



MIDDLEGAME PLAY: MATERIAL IMBALANCE & HOW TO PROPERLY EVALUATE A POSITION • Illia Nyzhnyk

AMERICAN CHESS MAGAZINE

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WHERE GREAT MINDS MEET

Saint Louis U.S. Championship

RUTHLESS
PERFORMANCE
BY FABI AND A
NOTABLE DEBUT
FOR MISHRA

John Burke

A Winning Odyssey from Missouri to Mexico

MIZZOU STUDENT
CLAIMS BRONZE
IN WORLD
JUNIORS

Luka Budisavljevic

A New Wave is Coming

MEET
ALICE LEE
AND OTHER
AMAZING
U.S. GIRLS

Zoey Tang

2023 In Review

A YEAR
OF UPHEAVAL
AND CHANGE

Dylan Loeb McClain



Amazing Year-End Triumphs

FABIANO

Triple Crown, Total Victory!

THE WINNER TAKES ALL



AMERICAN GRANDMASTER FABIANO CARUANA ENDED THE YEAR WITH A TRIPLE CROWN, WINNING THE U.S. CHAMPIONSHIP, THE SINQUEFIELD CUP AND THE 2023 GRAND CHESS TOUR



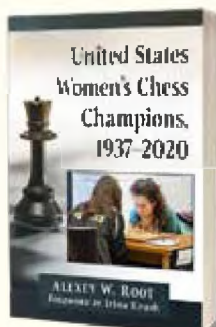
McFarland

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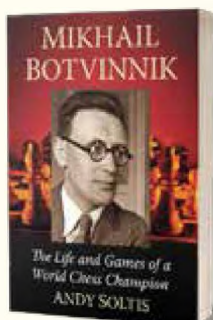
José Raúl Capablanca. *A Chess Biography*. Miguel A. Sánchez. 2023, [original lib. bdg. 2015] \$59.95 **now paperback** (7 × 10), 568pp., 195 annotated games, 55 photos, appendices, notes, bibliography, indexes, 978-1-4766-9422-1. “Even the most ardent Capa fan will learn something new”—*Chess Life*.



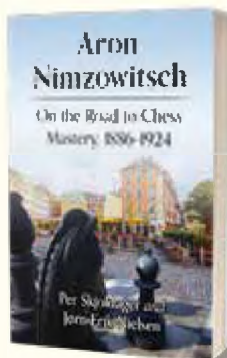
United States Women's Chess Champions, 1937–2020. Alexey W. Root. 2022, \$49.95 paperback (7 × 10), 238pp., 29 photographs, 171 annotated games, 93 diagrams, 60 cross-tables, bibliography, index, 978-1-4766-8693-6. “A major accomplishment and one chess historians will gratefully appreciate... fascinating”—IM John Donaldson (Mechanics' Institute).



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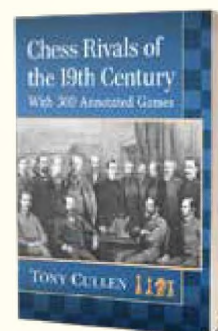
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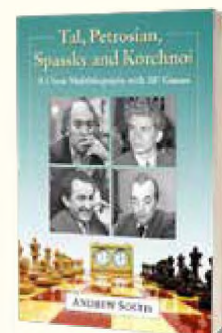
Smyslov, Bronstein, Geller, Taimanov and Averbakh. *A Chess Multibiography with 220 Games*. Andrew Soltis. 2021, \$65 library binding (7 × 10), 392pp., 44 photographs, 227 diagrams, appendices, notes, bibliography, indexes, 978-1-4766-7793-4. Fate played a capricious role in the lives of five of the greatest. **BOOK OF THE YEAR AWARD**—*Chess Journalists of America*



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Tal, Petrosian, Spassky and Korchnoi. *A Chess Multibiography with 207 Games*. Andrew Soltis. 2020 [original lib. bdg. 2019], \$45 **now paperback** (7 × 10), 394pp., 30 photographs, appendices, notes, bibliography, indexes, 978-1-4766-8364-5. “Arguably the best book Soltis has ever written”—IM John Donaldson. **BOOK OF THE YEAR AWARD**—*Chess Journalists of America*.



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ON THE ROAD TO THE 2024 CANDIDATES TOURNAMENT

Caruana Wins The Sinquefeld Cup and GCT

American GM Fabiano Caruana won the Sinquefeld Cup held in Saint Louis, MO from November 21–30, 2023. With this victory at the final event of the 2023 Grand Chess Tour, Caruana also claimed the overall title of the series – to complete one of the best years of his professional chess career on a high note!

Still in 2023, at present there are six confirmed participants for the 2024 Candidates Tournament which will be held early April 2024 in Toronto, Canada. As Magnus Carlsen had earlier announced that he will not take part in this event, the qualifiers are: Ian Nepomniachtchi (2023 WC match runner-up), Rameshbabu Pragganandhaa, Fabiano Caruana and Nijat Abasov (top three finishers from the 2023 World Cup), Vidit Gujrathi and Hikaru Nakamura (the top two finishers from the 2023 FIDE Grand Swiss).

In early 2024, two remaining names will be announced – the winner of the 2023 FIDE Circuit, and the highest-rated player in the January 2024 FIDE rating list who has not yet qualified. There are already two confirmed U.S. candidates (Caruana and Nakamura), but also realistic chances for a couple more American players – Wesley So and Leinier Dominguez – to join their compatriots in Canada by virtue of their rating.

The Sinquefeld Cup was not taken into account in the December 2023 rating list due to not finishing in time for inclusion. However, according to tentative live ratings, with the results from Saint Louis included, So is at #6 in the world with 2757.4, and Dominguez #7 with 2756.2. The denouement of this drama will be known on the first day of 2024 when FIDE will publish its official rating list for January.

SAINT LOUIS, MO

November 21–30, 2023

Sinquefeld Cup

(9-player round-robin)

1 Fabiano CARUANA	5½
2 Leinier DOMINGUEZ	5
3 Wesley SO	4½
4–6 Ian NEPOMNIACHTCHI (FID), Maxime VACHIER-LAGRAVE (FRA), Levon ARONIAN	4
7 Anish GIRI (NED)	3½
8 Alireza FIROUZJA (FRA)	3
9 Richard RAPPORT (ROU)	2½



▲ Fabiano Caruana

European Team Championships

HISTORIC TRIUMPHS FOR SERBIA AND BULGARIA

After nine rounds of grueling battles in Budva, Montenegro, the Serbian men's team and Bulgarian women's side were each crowned champions for the first time in their respective chess histories!

The 10th seed Serbian team (GM Alexander Predke, GM Alexey Sarana, GM Aleksandar Indjic, GM Robert Markus and GM Velimir Ivic, captain: IM Miodrag Perunovic) finished in shared first place with the third seed Germany (GM Vincent Keymer, GM Rasmus Svane, GM Matthias Bluebaum, GM Alexander Donchenko and GM Dmitrij Kollars, captain: GM Jan Gustafsson),

but were declared winners due to superior tie-breaks. So in the end Serbia claimed gold, Germany took silver, while Armenia won bronze.

This outstanding achievement by Serbia enabled Alexey Sarana to become the European Individual and Team Champion in the same year, a quite unique feat!

In the women's section, the 5th seed Bulgaria (player-captain GM Antoaneta Stefanova, IM Nurgul Salimova, WGM Viktoria Radeva, FM Gergana Peycheva and WGM Beloslava Krasteva) surprisingly came out on top after a last-round drama in which Peycheva was able to completely turn the tables and win a crucial game for her team against the top-seed Georgia. Silver went to Azerbaijan, while France won bronze due to superior tie-breaks.

BUDVA, MONTENEGRO

November 11–20, 2023

European Team Championship

(9 rounds, 38 teams)

1–2 Serbia, Germany	15
3 Armenia	13
4–5 Poland, Czech Republic	12
6–12 England, France, Romania, Hungary, Croatia, Georgia, Greece	11

European Women's Team Championship

(9 rounds, 32 teams)

1 Bulgaria	16
2 Azerbaijan	15
3–6 France, Ukraine, Greece, Poland	12
7–9 Germany, Serbia, Switzerland	11
10–13 Georgia, Armenia, Spain, England ..	10



▲ Serbian team



▲ Bulgarian team

FIDE RATINGS on December 1, 2023

Jennifer Shahade at the Marshall Chess Club

On November 28, WGM Jennifer Shahade conducted a lecture at the Marshall Chess Club, followed by a book signing. The event was well attended, with huge interest shown by members of the famous New York City chess club.

Jennifer presented some dazzling examples of pawn promotion tactics to test the calculating ability of attendees, while giving some concrete ideas on how to improve their pattern recognition. She also talked about her work to make chess more inclusive and fun for everyone, touching on her cover story from *American Chess Magazine* #35, and a recent study she co-authored with NYU professors on gender bias and chess. The lecture concluded with a Q&A session and Jennifer signing copies of *Chess Queens* (now out in paperback), as well as her recent ACM cover and her brand new work *Play Like A Champion*.



▲ Jennifer Shahade and Laurel Aronian

2023 Chess Hall of Fame Inductions

As is customary, the opening ceremony of the 2023 U.S. Championships in Saint Louis, Missouri, coincided with the induction ceremony for the U.S. Chess Hall of Fame. This welcomed **Lisa Lane**, twice U.S. Women's Champion and the first chess figure to appear on the cover of *Sports Illustrated* in August 1961; **GM Yuri Shulman**, 2008 U.S. Champion and winner of the team bronze for the U.S. squad at the Chess Olympiad the same year, as well as team silver at the World Team Championship in 2011; and **William Shinkman**, one of the greatest ever chess problem composers (ACM #31, pp.63-67).

Similarly, at the ceremony hosted at Webster University on November 13, the World Chess Hall of Fame also recognized its new members – the legendary **GM Bent Larsen**, the second strongest non-Soviet player of the 1960s and 1970s behind Bobby Fischer; Hungarian **GM Lajos Portisch**, eight-time contestant in the Candidates

Tournament and 20-time Chess Olympiad participant, winning six team medals and five individual medals; and **GM Susan Polgar**, former Women's World Champion in classical chess, rapid and blitz, winner of 12 Olympiad medals, and coach of Webster University Chess Team that won seven consecutive national championships.

More details on biographies of these outstanding chess personalities can be read at worldchesshof.org



FIDE Ratings - Top 10 Open			
1	Magnus Carlsen	NOR	2830
2	Fabiano Caruana	USA	2794
3	Hikaru Nakamura	USA	2788
4	Ding Liren	CHN	2780
5	Ian Nepomniachtchi	FID	2771
6	Alireza Firouzja	FRA	2763
7	Anish Giri	NED	2754
8	Wesley So	USA	2752
9	Sergey Karjakin	FID	2750
10	Viswanathan Anand	IND	2748

FIDE Ratings - Top 10 Women			
1	Hou Yifan	CHN	2632
2	Ju Wenjun	CHN	2560
3	Humpy Koneru	IND	2554
4	Aleksandra Goryachkina	FID	2553
5	Lei Tingjie	CHN	2550
6	Kateryna Lagno	FID	2542
7	Anna Muzychuk	UKR	2530
8	Tan Zhongyi	CHN	2521
9	Mariya Muzychuk	UKR	2510
10	Nana Dzagnidze	GEO	2506

FIDE Ratings - USA Top 10 Open			
1	Fabiano Caruana		2794
2	Hikaru Nakamura		2788
3	Wesley So		2752
4	Leinier Dominguez		2745
5	Levon Aronian		2723
6	Samuel Sevian		2697
7	Ray Robson		2696
8	Sam Shankland		2674
9	Hans Niemann		2667
10	Grigoriy Oparin		2667

FIDE Ratings - USA Top 10 Women			
1	Irina Krush		2430
2	Carissa Yip		2399
3	Alice Lee		2380
4	Gulrukhbegim Tohirjonova		2370
5	Annie Wang		2356
6	Anna Zatonskih		2350
7	Nazi Paikidze		2319
8	Tatev Abrahamyan		2311
9	Katerina Nemcova		2305
10	Zoey Tang		2284



CHESS IN AMERICA KEEPS GROWING

The past year has brought a lot of success for American players, organizers, coaches and instructors – some intrigues and controversies too, but I'd rather skip that here. Caruana and Nakamura secured their places in the 2024 Candidates, climbed up the world rating list to #2 and #3 respectively, and there are great expectations for more successes in 2024. So and Dominguez are on the verge of qualifying for the Candidates by rating, but most likely only one of them will achieve this. Early January will tell.

Fabiano Caruana delivered outstanding performances in almost every tournament he played in 2023 – winner of the first Grand Chess Tour (GCT) tournament, held in Romania, 4th place in the Rapid and Blitz GCT event in Croatia, 3rd place in the World Cup, winner of the GCT Rapid and Blitz in Saint Louis, winner of the Sinquefeld Cup, and a convincing defense of his title at the U.S. Championship! An extensive report on this last event is presented in this issue by our grandmaster contributors John Burke and Sarunas Sulskis.

All of you who continuously follow *American Chess Magazine* have surely realized by now that we always keep our eyes wide open on the performances of the most prominent U.S. Juniors. Our young colleagues, FM Grayson Rorrer and WIM Zoey Tang, have prepared tremendous reports and interviews with U.S. juniors who achieved notable results in 2023. We can't help but be more than happy with how Grayson and Zoey continue to grow as writers, but also as players – we're certain that their prime is yet to come!

When it comes to clubs and communities that nurture chess and do a wonderful job in connecting people and crossing boundaries, ACM has already reported on those enthusiastic chess promoters in Florida, and chess instructors gathered at the New York based organization which provides chess education all over the country. In this issue you will also read how locals from Denver have kept alive the spirit of their chess club, founded in 1859, written from the viewpoint of a non-chess-playing mom.

Another very strong chess community has been established over the years – that of the so-called "chess colleges and universities." Well, that is not exactly as it reads, but our chess focus may allow us to express it that way. If truth be told, there is a significant number of universities across the USA which offer chess scholarships and gather together talented players. We at ACM also aim to

document their significant results from both an individual and team perspective.

Last but not least, hearty praise goes to all those vibrant chess organizers in so many U.S. States. Without their engagement, it would be impossible to develop successful players, achieve great results and offer everyone a chance to compete. No matter how well attended are their tournaments, their efforts remain at an incredibly high level, which has enabled the U.S. chess map to constantly expand from east to west and north to south. Tournaments have been organized in New York and New Jersey, Los Angeles and Bay Area, Chicago, Saint Louis, Las Vegas, Charlotte, Wyoming, Tennessee, Florida, Washington, Oregon, and now a new series is announced for Texas... Soon you will hardly find a State without chess events (I apologize to you guys in Alaska, but I warmly greet our subscribers there!). Again, we at ACM encourage all organizers to get in touch and thereby receive due recognition for their achievements.

Why did I write 'America' and not 'USA' in the title? Well, we have previously reported on several chess events in Canada, and we intend to continue with this. There is a lively chess scene north of the border as witnessed by a very special American chess player, who now shares with us his personal story of how he set a unique chess record!

The New Year holiday season will soon be upon us and many of you may want to travel – either to a tournament or simply to have fun and time to relax. If you haven't visited the World Chess Hall of Fame yet, this might be a wonderful opportunity, as they are hosting a nice free-admission exhibit on music and chess that will end on January 28, 2024.

All of us at *American Chess Magazine* wish all of our readers a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year until our next meeting in February 2024.



Yours in chess,
Dusan Kronic, Managing Editor



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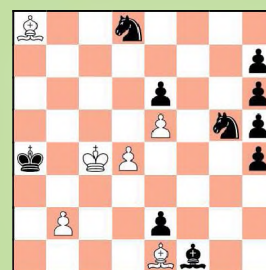
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December 2023

Holiday Puzzle

John Nunn 1991



Mate in 24



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▲ Alice Lee



Another ruthless performance by Fabi and a notable debut for Mishra



Caruana

clinches his third national title

Top-seed Fabiano Caruana convincingly won his third U.S. Championship with a $1\frac{1}{2}$ -point margin and undefeated. As usual, the national championship was replete with fighting chess, but what is particularly worth noting is the performance of the youngest player – 14-year-old Abhimanyu Mishra, who finished on a shared second place with eight decisive games out of 11!

■ By GM John Burke

The 2023 U.S. Championship took place in St. Louis, and featured a field of experienced veterans and ambitious youngsters. From the former group we had Fabiano Caruana, Wesley So, Leinier Dominguez, Ray Robson, Levon Aronian, Sam Shankland, and Dariusz Swiercz. From the latter group we had Abhimanyu Mishra, Sam Sevian, Hans Niemann, Jeffery Xiong, and Andrew Tang. The gap that divides “veteran” and “youngster” is getting smaller and smaller, and it seems weird to put the 29-year-old Robson in the first category, but considering

he became a grandmaster at the age of 14 and played his first U.S. Championship in 2007, it’s quite fair! It’s also crazy that Sevian and Xiong are hardly inexperienced youngsters anymore, as they’ve both played this event countless times.

Caruana ended up defending his title quite smoothly, winning by a $1\frac{1}{2}$ -point margin – a true rarity at this level of competition. His 8/11 score was followed by three players with $6\frac{1}{2}$ – Dominguez, So, and Mishra. The first two names are certainly no surprise, but Mishra had a great result in his U.S. Championship debut – definitely a positive sign for the world’s youngest grandmaster. He also had the most decisive games out of any player – 8(1), (5 wins, 3 losses) and 3 draws, while Dominguez and So both had their same customary score of 2 wins, 0 losses, and 9 draws.

Sevian, Robson, and Niemann all had topsy-turvy events and ended up scoring 50%. Notably, Levon Aronian, who has been struggling with form as of late, had his second consecutive disappointment in the U.S. Championship, scoring minus one, just like last year.

Seven passed pawns!

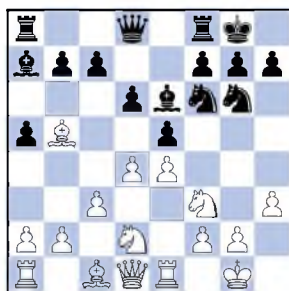
The critical game that locked up Caruana's victory occurred in round nine against Hans Niemann. Caruana was leading by a full point, but four people were tied for second right behind him – including his opponent. Niemann had the white pieces and certainly wanted to use his chance to catch up with the frontrunner.

C54

Hans Niemann	2667
Fabiano Caruana	2786

U.S. Championship, Saint Louis 2023

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♘f6 4.d3 ♙c5 5.c3 a5 6.0-0 d6 7.♞e1 ♙a7 I believe this trend of combining ...a5 with ...♙a7 in the Italian was started by Magnus Carlsen. For example, he played it in his World Championship match against Nepo. There are lots of small details and move order subtleties, but the basic point is that it serves as prophylaxis against d4 later, once Black plays ...♘e7.
8.♘bd2 0-0 9.h3 ♙e6 10.♙b5 ♘e7 11.d4 ♘g6



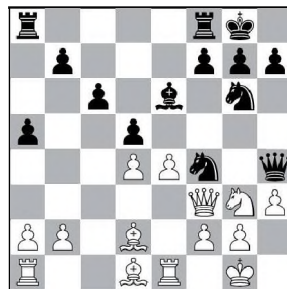
12.♙a4 It may look a bit mysterious to play this move before Black attacks the bishop with ...c6. However, playing 12.♘f1 immediately would give Black an extra option after 12...exd4 13.cxd4 d5 14.e5 ♘e4. If the knight was on d2, this option wouldn't work for Black, which is why Hans decided to delay ♘f1.
12...♘h5 The typical plan in this line – the knight heads to f4, where it will be very



John Burke was the 2020 US Junior Champion. The young grandmaster from New Jersey had already stunned the chess world in 2015 by breaking the record as youngest player ever to surpass 2600+ ELO. John's most notable victories include the 2018 U.S. Masters, the 2018 New York International Championship, and the 2019 Washington International Open. In 2021 he shared first at the Cherry Blossom Classic in Dulles, VA, and also in the World Open in Philadelphia, PA.

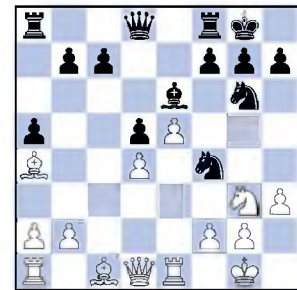
difficult to dislodge, as White can't play g3 while his h-pawn is hanging.
13.♘f1 ♘hf4 14.♘g3 exd4 15.♘xd4 ♙xd4 16.cxd4 d5 17.e5?! The first new move, and not a good one.

There was a high-level game in this line last year in which White played 17.♞f3. Then followed 17...♞f6 18.♙d1 ♞h4 19.♙d2 c6



White has the bishop pair, but Black's pieces are active and he has no weaknesses. Black eventually won in L. Dominguez 2752 -

W.So 2772, Berlin 2022.



17...f6 An inaccuracy in reply. It's nice to get the queen out with 17...♞h4! before playing ...f6 to open the f-file. Now Black's attack has much more power. White doesn't have ♘h5 ideas like in the game, relieving the pressure. There will constantly be ideas of sacrifices on h3 and g2, and White has to be very careful to not get blown off the board.

18.♙xf4 ♘xf4 19.♘h5! Now White gets to trade some pieces and Black's attack is a thing of the past.

19...♘h5 20.♞xh5 f5 An interesting choice, keeping the e-file closed. Caruana didn't want to play a slightly worse position with no chances of winning. After 20...fxe5 21.♞xe5 ♙f7, White has a slight but annoying advantage, thanks to his control of the e-file and potential play on the light squares.

21.f4



2023 U.S. Championship, Saint Louis, MO, October 5-17, 2023

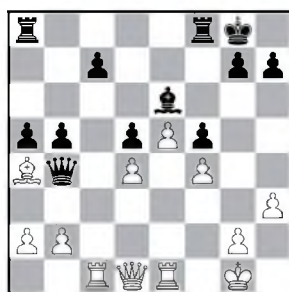
Rk	Name	Elo	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Pts	TPR
1	Fabiano CARUANA	2786		½	½	1	1	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	8	2848
2	Wesley SO	2753	½		½	1	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	½	6½	2741
3	Leinier DOMINGUEZ	2745	½	½		½	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	1	6½	2742
4	Abhimanyu MISHRA	2592	0	0	½		0	1	1	1	1	½	½	1	6½	2756
5	Hans NIEMANN	2667	0	½	½	1		1	0	1	0	½	½	½	5½	2684
6	Samuel SEVIAN	2698	½	½	½	0	0		1	½	½	½	½	1	5½	2681
7	Ray ROBSON	2699	½	0	½	0	1	0		½	½	1	1	½	5½	2681
8	Levon ARONIAN	2742	½	½	½	0	0	½	½		1	½	½	½	5	2641
9	Sam SHANKLAND	2698	½	½	0	0	1	½	½	0		½	½	½	4½	2616
10	Jeffery XIONG	2693	0	½	½	½	½	½	0	½	½		½	½	4½	2616
11	Dariusz SWIERCZ	2620	0	½	½	½	½	½	0	½	½	½		0	4	2586
12	Andrew TANG	2496	0	½	0	0	½	0	½	½	½	½	1		4	2597



Now the position is blocked, so we should examine the pawn breaks. Black will aim to play ...c5 and get his queenside pawns going. White will try to stop that from happening, and maybe, if things could go well, he could gradually prepare a kingside attack, including the move g2-g4. However, he should be very careful that such a move is well-prepared, otherwise it could backfire and his own king might get exposed.

21...♖e7 22.a3 Stopping ...♖b4, but it actually wasn't necessary.

22.♞ac1 is the most natural move, stopping ...c5, but surely both players thought that ...♖b4 was a dangerous threat for Black. **22...♖b4** (After **22...♞ac8 23.♖d1 c5 24.♖b3** Black's counterplay is completely contained. **24...cxd4** can be met with **25.♖b6** with a nice position for White.) **23.♖d1 b5**



24.♞c6! A really nice detail that is hard to see from a few moves back. **24...bxa4** (**24...♞fe8 25.♞b3 a4 26.♞xe6!+-**; Or if **24...♞d7**, then **25.♞xc7** when the bishop is hit again, so no time to take on a4.) **25.♞xe6 ♖xb2 26.♞e2!** The a4 pawn is weak and isn't going away, so it's more important to expel the black queen first. (**26.♖xa4** allows some dangerous counterplay after **26...♖d2 27.♞f1 ♞ab8**) **26...♖c3 27.♞h2!** Even though he's down a pawn, White is in great shape here. His rooks are active and ready to pick off Black's weak pawns, for example with **♞c2** and **♞xc7**.

22...c5 23.♞ac1 c4 Black's pawns are beginning their march. The dream is to force ...b5-b4 through. If he accomplishes this, he will be doing very well.

24.♖d1 24.♞h2 b5 Here's a surprising trick – White's bishop gets trapped behind enemy lines. **25.♞xb5 a4 26.♖d1 ♖a7 27.♞c6** It turns out that White can save the piece, but Black still gets very active after **27...♞ab8 28.♞xa4 ♞xb2**.



▲ Hans Niemann vs. Fabiano Caruana

Photo: Saint Louis Chess Club

24...♞h8



25.♞b5?! A slight mistake, but not an obvious one. **25.♞c3!** is a really high-class move, shoring up the third rank in preparation for Black's attack on the g-file. **25...♞g8** (**25...g5 26.fxg5 ♖xg5 27.♞f1** With the rook already on c3, White is much better equipped to deal with the attack.) **26.♞e2 ♞ab8 27.♞b5** Now White will prepare to play b2-b3 under good circumstances. Or, if Black plays ...g7-g5, he will switch his focus to the kingside.

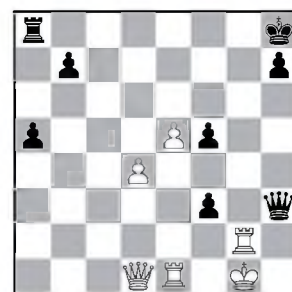
25...g5! The attack is really quick, and White has to be careful.

26.b3? I understand the desire to include the b5 bishop in the defense, but there's just not enough time for this. In case of **26.fxg5 ♖xg5 27.♞c3 ♞g8 28.♞e2 f4**, Black's moves come so easily – ...♞af8, ...♖h4, etc.

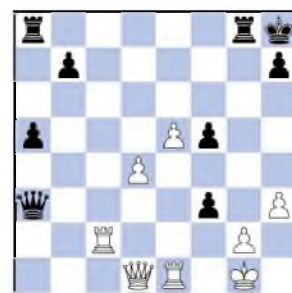
26.♞f1! was best for White, when after **26...♞g8 27.♞c3 gxf4 28.♞f2** Black doesn't have a breakthrough.

26...gxf4 27.bxc4 ♞g8 Black's agenda contains ...♞g3 and ...♞ag8 coming quickly. **28.♞c3 dxc4 29.♞xc4 ♞xc4 30.♞xc4 ♖xa3 31.♞c2 f3 31...♖xh3!** would have

led to a beautiful win after **32.♞f2 ♞xg2+!! 33.♞xg2 f3**



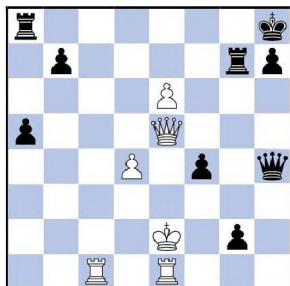
The rook can't leave the g-file because of ...♞g8+. **34.♞g5** (**34.♖d2** The rook endgame is winning, but it's not totally obvious, since White has two connected passed pawns. **34...♖xg2+ 35.♖xg2 fxg2 36.d5 a4 37.d6 ♞g8 38.e6 ♞f8 39.♞xg2 a3 40.♞f3 a2 41.♞a1 ♞a6!** Just in time. White loses by one tempo – he can't get his king to e5 in time. **42.♞f4 ♞xd6 43.♞xa2 ♞xe6+-**) **34...♖h4 35.♖d2 f4**.



32.e6? After this the kingside falls apart. **32.♞f2 ♞xg2+ (32...fxg2 33.♞f3) 33.♞xg2 fxg2 34.♖d2! ♖xh3 35.♖g5** White threatens a perpetual check, and it seems



like Black has no win here after 35...f8 36.e6 f1+ 37.f2 f2 38.f3! 32...fxg2 33.f2 f2 34.f3+ f3 35.f4 36.f2 f2 37.f3+ 37...f4



How often do you see a position with seven passed pawns? Black's are far quicker, though, and his king is safer.

38.f3 f3 39.f4+ 40.f3 41.f3 42.f3 43.f3 44.f3 45.f3 46.f3 47.f3 48.f3 49.f3 50.f3 51.f3 52.f3 53.f3 54.f3 55.f3 56.f3 57.f3 58.f3 59.f3 60.f3 61.f3 62.f3 63.f3 64.f3 65.f3 66.f3 67.f3 68.f3 69.f3 70.f3 71.f3 72.f3 73.f3 74.f3 75.f3 76.f3 77.f3 78.f3 79.f3 80.f3 81.f3 82.f3 83.f3 84.f3 85.f3 86.f3 87.f3 88.f3 89.f3 90.f3 91.f3 92.f3 93.f3 94.f3 95.f3 96.f3 97.f3 98.f3 99.f3 100.f3

White resigned

When fire meets fire

While Caruana was the clear star of the event, let's take a look at some of the highlights of our second-place finishers. Wesley So is probably the hardest player

in the world to beat, although he usually draws a lot of games too, which can make it hard to rack up the margins required to win an event like this. However, I was very pleasantly surprised by Wesley's approach in his game against the fearsome junior Abhimanyu Mishra, as he played in a very aggressive style, choosing a sharp, risky variation as White in the Najdorf. I don't remember the last time Wesley played a game like this, and it produced excitement on the board.

B87

Wesley So	2753
Abhimanyu Mishra	2592

U.S. Championship, Saint Louis 2023

1.e4 c5 2.f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.fxd4 f6 5.f3 c3 a6 6.f4 e6 7.f3 e3 This move is the latest fashion in the Fischer-Sozin Attack. White ends up aiming for a type of hybrid setup that incorporates elements of the English Attack (6.f3). 7...b5 8.f3 f7 9.a3 0-0



10.f2 10.f3 f7 11.f2 The queen doesn't belong on d2 in this setup, with the white bishop already on b3. Here's a sample variation showing why. 11...f6 12.0-0-0 fxd4 13.fxd4 f6! Black is already gearing up his attack with ...a5 and ...b4 coming. If White's queen were on e2, then ...a5 wouldn't be possible yet, as the b5 pawn would hang.

10...f7 11.f3 Compared to the standard English Attack, there are a few differences. The queen is on e2, not on d2, which would normally not work in the standard English Attack, but here White's bishop is already on b3, not stuck on f1, so it's not a problem.

11...f6 12.0-0-0 fxd4 13.g4 f6 White doesn't necessarily mind giving up this bishop, since after 13...fxb3+ 14.cxb3, he will play f1 next, and the pawns shield his king nicely. 14.f1 d7 15.h4

Fabiano Caruana	2786
Abhimanyu Mishra	2592



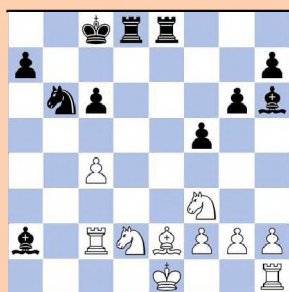
17.c5 f6 18.f5 f6 19.f4 f5 20.cxd6 exd6 21.f5! f5 22.f4 f5 23.f1 f5 24.f3 f8 25.f3 f3 26.exd5 f8 27.f6 f6 28.f3 White won on move 75

Andrew Tang	2496
Fabiano Caruana	2786

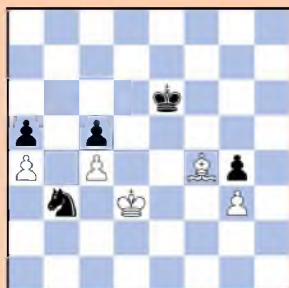


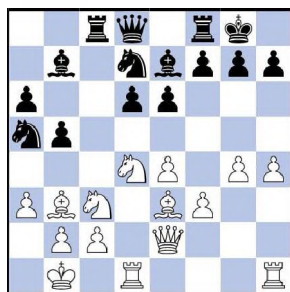
10...f6! 11.exd5 f5 12.dxc6 bxc6 13.f3 f2 14.f4 f4 15.f4 f5 16.f1 f4 17.f4 f4 18.f2 f2 19.f3 f3 20.f4 f4 21.f1 f1 22.c4 0-0-0 23.f4 f3 f8 24.f2

63...f5? 63...f4 64.f3 64.f3 65.f6! f5 66.f7 f1+ 67.f2 f3+ 68.f3 f6 69.f2 f5 70.f3 f5 71.f4 f6 72.f4 f5 73.f5 f1 74.f5 f2 75.f7 f4+ 76.f4 f6 77.f6 f5 78.f5 f6 79.f5 f5 80.f6 Black resigned



Fabiano Caruana	2786
Dariusz Swiercz	2620



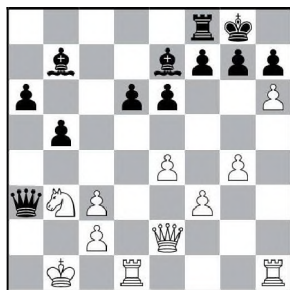


15...Rxc3! An extremely thematic (and correct) sacrifice. 15...Ne5 was another approach, aiming to plant a knight on c4. 16.We1, stopping the exchange sacrifice and preparing to forward with the attack. It seems easier to play as White here – his play is simple, whereas it's not exactly clear how Black continues the attack.

16.bxc3 Nb6 17.h5 Qac4 18.Qxc4 Qxc4 19.Qc1 Wesley was still in his prep here, which is understandable, as all Black's moves have been very logical so far. Now Mishra commits his first mistake.

19...d5? It's tempting to open up the e7 bishop, but this is certainly not the right time to do it, with White's rook opposing Black's queen on the d-file.

19...Wa5 was the best move, and the position remains insanely complicated. Here's a sample line. 20.Nb3 Qxa3+ 21.Qxa3 (Or 21.Qa2 Wa4 22.Qxa3 d5 with excellent compensation for Black.) 21...Wxa3 22.h6



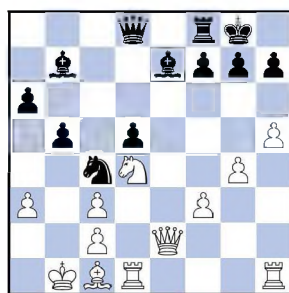
22...b4! (After 22...g6?! 23.We3 Rc8 24.Qd3, the hole on g7 and the constant back-rank mating ideas will end up bugging Black.) 23.c4 (Not 23.hxg7?? bxc3+-) 23...Qf6 24.Qd4 b3 25.cxb3 Qxd4 26.Qxd4 Wxb3+ 27.Wb2 Wxf3 Black gets sufficient counterplay by hitting the rook on h1. These were far from the only moves for both sides, but it shows how Black must play energetically in order to maintain the dynamic equilibrium.

20.exd5 exd5 20...Qxd5 21.Qc6! This tactic illustrates why the ...d5 break was premature. 21...Wc7 22.Qxe7+ Wxe7 23.Qxd5+-.

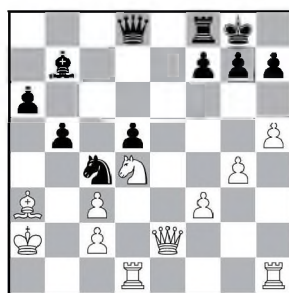


▲ Wesley So

Photo: Saint Louis Chess Club



21.Qa2? Returning the favor. 21.Qde1! Qxa3 (21...Qd6 22.g5) 22.h6! It's critical to provoke weaknesses around the opponent's king. 22...g6 23.Qxa3 Qxa3+ 24.Qc1 Qc4 25.We7 Wa5 26.Qb3 Wxc3 27.Wxb7 Black's queen and knight look scary, but there's actually nothing to fear as White's knight successfully safeguards his own king. 27...Wb2+ 28.Qd1 Wb1+ 29.Qc1 Qb2+ 30.Qe2 Wxc2+ 31.Qf1+-, **21...Qd6?** 21...Qxa3! It was now or never. 22.Qxa3

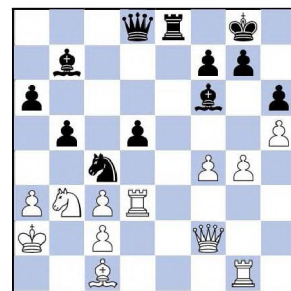


22...Qe8! If White moves the queen away, then Black has ...Wa5, so he has to give it up. (Not 22...Wa5? because of 23.We7+-.) 23.Wxe8+ Qxe8 24.Qhe1 Qd8 This

material imbalance is difficult to evaluate for sure, but it seems like Black is fine here. White's weak king should provide Black with sufficient play. All things considered, I think it's clear that Black is in huge trouble if he doesn't try this. Sometimes you should go for the throat even if you're not 100% sure how to evaluate the ensuing position.

22.Qb3 Now White's king is quite secure, and the b3 knight does an admirable job of guarding the key a5 square. Now it's really just a matter of time before White either executes his kingside pawn storm, or trades down to a favorable endgame and uses the power of his rooks.

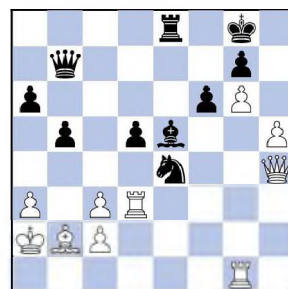
22...Qe8 23.Wf2 h6 24.Qhg1 Qe5 25.Qd3 Qf6 26.f4 The nice thing for White is that his moves are easy.



The objective evaluation of a position like this matters a lot less than the practical elements. The reason that this is practically so nice for White is that his plans are so straightforward. He's just attacking on the kingside with obvious moves – Qg1, f4, g5 – what could be more natural than that?

26...Qd6 27.g5 hxg5 28.fxg5 Qe5 29.Qc5 Qe7 30.g6 f6 The g6 pawn is a huge thorn for Black's king, just like the h6 pawn was in some of the variations we looked at earlier in this game. There are always back-rank mates to look out for, and White has the h6-break at his disposal whenever he wants it.

31.Qxb7 Wxb7 32.Qb2 Qe4 33.Wh4

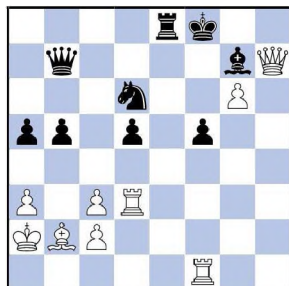


33...a5 33...b4 was a last-gasp try, but White has numerous good ways to finish



things off. 34.cxb4 ♖xb2 35.♗xb2 a5 36.h6 axb4 37.♗a1 bxa3 38.♖b1 ♗e7 39.hxg7 ♗xg7 40.♖h3 f5+ 41.c3 ♖xc3 42.♗h7+--.

34.h6 f5 35.hxg7 ♖xg7 36.♗h7+ ♗f8 37.♖f1 ♖d6



38.c4! Finally including the b2-bishop in the game, after so much waiting.

38...bxc4 39.♖xg7+ ♗xg7 40.♖xd5 ♖e6 41.♖dxf5+ ♖xf5 42.♖xf5+ ♖f6 43.♗h4 The king and pawn endgame is as winning as they come, but Wesley wants to deliver checkmate.

43...♗e7 43...♖xf5 44.♗d8 mate.

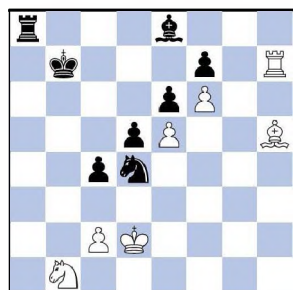
44.♗e4+ ♗f8 45.♗d4 ♗e7 46.♖e5+ Black resigned

Extraordinary material imbalance

The other standout performer, 2023 U.S. Junior Champion Abhimanyu Mishra from New Jersey, entertained us practically every round. Even when he fell into difficulties, he showed tremendous fighting spirit. Here's an example of his alertness, snatching a win from an equal position.

Sam Shankland	2698
Abhimanyu Mishra	2592

U.S. Championship, Saint Louis 2023



Shankland has been pressing all game, but



▲ Abhimanyu Mishra Photo: Saint Louis Chess Club

resilient defense by Mishra has enabled him to survive the danger.

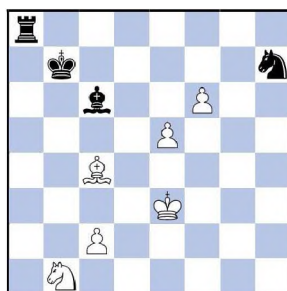
63.♖xf7 A terrible blunder.

63...♖f3+! A very easy move to overlook.

64.♗e3 ♖g5 This fork wins material, but it's not over yet.

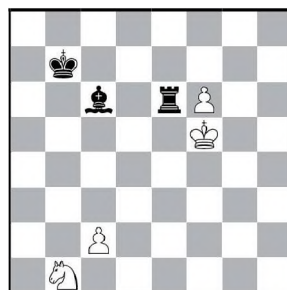
65.♖xe6+ ♖xh7 66.♖xd5+ ♖c6

67.♖xc4 This very unusual material imbalance is still tricky to convert, since White's e5 and f6 pawns are far advanced.

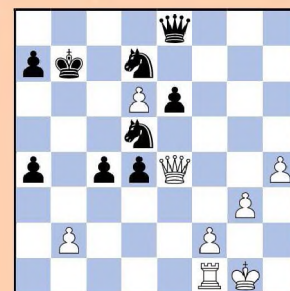


67...♖f8? Based on the point that e6 is impossible...or is it? Black's best was **67...♖a5 68.♗d4 ♖c7+.**

68.♖d2 68.e6! Amazingly, this move draws. **68...♖xe6 69.♖xe6 ♖e8 70.♗f4 ♖xe6 71.♗f5**



Ray Robson	2699
Abhimanyu Mishra	2592



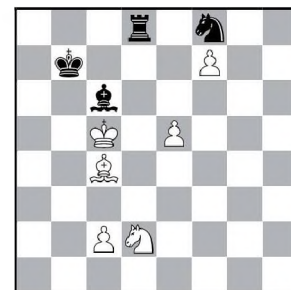
32...♗h8!! 33.♖d1 ♖e5! 34.d7 ♖xd7 35.♗xd4 ♗xd4 36.♖xd4 a3 37.bxa3 c3 38.♖d1 ♖c5! 39.h5 ♖d3 40.h6 c2 41.♖f1 ♖f6 42.g4 ♖h7 43.♗g2 c1♗ 44.♖xc1 ♖xc1 45.f4 ♖c6 46.♗f3 ♖d5 47.g5 ♖f8 48.♗g4 ♖d3 49.f5 ♖e5+ 50.♗f4 ♖fg6+ 51.fxg6 ♖xg6+ 52.♗g4 ♖e4 53.a4 a5 54.h7 ♖e5 55.♗h5 ♗f5 56.♗h6 e5

White resigned



his pieces and stop the f-pawn. **71...♖e1 72.f7 ♖d5 (72...♖xb1 73.♗f6=; 72...♖f1+ 73.♗e6=) 73.f8♗ ♖f1+ 74.♗e5 ♖xf8 75.♗xd5=.**

68...♖d7 69.♗d4 ♖d8 70.f7 ♖f8+ 71.♗e3 71.♗c5! would've been a nice practical try, setting a beautiful trap.



71...♖d7! The only winning move, stopping e6. (**71...♖xd2? 72.e6 ♖xe6+ 73.♖xe6 ♖d8 74.♖d7!!** What an incredible interference tactic! The king now reaches

Find the continuation on Page 16 ►►►



Wesley So



Carissa Yip and Karen Pennock



Fabiano Caruana

Carissa Yip



Anna Zatonskih



John Donaldson



Irina Krush



Dr. Jeanne Sinquefield, GM Yuri Shulman and Rex Sinquefield



Nazi Paikidze



Alice Lee





U.S. WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP 2023

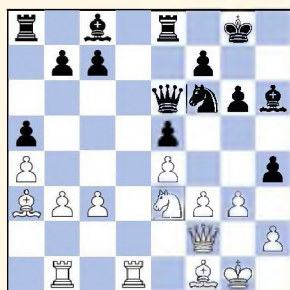
Second Championship Crown for Carissa Yip

Anna Zatonskih 2363

Carissa Yip 2372

U.S. Women's Championship, Saint Louis 2023

Notes by Grayson Rorrer



Carissa's favorite Modern Defense led to a rather passive position, but that doesn't bother her. There always remain prospects for active play, and she's managed to drum up... something.

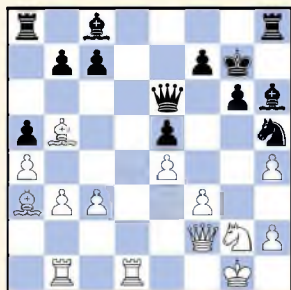
22.gxh4? It pays off! From a practical point of view, at least, grabbing the pawn in exchange for White's previously sound kingside structure is a terrible tradeoff. 22.c4 hxg3 23.hxg3± is nicer for White.

22...♔g7!? Hinting at ...♔h8 in the near future. 22...♔b6! 23.♔g2 ♔xf2+ 24.♔xf2 ♔f8!± supposedly gives Black enough compensation, but it's not a very intuitive path.

23.♔g2? Keeping White's kingside together, but is it worth taking on such miserable passivity for the sake of a pawn? Perhaps only Steinitz would have approved. 23.♔c4 ♔h3 24.♔c1! ♔h8 25.♔g2± consolidates White's position, though there is still play left in the game.

23...♔h5 24.♔b5! The rook needs to be removed from e8.

24...♔h8



25.♔c4?? But this gives Black too much

time. Zatonskih had the right idea, but executed it just one tempo too late. 25.♔c5! ♔f6 26.♔e7∞ takes the queens off, when Black has enough to make up for the pawn, but not more than that.

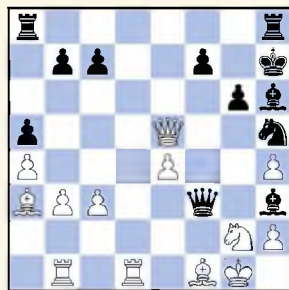
25...♔f6 All of a sudden White is in major trouble.

26.♔c5?! Too late... 26.♔f1 ♔h3 27.♔e1 ♔f4+ isn't much better, when Black's kingside monopoly should soon prove decisive. With ...♔g8 and ...♔f8 to follow, h4 can't be defended.

26...♔h3 27.♔e7? Tantamount to resignation, but the alternatives were hardly any more pleasant.

27.♔e1 ♔ae8! 28.♔f2 ♔h7! 29.♔h1 g5+ opens up the kingside, when a direct attack will decide the outcome.

27...♔xf3 28.♔xe5+ ♔h7 29.♔f1



29...♔f4 One of many winning moves, and a simple, straightforward one.



▲ Carissa Yip

Photo: Saint Louis Chess Club

30.♔d2 Or 30.♔xf4 ♔xf4 31.♔d3 ♔g4+ 32.♔g3 ♔xe5 33.♔xg4 ♔xg4+.

30...♔xg2 31.♔xg2 31.♔xg2 ♔e3+ 32.♔f2 ♔xf2+! 33.♔xf2 ♔d3+ sees the dust settle with Black up a full rook.

31...♔h3+ 32.♔h1 ♔e3! An elegant mating attack. White has no defense.

33.♔xc7?! Might as well at least take solace in creating a pretty picture... 33.♔b5 ♔f2+ 34.♔g1 ♔xe4+ 35.♔h1 ♔f2+ 36.♔g1 ♔d1+ 37.♔h1 ♔ad8+ should also be hopeless. Black doesn't have an immediate strike yet, but the result doesn't appear to be in any doubt.

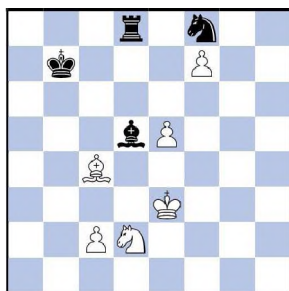
33...♔f2+ 34.♔g1 ♔d1+ Mate follows. Black won

2023 U.S. WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP, Saint Louis, MO, October 5-17, 2023

Rk	Name	Elo	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Pts	TPR
1	Carissa YIP	2372		½	1	1	½	½	0	1	1	1	1	1	8½	2527
2	Gulrukhbegim TOKHIRJONOVA	2350	½		½	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	8	2493
3	Alice LEE	2388	0	½		0	½	1	½	1	1	1	1	1	7½	2448
4	Tatev ABRAHAMYAN	2262	0	0	1		1	½	1	½	1	½	1	½	7	2428
5	Irina KRUSH	2437	½	1	½	0		½	½	½	1	1	½	½	6½	2375
6	Nazi PAIKIDZE	2316	½	0	0	½	½		½	0	½	1	1	1	5½	2321
7	Ruiyang YAN	2206	1	0	½	0	½	½		½	½	½	½	½	5	2295
8	Jennifer YU	2294	0	1	0	½	½	1	½		0	0	½	½	4½	2258
9	Anna ZATONSKIH	2363	0	0	0	0	0	½	½	1		½	1	1	4½	2252
10	Atousa POURKASHIYAN	2288	0	0	0	½	0	0	½	1	½		½	½	3½	2191
11	Ashritha ESWARAN	2273	0	0	0	0	½	0	½	½	0	½		1	3	2150
12	Thalia Cervantes LANDEIRO	2303	0	0	0	½	½	0	½	½	0	½	0		2½	2112



d6 and e7. 74...♙xd7 75.♙d6 ♙e8+ 76.♙e7=) 72.♙d6 ♖g6! Again, the only move. 73.♙b3 ♙g4+ 74.♙c5 ♙xe5-+. 71...♙d5



Now the bishops will be traded, White's king is far back, and everything is under control.

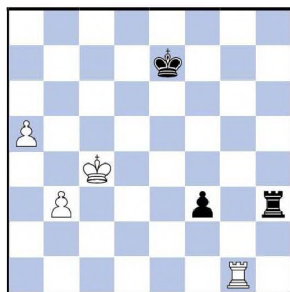
72.♙xd5+ ♙xd5 73.♙f3 ♙c7 74.♙e4 ♙c5 75.♙f5 ♙d7 76.♙f6 ♙c6+ 77.♙g7 ♙e7 78.♙h4 ♙e6+ 79.♙g6 ♙d8+ 80.♙g7 ♙xf7 **White resigned**

Another tricky rook endgame

Similar to Wesley So, Leinier Dominguez seemingly followed the approach of “stay unbeaten and pick up a few points here and there.” One such point came in a rook endgame against Shankland, in which the defensive task was apparently too difficult for the man who recently published a book on theoretical rook endgames. Irony aside, it's worth pointing out that this specific type of rook endgame is so difficult in practical play. It comes down to specific details and concrete factors, and is less about general principles or knowledge.

Leinier Dominguez	2745
Sam Shankland	2698

U.S. Championship, Saint Louis 2023



63...♙h4+ 63...f2? doesn't work with Black's king too far away. 64.♙f1 ♙f3 65.a6 Black's king isn't able to catch the a-



▲ Ray Robson

Photo: Saint Louis Chess Club

pawn, so he must backtrack with the rook. 65...♙f8 66.a7 ♙a8 67.♙xf2 ♙xa7 68.b4 ♙d6 69.♙b5+-.

I like 63...♙d7 more, not driving White's king further up the board. 64.b4 (64.♙g7+ ♙e6! Important, not allowing White's rook to get behind the f-pawn.) 64...f2 65.♙f1 ♙f3 Now this is an easy draw, since Black's king is within range of the pawns.

64.♙b5 ♙h5+ Still fine, but making it tricky. 64...♙d7 would have drawn in a similar manner as the previous variation.

65.♙b6 ♙h4? Finally giving away the draw. 65...♙d8! was the only move. 66.a6 (66.♙g8+ ♙e7) 66...♙h6+ 67.♙b7 ♙h7+ 68.♙b8 f2 69.♙f1 ♙h3 Black will trade his f-pawn for the b-pawn, resulting in a drawn endgame, as White's king gets stuck in front of his own a-pawn.

66.a6 66.♙c7 also wins, “shouldering” Black's king and preparing a6. 66...♙b4 67.♙e1+ ♙f6 68.♙b1 f2 69.♙f1 ♙xb3 70.♙xf2+ ♙e6 71.♙c2 ♙a3 72.♙c6+ ♙d5 73.a6+-.

66...♙b4+ 67.♙a5 ♙xb3 67...f2 68.♙a1 ♙e4 69.♙f1+-.

68.♙a1! A really nice finesse, preventing ...♙a3+. Black has no good defense against a7.

68...f2 69.a7 f1 ♙ 70.♙xf1 ♙a3+ 71.♙b6 ♙b3+ 72.♙c5! White's king isn't forced to hide on a8 – there's a trick here.

72...♙a3 73.♙h1 Black's king is on the worst square – the pawn cannot be taken because of ♙h7+. **Black resigned** in view of this sample variation: 73.♙h1 ♙e6 74.♙h7 ♙a1 75.♙b6 ♙b1+ 76.♙c7 ♙a1 77.♙b8 ♙b1+ 78.♙b7+-.

A sudden king chase

Another game that caught my eye was Ray Robson's win against Xiong, scored in his typical tactical style. Jeffery was coming off a long hiatus from classical chess (his last major event was the same tournament last year). Perhaps that element of rust was the reason for his disappointing result.

Ray Robson	2699
Jeffery Xiong	2693

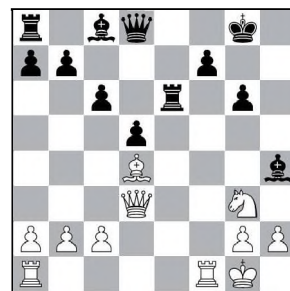
U.S. Championship, Saint Louis 2023



Here, Ray could take a slow approach and enjoy a slightly better position, based on Black's weakened kingside. However, he decides to go for the throat.

15.f5!? Although Black is okay if he defends well, this is a decent practical try for White, as the path to safety is riddled with pitfalls.

15...♙xe5 16.fxg6 hxg6 17.♙d4 ♙e8 There's an argument for playing 17...♙e6, taking the sting out of the ♙xf7 sacrifice.



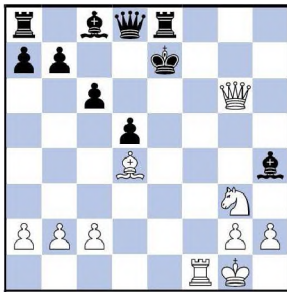
18.♙f3 (18.♙xf7?? doesn't work now, as after 18...♙xf7 19.♙f1+ ♙g8, the g6 pawn is defended and Black is winning easily.) 18...♙d7 19.♙af1 ♙e8 20.♙f5! A dangerous sacrifice. 20...♙xf5 21.♙xf5 White has threats like ♙f4-g4, but Black has a key move to deflect the d4 bishop. 21...c5! (21...♙g5?? 22.♙g3+-) 22.♙g4+ ♙g5 23.♙xe6 White bails out with a pretty perpetual check. 23...fxe6 24.♙f8+ ♙h7 25.♙h8+ ♙g6 26.♙g8+ ♙h5 27.♙h8+ ♙h6 (27...♙g4?? 28.h3+ ♙g3 29.♙f3#) 28.g4+



♔g6 29.♖g8+ ♔h7 30.♖h8+ ♔g6=.

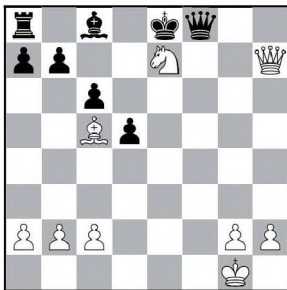
18.♖xf7! This sacrifice was the whole point of White's 15.f5 idea.

18...♔xf7 19.♖f1+ ♔e7 20.♗xg6



White is threatening ♖f7 mate, when there's only one good way to stop it!

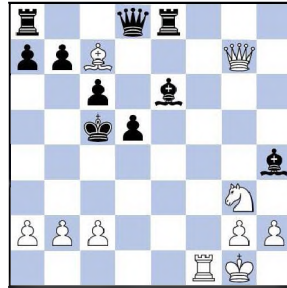
20...♔e6? This loses by force. 20...♔d7! The king has to run! White has no more than a draw here. 21.♖f7+ ♖e7 (Upon 21...♔e7?? 22.♔f5+- is just overwhelming for Black, as ♗d6 is a deadly mate threat.) 22.♔f5 (22.♗f5+ ♔d6 also gives White no more than a draw.) 22...♖xf7 23.♗xf7+ ♔e7 24.♔c5 ♖f8 25.♗h7 ♔e8 26.♔xe7



White has won a piece back, but his knight is now awkwardly placed on e7, giving the opponent enough time to coordinate a perpetual check. 26...♗f4

27.♔xc8 ♗c1+ 28.♔f2 ♗f4+ 29.♔g1 (If the king goes to the e-file 29.♔e2, then Black can cover the mate threat on e7 with tempo. 29...♗e5+ 30.♔d1 ♖xc8 31.♗g8+ ♔d7 32.♗f7+ ♔d8=) 29...♗c1+ A complicated line to be sure, and not at all easy to see in advance.

21.♗g7+ ♔d6 22.♔e5+ ♔c5 23.♔d4+ ♔d6 24.♔e5+ ♔c5 25.♔c7!



The queen is ready to swing back to c3 with a mating attack.

25...♔f6! The best defense – dragging White's rook to f6 as interference.

26.♖xf6 ♖g8 Upon 26...♗d7 27.♖f7!, the rook clears a path for the queen. 27...♗xf7 28.♗c3+ ♔b5 29.a4+ ♔xa4 30.♗b3 mate.

27.♔e4+! The only winning move, and one that Ray surely saw well in advance.



27...♔b5 27...dxe4 28.♖f5+!! ♔xf5

29.♗c3+ ♔d5 30.♗e5+ ♔c4 31.b3+ ♔b4 32.♗a5 mate.

28.a4+ ♔b4 28...♔xa4 29.♔c3+ ♔b4 30.♖f4+-.

29.♗h6 Now that Black's king is on a dark square, White's queen can swing back and deliver mate, starting with ♗d2+. **Black** has to give up his queen, so he **resigned**.

A walk on thin ice

Whatever you think about the polarizing Hans Niemann, there's no denying that his games are among the most interesting to watch of any player. After struggling early on against Sam Sevian, he turned things around when his opponent couldn't find his way through the complications.

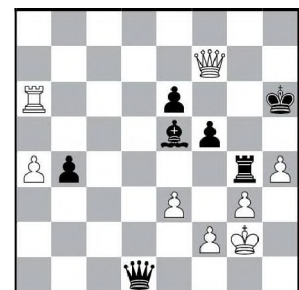
Sam Sevian	2698
Hans Niemann	2667

U.S. Championship, Saint Louis 2023



The game has been very exciting so far (as games by both these players often are). White is pinning his hopes in creating threats against Black's king, but it's not that easy. The dark-squared bishop does a tremendous defensive job. White has only one way to save the game here, and it's far from easy.

55.♗f8+? 55.♖a6? is an obvious move, but it walks into a forced mate. 55...♗d5+ 56.♔g1 ♗d1+ 57.♔g2 (57.♔h2? ♖xh4+ 58.♔g2 ♗h1 mate.)



Hans Niemann Photo: Saint Louis Chess Club





57...♖xg3+! 58.fxg3 ♖e2+ 59.♔h3 ♖g4+ 60.♔g2 ♖xg3+ 61.♔f1 ♖f3+ 62.♔g1 ♖xe3+ 63.♔f1 ♖f3+ 64.♔g1 ♔d4+ 65.♔h2 ♖f2+ 66.♔h3 ♖f1+ 67.♔g3 ♔e5 mate.

55.♖a5! was best, preventing the ...♖d1-d5 maneuver. Black has nothing better than to force a draw with 55...♔xg3 (55...♔g7?? would be a grave mistake, as after 56.♖xf5, White sneakily takes advantage of black queen's poor placement. Now Black even loses! 56...♔g6 57.h5+-) 56.fxg3 ♖xg3+ 57.♔xg3 ♖xe3+ 58.♔g2 ♖e2+=.

55...♔g7 Now Black's pieces are fully coordinated, and it's only a matter of using his strong b-pawn to march down the board.

56.♖d6 ♖c4 57.♖e8 b3 58.♖xe6+



58...♔h7! 58...♔h5? 59.♖e7 ♖g6 60.♖b6!=.

59.♖d7 b2 60.♖b6 ♖e4+ 61.f3 ♖c2+ 62.♔h3 b1♖ 63.♖xb1 ♖xb1 64.fxg4 ♖h1 A pretty mate! 0-1

Mutual blindness

Finally, I have to give a shoutout to Andrew Tang, who experienced the highs and lows that come with such a strong tournament. He was the lowest seed by over 100 points, having qualified by winning the U.S. Open. He works as a Quantitative trader for Susquehanna International Group, so he doesn't really play chess professionally.

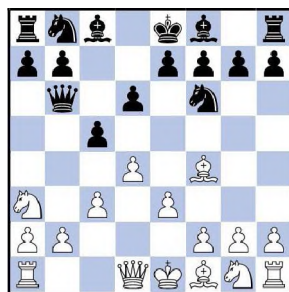
Chess fans should understand that nerves are very real, especially in the first round of a tournament for a newcomer, so the following case of mutual blindness is understandable.

A45

Andrew Tang	2496
Sam Shankland	2698

U.S. Championship, Saint Louis 2023

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♔f4 c5 3.e3 ♖b6 4.♔a3 d6 5.c3??



The b2 pawn is poisoned in lots of similar positions, but not here!

5...g6?? Shankland trusts his opponent and misses his chance. The rest of the game was fairly well-played and ended in a **draw**.

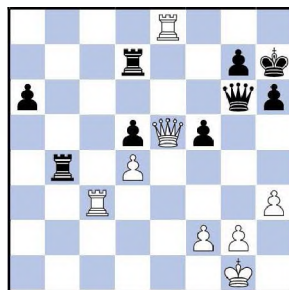
5...♖xb2 6.♔b5 This is usually the idea, with potential threats of trapping Black's queen, along with ♔c7+. Here, however, the crucial problem is that the second rank is open. 6...♔e4! Threatening mate in one, as well as ...♔xc3. 7.♔e2 ♔xc3 8.♔xc3 ♖xc3+-.

A Tang bang!

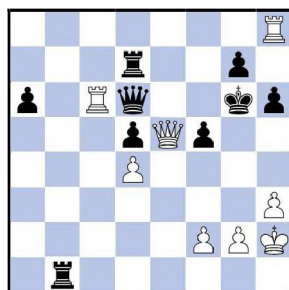
Nevertheless, although he suffered a few losses along the way, he conjured up what I would call the most beautiful combination of the entire event.

Andrew Tang	2496
Dariusz Swiercz	2620

U.S. Championship, Saint Louis 2023



46.♖cc8! At first glance this looks like a mistake, allowing Black to force a queen trade. 46...♖b1+ 47.♔h2 ♖d6 48.♖h8+ ♔g6 49.♖c6!

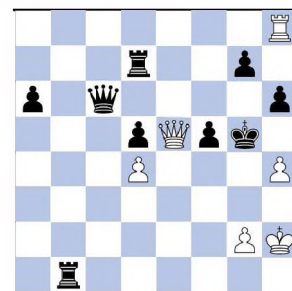


▲ Andrew Tang

Photo: Saint Louis Chess Club

This was the whole point. White ends up with a mating attack.

49...♖xc6 50.♖e8+ ♔g5 51.f4+! ♔xf4 52.♖e5+ ♔g5 53.h4+!



53...♔xh4 53...♔g6 54.♖e8+ ♔f6 55.♖f8+-.

54.♖f4+ ♔h5 55.♖xf5+ g5 56.♖h3+ ♔g6 57.♖xh6+ **Black resigned**

So that's a wrap on the U.S. Championship! It actually reminds me of the annual Tata Steel tournament, in that it always brings together a diverse field in terms of age and rating. That seems to be a rarity in classical events these days, so it's always nice to see. Overall, Caruana's performance was a very good sign for him, continuing his return to form and setting himself on a nice trajectory heading into 2024, with the all-important Candidates Tournament looming in April.



MIZZOU STUDENT LUKA BUDISAVLJEVIC CLAIMS BRONZE AT THE WORLD JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIP

A Medal-Winning Odyssey From Missouri to Mexico

University of Missouri (Mizzou) sophomore Luka Budisavljevic, a 19-year-old Serbian Grandmaster, delivered a remarkable performance at the World Juniors in Mexico City. He achieved a joint first place, ultimately securing the bronze medal after tie-breaks.

■ By GM Luka Budisavljevic

The last time anyone from my home country Serbia won a medal at the World Juniors' was 30 years ago (representing former Yugoslavia GM Igor Miladinovic won gold in 1993, whereas the first World Junior Champion was Bora Ivkov in 1951-Ed.). As soon as I found out that it's going to be held in late September in Mexico City, I understood that this is a huge opportunity for me to make history. I'm currently studying in Missouri, so Mexico is as close as it could possibly get to me, as well as for others coming from the United States. I was looking forward to the event, and had my eyes on the goal from the very beginning.

The tournament was very interesting, as various players shared the top standings during the event. French Grandmaster Maurizzi emerged as the sole leader with his 9th-round victory, but my victory over GM Avila Pavas in round 10 meant that our last-round matchup, as the only two players with 8 points on a shared first, would decide the title. The game ended in a draw, which allowed Maurizzi to gain the title due to superior tiebreaks, while I brought my country its first World Juniors medal of this century.

Luka Budisavljevic became Serbia's youngest ever grandmaster at the age of 16. He was U8 European Champion in rapid chess, silver medalist at the U18 European Youth Rapid Championship and bronze medalist at the U18 European Blitz Championship. Luka also has an exceptional talent for mathematics and physics, having won numerous awards at national competitions. Currently Luka is a sophomore at the University of Missouri (MIZZOU), pursuing Business studies, with a major in Finance, and also a member of their A chess team.



C76

Santiago Avila Pavas	2510
Luka Budisavljevic	2492

Mexico City 2023

With two rounds to go the situation was looking promising for me. French GM Maurizzi was the sole leader with 7½ points, while my opponent and I were among the four players trailing with 7 points. This meant that scoring 1½ points from the last two games would most likely bring me to a shared first place, and almost guarantee a medal. I understood that this game was a big chance for me, but I wasn't going to burn any bridges as I was expecting to get the white pieces in the last round, which would allow me to strike more easily.

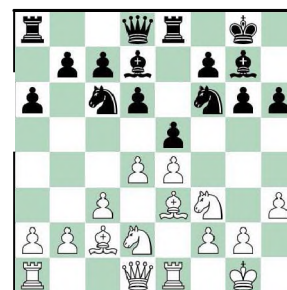
1.e4 e5 My first move choice already caught my opponent off guard, as to date I had previously opted for 1...e5 only a few times in my career.
2.♟f3 ♜c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 d6 This was my first time ever to play this line and I immediately showed that I was ready for a

fight. This line usually leads to complicated positions where most of the pieces remain on the board for quite a while.

5.0-0 ♙d7 6.c3 g6 7.d4 ♙g7 My opponent was playing the most logical moves, and we have now reached the main position in this line.

8.♙e3 ♜f6 9.♜bd2 0-0 10.h3 Already my opponent had used up some time on the clock, while up to now I had obviously been blitzing out my moves. However here I paused for the first time. It wasn't easy to come up with a plan until White had clarified the center. Thus, I opted for a move that would be useful in most future situations.

10...h6 11.♙e1 ♙e8 12.♙c2



World Junior Open Championship (11 rounds, 144 players)

1-4. Marc-Andria MAURIZZI (FRA), Arseniy NESTEROV (FID), Luka BUDISAVLJEVIC (SRB), Mamikon GHARIBYAN (ARM) **8½**
5-7. Jan SUBELJ (SLO), Elham AMAR (NOR), Santiago AVILA PAVAS (COL) **8**
8-16. Hans NIEMANN, Gleb DUDIN (HUN), Anand PRANAV (IND), Rudik MAKARIAN (FID), Frederik SVANE (GER), Vignir Vatnar STEFANSSON (ISL), Shawn RODRIGUE-LEMIEUX (CAN), Filip HARING (SVK), Jose Gabriel CARDOSO CARDOSO (COL) **7½**



12...a5 According to my database, this move is a novelty. However, it is a typical plan in these lines as it allows Black to gain space on the queenside.

13.a3 a4 The idea behind my previous move, exploiting the fact that White cannot capture the pawn on a4 due to a thematic tactic.

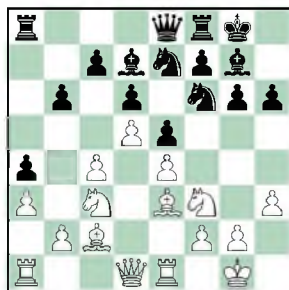
14.d5 The moment I had been pretty much waiting for, as after blocking the center it becomes clearer where I should place my pieces.

14.♟xa4?! ♞xd4 15.♟xd7 ♞xf3+ 16.♞xf3 ♞xd7 Black definitely doesn't have any issues here. He has comfortably equalized, and is ready to gradually take over.

14...♞e7 15.c4 We have arrived at the King's Indian pawn structure which I was rather happy with, considering that my opponent never plays anything other than 1.e4, which makes his experience in this type of position very limited. I also thought that this position should be better than ones that usually arise from the KID, as my pawn on a4 slows down White's queenside plans. On the other hand, it can also become a target for White that I will have to defend.

15...b6 16.♞b1 My opponent starts rerouting the knight in order to exert pressure on my a4 pawn. Therefore I need to regroup my pieces in order to defend it.

16...♟f8 17.♞c3 ♞e8



Once my a-pawn is reasonably safeguarded, my plan is to move the knight away from f6 and follow up with a typical ...f7-f5 break, switching to Black's principal strategic play on the kingside.

18.♟d3 ♞c8 19.♞b5?! Now I already began to feel very confident in my position, because my opponent didn't seem to be playing in accord with any plan at all.

19...♞e8 Here we go – sticking to the plan. **20.♞d2 ♞h7 20...g5** was a solid alternative.

21.♞h4? A subtle key moment in the game as it gives me two tempi, as well as the momentum.



▲ Josiah Stearman, Luka Budisavljevic, Beloslava Krasteva and Cristian Chirila



Psychologically, it felt as if I was taking command which pleased me. That, combined with additional pressure on the clock, made White's life very uncomfortable.

21...g5 21...♟xh3! was a powerful alternative that I missed, mostly because I was very satisfied with my position after ...g5. Nevertheless, after **22.gxh3 ♞xh3 23.♞g2 f5**, it would have been even more difficult for White to cope with the pressure.

22.♞f3 ♞g6 23.♞c3 Over the previous five moves the only thing that has changed in White's position is that his queen is now on d2 instead of d1. On the other hand, I have played some useful moves which enable me to obtain full control of the game.

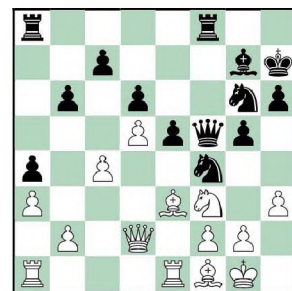
23...♞f6 24.♟f1 ♞h5 24...g4!? was a solid alternative, but I wasn't sure how I could then further develop my attack.

25.♞e2 Now my main pawn break comes with even more power.

25...f5 26.exf5 ♟xf5 27.♞g3 ♞hf4 28.♞xf5 ♞xf5

UNDER COACH CHIRILA'S GUIDANCE

Although this was an individual competition, the Mizzou team of four was represented in Mexico City – IM Josiah Stearman, WGM Beloslava Krasteva, our team coach GM Cristian Chirila and myself. Cristian's help was hugely appreciated as each of us gave his/her best, which ultimately resulted in both Beloslava and myself finishing shared first and winning bronze on tie-breaks, while Josiah finished on 7/11.



29.♞h2?! White's position becomes extremely tough now, especially in view of my opponent's time trouble. **29.♟xf4** was the only move I considered, as I thought it had to be White's best. Then, for example after **29...♞xf4 30.♟e3 ♟f7**, it's clear that Black is the one pressing. White can merely count on the opposite-colored bishops as the factor that keeps him in the game.



29...e4 Opening up the “dragon” bishop and also the e5 square for my pieces.

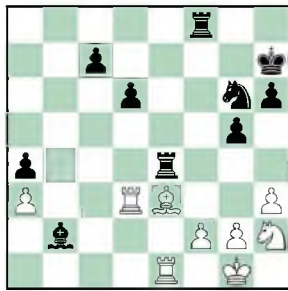
30. ♖c2? 30. ♖ad1 ♖ae8 31. ♖c2 was the correct move order to prolong the fight.

30...♗d3 When the strategy is sound, it is usually rewarded with a number of strong options. After this move, White is practically lost.

31. ♗xd3 exd3 32. ♖d2 b5 A very practical way to provoke further weaknesses in White’s camp.

33. cxb5 ♖xd5 34. ♖b4 Probably the final mistake. From this moment on I would be playing very logical moves, not giving my opponent any chances of counterplay. 34. ♖ad1 was called for, although with slim chances of survival for White.

34...♖ae8 35. ♖ad1 ♖e4 36. ♖d2 ♖xb5 37. ♖xd3 ♖xd3 38. ♖xd3 ♗xb2



As is so typical for many KID games, after gaining the ascendancy on the kingside and in the center, Black goes for the final destruction on the queen’s flank.

39. ♗f3 39. ♖b1 is logical, but here this fails because of 39...♗e5!, which also wins the a3 pawn.

39...♗f4 40. ♖dd1 ♗xh3+ 40...♗xa3 was perhaps more principled, but it’s easy to make a move when almost everything wins.

41. ♗h2 ♗f4 42. ♖b1 ♗xa3 43. ♖b7 ♗d5 44. ♖d1 ♗xe3 45. ♖xc7+ ♔g6 46. fxe3 ♗c5 47. ♖b1 a3

White resigned

This victory meant that, coming into the final round, I would share the first place with GM Maurizzi, who was to be my last opponent in the tournament. Unfortunately, again I got the black pieces, which made my task of winning significantly harder. Tiebreaks looked promising for my French opponent, so he wasn’t taking too much risk, and managed to defend against all my attempts to squeeze out a victory, and the World Junior Champion Title.

I liked how the tournament was organized, as it was a very pleasant experience. The hotel was great, there were no serious flaws in any aspect of the event, and visiting the Teotihuacan pyramids on the rest day was an unforgettable adventure. Overall, I hope that the Mexican Chess Federation will organize more events in the future, as they did a great job this time. ■

A TOUGH CHALLENGE AND A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR U.S. JUNIORS

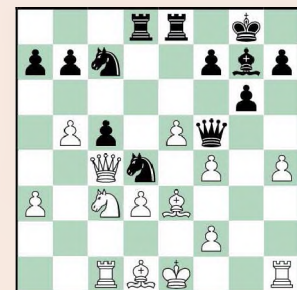
Every player came to Mexico to fight for top honors, however, the favorites by rating were American GM Hans Niemann and German GM Frederik Svane, both rated well above 2600. They each scored 7½ points and finished 8th and 12th respectively, which shows how tough an event it was. Niemann’s tournament started to get out of hand already in round 3, as he lost against one of the most promising American prodigies, IM Andy Woodward. 13-year-old Woodward played a masterpiece and showed that he is going to be among the contenders for medals in this event in the upcoming years. This time Andy finished on 6½/11.



▲ Andy Woodward

Hans Niemann	2667
Andy Woodward	2480

U20 World Junior Championship, Mexico City 2023



22...♗h6! 23. ♗e4 ♗xf4 24. ♗f6+ ♔g7 25. ♗xe8+ ♖xe8 26. ♖xc5 ♗cxb5 27. 0-0 ♖xe5 28. ♗xd4 ♗xd4 29. ♖xd4 ♗xc1 30. ♖e1 ♗f4 31. ♖e4 ♖f6 32. h5 ♖g5+ 33. ♗f1 ♗e5 34. ♖xa7 b6 35. ♖a8 gxh5 36. ♖e3 ♗h2 37. ♖e8 ♖g1+ 38. ♗e2 ♗h6 39. ♗c2 ♖c3 40. ♖c8 ♖e1+ 41. ♗f3 ♖f6+ 42. ♗g2 ♖g1+ White resigned

▼ Last round - Marc-Andria Maurizzi, Luka Budisavljevic, Hans Niemann





2023 IN REVIEW

A Year of Upheaval and Change



Dylan Loeb McClain is a journalist and a FIDE master. He worked at *The New York Times* from 1994 to 2012 and wrote the chess column for the paper from 2006 to 2014. He now lives in a Paris suburb and works for *Les Echos*, a daily French business newspaper. He also continues to write articles for *The New York Times* from time to time.

How will 2023 be remembered in chess history? At the very least, it was the end of an era as Magnus Carlsen's reign as classical world champion expired when he elected not to defend the crown that he had held since 2013.

By Dylan Loeb McClain

Carlsen's decision opened the door for Ding Liren to become China's first world champion after he defeated Ian Nepomniachtchi in a thrilling match that was only decided in the last game. Only time will tell if Ding can hold the title, but he certainly is not as intimidating a champion as Carlsen has been, so Ding, who is already 31, is unlikely to leave his imprint the way that the Norwegian did and continues to do. Carlsen made a conscious choice to give up the title, but as the year drew to a close, it seemed that his aura of invincibility in classical chess was slipping. Though he won the World Cup in August for the first time, it was after he had a disastrous tournament in Norway in June where he failed to win even a single classical tournament game for the first time in 16 years.

Then, in the Qatar Masters in October, something happened that had not occurred since 2006, when Carlsen was 16: He lost a classical game to someone rated in the 2500s. A few days later, Carlsen lost again, this time to Murali Karthikeyan, an Indian grandmaster rated in the low 2600s. Carlsen's standard rating is now the lowest it has been since October 2017.

Hikaru Nakamura, who has probably been Carlsen's most consistent opponent over the last 15 years, noted after his loss to Murali: "This is the future for Magnus. The Indians are coming for him. It's going to be one Indian after another, after another, after another, after another – all the disciples of Vishy!"

Chess Power Shifts To The East

Indeed, that was another theme of 2023: The (continued) rise of India.

Three Indian players stormed into the world's elite, led by Dommaraju Gukesh, who briefly supplanted the legendary Viswanathan Anand, a.k.a. Vishy, as India's top player – the first time in 37 years that Anand had not held that position.

Another one of the trio, Rameshbabu Pragganandhaa, was the runner-up to Carlsen at the World Cup, giving him a berth in next year's Candidates Tournament to select a challenger for the World Championship.

Pragganandhaa will be joined by one of his countrymen, Vidit Gujrathi, after he won the FIDE Grand Swiss tournament in November, which was a qualifier for the Candidates. (American GM Hikaru Nakamura also grabbed a spot in the Candidates by finishing second to Vidit.)



▲ World Champion Ding Liren

Photo: FIDE

Gukesh could also make it into the Candidates if he becomes the highest finisher in the 2023 FIDE circuit – a ranking based on a points system of performances in top tournaments. As of early November, he lagged behind Anish Giri of the Netherlands but narrowly ahead of Wesley So of the United States – players who were eligible for a spot in the Candidates. (Players who have already wrapped up a place in the Candidates, notably Fabiano Caruana, who punched his ticket by finishing third in the World Cup, are not eligible.)

Overall, India is now No. 2 in the world rankings, according to FIDE, with six players rated over 2700, the usual standard for the world elite, which is as



Three Indian grandmasters stormed into the world's elite:
Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa, Dommaraju Gukesh, Vidit Gujrathi
Photo: FIDE

many as the United States, currently ranked No.1. Given how many young players are coming up through India's development programs, it seems like only a matter of time before India takes over the top spot.

Other countries on the rise include Uzbekistan with its two Nodirbeks – Abdusattorov, who won the world rapid championship in 2021 and currently ranked in the world top 25 in classical chess at only 19 years of age, and Yakubboev, two years older, who was the surprise winner of the Qatar Masters after he defeated his compatriot in a playoff.

With China already a force in chess, the balance of power seems to be shifting to the east.

Pajamas And Scandals

Just as Covid-19 reshaped work life, it has permanently changed elite chess. Though in-person tournaments have returned to almost their pre-pandemic levels, online tournaments have become increasingly popular, with the 2023 Champions Chess Tour, featuring eight tournaments and a \$2 million prize fund, as the most prominent example. The momentum for online tournaments is accelerating as they are easier to organize and less expensive (no need for special venues, air travel or hotels). It is probably only a matter of time before a player competes in his (or her) pajamas, which will take watching tournament chess to a whole new level.

The year saw one scandal (mostly) put to rest as the multimillion-dollar lawsuit brought by Hans Niemann against Carlsen, Chess.com and Nakamura over allegations that Niemann cheated against Carlsen in the 2022 Sinquefeld Cup, as well as repeatedly online, was settled. Terms of the settlement were not disclosed, but it seems that the parties mostly agreed to disagree and leave it at that.

There is still one shoe that has not dropped: the results of an investigation by the International Chess Federation into the matter and any possible sanctions arising out of it. FIDE has put off publishing its findings, possibly because people there think that it is in nobody's best interest to reopen that can of worms.

A new, uglier story broke in early 2023 after Jennifer Shahade, a two-time United States women's champion and the Women's Program Director at the United States Chess Federation, went public with accusations that Alejandro Ramirez, a grandmaster and the coach of Saint Louis University's national college champion team, had twice sexually assaulted her when she was young. Other women soon came forward to say that he had made unwanted advances against them, too.

Subsequently, Ramirez resigned his position at Saint Louis University and was banned as a member

of the United States Chess Federation, but Shahade resigned her position at the Federation saying that it had not given her enough support when she made her allegations. After Randy Bauer, the Federation's President, got into a heated argument online with other members of the Federation, a petition was started to try to force his removal. The story was covered extensively in the previous issue of American Chess Magazine.

2024 Predictions

The future is of course impossible to predict, but this seems to be a period of the changing of the guard. Generation Y, or the millennial generation, which was born around 1990 and that includes Carlsen, Ian Nepomniachtchi and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, among others, is facing a real challenge from Generation Z, i.e. those born from 2000 and afterwards. As 2024 rolls around, it should be entertaining to watch the competition.

▼ Hans Niemann

Photo: SLCC



**FOR TACTICS
(CALCULATION) EXERCISES:****IDENTIFY THE TACTICAL
MOTIFS**

Look for patterns such as pins, forks, double attacks, discovered attacks, and skewers in the position.

CALCULATE VARIATIONS

Based on the tactical motifs you have identified, calculate various lines and variations to determine the best move.

**CONSIDER THE
CONSEQUENCES**

Once you have calculated a few lines, evaluate the consequences of each move, and determine which line leads to the best outcome.

**FOR STRATEGY
(POSITIONAL) EXERCISES:****EVALUATE THE POSITION**

Determine the strengths and weaknesses of both your and your opponent's position, including pawn structure, piece placement, king safety, and control of key squares.

IDENTIFY A PLAN

Based on your evaluation, come up with a plan that takes advantage of your strengths and exploits your opponent's weaknesses. This can involve improving the position of your pieces, controlling key squares, or creating threats.

**CONSIDER
ALTERNATIVES**

Once you have a plan, consider alternative moves or variations that might also achieve your goals. Choose the move that best fits your overall plan.

Aagaard's MasterClass

by GM JACOB AAGAARD



Photo by David Liada.



GM Jacob Aagaard won the 2007 British Championship; but is mostly known as a trainer and writer. He co-founded Quality Chess and *killerchesstraining.com*. His books include the *Grandmaster Preparation* series, the *Decision Making* series with Boris Gelfand and latest *A Matter of Endgame Technique*. Jacob works day and night to help players of all levels improve their game and achieve their goals.

AAGAARD



SHANKLAND

California-based **GM Sam Shankland** is a leading American chess player. In 2018, Sam achieved several milestones, including winning the U.S. Championship, surpassing 2700 Elo, and claiming first place at the Capablanca Memorial and the American Continental Championship. He is author of two chess books from the series of *Small Steps to Giant Improvement*.

PLAY IT ALONG WITH SAM

Get ready to take your chess skills to the next level with Jacob Aagaard's Masterclass! Each issue is packed with 12 challenging exercises – 6 tactics/calculation exercises and 6 positional/strategic exercises – carefully curated by GM Jacob Aagaard and tested by none other than GM Sam Shankland.

In early 2023, Sam and Jacob held a training camp to put these exercises to the test, using real game scenarios from the end of 2022 tournaments in Charlotte, New York, and Hollywood. You'll be facing off against some of the brightest young talents in U.S. chess, as well as established grandmasters and players.

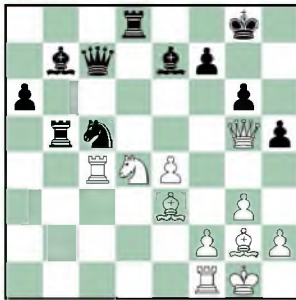
But here's the best part: even Sam, a seasoned Grandmaster, did not solve all the exercises correctly. That means there's a real chance for you to compete with him and test your chess knowledge. Whether you're a seasoned player or a beginner looking to up your game, Jacob Aagaard's Masterclass is the perfect way to challenge yourself and become a stronger chess player.

TACTICS

T1 ▼



T2 ▲



T3 ▲



T4 ▲



T5 ▲

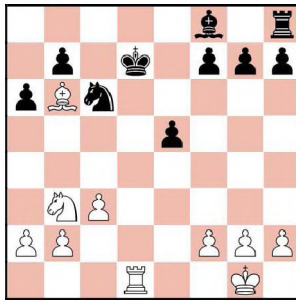


T6 ▲

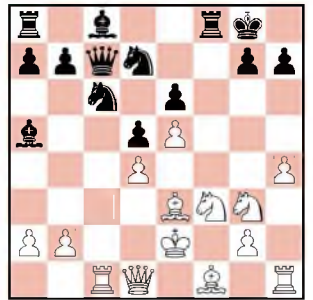


STRATEGY

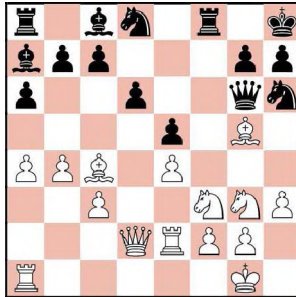
S1 ▼



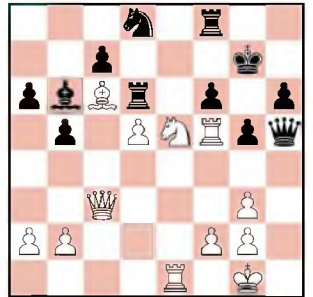
S2 ▼



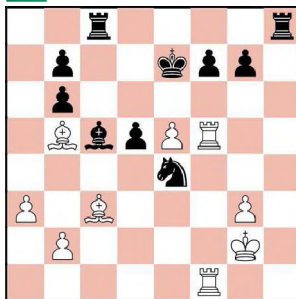
S3 ▼



S4 ▲



S5 ▼



S6 ▼





TACTICS

T1

Aleksandr Ostrovskiy	2371
Parimarjan Negi	2639

Charlotte 2022

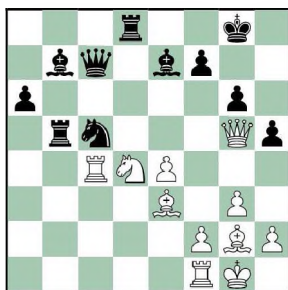


34...♖xg2+! 35.♗xg2 ♕f3 mate.

T2

Nico Chasin	2429
Zachary Dukic	2254

Hollywood 2022



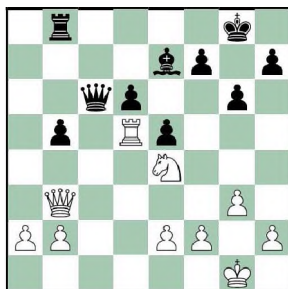
Sam was confused with the exercise being easy... Nico also did his job.

29.♕xb5! axb5 30.♗xc5! 1-0

T3

Thalia Cervantes Landeiro	2309
Aman Hambleton	2437

Charlotte 2022



After 26.a4? ♖c4! Black's position was not much worse and quite manageable.

But after 27.♗xc4 bxc4 28.♗b5 ♗a8? White had the chance to gain a decisive advantage by 29.a5. She missed it and the

game was **drawn** by move 50.

SOLUTION

Sam suggested the right first move in 26.♕c3!!, but after 26...b4, he was lazy and went for 27.♗d1?, when after 27...♗b7 28.♕d5 ♕d8 Black's problems are far from overwhelming.

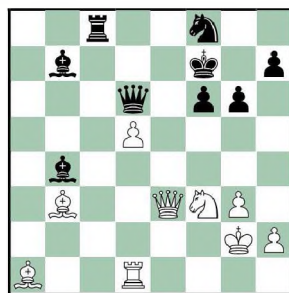
Instead, she had the chance to play 27.a3!, simply winning the pawn.

27...♗b7 would be met with 28.♗b5, and 27...bxc3 also does not work. After 28.♗xb8+ ♕g7 29.♗d1!, the pawn is stopped: 29...c2 30.♗c1 ♕d5 31.♗b4! ♕g5 32.e3 ♗d1+ 33.♗e1 and we have entered a technical phase. Sam saw nothing of this and thus has no excuses.

T4

Oliver Barbosa	2505
Kassa Korley	2400

New York 2022



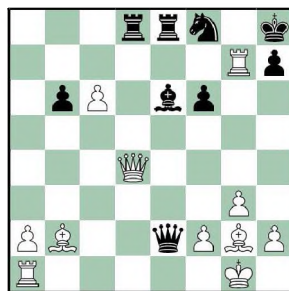
Barbosa and Sam both chose 35.♕g5+! ♕g8 36.♕e4 when in the game **Black resigned**.

Critical was 35...fxg5, but White wins with 36.♗f1+ ♕g8 37.♗d4 and Black has to give up the exchange to delay resignation.

T5

Ivan Schitco	2532
Brian Escalante	2468

Charlotte 2022



White gradually shed his advantage after 29.♕f1?! ♗xf1+ 30.♗xf1 ♗xd4 31.♗b7 ♗g4 32.♗e1?!, when after 32...♕g8! Black would have been equal. However he went in a different direction down a big black hole and **White won**.

White would still have strong compensation after 32.f3! ♗g6 33.♗e1, but the game is not yet lost for Black.

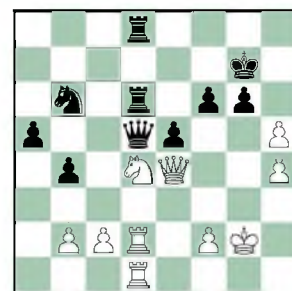
SOLUTION

Sam preferred 29.♗d7! ♕xd7 30.cxd7 ♗f8 31.♕c6, when it may be difficult to evaluate that Black is entirely lost. The rooks are locked down on the back rank and White has the glorious d-pawn and two pawns for the exchange. On top of this, the black king is entirely exposed.

T6

Jagadeesh Siddharth	2407
Ryo Chen	2269

Charlotte 2022



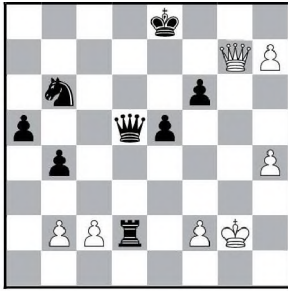
Siddharth started out with the correct first move.

32.♕e6+!! ♗xe6 33.♗xg6+ Sam wanted to insert the exchange of rooks, but it transposes to the game.

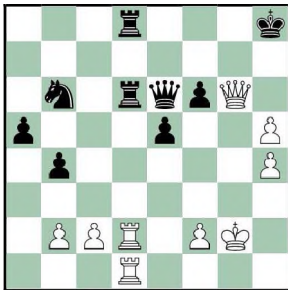
33...♕h8 33...♕f8 loses to 34.h6! (34.♗xd6? ♗xd6 35.h6 ♗xd1 36.h7 ♗d5+ is a much worse line, as here Black has a vital check on g1.) 34...♗xd2 35.♗g7+ ♕e8 36.♗xd2 ♗xd2 37.h7 ♗d5+

SAM GOT 4/6 ON
THE TACTICS/CALCULATION PAGE





38.♠g3 and White wins.



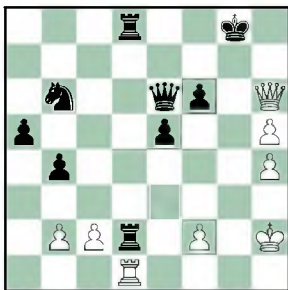
The game ended with 34.♠xd6? Sam, at his second attempt, wanted to continue 34.♠h6+ ♔g8 35.♔h2? which turns out to be a worse move order, as 35...♠f5! would have saved the day. After 36.♠xd6 ♠xd6 37.♠xd6 ♠xf2+ Black has a perpetual. 34...♠xd6 35.h6 ♠d7 36.♠xd7 ♠xd7 37.♠xf6+ ♔h7 38.♠xb6 ♠g4+ ½-½

SOLUTION

Correct was 34.♔h2!! This is the magical move that makes the whole exercise difficult.

34...♠xd2 34...♠f5 does not need to be analyzed.

35.♠h6+ ♔g8



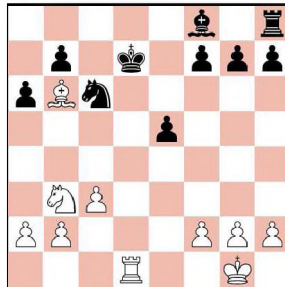
36.♠g1+ and Black is mated.

STRATEGY

S1

David Brodsky	2509
Aaron Jacobson	2351

Charlotte 2022



After 22...♔c8? 23.♔a5 ♠e7 24.♔c4! f6 25.a4± Black was under a lot of pressure, even if he did later manage to hold the game. Drawn.

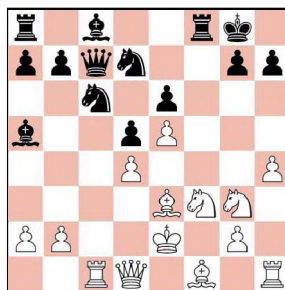
SOLUTION

There was no reason not to activate the king with 22...♔e6!, as after 23.♔c5+ ♠xc5 24.♠xc5 ♠d8 Black would even stand better, due to the passive position of the king on g1.

S2

Parimarjan Negi	2639
Craig Hilby	2411

Charlotte 2022



Black played 16...♠b6? and later lost.

At this point I like 17.♠e1! quite a bit, retaining full control. The dark squares are important, which is why the queen tries to control them.

SOLUTION

However once you see 16...♔f6! you know you need to play it. The position remains unclear, even if Stockfish then slightly prefers Black. But during the game the main focus was on getting the pieces out.

S3

Justus Williams	2388
Gergely Kantor	2561

Hollywood 2022

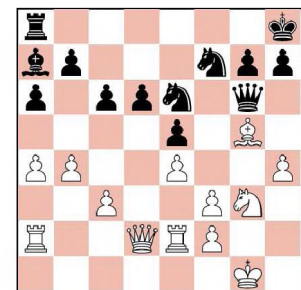


After 19...♔hf7? 20.♠e3! the position was roughly equal and Black had missed his moment, even though he later won.

SOLUTION

Sam wanted to play 19...♠xf3! 20.gxf3 ♠e6! to take control of the dark squares and get Black's pieces out. 20...♠xh3!? would also have given Black the advantage, but that is less natural.

A fantasy variation could then go 21.♠d5 c6 22.♠a2 ♠xa2 23.♠xa2 ♔e6 24.h4 ♔f7

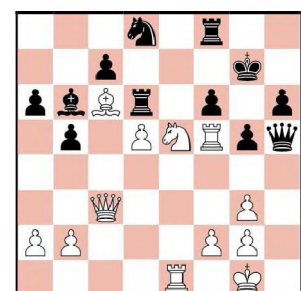


25.♠e3 ♠xe3 26.♠xe3 ♠f8 with a deadly attack.

S4

Evan Park	2364
Pranav Sathish	1989

Hollywood 2022





White obtained a winning position after 35.♔d7? ♚f7?? 36.♕xb6 cxb6, when simplest was 37.♙e8!. **White won.**

But after 35...♕xc6, Black is simply OK in the complications.

SOLUTION

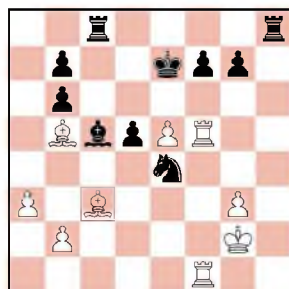
White had the chance to eliminate the black queen from the game with 35.g4! ♚h4 36.g3, when after 36...♚h3 he could do a number of things.

I like 37.♙e4!? with an overwhelming position, but other moves are good too. The key point is to tame the queen.

S5

Kassa Korley	2400
Edward Song	2383

New York 2022



Black won the game after 28...♙cf8?!, but at this point he had no advantage. For example 29.a4!? is a decent continuation. White does not stand worse.

SOLUTION

Sam preferred 28...♙hf8! with a solid advantage for Black, arguing that there is nothing on the h-file; the targets are on the c-file. For example, after 29.a4 ♕xc3 30.bxc3 ♙e3 Black wins a pawn.

S6

Jason Wang	2345
Luka Budisavljevic	2505

Charlotte 2022



White's position is rather overstretched, but once he gets coordinated, he will have a space advantage. Black played 25...♙fe8? and the game was later **drawn**.

I like 26.♙e2!? for White. The position is close to equal, but could quickly turn out to be a bit better for White, for example after 26...♕b8 27.♙f2.

Sam chose the dreadful 25...e5?, intending to meet 26.♕d5 with 26...♙fe8, horrified to realize he had blundered because of 27.♕c7.

SOLUTION

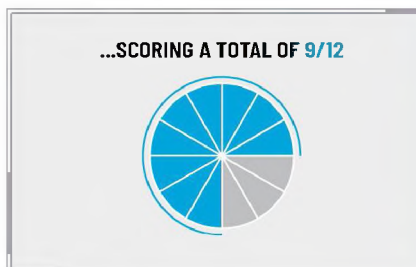
Black was able to exploit the weakness of the e4-pawn with a fantastic maneuver. 25...♕b8!! 26.♙f3 26.e5?! dxex5 27.fxe5 ♕fd7 would leave White overextended with the e5 pawn remaining as a further weakness.

26...a4! Black undermines White's position on the queenside. After 27.bxa4 ♕bd7, White has a lot of weaknesses. And after 27.b4 cxb4 28.axb4 ♙c8 White finds it difficult to defend his weaknesses.

For example, 29.♕a3



29...d5! and everything is blown to pieces.



SMALL CHESS LECTURES

By GM Nikola Nestorovic

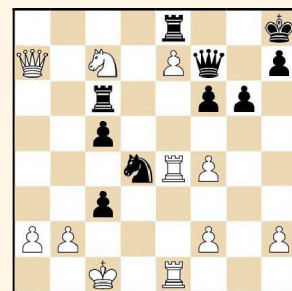
What should be the thinking process in a situation where you have a choice – to win material in a sharp position or to play it safe?

A lot depends on the temperament of a player, as well as the degree of strength of both contestants and their sense of danger. In this issue I will try to provide some explanations by means of an example from my own tournament play.

Allow me to remind you of my article published in ACM #31. There, I tried to explain the level of threats according to their power. So, threats to the opponent's king should have the highest priority, after which we have threats to win material or to promote a pawn, etc.

Goran M. Todorovic	2401
Nikola Nestorovic	2466

Smederevska Palanka 2020



Here, White has a choice – to prevent any counterattack by the simple bxc3, or to enter complications starting with the tactical move ♕xe8, when at first glance he wins material and easily promotes his e-pawn. What he missed (or underestimated) is that Black's only counterplay lies in threatening the white king, which should be accepted as a stronger threat, compared to those of his own. Strategically, had White taken some precautionary measures, his threats would then have remained, whereas his opponent's would have disappeared.

29.♕xe8? 29.bxc3! was the simplest move and the stronger one! Only now the threat of taking the rook on e8 is activated, and the best defensive setup for White is created. 29...♙c4! 30.♙4e3! Two 'simple' defensive moves are enough to extinguish any of Black's hopes. 30...♙xc7 (30...♙xe7 is met by 31.♙a8+! winning material.) 31.♙xc7 Black can hardly create any more threats. 31...♙xa2 32.cxd4 ♙a1+ 33.♕d2 ♙b2+ 34.♕d1 ♙b1+ 35.♕e2 The king marches to the kingside where it is safe from further checks, thus Black's last threats disappear. 29...♙c4! This is the only way to create



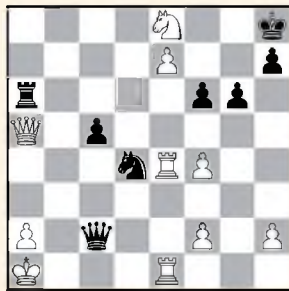
Nikola Nestorovic became a Grandmaster in 2016 and a FIDE Trainer in 2018. Still an active player, Nikola is mostly dedicated to chess teaching. Together with his father, IM Dejan, he co-authored two chess books – *The Power of Defence* and *The Art of Counterattack in 64 Pictures* and *Secrets of Positional Sacrifice*.

any threats and shift the emphasis of the game to a different sector of the board.

30. ♖b8 The most logical way to defend the white king from threats and thereby avert a drawn final outcome.

30. ♖d6!? cxb2+ 31. ♔xb2 ♖b4+ 32. ♔c1 ♖c3+ 33. ♔b1 ♖c2+ 34. ♔a1 ♖c3+ ends in perpetual check.

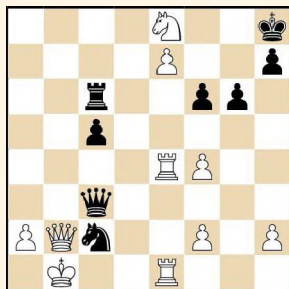
30. ♖a5!? cxb2+ 31. ♔xb2 ♖c2+ 32. ♔a1 ♖a6!!



A) 33. ♖d6 ♖b3+! 34. axb3 ♖xa5+ 35. ♖a4 ♖xa4+ 36. bxa4 ♖c3+ 37. ♔a2 ♖c2+. The motif of perpetual check appears in almost any line.

B) 33. ♖xa6 ♖c3+ 34. ♔b1 ♖c2+ is another perpetual check.

30...cxb2+ 31. ♔xb2 ♖c2+ 32. ♔a1 ♖c3+ 33. ♖b2? The desire to win sometimes leads a player astray! **33. ♔b1=.** **33...♖c2+ 34. ♔b1**



34...♖b6!! A phenomenal resource to finish off the counterattack! **White resigned** due to his inability to defend against the threat of checkmate, as **35. ♖xb6** runs into **35...♖a3** mate. Obviously, White's sense of danger has failed him with severe consequences – an unexpected defeat from a position that promised so much.

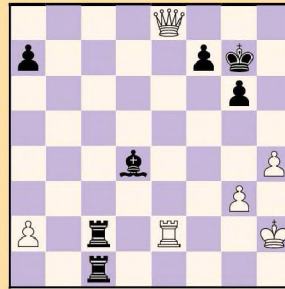
Discover The Threats

Solutions on page 93

1.

Kajus Mikalajunas 1881
Brandon Clarke 2486

British Chess Championship 2023

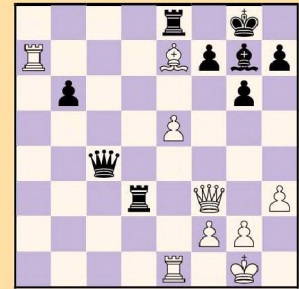


Black to move

2.

Zhou Jianchao 2421
Ivan Smikovski 2498

Aeroflot Open B, Moscow 2005

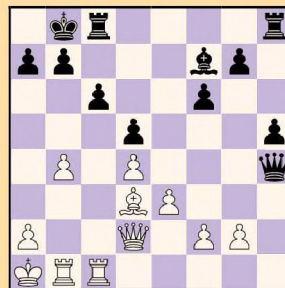


White to move

3.

Igor Miladinovic 2507
Nikolay Averin 2259

Dubai Open 2023

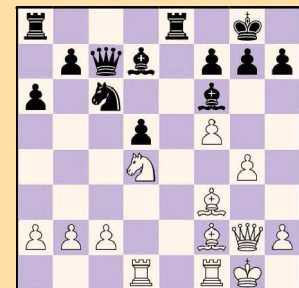


White to move

4.

Aleksander Mista 2521
Sergei Movsesian 2639

Czech Team Championship 2004

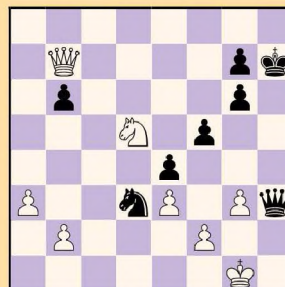


Black to move

5.

Teodora Injac 2415
Nurai Sovetbekova 1823

FIDE Women's World Cup, Baku 2023

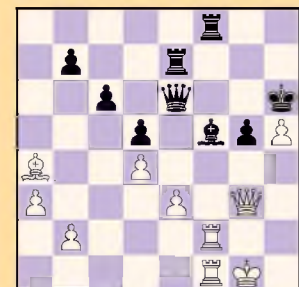


White to move

6.

Vassily Ivanchuk 2664
Mahammad Muradli 2539

European Championship, Vrnjjacka Banja 2023



White to move



A SELECTION OF OPENING CHOICES FROM THE 2023 WORLD CUP IN BAKU

Troubled Waters of the Sicilian, Grunfeld, and Catalan

In this continuation of the Opening review from ACM #35, World Cup participant GM Emilio Cordova expertly navigates through the innovative ideas of his fellow grandmasters, including Dominguez, Caruana, Svidler, and others.

■ By GM Emilio Cordova

After presenting Caruana's likely one-time surprise (6.♘f4) to the Four Knights Sicilian in ACM #35, p.46, it is now time to switch to the main and most popular approach by White. The main protagonist here was none other than Caruana's good friend and second Leinier Dominguez.

Leinier is famous for being an excellent theoretician, who employs mostly the main and most topical opening variations. His 1.e4 was twice tested in the Four Knights Sicilian, and he responded with two different, but similarly efficient approaches. Naturally, after opting for 6.♘xc6 in round 3 against Guseinov, he avoided repeating the line in round 5 against the reigning European Champion Alexey Sarana, in order not to allow any surprises that his opponent might have prepared. However, I will here change the order of presentation, so let's start with the more positional approach before we delve into the fire on the board.

B

THE SICILIAN DEFENSE

B45

Leinier Dominguez	2739
Alexey Sarana	2685

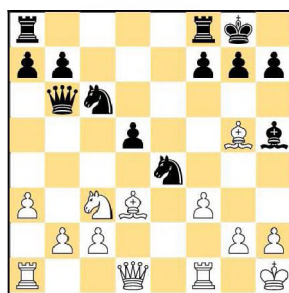
World Cup, Baku 2023

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♘c6 6.♘db5 One of the top two choices for White in this position. 6...♘b4 7.a3 This is considered as the most reliable way to play for White. By gaining the bishop pair, White will secure a small but long-term advantage. 7...♘xc3+ 8.♘xc3 d5 With this pawn thrust Black almost rids himself of all his problems. After all, whoever controls or occupies d5 should have no trouble in the Sicilian. 9.exd5 exd5 10.♘d3 0-0 11.0-0 ♘g4

12.f3 ♘h5 Black has successfully completed his piece development. Moreover, he is planning to trade the light-squared bishops by playing ...♘g6 at some point. Without the bishop pair, White won't have any advantage at all.

13.♘g5 Putting pressure on the d5 pawn. In fact, the d5 pawn is isolated, therefore White should do something against it.

13...♗b6+ 14.♔h1 ♘e4



It is all main theory till this point. Black aims to successfully trade a certain amount of pieces, in order to clarify and clean the "stains" from the position. In other words,

A R ♘1. d4, 1. e4
1. d4 R ♘1... d5, 1... ♘f6
1. d4 ♘f6 R ♘2. c4
1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 R ♘2... e6, 2...g6

B 1. e4 R ♘1... c5, 1...e6, 1...e5
1. e4 c5

C 1. e4 e6
1. e4 e5

D 1. d4 d5
1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 g6 ♘3... d5

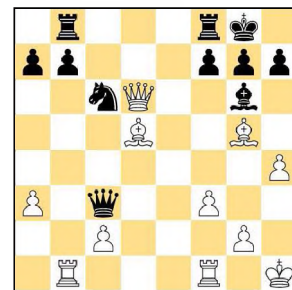
E 1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 e6
1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 g6 ♘3... d5

to reduce his opponent's pressure against the d5 pawn.

15.♘xe4 dxe4 16.♘xe4 ♗xb2 16...♘g6!? By sacrificing a pawn, Black will be able to reduce the strength of his opponent's bishop pair by trading those on the light-squares. 17.♘xg6 hxg6 18.♗b1 ♗fe8 Black's pieces are too active. Therefore he should have at least enough compensation to fight.

17.♗d6 ♘g6 18.♗ab1 ♗c3 19.♘d5 By avoiding the trade, White retains his bishop pair, maintaining the dynamic factor and a small advantage.

19...♗ab8 20.h4



20...♘d4 20...h6? removes the bishop pair, but at a high price. 21.♗xg6 hxg5 22.♗b3+.

After 20...♘xc2!, the bishop is no longer a weakness on g6. 21.♗fc1 (21.♗bc1 h6 No more bishop pair!) 21...h6! Finally Black will be able to get rid of the bishop pair.

21.♗fe1 b5? 22.♗e5! After this amazing move, Leinier seizes control of the dark squares, mainly the a1-h8 diagonal.

22...♗bc8 23.h5! After this, White won in a stylish and convincing way. The whole point of this line for Black is to trade one of the enemy bishops. Once Black achieves that, his position should be at least fine.



Emilio Cordova a Peruvian Grandmaster, peaked at a 2660 FIDE rating in December 2016. A talented junior, he won multiple Pan-American championships and has represented Peru in seven Chess Olympiads from 2004-2022, leading the team in 2016, 2018, and 2022. Cordova was the American Continental Champion in 2016 and tied for first in 2017. As part of the Webster Chess Team, he earned several Pan-Am titles and an individual gold in 2019. Emilio also has over 14 years of coaching experience.

B45

Leinier Dominguez	2739
Gadir Guseinov	2661

World Cup, Baku 2023

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.♗c3 ♗c6 6.♗xc6 Finally, we have one of the most trendy lines of recent months.

6...bxc6 7.e5 ♗d5 8.♗e4 White's main idea is to potentially occupy the d6 square. However, Black will do his best to challenge that.

8...♞c7 By putting pressure on the e5 pawn, Black is forcing White to overextend his pawns. This will allow pretty good chances of counterplay by attacking White's king on the dark squares.

9.f4 Once you make a pawn move, a weakness emerges.

9...♞b6 10.c4

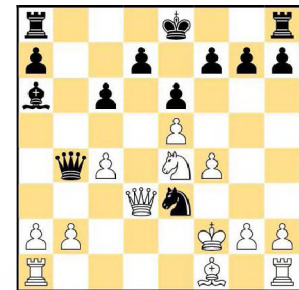


10...♗e3 This sideline can be considered somewhat suspect. It's not that bad; however, Black is forced to play accurate moves at all times, which makes his position a bit more difficult to play. That's why, when choosing a line, you have to be sure that your moves are not so hard to find. Relying on memorization in lines with a high price per move may prove to be a fragile approach.

10...♗b4+ 11.♗e2 ♗a6 (11...f5 is another interesting line, too.) **12.♗f3 f5** is considered to be the main line. Black's idea here is to challenge the white king at any cost, while undermining the center. If Black does nothing, then White will secure a nice and pleasant position, due to his better pawn structure, and powerful control of the d6 square.

11.♞d3 ♗b4+ 12.♗d2 ♗a6 12...♗f5?? is too solid and too slow! White will easily gain control of the d6 square, which would guarantee him a huge positional advantage after 13.0-0-0+.

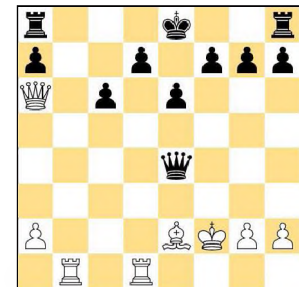
13.♗xb4 ♞xb4+ 14.♗f2



14...♞xb2+ It's still all theory. However, based on pure understanding, Black is forced to utilize the dynamic factor, otherwise he will end up in a cramped position.

14...♗xc4?? is met by **15.♞b3 ♗b8 16.♗xc4 ♗xc4 17.♞xc4 ♞xc4 18.♗d6+**. All thanks to d6!

15.♗e2 ♗xc4 16.♗ab1 ♗xe5 Not **16...♞xa2?**, because of **17.♞hd1!** and Black would welcome good advice. For example, **17...0-0** can be met by **18.♗a1+-**. **17.fxe5 ♞xe5 18.♞xa6 ♞xe4 19.♞hd1**



White has a piece for four pawns! Of course, the material matters, but the question is in whose favor is it? It's not easy for Black to advance his pawns. That's why I consider this position as slightly preferable for White. In fact, Leinier was able to convert his advantage after a very tough fight.

I won't say that this line is bad, but of course, as Black, you really need to remember the main ideas of how to play this position which for me, at least, is not so clear. That's why you shouldn't blindly trust the numbers that engines show. Instead, try to trust more in your own understanding of the position!

B95

Peter Svidler	2688
Jorden Van Foreest	2693

World Cup, Baku 2023

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.♗c3 a6 The Najdorf Variation has always been considered among the most effective and dangerous lines in the Sicilian

Leinier Dominguez vs. Alexey Sarana

Photo: FIDE

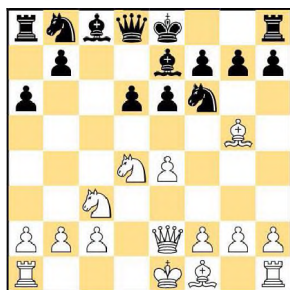




Defense. Its flexibility and dynamics have gained the reputation of being a pet line of a whole army of players, especially those of elite class. In fact, it was the favorite weapon of legends like Fischer, Kasparov, and currently MVL (Mr. Najdorf).

6. ♖g5 e6 In the Najdorf it's of greatest importance to control two key squares – b5 and d5. By playing ...a6, Black prevents any unpleasant knight jump to b5, which would make the d6 pawn an easy target for his opponent. The most significant square to keep an eye on is d5, and this relates to almost any Sicilian line. Controlling d5, or occupying it, is the most important thing that you always have to remember, regardless of the side you're playing on. In either case, don't leave the b5 square unprotected without any good reason. And another reminder: even more importantly, always try to keep an eye on the d5 square.

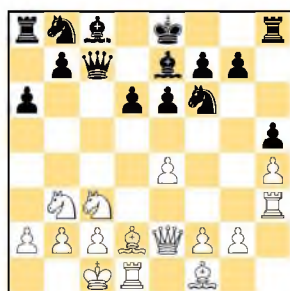
7. ♜e2 ♗e7



8.h4 In the Najdorf, almost every single move has been tried, especially from White's side. That's why the Najdorf requires a deeper study and amazing memory, compared to any other defense or opening.

8...h6 9. ♗d2 ♞b6 10. ♘b3 h5 Preventing any kingside expansion by White. Should White manage to play g2-g4, he would gain a lot of space on the kingside. That's why, by playing ...h7-h5, Black counters any White attempt to expand on that side of the board.

11.0-0-0 ♜c7 12. ♗h3



Now we can see the idea behind h2-h4! It's not just about attacking the kingside, but also the possibility of transferring the rook somewhere along the third rank. In

fact, that rook will now be able to defend the queenside as well as attacking the kingside. A rook on the third rank is what is known as a multi-purpose piece.

12...♗bd7 13. ♗g3 g6 14. ♗g5 Now the bishop is strengthening its position by hitting the f6 knight, which will allow the rook on d1 to exert pressure on the d6 pawn. **14...b5 15.a3** And after a fierce battle, White then won a very nice game. I must say that Svidler was always in control, and I don't think he had any real problems.

Of course, playing or dealing with the Najdorf is not for everyone, the nuances there are just too many in number. However, I believe that knowing the basic principles, such as the importance of controlling d5 and b5, could make the difference in your games. Another interesting aspect that you have to know when you play the Sicilian, is that sometimes as Black you may want to leave your king in the center for security reasons.

D

THE GRUNFELD DEFENSE

Last but not least, we will discuss the main ideas of a system known as the Neo-Grunfeld. I called it a system because you can actually play it against almost anything, and of course, it's not so hard to learn and play.

D78

R. Praggnanandhaa	2707
Arjun Erigaisi	2704

World Cup, Baku 2023

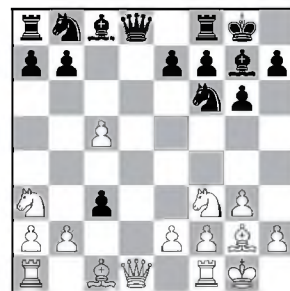
1. ♖f3 d5 2.g3 g6 3. ♗g2 ♗g7 4.d4 ♖f6 5.0-0 0-0



The Neo-Grunfeld is a very simple, solid, and easy-going system, where the main idea is to remain solid at all times. Symmetrical setups are indeed solid, but may get tricky. Remember the Petroff for example!

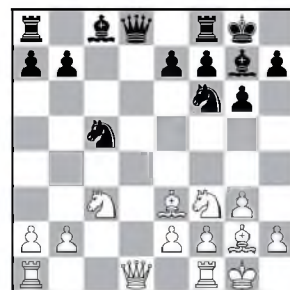
6.c4 c6 I would rather call this a “system” rather than a “defense”, since a defense is so called because it's mostly employed against specific openings, where the move order is extremely important. However, in a system that's not the case. You can use many different move orders to transpose to your favorite system. Don't forget that “All roads lead to Rome”.

6...dxc4 is probably the most direct way to equalize. By releasing the tension in the center, Black breaks up pawn chains, with a pretty level middlegame. **7. ♖a3 c5! 8.dxc5 (8. ♗xc4 cxd4 9. ♗xd4** leads to a position where White superficially stands slightly better, but Black has his own trumps.) **8...c3!** This is the key move that needs to be remembered! In this way Black will be able to increase the power of his dark-squared bishop.



A) 9.bxc3 leads to a very comfortable position for Black. **9...♖e4 10. ♜c2 ♗xc3 11. ♗b2 ♗f5 12. ♜b3 ♗e6 13. ♜c2** (Not **13. ♜xb7? ♗d5+**) **13...♗f5=.**

B) 9. ♖b5 At least, with this move White is giving Black the opportunity to make a mistake by capturing on b2, which indeed would give White a very powerful initiative since his bishop on b2 would obtain an amazing diagonal. **9...♖a6 (9...cxb2?! 10. ♗xb2** with a powerful initiative) **10. ♗xc3 ♗xc5 11. ♗e3**



11...♖fe4! It's very important to know how effective it can be to activate the g7 bishop. In fact, if Black is able to keep this bishop active for a short period of time, there are some chances to even fight for an advantage. **12. ♖xe4 ♗xe4**



▲ Playing hall, World Cup, Baku 2023

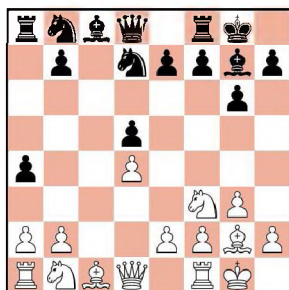
13.♟d4 ♟xd4 14.♞xd4 ♞xd4 15.♞xd4 ♞d6 16.♞fc1 ♞d8= Black has to keep in mind not to rush! Playing and preparing moves like ...a5, ...♟f8 and ...♞f5, would definitely improve his position. Baby steps, and a “no rush” strategy, are always necessary.

7.♞a4 There are many different ways for White to play here. However, the idea of ♞a4 is to entice Black to provoke more weaknesses on the queenside by playing certain unnecessary pawn moves. In fact, by capturing on c4 or making some queenside pawn moves, Black would lose control of the center or create some holes in his position – which, indeed, will make White a happy camper.

7...♞fd7 This is a more rigid approach, where Black aims not to lose control of the center without any reason.

7...dxc4 is playable too, but actually this is what White is aiming for! By capturing on c4 and not even obtaining at least a pawn in return, Black is in danger of losing control of the center.

8.♞b3 a5 9.cxd5 a4 10.♞d1 cxd5



White's strategy seems to have worked well, since Black has likely been obliged to over-extend his pawns. However, it's very hard to prove that the a4 pawn is a weakness, since it will be really hard to pile up on it.

11.♞c3 ♞b6 With a very symmetrical pawn structure and easy-going natural moves, Black's position is not so hard to play. Opening theory here is not too relevant.

12.♟f4 ♞c6 Natural moves like this don't need explanation – the move speaks for itself.

13.♞c1 ♞a5 After a very tough fight, Black eventually won. Black's position is easy to play since his moves are very natural. In fact, if you don't know what to do, stick to the fundamental chess principle “Complete the development of your pieces”. Get real targets or reasons for your pieces to come alive.

E

THE CATALAN OPENING

For the end of this review, let's take a look at the prominent and elegant Catalan. We will dive into nuances, subtleties, and details of this ever popular opening.

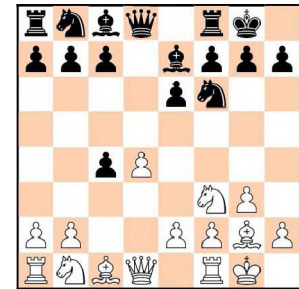
E05

Nijat Abasov	2646
Fabiano Caruana	2782

World Cup, Baku 2023

1.d4 ♞f6 2.♞f3 d5 3.c4 e6 4.g3 ♟e7 5.♟g2 The Catalan Opening can be easily considered as a lifetime repertoire. Its solidity, well-founded structure, powerful presence in the center and fluent piece play, make the Catalan setup an extremely much-desired opening by many players. 5...0-0 6.0-0 dxc4 As usual, this capture is considered as the most “direct way

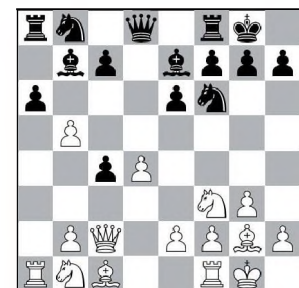
to equalize”. However, by doing this, Black is kind of giving away his control of the center, but in return will obtain a rock-solid position, with barely a few weaknesses. Remember that you can't have it all – small concessions are allowed as long as you give something in order to get something.



7.♞c2 Playing the ♞c2 line is always reasonable since it shows the main Catalan idea – “control the center as much as you can”. By controlling the center, White will gain more space and will deprive Black's pieces of mobility. In fact, here the most relevant and important outpost to gain control of the center is the e4 square – once you achieve that, be sure to keep reinforcing your center.

7.♞a3!? is another interesting line to consider in your opening preparation...

7...a6 7...b5!? Nowadays, this trendy move is considered a reasonable pawn sacrifice, which leads to an “opposite-colored bishops endgame”. White gains an extra pawn, but, this endgame is known for its very strong drawing tendencies. Remember, “You give something in order to get something”. 8.a4 ♞b7 9.axb5 a6



A) 10.♞c3 is a playable move, but in this case White is rejecting the opportunity to gain material. Therefore, the ensuing endgame is going to be equal and very drawish. 10...axb5 11.♞xa8 ♟xa8 12.♞xb5 ♟d5 13.♟f4 c5 14.dxc5 ♞a5 15.♞c3 ♞xc5 and Black has no cause for complaint. B) 10.bxa6 10...♞xa6 11.♞xc4 ♟d5 12.♞c3 c5! Here we have a clear demonstration of Black's main strategy –



by playing ...c7-c5, he is cleaning the “stains” from the board. Which means fewer obstacles when heading for the opposite-colored bishops’ endgame. 13.♗e3 ♖e4

B1) 14.♞c1 cxd4 15.♙xd4 ♖b4 16.♞xa8 ♞xa8 17.♜c3 ♜xc3 18.bxc3 ♜c6 ended in a draw on move 36 in B.Bok 2616 – Hi.Nakamura 2768, Internet 2022.

B2) 14.♞e1 ♖b4 15.♞xa8 ♞xa8 16.♜c3 ♜xc3 17.bxc3 ♜c2 18.♞d2 ♜xe3 19.♞xe3 cxd4 20.cxd4 ♙f6 By trading pieces, Black has reached an endgame down a pawn, but with a bishop pair and the possibility of trading his light-squared bishop for the enemy knight. In that way, he will be able to play the opposite-colored bishops’ endgame, although, there are still queens and rooks on the board. If Black is able to trade queens and rooks, a draw will be almost guaranteed. Moreover, Black’s pieces are very active too. Interestingly enough, my database shows eight games (seven by Nakamura as Black!) that reached this position and all ended peacefully!

8.a4 ♙d7 9.♞xc4 ♙c6 10.♙g5 The idea of this move is to increase control of the center – principally the e4 square. By pressurising the f6 knight, White is indirectly throwing down a challenge to Black, as that knight is controlling d5 and e4.

10...♜bd7 Reinforcing the knight on f6 and maintaining control of the center.

11.♜c3 h6



12.♙f4 The Catalan is known for its versatility. Sometimes you see very dynamic positions, other times very dry, quiet positions, where White is always trying to squeeze the last drop of juice from an almost dry orange.

12.♙xf6 ♜xf6 is an alternative approach by White. Here White players have tried all sorts of ideas – 13.b4, 13.♞fd1, 13.♞fe1, 13.a5, 13.♖e5, etc...

12...♙d6 13.♞d3 White keeps directing his pieces at the e4 square in order to control the center. At the same time, he



▲ Fabiano Caruana vs. Nijat Abasov

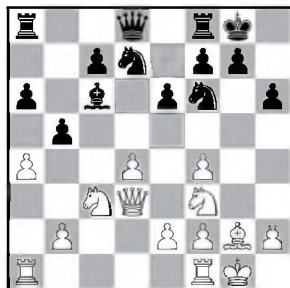
Photo: FIDE

allows Black to capture on f4, “damaging” his own pawn structure. In fact, it is going to be far from that.

13...♙xf4 14.gxf4 It’s true that White’s pawn structure has been slightly damaged. However, White now has more pawns in the center, which is part of his main strategy. Moreover, by opening the g-file, White will have another alternative but efficient plan – attacking the enemy king!

14...a5 Not bad, but not the most precise way to play. It’s true that ...a6-a5 is always the most reliable way to consolidate Black’s position on the queenside. However, in comparison to the original setup, Black doesn’t have his dark-squared bishop on b4, which normally puts pressure on the c3 knight, fighting for control of the e4 square.

14...b5! is a very intrepid way to challenge for central control. By playing this, Black intends to disturb the knight on c3, and gain control of the e4 square.



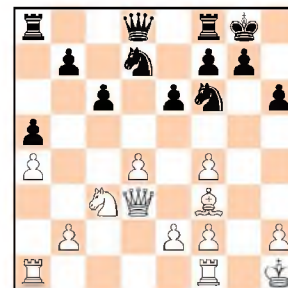
A) 15.axb5 axb5

A1) 16.♞xa8?! ♞xa8 All Black’s pieces are very active with most of them directed at the e4 square. 17.♜xb5? is wrong because of 17...♜h5!. Now Black gains the initiative due to his powerful piece play and the f4 weakness. For example, 18.d5 (Of course not 18.♜xc7? ♞b7+, trapping the stray knight.) 18...♜xf4 19.♜xc7 ♜xd3 20.♜xa8 ♙xd5 21.exd3 ♞xa8+;

A2) 16.♖e5 leads to a series of trades, with an equal position in all key lines.

B) 15.♞fc1! b4 16.♖b1 ♙e4 17.♞c4 ♙d5 18.♞xb4 ♞b8 19.♞d2 ♖e4 All roads lead to... e4! Black has excellent compensation for the pawn. Then after 20.♞c2 c5! removing the “stains” from the board.

15.♜h1 ♙xf3 16.♙xf3 c6



17.♞g1 Finally the alternative plan comes to the fore!

17...♜h8 18.e4 By combining two powerful but efficient plans, White won in a very implacable and fashionable way. His powerful control of the center, in conjunction with pressure on the g-file, has allowed him significantly easier play. At the end of the day, it is not about numbers like +1 or +0.50, but rather how easy it is to play such a position. Even more important is whether you really like the resulting positions.

I hope that I have been able to help you improve your understanding of these openings, defenses, and systems, since my objective is to encourage you to rather use your own understanding and critical thinking than your memory. My philosophy in opening preparation is – if you can’t explain why a line should be played, then you shouldn’t play it! ■

I watched the U.S. Championship 2023 held in Saint Louis with both admiration and eager anticipation that it might produce enough material to fill my regular column. Why only this event, you may ask? Are not we living in a world with an unprecedented number of games played on a daily basis both over the board and online? While I still have a long way to go to get my old-fashioned mind around to taking any online chess game seriously, I also have no doubt that the U.S. National Championship outshines many OTB events across the world in its glory, prestige, top-notch management and last but not least – a generous prize fund for both gentlemen and ladies.

The Tournament Management Board paid high respect to every participant of this prestigious event, male and female alike, by setting up money prizes even for those who finished in last place. In return, the participants gave their very best, which resulted in an abundance of high quality games and fascinating progression of both tournaments. Ultimately, yours truly wasn't let down either and I humbly offer readers my personal choices.



Sarunas Sulskis is a nine-time champion of Lithuania and a regular member of his country's national team. As a teenager, he studied at the Botvinnik-Kasparov Chess Academy and later graduated from the Kaunas College of Management and Law. He qualified three times for the knock-out World Championship, and his most notable recent result is a victory at the traditional 2022/23 Hastings Chess Congress. In addition to his achievements as a player, Sarunas is a FIDE trainer, arbiter, writer, and passionate chess promoter.

1 The MAGNIFICENT 3 REMARKABLE RECENT GAMES

By GM Sarunas Sulskis

SWIERCZ FENDS OFF DOMINGUEZ' ASSAULT WITH A REMOTE QUEEN

My first selection was played at quite an early stage of the Championship – Round 3. This meant a hard day for Swiercz (2639), pitted against one of the Championship favourites and a National Team player, Dominguez (2739), at odds of piece color and rating.

To the delight of spectators, Dominguez went for the throat quite early in the game, sacking a piece by 14.♟xg5 to dramatically expose Swiercz's king, when a retreat by 14...♙g3 was a viable option too. For some time Swiercz tried to match his opponent's drive with modern preparation. But the time inevitably came for individual decisions. His human inaccuracy of 19...♞d7? allowed his formidable opponent to skilfully edge closer to the black king by tactical means. Soon Dominguez had his knight on f6, effectively cutting Black's position into two halves. A wonderful detail about the knight's position on f6 was that it remained there annoyingly long for Swiercz, despite the presence of Black's bishop on g7 from the very start!

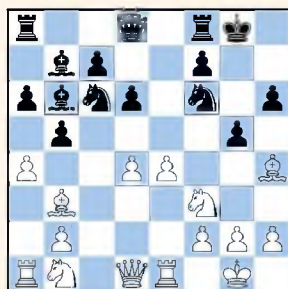
Pressed hard against the wall, Swiercz ultimately came up with an awesome remote defence, featuring his black queen on the b2 and a1 squares, patrolling the long diagonal and ready to rush to g7 in front of her king the moment she hears the siren wail.

C78

Leinier Dominguez	2745
Dariusz Swiercz	2621

U.S. Championship, Saint Louis 2023

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♙c5 6.c3 b5 7.♙b3 d6 8.d4 ♙b6 9.♞e1 0-0 10.♙g5 The outline of the Archangelsk Ruy Lopez is there.
10...h6 11.♙h4 ♙b7 12.a4 exd4 13.cxd4 g5 Swiercz enters a sharp and provocative line, which however was undoubtedly adequately prepared.

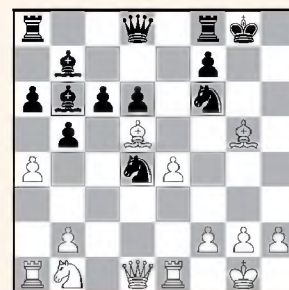


14.♟xg5 Dominguez blows open the king's residence, making for early excitement. However, there is no question that the players were still in their books. 14...♙g3 is also played, just to give you

the idea that Dominguez has deliberately chosen the sharp way.

14...hxg5 15.♙xg5 ♘xd4 The usual response. I found no games with 15...♙xd4. After 16.♙d5 the bishop on d4 apparently cannot maintain its stability in the center. 16...♙e5 17.f4 ♙xb2 18.♞a2 ♘xd5 19.♙xd8 ♙d4+ 20.♙h1 ♘xf4 21.♙xc7 gives White a huge advantage. 16.♙d5 Disguised as a struggle for the center by the bishop, in reality this move makes way for a deadly rook lift ♞a1-a3-g3. 16...♙xd5 A fresh trend. I have little doubt that Swiercz was familiar with the position. Back in the day they used to play 16...♙e6 17.♙h4 ♙xd5 18.exd5 ♘g7.

Black bought into the disguise in D.Kollars 2541 - M.Godena 2508, Le Castella 2018, by continuing 16...c6.



But then came 17.♞a3!! ♙e8 18.♞g3 ♙f8



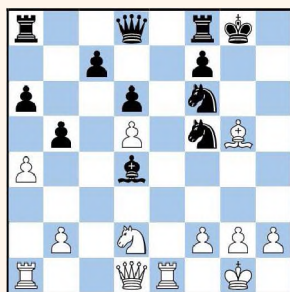
19.♔h6+ ♕e7 20.♔xf7! ♖h8 21.e5 ♖xh6 22.exf6+ ♕xf7 23.♖g4 ♖xf6 24.♗d7+ ♕f8 25.♖xb7 ♖d8 26.♖xb6±.

17.exd5 ♖f5 Little wonder it had not been played earlier.

18.♖d2 Though 18.♖f3 seems to be winning, Black can in fact meet it with 18...♖d4 19.♖g3 (19.♖xf6 ♖xf6 20.♔xf6 ♖c2⚡) 19...♖h5 20.♖g4 ♖c8! 21.♖xh5 ♖f5 – modern chess!

18.♖a3 looks powerful, but Swiercz certainly had something in mind to combat it. Perhaps 18...♖d4 19.♖f3 ♗d7 20.♔xf6 ♔xf6 21.♗d3 ♖fe8 22.♖d1 ♖e5 23.g4 ♖d4 24.♖xf6 ♖xg4+ 25.♔h1 ♖ae8.

18...♖d4 Swiercz throws his bishop right into the center, despite Dominguez's best efforts to scare it off by ♖d2-f3.



19.♖f3 It turns out that after 19.♖f3 ♔xb2 20.♖a2 ♔c3 Black's bishop still clings to the long diagonal – 21.♗d3 ♔xe1 22.♖xf5 ♔c3.

And on 19.♖e4 Black unleashes the trademark Archangelsk tactics: 19...♖xe4! 20.♔xd8 (20.♖xe4 ♔f6) 20...♖xf2! with a dangerous counterattack. Now 21.♖h5 loses on the spot to 21...♖e4+ 22.♔h1 ♖fg3+!–+.

19...♗d7? A nice human move. The rooks must be connected, shouldn't they? Yet Swiercz now falls into a deep trap, carefully prepared for him by Dominguez. It was essential to place the queen in a defended, albeit less attractive, position by 19...♖c8. The game could then continue on its messy course with 20.g4 ♖h7 21.gxf5 ♖h8 (21...♖xg5 22.♖g4 ♖f6 23.h4+–).

20.♔xf6 ♔xf6 21.♖g4+! The point. The black knight is now under a nasty pin. Swiercz must now be very careful not to lose the game in the next five or six moves. **21...♔g7** 21...♔h7 22.♖e4 ♔g7 23.♖g3 underscores Black's problems.

22.♖e4! With the dual threat of ♖f6+ and ♖g3. Luckily for Swiercz, he has just one defense left.

22...♖c8! 22...f6 is no cure due to 23.♖g3!+–. Now the game is still far from over. With the following forced sequence, Dominguez tries to benefit from Swiercz's



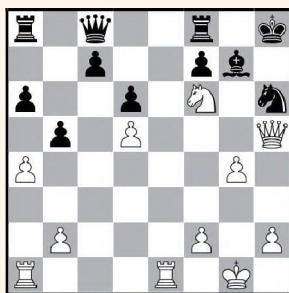
▲ Leinier Dominguez vs. Dariusz Swiercz

Photo: SLCC

queen zigzagging ...♗d8-d7-c8.

23.♖f6+ ♔h8 24.♖h5+ ♖h6 24...♔h6 loses nicely to 25.g4 ♖g7 26.gxf5 ♖h8 (26...♗d8 27.♖e6!) 27.♖e7 ♖f8 28.♖g6!! mate.

25.g4! This is the attacking setup Dominguez has had in mind. The last move is designed to prevent the black queen from coming out to f5.

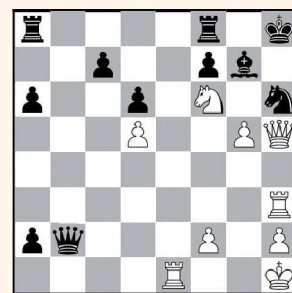


Black cannot easily get rid of the knight on f6 and therefore his rooks cannot contest their counterpart on the e-file. That said, White is still down a piece and with g4-g5 being only a false threat in view of ...♖c8-f5, the game has reached a critical stage of the middlegame. How is Swiercz going to untangle himself?

25...bxa4 He starts off with a little pawn. The b-file is needed to muster a counterattack. An attempt to revolt the knight's rule on the board by 25...♔xf6? is swiftly punished by 26.♖xh6+ ♔g8 27.♖xf6 ♖xg4+ 28.♔h1 winning.

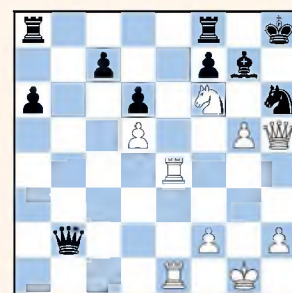
26.♖xa4 Watching the broadcast I thought Leinier would go for a straightforward rook swing to the kingside with 26.♖a3. However, it's dangerous to leave the a4

pawn alive. In the vast immeasurable ocean of variations let me show you one line which probably has quite a few refutations, but is fun nevertheless. 26...♖b7 27.♖h3 ♖xb2 28.g5 a3 29.♔h1 a2



It seems absolutely resignable for White now, but look what he has: 30.♖xh6+! ♔xh6 31.♖xh6+ ♔g7 32.♖h5+ ♔g8 33.♖f6+ and I wouldn't advise Black to skip the repetition by 33...♖xf6? 34.gxf6 because he'd do it at his own expense.

26...♖b7 27.g5 ♖xb2 28.♖ae4

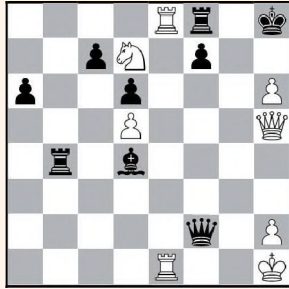


Another critical middlegame position is reached. Despite the sharp character of the game, Dominguez still tries to tackle it positionally. His rooks are now firmly



connected, he is getting ready for ♖f6-g4 without allowing Black to counter him on the e-file by either of his rooks.

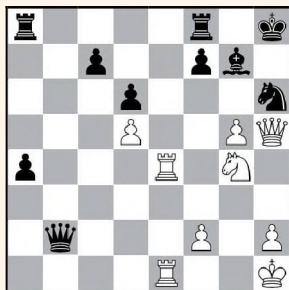
28...a5 The pawn is still quite a long way off its destination, but White also needs time to regroup if he is to strike Black decisively on the kingside. An attempt to hit White on the flank by 28...♖ab8 runs into a spectacular line after 29.♖d7! ♖b4 30.gxh6 ♖d4 (30...♖xe4 31.hxg7+ ♖xg7 32.♖g5+-) 31.♖e8! ♖xf2+ 32.♖h1



32...♖b8!? just looks stupid, but it's better to lose a rook than get mated after 32...♖xe8 33.♖e8+ ♖h7 34.♖f8+ ♖h8 35.♖e6+ ♖h7 36.♖g5 mate. So, after 33.♖xb8 ♖xe8 34.♖e8+ ♖h7, the only move not to lose the game, despite Black giving rook odds, is 35.♖d1.

29.♖g4 a4 30.♖1e2 It's understandable that having played the game for the most part a piece down, Dominguez could have been close to the point of exhaustion. With the black queen on the long diagonal, Black is immune to any direct means of assault, such as by 30.gxh6 ♖c3, or 30.♖xh6 ♖xh6 31.♖xh6+ ♖g8 32.g6 ♖g7. Here we note the importance of the white g6 pawn being pinned.

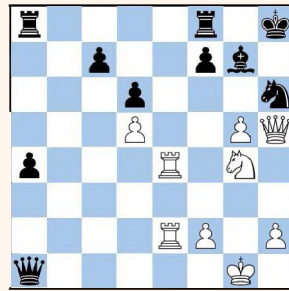
Therefore, I think that a good try for a win could have been the quiet 30.♖h1 releasing well in advance the potential of the g-pawn to strike against the enemy king.



This idea is beautifully revealed in the following very long line: 30...a3 (Maybe 30...♖g8 is more resilient, but it's no fun either. 31.gxh6 ♖c3 32.♖f5 ♖h8 33.♖e5! ♖xe5 34.♖xe5+-) 31.♖xh6 ♖xh6 32.♖xh6+ ♖g8 33.g6! ♖g7 34.gxf7+!

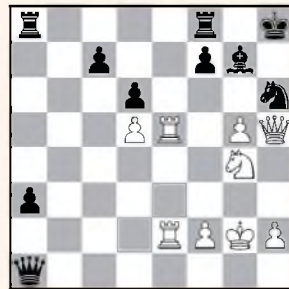
Here we go! 34...♖xf7 35.♖g1 a2 36.♖xg7+ ♖xg7 37.♖e6+ ♖f7 38.♖g4+ ♖f8 39.♖h6+ ♖e7 40.♖e4+ ♖d8 41.♖h8+ ♖d7 42.♖xa8 End of story!

30...♖a1+ 31.♖e1 ♖b2 32.♖1e2 ♖a1+



33.♖g2! Well done, Dominguez! Despite adversities, he still hasn't abandoned his hopes of winning.

33...a3 34.♖e1 Now, however, still exhausted and desperate to reach the second time control, he goes for the safe threefold repetition. His opponent must also have been exhausted with never-ending suspense hanging over his king. Perhaps it made sense to stun Swiercz with the fabulous, albeit very risky 34.♖e5?!



It's possible that, short on time, Black could have lost his way among the multiple captures.

A) 34...♖xe5? indeed, is too bad after 35.♖xh6+ ♖g8 36.♖xe5 ♖xe5 37.♖f6+ ♖xf6 38.gxf6+-.

B) 34...♖xe5 35.♖xe5 dxe5 36.gxh6 and White is on the attack.

C) 34...a2 35.♖xh6 and White's attack seems to get there first.

D) 34...dxe5 35.♖xh6, when, in case of 35...♖xh6 36.♖xh6+ ♖g8 37.g6, White risks nothing, but Black is being harassed.

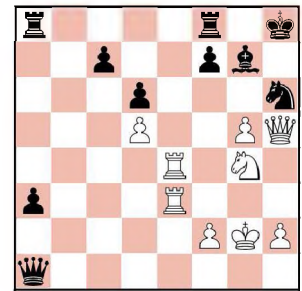
34...♖b2 35.♖1e2 ♖a1 36.♖e1 ♖b2 37.♖1e2 ♖a1 Sealing the truce with a threefold repetition due to complete exhaustion. White is still unable to break the seal on the long diagonal with 38.♖xh6 ♖xh6 39.♖xh6+ ♖g8.

Draw

FOR THE SAKE OF TRUTH...

In order to satisfy the quest for truth on the chessboard, here we present engine analysis of the final position – that was also reached after Black's move 33 (thus the move numbers).

34.♖2e3!!



34...♖g8 (34...♖d1 35.♖h4!+-; 34...a2 35.♖xh6 ♖xh6 36.♖xh6+ ♖g8 37.♖f6!!+-) 35.gxh6

A) 35...♖b2 36.h7+ ♖h8 37.♖h6 a2 (37...♖g7 38.♖xf7+ ♖xf7 39.♖xf7 ♖f6 40.♖e8+ ♖xe8 41.♖xe8+ ♖xh7 42.♖g8+ ♖h6 43.♖e6 a2 44.♖a8 ♖xe6 45.dxe6 a1 ♖ 46.♖xa1 ♖xa1 47.e7+-) 38.♖e8 ♖axe8 (38...♖fxe8 39.♖g3! ♖f8 40.♖g8+ ♖xg8+ 41.hxg8 ♖+ ♖xg8+ 42.♖g4+ ♖g7 43.♖h6 mate.) 39.♖xf7+ ♖g7 40.♖g3+ ♖f6 41.♖g6+ ♖e7 42.♖e6 mate.

B) 35...♖d4 36.♖f5 ♖h8 37.♖xd4 ♖xd4 38.♖f6 ♖g8+ 39.♖g3! ♖g6 40.♖xg6 fxxg6 41.♖xg6 ♖xd5+ 42.♖xd5 ♖g8 43.♖xg8+ ♖xg8 44.♖c3+-.

After going through the above lines, you will surely be aware of how difficult it must have been for the players to calculate so many moves – particularly over-the-board and while dogged with time pressure. When a strong grandmaster such as Leinier Dominguez decided to call it a day, there is little doubt that his decision was entirely human and rational, despite sensing that he must have a win somewhere.

We can only give kudos to both players for allowing us the pleasure of replaying such a fascinating game replete with both attack and defense!

Dusan Kronic, Managing Editor



HOW TO PROPERLY EVALUATE A POSITION

Material Imbalance

Big goals are usually achieved through many small steps. Material imbalance can often prove deceptive if you fail to correctly assess “the bigger picture” and just go for material gain or sacrifice, without detecting bigger goals.

■ By GM Illia Nyzhnyk

A materialistic mindset is no stranger to many people, and while it is only natural to experience short-term gains (and sometimes losses), there is usually a bigger goal along the road. Whether one is trying to increase funds to make a large purchase (in which small consistent gains are seen as a good thing, because it brings that individual closer to completing his/her goal), or spend their time and resources to accumulate knowledge and information (in which case losses are to be expected along the way), at the end of the day there is always something that all of us are striving for. In this regard, chess is not that much different, because the game allows for what I call a “goal breakdown” in which big goals (e.g. checkmating, winning a queen, controlling the queenside, etc.) can usually be achieved by completing smaller tasks along the way.

Hello fellow readers, and welcome once again to the series on position evaluation, where we discover techniques that help us evaluate positions correctly. This time, I would like to expand on our previous topic. Some of you may remember that previously we talked about piece activity as it relates to material gains and losses. This time, however, we will focus more on the actual material gains and losses themselves, and how they can help us achieve bigger goals.

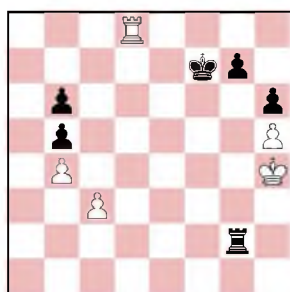
M. Amin Tabatabaei

2689

Vincent Keymer

2690

World Cup, Baku 2023



The first example in this article may look deceptively easy – we have a rook endgame where Black has an extra pawn to work with. At the same time, White has a serious problem with his king currently stuck on the edge of the board. One might say that this is one of the best case scenarios – we have a material advantage, as well as positional advantage to make progress. The

only problem Black is facing right now is his inability to keep both pawns on the b-file alive. However, as you will be able to see shortly, those pawns are not as important as the bigger goal, which is to win White’s h5 pawn.

43...♔e6! The king is going on a walk of glory, trying to get to f4, but also keeping open the option of going after White’s queenside pawns.

43...♔f6? would have been a serious mistake, as now White plays 44.♞d5!, completely cutting off the black king. Then, after 44...♞g5 45.♞xg5 hxg5+

46.♔g4, the ending is equal.

44.♞b8 ♔e5 Unfortunately, going after the queenside pawns immediately by 44...♔d5? fails due to 45.♞xb6 ♔c4 46.♞c6+ ♔b3 47.♞c5!=.

45.♞b7 45.♞xb6 would lead to the position that Black is looking forward to – after 45...♔f4 46.♔h3 ♞g5

47.♔h4 ♞g1! 48.♔h3 ♞h1+ 49.♔g2 ♞xh5+.

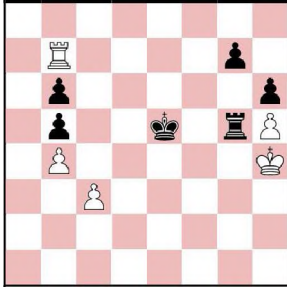
This endgame becomes much more straightforward, as Black now has two connected passed pawns, which are usually more than enough to win the game.

45...♞g1 46.♔h3 ♞g5 47.♔h4



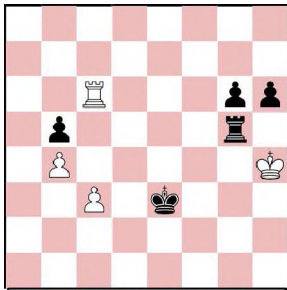
Born in 1996 in Ukraine, Illia Nyzhnyk earned his Grandmaster title in 2011 and subsequently moved to the United States. Since joining Webster University’s SPICE program in 2014, he has been instrumental in securing multiple championship wins. In addition to team successes, Illia has claimed various individual titles, such as the 2020 Spice Cup Open and four World Opens. After completing his MBA in December 2021, he has fully committed himself to further developing his chess abilities.





47...g6 Keymer's choice is definitely good enough to achieve victory, but I believe that the simple **47...f4!**? **48.f7+** (**48.fxb6** transposes after **48...g1 49.h3 f1+ 50.g2 fxh5+**) **48...e4 49.b7** (**49.d7 g6 50.hxg6 fxg6 51.d4+ e5 52.d3 d6 53.e3+ f4 54.e7 c6-**) **49...d3 50.c7 g6 51.hxg6 fxg6+** would have been a much easier way to win, as all Black has to do now is to use his rook to pick up both White's queenside pawns.

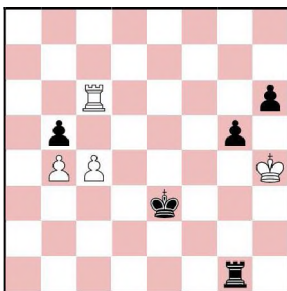
48.fxb6 fxh5+ 49.g4 e4 50.c6 g5+ 51.h4 f4 52.f6+ e3 53.c6



53...g1? A kind of "mistake" that makes most people (including myself) go "Yeah, this is why rook endgames are so difficult", as this move makes perfect sense, getting Black's pawns ready to advance.

53...h5+! was necessary, when after **54.g4 d3 55.c5 e4 56.c6 e5** was winning for Black. However, it is definitely not easy to understand that the way Black wins here is by bringing his king back to f5! **54.c4!** Now, White creates a passed pawn of his own, but that is not the only counterplay that becomes available for him!

54...g5+



▲ Vincent Keymer

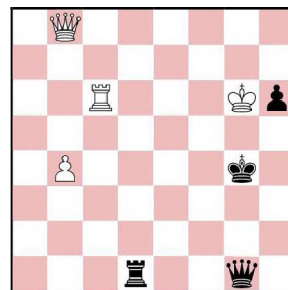
Photo: FIDE

55.fh5?? An extremely unfortunate miscalculation by White (or maybe he just did not realize how powerful his counterplay becomes!).

55.fh3! was a must, because after **55...bxc4 56.fxc4 h5** (**56...b1!? 57.g4 b2 58.c3+ f2 59.c4 b3 60.c2+ e3 61.c4=** does not do anything for Black's bigger goal of promoting the pawns.) **57.c5** Now all of a sudden there is no way for Black to keep the pawns moving, and if he tries to bring in his king to help, then White begins giving checks from the side: **57...f4 58.c4+ e5 59.c5+ d6 60.h2 g4 61.h3=.**

55...f1+ 56.fg6 g4 It appears that Black is simply faster with promoting his g-pawn.

57.cxb5 g3 58.c3+ f4 59.c4+ f3 60.c3+ g4 61.b6 d1 62.c6 g2 63.b7 g1 64.b8



64...fh4+ Good enough to win, but **64...d7!** would have been a nice find that ends the game immediately, as the white king has nowhere to run from the mating net. For example, **65.b5 f4+ 66.h5 g4+-.**

65.f7 d7+ 66.e8 g8+ 67.fxd7 bxb8 68.fh6+ g5 69.d6 bxb4 70.c6 f5 It now took Black an additional 30 moves or so to win this endgame.

Black won

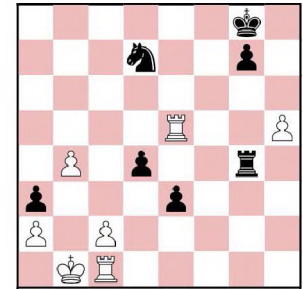
The previous example demonstrated a rather simple case of us having both material and positional advantages which works great

for the purpose of accomplishing bigger goals. However, what happens when we have a material advantage, but also some immediate problems to deal with?

Nataliya Buksa 2286

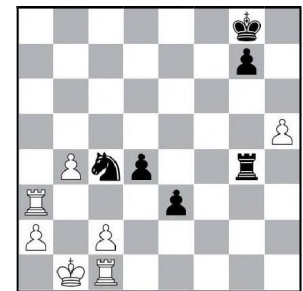
Meruert Kamalidenova 2162

World Women's Team Championship,
Bydgoszcz 2023



49.f7? White is claiming that Black's e3 pawn is here main concern and needs to be stopped by any means possible. Unfortunately, it is not the case, as White seems to have a bigger problem that she failed to recognize.

49.f5! would have been correct, helping White solve the problem of her king safety. **49...b6!** is essential for Black to make good use of her knight. (**49...e2?** is premature, and loses immediately after **50.f1 b6 51.f1 c4 52.c5**, with the white king successfully escaping dangers along the back rank.) **50.fxa3 d4** (**50...d5** The black knight would not be as good on d5 without controlling the white king's key escape routes. **51.f3 d3+ 52.f2+-**)



A) 51.d3? would have been a logical move to make, but it appears that the rook does not belong on d3 at all. **51...e2! 52.fh3** (Not **52.f1? f4 53.g3 f1 54.g1 fxg1 55.fg1 d2+ 56.f1 f1+-** when White would have actually lost the game.) **52...e3 53.fh1 d3! 54.cxd3 fxb4+ 55.f1 f4**, with annoying compensation, strong enough to give Black significant drawing chances.

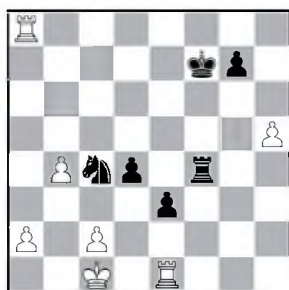
B) 51.f8+! f7

B1) While analyzing this position for the



first time, I thought that White's most effective way of winning is to ignore Black's e3 pawn from now on, and focus on her own connected passed pawns on the queenside, but I was wrong, because after 52.a4?! ♖g2!, a win for White becomes a much more difficult task after 53.♞d8 ♞d2 54.♞d7+! ♔f6 55.♞g1 ♕e5 56.♞d6+ ♕e7 57.♞a6 e2 58.♔c1! ♕f3 59.♞xg7+ ♔f8 60.♞g1+-.

B2) 52.♞e1! ♞f4 (Worse is 52...e2?! 53.♞c8 ♞f4 54.♞xc4 ♞f1 55.♔c1 ♞xe1+ 56.♔d2+-) 53.♔c1



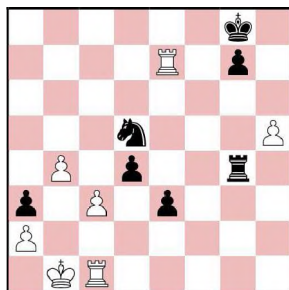
B21) 53...♕e5 54.b5 ♕f3 55.b6 ♕xe1 56.b7 e2 (56...♞f1 57.♞f8+ ♔xf8 58.b8♞+ ♔f7 59.♞c7+ ♔f6 60.♞d6+ ♔g5 61.♞g3+ ♔f6 62.♞g6+-) 57.♔d2+-.

B22) 53...♞f2 54.♞d8 ♕a3 55.♞c8+-.

49...♔b6! At this point, White has no real way of dealing with both knight jumps ...♔d5 and ...♔c4. The compensation Black obtains as a result of improving the knight is strong enough to survive.

50.c3 50.c4 ♞g2∞

50...♔d5



51.♞d7?? A blunder that could have cost White the game.

Either 51.♞e8+!? ♔f7 52.♞e5 ♕xc3+ 53.♔c2 ♞g2+ 54.♔b3 ♔f6 55.♞e8 ♔f7 56.♞e5;

Or 51.♞e5!? would have been enough for White to survive as well. 51...♕xc3+ 52.♞xc3 dxc3 53.♞xe3

A) 53...♞xb4+ 54.♔c1 ♞b2

55.h6!! gxf6 56.♞xc3 ♞xa2 57.♔b1 ♞g2 58.♞xa3=

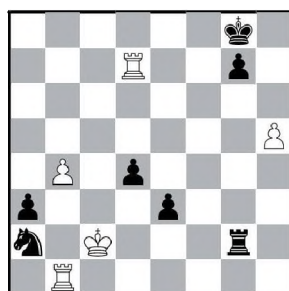
B) 53.b5 ♞b4+ 54.♔c2 ♞b2+ 55.♔xc3 e2 56.♔d3 ♞xa2 57.b6 ♞b2 58.♞xe2 ♞xb6 59.♞e8+ ♔h7 60.♞a8 ♞b3+ 61.♔e4 ♔h6



▲ Nataliya Buksa

62.♔f5=.

51...♕xc3+ 52.♔c2 ♕xa2 53.♞b1 ♕xb4+? It is not unusual for players to miss amazing opportunities based upon their previous experience during the game. In this case, Black decided to simplify the position into something they knew they cannot possibly lose. However, Black already has an overwhelming advantage due to her passed pawns, and the simple 53...♞g2+! would overwhelm White's defense and guarantee a pawn promotion.



A) 54.♔b3 ♞b2+ 55.♞xb2 axb2 56.♔xa2 (56.♔xb2 e2 57.♞e7 d3+-) 56...e2 57.♞e7 d3+-.

B) 54.♔d3 ♞d2+ 55.♔c4 ♞c2+ 56.♔d3 ♞c1 57.♞b3 (57.♞xc1 ♕xc1+ 58.♔c2 e2 59.♞e7 a2 60.♔b2 d3+-) 57...♞d1+ 58.♔c4 e2 59.♞e7 e1♞ 60.♞xe1 ♞xe1 61.♞xa3 ♞c1+ 62.♔xd4 ♕xb4+-.

54.♞xb4 d3+ 55.♞xd3 ♞xb4 56.♞xa3 As it stands, Black does not have enough to win this rook endgame.

56...♞e4 57.♔d1 ♞e5 58.♔e2 ♔h7 59.♞a6 ♞xh5 60.♔xe3 ♞f5 61.♔e4 ♞f1 62.♞a3 g5 63.♞f3 ♞g1 64.♔f5 g4 65.♞a3 g3 66.♔g4 g2 67.♔g3 ♔g6 68.♞a2 ♔f5 69.♔h2 ♞e1 70.♔xg2 ♞e4

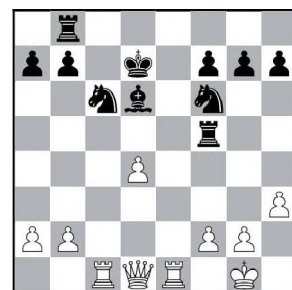
Draw

In the previous example, the extra material was meant to be used to help us solve our immediate problems that are easily identifiable – king safety, piece activity, etc.

Pentala Harikrishna	2711
Dommaraju Gukesh	2758

Tata Steel India (rapid), Kolkata 2023

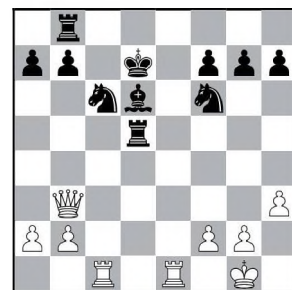
However, in the case of the following example, White's main problem is rather unique – Black's position is so solid that White simply does not have a clear target. Black's minor pieces are controlling all of the key squares that White might exploit to infiltrate Black's position, and the outpost on d5 will ensure that White's ♞b3 is ineffective.



In the game, White tried to artificially create a target in Black's position by sacrificing one of his rooks. Unfortunately, that kind of sacrifice significantly tilts the material scale in Black's favor, and White ended up losing as a result of his risky decision.

21.♞c3 In the case of 21.♞b3, White's main idea is still to target f7, but now it is actually possible to make the dreaded 21...♞d5 move, with an unclear position.

But 21.d5! was an amazing opportunity missed by both players! This positional sacrifice ensures that White additionally opens the d-file, enabling him to apply pressure on any black piece positioned on that file. 21...♞xd5 (21...♕xd5?? would lose on the spot to 22.g4 ♞g5 23.h4 ♞e5 24.♞xe5 ♕xe5 25.♞xd5+-) 22.♞b3



A) 22...♔c7 would have been a natural response, after which White would end up winning back one of the pawns. 23.♞ed1 ♞d8 (23...♞xd1+ 24.♞xd1 ♞d8 25.♞xf7+ ♞d7 26.♞b3±) 24.♞xd5 ♕xd5 25.g3 ♕e5 (25...♕f8? 26.♞d1 ♕ce7 27.♞c2+ ♕c6 28.♞xh7+-) 26.♞c5 ♕de7 27.♞xf7 ♞d7 28.b4 a6 29.b5 axb5



EXERCISES FOR SOLVING

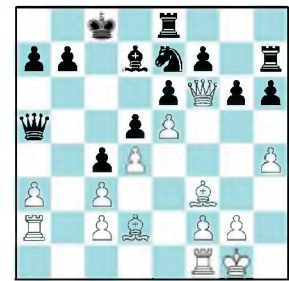
In an ideal world, we would always have extra material to help us solve bigger or immediate problems. However, oftentimes we do not really need to be up anything in order to utilize the strength of our pieces properly, even if it means having to sacrifice material.

From this point on, I challenge you to solve a few puzzles that closely relate to the topics of piece activity, king safety, and material imbalance!

Illia Nyzhnyk

Advay Bansal	2279
Nikolas Theodorou	2586

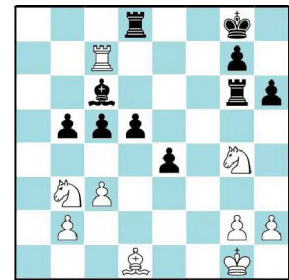
1000GM Silicon Valley Fall Super Swiss,
Sunnyvale 2023



Black to move

David Brodsky	2493
Ashton Jin	2173

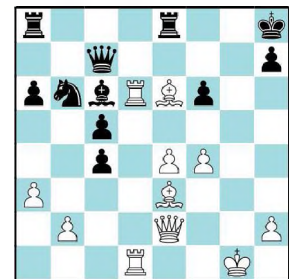
Washington International, Rockville 2023



Black to move

Dambasuren Batsuren	2519
Justin Wang	2488

Summer Chess Classic - Group B, St Louis 2023



White to move

30. $\text{Exb5}\pm$. This position is also difficult to assess, but we can safely argue that White is the one trying to win at this point, as the position is open, making the $\text{W}+\text{E}$ combo work extremely well.

B) 22... Qd4 , forcing the white queen away for a move or two, would not make much difference. 23. Wa4+ Qc6 24. Ecd1 Exd1 25. Exd1 Qe7 (25... Qc7 26. Wb3 Exd8 27. Wxf7+ Ed7 28. $\text{Wb3}\pm$) 26. Wb5! a6 27. We2+ Qd7 28. Wd3 Exd8 29. Wb3 Qc7 30. Wxf7+ Ed7 31. Wb3 , reaching an almost identical position to that in the 22... Qc7 line.

21... Ed5 21... Eb4? does not work, because of the nice 22. Ee5! Qxe5 23. dxe5++ .

22. Ef3 Exd8 23. Exf6? It was not too late to turn back and switch to defensive mode, but obviously this is not the kind of strategy White had in mind. After 23. Ec3 Eb4 24. Wb3 a5 25. Ec5 Exd4 26. $\text{Ecc1 Qc8}\mp$, Black is the one pushing, as his minor pieces would be outperforming the queen.

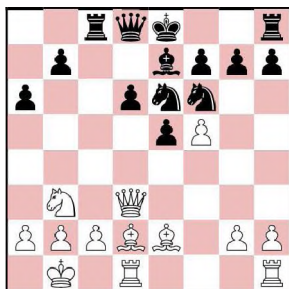
23... gxf6 24. Wf3 Qc7 25. Wxf6 Exd7 26. g3 Qxd4 27. Qg2 Qc6 28. Ee2 Qe5 etc. And it took Black 30 or so moves to finish off his opponent, in a situation where White has been trying his best to survive, but by this point the material advantage was too much to deal with. **Black won**

As you can probably see the pattern, every example we have analyzed so far involved one of the sides having some kind of material advantage. That side was able to use it either to make progress, or solve a problem.

The next example is no exception – Black is currently up a pawn, but behind in development.

Evgeniy Najer	2579
Samvel Ter-Sahakyan	2550

World Rapid Team Championship,
Dusseldorf 2023



Moreover, White has the advantage of a bishop pair, and a relatively simple and straightforward plan of going g4-h4-g5 , attacking the kingside. Since Black's king is still in the center, as well as his rook



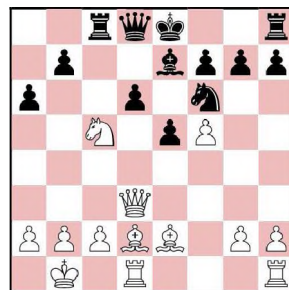
▲ Evgeniy Najer

being stuck on h8, it is safe to assume that Black would want the capability to castle at some point. However, as things stand right now, castling would likely become the black king's death sentence after White breaks through with the pawn march.

16... $\text{Qc5?!$ saw Black attempting to preserve his extra pawn, but in light of his problems, a single extra pawn is definitely not enough.

Instead, Black should have played 16... Qf4! , removing White's bishop pair advantage at the cost of an extra pawn. 17. Qxf4 exf4 18. Ehf1 0-0 19. $\text{Exf4 d5}\infty$, and White has a really difficult time trying to go for the same plan, since he no longer has his dark-squared bishop: 20. g4?! Qc7 21. $\text{Eff1 Qe4!}\mp$.

17. Qxc5



17... $\text{dxc5?!$ might have been the result of a miscalculation, but Black's position was not that great anyway.

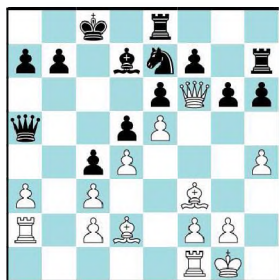
17... Exc5 would have been sturdier, but here White can comfortably go for the pawn advance, and Black does not have a good response to it. 18. g4! h6 19. h4 d5 20. g5 Qe4 21. Qe3 Ea5 22. c4 Qg3 23. Ehe1 Qxe2 24. Wxe2+- .

18. Wg3! Qe4 19. Wxg7 Qxd2+ 20. Exd2 Wxd2 21. Wxh8+ Qd7 22. Wxe5 etc. **White won** shortly after.

Clearly, Black's attempt to save material was suboptimal in the light of other, bigger problems that needed to be solved immediately. ■

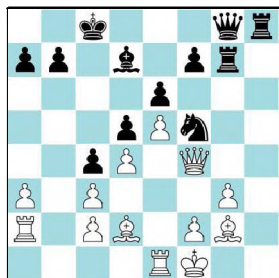


Advay Bansal
Nikolas Theodorou



19...g5! Black's position is quite solid as it is, but this move takes it to a whole new level! All of a sudden, at the small cost of a single pawn, Black will obtain a long-lasting attack against the white king.

20.hxg5 hxg5 21.♖xg5 ♟f5 21...♟d8!? would have also been good, as Black needs to bring his queen over to the kingside anyway, so he might as well do it now. 22.♖e1 ♖g8 23.♗f4 ♟g6 24.♗f6 ♗xf6 25.exf6 ♟h4 26.♖e3 ♖h6. 22.g3 ♖eh8 23.♙g2 ♖g7 24.♗f4 ♗d8 25.♖e1 ♗g8 26.♟f1 An inaccuracy. 26.a4 was best.



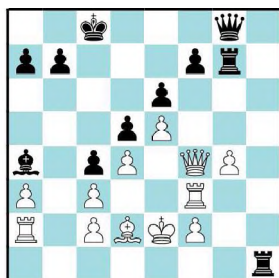
26...♙a4 Black's attack is so strong and long-lasting that even this slow-looking move does not change the fact that Black is completely winning.

There were a couple of other ways to win at once:

26...♖h2! 27.♟g1 ♖xg2+ 28.♟xg2 ♖g4 ends it right away, since 29.♗f3 runs into 29...♟h4+.

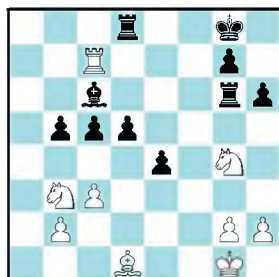
Also 26...♙g4!? 27.♗f3 ♟xg3+ 28.fxg3 ♖xg3 29.♗f2 ♖h2 30.♖e2 ♗g4 31.♙a1 ♖h3! 32.♗g1 ♖xg2 33.♖xg2 ♖h1 34.♟f2 ♗f5+ 35.♟e2 ♖xg1 36.♖axg1 ♗xc2+. 27.♙f3 27.♙e3 ♖h2 28.♙f3 ♗h7+. 27...♟h2 27...♟xg3+ also wins

easily. For example, 28.fxg3 ♖xg3 29.♖e2 ♖g1+ 30.♟f2 ♖h3 31.♖e1 ♖gg3 32.♖h1 ♖xf3+ 33.♗xf3 ♖xf3+ 34.♟xf3 ♗g6+. 28.g4 ♟h4 29.♖e3 ♟xf3 30.♖xf3 ♖h1+ 31.♟e2



31...♗h7 32.♖g3 ♙xc2 33.♙e1 ♖xe1+ White resigned

David Brodsky
Ashton Jin



This position is a good example of how first impressions can be deceptive. Initially it may seem that Black has a material advantage – (two rooks + two pawns) vs. two minor pieces, and the position is nearing the endgame, where the strength of the rooks will be amplified. However, White is threatening both ♟c5 and ♟e5, which are difficult to deal with.

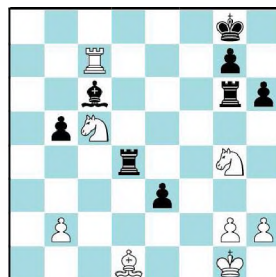
In the game, Black tried 33...d4?! which leads to a difficult position by force.

The correct way was to switch the move order, and play 33...e3! first, since now, due to invulnerability of the e3 pawn, White will have to allow it to slide over to the third rank, making the pawn promotion all the more possible.

A) The flabby 34.♟xe3?! is met by 34...d4 35.cxd4 cxd4 36.♟f5 ♖xg2+ 37.♟f1 ♙a8 38.♟bxd4 ♙e4+ and White needs to start fighting for a draw.

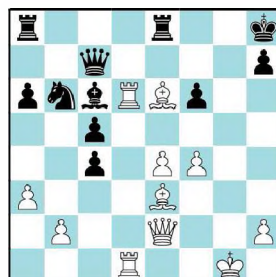
B) 34.♟e5 d4! is where the pawns begin to shine. Well, sort of, since it is only enough to draw: 35.♟xg6 dxc3 36.♟e7+ ♟f8 37.♟g6+ ♟g8 38.♖c8 ♖xc8 39.♟e7+ ♟f8 40.♟xc8 e2! 41.♟xe2 cxb2 42.♟d3 c4 43.♟b1 cxb3 44.♟d6 ♟e7=, and Black should survive.

C) 34.♟xc5 would likely be my first choice. Luckily for him, Black manages to escape after 34...♖e8 35.♟d3 (35.♙e2 h5) 35...e2 36.♟xe2 ♖xe2 37.♟f4 ♖e1+ 38.♟f2 ♖xg4 39.♟xe1 d4 40.g3 dxc3 41.bxc3 ♙e8=. 34.cxd4 e3 35.♟xc5 ♖xd4



36.♙b3+? Letting the win slip away. Correct was 36.♖c8+! ♟h7 37.♙c2 ♖dxg4 38.g3 ♖c4 (38...♙d5 39.♟d7+) 39.♙xg6+ ♟xg6 40.♖xc6+ ♟h5 41.♟f1 ♟g4 42.♟e2 ♟h3 43.♟xe3 ♟xh2 44.g4 ♟h3 45.b3 ♖xg4 46.♟e4+-. 36...♙d5! 37.♙xd5+ ♖xd5 38.♟xe3 ♖d2 39.b4 ♖e2 Black's rooks are way too active for White's knights to handle. 40.♖e7 ♖xg2+ 41.♟xg2 ♖xe7 42.♟f2 g5 43.♟f3 ♖a7 44.♟e3 ♟f7 45.h3 ♟g6 46.♟c2 ♖a2 47.♟d4 ♖a3+ 48.♟g2 ♖a2+ 49.♟f3 ♖a3+ 50.♟g2 ♖a2+ Draw

Dambasuren Batsuren
Justin Wang



Sometimes we get our minds fogged by a seemingly easy way

to gain extra material, which also looks like a quick way to bring us closer to completion of a bigger goal. In the game White continued 28.♙xc5? winning a pawn and intending to attack the black king with ♟d4. However, this allowed a unique opportunity that was missed by Black.

28.♙f2! was the way to go, with the similar idea of attacking f6, but without exposing more pieces to the opponent's potential counterattack. 28...♙a4 (28...♟c8 no longer works because of 29.♖xc6! ♗xc6 30.♙d5+) 29.♙1d2 ♟c8 30.♙xc8 ♖exc8 31.♙h4 ♖g8+ 32.♟f2 ♖af8 33.♖xf6 ♗g7 34.♖xf8 ♖xf8 35.f5+.

28...♙d5? Looks nice and "confusing", but in reality does nothing more than bringing the game into a lost endgame.

28...♟c8! was a must, as now way too many of White's pieces are being attacked/pinned. All of a sudden, it turns out that White underestimated the change in dynamics/piece activity, as may often happen with tricky retreating moves. After 29.f5 ♟xd6 30.♙xd6 ♗a7+ 31.♗f2 ♙xe4 32.♗xa7 ♖xa7 33.♟f2+, White is the one trying to save himself.

29.♙d4 ♖xe6 30.♖xe6 ♗g7+ 31.♗g2 ♙xe6 32.♗xg7+ ♟xg7 33.♙xb6 ♙g4 34.♙d2 ♖b8 35.♙d4 ♟f7 36.♙c3 White eventually managed to win this endgame.



36...♖e8 37.♖d4 ♙f3 38.e5 fxe5 39.fxe5 ♙e2 40.♖f4+ ♟e7 41.♖f6 ♙d3 42.♖xa6 ♖g8+ 43.♟f2 ♖g5 44.♙b4+ ♟d8 45.e6 ♖f5+ 46.♟g3 ♖g5+ 47.♟h4 ♖e5 48.e7+ ♟d7 49.♙d6+ ♟c7 50.♖d8 ♖e4+ 51.♟g3 ♖e3+ 52.♟f2 ♖e2+ 53.♟f3 Black resigned

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■ By Nicole B. Harris

Photo Credit: John Brezina



▲ Vice President, Juan Carlos Brenes Salgado

The parking lot is packed. I drive to the end of the lot around the corner to grab one of the last spots. I'm not late, I'm right on time, in fact. There is a lively line down the sidewalk of people chatting and waiting to check-in. There are no red ropes. No one is clad in black from head to toe and this is not a club in the house-music sense. It's another regular Tuesday night in Denver, and the Denver Chess Club (DCC), it seems, is the place to be.



▲ President and Life Master, Brian Wall

What makes a chess club great? It's not a new question, and certainly with the resurgence of popularity of one of the world's oldest gaming traditions (thank you Netflix and *The Queen's Gambit*), it's a question that is googled with far more regularity these days.

To be clear, I am not a grandmaster, National Master, or even a rated player of any kind. I raise two teenagers; I am hardly master of my own house most days. And, while I would not embarrass myself in a casual game (I know where the pieces go), my perspective and involvement with the

DCC is that of a chess mom. That translates to hundreds of hours of watching active chess play in weekly and seasonal tournaments, as well as observing the workings of the club up close, both socially and logistically.

The conclusion from my own anecdotal study: *by any number of measures, the Denver Chess Club is world class and setting the bar high for anyone who's paying attention.*

The question of what makes a club great could have many answers. Sure, we could look at the stats. Founded in 1859 by William Byers, the DCC is Colorado's oldest and longest running club with 153 active members, 587 total members, and more than 2000 online accounts. It hosts two rated games weekly having added Thursday nights at the Denver Metro Bridge Studio, as well as four larger tournaments per year with the recent addition of the Spring Classic. The latest Tribute to MLK Tournament held in January 2023 drew players from all over the country including grandmasters and the Texas Tech Chess team. With ingenuity, that tournament was held at the Aurora Public Library. Librarian and DCC member, Cori Iannaggi and the DCC are partnering to reimagine missions for the city's long beloved library spaces. The club is managed with efficiency, the software works well, and the people running the show are trusted and on their game (pun intended).

Those are the measures we can see. And, while they are significant and integral to a well-run organization, I would assert that they are not what makes the DCC world class. As the person sitting in the chair against the wall watching, I see standards that are not easily quantifiable, but possibly the most important.

How do you quantify hope? How do you palpate possibility? Because this is what I see from the sidelines week after week. Anyone who walks through the door of this club is given the warmest welcome and unwittingly has tapped into one of the most supportive organizations I've encountered. When I asked some of our Board members to popcorn what the club represents, there was a chorus of *community, resilience, generosity, a salve for spirit, a welcoming space*, and the elixir of, "a shared understanding of a beautiful idea on the chessboard," as current Web Master Christofer Peterson eloquently offered. Secretary, Madeleine Finch noted her gratitude as a female player for feeling at home and a genuine sense of belonging.

Observing a weekly tournament, you will not miss the inclusivity that is the hallmark of the DCC. It is among the most variegated cross-section of humans I have witnessed in



▲ Turpana Molina and Former President NM Richard Shtivelband



▲ NM Griffin McConnell



▲ NM Sullivan McConnell and Jason McEwen

activity in a single room. I have unofficially nicknamed it, "The Peoples' Chess Club." The monthly dues will run you roughly the price of a single Venti, drip coffee at your local Starbucks. If you have a pulse and a USCF chess card in good standing, you are welcome to play here. The evidence is right there in front of you.

National Masters, hardly resting on the laurels of their rating floors, putting it on the line weekly because they love this club and the game. New players who have never used the notation? Please come – you are welcome – someone will show you. Members supporting one another – always collaborative, a helping hand, a missing pen, extra clock, game analysis, impromptu tutoring in hushed voices.

It is not uncommon for players entering the club for the first time to spot President and Life Master, Brian Wall (see ACM #2, pp.110-113, Chess In Colorado), a name synonymous with Denver chess, holding court at the whiteboard; imparting wisdom with a smile and sense of humor. Former

President and National Master, Richard Shtivelband, Member-at-Large, Phil Brown, and Madeleine Finch are likely checking you in with enthusiasm and kind inquiries about your day. Vice President, Juan Carlos Brenes Salgado, always with a friendly smile, a handshake or a fist-bump, keeps a comforting watch over the room. Aforementioned Web Master, Christofer Peterson? He's a self-taught coder who built the DCC website from flint and stone. Member-at-Large Turpana Molina is ubiquitous at the boards as well as the Board meetings. Newly minted treasurer, Luis Jimenez has brought the club into the 21st century with the advent of Zelle and Venmo payouts, and JC MacNeil, the club's current manager, is probably running around penning the newsletter, like he's done for years. As near as I can tell, his "to-do list" is anything that is needed in the moment. It is a serious and passionate group that strikes the all-important balance between commitment to the mission and joy. There is a grass-roots energy to the fabric of this organization, a tangible camaraderie.

Shift your gaze any direction and you will find inspiration to evolve and overcome. The McConnell brothers – Sullivan and Griffin – some of our youngest National Masters have surmounted great odds as a family with grace, good humor, and hard work. Despite no less than four brain surgeries to address Grand mal seizures, Griffin achieved his National Master status at 17 years of age. His optimism is a lighthouse across the room, shored up by the club rooting for him every step of the way. *Hope*.

Former member Joe Ford secured the club's current location to ensure that he,

Nicole B. Harris is a freelance writer residing in Denver. Her essay, *Fizzy Death, Brilliant Life* was selected for the national Listen To Your Mother Storytelling Series. She is also a chess mom, living at her beloved 97-year-old home 'Hijinks Farms,' where she raises two teenagers, two cats, six chickens, and 'an appropriate amount of trouble,' as she put it.



with cerebral palsy, or anyone else who may wish to play who has mobility challenges, would be able to do so. There is an elevator down to the basement. *More hope*.

That software that works so well? That was homegrown too, compliments of Dean Clow, CaissaChess was birthed because Dean saw challenges with the existing system and believed he could create something that improved upon the status quo. *Possibility*.

We are a hodge-podge of army veterans, doctors, a violinist, a professor and poet, a carpenter, actuaries, IT folk, teachers, students, a Twitch streamer, moms and dads, sons and daughters, entrepreneurs, engineers, coders, retirees and those in between. You are welcome here. Graduates of esteemed universities and scholars of the University of Life. You are welcome here. Players with the keen wisdom only advanced years can offer play alongside those who are clearly up past their bedtimes. You. Are. Welcome. Here.

The facilities are not fancy. I don't think anyone would describe them as *state of the art*, but they feel like home. Tuesday night games are held in a church basement under the utilitarian glow of fluorescent lights. No one seems to notice. Their focus is on checkered boards and the well-being of their fellow club members. Fittingly, the church that Joe Ford secured all those years ago is named the "Hope Fellowship." It's perfect, really. In a world that can seem all too divisive and often upside down, when nothing else seems to make sense, this community does.

They say there are more possibilities on a chess board than there are atoms in the universe. I haven't verified this fact, but I see it reflected in the faces of the DCC players every week. It is the purveyance of possibility and hope for all who enter that has catalyzed this club from eight players at an IHOP to its renaissance and the beacon of kinship it is today, by and for the people, and there is no metric or analytic needed for that.



▼ JC MacNeil and Henry Kovacs

Paul Morphy's Christmas Present

■ By Louis Paulsen

(Editor's Note: Once again the indefatigable researchers at Old South Wales have uncovered a long lost manuscript. As the author is well-known to the chess public we will omit any further introduction.)

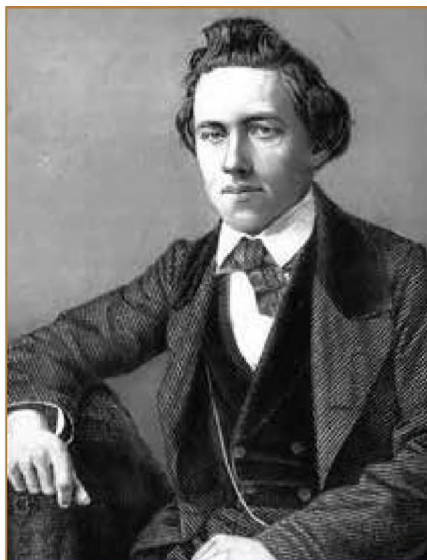
Breslau, 1890.



I knew Paul Morphy better than any man, and certainly better than any chessplayer. It is the common gossip that he became hateful of chess after his return to New Orleans. In the world of the South after the War Between the States social matters suffered great upheaval and great disjointment of the social classes. Paul suffered along with his entire world. I knew little of Paul and his world in New Orleans, yet I know from long experience that the truth of a man can be found in his play over the board. As I played Paul perhaps more on his level than any man (and that at a remote distance, when one bears in mind his fantastic ability), I may justly claim to have known him better than any man.

My days are drawing to a close, as the weight of years presses down on me. I think it is my duty to record, before I am silenced forever, to share with the chess world, the truth about Paul Morphy's last days.

In the days of Christmas, 1883, I travelled to New Orleans to visit Paul. I heard that Morphy received Steinitz for an interview early that year. I tried to speak to Steinitz about it, but he refused my inquiries. I took it upon myself to presume on our former friendship to visit Paul unannounced. As I strolled through his neighborhood, following directions from cheerfully inebriated passersby, carolers serenaded me with a wide collection of good old English carols. Dusk began to embrace me – Christmas Eve in New Orleans. I had it on good authority from a local journalist that Paul and his family would be at home that evening, and that they would receive callers after eight p.m. They rarely received callers, as the



▲ Paul Morphy

majority of New Orleans' genteel population made gentle excuses for not calling on the Morphys. A few of the legal friends of Paul's father would stop by; I counted on them to give me a short time alone with Paul.

I stepped to the front door and rapped with the knocker. An elderly Negro man opened the door with the dignity of decades of practice.

"May I ask your business, suh?" he intoned. "You may present a card if you prefer."

I placed my card on the silver salver he proffered. He looked at the card, read my name, and gave a sly smile. "Right this way suh," he added, bowing me into the foyer. In an undertone he threw in, "I'm sure Marse Paul will be glad to see you, suh." He continued, "I've seen him going over chess games in the papers. We don't get many of your games, what them being played in Germany and all. Mostly we get games from London." He looked about conspiratorially to make sure we were not

overheard. "No one else in the hous' knows that I get Marse Paul the chess papers, Missus Morphy sez it's bad for his brain." Then he winked as he took my coat and hat. "My name is Peter. I been with the Morphy family fifty years almos' to the day. Paul and I was chillun here in this same house. I be sure Marse Paul will see you tonight, suh. I mus' warn you, though, that Marse Paul don't speak much to anyone. He barely says ten words to me in ten days. I know he'll want to see you in private, so I'll do my best to keep the ladies and gents occupied. Missus Morphy has some friends of Old Marse Morphy in the music room. I'll keep the egg nog good and noggy, iff'n you know what I mean." He winked a second time as he went in to announce me.

I waited in the foyer while the butler went inside. He returned in a moment and ushered me down to the music room. There was Morphy's sister and mother, along with a few elderly gentlemen. A piano tinkled out some bright notes of cheerful sound, bringing out the merriment of the Christmas season. A Yule log burned brightly in the fireplace. Paul sat in the rear of the room, half-shadowed by a curtain. His sister and mother came forward to greet me.

"My pleasure, Mr. Paulsen, so good of you to come," began Mrs. Morphy. "Your name is vaguely familiar to me, but I cannot place it. Were you a friend of my husband?"

"No ma'am. I am an old acquaintance of your son, Paul. We met..." At this moment I spotted Peter, standing behind Mrs. Morphy, giving me a wide-eyed head shake. Grasping at once the changed circumstance I altered variations. "...when your son visited Europe, during his last trip. We spent several happy hours at the Paris Opera."





In the back I saw Paul smile slightly.
“Well, Paul must come up to see you!
Paul, Mr. Paulsen is here!”

Paul shyly rose and crossed the room. Without extending his hand he bowed silently. I glanced out of the corner of my eye to spot Peter bowing slightly while giving me a hand signal to keep quiet. I imitated Paul and bowed slightly while not saying a word. Then I espied Peter reaching into his vest, bringing forth a small silver flask which he promptly emptied into the egg nog. A nod of the head in my direction assured me of the potency of that most popular Christmas beverage.

Mrs. Morphy then briskly introduced me around to the other guests, and I regret that I cannot recall the names of those worthy gentlemen. I can only remember that several were senior members of the Louisiana bar, one a professor of ancient Greek, while another was a physician who favored phrenology and disliked Pasteur's theory of germs. As the evening proceeded, more carols were sung, with the company joined by Paul's sister on the piano. Several times the egg nog bowl went about, from which I abstained as courteously as I could. After the second pass of the bowl, Paul silently offered me a cup of Christmas punch. I espied a twinkle in his eyes, and even before I tasted the punch I could discern from the scent that it lacked alcohol. A smile from Paul convinced me that I was the third party of a plot hatched by Paul and Peter. After that I indulged in the punch while shunning the egg nog. Gratefully I could see that the egg nog had the desired effect, increasing the jollity of the mostly elderly company. Paul widened his eyes and made a bit of nod; then Peter entered and announced that the cherry jubilee awaited lighting. As the revelers filed out, lead by Mrs. Morphy, I took the last place in line. On reaching the door old Peter placed his hand on my forearm. With his finger pressed quickly to his lips he waved me to a more distant door.

“In here, Marse Louis,” he whispered. “Do keep your voice down. As long as Mrs. Morphy is busy with the cherry jubilee she won't notice that you and Marse Paul are absent. You get 'bout an hour to go over some games. By then you and Marse Paul will need to come in an' join the cherry jubilee, before the last of it is gone. Ifn you don't there will be hell to pay, oh yes, hell to pay.”

He let me enter the sanctum sanctorum and shut the door. In a trice Paul opened the door, and then, glancing about, closed it quickly behind him. He drew up a table and then, from a secret recess behind a bookshelf, he brought forth a set of chess men and a board. As we set up the pieces I saw a look of barely suppressed glee on his face, a look that came not from liquor or the season's general joy.

I found myself at a loss as to procedure. I began to ask Paul if he would prefer the White or Black men, when he motioned to me to be silent. Then he cheerfully thumped



▲ Louis Paulsen

my chest with his forefinger a few times, then waved his hands over the board. He wanted me to show him my games!

I began my showing one of our games from the old days, when Paul rolled his eyes at heaven, with the palms of his hands facing me. No old hat games, he seemed to be saying. So I quickly reset the pieces and unveiled one of my games with Baron Kolisch, from our match in 1861.

KING'S GAMBIT

Ignaz Kolisch – Louis Paulsen

London 1861

1.e4 e5 2.f4 exf4 3.♖f3 g5 4.♗c4 g4 5.0-0 gxf3 6.♗xf3 ♗f6 7.e5 ♗xe5 8.d3 ♗h6 9.♗d2 ♗e7 10.♗c3 ♗bc6 11.♗ae1 ♗f5 12.♗d5 ♗d8 13.♗c3 ♗g8 14.♗f6 ♗g5 15.♗xe7 ♗xf6 16.♗e4 ♗g5 17.g4 ♗g6 18.h4 ♗xh4 19.♗xf4 d6 20.♗xf7 ♗xf7 21.♗xf7 ♗e5 22.♗xh7 ♗xc4 23.♗xc4 c6 24.♗c7 ♗b8 25.♗f4 ♗e7 26.♗ff7 ♗xc7 27.♗xe7+ ♗b6 28.♗hg7 ♗xg7 29.♗xg7 ♗e6 30.♗g6 ♗xa2 31.♗xd6 ♗g8 32.♗f2 ♗xg4 33.♗e2 ♗g2+ 34.♗d1 ♗b1 35.c3 ♗xb2

White resigned

Paul studied the game with the eyes of a gourmet in a kitchen, or an artist in the studio of a fellow practitioner. At the game's end he eagerly reset the men, as though this rare chance to play with a fellow master came too rarely to waste even a minute. Quickly I showed him another game, one not likely to have crossed his desk in the columns of the day.

VIENNA GAME

Louis Paulsen – Henry Edward Bird

Vienna 1873

1.e4 e5 2.♗c3 ♗c5 3.♗f3 d6 4.♗a4 ♗g4 5.♗xc5 dxc5 6.♗e2 ♗d6 7.h3 ♗xf3 8.♗xf3 ♗c6 9.g3 ♗ge7 10.d3 0-0-0 11.♗e3 ♗d4 12.♗g2 h5 13.♗d2 ♗a6 14.0-0 h4 15.g4 ♗g6 16.f4 exf4 17.♗xf4 ♗xf4 18.♗xf4 f6 19.♗f2 ♗e6 20.♗c3 ♗he8 21.b4 c4 22.dxc4 ♗d4 23.c5 ♗ed8 24.a4 ♗g5 25.e5 fxe5 26.♗e3 ♗h6 27.♗xe5 ♗xb4 28.c3 ♗b3 29.♗af1 ♗g6 30.♗f5 ♗e6



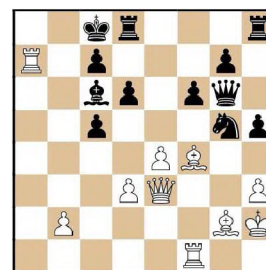
31.♗f6 gxf6 32.♗xe6+ ♗b8 33.♗xb3 ♗d3 34.♗xb7 **mate.**

Paul clapped his hands with delight. As though animated with one mind and one will we arranged the men and I again gave him a morsel from my collection of games.

Louis Paulsen – Samuel Rosenthal

Vienna 1873

1.e4 e5 2.♗c3 ♗c6 3.g3 ♗c5 4.♗g2 d6 5.d3 ♗f6 6.♗ge2 ♗g4 7.h3 ♗d7 8.♗a4 ♗b6 9.♗xb6 axb6 10.f4 exf4 11.♗xf4 ♗e7 12.c4 ♗e5 13.0-0 0-0-0 14.♗e2 ♗d4 15.♗f4 ♗xe2+ 16.♗xe2 ♗h5 17.g4 ♗g6 18.a4 h5 19.g5 ♗h7 20.♗e3 f6 21.a5 ♗xg5 22.♗h2 bxa5 23.♗xa5 b6 24.♗a7 ♗c6 25.c5 bxc5



26.♗xc5 ♗e8 27.♗a5 ♗e6 28.♗c1 g5 29.♗a6+ ♗d7 30.♗xc6 gxf4 31.♗xd6+ **Black resigned**

After this Paul drew out a daguerrotype of Adolf Anderssen, the great master who added such luster to Morphy's fame. I gladly obliged my old friend, who obviously wanted a choice of my games with Herr Anderssen.

Louis Paulsen – Adolf Anderssen

Vienna 1873

1.e4 e5 2.♗c3 ♗c6 3.g3 ♗c5 4.♗g2 a6 5.♗ge2 d6 6.♗d5 ♗f6 7.d3 ♗xd5 8.exd5 ♗e7 9.0-0 ♗f5 10.♗h1 0-0 11.c3 ♗d7 12.f4 f6 13.♗g1 ♗e8 14.♗h3 ♗g6 15.♗f2 ♗ae8 16.♗e4 ♗e3 17.♗xe3 ♗xe3 18.♗f3 exf4 19.gxf4 ♗b6 20.f5 ♗h6 21.d4 ♗e7 22.♗g3 ♗h5 23.♗ae1 ♗ef7 24.♗h3 ♗h8 25.♗f4 ♗e7 26.♗g4 ♗f7 27.♗h3 ♗xd5 28.♗g2 ♗c6 29.♗f3 ♗f7 30.♗h4 ♗fe8 31.♗f1 h6 32.h3 ♗xe4 33.♗xe4 c6 34.♗g1 ♗c7 35.b3 ♗f8 36.♗g4 d5 37.♗f3 ♗e1 38.♗f2 ♗xg1+ 39.♗xg1 ♗d6 40.♗g2 ♗e7 41.♗d1 ♗g8 42.♗f3 ♗f8 43.c4 dxc4 44.d5 cxb3 45.dxc6 bxa2 46.cxb7 ♗a3 47.♗a1 ♗c3 48.♗f1 ♗b2 49.♗g2 ♗e2 50.♗c1 ♗xc1+ 51.♗xc1 ♗b2 52.♗e4 ♗b4 53.♗d3 ♗e5



54.♘g2 a1 ♖55.♖xa1 ♙xa1 56.♙xa6 ♙e5

White resigned

At this Paul shot me a sidelong glance, then poked my chest gleefully. He wanted me to show my victories with Herr Anderssen, not my losses. So I produced a sample from the Baden-Baden tournament.

Louis Paulsen – Adolf Anderssen

Baden–Baden 1870

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♙c5 4.♘xe5 ♙xf2+ 5.♙xf2 ♘xe5 6.d4 ♖f6+ 7.♙g1 ♘g4 8.♖d2 ♘e7 9.h3 ♘h6 10.♖f2 ♖g6 11.♘b5 0-0 12.♘xc7 ♖b8 13.♘b5 f5 14.e5 d5 15.exd6 ♘d5 16.♙c4 ♙e6



17.♘c7 ♘xc7 18.dxc7 ♖bc8 19.♙xe6+ ♖xe6 20.♙f4 ♘f7 21.♙h2 ♖b6 22.♖he1 g5 23.♙e5 ♘xe5 24.♖xe5 ♖xc7 25.c3 g4 26.hxg4 fxg4 27.♖h4 ♙h8 28.♙g1 ♖b6 29.♖ae1 ♖xb2 30.♖e7 ♖c2 31.♖1e4 ♖c1+ 32.♙h2 h6 33.♖e3 ♖c6 34.♖xg4 ♖g8 35.♖e8

Black resigned

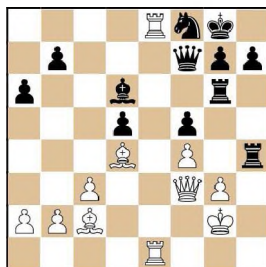
After the game I quietly related to Paul a first-hand account of the arrest of Joseph Henry Blackburne, the British master. War broke out between France and Prussia during the tournament, and the Prussian secret service detained Mr. Blackburne as a spy! Paul could scarcely stifle his mirth. A chess player as a spy! We then played over another game with Anderssen.

Louis Paulsen – Adolf Anderssen

Leipzig 1877

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♙c5 4.♘xe5 ♘xe5 5.d4 ♙d6 6.dxe5 ♙xe5 7.♘d5 c6 8.♘e3 ♘f6

9.♙c4 0-0 10.♖d3 ♖e8 11.♖b3 d5 12.exd5 cxd5 13.♙b5 ♖e6 14.0-0 ♖b6 15.♖d3 a6 16.♙a4 ♖b4 17.♙b3 ♖d4 18.♖c2 ♖e4 19.f3 ♖h4 20.g3 ♖h5 21.c3 ♘d6 22.♘g2 ♙h3 23.♙e3 ♖c7 24.♖f2 ♖e8 25.♖fe1 ♙xg2 26.♙xg2 ♖e6 27.♙d4 ♘d7 28.f4 ♖eh6 29.♖e8+ ♘f8 30.h4 ♖g6 31.♙c2 f5 32.♖f3 ♖f7 33.♖ae1 ♖xh4



34.♙b3 ♙xf4 35.♖xd5 ♖xg3+ 36.♙f1 ♙h8 37.♖xf7 ♖h1+ 38.♙e2 ♖h2+ 39.♙f2

Black resigned

At this came a soft tap at the door, which then swung open to reveal the greying head of old Peter. “Marse Paul,” he rasped, “your mother is noticing your absence. Best get back to the guests.” Paul nodded and whisked his men back into their box and secreted them in their hidden niche. We rose from the board, and Paul shook my hand heartily. We returned to the guests for the last of the cherry jubilee.

The guests departed one by one, leaving at last only myself, Paul, his mother and sister, and old Peter. Mrs. Morphy gracefully drew our evening to a close, and Peter escorted me to the front door. He helped me into my winter array, as it was the coldest winter in a century in New Orleans.

“Peter,” I began in a low tone, “does Paul ever speak? I am concerned with him.”

“Don’t fret none about Marse Paul,” replied Peter, buttoning up my coat. “When he feels like talkin’ he’s able and ready. Put no stock in them wild rumors about him starin’ at young ladies and dance-in’ round no shoes. Them’s all lies. He’s sound as a silver dollar, suh. Do come by again.”

He let me out into the darkness and I looked

back at the darkened house. “Merry Christmas, Paul,” I said out loud, unsure that any soul would hear me. I turned away and quietly, mournfully, thoughtfully, made my way down the pavement. At the corner where I would turn to the heart of the city and the comfort and refuge of my hotel, I heard, through the clear night air, the best Christmas present I would receive that year. It was a voice well-known to me, a voice that I would, alas, never hear again.

“Merry Christmas, Louis. And a Happy New Year.”

Written by Ed Yetman, in the voice of historical figure Louis Paulsen.

(This story first appeared in Yetman Brothers’ Descriptive Chess Magazine. It is reprinted here by permission of the Yetman Brothers.

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Ed Yetman is an immodest man with much to be modest about. A correspondence chess master who scorns the use of computers, he has played in the Canadian Closed Correspondence Chess Championships about a dozen times; he was co-winner of the over-the board U.S. Amateur West Championship in 2002 and 2007. You can follow his writing on chess subjects at his blog,

<https://edyetmaniii.substack.com/>

Or you may email him at

substackchesscolumn@hotmail.com

We hope our readers enjoyed this little work of fiction. Depending on your knowledge of chess history, it might have taken some longer than others that it was indeed fiction. Our author included some “tells” and/or “Easter Eggs” in the text itself. ACM is offering a book prize (on Morphy!) to the reader who can list the most of these from the text. A tie-break will be the reader who puts better explanations. Send your entries to ptamburro@aol.com

Brigitte Bardot needs a chess board, a set of chess men

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By GM Sarunas Sulskis

SHANKLAND'S CHIVALRY MATCHES THE UNPARALLELED SKILLS OF THE U.S. CHAMPION

I take my chance to congratulate Fabiano Caruana on his well deserved title of the 2023 U.S. Champion! I hope the game below, although not won by Fabiano, will serve as a good testimony to his skills of play that no one else could really match in Saint Louis, despite their experience, high ranking or palpable aspirations.

Leading the field after seven rounds, Caruana nevertheless feels Hans Niemann breathing down his neck, only a half point behind. Other usual suspects, such as Wesley So and Leinier Dominguez, are not far away either. Therefore, Caruana arrives for his Round 8 game against Shankland with an unwavering determination to win.

For some time the game itself follows the course of a deceptively quiet Giuoco Piano. As usual, Shankland is adequately prepared for the opening stage. On move 14 he goes for the central break ...d6-d5, intent on obtaining full equalization. Henceforth, Caruana launches a wonderful series of seven consecutive moves beyond the comprehension not only of yours truly, but I believe of other U.S. Championship participants too, poor Shankland included.

Seeing these hitherto unseen and detrimental things and feeling being thoroughly outplayed, Shankland makes his last stand with a chivalrous queen sacrifice to take Fabiano away from his normal course. And his courageous decision suddenly works!

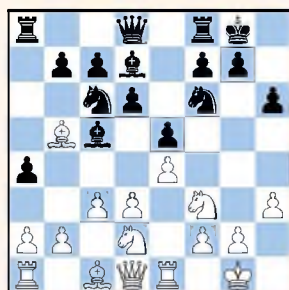
Significant material odds are on Caruana's side, but Shankland invades White's camp deep into the first rank, hinting to his opponent the misery of White's corner rook stuck on a1. Fabiano's solution? No problem, he turns the awful rook from white to black and keeps harassing the black king. Material odds now have switched to Black's favor and, with careful defense, Shankland steers the game to ultimate salvation.

C54

Fabiano Caruana	2786
Sam Shankland	2698

U.S. Championship, Saint Louis 2023

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.0-0 ♘f6 5.d3 0-0 6.h3 d6 7.c3 a5 8.♗e1 h6 9.♘bd2 a4 An ambitious edge-pawn's run into White's territory has many bonuses – the b3 square is denied to at least two of White's pieces, a2-a4 is stopped for good and Black's knight and rook both have in prospect exploitation of the a5 square. Black, however, needs to have something up his sleeve to meet Caruana's next move. 10.♗b5 ♗d7 Shankland's solution is home preparation. However, the credit of this tactical idea should be given to other people, namely Armenian players. 10...a3 is a poor solution to the problem of the a-pawn. After 11.b4 ♗b6 12.♘c4 that pawn will not stay on the board for long.



11.♘f1 Typical Caruana. He values initiative above material gain. On 11.♗xa4, to justify his strategy Black needs to add more fuel in the tank. 11...♗xa4 12.♗xa4 ♘b4 13.♗d1 ♘xd3 14.♗f1 and Black is an exchange down, but this is well-compensated by his bishop pair and the active knight on d3. Another participant in the 2023 U.S. Championship, Ray Robson, actually managed to engage more pieces by 14...♗a7 15.♗c2 ♘xc1 16.♗axc1 ♘h5 17.♘c4 f5 and win a nice game in some 10 moves from this point. S.Bilguun 2479 - R.Robson 2670, Ulaanbaatar 2018.

11...♘e7 12.♗xd7 ♗xd7 13.♘g3 ♗b6

Sam Shankland vs. Fabiano Caruana



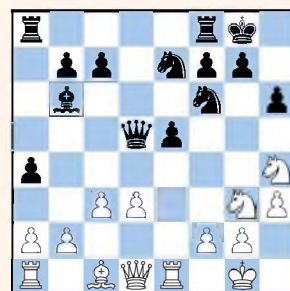
The position looks pretty cool for Black. His a4 pawn is doing a good job and there are no visible weaknesses in Black's camp. With his next move, however, Caruana starts probing Shankland's kingside.

14.♘h4 d5?! The center break looks like a well-timed response to White's flank surveillance. From this point onwards, however, Caruana begins to display discernment, worth both 2800 ELO and the U.S. Champion title, in highlighting some soft spots in Black's camp, which neither Shankland nor other mere mortals would suspect even existed.

14...♘h7 was a decent alternative, keeping e5 safe for the time being. 15.♗f3 (On 15.♘h5 ♘xf5 16.♘xf5 d5 makes Caruana's capture on d5 impossible. 17.exd5?? ♗xf5) 15...♘fg8.

15.exd5! This must have come as quite a not as surprise to Shankland, since it seems as though White now relinquishes control of f5. Caruana, however, wants to include his rook in the game! I bet Shankland expected 15.♗f3 dxe4 16.dxe4 ♗e6 17.♘h5 ♘xf5 18.♘xf5 ♘h7 when he would have no problems whatsoever.

15...♗xd5



16.d4! Hitting two birds with a single stone: attacking e5 and simultaneously shutting in the bishop on b6.

16...♘c6 16...e4 would endanger the stray pawn after 17.♗e2 ♗fe8 (17...g5 18.♘xe4 ♘xe4 19.♗xe4 ♗xe4 20.♗xe4+-) 18.♘xe4±, when Black cannot exploit any pin on the e-file.

17.♘h5! Again departing from the knight's expected journey towards f5. White's queen now rapidly retrieves her barred passage to the kingside via the g4 and h5 squares.

17...♗d8 On 17...♘h5 18.♗xh5, White's queen is already closing in on the black king, while Shankland is still unable to

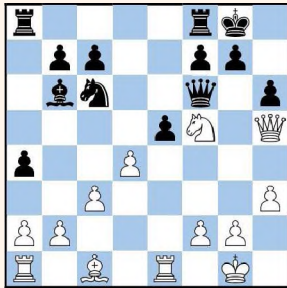


shake off the shackles from his bishop on b6.

18.♟f5 And all of a sudden Shankland needs to deal with the whole might of the attacking brigade of four. There's a fifth one on e1, ready to quickly join the fray, too.

18...♞xh5 18...exd4 19.♞hxg7 dxc3 20.♟f3, forebodes a slaughter.

19.♟xh5 ♟f6 On 19...exd4 20.♞xg7! is a bone crusher. (20.♞xh6 is actually softer. 20...g6 21.♟f3 ♟e8) 20...♞xg7 21.♞xh6+-.



20.♟e4! Caruana gives his opponent no respite. There were at least two ways to win a pawn. For example, 20.d5 ♞e7 21.♞xe7+ ♟xe7 22.♟xe5.

Or the straightforward 20.dxe5, whereupon Shankland had obviously banked on the smart 20...♟g6! and with an opening of the f-file in prospect, Black is fighting back (20...♞xe5? is tactically flawed because of 21.♟xe5! ♟xe5 22.♞xh6+ gxh6 23.♟xe5+-).

20...♟g6 The whole confrontation of these two smart players now consists of whether Black can get his bishop released by 20...exd4 and subsequently take over the initiative, or keep postponing this break until it's too late.



A) At first I thought that Black is severely punished by 21.♞xh6+ gxh6 22.♞xh6 **A1)** 22...♟g6 23.♟g4 ♞h7 24.♟xg6 fxg6 25.♟h4+-, when he is not going to survive his wounds.

A2) But then I came across against the unbelievably stupid-looking 22...♞e7, when Black meets the magnificent 23.♟xe7 with a quiet 23...♟fe8. This

position ceased to look winning for White to me as 24.♟g4+ is met by 24...♟g6.

B) Therefore, Fabiano would have probably needed to contain this outburst and patiently proceed with 21.♟g4 g6 22.♟xh6 with a scary win coming in lines as:

B1) 22...♟fe8 23.♟h4 ♟e1+ 24.♞h2.

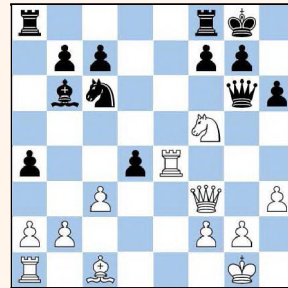
B2) 22...♟h8 23.♟xg6+! fxg6 24.♟xg6+.

B3) 22...♟xf5 23.♟h4+-.

B4) 22...dxc3 23.♟h4 ♞xf2+ 24.♞xf2 ♟xf5+ 25.♞f4.

21.♟f3! Again spot-on. ♟g4 is coming in all its might. Meanwhile 21.♞xh6+?! ♞h7 would've been what Shankland eagerly hoped for.

21...exd4! Now or never. Fabiano has left Sam no other choice but to part with his queen.



22.♞xh6+ Wins the queen, sure, but... not the game. After a series of some seven wonderful, top-notch moves, Caruana eventually loosens his grip slightly. To pull off the win now he needed a couple more brilliancies. 22.♟g4! actually looks horrible as it allows...

A) 22...♞e5 but then White can unleash his trump card 23.♟e4!

A1) The main point is 23...♞xg4 24.♞e7+ fork. 24...♞h7 25.♞xg6 fxg6 26.♟xg4 dxc3 27.bxc3 ♟xf2 28.♞h2 ♟f1 29.♞b2 ♞g1+ 30.♞h1 ♟af8 31.♟c4+-.

A2) 23...♟fe8 24.♟xg6 ♞xg6 Against heavy odds Black still continues to struggle. I think the best way to contain him is to paralyze his knight with 25.♟g4 ♟e1+ 26.♞h2 dxc3 27.bxc3 ♞xf2 28.♞b2+-.

B) Also 22...dxc3 23.♟xg6 fxg6 24.♞xh6+ gxh6 (24...♞h7 25.♞f7) 25.♟d5+ ♞g7 26.♟d7+ ♟f7 27.♞xh6+ ♞xh6 28.♟xf7 cxb2 29.♟e1 a3± should not last long for Black.

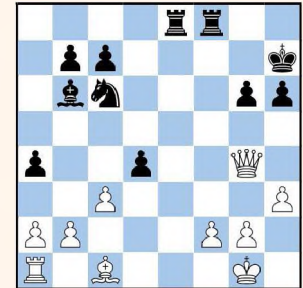
22...gxh6! Without hesitation, Shankland parts with his queen. I think Fabiano secretly expected his opponent's resolve to waver a little and had prepared a knock-out

blow in a long but beautiful line: 22...♞h7 23.♟h4! (23.♞f5 is not so effective due to 23...♟a5! 24.♟h4+ ♞g8 25.♟xc6 ♟xf5+) 23...gxh6 24.♞xh6+ ♟xh6 25.♞xh6 ♞xh6 26.♟f6+ ♞h7 27.♟e1 ♟a5 28.♟e4 ♟h5 29.♟g4+-.

23.♟g4 ♞h7 24.♟xg6 fxg6 The No.1 American player has won the queen. Is the game essentially over? It turns out – no. Suddenly Black's remaining pieces have all become very active. The bishop and the rook on f8 can't wait to open up joint fire on f2. Meanwhile, White has too many pieces on the back rank. This will be daunting for Caruana, as we shall see.

25.♟g4 An attempt at invasion via d7, but Shankland remains vigilant. White badly needs to bring his pieces out, but Caruana probably eschewed 25.♞f4 on account of 25...a3! 26.bxa3 dxc3.

25...♟ae8!



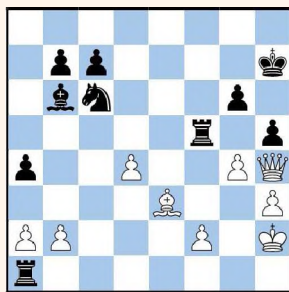
26.cxd4 This allows Shankland a dangerous invasion, but Caruana has some beautiful tactics in mind and fights for a stable position of his bishop on e3. Apparently Caruana didn't feel like going for the move repetition yet with 26.♞f4 ♟e4 27.♟d7+ ♟e7 28.♟g4 ♟e4=.

26...♟e1+ 27.♞h2 ♟f5! Shankland remains vigilant again. On 27...exd4 White's idea is beautifully revealed by 28.♞xh6! ♟e5+ 29.f4 ♞xh6 30.♟xe1 ♟xf4 31.♟g3 ♞d6 32.♟e6+-.

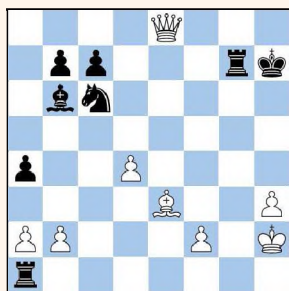
28.♟h4 On 28.d5 Fabiano must not have liked the way his king is treated upon 28...♞xf2 29.dxc6 ♞g1+ 30.♞g3 ♞f2+ 31.♞h2=.

28...h5 29.♞e3 Caruana certainly had in mind this radical way of solving the problem of his redundant rook when he allowed Shankland to enter his rear. Meanwhile, the hasty 29.g4? runs into the nice tactic 29...♞xd4! and Black wins by a fork.

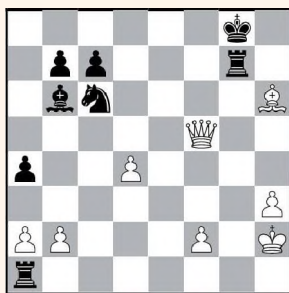
29...♟xa1 30.g4! Having passed on the problem of the bad rook to his opponent at a heavy cost, Caruana urgently tries to reignite the flames of his former attack from its ashes. Shankland must now be very careful.



30...f7! Many a player would have tried to keep the h5 pawn defended. But this would allow a queen invasion with decisive effect: 30...d5 31. f6 d8 32.gxh5 gxh5 33. h6+ g8 34. g6+ f8 35. h6+ e7 36. e4+ d6 37. f8+ c6 38. e8+ d7 and now the little pawn takes out Black completely by 39.d5+!-. 31.gxh5 gxh5 32. xh5+ g8 33. g6+ g7 34. e8+ h7



35. e4+ Of course, Caruana doesn't rush with 35. h5+. With a draw in hand he still harbors some hopes of winning the game. 35...g8 36. e6+ h7 37. e4+ Interestingly enough, Black's corner rook is well-hidden from lethal double attacks. 37...g8 38. e6+ h7 39. f5+ g8 40. e6+ Caruana's tournament position was not so bad as to tempt him to continue his winning attempts by 40. h6, as that gives Black winning chances, too.



Both 40...xd4 (and 40...e7 41. d7 g6 42. e8+ h7 43. f8 d5) 41. c8+ h7 42. xg7 xg7 43. xb7 xa2 are possible with an unclear outcome. 40...h7 **Draw**

THE REAL MONEY IS NOT MADE BY TRADING, BUT BY SITTING!?

A game of patience

Grandmasters can win games just by “sitting and doing nothing,” patiently waiting for the right opportunity without forcing matters. Investors should do the same, as not all market situations can be ideal for starting a new investment.

By Luca Barillaro



One of the main problems investors face when managing their investments is the need to always be doing something.

Overtrading, i.e. the tendency of investors to often modify their portfolio without apparent rational reason but only to have the illusion of “doing something,” has been constantly increasing since technology has allowed millions of individuals to directly access the financial markets. Trading platforms allow you to buy and sell financial assets at negligible costs with just a few clicks and this ease of intervention leads many investors to suddenly enter and exit the markets many times a day. Jesse Livermore, in his masterpiece *Reminiscences Of A Stock Operator*, warned those who were too active on the markets back in the 1920s. “The real money is not made by trading, but by sitting” was one of his most famous phrases. Trading too much is often synonymous with a tendency towards gambling and the search for emotions rather than performance. There are certainly times when it is necessary to change strategy and, therefore, also change some positions in the portfolio. However, most of the time many investors are led to buy and sell as they look for opportunities that in reality either do not exist or have a bad risk/reward.

In other words, the investor, overwhelmed by emotions, sees opportunities that aren't in fact there because he is actually starting to hope that the market will give him something. In finance, standing still is actually a decision that can be made, but in chess it is not possible to pass the move and often chess players, in an attempt to do something at all costs, play cheap tricks or take unnecessary risks weakening their own position, hoping that their opponent will give them something.

But overtrading and overplaying is not only related to the maneuvering during the game. In chess, the possibility to play online at any time of the day on different platforms and different time controls has brought an entire generation of young chess players to sacrifice patience and study to almost random play. I have personally seen a strong GM entering my car on the way to an important training session at 8 o'clock in the morning, playing on a famous platform a bullet game on his mobile! I literally took the mobile out of his hands.

Discipline is what it takes to master both the art of investing and the art of chess. Technology gives us the possibility to experiment frequently and to have immediate feedbacks on our ideas, but are we sure the answers are worthy of our attention?

No doubt technology has made financial markets more transparent and efficient, while, in chess, technology has given the opportunity to play against millions of people who otherwise wouldn't have the chance to play at all. Nonetheless, technology is such a powerful tool that it is easy to become enslaved by it.

Just like the markets dictate what are the risks and the opportunities, regardless of what we think the position we have to play on the board dictates what can be done and what cannot be done. In other words, it is not the ease to trade/play that must dictate our action.

It is perfectly human to try to shape reality according to our desires, nonetheless only discipline can guide us in recognizing our own shortfalls, thus keeping us inside our investment or chess plan.

For this reason, one of the qualities of strong players is knowing how to stay put without always necessarily having to do something. In a conversation between



Luca Barillaro is doctor of economics, an independent financial consultant and trader residing in Modena, Italy. Luca is also an avid chess player, and thanks to his proficiency in using AI for chess preparation, his help was of benefit to several elite grandmasters and their teams.

grandmasters Bent Larsen and Daniele Vocaturo shortly before the Dane's death, when asked why he was an assiduous user of lateral pawn advances (a4, h4, ...a5 or ...h5), Larsen replied "because they don't ruin the central structure." Karpov, Capablanca, Petrosian, Andersson and Larsen are the classic players who knew how to "move without moving," and all of them were great chess strategists.

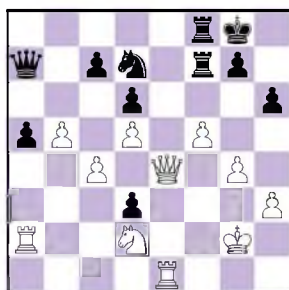
Lack of patience is often observed in young investors as well as young chess players. It's now well known that the excessive use of mobile apps and the web (let alone AI interactions) produces a kind of immediate feedback dependence in our brain. The attention span is gradually reduced and we need to feed our brain constantly with feedbacks either from a new trade idea or a new blitz game on the internet.

Youngsters should learn patience.

Let's see a couple of examples from the recent FIDE Grand Swiss held on the Isle of Man. Both Kollars and Pragg (against more experienced opponents) were not able to resist the temptation to do something in positions that required them to stay put and not weaken their own positions.

Levon Aronian	2742
Dmitrij Kollars	2633

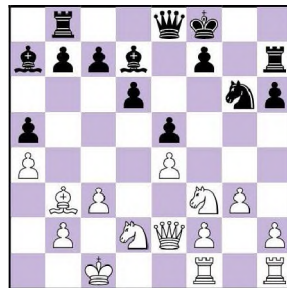
FIDE Grand Swiss, Douglas 2023



36...g6? 36...d5=
37.d3 gxf5 38.♖e6 fxg4 39.hxg4 d5
40.dxe5 dxe5 41.g5 ♖b6 42.♗xe5
♗xe6 43.dxe6 ♗g7 44.♗d2 ♗d8 45.e7
♗e8 46.♗xd3 ♗xe7 47.♗xe7 ♗xe7
48.gxh6 ♗h7 49.♗f3 ♗xh6 50.♗e3
♗d7 51.♗e4 ♗g6 52.♗f3 ♗f7 53.♗g3+
♗f6 54.♗d5 a4 55.c5 **Black resigned**

Pragganandhaa	2738
Sandro Mareco	2606

FIDE Grand Swiss, Douglas 2023



18.d4? 18.♗c2=
18...d4 19.gxh4 ♗xa4 20.♗xa4
♗xa4 21.♗h1 ♗d7?! 21...b5!, intending
...b5-b4 with excellent winning chances. **A draw was agreed on move 44.**

To conclude this topic, here is a not-so-famous game won by Bent Larsen against one of the kings of activity – David Bronstein.

David Bronstein
Bent Larsen

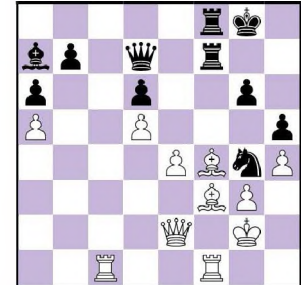
Belgrade International 1964



Black has reached an ideal position both for his pieces and pawns, therefore maneuvering starts with great attention not to ruin coordination and stopping an opponent's plans. Bronstein slowly gets lured into worsening his own piece coordination and pawn structure. Thus, the tactical opportunity for Bent arises.

22.d4xf6+ ♗xf6 23.d4e4 ♗e5 24.a5
♗xe4 25.fxex4 ♗e7 26.♗d2 ♗ac8

27.♗f3 ♗f6 28.♗d1 ♗c7 29.g3 d5
30.♗e2 ♗f8 31.♗f4 d7 32.♗c2 ♗d4+
33.♗g2 d5 34.h4 ♗f7 35.♗a3 ♗e8
36.♗a1 ♗e7 37.♗ae1 ♗d7 38.b3 ♗h7
39.♗d2 ♗g4 40.♗d3 ♗c8 41.b4 ♗cf8
42.bxc5 ♗xc5 43.♗e2 d5 44.♗a1
d4 45.♗ac1 ♗a7 46.♗f3 ♗g8 47.♗e2



47...♗xf4!? 48.gxf4 ♗xf4 49.♗g3?
49.♗c3 was the only move.
49...♗d4 50.♗d2 ♗e5 51.♗xf4 ♗xf4+
52.♗xf4 d5 53.♗g3 d4xf3 54.♗xf3
♗h3+ 55.♗e2 ♗xh4 56.♗e3 ♗d8
57.e5 ♗g5+ **White resigned**

The above examples show how grandmasters can win games just by "sitting and doing nothing," patiently waiting for the right opportunity. The same should be tried by every investor as not all market situations can be ideal for starting a new investment. Sometimes the right decision is to wait for a better opportunity or for a clearer picture of the market environment without forcing matters.

Given what we have been living through in the last few years, it seems that the moment to learn from the giants of chess strategy has definitely come. To slow down is maybe the most advanced piece of advice.

In the previous 12 months I tried to show to ACM readers how to use financial and chess principles in both fields. Going deeper into the subject would require longer and maybe not so entertaining articles that could go very far from chess. Chess and finance are nowadays regarded more and more similar and the number of "experts" is growing with many new initiatives and conferences organized around the world.

When we speak about chess and finance we are dealing with only a small fraction of the bigger world of chess and business, but at the same time we are referring to the most similar parts of the two worlds.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all ACM readers, and particularly ACM editors, who gave me the opportunity to shed some light on two subjects that are both my job and my passion.



MEET ALICE LEE AND OTHER AMAZING U.S. GIRLS

A NEW WAVE IS COMING

Start to finish, this year's edition of the U.S. Junior Girls' Championship was marked by one player only, as Alice Lee demonstrated incredible stamina and maturity in play, while other contestants all had their ups and downs. As always, a lot of fighting chess was on display, too.

■ By WIM Zoey Tang

Zoey Tang is a 15-year-old WIM and FM residing in Portland, Oregon. She earned her Woman International Master title in 2022 after winning the North American Youth Chess Championship G18. Zoey is the first girl to have won the Oregon State Championship. In 2022, she founded a non-profit organization called Puddletown Chess. You can visit their website and read the many chess articles she wrote there at www.puddletownchess.org. Besides chess, Zoey loves playing the piano and reading.

There's something very special about playing at the Saint Louis Chess Club. Competing on the same table-integrated DGT boards that were played on by the world's elite is a rare opportunity, and the many photographers present add to the feeling of prestige. Ten of the top U.S. girls, including myself, were invited to Saint Louis to play in the annual U.S. Girls' Junior Championship. The event was held concurrently with the U.S. Junior Championship and

the U.S. Senior Championship.

This year's Girls' Juniors had a tough field. Top talents like IM Carissa Yip and IM-elect Alice Lee were present, as were many familiars of the tournament. There were also "new" (experienced and talented, but playing the Closed for the first time) players who couldn't be underestimated. Personally, I liked my chances of doing significantly better than last year (we're not going to talk about that...), but more than that, I couldn't say.

Alice Lee

The beginning of the tournament was peaceful enough. After three rounds, I was somewhat surprised to find myself in shared first place with Alice on 2½/3. Funnily enough, we were paired for the next round.

D45

Alice Lee	2393
Zoey Tang	2290

U.S. Girls' Junior Championship, St Louis 2023

Heading into round 4, Alice and I were the only co-leaders. I wasn't too concerned about the result, as there were still many rounds to go and anyway, my goal was to play good chess rather than win first place.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.e3 e6 5.♘c3 ♘bd7 6.♙e2 ♙d6 Trying to enter the normal Meran with 6...dxc4 usually doesn't work, because White's bishop is on e2 rather than d3, so this capture doesn't come with tempo. White therefore has the option to play 7.a4 ♙d6 8.♘d2 with a comfortable edge.
7.0-0 0-0 8.b3 ♘e4 9.♙b2 f5 A Stonewall-esque structure I had prepared before the game. This position is off-theory and provides Black with nice attacking chances.





U.S. GIRLS' JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIP 2023, Saint Louis, MO, Jul 15- 26, 2023

Rk	Name	Title	Elo	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Pts	TPR
1	Alice LEE	FM	2393		½	1	1	½	½	1	1	1	1	7½	2438
2	Ruiyang YAN	FM	2206	½		1	0	½	½	1	1	1	½	6	2311
3	Carissa YIP	IM	2369	0	0		1	1	1	½	½	1	½	5½	2248
4	Zoey TANG	FM	2290	0	1	0		½	1	1	½	1	½	5½	2256
5	Iris MOU	WIM	2214	½	½	0	½		0	½	½	1	1	4½	2185
6	Rochelle WU	FM	2253	½	½	0	0	1		½	½	½	½	4	2137
7	Shreya MANGALAM	WCM	1972	0	0	½	0	½	½		1	½	½	3½	2132
8	Kelsey LIU		1997	0	0	½	½	½	½	0		½	½	3	2084
9	Gracy PRASANNA	WFM	2012	0	0	0	½	0	½	½	½		1	3	2082
10	Rose ATWELL		2171	0	½	½	0	0	½	½	½	0		2½	2024



10...c1 White is preparing the thematic a3 in order to trade off one of Black's key attackers – the bishop on d6. I underestimated the threat of this idea during the game. 10...c1 f6 11...c2 g5 was the line I had prepared before the game.

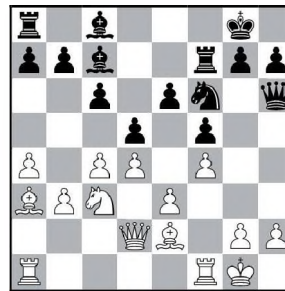
10...f6 Here, 10...e7 is the more solid option, denying White the opportunity to play a3. 11...b1 a5 12...a3 b4 is just fine for Black.

11...d2 h6 12.f4 This nice mini-plan of White's prevents the kingside from being under too much pressure, as now the structure is more or less locked.

12...g5?! I thought I had enough attackers to make this risky move work, but unfortunately White has many opportunities to trade pieces.

In case of 12...d6f6?! 13...dxe4 fxe4 14...a3, White would be significantly better.

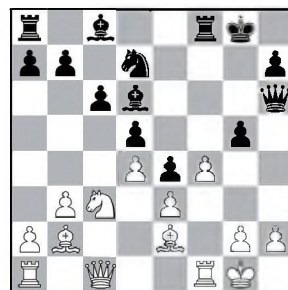
Depriving White of the chance to take on e4, 12...xd2! also displaces White's queen so that a3 is delayed. While the knight looked prettier on e4, Black can always replace it with the other knight via f6. 13...xd2 f6 14.a4 (14...f3 g5 15...h3 g7 16.fxg5 xg5 17...f1 d7= Black has enough time to swing the light-squared bishop over, a typical Stonewall maneuver.) 14...f7 15...a3 c7



16...e1 g5 17.g3?! g7 18.h1 d7. This would be the more stable way to approach the attack by activating all the pieces before playing the committal pawn moves.

13...dxe4 fxe4? Missing a nice tactic. 13...dxe4 was necessary, when after 14.g3 gxf4 15.exf4 f6 16...a3 xa3 17...xa3 f7 Black shouldn't be in any danger.

14.g3? Alice played this instantly, which came as quite a relief to me. I was vaguely concerned about 14.cxd5, but figured that I could deal with it if it came. Principally, this move looks illogical, which is presumably why Alice didn't spend much time considering it. 14...exd5



15...xe4! dxe4 16...c4+ g7 17.d5+ Unleashing the monster dark-squared bishop. 17...f6 18.dxc6 gxf4 19...ad1+- . White's attack will crash through, but this line is by no means easy to calculate from afar.

14...f6 To play on the safe side, Black should start with 14...gxf4, using the bishop for the last time to force White to

take with a pawn. 15.gxf4 h8=.

15...a3 Trading off Black's best attacker, rendering the kingside attack basically useless.

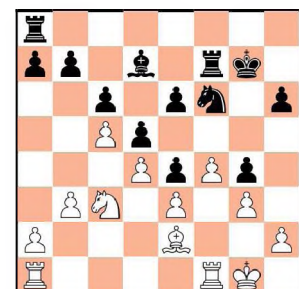


15...xa3?! Black can't afford to invite the opponent's queen forward. 15...e8! was best, when after 16...xd6 xd6 17.fxg5 xg5 18...xf8+ xf8 19...d2 White is very slightly better.

16...xa3 d7 17...d6 Taking advantage of Black's weak dark squares.

17...f7 18...e5 g4 19...g5+ g7 20.c5 h6 20...h5!? would have saved me a tempo compared to the game.

21...xg7+ xg7 During the game, I thought this endgame was worse for me. In reality, even though White's queenside expansion looks fearsome, it doesn't result in much. Still, at this point White is playing for two results.



22.b4 h5 23.b5 h4? Missing a chance to trade off the dumb light-squared bishop. 23...cxb5 24...xb5 b6! The threat against the c5 pawn is enough to prevent White from avoiding the trade. After 25...xd7

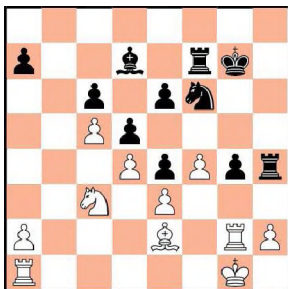


♙xd7 26.♙ac1 ♜c8 Black is no worse by any means.

24.bxc6 bxc6?! 24...♙xc6 would prevent White from utilizing the b-file.

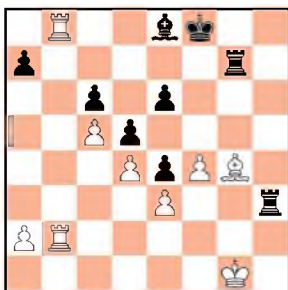
25.gxh4 Correctly assessing that the h2 weakness can easily be protected.

25...♙h8 26.♙f2 ♙xh4 27.♙g2



27...♙f8 27...e5! is the engine-backed idea to open the light-squared bishop, even at the cost of a pawn. This just shows how sad my position is... 28.fxe5 (28.dxe5 ♖h5 29.♖d1 d4) 28...♖h7 29.h3 ♙xh3 30.♙xg4 ♙xg4 31.♙xg4+ ♙f8±. 28.♖d1 ♙g7 29.♖f2 After the prophylaxis is finished, all that is left is to invade the b-file.

29...♙e8 30.♙b1 ♙h5 31.♙b8+ ♙e8 32.♙d1 ♙hh7 33.♖xg4 ♖xg4 34.♙xg4 ♙b7 35.♙b2 ♙bg7 36.h3 ♙xh3 I saw the follow-up tactic, but what other option did I have?



37.♙xe8+ ♙xe8 38.♙b8+ ♙f7 39.♙b7+ ♙f6 40.♙xg7 ♙xe3 41.♙f2 ♙a3 42.♙c7 ♙xa2+ 43.♙g3 ♙a3+ 44.♙h4 ♙a6 45.♙h5 e5 46.♙f7+ Black resigned

After mishandling my feisty opening choice, I got into a worse position where my key attackers got traded off. Alice chose to go into an endgame where only she was pushing, and showcased very nice (annoying to me during the game) technique and prophylaxis to capitalize on my inaccuracies. A painful game, but definitely one from which I learned a lot.

INTERVIEW WITH ALICE LEE



ACUMULATED EXPERIENCE AT THE AGE OF 13!

By WIM Zoey Tang

During the 2023 U.S. Open in Grand Rapids, MI, I had the fortunate opportunity to talk with Alice about her recent accomplishments, routines, and more.

Hi Alice, great to have you here! First of all, congratulations on achieving the IM title! How does it feel to have achieved such a prestigious title, especially since you broke the record for the youngest American-born female to do so?

Yeah, it feels really good. It was something that I'd been working on for the past one and a half years, so being able to achieve it is really nice, and I'm really

happy that throughout the process I was able to improve.

How do you feel about breaking the record?

It feels great, especially since Carissa [previous record-holder -ZT] is one of the best players and I've looked up to her for so long. But for me, I wasn't thinking too much about the record, because if you give yourself a certain timeframe that might put too much pressure on you. I'm happy that I was able to break the record, but overall it wasn't my main focus.

You had many successes in a row recently. Congrats on

winning the U.S. Girls' Junior Championship right after getting your IM title, with even a round to spare!

You've attended this event previously; how has your experience been, and was this time around any different?

I think I got last place three years ago. And then two years ago, I got 3½/9. Last year I didn't do too badly, I got 5½/9, but this year I think it was very different because I had the experience. I played in the event two times in-person previously, and once online. Of course, the players at the U.S. Girls' Junior Championship are all pretty strong, but it helps to have prior experience. I was actually one of the more experienced players this year, which was really nice. I definitely wasn't expecting to win with a round to spare, I thought it'd probably go to tiebreaks if I won it at all.

So, you talked about experience. One unique aspect of the Juniors is the one-round-per-day format. How does this impact your tournament routine?

For a lot of the two-rounds-per-day tournaments, especially norm tournaments, you have to do a lot of preparation beforehand. Before the Junior Girls' I actually didn't have much time to prepare because I played in a tournament that ended a few days before this one started. So, playing one round per day was really good for me. I was able to do preparation between rounds, since there was so much free time. Sometimes two rounds a day is just too much!

Moving on to general questions, what does a



typical non-tournament day look like for you?

I guess it depends on the day, but I try to spend time on chess each day, around 2-3 hours. It also depends, for example, on recent tournaments. After I got back from the Junior Girls' I had two weeks of online school classes to catch up on, so recently I've been trying to catch up and finish the homework. But normally, I try to spend some time on chess and it's generally about keeping up the consistency.

■ You'll be going to high school soon, right?

Yes, I'll be starting high school in September.

■ Do you anticipate having to change your schedule to accommodate more homework? High school's traditionally more busy.

I feel like in the past few years, in middle school, the teachers were really nice about letting me make up the work afterward, if I had a lot of tournaments. I think for high school, I'd have to do all the work ahead of time, which might impact how I play during the tournament if I'm worrying about schoolwork. Overall I'll still try to maintain being able to do chess and also school.

■ Could you elaborate on that? When you're working at home, how will you balance school and chess when there's more homework? Will you cut back on chess or will you cut back on sleep?

That's a good question. Usually in the summer I get a lot more sleep than I do during the school year, probably 30-60 minutes more. I'll try not to cut back on sleep because sleep is important! So I'll probably have to cut back more on chess, though I'll try to maintain a consistent schedule.

■ What activities do you enjoy besides chess?

I enjoy doing contest math, although now that I'm doing so much chess it's a bit harder. But I've done that since 6th

grade and it's just something that I really enjoy. I also enjoy reading and writing. I actually got two cats a few months ago, so I like just spending time with my cats. And that can also be more like doing work, so that's a plus. But mainly I spend a lot of time on chess.

■ I've heard that you run a mile a day.

Yeah, I still do that. I try to do that especially during tournaments, actually. Like, the hotel we stayed at during the Junior Girls' had a really nice gym, so I went there every day. But, yeah, I think it's just a healthy habit, especially for chess players. Physical shape is pretty important as well.

■ What do you think of the current environment for female chess players?

For me, growing up as a female chess player, I feel like the environment has been pretty nice to me. However, I know the ratio of females to males playing chess is like 1:8 or something similar. So, obviously it's harder to go to some chess tournaments and be one of the few females playing, but I think overall, I'm hoping that, especially as the popularity of chess increases, the amount of females playing chess will also increase.

DON'T PUSH YOUR KID TOO HARD

■ What specific advice do you have for parents of young female chess players?

For young female chess players, I'd probably say just to enjoy the game and keep going and don't be discouraged. For parents, I would probably say, don't push your kid too hard to do the game. Just like, let them genuinely enjoy it and just support them throughout their chess journey.

■ Who have been some of the influential people along your chess journey, and what was their particular contribution?

There were definitely a lot of people who helped me so far with my chess journey, including my coaches. I started with GM Dmitry Gurevich. He helped me from when I was seven to when I was ten. And that really helped me with my improvement. And also my current coaches, who I won't name exactly, but they've been really helpful, really supportive throughout my entire journey. My parents and my family, and many female role models – Judit Polgar, Hou Yifan, and just strong players in general. I look at their games and I go, "oh I should try to do as well as them," but of course it's very hard. And, in general, I have a lot of people to thank for my chess journey and also just the people I play in really tough tournaments have been really helpful for me.

■ What role do your parents play in your chess right now?

My mom is usually the one who travels with me, so I'm really grateful for her, because she takes time off of work just to go to chess games with me. So, I think that's one really supporting role. And also during chess games, she gets food and covers the basic things so I won't be too exhausted before the game. And also, I study chess sometimes with my mom watching over, and I think that's pretty helpful because you don't always study with your coach and also you don't always study by yourself. So having somebody to study with you is pretty good to have. Even if their level is much lower, it's still really great to have somebody to just keep you on task. I think the main role that my parents have is traveling with me to chess tournaments. I think that that's like a really big role on their part, to have to cut off time from work and put in a lot of work while I go to play in chess tournaments.

■ You mentioned the importance of having a coach or at least some sort of mentor figure when studying

chess. What should parents look for in choosing a coach if it's clear that their child will want a coach?

I'm not really sure. For my coaches, I just contacted some people who are pretty strong and asked them whether they'd be willing to coach me, and they accepted. So I think there's a lot of great chess coaches out there, and mainly you can look at what they play in general and how their style would suit you, in order to be able to get a good coach who suits your style in general. But there are so many great coaches out there that even if you just ask a really strong player to be your coach, they might just accept you and you can improve from there.

■ One last question. You said in an interview that your advice for girls starting to play chess was to enjoy the game and not worry about losses, which is very good advice. What are other ways for girls to enjoy the game?

I would say instead of just being in tournaments in general, there's actually a lot of really good all-girls events that I went to and I had a lot of fun just being surrounded by a super supportive female environment. For example, I think the All-Girls Nationals has been a tournament that I played in multiple times. Starting when I was seven, I played it for a few years. And that was a really fun tournament; I think it's usually in April in Chicago. And also, there's the Susan Polgar Foundation Girls' Invitational event, that's also really great. It's a really strong tournament and in general a super fun one to play in. I think there's also some all girls camps and there's also chess camps for kids in general. Making sure that you have fun with chess is really important as well. Instead of just playing in tournaments and studying, having fun is really good for any chess player.

■ Thank you for all your insightful advice, Alice! You're welcome. Thanks.



Ruiyang Yan

The second half of the tournament was one full of comebacks, upsets, and turmoil in the standings for everyone but Alice. First, FM Ruiyang Yan achieved an important victory on her way to finishing with 6/9 despite a slow start of 1½/4 including a loss against yours truly, but what can I say? Ruiyang played better than me against the rest of the opposition.

C54

Ruiyang Yan	2206
Carissa Yip	2369

U.S. Girls' Junior Championship, St Louis 2023

Notes by Ruiyang Yan

1.e4 e5 2.♟f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 I don't usually adopt this line but it has very similar ideas to others I used to play and I wanted to try something more random.

3...♙c5 4.0-0 ♟f6 5.d3 d6 6.c3 a6 7.♞e1 ♙a7 8.♙b3 0-0 9.h3 h6 10.♜bd2



10...♜h5 I wasn't expecting this. I'm pretty sure 10...♞e8 11.♟f1 ♙e6 12.♙c2 d5 13.exd5 ♙xd5 14.♜g3 was the position I had prepared for.

11.♟f1 ♜f4? This allowed me to play against her dark-squared bishop, which I was very happy about during the game. I expected 11...♞f6 here. (Black is threatening to play ...♞g6, and this move is also supporting ...♜f4 since the queen can take back in case of ♙xf4. – Zoey Tang)

12.♙xf4 exf4 13.d4 ♜e7 Planning ...♜g6 and ...♞f6.

14.e5 d5 15.♙c2 Indirectly stopping ...♜g6, due to e5-e6 motif.

15...♙e6 16.b4! During the game I was a little paranoid of Black playing ...c5. Thus b2-b4 was probably unnecessary, but is a nice prophylactic move to further lock in

the a7 bishop.



16...♞d7 17.♜h4 ♞ae8 18.♜h2 My plan was to go after the weak f4 pawn.

18...c6 19.♜g4 19.♞f3 could also work, but I didn't like 19...f5 20.exf6 ♞xf6. This should still be good for White, but I had no reason to allow it.

19...♙xg4 20.hxg4 Now the pawn supports ♜f5 ideas.

20...♜c8 21.♞f3 ♜b6 22.♞xf4



22...f6 The rest is a very simple win, but still requires a little precision. 22...g5 runs into 23.♞f6 gxf4 (23...♙e6 24.♞f5+-) 24.♞xh6 f5 25.exf6+-.

23.♜g6 fxe5 24.♜xf8 ♞xf8 25.♞xe5 25.♙h7+ ♜xh7 26.♞xf8+-

25...♞xg4 26.♞e6+ ♞xe6 27.♞xe6 ♜c8 28.♞ae1 ♙b8 29.♞e8 g5 30.g3 ♜d6 31.♞xf8+ ♜xf8 32.♞e6 ♜b5 33.♞xh6 ♜c7 34.♞h7 ♜d6 35.♞xb7 ♜xc3 36.a4 ♜a2 37.b5 axb5 38.a5 ♜b4 39.♜g6 ♜e7 40.♞a7 c5 41.a6 ♜c6 42.♞c7

Black resigned

After an opening slip-up from her opponent, Ruiyang was able to continually exert pressure through her center space. She stopped any ideas of her opponent's counterplay and was able to convert with good technique. A crucial game that propelled Ruiyang to second place, ahead of Carissa and yours truly...

My second half was significantly less rosy, with another loss against Carissa and two draws after unfavorable openings. Tying for third is by no means a bad result, but I was hoping for better given the standings up until as far as round 7.

On her part, Alice widened her lead during the last few rounds, winning game after game with immaculate technique and only conceding three (!) draws the whole tournament. A dominating performance with one of the highest scores in recent years.

Meanwhile, the new players to the tournament were battling it out fiercely against their more experienced opponents, even in the last rounds where energy among non-podium prospectors is traditionally low.





E20

Rochelle Wu 2253

Kelsey Liu 1997

U.S. Girls' Junior Championship,
St Louis 2023

Notes by Kelsey Liu

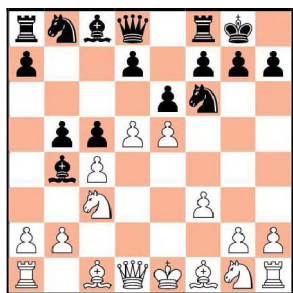
In round 8, I was playing Rochelle Wu, who already had many achievements since a young age. This would be my first time playing her, but I saw her at many tournaments before, playing on the top boards. I hadn't won a single game before this round and I wasn't expecting anything here as I was Black against one of the pre-tournament rating favorites.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.f3

My only prep was against 4.♗c2, but this deviation showed that she anticipated my opening choice and prepared another line against me. The risk of entering positions comfortable for your opponent, with preparation in mind, is that they might deviate first – that's why it's ideal to spring your surprise as early as possible.

4...c5 I just played what I knew.

5.d5 b5 6.e4 0-0 7.e5 Here, I spent an entire 15 minutes thinking about the position.



7...exd5 I ended up going for a more active/dynamic continuation because her king was still in the center with only a minimal development. Logically speaking, those are some red flags... But this is apparently still some obscure theory.

The simple retreat **7...♗e8** is the main line, when after **8.f4 exd5 9.cxd5 d6 10.♘f3** it can get dangerous for Black because of White's space advantage. I didn't review any of these lines, so I was hesitant to go in that direction.

8.exf6 d4 9.a3 Without this key move, material is equal and Black is ahead in all other aspects of the game.

9.fxg7 ♗e8+ only helps Black. The extra pawn gobbled on g7 does not matter in the grand scheme of things because of

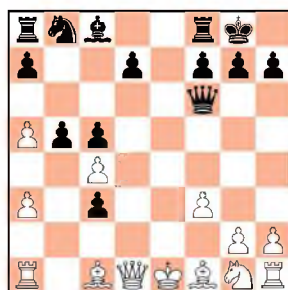


Kelsey Liu

White's lack of king safety.

9...♗a5 10.b4 The typical way to break the pin.

10...dxc3 11.bxa5 ♗xf6 This recapture comes with the added threat of ...c3-c2, to which White must respond and give Black another tempo.



12.♗a2 This was played extremely quickly and here Rochelle still had 1 hour and 33 minutes on the clock, showing that this was still probably within her knowledge. However, I think this may have been a bluff as it was the most natural move (because it guards the vital second rank and could swing to e2 to protect the king), although not approved by the engine. There was still one game in the database played between Volkov and Gordievsky in 2012, but that game later followed the engine recommendation with the vital **12.♗d5**.

12.♗d5 is the only move that maintains equality, which is already a red flag for the white pieces. **12...♗e8+**

A) 13.♘f2 is now a possibility thanks to the pawn on f3, and does not get in the way of the kingside minor pieces'

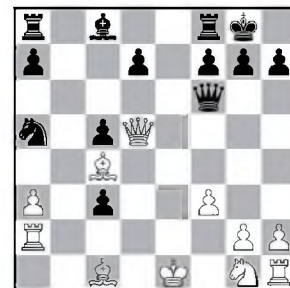
development. **13...c2 14.♗a2 ♗b7 15.♗d2 (15.♗xb7 ♗d4+ 16.♘g3 ♗e5+ 17.♘h3 ♗h5+ 18.♘g3 ♗e5+ is already a forced draw.) 15...bxc4 16.♗xc2 d5=.**

B) 13.♗e2 b4= Engines scream that this position is equal, but it seems so hard to evaluate!?

12...bxc4 For the piece, Black now has tripled pawns in the middle of the board. As ridiculous as they look, the march of the d-pawn will be a fearsome threat to behold.

13.f4? This was played after my opponent's first pause in the game, but it felt wrong to me because White has no development. However, with it White threatens ♗xc4 as then ...♗h4+ would not fork the bishop. Moreover, the knight can now develop to the more appealing f3 square.

Better was **13.♗d5 ♘c6 14.♗xc4 ♘xa5**



A) 15.♗xa8 ♘c6?? (15...♗a6-+) 16.♗b5 ♗a6 17.♗xc6 dxc6 18.♗xa6 ended in a draw on move 58 in S.Volkov 2577 – D.Gordievsky 2422, Moscow 2012.

B) 15.♗d3 and Black's pawns have less potential to be dangerous. However, I guess **13.♗d5** is a precarious move to make with zero minor piece development.

13...♗a6 (Kelsey maintains the tension and prepares to push the d-pawn in the near future. Meanwhile, deprived of c4, it is difficult for White to develop her light-squared bishop. –Zoey Tang)

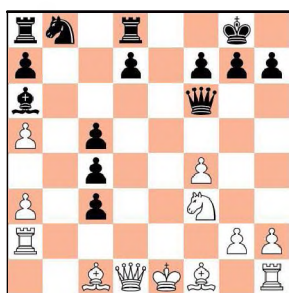
I was seriously considering **13...♗b7** because the position felt like something would happen soon. For example, **14.♗xc4 d5** leads to an interesting line that could arise: **15.♗b3 (15.♗d3 ♘c6) 15...♗e7+ 16.♗e2 dxc4 17.♗xe7 cxb3 18.♗xb7 b2 19.♗xb2 cxb2 20.♗xb2 ♘c6=.**

14.♘f3 ♗d8?! This is not accurate because it continuously allows **♗d5**.

After **14...♘c6**, White cannot take



15. ♖xd7 due to 15... ♜fd8 16. ♖g4 ♜ab8, because Black has too many threats – the power of activity!
17. ♙e2 ♜b2!-+.



15. ♙e3?? 15. ♖d5 is still necessary for White. 15... ♘c6 16. ♙xc4 (Not 16. ♖xc5?? d5 17. ♙e2 d4 18. ♙xc4 ♙xc4 19. ♖xc4 d3-+ when Black's pawns are really scary when they hold hands and march down the board together.) Trying to preserve material with 16... ♙e7, allows 17. ♖d3 ♙xc4 18. ♖xc4 d5 19. ♖xc5 d4 20. 0-0 d3 21. ♜af2= and White is here in time to coordinate her pieces, compared to previous variations.

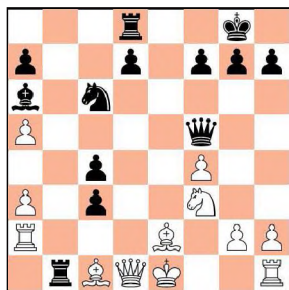
15... ♘c6 I had wanted to play 15... ♖e7, but was concerned about the engagement of the a2 rook back into the game upon 16. ♙e2 d5 17. ♙d4 ♖c7 18. ♙e5.

16. ♙xc5 16. ♖d5! was the lesser evil, although after 16... ♜ab8 17. ♙f2 ♜b2+ 18. ♜xb2 cxb2 19. ♙e2 ♙e7 Black's position is clearly better, but with a lot of play ahead.

16... ♜ab8 17. ♙e2 ♖f5 Now I threaten both ... ♖xc5 and ... ♜b1.

18. ♙e3 The other way to defend against dual threats was 18. ♙b4 d5 19. ♖c1 d4 20. 0-0 ♙xb4 21. axb4 ♜xb4. I will eventually win back a piece as White must sacrifice one to prevent the pawns from steamrolling. 22. ♙xd4 ♜xd4 23. ♖xc3 ♖c5-+.

18... ♜b1 19. ♙c1 (While the engine claims Black is completely winning, the pressure of a real game makes finding the best moves very difficult. -Zoey Tang)



19... ♙d5?! I think this was a crucial inaccuracy on my part because it allowed

more options for my opponent to fight back.

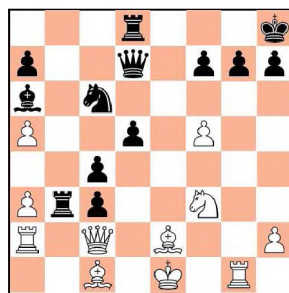
19... ♖c5! is the most clinical, preventing White from castling and sacrifices that later happened in the game. Again, the position felt like I had to hurry as a piece was sacrificed, but in reality White is completely tied down and the march of the d-pawn cannot be stopped anyways. To be clinical in these kinds of positions, one must first observe if their plan is stoppable within their opponent's concrete moves before feeling the intuitive need to hurry. 20. ♖c2 is simply met by 20... ♜db8 21. ♖xc3 d5. Black's king is completely safe while its counterpart faces peril.

20. g4! Although this move is not necessarily approved by the engine, I think it deserves an exclamation mark because it poses the most practical challenges. I was also on the brink of facing time pressure and faced a dilemma. Clearly such a pawn push, while the king is wide open, should be punished. However, if I take, it will open up the g-file and my own king faces some danger. On the other hand, if I don't capture then I allowed such a move for free! What a scam!

20... ♖xg4 I ended up making the right decision, but at the cost of 14 minutes from my remaining 25. When your opponent is cornered, they become the scariest as they find crazy resources. You try to navigate accurately, but end up with even more practical problems.

21. ♖c2 ♜b3 21... ♜db8 may have been better because it keeps the c1 bishop pinned. 22. ♖xc3 d4 23. ♙xd4 ♖xf4!

22. ♙g1 ♖d7 23. f5 ♙h8



24. ♜xg7 Wow. Rochelle had a couple minutes more than me at this point and used up most of it to come up with this resource. I hadn't even considered it while she was pondering over her move.

24... ♙xg7 25. f6+ ♙xf6 The point is that if I try to hide my king with 25... ♙h8, then 26. ♙g5+- comes with deadly effect.

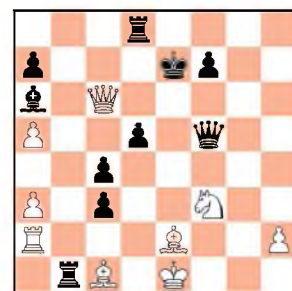
26. ♖xh7 ♖f5 27. ♖h6+ The sacrifice was unsound and it turns out that I am

completely winning here, but I must make the critical decision at the crossroads between ... ♖g6 and ... ♙e7 with only seconds left on my clock.

27... ♙e7? Unfortunately, I made the wrong choice.

27... ♖g6 was the only move. Then, after 28. ♙g5+ ♙e6 29. ♖h3+ (29. ♖xg6+ fxg6 30. ♙xd8 ♙xd8-+) 29... ♙d6, my king is able to escape to c5 where checks on the diagonal can be blocked by ...d5-d4! 30. ♙xd8 ♙xd8-+.

28. ♖xc6 ♜b1 This was what I was banking on when I allowed my opponent to take on c6.



29. ♙d1!! A cold shower describes this feeling perfectly. Now the a2 rook that arrived on the rank 17 moves earlier is finally invited to the party.

29... ♜d6 30. ♙g5+? At this point we were both in huge time pressure.

30. ♖c5!! was a quiet move to win the game. In many positions it feels that every move must be a check or a forcing one. However, sometimes lethal quiet moves are the best way to increase your advantage. 30... ♜xc1 31. ♙e2+ ♙d7 32. ♖xa7+-.

30... f6 31. ♙e2+ Now everything is forced. 31... ♜e6 32. ♖c7+ ♙e8 33. ♖c6+ ♙e7 34. ♖c7+ ♙e8 35. ♖c6+ ♙e7 36. ♖c7+ ♙e8

Draw

A bit of an anticlimatic finish to a crazy game going back and forth, but an acceptable result after being on the brink of losing! This tournament was such a unique and fun experience and I'm extremely grateful to have been invited to this prestigious event. I gained a great deal of experience and am determined to keep improving.



NOTABLE ENDINGS FROM 2023 TOURNAMENT PLAY

A Slow Squeeze

As we turn the page to 2024, let's look back at some of the best endings of the past year. Of course, many great and intriguing endings are played every day; these are just ones that happened to catch my eye. The relative strength of the players and importance of the game was a factor in my selection, but there are also some problem-like ideas here.

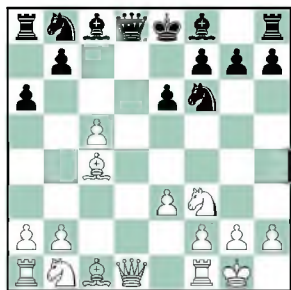
We begin with the last-round win by Vidit Gujrathi which gave him clear first in the Grand Swiss and qualification into the Candidates' Tournament.

D27

Vidit Gujrathi	2715
Alexandr Predke	2661

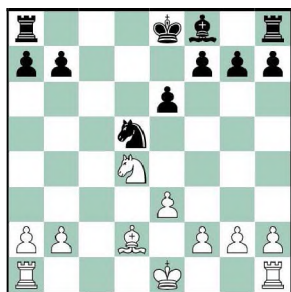
FIDE Grand Swiss, Douglas 2023

1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.e3 e6
5.♗xc4 a6 6.0-0 c5 7.dxc5



7...♗xc5 We discussed in ACM 24 the advantages and drawbacks of keeping the king in the center in a queenless middlegame. If the monarch sits on a square vulnerable to attack by the enemy bishop, it's a drawback.

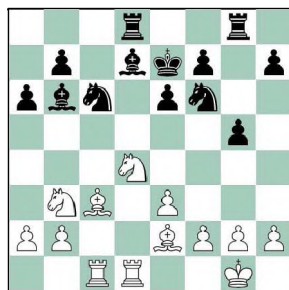
For me, this situation is reminiscent of the following famous comment by Nimzovich in *My System* to this position from his game with Tarrasch (Breslau 1925):



"This position, for all its apparent harmlessness, is full of poison. White is threatening to take over the c-file; moreover, he has at his disposal a convenient square for his king (e2), whereas this is true for Black only to a limited extent (see the note to the 17th move). In such positions the defender has to play with extreme care."

Returning to our game, I prefer trading on d1 and castling for Black (the ACM 24 article has more details on that), but of course both options are viable.

8.♙xd8+ ♗xd8 9.♗e2 ♗e7 10.♘bd2 ♗d7 11.♘b3 ♗b6 12.♗d2 ♘c6 13.♗c3 ♗hg8 14.♗fd1 ♗ad8 15.♗ac1 g5 16.♘fd4



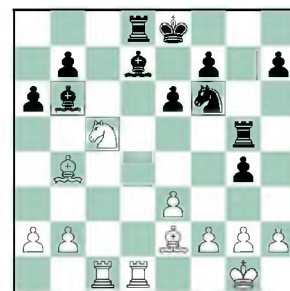
16...♘xd4 Allowing the white bishop a diagonal leading to the black king. 16...♗d5 was another option.

17.♗b4+ ♗e8 18.♘xd4 g4 The idea of expanding on the kingside is essentially correct (in the aforementioned article, we also discussed pawn play on the flanks as an advantage of keeping the king in the center), but Black should have prefaced it with a centralizing and defensive 18...♗d5, for example: 19.♗a3 g4 20.♘f5 exf5 21.♗xd5 ♗e6 and Black is OK (although it's not immediately obvious, as the rook seems offside).

19.♘b3! ♗g5 20.♘c5!

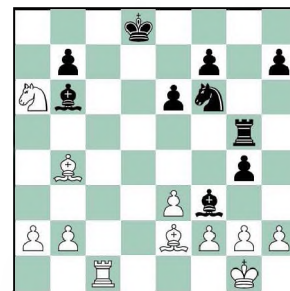


Born in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1968, Alex Fishbein relocated to the United States in 1979. Mentored by Vladimir Zak, who previously coached Boris Spassky and Viktor Korchnoi, Fishbein swiftly built a strong chess foundation. By 14, he was a master, and he climbed the ranks to become an IM in 1988 and a GM in 1992 after an international victory in Norway. In 1985, Fishbein championed the first Denker Tournament of High School Champions, setting off a string of achievements at home and abroad. Even while pursuing a career in finance, he remained an active competitor into the 2000s, appearing in four U.S. Championships.



Now Black faces real problems. Rather than giving White control of the dark squares, he decides to sacrifice a pawn.

20...♗c6 21.♘xa6 ♘d7 He might have missed that after 21...♗f3!? 22.♗xd8+ ♗xd8,



White has 23.h4!! ♗g8 (Or 23...♗xe2 24.hxg5 ♘d5 25.♗c5 with an advantage.) 24.♗d1!! and if 24...bxa6 25.gxf3 gxf3+ 26.♗f1 ♘g4 27.♗xf3, White is a pawn up as his pawn can no longer be captured on h2.

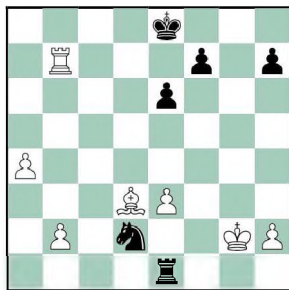


22. ♖f1! ♜a8 23. ♙d6!



With several precise moves, White has consolidated his advantage.

23... ♙a4 24. ♙f4 ♜a5 25. ♖c7+ ♙xc7 26. ♙xc7 ♙xd1 27. ♙xa5 ♜xa5 28. ♙xd1 ♖e5 29. a4! Black still has counterplay, as his pieces are more active, but Vidit converts convincingly. 29... ♜c5 30. ♙d4 ♜c1 31. ♙b4 ♜b1 32. f4 gxf3 33. gxf3 ♖xf3+ 34. ♙g2 ♖d2 35. ♙d3 ♜e1 36. ♙f2 ♜h1 37. ♙g2 ♜e1 38. ♙xb7



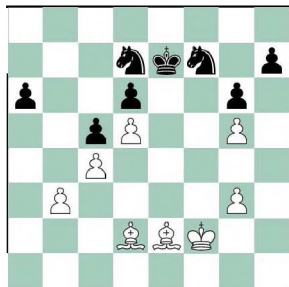
White has a passed pawn aided by the rook and bishop.

38... ♙xe3 39. ♙b5+ ♖f8 40. a5 ♜e5 41. a6 ♜g5+ 42. ♙f2 ♖e4+ 43. ♙e3 ♖d6 44. a7 ♜e5+ 45. ♙f3 ♜f5+ 46. ♙g2 ♜g5+ 47. ♙h1 **Black resigned**

The eternal struggle between the bishop and knight will be the theme of many of the endings we cover in this article.

Anish Giri	2760
Rauf Mamedov	2640

FIDE Grand Swiss, Douglas 2023



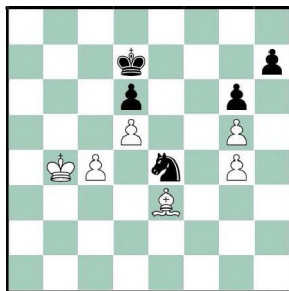
Here we have two bishops versus two

knights. Another theme will be the nonchalance of the modern computer engines. I think that most people would assess the diagrammed position as much better for White. Giri has the two bishops and a big space advantage. Black has a weak pawn on a6. But the computer just sits there laughing with “0.06” – no problem!

42. ♙e1 ♖b8 43. ♙d1 a5? The white king is going to the queenside. It is hard for a person to judge when passive defense works and when it doesn't. Here, he could just sit tight with 43... ♖d7 44. ♙c2 ♖b8 45. ♙b2 ♖d7 46. ♙a3 ♖d8 47. ♙a4 ♖c7 48. ♙a5 ♖b7 49. ♙f4 ♖de5 50. ♙f1, and even here just doing nothing with 50... ♙a7 51. ♙h3 (51. b4 ♖d7 52. b5 axb5 53. ♙xb5 ♖de5) 51... ♙b7 52. ♙e6 ♙a7 doesn't lose.

44. ♙c2! 44... ♙xa5 ♖xg5 is fine for Black. 44... ♖a6 45. ♙b2 ♖b4 46. ♙a3 ♖c2+ 47. ♙a4 ♖d4 48. ♙d1 ♖e5 49. ♙xa5 ♖d3 50. ♙c3 ♖f2 51. ♙xd4 ♖xd1 52. ♙g1 ♖c3 53. ♙e3 ♖d7? Black has lost a pawn, but even here I am not sure White can win after 53... ♖d1. In the game, he ends up in a funny position where the knight is trapped in the middle of the board.

54. b4! ♖d1 The main line is 54... cxb4 55. ♙xb4 ♖e4 56. g4



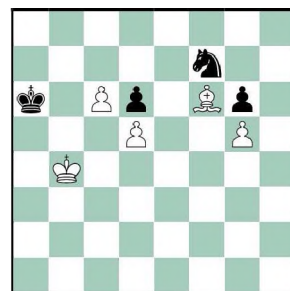
The black knight is stranded on e4! It has no escape routes, and when the white king comes around to d3, the knight will have to offer itself on c5 for the bishop, leading to a loss in the pawn ending.

55. ♙g1! ♖b2 56. bxc5 ♖xc4+ 57. ♙b5 ♖e5 58. c6+ ♖c7 59. ♙b6+ ♖c8 60. ♙d4 ♖f3 61. ♙e3 ♖c7 62. ♙c4 ♖e5+ 63. ♙d4 ♖f3+ 64. ♙c3 ♖e5 65. ♙d4 ♖f7 66. ♙f6 ♖c8 67. ♙b4 ♖c7 68. ♙b5 h6 69. gxh6 ♖xh6 70. ♙d4 ♖f7 71. ♙c4 ♖c8 72. ♙d3 ♖c7 73. ♙e4 ♖c8 74. ♙f4 ♖c7 75. ♙f6 ♖c8 76. g4 ♖c7 77. g5 ♖c8

Trying to avoid scenarios similar to our comment on move 54, where the knight gets chased down, Mamedov tried to construct a fortress with the knight on f7. But now it's effectively a pawn ending.

The knight has no moves, and Black loses by zugzwang.

78. ♙e4 ♖c7 79. ♙d4 ♖b6 80. ♙c4 ♖a6 81. ♙b3 ♖b6 82. ♙b4 ♖a6

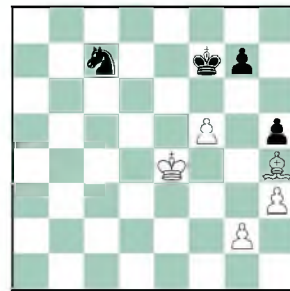


The last stand, which Anish Giri breaks down elegantly:

83. ♙d8! ♖e5 84. ♙c7 ♖f7 85. ♙c4 ♖e5+ 86. ♙c3 ♖f7 87. ♙b4 ♖xg5 88. ♙xd6 ♖f7 89. ♙c5 g5 90. ♙g3 g4 91. d6 **Black resigned**

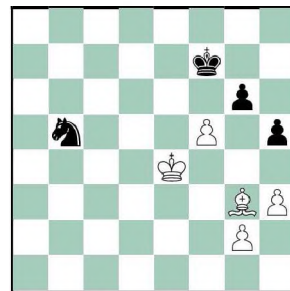
Tatev Abrahamyan	2262
Anna Zatonskih	2363

U.S. Women's Championship, St Louis 2023



Keeping the knight from harm was also not easy in this game from the U.S. Women's Championship:

55... ♖e8? The only defense is 55... g6! But this is only the beginning. After 56. ♙g3 Black must play 56... ♖b5!



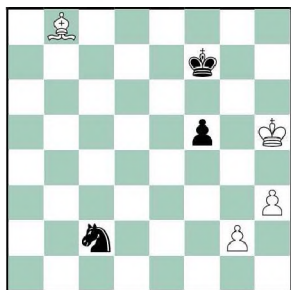
with two branches:

A) 57. ♙e5

A1) 57... ♖a3? 58. ♙f4 ♖c4 59. g3!! and White wins, for example: 59... ♖d2 60. h4 ♖c4 61. ♙c7! ♖d2 62. ♙d8 ♖c4 63. ♙g5.

A2) 57... ♖a7! 58. ♙f4 ♖c6 59. g3 ♖e7.

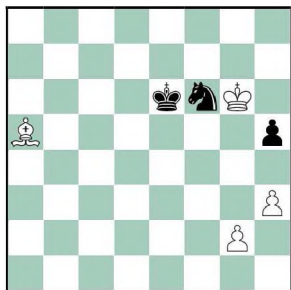
B) 57.♖b8 ♖a3! (now only this works!)
58.♗f4 ♖c2! 59.♗g5 gxf5 60.♗xh5



60...♖e1! 61.g3 ♖f3, pinning the white king to the side. This position is drawn. If you say this is all too abstract to understand, I agree. I am not sure I can offer much advice here regarding intuition. You just have to be constantly moving pieces in your mind, “I go here, you go here.”

I guess having as many moves as possible available to the knight (after a possible restraining action by a king or bishop) helps. After the game, of course, any beginner who knows how to look at a bar on the phone can ask you why you lost a dead-drawn ending with pawns on one side.

56.♗f4 g6 Too late now, because the white king becomes active.
57.♗g5! gxf5 58.♗xf5 ♗g7 58...♖g7+ 59.♗g5 is similarly hopeless.
59.♗g5 ♖f6 60.♗e1 ♗f7 61.♗a5 ♗e6 62.♗g6



The black knight can't keep defending its pawn for very long.

62...♖d5 63.♗xh5 ♗f7 After 63...♖f4+ 64.♗g5 ♖xg2 White has only one pawn left, but it's enough because she traps the poor knight with 65.♗d2!.

64.♗g5 ♖f6 65.g4 ♖e4+ 66.♗f4 ♖f6 The white bishop is of the right color for the rook pawn, so there is no doubt about the outcome.

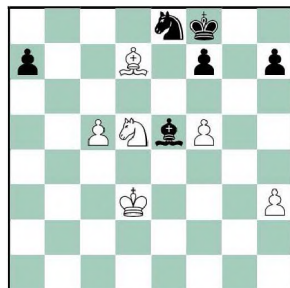
67.♗d8 ♖e8 68.h4 ♖g7 69.♗e5 ♖e6 70.♗f6 ♖f8 71.♗f5 ♖g6 72.h5 ♖f8 73.g5 ♗g8 74.g6 ♖d7 75.h6 ♖f8 76.♗d4 ♖h7 77.gxh7+ ♗xh7 78.♗g5

Black resigned

Abhimanyu Mishra 2591

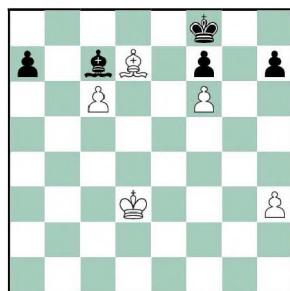
Arthur Guo 2483

U.S. Junior Championship, St Louis 2023

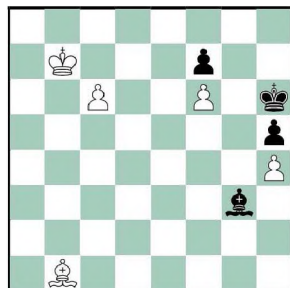


The knight can also defeat a bishop: In this game, I found Abhimanyu Mishra's persistent winning attempts quite impressive. Sure, the position is drawn, but being able to constantly create problems is a sign of a very strong player. I also remember how in the post-game interview, Mishra whipped out a series of moves so quickly I couldn't even follow it.

41.c6 f6! 41...♖c7 is tempting, but after 42.♖xc7 ♗xc7 43.f6!



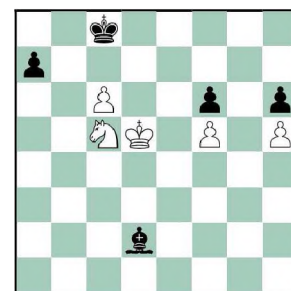
White wins, as Black has no room to move. For example: 43...a6 44.♖c4 h6 45.♖c5 h5 46.h4 ♗g8 47.♗c8 ♖h7 48.♗f5+ ♖h6 (48...♗g8 49.♗d3 ♖f8 50.♗xa6 ♖e8 51.♗c4 ♖d8 52.♗xf7 ♗e5 53.♖b6) 49.♗d3 a5 50.♗b1 (It's still easy to mess up: 50.♖b5 ♗d8 51.♖a6? a4 52.♖b7 a3 53.♗b1 a2 54.♗xa2 ♗g6 and White is left with the wrong rook pawn.) 50...a4 51.♖b4 ♗d8 52.♖xa4 ♗c7 53.♖b5 ♗g3 54.♖b6 ♗h2 55.♖b7 ♗g3



56.♖c8 (56.c7?? ♗xc7 57.♖xc7 stalemate.) 56...♗xh4 57.♖d7 ♗g3 58.♖e7+-.

42.♗xe8! ♗xe8 43.♖c4 ♖d8 44.♖c5 ♖c8 45.♖b5 ♗b2 46.h4 ♗e5 47.h5 ♗b2 48.♖f4 ♗c1 49.♖e6 ♗e3 50.♖f8 h6 51.♖e6 ♗b8 52.♖c4 ♖c8 53.♖d5 ♗d2? It only takes one mistake to lose! The white knight now begins to dominate the bishop. The bishop should have stayed on the g1-a7 diagonal with 53...♗f2, but not 53...♗g1? which is too far, as White would win with 54.♖g5! or 54.♖f8.

54.♖c5!



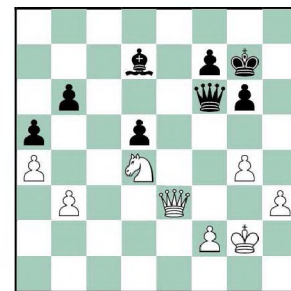
54...a5 Other losing continuations are: 54...♗e3 55.♖e4; or 54...♗e1 55.♖e4 ♗h4 56.♖d6 a5 57.c7 a4 58.♖c6 ♗g3 59.♖xg3 a3 60.♖e4 a2 61.♖d6 mate; or 54...♗c3 55.♖e4 ♗b2 56.♖d6+ ♖c7 57.♖b5+ ♖b6 58.c7 ♖b7 59.♖d6. 55.♖c4 ♖c7 56.♖b5 ♗e3 56...♗c3 57.♖e6+ ♖c8 58.♖f4 ♖b8 59.♖d5. 57.♖e6+ ♖d6 58.c7 ♖d7 59.♖xa5 ♗f4 60.♖xf4 ♖xc7 61.♖b5 ♖d6 62.♖e6 ♖e5 63.♖g7 ♖e5 64.♖b6 ♖d6 65.♖b7 ♖d7 66.♖e6

Black resigned

Magnus Carlsen 2839

Al Muthaiah 2470

Qatar Masters Open, Doha 2023

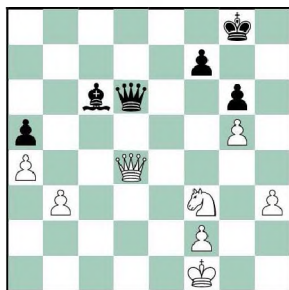


What about queen and bishop vs queen and knight? Back in the day, Jose Raul Capablanca said that ♖+♗ is better than ♖+♗. He was probably talking about positions like this one: pawns are even, and you already know what the engine says... 39.♖f3 ♗c6 Black has to walk a tightrope after this.

40.g5 ♖d6 41.♖xb6 d4 This is what Black was counting on, but after the next



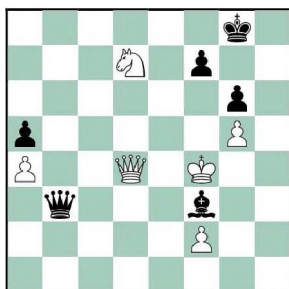
move it turns out to be a real sacrifice.
42.♔f1 ♕g8! 43.♖xd4



43...♖e6? Black is two pawns down but can still defend with 43...♖e7! and if 44.♘e5 ♖xg5! 45.♘xc6 ♖c1+ 46.♔e2 ♖xc6 and Black should not lose, because it's hard for White to form a passed pawn without allowing a rain of checks (although I wouldn't bet against Magnus Carlsen winning this).

44.♘e5! But now the queen and knight working together are deadly. Black even levels the material soon, but that doesn't matter.

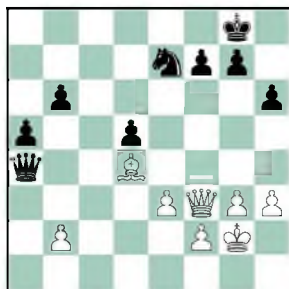
44...♖xh3+ 45.♔e1 ♖h1+ 46.♔d2 ♕f3 47.♘d7! ♖d1+ 48.♔e3 ♖xb3+ 49.♔f4 Mate on the hopelessly weak dark squares is coming.



49...♕c6 50.♘f6+ ♔g7 51.♘h5+ ♔f8 52.♖d6+ ♔g8 53.♖d8+ **Black resigned**

Fabiano Caruana	2782
Leinier Dominguez	2739

FIDE World Cup, Baku 2023

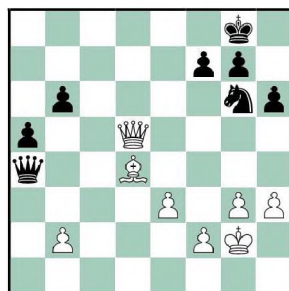


However, it seems like Fabiano Caruana might have an argument with the third world champion about whether ♖+♘ is

stronger than ♖+♕. Well, we don't argue about these things anymore. It really just "depends on the position." White is temporarily a pawn down, but rather than immediately regaining it, he focuses on creating mating threats.

35.♖g4! ♘g6 The machine wants 35...g6, 0.00, but who would ever play that?

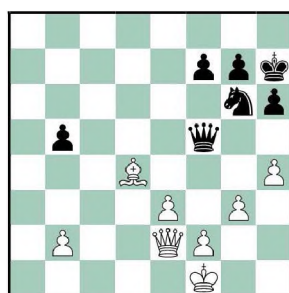
36.♖c8+ ♔h7 37.♖f5 ♕g8 38.♖xd5



White's centralized pieces give him an advantage.

38...b5? Probably the losing move! The black pawns on the queenside will be hard to defend. The only defense was 38...♖c2! and if 39.♕xb6, Black can play 39...♘h4+! (39...♖xb2 40.♕xa5 also should not lose but will be long-term misery.) 40.gxh4 ♖g6+. The long queen check with the capture of a piece, leading to a drawn ending a pawn down, is reminiscent of the variation in the previous game.

39.h4 ♖d1 40.♖a8+ ♔h7 41.♖xa5 ♖g4 42.♔f1 ♖d1+ 43.♖e1 ♖d3+ 44.♖e2 ♖f5



White is a sound pawn up. With pawns on both wings, it's better to have the bishop. Fabi can combine threats against the king with attacks on weak pawns. It took a while, but **White eventually won**:

45.♔g2 ♘f8 46.♖f3 ♖d7 47.♖e4+ f5 48.♖f3 ♘g6 49.♕c3 ♘e7 50.e4 ♔g8 51.exf5 ♘xf5 52.♖a8+ ♔f7 53.h5 ♘e7 54.♕b4 ♘d5 55.♖f8+ ♔e6 56.♖g8+ ♔e5 57.♕d2 ♔d4 58.♖h7 ♖e7 59.♔g1 b4 60.b3 ♖e5 61.♖c2 ♖xh5 62.♕xb4 ♖f3 63.♕a3 ♔e5 64.♕b2+ ♔d6 65.♕xg7 h5 66.♕d4 h4 67.♖g6+ ♔d7 68.♖h7+ ♘e7 69.♖xh4 ♖xb3 70.♖g4+ ♔d6 71.♖e4 ♖b5 72.♔g2 ♖h5 73.g4 ♖b5 74.♕f6

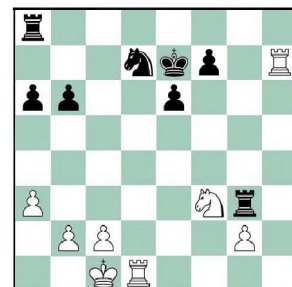
♘d5 75.♕e5+ ♔d7 76.♔g3 ♘e7 77.♕f6 ♘d5 78.♖f5+ ♔e8 79.♖e6+ ♔f8 80.♕e5 ♖d3+ 81.f3 ♖d1 82.♕d6+ ♔g7 83.♕c5 ♘f6 84.♖e5 ♔f7 85.♕d4 ♘d7 86.♖e4 ♘f8 87.♕c5 ♘g6 88.♖c4+ ♔g7 89.♖d4+ ♖xd4 90.♕xd4+ ♔f7 91.f4 ♘e7 92.f5 ♘d5 93.g5 ♘e7 94.♔g4

Black resigned

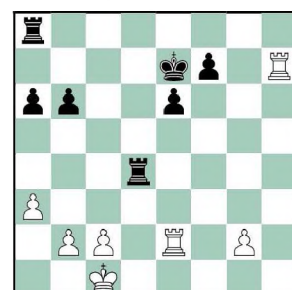
Whenever Magnus Carlsen wins a tournament, you can bet that a conversion of a small endgame advantage at some point contributed to the victory. Here is one from the World Cup.

Dommaraju Gukesh	2744
Magnus Carlsen	2835

FIDE World Cup, Baku 2023



22.♘d4 ♘e5 23.♖e1 ♖g4 24.♖xe5 ♖xd4 25.♖e2



If this game were annotated in the 20th century, we would see something like this: "Although a lot of pieces have been traded, the position is difficult to play, especially for White. Black now executes a multi-step winning plan:

- 1) Defend the f7 pawn from all possible attacks,
 - 2) Exchange one pair of rooks,
 - 3) Tie down the remaining white rook to the defense of the weak g-pawn,
 - 4) Hold the three white pawns on the queenside with just the a- and b-pawns,
 - 5) With the much more active rook, tie down the white king to the defense of the queenside, and...
 - 6) At that point, the black king and passed e-pawn can march freely.
- Of course, if White had understood this



▲ Magnus Carlsen

Photo by Maria Emelianova

entire conception, he could have perhaps saved the game.”

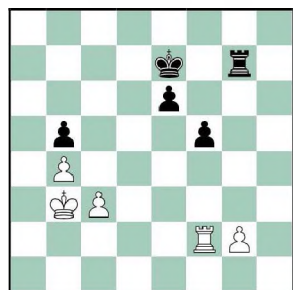
I am referring in jest, of course, to the famous Alekhine annotations to his game with Znosko-Borovsky (Paris 1933), which the reader can find in many sources. (Alekhine gave a six-part plan, *a posteriori*, which could have been easily derailed on move 2, as Shereshevsky, in *Endgame Strategy*, among others, later pointed out.

25...♖ad8 26.c3 ♜f4! Stopping the second white rook from attacking f7.

27.♔c2 ♜g8 28.b4 White is looking for counterplay.

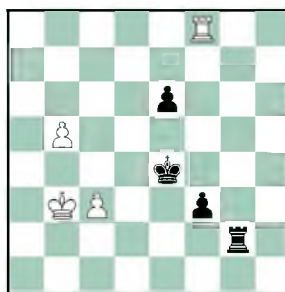
28...b5! One pawn will hold two.

29.♔b3 ♜fg4 30.♜f2 ♜g8 31.♜xg7 ♜xg7 32.a4 f5 33.axb5 axb5



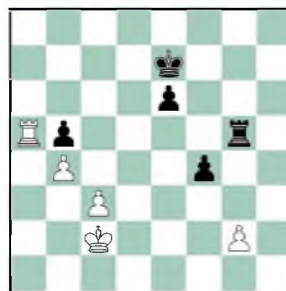
34.♜a2? White has to defend actively with **34.c4!** ♜g3+ **35.♜f3 bxc4+** **36.♔xc4 ♜xg2 37.♜b3;** for example, **37...♔d6 38.♜d3+!** ♔e5 **39.♜e3+!** ♔f6 **40.♜b3!** But this wasn't obvious at all.

34...♜g5? A mistake in reply! It was Black's turn to get active with **34...♔d6!** **35.♜a6+** ♔d5 **36.♜b6 ♜xg2 37.♜xb5+** ♔e4 **38.♜b8 f4 39.♜f8 f3 40.b5**



40...♜g5! 41.♔a4 ♜f5 42.♜xf5 exf5 43.b6 f2 44.b7 f1 ♜ ♔a1+ But who are we to judge?

35.♜a7+? White appears to have somewhat given up, just when a miracle draw is available with **35.♜a5! f4 36.♔c2!!** walking right into a tempo-gaining check that captures a pawn!

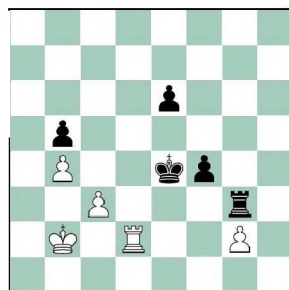


A) If **36...♔f6 37.♔d3 ♔f5 38.♜xb5+ e5 39.♜b8 ♜g3+ 40.♔c4 ♜xg2 41.b5** is a draw this time.

B) **36...♜xg2+ 37.♔d3 ♜g5 38.♔e4 ♜f5 39.♜a7+!** ♔f6 **40.♔f3 ♔e5 41.♜b7! ♔d6 42.♜b6+.** Finding all this in a practical game in time pressure is, as far as I can tell, very difficult.

35...♔f6 36.♜a2 36.♜b7 f4 37.♔c2 no longer helps: **37...♜xg2+ 38.♔d3 e5 39.♜xb5 ♔f5,** etc.

36...f4 37.♜c2 ♜g3 38.♔a2 ♔e5 39.♔b2 ♔d5 40.♜d2+ ♔e4



Now the black pawn will advance, as preordained.

41.♔b3 e5 42.♜e2+ ♔f5 43.♜d2 e4 44.♜d5+ ♔f6 45.♜xb5 e3 46.♜b6+ ♔f5 47.♜b5+ ♔e4 48.♜b8 e2

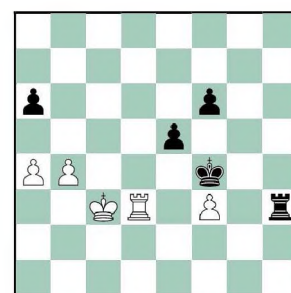
White resigned

I have saved the best for last. Fidel Corrales's combination here is one of the most unusual I have seen in a long time. Special thanks to Justin Sarkar for posting this ending on social media. He showed that the love of beauty in chess outweighs whether you win or lose.

Karsten Mueller and I included this ending in our upcoming endgame exercise book, *Endgame Corner* (published by Russell Enterprises), which will be available by the time you read this.

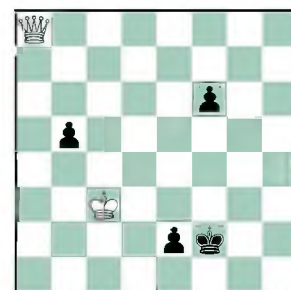
Justin Sarkar	2338
Fidel Corrales	2489

Eastern Class Open, Windsor Locks 2023



46...♜xf3!! This looks fine at first, but upon a closer look it's clear that White queens with check before Black can queen. **47.♜xf3+ ♔xf3 48.b5 axb5 49.a5** Why then did I give Black's 46th move two exclams?

49...e4 50.a6 e3 51.a7 e2 52.a8 ♜+ ♔f2



Fidel had seen further. The three black pawns form some sort of magic constellation where White's checks are all blocked and he cannot stop the pawn from queening. The best he can get is a ♜ vs ♜+♔ ending which is lost.

53.♜a7+ ♔f1 54.♔b4 e1 ♜+ 55.♔xb5 f5 56.♜d4 ♜e4 57.♔c5 ♔e2 58.♜b2+ ♔f3 59.♔b6 f4, and **Black won.**

I hope that in 2024 you too can produce endgame studies over the board! 

SCIENCE-BASED ADVICE FOR MEANINGFUL SELF-IMPROVEMENT

Improve Your Chess!

The process of learning is no different in any subject you may think of, chess included. You only need to know what actions lead to effectiveness instead of wasting time!

■ By Dr. J. Corey Butler

Professor of Psychology at
Southwest Minnesota State University

It is time to write a practical column. This month I would like to discuss the best ways to improve at chess, according to psychological science. For more than a hundred years, the topics of learning and memory have received a tremendous amount of research attention from psychologists. Let's apply some of this vast knowledge to the development of chess skill.

"HOW" BEFORE "WHAT"

I will not say much about what to study in this article. It might be best to master the endgames first, as Capablanca said. Or perhaps study tactics, or annotated grandmaster games. Or maybe devote a certain percentage of time to each phase of the game: openings, middlegames, and endgames. I will leave these recommendations to people who are better at chess than me. Besides, I think the "how" of chess study is probably more important than the "what" and so that is what I will focus on.

I will say this though. As much as possible, you should study what you enjoy studying. This maximizes intrinsic motivation, which has benefits for retention, and especially persistence. If you enjoy solving puzzles and find endgames boring, it is okay to devote more study time to your preferred activity. It is far better to actually work on your tactics than to buy the best endgame book available, only to leave it on the shelf to collect dust.

SEVERAL SHORTER SESSIONS RATHER THAN A BIG ONE

My next piece of advice is to use distributed rather than massed practice in your study. This is very similar to what teachers always say about not trying to cram for a big test. You will do better and retain the information longer if you break up the learning and spend several sessions on it, rather than one big session, even if the total amount of study time is the same. This technique has been verified with many experiments on both humans and other animals.

The difference can be dramatic. In a 2006



Dr. Corey Butler is a psychologist, educator, and youth chess coach in Saint Paul, Minnesota. He has published research on such topics as social perception, the psychology of competition, interpersonal sensitivity, and authoritarianism. In his spare time he enjoys playing chess and other hobby board games.



I think the
"how" of
chess study
is probably
more
important
than the
"what".

You should
study what
you enjoy
studying.

experiment published in Applied Cognitive Psychology, college students learned a mathematics procedure either in a single session, or distributed across two sessions separated by a week. The number of practice problems given to each student was the same. After one week, performance was about the same between groups. But four weeks later, the group receiving distributed practice scored twice as high on the test than the massed practice group.* Other research has found that even *Drosophila* (fruit flies) learn better if they have breaks between learning trials rather than having all the training take place at once.

So, if you want to improve at chess, you will be better off studying weekly or several times a week, rather than having one or two long sessions a month. Multiple sessions force our brains to retrieve the learned information repeatedly in different contexts, leading to more durable memory. If you are learning a new opening, for example, go over a key variation during one study session. Then next time you study, don't move on to another line, but go over that first variation again, and keep reviewing it on succeeding study sessions. This will make the most of your practice over time.

MEANINGFUL – THIS IS THE KEY!

Another piece of advice is to make your study meaningful. Meaningful information is retained much better than an equal amount of meaningless



information. To take an extreme example, imagine memorizing a few of lines of poetry in your native language, compared to a language you are unfamiliar with. Even if word length and number of syllables are held constant, it is far more difficult to memorize words in a foreign language. Likewise, beginners often memorize chess openings without really understanding them. Rote memorization like this is terrible for memory, and so we are likely to forget the opening, probably at the very moment we finally have an opportunity to play it. Even if we do remember the variations, we may have trouble finding an effective plan in the middlegame if we do not understand the reasons behind the moves.

If you are a beginner or intermediate player and you want to study openings, the thing to do is to find a course or book that has plenty of explanations of the moves, as well as illustrative games that show how the opening leads to typical middlegame and endgame positions. Likewise, if you are studying grandmaster games (a common recommendation) look for well-annotated games that explain the reasons behind the moves, not just long sequences of notation. IM Jeremy Silman's books were much loved because of the clarity of his explanations. And many of us who have been around for a while have a fondness for Irving Chernev's *Logical Chess Move by Move*, which explained every move of every game (yes, it is quite an undertaking to think of dozens of interesting and informative explanations for 1.e4).

PRACTICE ACTIVE LEARNING

When it comes to learning, how you spend your time while you study may be more important than how much time you spend. Passive learning, such as mindlessly playing through the latest grandmaster games, is going to provide limited results. Research shows that active learning is far more effective. It forces you to pay closer attention and leads to more durable and accessible long-term memory. Watching chess videos on YouTube tends to be passive, but pausing a video to think about a position and coming up with the best continuation transforms it into an active learning exercise.

Solving puzzles is a great way to train the chess neurons of your brain. Not only do puzzles sharpen tactics, which determine the result of the vast majority of amateur games, but they are also a wonderful active-learning strategy. I'm convinced that I was able to add 200 points to my rating just by working my way through Fred Reinfeld's book, *1001 Winning Chess Sacrifices and Combinations*. These days, with the easy availability of online puzzles, there is simply no reason not to solve them on a daily basis, either to improve your skills or to maintain them at their current level.

Another good active-learning strategy is to play through well-annotated grandmaster games while covering all the moves for one side and trying to guess them on the board. This may be better practice than random puzzles because it helps develop planning over a series of moves. Bruce Pandolfini's *Solitaire*

You will be better off studying weekly or several times a week, rather than having one or two long sessions a month.

Chess column in *Chess Life* is a great way to do this because you earn points for correct moves, adding to the fun. Several books have also taken this approach. Most of them are probably out of print now, but they are still somewhat available in the used book market.

One final recommendation from chess coaches is also extremely useful. Play through annotated games on a real set, but stop when you reach the end of the opening. Put fifteen or thirty minutes on the clock and think of a plan, just as you would in a tournament. Write down your thoughts and notes and compare it to what actually happened in the game. This will help you develop your strategic thinking with practice.

ACT WITH DETERMINATION

So now we have a plan. Frequent, distributed practice using an active-learning approach with enjoyable, high quality, and well-explained instructional material. But sadly, planning is limited in both chess and life. This is going to be quite a lot of work, and most of us are already far too busy. How can we build a solid training regimen that we will be able to commit to?

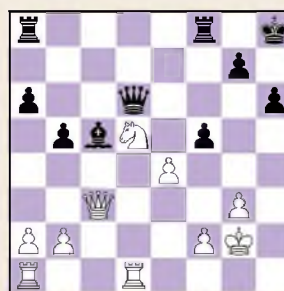
Here we turn to the principles of behavior modification. Most voluntary behaviors like studying chess are preceded by a cue or reminder, and followed by some sort of reward. Over time this forms a habit loop, which becomes part of our routine. I recommend that you get started right away. Put a reminder in your phone, put your chess set next to your favorite chair, or put a chess piece on the kitchen counter as a visual reminder. It is surprisingly how effective these little nudges can be.

What about the reward for the behavior? This will be the progress you make as you improve, as well as the pleasure you get from working on chess. Remember that you need to leverage your intrinsic motivation and study what you like. If you don't enjoy any of it and learning chess does not motivate you, I can only wonder what you are doing reading this magazine!

*Rohrer, D., & Taylor, K. (2006). The effects of overlearning and distributed practice on the retention of mathematics knowledge. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 20, 1209–1224.

PUZZLE

Practice active learning by solving this puzzle in your head. Or set up the pieces on your board, cover the moves with your finger, and try to guess them "solitaire chess"-style. The position is from a recent game I played, with White to move.



1.e5 Chasing the defender of the bishop.

1...♖c6 2.♖ac1 A second tactical motif, putting pressure on the pinned piece.

2...♖ac8 3.b4 ♜fd8 4.♞f3 Not **4.♞xc5? ♞a8 5.♞d4 ♜xc1 6.♜xc1 ♞xd5+** and Black is not so bad.

4...♞e6 5.♟f4 The immediate **5.bxc5** is even better.

5...♞xa2 6.♜xd8+ and **White won**.



A Peek Inside A Private Archive

Bruce Alberston – Master Of A Measured Aggression

Bruce Alberston, a prolific educational chess author as well as instructor, is almost unknown for his chess playing ability. In this feature, we aim to shed light on his talent by showcasing some extraordinary games that reveal his temperament playing style.

■ By Andy Ansel

Unfortunately, I never met Bruce. However, his close friend and coauthor of eight books, Fred Wilson, and I went to his house upon his passing, and bought his book collection. We also found his notebooks containing many games from the 60's through the 80's. If you look through commercial databases you will only find a few of his games published, but Bruce was a very active player before retiring to his teaching and writing. His book *Chess Mazes* is an interesting and instructive book teaching visualization and this process is evident in many of his games.

Bruce grew up and started playing in the Lehigh Valley Region in Pennsylvania. Early games include a few against Paul Felix Schmidt, the strong German player who emigrated to the U.S. and has had several books written about him. Bruce collected many local scores and had typewritten binders of games called "From the Shoebox" which recorded many local games, including those from Pennsylvania Championships. He highlighted many local players who are unknown to almost everyone today.

In the 70's he moved to New York and was very active in the local chess scene, playing in most major events and facing many top players. Bruce's playing strength probably was inhibited by his classical, dogmatic opening repertoire and playing style. He played cautiously against strong players, opening with 1.d4 instead of 1.e4, which he only used against players he felt he could beat. He answered 1.e4 with 1...e5 and played many Ruy Lopez's. His style was more positional and cautious and hence he drew many games against stronger players. However, he could be deadly at times and was quite a dangerous tactician in the middlegame. He also won games against many strong players and his games are technically very sound.

Bruce's first opponent needs little introduction. John Fedorowicz (or the Fed) was part of a group of strong post-Fischer American players and was an IM at the time of this game. John is a sharp player who has deep theoretical knowledge.

The next game is against another of America's strong post-Fischer players, Michael Rohde, who at the time of this game was an IM, but as with the Fed, later became a GM. Mike is known as a creative thinker and a tough fighter and defender and a very dangerous opponent.

The last game features someone less known, but also a very strong player. Leslie Braun was a fixture in the New York chess scene and among the most active tournament players. He was a member of the Marshall Chess Club and played in many of their events as well as championships. A 2300+ player, who would usually not fare as well against stronger opponents but was deadly against lower rated ones as I can personally attest to. Leslie had a wide opening repertoire, but was always a dangerous opponent and appeared to have an even score against Bruce.

Now I give the floor to Pete Tamburro to guide us through Bruce's three exceptional games.

FROM A RATHER UNIQUE GAMES DATABASE, *AMERICAN CHESS MAGAZINE* REVEALS EXCLUSIVELY SOME HIDDEN GEMS GATHERED TOGETHER OVER DECADES BY RENOWNED BIBLIOPHILE ANDY ANSEL.



Andy Ansel can be considered a product of the Fischer boom, having learned to play chess in 1972. He was active in the Bay Area chess scene while in High School, after which he moved to New York, where he achieved a peak rating of around 2100. He has now retired from active chess play but spends his time collecting books and maintaining a database based on games drawn from his library. He currently resides in North Fork, Long Island, with his wife and two dogs. His grown-up daughters live in NYC and London.

A57

Bruce Alberston

John Fedorowicz

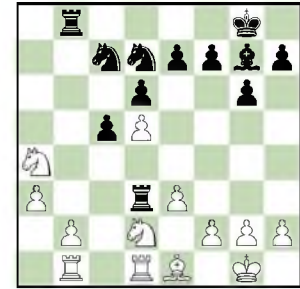
Philadelphia National Chess Congress 1979

This is a particularly fascinating game because Bruce's opponent becomes an author of a book on the Benko Gambit and one of its leading practitioners. Despite people knowing it was coming, Fed's record with the line was 26 wins, 11 losses and 20 draws in 57 games. This is one tough opponent: a Grandmaster with a pet line.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 b5 4.cxb5 a6 5.e3 Taking on a6 is still by far the most popular. However, Milos Perunovic, in his book *The Modernized Benko Gambit*,



BRUCE WAS ORIGINALLY FROM LEHIGH VALLEY, PA, BUT HE MADE HIS MARK IN THE NEW YORK CHESS SCENE AND WAS A VERY STRONG PLAYER WHO BATTLED MANY TOP PLAYERS IN THE 70'S AND 80'S, EVEN BECOMING A LIFE MASTER.



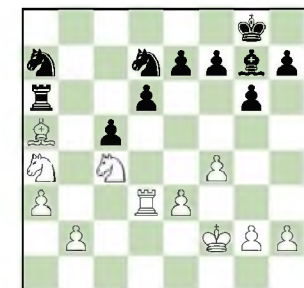
21. ♖c4! A very ingenious pawn sacrifice!

21... ♜xd5 22. ♕a5 ♜xd1+ 23. ♜xd1 ♖b5 24. f4! To discourage ... ♖e5 and get the king in the game.

24... ♜a8 All dressed up and nowhere to go. Black might want to get ... ♖e6 and ... ♖d5 in and may need the rook to support d6 when the e-pawn moves. You get the feeling as this endgame evolves that having two rooks is better than one, and if you are going to exchange material you had better see a concrete continuation to make the advantage decisive.

Bruce found a way to hold the wing with a bit of cooperation from John that turned the tables. It was not sudden. The Black edge dissipated, and the White prospects grew.

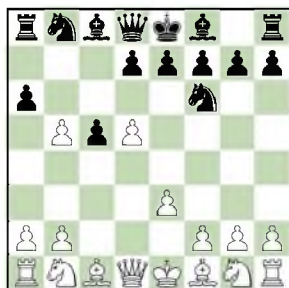
25. ♖f2 ♜a6 26. ♜d3 ♖a7



27. b4 Wow! He gets this move in after all. Now the White queenside prospects are brightening.

27... ♜xb4 28. axb4 f5 29. ♖c5 ♜c6 30. ♖xd7 ♜xc4 31. ♖e2 ♖c6 32. ♖b6 ♜c2+ 33. ♜d2 ♜c1 34. ♜d1 ♜xd1 35. ♖xd1 It's unclear what Fed had in mind all this time. The initial queens exchange was fine, but as more pieces were traded off, White is left with an outside passed pawn. Without major pieces, the b-pawn advance will be very tough to meet. The squares d5 for the white knight and b5 for the white king or the passed pawn will become key possibilities.

calls the e3 line: "In my opinion, one of the most dangerous lines a Benko player can meet. White protects his pawn on b5 and never has to worry about the pawn on b5." Albertson plays this 49 years before that evaluation!



5... ♖g6 GM Lev Alburt was a big fan of 5... ♖b7, but also 5... axb5 6. ♖xb5 ♜a5+ 7. ♖c3 ♖b7 8. ♖ge2=, when we end up in a swamp of theory.

6. ♖c3 ♖g7 7. ♖f3 d6!? Today, preferred is 7... 0-0, probably to keep the possibility of ... ♖e7-e6 in reserve, depending on what White plays. Generally it just transposes.

8. bxa6 Modern theory likes securing b5 and blocking the b-file. It seems counter to original purpose of e3, as White is allowing the thematic a- and b-file pressure. White should probably stick with the original idea of e3: 8.e4 0-0 9. a4 axb5 10. ♖xb5.

8... 0-0 9. ♖c4 ♖xa6 10. ♖xa6 ♖xa6 We

now have a well-known position. Black has compensation for the pawn deficit in view of his pressure on the queenside from the files and long diagonal.

11. 0-0 ♜a5 12. ♖d2 ♜fb8 13. ♜b1 ♖d7 A Fed a few years older would play 13... ♖b4 14. a3 ♖d3.

14. ♜e2 ♖c7 15. a3 This move is usually a sign something has gone wrong. The hole on b3 is significant. It weakens the light squares and makes b4 impossible.



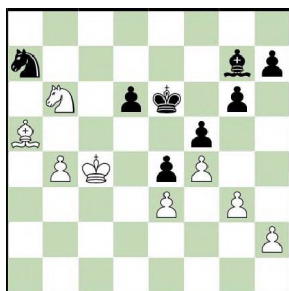
15... ♜b3 16. ♖fd1 ♜a6 There's confidence in just how good Black's position is! Benko who used to write "Benoni Countergambit" articles in *Chess Life* in the late 60s wasn't averse to showing how he would go into endgames to win. 16... ♜ab8.

17. ♜xa6 ♜xa6 18. ♖e1 ♜ab6 19. ♖a4 White has to figure out how to set up some sort of defensive structure here.

19... ♜b8 20. ♖d2 ♜d3



35...e5 36.g3 e4 Both players needed to activate their kings a little sooner. 36...f7. 37.f2 f7 38.f3 e6 39.f4 a7

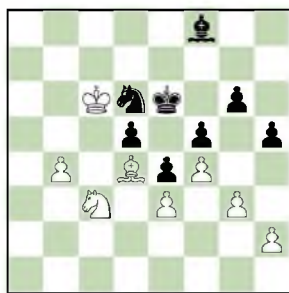


40.f4?! 40.f5!+-.

40...f8? Black can defend with 40...c8 41.b5 (41.f5 e7) 41...d7.

41.f3 41.f6 with the knight going to d5, the bishop going to c7 and a royal escort down the b-file seems in order as well.

41...h5 42.f6 f8 43.f4 d5+ 44.f5 Cheapo trap! Not 44.f5 d6+. 44...d6+ 45.f6 The Fox is in the henhouse. The game is over.



45...f7 46.b5 f4 47.f7 f6+ 48.f8 f4 49.f2 f5 50.f3 f7 d7 51.b6 d2 Just in case you were wondering about the kingside pawn vulnerabilities. 51...xb6 52.f6 d2 53.h4 f1 54.f5 f3 55.f3 h1 56.f5 f3 (56...f6 57.f6) 57.f7 and it turns out that way in the game as well.

52.f1 f1 53.f6 f6 54.f6 f6 55.f5 f6 56.f2 f1 57.f1 f3 58.f3 f2 59.f5+ f7 60.f5 d1 61.f5+ f6 62.f6 f7 63.f8 f6 64.f7+ f7 65.f6 f3 66.f6+ f8 67.f5

Black resigned.

Source: Alberston's notebook

Determined defense won this for Bruce. Fed had many better experiences. The Benko is still alive after some 50,000 games recorded in Chessbase and it is still a struggle.

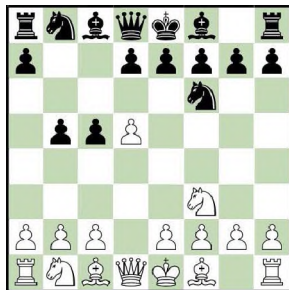
A57

Bruce Alberston

Michael Rohde

World Open, Philadelphia 1982

1.d4 f6 2.f3 c5 3.d5 b5!? Back then, Mike could play anything and get away with it. Not today.



4.c4 f7 Not 4...bxc4 5.f3 d6 6.e4 g6 7.fxc4 and you have a really bad Benko-like (but not really) Gambit.

5.a4 bxc4 Perhaps best was what some old Blumenfeld Gambit players used to do: 5...b4.

6.f3 e6 Well, it's consistent – attack d5. 7.e4 exd5 8.exd5 d6 9.fxc4 f7 Not much choice as fianchettoing is too slow – fatally so. 9...g6 10.0-0 f7 11.f1+.

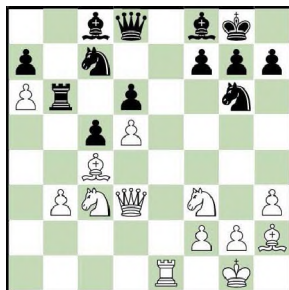
10.0-0 0-0 11.f1 fbd7 12.a5! Nice positional alertness – cut down the possibility of ...a5 and ...f6.

12...f8 13.h3 To prepare his next move.

13...f8 14.f4 f8 15.f3 Bruce decides that he has time to build up the position more cautiously, considering his opponent. A bit sharper with the same idea was 15.a6 f8 16.b3.

15...f6 16.f2 f8 17.fxe8 fxe8 18.a6 18.f5 f8.

18...f8 19.b3 f7 20.f1 f6 We're in 20 moves. Bruce has more space and mobility. Mike has a solid-looking and tenacious defensive setup. White's biggest problem is the bishop on c4, though, while Black's rook will have only a role of fruitlessly attacking pawns protected by a bishop – an inefficient relationship for Black.



21.f4 f4 22.f3 Now both sides try

to improve the positions of their minor pieces.

22...f7? Errant knights wandering off always reminds me of Jeb Stuart around Gettysburg.

23.f2 f5 24.fde4 f8 25.g4 f6 26.f3 The queen is unscathed by the pointless bishop "attack." Now the pressure on d6 has to be dealt with.

26...f4 27.f4 f5 This should not work, but it must not be underestimated. You always have to ask what your opponent is up to, especially a very strong one. Unfortunately, the knight excursion seems to invite kingside activity, which should not work either. Two bad plans simultaneously initiating!



28.f4? f3 29.f5 29.f3.

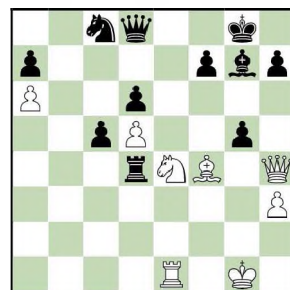
29...f4 30.bxc4 fxc4 31.f6 An honorable and fun way to end this would have been 31.g5 f4 32.g6 f6 33.f3 f7 34.fxf6+ gxf6 35.f8 f8 36.fxe8 f8+ 37.f2 f2+=, but there are dark forces at work here...

31...gxf6? 31...g6 32.f3 f4.

32.f4? 32.f4! f7 33.f5 f6 (33...f7 34.fxf6+ gxf6 35.f8 f8 36.fxe8 f8+ 37.f2 f2+=, but there are dark forces at work here...)

32...f7? 32...f7.

33.f4! f4 34.g5 f5 Of no help is 34...f4 35.f4 f5 36.f2.



35.f5 35.f5?? h6+-.

35...f8 36.f6 fxd5 37.fh1! It's always pleasant to see the king in the middle of all this commotion simply stepping to one side to allow the file to become an interstate highway to the other king.

37...h6 38.f1 f5 39.f1

Black resigned

Source: Alberston notebook



One can only infer from the chaos in the latter part of the game that both sides were in time trouble. It's a shame, because that one variation with the repetition of position would have done justice to both players' talents at the time.

Annotating these three games has been a time machine for me. Bruce, Fed and Mike were good chess friends over many years. Although I didn't personally know Leslie Braun, I knew him to be a respected and very strong master who peaked over 2300. I have some pleasant memories of the first three.

Bruce was always the sportsman. When I bested him from the black side of a Vienna Gambit, he was so cordial and friendly about it. Over the years we had dinners in NYC with other chess players, and he was always gregarious and never tried to take over the conversation.

I knew Fed from when he was a teen. He, too, loved chess so much that he even complimented me when, in a league match I had a nice sac to beat his favorite English at the time. I played him in three simul, and he let me have White each time with draws in all three. He was a very aggressive player, but he wasn't out for blood.

Mike Rohde joined Fed and me along with Tisdall, Henley, Regan, Diesen and others in our Scandinavian jaunt and won the tournament. Very modest, yet he was one of our most brilliant attacking players. I never played him, but I did beat his wife Sophia!

All these people above proved to me that chess players could be nice, sportsmanlike, creative, fun and a pleasure to be with as opposed to the exceptions that can plague our memories. Kudos to all of them.

E23

Bruce Alberston

Leslie Braun

New York March Open 1979

1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 e6 3.♟c3 ♟b4 4.♞b3 At one time this was considered a refutation of the Nimzo as was ♞c2 and e3, yet none of these 4th moves would prevail. The Nimzo still lives!

4...c5 With students, I always suggest the old Purdy rule. "If White threatens e4, play ...d5! And if White doesn't, play ...c5." It's not an ironclad rule, but it is helpful for beginners.

5.dxc5 ♟c6 6.♟g5 ♞a5 Black can also play the sharp 6...h6 to create pressure on c3 with 7.♟xf6 ♞xf6, but the text does that as well. The black queen is better placed on f6

than a5, as the ...♞a5 is a bit more crowded there and will have to reposition soon.

7.♟xf6 ♟xf6 8.♟f3

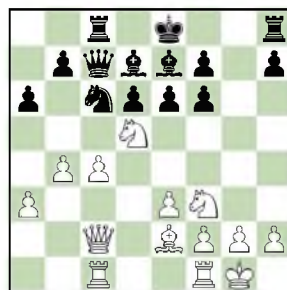


8...♟xc5? Also 8...♞xc5 didn't do any good for Black. **9.a3 ♟a5 10.e3 a6 11.♟e2 ♟g8 12.0-0 ♟c7 13.♟e4 ♞e7 14.♞c3 ♟g6 15.c5 d5 16.cxd6 ♟xd6 17.♞fd1 ♟c7 18.♟c5 ♟f8 19.♞ac1 ♟e5 20.♟xe5 ♟xe5 21.f4 ♟c6 22.♟f3 e5 23.b4 ♟d8 24.♞d3 ♟e8 25.f5 ♟g5 26.♟e4 ♟g8 27.♟d6+** Black resigned in M.Botvinnik - G.Miasoedov, Leningrad 1932.

If you're playing the Nimzo, then PLAY the Nimzo! **8...♟xc3+ 9.♞xc3 ♞xc3+ 10.bxc3=.**

9.e3 ♞b8 10.♟e2 a6 11.0-0 ♟e7 12.a3 d6 13.♞c2 ♟d7 14.b4 ♞c7 One thing I've noticed about Bruce in playing over these games and my own experience with him was that he had a measured aggression. He didn't want to blow you off the board in the opening. He would often build a position, gain space and just put pieces on good squares. We would never see him in Black's position in a queen pawn game. That setup is even difficult for people who like that array.

15.♞ac1 ♞c8 16.♟d5! Sometimes people play moves just because they can, but the move doesn't really accomplish much. Here, there is a definite strategic reason – the about to be created weaknesses at d6 and f6.



16...♞d8 17.♟xe7 ♞xe7 18.♞d2 ♞d8 19.♞fd1 ♟c8 20.e4 Do you get the feeling that Black's ...d5 move is not in the cards? **20...0-0 21.♞e3** The queen now will investigate the dark squares on both sides of the board.

21...♟h8 22.♞d2 ♞d7 23.♞cd1 ♞fd8 24.g3! Preparing a lovely path for the knight. Do you see it?

24...♟g7 25.♟h4 ♞f8 26.♟g2 ♟h8 27.♞b6! Not obvious and definitely thinking ahead. The queen is indirectly attacking the d6 pawn without being in front of a tripled major piece setup.



27...♞e7 28.♟e3 ♟g7 29.f4 ♞f8 30.b5 Making the queen's attack on d6 now a direct one.

30...axb5 31.cxb5 ♟e7 32.♞xd6 Black could resign here with a clear conscience, but he allows us to see further dark square weaknesses being exploited on the other side of the board.

32...♟d5



33.♞6xd5! exd5 34.♟f5+ ♟g8 35.♞xf6 h6 36.e5 **Black resigned**

Source: Alberston's notebook

This game showed Bruce at his most typical and best. His games reflect the chess teacher in him: always giving a lesson in how to fight at the board no matter what the position.

The MAGNIFICENT 3
REMARKABLE RECENT GAMES

By GM Sarunas Sulskis



A PIECE OF ADVICE FOR TECH ROOKIES

THE MUCH NEEDED START

Technology is here to serve chess players, so learning how to use it effectively can help you tremendously with your preparation. Initially, this may require a significant portion of your time, but afterwards you will be availed with tools that will save you both time and hassle.

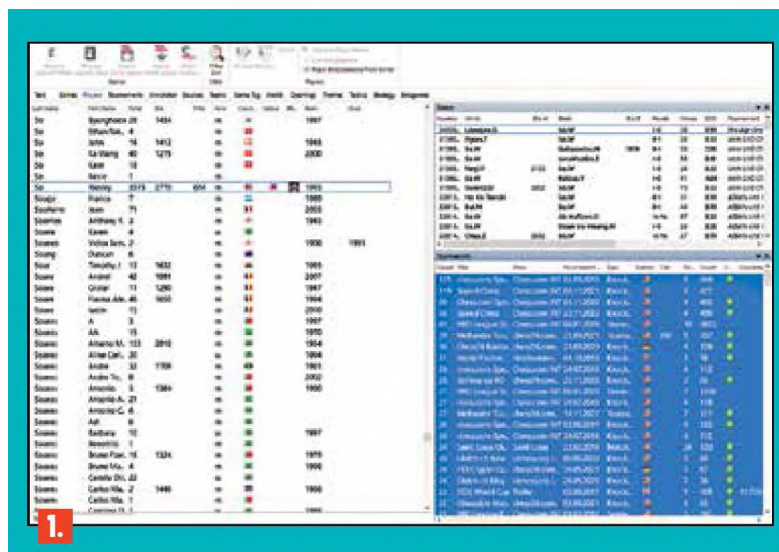
By Jon Edwards

If you have not yet embraced chess technology, it may be that you have not yet experienced or do not yet know what the technology can do for you. I recently had the wonderful experience of supporting a player at an important national event. She was not fully versed in the possibilities of chess technology, but she understood the need to prepare effectively to play against the titled players she would soon face.

We began in ChessBase by placing all of her games in a single database. It took only seconds to find her games in the largest databases and to move them to a smaller database that contained just her games. Before we search for the weaknesses of our opponents, it's undoubtedly best first to see what weaknesses may exist in our own games.

A short digression. It can be time consuming to assemble such a database of your own games. The answer, of course, depends very much on who you

Jon Edwards is the newly crowned World Correspondence Chess Champion living in Pennington, NJ. He also won the 10th US Championship. Jon has written more than 40 chess books, notably *The Chess Analyst* (1999), *Sacking the Citadel* (2010), and *ChessBase Complete* (2014), which has recently received its 2019 Supplement Covering ChessBase 13, 14 & 15. He is regular columnist for *Chess Life for Kids*. His web site, Chess is Fun, provides free chess instruction.



are. If you are a titled player, then most of your games may appear in large commercial databases. If you are a passionate club player, you may need to enter your games and create such a database from scratch.

Titled players can open their largest databases and search for all of their games. The simplest option is at [image 01](#)

In this example, I have opened my Mega Database 2023, clicked on the player tab, and entered in the name "So". I then selected "So, Wesley", a search that brings up 3,575 games. I highlighted all of those games with Control+A, and then it takes only a bit of dexterity with the mouse to drag those games into the new database. The creation of a new database requires only clicking on "New"...

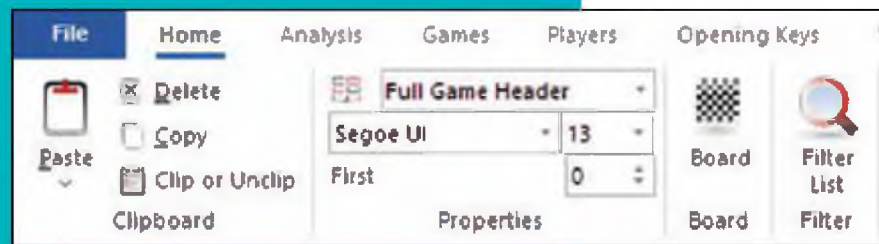
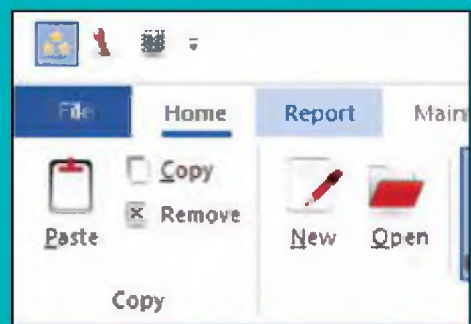
[image 02](#)

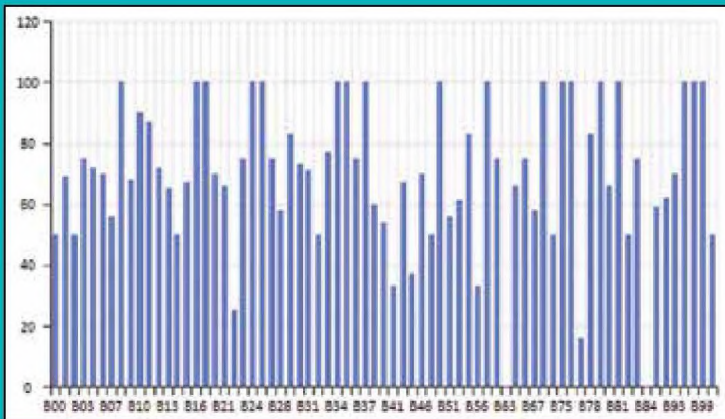
...and then giving your database its name. I encourage my students to use a more exciting name than "MyGames" for their personal databases, but I leave that decision up to each reader.

One trick is to make separate databases for your white and black games. That additional step avoids confusion when you play the same openings with both colors.

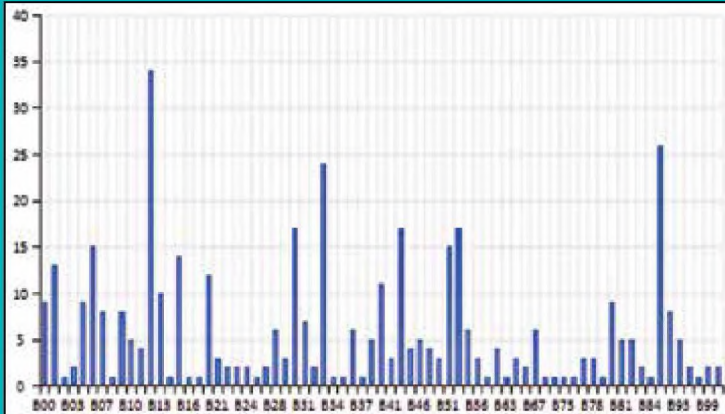
If you need to add some or all of your games to the new database, open the database and select the board icon:

[image 03](#)





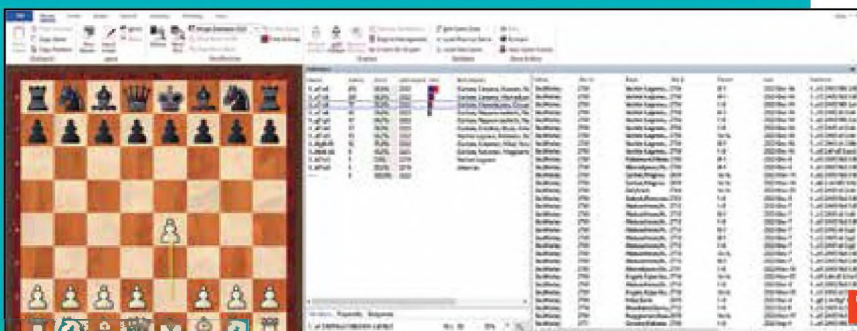
4.



5.



6.



7.



8.

Move entry is easy once you have done it a few times. Perhaps the fastest way to enter moves is to open the online database (The “Enter” key) and use it to enter each move. That method works very quickly through the opening phase, and you get the added bonus of seeing how well you fared against the collected wisdom of other players.

Why do all this work? First and most important, because you will be able to learn quickly in which openings you are best succeeding and which openings may need a review. Here are the statistics for Wesley So in the Caro-Kann and in the Sicilian.

The first chart shows So’s success with White in each ECO code. The second chart shows how many games occurred in each variation. To bring these charts up, simply highlight all of your games (or the games of an opponent) with Ctrl+A and then press the “S” key for Statistics.

image 04 and image 05

Another very powerful ChessBase feature is the Opening Reference. Highlight games in any variation and then Right Click=>Opening Reference. Here’s one example for the 40,237 Sicilian Dragon games in the 2023 Mega Database. The power here is being able to play through many hundreds of games at the same time, an obvious gain in efficiency. Moreover, unlike a book, your data can be maintained and be fully up-to-date!

image 06

Here is the very same Wesley So data in a presentation that will permit him, or you, to review all or some of these games at the same time. If we are preparing to play against him, we can test every one of our opening ideas against the body of his game collection before we sit at the board.

image 07

NEW COMPREHENSIVE CHESS WEBSITE

Finally, I take note of Chess Tempo (chesstempo.com), an interesting web site that provides a range of nicely implemented chess facilities, from opening preparation through tactics training. I remain of the belief that daily Tactics challenges are key to over-the-board improvement, and this trainer has an excellent range of challenging puzzles.

image 08



Fresh Leaves from the Bookshelf

By FM Carsten Hansen

10 NOTEWORTHY BOOKS

01 Perpetual Chess Improvement

by Ben Johnson

(New In Chess 2023) 5*



02 How to Win at Chess

by Levy Rozman

(Ten Speed Press 2023) 4*



03 World Chess Champion Strategy Training for Club Players

by Thomas Willemze

(New In Chess 2023) 4*



04 The Discovery of Chess

by Phil Amara & Oliver Chin

(Immedium 2023) 4*



05 Obsession – A Chess Biography of Vsevolod Rauzer

by Alexander Konstatinopolski

(Elk & Ruby 2023) 5*



06 Attack

by Karsten Mueller

(JBV Chess Books 2023) 4*



07 First Grandmaster of the Soviet Union

by Sergei Tkachenko

(Elk & Ruby 2023) 5*



08 Grind Like a Grandmaster

by Magnus Carlsen & David Howell

(Chessable 2023) 3*



09 Endgame Labyrinths

by Steffen Nielsen & Jacob Aagaard

(Quality Chess 2023) 5*



10 Caro-Kann – The Easy Way

by Thomas Engqvist

(B. T. Batsford 2023) 4*



Carsten Hansen is a FIDE Master and FIDE Trainer, residing in Bayonne, New Jersey. He has written more than forty books, mostly on chess openings and chess tactics. You can find his work on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

It is time once again for a look at the latest batch of new arrivals of chess books, but before moving on to the selected books, I should draw your attention to three other releases.

Grandmaster Jon Tisdall, who hails from the US but has been living in Norway for decades, wrote *Improve Your Chess Now* back in 1997. Although I'm not sure that it actually went out of print, it gradually disappeared from where it belonged: in the forefront of players who wanted to improve their understanding of chess. I have been a fan ever since I picked up my copy a few years after it was first released, and so have several others, including one of the world's leading and most successful chess coaches, R.B. Ramesh of India, who has extolled its virtues on Twitter (or 'X,' if you like) as well as many other places. It is fantastic. Thankfully, New In Chess has released a new, albeit largely unchanged, edition of Tisdall's classic book. If you are rated from around 1500 or above and haven't read it yet, hurry up and order it. You will not regret it.

There is also a new volume of *Chess Informant*, this time volume 157, of the

yearbook series that started way back in 1966. The format has changed over the years, but it is still great. In this latest volume, there is coverage of both the World Cup and the Women's World Championship match, many other articles of varying kinds, styles, and topics. Finally, there is a wide selection of annotated games from all the major events from the previous period. I have read *Chess Informants* almost since I started to play chess, and I still enjoy them to this date.

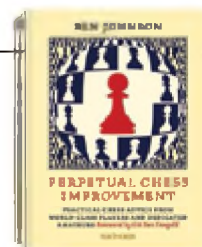
Finally, I will draw your attention to two different releases by Howard Burton. One is the book *Chessays* that was published last year, and the other is his four-part

documentary "Through the Mirror of Chess" which is about four hours long.

Burton is by no means a chess master or even a traditional chess historian but he has explored the history of the development of ideas, how chess evolved, and its cultural impact. The book is an interesting read in itself, consisting of essays covering various topics. It is available on Amazon in both Kindle, paperback, and hardcover formats. I can highly recommend you check it out. The film documentary won the CJA award for Best Documentary, but I suspect it was the only entry in that category. Nevertheless, it is also fascinating: while covering many of the same topics, it provides a completely different visual presentation of the material, something we chess players rarely encounter as most online chess videos are focused on the games themselves and less on what surrounds them and how it came to be the way it is today. In fact, looking at chess from a historical angle is almost refreshingly new in this media.

I have enjoyed watching the documentary, and if you want an understanding of chess from a different angle, check it out. The same, by the way, can be said about Burton's interview by Ben Johnson on the *Perpetual Chess Podcast*, where they discuss the book and documentary in episode 319. I hope you enjoy it.

01



Perpetual Chess Improvement – Practical Chess Advice from World-Class Players and Dedicated Amateurs

by Ben Johnson

The king of chess podcasts, Ben Johnson, the host of the *Perpetual Chess Podcast*, has finally published his book. I remember talking to him about it a couple of years ago, and to see the final product is obviously exciting. Most people who talk about writing a book actually stop at the talking part and never get around to writing it, particularly because the writing part



is much more difficult than the talking part.

Exactly the talking part is where Ben Johnson has excelled over the last several years. He has met with players of all levels, from the very top tier, to improvers, to coaches, to authors, to broadcasters, to officials, and everyone in between. But a particularly popular subject is that of chess improvement and chess improvers, and it is one that Ben returns to quite regularly, having discussed it with some of the most prominent coaches in the world along with players who have embarked on the journey of chess improvement, particularly adult improvers. Based on his numerous conversations in countless episodes, Ben has selected advice from these conversations and distilled them into a book that works brilliantly as a guide on what to do and which pitfalls to avoid. With so much content available in all sorts of formats, it is easy to go wrong and equally easy to pick up bad advice from people ill-equipped to offer it.

The book is split up into five parts: 1) The four pillars of chess improvement, 2) Other aspects of chess you may work on, 3) Working on your game away from the board, 4) Tools of Improvement, and 5) Final thoughts on incorporating chess study into your life.

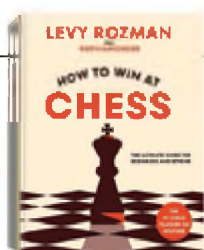
These parts are then broken down into a total of 27 chapters covering all aspects of chess improvement. While I found most of the book eminently usable, I particularly liked his look at tools of improvement and how to optimize the use of the various tools. But throughout the book, there are valuable pieces of advice for players at almost every level.

While the book is currently available in print and some e-formats, there will eventually also be an audiobook version of the book. The number of chess books that make it into

audio format is quite limited, so I'm curious how that will work for this book. On his podcast, Ben revealed to guest host Christopher Chabris, when discussing the present book, that snippets of the interviews with some of the guests will be included in the audiobook. It should be an interesting listen.

However, until that becomes available, if you belong in the category of adult improvers, or even young improvers who work either by yourself or with a coach, I highly recommend this book. It has more advice than you will know what to do with, but the collected wisdom it delivers will definitely help you become a better player, provided, of course, that you apply what you read.

02



How to Win at Chess – The Ultimate Guide for Beginners and Beyond by Levi Rozman

When this year ends, one chess book will have outsold all the others, which is this book. The reason for this, of course, is that Levy Rozman, aka GothamChess, has a massive platform on social media, particularly on YouTube, where he, at the time of writing, has 4.35 million subscribers. When the book was first released a couple of weeks ago, it zoomed up the bestseller list and, at one point, was in the top 25 of all books being sold on Amazon! That means that it sold somewhere around 6-700 copies per day! That is an impressive number. It has since dropped down a little on the bestseller chart, but it still shifts a steady

number of copies daily. As a fellow chess book author, I am happy because the many players who start out with Rozman's book will eventually move on to more advanced material as they get better and better.

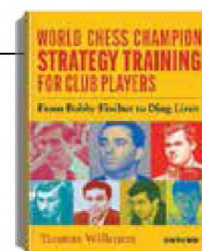
Rather interestingly, Rozman chose a presentation style that entirely avoids giving chess moves in their traditional notation formats (Algebraic or Descriptive) but instead offers each move on the diagram so that the reader will not need to worry about learning something as archaic as memorizing the coordinates of the board and the abbreviations of the pieces but can visualize the pieces on the board just like you would be watching a video on YouTube. The topic of chess notation is covered in the book, even very early on, but it is not used to recount the moves, even when discussing openings, tactics, etc., throughout the book. This is an interesting approach but definitely something that will please a lot of beginners. Numerous times, I have been asked, by work colleagues who wanted to play chess or teach their children to play chess, if learning chess notation was necessary, and my answer was always, "it will make it easier to learn chess if you understand the notation," but Rozman clearly has found a way to avoid it.

The book is aimed at beginners and those just beyond the level where they understand how the pieces move. Elementary openings, tactics, strategies, mates, endgames, etc. are covered, and the coverage is good and informative so that anyone who works their way through the book will not just know how the pieces move but will also have the ability to consistently win games both online and against their friends and family.

Therefore, it is easy to recommend this book as the starting guide for friends and family members who are

interested in learning to play our beautiful game.

03



World Chess Champion Strategy Training for Club Players by Thomas Willemze

by Thomas Willemze

"Our beautiful game is the perfect learning environment for becoming a strategic expert. But what should a chess player do to reach such a level? It starts with playing many games and analysing them carefully afterwards. At the same time, you should learn from the best by studying the games for the world's strongest players and gradually build their techniques into your play."

This is how the present book by Dutch International Master and experienced trainer Thomas Willemze starts. For the purpose of the latter part, the author has selected 100 strategic exercises based on the games of the world champions, starting with Bobby Fischer and ending with Ding Liren.

The aim of the book is to teach you some common but important strategic themes, such as improving your worst-placed piece, making the right piece trade, creating a strong square, discovering your opponent's weakest spot, using an open file, and several more.

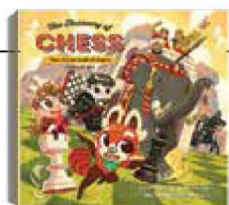
Throughout the book, the author has chosen excellent examples of these many themes and carefully annotated the solutions without drowning the reader in both overly verbose explanations and long pieces of analysis. The balance is good to both deliver the important points and encourage the



reader to continue reading the book, something which overly complicated examples and long variations can easily discourage.

For players up to around 1800-1900, there is plenty of excellent study material to further the understanding of important topics.

04



The Discovery of Chess – The Asian Hall of Fame

by Phil Amara & Oliver Chin,
illustrated by Juan Calle

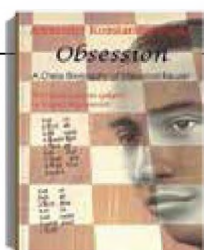
This animated book is part of “The Discovery of...” series, with the other titles covering such varied topics as ramen(!), anime and manga, and fireworks and gunpowder. The main characters are the children Emma and Ethan and a red panda named Dao, who has the magical power of being able to make the three of them travel through time. After seeing some chess players play chess in Paris, the trio goes on a magical journey through time, seeing the origins and early iterations of chess and the development of the pieces and their abilities, as well as encountering many of the world champions and notable players through time.

Some of it seems a little haphazard and random, and some of it is not entirely right and even worth mentioning, but the overall story is fun. However, the illustrations are just outright fantastic, and the illustrator has done a phenomenal job throughout, even nailing how many of the players looked at different ages etc.

As an introduction to chess for children too young to play the game but curious about what

the parents or older siblings are playing, this is a wonderful introduction that I honestly enjoyed breezing through.

05



Obsession – A Chess Biography of Vsevolod Rauzer

by Alexander Konstantinopolskiy

“Unfortunately, I just can’t make myself work on the theory of the game for more than 16 hours a day! My head can’t endure more.” Those were words told by Rauzer to Panov. Such an obsession obviously is what brought about the title of this fine biography about Vsevolod Rauzer, written by his contemporary Alexander Konstantinopolskiy (1910–1990), a leading player and coach in the Soviet Union.

Rauzer was a special player, angelic in his appearance and fierce in his studies, particularly of openings and play. He was convinced that 1.e4 was White’s best move and sought to demonstrate that through his analysis of various openings, for which he drove the theory miles forward.

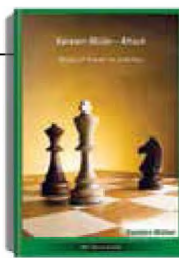
However, his obsession caused him considerable pain and eventually made him mentally ill, living largely in poverty, needing care, and eventually dying during the Siege of Leningrad in the Second World War.

However, while he was well, he was a formidable player, and through the many games, 78 in total, in this volume, annotated mostly by the author and some by his opponents and even Rauzer himself, with their

analysis updated by Grigory Bogdanovich, we see him facing players such as Botvinnik, Levenfish, Romanovsky, Makogonov, as well as foreign players like Fine, Lasker, Lilienthal and others.

It is an excellent read, and accompanied by fascinating fighting games.

06



Attack – Rules of thumb for practice

by Karsten Mueller

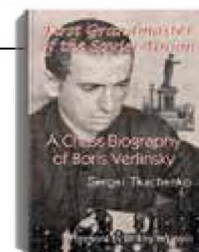
German Grandmaster Karsten Mueller is incredibly productive. Ahead of writing this issue’s column, from his publisher in German, JBV Chess Books, I received no less than three new titles by Mueller, aside from the present title, *Endgame Magic – Illustrative training material from master practice*, co-authored with Jerzy Konikowski, and *Magnus Carlsen – The Chess DNA of a Genius*. Impressive productivity that rivals that of our own and my frequent collaborator, IM Cyrus Lakdawala.

In this relatively slim volume, 140 pages, the author methodically works through various aspects and recurring mechanisms of attacking play through a number of illustrative, annotated games and exercises. Among the games and exercises, there are several familiar examples, but there are also many by lower-ranking players that will definitely be new to even the most ardent readers on the topic. This is, of course, a pleasant surprise as it brings some spice to a topic that has been covered in numerous previous books. In the tenth

and final chapter of the book, the author adds a selection of attacking games of his own, interestingly, two of the games being miniatures as White against his own favorite opening, the French Defense.

It is an enjoyable and instructive book that many, particularly players rated below 2000, will greatly benefit from.

07



First Grandmaster of the Soviet Union – A Chess Biography of Boris Verlinsky

by Sergei Tkachenko

To say that Ukrainian chess historian Sergei Tkachenko is one of the leading authorities in his field is no exaggeration. Several of his books have been translated and published by the publishing house of Elk & Ruby, which releases a steady stream of titles that have lovers of chess history hungering for more and more.

Boris Verlinsky isn’t exactly a name that rings too many bells with chess fans, but his story is fascinating. Born and brought up in Ukraine, he was one of the leading Soviet players in the 1920s and came to prominence in the Moscow tournament in 1925, where he beat world champion Capablanca in a fascinating game. In the same tournament, he also beat both Rubinstein and Spielmann. At the end of the decade, in 1929, he won the Soviet Championship and was duly awarded, as the first placed player, the grandmaster title of the Soviet Union. He won several other tournaments and had a fascinating style of play, loving the initiative and the attack that



resembles later players such as Tal and Shirov. This, of course, makes his games eminently watchable and enjoyable even all these years later. Aside from telling the story of his life and times, there is a bounty of games, no less than 130 complete and partial ones, all with some sort of notation. Aside from the aforementioned players, several games are against Alekhine, Bogoljubow, Botvinnik, Bronstein, and many others.

It was not all joy and happiness, as with many stories of players from that time and age. Verlinsky struggled with poor health, and for citizens in large parts of the Soviet Union, their lands took a severe beating during the Second World War. Nevertheless, the biography of Verlinsky is a fascinating read that will please historians and games which chess lovers will enjoy. This book is highly recommended.

08



Grind Like a Grandmaster – How to keep pressing until your opponent cracks

by Magnus Carlsen & David Howell

Of all the books I had put aside for this column, one of the ones I had looked forward to the most was this book. A combined effort by former World Champion Magnus Carlsen and his friend (and fellow grinder) English Grandmaster David Howell. Yet, when it came down to it, it was also the book that disappointed me the most. The material is based on the Chessable course of the same name. Usually, these courses on the platform

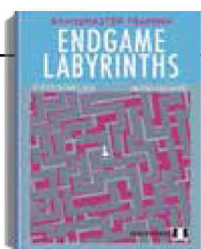
are jam-packed with material, but apparently not this one. The book is just 206 pages long and covers 12(!) games by the authors. Both authors have had numerous famous grinds, so there was no shortage of material to present, but in the end only 12 made the cut, including their very first game against each other when they were talented kids at the youth world championship in 2002.

The presentation style is chatty, with the comments by each author attributed. I assume this is based on how the video course was presented.

The book ends with a 24-page coverage of Carlsen's brilliant win against Nepomniachtchi in game 6 of their World Championship match in Dubai 2021.

Does the book deliver on its premise? In part, yes. Could it have been much better? Absolutely! As a big fan of both players, I felt let down by the potential the book/course held and to the degree it could deliver. The material is interesting, but there should have been more. More games, more examples, more types of grinds, etc. Therefore, I can only give it three stars.

09



Grandmaster Training: Endgame Labyrinths

by Steffen Nielsen & Jacob Aagaard

As regular readers of this column will have noted, I have been converted from a dabbler to an enjoyer of endgame studies in the last couple of years.

In the previous issue, we looked at Murdzia's book, looking at studies and problems from

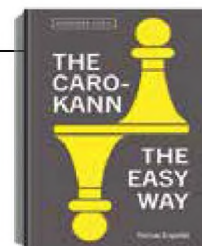
the solver's perspective, whereas in the present book, we look at a collection of studies collected and selected by the recently (while this article was being written) awarded Grandmaster in Composition and the 2022 World Champion in Endgame Study Composition, the Dane Steffen Slumstrup Nielsen and fellow Dane and OTB Grandmaster Jacob Aagaard, who has the well-deserved reputation of being one of the finest authors and publishers of chess books today, as well as one of the world's leading chess coaches.

In this work, the authors have assembled 1002 endgame studies particularly aimed at the practical players. Therefore, studies with incomprehensible sequences of moves have been avoided or cut short, presenting only the main theme. That makes this book particularly good for strong and ambitious players, either to solve by themselves or as part of working with a coach. The material is split into six initial chapters that basically explain what the remaining 23 chapters are about.

While this book is truly excellent, it is not easy; in fact, it is extremely difficult; even expert solvers and grandmasters should not expect to solve all the studies. However, solving the studies is just a part of the journey; studying and understanding the solutions are equally important elements of becoming a better chess player. I doubt most of the people who buy this book will ever make their way through all of the material, but, if they do, they will be richly rewarded with a much more nuanced understanding of chess and a considerably richer imagination when playing endgames on their own.

This book is excellent and highly recommended, but if you are rated below 1800, I would stay well clear of it as it will be of very limited benefit and mostly an unlimited source of frustration.

10



Caro-Kann – The Easy Way

by Thomas Engqvist

Swedish International Master Thomas Engqvist has become one of the "house" authors at Batsford, having previously written several titles for coaches and eager students, such as *300 Most Important Chess Positions*, *300 Most Important Tactical Chess Positions*, and *300 Most Important Chess Exercises*.

In this book, Engqvist presents a repertoire for Black in Caro-Kann. All lines are worked over and presented based on the author's own experiences and analysis. Rather refreshingly, Engqvist has chosen the 4...♟f5 variation in the main line rather than the Nimzowitsch Variation of 4...♟f6 (with 5...exf6), which has been the preference of several authors in recent Caro-Kann repertoire books (and Chessable courses).

The theory is presented in a traditional style with variation trees, although without overwhelming the reader/student with too many branches. Then there are well-annotated model games to illustrate the ideas for both sides. While the analysis is, for obvious reasons, computer-checked, the volume of it is not overwhelming, which makes the book a pleasant read and easier to understand, although occasionally the author dives into a rabbit hole and presents some bizarrely long variations to illustrate potential play with certain pawn structures or piece configurations.

Nevertheless, this is a good choice as a repertoire book for Black against 1.e4 and one I can easily recommend.

CHARLOTTE, NC

September 29 – October 1, 2023
Charlotte Fall Open
 (5 rounds)

- 1 Jianchao ZHOU (CHN) 4½
 2-4 Sergey ERENBURG, Thomas KUNG, James CHIRILOV 4
 5-10 Craig HILBY, Dean IPPOLITO, Vishnu VANAPALLI, Alonso ZAPATA (COL), Emmanuel CARTER, Vishnusankar JONNALAGADDA 3½



▲ Jianchao ZHOU Photo: SLCC

WINDSOR LOCKS, CT

October 6-8, 2023
12th Annual Hartford Open
 (5 rounds)

- 1-2 Jianchao ZHOU (CHN), Brewington HARDAWAY 4
 3-7 Danila POLLIANIKOV, Ansh SHAH (IND), Qi PANG, Alexander FIKIET, Maxim FARBEROV 3½

WHEELING, IL

October 6-8, 2023
31st Annual Midwest Class
 (5 rounds)

- 1-5 Harshit RAJA (IND), Sam SCHMAKEL, Dmitry GUREVICH, Justus WILLIAMS, Julian PROLEIKO 4
 6-9 Dimitar MARDOV, Ochirbat LKHAGVAJAMTS (MGL), Jonathan KOGEN, Avi KAPLAN 3½

RENO, NV

October 5-8, 2023
Reno Western States Open
 (6 rounds)

- 1 Sergey KUDRIN 4½
 2-8 Nick DE FIRMIAN, Dmitry ZILBERSTEIN, Rose ATWELL, Patrick LIU, Kevin FONG, Theodore BIYIASAS, Kritin GOPALAKRISHNAN 4

TUCKER, GA

October 13-15, 2023
Georgia Class Championships
 (5 rounds)

- 1 Alonso ZAPATA (COL) 4
 2-5 Deepak AARON, Ethan SHEEHAN, Andrew JIANG, Davis WHALEY 3½
 6-8 Damir STUDEN, Damian KROTOV, William WU 3

ESTERO, FL

October 13-15, 2023
Gulf Coast October Open
 (5 rounds)

- 1 Marvin GAO 4½
 2-3 Nikola MITKOV (MKD), Brejesh CHAKRABARTI 4
 4-8 Vladimir GEORGIEV (MKD), Cesar BOUZA (CUB), Theodore SLADE (ENG), Joshua HARRISON, Sritej SATTARU 3½

RESTON, VA

October 20-22, 2023
13th Washington Chess Congress
 (5 rounds)

- 1-2 Jianchao ZHOU (CHN), Fidel CORRALES, Tal BARON (ISR), Arvind JAYARAMAN (IND) 4
 5-10 Erick ZHAO, Ansh SHAH (IND), Andrew SAMUELSON, Vaibhav KALPAKA (IND), Lang XIONG, Max ENGLAND 3½

PRINCETON, NJ

October 27-29, 2023
27th Annual Eastern Chess Congress
 (5 rounds)

- 1-2 Jianchao ZHOU (CHN), Ehsan MAGHAMI (IRI) 4½
 3-5 Mackenzie MOLNER, Derek CLASBY, Mardon YAKUBOV (UZB) 4
 6-10 Brewington HARDAWAY, Ansh SHAH (IND), Qi PANG, Matthew O'BRIEN, Arvind JAYARAMAN (IND) 3½

FORT LAUDERDALE, FL

November 2-6, 2023
1000GM Norm Invitational GM
 (10-player round-robin)

- 1 Josiah STEARMAN 6
 2-3 Robby KEVLISHVILI (NED), Jakub FUS (POL) 5½
 4-5 Alex FISHBEIN, Joshua POSTHUMA 5
 6 Mark HEIMANN 4½
 7 Bach NGO 4

- 8-9 Ekin Baris OZENIR (TUR), Luka BUDISAVLJEVIC (SRB) 3½
 10 Konstantin KAVUTSKIY 2½

FORT LAUDERDALE, FL

November 2-6, 2023
1000GM Norm Invitational IM
 (10-player round-robin)

- 1 Ethan SHEEHAN 6½
 2 Bhatia AADIT (IND) 6
 3-5 William HERNANDEZ GONZALEZ (CUB), Julio BECERRA RIVERO, Alder ESCOBAR FORERO (COL) 5½
 6 Eugene YANAYT 4
 7 P MICHELLE CATHERINA (IND) 3½
 8-9 Akeras OVERLINGAS, C.J. ARVIND 3
 10 Jean Marco CRUZ MENDEZ (CUB) 2½

BERKELEY, CA

November 3-5, 2023
U.S. Senior Women's Championship
 (5 rounds, 12 players)



▲ Anjelina Belakovskaia Photo: ACM Archive

- 1 Anjelina BELAKOVSKAIA 4½
 2 Olga SAGALCHIK 4
 3-4 Varinia CABRERA, Beatriz MARINELLO 3
 5-6 Natalia TSODIKOVA, Vesna DIMITRIJEVIC 2½
 7-9 Natasha CHRISTIANSEN, Alexey ROOT, Julie Anne O'NEILL 2
 10 Shernaz KENNEDY 1½
 11-12 Mary KUHNER, Dorothy TEASLEY 1

NEW YORK, NY

November 8-12, 2023
1000GM NY Norm Invitational IM B
 (10-player round-robin)

- 1 Mykola BORTNYK (UKR) 6½
 2 Megan LEE 6



By FM Grayson Rorrer,
 Features Editor

ACM would like to invite tournament organizers and players to submit announcements, results and games to be featured in Tournament Reviews section. Send your submissions to office@acmchess.com or visit www.acmchess.com/submit. Please refer in the subject line to our Features Editor, FM Grayson Rorrer.

- 3-4 Steve WONGSO, Jiangwei YU (CHN) 5½
 5-6 Leif PRESSMAN, Leonid YUDASIN (ISR) 4½
 7-8 Maili-Jade OUELLET (CAN), Kiren NASTA 4
 9 Todd ANDREWS 2½
 10 Jay BONIN 2

NEW YORK, NY

November 8-12, 2023
1000GM NY Norm Invitational IM C
 (10-player round-robin)

- 1 Mark PARAGUA (PHI) 8
 2 Hersh SINGH 5½
 3-4 Justin LEE, Carter HO 5
 5-6 Qindong YANG (CHN), Jacek STOPA (POL) 4½
 7-8 Zachary TANENBAUM, Augusto CAMPOS JIMENEZ (CUB) 4
 9 Logan BRAIN 3
 10 Eugene YANAYT 1½

OMAHA, NE

November 15-19, 2023
Edmar Mednis Memorial
 (10-player round-robin)

- 1-2 Augusto CAMPOS JIMENEZ (CUB), Adam DORRANCE (CAN) 5½
 3-4 John FEDOROWICZ, Shelev OBEROI 5
 5-7 Luis TORRES ROSAS (MEX), James CANTY, Bryan XIE 4½
 8 Alexandre KRETCHETOV (RUS) 4
 9 Eugene YANAYT 3½
 10 Harshid KUNKA 3



NEW YORK, NY

November 17-19, 2023

Mona Karff Memorial

(5 rounds, 22 players)

- 1 Irina KRUSH 5
 2 Chloe GAW 4
 3 Megan PARAGUA 3½
 4-8 Laura SMITH, Sahana ARAVINDAKSHAN, Jessica REGAM, Kamellia SHARUDA, Hema VIKAS 3
 9-13 Dorothy TEASLEY, Nicole ZLOTCHESKY, Abigail ZHOU, Leah YANG, Anna Sophia RADCHENKO 2½

CHARLOTTE, NC

November 17-21, 2023

Charlotte Fall GM Norm A

(10-player round-robin)

- 1-2 Fidel CORRALES, Andy WOODWARD 6

CHARLOTTE, NC



- 3-5 Bilel BELLAHCENE (ALG), Cristhian CRUZ (PER), Dimitar MARDOV 5
 6 Siddharth JAGADEESH (SGP) .. 4½
 7 Carlos SANDOVAL MERCADO (MEX) 4
 8 Aarav DENGLA (IND) 3½
 9-10 Ryo CHEN, Gauri SHANKAR (IND) 3

CHARLOTTE, NC

November 17-21, 2023

Charlotte Fall GM Norm B Alto

(10-player round-robin)

- 1 Titas STREMAVICIUS (LTU) 6½

- 2-3 Emilio CORDOVA (PER), Tanguy RINGOIR (BEL) 6
 4-6 Denis SHMELIOV (UKR), Dean IPPOLITO, Tianqi WANG ... 4½
 7 Max GEDAJLOVIC (CAN) 4
 8-10 Kassa KORLEY (DEN), Craig HILBY, Kyron GRIFFITH 3

CHARLOTTE, NC

November 17-21, 2023

Charlotte Fall IM Norm C

(10-player round-robin)

- 1 William GRAIF (CAN) 7
 2 Isaac WANG 6
 3 Darcy LIMA (BRA) 5½

- 4 Martha FIERRO BAQUERO (ECU) 5
 5-6 Vaseegaran NANDHAKUMAR, Ethan GUO 4½
 7 Ethan SONG (CAN) 4
 8 Roberto MARTIN DEL CAMPO (MEX) 3½
 9-10 Nikash VEMPARALA, Kush BHAGAT (IND) 2½

CHARLOTTE, NC

November 17-21, 2023

Charlotte Fall IM Norm D

(10-player round-robin)

- 1 Gianmarco LEIVA (PER) 7½
 2 Zachary DUKIC (CAN) 6
 3 Matyas MAREK (CZE) 5½
 4 Nicholas MATTA 5
 5 Ansh SHAH (IND) 4½
 6-7 Joseph WAN, Daniel GIRSH .. 4
 8-9 Nikolay ANDRIANOV (RUS) ... 3
 10 Advait KARTHIK 2½

Huge congratulations go to Josiah Stearman for completing his GM title requirements in view of his third and final GM-norm (his new title will be verified once his live rating exceeds 2500 FIDE), and also to Nico Chasin on gaining his second GM-norm.

B56

Kyron Griffith 2358

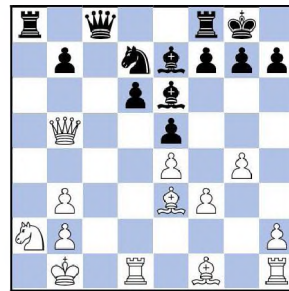
Josiah Stearman 2476

1000GM Fall GMA, New York 2023

1.e4 c5 2.d3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.dxd4
 5.f6 6.c3 7.c6 8.f3 e5 9.b3 10.e7
 8.e3 9.e6 10.e2 0-0 10.0-0 11.c8
 11.g4 a5 12.b4 13.b5 14.b4
 14.c3 15.a2+ 16.b1
 axb3 17.cxb3

▼ Josiah Stearman

Photo: Lennart Ootes



17...xa2 White resigned

A21

Alexander Kaliksteyn 2375

Nico Chasin 2419

1000GM Fall GM A, New York 2023

1.c4 e5 2.c3 3.b4 4.d5 a5 4.d3 d6
 5.e3 6.e7 6.a3 7.cxd5 8.c5 8.d4
 exd4 9.exd4 10.b6 10.g5 f6 11.e3

NEW YORK, NY

November 8-12, 2023

1000GM NY Norm Invitational GM A

(9 rounds, 12-player Schiller)

- 1-2 Josiah STEARMAN, Nico CHASIN ... 6½
 3-5 Brewington HARDAWAY, Djurabek KHAMRAKULOV (UZB), Titas STREMAVICIUS (LTU) 5½
 6 Kassa KORLEY (DEN) 5
 7 Sam SCHMAKEL 4½
 8 Luka BUDISAVLJEVIC (SRB) 4
 9 Alexander KATZ 3½
 10-12 Anthony ATANASOV (CAN), Kyron GRIFFITH, Alexander KALIKSTEYN 2½

0-0 12.d3 f5 13.c2 h6 14.g3 d7
 15.h4 16.f6 17.xf5 18.d3 19.xd5



19.xh6 20.e6+ 21.e3 22.fxe3
 23.ae8 24.0-0 25.xe3+ 26.xe3 27.xe3
 White resigned

▼ Nico Chasin Photo: Biel Chess Festival





BATTLE OF THE STATES - 2023 U.S. NATIONALS INVITATIONALS

16-year-old Ruiyang Yan Wins Haring Tournament of Girls' Champions

By WIM Zoey Tang

After the U.S. Junior Girls' where she finished as runner-up, FM Ruiyang Yan clinched the title at the Haring Tournament - confirming that she is one of the best junior female players in the U.S.

The annual U.S. Nationals Invitationals, held this year in Grand Rapids, MI, concurrently with the U.S. Open, consists of five sections: the Rockefeller (elementary school), Barber (middle school), Denker (high school), Haring (girls), and Irwin (seniors). Each of the benefactors from whom the sections derived their names has contributed immensely to chess (especially junior chess). According to a story told every year at the opening ceremony (usually by Dewain Barber, US Chess Dean of Scholastic Chess), the tournament started with a simple phone call from GM Arnold Denker: "I want to do something for the kids." From this, the GM Arnold Denker National Tournament of High School State Champions was born. Later, the Dewain Barber National Tournament of Middle School State Champions, WIM Ruth Haring National Tournament of Girls' State Champions, John T. Irwin National Tournament of Senior Champions, and the John D. Rockefeller III National Tournament of Elementary School State Champions were added.

The unique format pits state champions, the winners of their state's respective qualifiers, against each other. While some strong players are eliminated without having the chance to even enter the tournament, many still remain for a tough battle.

While the chance to represent our country on the Olympiad team is out of reach for the majority of us, the annual U.S. Nationals Invitationals gives scholastic players the chance to feel the same honor, albeit on a smaller scale - the Denker and Haring champions qualify for the World Youth (Cadet) Championship and the U.S. Junior Closed Championship. Staring at the rows of vinyl chess boards, one might be surprised to see miniature state flags beside them as well. With so many colors and patterns, the Invitationals give off the same vibe as many professional tournaments.

The front of the tournament hall resembles an elite event even more, with the vinyl boards and plastic pieces replaced by DGT sets. There, the top players of each section battle it out on a broadcast for all to see.

Knocked down from board one of the Haring for the first time after a draw against sixth-seed Asha Kumar, the eventual winner FM Ruiyang Yan scored an important victory to bounce back to the top of the standings in round 4.

B70

Ruiyang Yan	2356
Celina Zhou	1808

Grand Rapids 2023

Notes by Ruiyang Yan

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 ♘c6 3.♟c3 This is an interesting move that avoids a lot of theory in the Sveshnikov.

3...g6 4.d4 cxd4 5.♟xd4 ♟g7 6.♟b3!? Again I decided to stay away from main theory in the ♟e3 line.

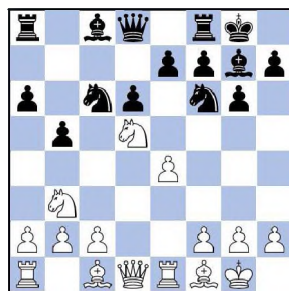
6...♟f6 7.♟e2 d6 8.0-0 0-0 9.♟e1 With a very simple idea of playing ♟f1 and ♟d5. 9.♟g5 is the other, more aggressive option. 9...a6 10.♟f1 b5 11.♟d5

2023 U.S. NATIONALS INVITATIONALS

Final Standings - 2023 Haring

6 rounds (45 players)

1 Ruiyang YAN	5½
2-3 Jwalanthi RAM, Megan PARAGUA	5
4-5 Esther JOU, Chance NGUYEN	4½
6-12 Asha KUMAR, Elizabeth BRADDY, Celina ZHOU, Nastassja MATUS, Lily DENG, Zoe ZELNER, Sunny ZHANG	4



11...♟xd5 Even though Black has a slightly higher score in this line, I don't like this move as it weakens the e7 pawn for my rook and gives White a lot of options to play with on the queenside (e.g. a4, ♟d4-c6 ideas). More playable options are 11...♟b7 and 11...♟d7.

12.exd5 ♟e5 13.h3 Preventing ...♟g4 in case I play f2-f4. Also, it avoids any back rank shenanigans in the future.

13...♟e8 14.a4 bxa4?! With this decision, Black weakens her queenside too much.

However, the queenside tensions ensure open lines. 15...♟c4 (Not 15...bxa4?? due to 16.f4+- oops) 16.b3 ♟b6 17.axb5 axb5 18.♟xa8 ♟xa8 19.♟xb5 ♟xd5=.

15.♟xa4 ♟d7 After 15...♟d7!? 16.♟xa6 (16.♟a3 ♟b5) 16...♟xa6 17.♟xa6 ♟b6, White is probably better, but this is a much better way to play for Black.

16.♟a5 ♟b6 17.♟a3 ♟c7 18.c4 ♟d7 19.b4 e6 20.dxe6 20.♟f4! exd5 21.c5+-.

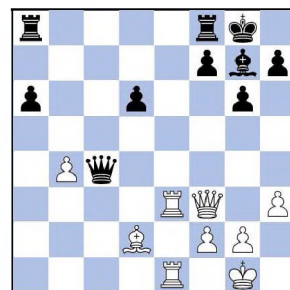
20...♟xe6 Black got her pieces out eventually, but she has too many weak pawns.

21.♟ae3 ♟ec8 22.♟f3 ♟f8 23.♟d2!?

This move is setting up a nice little trap my opponent ended up falling into.

23...♟xc4? Upon 23...♟ac8 24.♟c1, White is still better on account of Black's weak d6 and a6 pawns.

24.♟xc4 ♟xc4 25.♟xc4 ♟xc4



26.♟xa8! ♟xa8 27.♟e8+ ♟f8 No better is 27...♟xe8 28.♟xe8+ ♟f8 29.♟h6 with unavoidable checkmate.

28.♟xa8 ♟d5 29.♟xf8+! ♟g7 29...♟xf8 30.♟h6+ ♟g8 31.♟e8 mate.

30.♟e3 ♟b5 31.♟d8 ♟xb4 32.♟d1 a5 33.♟8xd6

Black resigned

Ruiyang chose a slightly offbeat line, but it was one that made sense and allowed for steady positional play (as opposed to the blood and brute calculation of most opposite-side castling Sicilians). Black was not able to set her pieces up effectively, and White quickly got an advantage by crashing through on the queenside. The cute final trap was a nice demonstration of Ruiyang's tactical prowess. Overall, a clean game!

This win, followed by clean victories over the eventual second-place Jwalanthi Ram and second-seed Esther Jou, brought Ruiyang into clear first place with an undefeated 5½/6 score. A great performance, especially coming after a second-place finish at the U.S. Girls Junior Championship.



Interview with Ruiyang Yan

ENJOYING CHESS WITHOUT PRESSURE!

I talked with Ruiyang about her view on the Junior Closed vs the Invitationals, her opinions about female chess, and more.

■ **Hi Ruiyang, welcome. Congrats on taking second place at the US Girls Junior Championship! How has your experience been at this tournament, and was this time around any different?**

As usual, the venue at the Saint Louis Chess Club was really nice. There's not much change except I played better than last year, obviously. But it's always nice to play with new, different people every year at the US Junior Girls.

■ **Could you elaborate more on your experience, especially previous times?**

The Juniors is a very widely broadcasted event, so they have very big accommodations and the venue, the hotels, and the city in general are all very nice. Playing chess there is a very enjoyable experience, especially with the one game per day format, which gives plenty of time to rest.

■ **Also, congrats on winning the Haring right after the U.S. Junior Girls! This is another event that you attend annually. What do you think of the tournament?**

This event is really different compared to the Juniors. It changes every year to different locations. And it's always nice to play in a new city, a new state, and just go explore. It's also cool to play with people from different states who are the best in their state. It's kind of different from the Juniors because Juniors are the best overall, but this is the best from each state, which is a very nice experience.

■ **What do you think of all-girls tournaments in general?**

They're very good for promoting girls' chess; they're a very good motivator. For me, one of my first girls' tournaments was the all girls tournament in Chicago a long time ago. I showed myself that I could play like and I could beat other girls my age, you know? Especially because as a girl, in some tournaments you're surrounded by boys who are 10 years older than you or something. It's very motivating to play and interact with a bunch of other girls who also enjoy chess and see that you're not really alone in your pursuits.

■ **You touched on this in your previous answer, but what do you think of the current environment for female chess players?**

I think it's certainly improved over the years. I remember back in 2018, 2019, I would be

like the only girl at chess tournaments. But nowadays I feel like so many new faces, younger girls are getting to try and they're all very talented of course. Especially the big tournaments, there are so many new talented girls, like you, Zoey Tang.

■ **Wow, thank you. I'm flattered.**

The environment is still improving but obviously could do better. We can always include more girls.

■ **What specific advice do you have for parents of young female chess players?**

Honestly for parents, I would just advise them to not put too much pressure onto your daughter and just try to encourage them more. I know it's really easy to get discouraged during tournaments, and there's a lot of internalized misogyny toward female chess players, so it's really easy to get affected by the environment around you. So I would advise parents to encourage their child and help them grow into a better chess player.



Photo: Lennart Ootes

■ **And what should parents look for in choosing a coach, specifically for a female player, if it is apparent that their child will want/need a coach?**

For me, whenever I was playing those World Youth tournaments, they gave me a coach and my dad just asked them, every single one. I don't really have much advice. I honestly just ask other kids around here and see what they're doing. And there's some very well-established coaches. I can't really name them, but I guess Melik [Khachiyan] for example, is very well established. It never hurts to ask; they might just say yes.

■ **What advice do you have for girls who are starting to play chess?**

Honestly, when you just start playing, you're obviously going to play a lot of online

games. Just don't put too much pressure on yourself. Enjoy the experience. It doesn't really matter if you're winning or losing. The most important part is to enjoy the experience, because if you don't enjoy it then it's just going to be very painful if you really want to improve because you're going to have to spend hours on chess to improve.

■ **Like lots of chess players, you played lots of tournaments back-to-back this summer. How do you handle the stress of this busy schedule?**

During the tournament and in between tournaments I just try to relax myself. I watch YouTube, I go hang out with friends, and such. And then I just try to relax myself and try not to put too much pressure or think about the results too much.

■ **Moving on to general questions, what does a typical day look like for you?**

On an average school day, I get out of school at 3 or 4 or something. And then if I can I will try to take a nap, but this is very unlikely to happen. After I get home I either do homework or I play random blitz games online. So let's just say I do homework, right? That usually takes a few hours, like three, four hours maybe and then I will spend time on blitz and doing tactics problems. I just try to stay sharp during the school year because I'm usually very busy with homework and tests.

■ **How do you balance your high school workload and chess? Lots of homework.**

Well, I try my best. The most important thing for me is to do a lot of tactics every day and stay tactically sharp. I don't always get to study chess, though; some days are just too busy.

■ **What activities do you enjoy besides chess?**

There are a few hobbies I enjoyed, but I don't actually do them anymore. I used to read a lot, but not much anymore. Yeah, I'm busy.

■ **Who have been some of the influential people along your chess journey, and what was their particular contribution?**

I've had many coaches throughout the years. One coach I had really influenced my earliest style because they showed a lot of Karpov and Petrosian (the world champion!) games. They really kind of influenced my sense for positional play. You can see it in my games throughout the years. That was a pretty big influence, especially my earlier years, when I was a wee little child. And then we have GM Joel Benjamin who was my coach for a year, who also really influenced that positional style.

■ **Thank you for your time and advice, Ruiyang!**

Thanks for having me here.



BATTLE OF THE STATES - 2023 U.S. NATIONALS INVITATIONALS

Arthur Guo wins Denker with perfect score

By WIM Zoey Tang

Similarly to Ruiyang Yan, after finishing on a shared second at the U.S. Junior Championship, GM-elect Arthur Guo cruised to his victory at the Barber Tournament by winning all his games.

Arthur's impressive 6/6 score belied the sharp games it took to get there. The race wasn't finished even at the very last round, with Arthur leading by only a half-point over the eventual third-place finisher IM-elect Gus Huston.

E11

Gus Huston	2439
Arthur Guo	2517

Grand Rapids 2023
Notes by Arthur Guo

This final round had taken an unusual importance as not only would I clinch the Denker for the second year in a row, it would be a nice way to finish off a very productive summer for me. Before the Invitationals, I had achieved the most out of six back-to-back tournaments across Europe and the USA, earning my Grandmaster title and placing a close second at the Junior Closed in the process. I was determined to end my remarkable journey on a high note. In the way was newly minted IM Gus Huston, whom I've had trouble playing against several times at Nationals. However, the tournament situation played in my favor. Entering this game, I had the sole lead with 5/5 with my opponent half a point behind. If anything, I knew that my opponent was thinking of snatching the first place prize, so I would use that to my advantage.

1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗f3 d5 4.g3 The first surprise. My opponent has, as of recently, leaned toward d4 more often than not, but has never deployed the Catalan.
4...♙b4+ 5.♙d2 ♙e7 6.♙g2 c6 7.♚c2 0-0



2023 U.S. NATIONALS INVITATIONALS

Final Standings - 2023 Denker
6 rounds (50 players)

1 Arthur GUO	6
2 Maximillian LU	5
3-5 Gus HUSTON, Sharvesh DEVIPRASATH, Terry LUO	4½
6-13 Vishnu VANAPALLI, Levon HE, Evan PARK, Nicolas DE LA COLINA, Rohit GUHA, Luke YE, Jason WANG, Hersh SINGH	4

Final Standings - 2023 Barber
6 rounds (49 players)

1-3 Erick ZHAO, Brewington HARDAWAY, Jasmine SU	5
4-7 Eric FENG, Ronen WILSON, Henry DENG, Sihan TAO	4½
8-12 Yiding LU, Andrew JIANG, Anjaneya RAO, Austin TANG, Vaibhav KALPAKA ...	4

Final Standings - 2023 Rockefeller
6 rounds (51 players)

1-3 John ABRAHAM, Andrew JING, Harshin JAGIRAPU	5
4-8 Aiden LIU, Harvey HANKE, Vijay ANANDH, Mason LI, Anmay CHAUDHURY	4½
9-10 Bryan LIN, Glenn ZHANG	4

8.h4!? Another interesting decision by my opponent, but I wasn't startled. As of three years ago, the computer has showed us that moving the rook pawn forward is often very useful in a myriad of positions. Frequently, in these closed Catalans, h4 is the top move of the engine. I must say, however, I was a bit surprised my opponent played it so early. 8.0-0 ♖bd7 9.♙d1 is the topical mainline.

8...♖bd7 9.♖c3!? The traditional Catalan way of spicing things up.

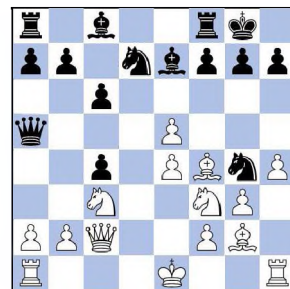
9...dxc4 Only natural. During the game, I felt certain this was the logical continuation, especially when many positions come to mind where White has already achieved a comfortable position from the opening before committing the knight to c3.

10.e4? A sign of lack of understanding of the opening. Often Black has the theme of ...e6-e5 in response to White's central advancement. In this case, it works perfectly, with the white king still in the center. 10.♙d1 was best and it's a game.

10...e5! 11.dxe5 ♖g4 12.♙f4 ♚a5?

Impulsive. As natural as regaining the pawn is, this move gives way most of Black's advantage.

12...♖c5! was by far the best continuation. A decisive advantage as Black's queenside majority is lethal and the future knight jump to d3 will restrict every White's piece. 13.0-0 b5 14.♙ad1 ♚b6-+.



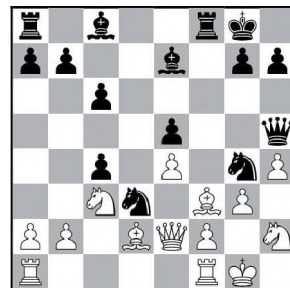
13.e6? Missing a resource, my opponent returns the favor. After 13.0-0 ♖dxe5 14.♖xe5 ♖xe5 15.♖d5!, White equalizes.
13...fxe6?! Not precise. 13...♖c5 was best. 14.exf7+ ♙xf7 15.0-0 ♖d3-+ and White's position is a mess.

14.♚e2 ♖c5?! Most natural, but not the most accurate. 14...b5! In hindsight, this is the move that would have squashed any complications.

The point is that ...e5 is unstoppable and Black can unravel all his pieces to the most optimal squares. 15.0-0 e5 16.♙d2 ♚b6-+ with ...♙c5 and ...♖df6 coming.

15.0-0 ♖d3 16.♙d2 ♚c7? Another indecisive choice. My opponent thought a lot before his last move but I couldn't fully grapple with the best plan to execute my advantage. Looking a bit further would have led me to a swifter conversion.

16...♚h5! is an unnatural move, walking straight into a pin. However, after 17.♖h2 e5 18.♙f3



18...♙xf3! is the point, although not easy to see from afar. 19.♚xf3 ♙e6-+ and Black's attack is beyond devastating.

17.e5 A good practical choice to muddy the waters.

17...♖gxe5 18.♖g5 h6 19.♖ge4 b5 20.f4 ♖f7 21.b3 b4 22.♖a4 ♙a6 Very natural, but a bit concerning during the

game, as I am moving a crucial defender of my king to the other side of the board.

23. ♖g4



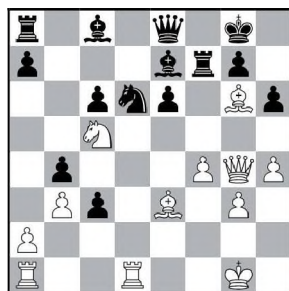
23... ♗d7?? Looks natural, but is a huge blunder.

23... ♗d6! was the cleanest and what I was considering for a long time, but didn't have the guts to play. 24. ♖xe6+ The pawn is nothing as the king sidesteps and Black's pieces are no longer hindered by the e6 pawn. 24... ♖h8 25. ♖g6 ♖ad8-+ Finally, all Black's pieces have come to life.

24. ♗e3 c3 25. ♖h2?? During the game I thought this was very natural: the king sidesteps from any possible checks and forces Black to make a move. Thankfully, I had foreseen a very elegant way to end the game.

25. ♗fd1! was the only saving move, although difficult to commit to as the rook willingly let's Black's passed c-pawn move to the second rank.

25... ♖e8 (25... c2?! simply loses the pawn after 26. ♗d2±) 26. ♗ec5 White's only hope is to trade off the monster knight on d3. 26... ♗xc5 27. ♗xc5 ♗c8 28. ♗e4 ♗d6 29. ♗g6 ♗f7

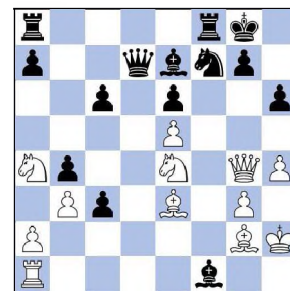


30. ♗xe6 (30. ♖f3 probably would have put more pressure on a human in a real game. It seems as though Black holds on after 30... e5 31. ♗f2 exf4 32. ♗xf7+ ♖xf7 33. ♖xc6 fxg3 34. ♗xg3 ♗b7) 30... ♗f8 31. ♗xd6 ♗xd6 32. f5 ♖e7 33. ♗xf7+ ♖xf7 34. ♗d1 ♗f8 35. ♗d8 ♗b7 36. ♗xa8 ♗xa8= and the dust settles to equality.

25... ♗de5! Once on the board, I took a

deep breath as the final outcome was never in doubt from here on.

26. fxex5 ♗xf1



27. ♗xf1 27. ♗f6+ doesn't work, because of 27... ♗xf6 28. exf6 ♗e5-+.

27. ♗ac5 looks as though White crashes through, but Black has a cheeky intermediate move. 27... ♗xe5-+.

27... ♗xe5 28. ♗xf8+ ♗xf8 29. ♖h5 ♗f5 30. ♖e2 ♗d3 31. ♖xd3 ♗xd3 32. ♗axc3 bxc3 33. ♗xc3 ♗c5 34. ♗d2 ♗b4 35. ♗g1 ♗f2 36. a3 ♗c5

White resigned

And with this win I achieved a perfect 6/6 score in the Denker, capping off an exhausting but undoubtedly unforgettable summer for me!

Interview with Arthur Guo

ON TOP OF A SERIES OF SUMMER ADVENTURES – DAD ORGANIZED, SON DELIVERED!

Arthur shared his impressions on his busy, but very specific summer, as he played seven back-to-back tournaments(!) – crossing the 2500 Elo mark, completing requirements for his GM title, coming second at the U.S. Junior Championship and winning the Denker tournament of High School champions. He also revealed his future plans, and more...

■ **Congrats on achieving the GM title! How does it feel to achieve what I assume was one of your lifelong goals?**

It feels good. It was definitely a relief when I finally got it. I started chess when I was like six and a half years old and I've always wanted to be a grandmaster. And honestly, before this summer it didn't really look like I would get it because I was only around 2450. I still had to make a big jump. And this summer, it kind of just came together. The first tournament I played in Europe was good, and then the second one was also good, and then so on. So, yeah, it's definitely a relief. I'm very happy.

■ **Did you change anything in your training routine in order to achieve this jump?**

Honestly, I was so busy with school junior year. I put off chess for a whole year because I had other extracurriculars, and then the

month leading up to summer I had tons of exams. I'm actually really surprised; I spent a lot of time in my sophomore year on chess, and the results weren't that great, but junior year was basically the opposite. So I didn't really do anything special per se, but I guess I handled the games and preparation more maturely. I think that contributed to my rapid growth this summer.

■ **Your summer was filled with achievements. Besides achieving GM, congratulations on winning the Denker [National Tournament of High School Champions] for the second year in a row!**

How has your experience been at this tournament over the years?

It's been good. The Denker Invitational is always kind of nice because there are a few strong players that you know really well and who also are your friends, so to come out on top is always a good thing for your confidence.

■ **The format of the Denker is pretty unique because the champion of every state gets to go to the invitational. What do you think of it?**

I think it's like a great tradition, especially for high schoolers. I remember going to the Barber in middle school and also enjoying it as well. It's great to have a closed invitational for not just the strong players, but also the other players that represent the best of their state.

■ **What are your goals now that you've reached GM?**

I don't really have any (laughs). I mean, I played four tournaments





in Europe. The fourth tournament was in Germany and I finally crossed 2500 there. And since then, it just feels like senior spring to me. Sure, I had motivation for the Junior Closed and for the Denker, which was my last tournament of the summer. But also, I mean, I'm not planning to become a chess professional. Who knows? Maybe I'll try to get to 2600, but my main focus right now is just school, academics, and other things. So I'm putting chess on hold for now, but hopefully, I'll get the motivation and drive to get to 2600 and pursue chess further.

■ You actually answered my next question, which was "do you plan to pursue chess professionally?". In that case, what role do you see chess playing in your future life?

I plan to do some academic career when I grow up. So, like, become a professor or whatnot. I guess in those kinds of fields being a chess grandmaster certainly adds credibility to your name in terms of publishing papers and doing research. For the past three tournaments, including Denker, I just wanted to have fun. That's why every time I had a bad tournament over the past decade or so, I reminded myself that chess is ultimately supposed to be fun. While it's always nice to have a feeling of winning, just as importantly, you have to deal with it when you lose, when you encounter setbacks, when you don't reach your goals or don't perform as well as you expect to. And if you play chess for that long, you certainly have a passion for it. That's probably what's going to make me go to tournaments like the World Open when I'm in college or something, or try to qualify for the World Cup. So yeah, that's probably what chess is going to be like, more of a hobby and less of something I have to prove myself in because I already accomplished the Grandmaster title. I'll probably play a few tournaments here and there, see what happens.

■ Could you elaborate more on what you do after a really bad game or a really bad tournament?

It's actually interesting, because I think that's a big part of why I improved so quickly this summer was because I could handle losses a bit more maturely, so to speak. A lot of times before, when I lost, I could quickly forget the result, but I still let it affect my play. And this summer, after I scored my last norm in Hungary, I did terrible in the tournament afterward. And I was super angry, but I managed to pick myself up in the last two games and beat some strong players. So I think the biggest thing is just recuperating in between rounds. Doing non-chess things is always important and finding that balance always helps because at the end of the day, chess is just a game and losses are a natural part of winning, and a natural part of the process it takes to improve.

■ I found your non-profit Eagle Chess School after some research online. Are you still hosting events/camps there?

Yeah, so that's actually fun because during the pandemic, my sister and I wanted to do something for the community. And a lot of the nurses at the time were being overworked by their long hours and influx of patients. We did a fundraiser a few times from Chick-fil-A and a GoFundMe for the nurses at five hospitals in our local area. And then after my sister went to college, I connected with some of the local clubs and local chess organizations to host chess events for the community such as simul. So hopefully I get some more time to do that. I think it's important not to get too caught up in the chess elite world, if you know what I mean. It's better not to be too obsessed with things like rating points or titles or results, and instead actually give back to the community. Because at the end of the day, Grandmaster is nice or any other title is nice. And being able to have that is always a bonus, but also being able to share your passion, which you've had for so long, is the plus side of all those things.

■ Now some more general questions. How do you handle stress during important tournaments?

Like I said before, there were a lot of times over this summer when I looked at chess for hours on end and it just got kind of boring, so to speak. I listen to music or any other non-chess thing. Always helps, at least for me. Because I felt like it was always important to not take things too seriously. And that's a lot of the reason why when I lose a game, I don't have the mentality of okay, this effed up my tournament, it's hopeless now. That mentality has changed into something like okay, you know, I don't really care too much anymore. The only thing I care about is whether I play good chess or not. And that's the baseline for me, focusing on the things that should be focused on, prioritizing, making my mindset before a game a little more healthy, and a little less focus on the things I can't control.

■ What does a typical school day look like for you? You mentioned a lot of homework earlier, so I'm guessing there's not much time for chess.

I go to a private school called Westminster. And naturally the people there are pretty smart. So, yeah, balancing chess and school is hard. It's hard for a lot of people who go through the same thing. But also at the same time, I think chess and my drive to be really good at chess over the years has naturally made me more able to handle school subjects than my peers. Being able to study for three hours straight without looking at my phone, that kind of thing. That always helps, but taking tons of AP classes and tons of tests every week and

having to make up classes, like two or three days of school from chess tournaments or other kinds of extracurriculars, is a lot of work. Bottom line, it's busy, but I've handled it hopefully pretty well.

■ Who have been some of the influential people along your chess journey, and what was their particular contribution?

Well, it's basically one person, because my dad has been taking me to practically every single tournament since I was like six. And so when people congratulate me for this summer, I tell them it didn't all have to do with me. My dad literally planned the summer like five months ahead at the start of the year. And it was funny because when I look back, he asked sometime close to New Year's about my resolution and whether I wanted to pursue chess and pursue the Grandmaster title before college and really cash in everything. I played seven back-to-back chess tournaments this summer and it's been tiring yet fruitful. A lot of that planning and the convenience for me to focus only on chess during those two months had to do with my dad prepping out everything and fleshing out all the scheduling. He's been a lot of the reason for all my successes in chess and successes outside of chess also. I guess outside of my family, the support from all my friends and teachers is always nice. Actually it's kind of funny because the people writing my recs are interested in chess and also play on chess.com. So it's always a benefit to have that kind of support from school. In terms of coaches, I haven't had that many. Like I haven't had a coach since I was a master. But a lot of the people, David West, who was my first coach, and also a local Grandmaster, Alonso Zapata, from Georgia, also helped me to get to where I am, and basically started my interest in chess.

■ What activities do you enjoy besides chess?

I like to play golf, and I also do cross-country and track. Also, a lot of the reason why I couldn't spend time on chess was because I was doing a lot of policy debate. My school is really good at that. I also love watching "The Office" because it's always on at chess tournaments; the hotels always have the Comedy Central channel. Honestly, I try to keep it simple, especially this summer. I didn't want to have too many distractions. At the end of the day, I didn't want to let all this hard work go to waste. I want to think I have a balanced life, but when I get bored of chess, when I hate it after games, I always try to have time to relax and think about different things.

■ Those were all the questions I had. Thank you for your advice, and thank you for your time, Arthur!

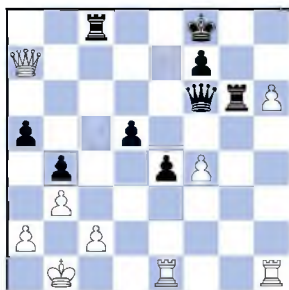
Thank you, Zoey.

FIDE WORLD JUNIOR GIRLS U20 CHAMPIONSHIP, Mexico City 2023

IM Carissa Yip has been on a great run as of late – in one month she tied for first in the World Junior Girls U20 Championship (winning the silver medal on tiebreaks) and, upon her return home, picked up a second U.S. Women's Championship title! First, we'll examine an important moment from Carissa's World Junior Girls title bid. In a tumultuous up and down struggle, where both sides missed serious chances, she managed to hold on and make the next to last mistake.

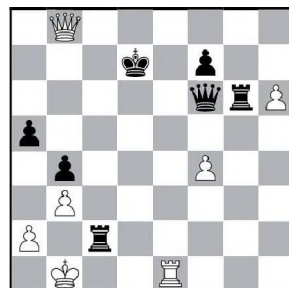
Carissa Yip	2372
Trisha Kanyamarala	2184

FIDE World Junior Girls U20 Championship,
Mexico City 2023



51...Bxc2?? Natural enough – Black grabs a pawn, while menacing a deadly attack. Tactics prevent White from taking the rook, and otherwise what could go wrong?

51...Bxc2 52.Bxc2 Bxc2 53.Bxc2 Bxc2 54.Bxc2 Bxc2 55.Bxc2 Bxc2 56.Bxc2 Bxc2 57.Bxc2 Bxc2 58.Bxc2 Bxc2 59.Bxc2 Bxc2 60.Bxc2 Bxc2 61.Bxc2 Bxc2 62.Bxc2 Bxc2 63.Bxc2 Bxc2 64.Bxc2 Bxc2 65.Bxc2 Bxc2 66.Bxc2 Bxc2 67.Bxc2 Bxc2 68.Bxc2 Bxc2 69.Bxc2 Bxc2 70.Bxc2 Bxc2 71.Bxc2 Bxc2 72.Bxc2 Bxc2 73.Bxc2 Bxc2 74.Bxc2 Bxc2 75.Bxc2 Bxc2 76.Bxc2 Bxc2 77.Bxc2 Bxc2 78.Bxc2 Bxc2 79.Bxc2 Bxc2 80.Bxc2 Bxc2 81.Bxc2 Bxc2 82.Bxc2 Bxc2 83.Bxc2 Bxc2 84.Bxc2 Bxc2 85.Bxc2 Bxc2 86.Bxc2 Bxc2 87.Bxc2 Bxc2 88.Bxc2 Bxc2 89.Bxc2 Bxc2 90.Bxc2 Bxc2 91.Bxc2 Bxc2 92.Bxc2 Bxc2 93.Bxc2 Bxc2 94.Bxc2 Bxc2 95.Bxc2 Bxc2 96.Bxc2 Bxc2 97.Bxc2 Bxc2 98.Bxc2 Bxc2 99.Bxc2 Bxc2 100.Bxc2 Bxc2



on c2 to boot. 53.Bxc2?? Bg2+ is suddenly a mating attack. The only defensive try would be 54.Bxe2 Bxe2+ 55.Bd1, when 55...Bd2+! 56.Bxd2 Bc3+ 57.Bc2 Bf3+ gives Black a winning queen endgame. 53...dxe4 54.Bxe4+ Bxe6? The rook ending is entirely hopeless. 54...Bf8 would still have forced Carissa to play with mechanical accuracy. Would she really have found the amazing sequence 55.Ba8+! (55.Bxc2? Bxc6=) 55...Bxe7 56.Bb7+ Bf8 57.Bb8+ Bxe7 58.Be1+ Bxd7

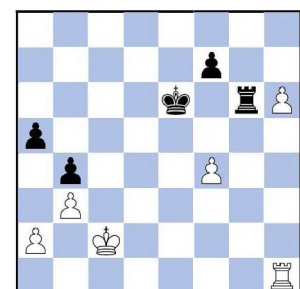
MEXICO CITY, MEXICO

September 21 – October 1, 2023
World Junior Girls' Championship
(11 rounds, 77 players)

1-3. Candela FRANCISCO (ARG), Carissa YIP, Beloslava KRASTOVA (BUL).....	8½
4-6. Mariam MKRTCHYAN (ARM), Ema WALTER (SVK), Galina MIKHEEVA (FID).....	8
7-8. Trisha KANYAMARALA (IRL), Lhia Itzayana CASTELLANOS HERNANDEZ (MEX).....	7½
9-14. Miaoyi LU (CHN), Mounika Akshaya BOMMINI (IND), Barbara GORAJ (POL), Ineymig HERNANDEZ GIL (CUB), Zeinep SULTANBEK (KAZ), Roxangel OBREGON GARCIA (CUB).....	7

59.Bb7+!! Bc7 60.Bd1+ Bxd6 61.Bxd6+ Bxd6 62.Bb1 Bc8 63.h7 Bb8 64.Bb7+ Be6 65.Bxe4+ Bd7 66.Bxe5 f6 67.Bxa5+-, when White picks off the queenside pawns, with an inevitable win? We'll never know, but with so many pitfalls along the way it looks like a hard task.

55.Bxe6+ Bxe6 56.Bxc2



56...Bg8 57.h7 Bh8 58.Bd3 With Black's rook incarcerated, the endgame poses no difficulties. **White won** in 16 moves.





QATAR MASTERS, Doha 2023

The life of a professional tournament chess player can no doubt be a trying, weary one at times. With no central area where most strong events are held, the intrepid chess pro is often forced to live practically out of their suitcase, going from one unlikely place to another. Think of Albania, Morocco, Dubai... or Qatar, home to the Qatar Masters. There were two iterations of the event from 2014-15, after which it abruptly disappeared, only to be resuscitated this year. The aptly named "Qatar Masters Open" is limited to players rated 2300 FIDE and above, making it one of the very strongest Swisses. Refreshingly, a significant number of the world elite came down from their "closed circuit" to contend with the masses for overall victory. Big names like GMs Magnus Carlsen, Hikaru Nakamura, Anish Giri, etc. will be recognized by most. The eventual winner and early frontrunners, as it turned out, would be none of the above!

Magnus' poor 2½/4 start already all but knocked him out of contention for the top spots, opening the door for the underdogs. Amidst countless upsets, Indian GM S.L. Narayanan was the first to distinguish himself from the rest of the field, taking a half point lead over the chasing pack with

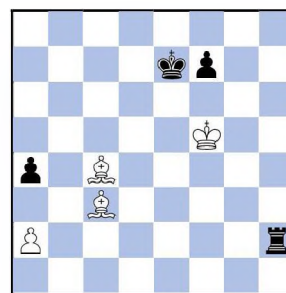
a powerful 4½/5. A quick start can be beneficial, but even so, opens are usually decided by who has the staying power to crank up the heat in the critical, penultimate games. It wasn't any different in Qatar, and heading into the last round GM Arjun Erigaisi had snuck a half point clear of the field, with six others right behind. IM Rameshbabu Vaishali was perhaps the only player with some cause for relief before the last day – she had already wrapped up her final GM-Norm!

In a dramatic twist of fate, the ninth round brawls only saw two decisive clashes at the top. Narayanan had Nakamura playing to his tune throughout, but couldn't seal the deal, while Uzbeki GM Nodirbek Yakkuboev – who had been keeping a fairly low profile but still managed to stay in contention – took apart GM Murali Karthikeyan's KID in brutal fashion. Erigaisi had a chance to take the title with a win, but very quickly fell under dangerous preparation with the Black pieces. A brilliant and inspired effort brought him on the brink of a draw, and with it a playoff for the crown, but tragically the tiring defense got to him, and a rook dropped off in

one move. That meant his opponent, GM Nodirbek Abdusattorov, sprung up to match his compatriot's 7/9 score, necessitating a battle of Nodirbeks to decide the final prize distribution. The tiebreaks were somewhat anticlimactic – Yakkuboev completely outplayed his countryman in two blitz games, eventually winning both to take home a major tournament victory.

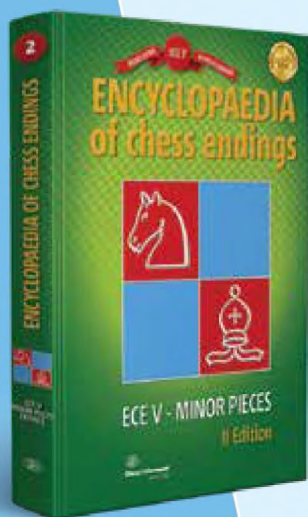
Nodirbek Abdusattorov	2716
Arjun Erigaisi	2712

Qatar Masters, Doha 2023



48...♖h4?? 49.♙f6+ **Black resigned**

While there isn't nearly enough space here to do the Qatar Masters the justice it deserves, it's safe to say the annual chess calendar is much livelier with such interesting events to look forward to!



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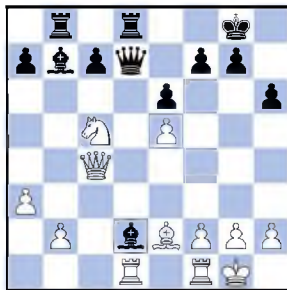
acmchess.com/store





Nodirbek Yakubboev 2616
Baskaran Adhiban 2551

Qatar Masters, Doha 2023



24...♞c8? Adhiban had managed to fully equalize out of a QGD Vienna, but not now! Sending the queen into passivity even looks ugly. 24...♞e7 would have been about level. With the queen on any normal square, Black has a fine position, but on c8 it can be trapped... 25.♞c2 ♠a5 26.♜xb7 ♞xb7 27.♞xd8+ ♞xd8= shouldn't take long to peter out into a draw.

25.h4!? A prevalent theme nowadays! A statistical comparison of rook pawns pushed in master games before and after AlphaZero would no doubt be very revealing.



▲ Nodirbek Yakubboev

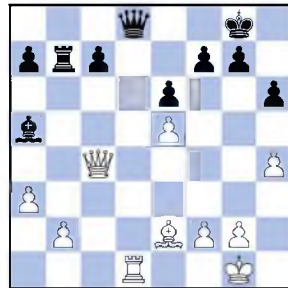
Photo by David Llada

25.b4! ♠g5 26.♠g4! was tactically even stronger. The e6 pawn is soft, and 26...♠d5 27.♞xd5! ♞xd5 (27...exd5?? 28.♞e2+ humiliates the queen!) 28.♞xd5 exd5 29.♠xc8 ♞xc8 30.f4 ♠e7 31.♞c1± is a very pleasant endgame for White. Choosing to keep the pieces on the board, and with them all the tension, was a fair decision nonetheless.

25...♠a5 26.♞xd8+ The most direct. Black's pieces look passive, but he should

just about be able to survive the opposite-colored bishop endgame.

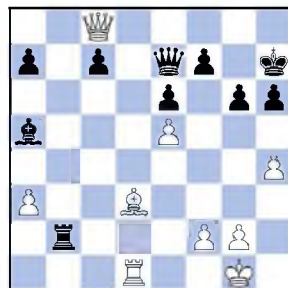
26...♞xd8 27.♜xb7 ♞xb7 28.♞d1



28...♞e7?? A huge tactical blunder. The back rank needed all the protection it could get. With that in mind, 28...♞f8! 29.b4 ♠b6 30.a4 c5 would have been strongest. White has a small edge in piece placement after 31.♞a6!? ♞b8 32.♠f3 ♞e7 33.a5 ♠c7 34.b5±, but it's a far cry from what came to pass in the game!

29.♞a6! ♞xb2 30.♞c8+ One win is enough. 30.♞xa5!? ♞xe2 31.♞b5! is also a beautiful finish. Everywhere it turns, Black's rook is vulnerable to tactics. 31...♞c2 (31...♞e4 32.♞b8+ ♜h7 33.♞b1! ♞xh4 34.♞d4+-) 32.♞b8+ ♜h7 (32...♞f8 33.♞d8+- is no better.) 33.♞b1 ♞c5 34.♞d2+-.

30...♜h7 31.♠d3+ g6



32.♠xg6+! Pins and skewers ravage Black's position.

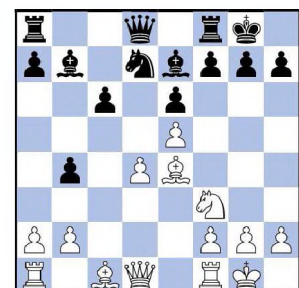
32...♜xg6 32...fxg6 33.♞d7+-; or 32...♜g7 33.♠xf7! ♜xf7 34.♞d7+-, making use of the same idea.

33.♞g8+ ♜f5 34.♞h7+ ♜xe5 35.♞g7+ Black is at least losing the rook on b2, if not just getting outright mated, all of which forced Adhiban to put an end to the struggle. **White won**

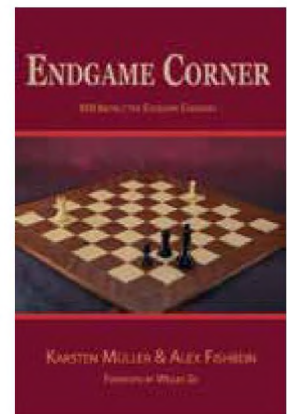
GM Gregory Kaidanov was arguably the most successful of the American contingent in Qatar. Finishing on a superb 6/9, he even sprung up to the top board with a pairing against Magnus Carlsen in the second-to-last round. They eventually finished on the same score, despite a tough loss for Kaidanov. Winning against Van Foreest, an unquestionable member of the world's elite, was the springboard for it all.

Gregory Kaidanov 2554
Jorden Van Foreest 2707

Qatar Masters, Doha 2023



14...♞b6? Though uncommon, the position was still more or less a theoretical



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one, coming from the Slav. 14...♖b8 has been by far the main line. Black aims for ...c5 soon, which should just about equalize.

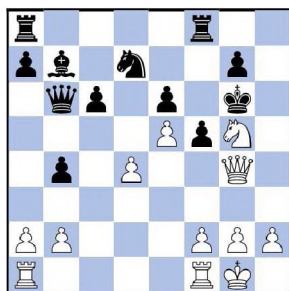
15.♙g5 ♙xg5? Jorden had no idea what was in store, it seems... I can't imagine a 2700-GM miscalculating the sacrifice, more likely he missed the candidate altogether. It's hard to think creatively right after the conclusion of prep.

15...♙fe8 is a grim concession, but absolutely necessary. 16.♙xe7 ♙xe7 17.♙c1 ♙c8 18.♙d2 was I.Zugic 2465 - I.Novikov 2610, Montreal 2004, which ended peacefully, but White just has a much better position. An important detail can be seen after Novikov's 18...♙a6?!, when White should keep the light-squared bishops on. 19.♙fd1 ♙f8 20.♙e3±.

16.♙xh7+! Already seen twice before, this thematic sacrifice must have come as a shocker, and something of an embarrassment.

16...♙xh7 17.♙xg5+ ♙g6 18.♙g4!? The unanimous choice in practice. There was more than one path to eternal Greek Gift glory, but this is the clearest.

18...f5



19.♙g3!? As before, the unequivocal favorite of humans. 19.♙h4! ♙h8 20.♙g3+- actually worsens Black's defensive prospects, but with his king so poorly placed it doesn't have a major impact.

19...♙xd4? Going down without a fight. 19...♙ae8?! 20.♙ad1 ♙c8 21.♙fe1+- also leaves White with an overwhelming position. Black's pieces are missing in action, and everyone knows the queen and knight work well together!

19...♙h8?! 20.♙xe6+ ♙f7 was K.Grigrorian 2475 - H.Dobosz 2385, Yerevan 1980, when the simplest conclusion is 21.♙f4+-.

19...c5!? was the best attempt, but not enough to put up serious resistance. 20.dxc5 ♙c6 21.♙xe6+ ♙f7 22.♙d4! ♙xc5 23.♙xf5 ♙xe5 (23...♙xe5?! 24.♙ac1+- strips Black's king of any illusions regarding survival. A.Williams -



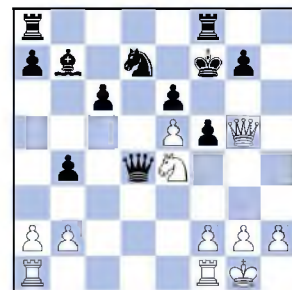
▲ Gregory Kaidanov

Photo by David Llada

J.Cooper 2330, Wales 1982 oddly ended in a repetition of moves... when White had a mate in nine! Perhaps intimidation from the unrated player against his far stronger opponent?) 24.♙d6+ ♙g8 25.♙xb7+- wins slowly but surely. Two pawns is two too many.

20.♙e4+ ♙h7 21.♙h4+ ♙g6 21...♙g8

22.♙f6+ ♙xf6 23.♙xd4+- snatches the queen. 22.♙g5+ ♙f7



23.♙ad1! A nice detail. White will emerge with an extra piece.

23...♙xe5 Forced, as 23...♙xe4? 24.♙xd7+ is mate on the spot.

24.♙xd7+ ♙g8 25.♙xb7 Tactics prevent Black from capturing on e4, and Kaidanov converted with a steady hand. **White won** in six moves.

FIRST SATURDAY OCTOBER GM NORM INVITATIONAL, Budapest 2023

Budapest, and Hungary in general, is a place with a long standing chess heritage. I was fortunate enough to visit the city

TSAGHKADZOR, ARMENIA

September 20-27, 2023

Tsaghkadzor Open
(9 rounds)

1-4 Abhimanyu PURANIK (IND), Tigran PETROSIAN (ARM), Krishnan SASIKIRIAN (IND), M. PRANESH (IND) **7**
5-8 Valentin DRAGNEV (AUT), Subramaniyam BHARATH (IND), Manuel PETROSYAN (ARM), Arman HAKEMI (IRI) **6½**
9-15 Sina MOVAHED (IRI), Aleks SAHAKYAN (ARM), P. INIYAN (IND), Krishna GOUTHAM (IND), Maksim TSARUK (FID), Vahe BAGHDASARYAN (ARM), S.P. SETHURAMAN (IND) **6**

YEREVAN, ARMENIA

September 29 - October 7, 2023

5th Yerevan Open
(9 rounds)

1 Karen GRIGORYAN (ARM) .. **7½**
2-4 Baskaran ADHIBAN (IND), Abhimanyu PURANIK (IND), Sergei LOBANOV (FID) **7**
5-10 Mahdi GHOLAMI (IRI), M. PRANESH (IND), Venkataraman KARTHIK (IND),

Vitaly SIVUK (SWE), Subramaniyam BHARATH (IND), Nikita MATINIAN (FID) **6½**

CANCUN, MEXICO

October 11-15, 2023

**11th Chamber and Associates
Master Chess Cup**
(9 rounds)

1 Jorge CORI (PER) **7½**
2-7 Jose MARTINEZ (PER), Carlos ALBORNOZ (CUB), Dylan BERDAYES (CUB), Sandro MARECO (ARG), Gabriel FLOM (FAR), Luis QUESADA (CUB) **6½**
8-12 Sion GALAVIZ (MEX), Juan GONZALEZ (MEX), Maties PEREZ (CHI), Sergio DURAN (CRC), Michel DIAZ (CUB) **6**

DOHA, QATAR

October 11-20, 2023

Qatar Masters Open
(9 rounds, 158 players)

1-2 Nodirbek YAKKUBOEV (UZB), Nodirbek ABDUSATTOROV (UZB) **7**
3-8 S.L. NARAYANAN (IND),

Javokhir SINDAROV (UZB), Hikaru NAKAMURA, Arjun ERIGAISI (IND), Parham MAGHSOODLOO (IRI), D. GUKESH (IND) **6½**
9-15 David PARAVYAN (FID), Murali KARTHIKEYAN (IND), Anish GIRI (NED), Aleksandr SHIMANOV (FID), Saleh SALEM (UAE), Rinat JUMABAYEV (KAZ), Magnus CARLSEN (NOR) **6**

PAVLODAR, KAZAKHSTAN

October 22-31, 2023

Pavlodar Open
(10 rounds)

1 Aditya MITTAL (IND) **8**
2-3 Mihail NIKITENKO (BLR), Dmitry BOCHAROV (RUS) ... **7½**
4-7 Anton DEMCHENKO (SLO), Daniil LINTCHEVSKI (RUS), Denis MAKHNEV (KAZ), Zhamsaran TSYDPOV (RUS) **7**
8-12 Ramil FAIZRAKHMANOV (RUS), Alisher SULEYMENOV (KAZ), Zhandos AGMANOV (KAZ), Evgeny ALEKSEEV (ISR), Steven ZIERK **6½**



and participate in two events – First Saturday and Vezerkepzo – that together make up easily one of the longest running continuous series of Norm Invitationals. It's enough to say that in Budapest one could play chess non-stop just about indefinitely given the chance, which presents an invaluable opportunity to gain experience. I was expecting to participate in the IM section, and steeled myself for the battle ahead to reach a monstrously high 7/9, but was instead pleasantly surprised to find there would be space in the GM group – a much tougher crowd, but the necessary score was lowered exponentially to 5½/9.

The First Saturday GM Norm Invitational was a dream come true – after a good start I took off, unexpectedly making it through the “murderer's row” of three GMs back-to-back with a strong 2/3. Needing a +1 score in the final three rounds, I was very generously gifted a full point from a formidable adversary who, up to that point, had seemed on track for a GM-Norm. After that stroke of luck, two draws were enough to suffice for my second IM-Norm!

Next up was Vezerkepzo's GM Norm section, where I also managed to start off with a bang, taking a high-profile scalp in GM Baadur Jobava, and with Black pieces!

BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

October 7–17, 2023

First Saturday October GM Norm Invitational

(10-player round-robin)

1-2 Valeriy AVESKULOV (UKR), Dmitry KUSHKO (UKR)	6
3-5 Milovan RATKOVIC (SRB), Grayson RORRER, Andrei KOVALEV (BLR)	5½
6-7 Gellert KARACSONYI (HUN), Bence PRIBELSZKY (HUN)	4½
8 Valeriy NEVEROV (UKR)	3½
9-10 Maksym DUBNEVYCH (UKR), Dmitriy VOLKOV	2

BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

October 19–27, 2023

Vezerkepzo Autumn GM Norm Invitational

(10-player round-robin)

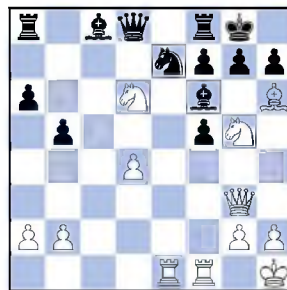
1-2 Valeriy AVESKULOV (UKR), Arseniy NESTEROV (FID)	7½
3 Baadur JOBAVA (GEO)	6½
4-5 Grayson RORRER, Dmitriy KUSHKO (UKR)	4½
6-7 Matyas PALCZERT (HUN), Aryan GUTLA	3½
8 Endre CSIKI (HUN)	3
9 Leonardo VINCENTI (ITA)	2½
10 Daniel OCHS (GER)	2

Climbing to +2 after four rounds, it seemed I would have every chance of finishing well and, perhaps, even bagging a superfluous third norm – FIDE rules require at least one from a Swiss, too. While the fact of having already achieved a major goal takes some pressure off, perhaps a bit more stress would have helped me stay alert and focused. As it happened, I completely ran out of energy and dropped back to an even score in the final tally. Good beginnings and a plethora of missed opportunities in my final games was certainly frustrating at the time, but in the same vein a clear sign of potential for future improvement!

All in all, my performance in Budapest was a great success – I gained 70 rating points and an IM-Norm was exactly what I was hoping for after a lengthy period spent dormant at around the same level. I hope to build on this major breakthrough back in the States, and edge ever closer to the IM title and the deepening mastery that feat entails.

Andrei Kovalev	2435
Grayson Rorrer	2288

First Saturday GM Norm Invitational,
Budapest 2023



22...♠g6? I recall spending much of my remaining time on this move, eventually deciding on it in the hopes of getting some clarity. Instead, I brought on the exact opposite...

22...♠a7, giving f7 additional support and intending ...♠g6 next, leaves Black with a clear extra pawn and a decisive advantage. 23.♠gxf7 ♠xf7 24.♠e8+! Somehow I had been more focused on 24.♠xf7? ♠xf7 25.♠b3+ ♠f8, worried about my king position, but as I eventually concluded – it can get away scot free after 26.♠d2 a5! 27.♠xb5 ♠e7+.

24...♠xe8 25.♠xe8 gxf6 26.♠f3 Nothing quite works for White. He can only try to seek compensation through active play with the queen.

26.♠d6!? ♠f8 27.♠b3+ ♠h8 28.♠c1 ♠d7 29.♠c7 ♠e8 30.♠e6 ♠g7+ also leaves



BROADEN YOUR HORIZONS!

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GRANDMASTER ALEX COLOVIC

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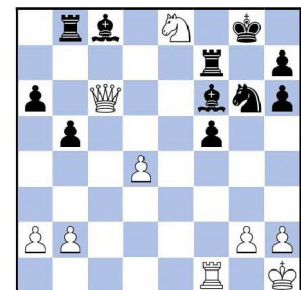
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Alex writes on Substack, subscribe at substack.com/@gmalexcolovic. He also shares his views on current news in video format at www.youtube.com/@gmalexcolovic.

GM Colovic is the author of *The Sinquefeld Chess Generation*, a book that analyzes and explores in great depth the styles and preferences of America's top young talent.

White struggling to prove compensation, though it definitely exists.

26...♠b8 27.♠c6?! A basic oversight, shared by both players as we will see! Time shortage does strange things to the mind. 27.♠d6 ♠f8! 28.♠c6 ♠e6+ is great for Black, but not over just yet.



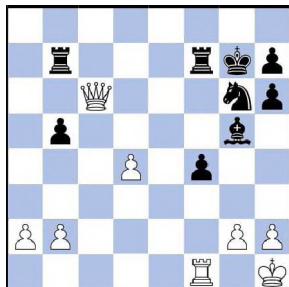
27...♠g5? Missing the chance! 27...♠xd4! 28.♠d6 ♠b7+– uses the same idea from the game... but with a pawn to the good! That stipulation leaves White fighting a hopeless battle.

28.♠d6 ♠b7 29.♠xb7 ♠bxb7 30.♠xa6?



Grabbing a pawn is always a great feeling, but White's position suffers. 30.g3! leaves the game in a state of flux – it's always nice to have the pieces, but at the same time White has serious compensation in his passer and active queen.

30...f4 31.♖c6 ♕g7



32.g3?! Getting the king out of his tomb, but at a cost! Probably it was better to rush ahead with the pawn – 32.d5 ♖fc7 33.♖e6 ♖e7 34.♖c6 ♕e5 35.♖c5 ♖bd7, which is clearly nice for Black, but it's harder to activate his pieces, meaning the play is less one-sided than in the game.

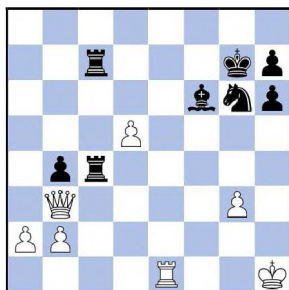
32...♖fc7 33.♖g2?! Rather passive. Now Black takes full control. The queen should keep pestering Black's pieces, though the situation is already grim after 33.♖a6 h5! 34.h4 ♕h6.

33...fxg3 34.hxg3 ♕f6 35.♖d1 ♖b6 36.♖d5 b4 37.♖e1 37...♖d2 ♖bb7 38.♖b3 was more resistant, though 38...♕g5! 39.♖f2 h5 leaves Black dictating the game.

37...♖bc6 38.♖b3 38...♖f1 h5! 39.♖xh5 ♕xd4++ wouldn't have been much better. Long term White is helpless against the power of the pieces.

38...♖c4 38...♕xd4 39.♖xb4 ♕f2++ was even easier.

39.d5



39...♖d4?? Giving away the lion's share of my advantage just when I had the game clinched! 39...♕e5 40.♖d1 ♕d6++ is as bad for White as ever.

40.d6? A typical last move before the time control, trying to liquidate the position. But not in the right way!

40.♖d1!, taking off a pair of rooks, was the way to go. Then, after 40...♖xd1+ 41.♖xd1



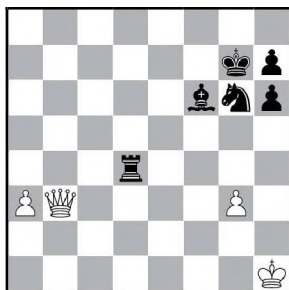
▲ Grayson Rorrer

♕xb2 42.♖g4! ♖, Black can't favorably keep the b-pawn. There still remain some winning chances, but they would be slight indeed compared to earlier in the game.

40...♖d7? The same comment can be appended here! 40...♖xd6 41.♖xb4 ♖cd7++, with ...h5-h4 to follow, is back to hopeless for White.

41.♖e8? Played quickly after returning from the usual post time control stroll, and the final error, after which my execution was crisp and clean.

41.♖d1, as before, takes off a pair of rooks and greatly reduces Black's winning chances. 41...♖7xd6 42.♖xd4 ♖xd4 43.a4 bxa3 44.bxa3



44...h5 45.a4 h4 46.a5 hxg3 47.♖xg3 ♖ is a logical way the game could go, when I find it hard to believe Black has any legitimate winning chances left.

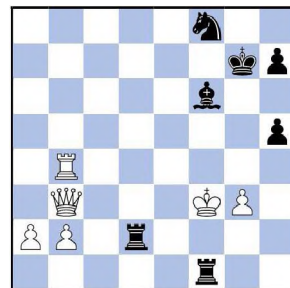
41...♕f8 No more chances to trade rooks! Now White really is running against the wind.

42.♖b8 42.a4 bxa3 43.bxa3 ♖4xd6++ fails to have much of an effect with both rooks still on the board!

42...♖7xd6 43.♖xb4?! Giving me a forced, straightforward win to calculate out. It took some time, but I was able to handle the task in exemplary fashion.

43.♖b7+ ♕d7 44.♖f3 h5! 45.♖xh5 ♖6d5 46.♖f3 ♕g6++ also gives Black a decisive mating attack.

43...♖d1+ 44.♕g2 ♖6d2+ 45.♕h3 ♖h1+ 46.♕g4 h5+ 47.♕f3 ♖f1+ 47...♕g6++ was simple too.



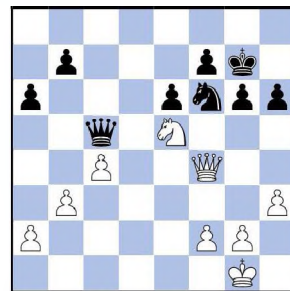
48.♕e4 48.♕e3 ♕g5+ 49.♕e4 ♖e1+ 50.♕f3 ♕g6++ was the other line I calculated, when White can delay but not indefinitely prevent the inevitable.

48...♖e1+ 49.♕f3 ♕g6?! 49...♕e6++ would have saved us some time!

50.♖b5 ♕e5+ 51.♖xe5 ♖xe5 With such a surplus in material, the position is winning, slowly but surely. **Black won** in 12 moves.

Grayson Rorrer	2288
Dmitriy Kushko	2426

First Saturday GM Norm Invitational,
Budapest 2023



27...♖d6?? I just couldn't believe my eyes... I was all ready for 27...♖a5 28.♕g4 ♕xg4 29.hxg4 ♖xa2 30.♖d4+=, when Black can't reasonably avoid a repetition of moves.

28.♖xh6+ ♕g8 29.♖h8+

Black resigned

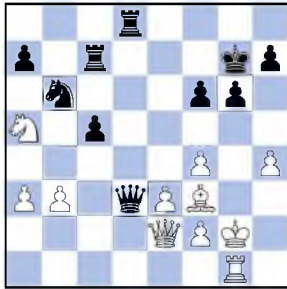
Just as in the beginner textbooks. A thoroughly undeserved, but most welcome victory. My opponent was on a sterling 4/5 and, naturally, his norm chances (the GM-Norm score was set to at least 7/9) would have benefitted from a win against the lowest-rated player. It wasn't to be, though, as White was quite alright throughout the entire game, meaning his ambitions weren't based on reality. But sometimes we try to conjure up what



doesn't exist if it suits our needs/desires... 29...♔xh8 30.♕xf7+ ♔g7 31.♕xd6 is a pointless fight to carry on.

Baadur Jobava	2581
Grayson Rorrer	2288

Vezerkepzo Autumn GM Norm Invitational,
Budapest 2023



After an odd exchange sacrifice I've managed to completely outplay Georgian GM Jobava, a former member of the world elite having topped out at 2734. Now was the right time to ramp up the pressure and clinch a well deserved victory. Instead...

31...♕c3? The introduction to a strange plan. Black is, of course, still better, but somehow my pieces get a bit sidetracked over the next few moves.

31...♕xe2! 32.♕xe2 ♔d2 was an endgame the players summarily failed to properly evaluate. For concrete reasons Black is just much better, rather than the rough equality we both thought reigned supreme. 33.♔f3! (33.♕b5? looks like a nice setup, but Black breaks up the construction most simply by 33...♔a2 34.a4 a6!-+. The bishop can never go to c4, as was Jobava's intention, on account of the basic shot 35.♕c4 ♕xa4) 33...♔cd7 34.a4 ♔c2 35.♔f1 ♔dd2 36.♕b5 (36.♕c4? ♕xc4 37.♕xc4 ♔d3-+ also doesn't help.) 36...♕c8! 37.♕c4 ♔d8+ White's pieces aren't working well together. I wouldn't expect the game to have lasted very long, if only I had noticed just how powerful Black's rooks will be in the ending...

32.♕b5 Already a modicum of activity I needn't have allowed.

32...♔d2? My idea behind the last move – but with White's queen activated I don't have the leisure to play so carelessly.

32...♕d3!? 33.♕xd3 ♔xd3 34.♔c1 ♔d2 35.a4 is a worse version of the previous endgame, and certainly not something I ever considered after declining to liquidate just on the last move! Black is better, but much less so that what could have been, e.g. 35...h5! 36.♔f1 ♔h6 37.♕c6!+, and with c5 dropping Black's winning chances

look just about non-existent, in practice. There's still a game to be played, but White has definitely managed to get away more or less scot free.

32...♕c2!? was probably a better version of what I did in the game, keeping an eye on the kingside via ...♕f5. Still, White has good chances of defending after 33.♕c4! ♕xc4 34.bxc4 ♔d2 35.♔f1 ♕f5! 36.♔g1+.

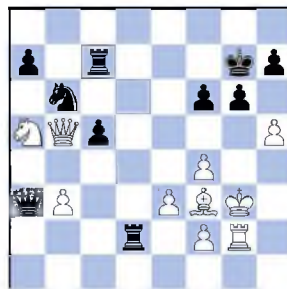
33.♔g3 ♕b2? Black's advantage, if any remained, was already very much in question, but now the game spirals completely out of control. My king will miss his royal defender while it's out lounging on the queenside, grabbing pawns.

33...♔b2! was the best try to maintain some pressure, with the idea of keeping the queen closer to home while still maintaining some seventh rank pressure. 34.h5 (34.a4 ♔f8! 35.♔d1 ♕c2 36.♕f1 g5! 37.hxg5 fxg5 38.fxg5 ♕f5+ is also more comfortable for Black.) 34...♔f8! The only move, and one that can be understood but looks hard to find. 35.♔d1 ♕c2 36.♔d8+ ♔g7 37.♕f1 gxh5! 38.♕xh5 h6+ looks to dangerously weaken Black's kingside, but it's hard to exploit.

34.♔g2 By now practically anything works. Black's pieces have strayed too far from home.

34.♕e8!? ♔xf2 35.♔h1 already seems to have Black fighting for a draw. 35...♔xf3+!? (35...h5 is also fine. 36.f5 ♔d2 37.♔h3 ♕e5 38.♕xg6+ ♔f8 39.♕xh5 ♔g7 40.♕h8+ ♔g8 41.♕h6+ ♔g7=) 36.♔xf3 ♕d2 37.h5 ♕d5+ Black's queen is just in time. White either needs to acquiesce to a trade into an even endgame, or endless checks. 38.e4 (38.♕e4 ♕xe4+ 39.♔xe4 c4=) 38...♔d3+ 39.♔f2 ♕d2+ 40.♔f3 ♕d3+=.

34...♕xa3 35.h5



35...♔d8 35...♕b4?? 36.♕e8+- would be a complete disaster. The eighth rank needs defense as 36...♕xa5 runs into 37.h6+ ♔xh6 38.♕f8+ ♔g7 39.♔h2 mate. However, 35...♔dd7 36.♕c6∞ also gives White fine play.

36.♕c6 ♔d2 A strange move, but ironically



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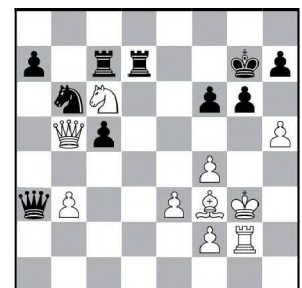
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one that provoked the decisive blunder. Chess can be odd like that sometimes, you think your opponent is a fool and in turn lose that little bit of concentration. It didn't help that Jobava was down to minutes by now. In all seriousness, I realized quite acutely what I had done and wouldn't have minded a draw in the slightest by now.

36...♔dd7 37.♕b8 ♔e7 38.♕c6 ♔ed7 would have been a better way to covertly slip in a draw offer.





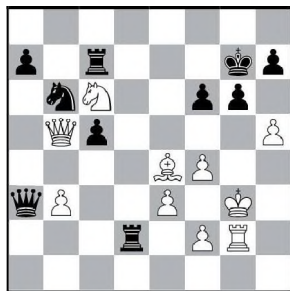
A) 39.hxg6 hxg6 40.♖h2!? (40.♙e4? ♖c1 41.♗h2 ♗f8! is suddenly dangerous for White again.) 40...♗c8!∞ again needs to be found.

B) 39.♙e4!? The idea we agreed was best after the game. Black can defend, but it's only easy to inhuman minds. I would have been under great pressure to survive, especially with eight minutes on the clock. 39...♗c8! (39...♖c1!? is possible, but frightening indeed.) 40.hxg6 h6 41.♙f3 ♖b7 42.♖e2 ♗d6 43.♙g4 ♖xb3 44.♗a5 ♖b6 45.♗xb7 ♖xb7∞, and with scarily precise play Black has managed to escape the worst of it.

37.♗xa7?? An unbelievable oversight! It's easy to go with the flow, which had clearly been on White's side, but a sober disposition under pressure would show there isn't any reason White should be better yet.

37.♗e5!? ♖d8 (37...fxe5 works too, but 38.♖e8 exf4+ 39.♗h4!∞ is some kind of mess I would have no desire to get into right before the time control.) 38.♗c6 ♖d2= is the simplest with low time.

Just about everything could be tried – as mentioned, we both thought 37.♙e4!? was the most dangerous idea after the fact. Black has a narrow path to equality consisting of two difficult to spot moves/ideas.



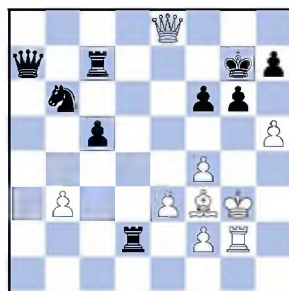
A) 37...♖d6! Dangerous, but it looks to be working fine.

A1) 38.♗e5 ♖d8 39.hxg6 fxe5 40.gxh7 ♗h8 41.♗h2 ♗f7 42.♖g8+ ♖xg8 43.hxg8 ♖+ ♗xg8 44.♖e8+ ♗g7 45.♖xe5+ ♗f8 46.♖d6+=.

A2) 38.hxg6 hxg6 39.♗d4!? gives White some dangerous ideas, but nothing that seems to pan out. 39...cxd4!? 40.♖e8 ♖xb3! 41.♗h4! f5 42.♖e5+ ♗g8 43.♖xd6 ♖h7+ 44.♗g3 fxe4 45.♖b8+ ♗g7 46.♖e5+ ♗g8 47.♖b8+ ♗g7=.

B) 37...♖c1! also seems to be okay, but who would have the bravado to throw their queen even further out into the wild with their king trembling? 38.hxg6 h5! 39.♙f3 ♖h1 40.♖xc5 h4+ 41.♗g4

♗d5! 42.♖g3 ♖h2 43.♖g2 ♖h1=, with a typical engine draw that nobody would ever be able to work their way through. 37...♖xa7 38.♖e8 Threatening the same h6+, ♖f8+ and ♖h2 mating sequence.



38...♖c8! If it were not for this move, White's plan might have worked. All of a sudden, the door slams shut on White's attacking ambitions, and just like that the game is completely over. A rook is a rook! Just to illustrate the potential of White's attack, note these couple of lines: 38...f5 39.♖e5+ ♗g8 40.hxg6 hxg6 (40...♖d8 41.♖e6+ ♗g7 42.♖h2 ♖h8 43.♖xf5 ♖a1 44.gxh7+-) 41.♖e8+ ♗g7 42.♖h2+-.

Or 38...h6 39.♗h3! g5 40.♖g6+ ♗f8 41.♖xf6+ ♖f7 42.♖xh6+ ♗e8 43.♖xg5+- Looks terrifying indeed.

39.♖e6 39.h6+?! ♗xh6 40.♖f7?? was my opponent's intention when deciding to sacrifice on a7, but the wayward queen has managed to return with powerful effect. 40...♖xf7 Not that easy to see from afar after all the previous calculations both players had to undergo.

39...♖f8! Consolidating the position. White has no hope whatsoever.

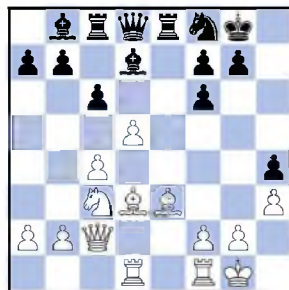
40.hxg6 hxg6 41.♖h2 41.♙e4 f5! 42.♖e5+ ♖f6 is lights out.

41...♖dd8 The final finesse. White's h-file aspirations lead nowhere, so...

White resigned

Grayson Rorrer	2288
Dmitriy Kushko	2426

Vezerkepzo Autumn GMNorm Invitational, Budapest 2023



16...♙xh3?? The decisive mistake, played

DOUGLAS, ISLE OF MAN

October 25 – November 5, 2023

FIDE Grand Swiss

(11 rounds, 114 players)

1	Vidit GUJRATHI (IND)	8½
2	Hikaru NAKAMURA	8
3-7	Andrey ESIPENKO (FID), Arjun ERIGAISI (IND), Vincent KEYMER (GER), Parham MAGHSOODLOO (IRI), Anish GIRI (NED)	7½
8-13	Javokhir SINDAROV (UZB), Alexandr PREDKE (SRB), Fabiano CARUANA, Jan-Krzysztof DUDA (POL), Nodirbek ABDUSATTOROV (UZB), Praggnanandhaa RAMESHBABU (IND)	7

after five minutes of thought. I couldn't have hoped for better! Perhaps he thought I underestimated the idea and expected to mate glamorously, but actually it was next to the only option I analyzed.

16...cxd5 17.♗xd5 ♙e6, on the other hand, is already very comfortable for Black. 18.♙f4! is forced. (18.♙e4? was my idea after a cursory examination, but naturally White runs into trouble after the simple 18...♙xd5 19.♙xd5 ♖c7 20.♖fe1 ♖h2+ 21.♗f1 ♗e6! is forced.) 18...♙xf4 19.♗xf4 ♖c7 20.♗xe6 ♗xe6 leads to a simple position where I would already rather take Black.

17.gxh3 ♖d6 18.♗g2! The only move, but it's good enough! 18.♖fe1?? ♖h2+ 19.♗f1 ♖xh3+ 20.♗e2 ♖xe3+! 21.fxe3 (21.♗d2 is, of course, hopeless.) 21...♖g2 mate, with a sparkling finale, at first made me want to abandon the idea of my previous moves 15.♗c3 and d4-d5, but fortunately I took a step back and reviewed the situation with fresh eyes.

18...♖h2+ After thirty minutes of thought! Not a very practical time management when, as here, the move is more or less just forced. At least he could have made it quickly, with the full realization that something had gone wrong, and been able to see clearer the positions ahead.

19.♗f3 ♗d7 Another twenty minutes gone!

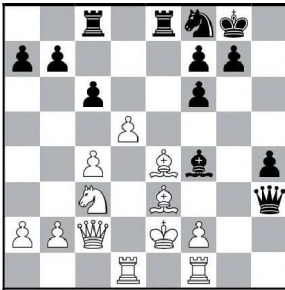
19...♖xh3+ 20.♗e2 ♙f4!? was mainly what I was looking at during the near-hour

I had to wait at the board. Now I can sympathize with MVL, who, still in prep against Alekseenko, wished for board games. (20...♖xe3+? 21.fxe3 ♖g2+ 22.♖f2+- is, of course, the crucial difference – the rook remained on f1 rather than entombing White's king



SOLUTIONS TO THREATS EXERCISES FROM PAGE 29

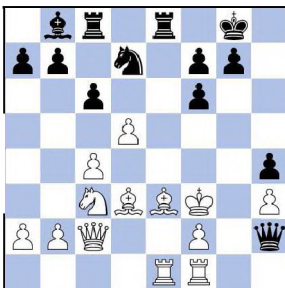
and leaving it without defenders.) 21.♔e4! The only winning move, and one I had spotted. White keeps the position under control.



A) 21...f5 22.♖h1 ♗g4+ 23.♔f3 ♗g5 24.♗dg1! ♗f6 25.♗d2+-.

B) 21...♙e3 22.fxe3 cxd5 23.cxd5 seemed the end of the line. Black is running out of play, but still has one last firecracker to set off. 23...♙c4!? White still needs to be careful. I hope I would have managed to bob and weave through the complexities of 24.♖h1 ♗g3 25.♗dg1 ♗e5 26.♙xh4! f5 27.♖h5! ♗xe4 28.♗xe4 ♙xc2+ 29.♔d3 ♙xe4 30.♔xc2+-.

20.♗de1!? The simplest solution – White just wants to run with his king to e2-d1, getting away from the crime scene. 20.♖h1! also works, but unnecessarily complicates the play. Or so I thought at the time! 20...♙e3+! 21.♔e3 ♙e8+ 22.♔e4 ♗f4+ 23.♔e2 f5 24.♗d2! was what I had missed, when White wins clearly after 24...♗e5 25.dxc6 ♗f6 26.♗d4 ♗c7 27.♔f1!? fxe4 28.♗d5+-.



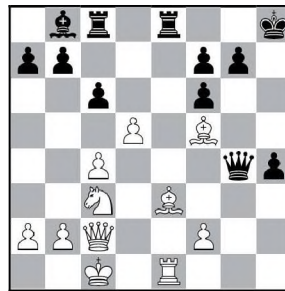
20...♗xh3+ Letting me make a clean escape. 20...♔f4!? would have at least forced me to find the fairly self evident 21.♔f5! ♗e5+ 22.♔e2 ♗xc4 23.♔d1 ♙cd8 24.♖h1 ♗xe3+ 25.fxe3 ♗xc2+ 26.♔xc2 ♙xe3 27.dxc6 bxc6 28.♗d1+-, when, despite temporary material equality, White will win with the

pieces. Black's immobile kingside majority, taken on as early as move 4, is an important factor!

21.♔e2 ♗g4+ 21...♗e5 22.♔h7+! ♗h8 23.♗f5+- trades queens without shedding even a pawn more than necessary. White wins easily.

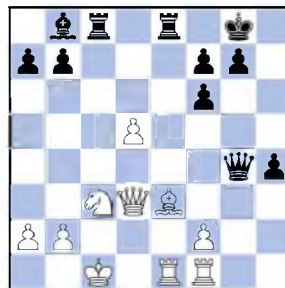
22.♔d2 ♗e5 23.♔c1 The safest and surest.

23.♔h7+! ♗h8 (23...♔f8 24.♔c5+- is not an improvement.) 24.♔f5 was the most straightforward conclusion, based off 24...♗f3+ 25.♔c1 ♗xe1 26.♙xe1



A) The difference from 23.♔f5 immediately can be seen in 26...♗xc4?! 27.♔xc8 ♙xc8 28.♗f5+-, when, with a king on g8, Black would have serious counter chances! But now White's attack (♖h1-xh4) will prove decisive.

B) 26...♗f3 27.♔xc8 ♙xc8 28.♗d1+- The endgame conversion shouldn't pose too many difficulties. 23...cxd5 24.cxd5 ♗xd3+ 25.♗xd3



25...♙e5 Nothing else had much of an impact either. 25...h3 26.♖h1 ♗h4 27.♗d1 h2 28.♔b1+- shows the futility of Black's h-pawn march – without support, it's just a lone foot soldier, and doesn't have any effect whatsoever.

26.♔b1 Just about everything worked fine. Getting out of the c-file pin restores mobility to White's knight. **White won** without any further difficulties after 21 moves.

1. Black has created a threat to which White fails to respond. White's last move was 45.h4?!, when, instead, 45.♗e4! was the proper defense against the threat. After 45...♙e2+ 46.♗xe2 ♔f6 White is very slightly better, but Black has 45...♙c4! with equality. 45...♙e1!! A phenomenal threat that totally changes the evaluation of the position. 46.♗xf7+ 46.♙xc2 ♙xe8+-.

46...♔xf7 47.♙xc2 and **Black won**.

2. Here Black had attempted to defend actively by 23...♗d3!?, threatening the white queen. However, he should have defended with 23...♙c8!±. 24.♙a8!! A powerful counterthreat! Black's back rank is extremely weak. 24...♙xf3 25.♙e8+ ♔f8 26.♙xf8+ ♔g7 27.♙b8 ♔h6 Also 27...♗c7 doesn't solve Black's problems after 28.♔f8+ ♔g8 29.♔d6+ ♙xb8 30.♔xb8+-.

28.gxf3 ♗e6 29.♔f6 ♙xh3 30.♙e4 g5 31.♙g8 **Black resigned**.

3. 25.♔f5! ♙c7 26.f4!! ♗g3?! 26...g6 27.♖h1 ♗xh1! (27...♗g3 28.♖h3+-) 28.♙xh1 gxf5+.

27.♖h1! ♔g6 28.♖h3 ♙xh3 29.♔xh3 ♔xb1 30.♔xb1 and **White won**.

4. Black created a threat with his previous move ...♙fe8, to which White wrongly responded with 18.♔f2?. The correct plan was the counterthreat 18.g5!, when after 18...♙xd4 19.♔xd4 ♗xd4 20.♙xd4 ♙xf5 21.♙xd5 ♔e6 22.c3 White is only slightly worse. 18...♗xd4! 19.♔xd4 ♔b5! An excellent move after which Black wins the exchange. 20.♔xf6 Or 20.♙f2 ♔xd4 21.♙xd4 ♔e1+-.

20...♙xf1 21.♙xf1 gxf6 and **Black won**.

5. 40.♗f6+ White combines threats against the black king with winning material.

40...♔h6 41.♗b8 ♔g5? 41...♗xf2!! was the only proper defense against the threats. After another spectacular move 42.♗d5!!, Black has nothing better than 42...♔h7 43.♗xf2±.

42.♗e4+!! Beautiful geometry which allows White to win material and the game.

42...♔g4 42...fxe4 43.♗d8+ ♔f5 (43...♔h6 44.♗h8+ ♔g5 45.♗xh3+-; 43...♔g4 44.♗c8+ ♔h5 45.♗xh3+-) 44.♗d7+-.

43.f3+! ♔xf3 43...♔h5 44.♗h8 mate.

44.♗g5+ **Black resigned**.

6. Black has just played 37...♗e6, which serves as the best defense against threats on the f-file.

38.e4!! Ivanchuk combines threats with the hand of an artist.

38...♔xe4 38...♔xe4 39.♙xf8+-; Or 38...♗xe4 39.♔c2 ♗xd4 40.♗d6+ ♔xh5 41.♔d1+ ♔g4 42.♗xe7+-

Threatening the rook on f8 and also checkmate on h7. 39.♔b3 ♗d7 40.♙xf5 ♙xf5 41.♙xf5 ♗xd4+

41...♗xf5 42.♗d6+ ♔xh5 43.♔d1+!

42.♔h1 ♗d2 43.♙f6+ ♔h7 44.♙f2

Black resigned.



FIDE GRAND SWISS,

Douglas 2023

The road to the World Championship has historically been a lengthy, challenging one. Recently the reigning Champion's challenger has most often been decided by a single Candidates tournament, with various paths of qualification ranging from knockout lotteries to rating and everything in between. In the days of old even true legends of the game were forced to fight their way through first a Zonal qualifier (usually a National Championship), then a stacked Interzonal among other winners to get a shot in that cycle's Candidates tournament/matches. The FIDE Grand Swiss (formerly dubbed the "FIDE Chess.com Grand Swiss"), held this year on the Isle of Man, brings back memories of those Interzonals from days gone by, if in a somewhat abridged form. Players were indeed fighting for a cherished spot in the Candidates, which went to the top two finishers. The 100 highest-rated active players in FIDE's June rating list were eligible to participate, going further down the list in case of refusals, and spots were also offered for Continental picks and nominations of the FIDE President. There would also be a Women's Grand Swiss held alongside the main action, with similar stakes. All said, the event looked set to live up to its name of a truly Grand Swiss, and the players did not disappoint!

In a field rated on average in the 2630's, there would be no easy matchups right from the get go. While there weren't many major upsets in the early stages, some top seeds did find it a bit hard to get going, having been forced to succumb to early draws. It's just the nature of chess nowadays – winning games is not becoming any easier as the general strength of opposition constantly goes up. An early shocker was Kazakh IM (you got that right!) Ramazan Zhalmakhanov, who started with two wins against mid-to-high 2600's, before drawing four games in a row against 2700+ adversary. He fell off a bit around the end, but still had an outstanding breakthrough performance, smashing through the requirements of a second GM-Norm.

Dark horse stories aside, GM Andrey Esipenko was the first to take a small step further than the rest, jumping ahead to 3½/4. It wouldn't last long, though, as GM Hikaru Nakamura bounced back from a sluggish start to win three in a row, thereby catching up. After a one-time sole



▲ Hikaru Nakamura, Grand Swiss 2023

Photo by Maria Emelianova

leader, every passing round only served to make the fight at the top more and more intense, as those playing catch up closed in, increasing the number of players vying for and sharing the lead. The tournament's schedule was somewhat brutal – eleven rounds with only one rest day halfway through. After the – surely much needed – break, India's GM Vidit Gujrathi was the next to separate himself, completing an impressive comeback, having roared to 5½/6 after a first-round loss. I would call it an effective use of the "Swiss Gambit," but actually the level of his opponents never went down, only progressively upwards!

It was only after the penultimate tenth round that there could finally be talk of clarity in terms of the Candidates hunters: by steamrolling GM Fabiano Caruana – who at that point had temporarily crossed 2800 and was on track to repeat his 2021 qualification – Nakamura joined the leading pack before the final round, accompanied by Esipenko and Vidit on 7½/10. The event's fate rested in their hands. Theoretically it would have been possible for any of three right behind on 7/9 to catch up, qualify and even win it all, but the chances were next to none. And so it went – Esipenko took a hard loss, paired "down" against GM Anish Giri (6½), while Nakamura defended the somewhat questionable Kalashnikov in exemplary fashion, drawing from a position of strength, in the process securing a Candidates berth. That left it up to board two, where Vidit didn't let up and pressed a small endgame advantage to a full point, smooth as butter, claiming overall victory and a place in the Candidates!

Hikaru Nakamura	2780
Alexey Sarana	2682

FIDE Grand Swiss, Douglas 2023



18...d4?! White had achieved less than nothing with his Catalan, and should have been fighting for equality, but by pressing ahead too early with the hanging pawns Sarana forgave his opponent in full.

18...c4! was the right square to give up – the d5 pawn is well protected, and won't come under any serious pressure soon. Black has comfortable play after 19.♖d4 h6 20.♗xf6 (The lesser evil, as 20.♗d2 ♕c5 21.e3 ♖e4!? 22.♖c1 ♗xd4 23.exd4 ♗c6 looks rather unpleasant. The bishop pair definitely aren't operating at full capacity!) 20...♗xf6 21.e3 g6!?, and though White should be okay his position isn't much fun to play.

19.♗xb7 ♖xb7 20.♖c4 With Black's pawns firmly blockaded and a permanent weakness on c5, now was the time to find a way of getting rid of the c5 pawn in return for active play. Hanging on to the pawn will only lead to suffering.

20...♗d5? Bad tactically. If not for one detail Black would have been in time with ...♗b6, ...♗fd8-d5, etc. But it's an important one!



20...♟fe8!? 21.♟xf6 ♟xf6 22.♟c2 ♟e7 23.♟c1 g6 should be okay for Black, but the details are far from simple to work out. From a distance, both c5 and d4 look set to drop off.

20...♟g4!? 21.♟xe7 ♟xe7 also amounts to a pawn sacrifice, but would have been a far better way to execute a similar idea to the game! 22.♟c1! remains the only challenge, but far from devastating this time. (22.♟c2 ♟e5! 23.♟xc5 d3 24.♟c3 ♟xc5 25.♟xc5 dxe2 26.♟e1 should clearly be decent in more than one way. Simplest seems 26...♟e8!? 27.♟g2 ♟g4⇒) 22...♟e5!? The most consistent with Black's earlier strategy. (However, 22...♟xe2 23.♟xd4 ♟e4 24.♟b3 ♟e2 25.♟c2 ♟xc2 26.♟xc2 c4 27.♟d2 ♟e5= also appears to be a holdable endgame.) 23.♟xc5 ♟cd8 Black's compensation is obscure but definitely exists. The position wouldn't have been easy for either side to navigate.

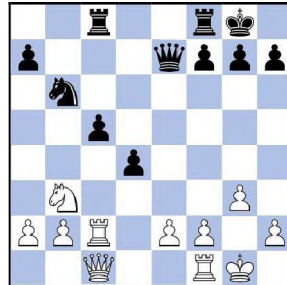
21.♟xe7 ♟xe7 22.♟c1! Absolutely necessary, otherwise Black has fine play. But now the hanging pawns have advanced too far, with the more than likely outcome of both falling, with little to no active play to compensate.

22...♟b6 Definitely not a bad try. 22...♟xe2?! 23.♟xd4! is the big idea. Again, the c5 pawn is weak, and White suddenly develops a threatening kingside initiative after 23...♟e7 24.♟e1 ♟c7 25.♟f5! g6 26.♟h6+ ♟g7 27.♟g4+.

22...♟fe8!? 23.♟xc5 ♟c3 was also playable, bringing the game to a major piece endgame. (23...♟xc5 24.♟xc5 ♟xc5 25.♟xc5 ♟xe2 26.♟d1!±, thanks to the back rank considerations, should

just about win for White.) 24.bxc3 ♟xc5 25.♟xc5 ♟xc5 26.cxd4 ♟xd4 27.♟d1 ♟b6 28.♟d2 g6 29.e3± brings about a difficult type of position not seen too often in practice. White is, naturally, pressing hard for an advantage, but the position still needs to be won. It isn't a completely simple task.

23.♟c2! Another important point – with e2 covered, White is ready to pick up c5 in the most favorable manner. There isn't a reasonable defense.



23...♟fe8 Not the most resistant. Sarana hit on the right idea, it seems, but there was no reason to delay. That said, 23...h5 24.♟xc5 h4 25.♟d1 ♟fd8 26.♟b3± is a solid extra pawn for White.

23...♟e6 24.♟xc5 ♟xa2 25.♟d1 ♟fd8 26.b4 ♟d5 27.♟a1± isn't a big help either – at least one of Black's weak pawns will be lost in the very near future.

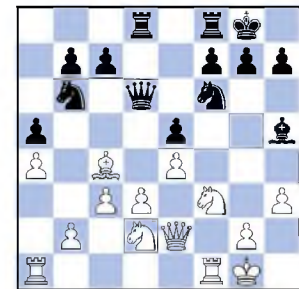
24.♟xc5 h5 There isn't anything left to lose. 24...♟d7 25.♟xd7!? ♟xd7 26.♟d1 h5 27.♟c4 promises Black a miserable defense down a pawn with no counter chances. 27...♟b7! (27...♟e6 28.♟dxd4 ♟xc4 29.♟xc4 ♟xe2 30.h4± would give Black even fewer prospects of salvation – with a mobile queenside majority, the rook

endings should be lost.) 28.♟dxd4 ♟xc4 29.♟xc4 ♟xb2 30.e3±.

25.♟d1 ♟e5 26.♟dd2! The final precaution. With ♟d3 coming next, White is more or less just a pawn up. To Sarana's credit, he did manage to complicate the game nicely and even had chances to survive, but after the dust settled his play had run out. **White won** in 44 moves.

Javokhir Sindarov	2658
Vidit Gujrathi	2716

FIDE Grand Swiss, Douglas 2023



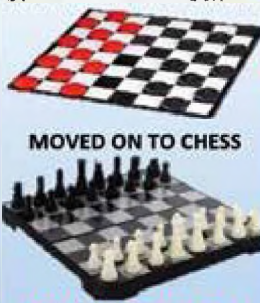
A slow Italian has led to a typically quiet position. Perhaps the players will chop wood, with a quick draw in the offing?

18.g4?! Not so much – Sindarov is ambitious, but without objective substantiation it's just a questionable gamble. The kingside weaknesses will come back to haunt him. 18.♟e3 ♟fe8! 19.♟b5 ♟fd7 20.♟c4 ♟xc4 21.♟xc4 ♟b6 22.♟ae1 ♟xf3 23.♟xf3 ♟xe3+ 24.♟exe3 ♟e7= is an example of the trading route after which the position is dead drawn.

18...♟g6 19.♟fd1 ♟fd7! The knight on c5 will put pressure on d3 and also angle for f4 via e6.

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SIDE DIE & OFFENSE & SIDE DIE
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ZOOM BUTTON: IN & OUT
MENU BUTTON WITH 7 OPTIONS
SMALL BOMBS: POISON CAPTURES &
ATOM KILLS
BIG BOMBS: BIOLOGICAL CAPTURES
& HYDROGEN KILLS
GRID MOVEMENT: TRACKING PIECES
(NO TIES, DRAWS OR STALEMATES)

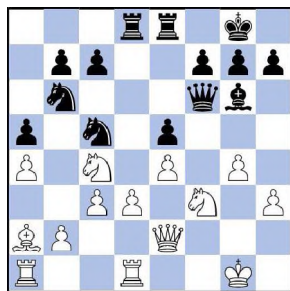




20.♔b3 White's pieces make a sorry sight at present – now at least the knight on d2 will be able to come out on c4.

20...♖c5 21.♖c4 ♜f6!? Refusing to trade keeps more tension in the position. It isn't clear whether this is favorable for Black, though. 21...♖xc4 22.♙xc4 h6!? 23.♜e3 ♗h7 24.♖h4 ♜e6 is more pleasant for Black, though a breakthrough isn't apparent just yet.

22.♙a2 ♜fe8



An important moment. White should be just about able to keep the balance in more than one way, but instead...

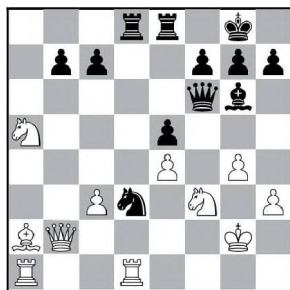
23.♙g2? Perhaps forgetting that Black's last move actually did have an idea – by protecting e5 it's now possible to just take the pawn on offer!

23.h4!? would have been a good way to make use of the kingside advances. The position is unclear and messy. 23...h5!? (23...♜f4 24.♖xe5 ♜xe5 25.♖xe5 ♜xe5 26.h5 leaves Black needing to force a draw with 26...♜g3+ 27.♜g2 ♜e3+ 28.♗h2 ♖xd3 29.hxg6 ♜h6+ 30.♙g1 ♜e3+=) 24.g5 ♜f4 25.♖xb6 Possible with Black's queen deflected from the knight's defense. White is okay after 25...cxb6 26.♙c4 ♜d6 27.♙f2!.

23...♖bxa4 Naturally! White has next to no compensation.

24.h4?! Before the h-pawn's advance was almost a necessity to create counterplay, but now the idea fails to have any impact.

24.♖xa5? ♖xb2! 25.♜xb2 ♖xd3



A) 26.♜xd3 ♜xd3 27.♜e2 ♜xc3++ leaves White's position devastated.

B) 26.♜xb7 ♜f4 would be another spectacular way to lose, e.g. 27.♙d5

DOUGLAS, ISLE OF MAN

October 25 – November 5, 2023

FIDE Women's Grand Swiss

(11 rounds, 50 players)

1 Vaishali RAMESHBABU (IND) 8½

2 Anna MUZYCHUK (UKR) 8

3-4 Tan ZHONGYI (CHN),
Batkhuyag MUNGUNTUUL (MGL) 7½

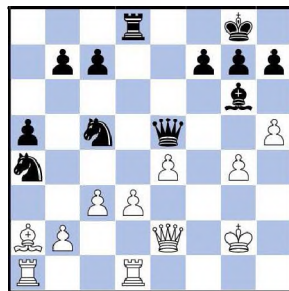
5-8 Leya GARIFULLINA (FID), Antoaneta
STEFANOVA (BUL), Pia CRAMLING (SWE),
Mariya MUZYCHUK (UKR) 7

♜xd5! 28.♜xd5 (28.exd5 e4++)
28...♙xe4 29.♜xd3 ♙xd5 30.♜xd5 h5!
31.gxh5 e4++, when, despite the small material advantage, Black's passed pawn combined with a good attack will prove decisive.

24.♜d2 ♜e6 25.♜e3 ♖ac5++ was "best," but White is down a pawn for zero compensation anyway.

24...♜f4 25.♖xe5 With the kingside falling apart, there really isn't any other try. 25.♙g5?! h6 26.♖h3 ♖xd3!++ is a nice tactical finish.

25...♜xe5 26.♖xe5 ♜xe5 27.h5?! Allowing the tactical fireworks, but this was the entire idea. 27.d4 ♜xe4+ 28.♜xe4 ♙xe4+ 29.♙g1 ♖d3!++ is more or less game over in any case.



27...♜xd3! A nice idea, but not too difficult to see. Due punishment for White's overambitious kingside play!

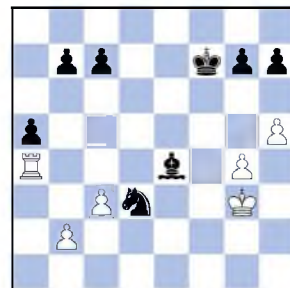
28.♙xf7+ 28.♜xd3 ♖xd3 29.hxg6 ♖f4+ wins the queen and the game. However, also 28.hxg6 ♜g3+ 29.♗h1 (29.♙f1 ♜f3+) 29...♜h3+ 30.♜h2 ♜f3++ is too much to handle.

28...♙f8! The most precise. White's position is falling apart.

29.♜xd3 29.hxg6 ♜g3+ 30.♗h1 ♜h3+ 31.♜h2 ♜f3++ is no different than before. 29...♖xd3 30.♜e3 ♜xe4+ More than good enough. 30...♙xe4+!? 31.♙g1 ♖xc3 32.bxc3 ♙xf7++ would win in the middlegame, but why allow White even a small glimmer of counterchances?

31.♜xe4 ♙xe4+ 32.♙g3 ♙xf7

33...♖dxh2 33.♙b3 ♖c5 picks up another pawn with no repercussions, but perhaps Vidit was worried about taking his knight away from the main scene of battle. 34.♜xa5 ♖xb3 35.♜b5 ♙c2!++ is an important point. 33.♜xa4



33...♙c6 34.♜xa5 ♖xb2 Black won in 23 moves. The endgame is a hopeless prospect for the first player, with a rook for two pieces and a pawn.

It was a great day for Indian chess fans, as in the Women's Grand Swiss IM Vaishali Rameshbabu clinched victory with a tumultuous draw. To wrap up her GM title she needed to win, and certainly had good chances, but considering the tournament situation a split point was more than satisfactory. Former Women's World Champion GM Tan Zhongyi took the second Candidates spot on offer.

ZAGREB, CROATIA

November 22–30, 2023

TOURNAMENT OF PEACE

(10-player round-robin)

1 Hans NIEMANN 8

2-4 Ante BRKIC (CRO), Anton KOROBV (UKR),
Vasyl IVANCHUK (UKR) 5

5-6 Alexander MOTYLEV (ROU),
Ivan SOKO LOV (NED) 4½

7 Hrvoje STEVIC (CRO) 4

8 Zdenko KOZUL (CRO) 3½

9 Robert ZELCIC (CRO) 3

10 Ivan CHEPARINOV (BUL) 2½

American GM Hans Niemann won with an outstanding +7=2-0 score and a TPR of 2946! Here's how he celebrated this victory on his X (former Twitter) page, posting photos of the closing ceremonies in 1970 (when Fischer won) and 2023:

"Two lone Americans up against the world, facing immeasurable odds.

Victorious 53 years apart at the legendary Tournament of Peace.

8/9: 2946 performance rating

I know of no better life purpose than to perish in attempting the great and the impossible."



CHICAGO RESIDENT LAWRENCE COHEN HAS PLAYED CHESS TOURNAMENTS IN ALL TEN CANADIAN PROVINCES!

My Canadian Conquest

Apart from competing, chess may bring wonderful joys of travelling. With this in mind, your goals may get set to breaking records that are not exclusively related to the chessboard! The following personal story provides first hand evidence of this at its best.

■ By Lawrence Cohen

You likely have heard of the British invasion (musicians from England coming to the United States in the 1960s), well I am here to tell you about the American invasion – which phrase I use to describe U.S. chess players traveling up to Canada to play chess. Other than Seattle and Detroit, most of the areas in the United States near the Canadian border do not have a lot of chess tournaments. So it has become common to see U.S. players playing in Canadian events. What is not common is a U.S. player who has played (CFC) rated chess in all ten Canadian provinces.

As of June 25, 2023 I think I can make the claim that I am the first and only U.S. player, who has never lived or worked in Canada, to have played rated chess in all ten Canadian provinces. I would be surprised if I was the first ever to have done so, as I would expect there must be at least one Canadian who has done it before me. (Does anyone know the number of Canadian players to have accomplished this feat?) So, I have completed my conquest to play in all of the Canadian provinces.

The shirt in the picture is, of course, the national flag of Canada. Surrounding that are the provincial flags. They are (starting top right of my shirt): British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, (down from the green SK flag) Manitoba, Ontario (similar flags, but

MN has a buffalo on the small shield, while Ontario has three flowers), Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, (back up) Quebec, and New Brunswick.

I have played in



week-long tournaments in the States, Canada, and abroad, including places like Gibraltar, London, Iceland and Malta. I have always thought of such week-long events as a chess vacation, with, of course, tourist visits in many of the areas I have been to throughout the years. A chess vacation requires planning and research, just as you need to plan and study for chess itself. The further ahead you can successfully plan, the better your results. Know what weather you can expect to deal with, and learn what sites there are to see in the area you are visiting. Contact the tournament organizer as they are a good source of

Lawrence Cohen is a tournament organizer, a tournament director, a FIDE arbiter, but most of all a chess player. Lawrence works full time as a credit manager for a manufacturing firm in Chicago, occasionally taking days off in order to play in chess tournaments. His involvement with chess has lasted for nearly 50 years.

information on local attractions, eateries, and places to stay. They also can give you good information on the tournament itself, any

restrictions, and hopefully will prevent you from encountering any surprises. I once failed to do this and ended up at an event that used “Degraded Accelerated Pairings” for the first five rounds. The name should give you some idea of how crazy/bad a system it is in my opinion, especially in a 9-round event with a total of only 100 players.

As a U.S. chess player, I must say that the people, players, organizers, and arbiters (TDs) are very friendly. The last two on that listing can sometimes be the same person. I would highly recommend to anyone who has not done so, to try playing in the Grand Pacific Open

in Victoria (also known as Vancouver Island), British Columbia. It is a very nice site in a very nice town. This event is typically run over Easter Weekend, with the final game on the morning of Easter Monday (a holiday in BC) and the first game played the evening of Good Friday. I have been fortunate in that I have been based in the Chicago area, and this made my travels a little easier than a player from the east or west coast of the United States. That is not to say that there have never been any travel problems, and I have at least once been stuck overnight in Montreal. For those U.S. players that think the announcements before a round starts are too long, I would strongly advise against playing in Montreal. Any chess tournament in the province of Quebec will do the announcements in both English and French, and of course take more time.

The most recent tournament I played was the New Brunswick Open held June 23-25, 2023. Due to my travel arrangements I had to take a bye in the first round. A bye in the first or last round due to travel considerations is something you may find you need. That is another reason to contact the organizer ahead of time, as last-round byes are not allowed at many tournaments.

I am among the few players who are attempting to eventually have played rated chess in all 50 states. Yet, back in 2015 (Calgary Qualifier tournament) I realized I had just played in my fourth province and decided that I would also try to play in all ten of the Canadian provinces along with the 50 states. Although there are still some states to go for the goal of all 50 (HI, AK, ND, RI, PA and GA), I have successfully achieved the goal of playing in all ten Canadian provinces.

A5 QUESTION GUIDE *From Chess Masters for the Next Generation*

Bob Holliman

01 What is the advantage of someone starting to play chess at an early age? When is it best to start? And for those who might be late in learning the game, are they able to get back on track to becoming a titled player?

The long term advantage is that the child will have an advantage in logic, understanding consequences of their actions and long range planning. As for the best age to start it would seem 3-4 years of age, whenever a child is able to understand how to move the pieces. They can learn various aspects of chess with variant ideas such as the "pawn game". I've heard that the Dutch "Step Method" may have several of these variants that are good for teaching concepts. Depending upon what you call "late" in life, titles are always possible. Remember, to become a GM all you need to do is win the World Senior!

02 If there are three main departments of the game — opening, middlegame and endgame — what portion of our time should we spend on each? And what is the most important?

Endings are the most important! A good classical chess education is necessary instead of the way chess seems to be taught in the USA: openings, openings, openings and tactics, tactics, tactics. In all my years of teaching I have yet to pick up a student who has any understanding of how to play the endgame. They can force a passed pawn or mate with two bishops but simple ideas like taking your time seem foreign to young players. But even further we need to start with basic pattern recognition. In dealing with adults who want to improve I



5-time Missouri Champion

Master in both OTB & Correspondence play

Chess Tourist long before Kasparov used the phrase

Professional Coach

Author of multiple state publication columns

have found that they feel insulted when you start to take them through basic things which they profess to know but for which their play says otherwise. If you had 90 minutes a day to work on chess I would devote half of that to endgame theory. The other half can go toward openings and the resultant endings they produce. Remember, the endgames you reach is a result of the middlegame you played from your choice of opening — so choose wisely!

03 From your own experience can you recall any specific type of opening position or endgame theme that an aspiring chess player should be sure to study because of its particular importance?

That is a tricky question! Depending on the opening you can try to provoke pawn weaknesses or lure the opponent into a tactical battle for which you have prepared. A good foundational understanding of the basic tactical themes should cover both of these, but one should also include an understanding of the pieces that are left. Which one is good and which is bad.

04 Not everyone can be a chess world champion. But how can chess be of benefit in life and business?

As I mentioned above, you learn the consequences of your decisions! Better to lose a club game than make a career mistake! One must be strategic in the business of life, otherwise you are just casting about for a way to get through it. Write down your goals and a dozen ways to accomplish them... now I am starting to sound like a "life coach"!

05 Why would you recommend chess to youngsters? What joys may they expect to experience on this thrilling journey, in addition to those you have mentioned in your previous answer?

Winning is always a good experience and youngsters nowadays pick on us veterans more and more. Of course, when you win a game the opponent made a mistake. One starts to build a mental model of what works and does not and this translates over to life.

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