Bg2 Qc8 56.Kf2 Qc1 57.Bf3 1-0 (Diagram 23)

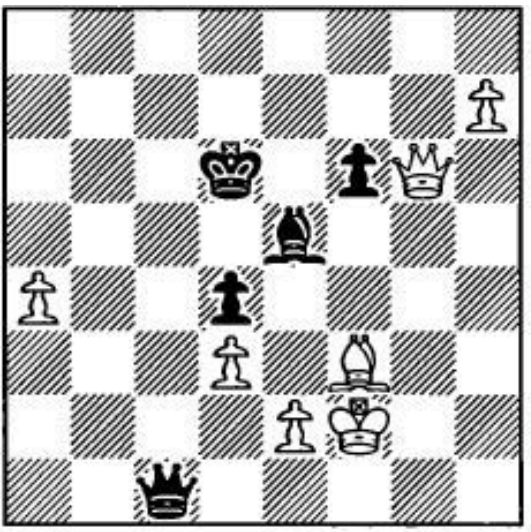


DIAGRAM 23. White to Play

We've been here before, but my h-pawn kept advancing in the meanwhile. This was the sealed move and Mischa resigned the game before a second resumption.

(Note: Some databases give the additional moves 57...Qe3+ 58.Kg2 Qg5+ 59.Qxg5 fxg5 60.a5, but those moves were never played – they are just someone's analysis that was added to the score.)

My teammates and captain were all hearty in their congratulations. I could hardly believe my good fortune myself. Thoughts of admonishing Larry for our "excessive preparation" completely faded away.

For interested readers *Inside Chess* (volume 2, issue 3, page 4) published a photo by Catherine Jaeg where Mischa's physical condition is visible.

Closing thoughts about the Malta Olympiad: My first often Olympiad events convinced me that team events can produce some very uneven individual results which should not count for norms. Players can have an excessive number of white games. They can choose which opponents to play or avoid and even combine outcomes of their game with others (if the team captain negotiates a 2-2 match draw, for example). Norms are supposed to be earned from an individual's result, but team play is very different. While I do appreciate that, for many nations, Olympiads represent the best (perhaps only) opportunity for title norms, there is something very wrong when colors can be so lopsided, packaged agree-

ments for draws in all games can be made and players can choose whether or not to play opponents. These all pervert the notion of an individual norm. Perhaps "Olympiad norms" should count, but only half as much as "regular norms" from individual events. Team play is just a different kind of chess.

In Malta I scored a Silver Medal for Board Two. One further memory of this Olympiad comes from my game with Zoltán Ribli. During play, the USCF's delegate Don Schultz informed me that the FIDE Titles Committee had confirmed my Grandmaster title. I was elated and very pleased with myself. "I'm now a Grandmaster!" was the thought that looped through my head. I lost that game – my first loss as a Grandmaster and my only loss in Malta.

My next meeting with Mischa took place in Nikšić, Yugoslavia. In those days, Yugoslavia was a heaven for chess players, as major events took place all over the country. Nikšić 1983 featured a galaxy of chess stars: the former World Champions, Mikhail Tal, Boris Spassky and Tigran Petrosian, as well as the future World Champion Garry Kasparov. We will return to Nikšić often in this book. I had a very uneven performance winning and losing games right and left. This game was one of my happier ones.

Yasser Seirawan-Mikhail Tal
Nikšić, 1983
Nimzo-Indian Defense

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.Qc2 d5 5.cxd5 exd5 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bxf6!

I don't give this move an exclamation mark because it is the best move. On the contrary, it is a completely tame variation for Black. I give it because of how well it fits *against* my opponent. I wasn't about to enter the wild and woolly variations of 7.Bh4 g5 8.Bg3 c5 9.dxc5 Ne4, when after subsequent moves like ...Qd8-a5 and ...Bc8-f5, the game is turned into a tactical slugfest. Mixing it up with others, yes. But with Tal? Absolutely not!

Instead, I wanted the game to enter the calm waters of a strategically contested battle with few tactical operations. That means trading off the pieces and trying to bore my opponent to death.

7...Qxf6 8.a3 Bxc3+ 9.Qxc3 (Diagram 24)

The position is a well-known Queen's Gambit Declined pawn structure, with two pairs of minor pieces cleared from the board. I will conduct the well-worn strategy of a queenside minority attack, trying to fix Black with a (c6-pawn) weakness, while Black will look for chances on the kingside and in the center. The battle lines are clearly drawn. In truth, there isn't much for Black to "attack" and White's winning chances are modest, even after the best case scenario where he saddles Black with a weak c6-pawn. All of which suited me just fine. I would be a bulldog gnawing at a bone. If I could get one.

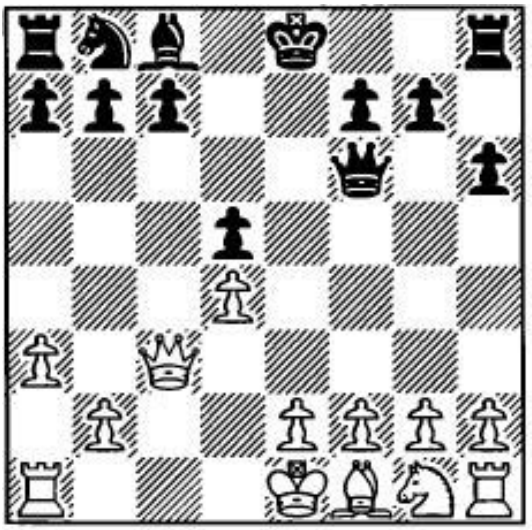


DIAGRAM 24. Black to Play

9...0-0 10.e3 Bf5!

Offering his c7-pawn as a sacrifice, which I had no intention of accepting. Tranquil sterility and steady as she goes was my mindset.

11.Ne2Rc8?!

But this attempt at infusing the position with active play is wrong-headed. It is clear that Black wants to play ...c7-c5, but, simply put, this freeing break works to White's advantage. Mischa should have contented himself with 11...c6 12.Ng3 Bg6, and brought his knight to the f6-square as quickly as possible, keeping an equal position.

12.Ng3 Be6 13.b4!

Putting an end to any further expansive ideas on the queenside. Now it is clear that the c8-rook is misplaced.

13...a5?!

Continuing his ill-fated treatment of the position. Again, Mischa wants concrete, forcing play. A better approach was 13...Nd7 14.Rc1!? a5!? 15.Bd3 axb4 16.axb4, with a small plus for White. The text plays right into my hands and helps me in saddling Black with a queenside weakness.

14.Be2 axb4 15.axb4 Rxa1+ 16.Qxa1 Qe7 17.Qc3 Nc6 18.b5 Nd8 19.0-0c5

At last, Black achieves his desired ...c7-c5 break. But all he has managed to do is assist White in carrying out his b2-b4-b5 minority attack.

20.bxc6 bxc6 21.Rc1 (Diagram 25)

With Mischa's help the mission begun on move seven has been accomplished. Black has a c6-weakness with nothing to compensate for it, not even a smidgen of a center or kingside attack. Me? I'm happy with my bone to gnaw.

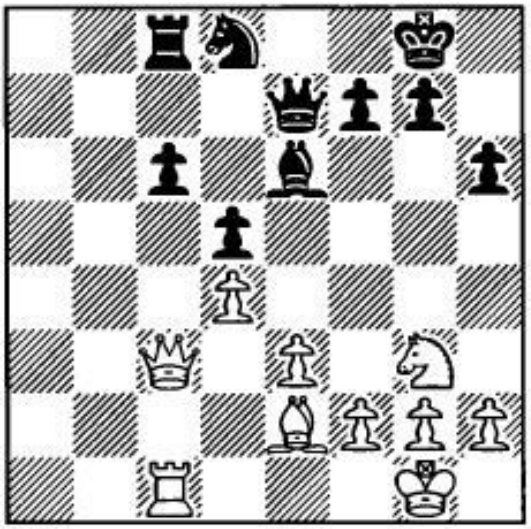


DIAGRAM 25. Black to Play

21...Bd7 22.Qa5 Kf8?

Really a challenging move to explain. I cannot. If the position was given as a diagram to a very wide selection of, say, 100 grandmasters and they were asked to offer their best candidate moves, I'm not sure anyone would suggest the text. I thought that I could cause problems in case of 22...Ne6 23.Nf5, with ideas like Qa5-a7, to harass Black's pieces. My main concern was how to make progress after 22...Rb8, intending ...Qe7-b4, for example. After all, my g3-knight is a long way from either the c5- or e5-outpost.

The only way I can explain this move is that Mischa was an incredibly deep calculator and in some lines he anticipated a Qa5-a7 invasion and a possible queen trade, when Black's king is nicely centralized. I, of course, had no intention of helping Black with trades in this position.

23.Qa7 Be6 24.Qb6 Qc7 25.Qb1! Kg8 26.Bd3!

The last few probing moves have been successful. Black hasn't improved the position of his pieces, and especially the wayward d8-knight. Whereas my minors are ready to come alive.

26...Qe7 27.Qc2

With a careful eye to prevent ...c6-c5 breaks.

27...Bd7 28.Bh7+! Kh8 29.Bf5!

A fine move played without prejudice. Black has a "bad d7-bishop" which is useful only for defending the c6-pawn, but this is where we come to an insightful saying of Romania's Mihai Suba: "bad bishops defend good pawns." This is the point of my move. I'm willing to trade my good bishop for Black's bad bishop in order to attack his good c6-pawn.

29...Bxf5 30.Nxf5 Qd7 31.Nh4! (Diagram 26)

It might not look like it, but in truth I'm making serious progress in getting to the c6-weakness. The bishop trade has opened up operations on the f5-square and I'm now just a move or two away from Nh4-f3-e5, locking my sights on the c6-pawn.

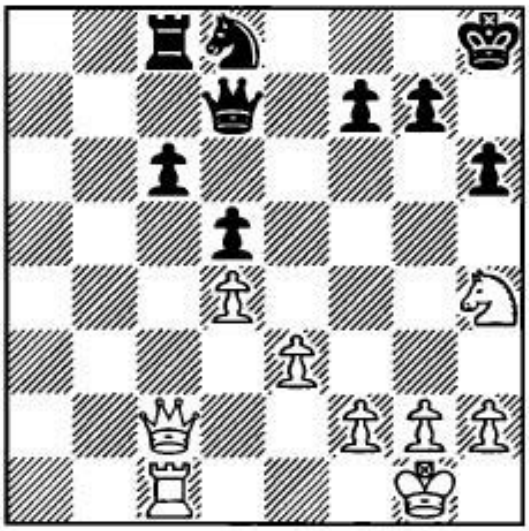


DIAGRAM 26. White to Play

31...Ne6 32.Qf5 c5

It's strange that the whole game seems to have revolved around this push. Is now the time?

33.dxc5 Qe7??

Mischa is the first to blink and costs himself a pawn. Black was obliged to continue 33...Rxc5 34.Rxc5 Nxc5 35.Qxd7 (35.Ng6+ fxg6 36.Qf8+ Kh7 37.Qxc5 should be a drawn queen ending) Nxd7 36.Nf5, with a knight ending only marginally better for White. It seems that Mischa had a momentary bout of blindness. He wrongly thought that in this knight ending he would be forced to play ...Kh8-h7, protecting his h6-pawn prior to playing ...g7-g6, in which case Black does indeed fall into trouble: 36...Kh7? 37.Ne7 Nb6 38.Kf1 g6 39.Ke2 Kg7 40.Kd3 Kf6 41.Nc6 and, by playing Kd3-d4, White has some chances to torture.

However, if Black continues 36...g6!, he saves a key tempo: 37.Ne7 (37.Nxh6? Kg7 38.Ng4 f5, traps White's knight) Nb6 38.Kf1 Kg7 and Black's king arrives in the center safely in time, with a likely draw.

The text, on the other hand, is a time-pressure blunder. Combined with the momentary bout of blindness, it is fatal.

34.g3! Qd7?

Dreadful. With 34...Rxc5 35.Rxc5 Nxc5 36.Qxd5 Black loses a pawn but could put up long resistance. With the text, Black's position collapses.

35.c6! Rxc6 36.Rxc6 Qxc6 37.Qxf7

This ending of queen, knight and four pawns versus queen, knight and three pawns is completely different. The missing f7-pawn versus holding the isolani-d5-pawn is a stone-cold win for White.

37...Ng5 38.Qf5 Qf6 39.Qxf6 gxf6 40.Nf5 Kh7 41.h4 1-0

With time pressure overand the game adjourned, it is clear that Blackhas no hopes for holding the position. For example, after 41...Ne6 42.h5 Black's king is handcuffed to the h6-pawn, while White's king makes a beeline towards the d5-pawn and victory. Mischa resigned.

Our third encounter takes us back to the Montpellier Candidates' tournament – the event where I had a lively draw with Vassily Smyslov.

One of Mischa's considerable strengths was that he could play any opening or any defense. Besides the Nimzo-indian, he regularly played Benoni and King's Indian positions, as well as Queen's Gambits and soon. Somehow my team and I correctly guessed his choice of the Semi-Slav, looking for a complicated game. I decided to prepare hard for the Meran Variation...

Yasser Seirawan-Mikhail Tal
Montpellier Candidates', 1985
Semi-Slav Defense

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 c6 5.e3 Nbd7 6.Bd3 Bb4!?

More than annoying. I was ready for the main line Meran Variation 6...dxc4 7.Bxc4 b5, when I was all set for a lengthy theoretical discussion. The text was completely new to me and took me out of my preparation. I was on my own. It seems strange to offer to trade the dark-squared bishop for the c3-knight, but Black has no such intentions. He has a deeper idea: 7.a3 Ba5!? 8.b4 Bc7 when the difference over the normal 6...Bd6 lines is that the bishop is less vulnerable on the c7-square – a key tactical point – and it isn't clear that White benefits from his queenside expansion. I spent a lot of time trying to weigh the nuanced differences in the key variations, without success. Black's sixth move is very clever indeed, and I'm surprised it isn't more popular today.

7.0-0 0-0 8.Bd2

Not exactly inspired, but this is the best I could find. White now threatens 9.Nxd5, with favorable trades.

8...Qe7 9.Qb3

Renewing my previous threat. Both players are preparing to break with their e-pawns and want to do so on their own terms.

9...dxc4

Mischa breaks the tension. I felt that White stood a little better after 9...Bd6 10.e4 dxc4 11.Bxc4 e5 12.Rae1, but this position is quite complex. If Blackwanted

he could play 12...exd4 13.Nxd4 Bxh2+ 14.Kxh2 Qe5+ 15.Kg1 Qxd4, swiping a pawn forthe two bishops. My intention was just to bring my rooks to the center by 9...Bd6 10.Rfe1 and 11.Rad1, then to push e3-e4, and hope I had something.

10.Qxc4 Bd6 (Diagram 27)

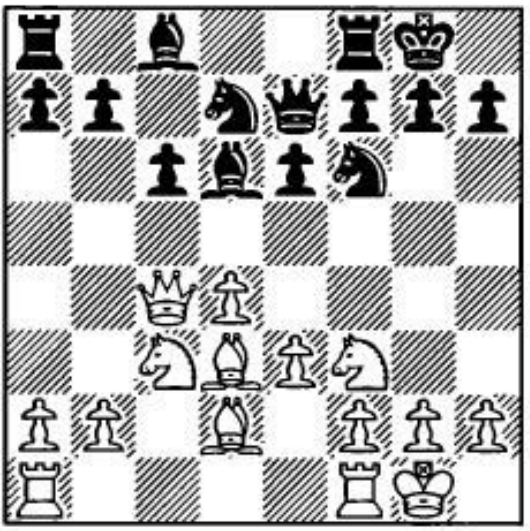


DIAGRAM 27. White to Play

I now had the unpleasant feeling that I had been out-prepared. My queen certainly didn't feel comfortable on the c4-square, and lines with 11.e4 e5 actually seemed dangerous for me. It was time for a re-evaluation of the position. Certainly my position isn't bad, but what are my trumps? I decided to force a few trades and see if I couldn't take advantage of my superior development.

11.Ne4! Nxe4 12.Bxe4 e5 13.Qc2 g6 14.Bc3

Okay, I'm not winning any awards for "preparation of the year," but at the time that I played the modest 8.Bd2, I had serious doubts about any "advantage" at all. With the text, I felt good about my piece placement for a change. Once I bring my rooks to the center, White's game will look brighter yet.

14...Re8 15.Rfe1 f5

Not the most attractive move, but other suggestions don't come easily. Black should be careful not to open the position, as after 15...exd4? 16.exd4! his lack of development becomes obvious.

16.dxe5 Nxe5 17.Nxe5!?

A very deep conception about which I had doubts. I give up the two bishops, as well as control of the d3-square, in return for a mighty c3-bishop and safe king. After 17.Bxe5 Bxe5 18.Nxe5 Qxe5 19.Bf3 Be6 the position is only marginally betterfor White.

17...fxe4!?

Accepting my challenge. After 17...Bxe5 18.Bf3 one key difference compared

to the previous note is that Black's queen isn't on the lofty e5-perch. In order to activate the c8-bishop Black has to play 18...Bxc3 19.Qxc3 Be6, when White has a superior version of the above note. Translation? The position would still be only marginally better for White

With the text there is much more play for both sides.

18.Nc4 Bc7 19.Nd2! Bf5 20.Nf1 (Diagram 28)

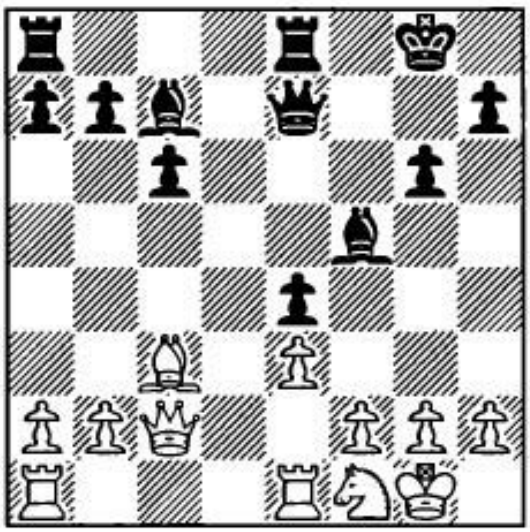


DIAGRAM 28. Black to Play

This was my conception. Quite a knight tour around the board. In the resulting position, the question is: which side has the better set of minor pieces? At the moment, the f5-bishop isn't any great shakes.

20...Rad8 21.Ng3

Threatening 22.Qb3+ and 23.Qxb7, as there is no ...Bc7xh2+ riposte.

21...Rd5 22.Rad1 RedB 23.Rxd5 Rxd5 24.Rd1 Bxg3(Diagram 29)

No doubt played with a heavy heart. This trade means that Black can hope only to draw, as once more in the resulting bishops of opposite colors ending, the attacker has the advantage. And in determining which side plays the role of the attacker, consider the situation of the respective kings.

25.fxg3!!

My best move of the tournament. By capturing with the f-pawn, I'm setting my king up for the perfect pocket on the h2-square where it will be cocooned. Capturing with the h2-pawn isn't nearly as good, as Black would always have chances for perpetual check.

25...Rxd1+ 26.Qxd1 Qd7 27.Qe1!

Another fine move. My queen crawls along the back rank waiting for a chance to leap into the fray. The text envisions lines involving h2-h3, g3-g4 and the possibility of Qe1-g3-e5, creating a deadly battery

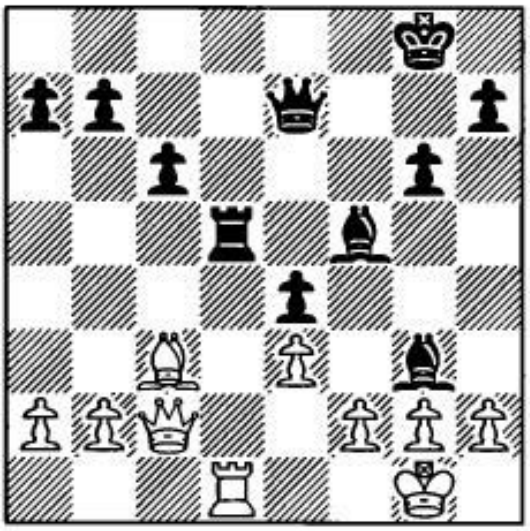


DIAGRAM 29. White to Play

27...Be6 28.b3 c5 29.h3 b5 30.Qf1

And, just like that, Black is lost. There is no way that he can prevent White's queen from activating herself, and then his king will be a sitting duck.

30...b4 31.Be5 Qd8 32.Qb5!

White's queen is unleashed, and no defense is possible.

32...Qc8 33.Kh2!

A really unpleasant move to face. White tucks his king away and asks his opponent: "what will you do for play?"

33...Bd5 34.Bd6

Going to harvest the pawns

34...a6 35.Qa5 Kf7 36.Bxc5 Qc6 37.Qxb4 Be6 38.Bd4

Collection completed. Now it is time to target Black's hapless king.

38...h5 39.Qb8 Ke7 40.Qe5

When playing 17.Nxe5, I dreamt about such a battery.

40...Qd5 41.Qf6+ 1-0

With the time control reached, Mischa resigned.

One image I'll long remember from the 1985 Montpellier Candidates' tournament occurred at the closing ceremony. All the players were on a stage with a long table before them. In front of each player were chess boards and pieces set up in the starting position. When it was time to accept his prize each player would stand up and walk behind the other seated players to the podium, exchange a smile as well as handshake with the speaker, receive his enveloped check and walk back behind the seated players to his own chair. After receiving his prize, Mischa zigged right instead of left, walked in front of the assembled

masters and began to make a move on each board as if giving a simultaneous display. The audience roared with laughter and applauded loudly. The players joined in with the audience as well. I dare say he was the only one amongst us who could either have thought of such a thing or have pulled it off. He was such a special person.

The late 1980s and early 1990s were a golden age for chess, with the founding of the Grandmasters Association. Much will be written about the GMA in the chapters on Garry Kasparov. The World Cup events were a fantastic series of six tournaments spread over two years and featuring the best stars in the chess world. Each player participated in four events, with their collective scores making up the final standings. I played Mischa twice in the World Cup series.

In the first of these games I again had White, for the fourth time in a row.

Yasser Seirawan-Mikhail Tal
Brussels, 1988
Nimzo-Indian Defense

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.Qc2

I started playing the Classical line of the Nimzo-Indian long before it became popular to do so. However, once Kasparov took up the line and infused it with a rich stew of original ideas, it seemed to become *the* treatment used by everyone. Clearly not happy with the outcome of our Nikšić encounter, Mikhail takes a different approach.

4...0-0 5.Bg5 d6!?

Of course, there is absolutely nothing wrong with this move or, indeed, the whole line. Black will have fair development and a reasonable position, but I can't shake the feeling that Black is too casual in his ceding of the two bishops. In my view, this whole line of development gives White a long-term plus, even as we agree that Black is okay.

6.e3 Nbd7 7.Bd3 h6 8.Bh4 c5 9.Nge2 b6 10.0-0 cxd4

Alert! White threatened to move his c3-knight and catch the b4-bishop hanging in mid-air.

11.exd4 Bb7 12.a3! Bxc3 13.Nxc3

It is very important to note that in White's operation to win the two bishops he did not play a2-a3 and Qc2xc3; rather White recaptured on the c3-square with his knight in order to achieve a more harmonious piece deployment. White was able to do this because Black's fifth move, 5...d6, was restrained and didn't put any immediate central pressure on White's position.

13...Qc7 14.b4! (Diagram 30)

I've now achieved precisely the type of position I hoped for: I possess the two bishops, fair central control and now space on the queenside as a bonus. In my

eyes, all I needed to do was centralize my rooks, play f2-f3 to block the long (h1-a8) diagonal, and White's position is strategically won.

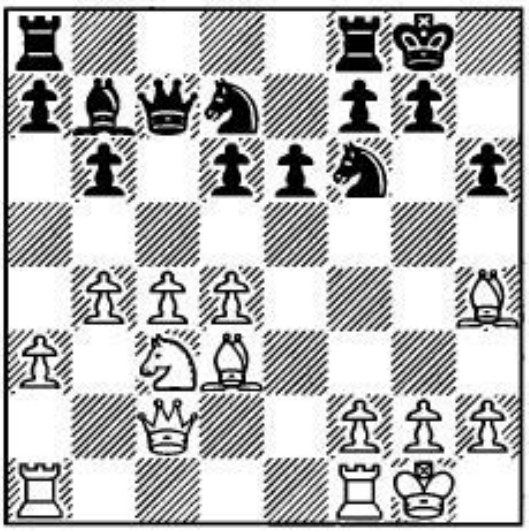


DIAGRAM 30. Black to Play

Mischa went into deep thought, and I could see that identical thoughts were going through his mind as well. Where is Black's play? Obviously 14...d5? 15.c5! is strategic disaster, as is 14...e5? 15.d5, and in both cases the b7-bishop is septic. But if Black is unable to force matters in the center and chooses to play slowly and wait, how can he best do that? Suppose the moves 14...Rfe8 15.Rfe1 Rac8 16.Rac1 Qb8 17.Qd2 Qa8 18.Bf1 are played. What has Black accomplished by "playing slowly?" Absolutely nothing. Indeed, with each passing move White's advantage seems to have grown. After a future 19.f3, 20.Bg3 and 21.Ne4, Black's d6-pawn will come under attack and Black will soon be forced on to the defensive without having made a visible mistake.

I could "feel" through Mischa's body language that his level of concern for the position was becoming elevated. At such times he had the habit of pursing his lips and leaning his head forwards into the board. I too sometimes bear down at the board and bring my head forwards. At times our heads came close together.

14...Ba6?!

While I think this a poor move, I can only temper my criticism by saying that I don't have a good suggestion for a better one. Black's position is not easy to play and this move accelerated the slide along the downwards trajectory.

15.a4!

A very strong rejoinder. Black's a6-bishop looks particularly forlorn, and the "threat" to the c4-pawn is to be blocked by 16.Nb5. That is also White's response to 15...Bxc4?, which would cost a piece. Since Black cannot capture on c4, he tries to increase the pressure, but his next move doesn't really accomplish much.

15...Rfc8 16.Nb5! Qc6

There is no joy in Mudville as the text doesn't help at all. After 16...Bxb5 17.axb5 e5 18.Qb2 Nh5!? 19.Rfc1 Nf4 21.Be4 Rab8 22.d5 I thought the position was a strategic disaster for Black. Black's position may already be beyond salvation.

17.Bg3 e5 18.Qb2! d5 19.Rfc1! Qe6 (Diagram 31)

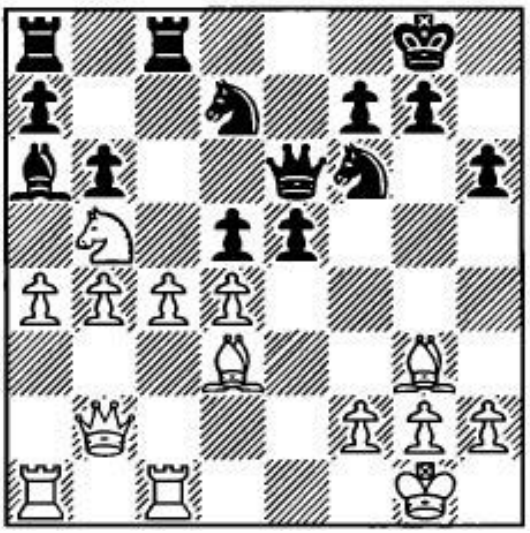


DIAGRAM 31. White to Play

At last, Mischa has a position where "concrete play" and the powers of calculation are in the ascendency. Unfortunately for Black, the position is about to burst open at a time when White holds the trumps of two bishops and superior development. Now it is time to win material.

20.cxd5 Qxd5 21.Rxc8+ Rxc8 22.Nxa7!

Achieving our most blessed state of being: holding a pawn more.

22...Bb7

There is no solace to be found in 22...Rc7 23.Bxa6 Rxa7 24.Bb5 exd4 25.Rd1, as White will win the d4-pawn and be a healthy pawn to the good with two bishops in an open position. All of which means an easy win. The text, keeping pieces on the board by threatening mate with 23...Qxg2, was Mischa's best chance.

23.Bf1 Rc4

There is only forwards! Of course, it is a leap of faith and hope that the chess gods look kindly on such brave play... For my part, if I can "avoid mate" (take a second look at White's king safety), victory is in the bag.

24.Nb5

Probably 24.dxe5 was simpler and stronger, but I calculated a line that went 24...Ng4 25.Re1 Re4 26.Rxe4 Qxe4 27.Nb5 Nxe5 28.Nd6 Nf3+ and I shuddered, forgetting that 29.gxf3 Qxf3 30.Nxb7! eliminates the fearsome bishop. Whether the text is inexact or not, I can't fault myself for bringing my knight back into

play. It is always a good idea to keep your pieces gainfully employed. Now a future Nb5-d6 will eliminate the dreaded bishop.

24...exd4 25.Rd1!(Diagram 32)

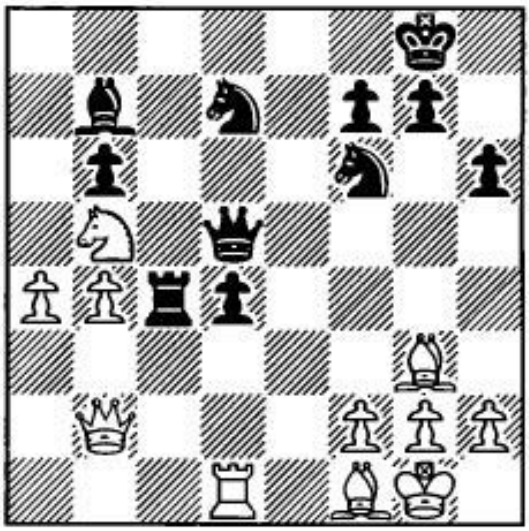


DIAGRAM 32. Black to Play

Changing my mind. My original intention was 25.Nd6 Rc3 26.Nxb7 Qxb7 27.Rd1 Qd5 28.f3, with what I considered a won position. But the more I thought about it, it seemed to me that Black's c4-rook was simply "trapped" and I could win an exchange. I looked and double-checked, but could not spot Tal's compensation.

25...Bc6 26.Nxd4 Nh5 27.f3!

This is precisely why I changed my mind. With the long diagonal shut down, Black's c4-rook is left looking dreadfully exposed.

27...Bxa4 28.Bxc4 Qxc4 29.Ra1 Qd3 30.Bf2! b5

For all his wondrous calculating ability there are simply no tricks for Mischa to conjure up. If Black doesn't protect the a4-bishop and tries 30...Nf4, then 31.Qc1! wins at once. I cover the d1-square, making Ra1xa4 possible, while also hitting the f4-knight. Black can't even bail out with 31...Qxd4, as 32.Qc8+ steps out of the knight fork on the e2-square with tempo and wins Black's queen.

31.Qe2! Qc3 32.Qe1!

It is perhaps excessive to award myself exclamation marks for my last two moves – after all, the position is winning. However, trust me that whenever you have one of these legendary guys against the wall, being exact is critical. You don't ever want to give them a smidgen of a chance for escape. They will find it. With this maneuver I bring my queen into play with tempo and keep everyone on my team protected.

32...Qd3 33.Qe8+ Nf8 34.Nc6 1-0

Facing massive material losses, Mischa was forced to stop the clocks.

Amazing. Four games, four wins for me. How was it possible? Really, I cannot explain it myself. In saying the following, I'm aware that I'm patting myself on the back, but it needs to be pointed out.

Mischa has a deserved reputation for risk-taking, daring adventures from on high where a single slip could be a fall costing the game in an instant. This fine imagery forces us to admire the daring high-wire acrobat. Actually, it is funny, but statistics show that Tal was one of the hardest players to beat. He has two of the longest streaks without a loss in modern chess history. Tal was the adroit acrobat who didn't fall. In truth, defeating him once was actually a very fine achievement; therefore, beating him four times is absolutely beyond my understanding as well.

Regarding Tal's twin streaks: from July 1972 to April 1973 he played a record 86 consecutive games without a loss (47 wins and 39 draws). He then bettered this record between October 1973 and October 1974, when he played 95 consecutive games without a loss (46 wins and 49 draws). These are two of the longest unbeaten streaks in modern chess history.

We all know of those situations where player "A" defeats player "B" routinely, player "B" defeats player "C" routinely, and yet player "C" defeats player "A" routinely. No one gets anywhere. In this case I can only say that somehow Mischa did not match up well with me. He was unable to achieve the type of double-edged, complicated games in which he excelled, while I managed to keep the games in the clear quiet strategic channels that suit me. By trying to obtain the kind of positions he liked, he just made things worse. This "style explanation" explains a lot (I can't helping thinking of my good friend, the Canadian GM Duncan Suttles, and his fine record against the stronger Bent Larsen, and his even worse record against the classicist Svetozar Gligorić), but four wins in a row? Sometimes one must also look to the Chess Gods for explanations...

Finally, I should mention, obviously and without shame (it wasn't my fault!), that I had four Whites in a row. And, yes indeed, it is nice to have White.

Our final game was played in Skellefteå, Sweden. Mischa was having no further entanglements with me, and from a standard position he offered a draw before we had even left theory behind.

Mikhail Tal-Yasser Seirawan
Skellefteå, 1989
Semi-Tarrasch Defense

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 Nf6 5.Nc3 e6 6.Nf3 Be7 7.cxd5 Nxd5 8.Bd3 Nc6 9.0-0 0-0 10.Re1 Bf6 11.Be4 Nce7 12.Ne5 ½-½

Drawn on Mischa's proposal.

By the way, did you notice how the opening was labeled a Semi-Tarrasch Defense (a line of the Queen's Gambit Declined) instead of a Caro-Kann Defense? Such are the vagaries of opening classification. Apparently the position reached in the game most often comes from the move order 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 c5 5.e3 Nc6 6.Bd3 cxd4 7.exd4 Be7 8.cxd5 Nxd5 9.0-0 0-0 10.Re1 Bf6 11.Be4 Nce7 12.Ne5, with the same game position and hence the QGD Semi-Tarrasch classification. The same position can arise from other openings as well.

Most of Mischa's life saw him in poor health, suffering liver and kidney dysfunction. In Skellefteå he looked terribly gaunt and worn. We all feared the worst, and indeed he passed away in June 1992.

Don't for a moment think that a victory over Mischa in his declining years wasn't to be relished. Not at all. In 1988, Mischa won the World Blitz Championship in St. John, Canada, ahead of both Karpov and Kasparov. It was an amazing spectacle to behold. In the Final, Mischa won against Rafael Vaganian, and I, like many others, found myself standing on tables to watch the action. I was in St. John (losing a Candidates' match to Jonathan Speelman), where Mischa and I played blitz games, preparing ourselves for the tournament. On my honor, I won every blitz game we played (about five) before Tal said: "Okay! Thank you! Now I'm ready for the tournament." And win it he did.

Another memory of Mischa that I'd like to share comes from an event in Reykjavik, Iceland. We were in the "players' room" where we could serve ourselves coffee, drinks and sandwiches while at play. I had a container of orange juice and I was looking for a glass; Mischa had a lighted cigarette with an incredibly long ash and was hunting for an ashtray. We almost bumped into one another, established eye contact for a brief moment and he said, "You have your problems, I have my problems." We both laughed and continued our hunt. Somehow that statement sums up the whole of life as well.

Again as a footnote to that event in Reykjavik, it was the first one where smoking was forbidden. However, the organizers made an exception for Mischa. His "table" was allowed to smoke. There were many players in the event who wanted to be paired with Mischa so that they too could smoke.

The year 1990 featured the fifth and final FIDE World Championship match between Kasparov and Karpov, in New York City and Lyons. I had been hired by Bessel Kok to be a commentator for a "SWIFT Suite," where VIP guests could mill about and have drinks and snacks while watching the players from a monitor. I had a demonstration board and would comment on the games and answer questions from the guests. Mischa was a second for Karpov and frequently visited the SWIFT suite, where we would chat, pausing to sign autographs and pose for photos.

One day, I believe it was Halloween, a very close friend of mine, Min Yee, came into my suite. Min worked for Microsoft as the President of Microsoft Press and he played a considerable role in the enormous success of the company, develop-

ing the "CD" technology at the firm. Min, by his own admission, is a bit of a "mutt." A large man at about six feet and 275 pounds, he is "half Chinese, half American Indian, half Irish, half..." He came sweeping into the room wearing a full-length, greywolf fur coat with hood. To say he was a magnet for stares is an understatement. We hugged, he cast his coat aside and settled himself down in the front row of my demo-board and began peppering me with questions.

At one moment, Min became very excited by a move that he thought Karpov should play. No, I sagely informed him, the suggested move wouldn't work and would lose a pawn. Sure enough Karpov played "Min's move" and Min burst out of his chair with excitement, knocking down the gentleman seated next to him. Of course, I was horrified. Min then took his huge ham-sized hands, grabbed the fellow by the scruff off the neck and lifted him back to his chair. "Oh gee, I'm so sorry about that. I just got too excited. I apologize," said Min.

"That's quite all right," responded the wounded guest. "Not a problem. I get excited too."

Pleased that the gentleman took the incident so well, Min thrust out his hand for a shake. "Hi. My name is Min Yee," he declared.

"Pleased to meet you. My name is Milos Forman," the gentleman responded, and they shook hands.

Without pause, Min responded, "Milos Forman? Milos. I like your work. Great movies!" Min turned to look at the demonstration board and focused his eyes on me. "Okay. What now?" he shouted.

I was dazed. Fortunately, Min didn't injure anyone else and the whole evening went well. At a certain moment, Min pulled me aside and said, "Yasser, I'd like to invite everyone to a big Chinese dinner tonight. I'll hire some limos and make reservations. Invite as many grandmaster buddies of yours as you can, with their partners too, tell 'em there will be lots to eat and drink. I have just one condition: I really want Mikhail Tal to be there. Do you think you could invite him too?" I had my duties to perform and found Mikhail shortly.

"Mischa, a friend of mine would like to host a dinner party. Lots to eat and drink. There will be a limo downstairs at eight and many grandmasters will join us. My friend Min has one condition, though."

"Yes?" asked Mischa.

"He wants the party to be in your honor. He is a big fan. If you accept, we have a party. If you refuse, no party," I explained.

"Let's party," said Mischa.

So we did. Two white stretch limos took us to a pretty swanky restaurant and about 18 or so joined the dinner. Min lead us into the restaurant with his grey wolf fur coat and we all unbundled from the New York chill. All the grandmasters were in suit and tie, being commentators for the public, but Min was missing a jacket. The maitre d' looked askance and informed Min that the restaurant policy required a jacket, but for just such occasions the restaurant had a selection on

hand. "I don't care which color, just bring me the biggest one you have," hollered Min. The maître d' returned with the biggest jacket they had and Min barely managed to squeeze himself into it. He looked as if he could hardly breathe.

We all went to the table to be seated. Min ordered, welcomed everybody, thanked Mischa for coming and then apologized to his guests. The jacket was suffocating, Min flexed his back and the jacket made a loud ripping sound and neatly split itself in half. Min wore half the jacket on one shoulder and arm, the other half on the other shoulder and arm. We all burst into laughter and Mischa most of all was having a giggling fit. The maître d' passed by our table, took one look at Min, retrieved the jacket and pronounced the regulation unfit for the evening. It was quite a wonderful dinner. Thankyou, Min!

One other thing I definitely must mention: besides being a great player, Mischa was a gifted writer. Ask any well-read chess player for his top ten favorite chess titles and invariably Tal will have two listed. His book *Tal-Botvinnik 1960*, a highly personal account of his World Championship match versus Botvinnik, and *The Life and Games of Mikhail Tal* are, in my view, two of the best chess books ever written. Every chess player should have these two works. They are simply outstanding. What makes them sovery special is his honesty. He saw something, he missed something, his head wasn't in the game; whatever was going on upstairs, he told his readers. He didn't try to prove the soundness of every combination – on the contrary, he would let us know that he was gambling and was feeling his wayalong.

Mischa's writings were completely different from everyone else's: the professors teaching us what was right and wrong. Here was an author who struggled over his decisions, suffered a missed blow, or found that opportunity unexpectedly called. More often than not, he found his balance. The struggles were so personal that I felt I was sitting beside him. It was exhilarating to read both the ups and the downs. Such honesty brought Mischa closer to his readers and endeared himself to them. You can't read these books without smiling and laughing aloud.

On another topic, Tal was famous for his "stare." In chess lore he would look upon his opponents and hypnotize them. How else to explain why so many combinations, not quite sound, hit their mark? In truth, there was nothing to it. Like many deep thinkers, Tal had a "far-away" look in his eyes. He might be talking to you, but you could see his mind was elsewhere. When calculating deep combinations he simply looked upwards and towards his opponents. He wasn't "looking at them." Indeed, I doubt he even saw his opponents; rather, he was simply calculating and it seemed he calculated better when not staring fixedly at the pieces. I'm absolutely certain he didn't do this in any way to disturb his opponents. In our games when I gave him a quick glance I realized that he was looking "past" me, really as if I wasn't there.

In a similar vein I remember being warned by a Seattle friend, Michael

Spiegel, that the Soviets had two enormously talented junior players: Boris Gelfand and Vassily Ivanchuk. I've played them both. At the board Boris has the habit of looking down. Literally staring at the square "e0" while calculating. Conversely, Vassily stares up at the ceiling to calculate. On one particular move, I think Vassily took about 50 minutes, and the whole time he was looking at the ceiling. At some point about 40 minutes into his thought I too began to look at the ceiling, seeking insights as well.

When I returned to Seattle and spoke with Michael he was quite excited about my contests with Boris and Vassily. "What was it like play against them?" he excitedly asked.

"Michael, you were right." I answered. "They are both incredibly talented. Between them they have both the macro and the micro views of the world completely covered."

The following are nice passages by Lev Alburt and Al Lawrence in their book *Three Days with Bobby Fischer & other chess essays*, page 30:

"In general, Botvinnik preferred to enter an important match with some dislike for his opponent, or at least some psychological distance from him... Botvinnik's complaint about Tal? He confided to Lev Alburt his damning fact: 'I couldn't make myself dislike him.' For example, when in 1961 Botvinnik, the challenger after all, approached Tal for his thoughts about the lights or the set and board he wanted, Tal would say he was sure that anything Botvinnik chose would be just fine.

"Tal showed none of the pre-match maneuvering, tension and histrionics that characterized Fischer's off-the-board behavior. In fact, in a sense, Tal put all of his 'incorrect' behavior into the moves he played, while Fischer put all of his 'correct' behavior into his moves. Fischer, with his ultra-dry classicism, took no deliberate chances on the board and relished the moment he 'crushed his opponent's spirit.' Tal would sacrifice a piece if he saw no direct refutation, even in a world-championship game! He relished the explosive poetry that he consistently found under the noses of his more practical peers for its own intrinsic beauty."

This topic of "off-the-board" behavior or psychological tricks raises a great deal of discussion because such incidents are so rare and the media love to focus upon them. While it is true some players prefer to dislike their opponents, finding it difficult to play against those with whom they are on friendly terms, my overall experience after three and a half decades of play is that psychological tricks are really at a minimum.

The great majority of my opponents have been genuine sportsmen. Not out to distract or to win in any dubious way, rather they hope that strong moves will be their only correct path to victory. In particular, and in no order, my most well-behaved, "gentlemanly" opponents include Ulf Andersson, Alexander Beliavsky, John Nunn, Jan Timman, Arthur Yusupov, Lubomir Ftacnik, Judit Polgar, John van der Wiel and many, many others. All of whom have behaved with impeccable

over-the-board manners. The very idea of deliberately distracting their opponent would be viewed as ridiculous by them.

I'll close this chapter with a quote from Garry Kasparov: "We calculate: he does this then I do that. And Tal, through all the thick layers of variants, saw that around the 8th move, it will be so and so. Some people can see the mathematical formula, they can imagine the whole picture instantly. An ordinary man has to calculate, to think this through, but they just see it all. It occurs in great musicians, great scientists. Tal was absolutely unique. His playing style was of course unrepeatable. I calculated the variants quickly enough, but these Tal insights were unique. He was a man in whose presence others sensed their mediocrity."

Classical Games versus Mikhail Tal

Seirawan-Tal, Valetta, Malta 1980: 1-0
Seirawan-Tal, Nikšić, Yugoslavia 1983: 1-0
Seirawan-Tal, Montpellier, France 1985: 1-0
Seirawan-Tal, Brussels, Belgium 1988: 1-0
Tal-Seirawan, Skellefteå, Sweden 1989: ½-½

Seirawan: four wins, one draw. Classical score 4½-½

Chapter Five

Tigran Petrosian

Of all the World Champions, Tigran Vartanovich Petrosian (1929-1984) is the hardest to categorize. We all want nice definitions, labels that we can affix to people or things so that we feel comfortable by giving ourselves a reference we understand. We call something a "hammer" or someone "hammer-like" and we are immediately happy. We know what a hammer is and are ready to discuss the person's hammer-like qualities further. Why, we positively know the fellow and are ready to elucidate further!

We are happy calling Mikhail Tal a "combinational genius," "a tactician without any peers," or "a tactical magician." It certainly helps us feel closer to Tal, and we can define the player, at least a little, for ourselves, even if such a definition is ridiculously shallow. Didn't Tal ever play an endgame in his life? Heck, could he play endgames at all? Or did he just sprinkle his magic tactical powder on every position, including bare kings, producing fireworks at an instant?

Which brings us to Tigran. Each of the World Champions in his own special way has brought something unique to the game, imbuing the pool of chess knowledge and making it deeper. Some special understanding of the game – *his interpretation of a position or style of play*. All the champions imparted and shared with us their legacies. It may be trite to say that Tigran was a "hard man to beat," or "a deep thinker with long-winded strategic ideas," or that "he had an acute sense of danger." (Which World Champion did not?) Yes, he had all these things, but these labels are mere descriptions that don't help us understand the player. To the contrary, they lead us astray. The reason is that he was all these things and a mixture of other qualities as well.

To begin with, Tigran was a gifted tactician who could calculate with the best of them. Look at his game versus Kasparov from Tilburg, where he out-calculated Garry in a wild tactical mêlée. He was a fine strategic player, but he wasn't lim-

ited in this area; he played a wide variety of openings and defenses, bringing unique insights to a host of middlegame positions. While he was most successful in closed positions, he played open positions very well indeed.

Tigran was also ruthless in pressing home an advantage. We all blow won positions, that comes with the job, but my impression of Tigran's games was that he was very good at bringing in the whole point when he had his "positional grip" on you. In short, if you fell into a bad position, that was it – you weren't going to escape.

Tigran has been criticized as being not especially ambitious. This criticism has evoked thoughtful agreement from a wide selection of grandmasters. The oft-told joke goes that once Petrosian was determined to draw a particular game nothing could stop him, not even a won position. A delightful and humorous joke. Yet Tigran was one of the most successful modern chess players where the World Championship cycles were concerned. To perform well in these brutal cycles one's ambition must be to conquer the whole world. In 1963 he defeated Mikhail Botvinnik 12½-9½ and in 1966 he beat Boris Spassky (the second youngest GM ever at the time) 12½-11½. Then in 1969, he lost the title to Spassky by 12½-10½, but in 1971, he put a stop to Bobby Fischer's rampage in the final Candidates' match, winning Game Two after losing Game One from a much better position. Bobby went on to win their match and become the Challenger. How different history might have been had Tigran won Games One and Two of that match.

So let us try to place Tigran in the hierarchy of chess greats: he defeated Botvinnik, one of the longest-lived World Champion legends; he both defeated and lost to Boris Spassky, the "universal champion;" and it took a meteoric Bobby Fischer to stop him in his pursuit of a third match versus Spassky. That strikes me as an extraordinary record of outstanding achievement, yet for all of this Petrosian is thought to be lacking in ambition?

Worse still, Tigran is often dismissed as a "defensive" player, who was good at anticipating and then "frustrating" his opponent's plans before (grudgingly) "counter-attacking." Such characterizations sound so corny and funny, I just have to laugh. How about those countless games where Tigran just absolutely mashes strong grandmasters off the board, never giving them any chance whatsoever? Just a total crush from start to finish. How about those games where Tigran's opponents, as White, were so intimidated that they rushed to the safety of the nearest drawing variation and counted their blessings after the scoresheets had been signed? Where do these hundreds of games fit into our nice labels and definitions of the "great defender?" They don't.

When critics have melted away or given pause, a ray of sunshine does appear. Enthusiastic attackers credit Tigran with the exchange sacrifice – a near trademark in his play where he would upset the material cart for dynamic play with the minor pieces. Defensive player, you say? Really? Just for fun, I challenge you

to do a statistical comparison between the percentage of draws made by Petrosian and, say, the figures of Tal or Fischer. You may be surprised.

Tigran was a unique player because he could, in fact, play many roles: the opportunistic attacker; the careful defender; the skilled counter-puncher; the master strategic visionary; the consummate endgame player; and yes, the player with the stronger nerves. Of course, where Tigran's games sparkle is in his extraordinary ability to resist in, and save, difficult positions, turning them around as if by magic. Because of this unique ability, we label him as we do. In truth, he was a universal player, perfectly at home in a tactical mêlée, but simply outstanding, without peer, when required to "keep" the position.

It would be remiss if I didn't also draw attention to Tigran's remarkable Olympiad record. He played for ten straight Soviet Teams from 1958-1978, when simply being *considered* for inclusion was no mean feat. His record was a spellbinding 78 wins, 50 draws and one single loss. He certainly was a player I would want on *my* team!

Another often-told joke was that it was as difficult to win the Soviet Championship as it was to win the World title. Tigran won the Soviet Championship four times – in 1959, 1961, 1969 and 1975 – over a 16-year period, yet he wasn't considered a great tournament player. I find it amazing that such extraordinary successes draw any criticism.

I first met Tigran at the 1976 Lone Pine Open and for the second time at the 1978 edition of Lone Pine. It was at the 1976 event, when I was 16 years old, that the following episode happened.

During the tournament I was surprised to see that Tigran was keeping a lively interest in my games. Often when I would look up from the board or walk around the tournament hall I saw that he was watching my games. I knew absolutely no reason why. Even I didn't find my games that interesting. However, I thought his games were great!

It was during one of the free days. The Town Hall building where we played also had an analysis room where Miguel Najdorf was holding court. He was playing blitz and clobbering one American junior player after another. After their loss, the junior would give up his seat and make room for the next one in a small line-up of players. With each victory Miguel would loudly chortle to the whole room: "Blood! I need *young* blood! You are too *old* for me! Blood! More young blood!" He did this over and over again, and was clearly enjoying himself while cleaning the clocks of America's best junior players. Even at his advanced age, Miguel was a formidable blitzer. My friends pressed me to join the line of juniors, as they knew I was quite a capable blitz player and it was time for a little old blood to get spilled. I'm not sure what I had intended for the free day, but being humbled by Don Miguel wasn't it. Nevertheless, I allowed myself to be persuaded to join the line.

Eventually, it came my turn to play Miguel. He was in full throttle mode, bel-

lowing his need for yet more young blood. We shook hands to set up the pieces. My turn! I just knew that Miguel was cruising for a bruising and his comeuppance was due. Exactly at that moment, Miguel received a tap on the shoulder. He turned to look up and saw Tigran Petrosian asking him for his seat. Miguel asked Tigran in Russian if he really wanted his place. Tigran indeed confirmed his desires, and Miguel jumped out of his seat and gave it in an instant to Tigran.

Quite unexpected! I too stood up, assuming that Tigran wanted the set and table to analyze or perhaps show something from his own games. No, no! Not at all! He flapped his hands up anddown that I was to retake myseat. He wanted to play blitz against me. Cool!

Suddenly all those who had been merely mulling or drifting around the playing venue found a reason for being close and they all piled into the analysis room which quickly filled up. Petrosian was playing blitz! While setting the clocks I heard the cry of Walter Shawn Browne: "3-1 odds on Petrosian. Who takes my bet?" We all burst into laughter. And now it was VassilySmyslov as well; he took a position, standing behind Tigran, and put him in a gentle bear hug, speaking in Russian. The scuttlebutt was that Vassily didn't want Tigran to injure the spirits of the young players and that he should show us all mercy. Everyone seemed to be in good spirits and both Vassily and Tigran enjoyed a very good laugh together.

Soon, we were ready. I started with White and played an English Opening. While there was no "kibitzing" per se, there was an appreciable volume of "noise" where ohhs and ahhs would greet a good shot or fine defensive cheapo. I really don't know exactly how, but I managed completely to outplayTigran, who had a big reputation as a great blitz player, and I won the game.

The room was in shock. Me too. I stood up to give up myseat tothe next junior in line. What a great honor to play Petrosian! No, no! Again, he shook both hands at me totake myseat again. Hewanted a second game.

Again, while setting up the pieces and clock, there came the loud cry of Walter Shawn Browne's voice as it rang out, "Okay 50-50! Who takes mybet?" Again we all burst in laughter, enjoying the revelry of the moment. This time Vassily didn't try to persuade Tigran to have mercy on the poor junior players, but rather he was now "permitted" to play at full strength.Again Tigran, with his very expressive face, started laughing loudly.

Of course, I started with Black, but this game has completely slipped out of memory. I "think" I played a Botvinnik Pawn Triangle formation. Somehow I once again managed to win. The victory was no flag or fluke win either. I won a nice game. Had I been possessed?

Again, I began to stand up, and this time Petrosian was far clearer with his hand motion: "Sit!" Again, while setting up the pieces for the third game, the unmistakable voice of Walter Shawn Browne rose above the din: "3-1 odds on Seirawan! Who takes my bet?" We all roared with laughter. Walter prided himself on being a good odds-maker too!

I was in heaven. My last clear recollection was that I was clearly crushed in the next two games. Much to my great relief, Tigran broke off the match and shook my hand. Wow! A 2-2 split! Suddenly it seemed like everyone was shaking my hand to congratulate me. I think we were all equally disbelieving.

In passing, let me point outthat during the 1977 US Open in Columbus, Ohio, I won the title of US five-minute (blitz) Champion with a 7½ out of 8.0 score. I wasn't a pushover in blitz. But neither was Petrosian!

As mentioned earlier, I helped Victor Korchnoi in his 1980/1981 World Championship campaign. His first Candidates' match was in Austria against Tigran Petrosian. What a tough, tension-filled match that was. The players were mortal enemies and neither side gave an inch. In the end Victor managed a narrow win. We all counted our blessings and anxiously departed. It was during that match that I gained a real appreciation forjust how strong Tigran was. Let me be clear: I thought that Victor Korchnoi was the best player in the world or, at the very least, second best, and Tigran tested him in every game. It was only with absolute grim determination that Victor won. In match play Tigran was indeed formidable.

The one and only classical tournament game Tigran and I played with one another was again at the Nikšić tournament of superstars. The one where my results alternated wins and losses. Draws seemed rare

Yasser Seirawan-Tigran Petrosian
Nikšić, 1983
Nimzo-Indian Defense

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.Qc2 d6 5.Bg5 Nbd7 6.e3 c5

Terrible. Here I am writing a book on my games against the World Champions and I now realize for the first time that Smyslov, Tal and here Petrosian all used the same poordefensive system, bytransposition, against the Classical variation of the Nimzo-Indian. Perhaps they all read the same vaunted "Soviet School of Chess" openings book that recommended this system for Black. Honestly, I can't seewhythis system would be at all attractiveforblack players, and much less for the legends of the chessboard.

7.dxc5!? dxc5?

This move came as quite a surprise as I considered it simply a mistake. The resulting position is passive for Black with little chance of creating play. My main linewas 7...Nxc5 8.Ne2 h6!? (8...Nce4 9.Bxf6 Nxf6 10.a3) 9.Bh4 b5!. This last move I considered "absolutely necessary" for Black in order to create counterplay, or else he would just be beaten backwards. Then after 10.a3 Bxc3+ 11.Nxc3 bxc4 12.Bxc4 Bb7 13.0-0 0-0 the position is roughly even.

8.0-0-0 Bxc3

Not a voluntary trade that Black plays for in the Classical Nimzo. Normally, Black waits for a2-a3, which costs White a tempo before Black parts with his b4-bishop. The concrete problem here is that White's c3-knight is threatening to skip away with Nc3-e4, when the b4-bishop will be left high and dry with nothing to do.

9.Qxc3 Qe7 (Diagram 33)

Tigran wasn't interested in handing me the address of his king. After 9...0-0 10.Bd3! I had dreams of Bd3-b1 and Qc3-c2, with a very dangerous battery. Note that after castling kingside prematurely, Black will not be able to break the g5-pin with ...h7-h6, as h2-h4! will be a strong retort. So if Black wants to break the g5-pin with ...h7-h6, he should toss in that move before castling. With the text, Black makes it clear that he wants to retain the option of castling queenside.

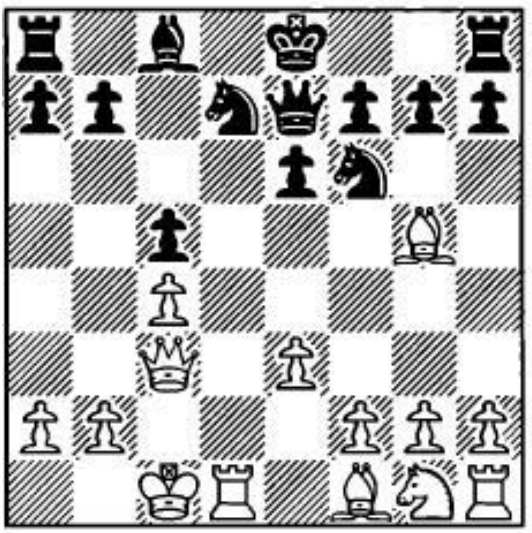


DIAGRAM 33. White to Play

Take a close look at the diagrammed position for a moment. I know it seems strange, but it is precisely here that I felt that I had a strategically won position. Why? Well, think about it another way: imagine that White plays f2-f3 and Qc3-c2, exactly what will Black do for counterplay? The g5-bishop pin is annoying, White's g1-knight will deploy to the c3-square and White can just build up his position. Toss in the two-bishop advantage and the plusses in White's position keep adding up higher and higher.

That said, I was now looking for the most precise deployment of my pieces. They would have to be ready to take advantage of wherever Black might castle, while trying to take full control over the center. In short, owing to Black's mistake on his seventh move, how to win my much superior position?

10.Bd3!

I thought for some time, but the following series of moves was really quite

difficult to find because of the numerous possible set-ups. In the end I was quite pleased I found the best. False trails include 10.Nf3 b6!? (10...e5!?) 11.Bf4 Bb7 12.Bd3 0-0-0 13.Bc2, which seemed quite attractive, but after the strange retreat 13...Nb8 I wasn't sure how big my advantage was.

Another very attractive line of play was also the simple 10.Ne2 h6 11.Bh4 b6 12.Qc2 Bb7 13.Nc3 0-0 14.f3, when Black has fallen into a very disagreeable position. Black's counterplay is hardly visible, and left to his own devices White will play g2-g4, Bh4-g3 and a gradual kingside advance.

In the end, I decided I liked the text best.

10...b6 11.f4! Bb7 12.e4! e5 13.Nf3!

Thanks to a very precise order of moves, Black is in serious danger of being ripped apart. My self-confidence was soaring. The position is poised for being ripped open and I'm holding thetwo bishops.

13...Qe6!

Practicallyspeaking, the only move. Black has to break the pin before thecenterblows.

14.fxe5

Yet another difficult internal struggletook place over this move. Black isclose to complete asphyxiatiion after 14.f5 Qe7 15.Bc2 0-0-0 16.Rhe1, when he can hardly move and White has all the time to prepare for Bg5-h4, g2-g4-g5 and Bh4-g3, and Black could pass away without a murmur.

I chose the text because I felt certain that ripping open the position would be favorable. Having the position again, I would likely prefer the aforementioned "big clamp" option.

14...Ng4!

I completely underestimated this move. For some reason I fixated upon and calculated 14...Nxe4 15.Bxe4 Bxe4 16.Rd6 Qf5 as mymain line. I had prepared the very powerful reply 17.Qd2!, when thanks to a number of threats, including e5-e6, I thought the position winning.

The text, on the other hand, really caught me flat-footed for some reason. I had rejected 14...Ng4, because of a d7-exchange sacrifice and was now forced to double-check the planned sacrifice which I thought could not be allowed by Black.

15.Bc2 Ngxe5 (Diagram 34 – see following page)

The moment of truth has arrived. Obviously, in view of the devastating threat of Rd1-d6, Black had to capture the e5-pawn. Now the chess player's eternal lament arises: to sac or not to sac? (In this case, the d1-rook.)

16.Ba4?

Darn it, darn it, darn it! And triple gosh, darn it. I didn't trust my gut instincts and avoided the crucial line. Immediately after the game Tigran pointed to his d7-knight, made an extremely sour face and clearly indicated he didn't like his game after the natural 16.Rxd7 Nxd7 17.Qxg7 Rf8. Certainly it was easy to calcu-

late this far, but then the question was: "what next?" Unfortunately, the very posing of this question put me off the whole line. Sometimes we forget that chess is just a fight. And while we may not be able to analyze to a concrete win, we have to understand that sometimes it is just a verygood thing to put our opponent into a position that *he* doesn't like. And that too is very, very good for us.

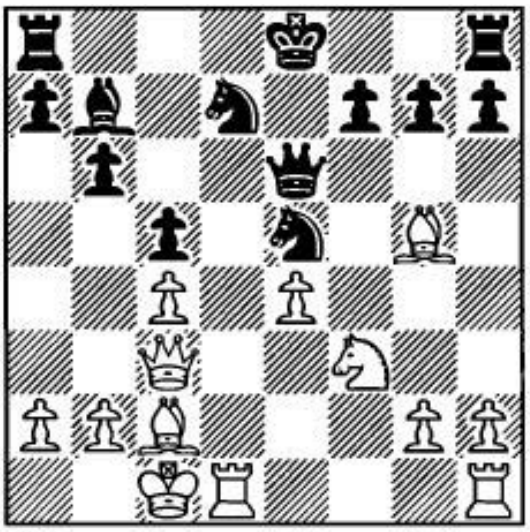
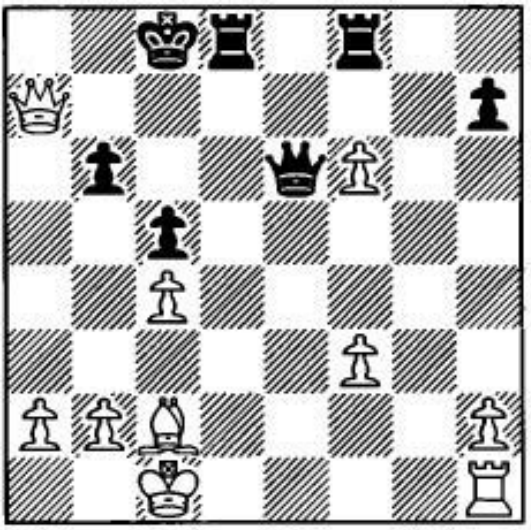


DIAGRAM 34. White to Play

Of course, I didn't find a clean win after 17...Rf8, for the simple reason that it doesn't exist. Rather, what does exist is a position where White has bishop and pawn for the exchange, perhaps with a second pawn in the offing. Black hasn't completed his development and White has fine attacking chances. But again, the proper approach to the position was to imagine a line of play that my opponent would simply hate to play against. From that perspective, there were two lines after 17...Rf8. The first choice was 18.e5!?, keeping Black's king stuck in the center, and the second one 18.Rd1, simply bringing the rook into play. The main line that I looked at during the game was 18.Qxh7?! (an old weakness of mine – grabbing as many pawns as possible) 18...f6 19.Bf4 0-0-0, which is okay for Black.

In practice, after 16.Rxd7! Nxd7 17.Qxg7 Rf8 18.e5, Black has a difficult decision to make. Should he be greedy and grab the c4-pawn? No... That seems too dangerous. Should he play 18...Bxf3, and grab the e5-pawn? For example, 18...Bxf3 19.gxf3 Qxe5? Answer: no. After 20.Qxe5 Nxe5 21.Ba4+ Black is checkmated in short order. Quite a nasty surprise. So, grabbing the c4-pawn seems too dangerous and giving up the b7-bishop doesn't help, which leaves only 18...f6 as a possible defense. Again the path seems rather narrow, but also straightforward: 19.Bxf6 Bxf3 (a forced capture as 19...Nxf6 20.Qxb7 loses for Black) 20.gxf3 Nxf6 21.exf6 0-0-0 22.Qxa7, reaching our analysisdiagram **(Diagram 35)**.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 35. Black to Play

We again come to one of those positions where we can't speak of any definitive "win." Only which side is easier to play. For the moment White has a bishop and a few pawns for the exchange, and it is highly likely that White has a perpetual check any time he needs it, and of course also has chances to mate. The point – to repeat myself – is that sometimes you just have to realize that chess is a fight. You try to put pressure on your opponent and keep levering up the threats and hope he cracks. Sometimes you just have to go with your gut and play the move that feels right.

This line and this game bothered me not only for the whole night but for the whole week. Somehow Black just had to be punished for his weak opening play, and I spent a long time analyzing the variations. Eventually I remembered my own old wise adage: "Invite everyone to the party." Suddenly the line that I did *not* concentrate upon during the game became especially attractive: 16.Rxd7 Nxd7 17.Qxg7 Rf8 18.Rd1! f6 19.Bxf6 Rxf6 (otherwise, 19...Qxf6 20.Qxd7 is mate and 19...Nxf6 20.Qxb7 is good for White) 20.Rxd7 when I have two pawns for the exchange. Black can continue to ride a tiger by 20...Rxf3 21.Rxb7 Rf1+ 22.Kd2 0-0-0+! 23.Kc3 when I thought I stood better, but after 23...Rd7! Black is fine once more. Chess can be a tough game.

Frustrated that I couldn't find the win, I had to put the game away. Perhaps some day in the future it can be definitively shown where I blew it. While my gut tells me the exchange sacrifice was right, I could simply be mistaken.

After deciding to reject the exchange sacrifice, my new focus was 16.NxeS QxeS (16...NxeS? 17.Bf4!, is very strong for White.) 17.Qd2, which appeared to be most appealing. Then I saw 17...Bc6! – a really annoying move. But even then, say after 18.Rhf1, White has a small plus thanks to the two bishops.

With my head spinning from all these variations, it suddenly occurred to me simply to pin the d7-knight, when Black's knights are "fastened" to one another. In my mind's eye, the "only" way to break the pin would be to play ...Bb7-c6, in which case after a bishop trade I could plant a rook on the d5-square. Unfortunately, after the text, Black has just enough time to skip away.

Lastly, one move that I didn't consider sufficiently was 16.Bf4 f6 17.Nxe5! fxe5 18.Ba4 0-0-0 19.Bxd7+ when White will have an advantage in a bishops of opposite colors middlegame. The idea of voluntarily giving up control over the d8-square simply hadn't occurred to me.

16...0-0!17.Bf4f618.Rhe1

While playing this defensive move, I realized that my early opening advantage had slipped away. Against an opponent of Tigran's caliber, opportunity is so fleeting!

18...Rf7

One of those highly surprising defensive moves that was a hallmark of Tigran's play. I hardly gave the text much thought, expecting 18...Rfd8, which I judged as even.

19.h3

Played out of frustration as much as anything else. There are some lines where Black might play ...Qe6-g4, so I thought to take away that opportunity.

19...Nxf3 20.gxf3 Raf8 21.h4 ½-½

Drawn on Tigran's proposal. Without making a move, he crossed his fingers to offer a draw. I accepted, thinking that the lion's share of my advantage had disappeared. After the obvious 21...Ne5 I considered the game even. For both players, time troubles were going to be serious and the outcome of the game was going to be decided by a blitz finish. Exciting for spectators, but stressful for the players. Yet another of the many confounding games with the Champions.

Unfortunately, Tigran passed away on August 13, 1984 at a mere 55 years of age. The chess world mourned this gifted, unique player who defied characterization.

Our Classical Chess tournament score ends with a ½-½ push, as well as four of the most memorable blitz games I ever played.

Chapter Six

Boris Spassky

Boris Vassilievich Spasskyoccupies a special place for all American chess players: he was the Champion who lost his title to Bobby Fischer in 1972. Even today, closing on 40 years later, the American public is likely to know the names of two chess grandmasters above all others: Bobby Fischer and Boris Spassky. Certainly it is not the way that Boris would like to be remembered, but such arethe whims offate. Similarly, it was not the intention of Hector to fall to Achilles in the sacking of Troy when the former chose to compete in a duel he didn't have to accept. A loss for which he will be remembered till the end of time.

For me, Boris Spassky was a truly "universal" player. He was capable of playing all facets of the game equally well. Clearly, he enjoyed the attacker's role most, and he was extremely formidable, but it was the "balance" of his play that impressed me the most. He felt comfortable in every type of position. In fact, it is hard to distinguish Spassky's style. As Miguel Najdorf would say, there wasn't so much "style" – just a lot of great play.

Boris was an outstanding World Champion. He was at the height of his powers from 1969 to 1972 while holding the title. Then the 1972 World Championship match defeat "hit" and things just went terribly wrong. His loss of the world title didn't endear him to the Soviet authorities and he experienced a loss of privileges and restrictions for his failure to keep the Chess Crown. His second marriage ended in divorce: "We were bishops of opposite colors," Boris would say.

In the 1974 Candidates' Semi-Final, Spassky was trying to climb back towards a rematch with Bobby Fischer when he ran into the young Anatoly Karpov. Karpov won the match and knocked Spassky out of the cycle. I was too young in those days to follow chess events closely, but that match struck me as a very strange one. For the 1972 match with Bobby, Efim Geller had been Spassky's long-time second. Then, before his 1974 match with Karpov, Geller switched and

suddenly joined Karpov's team. That musthave come as quite a shocking blow to Spassky, as his opening repertoire would have been known by Karpov

Boris continued to compete in the World Championship cycles. In 1976 he failed to qualify at the Manila Interzonal for the Candidates' event, but owing to Bobby's forfeit, Boris got aCandidates' seeding in Bobby's stead. With thisopportunity, Boris fought his way to the 1977-1978 Candidates' Finals match in Belgrade, losing to Victor Korchnoi. In his 1980 Candidates' match with Lajos Portisch the players fought to a 7-7 standstill. Portisch advanced thanks to more wins with Black. In the 1982 Toluca Interzonal, Bor's failed to qualify by half a point, while in the 1985 Candidates' tournament in Montpellier he scored 8/15 and failed to advance. His best days of successfullycompetiing in the cycles were receding.

Although Boris did not defect from the Soviet Union per se, he was granted an extremely rare exception: he was allowed to move to France with his third wife, and able to travel freely as he liked. He made a special bargain with the Soviet authorities: in return for his unique status Boris would be apolitical and would not speak out publicly about the USSR, and certainly not in anyderogatory fashion. He would not be a "refusnik" or a "defector." He would simply become a quiet Russian citizen living and working abroad.

My first tournament game against a World Champion was in 1980 against Boris Spassky in the Tungsram tournament in Baden, Vienna. My second game versus a World Champion, Mikhail Tal, came one month later at the 1980 Malta Olympiad. There are a few things I remember quite well about the Baden event. Tungsram was a Hungarian-based electrical light bulb manufacturer, yet it was easier for the company to organize an event, invite players and obtain official approvals in Austria than in Hungary. At the time this struck me as really quite strange. A twisted weirdness one would find on a television episode of the *Twilight Zone*, if you will. Of course, in Communist nations all kinds of nonsensical economic things happened often, so in fact this wasn't so surprising, but it left a deep impression on me

At the opening ceremony everything went fine: the proper speeches, the drawing of lots, drinks and appetizers all went according to schedule. There came a lull as folks milled about and spoke with one another. I found myself walking around the building and came into a "study-like library room" that I found really attractive. I took a seat at the desk and seemed to pass immediately into a meditative, wonderfully calm state of mind. It was amazing. I felt so relaxed and at home in this pleasant room. Eventually, I was "disturbed" as one of the organizers came to inform that we would now be boarding our bus to take us back to the hotel. Noticing how peaceful I appeared to be, he said, "Ah. So you like Beethoven's study." Apparently, I had been sitting in the Great Man's desk chair completely oblivious to my circumstances. I can only enthuse that it was a marvelous room for inspiration.

Another memory from this event gave me an insight into the playing fees or "honoraria" that grandmasters received. (Keep in mind that I was just breaking into the arena in those years.) In many events in which I played the prizes were small, as the organizers gave guarantees or starting fees to the players that were negotiated individually. A player's title(s) and rating determined much of his fee, of course, but there could still be a large discrepancy between two similarly-titled and rated players, leaving it up to the players to negotiate their own terms.

Unfortunately, there had been a mix-up in the honoraria paid. The organizers gave Boris Spassky the envelope for Alexander Beliavsky and, of course, Beliavsky received the envelope for Spassky. As a former World Champion we might think that Spassky's envelope was the larger of the two? Not so. Beliavsky was the one being short-changed as a result of the mixed-up envelopes. The organizers were put in the uncomfortable position of asking the players to trade their envelopes with one another. Here Boris dug in his heels. As a former World Champion he wanted a fee equal to Beliavsky's. While the difference wasn't great, the organizers were quite unhappy with Boris. After all, he had accepted his invitation and fee prior to the event. These "discussions" seemed to last a good portion of the event. In the end I don't know how things were settled.

From the moment we met, Boris struck me as an extremely friendly, humorous person. Quick and easy smiles illuminated his whole face. I liked him from our very first introduction. His play at the board was correct, and he moved the pieces with a smooth, easy, practiced motion that made me recall Paul Keres. He seemed to me to be everything you would want in a World Champion.

Boris Spassky-Yasser Seirawan
Baden, 1980
Caro-Kann Defense

1.e4 c6

At this point in my career, I had three primary defenses to 1.e4: my favorite, the Pirc/Rat/Modern Defense, which consisted of 1...g6 and 2...d6 (actually playable against anything, not just a king pawn opening); the French Defense 1...e6; and the Caro-Kann 1...c6, my choice for this game.

When playing against 1.e4, defenses should be thought of in two types. The first types are those that attack the e4-pawn directly early in the game. Here the Scandinavian, Alekhine, French, Petroff and Caro-Kann come to mind. The second type is not a direct e4-pawn attack; rather, Black seeks to skirt around the e4-pawn. Here the Sicilian, Pirc and Ruy López Closed defenses come to mind. In general, those defenses that seek to "hit" the e4-pawn early are the most concrete, in terms of forcing lines. Those that dance around the question of the e4-pawn, such as the Sicilian, tend to have a wide berth of flexible plans.

The Caro-Kann is attractive to me as it has been one of those defenses where the main lines of play are clear-cut and easy to learn. Amateur players seem to avoid the Caro-Kann because of its stodgy reputation or because the resulting positions aren't dynamic or exciting enough for them. A pity. Just about every World Champion at one time played the Caro-Kann. Trying to persuade folks to play the Caro-Kann reminds me of a Tal joke:

"In one of his games he was in a must-win situation and played Black. He chose the Caro-Kann defense, but could achieve only a draw. When a reporter asked about the choice of such a quiet opening and something sharp like the Sicilian defense Tal responded: 'I play the Sicilian Defense when I need a draw, but when I want to win, I play the Caro-Kann Defense!'" – GM Greg Serper *Chess Life* (September 2007, page 33).

So far I'm on solid ground...

2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Bf5

My favorite main-line move. Other Caro-Kann players, including Anatoly Karpov, prefer 4...Nd7, while David Bronstein's choice, 4...Nf6, attracts me from time to time.

5.Ng3 Bg6 6.Nf3

Not the most testing line. Today, decades later, the critical line still remains "Spassky's Treatment," 6.h4 h6 7.Nf3 Nd7 8.h5 Bh7 9.Bd3 Bxd3 10.Qxd3 e6, a position I've reached on dozens of occasions. The text, which does not include "the weakening" of White's h2-pawn, tries to give White an advantage in the resulting positions based on "space." The d4-pawn will control more squares of the opponent's territory than will the e6-pawn. Not much of an edge for White, but a plus of sorts. Therefore, from Black's perspective, if he can play ...c6-c5, and trade his c6-pawn for White's d4-pawn, he will take away White's space advantage and at least equalize the game.

6...Nd7 7.Bd3 e6 8.0-0 Ngf6 9.c4 Be7 10.Bf4 0-0 11.Bxg6

A very difficult question to answer: which side benefits most from this trade? On the one hand, the doubled g-pawns are a weakness. Black's kingside structure loses flexibility and White gains the g5-square for a knight to be stationed offside and close to the goal: checkmate. That means there are latent attacking chances in the resulting position for White. On the other hand, Black gets luft (air) for his king (use of the h7-square) without losing a tempo. This could be important for the middlegame battle and, finally, whether you want to term the doubled g-pawns an inflexible weakness or not, Black's king has a lot of guards around him, which is a good thing.

11...hxg6 12.Qe2 Qb6! (Diagram 36)

An important shift of plan. Instead of playing the usual ...c6-c5, the text envisions a plan of awaiting developments. My intention is to keep a watchful eye on the d4-pawn, expand on the queenside and to make any trades in the center that may come my way.

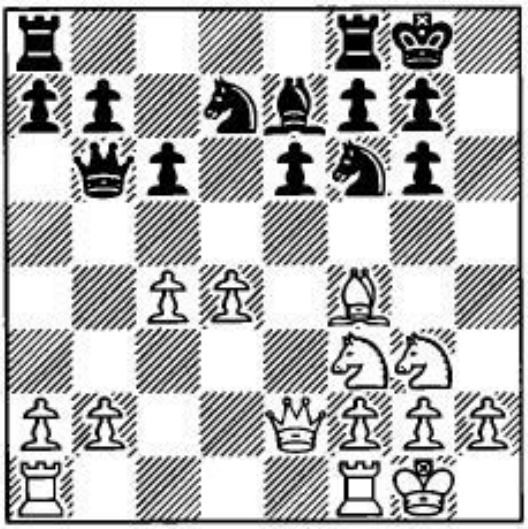


DIAGRAM 36. White to Play

13.Rfd1 Rfd8 14.b3 a5! 15.Ne4 Nxe4 16.Qxe4 a4! 17.Rab1 axb3 18.axb3 Ra2!

So far, things have gone like a dream. I've traded off a pair of minor pieces, there are no major problems with my king and my last move, a nice active one, is going to cause White to make further trades.

19.h3 Rda8 20.Be3 Nf6 21.Qf4 Nh5 22.Qe4 Nf6 23.Qf4 ½-½

Drawn on the proposal of Boris. I was absolutely delighted with a "solid draw" against a former World Champion as Black on my very first outing.

Following the lengthy discussions about honoraria, Boris and Alexander Beliavsky jointly shared first place and top honors with impressive 10½/15 scores. Boris went undefeated and won his individual game versus Beliavsky to win the trophy. The final results made me even more pleased with my solid draw.

Our second battle together took place at the Phillips & Drew event in London in 1982. This was a very strong tournament which turned wild for me. I won six games, including a win over Anatoly Karpov, and lost three, to take third place. My game with Boris was, sad to say, a truly lousy, gruesome performance. Prepare yourselves – those with strong stomachs will be all right, but those with weak digestive tracks are advised to skip ahead.

Boris Spassky-Yasser Seirawan
London, 1982
Caro-Kann Defense

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5

The Advance Variation of the Caro-Kann has a tumultuous history with strong opinions voiced often. White "wastes" an entire tempo to advance in the center, hitting nothing. Unlike, for example, in the Alekhine and certain variations of the French Defense, 3.e5 doesn't attack an f6-knight, and White's third move can easily appear squandered. Black will seek to use the extra tempo in his favor to develop quickly and to counterattack White's advanced center, hoping to seize the initiative along the way. White plans to control the game by maintaining his advanced center and the space advantage that goes along with it, or by blasting Black off the board if he tries too hard to undermine White's center. White also hopes that his e5-pawn will tilt a kingside attack in his favor or just allow him to play a lengthy game, and even endgame, where the advanced center favors White by keeping a long-term cramp on Black's pieces.

It is interesting to note that today's most dynamic grandmasters consider the Advance Variation to offer the best chances for White to secure an opening advantage versus the Caro-Kann.

3...Bf5!

As all French Defense players know, their favorite defense has just one drawback: the c8-bishop. Developing it before fixing the center is a French Defense player's dream. Indeed, what could be sweeter? Solving all our opening problems in a mere three moves.

4.h4!?

A very hard move to try to explain. I'm not even sure I can. The basic theory of the move goes like this: White's advanced e5-pawn cramps Black's natural kingside development and White hopes to be able to create a kingside attack thanks to its influence. With the text, White determines to "fix" the kingside pawn structure. Once fixed, White can then deploy his pieces to those squares he controls. That's the theory. It does look goofy to advance the h2-pawn, having just advanced the centerpawns. White is making only pawn moves.

4...h5!?

Going along with White's program. Boris obtains the g5-square; I collect the g4-square. Fair enough. Note that in this way, Black also keeps the f5-outpost for the bishop. Again, a fair deal for both players.

In subsequent games, I tried to have my cake and eat it too. That is, I'd play to retain control over the g5-square by 4...Qd7, in order to stop the g2-g4 advance. The idea would be 4...Qd7 5.c4 h6!? 6.Nc3 e6, when Black has made the h7-square available for his bishop, and has not ceded the g5-square. He is ready to fight in the center. A similar idea is to play 4...Qc8, keeping the d7-square free for the b8-knight.

Finally, another interesting line of play results from 4...h6, preparing a possible bishop retreat to the h7-square. White is practically forced to continue 5.g4, but then Black can demonstrate the flexibility of his position with 5...Bd7! (5...Be4 6.f3 Bh7 7.e6! is an unpleasant pawn sacrifice for Black to face) 6.h5 e6, transpos-

ing into an Advanced French position where White has a much accelerated kingside attack going on. But it isn't clear that all these tempi have been a wise investment, as Black will castle queenside, and the impressive chest-beating kingside advance may simply whiff and miss the target completely.

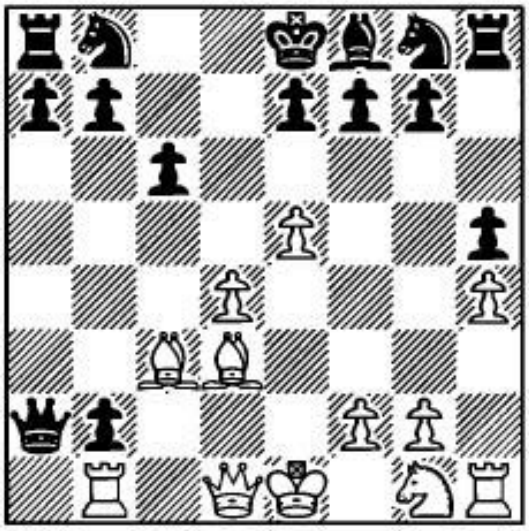
5.c4 Bxb1??

Gasp. I can hardly believe my eyes that I played this move. What was I thinking? Embarrassing to say, I know exactly what I was thinking: I thought I could clip a pawn. In short, I had a truly ridiculous tactical delusion. That said, there was also an element of wanting to "punish" White for having made so many pawn moves.

Since there is no "punishment" forthcoming, there was no reason to give up my nice f5-bishop for an undeveloped b1-knight (painful to imagine I really made that trade). Perhaps the second question mark is excessively harsh as I don't lose material after this move, but I do achieve a strategically septic position unnecessarily. (My game goes into the toilet.)

6.Rxb1 e6

Not the grandiose "win of a pawn" follow-through that I had anticipated. My plan was 6...Qa5+ 7.Bd2 Qxa2, clipping a pawn and challenging White to do anything about it. If White plays 8.Bc3, intending to trap my queen, then 8...dxc4, is my rescue as I secure the b3-square. Then in my mind's eye I began to see a problem building up. Continuing the line, White could play 9.b3, again threatening Bf1xc4 (or b3xc4) and Rb1-a1, trapping my queen. I'd be forced to take again 9...cxb3, far from having won one pawn I just gobbled three! Then White plays 10.Bd3, and to save my queen I must play 10...b2 **(Diagram 37)**.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 37. White to Play

From our analysis diagram, I now saw 11.Nh3 or 11.Ne2, and wanted nothing further to do with the line. Black has no development and White is ready to fire

salvos at Black's king with e5-e6 and much else as well. In fact, if we go back to 6...Qa5+ 7.Bd2 Qxa2, there is a very strong case to be made for the powerful 8.e6! pawn sacrifice as well. Thanks to his control over the g5-square, White is ready for natural Ng1-f3-g5 and Bf1-d3 development, and complete domination. Meanwhile as my king gets sacked I get to hold up an a2-pawn as my great reward? Ridiculous!

Realizing my whole line was a crock of manure, I found that my spirits sank and I played poorly... In the post-mortem, I asked Boris if he planned to play 8.e6, sacrificing a second pawn or not. His answer was: "Do you mean after 6...Qa5+ 7.Bd2 Qxa2? I saw only 8.Rh3! Don't I win your queen?" Missed that too. Groan again.

7.a3!

No, no, this isn't about Boris trying to save his a2-pawn, in truth he would have happily sacrificed it. This move was to prevent ...Bf8-b4+, which would help Black trade pieces, thereby reducing the influence of White's cramping center.

7...Nd7 8.Nf3 g6?

Terrible. Black wastes a whole tempo only to create further kingside weaknesses. While there is not much good to say about Black's position after 8...dxc4 9.Bxc4 Nb6 10.Bd3 Ne7, intending ...Ne7-f5, ...Nb6-d5 and ...Qd8-d7, I could plug some of the holes in my position and put up a good fight. The text misses the key to the position by a country mile.

9.Bg5 Be7 (Diagram 38)

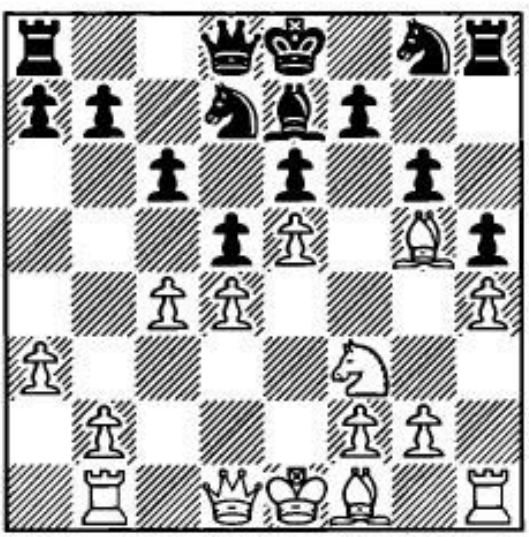


DIAGRAM 38. White to Play

10.cxd5!

And this is the obvious and simple key. From the diagram it is easy to see that White has a nice lead in development, the two bishops and a powerful central wedge. All fine pluses. But he needs to turn these advantages into something

concrete, and the proper way to do that is to open the position up by trading pawns. Hence this trade, opening the c-file, works heavily in White's favor, and it is why I had to play B...dxc4, as mentioned above.

10...cxd5 11.Bd3 Rc8 12.0-0 Kf8

Black's position is as bad a grovel as it looks. White can practically win the game on either flank.

13.Rc1 Rxc1 14.Qxc1 Kg7 15.Qf4 Bxg5 16.Nxg5 Nh6 17.Rc1! (Diagram 39)

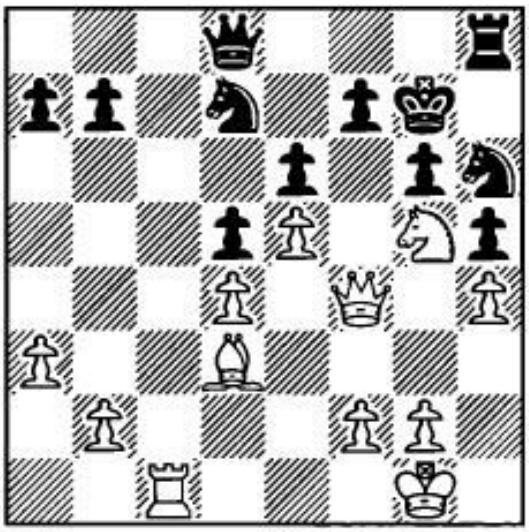


DIAGRAM 39. Black to Play

Clearly my position is being dominated, and things may well be beyond repair, but my "resistance" now goes straight into the "pathetic" category.

17...Qb6?

Misplacing the queen. As bad as things are, and they are pretty bad, Black should try 17...Nf8, in order to play ...Nf8-h7, to challenge the stout fellow on the g5-square. In that case, Black could also aspire to play ...Rh8-e8-e7-c7, challenging the c-file. Okay, I despise my position, but it was my obligation to put up the best resistance that I could.

18.b4 Re8 19.Rc3!

White need not engage in pretense but can openly telegraph his moves. The text is setting up for 20.Nxf7 and 21.Bxg6, when the rook swings along the third rank with decisive affect.

19...Re7?

Clearly not my day. My last chance was 19...Nf5, when prayer is in order.

20.Rc8!

Simple and decisive. It is as if every one of my pieces is wrong-footed. And they all are. Black is helpless.

20...Ng8 21.g4!

I thought this was a very strong move and felt like giving the position a rest. But resigning so soon? I didn't want immortality in a book of miniatures, so I stumbled onwards.

In the commentators' room, the combination 21.Bxg6!! fxg6 22.Re8! was spotted, and I have to admit that powerful shot was even better than the text.

21...hxg4 22.h5 f5

I didn't like my role in the script Boris had written after 22...gxh5 23.Nxf7 Rxf7 24.Qg5+, but the text doesn't help either.

23.exf6+ Ndxf6 24.Qe5!

Nicely played indeed.

24...g3 25.Rxg8+! Kxg8 26.Qxf6 gxf2+ 27.Kg2 Qc7 28.Qxg6+ Kf8 29.Qf6+ 1-0

I hoped I was now out of the "sure to be published miniature danger zone" and resigned. That plan, at least, seems to have worked. (In such a pile of manure there has to be a pony.)

It doesn't happen to me too often, but on occasion I've been totally crushed; as you've just witnessed. Ouch! What really annoyed me about this defeat is that after my opening mistake 5...Bf5xb1, a move I knew had to be bad even while playing it, I didn't bear down and try to save the game; rather I seemed to play poorly throughout. There is nothing wrong in losing the good fight. Just remember to fight well. And while I'm the first to admit that Boris is one of the great attacking players in chess history, I hardly put him to the test...

We will return to the 1982 Phillips & Drew tournament in our next chapter.

The 1982 Toluca Interzonal was my first attempt at the three-year World Championship cycle. I qualified through the US Zonal and went with my second/coach GM Lubomir Kavalek well prepared and in high spirits. My Interzonal featured six players from the East: Against the four Soviets, Boris Spassky, Lev Polugaevsky, Arthur Yusupov and Yuri Balashov, I earned an even 2-2 split. Against the Hungarian duo of Lajos Portisch and András Adorján, both previous Candidates, I managed to win. With a 4/6 score against the pre-tournament favorites I/we thought qualification was all but assured. Not so fast! Eugene Torre of the Philippines, Asia's first grandmaster, surprised us all, defeating me on his way to qualification and a shared first with Lajos Portisch. It was an electrifying result for Asian chess fans. I missed qualification by a point. It meant a three-year wait for another shot.

Boris Spassky-Yasser Seirawan
Toluca Interzonal, 1982
Caro-Kann Defense

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Bf5 5.Ng3 Bg6 6.Nf3 Nd7 7.Be2?!

Not a very inspiring move and certainly not superior to the 7.Bd3 played by Boris in our game from Baden. One look at the position makes things clear: the g6-bishop is an excellent piece and should be traded.

7...e6 8.0-0 Bd6 9.Re1 Ngf6 10.Bf1!?

I was having a hard time following Boris' moves. I was sure he wanted to play 10.Nh4 and win the two bishops. In response, I wanted to play for ...Bd6-f4 to trade a pair of bishops off. The text just looks like a waste of tempi.

10...Qc7 11.c4 0-0 12.Bd2 c5! (Diagram 40)

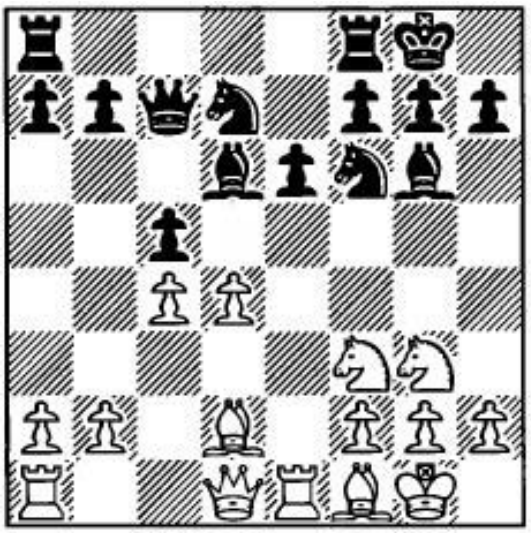


DIAGRAM 40. White to Play

As mentioned above in my notes about 1.e4 defenses: in the main 4...Bc8-f5, Classical line of the Caro-Kann, when Black makes this freeing break, he eliminates the d4-pawn and takes away any space advantage that White possessed. Indeed, with an extra center e6-pawn, the advantage may easily shift to the second player, as we are about to witness.

13.Bc3 Rfd8!? 14.Qe2

Refusing my challenge. I had hoped to induce the advance 14.d5 exd5 15.cxd5 Nb6!? 16.Bxf6 gxf6 17.Ne4 Kg7 18.Nc3 c4 when I wanted to isolate and destroy White's d5-pawn.

14...cxd4 15.Nxd4 a6! 16.Red1 Nc5

Black has gained the advantage and can think about how to play for a win.

17.Nf3 Nce4 18.Be1 Nxg3 19.hxg3

Ironically, this time it's White that has the doubled g-pawns.

19...e5

This seemed the most consequent way of improving my position. The problem is that White has a pawn sacrifice which helps Boris simplify. He immediately went for the sacrifice. With hindsight, Black can and should heighten the tension by

19...a5! in order to prevent b2-b4. Black's plan would be to creep forwards with 20...Bc5 and 21...Ne4, when White has a challenging route to equality.

20.c5! Bxc5

In case of 20...Qxc5?! 21.Rac1 Qb6 22.Nxe5 White is doing fine.

21.Qxe5 Qb6 (Diagram 41)

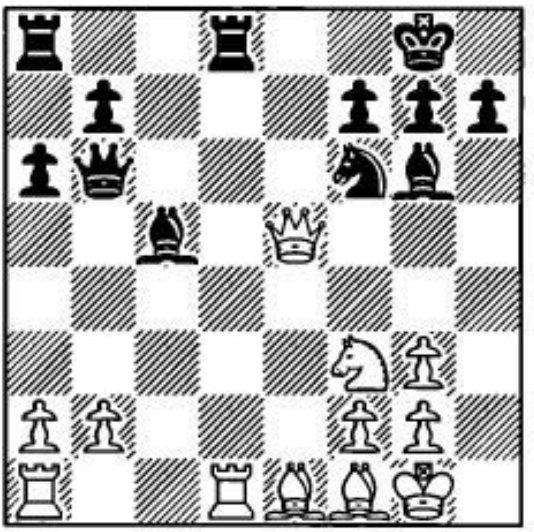


DIAGRAM 41. White to Play

22.b4!

Before this move was played I was quite optimistic about my position. Black threatens 22...Ne4, and if White should wander off with 22.Nh4? then 22...Bxf2+ 23.Bxf2 Qxf2+ 24.Kxf2 Ng4+ wins a pawn. I wasn't sure what Boris would do when I realized the text might just sail White into a playable ending.

22...Rxd1 23.Rxd1 Bxb4 24.Qb2 Bc5 25.Qxb6 Bxb6 26.Ne5 Rd8?

This is very helpful to White's defense. I should have played to keep pieces, especially my g6-bishop. The best line was the unusual maneuver 26...Bc2! 27.Rc1 Ba4! 28.Bc4 Be8!, which seems like quite a strange concept as Black is undeveloping a well-placed bishop. However, in that case White would have to soldier on a pawn down without the benefit of the two bishops. With a healthy extra pawn, I'd rate my winning chances highly. White's e1-bishop should have alerted me to the same possibility for Black...

A second attempt, still superior to the game, was 26...Bh5 27.Rb1 Bc7 28.g4 Bxe5 29.gxh5 b5, with an ending similar to the game but with far better winning chances thanks to the presence of rooks.

27.Rxd8+ Bxd8 28.Nxg6! hxg6 29.a4!

Now I awoke to the realization that with the two bishops White holds pretty comfortably. An opportunity slipped by...

29...Bb6 30.Bc4 Bc5 31.Kf1 Kf8 32.Ke2 Ke7 33.f3 Ne8 34.Bd5?!

34.a5 was stronger, clamping down on the queenside.

34... b5 35.axb5 axb5 36.Ba5 Nf6 37.Bb3 Nh5 38.Bc7 g5 39.g4Nf4+

Acquiescing in the draw, but it's really not possible for Black to make progress by keeping his knight.

40.Bxf4 ½-½

Our next encounter was at Linares, 1983, a tournament that scarred both Boris and me for life in very different ways. From my side, I had a problem with the organizer Luis Rentero from day one. My agreement to participate called for airline travel reimbursement from my Seattle home to Madrid, as well as train reimbursement for travel from Madrid to Linares; hotel and food expenses while in Linares; and something like a $1,500 honorarium. The prize fund for the event was very modest, as most of the money went into honoraria for the top players. I accepted my invitation for the simple reason that Linares was gaining a reputation for being one of the strongest events of the year. That year, the World Champion Anatoly Karpov was playing, and I wanted to participate in the strongest competitions possible, regardless of my more modest remuneration. Clear

But it seemed to me that Linares, 1983 was a tournament where "everything went wrong beginning with the starting pistol." When I asked Mr. Rentero for my airline travel reimbursement I gave his staff my airline tickets and thought that it would be a simple matter. I had purchased a discounted ticket from Seattle to New York to Madrid and back, and in fact "saved" the organizers some money by booking well in advance. Not so fast. Mr. Rentero told me he had called his travel agent and was able to get a ticket $200 cheaper to Madrid. What? I knew this was impossible because I used an agency that had the very best discounts. Secondly, even if such a feat was possible, what had that to do with anything? I paid an amount that was promised to be reimbursed.

There were back-and-forth days of haggling, and I was really becoming annoyed. Finally, we were able to clear up a misconception: I lived in Seattle, Washington. As in Washington State. Mr. Rentero obtained a quote from his travel agent for a ticket from Washington DC (District of Columbia), the capital of the USA, on the east coast and hence much closer to Madrid. I was able to point out this simple error and that in fact I lived thousands of miles away from Washington DC, in Washington State.

I thought the matter settled. Not at all. Mr. Rentero refused "complete" reimbursement and offered to "split the difference" between what he was willing to pay and what I had actually paid. I was shocked. What kind of garbage was this? I accepted his "compromise offer" and made it clear to Mr. Rentero that this would be my last Linares event.

I shared my unhappy "negotiations" with my colleagues as well. I was shocked even further when they all told me they had "issues" of their own with

Mr. Rentero. He seemed to be capable, on a whim, of handing out a cash prize for a game he liked or "fining" players on the same day for failing to engage in a full struggle. His only criterion seemed to be the number of moves made in the game. Win a short game and get a tip; draw a short game, even with a perpetual check, and get a fine. Such tips and fines were not spelled out in any agreements, and the affected players were understandably either pleased or furious, but at all times confused. What was even more amazing was that this had been going on for years. Yet year after year the players who had been furious with Mr. Rentero would return politely in the following year to kiss his arse. Well, fine, I said, "A pox on all your houses." The players and Mr. Rentero deserved one another. Me, I was done with Linares

Even writing these words now, many years later, makes me angry. Of course, the money was minor – it was the principle of how I was treated which brings me to a boil. And now to the Linares hotel where the players all stayed. The Hotel Anibal was one of those tiled buildings you see so often in Spain – there were tiles everywhere. Tiles on the floors, the bathrooms, the walls, the roof... You get the idea. Tiles can be beautiful and adorn. In summer they are lovely and reflect heat; in winter they are cold. Freezing cold. My room seemed to have no heating, and the tiled floor radiated a chill. I caught a very bad cold with a whooping cough, as did many players, and my coughing and sniffling to and from my bed to the playing hall, coupled with the lengthy organizational problems, made the event terribly unpleasant. The finishing touch, of course, was that I played miserably. I could hardly wait for the event to end.

I'm not sure if Linares, 1983 was the worst event of my life (I had five losses and just one win to finish near last place), but by every criterion that I measure tournaments it was certainly the worst event in which I ever played.

Yikes! Quite a horror story for yours truly. Boris Spassky, on the other hand, had a jarring experience in a completely opposite way from me – he won clear first, undefeated, half a point ahead of the World Champion Anatoly Karpov. Wonderful, you say. Well, yes and no. His victory had consequences. In those days Karpov was the national symbol, the flag-bearer for "Soviet chess power." Other Soviet players seemed to "defer" to Karpov when outside the Soviet Union. I don't think in the entire time that Karpov was World Champion, from 1975-1985, he lost a game to another Soviet player played outside the Soviet Union. He either won or drew all the games played against his countrymen. An impressive, but dare I say statistically improbable record indeed. As the Soviets were often the very strongest players in the tournament, going through the Soviet line-up with an equal or plus score was an excellent formula for tournament success.

As mentioned, Boris won the event and he received quite a boost from me. He won our game "twice," both times from lost positions. In the last round, Karpov as White needed a win against me to catch Boris. I held the game while the Soviet Ambassador to Spain looked on, awaiting Karpov's inevitable victory.

The rest of the story is from Boris himself: "Yasser, I owe you a big debt of gratitude and thanks. Thanks to you I was the tournament winner. I returned to Moscow and the Soviet authorities decided that because of my Linares victory I was no longer entitled to my monthly stipend of rubles as a grandmaster. Their reaction provoked me to take a harsh course. I would move to France. There was a really big fight, but I was mad, and wouldn't be compromised. I was leaving and that was it. I agreed not to make a fuss, not to speak out, no denunciations. Nothing. I would go to live my life peacefully in Paris. Thank you. Goodbye. Which is what I did and how I came to live in France. Linares 1983 was the triggering event that set everything in motion and completely changed my whole life."

So how did I blow it and turn a Russian into a Frenchman?

Boris Spassky-Yasser Seirawan
Linares, 1983
Queen's Indian Defense

1.Nf3

Another Black but, thankfully, Boris has tired of our Caro-Kann games for now. The last one, where he obtained less than nothing, may have caused him to try a different opening approach.

1...Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.d4 b6 4.Nc3 Bb4

At the time, Kasparov was popularizing the "Petrosian Variation" 4.a3, as well as the move order 4.Nc3 Bb7 5.a3, a line I wanted to avoid. Hence my choice.

5.Bg5 Bb7 6.e3 h6 7.Bh4 Bxc3+

In those days, the main lines ran 7...g5 8.Bg3 Ne4 9.Qc2 f5 10.Bd3 Bxc3+ 11.bxc3 d6 12.d5 with hair-raising adventures for both players. As I preferred White in the main lines, I chose the less critical text, which, incidentally, could easily transpose.

8.bxc3 d6 9.Bd3 Nbd7 10.0-0 Qe7 11.Nd2!

A necessity. To try to gain an advantage, White must fight for control of the e4-square. The text envisions an opportunity to play f2-f4 and e3-e4, with an impressive central phalanx. Clearly if White achieved his objective, Black would be rubbed out. The only way to hit back against this plan is on the kingside.

11...g5 12.Bg3 0-0-0

The battle lines are drawn; an uncompromising fight lies ahead. The players have castled on opposite sides, and will do their best to maul the other's king.

13.c5 (Diagram 42)

From a strategic perspective this sacrifice is as natural as a baby's smile. But before we start handing out brilliancy prizes, let us not forget that *successful* combinations occur because a mistake has been made. What has Black done that was so terribly wrong? Why should he be punished at all?

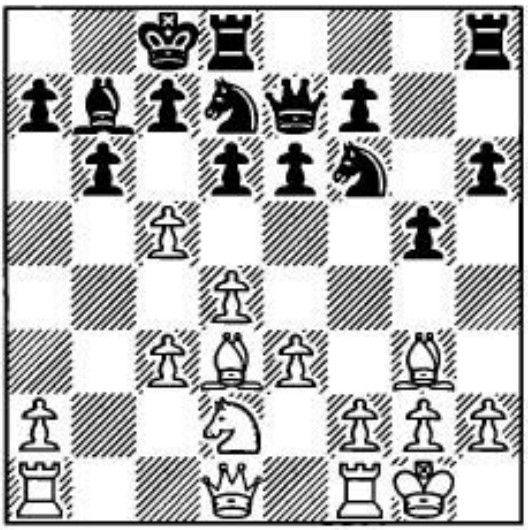


DIAGRAM 42. White to Play

From my perspective I was wondering whose attack was faster after 13.Qa4 Kb8 14.Rab1 h5 15.f3 h4 16.Be1, when White's caveman intentions are Rb1-b3-a3, and in case of ...a7-a5, to sacrifice a knight against the a5-pawn. Conversely, I'm going to have some difficulties "ripping open" the kingside.

After the text, I was quite happy. Not only because I would be a pawn ahead, thank you very much indeed, but now I have the d5-outpost for my knight to help conduct kingside operations too.

13...dxc5 14.Qa4Kb8 15.Rab1 Nd5! 16.Rb3 f5! (Diagram 43)

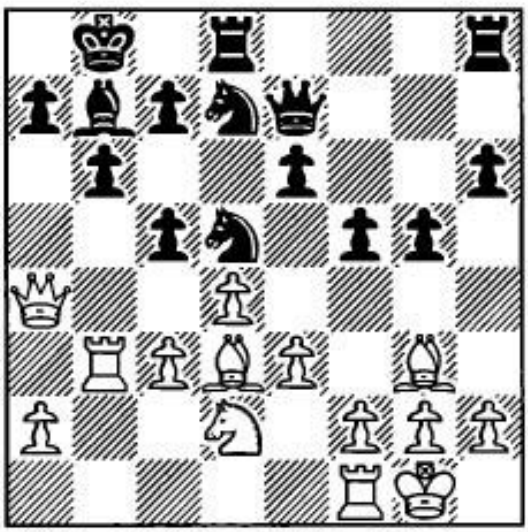


DIAGRAM 43. White to Play

And this too is the reason for my joy. As Robert Byrne likes to say, "Plain ol' ornery counterplay." If I can get in ...f5-f4, not only will I win a piece, but I'll also open some lines against White's king.

17.Ba6!?

With this move Boris burns his bridges, and there is no turning back. My main line was 17.e4 Nf4 (17...Nxc3!? 18.Bxc7+ Kxc7 19.Rxc3 Kb8 was also interesting) 18.Ba6, when I didn't know how to evaluate the position. "Dynamically even" or "both sides have chances" seem like good cop-outs.

17...cxd4 18.exd4?

With this move Boris really goes too far. Obviously 18.Bxb7? Nc5! is a disaster for White, so he must take the d4-pawn, but with 18.exd4? White recaptures with the wrong pawn. The only line going through my head was 18.cxd4 f4 19.Ra3 Qb4! when I wasn't getting mated. Indeed, I had so counted upon the defense ...Qe7-b4, that Boris must have read my mind and thought: "I must not allow ...Qe7-b4 under any circumstances." The text tosses a piece for ghost threats.

18...f4

Thank you.

19.Nc4

It's hard to say what White should do. After 19.Bxb7 Kxb7 20.Nc4, a very sturdy defensive move is 20...Nb8!, protecting a lot of squares and setting up ...Qe7-e8, completely routing the attack. But allowing Black to keep the bishops makes White's attack much harder to prosecute.

19...Ba8! 20.Bb5

For some reason I found this move rather mystifying. How could White be attacking, on the one hand, and yet be wasting tempi playing to and fro with his pieces? Of course, the move does have a point: White prepares to attack Black's a7-pawn.

Now I went into a long think and by the time I emerged I began to panic. I have no explanation why. Allow me to say "bad form" and excuse my play. Our predecessors would call this condition, "Long think, wrong think."

20...c6?!

There is a serious logic glitch with this move that can only be explained as panic. With my previous move I avoided trading bishops; with the text I toss a pawn to force a bishop trade. Hmm.

I spent most, perhaps all, of my time on the straightforward 20...N7f6!, preparing a lateral defense of the a7-pawn with my queen. Then 21.Ne5 (21.Ra3?! c6! 22.Bxc6 Bxc6 23.Qxc6 Rc8, followed by 24...Rxc4, wins for Black) 21...Ne4! at first sight looks a little frightening, as the c6-square seems quite tender. However, Black has nothing to fear after 22.Nc6+ (22.Bc6 Nexc3 23.Qa6 Nb4 24.Rxb4 Qxb4 25.Bxa8 Kxa8 26.Nc6 Qa4 wins) Bxc6 23.Bxc6 Qd6, and Black is winning. While staring at this line/position, it occurred to me how nice it would be to sacrifice an exchange and get rid of the annoying c6-bishop. Therefore the move

23...Rd6 looked promising. Unfortunately, 24.Qxa7+ would be a stock mating sacrifice. And this is where the panic set in. I now "forgot" about the winning 23...Qd6, only that the c6-bishop was frightening and that 23...Rd6 was taboo. That is how by ghost threats I scared myself into the text.

21.Bxc6 Bxc6 22.Qxc6 Rc8 23.Na5 Rxc6??

Oh my. This is just plain silly and takes panic to a new extreme. After the calm 23...Rc7 24.c4 Rhc8 25.Qa4 Ka8! 26.cxd5 exd5! both of White's minor pieces are trapped and Black is just winning. There goes my "first win."

24.Nxc6+ Kc7 25.Nxe7 Nxe7 26.c4?! (Diagram 44)

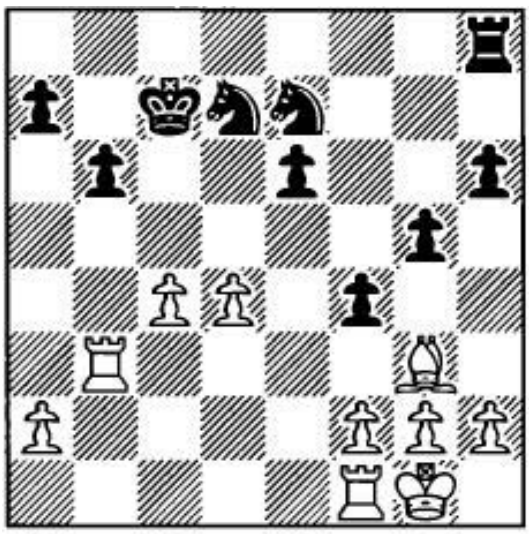


DIAGRAM 44. Black to Play

We've arrived at an ending which, while better for Black, is also playable for White. The text was inexact, though. White should play 26.Bxf4 first

26...Nc6?!

Returning the favor. With 26...fxg3! 27.fxg3 Nc6 Black has a much superior version of the game as my kingside structure is less vulnerable to attack while White's pawns are doubled.

27.Bxf4+! gxf4 28.Rd1 Rf8

Despite my stumbles to reach this position, it is still very much in my favor. We were both now growing short of time, and the game began to become a nervy affair.

29.Rh3 Rf6 30.Rh5 e5! 31.dxe5 Ndxe5 32.Rd5 Re6!

In spite of my time shortage I've played well and my advantage has grown.

33.h4 f3!

The attacking 33...Ng4 34.Kf1 Nb4 35.Rd1 was tempting, but I preferred the text as my pieces are more harmoniously placed.

34.gxf3?

A very **bad** move that tosses the point right back to me. My main line was something like 34.Rf5 fxg2 35.Kxg2 Nxc4, with a superior position and winning chances.

34...Nxf3+ 35.Kg2 (Diagram 45)

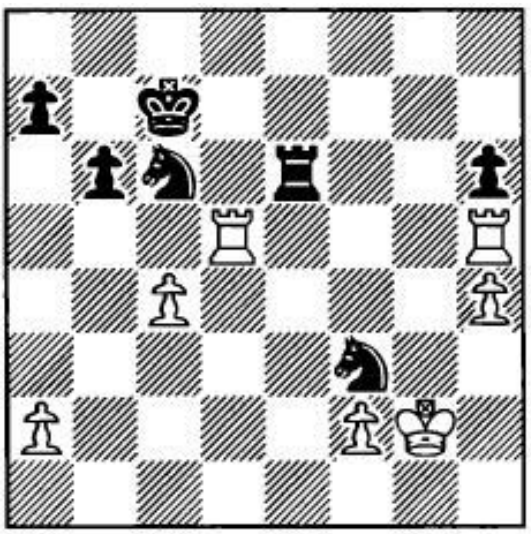


DIAGRAM 45. Black to Play

35...Nfe5??

Mystifying, mysticism or black magic? I just cannot understand how I didn't play the obvious 35...Ncd4!, setting up checkmating threats (36...Rg6+!) and winning on the spot. I had seen 36.Kg3 Rf6? 37.Kg4 and stopped looking. If I had spotted 36.Kg3 Ng1!, threatening 37...Nge2+, chess history would have been written quite differently. The text tosses away win number two.

36.c5! b5??

Completely missing the point of White's 36th move, which I thought was only an effort to trade pawns. In view of my time trouble, I should just force a draw with 36...Rg6+ 37.Kh3 Nf3 38.Rd6 Ng1+ 39.Kh2 Nf3+ and perpetual check. I saw this line and such a draw during the game, but instead dreamt of a queenside passer.

37.Rd6! Rxd6?!

White's last move came as a shock, and I reacted out of instinct (winning a pawn). Perhaps 37...Re7 was best, but after 38.Rdxh6 White is now for choice.

38.cxd6+ Kxd6 39.Rxh6+ Kd5 40.h5 a5?!

The usual last move of time control mistake as I cling to my dream of a queenside passer. Red-faced I was stunned to discover my position had gone. The knights simply cannot cope with the rook and passed kingside pawns. In the words of Nikolay Minev, "The disaster is now complete."

41.Rf6! Nd8?!

My best chance, 41...Ng4 42.Rf5+ Nce5 43.Rg5, wouldn't have saved the game, but would have offered a more stubborn defense.

42.h6! Nef7 43.h7 a4 44.Kg3 Nh8 45.Rb6 Kc4 46.a3 Ndf7 47.Kf4 Kc5 48.Rb8 Kd6 49.Rxb5 Ke6 50.Ra5 Ng6+ 51.Ke3 Kf6 52.Rxa4 Kg7 53.Ra7 1-0 (Diagram 46)

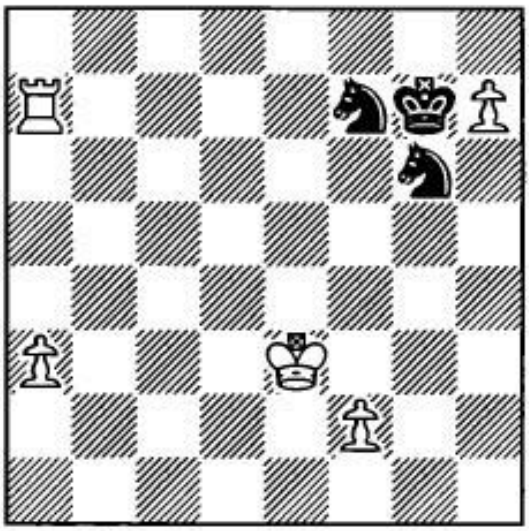


DIAGRAM 46. White to Play

One of those really, really painful defeats suffered while having the worst event of your life. Such games just go hand-in-glove with such events.

Before leaving Linares 1983 let us toss in one final straw to show how angry the gods were with me. For some reason in 1982/83 I was tempted to write a novel. A romance/adventure. Surprise! The story came to me in a flood of inspiration, and I found myself scribbling away for hours at a time over several months. I would buy one of the multi-ringed notebooks popular amongst college students and write my story. First filling one, then another and finally completing my novel with five thick A4-sized ringed notebooks. Collectively this bundle was rather bulky and up till this event I had been transporting them in my "carry-on-luggage", but now the novel was finished. It made sense to put the bulky notebooks into my "check-in-luggage" for the flight leaving Madrid. My check-in-luggage from my Madrid flight never arrived. I was reimbursed by an insurance company for the checked bag, but my novel was lost. Naturally as it was all done in long hand, I had no copies... (It would be 22 years before I would take up the novel again.)

Next, once more we return to the Nikšić tournament of superstars and pick up our personal rivalry in round ten.

Yasser Seirawan-Boris Spassky
Nikšić, 1983
Queen's Gambit Declined

1.d4

As my handling of the Black pieces against Boris hadn't brought much success, I must say it was nice to have the White pieces for a change. I'm sure Mikhail Tal had the same feelings against me during our fifth encounter.

1...Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 d5 4.Nc3 Be7

These were the days when the World Champion Anatoly Karpov would play the Queen's Gambit Declined and challenge anyone to dent his defenses. Not many could. Therefore instead of going for the well-trodden 5.Bg5 path, I chose an important side variation from Boris' 1972 World Championship match.

5.Bf4 0-0 6.e3 b6?!

This takes the game into a QGD where the f4-bishop actually turns out to be more favorably placed than on the g5-square. Theory rightly considers 6...c5 as nearly mandatory in terms of fighting for equality.

7.cxd5 exd5!? (Diagram 47)

In principle, Black usually seeks to trade a pair of pieces because of what is perceived as a space deficit and to allow for free play. I expected 7...Nxd5 8.Nxd5 exd5 9.Rc1, when according to opening theory White has the upper hand.

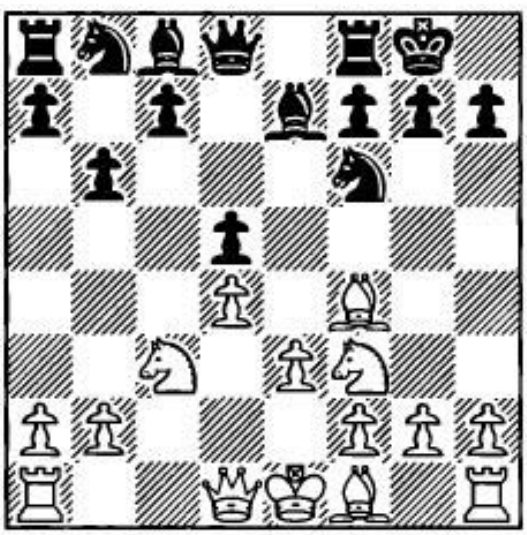


DIAGRAM 47. White to Play

8.Bb5!?

An attempt to disturb Black's scheme of development. Black wants ...Bc8-b7, ...c7-c5 and ...Nb8-d7, challenging White to find a chink in Black's center.

8...Bb7 9.0-0 c6 10.Ba4 Nbd7 11.Qe2?!

It was certainly more prudent to play 11.h3!, retaining the f4-bishop by making the h2-square available.

11...Nh5! 12.Be5! f6 13.Bg3 Nxg3 14.hxg3 f5

Black has won the two bishops but at some cost: he has advanced his f7-pawn, creating many weaknesses on the kingside as well as on e6-square. On the other hand, if White can't take advantage of these weak light squares, the f5-pawn will prove useful in controlling the center and Black will benefit. I thought the position was dynamically balanced.

15.Rfc1 Bd6 16.Qd3 Qe7 17.Ne2 Rac8 18.Rc3!?

Possibly the precursor to a tempo loss. The line 18.Rc2 c5 19.dxc5 Nxc5 20.Qd4 Qe4 seemed better for Black. Note that in this line 19.Bxd7 c4! is also better for Black. By putting my rook on the c3-square, I make the retreat Ba4-c2 possible.

18...Nf6

While Black could play 18...c5 19.dxc5 Nxc5 20.Qd4, I welcomed the opportunity to play against the isolated queen pawn. The text seems quite sensible, just parking the knight on the e4-square. Lastly, note that White also has an intriguing queen sacrifice in 18...c5 19.Bxd7 c4 20.Bxc8 cxd3 21.Bxb7 Qxb7 22.Rxd3, when White has compensation but I didn't think the sacrifice favored him.

19.Rac1 c5 20.dxc5 bxc5 21.R3c2 g6?

This additional weakening of the kingside is hard to explain. Black should play 21...Ne4, with at least equality. In fact, I slightly prefer Black's position, and I missed my second bishop.

22.Nf4 Rb8 (Diagram 48)

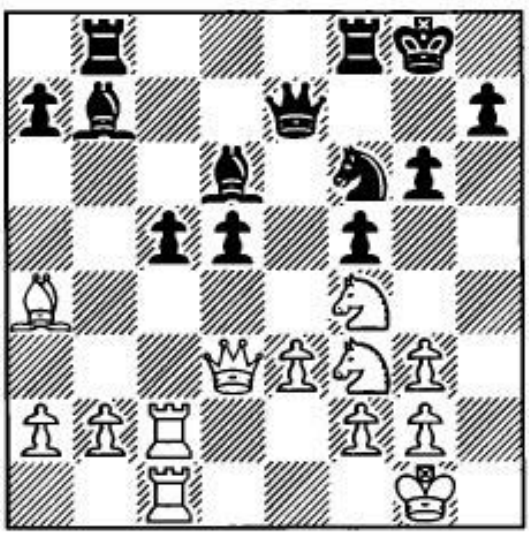


DIAGRAM 48. White to Play

23.Qd1!

I want to force either the d5-pawn or the c5-pawn to advance in order to gain squares for my pieces. The text is a preface to Ba4-b3, to achieve this goal.

23...Ba8 24.Bb3 c4 25.Ba4 Rb6 26.b3!

Mission accomplished. Now, for the first time, I was more than satisfied with my game. It seems that Boris and I read the same script about how the game should proceed, but reached different conclusions.

26...Ba3 27.Rb1 Rfb8 28.Qe2 Ne4 29.Rd1 Qf6

After this move, Boris had less than eight minutes remaining to the move 40 timecontrol.

30.Nxd5!

Sacrificing an exchange for two pawns and a knight, which is usually more than enough compensation. I thought the resulting position was better for White, whereas Boris considered the position even.

30...Bxd5 31.Rxd5 Nc3 32.Qxc4 Nxd5 33.Qxd5+ Kh8 34.Ne5! Re6 35.f4 Rbe8??

Now in severe time-trouble, Boris made a horrible oversight which ends the game. My main line was 35...Re7 36.Nc6 Rc7 37.b4! when I liked my position as I was entertaining ideas of trapping Black's a3-bishop.

36.Bxe8

Boris slumped in his seat and shook his head. We all understand that time-trouble does strange things to a player. Sometimes the mental processes just short-circuit and fry themselves.

36...Rxe8 37.Rc6 Qe7 38.Rxg6 Rf8 39.Rc6 Qg7 40.Kf2 1-0

Okay, not the most satisfying of victories. Boris rather made a gift of the game. On the other hand, I had been more than generous in our previous games as well. I was simply grateful and happy for the win.

While in Nikšić, Jan Timman told me that the organizers of the world's strongest tournament, Tilburg, would like to invite me to that year's edition. I asked Jan for his advice on a starting fee, and he suggested that I double the organizers' offer and ask for 5,000 Dutch guilders. My counter-offer was accepted.

The Interpolis tournament was everything I expected it to be and everything that the Linares tournament was not. The organizers and their entire staff were marvelously professional; the playing conditions were simply excellent; the hotel and food were good; and the players were treated like stars.

Having just heaped praise upon the organizers, I really don't recall what the story was for the following game. I'm embarrassed to say that if the organizers are going to make outstanding offers and efforts, I should match them as well and do my very best. This game was certainly not my best effort. Not at all!

Yasser Seirawan-Boris Spassky
Tilburg, 1983
King's Indian Defense

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7

While Boris has a wide opening repertoire, his choice of the King's Indian Defense (KID) was surprising. Those were the days when everyone, including their weaker sister, played the QGD as well as the Queen's Indian Defense. Generations of Soviet players had enriched the theory of the KID, but at that time the KID seemed to be in some wasteland of suspicion. It would take the emergence of Garry Kasparov to rehabilitate the KID.

4.e4 d6 5.Be2 Nc6 6.Nf3 Bg4 7.Be3 0-0 8.0-0 Re8?!

Through a tricky move order I've caught Boris in a theoretical position where I prefer White. The immediate 8...e5 9.d5 Bxf3 10.Bxf3 Nd4 11.Bxd4 exd4 12.Qxd4 wins a good pawn. The text prepares this line by creating an attack on White's e4-pawn.

9.d5! Bxf3 10.Bxf3 Ne5 11.Be2 c6 12.f3?!

I should have done without this move, as ...Nf6-g4 is hardly a formidable threat. Simply 12.Qb3! gives Black concrete problems to solve. Should he play 12...Qd7 13.Rfd1, Black's queen isn't comfortable on the d7-square. I thought that Black would play 12...Qb8, and, if so, wonderful. In that case, the a8-rook isn't so happy.

12...e6

Offering a piece sacrifice.

13.dxe6?

Having played f2-f3, I wasn't thrilled about 13.f4 Nxc4 14.Bxc4 exd5 15.Bd3 Nxe4 16.Bxe4 dxe4 17.Bd4 d5, when Black has three good pawns for the piece.

What really annoyed me after the game is that in these types of position I knew that 13.dxe6 is the correct capture. Invariably it leads to an awkward position for Black. If 13...Rxe6 14.Qb3 and White has the two bishops and a nice backward d6-pawn to gnaw on. White would double on the d-file, and Black would have no counterplay. Or 13...fxe6 14.f4 Nf7 15.Qb3 Qc7 16.Rad1 and White enjoys his space advantage as well as the two bishops. Once more, Black has little chance to develop counterplay, as while his f7-knight is an excellent defender, it has nothing else to do.

12...Nxc6 14.Qb3 Qe7 15.Rad1 Rad8 ½-½ (Diagram 49)

Drawn on the proposal of Boris. I cannot understand why I agreed to a draw in this position, which is still favorable for White. Let us call it "star power." Black has no compensation for the two bishops. After 16.Qa3, followed by doubling on the d-file, Black would have a solid but cramped position for a very long time.

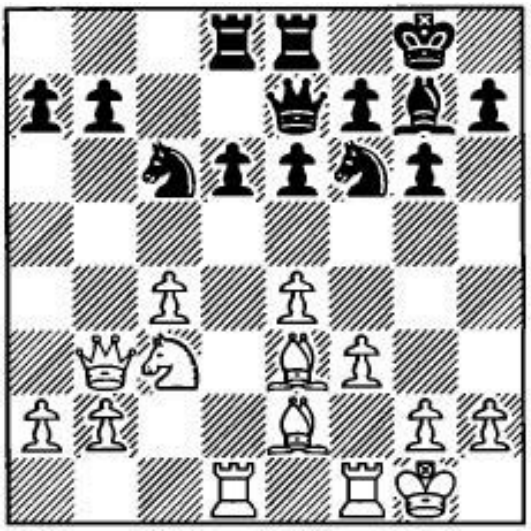


DIAGRAM 49. White to Play

One amusing story from the Tilburg tournament: the hotel where the players stayed featured an "in-house" movie channel, and one night the Stanley Kubrick movie *The Shining* was played. Those familiar with it will remember Jack Nicholson's frightening descent into madness. As the film became increasingly tense, at a certain moment I decided to watch the rest of the movie in the lobby and not alone in my room. I arrived at the lobby to deafening applause. Apparently, every other player watching the film was in the lobby as well. I was the last holdout to join them.

My next encounter with Boris was at the Zurich Open, an event celebrating the 175-year existence of the oldest chess club in the world.

Boris Spassky-Yasser Seirawan

Zurich Open, 1984

Pirc Defense

1.e4 d6

As mentioned, the Pirc/Rat was really my favorite defense. I knew it was risky, but I just had to try it, at least once, against a World Champion. An Open event seemed like the perfect setting.

2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 g6 4.Nf3 Bg7 5.h3 0-0 6.Be3 a6 7.a4!?

A rather unusual opening treatment by Boris. His initial set-up implies that he wants a kingside assault based on Be3-h6, in conjunction with castling queenside. All quite reasonable, but the text doesn't fit into such a plan.

7...b6!?

A bit provocative, but I thought 7...Nc6, intending ...e7-e5, would lead to a stale position after White trades on the e5-square.

8.Bc4!?

A highly ambitious, intuitive attacking decision. Open events force an extra dosage of risk-taking on the players in order to take a top prize, and Boris and I are both caught up in the moment. I had expected 8.Be2 Bb7 9.Nd2, with a neven position. In that case, my plan was to play 9...e6 and 10...c5, chipping away at White'scenter.

8...Bb7 (Diagram 50)

Continuing in the same highly ambitious, provocative manner. Perhaps the less valorous 8...e6 was better or merely prudent. I saw the game continuation, winning material, and thought that while I had not done anything "wrong," the two moves h2-h3 and a2-a4 didn't link well together, and that, if anything, White had done something wrong. Again, to win one has to take risks, and we were both in a gambling mood...

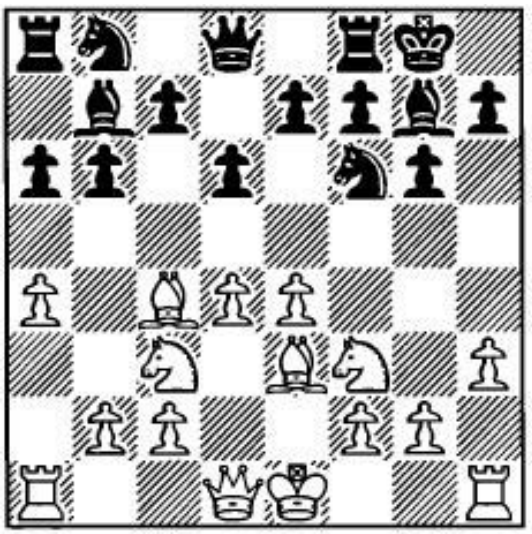


DIAGRAM 50. White to Play

9.e5

In a greater sense this move is forced and both players follow a narrow tactical path. Clearlylines like 9.d5?! c6! and 9.Nd2 d5! are helpful to Black.

9...Ne4 10.Nxe4 Bxe4 11.Ng5

Again, same comment as before. White doesn't really have a choice. If 11.0-0 dxe5 12.Nxe5 Nc6 and Black has a fine position.

11...Bxg2 12.Kxg2 Bc6

A reasonable decision. I thought there might be a variation where a defensive ...Bc6-e8 might come in handy. With the alternative 12...Bb7, I'd keep the e8-a4

diagonal open and this could be useful if I wanted to play ...Qd8-e8, hitting the a4-pawn. Not an easy choice and it was more intuition than calculation that persuaded me to try the text.

13.Qg4!

I definitely thought this the most annoying as White just masses pieces on the kingside. I hoped for 13.e6? f6 14.Nf7 Qc8!? 15.d5 Be8 16.Nh6+ Kh8 when White has overextended himself.

13...e6 14.0-0-0 Nd7!?

Continuing to be as provocative as ever. A more cautious move was 14...Qe7, to fortify the f7- and e6-pawns.

15.h4!?(Diagram 51)

While Boris was thinking over this move, I was really beginning to have some worries about 15.Nxf7 Rxf7 16.Qxe6 Qf8 when, if he likes, White could win an exchange by 17.Qxf7+ Qxf7 18.Bxf7+ Kxf7 19.d5 Bxd5 20.Rxd5 Nxe5, with a plus for White.

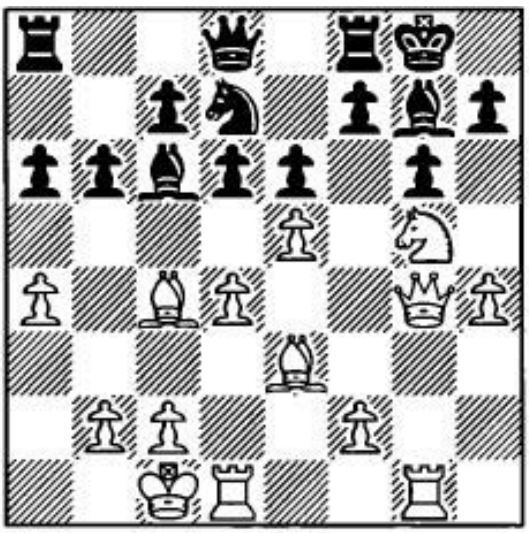


DIAGRAM 51. Black to Play

Now I face the old caveman attack. White just grabs his clubs and starts beating the position as harshly as possible. In truth, I was rather happy to see this, as I thought the attack was unlikely to succeed. Even so, Black's defense is not easy, and now is the moment Black must make a key decision.

To take or not to take the e5-pawn? That is the question.

15...dxe5

By capturing at once, I open up the d-file and "allow" Boris to sacrifice an exchange. On the other hand, the line 15...Qe7 16.h5 dxe5 17.Nxh7! was really disconcerting. My continuation of this line went 17...Kxh7 18.hxg6+ Kg8 19.gxf7+ Rxf7 20.Bxe6 Kf8 21.d5!? Nf6 22.Qh3 and simply put I didn't like my game. In-

deed, what is there to like? White is having all the joy.

With the text, I force White to respond to the threat of ...Nd7-f6, and slow his attack for a move...

16.dxe5 Qe7 17.Rxd7!

Both forced and good. White plays with the same élan that he started with when playing 8.Bc4, since when the players have been at the mercy of the forceful winds.

As before, White couldn't pause for 17.f4? Rfd8! 18.h5 Nf8! when I've solidified my kingside and I liked my game. Soon, it will be my turn to start trading (...Rd8xd1) or pursue an attack (...Bc6xa4; ...b6-b5), when I'm in business.

17...Bxd7 18.h5 (Diagram 52)

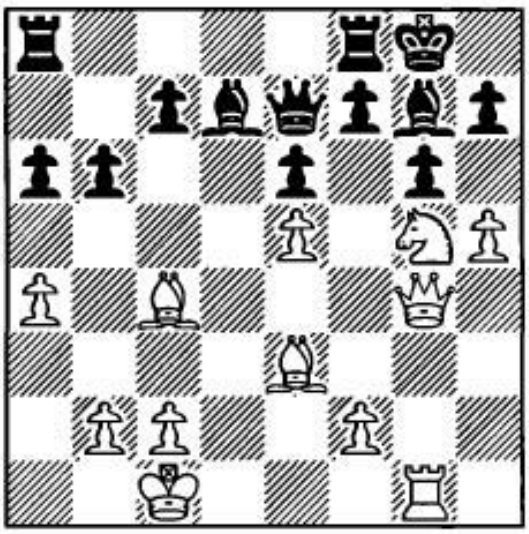
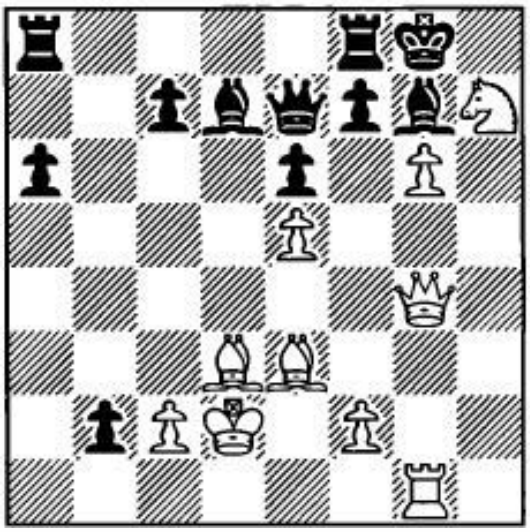


DIAGRAM 52. Black to Play

Boris is an unstoppable attacking machine. Even so, I had the impression that I "should be winning," but I didn't see my win. For starters I'd been worrying about the sacrifice Ng5xh7, for quite a while and it was really annoying me. The win I wanted had to begin with grabbing the e5-pawn with ...Bg7xe5, then playing ...Qe7-b4 to go on the offensive. This was the "win" that I had been counting on for some time. The line that was really confounding was 18...Bxe5? 19.Nxh7! Qb4 (my win) 20.Bd4! Qxc4 21.Bxe5 Qxg4 22.Nf6+ Kg7 23.h6+!!, and White stands much better. This line came as a real shock. Going from winning to worse? I kept spinning my jets "analyzing" this line like a broken record. I was sure it held my elusive win, which I never found. It was only with great reluctance that I gave the line a rest.

The other forcing continuation, going after White's king, was 18...b5!?, which seemed to be altogether wrong. Why force the c4-bishop on to a more dangerous diagonal? Nonetheless, I made an effort to look at this "wrong line" – after all, it

is an attempt to get at White's king. The line continued 19.Bd3 bxa4 20.Nxh7! a3! 21.hxg6 axb2+ 22.Kd2, which brings us to an analysis diagram **(Diagram 53)**.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 53. Black to Play

Damned if I knew what was going on here: 22...f5 23.exf6 Rxf6 seemed "forcing", and now the players could toss a coin in the air to decide who wins.

This second line made me think that 18...b5 was a gamble or even too much of one. It also provoked a sense that some lateral defense of the h7-pawn was needed.

18...f5?

A bad move which succeeds only in weakening my kingside. It turns out that 18...b5 was the necessary move.

There was one other funny line that looked terrible, but I didn't bother to refute it: 18...h6!? 19.Ne4 g5 20.f4 looks dreadful for Black, but 20...Kh8 is not so easy for White.

19.Qh3!

Very nicely played. White avoids 19.exf6 Qxf6, which would help me defend my king while gaining a tempo against the b2-pawn as well.

19...f4?

Suddenly, my position is no longer so attractive, but this throws the game away on the spot. I had to play 19...gxh5 20.Qxh5 h6 21.Nh3, which is nice for White. However, after 21...Kh8! 22.Nf4 Qf7 I can keep kicking. Not that I would like my position.

20.hxg6! Bxe5

Not my intention at all. When I played 19...f4, I thought that I had 20...h6, attacking two white pieces. I had set up this really great cheapo – 21.Nxe6 Kh8!!, intending 22...Rae8 – when it suddenly dawned on me that after 20...h6 I had no

threat to take the g5-knight at all. White could just ignore my "threat" and play 21.Bd2, and whoops, I'm in deep doo-doo. White is ready to play Ng5-f7, and wins. The text unfortunately doesn't help either. Perhaps I should have played my intended 20...h6, after all.

21.Nxe6! Bxe6 22.Bxe6+ Kg7

Or 22...Kh8 23.Rh1 and I can give up.

23.gxh7+ 1-0

A very good win by Boris. A sparkling game, in fact. I missed my one chance to hold with 18...b5, and after that it was all downhill for me. Some days you just have to tip your hat and say "Bravo and well done!"

The US Open has long been regarded as the most prestigious Open event in American chess history. I first played in the Chicago, 1973 edition as a 13-year-old, and that event holds great memories for me, as does the Lincoln, 1975 edition. At the 1985 US Open, I tied with Boris Spassky and Joel Benjamin for first place, winning the trophy on tie-breaks. This was our crucial match-up game.

Yasser Seirawan-Boris Spassky
US Open, Hollywood, Florida, 1985
Queen's Indian Defense

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 b6

Not at all unexpected. Indeed, I would have been surprised had Boris played a Queen's Gambit Declined or a King's Indian. As mentioned, in those days the Queen's Indian Defense was all the rage, and it just seemed as if everyone played it.

4.Nc3 Bb7 5.Bg5

Besides the text, there are two other choices: 5.a3, the Petrosian Variation, which Kasparov was using to tear up the world; and 5.g3, offering to transpose into a mainline Queen's Indian where the move order has denied Black an opportunity to play ...Bc8-a6 lines. I thought the text would be the most uncompromising.

5...Be7!

Darn. This move sunk me. I had hoped to get the variation 5...h6 6.Bh4 g5 7.Bg3 Nh5 8.e3 Nxg3 9.fxg3! Bg7 10.Bd3 on the board, as I had seen some games by Valery Salov that I thought he handled really well. The text is kind of a hybrid line of the QGD and the Queen's Indian that fits well together.

6.Qc2

Thanks to Black's move order he threatens the freeing move 6...Ne4, with a fine game. The text covers the e4-square, but who knows if White's queen is optimally placed.

6...h6! 7.Bh4 d5 8.cxd5

Not much choice here. Black is ready to play ...d5xc4, going for a Queen's Gambit Accepted-type of position where White has played Qd1-c2, which isn't very good in those positions.

8...Nxd5 9.Nxd5?!

Tossing away any pretense of gaining an opening advantage. White's best was 9.Bxe7 Qxe7 10.e4 Nxc3 11.bxc3 0-0 12.Bd3 c5 13.0-0, when in my mind's eye I saw that Black would play ...Ra8-c8, picking up a tempo against my c2-queen. I thought that would mean easy enough equality. Maybe not. Oftentimes the maneuver Qd1-c2-e2 is played by White in such positions, and he still has his central phalanx to which to cling.

9...Bxd5 10.Bxe7 Qxe7 11.Rc1

The big idea. I hope to win the c7-pawn.

11...0-0 (Diagram 54)



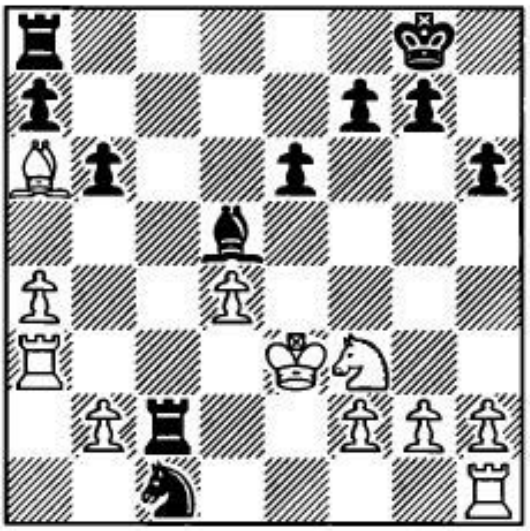
DIAGRAM 54. White to Play

12.e4?!

Very annoying. I've played for the win of the c7-pawn, and now I argue myself out of it. Talk about not being very consistent. Of course, I understood that "winning" the c7-pawn wouldn't give me a won position or anything of the sort; rather, I knew that Black would have "sufficient compensation." But there is a difference between sufficient compensation and equality. I feared that if I took the c7-pawn Black would gain "total equality". Hence the text.

Here was what I calculated: 12.Qxc7! Qxc7 13.Rxc7 Na6! 14.Rc3 Nb4 15.a3? Na2! when I preferred Black's position. The problem is that 15.a3, wanting to gain a tempo against the knight, is a serious mistake. Rather, 15.a4 (15.Kd2!?) is the proper way forward. The line would continue 15...Rfc8 16.Kd2 Na2 17.Ra3!

(the important point – White isn't forced to trade rooks, which is helpful for Black's initiative), when Black goes 17...Nc1 (17...Nb4? 18.Ne1!), whereupon White plays 18.e4, returning the pawn for development. Then 18...Bxe4 19.Ba6 Rc2+ 20.Ke3 Bd5 brings us to our analysis diagram **(Diagram 55)**:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 55. White to Play

I reached as far as 21.Rc3! Rxc3 22.bxc3 Nb3, and the game "felteven." That is true enough, but I didn't give the position at move 18 enough consideration. I think that instead of 18.e4, White can try 18.Ne5, when Black still has to prove his pawn sacrifice.

Postscript: One amusing line that appeals to me would go 18.Ne5 Nb3+ 19.Kd3 f6 20.e4 fxe5 21.exd5 Nxd4 22.Ke4, where the general leads his army into battle.

In any event, I should have played 12.Qxc7, and just returned the a2-pawn.

12...Bb7 13.Qxc7

Not a move that can be described as "beautifully timed." After 13.Bd3 Rc8 14.0-0 c5 Black has fully equalized. The text I thought gave chances for a favorable imbalance of the pawn structure.

13...Qb4+! 14.Qc3 Qxc3+ 15.bxc3 Bxe4 16.Ne5 f6! 17.f3 Bh7!

This last sequence of moves have been very nicely played by Boris. Without the last two little moves in particular, I thought that I could gain a pull in the position.

18.Ng4 Nc6 19.Bc4 Rfe8 20.Ke2!? Na5 21.Ba6 Rad8 22.Rhd1 (Diagram 56)

Okay, full confession. I'm not exactly rocking the chess world with sparkling play here, but I thought that here Black could easily slip into a difficult position. White has a space advantage, the slightly more active pieces and the possibility to reset by Ng4-e3, followed by a kingside charge. What are the a5-knight and

h7-bishop really doing, after all? In short, the position has a dollop of poison, and Black can easily be lulled into a false sense of security. In fact, exact play is needed and Boris responds well to the challenge.

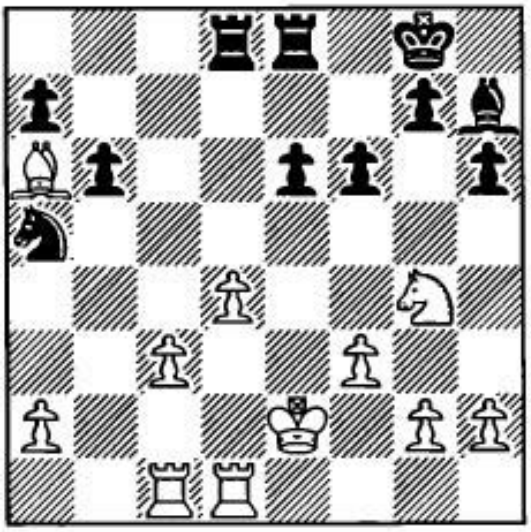


DIAGRAM 56. Black to Play

22...Re7! 23.Ne3 Bg6!

Darn! Very fine defensive play indeed. Black immediately seeks to activate his bishop by ...Bg6-e8-a4, when in conjunction with ...b6-b5, I may soon find my own a6-bishop misplaced.

24.Bb5 Be8 25.Bxe8 Rexe8

Thanks to Black's fine operation of trading bishops what chances there may have been in the position have slipped away.

26.f4 h5 ½-½

Drawn on the offer of Boris. In my view, these last two games have really highlighted Boris at his very best: consummate attacker and gifted defender.

Once more, we now return to Montpellier and the Candidates' tournament in France, where I previously faced Vassily Smyslov and Mikhail Tal. Of all our contests together, this game was the most painful and left me the most sore at Boris.

The story goes like this: we were scheduled to play in round nine of the tournament. My seconds Ulf Andersson and Miguel Quinteros and I rented a home outside of the city, and we would all drive into town together and to the playing hall. We arrived at the playing hall at our normal time well before the start of the game. I went to my table and filled out my scoresheet, waiting for Boris and the game to begin. The Arbiter came to tell me that Boris had an earache. That to accommodate Boris, he, the arbiter, had rescheduled the game for tomorrow's

free day. That was it, just like that. Well clearly, this was more than annoying for me. I had made plans for the free day, and if I had known there would be no game for me that day I would have stayed home.

Now I made a dreadful mistake. I stayed to watch the round. Lourdes, Ulf Anderson's wife, begged me to go back home and to "enjoy the free day." She knew something that I did not. I failed to follow her sage advice. By the time we returned, all the game-watching and analyzing left me with the impression that I had played the round.

The next day we went to the playing hall. The whole place was empty, no players, no spectators – just a few arbiters, Boris and me. It was a very strange feeling. I couldn't shake the concept that somehow we were "playing outside of the event," and that the game became disconnected from the "real tournament."

Boris seemed absolutely fine. The earache had passed.

Now we move to a completely different aspect of the story: the rules. Simply put, in those days the rules allowed the players and arbiters to move the schedule of play easily. So, to be clear, Boris was well within the rules to request a free day because of his illness. On the other hand, there are rules and there is the spirit of play. I was clearly negatively affected by the changed schedule. My opinion was not sought, and nor was my consent given. Boris knew in advance that the game was rescheduled; I did not. Today, such timeouts cannot be made. Either you play at the scheduled time or you forfeit. The player simply has to follow the schedule of play. I like the rules of today. I've played with splitting headaches, an upset tummy and dreadful jet-lag, but have never requested a timeout or rescheduled a game.

Boris Spassky-Yasser Seirawan
Montpellier Candidates', 1985
King's Gambit

1.e4 e5

I had started to take up the Petroff Defense and really liked the positions I was obtaining.

Boris now began rolling his head back and forth from left to right, and made hand movements as if tossing an imaginary coin into the air, catching it and flipping it over to see what he would play.

2.f4!

The King's Gambit. Talk about catching me flat-footed. Of course, I knew that Boris did, on occasion, play the King's Gambit, but somehow I had put it out of my mind and out of the realm of possibility. I began to think and think. Could I play something a little offbeat and perhaps catch Boris in his own specialty?

2...exf4 3.Nf3 Ne7?!

A combination of over-the-board inspiration and poor home analysis. I was trying to think about the main lines and a blitz session I'd had with Robert Byrne. He too liked playing the King's Gambit as White, and I had come off pretty well in those games. The line I liked best for Black went 3...g5! 4.h4 g4 5.Ne5 d6 (much attention had also focused on 5...Qe7 6.d4 d6) 6.Nxg4 Nf6, returning the pawn for "comfortable development." My preparation, in case anyone would play the King's Gambit against me, continued 7.Nxf6 (7.Nf2 Rg8 8.d4 Bh6 looks fine for Black) Qxf6 8.Nc3 Nc6! 9.Nd5 Qg6 10.Qf3 Nd4! 11.Nxc7+ Kd8 12.Qc3 Qg3+ 13.Qxg3 fxg3 14.Nxa8 Nxc2+ 15.Kd1 Nxa1, with a typically scrappy kind of position that I more or less analyzed out to a draw.

So, why didn't I play my "main" preparation? Well, a thought intruded while I mused over what to play. There was a player, Jacob Yuchtman, a defector from the Soviet Union, who I used to play blitz against when visiting New York City. He had recommended the text and we had analyzed it together superficially, and somehow right now it seemed to fit the bill for taking the game off the beaten track. I hoped to catch Boris off guard.

4.d4 d5 5.Nc3 dxe4 6.Nxe4 Ng6?

And this is the very big deal. Black simply defends "his" f4-pawn and challenges White to show compensation. Of course, Black must not be allowed ...Bf8-e7 and ...0-0, when he simply stands much better, if not close to winning. White has to strike quickly and hard, disrupting Black's scheme of development, or else he will be worse. In passing, 6...Nd5 is reasonable for Black and is the best move.

7.h4!

Without this move, White stands worse. My problem was that I didn't think White could play the text.

7...Qe7? (Diagram 57)

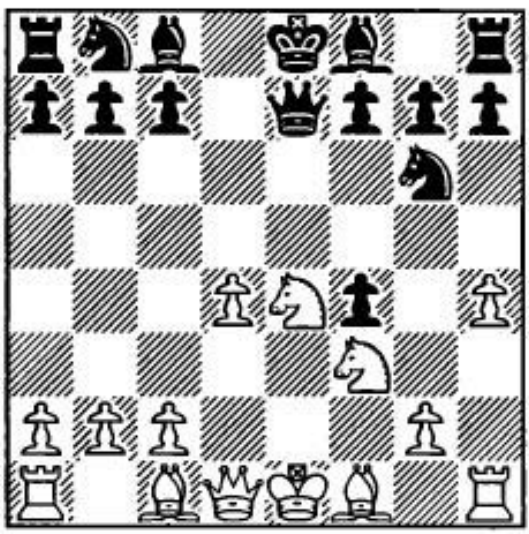


DIAGRAM 57. White to Play

Simply put, I wrongly thought that White's play was now refuted. After the "forced" 8.Qe2 h5, Black can be confident about the rest of the game. I would complete my development by ...Bc8-g4, ...Nb8-c6 and ...0-0-0, while holding on to the f4-pawn. And my game literally plays itself.

With hindsight the text is a mistake. I should have continued 7...Bf5 8.8d3 (8.Qe2 8b4+! 9.c3 0-0! is fine for Black.) 8...Be7 9.h5 Nh4, with a roughly even game. I hardly gave this line consideration because I thought that, in the diagrammed position, White was in trouble.

8.Kf2!!

A real zinger. A powerful move that totally rocked my boat. As in our game in Zurich, my play was supposed to bring me an expected victory (...Bg7xe5 and ...Qe7-b4) that simply wasn't there. My analysis had simply stopped at 8.Qe2, and I never considered anything else, let alone the text. The move refutes my set-up.

8...Bg4

It was stunning how severely I had wrong-footed my own pieces. My queen on the e7-square is clearly misplaced, interfering with the development of my f8-bishop, which in turn, keeps my king in the center...

Of course, White wants to play h4-h5, drive away the g6-knight, and capture the f4-pawn with wonderfully harmonious development. I can't play 8...h5, which gives up the g5-square. Indeed, after 9.Neg5 I'm sunk. White is ready for 10.Bd3 and 11.Re1, not to mention 10.Bc4, when I hate myposition

In my view, things are now so bad I should probably have sacrificed my queen with 8...Qxe4!? 9.Bb5+ c6 10.Re1 Qe7! 11.Rxe7+ Bxe7 12.Bd3 Bg4 13.Qe1 Bxf3 14.8xg6 Bd5! when for sure White has a clear advantage, but there are some holding chances.

9.h5! Nh4 (Diagram 58)

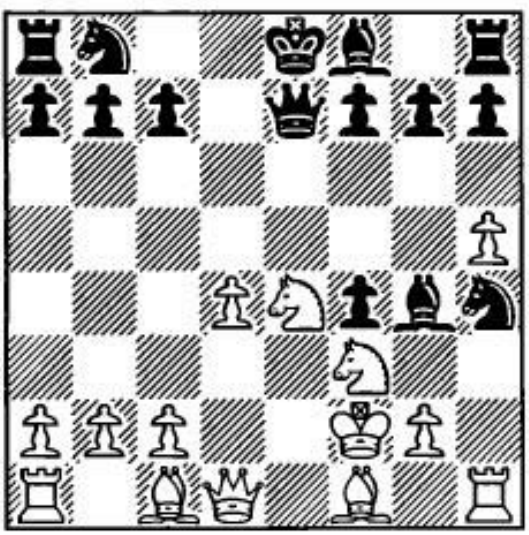


DIAGRAM 58. White to Play

This wasn't my intended choice either. I thought I could bail out with 9...Bxh5!? 10.Rxh5 Qxe4, when I certainly didn't trust my position, but neither did I think I was lost. However, the more I looked at 11.Bc4!, the worse my position seemed to become. Besides threatening Bc4xf7+, there was also a Bc4-d5 threat, winning the a8-rook. I didn't see anything better than 11...Qe7 and then there was 12.Ne5 and, horror of horrors, the h5-rook is magnificently placed as well. Our rescheduled game was turning into a nightmare.

10.Bxf4

A moment of gleeful triumph for King's Gambit players. Hard to imagine more stupidly-placed black pieces and more harmoniously-placed white ones. Groan.

10...Nc6 11.Bb5!

Making sure that my king will not find comfort on the queenside either. After the text, not surprisingly, Black is basically lost.

11...0-0-0 12.Bxc6 bxc6 13.Qd3! Nxf3 14.gxf3 Bf5 15.Qa6+ Kb8 16.Nc5 Bc8 17.Qxc6 Rxd4 (Diagram 59)

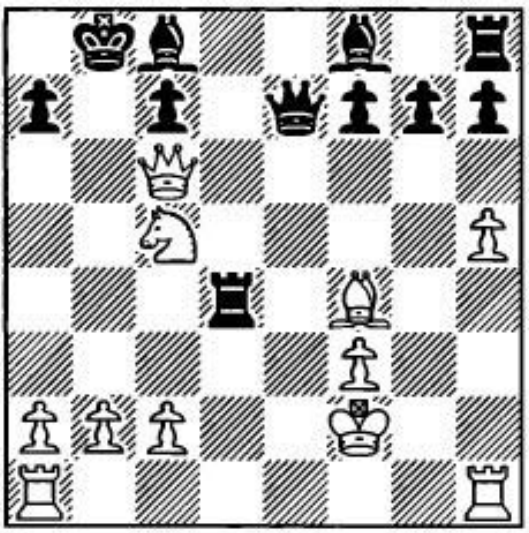


DIAGRAM 59. White to Play

18.Rae1!

Splat. And just like that I'm lost. Boris played the rest of the game in very accurate style. A deserved, or even inspired, win.

18...Rxf4 19.Qb5+ Ka8 20.Qa6+ Kb8 21.Rxe7 Bxe7 22.Rd1 Rf6 23.Nd7+ Bxd7 24.Qxd7 Rd8 25.Qb5+ Kc8 26.Rxd8+ Bxd8 27.Qa4 g5 28.Qxa7 Rf4 29.Qa6+ Kb8 30.Qd3 Be7 31.Qxh7 g4 32.Kg3 1-0

After the game Boris apologized to me: "Yasser, I'm sorry I had to reschedule the game. I tried to call you in your hotel room to ask for your understanding,

but you were not checked in there. I'm sorry." There it is. What to say? Sometimes, bad things happen.

Our last classical chess tournament encounter took place at the GMA World Cup in Barcelona in a grand cathedral. I came to the game with an idea to mix things up right from the opening.

Boris Spassky-Yasser Seirawan
Barcelona, 1989
Caro-Kann Defense

1.e4 c6

Upon seeing this move, Boris committed a wonderfully blatant rule violation and openly spoke to me: "Yasser, why do you torture me with this Caro-Kann business?" I didn't know what to say and could only laugh with him. One thing for sure, it was certainly better than losing to a King's Gambit.

2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Nxf6+ gxf6 6.c3

As mentioned, on occasion I enjoy playing the Bronstein Variation of the Caro-Kann. White's last move is considered the proper treatment as White keeps his development schemes flexible. An early 6.Nf3 Bg4 allows a pin and easy development for Black, whereas now if Black tries to develop the c8-bishop by 6...Bf5 7.Ne2 Nd7 8.Ng3 Bg6 9.h4 h5 10.Be2, White can go for the win of the h5-pawn, as in J.Peters-Y.Seirawan, US Championship, 1984.

6...Qd5 (Diagram 60)

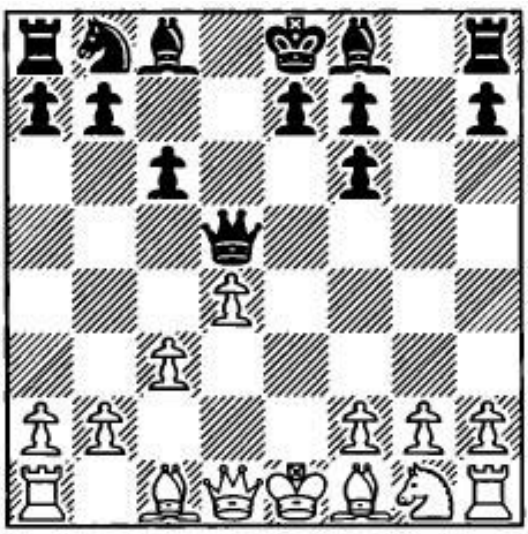


DIAGRAM 60. White to Play

My big idea. I just put my queen in the middle of the board in Scandinavian style and say: "Go ahead. Try to find an advantage."

7.Ne2?!

This really does not make a good impression. I thought White's best chance was 7.Nf3 Rg8!? 8.Qb3 Qxb3 9.axb3 Be6 10.b4 Nd7, with a small plus for White.

The text merely encourages me to carry out my plan in a very comfortable way.

7...e5!

Preventing Ne2-f4, and grabbing squares in the center.

8.Be3 Be6 9.Qc2 Nd7 10.a3

Not exactly an inspiring move. When White has to play such a move prior to castling queenside, it is time to back up and confess something has gone wrong already. Unfortunately, according to the rules, we are not allowed to take back our moves.

10...0-0-0 11.0-0-0 Nb6

Good enough for a small plus, but second-best and inexact. A stronger line was 11...Qa2! 12.Qb1 Qb3! 13.Qc2 Nb6, first bringing my queen to the b3-square with gain of tempo. Now White has a problem to solve: how best to complete his development? White's problem is that he can't transpose into the game by 14.dxe5, because 14...Qxc2 15.Kxc2 Bb3+ 16.Kxb3 Rxd1 is an exchange sacrifice White might be unwilling to make. However, should he try 14.Ng3 Na4, Black is making a gradual drift of pieces to the queenside and towards White's king. Suddenly, sacrificial continuations start to abound. Black can also consider 14.Ng3 Qxc2+ 15.Kxc2 Nc4, playing on the light squares as well as trying to gain the two bishops.

12.dxe5!

Well played. White flees into an even ending, as opposed to an unpleasant middlegame. Otherwise, with ...Nb6-c4, on the agenda, Black has good light-squared play.

12...Qxd1+ 13.Qxd1 Rxd1+ 14.Kxd1 fxe5 15.Ng3 f5 16.Bd3 e4 17.Be2 c5 18.Nh5 ½-½

Drawn at Boris' suggestion.

Our total classical chess tournament results ended with one win, four losses and five draws, i.e. an overall 3½-6½ score in favor of Boris.

Our final tournament encounter took place during the Kasparov versus Karpov 1990 World Championship match in New York City, at the Hudson Theater. Between the games of the World Championship, Bankers Trust sponsored a USA versus the Rest of the World Match. The conditions of play were a series of mini-matches of two games each. The time-control was 15 minutes per player for the entire game. In case of a 1-1 tie, the players would continue to play five-minute games until a winner was decided. My match with Boris was the longest of these mini-matches

I started with a win as Black, which meant the match was practically over. Understanding the dire predicament he was in, Boris threw caution to the wind and tried 1...b5?!, which worked like a charm. There was a second drawing of colors, and this time two draws, but again Boris got away with 1...b5 as Black. Now a third drawing of lots with no possibility of "revenge." This time Boris went to the well with 1...b5 once too often, and I won our mini-match.

Surprisingly, the USA actually won the match 11-9; see *Inside Chess*, Issue 24, December 10, 1990, page 9 for full individual performance details.

Boris Spassky-Yasser Seirawan
1st matchgame, USA vs. the World, New York (rapid), 1990
Caro-Kann Defense

1.e4 c6

At the time of this encounter, the time-controls for "rapid chess" weren't fiimly set. While classical (six-hour sessions) and blitz (five minutes per player) time controls were more or less clear, rapid chess games could be defined as anything from 15 minutes per player to one hour per player for the whole game. There was a question therefore of whether or not when playing rapid chess the players should "keep score" – that is, write down their moves. Since we had use of electronic boards the decision was made that we didn't have to write down our moves, but could let the electronic board capture the score for us. Which again causes other types of problems. How would the players know about a three-time repetition? What about the 50-move rule? And so on. Thesequestions were left unanswered. We would just play sportingly.

Again, please let me emphasize the distinction: I think rapid and blitz are completely different kinds of chess from classical games. The quality of play goes down as the time-control gets faster. Games One and Two are "rapid" and Games Three, Four and Five of this series are "blitz."

2.d4 d5 3.e5

Back to the Advance Variation.

3...Bf5 4.Nf3 e6 5.Be2!?

At the time, Nigel Short was introducing his entirely new treatment of the Advance Variation. Nigel's principal idea was to say, "Well done. You have an f5-bishop. But I don't think it is doing anything useful for you there." He has won some fabulous games with his system, but I think it is a crock for White and I've called his treatment, the Short *Defense*. In my view, White will soon seize the defensive. Needless to say, Nigel has tried to correct my "defamation" of his variation. With some real success, I must confess.

5...Ne7 6.0-0Nd7 7.c3 c5 8.Be3 Ne6 9.Nbd2 Be7 (Diagram 61)

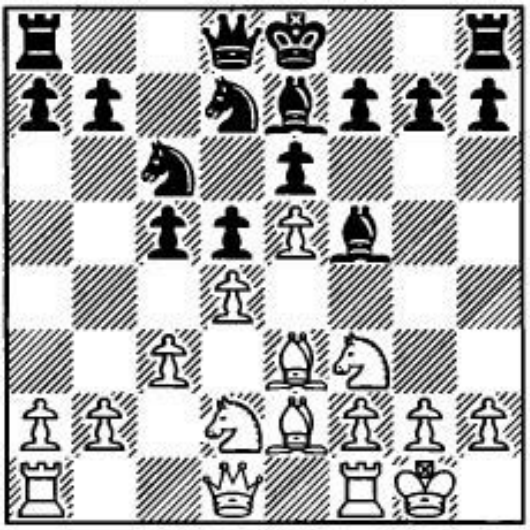


DIAGRAM 61. White to Play

I've achieved a very pleasant "French Defense" with my often septic c8-bishop actively placed on the f5-square. I prefer Black's position already. Sorry, Nigel!

10.Re1 0-0 11.a3!?

Trying to force the resolution of the central tension by threatening the b2-b4 advance.

11...c4

In turn, attempting to keep my advantage alive by not trading. I thought that White would do fine after 11...cxd4 12.Nxd4! Nxd4 (12...Ndxe5 13.Nxf5 is sufficient compensation for White) 13.Bxd4, with an even game. With the text I hope for a queenside roller by ...b7-b5, ...Nd7-b6-a4, and so on.

I certainly wasn't afraid that, thanks to the e5-pawn, I would face a kingside mating attack, as the f5-bishop is a fine sentry.

12.b4 cxb3 13.Qxb3 Na5 14.Qa2 Rc8 15.c4 dxc4 16.Nxc4 Nxc4 17.Bxc4 Nb6 18.Bb3 Be4!

Through simple play I've now gained the superior position. The f5-bishop comes alive.

19.Rec1 Qd7 20.a4 Bd5 21.a5 Bxb3 22.Qxb3 Nd5 23.Bg5 Rxc1+ 24.Rxc1 Rc8 25.Ra1?

Although I stand slightly better, this is a serious error that I don't understand at all. I thought 25.Rc4 h6 (25...Bf8!?) 26.Bxe7 Nxe7 would be the most sensible line of play, when I hoped the a5-pawn might prove to be a fatal weakness. Perhaps Boris felt the same way, but giving up the c-file?

25...Bf8!

Remember, at its most basic level chess is a game where you want to keep your "good pieces" and you want to saddle your opponent with his "bad pieces."

In this case, White's g5-bishop is just a bad bishop.
26.Bd2 h6 27.h4 Ne7! (Diagram 62)

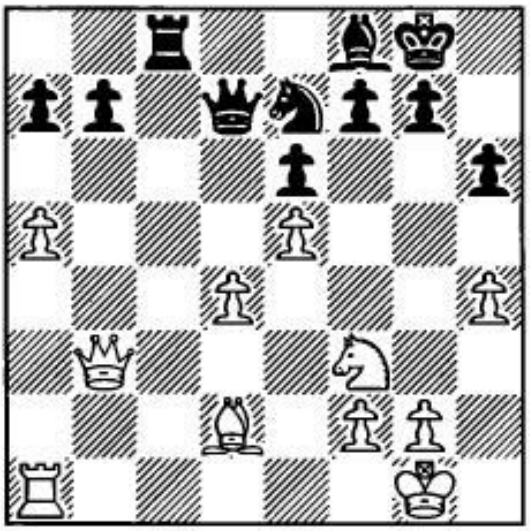


DIAGRAM 62. Black to Play

The d5-knight makes a glorious picture, no doubt about it, but it is an empty creature flailing away at nothing. Now it is time to put it to good work hitting some weak white pawns.
28.Rb1 Rc7 29.Qd3 Qa4 30.g4?! (Diagram 63)

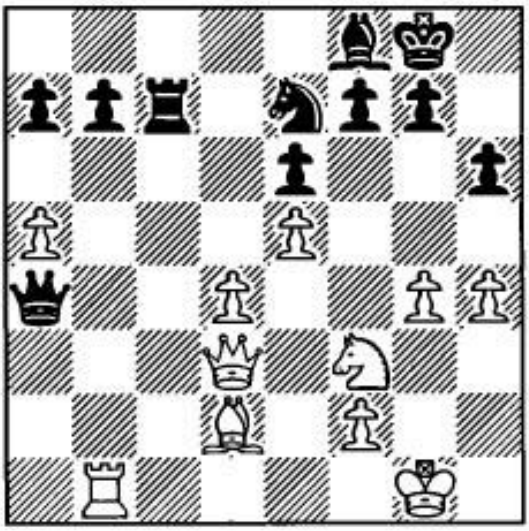


DIAGRAM 63. Black to Play

Okay, I will be the first to admit that Boris has enjoyed some outstanding

moments of success when attacking my king. I've panicked, choked and in general played like a defensive idiot when pressed by him. But going on the attack when clearly defense for Whitewas job one? Hmm. Enough is enough!

30...Rd7 31.Qb3?!

Well, all right, Boris has second thoughts about 31.g5 h5, giving up the f5-square. But the text plays right into my hands as I can now concentrate on attacking the weak d4- and a5-pawns

31...Qxb3 32.Rxb3 a6! 33.Kf1 Nc6 34.Ke2 Be7! 35.Kd3 Bd8 36.Ra3 Rd5! (Diagram 64)

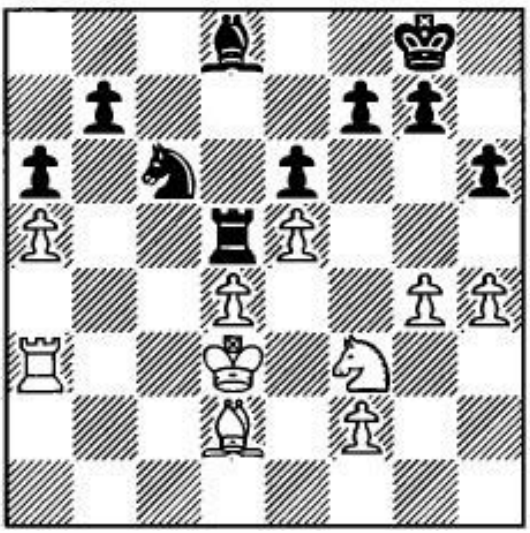


DIAGRAM 64. White to Play

Mission accomplished – now the game is won.

37.Rb3 Bxa5 38.Bxa5 Nxa5 39.Rb6 Kf8 40.Nd2?!

This is a little helpful as well.

40...Nc6 41.Nf3 Rd7! 42.g5 hxg5 43.hxg5 g6!

With the kingside now locked up and secured, I can crawl with my king along the first rank and up to the queenside, where the connected passers decide.

44.Kc4 Ke8 45.Rb1 Kd8 46.Rh1 Kc7 47.Rh4 b5+ 48.Kc3 Kb6 49.Nd1 a5 50.Rf4 a4 51.f3 Rc7 52.Kb2 Nb4 53.Kb1 Nd5?

Much simpler was 53...a3, as well as 53...Nd3!, attacking the f4-rook and preparing ...Rc7-c1+-c2+, winning White's knight. On the other hand, the text is so wonderfully "positional."

54.Rh4 b4 55.Ne4 Nc3+ 56.Nxc3 Rxc3 57.d5 Rb3+ 58.Ka2 exd5 59.Rf4 Kc5 60.Rxf7 Re3 61.f4 Re2+ 62.Kb1 b3 63.f5 a3 64.Rc7+ Kd4 65.fxg6 a2+ 66.Ka1 Re1+ 0-1

Yasser Seirawan-Boris Spassky
2nd matchgame, USA vs. the World, New York (rapid), 1990
Polish Defense

1.d4 b5

Why not? When you absolutely have to win with Black, playing something as irregular as this has its merits. By the way, I'm not sure where the naming for this Defense comes from. Do Poles really want the credit? Or is it the blame? I think it was Tartakower who started it all in the "modern" era, playing 1.b4 in the famous New York, 1924 tournament, with the story that he dedicated the game to an orangutan he saw at the zoo. The opening sometimes bears that name as well.

2.e4 Bb7 3.f3 a6 4.c4?!

Definitely helpful for Black. I thought I had spotted an opportunity to put Boris into a really strong bind. With hindsight, 4.a4 would be my choice today.

4...bxc4 5.Bxc4 e6 6.Qb3 Qc8 7.d5!?

This advance was what I had in mind. If Black misplays the next move or two, the game could be over in a hurry.

7...Nf6 8.Be3 (Diagram 65)

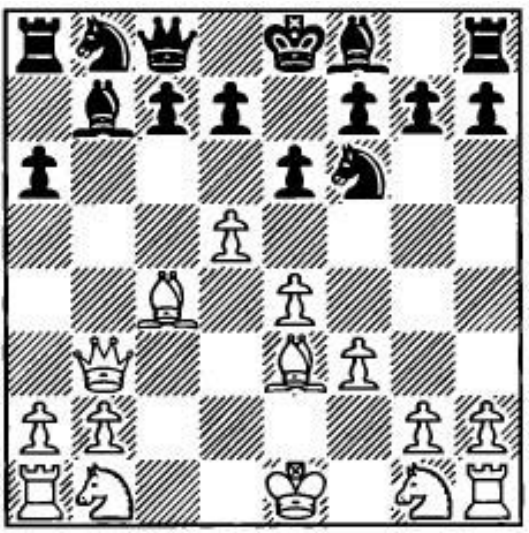


DIAGRAM 65. Black to Play

This was the position for which I was aiming. Optically, it appears as if White has a massive bind on the position. How will Black develop his queenside pieces? Obviously, if White mobilizes by Nb1-c3 and Ra1-c1, and Black's pieces remain stuck at home, the game is over.

8...a5!

A very good move, without which Black would just be strategically lost. Now Black is able to solve his queenside development adequately and he obtains a reasonable game as well. Simply put, I missed this move when playing the whole line. I guess Black's third move made such a strong impression on me that I thought the a6-pawn would remain glued to that square for the rest of the game.

9.Nc3 Na6 10.dxe6?!

The game continuation is based on an oversight on my part. I think 10.Nge2 was best, with an even game.

10...fxe6 11.e5?!

At the time I played my last two moves I thought things were fine and still going my way.

11...a4? 12.Qd1 (Diagram 66)

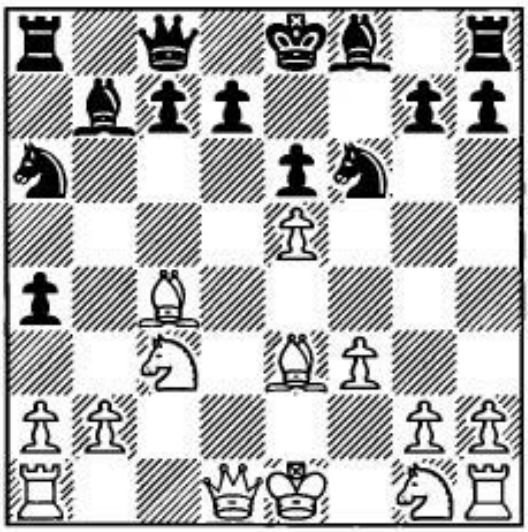


DIAGRAM 66. Black to Play

12...Ng8?

Mutual blindness. What is the whole idea of the early queenside fianchetto? Why, to play ...Bb7xg2 of course. Either 11...Ng4! or 12...Ng4! would have been a bit embarrassing, with advantage to Black in both cases.

13.Nge2?!

More sensible was 13.Nxa4, taking a pawn and stopping any queenside molestation. Since I'm happiest when grubbing a pawn, failure to do so here is especially strange.

13...a3! 14.Rb1 Ne7 15.0-0 Nf5 16.Bf2 axb2 17.Rxb2 Bc5 18.Qd2

Not a bad move, but in view of the match situation it was advisable to simply go for the draw with 18.Qb1! Bc6 19.Bd3 0-0 20.Bxf5 Rxf5 21.Nd4 Rxe5 22.Nxc6

dxc6 23.Ne4, with an even ending.

18...0-0 19.Ng3 Bxf2+ 20.Qxf2 Ne7 21.Rfb1 Bc6 22.a4 Kh8 23.Qe3 Ng6 24.Bb5 Nb8 25.Nce2?!

This loses some tempi. Simply 25.Nge2 and Nd4 is better for White.

25...Qd8 26.Rc2 Bd5 27.Nc3 c6 28.Bd3 Nf4 29.Bf1 Na6 (Diagram 67)

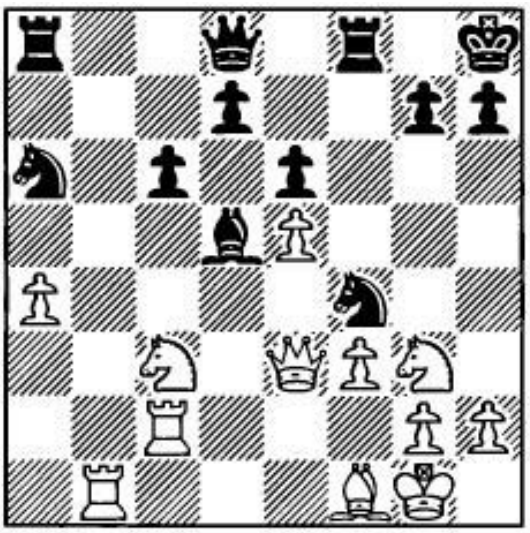


DIAGRAM 67. White to Play

So far, not too much has really happened, other than a little piece-shuffling. I've managed to keep a small advantage. Now 30.Nge4, intending g2-g3 and f3-f4, keeps everything nicely under control.

30.Rb7 Qe7 31.Qb6? Qc5+!

How embarrassing. I simply missed that this move was tactically possible. I thought Black's knight was trapped and I was kicking it back to the b8-square and perdition. As 31...Nc5? 32.Nxd5 wins a piece, I thought the same was true after the text: 32.Qxc5 Nxc5 33.Nxd5, but I forgot that my b7-rook is *en prise* to 33...Nxb7, winning an exchange.

32.Kh1 Bc4!

A very crafty move which solves Black's problems. I wrongly thought that Black's position was hanging by a tactical thread when in fact it was a strong rope.

33.Qxc5

The tactics were suddenly becoming a little hairy. I thought 33.Bxc4 Qxc4 34.Rxd7 should still be okay *or* perhaps even good for me, but I realized that 34...Nd5 35.Qb2 Nab4 36.Rc1 Nd3 37.Qe2 could easily end in a tragic accident. Unfortunately, this queen trade is simply excellent for Black. In the upcoming ending my e5-pawn is too weak.

33...Nxc5 34.Rb4 Bxf1 35.Nxf1 Ncd3 36.Re4 Nc5?! (Diagram 68)

36...Ng6 was much stronger. The textgives me an unexpected opportunity.

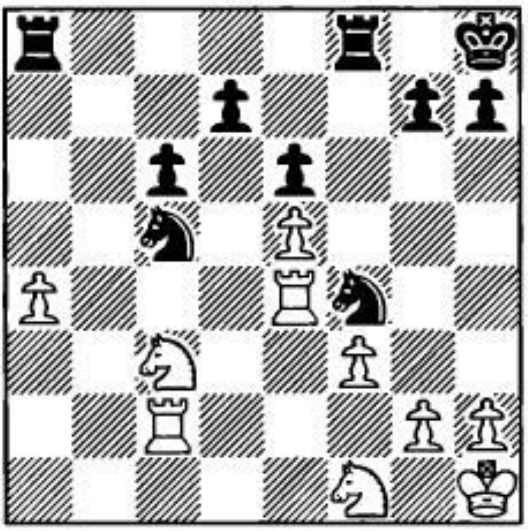


DIAGRAM68. Whiteto Play

37.Re3?

Going quietly into that long good night. My best chance was 37.Rxf4! Rxf4 38.Ne2 Rfxa4 39.Rxc5 R8a5 40.Rxa5 Rxa5 41.f4 Ra2 42.Nfg3 Ra1+ 43.Ng1 c5 44.Ne2 c4 45.g3, with good holding chances.

37...Nxa4 38.g3 Nxc3 39.Rexc3 Nd5

Nowwith an extra pawn and a terrificd5-mule, Blackis just winning.

40.Rb3 Rfb8 41.Rcb2 Rxb3 42.Rxb3 Kg8 43.Rb7 c5! 44.Rb2 c4! 45.Rc2 c3 46.Rc1 Ra2 47.f4 Rb2 48.Kg1 Kf7 49.h3 h6 50.Nh2 c2 51.Kf2 Nb4 52.Ke3 g5 53.fxg5 hxg5 54.Nf3 Kg6 55.g4 Rb3+ 56.Ke2 Rxf3 57.Kxf3 Nd3 0-1

All right, no one likes losing. Especially with White. But to 1...b5? That really was insulting! To settle the mini-match, we now had to play a set of five-minute blitz games. Boris drew the White pieces.

Boris Spassky-Yasser Seirawan
3rd matchgame, USA vs. the World, New York (blitz), 1990
Caro-Kann Defense

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Nxf6+ exf6?!

I have doubts about this, considering the resulting position to be a plus for White. My choice was motivated by a desire to have as safe a king as possible.

6.c3 Bd6 7.Bd3 0-0 8.Ne2 Re8 9.Be3 Nd7 10.Qc2 Nf8 11.Ng3?!

White should do without this move and play 11.0-0-0 at once.

11...g6 12.0-0-0 f5 13.Ne2 Qa5 14.Kb1 Be6 15.b3 Qc7 16.Qd2 a5 17.h4 a4 18.b4 h6 19.Bf4 b5 20.Bxd6Qxd6 21.Nf4 Bd5 (Diagram 69)

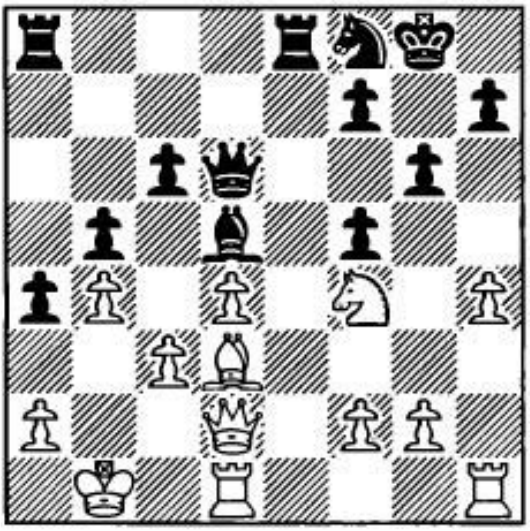


DIAGRAM 69. White to Play

Not much has been happening, and the game is about even.

21.Rde1 Ne6 23.Nxd5 Qxd5 24.f3 Ng7! 25.Rxe8+ Rxe8 16.Re1 Rxe1+ 27.Qxe1 Ne6 28.Qe3 Kg7 29.Kb2 h6 30.g3 f6!?

An interesting attempt to prove that if any side has an edge, it is the queen and knight side versus the queen and bishopside.

31.Be2 g5 32.hxg5 hxg5?! (Diagram 70)

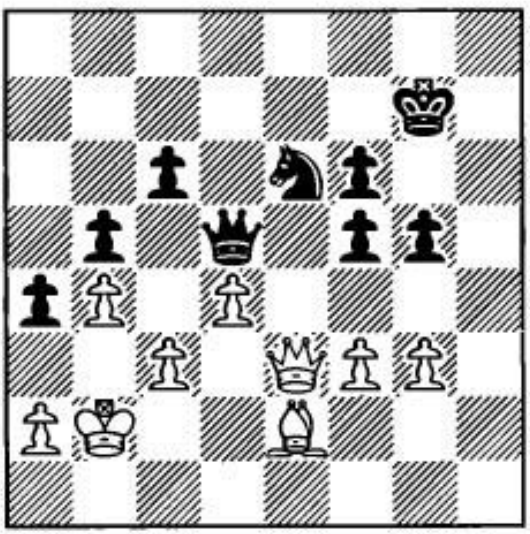


DIAGRAM 70. White to Play

With 32...fxg5, restoring my kingside structure to full functionality, I would have a small chance.

33.Bd3 f4 34.gxf4 Nxf4 35.Bc2 Ne6?!

35...Kf7 was better, playing for ...f6-f5, although the game should still be drawn.

36.Qe4 Qxe4?

This looks like a creeping time-trouble error. Just 35...Nf4 keeps a comfortable draw. Now White has a big plus.

37.Bxe4 Nd8 38.c4! bxc4 39.Kc3 Kf7 40.Kxc4 Ke6 41.Kc5 f5 42.Bd3??

This also seems to be a frightful time-trouble error. We both had the same blind-spot. 42.Bxc6 was an obvious and good move. Then 42...Nxc6 43.d5+ Kd7 44.dxc6+ Kc8 45.b5 g4 46.fxg4 fxg4, and while 47.b6 only draws, 47.Kd4!, hunting down the g-pawn, would win.

42...g4 43.fxg4 fxg4 ½-½

A courtesy draw offer from my side as Boris would likely have lost on time.

Yasser Seirawan-Boris Spassky
4th matchgame, USA vs. the World, New York (blitz), 1990
Polish Defence

1.d4 b5

Boris needed a must-win game as Black, and this worked once. A reasonable decision to have another go? I decide not to try to refute the line, but played quietly.

2.Bf4 Nf6 3.Nf3 Bb7 4.e3 a6 5.h3 e6 6.Bd3 d6 7.0-0 Nbd7 8.Nbd2 c5 9.c3 Be7 10.a4 Qb6 11.axb5 axb5 12.Rxa8+ Bxa8 13.Qe2 c4 14.Bc2 d5 15.Ra1 0-0 (Diagram 71)

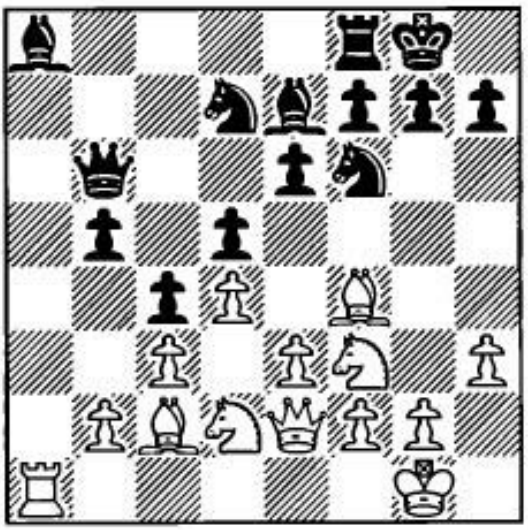


DIAGRAM 71. White to Play

16.Qd1?!

There is playing quietly and then there is putting the position to sleep. Arguably, with 16.e4, there might still be something in the positionfor White.

16...Bc6 17.b4cxb3 18.Bxb3 Ra8 19.Rxa8+ Bxa8 20.Qa1 Bb7 21.Ne5 Nxe5 22.Bxe5 Ne8 23.Bd1 Nd6 24.Be2 Nc4 25.Nxc4 bxc4 26.f3 f6 27.Bg3 Kf7 28.Bd1 Qa6 29.Qxa6 Bxa6 30.Kf2 ½-½

Not a magical mystical feat that would stir the hearts of poets.

Nowthe situation was sudden death. The victor in the next game would win the match. A third drawing of lots and I was White for game five, a blitz, five-minute game like the previous two.

Yasser Seirawan-Boris Spassky
5th matchgame, USA vs. the World, New York (blitz), 1990
Polish Defence

1.d4 b5

Now this is really too much. It was time to play for a refutation.

2.e4 Bb7 3.Bd3! e6 4.Nf3 a6 5.0-0 d6 6.c3 Nd7 7.a4! Ngf6 8.Re1 Be7 9.axb5 axb5 10.Rxa8 Qxa8 (Diagram 72)

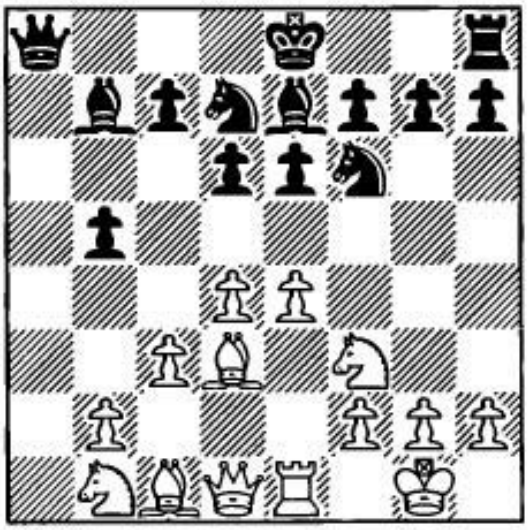


DIAGRAM 72. White to Play

11.e5!

Direct, consequent play has its rewards. White now stands better.

11...dxe5 12.dxe5 Nd5

There would be no compensation after 12...Bxf3 13.Qxf3 Qxf3 14.gxf3 Nd5 15.BxbS, as the doubled f-pawns aren't as important as the two bishops.

13.Bxb5 Bc6 14.Bxc6Qxc615.Nd4 Qb7 16.Qg4!

An extra pawn and the initiative as well. The position is almost won.

16...g6 17.Nd2 c5?

I was happy to see this move, as the c5-pawn limits the activity of both the d7-knight and the e7-bishop.

18.N4f3 h5 19.Qe4 Qc7 20.Nc4 h4? 21.Bg5! Bxg5 22.NxgS Rh5? 23.Nxe6! 1-0

Full disaster, and Boris lost the match.

I would like to leave this chapter on Boris Vassilievich Spassky with the following story. It is one that he himself likes to tell, and he does it so very well:

"It was a Soviet Championship. This meant that there was a Women's Soviet Championship played alongside as well. I was at the cafeteria/restaurant with my second, Isaac Boleslavsky. We were having our dinner when the lady ... came to sit besides us. She was in a rage. Quite angry. It was clear that she had lost her game that day. She implored Boleslavsky to help her for the next round.

"Boleslavsky nodded his assent. (He took a deep slow breath, breathing heavily through his nose – Boris imitates his second.) 'With whom do you play tomorrow?' Boleslavsky asked.

"With so-and-so comes the answer.

(Deep slow breath through the nose is taken.) 'She will play 1.e4.'

(Deep slow breath through the nose is taken.) 'You will play 1...e5.'

(Deep slow breath through the nose is taken.) 'She will play 2.Nf3.'

(Deepslow breath through the nose is taken.) 'You will play 2...Nc6.'

(Deep slow breath through the nose is taken.) 'She will play 3.Bc4.'

(Deep slow breath through the noseis taken.) 'You will play 3...Nd4.'

(Deep slow breath throughthe nose is taken.) 'She will play 4.NxeS.'

(Deep slow breath through the nose is taken.) 'You will play 4...QgS.'

(Deep slow breath throughthe nose is taken.) 'She will play S.Nxf7.'

(Deep slow breath through the nose is taken.) 'You will play S...Qxg2...'

"I, of course, followed the whole conversation closely. The next day the same situation. This time the lady comes rushing to the restaurant and to our table in extremely high spirits. She comes to Boleslavsky and gives him a deep kiss on the lips, grabs his cheeks and says, "Thank you very much! The gamewent exactly as you said it would! I have won brilliantly!" Then the ladyturns to me, looks me up and down with a look of complete disgust and says, "Ha! With such a second, I could be World Champion too!"

For me, Boris Vassilievich Spassky was not only one of my toughest opponents – he is the fifth greatest chess player the world has ever seen.

Classical Games versus Boris Spassky

Spassky-Seirawan, Baden, Austria 1980: ½-½
Spassky-Seirawan, London, United Kingdom 1982: 1-0
Spassky-Seirawan, Toluca, Mexico 1982: ½-½
Spassky-Seirawan, Linares, Spain 1983: 1-0
Seirawan-Spassky, Nikšić, Yugoslavia 1983: 1-0
Seirawan-Spassky, Tilburg, Holland 1983: ½-½
Spassky-Seirawan, Zurich, Switzerland 1984: 1-0
Seirawan-Spassky, Hollywood, Florida, USA 1985: ½-½
Spassky-Seirawan, Montpellier, France 1985: 1-0
Spassky-Seirawan, Barcelona, Spain 1989: ½-½

Seirawan: one win, four losses, five draws. Classical score 3½-6½

Rapid Games versus Boris Spassky

Spassky-Seirawan, New York, USA 1990: 0-1
Seirawan-Spassky, New York, USA 1990: 0-1

Seirawan: one win, one loss: Rapid score 1-1

Blitz Games versus Boris Spassky

Spassky-Seirawan, NewYork, USA 1990: ½-½
Seirawan-Spassky, NewYork, USA 1990: ½-½
Seirawan-Spassky, New York, USA 1990: 1-0

Seirawan: one win, no loss, two draws. Blitz score 2-1

Chapter Seven

Anatoly Karpov, 1975-1985

This chapter is devoted to the 1975-1985 World Champion Anatoly Yevgenyevich Karpov, a player of extraordinary powers.

Whereas Spassky's name is linked to Fischer's, Karpov's name is inextricably linked with not one but two great players: Robert James Fischer and Garry Kasparov. Anatoly or "Tolya" was, after all, the villain who received Bobby Fischer's World Chess Championship title crown by forfeit. For fans like me, we *knew* that had Bobby contested the 1975 match, he would have won. Laying a laurel wreath on Anatoly's shoulders was an insult to chess fans and a betrayal of the title. For millions of dedicated chess fans, the title "World Champion" was supposed to mean "world's best player" too. I was convinced that in 1975 Bobby was the world's best player. It hardly mattered to me what some national delegate attending a FIDE General Assembly might say about the matter. The only opinion that counted – at least for me – was my own.

Who Owns the Title?

Karpov's receipt of the world title in 1975 by forfeit raised a profound and deeply disturbing question for the chess world. Who "owns" the title of "World Champion?" Prior to Mikhail Botvinnik, the public recognized the World Champions certainly as "wearers of the title," but was it theirs to own?

The title wasn't a property that one could hand away. When Emanuel Lasker tried in 1920 to bestow the title upon his Challenger, José Raúl Capablanca, without playing, the public didn't want to hear about it and refused to accept Lasker's decision. The match was played in Havana after lengthy delays. Before play began, Lasker insisted on being treated as the Challenger. As he made clear in his correspondence, he had previously given away the title to Capablanca before their match began. Now, at least in his view, he was playing to regain his lost crown.

The public didn't share Lasker's point of view. Lasker was the World Champion and recognized as such by the public until the day he resigned the title in a contested match. But it was not a title or piece of property he could give away or bestow upon a Challenger, worthy or not. The World Champion *possessed* the title, like a caretaker, but it was not owned by him. When Alekhine died as the title-holder a new event was needed. It had to be staged in such a way that the public would accept the contest as legitimately creating a worthy new World Champion. Or at least someone who had done something worthy enough that it might be said, "well, out of the Candidates, he is close enough." Close enough to claim to be the world's *best* player.

Will the Real World Champion Please Play?

From Alekhine's death while still World Champion, we fast-forward to Anatoly Karpov in 1975. Certainly, Anatoly had achieved what was required by the rules to become Challenger. But the overall sense of the public was that there was a gulf between Challenger and Champion, and that Bobby was simply far superior. Unlike Alekhine, Bobby had not passed away, and although Anatoly was close he was not the real thing. He was not close enough. And therein was the rub: in 1975, Anatoly Karpov was a paper champion and the public, certainly the Western public, simply wasn't willing to have the FIDE wool pulled over their eyes. And so began a strange interplay of dynamics that would last another two decades, if not longer.

"Everyone" (that is, fans like me) knew that Bobby Fischer was the world's best player, but as long as he stayed out of competition there was nothing to debate. The "real champion" wasn't playing and showed nothing. Anatoly, on the other hand, desperately wanted to be accepted as a *genuine* World Champion, along with being recognized as the world's *best* player. His mission was simple: if he wanted to be treated or thought of as a World Champion, he would have to play against the best players in the best events and win. And win often. He did. Anatoly was the world's best player amongst active grandmasters.

Anatoly's first test as "defending FIDE Champion" came in 1978, when again he faced Victor Korchnoi, this time sanctioned as a World Championship. He won the match by the narrow margin of six wins versus five losses, with 21 draws. By the end of the match, Anatolly was fading badly, losing three of the last five games. His victory was much too close for comfort and didn't dissuade his critics, even if they grudgingly admitted that defeating Victor Korchnoi, the second-highest ranked player, was no mean task. The victory margin was harrowingly slim.

Another three-year cycle came and went; Anatoly remained an active World Champion, winning or tying for first in virtually all the events in which he participated. In 1981 he faced Victor Korchnoi for a third time in a match that would determine the Champion's title. This time the result was a decisive six wins, two

losses and ten draws performance. Anatoly dominated the shortest World Championship match in post-war history. A new Karpov, a version 3.0, was born.

The Anatoly Karpov of 1981-1984 was a player the world had rarely seen before. This was not a "first amongst equals" World Champion – this was a World Champion that we had hoped Bobby Fischer would blossom into becoming: a World Champion of indisputable credentials, one cut above his colleagues. Anatoly played in all the major events and won most. In the years 1977-1985 a new type of event was being born: the Category 15 event – an event so strong that in the history of chess only a handful had been staged. Category 15 events became annual fixtures, and Karpov either won or shared first in just about all of them.

Every chess player has an opinion about what would have happened in a hypothetical 1975 showdown between Bobby and Anatoly. I'm no different. Bobby would have won 10-4 with about 20 draws along the way. But by 1984 Anatoly Karpov had grown into a formidable World Champion and would have defeated any challenger, including, in my estimation at least, Bobby. It is really unbelievable how good Anatoly was during this period. In my opinion, Anatoly Karpov is the second greatest chess player the world has ever seen.

But Karpov has suffered a cruel fate. He had to contend with an opponent that no one could overcome – the shadow of Bobby Fischer. No matter how great his accomplishments, no one could ever know for sure whether Karpov was the true Champion, because he never played his first great rival. This was a tragedy for the chess world, for Anatoly and, arguably, for Bobby as well.

Despite this, Karpov compiled a tournament and match record that will never be equaled, not even by the greatest chess player ever, Garry Kasparov. There is real irony in the second blow delivered to Karpov by the Chess Fates – he was the reigning World Champion when Kasparov came on the scene and he had to contend not just with a shadow who would not play, but with a real opponent who would. The two went on to contest an astounding number of matches.

Before turning to the Karpov-Kasparov rivalry, I cannot stress too greatly that Karpov was far more than the bridge between Fischer and Kasparov – he was a tremendously powerful player in his own right and chess players should be eternally grateful that he took on his rivals with such determination.

The Infamous 1984 Match

Let us pause for a moment to understand how great Karpov was. In 1984, when he defended his title, this time against a new Challenger, Garry Kasparov, in the famous aborted first match, Karpov led five wins to nil. Really cogitate over that fact for a moment. Garry Kasparov, who would rise to become the greatest chess player the world has ever seen, was getting smashed 5-0 by the 1984 Anatoly Karpov. Wow. This is a gap with his rivals that only the vintage Bobby Fischer of 1971 was able to demonstrate.

Many pundits, including me, have suggested that if Anatoly had won the

1984 match 6-0 (draws not counting), Kasparov would have been psychologically wiped out and would not have become the Kasparov that we know today. That indeed, propelled by such an enormous victory, Karpov would have kept his title for another ten years and gone on to be the greatest player ever. That is the way I see it: Karpov wins the 1984 match with a blow-out 6-0 victory, Garry never fully recovers from such a disaster, and Karpov stays on top of the throne for another decade. After reigning supreme for 20 years in total, he would end his career as the greatest player ever. Anatoly was that close to such a script of chess greatness.

But that's not what happened. What actually occurred is simply astonishing. My only description is super-human. Trailing the match 5-0 after 27 games, Garry Kasparov finds resources within himself that he doesn't know exist. Facing the most horrible ordeal possible for a chess professional, Kasparov fights with every ounce of determination he can muster. He must not lose a single game. He will draw and draw – forever if necessary – but he will not lose. He must not lose. The match is no longer a game or a sporting duel – instead it has transcended chess and morphed into a struggle between life and death itself. The loss of just one game means the death of a career. Kasparov must stay with his opponent, holding on day after day, withstanding the very best that Karpov has to offer. Neither player is keen to take risks. Karpov wants a 6-0 shellacking. With Game 32 Kasparov's nightmare is over; he wins his first game of the match. Outstanding! The threat of a whitewash is over. Should Karpov now win the match, Kasparov will have the solace of at least one lone victory.

Again, the rearguard action of "must not lose a game" continues. Karpov is unable to push the match across the victory line. After five months and 46 games, the score stands unchanged at 5-1. The organizers and journalists are growing exhausted and impatient. Some reporters have been grimly stationed in Moscow since before the start of play and have remained for some six months. Hotel rooms have become homes; voices of loved ones at the end of a long telephone wire are changing; budgets have been grossly overspent, and no one is sure of the overall deficits.

Abruptly, the never-ending match takes an entirely new twist: Kasparov wins, back-to-back, Games 47 and 48. The match score is 5-3 and for the first time in months, things have gotten interesting. A flurry of activity takes place, and rumors abound: Karpov is said to be exhausted; there is a suggestion from unidentified doctors that the health of the players could be at risk; the organizers are said to be considering yet another change of venue; there is a possibility of a month-long postponement as an official timeout before resumption of the match; FIDE officials are considering canceling the match, scheduling a new contest with a fixed number of games. In short, rumors swirled, and no one knew for certain what would happen next. When was Game 49 scheduled anyway?

No decisions of the magnitude of aborting the 1984/85 match are made for a

single reason. There are always a multiplicity of causes for such a decision and for what takes place. We may never know all the factors and dynamics. What we do know is that the FIDE President, Florencio Campomanes, made a far-reaching decision: he aborted the match "without result" and called for a new 24-game match with the scores reset to 0-0. The chess world was up in arms.

Barrels and barrels of ink have been spilled about the cancellation, but my views are agnostic. There is no question that the match had run far beyond anything that any reasonable person might have expected. Five to six months for a sporting event? The upper bounds of extraordinary had long been breached. Of all the people involved in the match, Campomanes should have realized that such a dire possibility as the never-ending-match was real. He had been the organizer of the 32-game match in Baguio City between Karpov and Korchnoi in 1978 that ended 6-5. That marathon-like match was beginning to try the patience of the organizers when it too came to a sudden and furious conclusion. Korchnoi won three of the last five games, but lost the one game that Kasparov would not, the final game.

Campomanes knew that the "must-win-six-games" match rules had been put into place in 1975 as a means of mollifying Fischer's demands for a "must-win-ten-games" match. By the time of the 1984-1985 match, such rules had outlived their usefulness, as they had been put in place to attract Bobby out of retirement and that gambit had failed long ago. It was time to scrap that system and go back to a 24-game match format for which organizers could properly budget. The 1984-1985 aborted match forced just such a rational decision.

Myths and Legends

It should already be clear to the reader that World Champions are the stuff of legends. The stunning abilities of every World Champion, from Steinitz to Kasparov, lend themselves to mythologizing. Perhaps it was always true that the World Champions themselves played a role in creating their own myths, but the mythology surrounding Fischer, Karpov and Kasparov reached heights never before seen.

Let's first look at Kasparov's myth of the 1984-1985 match.

The Myth of the Stolen Match

When the first Karpov-Kasparov match was aborted, with the score 5-3 in favor of Karpov, Kasparov's reaction was far from what you might have expected.

Astonishingly, the condemned man, Garry Kasparov, and his supporters in the West roundly criticized the actions of Campomanes, describing it as a "Day of Shame." In a depiction most sinister, Kasparov cast Campomanes as a close friend and (more darkly) perhaps even business partner of Karpov. (No evidence of any mutual business dealings has ever been presented.) Campomanes, we were informed, either "acted on orders" (most likely the KGB – those b*****ds!), or

had aborted the match to "save" Karpov and their mutually lucrative business agreements from catastrophic defeat/collapse! No doubt billions were at stake.

Let's think about these allegations for a moment. Apart from the conjecture as to Campomanes' motives, can a cogent argument really be made that it was Kasparov, rather than Karpov, who suffered more from the ending of the match? I don't think so – Campomanes' decision to abort the match suited Kasparov perfectly. He would get a new match, a clean sheet so to speak; the current 5-3 deficit score was wiped away. Day of shame? Let's be crystal clear: how about a "Day of Celebration?" And break out the bubbly. It simply could not have gotten any better for Kasparov.

Conversely, Campomanes' decision was terrible for Karpov. His one-time lead of 5-0 had evaporated and his then current 5-3 lead was wiped out as well. Realizing the obvious, Karpov wanted the match to continue, claiming he wasn't exhausted and any reports to the contrary were false. No siree, he had a full head of steam and was anxious to rumble. In the words of boxing promoter Don King, "In forty-nine we will shine!" It was not to be.

I'm not a doctor and I certainly didn't have a chance to examine Karpov in order to determine the state of his health when the match ended. His claim that he was in fine fettle is as unlikely to be true as Kasparov's claims that the match was ended to save Karpov from certain defeat. Of course, the match took a toll on Karpov, just as did his grueling 1978 match against Korchnoi. But the chances of Karpov losing three games versus winning one were certainly low. At the time of the cancellation, Kasparov estimated that he had a one in three chance of winning the 1984-1985 match if it continued. I think this is too optimistic. In my view, Kasparov's chances were at best 25 percent to win, which means a 75 percent chance that he would have lost.

While Kasparov still asserts his "Day of Shame" hypothesis, accusing "Karpomanes" (a twinning of the names of Campomanes and Karpov) of having cooperated with the USSR Chess Federation in *saving* their man, it really is time to lay it to rest. While I disagree with Kasparov's estimate of his chances, let us give Garry the benefit of the doubt and accept his 33 percent chance of winning. That means a 66 percent chance of losing, so who benefited more from the decision to abort?

Recently, I read an article in *New In Chess* Magazine (2008, issue 5, pages 62-70), by Kasparov. Referring to Game 48, Kasparov wrote, "I think that this game was not only my best over the five months' play, but also the best in the match overall." Now Garry has a penchant for revisionist history, perhaps stemming from his early years in the Soviet Union. Apparently Kasparov, after taking a deeper, more objective view of the match, came to a stunning conclusion: Games 47 and 48 were two of the very best games produced in the whole match! If, as suggested by Garry, *both* players played extraordinary high-level chess at that point, it must have been due to the 46-game warm-up... But where does that

leave Garry's 1985 claim that Karpov was exhausted, and that if he was unable to continue he should resign the match?

Well, if we accept this revisionism, I ask for the same opportunity to revise my views too. Give me a fresh Karpov in top form and I raise my 75 percent estimate of a Karpov victory had the match continued to 80 or 90 percent. If the 1984 Anatoly Karpov, playing the best chess of his life, needed to win only one game before losing three in a match where draws don't count, I feel I'm on very solid ground with my 80 plus percent estimate. Karpov was the best player in the world in 1984-1985 and certainly no one could spot him a 3-1 advantage. Anything could have happened, but let's keep our feet on the ground...

The rest, as they say, is history. Kasparov won the next match, to become the youngest World Champion in history. He would goon to dominate chess for the next 20 years, as we will discover in the chapters ahead.

Far too often we look at life through the lenses of our own eyes, and fail to stop and consider the views of our opposition and whether their view is just or not. I've often wondered what Garry might have said had the roles been reversed and it was his 5-3 lead that had been wiped clean. In that case his hypothesis regarding the "Day of Shame" would have been justified. In the reality in which most of us live, his hypothesis strikes me as absurd, yet it has taken on mythological proportions for no good reason. After all, he did become World Champion in late 1985.

The Myth of Fischer as David vs. Goliath

Let us boldly state the obvious: we are all Saints and Sinners both. Anatoly Karpov was and is no different from each and every one of us. He has his good points and bad, highs as well as the lows. It is all a part of our human comedy. Perfect beings don't need toilets.

For those who think I'm going to praise Karpov to the stars, this chapter will come as a shock, and for those who think that, as a chess fan of BobbyFischer, I'll pull Anatoly into the muck, wrong again. Let me be clear: I admire Anatoly a great deal. His games and achievements are amazing, and worthyof our highest respect. He certainly received a lot of help along the way, but all too often Karpov's "sports progiam" ascent to the World Championship is contrasted to the myth of Fischer as the lone wolf.

The chess public has long been fed the fable that Bobby Fischer singlehandedly challenged the Soviet chess juggernaut and, in a nod to individual genius, defeated a collective Socialist sports system built over decades. How evocative. The lone genius standing up for right over might; individual liberty versus systemic straight-jacket training; Bobby fighting an entire government apparatus to snatch away the World Chess Championship. Wow! Such an angle makes for a brilliant storyline. Hollywood couldn't make this stuff up –there has to be a movie in here somewhere. I mean, howcool is that? Cool but rubbish.

To put things in perspective, it's true that from the standpoint of the game itself, Fischer was largely self-taught. What he lacked in the formal, institutionalized training that characterized the "Soviet school of chess," he made up for with single-minded determination and hard work. He studied the games of the top Soviet players and read Russian chess literature avidly. In the end, Bobby "out-Sovieted the Soviets," and did it with only modest help from his colleagues.

But that is only part of the story. Let us start with the simplest fact: in the three-year cycle that Bobby won, he didn't qualify. "Single-handedly" Bobby had taken himself out of the cycle because he boycotted the 1969 US Championship, which also happened to be a Zonal qualifier and the first stage in the World Championship cycle. The legend could have ended right then and there: "So sorry, Bobby, afraid you're out of this one. You can try again in the next three-year cycle. The one that begins in 1975. Bye. Take good care of yourself."

It was the decision of Pal Benko, who *had* qualified in the US Zonal, to *step aside* and to give up *his* qualification spot in favor of Bobby that would allow Bobby to compete in the Interzonal which set him on his path to stardom. Let me repeat: Bobby was out, and only because Pal Benko made a fantastic sporting gesture was Bobby allowed to soar.

Like Lasker trying to give his title to Capablanca without playing, it wasn't even clear that Benko had such a right to transfer his qualification spot to a player of *his* choice. If Pal wanted to step out of the cycle, wouldn't the player in the Zonal who had been next in line move up to replace Pal? In fact, all the American players in the Zonal would have to agree to let Bobby take Pal's qualification spot and give up *their* rights and claims. On top of that, it was FIDE's Central Committee that would have to approve the switch as well. The rules were clear: the top players from the Zonal qualified to the next stages of play. Players who were absent weren't given preferential treatment. It was at this Committee that USCF's officials worked mightily to secure the votes needed that would permit Bobby to play in the cycle at all.

Writers have claimed that Pal was paid money to step aside. This is simply not true. Pal stepped aside for the simplest of reasons: he thought Bobby had a *genuine* shot at becoming World Champion, certainly a better chance than he did himself. He was willing to give up his place, but *only* for Bobby. So just to get started, Bobby needed and received the help of Pal Benko. If Pal had any hopes of remuneration there was but one: if Bobby advanced far in the cycle, perhaps he could be a coach or assistant.

Next, all the players in the 1969 American Zonal had to agree with Benko's decision to switch with Bobby. If Benko wanted to step down, fine, that was his decision; but the fellow behind Benko who would have qualified would also have to give up his claim. And so on and so forth. None of these players were paid to give up their rights either. They all wanted to see Bobby play. To see him play and win.

You can see that *off the board* Bobby needed help to have his shot at the World Championship, and he received it. And the story doesn't end there.

Once the USCF secured Bobby's place in the cycle through FIDE Central Committee approval, the USCF came to his aid and supported him unreservedly. The USCF Executive Director, Colonel Ed Edmondson, devoted much of his time and energy to making sure that Bobby had all the support he needed. To quote the former USCF Executive Director Al Lawrence:

"Leroy Dubeck, president of USCF from August 1969 to August of 1972, remembers that when he took over, he agreed with then-Executive Director Ed Edmondson to focus the entire resources of the chess federation on a single, monumental goal – getting Fischer a chance to win the World Championship. For this purpose, the two even rechanneled all the money coming in from life memberships, instead of investing it." *Chess Life* (September 2007, page 25).

Along with Leroy Dubeck and Ed Edmondson, there was Fred Cramer, also of the USCF, who helped Fischer with agreements and numerous legal issues.

The Grandmasters Bill Lombardy and Lubosh Kavalek were there to offer their services in any way they could, as was IM Anthony Saidy, a close friend of Bobby's. There was Lina Grumette, a lovely, elderly lady, a mother figure for Bobby, who similarly devoted herself to his support. For several years as a teenager, Bobby stayed as a guest in her home, where she devoted herself to his well-being. There is the famous story of Lina in a movie theater with Bobby in Reykjavik at a crucial juncture in the 1972 match, steadfastly telling him just to play and win. There were streams of people, organizers, fans and journalists anxious to help Bobby, wishing him to succeed, willing him forwards.

There was an outpouring of support from all corners. If Bobby had made a public appeal to chess fans in 1975 and said, "Please, I need your help. Support me and send $50 to my training fund and help me retain my World Championship. With your support I promise to compete, and if the competition doesn't occur I will send you back your donation...," I suspect that I, as a 15-year old with little money, and a million other American chess fans would have donated. Gladly. Bobby would have had a $50 million dollar war chest nearly over night, such was the "support" he had. The very suggestion that Bobby did what he did on his own is a myth created by the media and devalues the tremendous efforts by the many people without whom Bobby would have remained a "what if" to the chess world.

To put the matter directly: single-handedly Bobby didn't get anywhere. He put himself out of the cycle. The simple truth is that Bobby was at times his own worst enemy and cost himself dearly, at times forfeiting, withdrawing and in general sabotaging his own campaigns. It was the assistance of some key people at crucial moments that helped push, persuade and prod Bobby to meet his destiny. Don't forget Dr. Henry Kissinger's phone call that got Bobby to board the plane to Iceland. Single-handedly? Please!

The Myth of Karpov and the Level Playing-Field

Bobby Fischer was the Soviet chess machine's worst nightmare come to life. They needed a Karpov and, to paraphrase an old saying, if Karpov hadn't existed, they would have had to invent him. Did they? Karpov was a great player, but as the flag-bearer for Soviet Chess and the Soviet State, he was supported fully, with as many privileges as possible. No chess player has ever enjoyed the bounties offered by a State and by FIDE as much as did Anatoly Karpov. Could he have done it on his own? Did Karpov overcome the shadow of Fischer by being an "active Champion" who, fair and square, let his pieces and pawns do his talking? As we will see, Anatoly enjoyed *every* advantage possible and then some that had never been thought of before.

"State support" for Anatoly seems to have begun from the very beginning of his career. Then the gravy train just accelerated. He was permitted to relocate with his family to Moscow – permission not given lightly in the Soviet Union. Let us review the simple facts of the 1972-1975 three-year cycle which brought him the title by forfeit:

1. Anatoly qualified from the Soviet Zonal
2. He played in the 1973 Soviet Interzonal in Leningrad, tying for first place with Victor Korchnoi undefeated
3. He played three Candidates' matches, first defeating Polugaevsky in his home city of Moscow.
4. He defeated Spassky in Leningrad in the Semi-Final.
5. He defeated Korchnoi in the 1974 Candidates' Final in Moscow 3-2, with 19 draws. Korchnoi's home city was Leningrad and Karpov's Moscow. The match was in Moscow.
6. Lastly, gaining the title in 1975 by forfeit thanks to machinations within FIDE's General Assembly by the USSR Chess Federation. The USCF was on the other side of the machinations, in support of World Champion Bobby Fischer.

In part because the Interzonal in which he participated was held in Leningrad and because his Candidates' opponents (Polugaevsky, Spassky and Korchnoi) were all Soviet players (at the time), it so happened that Anatoly Karpov became World Champion *without playing in that process a single game outside of the Soviet Union*; or, better put: he played all of his games in Russia and most of the games, including the Candidates' final, were played in his home city of Moscow. In British understatement, "That is useful."

I can still see Bent Larsen complaining that for one leg of the lengthy three-year cycle only, the Interzonal in which he would be forced to compete would be held inside the USSR. I wonder how Larsen might have done had an *entire three-year cycle taken place in Copenhagen.*

Let me be absolutely clear: I am not making any accusations of cheating or chicanery. At the time, Karpov was already in the top ten in the world. I am only saying that his efforts had the full backing and support of the Soviet Chess Federation, and that without that support he might well not have succeeded.

eration, and that without that support he might well not have succeeded.

After Karpov was declared FIDE World Champion and the question of Fischer's 9-9 tie clause was being debated, the question was: "what advantage, if any, should the Champion enjoy?" FIDE officials decided to give Champion Karpov a huge advantage: a rematch clause. In case Karpov lost a title match he would have a right to a rematch – the very right that Botvinnik twice exercised successfully before it was taken away from him because it was too great an advantage. The right to a rematch was simply a huge advantage for the World Champion and certainly far greater than anything Bobby had asked for. From Karpov's perspective, this was all quite natural. Why should he object? Why indeed?

With his ascension to the chess throne, Anatoly Karpov became a leading figure in the circles of Soviet Sport and Soviet Culture. He had recaptured the crown that has been taken away by the upstart Bobby Fischer. He was awarded the Order of Lenin and twice voted Soviet Sportsman of the Year– a not inconsiderable accomplishment in a nation that produced World Champions in practically every sport. By the time of the 1978 match with Victor Korchnoi, and especially the 1981 one, Karpov's influence in the USSR was quite powerful. His opponent, a defector, officially a criminal of the Soviet State awaiting trial, was the perfect foil for Anatoly. He held the flag, upheld the honor of the USSR and kept the crown. The Commissars had to be absolutely delighted with Anatoly Karpov – he was the perfect "national hero of the motherland."

Karpov never played Fischer, but he three times defeated the demonized Victor Korchnoi, fair and square. Or did he? In 1976 Korchnoi defected from the Soviet Union while playing in a tournament in Amsterdam. He left behind a wife and a son in the USSR. He begged the Soviet State to allow his family members to leave and to join him in the West, but this request was rejected many times. Korchnoi would explain at press conferences that his family was being deliberately held as "hostages" by the Soviet State. That on the eve of his matches against Karpov, his son Igor was sent to a prison camp, as indeed happened in 1981.

This is where things become particularly interesting: Korchnoi would claim that Karpov, if he wanted, could intervene and ask the State to release Korchnoi's family members. It was a charge that I found quite compelling. Just simple respect for one's opponent should have required Karpov to make such a request. Let the family be reunited and put an end to a very powerful and emotive charge, while at the same time ensuring that the important question of Soviet chess supremacy was settled on the board.

It was only years after Korchnoi stopped being a threat to the World Championship title that his wife Bella and son Igor were permitted to leave the Soviet Union and live in the West. Victor ended up divorcing and marrying again. To my knowledge, Karpov never once spoke up on behalf of Victor's family members.

Karpov was a formidable player, but he did not gain his strength unaided. The

Soviet Union was the greatest chess powerhouse on earth. The very best players in the world came from the USSR, and Karpov spent a lifetime competing with them. The State sponsored him, his trainers, the training sessions, supplied him with chess books and materials, and insured that he was a full-time, well taken care of chess professional. He was able to devote his time and energy to study and play, and it was simply inevitable that his talent would allow him to emerge as a strong grandmaster.

At various times I've read words from folks who should know much better that Bobby Fischer was the world's "first chess professional" and how we are all "indebted" to Bobby for his "professionalism." How he paved the way for others to become professionals as well. Bobby had a professional approach, but it's laughable to consider him the first chess professional. The USSR had professional players as well as professional athletes long before Bobby learned an opening. Soviet grandmasters and World Champions had apartments, incomes, stipends, cars, dachas, holidays, trainers, coaches and pensions for decades before Bobby. These players devoted their lives to their craft. They were the epitome of professionals.

What Bobby did was *popularize* chess in the *West* and make it possible for its adherents in the West to eke out a modest living. Eastern professionals were doing just fine long before then, earning many times the income of the "common man" in the street.

To give just one example, my dear friend IM Nikolay Minev trained as a medical doctor in Bulgaria. After working as a doctor for a few years, Nikolay switched professions. He became editor of the Bulgarian Chess Federation's magazine *Shakhmatna Misl*, and a fixture in Bulgarian Championships and on their national team. Why? Simply put, Nikolay earned three times as much being a chess player than as a medical doctor *and* worked fewer hours as well. As a player, Nikolay was also permitted to travel abroad, which was simply impossible as a doctor. Chess professionals did very well in the Eastern Communist nations and, when their best playing days were over, they could easily join the ranks of coaches and trainers where apartments, salaries and pensions were provided. I am not saying that living in the Communist countries was easy; but living in a Communist country was much easier if you were a chess grandmaster.

Anatoly Karpov was a professional player and owed his livelihood to the Soviet State. As he racked up various successes, his privileges increased as well. He had the best trainers, the best coaches, the best chess libraries that the USSR could offer. A long, long list of players, including Mikhail Botvinnik, Igor Zaitsev, Lev Polugaevsky, Efim Geller, Semyon Furman, Mikhail Podgaets and Mischa Tal, worked for and on behalf of Anatoly Karpov. The cream of Soviet trainers helped Anatoly hone his game. If Bobby counted "only on himself" to train and prepare, Anatoly was his polar opposite and counted on the labors of many for their help. Again, we are talking about the best of the best – in the whole of the world. Ana-

toly was at the apex of a vast pyramid where all good things flowed up from the base to the top. As the film director Mel Brooks might say, "It's good to be king!"

As a result of all the rigorous training, assistance from strong grandmasters and opening theoreticians, and competition with and against the best players on earth daily, it is no wonder Anatoly became one of the best players in the world. And, where possible, the Soviet authorities left nothing to chance. From their point of view, it made perfect sense that "their" World Champion should have the best of everything. Another paraphrase comes to mind, this time from Orwell: "Some level playing-fields are more equal than others."

With all these advantages, could there have been any other outcome? One further detail is worth mentioning: Anatoly was unbelievably talented as well. That helps too, of course.

Karpov as a Player

What do I mean when I say that Anatoly was "talented?" In my view, Anatoly had gifts few others possessed. He had a great memory (all great players do); he had fantastic calculating abilities, seeing lengthy variations clearly, calculating accurately, and he judged the resulting positions very well. Besides these skills which can be taught, he had something innate: an ability to harmonize his pieces that few ever possessed. Anatoly played hundreds and hundreds of great and good moves, made very few mistakes and fewer blunders, and all the while that he was making his moves he was also knitting together a joyous piece of harmony based on this marvelous intuitive gift. His games were at once a powerful mix of art, logic and calculation. This "cohesion of forces" was second nature for him. It was a skill no one else has ever been able to imitate. Karpov wasn't perfect; he had style. A style no one has seen before or since.

Defeating Anatoly was a near impossible task. Why? Well, the depth of his opening knowledge was stunning. His openings and defenses had been honed to fathoms unmatched by anyone. To win, you needed to obtain an opening advantage, and his trainers were working night and day to ensure that didn't happen.

If you managed an opening advantage then you would have to nurture it through the middlegame. Somehow you would have to outplay one of the most gifted and hard-working players the world had ever seen.

Once you were able to keep your advantage to an adjournment then you had another completely different disadvantage: Karpov's formidable team of trainers and seconds would analyze the adjournment to a depth that had never been matched. This team of all-star trainers only helped improve Anatoly's superb endgame play. Arguably he was the best endgame player since Vassily Smyslov, perhaps the best endgame player ever.

To recap, as they used to say about Alekhine, to beat Anatoly you had to win three times to win one game: in the opening, in the middlegame and in the adjournment/endgame. In addition, you had to beat not only Anatoly, but, in ef-

fect, his army of helpers. Karpov's losses in a given year from 1975-1985 could mostly be counted with one hand. And he was a very active player.

Anatoly had two bitter rivals, apart from Fischer's shadow: Victor Korchnoi and Garry Kasparov. While Mohammed Ali had his Joe Frazier, Anatoly had two mortal enemies and what contests they produced against one another. In the fire of his three matches with Victor Korchnoi it seemed to me that Karpov improved, while in the unprecedented five World Championship matches between Karpov and Kasparov, it seemed that Kasparov improved.

Meeting Karpov

It is not surprising that my first meeting with Anatoly Karpov was unforgettably coupled with Garry Kasparov. We return to the 1980 Olympiad in Malta. As mentioned, the American teams were housed in an apartment building complex outside of Valletta; the Soviet teams by contrast stayed in the best hotel in Valletta, which was an easy walk to the tournament hall. Outside of the rounds of play we didn't see much of the Soviet Teams.

I recall the incident that branded in my mind an impression of these great champions very well: I was staring directly at the Soviet Men's team; they were playing against Bulgaria and the Bulgarian players had their backs to me. The USA played that round against Hungary on "Table 1." I could look across the tables of players from Karpov on board one, playing against Evgeny Ermenkov slightly to my right, down to Garry Kasparov on board four playing against Krum Georgiev, further to my left. I had the perfect view of the events as they unfolded.

I was aware that Garry had committed an egregious blunder in the opening/early middlegame and stood very badly. (I had walked around the tables and noted the games in play earlier.) Anatoly made his move on board one, rose from the game and crossed over to the "Bulgarian side" of the table and began a slow stroll down the tables checking the games as he made his way to the far wall. He stopped at Kasparov's board and began openly laughing at Garry's predicament. Garry was furious. He turned red, said something in Russian quite forcefully and brushed away with his hand, "inviting" Anatoly to leave. It was shocking. Talk about team spirit. Anatoly understood the message and shuffled off to find himself a cup of coffee.

Until then things had been merely "amusing", but now they became positively sublime. Garry decided on his move, made a sharp movement of hand and piece (in the physical sense), smashed the clock, stood up and made a beeline to look at the position on board one. He studied it for a few minutes, and then moved around to Evgeny and whispered something in his ear.

I was titillated. I waited for Garry to leave and went to Evgeny to ask him what had just taken place. Evgeny told me that Garry had told him in Russian, "You stand better. Karpov will soon offer you a draw. Don't accept!" It was just too funny. In passing, I should mention that it was only a totalitarian Commu-

mist regime that could manage to keep these two men on the same team. More about this in future chapters. By the way, Garry was completely right, as a few moves later Anatoly did in fact offer a draw. Evgeny, however, didn't accept Garry's friendly advice and took the draw offer.

I met both Garry and Anatoly officially during Round 11 at the USSR versus USA match where I faced Mischa Tal. There were various handshakes and my recollection was that both Anatoly and Garry behaved (at least on that occasion) very professionally, at least towards me. My teammate, Lev Alburt, playing on board one, felt differently. Lev had defected from the Soviet Union and had been "building himself up" to play Karpov on board one. He had looked forwards to shaking Karpov's hand – it would be Lev's way of saying, "See. I'm here. I've defected, but I'm still alive." Karpov was having none of it. When Lev extended his hand for a shake, Karpov made it very clear there would be no gestures of friendliness and refused his hand. Lev was totally deflated and played a horrible game. Maybe the worst of his career.

I found myself disappointed with Karpov over this incident. Many years later I asked him about it. "Why not just shake Lev's hand?" I innocently asked. His explanation went on to show how many worlds apart we lived: "Yasser, those were the days of the Soviet Union. Keep in mind we were all being constantly watched. Everything we did and said was in some way monitored or 'recorded.' Lev was a defector. According to the State, officially a criminal. If I had been seen shaking his hand, it would have been reported and I would face an inquisition and would have to explain myself. 'Why did you shake the hand of a State criminal?' I would be asked. It would be a black mark on my record."

Viewed from that perspective, I could understand Anatoly's decision. I wouldn't want a black mark on my CIA record. Hmm, do I have a CIA record?

The next time I met Anatoly was fuzzier. My recollection is that I was in Spain, perhaps on holiday, became bored and decided on the spur of the moment to drop in on the 1981 Linares event. Larry Christiansen and Lubomir Kavalek were participants, so I had reason to hang around for a few days. While there, I helped Larry a little with his game preparations, along with a friendly "Go get 'em tiger!" comment before the round. Whatever we did didn't hurt. Larry tied for first place with Anatoly.

The incident I have in mind (and I do think it happened in Linares during this particular visit) is that we had a bridge game going for very small stakes in Spanish pesetas. Hardly enough to buy a round of drinks. Larry was my partner and we were playing Kavalek and Karpov. I was the weakest player at the table by far, and Larry would have to carry the team. Not successfully enough, unfortunately, as Larry and I were being killed. (That is, we probably owed two whole rounds of drinks.) At a certain moment Lubosh went to the bar for a round of drinks while Anatoly visited the restroom, leaving Larry and me alone.

"Let's fix the deck," Larry whispered to me.

"What?"

"Let's fix the next hand. When they bid the contract, you double, okay?"

Well, let's say the devil got the upper hand on this one, and I agreed. In no time at all Larry had fixed the deck. Let's be clear, this wasn't Ian Fleming's *Moonraker* moment where James Bond switches a pre-made deck of cards. Larry did it almost instantly. Was he practiced? By the time Anatoly started walking back to the table, he could see that I made a show of "cutting" the cards to give the ruse that all was on the straight up. Lubosh returned with drinks and was pleased to discover a very fine hand awaiting his arrival. Between them I think they had 34 points and got to "game" lickety-split. I, of course, doubled – for absolutely no reason. The bidding had all been one-sided. This was met by a "redouble" which caused much laughter as our opponents started complaining about being insulted...

In the end, Anatoly played the contract and Lubosh was proud as punch to show his dummy honors. Anatoly started with the words, "Aiy-yi-yi." He immediately understood that their hands duplicated honors and that he would be very fortunate indeed to make the contract. Well, as luck would have it *every* finesse went against him. Anatoly, bless his heart, cursed with each lost trick. I definitely had the impression that Russian is a rich language in which one can curse really very well. It was quite a treat.

To this day, I don't know how Larry and I held our nerve and didn't burst into convulsive laughter. Lubosh made it around the table to see Anatoly's dilemma, said something like "Oh, Jesus. Let me get another round..." and departed. Well, Anatoly went down badly, something like four tricks, vulnerable, doubled and redoubled. When Lubosh returned, Anatoly went into a long-winded explanation of how terrible the hand was. Larry and I were stuck – the complaining was so vociferous we couldn't bring ourselves to confess. Instead, we quietly continued playing like good Christians. I suspect that single hand may have brought us to even on the scorecard... This story has a continuation, but let us call it a cliff-hanger for the moment.

One other adventure from that Linares event: on one of the free days the players were invited by the organizers to be matadors against the bulls. Larry and I accepted, and off we went to the bullfighting ring. Let me be extremely clear here; the "bulls" we were to fight against were calves. I'm talking two-year olds. Even at that age they are big animals and very fast and frisky. I will not say I was "terrified" to take them on, but my danger signals were on high alert and I often turned and ran behind a concrete slab for protection. In the photos I have, Larry seemed to have proven to be a better matador. He certainly had style. One thing I can definitely say about the whole experience, regardless of your views of bullfighting, is that the matadors that stand in front of a full grown bull have to be absolutely fearless. No way would I trade careers for a single moment.

The next time I met Anatoly was at the 1981 World Championship match

with Victor Korchnoi. I recall being in the Hotel Palace in Merano when Petra informed us, "The Soviets have arrived." They had come in by a large coach bus from Milan Airport. What had impressed her most? "I counted 35 pieces of luggage." It was a stunning number indeed. How many persons? Why so much luggage? And yes, Karpov had come in a special car as well. In the words of a local Seattle Chess Master, Johnny Walker, when a sponsor counted out a cash award, "Now that is what I call a sponsor!" In some ways it was quite sobering news for our small team of Korchnoi supporters. We really were up against a big team of many people.

My first game against Anatoly Karpov came in 1982 in the first round of a tournament held at the famous seaside resort of Mar del Plata, Argentiina. I met his first wife there as well. In general, Anatoly was very quiet in Mar del Plata. He didn't play well, arguably his worst event in years, and I didn't see much of him either; my eyes were focused on the beaches.

We all have our tales of the "really, really big one (fish) that got away." Well, this game is just such a story. In fact it is the worst story in my career of the really big one that got away. Even today, looking at this game hurts. It hurts like the pain of an ugly old scar. I just have to grimace and turn away my eyes. I still can't believe I didn't win this one; Anatoly was sooooo lost!

I annotated this game for *The Weekly*, a local Seattle magazine (in the issue of March 10-17, 1982, page 31), in an article titled, "The Assault on Mt. Karpov." The notes below marked *"The Weekly"* are from my annotations. Please note these annotations were for a general public audience and were therefore light.

Anatoly Karpov-Yasser Seirawan
Mar del Plata, 1982
French Defense

1.e4 e6

Pirc, Caro or French? These were my primary defensive choices in my first game versus a reigning World Champion. I can't say why I went with the French. I guess it felt right.

2.d4 d5 3.Nc3

Personally, as a French Defense player I always enjoyed the dilemma posed to White players on move three. The lines of 3.e5, 3.Nc3 and 3.Nd2 are so different from one another, and they must choose one. Some players ponder their choice for several minutes, while others have chosen their line well in advance. My scoresheet indicates that Anatoly had no such problems; he made his first three moves within a minute and his first five moves within five minutes.

3...Bb4 4.e5 Ne7!

I've always felt that this is the proper move order for Black in the Winawer.

5.a3 Bxc3+ 6.bxc3 b6!

And this is the reason why. The lines after 4...c5 are less flexible and sometimes you just need to surprise your opponent with an offbeat choice. The text perfectly suited the bill. Playing main-line theory against Karpov in those days wasn't the brightest idea. For sure, he would be better prepared. After all, he had played three matches with Victor Korchnoi, a French Defense expert. The text has a woefully simple idea: I'm just trying to get rid of my bad c8-bishop.

"This is a well-known variation of the French Defense, the Winawer system. Korchnoi is a major advocate of the French Defense, so it is likely that Karpov had prepared for this position. But Korchnoi never employed the French Defense in their World Championship match." – *The Weekly*

7.Nh3!?

And there went my preparation. I now thought for 40 minutes and finally decided that the plan of Nh3-f4-h5 simply had to be stopped. Even at the cost of misplacing my own knight.

"Novelty. A new idea. This is probably what Karpov had prepared for Korchnoi. However, I show Karpov should not be so pleased with his idea." – *The Weekly*

7...Ng6!? 8.a4!?

Very ambitious indeed. Anatoly decides he wants command over the entire board and prepares a4-a5, for a queenside lock-down, or Bc1-a3, with a lordly bishop. I was more worried about the modest approach 8.Bd3 Ba6 9.0-0, when White prepares for f2-f4-f5, and if Black trades bishops, then c2xd3 allows the newly-minted d3-pawn to protect some fine squares.

8...Ba6 9.Bxa6?

A mistake that helps Black. White's opening moves do not jell well. Again, 9.Bb5+ c6 10.Bd3 was my expected line, with advantage for White.

9...Nxa6 10.0-0 Nb8!

I was absolutely delighted with this one. Happy dreams of one day reaching the c4-promised land filled my head. In any case, it is clear that the a6-knight is terrible and needs a proper job.

11.Qg4!?

Further confusion. Why not just get on with the main task of playing 11.f4, and opening up lines on the kingside? I would likely have played 11...Ne7, when with the follow-up 12.Qh5, White is still for choice.

11...Nc6

Already I was becoming optimistic. Now there is the possibility of ...Nc6-e7, holding up White's kingside break for good.

12.Nf4?

This was definitely shocking. Voluntarily trading off knights? Either 12.f4 or 12.Ng5 seemed logical. The text is based on a long-winded calculation that contains a key flaw. The result is that Karpov leaves himself with an absolutely terrible bishop.

12...Nxf4! 13.Bxf4 Rg8

"Karpov has realized his idea and has gained space on the kingside. But I have also realized my idea, which is to saddle Karpov with an ineffective bishop." – *The Weekly*

14.Bg5 Qd7 15.f4? (Diagram 73)

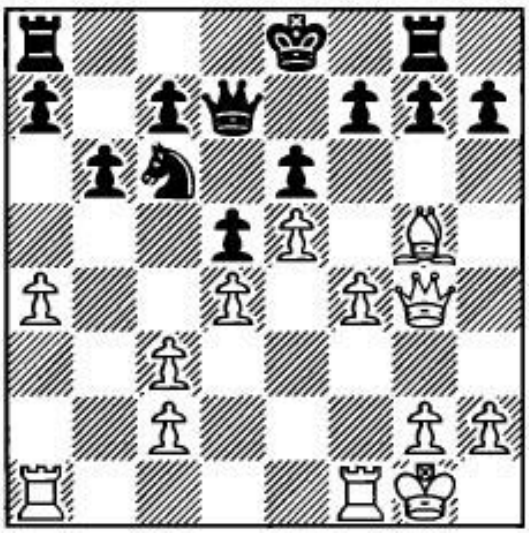


DIAGRAM 73. Black to Play

This is the position that Karpov has been playing for over the last half-dozen moves. First impressions are very favorable indeed for White. Black's king is frozen in the center, while f4-f5 is coming fast and furious. In short, Black appears to be in trouble.

"A horrible mistake. Karpov used 13 minutes to find this lemon, overlooking my 21st move. The world champion now is totally outplayed." – *The Weekly*

15...f5!

Forced moves are most often good moves as well. This ends White's f-pawn break.

16.Qh5+

No choice here either. If 16.exf6 gxf6 17.Rae1 (17.Qh5+ Qf7 18.Qxf7+ Kxf7 19.Bh4 Ne7, with the idea of ...Ne7-f5-d6, is just terrific for Black) 0-0-0 and Black wins a piece for little compensation.

16...g6 17.Qh6 Qg7 18.Qh3

The speed with which Karpov executed his moves was incredible. He seemed to be in a hurry. So far he had seen everything, calculating that I was in trouble.

18...Na5! 19.Bf6 Qf7 20.Qh6 (Diagram 74)

Karpov played his last six moves in less than six minutes. Remarkably, he has achieved the exact position he aimed for at move 12. He simply didn't see a way for me to untangle my pieces and defend the position. White wants to play the

obvious rook lift: Rf1-f3-h3, and clip my h7-pawn, with good winning chances, if not just a won game.

"Karpov up to this point had been playing quickly and confidently. But after my rejoinder, he sinks into deep thought. Karpov had based his strategy on winning the KRP. But I have a simple defense." – *The Weekly*

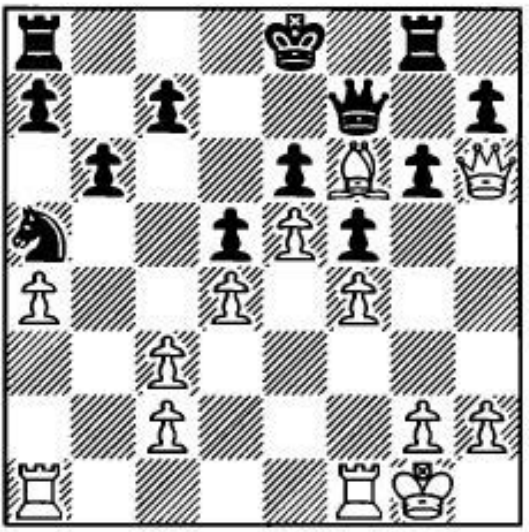


DIAGRAM 74. Black to Play

20...c6!!

Bang. The trap-door closes and locks shut. Just like that it is game over. White is strategically lost. Not slightly worse, not badly off, lost. Gone. Over. Dead. Buried. Walking the Green Mile. On his way to meeting his Maker. Game over!

21.Rf3

Played out of inertia, if nothing else. There is simply no play in the position for White any more. For what it is worth, my chess engine program assesses the position as a small plus for White. Ha!

21...Rc8!

This lateral defense of the h7-pawn is what Karpov missed. The rest of the game is play on one goal. Black totally dominates.

22.h3 Nc4

Arriving at the promised land! How did I ever harbor any misgivings?

23.Rd3

Protecting against the possibility of ...Nc4-d2-e4, when the knight is a beast of reverential beauty. A Thor. A Norse God of thunder.

23...Kd7

Black's position on the queenside is so nice that his king decides to stroll over and have a closer look.

24.g4 Kc7 25.Kf2 Kb7 26.Bh4 (Diagram 75)

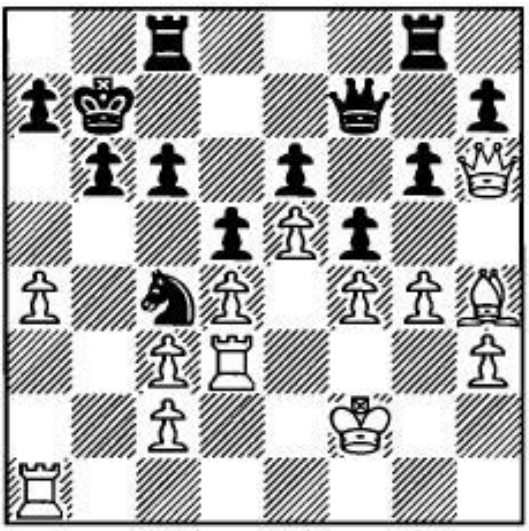


DIAGRAM 75. Black to Play

At dinner that evening Bent Larsen stated matter-of-factly: "Yasser, in such positions, you can save yourself a lot of trouble in the future by just playing ...a7-a5, before putting your king on a6. Then, you play...b6-b5, secure an outside passed a5-pawn. Then you trade rooks down the b-file and just win."

How do grandmasters just "know" these things? Of course, what Bent says makes perfect sense and was, indeed, the simplest winning method.

26...Ka6?

"I have many ways of winning the position. Perhaps simpler would be to advance the QRP and then the QNP." – *The Weekly*

27.Ke2 c5?

At the time, the text made perfect sense. Isn't this what Black aspires to in a Winawer? I had dreams of opening the c-file for my rooks and, who knows, simply pick off some weak queenside pawns. In reality, the text gives White's h4-bishop a potential role in the game in case a c5-pawn is created.

Black should have taken back his last move and played the winning method outlined by Bent.

28.Ra2

Truly pathetic. But White has to protect against the potential of ...Qf7-e8, and ...Nc4-b2, picking off the a4-pawn. Also, the text is useful in case the c2-pawn needs protection.

28...Rc7 29.Qg5 h5!

A pleasant move to employ. I manage to trade off the potentially weak h7-pawn and open up the h-file. After all, that is a white king in the middle of the board. With every passing move, Black's position just becomes better and better.

30.Rg3

This is not the Karpov of harmonious coordination. White's pieces are truly sad.

30...hxg4 31.hxg4 Rh8

"I have completely achieved my plan and have opened lines against the enemy king. And now I begin to attack." – *The Weekly*

32.Rg2Qe8

Now was a good time to give the position a little thought. While there is no question that the c4-knight is a thing of a beauty, it hadn't occurred to me that occupying the promised land of the c4-square stifled my attack. Without prejudice, now was the appropriate moment to give 32...cxd4! 33.cxd4 serious consideration. I could then put my pieces to the concrete task of winning material: 33...Na5 34.Be1 Nc6 35.c3 Qe8 brings a different kind of position. What has Black accomplished? Well, in this manner I keep the e1-bishop utterly inactive and I'm setting up for ...Nc6-a5 and...Rc7-c4, going after the a4-pawn.

Note that in this line I keep my king's position rock-solid and safe. The a7- and b6-pawns, the a5-knight and a c4-rook work nicely to give excellent protection. As the game progresses, you will see how king safety becomes a key consideration.

I can't fault myself for the text, though. Indeed, everything is still flowing like a charm.

33.Bf2 Rh3

Again 33...cxd4 34.cxd4 Rch7! is just positional over-kill for Black.

"This move was dubious. Better would have been PxQP." – *The Weekly*

34.gxf5 gxf5 35.dxc5!

At a very dark moment in the game, Anatoly is alert enough to keep fighting and to create a weakness that his f2-bishop may one day bite.

"Now the world champion creates a target." – *The Weekly*

35...bxc5 36.Rg3 Rxg3?

Unbelievable. This is really a disgusting move which makes me want to take a hot shower and scrub myself clean. Everyone understands the first simple rule of attacking: don't unnecessarily trade good attacking pieces for poor defensive ones. I have no excuses, and no explanation either. I just don't know what I was thinking.

I reckon that the simplest way to win this position is to play 36...Rhh7, with ideas like ...Qe8-c6 and ...d5-d4 to follow. Black can also then think of playing ...Rc7-b7-b2, offering a trade of rooks just to snip off the a4-pawn. Everywhere I look I see low-hanging fruit. One thematic line would run 36...Rhh7! 37.Qg6 Qc6 38.Rg1 Rcg7 39.Qxg7 Rxg7 40.Rxg7 d4 41.cxd4 cxd4, with a winning attack.

"Better would be to keep my attacking forces and play 36...R-R7." – *The Weekly*

37.Qxg3Qc6?

It is going to take a very serious effort not to win this game, so please bear with me as I strive to do my best. Remember our thunder god Thor? Well, now

would have been a fine time to make his acquaintance: 37...Qh5+ 38.Qf3 Qxf3+ 39.Kxf3 Nd2+ 40.Ke3 Ne4 is positional domination in the ending. White's a4-pawn is weak, the bishop is awful, and White's rook is pathetic. The win would be very easy: I would play ...c5-c4, ...Kb6-a5 and activate my rook.

So why didn't I play the above simple win? Clearly I wanted "more." I had dreams of invasion and smashing White's position by a direct mating attack. It was annoying that 37...Qb8 38.Qg1 (forced) 38...Rb7 39.Bxc5 Rb1 didn't win "directly." White plays 40.Qg6, attacking the e6-pawn and is very much alive.

The text, on the other hand, seemed to keep all my various trumps, whether they were helpful or not. I keep an eye on the a4-pawn (...Nc4-b6xa4 is a possibility); I'm ready for a b-file invasion; I cover the c5-pawn and prepare for ...d5-d4 with a winning attack – one day. It was easy to talk myself into the text.

But we must never forget an important rule, despite what I said about having to beat Karpov three times in each game: one win per game is good enough. In fact, one win per game is all we will ever need. Trading queens and going into a winning endgame was lights, candles and curtains out.

"Now I begin to play badly. Having opened up lines on the kingside I should utilize them. For this reason Q-KR1 would have been better." – *The Weekly*

38.Ra1! Rb7?!

Unfortunately 38...d4? 39.Qd3! offered no hopes of a "winning attack." No worries, I thought. I would just reposition my rook to crown the attack.

It becomes more and more unbearable to look. With the obvious 38...Qb7!, preparing to invade down the b-file, White is helpless: 39.Qd3 (39.Qg8 Qb2 40.Qxe6+ Nb6 wins) Qb2 40.Rh1 Ka5! 41.Rh6 Rc6 42.Ra7 a6, and White cannot prevent the loss of his a-pawn and the game. Black just slowly marches up the a-file, where the black king is perfectly safe, and escorts the a7-pawn to promotion.

The text misplaces my rook, which was very well located indeed. It is my *queen* that should be doing the attacking. A good rule of thumb to remember is that the queen is a more powerful attacker than the rook. Make a note.

39.Qg1!

"Excellent! Karpov defends with vigor." – *The Weekly*

39...Rb2?

"Defending the BP would have been better." – *The Weekly*

40.Kd3!

Don't ask me why, but this move threw me off kilter. In truth, White had absolutely no other choice. If either 40.Qd1 or 40.Rc1, then 40...d4! is a winner as White no longer has time for the defensive Qg1-h1, trying to protect the e4-square. I'm sure I thought that the text allowed 40...d4, and a mating attack. I kept looking and looking, but 40...d4? 41.Qh1! is a stone-cold refutation.

40...Kb6?

Reaching the time-control, I remained supremely confident of my eventual victory. Even so, I should have played 40...Qb7 41.Rc1 (41.Qg8?? Rxc2 42.Qxe6+

Ka5 and White will be mated shortly) 41...Qh7 42.Qg2 Qh6 43.Be3 Ka5! 44.Rh1 Qf8 when Black makes inexorable progress.

41.Qg8!Ka6?!

It was better to play 41...Ka5.

42.Qg1! Rb7 43.Bxc5 Rh7 44.Bd4 (Diagram 76)

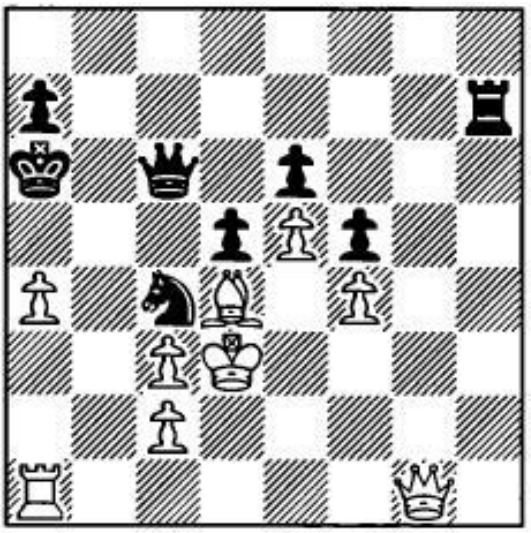


DIAGRAM 76. Black to Play

The adjourned position.

"The five hours of the first session have been completed. I must seal my move. Unfortunately, I chose to seal my move hastily. With thought I would realize the win with 44...Q-K1. Instead I sealed the poor move 44...R-R6+. After three nights of analysis I became aware a win no longer was possible. For the rest of the game, Karpov defends with precision and secures the draw." – *The Weekly*

44...Rh3+

My sealed move. This game was adjourned for many days and the more I studied the position, the more frustrated I became. My "trivial" win stopped being trivial and became elusive. White's anemic bishop has become a tower of defensive strength radiating from the d4-square. Worse still, in many lines my king no longer enjoyed sanctuary. In short, I've really messed things up badly. Still, it was hard to believe that I shouldn't win...

45.Ke2Qe8

After days of analysis, this was the best that I could come up with. The winning try is to crawl up the h-file to get at White's king.

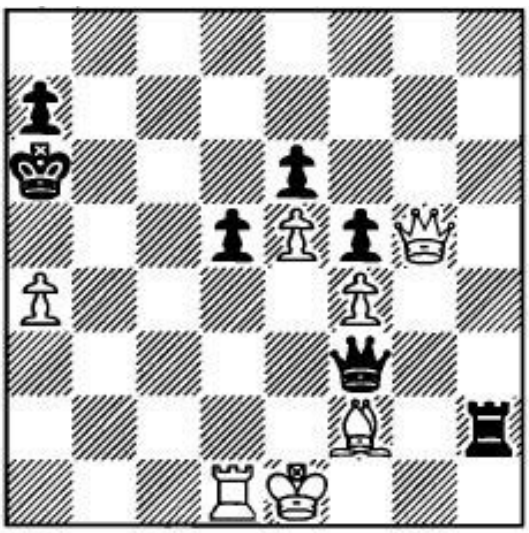
46.Qg5! Rh2+ 47.Bf2

So far all the moves from adjournment could be described as forced or forcing. We have now reached the critical position that kept me up several nights in a row. How to proceed? My two straightforward tries fail-

While 47...d4 looks attractive, correct defense saves the day: 48.Qg3! (forced) 48...Qh5+ 49.Qf3 (forced) 49...Rxf2+ (49...Qxf3+ 50.Kxf3 dxc3 51.Kg3 is not a problem ending for White) 50.Kxf2 Qh2+ 51.Qg2 (forced) 51...Qxf4+ 52.Qf3 Qh2+ 53.Qg2 and Black can do no better than a perpetual.

The trade of minor pieces would open up White's king (as well as my own), but somehow I couldn't bring myself to give up my glorious knight. One should have principles even when winning a game! Clearly 47...Nd2?? 48.Qg1!, winning for White, would be a tragic blunder.

The piece swap I analyzed went 47...Ne3!, threatening ...Ne3-g4, winning. White must capture 48.Kxe3, then 48...Qc6, threatening both 49...Qxc3+ and 49...Qc5+, winning. White has to defend with 49.Rf1 Qxc3+ 50.Ke2 Qxc2+ 51.Ke1 Qc3+ 52.Ke2, when again all these moves since the adjournment could be described as "forced." My line continued 52...Rh3 53.Rd1! Qf3+ 54.Ke1 and I hit a wall. I saw the forcing 54...Rh1+ 55.Bg1 Qe3+ 56.Kf1 and all I get is a perpetual. Tragically, I missed that 54...Rh2! **(Diagram 77)** would win on the spot.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 77. White to Play

How marvelously simple! White's pieces are comically misplaced: 55.Qg1 Rh1 or 55.Qg3 Rh1+ are simple wins, while 55.Rd2 Rh1+ 56.Bg1 Qe3+! wins thanks to luring White's rook to the d2-square.

Again, I analyzed in depth, saw the perpetual, missed the win and in the end simply couldn't bring myself to play a line where I parted with my adorable c4-knight.

47...Rh7?

Since I wrongly thought that the straightforward try 47...Ne3! ended in a perpetual, I decided simply to play around for a while, trying to improve my position before playing a winning shot. White's position is extremely difficult to defend. A

single misstep of any type and the position is quickly won. While I'm not expecting Karpov to blunder, I thought that by just keeping up the pressure I would have good things happen.

48.Bd4 Ka5 49.Bf2 a6

I can't say for sure whether it was a good idea or not, but it just seemed useful to place my a7-pawn on a light square.

50.Bh4 Kb6 51.Bf2+

Of course, 51.Qd8+??, trading queens, would give White a lost ending, as the d8-bishop is misplaced and needs to be on the d4-square.

51...Kc7 52.Bh4 Nb6 53.Kd2!

Karpov has no intention of cooperating by putting his a4-pawn on a dark square. 53.a5?? Nc4, would help me greatly.

53...Kc6 54.Bf2 Rh5 55.Qg3 Nc4+ 56.Ke2 Rh6 57.Qg5 Rh3 58.Bd4 Rh5

Unfortunately, 58...Qh5+ 59.Qxh5 Rxh5 60.Rg1! allows White to hold comfortably thanks to the strong d4-bishop.

59.Qg3 Rh6 60.Rg1!

Nicely played. The rook makes a timely appearance to save the day. To think that at one time this creature was on the a2-square as well. Arrghh, it hurts to look at this game.

60...Qh5+ 61.Qf3 Qh2+ 62.Rg2 Qh1 63.Qf1! (Diagram 78)

Quite frustrating. Karpov does a marvelous defensive job. I had a ridiculous fantasy of 63.Bg1?? Rh3 64.Rg3 Qxf3+ 65.Rxf3 Rxf3 66.Kxf3 Nb2 when by trading the major pieces, I easily win the minor piece ending.

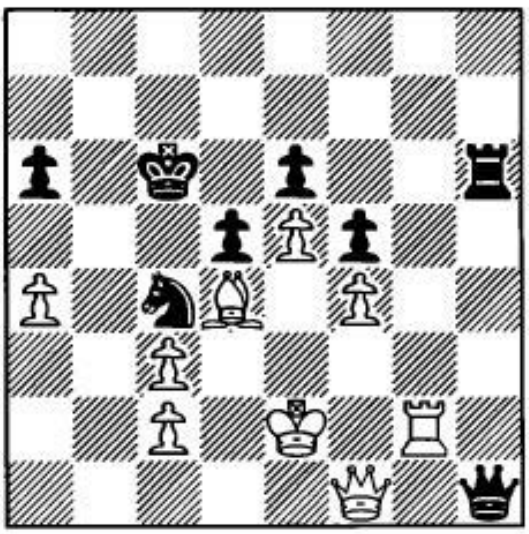


DIAGRAM 78. Black to Play

63...Qxf1+ 64.Kxf1 Rh4 65.Rg6! Rxf4+ 66.Ke2 Re4+ 67.Kf1!

Around these parts I was really becoming fed up with the accuracy of Kar-

pov's defense. He continues to play very well indeed.

67...Kd7 68.Rg7+ Kd8 69.Rg8+ Kd7 70.Rg7+ Ke8 71.Ra7! Nxe5 72.Rxa6 Kd7 73.Ra8 Nc6 74.a5!

And now it is clear that the really big one that should not have got away has.

74...e5

A rather feeble attempt, but 74...Nxd4 75.cxd4 Rxd4 76.a6 Ra4 77.a7 Kc7 78.Re8 Rxa7 79.Rxe6 is a pretty dead drawn rook ending.

75.Bb6 Rc4 76.a6 Rxc3 77.a7 Nxa7 78.Rxa7+ Kd6 79.Ra2

"Excellent. The game has been a draw for some time. My last hope for a win was that Karpov would allow the trap 79. R-R6. This would have walked into the pin R-B3 winning. Now the game fizzled into a draw." – *The Weekly*

79...d4 80.Ba7 f4 81.Bb8+ ½-½

Drawn on the proposal of Karpov. I was dreadfully disappointed with the result of this exhausting game. Defeating a reigning World Champion as Black is to be relished, and on my very first outing as well. Nor is this one where I can say, "c'est la vie". I put tens of hours of analysis into the adjourned position, and the win just slipped through my hands. I was bummed out for most of the tournament.

"At this point Karpov looked up and smiled. 'I offer a draw,' he said. After a quiet hesitation I had to accept. The audience applauded strongly and Karpov gently said. 'How could you not win?'" – *The Weekly*

Our second battle together took place at the Phillips & Drew event in London in 1982. I've annotated this game move by move in my book *Winning Chess Brilliancies*. Frankly, I can't do any better than what I wrote there, so, dear reader, I refer you to that work for more comprehensive notes, as my annotations here will be a little lighter.

Yasser Seirawan-Anatoly Karpov
London, 1982
Queen's Gambit Declined

1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 d5

My move order was intended to avoid a Queen's Indian Defense and to induce a Queen's Gambit Declined, Anatoly's favorite defense. While preparing with Victor Korchnoi, he had found a new idea that I was anxious to try.

4.d4 Be7 5.Bg5 h6 6.Bh4 0-0 7.Rc1 b6

Anatoly repeats the variation that he played in the World Championship in Merano in 1981. I held my breath wondering if I would have the chance to play my preparation.

8.cxd5 Nxd5 9.Nxd5 exd5 10.Bxe7 Qxe7 11.g3!?

A completely different approach from the main line: 11.e3 when White's f1-bishop finds it difficult to find gainful employment. The text envisions a fianchetto to put immediate pressure on the long diagonal

11...Re8!

This is Black's best approach to the position. In Meiano, Karpov had tried 11...Bb7?! and obtained a bad position for his effort. The text is far more sensible. Black utilizes the half-open e-file in order to pressure the e2-pawn. In this way he hopes to demonstrate that the kingside fianchetto was ill-advised.

12.Rc3! (Diagram 79)

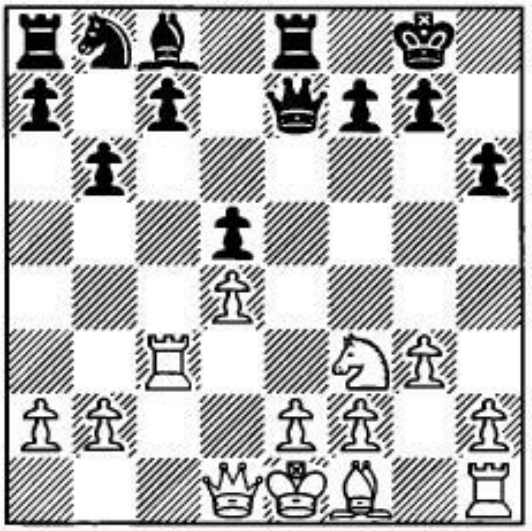


DIAGRAM 79. Black to Play

This was Korchnoi's novel idea. In some variations, the rook can swing across the third rank to block Black's attack on the e2-pawn. Note that the immediate 12.Bg2 Ba6! would have undone White's strategy, as the e2-pawn becomes a sensitive point.

12...Na6

Karpov spent a mere 11 minutes of thought. Most grandmasters, when confronted with a novel idea, stew for about one hour in order to double-check the variations. Karpov's quick reaction caused a warning light to go off in my head. Who was trapping whom?

13.Qa4

This too was the intended follow-up that Korchnoi and I had analyzed together. The threat of Rc3-e3 made me believe that Karpov was in a heap of trouble. As I rose from the board and walked around the playing hall, I strolled by Efim Geller, Karpov's long-time trainer. Geller had excitedly grabbed Jan Timman by the arm and exclaimed "...c5!" Pretending I hadn't overheard, I continued my pace. "13...c5 – doesn't that lose a piece?" I thought.

13...c5?

When Karpov played this move, my heart sank. "Oh [bleep]!" I thought. I had obviously fallen into *his* preparation. Karpov had foreseen my strategy and had prepared a piece sacrifice. He doesn't sacrifice his pieces based on intuition, but rather when he is 99 percent sure that the sacrifice is correct. He had called my bluff. I thought for 15 minutes about declining the sacrifice with 14.e3 c4!, but in that case Black would have the better game.

In a subsequent rapid game played in Hamburg, as you will see, Karpov improved his play with 13...b5!, winning a very good game.

14.Re3!

Since I have no choice, I may as well ride the tiger and go for the gusto. At times like this, when a player is nervous about falling into a losing trap, having some extra material in hand provides some solace.

14...Be6 15.Qxa6

Reluctantly accepting the offered piece sacrifice. Despite my frantic analysis, I didn't see a winning line for Karpov.

15...cxd4

Opening the position to go after my king. My immediate problem is dealing with ...Qe7-b4+, which I have to stop. Black will use the open c-file for his rooks to launch an attack.

16.Rb3

Preventing ...Qe7-b4+ was priority number one. So far everything has been forced. Certainly Karpov had prepared the sacrifice, but he now surprised me by thinking for 34 minutes.

16...Bf5!

The best move. While Karpov was thinking I saw that I can beat back the attacking 16...Qc5 with 17.Qd3! Qa5+ (17...Rac8 18.Nxd4 Qa5+ 19.Rc3 would save White's skin) 18.Qd2 Qxa2 19.Nxd4 Rac8 20.f3!! (making room for Ke1-f2, escaping to the kingside) 20...Qb1+ 21.Kf2 Rc1 22.Nxe6! fxe6 23.Qd3 Qa1 24.Ra3!, and White wins.

Even easier would have been 16...Rac8 17.Nxd4 Rc1+ 18.Kd2 Rc4 (18...Qc5? 19.Rc3! wins) 19.Nxe6 fxe6 20.e3 when White emerges a bishop ahead.

While the text threatens 17...Bc2, snaring my b3-rook, it was also something of a relief. Now I would have just enough time to save my king.

17.Bg2 Bc2

Black has no choice but to pick off the b3-rook. The try 17...d3, threatening ...Qe7xe2 checkmate, would be a mistake. After 17...d3? 18.e3 d4 19.Nxd4 d2+ 20.Kxd2 Rad8 21.Rd1 all of Black's threats would be finished; White would consolidate his king's position and pocket the point.

18.Nxd4!

This is what Karpov had missed in his preparation. He thought White would be forced to play 18.0-0, which would allow 18...Bxb3 19.axb3 Qxe2 20.Qxe2 Rxe2

21.Nxd4 Rxb2 with rough equality. But if I can retain the e2-pawn, all endgames will be winning for me.

19...Bxb3 19.Nxb3 Rac8!

A natural move as Black seizes the open c-file. Black must not be beguiled by 19...Qb4+?, since 20.Kf1 Rac8 21.Bf3! and Kf1-g2 would help me castle by hand, and only misplace Black's queen. The a7-pawn would lack protection.

20.Bf3!

The key point – without sacrificing the e2-pawn by 20.0-0, I achieve a technically winning position. The protected e2-pawn neutralizes Black's battery on the e-file.

It was only at this point that Karpov allowed his poker face to slip. Efim Geller, who had been immersed in his own game, now surfaced to see Karpov's position. As Geller stared at our board in open astonishment, Karpov's face turned crimson. Disturbed by Geller's presence, he fixed him with a long scornful stare. The suggestion was clear: "Comrade, when we return to Moscow, we shall talk!" Geller hurried away. Karpov again returned to the board to think, and the poker face was back.

I felt exalted but knew it would be necessary to keep my killer instinct. I had slipped so many times before against Karpov I was determined not to let it happen again.

20...Rc2?

This would be Karpov's final mistake. Black intends to capture the b2-pawn, but the rook will be woefully misplaced. Black had to try 20...Qf6! 21.0-0 Qxb2, at which point the black queen would have a chance of causing some damage. This line is a strange echo of my Mar del Plata game with Karpov, where I too used a rook instead of my queen to invade the opponent's camp.

21.0-0

What a great pleasure it was to castle and remove my king from danger.

21...Rxb2 22.Rd1!

Overcoming my temptation to control the c-file. Now that my king is safely tucked away, I can concentrate on bringing my pieces to strong squares. Besides wanting to win the d5-pawn, I need to reposition the b3-knight and that means controlling the d4-square.

22...Rd8

Black hopes for 23.Rxd5? Rxd5 24.Bxd5 Rxe2, trading his weak d5-pawn for my strong e2-pawn – a swap I had no intention of making. My priority now was activating my knight.

23.Nd4! Rd7 (Diagram 80)

White's pieces are a picture of harmony. But how to win? Looking deeply into the position, I saw a combination based on Black's weak back rank as well as the hanging b2-rook.

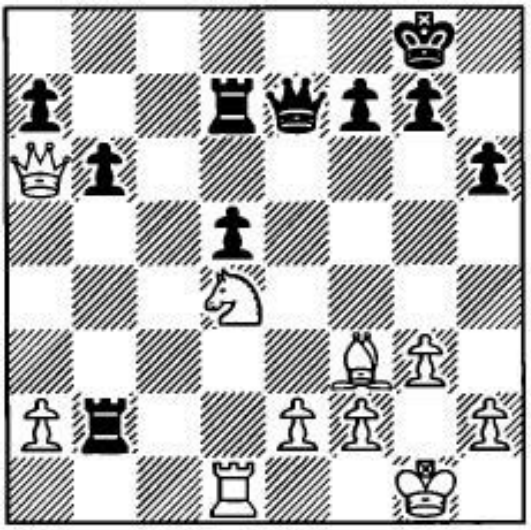


DIAGRAM 80. White to Play

24.Nc6!

The starting sequence of a knight sacrifice to win material and to attack Black's king.

24...Qe8

Karpov has no choice. He has to protect his back rank. For example, 24...Qc5? 25.Qc8+ wins the d7-rook, while 24...Qf8? 25.Bxd5 picks off the d5-pawn with impunity, as the e2-pawn is now adequately defended.

25.Nxa7!

Grabbing a pawn and challenging Black to do something about it.

25...Rc7

Anatoly saw the script I had prepared and avoided my piece offer. My main line was a forced win: 25...Qa8 26.Rc1 Qxa7 27.Rc8+ Kh7 28.Qd3+ g6 29.Qd4!, with the double threat of 30.Qh8, checkmate, and 30.Qxb2, capturing the b2-rook. Black would have to continue 29...Rb1+ 30.Kg2 f6 31.Qxf6 Rg7 32.Qf8 g5 when I anticipated 33.Qf5+, picking up the b1-rook. While this echo variation is charming, later I realized that 33.Bh5! was even more powerful. It's always nice to have choices.

26.a4!

Once more I challenge Black to accept my piece offer. If he doesn't, it will take only Na7-b5 and Qa6xb6 to complete the queenside harvest.

I didn't want to play 26.Rxd5 Rb1+ 27.Kg2 Rcc1, with counterplay against my king because I had seen a trick – 28.h4?? Rh1!, with the threat of ...Rb1-g1 checkmate – which gave me a shudder.

26...Qa8

At last the piece sacrifice becomes irresistible to Black. If he had chosen 26...Rb4, then 27.Nb5 Rcc4 28.Nd6 would win material.

27.Rxd5!

The rook now blasts its way into the game. It was this move that I had in mind when my knight went pawn hunting.

27...Qxa7

The brave knight has given his all and will be redeemed when the rest of White's forces reach the black king.

28.Rd8+ Kh7 29.Qd3+

The audience that packed the Greater London Council Chambers for the game had become noticeably agitated and were murmuring. They now realized that the World Champion's king was in grave danger.

29...f5 30.Qxf5+ g6 31.Qe6! 1-0

Avoiding the last trick, 31.Qf6? when 31...Rc1+ 32.Kg2 Qg7! would give Black a chance of survival. As Black faced 31...Rg7 32.Qe8 g5 33.Be4+ or 31...Rc1+ 32.Kg2 Qg7 33.Rd7, winning the Queen, Anatoly stopped the clock, shook my hand, and congratulated me.

This was an historic moment, as it was the first time in 27 years that a reigning FIDE World Champion had lost to an American in tournament competition. In his whole career, Bobby Fischer wasn't able to defeat a reigning FIDE World Champion before his 1972 match with Boris Spassky

Our next meeting was in Hamburg where we played rapid games for the BBC *Master Game* program. I'll look at those rapid games later in this chapter.

Our third classical chess encounter took place at the 1982 Olympiad in Lucerne. I hadn't quite earned the right to play board one yet. This time I played second board behind Walter S. Browne.

Anatoly Karpov-Yasser Seirawan
Lucerne Olympiad, 1982
Caro-Kann Defense

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nd2!

The most accurate move order for White. If White intends to play the Nb1-c3/d2xe4 variations, then he should play this move order to avoid the possibility of 3...g6, as I played against Smyslov in a must-win game.

3...dxe4

The point of the move order is that now 3...g6?! really lacks sense, in view of 4.Ngf3 Bg7 5.Bd3! Nh6!? 6.0-0 0-0 7.Re1 f6?! 8.c4! – this strike in the center is the reason that the b1-knight is better placed on the d2-square. Furthermore, in case Black chooses a line with ...Bc8-g4, White will have the central fortifying move c2-c3, which makes the g7-bishop bite on cement. In such a case, Black will have no compensation for the lost bishop-pair.

4.Nxe4 Bf5 5.Ng3 Bg6 6.h4!

Unlike Spassky, who was reluctant to advance his h-pawn, Anatoly had no such misgivings.

6...h6 7.Nf3 Nd7 8.h5 Bh7 9.Bd3 Bxd3 10.Qxd3 Qc7

For many years, 10...Qc7 was my automatic move, as I liked to prevent Bc1-f4 for White. Now, with the benefit of many years of hindsight, I've come to realize that the f4-square for White's bishop is really no great shakes at all. That, in fact, the very best move order is 10...e6!, as there are many occasions where Black's queen can better go to the a5-square or the b6-square, or Black may just play ...c6-c5, as early as possible, without moving his queen at all.

11.Bd2

One thing about Anatoly: he could be counted upon to play the main line. A provocative but interesting move for White is 11.Rh4!, which is underrated.

11...Ngf6 12.0-0-0 e6 13.Ne4 (Diagram 81)



DIAGRAM 81. Black to Play

13...Rd8?

Too clever for my own good. I wanted to avoid the main line 13...0-0-0 14.g3 Nc5 15.Nxc5 Bxc5, as I've committed my king to the queenside at a moment I'd be happier sitting on the g8-square. While I like my d8-rook, I'm ignoring the problems of my king, and this move should land me in trouble.

14.Nxf6+! Nxf6 15.Qe2?

This mistake returns the favor. While a highly standard move in this variation, the text simply fails to crack the whip and lets me off the hook completely. White should have played 15.Ne5! Bd6 16.Qg3!, a move I saw but underestimated. My focus had been on 16.f4 0-0 17.g4 c5!, variations that actually turn out well for me. After 16.Qg3 the move 16...Rg8 is a rather sad response and a

critic might be justified in asking what the heck I'm doing.

15...c5!16.dxc5?!

This is far too compliant. I expected either 16.Qb5+ or 16.Be3, with a small edge for White in both lines. After the text I thought I was just better.

16...Bxc517.Ne5?!

Further slippage. It was time for White to seize with both hands 17.Qb5+ Qc6 18.Qxc6+ bxc6 19.Ne5 Bxf2 20.Nxc6 Rc8 23.Ne5 Bg3, and go for a drawn ending.

17...0-0(Diagram 82)

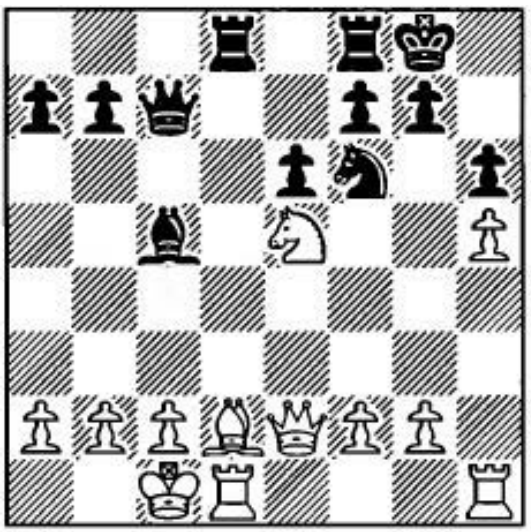


DIAGRAM 82. White to Play

Now Black really stands better. Think about the diagrammed position in a different way: it is like a Sicilian where Black has played a ...d6-d5 advance, trading off his "backwards" d6-pawn for White's e4-pride and joy. Secondly, Black has the half-open c-file line, already aiming at White's king. Thirdly, Black has an extra central pawn (the e6-pawn), which clogs files and protects squares (f5 and d5) that can become useful outposts.

18.Nd3

Not exactly a major achievement. What is the d3-knight doing anyway? Clearly Anatoly is hoping for a kingside pawn storm and just gets his knight out of the way, but he will soon be seizing the defensive in a major way.

18...Be7 19.Kb1Rc8

A very difficult choice, as 19...Rd5, was quite attractive.

20.Rc1

Further slippage? I wasn't quite sure. I had expected 20.Bc1, but in that case I planned to play ...Qc7-b6, double rooks on the c-file, ...Nf6-d5, ...Be7-f6 and give the World Champion checkmate. The text takes away the doubling against the c2-pawn plan and introduces the idea of c2-c4, denying my knight the d5-square.

Excellent reasons for this move. On the other hand, the c1-rook is now a full-time defender and I was happy about that part and confused about the rest.

20...Qc4

Such tempting moves are hard to resist. But in general I had the feeling that the text was wrong and that my queenside attack needed to be prosecuted with rather more urgency. To this end 20...b5, securing the d5-square, seems best. A sample variation might run 21.g4 Nd5 22.f4 b4!, which is my whole point: Black should be creating the sacrificial threat of ...Nd5-c3+ as soon as possible. To continue the line: 23.g5 hxg5 24.fxg5 Nc3+ 25.Bxc3 bxc3, with superior chances for Black.

This whole line of play raises a very interesting question: "When does an 'attack' first begin?" Garry Kasparov gave a very thoughtful and I believe correct reply when he answered: "When you advance a pawn into the attack." As we can see from this variation, advancing the b7-pawn brings into play the line-opening sacrifice ...Nf6-d5-c3, with checkmating threats. Thanks to the presence of the b-pawn the attack is *accelerated*.

21.Rhe1 Nd5?!

Oh my, chess is a difficult game. Now the text is misti'med. If I wanted piece play, then by all means introduce the pieces. With 21...Rfd8 22.f4 Qb5 23.g4 Rd4! the game is going to be a wild and bumpy journey. I prefer Black's position.

22.g4! a5! 23.Ne5 Qxe2 24.Rxe2 a4 25.a3?!

A remarkably cautious move. My expectation was 25.c4, a move I considered "forced." Then 25...Nb4 26.Bxb4 Bxb4 27.Nd7! Rfd8 28.Nb6 Rc6 29.Nxa4 Rd4 30.f3 Rdxc4 31.Rxc4 Rxc4, achieving more or less an even position, was in my judgment best play.

25...b5! (Diagram 83)

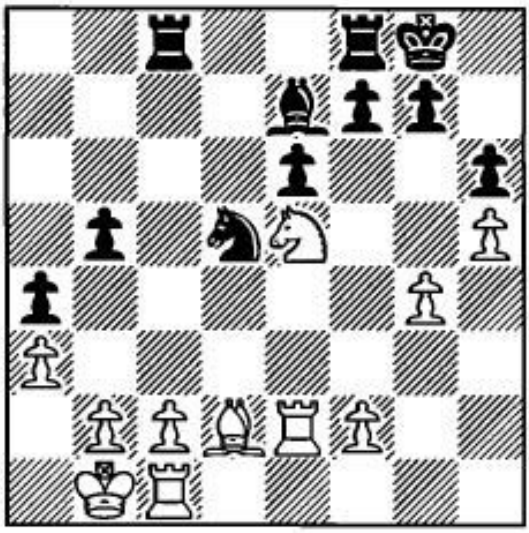


DIAGRAM 83. White to Play

Once again, thanks to the superior pawn structure, I stand better. It may be hard to win, but I'm willing to give it a try.

26.Nd3 Rc4 27.f3 Rfc8?!

Not the most useful tempo. I wanted to rule out b2-b3, once and for all, but White certainly had no such intentions. A better choice was 27...Bd6!, playing for ...Rf8-e8, ...f7-f6 and ...Kg8-f7, when, by such small, creeping moves, Black improves his position. White is well advised to play c2-c3, Rc1-d1, Kb1-c2 and to just wait.

28.c3 Bd6 29.Rg1!?

A very surprising choice indeed, as Anatoly decides to open lines. I expected 29.Rce1 Kf8 30.Kc2, keeping the position quiet.

29...Re8!?

I wanted to encourage Anatoly to pursue his g5-break, as I thought it would benefit me. The move 29...Kf8, to discourage the break, was also a fair choice, but sometimes you just have to give your opponent the rope he needs to hang himself.

30.g5?

This consequent follow-up will have large ramifications. With this move White destroys his kingside pawn structure, making me a very happy camper.

30...hxg5 31.Rxg5 Be7

Allowing the trade of my g7-pawn for the h5-pawn. A better line was 31...Rd8!, allowing White to "enjoy his structure" the seeds for which were sown at move 30. A sample line might go 31.Reg2 Bf8 32. R5g3 Rh4! 33.Bh6 Rh1+ with a healthy advantage for Black.

I cannot fault myself for the text, because I thought I was heading to a four-rook ending with opposite majorities and where my protected passed pawns were more advanced. In short, I thought the text would lead to a winning position.

32.Rg1 Rh4 33.Reg2 Bf8 34.Bh6

Clearly, White cannot deviate and must go for the game variation.

34...Rxh5 35.Bxg7 Bxg7 36.Rxg7+ Kf8

Very nice. I have the better structure, better minor piece, good king position and I'm about to tackle the f3-pawn. All due to g4-g5 from White, trying to force a draw in the position. My confidence was riding high.

37.R7g4!

A very good defensive move. While Anatoly was thinking, I gave up hope that he would play 37.Rg8+? Ke7 38.Rxe8+ Kxe8, which only trades my passive e8-rook for White's active g7-rook. The hoped-for continuation 39.Rg8+ Kd7 40.Rb8? Kc7 41.Rf8 Rf5 would be a dream come true.

The text sets up two crucial defensive ideas: firstly Nd3-f4, to get rid of the passive d3-knight, and secondly c3-c4, to obtain play on the queenside by creating an a4-pawn weakness.

37...Rf5 (Diagram 84)

Going straight for my main line. Black is also better after 37...Ke7, just improving things.

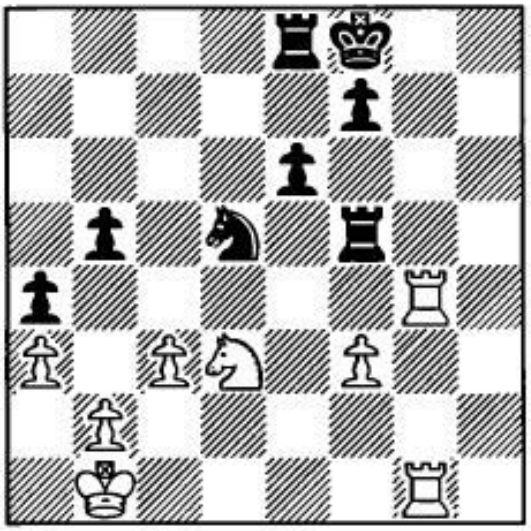


DIAGRAM 84. White to Play

38.Nb4! Nxb4 39.Rxb4 Rxf3

I see from my scoresheet that both players were playing quickly, moving without hesitation. I had over 40 minutes left for the time-control while Anatoly had 13 minutes. I had my tunnel vision going for what I thought was a winning rook ending. Also 39...Rc8 deserved consideration.

40.Rxb5e5?!

As we know, in rook endings every move has major implications. Furthermore, each move can have a "ripple effect" as a forcing line of play cascades forwards. If I had a second chance, I would play the superior 40...f5!. In that case, Black could bring his king to the f6-square, then advance his f5-pawn to the f4-square and only then advance thee-pawn. It sounds like a slow process, but it is not. In fact, it would go prettyfast.

Think of this line in another way for a moment: Black will have two connected passed pawns, White will have three. Black's pawns, however, will be much further advanced and he will have a supportive king as well. While it is impossible to prove, I can't shake my conviction that with 40...f5! I would have won the game.

41.Kc2! (Diagram 85)

We have arrived at the position I aimed for with 31...Be7. Here I stopped and "thought" for 40 minutes, so that I could seal my move and confirm my win with adjournment analysis. This turned out to be a very bad idea indeed and, sad to say, I believe it ended up costing me a victory.

To begin with, before I started "thinking" about what to seal, my intention was to play the obvious 41...f6!, opening the way for my king to "go forwards" with ...Kf8-f7-e6, and then simply to advance the pawns. Passed pawns must be pushed and all of that. But while I was "thinking" – basically waiting for the moment I could seal my move – it began to seem reasonable to advance my e-pawn as well. Annotating the game in *Chess Informant 34*, Karpov's long-serving second Igor Zaitsev suggested that 41...f6!, with the idea of 42.Kd2 Kf7 43.Ke2 Rh3, would have lead to a big advantage for Black. He is right. A typical case of "over-thinking" the position.

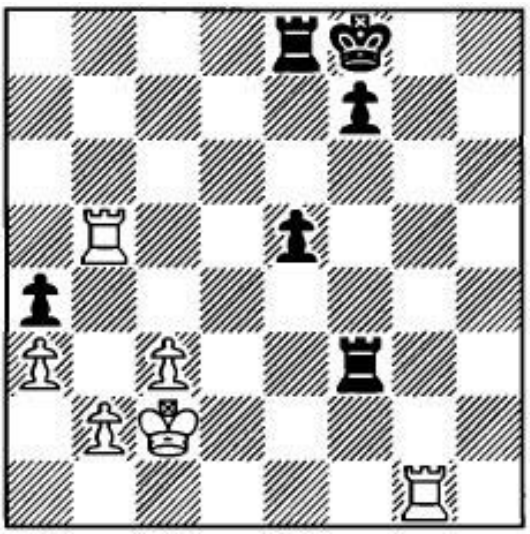


DIAGRAM 85. Black to Play

41...e4?

My sealed move and a very bad one. During the adjournment the whole of the American team came to my aid. Even Victor Korchnoi tried his hand as well. Lots of cooks, but not enough broth. The position is a cold draw. I just couldn't believe that I had done it again. I had let the World Champion escape from a lost position. Darn!

42.Kd2 e3+

Obviously the e-pawn is running too far ahead. The problem is that 42...f5 43.Rgg5! f444.Rgf5+ allows an immediate perpetual check across the fifth rank.

43.Ke1 Rf2 44.Rf1 Rc2 45.Rb7 Rc1+ 46.Ke2 Rc2+ 47.Ke1 Rc1+ ½-½

By the way, this was my second Olympiad. I have explained that in these team events individual norms should not be counted. In Lucerne, this was the second game in a series where I played with the black pieces in seven consecutive games.

Again we return to Linares, 1983 and the worst tournament of my career.

Anatoly needed a win in the final round to catch and share first place with his countryman Boris Spassky. The Soviet Ambassador to Spain was in the front row to watch the merriment. I understood my own role perfectly well: spoiler.

Anatoly Karpov-Yasser Seirawan
Linares, 1983
Caro-Kann Defense

1.e4

These were the days when Anatoly played 1.e4, with the impervious attitude of "Now the rest is just a formality of proving a forced win." His absolute belief in White's advantage was impressive. "Win with White, draw with Black" was his formula for success. A formula shared by many of his great predecessors, of course.

From my side of the table, I thought Black was just fine and was capable of an easy draw against 1.d4. I enjoyed playing against 1.c4; and only felt "under pressure" against 1.e4. There really is something to Bobby's "1.e4! Best by test" comment.

1...c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nd2 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Bf5 5.Ng3 Bg6 6.h4!

I note that the databases give the wrong move order of 6.Nf3 and eventual transposition. Anatoly always played the main lines straight and accurately.

6...h6 7.Nf3 Nd7 8.h5 Bh7 9.Bd3 Bxd3 10.Qxd3 Qc7

According to my scoresheet Anatoly had used a whole six minutes to my one minute. No doubt he was prepared to improve on our game from Lucerne. Me too.

11.Bd2 Ngf6 12.0-0-0e6 13.Ne4 Be7!?

An unusual choice. The common line is 13...0-0-0 14.g3 Nc5 15.Nxc5Bxc5, as mentioned before. The text is a definite improvement over 13...Rd8?, but hardly better than the main line. It is this combination of moves 10...Qc7 and 13...Be7, which convinced me that 10...Qc7 wasn't the best move and that 10...e6 was more flexible. The tempo ...QdB-c7 might besparedand be put to better use

14.Nxf6+!?

Seeking to wrong-foot Black's pieces.

14...Bxf6

The proper recapture, as 14...Nxf6?! 15.Ne5! gives White an ideal set-up

15.Qe4!0-0-0!

Suddenly, 15...0-0 16.g4! looked rather turbulent while the queenside appeared positively tranquil. As a peaceful person, I chose tranquility.

16.Bf4! (Diagram 86)

Stop and consider the diagrammed position for a moment. White has, in my view, achieved all the advantages possible in this line. A kingside space edge, a

near clampdown over the e5-square and an advantageous positioning of bishops (Black's bishop might be more comfortably placed on the c7-square). Yet for all of these plusses I'm perfectly happy with Black's position.

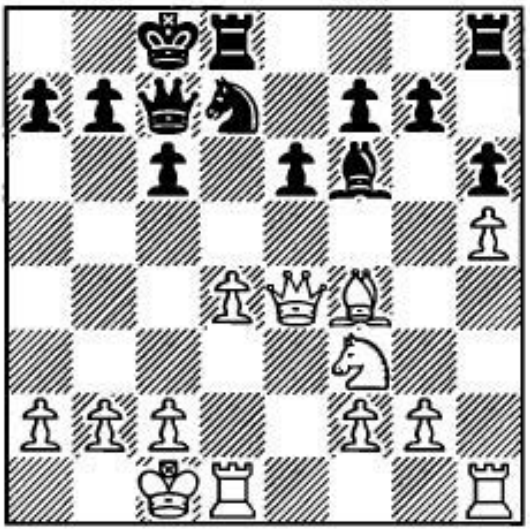


DIAGRAM 86. Black to Play

16...Qa5 17.Kb1 Rhe8

Come and get me!

18.Bg3!

This type of move is a Karpov specialty: fine prophylactic play, which leaves it up to his opponent to find a plan, while also improving his own options. The move even receives its own moniker: "Karpovian." Okay, I'm game, let us continue.

18...Qf5!

First to stop 19.Qf4 when, in the words of Victor Korchnoi, Black would experience "...unpleasant sensations..." Second, this invitation to an ending should be declined as Black's pieces stand well after the trade, so I win a tempo.

19.Qe2 (Diagram 87)

19...b5!

Bravely and well played. While I thrust my king's shield forwards, I also grab space and give my king the b7 luft square. The text helps me control the c4-square and by extension the d5-square.

20.Rd3!?

I'm not really sure what to suggest for White, and the text looks as good as anything. After 20.Ne5?! Nxe5 21.dxe5 Be7 I would be quite happy with my position. The text has ideas of swinging the rook across the third rank in cases like Nf3-e5 and Rd3-f3, or at times to play for a2-a4 and Rd3-a3, with a sudden attack on the queenside

After my last move a line like 20.Nd2 is attractive, aiming for d6, but my plan was to sacrifice an exchange with 20...Bxd4! 21.Ne4 Nf6!? 22.Nd6+ Rxd6 23.Bxd6 Qxf2!?, with a knight and two pawns for the rook. Also 23...e5!? leads to an interesting middlegame position where the d6-bishop makes a strange impression. The text introduces such a maneuver without sacrificing the d4-pawn.

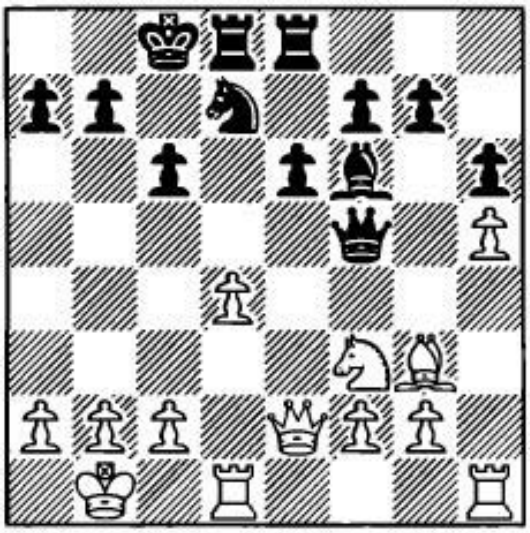


DIAGRAM 87. Black to Play

20...Nb6!

I wanted to stop the possibility of Nf3-d2-e4-d6, and was happy to allow the game variation where I cede my bishop.

21.Ne5 Bxe5! 22.Bxe5 f6 23.g4! Qh7 24.Bg3 Kb7!

I definitely felt good about this move, safely tucking in my king.

25.Re1 a5!

Similar to my 19...b5!, I liked this expansion as well. As before, I'm closing off avenues of attack for White; for instance, Rd3-a3 and Qe2-d2-a5 is taken away. At the same time, by advancing my a7-pawn to the a4-square, I'm securing the c4-square as well. What I mean is that White will have to play b2-b3, to gain control over the c4-square. Great! In that case, I'll be able to play ...a4xb3 and potentially utilize the a-file.

26.Qd2 a4! 27.f3

It seems White has maximized his position and so takes along this little flick just in case the g4-pawn requires a little protection down the road. While White is shoring things up and putting some polish on his position, this pause works for me too, as I wanted to improve the situation of my queen.

27...Qg8! 28.Re4 Qf7 29.Qe1 Rd5! 30.a3

Ah, at last, a small concession with which I am content. With this move, I've now won control over the c4- and d5-square complex!

30...Qd7

Mission accomplished; my queen is back in play. At this moment I opened up peace negotiations with an offer of a draw. (Throughout my career I haven't liked offering draws. Please note my draw offers from this book versus those from my opponents. I have normally offered draws when trying to secure a tournament success or because I was really in bad physical shape, usually because of jet-lag.) Anatoly politely declined my offer with the approved response "I like to play." This is really the one and true reason why I don't like offering draws. Having my advances for peace and universal brotherhood rejected? Intolerable!

In truth, I wasn't unhappy with Anatoly's decision. In such positions I have a very small preference for the knight over the bishop – think of a Marshall Gambit ending where, a whole pawn behind on the queenside, Black draws easily thanks to a powerful d5-knight. My draw offer was based on the pawn structure, which I thought was solidly balanced.

31.Qd1 Rd8 32.Be1

White's last two little retreats weren't exactly an admonishment for my draw offer. The three possibilities of 32...e5, 32...Nc4 and my game choice started to look attractive.

32...f5!?

An interesting attempt to mix things up and catch Karpov off-guard. I was afraid that after 32...Nc4 33.Bc3! I wouldn't have another chance to take advantage of the piece position.

33.Re2

A necessary retreat. A bad alternative was 33.gxf5? exf5, which helps me get rid of my e6-weakness and leaves the h5-pawn sitting like a sore thumb.

33...Qf7 34.Bb4!?

An interesting judgment. I thought Anatoly should have played 34.Ba5, to trade minors and make a draw. But having just refused my kind offer...

34...fxg4 35.fxg4 g6 36.Qe1 gxh5

I decided to play for "safety," as 36...Rxd4 37.Rxe6 Rxd3 38.cxd3 Qf3!? 39.hxg6 looked like a line which, if it didn't go right, could easily go wrong.

37.Rxe6 R8d7 38.gxh5 Rf5?!

At the time, this struck me as clever since it drives the d3-rook back to the d1-square to protect the first rank. Now I realize that the d3-rook is actually misplaced and I'm helping White defend. So much for my clever *zwischenzug* – I should have played 38...Rxh5, at once, likely winning a tempo over the game.

39.Rd1 Rxh5 40.Qe4 Nd5 41.Bc5

The adjourned position.

41...Rh2 (Diagram 88)

My sealed move. I went back to my room to analyze the position and the more I looked the more pleased I was. I had an easy draw. There was a knock on my door, and I went to answer it. To my surprise it was Boris Spassky. He inquired

about the position. I told him it was a draw and he asked if I needed his help. No thank you, I answered, it wasn't necessary.

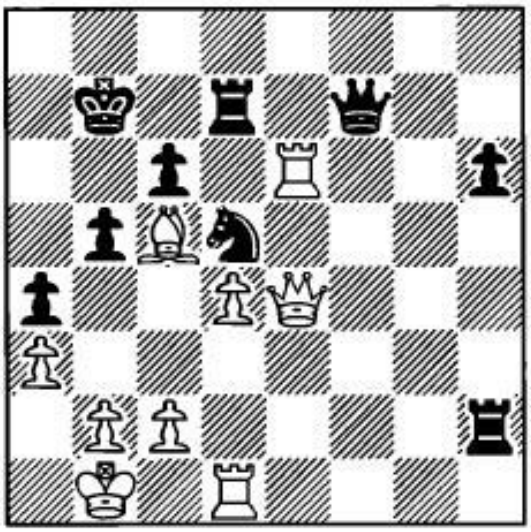


DIAGRAM 88. Black to Play

42.Rc1

Basically the only potential play in the position for White is associated with c2-c4, when after the trade of the c2-pawn for the b5-pawn, the a4-pawn is left unprotected. A happy thought for Anatoly. On the other hand, opening up the second rank is suicidal.

42...h5 43.Rh6

Avoiding the trap 43.c4? bxc4 44.Rxc4 Qf1+ 45.Rc1 Qb5 (45...Qf2 46.Rc2 Qxc2+ 47.Qxc2 Rxc2 48.Kxc2 Rh7 is a little better for Black) 46.Rc2?? Nc3+!, winning.

43...Rf2 44.Qe1 Rd8

White had a concrete threat of Qe1-a5, which would be unpleasant. The text intends to meet 45.Qa5? with 45...Ra8!, and a swift kick backwards.

45.Qd1 Rf3 46.Qe1 ½-½

Game drawn on Karpov's proposal. I was very happy to see the end of the event. The final position is balanced, yet under different circumstances I might have played 46...Rf6 47.Rxf6 Qxf6, and continued the game. Black's king is perfectly safe, and that is a passed h5-pawn in the position. A main line Caro-Kann player's pride and joy! (Moral victories that overpower White's sixth move deserve special appreciation.)

Our next classical chess meeting was in Tilburg. It was interesting how in the major events at Linares and Tilburg, there was Karpov, and in the other major event in Nikšić, there was Kasparov. I believe this avoidance was deliberate by both men.

Anatoly Karpov-Yasser Seirawan
Tilburg, 1983
Caro-Kann Defense

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nd2 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Bf5 5.Ng3 Bg6 6.h4 h6 7.Nf3 Nd7 8.h5 Bh7 9.Bd3 Bxd3 10.Qxd3 Qc7 11.Bd2 Ngf6 12.0-0-0e6 13.Ne4 Bd6!? (Diagram 89)

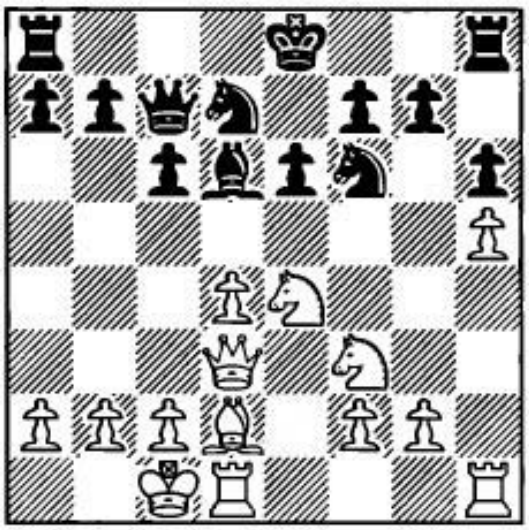


DIAGRAM 89. White to Play

A specialty line of mine that I've dabbled with on occasion. I'm quite aware that it can't be a good idea to give up the good bishop for a mere knight, but in the crucial line that tests my whole concept White has to make a pawn sacrifice and I wanted to take it.

14.Nxd6+ Qxd6 15.Qe2!

White has a large number of choices, including 15.Rh4, 15.c4 and 15.Kb1, but I consider, having studied this position in depth for over a decade, that this is White's best.

15...Qd5 16.Kb1 Nxh5

The pawn sacrifice referred to earlier. Either it is very brave or foolish to take it. Since I played it, let's go with the former, as it was, after all, the position for which I was aiming. A more circumspect (gotta love that word) choice was 16...Qe4, offering White a slightly superior endgame.

17.Ne5 Nhf6 18.f3

How sweet, a pawn to the good. Unfortunately, it is the type of sweet that can cause you to choke and, without a timely Heimlich maneuver to un-block the

passage, asphyxiation can result. So we understand the remedy: return the pawn when necessary. How to continue?

18...b5!?

Still part of my preparation. I will return the pawn, but on my terms. I could also try a "wipe-out" variation to vacuum pieces off the board: 18...Qxd4!? 19.Bc3 Qc5 20.Nxd7 Nxd7 21.Bxg7 Rg8 22.Bxh6!? (22.Bd4 Qb5) 22...0-0-0 23.Bf4 (23.Be3 Qe5) 23...Nb6, with what I thought was a "small" plus for White. I rejected this line because I wanted Karpov to prove his compensation after the text.

19.g4!Rg8

A very provocative and dangerous move. I fully understood that I'm playing with fire, but I believed in the basic soundness of my position and didn't want to return my extra pawn. Yet.

The text avoids the g4-g5 threat at the cost of losing kingside castling privileges (not that this was a trump to be used) and, more importantly, badly misplacing my rook. A worse choice was 19...Rf8, which would only encourage a future Bd2-b4, with tempo. Moreover, the bail-out variation, 19...Nb6 20.g5 Nfd7 21.gxh6 gxh6!? 22.Bxh6 Nc4 23.f4, wasn't what I was hoping for, as I've returned my pawn and White still has pressure. I had stopped analyzing here, but surprisingly with 23...Nd6! Black's game isn't so bad, as the h6-bishop is temporarily pinned to the h1-rook and Black has ideas like ...Nd6-f5 and ...Qd5-e4, offering to trade queens.

If the text was provocative, I really couldn't bring myself to play my other prepared line, 19...Rh7, for fear of being laughed at by my colleagues and perhaps never being invited back to Tilburg again.

In any case, now that those worries are out of the way, let me explain why I gave 19...Rh7 serious consideration. In the first place, we understand that the threat of g4-g5, winning back a pawn, compels the h8-rook to move. Wherever it moves, it is not going to be well placed. One bad square (h7) is as depressing as a second bad square (g8). Therefore, we have to ask "What are the 'plusses' of 19...Rh7?" Surprisingly, they are numerous. In the first place, from the h7-square White is strongly discouraged from playing g4-g5, which opens up the h-file and liberates the rook. Secondly, with a future ...g7-g5 or ...g7-g6, the f7-pawn is protected, making queenside castling possible. Finally, and this was the thing that I found most attractive, *Black can crawl with his king to the kingside thanks to the protection of the h7-rook.*

Let us look at a sample line: 19...Rh7 20.Rhe1 (as in the game) 20...Kf8! 21.Bb4+ Kg8 22.b3 (trying to take advantage of the d5-queen) 22...Nb6 23.c4 bxc4 24.bxc4 Qd8 25.Nxc6 (winning back the pawn) 25...Qc7 with a fine position for Black. White actually has to be careful, since 26.Ne5? Rb8 is already an advantage for Black. Surprise!

Give the preposterous-looking 19...Rh7 a glance, and if you find a refutation drop me a line. With hindsight, of course, I regret that I didn't try the variation.

While writing this book, I watched an absolutely fantastic game between Russia's Morozevich and France's Lagrave. The players reached the following position after White's 27th move (**Diagram 90**):

Alexander Morozevich-Maxime Vachier Lagrave
Biel, 2009

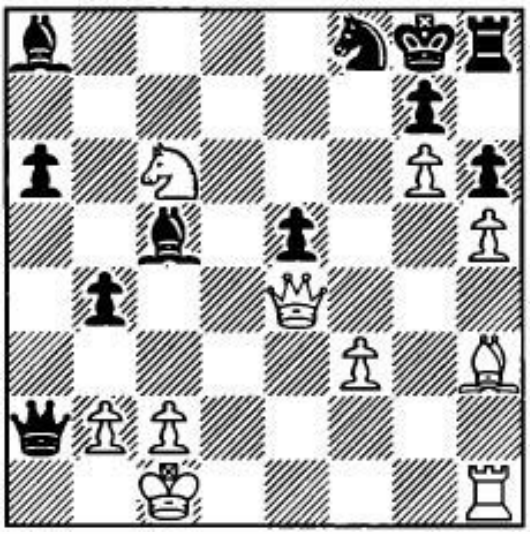


DIAGRAM 90. Black to Play

27...Rh7!! 28.Re1 Bxc6 29.Qxc6 Bd4 30.Kd2 Qxb2 31.Qc4+ Kh8 32.Kd3 a5 33.Qc8 Qa3+ 34.Ke4 b3 35.cxb3 a4 36.Rb1 Qb4 37.Qc4 Qb7+ 38.Qd5 Qb4 39.Qc4 Qd2 40.Bg4 a3 41.Qf7 Qc2+ 42.Kd5 Qc5+ 43.Ke4 a2 44.Rc1 a1Q 45.Rxc5 Bxc5 46.Qd5 Qe1+ 47.Kd3 Qd1+ 48.Kc4 Qxd5+ 49.Kxd5 Ba3 50.Bf5 Kg8 51.Kxe5 Rh8 52.Kd5 Nh7 53.gxh7+ Kf7 54.Bg6+ Kf6 55.f4 Bc1 56.f5 Bd2 57.Kd6 Be1 58.Kd7 Bb4 59.Kc7 Ke5 60.Kd7 Ba3 61.Kc6 Kd4 62.Kc7 Kc3 63.Kd7 Kb4 64.Kd6 Kxb3+ 65.Kd5 Bb2 66.Kd6 Bf6 67.Kc5 Kc3 68.Kd6 Kd4 69.Kc6 Rd8 70.Kb6 Kd5 71.Kc7 Kc5 72.Bf7 g5 73.fxg6 Rd6 74.Be8 Be5 75.Kb7 Rb6+ 76.Kc8 Kd6 0-1.

What a fantastic move from the diagrammed position. Of course, Black is in desperate straits, and necessity is the mother of invention. If Lagrave could play the absurd ...Rh8-h7, then many years earlier I should have done the same.

20.Rhe1! Nb6 (Diagram 91) 21.b3!

Before the text we were still in my preparation. I confess I simply underestimated the strength of this powerful quiet move.

My focus had been on two forcing lines: 21.f4 Nfd7 22.f5?! (a helpful move) 22...Nxe5 23.dxe5 Qc4! 24.fxe6 (24.Qf3 0-0-0) 24...Qxe2! 25.exf7+ Kxf7 26.Rxe2 Ke6 (26...Rge8), when I've "returned" the extra pawn on my terms. The resulting position may offer White a plus, but Black has an attractive blockade and, most importantly, it was this position I wanted.

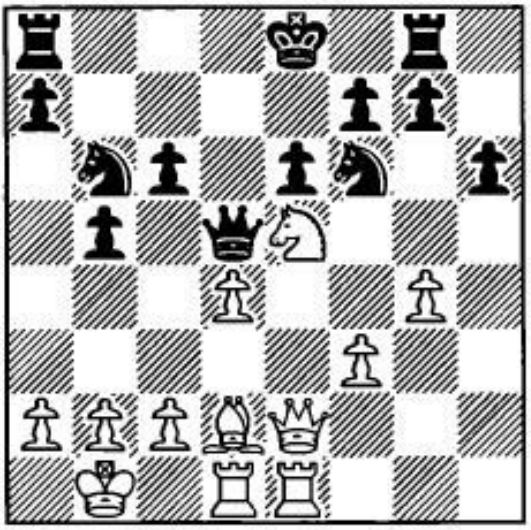


DIAGRAM 91. White to Play

Another hoped-for forcing line was 21.g5?! hxg5 22.Bxg5, which optically looks strong for White. His pieces are all very well posted and he is "...opening up the position for his better developed army..." That comment can be read in every instructional textbook for beginner to expert. The problem is that, in the parlance of baseball, the line simply whiffs and strikes out after 22...Nfd7 23.f4 f6 24.Qh5+ Kd8 25.Bh4 Kc7, when White is left empty-handed.

Since neither of these forcing lines worried me, I was pleased to defend my whole concept of play beginning with 13...Bd6, risking the capture of the h5-pawn and challenging Karpov to prove his compensation.

Moreover, I didn't think that White could play the position quietly because Black has many ways of improving his position. For example, 21.Bc1 might seem reasonable, although I don't know what it does: 21...Nfd7 22.Rd3 (same comment as before) 22...Rf8, and, if allowed to continue unmolested, Black will castle queenside with a safe king. It was actually this quiet line, where the defensive move ...Rg8-f8 could be played, that attracted me to 19...Rg8 and not 19...Rh7.

The text, on the other hand, is quite discomforting and considering my reply forced me to change my evaluation sharply. Besides taking away the c4-square in the line seen in the first paragraph, the text prepares Bd2-b4 and c2-c4, when Black is routed fast and furiously. The f3-pawn isn't the only battering-ram in the position. Suddenly I didn't feel so good about my position, much like the cat after swallowing the canary.

21...Qd6

Not the square of my dreams, but something had to be done. White's Bd2-b4 and c2-c4 are coming fast, and I have to get out of the way.

22.f4!

Now the timing for this move is really strong.

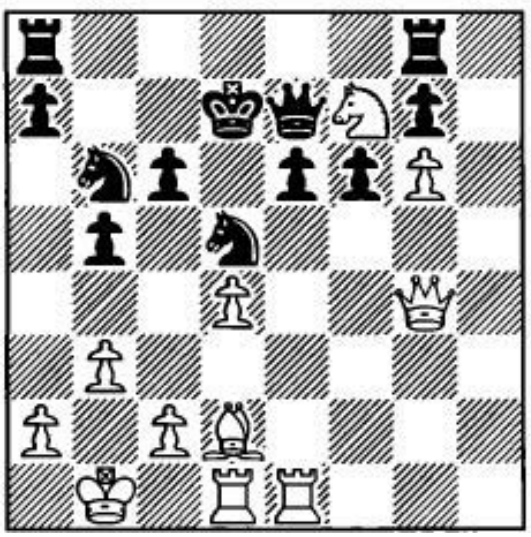
22...Nfd7?

Okay, my love for the position has lost its bloom, but this pushes me from the heat into the flame. I'm not happy, but 22...Qc7 was necessary, defending the f7-pawn and preparing to flee queenside. White has three attractive lines of play:

a) 23.f5?! 0-0-0 24.fxe6 fxe6 25.Ba5 Rd5! reveals a common tactical motif in the Caro-Kann. Black's d5-rook gets out of the pin and prevents c2-c4, thanks to the sideways hit on the a5-bishop. White has excellent compensation but no forced win.

b) 23.Qf3 0-0-0 24.Nxc6 Rd6 and White has won back his pawn, but the position isn't much of a problem for Black as the d4-pawn is hanging.

c) 23.g5! was what frightened me away: 23...hxg5 24.hxg5 Nfd5 25.g6 (25.c4 bxc4 26.bxc4 Na4 might be good for White, but at least I'd get in a tickle or two) 25...f6 26.Nf7 (preventing queenside escapes) 26...Qe7 27.Qg4 Kd7 **(Diagram 92)**.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 92. White to Play

I made a very serious error of judgment assessing this analysis diagram position. I thought it was terrible when actually Black has good defensive chances. In any case, 22...Qc7, was forced.

23.f5 Nxe5 24.dxe5 Qc5?

Another mistake. When it rains it pours. Already I didn't see a satisfactory defense. The "obvious" 24...Qe7 25.Qe4 (threatening Bd2-b4) 25...Nd5 26.c4 bxc4 27.bxc4 Rb8+ 28.Ka1 Qa3 29.Rb1 looked hopeless, while after the forced move 24...Qc7! 25.Ba5 Rd8 26.Qe4, I stopped looking and missed 26...Rd8-d5, a common tactical motif in the Caro-Kann. Don't get me wrong, I do not recommend the position after 24...Qc7!, but it was the right way to put up resistance. After the text I land in a lost rook ending.

25.fxe6! fxe6 26.Be3! (Diagram 93)

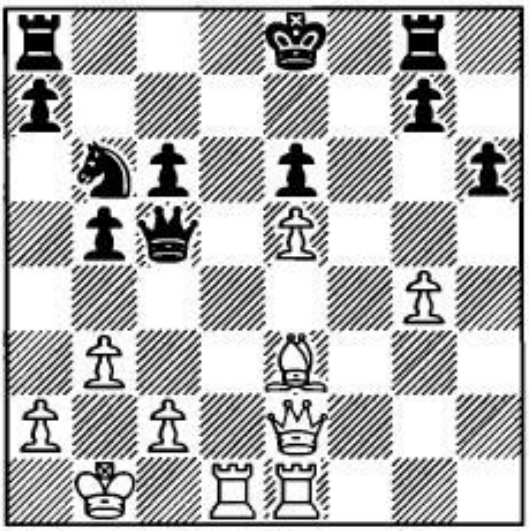


DIAGRAM 93. Black to Play

Simple and very powerful.

26...Qxe5?

My collapse is complete and I speed White along in his winning task. The position is lost, but 26...Qe7 was necessary.

27.Bxb6

At the board, this was the move I feared the most, as it forces a winning technical ending that Karpov handles flawlessly. After the game, it was pointed out that 27.Qd3!. would have won the game faster. Both players saw the win that was played in the game and Karpov unhesitatiingly grabbed it. I don't blame him. One win per game is all that is needed.

27...Qxe2 28.Rxe2 axb6 29.Rxe6+ Kf7 30.Rxc6 Rgd8 31.Rf1+! Kg8 32.Rf5!

Well played. No doubt 32.Rxb6 Rd4 33.Rxb5 Rxg4 34.a4 is good for White as well, but in that case I'd be happy too as I'd have a few passers of my own. The text prepares to meet ...Rd8-d4 with g4-g5, not allowing me connected passers.

32...Rd1+

Helping White gain a tempo or two in a rook ending. But 32...Rd4 33.g5 h5 34.g6! I judged to be hopeless.

33.Kb2 Rg1 34.Rxb5! Rxg4 35.Rcxb6!

Everything is nicely flowing for Karpov and he is on a real roll. The extra pawn is very meaningful as White's king is marvelously protected and there are no annoying checks.

35...g6

A pretty pathetic advance in a race that should be a sprint.

36.Rb8+ Rxb8 37.Rxb8+ Kg7 38.a4 Re4 39.a5 Re7 40.a6 Kf6 41.b4 g5 42.b5 Ra7

43.Rb6+ 1-0

I didn't want to lose a pawn after 43...Kf5 44.Rxh6, so I decided to give the struggle a rest.

True, this game might not go down in a collection of Karpov's absolute best games, but think about this: with 21.b3! he essentially refuted my opening preparation over the board to secure an advantage. he played flawlessly in the middlegame and then he showed perfect endgame technique. To my mind, this was vintage Karpov at his very best. I'd like to flatter myself and think that was what it took for him to beat me. With the exception of move 27, when he had a choice of wins, give his moves another glance and tell me if any of them deserves a second guess. I don't think so. His play in this game made a deep impression.

The last classical game that we played while Anatoly was the 12th World Chess Champion was at the 1984 Phillips & Drew event in London. I had won our game at the same tournament two years earlier, when I had White. It felt good to have White once again after the run of Black Caro-Kann games.

Yasser Seirawan-Anatoly Karpov
London, 1984
Catalan Opening

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.g3!?

Not my usual choice in this position. Frankly, I was out of ideas as to how to meet Karpov's usual Queen's Gambit Declined, as well as the Queen's Indian Defense. At the time, I had an idea in the Catalan Open variation, which is what Karpov preferred to play.

3...d5 4.Nf3 Be7 5.Bg2 0-0 6.0-0 dxc4 7.Qa4 a6 8.Qxc4 b5 9.Qc2 Bb7 10.Bf4

And this was the big deal. At the time White was having a very hard, if not impossible, job of proving an advantage. Many ideas, including 10.Bg5, 10.Bd2, 10.Nc3 and 10.Nbd2, had been unsuccessfully tried. The text had a different spin; I'd allow or rather encourage a trade on the f4-square, so that after the recapture g3xf4, I take firm control over the e5-square. Best of all, I had been successful with this idea in some of my games.

10...Bd6!?

No one had played this move against me before. Everyone had played 10...Nd5 11.Nbd2!? Nxf4 12.gxf4 Nc6 13.Nb3 Nb4 14.Qd2, when my doubled pawns aren't so bad and most importantly I've hampered the liberating ...c7-c5, which is so vital in this variation.

One "wipe-out" line that I had prepared went 10...Nc6 11.Nbd2 Nxd4 12.Nxd4 Bxg2 13.Nxe6 fxe6 14.Kxg2 Nd5 15.Be5 Nb4 16.Qxc7 Qxd2 17.Qxe7 Qd5+ 18.Kg1 Qxe5 19.Qxb4 Qxe2 20.Rae1, with a better ending for White

11.Nbd2

Essentially continuing with my pre-game notions, but there really is a question as to whether the d6-bishop is so well placed, and both 11.Bg5 and 11.Bd2 had to be considered.

11...Bxf4 12.gxf4 Nbd7 13.e3 Rc8 14.b4! (Diagram 94)

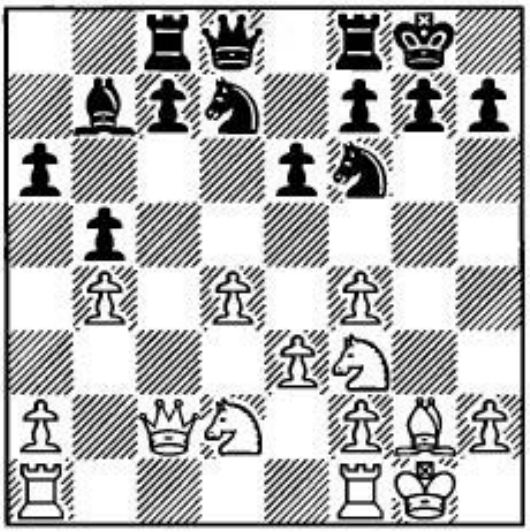


DIAGRAM 94. Black to Play

At this moment I was very happy with the outcome of the opening. Getting in b2-b4 meant that I had put the kibosh on ...c7-c5 forever and could look forwards to gnawing against Black's c-pawn for ages to come. Interestingly, while I considered the position to be greatly to my advantage, Anatoly disagreed, pointing out that he controlled squares too.

14...Nb6 15.a3 g6 16.Rfc1 Bd5

With his last few moves, Anatoly basically puts up a wall and says, "All right. What are you going to do?"

17.Ne5?!

A tough move to criticize. It looks and feels good, but the timing is likely wrong. With hindsight I would like to take this move back. Today, I would play 17.Qd3!, with several explanations for the improvement. Firstly, I must be aware that my doubled f-pawns do have a drawback: my king's palace has holes. So moves that don't fortify the kingside should be looked at askance. Secondly, my queen, while nice, needs a better role. I need to double rooks on the c-file as quickly as possible to tie Black down to the defense of the c7-pawn. Lastly, the move Nf3-e5 needs to be played, but I should prepare that leap by first playing Qd3-f1, and only then Nf3-e5. After a g2-bishop trade I can recapture with my queen and lord over the long diagonal.

Another way to think about the position is as follows: what can Black do to

improve his position? Yes, he might find ...Qd8-e7 and ...Rf8-d8 to offer modest improvements, but he has a problem finding a long-term plan. On the other hand, I have a very clear and straightforward plan: double rooks on the c-file, reposition my queen to the long-diagonal (h1-a8), play Nf3-e5, then sit upon and mash Black to death. Admittedly, this final stage is a little less concrete than the preliminary steps, but you get the idea.

17...Bxg2 18.Kxg2 Nfd5 19.Qe4 Ra8!?

It is strange; I really didn't know what on earth Anatoly would play. I was already cruising at my most optimistic best. I have fantastic control over the queenside squares and I didn't see a way for him out of the bind. Somehow, with the text Anatoly managed to mesmerize me and convince me that ...a6-a5 might one day become a threat. In another life, perhaps he could charm cobras.

20.Nc6 Qd7 21.Na5?

Good grief! What nonsense. I take my beautifully centralized e5-knight and reroute it to the stupid a5-square? What was I thinking? No idea. After the normal 21.Kh1 Nc8!? 22.Qg2 Nce7 23.Nxe7+ Qxe7 24.Nb3 I prefer White's position.

21...Nc8! 22.Kh1 Nd6 23.Qg2 Kh8!

While it may appear that neither player has come up with an effective plan, Anatoly is doing nothing better than I am doing so. The text is part of a well-concealed plan to open up lines on the kingside. Of course, I've done a fine job of encouraging this by putting my a5-knight well out of play.

24.Rc5 Rg8! 25.Nf1

An acknowledgment that bad things will happen if the kingside is ripped open. The text seeks to shore up my king's defenses. I'm being outplayed, and the advantage has swung.

25...Qe7 26.Ng3f5 27.Nc6 Qf6 28.Rac1 g5 29.fxg5 Qxg5 (Diagram 95)

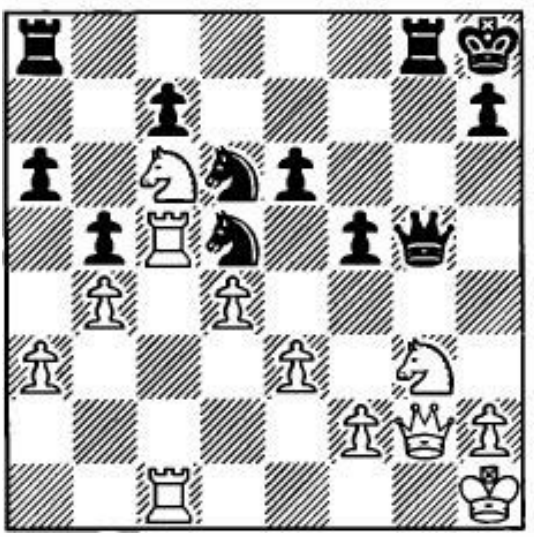


DIAGRAM 95. White to Play

30.Rxd5!?

A defensive combination based on an oversight. I was becoming concerned about Black's budding threats and thought an exchange sacrifice would take care of my problems. While 30.Ne5 f4 31.exf4 Qxf4 would be a little better for Black, there really wasn't that much to worry about. Indeed, 30.Qf3! Raf8 31.Qh5 is roughly even.

30...exd5 31.Qxd5

This was *not* my intended follow-up. I thought I had time to play 31.f4 *first* and then to capture the d5-pawn. In that case, the f5-pawn is fixed and I have a mighty e5-square for my c6-knight and, in my view, excellent compensation. Now I awoke to my problem. If 31.f4 Qh4! 32.Qxd5? Rxg3! wins a piece and the game. How embarrassing. I would not have made the exchange sacrifice if I didn't think that 31.f4 could be played. Suddenly, my confidence suffered a blow.

31...f4!

This simple move makes all the difference in the world. Black promptly forces a queen trade to take away any dangerous checks.

32.Qxg5 Rxg5 33.exf4 Rg4 34.Ne5?

This mistake really does land me in serious trouble. I was forced to play 34.Ne2! when Black could make an immediate draw with 34...Ne4 35.Rf1 Nd2 36.Rd1 Ne4, if he likes. Black shouldn't become too frisky, though. For example, 34.Ne2 Rag8 35.Ne5 Rg2 36.Rf1 Ne4?? 37.Nf7+! would be embarrassing.

34...Rxf4 35.Rxc7 Raf8! 36.Rd7 Nc4!

Well played. Thanks to my misstep, Anatoly has seized his chance for the advantage. To make matters worse, I had only one minute for the 40-move time control.

37.f3 Nxe5 38.dxe5 Rxf3 39.e6 Rxa3 (Diagram 96)

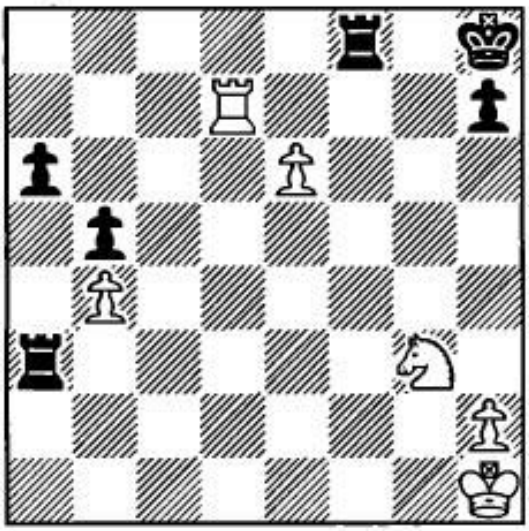


DIAGRAM 96. White to Play

40.Nf5! Rg8?

The dramatic last move of time control. I wasn't sure if the rook ending after 40...Rxf5! 41.Rd8+ Kg7 42.e7 Re5 43.e8=Q Rxe8 44.Rxe8 Rb3 45.Ra8 Rxb4 46.Rxa6 was lost or not, because after 46...Rb2 my king is confined to the first rank while Black's king can wander freely. After the text, I don't give Anatoly a second chance for that ending.

41.Rd1! Rf3 42.Nh6

The adjourned position.

42...Re8 43.Rg1 Ref8 44.Rg4!

This is a much different rook ending. Now Black's king is cut off and White's king is active. Adjournment analysis confirmed an easy draw.

44...R3f6 45.Nf7+ R8xf7 46.exf7 Rxf7 47.Kg2!

Certainly there is no reason to fear a king and pawn ending.

47...Rf6 48.Kg3 h6 49.Rf4 Rg6+ 50.Kh4 Rd6 51.Rf7 Rd4+ 52.Kh5 Rxb4 53.Ra7 ½-½

After 53...Ra4 54.Kg6!, threatening mate, Black is forced to repeat with 54...Rg4+ 55.Kh5 Ra4 56.Kg6 or give up his a6-pawn.

Another annoying game where my opening preparation came to nothing. Worse still, I obtained what I considered to be a favorable position, only to be comprehensively outplayed. In the end I managed a narrow escape.

So our classical chess tournament score ends with one win, one loss and four draws while Anatoly was World Champion in the 1975-1985 period of his career. Considering his place at the top of the chess hierarchy, this is a pretty good score; but considering the positions I had, I considered this was a terrible result.

Rapid Chess Games

In 1982 there was a television production event called *TV World Cup Chess*. It was a joint effort between a Hamburg, Germany-based television channel and the BBC. The games were played in Hamburg while the players did the "post-production" work or "voice-overs" at a BBC studio in the UK. I think this post-production work was done in Bristol, but I'm not certain. The games were not ELO-rated, as they were played at a time-control of 60 minutes per player for the whole game (a maximum two-hour game).

Anatoly Karpov was the winner of the event, defeating Boris Spassky in the Final 1½-½ and he swept me in the preliminaries 2-0. One part of this event I'll always remember: the flight from Hamburg to the UK. As fate would have it, Anatoly and I ended up seated next to one another. After the flight took off and settled into cruising altitude we were informed that a snack/lunch service would soon be served. Suddenly, it seemed like an excellent opportunity to make a confession.

I started the conversation with a great deal of trepidation. "Anatoly, I'm sorry to say that I have a confession to make."

Anatoly immediately objected: "Confession? Surely not. You have nothing to

besorryfor."

At this point I understood that Anatoly may have been thinking of my having assisted Victor Korchnoi during his 1981 match. "Well, you've probably completely forgotten the incident already... But we once played bridge and, well, Larry and I fixed a hand..."

Anatoly was immediately up to speed and right on topic. His reaction was completely unexpected. "Oh my! Thankyou so much for telling me. You know, I had nightmares for *months* about that hand.. "

Vasser Seirawan-Anatoly Karpov
1st matchgame, Hamburg TV (rapid), 1982
Queen's Gambit Declined

1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 d5 4.d4 Be7 5.Bg5 h6 6.Bh4 0-0 7.Rc1 b6 8.cxd5 Nxd5 9.Nxd5 exd5 10.Bxe7 Qxe7 11.g3 Re8 12.Rc3 Na6 13.Qa4

Repeating the variation played in the game I won. Anatoly came prepared with a very powerfulnovelty.

13...b5!

At the time, I wasn't convinced that this move was very good, but after a great deal of analysis I'm impressed. All my efforts to refute themove went nowhere, and it seems to be fine. Therefore 13.Qa4 isn't as strong as I thought and should probably be replaced with 13.e3, with a roughly balanced position.

I didn't want to publish my analysis and be accused of "setting up an opponent," which might have been a fair charge had I annotated the game. Instead, I sat on my analysis and share it here for the first time.

14.Qa5?

The first point to be made is that 14.Qxb5? Rb8 is just flat-out bad for White.

After the game, my attention was drawn to 14.Qc2!, which I wronglythought favored White. The idea is to prevent...c7-c5, quickly complete my development, and then to take advantage of Black's chronic queenside weaknesses as well as the offside a6-knight. It all sounds good, but concrete analysis doesn't show an advantage. Black plays 14...c5! anyway, the very move I had hoped to prevent. The line seems pretty straightforward: 15.dxc5 Nb4 16.Qd2 (16.Qd1 and 16.Qb1 are possible but look less trustworthy) 16...Qe4! 17.a3!? Qb1+ 18.Qd1 (18.Rc1? Nd3+! is Black's trick) 18...Qxb2 19.Qb3 Qxb3 20.Rxb3 Nc6, with an equal game.

The problem with the text is that Black now has a forced draw, at the least, and I fall right into Anatoly's opening preparations

14...Qe4! (Diagram 97)

A very nasty move to face. Note that through inclusion of the move ...b6-b5, this queen sally is possible. If Black immediately plays 13...Qe4? then 14.Nd2! Qxh1 15.Qxe8+ is to White's advantage.

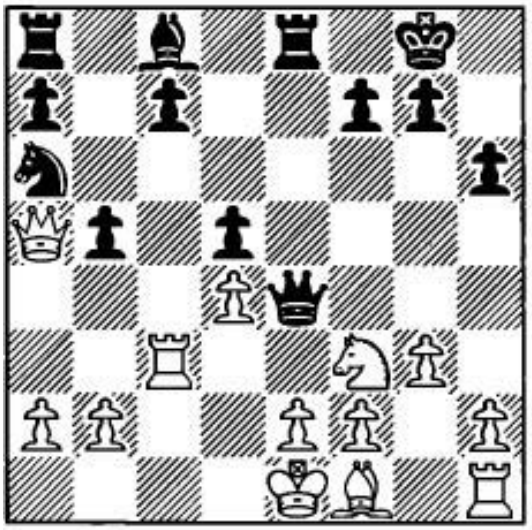


DIAGRAM 97. White to Play

15.Kd2

White has no choice, as there is a threat of ...Qe4-b1+. With the text, White plans Rc3-e3, a threat of my own. In anycase, 15.Kd2 seemed to be the only move.

15...Re6!

Played nearly instantly. Now I understood that I had really fallen into the stew.

16.b3

There didn't seem to be much choice. I want to capture on b5 and scurry back with my queen. After the game, Anatoly offered 16.b4 as an alternative.

16...b4 17.Re3 Qb1 18.Rxe6 Qb2+ 19.Kd1 Bxe6!

Black has a perpetual whenever he wants. The alternative recapture, 19...fxe6?! 20.e3!, would force Black to take the perpetual, as 20...Qxf2 21.Nd2! may start to favor White.

20.Qxa6Qa1+ 21.Kd2 Qc3+ 22.Kd1 Bf5!

Still testing. The perpetual check isn't going away.

23.Ne1! Rb8

Further testing.

24.Qxa7!Rb6

Last test.Answer correctly and it is a perpetual check.

25.e3?

Wrong answer! I was forced to continue 25.Qa8+ Kh7 26.Qxd5 Qa1+ 27.Kd2 Qc3+ when Anatoly told me he intended to take the perpetual.

25...Rc6!

Winning on the spot. My failure to capture the d5-pawn proves fatal, as we shall see in a moment.

26.Bc4 Qa1+! 27.Ke2 Qb2+! 28.Kd1

There is no escape. 28.Kf1 Bh3+ 29.Kg1 Qd2 and 28.Kf3 Be4+ both win.
28...dxc4 29.Qa8+ Kh7 30.Qxc6 c3! 0-1 (Diagram 98)

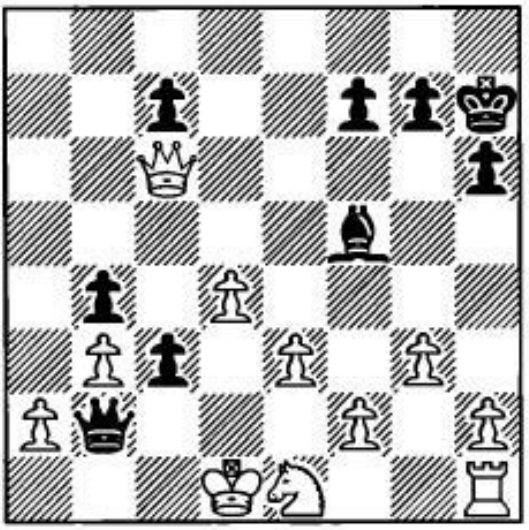


DIAGRAM 98. White to Play

Nicely done indeed. Excellent preparation by Anatoly, which goes to show how formidable his homework was.

This game, as well as the next one, stuck in my craw for a completely different reason: Anatoly annotated both games for the *Chess Informant*. I considered this a kind of sacrilege. In those days, the publication was a near bible for players and the games that appeared in the *Informant* were all "classical games" of the world's very best players and best events. The games played in Hamburg were "rapid games" and gave *Informant* readers a false impression. Put another way, I considered these to be "exhibition games for the TV program" that were unrated. Had I won, I wouldn't have annotated them.

By the way, in his *Informant* notes, Anatoly showed that had I played the superior 25.Qa8+ Kh7 26.Qxd5, he could have done better than to take the perpetual check with 26...Qa1+ 27.Kd2 Qxa2+! 28.Ke3 Re6+ 29.Kf3 Be4+, with a superior position for Black. The conclusion is that after 14.Qa5? I was practically lost.

After the above setback, in order to qualify I would have to win with the Black pieces. A tall order.

Anatoly Karpov-Vasser Seirawan
2nd matchgame, Hamburg TV (rapid), 1982
Queen's Indian Defense

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 b6 4.g3 Ba6 5.Nbd2 Bb4 6.Qc2

At the time this game was played, the text was all the rage for White.

6...c5

The most combative. After 6...Bb7 7.Bg2 Be4 8.Qb3 Bxd2+ 9.Bxd2 White would have the two bishops to show as an opening plus. More importantly, the resulting position hardly gives Black a chance to mix things up.

7.e4!

Otherwise the line would make no sense. For instance, after 7.Bg2 Nc6 Black has smooth development and an excellent game.

7...cxd4 8.e5 Ng8

The circumspect move. The main line ran 8...Bb7 9.Bg2 (9.exf6? Qxf6) 9...Ng4 10.0-0 Qc7 (10...Nc6? 11.h3!) 11.Re1 Nc6 12.h3 Nh6, with a sharp game. Suspecting that Anatoly would be better prepared than I was in this main line, I chose the text.

9.Bg2 Nc6 10.0-0 Nge7 11.a3

Grabbing the two bishops. I hoped to mix things up and create a mess after 11.Ne4 Ng6 12.Bg5 Qc7 13.a3 Bf8!?, which when I look at it now seems really provocative. In any case, considering my tournament situation, such a line had to be tried.

11...Bxd2 12.Qxd2 b5! 13.cxb5!?

Unexpected. I thought Anatoly would go for a positional grip by 13.c5 b4!? 14.Rfe1 bxa3 15.Rxa3 Bb5 16.Qe4 d3, with a small plus for White.

13...Bxb5 14.Rfe1 d3 (Diagram 99)

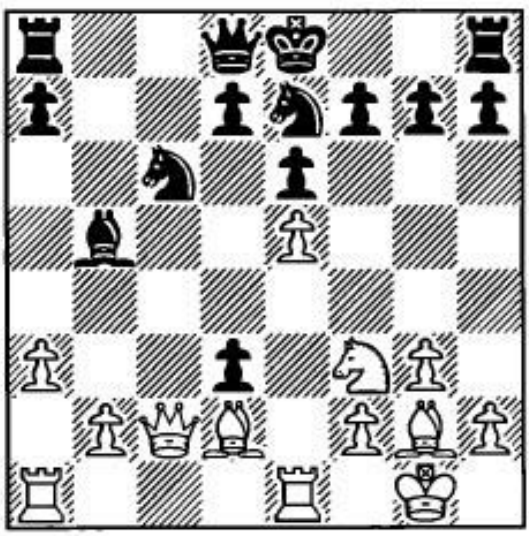


DIAGRAM 99. White to Play

I was satisfied with the outcome of the opening. For the moment I'm a pawn ahead, a very good thing indeed, with good squares for my pieces. In principle, I would have preferred not to advance my d4-pawn, but there was a problem with

my b5-bishop. 14...0-0 15.a4! Ba6 16.b4! gives White the initiative, but if I stop this plan with 14...a5, then 15.Qc5! is a double hit against my b5-bishop and d4-pawn.

15.Qb3 Rb8 16.Re4?!

Frankly, the purpose of this move was lost on me. I was immersed in the line 16.a4! Ba6 17.Qa3 Nd5 18.Ng5, trying to figure out which White threat worried me the most: Bg2xd5 and b2-b4, or Ng5-e4, heading for the d6-square. The text seemed to get in the way of White's compensation, so I took advantage of the opportunity to squirrel away my king.

16...0-0?

Very bad timing and almost deserving of a second question mark. I should have secured the queenside first by 16...a5!, when Black has an excellent position. Now Anatoly has his chance to pounce.

17.a4! Ba6 18.Qa3 Nf5 19.b4!

This sequence of moves makes all the difference, and the initiative is now firmly in White's hands.

19...d5

Clearly, I cannot allow b4-b5, closing off the protection of the d3-pawn.

20.Rf4! Bc4! 21.b5 Nce7 (Diagram 100)

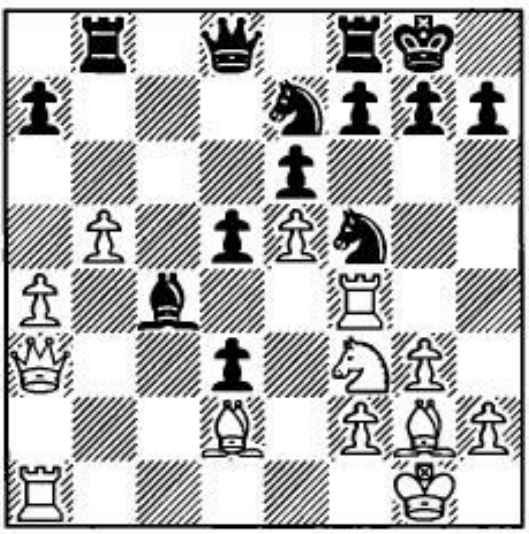


DIAGRAM 100. White to Play

One of those positions where Anatoly's judgment was far superior to my own. As a French Defense player, I thought I was doing "all right." I'm still a pawn ahead and, with ...Ne7-g6 and ...f7-f6, things might go swimmingly in my direction. But it is White to move and Anatoly finds an impressive sequence.

22.g4! Nh6 23.Rd4!

It is ironic, I played 8...Ng8 just to avoid a line where my knight would be marooned on the h6-square. The d4-rook in the middle of the board makes a

strange impression but is unassailable.

23...Ng6?

Further bad timing. This move really does nothing to improve my game. The best line was 23..a6, breaking up the queenside team and trying to utilize my b8-rook. If White goes for the kingside with 24.Qc1 Kh8 25.Bxh6 gxh6 26.Qxh6, I have plenty of defensive resources after 26...Rg8!, and the idea of ...Rg8-g7 and ...Ne7-g8 would patch up my kingside.

24.Qc1 a6?

I seemed to have a timing problem throughout this game. 24...Kh8 was forced.

25.h4!

Suddenly, White's attack hits the bull's-eye. My knights are poorly placed and get peppered with tempi.

25...f6

I was trying to find some bail-out sacrificial variation like 25...axb5 26.h5 Ne7 27.Bxh6 Nc6 28.Be3 Nxd4 29.Nxd4, but feared that White's kingside attack would go smoothly. Even the queen sacrifice 25...Nxh4 26.Nxh4 Qxh4 26.Bg5 Nf5 held my brief interest until I saw 27.Rxc4!, winning

26.exf6 Rxf6 27.Bg5

Certainly not 27.g5?? Rxf3! 28.Rxf3 Nf5 when the tables are completely turned.

27...Nf7 28.Bxf6Qxf6?!

Better kicking chances were offered by 28...gxf6!, which strangely enough I hardly considered.

29.g5Qf5?!

Further misplacing my queen. Both 29...Qe7 and 29...Qd8 were better.

30.h5 (Diagram 101)

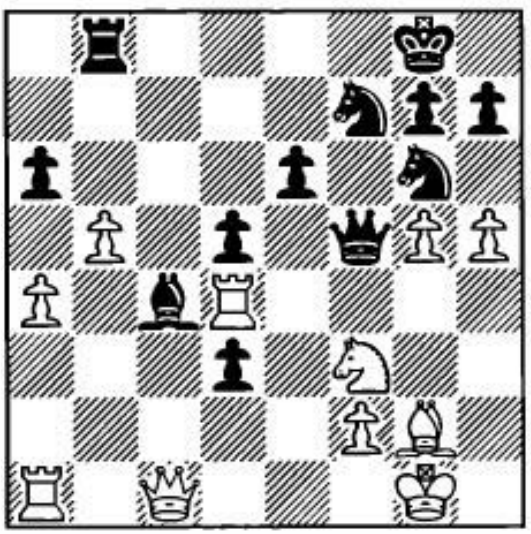


DIAGRAM 101. Black to Play

Despite a host of second-rate and mistimed moves, and plain mistakes, I'm not yet lost and still have a real fighting chance.

30...Nge5?

Not any more. This can be described as "the final blunder." After the correct 30...Nfe5! 31.Qe3! Nxf3+ 32.Bxf3 Ne5 33.Bg2 White has a clear advantage, but I could still soldier on.

31.Nh4!

Now we clearly see that it truly was the wrong black knight that landed on the e5-square. My queen is trapped *or* I lose a piece. The final moves weren't really necessary and suggest time-trouble.

31...Qxg5 32.Qxg5 Nxg5 33.f4 Nd7 34.fxg5 Kf7 35.g6+ hxg6 36.Nxg6 axb5 37.axb5 e5 38.Bxd5+ 1-0

As you can see from my notes, this is not a well-played game and it contained many mistakes, which is quite common for rapid chess games. Having my queen trapped on move 30 in one move is certainly not a proud moment for me. This is why you can understand that I wasn't delighted that the games were annotated for the *Chess Informant*. These days, of course, rapid games as well as blitz games decide the World Championship title itself (gasp!), and even those games now appear in *Chess Informant* and in the databases.

Our rapid chess tournament score ends with two wins for Anatoly while he was World Champion in the 1975-1985 period of his career.

Chapter Eight

Garry Kasparov, 1985-2000

Garry Kimovich Kasparov was and is the greatest chess player ever born. He was a meteor, comet and celestial body that streaked over the chess cosmos. We all watched in open-mouthed rapture at his amazing list of accomplishments. For nearly two decades, from 1986 to his retirement on March 10, 2005, Garry was at the top rung of the rating list, holding the number one position. Once he had to share the top spot, but oftentimes he was number one by a large gap. It was an extraordinary achievement in modern chess and in modern sports of any kind.

His career was charmed in another way as well. Garry was not only the highest-rated player in the world, he also had an extraordinary gift for being the center of attention. If there was a controversy or if anything of exceptional interest of any type happened in the chess world, you could be absolutely sure that Garry was to be found front and center in the happening. When these two abilities are linked, we start to see what a rare and spectacular career Kasparov had. The spotlight blazed on him so constantly that it became hard not to mention "Kasparov and chess" in the same breath or same article. For 20 years he was "Mr. Chess," and in chess circles was simply known as "The Boss."

He was born Garry Kimovich Weinstein on April 13, 1963 in Baku, Azerbaijan to an Armenian mother and Jewish father. When Garry was seven his father died of leukemia, leaving him to be raised by his mother, Klara, as an only child. Garry learned chess at quite a young age and began attending the famed Young Pioneer Palace chess programs by age seven. His prodigious chess talent was noted, and by age ten he began training formally with Mikhail Botvinnik at the latter's chess school in Moscow. At the age of 12, he adopted his mother's Armenian surname, Kaspaiyan, modifying it to its Russian equivalent, Kasparov. His name change wasn't without controversy. David Bronstein, for one, never changed his name, and his Jewish identity was open for all to see. Garry has given his reasons

for his name change and far be it from me to judge him on such a score.

Now Garry Kimovich Kasparov, his career simply took off like a rocket. In 1976 he had an astounding result, he won the Soviet Junior Championship (under 21 years of age), scoring seven points from nine games, when he was only 13 years old. Amongst junior players this type of result was amazing; occurring as it did within the Soviet Union, the strongest chess nation on earth, it was all the more impressive. He repeated this success the following year in even more dramatic fashion, scoring 8½ from nine games. Words begin to fail to describe adequately these results.

Thereafter the rocket continued turning into a comet to the stars. Records were routinely broken at nearly every outing. In 1978, at only 15 years of age, he qualified for the Soviet Chess Championship, the youngest participant ever. In 1980, in Dortmund, West Germany, he won the World Junior (under 21 years of age) Championship. Stories have been told that during the event he also played blitz chess, giving his opponents odds of five minutes to three and even one minute, and winning. In 1980, he represented the USSR Olympiad team in Malta, the youngest representative ever for the USSR Team. He was awarded his Grandmaster title by the FIDE at the event.

In 1980-1981 and 1981-1982 Kasparov twice tied for first place in the USSR Chess Championship, becoming one of the youngest Soviet champions ever. Outside of the Soviet Union he had breakout results in Banja Luka, Yugoslavia in 1979, winning the event as an unrated player (!) with 11½ points out of 15 games. The grandmaster norm was 10½ points, a point less than his final score. Even more sensationally, at the 1982 Category 14 event in Bugonjo, Yugoslavia he won with 9½ points from 13 games, this time two and a half points clear of a grandmaster norm. This was not a player barely making the cut – he was carving out a completely different title for himself. One of his own creation which will never be matched.

Owing to his success in the USSR Championships, a Zonal event, Garry qualified for the World Championship cycle and played in the 1982 Moscow Interzonal tournament. He won the event and qualified for the Candidates' Matches at his first attempt, at the age of 19. Only Bobby Fischer was a younger Candidate player, qualifying at 15 years old in 1958. Comparisons were inevitably made. By the time the Candidates' Matches began Garry was the favorite to become Challenger, as his rating had soared to number two on the January 1983 FIDE list, second only to the World Champion, Anatoly Karpov.

Kasparov was unlucky with the drawing of lots. In his Quarter-final Candidates' match he was paired against Alexander Beliavsky, who in my estimation was one of the most dangerous opponents for Garry. However, Kasparov won convincingly 6-3. Politics, though, threatened to end Kasparov's run in the Candidates' cycle. Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the USA boycotted the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow, a favor the Soviets would return by

boycotting the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles. In 1983, FIDE had awarded the Semi-final Candidates' match between Kasparov and Korchnoi to Pasadena, California, near Los Angeles and the upcoming Olympic Games venue.

It would be hard to allow a Soviet to compete in Pasadena and to explain why other athletes couldn't compete in Los Angeles. The result was that Kasparov was barred by the Soviet Government from competing in the United States and forfeited the match. Combined with the Maltese Olympiad incident with Karpov, there were a large number of opinions about this forfeit and whether the USSR Chess Federation was protecting the current champion or whether it was a case of bad luck.

Kasparov would famously say that he had spoken to a USSR Chess Federation official: "We already have a Soviet World Champion." Garry's translation was "We don't need a second one." As well as, "And you are not him." Such outspoken comments were sure to draw rebukes in the USSR, and we in the West wondered what would happen to Kasparov thereafter. Kasparov was now out of the cycle.

In their very bitter rivalry, at times it would seem that both Karpov and Kasparov had nasty things to say about one another and seemingly "enjoyed tearing one another down." Amusingly, they often used the same mutual accusation against one another. For example, while visiting the West, Kasparov would constantly inform his audiences that Karpov was the State's chosen flag bearer. How Karpov had the complete support of the State. He would cast himself as the "outsider" battling against State forces, asking only for fair and equal conditions. These were interesting charges and certainly unusual ones for a Western audience to consider. Most folks in the West thought of the USSR as controlled by *the Party*: a faceless monolithic entity which made commandments at the Politburo level that simply flowed down the chain of command. Objectors were sent to the Gulag. How could Kasparov "battle" within such a State system?

In turn, Karpov would charge that he wasn't the anointed one – rather it was Kasparov who had the direct support of Heydar Aliyev, one of the highest-ranking members of the Politburo from Azerbaijan, who was friends with Garry and was, in fact, his supporter. A friendship that Garry confirmed. Karpov would say that Garry had joined, and was one of the youngest members of, the Communist Party. That the "State," starting from the highest levels of the Politburo, supported Garry and that it was he, Karpov, who was under pressure.

It was an amusing mutual charge. Both men fighting faceless apparatchiks who could make or break their careers? How could we in the West divine who was telling the truth and who was exaggerating? Certainly, both men had far more privileges than many others, and they both had their supporters.

But back to chess for a moment. In 1983, Garry was out of the cycle by forfeit. So what did happen? Was the outspoken outsider, the rebel with a cause, cast on to the heap of State accidents? Collateral damage to preserve the collective big picture? Or was Garry not quite the outsider figure that he thumped?

In a rather stunning about-face, the USSR Chess Federation did something that the USSR rarely, if ever, did on an international level: it backed down and apologized for its behavior. The USSR Chess Federation repaid the organizers of Pasadena for the organizational costs of their forfeited match – in Western currency. They paid a fine to FIDE and issued an apology. It was simply extraordinary. Without precedent. Who in the USSR could have ordered such a dramatic reversal?

Would the Soviet players Kasparov and Smyslov be allowed back into the cycle? This would depend upon Zoltán Ribli of Hungary and Victor Korchnoi of Switzerland, who had won their Candidates' matches by forfeits. In the case of Ribli, from Socialist Hungary, this decision would likely be made for him. The tricky case was that of Victor Korchnoi – a defector, let us not forget – who would have to agree to a replay. I don't know whether or not these players received a bonus to replay their Semi-Final Candidates' matches, but both Korchnoi and Ribli agreed to a replay. Both lost. Kasparov began the first game against Korchnoi with a loss, but he won his Semi-Final Candidates' match 7-4.

In 1984, in Vilnius, Lithuania, Kasparov won the Candidates' Final 8½-4½, vanquishing Vassily Smyslov to qualify as challenger to the World Champion, Anatoly Karpov.

In the last chapter we read about the 1984-85 match, which was aborted with "no result." The second Karpov-Kasparov match, in 1985, was organized in Moscow as a 24-game contest; the first player to score 12½ points would claim the title. If the score was a 12-12 draw, Karpov would retain the title as defending Champion. Kasparov won the 24th and final dramatic game with Black and on November 9th, 1985 secured the title of World Chess Champion at 22 years of age. He won by a score of 13-11. Had Kasparov lost the final game, Karpov would have retained the title. With his victory, Kasparov broke the existing record of youngest World Champion, held by Mikhail Tal, who was 23 when he defeated Mikhail Botvinnik in 1960. The legend of Garry Kasparov was born and it continued to flame ever brighter.

Anatoly Karpov had the right to a rematch, so the players faced off for a third match in 1986 in London and Leningrad, each city hosting 12 games. The match was initially one-sided as Kasparov opened a three-point lead, but Karpov won three consecutive games to level the score late in the match. As mentioned, Kasparov had a knack for being in the middle of virtually every chess controversy: following his burst of losses, charges erupted when Kasparov fired one of his seconds, Evgeny Vladimirov, accusing him of selling his opening preparation to Karpov's camp. Kasparov managed to achieve one more win and kept his title by a final 12½-11½ score.

Finally, Kasparov had rid himself of his eternal rival. Not so fast. Because of the extraordinary events that surrounded the aborted match, a new first match and then a rematch to settle the cycle, the time-frames for the 1985-1988 cycle

became badly mangled. You will recall the 1985 Candidates' tournament with my games against Smyslov, Tal and Spassky. In the FIDE regulations, the "loser of the 1984 World Championship match" had been scheduled to compete in the 1985 Montpellier Candidates' tournament. As there was no result, FIDE decided that the eventual loser would qualify for the Candidates' matches.

Thanks to a Kasparov victory and the need for a rematch, the Candidates' matches continued to be played without the participation of either Kasparov or Karpov, as no "loser" had been decided. In the end, Andrei Sokolov "won the cycle," but was not pronounced Challenger. Following his loss in the third World Championship match, Anatoly Karpov fell a mere step: He was seeded into a Candidates' Final and needed only to win one match to become Challenger again. Karpov successfully defeated Andrei Sokolov, and never before had a player done so little to become Challenger. It was an enormous benefit from FIDE to Anatoly Karpov, and it wouldn't be the last.

Thus a fourth match for the World Championship took place in 1987 in Seville, Spain. At that time, I had worked closely with Bob Walsh, the Chairman of the 1989 Goodwill Games in Seattle, to bid for the rights to host the match. The Seattle offer was within the FIDE statutory minimum, with an additional million dollars in "best-game prizes" to be awarded to the players in equal amounts and not subject to the FIDE 20% tax. The auction wasn't even close. Seville made a whopping financial offer and won the bid.

What was particularly interesting about that 1987 FIDE auction was that the players could decide the site. If both players chose the same site, FIDE was bound to accept the decision of the players. If there was a player disagreement, then the financial amounts on offer were the first "tiebreaker" and FIDE made the final decision. As there was no chance that the players would agree on the site, Seville won on tiebreaker. I managed to secure Kasparov's support for the Seattle bid, but couldn't swing Karpov's.

The Seville match was a dour affair – near trench warfare with neither player able to achieve a lead of more than one point. In an echo of their confrontation in Malta, during the match a controversy arose: Karpov made a move which blundered away an exchange. From the cameras we could see Kasparov sitting up sharply, turning to the audience and openly laughing/giggling at his opponent. Something simply not seen in the dignified atmosphere of World Championship match play. Karpov complained that his concentration had been broken by Garry's conduct, but to no avail. No sanction or other action was taken.

After 22 games the match was tied 11-11. Fans bored to tears were jolted upright by a dramatic burst of play: Anatoly won Game 23 in a nervy affair, to take a one-point lead. Now to keep his title, the roles were reversed. Garry would have to win the final Game 24 with the White pieces, a feat that Anatoly had been unable to accomplish in their 1985 match. Just before the time-control was reached, by applying steady pressure Garry managed to win a pawn and Game

24 was adjourned. In an ending a pawn ahead the winning method wasn't so clear. All around the globe chess fans made frantic efforts to determine the outcome of the game and therefore the whole match.

I had some doubts that Garry could win the game. However, thanks to shockingly poor endgame play by Anatoly, Garry did win and retained his title by virtue of the 12-12 score. It was a virtuoso performance that had the Spanish audience shouting "Toro! Toro!" as they would for a matador, following Anatoly's resignation.

Skipping ahead a few years for a moment, to 1992 when Bobby Fischer came out of retirement to replay Boris Spassky on the Adriatic island of Svetl Stefan in Montenegro, I spent a day with Bobby, chronicled in my book *No Regrets*. Bobby was adamant in his view: every move of every match game played between Karpov and Kasparov had been "staged." Bobby was convinced that the players had perpetrated a fraud on the whole world and the games were in fact "all scripted beforehand." What was extraordinary is that Bobby, having given the matter a great deal of thought, had brought together some amazing circumstantial evidence which he showed me. He promised to write it all up in a book to expose the criminals.

Bobby had one small problem: theory in an ivory tower is nice. How would the theory be applied in actual practice? Specifically, I challenged Bobby as follows:

"Okay, Bobby let's say you are 100 percent right. No problem. How does it specifically work? I need details. The players are actors, right? They need a script. They need a scoresheet of the game to be played. They will have to memorize and review the scoresheet the night before so that they can 'battle' and fulfill their roles the next day in the play. No problem, there are plenty of good script-writers in Moscow capable of devising a well-played game. What I'm interested in is Game 23 in Seville. The match has been boring. At the proper evening hour, there is a knock on Karpov's door. He opens and there is the apparatchik giving him his script for Game 23. Karpov looks and lets out a holler of delight. He gets to win. Down the hall, Garry gets his script. Damn! What is this? Why must he lose? Isn't he the youngest Communist party member ever? An asset to the Party?"

Bobby found my characterizations amusing as I hammed it up.

"Both being good Commies, the game goes as planned and the deed is done. Next day, same situation. Knock on the door here is the script for Game 24. Now the roles are reversed. Kasparov is delighted, doing back-flips and cart-wheels in his room. Karpov is embittered. Why must he lose to this idiot? Both players study their scripts and memorize the moves. While memorizing his moves, Karpov realizes, 'Hmm. This is strange, just before the time-control I could defend as follows, not lose a pawn and get a dead drawn position.' So Bobby, what you are telling me is that these two men who hate one another's guts with the passions of Achilles and Hector would follow the script for Game 24? Karpov wouldn't deviate?"

Bobby had to laugh. And so did the audience in the room of my wife, Yvette, Eugene Torre and Svetozar Gligorić. Bobby didn't back down from his claim but it did cause him some hesitation and reflection. Now let's get back to the rivalry of the "K's."

After his loss in Seville, Anatoly had to battle his way through the Candidates' matches to become Challenger, which he successfully did to set up a fifth match between the two for the World Championship title. An unprecedented number of matches between two players for the title. The 1990 match was held in New York and Lyons, each city hosting 12 games. Again, the result was close, with Kasparov winning by a 12½-11½ score. (My first chess book, *Five Crowns*, was about this fifth match.) In their five World Championship matches, Kasparov won 21, lost 19 and drew 104 from the 144 games played. The margin that separated these two great players was statistically so small as to be hardly significant.

Despite the very small difference in results, the style of play of the two men couldn't be more striking. During his World Championship reign Anatoly had taken "technical chess" to new peaks of perfection. The best players in the world feared any pawn weakness might be the root cause of their downfall. Sacrifices that didn't immediately recover the material were held in abeyance. Steady, accurate, technical chess reigned supreme. Kasparov's arrival therefore was a breath of fresh air; his style of play was a throwback to Mikhail Tal. Garry thrived on dynamic play where tactics dominated. Never mind a pawn weakness. Garry's game was sacrifice, sacrifice, attack! Anything to create an imbalance where dynamic play ruled. That was Garry's game. The chess public rightly loved Garry's style of play and embraced his ascension.

Tal joked that when he became World Champion, all the Soviet school children became very unhappy. Now they had to learn how to sacrifice pawns and give up their pieces. That when Tal lost the title back to Botvinnik, the children could rejoice as they could now go back to protecting their pawns and pieces.

Kasparov's successes meant that chess wasn't just a game of technique, and his daring play was universally heralded. His play was exciting. Chess didn't have to be a dry technical exercise, but could be infused with dramatic play and daring sacrifices once more. Garry lusted after complicated play and leapt into the fray unhesitatingly. For he had a gift that no one else could come close to matching: his powers of calculation were sublime.

Just as few could mimic Anatoly, none could match Garry and his brand of chess. He was a devastating attacker. When he held the initiative not many could hold out for long. Garry's openings and defenses matched him well. As White he could play anything, 1.e4 or 1.d4, and his range of opening preparation was just as deep as Karpov's before him. Indeed, Garry became the master of the devastating novelty, and time and time again he won outstanding games thanks to his intense and deep preparation.

When he wasn't contesting five World Championship matches, Garry was also on the circuit playing the strongest tournaments in the world. In tournaments he was a beast. Not just winning them, but trying to do so with maximum scores, in the style of Bobby Fischer. He raised his rating to a level never seen by anyone before or since – 2851 remains the record. This is even more impressive when we realize that since his retirement there has been inflation in the FIDE Elo rating system.

Garry was driven by powerful passions. He was greatly dissatisfied with the state of modern chess, and in 1986 launched a campaign to change the FIDE leadership. He strongly supported a challenge ticket of Lincoln Lucena as President and Raymond Keene as General Secretary in an effort to unseat the Presidency of Florencio Campomanes. In the 1986 FIDE General Assembly in Dubai, Garry failed in his attempt to promote a change of direction as Campomanes retained his Presidency.

Once more Garry would be at the center of a chess controversy. One of the strong supporters of the challenging ticket of Lincoln Lucena was Dr. Ricardo Calvo of Spain, an International Master and author. Dr. Calvo campaigned hard amongst the delegates of latin America, letting it be known that if they would support the ticket of Lucena and Keene, in return Garry Kasparov was ready to come to their countries to perform a simultaneous *gratis* to "raise chess awareness." While such mutual back-scratching, bribery, skullduggery – call it what you will – was arguably common in FIDE elections, such offers were supposed to be a poorly-kept secret at a minimum or a sacred blood oath never to be revealed at a maximum. Dr. Calvo made the mistake of penning a truthful article about the seedy side of FIDE politics for *New In Chess* magazine.

FIDE's delegates were aghast, indignant, shocked. Unbelievable! Was it true? Was the FIDE World Champion Garry Kasparov offering free simultaneous exhibitions? Was the World Champion trying to (gasp) bribe our very own dear delegates? FIDE's vestal virgins? Shocking! In a fit of sanctimonious rage FIDE's delegates decided to support a motion making Dr. Ricardo Calvo a "Persona Non Grata." A fancy way to say a "Person not invited," or more simply an "unwanted person." Garry was not sanctioned and the messenger was duly punished instead.

It was great comedy. No one even knew what a "Persona Non Grata" actually meant. Were such persons allowed to participate in events? Spectate at them? And how could FIDE sanction an individual anyway? After all, there was nothing in the Statutes. Its members were composed of national federations. It was the national federations who were to discipline their individual members. Dr. Calvo was furious with his new FIDE title and pursued the matter in a court of law, the exact outcome of which I know not. To my knowledge, only Dr. Calvo has achieved such a unique distinction, his very own FIDE title.

One truly humorous aspect about this story was the Dubai Olympiad itself.

Hosting such an event was awkward, to say the least. For starters, the big hurdle to be faced was: what about the Israeli team? Campomanes had his solutions, all of which were rejected in the end, and Israel did not participate in the Dubai Olympiad, but sent a message that it was not to be boycotted. The Dubai organizers spent lavishly on the Olympiad. It was clearly the best I've ever attended. Indeed, so generous were our hosts that those nations who voted for Campomanes managed to have the travel of their teams paid for by the organizing committee. Lincoln Lucena's bid for the FIDE Presidency was strangely low-key and ineffectual. Worse, his "running mate," Raymond Keene, seemed to pop up almost everywhere in the chess media with statements which, let's just say, often failed to bear scrutiny. Campomanes' reelection was assured, and Lucena withdrew his challenge before the vote itself took place. Kasparov was furious.

With his desire to reform and change the FIDE leadership rejected in Dubai, Kasparov decided to create a new organization and launched the Grandmasters Association (GMA), as a counterweight to FIDE. This movement was greatly welcomed by his Western colleagues. As Soviet players in particular and Eastern European players in general dominated chess, having a union-style organization of grandmasters would make sense only with their participation. Under Garry's leadership, a union of grandmasters was a perfect way for chess to be advanced.

In mystic circles it is said, "When the student is ready, the master will appear." The clever students would rather say, "When the master is ready, the student will appear." Serendipity is a beautiful thing. In Dubai, Garry Kasparov met and got together with the CEO of SWIFT, Bessel Kok. Together, they created the GMA and launched a golden era in chess.

For now let's play a few games and settle in with our 13th World Champion.

As mentioned, I first saw and met Garry at the 1980 Olympiad in Malta. An event, incidentally, in which we were both awarded the grandmaster title. I was shocked by his physical appearance. Although Garry was about three years younger than I was, he had a sprinkling of grey in his hair. It was really befuddling as he appeared much older than his years. I'm sure it is something that he has to laugh about a great deal as well. These days his grey hair suits his age.

We next met in Bugojno in 1982, the site of one of his most celebrated breakthrough victories. I had accepted an invitation to play. I arrived in Bugojno to find out that I had been "uninvited" and that Miguel Najdorf would take my place. No one bothered to inform me. Ahem. The organizer of the Bugojno tournament, Dimitrije Bjelica, positively put the Linares organizer Luis Rentero on a pedestal of truth, virtue and honesty. It is a travesty that Mr. Bjelica is allowed in the chess world at all. For me, he is simply not to be trusted. Let us say I tried as best I could to recover some travel expense money and never returned to the event again.

Before taking my leave of Bugojno I had a free evening. Garry and I decided to walk into town and watch a movie together. The theater was a good five kilome-

ter walk or so from our hotel, so we had plenty of time to chat and become friends. First the movie. It was great. It was a Kung-Fu "B" movie with all the slapstick that could be mustered. However, what was really cool was that the hero kept coming up against opponents who grew increasingly fierce in appearance and grandeur as he got past them. Garry and I started out describing early opponents as "2400," middle movie opponents as "2600" and by the end of the movie we both reached "3000." The final fight sequences were marvelous! We loved it. A pity I can't recall the name of the movie. Let's say strongly recommended by the movie review team of Kasparov and Seirawan!

During our walks to and from the theater Garry and I talked about government and its evolution. Garry explained how mankind had gone from hunter-gatherer societies of tribal leaders to kingdoms and priesthoods. How kingdoms and theocracies had given way to republics and democracies, and how these in turn had given way to Socialist and Communist states. I roared with laughter and explained that at our ages if we weren't Socialists we had no ideals or heart, but that if we weren't Democrats by 30 we would have no brains. We argued back and forth. Garry, convinced in the correctness of his beliefs, could not be shaken. I congratulated him on the high marks that he undoubtedly received in his classes and from his teachers, and told him that we would talk again in ten years when he had more experience. It was great fun debating with a Communist. I had never had the opportunity before.

I must say I found myself greatly attached to Garry. We were close in age, and I found him to be like a younger brother. I felt an affinity with him while hardly even knowing him. I admired him and enjoyed his company immensely.

In Bugojno we also spoke about a match. Our match. In 1981-82 there was much chatter about a challenge match between Garry and me. The USCF had found a sponsor, and Garry was willing. In the end the USSR Chess Federation had given him a choice: a match against me or he could play in the Bugojno tournament or another event of his choice. He chose Bugojno. Great choice, as he won the event with panache and awoke chess fans all over the world from their technical slumbers. Who was this brash young attacker anyway?

We contested our first game in the great event held in Nikšić, Yugoslavia. Please forgive me, I'm not one to make excuses and I don't mean to offer one here, but I just have to get this comment in once (at least) for the record. Those of you who have traveled internationally will know that jet-lag is a pain in the you-know-where. Virtually all the major events I played in were in Europe. Traveling from the West Coast of the United States often meant first making a six-hour transfer flight to the East Coast, before catching a connection to Europe, only to transfer again. This meant that reaching my destination took 24 consecutive hours of travel and sometimes longer. Oftentimes I showed up at events bedraggled and only many days later, often as much as a week, did I begin to feel acclimated. The time-zone changes were always a minimum of nine hours

I tried all kinds of remedies for jet-lag, including mimicking the time zone of my destination days before traveling; sleeping on flights; not sleeping on flights; over-eating; fasting; drinking gallons of water or not. Nothing worked for me. I would always arrive worn and simply have to "tough it out." Needless to say, my European colleagues were better off, sometimes not by much, but better. So naturally, I had this lengthy travel of three airplane transfers that takes me to Nikšić (Montenegro), which required a transfer from Belgrade, and I finally made it to the mountainous hotel. Round One: Garry Kasparov.

By the way, not to beat the above point of jet-lag too harshly, but at one time the "only" US tournament that was attractive to European guests was the Lone Pine event. Take a look at Round One and Round Two games from some of the Lone Pine tournaments, and see how many foreign guests lost or stumbled badly in those early rounds, often to lesser opposition. Don't read too deeply into the statistics, though, as some were clever enough to arrive early and perhaps play in an event beforehand. I'm sure you'll be surprised.

Yasser Seirawan-Garry Kasparov
Nikšić, 1983
Tarrasch Defense

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 c5

Garry played the Tarrasch in his early years with considerable success, using it, for example, to qualify as Challenger during his Candidates' matches. Prior to Garry's endorsement, this defense had disappeared from top-level chess. Karpov's technical prowess was such that accepting an Isolated Queen Pawn weakness was seen as a prescription for a lengthy torture and ultimately disaster. In time, Kasparov would flow through a litany of defenses, Queen's Gambit Declined, Grünfeld, King's Indian Defense, Modern Benoni, the Slav and Semi-Slav... You get the idea. In time, I think Garry played just about everything. Scratch that; I don't think he ever essayed the Dutch Defense.

In any case, his choice in this game wasn't unexpected. Not at all. It was that I just didn't know what to play. Firstly, because the line was so rare in my practice; secondly, because I hadn't made a careful study of the main lines; and, finally, because I had an idea that I thought was good but wasn't...

4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nf3 Nc6 6.g3 Nf6 7.Bg2 Be7 8.0-0 0-0 9.Bg5 cxd4 10.Nxd4 h6 11.Bxf6

The main line is 11.Be3, with theory stretching for another dozen moves at least. The idea I have in mind is to put pressure on Black's queenside.

11...Bxf6 12.Nb3 d4 13.Ne4?!

Implementing my plan and a poor choice. The usual treatment for this variation is 13.Nd5, with a balanced affair.

13...Be7 14.Rc1 Qb6 15.Nec5 (Diagram 102)

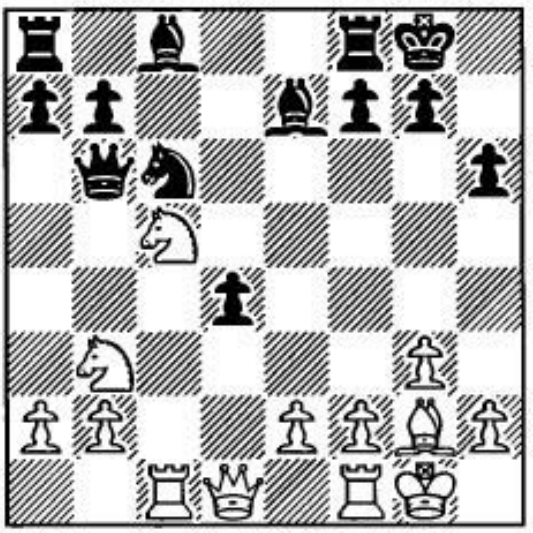


DIAGRAM 102. Black to Play

The "big idea" is revealed. Clearly, the plan is to stop the c8-bishop from developing thanks to the long diagonal pressure. Also, simply to snap off the d4-pawn, sometimes at the cost of the g2-bishop.

15...Rd8 16.Rc4?!

Senseless. Inexcusable. Jet-lag. What to say? More natural and, dare I say, actually "prepared" was 16.Qd3, just bringing pieces into play. By covering the b5- and a6-squares, sometimes White can threaten Nc5-a4, with advantage. For example, 16...a5?! 17.Na4 Qb4? 18.Rc4 would fall right in line with my plans. I suspect I had a last-second change of plan over concerns arising from the tactics after 16...Nb4 17.Qe4 BxcS 18.Nxc5 Nxa2 19.Rc4 Qxb2 20.Rb1, which is good for White, as I knew. Even then Kasparov enjoyed a reputation for aggression and I "backed down" from my preparation.

The text allows Black an easy game.

16...Bxc5!17.Nxc5

Already I have to fight for equality. While it is typical in this line to play 17.Rxc5 Be6 18.Bxc6, giving up my pride and joy, Black isn't obliged to recapture my bishop. Instead, Black has 18...Bxb3! 19.Qc1 Bxa2! when he is a pawn to the good. The text gives Black a smaller plus.

17...Qxb2 18.Qc2 Qxc2 19.Rxc2 Rb8 20.Rb2 Rd6 21.Rd1 b6 22.Nb3 Bb7 23.Rbd2 Rbd8 24.Kf1 (Diagram 103)

Although I will win back my pawn by capturing the c6-knight and then the d4-pawn, the resulting position of rook and bishop versus rook and knight will favor Black, and I'll be forced to fight for the draw. Black will have the sunny side of the torture.

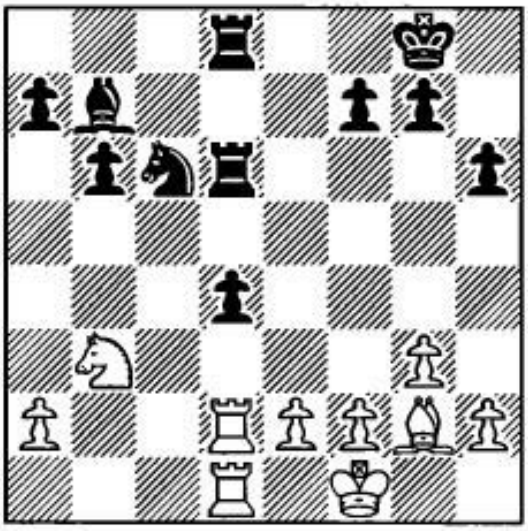


DIAGRAM 103. Black to Play

24...Ba6 25.Bxa6 Rxc6 26.Nxd4 Rc5 27.Nb3 Rxd2 28.Rxd2 Rc7 29.Rd8+ Kh7 30.Ke1 Bc4 31.Kd2 g6 32.Nc1 Kg7 33.a3 Kf6 34.e3 Ke7 35.Rd4 Rd7

Garry didn't find anything better than trading all the pieces into a king and pawn ending, but then the draw is almost assured

36.Kc3 Rxd4 37.Kxd4 b5 38.Nd3 Bxd3 39.Kxd3 Kd6 (Diagram 104)

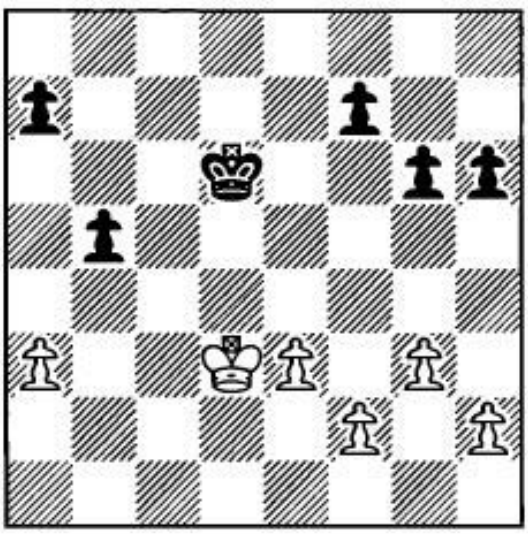


DIAGRAM 104. White to Play

40.e4??

Oh dear, the last move of the time-control mistake and a colossal one at that.

With the simple and obvious 40.Kd4, the game is drawn. Kasparov annotated the game for *Informant* 36 and gives the following notes: 40.Kd4! g5 (40...f5 41.f4 a5 42.e4! fxe4 43.Kxe4 Kc5 44.g4 is equal) 41.f4 f6 42.e4 a5 43.h4! with equality.

Given a golden opportunity, Garry seizes his chance and there is no escape.

40...g5! 41.f4

I cannot allow Black to play ...g5-g4, which would freeze my kingside majority.

41...gxf4 42.gxf4 Kc5!

Well played. Black uses the opportunity to put my king into a type of penalty box area where I'm shouldered aside and forced to give way.

43.Kc3 a5 44.Kd3 h5!

Again well played, and we continue with Kasparov's notes. I cannot continue 45.Kc3 because of 45...b4+ 46.axb4 axb4+ 47.Kd3 h4 48.h3 b3 49.Kc3 b2 50.Kxb2 Kd4 51.e5 Ke4 52.Kc3 Kxf4 53.Kd4Kg3 and Black wins.

45.h4

As we've seen, my only move.

45...b4 46.a4

Otherwise the game transposes into the above note, where I lose.

46...f6!

The winning tempo. If Black's king moves, then after 47.Kd4 the game is drawn as I just shuttle my king back and forth between the d4- and c4-squares.

Note that 46...b3?? 47.Kc3 b2 48.Kxb2 Kd4 49.Kb3! Kxe4 50.Kc4 Kxf4 51.Kb5 would allow me to promote my a-pawn and likely draw the game. It was for this trick that I kept my a-pawn.

Now, however, I'm forced to advance my f-pawn and give up control over the e5-square.

47.f5 (Diagram 105)

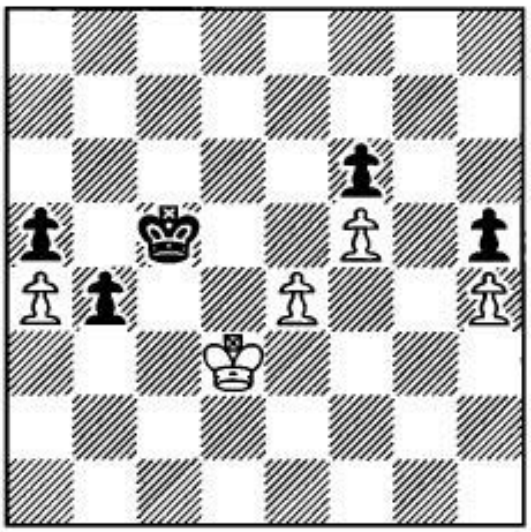


DIAGRAM 105. Black to Play

47...Kc6!

Garry gives a marvelous lesson of king triangulation to lose tempi and to win the game. Again 47...b3?? would transpose to the above note and allow me to draw the game.

48.Kc4 Kc7! 49.Kd3

A necessary retreat. If 49.Kd4 Kd6, and Black's king triumphantly marches to the e5-square and a full meal.

49...Kd7!

Placing me in *zugzwang*. I'm wrong-footed with my king having fewer squares than its counterpart. If 50.Kc4 Kc6 51.Kd4 Kd6, Black has the opposition and wins.

50.Ke3 Kc6 51.Kd3 Kc5

Achieving his goal. Once more I'm forced to give way.

52.Ke3 b3!

Avoiding my last trick. The advance 52...Kc4?? 53.e5! would allow me to save the game.

53.Kd3 Kb4 54.e5 Ka3! 0-1

Black's last move was the only one that wins. A darn good one too.

I resigned. Kudos to Garry, very impressive technique. One bad slip at the end of the time-control and it was curtains for me. This is what happens when playing against giants. They have a chance, seize it and throttle you. Return the favor, perhaps? Forget about it!

Before leaving Nikšić I'd like to share a story from the event. It comes from the eighth round of the tournament. Kasparov suffered his only loss on his way to first place, at the hands of Boris Spassky. Jan Timman, Ljubomir Ljubojević and I watched their post-mortem. There are moments in life, in sports, that are simply sublime. Unforgettable moments. You watch the basketball great Michael Jordan fake right, go right, cause the defender to back-pedal, over-compensating against the drive. With the defender now wrong-footed, Michael makes a sudden behind the back dribble sliding to his left and switching the ball to his left hand, without warning his head, his upper body dips lower and he springs towards the hoop. His body soars into the air and his head seems level with the basket, his hand grips the ball like a cantaloupe and he does a whirly-bird helicopter dunk, with his left hand landing cat-like underneath the hoop. His tongue is out as he turns and makes his way back up the court. His action conveys a message to the other team: your ball. Your jaw drops. It takes three seconds and you realized you've just seen athletic greatness and art fuse together.

I have a digital video file of the martial artist Bruce Lee. He is on set for a film and is taking a break. He is playing ping-pong. His paddle is a set of Nunchaku sticks. These are specially-treated wooden sticks tied together either by a chain or by string. Anyone who has practiced with Nunchaku knows it takes years of

training not to hit yourself with them. He returns the ping-pong ball effortlessly. While waiting for the ping-pong ball to be returned he spins the sticks furiously. He returns the ball in multiple ways, striking back the ball from many angles. The sticks never stop spinning and he smashes the ball back to his opponent. An extraordinary recovery allows Bruce to jump, elevate, hold in mid-air and smash the ball again. The tape is about 90 seconds long and it is sublime. Again your jaw drops. You can't believe what you are seeing. This is ability on a super-human level. The training had to take years to perfect.

Watching Garry at that particular post-mortem in Nikšić gave me the same feelings as watching Michael Jordan and Bruce Lee at the top of their game. Garry showed ten and twelve move variations effortlessly and easily. Boris was reduced to comments like, "Yes. Of course." "Yes, very interesting." "Yes. Of course." And Boris won the game! I've often said that if I had a video tape of that 20-minute post-mortem, it would sell forever. It was simply amazing watching Garry show what he had analyzed. This was not some well-trained schoolboy. This was a calculating machine without peer. Ljubo, Jan and I had a 10-minute walk back to our hotel. We were so dumbfounded by what we witnessed that hardly a single word was exchanged. For those who know Ljubo, this is quite impressive. We could hardly believe what we saw. It was sublime. Jaw-dropping.

It is precisely this type of sublime moment that makes chess such a fantastic endeavor. Anyone can appreciate what Michael Jordan can do with a basket-ball, what Bruce Lee could do with Nunchaku sticks or other weapons. These are physical skills which immediately capture our imaginations and cause us to say, "wow," with a soft breath. With chess we can smugly say, "wow," only after we have honed our skills to a level where we can appreciate spectacular combinations. Admiring the creativity that is needed even to conceive a plan, its precise execution, the mental gymnastics necessary, the depth of the knowledge needed, all of these things fuse together and we say, "Wow. This is chess. This is why we play. This is why chess is the greatest game in the world. Why don't others see the beauty? Well, too bad for them, it is all ours."

Our next encounter took place at the Olympiad in Dubai. This event was a spectacle the likes of which I haven't seen before or since. Our hosts were extraordinarily generous. The American team was housed on the Executive Floor and given plush rooms in the Hilton Hotel a mere three hundred meters from the playing hall. On "our floor" there was an Executive lounge where we could get drinks, snacks and newspapers freely and enjoy 24-hour service. Anatoly and Garry of the Soviet team were the only other players on our floor.

The playing hall was a huge convention center. I'm not kidding when I suggest that half-a-dozen jumbo Boeing 747 airplanes could be comfortably parked in the playing hall. "Pockets of games" were surrounded by movable metal fences to keep the crowds at bay. The top boards had a large comfortable area where we could freely walk around and see the games in progress. Spectators

could view the games from a great distance as the demonstration boards were simply huge. I'd suggest each one measured five meters by five meters, and they were set up throughout the playing hall. The demonstration boards were manned as follows: a runner would gather the moves from the tables then climb stairs to the operators, who would use long hooked wooden sticks to fish out a metal loop attached to a piece or a pawn and move it to the square. The physical process of moving the pieces took considerable time and effort.

I should also mention that throughout the playing hall there were large numbers of Arab spectators in formal Arab dress. As a Syrian-born player I received much attention, signing many autographs and posing for photos throughout the day.

At last the big match occurred. The American team had gotten off to a flying start, and I was having a tremendous result. We would be facing the pre-tournament favorite Soviet team. If we could get past them, good things could happen and we might win medals. That was our cherished hope.

I came to the board early, filled out my scoresheet and waited for Garry to show up. Much to my annoyance, I saw that Dimitrije Bjelica, the organizer of the Bugojno tournament, was milling around my board with a Yugoslav film crew. I would have dearly loved to have him thrown out of the playing area, but the rules permitted photography and filming for the first five minutes, and he had credentials as a photographer. Damn!

The clocks were started, and I played my opening move and waited for Garry. He was a few minutes late, arrived in a huff and shook my hand. He was about to sit down when Bjelica pounced. With cameras filming, Bjelica spoke hurriedly in Serbo-Croat and tried to present Garry with a box of commemorative coins. Garry took one look at Bjelica, took a second downward look at the coins and whacked the box away with his hand. Hard!! Coins started flying through the air, and Bjelica had to scramble on his knees to retrieve them all. I was absolutely elated! At times, I truly admired Garry Kasparov. I looked at him and said, "Bravo!" He smiled gleefully too. Apparently Bjelica had crossed him as well.

Yasser Seirawan-Garry Kasparov
Dubai Olympiad, 1986
Grünfeld Defense

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5

Like many others before me, I've always had a problem handling the Grünfeld Defense. Some of the razor-sharp main lines last for dozens and dozens of moves. In a fight as to who is best prepared there was no way I could out-duel Garry and his team. So in this case it was necessary for me to fall back onto

something quiet and sterile. I had been experimenting with a continuation that leads to a Queen's Gambit Declined pawn structure with reasonable success and so played the following. Garry expected my choice and was well prepared.

4.Nf3 Bg7 5.Bg5 Ne46.cxd5!?

This was it. The usual move to retain the Grünfeld flavor is 6.Bh4 Nxc3 7.bxc3 dxc4 8.e3 Be6 9.Qb1, with a sharp game ahead.

6...Nxg5 7.Nxg5 e6

Necessary to regain the pawn, as Black has a double attack against the g5-knight and d5-pawn.

8.Nf3

A modest retreat. A different approach is 8.Qd2 exd5 9.Qe3+ Kf8 10.Qf4 Bf6 11.h4 when Black has lost his castling privileges. This is not a great concern for Black, as 11...Kg7 gives him a comfortable game. While this line has been played frequently I'm not sure that the f4-queen is well placed.

I should note too that 8.Qa4+ is a poor move. After 8...c6! 9.dxc6 Nxc6 10.Nf3 Bd7 Black will quickly obtain a superior game.

8...exd5 9.b4 Qd6!

For me, this move was a very strong novelty and although I spent a good deal of time thinking over a reply, I didn't find a positive way to continue. Previous opponents played 9...0-0 10.e3, and would contrive ways of giving my minority attack a boost and an advantage: for instance, by 10...Qd6 11.Rb1 Bf5?! 12.Bd3 Bxd3 13.Qxd3, helping me enormously.

10.a3?!

Not the sort of move White wants to play when his pawn has already marched to the b4-square. In principle, White should be playing b4-b5 and a2-a4, trying to justify the minority attack.

In later games I would play 10.b5 and 10.Qb3, the latter being my first instinct. Indeed, 10.Qb3 protects the b4-pawn and returns the favor by attacking the d5-pawn. The response that had me stumped was 10...Nc6! with a double attack against my b4- and d4-pawns. There is no way I'd allow that sleeping g7-bishop to awaken, so 11.e3 seems best, and now the continuation 11...Qxb4 12.Qxb4 Nxb4 13.Rb1 c5! was becoming disconcerting. At various moments I can toss in a Bf1-b5+, but my main line continued 14.a3 Bf5!? 15.axb4 Bxb1 16.Bb5+ Kf8 (16...Ke7!?) 17.Nxb1 cxb4, with a pretty messed up material imbalance. I wasn't sure which side was better and feared that I could be worse. Furthermore, with the speed at which Garry was playing, I was certain he had prepared specifically with this sharp line. Bluff or not, I blink first with my tenth move.

10...0-0 11.e3 c6 12.Be2 Bf5 13.0-0 Nd7 14.Na4?! (Diagram 106)

White was better off playing 14.b5 c5! 15.dxc5 Nxc5 16.Nd4, with a roughly equal position. The text triggers a well-regarded classic reaction.

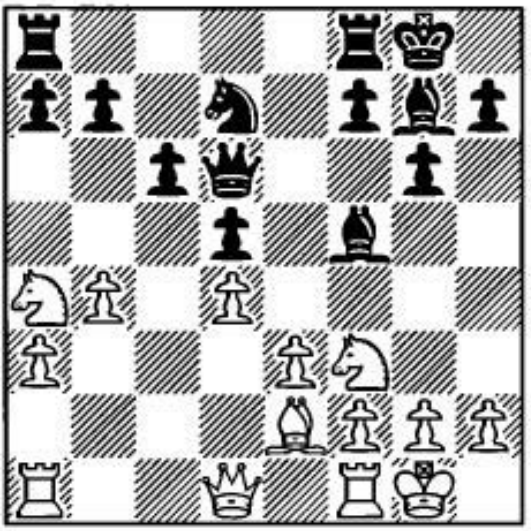


DIAGRAM106. Black to Play

14...a5! 15.Qb3 b5!16.Nc5 a4! 17.Qc3 Nb6!

A series of very fine moves by Black has not only completely neutralized White's opening advantage, but has already given Black an edge. While the c5-knight "looks great" it actually does nothing. Conversely, Black has a serious grip over the c4-square. When the b6-knight makes its hop, it will have to be captured, and Black's reward will be to have a strong protected passed c4-pawn in its place.

Sad to say, White really doesn't have much of a plan in this position and I can only intimate that I may one day play e3-e4, with hopes of equality.

18.Nd2 Rae8 19.Rfe1 Re720.Bf3 Rfe821.g3 Bh3 22.Bg2 Bxg2 23.Kxg2 f5!

Methodical play by the World Champion has allowed him to build up a superior position. White is condemned to passivity and must try to react as best he can.

24.h4!

Okay, hardly a move to be proud about, but I admire the thinking behind it. It is clear that Black is planning ...g6-g5 and ...f5-f4, pawn-storming his way to White's king for a gang-tackle. With the text, I at least insure that Black will also have to prepare with ...h7-h6, when a trade on the g5-square will open up the h-file. I know I'm about to face a fierce attack but at least in that case, I can play a rook to the h-file and remind Black that he has a king as well.

24...Nc425.Nf3!? (Diagram 107)

An important long-term decision, as I choose to live with the monstrous c4-knight which anchors me to my a3-pawn. While I didn't like 25.Nxc4 dxc4 26.f3, it might have been a better choice. With the text I'm hopeful of slowing down Black's kingside initiative and if I should have an opportunity to remind Black

about his own king, I'll need some pieces in the vicinity.

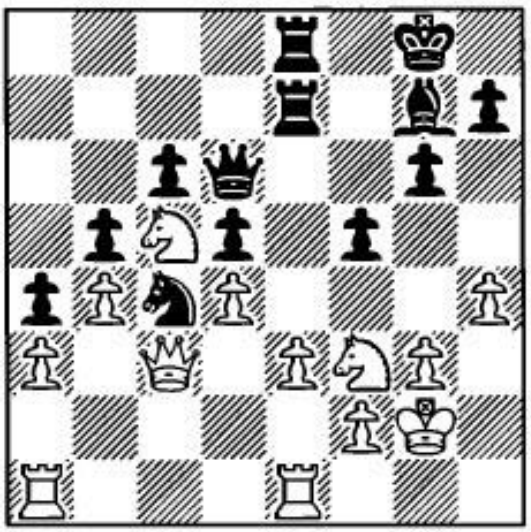


DIAGRAM 107. White to Play

25...Bf6 26.Re2!

Similar to my 24th move, it is hard to give plaudits for such a lame move, but in the given position this was my best move. I'm making it possible to switch a rook to the h-file.

26...Rg7 27.Rh1 Qe7 28.Ree1 h6

Black is not disguising his intentions in the least. A storm is brewing on the kingside and Black has all the time in the world to bring his pieces to their very best squares.

29.Qd3 Rf8 30.Nd2!

Living with the c4-beast is no fun. I decide that its elimination is necessary after all.

30...Qe8 31.Nxc4 dxc4 32.Qd1! Re7 33.Ref1 Qf7 34.Qf3! Qd5 35.Qxd5+ cxd5

Getting rid of the queens has been a great relief. True, I've fallen into a passive ending, but that sure beats facing a middlegame checkmating attack. Oftentimes endings hold a number of surprises.

In the following ending all the levers belong with Black. He can quietly prepare ...g6-g5 and ...f5-f4, to break open lines in order to win. It would be highly inadvisable for White to play for either g3-g4 or e3-e4, as both breaks would really weaken his position. So for a while we see a great deal of shuffling going on as Black winds up for his big breaks.

36.Kf3! Bg7 37.Rd1 Rff7 38.Rd2

The only question I really faced was: "What to do with my king?" On the one hand, scampering over to the c3-square looks logical to blockade the passed pawn firmly. On the other hand, it is quite clear that all the ensuing action is go-

ing to come on the kingside. Therefore, there are compelling reasons to hang out over there and see what Garry can come up with.

38...Re8 39.Rdd1 Bf8 40.Rdg1 Bg7

Reaching the first time-control of 40 moves in two hours. The second session of 20 moves in one hour would continue without adjournment, so we would play a continuous six-hour session.

41.Rd1 Kf8 42.Rd2 Ke7 43.Rdd1 Kd6 44.Rh2 Kc6

Same question for Garry. He decides his king might be useful on the queenside. There are several reasons for his determination. The first is that, quite obviously, if the h-file breaks open Black's king could be in range of something bad happening. Secondly, Black has the possibility of capturing the c5-knight. In that case, depending upon how I recapture, Black could sacrifice a pawn for a breakthrough either by ...b5-b4 or by ...d5-d4, when Black's king becomes active and may escort his c4-passer all the way home.

45.Rhh1 Bf8 46.Rd2 Bd6 47.Rdd1 (Diagram 108)

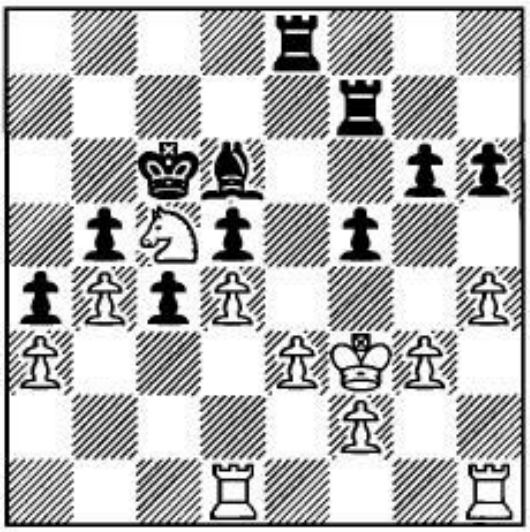


DIAGRAM 108. Black to Play

All the to-ing and fro-ing was taking a heavy toll on my clock. Garry now makes a long-range decision to try to take advantage of my time shortage.

47...Bxc5!?

By no means a bad decision and maybe even the best move. On the other hand, I was relieved. Black could continue "doing nothing" until the time-control was reached and then adjourn. In this way he could work out precisely how best to continue play to make his break. GM Eduard Gufeld, for one, was annoyed that Garry didn't do precisely that.

48.dxc5 Re4!

The big idea. Black plans ...d5-d4, followed by moving in with his king. I shouldn't play 49.Rd4? Rxd4 50.exd4 Re7, when after a subsequent ...Re7-e4, there will come a *zugzwang* and Black's rook will break into my camp.

49.Rhe1! Rd7

Played quickly. With this move Garry now went into "blitz mode" in an effort to push me over on the clock. Soon both players were blitzing like mad, me in an effort to avoid losing on time, Garry in an effort to push me over.

The spectators were in a tizzy and had lined up dozens deep around the fence to watch the action. The poor demonstration board boys were frozen as the runners couldn't pass the moves to the handlers in time.

50.Rd4 g5!

The big break. This is what Garry has been building up for 20 moves and does so when my clock-time is nearly exhausted.

51.hxg5!

Not panicking. Opening up the h-file appears to be good for Black, but I'll have tricks as well. It was far worse to play 51.h5? when I would have to worry constantly about lines with either ...f5-f4 or even ...g5-g4, going after the h5-pawn.

51...hxg5 52.Red1! Rxd4 53.Rxd4 Rh7! 54.Ke2! Rh3!? (Diagram 109)

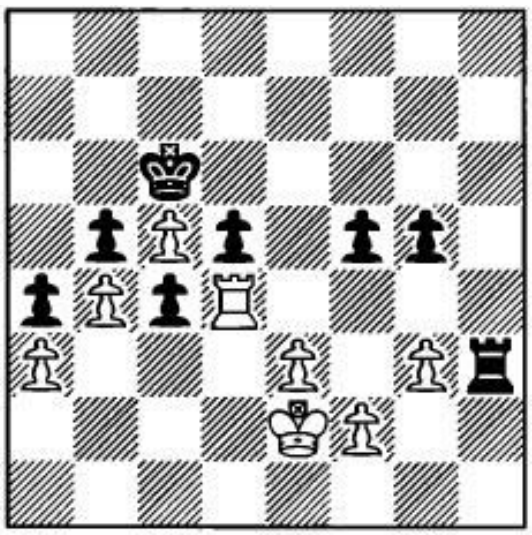


DIAGRAM 109. White to Play

Playing with fire or a cunning winning attempt? I had expected 54...Rh1 55.Rd1 Rh3 56.Rd4, with a type of repetition. Using what little remaining time I had, I decided to accept the challenge that Garry had presented and go for my chances too.

55.g4! f4

Straight ahead! Garry continued to blitz his moves as there was no turning

back. Clearly 55...fxg4? 56.Rxg4 Rh5 is not what Garry had in mind. That is no way to treat one's own rook.

56.exf4 Rxa3!?

Humma, humma, humma! (A famous line from the comedian Jackie Gleason and one of my personal favorites. This was from the American TV sit-com show *The Honeymooners*. Whenever Jackie's character, Ralph Kramden, was in trouble, especially with his wife, he would say, "Humma, humma, humma", and start babbling, moving his mouth and making noises, trying to explain himself and get out of the trouble he was in. He really was hilarious and one of America's most beloved comedians.)

Things are really heating up now. I thought it incredibly dangerous to grab the a3-pawn immediately and was stunned by the changing position. I had expected 56...gxf4 57.Rxf4 Rxa3 58.g5 Ra1 59.Rf6+ and was content to think I likely had a perpetual. Allowing me a passed g5-pawn seemed reckless. How would he stop the little fella?

57.fxg5 Ra2+ 58.Kf3!c3??

Oh my! After this move there is no stopping my g-pawn. Garry had to rein in his ambitions and go 58...Ra3+ 59.Kg2 Ra1 60.g6 Re1, to try and draw. Garry continued in blitz mode like an angry bull. There was no stopping him.

59.Rd1! d4 60.g6 d3

My mind had been racing at 100 miles per hour. I didn't realize we had reached the time-control and wanted to react in haste. I saw a trick 61.Rxd3 c2 62.Rc3 Ra3! and nearly froze. I quickly grabbed my king and made a move. As it turns out, grabbing the pawn would have been good as well, since 62.g7! would also have won in this variation.

61.Ke3Rxf2

Garry played this capture in a flash and my flag fell. Inwardly I groaned. I was so "hot" from the game, I had no idea if I had lost on time or not. The arbiter relieved my anxiety immediately by not forfeiting me, but rather politely asking me to fill in my score by presenting me with his. When I saw that he had written to move 61, I could breathe a sigh of relief. After catching up with my scoresheet and studying the board for a time the arbiter appeared again and asked me to seal my move. Of course, I have no choice and sealed a song, "Passed pawns must be pushed."

62.g7 1-0

After I sealed my move and stopped the clocks, calm began to be restored. Slowly the runners and handlers had caught up to the position on the board, and the crowd of spectators from 100 meters away could look upwards and see my g-pawn running for a touchdown. When the awareness hit the crowd that a Syrian-born lad was about to defeat the World Champion a spontaneous "La-la-la-la" cry began around the cavernous playing-hall. (Think about the scene from *Lawrence of Arabia* where the Arab armies attacked the Turkish train singing, "La-la-la-la." A victory cry.)

The victory cries as well as the clapping of hands seemed to come from everywhere around me. After I stepped beyond the metal fence a new problem materialized: returning to the hotel. I was mobbed by a crush of very excited chess fans that thronged around me and pushed me back and forth, left and right, spinning me around. Hands, arms and faces everywhere. I was caught in the undertow of a sea of people. Somehow, my team captain, John Donaldson, was also sucked into the crowd and we were pinned together. We held on to one another as we were spun around, pushed and pulled in two directions at once. We spotted an escape route and both darted for it and reached the doors. Soon we were given chase by a mob, but as we accelerated into cruising gear the crowd lessened. Eventually we hit a high speed and made our way into the hotel and the elevator. Remarkably, one enthusiast kept up with us and managed to make it into the elevator with us as well. In the exhilaration of the moment he had been overtaken by some ancient instinct that had kicked in: we must give chase to prey on the run. He stayed right behind us on our scamper. We thanked him for his congratulations and made it to our floor.

What an escape. John and I made our way to the Executive lounge, where I could luxuriate with our team and show them the adjourned position. The match turned out to be a fantastic success, as the other three games were drawn. I was the sole winner and the USA won the match 2½-1½ over the mighty Soviet team. We stayed in first place all the way to the final round...

During our team analysis, Garry came into the Executive lounge, he and Karpov being the only Soviet players to stay on "our" floor, and watched our analysis. Following 62.g7, I showed my expectation of 62...c2 63.Rh1! (63.Rg1 Rg2!) 63...Rh2 64.g8=Q Rxh1 65.Qa8+ is my point; the h1-rook is skewered and Black's pawns are done in) 64.g8=Q, when Black cannot queen. For example, 64...d1=Q 65.Qa8+! Kc7 66.Rh7+! and Black will soon find himself mated. By the way, the decisive rook check should be noted. It comes from the h-file. You do remember how 24.h4 anticipated this check? Please don't be fooled! I freely confess that I didn't see 42 moves ahead...

As Black is unable to promote one of his pawns to a queen he is forced into an under-promotion, but after 62.g7 c2 63.Rh1 d2 64.g8=Q d1=N+ 65.Ke4 Re2+ 66.Kf5 Ne3+ 67.Kg5 Black has run out checks.

Eventually, Garry interrupted the analysis and said, "Yasser, this is not a position to analyze." We didn't know if he had resigned, but later that evening the Soviet team captain, Efim Geller, confirmed that Garry would give up. Because the game was adjourned, the scoresheets were sealed and would be opened in the morning, when the captains would sign them. It is my only scoresheet with Garry that misses his signature. The only game I won in our series. Annoying how these things go.

After dinner that evening I met a life-long friend. Somehow I was introduced to an elderly Chinese man with twinkling eyes and a warm smile. He held out his

hand and said, "Tan Chin Nam." We shook hands and he said "You know. You cost me a *lot* of money."

"Really? How did I do that?" I asked.

"Well, you know Don Schultz? He and I like to bet. I've been losing all my wagers to Don. To break even we made a double or nothing bet on your game with Kasparov. I gave Don 2:1 money odds and took Kasparov. In return, I got draw odds. How to know that the World Champion would lose? I thought that, with draw odds, Don was giving me a chance to break even. Now I'm down 20 bucks and have lost my confidence."

"Serves you right," I answered. "You shouldn't bet against me."

Tan Chin let out a big laugh and said "Goodness! I like you already. Let us be close friends." We are.

There is one ironical aspect of the Dubai Olympiad. In this book you will have read my doubts about using Olympiad team results for individual title norms. Before the Dubai Olympiad players were asked if they wanted their individual results rated for the FIDE Elo list. I elected, "No." Hence, one of my finest results went unrated.

Before we leave Dubai, there is much still to be said. What I'm writing now has never been shared before. As mentioned, Garry was definitely "distracted" during the Dubai Olympiad by the FIDE elections. He had been hosting numerous delegates in his suite, which was right down the hall from my room. The American team got used to the delegates trekking to Garry's abode to be pressed into voting for his preferred candidates. Garry was a tireless campaigner, as I can personally attest. If you ever wanted to pick a political supporter in such a campaign Garry is relentless.

At a certain moment at the height of the election, I received a call from Garry around midnight imploring me to come to his room. At that precise moment I was with my girlfriend and had no intention of leaving. Garry was insistent, explaining that Campomanes was sending a peace emissary who was about to arrive at any moment. Garry wanted a witness. "You are the only one I trust. Yasser, I need your help." What to say? My younger brother needed help, and I went to his suite over the protests of my lady friend.

When I arrived, Garry was in an excited mode. He was pacing around at good speed, talking rapidly and ticking off a number of things on which he could not compromise. It took me a while to get up to speed about the upcoming meeting, but Garry was patient with me. Indeed, it was to be a most important meeting.

Garry's highest priorities were that grandmasters would have more control over their own affairs. Number one on his list was the World Championship match, the World Championship cycle, and that the players "control" this cycle. That the titles and ratings needed to be "professionalized" and that a commercial company be formed to make sure these rights would attract the best sponsors. Lastly, the "Rules Commission" should be controlled by the players as well.

Insuring that the rules remain universal and to prevent silly experiments such as relaxing the 50-move rule for two knight endings had to stop. Garry spanked his fist into his hand, nailing these points one by one by one. He would demand all these conditions before he could talk "peace." The peace would have to include conditions of positions for his candidates, as well as player representatives on the FIDE Central Committee.

Eventually, there was a knock on the door. There stood a silver-haired, beautifully dressed, elderly gentleman. A picture-perfect specimen of wealth and power. I can only emphasize how deeply impressed I was by his appearance. Clearly, whoever he was, he was a man used to having his way. Again, I was impressed that Campomanes could summon such a formidable representative. Garry began the meeting. Seriously, for the next 20 minutes Garry spoke nonstop. Not once did the emissary interrupt. Garry vented his feelings from the Day of Shame to the present. Only when Garry had exhausted what he wanted to say did the emissary "speak." During this whole time I had been sitting on a couch opposite the emissary, who had been sitting on a chair facing me. Garry had been walking mostly around me, but also circling the room. Both of us watched him move and we adjusted ourselves as Garry paced and spoke.

Now it was his turn. The emissary spoke and moved his mouth. His voice barely a whisper. Garry and I looked at one another perplexed. We had missed what he said entirely. Garry asked him to repeat himself. Again the emissary spoke, clearly moving his mouth, but again the whisper was so faint we missed it. Garry came and sat on the couch besides me and again pressed him to repeat himself. Was the emissary a mute? After Garry was seated, we heard the words clearly and for the first time: "Yes. I understand you completely. I too have had many troubles in my dealings with FIDE. However, it is time to make compromises so that we can benefit and move chess forwards." He had our total attention. For the next 20 minutes Garry and the emissary spoke together, quietly, confidently and with mutual respect. It was clear they would reach an understanding. The meeting was over, the emissary left and Garry was beaming in delight. The door closed

Garry turned to me and said, "Isn't it wonderful?" I turned to Garry and told him he was an idiot. Garry was shocked. "Why?" he wanted to know. I then proceeded to explain that I was merely a witness. That before the meeting Garry had laid out a series of principles that needed to be followed. That in each and every one of his "non-negotiable issues" he had compromised. The emissary had spun him around and around, and he had bargained away each of his core conditions. "What did I mean?" asked Garry.

I did my best to explain fully. On the issue of creating a commercial company that would have the rights to the World Championship cycle as well as the World Championship matches, the emissary had explained that approval for such an agreement must come from the FIDE General Assembly as it was a statute.

Hence, in the final analysis the FIDE General Assembly could both approve and in the future *abrogate* the contract. The ullimate power would continue to rest with FIDE.

Regarding the rights of the players to determine the site of the match, this was already in the rules. If both players agree, we had a winning bid, end of the story. As we both understood, Karpov would be his most likely rival and if the players didn't agree, FIDE *determined* the winning bid.

In the case of player representation on the FIDE Central Committee, Garry "won" the right to attend, either personally or by representative. Good for him! What did it mean? One vote. One vote from 12 or 14? And did Garry want to journey to annual, bi-annual or quarterly meetings with FIDE's officials?

In the case of his candidates having FIDE posts, no problem. On what committees would they like to serve? He would personally insure that they were voted in and approved through a FIDE General Assembly vote. The posilions of real influence, FIDE President, FIDE Deputy President, FIDE General Secretary (Executive Director) were filled.

And so it went down the entire list. Garry had compromised on each of his key points and the bargain made earned him precisely nothing. Garry turned pensive, and I took my leave.

Upon returning to my room, I discovered I'd be spending the night alone. As my mind was racing from the meeting and discussions I carefully replayed them, analyzing what had been spoken, what had been agreed and making sure that as a witness my interpretation was correct. I wrote down some notes, a practice I've made for all the major meetings I've attended.

Having completed my notes, I found that sleep would not come to me, so I picked up a book that was on my bed table. It was by Mark McCormack, the founder of International Marketing Group (IMG), the largest sports agency in the world. His company had made him a billionaire. It was the first book of his series and was entitled *What They Don't Teach You At Harvard Business School*.

Through example McCormack explained how making business in the theoretical sense of academia collides with the true reality of the business world. The contrasts were brilliantly chosen and highly amusing. McCormack devoted an entire chapter to a man from Venezuela, Rafael Tudela. In this chapter the brilliant business man managed a three-way trade whereby Argentine beef, Brazilian soybeans and Venezuelan oil were all traded with no cash involved. It was a marvelous coup and billionaire McCormack spoke highly of Tudela's ability. To quote: "Several years ago I met a Venezuelan oil and shipping businessman by the name of Rafael Tudela. As I have come to know, respect and admire him, he has impressed me as the quintessential street-smart executive."

The word "quintessential" jolted me, and I had a sudden realization. I got out of bed to check my trouser pockets, and I found the emissary's business card tucked away. Indeed, it was the very same Rafael Tudela. Serendipity at play.

Garry had come up against one of the true masters of business and finance, and discovered he wasn't in his league. Not even close.

A mystery for me is what happened to Rafael Tudela, the quintessential capitalist who ran circles around Garry. Allowing myself room for conjecture, I would say that it seems that at some point Tudela and Campomanes split, and Tudela withdrew from FIDE. Where did he go? Was he still interested in chess? I never saw him again. I asked Don Schultz about him and was told that Tudela had medical problems and started losing his eyesight. He was an extraordinary man and who knows what he might have accomplished for chess if given a proper chance?

One last story about Dubai before we take our leave. It is often discussed in chess circles whether it is a good idea to take your wife/husband or lover to a tournament. Many have strong views. I can only echo the words of an American athlete when asked about sex before a track meet. He replied, "It ain't the catchin' that's the problem, it's the chasin'." My view is clear: wife or husband at an event, yes. The relationship is on solid, stable ground. Such partners are a foundation and can help. A lover, on the other hand, can both assist and detract. When the relationship is going well, positive emotions and confidence can be boosted dramatically. When the relationship sputters and fails, it can be a fierce distraction. Such happened to me in Dubai.

I had a partner of several years and she wanted a deeper commitment for our relationship. A commitment I was unable to make at that time. On the eve of the final round she broke up with me. Emotionally I plummeted badly. The last round was a crucial match as we faced a strong Bulgarian team and we had a narrow lead over the field. Up until that moment I enjoyed a wonderful event: after 11 games played I was undefeated while beating the world's best on board one with a plus five result. Clearly my team captain wanted me in the team, as did I. Now I was an emotional wreck; lightning and thunder out of the blue sky. What to do? Should I ask my team captain to drop my name from the team at the last minute and rearrange the lineup? Or suck it up and concentrate? I chose the latter.

Not to disparage GM Kiril Georgiev's performance in any way – he won a fine game indeed – but I wasn't there. I was hollow inside and played as if in a warped trance. My result injured our team's chances. As it turned out, the Soviets won their match over Poland 4-0, and we had no chance of such a result versus Bulgaria, so the gold medals slipped away. To make matters worse, so did the silver medals, as England won its match 4-0 against a good Brazilian team. The USA took bronze.

When you take a committed partner with you to an event, fine. When your relationship is young or unstable the results can be dangerous. You play with fire. Play carefully.

The Grandmasters Association (GMA)

Although Kasparov's Soviet team won the gold medals in Dubai, it was an event that he would probably prefer to forget. His loss to me was painful, and even more so the great efforts he made to change the FIDE leadership came to naught. Deeply discouraged, he felt that he had had enough of FIDE and its officials, and would strike out in a brand new direction. At just the right moment a new man appeared on the scene, Bessel Kok. Bessel was the President of SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Transactions), a membership-owned bank wire-transfer group, and had taken a deep interest in chess. Garry wanted to start a new organization, a union of chess professionals, and needed help. Would Bessel initially sponsor the costs of forming such a body and help him have it legally registered? Bessel not only agreed to finance the project, but also brought considerable skills to the table in terms of its registration and legal status. The first thing Garry would have to do was to form a Board of Directors so that the Articles could be discussed and the process begun.

Garry went from FIDE campaigner to player Board of Director campaigner overnight. He asked Anatoly Karpov (!), Ljubomir Ljubojević, Lajos Portisch, John Nunn, Jan Timman and me to become directors in his new project, and won the support of all of us. Everyone agreed to work together and help the new organization. Quite a remarkable feat, when you think about it. In those days Garry had the respect and admiration of his colleagues and not just because he was the World Champion. Here was someone who was working really hard to boot-strap chess and to lift it to a much higher level. Garry is indeed a man of "big ideas."

I first met Bessel in Brussels in March 1986, when I played in the SWIFT tournament together with Karpov. We got along immediately and it pleased me greatly to have such a wonderful sponsor. It was a great surprise to see him in Dubai as well. For me, Garry was the mother of the GMA, giving birth to it, while Bessel would be the father, providing security and support. Jointly the two would create a golden age of chess – if only for a period that was far too short.

In Dubai, it was decided that the first meeting of the Board of Directors of the newly-minted organization, the Grandmasters Association, would take place in February, 1987 in Brussels, where Bessel was based at the time. All the arrangements and costs were to be borne by Bessel and his staff.

The birth of the GMA was not overlooked by FIDE officials. It was decided that the GMA and FIDE would hold their first meeting together in Brussels after the GMA had been legally incorporated. Things were moving very fast indeed.

In Dubai, Garry had carefully sketched out ideas for what he called "The World Cup." A series of six world-class events featuring the top chess stars played over a two-year period. It would have a multi-million dollar cost, and Garry was convinced that with the right commercial sponsors the events would be a huge success, drawing in the media, elevating chess and leading to big prize monies and rewards for the players. He was absolutely right.

February came quickly. We all came to thrash about, haggle and iron out a series of Articles for our new organization. Bessel was a marvelous host and tossed his wife Pierrette into the fray as well. Pierrette was an attorney by training and a damned fine one at that. She was wise, tolerant and patient. She also knew how to chair a meeting. I'm certain that without her the meetings might have ended in chaos and nothing would have been accomplished. In addition, Bessel included another wonderful lady, Angela Day of Toronto. The organization would need an Executive Director and Angela was a spark-plug of energy. She too played an important role in our meetings and insured that we stayed on the agenda and accomplished our business.

As you can imagine, having the world's best players at a meeting to discuss their own interests can lead to tumultuous discussions. We became bogged down on numerous issues. For instance, we were the Grandmasters Association, a union dedicated to chess professionals. Clear. But let us take the world "professional" for a moment and think about its meaning. There were some writers and journalists who were indeed professional, owing their livelihoods to their chess writings. Could they become members? What about merchants who dealt exclusively with chess products? Too, there were coaches and trainers, not necessarily grandmasters either, who earned their livings from chess training. Could they, as professionals, join our merry band as well? Was the name "Grandmasters Association" perhaps confusing? Would it be better to say "Chess Professionals Association?"

Another over-arching issue related to the "grandmasters" themselves. Who were they and where did they live? Focusing for a moment only on those who had been awarded the title from FIDE, a small investigation would instantly reveal that the vast majority of the world's grandmasters lived behind the Iron Curtain. In fact, two nations, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, held a majority of the world's grandmasters. The moment the GMA held its first members' meeting, players from these two nations could combine their votes and move or overturn any legislation on their own. The "Western" grandmasters would be out-gunned 2:1 at least. So we had to choose a formula on how to "limit" the votes of any one nation without taking away the representation that came with each voting member. We decided that the maximum members' vote from any one nation at a members' meeting would be 25 percent of the total. The discussions continued long and hard for three consecutive lengthy days.

I was very proud of my colleagues. Everyone was permitted a voice and everyone made enduring and positive comments. I was impressed that despite the lack of legal training we all kept up with the legal restrictions presented by Pierrette. Of the voices, two spoke the loudest, Garry and Ljubo (Ljubomir Ljubojević of Yugoslavia). At times they were very combative and feisty. At other times they got along extremely well. This combativeness of the Board was at times rather too much for John Nunn, and he became the first to resign his seat on the Board of Directors.

After the three strenuous days of discussion our Articles of Incorporation were completed. We had hemmed and hawed and chewed our way through them, and had a crystallized vision of how the organization could operate, coupled with a mission statement. We were all exhausted. Bessel congratulated each of us and said, "Now we have to sign."

"Sign?" said Kasparov. "I'm not sure I can. As the GMA will become a political counterweight to FIDE, I will have to get special permission from my Federation." A comment immediately echoed by Anatoly Karpov.

Lajos Portisch too began to feel uncomfortable. "Yes. Garry is right. It would be best that I ask my Hungarian Chess Federation.

Even Ljubo, from the much freer nation of Yugoslavia, professed his own doubts. "I do not think the Yugoslav Federation will object, but they should be asked. Yes. Definitely!"

As this conversation moved around the table something began to stir in me. Perhaps it was my tiredness from the three long days of discussion and argument, and jet-lag. Whatever the cause, I simply snapped and committed the worst faux pas of my life. Without thinking I made an outburst as follows: "Gentlemen! Please! This is ridiculous!" I shouted. As I went on, my voice grew louder: "We have been arguing for three days. At last, we have a document we all agree upon. It is why we came here. If we don't sign there is no organization. What do we need, the permission of our mothers?" The moment this final word left my lips I regretted my outburst. Almost immediately the whole room broke down in convulsive laughter. At first I was confused. What had I said? Then I realized that during many of the meetings Kasparov would leave the room to speed-dial and speak with his mother. I turned to Garry in open-mouthed horror to mumble an apology, but he had turned bright red and looked away from me. The laughter went on for a very long time before Ljubo said, "Okay, okay. I sign." In turn everyone signed. I had shamed them into standing up for themselves.

That night I went to Garry's room and softly knocked on his door to offer my most sincere apologies. "Gary, I'm so sorry. I was angry and the words just popped out of my mouth. I wasn't even thinking! Please forgive me," I began.

Garry was having a hard time looking at me directly. Clearly he was still sore at my stinging words. "It is all right. I know you weren't speaking against me. You spoke emotionally. Never mind. You know, maybe it was the best thing that you did the whole day! Without your comment maybe we wouldn't sign and in Moscow they would be debating for months!" Gary started to laugh, and I knew I had been forgiven. I was greatly relieved. I was tremendously proud of what he was trying to accomplish. A young man from the Soviet Union, creating an international organization based in Brussels? Appointing himself and receiving the unanimous support of his Board of Directors to make him the President? To create an organization that would seek capital? Was this proper Communist behavior? Clearly, he was showing great daring. My unintended insult laid me low for

quite a while. It taught me to bite my tongue in moments of frustration and especially anger. Garry's only solace was that in case his Moscow apparatchiks did become upset with him, they would have to be upset with Karpov as well. They would both be in the same hot-seat.

Once the GMA had been legally registered, the FIDE officials all arrived. Sleeping soundly in my room at the Brussels Sheraton Hotel I was surprised to receive a telephone call. "Mr. Seirawan? This is reception. I'm sorry, but Mr. Schultz is coming to town and we need your room. Would you please help us?"

Of course, I knew that Don Schultz of the FIDE Central Committee was coming to town and I'd be damned if he could have my room. Let him find another. I was about to voice an objection when the receptionist continued, "Please, you wouldn't have to do a thing. We will do all the packing and moving for you. We have arranged a suite for you on the top floor. There will be a bucket of champagne waiting for you in your room and we will give you a $100 voucher for a dinner in our restaurant..." Hmm. Well, if the hotel was going to put it *that* way, I decided my current room wasn't so special after all and Don could enjoy it to his heart's content. I accepted.

Of course, I shared my good fortune with my fellow Directors, and Jan Timman made a beeline for the champagne, which he pronounced quite good. We all shared a toast together. The suite was magnificent, and Garry expressed his admiration, mentioning that now my room was twice as large as the GMA President's. We were all in a very good mood. FIDE was now at our door and coming before us. Things were going to become quite interesting, and we were prepared. Better still, Bessel and Pierrette had managed to instill in all of us a sense of confidence and a clear direction. We were ready for the challenge.

The meeting between FIDE and GMA officials took place at the Sheraton Hotel, in one of its many conference rooms. We were all seated behind our respective long tables covered with white tablecloths and spoke for two days. In truth, I can hardly recall what was said. It didn't seem to me that anything truly concrete was agreed, but only that we would seek to cooperate and make our best mutual efforts. Fair enough.

At one moment I had a quiet word with Don Schultz, the USCF representative from Florida and a close friend. I asked him about his room. Don said it was fine and seemed mystified by the question. His quizzical expression made me ask him his room number. Nothing personal, strictly professional I assured him. He told me and I realized it wasn't my old room. I went to the receptionist to ask and was told that the US Secretary of State, *George Shultz*, was in town for a NATO meeting and that for security reasons his staff wanted the whole 16th floor to themselves. I had been the only guest on that floor, so it was decided to evacuate me. I never met George Shultz, but two thumbs up for him and his rose-tattooed derrière.

After the meetings with FIDE, Bessel took the GMA Board out to a restaurant to reflect on the week, what had been accomplished and his views of FIDE. As a

newcomer to the world of chess, his insights were a real hammer-blow to the GMA Board and our own perceptions of our small world. Bessel's view as he shared it with us that night would also be quoted before a public audience: "I've never been in a room where there were so many people who seemed to hate chess." Harsh words indeed.

A further recollection of the joint FIDE/GMA meeting was having Belgian waffles with Robert Hamilton, a member of the Canadian delegation. St.John's, New Brunswick had made a winning bid to host the Candidates' Matches, and a big festival was being planned. The event was a mess because the rules of the cycle hadn't been settled. Canada was also aspiring to place a Canadian representative in the event. Robert and I debated a host of various formats and settled on one that we liked best for helping the interests of all parties. We wrote it up on the back of a napkin. It would be my job to take back our proposal and to "sell" it to the FIDE officials. I did. They liked the format, and the St. John's chess festival turned out to be one of the very best in the world.

My next duel with Garry was at the following Olympiad, in Thessaloniki, Greece, again in the all-important USA v USSR match. This time Garry would take his revenge for Dubai, scoring the pivotal win for his team and providing the winning 2½-1½ margin.

Before we begin with the game, a few words about the 1988 Thessaloniki Olympiad. Astute readers will have noticed my 1980 game versus Mikhail Tal in Malta, my 1982 game against Anatoly Karpov in Lucerne, and my 1986 game against Garry Kasparov in Dubai – but no 1984 Olympiad game against the Soviet squad. What happened? It is a long story and I'll make it short. In those days a good portion of the US Olympic team expense funding was provided by the American Chess Foundation (ACF). At that time the ACF was headed by James Sherwin. He decided that instead of having ratings qualify team members, it would be better if the teams were decided by a selection committee. I'm aware that a few nations do use a selection committee to decide their teams, while other nations rely upon a captain to choose the players.

In the US, where politics seem to be a factor in many chess decisions, I was strongly opposed to a selection committee. The objective criterion – ratings only – had worked well enough and more often than not the US teams outperformed their expected rating result.

To impose a selection committee, the USCF would have to agree with the ACF's demands. Again, as the USCF relied on the ACF for funding of our two teams, Men's and Ladies', the Golden Rule prevailed– he who has the gold makes the rules. With the USCF on board the next problem was: "who would serve on the selection committee?" My friend or yours? Not surprisingly the President of the ACF, James Sherwin, and the President of the USCF, Steven Doyle, put themselves on the selection committee. The idea that these two could judge the different strengths and weaknesses of grandmasters is absurd. I think Doyle was

"B" player strength, while Sherwin was a retired IM player. Sherwin finished third in the 1957-58 US Championship (behind Bobby Fischer and Sammy Reshevsky). He played, albeit not very successfully, in the 1958 Interzonal, scoring 7½/20.

Who is stronger: Lubomir Kavalek or John Fedorowicz? What would *you* do to answer this question? Personally, I would look at their individual results and look at their ratings...

I objected strongly from the start of the whole process. That the sponsor (the ACF) could also choose the players struck me as an altogether bad idea. My objections fell on deaf ears. I was told to get with the program or get out of the way. It was a very difficult personal choice for me to make as I really enjoyed the strong camaraderie of the team. In the end, I decided to withdraw as a player and offered myself in any other capacity, analyst, coach, captain. All my offers to help the team as best I could were rebuffed.

In this maelstrom I received a searing letter from the then USCF Executive Director, Gerard Dullea. He characterized my actions as being "insane." An emotive word in the world of chess. I was vilified in *Chess Life* magazine as a prima donna wishing to play first board only or not to play at all. It was a remarkable charge as I was against the selection committee from the start, not knowing who would be chosen, the board order or why.

At that time I was most worried about two players with whom I had close friendships, Roman Dzindzichashvili and "Lubosh" Kavalek. I strongly felt that both players deserved to be on the team and both had had run-ins with USCF officials. In the original line-up, I was happy to see that Roman was in. Excellent Board one, even. Better still. I was invited to play board two and there was no Lubosh on the team at all. It was cruel favoritism in a very ugly form.

After I declined my invitation, Lubosh was offered board three, which I found amusing: how is it possible that when I'm on a team of six players, there is no Lubosh, but when I'm off the team Lubosh not only makes the team but vaults over several other players to be worthy of playing board three? Welcome to the selection committee process where reasons are not given. Nor do they have to be.

Much to my joy, the team played very well; Roman had a fantastic result too! I was very pleased for the team. Unfortunately, my withdrawal would have deep repercussions. In a way that is hard to describe, I was "black-balled" or "black-listed" by USCF officialdom for years and years.

Fortunately, the selection committee was a one-off experiment and the ratings criterion was put back in 1986. I played for the team thereafter. That is the short version of how I missed the 1984 team. A longer version includes a story of my meeting with the ACF Executive Director Allen Kaufman in NYC, where we discussed the selection committee and compromises. It is the only time I've cried in front of another man besides my father. I pledged Allen not to reveal my emotional distress and to my knowledge he kept his promise and never did.

The whole experience was absolutely dreadful and emotionally damaging. I think I stopped playing in tournaments for six months and seriously considered giving up chess. I spoke about such a decision with my mother who told me that: "Small minds always try to stop others. You have to decide whether they will succeed or not." I've often wondered what I would have chosen if I had stopped playing professionally. At that time I was the landlord of two rental property homes. I suspect real-estate would have become my profession, and in the decades that followed Seattle real estate appreciated tremendously. The ways of fate are strange and unknown.

Garry Kasparov-Yasser Seirawan
Thessaloniki Olympiad, 1988
Queen's Gambit Accepted

1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 c5 3.c4 dxc4 4.Nc3

At the time I was specializing in the Queen's Gambit Accepted, which goes to explain Garry's unusual order of opening moves. I now felt that I had been somewhat caught out in the opening. If I play 4...Nf6, White need not cooperate with the lame 5.e3, transposing into the line I wanted, but can try for a bigger advantage with 5.d5!, with e2-e4 to follow. If I play 4...e6 then 5.e4! is once again a superior version of the regular QGA. In future games, I'd play the tried and true 2...Nf6, which is the most circumspect.

4...cxd4 5.Qxd4 Qxd4 6.Nxd4 Bd7?!

When I essayed the text, it struck me as a clever move that would neutralize the position the moment a timely ...Nb8-c6 could be played. I'm clueless as to what attracted me to it, as it will soon become painfully obvious that the move sucks and Black will find himself in difficulties.

Remarkably, Black can keep a playable position with the surprising 6...e5! 7.Ndb5 Kd8!, which at first glance appears to be overwhelming for White. But in a game I had with Lev Alburt, I managed to turn the tables quickly after some quite natural play from my opponent: 8.Be3 Be6! 9.0-0-0+ Nd7 10.Bxa7 Ngf6 11.e4 Rxa7! 12.Nxa7 Ng4! and in an instant White was in serious trouble. Another natural line of play is 8.Bg5+ Nf6 9.0-0-0+ Nd7 10.Nd5 a6!? 11.Nxf6 Be7!, with a lively mess. My main line of preparation was a tactical minefield that continued 12.Nc7 Rb8 13.Ncd5 gxf6 14.Nxf6 Re8! 15.e4 b5, with even chances.

7.Ndb5!

Clearly the strongest move. White might eke out a symbolic edge after 7.e4 Nc6 8.Nxc6 Bxc6 9.Bxc4 e6, but I didn't think it was serious. More importantly, neither did Garry.

7...Na6 8.e4 Nf6 (Diagram 110)

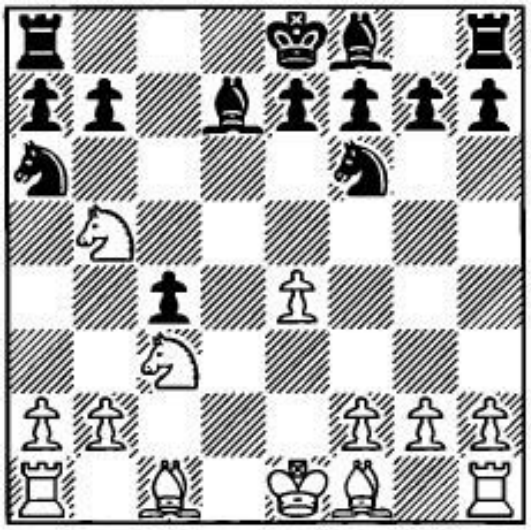


DIAGRAM 110. White to Play

9.f3!!

Fiddlesticks! Or something like that. There goes my preparation out the window. Much like in my King's Gambit game with Boris Spassky, I myopically concentrated upon the natural 9.Bxc4, considering it forced in order to regain the pawn, protect the b5-knight and stop my ...Nf6xe4 threat. I thought that in that case I could successfully untangle my a6-knight by 9...Rc8! 10.b3 Nb4! 11.Nxa7 Rxc4!, with roughly equal chances.

Now I had to reassess the situation. The good news is that my position wasn't refuted, as happened with Boris. The bad news was that I realized I'd be under a lot of pressure for many moves to come and I'd have to defend very accurately. The position I wanted to avoid was 9...e5 10.Bg5 (10.Be3 Be6! is all right for Black) 10...Be6 11.0-0-0 Be7 12.Bxf6 gxf6 13.Kb1 when I feared that White might manage to clamp down on the central d5-square. Hence, my game decision.

9...Bxb5!

Not a happy choice to part with the two bishops, especially as in many variations it is nice to be able to play ...Bd7-e6 and retain the c4-pawn. On the other hand, I had a clear idea of how to continue the game.

10.Nxb5 e5 11.Be3 Bb4+ 12.Kf2 Ke7! 13.Bxc4 Rhc8! 14.Rac1 Bc5!

The key point. By trading off the two bishops I neutralize White's pressure.

15.Rhd1 Bxe3+ 16.Kxe3 (Diagram 111)

Good defensive play has brought us to the diagrammed position, where I now missed a key resource. Had I played the correct 16...Nc7! I think the game would have been easily drawn. That move had not occurred to me because the threat of Nb5-d6 loomed so large in my imagination, it had to be stopped.

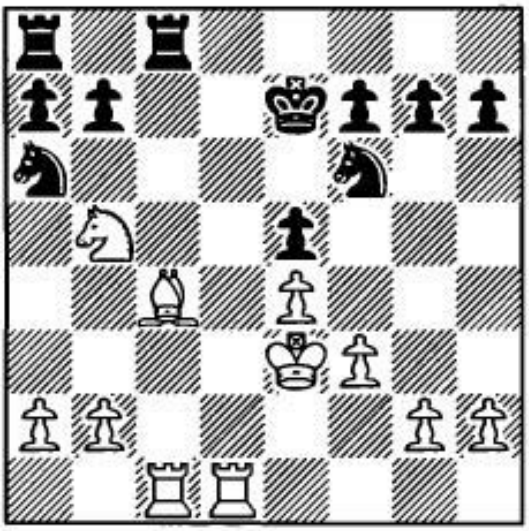


DIAGRAM 111. Black to Play

16...Ne8!?

So, I stopped White's threat

While the text isn't bad, I could have saved myself a boat-load of trouble by 16...Nc7! 17.Nd6 Ncd5+! (the resource that I missed) 18.Bxd5 Nxd5+! 19.Kf2 Kxd6 20.Rxd5+ Ke6 21.Rcd1 Rc6!, with a dead even ending. Of course, after 16...Nc7, White can retreat with 17.Nc3, to retain some pieces, but in that case I've solved the problem of my errant a6-knight and can start thinking about 17...Ne6 or 17...Nce8, with a fairly level game.

The other way to "stop" Nb5-d6 was 16...Rc6!?, when I feared something could go wrong after 17.Bd5 Nxd5+ 18.cxd5 Rxc1 19.Rxc1, with advantage for White, thanks to my wayward pieces.

The text may appear overly defensive, but once Black is able to play ...Na6-c7, most of his problems will be over.

17.Bb3!?

It is by no means an easy task for White to keep the pressure going. In fact, Garry spent 50 minutes agonizing over the text, which prevents the desired 17...Nac7 by 18.Nxc7 Nxc7 19.Bxf7!, snapping off a pawn

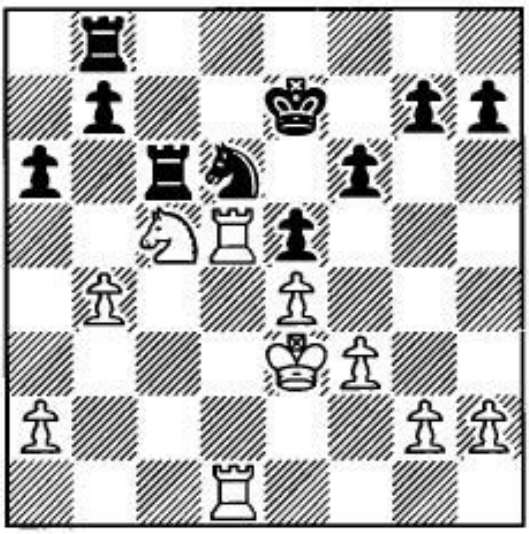
Note that the attractive-looking 17.Bd5?! Rxc1 18.Rxc1 Nb4! is quite helpful for Black, when again the a6-problem has been solved, as the b7-pawn is poisoned.

The text, on the other hand, is a subtle move designed to extract control over the c-file by threatening to trade rooks on c8 and capture the a7-pawn.

17...Rxc1

These weren't easy decisions. Giving up the c-file meant good pressure for White. When I played 16...Ne8, my hope was to meet 17.Bb3 with 17...Nc5!, when

White has two choices. The first crossroad, 18.Rd5 Nxb3! 19.Rxe5+ Kf8! 20.Rxc8 Rxc8 21.axb3 Rc2! 22.Nxa7 Rxg2 23.Rb5 Rxh2 24.Rxb7 Rxb2, is a wipeout variation and White comes up empty-handed. My problem was the line 18.Bd5! a6 19.Nc3 Rab8 20.b4 Ne6 21.Bxe6 Kxe6 22.Na4! Nd6 23.Nc5+ Ke7 24.Rd5 f6 25.Rcd1 Rc6 **(Diagram 112)**, a variation that had a certain "flow" about the moves. They all seemed natural and best, bringing us to our analysis diagram.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 112. White to Play

I now think that I made an error of judgment and that in fact my position is quite defensible. At the board and in my mind's eye I didn't like the doubled rooks and the strong c5-knight one little bit, and so avoided this variation. In fact, it is hard for White to make any progress at all. Black just plays ...Rb8-d8 and ...Rc6-c7, and I don't see any problems.

18.Rxc1 f6

Finally, and at long last, I'm now ready to play ...Na6-b4! and bid for my freedom.

19.a3

Jerk.

19...Nd6 (Diagram 113)

I realized there was no way that Garry would let my a6-knight escape to b4, so I had planned a secondary means of escape long ago with the text. If White wants to play on, he would have to sacrifice.

In passing, please note that 19...Kd8?? 20.Be6! Nac7 doesn't solve my problems, but it does end them after 21.Rd1+! Ke7 22.Nxc7 Nxc7 23.Rd7+ Kxe6 24.Rxc7, when White wins.

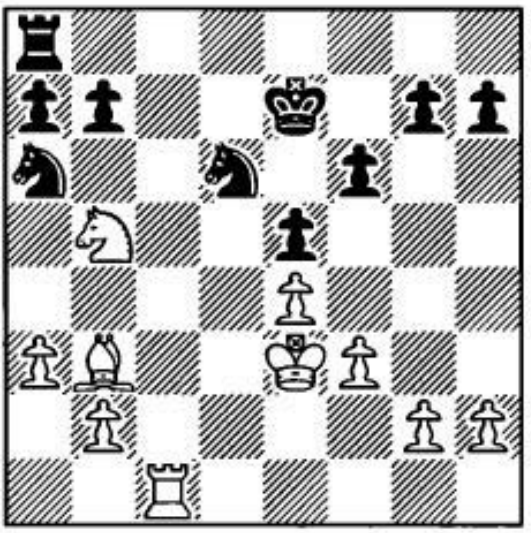


DIAGRAM 113. White to Play

We now reached a key moment. Garry has been very suspicious of my opening play (so have I), and for the whole game my a6-knight has dominated both our thought processes. Garry *must* punish me for my errant play. To do that, he will have to sacrifice two minor pieces for rook and pawn. I wrongly judged the trade to be in my favor. Garry rightly judged it to be equal, in which case he should continue to play on.

20.Bd5!

I now find it amusing that I was happy to see this excellent move. At the time, I thought Garry was going over the line in pursuit of victory, as he did in Dubai.

20...Nxb5

Grabbing the loot and seizing with both hands what I thought were *my* winning chances. It was safer to play 20...Rb8 21.Nxa7 Kd7! (21...Ra8?? 22.Nc8+! wins for White) 22.a4 Nc7 23.Bc4!? Ra8 24.Nb5 Nxc4+ 25.Rxc4 Nxb5 26.axb5 Kd6 27.b6 Ra6 28.Rc7 Rxb6 29.Rxg7 Rxb2!, with a comfortable draw.

21.Bxb7 Nbc7!

Again, the decisions are so difficult to make. For ages I've wanted to bring the a6-knight into play. Was now the right time for 21...Nac7 22.Bxa8 Nxa8, solving my conundrum? I feared that after 23.Rc8 Nb6 24.Rc5 Nd4 25.Rc7+ Kf8 my winning chances were zero, while my losing chances were much higher. I made the right choice.

22.Bxa8 Nxa8 23.Rc8

At the start of play, Garry had played "softly" with his pieces, but over the last few moves, as the tension increased, he began to play "hard." He would "screw" the pieces into the squares, and even "mash" or "vibrate" the pieces onto their squares before releasing them and pressing his clock. It was becoming annoying,

and I could feel emotion starting to well up inside of me. If he kept up his behavior, there might come a violent explosion of anger.

23...Nb6

Not my first instinct, but again the right choice. Initially, I planned to try to "trap" White's rook. The idea I had in mind was 23...N8c7 24.b4 Kd7 25.Rg8 Ne8, planning to keep White's rook trapped in the corner. I rejected the line because 25.Rf8 Ke7 26.Rc8 forces an immediate repetition.

24.Rg8!

It is clear that White should keep an active rook. Should it retreat with 24.Rc1? Kd8! my hopes of bringing my knights into active positions won't be just a dream, they will be quickly realized. Clearly, a rook retreat would lose two tempi and help me reposition my knights.

24...Kf7 25.Rh8 Nc5?

A brave but wrong-headed attempt to win the game. After the straightforward 25...Nc4+ 26.Ke2 Nxb2 27.Ra8! Nc5 28.Rxa7+ Kf8!? 28.h4 Nba4 Black has an impregnable fortress on the queenside. I thought the position offered me more and therefore there was no reason to force a premature draw.

Note that White shouldn't misjudge his chances either with 25...Nc4+ 26.Kd3?! Nxb2+ 27.Kc3 Na4+ 28.Kc4 Nb6+ 29.Kb5 Nc7+ 30.Kc6 Ne6, as while White's active king impresses, the position favors Black. If White continues wrongly with 31.Rxh7?? Kg8! 32.Rh3 Nf4! 33.Rg3 Nc4 34.a4 Ne2, Black is in command thanks to the incredibly clumsy rook. However, even if White avoids capturing the poisoned h7-pawn and continues 31.Rb8 Nd4+ 32.Kd6 (32.Kc5?? Nd7+ wins the rook), then 32...Nc4+ wins the a3-pawn and Black has all the chances.

26.Rb8!

With this move Garry lashed out and smashed the clock with a closed fist. Unfortunately, the table happened to have little give to it and the end result was that all the pieces jumped off their squares. I was furious. Indeed, Garry had been so violent that on the adjacent board the game between Karpov and Gulko was also disturbed by Garry's outburst as their pieces jumped as well. So here I was, pieces spewed about, my clock running and now this. For the last few moves Garry had been doing his "piece screwing" business, and I had had enough.

I decided right there and then that a solid right punch to the jaw was the required response, and I clenched my fist. Garry's sense of self-preservation kicked into high gear faster than I could "make my move." Garry put his hands in the air and kept saying, "Sorry. Sorry. Sorry!" Repeatedly. All the while readjusting the pieces and putting them on their proper squares. Garry's sudden change to a fawning apology disarmed me. The rush of adrenalin that wanted me to put Kasparov in a different time-zone had nowhere to go, and I found that it took me many minutes to restore my concentration.

While not in time-trouble, I was beginning to drift in that direction, and the

whole incident had a completelly unnerving effect upon me. In my whole career I had never been in such a situation, although some opponents had been well and truly rude. But this? Talk about *enfant terrible* behavior. What had caused Garry to behave so badly? I have no idea of the pressures that he was under (or those expectations he placed on himself), but there was simply no excuse. It was a really unpleasant business and put me off from the tremendous respect I had, and have, for him as a player. A great player, but in this instance a terrible sportsman.

26...Ke7 27.b4 (Diagram 114)

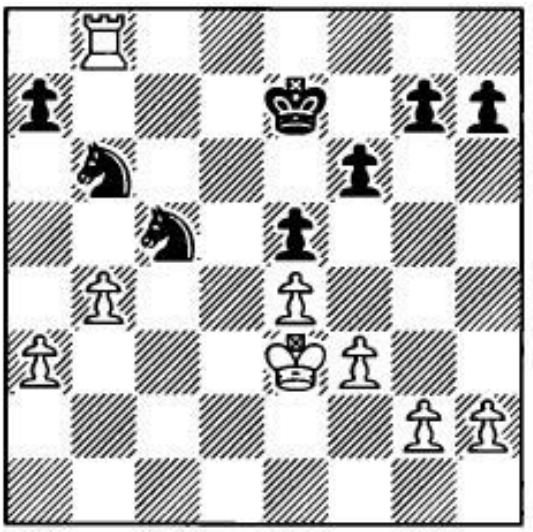


DIAGRAM 114. Black to Play

27...Nc4+??

Groan. Wrong move order. After the correct 27...Ncd7 28.Rb7 and now 28...Nc4+ the game would be drawn: 29.Kd3 Nxa3 30.Rxa7 Nb5 31.Ra5 Nd6 32.Kc3 g6 33.b5 f5, with an equal game.

The text, on the other hand, blows the game on the spot. In passing, this ending has echoes of my game versus Spassky in Linares. There too my two knights were out-gunned by a lone rook.

28.Ke2 Nd7 29.Rg8!

The difference. Now White isn't forced to play 29.Rb7 and transpose into the drawn line noted above

29...g5

This was the best chance to rescue the game. I couldn't play 29...Kf7 30.Ra8 Nxa3? 31.Rxa7, when White wins a knight

30.a4! a5 31.bxa5!

Playing for the knight's Achilles heel, the distant outside passed pawn. The game is gone.

31...Nxe5 32.Ra8! Nc6 33.a5 Kd6 34.g3 h5 35.h4 gxh4 36.gxh4 Nc5 37.a6 Kc7

Played with my flag hanging.

38.a7?

A mistake. With 38.Ke3, White's position is nearly winning.

38...Nb7??1-0

A short-circuit error induced by time-trouble. My brain fried from the tension. When I realized that 39.Rc8+ followed by queening was possible, I gave up. Instead, after 38...Kb6! 39.Ke3! Nxa7 40.Rh8 Nc6 41.Rxh5 Kc7 White's practical winning chances are excellent. I doubt I could have saved the game, but I could put up a fight.

I won't share with you what my true feelings were and how I felt after this game. Let's say that, in a book to be shared amongst family members, jet-streams of profanity should be avoided. I remembered a few muttered by Anatoly during our bridge game that could fit well. I won't repeat them either. This game had me boiling mad for a long, long time and it's been a long, slow cooling period as well. As John Nunn might say, "We are talking half-lives."

My next encounter with Garry Kasparov took place in Barcelona. The World Cup events had become a reality, and the GMA was becoming an established voice for chess professionals. As could be expected, there were a few hiccups along the way. As mentioned earlier, John Nunn stepped down from the Board, to be replaced by Bent Larsen. In my own case, as a member of the GMA Board of Directors, I attended quarterly meetings, all of which were held in Europe. This was quite a hardship for me, as I would travel from Seattle to Europe, a near day-long flight, arrive for a few days, toil through jet-lag and, by the time I'd adjusted to the nine-hour time-zone difference, I'd fly back to Seattle and repeat the readjustment process all over again. It wasn't a question of just losing one week from these trips, as sometimes jet-lag persisted and affected me for much longer. If I lost two weeks making these trips, that was eight weeks a year, which was a considerable amount of time taken from a hectic schedule.

My duties as publisher of *Inside Chess* magazine never stopped. (Those who have worked on magazines know that the demands of magazine publishing are insatiable and are always coupled with an immediate deadline.) Too, wasn't I supposed to be *playing* chess? You know, against the *best* players in the world. The very same guys who were *preparing* for me. It seemed that I never had enough quality time to work on my own game, and whenever I did manage to snag a quiet evening together with Nikolay Minev or John Donaldson, it felt like a glorious moment of sanctuary. I should also like to add a most gracious and kind word of thanks to Elena, Nikolay's wife, who often cooked something wonderful to go with the coffee. She always made me feel so very welcome and at home. Thank you, Elena!

Following the GMA's first assembly of its members, I wrote a report for *Inside*

Chess about what happened at our open members' meeting. Garry was not pleased, to say the least. He felt that I had violated the confidentiality of the GMA as a Board member. While I reasonably pointed out that dozens and dozens of members had attended, many of whom were journalists and had written their own reports. Moreover, I never once wrote about the Board of Directors' meetings, as they were confidential. Garry wasn't prepared to see the distinction between a closed Board of Directors' meeting and an open meeting of the GMA membership. He wanted me to resign from the GMA Board.

It was the GMA Chairman, Bessel Kok, who delivered to me the bad news. "Garry wants you to resign as Director of the GMA," he intoned.

"Really?" I answered. "I accept!" I added with a broad smile.

My reaction really surprised Bessel, who had prepared himself for a completely different type of reaction. "You don't mind?"

"Not at all," I responded. "Maybe I can get my life back."

I happily stepped down in favor of Jonathan Speelman, the choice of the Directors. In time, Maxim Dlugy was voted in as a Director to replace me. That is quite another story, however.

In hindsight, the irony is that *Inside Chess* endeavored to publish only the news releases issued by the GMA. I was very careful not to print any confidential information of any type. My report on the members' meeting was a factual account that was witnessed by everyone who attended, and while reserved for members, it was a very public discussion and was the only GMA meeting I wrote about while a Director.

In Barcelona the GMA's success was very visible. The players stayed in the magnificent Ritz Hotel, and the tournament was played in a marvelous cathedral. The conditions were simply excellent and our Spanish hosts went over the top in making everyone feel welcome and special. The event garnered enormous publicity, with excellent local coverage and attendance. The extraordinary success of the GMA and the World Cup events, however, masked a very deep-seated problem: the conflict between the GMA and FIDE had escalated. The animosity of Garry towards Campomanes continued unabated. Attempts at cooperation and best efforts were not working, and events had come to a steaming boil.

An article I wrote, "Fraternal Fight - Can FIDE and the GMA avoid a War?", published in *Inside Chess* (Volume 2, Issue 10, page 26-27), reported that the GMA and FIDE were seeking to create an agreement that would clearly state the rights and powers of each organization. The GMA issued a press release on March 1, 1989, explaining that at a meeting between the GMA and FIDE in Brussels February 13-14, 1989 a tentative Agreement had been reached that was by *every* estimation enormously favorable to the GMA.

On February 15-16, Bessel Kok and Jan Timman traveled to Cannes, France to explain the proposed Agreement to Garry, who flatly rejected it. Garry was on the warpath. He wanted nothing to do with FIDE – indeed, as he expressed it

himself, he wanted to *kill* the organization. On February 17, 1989 Jan Timman tendered his resignation as a GMA Director. Bessel Kok did the same in his capacity as the GMA Chairman, but would fulfill his duties until July 1, 1989 before formally stepping down. The GMA was fraying apart, tempers were running high and folks were digging into their positions.

The FIDE President, Florencio Campomanes, was certainly doing no better either. The hardliners within FIDE were aghast that he had accepted such a one-sided Agreement in the first place. The Agreement would turn over the running of the World Championship cycle to a "Commission of Experts" that would have four GMA members and one FIDE representative. The GMA had won the right to call the shots for *both* the World Chess Championship cycle and the World Cup cycle. FIDE would receive a percentage of the prize funds for its general budget and play a greatly reduced or cursory role.

On April 9, 1989 both Jan Timman and Bessel Kok journeyed to Barcelona to implore Garry once again to see reason and find a compromise. During the Barcelona event Garry and I talked often and got along very well indeed. Whenever Yvette and I were in the restaurant he would come to join our table, oftentimes surprising his own countrymen, who were also dining nearby, by not joining them. My resignation from the GMA Board was ignored during our discussions. (Again, I felt that Garry did me a great favor by relieving me of my responsibilities.) We talked calmly about the FIDE/GMA situation, and I urged Garry to accept the Agreement. I explained that virtually all my Western colleagues were ecstatic with the highly favorable terms. They wanted peace, not war.

Garry compromised with Bessel and accepted the Agreement with the major change that another GMA member, Lothar Schmid, was added to the Commission. Garry was stacking the odds overwhelmingly in favor of the GMA. Bessel was jubilant and anxious to get back on track.

While in Barcelona Bessel paid me a great compliment: "Our meetings aren't as much fun without you. You have a good, positive influence on Garry, and he respects you. Why don't you come back and join our Board?" he asked. I graciously thanked Bessel for the compliment, but explained that my life was so much easier *not* being a member of the Board. I didn't want to return.

The following comments on my Barcelona game with Garry were published in *Inside Chess* (Volume 2, Issue 10, pages 12-14). Updated comments are marked "YS, 2010" at the end of each new paragraph.

Garry Kasparov-Vasser Seirawan
Barcelona, 1989
King's Indian Defense

1.d4 d6 2.e4

Surprise. Kasparov had a recent game with Speelman that continued 2.c4 e5 3.Nf3 e4 4.Ng5 Nf6 5.Nc3 Bf5 6.g4. Though the game ended in a draw, Speelman had the better chances. I wanted to see Garry's improvement. No such luck. Oh well, the Pirc suits me just fine.

2...Nf6 3.f3!?

Damn! Outplayed, and the game is only three moves old! If I wanted to avoid the Sämisch King's Indian (a defense I've never played) my choices are 3...e5, as played by Nikolić against Korchnoi in Round 1, or 3...c5. Neither variation suited me.

3...g6

Garry began to smell a rat! Was I really allowing a King's Indian?

We must never forget that chess is a fight between two human beings. We are animals, imbued with animal instincts, including those for survival. At the board we pick up these long-lost traits, sensing our opponent's discomforts, worries and fears. We make efforts to conceal but reveal our own fears. We sweat, we react to noises around us and how we react, whether with a laugh or a grimace, reveals our mood. We are not as evolved as we would like to think. (YS, 2010)

4.Be3! Bg7 5.Qd2!? 0-0 6.c4

Yes, it's a King's Indian – but who's trapping whom? I recently came across an excellent article by IM Andrew Martin on the Bronstein Variation of the Sämisch King's Indian, suggesting some new defensive ideas for Black. This prompted me to look at the variation and I found a new idea.

6...e5 7.d5 Nh5 8.Nc3 Qh4+! 9.Bf2 Qf4 10.Be3 Qh4+ 11.g3

Garry wasn't altogether happy about playing into this variation. His ambivalence about continuing the game was obvious.

11...Nxg3 12.Qf2 Nxf1 13.Qxh4 Nxe3 (Diagram 115)

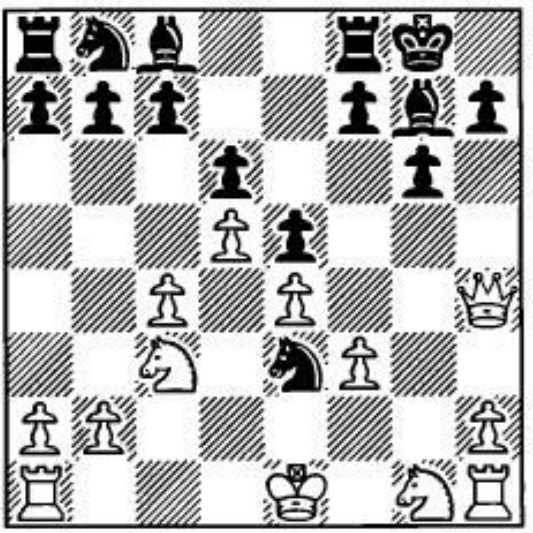


DIAGRAM 115. White to Play

A well-known position. Black has sacrificed his queen for two bishops and in a moment two pawns. Black's threat is ...Ne3-g2+, forking king and queen. The players continue following the dictates of opening theory.

14.Ke2 Nxc4 15.Rc1! Na6 16.Nd1 Nb6 17.Ne3 Bd7 18.Nh3 f6 19.Nf2! (Diagram 116)

In the celebrated game Karpov-Velimirović, Skopje 1976, *Informant 21/556*, Karpov played 19.Rhg1 Rad8? 20.Nf5, and won beautifully. IM Martin suggests 19...Rae8, intending ...Re7, as an improvement, and only then chipping away at White's center with ...c7-c6. I had another, more powerful idea in mind.

The text was a novelty and an improvement over Karpov's play. I had expected his move

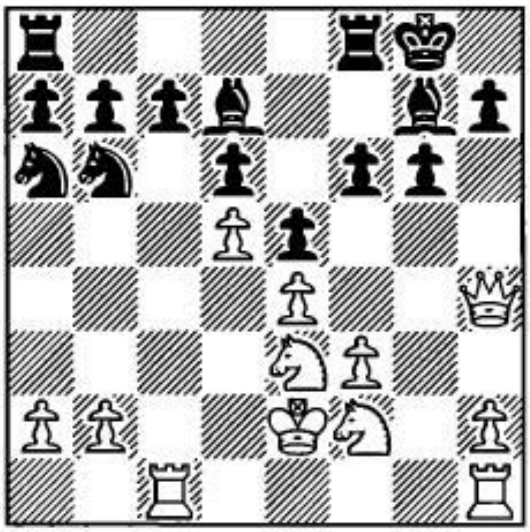


DIAGRAM 116. Black to Play

19...Nc8!!

Outstanding. This move stops White's kingside play cold. This idea takes all the punch out of the Ne3-f5 sacrifice. Furthermore, if White is stubborn and plays 20.Nfg4?! Ne7 (20...h5!?) 21.Nh6+ Kh8 (21...Bxh6!?) 22.Rhg1, White must be prepared to face 22...g5 23.Qh5 Ng6! (a key motif) 24.Ng2 f5!? 23.Qxg5 (23.exf5!?) 23...fxe4 24.fxe4 Nc5, with crazy complications.

Garry didn't feel that his knight belonged on h6. He now went into a deep think. Where will White attack if not on the kingside?

20.Rc3! Ne7? (Diagram 117)

The idea behind 19...Nc8 isn't one dimensional (defending the king.) The real point behind the move is to play ...c7-c5, in order to bring the knight on a6 into the game by ...Na6-c7-b5-d4!

After 20...c5! 21.dxc6 White hardly has a choice. If he allows the position to remain closed, Black will eventually expand on both flanks with ...Na6-c7, ...b7-

b5, ...a7-a5, and ...b5-b4, or preparation for ...f7-f5. In either case, White has serious problems. Now that White has been forced to exchange his d5-pawn, the a6-knight on a6 has an open avenue to the f4 or d4-outposts.

Now if 21...bxc6 (21...Bxc6!?) 22.Rd1 Nc7 23.Rcd3 Nb5 24.a4 Nd4+ 25.Rxd4 exd4 26.Rxd4 c5 is better for Black. White's king is in the center and Black's pieces are due for a wake-up call.

So, why didn't I play 20...c5? Well, I was sure White's "attack" on the queenside was nothing, and I wanted Garry to invest more time going down a dead end. Preparing the break ...f6-f5, with ...Rf8-f7, in conjunction with ...Ra8-f8, was beginning to look more and more attractive.

I think I was overly critical of the text. The move would not be so bad if I had followed it up correctly with ...c7-c5, preparing to recapture on c6 with my knight. If the knight manages to reach the d4-square I should be doing well. (YS, 2010)

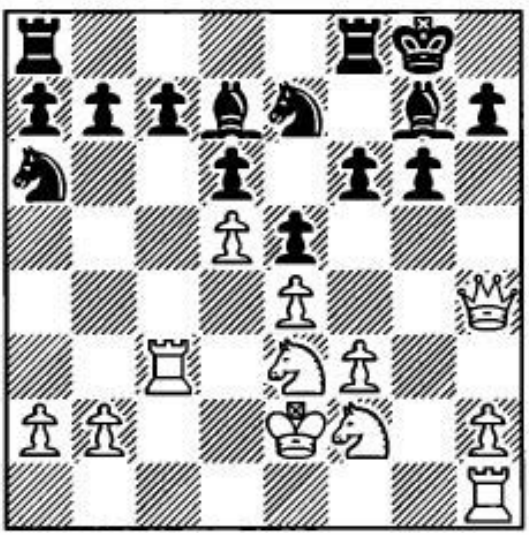


DIAGRAM 117. White to Play

21.Rhc1!

Garry understands that he can't just sit. The text prepares to sacrifice an exchange.

21...Rac8?!

I'm still too enamored with my kingside break. Unfortunately, White's attack on the queenside turns out to be real. I can't treat the attack so casually. Best was 21...c5! 22.dxc6 (22.Nc4? Nc8! will transpose into positions explained above) 22...Nxc6! 23.Kf1 Nd4 24.Kg2 Nc5, with a position that is difficult to evaluate. Tellingly, Garry didn't like the resulting position for White.

22.Rb3 Rb8 23.Nd3

I saw that White was preparing the billiard shot "queen to the bottom cush-

ion." That is, Qh4-e1-a5, emerging on the other side of the board. But I was convinced that White's queen had to prevent ...Bg7-h6, which would be a beautiful diagonal to operate from. Besides, I saw that by bringing my knight back to b6, White's queenside attack would be stopped. So I smugly played the following move.

23...Rf7??

Losing the game outright. Despite all the tempi I've wasted, the situation is still unclear after 23...c5!.

While I was right to be critical of this move, because 23...c5! is so much stronger, the second question mark is certainly excessive. (YS, 2010)

24.Qe1! Nc8

This is the move that actually lands me in deep water. The transfer of the knight to b6 allows a winning combination, while losing tempi as well. Once more and for the last time, 24...c5! 25.Qa5 (25.dxc6 Nxc6) 25...f5 (25...Bh6!?), pursuing my long planned kingside attack, was the right path. (YS, 2010)

25.Qa5 Nb6 26.Rxc7!

Crashing through. Now the real horror of 23...Rf7 is revealed. After 26...Nxc7 27.Qxa7 my rook on b8 lacks protection.

Well, since I've just paid dearly for an opportunity to attack, I might as well get on with it.

26...f5 27.Rc2?

Garry's resolve fails him. The simplest win was 27.Rxb7 Rxb7 28.Qxa6 Rc7 29.Rxb6! axb6 30.Qxb6, and White's two passed pawns cannot be stopped. When I showed this to Garry in the post-mortem he just tut-tutted and shook his head sadly. The second-best move in the position was 27.Rc1, also winning. The point is to challenge me on the f-file.

27...fxe4 28.fxe4 Rbf8

In my notes I should have mentioned that I rejected 28...Ba4, snaring an exchange, because of 29.Rxb6 Bxc2 30.Rxd6! with a big advantage for White. (YS, 2010)

29.Rxb6! (Diagram 118)

Garry made this cruncher of a move and accompanied it with the offer of a draw. I can only say that both players were feeling the tension and that neither of us knew what was going on.

However after 27.Rc2, I was beginning to feel unduly optimistic about my attack and Garry sensed my rising confidence. White's growing time-pressure also contributed to my nascent euphoria. I was certain of only one thing – I wanted to continue the game. Surely, White is in trouble. Why else would Garry offer the draw? Stop for a moment. What do you think about the (diagrammed) position?

Racking my brain, I came to the conclusion that Black was lost. And I was right. After 29...axb6 30.Qxb6, the two choices I considered were 30...Bh6 and 30...Nc5. In the post-mortem, Garry refuted 30...Bh6 with 31.Qxd6 Rf3? 32.Nf5!

gxf5 33.Qxh6 fxe4 34.Ne1, winning. I tried improving on this variation with 31...Bh3, but was once again undone by 32.Nf5!.

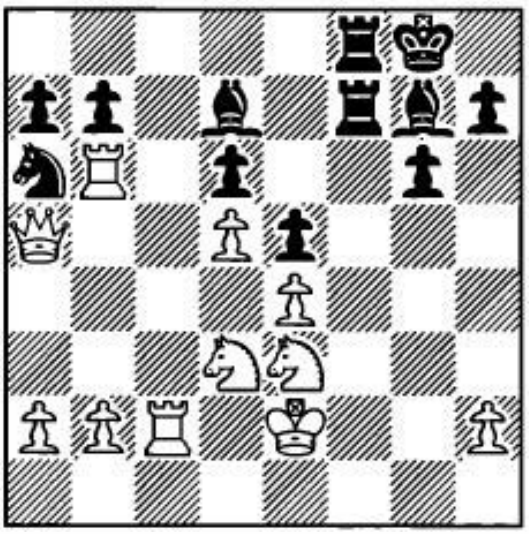


DIAGRAM 118. Black to Play

Therefore, the only move is 30...Nc5 (forced according to Kasparov) 31.Nxc5 dxc5. At first we went along convincing ourselves that the position was unclear. (I never liked the position. Garry was doing the convincing.)

Then Garry found 32.Kd1!!, which seemed to end the game and the post-mortem... White just consolidates with 33.Re2, and then asserts his material advantage. After this move, the main topic of discussion was 32...Bh6!, intending ...Rf7-f3-h3, with counterplay. At the end of the post-mortem we were convinced Black was lost. Is he?

Anyway, back to the game. After thinking for 23 minutes...

½-½

Draw agreed!!

Some databases include the following moves: 29...axb6 30.Qxb6 Bh6 31.Qxd6 Rf3 32.Nf5 gxf5 33.Qxh6 fxe4 34.Ne1 ½-½. But that is just analysis, as those moves were not played. (YS, 2010)

The Game

The following game was played in the sixth and final tournament in the GMA World Cup, in Skellefteå, Sweden. The World Cup events had been an outstanding success, and the GMA seemed to have established itself as a key chess organization. A bright future was seemingly assured, but within a scant two years the GMA collapsed, after Garry withdrew as its President.

My annotations were published in *Inside Chess* magazine, and updated comments are again marked "YS, 2010". Of all the games in this book, the one that

follows ranks the highest in terms of ideas, tension and drama.

Every now and then you play a game that is so complicated, and filled with so many twists and turns, that you don't really know what is going on. You are forced to rely upon intuition, to play by the seat of your pants. Only months later do you discover even more ideas of attack and defense. How wonderful it would be to have the World Champion participate in the post-mortem. My sincere thanks to Garry Kasparov for graciously analysing the following game with me. For every hour we spent playing the game, we spent three hours looking at it later. Two very long post-mortems, several meals, and a four-hour plane ride haven't exhausted the wealth of ideas discovered.

Yasser Seirawan-Garry Kasparov
Skellefteå, 1989
King's Indian Defense

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6

The last time we played this position, Garry was White and I was Black.

5.Be2 0-0 6.Bg5 c5 7.d5 h6 8.Be3

The alternative is 8.Bf4 e6! 9.dxe6 Bxe6 10.Bxd6 Re8, with massive complications for the sacrificed pawn.

The theoretical continuation of this gambit line by Black goes on for at least a dozen more moves and even more. As Garry had a great deal of experience in that line I avoided it. (YS, 2010)

8...e6 9.Qd2 exd5 10.cxd5 Re8! 11.f3 h5!

An important move. Black uses his h-pawn to gain space on the kingside. White has won some fine games by playing g2-g4 and h2-h4. In the 1982 Toluca Interzonal, GM Amador Rodriguez played 11...a6?, against me. My elbow-jerk reaction was 12.a4?, exchanging blunders. After 11...a6? 12.Bxh6! Nxe4 13.Nxe4 Qh4+ 14.g3 Qxh6 15.Nf6+! snares an exchange.

An additional comment to the above note. It was normal for Black to play 11...Kh7, protecting the h6-pawn, in which case a pawn storm by g2-g4 and h2-h4, gathers momentum. Garry's novel approach put the kibosh on this variation. (YS, 2010)

12.a4 a6 13.a5? (Diagram 119)

Both players are waiting. White wants to play Ng1-h3-f2. While Black is waiting for the opportunity to play ...Bc8xh3. The question is: who will benefit more from the waiting game? Kasparov's next move answers that question: Black will. White should have played 13.h4 (in order to capture on h3 with his rook) 13...Nh7! 14.g3 b6! 15.Nh3 Bxh3!? 16.Rxh3 Ra7, intending ...Ra7-e7, with a better game for Black. All this means that players who employ the Averbakh system will have to look for another job.

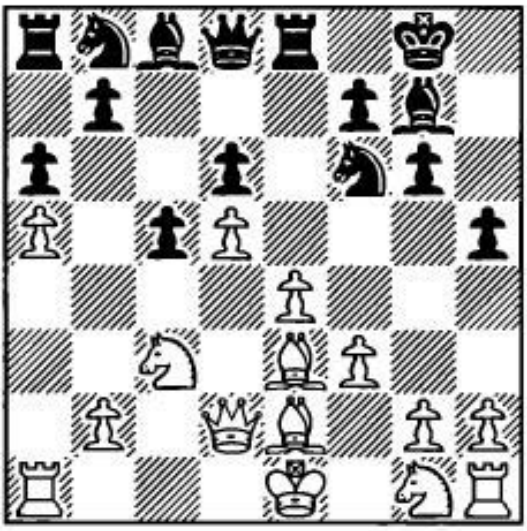


DIAGRAM 119. Black to Play

13...Nh7!

An important new idea in the position. Black intends ...f7-f5, attacking White's trump, his powerful center. If Black succeeds in destroying the center, he wins. White's position will be ruined. I now had to undertake a major rethink of the position

14.Bd1

Not pretty, but necessary. If 14.Bd3 Nd7 15.b3 Ne5 16.Bc2 b5 17.axb6 Qxb6 with good play for Black. Or 14.Na4? f5! 15.Nb6 Ra7 and, in spite of his temporary discomfort, Black is on the attack.

14...Nbd7

The waiting is over. Black has won the first battle. White has been forced into an ugly scheme of development.

15.Nge2 Ne5 16.b3Qh4+?!

More natural is 16...f5! 17.Bc2 fxe4 18.Bxe4. Black now has a happy choice between 18...Nf6, and 18...c4. In either case, I prefer Black.

17.Bf2 Qf6 18.Qe3?

Continuing to misuse all my pieces, while only a couple of Black's are clumsily placed (Qf6, Nh7). I rejected 18.0-0 Ng5! (18...Qxf3 19.Bxc5 [19.Nf4 Nc4! wins for Black] 19...Qd3 20.Qxd3 Nxd3 21.Bxd6 is a speculative sacrifice) 19.Kh1 Nexf3!, and White is busted. With the text, I shore up f3 in order to prevent the threat of 18...Qxf3 19.gxf3 Nxf3+ 20.Kf1 Bh3 mate. The best way to meet that threat was 18.Be3!, inviting a repetition. If Black declines to repeat, then he has misplaced his queen. The only way to take advantage of the free tempo – 18...Nxf3+?! 19.gxf3 Qxf3 20.Rf1 – favors White. With 18.Qe3?, I justify Black's queen sally and help him increase his advantage.

Actually, White's best move was 18.0-0! Ng5 19.Be3! Ngxf3+ 20.gxf3 Nxf3+ 21.Rxf3 Qxf3 22.Nf4 Qxe3 23.Qxe3 Bd4 24.Kf2, with a roughly even game. (YS, 2010)

18...h4!

Another benefit of 11...h5, is that White can't allow ...h4-h3, but, by playing h2-h3 myself, my kingside becomes a rigid target. Black will also keep the mighty outpost one5.

19.h3 g5! 20.0-0 Bd7 (Diagram 120)

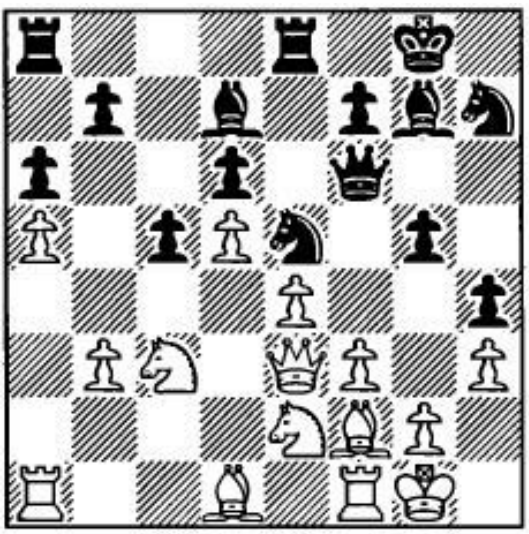


DIAGRAM 120. White to Play

I ain't happy. How often do you see a bishop voluntarily "developed" at d1? My knights are particularly sad. The e2-knight is an object of ridicule. Look at those black pawns! My king is the object of Black's attentions. My bishops are wondering what to do, while my rooks have no clue! In short, if I were the World Champion, with White's position, I'd offer a draw and excuse myself. Since that tactic wouldn't work here, some repairing is in order. Before all else, my king needs protection!

21.Kh1! Nf8!

Declining the opportunity for a direct assault. I had hoped for 21...Bh6 22.Bg1 g4? 23.f4 gxh3 24.gxh3 Ng5 25.fxg5 Qxf1 26.gxh6 Bxh3 27.Nf4, favoring White.

22.Bg1! Nfg6 23.Bh2

Good defensive play has brought me back into the game. While still devoid of counter-play, I should be able to avoid immediate loss. Black should now play 23...Bh6, intending ...Ng6-f4 and a doubling on the g-file in case of an exchange on f4. Another plan would be to reach "the Zuk point" by playing 23...Bb5, ...Re8-e7, and ...Ra8-e8, preparing to punish White for any active moves. The concept of the "Zuk point" needs elaboration. Robert Zuk was a strong Senior Master, now

mostly retired from chess. The "winter of Zuk" (1970-71) still evokes awed memories. Bob came down from British Columbia and dealt the top players of the Pacific Northwest over 120 consecutive games without a win. That included a streak of over 40 consecutive victories (no draws) for Bob. Zuk was famous for building up his position to an absolute maximum before attempting to find a winning plan. Garry should have used that method here. Instead, he uncorked a strategic howler of major proportions.

23...c4??

When making this move, Garry screwed the pawn into the c4-square, then he rubbed the pawn on the square hard enough to rock the table. I was so delighted by this move and its accompanying motions that I couldn't repress a smile. I wanted to tip-toe around the board, give Garry a peck on the cheek, let out a small "thankyou," and then tip-toe back. The TV cameras were too intimidating (The event was broadcast to 15 nations.) When I told Garry later, he burst into laughter, "I deserve it!" he exclaimed.

Review my summation after the last diagram. In an instant, my rooks know where to play. The knight on e2 is offered d4, while my queen is unleashed on the g1-a7 diagonal. Stunned by the new-found promise my position offered, I spent several minutes readjusting my thoughts. I was going to win this game!

24.Rb1

The suddenness of White's advantage can be explained as follows. Think of the position as a King's Indian. White is about to break through on the queenside with killing effect. Black's attack on the White king has a long, long way to go. The h2-bishop offers fantastic security.

All of this is true, but Black has a huge trump that is not common in a King's Indian, a powerful e5-knight which gives him tactical opportunities with ...g5-g4, as well as sacrifices against the h3- and f3-pawns. In short, Black's KID attack is not based solely on a pawn-storm but includes dynamic piece play for which his pieces are splendidly posted. (YS, 2010)

24...RacB25-Qa7!

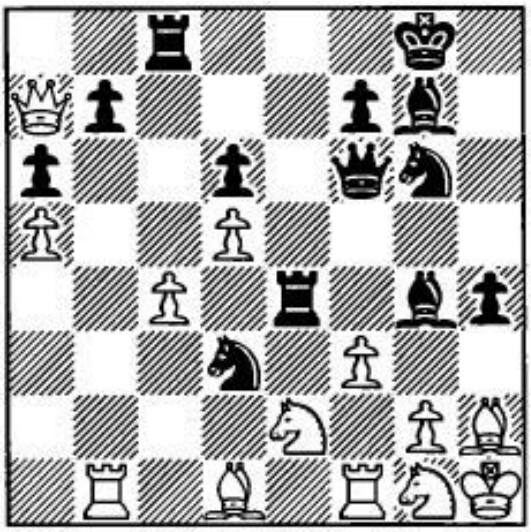
Same move faster was better. I was tormented by the memory of a recent loss to Karpov in Rotterdam. There I had moved my queen far away from the protection of my king. I spent 11 crucial minutes analyzing possible desperation sacrifices with 25...Bxh3, as well as the more fearsome 25...g4?! 26.hxg4 Bxg4 (26...Nxg4 27.Bg1 h3 28.g3 N4e5 [28...h2? 29.Bd4 wins] 29.Nd4 [29.Qxb7!?; 29.Qe3[?] when Black is about to be routed) 27.Ng1!! (If 27.Nd4 Nd3 28.Nce2 h3! 29.g3 Rxe4[allows Black a powerful attack. White's knight on d4 is a juicy target, which makes the f3-pawn vulnerable.) 27...Nd3 28.N3e2 (28.e5!?) 28...Rxe4 (28...c3? 29.Bc2 protects the rook on f1) 29.bxc4 **(Diagram 121)**.

This is the picture I saw when I finally decided on 25.Qa7. Make no mistake, Black is on the critical list. Too many of his units are *en prise*.

Kasparov grew increasingly agitated. The game was slipping away. Launching

himself into the position with increased determination, he began to search for ways to save the game.

My final judgment about the analysis diagram position after 29.bxc4 was too strong. After 29...Re7, Black has a perfectly playable position. (YS, 2010)



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 121. Black to Play

25...Nf4

As good as anything else. Black is impaling himself on White's defenses.

26.bxc4?

As Kasparov indicated afterwards, after the simple 26.Bxf4! gxf4 27.Qxb7, Black is in real trouble. At first, we couldn't find a way for Black to continue, e.g. 27...Ra8 28.bxc4 with two pawns and an attack for White! GM Roman Dzindzichashvili might have said, "White has compensation for Black's two pawns." After considerable consternation, we found 27...Qd8!. Hardly a crowning achievement to Black's attack. Although best, I doubt it could save Black. After 28.Qxa6 (26.b4!?) 28...Ra8 29.Qxd6 Qxa5 30.bxc4, Black is being done.

The reason I didn't capture on f4 is that I felt it was unnecessary. It felt good to keep the bishop on h2! My capture with the rook on b7 would force Black to play his entrapped bishop on d7 to b5. That would allow me to exchange the accursed knight on c3.

Capturing by 26.Bxf4 certainly was best: 26...gxf4 27.Qxb7 when Black should continue 27...Rb8! 28.Qxa6 Ra8 29.Qb6 Reb8 30.Qd4 Rxa5, with adequate compensation for his pawn. (YS, 2010)

I was too critical of the text. It isn't as bad a move as I first thought. Note that after 26.Qxb7 Nxe2 27.Nxe2 Bb5 gives Black good compensation. The "mutual trumps" variation 26.Qxb7 Nxe2 27.Bxe2 Rb8 28.Qxa6 cxb3 29.Qa7 Qe7 30.a6 b2 was by no means clear either. (YS, 2010)

26...Nxc4!

Played in an instant! That should have been a warning. I had expected 26...Rxc4 27.Rxb7 Bc8 (saving the bishop!) 28.Rc7, when Black is merely lost.

It seems that hyperbole was getting the best of me as the game was such an exciting one. With 28...Qd8! Black is fully in the game. (YS, 2010)

27.Rxb7?

A capture made with high hopes. I'm amazed that I could play such a bad move. Once again, I was too sure of my king's defenses. Now was the last opportunity to take on f4. Forced was 27.Bxf4 gxf4 28.Rxb7 Ra8 (28...Ne3 29.Rg1 Bb5 30.Nxb5 axb5 31.Rxb5 Qa1, as indicated by Kasparov, is also possible) 29.Qf2 Bb5 30.Nxb5 axb5 31.Rxb5 Rxa5 32.Rxa5 Nxa5 with good compensatiion - Kasparov.

After I failed to capture on f4, Black has a ferocious attack against my king.

Again, I was too critical of the very reasonable text. My whole career has been spent grabbing pawns – and now I start criticizing myself for doing what comes naturally. After 27.Bxf4 gxf4 28.Rxb7 Ra8 29.Qf2 Bb5? is too cooperative. With 29...Re7! Black has good play on the dark squares. For example, 30.Ba4 Bxa4 31.Rxe7 Qxe7 32.Nxa4 Ne3 33.Rc1 Be5! 34.Nb6 Rb8 looks good for White, but Black's play on the dark-squares has to be taken seriously. His plan of ...Kg8-h7 and ...Rb8-g8 cannot be treated lightly. My e2-knight remains woefully unemployed. (YS, 2010)

27...Nd2 28.Rg1 (Diagram 122)

For the record, I should have noted that parting with my h2-bishop with 28.Bxf4 Nxf1 29.e5 Rxe5 30.Bxe5 Qxe5 is good for Black as he threatens ...Qe5-h2, check and mate. Hence, I have no time to capture the d7-bishop and after 31.Kg1 Ng3! Black has a winning attack. This is the same checkmate pattern that Vladimir Kramnik missed in his 2006 match with *Deep Fritz*. (YS, 2010)

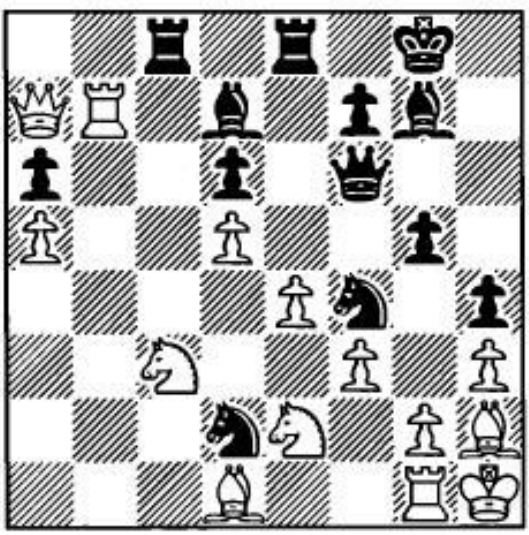


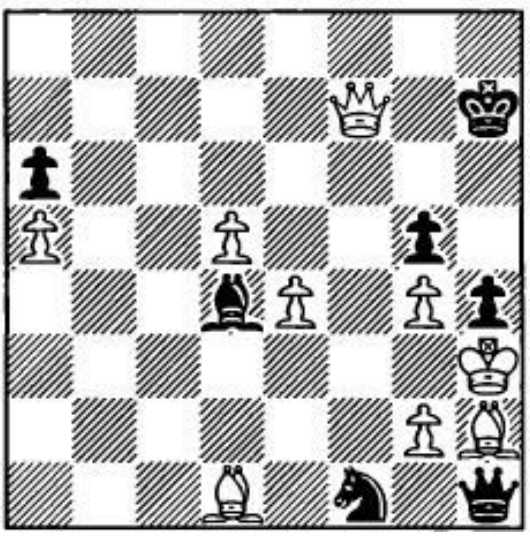
DIAGRAM 122. Black to Play

Here, my confidence in victory was absolute! After all, isn't Black's bishop simply trapped? In fact, the position is harrowinglycomplicated.

28...Nxh3!!

Expected! I had long dismissed the faint hope of 28...Bb5?? 29.Nxb5 axb5 30.Nxf4, winning. The problem was that I thought I had the answer! After several hours of analysis, we came to the conclusion that 28...Nxh3 is the best move. The central theme is the smothered mate on f2. As strange as it sounds, the drawback of the move is that it puts the knight *en prise*! That is, White can always deal with the problem of mate by capturing the knight. My real scare was 28...Nd3!? I have two defenses: 29.Rxd7 and 29.Bc2

When you are defending, you grab as many of your opponent's pieces as quickly as you can! My first reaction was 29.Rxd7 Rxc3 30.Nxc3 (30.Rxd6? Nxe4!! – a recurring knightmare!) 30...Qxc3 31.Bxd6 Bd4 (the d-file is everyone's favorite) 32.Qc7 (32.Qxa6? Bxg1 33.Kxg1 Qd4+ wins) 32...Nf2+ 33.Kh2 Qe3 34.Rd8! (34.Rxf7? Ng4+ 35.hxg4 Q:xg1+ 36.Kh3 Qh1+ 37.Bh2 Be5 wins) 34...Rxd8 35.Q:xd8+ Kh7 36.Qf8 Ng4+ 37.fxg4 Qxg1+ 38.Kh3 Qh1+ 39.Bh2 Nf1 (39...Kg6? 40.Qg8+ Bg7 41.Bc2 is good for White) 40.Qxf7+ **(Diagram 123)**



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 123. Black to Play

– and after dodging all the bullets, the game ends with a perpetual.

A fine piece of analysis for such a lengthy variation. I should have mentioned the improvement 31.Qe3!, a move I had missed which eye-balls the g5-pawn and prevents an immediate ...Bg7-d4 attack. Play would continue 31...Nc4 32.Qe2 Bd4 33.Rf1 Ne3 34.Bxd6 Rc8, with another completely messed-up position. Black's attack is ferocious, and he should have sufficient compensation to draw. (YS, 2010)

My intended defense was the quiet killer 29.Bc2!! Rxc3 30.Nxc3 Qxc3 31.Bxd3 and, funnily enough, Black is just dead: 31...Bd4 32.Qxa6 Bc8 33.Qc6! is a quick

tiip to the dugout. Meanwhile, the bishop desperado 31...Bxh3? rebounds with fatal consequences: 32.gxh3 Qxd3 33.Rxf7, with a decisive attack.

Black is dead only after 31...Bd4?, which loses. With 31...Qxd3! 32.Rxd7 Bd4 (only now this move) 33.Qc7 Bxg1 34.Bxg1 Nf1! Black fights his way to a perpetual check. (YS, 2010)

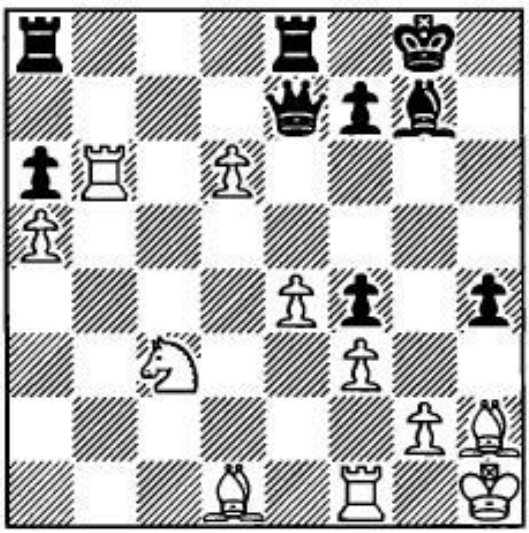
Garry calculated a lot of these variations, but, without enough time to form judgments, he reliedon instinct to guide him to 28...Nxh3, and not 28...Nd3.

And what an amazing instinct as a guide. We should all be so gifted. (YS, 2010)

29.e5?

My intended resource. The structure g2-f3-e4-d5, was supposed to corral Black's knights. They've jumped the fence! I therefore had no reluctance to open the gate. By interfering with Black's attack on c3 I figured to pick up a piece or two.

My best chance to save the game now is 29.Rxd7 Ra8 30.Qb6 Nc4!. The point. My queen cannot protect f2. Now the best move is 31.Rf1!, when we arrive at some unusual middlegame positions: 31...Nxb6 32.Rxd6!? (32.axb6!?) Qe7 33.Rxb6 Nf4 34.Nxf4 gxf4 35.d6 **(Diagram 124)** intending Nc3-d5.



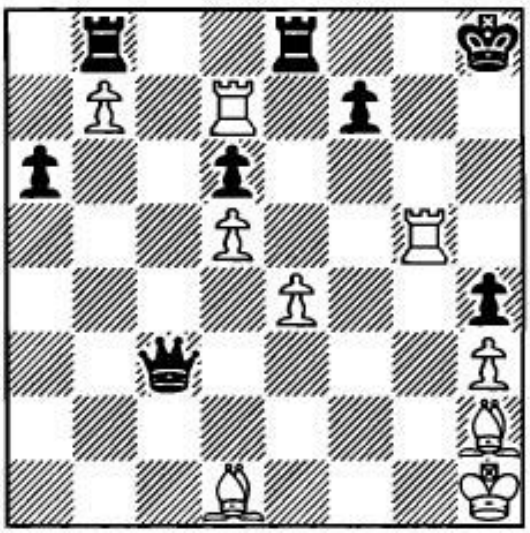
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 124. Black to Play

Although Black has won a queen for two minor pieces, the situation is completely unclear. Lack of time prohibits exhaustive analysis.

The evaluation is indeed unclear. The whole line features an incredible mixture of material imbalances. Just for fun, I decided to flog the computer engine to produce the following amusing line from the analysis diagram: 35...Qf8 36.Nd5 Bd4 37.Bxf4 Bxb6 38.axb6 Red8 39.e5 Qg7 40.Bc2 Kh8 41.Bf5! Rab8 42.g4! when White's three minor pieces and pawns completely dominate Black's queen

and rook. White's last move introduces the idea of Kh1-g2 and Rf1-h1, winning. (YS, 2010)

But we spent most of our analysis time on (29.Rxd7 Ra8 30.Qb6 Nc4!) 31.gxh3 Nxb6 32.axb6 Qxf3+ 33.Rg2 Bxc3 34.b7!? (later it was suggested the pawn might be better left on b6) 34...Rab8 35.Nxc3 Qxc3 36.Rxg5+ Kh8 **(Diagram 125)**.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 125. White to Play

An amazing position. For the queen, White has two bishops and a powerful passed pawn on the seventh. If my king were safer (the h3-pawn on, say, g2), then the position is no doubt a win. But that's the rub. My king is as badly exposed as Black's. Victor Korchnoi, Garry Kasparov, Alexander Nikitin and I spent the plane ride from Skellefteå to Antwerp analyzing these positions. The inescapable conclusion was that, with precise play, Black has good chances to win. Playing precisely in this position is no easy task.

From the last diagram, White has three moves: A) 37.Rxf7, B) 37.Rxd6, and C) 37.Rh5+.

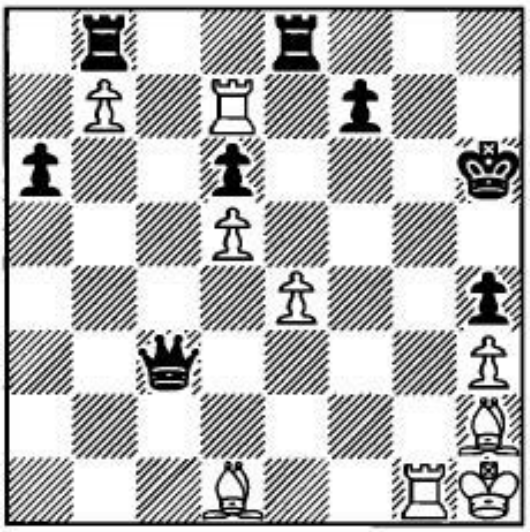
A) 37.Rxf7 looks good, but Black is quicker to the punch: 37...Rxe4! 38.Bf3 (38.Rf3 Re1+ 39.Bg1 Qc1) 38...Qc1+ 39.Rg1 Re1 40.Bg4 Rxg1+ 41.Bxg1 a5 and Black wins in both cases.

The analysis is correct. Black wins after 37.Rxf7, as his attack is too fast. (YS, 2010)

B) 37.Rxd6 threatens mate in one! But after 37...f6 38.Rg1 Rxb7 39.e5 fxe5 40.Rh6+ Kg7 41.Rhg6 Qxh3 42.Bg4 Qd3 43.Be6 Rh5 wins again.

These two variations quickly taught me that the moment Black activates his rooks, it's instant death. I have to keep the files for a moment to get my bishops going.

C) 37.Rh5+ Kg7 38.Rg5+ Kh6 39.Rg1 **(Diagram 126)**.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 126. Black to Play

White is on the verge of an instant win with Bh2-f4+, ...Kh6-h7, and Bd1-g4-f5. For example: 39...Qxh3? 40.Rxd6+ Kh7 41.Bg4 intending Bf5+ winning.

The win is more complicated than I first thought: 39...Qxh3?? 40.Rxd6+ Kh7 41.Bg4 Qe3 42.Bf5+ Kh8 43.Rc6! is the winning move, since 43...Rxb7? 44.Be5+ leads to mate and 43...h3 44.BxhB Qf3+ 45.Kh2 Qf2+ 46.Kxh3 Qxg1 47.Be5+ Kg8 48.Rc8! wins for White. (YS, 2010)

Or 39...Rxe4 40.Rxd6+ Kh7 41.Rd7 Re1 42.Rxf7+ Kh8 43.Bxb8 wins again. Unfortunately, it's Black's move.

Capturing the d6-pawn, while good, isn't strictly necessary. The immediate 40.Rxf7 is good for White. Hence, 39...Rxe4? is also an error. (YS, 2010)

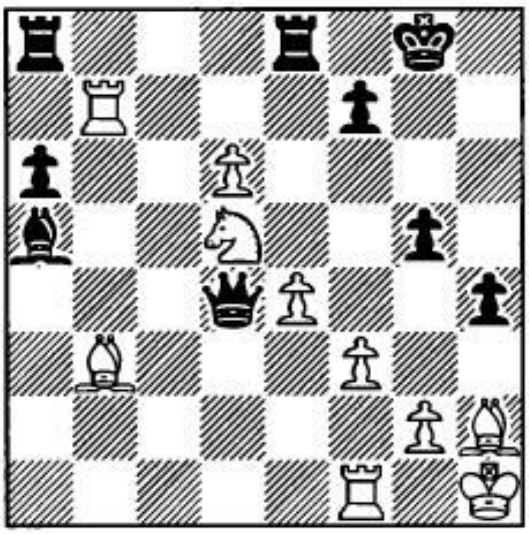
With 39...Rg8!, he dodges a few bullets. Now it's White's turn to panic: 40.Rf1 (40.Bg4 Rxg4! 41.Rxg4 Qxh3 42.Rxd6+ Kh7, or 40.Bf4+ Kh7 41.Rxf7+ Kh8 42.Bg4 Rxg4! 43.hxg4 Kg8! and Black wins either way) 40...Qxh3! (Not a bad move. Black attacks both of White's rooks and threatens mate in one!) 41.Rxd6+ Kh7! (41...Rg6? 42.Rxg6+ fxg6 43.Rf3 wins) 42.Rxf7+ Rg7 and Black is about to win.

A fine piece of analysis. (YS, 2010)

There is a lot of room for either player to go wrong in this variation. Equally clear is that if both sides avoid all the various pitfalls, Black has the better chances. Therefore, White should play not 31.gxh3 but 31.Rf1!, after which the game is simply unclear.

Without question this whole sequence of variations beginning with 29.Rxd7 Ra8 30.Qb6 Nc4 is fascinating and, indeed, 31.Rf1! would be the correct continuation, but it is extremely difficult to give up your queen in a real game when you are unsure of the resulting position. Again, I'm harshly criticizing my moves, and the text is a very reasonable choice. In fact, a darn good move. (YS, 2010)

At the risk of losing you, dear reader, in a thicket of analysis, the question of what is going on in this line has vexed me for many years and I'd like to give the following position a look with fresh eyes: 29.Rxd7 Ra8 30.Qb6 Nc4 31.Rf1 Nxb6 32.Rxd6 Qe7 33.Rxb6 Nf4 34.Nxf4 Bxc3! 35.d6 Qe5 36.Nd5 Qd4 37.Bb3 Bxa5 38.Rb7 **(Diagram 127)**, leading to the following analysis diagram position: (YS, 2010)



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 127. Black to Play

The position is yet another crazy imbalanced one. Bishop and knight for queen, but White's pieces have marvelous coordination. My threats include 39.Ne7+, followed by 40.Nc6 or 40.Bxf7, grabbing an important pawn. My feeling is that a timely ...h4-h3! will rescue Black but there is no certainty about that. My engine reckons that 38...Qb2 is Black's best choice, a near impossible move for humans to make as it walks into a discovered attack from the b7-rook. I too like this move for Black, as I consider counterplay with ...h4-h3 to be vital. The line continues 39.Ne7+ Kh7 (a very difficult choice for Black to make.) 40.Nc6 h3! 41.gxh3 Qe2 42.Rxf7+ Kg6 43.Rg1 Bb6 44.Ne5+ Rxe5 45.Bxe5 Bxg1 46.Rf6+, with a perpetual check. (YS, 2010)

A completely over-the-top, lengthy piece of analysis where both players come up empty-handed after all. (YS, 2010)

29...Rxe5?

Played with a slight pause for reflection. It was here that both Garry and I missed the crucial point. Nikitin's move 29...Qf5! causes White real problems. Black simply defends his bishop – 30.Rxd7? Qxd7 wins. Black now threatens 30...Ra8, when White's queen is short of squares that protect f2. Both players "noticed" this move but rejected it by reflex because of 30.e6!. Black can't play 30...fxe6?, as 31.Rxd7 gains a tempo against the bishop on g7, winning. Nor is

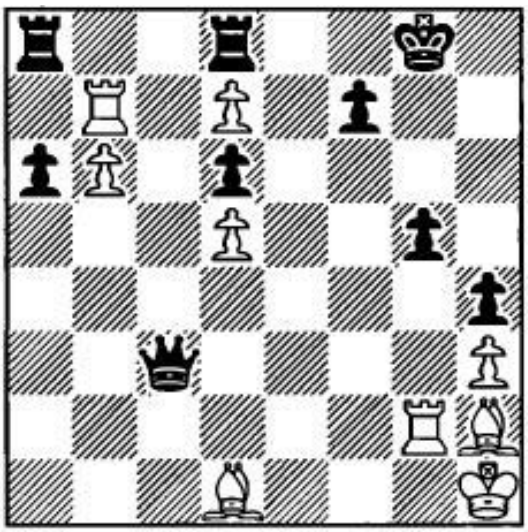
30...Bxe6? 31.dxe6 good for Black. Thus 29...Rxe5 is natural. It is also a mistake. Black had a hidden possibility, namely: 29...Qf5! 30.e6 Ra8! 31.exd7 Red8! (It would be interesting to test a computer to see if it would "think and choose" this variation. What level of "thought depth" would be necessary?)

Precisely 20 years later that is what I am now doing, checking my analysis with a computer. (YS, 2010)

32.Qb6 Nc4 33.gxh3 (33.Rf1!? Nxb6 34.axb6 Nf4 35.Bxf4 gxf4 36.Ba4 with an interesting position that should favor Black).

[Indeed, the position after 36.Ba4 more than favors Black after 36...Bxc3! 37.Nxc3 Qd3 38.Rc1 h3!, and Black is winning. (YS, 2010)]

33...Nxb6 34.axb6 Qxf3+ 35.Rg2 Bxc3 36.Nxc3 Qxc3 **(Diagram 128)**, with positions similar to the previous variation.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 128. White to Play

White's problem here is that the rook on b7 is dreadfully misplaced. As in the previous variation, I'm convinced that White should avoid capturing on h3 and instead try the positions after Rg1-f1. Reader's help!

Dear Yasser: Allow me to come to your rescue. You were unduly influenced by Nikitin's suggestion. After 29...Qf5, 30.Re1 side-steps the smothered mate threat. After 30.Re1 Bxe5 31.Bxe5 Qxe5 32.Ne4 Nxe4 33.fxe4 Bg4 34.Rf1 Bh5 35.Nd4 Bxd1 36.Rfxf7 the game remains balanced. Yours truly, The Chess Engine. (YS, 2010)

Dear Chess Engine, Thank you for your help. I'm relieved to know that my move wasn't so bad after all. Yasser. (YS, 2010)

Dear Yasser: You're very welcome. It's what I do best. Yours truly, The Chess Engine. (YS, 2010)

30.Rxd7 Nxg1 (Diagram 129)

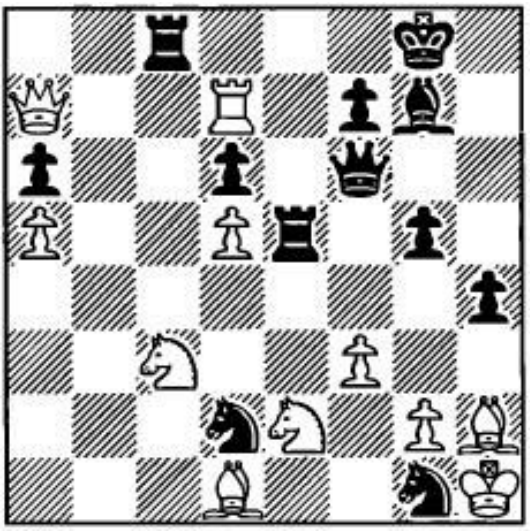


DIAGRAM 129. White to Play

31.Qxg1!

In making this move, I was once again fully confident of victory. Most of the little horrors hovering around my king have disappeared. I'm ahead in material. Things never appeared so rosy; the only drawback was the time control. At least that was mutual.

Unfortunately, my confidence was not fully warranted. White's knights on c3 and e2 step on each other's hooves. My queen is passive. And the f3-pawn can easily be undermined by ...h4-h3. Both players were beginning to tense up. I felt my mind had slipped into high gear and was speeding at 100 miles per hour!

The move I chose was so human. The desire to rush back and cover up my king is an instinct I will take to my grave. The inhuman machine has no such concerns. It prefers 31.Bxe5 Qxe5 32.Kxg1, keeping White's pieces firmly on the attack. After 32...Rxc3 33.Rd8+ Bf8 (33...Kh7?? 34.Qxf7 wins on the spot) 34.Qb8 Kg7 35.Rxf8 Rc1 36.Rg8+ Kh7 37.Rh8+ Kg6 38.Qg8+ Kf6 39.Qd8+ a perpetual is the outcome. (VS, 2010)

31...Ree8?

Unexpected. I hadn't imagined that Garry would jettison his d6-pawn. My calculations had rejected 31...Ree7 32.Rxd6 Qf5 33.Rc6! Rce8 34.d6 Re3 35.Rc7! intending d6-d7. If there is no good sacrifice on f3, the whole variation becomes a rout.

A good line. My instincts were correct, and Black should play 31...Nxf3! 32.gxf3 Qxf3+ 33.Qg2 (the reason I recaptured on g1 with my queen) 33...Qf5! 34.Bxe5 Bxe5 35.Ne4 Qxd7 36.Qxg5+ Kf8 37.Nf4, with yet another brain-teasing position that receives an evaluation of even. It seems that both Garry and I missed 33...Qf5!, for a second time. By hitting the d7-rook Black is fine. Clearly,

my moveof 31.Qxg1 was played precisely to stop ...Nd2xf3 sacrifices. (YS, 2010)

Therefore, at the time it seemed that Black had only one chance – sacrifice the rook on e5 by trying 31...h3! 32.Bxe5 Qxe5, when Black has good compensation for his piece. I didn't doubt that White had the edge, but I did fear that time-pressure would decide the game.

32.Rxd6 Qf5 33.Ba4!

Garry overlooked this grab from the crypt when playing 33...Ree8. I had been dreaming of such a moment ever since 14.Bd1. Black is forced to part with a rook for the septic cleric on d1. As Gary exclaimed afterwards, "I can't believe it. This bishop," he said, holding it up and shaking it at me, "It – it took a WHOLE ROOK!" Black has no choice. If 33...Red8?, then 34.Rxd8 Rxd8 35.Qe3 Nc4 36.Qe4 is an absolute slaughter.

33...Qd3!

A tremendous reaction to the shock of 33.Ba4. Black's queen is omnipotent on d3. My knights are in concrete shoes. The bum's rush d5-d6-d7 is nigh impossible, as the queen stands behind the d-pawn.

34.Bxe8 Rxe8 35.Rc6 h3 (Diagram 130)

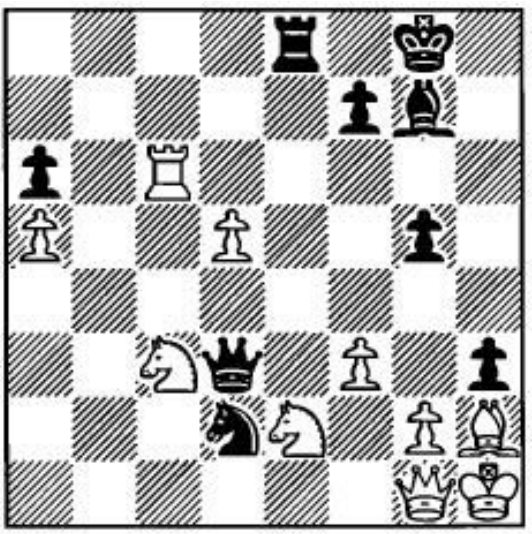


DIAGRAM 130. White to Play

Using his only chance. I've no doubts the position is won for White. Am I not a *full piece* up? Proving the matter, however, is not easy.

36.Bg3?

A strange move. I had calculated a few variations that Black wins with ...Re8-e1+, and anxiously covered the e1-square. Instead, 36.Qf2 begs to be played. White shores up f3 while planning to recapture on g2 with the king. The line that finally motivated 36.Bg3, was 36.gxh3? Bxc3 37.Nxc3 Nxf3 38.Qf2 Re1+ 39.Kg2 Nh4+, and Black wins.

Here a correction is definitely in order. The move 36.gxh3, is, in fact, a very reasonable choice. Since after the missed 36...Bxc3 37.Rxc3! Qxe2 38.Qxg5+, White is winning. For example, 38...Kh7 39.Qh4+ Kg8 40.Bg1! when White protects his king and leaves it up to Black to find a continuation. The extra two pawns help, of course. (YS, 2010)

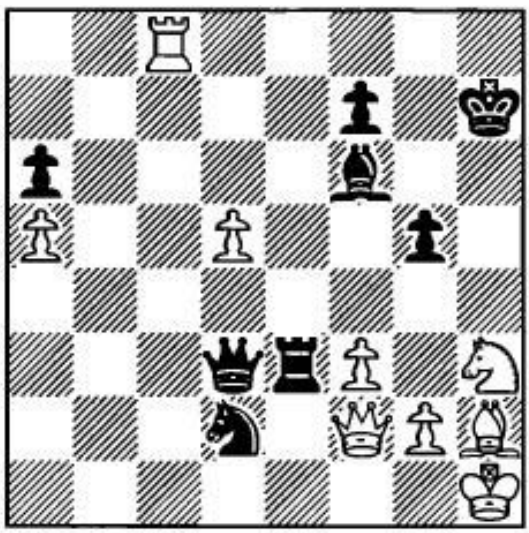
The question is, after 36.Qf2 Re3!, does White win?

White, despite his extra piece, is being smothered! Truly an amazing occurrence. I spent a morose evening in the Etage Disco believing 37.Qg3 to be an immediate killer. Not true. The game remains complicated. For example, 37...hxg2+ 38.Kxg2 Nxf3 39.Rc8+ Kh7 40.Qh3+ Nh4+!. Whoops.

After 36...Re3, let's list White's options first: 37.Nc1; 37.Rc8+, intending Ne2-g1; 37.Bg1; or 37.Rc8+, intending Qf2-g3.

At first sight, 37.Nc1 seems to refute Black's position. However, he has a tactical resource: 37...Re1+! 38.Qxe1 hxg2+ 39.Kxg2 Qxf3+ 40.Kg1 Bd4+, with mate to follow. Such variations led me to 36.Bg3.

The last variation brings up 37.Rc8+. If Black interposes with his bishop, then Ne2-c1 or Bh2-d6 works. So, 37...Kh7 38.Ng1 was my first thought. White returns his extra piece in order to win a pawn and cement his king. But Black retains his initiative: 38...Bxc3 39.Nxh3 Bf6 **(Diagram 131)**.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 131. White to Play

During analysis, we were joined by many GMs, including Nigel Short. Both Nigel and I took White's position. Between us, we lost 20 Swedish kronor to Gary. Black does get plenty of counterplay.

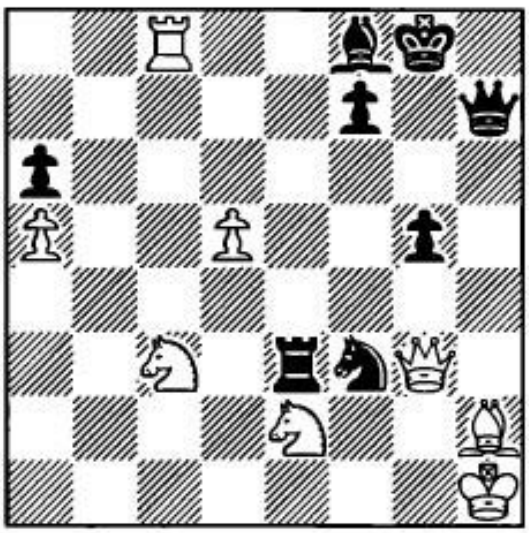
Indeed, it would seem that after 40.d6 Re2 41.Qg3 Qf5 Black has play for the pawn, but I have doubts that it is enough to hold his position. (YS, 2010)

Another seductive variation is 37.Bg1!?, attempting to kick Black back. He is

forced to clarify matters: 37...hxg2+ 38.Qxg2. Black can now capture on f3 in two ways: 38..Nxf3 and 38...Rxf3!. If 38...Nxf3 39.Rc8+ Bf8 (39..Kh7? 40.Qh3+ and Bg1xe3) 40.Qg3 (in order to vacate g2 for the king and deal with the pseudo-threat of ...Qd3-h7+).

[In this variation, the move 40.Qg4, is stronger and is winning for White. (YS, 2010)]

40...Qh7+ (40...Rxe2? 41.Nxe2 Qxe2 42.Qd6 wins, as does 40...Nxg1? 41.Qxg5+, winning the house) 41.Bh2 **(Diagram 131)**.

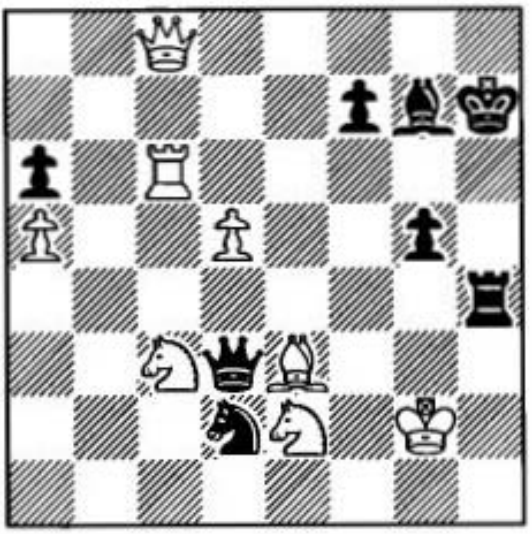


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 132. Black to Play

Black is in big trouble because of the threats of Ne2-g1, Qg3-d6, and Qg3-b8. An important feature of the position is that Black has been forced to interpose his bishop on f8 to block the check. When Black is forced into this passivity, it usually spells the end.

This analysis is correct. The move 38...Nxf3 is a mistake and would lead to a lost position for Black. (YS, 2010)

Best is 38...Rxf3! Now comes 39.Qg4, threatening Rc6-c8+; and after ...Kg8-h7 then Qg4-h5+ winning. (White can't be tricky and try 39.Nc1? Qf5 40.Qxd2 Rh3+ 41.Bh2 Qf1 checkmate.) In these positions, Black's knight on d2 is a little too far from the battle. But, as usual, Kasparov has his resources! Best is 39...Rh3+ 40.Kg2 (40.Bh2 Nf1 41.Kg2 Ne3+, forking my king and queen) 40...Rh4! 41.Qc8+ (White's queen is forced to disappear: 41.Qg3 Qf5 with the twin threats of ...Qf5-f1 checkmate and ...Rh4-g4 winning my queen) 41...Kh7 (Once again, bad is 41...Bf8? 42.Rf6 and White is suddenly winning.) 42.Kf2 (White's king is forced to scurry. If 42.Be3 **(Diagram 133)**



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 133. Black to Play

42...Bxc3!! (This move is so rare that after a time I didn't even realize it was legal! Greedily capturing the piece is bad: 42...Qxe3? 43.Qf5+ Kg8 44.Rc7 ends the game.)

[Not quite. Black still has 44...Rh2+ 45.Kxh2 Qe5+ 46.Ng3 Qxc7, winning back the rook. After 47.Nce2 rough equality is at hand. (YS, 2010)]

42...Bxc3!! 43.Nxc3 Qf1+ 44.Kg3 Qf3 checkmate!) 42...Rf4+!! **(Diagram 134)**.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 134. White to Play

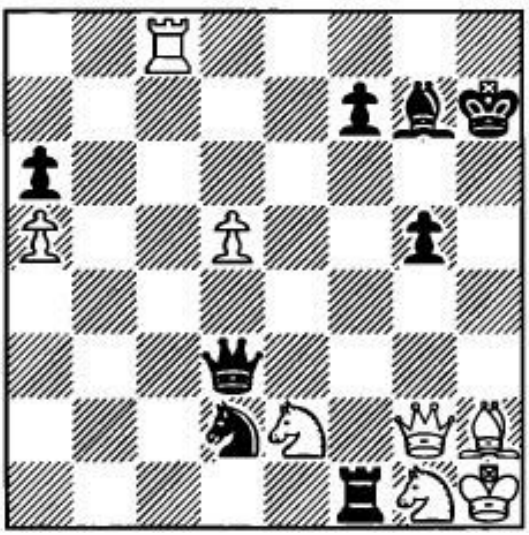
An amusing twin mate arises after 43.Nxf4 Bd4+ 44.Kg2 (44.Ke1 Nf3 check-

mate) 43...Qf3+ 45.Kh2 Nf1 checkmate! So much for the knight on d2 being far from the battle!

All of that proved highly annoying. However, my sense of outrage didn't betray me. Black is lost! How? After many hours of analysis following the World Cup closing ceremonies in Brussels, I found the elusive win. This last variation taught me that White's bishop should stay on h2. Too often, Black has the saving resource ...Re3-h3+. After a short walk around the block, the pieces began to talk to me!

Best is 36.Qf2! Re3 37.Rc8+ Kh7 (37...Bf8? 38.Nc1 wins) 38.Qg3! hxg2+ 39.Qxg2!. Once again, Black has the dual captures on f3: 39...Rxf3 and 39...Nxf3. We analyze each in turn.

39...Rxf3 40.Ng1! Rf1 (the rook is not so dangerous on f1 as on h3!) 41.Ne2! **(Diagram 135)** and White has finally succeeded in bringing his knights into the battle.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 135. Black to Play

The d2-knight is tied to the protection of the f1-rook. White threatens the simple Ne2-g3 followed by Qg2-h3+, or Qg2xg5. Black is lost

This analysis is correct. (YS, 2010)

White has an important option with 41.Qxg5 (instead of 41.Ne2). Both kings are under the hammer, but despite White's extra material, Black has tactical resources: 41...Qh3! (not 41...Bxc3? 42.Qh5+ Kg7 43.Qh8+ Kg6 44.Rg8+ Kf5 45.Qh7+ which skewers Black's queen) 42.Qxd2 Qxc8 43.Qd3+ Qf5, when Black is still kicking. The analysis might continue: 44.Ne4 Re1! 45.Ng5+ (45.Nf6+ Kg6 46.Qg3+ Kxf6 47.Qxe1 Qxd5+) 45...Kg6 46.Qg3 Rxg1+ 47.Bxg1 Qxg5 48.Qxg5+ Kxg5 49.d6 and, although White wins a piece, he doesn't win the game!

This last piece of analysis was wrong. After 46.Qg3? Qxg5! (not 46...Rxg1+)

47.Qxe1 Qxd5!, Black is winning. The move 41.Qxg5 is a mistake and 41.Ne2 is correct and good for White. (YS, 2010)

39...Nxf3 40.Qg4! (angling for Qg4-h5+ leading to mate) 40...Qg6 (40...Kg6? 41.Nf4+, or 40...Rxe2? 41.Qh5 and White wins both times) 41.Qh3+! (Just so. With Black's rook unprotected, Black is forced to interpose his bishop.) 41...Bh6 42.Rc6! f6 (Once again forced. If 42...g4 43.Qxh6+! wins.) 43.Rc7+ Kg8 44.Qd7. Suddenly White's pieces create too many threats. And he is a piece up.

[While this variation is indeed winning for White, the final move 44.Qd7, is not the strongest. The best line is 44.d6 g4 45.Qg3 Nxh2 46.d7!, with a nice tactical win. (YS, 2010)]

I hope your patience hasn't been exhausted by this lengthy analysis. Of course, I could merely have shown the winning variation and stopped. Then, however, I wouldn't have been able to share my agony. Normally I'm content to explain the important strategical and tactical themes of a game. This time I felt an obligation to prove that Garry was busted and that another win had slipped through my fingers.

Back to the game! I was still happily convincing myself that Black was as lost as ever. The goal was simply to reach time control and bag the game.

It is remarkable how close this analysis is to the truth. Indeed, 36.Qf2 Re3 37.Qg3 would lead to a win for me. (YS, 2010)

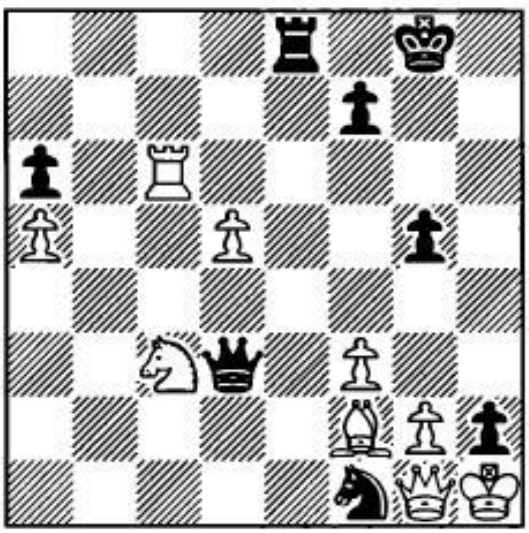
Best of all, however, would have been 36.Qf2 Re3 37.Rc8+ Kh7 38.Bf4!, a move I didn't consider. By sacrificing the bishop I win control over the h4-square. For example, 38...gxf4 39.Qh4+ Bh6 40.Qxh3 – what a relief to capture this aggravating pawn and keep my kingside shield. Now, owing to the threat of Rc8-c6, Black is lost. (YS, 2010)

So, does it really mean that my move, 36.Bg3, tossed away a win and that with 36.Qf2! I could have dealt the World Champion a second loss? Unfortunately, not so fast. It turns out that the seductive 36...Re3 – the move I feared and the move Garry intended – is a mistake that would have lead to a lost game, as we have just seen. After the restrained 36...hxg2+! 37.Qxg2 Nxf3 my engine reckons that Black has adequate compensation for his missing piece and considers the position balanced. Moreover, after 37.Kxg2 Nc4! my engine reckons that White stands only a little better. In the heat of battle, there is no question that Garry would have played 36...Re3?, but that moment is now at a time and a place worlds away. (YS, 2010)

One thing is for sure, my move 36.Bg3 felt wrong at the time I played it and while it doesn't toss away the elusive win, 36.Qf2 was certainly the more natural move and would likely have induced 36...Re3, the move Garry and I considered best. Again, considering our time-pressure the natural human play that seems best to me was 36.Qf2 Re3 37.Rc8+ Kh7 38.Ng1 Bxc3 39.Nxh3 Bf6 40.d6, as the most "reasonable" continuation. (YS, 2010)

36...hxg2+!

A tough decision to make when your opponent is in timetrouble. I had hoped for (even expected) 36...Rxe2 (while winning back material it helps solve my defensive problems and cures the headache of activating the knight on c3!) 37.Nxe2 Qxe2 38.Rc8+! Kh7 39.Rc1!. White plans Qg1-h2, with a likely win. By keeping the position as complicated as possible, Kasparov hopes for a mistake to keep him afloat. In the post-mortem, Garry indicated an amusing possibility: 36...Bxc3? 37.Nxc3 Nf1 38.Bf2? h2! **(Diagram 136)**, winning.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 136. White to Play

Funny, to be sure. When Garry first pointed this shot out, 38.Bf2 looked like such a sensible move!

37.Qxg2 Nxf3 38.d6

Played in order to prevent variations such as 38...Qh7+ 39.Bh2 Be5? 40.d7 Rd8 41.Rc8, winning. The move, however, has a drawback that Garry swiftly exploits. The winning try with 38.Qf2!? g4 39.Nf4 Qh7+ 40.Kg2 Ne1+ 41.Qxe1 Rxe1 42.Bxe1 Be5 looked too dangerous.

Indeed, this line is dangerous for me as Black should play 40...Bd4!, with a strong attack. (YS, 2010)

38...Re6!

An unpleasant surprise. I hadn't reckoned on being mated on the h-file.

It is amazing that while we were both short of time, our minds racing, and the tension at the highest level of our encounters, we both found some excellent moves. (YS, 2010)

39.Qf2 g4 40.Rc8+?

The normal last-move-of-time-control mistake. If White has a win, this move makes it more difficult. The primary feature is the sudden threat of queening the d-pawn. For this threat to retain all the airs of a decisive blow, queening has to

come with check. While happily making the time control, I was blissfully unaware that I was helping Black save the game. If another win exists, it must be 40.Kg2!. Among Black's many possible replies are 40...Ne1+ and 40...Bxc3. Let us look at them in turn.

One move that isn't as good as it looks is 40...Ne1+ 41.Kf1! (If 41.Qxe1 Qf3+ and 42...Qxc6. While White is better, I see no reason to give up the exchange.) Rh6!? 42.Rc8+ Kh7 43.Qxf7 Rf6+ 44.Qxf6 Bxf6 45.Kxe1, winning.

Indeed, while this line does win for me, the move 41...Rh6 is a mistake. Black should return with 41...Nf3, which my engine evaluates as giving a balanced position. (YS, 2010)

The next try is 40...Bxc3 41.Rxc3! (Not 41.Nxc3 Ne1+ 42.Qxe1 Rxe1 43.Rc8+ [escaping the double attack from f3] 43...Kg7 44.Bxe1 Qh3+! 45.Kg1 g3 and Black wins owing to the double threat of ...Qh2+ and ...Qxc8) 41...Qxe2 (41...Qd5 42.Nf4! Nh4+ 43.Kh2 Nf3+ 44.Rxf3 Rh6+ 45.Kg1 Qxf3 46.Qxf3 gxf3 47.Ne6! winning) 42.d7, winning for White.

This analysis is correct. (YS, 2010)

While those two defenses may not be Black's best, the point is that 40.Kg2! makes Black fight for the draw.

Indeed, it is the case that Garry would have to fight to hold the balance. However, the equality does exist and again my last move wasn't a "bad" mistake in the sense that it does not toss away a win. (YS, 2010)

40...Kh7

Now that the time control had been reached, I sank into deep thought and couldn't believe my eyes. My mind had stopped working. I couldn't find a win. After a 37-minute tank, I decided to force a repetition.

41.Nf4?

I spent most of the time looking at 41.Bf4!? Be5. Black now threatens 42...Bxf4 43.Nxf4 Rh6+ 44.Kg2 Ne1+ with at least a perpetual. Also, the d6-pawn is now *en prise*. Unable to find a promising line, I returned to 41.Kg2 and began to appreciate why I should have left Black's king on g8. Kasparov thought the position after 41.Kg2 was now equal after either 41...Bh6 or 41...Rh6. I disagree.

Garry was right. (YS, 2010)

41...Rh6+ 1:58 42.Kg2 Ne1+ 43.Kg1 Nf3+ ½-½

A game of enormous complexity. Once again, thanks to Garry for his graciousness in sharing so much time to analyze the game together.

As a postscript to this game, I would suggest two things, dear reader. Firstly, just look again at the game moves only with their punctuation. Clearly it was a game of high drama, slips, near falls, thunderous blows and excellent recoveries. Then I would suggest looking at the game with an engine. I found it astonishing that the valuations hardly ever change. It is as if the game was in the drawing zone as from the opening move. Truly remarkable.

Before we take our leave of Skellefteå, a few words of reflection. As in Barcelona, the event was magnificently staged. The organizers fulfilled their roles wonderfully, and the event was one of the best I've played in. The press and television gave prominent coverage throughout.

Opening ceremonies are nice, if mostly boring, affairs. Genuine words of welcome and the serious part of the drawing of lots takes place. This is when the players find out the good news of having an extra white or the additional challenge of having an extra black. Organizers have used all types of devices and schemes to help the players find their numbers. Numbers have been placed in a hat, the players are invited to draw boxes, or to pick a statue or scarf. Once, in Mar del Plata, balloons were placed in a pool and attractive divers would retrieve a chosen one. Lajos Portisch wore his swimsuit and insisted on jumping in the pool and fetching his balloon himself. In Skellefteå, a gold-mining province, the organizers had bricks of gold on a table. As the gold bars were stamped with numbers, the players would go and try to lift one and show the number at the bottom. Lajos was the only one able to use one arm. Poor Mischa, on the other hand, was so gaunt and frail that he could barely manage at all and needed help.

During the event, on one of the free days, the organizers arranged whitewater rafting excursions. It was by far one of the most enjoyable free days I've ever had at a chess event, and I think many of my colleagues who joined the excursion felt the same way. We finished off with a sauna and fish barbecue, which was superb.

For the closing ceremony a cast from the musical *Chess* gave a performance, and it too was a tremendous highlight. Everyone was in great spirits. Kasparov a little less so, since Karpov had a superb performance as well, tying for first with Garry. He needed to vent a little annoyance and so in the evening he challenged me to a blitz session for a few Swedish kronor per game. In his words: "I need money for dinner! Let's play."

I laughed and said, "Garry, you may win but you will not eat well." We played late into the night and it was probably the early morning when we finally broke. I paid Garry his winnings, enough for a McDonald's Happy Meal, but all the restaurants were closed. It was a wonderful blitz session.

With the World Cup series finished, the winners were... Garry Kasparov first, Anatoly Karpov second. The events were so extraordinary that it seemed that something was missing, and something was. A match between the two should occur, and it did: the 1990 World Championship held in New York City and Lyons, a FIDE event.

Following the match, all eyes turned to "what's next?" There was the three-year FIDE cycle, of course, with a World Championship match to be scheduled in 1993 and the second GMA World Cup as well. Between the lip and the cup many a drop has slipped...

The Death of the GMA

Despite their rapprochement in Barcelona, Garry was having second thoughts. He eventually determined that the GMA membership should decide between war and peace with FIDE. A GMA members' meeting was held in Murcia, Spain in 1990 and it promised to be a battle royal. Garry was campaigning strongly for war, while Bessel and most of the GMA Board wanted the Agreement to be ratified. I recall that Carol Jarecki and Viswanathan Anand (!) were to tabulate the votes.

Prior to the casting of votes, I had introduced a motion to have the question referred to a committee. My motion was rejected. In my heart I just knew that Garry would lose the vote and that if he did, he would see it as a rejection of his leadership and feel compelled to step down from his position as the President of the GMA. Such a severe ripple of events would mean, in my view, the end of the GMA. The stakes were high and I expressed my deepest misgivings to Bessel Kok. Bessel reassured me that both he and Garry had made a strong pact, and that regardless of the outcome they would both continue to work together for the GMA and respect the vote of the membership. He was confident that the GMA would survive. I openly expressed concern that it would not.

Garry lost the vote 65½-60½ with a hugely important asterisk: the Soviet grandmasters strongly supported his position, but as the GMA statutes limited the votes from any one nation to 25% of the total, the Soviet votes were reduced. (In my GMA newsletters the actual number of reduced votes is not mentioned.) The members endorsed the Agreement for peace with FIDE. After the result had been declared, Garry gave a rambling speech and sat down. I was seated in the audience looking at the podium, and Nigel Short, also in the audience, stood up and asked a simple question: "Garry, does this mean you resign from the GMA Board?"

Garry thought for a moment, took hold of a microphone and said, "Yes, it does!" He then left the stage, walked down to the audience, sat down right next to me and said, "Yasser. This is all *your* fault!"

Oh dear. Quite a charge to make and perhaps a silly one, as there were so many dynamics at play. In truth, though, Garry's charge was a direct bull's-eye. I wanted peace and I voted in favor of ratifying the agreement. Many colleagues asked me my opinion, and I swayed their vote in favor of peace as well. Had I supported Garry with my vote, a few proxies and, more importantly, with public support for Garry's position, he would have won the vote handily and would have had his FIDE war. All of which assumes that other dynamics remained constant, of course. Who knows what might have happened in that case?

To clarify my own view, I could not fathom why Garry wanted to *kill* the FIDE organization. In truth, as you will read in Chapter 11, FIDE does some mighty important work. Garry's beef was with the personalities of the FIDE leadership. Specifically, his anger towards the FIDE President Florencio Campomanes. Garry was taking a personal vendetta too far.

This episode is, in many ways, a prime example of Garry's personality. His is a binary one in the style of the former American President George W. Bush, Junior: you are with me or against me. Victory or defeat. Black or white. For Garry, there was no in-between, and no shades of grey existed. He demanded total support from those on his side. As an only child, he was used to getting his way and most often did. In Garry's world, there were supporters and members of the opposition. He was a rebel railing against the system, it stands to reason that the opposition was in the majority, and that to achieve his goals Garry would have to work diligently to overcome the opposition. Because I had voted against Garry in Murcia, I was now in his dog-house, consigned to those who opposed him.

Garry's resignation from the GMA Board and its Presidential function didn't necessarily mean the end of the GMA World Cup. Would Garry continue to play? In a famous meeting in a Chinese restaurant, he agreed to play if he was paid a handsome $100,000 stipend. No player received any honorarium, as the prize monies were quite generous. Such a demand changed the dynamics of the World Cup prizes. Nevertheless, Bessel agreed, and a Chinese waiter witnessed a napkin agreement that the three signed together. Afterwards, Garry reconsidered his position and withdrew as a player in the second World Cup event. The first one took place in Reykjavik, Iceland, and with Garry's withdrawal as a player the World Cup events were canceled, and soon thereafter the GMA collapsed. Garry would say of his creation, "The GMA was worse than FIDE."

With the collapse of the GMA in 1991-92, the only game left in town was the FIDE World Championship cycle, as well as the many private tournaments. The World Championship title remained the great prize, and with the collapse of the GMA, it was still firmly, for the time being, with FIDE.

The Birth of the PCA

In 1993 the spell of "Kasparov first and Karpov second" was broken. A new Challenger emerged, Nigel Short of the UK. He defeated Anatoly in the Candidates' Final to become the first Western challenger since Bobby Fischer. A fantastic achievement. They would play together where? As rumors of various bids started circulating, both players had high hopes of a record-breaking purse. There were strong reasons why the players were so optimistic...

Astonishing one and all, Bobby Fischer came out of retirement in 1992 to play his rival Boris Spassky in Sveti Stefan and Belgrade, Yugoslavia. The match featured the Steinitz rules of the first to win ten games. The players fought for an astonishing prize fund of five million dollars. With no FIDE tax either. A new record for World Championship prize money was set. For the first time in ages, Garry wasn't the primary focus of the chess spotlight.

When asked his opinion about the match in Yugoslavia at a press conference in Linares, Spain, Garry, not for the first or last time, put his foot firmly in his mouth. He degraded the players, explaining that Fischer's play was "poor" and

that the 11th World Champion was a legend who was from the "past" and that Bobby risked injuring his legacy. Yes, continued the journalist, but wasn't Bobby contesting a World Championship match? Not at all, retorted Kasparov. The match in Yugoslavia was merely an "exhibition match." Very well, responded the journalist. But how were they, mere journalists, to tell the difference between a "World Championship match" and an "exhibition match" to their public? Garry let him know precisely how: "Because of the money!" Oh, yeah. The money. *That* makes the difference.

Bobby's five million dollar exhibition match set the bar enormously high. In 1990, Kasparov had played for a three-million dollar purse. Could his 1993 match versus Nigel top that figure? If not, would Garry be the one playing an "exhibition match?"

Where would such a princely sum come from? Would Ted Fields, the sponsor of the NYC half of the 1990 match, make a bid from Hollywood? Would a Sheikh from the Middle East step forwards? Perhaps one of the emerging oligarchs from Russia? Or would a city find the funds within its marketing budget and present its credentials on a world stage as happened with Seville? Rumors flew, and we were all on the edge of our seats. No more so than the players.

While playing in Monaco, at one of the early Melody Amber tournaments, I posed the question directly to Nigel himself. While not having a clear idea either, he was very buoyant about a bid from Manchester. He had met with representatives of the city, and a lofty discussion of two million pounds had definitely gotten his attention.

Then came the day when the bids at the FIDE offices were announced. Manchester had won with a one million, two hundred thousand pound offer. The players were crestfallen, and in particular Nigel himself. He was convinced that Campomanes had deliberately sabotaged the bid by allocating the money to be spent in other parts of the organizing budget and away from the prize fund itself. Angry and disappointed, Nigel gave Garry a call: "Would you like to play your match outside the auspices of FIDE?" he asked. My goodness, would he ever! Garry leapt at the opportunity. "Great! Let's create our own organization!"

As Garry explained it himself, in Nigel he saw the perfect partner. The "best representative from the West," teaming up with himself, the best representative from the East. What could go wrong? Garry worked with a NYC-based attorney, Robert Rice, to found the Professional Chess Association (PCA). The PCA would be the counterweight to FIDE that Garry had always wanted. At last he could put his dream of a "professional commercially successful" organization together. FIDE would be swept away. That was the plan.

FIDE's President Florencio Campomanes was beside himself with grief, anger, shock and disgust. After all, it was the FIDE cycle that had "created these stars" and now the ingrates had run off together, leaving FIDE in the lurch. FIDE depended upon the 20 percent tax from the World Championship prize fund for its

general administration expenses. FIDE sent both players an agreement to be signed by a certain deadline, or else Garry Kasparov would lose his status as "Champion" and Nigel Short would lose his status as "Challenger." Both players allowed the deadline to lapse, and FIDE forfeited them both. As Karpov was the player who lost to Nigel in the Candidates' Final, he was invited to compete in a new 1993 FIDE World Championship match. As Jan Timman was defeated by Nigel Short in the Candidates' Semi-Finals, he was invited to compete against Anatoly Karpov for the FIDE title. There would be two World Championship matches held in 1993. "Garry's War" was on.

The PCA World Championship match between Kasparov and Short was staged in London for a prize fund of one million pounds. The FIDE World Championship was split between Holland and Indonesia with a one million dollar prize fund ($800,000 went to the players). Both organizations had great difficulties staging their events, and particularly FIDE. At one time Campomanes announced that Oman would host half the Karpov-Timman match and promised a much greater purse than did London. He wanted to show the two errant lads who was the boss. He overplayed his hand, however, as the Oman bid fell through.

Kasparov won his match against Short, while Karpov again became the FIDE World Champion. The chess world was split and would remain so for over a decade.

The Great Schism

As any professional player can attest, the chess world is, on the one hand, remarkably small – almost like a fraternity – yet on the other hand chess has tens of millions of people around the world who play the game and follow the important events. Fragmented is one word that comes to mind. Chaotic is another. Having a single organization, FIDE, is a way of helping to control the chaos, but only to a degree, as it isn't the most professional of groups... Having two organizations both claiming to hold the World Championship title led the public into a state of absolute confusion. Comparisons were made to the boxing and wrestling "world" federations. Sponsors threatened to walk unless the chess world put its house in order.

In 1994, FIDE was having trouble with the staging of its two-yearly Olympiad event. In fact, the original bid collapsed. Following the difficulties it had in organizing the FIDE 1993 World Championship match, a failed Olympiad in 1994 could have been the death-knell for FIDE. In this dark moment of crisis it would need a savior. It found one: Garry Kasparov. Surprise!

The Olympiads are huge, costly affairs. Given that there are over one hundred Men's and Women's teams, it takes an army of organizers, directors and arbiters to stage the three-week affair. Toss in the FIDE General Assembly meeting and the need for interpreters as well, and it is obvious that years of careful planning are required. Garry had found sponsors in Moscow, and as the city has just such

an army of organizers, directors and arbiters at the ready, it was able to pull off a last-minute enormous effort. Garry was seeking a rapprochement, and FIDE was grateful.

Garry learned the lessons of his war quickly, coming to a crystal-clear understanding: a chess war was bad for sponsors, bad for players, bad for journalists and bad for the public too. His status as "Champion" was being questioned even while he reigned supreme on the rating list. Making the situation even cloudier, Anatoly Karpov had one of the most remarkable tournaments of his illustrious career, winning the 1994 Linares event with a massive tournament performance rating (TPR) that exceeded Garry's actual rating. Garry was second in the field. At one time Garry was quoted as saying, "Linares separates the men from the boys." Now his rival had won undisputed first. When asked if his Linares victory meant that he was the "true" World Champion, Anatoly merely said, "Let us say I am the best player of the moment."

The 1994 Moscow Olympiad also happened to be an election year for the FIDE Presidency. Garry threw his support behind Campomanes! He convinced him to run for a fourth consecutive term. Previously, Campomanes had let it be known he would not be seeking re-election. Now, with Garry's prompting, he decided at the last moment to toss his hat into the ring. It proved to be the most tumultuous election in the FIDE history, and skullduggery was rampant. My own federation, the USCF, accepted a bribe, a free simultaneous exhibition from Kasparov, to change its vote. The USCF delegate, Faneuil Adams, resigned his position in disgust. Campomanes won.

The standing joke of the time was that FIDE changed its motto from "We are one family" ("Gens Una Sumus") to "We are one man" When I reported on the 1994 election in the pages of *Inside Chess*, one reader accused me of reporting a scandalous lie. Kasparov supporters were disbelieving.

Of course, for all his efforts in staging the 1994 FIDE Olympiad, Garry had his price. He wanted the title back. As FIDE couldn't merely forfeit Anatoly and proclaim Garry champion, a new match would have to be staged. Fair enough. But herein was a price that couldn't be met, as in a match between the two players, Anatoly, as the FIDE World Champion, would be *defending* the title crown and, as the defending champion, he would receive draw odds. Garry's position was that he would not give draw-odds to his opponent and wanted a match between "equals." He didn't want to pay any price for having absconded to play his match versus Nigel Short. FIDE's Statutes were very clear, and no compromise was possible.

Once more we can openly wonder "what if?" What if Garry had agreed to play a new match versus Anatoly as a Challenger? I have no doubt he would have won, even ceding draw-odds. The split would have been healed and the chess world could have returned to its low-key internecine squabbles. Sponsors would have returned, lessons would have been learned, and a bright future might have

been possible. What happened was that the PCA and the FIDE battled one another for a shrinking base of sponsors.

Before leaving the 1994 Moscow Olympiad, we should note that there were some very strange things buzzing around. As host, Russia had the chance to field not one but two teams. As the FIDE World Champion, Anatoly Karpov was certainly expected to play. Perhaps he would even lead his "own" team, "Russia B," while Garry Kasparov would lead "Russia A?" Garry was having none of it, and Anatoly was given a choice, to play for the Russia A team behind Garry or not to play at all. Anatoly refused to play behind Garry in the line-up. (As previously mentioned, only a totalitarian State could put these men on the same team.)

So Anatoly didn't play in Moscow, but this is where things got truly ridiculous: he was barred from the hotel as a visitor. How bizarre was that? The FIDE Chess Olympiad was being played in the home city of the FIDE World Champion and he wasn't allowed to visit an official FIDE event? When did Anatoly become a Persona Non Grata?

The 1994 FIDE election of Campomanes had not gone down at all well with the delegates. There had been a great deal of bad behavior. Here, I'm reminded of the quip by the comedian Lily Tomlin: "I believe diapers and politicians should be changed often and for the same reasons."

Following the Olympiad, many of FIDE's Western delegates were in open revolt. At the next FIDE General Assembly meeting, slated for Paris in 1995, one agenda item would call for President Campomanes to resign. Another problem had to be faced: the 1993 FIDE World Championship match prize-fund had been a hardship to raise; where would the next sponsor come from? Serendipity to the rescue once more.

The President of the autonomous Republic of Kalmykia, Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, had been invited to attend the 1995 FIDE General Assembly in Paris as a guest. As a great lover of chess and a master-strength player, he had happily accepted the invitation. He was also a friend of Kasparov's. In 1990, a diamond-studded "Korloff" trophy had been presented to Kasparov as the winner of the World Championship match. Before the match both players agreed that the winner would allow the handsome trophy to be auctioned off, with the money going to a fund for the victims of a devastating earthquake in Armenia. The winning bidder was none-other than Kirsan.

At the 1995 General Assembly meeting in Paris, Campomanes agreed that he would step down as President and was offered the place of Chairman, a role that was not spelled out in the FIDE Statutes. He accepted. Kirsan was asked if he would like to run for the now-vacated seat of the FIDE Presidency. He did and won in a landslide vote. Could he reconcile the world of chess and heal the split? He was well-equipped to pull off such a coup – he was rich and on friendly terms with both Kasparov and Karpov.

Before healing the split, FIDE had first to complete the existing cycle. In 1996,

Kirsan played host to the FIDE World Championship match in Elista, the capital of Kalmykia. Karpov's challenger was the American Gata Kamsky. Karpov successfully retained his title in a well-contested match.

On the other side of the split, the PCA World Championship match was held in New York City. Kasparov's Challenger was the Indian Grandmaster Viswanathan Anand. Again, in a well-fought match Kasparov retained his title, after initially falling behind. The stage was once more set for a grand reconciliation. The chess world now wanted to know, when the two world champions, Kasparov and Karpov, would face off and contest a sixth match and heal the split.

Kirsan had his own ideas about how to do that. His misfortune was that he had the means to put his own policies in motion. Taking a page from the world of tennis, Kirsan conceived a three-week, 128-player knock-out World Championship tournament to decide the World Championship title. The idea was to have two "Classical" game mini-matches all the way up to the semi-final matches, which would be four games long, followed by a Championship match of six games. Both Kasparov and Karpov would be seeded into the semi-finals, so that the 128 players would have to play one extra match to win the event. Kirsan put up a five million dollar prize-fund, and this staggering sum had the whole chess world aflutter.

To suggest that a 128-player knock-out event turned the idea of prestigious "title matches" upside down doesn't do the expression justice. The event is completely ill-suited for determining the highest title. In two-game matches any grandmaster has a chance to win against any other – it is precisely thanks to lengthy 24-game matches that the better player can be clearly determined. Furthermore, in case of a 1-1 tie, or a tie in any match, the players would play two games of 15 minutes each with bonus seconds for each move made; and in case of a further 1-1 tie two blitz games of five minutes; *then*, if the tie was still not broken, a sudden-death Armageddon game where White had six minutes to Black's five minutes and Black had draw odds. The system gave anyplayer in the top 100 a reasonable chance of becoming World Champion.

Allow me to spell out the absurdity of the new rules. Suppose I were to play a two-game match with Kasparov. On paper or by rating he would be a clear favorite. I might start with the White pieces and a draw might suit Kasparov. In the second game he would have White and would want to win in order to avoid playing rapid and blitz tie-breaker games. If he were to slip and over-press he might lose and be out of the competition in an instant. To make a poor analogy, it would be like two professional snooker players playing two frames against one another. In case of a tie, the two would play a "black ball" to see who would advance to the next round. It would be an insufficient test of skill. Most of the top snooker players can easily make a century break. Let me make it even simpler: suppose that Kasparov and I were to play a two-game match; he might be a 2:1 favorite. If we play three matches, according to the odds I should win one of them.

How would Garry Kasparov react to Kirsan's new plan? Vehemently opposed! He put the matter succinctly: the FIDE World Championship was being debased into a "lottery" he would declare. Which was precisely Kirsan's point. Any qualified player had a chance to win. Kasparov was having nothing to do with the event, which suited Anatoly perfectly well. Kirsan had offered to seed both players into the big-money semi-finals. Should either player decline to play, then the other would be seeded directly into the *final* match. Thus, Anatoly would receive yet another juicy advantage from FIDE, a berth into the final match of a 128-player knock-out event. Again, in British understatement, "useful." Better still, his opponent, having just won seven brutal nerve-wracking mini-matches, would have to fly from Groningen, Holland, the site of the event, to Lausanne, Switzerland to play the final match against a well-rested, well-prepared Champion. The rules were grossly unfair to the Challenger.

With the extraordinary wealth of its new President, the fortunes of FIDE took a remarkable turn for the better. No longer an organization clawing for every pfennig in the budget, it was now on easy street. It had found a sponsor and President together in one package. The fortunes of the PCA, on the other hand, soon deteriorated. I'm not sure when it was quietly put to rest. Its Directorships, of Kasparov and Short, unwound as Nigel stepped down, and it seemed to drift towards the chess graveyard – which is quite full of such headstones. The result was that after 1995 Garry Kasparov, *the people's champion*, didn't defend his title for five long years. However, unlike Fischer, who stopped playing in 1972 and stopped a second time in 1992, Kasparov remained as active as ever. He reigned atop the ratings list and remained the dominant player of his time.

Chapter Nine

Anatoly Karpov, Post-1985

Perhaps I'm being unkind to Anatoly, but at our meeting at the SWIFT tournament in Brussels in 1986, when he was no longer the World Champion, he had become less imperial. He was a far more approachable, talkative fellow. He no longer carried the burdens that came with the precious title, and the symptoms of Championitis receded. Anatoly could relax more.

In the mid-1980s a new sponsor appeared on the scene, Bessel Kok. He went on to have an illustrious hand in elevating chess. The SWIFT tournament justly gained a reputation as one of the finest events in the world. Bessel was a marvelous host and at all times tried his best to make the players feel warm and welcome. As a small example, following the 1988 SWIFT tournament Bessel invited Mikhail Tal to stay on and sent him to hospital for a thorough examination and proper treatment. Mischa was very appreciative and this likely added years to his life.

At the time of the next duel, I had expanded my opening defensive repertoire to include the Petroff Defense as Black. This game landed a strong blow squarely to my jaw, and the Petroff Defense lost much of its sparkle for me thereafter. How I regret I didn't essay the French Defense from our first encounter.

In annotating this game I will also liberally quote Jan Timman from his excellent book *Power Chess with Pieces*. The subtitle is "The Ultimate Guide to the Bishop Pair & Strong Knights."

This SWIFT tournament was one of the first events on the élite circuit to feature a six-hour session of 40 moves in two hours and 20 moves in one hour, followed by adjournment. The older time-control was 40 moves in two and a half hours, followed by an adjournment, a five-hour session. Upon resumption the time-controls were 16 moves per hour per player. So a faster tempo and a longer session. There was some grumbling amongst the players, including Anatoly, about the faster tempo. With the advance of chess engines, adjournments would

soon be done away with altogether. An "advance" that I deeply regret as I learned so much about chess and endgames in particular thanks precisely to adjournments.

Every player has had dramatic, painful losses. Most certainly this book contains many of mine, and the following game resonates deeply. It takes the whole enchilada, taco and piñata as well. To understand why, just think of the following: it was a big game and I had built myself up for it, preparing at some length; Anatoly fell right into my preparation. Then I was comprehensively outplayed and lost. Anatoly slipped twice, allowing me back into the game. I struggled like mad and when on the brink of a draw blundered decisively just before the secondary time-control. Then, following a two-day adjournment, I studied the position as deeply as I was able, only to discover that my analysis was all a very large pile of manure. It was an exhausting effort for which a big fat zero appeared on the crosstable with no acknowledgment for all my suffering. In the poetic words of a Caliph sponsor of Al-Suli which I adapt to the situation, "My rose-water turned to urine."

Anatoly Karpov-Yasser Seirawan
Brussels, 1986
Petroff Defense

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Nxe5

In the other main line of the Petroff, 3.d4 Nxe4 4.Bd3 d5 5.Nxe5 Nd7 6.Nxd7!?, I've always liked the quote of Bent Larsen to describe White's sixth move "I don't play such moves." Indeed, it seems quite strange to hop three times with a knight in the opening, in order to trade it for a piece that has just developed. Such are the vagaries of opening theory.

3...d6 4.Nf3 Nxe4 5.d4 d5

Timman makes a mind-twisting observation at this juncture: "Remarkably enough, this position could also have arisen with reversed colors from the Exchange Variation of the French, viz. after 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.Nf3 Nf6, and now 5.Ne5, and although this knight jump doesn't look all that bad, White would have a real battle on his hands just to equalize."

6.Bd3 Be7 7.0-0 Nc6 8.c4 Nb4 9.Be2 Be6 10.Nc3 0-0 11.Be3

At the time, all these moves could best be described as main-line theory. Black now has reasonable continuations such as 11...Bf5 and 11...Bf6, but I was drawn to a far different approach.

11...f5!? (Diagram 27)

This was my novelty. It is not the kind of weakening move that one should make lightly. The e5-square is now a permanent hole, but I was attracted to a long-term idea of creating a kingside initiative.

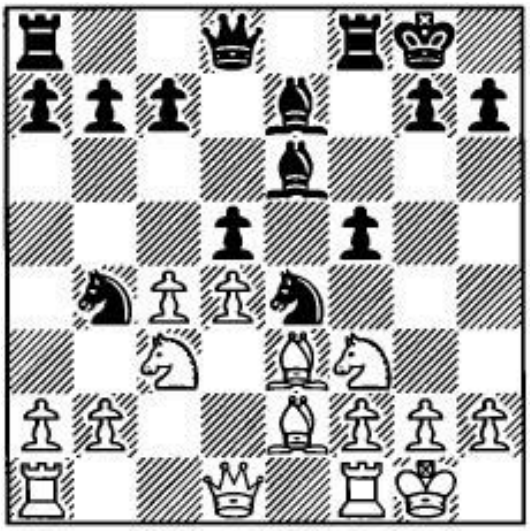


DIAGRAM 137. White to Play

12.a3!

An important little move to clarify the situation in the center. Now that the e4-knight is well protected, the c4-pawn was threatened with capture. The trade 12.cxd5?! Nxd5 13.Nxe4 fxe4 14.Ne5 Nxe3 15.fxe3 Rxf1+ 16.Qxf1 Bg5 is helpful for Black as he is able to resolve the question of what his b4-knight is doing.

A highly intriguing position occurs after 12.c5!? f4 13.Bc1 Nc6 14.Qb3 Ng5 15.Rd1 Qd7 16.Qxb7!? Nxf3+ 17.Bxf3 Rab8 18.Qa6 Bf619.Ne2 g5 20.h3 Rb4! 21.a3 Rxd4!. I wanted to play this crazy sacrificial line against someone but never found a victim. Again, it was these types of kingside initiatives that made 11...f5 an attractive option. Positionally, the line is a little dodgy for Black but I was intrigued by the line's potential – as this note shows it is very easy for White to play natural moves and fall into an awkward position.

12...Nxc3

I have to avoid 12...Nc6? 13.Nxd5 Bxd5 14.cxd5 Qxd5 15.Rc1, when I don't like Black's position one bit.

13.bxc3 Nc614.Qa4!?

An important tactical justification for Black's play occurs after the direct 14.cxd5 Bxd5 15.c4 Bxf3 16.Bxf3 f4! 17.Bd5+ Kh8 18.Bc1 Nxd4 19.Rb1 Bc5! 20.Bb2?! Qf6, a line that I kept triple-checking in my preparations to be sure I hadn't missed something dire.

The text, on the other hand, keeps the central tension alive and forces Black to resolve the situation. I was still comfortably in my preparation and thought I had found an equalizing solution.

14...f4 15.Bd2

The move I expected. Afterwards a good argument was made for 15.Bc1, the

idea being to keep the d2-square free for Nf3-d2-e4 and to make the alignment Bc1-b2 and c3-c4 possible, when the dark-squared bishop is well posted on the long diagonal. Personally, I've always enjoyed driving my opponent's pieces backwards. How far back they go is his choice.

15...Kh8 16.Rab1 Rb8 17.Rfe1dxc4

Perhaps it is premature to resolve the tension, as 17...a6!? is an interesting option. If White continues 18.Bd3!? dxc4 19.Bxc4 Bg4, we have transposed into the game where the move ...a7-a6, would have been very useful. I was concerned about 17...a6 18.c5!? when my bishop has been denied use of the d6-square.

18.Bxc4 Bg4 19.Be2 Bd6

A natural move which will give me cause for regret. In a later game, M.Rohde-Y.Seirawan, played at the 1986 US Championship in Estes Park, I first inserted 19...a6!?, as an attempted improvement. That game continued 19... a6 20.h3 Bh5 21.Ng5 (to take advantage of my ...Be7-d6 omission) 21...Bxe2! (not 21...Bxg5? 22.Bxh5 f3 23.Bxg5 Qxg5 24.Bxf3! Rxf3 25.Qxc6!, which is a cute trick that takes advantage of my back-rank) 22.Ne6 Qd5 23.Rxe2 f3! 24.Ree1? (24.Ree3 is forced) 24...fxg2 25.Nxf8 Rxf8 26.Qd1 Qf5 27.Kxg2 Qxf2+ 28.Kh1 Rf3, and I went on to win.

20.h3 Bh5 (Diagram 138)

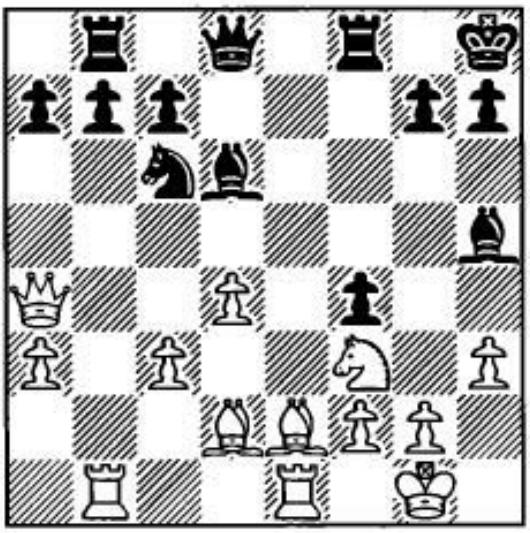


DIAGRAM 138. White to Play

One can only prepare so much and for so far. Here is where my preparation stopped, as I was satisfied with the position. How to sum up the opening struggle? White has nice central pawns, good piece development and a safe king. That's the good news. The bad news is that the d2-bishop isn't a very happy camper. In my mind's eye I thought my development reasonable, and my king was even a tad safer. I anticipated being able to complete my development by

...Qd8-f6, and I could face the future with confiidence. I have the potential for a kingsIde pawn-storm and who knows what dangers may lurk there? Let me just make one further point: when facing a "giant" it is vital that you go prepared with an idea for the game, as if you are so lucky as to catch one inyour preparation it gives you a very pleasant feeling indeed.

21.Rb5!

Neither before the game nor at the board did this move occur to me. A kindof blind-spot if you will. While such a maneuver is common in many lines of the Petroff itjust failed to register as a possibility. It really is a very goodmove beca use it disrupts my hoped-for kingside initiative and simultaneously makes the hop Nf3-g5 playable. It is what could be described as an irksome move that spoils my hopes of creatiing an initiative.

21....Be8?

An over-reaction to the threat of capturing the h5-bishop. I saw ghosts after 21...Bg6 22.Ng5!? Re8 23.Qc4 Qf6 24.Bd3, when I feared White would be in time to reposition his f3-knight nicely to either the e6- or e4-squares. This simply isn't the case, as after 24...Rxe1+ 25.Bxe1 a6! 26.Bxg6 axb5 27.Nf7+ Kg8 White should take the perpetual check by 28.Nh6+, as his queen is *en prise*. A fact that I simply missed. I saw 28.Nxd6+??, capturing a bishop with check, and thought I would be lost. Clearly, with 28...bxc4, capturing White's queen, the tables are turned.

Just to complete the above line, after 28.Nh6+ Kf8!? 29.Qg8+ Ke7 30.Qxh7 White has pawn and bishop for the exchange with myking crawling around. I'd judge the position as "balanced," but in a practical game it is easier to play White. For example, 30...Rf8 (in order to make a run to the queenside with my king) 31.f3 Kd7 32.Ng4 Qe6 33.Bf2 leaves me with a g7-pawn to worry about. For this reason I would have allowed the perpetual if I had realized that White's queen was attacked.

In his annotations in *Informant* 41, Anatoly said that after 21...Bg6 22.c4 White has a big advantage and stopped his analysis. I disagree. It seems to me that 21...Bg6 was my best move, and that Black has an easy game after 22.c4 a6! 23.Rb2 (the only square, as 23.Rb1 or 23.Rb3 Bc2 loses an exchange and 23.Rd5 Be4 is helpful to Black; with the rook on the b2-square the d4-pawn is now pinned) 23...Qf6 24.Bc3 (24.c5? Bxc5) 24...Be4 (24...Bh5!?) 25.Qd1 Rbe8! 26.Rxb7 Bxf3 27.Bxf3 Rxe1+ 28.Qxe1 Nxd4, when the game is even as White can't retain the two bishops: 29.Kh1? Nxf3 or 29.Qd1 Ne2+ and ...Qf6xc3, and finally 29.Bd1 f3 30.g3?? Bxg3 is good for Black. In this note, there is also a temptation to grab the hanging a3-pawn as well, which I restrained myself from doing.

22.Qc2! a623.Rf5!

Further imitation. Anatoly is forcing a trading sequence before I can even begin to realize an initiative. He correctly intuited that the "good-looking" b1-rook was not as useful in the position as my f8-rook. By trading them away, White reduces any dangers to his kingside.

23...Rxf5 24.Qxf5 Bg6 25.Qg4!

This is really becoming annoying. White keeps his queen buzzing around the kingside, not only bottling up my initiative up but also keeping his options of a knight hop to the g5-square alive.

Anatoly rejected the attractive-looking centralization 25.Qd5 Bxa3! 26.Qxd8+ Rxd8 27.Bxf4 Bb2!, with an ending where both players have trumps. Also, 25.Qe6 Qf8, intending to gain a tempo by ...Rb8-e8, would misplace White's queen.

25...Qf6 26.Bc4 Rf8

I had my doubts about this very normal-looking move, which brings my rook into play. Now that White has the e-file, he will always have fine play based on a rook invasion, there is the potential for Nf3-g5-e6, and it can easily happen that the advanced f4-pawn becomes a liability. My key alternative was 26...Bf5, to cover the e6-square: 27.Qg5 b5!? 28.Bd5!? Ne7 29.Bb3 Ng6, inviting White to play Qg5xf6, doubling my pawns if he should wish to do so. In that case leaving my rook on the b8-square may be beneficial in the ending, as the a3-pawn could advance and I have an opportunity to seize an open b-file.

27.a4!

A little move that simply moves the pawn on from a square where it can be captured. In a strange way, my position has hit a wall and I don't have a definite plan to strengthen my position further. If I try to reposition my knight with 27...Ne7, I weaken the control over the e5-square and simply invite 28.Ne5, with advantage to White.

27...Bc2

While it looks strange to go pawn-hunting, that is my style. My problem was that if I now try to trade queens by 27...Bf5 28.Qg5 h6 29.Qxf6 Rxf6 30.Re8+ Kh7 31.Ne5!, White has the initiative. The idea of the text isn't just to snap off the a4-pawn (oh, yes it is!), but also to be able to play ...h7-h6 and ...Bc2-f5, kicking the g4-queen off her perch.

Timman now makes the embarrassing comment that the text was a "fruitless excursion" and that, "...a more stubborn defense would have been 27...h6 which, sooner or later, would have been inevitable..." Jan is truly a gifted annotator, but in this case he had a very rare momentary blind-spot, as 28.Re6! wins a piece at once.

The text was necessary to make way for the "inevitable" ...h7-h6, and luft.

28.Qh5

Not a bad move, but I was much more worried about 28.Ng5! Bf5 29.Ne4! Bxg4 30.Nxf6 Bxh3 31.Nxh7 Kxh7 32.gxh3 when White has the two bishops at the cost of split kingside pawns. Perhaps the ending isn't so bad for Black, but I didn't like it.

28...h6?!

I was pleased to play this move to take away Nf3-g5, and while I didn't trust the pawn grab 28...g6 29.Qd5 Bxa4 30.Ne5 Nd8!?, it wasn't an entirely bad op-

tion, as many key squares are covered. Black can reset his pieces by ...Ba4-e8 or ...Ba4-c6, and respond to White's threats as they appear. The "fruitless excursion" has earned a reward. If you are going to grovel, you may as well do so with an extra pawn.

In his *Informant* notes, Anatoly points out the attractive finish 28...Bxa4 29.Ng5 h6 30.Nf7+ Kh7 31.Re6 as winning for White.

29.Re8!

Impressive, dare I say sublime, understanding. Again, the e1-rook looks better than its f8-counterpart, but my rook is defending some important squares, including the g8-square. By trading rooks White eliminates a key defender and the squares around my king become more vulnerable.

Around this point it began to dawn on me that my c6-knight is not really doing anything and is in fact nicely corralled by White's central pawns. I began to look for an opportunity to bring it into play.

29...Bf5

A rather shamed-faced retreat. This time 29...Bxa4? 30.Re6 Qf5 31.Qxf5 Rxf5 32.Nh4! sinks my ship because of my weak g6-square.

One line attractively shows how the second rook trade helps White: 29...Bg6 30.Rxf8+ Bxf8 31.Qd5!, threatening 32.Qg8 checkmate.

30.Bd5! Bd7 31.Rxf8+ Qxf8 32.Nh4 Be8 33.Qe2! (Diagram 139)

Correctly avoiding 33.Ng6+? Bxg6 34.Qxg6 Ne7 35.Qe4 Nxd5 36.Qxd5, which would give me an opportunity to trade two pairs of minor pieces and equatize.

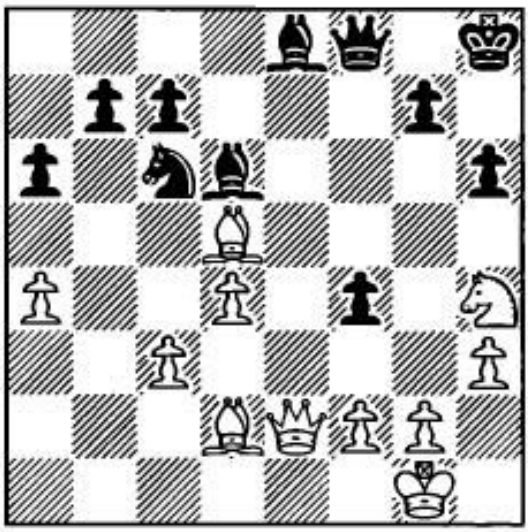


DIAGRAM 139. Black to Play

At this moment, time-trouble was beginning to rear its ugly head and under its relentless pressure I surrendered the wrong bishop.

33...Nd8?

A very bad mistake, induced by time-trouble, which allows White to increase his advantage significantly. The best move was 33...g5! (remember that kingside pawn-storm?) 34.Nf5 Bg6 35.Nxd6 Qxd6 36.Bf3 Kg7, although White definitely has the sunny side of the torture. The idea of the dark-squared bishop being transferred to the long diagonal made me shudder. Nonetheless, it was here that my best hopes for salvation lay.

34.Qe4!

This powerful centralizing move gives White domination over the light squares and a strategically winning position.

34...Qe7 35.Ng6+ Bxg6 36.Qxg6 c6 37.Bb3 b5 38.Kf1 Qf8 39.Bc2 Kg8 40.Bb3+ Kh8

Having successfully made the time-control, I could now assess the damage. It wasn't pretty. White's g6-queen is omnipotent. In fact, I didn't see any chances for play.

41.h4?!

While it is desirable to have an h5-pawn, insuring that any queen trades on the g6-square will be terrible for Black, it was much stronger to crack the whip by playing 41.c4! immediately. White would be threatening c4-c5, with a strategical stranglehold. If 41...bxc4 42.Bxc4 and the a6-pawn is lost. Then 42...bxa4 43.Bxa4 c5 44.Bc2 Kg8 45.Qh7+ Kf7 46.dxc5 Bxc5 47.Bxf4 wins a pawn and retains the initiative as well. As I'm being allowed to fight on, the game continues.

41...Nb7 42.c4 Qg8

Black is running out of moves.

43.Qd3?

Releasing his grip on the position. With the natural and consequent 43.d5! White will realize his dream of putting his dark-squared bishop on the long diagonal, and the game will be over shortly. For example, 43...cxd5 44.cxb5 axb5 45.Bc3 Qh7 46.Qe8+ Qg8 47.Qxg8+ Kxg8 48.Bxd5+ when I can give it a rest. Now the fight flares anew.

Timman's comment about the text is illuminating: "White allows himself to be intimidated. Immediately after the adjournment Karpov indicated he had overlooked a magnificent win here. 43.Bc2!! would have been the end, despite the fact that Black can capture on c4 with check. The point is that after 43...Qxc4+ 44.Bd3 Qg8 45.Bc3, Black has no defense against the threatened 46.d5, followed by 47.Qxh6+ and mate. 45...b4 46.Bb2 would be no more than a stay of execution.

"This is a good illustration of the strength of the so-called Horwitz bishops. If Karpov had not found this a little too late, this game would have been a true masterpiece of accuracy and subtle maneuvering. The advantage of Karpov's hesitation is that the game is now extended by an instructive endgame."

I couldn't agree more with the final paragraph. Before the text Anatoly had played marvelously from a position I had prepared. Exactly as in our game in Tilburg that he had won. My only comfort then was that I was able to resist and

forced Anatoly to make a great effort to win...

43...Qh7 44.Ke2 g5 45.c5 Bc7 46.axb5

In his annotations in the *Informant* Anatoly called this move dubious. While it is true that keeping an extra pair of pawns on the board usually favors the player with the initiative/advantage, in that he has extra options, this strikes me as a case of nit-picking. The text is perfectly fine and leads to a winning position.

46...axb5 47.h5 Ba5 (Diagram 140)

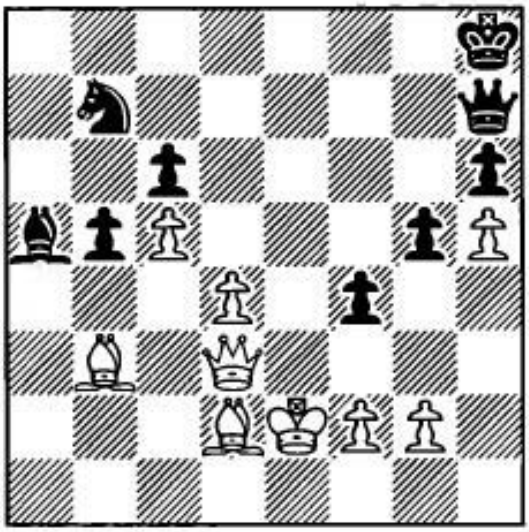


DIAGRAM 140. White to Play

I'm still struggling in a near hopeless situation. Again, Anatoly has the opportunity to reel the victory home by 48.Qxh7+ Kxh7 49.d5!, with a decisive breakthrough. I had in mind what I thought was a cunning trap – 49...Bc7, hoping to induce 50.d6 Ba5!, when shockingly and completely undeservedly Black has real holding chances. The problem is that with 50.dxc6! Nxc5 51.Bd5 Black will be unable to create a fortress and eventually White's king will smash through.

48.Bc1?

A mistake that allows me to continue to resist.

48...Qe7+ 49.Kd1

An embarrassing retreat of his own. Anatoly had intended 49.Kf3, considering his king "untouchable." He now saw that 49...g4+ 50.Kxg4 Qg5+ 51.Kf3 Qxh5+ was very much a "touchy feely" variation that he would greatly prefer to avoid.

49...Qe1+ 50.Kc2 Qxf2+ 51.Kb1

Well, grabbing a pawn with check was a pleasant surprise, but now I face a serious problem. With Qd3-g6 or d4-d5 and Bc1-b2+, White has a ready-made checkmating attack. With deep regret I'm forced to trade queens and double up my kingside pawns. I feared that the resulting ending would lead to a loss by *zugzwang*, but it was the only way to continue the fight.

51...Qg3 52.Qxg3

Playing into the ending that I feared most, and a very human decision. My engine prefers 52.Qd1!, informing me that White will have a checkmating attack after 52...Qxg2 53.d5! Qe4+ 54.Bc2, when Black's king is helpless against the ferocious bishops and passers.

Another attractive finish would have been 52.Qd1 Bd8 53.Bb2 Bf6 54.d5! Bxb2 55.dxc6, winning.

52...fxg3 53.Kc2?

Anatoly continues to make his task more difficult, allowing me to put up a fight. The best move was 53.Bb2!, putting me in a quandary. If I play 53...Kh7, my king will be shuttered out of play on the kingside, and White's king will sprint to the center and the game is over. Therefore, 53...Kg7 would more or less be forced, and now the difference compared to the game is clear: 54.d5+ Kf8 55.dxc6 Nd8 (unlike in the game, I cannot capture the c5-pawn: 55...Nxc5 56.Ba3! b4 57.Bxb4 Bxb4 58.c7, and the c-pawn promotes) 56.Bd5, with an extra pawn and domination of the board.

In his *Informant* notes, Anatoly lets this move pass without comment and merely points out that after the text White stands slightly better. True enough, but after 53.Bb2! I'd evaluate the position as winning.

53...Kg7 54.d5 Nxc5 55.Bb2+ Kf8

It felt as if I was running through a mine-field in this tricky ending, avoiding some explosives altogether while those I stepped on failed to explode, giving me a reprieve. Once more my time was nearly exhausted. (A reminder, the time-control was 40 moves in two hours, followed by 20 moves in one hour thereafter, so it is move 60 and not 56 that is the time-control.)

56.dxc6 Na6! (Diagram 141)

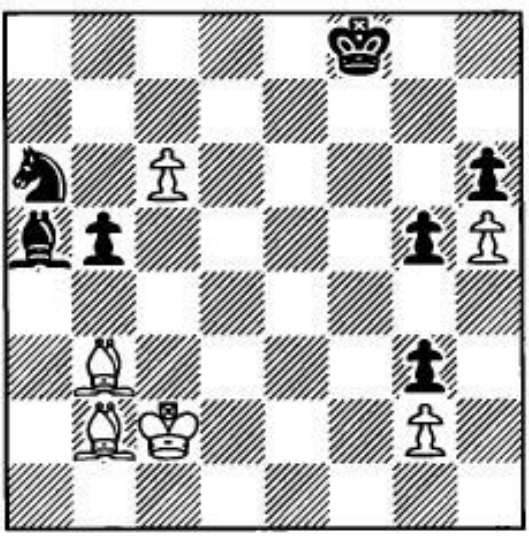


DIAGRAM 141. White to Play

Thanks to his slips, Anatoly has given me a real chance to save the game. This ending is quite an interesting one thanks to the possibility of a fortress with a d6-bishop, a c7-knight and a b5-pawn to keep White's king at bay. The problem is that the h6-pawn needs constant protection, and either my king or bishop will be anchored to it.

57.Ba3+! Ke8!

It is vital that the b5-pawn should remain where it is, as it helps control the approaches for White's king. 57...Bb4?? would be a dreadful mistake which, after 58.c7!, would cost me the game at once.

58.Be6! Bb4!

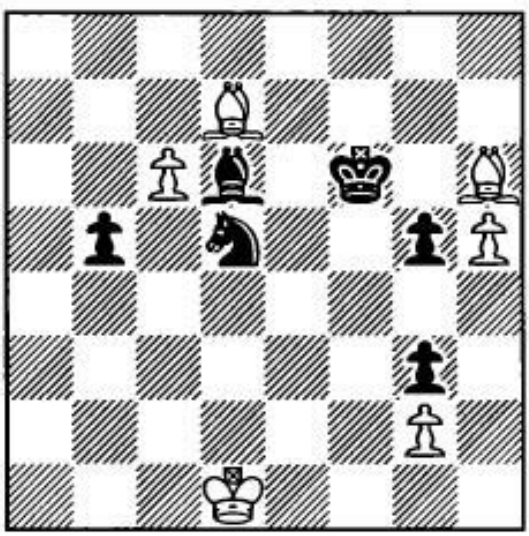
Now this move is playable as 59.c7? Nxc7 attacks the e6-bishop.

59.Bb2 Bf8?

Not the common last move of the time-control blunder, but rather the penultimate move of the time-control blunder. While the desire to protect the h6-pawn is clear, it isn't my major problem. The c6-pawn is the bone in my throat. Afterwards I was sure that 59...Be7 would draw the game thanks to 60.Bd7+ Kd8 61.Bg7 Nb8! 62.Bxh6(?) Nxd7 63.cxd7 Kxd7 64.Bg7 Ke6 65.h6 Kf7, when Black's king is just in time to stop the h-pawn.

However, as Timman shows, 62.c7+! Kxc7 63.Bxb5 will lead to the win of the h6-pawn, when White has excellent practical chances. He thus correctly refutes my claim that 59...Be7 would have drawn.

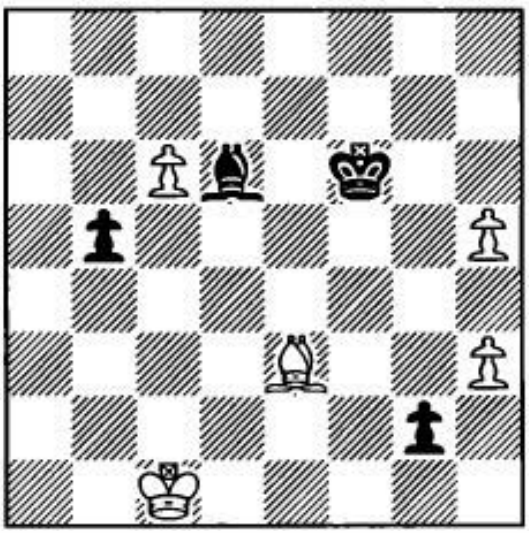
Nevertheless, I will begin a new contention that the position could be saved. My missed opportunity was concealed in a very nice resource: the trapping of White's bishop after it captures the h6-pawn. This idea is best illustrated by 59...Bd6! 60.Bg7 Nb4+ 61.Kd1 Ke7!! 62.Bd7 Nd5 63.Bxh6 Kf6! **(Diagram 142)**, bringing us to our analysis diagram.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 142. White to Play

This was the saving resource which I missed. With the h6-bishop out of play, White has to deal with two problems, the passed b5-pawn and the vulnerability of the g2-pawn. The position is extremelytricky, with almost problem-like traps lurking at every move. For example, from the analysis diagram, White may be tempted to reposition his d7-bishop to the g6-square by 64.Be8?, but this is a bad idea as 64...Ne3+ 65.Kd2 Nf5! 66.Bf8 Bxf8 67.c7 Nd6 is some fine knight hopping indeed.

It seems to me that the analysis diagram position is drawn. If White's king goes to deal with the b5-pawn with 64.Kc1, then after 64...Ne3 65.Bh3 (65.Bf8 Bf4 and the g2-pawn falls with check) 65...g4 66.Bxe3 gxh3 67.gxh3 g2 **(Diagram 143)** we arrive at a most unusual ending worthy of another diagram.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 143. White to Play

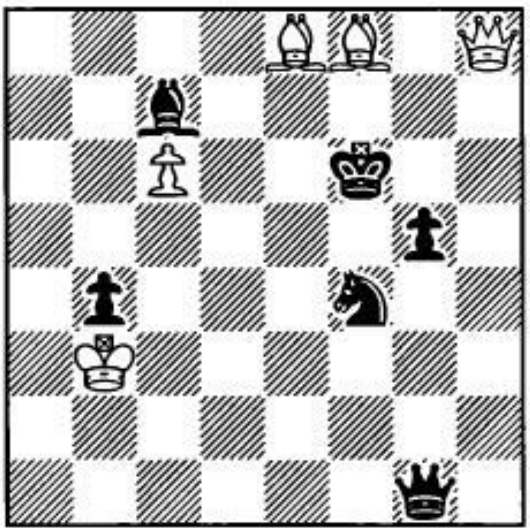
In view of Black's threat of ...Bd6-f4, White will not find the time to advance his pawns: 68.Kd1 Bf4! 69.Bg1?! (69.Bd4+ Be5 70.Be3 Bf4 is a repetition) 69...Ke6 70.Ke2 b4!, and Black has the advantage.

A new world of possibilities occurs after 64.Kd2 b4 65.Kc2 Ne3+ 66.Kb3 Nxg2 67.Bf8! (a thematic escape by the h6-bishop) 67...Bc7 68.h6 Nf4. White can acquiesceto a draw with 69.h7 Ng6 70.Bh3 Kf7 71.Bh6 Nh8 72.Bxg5 Kg6, or allow both sidesto queen with 69.BeB g2! 70.h7 g1=Q 71.h8=Q+ **(Diagram 144 – see following page)**, bringing us to our last analysis diagram position.

White cannot win this position, as after 71...Kf5 72.Qh7+ Kg4 the bishop is poison (73.Qxc7? Qd1+ and White will find his king and queen forked.)

Backing up for a moment, we should note that the variation starting with 59...Bd6! raises several questions. Why didn't White play 60.Bd7+, protecting the c6-pawn? In that case 60...Kf7! protects the g7-square and prepares the knight trek ...Na6-b4(c7)-d5-f4, going after the g2-pawn with counterplay. Then, after 60.Bg7 Nb4+ 61.Kd1 why not take the c6-pawn right away? But 61...Nxc6?

62.Bxh6 Be7 63.Bg7 Bf8 64.Bf6 Be7 65.Bb2 Bf8 66.Kg2 gives White an advantage that is best avoided.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 144. Black to Play

The text is my last mistake, not because I now play perfectly, but because I'm not given another chance to save the game.

60.Bd7+ Kd8

Although we successfully reached the time-control, the next two forcing moves were made rather quickly as well

61.Be5 Nb4+ 62.Kd2 (Diagram 145)

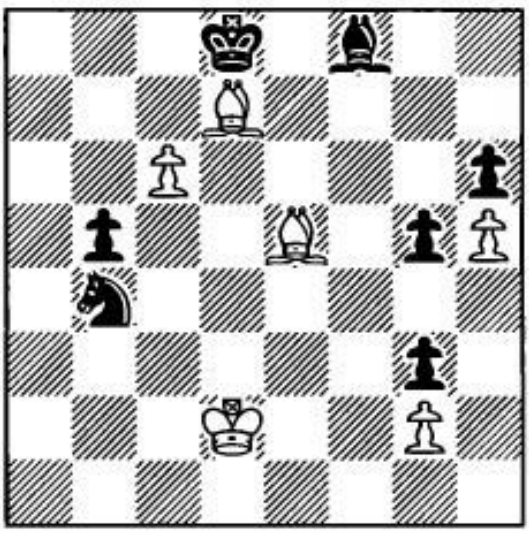


DIAGRAM 145. Black to Play

Here the game was adjourned, and I sealed my move. It would be two days until resumption, and I spent some sleepless nights trying to save the position. The adjournment gathered much attention from the other competitors as well, and there were many forceful opinions.

62...Nd5

My sealed move was the best, but it wasn't good enough to save the game.

63.Be6Nc7

The prelude to a line that leads to my immediate capitulation, which was highly annoying considering the time I had to analyze the position. I missed White's 66th move completely, and my adjournment analysis was rendered complete crap in an instant. Arguably, the worst adjournment analysis I ever made went into this game. (At least I hope this was the case!)

Having lost the thread of the position let me turn the reins over to Timman's notes as he quotes Karpov: "Karpov rejected this move during the post-mortem. Shortly before the resumption he had found a defensive plan starting with 63...Bb4+ for which he had not been able to find an immediate refutation.

"Now the White king has to be careful in its choice of squares, as both 64.Kd3 and 64.Ke2 are met by 64...Nf4+, while 64.Kd1 is effectively refuted by 64...Bc3!. The only correct reply is 64.Kc2, after which Karpov had considered 64...Nc7 65.Bf7 Na6 66.Bg7 Ke7 67.Bg6 Ba5. It seems strange to put the minor pieces back in the same positions as eight moves earlier, but he assured everyone that this was Black's only chance and that he had planned to continue with 68.Kd1."

Indeed, I do not understand 67...Ba5? either. For sure, Black should try 67...Bd6! as a better chance to save the game. Timman continues:

"He had not analyzed this any further as he assumed Seirawan was unlikely to consider two such paradoxical and decentralizing moves in a row.

"Later the American turned out not to have been too impressed by the position either, regarding it as lost in all variations. His prolonged search for saving options had been in vain. Personally, I also fail to see how Black should save himself, e.g. 68...Nb4 69.Be4 Na2 70.Bf5 Nb4 71.Bd7, followed by 72.Bxh6, and Black is doomed."

I can only add that in no way during my analysis was I trying to defend the position by returning my pieces to the a-file. Such ideas simply didn't occur to me.

64.Bf7 Ne8?

This is really bad. As I've already mentioned, I just missed White's 66th move. My best chance was 64...b4! (for some reason, I thought my b5-pawn should remain fixed to block White's approaching king) 65.Kd3 Nb5 66.Bd5 Bd6, hoping to get a line like 67.Bg7 Ke7 68.Bxh6? Kf6, trapping White's bishop. While I think White should win this ending, Black is fighting. The text should lead to immediate resignation.

65.BxeB!

Trading into a bishop of the same colors ending wins instantly because I had missed something...

65...Kxe8 66.Bf6!

And this is it. In the words of Victor Korchnoi, "So simple." Indeed. Black isn't given a chance to play ...Ke8-e7-e6, to keep White's king at bay. The rest of the game is futile, and I played on rather out of inertia. Just as I feared at the start of this whole ending, indeed I would be forced into *zugzwang*

66...g4 67.Kc3 Bd6 68.Bg7 Bf4 69.Kb4 Kd8 70.Kxb5 Kc7 71.Kc5 Be3+ 72.Kd5 Bf4 73.Bf8!

This is the *zugzwang*. Black can hang it up.

73...Kb6 74.Bd6 Bg5 75.Bxg3 1-0

Losing is always tough, but this game felt like four losses in one. Firstly, because I had the position I had prepared on the board and lost in my prepared variation. Not good! Secondly, because after 40 moves I had been masterfully outplayed and should have lost shortly thereafter, but was allowed to keep fighting on. Thirdly, because I had a draw that I missed in time-trouble. Finally, despite nearly two whole days of adjournment analysis I went barking up the wrong tree. That is a lot of "defeats" for one game. For Anatoly it was a win that he won twice and he probably wasn't too pleased with his various slips. But he obtained the victory and the whole point.

Although I wasn't proud of my adjournment analysis, a word like disgusted would be appropriate. At such moments I'm always reminded of a comment made to me by James Tarjan from our training days together in 1979. I hope you too, dear reader, will take his comment to heart.

The incident that I have in mind was as follows. At some point in our preparation for the 1979 Riga Interzonal, Jim had an idea to prepare for Lev Polugaevsky and wanted to explore the labyrinth of the Polugaevsky Variation of the Sicilian Najdorf. The hope was that we might find a new idea, catch him there and steal away a whole point. Great idea! One day of mind-numbing analysis followed another followed another. The days turned into a week and into a second week. At long last! We had found something and were overjoyed.

"Okay, let's see how we got here!" As we reconstructed the whole variation we discovered to our lament that we had simply stolen a tempo along the way. At some point in mid-week we had set up our analysis "tabiya" position wrongly. Good grief. I was particularly crestfallen, and Jim tried to cheer me up by saying: "Yasser, don't worry. All work is good work. Even if it is wrong, it will help teach us what is right. All work is good work." Over the course of my career I've found this remarkable insight to be profoundly true. All work is good work. Of course, we have to learn from our mistakes. It is the only way, trial and error. We can speed up the instruction process by learning from the mistakes of others, but in the end we have to be prepared to work ourselves and admit that mistakes are inevitable. By working hard we will find our way

My next classical tournament game with Karpov was in the GMA World Cup

organized by the same SWIFT staff two years later. While we often saw one another at GMA Directors' meetings and the like, we missed each other over-the-board. In the late 1980s I very much enjoyed playing in an Open event in Lugano, Switzerland, and I tried to make it a fixture on my playing calendar. At one of these Lugano Opens there was also a blitz tournament, and Anatoly came to play (only in the blitz event). We met in the last round; he was White and led by a point. With a win I could catch him. Anatoly played 1.e4, I chose a French, 1...e6 2.d4 d5, Anatoly paused for a few seconds and played 3.exd5, the Exchange French. I commented to him aloud "You dog!" and we both had a good laugh. (On my time!)

In a way that I can't fully explain, the Exchange French is a strange opening to play when White wants to force a draw. The Manila Interzonal game between Mikhail Gurevich and Nigel Short saw Black win and has had a searing legacy on these two fine players. In Nigel's case, he went on to become Challenger. Moreover, the Capablanca vs. Alekhine match saw Black win in a World Championship match (with 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.exd5 exd5). I'm not even sure that White has a 50 percent score in the Exchange French. (Probably he does.) I just remember a few key Black wins that have left a lasting impression. Well, sure enough, Anatoly too got the worst of things, and although I pressed, I couldn't win, and Anatoly was the victor in the blitz event.

I had White in our second meeting in Brussels and, after some very tough losses with the black pieces, my, oh my, was I happy to be playing White. Best of all, I had an idea against one of Anatoly's pet set-ups. Let's see him defend this one. Annotations for this game also include my own notes from *Informant* 45

Yasser Seirawan-Anatoly Karpov
Brussels, 1988
Queen's Gambit Declined

1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 d5 4.d4 Be7 5.Bg5 h6 6.Bh4 0-0 7.e3 b6 8.Be2 Bb7 9.Bxf6 Bxf6 10.cxd5 exd5 11.b4 c5 12.bxc5 bxc5 13.Rb1 Qa5 (Diagram 146)

This line of defense was a kind of tabiya for Anatoly at that time. He was incredibly stubborn about certain views. One was that White is better, and that Black should try to equalize and draw. This meant that Black should play (classical) defenses which gave only a slightly better position for White. In turn, this meant with correct defense a draw was a likely result. Hence, from the diagram position Anatoly's view was that White has only a small edge, and Black has a draw with correct play. I begged to differ.

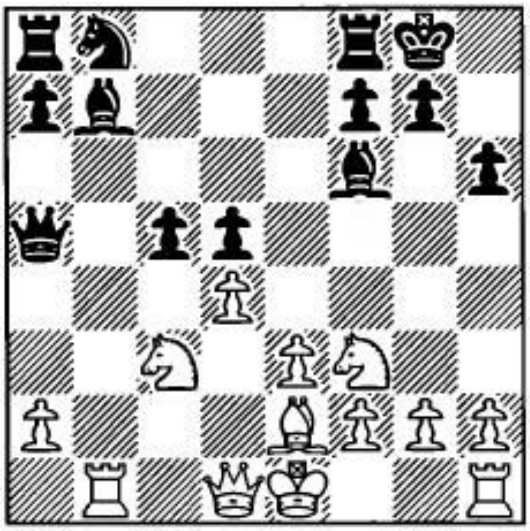


DIAGRAM 146. White to Play

14.0-0!

A strong novelty that I had especially prepared for this encounter. Previously 14.Qd2 had been played, and Black did just fine.

14...cxd4 15.Nxd4 Nc6! 16.Ndb5!

This is the real point behind my novelty. White will have good pressure against the isolani.

16...Ne7

Avoiding the major piece ending: 16...Bxc3 17.Nxc3 Qxc3 18.Rxb7 d4 19.Rb3 Qa5 20.Bf3 Rac8 21.Bxc6 Rxc6 22.Qxd4 when White has an edge.

17.Qa4! Qxa4 18.Nxa4

The end of my preparation, and a late middlegame/early ending has appeared. I considered the position to be quite good for White, as Black's b7-bishop and e7-knight are passive and the d5-pawn could be attacked. I didn't see an easy route to equality for Black.

18...Bc6 19.Nc5 Rfc8 20.Rfc1 Bxb5!

Surrendering the right bishop at the right time.

21.Bxb5 Rc7

When annotating this game for *Informant 45* I awarded the text move an exclamation mark. However, later, Anatoly improved on his play with 21...d4! 22.Nd7 dxe3 23.Nxf6+ gxf6 24.fxe3 Rab8 25.Ba4 Kg7 26.Rxb8 Rxc1+ 27.Kf2 Rc7, when a draw was agreed (J.Timman-A.Karpov, Amsterdam, 1988.)

As you see, in no way did our encounter dissuade Anatoly from his tabiya. On the one hand, such stubbornness is a characteristic trait of all great players. They just believe in themselves and their ideas. They have to. On the other hand, a certain inflexibility starts to creep into their play and by not adapting to the chang-

ing rhythms their strength begins to slip. Chess is constantly evolving, and keeping up requires constant reassessment, hard work and dedication. Sometimes the friendly opening and defense lines that served so well need pruning.

22.Nd7 Bc3 23.Rb3 Ba5 24.Rxc7 Bxc7 25.g3?!

I was correctly critical of his move in my *Informant* annotations, suggesting instead 25.Kf1, to bring my king into the center.

25...Rc8?

A slip that will land Black in deep trouble. As mentioned in my *Informant* notes, 25...Bd6! was the right move, intending ...f7-f6 and ...Kg8-f7-e6, bringing the king into the center, when Black should hold.

26.Be6! Ra8

Anatoly must retrace his steps. After 26...Rd8? 27.Rb7! Rxd7 28.Bb5 White regains his piece with a winning endgame. For example, 28...Rd6 29.Rxc7 a6 30.Bd3 Kf8 31.Ra7, and the a-pawn is lost.

27.Rb7 Bd6 28.Bb5

A very difficult choice. I hated to give Black an opportunity to move his a-pawn, as it is good to keep the rook bottled up for the defense. On the other hand, the bishop isn't the proper blockader. I need to put pressure on the d5-pawn and therefore reposition my bishop. In fact, the same can be said about my d7-knight as well. At the time, it was required to cover the b8-square but it too needs a better spot. A strong alternative was 28.Ne5, when Black's position is difficult.

28...a5! 29.Ba4! g6? (Diagram 147)

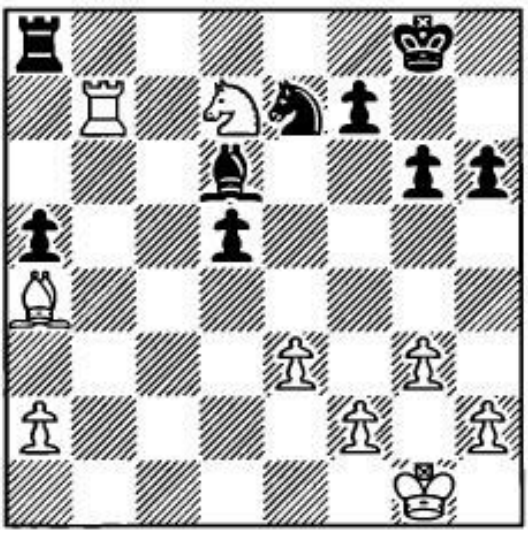


DIAGRAM 147. White to Play

A bad mistake that failed to register. I had been analyzing the retreat Nd7-e5 for a long time and had expected ...f7-f6 earlier. The text never crossed my mind and I shared the same blind-spot with Anatoly.

30.Bb3?

Missing a very powerful shot: 30.Nf6+! Kg7? 31.Ne8+! and White is winning. Black would be forced to play 30....Kf8 31.Rd7 Bb4 32.Nxd5 Nxd5 33.Rxd5 Ra7, with an opposite-colored bishops ending with an extra e3-pawn for White. In my opinion, these endings are winning in practical play as the defense is a brutal task.

In his November 2007 *Chess Life* column (pages 56 and 57), Pal Benko wrote a brilliant piece about just such rook and opposite-colored bishops endings, and I'd encourage readers to have a look. Pal cited Carlsen-Xiangzhi, Cap d'Agde, 2008, Keres-Pirc, Munich, 1936, and Ragozin-Bondarevsky, Leningrad, 1939. My guesstimate is that the side with the extra pawn should score 75 percent in such positions. Another one that got away...

30...Kg7

Certainly not 30...a4? 31.Nb6, winning.

31.a4 Bb4! 32.Ne5?!

After this the crisis for Black has passed. I regret that I didn't choose 32.Rb5! Rd8 33.Ne5 Bc3 34.Nd3 (34.Rb7!?) 34...d4 35.e4, when despite the opposite-colored bishops, White has a pleasant advantage.

32...Rc8!

The key difference between the game continuation and the above note. Black has an active rook.

33.Rb5 Rc1+ 34.Kg2 Bc3 35.Rb7 Bb4 36.Rb5 Bc3 37.Rb7

I was rather harsh in my own self-criticism as I didn't now continue the game by 37.Nd3 Rb1 38.Rb7, when White still stands better.

37...Bb4 38.Rb5 Bc3 ½-½

Unfortunately, the scoresheet for our next game has been lost in time. Mazatlán, Mexico hosted a new event, the FIDE Rapid Chess World Championship. There was a preliminary Open where the top finishers qualified for knock-out matches. I failed to qualify from the preliminaries owing to a strange set-back. In a crucial game with Anatoly, I was Black and a tense game went down to a fast and furious blitz finish. Both our flags were vertical, I made my move, pressed my clock and declared "Flag!" pointing to Anatoly's fallen flag and went to stop the clock. Anatoly replied nearly instantly, hitting the clock before I could stop the buttons and my flag fell as well. As both flags were down a draw was declared by the arbiter. As it turns out, Mexican television was filming the final minutes, and it was clear that Anatoly's flag fell first, but the rules were that when you claimed a win on time your own flag had to be up. A good rule. Fair is fair. Anatoly went on to win the event and become the first FIDE Rapid Chess World Champion.

Following his FIDE Rapid Chess World Championship victory in December, Anatoly and his wife Natalie came to Seattle on an inspection visit. He would be

facing Iceland's Johann Hjartarson in a Candidates' Match from January 28 to February 6, 1989. The match was a part of the cultural activities of the Seattle Goodwill Games. The Chairman of the organization committee was a friend, Bob Walsh. Bob had asked me to be an escort for Anatoly and Natalie during their visit, a task I eagerly accepted. I drove them around the city, went shopping and played blitz! My recollection is that Anatoly did very well, scoring a clear majority. (The guest from Hell.)

At some point during the stay I visited Bob at his office, and he asked how things were going with the Karpovs, and I told them I was enjoying their stay tremendously. He tossed me a few tickets and said, "Tonight the Moscow Circus performs. Why don't you bring the Karpovs? Before the show there is a VIP gathering in this room, bring them there as well." I protested, explaining that the Karpovs lived in Moscow, that they probably saw the Moscow Circus all the time and that they would be bored. "In that case, give the tickets to your family or friends."

When I met the Karpovs that day I asked if they would like to see the Moscow circus. "Absolutely!," said Anatoly, "We've always wanted to go but somehow we never made the time. That would great." I explained about the VIP gathering and Anatoly was enthusiastic as well: "Let's go!" I gave Bob a call to tell him we were coming.

The VIP reception was pleasant. Good snacks and drinks, a few speeches and chit-chat, and then Bob pulled me aside. "Yasser. This is the program tonight. I'll give an introductory speech, we will play the Soviet anthem, then the American anthem, another short speech and I want to introduce Anatoly to the audience. Explaining we have a special guest in town. What do you think?"

I was horror-stricken. I explained my fears immediately. "Bob. Most of the audience have no knowledge about chess, they don't know Anatoly's name. If the reception is muted, he will be insulted. Why take the risk? Better not. Let them have a nice evening and no one will know."

"No," said Bob. "You are wrong. Tell Anatoly I'm going to introduce him. The lights will go black, the spotlight will shine on him, all he has to do is get up out of his seat, wave to the audience and sit back down."

I told Anatoly what was being planned. He said "Fine," without a care in the world, whereas I dreaded what would come next.

Soon the performance was to begin, and we drifted into the arena and took our chairs. Bob had placed the three of us directly on the tarmac. Well above our heads were the nets for the acrobats. They really were the front row seats. As planned, Bob spoke warm words of welcome, the Soviet anthem was played and the Seattle audience gave strong, polite applause afterwards. Then the American anthem and stronger applause came.

Bob addressed the audience again. "And tonight, dear friends, we are extraordinarily privileged as we have a very special guest in the audience, his name

is Anatoly Karpov and he is considered the greatest chess player in the world! Please let us give him a warm Seattle welcome!" The arena went positively black and a powerful white spotlight beamed itself directly on Anatoly, cutting my own leg in half. Anatoly stood up, and I held my breath. The applause was staggering, easily double that for the American anthem. Seattleites were stomping their legs. Memories of Riga sprang to mind. The applause lasted for a remarkably long time, until Bob cut it short to tell us the performance just had to begin.

Anatoly sat down and was positively beaming with delight. His face wore a shocked expression. "My goodness! I didn't realize that chess was so popular in Seattle!"

"Of course!" I replied. "You are in my town now!"

Sometimes you just have to go with the flow.

The evening was absolutely delightful. I strongly recommend it if you ever have the chance to see the Moscow Circus. Don't hesitate, go! After the performance, the tarmac was cleared, and again there was a VIP gathering. The performers came out with various animals for the guests to touch and to a person they *all* went to Anatoly for a picture together. This fact was not lost on our VIP members, and they too did likewise, including the Washington Governor Booth Gardner and his wife. Bob had a glowing expression, and he sidled over to me for a serious I-told-you-so. One of my happiest times for being completely wrong.

My next classical duel with Anatoly Karpov was at the GMA World Cup event in Rotterdam, held at the prestigious venue of the World Trade Center on June 3-24, 1989. Once more Anatoly was in great form as he took clear first with 11 points from 16. The tournament ran into a last-minute sponsorship hiccup, and Bessel Kok came to its timely rescue. It was the closest that the GMA came to canceling a World Cup event.

Yasser Seirawan-Anatoly Karpov
Rotterdam, 1989
Nimzo-Indian Defense

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.Qc2

For a number of years I had been playing the Classical line of the Nimzo-Indian. Besides the fact that the positions appealed to me, I just didn't find a good continuation against the Queen's Indian. The Catalan also failed to pack the punch I was looking for with the white pieces.

4...0-0 5.a3 Bxc3+ 6.Qxc3 b6 7.Bg5 Bb7 8.f3 h6 9.Bh4 d5 10.cxd5?!

This early capture is premature as it encourages Black to develop pressure on the half-open e-file. A long theoretical variation would be established in time following 10.e3 Nbd7 11.cxd5 Nxd5 12.Bxd8 Nxc3 13.Bh4 Nd5 14.Bf2, when White has the two bishops but lags in development.

I wanted to fix the center pawns early and to play a QGD-type of position with the two bishops as my trump.

10...exd5 11.e3

This was my novelty. Previously, 11.Bxf6 Qxf6 12.Qxc7 Ba6 had been played and by continuing quickly with ...Rf8-c8, Black has full compensation for the lost pawn.

11...Re8 12.Bf2?

I want to have my cake and eat it too. The scheme of development I have in mind is to play Bf1-d3 and Ng1-e2, when Black will have insufficient compensation for the two bishops and his c7-pawn may come under fire as well. The problem is that I simply don't have enough time to carry out the desired set-up.

In future games I would play 12.Bb5 c6 13.Ba4, waiting for Black to play ...Qd8-e7 before retreating my h4-bishop.

Other development schemes such as 12.Ne2 and 12.Nh3 could be tried as well, but as the white knight will have to move again, the overall impression is that Black is doing fine and that my tenth move is helpful for Black

12...c5!

Natural and very strong. Black must hit back in the center as soon as possible. If White is able to play Bf1-d3 and Ng1-e2 unimpeded, the game will soon take on characteristics of a Sämisch Nimzo-Indian with no doubled c-pawns and no targets for Black to attack.

13.Bb5

Clearly 13.dxc5? would be a mistake, as 13...d4! gives Black a strong initiative.

13...cxd4

I was hoping to provoke 13...Bc6 14.Bd3 c4 15.Bc2 b5 16.Ne2 when Black has a queenside initiative, but White would prepare the central break e3-e4, when I prefer White's position

14.Qxd4 Bc6 15.Bd3 Nbd7 16.Ne2 Nc5 17.Bc2 Bb5 18.Qd2 Rc8

Here Karpov thought that 18...Bxe2, giving up his other bishop, was an interesting idea. After the relatively forced 19.Kxe2 d4 20.e4, he considered the position "unclear." But in that case, 20...d3+ 21.Bxd3 Nb3, winning material, should be in Black's favor. I would have played 20.Rad1!, instead, and I thought I could claim some advantage. For example, 20...Ne6 (20...dxe3 21.Qxd8 Raxd8 22.Rxd8 Rxd8 23.Bxe3 is good for White) and now 21.e4 keeps the position steady. White will play Bf2-g3, Rh1-e1 and Ke2-f1, holding his two bishops.

19.Nd4

I was beginning to feel uncomfortable about playing this move. A key alternative was 19.Rd1 (planning 20.0-0) 19...Bc4 20.0-0 d4 21.Nxd4 Bxf1 22.Kxf1, sacrificing an exchange to evacuate the king. With a pawn and the two bishops, White has some compensation, but perhaps not enough. At this moment I didn't think my position called for such desperate measures.

19...Bc4 (Diagram 148)

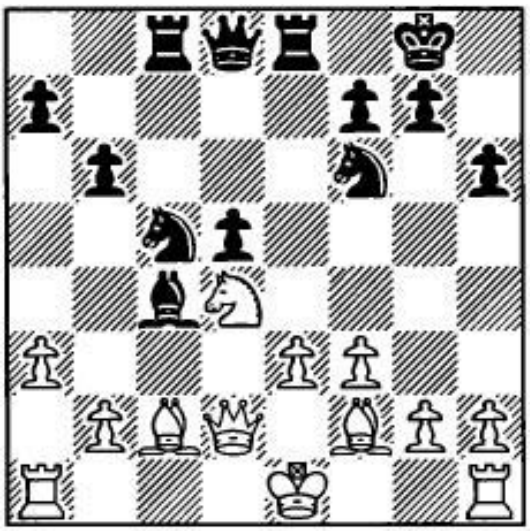


DIAGRAM 148. White to Play

While I couldn't be sure that we would reach this precise middlegame position, it was this *type* of position that I expected when playing 10.e3, fixing the pawn structure. Now I wonder why I was attracted to the position at all. Of course, if White's king were on the g1-square and the h1-rook on the d1-square, White would have a huge strategical advantage. Hence, my "only" problem is my king. I thought that I'd have time to play Bf2-g3, Ke1-f2 and Rh1-e1/d1, problem solved. Black would have an isolani, and nice play would come my way. Unfortunately, the situation is all about timing and it seems that White just doesn't have the tempi he needs to solve his only problem...

20.Bg3

I want to criticize this move and say that Black has easy play thereafter, but the choices all seem fine for Black as well. I considered 20.Bf5 Ne6 21.Nxe6 fxe6 22.Bg6 Rf8 as good for Black, since I still haven't done anything with my king.

My second choice was 20.b3, a difficult one to wrestle with. On the one hand, it is good that the c4-bishop sits where it is, as it blocks the c-file. So why drive it away? Well, the plan I thought about was connected with blocking the f1-a6 diagonal. The line was 20.b3 Ba6 21.a4, telegraphing my obvious intention of b3-b4-b5, with tempo. But Black moves out of the way with 21...Ne6 22.Nb5 d4! 23.e4 Nh5, when I had that sinking feeling that something was going wrong. Black has ...Nh5-f4 and ...Qd8-g5 in view, when my queen felt placed at the scene of a future accident. Perhaps this line is playable, but my Spidey sense was tingling.

20...Nh5!

Eliminating my pride and joy, the two bishops, before they could be used. This is my problem, as once one of the bishops is traded, White has nothing to be proud of in his position.

21.Kf2?!

While this merely follows up on my previous move I soon slide into a worse position. In hindsight 21.Bf5! would be a significant improvement over the game as I block the f-file, the importance of which will be seen shortly. It would seem highly unsatisfactory to play 21...RaB, while Black would also like to "hold off" from trading the h5-knight for the g3-bishop since in that case the h1-rook might be well placed. The natural reaction by Black would be 21...Qg5 22.Kf2 Nb3 23.Nxb3 Qxf5 24.Nd4, with a pretty equal game as Black's isolated d5-pawn remains on the board.

21...Qf6! 22.Rac1 Ne4+!

This is Black's point and why the note above recommended 21.Bf5, to block this check. After the text, Black has the edge as he is able to dissolve his isolani

23.Bxe4 dxe4 24.Rc3 exf3 25.gxf3 Bd5 26.Rxc8 Rxc8 27.Rc1 Rd8! 28.Qe2 Nxg3 29.hxg3 h5 (Diagram 149)

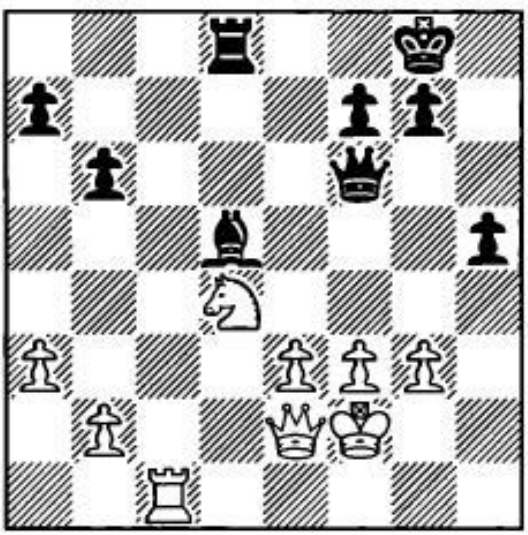


DIAGRAM 149. White to Play

The game has flowed rather naturally to the diagrammed position. Black has the better of the play thanks to my loose pawn structure. Black's last move sets up the probing action ...h5-h4, which will induce further weaknesses.

30.Qa6??

A bad blunder that meets a thunderous reaction. I had to play 30.f4, in order to meet 30...h4 with 31.g4, trying to keep the kingside closed. But I just couldn't bring myself to weaken the light squares around my king.

In his *Informant* annotations, Anatoly indicated 30.Rh1 g6 31.Rh4 Rc8 as his main line of play. Perhaps he is right, but I'm not sure what I'm doing in the resulting position.

30...Bxf3!

simply smashing. I had seen 31.Nxf3 Rd2+ 32.Ke1, but now I realized that 31.Nxf3 Qxb2+ wins at once.

31.Qxa7 Bg4+ 32.Ke1 Rxd4! 33.exd4 Qe6+ 34.Kd2 Qe2+ 35.Kc3 Qe3+ 36.Kc2 Bf5+ 37.Kd1 Qxd4+ 38.Ke1 Qe3+ 39.Kd1 Qd3+ 40.Ke1 Qxg3+ 41.Kd1 Qg1+ 42.Kd2 Qf2+ 0-1

Winning the house. I decided to give the game a rest.

Another gem of a win by Anatoly. Did you see any mistakes in his play at all? Why is it that I seem to bring out the best in my opponents?

Before moving on from Rotterdam I have a story to share which concerns the very affable Russian Arthur Yusupov. In general the casinos in Europe are much more highly-regulated than in America and are certainly less common. As it turned out, the players stayed in the Rotterdam Hilton Hotel, which had a casino on its basement level. The players often went there to have a nightcap and to watch the action. Some played blackjack (twenty-one) for small stakes.

One evening I visited the casino and saw an ashen-faced Arthur Yusupov eating an ice-cream, a "dame chocolate." I went to him to ask what was wrong. It took him some time to mumble an answer. "Now I understand Dostoyevsky," he eventually managed to say. Dostoyevsky? Oh dear, I pulled up a seat and asked him to explain.

As a avid reader of Dostoyevsky's novels, Arthur wondered why he had a gambling addiction. Arthur found himself at the roulette wheel and put five Dutch guilders on Black. It was red. He then put ten Dutch guilders on Black again. You know the rest. He kept losing until he realized that with the final spin he had put all his money on the table and was in shock. He was gambling a fortune by Soviet standards. He won. The ice cream he was eating was his whole winnings. "Never again!" he told me with a stony face. Whew! I hope, dear readers, that you will learn from the mistakes of the grandmasters: stay away from the roulette wheel.

The final GMA World Cup event came to a spectacular close. The race for the lead was keen, with Anatoly giving Garry hot pursuit. While he gave it his best effort, Anatoly came up just shy, and Garry was the overall winner. Once more Anatoly played a gem of a game against me.

Anatoly Karpov-Yasser Seirawan
Skellefteå, 1989
Queen's Gambit Accepted

1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4

The Queen's Gambit Accepted figured prominently in my repertoire for most of my career. As I like playing against isolated queen pawns it was a natural choice.

3.e4!

But this isn't one of those IQP variations! In principle, this natural move *should* be White's best response to the QGA. After all, if Black is going to give up the center, White should take it. The problem is that White can't keep his central phalanx, and a series of trades should give Black a playable disadvantage.

3...e5

After this game, I gave up on this line, choosing 3...Nf6 4.e5 Nd5 5.Bxc4 Nb6 when White has an edge in space but Black has better chances to equalize.

4.Nf3 Bb4+ 5.Bd2 Bxd2+ 6.Qxd2 exd4 7.Qxd4 Qxd4 8.Nxd4 Bd7 9.Bxc4 Nc6 10.Nxc6 Bxc6 11.Nc3 Rd8 12.Ke2 Nf6 13.f3 Ke7 (Diagram 150)

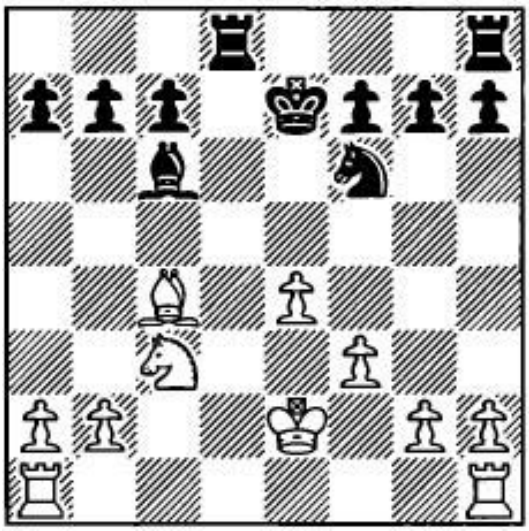


DIAGRAM 150. White to Play

Zipping right along we come to a position that is admittedly "slightly better" for White. Put Black's c6-bishop back to the c8-square and the c7-pawn on the c6-square and we would start to talk about "complete equality," but Black can't achieve that formation. Unfortunately, I completely underestimated the danger in Black's position. White has a very comfortable grip on the d5-square, and all his pieces seem just a little more active than my own. These aren't just "niggling" advantages – they become larger as the game continues.

14.Rhd1 a5

Already, I was feeling pressed for a plan. What should I do? I didn't want to compromise my pawn structure after 14...Nd7 15.Bd5! Nb6 16.Bxc6 bxc6, with a long-term structural advantage for White. But as the course of the game makes clear, at some moment I had to accept a pawn weakness in order to obtain piece play.

15.Rac1 Rxd1

I had to agree to this trade to bring my h8-rook into the game.

16.Rxd1 Rb8 17.Ke3! g6?!

Failing to follow through on my plan of expanding on the queenside. For better or worse, I should have continued with 17...b5 18.Bf1! Nd7 19.b3! when it is clear that my queenside play isn't going anywhere, but I'd have something to do, if only repair what I've done...

My other choice, as mentioned above, was to play 17...Nd7 18.Bd5! Nb6, and accept doubled c-pawns. The text is something of a pass move, leaving it up to White to make a commitment.

18.Bb3!

Typically Karpov-like prophyiaxis. He puts his pieces out of reach and keeps all his options open.

18...Ra8

Frustration was beginning to kick in. I had to bite the bullet and play 18...b5 19.e5!? Nd7 20.Bd5 Rb6 21.f4 b4 22.Ne4 f6, which is only marginally better for White. My fear was that 18...b5 19.Rc1! Ba8 20.Ne2 c6 21.Bd1 would bring me a lifeless position.

19.Rd4 Nd7 20.Bd5 Ra6

The point of all my maneuvers. I'm trying to avoid doubled c-pawns. Note that if I was forced to play 20...Bxd5 21.Nxd5+ Kd8, it would have been better not to have weakened my f6-square.

21.f4 f6 22.h4 h6 (Diagram 151)

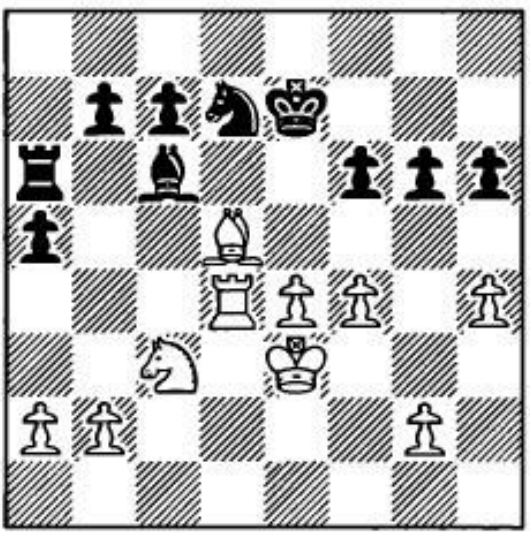


DIAGRAM 151. White to Play

We all love those diagrams where there is a winning tactical combination which we can try to find. This diagrammed position is of a completely different variety. There are no tactics to look for, just technical play. What would you do if you were White?

Stop, take a minute to consider your answer. Karpov's next move makes a fantastic impression.

23-g3!!

Probably I'm being overly generous with my punctuation, but this move almost leaves me in *zugzwang*. I don't want to move my pawns, or my knight or rook. That leaves me with just a bishop move.

23...Bxd5 24.Nxd5+ Kd8 25.Nc3! Rb6 26.Rd2!

Masterful retreats. My pieces have fewer options than their counterparts, and now White is ready to use his kingside majority.

26...c6

Protecting the d5-square at last. Unfortunately it is now too late, as my rook is misplaced. If the b6-rook was centralized, Black might have a decent position, but as it is I'm unable to block White's kingside initiative.

27.h5! g5 28.Kf3!

With each move I'm slipping into that long sleep goodbye. The text makes way for Kf3-g4 and, far more importantly, White wants to maneuver his knight to the f5-square.

28...Ke7 29.Ne2

No doubt an excellent move, but I considered it a bit of a slip. A stronger move was 29.Nd1!, with the same idea of coming to the f5-square. After 29...gxf4 30.gxf4 Rb5 31.Rh2! the situation seems hopeless as Nd1-e3-f5 will end the game.

29...c5

I had to stop the knight from arriving on the f5-square. You can imagine my frustration, having worked so hard to protect the d5-square, as I now hand over the goods.

30.Nc3! Rd6 31.Rd5 Rxd5

Speeding my descent, as the knight ending offers no chances. A preferable move was 31...Rc6, but I feared that 32.Rf5 and Nc3.d5 would cause asphyxiation.

32.Nxd5+ Ke6 33.Ne3!

The knight's arrival signals the dinner bell.

33...b5 34.Nf5 Nb6 35.Nxd6 Nc4 36.Nf5 Kf7 37.b3 Nd2+ 38.Ke3 Nf1+ 1-0

Yet another masterful game by Anatoly. I was tipping my hat so often I'm losing my hair! What to say? This is why he was the most technically gifted player ever.

After my last few outings with Anatoly, a rethink was definitely in order. My Classical Nimzo hadn't worked. The Catalan was a reasonable choice, and I really didn't have a good answer for the Queen's Gambit Declined. Just a few ideas for obtaining a small pull. It was time to take a different approach. How about an English Opening? I've played it most of my career with good results...

The following annotations were published in *Inside Chess* magazine as an article, "Scaling K2." Updated comments are marked "YS, 2010" The following was my *Inside Chess* preamble:

"I first played Karpov at Mar del Plata, Argentina in 1982. I completely outplayed him in a French Defense, but failed to score the knockout. I won the second game we played that year in London. Over the course of the next two years, many promising positions slipped through my fingers. Then Karpov seemed to get my number. He won two games among many draws. Our last two games saw me routed in both. Somehow, he had adjusted – but I hadn't."

Yasser Seirawan-Anatoly Karpov
Haninge, 1990
English Opening

1.c4

I wanted to avoid a Nimzo-Indian Defense, having prepared to meet a QGD by the following move order: 1...e6 2.Nc3 d5 3.d4, etc.

1...e5

So much for my preparation! With this, Karpov shows he wants a full-bodied struggle. When he wants the sure draw, he usually opts for 1...e6.

2.g3!

By delaying the development of the knight, I dodge the analysis of recent Kasparov-Karpov encounters.

2...g6

A big surprise. To my knowledge, this is the first time that Karpov has played this move. When confronted by White's move order, Karpov usually plays 2...Nf6 3.Bg2 d5, etc. or 2...Nc6 3.Bg2 g6, etc.

3.d4!?

Attempting to lure Anatoly into unfamiliar territory.

3...d6 4.dxe5

I also felt a strong temptation to play 4.Nc3 Nd7 5.Nf3, with a likely transposition into a King's Indian Defense. The text produces a queenless middlegame position with which I'm very familiar.

4...dxe5 5.Qxd8+ Kxd8 6.Nc3 c6?

How nice! A mistake. This move took Karpov about a quarter of an hour. Obviously Black is concerned about the position of his king, so he prepares a home on c7. The problem is that by playing this move now, Black throws his timing off and allows White a strong attack. After 6...Be6 7.b3 Nd7, White has a slight advantage.

What I should have emphasized is that Black should wait for White to play Bf1-g2, before playing the text. As we will see, this will be a major factor in the coming play. (YS, 2010)

7.f4!

Only this move exposes the vulnerability of Black's position. White wants to open the center and deny Black's king the c7-square. It is also the prelude to a long and complex pawn sacrifice.

7...Be6!

Best. Bad is 7...exf4? 8.Bxf4 Be6 9.0-0-0+ Nd7 10.Nf3 Bxc4? 11.Bh3 f5 12.Be5! or 12.e4, with an advantage to White. This variation shows the extreme danger that Black is facing. A fundamental error would be 7...f6? 8.fxe5 fxe5, when White has opened the f-file to his advantage and Black's g5- and e5-squares are weak. In this position, it's important to note the role of White's e2-pawn. By not occupying the e4-square, it is left open for a mighty knight!

8.Nf3 Bxc4

One can't help but admire the forthright play of Karpov (...c7-c6, ...Bc8-e6xc4). But Black could consider 8...Nd7 9.fxe5 (9.b3) 9...Bxc4 10.Bf4! h6 11.0-0-0 g5 12.Bh3 Be6 13.Bxe6 fxe6 14.Be3, when White has a dangerous initiative. In this line, if Black doesn't capture White's c4-pawn he still gets a bad game. 8...Nd7 9.fxe5 h6 (9...Kc7 10.Ng5) 10.b3 Bg7 11.Bg2 Kc7 12.0-0-0, intending Nc3-e4, is pleasant for White.

9.Bh3!

The crispest continuation, as 9.Nxe5 Be6 10.Be3 Bg7 is feeble since Black has fewer problems. With the text, White threatens the howitzer-like Nxe5.

The point of my earlier emphasis about waiting for Bf1-g2, before playing ...c7-c6, is now demonstrated. Clearly, the bishop is much stronger on the h3-c8 diagonal than on the long diagonal which is blocked. (YS, 2010)

9...f5

Obligatory. Black has a variety of unpleasant continuations: 9...Bg7?! (9...Nd7 10.Bxd7; 9...f6? 10.fxe5, and White is better) 10.Nxe5 Bxe5 11.fxe5 Be6 12.Bg5+ Ke8 (12...Kc7 13.Bxe6 fxe6 14.0-0 and White holds the advantage) 13.Rd1 Nd7 14.Bxe6 fxe6 15.Ne4 Nxe5 16.Nd6+ Kf8 17.0-0+ winning. Another fun line for White is 9...Bb4!? 10.Nxe5 Bd5 11.e4!? Bxe4 12.0-0 Bc5+ 13.Rf2, with a sharp position. If White wants a quiet advantage, then 9...Bb4 10.Kf2 offers such a guarantee. White's superior development promises an excellent attack.

10.b3!!

A move I'm very proud of. The reason for my pride stems from the fact that I had to reject the obvious "crush" 10.e4! This thrust begs to be played, of course. Isn't Black about to be torn to pieces? Yes and no.

My move, 10.b3, goes to the very heart of the position. The key question facing White is: "What are you going to do with the bishop on e4?" Is it going to g5 with check? That is attractive to be sure, but it implies f4xe5, which involves a huge tempo loss. Besides, doesn't the knight want to go to e5? So that leaves Bc1-e3. Hardly inspiring.

Let's see why I rejected 10.e4 (the move Karpov feared most!). There follows

10...Nh6! (Forced. For some strange reason, Karpov intended 10...Nd7?, which is just crushed after 11.exf5. Also bad is 10...Be6 11.Ng5, when White is better.) 11.Nxe5 Be6 12.Be3 Bd6 13.0-0-0 Kc7 14.Bd4?! Re8. This was my main reason for rejecting 10.e4. While White is certainly for choice, I was very dissatisfied with the knight on e5! Paradoxically, as mighty as it appears, what does it do? It is only because of my own familiarity with these positions that I was able to find 10.b3. Just look how sensitive the long diagonal a1-h8 appears!

10...Bb4!

Karpov finds the only defense! But when in his career has it happened that after ten moves he has only 27 minutes left for the last 30 moves of the time-control? Black has to reject 10...Be6? 11.Ng5 Kd7 12.Bb2, with decisive threats. If 10...Bf7, there follows 11.Nxe5 Be6 12.e4! (played only now, when the extra move b2-b3, will make a decisive difference). On 10...Ba6 11.Nxe5 is a killer as the bishop on a6 is well offside.

Therefore, the only other defensive try is 10...e4!? 11.bxc4!? (11.Nxe4 Bg7 12.Ne5 Bd5) 11...exf3 12.Bb2 Bg7 13.0-0-0+ Nd7 14.e4!, and White's advantage is nearly decisive.

With the text Karpov makes his stand. He will keep his post on d5 come what may and try to weather the attack.

11.Bb2 Bd5 (Diagram 152)

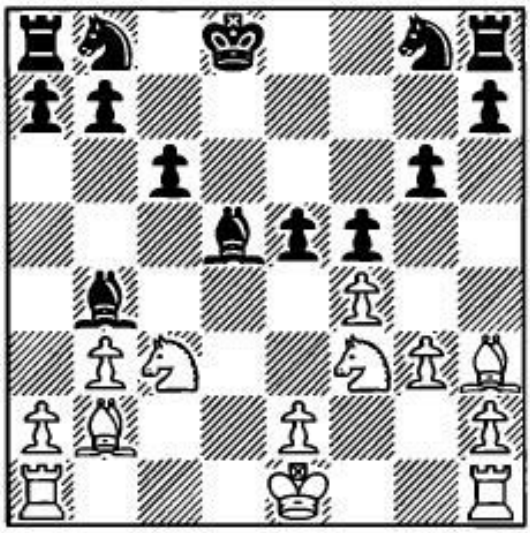


DIAGRAM 152. White to Play

12.e4!

Fantastic! I'm fighting for the initiative at all costs. Somehow White has managed to develop all his minor pieces and played c4, d4 and f4, while Black has only managed to move his bishops, pawns and put his king on a bad square!

12...fxe4

The only move. If 12...Bxe4?? 13.0-0-0+, intending Nc3xe4, wins on the spot. Another bad idea is 12...Bxc3+? 13.Bxc3 Bxe4 14.0-0-0+ Nd7 15.Nxe5, winning. During our walk back to the hotel (we analyzed the game in post-mortem so long that we missed our rides), Karpov confided that he was also worried by 12.0-0-0!? Bxc3 13.Bxc3 Nf6 14.Nxe5 Rf8 15.Rhe1, and he didn't care for his game as 15...Nbd7? runs smack into 16.Nxd7 Nxd7 (16...Kxd7 17.e4 winning) 17.e4! fxe4 18.Rxe4 Bxe4 19.Rxd7+, winning.

It was precisely this variation that prompted me to play 12.e4!. In the above line, Black has to play 15...Na6. In this case Black has a rotten game, but at least he can play for the e4-square while my bishop on h3 is rather quiet. With 12.e4!, the diagonal h3-c8 is opened and Black is forced to occupy e4 with a pawn

13.0-0-0 Bxc3!

Excellent. Black finds the only chance: sacrifice an exchange! A cursory glance shows he has no choice. If 13...Nf6?, then 14.Ng5! (again not Nf3xe5) and Black is about to be slam dunked.

14.Bxc3 exf3 15.Bxe5 Nd7! 16.Bxh8 Ne7! (Diagram 153)

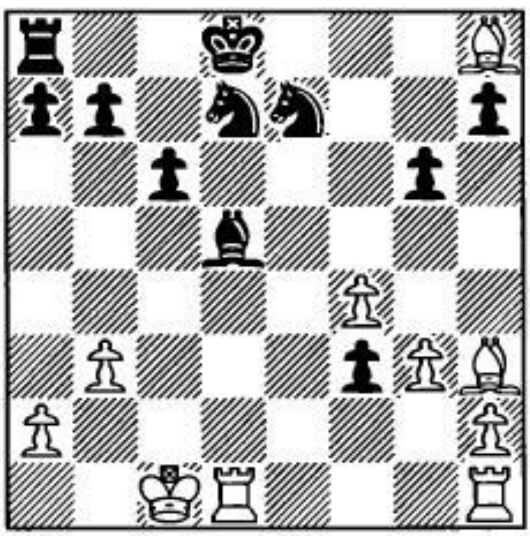


DIAGRAM 153. White to Play

The game has been incredibly complex and this has taken a considerable toll on both clocks. I had foreseen this position with 12.e4 and had thought, "Okay, Black has a pawn for the exchange." But I reasoned that Black's little fella on f3 was too far from his supply lines, and that after a few deft moves the game would be over. So I nonchalantly made a lazy piece of analysis and played a mistake.

17.Rhf1?

Erroneously believing that this would round up the pawn on f3. After the simple 17.Rhe1! (rooks belong on open files!) 17...Nf5 18.Bd4 Kc7 19.Bxf5 gxf5 20.Re7 Kd6 21.Rxh7, Black is technically lost. The text allows a heroic resistance.

17...Nf5!

Five minutesfor the next 23 moves!

18.Bd4h5!

Forced. White threatened Bh3-g4xf3, with an absolutely winning attitude and personality.

19.g4

It was probably better to play 19.Rfe1 Kc7 20.Bxf5 gxh5 21.Re7, as above. Now I compromise my kingside structure and give Black better chances of holding.

19...hxg4 20.Bxg4 Nh4

I had seen to this point when playing 17.Rhf1. I was thinking that 21.Bxd7 Kxd7 22.Bf6 Nf5 23.Rxf3 just slurped a pawn when I realized that 23...Ke6! hits two pieces. Whoops! Think! – Think! – Think! How much time does he have left? Time for a new plan. The pawn on f3 lives.

21.Bf2 Ng2

At this point, I realized that Karpov would lose on time. It would be physically impossible for him to make the time control. But this didn't stop him trying!

12.Bg1 Nh4 23.h3 Kc7 24.Bh2 Nf6! 25.f5+ Kb6 26.fxg6 Nxg4 27.hxg4 Rg8 28.Rd4 a5!29.g5 Nxg6! 30.Kd2!

About this time, my flag was beginning to rise, preparatory to precipitous descent. It was time to put the criminal on f3 under lock and key!

30...Rf831.Bg1?

Black is still worse after 31.Bg3.

30...Ka6?

In the post-mortem, we agreed that 31...Kc7! was equal. As my flag continued to rise, we played at lightning speed.

32.Bf2! Rf5 33.Rg4 Ne5 34.Rg3 Ng6 35.Rh1! Re5 36.Re1! (Diagram 154) 1.0

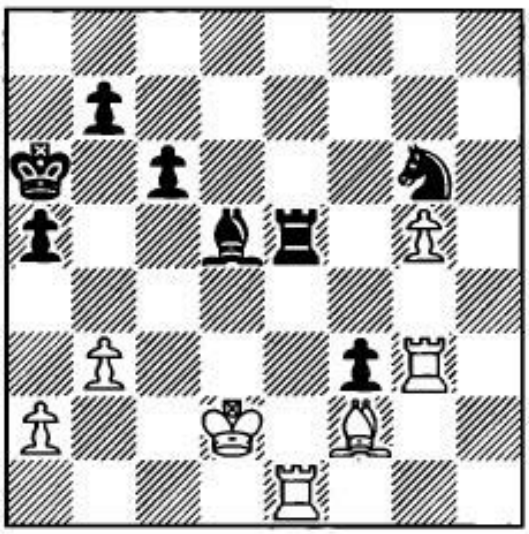


DIAGRAM 154. Black to Play

And in this position my opponent's flag fell! After 36...Rf5 37.Re8 b6 38.Rd8 (intending Rd8-d6) 38...Kb7 39.Rh3 Rxg5 40.Rh7+ Ka6 41.a4 Black gets mated. In a very lengthy (three hours!) post-mortem, Karpov was unable to save the final position.

This last bit of analysis is off the mark. After 37.Re8 b6 38.Rd8 Re5 39.Be3 Nh4! 40.g6 Nf5 41.Rg5 Rxe3 42.RxfS Re2+ 43.Kc3 Rg2, Black should hold thanks to his well-anchored d5-bishop. Perhaps I should play 38.Rb8 c5 39.Re8, to unhinge the d5-bishop. White has a plus, but Black has good kicking chances. Overall, a pretty good piece of analysis that holds up to modern scrutiny. (YS, 2010)

A tough game! Many thanks to Tolya for spending a lengthy analysis session with me. On the walk back to the hotel he said "Congratulations, you played very well!" Thank you!

Haninge turned out to be a major success for me as I won the event with an undefeated 8½ points from 11 games, giving me clear first at "plus six" in the Category 14 event. At the closing ceremony I made a speech on behalf of the players and ended up seated close to Anatoly. I asked him how I had done. He asked what I meant. And I said, well you've made so many victory speeches in your career, you must have dozens prepared. How did mine compare? We both had a good laugh.

Our next meeting came in what was supposed to be the second series of the GMA World Cup events. Anatoly had lost his 1990 FIDE World Championship Match in New York and Lyons, and was eager to return to the thick of things. In Murcia, Spain, at the General Assembly meeting of the GMA June 9-10, 1990, Garry had resigned as the GMA President when the GA ratified the motion to approve the Agreement with FIDE. Garry hinted that if he retained his World Championship title he might rejoin the GMA Board, but for now he wanted to devote himself to his preparation. Garry retained his title but did not rejoin the GMA Board.

There was considerable confusion about the second World Cup series. Would Kasparov play in the tournaments? Bessel Kok thought he would, and the events were announced. Reykjavik, Iceland would host the first and, as it turned out, the only one as well. Garry decided to withdraw from competing in the events. Sponsors then turned away, and the whole series collapsed. Although the GMA struggled on for a few more years, the writing was on the wall: the organization has lost its *raison d'être*, as well as its visionary founder. It was a bitter pill for everyone. What would have happened had Garry stayed with the GMA and pursued his vision? We will never know.

There is a very funny story about the 1990 World Championship match in New York/Lyons regarding Anatoly that I just have to share. A friend of mine, Dodd Darren of Los Angeles, had gotten into the chess book publishing business and was showing me his latest wares in the lobby of the Macklowe Hotel in New

York. As we were chatting he told that it was a cherished dream of his to meet Anatoly and to present some books to him, and let him know that he would be ready to publish anything Anatoly would care to author. I responded that as he was completely engaged in the match there was no way I could intercede to introduce him at this time. Dodd implored me to try.

Just at the moment I was explaining it was absolutely impossible to make the desired introduction, Anatoly walked through the lobby, spotted me and came over to say hello. I made a brief introduction for Dodd, and Anatoly asked if we could join him in the elevator for the ride up. We did and Dodd got busy explaining who he was and presenting his latest book, hot off the press. Anatoly was very polite, accepted Dodd's book with thanks and we said our goodbyes. Dodd and I rode the elevator back down to the lobby. Dodd was absolutely gleeful.

"That was great!," he gushed. "Thank you so much!"

I decided to play a bad joke on Dodd. "I can't believe you just did that to me," I exclaimed. "You ask me for a big favor. I do it for you. And what do you do? You insult me and Anatoly both! Why did you just do that?" I protested.

Dodd was completely baffled. "What do you mean? I thought it went great. What did I do wrong?" he asked.

"Dodd, you just gave Anatoly your latest book, right? Well look at the title..." It was *How to Defeat a Superior Opponent* by Edmar Mednis.

"Oh no! You don't think Anatoly took it as an insult, do you?" Dodd asked.

"Relax, Dodd," I said, chuckling. "I'm sure Anatoly wasn't insulted." It was quite a humorous moment, though.

Back to the chess. Have you ever prepared an opening for the game and screwed up your intended move-order? How embarrassing! Imagine my embarrassment when I did it in my next big outing with Anatoly...

Yasser Seirawan-Anatoly Karpov
Reykjavik, 1991
Catalan Opening

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 d5 4.Bg2 Be7 5.Nf3 0-0 6.Nc3(?)

This is the move-order muck-up. I am clueless to what possessed me to make this move. I had busily prepared for the game and somehow the moves became mixed up.

My intention had been to play the position after 6.0-0(!) dxc4 7.Ne5 Nc6 8.Bxc6 bxc6 9.Nxc6 Qe8 10.Nxe7+ Qxe7 11.Qa4 c5 12.Qxc4 cxd4 13.Qxd4 e5 14.Qh4 Rb8 15.b3!, which I thought was a key improvement on the line. At least I wanted to test the water and hold the extra pawn.

6...dxc4 7.Ne5 Nc6 8.Bxc6 bxc6 9.Nxc6 Qe8 10.Nxe7+ Qxe7 11.Qa4 c5 12.Qxc4 cxd4 13.Qxd4 e5 14.Qh4 Rb8 (Diagram 155)

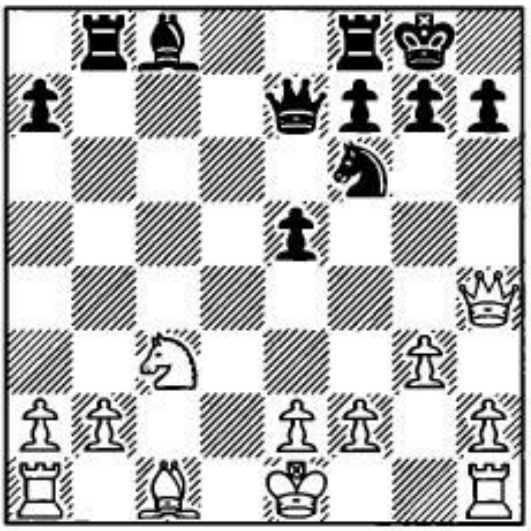


DIAGRAM 155. White to Play

Both players had moved rather quickly up to this point, and here I stopped and realized to my horror that my knight is on c3 and I haven't castled. Now 15.b3 runs into a major problem as the h1-rook is hanging after 15...Qc5 16.Bb2 Rb4 17.Na4?? Qd5/Qc6, and I can resign. Of course, I should play 17.Qg5, but after 17...Bh3!, stopping me from castling, I would prefer to play Black's position.

From the diagrammed position I had a long think, firstly to recover from the shock of my botched preparation and then to find the best move. I decided I didn't like my position after 15.0-0 Rb4 16.e4 Qb7! 17.f3 Qb6+ 18.Rf2 Rd8, with good play for Black.

15.Bg5!

Under the circumstances the best move.

15...Rxb2 16.0-0Qe6 17.Bxf6Qxf6 ½-½

Drawn on Karpov's offer. His first words to me were, "This was Game 15 of my 1978 World Championship match with Victor Korchnoi." Groan. I certainly followed that match closely and completely forgot about the game. A very embarrassing affair.

Our next meeting was at the inaugural Melody Amber event in Roquebrune/Monaco. The chess Midas Joop van Oosterom and his wife Muriel wanted to host an event in honor of their five-month-old daughter, Melody Amber. They invited 12 of the highest-rated players in the world to contest a double round-robin – a competition by the way I've always felt is the fairest.

During the drawing of lots the players had to choose from stuffed animals. There were more animals than numbers, and Melody got to gum the extras.

This was the period when rapid chess (30 minutes for the whole game per

player, maximum one hour) was really beginning to catch on. There was the fantastic Immopar Rapid Chess Cup in Paris, and SWIFT would shortly host a Rapid Cup knock-out event. (More on that later.) In time, the PCA held its Intel Rapid Chess events as well.

While I hold classical chess games in the highest esteem, followed by rapid and lastly blitz, in any of the forms it is possible to see some very good games and some very bad ones. Rapid chess is rather a mix in that in the first half the games all look good, even classical, but by the very end a blitz finish can spoil a lot. Finally, 22 games of rapid chess facing a world-class player every single day can be exhausting. The games were played in stages so that we could follow other players while we were on our "break," but the result was that I felt that I played chess for eight hours a day watching so many games in progress.

In Round One I faced Anatoly.

Yasser Seirawan-Anatoly Karpov
Roquebrune (rapid), 1992
Nimzo-Indian Defense

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 b6

I expected a Queen's Indian Defense and I had been for a number of years playing a line of my own making.

4.Nc3 Bb4 5.Qb3

And this is it. My idea is to play a type of a "Classical" Nimzo formation, but first, by "touching" the b4-bishop, to drag a concession of some type from Black. For example, some players have played 5...a5 against me, which wouldn't fit well if Black decides to castle queenside. Others have tried 5...c5, which is the most popular response; after 6.a3 Ba5 Black doesn't necessarily have to surrender the two bishops at once. In this case, Black has to keep a watchful eye over the d6-square. Lastly, there is Anatoly's choice in the game.

5...Qe7 6.a3 Bxc3+ 7.Qxc3 Bb7

Having "wrested" the tempo ...Qd8-e7 from Black is no big deal, as it is still all about whether White can prove whether or not his two bishops can give him an edge in the middlegame. My opening line has to have some drawbacks, and it does. I've committed my knight to the f3-square and can't play f2-f3, which means Black has greater control over the e4-square. The next phase of the struggle revolves around the fight for the center. If Black can secure a knight in the center he will equalize against the two bishops.

8.e3

It is an awkward question as to what to do with the f1-bishop. If I fianchetto it by 8.g3, the positions tend to become dry when the light-squared bishops are exchanged. In my experience, the text offers the best chance for an advantage.

8...d6 9.Be2 Ne4 10.Qc2 Nd7 11.0-0 0-0 12.Nd2! f5 13.f3! Ng5! (Diagram 156)

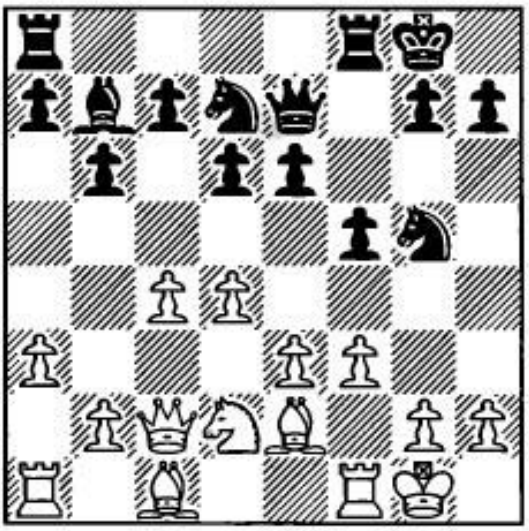


DIAGRAM 156. White to Play

A rather standard position for "my" opening. Black wants to keep pieces on the board buzzing around my kingside. White has to maintain a very watchful eye so that Black's pieces don't start producing threats, while at the same time trying to create play in the center.

14.Rf2!

The start of an important piece reorganization. Besides offering extra protection to the g2-pawn, White is following Larsen's Principle, "With a knight on f1, you can never get mated." My aim is to bring the dark-squared bishop to the long diagonal, play Ra1-e1 and to try to advance with d4-d5 and e3-e4, with a big grip on the center.

14...e5

Black, of course, has his own ideas.

15.Nf1 exd4 16.exd4 Ne6 17.d5 Nd4 18.Qd1 Qf6 19.Be3 Nxe2+ 20.Rxe2 Rae8 21.Bd4 Qf7 22.Ng3 (Diagram 157)

At first glance the position seems quite even. Balanced material, similar pawn structure, safe kings, bishops of opposite colors; the game is heading towards a draw. Not so fast. Firstly, my bishop is much more active than Black's and is bearing down on the g7-pawn, something the b7-bishop cannot do. Secondly, the d5-pawn has crossed the demarcation line, giving me a central wedge and a plus in space. Finally, Black's f5-pawn could become a target. The rooks are on the e-file chopping-block and, once they are hacked off, the f5-pawn stands out, as Black will be reluctant to play ...g7-g6, weakening the dark squares around his king.

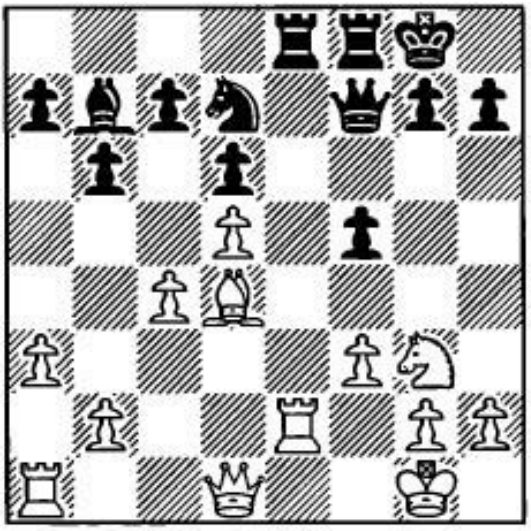


DIAGRAM 157. Black to Play

22...f4!?

A rather radical solution as Black cedes control over the e4-square. Quite a role reversal from a dozen moves ago. I had expected Anatoly to play something like 22...b5 or 22...c6, chipping away at my central wedge.

23.Ne4 h6 24.Qc2 Re7 25.Rae1 Rfe8 26.Nc3 a6 27.Rxe7 Rxe7 28.Rxe7 Qxe7 29.Ne2 Nf8 30.Kf1 Qf7 31.Bc3 b5 32.b3 bxc4 33.bxc4 Bc8

Rather inconsistent. Again, 33...c6 looks like the right continuation.

34.Qd2 Ng6 35.Qd4 Bd7

Although White has the more active pieces, it isn't clear how to make progress. After 36.Bd2 Qf5! 37.Bxf4Qb1+ 38.Kf2 Bf5 Black has compensation.

36.Qa7?!

A probing action that goes nowhere in a hurry.

36...Bf5 37.Qd4! Kh7?!

Seeking to take advantage of my retraced steps. In fact, the best move was 37...Bd7, asking White how he intends to continue. Black's queen needs to transit through the f5-square and is now blocked

38.Bd2! Bc2 39.Bxf4 Qf5 40.Kf2 Qd3 41.Bc1 Ne5 42.Qxd3+ Bxd3 (Diagram 158)

Despite the various hiccups, the game remains fairly evenly balanced, or perhaps the position is just a tad better for White, as my king is more active in the ending.

43.c5 Bc4 44.cxd6 cxd6 45.Ke3 Bxd5 46.Ng3 Kg6 47.Ne4 Nc4+ 48.Kd4 Bf7 49.a4 Kf5?!

A mistake that walks intotrouble. With 49...Na5! Black should draw.

50.g4+ Kg6?

This too is excessively helpful. Black should have played 50...Ke6!, as he is able

to recover his piece: 51.Kxc4 d5+ 52.Kd4 dxe4 53.Kxe4, and although he is a pawn down, the bishops of opposite colors insure a draw.

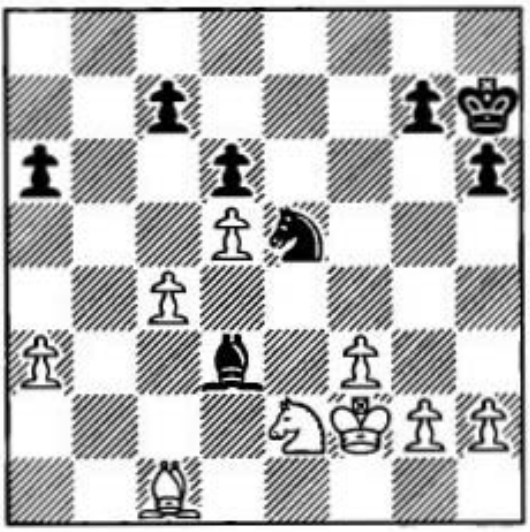


DIAGRAM 158. White to Play

51.f4! Kh7 52.h3

Suddenly, I have a pleasant advantage. I didn't know if I could win, but Anatoly was becoming terribly short of time.

52...d5 53.Nc5 a5 54.f5 h5 55.Bf4 hxg4 56.hxg4 g6?

A "panicked reaction" to time-trouble. I expected something like 56...Be8, seeking to trade or simply pick-off the a4-pawn.

57.f6 g5?! 58.Bxg5 Kg6 1-0

Anatoly lost by exceeding the time-control. Despite the flurry of errors induced by time-trouble, after 59.Bh4 Be8 Black is still kicking up a fuss.

Our second game came in the 12th round. Anatoly had a plus score and besides seeking revenge for our first encounter he was trying to catch the leaders.

Anatoly Karpov - Yasser Seirawan
Roquebrune (rapid), 1992
Modern Defense

1.d4 d6

I have had a deep fondness for the Modern or "Rat" Defense since I started to play chess. Sometimes it is just nice to say hello to a good friend, and even one who is a bit of a fiend.

2.Nf3 g6 3.c4 Bg7 4.Nc3 e5

After our game in Haninge, Anatoly realized my great familiarity with such queenless middlegames and had come prepared for one of my favorite defenses. This variation is dodgy, and I was once brutally crushed by Lev Polugaevsky (Lone Pine, 1978), which damaged my fondness for the line. I suppose I was sufficiently brave to try it in a rapid game.

5.e4 Nc6

Possibly this natural developing move is ill-timed at this particular moment and 5...Bg4!? might be a better choice. Of course, I could transpose to an old KID with 5...Nd7, but that wasn't my intent.

6.Bg5!

An annoying little hit. Now 6...Nge7 takes away the retreat square for the c6-knight and after 7.d5 Black's scheme of development is disrupted. Even more worrying: 7.dxe5! besets Black with serious problems. I had hoped for 6.d5 Nce7, when I'm all set for ...f7-f5 and a favorable King's Indian – a line I'm very familiar with.

6...f6 7.Be3 Nh6

My earlier observations apply here as well. If 7...Nge7 8.d5, the c6-knight is denied use of the e7-square. Perhaps 7...Bg4, trying to coax d4-d5, might be better, but Black will lose tempi after 8.d5 Nce7 9.c5, as the g4-bishop isn't well placed. Here, the radical move 7...Bh6!? is worthy of attention and may have been best.

8.dxe5! dxe5

An unfortunate recapture. But what were the alternatives? 8...Ng4? 9.exf6! simply wins a pawn; 8...Nxe5 9.Be2 (9.Nxe5 fxe5!? 10.Be2 0-0 10.c5 is better for White) 9...0-0 10.0-0 leaves Black with problems over how to develop; and, finally, 8...fxe5 9.c5! Ng4 10.Bg5 is just very good for White.

9.Qxd8+ Kxd8

This was not the ending I wanted when playing my favorite old defense. Specifically, the c6-knight is "in the way." Unfortunately 9...Nxd8? allows 10.Nd5, winning either the f6- or the c7-pawn.

10.0-0-0+ Bd7 11.h3 (Diagram 159)

White has to take out a tempo to prevent ...Nh6-g4, which is some solace for me. Now I have to do a repair job to get my pieces into harmony.

11...Kc8! 12.c5 Nf7 13.Bc4 Ncd8 14.b4 c6 15.Nd2 Be6

I like my last few moves very much and I've kept White's plus to a minimum.

16.Be2

A surprising retreat. I expected either 16.a4, playing for a queenside initiative, or perhaps 16.g3, preparing for f2-f4, and trying to open the position for his superior development.

16...Bh6!

Falling back on good strategic dogma: trade your inactive pieces for your op-

ponent's active ones. The text prepares a future ...b7-b5, to grab space on the queenside as well.

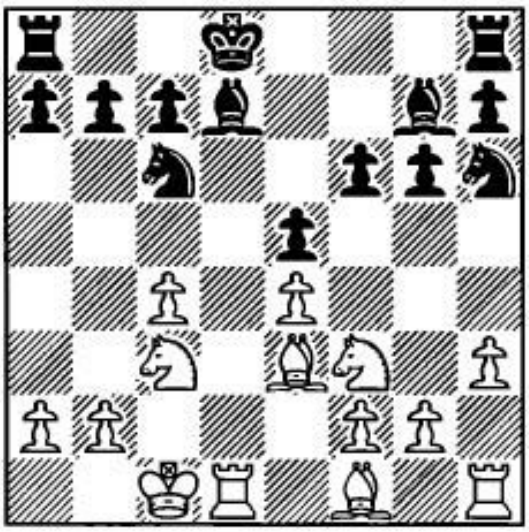


DIAGRAM 159. White to Play

17.Bxh6 Nxh6 18.Nc4 Ndf7 19.a4 Kc7 20.b5 Rad8!

Narrowly escaping the curfew. I played it just in time, before the queenside is locked down.

21.b6+ Kb8 22.Ne3 Rd4! 23.Nc2 Rxd1+ 24.Rxd1 Rd8! 25.Kb2 f5 26.a5 Ng8 27.Rxd8+ Nxd8 28.Ka3 Nf6 29.Bd3 (Diagram 160)

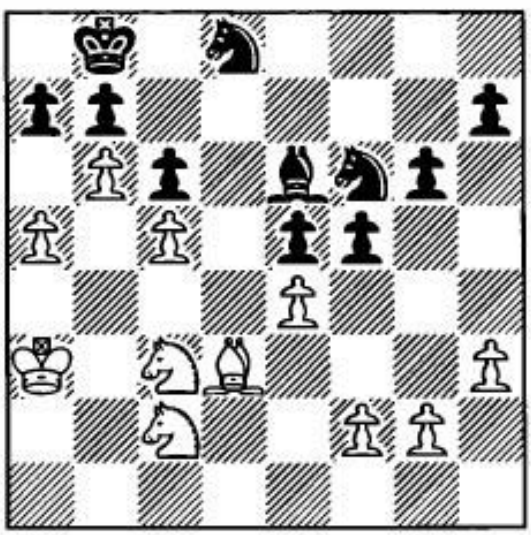


DIAGRAM 160. Black to Play

I've been able to roll with the flow quite well. Optically, White is doing very well in terms of counting space and squares, but Black's position isn't as difficult as it appears. White has to be genuinely concerned that the c5-pawn doesn't become a target after ...Nf6-d7 and ...Nd8-e6, which in fact looks like a good idea.

29...fxe4! 30.Nxe4 Nd7 31.Ne3 Bd5 32.Kb4 Ne6 33.Bc4 Nf4 34.Ng5 h6 35.Nf7

Considerably increasing the sharpness of play, Anatoly decides to trade his queenside pawns for my kingside ones. I thought the ensuing ending was even.

35...Bxf7 36.Bxf7 Nd3+ 37.Kc4 N3xc5 38.Bxg6 axb6 39.axb6 Na4 40.Ng4 Naxb6+ 41.Kd3 (Diagram 161)

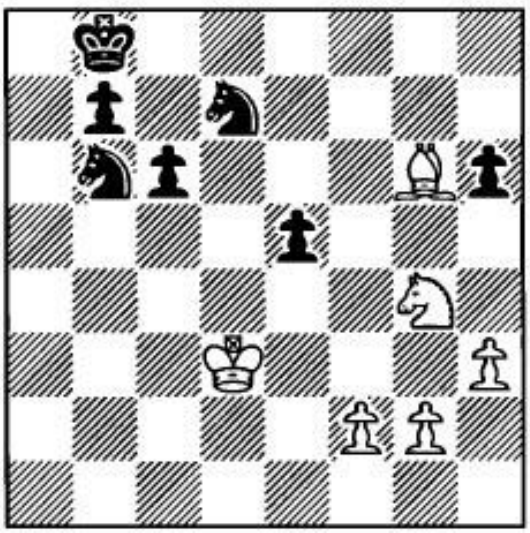


DIAGRAM 161. Black to Play

Despite the much reduced material, if White can snatch the h6-pawn he will have the far superior game as the h3-passer will become the most dangerous one on the board. Fortunately, I have some tactics to slow White down.

41...Nd5! 42.g3 Ne7 43.Bf7 Nf5! 44.Kd2 Kc7

My king emerges from its lair just in time to keep the position balanced.

45.Be6 Nd4 46.Bxd7 Kxd7 47.Nxe5+

Anatoly blinks first and decides to secure a draw. Which side stands better after 47.Nxh6 Ke6 is anyone's guess. Both players have connected passers supported by their knights. I was happy that my knight was well centralized and can quickly return to sacrifice itself if necessary.

47...Ke6 48.Ng4 h5 49.Ne3 b5 50.Kd3

Probably it doesn't matter, but if I were White 50.f4 and 51.g4 would be my choice to start the pawns moving.

50...c5 51.f4 Nf5 52.g4 Ng3

An interesting attempt to play for the win. After 52...hxg4 53.hxg4 Nxe3 54.Kxe3 a draw could be agreed. I wanted to keep my h-pawn on the board and

explore my chances.

53.Nc2 h4 54.Ne3?!

Time-pressure was beginning to be a factor for Anatoly once again. A safer line was 54.Na3 b4 55.Nc4 Nh1 56.f5+ Kd5 57.g5 Nf2+ 58.Ke3 Ne4 59.g6 Nf6 and, with both sides' pawns blocked, the game is drawn.

54...c4+

My pawns are the first to cross the demarcation line. Quite a turnaround from the earlier diagrams.

55.Kd2?!

Asking for trouble. Here 55.Kc3 Ne2+ 56.Kb4 Nxf4 57.Kxb5 and White should draw.

55...Ne4+ 56.Ke2 Nd6!

Preparing to advance my pawns further.

57.Ng2?

A gross over-estimation of his position. White is playing with fire and should have played 57.Kd2, keeping a close eye on the runaway criminals.

57...b4 58.Nxh4?

Now White is lost. He must play 58.Kd2, but he has already made things quite difficult for himself. For example, 58.Kd2 c3+ 59.Kc2 (59.Kd3 Nb5) 59...Kd5 60.Kb3 Ke4 61.Ne1 Kxf4 62.Kxb4 Ne4, with practical chances for Black. At such a moment, I'm very happy that h-pawns remain on the board.

58...b3 59.Kd2 Ne4+ 60.Kc1 0-1

Here Anatoly's flag fell, but the position is already gone. After 60...c3 61.Nf3 Nd2! 62.Nd4+ (62.Nxd2 b2+!, is a nasty *zwischenzug*) 62...Kd5 63.Nxb3 Nxb3+ 64.Kc2 Kc4, I will play ...Nb3-d4+ and promote my c-pawn with check.

Before the second rapid game, above, was played, on the free day a last-minute blitz tournament was held. Ljubo took top honors, and Karpov was second. I finished "+1" but didn't play well. In our game Anatoly completely outplayed me, but the clock was my ally as he overstepped the limit in a winning position.

Anatoly Karpov-Yasser Seirawan
Roquebrune (blitz), 1992
Czech Benoni

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e5

When playing in the 1979 World Junior Championship in Skien, Norway I watched as Jim Plaskett mowed down an opponent on the black side of this defense in a main-line variation. Impressed, I've played this defense as Black on several occasions, with reasonable results. Although it is a particularly effective

line against computers and Open tournament opposition, ceding so much space to Anatoly was a very bad idea.

4.Nc3 d6 5.e4 Be7 6.g3

Surprisingly, this slightly passive treatment is favored by most grandmasters. The main line is 6.h3 0-0 7.Nf3 Nbd7 8.Bd3 Ne8 9.g4, when White plays for Qd1-e2 and queenside castling. The idea of Black's slightly offbeat King's Indian/Benoni-type of position is to be able to play for ...f7-f5, after *fianchettoing* the e8-knight. In that way, Black reaches a KID break, and the e7-bishop is better placed.

The idea of the text is to meet Black's ...f7-f5 advance with f2-f4, to stop Black from further expansion. Furthermore, owing to the central pawn structure there is a danger that the f1-bishop may become "bad" and White could therefore choose to play Bf1-h3, to exchange Black's c8-bishop.

6...0-0 7.Bg2 Ne8 8.h4 g6 9.h5 (Diagram 162)

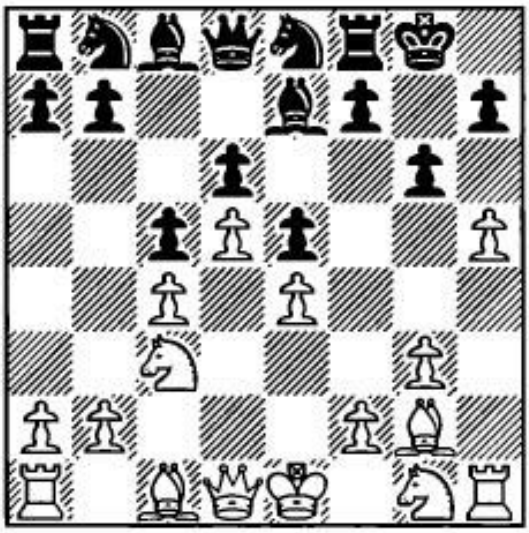


DIAGRAM 162. Black to Play

9...g5??

A strategic howler of major proportions. This move is wrong for numerous reasons. Firstly, because I close the side of the board that I need to open to acquire counterplay. Secondly, the opportunity for ...Be7-g5, a major strategic idea for Black, trading his bad bishop, is now lost. Lastly, I create a glaring hole on the f5-square. I must have seen a ghost after 9...Nd7 10.Bh6 Ng7 11.Qd2, becoming unhinged.

10.Bh3!

Immediately playing for control over the f5-square.

10...h6

A rather meek acquiescence to White's last move. While I do not like Black's

position, I should play 10...Nd7, at least preserving the light-squared bishops for a while. If I could manage ...h7-h6, ...Ne8-g7, and ...f7-f5, they might remain on the board, something that would favor Black.

11.Bxc8 Qxc8 12.Nf3 Ng7?

Now I'm having a really hard time trying to understand what I'm doing. After 12...f5 (strategically forced) 13.Nh2 White has a healthy edge. But with 13...Nf6 14.Qe2 Bd8, I could try to bring my pieces to active squares.

13.Nh2 Nd7 14.Ng4 Kh7 15.Ne3 Nf6 16.Qe2 Ng8 17.Bd2 f5 18.exf5 Nxf5 19.Qd3 Kh8 20.Nxf5 Qxf5 21.Qxf5 Rxf5 (Diagram 163)

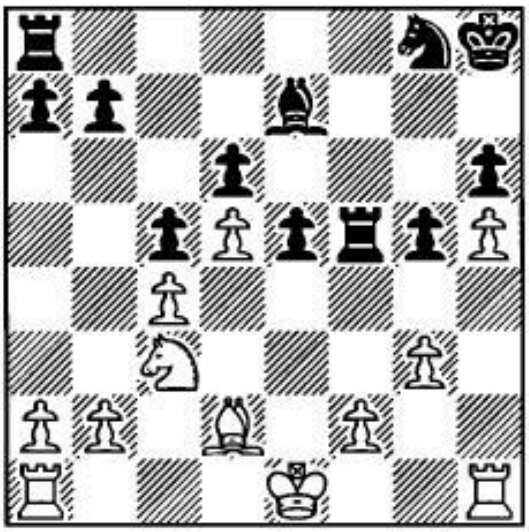


DIAGRAM 163. White to Play

22.g4!

White now has a massive positional grip.

22...Rf7 23.Ke2 Ra8 24.Rhf1 Nf6 25.f3 Bd8?

Blundering a pawn. I had to preface the text with 25...a6!, and only then try to activate my bishop.

26.Nb5!

Whoops. Ye Olde Fork variation. I drop a pawn, and my position sinks from bad to lost instantly.

26...Be7 27.Nxa7 e4 28.Bc3 Kh7 29.Bxf6 Bxf6 30.fxe4 Bxb2 31.Rxf7+ Rxf7 32.Rf1 Re7 33.Kd3 Be5?

Yeesh, looking at this game I'm wondering what I'm doing. It seems like a tag team where I'm working *together* with Anatoly to help him clobber this Seirawan character. I should at least play 33...Kg7, to cover the f8-square.

34.Rf8! Kg7 35.Rb8 Bh2 36.a4 Kf6 37.Nb5 Rd7 38.Re8! Be5 39.Re6+ Kg7

My position is wrecked. I suppose the only reason I didn't resign was that Anatoly was very significantly behind on the clock.

40.a5 Kh7 41.Kc2 Kg7 42.Kb3 Kh7 43.Ka4 Kg7 44.Na7 Bg3 45.Kb5 Kh7 46.Kb6 Kg7 47.Nb5 Kh7 48.Nc7 Be1 49.Ne8 Rf7 50.Nxd6 Rf2 51.Nxb7 Rc2 52.a6 Rb2+ 53.Kc6 0-1

Sadly for Anatoly, but happily for the hero of this work, my opponent's flag fell in this hopelessly won position. Not my proudest moment... If I dare say so, a number of moves earlier I had offered a draw – in a lost position – because my opponent was so far behind on the clock. Anatoly thought he had enough time to queen and mate. When in Monaco one should gamble...

At the closing ceremony of the first Melody Amber tournament, I was sitting next to Anatoly enjoying the camaraderie of the event when he said to me, "You know, Yasser, I'm not sure I've ever lost three tournament games in one week, and certainly not to the same player." We had to laugh. It was quite an event. Fortunately, Muriel and Joop thought so too, and the Melody Amber tournament is a highlight on the tournament circuit every year. Many thanks to them, and to Melody as well!

From July 5-10, 1992, Bessel Kok and SWIFT organized a 32-player knock-out event as a kind of consolation for those who had qualified for the second series of World Cup tournaments which the CMA canceled. The format was two rapid games followed by two blitz games if necessary to break the tie, and finally an Armageddon game where White has six minutes to Black's five minutes but Black has draw odds.

The following was my *Inside Chess* preamble to our knock-out match.

"It's always a pleasure to play such a magnificent player as Anatoly Karpov, but things certainly didn't start out as I would have liked. In the first game, a Queen's Indian, Karpov as Black neutralized the position completely and drew easily. He was then prepared to win the match with the White pieces but the game slipped away from him. At one point I was ahead by ten minutes on the clock – an insurmountable advantage."

Yasser Seirawan-Anatoly Karpov
Brussels (rapid), 1992
Queen's Indian Defense

1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 b6 3.Nc3 Bb7 4.d4 e6 5.a3

Tigran Petrosian's move. A line, in passing, that Victor Korchnoi absolutely despises. "It is anti-chess. You spend a whole tempo in the opening to deny the f8-bishop a square. What is that?" he would protest. Good point, but White does have a reason: he hopes to use a c3-knight to increase his control over the center. Having studied so many lines of the Queen's Indian, I was becoming desperate for White.

5...d5 6.cxd5 Nxd5 7.Qc2 Nxc3 8.Qxc3

The standard move is 8.bxc3, beefing up the d4-pawn and preparing to create a pawn phalanx in the center. The idea of the text is to make it awkward for Black to play the freeing ...c7-c5 break thanks to the potential attack on the g7-pawn.

8...Nd7 9.Bg5 Be7

At the time, this was rather a surprise. I had expected 9...f6 10.Bh4, and by quicklycontinuing e2-e3 and Bf1-c4, I hoped to put pressure on the e6-pawn.

10.Bxe7 Kxe7! (Diagram 164)



DIAGRAM 164. White to Play

Fiddlesticks. While it's not every day you see Karpov's king in the centerlike this, it was the proper recapture. After the expected 10...Qxe7?! 11.Qxc7! Nf6 12.Qxe7+ Kxe7 I don't think that Black has proper compensation, unlike in my ending with Spassky from the US Open.

11.e3 Rc8 12.Bb5 c6 13.Be2 c5 14.Rd1

I now had doubts about the wisdom of capturing the g7-pawn. After 14.dxc5 Rxc5! 15.Qxg7 Rg8 16.Qxh7 Nf6, followed by 17...Rxg2, Black's king suddenly seemed much safer in the centerthan did my own.

14...Nf6 15.0-0?!

After this, I give up any chance of an opening edge. I had to play 15.dxc5 Bd5 16.b4! bxc5 17.0-0, and hope to take advantage of Black's exposed king.

15...Qd5!

By assuming a dominating position in the center with his queen, Black solves all his problems. The pieces are soon vacuumed offthe board and the point split.

16.Rc1 a5 17.Rfd1 cxd4 18.Qxd4 Qxd4 19.Nxd4 Rxc1 20.Rxc1 Rc8 21.Rxc8 Bxc8 22.f3 e5 23.Nb5 Nd5 24.Kf2 Bd7 25.Bc4 Bxb5 26.Bxd5 f6 27.h4 h6 28.Ke1 ½-½

The following annotations to the second game were published in *Inside Chess* magazine (Volume 5, Issue 15, page 9 and 10)

Anatoly Karpov-Yasser Seirawan
Brussels (rapid), 1992
Modern Defense

1.d4 d6 2.e4 g6 3.g3(?)

I've never understood this move but I've seen strong grandmasters play it as an antidote to the Pirc. Why misplace the f1-bishop?

3...Bg7 4.Bg2 Nc6 5.Ne2 e5 6.d5 Nce7 7.c4 f5 8.Nbc3 Nf6 9.0-0 0-0

I prefer Black here because I have an accelerated KID and White's minor pieces are uncoordinated.

10.f4 Nxe4

Playing for "equals." Keeping the tension with 10...Kh8 is probably best.

11.Nxe4 fxe4 12.Bxe4 Bg4 13.Qd3 Qd7 14.Bd2 Nf5 15.fxe5 Bxe2 16.Qxe2 Bxe5 17.Rab1 Rf7 18.Qd3 Raf8 19.Bg2? (Diagram 165)

Trying to keep play. White is better off playing for the draw with 19.b3, followed by a general exchange on the f5-square.

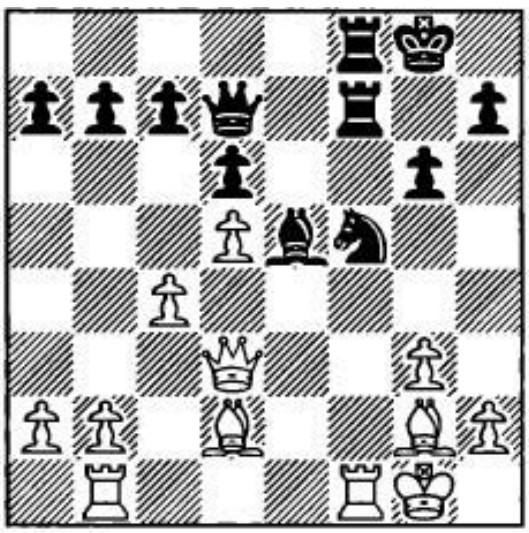


DIAGRAM 165. Black to Play

19...Qa4! 20.a3 Qa6 21.Kh1 Qb6 22.Bh3 Qd4 23.Qxd4 Nxd4 24.Rxf7 Rxf7 25.Kg2 Kg7 26.Bg4 Nb3 27.Be1 Nc5?

Still playing for equality. After 27...a5! 28.Bd1 a4 White has problems.

28.Be2 Na4 29.b4?

Karpov believes in White on principle, but this is excessive. He keeps a nice

disadvantage with 29.b3, with play similar to the game.

29...Nc3 30.Bxc3 Bxc3 31.Rd1 Re7 32.Kf2 a5 33.b5 b6 34.Rd3 Bb2 35.Bf3 Kf6 36.h4 h6 37.Bg2 Re5 38.a4 g5 39.Rf3+ Ke7 40.hxg5 hxg5 41.g4 Bd4+ 42.Kf1 Be3 43.Rh3?!

Anatoly was worried about the opposite-colored bishop ending following 43.Rf5, but it should be drawn.

43...Bf4 44.Rh7+ Kd8 45.Rh6 Re3 46.Re6 Be5! 47.Rg6 (Diagram 166)

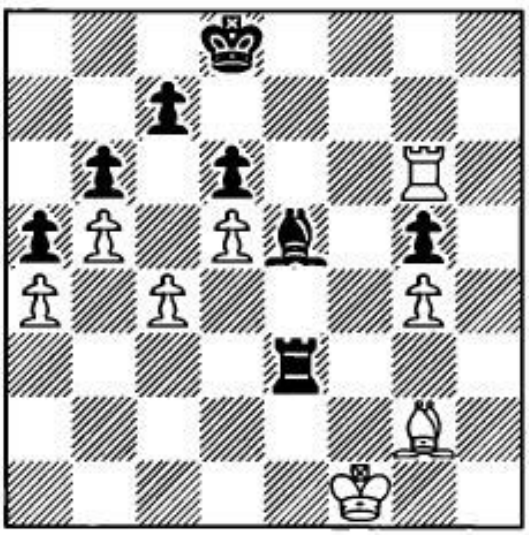


DIAGRAM 166. Black to Play

47...Bg3!

This move accentuates the difference between the bishops.

48.Bh1 Re1+ 49.Kg2 Bf4 50.Rg8+ Kd7 51.Rg7+ Kc8 52.Rh7 Rc1 53.Rh8+ Kb7 54.Re8 Rxc4 55.Kf2 Rxe4

Simpler was 55...Be5, keeping White's bishop out.

56.Be4 Rb4 57.Bd3 a4 58.Bf5 Rxb5 59.Bc8+ Ka7 60.Bd7 Rxd5

Later, a bewildered grandmaster asked how I managed to collect all four White pawns on light squares. "But where was Karpov's bishop?" Inquiring minds need to know.

61.Bc6 Rd2+ 62.Ke1 b5 63.Bxb5 a3 64.Bc4 d5

(Valery) Salov asked me, "Why didn't you play 65...a2?" The problem with that move is that it speeds up the game.

65.Bb3 c5! 66.Re2 c4 67.Ba2 Rb2 68.Kd1 Kb6 69.Rxb2+ axb2 70.Kc2 Bc1 71.Kc3 Kc5 72.Kc2 Kb4 73.Kd1 d4 74.Bb1 d3 75.Ke1 Be3 76.Kd1 Kc5 77.Ke1 Kd4 78.Kd1 c3 79.Bc2 dxc2+ 80.Kxc2 Ke4 81.Kb1 Kd3 82.Ka2 Kc2 0-1

At last Anatoly gave up, and I won our knock-out match. I think the above two games clearly show why the FIDE KO event for deciding the World Championship

title is a lottery. In a 24-game match against Anatoly I would have no chance. In a two-game match my chances zoom higher and become "reasonable," since the tiebreak games feature faster and faster time controls. Now consider that to win the event Anatoly would face seven such opponents, each having a reasonable chance. In that case, the odds of him winning such an event – even as a pre-tournament favorite – cannot be higher than ten percent.

One of the fantastic things about this SWIFT event was that the sponsor Bessel Kok invited Eric Lobron as a "wildcard" player. To hear Bessel tell it, some grandmasters criticized his choice because it meant someone would have an easy first-round match. It didn't quite turn out that way, as Eric made it all the way to the final. So much for being an easy victim. He lost to Michael Adams in the final.

Anatoly and I next met at the 1993 Melody Amber event in Monaco. This time Joop van Oosterom had a twist for the players, half of the rapid games would be played blindfolded. Oh my! I had never played a formal blindfold game before, and like everyone else in the field worried that something would go wrong...

The actual mechanics for playing blindfold were that the players would sit at a computer terminal screen with a two-dimensional chess board with no pieces. We saw the move in text and typed back our response. The text moves disappeared, and all we saw as the game progressed was a "half-ply" move of text. The games could be watched by the arbiters and spectators normally, but the players could not see the pieces. It took some getting used to, as it is kind of strange to be staring at an empty board.

The following game was our "rapid blindfold" game, and the next was a "normal" rapid game, where we pushed wood the conventional way.

Yasser Seirawan-Anatoly Karpov
Monte Carlo (blindfold), 1993
Ruy López

1.e4!

"Best by test" according to Bobby Fischer and my special surprise for Anatoly. I had never essayed this against him before. You never know: in blindfold, such an unexpected move may cause the player to look at the type really closely.

1...e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Bxc6!

According to modern theory, the Ruy López Exchange Variation is not supposed to offer White much chance of an advantage. While that may be true, when playing a blindfold game it is easier after the queens are off the board and the structures are fixed. That was my game plan, at least. The irony is how the game turned out.

4...dxc6 5.0-0 f6 6.d4 exd4 7.Nxd4 c5 8.Nb3 Qxd1 9.Rxd1 Bg4 10.f3 Bd7 11.Bf4 0-0-0 12.Nc3 c4 13.Na5! Bc5+ 14.Kf1 (Diagram 167)

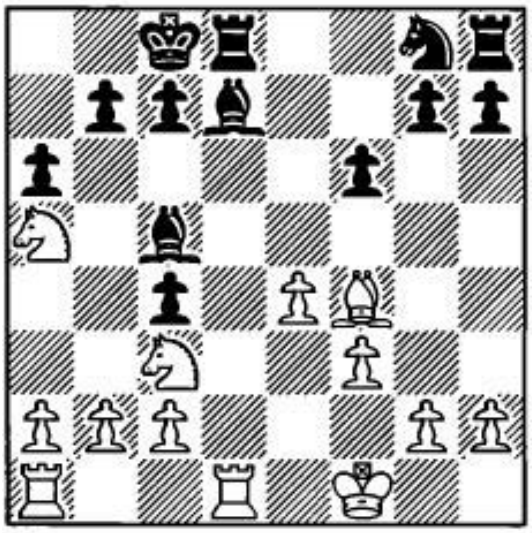


DIAGRAM 167. Black to Play

We've reached a very tricky position which is supposed to be equal. Although that is true, Black has to navigate some dangerous tactics to achieve equality, and a single misstep will give White a sizable advantage.

14...b5!

Essentially forced, as Black needs to protect his c4-pawn. It looks attractive to play 14...Bb4? 15.Nxc4 Bxc3 16.bxc3 Bb5! when Black wins material thanks to the pinned c4-knight. The trap is that White plays 15.Bxc7!, protecting the a5-knight and attacking the d8-rook. When Black captures with 15...Kxc7 then 16.Nd5+ and 17.Nxb4 wins a pawn.

One other point to make in this position is that Black has to decide whether or not to play...g7-g5, gaining a tempo against the f4-bishop. After Bf4-g3, Black gains the option of ...Ng8-h6, preparing an expansion by ...f7-f5, or just to reroute the knight. On the other hand, leaving the f4-bishop alone may allow ...Ng8-e7-g6, bringing the knight to the e5-square with tempo. At times it is difficult to weigh the two lines. For now, Anatoly leaves the f4-bishop alone.

15.Nd5! c6?

I realized this was a known error and now I struggled to figure out why. After all, I don't usually play 1.e4, and so I'm not that familiar with all the lines. The "theory" that I expected continued 15...Ne7! 16.Bxc7! Nxd5 17.Rxd5 Kxc7 (17...Bb4? 18.Bxd8 Rxd8 19.a4! Bxa5 20.axb5 Bb6 21.bxa6 is very good for White) 18.Rxc5+ Kb6 19.b4 cxb3 20.Nxb3 Be6 21.Rc3, when Black has sufficient compensation for his pawn.

It is always a strange challenge: your opponent deviates from the theory you know into a side channel that "has to be good" for you. But why? Will we be able to figure it out over the board?

16.b4! Ba7!

The only move. I had worked out that 16...cxd5? 17.bxc5 dxe4 18.c6! Bf5 19.Nb7! Rxd1+ 20.Rxd1 Ne7 21.Nd6+ is a winning check, as the black king has to walk into a discoveredcheck, allowing Nd6xf5+, slurping a piece.

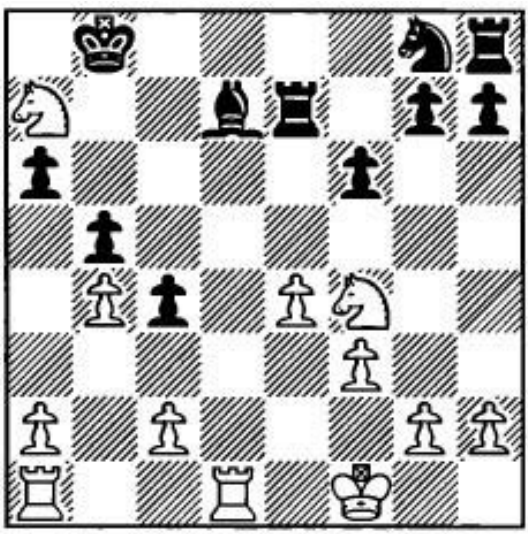
Here I went into a long think, using most of my time. This is the critical position.

17.Be3?

Cowardly backing down from the challenge. While I just "knew" that 17.Nc7! had to be the right move I was becoming lost in the thicket of variations. The idea of 17.Nc7 is as straightforward as possible. White wants to pluck the a6-pawn, and then play a2-a4 and Na6-c5, when I would have a pawn as well as the initiative.

While the tactics are murky, they are favorable for White. My main line went 17.Nc7 Bb8!, which essentially is forced. Otherwise, the a6-pawn is just lost for insufficient compensation. White continues 18.Ne6! Bxf4 19.Nxc6! Re8 – so far so good. Both players are on a very narrow tight-rope and should not deviate. For example, 18...Bxe6?? 19.Rxd8+ Kxd8 20.Nxc6+ and 21.Nxb8 is very good for White, while 19.Nxf4?! takes us into a position very similar to the game.

The position after 19...Re8 is very sharp. Both white knights are hanging, I've sacrificed my f4-bishop and need to recover my material. I have to continue 20.Na7+! Kb8 (the only move) 21.Nxf4, winning back my bishop. In my mind's eye I saw that the a7-knight cannot be captured as the d7-bishop is hanging. Clearly my knight is trapped if it isn't allowed to escape through the c6-square. Black protects his d7-bishop by 21...Re7 **(Diagram 168)**, reaching the analysis diagram:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 168. White to Play

White has no choice but to continue 22.Nd5 Re6! 23.Nf4 Re7!, and all I saw was

a repetition. Hmm. That was strange. Where was my refutation? I saw but quickly discounted 23.Nb6!? Be8 24.Nbc8, and stopped analyzing. "What are my knights doing on a7 and c8?" I wondered as I kept rechecking each of the moves above, looking for winning deviations and found none. I wasn't ready to hand Anatoly an easy draw and so I chose the text, which gives a small advantage to Black.

Bizarrely enough and well beyond my blindfold skills,. White's knights,. while desperately clinging to one another for survival, are doing something: they make it difficult for Black to complete his natural development. While by no means exhaustive, the following line seems most natural: 24...Nh6 25.Rd5 Nf7 26.Rad1 Ne5 27.Rd6 Rxd6 28.Rxd6 8d7 (28...Kb7? 29.Rb6+! and 30.Rxa6 – an attractive case of showing how the wayward knights do "something") 29.f4 Bxc8 30.Nxc8, and the knights escape and White ends up with a better ending.

A really deep line of play where the mix of tactics and strategy has me bewildered. As mentioned, I simply stopped considering it when I saw my knights were "trapped."

17...Bxe3 18.Nxe3 Ne7 19.Rd6?! Kc7 20.Rad1 Bc8!

The move I had simply missed in my calculations. For some reason I "saw" only 20...Nc8 21.R6d4, and thought, "I have a repetition at least and maybe more." Now all of Black's opening problems are behind him. I awoke with the realization that my "strong a5-knight," while well-protected, was trapped. Now Anatoly has a slightly better position, but White's position is solid enough and he should draw.

21.Rxd8 Rxd8 22.Rxd8 Kxd8 23.Ke2 Kc7 24.Kd2 Kd6 25.Nd1 c5 26.a3 cxb4 27.axb4 f5 28.exf5 Nxf5 29.c3 Nh4 30.Ne3 g5 31.Ke2 Ng6 32.g3 Ne7 33.f4g4?! (Diagram 169)

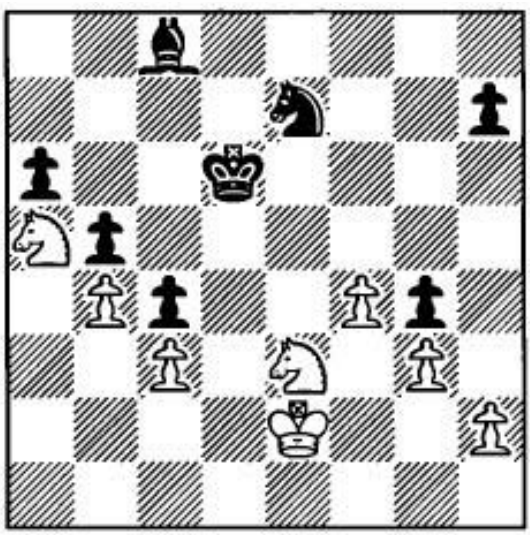


DIAGRAM 169. White to Play

After this move, allowing me a protected passed pawn, the position is equal. Black should play 33...gxf4 34.gxf4 to keep the game alive. The position would still be slightly better for Black, again thanks to the offside a5-knight.

34.Kd2 Kc7 35.Nc2

Going for an attempted rescue mission. The idea is to play Nc2-d4, making Na5-c6 possible if it is allowed.

35...Nd5 36.Nc6?? Kxc6 0-1

Whoops. It is "blindfold" chess for a reason. I simply thought that I had played 36.Nd4 already. Quite a tragic ending to an interesting game. My only solace was that in those early Amber days such blunders were not exceptional, as many of my colleagues made howlers of their own. The term howler, by the way, deserves an explanation. These are blunders that are so bad that after making a dignified exit from the playing-hall, the player is permitted to take a walk (away from the players' hotel) where he can scream so loudly that his howl can be heard in the next county!

In our second encounter, a normal rapid game, we both had sight of the board – much to my relief.

Anatoly Karpov-Yasser Seirawan
Monte Carlo (rapid), 1993
Semi-Tarrasch Defense

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 d5 4.Nc3 c5 5.cxd5 Nxd5 6.e4 Nxc3 7.bxc3 cxd4 8.cxd4 Nc6 9.Bc4 Bb4+ 10.Bd2 Bxd2+ 11.Qxd2 0-0 12.0-0 b6 13.d5?!

If this thrust is good for White, the whole variation would be bad for Black. In principle, White should patiently prepare this advance with 13.Rfe1 Bb7 14.Rad1, obtaining an edge. In this way, White has made Black commit his bishop to the b7-square, which is important as it impedes the blockading maneuver ...Nc6-a6-b7-d6, after which White can play the d4-d5 advance and, he hopes, keep going.

13...Na5 14.Be2 exd5 15.exd5 Bg4!?

Intending to get rid of the f3-knight and to play ...Qd8-d6, setting up a dark-squared blockade. The immediate 15...Qd6 16.Nd4 would be slightly better for White.

16.d6!?

Anatoly felt obliged to try to cross up my plans. The question is whether the little fella has marched too far too fast.

16...Qf6 17.Rfd1 Rad8 18.Qd4 Rfe8 19.Qxg4 Rxe2 20.Rac1 Nb7 21.Rc8? (Diagram 170)

A tactical oversight that drops the d6-pawn. I expected 21.Rc7 Nxd6 22.Rxa7, with a draw. Another bad mistake would be 21.d7? Nc5, when again the d-pawn is rounded up.

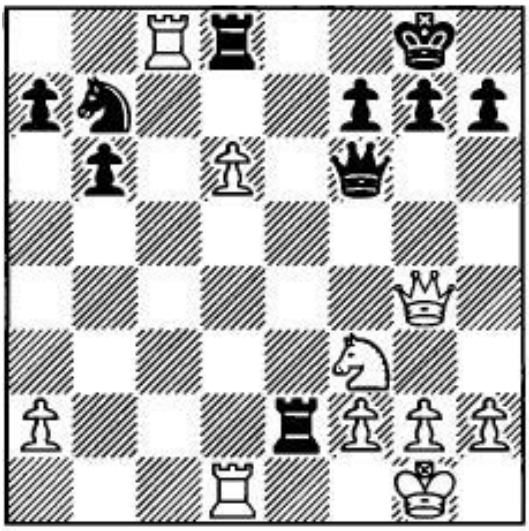


DIAGRAM 170. Black to Play

21...Nxd6 22.Rxd8+ Qxd8 23.h3!?

Confessing to his oversight. White had intended 23.Nd4, attacking the e2-rook, followed by 24.Nf5, threatening mate on g7, as well as attacking the pinned d6-knight and "winning." The problem is that 23...Re4!, attacking White's queen, is a very good move which stops White's plan in its tracks. Black then continues ...Qd8-e7, with a solid extra pawn.

23...Qe7 24.Qa4 g6 25.Qc6 Re6?

A natural reaction, as I want to keep the position and maintain my extra pawn. Instead of this retreat, it was better to go over to the attack by means of 26...Ne4! 27.Rd7 Qc5! 28.Qxc5 bxc5 29.Rxa7 c4, with a much better ending for Black.

26.Rd5 Ne8?!

It isn't so easy to shake off White's pressure, but this was the wrong way. I should play 26...Kg7! 27.Qc3+ Qf6 28.Nd4 Kg8!, a move that I had missed. I saw 28...Re7 as a desirable way to consolidate, as ...Nd6-e4-c5 would put the knight on an anchored square, but 28...Re7? allows 29.Rxd6! Qxd6 30.Nf5+ and the double-check is a winner for White. After 28...Kg8!, Black will be able to improve his pieces. For example, 29.Qg3 Re1+ 30.Kh2 Ne8! 31.Rd7 a6 and the advantage of the extra pawn will be slowly felt.

27.Qc8 Qc7?

Throwing away a pawn and the rest of my advantage. White would still be worse after 27...Re2 28.Rd8 (28.Rd7? Qe6 is now very good for Black) 28...b5!, slowly improving my position. Anatoly now seizes the opportunity to win back his pawn.

28.Qxc7 Nxc7 29.Rd7! Nb5

My intention had been 29...Rc6 30.Ne5 Rc1+ 31.Kh2 f5, when I thought I'd have a chance for ...Nc7-b5 and ...Rc1-c7, but this is too slow, as after 32.Nf7! White's chances are certainly no worse.

30.a4 Nc3 31.Rxa7 h6 32.a5 bxa5 ½-½

I was really annoyed with myself for messing up this game. It was as if Anatolyspotted me a pawn and could draw at will.

The Great Schism Revisited

At the second Melody Amber event in 1993 all discussions were dominated by the announced break-away match between Garry Kasparov and Nigel Short. As Nigel was playing in the event, it was very interesting to have his point of view. I'm sorry to report that Nigel was rather overwhelmed, perhaps even aghast, that his colleagues thought so poorly of his announced decision to split from FIDE with many, and most especially John Nunn, asking him, in not the most polite terms, please to reconsider his decision.

Despite the criticism foisted upon him, my own included, Nigel stuck with his decision. In his view, Florencio Campomanes, the FIDE President, had engaged in some underhanded practices. Nigel expected a bid of nearly two million pounds sterling from Manchester, based on conversations he had held with city officials. When FIDE announced the Manchester bid, it was for one million two hundred thousand pounds. Nigel bitterly complained: "What was this? Eight hundred thousand pounds in prize money simply disappeared into the budget." (Into Campomanes' pocket, we were invited to presume.) Nigel pinned the blame for his decision to break from FIDE squarely on the shoulders of Campomanes and made it clear that he didn't want to do any further business with either Campomanes or FIDE. "I don't mind the FIDE tax 20%, which, okay, is a hit, but when the prize-fund is purposely sabotaged, then forget it. I just refuse to play along as thepatsy."

Undoubtedly Nigel Short will not be the first, or the last, Challenger to feel underpaid. I have much sympathyfor him in this particular matter. Recall that in 1990 the "two Ks." Kasparov and Karpov, two Soviet players, competed for a three million dollar prize-fund in the West (New York and Lyons), and now Nigel, the first Western challenger since Bobby Fischer to compete for the World title, was to play for much less. His expectations were understandablyhigh. Too, let us not forget that in the previous year Fischer had played Spasskyfor a five million dollar prize-fund. Nigel just couldn't shake the feeling that something was amiss or afoul. Without any particular insights myself, what always struck me is "where did these millions come from?" In the case of New York, Ted Field had been the Midas behind the bid, while in the case of the Fischer-Spassky rematch in Yugoslavia, Jezdimir Vasiljević, the head of Jugoskandic businesses, a giant Ponzi scheme that later collapsed, had been the sponsor. These were not "free market" bids; rather they were "private" sponsors spending millions.

As a big fan of American sports, I'm envious of the millions won by golf and tennis professionals, but I understand that the events are aired on TV and draw record advertising dollars, justifying the underlying economics of the events. Major chess events shown on TV are rare indeed and marketing forces have not justified the millions that the players want or expect. It is all well and good to say "In 1990, the FIDE Championship was for three million and with inflation, the prize should go up," but each match is a separate event with different people, different dynamics and different economic circumstances. Chess has relied on private and, where cities have made bids, on public financings. Media advertising has not supported these events. Without James Slater, the man who doubled the 1972 prize fund, would there have been a first Spassky-Fischer match? Sometimes big money bids just fall into place. Sometimes they don't. Chess history is full of stories of major would-be sponsors desiring a top-level event but, when push comes to shove, the check just doesn't get written.

Regarding the 1993 match, from the FIDE side we were informed that everything had been done according to the rules and regulations, that the bidding procedures were open and transparent, and that if the players had further sponsors to be considered, FIDE was willing to extend the bidding deadline for their inclusion. FIDE's offers went nowhere. The die had been cast.

Together, Garry Kasparov and Nigel Short, along with the New York-based attorney Bob Rice, found the "Professional Chess Association" (PCA), to sanction their match. The London newspaper *The Times* became the host and sponsor. Kasparov and Short would play for a million pounds sterling. Without the need to subtract FIDE's fee of 20%, it wasn't an inconsiderable difference, and the players likely came out "ahead" in the short term. On the other hand, the split produced untold future financial losses for the chess world, as sponsors simply did not want to "choose sides" when making a decision on paying host to a chess event.

With the break complete, FIDE was staring at an enormous problem: much of its budget depended upon the fee it derived from the World Championship title match. Most of the rest of the cycle barely paid for itself, and it was the crown jewel of the match that would put the FIDE balance-sheet in the black over a three-year period. This dependence upon a World Championship match meant that FIDE had no choice but to arrange a match of its own. The Federation's regulations were quite clear on this point, as Nigel Short had defeated Anatoly Karpov in the 1992 Candidates' Finals as well as Jan Timman in the Candidates' Semi-Finals. As mentioned earlier, both those players were invited to contest a match for the FIDE World Championship title, and both accepted.

The rivalry between the PCA and FIDE was bitter. Both organizations were desperate to trump the other in terms of prize money. Campomanes had a surprise: he announced that Oman would play host to the Karpov-Timman match and strongly suggested that the prize money involved would be greater than

that of the PCA match in London. The FIDE match was scheduled to be split between Holland and Oman. Remarkably, the Dutch side of the bid put up no prize money, merely the hosting costs. It was quite a strange affair: arbiters, organizers, hotels and tournament halls would all be paid by the Dutch organizing committee, but nothing would go to the players. Again, this was because organizers of the second half of the match in Oman were to put up the million dollars wholly on their own.

After the first half of the 24-game match had been completed in Holland, with Anatoly leading by a 7½-5½ score, a crisis erupted: at the last moment the bid from Oman collapsed and FIDE had not secured a financial guarantee. The match was in turmoil. There was a meeting with Bessel Kok to rescue the second half of the match, but Campomanes had a second choice in Jakarta, Indonesia. Mr. Bob Hassan would host the second half of the match.

As I was a second to Jan Timman during this match, along with Ulf Anderson and Jeroen Piket, I can say that we were all worried about the Oman bid as none of us had any knowledge about the Omani organizers. Was it all a bluff to trump the PCA or was it a genuine bid canceled at the last possible moment? We didn't know. Mr. Hassan turned out to be a delightful host, and Jakarta organized an impeccable match but, in the end, there was a shortfall in the funding for the prizes. The players accepted a delayed payment scheme, and many of FIDE's officials and patrons reached into their own wallets to pay the deficit. To say it was a challenging time for the FIDE leadership is an understatement. When the Olympic bid collapsed in 1994 and was rescued by the efforts of Kasparov and the Moscow organizers, it was a very critical period for FIDE.

FIDE World Champion

For my next game with Karpov I was once again facing the FIDE World Champion, by virtue of his 1993 victory over Jan Timman. The reborn World Champion remained the same person as he had been before regaining the FIDE title. Championitis did not strike, and whenever we met we always did so on very friendly terms.

The constant question was: when would the chess world heal its schism? Would Kasparov and Karpov meet for a sixth time? As mentioned in the Kasparov chapter, Garry wanted a match but not on the terms that FIDE could offer him: a match with Karpov holding the Champion's advantage of draw odds. Too, the respective PCA and FIDE cycles were in full swing, and before too long each man would have a Challenger. It seemed the chances of a rapprochement kept receding after that.

In 1994, Anatoly won the Linares tournament undefeated with an astonishing 11 points from a possible 13 games. The highest-rated player, Garry Kasparov, tied for second and was two and half points behind. According to various websites, Anatoly's victory in Linares was the highest Tournament Performance

Rating in history. Sometimes, and I know this may sound strange, chess can be a game of confidence. When your confidence is riding high, you play more quickly, you are more willing to take chances and you *expect* opportunity to greet you. It often does.

Once more Anatoly and I contested two rapid chess games in Monaco, at the third Melody Amber tournament. This time I didn't blunder a piece in our blindfold game, fortunately. Whenever you face Karpov, it is the same story: what to play with White? Everywhere there were problems. When I prepared for our games it was as though I would obtain equality with White and a slight disadvantage with Black. It seemed so unfair. Bereft of other ideas, at least I came to the game with a plan: the Torre Attack, which is a quiet opening with a dollop of poison as well.

Yasser Seirawan-Anatoly Karpov
Monte Carlo (blindfold), 1994
Torre Attack

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 e6 3.Bg5 h6 4.Bxf6!?

Giving up the two bishops so early doesn't seem particularly inspiring, but as compensation White obtains a phalanx in the center.

4...Qxf6 5.e4 d6 6.c3!?

Arguably, this approach is simply too quiet and promises nothing. White could aspire to take advantage of his superior mobility and play 6.Nc3 g6 (6...g5!?) 7.Qd2 Bg7 8.0-0-0, with the idea of Bf1-c4 and trying to blast open the center.

6...g6 7.Nbd2 Bg7 8.Bc4 Nd7 9.0-0 0-0 10.Re1 e5 11.dxe5?!

In such positions it is always a tricky business trying to decide when to clarify the center by making this trade and when to advance pawns on the queenside. Although I don't think the position holds any particular promise for White, it was likely better to keep the tension. One never knows when d4-d5, clamping down in the center and keeping the g7-bishop blocked, will work. With the text, I simply lose the option for good.

A better choice was 11.b4 (11.a4 a5) 11...Nb6!? 12.Bb3 a5 13.a3 Rd8 14.h3, with an even position that offers possibilities for both players.

11...dxe5 12.Qc2?! a5 13.a3?!

I find my last two moves simply too timid. Playing for a "solid set-up" is one thing, but allowing one's opponent to gain space freely is quite another.

13...a4! 14.Nf1 Nc5 15.Ne3 c6 16.Rad1 h5! (Diagram 171)

A reminder that Black possesses the two bishops and has gained the upper hand. The text makes way for ...Bg7-h6, activating the dormant cleric.

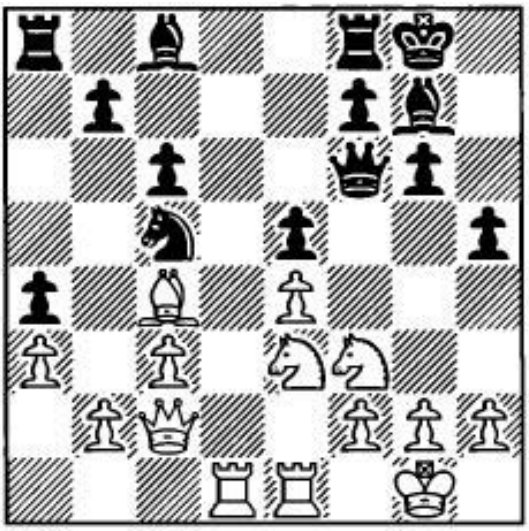


DIAGRAM 171. White to Play

17.Ba2 Qe7 18.Nd2

At this point I'm rather struggling to find a suitable plan. I'm trying to create some flexibility in my position but didn't have a concrete idea of how to play, so I decided to await developments. Unfortunately, in the art of "doing nothing" I'm up against the consummate professional.

18...Rb8 19.f3 b5 20.Ndf1 Be6 (Diagram 172)

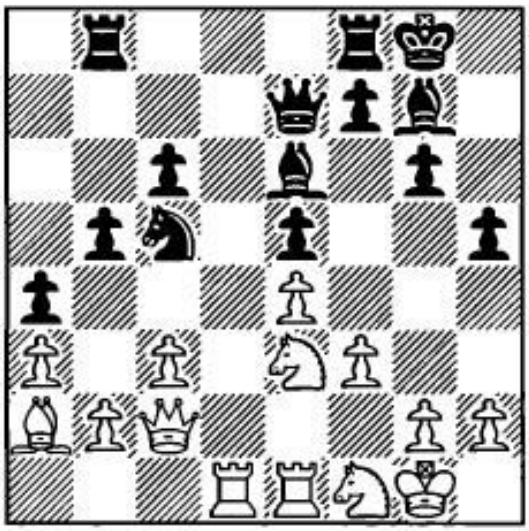


DIAGRAM 172. White to Play

Okay, in all likelihood this is a very good move as Black gains control over the

b3-square. On the other hand, I was very pleased to be rid of Black's two bishops and I was wondering what my a2-bishop might be doing after, say, 20...Rb7!, with a plan of ...Kg8-h8 and ...f7-f5 to follow. The b7-rook might swing across to the kingside or just challenge for control over the d-file.

For the next dozen moves both players shuffle their pieces around, but without a serious change to the pawn structure nothing much happens.

21.Bxe6 Nxe6 22.Qf2 Qc7 23.Nc2! Rfd8 24.Nb4 Rbc8 25.Ne3 Bf8 26.Kf1 Nf4 27.Nec2 Rd7 28.g3 Ne6 29.Qe2 Bd6 30.Ne3 Red8 31.h4 Qb6 32.Nbc2 Nc5 33.Kg2 Nb3 34.Nf1 Qc7 35.Nce3 Nc5

As advertised: nothing is happening, at least if you compare diagrams. I can hear the television commentator's voice, "Stay tuned for the exciting conclusion, but first we bring you this advertising message."

36.Rd2

Setting up the d-file chopping-block to trade off all the rooks. At this point I didn't want to offer a draw because Black still has a smidgen of an advantage

36...Bf8 37.Red1 Bh6 38.Rxd7 Rxd7 39.c4!

Opting for this freeing move at the right time. While I give up control of the d4-square, if I can obtain some squares in return, White's position will benefit.

39...Rxd1 40.Qxd1 bxc4 41.Nxc4 Nb3 42.Nfe3!

Avoiding the tempting 42.Qd6? Qxd6 43.Nxd6 Na5! (43...Bc1? 44.Nc4), when Black has a big edge.

42...Bf8 43.Nc2 Qe7 44.Na1? (Diagram 173)

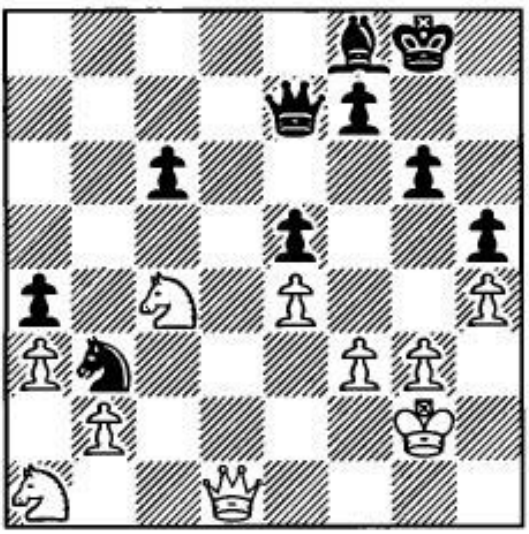


DIAGRAM 173. Black to Play

44...Nc5?

Mutual blindness. This (expected) slip allows me to take my queenside pawns off the dark squares. Black would still be for choice after 44...Qc5! 45.Nxb3 Qxc4

46.Nc1 Bc5, thanks to my very passive knight. Instead of my weak move 44.Na1?, 44.Nb4 was better, maintaining a small disadvantage. This was all a consequence of having surrendered territory on the queenside. Black's b3-knight had been "weighing" on the position and on my mind, and I wanted to dispose of it. Just as clearly, Anatoly wanted to hold onto it.

45.b4! axb3 46.Nxb3 Qe6

Both Anatoly and I labored under the belief that Black still stood better. Not true. Getting rid of both my b2- and c3-pawns means that the Achilles heel in my position is gone. Now I can focus on pushing my a-pawn passer. The position is even.

47.Nbd2 Nd7?

The purpose of this one was lost upon me. I expected 47...Bh6 48.Qc2 Bxd2 49.Nxd2 Qd6 50.Qc3 Na4 51.Qc2 Nc5, with a repetition.

48.a4! Bb4 49.Qc2 Nc5 50.a5! Qe7 (Diagram 174)

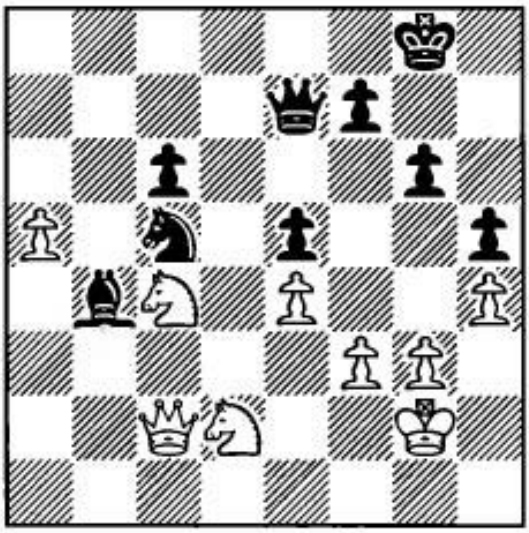


DIAGRAM 174. White to Play

51.Nb3!

Thanks to Black's slips, a sudden and major transformation has taken place: the most dangerous pawn in the position is White's a5-pawn. Now White's game is to be preferred.

51...Na6 52.Qd3 Nc7 53.Nb6 Nb5?

With the game slipping away, Anatoly helps me with this big shove. The best line was 53...Qe6 54.Qc4 Qxc4 55.Nxc4 f6, with a playable ending. The difference between this ending and the ending in the game will soon be clear: White's a-pawn will advance one square and Black isn't able to play...f7-f6, to liberate his king.

54.Qd7! Qxd7 55.Nxd7 Bc3 56.a6 Na7 57.g4! Kg7 58.g5! (Diagram 175)

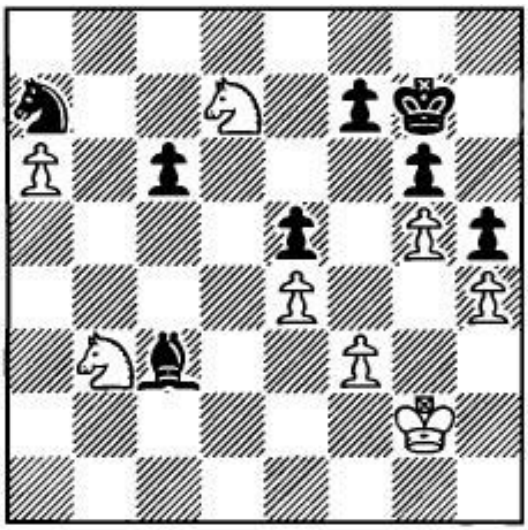


DIAGRAM 175. Black to Play

With an extraordinary suddenness the game is just over. The e5-pawn is artificially isolated, and White threatens the simple Nb3-c5-d3xe5, winning a pawn for free.

58...f5

Desperation, butthe game is gone. Even blindfolded I can handle this one.

59.gxf6+ Kf7 60.Nbc5!

This time I scurry to reinforce myknight before I leave it hanging or put it *en prise*

60...Ke8 61.f4 exf4 62.e5 Nc8 63.e6 Bxf6 64.Nxf6+ Ke7 65.Nfe4 Na7 66.Kf3 1-0

Not a game for the ages, but I was pleased with my play at the end. I've thrown away so many opportunities in my games with Karpov that I was just happy that I seized this one when it came knocking. It isn't often you will see Anatoly's pieces dominated as they were at the end of this one.

Obviously, Anatoly wasn't happy with the result of this game and was out for revenge. After all, he was the FIDE World Champion!

Anatoly Karpov-Yasser Seirawan
Monte Carlo (rapid), 1994
Modern Defense

1.d4 d6 2.Nf3 g6 3.g3

A very cautious treatment indeed. Anatoly wants to avoid a queenless mid-

dlegame after a subsequent ...e7-e5, going so far as to hold back the advance of his c-pawn. Against this set-up it is very difficult for me to transpose into the typeof middlegame I'm seeking

3...Bg7 4.Bg2 Bd7

Borrowing from the creativity of the Canadian Grandmaster Duncan Suttles, who lives in Vancouver, British Columbia. In my early years, Duncan had a large influence on me and many other chess players in the Pacific Northwest. We all learned to fianchetto our king's bishop, play ...Ng8-h6 and cede control of the center. The idea of the text is to line up a trade of White's g2-bishop, while also being able to advance ...e7-e5 without having to worry about the awkwardness of recapturing the queen on the d8-square.

5.o-o Qc8

By "threatening ...Bd7-h3," Black gains a tempo for vacating the d8-square.

6.Re1e5

It would be rather cheeky to play 6...Bh3 7.Bh1. h5, launching a mating attack with no development. Surprisingly, such attacks do have teeth, but I couldn't bring myself to give it a go.

There is also a good argument to be made for playing 6...Bh3 7.Bh1, and then calling off the attack to play 7...e5, as in the game. In that case, the d7-square is freed and, if the d-file opened, White isn't so pleased with his h1-bishop.Another interesting idea after 6...Bh3 7.Bh1 is 7...Nc6, inviting 8.d5, blocking the long h1-a8 diagonal.

7.e4 Nc6 8.dxe5

Darn, I justcan't persuade Anatoly to play a closed position. Black's scheme of development is made clear after 8.d5 Nd8!, with the go get 'em King's Indian attacking plan of ...f7-f5, ...Nd8-f7, and ...Ng8-f6. True, White will not sit still either, but such a set-up is a very harmonious one, and especially after White has a kingside fianchetto.

After the text, it isn't so much that White is better, only that he isn't subjected to the middlegame that I wanted.

8...dxe5 9.b3 Nge7 10.Ba3 0-0 11.Nbd2 f6

An awkward move to make. My problem is that the c6-knight is clumsy and on the "wrong circuit," which is also the case for my e7-knight. The text prepares the good e6-square for the light-squared bishop, when I don't have to be annoyed by Nf3-g5, causing some harassment. Still, it may have been better to play normally by 11...Bg4 12.c3 Rd8 13.Qe2 Qd7 14.Nc4 Qd3 15.Qb2!. I reached this far and stopped, reckoning that 15...Bxf3 16.Re3 was better for White. I should have taken it a step further: 16...Qd7 17.Rxf3 (making room at the e3-square for the c4-knight) 17...b5 18.Ne3 Qd2, when White has the two bishops and not much else.

12.Nc4 Be6 13.Qe2 Rd8 14.Ne3 (Diagram 176)

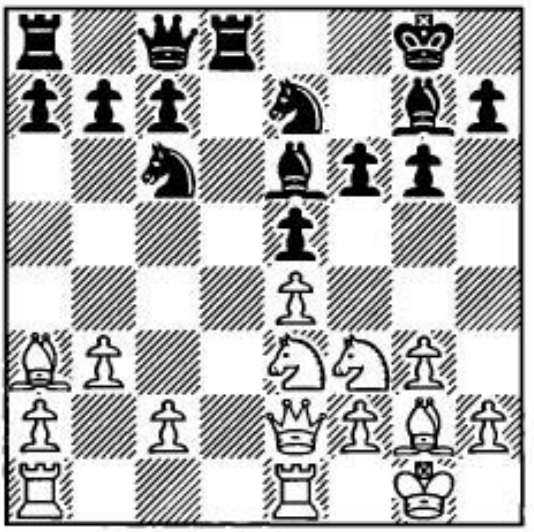


DIAGRAM 176. Black to Play

14...Bf8

Each move has to be carefully weighed up because there are many pieces that want to improve their positions. For instance, in the diagrammed position, 14...Rd7 was to be considered, as it prepares ...Nc6-d8, and makes room for the queen to slip across and then for the rooks to be doubled. For example, 14...Rd7 15.c3!? (15.Rad1) 15...Nd8 16.Rad1 Nf7 significantly improves Black's coordination.

15.c3 Qd7 16.Red1 Qe8 17.Ne1!

A very pleasant move. White can't sit still and wait as Black improves his pieces, or else whatever plus White may have will soon disappear. There are no obvious weak-spots in Black's position except for the d5-square, and the text uncovers the g2-bishop to help White control that square.

17...Rxd1

As my position is slightly cramped, it makes sense to relieve the pressure through trades. It was a pity that 17...a5!? didn't work, as it would be good to be able to play ...a5-a4. The problem was that 18.Qb5 b6? 19.Nd5! is strong for White. For this reason, there was also something to be said for 17...Qf7, awaiting 18.Nd3 b6, when Black is ready for ...a7-a5, prying around the queenside.

18.Rxd1 Rd8 19.Nd3! b6 20.Bc1 Rd7 21.h4 Nd8 22.f4

A kind of "now or never" decision. By changing the pawn structure White gives greater dynamism to his pieces. If White delays this advance, then when Black plays ...c7-c6 and ...Ne7-c8-d6, the position will start to look identical. Of course, 22.f4 carries a risk as well. If the resulting positions don't work, Black will end up with a fat e5-knight.

22...exf4 23.Nxf4 Rxd1+ 24.Qxd1 Bg7?!

There are games where all your moves have a flow to them. "This goes here, that goes there, in that order, we make luft, take the d-file, penetrate, win. Thank you for the game." Then there are the usual "muddied" games where you have a few second-guesses afterwards. Well, this game was a veritable tug-of-war with every move having second and third choices.

While the text improves my bishop, it will remain passive on the g7-square, so greater preference should have been shown for the e7-knight, which really is a morose creature. The best move was 24...Nec6!, simply seeking to put the knight on the e5-square. White will put one knight or the other on the d5-square, I will cover the c7- and f6-pawns by 25...Qf7, and Black will be fine. The f8-bishop may find a better square than the text.

25.c4 Qd7

I was tiring of all the intricate subtle play and now sought some resolution. Even so, there was good reason to consider 25...Bc8!?, preparing ...Nd8-f7-e5, as well as ...c7-c6, protecting vital squares and preserving the light-squared bishop.

26.Ned5 Nxd5 27.Nxe6!

A crucial capture. If 27.exd5 (or 27.cxd5) 27...Bg4, and the bishop skips away. Black will quickly play ...Nd8-f7-e5, with no further problems.

27...Nxe6 28.exd5 (Diagram 177)

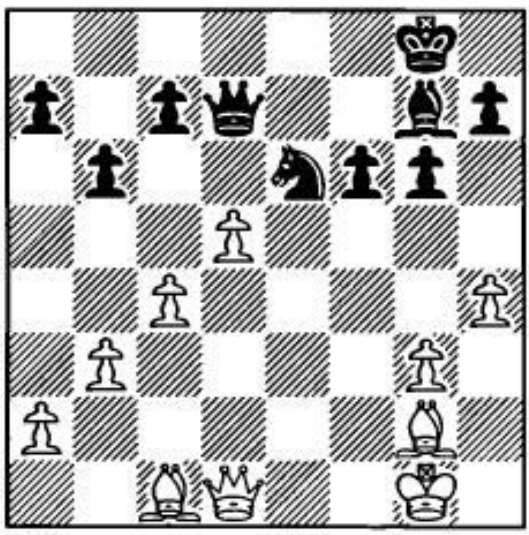


DIAGRAM 177. Black to Play

28...Nc5?

Mystifying. In two moves I throw away a perfectly reasonable position. I simply cannot explain it. I can first prepare the text by 28...a5!?, securing the c5-square, or I can follow up on my 24th move by 28...f5!, simply bringing my g7-bishop into play. In that case, I don't see any advantage for White.

29.Bf4 a5?

Good grief. My brain must have fried. I cannot explain this. 29...Bf8! was forced, to prevent d5-d6, when Black again has a reasonable position. For example, 30.b4 Ne6 31.Bd2 Ng7, planning for my own counterplay against the g3-pawn.

30.d6!

Thud. And just like that White's two bishops become blisteringly powerful.

30...cxd6 31.Qd5+ Ne6 32.Bxd6 f5 33.Kf1 h5?

With a queen trade in the offing, it was much better to play 33...Kf7, preparing to bring the king into the game.

34.Bf4 Qe8?

Further capitulation. I'm likely lost, but 34...Qxd5 35.Bxd5 Kf7 36.Be3 Be5 37.Bxb6 Bxg3 was the only way to struggle on.

35.Be3 Kh7 36.Bxb6 Qe7 37.Bf2 Qf6 38.Bf3 f4 39.g4 hxg4 40.Bxg4 Nd4 41.h5 gxh5 42.Qxh5+ Kg8 43.Bxd4 Qxd4 44.Be6+ 1-0

An impressive win by Anatoly. Rather a collapse by me at the end, with time-trouble the likely culprit, but it was all those awkward opening decisions with which White poisoned the position that caused me the trouble to begin with. Sometimes chess can be as simple as creating numerous problems for your opponent to solve. Even if he solves them all, he may fall into time-trouble and blunder his position away. That too is chess.

Our last classical game took place in Bali, Indonesia. It was a "grandmaster draw," and I know exactly why: jet-lag. I flew from Seattle to Taipei, a 12-hour flight, then onwards to Jakarta and then to Bali. It was more than 24 hours of travel and I was dead tired. Even though we played in the second round, as I looked across the board it was obvious to me that Anatoly wasn't in any better shape.

Yasser Seirawan-Anatoly Karpov
Bali, 2000
Queen's Gambit Accepted

1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 d5 4.d4 dxc4 5.e3 a6 6.Bxc4 c5 7.0-0 b5 8.Be2 Bb7 9.dxc5 Bxc5 10.Qxd8+ Kxd8 11.b3 Nbd7 12.Bb2 Ke7 13.Rac1 ½-½

Draw agreed on my proposal.

And so our duels together end with a whimper, and not a bang.

In giving Anatoly Karpov the position of the second greatest chess player of all time, I can point to a number of statistics, such as his 167 international tournament and match victories, a record which has never been equaled. However, it was while visiting the Olympiad in Dresden, Germany in November 2008 that I read something in the Sunday, November 23 bulletin that really struck a chord. To quote, "Anatoly Karpov was World Chess Champion for 16 years. Though he ac-

quired the title by default in 1975, he claimed his 11 title defenses and challenges over the next 25 years spanned 766 days in total. 'Two and half years fighting for only the worldtitle,' he said." That is not just impressive – it is flat-out amazing.

Classical Games versus Anatoly Karpov

Karpov-Seirawan, Mar del Plata, Argentina 1982: ½-½
Seirawan-Karpov, London, United Kingdom 1982: 1-0
Karpov-Seirawan, Lucerne, Switzerland 1982: ½-½
Karpov-Seirawan, Linares, Spain 1983: ½-½
Karpov-Seirawan, Tilburg, Holland 1983: 1-0
Seirawan-Karpov, London, United Kingdom 1984: ½-½
Karpov-Seirawan, Brussels, Belgium 1986: 1-0
Seirawan-Karpov, Brussels, Belgium 1988: ½-½
Seirawan-Karpov, Rotterdam, Holland 1989: 0-1
Karpov-Seirawan, Skellefteå, Sweden 1989: 1-0
Seirawan-Karpov, Haninge, Sweden 1990: 1-0
Seirawan-Karpov, Reykjavik, Iceland 1991: ½-½
Seirawan-Karpov, Bali, Indonesia 2000: ½-½

Seirawan: two wins, four losses, seven draws. Classical score 5½-7½

Rapid Games versus Anatoly Karpov

Seirawan-Karpov, Hamburg, Germany 1982: 0-1
Karpov-Seirawan, Hamburg, Germany 1982: 1-0
Karpov-Seirawan, Mazatlán, Mexico 1988: ½-½ (scoresheet lost)
Seirawan-Karpov, Roquebrune, France 1992: 1-0
Karpov-Seirawan, Roquebrune, France 1992: 0-1
Seirawan-Karpov, Brussels, Belgium 1992: ½-½
Karpov-Seirawan, Brussels, Belgium 1992: 0-1
Seirawan-Karpov, Monte Carlo 1993: 0-1
Karpov-Seirawan, Monte Carlo 1993: ½-½
Seirawan-Karpov, Monte Carlo, 1994: 1-0
Karpov-Seirawan, Monte Carlo, 1994: 1-0

Seirawan: four wins, four losses, three draws. Rapid score 5½-5½

Blitz Games versus Anatoly Karpov

Karpov-Seirawan, Lugano, Switzerland 1988: ½-½ (scoresheet lost)
Karpov-Seirawan, Roquebrune, France 1992: 0-1

Seirawan: one win, no loss, one draw. Blitz score 1½-½

Chapter Ten

Garry Kasparov, Post-2000

Kasparov Loses the Title

Although Kasparov was forfeited as the FIDE World Champion in 1993, his victories over the challengers Nigel Short in 1993 and Viswanathan Anand in 1995 were accepted by the chess-playing public as proof that he was the best player in the world and worthy of the title "World Champion." However, as the years continued to slip by, there was a growing agitation that Kasparov was not defending his title.

It wasn't through lack of effort on his part. The PCA had quietly melted away, and he no longer had the infrastructure required to organize a proper match. This became self-evident when in the final PCA cycle Alexey Shirov became the challenger by defeating Vladimir Kramnik in an upset victory. In Garry's view, Shirov's win was a blow as it made it much more difficult to raise sponsorship funds to finance a match against a challenger not in the top five by rating. Indeed, only one bid could be mustered: from Los Angeles for less than one million dollars. Shirov did not obtain a match against Kasparov – a right he had won fair and square. To make matters even worse for Alexey, Vladimir Kramnik had won a "losers'" purse for losing the PCA Finals match. Alexey's reward was supposed to be a million dollar match. This wasn't the first time in the history of chess that the winner of an event went without payment.

The situation was awkward for Garry, to say the least. He was not trying to duck his challenger – quite the opposite. He wanted to play, but only for a purse that both players deemed adequate. There were no takers/sponsors for the guarantees that the players were asking. As time went on, and the match versus Shirov dimmed further out of public view, Garry decided to try to resolve the Gordian Knot of finding an appropriate challenger in the most direct way possible: he would openly challenge the second-highest rated player on the rating list

Viswanathan Anand. "Vishy" accepted the challenge, and an agreement was signed. Unfortunately for both players, funding for the match collapsed, and the event was canceled.

In 2000, Viswanathan Anand won the FIDE knock-out event and was crowned the new FIDE World Champion. In his "Players' Undertaking" agreement with FIDE he was barred from competing against other "World Champion claimants." The war between FIDE and Kasparov was burning as brightly as ever. In London a new sponsor, Brain Games, stepped forwards, willing to sponsor a million dollar purse match between Kasparov and a worthy challenger. As Vishy was tied up, the next obvious player by rating was none other than Vladimir Kramnik – the very same player who had lost to Alexey Shirov in the PCA Finals match. Kramnik was invited to contest a match against Kasparov in London for Garry's title. He gladly accepted. I'm sure I don't have to convey Alexey Shirov's views about this situation.

Many things have been written about the 2000 match in London, and I have no insights to add as I watched it from afar. It was a strange affair, to say the least. In the first place, the match was an abbreviated one. Instead of the standard 24-game contest, Garry had insisted on a 16-game match. This was odd, given that he criticized FIDE so vehemently and justly over its mini-matches of six games to decide the FIDE Finals matches, arguing that he wanted to uphold the "tradition" of lengthy World Championship match play. Yet his actions betrayed his words, as he was cutting the traditional length of play by a third.

Again, I offer no insights, but Garry's play made a woefully strange impression. Trailing in the match, he agreed to short draws with the white pieces in games 9 and 13, the latter being at an especially critical juncture. Games that he absolutely had to strive to win to retain his crown he abandoned with a board full of pieces. Vladimir Kramnik won the match 8½-6½ without losing a game. It was a stunning result. The soft-spoken Vladimir was now thrust into the limelight, having some very large shoes to fill. He also inherited a war with FIDE which was not one of his own making.

The Split Continues

With new actors on stage, Vladimir Kramnik and Viswanathan Anand, perhaps at long last the split could be healed. No chance. Vladimir too was a traditionalist, advocating a lengthy Championship duel. FIDE had its President/sponsor and its new regulations, and neither side was willing to compromise – nor did they seem to have any reason to. For the most part, the two parties went their own way and in general ignored the other. At one press conference, Ilyumzhinov, the FIDE President, had a great quip when asked about the "Brain Games World Champion", Vladimir Kramnik: "Maybe there is a Pepsi World Champion too," he observed.

Garry's career "AD" or "After Death," as he put it to me, continued to sparkle. His loss to Vladimir seemed to give him new energy and his results soared as he won event after event, keeping him at the top of the rating list. Garry was spoil-

ing for a rematch. In his London, 2000 agreement he had staunchly refused to include a rematch clause, considering it unjust. Instead, there was to be a Brain Games "Qualifying Event" to be staged within a certain deadline, with the winner becoming the next challenger.

Like Kasparov before him, Kramnik was having difficulties in staging events. The deadline for the Brain Games Qualifier passed without anything happening, and then Kasparov raised the level of rhetoric significantly and demanded a direct rematch with Kramnik. Vladimir's response was to duck such a direct challenge and instead to point to the contract he signed for the London match; he was legally bound (first) to face a Challenger from the Qualifier. If he broke his agreement, he could be sued.

Eventually Brain Games announced that in the summer of 2002, Dortmund, Germany would host the Qualifier, and the winner would be Kramnik's challenger. Kasparov was furious. The Qualifier would be an eight-player event divided into two sections. There would be four players in each section, with the two top-finishers from each section qualifying for a short, four-game semi-final match. The two winners would then play an equally short four-game final match. While twice as good as the FIDE regulations with two-game mini-matches, it was an event that Kasparov might easily fail to win. He refused to play in Dortmund. Hence, he was out of "Kramnik's cycle" and he similarly refused to play in FIDE's 128-player knock-out affair. The best player in the world was out of two World Championship cycles. The situation was absurd, to say the least.

This absurdity reminds me of a strikingly familiar scene: in the movie *Patton*, in which George C. Scott plays the title role as the famous American general in WWII. After the invasion of Sicily, he is relieved of his command for striking a soldier in a hospital for being, in his view, a coward. Patton rages "The whole damned world is at war and I'm left out of it!?" Such was the case with Kasparov. Was there no World Championship cycle in which he could play?

The parallel with Bobby Fischer was evident as well. The world's best player was not the World Champion, even with two titles up for grabs. Kasparov was still playing in tournaments and had the highest rating in the world, but still...

It has always been open to pundits to claim that the reigning World Champion wasn't really the world's best player. Petrosian, especially, had to suffer from critics who didn't appreciate that his style was best suited to match, rather than tournament, play. The answer to such criticisms had always been: "if you want the title, come and take it!" But now bureaucrats, lawyers and simple inertia seemed to be conspiring to confuse what was supposed to be a simple question: who was the real World Champion of chess?

The Prague Agreement

For my part, I felt that the split in the chess world had been a terrible blow for chess and professional chess in particular. Sponsors were melting away before

my eyes. Many were friends of mine. The élite tournaments featured fewer participants, while the breakup of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the Iron Curtain meant armies of new competitors were coming forward to fight for a shrinking piece of the tournament pie. Being a chess professional had never been such hard work. In the face of these cold hard realities, I started to question whether I wanted to remain a professional player. Once such questions enter your head, you know you are in trouble. My heart was no longer in the game as it had been during my youth.

By the end of 2001 I decided that I would prepare myself for retirement. While it has always seemed to me that the chess fraternity is famously slow to anger, they were outdoing themselves as the long-suffering split continued. Before leaving chess as a professional player, I wanted to offer something in return for all the wonderful gifts that chess had brought to me – the most special of which was meeting Yvette, my wife. The best thing I could imagine as a thank-you note was to try to heal the split and reconcile the chess world. I launched a new project, "Fresh Start." It was a road-map for how all the parties, FIDE and its then-Champion Ruslan Ponomariov, the Champion Kramnik and the top-rated Kasparov could participate in a series of events that would lead to a unified World Champion title. "Fresh Start" was published on the Chess Café website and ignited a fire-storm of interest. How would the parties react?

Firstly, I was deeply gratified that Garry wholeheartedly endorsed the initiative. Vladimir was warm to the idea but pointed to the contract to which he was bound. I therefore met with Brain Games Executive Director, Steve Timmins, the other party to Vladimir's contract, and he fully supported "Fresh Start" and the method for unification that I had outlined. In his words, "It is the only thing that makes sense." Wonderful. That left FIDE. Again, much to my delight, the initial reaction from FIDE's officials was positive as well. With goodwill being exhibited all around it was high time to schedule a meeting.

As good fortune would have it, in May 2002 Bessel Kok, then living in Prague, was working as the Executive Director of Czech Telecom, as well as a wireless spin-off, Euro-Tel. The latter, Euro-Tel, would be hosting an élite tournament event featuring all the world's best players with one glaring absentee: the FIDE World Champion Ruslan Ponomariov. Bessel Kok issued invitations to the FIDE leaders, offering to host them in Prague. President Ilyumzhinov accepted the invitation along with all the highest-ranking FIDE officials. There would be a showdown in Prague.

I wrote lengthy articles on the Chess Café website that detailed all the Prague happenings. There were a lot of bumpy moments, but at the end of the discussions the "Prague Agreement" was hammered out and signed by all parties. Bessel Kok chaired the meetings and I'm quite certain that without his skills there would have been no agreement. The essence was that the FIDE Champion Ruslan Ponomariov would play a match with Kasparov; the June 2002 Dortmund Quali-

fier would produce a challenger to Vladimir Kramnik (Peter Leko of Hungary won in Dortmund and became the Challenger), and the winners of the two matches would have a unification World Championship match. Brain Games would run its Qualifier and match, and FIDE would run its match and future cycles. Critically, the unification match would be managed under the auspices of FIDE. The title of World Champion was a FIDE property. The chess world had come around in one big circle. All parties pledged their best efforts.

While hopes ran high that the Prague Agreement would be successful, it seemed to run into trouble from the very get go. The separate matches were to take place in 2003 or early 2004, with the goal of a unification match by late 2004. In Prague, the FIDE President promised to take care that the FIDE Champion Ruslan Ponomariov, who had not signed the Prague Agreement,, would support it and would play against Kasparov...

Who can say who is to blame that the Prague Agreement failed? A seemingly endless series of events and personalities clashed head-on against our best efforts. The chain of failure was set in motion by Ruslan Ponomariov. In his Players' Undertaking, signed before winning the FIDE World Championship title, there was a clause committing him to playing a "Man versus Machine" match. He was offered $50,000 to contest such a match, which he considered a paltry sum. He refused the offer. In his stead, Kasparov played a match against *Deep Junior* in New York City in January 2003 for one million dollars, which was personally guaranteed by the FIDE President. Quite understandably, this news was not well received by Ruslan, as he rightly felt that his position as FIDE Champion had been usurped. His response was to make the negotiations for his slated match with Kasparovas difficult as possible.

To this day I still cannot understand how any professional chess grandmaster could object to playing a million dollar match against the greatest chess player in history. As I stated at the time, I would *pay* fifty thousand dollars directly to Garry myself to play such a match against him.

Despite the difficult negotiations taking place between FIDE and its own Champion, in 2003 FIDE announced that the match between Ponomariov and Kasparov would take place that June in Buenos Aires. I, for one, breathed a sigh of relief. "All right, I thought. One match down, one match to go." Brain Games was struggling to find a sponsor for Kramnik versus Leko, but I hoped that once the FIDE match began, the other would attract sponsors as there was a great deal of sponsorship buzz about the unification match itself.. I began to worry when the Argentinean Grandmaster Miguel Quinteros announced to the press that the playing-hall in Buenos Aires would not be ready in time and that a postponement until December 2003 would be best. Not at all, retorted, Ilyumzhinov: the match would be held in Buenos Aires as planned and on schedule. Pardon? The local organizer on the ground explains that they are not ready and from above comes the command "Yes, you are!" That was a clear signal of problems ahead.

Indeed, the Buenos Aires eventwas eventually canceled.

Within months of the Buenos Aires cancelation, FIDE announced a new venue: Yalta, Ukraine would stage the Ponomariov versus Kasparov match in September 2003. This sounded much more promising to me. Ruslan, being from the Ukraine, would be right at home, and now I felt confidentthe match would be played. Once more, between the cup and the lip...

While I'm unsure of the actual details of the cancelation of the Buenos Aires match, the result was that it played havoc with the professional schedules of both Ruslan and Garry. The two spent months hiring trainers while declining invitations in anticipation of their duel. Once the match was canceled, the players were left with both a loss of income and hefty expenses for their trainers. Once burned, twice shy – forthe Yalta event both players asked for and received a guarantee, against their prizes, to cover their training costs. In the case of Ponomariov, however, the Ukraine organizers dealt with him directly and not through the auspices of FIDE. FIDE officials were furious and the Yalta match was canceled. Again, who is to blame? What went wrong? Who knows? It just seems like a whole series of explosive backfiring was taking place.

FIDE continued to hold its 128-player knock-out event, and in June 2004 Tripoli, Libya hosted the event. A new FIDE Champion, Rustam Kasimdzhanov from Uzbekistan was crowned World Champion. The new champion announced that he was more than willing, in fact eager, to play a million dollar match versus Kasparov. FIDE announced, in October 2004, that a match between Kasimdzhanov and Kasparov would be held, this time in the United Arab Emirates. Once more, I breathed a hesitant sigh of relief, as funding would not be a problem for the UAE.

On the other side of the coin, Brain Games and the match between Kramnik versus Leko was faring no better. While no failed date announcements and embarrassing cancelations had been made, no progress was to be reported either. Over two years passed before the match was staged. It began September 25, 2004 in Brissago, Switzerland. In a nail-biter finish Vladimir won the final game to tie the match 7-7 and thus retain his title. Again, while claiming to be a traditionalist and calling for a lengthy World Championship clash, Vladimir shortened the match even further, playing a mere 14-game contest, two games fewer than in London when he had won the title. At last, Brain Games had fulfilled its part of the Prague Agreement, and all eyes turned back to FIDE.

For the third and last time, after announcing the dates and venue for the UAE clash, the event failed to materialize. On this occasion, the cause was the death on November 2, 2004 of the country's ruler and first President, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan. A long period of mourning was declared by the UAE Government, and cultural initiatives such as staging a World Championship chess match were canceled during this period.

It had been quite a hat-trick of misses, and Garry was running out of pa-

tience. There was a final mad scramble to rescue the Kasimdzhanov versus Kasparov match, and rumors about a bid from Turkey quickly spread. It seemed the funding couldn't be secured within a stipulated time-frame, and this bid also failed.

Garry was angry and mystified, as he felt he had done everything he could to return to the hunt for the title and he bitterly complained, "They won't let me play." In March 2005, with one round to play, Garry was leading the Linares tournament by a full point. He had reconciled himself to the fact that following the event he would retire and he wanted to end his career on a high note. During his final game the fearless campaigner was plagued by one overriding emotion: "don't blunder." It was a far, far cry from a career of brazen daring of constantly striving for the maximum result. Garry did blunder and lost the final game to Veselin Topalov of Bulgaria, and the two shared joint first. At the end of the 2005 Linares tournament Garry announced his retirement from chess. The greatest player who ever lived was hanging up his spurs for good. It was an illustrious career that once more didn't end with a bang but with a whimper.

Although I had retired before him, I felt that the loss for chess was yet another tragic blow. Garry was bowing out while still number one, in the prime of his life, anxious to play a World Championship match and delight the world with a sensational comeback. Once more we can only speculate as to what might have been if only one of the announced Kasparov matches had been held.

Kasparov's retirement left the chess world in a sad state. It was denied the joy of seeing Kasparov play, and the World Championship title itself no longer seemed to have legitimacy. After all, the title only meant something if chess players around the world thought it did. With multiple and ever-changing Champions, and shorter and shorter matches, the chess world could really only look to the rating list to determine who was "number one." With websites posting rating changes daily, even that criterion for supremacy became ephemeral once Kasparov was gone. There could be a different "best player" almost every day, depending on the latest tournament results.

The days of the structured, three-year FIDE cycle and the 24-game match played at classic time-controls began to look awfully good to many players.

Back to chess

Following the demise of the GMA, somehow Garry and I didn't manage to play much with one another. At the 1988 St. John chess festival in New Brunswick we had played together in a warm-up blitz match for the World blitz Championship, which was won by Mischa Tal. Garry won our blitz training match 7-5, with a few games decided on close calls on the clock. These were to be our last games against each other for quite some time.

Garry missed the 1990 Olympiad in Novi Sad. In 1992 in Manila, when the US and USSR teams met, Gata Kamsky played first board for the American team. I

played board three and declined a draw offer from Vladimir Kramnik, a decision I would soon regret as he won our game. In 1994, the US and USSR teams didn't meet, because of a dreadful mid-tournament crisis by the US team. Had we played, I wouldn't have been paired with Kasparov either, as I was scoring a gold medal on board four. In 1996 I didn't play in Armenia; in 1998 Garry didn't play in Elista and he skipped Istanbul, 2000 as well. In Bled, 2002 we also missed one another. By the time of the 2004 Calvià Olympiad I had retired.

In the 2002 "USSR versus the Rest of the World" event, I captained the Rest of the World to victory. My report can be read on the Chess Café website. After the event Garry invited me to his Moscow flat, where we had tea and cookies. We also played another 12-game blitz session. This time Garry won 7½-4½, and I was crestfallen. He reminded me that he had "improved" over his St. John result, while I confessed I had lost "all" of my strength.

Our final Classical tournament duel was played at the 1996 VSB tournament in Amsterdam. At either the opening or closing ceremony, I'm not sure which, the sponsor's speech was a solemn and stinging rebuke to the chess world. In the face of the split, and with a pointed reference to the controversial figure of the FIDE President Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, the VSB withdrew from chess sponsorship. It was quite a heavy message and one I understood all too well. In my travels and various meetings with chess sponsors the same story was told again and again: the split was destroying sponsorship interest in chess.

In the drawing of lots for the VSB event the organizers had adopted a highly original approach. The players were invited to punch a boxing bag hooked to a machine that registered the strength of the blow and gave the player a number. Joël Lautier fared best, Kasparov was second and I was third.

The following annotations were published in *Inside Chess* magazine. Updated comments are marked "YS, 2010" at the end of each new paragraph.

These were my introductory remarks to the game in *Inside Chess*:

"Playing against either Anatoly Karpov or Garry Kasparov always inspires special feelings of excitement and worry. Ever since I received an invitation to the 1996 VSB event I had been looking forward to playing Garry once again. My last game with him was as the Skellefteå World Cup in 1989! And that game moved me to produce eight pages of annotation. What would this game bring? Well, in the first place disappointment, because I spent most of my preparation on the White pieces and the drawing of lots wasn't so generous."

I should have punched that bag harder.

"Before the game, I was quite optimistic, not to say euphoric. I hadn't realized how much I was looking forward to the game. It seems strange to say how wildly optimistic I was. I've followed Garry's career closely, of course, and he's won just about everything he's played in. So why the optimism? I can't explain it. He just seemed vulnerable at this time."

Garry Kasparov-Yasser Seirawan
Amsterdam, 1996
Queen's Gambit Declined

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3

A victory of sorts. Kasparov shies away from the Classical Nimzo-Indian I'd defended earlier against Gelfand. The drawback to the text, as Garry well knows, is that White loses a certain amount of flexibility against the QGD defense.

3...d5 4.Nc3

A surprise, as I expected Garry to try a Catalan (4.g3) here.

4...Nbd7

Following the example provided by Nigel Short, I've been experimenting with the text for a number of years. This way the risky lines for Black after 4...Be7 5.Bf4!? 0-0 6.e3 c5 7.dxc5 Bxc5 8.a3 Nc6 9.Qc2! are avoided.

5.Qc2?!

I was very happy to see this waiting move. White got little after 5.cxd5 exd5 6.Bf4 c6 7.e3 Nh5, as in Piket-Seirawan, Donner Memorial, 1995. The text tries for 5...Be7 6.cxd5 exd5 7.Bf4 with a long-term plus for White, but prematurely commits White's queen and weakens the d4-pawn.

5...dxc4! 6.e4

The only chance to get an edge. After 6.e3 c5 7.Bxc4 a6 we are in a Queen's Gambit Accepted with the weak Qd1-c2 waiting move having been played.

6...c5 7.dxc5?!

After this, White quickly gets a disadvantage. The only chance was 7.d5! exd5 8.e5 (8.exd5 a6 9.a4 Bd6 10.Bxc4 0-0 [10...Qe7+!?] 11.0-0 h6, is fine for Black), but Black can essay a piece sacrifice quite common to the QGA; i.e. 8.Nxe5!? 9.Nxe5 Bd6 10.Qa4+ (showing the drawbacks of Qd1-c2) 10...Bd7 11.Nxd7 Qxd7 12.Qxd7+ Kxd7 13.Bg5 Rhe8+ 14.Kd2 Ne4+, with sufficient compensation for the sacrificed piece.

While this piece sacrifice line is quite interesting and balanced, my engine prefers 8...Ng4, considering the positions after 9.Nxd5 Ndxe5, as well as 9.Bg5 f6 10.exf6 gxf6 11.Nxd5 fxg5 12.Qe4+ Nde5 13.Nxe5 Bf5! 14.Qxf5 Qxd5 15.Qxg4 Qxe5+ 16.Be2 h5!, to be slightly favorable to Black. These lines confirm the impression that I held during the game: that 5.Qc2?! was mistimed and gave up White's opening advantage. (YS, 2010)

6...Bxc5 7.Bxc4 a6 9.a4 Qc7! 10.0-0 Ng4!

Now with a few accurate moves, Black can claim an advantage due to his control over the central e5- and d4-squares. Ganyunderstands all this perfectly well as can be seen from his Candidates' match with Vassily Smyslov. Shaking his head and pursing his lips in obvious dissatisfaction Ganyunleashed...

11.h3?! (Diagram 179)

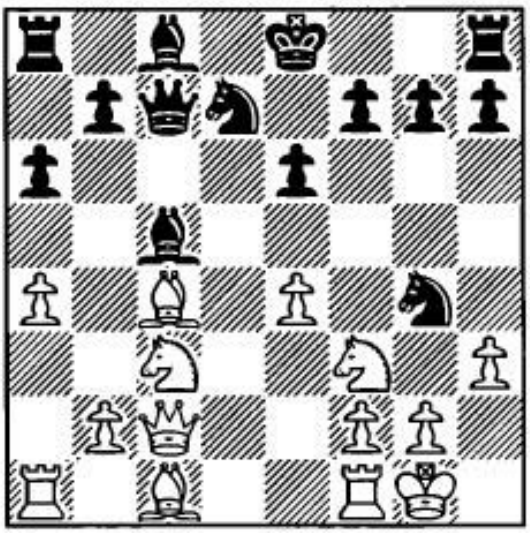


DIAGRAM 179. Black to Play

...and left the board. The move had its intended effect in that in left me stunned. I had expected Kasparov to fight for the control of the e5-square, considering 11.Ne2 to be forced. After 11...Bd6!? 12.h3 Nge5 13.Nxe5 Nxe5 White is obviously struggling his way to an unpleasant position.

I had considered the text, briefly, because of the fantasy mate 11.h3?! h5!? 12.b3? Qg3 13.Ba3 Nde5, when a phone call to the *Guinness Book of Records* might be in order.

Now I was being offered an invitation that was simply too tempting to refuse: to be an exchange and a pawn up against the PCA Champion within a dozen moves – and with Black! But, in my calculations, I committed a cardinal sin: It isn't important what comes off the board, but what stays on!

Hindsight being 20/20, the best choice was 11...Nge5 12.Nxe5 Nxe5 13.Be2 b6 14.Bf4 Bb7, when Kasparov considered Black to have a clear advantage. "What are my pieces doing?" he protested afterward.

11...Nxf2

Even now it seems incredible that I should have to adorn this move with a double question mark. I can't make myself do it so I won't. Still, this move is the culprit that leads to my defeat. I played in accordance with my mind-set: Garry was going down, that's all there was to it!

For the sake of accuracy, the most precise move was 11...Nde5! when Garry most likely would have played 12.Nxe5 (12.hxg4 Nxf3+ 13.gxf3 Qg3+ is an immediate perpetual) 12...Nxe5 13.Be2 b6, transposing into the note above. The reason for accuracy in this case is that 11...Nge5 12.Be2 Nxf3+ 13.Bxf3 Ne5 14.Qe2 is a better option for White. (YS, 2010)

12.Rxf2 Bxf2+ 13.Qxf2 Qxc4 14.Qg3 (Diagram 180)

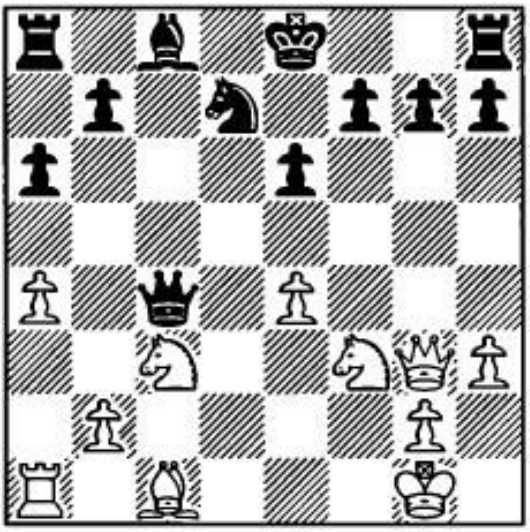


DIAGRAM 180. Black to Play

And now I began to have the first pangs of regret for my materialistic decision. White's compensation is startlingly concrete. I had seen the game continuation when grabbing the loot, but on closer examination I became acutely aware of White's active pieces. Again, look at what has remained on the board. Black is weak on the dark squares and the c1-bishop is ready to leap into the fray, whereas my c8-bishop and a8-rook won't be in the battle for some time.

14...f6

No matter how I twisted the variations in my mind, I had to settle on the choice I had made when capturing the f2-pawn. This is what I rejected:

A. 14...0-0 15.Bh6 g6 16.Rd1 Rd8 17.Rd4 Qc5 18.e5! Nf8 (18...Nxe5 19.Qxe5) 19.Ne4, and you don't have to be a rocket scientist to count Black's survival chances in nano-seconds.

B. 14...Qc5+ 15.Kh1 Qf8 (This was the crucial alternative to my actual choice. Back intends to unwind by ...f7-f6 and ...Qf8-f7, so White has to be quick.) 16.e5! (on 16.Bf4 f6 17.Bd6 Qf7 18.Rf1 Qg6 19.Qf4 b6, Black is just in time for an eventual liberation) 16...f5 17.exf6 gxf6, which is similar to the game. The crucial difference is that here White is missing his e4-pawn, making it easier to introduce the c3-knight into the game. After 18.Ne4 Rg8 19.Qc7 Kf7 20.Bg5!? fxg5 21.Nfxg5+ may be an unnecessary sacrifice, but, in my shoes, this looked horrifying.

Given the choice between line B and the game, I thought it clever to let White keep his e4-pawn.

It seems I had to expand my consciousness to include a third choice: 14...g6!, a move I hardly considered as it weakens so many dark squares. But if I'm going to

suffer after 15.Bh6, I may as well suffer with an extra pawn in hand. The position after 15...f6 16.Rd1 Qc5+ 17.Kh1 may not be so agreeable, but Black's fighting chances are far superior to those in the game. (YS, 2010)

15.Qxg7 Qc5+ 16.Kh1 Qf8 17.Qg4 Qf7 (Diagram 181)

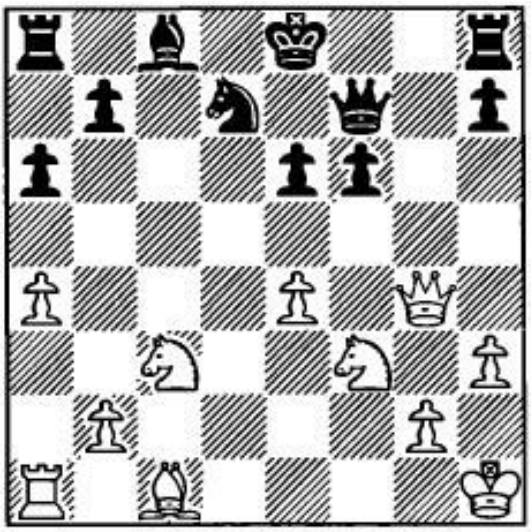


DIAGRAM 181. White to Play

This is where my analysis stopped when grabbing the f2-pawn. I misevaluated the position as being good for Black, because the plan of ...Rh8-g8 and ...Qf7-g6 looked quite promising and, besides, am I not material up?

18.e5!

Natural and very strong. White is ready to pounce on the dark-squares. Now the awareness of my situation was really beginning to sink home. The taste of the f2-pawn was beginning to turn bitterly sour.

18...Rg8

This move deserves to be second-guessed as well. Again with hindsight, 18...f5 should have been played immediately. In that case I retain the right to castle. For example, 19.Qc4, as played in the game 19...0-0!, which is a much superior version of the game. (YS, 2010)

Furthermore, I should have explained why I rejected 18...Nxe5 19.Nxe5 fxe5, which on aesthetic grounds alone is plain ugly and reason enough for rejection. I feared that the line 20.Ne4 Qg6 21.Nd6+ Kd7 22.Qd1 would be good for White. Actually, 22.Bg5! was strongest, when Black's king is in deep trouble. One nice point is that 22...h6 23.Nf7! Qxf7? 24.Qd1+ leads to a quick checkmate. (YS, 2010)

19.Qc4 f5

Played with extreme reluctance. Without an f6-pawn the dark squares are getting weaker still!, while the cramping effect of the e5-pawn means that the d7-knight is dominated. But in the face of Nc3-e4-d6, this was the only antidote.

20.Bg5 h6 21.Bh4!

Now that sinking feeling was getting worse. My attack along the g-file is nowhere to be seen. I knew my fate was sealed. After 21...Nf8 (the only reasonable developing move) 22.Rd1 Bd7 23.Qc7! Ng6 24.Bf6 Black can hardly move. Without having made any obvious error since 11...Nxf2, I now considered the position gone. Not wishing to go down without at least creating one threat...

21...Qg6?

This move doesn't help Black's cause at all, because it doesn't address the development problem and makes Nc3-e2-f4quite tempting (and good). Black's only chance was 21...Kf8, trying to scurry for cover. However, the position after 22.Ne2 Kg7 23.Nf4 Nf8 24.Rd1 b5 25.axb5 axb5 26.Qxb5 isn't exactly inspiring.

Alongwith 21...Kf8, a second superior choice was 21...Nf8 22.Rd1 Bd7, removing the pieces from the back-rank. (Usually a very good idea.) I had rejected this line because after 23.Qc7, I thought I'd be in *zugzwang*. In fact, I missed the fact that 23...Qg7! (vacating the f7-square with tempo) 24.Rd2 Bc6! is possible as there is no d8-checkmate. All right,. I still don't like my position, but 21...Nf8, was a much better move. (VS, 2010)

22.Rg1!

Obvious, yet once again I had under-estimated the strength of one of Garry's moves. I had wanted to keep the rook off the d-file and, by extension, the d8-square; so having the rook holed up on the g1-square didn't seem like such a bad deal. Now my intended attack by 22...b5 23.Qc6 Rb8 24.Nd5! exd5 25.e6 is a disaster. Like water from a bursting dam, White's pieces have flooded into my position. No time to nurse the pleasant dream of fianchettoing my bishop, it's time to panic! Wait a minute. What aboutscurrying away with my king as in ...Ke8-f7-g7-h8? No, that walks into a devastating g2-g4 shot now that I've forced White's rook to the g-file. Groan! Back to groveling.

A good piece of analysis. (VS, 2010)

22...Nf823.Qb4!

Ensuring that if Black tries to play ...Bc8-d7, his queenside pawns will be the price.

While this move made a strong impression at the time, the direct 23.Qc7! was even better. (VS, 2010)

23...Rg724.Ne2 b5

Desperation. The dream of fianchettoing the bishop hasn't completely died.

25.axb5?

Hey, what's this? A genuine mistake that allows me to climb back in the game? "You see," I told myself, "it is my day after all!" White could and should stuff the g7-rook back into its box by 25.Nf4 Qf7 26.Bf6 Rg8 27.axb5, when Black has nothing to look forward to at all.

25...Rd7!

At last my rook is working ... well, like a rook is supposed to work. While anno-

tating this game, I recalled a comment made by Evgeny Bareev in which he said that while playing Kasparov he had the feeling that his pieces didn't move the same way as Garry's. For the last dozen moves that is how I've felt. My c8-bishop, f8-knight, g7-rook, g6-queen have been mute spectators, while Garry's pieces have worked wonders. Even the stupid g1-rook has threatened me with a g2-g4, possibility. But now my rook is working. What next?

26.Nf4 Qf7 27.Rc1

Kasparov's nervousness had been betrayed by 25.axb5? Now he hastened to right himself.

27...Bb7

Boy, this move felt good!

28.bxa6 (Diagram 182)

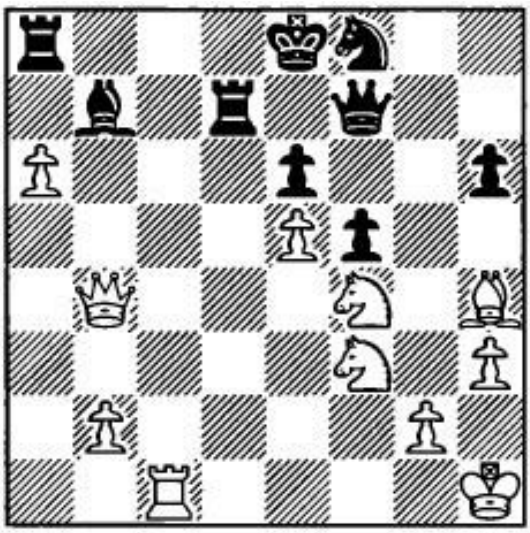


DIAGRAM 182. Black to Play

28...Bxf3??

The cumulative effect of long laboring under White's threats had taken its toll on my clock and the text is a time-pressure collapse. I saw that 28...Rxa6 29.Qa4 Bb7?? 30.Qxa8+ led to back-rank mate and so I was loath to leave the rank even temporarily undefended. Black is still under great pressure, but 28...Rxa6 leaves it up to White to find his win. What is harder for me to understand is why I didn't choose this recapture. At least my formerly passive pieces would be hard at work.

Just to show that it isn't easy to prove victory, consider 28...Rxa6 29.Qb5 (29.Nd4? Ng6 30.Nh5? Nxh4 31.Nf6+ Kd8 32.Nxe6+ Rxe6! 33.Qa5+ Rc7, and White comes up short) 29...Ra8! 30.Rc7 Bxf3 31.gxf3 Qg8! (introducing my second threat of mate along the g-file, i.e. ...Ra8-a1+) 32.Kh2 Ra1 33.Bf2 Rd1! 34.Nh5!? Kf7! 35.Nf6 Rxc7 36.Nxg8 Kxg8, and the crisis for Black has passed.

A correction to the last paragraph is in order. My engine reckons that White can indeed prove victory directly after the superior 28...Rxa6 29.Qb5 Ra8 30.Nd4! Ng6 31.Ndxe6! Nxh4 32.Nc5!, with winning threats. So while I could have defended better, the position was lost. In any case, a fine win to be sure, and the move 28...Bxf3?? accelerates my downfall. (VS, 2010)

29.gxf3 Rda7 30.Rg1!

A devastating switch that caught me completely off-guard. I had anticipated only 30.Rc6 Qd7 31.Rd6 Qc8 32.Rd8+ Qxd8 33.Bxd8 Rxd8 34.Qb6 Rd1+ 35.Kh2 Rg7, with dreams of a perpetual check.

30...Rxa6

Missing the point of White's last move. But I think the position is beyond saving.

31.Nh5!

Ouch! That really hurts!

31...Qc7 32.Rg7 Ra1+ 33.Kg2 Qc2+

Spike-checks are good for the soul.

34.Bf2 1-0

A wonderful game by Garry. He turned an inferior position into a beautiful example of how to exploit the initiative. His slip on move 25 should not be judged too harshly as it led to a marvelous creation.

Final thoughts on Garry

I'd like to share a delightful story that comes from the 2001 tournament in Wijk aan Zee, Holland. I was with my in-laws at the bar in the De Moriaan, the building where the festival takes place. Garry came to me and asked if I could join him on the walk back to his hotel. I asked him to give me a few minutes and indeed I'd join him. Garry didn't want to hang around the De Moriaan too long as autograph hounds would plague him, so he had a head start towards his hotel by the time I retrieved my coat. The night was cold, and snow had started to fall. It was dark, and my vision was obscured by the lightly falling snow. I hurried to catch up and made out two figures ahead of me and was soon in lock-step with them. I realized the third person was Vassily Ivanchuk. His voice betrayed pain. Garry and Vassily spoke in Russian, and it was clear that they were moving pieces. Vassily had just lost a crucial game to Vladimir Kramnik. A game I thought he should have won...

I've often said that there are two Garrys: the Good and the Bad. The Good Garry is beyond delightful. If there is one person in the whole world I would want to represent chess and to speak to a sponsor, it is the Good Garry. He is witty, charming, erudite and simply an outstanding spokesman for chess. He can extract the check. Just as painfully, if there is one person who should be prohibited from speaking to a sponsor or to anyone else it is the Bad Garry. The Bad Garry can be surly, angry and rude, making the most committed sponsor put his checkbook away and run for the nearest exit.

As we crunched our way through the snow towards the hotel I wondered what Garry wanted to talk to me about. I didn't wish to interrupt their conversation, and the only sounds were our crunching feet and their voices. Soft voices. It was a ten-minute walk but during this time the strength of the voices changed. Vassily's pain slowly gave way to excitement. By the time we reached the hotel he was completely "healed" and in high spirits. Garry had given him the key to how he might have won. Vassily was delighted. In the lobby Garry and I discussed whatever it was, I've forgotten, and I soon began my walk back to the De Moriaan. I thought about the conversation between Garry and Vassily. They were serious competitors in the tournament. Warriors who knew one another well. This was the Good Garry reaching out to a colleague and lifting him up out of the pit of torment we all knew so very well. I was very proud of my younger brother. The Good Garry could be so good...

One further story, rather an embarrassing one on my side, comes from the Czech capital, Prague in 2001. Garry had performed a highly impressive simultaneous exhibition, challenging the Czech National Team. He won by a 5½-2½ score. He invited a large group of people, including me, to a celebratory dinner; there was lots of conversation, and the wine flowed freely. Somehow Garry and I started reminiscing, and the issue of which Soviet players competed in my 1982 Toluca Interzonal event cropped up. Garry went through the names and included Arthur Yusupov. No, I corrected Garry, he was wrong – Yusupov didn't play in my Interzonal. Garry was insistent, and in no time we had a bet of ten Czech crowns. All the ladies were interested in the outcome of the wager. Who was right? The man who played in the event, me, or the onlooker, Garry?

How to settle the wager? As we all know, at every party there is one wise guy. Someone had brought a laptop that had a database, and the winner was ... Garry Kasparov. Groan. Garry remembered my own games better than I did, and once more became the center of attention from the ladies. Garry wore a broad smile and explained to me: "You know, in such things I'm really very good. I remember all these games. The only one I do not play against in this competition is Yuri Balashov. All the players were once on a bus going from the hotel to the Spartakiad playing-hall. The players got into a big discussion, and we were all arguing over where a particular game was played and who were the players. I shouted out my answer loudly and people all stopped to consider for a moment my answer. During this brief moment of quiet, Balashov replied, 'Garry is correct, the game was played in round nine.' Now everyone stopped completely. Okay, it is already a great accomplishment to remember the players, tournament and even year. But the round?? No, no, Balashov is the exception. I don't compete with him!"

I started writing this book in 2008, and now, in the first month of 2010, the work is being completed. What has happened to the man of "big ideas" following his retirement from chess? Garry went on to found an opposition Democratic

Party in Russia, "The Other Russia," and tried to enter his name on the ballot for Russian President. This initiative was blocked by the authorities. Ah, how I remember our walk to the theater back in Bugojno 1982, where Garry explained how Communism was our ultimate destination. While Democracies are terrible, noisy affairs, the alternatives are far worse. No doubt he will again attempt to run for the Russian Presidency, a goal that is rife with danger. Already he has been jailed. During his few days of incarceration he had a visitor: his rival Anatoly Karpov. One wonders what they talked about. Did they cruelly laugh at one another as they had done in Malta and Seville? Or did they look at one another and shake hands with deep respect and mutual bemusement? "Thank you for coming. Did you bring me any chocolates?"

Garry stays involved with the chess world. He plays simultaneous displays as well as the occasional exhibition match. He recently played such a match with Anatoly Karpov. Too, he has accepted an assignment to train Norway's Magnus Carlsen, a future great no doubt. Garry continues to write, including his famous series *My Great Predecessors*. It is to be hoped that he will continue his writing, lecturing, exhibitions and training. Personally, I would dearly love him to contest a match with today's unified champion, Viswanathan Anand, but that hope seems to be a lost cause.

As Garry stated following his rapid and blitz match victory against Anatoly Karpov in Valencia, Spain in September 2009: "I must make this very clear, and people are not listening: I have no interest [in coming back to professional chess]. Because I accomplished everything I wanted in the game of chess, and now I enjoy it immensely, but playing professionally is a very different thing. Let us not forget, I am working with Magnus, and that is my professional work. You cannot combine these two things. I'm happy that I played well with Karpov – well is a huge overstatement. Karpov played some very good moves, but the quality of his chess was not stable, sometimes it dropped quite dramatically, and also his time-handling. As a professional player you know that very often your game depends on your opponent."

In October 2009, Garry's protégé Magnus Carlsen won Nanjing, one of the strongest events of the year, by a massive "+6" score. It will go down as one of the best performances in history. Playing well can sometimes be as simple as having confidence. A whole lot of it. Knowing that Garry is backing him has lifted Magnus. His confidence is riding at an all-time high. Further great things can be expected from him.

Garry, what can I say that I haven't already written? My best wishes to you and your family. Mayyou find peace and happiness, my friend and dear younger brother.

Our career tournament score ends with a three wins, one loss and two draws record in favor of Garry 4-2.

Classical Games versus Garry Kasparov

Seirawan-Kasparov, Nikšić, Yugoslavia 1983: 0-1
Seirawan-Kasparov, Dubai, United Arab Emirates 1986: 1-0
Kasparov-Seirawan, Thessaloniki, Greece 1988: 1-0
Kasparov-Seirawan, Barcelona, Spain 1989: ½-½
Seirawan-Kasparov, Skellefteå, Sweden 1989: ½-½
Kasparov-Seirawan, Amsterdam, Holland 1996: 1-0

Seirawan: one win, three losses, two draws. Classical score 2-4

World Champion Seirawan?

Well, that's a catchy heading, isn't it? It never happened, of course, and please excuse the pretentious heading, but it had been a dream. This book isn't really about my chess career, except as I crossed paths with former and reigning World Champions. This happened often and the result was the 50-odd games you have seen. At times the summit seemed close, but it was not to be.

I have been blessed with having quite a number of enthusiastic and supportive fans over the years, and some may have occasionally wondered "why not Yasser as World Champion?" To repay their loyalty and kindness, I will treat this question seriously, not because I have any pretensions, but rather because it may shed some light on just what it takes to scale the very greatest heights in the chess world.

First of all, let me point out the obvious. At any given moment, there can be only one World Champion (well, maybe two or possibly three in recent times...). To be World Champion, you not only have to be good – you have to be the best. The very best. You have to be the best both for the entire title match and for the qualifying matches or tournaments that precede the Big Match. This is why in earlier chapters I have often referred to the accomplishments of World Champions in qualifying for their title matches, as well as the successful title matches themselves. Becoming World Champion or even a challenger is therefore no easy task.

David Bronstein was literally almost one move away from wresting the title from Botvinnik, although some have more sinister theories about his drawn match in 1951. Paul Keres was "the best player never to have become World Champion," having been denied the chance for a title match by unpredictable phenomena such as Tal. Victor Korchnoi lost two matches by a single point. The list of those who were so close goes on and on.

The odds against any player becoming World Champion are severe, just because there are so many legitimate contenders. While no one would go so far as to say that you have to be lucky to win the title, I'd suggest it is true that you have to be *fortunate*. You can do almost everything right and still be denied.

That's one thing the World Champions tend to have in common – they are at the right place at the right time, playing their best chess.

But World Champions make their own luck. Sure, the World Championship matches have had their key moments and turning points, as have Candidates' matches and tournaments, but there has never been a World Champion who hasn't *deserved* to hold the title.

Yes, like anyone else, World Champions need to have the opportunity to succeed, but they are all unsurpassed at making the most of their opportunities when they arise, both during a given game and generally throughout their careers. Spasskydid it the hard way, failing to beat Petrosian in his first attempt in 1966, then blasting his way through the cycle to avenge his defeat in 1969. Fischer took a shortcut into the 1970 Interzonal, and had devoted friends and colleagues who saved him from himself and managed his ultimately successful campaign to take the title from Spassky in 1972. Karpov, a stunningly talented and natural player, worked very hard, and the great efforts of the Soviet chess machine to insure his triumphs were probably more insurance than strictly necessary. As for Kasparov, like Mikhail Tal before him, how can a force of nature be stopped...?

Going back to the original question, I wasn't unlucky and I wasn't unfairly denied opportunities or support. I have never complained about any of that and certainly don't intend to start now. No, it's really simpler than that, dear readers. To be World Champion you have to play at a *consistent level of excellence*, and that is something that only a handful of players can do, and not always for a long period.

An analogy. Most golfers take good memories home after every round – the colossal drive on the fourth hole, the chip to within a few inches of the hole on nine, the long putt for a birdie on the 18th hole to end the round. Take your ten best shots and stick with them, and you're on the tour. Make that your five best shots, and look out, Tiger. But try doing that every day, every round, almost all the time. No hooks into the woods, no shots into the water, no missed putts. Maybe a few, but excellence as the norm, almost always. Near perfection. Impossible? For most, but not for the very best.

The same applies to chess. Not just some good moves, good games, good tournaments or good years. All of them, except for the rare lapse to show you're human. It's not that easy.

Despite what I consider some very good results and many very nice games, that was ultimately the little problem that I couldn't overcome: the need for absolute consistency in playing excellent chess for extended periods. Even the occasional mistakes, miscalculations and misjudgments are enough to stall you just that one step away from the very top. Just one step, but what a big step to try to take. It is not so much a question of not understanding a position or becoming lost in variations at a key moment – it's more that *one move*, that *one moment* of

inattention, that you would love to have back. And when you're playing against the very best, they don't let a chance slip away, they seize it, grasp it firmly and bring the victory home...

My overall record with the giants of the chess board in classical games, which I consider the "supreme" test, was not so bad. You have found the statistics at the end of each chapter, but here they are gathered together:

Seirawan versus Smyslov: one win, one loss, three draws. Score 2½-2½
Seirawan versus Tal: four wins, one draw. Score 4½-½
Seirawan versus Petrosian: one draw. Score ½-½
Seirawan versus Spassky: one win, four losses, five draws. Score 3½-6½
Seirawan versus Karpov: two wins, four losses, seven draws. Score 5½-7½
Seirawan versus Kasparov: one win, three losses, two draws. Score 2-4

Seirawan versus Giants: nine wins, twelve losses, nineteen draws. Score 18½-21½

Of the games presented in this work, including the missing scores of my Mazatlán rapid game (draw) and Lugano blitz tournament game (draw) against Anatoly Karpov, the total is sixteen wins, seventeen losses and twenty-five draws. Again, this total score is flattered by a blitz win on time over Anatoly Karpov and a blitz win against Boris Spassky. It was a pleasure and an honor to duel with the giants of the chess-board. Thank you one, thank you all.

Chapter Eleven

The Future of the World Championship

Fédération Internationale des Échecs (FIDE)

If FIDE, the Fédération Internationale des Échecs or World Chess Federation, did not exist, it would have to be created. Everyone would say, "Yes, of course, chess needs an international world chess body," after which the arguments and disagreements would begin in earnest. The old joke that when you have two chess players there will be three strong opinions has some truth to it.

To understand FIDE and why it has done poorly when measured against the success of other sporting bodies, we should start with its history and the role it has played in world chess

The History and Role of FIDE

During the 8th Olympic Games in Paris in 1924, the French Chess Federation also hosted a tournament. The participants founded FIDE as a *players' union*, not unlike the GMA. At that time, the World Champion José Raúl Capablanca wanted to define the World Championship regulations with the "London Rules." Unlike Steinitz's "must-win-ten-games," Capablanca preferred "must-win-six-games," with draws not counting, and no stoppage at a 5-5 tie.

As the fledgling organization grew, it took on the responsibility of organizing Chess Olympiads, where national teams played against one another. The two-yearly Chess Olympiads became FIDE's key event and, when delegates from around the world attended, in parallel the FIDE General Assembly meeting was held.

With the death of Alekhine in 1946 when he was still in possession of the World Championship title, it seemed natural that the next event to crown the new king would be held under the auspices of FIDE. Regulations for the World Championship match and World Championship cycle were carefully drawn up and codified.

FIDE had transformed itself from a players' union into a union of national chess federations. Each federation would send a delegate to attend the General Assembly, submit motions and vote upon them. Those nations which could not send a delegate would give their proxy to another delegate. It is not unusual to have one delegate wielding many proxies. When the General Assembly is not in session, FIDE is run by its President and Presidential Committee. Numerous committees were created, with delegates volunteering their time to serve. FIDE had a small professional staff, but by and large relied upon the national federations to bid on events and cover the resulting costs.

From this beginning, FIDE evolved, and each national federation had one vote. How wonderfully democratic, we might say. No one federation is more powerful than another. The US Virgin Islands have the same voting rights as Russia, the biggest federation in the world and home to the most grandmasters on Earth, whereas the US Virgin Islands have no grandmaster or international masters (to my knowledge), and there are perhaps a dozen people living there who actually play competitively. Immediately, we start to have a sense of the gulf in the problems that exist.

Unlike the United Nations, which has a Security Council where certain countries have the right to veto any actions, in FIDE the General Assembly can pass any legislation adopted by a majority of the delegates. The majority may have widely different interests from those of the largest federations. For example, whereas the United States Chess Federation (USCF) has a large professional staff and a multi-million dollar annual budget, nearly three times that of FIDE, most national federations outside of the OECD countries are small, volunteer-based organizations. Their needs are for chess materials, boards, sets, clocks and books, as well as travel costs to events like the Olympiads. Issues such as World Championship regulations have a low priority for the majority of chess federations, whereas Scholastics and Junior Championships are priorities.

FIDE takes on many tasks and functions which have a tremendously positive impact on chess. Besides the events that it stages, it has also established a worldwide rating system that rates events played around the globe. There are world rankings for the top players, as well as for each member nation. FIDE has a title system awarding grandmaster (GM), international master (IM) and FIDE master (FM) titles for both Men and Women. FIDE ratings and titles affect every professional, semi-professional and amateur player. FIDE provides chess sets, boards and clocks to developing national federations, taxing the richer federations and helping the less fortunate.

At times, FIDE has issued sanctions against individual players by removing their names from the rating-list, as well as by revoking their titles. There is a conflict at such times, as individuals are not members of FIDE and, in principle, it should be up to the national federations to sanction their own players. For example, when Garry Kasparov and Nigel Short forfeited their positions as FIDE

Champion and FIDE Challenger, their names were removed from the FIDE rating list, which caused havoc for organizers. FIDE shortly afterwards reversed its decision and reinstated the two players' names. FIDE should not be in the business of punishing or denouncing individuals, as this can lead to petty personal politiics of tiie silliest type.

FIDE Politics

At times the FIDE leadership has seemed terribly insecure, passing a bevy of resolutions providing that those critical of FIDE may be banned from chess. Persona Non Grata comes to mind – I'm not sure of the exact qualifications needed and whether one or two norms suffice. Again, FIDE is an organization of national chess federatiions, and it has to move away from the business of policing individual conduct and to focus on its members, the federations.

Further personal conflicts arise in relation to big money events. Here specific committees and FIDE's Presidential Committee decide who hosts lucrative sanctioned events, such as Scholastics Championships, where the prizes are medals and World FIDE titles. Most participants either pay for their travel, room and board costs individually or are subsidized by national federations or patrons. Organizers of these events receive a large proportion of their budgets from the participants staying at official hotels, where amounts from room charges are kicked back to the event's budget, as well as from entry fees and the like. While the organizing committees are made up of volunteers, some organizers are full-time professionals, and it is important to keep good relations with those who serve on the committees doling out the successful bids. Recently, for example, the Turkish Federation challenged the FIDE procedures in civil courts and won its complaint. At times auctions for events have seemed tainted and contrived. The winning bids are, sometimes, known in advance to insiders.

Thus there is a constant conflict within FIDE, as well as in national federations, between those who volunteer their time to the cause of chess as charitable work and others who seek to make chess a profession for their private, personal gain. This has given rise to the "professional FIDE office seeker." Just as there are professional politicians in the US Congress and Senate who spend decades in service seeking re-election, there are no term limits for FIDE's officers. Florencio Campomanes, the FIDE President for many years and now "Honorary Chairman," is a good example of a "career chess politician."

It can be argued that FIDE's professional politicians are the most experienced and capable people to play a prominent role in high-profile world chess events. If so, the potential conflicts of interest should force them to be agnostic and not have a vote when it is decided which bids for events will be accepted. Otherwise it would be like members of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) approving host nations' bids and then performing in paying functions at those events.

One of the simplest and cleanest ways to avoid these conflicts of interest is

for FIDE to grant the organizational rights for its major events to a third party, a commercial organization that would professionally manage and perform such duties. This brings us closer to today.

FIDE Economics

FIDE is an organization of damned if you do and damned if you don't. We need such an organization, but its governance structures make it practically ungovernable. It does not function as well as we would like. One simple reason is that it remains desperately under-staffed with a very small budget for such an organization. Spending is less than one million Euros a year.

At the Turin Olympiad in 2006, I was supporting Bessel Kok in his campaign to become the FIDE President, and we went to the FIDE Finance Committee workshop and received a detailed accounting for the latest financial year. I can't recall the exact figure of the FIDE's annual budget, but it was probably around 880,000 Euros. I pointed the figure out to Bessel, and he corrected me, "No, sorry Yasser. You are reading the number wrong. The balance figures are usually stated in thousands or hundreds." Laughing, I assured him I was right. Bessel was stunned at how small a figure the entire FIDE annual expenditure was. Bessel tried again. "Are you sure that isn't a budget for a FIDE Committee? For example, FIDE's work with the IOC?" Once more, I reassured him that it was for the whole of FIDE. Bessel went to seek a second opinion.

In 1995, Kirsan Ilyumzhinov became the President of FIDE and remains so at the time of writing (January 2010). While one might argue that 15 years is long enough for anyone to be President of an international organization and to make his mark, FIDE has been well nourished by its President and has relied upon his largesse.

Kirsan agreed in 1995 that his Russian Republic, Kalmykia, of which he is President, and its capital city Elista, would host the following year's World Chess Championship match between Anatoly Karpov (Champion by virtue of his victory over Jan Timman in 1993) and his challenger Gata Kamsky. It was a million dollar match, and Kirsan paid the prize fund. Then in 1998, Elista hosted the Chess Olympiad, a much more costly event for the organizers, as teams from many developing nations are hosted by the organizers. Kirsan built an entire "Chess City" with a "Chess Palace" to stage this huge event. And so Kirsan became both the sponsor of FIDE's events and its President as well.

He brought many new ideas into chess. When "a hundred flowers bloom," some inevitably turn out to be weeds. He sought to set up a commercial arm of FIDE to take into account the conflicts amongst the Federation's politicians which have been mentioned above. He created "FIDE Commerce," a London-registered for-profit company, which held the rights to host the World Championship events. He poured millions of dollars into its treasury and appointed Artiom Tarasov as the President of FIDE Commerce. It was a disastrous undertak-

ing. Tarasov was utterly incompetent for the position he held. In my view, he went on a free-wheeling spending spree and produced nothing. Comically, FIDE Commerce suggested a dress featuring a black and white chequered-board design. Mercifully, FIDE Commerce eventually folded.

The concept of having a separate for-profit company running FIDE's World Championship cycle makes perfect sense, and it is a pity that Kirsan put the wrong person in charge. On the other hand, there is something very dubious about the FIDE President also being the largest shareholder of the commercial company that holds FIDE's rights to its première events. The separation of church and state has to be strict.

Without a doubt Kirsan Ilyumzhinov has been the greatest chess sponsor ever. I recall a luncheon in New York City just after Kasparov's match with *Deep Fritz* in 2003, when we started to discuss how much money, at that time, Kirsan had devoted to sponsoring chess. Without including any of the costs for Chess City, Garry quickly counted as high as 29 million dollars and couldn't count how much Tarasov might have spent in the FIDE Commerce venture. It was a staggering sum, and we both imagined how much different things might have been had this level of commitment been known in advance and had the money been spent more wisely.

FIDE and the World Championship

Until 1993, when Kasparov and Short abdicated their roles and went off to play their Championship match under the auspices of the newly-formed PCA (a step which Kasparov later described as the biggest blunder of his career), the FIDE match rules had remained largely intact. After the first aborted match between Karpov and Kasparov, the system had reverted to a 24-game match with the first player scoring 12½ points being the winner. The 24-game match rules were in effect for the 1996 Elista match between Karpov and Kamsky. It was the last time that FIDE organized a 24-game match championship.

After Kasparov defeated Short in their London match, a new PCA challenger to Kasparov emerged: India's Viswanathan Anand. Kasparov and Vishy played a 20-game match in 1995 at New York City's World Trade Center, a match played "on top of the world." The opening ceremony was hosted by Mayor Rudy Giuliani on the sadly ironic day of September 11, 1995. Kasparov won that match and retained his "PCA crown." Most chess fans considered Kasparov the true World Champion but still wanted to see the two title-holders, Kasparov (PCA) and Karpov (FIDE), play a match for the unified title to heal the split in the chess world.

Instead of bringing the two title-holders together for a match, the FIDE President had a different idea altogether. As mentioned earlier, he unfortunately had the financial resources to put his plan into effect. His conception was for a massive 128-player knock-out (KO) event modeled on the Wimbledon tennis championships. Here the players would play rounds of short two-game mini-matches

with rapid chess and blitz chess games breaking a tie. The two players who reached the semi-finals would be joined by the two "seeded semi-finalists": Anatoly Karpov and Garry Kasparov. The semi-finals would be a four-game mini-match. The two winners would play a six-game final. As with all the rounds of play, rapid chess and blitz chess games would break any ties. The knock-out event would have a rich prize-fund of five million dollars, an unprecedented sum for an unprecedented event in the world of chess. Kirsan was the sponsor.

The first KO World Chess Championships were held in Groningen, Holland in December 1997. The six-game final was held a few days later, in January 1998, in Lausanne, Switzerland. I was a participant in Groningen and attended the Opening Ceremony, where Kirsan gave an incredible speech. He explained that his vision of a 128-player KO World Championship would take place every two years, and that he had deposited 50 million dollars in the Switzerland-based "World Chess Foundation" to guarantee the next ten events over the next 20 years. The Groningen KO event was unusual in that one player, Karpov, was to be seeded into the final, but in future KO events players would start from Round One or Match One.

By offering such a large prize-fund, Kirsan had hoped to coax both Kasparov and Karpov into accepting their invitations into the semi-finals and to settle their differences at the board. To sweeten the invitation further, if one player declined to play in the semi-finals, the player who accepted his invitation would be seeded into the final directly. Kasparov refused his invitation, and the FIDE Champion Anatoly Karpov was seeded into the final. Karpov's opponent in the final was Viswanathan Anand. Having just competed in a nerve-wracking series of mini-matches, he faced a well-rested Champion and lost a rapid chess tie-breaker. Chess fans knew this was extremely unfair to Vishy.

In the next KO event, organized in Las Vegas, Karpov was absent, arguing that the event unduly infringed upon his "two-year" reign as World Champion and refusing to play. He even filed a complaint with the Swiss sports bodies – a remarkable case of biting the hand that feeds you. The FIDE KO World Championship events would churn out a new Champion at each outing: Russia's Alexander Khalifman in 1999; India's Viswanathan Anand in 2000; Ukraine's Ruslan Ponomariov in 2002; and Uzbekistan's Rustam Kasimdzhanov in 2004...

Why did Garry Kasparov refuse his invitation to the initial highly lucrative KO event? He correctly stated that such an event for the highest title in chess cheapened the title, as such KO events were "lotteries", given that any grandmaster on any given day could upset another. He was proven right. Chess is not tennis and, in all the FIDE KO events, only once has the highest-rated player, Viswanathan Anand, won. The winner of the KO event was the "FIDE World Champion" in title and crowned as such according to the rules, but the chess public didn't recognize the winners as the best player in the world. According to its very own FIDE Elo rating and ranking list, the number one player was Garry Kasparov. Kasparov

would famously make the cruel comment that "the FIDE Champion should get an invitation to play in Linares."

Further confusion arose when, in 2000, Kasparov's PCA folded and a new sponsor, Brain Games, surfaced, as has already been mentioned. It hosted a 16-game match in London between Kasparov and Kramnik, which Kramnik won in an upset. In 2004, Kramnik defended his title in Brissago, Switzerland by tying a 14-game match against his challenger, Hungary's Peter Leko. It seemed that there were three players who were the "world's best:" Vladimir Kramnik by virtue of his *match* victory over Garry Kasparov, Kasparov by virtue of his highest ranking in the world and the FIDE KO title-holder. But who was the "World Champion?" While I personally favored the claim of Kramnik, despite the ever-shortening length of the "championship" matches, chess fans pined for a resolution to the conflicts, and chess sponsors continued a quiet exodus.

After the first highly-paid FIDE KO event, later such contests ran into financial problems. In Groningen, Kirsan had explained his payment of 50 million dollars into the World Chess Foundation for the budgets of ten events, but that money seemed to have gone missing. In 1999, at the FIDE Las Vegas KO event, there were a number of bounced checks, and the winner, Khalifman, waited several months for his prize. In time it was paid in full. Subsequent KO events were not as lucrative as the first one.

The Recent History of the World Championship

After FIDE Commerce faded away and the bloom of the KO Championship had worn off, FIDE changed the format for determining the World Championship in 2006. San Luis, Argentina was to host an eight-player double-round robin tournament. The winner would be the new FIDE World Champion. The FIDE KO Champion, Rustam Kasimdzhanov, played to defend his title, along with the highest-rated players in the world. Kasparov had retired in March 2005, whereas Vladimir Kramnik refused to play in the tournament, insisting that a match format should determine the title of World Champion.

A question asked was why such a competition for the highest title in chess would be so different from a Dortmund, Linares or Sofia high-category event. Indeed, such private tournaments often featured double-round robin formats of the very highest rated players. The "mystique" of what made the World Chess Championship title would be missing. It is precisely thanks to lengthy *match* play that the title of World Chess Champion is so prestigious. It is the one event that separates itself from every other type of chess event. Lengthy match play for the World Championship crown is unique, and from such competitions legends are created.

In 2006, Bulgaria's Veselin Topalov won the San Luis event and became the new FIDE World Champion under its new format. Topalov's credentials as World Champion were impeccable. He won San Luis in dominating fashion and was the highest-rated player in the world, following Kasparov's retirement. Topalov's

manager, Silvio Danailov, was delighted with the outcome. "Why do we need matches?" he asked me. "The tournament format is much better." It is really quite sad when leaders in the chess world are so utterly clueless as to what makes chess special and why it captures the imagination of the general public.

The FIDE President introduced another "innovation" into the struggle for the World Championship title. As FIDE receives 20 percent of the purse for title events, Kirsan opened the door to potential challengers. If a 2700-rated player could find a sponsor for a million dollar prize fund, a challenge could be issued. This was a throw-back to the days of Steinitz, Lasker, Capablanca and Alekhine. The Azerbaijani sensation Teimour Radjabov found such a sponsor in his oil-rich nation, and it seemed that there was a Topalov versus Radjabov match in the offing. Although that would be a fine outing for both players, the chess world longed for an end to the schism.

Finally, in October 2006, Topalov challenged Kramnik to a 12-game match to unify the title and end the split. The contest was held in Elista and received worldwide coverage for what Fleet Street dubbed "toilet-gate." Kramnik forfeited a game when his toilet was locked by a decision of the Appeals Committee and he nearly walked out of the match. In the end, when the forfeited game is included, the match was played to a 6-6 tie. A four-game rapid chess tie-breaker was used to determine the outcome of the match: Kramnik won 2½-1½, and the schism in the chess world was over, but this hardly solved the problems of the World Championship.

The player contracts for the Elista match required that the winner of the match defend the title in Mexico City in 2007 in the same eight-player double-round robin tournament as held in San Luis, Argentina. If the winner in Elista (Kramnik), did not win the event in Mexico, he would play the winner of the Mexico tournament a match. This clause was quite a tricky one for Vladimir Kramnik. After all, he had championed the match format for determining the World Championship title and he would now put at stake the World Championship crown by playing in a tournament format. Viswanathan Anand won the Mexico City double-round robin ahead of Kramnik to become the new FIDE World Champion. It was the second time that Anand had earned the FIDE title, having once won the KO event. Anand and Kramnik squared off to play a 12-game match in Bonn, Germany in 2008. Viswanathan Anand won the match and is justly considered the undisputed, unified champion of the world today. Whew! It has been far too long, but the schism is finally over.

Following Kasparov's lead with his PCA matches, FIDE has similarly headed in the wrong direction as regards the length of the World Chess Championship match. The 2008 Bonn match was for the best of 12 games, half the distance of the epic matches that made the giants of the past and were responsible for creating their legends. Bonn was a fantastic event which was simply too short. I understand economic realities and that organizing matches is costly, but if so much

is going to be spent why do it for a two-week event when a longer event is not that much more costly? I'd strongly urge FIDE to bring back the 24-game World Championship match fixtures. It takes the public several weeks to realize a World Chess event is even being staged, and if it is over before that awareness has set in, the sponsor will lose the attendant windfall of interest.

While FIDE was organizing eight-player double-round robin tournaments to determine its title-holder as well as matches, it had found a new sponsor for the KO event, which changed name to the "World Cup." The oil rich city of Khanti-Mansiisk in Russia played host to three consecutive World Cup events. The 2008 winner was America's Gata Kamsky. FIDE decided that Kamsky, the World Cup Champion, would play a match versus Bulgaria's Veselin Topalov, the highest-ranked player on the FIDE Elo rating list. In 2009, Topalov won the match in Sofia, Bulgaria and earned the right to challenge Anand to a title match to be played in April, 2010 in Sofia, Bulgaria. That is where matters stand today.

It is an understatement to say that from 1993 to today there has been a huge amount of confusion in the chess world. FIDE has minted as many World Champions in a six-year period as there were in the first 60 years. What has happened to the FIDE cycle for creating a Challenger? Sadly, matters are still clouded. In 2007, FIDE decided to launch a series of high-profile Grand Prix events modeled on the GMA World Cup events. The Grand Prix winner was supposed to become the finalist in a match to produce the Challenger. At the 2008 Olympiad in Dresden, the rules were changed, *during the cycle*. This led to the withdrawal from the Grand Prix of two top-ranked players: the UK's Mickey Adams and Norway's Magnus Carlsen. It seems that FIDE would like to organize a Candidates' tournament of eight players modeled on San Luis, the winner of which would challenge the winner of the Anand-Topalov match; rather than have the Grand Prix winner play a match with the World Cup winner as was originally announced.

We now have a cycle that features a Grand Prix of classical round-robin tournaments, a KO event where rapid and blitz games often determine the outcome and, finally, another eight-player double-round robin, with who knows what time-controls, all to produce a Challenger over a two-year period. In the meantime, the World Champion, presumably the greatest draw in chess, sits outside of these competitions to await a rival.

It is hard to explain the FIDE cycle to the non-chess public, especially when a grandmaster like me does not understand the ever-changing rules. (The rules may shift from one FIDE General Assembly meeting to another.) There has to be a better, more efficient system. The World Championship Committee has created a camel instead of a horse

Suggestions for FIDE

I will return to the topic of the World Championship in a moment, but first I will make what I hope are some constructive suggestions for FIDE

While all the above is a pretty harsh indictment of a Federatiion that acts willy-nilly with its own crown jewel, there are some extraordinary positives. Firstly, and most importantly, the rules ofcliess are universal. Whetlierwe play a game in China, Brazil or in Europe, the rules arethe same. This is a huge benefit for chess. If we take the sport of basketball, for example, the rules are different for the College game, the World Championships and for the Natiional Basketball Associatiion (NBA). Chess has benefited enormously from FIDE's efforts to codify the rules of play. Seeondly, FIDE tiitles provide a great service to the recipients, giving recognitiion as well as the honors that they deserve. Thirdly, FIDE does a very good job of publishing and updatiing the rating lists in a prompt and tidy fashion. This work is done from an office in Elista, and players and organizers benefit enormously from it. Lastly, whereas at one time FIDE depended upon Kirsan, its President, for being the primary sponsor of events, his role has become a sponsor of last resort, which is very healthy for the organizatiion. It would be better still for him not to have to sponsor chess events at all, and for the events that FIDE sanctions to stand on their own in a free-market system.

How will FIDE evolve? What will it do in the future? One thing from which FIDE could benefit is an overhaul of its governance structure. This is not necessarily a call for a "Security Council," but some power-sharing needs to be introduced whereby the largest federations have a greatersay in issues that affect them directly. The players must also play a stronger and more supportive role in the rules and regulations that affect their livelihoods. They must engage themselves in the committees that determine the World Championshi'p (cycle) regulatiions. The attitude of most professional players has been towait to receive their invitations to events and to weigh them as to whether or not it is in their interest to accept or decline. The players must understand that they have a responsibility to insure that the cycle's rules and regulations are in the best interests of all stakeholders. They must playa far more active role in their own affairs.

To this end, the players have gotten together to create the Association of Chess Professionals (ACP), a loosely-knit group of players who share their views on the cycle, time-controls, changes to the rules and the like. While not as prestigious as the GMA, it is playing an important role and deserves the strong support of professional players, as well as of FIDE. It is only through dialogue founded on mutual respect between the players and FIDE's officials that chess can advance. A strong *partnership* based on trust and goodwill has to be forged.

In passing, you will recall the 65½-60½ vote at the GMA members' meeting in Murcia that determined Garry's war. Today, a milestone has been passed – there are now over 1,200 chess grandmasters worldwide, a ten-fold increase. I recall one of the platforms on which Campomanes campaigned in 1982. He wanted "A chess grandmaster for every federation." At the current rate at which FIDE is awarding grandmaster titles, it seems that the US Virgin Islands will not have to wait much longer

Common sense dictates that when a cycle is started it should be completed according to the rules in force at the beginning of the cycle. Changing the rules midway is simply ridiculous. It would be a great step forwards if two and possibly three cycles could respect the same format, and one that the non-chess world can easily follow and understand.

Another pet peeve of mine has to do with the promotion of World Championship events. The match in Bonn in 2008 was very well attended and, indeed, despite high ticket prices there were numerous sell-out days. That reflected a job well done by Universal Event Promotions, the company which hosted the event. Yet I've seen photographs of the audience at other major events which, to put it mildly, were embarrassing. It is vital that prominent, major events have large audiences in the playing-hall watching the game. To this end, it would be a simple matter to have one-day, two-day and three-day scholastic events, simultaneous exhibitions and even a rapid chess open event played alongside or prior to the major competition. Participants in these side events would then flow into the playing hall to watch the masters and spare us such unflattering imagery of an empty hall. How well I remember being trapped in the 1979 Riga playing hall – "...more crowded than a bus in Kiev!" Such crowds are what sponsors and players adore. How marvelous it is to play before a packed house.

Besides an overhaul of its governance structure, FIDE needs to take a closer look at its own meetings and committees. There are numerous meetings that entail endless tedious discussions with little outcome. "Lots of talk but little progress" best sums things up. FIDE needs to cull its own committees and narrow the scope of interests into a select few, and then give those committees an adequate budget to put their plans and ideas into effect. Streamline the process and focus on the important issues. Milestones should be created and measured. Goals should be tallied by one-year, three-year and five-year progress reports. Ineffective committees should be dissolved, while successful ones should be rewarded with increased budgets.

In our digital age, the Internet has become a marvelous blessing for the chess world. While it is true that attendance at clubs has been hurt, this is largely due to the Internet chess servers that provide opponents at any time of the day or night. Internet audiences watching live major events continue to grow. Chess is perfectly suited for Internet audience viewing and participation. Text questions can be typed to a host, who provides an audio and even video description of the action in real time. If this audience can be properly monetized for sponsors and advertisers, interest in chess as well as the livelihoods of its professional players will be assured. My overall perspective is that the FIDE leadership has lagged behind in utilizing the new technology that is emerging. This is not necessarily a bad thing, as it is oftentimes better to be late than to be a pioneer, but I'd suggest a greater emphasis on this opportunity.

Lastly, I'd strongly advise the FIDE leadership to think in terms of an "Awards

Dinner." Such an annual event would be an opportunity to recognize outstanding efforts by volunteers and professionals and to double as an annual fundraiser. The goal would be to raise one million dollars a year through the auction of mementos and services of players to perform lectures and simultaneous exhibitions. These funds could be used to assist developing federations as well as committees. Again, it is strongly in the interests of professional players to engage in charity work. By giving back to their sport, happily, their image is enhanced and a child's joyful smile is a soulful reward.

The World Championship

In days past, chess fans could while away their time arguing about who the most worthy or likely Challenger might be and whether the World Champion would keep the title in the inevitable match. Everyone had a favorite player, just as sports fans have a favorite soccer, football or hockey team. Opinions were varied, but one thing was not in doubt – the *legitimacy* of the World Championship. The player who held the title was *World Champion*, and if someone wanted the title, it had to be taken. Many thought Fischer was the strongest player in the world after his devastating run through the Candidates' matches in 1971 (and they were right), but until he beat Spassky face-to-face, he wasn't the World Champion. Had Bobby not finished their match, he wouldn't have been World Champion – no ifs, ands or buts.

The chaos at the highest levels of the chess world has been the result of several factors, which together destroyed the legitimacy of the World Championship for a number of years.

The first factor, of course, was the schism in the chess world which resulted in there being a "World Champion" and a "FIDE World Champion." This was a disastrous development and brought chess closer to boxing than anyone could ever have wished. I have said enough about this already, and it seems that problem may be behind us.

The second factor was the ever-changing format for deciding the World Championship. I have recounted the history of the World Championship. The "Steinitz rules" (first to win ten games) worked well enough when chess theory was less well developed and decisive games were more frequent. As draws became more common, the "London Rules" (first to win six games) were introduced. The formats varied in the 1930s, but after a unique World Championship match-tournament in 1948 to find a new Champion after Alekhine's death, the match format settled down to 24 games, draws counting, with the Champion retaining the title at 12-12.

This format lasted some 20 years, until 1972. Fischer sought to reintroduce the Steinitz rules for the 1975 match, and in 1978, 1981 and 1984 the "shorter" London Rules were used. The 1978 Karpov-Korchnoi match and especially the aborted 1984-85 Karpov-Kasparov match showed that chess had changed and,

regardless of the match rules, *draws did count*. They took their toll on the players, the organizers and the fans. Unlimited matched just didn't work.

And so we returned to the 24-game matches, and Kasparov and Karpov produced some wonderful chess using that format. The matches were close, exciting, and had a fixed end-date. Kasparov held on to the title again and again, and was World Champion in every respect. Then the wheels came off. Knock-out tournaments, double-round robins, 16-game matches, 14-game matches, 12-game matches... Even without two World Champions, many chess fans couldn't help but wonder whether the player who happened to win such an event really deserved to be in the Pantheon with Steinitz, Lasker, Capablanca, Alekhine and all the other greats.

The third factor has been the attendant collapse of the three-year World Championship cycle. One theme of this book has been just how difficult it is to become World Champion. A proper match is a grueling undertaking, both in terms of preparation time and the match itself. Don't forget, you are playing against a very strong opponent for the highest stakes. It is unreasonable to ask players to go through this ordeal more than once every three years, but it is equally unreasonable to make contenders wait for more than three years. I think the historic three-year cycle was just about right, balancing the right of the Champion to enjoy the hard-won title against the rights of potential challengers to have a shot at the title. Shorter, more frequent matches are no substitute, and tournaments are worse.

To restore the luster to the World Championship, FIDE and the leading players much learn from history and act accordingly. By doing so, the legitimacy of the World Championship title will be assured. The concept of a World Champion defines chess in the public eye and is the key to sponsorship and public recognition and participation in our sport.

To this end:

1. World Championship matches should be 24 games, draws counting, with the Champion retaining the title at 12-12. No rematch.

2. The system for deciding the exact dates and site(s) of the match must be transparent and fair.

3. Championship matches should be held every three years; no more and no less. If the Champion refuses to play, the challenger should be awarded the title.

4. A fair qualification system must be established. The Interzonal system broke down with the ever-increasing number of strong players, but the Continental Championships, as well as the rating list, provide an opportunity for an open, inclusive system.

5. One reasonable approach is a double-round robin Candidates' tournament for the Continental winners, World Cup finalists and the top three rated players in the world (apart from the reigning champion), with the winner to play for the Championship. Another is to have the top four finishers play shorter (12-game) Candidates' matches

Innovative? Not really - but chess players and fans are steeped in history, and historical continuity has an important role to play in the perceptions of the chess and non-chess public. FIDE and the players "fixed" something that wasn't broken. There will still be strong invitational tournaments, non-title matches and other events. That's good for both chess and the professionals who play it at the highest levels. But the World Championship is the glue that holds it all together and, in that area, organizers, sponsors and players should restrain their creativity. The World Championship "worked" for many years, and can work again.

The World Champion

I'd like to close with a few words of respect, appreciation and admiration for Viswanathan Anand, today's unified World Chess Champion. In my view, Vishy deserves recognition as the fourth greatest chess player ever. Consider that he is the only World Champion in history to win the title from a knock-out event, an eight-player double-round robin tournament and by a match. Quite a trifecta! Besides these feats, for the better part of 20 years he has been in the world's top handful of ranked players and at various times has been number one and, during the Kasparov years, a close number two. He breached the 2800 rating mark after Kasparov. He has a fantastic tournament and match record of which any Champion would be justly proud. Should he continue to perform as well as he has, by defeating Veselin Topalov in their 2010 match, he would earn my recognition as being the third greatest player in history. Should he keep up such winning feats for five years, he may well earn the best player ever moniker. It will take an enormous effort for him to succeed, and I wish him well with all his endeavors.

Finally, tongue in cheek, I turn over the mike to Nigel Short, from a recent interview:

"You are standing for the post of FIDE Delegate in the forthcoming English Chess Federation elections. What made you decide to enter chess politics, and what are your intentions in case you win?"

"If elected, I intend to uphold the fine English traditions of secrecy, uncommunicativeness, obduracy, ignorance and utter contempt for the interests of those whose livelihoods I will affect by my vote. And I shall exhibit a gargantuan appetite for junketing – my raison d'être. As to why I have decided to enter chess politics: suffice it say that I am not entirely satisfied that the interests of English Chess are best represented by our current Delegate."

Nigel won his election.

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