



UNKNOWN AMERICAN GAMES

WILLIAM MARTZ – THE GREAT WISCONSIN MASTER

ANDY ANSEL

AMERICAN CHESS MAGAZINE

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WHERE GREAT MINDS MEET

2023 WORLD CUP

MAGNUS'
FINAL TICK
ON HIS
TO-DO LIST

GM John Burke

HOW TO
PREPARE
OPENINGS?

GM Emilio Cordova

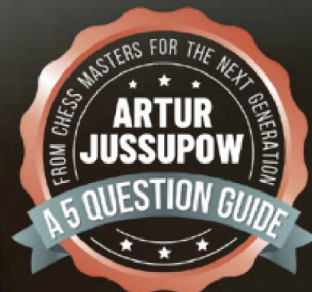
THE
MAGNIFICENT 3

GM Sarunas Sulskis

Exploring
Chess
and Crime

THE ENIGMA
OF NORMAN
T. WHITAKER

Dr. J. Corey Butler



Local
and
State
Chess

I ♥
NY

Laurel Aronian

Exclusive Interview
WHY **JENNIFER
SHAHADE** LEFT US
CHESS

CHECKMATE TO SILENCE

■ A PROMINENT CHESS FIGURE DISCUSSES THE CHALLENGES AND
ATTACKS SHE FACED AFTER IGNITING A **METOO** MOVEMENT IN CHESS

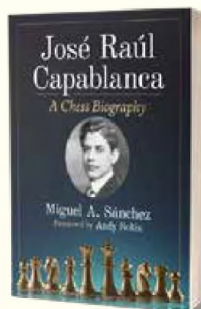




McFarland

“[The] classic McFarland book: a deeply researched, lovingly produced and definitive enquiry into an area of chess with a view to being the last word on the subject”—*British Chess Magazine*

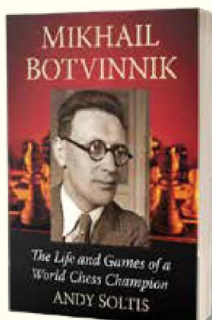
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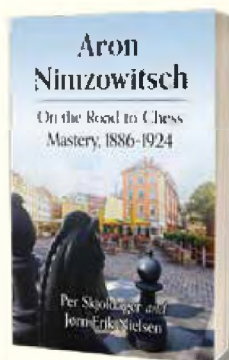
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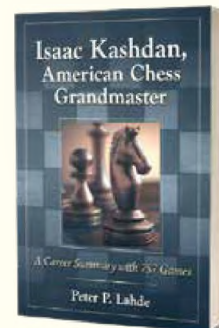
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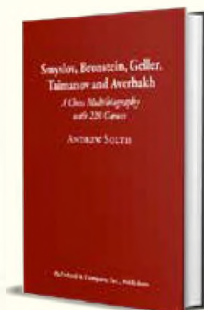
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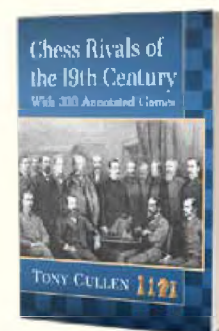
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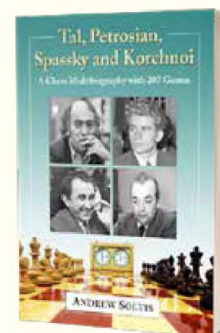
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Latest News



Caruana Leading at the U.S. Championship

With consecutive victories over Swiercz, Xiong, and Tang, Fabiano Caruana ascended to the lead in the U.S. Championship being held in Saint Louis. He maintained this lead after a hard-fought draw against Sam Sevian in the sixth round.

Standings after Round 6

1 Fabiano CARUANA	4½
2 Hans NIEMANN	4
3-4 Leinier DOMINGUEZ, Wesley SO	3½
5-7 Samuel SEVIAN, Sam SHANKLAND, Abhimanyu MISHRA ...	3
8-10 Dariusz SWIERCZ, Levon ARONIAN, Ray ROBSON	2½
11-12 Jeffery XIONG, Andrew TANG	2

Yip Shines with Silver at World Juniors

20-year-old American, Carissa Yip, clinched silver at the World Junior Girls' Championship in Mexico City after winning her last round, resulting in a three-way tie for first place. Argentinian Candela Francisco secured gold, while Beloslava Krasteva from Bulgaria received bronze. The decisive criterion for medal distribution was head-to-head performance. Francisco secured the top spot due to her direct win against Krasteva, while Carissa Yip had draws in her matches with both of them.

The Open section resulted in another tie, this time between four players. Based on additional criteria, Marc-Andria Maurizzi from France was crowned the champion. Silver was awarded to Russian Arseniy Nesterov and bronze to Luka Budisavljevic from Serbia. Armenian Mamikon Gharibyan landed in an "unfortunate" fourth place. The top-performing American was Hans Niemann, finishing in a tie for 8th-16th place. Niemann pushed the limits in his final round against Nesterov, sidestepping a move repetition, but ultimately lost the game, dashing his hopes for a medal.



KRAMNIK ACCUSES NIEMANN!

In a recent game on Chess.com, the moves 1.e4 f6 2.d4 g5 were played, with White resigning immediately after. Intriguingly, Black's moves were a statement, which White seemingly recognized, leading to his resignation instead of the checkmate with 3.♖h5. Playing as White was Hans Niemann, while the Black pieces were commanded by the former World Champion, Vladimir Kramnik.

Days after this curious incident, Kramnik released a 45-minute video on YouTube, detailing his thoughts on his first encounter with Niemann prior to the aforementioned game. "I'm absolutely convinced that 99% of professional chess players would agree with me that some moves, given the time management, were quite unusual," he shared. Following this, Kramnik decided to cease playing on Chess.com, citing his profile: "Just too many apparent cheaters here and the platform isn't doing enough to address this."

For those interested, the full game is provided for personal analysis.

Before this recent controversy, Niemann had been fully reinstated on Chess.com, with their official statement noting: "He will be allowed to play in any and all events and will be treated no differently from any other player." Magnus Carlsen further noted that he was "open to playing against Niemann in future events, if paired."

This all comes in the wake of the resolution of the case, as a US Court dismissed the significant \$100 million lawsuit brought by Niemann against Chess.com, Carlsen, and Nakamura.



Vladimir Kramnik	2978*
Hans Niemann	3049

*the ratings are for blitz on Chess.com

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 ♘f6
4.0-0 ♘xe4 5.d4 ♘d6 6.♙xc6
dxc6 7.dxe5 ♘f5 8.♙xd8+ ♘xd8
9.h3 ♘e7 10.♘c3 ♘h4 11.♘xh4
♙xh4 12.♙e3 h5 13.♙ad1+ ♘e8
14.♘e2 ♙f5 15.♘d4 ♙d7 16.f4
c5 17.♘f3 ♙e7 18.♙fe1 ♙f5
19.c4 ♙d8 20.b3 b6 21.♙f2 h4
22.♙xd8+ ♘xd8 23.♙d1+ ♘c8
24.♘f1 a5 25.♘e2 ♘b7 26.♙d2
♘c6 27.a4 ♘b7 28.♘e3 ♙h5
29.♙e2 ♘c8 30.♘g5 f6 31.exf6
♙xf6 32.♘e4 ♙d4+ 33.♘f3
♙h8 34.♘g5 ♙f6 35.♙d2 ♙d7
36.♙e3 ♙e8 37.♘f2 ♙f5 38.♘f3
♙c3 39.♙d1 ♙f6 40.♙d2 ♘b8
41.♙e2 ♙d8 42.♙d2 ♙xd2+
43.♘xd2 ♙c2 44.♘e2 ♘c8
45.♙f2 ♘d7 46.♘f3 ♙xb3
47.♘d3 ♙xa4 48.♙xh4
♙c6 49.♙xf6 gxf6 50.♘h4
a4 51.g4 ♙e4+ 52.♘c3 c6
53.g5 fxg5 54.fxg5 ♘e6
55.g6 ♘f6 0-1

FIDE SETS NEW RULES FOR TRANSGENDER PLAYERS, ECHOING OTHER SPORTS

The World Chess Federation (FIDE) has announced new regulations for transgender players. Under these rules, players who transition from male to female cannot participate in official FIDE women's events until a definitive decision is reached. This conclusion is expected within two years.

Players changing their gender will also see adjustments to their titles. If they transition from female to male, their women's titles will be abolished. However, titles earned before transitioning from male to female will remain intact.

It's important to note that while most chess competitions are open to everyone, these regulations especially impact the Women's World Championship. FIDE's stance mirrors recent policies in other sports, like swimming, which have revised their rules concerning transgender participation in top-tier female competitions.



SAINT LOUIS CHESS CLUB ADDRESSES ALLEGATIONS AGAINST GRANDMASTER RAMIREZ

In a recent statement, the Saint Louis Chess Club responds to concerns surrounding chess grandmaster Alejandro Ramirez, expressing that they are "deeply troubled by the allegations and accounts of misconduct." While stressing that "we were silent on this very real and important issue for too long," the club unveiled comprehensive measures including annual active bystander intervention, anti-harassment and anti-discrimination training, and an enhanced background check procedure. They reaffirmed their commitment to challenge the undercurrent of bias and discrimination against female players in the global chess community. Following their internal investigation, Ramirez, who had resigned earlier in March 2023, is now barred from all club-associated activities.



RIP Jeremy Silman (1954-2023)

The chess community recently mourned the loss of IM Jeremy Silman, who passed away in his West Hollywood, CA home after a long battle with a neurological condition. Introduced to the world of chess at the age of 12, Silman's passion led him to notable victories at the American Open, National Open, and U.S. Open. He also played a pivotal role in coaching the U.S. junior national chess team.

As an author, Silman left an indelible mark. He penned over 35 books and numerous articles for chess magazines and online platforms. His influential works, such as *How to Reassess Your Chess*, *Silman's Complete Endgame Course*, and *The Complete Book of Chess Strategy: Grandmaster Techniques from A to Z*, will continue to be invaluable resources for aspiring chess players.



FIDE Ratings - Top 10 Open			
1	Magnus Carlsen	NOR	2839
2	Fabiano Caruana	USA	2786
3	Ding Liren	CHN	2780
4	Hikaru Nakamura	USA	2780
5	Alireza Firouzja	FRA	2777
6	Ian Nepomniachtchi	FID	2771
7	Anish Giri	NED	2760
8	Dommaraju Gukesh	IND	2758
9	Viswanathan Anand	IND	2754
10	Wesley So	USA	2753

FIDE Ratings - Top 10 Women			
1	Hou Yifan	CHN	2628
2	Ju Wenjun	CHN	2560
3	Aleksandra Goryachkina	FID	2558
4	Humpy Koneru	IND	2550
5	Lei Tingjie	CHN	2550
6	Kateryna Lagno	FID	2546
7	Alexandra Kosteniuk	SUI	2523
8	Mariya Muzychuk	UKR	2519
9	Tan Zhongyi	CHN	2517
10	Anna Muzychuk	UKR	2510

FIDE Ratings - USA Top 10 Open	
1	Fabiano Caruana 2786
2	Hikaru Nakamura 2780
3	Wesley So 2753
4	Leinier Dominguez 2745
5	Levon Aronian 2742
6	Ray Robson 2699
7	Sam Shankland 2698
8	Samuel Sevian 2698
9	Jeffery Xiong 2693
10	Grigoriy Oparin 2681

FIDE Ratings - USA Top 10 Women	
1	Irina Krush 2437
2	Alice Lee 2388
3	Carissa Yip 2372
4	Anna Zatonskih 2363
5	Annie Wang 2356
6	Gulrukhbegim Tohirjonova 2350
7	Nazi Paikidze 2316
8	Katerina Nemcova 2305
9	Thalia Cervantes Landeiro 2303
10	Jennifer Yu 2294



ON AND OFF THE CHESSBOARD

With a significant decrease in the number of classical tournaments in which elite players can compete, it is no wonder that a large part of this issue is dedicated to the World Cup. Quite simply the level of this competition was not only extremely high but with a lot at stake – qualification for the Candidates Tournament, big money prizes, ratings, reputation, etc. Prestigious in every way!

Indeed, for a chess aficionado like myself, with great games, fighting chess, mixed formats, top secret novelties prepared at home and ready to be unleashed, the World Cup players had more than enough incentive to give their best at the chessboard... As a consequence there were major upsets in almost every round, plenty of interesting games, valuable novel ideas, etc., making the Battles of Baku an inspirational source of chess creativity for any ambitious player to improve his or her game. Our grandmaster contributors, John Burke, Emilio Cordova and Sarunas Sulskis have given their best to present the most captivating moments of this nearly month-long competition. And had it not been for limitations of space, their coverage might have been even greater!

Speaking of similar tournaments, it will be a treat to watch the forthcoming Qatar Masters and the Isle of Man Grand Swiss, since many chess fans with whom I am in contact are really curious to see how great the margin is between the elite and “mere mortals”. There is no doubt that the world’s best players have with good reason remained in their own league for years, but with the present array of hungry challengers I’m certain that we will be seeing more dynamic chess than the customary dry Berlins, Petroffs, Queen’s Gambits, etc. Plus one or plus two is good enough score to win round-robins, but winning Swiss opens demands much more than that!

On a different note, the chess world has lately been faced with challenging topics such as cheating, sexual misconduct, treating transgender – extremely sensitive and important matters! In order to shed more light on developing events that exploded in 2023, we asked prominent chess promoter and twice U.S. Women’s champion, WGM Jennifer Shahade, to share her views with ACM readers. Jennifer’s course of action started by speaking out on social media, back in February, and this had a snowball effect that culminated in her resignation from the post of Women’s Program Director at US Chess.

In order to reach the heights in chess, it is necessary to have appropriate tuition – after all, do you remember your first chess coach/educator?! The role of teachers who introduce the game to juniors is often undeservedly



forgotten, yet it is their responsibility to “produce” talents by providing youngsters with initial guidance that will eventually lead to significant results. The recognition of chess educators and their impact on the chess community is highlighted here by means of a report on the New York City organization ‘Chess in the Schools’, and their initiative to establish an annual award for excellence in chess education.

More local chess comes from our new contributor Laurel Aronian. Laurel and her family have special ties with America’s longest-running chess tournament, and she has done her best to present the full picture of her recent experiences at Albany – from tiny details to notable events.

While preparing this issue, we received sad news about the passing of Robert Sherwood, Ronald Lohrman and Jeremy Silman. Sherwood died in August at about 70 years of age. He was a translator of a number of historical tournament books published by Dale Brandreth, with the Cambridge Springs 1904 tournament being his most recent work. Lohrman passed away on 21 September. He was the U.S. Amateur Champion in 1967, and a popular vendor at tournaments. His son Shelby, CEO of American Chess Equipment, continues in his father’s footsteps by carrying chess products to tournaments all over the USA. Incidentally, on the same date of 21 September, another chess great has left us – IM Jeremy Silman passed away at his home in California. May they all rest in peace – we send our condolences to their families and friends.

With our regular columns and a wealth of additional instructive and entertaining articles, we believe that this issue will offer an enjoyable journey for all our readers...until our next issue #36 in December.

Yours in chess,
Dusan Kronic, Managing Editor



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AMERICAN CHESS MAGAZINE #35
October 2023



Issue #35 CONTENTS

COVER STORY

20



▲ Jennifer Shahade

08

2023 FIDE World Cup
MAGNUS' FINAL TICK ON HIS TO-DO LIST
GM John Burke

20

Exclusive Interview
Jennifer Shahade CHECKMATE TO SILENCE
By Josip Asik

26

Chess Training
MASTERCLASS
GM Jacob Aagaard &
GM Sam Shankland

30

The Magnificent Three (1)
PRAGG PROVES HIS QUEEN IS TOO GOOD TO DIE
LAGARDE – PRAGGNANANDHAA
GM Sarunas Sulskis

34

Chess in Schools
ANNUAL ANDY LERNER AWARD
FM Alec Getz

40

A Selection of Opening Choices from the 2023 World Cup in Baku
HOW TO PREPARE OPENINGS?
GM Emilio Cordova

47

Chess and Finance
CHOOSE WISELY
Luca Barillaro

48

All Things Chess
LONG LIVE CLASSICAL CHESS!
Dylan Loeb McClain

50

The Magnificent Three (2)
WITH THE BLACK PIECES, BERKES MAKES IT A BLACK DAY FOR GELFAND
GELFAND – BERKES
GM Sarunas Sulskis

52

SMALL CHESS LECTURES (1)
GM Nikola Nestorovic

54

Unknown American Games
WILLIAM MARTZ – THE GREAT WISCONSIN MASTER
Andy Ansel

58

Fiction Story
COFFEE MUG MEMORIES
Alexis Levitin

59

SMALL CHESS LECTURES (2)
Discover The Threats
GM Nikola Nestorovic

60

The Magnificent Three (3)
THE CROWN OF "SHINING ROSE'S" GLORIOUS RIDE
SALIMOVA – MUZYCHUK
GM Sarunas Sulskis

62

Chess Psychology
GET RICH QUICK
Dr. J. Corey Butler

64

Book Reviews
FRESH LEAVES FROM THE BOOKSHELF
FM Carsten Hansen

67

SOLUTIONS TO THREATS EXERCISES

68

Chess Tech
THE GAME GOES ON
Jon Edwards

70

Endings
START STRONG, FINISH STRONGER
GM Alex Fishbein



▶ Mark Indermaur, Annual Andy Lerner Award Winner

34



▶ Magnus Carlsen

08

77

Local and State Chess
I LOVE NY
Laurel Aronian

84

TOURNAMENT REVIEWS
IM Grayson Rorrer

98

A 5 Question Guide
From Chess Masters for the Next Generation
GM ARTUR JUSSUPOW



Carlsen wins, Caruana qualifies for the Candidates

Magnus' Final Tick on His To-Do List

World No.1 player, Magnus Carlsen clinched probably his only missing title in classical chess by winning the FIDE World Cup in Baku. India's rising star Praggnanandhaa reached the finals, eventually losing to Carlsen only in the rapid tie-breaks. Fabiano Caruana was the best American player – winning the match for third place against local hero Nijat Abasov.

■ By GM John Burke

A

fter weeks of play, the top four players turned out to be: former world champion Magnus Carlsen, Indian 18-year-old prodigy Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa, American elite-GM Fabiano Caruana, and the local 28-year-old Azerbaijani hero Nijat Abasov, who had a fantastic run, defeating numerous strong players, including Giri, Svidler, and Vidit.

Since Magnus has said that he will not play the next Candidates Tournament, that means Pragg, Caruana, and Abasov were already guaranteed a spot before the semifinals began! While I'm sure this took some of the pressure off them, they still wanted to win the World Cup.

Carlsen defeated Abasov in their match and Pragg took down Caruana, setting up a generational battle between the world's highest-rated player and the promising Indian talent. After two draws in the classical games, Carlsen's experience prevailed in the rapid tiebreaks.

CARLSEN SURVIVES A TIGHTROPE WALK

Let's take a look at some key moments that Carlsen faced on his road to the finals. Certainly, Magnus' biggest scare came in his fourth-round match against German prodigy Vincent Keymer. Carlsen lost the first classical game and had to win the second one to prolong the match. He pulled out a long endgame grind, but the game almost ended much earlier!



All photos by FIDE

Magnus Carlsen



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.

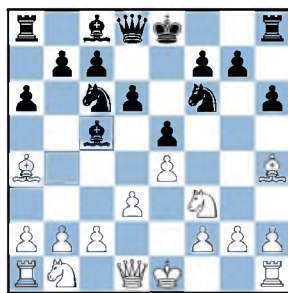
G77

Magnus Carlsen	2835
Vincent Keymer	2690

Round 4, Game 2, World Cup, Baku 2023

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.d3 ♙c5 6.♙g5 A rare move and a logical choice in a must-win game, immediately bringing Black into uncharted waters. He must decide if he wants to break the pin with ...h6 and ...g5, or do something else.

6...h6 7.♙h4 d6 7...b5 8.♙b3 ♙e7 would be another typical method of breaking the pin. After 9.a4 we would get a fairly standard, non-theoretical Ruy Lopez position, which I suspect is exactly what Magnus was aiming for.

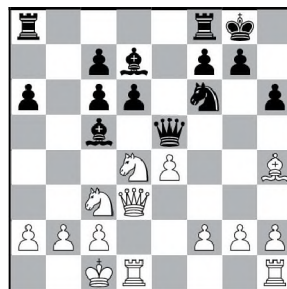


8.d4! A novelty, but it's the only follow-up that justifies White's preceding play. Magnus had surely prepared this at home.

8.c3? is a lazy move that would actually be a serious error. 8...g5 9.♙g3 ♙a7 10.♘bd2 ♙d7 This is a dream position for Black. The point is that he will be able to play ...♙e7 and ...0-0-0, since he has not weakened his position by playing ...b5. He will not suffer the consequences of playing ...g5 and weakening the kingside, since his king will be on the other side of the board.

Therefore, Black will be clearly better. This is the scenario White has to be careful to avoid when he plays an early ♙g5 in these sorts of positions.

8...exd4 9.♘xd4 ♙d7 10.♙xc6 bxc6 11.♘c3 0-0 12.♙d3 A very interesting idea. White intends to castle queenside and possibly launch an attack later with g4-g5. **12...♙b4** Objectively, best way for Black to play was 12...♙e7! 13.0-0-0 ♙e5, breaking the pin immediately. However, it's not a very obvious course of action for Black, since his queen is inviting itself to be kicked around by White's minor pieces. This is an example of how top players approach preparation – I'm sure Magnus saw this possibility before the game, but hoped that his opponent wouldn't go for it, since it's not very obvious for a human.

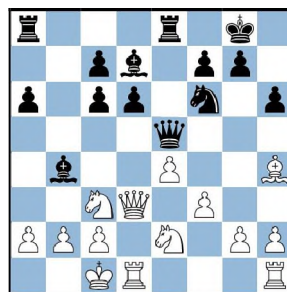


A) 14.♘f3 ♙e6 15.e5 ♘h5! It looks weird to put the knight on the rim like this, but ...♘f4 is a strong idea and White can't really take advantage of the wayward knight. (Not 15...dxe5?? 16.♙xf6 ♙xf6 17.♙xd7+–)

B) 14.♙g3 ♙g5+ 15.f4 ♙g6 The queen actually stands very well here, and is in no danger of getting trapped, as f5 can always be met with ...♙g5+.

13.♘de2 White doesn't want to go 13.0-0-0? ♙xc3, as now he would have to play 14.bxc3, ruining his pawn structure, since 14.♙xc3 ♘xe4 would lose a pawn.

13...♙e7 14.0-0-0 ♙fe8 15.f3 ♙e5 Both sides have played logical moves, and Black has finally broken the pin with ...♙e5.



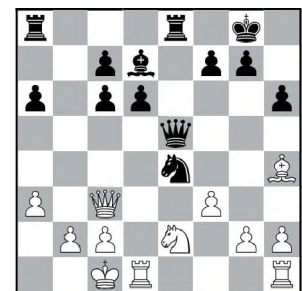
It's a complicated strategic position with lots to consider. Even though Black has the semi-open b-file to work with, it is not

It's a knockout!

The 2023 World Cup took place in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, from July 30 to August 24, and as always, proved to be one of the most exciting events on the chess calendar. A knockout system whittled down a total of 206 players to one eventual champion at the end. Mini-matches consisted of two games of classical chess, and if that ended in a draw, the players moved on to tiebreaks of rapid games, and then blitz if necessary. The top three finishers in the event would also qualify for the upcoming Candidates Tournament, which is obviously a huge prize that all the players were aiming for.

easy for him to generate an attack against White's king, as it will take a lot of moves before he can put pressure on the b2 pawn. As for White, he can begin to focus on his kingside expansion soon. There are many candidate moves here for White, and two examples are g4 (the direct approach) and ♙b1 (the prophylactic approach). However, perhaps getting lost in the abundance of possibilities, Carlsen commits a tactical blunder which could have resulted in his elimination from the World Cup.

16.a3? ♙xc3 17.♙xc3 17.♘xc3 ♙f4+–. 17...♙xc3? Missing the chance! 17...♘xe4! In all fairness, this is a pretty unusual tactic.



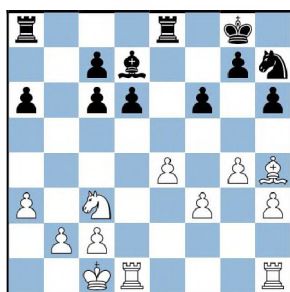
It looks like there is nothing forcing going on in the position, but suddenly White's minor pieces turn out to be loose. Obviously, if you give any GM this position as a puzzle, they would find ...♘xe4 in one second, but at the board it's a completely different story, as you have no one to alert you that an opportunity exists. Keymer was just happy to go to an endgame which is close to equal and which gives him a good chance to hold a



draw. 18.♖xe5 ♜xe5 19.♙e1 White is just a pawn down for nothing, and Magnus might have managed to hold the draw here, but certainly could never win, this resulting in his defeat in the match. (19.fxe4 ♜xe4++ is a pretty unusual fork.)

18.♜xc3 ♜h7 19.g4 Long-term, White's chances are slightly preferable due to Black's weak pawns on the queenside. In the distant future, Black's a-pawn could be picked off, which would give White a passed pawn of his own. However, that is years away from being a factor. At the moment, White has no way to generate pressure against that pawn, so he will try to gain space on the kingside, maneuver around, and try to find a favorable moment to make progress.

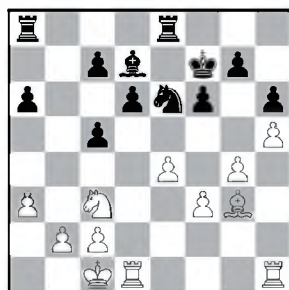
19...f6 20.h3



20...♜f8 20...♜f7 21.f4 may have been Magnus' idea if he was allowed to play it. Now that his g4 pawn is defended, he can expand in this manner. 21...g5 22.♙g3 gxf4 23.♙xf4 ♜g5 24.♞df1 If White manages to get his bishop to the d4 square, he could generate some pressure, but Black should still be able to hold comfortably here.

21.♙g3 ♜e6 22.h4 ♜f7 23.h5 ♞ad8 In a non-confrontational position like this, anything short of a concrete blunder could hardly be criticized as a mistake. However, I wonder if Keymer could have been more assertive, rather than waiting passively.

23...c5! Of course, hindsight is 20/20, but I really like the following plan, and I find it instructive.



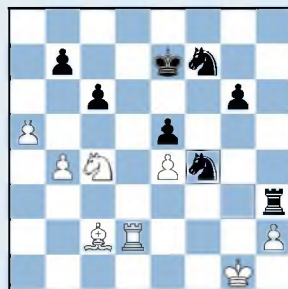
Black will advance his a-pawn as far

Final match

C50

R. Praggnanandhaa	2690
Magnus Carlsen	2835

Rapid Game 1, World Cup, Baku 2023



42.a6 bxa6 43.♙a4 ♜c3 44.♜a5 ♜g5 45.♞c2 ♜gh3+ 46.♜f1 ♞a3 47.♜xc6+ ♜f6 White resigned.



▲ Magnus Carlsen vs. R. Praggnanandhaa

as allowed. If it gets to a4, it would be securely defended on a light square and would hinder White's own pawns on the queenside. The b2 pawn could then become a target. White can meet ...a6-a5 with a3-a4, fixing the pawn on a dark square, but this concedes the b4 square to Black's rook. Black can always meet b2-b3 from White with ...c5-c4. I suspect that Keymer may not have considered these ideas, because he was in a "must-draw" mentality.

If the match situation were level, I think he would have been more assertive. 24.♞he1 (In case of 24.b3 a5 25.a4 ♞eb8, Black has ideas of ...c4 and ...♞b4, and his position is great.) 24...a5 25.♞e3 a4.

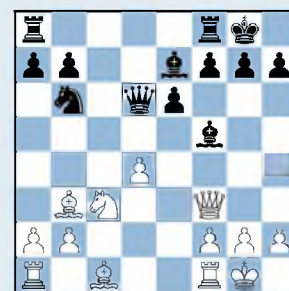
24.♞he1 ♙c8 25.♞d3 ♙b7 Black hasn't done anything terribly wrong, but his bishop was arguably better placed on d7 than on b7 (due to the previous plans I explained) and now Magnus has a free hand to maneuver.

After winning the first game of rapid tiebreaks, Carlsen opted for a safe line as White – at least aiming at a favorable draw for him.

B22

Magnus Carlsen	2835
R. Praggnanandhaa	2690

Rapid Game 2, World Cup, Baku 2023

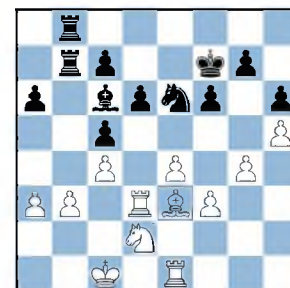


14.d5 ♙g6 15.dxe6 fxe6 16.♞e2 ♜h8 17.♞xe6 ♞xe6 18.♙e6 ♙c5 19.♙e3 ♙xe3 20.fxe3 ♞fe8 21.♙b3 ♞xe3 22.♞ae1 ♞xe1 Draw

Eventually, Magnus took home his first ever World Cup title. On the other hand, Pragg had to be content with silver, but the numerous fans he won along the way surely provided some consolation.

26.♜b1 The knight may be heading to a5 if given the chance.

26...c5 27.c4 ♙c6 28.b3 ♞b8 29.♙f2 ♞b7 30.♜d2 ♞eb8 31.♙e3



It appears that both players have come close to an impasse. There aren't many productive plans left. It will be difficult for White to achieve b3-b4 under favorable conditions. The other pawn break remaining is e4-e5, so Magnus prepares and executes that.

31...♜g8 32.♜c2 ♜d8 32...♜f7 I'm not sure how Magnus would continue if Keymer decided to stay put. 33.f4 ♞e8! Immediately putting the rook on the e-file

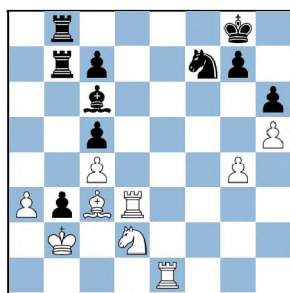


to prepare for the e5 break. I don't see how White could dream of making progress here.

33.f4 a5? A question mark may seem harsh, but this is really the first step in the wrong direction. It's just too complacent – why allow White to execute his only idea?

Upon 33...d7 it would take a while before White can play e5, and by then Black will be ready to meet it. 34.f2 e8 35.g3 e8b8 36.e3 d7! Right on time to pressure the g4 pawn.

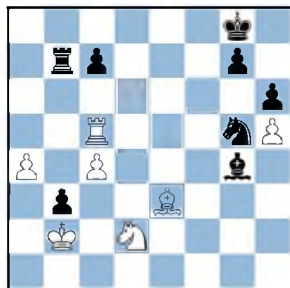
34.e5 fxe5 35.fxe5 d7 36.f4 dxe5 37.fxe5 a4 38.f3 axb3+ 39.f2



The character of the position has totally changed, and Black faces a miserable defensive task. He is temporarily up a pawn, but the b3 pawn won't survive forever. His doubled c-pawns are weak, isolated, and easily targetable on dark squares. His g7 and h6 pawns are also fixed on dark squares, and White's bishop on c3 is ideally placed to exert pressure on them. White also has a passed a-pawn which will become more relevant as more pieces are traded.

39...e8! Stubborn defense – this gives up the c5 pawn, but Black will get counterplay in return.

40.fxe8+ fxe8 41.f5 d5 f6 42.fxc5 d7 43.f4 f5 44.a4 d6 45.f3



45...f3 This is a difficult decision to assess. One of the factors that makes this position difficult for Black to defend is the inability to simplify. He largely has to sit and watch the a-pawn carefully. It's human instinct to want to trade the knights in order to change the character of the position. However, it may turn out that the

Elimination close call

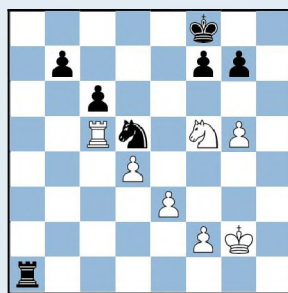


Vincent Keymer

Vincent Keymer 2690

Magnus Carlsen 2835

Round 4, Game 1, World Cup, Baku 2023



36...d7? Both 36...d7 and 36...a7 were good enough to hold.

37.f4 g6 Now 37...a7 is met by 38.f5 winning the f7 pawn. The trick is that 38...d7 doesn't work, because of 39.f4c8+ e6 40.f5e5+ winning.

38.f4xb7 and **White won** on move 58.

fewer pieces there are, the harder it is to defend Black's weaknesses.

45...f3 was the other option, equal in objective value to 45...f3, but I think far superior practically. Again, this is only obvious in hindsight, and very difficult to judge at the board. 46.f5 d5 47.a5 f8 48.f4xb3 f7 Black will aim to play ...g6 and create his own passed pawn, which will make his defensive task a lot more enjoyable.

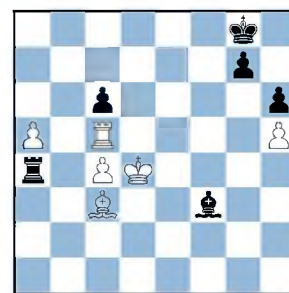
46.f4xf3 f3 47.a5 f8 An absolutely necessary move and one that Keymer clearly foresaw. The rook gets behind the a-pawn, restricting its movement.

48.f4d2 48.fxc7 f8 49.f5c5 d1 The b3 pawn is secure, while White's pawns are stuck.

48...f8 49.f4xb3 d1+ 50.f3 c6?! I'm skeptical of this decision since it restricts the mobility of Black's bishop. It will now have trouble guarding the crucial a8 square, which is the promotion square for White's pawn.

50...e2! 51.f4d4 f7! Black should not be greedy – the c7 pawn isn't that important here. 52.fxc7+ e6 The h5 pawn is a weakness, and White's passed pawns are not easy to advance.

51.f4d4 f3 52.f3c3 Black's position is extremely critical now, but Keymer fails to recognize the key concept here.

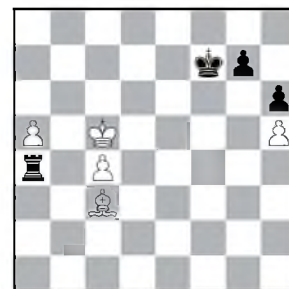


52...f2? The decisive mistake.

52...e2! was the key move, correcting the mistake from a few moves ago and jettisoning the c6 pawn, which is only hurting Black, not helping. This prevents the plan that occurs in the game. 53.fxc6 f7 It's still a tough defensive task, since this is a much worse version than the one examined a few moves back, and White can even push a6 here, but with careful play it's still a draw.

53.f5! Now Black is instantly toast, since his king is cut off. Most importantly, White's king will get active via c5, which is the one thing that Black had to expressly avoid.

53...f3 53...d5 54.fxd5 Forced, but winning. I don't think either player calculated everything to the end here, but they (correctly) intuitively felt that Black isn't in time to stop White's pawn. 54...cxd5 55.fxd5 f7 56.f5c5! Heading to support the a-pawn. Black has two approaches now – spend time creating a passed pawn, or make a beeline to the queenside.





A) 56...g6 57.hxg6+ ♖xg6 58.♗b5 ♖a2 59.a6 ♗f7 60.♗b6 ♗e6 61.a7 h5 62.♗a5+-.

B) 56...♗e6 57.♗b5 ♖a2 58.a6 ♗d7 59.c5 Even though White is technically down material here, he is completely dominant. 59...♖a3 60.c6+ ♗c7 61.♗e5+ ♗c8 62.♗d4 ♗b8 63.♗b6 ♖b3+ 64.♗c5 ♖a3 65.♗b5! A funny triangulation. 65...♖a2 66.♗b6 Now ...♖b2+ isn't available. 66...♖a3 67.a7+! ♖xa7 68.♗e5+ ♗a8 69.c7+-.

54.♖f4 ♗e6 55.♗c5 Now everything is secure and White's a-pawn is just unstoppable.

55...♖a3 56.♗b4 ♖a2 57.♗b3 Kicking the rook off the a-file at last.

57...♖e2 58.a6 ♗h3 59.a7 ♖e8 60.♖e4 ♖a8 61.♖e7 c5 62.♖b7 There's no good way to stop ♖b8, so **Black resigned**. For example, 62...♗g2 runs into 63.♖xg7+ ♗f8 64.♖xg2.



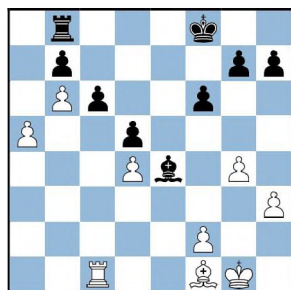
▲ Fabiano Caruana

ANOTHER CANDIDATES TOURNAMENT FOR FABIANO

The best performing American in Baku was Fabiano Caruana, who, as previously mentioned, made it to the semifinal and secured his spot in the Candidates. The only match that he did not win in the classical portion up to that point was the third-round clash against Turkey's Mustafa Yilmaz. Fabi built up a winning advantage in the first classical game, but missed the knockout blow at the key moment.

Fabiano Caruana	2782
Mustafa Yilmaz	2639

Round 3, Game 1, World Cup, Baku 2023



32.a6? 32.♖xc6! bxc6 33.a6 ♖xb6 34.a7 A beautiful picture.

32...bxa6 33.♖xc6 This looks winning, too. After all, how can Black stop ♗xa6 followed by b7 and ♖c8?

33...♗g6! I guess Caruana missed this move.

34.♗xa6 ♗e8 35.♖d6 ♗e7 36.♖xd5 ♖xb6 White's extra pawn isn't enough to

win here, and, indeed, the game ended in a **draw** after 14 more moves.

The second classical game featured missed chances for both players before ending in a draw, and then Caruana was quite convincing in the rapid tiebreaks.

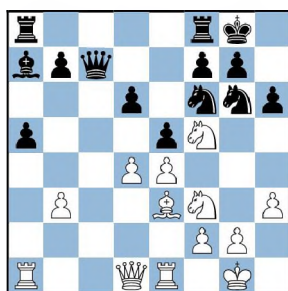
He went on to face fellow American Ray Robson, and decided matters in the second classical game with a textbook attack.

C54

Fabiano Caruana	2782
Ray Robson	2689

Round 4, Game 2, World Cup, Baku 2023

1.e4 e5 2.♖f3 ♗c6 3.♗c4 ♗f6 4.d3 ♗c5 5.c3 d6 6.0-0 a5 7.♖e1 ♗a7 8.♗bd2 h6 9.♗f1 0-0 10.♗g3 ♗e7 11.h3 ♗g6 12.♗b3 ♗e6 13.♗c2 c5 14.d4 cxd4 15.cxd4 ♖b6 16.♗e3 ♖xb2 17.♗b3 ♗xb3 18.axb3 ♖c3 19.♗f5 ♖c7



20.♗xb6! A fantastic move. In the Italian, when Black's dark-squared bishop is out of play, you always have to watch out for sudden kingside attacks like this.

R1: bye

R2: Caruana - Mchedlishvili (GEO)..... 2-0

R3: Caruana - Yilmaz (TUR)..... 3-1

R4: Caruana - Robson..... 1½-½

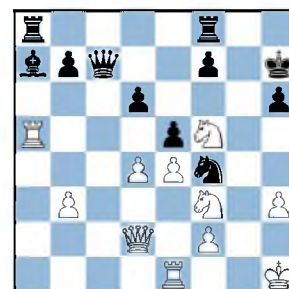
R5: Caruana - Duda (POL)..... 1½-½

R6: Caruana - Dominguez 1½-½

SF: Caruana - Praggnanandhaa (IND) ..2½-3½

for 3rd place: Caruana - Abasov (AZE) 3-1

20...gxf6 21.♖d2 ♗f4 21...♗e7 22.♖xf6 ♗xf5 23.exf5 ♖e7 24.♖g5+ ♗h8 25.♖e4!+- The rook lift is the easiest, bringing the decisive piece into the attack. 22.g3 ♗6h5 22...♗h8! It was more tenacious to get the king off the g-file. 23.gxf4 exd4 White is much better, but the position is really messy and could easily turn around. 23.gxf4 ♗xf4 24.♗h1 ♗h7 25.♖xa5



25...♗b6? The final mistake – now Black's f4 knight gets undermined. 26.dxe5 dxe5 26...♗xa5 27.♖xf4+- would lead to a quick checkmate. 27.♖xe5 **Black resigned.**



Leinier's excellent form and an unfortunate denouement

Closely following the developments in Baku, I was hugely impressed by Leinier Dominguez's powerful play. Of course, there are no doubts in his top-class status, but it was simply a matter of his excellent form and how effortless it looked.

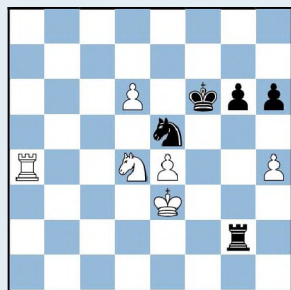
While many players experienced playing long matches, with numerous rapid (and even some blitz) games, Leinier's run was pretty smooth: in round 2 (advanced directly as one of the top-50 seeded players) he defeated Polish GM Igor Janik with two classical wins, then in round 3 he eliminated strong local GM Gadir Guseinov with a 1½-½ score before he passed a strong test in round 4 against former Polish No.1 Radoslaw Wojtaszek. Eventually, Leinier prevailed in this mini-match in rapid games with a total score of 3½-2½, before eliminating European Champion Alexey Sarana again with a 1½-½ score.

Then, in the quarter-finals we witnessed an all-American clash in which Leinier was paired against Fabiano Caruana. Although good friends, at the chessboard it was a great fight.

Leinier Dominguez	2739
Fabiano Caruana	2782

Round 6, Game 1, World Cup, Baku 2023

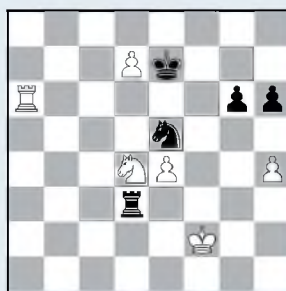
After some mutual inaccuracies in the middlegame, Leinier has been nurturing an advantage in the endgame with very precise play. Until...



54.♖e2 54.♖a6!! was the only winning move here. For example, after 54...♗g3+ 55.♙f2 ♖d3 56.d7+ ♙e7



▲ Leinier Dominguez



57.♖d6!! is the point! Certainly not easy to see from afar, nevertheless, extremely beautiful. The trick is that after 57...♖xd7 58.♖f5+ gxf5 59.♖xd3 fxe4 60.♖d4 ♖f6 61.♙e3+- White has a technically winning position.

Fabi was able to save the game after 54...♗h2 55.♖a6 ♗h3+ 56.♙d4 ♖d3+ 57.♙c5 ♖d7+ 58.♙c4 ♖e5+ 59.♙c5 ♖d7+ 60.♙c4 ♖e5+ 61.♙b5 g5 62.h5 ♙e6 63.d7+ ♙xd7 64.♗xh6 ♖e3 65.♖d4 ♖xe4 66.♙c5 ♖d3+ 67.♙d5 ♖e5+ 68.♙c4 ♖f4 69.♗h7+ ♖e7 70.♗h8 ♖e4 71.♙c3 **Draw**

There is an impression that the chance he missed in game 1 clearly affected Leinier's play in game 2. Encouraged with a favorable score, Fabi was pressing with White from the get-go of the second classical game, with Leinier missing his best defensive options a couple of times. Eventually, Caruana won that game and deservedly advanced to the semi-finals.

Dusan Kronic

THE PINNACLE OF PRAGG'S CAREER SO FAR

Pragg had numerous impressive games, but one that stood out to me was the second classical game in the fifth round against Ferenc Berkes from Hungary. Berkes might not be a household name to the casual fan, but he is an extremely strong and experienced player who was over 2700 at his peak.

C02

R. Pragganandhaa	2690
Ferenc Berkes	2615

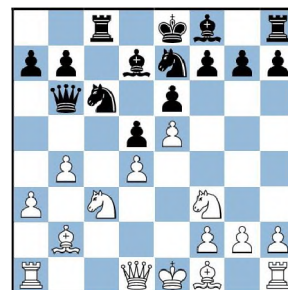
Round 5, Game 2, World Cup, Baku 2023

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♖c6 5.♖f3 ♗b6 6.a3 White's typical plan in the Advance French is to prepare the b2-b4 advance, clarifying the pawn tension. Black now has the choice of whether or not to advance ...c5-c4. It closes the position and results in a long maneuvering game in which the position will stay blocked for a while. The downside would be that Black releases all his pressure in the center against the d4 pawn and gives White a free hand to do as he pleases. Berkes decides to go with the other option, which is to play ...cxd4.

6...♙d7 7.b4 cxd4 8.cxd4 ♖c8 9.♙b2 White needs to defend the d4 pawn before developing the rest of his pieces.

9.♖c3 would run into tactical trouble on the c-file, with Black having a wide choice between ...♙xb4, ...♙xd4, or ...♙xe5, all exploiting the loose c3 knight.

9...♙ge7 10.♖c3



10...♙a5! Without this move, Black's preceding play wouldn't make sense.

10...♙f5? is met by 11.♙a4 ♗d8 12.♙d3 which is just a dream position for White – he has a huge



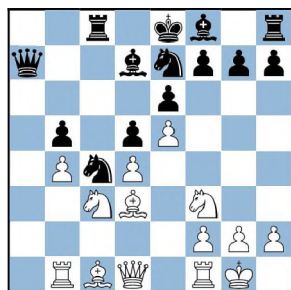
space advantage and Black has no pressure on the center in return.

11.♘d3 Pragg surely was able to anticipate this variation, as Berkes had played it in an earlier round of the World Cup against Vitiugov. This was his rare idea, played only four times before, just allowing the knight to c4.

11.♖a4 was how most of the previous games had gone, including the Vitiugov - Berkes game. **11...♞c6** **12.♙c5 ♘c4** **13.♙c1 b6** **14.♙xd7 ♞xd7** was N.Vitiugov 2720 - F.Berkes 2615, Baku 2023. White has the bishop pair, but Black's d7 bishop was his "bad" bishop anyway, so it's not such a big deal. Black eventually undermined the queenside with ...a7-a5 and later won.

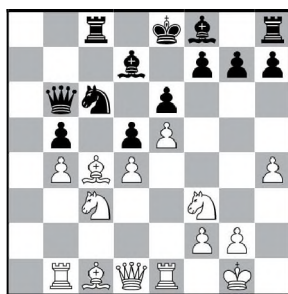
11...♙c4 **12.♙c1 a5** **12...♙xe5** tactics must always be considered. **13.dxe5 ♞xc3** **14.♙e3 ♞d8** **15.♞d2 ♞c8** **16.0-0** White has a massive development advantage and Black is still several moves away from completing his development, so it's understandable that Berkes did not want to go for this.

13.0-0 This is the whole point - White welcomes the opening of the queenside. **13...axb4** **14.♞b1 ♞a7** **15.axb4 b5** We have a very unusual queenside structure now - the a- and c- files are open, but it's not easy for White to invade there. Black's c4 knight does a good job of blunting the d3 bishop's pressure against the b5 pawn. If Black decides to castle kingside, he might come under some pressure, as White's bishops are menacingly pointing in that direction.



16.h4 A very typical idea, expanding on the kingside and hinting at a future attack there. This also plays against the e7 knight, as if it ever goes to g6, it will get kicked with h5.

16...♞b6 **17.♞e1 h6** For the next several moves, **17...♙c6** is something that Black would like to do, but it fails because it cuts off the c8 rook's protection of the c4 knight. **18.♙xc4!** Black is now in huge trouble whichever way he elects to recapture.

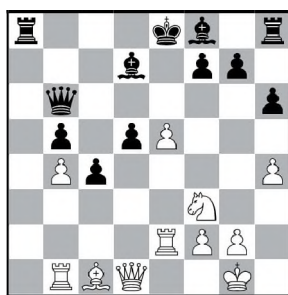


A) 18...dxc4 **19.d5** White simply crashes through in the center. **19...♙xb4** **20.♙e3 ♞b7** **21.d6 ♙d3** **22.♞e2** White's d6 pawn chokes Black's entire position. He will never be able to extricate his f8 bishop in time. **22...b4** **23.♞a2!** A nice touch - the b4 pawn is pinned, so White has time to threaten ♞a7. Black is lost.

B) 18...bxc4 **19.b5 ♙a5** (Or **19...♙b4** **20.♙a3 ♙d3** **21.♙xf8 ♙xf8** **22.♞e3±**) **20.♙a4 ♞d8** **21.♙c5±** The knight lands on the excellent c5 outpost, and White's b-pawn is quite dangerous.

18.♞e2 Preparing to bring the rook to the a-file. The rook on b1 should stay there since it is usefully defending the b4 pawn, as in the lines I just illustrated.

18...♙c6 **18...♞a8** is a really risky move since it abandons the c4 knight, but it was probably worth it to contest the a-file. **19.♙xc4 dxc4** **20.d5 ♙xd5** **21.♙xd5 exd5**

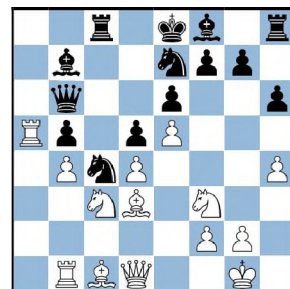


A) 22.♞xd5? totally misses the boat - Black has time to consolidate now. **22...♙c6** **23.♞d4 ♞xd4** **24.♙xd4 ♙d7** With the queens off, only Black can be better, with the bishop pair and the excellent c4 pawn.

B) 22.e6! Opening the e-file and long a1-h8 diagonal in one go. **22...♙xe6** **23.♙b2** The position looks terrifying for Black with his king caught in the center, but it's still rather well-sheltered behind the queenside pawns, and it can perhaps run soon to d7 and then c7. White still is the favorite here, but things could easily turn around, and it's probably a better situation for Black than the game continuation.

19.♞a2 ♙b7 **20.♞a5** A really creative move! White could have also continued

slowly with something like **20.h5**, since it's not clear what Black's next move will be. As mentioned before, **...♙c6** will always be met with **♙xc4**. However, Pragg decides to force matters, offering up his rook to try to pry open the queenside, and potentially double rooks with **♞ba1**.



20...♙c6 Without the b5 pawn defended, **20...♙xa5** is just asking for trouble. After **21.bxa5 ♞xa5** **22.♙xb5 ♙c6** **23.♙f4**, White's likely follow-up is **♙d6+**, uncovering an attack on the b7 bishop. **23...♞d8** **24.♙d6+ ♙xd6** **25.exd6 ♞d7** **26.♙e5 ♙xe5** **27.dxe5+-**. Now if Black castles he'll run into a deadly attack once White brings his queen into play.

21.♞e2?! I admire the creativity and bravery of just leaving the rook hanging out to dry, but objectively it should've been reinforced.

21.♞ba1 **♙xa5** **22.bxa5 ♞a6** **23.♞b1 ♞b8** **24.♙xb5!** It turns out the pawn can still be taken. **24...♞xb5** (**24...♙xb5** **25.♞xb5 ♞xb5** **26.♞a4+-**) **25.♞f1!+-**.

21...g6? A totally pointless move, after which Pragg regains full control.

It was time to accept the bait. **21...♙xa5** **22.bxa5 ♞xa5** **23.♙xb5 ♙xb5** **24.♙xb5+ ♙c6** It looks scary to put yourself in a pin, and White has many continuations here, but objectively none of them lead to an advantage. **25.♞c2 ♞b6** **26.♙a4 ♞a6** **27.♙b5=**.

21...♙f5 was also a surprising possibility, aiming to distract the d3 bishop before taking the rook. **22.♙xf5 ♙xa5** **23.bxa5 ♞xa5** White can't save both his c3 knight and f5 bishop. **24.♙d2 b4!** **25.♙d1 exf5** **26.e6∞** The position is totally unclear. White is down a boatload of material but he has a strong attack.

22.♞ba1 The a5 rook is immune again, and White has achieved total control of the a-file. With correct play from here, this should not be survivable for Black.

22...♙f5 **22...♙xa5** **23.bxa5 ♞a7** **24.♙xb5+-**.

23.♞a6 ♞d8 **24.g4!** Really accurately calculated, sacrificing the h4 pawn.

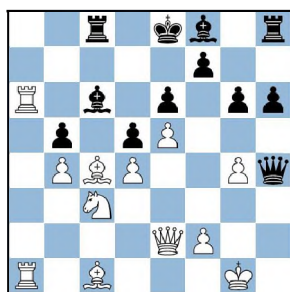
24...♙xh4 Accepting the pawn is the



correct choice in my opinion. Even though it may lose by force, it's something you have to try as Black, as retreating is basically dooming yourself to a slow and certain death.

24...♠e7 25.♠d2 ♠g7 26.h5 Opening up the kingside. 26...g5 Trying to keep things closed doesn't really help. 27.♠b3+- It's just dreadful for Black with ♠c5 coming next. If Black ever castles, then ♠c2 and ♠d3 will be possible for White. It's only a matter of time before White breaks through.

25.♠xh4 ♠xh4 26.♠xc4



26...♠xc4 26...dxc4 is just a worse version of the game, since it gives White freedom on the light squares. 27.♠xc6 ♠xc6 28.♠a8+ ♠d7 29.d5 exd5 30.♠f3+-.

27...♠xc6! This was the whole idea. White sacrifices an exchange to get rid of Black's light-squared bishop and invade along the eighth rank.

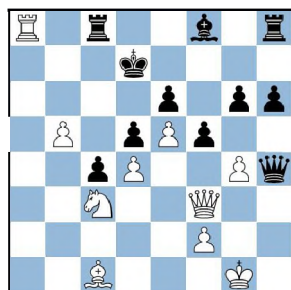
27...♠xc6 28.♠a8+ ♠d7 29.♠f3 The f7 pawn can't be conveniently defended. The idea of ♠xd5 will pop up in a lot of variations.

29...f5 Relatively best under the circumstances.

29...♠e7 is met by 30.♠xd5 exd5 31.♠xd5+ ♠c7 32.♠a7+-.

Equally, 29...♠c8 runs into 30.♠xd5! ♠xa8 31.♠f6+ ♠c7 32.♠xa8+-.

30.b5 ♠c8



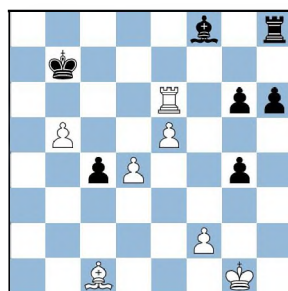
31.♠xd5 ♠xg4+ Giving back the



▲ Rameshbabu Pragganandhaa

material with interest, but at least reaching an endgame with some faint hope for survival.

32.♠xg4 fxg4 33.♠b6+ ♠c7 34.♠xc8 ♠b7 35.♠a6 ♠xc8 36.♠xe6 ♠b7

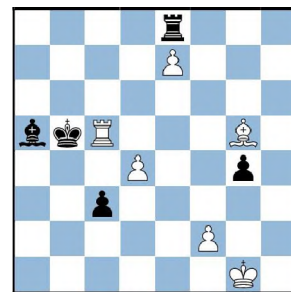


37.♠xg6 A very interesting decision. Many players would not have wanted to leave Black's c-pawn on the board, but Pragg accurately assesses that he can grab pawns while he has the chance.

37.♠c6 is also completely winning. 37...♠h7 38.d5 (Upon 38.♠xc4 ♠c7, White should be careful about allowing the rook trade under these circumstances, as it's possible for him to lose the b-pawn and not be left with enough material to win. It's still winning for White, but it's just practically better to avoid this.) 38...♠c7 39.e6+-.

37...c3 38.♠c6 ♠b4 39.♠xh6 ♠d8 Or 39...c2 40.♠c1 ♠c8 41.d5+-.

40.♠c4 ♠a5 41.e6 ♠b6 42.e7 ♠e8 43.♠g5 ♠xb5 44.♠c5+



44...♠b6 The king runs into tactical problems after 44...♠b4, as 45.♠f5 signals the following ♠f8 next to be unstoppable. Note that the king on b4 takes away the possibility of ...♠b4. 45...c2 46.♠f8 ♠xe7 47.♠xe7+ comes with check!

45.♠d5 Now ♠d8 will end the game.

45...♠b4 After 45...c2 46.♠c5 the pawn is lost.

46.♠d8 ♠xe7 47.♠xe7 ♠xe7 48.♠c8 g3 One last trick. 48...♠b4 49.♠f1 is a game over. Or 48...♠f6 49.♠xc3 ♠xd4 50.♠c4+-.

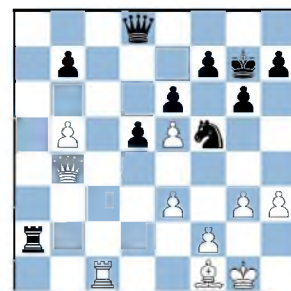
49.♠xc3 49.fxg3 ♠f6 50.♠xc3?? ♠xd4+. Needless to say, there's less than a 0.01% chance of this occurring, since 50.d5 is enough to sidestep the trap.

Black resigned.

Then, there came the epic quarterfinal match between Pragg and his friend/fellow Indian supertalent Arjun Erigaisi. An article can be written about this match alone, but I'll restrain myself to showing the climactic moments of the two classical games. Arjun managed to take control, winning the first classical game with Black.

R. Pragganandhaa	2690
Arjun Erigaisi	2710

Round 6, Game 1, World Cup, Baku 2023



34...d4! Initiating a very strong forcing sequence.

35.e4 The knight is safe on f5, since after 35.g4?? ♠h4 36.♠e1 dxe3 37.fxe3 ♠g5, White's position falls apart.

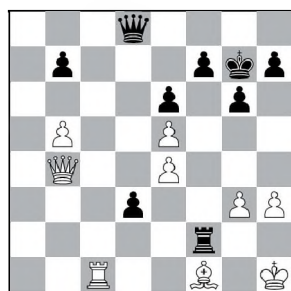
35...♠xg3! This is the point – retreating the knight would only leave the d-pawn weak.



36.fxg3 d3 Black is down a piece, but his rook on a2 dominates the bare second rank with ...♙g5 being a huge threat.

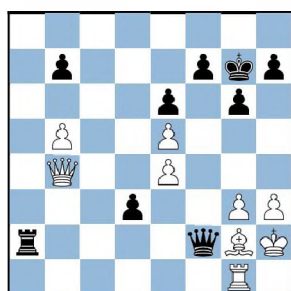
37.♙g2? Natural, but it loses.

37.♙h1! was forced, when 37...♙f2! is a very hard move to foresee. The idea is that Black wants to play ...d2 and then ...♙xf1+, forcing his passed pawn through. (But not 37...♙g5?, when after 38.♙c8 Black has no checks here, so White has time to deliver a mate of his own.)



38.♙d6 ♙g5 39.♙c8! ♙xf1+ 40.♙g2 At the end of all the madness, Black has to settle for a perpetual check, lest he get mated himself. 40...♙d2+ 41.♙xf1 ♙e2+ 42.♙g1 ♙e1+ 43.♙g2 ♙e2+=.

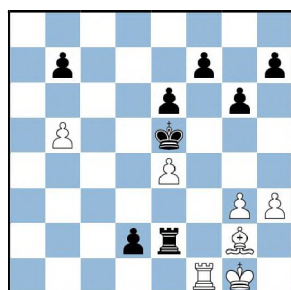
37...♙b6+ 38.♙h2 ♙f2 39.♙g1



39...♙e2!! The key move. Black needs his rook and queen connected after he pushes ...d2, to maintain pressure on the g2 bishop. He will then be able to play ...♙e1, winning. White has to scramble to trade queens in order to combat this plan, but it results in a losing endgame.

40.♙e7 d2 41.♙f6+ ♙xf6 42.exf6+ ♙xf6 It turns out that Black's dominance remains even without queens.

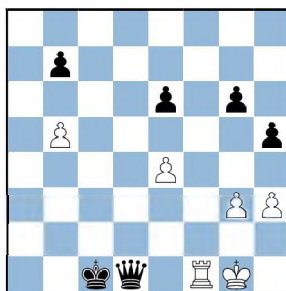
43.♙f1+ ♙e5 44.♙g1



44...♙d4! 44...♙e1 is too hasty. Then, after 45.♙f3, with ♙f2 coming next, White is safe.

45.♙f3 ♙e3! Taking the rook results in a losing pawn endgame, but ...♙e1 is the threat otherwise.

46.♙g4 h5 47.♙xe2 ♙xe2 48.♙f2+ ♙d3 49.♙f1 ♙c2 50.♙f2 ♙c1 51.♙xf7 d1♙+ 52.♙f1

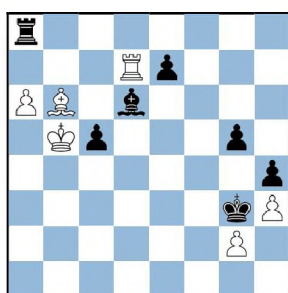


52...e5 53.b6 ♙xf1+ Black will come and take the e4 pawn, so **White resigned**. For example, 54.♙xf1 ♙d2 55.♙f2 ♙d3 56.♙f3 g5 57.g4 h4+.

Normally, it is very difficult to win a game with Black against an opponent who only needs a draw, but Pragg managed to do so, sending the game into tiebreaks.

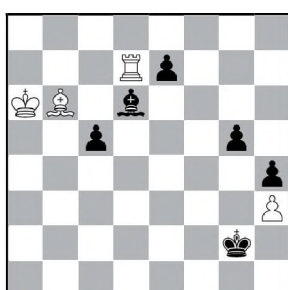
Arjun Erigaisi	2710
R. Praggnanandhaa	2690

Round 6, Game 2, World Cup, Baku 2023



43...c4 This wins, and Pragg had calculated everything to the end, but I want to show another way that Black could have won, as I find it quite pretty.

43...♙xa6! 44.♙xa6 ♙xg2

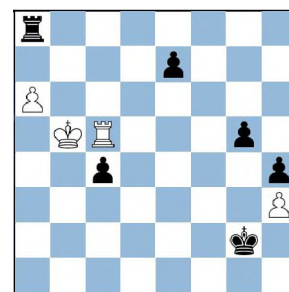


▲ Arjun Erigaisi

White is a rook up, but his pieces are powerless to stop Black's pawns. 45.♙b5 ♙xh3 46.♙xc5 ♙xc5 47.♙xc5 g4 48.♙d4 g3 49.♙e3 g2 50.♙f2 ♙h2 51.♙d1 h3+ Black will march his e-pawn down and win.

44.♙c7 44.♙d8 ♙xd8 45.♙xd8 c3 46.a7 c2 47.a8 ♙ c1♙ 48.♙f3+ ♙h2+ Black's king couldn't be safer on h2!

44...♙xc7 45.♙xc7 ♙xg2 46.♙c5



46...♙g8 The key move, ensuring that Black retains his g-pawn.

47.a7 ♙xh3 48.♙a6 48.♙xg5 ♙xg5+ Importantly, this is check.

48...g4 49.♙b7 g3 50.♙c8 ♙xc8 51.♙xc8 g2 52.a8 ♙ g1♙ 53.♙f3+ ♙g3 54.♙h1+ ♙g4 55.♙e4+ ♙f4 56.♙e2+ ♙h3 57.♙xe7 c3 Two pawns are more than enough to win the queen endgame, and Pragg had no trouble converting. **Black won**.

The match went all the way to blitz



tiebreaks, with Pragg only winning in the ninth game. I encourage you to check out all the games if you haven't seen them already – this match was truly a thriller!

A TWILIGHT ZONE FOR THE FAVORITES

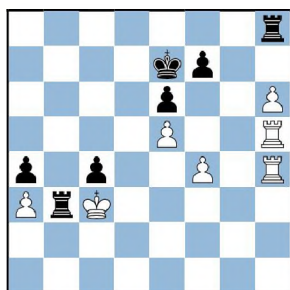
Obviously, in a tournament with 206 players, it's impossible to sum up all the noteworthy games and storylines that occurred, but here's a smattering of what caught my eye.

When it comes to American players, Hikaru Nakamura ran into the fearless Pragg in round 4. Surprisingly for some, after two classical draws, Hikaru lost both rapid games and finished his outing in Baku.

Sam Shankland suffered a bitter disappointment, crashing out early in the second round against Moldova's Ivan Schitco, making a painful blunder in the classical portion.

Sam Shankland	2711
Ivan Schitco	2507

Round 2, Game 1, World Cup, Baku 2023



Shankland has been pressing the whole game, but took some risks a few moves ago by sacrificing a pawn. Now he should rein it in and be careful to secure the draw.

57. ♖xc4?? A shocking blunder, allowing an immediate checkmate. After **57. ♖c2 ♜xa3 58. ♜h3** White should still not lose here, since Black's rook on h8 is permanently tied down to defense.

57... ♜c8+ 58. ♔d4 ♜bc3 It must be extremely unpleasant to face this over the board and realize that ...♜c4 is mate next move, particularly after having been on the pressing side for the entire game.

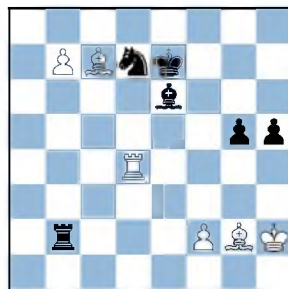
White resigned.

Wesley So almost bowed out in the same round, but he proved to be a cat with

nine lives in his match against Turkey's Emre Can, surviving two completely lost positions.

Emre Can	2570
Wesley So	2769

Round 2, Game 2, World Cup, Baku 2023



Emre Can has done everything right so far. He completely outplayed Wesley So, and is a step away from winning.

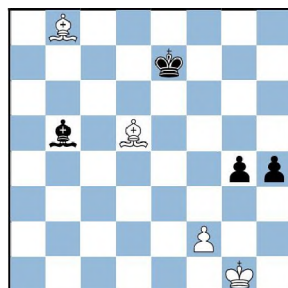
45. ♜xd7+? It's still winning for White after this, but his task is now unnecessarily complicated.

45. ♜d6+!

A) 45... ♖e8 46. ♜a3 ♜b3 (46... ♜b6 47. ♜d6! ♜xd6 48. ♜xd6+- Black is unable to meet the following ♜c6 and a pawn promotion.) **47. ♜c6+-;**

B) 45... ♖f7 46. ♜b4! The key move, cutting off the rook on the b-file and threatening ♜xd7+. **46... ♖b8 47. ♜d8 ♖a6 48. ♜a8 ♜xb4 49. ♜xa6+-** Black cannot stop ♜a8.

45... ♜xd7 46. b8 ♜ ♜xb8 47. ♜xb8 h4 48. ♜d5 g4 49. ♖g1 ♜b5 We've landed in one of the strangest endgames I've ever seen.

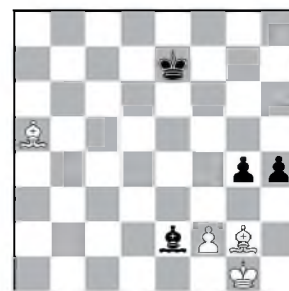


White is a piece up, but he has to play with care, since if he lets his last pawn get traded off, then it's a draw. He also has difficulties with activating his king. He would like to force one of Black's pawns to advance, but his dark-squared bishop cannot attack the h4 pawn! If he tries to play ♜g5, Black will play ...♖f6, and if he tries to sneak in to d8, Black will put his king back on e7!

Therefore, the only winning plan is

to bring the light-squared bishop to f1 to drive its counterpart away, and then gradually bring his king out. It looks like White can objectively win in the end, but it's not easy to understand.

50. ♜c7 An example of how White's winning plan could shake out can be seen after **50. ♜g2**. The idea is to play ♜f1. **50... ♜e2!** The most stubborn defense. Black intends to meet ♜f1 with ... ♜f3, with the idea to play ...g3 and trade off White's last pawn. **51. ♜c7** White plays for zugzwang, trying to get Black to move his bishop away. Remember, Black's king has to always watch out to not let White's dark-squared bishop attack the h4 pawn. **51... ♖d7 52. ♜b6!** It looks like White could have accomplished his goal by playing ♜f4-g5 instead, but we'll see in the game why this actually throws away the win! **52... ♖e7 53. ♜a5** Now Black has to give ground with his king or his bishop.



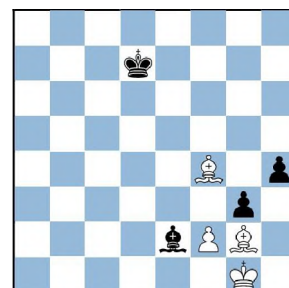
A) After 53... ♖d7 54. ♜d2, the bishop gets to g5, finally accomplishing White's goal.

B) 53... ♜d3 54. ♜f1 ♜f5 55. ♜a6 ♜e4 56. ♜e2 ♜f5 57. ♖f1 ♜e6 58. ♜c7 ♜f5 59. ♖e1+- White finally has everything under control. He will bring his king into the game, and can always safely meet g3 with f3.

50... ♜e2 51. ♜g2 ♖d7! An absolutely cunning trap by Wesley. It looks like this allows White to bring his bishop to g5 and win immediately, but looks are deceptive.

52. ♜f4?? 52. ♜a5 White can win using the plan shown previously.

52...g3!



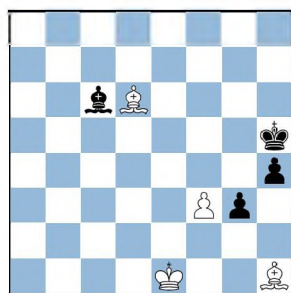
In this particular construction, White needs to be able to play f4, since by playing f3 his pawn is vulnerable to Black's bishop. But f4 is impossible now because White put his bishop there!

53.f3 ♖e8! The only move. Black wants to play ...h3, but avoids the check.

54. ♖h1 The only way to stop ...h3, drawing immediately, but now there's no way to make progress.

54...♔f7 55.♙c7 ♔g6 56.♔g2 ♚b5
Black's king can safely sit on h5 now.

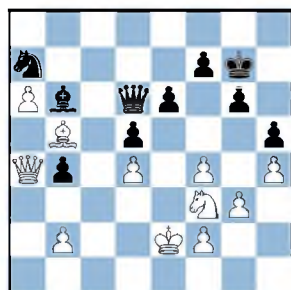
57. ♖d6 ♜h5 58. ♜g1 ♞c6 59. ♜f1 ♞b7
60. ♜e1 ♞c6



61. ♔d2 ♚d7 62. ♚g2 h3 63. ♚xh3 ♚xh3
64. ♚xg3 ♚g2 65. ♔e3 ♚xf3 Draw.

Emre Can	2570
Wesley So	2769

Round 2, Game 3 (Rapid), World Cup, Baku 2023



Once again, Can has played an exemplary game and now only has to find a breakthrough.

43...♔d3 43...♙e8! would have soon forced Black's collapse. He is stretched too thin to deal with threats to his kingside. 43...♖e7 44.♗g5 provoking a weakness. 44...f6 45.♗f3+-. With e6 and g6 weak now, it's only a matter of time before Black runs out of moves.

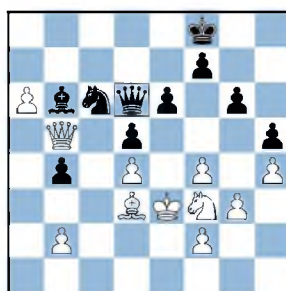
43...♙f8 44.♖e3? Overprotecting the d4 pawn, but also putting White's king in harm's way. The king should stay on a light square in such positions, out of the range of the enemy bishop.

44...♘c6! Now White is tied down to the d4 pawn and things aren't easy anymore.

45. ♔b5 ♘a7 46. ♔a4 ♘c6 47. ♔b5

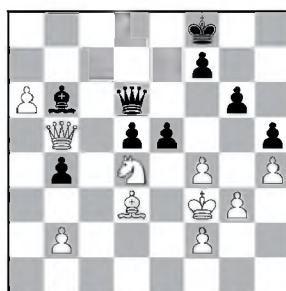


▲ Emre Can



47...♖xd4?! 47...♖a7 would have forced 48.♔a4, when Wesley could have then claimed a threefold repetition. I'm not sure if he didn't realize this, or if he sensed the momentum changing and decided to bravely play for a win. Objectively, the position is still winning for White after this, but Can was unable to cope with the dynamic change.

48.♖xd4 e5 49.♔e2 49.♔f3! The king should run to safety.



A) 49...e4+ 50.♔e3!+- This switchback is easy to miss.

B) 49...♙xd4 50.fxe5 ♚xe5 51.♚xb4+ ♔g7 52.♔g2 White should win eventually.

although it's not easy to break Black's blockade on dark squares.

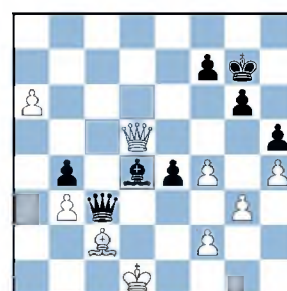
49...♙xd4 50.b3? Now White even gets into trouble. After 50.fxe5 ♖xe5+, the difference is this move comes with check now, so White can't take on b4. 51.♔f1 ♗d6 Black should draw with careful play.

50...e4 51.♔c2 ♖g7 52.♞a5? 52.♜f1!
The king should be looking for safety
at every opportunity, and this one is no
exception.

52...♙c6 Now the queen infiltrates.

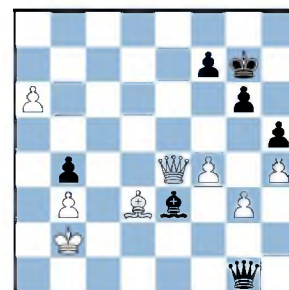
53. ♔d1 ♚c3 53... ♙xf2 54.a7 (54. ♖a1+ ♕h7 55.a7 ♚a8+-) 54... ♚c3! Mate is coming on e1.

54. ♖xd5



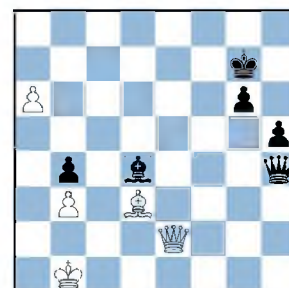
54...♔f3+? 54...f5! Preserving the pawn was necessary, as Black's threats aren't going away.

55. ♖c1 ♜xf2 56. ♜xe4 ♙e3+ 57. ♔b2
♜g1 58. ♙d3?



58... ♔f2+? Both players are clearly extremely nervous, 58... ♖c1+ wins immediately, 59. ♕a2 ♖a3+ 60. ♕b1 ♖xb3+ 61. ♕a1 ♖c3+ with ... ♕d4 coming next, wrapping up the game.

59.♔b1 ♕d4 60.♔e2 ♔xg3 61.f5
♔xh4 62.fxg6 fxg6





63.♖f1 White should keep his queen active with 63.♖e8, in order to tie Black's queen down.

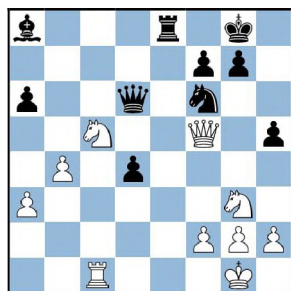
63...♖h2 64.♙c2 ♖d2 Now Black's queen is too active.

65.♖h1 ♖c3 66.♖b7+ ♔h6 67.♙c1 ♖e1+ 68.♙d1 ♙e3+ **White resigned.** Not the highest quality game, but the player who made the second-to-last mistake won.

However, Wesley's run came to an end in the very next round against the reigning European Champion Alexey Sarana, a Russian-born who recently transferred his federation to Serbia.

Wesley So	2769
Alexey Sarana	2685

Round 4, Game 1, World Cup, Baku 2023



Material is equal, but Black's position is overwhelming due to his monster bishop and the d-passer.

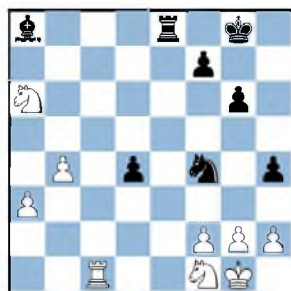
27...h4 28.♙f1 Or 28.♙h5 ♙xh5 29.♖xh5 d3+.

28...g6 29.♖d3 ♙h5! Black's next move is ...♙f4 and there's really not much White can do to stop it.

30.♖xa6 30.g3 ♙f4! 31.gxf4 ♖xf4+.

The rook is hit and ...♖g5+ is threatened.

30...♖xa6 31.♙xa6 ♙f4



The queen trade didn't help White, since his pieces are not coordinated enough to stop Black's knight+bishop combo, plus the passed d-pawn.

32.♙c7 h3 33.♙g3 Funnily enough, 33.♙xe8 ♙e2+ 34.♙h1 hxg2 is a pretty checkmate!



▲ Wesley So

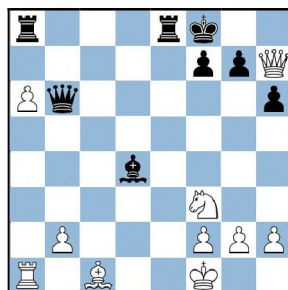
33...hxg2 Threatening ...♙h3 mate.

34.♙xa8 d3 There's no defense against the straightforward ...d2, followed by ...♙e1. **White resigned.**

I have one more game to show, which proves how difficult it is to win a tournament like this. Maxime Vachier-Lagrave has been one of the best players in the world for many years, but he was eliminated in round three against the talented young player from Uzbekistan, Javokhir Sindarov. After a very sharp opening, all it took was one miscalculation for MVL to be sent packing.

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	2739
Javokhir Sindarov	2659

Round 3, Game 2, World Cup, Baku 2023



After a sharp opening, White is on the back foot, as he has to worry about back rank problems and his exposed king.

26.♙xd4? Based on a really pretty, but unfortunately flawed idea.

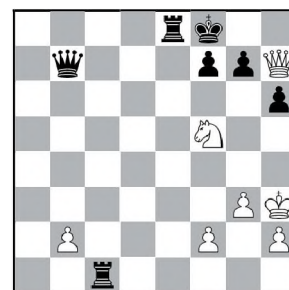
26.♙d2! Development is the key.

26...♙xb2 27.♙b1 ♖xa6+ 28.♙g1 White is an exchange down but has sufficient counterplay against Black's king. For example, ♙b4+ is an annoying threat.

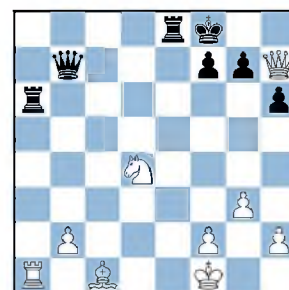
26...♙xa6! 27.g3 This was the point that MVL had foreseen – he leaves the a1 rook hanging, counting on ♙f5. But he missed his opponent's next move.

27...♖b7! A great intermediate move, threatening ...♖h1 mate and destroying White's coordination.

27...♙xa1 28.♙f5 ♙xc1?? 29.♙g2 ♖b7+ 30.♙h3



The checks run out and White wins. If this was to happen on the board, we would be now praising MVL's creative play in a Tal-like style. Of course, the line is not forced, thus it remains just a fantasy... 30...f6 31.♖h8+ ♔f7 32.♖xg7+ ♔e6 33.♖xb7 ♙xf5 34.♖d7+ ♔e6 35.♖d3+.



28.♖h8+ 28.f3 ♙xa1 29.♙f5 ♖xf3+-. 28...♙e7 29.♖xg7 ♙xa1 30.♙f5+ ♔e6 31.♙d4+ ♔d5 32.♙f3 ♙xc1+ 33.♙g2 ♙c4 34.♖xh6 ♙e6 Black's king has nothing to fear with all the major pieces guarding it, so **White resigned** without a hope.

The World Cup seems to be an event that offers something to all types of chess fans. There's a mix of all time controls and a wide variety of players, including the absolute elite and those of a slightly lower caliber. With so many players and matches going on, it's impossible to not find someone to root for!

In the end, Magnus Carlsen was able to secure what is perhaps one of the few remaining titles he had yet to win in his career.



WHY JENNIFER SHAHADE LEFT THE US CHESS FEDERATION

Checkmate to **SILENCE**

A prominent chess figure discusses the challenges and attacks she faced after igniting a METOO movement in chess.

■ By Josip Asik



Jennifer Shahade, Philadelphia 2023, Photo by Danier Weiron

Jennifer Shahade's resignation as the Women's Program Director of US Chess, a position she held since 2018 (though affiliated with US Chess since 2006), has profoundly impacted the chess community. The direct cause centers on US Chess's handling of sexual assault allegations against GM Alejandro Ramirez. Despite being aware of these grave allegations, which remained unaddressed for years, US Chess appointed Ramirez to participate in the 2022 Chess Olympiad as a trainer. Since Jennifer voiced her concerns in February, more women have come forward with similar allegations. In September, Jennifer remarked, "Instead of support, I was greeted with hostility. My tweet – the one that finally instigated consequences – was criticized by US Chess."

Jennifer's departure has prompted discussions about US Chess's ethics and its future direction. Expressing her disappointment, she declared, "I cannot currently lend my credibility to the organization in good conscience, especially since I've become a de facto confidante for so many women and girls." The leading chess organization in the US simply wished Jennifer "well in her next professional chapter." Our interview delves deep into Jennifer Shahade's decision and its wider implications for the chess world. It also provides insight into the grandmaster, author, and two-time US Women's Champion – a proud Philadelphia native.

Editor's Note

REFLECTING ON SHAHADE'S DEPARTURE

In early September, news struck like a lightning bolt: Jennifer Shahade's resignation from US Chess. I've only met Jennifer at a few chess gatherings, and as a WGM, she was featured in an earlier issue of our 5x5 column. The weight of this news hit hard because for many, including myself, Jennifer stands as an embodiment of US Chess, especially as a bridge between chess and mainstream media. Look for her TEDx talk on YouTube, for instance. Her prominence and the role she has played in the chess world cannot be understated. Drawing from my extensive experience in mainstream sports TV media, where I've witnessed grand events, marketing spectacles, and so much more, I can emphatically say: having someone like Jennifer in the chess realm is an absolute boon – a veritable gift to all of us. Witnessing this fiery, red-haired force of nature

(recently having transitioned to blonde, as captured in a photograph by her husband for ACM) resign is deeply unsettling. She's made this choice, driven by unwavering principles that any society grounded in common sense should uphold.

Her decision highlights the vital role independent media, like ours, plays in today's narrative. While some affiliated magazines might prefer to sidestep this controversy, we're resolute in confronting it head-on. We focus on the glaring silence and inaction of chess institutions. Trusting that the allegations are being duly addressed within the legal system, our unwavering mission is to convey information with utmost integrity, clarity, and objectivity.

FM Josip Asik, Editor-in-chief



I saw the hard way the truth is not always that important to everyone and we need to keep fighting for it on a daily basis.

Jennifer Shahade

”

BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE

Can you briefly share your experience as the Women's Program Director of US Chess and highlight some of the initiatives and events that you are most proud of?

I loved raising money to help organizers around the country that want to increase the number of girls and women playing, but don't always have the budget to create a dedicated space for them. There's nothing better than getting money for people who spend it to enrich kids' lives.

The online community of girls that formed via our social and chess training club during the pandemic was special. We hosted hundreds of Q+A and tutorial sessions and tournaments. Guests included Garry Kasparov, Judit Polgar, Jennifer Yu, Phiona Mutesi, Pontus Carlsson, Irina Krush, the Botez Sisters and dozens of other GMs and luminaries (archives of these videos are still available on the US Chess YouTube channel).

I also cherished all my trips to events where I got to mentor and work with girls in person. I've been doing this work for decades with different organizations from Chess-in-the-Schools to 9 Queens to ASAP in Philly or the Impact Coaching Network in New York, and it just never gets old. As an educator and a speaker, I'm proud of my ability to reach multiple levels at once, from experts to beginners.

I also created over 55 episodes of the Ladies Knight podcast, which started with content creator Alexandra Botez — before she had 100K followers, let alone millions — and ended with chess master and fierce advocate for gender



▲ Jennifer Shahade play chess with Isabelle Choko, the Holocaust Survivor and 1956 French Women's Champion
Photo by Chandler Toffa

equality and LGBTQ+ inclusion, Yosha Iglesias. My most memorable guest of all was the Holocaust Survivor and 1956 French Women's Champion Isabelle Choko. One of my most treasured experiences was taking part in a documentary for chess.com on Madame Choko. This February, I travelled to Paris along with Chandler Toffa (the director) and my friend Benjamin Portheault, a mental game coach who originally introduced me to Madame Choko. Sadly, she died five months later, on July 21, 2023. She doesn't usually play chess against guests or media but she made a special exception for me since I was so obviously giddy to communicate with her, but don't speak much French. What an honor to be perhaps, the last person she played chess with. I will never forget her message of peace, kindness and love. She told me that she believes more than anything, in the love of her parents. They both passed 80 years prior in World War II, in the Lodz ghetto (her dad) and in the Bergen-Belsen death camp (her mother). But their love of their daughter was eternal.

▼ Jennifer Shahade, 2019 Fall Exhibitions Opening Reception, World Chess Hall of Fame

REASONS FOR RESIGNATION

Can you explain the specific events or instances that led to your decision to resign from your role as Women's Program Director of US Chess?

The main reason, as I stated in my resignation letter, was that my advice about handling sexual assault allegations was consistently minimized or ignored. Alejandro Ramirez was sent to the Women's Olympiad as the official U.S. coach despite my repeated warnings about assault allegations by him centering on girls as young as 15. I also wrote I'd been attacked and he was still sent. In February 2023, I tweeted about my concerns and experience, which finally led to swift action. On International Women's Day, a bombshell article in the *Wall Street Journal* interviewed eight women who alleged abuse by Alejandro, including three who were under 18 at the time of the allegations. After receiving a list of questions from the Journal for the article, Alejandro resigned from US Chess, as well as the Saint Louis Chess Club and SLU.

In the aftermath of the saga, more and more women came forward to me about their own negative and abusive experiences in the chess world, which deepened my understanding of the need for a safer chess world and how to get there. And yet, my advice still wasn't taken seriously at US Chess. I loved what I founded with US Chess Women. But I ultimately realized I could make a greater impact from outside the organization.





I still care deeply about the future of US Chess. Even just its name — which my friend Jean Hoffman, a previous executive director of US Chess did a great job in re-branding it to — makes it a powerful and permanent part of our chess universe. They also have some tremendous staff and volunteers. I am hopeful that the future, whether it's months or years from now, will bring better times and a new perspective for the org.

Can you elaborate on the hostility you mentioned receiving from US Chess following your public revelations? How has this impacted your feelings about the organization and your work in the chess community?

I got aggressive warnings and demands from lawyers representing US Chess, including one after my tweet. I was discredited even on points that were in writing and verified by publications like the *Wall Street Journal*. Of course, I also got tons of blowback from trolls and on social media — but to be honest, I was expecting that part. Considering the personal sacrifices I made to fight for the safety of our community, and my decades of work in chess, I was expecting more institutional support, especially when my concerns were validated by reporting in the *WSJ*, the *STL Post Dispatch*, lichess and chess.com. I saw the hard way the truth is not always that important to everyone and we need to keep fighting for it on a daily basis. Maybe that's something I now see in chess. You can't hide from the truth on the chessboard.

This experience has changed me forever. I see a greater need to fight and speak up for those who aren't able to. I also see how private individuals are at a profound disadvantage compared to institutions. I think I'll see the whole world differently from now on.

Recently, the Saint Louis Chess Club put out a very strong statement vowing that they would do more to protect girls and women in chess, and that they should have done more sooner. Seeing a powerful chess entity take an approach of accountability and compassion was refreshing — even if I'd like to have seen it earlier.

Your insights regarding major platforms like lichess.org and chess.com distancing themselves from US Chess and the Saint Louis Chess Club. What's your take on their stance?

It has been encouraging to see lichess and chess.com stand up for women's rights and women in chess in the wake of this ordeal. The Saint Louis Chess Club recently released a statement that they "were silent for too long," which I think shows that the culture is changing, and will continue to change.

COMPARISONS TO "METOO" MOVEMENT

How do you reflect on the comparisons being made between this situation and the broader *MeToo* movement, considering both involve allegations of misconduct coming to the forefront?

I've done a lot of reading on the origins of the *MeToo* movement, including *Unbound* by Tarana Burke (Burke is the founder of the movement) and Chanel Miller's stirring memoir *Know My Name*. There are a lot of things I've learned. One common thread is the emotional, professional, and financial costs of coming forward. This is why so many prominent *MeToo* Cases end up breaking in legacy media, because source identities can be protected, and their lives can



▲ Jennifer Shahade and Rex Sinquefeld, 2020 Caissa Member Appreciation Night, Saint Louis Chess Club

continue on as normal. You can see a great rendition of the role of media in the movie *She Said*, which is a chronicle of the *New York Times* reporting that led to the downfall of Harvey Weinstein.

Given what we have heard so far, do you believe we are just seeing the tip of the iceberg? Are there potentially more untold stories or unmade accusations within the chess community?

Yes, there are more untold stories. I am moved that many women and men too, have entrusted me to tell some of their own traumatic stories. But it's also really depressing to know the truth, that there are so many such cases. More women are coming forward. Alongside preventive measures and cultural change, we will have a much safer chess world in the future thanks to these troubling times. Lots of organizations are creating new policies and training, certainly positive steps if implemented well. It's crucial to have a positive attitude and culture toward whistleblowers and survivors. Otherwise, people will be justifiably reluctant to come forward. I would hate for my own case to be a cautionary tale as I lost so many friends, so much income, and gained so many grey hairs. And yet, I also feel lucky as I succeeded in being heard in the end and the community has resoundingly supported me.

ON ADVOCACY AND FUTURE INITIATIVES

How do you plan to continue your advocacy work for women and girls in chess outside of US Chess?

Many organizations, colleges and media have reached out to me this year. I have no shortage of opportunities to continue voicing my support for inclusion. I also plan to do some work via the non profit I founded, 9 Queens, so keep your eyes peeled for that. I'm also an advisor on the brand new org, Women in Chess Foundation, which has a focus on supporting survivors.

I want to spread my message of beauty, chess and truth to all genders to get a truly wonderful and safe space we need men and boys on board too and I'm delighted to report how many male allies have been super-supportive through this whole ordeal. This is probably the biggest change I've seen in this decade rather than in the noughties and early 2010s. In chess and in poker too—there are way more men who are asking "What can I do to make this situation better?" Kings Support Queens!

I think it may be easier to navigate on my own. To borrow a line from another chess personality, my work speaks for itself and in recent years



I've started spreading my message more widely to mainstream media as well as to universities and corporate clients. When I find partners and organizations that truly celebrate me, my impact can explode.

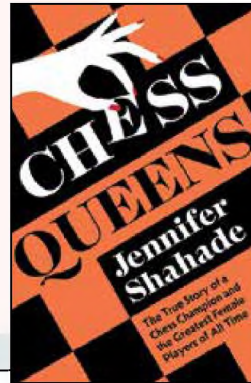
FUTURE EXPECTATIONS AND CHANGES

What is your message to young girls and women who look up to you and who are aspiring to be a part of the chess community?

Find a strong community, and try to look for people who build up your confidence rather than break it down. Confidence is the #1 struggle I've seen for many kids in chess, but especially girls. I recently co-authored a study, *Checking Gender Balance: Parents and Mentors Perceive Less Chess Potential in Girls*, with professors from NYU that showed how mentors and parents often under-value the talent of girls. When others don't believe in you, it's more important than ever to believe in yourself.



▲ Jennifer Shahade with her son Fabian



Play Like a Champion follows your captivating 2022 book, Chess Queens, which serves not only as an autobiography but also as a testament to the chess era during the years of your active playing career. Does delving into tactics offer a more relaxing contrast after recounting your personal journey?

I am happiest when I'm writing books. *Play Like a Champion* was a welcome distraction during a stressful period of my life. I'm also

exceptionally happy with *Chess Queens* as I think it captures the spirit of our chess world: so diverse, so alive, but also so fraught with the same structural problems we see around us. It embodies my life philosophy: to balance a focus on the positive, the joy and beauty of the game, with attention to the negatives that we need to change.

I have so many more books planned now, from *How to Beat Your Mom at Chess* that I'm co-authoring with my son, to a young adult novel. At this rate, I will spend the rest of my life working on at least one book or script, and that's how I want it to be.

Thinking Sideways is my next book. This one surveys the skills a chessplayer needs to succeed and some of the research that ties them to chess, from memory to decision trees. I'm also writing about the temptation to cheat in chess, the crazy ways that people have tried to pull it off, and how to make our culture less conducive to it.

TWO-TIME US CHAMPION

You've won the US Women's Champion title two times! We should really talk about this, especially since a lot of people, particularly the newer generation, know you more as someone who promotes chess these days. It's interesting that in 2004, you outperformed other strong players of your generation like Irina Krush and Anna Zatonskih. They are still top players now, nearly twenty years later. Did you step back from your playing career earlier than one might have expected?

I won my first title in Seattle in 2002, which was the first year all genders were combined into the same section.

I also got an IM norm for my efforts. Winning in 2004 was also special because as you point out, I was not at

all the favorite. I won the US Women's Championship twice as an underdog, and I realized I could leverage those fantastic titles to other accomplishments. I also really fell in love with writing and art and my brain started to move into a creative space. I do miss classical chess though! Unfortunately, my skill set is not in rapid chess or blitz chess otherwise I would love to dabble. As a chess promoter, blitz and rapid are sensational. But as a player, my brain fits better with very long games as I'm more of a deep thinker.

Our readers love to delve into remarkable games. Could you recommend some of the crucial games from your career that they should explore and can you explain why they are significant?

I think the win over Armen Ambartsoumian was crucial because it led to my first US Women's Championship title, and my first IM norm. It was in one of my favorite openings, the Grunfeld, and involved a fun tactical finale. It's in *Play Like a Champion*. I also won a couple times against Irina Krush, although only one made it

NEW BOOK

At the time of our conversation in October I noticed that your new book, *Play Like a Champion*, is available for pre-order on Amazon. It appears to offer substantial insight in the field of chess tactics. Could you share who the target group is for this book?

Since I was a kid I loved puzzle books, but they can be dense. In *Play Like a Champion*, I break things up with prose and funny stories so that you can improve and be entertained simultaneously. Stories of some of my favorite players are sandwiched between chapters on iconic tactical themes like pin, skewer and fork, as well as more advanced topics like liquidation and destruction. All ages and levels can enjoy the book. A master level player will get most of the puzzles quickly, but will still find head-scratchers and funny stories. And even a total beginner can get some of the easier puzzles, enjoy the prose, and grow alongside the book.



into the database, I remember the shape of the other one very well. It was a Grünfeld also! I lost to her so many times, any victory was absolutely precious to me. I talk about that game in *Chess Queens*.

Over time, US chess has seen significant transformations, notably influenced by Jeanne and Rex Sinquefeld. As someone who's been at the forefront, leading promotional activities for most events in St. Louis, you've witnessed and contributed to these changes. How would you contrast the landscape of US chess before and after these developments?

There's so much more money and opportunity in the game now. It's just been explosive ever since 2020, but the seeds were certainly planted over a decade prior. I also love to see how many ways there are to be successful in chess. It's not all about your rating, you can also build a great following via exceptional content or commentary, or be admired for skill at a specific variant, from bughouse to bullet.

We are observing more young prodigies emerging as winners in US Women's Chess. The emergence of progressively younger champions is now a universal trend. How do you interpret this evolution?

In 1998 I played the event where Irina Krush became the youngest ever US Women's Champion at 14 years old! And growing up, I was inspired by Judit Polgar, who was the greatest chess prodigy of all time. So from my perspective the youth movement has always dominated the conversation, especially in women's chess. It's thrilling to see Alice Lee break records, I am excited to see where her career goes. I also love watching young women like Carissa Yip, Annie Wang and Jennifer Yu do so well in chess and in academics, and to see players like Megan Lee, Rochelle Ballantyne, Alisa Melekhina, and Darrian Robinson become such successful and awesome people on and off the board. Meanwhile, it's also quite heart-warming to see the other side of things, women like Pia Cramling and Anna Zatonskih succeed decade after decade and continue to break new ground!

Which players have had a profound influence on you, and from whose games have you drawn insight and learning?

I was super inspired by the Polgar sisters, of course Judit, but really all three. Sofia because she is also an artist. It always intrigued me that she was lower rated but had her own magical gifts that were celebrated by the whole family. In the book 5334 by Laszlo Polgar, her composition shaped in a rook is enlarged in homage to its precocious creator (Sofia was 7 at the time.) Sofia just wrote a book *Sofia Polgar: Amazing Artist - Dangerous Tactician* that combines chess with her many beautiful drawings and paintings and I recommend it. And of course I greatly admired Susan too, for paving the way and fighting against so many barriers. Her win against Chiburdanidze when I played for the U.S. team alongside her was truly epic.



▲ Jennifer Shahade in action - promoting chess to girls

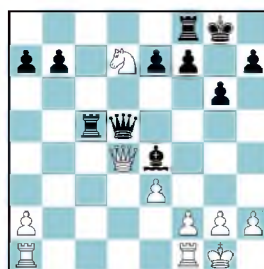
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Armen Ambartsoumian 2388

Jennifer Shahade 2302

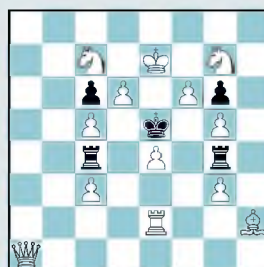
US Championship, Seattle 2002

1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 g6 3. ♖c3 d5 4. ♘f3
 ♙g7 5. e3 0-0 6. ♙d2 c5 7. dxc5
 ♘a6 8. cxd5 ♘xc5 9. ♙c4 ♙f5
 10. 0-0 ♖c8 11. ♗e2 ♘fe4 12. ♘xe4
 ♙xe4 13. ♙b4 ♘a4 14. ♙a3 ♘xb2
 15. ♙xb2 ♙xb2 16. ♗xb2 ♖xc4
 17. ♘e5 ♖c5 18. ♗d4 ♗xd5 19. ♘d7



19... ♗xd4 20. exd4 ♖g5! 21. ♗fe1
 ♖xg2+ 22. ♗f1 ♖xh2 23. f3
 23. ♘xf8? ♙f3!!+
 23... ♖d8 White resigned

Sofia Polgar 1982



Mate in 2



▲ Irina Krush and Jennifer Shahade

In my work for *Play Like a Champion*, I was stunned by how many scalps Irene Sukandar has. She has a fearless style. I also love the elegance of many of Hou Yifan and Maia Chiburdanidze's combinations. True geniuses of the game!

I also am a big fan of the artist and chess master Marcel Duchamp, who I co-authored a book about. And Pal Benko, who composed the most delightful endgame studies and had such a fascinating life. And for modern chess personas, I am in awe of the work by Chess-in-the-Slums founder Tunde Onakoya. Along with the work of the Gift of Chess, an organization that aims to give out one million chess sets in Africa, they are really showing how chess is a gateway to opportunity.

POKER AND CHESS

You're also recognized as a professional in the world of poker. I've observed that there seems to be a common inclination among active chess players

toward card games and various puzzles, especially during leisure times at open tournaments in hotels. How did you become interested in this field?

My brother taught me poker soon after I graduated NYU and I enjoyed the game, but I wouldn't say it was love at first ace. What ultimately got me hooked on poker many years later was the



community. I was fascinated that there was this culture built around a game, similar to chess but also very different. More glamorous, more dangerous but also challenging. I grew to love poker theory in the same way I love chess problems. Now I am an Ambassador for PokerStars and a board member of Poker Power and a believer in the ability of poker to teach life lessons, and especially lessons about money and personal finance. That said poker is not for everyone, there are certain personality types that should avoid it completely due to adjacency to addictive games and casinos. I never had that tendency. I dislike gambling, almost to a fault. Like many poker players and amateur investors, I started out fearful of losing even small amounts of money. The life lesson I had to learn from that game was that you need to tolerate some risk in order to succeed, and that taking no risks is a risk in itself.



▲ Jennifer Shahade during a poker game

Do chess players carry a reputation of being formidable opponents in the poker world? How do dedicated poker players perceive chess and chess players?

I think chessplayers are known to have the skills to be good at poker if they apply themselves. Grischuk was once one of the best poker players in the World, while also being in the top ten chessplayers in the World. But I don't think that will ever happen again. Poker has become so professionalized, and the top players spend so much time studying its intricacies. Ironically, as poker became more like chess, it became harder to dominate both simultaneously.

Individuals in the chess community often formulate opinions on games that incorporate elements of luck. What are the similarities, and more notably, what unique advantages could a chess aficionado potentially bring to a game of poker?

I think chessplayers bring excellent study habits to poker. We're used to breaking a game down to its components and studying them in parts. We're also trained in the deep focus that poker can also require. In chess one good decision after another usually means you win. In poker you can sometimes make great choices and still lose or make bad decisions and win, so chessplayers need to learn to detach result from decision. Poker is a game of balancing patience and aggression, which may appear simple until you realize it's rare to have a player who is patient when they need to be, and can still pull the bluff off in a risky spot. Chessplayers should be able to get this, as in our game we also seek to balance attack and defense as well as things like confidence and respect for your opponent.

CHESS FAMILY

I was aware that IM Greg Shahade is your brother, and of his significant contributions, notably as the founder of the U.S. Chess League, which transitioned to Chess.com and evolved into the PRO Chess League. Yet, until preparing for this interview, I didn't know that your father is also a titled player, FM Michael Shahade. With such a deep-rooted

chess lineage, what was it like growing up in a family so profoundly connected to the game?

At the start, it was a bit intimidating. My dad and brother both encouraged me a lot, but I was a slower learner than they were. Luckily, at some point, I became immersed in the process, and enamored with the travel, community and art of chess. I also fell in love with the Sicilian Defense! This is when my rating soared: When I forgot about the rating.

My mom, the first female chemistry professor at Drexel University, was also very encouraging of my efforts in male-dominated fields. This familial support was invaluable when I started to encounter the sexism in the sport. In my opinion, there's a reason so many top female players come from chess families: without this support, there are many hurdles. We should study this effect and make sure that all girls, even those without chess champs in the fam, have a chance to fulfill their chess dreams and experience all its joys, from the flow experience to its lifelong friendships.

It would be nice to draw a parallel between your early chess experiences and your family's current involvement. Does your son share your enthusiasm for chess? Did you ever hope for your child to take up chess, or were you more inclined towards him exploring other sports or activities?

My son absolutely loves chess! It's awesome! To be honest, I was not expecting this. We took him to a tournament (the Nationals last year in Maryland) and he was five, and we were not sure whether he should play as most kids don't play the Nationals for their very first event. He played a practice game against a four-year-old and the four-year-old en-passanted him and Fabian was so upset because he didn't remember the rule. We second guessed ourselves. Should we pull him out? How wrong we were to worry. He had a blast and won three of his seven games. And hey, at least no one else tried en passant on him!

He's not on a trajectory to be a chess pro, but we get so much joy out of taking him to tournaments and chess camps and classes, and he has renewed my passion for the game and for educating others. He inspired the title, *Play Like a Champion*, and we also do videos together for our *How to Beat Your Mom at Chess* channel, which will eventually be a book.

Fabian also likes other sports such as basketball and soccer, and I just hope he can continue to take joy from the game even when life gets busier. We'll definitely be going to the ChessKid National Festival this coming winter which seems like it will be a nice mix of fun and play. ■

▼ Jennifer Shahade and her brother Greg Shahade,

Photo by Eric Rosen



**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".

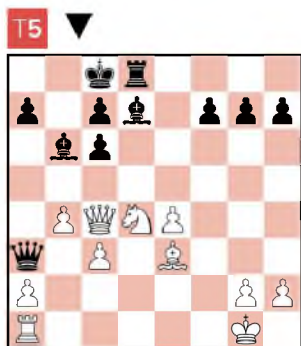
PLAY IT ALONG WITH SAM

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.

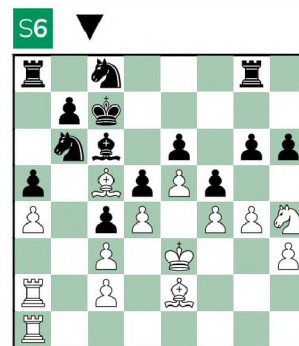
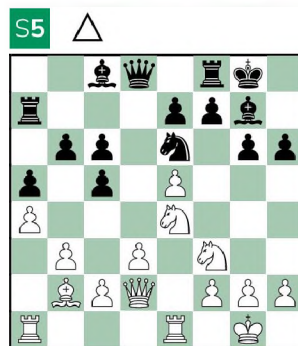
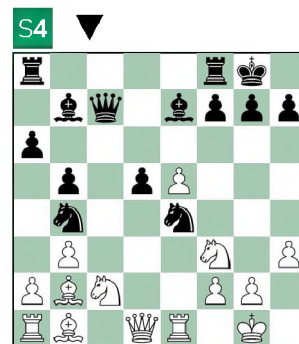
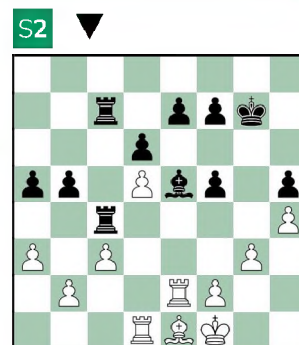
In early 2023, Sam and Jacob held a training camp to put these exercises to the test, using real game scenarios from the end of 2022 tournaments in Charlotte, New York, and Hollywood. You'll be facing off against some of the brightest young talents in U.S. chess, as well as established grandmasters and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



STRATEGY



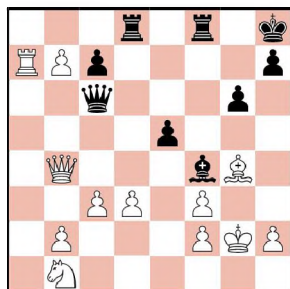


TACTICS

T1

Mikhail Al. Antipov	2608
Shelev Oberoi	2328

Hollywood 2022



23...h5! It's always good to start with the easy ones...

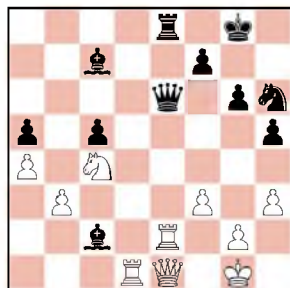
24.♙c8 ♙e3! A nice double attack.

25.♘d2 ♙xa7 and White continued for another seven moves before resigning. **Black won.**

T2

Gabor Nagy	2518
Kassa Korley	2400

New York 2022



36.♙xe6? ♙xe6 37.♙xe6 fxe6 38.♙d7 ♙f4∞ led to an unclear endgame. **White won** the game on move 72, but this was not something anyone could have been certain of at this point.

SOLUTION

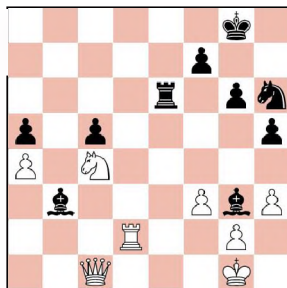
Sam found the stronger move 36.♙dd2! with a double attack.

SAM GOT 4/6 ON
THE TACTICS/CALCULATION PAGE



36...♙xb3 37.♙xe6 ♙xe6 38.♙c1 "...and we can play." More than just that!

After 38...♙g3 Sam had not seen further, as he was ready to make a decision.

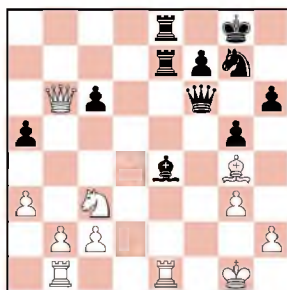


After 39.♙d8+ ♙h7 40.♘d2 White is winning.

T3

Tianqi Wang	2431
Max Gedajlovic	2317

Hollywood 2022



The game entered complicated territory after 28.♙f1? ♙g6 29.♙be1 ♙xc2 30.♙xe7 ♙xe7 31.♙xa5 and **Black** later won the game, although Steve [Tianqi Wang's nickname -Ed.] was not worse yet.

SOLUTION

Sam felt it was a candidate move exercise as after the strong 28.♙e2!! Black cannot avoid losing material.

28...♙g6 holds on to the piece, but after 29.♙be1 f5 30.♙xa5! fxe4 31.♙b4 White is a big pawn up and completely winning.

28...♙g6 loses to 29.♘d5!.

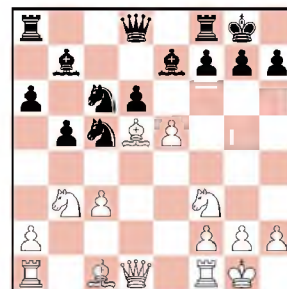
28...♙f8 29.♙be1 ♙xc2 is also met by 30.♘d5!, winning.



T4

Mikhail Al. Antipov	2608
Andrei Macovei	2482

Charlotte 2022



White played 15.♙f4? and already stood a bit worse, although he managed to win the game later. Sam wanted to continue 15.♘xc5?, recognizing there was nothing more than equality after 15...dxc5.

SOLUTION

But Black's centre collapses entirely after 15.♙a3!! "Completely missed it as a candidate," Sam said.

15...♘a7!? The trickiest defense.

1) 15...♘a4 16.exd6 is just winning.

2) 15...♙xe5 16.♘xe5 also loses material.

3) 15...♙xb3 16.axb3 reveals the core of White's idea. After 16...dxe5 (16...♙h8 17.exd6 ♙xd6 18.♙xc6 and White wins a piece.) 17.♙xc6 ♙xc6 18.♙xd8 ♙xd8 19.♙xf8 ♙xf8 20.♘xe5 the win is a matter of technique.

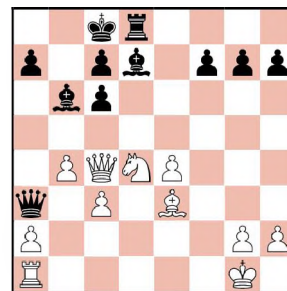
16.♙h1! and White wins as there is no way for Black to defend. Black's key try was based on 16.exd6? ♙xd6 17.♙xc5 ♙xd5! when he survives due to 18.♙xd5? ♙xh2+.

16...♙c8 17.exd6 ♙xd6 18.♙xc5 ♙xd5 19.♙xa7!.

T5

Kyron Griffith	2354
Ivan Schitco	2530

Hollywood 2022





STRATEGY

Black played 19...c5?, when the game ended in a **draw** after 20.♖d5 ♘a4 21.♗a8+ ♜d7 22.♗d5+ ♜c8 23.♗a8+ ♜d7 24.♗d5+ ♜c8.

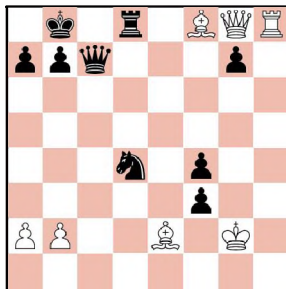
SOLUTION

Sam found 19...♙e6!! 20.♗xc6 ♜d6 21.♗a8+ ♜d7+ “and stuff is hanging...” to be elementary. Sometimes your heart is filled with hate...

T6

Tanitoluwa Adewumi	2262
Djurabek Khamrakulov	2490

New York 2022



“I suck at these irrational positions,” Sam complained.

He wanted to play 28.♙f2? as Tani had done in the game.

After 28...♜c8 29.♙d3 **White won**, but Black is fine with 29...♗b6! 30.b4 ♙e6+ 31.♙c5 ♗c6 32.♗h7 ♙xc5 33.♗xd8+ ♜xd8 34.bxc5 ♗xc5+, when a draw is on the horizon.

SOLUTION 1

The correct first move was 28.♙xf3!

Sam was not happy with 28...♜a8!? 28...♙xf3 loses immediately to both 29.♙d6! and 29.♙c5!

White has two wins now. But 29.♙c5? ♙e6! would give Black a chance to fight on after 30.♗xe6 ♗xh8 with drawing chances. 29.♙xg7! Oddly this works because it defends the rook on h8. 29...♗c2+ 29...♙e6 30.♙f6! 30.♙h3 ♗c8+ 31.♙g4 ♗xg8 32.♙xc8 **White wins**.

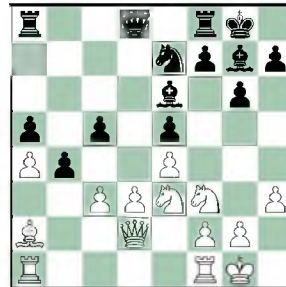
SOLUTION 2

White's even more odd win is 29.♗d5!?, where the queen is obviously immune due to ♙d6+, but still the key line is 29...♗c2+ 30.♙h3 ♗c8+ 31.♙g4 ♗xf8 32.♙xc8 ♗xh8+ 33.♙g4 ♗xc8 34.♗xd4 and Black will not manage to construct a fortress.

S1

Harshit Raja	2461
Seth Homa	2242

Hollywood 2022



Black did not get much out of a good start to the game after 20...♙xa2? 21.♗xa2 f5 21...♙c8!? might have given him a slight edge.

22.♗c2 The chances are level and **White** later **won** the game.

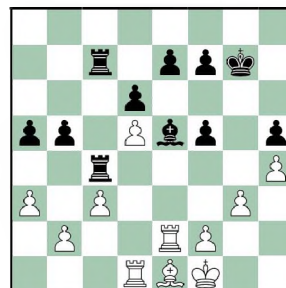
SOLUTION

Hopefully you chose 20...b3! 21.♙b1 ♗b8, when the white pieces are desperately dominated.

S2

Alejandro Ramirez	2561
Christopher Yoo	2573

Charlotte 2022



Black won this game, although after 27...♗e4? 28.♗d3 ♜g6 29.♙d2 he did not have any advantage.



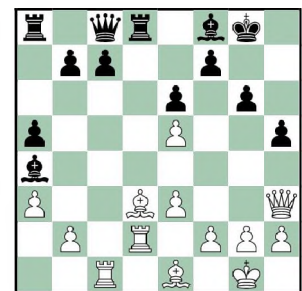
SOLUTION

Sam and I both found 27...f4!, with a significant edge for Black, to be automatic. Long term the h4 pawn will be isolated and weak, while White is unable to block the position short term with f2-f4.

S3

Zoey Tang	2206
Evan Park	2364

Hollywood 2022



Zoey is one of the most talented young female players in the USA. However, she lost this game, partly because after 25.♗h4? ♙e8 her advantage was gone. **Black won**.

SOLUTION

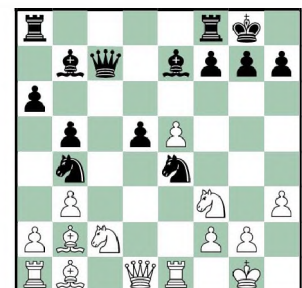
Having seen a lot of examples like this, Sam and I immediately understood that White needed to play with energy and on the kingside, where her advantage lay.

Thus the correct way to continue was 25.g4! hxg4 26.♗xg4 ♙e8 27.h4 with a strong attack. The game is far from over, but Black is in a desperate situation.

S4

Praveen Balakrishnan	2510
Parimarjan Negi	2639

Charlotte 2022



Negi (and Sam) got his queen into trouble



1st MAGNIFICENT 3 REMARKABLE RECENT GAMES

By GM Sarunas Sulskis

with 18...♖c3? 19.♗xc3! White played 19.♗d4!?, which was good enough to develop an attack and win the game on move 28, but the given move is even stronger.

19...♗xc3 20.♗cd4 g6

White can now win after both 21.♗f5!! and 21.♗xg6!? hxg6 22.♗c1 ♖d3 23.♗c7. **White won.**

SOLUTION

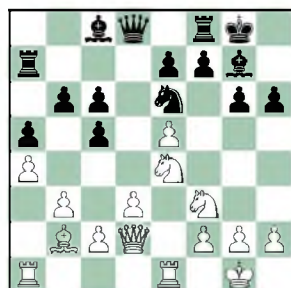
But Negi was right in following his intuition to exploit the weak c3-square. It is only important to bring up the inactive bishop on e7 to achieve this.

This can be done after 18...♗xc2 19.♗xc2 ♗b4, when after 20.♗e2 ♗ac8 or directly 20...♗c3, Black is completely level.

S5

Sriram Krishnakumar	2248
Titas Stremavicius	2515

Hollywood 2022



After 15.♗ad1? ♗d4, Black was fine and later **won** the game on move 43. Also 15...f5!? would give him a good game, which is important, as this is the idea we are up against.

15.h4? was Sam's suggestion. He was not fond of the position, but could not find anything better. After 15...f5! 16.exf6 exf6 17.♗g3 g5∞ Black has full counterplay. The rook is ready to recapture on g7, for example. And after 18.♗f5?! ♗f4 Black would already stand better.

...SCORING A TOTAL OF 8/12



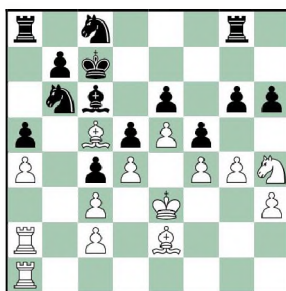
SOLUTION

For this reason strongest is 15.♗h4!!, preventing Black from playing ...f7-f5. Then, after something like 15...♗d4 16.f4, White will slowly build up a strong attack on the kingside, while Black finds it difficult to coordinate his defense.

S6

Alder Escobar Forero	2510
Joseph Wan	2153

Charlotte 2022

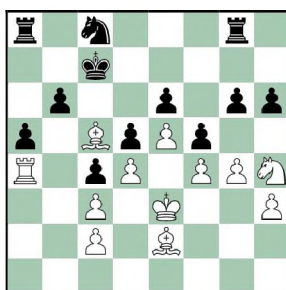


Black played 36...♗a6?, which seems a bit random.

After 37.♗g1!? the position was sharp and full of complexities. White could also follow Stockfish 15, when after 37.♗xb6+!? ♗xb6 38.♗f3 White is fine, based on 38...♗xa4 39.♗xa4 ♗xa4 40.♗xa4 b5 41.♗a1 being perfectly safe for him. **1-0**

SOLUTION

Sam did not hesitate finding 36...♗xa4! 37.♗xa4 ♗xa4 38.♗xa4 b6! The key move.



If White retreats the bishop, the rook gets trapped. Black thus gains an extra pawn.

39.♗d6+ ♗xd6 40.exd6+ ♗xd6 41.♗f3 fxg4 42.hxg4 g5 The position opens up and Black has a decisive long term advantage. ■

This time I have selected all my games entirely from the World Cup in Baku 2023. Fittingly, the World Cup is a selection in its own right. The 200 best men and 100 women had been carefully selected by FIDE from all over the world. Spurred on by the knockout format of the Cup, coupled with financial incentives, the players really gave their best.

The outcome of the World Cup, both Open and Women, is too well known for me to repeat it. Although the names of both Indian 18-year-old prodigy Rameshbabu Pragganandhaa and to some lesser extent, Bulgarian Nurgul Salimova, had been hitherto known to chess lovers, these two were, in my humble opinion, the brightest discoveries in Baku. Their mighty efforts for worldwide recognition are reflected in two of my selections.

PRAGG PROVES HIS QUEEN IS TOO GOOD TO DIE

The first installment of my column deals with Praggna's Round 2 heroic feat against the Frenchman Maxime Lagarde. Actually, it was the young Indian's first game in Baku as thanks to his high seeding he didn't need to play in Round 1. However, before getting into a mission of praise, I would also like to say a few words about Lagarde.

It's not the first time the poor French GM has hit the pages of our magazine and my column in particular. Mostly thanks to my unwavering efforts, he usually enters our magazine on the losing side. Yet I've come to appreciate his natural propensity for violent king hunts, notwithstanding the amount of material shed on this noble goal. Lagarde's determination often provokes powerful counterattacks and results in wild complications all over the board.

In a similar vein, I think Pragg should be thankful to his bold opponent for opportunities he'd kindly offered him for a spectacular counterattack with the black queen lodged deep in White's rear on g1. This win by Black was so good – and instantly acclaimed by the chess media – that it undoubtedly gave the young Indian star the wings of confidence to soar high and mighty. In fact, as high as to reach the very final of the World Cup and, thereby, secure his qualification for the Candidates' Tournament despite his tender age.

C60

Maxime Lagarde	2599
R. Pragganandhaa	2690

Round 2, Game 1, FIDE World Cup, Baku 2023

1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.♗b5 ♗ge7 Quite a rare Ruy Lopez sideline, undoubtedly Pragg's specialty for the World Cup. It seems to have served its initial task



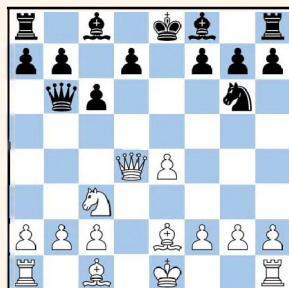
well as the surprised Frenchman now took nine minutes to ponder his choice.

4.♖c3 This move has been trending lately although in general it's behind the classic 4.0-0 and 4.c3 in popularity.

4...♟g6 Meanwhile Pragg follows the classic strategy endorsed by the legendary Paul Keres in other branches of the Ruy Lopez. The black knight is transferred to g6. From here it protects e5, heads to f4 and doesn't obstruct his queen's view along the d8-h4 diagonal. The drawback, however, is that the knight may become harassed by the h2-h4-h5 rook's pawn run. It's not advisable to ask the white bishop to declare its intentions by 4...a6 as it may then turn its attention towards the black king by means of 5.♗c4.

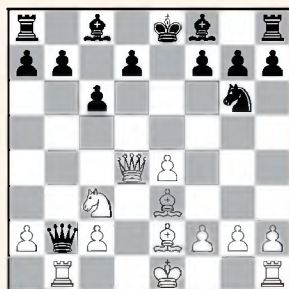
5.d4 On an immediate 5.h4 Lagarde was probably concerned with 5...♗d4 6.h5 ♟f4 7.♜xe5? ♜g5 when Black is already close to winning.

5...♜xd4 6.♜xd4 exd4 7.♞xd4 c6 8.♞e2 ♞b6 The point.



9.♞d3 The queen swap on Black's terms 9.♞xb6?! axb6 has so far found few followers. The dumb corner rook would then suddenly become a flourishing businessman.

Lagarde, however, had an alternative to the retreat by 9.♞e3 ♞xb2 (Nevertheless, Black has a safer path to tread – 9...♞xd4 10.♞xd4 ♟f4) 10.♞b1



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.

A) 10...♞xc2? is unlikely, though, despite appearances, it doesn't lose the queen on the spot – 11.♞d1 (11.♞d3 c5; 11.0-0) 11...c5 12.♞c4 ♟e5.

B) 10...♞a3 11.0-0.

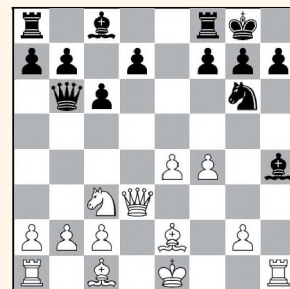
9...♞e7 10.f4 After a deep think Lagarde comes up with an aggressive move which, according to my database, is a novelty. 10.0-0 is the customary move which, however, is less demanding on Black – 10...0-0.

10...0-0 Pragg spent some good 20 minutes on this simple move. He could have counter-struck Lagarde immediately by 10...d5 11.exd5 ♟h4, but probably decided to bring in the rook to proceed more forcefully with his counterattack. From this you can glean both the drive and ambition of the 18-year-old Indian star! Lagarde must have already achieved notoriety with ACM readers due to his fearless uncompromising style. It's not the first time I have chosen and highlighted his games. Nevertheless his unrelenting straightforward pursuit of an enemy king is often asking for trouble and generates sparkling counterattacks in return. Alas,

way too often at the expense of this valiant French GM.

11...d5! It is high time for Pragg to strike in the center as Lagarde has burned his bridges with 10.f4 and 11.h4. Pawns simply no longer count.

The greedy 11...♞xh4+? just helps White to open up the h-file for his attack.

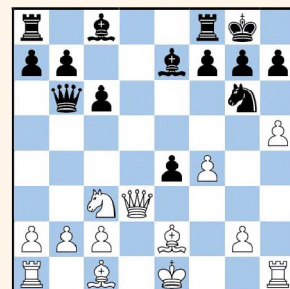


A) Yet, knowing Lagarde's ferocious style, one cannot rule out even the incredible exchange sacrifice 12.♞xh4! ♟xh4 13.♞g3 ♟g6 (13...♞g1+ 14.♞f1) 14.f5 ♟e7 15.♞h6 ♞d4 16.♞d1 ♞f6 17.♞d6! and Lagarde would have heroically achieved his aim!

B) 12.g3 ♞e7 13.♞e3 ♞xb2 14.♞f2

12.h5 On 12.exd5 Black's counterattack flows smoothly after 12...♞xh4 13.g3 ♞f5 14.♞d2 ♞ae8!?, the point being 15.gxh4 ♞xh4+ 16.♞xh4? (16.♞d1 ♞f2) 16...♞g1 mate.

12...dxe4



13.♞g3! Lagarde sets his queen against the black king, thereby displaying the main point of his strategy. Pragganandhaa now faces a tough challenge. Will he take his knight to the corner now?

Both 13.♞xe4? ♞h4+ 14.♞d1 ♞d8+ 15.♞d2 (15.♞d3 ♞g4+) 15...♞xb2 16.♞b1 ♞xc3+; and 13.♟xe4 ♟h4, give Black an easy time.

13...♟h4! No way! Pragg only goes forward. White is forced to take the offering since refusal would signal a complete failure of his strategy.

The knight's shameful desertion 13...♟h8? would have empowered White – as after 14.♞e3 ♞xb2 15.♞d4! ♞xa1+ 16.♞d2 e3+ 17.♟xe3, he is winning.



14.♖xh4 ♕g1+ The point. Pragg's queen now invades deep into White's ranks.

15.♙f1 In this way the valiant Frenchman hopes to keep Black's threats in check. On the next turn, however, he gets struck with the unforeseen...

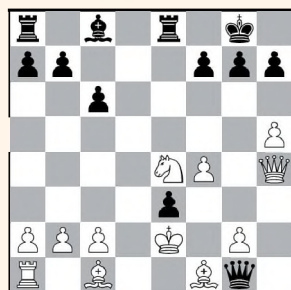


15...e3!! Pragg comes up with the most beautiful move in the game so far. Optically it seems that he's not doing his own queen any favours by placing her in the enemy camp. But the main issue now is the ...♕g1-f2+ threat.

16.♖d1 16.♙xe3? turns out to be the easiest move to refute – 16...♙xh4 17.♙xg1 ♙xg3+ winning. Also, 16.♖e2? runs into 16...♗f2+! with a decisive advantage.

Upon 16.♗h2 Pragg probably intended 16...♙c5 17.h6 (17.♖e4 e2! 18.♙xe2 ♖e8) 17...♗f2+ 18.♗xf2 exf2+ 19.♖e2 ♙g4+ (19...♙e8+ 20.♖f3 ♖e1 21.♗h1) 20.♖d3 ♖fe8, with a strong attack despite the absence of queens.

16.♖e4 deserves a serious mention as it not only protects f2, but also the white queen on g3. Akin to the game, Pragg probably intended 16...♖e8 preparing an ambush down the e-file. (Upon the natural 16...♙f5? the weird concept of “protecting the queen with the knight” is suddenly vindicated after 17.♙xe3 ♙xh4 18.♙xg1 ♙xg3+ 19.♖xg3, when White is undoubtedly better.) 17.♖e2 (17.h6 ♙xh4 18.♗xh4 e2 19.♖f6+ gxf6 20.♗g3+ ♖f8 21.♗g7+ ♖e7+; Or 17.♗h2 ♙b4+) Lagarde might have overlooked an important resource upon 17...♙xh4 (Weaker is 17...♙f5 18.♗h2 ♙xe4 19.♙xe3 and the black queen is in deep trouble.) 18.♗xh4



A) 18...♙xe4?? is now met by 19.♖d8+.

B) But the way to go for Black is 18...♙f5 19.♖d6 ♙g4+! Deflection! 20.♗xg4 ♗f2+ 21.♖d3 e2! (This resolute pawn thrust may be even better than 21...♗xf1+ 22.♗e2; or 21...♖ad8 22.♙e2 ♖xd6+ 23.♖c3) 22.♙xe2 ♖ad8 and I don't think White can survive.

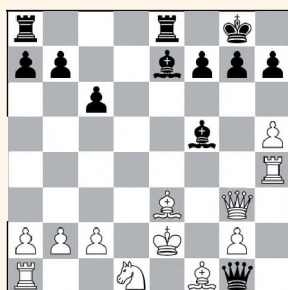
16...♖e8! Despite quite a few hurdles, the rook belongs on the e-file because that's also where his royal target is located.

17.♖e2! In the heat of battle, the king himself steps in to shield the deadly threat of ...e3-e2 when 17.♖xe3 is met by 17...♙xh4.

17.♙xe3 ♙xh4 18.♗xh4 ♖xe3+ 19.♖d2 ♖e8 20.♖f2 ♙f5 is yet another wild line. White will hardly be able to contain the black queen forever, but the game is not over yet...

17...♙e6 Pragg is not interested in relinquishing his powerful bishop pair by 17...♙xh4 18.♗xh4, and keeps piling up the threats against the enemy king.

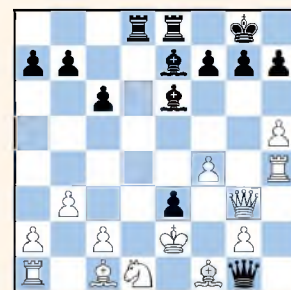
18.b3 I guess 18.f5 was the better way of defending against the threat of ...♙e6-c4. True, it sheds a pawn, but the game had already taken a wild turn quite a while ago, whereupon conventional guidelines ceased to apply. The pawn on f4 obstructs both the queen and the rook and it may also potentially obstruct the c1 bishop. In addition, 18...♙xf5 19.♙xe3



A) 19...♙xh4 20.♗xh4 sets a nasty trap for Black: 20...♖ad8? (Correct is 20...♙xc2 retaining pressure.) 21.♗xd8!

B) 19...♖ad8! is a move that is hard to come by. Looking at the game, there's little doubt Pragg would have gone for it. Black will beautifully avenge the capture of his queen by 20.♙xg1 (Instead, I could suggest for White the bizarre interference 20.♖e4!?, but then, all of a sudden, the black queen rises from her grave by 20...♗h1! Speechless!) with 20...♙xh4+ 21.♖f3 (21.♗e3 ♙g4 is a checkmate!) 21...♙xg3 22.♖xg3 ♖e1+.

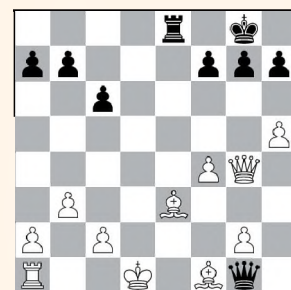
18...♖ad8 From now on, all Black's pieces are fully engaged in battle. However one cannot say the same about the white army.



19.♖xe3 19.h6 g6 oddly enough, doesn't seem to change things much.

The alternatives are no better – 19.♙b2 ♖d2+ 20.♖e1 ♙xh4 21.♗xh4 e2+.

Or 19.♙xe3 ♙xh4 20.♗xh4 ♙g4+! (and not 20...♙xd1? 21.♙xg1) 21.♗xg4 ♖xd1! 22.♖xd1



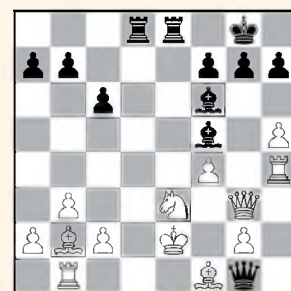
A) The simple-minded 22...♗xf1+ is possible, but after 23.♖d2 ♖d8+?! (23...♗xa1) 24.♙d4, Black must dodge two mines placed in his way – 24...♗xa1?? 25.♗xg7 mate; and 24...♖xd4+? 25.♖e3±. Only with 24...♗f2+! is Black still calling the shots.

B) 22...♗xe3 is best, with a multitude of threats and White will need to part with his rook while parrying them.

19...♙f6 With this and his next moves Pragg slowly unpacks the e-file for a lethal strike on the king. The stranded rook on h4 remains of little concern to him.

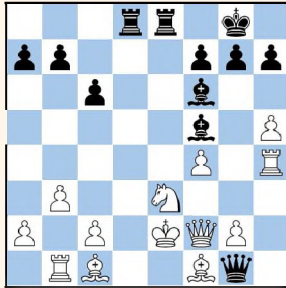
20.♖b1 ♙f5! 21.♗f2 21.♗h2 can be met with either a transposition to the game by 21...♙xh4; or even more skillfully by 21...♙g4+! 22.♖xg4 ♗xh2, picking up the queen.

21.♙b2 must be addressed with due seriousness.





- A) Black may regret 21...♙xc2? due to 22.♙xf6 ♙d3+ 23.♙d2 ♙xf1+ 24.♙c2! ♙d3+ 25.♙c3, and it's actually White who is having the last laugh.
- B) Instead, he has numerous other ways to continue his attack by doubling rooks on the e-file, for example 21...♙xb2 ♙xb2 ♙d4 23.h6 g6 24.b4 (24.♙f2 ♙d2+! is an important finesse.) 24...♙e6.



21...♙xh4! Generosity always impresses. Pragg leaves his stranded queen *en prise* but she refuses to die and in fact survives until the very end of this fabulous game.

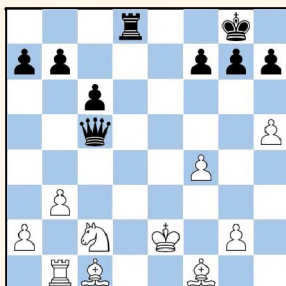
21...♙xf2+ 22.♙xf2 ♙xh4+ is too pragmatic though – and would leave Black with only a slight advantage on 23.g3 ♙xe3 24.♙xe3 ♙f6.

22.♙xh4 22.♙xg1 is prohibited due to a beautiful checkmate in the center: 22...♙g4 mate.

22...♙xc2 23.♙xd8 It's actually Lagarde's queen which perishes. He had to deal with too many threats thrust upon his king by the mighty black army.

Upon 23.♙b2, the simple 23...♙d3+ wins easily. Yet, who could resist the more elegant 23...♙d1+ ? After 24.♙e1 ♙xe3+ 25.♙xe3 ♙xe3+ 26.♙e2!, Black must be careful, however, not to fall headlong into the trap 26...♙xe2?? 27.♙xd8+. Instead, 26...♙c3+ 27.♙f2 ♙d4+ 28.♙e3 ♙e8 29.♙g3 ♙xh5 wins.

23...♙xd8 24.♙xc2 ♙c5 Having faced mortal dangers for ten long moves, deep in the enemy camp, the brave queen at last escapes, hitting two scattered white soldiers on her way. The fate of the game is sealed.



25.♙e3 ♙e8 Instead of the immediate 25...♙xh5+, Pragg attempts to take full



▲ Rameshbabu Pragganandhaa

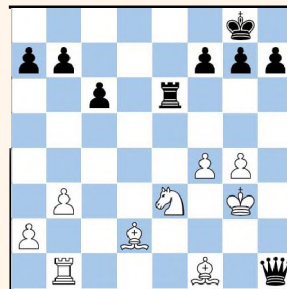
Photo by FIDE

advantage of White's confused pieces. He now threatens to win the rook by ...♙c5-c2+. 26.♙f3 ♙d4 27.♙e2 27.♙b2 ♙xe3+ 28.♙xe3 ♙xb2+.

27...♙c5 The simple 27...♙xf4 is winning too, of course.

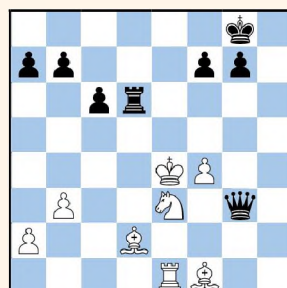
28.♙f3 ♙xh5+ 29.g4 ♙h1+ 30.♙g3 ♙e6 Two extra pawns plus the ongoing attack is Pragg's tally.

31.♙d2



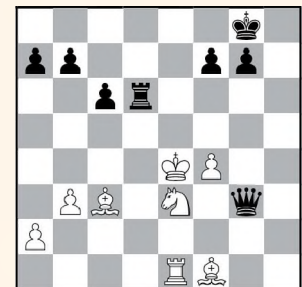
31...h5 32.gxh5 ♙xh5 33.♙e1 ♙g6+ 34.♙f2 ♙h4+ 35.♙f3 ♙g3+ 36.♙e4 Typically adventurous Lagarde – his king swims in the storm. On 36.♙e2 ♙xf4 Black's tally increases.

36...♙d6 Cutting off any escape for the king.



37.♙e2? By this stage Lagarde must have been too exhausted to seriously believe he still had chances. His move loses instantly. Nor is 37.♙d3 c5 38.♙c3 ♙e6+ 39.♙e5 ♙xe1 any remedy.

Under the circumstances, perhaps most resilient was 37.♙c3



... whereupon the Indian star may choose between...

A) ...slowly increasing the material gain by 37...♙e6+ 38.♙d3 ♙xf4+.

B) ... drastically going for the king's throat by 37...f5+.

B1) 38.♙xf5 ♙xc3 39.♙c4+ is well met by 39...♙xc4+! (39...♙f8 40.♙h1) 40.bxc4 ♙e6+ winning.

B2) Here, however, White can still attempt a desperate counterattack by 38.♙e5 ♙g6 39.♙c4+ ♙f8 40.♙xf5 ♙f6+ 41.♙e4 ♙xc3 42.♙h1.

37...f5+! and **White resigned** because of 38.♙xf5 ♙g6+ 39.♙e5 ♙e6 mate; or 38.♙e5 ♙xd2 (although 38...♙g6 is probably mate in two.) or else 38.♙xf5 ♙d3+ 39.♙e5 ♙d5 mate.

What a thriller of a game!

THE FIRST ANNUAL ANDY LERNER AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN CHESS EDUCATION

They help to grow in chess... and life!

Established by the New York City based organization Chess in the Schools (CIS), and named by its esteemed Board of Directors' member, this nationwide annual award recognizes the educator's impact on the chess community and students.

■ By FM Alec Getz

Chess in the Schools Board Members Richard Wagner (left) and Andy Lerner (right)

The first annual Andy Lerner Award for Excellence in Chess Education was held at the historic Grolier Club on Manhattan's Upper East Side, and I got to experience first-hand the celebration of the chess educators who've put their heart and soul into making an impact on children with our royal game. The award was made possible by National Master and Managing Partner of a venture capital firm, Andy Lerner, who is also a member of the Board of Directors of Chess in the Schools (CIS), a non-profit organization based in New York City that was formed in 1986 and focuses on the intellectual and social development of low-income youth through teaching chess.

The organization has given chess education to over half a million students overall – ninety percent of which are students of color – and upwards of 10,000 pupils per year throughout its programs, which include more than 40 public schools, college-bound and career building programs, summer learning programs, a Teacher Training Institute, a new College Success Initiative, and the biggest free tournament system of its kind in the United States. The award recognizes the impact that chess educators have had on their students and their community, through alignment with Chess in the School's mission.



FM Alec Getz was a multi-time national scholastic chess champion and member of the United States Chess Federation's All-American Team. He received the gold medal at the Pan-American Youth Championship and came runner-up in the US Junior Championship. He has all of his International Master norms and enjoys keeping up with the game. In addition to his articles on Chess.com, he has been a published author for *Chess Life* and currently serves as Features Editor for *American Chess Magazine*.



The finalists of the contest

The ceremony began with a short speech by Kayvon Thibodeaux, a football outside linebacker for the New York Giants and an avid chess player. Then, Debbie Eastburn, CIS President and CEO, transitioned to the recognition of the finalists, who were chosen by a judging panel that included educators and representatives of the wider chess community. The finalists were announced by CIS board member, Richard Wagner, to rounds of applause from the crowd:

- **Matthew Morales**, Chess Program Manager at Success Academy Charter School from New York City
- **Carlos Graupera**, Teacher at P.S. 503 School of Discovery from Brooklyn, NY
- **Mark Indermaur**, the President of the Indermaur Chess Foundation from Raleigh, NC
- **Vaughn Bennett**, Executive Director of the DC State Chess Federation Club from Washington DC
- **Jose Garza**, Chess Coach at four public schools in the East Side community of Chicago, IL



Kayvon Thibodeaux,
an American football linebacker for the New York Giants

Each finalist received \$2,000, which was split between them and their chess programs, and the winner received \$10,000 – of which \$5,000 to the educator and \$5,000 to the affiliated organization.

Last but not least, one of the finalists, Mr. Vaughn Bennett summed up the essence of teaching chess and its huge social impact: “Being recognized as a finalist for such a prestigious award is an immense honor, and I am humbled by this acknowledgment. It serves as a testament to the unwavering dedication and passion I have for chess education – a field that holds a special place in my heart.

The Andy Lerner Award for Excellence in Chess Education is particularly meaningful to me, as it shines a spotlight on the significance of chess education beyond its surface-level teachings. Chess goes beyond the mere rules and strategies of the game; it cultivates critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and enhances cognitive abilities for individuals of all ages. It empowers students to develop life lessons like patience, resilience, and the ability to analyze complex situations.

In his paper, *The Morals of Chess* (1779), Dr. Benjamin Franklin said, “The game of Chess is not merely an idle amusement. Several very valuable qualities of the mind, useful in the course of human life, are to be acquired or strengthened by it, so as to become habits, ready on all occasions. For life is a kind of chess...”



Chess in the Schools Program Director Ron Boocock plays chess with Dakim Vanterpool, a CIS alum and a ChessKid.com business development representative.



Left to right: Samantha Velez, chess coordinator at PS 279, Tristan Stovall CIS's program manager and chess instructor, Vincent Bogert, recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award, and Shehab Hasan, CIS alum.



Chess in the Schools students enrolled in CIS's College Bound Program



Being a part of the chess education community has allowed me to witness firsthand the transformative power of this ancient game. Chess brings together people from diverse backgrounds, fosters a sense of inclusivity, and promotes social interaction. Witnessing students develop not only their chess skills but also their self-confidence and personal growth has been incredibly rewarding.

I would also like to emphasize the broader benefits of chess education. Beyond the game itself, studies have shown that chess has the potential to positively impact academic performance by improving problem-solving abilities, concentration, and logical reasoning. Moreover, chess encourages creativity and imagination, allowing individuals to think outside the box and approach challenges from different angles. Additionally, research has shown that chess helps delay the onset of dementia in senior citizens, highlighting its long-term cognitive benefits.

I would be remiss not to express my deepest gratitude to my students, colleagues, and mentors who have supported and inspired me throughout my journey in chess education. Their enthusiasm and dedication continue to fuel my own passion for teaching and promoting this wonderful game.

Once again, I am incredibly honored to be a finalist for the Andy Lerner Award for Excellence in Chess Education. I hope that through my work in the field, I can contribute to the growth and recognition of chess education as a powerful tool for personal and intellectual development."

Overall, it was a wonderful event and celebration of excellence in chess education, the first of (hopefully) many more to come.

Earlier this fall, Chess in the Schools announced the next round of nominations for the Lerner Award. Check the award's details visit CIS's website at www.chessintheschools.org



Jon Edwards, chess player, writer and columnist, in conversation with guests



Kayvon Thibodeaux playing chess with CIS program manager Tristan Stovall



Award winner and finalists, left to right: Vaughn Bennett, Mark Indermaur, Vincent Bogert, Jose Garza, and Carlos Graupera



THE WINNER

Mark Indermaur

president of the Indermaur Chess Foundation
from Raleigh, NC

Immediately after receiving this prestigious award, the winner Mark Indermaur shared his thoughts exclusively for ACM readers: "I would like to thank Andy Lerner and Chess in the Schools for offering this generous recognition for chess educators who are helping students and schools across the country. I am honored to receive the inaugural award and inspired by the accomplishments of the other finalists."

Chess has so many educational benefits. It helps students improve concentration and problem-solving skills and teaches life skills like learning from mistakes and considering consequences before acting. Compared with other sports or academic competitions, chess is a great equalizer. Chess players do not have an advantage based on their age, gender, physical size, race, religion, or socio-economic status. As we well know, young children who practice regularly beat older opponents.

Since chess is such a fun game that anyone can play, it is also a great community builder. In school chess clubs, students quickly make friends in every class and grade across the school. Chess clubs are also excellent inter-generational programs for libraries and community centers, because they appeal to young children, retirees, and everyone in between!



Mark Indermaur with his students



Mark Indermaur is a volunteer chess coach who has run chess clubs in schools in low-income communities of Raleigh, North Carolina for twelve years. He teaches lessons, runs club tournaments, and provides US Chess memberships and ChessKid accounts. He also runs programming for teachers and parents plus summer activities for his students. He encourages girls to play in the male-dominated sport as well. With the help of parent volunteers, he manages these two large school-based chess clubs. In 2019 he and his wife Meredith founded a non-profit, the Indermaur Chess Foundation to help 65 NC schools, libraries, and community centers start chess clubs. The funding of the foundation provides chess sets, instructional materials, ChessKid accounts, online support, and facilitates online tournaments. Overall, Mark is empowering 750 chess players through his wide-ranging efforts. To quote his student Allison Owens, who wrote a letter of recommendation, "Coach Mark made an impact by giving me a place to grow in chess as I grew up in life." For his "day job" Mark works at IBM in product management.

My wife and I saw hundreds of families experience these benefits through the chess clubs where we volunteer, so we started our nonprofit Indermaur Chess Foundation to help start more chess programs in North Carolina. Since 2019 we have helped 78 schools, libraries, and community centers in 36 of NC's 100 counties start chess clubs. We provide each group with chess sets, Chess-Steps instructional materials, ChessKid accounts, and online support. We organize free weekly online tournaments on ChessKid and regular over-the-board tournaments for our clubs.

We are excited to leverage the Andy Lerner Award to reach the remaining 64 counties in NC. I am inspired by the creative ways that my fellow finalists are serving their diverse communities in New York, Chicago, and Washington, DC, so, in addition to expanding our geographic reach, I would like to support chess programs in NC's two school districts for students whose parents serve in the military, our American Indian school district, and our three schools for students who have hearing or vision loss.

We modeled our non-profit's program after recreational sports leagues where the league provides training materials and support to volunteers who then coach their teams. The vast majority of these volunteers were never professional or even collegiate athletes. In the same way, you don't have to be a grandmaster to coach a school chess club."

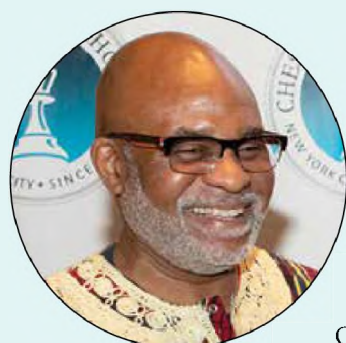
Mr. Indermaur also had a special message to ACM readers, though: "While parents and teachers are willing to start a chess club, they can still feel nervous about teaching chess. As a reader of *American Chess Magazine* you clearly enjoy and appreciate our beautiful game, so if you could offer to periodically help a local school or library chess club, it would give the club's leader the confidence to proceed. You could teach a few lessons during the year, play a simul, review games during a tournament, or help the club run their own tournament at the end of the year. However you could help, you would make a difference to so many families, and you would help grow our amazing chess community. Thank you!"



Matthew Morales is the Chess Program Manager at Success Academy Charter School Network in New York City. He oversees a staff of nearly 40 chess instructors at Success that instructs more than 8,000 students. Matthew has worked at Success for over 10 years, rising from Instructor, to Content Lead developing the curriculum, to his current leadership role. At Success Academy, chess is taught during the school day to all students in grades K-2, and then as an elective and an afterschool club in the higher grades. Success offers in-house tournaments as well as providing opportunities for high-performing students to compete in local, state, and national tournaments. His students have earned impressive titles,

trophies and awards. As a youngster, Matthew

himself was a CIS student and on the Bronx middle school team that won Middle School Nationals and was coached by the famed David MacEnulty who is here in the audience. We consider Matthew to be part of the CIS extended family.



Currently, Executive Director of the DC State Chess Federation Chess Club, **Vaughn Bennett**

has coached chess and run tournaments for decades at a wide

range of schools, libraries, camps, and even universities. His students and teams have won trophies and awards, and he has received media coverage in newspapers, television, radio, and film. DC State Chess provides free chess classes in all eight wards of the city. Tournaments and teacher training are free too. Vaughn is a volunteer and he is known for his drive to increase access and equity in chess to include the racial and ethnic groups that are reflective of the diversity of the city. The parent of a student wrote, "Through the seven years since my son has studied with Mr. Bennett, his commitment to empowering young chess players has been unsurpassed and unwavering."

Carlos Graupera is not your typical chess coach.

He is the visual arts teacher at P.S. 503 in Sunset Park. He sees chess as both an art and a science. The chess team, sporting Carlos's team t-shirt designs (and handmade by him), is a source of community pride. Carlos and a group of dedicated parents

launched the chess program in 2010 with the help of Chess in the Schools. The elementary school serves a predominantly immigrant population from China, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Central and South American countries, Yemen, Egypt, and Palestine. He works with students, staff and parent volunteers across languages and cultures to bind his team together. He volunteers his time to personally chaperone his chess team to weekend tournaments across the city as well as to States and Nationals.

Carlos has created connections with middle and high schools to enable his students' continued growth in chess after they graduate from P.S. 503. As one parent wrote, "Carlos is the heart of the chess program at our school."



Jose Garza may be retired, but he is still hard at work. This former mechanical engineer is a board member of the Chicago Chess Foundation where he is a

very active volunteer chess coach and tournament organizer. For 15 years he has coached in the elementary, middle, and high schools in the community where he grew up. He has been called the biggest promoter of chess in Chicago's Latinx population. Jose is in the schools every day of the week, working with 100 students. On Saturdays, he is with his chess teams at tournaments. In the summers, he runs a free one week summer chess camp for 40 low-income youth. He takes a group of 20 students out of state to Nationals each year. His motto about chess is, "Anyone can play it, and if you can play it, you can do anything."





Special Award Winner

Vincent Bogert

veteran chess coordinator at P.S. 279 in Bronx



Left to right: Richard Wagner, Andy Lerner, Vincent Bogert and Debbie Eastburn, CIS's former President & CEO.

Vincent Bogert, a veteran chess coordinator at P.S. 279 in Bronx, NY, was honored with a special *Lifetime Achievement Award for Excellence in Chess Education*. As announced by Richard Wagner:

"At P.S. 279 in the Bronx, chess began 30 years ago. Chess in the Schools arrived and never left. **Vincent Bogert** was a classroom teacher and next the School's Business Manager until he finally retired in 2010. Since then, he has volunteered his time to keep the program vibrant. Throughout the 30 years, he has been the steady encouraging presence. P.S. 279's chess club serves about 50 kids each year. He and his fellow club coach, the ever-upbeat Samantha Velez, chaperone students to almost every Saturday tournament that CIS offers across all boroughs plus they have brought groups to Nationals.

Jean Dalton, the principal of P.S. 279 has known Vincent Bogert for 25 years. According to Jean, "Mr Bogert's success goes beyond what can be measured in chess. For him, chess is a tool, a means to an end, a tool to help students reach for immediate AND long-term success. The graduation rate and the rate of advanced degrees among our chess players is quite impressive. Every year former chess players come back, and they speak of all the successes they are having and they attribute a lot of it to him."

Here's how Mr. Bogert felt after receiving this very special award: "I really do appreciate this honor. Over the years I have done my best to get students to our club and tournaments I have also tracked students' academic progress. As with chess, their level of achievement varied widely. Generally, success in chess did lead to academic progress, but we need to be certain

that is happening. We need to always monitor student progress before making that claim.

I must be modest about this award. I do have some chess skills going back to my high school days in the 1960s. However, in 1995, after just a year of chess club, I had my doubts about my ability to help students get to a higher level in chess. It was easy to teach the basics, maybe even implement more advanced lesson plans, but it would be difficult to inspire more advanced players given my limited chess skills. Fortunately, I met Chess in the Schools at that time. They provided the kind of expertise required.

I do consider one measure of success to be student achievement in chess. That has varied widely over the years. We do not have any former students who made it to the master level, although we do have three former students who are currently employed as chess instructors. However, our former students have achieved on another measure, success in education, as measured by graduation from four-year colleges. Again, we must be modest about that. We empower students with our chess program, but it is their determination and support from their families that take them as far as they get. CIS College Bound program also helped in many cases. I believe very much in the value of chess, but it is just a part of student success.

When an organization like Chess in the Schools calls my efforts an achievement, that is an affirmation. It inspires me to carry on. I am feeling some of the effects of age, but I will summon the energy to get back with the program as we recover from the impact of the pandemic. That may mean up to 25 chess tournaments next year. If our students get out of bed early on Saturdays to attend tournaments, I must match their effort. I really can't think of a better way to service my school community.

Victories on the chessboard at PS/MS 279 Bronx are important, but the lessons learned by students through chess are equally and possibly even more important."

CIS's College Bound students, left to right: Selvin Ramirez, Shesit Moreno-Lopez, and Sharon Lu





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

How To Prepare Openings?

Instead of following the engine's top choices, why don't you make your own preferred choices? If approved, you'll have an original opening repertoire which you can fully understand, rather than blindly memorizing and following those top choices of the engines. In the examples that follow, you will learn how to approach opening preparation, and also note how some "secondary" lines might bring success.

■ By GM Emilio Cordova

Nowadays the input of computers in the chess world has placed openings on a "what to play list". However the next step is how to utilize the engines in the proper way, especially in the openings, so we can benefit from this valuable and amazing assistant in a way that will fulfill our needs. It must never be forgotten that, at the end of the day, the engine is just a tool, a very efficient one but nevertheless still a tool.

Moreover engines have made openings the most important focus of preparation before entering a tournament. Therefore, I will take the opportunity to introduce you to the topic of "how to prepare openings" with help of examples taken from the prestigious FIDE World Cup 2023. This strong tournament provided many interesting and playable ideas in various well-known setups – fresh ideas that will guide us when working with our silicone friend.

In this article I aim to present a variety of games with different setups, such as the English, Caro-Kann, Rossolimo, Open Sicilian, Neo Grunfeld, and Catalan.

So, let's begin in order – by ECO codes.

A

THE ENGLISH OPENING

The English Opening has always been considered a very sound and rock-solid

opening. Strategically speaking, this opening adopts more of a long-term approach – in other words it aims for superior endgames. In this case, let's investigate an interesting and easy-going line for Black, which will enable you to deal with the English Opening quite effectively.

A34

Hikaru Nakamura	2787
R. Praggnanandhaa	2707

Round 4, Game 1, World Cup, Baku 2023

1.c4 Some say the English Opening is a "Sicilian with an extra tempo"... However, the approach of this flexible opening is a little different from the ever dynamic Sicilian. In fact, generally speaking, the English Opening is far more positional and quiet than the Sicilian.

1...d5 2.c3 c5 3.g3 d5 4.cxd5 This is considered to be the most direct way to adopt a specific setup against the English. It is not about a right or wrong system, it is up to you whether or not you like what you see on the board. In fact, Black's main ideas rather resemble the Maroczy Bind with colors reversed – quiet positions with broad scope and solid control of the center.

5.g2 d7 6.f3 c6 7.d3 e5 Now we can see some resemblance to the ever solid and logical Maroczy Bind.
8.d2 e7 9.c4 0-0 10.0-0

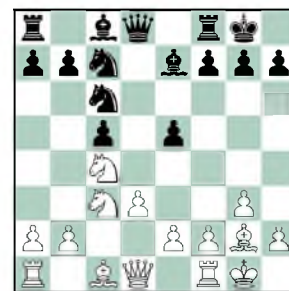
A R 1. d4, 1. e4
1. d4 R 1... d5, 1... d5 f6
1. d4 d5 f6 R 2. c4
1. d4 d5 f6 2. c4 R 2... e6, 2... g6

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 d5 f6 2. c4 g6 3... d5

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



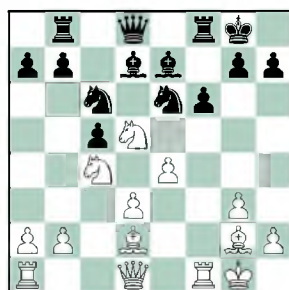
10...f6 As in any Maroczy Bind, it's important not to rush but keep improving and reinforcing the center, while gaining space on the queenside. The key is to restrain any attempts by your opponent to weaken your pawn structure.

10...d7!?? is an interesting try if you are looking for a sharper game. **11.xc6** Most of the time, trading the light-squared bishop for the knight is not so attractive for White, since the g2-bishop is the key piece in this position... White needs to have full control of the position in order to proceed with this exchange of pieces. **11...xc6 12.xe5 e8** Black is down a pawn, but the bishop pair in a semi-open position, plus the activity of his pieces, together with the weaknesses on White's kingside, should give Black enough compensation. In this connection let me reveal a little secret – "If you are down a pawn but in return you have the bishop pair in a semi-open position, then you are not really down a full pawn – maybe only half a pawn!". So, don't be afraid.

11.f4 exf4 12.xf4 d6 Controlling the center is the key, never forget that!
13.d2 d7 A "no rush" strategy.
14.d5 b8 15.e4



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.



15...b5 Gaining space and playing on the queenside forms part of Black's main strategy here. Don't try to play on the kingside – it's better to concentrate your mind on the center and queenside.

16.♖xe7+ ♜xe7 17.♗e3 ♖ed4 Black has gained powerful control of the center and a very easy-going position. After a fierce fight, this game ended in a draw.

17...a5!? 18.♗f5 ♜d8 19.♞c1∞ In any case, Black should be happy with the position he has reached with his choice of opening.

This line can be considered as a very nice and concrete line to play against the ever-solid English. The ideas are not so difficult, and the move order is very natural. But always keep in mind not to rush!

B

CARO-KANN

The Caro-Kann Defense is known for its solidity and quiet positional play. However, such an assessment does not really convey the essence of this defense. In fact, its flexibility makes it a very interesting choice and fun to learn.

B12

Ivan Cheparinov 2663

Jan-Krzysztof Duda 2732

Round 3, Game 1, World Cup, Baku 2023

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 The Caro-Kann is a more flexible setup than I previously thought!

3.e5 With this advance, White is telling his opponent that his intentions are to gain space and attack on either flank, depending on Black's reaction. Indeed, it is the side having a space advantage who has the better chance to operate on both sides of the board.

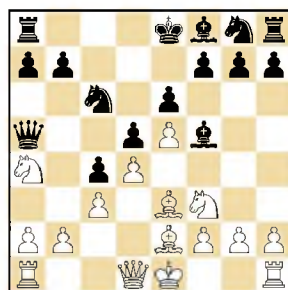
3...♗f5 Compared to the French Defense, in the Caro-Kann Black has the opportunity to develop his light-squared bishop. However, this will not be for free, as it will cost him some extra tempi.

4.♗f3 4.h4 is another interesting try for White. The idea is to gain more space and provoke some weaknesses on the kingside. On the other hand, **4.♖d2** is considered to be the move leading to a gain of space on the queenside.

4...e6 5.♗e2 c5 It is very important to solidify the center with ...e6, before proceeding to undermine White's center with ...c7-c5. Never forget that remaining solid is your responsibility!

6.♗e3 ♜b6 Once the center is secured, you can always seek adventure by being a little more intrepid.

7.♗c3 ♗c6 8.♖a4 ♜a5+ 9.c3 c4



You won't normally see this move very often, since Black's main idea relies on effective pressure against d4. However, here Black will gain a powerful pawn phalanx on the queenside, as he would by the customary ...f7-f6, which will result in making White's center less stable. In fact, the ...f7-f6 thrust is considered to be the key idea in this type of structure.

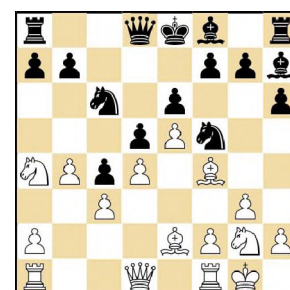
In general, if you see an enemy pawn that has crossed the middle of the board and it is depriving your pieces of free movement, try to formulate plans which can help you to undermine that pawn.

10.b4 ♜d8 11.0-0 h6 It is very important

to open a window for your light-squared bishop. If you have the chance to retain this piece, than do so. The text move is not only directed towards preserving a good square for the f5 bishop, but also enables Black to play ..g7-g5 in some positions.

12.♖e1 ♗ge7 13.g3 ♗h7 Once the bishop gets to h7, the f5 square becomes attractive, since from there Black's knight will exert pressure on both d4 and the kingside, allowing it a multi-purpose function.

14.♗g2 ♗f5 15.♗f4



15...♗xb4! By going for this amazing sacrifice, Black will obtain a very powerful pawn chain, together with control of the center. Now we can see how effective are the bishop on h7 and the knight on f5.

16.cxb4 ♗fxd4 17.♗c3 ♗xe2+ 18.♗xe2 ♗xb4 Black has three pawns for a piece. After a tough and lengthy battle the game ended in a draw. However, it was Black who was striving for more.

In general, we can learn a lot from basic but relevant ideas – like the setup with the bishop going to h7 and knight going to f5. Combining these two pieces in a productive way might help Black seize the initiative. Never forget that once White plays 3.e5, Black's main idea will be to remain flexible at all times by considering the pawn breaks ...f7-f6, ...g7-g5, and ...c7-c5.

THE SICILIAN DEFENSE

The Rossolimo Variation has become one of the top choices for players who are tired of coping with the huge amount of theory that has developed in the Open Sicilian. Most of the critical ideas will be explained from both sides' perspectives, since I believe that this opening can be readily played on pure chess understanding. Moreover, lately there has been a very strong tendency to play the Rossolimo against the Sicilian, therefore it's important to know a bit more about the main ideas of this opening.



2023 World Cup Baku, Azerbaijan



David Navara



Magnus Carlsen



Awonder Liang, Carissa Yip and Josiah Stearman



Hikaru Nakamura and Kartik Venkataraman



Fabiano Caruana



Magnus Carlsen



Hikaru Nakamura



Irina Krush



Aleksandra Goryachkina





B30

Magnus Carlsen 2835

Nijat Abasov 2646

Semi-final match, Game 1, World Cup, Baku 2023

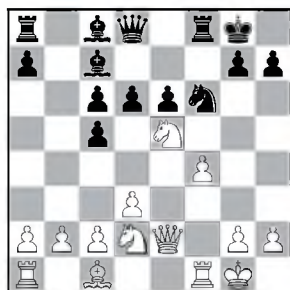
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 The Rossolimo has accumulated a lot of fans in recent years. Its simple strategy and easy-going play have made this line a very popular choice among players of all strengths. In a sense the main idea of the Rossolimo resembles a purely classical style – it relies on completing White's piece development quite quickly and, if possible, damaging Black's pawn structure in the process.

3...e6 The "...e6 line" can be considered as "forever green". Some years ago, 3...g6 was literally everyone's top choice!

4.♙xc6 bxc6 Here we have a very unbalanced game, where both sides have their pluses and minuses. White has the better pawn structure, fewer weaknesses and a long term perspective where quiet maneuvers will make all the difference. In contrast, Black has the bishop pair, and is looking for a more dynamic game in which tactics and initiative will play the leading role.

5.b3 Probably one of the most interesting move orders. Black aims to obtain a very powerful and flexible pawn center. In fact, what matters the most is how flexible your pawn structure can be in order to allow active piece play, particularly for the bishops. I'd like to illustrate Black's main ideas in the following lines.

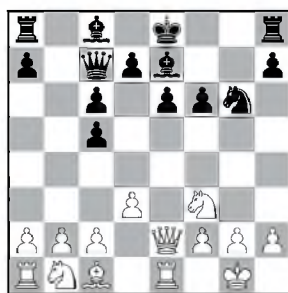
5.e5?! is not bad, but at least to me is a somewhat suspect idea. 5...f6! is the main response. Black uses his f-pawn to undermine the opponent's e-pawn, and thereby reconstruct his pawn center by later playing ...d7-d6. Then play can continue 6.d3 fxe5 7.♗xe5 ♖f6 8.0-0 ♙d6 9.f4 0-0 10.♖e2 ♗c7 11.♗d2 d6...



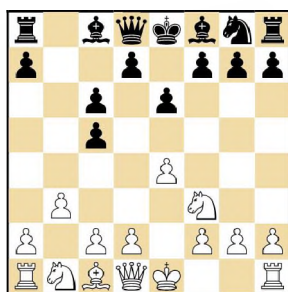
...achieving the ideal setup! Taking a close look at Black's pawn structure illustrates what it means to have a flexible pawn structure. Mobility, flexibility, and protection.

Also after 5.d3 ♖c7 6.0-0 ♗e7 7.♖e2 ♗g6, Black's previous moves are shown to

be directed at preparing to play ...e6-e5 at an appropriate moment, thereby obtaining a mobile and flexible pawn chain in the center. 8.e5 f6 Once again the f-pawn plays its part. 9.♞e1 ♙e7 Maintaining the tension and increasing the pressure. (9...fxe5 can be met by 10.♗g5! with strong kingside play! Also after 9...♗xe5 10.♗xe5 ♖xe5 11.♖xe5 fxe5 12.♞xe5 d6, Black is okay, although the dynamic factor has been largely reduced after trading pieces.) 10.exf6 gxf6!



This is a dream come true for Black in view of his amazing pawn structure! Black is already for choice here.

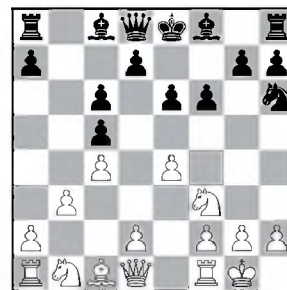


5...d6 Aiming to construct an almost perfect setup with his pawn on e5. Black would then gain a lot of space in the center when his flexible pawn structure would offer him all kinds of pawn thrusts.

5...e5 shows how this setup was originally conceived. 6.♗xe5 ♖e7 7.♙b2 d6 8.♗c4 d5 9.♗e3 d4 Aiming at the b2 bishop. 10.♗c4 ♖xe4+ 11.♖e2 ♖xe2+ 12.♗xe2 ♙e6 Black now has the bishop pair, but this is an endgame. Therefore, quiet moves and long-term play will matter more than the dynamic factor. I dare say that this position is easier to play for White. However, Black is solid enough. 13.d3 ♗f6 14.♗bd2 0-0-0 was seen in the stem game V.Anand 2791 – B.Gelfand 2727, Moscow 2012, which ended in a draw on move 25.

I believe that 5...f6 is better suited to the spirit of this position. Then 6.0-0 ♗h6 is another flexible way to complete Black's piece development. (On 6...d6 7.c3! is an interesting idea to challenge ...e5 with d2-d4! Then after 7...♗e7 8.d4 cxd4 9.cxd4 d5∞ Black's pawn structure is sufficiently

flexible. Therefore, his position must be at least okay.) 7.c4



A) 7...e5? is bad, because of 8.d4! and White will inflict enough damage on Black's center to claim an advantage. 8...exd4 (Or similarly 8...cxd4 9.♙xh6 gxh6 10.♗xe5!+-) 9.♙xh6 gxh6 10.♗e5!±;

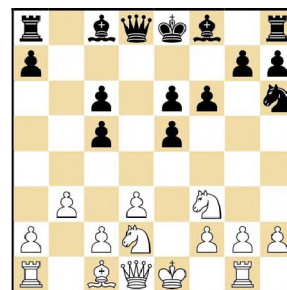
B) 7...♗f7 8.d4 cxd4 9.♗xd4 ♙e7 White is marginally better, but Black maintains his flexibility, along with control of the center.

6.e5!? This very interesting classical idea gives White the opportunity to significantly change Black's pawn structure. In fact White sacrifices a pawn but in return Black's position will be full of weaknesses, principally the c5 pawn.

6...dxe5 7.d3 f6 Black is up a pawn, but his c5 pawn will remain a target for the entire game. Moreover, Black's pawn center will lose its flexibility, since any pawn advance will create new weaknesses.

7...c4!? is an interesting attempt to keep the dynamic factor alive. After 8.bxc4 ♗e7 9.♗bd2 c5 10.0-0 f6, at least now the light-squared bishop will be able to join the battlefield. Remember that you should always try to give meaning and purpose to your pieces. 11.♗e4∞.

8.♗bd2 ♗h6 9.♙g1!? Trying to provoke more weaknesses on the kingside as well.



9...♙a6? From a6 the bishop is smacking against a big wall (the d3 pawn). In other words, this move is pointless.

9...♙e7 10.g4 ♖a5! is a very powerful idea. 11.♙f1 (11.♙b2?! now runs into 11...c4! revealing the idea behind ...♖a5, as the d2 knight can't move.) 11...♙a6 In comparison to the text, here Black has forced the white king to walk into a dense forest.

9...d5 10.g4 d4! gives purpose to the knight and Black should now be fine.

10.g4 White aims to provoke more weaknesses on the kingside by implying that it would be too dangerous for Black to castle there.

10...d7 11.e2 e7 12.b2 a5 13.c4 Depriving Black of any crazy dream related to the ...c5-c4 move, which would make Black's position very dynamic and easy to play.

13...g5 14.h4 h6 15.h1 White has won the opening battle, and later Carlsen won this game as well after a tough fight.

This game was played in the semi-finals and, although it didn't bring him a favorable result, Abasov stuck to his guns in the next match for third place against Caruana.

B30

Fabiano Caruana 2782

Nijat Abasov 2646

Match for 3rd, Game 4 (Rapid), World Cup, Baku 2023

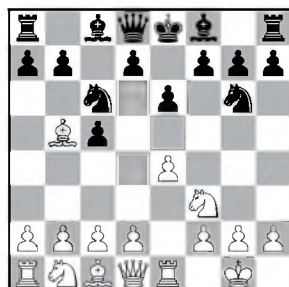
1.e4 c5 2.d3 d6 3.b5 Here we go again it's the Rossolimo – the classics will never go out of fashion!

3...e6 4.0-0 The most natural and simple way to play.

4...ge7 Here Black here has several playable options, 4...d4 being one of them. However, I think the text move better meets the demands of the position.

5.e1 a6 The most trendy line although Black has a number of moves since his pawn structure is so flexible. In fact, almost any move is playable here and any decision would still lead to very complex Sicilian-type positions.

5...d6 is another interesting try for all Sicilian fans.



6.c3 (6.d4 cxd4 7.dxd4 e7∞ leads to an Open Sicilian setup. Remember that the Sicilian is about flexible complex setups – if you are not flexible, don't play the Sicilian!)

A) 6...a6 7.f1 e7 8.d4 cxd4 9.cxd4 d5 transposes to a French-type structure. 10.e5 0-0 11.d3

A1) 11...f6?! 12.exf6 xf6 (After



▲ Nijat Abasov

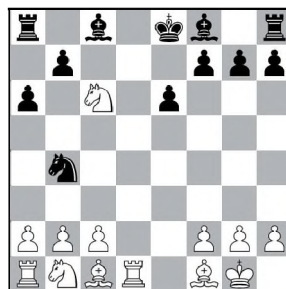
12...xf6?! 13.g5, Black will be forced to trade his dark-squared bishop, which should benefit White rather than Black.) 13.g3±.

A2) 11...h6, preparing the thematic strike at White's center. 12.g3 f6! As in almost every French Defense game, Black has to react with ...f7-f6!

B) 6...e7 7.d4 cxd4 8.cxd4 d5 is another version of the French-like structure.

6.f1 d5 7.exd5 dxd5 8.d4 f6 Very playable for sure, and probably a more flexible approach.

8...cxd4 is the most direct way to remove some uncertainty from the board. 9.dxd4 db4 Now we have a very interesting endgame, where Black needs to know how best to place his pieces, based on his pawn structure. 10.dxc6 xd1 11.Exd1



A) I think 11...dxc6 is also playable here. However, White can take advantage of the vacant b6 square. 12.c3 e5 13.e3 g4 14.f3 e6 15.d2 f6 16.a4 First securing some space on the queenside. 16...e7 17.d4 f7 18.b6± Now White can seize the initiative by exploiting the b6 square.

B) After 11...bxc6 Black's pawn structure is worse due to his split queenside pawns. However, it's not easy to show why this structure is that bad. 12.d3 a5 13.c3 (13.d2 a6∞) 13...d5 Black has very active piece play, since all his pieces can be easily developed. 14.d4 f6! This is the key! It allows Black to consolidate his position, taking the e5

square under control and vacating the f7 square for his king.

9.e3



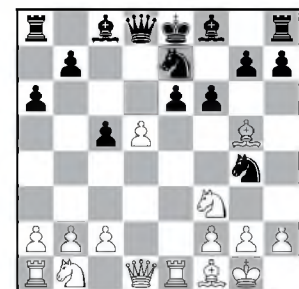
9...d4?! Black is behind in development. Therefore he is unlikely to succeed in his attempts at attack, as his pieces are barely active and the center is open and unstable.

It is better to release the tension when you are far behind in development. 9...cxd4! 10.dxd4 d7 There's no need to memorize long lines. There are certain positions where you just need to remember the ideas... 11.c4 dxd4 12.dxd4 c6 A very good diagonal for this bishop. 13.d3 e7∞ Black has almost completed his development, and shouldn't have any significant problems to solve.

10.g5! Logical and best.

10...f6?! 10...d6! It is never too late to say "sorry". After 11.xf6 xf6 12.d5! d4 13.f2± White's structure is way better, due to all Black's weaknesses and slow development.

11.f4 Not bad, but also not best. 11.d5!! was the most concrete and direct way to punish such a brave king. 11...e7 (After 11...fg5 12.dxc6 xd1 13.Exd1 bxc6 14.d2+- the pawn structure speaks for itself!)



A) 12.h3

A1) 12...fxg5 13.hxg4 dxd5 14.c4 b6 15.a3± A simple look at Black's pawn structure speaks volumes about the position in which there are weaknesses all over the place.

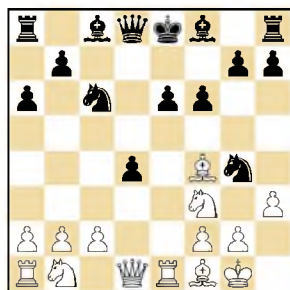
A2) 12...xf2 13.f2 fxg5 14.d3±;

B) 12.d2 dxd5 13.h3!

B1) 13...h5 14.d4 e5 15.Exe5 fxe5 16.dg6 h7 17.d3! d6 18.d3+-

B2) 13...h6 14.xh6 gxh6 15.d4+-.

11...cxd4 12.h3



12...d6?! 12...g5! is what the position demands! Natural and logical moves don't suit this unusual setup. 13.c1 h5!?∞

13.♟xh6 gxh6 White has finally achieved his main goal in the Rossolimo – to damage Black's pawn structure.

14.♞bd2 b5 15.a4+- White later won in a very convincing way. Black's pawn structure has been severely damaged, his king is still exposed in the center, and his center pawns can't really move without a further weakening of his king's position.

The Sicilian Defense has formed part of the repertoire of many top players, especially the Najdorf, which in fact we will also discuss later. Its versatility and dynamism have made the Najdorf the top choice line above the rest.

Besides that, I would like to show and explain another interesting line in the Sicilian known as The Four Knights Variation. This line has become very trendy and proven to be solid as a rock, as well as easy to remember. The ideas of this setup will be explained in more detail in the games that follow.

B45

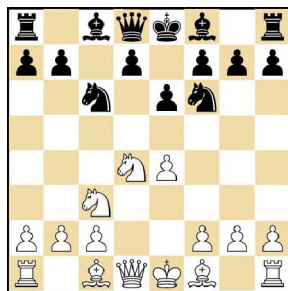
Fabiano Caruana	2782
Nijat Abasov	2646

Match for 3rd Game 2, World Cup, Baku 2023

1.e4 c5 It's always so refreshing to see the famous and powerful Sicilian being played at the highest level. Especially at this time when we are forever being so influenced by engine suggestions, and not the opposite. In fact, we should never forget that engines are tools – of course, useful tools but ones we should use with care.

2.♞f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♞xd4 ♞c6 5.♞c3 ♞f6 The Four Knights Variation in the Sicilian Defense has become a very hard nut to crack. This old line has so often proved its resilience and even been adopted by strong GMs as part of their principal repertoire. Also the logical and fluent play of this setup makes it an easy line to remember. In fact Black's main strategy here relies on its effectiveness in making

the most of his quick piece development and control of the center.



6.♟f4! My exclamation mark is not for the move itself, but rather for Fabi's bravery in playing this kind of suspect move, which leads to equality. Of course, because of the influence of the engine, it is very rare to see moves that aren't considered its top two or three choices. This approach makes us less creative and intrepid. That's why I believe the best way to use engines is by suggesting moves and ideas to it, in order to have more clarity and a better understanding of the resulting positions. The idea of ♟f4 is clear and clean – to control the d6 square, together with having a knight check on c7 as a potential threat.

The top two choices here are 6.♞db5 and 6.♞xc6, both with good play, but with tons of theory, which leaves less space for improvisation.

6.♞db5 ♟b4 is in the spirit of the Four Knights Variation. (6...d6 7.♟f4 e5 8.♟g5 leads to a Sveshnikov setup.) 7.a3 ♟xc3+ 8.♞xc3 d5 9.exd5 exd5 10.♞d3 0-0 11.0-0 d4 12.♞e2 ♟g4 White has the bishop pair, but Black has very fluent and easier piece play.

6.♞xc6 bxc6 7.e5 ♞d5 8.♞e4 Probably the main *tabiya* (critical opening position) of this setup. 8...♞c7 9.f4 ♞b6 10.c4 ♟b4+ (10...♞e3!?) 11.♞e2 f5∞ This line has a lot of theory ahead and leads to very complex positions where both sides have their pluses and minuses.

Interestingly enough, both these continuations could be seen in the World Cup games of one of Caruana's main seconds – Leinier Dominguez! As a curiosity, Dominguez was eliminated from the World Cup by his own mentor, so it's likely that he then switched to helping Fabi in this match. So, 6.♟f4 was certainly a worthy recommendation to test Abasov's preparation and memory!

6...♟b4 7.♞db5 With this move order, White forces his opponent on the ropes by testing his knowledge of this very sharp line. 7...♞xe4 7...0-0 is a less accurate move order, which will allow White to keep the position under control. For example, 8.♟c7

♞e7 9.♟d6!, and now Black is deprived of having his own mobile pawn center, which is indeed what makes this line very attractive. After 9...♟xd6 10.♞xd6, Black lacks any pawn play in the center.

8.♞f3 d5 9.♞c7+ ♟f8 10.0-0-0 ♟xc3 11.bxc3



Fabi has forced his opponent to enter a very concrete position, where the moves won't come easily or naturally. In fact, in such situations, either you know the line or you don't! Playing secondary lines like 6.♟f4 (which is absolutely not without venom) might offer you some advantages such as the surprise factor, getting your opponent out of his comfort zone (theory), etc. Some secondary lines can be more dangerous than main lines, because those are not so well studied and tend to be more dynamic. 11...♞e7?! Not the most precise. Here Black is forced to continue playing natural moves like 11...e5. However, as I said, such moves in a dynamic position, you either know or you don't know. This guessing game might be considered a gambling zone – a sort of lottery.

11...e5 12.♞xd5 f5 Since this line is known as the Four Knights, it makes sense to reinforce these pieces at any cost. 13.♟e3 ♞a5 14.♟c4 ♟e6 leads to a very complex position.

12.c4 ♞f6? Mistakes very often come in pairs!

13.c3! After Black lost tempi by playing ...♞e7 and ...♞f6, he achieved nothing more than a consolidation of White's position.

13...g5 14.♟d6+ ♟g7 15.♞xf6+ ♟xf6 16.♞xa8 After the trade of queens, White exploited his advantage without particular problems in a very technical endgame.

The ♟f4 sideline has proved how dangerous it can be. That's why it's important to keep searching and suggesting interesting lines to the engine – in that way we may be able to win without even thinking so much with our own brains. In this case, the surprise paid off!



TO BE CONTINUED IN ACM #36

HOW TO CREATE AN INVESTMENT PLAN? HOW AI HELPED CHESS PLAYERS WITH ADJUSTING THEIR GAME PLANS?

Choose wisely

■ By Luca Barillaro



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.

In chess there is a saying that “a bad plan is better than no plan at all.” In order to adopt the correct plan, chess theorists have found the connection between openings, middlegames and endgames, and modern chess is based on these connections, but with the use of AI! However, don’t get misled by the statistics – choose your own plan tailored to your own style and preference.

Any investment strategy is built up around the investor’s risk tolerance and his/her needs. The combination of these two makes up an investment plan. As Tartakower used to say: “tactics is knowing what to do when there is something to do, while strategy is knowing what to do when there is nothing to do.”

In finance the importance of having a plan cannot be stressed enough. The investment plan is very much created like in chess – according to the needs of the investor (player), his/her risk tolerance (age, experience, willingness to risk), strategy choice (fundamental, technical, macro) and time horizon (short term, long term). Nonetheless, one plan may not be suitable for different investors, just like not every opening strategy is suitable for every player.

Therefore, we must not stop at the percentages that we see in the chessbase opening tree, but it is necessary to understand the plans behind the moves – just as it happens on financial markets where different investment decisions in a portfolio must be aimed at the realization of a single plan. It is not enough (and, indeed, it is dangerous) to test an investment strategy and use it only because it has had positive returns in the past.

The investment process is made up of a plan and within the plan of several micro-plans as GM Kotronias illustrates in his illuminating book *How to Play Equal Positions*.

The importance of having a plan is known to all chess players ever since they first learn the rudiments of strategy and tactics. Standard plans in the main openings are usually dictated by pawn structures that form the skeleton of the position, but the qualitative leap in elaboration of the plans started thanks to the research of Botvinnik and later of all the Soviet masters. The connection between the opening and the middlegame up to the deep exploration of typical endgames deriving from different strategic plans in different openings has been. This was a strong point of the Soviet masters for many generations after the Second World War. The books by Zlotnik and Shereshevsky *Mastering the Endgame vol.1&2* are just one example of the depth of analysis that Soviet players applied in the pre-computer era. On the internet, as indicated by GM Ehlvest in his book *Grandmaster Opening Preparation*, it is probably still possible to recover one of the leaked files from Kasparov’s preparation in the mid-1990s which demonstrates how different opening lines were explored all the way to the endgame.

In finance, different strategies are tested through AI, both on past time series and “live”, in order to find the most efficient way to deal with different market environments.

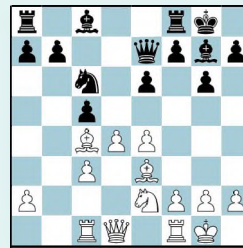
Today in chess it is no mystery that every professional GM uses artificial intelligence to verify and test the opening plans by assessing their validity in probabilistic terms depending

on the possible endings that may occur.

Even in the recent World Cup we had several examples. Daniele Vocaturo, against Volokitin, employed a Grunfeld line which seemed to perform highly negative for Black.

D87
Andrei Volokitin 2674
Daniele Vocaturo 2609
FIDE World Cup, Baku 2023

1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5
4.cxd5 ♜xd5 5.e4 ♜xc3 6.bxc3
♙g7 7.♙c4 c5 8.♜e2 ♜c6 9.♙e3
0-0 10.0-0 e6 11.♞c1 ♞e7



12.♙b5 ♞d8 13.♙xc6 bxc6
14.♞a4 cxd4 15.cxd4 a5 16.♞fd1
♙a6 17.♜c3 ♞b4 18.a3 ♞xa4
19.♜xa4 ♙b5 20.♜c5 a4 21.♜b7
♞d7 22.♜c5 ♞dd8 23.♜b7 ♞d7
24.♜c5 ♞dd8 Draw

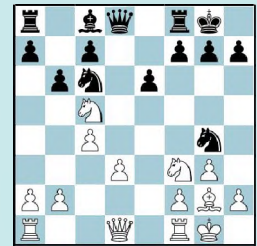
The Italian GM has reached a high degree of specialization in the use of AI engines that can be seen clearly from his style and preparation, now at the level of 2700 players. In this specific case, the plan with 11...♞e7 allows Black to simplify the game and enter an endgame without risk.

The clearest example in using plans double-checked by AI seems to be that of Indian GM Vidit in his match against Ian Nepomniachtchi.

A13
Ian Nepomniachtchi 2779
Vidit Santosh Gujrathi 2719
FIDE World Cup, Baku 2023

1.c4 ♖f6 2.♜f3 e6 3.g3 d5
4.♙g2 d4 5.0-0 ♜c6 6.d3 ♙c5

7.♜bd2 0-0 8.♜b3 ♙e7 9.e3
dxe3 10.♙xe3 ♜g4 11.♙c5 ♙xc5
12.♜xc5 b6



13.♜d2 ♜ge5 14.♜cb3 ♙b7
15.d4 ♜g6 16.♞e1 a5 17.♜f3 a4
18.♜c1 a3 19.b3 ♞d6 Black won
on move 60.

Vidit (Black) deliberately enters a line he had previously employed with White against Keymer. The line seems statistically favorable for White, but Black’s idea is to gain space on the queenside with ...a5-a4-a3 to win the endgame. Vidit’s maneuver, typical of the AlphaZero style, is clearly the result of studying possible endings, and his plan has eventually proved successful against Nepomniachtchi who failed to counter Black’s plan.

The temptation to judge one line better than another just by looking at past results is as high as it is wrong. Backtesting is always a useful tool, but it can also be misleading, and, therefore, dangerous.

Past statistics are certainly useful, but they are not a guarantee of success – just as the strategies applied by other investors are not necessarily suitable for our risk tolerance and our investment objectives. In chess, the study of plans must remain closely connected to the middlegame and endgame objectives which must be suitable to our style and our needs in a single game or a tournament.

IS CLASSICAL CHESS DEAD?

Long Live Classical Chess!

This past decade has seen a huge increase in the number of events held at faster rates of play – rapid and blitz. With the modern level of preparation and high drawing percentage at elite tournaments in classical chess, more and more of the world’s leading players see classical chess coming to its melting point. Well, is it?



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.

By Dylan Loeb McClain

For the longest time, hundreds of years really, when people talked about the best players in the world, what they meant was clear – the best players at classical, or slow, chess. While top players would entertain themselves, and often others, by playing fast or blitz chess, it was not taken too seriously.

That is clearly no longer true. Faster time controls – rapid, blitz, lightning or bullet, and even faster games like hyper-bullet and ultra-bullet (15 seconds per player per game!) – have become more respectable and prowess in them has become more valued. As they have become more popular, there has been an erosion of respect and interest in classical chess.

Fabiano Caruana, who is ranked No. 2 in classical chess, said on a recent C-Squared podcast with his friend grandmaster Cristian Chirila, “If the trend continues, classical chess is getting phased out within a few years.”

It is not hard to understand his thinking. Consider Magnus Carlsen, who has dominated chess in all its forms for more than a decade. After holding the classical crown for 10 years, Carlsen declined to defend the title this year because of his dwindling interest in that form of the game.

In an interview on a Norwegian podcast in May, he said of classical chess, “It’s nice to have time to think for a while and figure things out, but I am quite fed up with all the preparation. It’s frustrating to come up with new ideas every time in order to get a game at all.”

Carlsen’s last comment was a reference to how well-prepared opponents make it



increasingly difficult for players to gain an edge in classical games.

That is one reason that Carlsen has played less classical chess in the last couple of years, preferring to concentrate on faster time controls in which preparation can be a smaller factor because players don’t have time to recall all that they know. Faster time controls also encourage experimenting with different openings, even off-beat ones, because there is a smaller risk that opponents will have time to figure out how to try to refute them.

Carlsen does not speak, or act, for every chess player, but his views, as the star of the chess world and the No. 1 ranked player since 2008, carry a lot of weight. He has also contributed directly to diminishing the popularity of classical chess.

When the pandemic hit in 2020 and

all in-person competition was suspended, Carlsen helped organize, and leant his name, to an online series of five tournaments with a prize fund of \$1 million. The tournaments were all at rapid time controls, likely because no one wants to sit staring at a computer screen thinking about one game for hours.

The series proved to be a big enough success, among players and fans, that it has led to an annual series of elite online tournaments, renamed the Champions Tour. The prize funds have also increased, with this year’s being \$2 million. All the tournaments have had rapid and blitz time controls (usually to break ties when the rapid matches are knotted at the end).

The staggering growth of online chess has also made faster time controls more popular. (Again, no one really wants to sit and stare at a screen for hours on one game.)



One other factor has contributed to popularizing fast play: The official recognition of those skills by the International Chess Federation, or FIDE. Though there had been “one-off” events over the decades, including the first World Blitz Championship in 1970 in Herceg Novi, which was won by Bobby Fischer, in 2006, FIDE began recognizing official World Blitz Champions. Then, in 2012, FIDE began organizing the World Rapid and Blitz Championships. As part of that effort, FIDE also created rapid and blitz rating and rankings.

In the same podcast in which Caruana suggested that classical chess might be phased out, Chirila noted, “Nowadays, as a coach, you could probably direct your players to be good in rapid and blitz. That is probably going to be more financially feasible for them.”

Indeed, Andrew Tang, who is a good, but not world-class grandmaster, is an example. He is in the top five in the world in bullet, which allows him, if he so desires, to make a good living as a streamer because people love to watch him play bullet online. Tang, a recent graduate of Princeton, may decide to take a more conventional path, but that is another story.

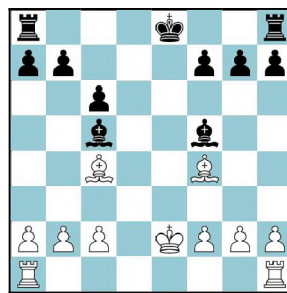
Is classical chess on its deathbed then? Probably not. To paraphrase Mark Twain, the American writer and humorist, the rumors of the death of classical chess are greatly exaggerated.

Take the recently completed World Cup, for example. Who showed up at the last minute to play in it? Carlsen, despite a format that required mini-matches of two classical games followed by rapid and blitz games if the mini-matches were tied. Though he second-guessed his decision to participate early on, saying in a post-match interview, “Honestly, like almost since Day 1, I have been wondering, like, what am I doing here?” he went on to win the tournament.

Afterwards, in an interview with grandmaster Daniel Naroditsky, Carlsen admitted that his decision to play in the event was partially motivated by his poor showing in Norway Chess, a classical tournament in June in which he lost one classical game and drew the rest – the first time in 16 years that he had failed to win a classical game in a competition. “Maybe it was a bit emotional,” he said. “I played so poorly in Norway Chess, I don’t want that to be the impression of me in classical chess.” In other words, Carlsen still cares about classical chess.

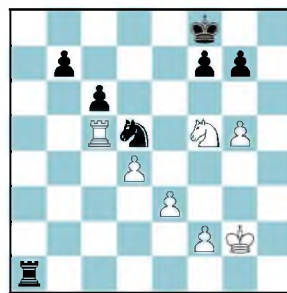
He is not the only one. Most of the world’s top players competed in the World Cup, including Caruana, who finished third and thereby qualified for the next Candidates tournament to select a challenger for the Classical World Championship. (Carlsen also qualified but has already indicated that he is not going to play.)

Classical chess is still chess, so whatever the speed of the game, it can still be exciting. During the World Cup, there were some insipid games, as for example Carlsen’s second game against Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa, where the players reached an almost perfectly symmetrical position after 14...♟f5.



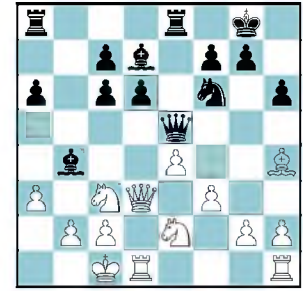
But there were also many exciting moments, a result of blunders, oversights and desperation because players had to win in Game 2 of the mini-matches after losing Game 1. All of those elements arose in Carlsen’s match with Vincent Keymer in Round 4.

In the following position in Game 1, Carlsen had plenty of time on his clock, while Keymer only had a few minutes to make four moves before the time control.



Carlsen, perhaps too used to playing rapidly, blitzed out 36...♞c7, but after 37.♞d6, threatening both ♞xb7 and ♟f5, Carlsen had to lose a pawn. Keymer then converted the ending to take the lead. That put Carlsen in a must win position to survive.

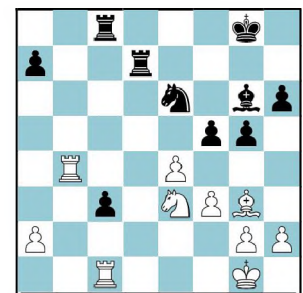
In Game 2, Keymer missed a shot that would have put Carlsen away. Carlsen had just played 16.a3, when he realized to his horror that he had blundered.



Amazingly, after Keymer played 16...♟xc3 17.♟xc3 (Not 17.♞c3 because then 17...♟f4 forks the king and bishop, winning a piece.), Keymer missed 17...♞xe4, which would have won at least a pawn. If 18.fxe4, then 18...♟xe4 forks the white knight and bishop. And if 18.♟xe5 ♟xe5 19.fxe4, then 19...♟xe4 still forks the knight and bishop. When Keymer instead continued 17...♟xc3, Carlsen was visibly relieved. (There is a great short video on X, formerly Twitter, of him looking to his right and exhaling after seeing Keymer’s move.) Carlsen was able to even the match by squeezing Keymer in an endgame in his trademark style.

Interestingly, Carlsen noted after winning the tournament that he feels that Dommaraju Gukesh, the 17-year-old Indian grandmaster who has risen to No.8 in the world in the classical rankings, supplanting Viswanathan Anand as the top Indian for the first time in 37 years, might now be the best player at slow time controls.

Carlsen beat him in the quarterfinals, but he said that was because he played his best game of the tournament in Game 1, to take the lead. Gukesh had shown his class in the previous round with a smooth win over Wang Hao in Game 1 of their match.



In this position, Gukesh crashed through Wang’s defenses with 31...fxe4 (Not 31...f4? 32.♞d5! and White is in control.) 32.fxe4 ♟d3 33. ♟f2 ♞f4 34.♟c2 ♟d2! 35.h3 ♞d3 36.♟d2 cxd2 37.♟d4 ♟c1+ 38.♟h2 ♞f2, and Wang threw in the towel.

While the World Cup shows that classical chess is alive and well, its method for breaking ties – two rapid games, then, if necessary, two blitz games, and if there



is still a tie, an Armageddon game – also illustrates how faster time controls have overtaken classical chess.

There was a time when the idea of using such a tiebreaking system would have seemed an abomination to purists. And it is true that the different time controls require slightly different skill sets.

After Anatoly Karpov won the 1988 World Active Chess Championship held in Mexico, he made an analogy to racing in an interview. “In track, you have the 100 meters, the 200 meters, the mile,” Karpov said. Different time controls are “completely different chess.”

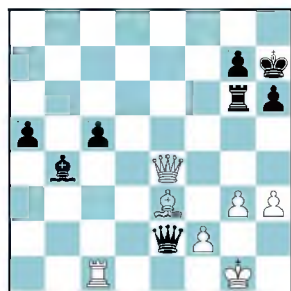
(Garry Kasparov, who at the time was the classical World Champion, refused to participate in the tournament, saying dismissively, “Active chess? What does that make me? The passive World Champion?” His comment, and the confusion sowed by the name of the title, may have been why active chess was later rechristened rapid.)

Though the classical World Championship in 2004, between Vladimir Kramnik and Peter Leko, either had an outright winner, or, if they ended in a tie, the reigning champion kept the title. Over the years, there were several matches that ended in ties (1951 between Mikhail Botvinnik and David Bronstein; 1954 between Botvinnik and Smyslov, 1987 between Kasparov and Karpov and 2004 between Kramnik and Leko). Tied matches with the champion retaining the title were unsatisfying and seemed unfair.

In 2006, in the match between Kramnik and Topalov to reunify the title after a 13-year split in the chess world, a series of four rapid games to break a tie was introduced. It was an idea born out of necessity as the competing claims of Kramnik and Topalov for the title meant that a tie would not mend the schism, since both players could continue to claim to be the rightful champion. As it turned out, the tiebreakers were necessary and Kramnik won by beating Topalov, 2½ to 1½ in the rapid games.

It was an exciting finish and it became the new standard just as faster time controls were becoming more popular and legitimized.

Since then, four other matches (in 2012, between Anand and Boris Gelfand; in 2016, between Carlsen and Sergey Karjakin; in 2018 between Carlsen and Caruana; and this year, between Ding Liren and Ian Nepomniachtchi) have been settled by rapid tiebreak games. The last game of the 2023 match, with Ding’s 46...♙g6! leading to victory was a brilliant and worthy capper.



should ever be decided in blitz games or, even worse, in an Armageddon game in which the loser goes home. Hopefully that never happens.

As Karpov explained, using rapid games to break a tie in classical chess is not ideal, but, at least, so far rapid tiebreakers have been sufficient. It would likely create unimaginable arguments over a classical champion’s legitimacy if the title

21st MAGNIFICENT 3 REMARKABLE RECENT GAMES

By GM Sarunas Sulskis

WITH THE BLACK PIECES, BERKES MAKES IT A BLACK DAY FOR GELFAND

Before I embark on Salimova’s Cinderella story in Baku, I have found it fitting to stop over and take a look at the progress of the Hungarian GM Ferenc Berkes. Though a middle ranking player at the World Cup, Berkes began drawing attention to himself right after knocking out the former World Championship contender (Moscow 2012), a world top-GM for quite a few decades, Boris Gelfand from Israel.

Despite being a remarkable feat in itself, Berkes didn’t stop there and proceeded to knock out a strong 2700+ club member, Nikita Vitiugov, followed by the former World Champion Ruslan Ponomarev from Ukraine. An impressive run by Ferenc Berkes, possibly the best in his career so far! And I believe it had been set in motion by his confident win on the Black side against Gelfand in the game below.

The game features professional opening preparation which brings out Berkes’ trust not in some unruly engine lines or assessments, but in the sound strategy of engaging all his pieces in the battle – even if it comes at the cost of a pawn or two. By snatching the a4 pawn early in the game, Gelfand tried hard to make his younger opponent recant the strategy of piece liberation. Berkes, however, remained firm and didn’t back down. When he suddenly thrust the black queen close to the white king by ...♙b5-e2!, all the fun was over for Gelfand. The veteran tried desperately to hold his ground with the passive ♗c3-e1, but once Berkes uncorked the ...♞e4-g5-h3+ maneuver, as skillful as it was deadly, the white king’s residence went up in flames.

A brilliant attack which immediately took Berkes through to Round 3, without any need to play annoying tiebreak games!

E11

Boris Gelfand	2668
Ferenc Berkes	2615

Round 2, Game 2, World Cup, Baku 2023

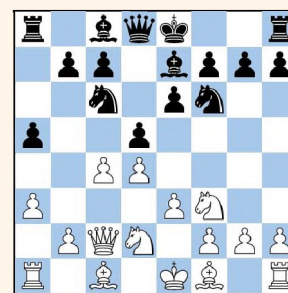
1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 e6 3.♞f3 ♟b4+ 4.♞bd2 d5 5.♙a4+ A well-known method in the Bogo-Indian Defense. Gelfand forces the black knight to c6, thereby disabling Black’s trademark attack in the center by ...c7-c5.

5...♞c6 6.e3 a5 7.a3 ♟e7 8.♙c2 The first critical moment of the game. After some consideration Gelfand cautiously retreats his queen. The principled line is undoubtedly 8.b4, when Black resorted to 8...0-0 9.c5 ♞d7 10.b5 ♞cb8 in A. Smimov 2448 – J.Stocek 2567, Teplice 2015.

8...a4! A risky, but brave move. Berkes consciously sends his foot soldier to his death. The game itself will explain why.

9.cxd5 And Gelfand goes for it head-on. However, he pays a significant cost for this acquisition. Berkes obtains a free pass for both his bishop on the c8-h3 diagonal and his rook on the e-file.

Instead, White had a couple of alternatives, which further restrict Black’s aforementioned pieces: 9.c5 0-0 10.♟b5; and 9.♟d3 0-0 10.0-0, whereupon 10...♞a5?! is met by 11.♙xa4.



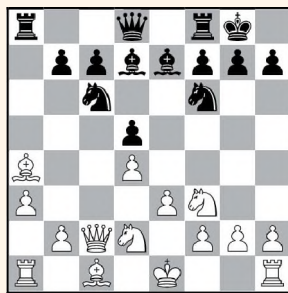


9...exd5 10.♟b5 0-0 Berkes continues to play quickly, having confidence in his preparation. This apparently makes Gelfand feel uneasy as he now frequently takes copious amounts of time to consider his responses.

11.♟xc4 There's not much point in commenting on 11.♟xc6 bxc6 12.♞xc6, since Berkes later allowed it even without the a4 pawn. Suffice to say, it exposes White on the a6-f1 diagonal.

11...♟d6 According to my database, this is a valuable novelty featuring a repeat sacrifice of yet another pawn. Again, it was played by Berkes almost instantly.

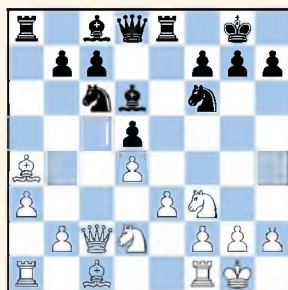
In a preceding game Black was more careful with 11...♟d7



...and still gained good compensation after 12.♟xc6 ♟xc6 13.0-0 ♞a6 14.♞e1 ♟d6 in A.Korobov 2680 - Y.Kuzubov 2661, Lvov 2014.

12.0-0 Fair enough, Gelfand finds 12.♟xc6 bxc6 13.♞xc6 ♟a6 too scary.

12...♞e8! The rook has a lot to say down the open e-file. To begin with, it supports the landing operation starting with ...♟f6-e4. The ease with which Berkes directs his pieces towards the white king makes Gelfand regret his release of the central tension on move 9.



13.b4?! Allowing Berkes a good kick on the queenside. 13.♟xc6 bxc6 allows Black's light-squared bishop to rule the a6-f1 diagonal. The peril in store for White is well-illustrated by the line 14.♞e1 ♟e4 15.♞xc6 ♞a6 16.♞b5 ♞b6 17.♞f1 ♟a6.

Gelfand, however, had a few more cautious alternatives in 13.♞d1 ♟e4 14.♟b3, tucking away his bishop, and 13.b3

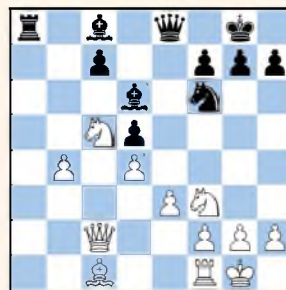


▲ Ferenc Berkes

which prevents Berkes' kick in the game.

13...♟xb4! 14.axb4 b5 Though this tactical operation will not result in Berkes recovering his pawn investment, it does undermine Gelfand's queenside pawns and, more importantly, grants Berkes the bishop pair.

15.♟xb5 ♞xa1 16.♟b3 ♞a8 17.♟xe8 ♞xe8 18.♟c5 On 18.♟d2 ♟e4 19.♞a1 ♞a4! is strong.



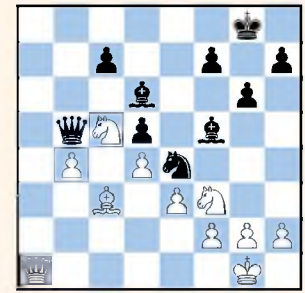
18...♞b5! A nice diagonal queen leap that foreshadows far greater trouble in store for Gelfand.

19.♟d2 g6 Berkes gets ready to reinforce his grip on the light squares. Gelfand can do little to prevent it.

20.♟c3 ♟f5 21.♞b2 ♟e4 22.♞a1 This allows Black to invade deep inside his territory.

However, upon 22.♟xe4 Gelfand possibly didn't like 22...dxe4 23.♟e5 ♞d5 (but not the hasty 23...f6?, because of 24.♞b3+) 24.♞a1 (24.b5 ♞a2) 24...♞xa1+ 25.♞xa1 f6+, and the white knight is caught in the middle of the board.

22...♞xa1+ 23.♞xa1



23...♞e2! Here you are! Berkes dives his queen deep into the white king's quarters. Taken by a surprise attack with all Black's pieces fully engaged, Gelfand is unable to hold on for even ten more moves. The main culprit of such a quick demise is perhaps his own bishop. The next move merely underscores his deplorable state.

24.♟e1? Gelfand tries to cling on to his extra pawn until the very end. But confronting Black's aggression with passive defence fails. With hindsight, he should have abandoned the pawn

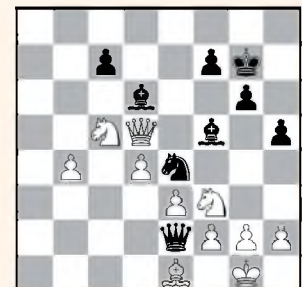
count and fight hard for survival.

Both 24.♞e1 ♞c2 (24...♟xc3 25.♞xc3 ♟g4 26.♟d3) 25.♟xe4 dxe4 26.♟e5; and 24.♟xe4 ♟xe4 (24...dxe4 25.♟d2 h5 26.d5) 25.♟d2 ♟d3 26.♟f1 h5 27.♟g3 ♞c2 28.♞e1 h4 29.♟h1 h3 30.gxh3 ♟e4 31.♟g3 ♟f3 would have offered more stiff resistance.

24...h5! This run by the edge pawn towards the white king is intimidating in itself, but there are also some invisible snippets of wisdom concealed within it. Check it out when you see the black queen checkmating the king from g4 in sidelines! The impatient 24...♟xc5 25.dxc5 ♟d3 26.♟c3 is what Gelfand had counted on.

25.♞c1 25.♟xe4 ♟xe4 (25...dxe4 26.♟e5 ♟e6 27.♟c3) 26.♟g5 ♟xg2 27.♟xg2 ♞g4+ 28.♟f1 ♞xg5+ leaves Black clearly on top but White can still continue struggling.

After a good think, Gelfand has to concede that his threat 25.♞a8+ ♟g7 26.♞xd5 has failed to hold off Berkes.



A) 26...♟xc5 27.dxc5 ♟d3 initially looks like a more straightforward win, but on closer inspection White uncorks a



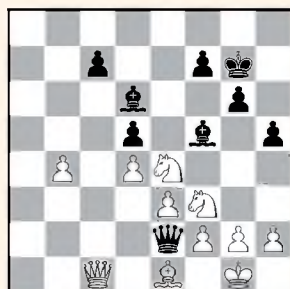
defense nothing short of magic: 28.♖c3+ ♔h6 29.♔h1!!

B) 26...♗g5! You're going to see this recurring motif not only in sidelines, but also carried out by Berkes in the actual game. 27.♖c3 ♗h3+! Look out for this deadly knight maneuver ...♗e4-g5-h3 in the actual game too! 28.gxh3 ♖xh3 29.♔h1 (29.♞xf7+ ♔xf7 30.♗g5+ ♔g8 31.♗h3 ♞g4+-) 29...♞xf2+- This time around no magic can stave off the inevitable.

25...♔g7 This wise quiet move provokes the final crisis while Gelfand tries to untangle himself.

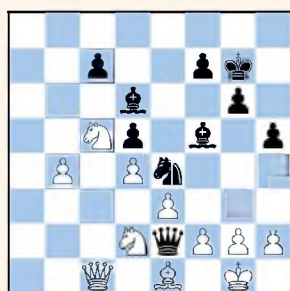
26.♗d2? Still hoping to get the best he can out of a knight trade, Gelfand commits a final error.

It was the last chance to take down the beast by 26.♗xe4



A) 26...♗xe4 27.♗e5 (27.♗d2 ♖xb4 27...h4 28.h3.

B) Or 26...♗xe4 27.♗g5 (27.♗d2 ♖xb4 28.♗xe4 ♖xe1) 27...♖xg2 (27...♖d3 28.♖d2 ♞g4 29.♗f3) 28.♖xg2 ♞g4+ 29.♔f1 ♞xg5 30.h3 with survival chances for White.



26...♗g5! A masterstroke by Berkes! Not allowing himself to be distracted by the beautiful yet futile 26...♗c3 27.♗f1 (but not 27.♗c4? ♗a2) 27...♗d1 28.♞d2, the Hungarian GM brings his knight over to h3 to complete his sudden attack in style! **27.e4** Suddenly Gelfand realizes where he has landed himself and desperately tries to divert Berkes'

attention away from executing a deadly strike on his king. To no avail, though.

There was no longer an antidote against ...♗g5-h3+: 27.♗f1 ♗h3+ 28.gxh3 ♖xh3 29.♖c3 ♞f3+-.

Or 27.h4 ♗h3+! 28.gxh3 ♖xh3+-.

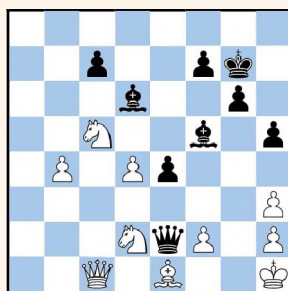
Or 27.♔h1 ♗h3 28.f3 ♞xe3 29.gxh3 ♞e2 (29...♖xh3 30.♞d1) 30.♖g3 ♖xh3 31.♞g1 ♞xd2+-.

27...♗h3+! Berkes gives his famous opponent no respite! Pushing the king to the corner ties down the d2 knight to f1. 27...♗xe4 28.♗c4 ♗h3+ 29.gxh3 ♖xh3 30.♗e3.

28.♔h1 A sad necessity. On 28.gxh3 ♖xh3 29.♔h1 ♞g4, checkmate is imminent.

28...♗xe4 Berkes keeps picking the best timing for his captures. The knight on d2 is now rendered immobile.

29.gxh3



29...e3! This powerful, well-timed pawn advance in the center dashes White's last hopes. In contrast, 29...♖xh3? is an ill-timed move because of 30.♗cxe4.

30.♔g1 A quiet testimony of how badly impaired the white forces are.

30.fxe3 ♞xh2 mate is nice for the spectators, though horrific news for Gelfand, whereas 30.♗de4 ♞f1 mate is both simple and brutal. Finally, 30.♔g2 ♖xh3+!! 31.♖xh3 ♞g4 mate is rather elegant.

30...♖xh3! Berkes keeps the heat on until the very end. **White resigned** in view of 31.♗ce4 (Or 31.♗de4 ♞f1 mate.) 31...exd2 32.♗xd2 ♞g4+-.

Gelfand decided he had now seen enough and resigned both the game and the match. Having shown valiant attacking skills and willingness to shed his pawns, Berkes deservedly went through to the next round, and managed to knock out quite a few more guys there too.

SMALL CHESS LECTURES

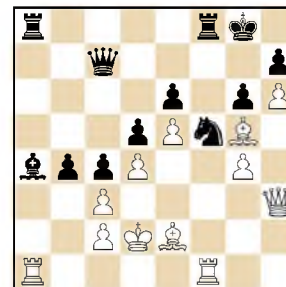
By GM Nikola Nestorovic

The present article tells the story of strong pawns, combined threats, and how to defend against them.

Maikel Gongora Reyes 2454

Ernesto Fernandez Romero 2449

Guillermo Garcia Memorial-B, Santa Clara 2005



At first glance it seems the present position should be very bad for Black. However, at this very moment Black has several options to defend his position and this gives it a special charm. The 'best' continuation is 26...♗c2! with an unclear position.

Another possibility 26...♗d4!! (the two exclaims are for bravery) leads to a complicated line in which White is required to be very precise if he is to reveal the deficiencies of this tactical move. To be sure, it won't be easy for Black if White finds the best moves along the way! So Black chooses an option where White needs some super accurate calculation. Counterattack is the key!

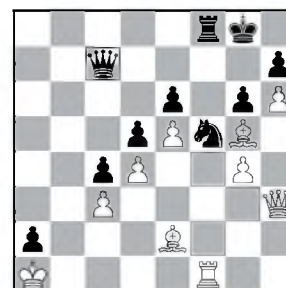
26...♗xd4 26...bxc3+ 27.♞xc3+- looks very bad for Black.

26...♗e7? is punished in straightforward fashion as White gains a decisive advantage after 27.♞xf8+ (27.cxb4+- is also good enough.) 27...♖xf8 28.♞f3+ ♔g8 (Or 28...♖e8 29.♞f6 ♖a6 30.♞f1+-) 29.♞f6 ♗c8 30.♞f1 bxc3+ 31.♖e3 and Black has no defense against the threats along the f-file.

26...♖xc2 is a great strike that leads the game towards an unclear end. It is definitely Black's best option.

A) 27.♖xc2 b3+

A1) 28.♖b2? ♖a2+ 29.♖xa2 bxa2 30.♖a1





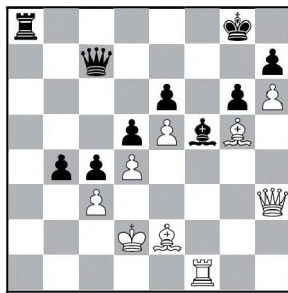
Nikola Nestorovic became a Grandmaster in 2016 and a FIDE Trainer in 2018. Still an active player, Nikola is mostly dedicated to chess teaching. Together with his father, IM Dejan, he co-authored two chess books – *The Power of Defence* and *The Art of Counterattack in 64 Pictures and Secrets of Positional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



30...♖b8!! 31.♖h2 ♜xd4! 32.cxd4 ♖b6 and, after a few strong moves, Black should win the game.

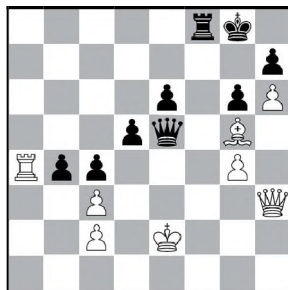
A2) 28.♙d2! The only chance. Now after 28...♞a2+ 29.♞xa2 bxa2 30.gxf5 ♖b6! 31.♞d1 ♖b2+ 32.♙e1 a1♖ 33.♞xa1 ♖xa1+ 34.♙d1 ♞xf5 it is not clear which side has the better chances. Actually it all looks rather messy.

B) More precise is 27.♞xa8, when after 27...♞xa8 28.gxf5 ♙xf5



29.♖h4! bxc3+ 30.♙e3! White successfully repels the direct threats, and has a piece for three pawns. Nevertheless, the insecure position of his king requires great care to the very end. Objectively, White has the upper hand, but there is a lot of play ahead.

27.♞xf8+ ♞xf8 28.cxd4 28.♞xa4? is an inferior way of capturing the piece. 28...♙xe2 29.♙xe2 ♖xe5+



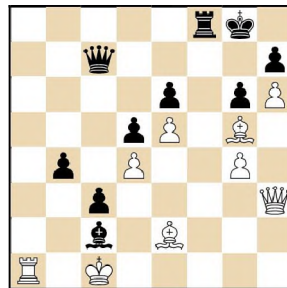
A) 30.♖e3 ♖h2+ 31.♙e1 ♖h1+ 32.♙d2 bxc3+ 33.♙xc3 (33.♙xc3 ♞f2+ 34.♙e3 ♖f3+ 35.♙d4 e5+ winning the queen

and the game.) 33...♞f3++ with another version of winning the queen.

B) 30.♙e3 ♖xc3 31.g5 ♖xc2+ 32.♙e1 ♖e4++ Through obvious counterplay Black has developed a strong attack, whilst grabbing too many pawns along the way as compensation.

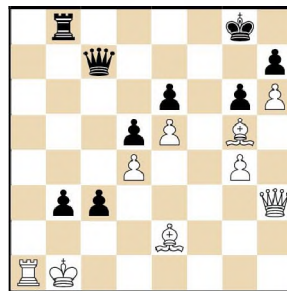
28...c3+ 29.♙c1 29.♙d1 ♙xc2+ transposes to the game.

29...♙xc2!! A phenomenal practical opportunity with undeniable counterplay! White now has to be very precise as the price per move is extremely high.



30.♙xc2 b3+ 31.♙b1! The best square for the king. Of course, not 31.♙d3? b2–+. White would have led the game into very muddy waters after 31.♙xb3? ♖b6+ 32.♙xc3 ♞c8+ 33.♙d2 ♖xd4+ 34.♙e1 ♖xa1+ 35.♙f2 ♖xe5 36.♞e3.

31...♞b8 The climax of the game – White is faced with a tough choice...



Only one move leads to victory and all the others are losing! Finding it is a great example of defending against a very strong threat.

The topic of how to evaluate a position is also interesting here. Does White have a 'winning' position just because the computer immediately finds a solution and shows +8, or is it not quite like that?

It seems to me that everything depends on the difficulty of the move, calculation, time on the clock, pressure arising from the importance of the game itself, whether someone likes to defend or not, etc. Therefore, many factors have a bearing on whether we would be able to solve such positions or not.

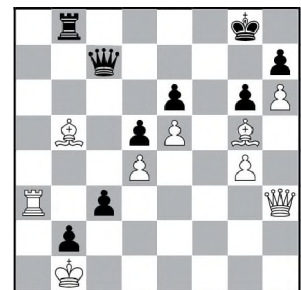
32.♞a3? Losing in a very convincing way!

32.♙d3? is another line that seems to be a possible defense against the invasion of Black's pawns. But it fails! 32...b2 33.♞a2 c2+! The key blow! 34.♙xc2 ♖xc2+! 35.♙xc2 b1♖+ and after a few exact moves, the pawn has promoted with a direct checkmate to follow.

32.♙b5!! An absolutely brilliant defense – counterplay is the order of the day!

A) 32...♞xb5?! 33.♞a8+ ♞b8 (33...♙f7 runs into 34.♖f3 mate.) 34.♞xb8+ ♖xb8 35.♖xc3+–.

B) 32...b2! The best chance! But now comes 33.♞a3!!, the second in a series of only moves! At first glance it is not so easy to understand why the rook has to go to the a3 square...



B1) 33...♖c4!? A nice trick but it is met by 34.♖xc3! Now after some calculation, we start taking away available squares for the black queen and threaten to give a check. (Not 34.♙xc4?? c2+ 35.♙xc2 b1♖+ 36.♙d2 ♞b2+ 37.♙e3 ♖e4 with a beautiful checkmate in the middle of the board!) 34...♖xb5 35.♖d3 Covering the a6-f1 diagonal. 35...♖b4 36.♙d2+– and all the squares that the black queen wanted access to are effectively covered. There are no more threats and White's material advantage will prove decisive.

B2) 33...c2+ 34.♙xb2 ♞xb5+ 35.♞b3! Only now can we see the beauty of a fully completed defensive plan! The rook must be positioned on the third rank because it is the only way to deal with the check, which in many lines would be a precursor to the opponent's mating threats. 35...♞xb3+ 36.♖xb3 Now all Black's threats have vanished, White has retained his extra piece, and everything is unquestionably heading towards a prosaic ending.

32...c2+! and **White resigned** on seeing the forced 33.♙b2 c1♖+!. I assume that White had previously overlooked this tactical move, leading to a grand finale after 34.♙xc1 ♖c2+ 35.♙a1 ♖xc1 mate.



A Peek Inside A Private Archive

FROM A RATHER UNIQUE GAMES DATABASE,
AMERICAN CHESS MAGAZINE REVEALS
EXCLUSIVELY SOME HIDDEN GEMS
GATHERED TOGETHER OVER DECADES BY
RENOWNED BIBLIOPHILE ANDY ANSEL.

William Martz – The Great Wisconsin Master

In this issue, we will feature games from Bill Martz (1945–1983), an IM from Milwaukee who died of cancer way too young. In going through Dale Brandreth's collection, I found mimeographed pages that appear to contain all of Martz's games – over 1,800 of them! I am not sure if Dale meant to publish these games in a book or just add them to his collection. The original source is not known, but it appears to be game scores in chronological order that were typewritten and then photocopied.

■ By Andy Ansel

In the United States, chess strength has been dominated by the two coasts. Chicago, the chess hub of the Midwest, has had some strong players, but being from Milwaukee, Bill definitely had to travel to face strong competition. Some career highlights include winning the U.S. Junior Championship in 1965, playing for the United States Student Team Championship at Ybbs in 1968 and for the Olympic team at Skopje in 1972, as well as in two U.S. Championships, 1972 and 73. In his last U.S. Open, played in Saint Paul (1982), he tied for first with GM Andy Soltis.

Some personal details come from an article in *Badger Chess*, reprinted in the June 1983 issue of *Chess Life* (page 40) written by Richard Fauber, where he states that Bill attended University of Wisconsin at Madison. Martz later got a law degree, but never actually practiced law. He kept very close to himself and was disciplined yet sensitive, traits shared by his close friend GM Robert Hubner. Also in the June 1983 issue *Chess Life* are two games annotated by Jude Acers in his usual entertaining and instructive style, plus one game given by Arthur Bisguier.

Bill had a fairly rigid opening repertoire. He regularly played the Paulsen Sicilian early in his career before switching to the Alekhine. Against d4, he tended to employ a Grunfeld structure. He almost always opened with 1.c4 or 1.d4, many times transposing into a pet line of

the King's Indian with 4.♗e2 followed by f2–f4. He had very good results against the Pirc/Modern using the Averbakh system. Overall, he was well prepared in his openings and had enough variety to make him hard to prepare against.

In this article Martz's first opponent was Michael Chess from Nebraska. Chess, along with his brother Richard and Loren

Schmidt formed a strong local team that led University of Nebraska to the 1975 Pan-Am Collegiate Championship. Michael was a strong expert/master who also passed away at a young age.

All the games are annotated by Pete Tamburro.

A42

William Martz

Michael Chess

North American Open, Stillwater 1974

1.c4 g6 2.e4 ♗g7 In the June 1972 *British Chess Magazine*, William Hartston wrote an article, "The Anti-anti-Grunfeld." He spent more than three pages on it, but apparently Mr. Chess didn't read

the literature or perhaps was suspicious of it. 2...e5 is popular in this move order.

3.d4 d6 4.♗c3 ♗d7 Does anyone still play this junk? Oh, yeah! Over 4,000 games with this for Black and some famous GMs to boot. It creates complications and often puts opponents on their own without their precious little book lines. However, Martz has a system against this sort of thing.

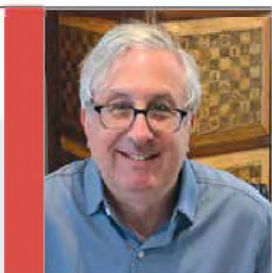
5.♗e3 e5 There is 5...♗f6, but that isn't why Black started out the way he did.

6.d5 ♗e7 Considering similarity to the classical King's Indian, one would think Black, especially with the white bishop on e3, would want to discourage b4 by playing 6...a5. However, 6...♗e7 shows that his idea for not playing ...♗f6 was, in fact, to play...f5 without having to retreat the knight from f6.

7.♖d2 0-0 8.0-0-0 f5 9.f3 ♗f6 10.h3 f4 11.♗f2 a6



William Martz



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.



Black obviously has the position he wants. The series of moves are certainly a unified approach. The question is: does anyone else want this? If you were White here, what would your plan be?

12.♖b1! ♗d7 13.♙c1! While Black may have forestalled a White kingside attack, Martz plays two fine positional moves to lift the curtain on his plan: he's coming down the c-file! With respect to the prior question, did you pick this as your plan?

13...♗b8 14.c5 ♖h8 15.♗d3 Time to get the rest of the team on the field. Black has no counterplay.

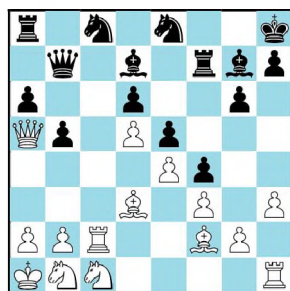


Second Plan Question: What next? Hint - there are two weak Black squares of special

interest: c6 and a5. What relationship do they have to each other?

18.♗a1 ♗c8 Knowing how this game developed, 18...b4 19.♗b1 a5 was called for. White would then continue with his plan of doubling the rooks on the c-file, trying to exploit the weaknesses in Black's camp.

19.♗b1 ♗f7 20.♗a5 ♗e8 21.♙c2 ♗b7 22.♗c1



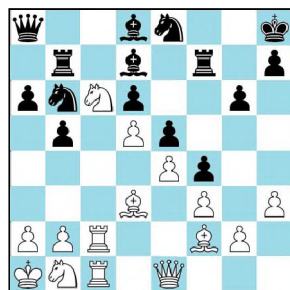
White has a stranglehold on the dark squares as his opponent's Indian bishop is useless, but what were those two Nimzowitschian knight retreats about?

22...♗b8 23.♗b3 ♗f6 After all that time to save a tempo for the knight move and ...f5, Black has to give it back with interest just to get the bishop back in the game.

24.♗hc1 Yes, the rooks dominate the c-file, but they have no entry square on c7 or c8, so other than looking powerful, what is their purpose? Stay tuned.

24...♗b6 25.♗e1 ♗d8 26.♗a5 Ah! Now it is all revealed: a5 is a knight move from c6 and a ♗c6 move is now supported by two rooks and a pawn. This is very impressive planning on Martz's part.

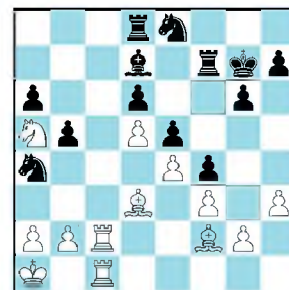
26...♗a8 27.♗c6 ♗b7 27...♗xc6 28.dxc6 was probably the lesser evil for Black.



The knight looks like it's a sheepdog holding a small group of six or seven sheep at bay, but Martz exchanges it off!

28.♗xd8! ♗xd8 29.♗a5 This is just beautiful! White's pieces dance on and off the a5 square until the final breakthrough.

29...♗b8 30.♗d2 ♗g7 31.♗b3 ♗a4 32.♗xd8 ♗xd8 33.♗a5



Absolutely brilliant positional chess! He does the same maneuver again: queen to a5, knight to b3, queen moves, ♗a5 and ♗c6 to come. Is that cool or what!? Go back and look at the position after the knights went back to c1 and b1. Did you see that plan?

33...♗b8 34.♗c6 An encore bow at c6. Bravo!! Black in good conscience could have resigned here.

34...♗c8 35.♗b4 ♗xc2 36.♗xc2 a5 37.♗c6 ♗xc6 38.♗xc6 ♗c7 39.♗xb5 ♗c5 40.♗xc5 dxc5 41.♗e6 ♗f6 42.d6

Black resigned

Source: Unpublished Martz notebook

The next game features Viktors Pupols, a Latvian emigre who has been a chess fixture in Washington for many years and is still active at the age 89. Besides being known for playing the Latvian defense, Pupols is known for his tenacious style of play. Larry Parr wrote an excellent book, *Viktors Pupols, American Master*, which gives many of his games.

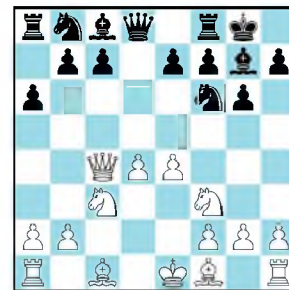
D97

Viktors Pupols

William Martz

Keres Memorial, Vancouver 1976

1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.♗f3 ♗g7 5.♗b3 dxc4 6.♗xc4 0-0 7.e4 a6 This was a theoretical novelty by Alekhine in 1935 in his match with Euwe.



Alekhine messed it up badly after 8.♗f4 b5! 9.♗xc7 ♗e8? and the line died in its infancy. It was revived in the sixties and



became known as a feisty Black response to create a tactical melee to wrest the initiative from White. You have to really study it to play it.

8...b3 Critical is the move 8.e5, as Carlsen has beaten Aronian, and Yu has overcome Ding and Wei with this line. Pupols doesn't have the advantage of almost 50 years of theory and decides to be cautious.

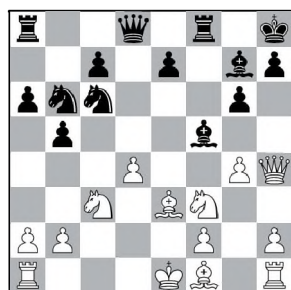
8...b5 Martz, though, gets it, even without theory.

9.e5 dfd7 10.e6! Now, Pupols has caught on! This is the critical line today and the one Yu followed in the above-mentioned games.

10...fxe6



11.a4? 11.♖xe6+ is logical, when after 11...♗h8 12.♗e4 (12.♗d5 is inferior, as after 12...♗b6 13.♗xd8 ♖xd8 14.♗f4 ♖a7 15.h4 ♗c6 16.h5 ♗f5 17.hxg6 ♗xg6 18.0-0-0 ♗xd4, Black is little more than just equal.) 12...♗b6 13.♗e3 ♗f5 14.♗h4 ♗c6 15.g4



15...e5! provides Black with equality. It's no wonder that Pupols and Martz never got to this point, as modern theory explored this line in great depth – witnessed by the game between two of the best theoreticians of the contemporary elite. 16.♗g5 h6 17.gxf5 exd4 18.0-0-0 ♖e7 19.♗g2 dxe3 20.♗xc6 ♖ab8 21.♗f3 ♖c5 22.♖hg1 exf2 23.♖xg6 ♖bd8 24.♗xh6+ ♗xh6+ 25.♖xh6+ ♗g7 26.♖g6+ ♗h8 27.♖h6+ ♗g7 28.♖g6+ ♗h8 29.♖h6+ a draw was agreed in S.Shankland 2704 - M.Vachier-Lagrave 2761, Berlin 2022.

Yu against Ding went 11.♗g5. Then, after 11...♗b6 12.♗xe6 ♗xe6 13.♗xe6+ ♗h8 14.♗e3, the engines, though, score

it as equal, but it isn't drawn. There is much play here to come. Black opted for 14...♗d6, and after 15.♗xd6 exd6 16.h4, White was able to win on move 46 in Yu Yangyi 2738 - Ding Liren 2836, Internet 2020.

11...b4 More in keeping with the theme of this line would be 11...c5, but the text is playable.

12.♗e4 ♗b6 13.a5 Not so much to chase the knight as to prevent a5.

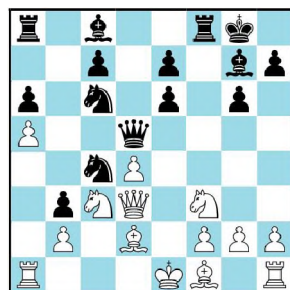
13...♗d5 14.♖c2 If 14.♗xd5 ♗xd5 15.♗c5 ♗c6, the doubled pawns will at some point have an exchange on e5. Black's knights are well positioned. Once ...e5 is played, the light-squared bishop will get air. White's knights have similar nice squares and two potentially active bishops, so it's a dynamically equal game.

14...b3 15.♗d3? White had to play the unattractive 15.♗e2, because the queen on d3 can be harassed by a ...♗c6-b4 maneuver, threatening ...♗c2.

15...♗c6 16.♗d2 White shares that concern, but Black's cavalry is not done!

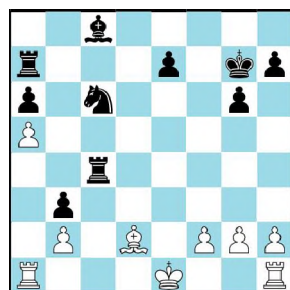
16...♗c4 Brutal and efficient would have been 16...♖xf3! 17.gxf3 ♗xd4 18.0-0-0 ♗a4, and that bishop on g7 enters the fray from a distance.

17.♗c3



17...♖xf3!! Now he sees it! And he offers his queen! Bravo! I truly wonder if he waited a move to play the rook sac so he could offer the queen as well since it was obvious for White to play a move like ♗c3.

18.♗xd5 ♖xd3 19.♗xc7 ♖xd4 20.♗xc4 ♖a7 21.♗xe6 ♖xc4 22.♗xg7 ♗xg7



23.♗c3+ It's over, but Martz's next convinces his opponent it's time to resign.

23...♖xc3 24.bxc3 ♗f5 White resigned

Source: Unpublished Martz notebook

In the last game Martz's opponent, Walter Browne, needs no introduction. At the time of the game, Walter was representing Australia and was the highest-rated junior in the U.S. by over 100 rating points! As usual, with Walter one can be assured it will be a fighting game.

E79

William Martz

Walter Browne

Niagara Falls (NY) Open 1970

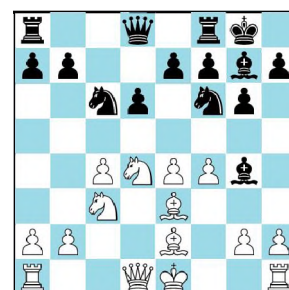
Browne once said that "most dangerous player was an A-player with no fear." How about an IM, Walter?

Actually, Martz would become an IM in 1975, but his rating was 2371 at the end of 1969, and Browne, who was rated at 2459 at the end of 1969, would become a GM in 1970.

1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.f4 Wow! The Four Pawns Attack! A Martz favorite. See the bonus game below. **5...0-0 6.♗f3 c5 7.♗e2** Logical and best. The advance 7.d5 is met by 7...e6, transposing to the Benoni setup, in which White's pawn on f4 is a bit over-extended. Black is absolutely fine here.

Releasing the tension by 7.dxc5 is an unambitious approach by White. Black can choose from several good options here, 7...♗a5 being one of them.

7...cxd4 8.♗xd4 ♗c6 9.♗e3 ♗g4 About that time, Pachman called this "the last word in this variation."



10.♗xc6 If 10.♗xg4 ♗xg4 11.♗xg4 ♗xd4 12.♗d1 ♗c6, Pachman opined that "Black stands reasonably well."

10...♗xe2 11.♗xd8 ♗xd1 12.♖xd1 ♖fxd8 Please, check out Alex Fishbein's endgame article in this issue on "equal" endings. We have one of those here, but



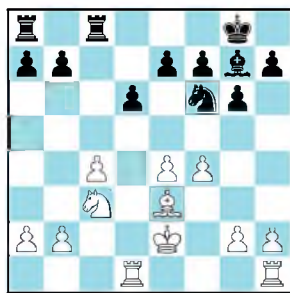
REIMAN AQUARIUM AT DISCOVERY WORLD

MILWAUKEE'S PREMIER SCIENCE MUSEUM, DISCOVERY WORLD, IS HOME TO THE REIMAN AQUARIUM, THE LARGEST AQUARIUM IN WISCONSIN. SITUATED ALONG THE SHORE OF LAKE MICHIGAN, THERE'S NO BETTER PLACE TO LEARN ABOUT SEA LIFE IN THE MIDWEST. YOU'LL FIND FISH AND SEA CREATURES FROM AROUND THE WORLD INCLUDING THE ATLANTIC AND PACIFIC OCEANS, THE RIVERS OF THE AMAZON BASIN, AFRICAN RIFT LAKES, AND THE GREAT LAKES.

equal does not necessarily mean drawn as there is play yet in the position.

13.♔e2 A spirited decision. The engines like castling, but the human wants an active king.

13...♖dc8 Browne could have played **13...♖d7**.



14.c5!? An intriguing pawn sacrifice to gain access to the seventh rank and even gain space in the center.

14...♙xc5 15.e5 ♘g4 16.♖d7 b6 The awkward-looking **16...f6** would have made an interesting fight of it as well.

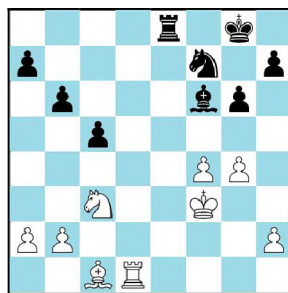
17.♖xe7 17.♖d5 ♖d8 18.♗xe7+ ♔f8 19.♖hd1 ♔e8 20.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 21.♖xd8+ ♔xd8 22.♖c6+ ♔d7 23.♗xa7 ♗xh2=.

17...♖e8! 18.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 19.♙c1 f6 Getting the knight back in the center was worth a thought. **19...♖h6 20.♔f3 ♗f5.**

20.♔f3 ♖h6 21.exf6 ♙xf6 22.g4 Either **22.♖e4** or **22.♖d5** was reasonable.

22...♗f7 Browne didn't want to give up his precious bishop, but it makes it look easier to draw after **22...♙xc3 23.bxc3 ♖d8.**

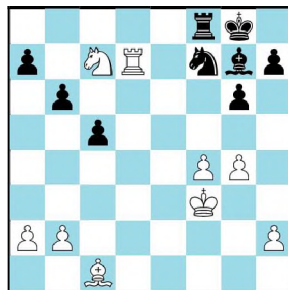
23.♖d1



23...♖d8? Last chance for **23...♙xc3**. Browne seems oblivious to how dangerous the knight on d5 is.

24.♖d5 ♙g7 25.♖c7! And another rook gets to the seventh. This one will be more troublesome.

25...♖f8 26.♖d7 ♗f7? The final mistake. Black had to try the odd-looking **26...♙h8**, with the idea to meet **27.♔e4** with the only attempt on active counterplay by **27...♖c6**. White is better, but not immediately winning like in the game.



27.♔e4! See? The king being on e2 made

it one move closer than being castled and on g1. Black also now has to worry about the king heading to d5 as well.

27...h5 A feeble attempt to create a distraction. Black is just lost.

28.gxh5 gxh5 29.♗e6 ♖a8 30.♔f5! ♙h8 31.♗g5 ♗xg5 32.♔xg5 The pawn is doomed, but unnecessary to White at this point.

32...♖e8 33.f5 ♖e1 34.♔g6 ♖g1+ 35.♙g5 ♖xg5+ Speaking of unnecessary... **36.♔xg5 ♙xb2 37.♔g6 ♔f8 38.f6 ♔e8 39.♖xa7**

Black resigned

Source: Chess Study Group 1976 by Martz

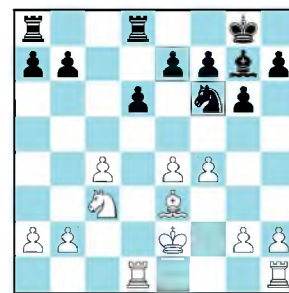
E79

William Martz

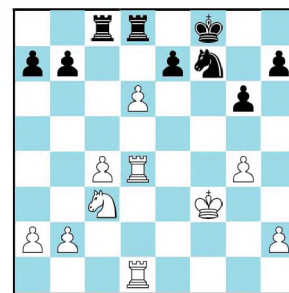
Dmitry Agrachov

U.S. Open, Columbus 1977

1.c4 ♗f6 2.♖c3 g6 3.e4 d6 4.d4 ♙g7 5.♙e2 0-0 6.f4 c5 7.♗f3 cxd4 8.♗xd4 ♗c6 9.♙e3 ♙g4 10.♗xc6 ♙xe2 11.♗xd8 ♙xd1 12.♖xd1 ♖fxd8 13.♔e2



13...♙g4 14.♙d4 ♙xd4 15.♖xd4 ♖ac8 16.♔f3 ♖h6 17.♖hd1 ♔f8 18.g4 f6 19.e5 fxe5 20.fxe5 ♗f7 21.exd6



21...♖xc4?? **21...♖xd6** was necessary, when after **22.♖xd6 exd6 23.b3** White is marginally better.

22.dxe7+ Everything works: **22.♖xc4 ♗e5+ 23.♔f4 ♗xc4 24.dxe7+ ♔xe7 25.♖xd8 ♔xd8 26.b3 ♖d6 27.♔e5 (Or 27.♔g5 ♗f7+ 28.♔f6).**

22...♔xe7 23.♖e1+ **Black resigned**

Source: Unpublished Martz notebook



Coffee Mug Memories

By Alexis Levitin

I've got a coffee mug with a picture of me and my mother on it. That's my favorite. My mother's been dead for nearly eighteen years now. Hard to swallow. We used to drink tea together late at night in the kitchen, quietly united, deeply at home, our minds wandering, as we talked about nothing and the steam rose from our cups.

I've got another mug, this one with a wolf panting gently, snow dusting his snout, as he stares out at me from the mystery of his otherness. To me that wolf speaks for the beauty and indifference of the universe itself. That's a good mug for the antidote of hot chocolate in the middle of long winter nights of driven snow and a cold wind whistling in the wires outside. Yes, I live in the Northern Tier.

I've got a third mug depicting one of the famous unicorn tapestries from the Cloisters. In the midst of an effulgent garden rich with flowers, butterflies, damselflies, and even a small frog, reclines the mythical creature of yearning, encircled by a fence, tamed by his captors. Resplendent in his narrow space, wearing a collar reflecting his surroundings, he poses for the artists busily weaving his freshly domesticated mystery.

But the one I probably drink from the most sports a fully rigged sailing vessel on its clear white surface, and beneath the logo are the words Java Strait Coffeehouse, Fayetteville, Arkansas. On the other side of the mug there are bold letters:

I beat Java Strait's House Chess Champion

It is a prized possession, though the memory of that conquest carries with it a modicum of embarrassment.

It all happened quite a few years ago. I had come to give a guest lecture at the University of Arkansas. After my talk, after the round table dinner at the local steakhouse, as my genial hosts shook hands and drifted back to the comfort of their daily lives, I thought I would drive around and check out the night scene in the relatively quiet town. I came across the dim lights of the Java Strait Coffeehouse and parked right in front. Inside there was almost no one. There were heavy wooden tables, benches and chairs, a young couple huddled in the corner, soft blues in the background, a fine traditional Staunton chess set on the counter, and a surprising rack of good contemporary poetry. I picked up a collection of poems by David Baker and sat down in one of the heavy wooden chairs.

The young waiter, with a round face and a bit of a belly, brought me a menu and I ordered a hot chocolate and an éclair. When he returned with my order, I noticed the writing on the mug. I put down the book of poetry and, glancing around the empty interior, posed my simple question: "So, who is the house champ, anyway?" He fidgeted,



Alexis Levitin was an English Professor for fifty years. He began playing chess at the age of six with two solid Russian chess players: Sergei Levitin, his father, and V.S. Yanovsky, who was his step-father. Alexis never became a true tournament player, but he did win first place in the Forest Hills High School chess tournament of 1956 and the Plattsburgh, New York Chess Club championship in the year 2000. He also received a second place trophy from the Polgar Chess Authority in New York City in 1999. Levitin's first book *The Last Ruy Lopez: Tales from the Royal Game* will be published by Russell Enterprises in fall of 2023.

cleared his throat, and, with his voice cracking a bit, replied "That would be me."

It sounded as if the evening might end with an unexpected pleasure. "Any chance of a game," I asked. He gazed around at the nearly empty shop, looked at his watch, and finally said "Why not? Once that couple leaves, I'll be closing up and we can play a game for as long as it takes."

"Terrific," I said, and returned to David Baker's poetry. Twenty minutes later the young waiter brought me another hot chocolate, murmuring "it's on the house." Shortly after that the young couple pushed back their heavy chairs, the young fellow paid the bill, and they departed into the night. Now it was just the long-haired grey cat curled beside the chess set on the counter, the local house champ, and me.

All this happened a long time ago. I don't remember much about the game. I opened with my usual king's pawn advance and the house champ countered with a Sicilian. He was young, but he was no slouch. The game went on and on and for the longest time no pieces were exchanged. I hoped to push forward, but his pawn structure was sound. Finally, I found a small structural weakness and applied pressure. And sometime just after 1 A.M. the house





champ resigned. We shook hands, he gave me a fresh copy of the coffee mug, neatly wrapped in tissue paper and housed in a discrete little box. I told him it had been a great game, we shook hands again, and I drove back to faculty housing, where I slept the sleep of the just.

The next day, after breakfast with my hosts, I started out of town, heading north toward my next lecture up in Missouri. While still extricating myself from town, I suddenly noticed the Java Strait Coffeehouse on my left. I pulled over to say good-bye to the likeable house champ with whom I had played till the wee hours of the night. The bell on the door rang, he looked up, and we both smiled. "I have something to show you," he said. "I went over the game, earlier this morning, with my teacher, the guy who taught me everything I know. Take a look at this," and he pulled the chess set off the counter, put it in the middle of the table at which we had played the night before, and began replaying the game from the notations he had made. It all looked solid to me. And then came the revelation. "Look at this move," he said. I looked, and it was a very good move, a move that neither of us had seen, a move that would have changed the game. "You see," he said with a regretful little grin, "if I were as good as my teacher, I could have won that game."

I stared at the board for a long time. His teacher was absolutely right. He had had a winning position if only he had been able to see it.

"Let me buy you a hot chocolate," I offered, slapping him on the back. "What a bummer. You should have won." We drank our hot chocolates together and then, with a final handshake and a squeeze of his arm, I headed out of town. The elegant little coffee mug was still sitting in my back seat, carefully wrapped in tissue paper in its discrete little box. Despite his mentor's discovery, I couldn't give it back. So here it is beside my keyboard, as I type away, a source of pride, tinged with uneasiness. My hot chocolate has grown lukewarm and I wonder if I shouldn't have returned the mug after all, way back when. ■



Discover The Threats

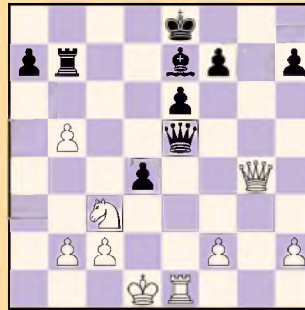
By GM Nikola Nestorovic

Solutions on page 67

1.

Glenn Flear 2489
Jack Silver

U.S. Open, Indianapolis 2016



Black to move

2.

Magnus Carlsen 2690
David Navara 2719

Corus, Wijk aan Zee 2007

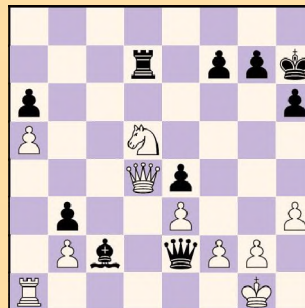


White to move

3.

Amit Doshi Moksh 2332
Hans Niemann 2525

GM Round Robin, Paracin 2021

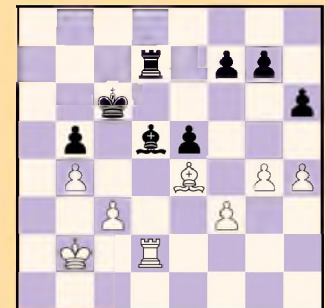


Black to move

4.

Nikola Nestorovic 2506
Faruk Bistic 2349

Bosna Open, Sarajevo 2017

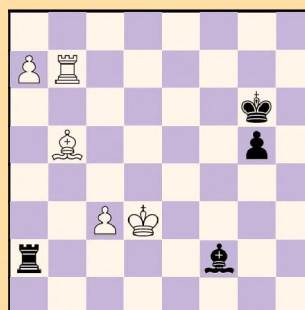


White to move

5.

Sergio R. Caldach 2233
Aleksa Strikovic 2495

San Cristobal La Laguna, Tenerife 2022

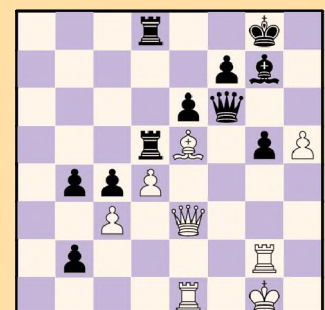


White to move

6.

Efim Geller
Yuri Averbakh

Soviet Championship, Kiev 1954



Black to move



3rd The MAGNIFICENT 3 REMARKABLE RECENT GAMES

By GM Sarunas Sulskis

THE CROWN OF "SHINING ROSE'S" GLORIOUS RIDE

I think that before the start of the Women's World Cup in Baku, only a handful of fans, mostly Bulgarian, could have expected Nurgul Salimova (the translation of her name means "shining rose" -Ed.), modestly seeded 29th in the roster, to claim one of the three coveted seats for the 2024 FIDE Women's Candidates Tournament. Her young career had so far achieved relatively limited exposure in chess media beyond her native country.

However, after Nurgul's glamorous rise through the ranks at Baku, this state of affairs would not last long! In contrast to quite a few more well-known and higher rated rivals at the Cup, Salimova had not been given any privileges at the start and began her ascent from Round 1. She knocked out no less than six(!) opponents in her bid to win the Women's World Cup and was only defeated in a final face-off against the eventual winner Alexandra Goryachkina.

One of the heaviest hurdles on Nurgul's way to glory was her semi-final match with the renowned player Anna Muzychuk, leader of the Ukrainian team and Olympic gold medal winners. The match extended well into tiebreaks, palpably spinning out of control as the players exchanged consecutive blows with Black in the third and fourth rapid games. I take the liberty of presenting the fifth game of this tense semi-final match, albeit played at a rapid time rate of ten minutes plus ten-second-increment. The tension was still there, in fact it had only increased.

The game displays Anna's mind heavily bent on her conviction to be the favourite in the match despite Black color odds. Her previous win of a rapid game 25+10 on the black side might have done a bad favor for Anna as this resulted in the Ukrainian player conducting her game with little or no regard for defense. With a well-timed center break d4-d5!, Salimova sounds the alarm loud and clear for Muzychuk. Yet, the absolute cherry on the cake is her ♕e3-b6!! sacrifice. Facing Salimova's relentless determination to burn all her pieces on the altar of victory, Muzychuk resigns the game in awe and never comes back in the match even with the chance of revenge in the sixth game still to be played.

D27

Nurgul Salimova	2409
Anna Muzychuk	2504

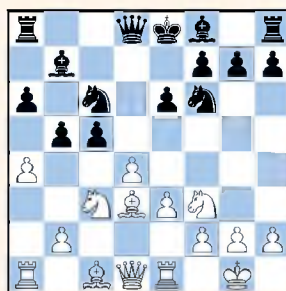
Semi-final match, Game 5 (Rapid), Women's World Cup, Baku 2023

1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.♟f3 ♟f6 4.e3 e6 5.♙xc4 c5 6.0-0 a6 7.♞e1 A modern but still quite unusual move which was virtually unknown some ten years ago. In terms of popularity it still significantly lags behind the mainstream 7.a4, 7.♟c3,

7.♙b3 and 7.♞e2. Yet 7.♞e1 possesses quite a few sound positional foundations. Sooner or later Black tends to go for central liquidation by ...cxd4. Then, after exd4, the position of White's rook might just come in handy.

7...♟c6 8.♟c3 b5 This lunge is hard to resist, especially in rapid chess. Yet it invites a subsequent a2-a4 and will contribute to Black's ultimate downfall. 8...♙e7 would not expose Black so much on the queenside.

9.♙d3 ♙b7 10.a4! A well-known attempt to undermine Black's foothold on the queenside.



10...b4 The easiest, but not necessarily the best reply. Its downside is the loss of the b4 square for her own knight. 10...c4 is an alternative, but on 11.axb5 axb5 12.♙xa8, Black needs to exercise caution

by recapturing with her bishop, 12...♙xa8, as 12...♞xa8? would be careless due to 13.♟xb5!, which would cost her two pawns.

11.♟e4 cxd4? From the strategical vantage point, this pawn trade clearly plays into White's hands. Not only is her somewhat mysterious 7.♞e1 vindicated, but also White's bishop on c1 obtains broad access to join in the fray.

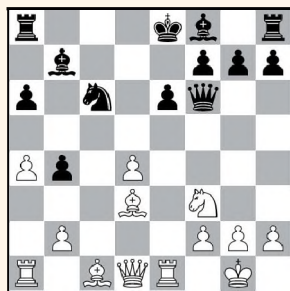
For some obscure reasons Muzychuk fails to source the ideas coming out of the fresh FIDE World Championship match, Ding - Nepomniachtchi. In a position with the white pawn on h3 instead of 7.♞e1, Nepo went 11...♟a5 and was quite successful after 12.♟xf6+ gxf6. That said, 12.♟xc5 would be more likely in the ladies' game, but Black can meet it with 12...♙xc5 13.dxc5 ♙e4, whereupon neither White's rook on e1, nor bishop on c1 impress much. 12.♟xf6+! A well-timed intermediate knight swap. Muzychuk has two possible recaptures, but neither of them is fully satisfactory for Black.

12...gxf6 This dramatically endangers any potential short castling and essentially confines the black king to the center.

And yet 12...♞xf6 13.exd4, with the double threat of ♙c1-g5 and d4-d5, is no better for Black.



▲ Nurgul Salimova



Quite importantly, 13...d7 14.g5 xf3 is no cure for Black thanks to the magnificent tiny move 15.d2!! Then, after 15...xd4 16.b5+, the black queen is finally lost.

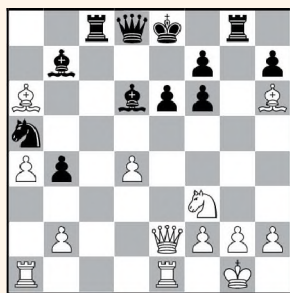
13.exd4 d5 Perhaps, after all, Muzychuk has seen that in the aforementioned World Crown game Nepomniachtchi equally recaptured ...gxf6, and also put his knight on a5. However, the inclusion of the unsound ...cxd4 exd4, turns everything in White's favor.

13...d7 14.a5 d5 15.c2 c8 16.a4+ c6 looks more solid for Black.

14.f4 c8 And this only serves to weaken the a6 pawn. Better was 14...d6 15.exd6 (15.h6 g8; 15.g3!?) 15...xd6, in order to meet 16.c1 with 16...f4.

15.e2 d6 16.h6! First, Salimova makes sure that under no circumstances will the black king be able to hide away on the kingside.

16...b3 This pseudo-activity only encourages White's general strategy of rocking Black's position by the d4-d5 thrust. However it is not easy to give Black good advice at this stage. Maybe she could have essayed 16...g8 in order to meet 17.xa6...

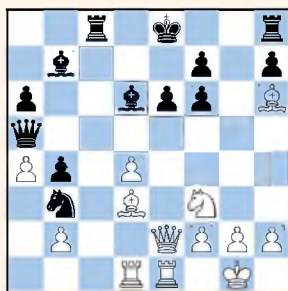


A) ...with the spectacular 17...xh2+!? Yet, if White keeps her cool with 18.h1±, she would remain in the driver's seat. (Both 18.xh2 d6+±; and 18.xh2 xg2+ 19.f1 xh2± play into Black's hands.)

B) 17...c2 is no less spectacular, but looks unsound after 18.b5+ e7 19.xc2 xf3 20.g3. (20.xe6+ e6 21.e1+ e5 deserves to be postponed.)

17.ad1 Salimova introduces her last piece to deliver the d4-d5 break to best effect.

17...a5 Despite the color odds, Muzychuk continues to play aggressive chess with little regard to defense. On the next move though, Salimova opens her opponent's eyes to the futility of such strategy.



18.d5!! A powerful central break, coming at the best possible moment for Salimova and the worst possible one for Muzychuk. It rocks Black's position heavily at all angles of the board.

18...xd5 18...xd5 loses the queen on the spot, but Black's troubles don't end there – 19.b5+ axb5 20.xd5 xd5 21.xb5+ c6 22.d3+- with a double attack.

On 18...g8 the safest way to clinch the win is probably 19.xh7 h8 20.dxe6+- 19.dxe6 must win too, but why allow a ferocious counterattack? For example, 19...xh2+ 20.xh2 h5+ 21.g1 xg2+ (21...xf3 22.xf7+ xf7 23.e6 mate.) 22.xg2 g4+ 23.h2 h5+ 24.g3.

19.xa6 White's strategy has worked out so powerfully that Salimova already has a pleasant choice of winning ways. 19.b5+ axb5 (19...d8 20.xd5 exd5 21.xa6 -) 20.xd5±.

19...c5 In light of an imminent xxd5 capture Anna Muzychuk tries to support her bishop.

19...xf3 Once the bishop is removed from d5, Black's position instantly falls apart – 20.xf3 xa6 21.xf6 f8 22.xe6+! fxe6 23.xe6+ e7 24.xa6.

20.b5+ d8 Even 20...xb5 cannot avert a catastrophe – 21.axb5 d7 22.xd5 exd5 23.d3+-.

21.e3 Salimova insists on driving the rook off the fifth rank for a good reason – to carry out a strike on d5. 21.g7 g8 22.xf6+ c7 leaves Black more hope.

21...c7 Muzychuk's last mistake comes as a consequence of the tremendous pressure exerted on her by Salimova. 21...c8 22.xd5 exd5 23.d3 c5 24.xd5+-.

Leaving a full exchange *en prise* by 21...c7 22.xc5 xc5 would have been a fair price to pay for her misdoings in this short nerve-racking tiebreak game.

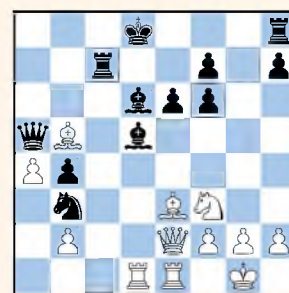
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22.xd5! A nice prelude will be followed up by a charming combination.

22...exd5 23.b6!! Awesome! Salimova suddenly throws her best pieces into the fire to deliver a direct checkmate!

Black resigned

Muzychuk resigned, unwilling to see her opponent triumph a queen down after 23...xb6 24.e8+! exe8 25.ex8 mate. In fact she still had a chance to level the score in the next tiebreaker game, but this beautiful victory gave Salimova wings and she never allowed Anna Muzychuk to come back.

WHAT DO CHESS OPENINGS SAY ABOUT CHARACTER AND PERSONALITY?

Get Rich Quick

Is playing for traps in the opening a sign of deviation from morality? Are some well-known behavioral patterns of chess players reflected in their opening choices?

■ By Dr. J. Corey Butler

Professor of Psychology at
Southwest Minnesota State University

I've been reading a lot of chess books lately. Last month I read *King's Gambit* by Paul Hoffman, which is part memoir and part commentary on the chess scene of the early 2000s. One chapter stood out to me. It was all about hustlers, cheaters, and the story of Claude Bloodgood. Bloodgood was a chess master, con man, and convicted murderer who died in prison in 2001. He enjoyed playing speed chess "with money on the table" and advocated sharp, trappy, openings that while technically unsound, were likely to defeat many amateurs quickly and efficiently. He was particularly enamored with Grob's Attack and even wrote a book on the opening.

Hoffman studied Bloodgood and interviewed his sister and one of his protégés. He suggests that there is a particular kind of mentality here.



Dr. Corey Butler is a social psychologist and chess player. He is Professor of Psychology at Southwest Minnesota State University and lives in Saint Paul, Minnesota. He has published research on the psychology of competitive orientation, physical appearance stereotypes, political attitudes and personality, and interpersonal rejection sensitivity.

This is a type of player that is impatient and always looking for a fast kill. They want to "win quickly or be shot down quickly" and a tricky opening like the Grob is appealing because it can provide this kind of instant gratification. According to Hoffman and his sources, winning a game with a cheapo can give the victor an easy thrill. When an opponent figures out the opening and learns to defeat it, the hustler goes looking for new victims.

Do chess players have styles and opening repertoires that match their personalities? Are Grob players really more devious? Psychologists sometimes talk about expressive behavior, which is when people's behaviors match their emotional states and personality traits. One can obtain clues about an individual's level of conscientiousness, for example, by the way they arrange and organize their homes. The method is not completely reliable, however, and the claim that chess is expressive behavior is even more questionable. Personally, I enjoy playing the Smith-Morra Gambit, yet I am extremely risk averse in real life.

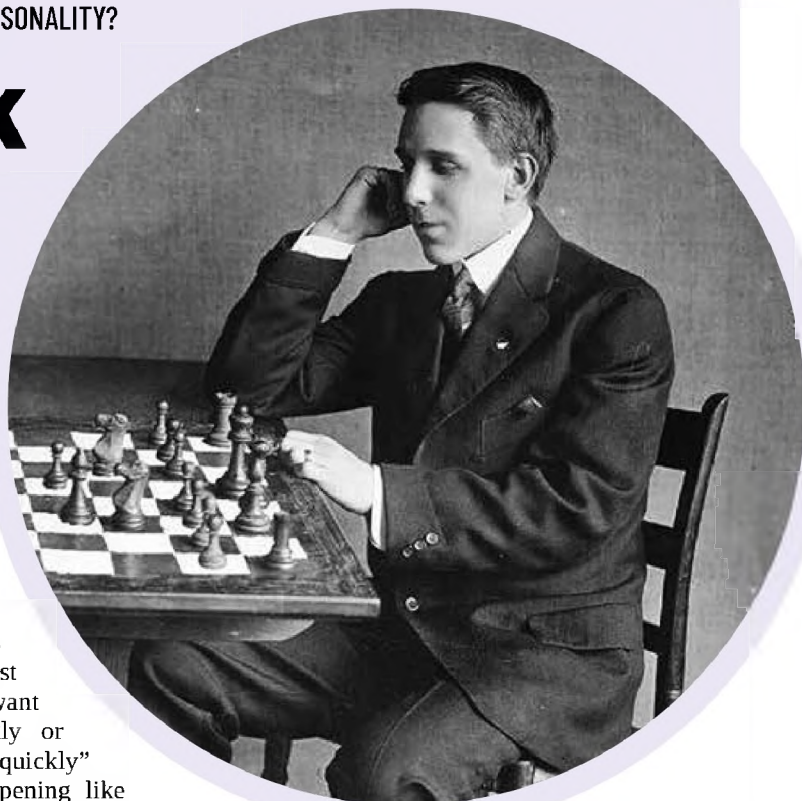
According to several theories in psychology, deceptive and criminal behaviors are caused by a certain profile or cluster of personality traits. These include traits like impulsiveness, lack of self control, narcissistic attitudes, low agreeableness, low conscientiousness, a tendency toward thrill seeking, lack of emotions like fear and remorse, habitual avoidance of responsibility, and also

self-justification
for antisocial behavior.

These traits are believed to occur early in childhood and be at least partly genetic. A significant limitation of this approach is that it neglects social influence and environmental factors.

Because the theory on criminal personality is controversial, I decided to take a look at some of the recent research on the topic. As it happens, an important study was published last year on this very subject in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.^{*} The data were obtained from a large sample of young men living in Denmark. The researchers found evidence that traits and preferences were strongly associated with crime. Impatience and risk tolerance were both significantly related to property crime, with the most risk tolerant individuals 8 to 10 percentage points higher on criminal behavior than the most risk averse. Poor self control was a significant predictor of violent crime. Furthermore, these data were controlled for socioeconomic background and other variables.

I became curious about whether or not these patterns generalize to chess players and opening choice. John S. Hilbert's book, *Shady Side: The Life and Crimes of Norman Tweed Whitaker, Chess Master* provides us with a second case study. In





Norman T. Whitaker
1932 mugshot

fact, Whitaker and Bloodgood are undoubtedly the two most notorious examples of strong chess players who were also convicted criminals. Whitaker was involved in criminal enterprises large and small, including auto theft, insurance fraud, and most infamously, an attempt to swindle the family of aviator Charles Lindbergh by posing as someone involved in the kidnapping of his son in 1932.

Near the end of Hilbert's book, chess historian, Dale Brandreth ponders the question of whether the deviousness which Norman Whitaker showed in life had any relation to his play at the chess board. In his opinion, it was a key factor that limited his playing strength. He wrote that Whitaker "achieved no more than 50%" of what he might have achieved, had he not succumbed to lazy analysis and wasted time on "petty arguments and cons."

For us, the critical question is, did Whitaker play the Grob? The answer is no, he did not. But he did have the same predilection as Bloodgood for unsound, trappy lines in the opening, the risky "get rich quick" schemes of the chess world. His games are full of Latvian Gambits, Budapest Attacks, and Albin Counter Gambits, especially against weaker players. He often played the Alapin Gambit, an unorthodox line against the French Defense (1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♗e3?) which was a specialty of his. Of course he also played the Ruy Lopez and the Queen's Gambit, as well as many other openings.

* Epper, T., Fehr, E., Hvidberg, K. B., Kreiner, C. T., Leth-Petersen, S., & Rasmussen, G. N. (2022). Preferences predict who commits crime among young men. *PNAS Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 119(6), 1-7.

Here is an illustrative game showing Whitaker's playing style. The annotations are especially useful for understanding his psychology because they were written by Whitaker himself.

Norman T. Whitaker

J. F. Collins

Chicago 1930

[Notes by Norman T. Whitaker, from the *Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 31, 1930; *The Gambit*, Oct.-Nov. 1930, and John S. Hilbert's book, *Shady Side*, 2000.]

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.♗c3 d6 6.♗c4 6.♗e2 is stronger, but White hoped that his opponent did not know the Magnus Smith Trap.



6...♗d7 If 6...g6 7.♗xc6 bxc6 8.e5 ♗g4 9.e6!

7.0-0 g6 8.f3 ♗g7 9.♗e3 0-0 10.♗d2 ♗e5 11.♗e2 ♗c8 12.b3 Disagreeable, but necessary to prevent exchange of one of the powerful Bishops. This arose from the inferior 6.♗c4 instead of 6.♗e2.

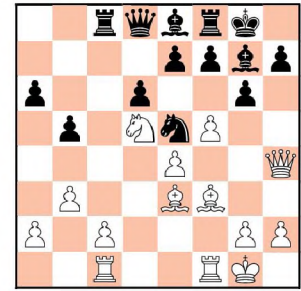
12...a6 12...♗c7 is probably stronger.

13.f4 ♗c6 14.♗f3 ♗c7! Threatening in several ways to win a piece.

15.♗ce2 ♗xd4 16.♗xd4 b5 If 16...e5 17.♗e2 ♗xc2 18.♗xd6 with White for choice.

17.f5 ♗e8 18.♗ac1 ♗c3 19.♗f2 ♗d7 To occupy the strong e5 square. White in reply scenting the weakness of Black hurries his knight to d5.

20.♗e2 ♗a5 21.♗f4 ♗e5 22.♗d5 ♗d8 23.♗h4

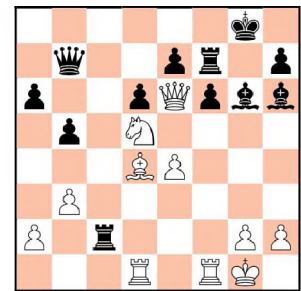


23...f6 How can Black defend? If 23...e6 24.♗e7+ ♗h8 25.f6 ♗c7 and mate in three. If 23...♗f6 24.♗xf6+ exf6 25.♗h6 and wins.

24.♗b6 ♗d7 25.♗d4 ♗b7 26.♗g4 ♗xg4 27.♗xg4 ♗h6 28.fxg6 ♗xg6 29.♗e6+ ♗f7 Forced.

30.♗cd1 Best.

30...♗xc2



31.♗xf6! exf6 32.♗xf6+ ♗h8 33.♗e8+ ♗f8 34.♗g4+ Black resigned

It is unusual for strong players to deliberately play a weaker line in the hope that their opponent will fall into a trap. It's also interesting that Whitaker refers to the "scent" of weakness in his opponent, as if he were a wolf hunting prey. Perhaps he comes across as somewhat arrogant in his annotations, but then again, who doesn't? We should be careful not read too much into a few word choices.

It is likely that personality manifests itself on the chess board, so people who are impatient or impulsive may indeed choose certain openings over others. Does this mean that we can detect criminal potential from opening choice? It is an entertaining question, but the answer must be no. Chess players choose their opening repertoires for all kinds of reasons. They may want to avoid theory, they may be working on their tactics, or they may just like to experiment with different systems. This may lead them to try a variety of different openings, even ones with bad reputations, like the *Killer Grob*.



Fresh Leaves from the Bookshelf

By FM Carsten Hansen

10 NOTEWORTHY BOOKS

01 **Amazing Artist – Dangerous Tactician**

by Sofia Polgar

(Russell Enterprises 2023)



02 **Akiba Rubinstein**

by Yuri Razuvaev & Valery Murakhveri

(Verendel Publishing 2023)



03 **Strategic Play with 1.d4**

by Milos Pavlovic

(Everyman Chess 2023)



04 **Grandmaster of Avant-Garde – The Chess Art of Galina Satonina**

by Vladimir Kudryavtsev (ed)

(Elk & Ruby 2023)



05 **Korchnoi – Year by Year – Vol 1 (1945–1968)**

by Hans Renette & Tibor Karolyi

(Elk & Ruby 2023)



06 **Solve with the World Champion**

by Piotr Murdzia

(Marmor Editora 2023)



07 **What Chess Coaches Don't Tell You**

by John & Victoria Doknjas

(Everyman Chess 2023)



08 **The Essential Sosenko**

by Genna Sosenko

(New In Chess 2023)



09 **The London Files**

by Vassilios Kotronias & Mikhail Ivanov

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10 **The Perfect Pirc-Modern (New Edition)**

by Viktor Moskalenko

(New In Chess 2023)



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.

As usual, there is no shortage of exciting new books from various publishers, and as far as their publication schedules go, there appear to be no plans to slow down their output for the remainder of the year.

As we have seen in the past, various publishers have released calendars. In recent years we have seen both a historical and a photo calendar. The first to arrive this year is the 2024 Calendar from SILU, which is the company run by the Danish International Master Silas Lund, who for the last five or so years has been living in the New York area. It is a calendar with a puzzle position per day. The positions have been

taken from games played in the Chess Olympiads of 1939 and 1950 (respectively, the last Olympiad before and the first one after World War II). The previous calendar, the one for this year, featured positions from the Olympiads in 1933, 1935, and 1937. The puzzles are well-chosen and most can be solved without an engine. Also the format and production standards are excellent. Check it out at House of Staunton or other major online retailers. In the same breath, I should mention that *American Chess Magazine* also has a calendar with a position per day.

01



Amazing Artist – Dangerous Tactician

by Sofia Polgar

Once upon a time, there was a former kingdom that had three chess princesses. The country was Hungary, and the names of the princesses were Zsuzsa, Zsafia, and Judit.

They were brought into a chess world that was unfamiliar with chess princesses and therefore resisted them. But with the support of their parents and through enormous sacrifice and determination, they achieved incredible results. The oldest became the first woman to gain the grandmaster title through the traditional norms and rating qualification; she later went on to win, among many other achievements, the Women's World Championship title. The youngest broke Bobby Fischer's record by becoming a grandmaster at only 15 and later entered the world top 10. In fact she was the first woman to compete for the Men's (which then by default became the "Open") World Championship title in San Luis 2005.

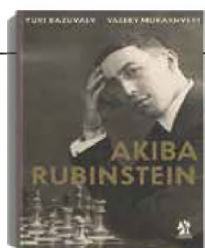
The middle princess achieved many incredible things in her own right, but like many other middle children, she and her accomplishments are often forgotten in the overall picture. The princesses are, if you haven't already put two and two together, the Polgar sisters: Susan, Sofia, and Judit.

This book is devoted to Sofia, who was a chess prodigy with amazing results; who can forget her fantastic 8½/9 in Rome in 1990, and how she and her sisters, supported by Ildiko Madl, won the Women's Chess Olympiad twice, breaking the Soviet monopoly on



the crown? But Sofia was and is much more than that, and this is where we have to be grateful that we have a publisher who is willing to take a chance on an unusual project. These days, Sofia is a talented artist. Books displaying art need to be in color to show the depth and intensity of the art, so Russell Enterprises has gone all out and invested in a book that shows not just the art but also the diagrams and family photos in beautiful colors. The result is a visually stunning book. As for the material in the book, I learned a lot about Sofia that I didn't know. Many of the games, both complete games and game fragments, were unknown to me. They showed just how gifted a player she was. Just as important, the book tells the story of her life thus far. It is a wonderful book that I can highly recommend.

02



Akiba Rubinstein
by Yuri Razuvaev &
Valery Murakhveri

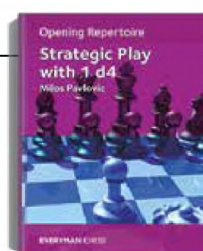
For many years, the only accessible books on the Polish Grandmaster Akiba Rubinstein have been those written by Hans Kmoch in 1941 and by John Donaldson and Nikolay Minev in the 1990s.

However, like many Westerners, I was unfamiliar with a book published in the Soviet Union in 1980, written by Yuri Razuvaev & Valery Murakhveri, but as soon as I became aware of it, I acquired it, albeit after a bidding war on eBay, in the early 2000s. I was immediately taken by it and

have enjoyed the games and careful annotations ever since. It was, however, a puzzle to me why this book, unlike many other works from the Soviet Union, had not been translated into English. However, with this gorgeous new edition, that has at last been accomplished. This new book, like the previous release from Verendel, Paul Keres' classic work on the 1948 World Chess Championship tournament – one of my desert island books – is a hardcover edition. Besides the games and annotations, which shine in their own right, it contains a bunch of photos, some in color, more biographical details that were not available to the authors in 1980, and a detailed, 49 pages(!), footnotes section written by Grandmaster Andrey Deviatkin, covering 'fresh' analytical discoveries and assessments.

This stunning book is a masterful achievement, and it deserves shelf space in the homes of all chess fans around the world. My only wish is that one day we will see a paperback edition as well, as the price for the current book is high, even if it is worth every cent or penny.

03



**Opening Repertoire:
Strategic Play with 1.d4**
by Milos Pavlovic

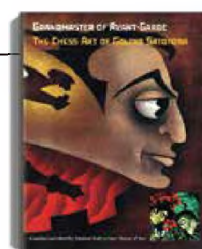
A *Strategic Opening Repertoire* by Donaldson and Hansen, A *Strategic Chess Opening Repertoire for White* by Watson, and now *Opening Repertoire: Strategic Play with 1.d4* by Pavlovic. The titles certainly resemble one other, and the

present work also overlaps quite a lot with the first book by Donaldson and yours truly from 2008. It should be said that Donaldson and I used a 1. d4f3, 2. c4 move order and thus allowed and avoided other openings than Pavlovic handles, but for some of the key openings, for instance, the Queen's Indian and Catalan, Pavlovic has adopted many of the same recommendations that Donaldson originally proposed 25 years ago, and which were similarly anchor stones of the 2008 edition.

Obviously, a lot has happened in the last 15 years, and that definitely shows in the material. Many of the key games are of a newer variety, but some of the main games Donaldson and I used are still to be found in this volume.

Nevertheless, the author presents a solid, functional repertoire for White that is not overwhelming to learn and will largely withstand the test of time and new, powerful engines.

04



**Grandmaster of
Avant-Garde – The Chess
Art of Galina Satonina**
by Vladimir Kudryavtsev (ed)

A column reviewing chess books but also including two books on art? Yes, this is the one and probably only time it will happen. When I first heard about this project being underway from Elk & Ruby, I got very excited. To the average chess fan, the name Satonina will definitely not ring a bell, because it didn't for me, but once I saw an example of her

art, then I immediately knew who she was. If you have seen tournament books covering Soviet Championships or Soviet chess in general, there is frequently one or more pictures she has painted during her career. Her style is immediately recognizable and very dramatic both in colors, style, and portrayal of individuals.

This book is not cheap, but it is in hardcover with all the paintings reproduced in color, which makes it almost a bargain price. As a coffee table book, it more than serves its purpose as it is imminently fascinating to leaf through. But the text inside the book adds another aspect and depth to the production, which also makes it an enjoyable read. If you are not sure what to make of this book, try googling Satonina's name and you will get an impression of her as an artist and what this book is about. I enjoyed it, and, I'm sure, so will many others.

05



**Korchnoi – Year by Year –
Vol 1 (1945–1968)**
by Hans Renette &
Tibor Karolyi

Viktor "the terrible" Korchnoi was long ago my hero. He was on the losing side of the match in 1978, which was featured in the first chess book that I ever won as a prize. The book by Raymond Keene was a fascinating read and Korchnoi's battle against Karpov, and the regime that held his wife and son prisoner behind the Iron Curtain, was obviously the enemy of the good. The book



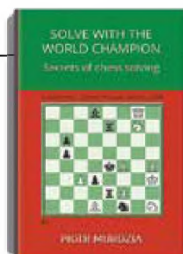
was one that I re-read dozens of times and even wrote a review about when I was in high school. Recently, I found a film on Freevee entitled *Closing Gambit* about the match. It features numerous interviews by both combatants. Kasparov, Seirawan, Svidler, Keene, Stean, and many others. It is a fascinating read and thus highly recommended.

Prior to this work, Korchnoi has been covered in various other books, including some written by Korchnoi himself, but this effort is by far the most extensive in scope. Being 550 pages long and yet only the first of four projected volumes, this new series will be massive. In volume 1, Korchnoi's early years, including his childhood and early career, cover the period 1945-1968.

The authors of this humongous project is Hans Renette, which should be a familiar name to fans of chess history, as he has written several important biographies on great players such as Lasker, Bird, Paulsen and others, and Hungarian International Master Tibor Karolyi, who has written game collections on numerous elite players, including world champions Carlsen, Kasparov, Karpov, Fischer, Spassky, Petrosian, and Tal. A more perfect duo for this project is hard to imagine.

After the introductions by both authors, the material moves forward one year at a time, combining biographical details written by Renette and annotations to games and game fragments by Karolyi; a total of 181 games and game fragments are featured in this book, so there is more than enough to satisfy both those who are interested in the man behind the moves and those mostly for his games. I cannot wait to see the future volumes in this series as the present book is fantastic. Highly recommended.

06



Solve with the World Champion – Secrets of Chess Solving

by Piotr Murdzia

The world of chess problems was for many years a total mystery to me. Who in their right mind would spend time trying to solve these mate-in-so-and-so-many-moves, help mates, selfmates, and so on? That's a good question, but it turns out to be a lot more than I could have imagined. In the Facebook group on Chess Composition and Studies, there is an active community of solvers and composers, and that community includes both highly-rated grandmasters, decorated composers, and lots and lots of regular solvers, who share their passion together. The author of this work is 8-time world champion in chess problem solving, Polish grandmaster Piotr Murdzia. When I started to become curious about chess problems, I saw his name mentioned several times, and therefore when I noticed that this book has been published, I promptly picked it up from Amazon. It comes from their self-publishing platform KDP, but the book is no ordinary book. It works as a combination of autobiography (albeit a modest one in scope), introduction to chess problems and the different types of compositions, and a chess puzzle book with sections on problems to solve and their solutions. Then there is a chapter with tests on problems that Murdzia had to solve along his amazing career as a solver, and finally, there is a chapter on outstanding achievements by Polish solvers.

The book has a few flaws here and there, including a non-descript boilerplate cover that comes free to those publishing on KDP, and some typos here and there, but overall it is very good and I hope many readers and fans of chess problems will pick it up as it is well worth the read.

07



What Chess Coaches Don't Tell You

by John & Victoria Doknjas

"The chess book of the year for chess improvers" is how I would describe this book.

It is written by the mother-son-duo of Victoria and FIDE master John Doknjas. The latter should already be familiar to regular readers of this column, as he has written and co-written (with his brother Joshua) a couple of very worthy books.

As the title tells us, it is about chess coaching, specifically how you as a student should work either by yourself or with a coach, and how you as a chess parent should look at the working relationship between your child and their chess teacher/coach. The topics of chapters include "Working Hard with a Set Purpose", "Defining Goals and Developing a Plan to Achieve Them", "Analyzing Your Games", "Creating an Opening Database", "Training Games", along with more practically related subjects such as essential endgames, tactical puzzles, endgame studies and much more. This book covers these topics in excellent fashion, giving tons of good advice along the way. Some of it I have used myself, both as a student and as a coach, but

some was new and eye-opening, which made me reflect on how I can improve in working on my own chess and how I can be even more helpful to my students. It is not a short book, 381 pages in total, but it is worth every moment you spend reading and learning from this fantastic work. Well done to the authors! Chess improvers, you now know what you need to do!

08



The Essential Sosenko – Collected Portraits and Tales of a Bygone Chess Era

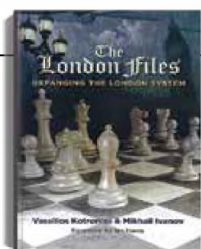
by Genna Sosenko

It is the eightieth year that Dutch grandmaster Genna Sosenko has spent on this planet. His playing days are long behind him, but thankfully he found another career as a journalist, editor, and author. His portraits of players, particularly from the former Soviet Union and about a generation that is no longer with us, enthralled readers for decades in *New In Chess Magazine* and in several lengthy books. The present work is a collection of the *creme de la creme* from his career as a biographer and storyteller. The volume of this book is massive, considerably over 800 pages, covering an amazing array of famous and less familiar names among players, coaches, theoreticians, world champions, and much, much more. The huge scale of the book may scare some people away, but I hope it doesn't. Sosenko's writings deserve to be enjoyed by a large audience, and the people whom he wrote about deserve



to be remembered for their contributions to chess. I cannot recommend this book highly enough; it should satisfy both Sosonko's current and future fans as well as those who like big beautiful chess books on their shelf.

09



The London Files

by Vassilios Kotronias & Mikhail Ivanov

The London is a scourge. The London is an infection. The London is a pandemic, and as pandemics go, it is spreading like wildfire. It is no exaggeration to claim that the London has become a mainstream opening and its popularity seems to have no end. Why is that? Because it is easy to learn for White, the concepts are easy to understand, and somehow, out of nowhere, new concepts and strategies are emerging from this opening that for many years was considered a harmless, start-the-game-without-the-need-to-think, stale opening. It appears that the opening not only has teeth but occasionally even fangs, and Black players can get seriously hurt if they don't know exactly what to do.

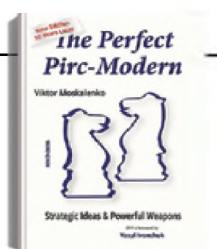
This is where Grandmasters Vassilios Kotronias and Mikhail Ivanov come to the assistance of Black players around the world. In the present work, the authors write not one but four recipes for Black against the London malaise, each one depending on what Black normally intends to do against 1.d4: King's Indian Setups, Benoni Setups, Nimzo & Queen's Indian Setups, and

Orthodox Setups.

As with all books by Kotronias, this volume is excellently researched, diligently analyzed, and well-explained. I really loved the work done throughout the book. There are lots of new ideas for both sides, and the explanations of the ideas work really well.

For those who play the London as White as well as those struggling against it as Black, this book is the answer.

10



The Perfect Pirc-Modern (New Edition)

by Viktor Moskalenko

This volume is a totally reworked, updated new edition of Grandmaster Viktor Moskalenko's book with the same title from 2013.

33 of the 42 main games are new, and all the analysis of both the surviving games, theory and the conclusions from the original book have been re-examined with today's stronger engines, all of which essentially makes this a completely new book. Interestingly, the author has decided to include his conclusions from the original work in this new book. That allows us as readers to see how the needle and general perceptions have changed in the decade that has passed since the emergence of the first edition.

For fans of the Pirc, this book will be indispensable and thus I heartily recommend it.

SOLUTIONS TO THREATS EXERCISES FROM PAGE 61

1.

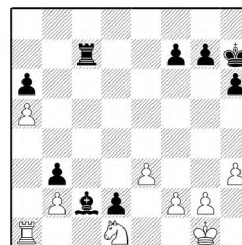
22...dxc3!! A missed opportunity as 22...♞xh2 was played in the game, which White later won... 23.♞xe5 cxb2 24.♞g8+ ♜d7-+ The pawn promotion is unstoppable. But not 24...♙f8?, when 25.♞xe6+! leads to an unclear position after the forced 25...fxe6 (25...♞e7? 26.♞xe7+ ♜xe7 27.♞g5+-) 26.♞xe6+ ♙e7 27.♞b3.

2.

32.c6!! Another missed opportunity. 32.a5? was played in the game, which Black eventually won. 32...♞xb5 32...bxc6 33.♞xf5+ 33.axb5 with a winning position.

3.

45...♞d3! 46.♞xd3 exd3 47.♟c3 d2 48.♟d1 ♞c7! The key! Black threatens to take on d1 and play ...♞c1, but also ...♞c2 is a powerful resource in certain lines.



49.♟f1 49.♟c3 ♞xc3-+; Or 49.♟h2 A) 49...♙xd1 50.♞xd1 ♞c2 Refer back to the comment after 48...♞c7! Now after 51.♞b1 (51.♟g3 ♞xb2 52.♟f3 ♞c2 53.♟e2 b2-+) 51...♞xb2 wins.

B) 49...♙d3 is also decisive: 50.♟c3 ♞xc3 51.bxc3 b2-+. 49...♙d3+ White resigned.

4.

42.c4!! bxc4 43.b5+ ♜c5 43...♟xb5 44.♞xd5+-, 44.b6! ♙xe4 45.♞xd7 ♙xf3 46.♞xf7 and White won.

5.

50.♙e8+! Not 50.♞f7? ♟xf7 (50...♙xa7!=) 51.♙c4+ ♟g7 52.♙xa2 ♙xa7=, 50...♟h6 50...♟f6 51.♞f7+ ♟e6 (51...♟g6 52.♞xf2+-) 52.♞xf2+-, 51.♞b2!! and White won.

6.

41...♞xe5!! 42.dxe5 42.♞xe5 ♞xe5 43.dxe5 bxc3-+, 42...♞xe5! 43.♞xe5 ♙xe5 44.♞xg5+ ♟h7!! 45.♙gxe5 bxc3 46.♞b5 ♟d1!! White resigned.

CHESS WILL BE “SOLVED” BY 2035 OR EVEN BEFORE!?

The game goes on

What exactly will it mean to ‘solve’ the game of chess? It’s hard to imagine that any human would be able to find a win in 584 moves or so. Nothing to worry about – over-the-board chess is like a never-ending story...

By Jon Edwards



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.

I began my remarks in Grand Rapids with “We correspondence players don’t get out much”. The fact is, I was astonished to hear the news that the US Chess Federation would be awarding me “Grandmaster of the Year” at this year’s US Open. It was personally thrilling, of course, but far more because it involved a recognition of correspondence chess – my utterly obsessive pastime for five decades. I won the World Championship, with much luck and with reliance, course, from a variety of constantly improving chess technologies.

Let’s delve into the ChessBase Folders pane, which contains two important ChessBase features about which many of you will know very little.

See image 1

This is what my Folders pane looks like. As usual, “My Databases” is highlighted as it will normally be on your screen. But there are two particularly interesting

options here.

The first feature to stress is “Game History” which, when expended, will look something like this:

See image 2

Each of these folders reflect the work that you have been doing during that period, very often with copies of your work. In other words, ChessBase has been busy behind the scenes backing up most of your work. I find that the backup is imperfect, but it is far better than nothing and much appreciated when computer glitches or my own occasional idiocies result in lost or inaccurately saved files.

For the second interesting feature, click on “Live”.

See image 3

You are certainly welcome to explore each of these databases, but I call your attention to two in particular. “Novelties” is a small but interesting database of recent over-the-board novelties. You can even choose to

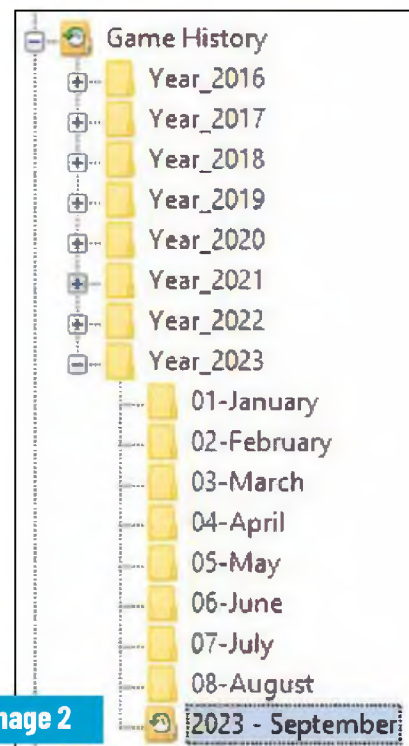


Image 2

be informed whenever novelties or interesting opening ideas are played!

► Wrench ► User ► Check the “Notifications box”

Note that you may need to use “Manage Notifications” in Windows to permit the notifications to appear.

There is also a section of “Tactics”. Each of the combinations is saved along with its “beauty quotient” in case, like me, you want to focus on the most challenging tactics. Here is one with a high “beauty rating” of 9.1 out of 10:

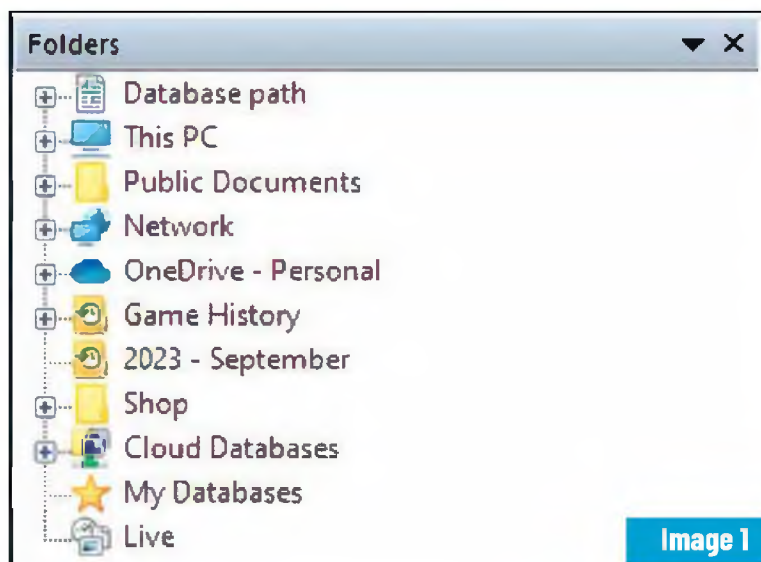


Image 1

Title	Games	Format	Path
 Tactics	30	PGN	..\<User>\AppData\Local
 Novelties	1	PGN	..\<User>\AppData\Local
— Tata Steel India Open Blitz 2023	45	PGN	..\<User>\AppData\Local
— Tata Steel India Open Rapid 2023	45	PGN	..\<User>\AppData\Local
— III Niteroi Rapid 2023	0	PGN	..\<User>\AppData\Local
— Caissa Hotel Lemon Group 2023	36	PGN	..\<User>\AppData\Local
— EYCC-U18 2023	57	PGN	..\<User>\AppData\Local
— FIDE-WWTC-Pool-A 2023	46	PGN	..\<User>\AppData\Local
— EYCC-U16 2023	60	PGN	..\<User>\AppData\Local
— FIDE-WWTC-Pool-B 2023	48	PGN	..\<User>\AppData\Local
— Cercle des Armees 2023	34	PGN	..\<User>\AppData\Local
— I Esphouses Guardamar Segura 2023	47	PGN	..\<User>\AppData\Local
— EYCC-U14 2023	60	PGN	..\<User>\AppData\Local
— Portugal Championship 2022-23	29	PGN	..\<User>\AppData\Local
— EYCC-U12 2023	60	PGN	..\<User>\AppData\Local
— EYCC-U10 2023	39	PGN	..\<User>\AppData\Local
— EYCC-U8 2023	30	PGN	..\<User>\AppData\Local
— III Niteroi Open 2023	48	PGN	..\<User>\AppData\Local
— Bagilar Municipality Open 2023	94	PGN	..\<User>\AppData\Local
— 33rd NATO Championship 2023	318	PGN	..\<User>\AppData\Local
— ITT 90th Club Villa del Parque 2023	30	PGN	..\<User>\AppData\Local

Image 3

quite likely a decade or more away. I believe that a different and more practical definition of “solve” will emerge, one likely based upon our experiences as chess players within the context of a neural net environment, and if that experience is indeed quantifiable, I humbly predict that we will reach “solution” well before the 2035 target. I can also safely predict that the announcement will have no negative effect upon the popularity of the over-the-board game.

NEW TIE BREAKER FOR ICCF COMPETITIONS

The ICCF (International Correspondence Chess Federation) could not ignore the practical reality of our situation, and so, its 2023 Amsterdam Congress agreed to institute a new tie breaker. In select tournaments, if all games end in draws, the first tie break will be based upon how well players have successfully predicted their opponents’ responses. It’s an interesting and clever idea.

At the moment, a number of opening choices are flat-out drawn. But those very same opening choices make the defending side’s move choices much easier to predict. It may be that the new proposal will force all defenders to avoid those drawn lines and to play more competitively, and who would argue with that? I have already begun reconsidering my entire opening repertoire, even on the white side where long, easily predicted sequences need to be weighed against the likelihood of winning or drawing the game.

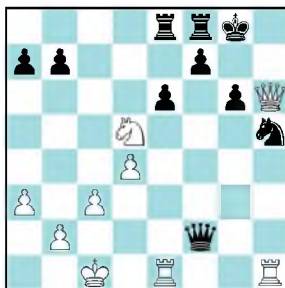
MORE CONTROVERSY

Finally, I note the settlement of the Carlsen-Niemann lawsuit. I personally would like to have seen an unambiguous apology from Carlsen, who offered up only that there was “no determinative evidence that Niemann cheated in his game against me at the Sinquefeld Cup.”

We can all be grateful with the return of Niemann to invitational events and to the Chess.com platform. Was that the end? Sadly, Kramnik reignited the controversy by unveiling the “Homer Simpson” Defense with 1.e4 f6 2.d4 g5 against Niemann. Niemann deserves the last word here: “There will be a day when I will be the best player in the world. Until that time, my chess speaks for itself.”

James Canty 2139
Achyuth Aravindhan 1917

Maia Open, Portugal 2023



White to play and win

- 1.♔e2! ♚f3 1...♚xe2 2.♘f6+ ♘xf6 3.♙h8 mate.
- 2.♙xh5 ♚f1+ 2...♚xh5 3.♘f6 mate.
- 3.♘d2 ♚xe2+ 4.♘xe2 Black resigned
- 4...exd5+ 5.♔e5+—

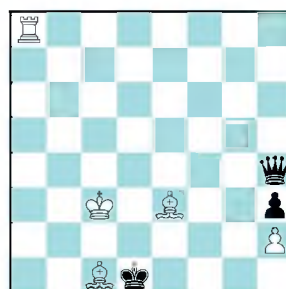
“SOLVING” THE GAME OF CHESS

When I travelled last month to Amsterdam to collect my awards for the World Championship and for the US Bronze Medal showing at the 23rd Olympiad, I was also asked to join a panel to speak about the future of chess. All correspondence chess players are concerned about this topic.

The first speaker, Jaap van der Herik is a Professor of Law and Computer Science at Leiden University and may

be better known here for his decades-long promotion of Computer Chess and a leading proponent of AI research in the ICCA/ICGA Journal. His interested talk, which was one of three to precede mine, made the rather heady claim that chess would be solved by 2035. Putting aside his claim, his talk raises an interesting issue: “what exactly will it mean to ‘solve’ the game of chess?”

Traditional definitions of “solving” the game involve the meeting of ever more refined opening repertoires with the expansion of TableBases. Along those lines, one of the developers of the 7-piece TableBase, Marc Bourzutschky, recently announced the discovery of a record DTC (Depth to Conversion, the reaching of a won 7-piece position) of 584 moves.



White to move and win

The entire set of 8-piece solutions will involve massive storage and remains



THE ULF ANDERSSON APPROACH — DIVE INTO THE ENDGAME STRAIGHT FROM THE OPENING

Start Strong, Finish Stronger

The art of turning balanced positions into victories is a skill not solely reserved for modern champs like Magnus Carlsen. Discover the wisdom pioneered by legendary Swedish GM, Ulf Andersson, whose approach has influenced today's top players — including the author of this article and his son. Learn key strategies of how to deal with seemingly equal and symmetrical positions.

Ulf Andersson was the hero of many technically-minded players of my generation. They wanted to learn to imitate him, but knew they never would. I would like to discuss a particular ending that epitomizes Ulf's approach: taking a seemingly quiet and equal position and outplaying the opponent move by move. This ending arises right after the opening, and is an interesting “weapon” in the Anti-Grünfeld.

A FAMOUS GAME

The following game is well-anthologized. Mark Dvoretsky used it as a quintessential example of practical endgame technique in his 1995 book *Technique for the Tournament Player*.

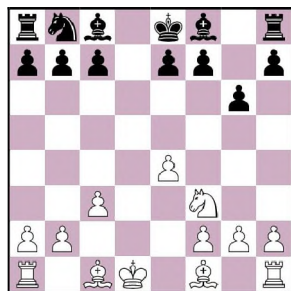
A16

Ulf Andersson	2560
Zenon Franco Ocampos	2360

Clarín International, Buenos Aires 1979

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 This particular move order is designed to avoid the Grünfeld.

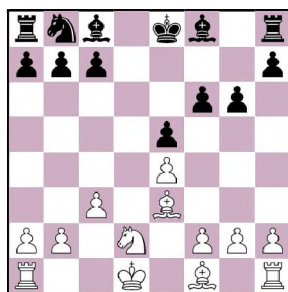
3...d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.dxc3 ♔xd1+ Black cannot avoid the trade of queens without making large concessions. For example, 6...♘d7? 7.♙c4 ♙g7? loses immediately to 8.♙xf7+ ♔xf7 9.♘g5+ ♔e8 (Or 9...♔g8 10.♔d5+) 10.♘e6. 7.♙xd1



The white king now has a ready-made refuge at c2, while Black has yet to find convenient development.

7...f6! The best reaction. As we shall later see, the bishop should not go to the typical Grünfeld square g7. It bites on granite from there on c3.

8.♙e3 e5 9.♘d2



What position should both sides be aiming for here? What pieces should each side trade?

Questions like this are never easy and are the reason we turn to people like Ulf Andersson for help. The blocked pawns on e4 and e5 carry the seeds of “bad bishops” in the future. For Black, the dark-squared bishop can become bad, biting on its own e5 pawn, and for White, the light-squared bishop. Therefore, for purely structural reasons, a trade of the dark-squared bishops benefits Black, and a trade of the light-squared bishops benefits White.

While we caution our readers from looking at static considerations in this way, here we have the queens off the board and



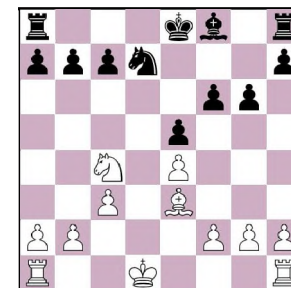
Born in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1968, Alex Fishbein relocated to the United States in 1979. Mentored by Vladimir Zak, who previously coached Boris Spassky and Viktor Korchnoi, Fishbein swiftly built a strong chess foundation. By 14, he was a master, and he climbed the ranks to become an IM in 1988 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.

no immediate prospects of attack by either side. Therefore, static considerations are important here.

With his last move, Ulf is waiting for Black to move his bishop to e6 so that he can trade it with ♙c4. An immediate ♙c4 is less precise. The bishop would be shooting blanks from there, as Black has no plans of castling kingside. Black could try to kick it with ...♘d7-b6, or just let it sit there and try to trade the dark-squared bishops in the meantime.

9...♙e6 Black goes along with White's plans. 9...♘d7 is the key alternative; we discuss it later.

10.♙c4 ♙xc4 11.♘xc4 ♘d7



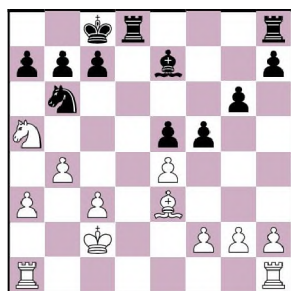
12.b4! Andersson, however, prevents the exchange of bishops with ...♙c5. White



Ulf Andersson

now has a clear advantage in space and development and also a better bishop. He also has a nice knight on c4 and a king which is ready to help on the queenside. Dvoretzky now correctly gives 12...h5 as Black's best plan, to try to trade the bishops even at the cost of time. But the game move is not yet a mistake.

12...♟b6 13.♟a5 0-0-0+ 14.♟c2 ♟e7 15.a3 A typical move of the past. White keeps his options open (maybe c4-c5-c6 is coming) and asks Black what he wants to do. The engine prefers the direct 15.a4. **15...f5**



16.♟xb6!? Ulf Andersson had a great practical sense for when to change the position and when to keep it static. When the game is still within the bounds of either +0.6 or -0.6 (by current metrics),

these decisions are usually subjective. A real artist of the endgame takes into account factors such as opponent's style, tempo of the game, and others which are hard for us mortals to detect. Quite often, an objectively suboptimal move is the key decision that wins the game.

By the way, this is true in all phases of the game. Tal won many games with moves that the engine frowns on, and so did Karpov. They had similar approaches to the practical element; Karpov's "bluff" was just of a more "positional" kind. It happens today, too. To beat a strong player, you have to make practical decisions and give your opponent the chance to make a mistake. Games between top players have a lot of mistakes because they are creating positions where it is easy to go wrong. Games between weaker players sometimes have a high "accuracy score" or low "centipawn loss" because the positions are not that complicated.

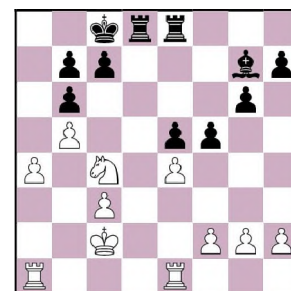
Returning to the game: the text move, 16.♟xb6, has received many exclams in the literature. The alternative is 16.f3, not changing the structure for now.

16...axb6 17.♟c4 ♟f6? Black was totally unprepared to answer specific questions. He had to play energetically

to avoid ending up with a bad bishop versus good knight. The critical line is 17...fxe4! 18.♟d2 (18.♟ae1 b5! 19.♟xe5 ♟hf8 20.♟hf1 ♟g5 and only White can be worse) 18...e3! 19.fxe3 ♟hf8 20.♟e4 ♟d7 21.a4 ♟e6 22.a5 ♟f5 and Black has enough activity to hold.

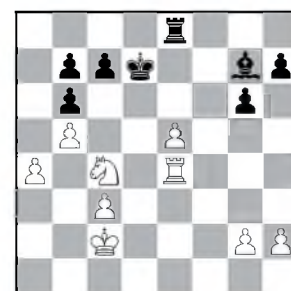
18.a4! Now it's time for prophylactics. Andersson prevents the key resource ...b5 and solidifies his knight on c4. After Black's lackluster previous move, closing the f-file, the ...fxe4 capture is not to be feared anymore.

18...♟g7 19.♟he1 ♟he8 20.b5



20...f4? It is hard to imagine a modern player rated 2360 playing this move. Black shuts down all possible counterplay and leaves himself with the bad bishop and a totally mangled queenside. All his light squares are weak, as is his king, and White can easily penetrate on the a-file. Very soon, all of Black's pieces are tied down to defense of his position, and White wins in a leisurely manner.

Instead, after 20...fxe4 21.♟xe4 it's true that Black has an isolated pawn, but with an open board one weakness can often be managed: 21...♟f8 22.f3 ♟f4! 23.♟ae1 ♟xe4 24.♟xe4 ♟e8 25.f4 ♟d7 26.fxe5



26...♟e6, with a sound blockade and good drawing chances.

21.a5! Now, the action will only be on one end of the field.

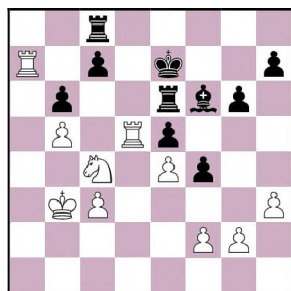
21...bxa5 22.♟xa5 b6 23.♟a7 ♟f6 24.♟ea1 ♟e6 24...g5 25.♟a6 g4 26.♟a5! is ugly for Black.

25.♟a6 ♟de8 26.♟b3 With the game already decided, Ulf can afford to take his time. His opponent has no good options, so



he is waiting for him to worsen his position even more.

26...♟d8 If 26...g5, then 27.h3 h5 28.f3 would stop any counterplay, because the remaining black pieces cannot participate. **27.♞a8+ ♟d7 28.♞a2 ♟f6 29.♞d2+ ♟e7 30.♞a7 ♞c8 31.♞d5!** Black has almost no moves. **31...♟e8 32.h3 ♟e7**



33.♟b2! The knight leaves its home on c4 and heads for even greener pastures: d5, c6, or even c5 after the white pawn moves forward.

33...♟e8 34.♟d3 ♟g7 34...c6 35.♞dd7 cxb5 36.♟b4+-. **35.c4 ♟f6 36.c5 bxc5 37.♟xc5 ♞e7 38.♞a6 ♟h8 39.♟c4 ♟g7 40.f3 ♞b8 41.♟e6 ♟f6 42.♞c6** **Black resigned**

Ulf Andersson won a few games with this variation, and it became popular for a while.

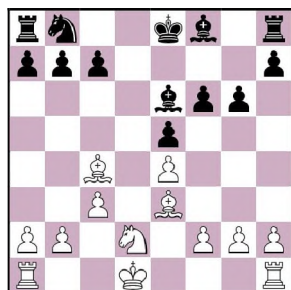
LEARNING FROM THE BEST

A16

Nodirbek Yakubboev	2574
Divya Deshmukh	2360

Abu Dhabi Open 2019

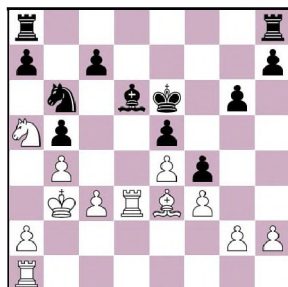
1.♟f3 ♟f6 2.c4 g6 3.♟c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♟xd5 5.e4 ♟xc3 6.dxc3 ♞xd1+ 7.♟xd1 f6 8.♟e3 e5 9.♟d2 ♟e6 10.♟c4



10...♟xc4 More precise is 10...♟f7 11.♟c2 ♟d7, although it doesn't yet solve all of Black's problems. After 12.a4 a5 13.♞hd1 ♟c5 14.♟b3! ♟d6 15.♟d5 White has a small but nagging advantage. We will see a position like this later, in the game Stern - Florstedt.

11.♟xc4 ♟d7 12.b4! We see that GM Nodirbek Yakubboev, 17-years-old at the time of this game, has learned the legacy of Ulf Andersson.

12...b5 13.♟a5 ♟b6 14.♟c2 ♟d6?! 15.♞hd1 ♟f7 16.♟b3 ♟e6 17.♞d3 f5 18.f3 f4?



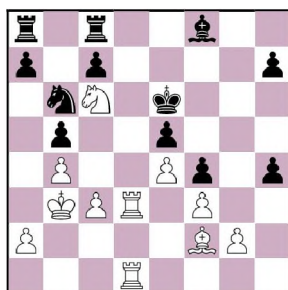
Wait, what did I say about a modern 2360 player never playing this move? In fact, this is also a mistake, but future WGM Divya Deshmukh (14 at the time) does have an idea here. The counterplay with ...g6-g5-g4 is more realistic this time.

19.♟f2 Black's bishop is actually not so "bad" at d6, as it at least defends more squares, so **19.♟c5!** was the most decisive way to continue.

19...g5 20.♟c6?! ♞hc8 Black needs to hurry with **20...g4!**. Now **21.fxg4 ♞hg8 22.h3 h5!** is real counterplay.

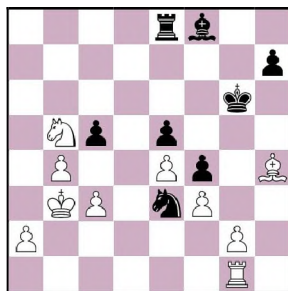
21.♞ad1 ♟f8? 22.h4! Playing on both sides of the board.

22...gxh4



23.♟d8+! ♟f6 24.♟xh4+ ♟g6 25.♟c6 The switchback maneuver has loosened the black pawn on e5.

25...♞e8 26.♞d8! ♟c4 27.♞xe8 ♞xe8 28.♟xa7 ♟e3 29.♞g1 c5 30.♟xb5



White has picked off the queenside pawns, and the rest is easy.

30...♟f7 31.g4 ♞e6 32.g5 cxb4 33.cxb4 ♞c6 34.♟f2 ♟c4 35.♞d1 ♟e7 36.a4 ♟e3 37.♞d3 ♟c2 38.♟c5 ♟xc5 39.bxc5 ♟e1 Or **39...♞xc5 40.♞c3 ♞xc3+ 41.♟xc3 ♟e1 42.a5. 40.♞c3 ♟g6 41.♟c4 ♞a6 42.♟d5 ♟g2 43.c6 ♟e3+ 44.♟xe5**

Black resigned

I recently had my own opportunity to see if I could imitate Ulf. Fortunately, I was able to catch a strong opponent by surprise.

A16

Alexander Fishbein	2363
Fidel Corrales	2554

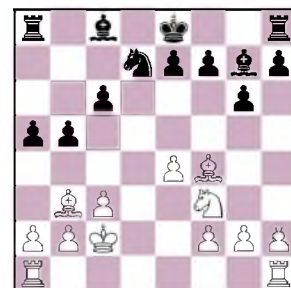
Washington International, Rockville MD 2023

1.c4! I think Fidel was expecting only 1.e4, which I had played against him three times before, with mixed results in the opening. Looking for a Grünfeld, and knowing I am not a player who plays for a draw, he drifted away from his normal opening repertoire into a line he didn't know in detail.

1...♟f6 2.♟f3 g6 3.♟c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♟xd5 5.e4 ♟xc3 6.dxc3 ♞xd1+ 7.♟xd1

7...♟g7?! 8.♟f4 c6 9.♟c4 White does not react appropriately. The priority was to develop the king with **9.♟c2**, followed by **10.a4**.

9...♟d7 10.♟c2 b5! 11.♟b3 a5!



Black has legitimate play on the queenside, and even the bishop on g7 has full employment. My attempt to play like Ulf has failed so far.

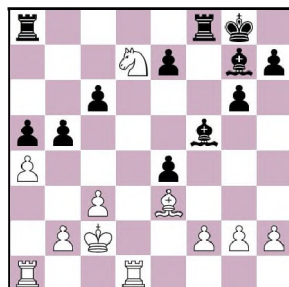
12.a4 ♟c5 13.♟d2 0-0 Black's king is fine where it is, and he can immediately contest the center with **13...f5 14.f3 fxe4 15.fxe4 ♞f8 16.♞hf1** with equality. **14.♟e3** Also not ideal; the black knight was going to take on b3 anyway.

14...♟xb3 15.♟xb3 f5 16.♞hd1

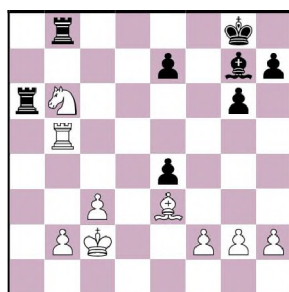


I unwittingly played like Ulf here, temporarily sacrificing my e4 pawn. Unlike Ulf's opponent, Black knows he should take it.

16...fxe4! 17.♖c5 ♕f5 18.♘d7! A well-calculated dive into the opponent's waters.

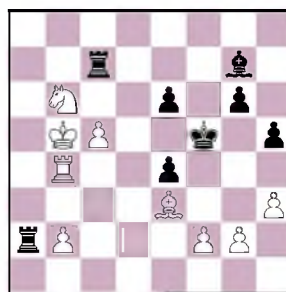


18...♞fe8?! After 18...♞fd8 19.♗b6 ♞xd1 20.♞xd1 ♞a6 (20...♞b8 21.axb5 cxb5 22.♞d5) 21.axb5 (21.c4!? bxc4 22.♞d8+ ♔f7 23.♗xc4 ♕e6) 21...cxb5 22.♞d5 b4 23.cxb4 axb4 24.♞b5 White has the better pawn structure, but Black's two bishops fully compensate. 19.♗b6 ♞a6 20.axb5 cxb5 21.♞d5! ♞b8 22.♞xb5 ♕d7 23.♞axa5! When playing my 18th move, I had intended 23.♞b3 here, with a safe position, but I then spotted the exchange sacrifice, which I thought was almost winning. 23...♕xb5 24.♞xb5

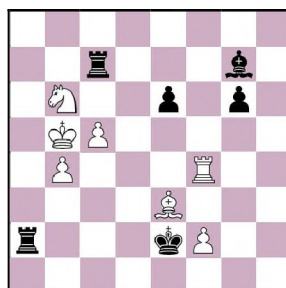


24...♔f7?! Black does not find a plan. I thought my queenside pawns would be overwhelming with all my pieces supporting them, but the machine shows that after 24...♞a1! 25.c4 ♞e1! 26.c5 ♞e2+ 27.♔c1 ♕e5! 28.♞b4 ♞d8 29.♗a4 Black is OK.

During the game, I expected 24...♕h6!? 25.♕xh6 ♞axb6 26.♞xb6 ♞xb6, which also does not lose. The black king comes in time. 25.c4 ♞b7 26.c5 ♔e6? Black has dilly-dallied too much, and now my queenside pawns are far too strong for the exchange, especially as my king can march forward to help. 27.♞b4 ♔f5 28.♔b3 h5 29.h3 ♞c7 30.♔c4 e6 31.♔b5 ♞a2



32.g4+! A simple, but precise operation. 32...hxc4 33.hxc4+ ♔xg4 34.♞xe4+ ♔f3 35.♞f4+! ♔e2 36.b4 White's pieces will defend each other.



36...♕c3 37.♞e4 e5 38.♗d5 ♔d3 39.♗xc3 ♔xc3 40.c6 ♞c8 41.♞xe5 ♞b2 42.♞c5+ ♔b3 43.c7 ♞a2 44.♔c6 ♔xb4 45.♔b7 ♞aa8 46.♞c1 ♔b3 47.♕a7 g5 48.♕b8 ♞xc7+ 49.♕xc7

Black resigned

I was proud of this win, especially because I am a fan of Fidel Corrales, who plays fearlessly against all opponents (including underrated ones) and exhibits only positivity, win or lose.

He won clear first place in the World Open this year – an achievement not matched by many. He also won a nice ending against me in Wyoming that I annotated in the previous issue of *American Chess Magazine* (ACM #34, pp.68-69 -Ed.).

HOW NOT TO PLAY FOR BLACK

There are many examples of how castling kingside in this variation leads to disaster. I chose this one:

A16

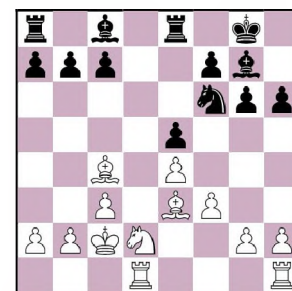
Alexandre Lesiege	2558
Simon Gravel	2226

Quebec Carnaval Open 2004

1.c4 ♗f6 2.♗c3 d5 3.cxd5 ♗xd5 4.♗f3 g6 5.e4 ♗xc3 6.dxc3 ♞xd1+ 7.♔xd1 ♕g7 8.♔c2 0-0?! The king belongs in the center or on the queenside, where it can

protect some potential weaknesses.

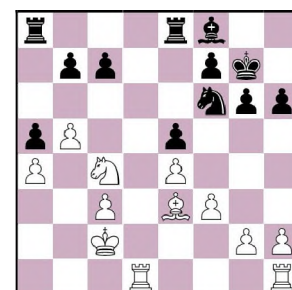
9.♕g5 e5 10.♕c4 ♗d7 11.♕e3 ♞e8 12.♞ad1 h6 13.♗d2 ♗f6 14.f3



14...♕e6 Simplifying the position actually worsens Black's woes, especially as he is trading his "good" bishop. White will have a preponderance on both the queenside and kingside. Black should look for counterplay with 14...♗d7! and ...b5.

15.b4 a5 16.b5 ♕f8 17.a4 ♔g7 18.♕xe6 ♞xe6 19.♗c4 The knight on c4 is a fixture in these positions.

19...♞ee8



20.g4! Opening a second front. Pawns are even, but Black is totally lost. Like in the Ulf game, he has no counterplay.

20...♞e6 21.h4! ♕d6 22.g5 hxc5 23.hxc5 ♗e8 24.♞d2! b6 25.♞dh2 ♔f8 26.♕f2 ♔e7 27.♞h7 ♕c5 28.♕g3 28.♕xc5+ bxc5 29.♞h8 is just as decisive. After the text move, **Black resigned**: not too soon. On 28...♕d6, the white knight can come around to d5.

HOW TO PLAY WITH BLACK

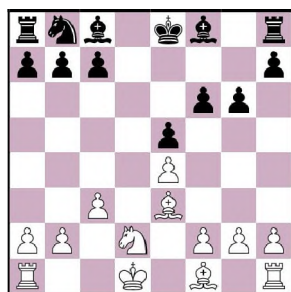
For a model game from the black side, we turn to the French top-level GM Maxime Vachier-Lagrave.

A16

Pavel Kotsur	2550
Maxime Vachier Lagrave	2711

Al Ain Open 2012

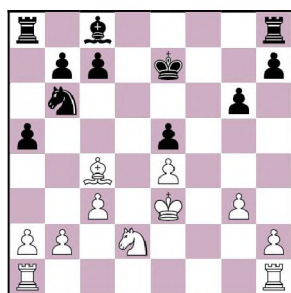
1.♗f3 ♗f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♗xd5 5.e4 ♗xc3 6.dxc3 ♞xd1+ 7.♔xd1 f6 8.♕e3 e5 9.♗d2



9...d7 Rather than immediately developing the bishop to e6 where it will be traded, Black is trying to exchange the dark-squared bishops. As we mentioned before, this is logical given the pawn structure – blocked central pawns on e4 and e5.

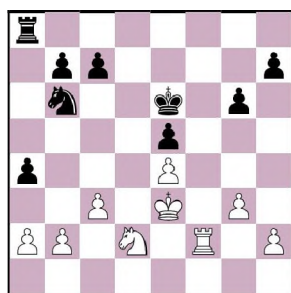
10.c4 c5 11.e2?! Defeats the purpose of the opening: the white king is supposed to go to c2. White also has no advantage after 11.cxc5 dxc5 12.b4 d6 13.c2 a5 14.a3 e7 15.d3 a4 and Black won a nice game on move 79 in C.Bauer 2576 - E.Sutovsky 2664, Leon 2001.

11...e7 12.g3 a5! 13.f4 ex3 14.e3 b6 15.fxe5 fxe5



White seems to be playing only for a draw, looking for a symmetrical position. Playing only for a draw with White is almost always a bad strategy.

16.hf1 e6 17.ex6 e6 18.f2 hf8 19.af1 xf2 20.f2 a4!

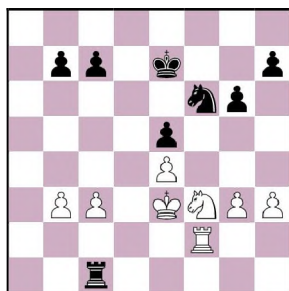


While his opponent was busy trading as many pieces as humanly possible, MVL has gained some space on the queenside. The a4 pawn takes away the b3 square from the white knight and potentially prepares a rook lift like ...a4-b5 or ...a5-c5 with ...a4-a3. White gets nervous

and eliminates the annoying a4 pawn, but that gives Black an open a-file.

21.b3?! axb3 22.axb3 d7 23.f3 f6 24.h3 a1 25.g5+ e7 26.f3?? White's position is already compromised. 26.e2 or 26.g2 had to be played. Instead, hoping for repetition, White blunders a knight fork.

26...c1!



27.ex5 27.d3 loses immediately to 27...xc3+.

27...xc3+ 28.d3 xxb3 29.d4 a3 30.e2 b6 31.f4 a4+ 32.d3 c6 33.e5 d7 White resigned as he saw no need to test the technique of his esteemed opponent.

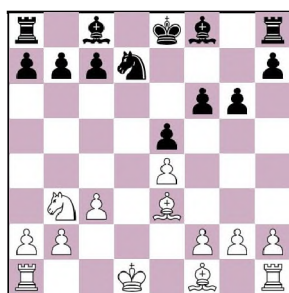
RECENT IMPROVEMENTS FOR WHITE

A16

Rene Stern	2519
Johannes Florstedt	2306

Lichtenberger Open, Berlin 2018

1.f3 f6 2.c4 g6 3.d3 d5 4.cxd5 dxd5 5.e4 dxc3 6.dxc3 xd1+ 7.xd1 f6 8.e3 e5 9.d2 d7 10.b3!? A good positional idea. Instead of the routine 10.c4, White takes a detour to stop the opponent from trading the dark-squared bishops.

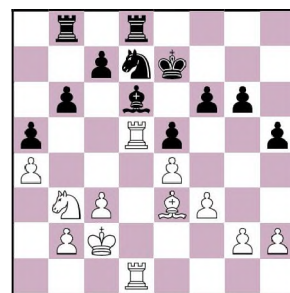


10...a5 11.a4 b6 Upon 11...f5 12.exf5 gxf5 13.f3 g8 14.g3 b6, White should continue with 15.c2 b7 16.d2, with decent chances in a lively position. Instead, he quickly got a losing game after 15.c4 g6 16.e2 b7 17.hd1 0-0-0 18.f2? The king is going the wrong way! 18...d6!

19.g1 f4! 20.gxf4 exf4 21.d4 c5 22.g7 e5 23.xg6 hxg6 24.ex5 dxe5 25.e2 d3+ 26.xd3 exd3 27.g1 xf3+ 28.e1 e3+ 29.f2 h3 30.xg6 xh2+ 31.g1 xb2 32.xb6 c4 33.xb7 cxb3 34.b5 b1+ Here White resigned in S.Bogner 2599 - Li Chao 2711, Germany 2014.

11...h5, looking to trade those bishops even with loss of time, can also be considered. White can opt to avoid the trade with 12.f3.

12.c2 b7 13.f3 d6 14.c4 e7 15.hd1 hd8 16.d5 xd5 17.xd5 h5 18.ad1 ab8



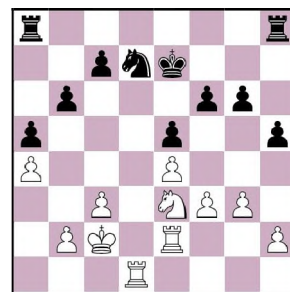
White has managed to assert a certain degree of light-square dominance. The knight can later apply for residency at its rightful place of c4. Of course, White's advantage is not serious yet, but Black is suffering a little.

19.g3 a8 Here and on the next few moves, Black should consider becoming active with ...g5.

20.e1 ab8 21.dd1 h8 22.e2 a8 23.d2! c5 Picking a bad time to trade the bishops. White's d-file control is dangerous.

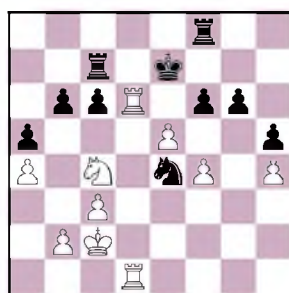
24.c4 ex3? 24...hd8 was a tougher defense.

25.ex3



25...c6? Another mistake. Defending with a move like 25...a7 and allowing the white knight to enter d5 was not for the faint of heart, but it was the lesser evil. Now White gains an entry square on d6, and the position becomes winning.

26.ed2 a7 27.c4 c7 28.d6 b8 29.f4! exf4 30.gxf4 c5 31.e5 f8 32.h4 d4



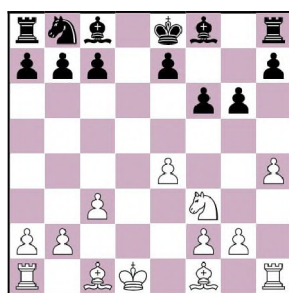
33.♖e1! A little tactic to finish the game.
33...b5 34.exf6+ ♜f7 35.♗e5+
Black resigned

A16

Ivan Cheparinov	2702
Jinshi Bai	2588

Chinese Team Championship 2018

1.♗f3 ♗f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.cxd5
♗xd5 5.e4 ♗xc3 6.dxc3 ♖xd1+ 7.♜xd1
f6 8.h4!? This is the engine's first choice.

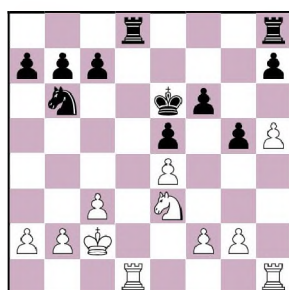


Lest you think that h-pawn advances only started with AlphaZero, I may mention that this was first played in N.Rashkovsky 2535 - A.Mikhalchishin 2535, Moscow 1981. In this game Black opted for 8...♗g4 9.♜c2 e5 10.♗d2 h5 11.♗c4 ♜e7 12.a4 a5, and later won on move 42.

8...e5 There have been a lot of games with 8...h5 9.e5, which looks better for White as the g6 pawn is a little loose.

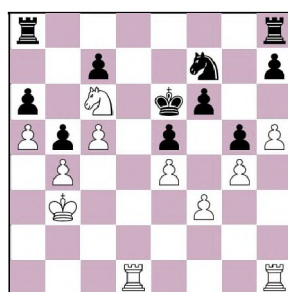
9.h5 g5 10.♗e3 ♗e6 After 10...♗d7, 11.♗h2 is best, looking to play 12. ♗g4 if the situation allows.

11.♗d2 ♗d7 12.♗c4 ♜f7 13.♜c2 ♗c5 14.♗xe6+ ♜xe6 15.♗f1 ♗ad8 16.♗d1 ♗xe3 17.♗xe3 ♗b6



The computer likes White's space advantage on the kingside, with the f5 square for the knight. Is this enough to win the game? Absolutely not. But this is a typical "two-result game."

18.b4! ♗c8 19.a4 ♗e7 20.g4 a6 21.♗c4 ♗c8 22.f3 ♗d6 23.♗a5? Throwing away the advantage. The knight has nothing to do on c6. White should continue with 23.♗e3 with serious chances. It will be hard for Black to avoid the weakening move ...c6.
23...b6! 24.♗c6 ♗a8 24...♗d7 was simpler.
25.♜b3 ♗b7 26.a5 b5 27.c4 ♗d6! 28.c5 ♗f7 The position has become too blocked.



29.♗d5 ♗d8 30.♗xd8+ ♗hx8
31.♗hd1 ♜e7 32.♗xd8 ♗xd8
33.♗xd8 ♜xd8 Draw.

Our last game sees White make a better effort at exploiting this type of advantage.

Many of ACM readers know that I travel to a lot of tournaments with my son Mitch, who is a strong player in his own right. A master since 2019, he would be a great sparring partner for me – except that we don't like playing against each other! But he prepares exercises for me, as I do for him. He also proofreads all of my articles to make sure I don't stray too far from reality.

Therefore, the readers will forgive me if I end this article with a recent game by Mitch in this variation, against 12-year-old NM Jasmine Su, co-winner of this year's Barber Tournament of Champions.

A16

Mitch Fishbein	2157
Jasmine Su	2035

WashingtonInternational,RockvilleMD2023

1.c4 ♗f6 2.♗f3 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.cxd5
♗xd5 5.e4 ♗xc3 6.dxc3 ♖xd1+
7.♜xd1 f6 8.♗e3 e5 9.♗d2 ♗d7 10.a4



BROADEN YOUR HORIZONS!

THE BLOG OF
GRANDMASTER ALEX COLOVIC

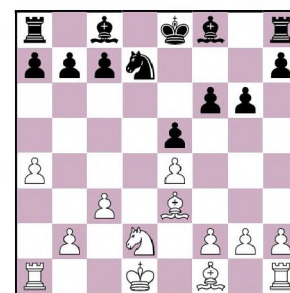
Ranked among the "Best Chess Blogs on the Planet" since 2016, Grandmaster Alex Colovic, President of Association of Chess Professionals (ACP) from 2019-2023, writes in style about all aspects of chess. From openings to endgames, psychology and practical advice, he provides deep insight into the secrets of our beloved game. Visit, read and broaden your horizons

www.alexcolovic.com

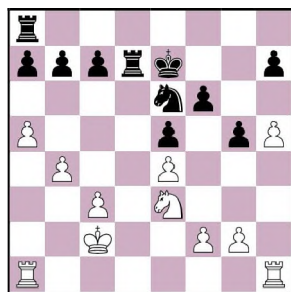
Alex writes on Substack, subscribe at substack.com/@gmalexcolovic. He also shares his views on current news in video format at www.youtube.com/@gmalexcolovic.

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.

Another reasonable approach. While Black takes time to trade the bishops, White gains space on the queenside.

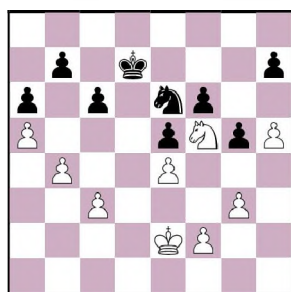


10...♗c5 11.♗xc5 ♗xc5 12.b4 ♗e6 13.a5 ♜e7 14.♜c2 ♗d8 15.h4 Now White is trying to create the weak f5 square.
15...♗d7 16.♗c4 ♗f8?! There was no need for Black to revert to the plan of trading light-squared bishops. Her pieces are well mobilized, and 16...b5 would give her easy equality.
17.h5 g5 18.♗f1 ♗e6 19.♗xe6 ♗xe6 20.♗e3 ♗d7



White has a long-term advantage, based on the f5 square. But the question is, will he be able to make progress after all rooks are exchanged?

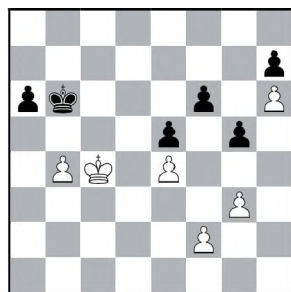
21.♖hd1 ♜ad8 22.♖xd7+ ♜xd7 23.g3 The machine wants to continue gaining space with 23.b5, which Jasmine now prevents. 23...a6 24.♖b1 c6 25.♟f5+ ♟d8 26.♞d1 ♞xd1 27.♟xd1 ♟d7 28.♟e2



28...c5? A big mistake, giving the king open space on the queenside. The surest way to draw is 28...♟c7 29.♟d3 ♟b5 30.♟c4 ♟d6+!, and White cannot win the pawn ending.

29.♟d3! cxb4 30.cxb4 ♟f8 31.♟c4 ♟c6 32.♟e7+ ♟d6 33.♟c8+ ♟c6 34.♟b6 ♟d7 35.♟d5! b6 35...♟d6 is met by 36.b5+.

36.♟e7+ The clock is the enemy of pawn ending calculation. Mitch wasn't able to properly evaluate the position after 36.axb6! ♟xb6+ 37.♟xb6 ♟xb6, when White wins with the only move 38.h6!.

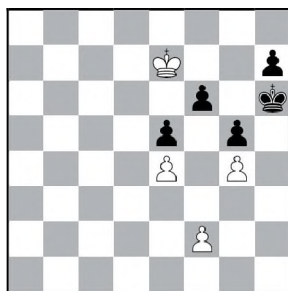


White's h-pawn is advanced far enough to win most races, and if Black holds steady on the queenside, White has a tempo in reserve:

A) 38...♟c6 39.g4! (Not 39.f3? ♟d6 40.b5 axb5+ 41.♟xb5 ♟e7 42.♟c6 ♟f7

43.♟d7 ♟g6 44.♟e6 ♟xh6 45.♟xf6 g4! 46.fxg4 stalemate.) 39...♟d6 40.b5!

A1) 40...axb5+ 41.♟xb5 ♟e7 (41...♟d7 42.♟b6 ♟d6 43.f3 ♟d7 44.♟b7 ♟d6 45.♟c8 ♟c5 46.♟d7 ♟d4 47.♟e6 ♟e3 48.♟xf6 ♟xf3 49.♟f5+-) 42.♟c6 ♟f7 43.♟d7 ♟g6 44.♟e7 ♟xh6



45.♟f7!+- but not taking the pawn because of stalemate!

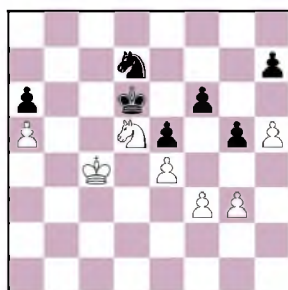
A2) 40...a5 41.♟b3 ♟c5 42.♟a4 ♟b6 43.f3 is the decisive reserve tempo.

B) 38...g4 39.♟d5 ♟b5 40.♟e6 ♟xb4 41.♟xf6 a5 42.♟g7 a4 43.♟xh7 a3 44.♟g7 a2 45.h7 a1♞ 46.h8♞+-.

36...♟d6 37.♟f5+ ♟c6 38.♟e3? White could still return to the pawn ending with 38.♟e7+ ♟d6 39.♟c8+.

38...♟d6 39.f3 ♟c6 40.♟d5 bxa5? Black needed to play ...b5+ here and earlier when she had the chance, closing things on the queenside.

41.bxa5 ♟d6



42.♟b4? 42.h6! would be zugzwang. A knight move loses the f-pawn, and a king move allows White a check forking the king and the a6 pawn: 42...♟c6 43.♟b4+ ♟b7 44.♟d5+-.

42...♟b8? 42...♟c5 43.♟d5 g4! is a draw. 43.♟d5! Correctly trying to get back to the previous position, which Black now avoids.

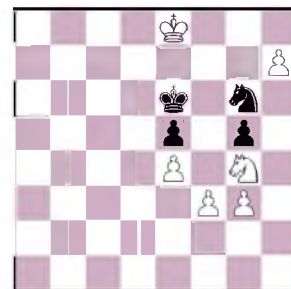
43...♟c6 44.♟xf6 ♟xa5+ 45.♟c3 h6 46.♟g4 ♟e6 47.♟xh6 ♟c6 48.♟f5 ♟f6 49.♟c4 ♟d8 49...a5 50.♟b5 ♟d4+ 51.♟xd4 exd4 52.♟c4+-.

50.♟e3 ♟f7 51.♟g4+ ♟e6 52.h6

The rook pawn is the sworn enemy of the knight. From here, the win is not difficult,

although when playing on increment, anything can happen, of course.

52...♟d6 53.♟b4 ♟c6 54.h7 ♟d6 55.♟a5 ♟e6 56.♟xa6 ♟d6 57.♟b5 ♟h8 58.♟b6 ♟f7 59.♟b7 ♟h8 60.♟b8 ♟e6 61.♟c7 ♟g6 62.♟d8 ♟h8 63.♟e8 ♟g6



64.♟xe5

Black resigned

Not a perfect game, but a good illustration of the difficulties Black can face in this variation. Anyone who plays this variation with White is trying to play like Ulf Andersson. As I said earlier, nobody can really play like him. But it's sometimes possible to explain how he played.

In the first game here, we saw Ulf Andersson employ some strategic motifs that, in fact, permeate this variation:

- 1) When there is a pair of blocked central pawns, a bishop of the color of the square of its central pawn can become "bad."
- 2) If you can support your knight near the center in such a way that your opponent cannot attack it with a pawn, that in itself can be a harbinger of weaknesses in your opponent's camp.
- 3) When your opponent has counterplay, don't be afraid to change the structure and guide him where he is not prepared to walk. But if your opponent has no active play, slow down and wait for the right time to pounce.

Magnus Carlsen took Ulf's endgame skill to a new level. At his best, Magnus is able to psychologically "bluff" his opponents without making second-rate moves! That's why he is the best player of all time (so far). But I cannot explain to you how Magnus Carlsen plays. For that, you will need to speak to someone smarter than I am!

A PERSONAL INSIGHT AT THE 145TH NEW YORK STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

I LOVE NY

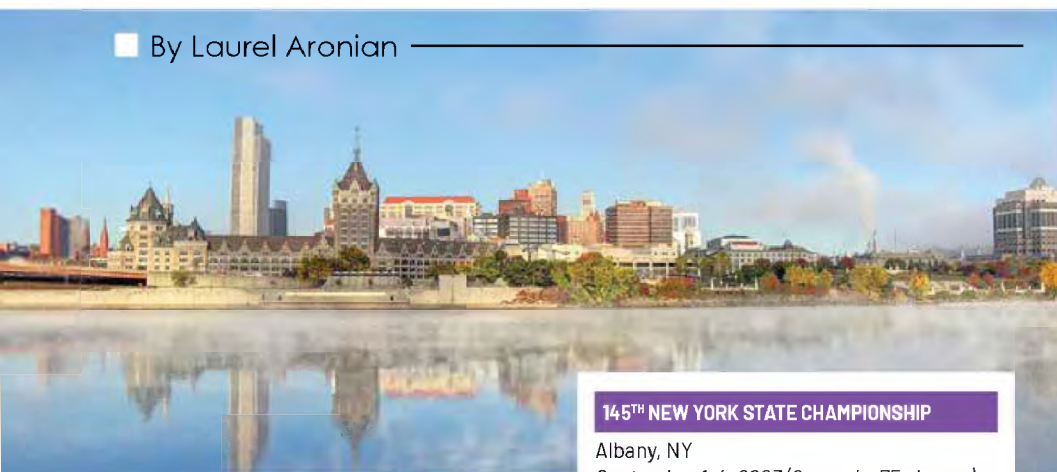
America's longest running chess tournament welcomes its participants with an action-packed schedule, in which you can play against strong opposition, learn some interesting history, meet warm people and make lasting friendships and memories. Laurel's personal story explains all these aspects that make the NY State Championship one of her favorite tournaments.



Laurel Aronian is a chess influencer, who has authored numerous articles for chess

publications, been featured in podcasts and periodicals, and profiled in WSJ and The Chess Journalist (forthcoming). Laurel was the 2022 Connecticut State Girls K-12 Champion and played the prestigious Ruth Haring National Tournament of State Champions Invitational. She proudly serves as the Teen Ambassador for the US Chess Women's Girls Club and is the President of St. Luke's School's Chess Club/Team, which hosts cross-cultural scholastic meet-ups. Laurel is the co-founder (with her brother) of Chessin1day.com, a volunteer teen chess initiative that teaches chess in public libraries and schools. Additionally, Laurel has intertwined her love of arts as a singer-songwriter performing music about the chess culture. She sang the National Anthem at the 2022 US Chess Open, 2022 US Chess K-12 Grade Nationals, and 2023 US Chess High School Nationals. For Laurel, chess is not only a skill to share; it's an invitation to all cultures and all populations to play, unite, and belong. Chess.com Blog @MountainLaurelA YouTube & IG @LaurelAronian

By Laurel Aronian

145TH NEW YORK STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

Albany, NY

September 1-4, 2023 (6 rounds, 75 players)

For my family, summer has always marked a time of togetherness when my brother and I are out of school and have time at home.

And the weekend before school starts, we always have one final family outing tradition – The New York State Chess Championships in Albany, NY. The New York State Championships is America's longest-running chess tournament – this summer marked the 145th year of the NY State Chess Association's (NYSCA) event. This tournament also has a notable history in my family – my brother and I won mixed doubles together in 2021, I tied for 1st in the U1200 that year, and it was the first competitive chess event my Dad ever played. Additionally, the chess mates I've befriended make the tournament feel like an ever-expanding homecoming, bringing me back year after year to rekindle relationships and make new memories.

The 145th New York State Championship was held over the Labor Day weekend, September 1-4, with a record-breaking 341 players competing in five sections: Championship (1900 & up),

- 1-3.** Jianchao ZHOU, Djurabek KHAMRAKULOV, Joel BENJAMIN 5
4-6. William GRAIF, Rafael ADAM, Aritro CHAKRAVARTY 4½
7-18. Justin SARKAR, Ryan SUN, Eric FENG, Vincent LATORRE, Jasmine SU, Tobias RIZZO, Sam LUGER, Bobby QIAN, Luc William Crim HOFFMAN, Kyle DONG, Samuel ZHANG, Hugo GUILLEMETTE ...4

Under 2100, Under 1800, Under 1500, and Under 1200. The largest Championship in tournament history ended with a three-way grandmaster tie in tie-break order: Jianchao Zhou (MA), Djurabek Khamrakulov (NY) and Joel Benjamin (NJ). However, Djurabek Khamrakulov took the Champion title as the only NY State resident.

Here is the list of winners in their respective sections:

U2100	Tommy ZHANG 5½/6
U1800	Grant LIU 5½/6
U1500	Max Lev DEPAUL 6/6 (!)
U1200	Sheldon ZHU 5½/6

Surprisingly last year's champion was missing in action. Assistant TD Sunny Yang remarked, "Jason Liang did not return to defend his state title (2022, 2021). Even more surprising was the fact that Aritro Chakravarty, an expert-rated player, was leading the championship section with 4½/5 with a round to go – a very impressive feat, considering the strength of the event. Unfortunately, he lost against the top seed in the final round."

The tournament comprises mostly New Yorkers, though surrounding northeast states (NJ, CT, NH, VT) are highly represented, along with a strong contingent of Canadian players. As expected for America's longest running chess tournament, the New York State Championship's long history boasts the attendance of numerous world-renowned players. For instance, in 1900, future US Champion Frank J. Marshall won the event. Other participants included renowned artist and French Olympiad player Marcel Duchamp and GM Reuben Fine.

IA Karl Heck, chess-chronicler extraordinaire and *Empire Chess*' Editor further clarified myths and truths regarding



“Chess doesn’t have to be an isolated game. Sometimes, opponents over the board become friends in real life. And that, I think, is a beautiful aspect of this game.”

Tyshaune Mack (2021 U1500 winner, and repeat NY State Championship player)

THE CREW BEHIND THE SCENES

With the relationships I’ve made over time, the NY State Championship not only feels like a family atmosphere - it’s actually run by the legendary mother and son dynamic duo, FIDE IA & Organizer Sophia Rohde and TD Danny Rohde, Chess Hall of Fame & former US Chess President William “Bill” Goichberg (who is also the President of the NY State Chess Association), Founder of Continental Chess Association (CCA), NTD Steve Immitt (Fun Fact: Sang The National Anthem at the 2016 Opening Ceremony at the World Open in Philly), Chief NTD Harold Stenzel, and Assistant TD Sunny Yang (youngest TD in NY history).

According to Sophia Rohde, “Danny took his first steps here!” Now he’s the organizing TD, literally running the hallmark event. Overall, the New York State Chess Association (NYSCA) has promoted chess in the Empire State for almost 150 years.

Of course, no NYSCA tournament would be complete without TD Steve Immitt’s notorious bullhorn! Thirty minutes before the round starts, Steve’s side arm alarm sounds protocol for players to get to the tourney hall, find their assigned board, process vital instructions, and ready themselves for the round’s timely commencement.

The electrifying clamor and last-minute confusion of the mass of players abruptly transition to calm flow as competitors hear Steve’s final command, “Turn on your clocks” and seasoned GMs and newbies alike make their first moves and response.

the tournament’s illustrious past champions: “Though Wikipedia says so, I don’t believe that Bobby Fischer was a participant. Fischer played in the New York State Open, a different tournament. The only former over-the-board World Champion who appears on the New York State Champions roll is José Raúl Capablanca (who won in 1910). Former World Correspondence Champion Hans Berliner won the tournament in 1953 as well.”

The majority of the event’s participation was rooted in the top three sections, attesting to the continued quality of competition at the Tourney. More recent elites who have played in the NY State Championship include GM Fabiano Caruana and GM Hikaru Nakamura (won in 2004 and 2007). NY State Chess Association’s IA Sophia Rohde also confirmed that FM Sunil Weeramantry (NYSCA Board of Directors) was an avid attendee, winning the event in 1975 and 2001 and playing in 2010 and 2022! Along with his continuous competitive streaks, Sunil is everywhere, organizing NYSCA tournaments, directing his namesake US Chess Open Blitz invitational, or accompanying his star stepson, GM Hikaru Nakamura around the globe.

With so many top players at the Capital event, I’ve been lucky enough to score some high-ranked mixed doubles partners: NM Charles Hua in 2022 and IM-with-4-GM-norms Justin Sarkar this year. Plus, I’ve met some cool girls from

the tristate who’ve become my US Chess Women’s Girls Club pals online and at tourneys around the US. It’s been reported through US Chess that only 15% of registered chess players are female members. Looking at the standings, it appears that women made up 10% of the New York State Championships. It was truly a scramble for people to find a female partner for Mixed Doubles!

Though I look forward to seeing familiar faces at the New York State Championships each year, the tournament has also allowed me to forge new connections. Two years ago, I met a coach who became the subject of a non-fiction short story I wrote. Last year, I met a girl who became my teammate at the World Amateur Team & US Team East (Northeast Queens for the win!). And just this year, an IM I’d seen year after year asked me to his senior prom (I went).

Coming into this year’s tournament, I had been toggling music performances and summer school assignments with some chess preparation. I was hoping for a good outcome (at least one big win to boost my rating), but I was realistic. For the first

time, I was entering a chess tournament and simultaneously competing at the NY State Fair Talent Showcase Finals in Syracuse (ironically, singing a song I wrote about “Albany”). To play all rounds, I would need to enter into the Tourney’s four-day schedule.

Arriving for the first round at 6:30 PM Friday for the four-day schedule was like pulling into a ghost town - with no sign of



the usual crowd, we wondered whether the tournament had been canceled (fortunately, this wasn't the case – the four-day option is just an unpopular choice). Indeed, the players not only arrived in swaths Saturday morning; the 145th banner year proved that speculation was no match for tried and true calculation. Previous year's victors returned to the throne, including multiple-year Champ ('85, '86, '87, '90, '92, '95, '00 '01, '02,') GM Joel Benjamin, whose mom Phyllis is the NYSCA Membership Secretary.



What do players say about the tournament?

In my conversations with ardent NY State players, they offered their suggestions, which included an increment instead of a delay, more sections, an award ceremony to honor the winners and the tournament's history, a more significant sign to mark the TD's Room, and a request for a New York City tourney (similar to the Empire City Open that ceased during the pandemic).

Overall, general feedback confirmed that the tournament is particularly well-organized and ideally located for an optimal chess experience. In fact, between rounds, many players take in the variety of the Capital attractions – one player, Justin Spaulding, went with his girlfriend to see the Herkimer diamond mines on Saturday, and another “was very impressed with local bowling.” Players commented on the excellent food in the Capitol region as well, crediting

CHESS – CONNECTING PEOPLE

Across the board, there was consensus that NY state creates irreplaceable connections year after year. My Round 3 opponent, Tyshaune Mack, told me he had an intergenerational buddy he met a few years back who brought him to Red Lobster, and they became new pals. When the last round was over, I found the two of them – still playing and trading pieces in the hotel lobby with a healthy crowd of onlookers!

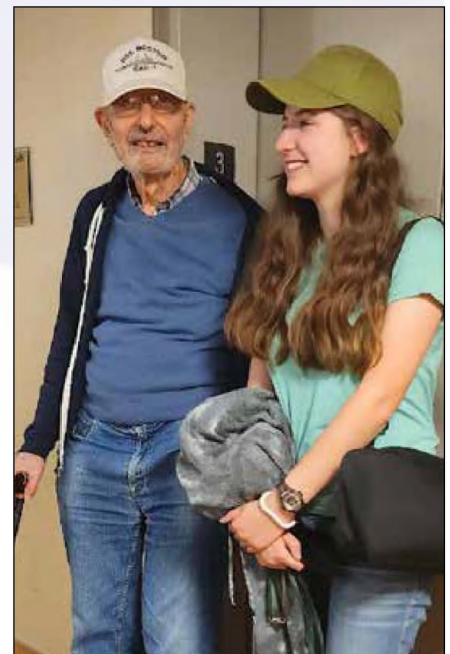
Tyshaune commented on his friend: “Someone I look forward to seeing at this event every year is a man named Daniel Pike from Rochester. Dan and I played against each other at the New York State Championship two years in a row. Both games were in the London system, and our records are 1-1 in those two games. “We need a rubber match!” he says every time I see him. Dan and I have been friends following our battles over the board. Since then he's been kind enough to treat me to lunch on multiple occasions. We openly exchange opening ideas and look at each other's games during the tournament. Dan is in his 70's and still as sharp as ever. Dan is also a musician. Being a musician myself, Dan and I never run out of things to talk about. Chess doesn't have to be an isolated game; sometimes opponents over the board become friends in real life. And that, I think, is a beautiful aspect of this game.”

Dan Pike agreed, “In short, chess brings people together who share a common passion. The opponents I encounter represent a diverse amalgam of age and ethnicity. My best memories involve the new friendships that arise as a result of the over-the-board struggles and the problem-solving post-game analysis. Tyshaune and I have faced each other two times in this tournament in the past. We split the matches. He has since moved up to the under 1800 section, and I'm still wallowing in the under 1500 section. It was after our first encounter at the 2016 U1500 section of the New York State Championship that the friendship began. I faced his pet London in that match and resigned after 31 moves. We faced off again in the 2018 U1500 section, and I figured out his Torre attempt in 48 moves on my way to tying for first place with 5 points. We analyze most of our tournament games together. We eat lunch together when convenient. We share our life stories when we have time. But, when we spend time together, we mostly share chess ideas. I'm looking forward to a potential tie-breaker match in the future. I may have to “play up” next year in an attempt to settle our New York State chess dispute.”

Jonah Johnson, a University of Vermont Chess Club member, who attended the tournament with UVM chess mates, also described the camaraderie: “I love the people; there are so many nice people and good players to play. Everyone was very kind and willing to learn or help me learn.” He mentioned how the Vermont Club made long-lasting friends at the event and has plans to collaborate with clubs from the area.

Longhorn
Steakhouse, PF Changs,
Druthers Brewery, and 99 Restaurants as
their top dining destinations.

Veteran players know how taxing chess tournaments can be, and that's why it was refreshing to get the first-hand perspective of Tim Fletcher, who came to the NY State Championship to play his very first chess tournament. He remarked, “The atmosphere was similar to a sporting event. Similar to sports, players have to mentally and physically outperform their opponents. Games lasting 4+ hours with multiple a day can





drain a player – which is more demanding than one would think”!

Players also highlighted the standout competition and large playing field, the flexible schedule options (2, 3, or 4 Day options), good prize money, and easy access from around the state. Bernard Rosenthal, who has played the NY State countless times and was the most senior adult (born in 1934) at the event, agreed, “It’s the only major tournament I can easily get to.”

Blitz and mixed doubles

The Blitz and Mixed Doubles side events also brought top-notch talent and a flurry of attendees. On Sunday, 9/3, the Blitz had eight rounds and drew a young crowd, likely because of the 10:30 PM start and tight schedule. Spectators practically matched the attendance, and the excited atmosphere starkly contrasted with the main playing hall: focused Blitz energy gradually grew more frantic. As the sounds of pieces hitting the board and hands slamming clocks accelerated, the room echoed a drizzle turning into a rainstorm – punctuated by an occasional shower as people knocked over all their pieces and switched sides.

Players laughed with their opponents, aggressively hit clocks, and cringed at blunders – as fun an event to witness as to play! Michael A. Miller, a 50-year-old seasoned chess player and multi-year attendee, commented, “Nice event, but these are at the end of a long day. For that reason, the number of participants was limited. My favorite experience from past events was the little-known NYS Quick, held the Friday evening before the main event for two years, 1993 and 1994. There were only about a dozen participants in 1994, and the event was not offered after that. The quick event included GMs. In 1993, I played Joel Benjamin in Round 1; in 1994, I played Robert Byrne in Round 1. That alone made the event memorable for me. I would suggest that in lieu of a Friday night Round 1 that, the Quick event be offered again. The players would be ‘fresh,’ and the quick time control may

be more appealing for those not likely to play in a Blitz event. Miller’s suggestion to move the Blitz in place of the Friday night Round 1, allowing players to sleep for their early morning matches, might cancel out Jon Rigai, an Impact Coaching Network (NYC) instructor and tourney player who highlighted the flexibility of the Tourney’s 4-Day, 3-Day, and 2-Day options.

According to the late-night spectators, GM Jianchao Zhou quickly stole the Blitz, winning all eight games with speedy aplomb! Bryan Enming Lin U2200, Peyton Mi Kromash U1900, Anushka Ayyappan, Noah Hinger, Christophe DeDonna, Ateeq Aslam Panjwani tied for U1600, respectively, taking home the first-place prize purse in their sections.

I opted not to play Blitz as I did in past years, because I was already torn between two competitions and quite exhausted.

However, I paid close attention to the Mixed Doubles results. My awesome Mixed Doubles partner, IM Justin Sarkar, practically played Round 5 into Round 6 as he battled GM Jianchao Zhou (draw) – the very last game in the playing hall. A large crowd gathered around as the clock ticked down.

Overall, the Mixed Doubles was won by Arnaud Jutras from Quebec and Anais Chloe Fiset from New York (5+3½), who came out with 8½ points combined. IM Sarkar and I wound up in 11th place (4+2½) out of 31 paired teams. We enjoyed this extra adrenaline rush of competitive fun! A heads up for future participants – like many players, I tried to save time by taking the stairs down from my room on the fourth floor to avoid the typical elevator rush to reach my game. Unfortunately the stairwell I chose dead ended with no out. This



blunder brought me into my game 5 late. For Round 6, I found a new stairwell with a slew of chess people and we correctly navigated out the back door and to the hall. Prepare the right stair or beware!

Looking forward to the next year’s edition

The NY State Championship is a familiar place of comfort and companions – a tournament that genuinely feels like a family reunion. New York State Chess itself is an extension of how chess is an old game that’s always new, welcoming, and a place of belonging. From this event, I’ve met players who resurface at tournaments across the state and nationally, yet I can’t wait to return to the 146th New York State tourney next year for all its stellar components. As TD Sunny Yang put it: “New York is one of the largest hotspots in the country for chess. We have a great community. I’ve been involved with this event for several years (I used to play before I became a TD). Last year, in 2022, we shattered the record number of players (318 as opposed to 220 or so in prior years). This year, we had 350 unique players on the crosstable, which is amazing! I think the New York chess scene is doing great and will only grow from here!”

*Become a NYSCA member to ensure your spot at next year’s NY State 146th Tourney: <https://nysca.net/membership/contact/>





Games from the tournament

B11

Andrew Feng	1996
Djurabek Khamrakulov	2501

Albany 2023, Notes by Pete Tamburro

What do you do when you're an expert paired with a GM? Do you play for a draw or do you play for a win – especially when your opponent plays a dubious move in the opening to lure you into unfamiliar territory?

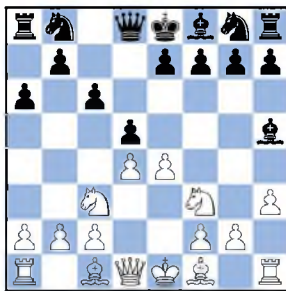
What do you do when you're a GM playing an expert? Do you avoid the theoretical lines or do you have the confidence to know you will eventually outplay him in the middlegame or, better yet, the endgame – the notorious weak spot of many non-masters?

The future NY champion for 2023 comes very close to becoming an ex-future champion in this game. Andrew Feng clearly outplayed his esteemed opponent in the opening, but then a critical moment arrived...

1.e4 c6 2.♘f3 d5 3.♖c3 This line has a historical pedigree going back to Tal, Nezhmetdinov and Fischer, while of late Nakamura has played it at least a dozen times.

3...a6?! The opening isn't that scary, so the experienced GM probably wanted to get his 14-year-old opponent out of the book at an early stage.

4.d4 ♗g4 5.h3 ♗h5

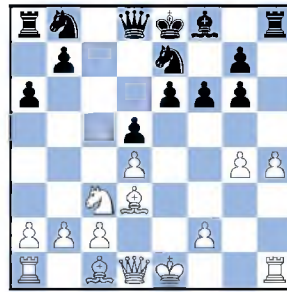


6.g4! OK!! That's the spirit. Not only is it a good move, but it's a gutsy one to play against a GM.

6...♗g6 7.exd5 cxd5 8.♗e5 e6 9.h4 If you said A, then you need to say B! Even with the pawn thrusts, White is ahead in development.

9...f6 10.♖xg6 hxg6 11.♗d3 Castling queenside is obviously in the plan for White, but, with this ♗d3 threat, where is Black's king going to hide out?

11...♗e7



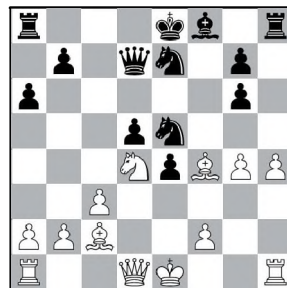
12.♗e2?! What a shame! After all that going forward, White chooses to go backward. Develop the queen with a threat, get the bishop out and castle queenside – White wouldn't have spoiled anything with this simple plan and should have started with 12.♗e2!.

12...e5! And the GM doesn't miss the opportunity to fight for the initiative, but it's not quite all he needs for his defense to be successful.

13.dxe5 fxe5 14.c3! Good thought. White is still ahead in development, so he prepares a retreat for the bishop and possibly a new diagonal on the queenside. **14...♖bc6 15.♗e3?!** Pretty modest and certainly not best. More logical and more aggressive was 15.♗g5; while a decent restraining move was 15.f3.

15...e4 16.♗c2 ♗e5 Here's the position that decided a state championship. The ...♗f3+ threat is brutal, but the move chosen ignores it.

17.♗f4?? Forced and good was 17.♗d4 ♗d7 (If 17...♗7c6?, then 18.♗e6 ♗d6 19.♗xd5 ♗xd5 20.♗c7+ ♗f7 21.♗xd5 and neither knight check accomplishes anything. White is winning.) 18.♗f4



A) 18...♗c4?! 19.♗e2! 0-0-0 (19...♗xb2 is grabbing the "poisoned pawn". After 20.♗b1! ♗c4 21.f3! ♗a3 22.fxe4! ♗xb1 23.♗xb1 0-0-0 24.exd5± White's pieces are way more active, and, most importantly, his king is safer than its counterpart!) 20.♗b3 and White has kept the advantage, although there is a lot of play left and many mistakes are waiting to be made.

B) 18...♗xg4 19.f3 ♗f6 (19...exf3

20.♗xf3+-) 20.fxe4 dxe4 21.♗e2 ♗ed5 22.♗g5 0-0-0 23.0-0-0±.

17...♗d7! Black doesn't even have to check right away, but it does give White a possible escape route.

18.♗a4? This is a wrong assessment, as ...b5 is actually not a weakening move for Black. The silicone minds suggest a tougher fight with 18.♗d2! 0-0-0 19.♗b3 ♗xg4 20.♗g1 ♗xe3 21.fxe3.

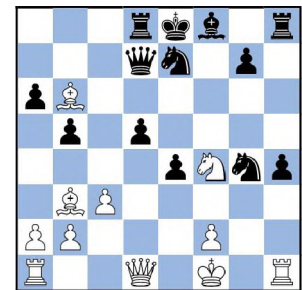
18...b5 19.♗b3 The once powerful light-squared bishop is now a virtual prisoner and White's kingside storm is now a mere puddle which Black will mop up in short order.

19...g5! 20.♗g2 20.♗xd5? fails tactically to 20...♗d3+.

20...gxf4 All too quickly, this game is over. **21.♗f1 ♗xg4 22.♗f4 ♗d8** Reinforcing the d5 pawn is necessary before taking any concrete actions.

22...♗xe3+ 23.fxe3 0-0-0 was also good, but probably Black didn't want to invite any queenside attack towards his king.

23.♗b6



23...♗f5! Black strikes that his threats are quicker. He is up two pawns, and has the attack!

24.♗d2 24.♗xd8 ♗xf4 25.♗b6 ♗h6!-+.

24...♗d6 The rest needs no commentary.

25.♗d4 ♗g6 26.♗xg6 ♗xg6 27.♗d1 ♗d6 28.♗xg4 ♗xg4 29.♗e1 ♗f3 30.♗f1 h3 31.a4 h2 **White resigned** We hope Andrew Feng continues his fearlessness.

C42

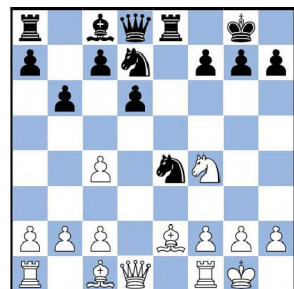
Djurabek Khamrakulov	2501
Alex Sinott	1872

Albany 2023, Notes by Dusan Kronic

This game is of great theoretical importance, as GM Khamrakulov unleashed a very strong novelty on move 11. Further in the game, Black played decently, until the moment he hesitated to consistently follow up his middlegame idea. One big mistake was all the GM needed to wrap up the game with cute tactics.

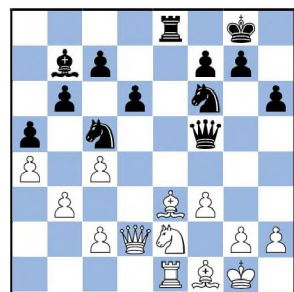


1.e4 e5 2.♟f3 ♟f6 3.♟c3 ♟b4 3...♟c6 is far more popular and solid.
 4.♟xe5 0-0 5.♟e2 ♟e8 6.♟d3 ♟xc3 7.dxc3 ♟xe4 8.0-0 d6 8...d5 possibly makes more sense. However, the text is also playable.
 9.♟f4 ♟d7 10.c4 b6



11.a4!N The engine's top recommendation – and a novelty. The main idea is to execute a rook lift via the third rank!

11...a5 12.♟a3 Here it is.
 12...♟dc5 13.♟e3 ♟b7 14.f3 14.♟f3 was more precise. Then, after 14...♟f6 15.♟xb7 ♟xb7 16.♟h3, White will follow up with b2-b3, ♟c1-b2, and take it from there. The rook on h3 cannot be attacked by the enemy pieces and will eventually come to g3, increasing pressure on g7.
 14...♟f6 15.b3 ♟d7 16.♟e1 ♟xe3 17.♟xe3 ♟e8 Black has managed to create a very solid setup against White's bishop pair. The position is roughly equal.
 18.♟d2 ♟f5 19.♟f1 h6 20.♟e2



20...♟e6? 20...♟g6 was the logical follow-up to Black's 18th move. Then, for example, 21.♟f4 ♟f5 22.♟d3 (Or 22.♟c3 ♟d7 aiming for ...♟e5. 23.g4 ♟f6 24.♟xf6 ♟xf6 25.♟f2 g5=) 22...♟e6=.
 21.♟g3! This is the point. After a series of forced moves, White will improve his pieces and, at the same time, dislodge his opponent's queen.

21...♟h7 Practically forced as 21...♟e5? runs into 22.♟xb6+-.
 22.♟d3 ♟h8 23.♟f5 White makes use of Black's unfortunate mistake on move 20 and further increases pressure, limiting his opponent's options.

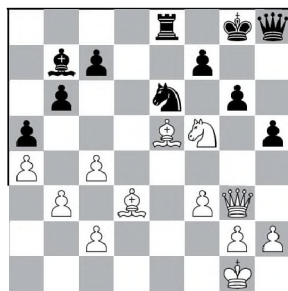
23...h5 24.♟f2?! 24.♟d4 would provoke a series of trades favorable for White. 24...♟xd4 25.♟xd4 ♟xe1+ 26.♟xe1 ♟f8 Here, however, it's not easy to calculate from afar that 27.c5! is a decisive blow.

After 27...dxc5 (27...bxc5 28.♟xf6 gxf6 29.♟xa5+-) 28.♟e5 ♟e8 White needs to find the spectacular tactic 29.♟xc7!, since 29...♟xc7 can be strongly met by 30.♟e5 ♟e8 31.♟b5!+-.

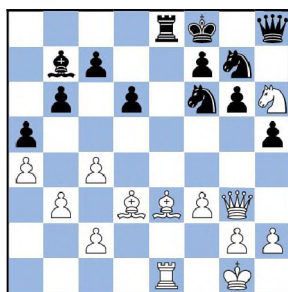
24...g6 25.♟g3 This was what White was counting on.

25...♟g7? A blunder that loses instantly due to nice tactics.

Black had to realize that he needs to do something to bring his queen back into play. Thus, 25...♟d7 was Black's only move here, which would probably have caught White by surprise, as after 26.♟d4 ♟e5 27.♟xe5 dxe5 28.♟xe5



28...h4! is the key move. Then, 29.♟xh4 ♟h6 30.f4 ♟c5 is unclear with a lot of fight ahead.
 26.♟h6+ ♟f8



27.♟xf7!

Black resigned

B47

Vincent Latorre	2077
Hugo Guillemette	1865

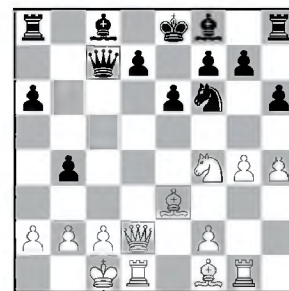
Albany 2023, Notes by Dusan Kronic

In this game we see a very modern and fashionable line that hasn't been that much explored until recently. Interestingly enough, one of the main contributors to adopting this line and showing how Black should approach it was none other than World No.1 Magnus Carlsen.

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♟xd4 ♟c6 5.♟c3 ♟c7 6.g4 This early pawn thrust gained a lot of popularity lately, either immediately or after 6.♟e3 a6 7.g4.

6...a6 7.♟e3 b5 The most popular continuation according to my database.

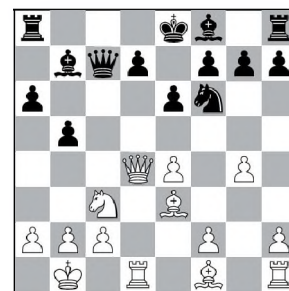
Magnus Carlsen adopted a different approach by opting for 7...h6 8.h4 b5 9.♟xc6 ♟xc6 10.♟d2 b4 11.♟e2 ♟xe4 12.♟g1 ♟c4 13.♟f4 ♟c7 14.0-0-0 ♟f6



A) 15.g5? is too aggressive, as Black's pieces coordinate perfectly after 15...hgx5 16.hgx5 ♟e4 17.♟d4 ♟b7 18.♟g2 ♟d6 19.♟xb4 ♟c8+. Black is already better here, and later won on move 54 in D.Gukesh 2744 – M.Carlsen 2835, Zagreb 2023.

B) After 15.♟g2?! ♟b7 16.♟xb7 ♟xb7+, White is better developed and has compensation, but Black proved that “a pawn is a pawn” and won on move 36 in F.Caruana 2782 – M.Carlsen 2835, Internet 2023.

Carlsen also tried 7...♟xd4. Then followed 8.♟xd4 b5 9.0-0-0 ♟b7 10.♟b1 ♟f6. The idea behind this move obliges the second player to learn the forced critical line by heart!

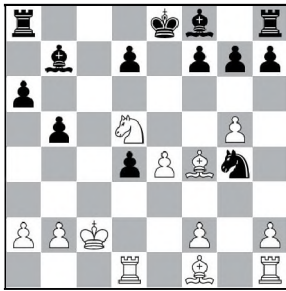


A) 11.f3 ♟c8?! Imprecise, as Black shouldn't allow g4-g5. (11...h6= was a must, with equal chances.) 12.g5 ♟h5 13.♟d2 ♟e7 14.♟h3!± pointing out that the knight on h5 is clearly in offside. However, later Black won on move 30 in I.Nepomniachtchi 2773 – M.Carlsen 2865, Internet 2022.

B) Now, this is the critical line: 11.g5 ♟g4! 12.♟f4 e5 13.♟d5 ♟xc2+! (Also



13...0-0-0 was played three times with the same equal outcome.) 14.♔xc2 exd4

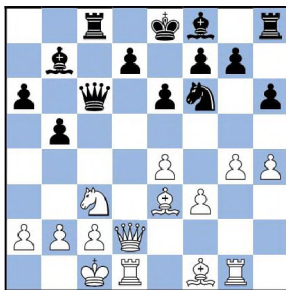


B1) 15.♕c7+? ♖d8 16.♕xa8 ♕xf2+

B2) 15.♕g3 f5! 16.♕c7+ ♖d8 17.♕xa8 f4! 18.♕xf4 ♕xf2 19.♕d3 ♕xa8 20.♕e5 White is “academically” better, but we can say that Black is not worse.

8.♕xc6 ♖xc6 9.♖d2 ♕b7 10.0-0 ♕f6 11.f3 h6 Better is 11...b4 12.♕e2 d5 13.g5 ♕d7 14.♕d4 ♖c7 15.f4±, when White is slightly better, but all the fight lies ahead.

12.♖g1 ♖c8 13.h4



13...b4?! It was crucial to trade the dark-squared bishops first. 13...♕c5 14.♕xc5 ♖xc5 15.♖g2 g5± White is better, but Black has a clear plan of setting up a blockade on the dark squares.

14.♕e2 ♖a4? Black thought that his queen will stand better on a4, once he plays ...d5.

14...♕c5? doesn't work now, as the rook on g1 is protected by the knight on e2. 15.♕xc5 ♖xc5 16.g5+-.

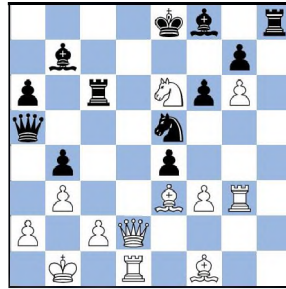
Instead, 14...d5 15.g5 hxg5 16.hxg5 ♕d7 17.g6 f6 18.♕d4 ♖d6 would keep the game going. But White is better without a doubt.

15.♕b1 d5 16.g5 hxg5 17.hxg5 ♕d7 18.g6 Now it is practically game over.

18...f6 19.b3 ♖a5 19...♖c6 20.exd5 ♖xd5 21.♕d4

Compare this position with the one after 14.♕e2 d5. White has gained two useful tempi – b3 and ♕b1. Enough for an almost decisive advantage as Black has no counterplay.

20.♕f4 ♕e5 21.♖g3 dxe4 22.♕xe6 ♖c6



23.♕xf8 ♖xf8 24.f4 Already here Black could have resigned.

24...♖c7 25.fxg5 fxg5 26.♕g5 ♖xg6 27.♖d8+ ♖xd8 28.♖xd8+ ♕f7 29.♕c4+ **Black resigned**

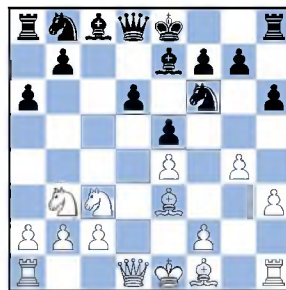
B90

Justin Sarkar	2290
Chowdhury Marzouq	1891

Albany 2023, Notes by Dusan Kronic

This game shows nicely how an experienced player outplayed his young lower-rated opponent in purely positional style.

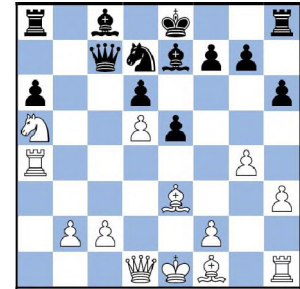
1.e4 c5 2.♕f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♕xd4 ♕f6 5.♕c3 a6 6.♕e3 e5 7.♕b3 ♕e7 8.h3 h6 9.g4



Another example of White's aggressive approach in the Sicilian. This time, though, we have a Najdorf – the variation that is famous for its long lines that have been explored in great depth. If you're not familiar with all the ideas, or have problems with memorization – it is highly recommended that you avoid playing the Najdorf as Black! Many strong players have fallen victim to the Najdorf venom due to its complexity...

9...b5 10.a4 bxa4 11.♖xa4 ♕bd7?! This feels somewhat stereotyped. 11...♕c6 is not really in the spirit of the Najdorf, but in this concrete position, Black should have noticed that playing for ...a5 and ...♕b4 is the better setup.

12.♕a5 ♖c7 13.♕d5 ♕xd5 14.exd5 White has obtained a pleasant edge and Black should be careful not to fall down too soon.

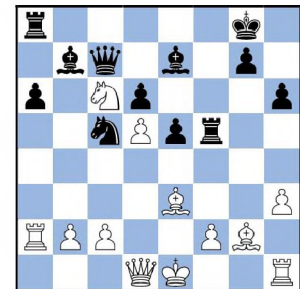


14...♕c5?! It was necessary for Black to eliminate White's strong dark-squared bishop, in order to set up a blockade on the dark squares. Also, the knight on c5 is pretty shaky, as proved by future developments in this game.

14...♕g5!? 15.♕xg5 hxg5 16.♖d2 ♕b6, putting pressure on the d5 pawn and defending tactically from any ♕c6 threats. One very important factor in the Najdorf is king safety (remember GM Nyzhnyk's article on this topic – ACM #32, pp. 72-75). 15.♖a2 0-0 16.♕g2 f5 17.♕c6 ♕b7? A step in the wrong direction.

17...♕e4 was almost the only move to prolong the fight for Black. His position is inferior, but not yet lost. His king is safer and he should have tried to organize some play on the kingside in order to parry White's strong bind on the queenside. However, that's easier said than done...

18.gxf5 ♖xf5



19.b4! This move finishes the game tactically. Remember the previous comment on the shaky knight on c5.

19...♕xc6 A sad concession. 19...♕e6 runs into 20.♕b6! ♖xb6 (20...♖d7 21.dxe6+-) 21.♕xe7+ ♕h8 22.♕xf5 winning.

20.dxc6 ♕e6 21.♕d5 White's bishops are true monsters – exerting insurmountable pressure on Black's position.

21...♖f6 22.b5 **Black resigned** as he is completely hamstrung and has absolutely no means to oppose White's simple plan of advancing the b- and c-pawns.

U.S. JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIP, St. Louis, MO

The U.S. Junior and Junior Girls welcome many of the same established top young stars year after year. A few new faces are always present, though, and it's rare indeed for a victor to successfully defend the title. GM Christopher Yoo, last year's winner, was noticeably absent, having to withdraw only days before the event and also forfeit his games at the World Cup. Here's hoping he won't have any further difficulties of a similar nature in the future.

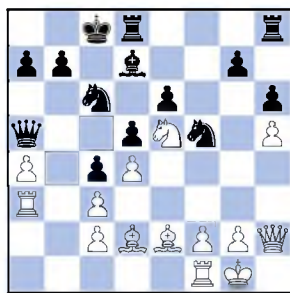
Battle in the main Junior Championship was fierce – it's enough to say that, before the last round, any one of five contenders could have taken home the crown! GM Abhimanyu Mishra and GM-elect Arthur Guo held a fragile half-point lead over the field, but practically speaking any result was still possible. Mishra kept control after getting a bit outprepared in the opening and drew from a position of great strength, while Arthur failed to put the finishing touch on his impressive run – mentioned last issue – falling to defeat after reaching an objectively better but complicated position from the opening. A decisive result in Jacobson-Hong could have forced a playoff to decide matters, but the game never had much of a spark. The split point cemented Mishra's victory and berth in the U.S. Championship.

The Junior Girls followed a somewhat less bumpy road – eventual winner IM-elect Alice Lee simply outclassed the field, securing the title with a round left to play. An important, complicated seventh round win over IM Carissa Yip took her only real competitor firmly out of commission.

GM Melikset Khachiyan's similar dominance in the U.S. Senior Championship, played alongside the Junior events, came as more of a surprise. The second-to-last seed, Melik tore the field apart with a 5½/6 start, after which three draws were more than sufficient to coast to victory.

Andrew Hong	2520
Abhimanyu Mishra	2591

U.S. Junior Chess Championship 2023



This battle between two of the early frontrunners and, as it would turn out, foremost contenders for the title, would later turn out to have been vitally important for the overall prize distribution. To most I'm sure the opening is fairly easy to guess just from the pawn structure's shell – yes, it was a sharp Winawer French. We enter the game at a point when Black is suffering from an obvious positional disadvantage, and needs to find a way to mix it up. **19...♟fxd4!** Precisely what the doctor

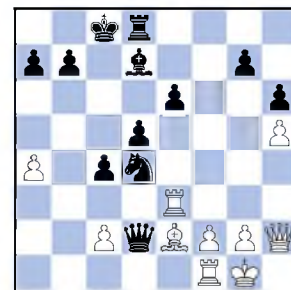


▲ Abhimanyu Mishra

Photo by Lennart Ootes

ordered! **19...♟cxd4?**, on the other hand, would ease up the pressure against White's knight on e5, allowing **20.♟g4! ♟hf8 21.♟g6 ♟f6 22.♟xf5 ♟xf5 23.♟f4±**. Black's king is clearly shivering. **20.cxd4 20.♟g4? ♟xe5 21.♟xe5 ♟c6±** sees White's compensation dry up. **20...♟xd2 21.♟f7** The only possible issue – White can already win an exchange and has some dangerous attacking possibilities. As it seems, though, Black will have either full compensation or sufficient defensive resources. **21...♟hf8 22.♟xd8** Going for the material. **22.♟d6+!? ♟b8 23.♟e3!** wouldn't have been easy to decide on. Both players are taking

certain risks after **23...♟a8 24.c3 a6! 25.♟g3 ♟a2!∞**, but it isn't clear why White should have the better of it. If Hong had needed a win at all costs this would have been the way to go, though, since White's active pieces make for a messy, unclear game. **22...♟xd8 23.♟e3 ♟xd4** With two pawns for the exchange, Black is more than comfortable, and the position seems better suited to his minor pieces.



24.♟e5 24.♟g4 ♟xc2 25.♟f4 ♟f5 26.♟e5 ♟f8!= also doesn't give White anything concrete. **24...♟f5 25.♟d1** The idea – now Black's queen needs to leave the crime scene rather than keep grabbing. **25...♟a5! 25...♟xc2? 26.♟c3 ♟xa4 27.g4!** destabilizes Black's formerly solid knight, when **27...♟e7 28.♟xg7±** sees the kingside fall apart. **26.♟f3 ♟c7 27.♟a1 ♟c6∞** Black is in good shape and, in the ensuing time scramble, took over when Hong's somewhat desperate attempt at an attack went awry. **Black won**



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.



U.S. JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIP, St. Louis, MO, July 15-26, 2023, (10-player round-round)

Rk	Name	Elo	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Pts	TPR
1	Abhimanyu MISHRA	2591		½	1	½	1	½	½	½	½	1	6	2572
2	Balaji DAGGUPATI	2494	½		0	1	½	1	½	1	1	0	5½	2538
3	Arthur GUO	2483	0	1		½	1	0	1	½	½	1	5½	2539
4	Brandon JACOBSON	2546	½	0	½		½	½	½	1	1	1	5½	2532
5	Andrew HONG	2520	0	½	0	½		½	1	1	1	1	5½	2535
6	Kirk GHAZARIAN	2489	½	0	1	½	½		½	0	1	1	5	2504
7	Justin WANG	2488	½	½	0	½	0	½		1	1	1	5	2502
8	Jason LIANG	2499	½	0	½	0	0	1	0		0	1	3	2333
9	Josiah STEARMAN	2444	½	0	½	0	0	0	0	1		1	3	2339
10	Arthur XU	2083	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		1	2153

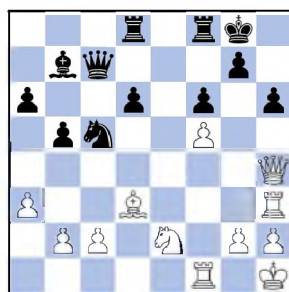
U.S. SENIOR CHAMPIONSHIP, St. Louis, MO, July 15-26, 2023, (10-player round-round)

Rk	Name	Elo	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Pts	TPR
1	Melikset KHACHIVAN	2403		½	1	½	1	½	½	1	1	1	7	2726
2	Alexander SHABALOV	2453	½		1	0	0	1	1	½	½	1	5½	2581
3	Vladimir AKOPIAN	2612	0	0		1	1	½	½	½	½	1	5	2526
4	Gregory K Aidanov	2563	½	1	0		½	½	1	½	½	0	4½	2489
5	Maxim DLUGY	2524	0	1	0	½		½	1	½	1	0	4½	2493
6	Joel BENJAMIN	2500	½	0	½	½	½		½	½	½	½	4	2453
7	Patrick WOLFF	2545	½	0	½	0	0	½		1	1	½	4	2448
8	Igor NOVIKOV	2527	0	½	½	½	½	½	0		½	½	3½	2413
9	Dmitry GUREVICH	2364	0	½	½	½	0	½	0	½		1	3½	2431
10	Douglas ROOT	2469	0	0	0	1	1	½	½	½	0		3½	2419

Balaji Daggupati	2494
Jason Liang	2499

U.S. Junior Chess Championship 2023

GM Balaji Daggupati had his chance for glory in the last round against Mishra – after clearly winning the preparation battle, he handled an unclear position far too uncertainly, landing in a position where his opponent should have been able to convert with relative ease. In a tough battle, the eventual tournament winner was forced to settle for a draw. To get to the point where he had a shot at the title, though, Daggupati had to ascend from an even score by winning his seventh and eighth rounds in quick succession. His triumph against Jason Liang was the start of a powerful finishing spurt.



At the moment he seems to have a dangerous attack, but nothing definite. **23...♖fe8!** Still fine, but why allow more problems than necessary? **23...♗de8!** would have been safer, seeing as **24.♟f4 ♗e5 25.♗g3 ♟xd3 26.♟xd3 ♗e7!** is now playable, with f6 covered. Black's position looks slightly more pleasant. **24.♟f4 ♟xd3** Removing the dangerous bishop is a natural impulse. The knight will be strong on e6, but at the same time Black's counter chances shouldn't be underestimated. **24...♗e5? 25.♗g3**

♟xd3 26.♟xd3±, as previously mentioned, loses material with f6 loose.

24...♗c8!? is the computer's absurdly calm suggestion, with the subtle tactical point of **25.♗g3 ♟xd3 26.cxd3 ♗c1! 27.♗g1 ♗xg1+! 28.♟xg1 ♗c1+ 29.♟f2 ♗c2+=**. A pretty repetition, but certainly not an easy one to envision five moves back! **25.cxd3 ♗e5 26.♟e6 ♗c2 27.♗g3 ♗d7 28.h3** The forcing play is over, and it's time for Black to pull an ace out of his sleeve. White has a dangerous initiative, but a defensive resource did exist...



28...♗d2?? Not this way, though! Defending h6 is perfectly logical, but now White has just enough time to break through.

28...♗e3!, distracting White's rook from the main battlefield, would have saved the game. **29.♟f4!?**, aiming at h5, doesn't manage to keep Black's play in check. (**29.♗h5!?**, threatening a check on e8 and g6 to cover g2, also shouldn't give more than a draw by repetition after **29...♗f7! 30.♗xg7+ ♗xg7 31.♗e8+ ♟h7 32.♟f8+ ♟g8) 29...♗de7 30.♗g4 ♟h7! 31.♟h5 ♗xg2+! 32.♗xg2 ♗xd3±**, with a mess. Black has perpetual checking options, and should at least manage to hold on.



▲ Balaji Daggupati

Photo by Lennart Ootes

29.♟h2! Enviably calm play! It's easy to rush, but now the threat of **♗xf6** really does prove decisive. The immediate **29.♗xf6??** would run into **29...♗xg2+ 30.♗xg2 ♗xg2+ 31.♟xg2 gxf6±** sparking up the struggle anew, when Black even has the better prospects.

29...♗e2 29...♗f7 30.♗d1!! ♗xd1 31.♗xh6 ♗xe6 32.fxe6+- is too much for Black to handle.

30.♗g1 30.♟f4+- works too, but it's aesthetically hard to move the knight away from its beautiful outpost.

30...♗f7 31.♗d4! Combining threats on both wings – Black can't afford to lose d6 for nothing, but...

31...♗xb2 32.♗g4! ...switches back with decisive effect. Black is helpless.

32...♗e5 33.d4! ♗e4 34.♗g6 was already enough to prompt resignation. With g7 dropping off, Black's plight is indeed hopeless. **White won**



C22

Carissa Yip 2369

Alice Lee 2393

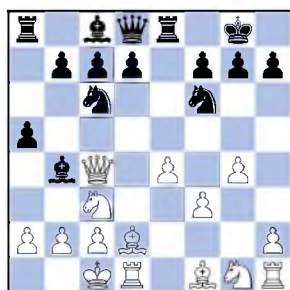
U.S. Girls Chess Championship 2023

1.e4 e5 2.d4!? A bold choice, considering Carissa had enjoyed success with the Center Game just a week and a half earlier! **2...exd4 3.♖xd4 ♜c6 4.♞c4!?** Modern chess at its finest! This is an interesting way to put Black under pressure while avoiding main lines of the past that have been analyzed out. **4.♞e3 ♠f6 5.♜c3 ♖b4 6.♙d2 0-0 7.0-0-0 ♜e8** has been proven to favor Black. **4.♞a4!?** can also be tried, with similar ideas.

4...♠f6 5.♜c3 ♖b4 6.♙d2 0-0 7.0-0-0 ♜e8 8.f3 The queen on c4 serves a useful function in ruling out ...d5 for the moment. As will soon become clear, though, Alice came to the game fully booked up, in which case I don't feel this type of position has the same kind of surprise value.

8...a5!? **8...d6 9.a3** was C.Yip 2369 - D. Mardov 2472, Charlotte 2023, when **9...a5!?** would again have been the stronger course of action. All in all, White's position is questionable, and I don't see any reason her kingside attack should land first.

9.g4



9...d5!? **9...N** Inviting fascinating complications that should certainly favor the player who has worked out the position in depth at home.

9...♜e5!? **10.♞d4 d6 11.♞f2 c6** can also be tried, but White's kingside pawns are coming on surprisingly fast. P.McCartney 2149 - J.Maestro Hernandez 2158, ICCF email 2021, went **12.h4 a4 13.h5 a3 14.b3 ♙xg4!?** **15.fxg4 ♙xc3 16.♙xc3 ♜xe4 17.♞d4 ♞g5+ 18.♙d2 ♞f6 19.♙e3 ♜xg4 20.♞xf6 gxf6**, and with ...♠g2 next Black will enter a rook vs two pieces imbalance. White should hold with careful play, though, as he did eventually manage to do.

9...d6!? **10.♞e2 ♙e6 11.♜b1** was T. Abrahamyan 2291 - M.Sarquis 2072, Chennai 2022. Apparently this variation is a favorite of U.S. female players! Black



Alice Lee

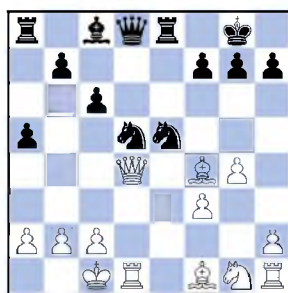
Photo by Saint Louis Chess Club

could have grabbed the initiative with the sharp **11...d5! 12.g5 ♜h5 13.♙h3 ♙xc3 14.♙xc3 ♞xg5**, when I don't think there's enough compensation. The game is messy enough that one can't ever be certain of the final result, though.

10.exd5 ♜e5 11.♞d4 c6 12.♙f4!? **12.h3!?**, intending ♙g5 next, could also be tried.

12...♙xc3 Based on Alice's speed of play, she was still firmly in prep. **12...c5!?** **13.♞d2 ♜exg4! 14.fxg4 a4 15.♙b5 a3** would also bring about a true maelstrom of complications. Black seems for choice after **16.♠ge2 axb2+ 17.♜b1 ♙d7**, when White's open king means she is fighting for survival.

13.♞xc3 ♜xd5 14.♞d4

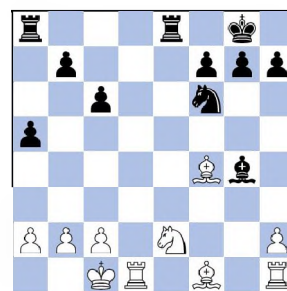


14...♙xg4! Not the only move, but clearly a strong and thematic follow-up to Black's previous play! The idea came as a big surprise to Carissa, who sunk into thought for nearly half an hour.

15.♜e2! Well spotted! Now it was Alice's turn to "fall asleep," as she had apparently only considered **15.c4** when Black is comfortable after **15...♞f6! 16.cxd5 ♞xd4 17.♙xd4 ♜f2 18.♙g2 cxd5**, snagging the rook in short order. The knight was immune, of course - **15.fxg4? ♙xg4 16.♙h6 ♞f6!?**

15...♞f6? Making use of the same idea, but chess is not a one size fits all game! **15...♞h4!** was the way to go. Black wins back her piece after **16.fxg4 ♙xg4 17.♙g3 ♞h6+ 18.♞d2 ♙xe2 19.♞xh6 gxxh6 20.♙xe2 ♜xe2 21.♜hg1**, with continued complications in the ensuing endgame - despite the two extra pawns Black's weak king should lead to some form of dynamic equality.

16.fxg4 ♙xg4 17.♞xf6 ♜xf6



The critical moment. Carissa had a golden chance to upset the apple cart and snatch a win, thus springing back into contention.

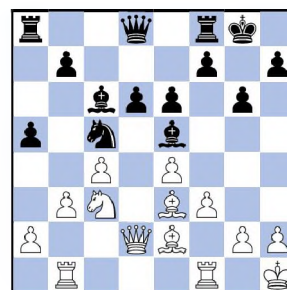
18.♜c3? But this wasn't it! **18.♙d2! ♜e4 19.♜g3** would have gone for the same transition while keeping White's pieces in active positions. In the game it took several moves to reroute the knight from d1 to a more suitable location, giving Black plenty of time to activate her own pieces. In this version, **19...♜xd2 20.♙xd2 ♙f3 21.♜g1+** is still a roughly balanced distribution of material, but the difference in piece quality is tremendous.

18...♙xd1 19.♜xd1 ♜e4 White isn't in time to consolidate her potentially more useful minor pieces. The game took many turbulent twists and turns, with both sides getting their share of winning chances. Alice's nerves held out better, and in the end **Black won** in 41 moves.

Dmitry Gurevich 2364

Melikset Khachiyan 2403

U.S. Senior Chess Championship 2023



From a typical Accelerated Dragon White hasn't managed to consolidate the



▲ Melikset Khachiyan Photo by Saint Louis Chess Club

advantage his extra space should provide. As we join the game, Black's counterplay is more than sufficient.

17.♖b1?! Either overlooking or underestimating the active counter punch that follows. **17.♗f4** would have been fine, defending against the immediate threat, even though **17...f5! 18.exf5 ♖xf5** is Black's dream.

17.♖e1, though passive, could also have been played – as will soon become clear, the h4 square is an important point to cover! **17...♗f6 18.♖b5 ♗f4! 19.♗f2 b6** is a double edged game, with chances for both sides.

17...♗h4! All of a sudden, White has to make an unpleasant concession.

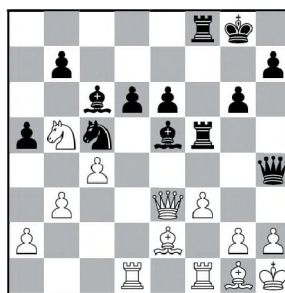
18.♗g1?! Choosing temporary passivity over the long-term structural weakness, which is certainly understandable. **18.h3** was still the lesser evil, when Black would hold the initiative after **18...f5 19.♗d4 ♗f4**, but the game is far from over.

18...f5 Black's pieces are springing to life!

19.exf5?! Played quickly. It's not easy to envision an alternative, with e4 impossible to defend. **19.♖b5!? fxe4 20.♗d4** gives White surprisingly decent compensation, but it isn't exactly human chess!

19...♖xf5 20.h3? That Gurevich already felt necessitated by the circumstances to weaken his kingside speaks volumes about the earlier decision's fallacies... By now, Black's attack will swiftly become decisive.

20.♖e3!?, defending against the capture on h2 thanks to ♖g1 resources, had to be tried, though Black is firmly for choice after **20...♖af8 21.♖b5!?**



21...♖h5! 22.f4 ♖xf4! 23.♗xh5 ♗e4, when White has a tough defense ahead of him.

20...♖g5 White's pieces are a tangled mess and, despite mutual oversights, Melik didn't let up. **Black won** in 16 moves.

GRAND RAPIDS, MI

July 29-August 1, 2023

6th Annual Irwin National Tournament of Senior State Champions

(6 rounds)

1-2 Jesse KRAAI, Nikoloz MANAGADZE (GEO)	5
3-5 John FEDOROWICZ, Enrico SEVILLANO, Ronald BURNETT	4½
6-10 Mark GINSBURG, Javier TORRES, Timothy TAYLOR, Karl DEHMELT, Kenneth SARNER	4

GRAND RAPIDS, MI

July 29-August 6, 2023

123rd Annual U.S. Open Championship

(9 rounds)

1-2 Aleksey SOROKIN (RUS), Andrew TANG	8
3-8 Viktor MATVIISHEN (UKR), David BRODSKY, Rahul SRIVATSHAV (IND), Ben LI, Sharvesh DEVIPRASATH, Justin SARKAR	7½
9-15 Varuzhan AKOBIAN, Jason LIANG, Bryce TIGLON, Joshua POSTHUMA, George LI, Dmitry GUREVICH, Ronald BURNETT	7



▼ St. Louis Summer Chess Classic

ST. LOUIS SUMMER CHESS CLASSIC – A, St. Louis, MO, August 1-11, 2023, (10-player round-robin)

Rk	Name	FED	Elo	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Pts	TPR
1	Nikolas THEODOROU	GRE	2586		1	1	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	6	2734
2	Raunak SADHWANI	IND	2624	0		½	½	½	1	1	½	½	1	5½	2685
3	John BURKE	USA	2592	0	½		½	½	½	1	1	1	½	5½	2689
4	Aram HAKOBYAN	ARM	2612	½	½	½		1	½	½	½	½	½	5	2649
5	Benjamin BOK	NED	2617	½	½	½	0		½	0	1	1	1	5	2649
6	Iliya NYZHNYK	UKR	2621	½	0	½	½	½		½	½	½	½	4	2562
7	V PRANAV	IND	2588	0	0	0	½	1	½		½	1	½	4	2566
8	Krishnan SASIKIRIAN	IND	2604	½	½	0	½	0	½	½		½	½	3½	2527
9	Abhimanyu MISHRA	USA	2585	½	½	0	½	0	½	0	½		1	3½	2529
10	Dariusz SWIERCZ	USA	2640	½	0	½	½	0	½	½	½	0		3	2478

ST. LOUIS SUMMER CHESS CLASSIC – B, St. Louis, MO, August 1-11, 2023, (10-player round-robin)

Rk	Name	FED	Elo	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Pts	TPR
1	Semyon LOMASOV	ISR	2542		½	½	½	1	1	1	½	½	1	6½	2683
2	Andrew HONG	USA	2525	½		0	½	½	1	1	1	1	½	6	2644
3	Akshat CHANDRA	USA	2469	½	1		1	0	½	½	0	1	1	5½	2606
4	Brandon JACOBSON	USA	2537	½	½	0		½	½	½	1	1	½	5	2561
5	Arman MIKAELIAN	ARM	2521	0	½	1	½		0	½	½	1	1	5	2563
6	Dambasuren BATSUREN	MGL	2519	0	0	½	½	1		½	1	½	1	5	2563
7	Luka BUDISAVLJEVIC	SRB	2495	0	0	½	½	½	½		½	1	1	4½	2523
8	Aleksandr LENDERMAN	USA	2547	½	0	1	0	½	0	½		0	½	3	2392
9	Eishan MORADIABADI	USA	2524	½	0	0	0	0	½	0	1		½	2½	2353
10	Justin WANG	USA	2520	0	½	0	½	0	0	0	½	½		2	2300



1000GM's Fort Lauderdale GM/IM Norm Invitational had a somewhat strange distribution in the final placement that surely isn't encountered too often! Both sections saw seven players – a great majority! – finishing with a plus score, leaving the tail enders far, far behind. There isn't much room for error in modern day chess, I suppose, and anyone who isn't on their game immediately becomes a target.

FM Aaron Jacobson shared the top spot with five others in the GM section, in the process achieving his final IM Norm and the title! In the IM group Nicholas Matta attained his maiden IM Norm on the heels of a blazing 5½/6 streak starting from the second round.

FORT LAUDERDALE, FL

August 2-6, 2023

1000GM Fort Lauderdale Norm Invitational – GM

(10-player round-robin)

1-6 Sam SCHMAKEL, Vladimir GEORGIEV (MKD), Mark HEIMANN, Nikola MITKOV (MKD), Aaron JACOBSON, Terry LUO	5½
7 Harshid KUNKA	5
8 Ezra CHAMBERS (BDI)	3
9 Petar ARNAUDOV (BUL)	2½
10 Maximilian LU	1½

FORT LAUDERDALE, FL

August 2-6, 2023

1000GM Fort Lauderdale Norm Invitational – IM

(10-player round-robin)

1 Nicholas MATTA	7
2 Sergio BARRENTOS (COL)	6
3-4 Jacek STOPA (POL), Augusto CAMPOS (CUB)	5
5-7 Rushaan MAHAJAN, Donald JOHNSON, James NGUYEN.....	4½
8 Jesse REN	3½
9-10 Mike ZALOZNY, Alexandre KRETCHETOV (RUS)	2½

Further experimentation with slightly different forms of the newly revitalized Scheveningen System pairing format - discussed previously in these pages - was seen in the Pacific Northwest Chess Center's back-to-back Artist Point GM/IM Norm Invitationals. Participants in the ten player events were paired into teams of five and faced off against each opponent from the opposing side twice over the course of the event.

IM Anthony He did local fans proud by finishing both tournaments with fantastic, undefeated 7½/10 results, in the process completing his first and second GM Norms in one swoop! A rare feat indeed. The first event saw IM Josiah Stearman finishing on a strong 7/10 which, sadly, seems to have been insufficient for his final GM Norm, while the second didn't see any other real contenders for a norm despite a powerful showing from the "Challengers" as a whole. Advait Vijayakumar and Erin Bian both raised their rating by 150 FIDE points, while the former even had chances to play for a first IM Norm, but just didn't manage to put together a robust enough finish.

REDMOND, WA

August 19-25, 2023

PNWCC Norm Invitational Artist Point 1

(10-player double-round Schiller)

Team 1 (masters)

1 Oliver BARBOSA (PHI)	7½
2 Costin COZIANU (CAN)	6
3 Dimitri KOMAROV (UKR)	5½
4 Enrico SEVILLANO	5
5 Maxim NOVIK (LTU)	4

Team 2 (challengers)

1 Anthony HE	7½
2 Josiah STEARMAN	7
3 Megan LEE	3½
4 Havish SRIPADA	3
5 Neeraj HARISH	1

REDMOND, WA

August 29-September 4, 2023

PNWCC Norm Invitational Artist Point 2

(10-player double-round Scheveningen)

Team 1 (masters)

1-2 Vladimir GEORGIEV (MKD), Maxim NOVIK (LTU)	7
3 Dimitri KOMAROV (UKR)	6½
4 Vladimir BELOUS (RUS)	5½
5 Leon PIASETSKI (CAN)	2½

Team 2 (challengers)

1 Anthony HE	7½
2-3 Advait VIJAYAKUMAR, Erin BIAN ..	4½
4 Nikash VEMPARALA	4
5 Damarcus THOMAS	1

ROCKVILLE, MD

August 12-16, 2023

10th Annual Washington International (9 rounds)

1-2 Mikhail ANTIPOV (FID), Jason WANG ...	6½
3-11 Djurabek KHAMRAKULOV (UZB), Andrew TANG, David BRODSKY, Hedinn STEINGRIMSSON (ISL), Rahul SRIVATSHAV (IND), Edward SONG, Alexander FISHBEIN, Justin LEE, Daniel GIRSH	6
12-14 Fidel CORRALES, Tanitoluwa ADEWUMI, Derek CLASBY	5½

SILICON VALLEY FALL SUPER SWISS

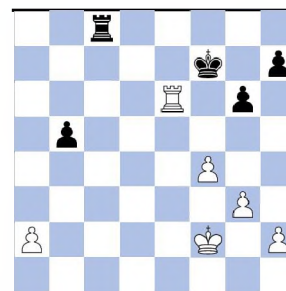
Sunnyvale, CA

The 1000GM organization seems to have broadened their early focus from just closed Norm Invitationals – there's more than one way to skin a cat or, in this case, create a Grandmaster. Over the last year or so they have managed to organize several Swiss events of an unusually high level that I certainly hope to see return with similar success in the year to come!

The Silicon Valley Fall Super Swiss was a closely fought race. ACM columnist GM Emilio Cordova proved to be a frontrunner from the offset, holding at least a share of the lead throughout proceedings and breaking away from his pursuers more than once. In the end he was forced to share the top prize with Greek Grandmaster Nikolas Theodorou with a commendable 7/9 record. On top of that, two title norms were achieved – FMs Anthony Atanasov and Aryan Gutla obtained their second IM Norms with 6 and 5 respectively.

Emilio Cordova	2549
Daniel H. Fernandez	2524

Silicon Valley Super Swiss 2023



After a long, hard battle, with plenty of mistakes from both sides and major swings, the game has simplified. Cordova must have been kicking himself for letting go of what seemed to be an easy victory and allowing the game to enter a rook ending. This type of position is known to give the defender good



SUNNYVALE, CA

August 31–September 4, 2023

Silicon Valley Fall Super Swiss

(9 rounds)

1-2 Emilio CORDOVA (PER),
Nikolas THEODOROU (GRE) **7**
3-5 Yasser PEREZ (CUB), Viktor MATVIISHEN (UKR),
Andrei MACOVEI (MDA) **6½**
6-13 Lazaro BRUZON, Mikhail ANTIPOV (FID),
Daniel FERNANDEZ (ENG), Christhian CRUZ (PER),
Giorgi MARGVELASHVILI, Arman MIKAELIAN
(ARM), Robby KEVLISHVILI (NED), Anthony
ATANASOV (CAN) **6**

chances to escape with a draw despite the pawn deficit, but the eventual tournament winner never gave up the fight.

31.♔e2 ♕f6 31...♔c3= was easier, when White has no way to make progress.

32.♕e3 Now White's king escapes, complicating the defensive task.

32...♕f5?! Poor execution. 32...♔c4!, heading to a4, executes the same idea as in the game in a simpler fashion – White won't be able to target the b5 pawn without allowing a trade, and ...h5-h4 is coming fast.

33.♕d4?! Understandably eager to advance, but now Black stands well.

33.♔b2! would have posed the most problems – Black needs to deal with the b5 pawn which is hanging with check thanks to his last move. **33...♕e6!** **34.♔xb5 ♔c2** **35.a4 ♔xh2±** is very holdable, but why give White any prospects whatsoever?

33...♔c4+ 34.♕d5 h5! 35.♔b2 h4 Black's counterplay has landed in time. He shouldn't have had any further problems holding the game to a draw, but to err is human...

36.gxh4 Unnatural, but the captured pawn could have become a real irritant.

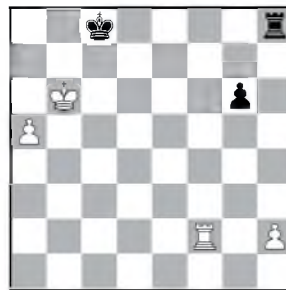
36.♔xb5 ♔c2 37.a4 h3!= leaves White unable to effectively defuse the counterplay.

36...♔xf4 37.♕c5 ♕e6 A precursor of what was to come. Why delay capturing the h4 pawn?

37...♔xh4 38.♕xb5 ♔h8! would have

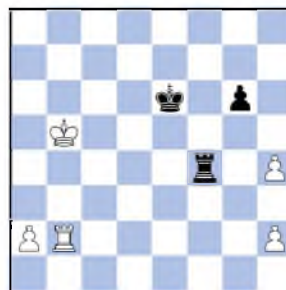


forced White to deal with the threatened skewer, after which Black's king has plenty of time to deal with the queenside passer. **39.♔f2+ ♕e6 40.a4 ♕d7** is fine for Black, seeing as **41.♕b6 ♕c8 42.a5**



42...g5!= is a very different story from **39.♔b4** below!

38.♕xb5

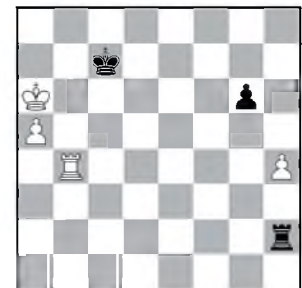


38...♕d7?? For subtle reasons, allowing his opponent to keep the h4 pawn could have led Fernandez to immediate disaster. **38...♔xh4 39.a4 ♕d7! 40.♔c2 ♔g4 41.a5 ♔g1=** remains a clear draw.

39.♔c2?? Cutting off Black's king is the usual solution, but this time it was possible to make use of White's more advanced kingside pawn.

39.♔b4! ♔f2 40.a4 ♕c7 41.♕a6 ♔xh2

42.a5 makes the difference clear – very importantly, Black isn't able to create any counter play on the kingside meaning he is just lost.



42...♔g2 43.♕a7 g5 44.♔c4+! ♕d7 45.h5!+- preserving two dangerous passed pawns, while Black's king is fatally cut off. **39...♔f5+??** The fog of a five-hour struggle can cloud even a strong Grandmaster's mind...

39...♔xh4 40.a4 ♔g4 41.a5 ♔g1± is the same procedure as before – Black holds.

40.♕b4 ♔f4+ 41.♕b3?? Repeating the mistake, and for the last time, as now Black is actually forced to grab h4! White's king isn't any worse placed on b4 – **41.♔c4 ♔f2 42.a4 ♔xh2 43.a5+-** remains the same.

41...♔xh4 42.a4 ♔h3+ Forcing White's king up the board makes perfect sense –

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now it will be more vulnerable to checks.

42...g4?? 43.a5 g1 44.a6+- was Cordova's basic point - now Black's counterplay from behind fails miserably.

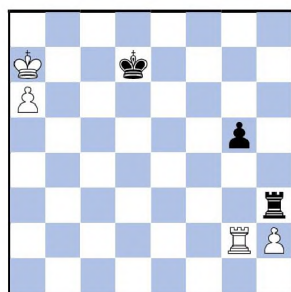
43.b4 h4+ 43...f3 44.a5 f1= works the same as before.

44.b5 h5+ 45.b6 h3 Only at the last possible moment! Instructive technique.

46.a5 46.b2 c8= gives Black's king a clear path to the corner, after which the passer won't be able to make any further progress.

46...b3+ 47.c6 As good a try as any.

47...g5 48.g2 h3 49.b7 b3+ 50.a7 h3 50...b5!? worked fine too. White can't remove his king from the a-file after 51.a6 c7 52.c2+ d7= 51.a6



We have reached the critical moment of the game. Through staunch defense, Black has managed to hold on by a thread - he only needs to spot one more fairly simple defensive resource to steer the game to a draw. It's a high-risk position, though, which the last few moves haven't been - if Black doesn't manage to find the defense, he will lose on the spot.

51...g4?? With seconds on the clock, Fernandez didn't prove up to the task.

51...c6! keeps White's king eternally blocked off. 52.c2+ b5 53.b7 is the last "Hail Mary" shot, but Black is in the square after 53...h7+ 54.c7 xc7+ 55.cxc7 xa6 56.d6 b5 57.e5 c6 58.f5 d7 59.xg5 e8 60.g6 f8= 52.b6 b3+ 53.a5 a3+ 54.b5 b3+ 55.a4 White's king has escaped from his prison while Black's monarch



isn't able to head for the corner, with tragic consequences. **White won** after eight more moves.

D23

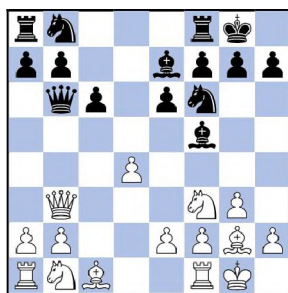
Patrick Liu	2175
Aryan Gutla	2290

Silicon Valley Super Swiss 2023

Notes by Aryan Gutla

I lost the previous game vs GM Arman Mikaelyan and now needed to win in order to preserve any chance of a norm.

1.d4 d5 2.f3 f6 3.c4 c6 4.c2 dxc4 5.xc4 f5 6.g3 e6 7.g2 e7 8.0-0 9.b3 This is quite a strange move, and certainly not best. 9...b6



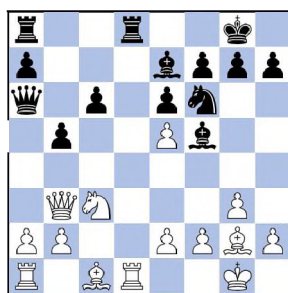
10.e5?! I really did not like this move. White isn't developing properly.

10.b2 d8 11.c4 a6= would have been a natural way of playing this position.

10...d8 11.c4 a6 12.d1 bd7 13.c3 b5 Black is already better because I've seized the initiative.

14.e5? 14.e3 was the best try. However, White still has a lot of work to do to equalize. A sample line may follow 14...g6 15.d2 a8 16.a1 b6, and White is struggling. However, this is far better for him than what happened in the game.

14...xe5 15.dxe5



15...d7?! This is a bit inaccurate as it allows White some chances to get back in the game.

15...g4!, attacking e5 and f2, was best.

White is simply tied up. 16.e4 g6 17.f4 c5+ With ...b4 and ...d4 to follow, White will likely lose a pawn at least.

16.e4? After this grave error White got dominated for the rest of the game.

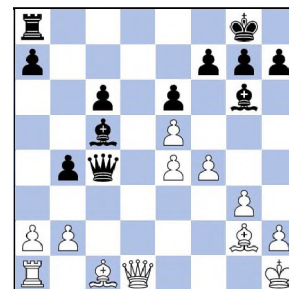
16.f4 was the only try. Then, after 16...g5 17.e3 xe5 18.e4, White actually has decent chances to save the game, due to all Black's weaknesses.

16...g6 17.f4 17.f4 doesn't help. Upon 17...h5+, there is no e4 square for White's pieces. In addition, it isn't so easy to make a move!

17...b4?! Still a winning position, but there was a more accurate way. 17...c5 18.c2 b4+, and he doesn't get the a4 square.

18.a4 c5 19.c5 xd1+ Precise. 19...xc5+?? would lose most if not all of the advantage, because 20.e3 xe3+ 21.xe3= would allow White to connect the rooks. White is safe.

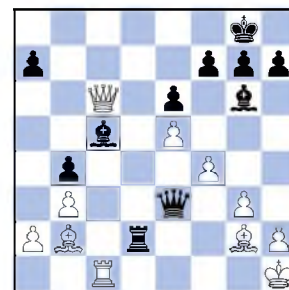
20.xd1 xc5+ 21.h1 c4 Total positional domination.



22.b3 xe4! A nice shot!

23.b2 23.xe4 xe4+ mates immediately. 23...e3 24.f3 d8 25.c1 d2 Now all is hopeless. White is losing heavy amounts of material.

26.xc6



26...xg2! 27.e8+ f8 28.xg2 e2+ 29.g1 e4 Unstoppable mate. The rest of the moves were simply in spite. 30.xf8+ xf8 31.c8+ e7 32.c7+ d8 White resigned

By winning this game I revived my norm chances and actually managed to make it in the end!



MARSHALL CC LABOR DAY INVITATIONAL

New York, NY

Among the traditional tournaments held over Labor Day weekend was one your author took part in – the Marshall Chess Club's Labor Day GM/IM Norm Invitational. It was a difficult tournament that I finished with a +1 score – safe to say that I failed to convert more than one overwhelming position, while my opponents also missed their chances from time to time. A true highlight was my win against distinguished GM Leonid Yudasin – in fact my first win against a holder of the highest title! My notes to the game can be found below.

The GM section saw, for the most part, the Titled players asserting their dominance – Aaron Jacobson being a long standout, achieving an IM Norm, though he was already an IM-elect going into the event. The IM group wasn't so cut and dry, but by the last day only Qindong Yang could achieve an IM Norm with two wins. Sadly, he failed to muster the strength necessary to collect the final points on demand.

E11

Grayson Rorrer	2287
Leonid Yudasin	2385

Marshall CC Labor Day IM-B, New York 2023
Notes by Grayson Rorrer

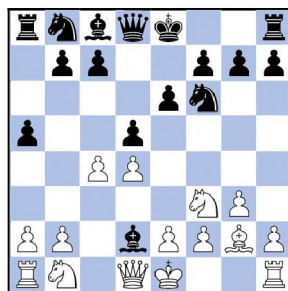
1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♟b4+ Yudasin's repertoire against the Catalan has been far from constant – practically any variation was likely to happen on the board.

4.♟d2 a5 This one, though, was a big surprise. He had previously tried 4...♟xd2+ 5.♟xd2 d5 6.♟g2 0-0 7.♟f3, which, in my opinion, is clearly a transition favorable to White.

5.♟g2 d5!? A further surprise, and not necessarily a pleasant one.

6.♟f3 ♟xd2+?! Only the third instance of this move in high level practice. It isn't terrible, just a bit suspicious.

6...dxc4 is, of course, 4...dxc4, 5...♟b4+ and 6...a5. I thought it was unlikely that he would have done the research necessary to excel in these complicated positions after never entering them before in the past.



7.♟xd2 A novelty! I knew from 4...♟xd2+ above that the queen usually recaptured, and made the standard move without much thought.

7.♟bxd2 is more reasonable in this iteration. White stands pleasantly better after 7...0-0 8.0-0 b6 9.♟e5! ♟b7 10.♟b3±, with long term positional pressure.

7...0-0 8.0-0 b6?! Not a good structure for Black, on the whole. 8...c6! 9.♟c2 b6 10.♟bd2 ♟b7 11.♟fd1± keeps Black's disadvantage to a minimum. White is still better, and should prepare for e2-e4 in the near future.

9.♟c3 ♟b7 10.♟e5 ♟bd7 11.♟fd1 Natural, smooth play. White has powerful pressure, though it wouldn't appear that much is going on from a first glance.

11...♟e4?! Premature activity, it seems. 11...♟e7 12.♟ac1 ♟ab8 13.♟f4!± is nice for White, but an entire game lies ahead.

12.♟c2 The simple solution, but completely justified. 12.♟xe4!± dxe4 13.♟e3 was the try to increase White's pressure instead of retaining the balance of the position, but I'm not entirely convinced. 13...♟f6 14.♟d2 a4± leaves

NEW YORK, NY

August 31-September 4, 2023

Marshall Chess Club Labor Day Invitational – GM
(10-player round-robin)

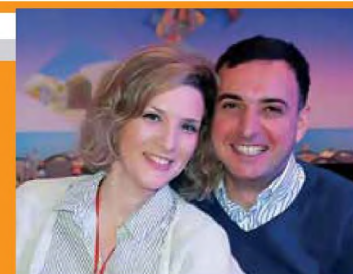
1 Oliver BARBOSA (PHI)	6
2-3 Mark PARAGUA (PHI), Aaron JACOBSON	5½
4 Gabor NAGY (HUN)	5
5 Akira NAKADA	4½
6-8 Justin CHEN, Brewington HARDAWAY, Terry LUO	4
9 Gus HUSTON	3½
10 Ikrom IBROHIMOV (TJK)	3

NEW YORK, NY

August 31-September 4, 2023

Marshall Chess Club Labor Day Invitational – IM
(10-player round-robin)

1 Mykola BORTNYK (UKR)	6
2-3 Zachary TANENBAUM, Qindong YANG (CHN)	5½
4-5 Miklos NEMETH (HUN), Grayson RORRER	5
6-7 Leonid YUDASIN (ISR), Aiden REISS	4½
8 Carter HO	4
9 Donald JOHNSON	3½
10 Eugene YANAYT	1½



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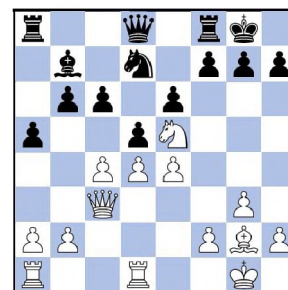
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White with some edge, but I don't think it's comparable to what I eventually got. Practically speaking, at least, the game has become far less clear.

12...♟xc3 13.♟xc3 c6 13...♟xe5?! 14.dxe5 c6 15.e4 a4 16.♟d2± will make it hard for Black to cover all the weaknesses indefinitely.

14.e4



14...♟f6? Forcing the position, but not



in a way that favors Black. The knight doesn't stand well on f6.

14...♖c8! was most flexible, when Black is a little worse but certainly still in the game. 15.♖e3!? ♖c7 16.♟xd7 ♖xd7 17.b3±.

15.exd5 exd5 16.♖ac1 The game has clarified – Black's inferior pawn structure is a permanent burden he will have to put up with.

16...♗e8 17.♖b3!? There were many different ways to keep pressing from here. 17.h4!± similarly leaves Black under pressure for a long time.

17...a4 A natural impulse, but exactly what I was hoping to force. 17...h6!? can be played, though Black's problems remain. 18.a3±.

18.♖c3 Entirely playable. It may look as though White has lost a tempo, but matters are far from that simple. 18.♖f3!? ♖d6 19.cxd5 cxd5 20.a3± also gives White pleasant play – the monster on e5 will be difficult indeed to evict.

18...h6 Better ideas are certainly welcome! 18...♗e6!± is the engine's suggestion, but it's not a human move, and in any case Black's position remains ugly.

19.cxd5! The tension can't be kept indefinitely – White has built on it as much as possible, and now it's time to open up the queenside for further operations.

19...cxd5 20.♖b4 The point of forcing Black's pawn to a4 can now be clearly seen – that small step weakens Black's entire queenside position.

20...♟e4 At least activating one piece...

21.♖c2 Batter up! Invasion on the c-file will not take long to enact, meaning Black needs to act now.



21...♖d6 The alternatives are too passive to bear. 21...♗c8!? 22.♖c6 ♟f5 23.♖dc1± leaves White in control, though the position hasn't entirely clarified itself just yet.

On the other hand, 21...h5 22.h4±, stops Black's desperate "offensive" in its tracks. 22.♖xd6 ♟xd6



23.♟d7? Objectively a big oversight after which Black can just barely survive. It

felt like the move my position demanded, though. 23.♖c7 ♖ac8 24.♖dc1 keeps White's edge intact. 24...♗e7 (I believe I had underestimated White's pressure after 24...♖xc7 25.♖xc7 ♖c8 26.♖xc8+ ♟xc8 27.♟g4! ♟f8 28.♟e3 ♟e7 29.♟f1±, when it would take super-human will to hold on.) 25.♖xc8+ ♟xc8 26.♟xd5 ♟xd5 27.♖xc8+ ♟h7 28.a3±, with a clear extra pawn. There's no guarantee of winning the game, but certainly a very pleasant next few hours ahead.

23...♟c4?? The decisive blunder, and not a very difficult one to refute. The position requires accurate calculation, but everything just works out.

23...♖ac8! 24.♖xc8 ♟xc8 25.♖c1 looked to be in order, but I had forgotten about 25...♗e2!, when the game spirals out of control. 26.h4!? ♖xb2 27.♖c7 ♟d6

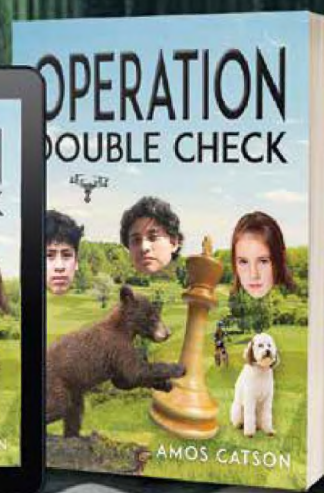
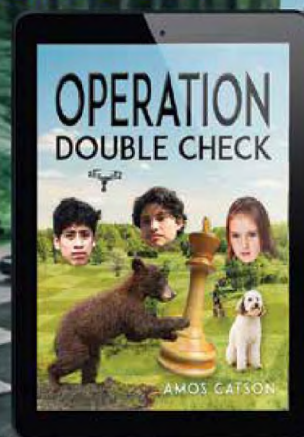
OPERATION DOUBLE CHECK

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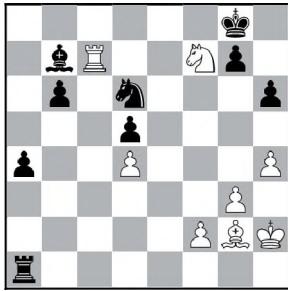


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28.♖e5 seems to be best, but Black should hold easily after the strong 28...♞xa2 29.♜xf7 ♞a1+ 30.♞h2

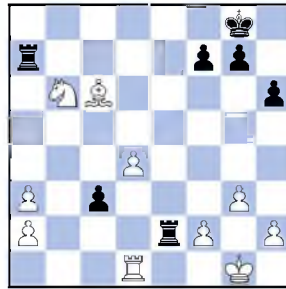


30...♞c1!!♞, unintuitively throwing a rook to the wind, when Black's connected passers are plenty of compensation. (30...♜xf7?! 31.♞xb7±, on the other hand, leaves Black with some problems to solve.) 24.♞xc4! Of course! It's hard to say what my opponent had overlooked, but the two pieces will just outclass the rook, especially with a passed pawn to boot. 24...dxc4 25.♞xb7 ♞a7 26.♞c6 ♞e2 The only try to stir up trouble. 27.♜xb6! I had the tactics under control,

and saw no reason not to grab another pawn.

27...a3!? What else? 27...♞a6 28.♞f3 ♞c2 (28...♞xb2 29.♜xc4 ♞xa2 30.d5+- is no better.) 29.♜xc4!+- snatches too much material.

28.bxa3 c3 28...♞a6 29.♞f3 ♞c2 30.♜xc4 remains entirely overwhelming, while 28...♞xa3 29.♜xc4 ♞xa2 30.d5 ♞xf2 31.d6!+- handily covers the g2 square.



29.♜c4! Covering the a3 pawn consolidates White's material advantage, while Black's rooks aren't well-coordinated enough to create any swindling chances. The game is good as over.

29...♞ae7 30.♜e3 ♞xa2 31.♜d5 Unnecessary, but enough to get the job done. 31.d5+- is overwhelming. I'm not sure what scared me off.

31...♞e6 32.♜xc3 Only after making sure the upcoming simplifications were working in my favor!

32...♞c2 32...♞xa3 33.♜b5! is an important intermediate shot. 33...♞a6 34.d5+-.

33.♞d5 ♞xc3 Resigning to the inevitable. 33...♞d6 34.♞d3 ♞xc3 35.♞xc3 ♞xd5 36.♞d3+- was no better, though – White will gradually convert the two pawn advantage.

34.♞xe6 fxe6 35.♞a1 Black has no defense to the a-pawn's inexorable march.

35...♞d3 36.a4 ♞xd4 37.a5 ♞d7 38.a6 ♞a7 39.♜g2 ♜f7 40.♜f3 There isn't any point for **Black** in continuing the struggle. Yudasin, ever the gentleman, flapped his hands in disgust and **resigned** with a hearty grin, capping off my first win against a Grandmaster in the best way possible.



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56TH BIEL CHESS FESTIVAL

Biel, Switzerland

I have not had the pleasure of participating myself, but there can be no doubt that the Biel Chess Festival is, at its core, a grand celebration of the royal game, with three open sections for differing levels of players and, of course, the main event – the Grandmaster Triathlon. A Chess960 round-robin between the invited players is used to determine pairings for the main legs of the triathlon – Classical and Rapid round-robins – while lots are drawn for the final blitz double round-robin. The winner is determined by which player scores the highest throughout all three stages, with a scoring system weighted to grow in value progressively as the time control lengthens.

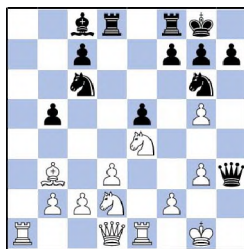
Le Quang Liem managed to defend his title, greatly aided by a powerful +3 in the classical portion, despite not having played a strong tournament since his initial triumph in Biel last year! A rocky performance for Le in rapid games was more than made up for by a second-place finish in the blitz, but nonetheless, the final day saw Vincent Keymer atop the leaderboard. Who could have anticipated the leader's first loss in classical games to come at such an inopportune moment? Certainly a great windfall for Le, as his draw thus proved enough to heft the crown a second year in a row.

Arjun Erigaisi 2710

Vincent Keymer 2690

Biel Chess Festival 2023

Notes by Grayson Rorrer



20.c3! Sacrificing d3 is more than worth the investment to keep Black's knight out of the powerful d4 square.

20...♠xd3 **20...♠g4!?** **21.f3 ♕e6=** would have given Black an easier time, but it's hard to resist the temptation of a free pawn, particularly when the tournament situation

only demands a draw – the extra material is “insurance,” but it rarely works out as the grabber would intend it to...

21.♖e2 ♜fd8 **22.♜a8 b4!** Otherwise the positional pressure becomes hard for Black to burden.

22...♜g4!? **23.f3 ♜f5** **24.♠a2±** looks far easier to play as White.

22...♠e6? didn't work immediately – White can snatch a pawn with **23.♜xd3 ♜xa8** **24.♜xb5±**. Moving it to the b4 square makes this transaction Black's main threat.

23.♜eal Harmoniously connecting the rooks. It was hard to make a better suggestion. **23.♠c4** is fine and dandy if Black has to retreat, but the counterattacking **23...♠b7** **24.♜xd8+ ♜xd8** **25.♜f3 ♜d7=** leaves White with enough compensation for the pawn, but definitely no more than that.

23...♜g4!? Not the most efficient way to secure full counterchances. **23...bxc3!?**

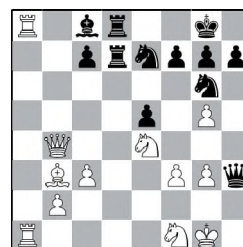
24.bxc3 ♜d7= only looks passive at a first glance. In actual fact, Black is ready to unravel with **...♠b7** or even **...♠ce7**.

24.f3 ♜h3?! Little mistakes tend to add up... The first can usually be reversed, while the second tends to already create concrete difficulties for the defending side, as was the case here.

24...♜f5!, forcing White to secure f3 before regrouping, keeps Black firmly in the game. **25.♠c4 ♜d7** **26.♠f1 ♜h3=**.

25.♠f1 bxc3 It's still possible for Black to keep parity, but the path will prove narrow indeed. It shows Keymer's mental strength that he was able to properly adjust and put up the best possible resistance.

25...♜d7!? **26.♜b5 ♠ce7** **27.♜xb4**



27...♠f4!! **28.gxf4 ♜xf3∞** would have been a decision of an entirely different nature – Black seems to have plenty of

BELGRADE, SERBIA

July 16-24, 2023

Serbia Open

(9 rounds)

1 Raunak SADHWANI (IND) **7½**2-3 Cristobal HENRIQUEZ (CHI), Arystanbek URAZAYEV (KAZ) **7**4-14 Santiago PAVAS (COL), Francesco SONIS (ITA), Bobby CHENG (AUS), Yair PARKHOV (ISR), Maksim CHIGAEV (FID), M PRANESH (IND), Jan SUBELJ (SLO), Nikita PETROV (MNE), Dey SHAHIL (IND), Antonios KALOGRIDIS (GRE), Miodrag PERUNOVIC (SRB) **6½**

URALSK, KAZAKHSTAN

July 21-28, 2023

Uralsk Open

(9 rounds)

1 Hans NIEMANN **7½**2-6 SP SETHURAMAN (IND), Manuel PETROSYAN (ARM), Samvel TER-SAHAKYAN (ARM), Boris SAVCHENKO (RUS), Valery SVIRIDOV (RUS) **6½**7-14 Denis LAZAVIK (BLR), Aleksey GOGANOV (RUS), Mittal ADITYA (IND), Alexei FEDOROV (BLR), Vitaliy BERNADSKIY (UKR), Mukhiddin MADAMINOV (UZB), Mihail NIKITENKO (BLR), Viacheslav ZAKHARTSOV (FID) **6**

BIEL, SWITZERLAND

July 15-30, 2023

56th Biel Chess Festival – Master Open

(10 rounds)

1 Xiangzhi BU (CHN) **8**2 Chopra ARYAN (IND) **7½**3-10 Yan LIU (CHN), Xiongjian PEND (CHN), Ngoc NGUYEN (CHN), Nico CHASIN, VS RATHANVEL (IND), Read SAMADOV (AZE), Robert SHLYAKHTENKO, Georg SEUL (GER) **7**



▼ Biel, Switzerland

initiative to compensate for the piece, but it's very hard to judge from afar.
26.bxc3



26...d4! Well spotted. **26...B3d7?** **27.Bb5** **dce7** **28.B8a2!** makes Black's minor pieces wonder what led them to

choose a life of indifference and passivity, while **26...Bb7?!** **27.Wxd3** **Bxa8** **28.Bd5±** also leaves White far more active.

27.Bxf7+! **27.Wxd3??** **d4** **28.gxf4** **dxf3++** was the idea behind Black's combination.

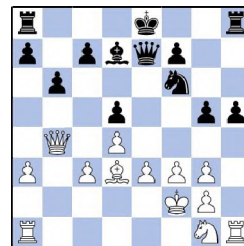
27...Bxf7 **28.cxd4** **B3xd4** **29.B1a7** **Bxe6** **30.Bxc7+** **Bg8** **31.Baa7** **B4d7** **32.Bxd7** **Bxd7** **33.Ba8+** **d8**



34.d5 **B7e7** **35.We4±** Strong play from both sides has led to the equalization of material and a clarification of the position, allowing us to draw clear conclusions. Black will have to suffer for the foreseeable future in a static position with a small but nagging disadvantage. Never a fun task, and certainly the type of conditions that make further slipups all the more likely. Keymer eventually succumbed to the pressure – **White won** in 52 moves.

Yangyi Yu	2735
Le Quang Liem	2728

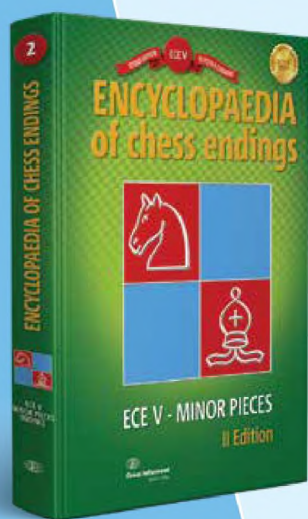
Biel Chess Festival 2023
Notes by Grayson Rorrer



Le Quang Liem started the classical segment of the tournament with a strong 3/4. It wasn't good enough to take the sole lead, though – Vincent Keymer was keeping pace. By now the tournament situation had cleared up enough for Le to know that, to have any chance of achieving overall victory, he needed to make the Classical games count. As we can see, he has done his best to create sharp play in the present game, uncompromisingly marching ahead on the kingside.

17.d2?! The first step towards his eventual demise. **17.c4!±**, a timely opening of the center, leaves White with the initiative, but sharp play always comes with that risk.

17...c5 **18.Bb2?** Allowing Black to lock the queenside down was a bad misjudgment that more or less decided the outcome.



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**CASABLANCA, MOROCCO**

August 14-19, 2023

4th King Mohammed VI Crown

(9 rounds)

1 Paulius PULTENIVICIUS (LTU)	7½
2-4 Shakhriyar MAMEDYAROV (AZE), Titas STREMAVICIUS (LTU), Pavel PONKRATOV (RUS)	6½
5-10 Borki PREDJEVIC (BIH), Max WARMERDAM (NED), Alan PICHOT (ARG), Eltaj SAFARLI (AZE), Carlos ALBORNOZ (CUB), Danil YUFFA (ESP)	6

ABU DHABI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

August 15-24, 2023

29th Abu Dhabi Chess Festival

(9 rounds)

1-2 Vladimir FEDOSEEV (SLO), Xiangyu XU (CHN)	7
2-10 Chithambaram ARAVINDH (IND), Abdimalik ABDISAMILOV (UZB), Hans NIEMANN, Maxim MATLAKOV (RUS), Shanglei LU (CHN), Vladislav ARTEMIEV (RUS), SL NARAYANAN (IND), Volodar MURZIN (FID)	6½
11-15 Aydin SULEYMANLI (AZE), Javokhir SINDAROV (UZB), Vuppala PRRANEETH (IND), Ziaur RAHMAN (BAN)	6

BARCELONA, SPAIN

August 18-27, 2023

24th Sants Open

(10 rounds)

1-2 Elham AMAR (NOR), Alberto DAVID (ITA)	8½
3-4 Liam VROLIJK (NED), Semen MITUSOV (NOR)	8
5-14 Sebastian IERMITO (ITA), Jinshi BAI (CHN), Dylan BERDAYES (CUB), Pablo ACOSTA (ARG), Daniel ALSINA (CAT), Brandon JACOBSON, Jose CARDOSO (COL), Pierre BAILET (FRA), Tor KAASEN (NOR), Santiago PAVAS (COL)	7½

MAIA, PORTUGAL

August 26-September 3, 2023

Maia Chess Open

(9 rounds)

1 Victor MIKHALEVSKI (ISR)	7½
2-8 Titas STREMAVICIUS (LTU), Stelios HALKIAS (GRE), Praveen BALAKRISHNAN, Evgeny POSTNY (ISR), Luca MORONI (ITA), Omar ALMEIDA (CUB), Alex GARRIDO (ESP)	7
9-15 Awonder LIANG, Andre SOUSA, Manuel PEREZ, Nikola KANOV, Elier MIRANDA (CUB), Yahil SOKOLOVSKY (ISR), Lachezar YORDANOV (BUL)	6½

MEXICO CITY, MEXICO

September 21 - October 1, 2023

World Junior Girls' Championship

(11 rounds, 77 players)

1-3 Candela FRANCISCO (ARG), Carissa YIP, Beloslava KRASTEVA (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

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

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Q&A **A5 QUESTION GUIDE**

From Chess Masters for the Next Generation

GM Artur Jussupow

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 advantage of the earlier start is that you can learn some basic things like detecting threats on an automatic level or finding active moves more quickly. I think that the age of six is a good moment to start, but it is an individual matter and some children can learn chess even earlier. Yes, it is possible. At the age of eleven or twelve kids can also absorb chess knowledge quite quickly, but they would need some time to catch up with the earlier starters. And they need to work harder.

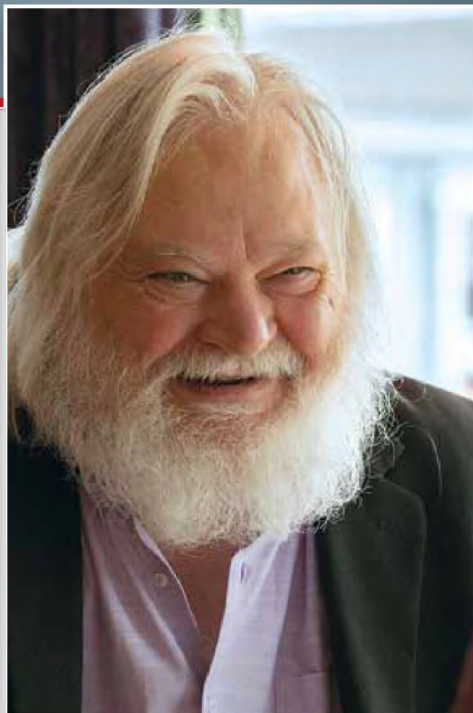
Artur Jussupow	2610
Anatoly Karpov	2755

Candidates Semi-final Match, London 1989

1.d4 ♖f6 2.♗f3 e6 3.♙g5 c5 4.e3 b6 5.d5 exd5 6.♗c3 ♙e7 7.♗xd5 ♙b7 8.♙xf6 ♙xf6 9.c3 0-0 10.♙c4 a6 11.0-0 b5 12.♙b3 d6 13.♙d2 ♗d7 14.♙fd1 ♙xd5 15.♙xd5 ♙b8 16.♙c2 ♗b6 17.♙d2 g6 18.♙ad1 ♙c7 19.♙e4 ♗g7 20.h4 ♙e7 21.♙f4 ♙e5 22.♗xe5 dxe5 23.♙g3 ♙bd8 24.h5 ♙d7 25.b3 ♙fd8 26.e4 g5 27.♙e3 h6 28.c4 ♙c7 29.♙d3 ♗d7



30.♙xf7 ♗xf7 31.♙d2 ♗e8 32.♙a5 bxc4 33.bxc4 ♙cc8 34.♙a4 ♙c7 35.♙xa6 ♙b8 36.♙g6+ ♗f8 37.♙f3+ Black resigned



World Junior Champion in 1977, German Champion in 2005

Reached the semi-final of the Candidates' Tournament in 1986, 1989 and 1992

Coached and mentored by the legendary Mark Dvoretsky – their collaboration resulted in founding the Dvoretsky – Jussupow Chess School

FIDE Senior Trainer and prolific chess author

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?

Again this is down to individuality. Ideally, you should discuss this with your coach. In general, it is beneficial to work on all aspects of the game and avoid having weak spots. Usually, at the beginning, you should pay more attention to tactics and start building your opening repertoire when you don't make blunders frequently.

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?

Studying elementary endgames could be very useful. It is important to learn certain themes correctly, such as opposition. I have seen many young players who were taught incorrectly and got it completely wrong. Get a

good book, like Mark Dvoretsky's *Endgame Manual*.

04 Not everyone can be a chess world champion. But how can chess be of benefit in life and business?

I like to quote Benjamin

Franklin "By playing chess we may learn:

1. Foresight...

2. Circumspection...

3. Caution..."

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?

You will learn how to work, how to use information, how to react with dignity in both loss and victory, how to make decisions and stand by them. Most importantly, you will learn how to learn. These skills are very useful in life. For me, the greatest joy in chess was finding a beautiful solution to a very difficult problem.



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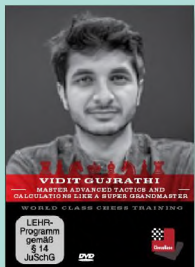
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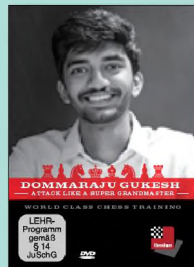


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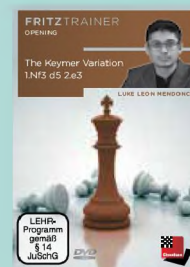


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Video playing time: over 4 hours.

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Luke Leon Mendonca:
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“People did not take 1.Nf3 d5 2.e3 too seriously until recently, when online chess started becoming popular due to the pandemic and this

opening was used frequently. I discovered how venomous this white choice was when I was trying to find a way to play against it with Black, and to my surprise this was not easy!

Vincent Keymer uses the starting moves 1.Nf3 d5 2.e3 in a huge percentage of his games, getting great positions and results with them. Avoiding mainstream theory, White's opening is a mix of positional and attacking elements depending on what system the opponent chooses. On each move both sides have a variety of options. I think most club-level players would not know how to effectively counter this opening as Black.”

In this video course, you'll learn the key concepts and strategies needed to add this fantastic choice for White to your repertoire - an easy-to-learn and yet venomous weapon that will make your opening play more versatile. Featured are the ins-and-outs of the possible setups Black can choose. Moreover, this course enables you to practice the freshly acquired repertoire with the ChessBase Opening Trainer: drilling the opening moves, guessing how a position arose or just replaying the moves in your desired speed further reveal the ideas this opening has to offer. Start your journey now!

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