The World's Oldest Chess Journal

BRITISH CHESS MAGAZINE

Since 1881

Volume 143

MAY 2023

£5.50



DING

THE SEVENTEENTH

CHINA'S TOP PLAYER MAKES HISTORY WITH WORLD CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP WIN

FROM TEARS OF SORROW TO TEARS OF JOY: DING LIREN'S STRUGGLE BEHIND THE SCENES

ISSN 0007-0440 02305

9 770007 044009

BEHIND THE SCENES OF THE NEPO-DING MATCH:
AN INTERVIEW WITH CHIEF ARBITER NEBOJSA BARALIC

IMPRESSUM

BRITISH CHESS MAGAZINE
Founded 1881

www.britishchessmagazine.co.uk

Chairman Shaun Taulbut
Director Stephen Lowe

Editors
Milan Dinic and Shaun Taulbut

Photo editor
David Llada

Prepress Specialist
Milica Mitic

Photography
Stev Bonhage, David Llada, Anna Shtourman / FIDE Official; Polski Związek Szachowy - pzszach.pl, Shutterstock, Wikipedia

Advertising
Stephen Lowe

Enquiries
editor@britishchessmagazine.co.uk

ISSN 0007-0440
© The British Chess Magazine Limited

Company Limited by Shares
Registered in England No 00334968

Postal correspondence:
Albany House, 14 Shute End
Wokingham, Berkshire RG40 1BJ

Subscription
support@britishchessmagazine.co.uk
12 monthly issues
UK: £55 | RoW: £85

Printed in the UK: by Lavenham Press Ltd

Cover photography:
Stev Bonhage

Contents



299 CHIEF ARBITER NEBOJSA BARALIC **INSIGHTS ON THE THRILLING WEEKS IN ASTANA**

260 The complete guide to the match and the 18 games that determined the new world champion (Part One): **DING THE SEVENTEENTH**
By GM Aleksandar Colovic

298 The end of an era: **AFTER 10 YEARS ON THE THRONE, MAGNUS CARLSEN NO LONGER WORLD CHAMPION**
By Milan Dinic

304 **BOAT RACE OF THE BRAIN**
By GM Raymond Keene OBE

307 Openings for Amateurs **NIGHTMARES IN THE NAJDORF, PART V THE POSITIONAL CRUSH**
By Pete Tamburro

312 Quotes and Queries **THE MARCH OF THE KINGS**
By Alan Smith

315 **PROBLEM WORLD**
By Christopher Jones

316 Endgame Studies **REMEMBERING THE CLASSICS**
By Alan Smith

FROM TEARS OF SORROW TO TEARS OF JOY: **DING LIREN'S STRUGGLE BEHIND THE SCENES**

In a period of three weeks, Chinese Grandmaster Ding Liren (pronounced Lee-zhen) went from being underdog to becoming the 17th world champion in chess. His success is monumental, both from a personal perspective and from the viewpoint of what he has achieved for his home country, China.

For the first time ever, a world champion in chess in the open section is from China. After years of dominating the women's chess, the country of the Red Dragon now holds world chess titles in both the open and the women's category. This success is a testament to China's huge efforts over the years to promote chess in the country and will likely be a significant incentive for further investment in the game, including hosting more tournaments and chess camps.

Ding's victory also heralds a shift in the chess world's centre of gravity back to the East. If we put aside that, at least in chess terms, Russia is now considered to be part of Asia, the two chess nations which are set to fight for dominance in the coming years will be China and India. The latter has been pouring resources into chess programs across the country, with the goal of producing a world champion.

But behind Ding's victory lies an emotional story of struggle and triumph. Just before the match in Astana, Ding's girlfriend broke up with him. As a result, he was living "a bromance with Rapport," his charismatic Hungarian second.

This explained a lot: the change of the hotel, the need to be alone, being away from the chessboard for most of game one, both physically and mentally absent from what was happening.

Most people have had that experience in life but for some being left broken-hearted can hit harder when it comes at a particularly challenging moment. Still, as we have seen in Astana, Ding managed to push through, thanks to the help of his second Rapport with whom he spent a lot of time listening to the hits from the 80s (great choice!), his mother and the chess family around him.

The final moments of the last tiebreak rapid game in Astana will go down in chess history as one of the most emotional and exciting moments ever witnessed.

As the realization dawned on Nepomniachtchi that he was completely lost without any hope of a comeback, a sense of desolation suddenly washed over him, and his face betrayed his distress. Trying to hold on to something, he nervously reached for the captured pieces on the side, causing a few to tumble from the table. With his hand trembling, he made his final move. Ding, sensing the end was near, responded quickly and decisively. In less than a second, Nepomniachtchi resigned and leapt out of his seat.

As Ding realized he had won, his face was a picture of shock and disbelief. He sat at the board, head in hands, coming to terms with the enormity of what he had just achieved. And then, as the cameras turned away and Nepomniachtchi quickly exited the playing hall, Ding was in there alone, with Chief Arbiter Nebojsa Baralic being the only other person present. He stood up, walked into his private room, sat down and - broke into a river of tears. For ten minutes the new World Champion was sitting on his own, crying his heart out. Everything he had been through poured out of him - the pressure, the ups and downs, the walk on the thin line of defeat and victory. In that moment, he wasn't just the world champion of chess; he was a human being, experiencing the full range of emotions that come with achieving something truly remarkable.

Ding Liren reached and passed that horizon of victory which only 17 people had experienced in life, in the 137 year-long history of chess matches. Congratulations to Ding Liren on his historic victory!

Editor

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO THE MATCH AND THE 18 GAMES THAT DETERMINED THE NEW WORLD CHAMPION (PART ONE)



DING THE SEVENTEENTH

By GM Aleksandar Colovic; www.alexcolovic.com
Photo: FIDE/ Steve Bonhege / Anna Shtourman / David Llada

A fairy tale always has a happy ending.

For the new World Champion, the story started with a player (Karjakin) being disqualified from the Candidates Tournament. To be able to play, Ding Liren was forced to play 29 classical games within one month to comply with the regulations and be allowed to play as a replacement.

Things weren't going great at the 2022 Madrid Candidates, where he spent the whole first half of the event on a minus score. He won three games in a row at the beginning of the second half, but a loss to Radjabov meant that he had no chances to win it anymore. A final round win from a drawn position against Nakamura gave him the second spot, but, as they say, there is only one winner at the Candidates.

Nepomniachtchi won the Candidates to challenge the World Champion Magnus Carlsen for the second time in a row.
But Fate would have it otherwise.

Carlsen decided to abdicate his title, dissatisfied with the format of the whole cycle and the match in particular.

This meant that Ding Liren, as second-placed in Madrid, got a chance to play a World Championship match.

So, after a series of very unlikely events, Ding Liren made it to Kazakhstan.

Astana hosted the match from 9-30 April, with 14 games of classical chess followed by four games of rapid tie-breaks and further blitz games if required.

Many experts, yours truly included, gave Nepomniachtchi a slight preference because of his previous experience of playing a match of this calibre. This was confirmed at the beginning of the match, especially in the first two games, when it was clear that Ding Liren couldn't control his nerves. But…

In this and the next issue of BCM we bring you a detailed look into every game of the match that decided the new - 17th - world chess champion. We will break down all the key points both on and off the board with the aim of producing a rounded picture of the match which crowned the new king of chess.

In Part One we will follow the first games of the match where Nepo showed more consistency, while Ding's performance was more shakey. These games laid the groundwork for the heart-stopping finale in part two.

Game 1 :
THE EMOTIONALLY WEAK DING

Nepomniachtchi – Ding, ½:½

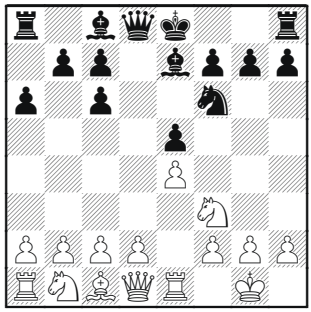
09.04.2023

1.e4 e5 Both players stick to their usual opening choices.

2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 Ding Liren's main opening against 1.e4 has always been the Marshall Gambit, so he doesn't mind playing it in a World Championship either. It was also Carlsen's choice in his last match against Nepomniachtchi.

6.♗xc6!? A curious choice. Objectively, it's clear that the move cannot pose serious problems, but for a one-game idea, it is quite an appropriate one.

6...dxc6 7.♖e1 The second surprise.



Previously, Ding has faced the more common 7.d3 ♘d7 *(or 7...♗d6 8.♘bd2 ♗e6 9.♘b3 ♕e7 which was played in a game Ding lost, to Anish Giri at the Ekaterinburg Candidates in 2021, though that loss had nothing to do with the opening, where in fact he was doing great.)* 8.♘c3 0-0 9.♗e3 ♖e8 10.♘d2 ♘f8Grischuk,A (2745)-Ding Liren (2811) chess.com SpeedChess 2022 blitz (1.34) 0-1.

7...♘d7 A common move in these structures, Black defends the pawn on e5 that was hanging.

7...♗g4 is a sharp alternative, but one that you cannot really play without good knowledge of the lines after the piece sacrifice after 8.h3 ♗h5 9.g4 ♘xg4! 10.hxg4 ♗xg4 which should give Black good compensation.

8.d4 Nepomniachtchi goes for direct play in the centre, as playing slowly after having played 7.♖e1 made less sense.

8...exd4 9.♕xd4 9.♘xd4 was an alternative, but Nepomniachtchi was still in his preparation, so he must have considered the queen recapture stronger. 9...♘e5 10.♗f4 ♗f6 gives Black good play.

9...0-0 10.♗f4 ♘c5 11.♕e3 11.♕xd8 ♗xd8 is good for Black as after ...♘e6 he will defend the pawn on c7 and will be able to move the bishop from d8.

11...♗g4 Black continues with development.

11...♘e6 was an alternative. 12.♗g3 ♗c5 13.♕c3 a5 threatening ...♘b4 14.♘bd2 *(14.a3?? ♗b4 is a nice trick that wins material for Black.)* 14...♖e8 Black has good play, though he needs a bit patience as his bishop on c8 is not yet developed.

12.♘d4 12.♘e5 is met by 12...♗h5 13.♕h3 ♘e6! 14.♗e3 ♗g6 with a balanced position.

12...♕d7 Black managed to finish development and connect the rooks, but his development is not harmonious as his pieces are somewhat scattered.

13.♘c3 ♖ad8 14.♘f5 14.h3!? was a very interesting attempt, when Black had to find the amazing move 14...♖fe8!! defending the bishop on e7 in advance. *(14...♕xd4?* loses to *15.♘d5! ♗f6 16.♘xf6+ gxf6 17.♕g3 when Black is left with a wrecked kingside shelter; 14...♗h5?!* is worse after *15.♘f5 ♘e6 16.g4! ♗c5 17.♕f3* with a strong initiative for White after *17...♗g6 18.♖ad1)* 15.hxg4 *(15.♘b3 ♘xb3 16.axb3 ♗h5* is fine for Black; *15.♕g3!? ♗d6!* is another amazing resource. *16.e5 ♗e7 17.♘xc6 ♕xc6 18.♕xg4 ♘e6 and by provoking a pawn on e5 Black has compensation thanks to his control of the light squares.)* 15...♕xd4 16.♗xc7 ♕xe3 17.♖xe3 ♖d2= with enough counterplay for equality.

14...♘e6 Possible, but not the most precise.

14...♗xf5 was simpler, after 15.exf5 ♖fe8 Black is fine, though he had to foresee that 16.b4? doesn't trap the knight given 16...♘a4! 17.♘xa4 ♗xb4 and suddenly Black wins!

15.♘xe7+ 15.♗h6!? was an interesting try. Black should decline the sacrifice by 15...♗h5 *(15...gxh6? 16.♕g3 is just too dangerous and also objectively bad.)* 16.♗xg7 *(*or *16.♕g3 ♗g6 17.♖ad1 ♕e8 when Black's compact position resists all White's aggressive attempts.)* 16...♘xg7 17.♕h6 ♘xf5 18.exf5 ♗g6 19.fxg6 hxg6 with the simplifications leading to an equal position.

15...♕xe7 16.♗g3 ♗h5 Ding plays positionally, without any drastic measures, but this slowly gets him in trouble.

16...f5!? was an idea to get rid of the space-gaining pawn on e4. Black is close to equality after 17.exf5 ♗xf5

17.f3 f6 18.h3 h6 Both players play generally useful moves, which don't change the character of the position. White is more comfortable here as his bishop is more active and exerts unpleasant pressure on the c7-pawn.

19.♔h2 ♗f7 The bishop had nothing to do on h5, so Black brings it back to f7. It's not much better there, so it made sense to double the rooks on the d-file.

20.♖ad1 20.♕a7 is an active try which is well met by 20...♕b4.

20...b6 This stops ♕a7.

21.a3 White stops ...♕b4.

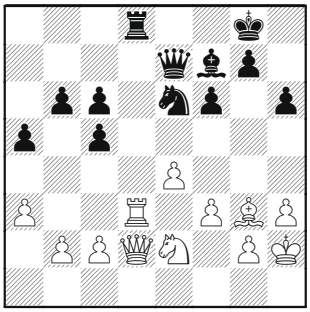
21...a5 22.♘e2 White has ideas like ♘d4 or ♘f4, to exchange the defender of the c7-pawn - the knight on e6.

22...♖xd1 23.♖xd1 ♖d8 24.♖d3 White doesn't want to exchange on d8 and give up the d-file.

24...c5 This move frees the c6-square, so Black can play ...c6 and remove the pawn from the attacked square.

24...♖xd3 was likely better, as after 25.♕xd3 *(25.cxd3 c5 26.f4 ♗h5! activates the bishop and is fine for Black, who will obtain control of the d4-square after the exchange of the knight on e2.)* 25...b5 Black has the idea of ...b4, to start some activity on the queenside.

25.♕d2 c6?!



Ding was spending a lot of time on his moves, but he didn't manage to extinguish White's initiative. By this moment he had approximately one minute per move and without increments before move 60 his time-trouble was becoming serious. The move he played follows the plan to remove the pawn from c7, but it allows White to attack the weakened queenside pawns after the queen penetration.

25...♖xd3 26.♕xd3 ♗e8 was more patient and resilient. After 27.♕a6 ♕d7 Black is holding, though it's not very pleasant.

26.♖xd8+ ♘xd8 27.♕f4 The threat is ♕b8 and ♘c7 or ♕c7, targeting the b6-pawn.

27...b5 28.♕b8 ♔h7 29.♗d6? Nepomniachtchi misses his best chance in the game.

29.♗c7! ♘e6 30.♗xa5 ♕d7 appears that Black obtains counterplay on the d-file, though after 31.♘f4 White is clearly on top and remains a pawn up, for example, 31...♘d4 *(or 31...♕d1 32.♘xe6 ♗xe6 33.♕c7)* 32.♗b6! ♘xc2 33.♗xc5.

29...♕d7 30.♘g3 30.♕c7 ♕xc7 31.♗xc7 ♘b7 32.♔g3 is still more pleasant for White, though Black should be able to hold by bringing his king to the centre via g8 and f8 to e7;

30.♗xc5 ♕d2 gives Black counterplay.

30...♘e6 31.f4 31.c3 prevents ...♘d4 and keeps some advantage, for example, 31...c4 32.♘f5 a4 though with all Black's pawns safe it's difficult to make progress.

31...h5 31...♘d4 was a good alternative, for example 32.c3 *(or 32.♗xc5 ♘xc2)* 32...♘b3 and the knight on b3 nicely covers the pawns on a5 and c5.

32.c3 c4 32...h4 was possible. 33.♘f5 ♗g6 34.♘e7 ♗f7 with a sturdy position on the light squares.

33.h4 White stops ...h4 now.

33...♕d8 34.♕b7 34.♕xd8 ♘xd8 35.f5 ♘b7 will be a draw as the opposite-coloured bishops don't really allow for winning chances.

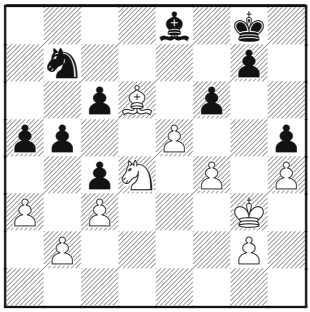
34...♗e8 35.♘f5 ♕d7 Black finally manages to control White's activity.

36.♕b8 ♕d8 Pushing the pawn to a4 was also good.

36...a4.

37.♕xd8 ♘xd8 38.♘d4 ♘b7 39.e5 ♔g8 The king comes to the centre and the draw is near.

40.♔g3



40...♗d7 40...♘xd6?? would be terrible, as 41.exd6 ♔f7 42.f5! cuts off the black king and White wins after 42...♗d7 43.♔f4 ♔e8

44.♔e4 ♔f7 *(44...♔d8 45.♘e6+ wins the pawn on g7)* 45.♘e2 with $d4-c5 to come.

41.♗c7 ♘c5 Going for activity, though there was nothing wrong with the simple 41...♔f7.

42.♗xa5 ♔f7 43.♗b4 ♘d3 Targeting White's only weakness, the pawn on b2.

44.e6+ ♗xe6 45.♘xc6 ♗d7 46.♘d4 ♘xb2 47.♔f3 ♘d3 48.g3 ♘c1 49.♔e3

½-½

The fact that Ding Liren drifted from only a slightly uncomfortable position to an almost lost one showed that he wasn't emotionally ready to play under such a big tension. He was still unstable in the second game, when his willingness to fight was completely mismatched with the state of his nervous system.

Game 2:
NEPO'S VICTORY THAT HELPED DING

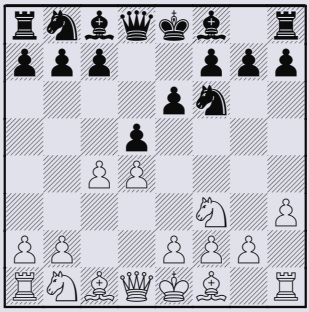
Ding – Nepomniachtchi, 0-1

10.04.2023

1.d4 ♘f6 For a better understanding of what happened in the game, we need to take a look at a game Ding played against Aronian in 2021. 1...d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.e3 e6 5.♗xc4 c5 6.0-0 a6 7.♖e1 ♘c6 8.♘c3 b5 9.♗d3 ♗b7 10.a4 b4 11.♘e4 ♘a5 if we compare this position to the one from the game after Black's 11th move we will notice that here White has played ♖e1 while in the game White has h3. The rook move is clearly more useful, as it can support e4, but it's also interesting to note that faced with the same choice as in the game, here Ding chose the more sensible recapture on c5. 12.♘xc5 ♗xc5 13.dxc5 ♘d7 *(13...♗e4 is a possible improvement.)* 14.c6 ♘xc6 Ding Liren (2799)-Aronian,L (2782) chess.com Speed 2021 blitz (2.11) 1-0 15.♗f1! here would have given White some advantage thanks to Black's exposed queenside and it would have shown the usefulness of the move ♖e1.

2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 Nepomniachtchi sticks to his prepared repertoire for the match with Carlsen.

4.h3!?



A shocking move, but in hindsight this move was the first sign of Ding's match strategy with the White pieces. As his next white games showed, he was looking for ways to avoid theoretical disputes by either deviating early, like in this case, or by choosing non-topical lines (like the London and the Colle). From a more concrete point of view, the move is aimed at avoiding Nepomniachtchi's prepared Semi-Tarrasch after 4.♘c3 c5 5.cxd5 cxd4 which served him well after the match with Carlsen.

4...dxc4 Black can react in any sensible way and would get a decent position, for example, 4...♘e7, and 4...c6 are perfectly fine. However, the choice Black has to make depends on his prepared defence against the more natural 4.♘c3. By not playing either of the mentioned moves, we can safely assume that Nepomniachtchi didn't prepare the Queen's Gambit Declined or the Semi-Slav for this match.

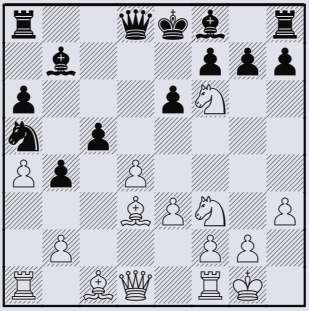
5.e3 c5 6.♗xc4 a6 7.0-0 ♘c6 Now we have a position from the Queen's Gambit



Accepted where White has played the move h3 instead of the more common moves ♘c3, a4, ♕e2, ♘b3 or ♘d3.

8.♘c3 b5 9.♗d3 ♗b7 10.a4 b4 11.♘e4 ♘a5 11...cxd4 12.exd4 ♗e7 13.♖e1 leads to a typical position with an IQP on d4 that offers mutual chances.

12.♘xf6+?!



Ding spent more than half an hour on this move. It's the turning point of the game, as he put it afterwards. He wanted to fight, but psychologically he wasn't ready and this showed in the remainder of the game.

12.♘xc5 was described as "mostly drawish" by Ding. It is the better move as it's safer and it also promises White a small pull after 12...♗xc5 13.dxc5 ♗e4! *(or 13...♘d7 14.c6 ♘xc6 15.♕e2 with a slight advantage for White, similar to the game with Aronian mentioned above.)* 14.♗xe4 *(14.♘d4? loses a piece to 14...♗xd3 15.♕xd3 e5)* 14...♕xd1 15.♖xd1 ♘xe4 16.c6 ♘b3 17.♖b1 ♖d8 18.♘d4 though Black should be able to hold this without too much trouble after 18...♔e7.

12...gxf6! A surprise for Ding, who was expecting only 12...♕f6. A surprising confession, failing to consider the other possible candidate move.

12...♕xf6 13.e4 h6 was also good for Black, but with the game move Nepomniachtchi shows that he intends to fight for the initiative.

13.e4?! An imprecision, which allows Black to obtain a powerful queenside majority.

13.dxc5 ♗xc5 14.e4 was better, with a roughly balanced and sharp position after 14...♖g8 15.♕e2 ♕b6 followed by ...0-0-0.

13...c4! Now White suffers from a lack of space on the queenside.

14.♗c2 ♕c7 Black prepares long castle.

14...b3! 15.♗b1 ♕b6 with the idea of ...0-0-0 and ...♘b4 would have emphasised White's suffocation on the queenside.

15.♗d2 ♖g8 White's last move was aimed against 15...b3? when White can play 16.♗b1 and with the idea of ♕e2 and ♘xa5, he will exploit the weak pawn on c4.

16.♖c1?! Completing development, but natural moves soon land White in serious trouble.

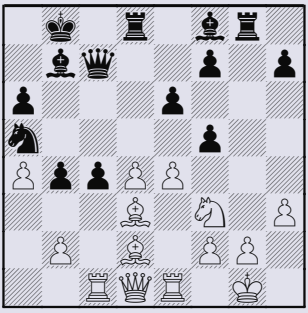
16.♕e1 was more to the point, immediately initiating concrete play against the pawn on b4. After 16...f5 *(*or *16...♕b6 17.♖c1* when *17...0-0-0?!* can be met by *18.♗d3!)* 17.♕e2! *(17.♗xb4? is bad in view of 17...♗xb4 18.♕xb4 fxe4 19.♘e1 ♗d5 when Black is practically winning due to his central dominance and White'a pathetic light pieces.)* 17...0-0-0 18.♖ad1 the position is very complicated but objectively White is not worse.

16...0-0-0 17.♗d3? Most likely based on a miscalculation.

17.♕e1 f5 18.♔h1 was the way to continue, though Black has the initiative after 18...♘c6.

17...♔b8 18.♖e1 Intending ♘f1, but...

18...f5!



"Brilliant move" - Ding. White is now busted.

19.♗c2 An admission that something has gone terribly wrong.

The strength of the move is seen after the natural 19.exf5 ♖xd4! when Black's attack crashes through. A nice sample line is 20.♘xd4 ♖xg2+ 21.♔f1 ♖xf2+! 22.♔xf2 ♕h2+ 23.♔e3 ♗h6#; 19.♔h1 can be met in more than one way, for example:

A) 19...♗g7!? with the idea of 20.e5 *(20.♗xb4 ♗xd4* wins for Black *as White's position falls apart.)* 20...♗f8!;

B) 19...f6 freeing the seventh rank for the queen;

C) 19...e5 20.d5 f6! with the idea ...♕g7.

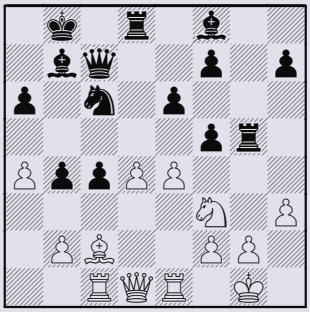
19...♘c6 Black was for choice here.

19...f6 was considered by Nepomniachtchi and was also very good;

19...e5 20.d5 f6 threatening ...fxe4 when the pawn on d5 would also fall.

20.♗g5 20.♗b1 fxe4 *(20...♘xd4 was mentioned by Nepomniachtchi at the press conference, but it's less good than the capture on e4. 21.♘xd4 ♗c5! 22.♖xc4 ♖xd4 23.♖xd4 ♗xd4 24.♕f3∓ when White's disadvantage is minimal.)* 21.♗xe4 f5! either clears the long diagonal for the bishop on b7 or forces the exchange of the bishop on e4 for the knight on c6, which is devastating: 22.♗xc6 *(22.♗b1 ♘xd4 is curtains.)* 22...♕xc6 23.♗f4+ ♔a8 24.♔h1 ♗g7 White won't be able to survive this for much longer.

20...♖xg5!



Just like Kasparov used to call the exchange sacrifices on c3 in the Sicilian "a matter of chess culture" this exchange sacrifice falls into the same category.

21.♘xg5 ♘xd4 Black's pieces are dominating. The pair of bishops, the possibility to attack along the g-file and the potential passed pawn on the queenside all add to Black's decisive advantage.

22.♕h5 f6 22...♗c5 was another way. 23.♕xf7 ♘f3+ *(*or *23...♕f4)* 24.gxf3 ♕g3+ 25.♔h1 ♕xg5 with a winning position.

23.♘f3 ♘xc2 24.♖xc2 ♗xe4 25.♖d2 ♗d6 The moment when Nepomniachtchi felt that the game was won.

26.♔h1 c3 27.bxc3 bxc3 28.♖d4 c2 29.♕h6 e5

0-1

A horrible loss, even more so with the white pieces!

I think that this loss in fact helped Ding. After it, he found himself in the more comfortable (for him) position of an underdog and the pressure was substantially decreased. This was immediately visible in the next game, where Ding finally played on a good level from start to finish.

Game 3:
DING REGAINS HIS COMPOSURE

Nepomniachtchi – Ding, ½:½

12.04.2023

1.d4 This was the first and only time in the match when Nepomniachtchi deviated from 1.e4. In hindsight, this was probably not the best decision. As the next games showed, Nepomniachtchi was able to put considerable pressure in the Anti-Marshall, so it made sense to apply that pressure immediately, while Ding was still reeling from the awful loss in the previous game.

1...♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 d5 A small surprise, as the Nimzo-Indian has been Ding's main opening.

4.cxd5 For many years the Exchange Variation was considered White's best try for an advantage against this move-order, but in the last several years Black found several ideas on how to deal with Botvinnik's plan of f3 and e4. We will see some of these ideas in this game.

4...exd5 5.♗g5 c6 6.e3 h6 7.♗h4 ♗e7 8.♗d3 0-0 9.♕c2 White is at a crossroad here and it may turn out that this move is a small imprecision. Since White intends f3 and e4, the queen may be better placed on d2 later on, so it made sense to start with 9.♘ge2. But since Nepomniachtchi must have been in his preparation, we can assume that he had his reason for preferring the move with the queen.

9...♖e8 With this move Black prevents the development of the knight to f3.

10.♘ge2 10.♘f3 can now be met by 10...♘e4! and after 11.♗xe7 ♕xe7 the rook on e8 helps the defence of the knight on e4.

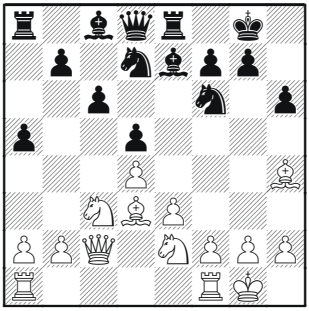
10...♘bd7 The immediate 10...♘h5 is possible and it was played against Nepomniachtchi: 11.♗xe7 ♕xe7 12.0-0 ♘d7 13.♖ae1 ♘f8 Nepomniachtchi, I



(2751)-Kramnik,V (2811) Zuerich Chess Challenge Blitz2 6th 2017 (2) 1-0

11.0-0 11.f3 b5! is good for Black. His idea to combat Botvinnik's plan is to be able to push ...b4 at some point, disrupting White's harmonious development by attacking the knight on c3. Another idea of ...b5 is to allow for the development of the bishop on b7, when after ...c5 the rook can come to the c-file. An illustration of Black's idea can be seen after 12.e4? b4 13.♘a4 dxe4 14.fxe4 ♘xe4! winning a pawn.

11...a5!



A subtle move. It is generally useful, to stop a possible minority attack, but it's also a waiting move. Black wants to see how White will commit his pieces.

11...♘h5 is possible. 12.♗xe7 ♕xe7 when White has two plans: the minority attack or f3 and e4. 13.♖ab1 *(13.♖ae1 ♘f8 14.♘c1 ♘f6 15.f3 ♘e6 16.♘b3 intending e4 and here we see how the pawn on a5 comes in handy for Black - he can harass the knight on b3 with ...a4, and even here the best move is 16...a5!)* 13...a5 again we see the usefulness of this move. *(13...♘f8 14.b4 a6 15.a4 ♘f6 16.b5 axb5 17.axb5 c5⩲)* 14.a3 ♘f8 15.b4 axb4 16.axb4 b5! when Black intends ...♘d7-b6-c4;

11...♘e4?! 12.♗xe7 ♕xe7 13.♗xe4 dxe4 14.♖fd1! with the idea of d5 gives White some initiative.

12.a3 White also decides to wait, making a semi-useful move.

12.f3 b5! with the idea of ...♘a6 and ...b4 gives Black good counterplay. A sample line is 13.e4 b4 14.♘a4 dxe4 15.fxe4 ♘xe4!

(or even 15...c5 16.e5 ♘d5 with unclear play.) 16.♗xe7 ♕xe7 17.♕xc6 ♘d2! 18.♕xa8 ♕e3+ 19.♖f2 ♘f6! threatening ...♘g4 with a strong attack and excellent compensation;

A positional idea worth noting is 12.a4 ♘b8! when Black intends ...♘a6-b4.

12...♘h5 13.♗xe7 ♕xe7 14.♖ae1 ♘f8 Black waits with ...♘hf6 in order not to allow ♘g3.

15.♘c1 Now the knight can no longer go to g3, so Black drops the knight back to f6.

15...♘f6 16.f3 White follows in Botvinnik's footsteps. He prepares e4.

16...♘e6 17.♘1e2 Up to this point the players followed a game between Giri and Ding, but here Nepomniachtchi deviates.

17.♕f2 was played in the mentioned game. 17...b5! may be an improvement, as *(17...c5 18.♗b5 ♖d8 19.dxc5 ♕xc5 was acceptable for Black in Giri,A (2761)-Ding Liren (2806) Chessable Masters Prelim rapid 2022 (6.5) ½-½)* 18.e4? is met by 18...dxe4 19.fxe4 ♘g4 when White loses the pawn on d4.

17...c5 Ding reacts in the same way as in the game with Giri.

17...b5!? was a good alternative. 18.e4?! *(18.♘a2 ♗d7 with ...c5 next is good for Black - his space on the queenside and active pieces easily compensate for the IQP.)* 18...b4! 19.axb4 axb4 20.♘d1 ♕a7! shows another aspect of having moved the a7-pawn earlier. The pressure on d4 gives Black an advantage here.

18.♗b5 A bit too safe.

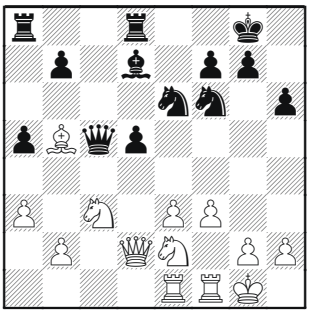
18.♘f4 was a more ambitious attempt. 18...♖d8 *(18...♘xf4?! 19.exf4 is awkward for Black as his pieces are not well placed with the e-file open. 19...♕f8 20.dxc5 ♕xc5+ 21.♕f2 ♕xf2+ 22.♔xf2 when White can safely press in the endgame by attacking the d5-pawn and advancing on the kingside.)* 19.♕f2 b6 with the idea of ...♗a6. *(or 19...cxd4 20.exd4 ♕d6 21.♘xe6 ♗xe6 when the position is close to equality, but White may claim he's a tiny bit better after 22.♖e5 ♘d7 23.♖e2)*

18...♖d8! A sign of ambition.

18...♗d7 would have given White an easy game after 19.♗xd7 ♕xd7 20.♘a4.

19.dxc5 ♕xc5 20.♕d2 Here we finally see why the queen on c2 is not always on a good square.

20...♗d7!



Again an ambitious choice.

Ding could have made a draw more or less by force after 20...d4 21.exd4 ♘xd4 22.♘xd4 ♕xd4+ 23.♕xd4 ♖xd4 when White's temporary initiative is easily extinguished, for example, 24.♖e7 ♔f8 25.♖c7 ♖b8 with the idea of ...♘e6. Instead, despite being one down in the match, he decides to keep the tension and play on.

21.♗xd7?! Allowing Black to show his idea.

21.♘d4 was better. 21...♖ac8 *(21...♗xb5 22.♘cxb5 a4 is also equal.)* 22.♖c1 ♘xd4 23.exd4 ♕d6 24.♗d3 ♕b6 with comfortable equality.

21...♘xd7! This introduces the idea of ...♘b6(e5)-c4 and may have been missed by Nepomniachtchi.

22.♘d4 The pawn on d5 is taboo.

22.♕xd5?! ♕xe3+ 23.♔h1 ♘dc5 gives Black the initiative;

22.♘xd5? ♘b6 loses a piece.

22...♘b6 23.♖d1 ♘c4 Black executed the relocation of the knight and has slight initiative now.

24.♕f2! Good defence.

24...♖ac8 White's idea is seen after 24...♘xa3 25.e4! when he equalises without problems. 25...♘c4 *(25...♘xd4 26.♖xd4 ♘b5 27.♘xb5 ♕xb5 28.♖fd1 and White regains the pawn on d5.)* 26.♘xd5 again with equality.

25.♘a4 ♕e7 The queen can come to f6 in case White plays ♘f5.

26.♖fe1 ♕f6 26...♘xd4!? was possible. 27.♖xd4 b5 28.♘c3 ♕c5 when Black continues to press, though White is certainly very solid.

27.♘b5 ♘c7 28.♘d4 28.♘xc7 ♖xc7 29.♘c3 ♘xb2! 30.♘xd5 ♕g5! also leads to equality.

28...♘e6 29.♘b5 ♘c7 30.♘d4 ♘e6

½-½

Ding must have felt much better after this game. Not only did he manage to solve his opening problems easily, he also managed to outplay Nepomniachtchi and obtain some initiative.

After the match Ding said that by Game 3 he was already feeling alright and managed to get over the psychological problems that plagued him in the first two games. The third game is also important as it may have given Ding important information about his opponent's treatment of the Carlsbad structure. This will prove vital later in the match.

In the next game, Ding felt ready to strike back.

GAME 4: DING LIREN STIRKES BACK

Ding – Nepomniachtchi, 1-0

13.04.2023

1.c4 The English Opening has always been an integral part of Ding's white repertoire. Even though he lost to Nepomniachtchi at the Candidates in Madrid, he shows that he wasn't afraid to use it again against the same opponent.

1...♘f6 1...e5 was Nepomniachtchi's choice in Madrid. 2.g3 c6 3.♘f3 e4Ding Liren (2806)-Nepomniachtchi,I (2766) FIDE Candidates 2022 (1.2) 0-1.

2.♘c3 If now 2.g3 Black can switch to Slav structures with 2...c6

2...e5 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.e3 A major alternative to the traditional fianchetto with 4.g3.

4...♗b4 5.♕c2 ♗xc3 The main continuation avoiding ♘d5 ideas.

6.bxc3!? Taking with the queen may be more natural, but practice has shown that after 6.♕xc3 ♕e7 intending ...d5 Black obtains good play. In line with his match strategy, Ding avoids theoretical confrontations and keeps the game at a slower pace.

6...d6 Black has alternatives, like 6...e4 or 6...0-0.

7.e4 Stopping ...e4. Now White has two plans - to advance either with d4 or with f4.

7...0-0 Black could have also postponed castling with moves like 7...b6 or 7...♘h5.

8.♗e2 The alternative is to develop the bishop on g2, for example, 8.g3 ♘e8 9.♘h4 ♘e7Carlsen,M (2843)-Topalov,V (2749) Gashimov Memorial 5th 2018 (7) 1-0.

8...♘h5 Black had other options as well.

8...♘e7 9.0-0 ♘g6 is a logical knight transfer, as in the game Tabatabaei,M (2675)-Giri,A (2768) Chessable Play-In Match rapid 2023 (1.3) ½-½; Or 8...h6 9.0-0 ♘e7 10.d4 ♘g6Tabatabaei,M (2677)-Caruana,F (2766) PRO League Prelim 2023 rapid (2.3) 0-1;

8...♘e8 9.0-0 f5 looks a bit premature as White has 10.d4!

9.d4! 9.♘xe5? ♘xe5 10.♗xh5 ♕g5 loses for White as the pawn on g2 drops.

9...♘f4?! It appears that Nepomniachtchi mixed up his preparation as this gives White an advantage.

9...♕f6 preparing ...♘f4 was better. Now 10.g3!? is an interesting pawn sacrifice, after 10...exd4 11.♘xd4 ♘xd4 12.cxd4 ♕xd4 13.♗b2 ♕c5 14.e5!? White has good compensation.

10.♗xf4 exf4 11.0-0 Improving on a game played by his second, Rapport. White has a stable advantage thanks to his powerful centre.

11.h4 looks too wild for a World Championship match. After 11...♖e8 12.♗d3 ♗g4 13.♘g1! White eventually won in Rapport,R (2621)-Zaragatski,I (2460) Bundesliga 1213 2012 (10) 1-0.

11...♕f6 12.♖fe1 ♖e8 Black banks on the solidity of his position.

12...g5?! is risky as after 13.h3 g4 *(13...♔h8 14.♘h2 stops Black's advance.)* 14.hxg4 ♗xg4 15.♖ab1 b6 16.♖b5! it will be White who will start attacking the kingside;

12...b6?! is premature as it weakens the long diagonal. 13.♗d3! White creates the threat of e5, attacking the pawn on h7 and threatening ♘e4.

13.♗d3?! Now it seems it was Ding's turn to mix up his preparation. He remembered that ♘d3 was an essential move for White in these positions, but it wasn't one in this exact position! White had several good options at his disposal.

13.h3 stops ...♘g4. 13...♕g6 14.♔h2 and White will continue with ♖ab1, ♘d3 with the idea to push e5;

13.c5 is a promising pawn sacrifice, similar to what Ding played later in the game. 13...dxc5 14.e5 ♕e7 15.h4!? h6 16.♕e4 cxd4 17.cxd4 ♗g4 18.♕xf4 ♗e6 19.♗d3 with a very comfortable position for White, who has good attacking chances on the kingside;

13.♖ad1 is a developing move that anticipates 13...g5?! which can now be met by 14.c5! dxc5 15.e5! when Black only weakened his kingside and White's rook is very useful on d1.

13...♗g4 Now Black should be fine.

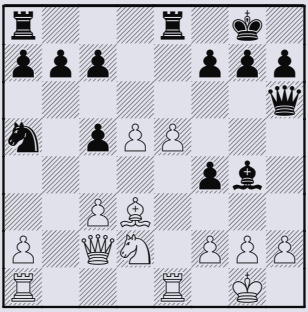
14.♘d2 ♘a5 Ambitious play by Black, who intends to go after the pawn on c4 with ideas like ...c5, ...♖ac8 etc.

14...♖ad8 was probably the safest move, as Black should prevent c5.

15.c5 White's main idea in the position.

15.♕a4 was another option, available after Black's last move. After 15...b6 16.f3 ♗e6 17.♘b3 ♘xb3 18.axb3 White improved his pawn structure and will play d5 or c5.

15...dxc5 16.e5 ♕h6 17.d5



White has excellent compensation for the pawn. The imposing pawn duo make White's position easier to play, though objectively Black should be fine.

17...♖ad8 18.c4 b6 19.h3 ♗h5 20.♗e4 Neither side has a clear plan, but Black must always be on the lookout for possible breaks with d6 or e6.

20...♖e7 Black decides to double on the e-file to put pressure on the e5-pawn.

21.♕c3 ♖de8 22.♗f3 White invites the exchange of bishops when the knight on f3 would safely defend the pawn on e5.

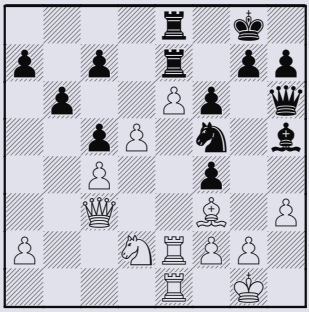
22.♗c2 was an alternative, keeping the bishop on the more active diagonal and introducing ♘a4 ideas. 22...♕g5 23.♗a4 c6 *(23...♖f8 24.g4!? fxg3 25.fxg3 is quite sharp)* 24.dxc6 ♕g6 25.♘e4 ♘xc6 26.♘f6+ gxf6 27.♗xc6 ♖f8 28.exf6 ♖e6 29.♖xe6 fxe6 30.♗f3 is again somewhat better for White, thanks to his safer king.

22...♘b7 23.♖e2 White doesn't want to take on h5 and waits for Black to take on f3.

23...f6 Black could have taken on f3 and implemented the same idea from the game after 23...♗xf3 24.♘xf3 f6 25.e6 ♘d6 with similar play.

24.e6 ♘d6 Black also had the option to keep the bishops on the board with 24...♘g6.

25.♖ae1 ♘f5?!



The knight aims for the d4-square, but it won't be very happy there. Psychologically this is understandable, since Black played with a bad knight on a5 for a long time, so activating it must have felt like a big improvement.

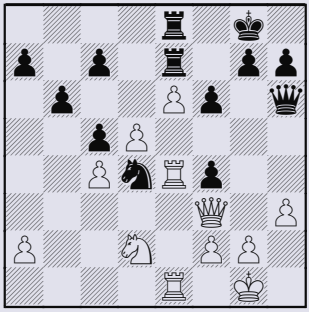
25...♗xf3?! 26.♕xf3! ♘f5 27.♕d3 ♘d4 28.♖e4 gives White the initiative, threatening both the pawn on f4 and the exchange sacrifice on d4;

25...♗g6! was better, denying White of the idea ♖e4 to attack the pawn on f4. White now has problems finding a way forward.

26.♗xh5! The move 26.♘g4 was a good alternative.

26...♕xh5 27.♖e4 ♕h6 28.♕f3 The pawn on f4 is under attack now.

28...♘d4?





The losing mistake.

28...g5 was the only move to stay in the game. After 29.g4 ♘d6 30.♖4e2 ♖f8 it's not easy for White to make progress.

29.♖xd4! Just like in the second game, the exchange sacrifice is a "matter of chess culture." It's not clear what Nepomniachtchi missed.

29...cxd4 30.♘b3 The knight is coming with vengeance.

30...g5 31.♘xd4 ♕g6 32.g4! Once planted on f5 the knight will be the decisive piece. Black's rooks are completely useless in this position.

32...fxg3 33.fxg3 h5 34.♘f5 ♖h7 35.♕e4 ♔h8 36.e7 White simply pushes everything forward and crashes through.

36...♕f7 37.d6 cxd6 38.♘xd6 ♕g8 38...♕xe7 39.♘xe8 wins a piece.

39.♘xe8 ♕xe8 40.♕e6 The pawn on e7 makes the win trivial.

40...♔g7 41.♖f1 ♖h6 42.♖d1 Threatening ♖d8.

42...f5 43.♕e5+ ♔f7 44.♕xf5+ ♖f6 44...♔xe7 45.♖e1+ wins the queen.

45.♕h7+ ♔e6 46.♕g7 Threatening ♖e1.

46...♖g6 47.♕f8

1-0

A convincing victory for Ding, in spite of it being a result of Nepomniachtchi's inexplicable blunder, allowing the exchange sacrifice.

This game set the tone for the next games - it turned out that both players were quite vulnerable with the black pieces, both in the opening and later on when defending inferior positions.

Game 5:
NEPO'S QUICK COMEBACK

Nepomniachtchi – Ding, 1-0

15.04.2023

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.d3 It was clear that the move 6.♘xc6 from the first game was a one-off attempt. Now Nepomniachtchi uses his main weapon for the match.

6...b5 7.♗b3 d6 8.c3 In Game 11 we will see the move 8.a3, which Nepomniachtchi had already used against Ding in the past.

8.a3 0-0 *(8...♘a5 postponing castling will be Ding's choice in Game 11.)* 9.♘c3 ♘a5 10.♗a2 ♗e6 11.b4 ♗xa2 12.♖xa2 ♘c6 13.♗g5 was played twice between the same players. In 2020 at the Ekaterinburg Candidates Nepomniachtchi won, while the game at the 2022 Airthings Masters ended in a draw.

8...0-0 9.h3 ♗b7 The revelation of this move-order for White is that in the case of 9...♘a5 10.♗c2 c5 11.d4 White enters the Chigorin Variation a tempo down (without ♖e1) and still manages to obtain some advantage!

10.a4 In Game 13 Nepomniachtchi will vary with 10.♘e3. Neither move is very common, with 10.♘c2, 10.♘bd2 and 10.♖e1 being the most popular one.

10...♘a5 11.♗a2 c5 12.♗g5 Improving on yet another Giri game. White's play is very simple, he plays on the light squares and his last move is aimed at eliminating the knight on f6, which controls the d5-square.

12.♘a3 ♕d7 *(12...h6!? may be what Nepomniachtchi wanted to avoid, as after 13.axb5 axb5 14.♘xb5 c4! Black obtains good compensation.)* 13.♗g5 bxa4 14.♘h4 ♖ab8?! *(14...♘d5!? equalises for Black; 14...h6 15.♗xf6 ♗xf6 16.♘f5 ♔h7 is also good for Black.)* 15.♘f5 ♗d8 16.f4 with strong attack for White in the game Firouzja,A (2778)-Giri,A (2760) Miami FTX Crypto Cup rapid 2022 (3.7) 1-0.

12...h6 Natural, but somewhat playing into White's hands as he wanted to take on f6 anyway.

12...♘d7 is an idea to exchange the passive dark-squared bishop. After 13.♗xe7 ♕xe7 14.axb5 axb5 15.♘a3 b4 16.cxb4 cxb4 17.♘c4 ♘c6 18.♘e3 White is more comfortable, threatening ♘d5 or ♘f5;

12...d5!? is a sharp attempt that appears to work. After 13.♘xe5 dxe4 14.dxe4 c4 Black obtains compensation in Marshall-style, for example, 15.♕xd8 ♖fxd8 16.♘d2 h6 and Black will either regain the pawn or after 17.♗xf6 ♗xf6 18.♘ef3 ♘c6 he can rely on his activity and bishop pair for satisfactory play;

12...c4!? is another promising idea for Black. 13.axb5 axb5 14.♘a3 ♕b6 15.♖e1 ♖fc8 leads to an unclear position.

13.♗xf6 ♗xf6 14.axb5 axb5 15.♘bd2 ♘c6 16.♗d5 White occupies the weakened d5-square.

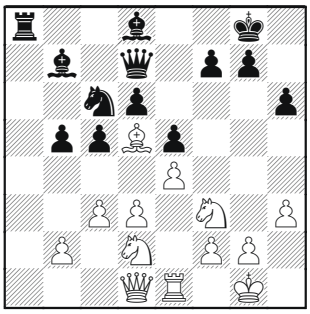
16...♖xa1 Black plays naturally, a good alternative was to connect the rooks with 16...♕d7.

17.♕xa1 ♕d7 The queen could also have gone to b6.

18.♖e1 ♖a8 Activating the rook with tempo, though decent alternatives were 18...g6 or 18...♘e7.

19.♕d1 The critical position. Black has many options, but what he needs to decide is how to deal with White's control of the light squares.

19...♗d8?!



Ding comes up with an elaborate idea, which unfortunately brings more trouble than benefit. He wants to activate his dark-squared bishop by putting it on b6 and opening the g1-a7 diagonal by pushing ...c4. This all sounds nice, but here it was a situation when simpler solutions were also the better ones!

19...♘e7 was probably the simplest. After 20.♗xb7 ♕xb7 21.♘f1 g6 22.♘e3 ♕a7 Black controls the a-file and the sensitive light squares d5 and f5. His dark squared is a bit passive, but White cannot really take advantage of that;

19...♖a6 or 19...♖a7 with the same idea - Black evacuates the long diagonal and plans ...♘c8 and ...♘e7, to evict the white bishop from d5 without allowing the exchange of his good, light-squared bishop. 20.♘f1 *(20.♕b3 ♘d8 is another idea for Black - a knight transfer to e6. 21.♗xb7 ♕xb7 22.♘f1 ♘e6 23.♘e3 ♘c7 controlling the d5-square. 24.♘f5 h5 and with ...g6 next Black is fine.)* 20...♗c8 21.♘e3 ♘e7 22.d4 *(22.♗b3 ♘g6 23.♘d5 ♗d8* with unclear play - Black keeps the bishops and White suffers from a superfluous piece - both the knight and the bishop want to be on d5!*)* 22...exd4 23.cxd4 ♘xd5 24.♘xd5 ♗d8 with a solid position for Black;

19...g6 20.♘f1 h5 21.♘e3 ♔g7 22.♔h2∞ gives White ideas like ♖g1 and g4, which can develop into a dangerous attack;

19...♘d8 the typical idea to transfer the knight to e6 works well here. 20.♘f1 ♘e6 21.♘e3 ♘f4 an active knight that also controls the d5-square. 22.♗xb7 ♕xb7 and Black is fine.

20.♘f1 ♘e7 21.♗xb7 ♕xb7 22.♘e3 ♗b6 23.h4! White starts activity on the kingside, taking advantage that Black removed almost all his pieces from that part of the board.

Nepomniachtchi considered 23.c4 to prevent ...c4, but after 23...♗a5 Black is fine.

23...♕c6 Black continues with the plan to push ...c4.

23...♖a2 was better, immediately starting queenside play. After 24.♕b3 ♕a6 Black threatens ...♕a4 and in the endgame he would be safe.

24.h5 c4 Black achieved his idea, but he still has problems to solve.

25.d4 exd4 25...♕xe4? is bad, after 26.♘xc4 ♕c6 27.♘xb6 ♕xb6 28.dxe5 dxe5 29.♘xe5 Black has lost a pawn;

25...♖d8!? prepares a possible ...d5. 26.♘h4 exd4 27.♘ef5 ♘xf5 28.♘xf5 with the idea of ♕g4. 28...♕e8! is the only defence for Black, intending ...♕e5. 29.cxd4 ♕e6 and Black has enough play for equality.

26.♘xd4 ♕c5? Still in line with his intended idea to create activity along the g1-a7 diagonal as now Black threatens ...b4, but this is a tactical mistake.

26...♕b7 was better. After 27.♘df5 ♗xe3 28.♘xe3 ♕xe4 29.♕xd6 ♘c6= Black manages to consolidate, though he still needs to be precise after 30.f3 ♕e6 31.♕xe6 fxe6 32.♘g4 ♔f7 33.♘e5+ ♘xe5 34.♖xe5 and now 34...b4! will make a draw in the rook endgame;

26...♗xd4 27.♕xd4 ♖a2 was another option. 28.♖b1! *(28.♖e2 b4! is good for*



Black in view of 29.cxb4? c3!; 28.e5 d5 29.f4 ♕e6 allows Black to establish blockade on the light squares on the kingside.) 28...♔h7 29.f3 ♕c7 is quite solid for Black.

27.♕g4? Natural, but letting his advantage slip.

27.♕f3! threatening e5. 27...♖e8 *(27...♕e5? 28.♘g4!* with e5 next*; 27...♕g5 28.e5 ♖d8 29.e6 ♖f8 30.♖a1!* and White wins. *30...♗xd4 31.exf7+)* 28.♕g4! was more precise, as the threat of ♕d7 is very strong after having lured the rook to e8, but this was probably too subtle.

27...♕e5! Now Black should be fine.

28.♘f3 28.♘df5 ♘xf5 29.♘xf5 ♔h7 30.g3 ♖a2 gives Black counterplay by attacking the pawn on b2;

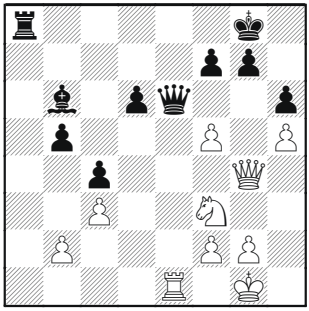
28.♕d7 now this isn't as strong as there is no attack on the rook on e8. 28...♗xd4 29.cxd4 ♕xe4 30.♕xb5 ♕xd4 31.♘xc4 ♕d5 leads to an equal endgame.

28...♕e6 28...♕f6 was possible, but Ding likely wanted to avoid 29.♕d7 though Black can deal with it with 29...♗xe3 30.♖xe3 ♖a1+ 31.♖e1 *(31.♔h2 ♖f1! is unpleasant to meet.)* 31...♖xe1+ 32.♘xe1 ♕e5 with an equal endgame, for example 33.♕e8+ ♔h7 34.♕xf7 ♕xe4.

29.♘f5 ♘xf5?! "After this, it's very difficult." - Ding. But in fact his mistake comes on the next move.

29...♕f6! was preferred by Ding after the game, He was right, as after 30.♘xe7+ ♕xe7 31.♘h4 ♕f6 32.♘f5 ♖a2 and Black is alright.

30.exf5



30...♕f6? This is the real mistake.

30...♕d7! still allowed Black to keep the balance. 31.♕f4 *(31.♕e4 d5! is the whole difference - the queen from d7 defends the d5-pawn, something that wasn't possible in the game with the queen on f6.)* 31...♗d8 prevents f6. *(31...♕d8 controlling the f6-square and with the idea of ...d5. 32.♖d1 d5 33.♕e5 ♗c7 is equal, as the pawn on d5 is taboo in view of the back rank problems: 34.♕xd5?? ♕xd5 35.♖xd5 ♖a1+ mates; 31...d5 32.f6! is a bit unpleasant.)* 32.♕e4 d5 33.♕e8+ ♕xe8 34.♖xe8+ ♔h7 White cannot get anything from the pin on the eighth rank. 35.♘e5 ♖a1+ 36.♔h2 ♗c7 37.f4 ♗xe5 38.fxe5 ♖f1 with a sharp, but objectively drawn rook endgame.

31.♕e4! Now there is no ...d5 and Black is left without counterplay.

31...♖b8 32.♖e2! A very good prophylactic move, defending the pawn on b2.

The immediate 32.g4?! is met by 32...b4! 33.cxb4 ♕xb2 and here we see the strength of White's 32.♖e2 in the game.

32...♗c5 Black still aims for ...b4.

33.g4 This was missed by Ding. White simply advances on the kingside.

33...♕d8 34.♕d5 Preventing ...d5.

34...♔f8 35.♔f1 The king could have gone to g2 or h2, too.

For example: 35.♔g2 ♕c8 36.♘h4 ♕b7 37.♕xb7 ♖xb7 38.f6 gxf6 39.♘f5 with a prospectless endgame for Black, though White is by no means winning.

35...♖c8? Black just wastes two moves now.

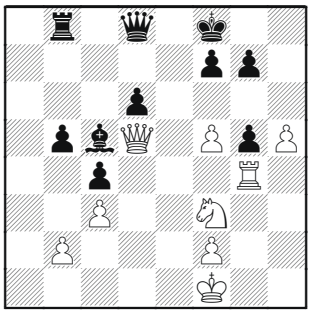
35...♕c8 was the only way, with the idea of ...♕b7. It doesn't look bright, but Black had to play like this. 36.f6 *(36.♘h4 ♕b7 37.♕xb7 ♖xb7 38.f6 gxf6 39.♘f5 is the same endgame from the note to White's 35th move.)* 36...gxf6 *(36...♕xg4 this is not a check, so here we see the idea behind 35.$f1. 37.♖e7 wins for White.)* 37.♕e4 White is dominating, but there is no forced win. 37...♔g8 38.♘h4 ♕b7 39.♘f5 ♕xe4 40.♖xe4 d5 41.♖e2 ♔h7 with ...b4 and Black even gets some counterplay.

36.♖e4 ♖b8 37.g5! Crashing through.

37...hxg5? Again not the most resilient.

37...♕d7 was the only move. After 38.gxh6 gxh6 39.♘d4 ♕b7 40.♘c6 ♖e8 41.♖xe8+ ♔xe8 42.♕e4+ ♔f8 43.f6 ♕d7 44.♕f3! preventing ...♕h3 and intending ♘e7-d5(f5) White is very close to winning, but not quite there yet after 44...d5 45.♘e5 ♕e6.

38.♖g4



Now White wins.

38...♖a8 38...♕e7 it's too late for this idea now. 39.♘xg5 ♕b7 40.♕xb7 ♖xb7 41.f6! gxf6 42.♘h7+ ♔e7 43.♖e4+ ♔d8 44.♘xf6 and the h-pawn decides;

38...f6 39.♘h4! possibly this was missed by Ding. 39...gxh4 40.h6 and the h-pawn decides.

39.♘xg5 ♖a1+ 40.♔e2 Going to g2 was also possible.

40...♕e7+ 41.♘e4 Much simpler than 41.♔f3 ♘xf2! which also wins for White,

but it invites unnecessary complications. **41...♕e8** 41...f6 42.h6 is the simplest.

42.♔f3 ♕a8 Black finally exchanges queens, but White made decisive progress by now.

43.♕xa8+ ♖xa8 44.f6 g6 44...gxf6 45.♘xf6 ♔e7 46.♘g8+ with h6-h7-h8.

45.hxg6 fxg6 46.♖xg6 ♖a2 A nice last-ditch attempt at counterplay.

47.♔g4! 47.♘g5? shows Black's resources: 47...♖xb2 48.♘h7+ ♔e8 49.♖g8+ ♔d7 50.♖g7+ *(50.f7? ♖xf2+ even wins for Black as the f7-pawn drops.)* 50...♔c6 51.f7 ♖xf2+ 52.♔g3 b4! and Black draws after 53.cxb4 c3! 54.bxc5 ♖f1! 55.cxd6 c2 56.f8♕ ♖xf8 57.♘xf8 ♔xd6! and Black will promote on the next move.

47...♖xb2 48.♖h6

1-0

A good game and a dominating win for Nepomniachtchi. Coming back so quickly after a loss was not something Nepomniachtchi was known for. In the match against Carlsen, he quickly fell apart after the first loss. This was a positive sign for him and it appeared that he retook the initiative in the match. However, the next game was a mirrored image of the previous one.

Game 6:
THE MOMENT DING TOOK THE INITIATIVE

Ding – Nepomniachtchi, 1-0

16.04.2023

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 d5 3.♗f4 A major surprise, but consistent with Ding's match strategy. The London System has never been considered serious enough for a World Championship match, but Ding obviously thought that the element of surprise would compensate for the blandness of the opening.

3...c5 4.e3 ♘c6 5.♘bd2 cxd4 Black has a wide choice of options against the London. Here we see Nepomniachtchi choose the simplest one, avoiding complications and going for the reversed Carlsbad structure.

6.exd4 ♗f5 7.c3 e6 8.♗b5 A rare choice, compared to the more popular 8.♕b3 and 8.♘e2, but it has been played several times by one of the most consistent London players, Gata Kamsky.

8...♗d6 The bishop on f4 is an active piece, so Black generally tries to exchange it.

9.♗xd6 ♕xd6 10.0-0 0-0 11.♖e1 h6 The first instructive moment in the game. Black is perfectly solid and has no problems. However, here we see him play a vague, superficial move. It doesn't spoil anything, as the margin of safety is very big for Black, but it is the first sign that perhaps Nepomniachtchi didn't feel entirely at home in this position.

11...a6 invites 12.♗xc6 ♕xc6 *(or 12...bxc6?! 13.b4 when Black has weaknesses on the dark squares on the queenside.)* 13.♘e5 ♕c7 14.g4 ♗g6 15.♖e3 with the play on the kingside;

11...♕c7 avoids ♘e5 as now Black can simply take that knight. 12.♕e2 keeps White's options open and passes the ball back to Black. For example, if Black plays ...a6 White will take on c6 and play ♘e5;

if Black moves the knight from c6 then ♘e5 comes. If a rook moves, then ♘e5 or ♘h4 can be considered. 12...a6; 11...♘d7 is another attempt to stop ♘e5. 12.♘h4 ♗g6 13.♘xg6 hxg6 14.♘f3 a6 15.♗f1 b5 16.h4 gives White chances to create an attack on the kingside thanks to the hook on g6.

12.♘e5 Now the knight cannot be taken given the fork after dxe5.

12...♘e7 13.a4 Useful move for White in this reversed Carlsbad structure. It stops a potential

minority attack after ...b5 and it also creates possibilities for future play on the queenside for White by advancing the a-pawn further.

13...a6 This is committal as it weakens Black's queenside. It's another questionable move for Black and the accumulation of these slowly lead him to a difficult position.

13...♕b6 threatening ...a6 and then when the bishop moves the b2-pawn would hang. 14.♖a2 ♖fc8 15.♕e2 keeps the position complicated, but it is Black who has more difficulty finding constructive ideas.

14.♗f1 Now the threat is to fix the weaknesses on the dark squares with a5.

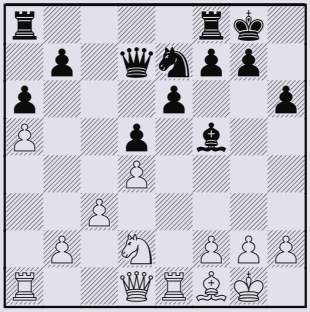
14...♘d7 This exchanges the centralised knight, but allows fixing of his queenside pawns.

14...a5 is possible, when White has the instructive maneuver 15.♘b1! with the idea ♘a3-b5, while after 15...♗xb1 16.♕xb1 White has some edge as the light-squared bishop from d3 can be used for play both on the queenside and the kingside;

14...b6 15.a5! forces further weakening of the dark squares;

14...♕b6 15.♕b3 ♕xb3 16.♘xb3 is a comfortable endgame for White who can continue his play on both wings - planning a5 and ♘c5 on the queenside and f3, g4, h4 on the kingside.

15.♘xd7 ♕xd7 16.a5!



Now White has the c5 and b6 squares at his disposal. The c5-square can be used by a knight (♘b3-c5) while the b6-square can be used by the rook (♖a3-b3-b6).

16...♕c7 Targeting the pawns on a5 and c3, thus preventing a possible b4 followed by ♘b3-c5.

17.♕f3! A good move, renewing the threat of b4 and ♘b3-c5.

The immediate 17.♘b3 would be met by 17...♘c6 when White's knight and rook on a1 are tied to the defence of the pawn on a5, so White cannot execute the transfer of the knight to c5.

17...♖fc8 Further increasing the pressure on the pawn on c3 and stopping b4.

17...♘c8 was an alternative. The knight is well placed on d6. Still, after 18.♘b3 ♘d6 19.♘c5 The knight on c5 is better than the one on d6. Black is passive, but quite solid and needs a lot of patience to play this position.

18.♖a3 White defends the pawn on c3 and introduces ♖b3 ideas. Another idea at his disposal is ♖ea1,♘b3-c5 in case Black plays ...♘c6 to attack the pawn on a5. An alternative with the same ideas was 18.♖ec1, intending b4, ♘b3-c5.

18...♗g6?! Another vague waiting move by Nepomniachtchi.

18...♗c2!? was more subtle. It stops ♘b3 and after 19.♖c1 ♗g6 20.♘b3 now the rook on c1 is worse than on e1. For example after 20...♘c6 Black threatens ...e5 and White would have liked his rook on e1 in this case.

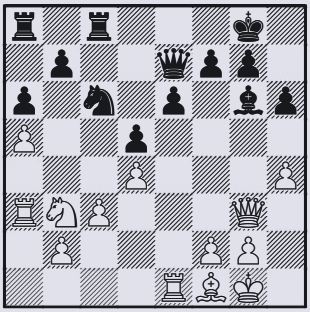
19.♘b3 White continues with his plan to plant a knight on c5.

19...♘c6 By attacking the pawn on a5 Black stops ♘c5, at least for the time being.

20.♕g3! White is consistent. He wants to exchange queens so that he can proceed with his plan of ♘c5.

20...♕e7 20...♕xg3 leads to a depressing endgame for Black. 21.hxg3 ♖c7 22.♘c5 ♗f5 *(22...♔f8? Black cannot centralise the king just yet as 23.♖xe6! wins for White.)* 23.f4 when White has the option to advance on both sides of the board.

21.h4!



A very deep move! White is preparing ♘c5 and stopping ...♕g5 at the same time.

The immediate 21.♘c5 is met by 21...♘xa5! 22.♖xa5 b6.

21...♖e8 22.♘c5 e5?! Nepomniachtchi loses his patience and seeks activity, but this only backfires.

22...♖ac8 23.b4 ♖ed8 would have required a lot of masochism to play;

After 22...♘xa5? we can see the depth of Ding's prophylactic move 21.h4: 23.♖xa5 b6 24.h5! this is the point! 24...♗xh5 25.♘xe6! fxe6 26.♖xd5 and the bishop on h5 is hanging. 26...exd5 *(26...♗f7 27.♖de5 is positionally hopeless for Black.)* 27.♖xe7 ♖xe7 28.♕h4 another point of h4 - the double attack on the rook on e7 and the lured bishop on h5 wins material.

23.♖b3! Ding prefers piece play.

23.b4 was a good alternative, though after 23...e4 24.f3! is the only way for White to exploit Black's expansion. It turns out that after ♖a2-e2 Black will lose the e4-pawn.

23...♘xa5 23...♖ab8 24.♖b6 is a picturesque demonstration of White using Black's dark-square weaknesses.

24.♖xe5 ♕f6 25.♖a3 ♘c4 The alternatives weren't better.

25...♘c6 26.♘d7 ♕d8 27.♖xe8+ ♕xe8 28.♕c7! is an important move that is the beginning of the wrecking of Black's queenside;

25...b6 26.♘d7 ♕c6 27.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 28.♘e5 and the dominating knight on e5 gives White a decisive advantage - the queen is attacked and the threats are ♘xg6 and ♘xa6.

26.♗xc4 dxc4 27.h5? An imprecision on White's part, allowing Black a saving chance.

27.♘xb7 was better. After 27...♖xe5 28.dxe5 ♕b6 29.♘d6 ♕xb2 30.♖a5!± is the important move, threatening e6. 30...♗d3 31.♔h2! is another crucial move, avoiding back-rank checks before following through with the attack. Another point of the move is that 31...♕xc3 can be met by 32.♘f5! with a decisive attack after 32...g6 33.♖d5 and e6 and ♖d7 will finish the game.

27...♗c2? Quickly played and missing the best chance.

27...♖xe5! was the start of amazing saving resource for Black. 28.dxe5 ♕d8! 29.♕f3 *(the idea is that 29.hxg6 ♕d1+ 30.♔h2 ♕h5+ leads to a perpetual check or in view of ♕h3 ...♕xe5, picking up the knight on c5, just like after 29.♕f3 ♕d2!)* 29...♕d2! The most difficult move in the whole variation. 30.hxg6 ♕e1+ 31.♔h2 ♕xe5+ 32.g3 ♕xc5 33.♕xf7+ ♔h8 34.♖a4 ♖c8 35.♔g1 White still keeps some advantage

here thanks to his better king, but Black has fair drawing chances here;

27...♗d3 was also a better try than the game move, though after 28.b4! White keeps a big advantage.

28.♘xb7 ♕b6 29.♘d6 The knight is very powerful.

29...♖xe5 30.♕xe5 Taking with the pawn was also possible, but this move creates the threat of ♘e8.

30...♕xb2 31.♖a5 ♔h7 31...♕xc3? loses to 32.♘e8! f6 33.♘xf6+! gxf6 34.♕d5+ ♔g7 35.♕b7+ and White picks up the rook on a8 with check.

32.♖c5? Understandably, White wanted to include all pieces in the attack, but this allows Black another chance.

32.♕e1! was the winning idea. White simply defends the pawn on c3 and threatens ♘xc4 or ♘xf7. 32...♗d3 33.♘xc4! is important as 33...♗xc4 34.♕e4+ picks up the rook on a8.

32...♕c1+? Again a quick decision by Nepomniachtchi costs him the game. Admittedly, in the saving line he had to find several difficult only moves, but if you don't show your best and find these resources in a World Championship match, then where else?

32...♕xc3 was the only move to stay in the game. 33.♘xf7 *(33.♖c7 ♕d2! is another only move for Black. 34.♖xf7 ♕c1+ 35.♔h2 ♕g5 and the passed a-pawn gives Black enough counterplay.)* 33...♗d3 the only move, defending the pawn on c4 and allowing for the check from c1. 34.♖c7 ♕c1+ 35.♔h2 ♖e8 again strictly the only move to save the game! 36.♕g3 *(36.♕xe8 ♕f4+ is a perpetual check.)* 36...♖e1 and Black has enough activity for a draw.

33.♔h2 Now Ding wraps up the game convincingly.

33...f6 34.♕g3 a5 35.♘xc4! This doesn't only pick up a pawn, but also intends ♘e3 in order to stop Black's defensive idea ...♕g5 after White plays ♖c7.

35.♖c7?! allows 35...♕g5 and this is unnecessarily complicating things after 36.♕xg5 hxg5 37.♘xc4 ♗b3 38.♘a3 when White is a pawn up, but the a-pawn is giving him headaches.

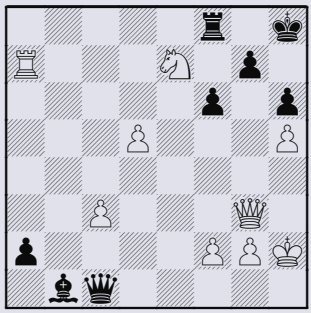
35...a4 36.♘e3 ♗b1 Moving the bishop from the attacked square.

37.♖c7 ♖g8 38.♘d5 Threatening ♘xf6.

38...♔h8 39.♖a7 Rook behind a passed pawn and also planning ♕c7. The final attack is conducted by Ding in a very creative fashion.

39...a3 40.♘e7 ♖f8 41.d5 The final preparation. The importance of controlling the e6-square will be seen later.

41...a2



42.♕c7! Threatening ♘g6 and ♕xg7#.

42...♔h7 43.♘g6 ♖g8 44.♕f7 Nepomniachtchi resigned, not allowing the pretty mating combination.

44.♕f7 ♕xc3 45.♕xg8+! ♔xg8 46.♖a8+ ♔f7 47.♖f8# and the king cannot escape via e6 - this was the idea behind 41.d5.

1-0

Equally dominating victory for Ding, immediately striking back and levelling the score. Surely a shock for Nepomniachtchi and a moment when Ding takes over the initiative in the match. However…

Game 7:
A PAINFUL LOSS FOR DING

Nepomniachtchi – Ding, 1-0

18.04.2023

1.e4 e6 A major surprise. Ding's main opening in the match, the Marshall, suffered serious problems in the previous games (the first and the fifth) so he decides to surprise Nepomniachtchi and use an opening he hasn't really played seriously. In this way, he gave his team time to repair the damage to the main defence. Ding has in fact played the French against Nepomniachtchi in the past, but these games were a long time ago. He said he was inspired to use the French after discussing this idea with his second Richard Rapport.

2.d4 2.♘c3 d5 3.♘f3 was used twice by Nepomniachtchi in one rapid and one blitz game against Ding. 3...♘f6 4.e5 ♘fd7 5.d4 c5 6.dxc5 ♘c6 7.♗f4 ♘xc5 8.h4 a6 *(8...♗e7 9.h5 Nepomniachtchi,I (2718)-Ding,L (2680) RUS-CHN Summit 8th Rapid 2012 (5) 1-0)* 9.a3 b5Nepomniachtchi,I (2632)-Ding,L (2530) CHN-RUS Summit Men 6th Blitz 2009 (2) 1-0.

2...d5 3.♘d2 Nepomniachtchi was surprised, but in a World Championship match you actually have ideas and are prepared against literally everything the opponent may play, so his plan in case of a French was to play his usual lines.

3.♘c3 was his choice in his three other previous encounters with Ding. 3...dxe4 *(3...♘f6 4.e5 ♘fd7 5.f4 c5 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.♗e3 a6 8.♕d2 b5 Nepomniachtchi,I (2718)-Ding,L (2680) RUS-CHN Summit 8th 2012 (5) ½-½)* 4.♘xe4 ♘d7 5.♘f3 ♘gf6 6.♗g5 *(6.♘xf6+ ♘xf6 7.♗e3 ♘d5 Nepomniachtchi,I (2632)-Ding,L (2530) CHN-RUS Summit Men 6th 2009 (2) ½-½)* 6...h6 7.♘xf6+ ♘xf6 8.♗e3 ♘d5 Nepomniachtchi,I (2632)-Ding,L (2530) CHN-RUS Summit Men 6th Rapid 2009 (7) 1-0.

3...c5 The best response to the Tarrasch Variation.

4.♘gf3 cxd4 5.♘xd4 ♘f6 The alternative 5...♘c6 is more popular, but it leads to a different type of positions after ♘xc6 bxc6, which resemble the Sicilian *(like after 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘c6 6.♘c3 a6 7.♘xc6 bxc6 8.♘d3 d5)*.

6.exd5 Advancing would have led to more closed positions. Nepomniachtchi keeps the position simpler.

6...♘xd5 The alternative is to take with the queen.

7.♘2f3 ♗e7 Nepomniachtchi had faced the check on b4 in his previous games with Grischuk.

7...♗b4+ 8.♗d2 *(8.c3?* is bad in view of *8...♘xc3 9.bxc3 ♗xc3+ 10.♗d2 ♗xd4 and Black is two pawns up.)* 8...♗c5 9.c3 0-0 10.♗c4 b6 *(10...♘c6 11.♘xc6 bxc6 Nepomniachtchi,I (2782)-Grischuk,A (2764) Wch Rapid Warsaw 2021 (10) 1-0)* 11.0-0 *(11.♕c2 ♗xd4 12.♘xd4 ♗b7 Nepomniachtchi,I (2773)-Grischuk,A (2742) Chess.com Rapid Wk9 Swiss 2022 (8) 0-1)* 11...♗b7 12.♕e2 ♘f6Nepomniachtchi,I (2773)-Grischuk,A (2742) Chess.com Rapid Wk12 Swiss 2022 (4) 1-0.

8.♗c4 White can develop the bishop on other squares, too. For example, 8.♘d3 and 8.g3 are valid alternatives.

8...♘c6 9.♘xc6 bxc6 10.0-0 0-0 11.♕e2 ♗b7 Both sides have almost finished development and Black can be satisfied with the results of the opening. The weakness on c6 cannot be exploited and that pawn can be useful once it comes to



c5 - from there, it controls the important d4-square and opens the long diagonal for the light-squared bishop on b7.

12.♗d3 The bishop is rather useless on c4, so White puts it on d3 from where it looks towards Black's kingside.

12...♕c7 13.♕e4 ♘f6 A critical moment. With this move, Ding provokes White to attack his king and relies on the solidity of his position to repulse it and get his chances on the counter-attack. It's interesting to observe how this strategy worked excellently, but it cost Ding a lot of time on the clock and eventually, this became the decisive factor.

13...g6 was safer, not allowing ♕h4. After 14.♗h6 ♖fd8 Black's kingside is safe as the lone bishop on h6 can do very little while Black continues with ...c5, ...♘f6 etc.

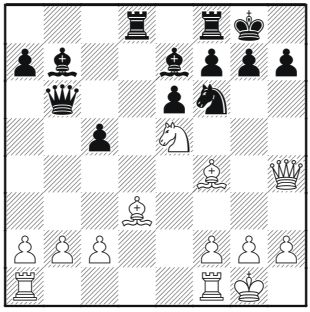
14.♕h4 c5 15.♗f4 White develops with tempo.

15.♗g5 was an alternative that could have led to a draw after 15...h6 16.♗xh6 gxh6 17.♕xh6 ♖fd8 18.♕g5+ ♔f8 19.♕h6+ ♔g8 with a perpetual check *(or 19...♔e8 with a mess after 20.♗b5+ ♘d7 21.♕h8+ ♗f8 22.♘e5 ♔e7 23.♘xd7 ♖xd7 24.♕h4+ ♔e8 25.♗xd7+ ♕xd7 26.♖ad1 ♕c6 and a very unclear position.)*

15...♕b6 Targeting the pawn on b2.

16.♘e5 White plays natural moves that pile up the pressure on the kingside.

16...♖ad8!



An important move for Black. White's main attacking piece is the light-squared bishop, so Black must ensure that in case

of emergency, he will have the option of ...♖xd3, eliminating the dangerous piece.

16...g6?! would be bad as after 17.♗g5 ♕d8 18.f4 White has a strong attack.

17.♖ae1 Another critical position where White had a wide choice, but nothing decisive. The lines below and the others in the game show the immense complexity of the position and the number of lines both players had to calculate. The position is very deceptive as it appears that White's attack is about to crash through, but Black manages to hold everywhere. To understand this the players had to spend a lot of time and in this aspect, Nepomniachtchi was more practical than his opponent.

17.♗xh7+?! doesn't work as after 17...♘xh7 18.♕xe7 ♘f6 19.♖fd1 ♘d5 20.♕h4 ♕xb2 Black is better as there is no attack and Black's pieces are better placed, especially the queen on b2 is harassing White's queenside;

17.♘g4!? was interesting. 17...♖xd3! here comes the crucial tactic for Black - the important bishop is eliminated. *(17...h5 was Ding's intention and it's a possible alternative. 18.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 19.♕xh5 g6 20.♕g4 ♖d4 gives Black sufficient compensation for the pawn in view of the activity of his pieces.)* 18.cxd3 ♘d5 gives Black excellent compensation for the exchange. 19.♕g3 *(19.♗g5? loses to 19...f6 20.♗d2 f5 and Black wins a piece.)* 19...h5! worsening the position of White's pieces. 20.♘e3 h4 21.♘xd5 ♗xd5 22.♕e3 ♕b7 23.f3 h3 and the weakened white king in addition to Black's domination on the light squares give Black long-term compensation;

17.♗g5 ♖d4 18.♕h3 and here Black has a choice. 18...h6 *(18...g6 is safe, not allowing any sacrifices; 18...♖fd8 is unclear, provoking White into 19.♗xf6?! ♗xf6 20.♕xh7+ ♔f8 when the attack is gone and Black's bishops become the important factor in the position.)* 19.♗xh6?! tempting, but not very good. 19...♖xd3! again the important defensive resource. *(19...gxh6 20.♕xh6 ♗e4 leads to a perpetual after 21.♗xe4 ♘xe4 22.♘g6 fxg6 23.♕xg6+ ♔h8 24.♕h6+)* 20.cxd3 gxh6 21.♕xh6 ♕b4! with the idea of ...♘g4 and Black defends;

17.♖fe1 ♖d4 18.♘g4 looks dangerous, but Black has more than one way to deal with White's threats. 18...♔h8! *(18...♖xd3 works again. 19.cxd3 ♘d5 20.♕g3 h5 with similar play as the line examined above after 17.♘g4; 18...♖fd8 19.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 20.♕xh7+ ♔f8 is also acceptable for Black, there is no attack anymore and his active pieces are a good compensation for the pawn.)* 19.♕h3 h6 *(19...♗a6 exchanging the important bishop is another idea for Black. 20.♗e5 ♗xd3 21.♗xd4 ♗f5 22.♗xf6 ♗xf6 the powerful bishops compensate for the lost exchange.)* 20.♗xh6 this only leads to a perpetual. 20...♘xg4 21.♗xg7+ ♔xg7 22.♕h7+ ♔f6 23.♕h4+ ♔g7 24.♕h7+ with a draw.

17...g6 17...♗a6 was an alternative. After 18.c4 ♖xd3! *(or 18...♖d4 19.♖e3 ♖fd8 20.♖g3 g6 21.♖h3 ♗b7 with a very unclear position.)* 19.♘xd3 ♘d5 Black has good compensation.

18.♗g5 18.♖e3? runs into 18...♘d5.

18...♖d4 19.♕h3 ♕c7! Defending the bishop on e7 and allowing for ...♘d5 or ...♘h5.

The immediate 19...♘d5 was possible, as 20.♘d7 is met by 20...♘f4! 21.♗xf4 ♖xd7 with equality.

20.b3 With this move White stops ...c4.

20...♘h5 Going to the centre on d5 was an alternative.

20...♘d5.

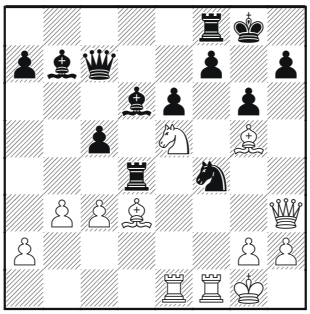
21.f4 21.♗h6 ♖fd8 is fine for Black, who also has the ...♖h4 idea at his disposal. This

could have led to a spectacular perpetual after 22.♗c4 ♖h4 23.♕xe6!! fxe6 24.♗xe6+ ♔h8 25.♘f7+ ♔g8 26.♘xd8+ ♔h8 27.♘f7+ ♔g8 with a draw.

21...♗d6! This move was praised by Nepomniachtchi. It prepares the exchange-sacrifice after ...♘xf4. Black had other moves that were also satisfactory, like 21...♘f6 and 21...♘g7.

21...♗xg5!? looked dangerous, but Black successfully navigates the dangers after a series of only moves: 22.fxg5 ♘f4 23.♕h6 c4! 24.♘g4 f5! 25.♘f6+ ♖xf6 26.gxf6 cxd3 27.f7+ ♕xf7 28.♖xf4 ♖xf4 29.♕xf4 dxc2 when thank to the pawn on c2 that can be defended by ...♘e4 Black has slightly better chances.

22.c3 ♘xf4!



Black finally eliminates all danger on the kingside and takes over the initiative.

23.♗xf4 23.♖xf4!? ♗xe5 24.♗xg6 is the only move for White. After 24...hxg6 25.cxd4 cxd4 Black has very good play thanks to the passed d4-pawn and the powerful bishops.

23...♖xf4 24.♖xf4 ♗xe5 Black successfully defended and is now slightly better. He has easy play as the bishops are dominating the board and now his king is the safer one.

25.♖h4 ♖d8 26.♗e4 ♗xe4 A possible decision, though there was something to be said for keeping the light-squared bishops on the board.

27.♖hxe4 ♖d5 Black's position is safe and he starts to think to push forward. Another idea was 27...♘f4 with ...e5 to cement the bishop on f4, but Ding may have been worried about g3 ideas for White.

28.♖h4?! White still dreams of threats against Black's king, but this only sidelines the rook.

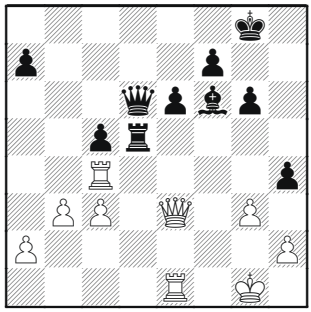
28.♖f1 ♖d2 *(28...♗g7? 29.♖xe6! wins for White.)* 29.♔h1 ♖xa2 30.♕f3 would have kept White's pieces centralised at the expense of a pawn. The position is objectively equal and dynamically balanced.

28...♕d6! Already creating threats like ...♖d1 when White's king comes under attack.

29.♕e3 The queen must aid the defence.

29.♖xh7? ♖d1 wins for Black.

29...h5 30.g3 ♗f6 31.♖c4 h4!



A move that shows Ding's character. Just like in several other moments in the match (the capture on f6 in Game 2, the move 20...♘d7 in Game 3, and the fantastic 46...♖g6 in the last game of the rapid) he shows a willingness to fight in spite of having an easy way out. Here that was especially important because he was in

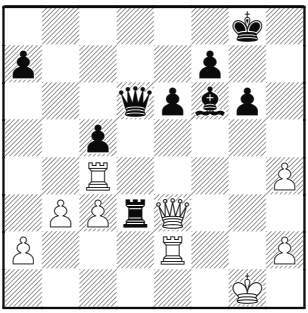
severe time-trouble, but instead of playing safe moves like 31...♔g7 or 31...♘g5, he believed in himself and pushed forward. Both in Game 2 and here he was punished, but he was ultimately rewarded with the most coveted prize. Caissa loves brave warriors!

32.gxh4 ♖d2? Ding spent almost five minutes on this move but then admitted that he missed his opponent's next move.

32...♗e5 was correct. Black is better after 33.♕e2 *(33.♖e2? loses to 33...♗xh2+! 34.♖xh2 ♖d1+ 35.♔g2 ♖d2+ winning the rook on h2.)* 33...♗f4 with the threat of ...♖d2.

33.♖e2 And now, in a state of shock, Ding immediately played the losing.

33...♖d3??



33...♖d5 was a good move that kept Black out of danger;

33...♖d1+ 34.♔g2 was what Ding missed, but he is still OK here after 34...♖d5.

34.♕xc5 All of a sudden, Black is lost.

34...♖d1+ Nothing works anymore.

34...♗d4+ 35.cxd4 ♖d1+ 36.♔g2 ♕f4 37.♕e5 parries all threats after 37...♕f1+ 38.♔g3 ♕g1+ 39.♔f4 ♕f1+ 40.♔g5; 34...♕xc5+ 35.♖xc5 ♗xc3 36.♔g2 is a technically winning endgame for White.

35.♔g2 ♕d3 36.♖f2 ♔g7 37.♖cf4 ♕xc3 Here Black lost on time, but the position is lost anyway.

37...♕xc3 38.♕xc3 ♗xc3 39.♖xf7+ ♔h6 40.♖e7 is an elementary win.

1-0

A painful loss for Ding. He played an excellent game, outplayed his opponent, and pushed for more, only to blunder in time trouble and lose. Nepomniachtchi went ahead again and the question was whether Ding can mount a come-back for a third time.

Game 8:
A MISSED CHANCE FOR WHITE

Ding – Nepomniachtchi, ½ - ½

20.04.2023

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 Ding finally goes for mainstream theory, but again has a prepared surprise in store.

3...♗b4 4.e3 0-0 5.a3 The first surprise. White transposes to the Saemisch Variation after waiting for Black's castling. The price - the pawn is on e3 and will have to spend a tempo to go to e4.

5...♗xc3+ 6.bxc3 d6 The immediate 6...c5 is also possible.

7.♘e2 7.f3 ♘h5 8.♘h3 f5 was played in Caruana,F (2766)-Carlsen,M (2859) chess.com SpeedChess 2022 blitz (2.14) ½-½.

7...c5 7...e5 was tried by Caruana 8.♘g3 ♖e8 9.♗d3 ♘c6Hakobyan,A (2620)-Caruana,F (2766) American Cup Blitz 2023 (9.1) 0-1.

8.♘g3 ♘c6 9.♖a2!? Here comes Ding's prepared surprise. The rook on the second rank is a common motif in the Saemisch as it will be very useful

to swing to the centre or kingside. The move has been tried several times by Armenian GM Hakobyan, albeit all of them in online chess.

The immediate 9.e4 can be met by 9...d5! when Black has the better of the central confrontation.

9...b6 Black develops in typical fashion, intending ...♘a6, ...♘a5, ...♖c8 and eventually ...cxd4, which would lead to winning the pawn on c4.

9...e5 10.d5 ♘a5 11.e4 ♘d7 12.♗d3 ♘b6 Hakobyan,A (2608)-Zhigalko,S (2572) Titled Tue 4th Apr Early blitz 2023 (11) 1-0 13.♕e2 with a subsequent advance with f4 gives White initiative on the kingside.

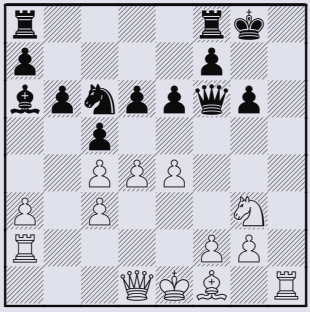
10.e4 ♗a6 11.♗g5 h6 12.h4 White's play is very aggressive and risky, if his attack doesn't crash through he will be lost because of the positional deficiencies of his position on the queenside.

12...hxg5 12...cxd4!? inserting the exchange on d4 made sense. 13.cxd4 *(13.f4 dxc3 14.♖c2 ♖e8 15.♖xc3 ♖c8 16.♖h3 is play more suited for online blitz than a World Championship match.) 13...hxg5 14.hxg5 g6 15.f4!? this was likely Ding's intention. It leads to crazy play after something like (15.gxf6 ♕xf6 16.♖d2 ♖fd8 gives Black easy play.)* 15...♘d7 16.♖d2 ♖e8 17.♕g4 ♔g7 18.♖h6 ♖h8 19.d5 with a total mess;

An obscure game went 12...♖e8 13.♖d2! ♕e7? 14.e5! dxe5 15.♘e4 ♘xe4 16.♗xe7 ♘xd2 17.♗f6! ♘xf1 18.♕g4 g6 19.dxe5 ♖ad8 20.♕f4 but more on this later. FVitelli (1540)-opqrstuv (1471) Rated Rapid game 2023 1-0.

13.hxg5 g6 14.gxf6 14.f4 was again possible, with similar lines as in the note starting with 12...cxd4.

14...♕xf6



15.e5! White can only go forward. Stopping will allow Black to consolidate.

15...dxe5 16.d5 16.♘e4 could lead to a quick repetition after 16...♕f5 17.♘d6 ♕f6 18.♘e4 ♕f5 but that was not on Ding's mind at all.

16...♘e7 Black could also put either rook on d8.

16...♖fd8 17.♖d2 exd5 18.cxd5 ♗xf1 19.♔xf1 ♕f4 20.♖h3 with ideas like ♘h5 with very sharp play;

16...♖ad8 17.♖d2 exd5 *(17...♘a5 leads to very complicated play after 18.♖d3 ♗xc4 19.♖f3 the rook's maneuvers in the game and in the variations are quite impressive. 19...♕g7 20.♘h5 ♖xd5! 21.♗d3! which should be around equal, but playing this over the board is absolutely nerve-wracking.)* 18.cxd5 ♗xf1 19.♔xf1 ♕f4 20.♘h5!? (or *20.♖h3)* 20...♕g5 *(20...gxh5 21.♖d3 ♖fe8 22.♕xh5 is dangerous for Black, though he should be able to survive after 22...♔f8 23.d6! f6!)* 21.♖d3 e4 22.f4!! exf3 23.♕xf3 with yet another mess.

17.d6 ♘f5 18.♘e4 ♕d8! 18...♕g7 was worse. It keeps the queen closer to the king but allows 19.g4! ♗b7 20.♗g2 ♖ad8 21.d7 when White establishes a bind thanks to the advanced pawn on d7. 21...♗xe4 22.♗xe4 ♘h6 23.g5 f5 is the only move. *(after 23...♘f5? 24.♖d2 Black can barely move.)* 24.gxh6 ♕xd7 25.♕xd7 ♖xd7 26.♗c6±

and the piece should be worth more than the pawns, but Black keeps drawing chances.

19.♕d3! With the brutal threat of ♕h3.

19.g4 is met by 19...♗b7.

19...♔g7 The only move.

19...♗b7? 20.♕h3 wins a piece after 20...♘h4 21.♕xh4 ♕xh4 22.♖xh4.

20.g4 ♗b7 Again the only move.

20...♘h4? 21.g5 ♘f5 22.f4! is a beautiful way to open the second rank for the rook on a2. After ♖ah2 White's attack is decisive. A sample line is 22...♖h8 23.♖ah2 ♖xh2 24.♖xh2 ♗b7 25.♕h3 ♕h8 26.♕xh8+ ♖xh8 27.♖xh8 ♔xh8 28.d7 and the pawn promotes;

20...♘h6? 21.g5 *(*or even *21.♖xh6 ♔xh6 22.g5+ ♔g7 23.♕h3 ♖h8 24.♕g3 which is also winning for White.)* 21...♘f5 22.f4! with the same position as after 20...♘h4.

21.♖h3 Getting out of the pin on the long diagonal.

21.d7 ♕e7 22.♖d2 ♖ad8 23.g5 ♗xe4 24.♕xe4 f6 is also unclear. With the game move White keeps more tension in the position;

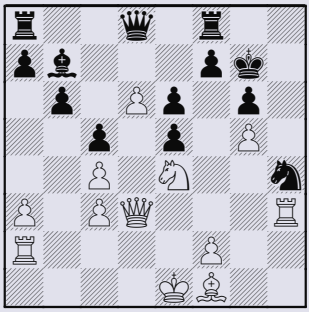
21.gxf5? exf5 is just bad for White.

21...♘h4 A good move, but played with the wrong idea.

21...♖h8 22.♖xh8 ♕xh8 23.gxf5 exf5 24.♘g5 ♕h4 *(*or even *24...♔f6!?)* 25.♕g3 ♕xg3 26.fxg3 ♔f6 should be fine for Black as the pawn mass ensures against problems in the endgame, in spite of White's extra piece;

21...♗xe4 22.♕xe4 ♘xd6 23.♕xe5+ f6 24.♕h2 ♘f7 is the only move, Black had to see that he is fine after 25.♖h7+ ♔g8∞ 26.♗g2 ♕d3! creating counterplay against White's king.

22.g5



22...♗xe4? Here comes the mistake. It was reasonable to expect that a human would crack under the tremendous pressure the position imposed. Ding deserves full credit for creating such a position thanks to his excellent opening preparation.

22...♖h8 was the only way to stay in the game. The lines are extremely complicated though, both to calculate and evaluate. 23.f4 *(23.♘f6? e4! is bad for White, Black now threatens ...♘f3 while 24.♘xe4 ♗xe4 25.♕xe4 ♕xg5 leaves White with nothing; 23.♕g3 ♗xe4 24.♖xh4 ♗c6 25.♕xe5+ f6 26.♖xh8 fxe5 27.♖xd8 ♖xd8 28.♖d2 ♔f7 is another equal endgame.)* 23...exf4 24.♘f6 ♘f3+ *(*or *24...e5 25.♖ah2 ♘f3+! 26.♕xf3! ♗xf3 27.♖h7+ ♖xh7 28.♖xh7+ ♔f8 29.♖h8+ ♔g7 30.♖h7+* with a perpetual check*.)* 25.♖xf3 ♗xf3 26.d7 ♗c6 27.♕d6∞ with a very curious position when White has only a knight (but what a knight!) for rook and two pawns, but Black must seek salvation with the only move 27...♕b8! 28.♕xc6 ♕e5+ 29.♔d1 ♖ad8 30.♖d2 which is equal, but still very complicated.

23.♕xe4 ♘f5 24.♖d2 Now White is winning as Black is tied down - he needs to defend against the advance of the d-pawn and also against the threats against his king.

24...♖h8 24...♕xg5 loses to 25.♕xe5+ f6 26.♕h2! and the combined threats on the h-file

with the advance of the d-pawn decide the game after 26...♖h8 27.♖xh8 ♖xh8 28.♕xh8+! ♔xh8 29.d7 when the pawn promotes.

25.♖xh8 ♕xh8 26.d7 This also wins, but here Ding missed the most clear-cut victory, which would have crowned the stellar career of the queen's rook. With the game move, Ding continues to play on domination.

26.♖d3! with the idea of ♖h3 wins immediately. 26...♖d8 27.♖h3 and after ♕xe5 Black will be mated.

26...♖d8 27.♕xe5+ ♔h7 28.♕h2+ ♔g7 29.♕e5+ ♔h7 30.♕h2+ Repeating moves to gain time. As usual in the whole match, Ding had less time than his opponent.

30...♔g7 31.♕c7 ♕h4 A curious moment. Nepomniachtchi saw that White can take the rook only when he played the move.

31...♕f8 was objectively better, but should still lose to 32.♔d1! ♕e7 33.♔c2 ♕xg5 34.♕xa7 when Black is tied down while White can take on b6 and advance with the a-pawn.

32.♔d1? Played after 2 minutes and 40 seconds, but this still wasn't enough for Ding to calculate carefully and see that he could hide from the checks and win after taking the rook on d8.

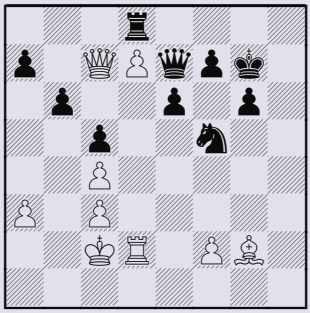
After 32.♕xd8! ♕e4+ 33.♖e2 ♕b1+ 34.♔d2 ♕b2+ 35.♔d3 ♕b1+ 36.♖c2 ♕d1+ *(36...♕xf1+ is simpler 37.♔d2 ♕xf2+ 38.♔c1 and the king hides on b2.)* 37.♔e4!! was the key move that both players missed *(and the one Nepomniachtchi saw too late)*. Now White hides from the checks and the d-pawn promotes. 37...♕xc2+ 38.♗d3 ♘d6+ 39.♔e5 ♕xd3 40.♕f6+ ♔h7 41.d8♕ ♘xc4+ 42.♔f4 e5+ 43.♔g4 ♕e2+ 44.♔g3 and the checks end.

32...♕xg5 Now Black is out of danger.

33.♔c2 ♕e7?! But he gets back in!

33...♕h4! was correct, threatening check from e4. After 34.♕xa7 ♕e4+ 35.♗d3 ♕c6 Black is fine.

34.♗g2?!



Natural, intending ♘c6, but allowing a tactical chance.

34.♔b3! prevents the ...♘d4 trick (because now the pawn on a3 is defended after Black recaptures ...cxd4) and keeps a big advantage, for example, 34...e5 35.♖d5 f6 36.♗h3 when Black is close to paralysed.

34...e5? Missing another chance.

34...♘d4+! would have saved Black. 35.cxd4 ♖xd7 36.♕f4 *(or 36.♕e5+ f6 37.♕e3 ♖xd4 38.♖xd4 cxd4 39.♕xd4 ♕xa3 now we see the importance of the move 34.♔b3.)* 36...cxd4 37.♖xd4 ♕xa3 again White misses the move ♔b3 and Black should draw easily after 38.♖xd7 ♕a4+ and ...♕xd7 next.

35.♗e4 ♘h6 36.♕xa7 ♘g4 37.♗f3? White misses the last chance in this game.

37.♗c6! was important, the d7-pawn needs extra protection, as we shall see from the game continuation. 37...e4 38.♕xb6 ♘e5 39.♗b5! still keeping the bishop in contact with the d7-pawn. Now the a-pawn can march forward and the d7-pawn is taboo as 39...♘xd7? 40.♕c7 wins the pinned knight;

37.♔b3! was another winning move, now after 37...♘xf2 38.♖xf2 ♖xd7 39.♕xb6 the a-pawn is again the decisive factor;

37.♕xb6! was also possible. 37...♖xd7 38.♖xd7 ♕xd7 39.♕xc5 ♕a4+ 40.♔d2 the endgame is winning for White, though it will take some time to convert.

37...♘xf2! A great resource, saving the game for Black.

38.♖xf2 e4! The bishop is cut off and is severely limited by the black pawns.

39.♖e2 f5 White should be careful now not to end up worse.

40.♕xb6 ♖xd7 41.♕b8 ♕d6 42.♕xd6 ♖xd6 43.♗xe4 Liquidating to a drawn rook endgame.

43...fxe4 44.♖xe4 ♔f6 45.♖e8

½-½

An extremely tense game and a big disappointment for Ding. His opening preparation was a success, he played energetically and achieved a winning position, only to miss several winning continuations and concede a draw.

Ding failed to equalize the score for a third time and the lucky escape firmly placed the match initiative in Nepomniachtchi's hands.

THE MOMENT DING'S PREPARATION WAS DISCOVERED ONLINE



During the eighth game, somebody on the internet discovered a series of games played on the lichess server between *FVitelli* (rated 1540) and *opqrstuv* (rated 1471). These names mean nothing at first sight, but the content of the games was very telling. These games featured Ding's opening ideas like the move 4.h3 from Game 2, the move 9.♖a2 from Game 8, various games in the Italian Giuco Piano, Anti-Marshall, the English Opening, the Berlin Defence and the London System. The games were played between 14 February and 5 April and contained a lot of original ideas. It didn't take long to conclude that the players were Ding Liren and Richard Rapport, playing training games and practising their opening ideas.

When asked about this at the press conference after Game 8 Ding feigned ignorance, but after the match he admitted that soon he realised that he was out of opening ideas for the match and his team had to come up with new ones.

This put additional stress on him - trailing in the match and with no constructive opening ideas he was facing difficult times ahead.

This situation resembled the one from 2018, when Caruana's preparation was leaked in a promotional video from his preparation camp. It didn't affect Caruana much (Carlsen's second Peter Heine Nielsen admitted that they didn't get any advantage from knowing which lines Caruana had prepared), while Ding had yet to find ways to deal with the unpleasant situation.

Game 9:
DING HOLDS ON

Nepomniachtchi – Ding, ½ - ½

21.04.2023

For Game 9 Ding returned to his favourite first move but prepared another deviation from his favourite Marshall.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6 There isn't an elite player who hasn't tried the Berlin and Ding has certainly done so in the past. It is not his main weapon, but it shouldn't have been a surprise for Nepomniachtchi. Even more so, the leaked games also contained games in the Berlin, something that Nepomniachtchi's team had to take into consideration. However, the thing with the Berlin is that even if you know your opponent is going to play it, you can do very little about it - it is that solid. Kasparov was the first to find that out in 2000. Another piece of information coming from Ding's choice was that his Marshall still wasn't completely ready to get back in use.

4.d3 The endgame is rarely tested nowadays, with this move being White's main try.

4...♗c5 5.c3 This move-order allows Black to strike in the centre with ...d5. If White wants to avoid that he should play 5.0-0, but that allows 5...♘d4.

5...0-0 6.0-0 d5 Current theory considers this as the easiest path for Black. The alternative 6...d6 leads to a different type of position.

7.♘bd2 White's main alternatives are 7.exd5 and 7.♕e2.

7...dxe4 8.dxe4 a5 With this move Black stops b4.

9.a4 White can take a pawn after 9.♗xc6 bxc6 10.♘xe5 but it has been established that this only leads to a draw after 10...♖e8 11.♘b3 ♕xd1 12.♖xd1 ♗b6 13.♘c4 ♘xe4 with an equal endgame and further simplifications.

9...♕e7 10.♕c2 ♘b8 The knight was rather bad on c6, so Black re-routes it. The alternatives are 10...♘a7 and 10...♘d8. The game move has the idea to play ...c6 and then send the knight either to a6 and c7 or c5.

11.♖e1 ♖d8 12.h3 12.♘f1 c6 13.♗c4 h6 gave Black a satisfactory position in the game So,W (2771)-Nakamura,H (2768) CGC KO 2022 chess.com INT rapid (5.2) ½-½.

12...h6 13.♘f1 13.♗f1 ♘bd7 14.♘c4 b6 15.♗e3 ♗b7 was equal in the game Nakamura,H (2768)-So,W (2771) CGC KO 2022 chess.com INT rapid (5.1) ½-½.

13...c6 14.♗c4 ♘a6 Black continues with his plan.

15.♘g3 ♕c7 The queen frees the way for the bishop to drop back to f8 and then to proceed with ...♘c5 and ...b5, to obtain active play on the queenside.

16.♗a2 b5 Since the bishop retreated and no longer controls the b5-square, Black plays ...b5 immediately.

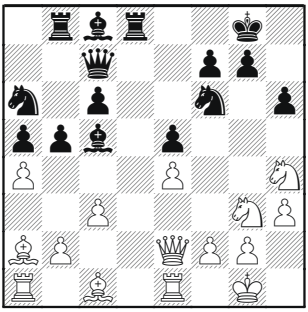
17.♕e2 White slowly moves his pieces towards the kingside. His plan is to play ♘h4 and ♕f3, when he will start creating threats on the kingside.

17...♖b8?! This is natural, as it defends the pawn on b5, but this tempo gives White the time he needs to start his kingside attack. Ding spent more than 15 minutes on this move.

17...♗f8! was better. Black obtains excellent compensation after 18.axb5 *(18.♘h4 is an attempt to ignore the pawn. After 18...♘c5 19.♕f3 ♖d3 Black pushes the queen back and 20.♕e2 bxa4 21.♗c4 ♖xg3!? the retreat to d8 is perfectly fine*,

too. 22.fxg3 ♘cxe4 leads to an unclear position where Black is by no means worse.) 18...cxb5 19.♕xb5 ♘c5 when the threats of ...♘a6 and ...♖b8 coupled with ...♘d3 give him easy play. 20.b4 ♘d3 21.♖d1 ♗a6 22.♕xa5 ♕xc3 23.♗d2 ♕c2 leads to lively piece play that is objectively balanced, for example now White can force a repetition with 24.♖ac1!? ♘xc1 25.♖xc1 ♕b2 26.♖b1 ♕c2.

18.♘h4!



Now White creates serious threats on the kingside.

18...♗f8 19.♕f3 This move creates the threat of ♘xh6.

19.♘g6 was an interesting alternative. 19...♘c5 *(19...♗d6 20.f4!? looks threatening, with the idea of 20...exf4? 21.e5 ♗c5+ 22.♔h1 with a decisive attack.)* 20.♘xf8 ♔xf8 21.♗e3!? ♘xa4 22.♖f1 with f4 next and White has serious compensation for the pawn.

19...bxa4 19...♔h7?! 20.♘gf5 only helps White's attack;

19...♘c5!? was more precise. After 20.♗xh6 ♘h7 21.♗e3 bxa4 the position is far from clear, but Black shouldn't be worse as he has ideas like ...♖xb2, ...♘e6 and ...♘b3 (to shut the bishop on a2) or ...♘d3.

20.♗xh6 ♘c5 21.♘g6 It's tempting to go after the bishop pair.

21.♗g5!? was a serious alternative. Black must play 21...♖d3! 22.♕e2 ♘h7 23.♗e3 and now the exchange sacrifice 23...♖xe3! is necessary to keep Black's chances. After 24.♕xe3 ♖xb2 25.♖e2 ♖b3!? is a second inspiring exchange sacrifice, with a very messy position where all three results are possible.

21...♖xb2 Ding plays for sharp counterplay.

21...♖d3 has the idea to simplify the position after 22.♖e3 ♖xe3 23.♕xe3 ♕d6 with ...♕d3 next, though things are still unclear after 24.♘xe5! ♗e6 *(24...♕xe5? 25.♗f4 wins the rook on b8.)* 25.♘xf7!? ♗xf7 26.e5 ♕d3 27.exf6 gxh6 28.♕f4 ♗xa2 29.♕xb8 which should be dynamically balanced and very difficult to first calculate, then evaluate and eventually play for both sides.

22.♘xf8 ♖xf8 Natural, but far from forced. The knight on f8 cannot escape, so Black can postpone the recapture.

22...♘b3?! 23.♗xb3 axb3 24.♗g5 ♔xf8 25.c4 is good for White, as the rook on b2 and the pawn on b3, in addition to the weakened king only add to Black's troubles;

22...♖d3 23.♗e3! *(23.♖e3?! ♖dd2! gives Black enough counterplay, with crazy lines like 24.♘h5 ♘fxe4! 25.♘f6+ ♘xf6 26.♕xf6! gxf6 27.♖g3+ ♔h8 28.♗g7+ ♔g8 29.♗h6+ ♔h8 with perpetual check.)* 23...♘b3 24.♘h5 and White still has a strong initiative on the kingside;

22...♘d3 23.♖ed1! *(23.♖e2 a3 is unclear, with the nice idea 24.♘g6 ♔h7! when both the knight on g6 and the bishop on h6 are attacked by the king!)* 23...♗g4! a pretty shot! 24.hxg4 ♖xf2 suddenly the queen is short of squares! 25.♘e6! a great shot from White now! *(25.♕e3 ♖xa2! 26.♖xa2 ♘xg4 is dangerous for White, though after a series of precise moves it should end in a draw after 27.♕g5 ♕a7+ 28.♔h1 ♘df2+ 29.♖xf2 ♖xd1+ 30.♖f1 ♖xf1+ 31.♘xf1 ♘xh6 32.♕d8 ♕f2*

33.♘e6+ ♔h7 34.♘f8+ with a perpetual check.) 25...♖xf3 26.♘xc7 ♖xg3 27.♗g5 ♖b8 this is still very much unclear, though objectively it should be around equal, in spite of White being a piece up for two pawns.

23.♗g5 White wants to worsen the position of the black knight before chasing away the rook with ♘c1, but this helps Black.

The immediate 23.♗c1 is met by 23...♖b5! here this is good, unlike in the game. *(23...♖c2? in the game this was good, but here it isn't as White has 24.♗a3 ♘b3 25.♗xf8 ♔xf8 26.♗xb3 axb3 27.♕e3! preventing ...♕b6 and with c4 next White is well on top.)* 24.♗a3 ♖d8 with unclear play;

23.♗c4 was best and kept White's advantage. Now the bishop cannot be shut with ...♘b3 nor taken with ...♖xa2. 23...♗e6 24.♘f5! is very strong. 24...♗xf5 is the only move. *(24...♗xc4? 25.♗xg7 will lead to mate soon.)* 25.♕xf5 ♕e7 26.♕g6 ♘e8 27.♗c1 and it's obvious that the bishop dominate the board, though Black is not without chances after 27...♘d6! 28.♗xf7+ ♖xf7 29.♗xb2 ♘d3 30.♗a3 ♖f6 31.♕h5 ♘xe1 32.♖xe1 ♕a7.

23...♘h7 24.♗c1 ♖b5?! Ding played this with the intention to sacrifice the exchange on b5.

24...♖c2! was better. The point is that after 25.♗a3 *(25.♕d1 ♖xc3 is OK for Black;*

25.♗b1 ♖xc1! 26.♖xc1 ♘b3 immediately regains the exchange.) 25...♘b3! 26.♗xf8 ♘xf8! now the knight can recapture on f8 and Black is even better. This is why it was better for White not to force the knight to h7 on move 23.

25.♗a3 ♖e8 26.♗c4 ♗e6 A critical moment. White needs to decide where to take: on e6 or b5.

27.♗xe6 The human decision.

27.♗xb5 is objectively better, but after 27...cxb5 28.♕e3 ♘d7 Black's play is easier - he only seeks ways how to get his queenside pawns moving forward, while White lost the concrete objective of his kingside initiative. For example: 29.♖ab1 ♗b3 *(or 29...♖b8 30.♘f5 ♗xf5 31.exf5 ♘hf6 and the knights have nice squares on d5 and c4.)* 30.♘f5 g6 31.♕g3 ♘hf6 with unclear play.

27...♘xe6 28.♘f5 c5 Shutting the bishop on a3.

29.♕e2 White no longer has an attack, so he reroutes his queen to c4.

29.♗c1!? rerouting the bishop was possible. 29...♘f6 30.♖xa4 c4 with a double-edged position.

29...♖b3 30.♕c4 ♕c6 Controlling the light squares d5 and b5. White has nothing better now than to start simplifying by going after Black's queenside pawns.

31.♗c1 ♘f6 32.♕xa4 32.♖xa4?! ♖xc3! is better for Black.

32...♕xa4 33.♖xa4 ♖xc3 Black had more than one way to ensure equality.

33...♘d7 34.♖xa5 ♖xc3 was one;

33...♖a8 34.♘e7+ ♔h7 35.♘c6 ♘d7 was another.

34.♗b2 ♖b3 35.♗xe5 ♖b4 36.♖xa5 ♖xe4 37.♖xe4 ♘xe4 This is a drawn position, but White continues to pose problems and eventually wins the c5-pawn.

38.♖a4 ♘d4 Black decides to give up the pawn immediately. This is much more practical than calculating correctly the lines after 38...♘d2.

38...♘d2 was possible, with some fascinating lines: 39.♖g4 ♘f4!! an incredible move! The knight can be taken by either bishop or rook and the pawn on g7 can be taken by all three white pieces! 40.♘h6+ *(40.♖xg7+ ♔h8! is a picturesque position when White's pieces turn out to be awkwardly placed. After 41.♗xf4*



♖*e1+ 42.*♔*h2* ♘*f1+ Black forces a perpetual check; 40.*♗*xf4* ♖*e1+ 41.*♔*h2* ♘*f1+ 42.*♔*g1* ♘*d2+ is a perpetual check.)* 40...♔h7 is the only move. 41.♘xf7 ♘e2+ 42.♔h2 ♔g8! 43.♖xg7+ ♔f8 incredible voyage of the black king to the h-file and back to f8. In spite of losing all of the kingside, Black draws as White's pieces are all under attack: 44.♖h7 ♔g8 45.♖g7+ ♔f8 is a repetition.

39.♗**xd4 cxd4 40.**♖**xd4 g6** Now White tries to squeeze blood from the stone, but Black defends well.

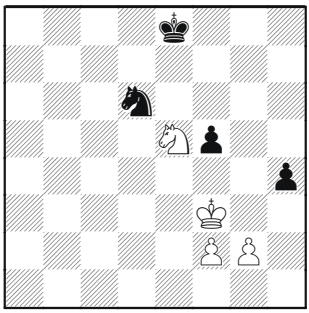
41.♘**e3 ♔g7 42.**♖**b4** ♘**g3 43.**♖**b7** ♘**f5 44.**♘**g4** The rook endgame after the exchange of knights would be an elementary draw.

44...♖**e7 45.**♖**b5** ♖**e1+ 46.**♔**h2** ♖**e2 47.**♖**b7** ♘**d6 48.**♖**a7** ♔**f8 49.**♔**g3 f5** Black wasn't forced to advance with the f-pawn, but he saw that this forces the exchange of rooks.

50.♔**f3** 50.♘e3 ♘e4+ wins the pawn on f2.

50...♖**e7 51.**♖**a8+** ♖**e8 52.**♖**xe8+** ♔**xe8 53.**♘**e5 g5** The only move to save the pawn. It appears that Black's pawns are too advanced and he may have trouble defending them, especially after White's next move.

54.h4! gxh4!



But Ding finds the only defence.

54...♘e4? 55.hxg5 ♘xg5+ 56.♔f4 ♘e4 57.♘g4! ♘d6 58.♘e3 wins the pawn on f5.

55.♔**f4 h3!** Leaving White with an h-pawn.

56.gxh3 ♔**e7 57.**♘**c6+** 57.♔g5 ♘e4+ gets the f2-pawn.

57...♔f6 Now the king is close and Black defends easily.

58.♘d4 ♘e4 59.f3 ♘f2 60.h4 ♘d3+ The check forces the king away from the ideal f4-square, thus securing the pawn on f5.

61.♔g3 ♔g6 62.♘e6 ♔f6 63.♘f4 ♘b4 64.♔f2 ♔e5 65.♔e3 ♘c2+ 66.♔d2 ♘d4 67.♘d3+ ♔f6 68.♔e3 ♘c2+ 69.♔f4 ♘d4 70.♔g3 ♘e2+ 71.♔f2 ♘d4 72.♘f4 ♔e5 73.♘e2 ♘e6 74.♔g3 ♔f6 75.♔g2 ♔g7 76.♔f2 f4 This limits the movement of White's king.

77.♔g1 ♔g6 78.♔g2 ♔h6 79.♘c1 ♔h5 80.♔h3 ♘d4 81.♘d3 ♘xf3 82.♘xf4+

½-½

Another tense game where Nepomniachtchi had certain chances, but never a clear-cut one. Ding could be satisfied with the result as he played dynamically in defence. Now he was faced with the problem of the leaked preparation as he badly needed fresh ideas with the white pieces.

Game 10:
A GOOD OUTCOME FOR NEPO

Ding – Nepomniachtchi, ½ - ½

23.04.2023

1.c4 Ding returns to the English Opening.

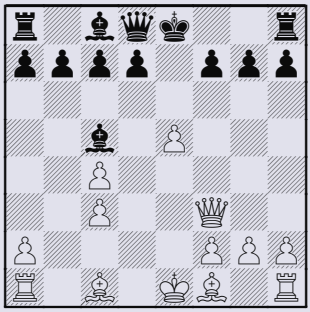
1...♘f6 2.♘c3 e5 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.e4 This line featured in one of the leaked games.

4...♗c5!? A very concrete approach by Nepomniachtchi, typical for his Black strategy in both World Championship matches - if given a chance, he relied on detailed and very concrete forcing lines, trying to kill the game off. This game was a perfect example of that strategy working to perfection.

The main alternative and main move is 4...♗b4 which leads to slower play without forcing lines.

5.♘xe5 This is White's only reasonable attempt to try for an advantage.

5...♘xe5 6.d4 ♗b4 7.dxe5 ♘xe4 8.♕f3 ♘xc3 9.bxc3 ♗c5!?



This was a surprise for Ding. This admission means that his preparation was not up to the required level. Perhaps this was a result of his team looking for new ideas after the leak, leading to some lines not being checked thoroughly enough.

9...♗a5 is the other major theoretical alternative, for example, 10.♗f4 0-0 11.0-0-0 ♕e7 with unclear, but objectively balanced play in the game Carlsen,M (2876)-Caruana,F (2812) FIDE Chess.com Grand Swiss 2019 (9) ½-½;

9...♗e7 has been played by Nepomniachtchi in an earlier game, but here White has some pull after 10.♕g3 g6 11.♗h6Carlsen,M (2861)-Nepomniachtchi,I (2773) Abidjan GCT blitz 2019 (6) ½-½.

10.♕g3 ♔f8 11.♗e2 White covers the e-file in order to avoid a pin on the e-file.

11.♗d3 leaves the bishop exposed, for example 11...d6 12.0-0 dxe5 now the bishop is attacked by the queen on d8. 13.♕xe5 ♕xd3 14.♕xc5+ ♕d6 and Black should be fine;

11.♗f4 d6 12.♖d1 h5! similarly uses the h-pawn as in the game, to harass the white queen on g3.

11...d6 12.♗f4 ♕e7! A nice move, whose tactical justification is demonstrated in the next note.

13.♖d1 Black's idea is seen after 13.0-0 dxe5 14.♗xe5 f6 15.♗xc7 ♕xe2 this is why the queen was needed on the e-file. 16.♖ae1 ♗xf2+! and this is how Black simplifies the position and makes a draw. 17.♕xf2 ♕xf2+ 18.♖xf2 ♗d7 with a drawn endgame.

13...h5! Another precise move.

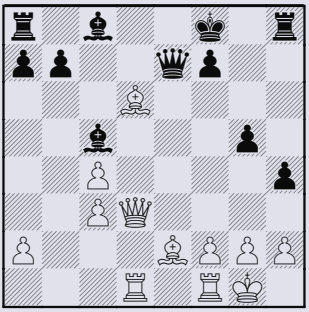
14.0-0 What is curious about this game is that Nepomniachtchi was following a game he was playing with the white pieces! His opponent, Cardoso Cardoso, played all these moves in a blitz game on the internet and this game gave Nepomniachtchi great basis for his preparation in a World Championship match! With his team, he managed to analyse this line until the endgame and eventual draw.

In that game Nepomniachtchi played 14.h4 but after 14...dxe5 15.♗xe5 ♗g4 Black didn't have any problems: Nepomniachtchi,I (2784)-Cardoso Cardoso,J (2414) Titled Tuesday intern op 5th May blitz 2020 (4) 1-0.

14...h4 15.♕d3 g5! Another precise move, forcing simplifications.

15...dxe5? 16.♕d8+ would be bad for Black.

16.exd6 cxd6 17.♗xd6



White takes a pawn, but after the simplifications, Black has easy play against White's weaknesses on the queenside.

Retreating doesn't offer much either 17.♗e3 ♗xe3 18.fxe3 ♗e6 *(or simply 18...♔g7 not allowing ♕g6.)* 19.♕g6 ♖g8 20.♕h6+ ♖g7 and Black is safe.

17...♕xd6 18.♕xd6+ ♗xd6 19.♖xd6 ♗e6 Black wants to consolidate with ...♔e7 and then start attacking White's pawns on the queenside by using the c-file.

20.f4 White tries to inject some dynamism into the position before Black consolidates. By breaking Black's pawn structure on the kingside he hopes to be able to divert Black from his plan.

20...♔e7 21.♖d4 gxf4 22.♖fxf4 Stopping ...h3 with 22.h3 would be met by 22...♖ag8 23.♔h2 ♖g5 with the idea of ...♖a5.

22...h3 23.g4 Now White wants to activate the king with ♔f2-g3.

23...♖ac8 24.♔f2 ♖c5 25.a4 Played after some thought.

25.♔g3 was the alternative, but even here Black holds relatively easily with 25...♖a5 26.♖d2 and now the direct 26...f5!? *(there is nothing wrong with something simple like 26...b6 since White cannot really effectively use his extra pawn on the queenside.)* 27.g5 *(27.gxf5 ♖xf5 simplifies the position further.)* 27...♖g8 28.♔h4 ♖h8+ leads to a repetition.

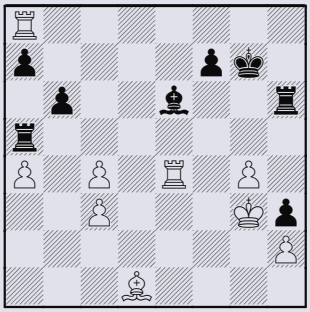
25...♖a5 26.♗d1 The bishop defends both pawns on a4 and g4, but by being defensive White cannot hope to exploit his extra pawn.

26...b6 26...♖a6 with the idea of ...♖b6 was another idea.

27.♔g3 ♖h6 28.♖fe4 Threatening ♖d5, to exchange the active rook on a5.

28...♔f8 29.♖d8+ ♔g7 30.♖a8





White activated his pieces to what was maximum possible, but even that doesn't suffice.

30...♖c5 Nepomniachtchi goes for simplifications, which sooner or later are inevitable.

For example 30...♗d7 31.♖e7 ♗xa4 *(or the simple 31...♖d6)* 32.♗xa4 ♖xa4 33.♖axa7 ♖xa7 34.♖xa7 ♖d6 is an easily drawn rook endgame.

31.♖xa7 ♗xc4 32.♖ae7 ♖hc6 33.♖7e5 33.♔xh3 ♗e6 34.♔h4 ♖xc3 is again an easy draw.

33...♖xe5 34.♖xe5 ♗b3! A pretty tactic to kill the game off.

35.♗xb3 ♖xc3+ 36.♔h4 ♖xb3 37.♖b5 ♖a3 38.♖xb6 ♖xa4 39.♔xh3 f5! And another one to end it on the spot.

40.gxf5 40.g5 ♖g4 wins the g-pawn.

40...♖f4 41.♖b5 ♔f6 42.♔g3 ♖xf5 43.♖xf5+ ♔xf5 44.h4 ♔g6 45.h5+ ♔xh5

½-½

An unsuccessful attempt by Ding Liren, who was caught in nice preparation by his opponent.

For Nepomniachtchi this was a very good outcome, finally showing fine preparation and drawing with Black without problems, a rarity in this match. Still leading and with a white game ahead, Nepomniachtchi could be quite content how the match was going.

With just four more games left in the match, Nepomniachtchi was leading with a score of 5.5 to 4.5, giving him an advantage in the upcoming eleventh game where he had the white pieces. Ding, on the other hand, was in a position that he had tot win two games and not lose the other two if he wanted to take the crown to China.

However, in the final four regular games of the match, Nepomniachtchi's heightened nervousness was to come to the fore…

In the next issue of BCM we will be taking a closer look at how the final part of the match unravelled and how Ding Liren - in spite of everything - emerged victorious.

THE END OF AN ERA: AFTER 10 YEARS ON THE THRONE, MAGNUS CARLSEN NO LONGER WORLD CHAMPION



Photo: Davil Llada

With the victory of Ding Liren in the match in Astana, Magnus Carlsen ceased to be the world champion in chess. It was a decision he made himself, announcing in July last year that he will not defend his crown in a match.

"I've spoken to people in my team, I've spoken to FIDE, I spoke to Ian as well. The conclusion is very simple: I'm not motivated to play another match," said Carlsen. "I don't have a lot to gain. I don't particularly like it, and although I'm sure a match would be interesting for historical reasons, I don't have any inclinations to play and I will simply not play the match," Carlsen said then.

Considered by many as the best player of all time, Magnus Carlsen became World Champion in 2013 and successfully defended the title four times - in 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2021.

Carlsen's impressive track record of triumphs extends beyond his world title wins, as he boasts a collection of rapid and blitz time control world titles, an unparalleled rating, and numerous victories in top-tier tournaments.

Even as he loses his World Champion title in classical chess, Carlsen can still boast to be world champion in two other categories - Rapid and Blitz, which he won several times, including in the most recent championships in Almaty at the end of 2022.

Despite not being the world champion anymore, Carlsen is still rated as the world's top-rated player. Intending to pass the 2900 rating mark, the Norwegian has shown he still has a lot to play for.

M.D.

BEHIND THE SCENES OF THE NEPO-DING MATCH:
AN INTERVIEW WITH CHIEF ARBITER NEBOJSA BARALIC

AN INSIDE LOOK AT THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF ARBITING A WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP MATCH

FROM A COLLAPSING CHAIR TO GAME-TIME DECISIONS: INSIGHTS ON THE THRILLING THREE WEEKS IN ASTANA

By Milan Dinic; Photo: Stev Bonhage / FIDE

Nebojsa Baralic (49) from Serbia had one of the most critical and difficult roles in Astana - as the Chief Arbiter of the World Championship match between Ian Nepomniachtchi and Ding Liren.

Baralic started chess in his teenage days and became a Master Candidate, but then focused more on organizing events and became a chess arbiter. A mechanical engineer by profession, Baralic works at the Serbian Institute for the Improvement of Education where he is in charge of projects of including chess in state education.

In 2005, Baralic was awarded the title of International Arbiter, and since then, he has been one of the most recognized faces in chess tournaments across the globe, including major events such as chess Olympiads, world and European championships, and the Candidates. Being selected as the Chief Arbiter in the World Championship match is the pinnacle of his chess career, and he is only the second Serbian to have this honour, after the legendary Svetozar Gligoric who was the Chief Arbiter of the 1984/85 Karpov-Kasparov match.

In an exclusive interview for BCM, Baralic provides insights into his experience as the Chief Arbiter.

Anyone who wants to understand the psychology of a monumental event such as the match for the title of world champion or aspires to become an arbiter will find Baralic's experiences useful. The interview provides a glimpse of the events in Astana and the people behind the scenes who made it all possible.

British Chess Magazine: What was it like to be the Chief Arbiter in the match to determine the new world champion in chess?

Nebojsa Baralic: It was a great privilege but a huge responsibility at the same time. This match was unique because, even before it started, we all knew that it would produce a new world champion! How many times did this happen in history? Only 17 times in 137 years! Bearing this in mind, I knew that this would be a historic event.

BCM: What are the key responsibilities of the Chief Arbiter in a world championship match?

N.B: The responsibilities can be split into three areas: before the beginning of the match, during and after.

In the first phase, the Chief Arbiter checks in detail all the rules and regulations of the

match and discusses with the organisers the details of the playing venue and what is needed.

A special emphasis is put on preparing the Technical meeting with the players and their teams. That is one of the final moments where any remaining issues or questions can be resolved; where we can define all the critical issues which may arise during play and have the players acquainted with them. That point is also very critical for the relationship between the Chief Arbiter and the players: That is when they get the real impression of who you are and what you are like as an arbiter, and can judge how well you understand everything and whether they can feel secure and comfortable with the way the arbiter will do their job.

In the second phase, during play, the most important element is to keep a constant eye on the games and the players. There can't be any mistake from the arbiter in this phase. There is also an administrative element here - filling in certain forms, but when there are two players there's not much to do on that front.

The final - post-match phase - should be the easiest one. As a Chief Arbiter, you have to file a report to the organisers, where you describe every aspect of your work during the match. Thie report has a technical part (the results, the games with all the moves…) but also you have to mention all the critical moments and any issues which arose during the match.

BCM: When we have two top-world players playing, when they are constantly monitored by cameras from various angles, when there are computers constantly checking their moves, and all of that is visible to the public everywhere in the world – is there really a lot of work for the arbiter?

N.B: That's one of the questions I get asked most often - what does the arbiter do when there are just two players and one game, with "a million" cameras filming constantly?

Even though we are living in a new IT time, where everything is recorded and tracked, where you have monitors showing everything, anti-cheating devices, and chess engines - it is extremely important that you pay attention to the players and the game with your own, human eyes. Computers and tech can help, but that is the same as watching the match from another continent. When you are looking at the players in person, you can see and feel the atmosphere of the game, the way the players breathe and react, the atmosphere in the playing room, and the little sounds and noises that can come from here or there. You get a more complex and finer understanding of what's going on, which helps you create a better picture. You are not just a spectator, you are an actor, an integral part of what's unfolding.

BCM: How did you prepare for this match?

N.B: I started by gathering and checking all the relevant rulebooks and documents regarding the match - from the rules governing the match itself to chess rules, anti-cheating, and regulations about organising tournaments…

Then, I was watching the recording of the previous match, in Dubai, and also the Candidates tournament in Madrid where both players were playing - trying to recognise certain patterns in their behaviour during the games. I am well acquainted with both players following the Yekaterinburg Candidates in 2020, held as the world was rapidly going into a Coronavirus lockdown. Because of Covid that tournament was the longest in chess history - 407 days! Ian won there and became the Candidate for the first time.

By watching all these videos and reading the regulations, I began to imagine potential situations which can arise and how best to deal with them.


FIDE
UNA SUMUS



Also, I was regularly communicating with the organisers on the details of the schedule and the technical details, including the arrangements for private rooms for the players where they could rest during the games.

BCM: What did you pay the most attention to during the match?

N.B: I was focused on the players almost every second of each game. And I mean that. I was constantly monitoring the board, writing down every move, checking that the clock was working properly, and following the body language of the players. The players don't need to speak to you - as an arbiter, you should be able to tell what they are feeling and thinking and anticipate where an issue might arise even before one of the players flags it, being ready to react timely and properly.

After each game, I discussed with the other arbiters in the team how the day went and what we noticed. I was fortunate to have an excellent team with me which included Gerhard Bertagnolli as my deputy, and Gopakumar as the Fair Play Officer, and I am grateful for their support and help before, during and after the match.

BCM: You had a rare opportunity to spend more than three weeks just two-three meters away from Nepo and Ding. What did you observe that you did not notice before, or that we – watching online – could not see?

N.B: It was obvious that the two are extremely professional and that they have a lot of respect for one another. During the entire match, they have been extremely fair and polite to one another, which made my work and life much easier.

It was obvious that both had two things in common: a strong desire to win and an urge to disappear quickly after they lose a game. It is exactly those moments of defeat when the arbiter needs to be careful, present but almost invisible, to be there if anything is needed but not to get in the way.

BCM: Were there any problems, issues, or complaints from either of the teams during the match?

N.B: I don't believe that any match for the world crown in chess passed without any additional requests from the teams, and that was the case here as well.

Two days before the match, both players and their teams checked the playing area and the rest area. They were testing the stage, the table, the pieces, chairs, checking the forms and even the pens they will be using. Every detail was checked. Ding wanted to change his chair, and there were some other minor comments but nothing substantial, and all of the requests were resolved.

The seasoned Dutch chess organiser Joeren van der Berg - known to many in the chess world as the key figure behind the Wijk aan Zee tournament - was the Supervisor and in charge of sorting these things out. He did a great job!

One thing was also noticeable - the teams of both players cooperated very well, they were professional and kind to one another, despite the stakes. This was very impressive.

BCM: You had the opportunity to see things which those following the games via the broadcast couldn't see. Could you share some details?

N.B: Some things need to be left unsaid, at least for now. However, I can highlight two interesting moments.

Somewhere during the first part of the match, after the game had finished and while we were preparing for the next round, the chair in which Nepomniachtchi was sitting collapsed.

Luckily, being a mechanical engineer by profession, I quickly determined what had happened and was able to fix it myself. It was usable, but I noticed during the games the way Ian preferred to sit and move in the chair, so I requested a part to be refitted to enforce the chair, and all was done quickly.

There was another chair in reserve which was brought specially from Russia for this event.

When it comes to Ding, he did not have any special requests save for fresh air. The balcony door in his private room during the games was almost always opened. At one point during the match, the weather got bitter and it was very cold in Astana, coming down to minus 13. Ding still wanted to keep the door to the balcony open. This particularly affected the Fair Play Officer Gopakumar, who is from India, who was in charge of checking all the areas where the players spend their time during the game. It was so cold in those common areas that the organisers had to bring several very strong heaters, and most of them were put near the table where Gopakumar was sitting.

BCM: What does it mean for you personally and for your country – Serbia – that you had the honour of being the Chief Arbiter in a World Championship match which determined the 17th world champion?

N.B: This is a great honour for me and for my country, Serbia. This represents the crown of my chess career. I am grateful to everyone in FIDE as well as the players for their support and trust in me. I hope I have delivered.

For those who know chess history, they will remember that Svetozar Gligoric was the arbiter in the 1984/85 match between Karpov and Kasparov. Also, another compatriot of mine, Sava Stoisavljevic was the Chief Arbiter of the 2010 Chess Olympiad in Khanty-Mansiysk. My work is, therefore, an extension of the efforts and dedication of Serbian arbiters in various FIDE events. I hope that we will continue that tradition as Serbia has many talented and experienced young arbiters.

BCM: If offered, would you again take on the role of a Chief Arbiter in a world title match?

N.B: Such an offer is never declined. I'd like to use this opportunity to thank everyone, including the Kazakhstan chess federation and the St Regis Hotel where the match was held. They gave us unwithering support for everything we needed.

BOAT RACE OF THE BRAIN



By Grandmaster Raymond Keene OBE

Watching this year's Boat Race between the teams of Oxford and Cambridge Universities, in which Cambridge won comprehensively across the board (male, female, reserve…) it struck me that Cambridge seem to be leading in both long-established disciplines, rowing and chess.

This year in chess, Cambridge (my Alma Mater being Trinity College, where I shared a Great Court landing with King Charles III) maintained their overall lead, though the 141st Varsity chess match, held at London's Royal Automobile Club on 4th March, ended, after multifarious vicissitudes, in an honourable 4-4 draw. Cambridge thus stemmed Oxford's recent advances to retain their overall lead, by 60 wins to 58, with 23 drawn.

The indefatigable match commentator was Grandmaster Matthew Sadler, while Barry Martin, perhaps the world's strongest chess-playing artist, and a former sponsor, offered a portrait of the late educational guru, Tony Buzan, as a special prize.

Interestingly, Tony himself, also a former sponsor, in his perpetual quest for the classic Roman Imperial ideal, of ***Mens sana in corpore sano,*** a healthy mind in a healthy body, was an enthusiastic advocate for both rowing and chess.

The role of ceremonial orator was assumed by my Editor at *TheArticle*, Daniel Johnson, where I write a weekly chess column, while distinguished guests included the chess historian Richard Eales and the 1965 British champion, Peter Lee, who represented Oxford while still champion in the (also drawn) contest of 1966.

OXFORD VS CAMBRIDGE

Tom O'Gorman	1 : 0	Miroslav Macko
Emil Powierski	½ : ½	Jan Petr
Ashvin Sivakumar	1 : 0	Freddie Hand
Max French	0 : 1	Daniel Gallagher
Amardip Ahluwalia	0 : 1	Gwilym Price
Dominic Miller	½ : ½	Ognjen Stefanovic
Nugith Jayawarna	1 : 0	Imogen Camp
Aditi Agarwal	0 : 1	Omeet Atara

The match was expertly organised by RAC stalwarts, Henry McWatters, Henry Mutkin (an Oxford veteran of the 1957 match) and Stephen Meyler, who together masterminded what is now well established, not just as the Boat Race of the Brain, but also the jewel in the crown of the UK annual social chess scene.

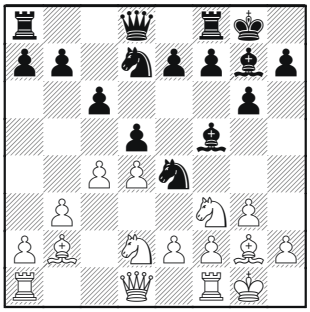
My days representing Cambridge date from the Cretaceous period, when I scored 3½/4. My favourite game is the following which, strangely, has hitherto avoided annotation. My opponent was the formidable Andrew Whiteley, former European junior champion, who had recently come top of the British contingent in the Hastings Premier, going on later to come second in the British championship and qualify as an International Master.

Raymond Keene - Andrew Jonathan Whiteley D11

Cambridge vs. Oxford London (ENG), 1969

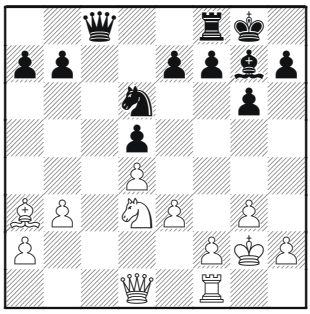
1.c4 c6 2.♘f3 d5 3.d4 ♘f6 Andrew was an enthusiastic devotee of the Slav defence to the queen's gambit. In an earlier game I had tried to overwhelm him with violence, trying Bronstein's: 4.♘c3 e6 5. ♗g5 dxc4 6. e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.♗h4 g5 9. exf6 gxh4 and now 10.♘e5. However, Andrew weathered the storm and clung on for a draw. I, therefore, decided to vary with something much less forcing.

4.♘bd2 ♗f5 5.g3 g6 6.♗g2 ♗g7 7.0-0 0-0 8.b3 ♘bd7 9.♗b2 ♘e4



White's next is, indeed, very unforcing. More aggressive is 10.♘h4 as in Portisch v Pachman, Moscow 1967, brilliantly won by White.

10.♖c1 ♘df6 11.♘xe4 ♗xe4 12.♘e1 ♗xg2 13.♔xg2 ♖c8 14.♘d3 ♘e4 15.e3 ♘d6 16.cxd5! cxd5 17.♖xc8 ♕xc8 18.♗a3



Black's next is careless, overlooking a cunning ploy.

18...♕d7? Here Black has a last chance to equalise with 18...♘f5 19.♕e2 ♕d7 20.♖c1 ♖c8 21.♘e5 ♗xe5 22.♖xc8+ ♕xc8. Black might have feared to play 18...♘f5 because of 19.g4 ♘h4+ 20.♔g3 when 20...g5 is forced, but there is nothing to worry about because 21.♗xe7 fails to ...♕c7+.

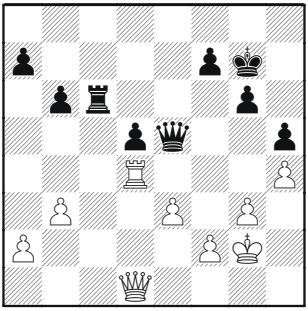
19.♗xd6 ♕xd6 20.♕c2 e5 There is no choice. Otherwise White follows with ♖c1, dominates the only open file and penetrates Black's camp with ♕c7.

21.dxe5 ♗xe5 22.♖d1 ♖d8 23.♘xe5 ♕xe5 24.♖d4 ♔g7 25.♕d3 Already White could reach the thematic endgame which is always likely to be the outcome, with 25.♕d2 ♖c8 26.♖xd5 ♖c2 27.♕xc2 ♕xd5+ 28.e4 ♕e5 29.♔f3.

25...♖d6 Or 25... ♖d7 26.b4 f5 (a weakening Black would prefer to avoid) 27.♕c3 ♔f7 28.a4 ♖c7 29. ♕b3 ♖d7 30.♕d3 with ongoing advantage. I was well aware of the game Unzicker v Petrosian, Varna Olympiad 1962, where the coming world champion squeezed out

a win against the German Grandmaster's isolated queen's pawn.

26.♕b5 b6 27.♕a6 ♖d7 28.♕d3 ♖d6 29.h4 h5 30.♕d1 ♖c6!



Faced with the threat of e4, Black elects to go for active counter play.

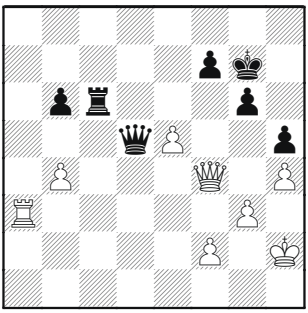
31.♖xd5 ♕e4+ 32.♕f3 ♕c2 33.e4 ♖f6 34.♕e3 ♕xa2 35.e5 Another method is 35.♖d7 ♕c2 36.♖xa7 ♕c5 37.♕d2 ♕e5 38.♖a4 ♖d6 39.♕f4.

35...♖e6 36.♖d7 ♕c2 37.♖xa7 ♕c6+?

38.♔h2 ♕d5 39.♕f4 ♖c6 40.b4 ♔g8 41.♖a8+ ♔g7 42.♖a3 Faster is 42.b5 ♖e6 43.♖a7 ♖xe5 44.♖xf7+ ♕xf7 45.♕xe5+ ♔h7 46.♕e3 with an almost certain win in the endgame.

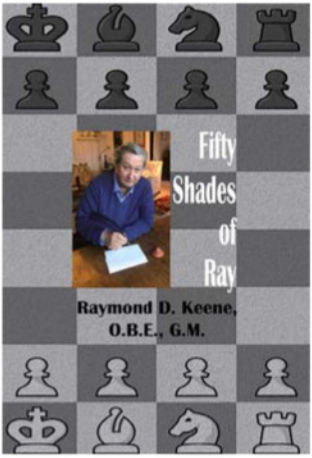
42...♔g8 43.♖a8+ ♔g7

1-0



Here the game was suspended and adjudicated by Bob Wade and Harry Golombek, one an International Master, the other Grandmaster Emeritus and both OBE's. Nowadays a faster play finish would decide. I was at first looking at attack by means of 44.e6 ♖xe6 45.♕b8 but after 45…♔f6 Black can run into the centre with his king and probably survive. Best is 44.b5 ♖e6 45.♖a7 ♖xe5 46.♖xf7+ ♕xf7 47.♕xe5+ ♔h7 48.♕e3 reaching the familiar Queen and pawn endgame, where White has an extra pawn, safer king and prospects of manoeuvring his king towards the Black weakness on b6. After 44.b5 ♕xb5 White wins at once with 45.♕d4 ♖e6 (forced to block the advance e6) and then 46.♕d8 penetrating to the back rank, but now in decisive fashion.

Hardinge Simpole



is delighted to announce the publication of

Fifty Shades of Ray

Chess in the year of the Coronavirus Pandemic

Raymond D. Keene

Openings
for Amateurs



NIGHTMARES IN THE NAJDORF, PART V

THE POSITIONAL CRUSH

By Pete Tamburro; ptamburro@aol.com

This game has special meaning to me. In 1975, I got to witness it at the third World Open. It was an incredible tournament, full of surprises, among them being a 19-year-old student from Darthmouth tying for first place with GM Pal Benko. His name was Alan Trefler, and he had a rating of 2045! Another surprise was a fellow New Jersey lad named Michael Rohde, who was all of 15-years-old. He outplayed GM Walter Browne in this very line of the Najdorf we talked about last time.

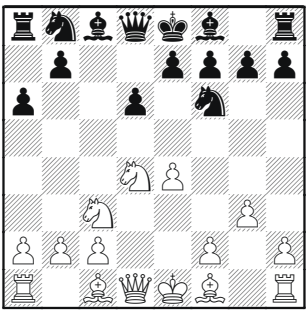
What makes it special is that a couple of weeks later, Manhattan Chess Club manager and master Jeff Kastner and I chaperoned a high school team to Scandinavia. It included Jonathan Tisdall, Mark Diesen, Michael Rohde, Kenneth Regan, Ron Henley and John Fedorowicz-all of which I wrote later in the November Chess Life would become grandmasters or at least IMs. Rohde won the 11-round Scandinavian Open and I tied for first in the 9-round amateur tournament. It was memorable off the board, too, but that's another story...

This game, though, was a positional crush of Browne, who played the e5 response to Rohde's g3 line. His response, in fact, is the most popular one today, but it illustrates the difficulties at even grandmaster level. GM Ruben Fine makes an embarrassing guest appearance as well to support that idea. Whatever side you play, this is a game worthy of study.

Michael A **Rohde** – Walter Shawn **Browne [B91]**

Third World Open New York (8), 1975

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.g3



6...e5 The attempt to turn this into a Dragon system seems to go against the Dragon idea of getting d5 in: 6...g6 7.♗g2 ♗g7 8.0-0 0-0 9.h3.

A) 9...♘c6 10.♗e3 ♗d7 11.♘de2 *(11.♘d5 ♖c8 12.♘e2 ♘xd5 13.exd5 ♘a5 14.♗d4 ♗xd4 15.♘xd4 e6 16.dxe6 fxe6 17.b3 e5 18.♘e2 ♗c6 19.c4±)* 11...♖c8 12.♘d5 ♘xd5 13.exd5 ♘e5 14.b3 g5 15.♘d4 g4 16.h4 ♘f3+ 17.♗xf3 gxf3 18.♕xf3 ♖c7 19.c4 ♕c8 20.♕e4 ♗h3 21.♖fe1 e5 22.dxe6 fxe6 23.h5 ♖cf7 24.h6 ♗f6 25.♖ad1±;

B) 9...♗d7 10.♗e3 ♘c6 11.♘de2 ♕c7 and now we have a Black position confined to three ranks with no d5 in the immediate plans, while White, with ♕d2 is one move away from initiating action on the kingside. White can try taking advantage of b6 with 12.♘a4 *(or getting a pawn on d5 and exposing the e7 pawn with 12.♘d5; or making a preparatory move before doing both of those moves with 12.♖c1; or even initiating the attack with 12.f4; The engine loves 12.b3 , combining with all the others mentioned.);*

The immediate challenge with 6...d5 leaves White with two very good choices:

A) 7.e5

A1) 7...♘e4 8.e6 *(or 8.♘xe4)* 8...♘xc3 9.exf7+ ♔xf7 10.bxc3 ♘c6 11.♗g2 e5 12.♘xc6 bxc6 13.0-0 ♖b8 14.c4 ♗e6 15.♗e3;

A2) 7...♘fd7 8.e6! ♘f6 9.♗f4! fxe6 10.♗g2 ♘c6 11.0-0 ♕b6 12.♘xc6 ♕xc6 *(12...bxc6 13.♘a4 ♕b7 14.♖e1 g6 15.♘c5+- ♕a7 16.♘xe6 ♗xe6 17.♖xe6 ♗g7 18.♖xc6 0-0 19.c4)*;

B) 7.exd5 ♘xd5 8.♘de2 Yes, moving backward is OK here as the bishop is ready to hop to g2 and Black would be ill-advised to play ♘xc3 because of the loss of castling privileges, an exposed king and a powerful bishop on g2, but it may happen anyway! 8...♗e6 *(8...♘xc3 9.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 10.♘xc3 ♗d7 11.♗g2 ♗c6 12.♗xc6 ♘xc6 13.♗e3 e6 14.0-0-0+ ♔e8 15.♘e4±)* 9.♗g2 ♘xc3 10.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 11.♘xc3 ♘c6 12.♗f4 and after castling queenside, White has a terrific initiative;

Najdorf lost to Fine at NY, 1949, with 6...b5 7.♗g2 ♗b7 8.0-0 e6 9.♕e2 ♘bd7 and here Fine played 10.a3 "To stop b4 once and for all." The positional player par excellence missed the tactic 10.♘xe6!! fxe6 11.e5 ♗xg2 12.exf6 ♕xf6 13.♔xg2 ♗e7 14.♖e1 ♘c5 15.h4 h6 16.♗e3 b4 17.♘d1 0-0 18.♗xc5 dxc5 19.♕xe6+±.

7.♘de2 ♗e7 8.♗g2 ♘bd7 Playable is 8...b5 9.♘d5 ♘bd7 10.♘ec3 ♘b6 11.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 where White has the slight edge of containing d5. The White bishop may want to go to e3 or even a3 for its best dark square positioning.; More popular now is 8...0-0 9.0-0 *(9.a4 ♘c6)* 9...b5 *(with 9...♘bd7 running a close second.)* An interesting game, Kagan-Ree, from the 1970 Siegen Olympiad went this way: 10.a4 b4 11.♘d5 ♘xd5? *(A little too concerned about exchanging the Be7 11...a5! because if 12.♘xe7+ ♕xe7 13.c3 ♘c6 he will have a knight able to take advantage of White playing cxb4 and a bishop with an option to play ♗a6.)* 12.♕xd5 ♖a7 13.♗e3 ♗e6

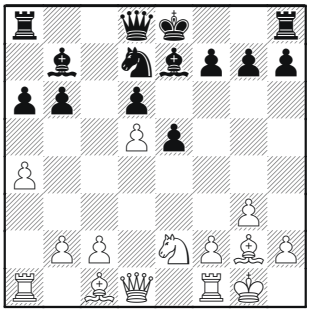
14.♕d2 ♖b7 15.f4 ♘c6 16.b3 ♗g4 17.♖f2 ♖d7 18.♖af1 ♕a5 19.f5 ♗xe2 20.♕xe2 ♗f6 21.♕h5 ♕d8 22.g4 h6 23.h4 ♗xh4 24.f6 ♗xf2+ 25.♖xf2 ♖e8 26.g5 ♖e6 27.♗h3 ♕e8 28.gxh6 and Black Resigned as after 28...♖xf6 29.♖xf6 gxf6 30.♕g4+ ♔f8 31.h7 ♔e7 32.♕xd7+ A fine lesson in the kingside attacking possibilities of this g3 line.

9.a4! b6 Black has to develop the bishop on b7.

10.0-0 Another good plan is 10.♘d5 ♗b7 *(10...♘xd5 11.♕xd5 ♖b8 12.♘c3 ♗b7 13.♕c4 ♕c8 14.♕xc8+ ♖xc8 15.♗e3 0-0 16.♗h3±)* 11.♘ec3.

10...♗b7 11.♘d5!? More precise was 11.h3! ♘c5 *(11...0-0 12.g4 and White will have ♗e3 and ♘g3 and further pressure along the d-file.)* 12.♗g5 0-0 13.♗xf6 ♗xf6 14.♘d5 ♖c8 *(14...♗xd5 15.♕xd5 ♗e7 16.♖fd1±)* 15.♘ec3±.

11...♘xd5 12.exd5



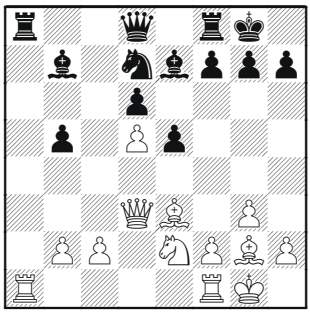
12...b5? A choice of Sicilian "theme" moves were ♕c7, ♖c8, 0-0, and b5, but b5 in two moves? Browne's first inaccuracy in his defence. This game demonstrates how a positional inaccuracy can lead to a very uncomfortable game.

More combative were 12...0-0! 13.c4 ♘c5 14.♖a3 *(14.b4 ♘d7 15.♗e3 a5)*;

Another possibility was 12...♕c7!?

13.♗e3! And this is the reason why b5 was not so accurate. White, by getting the bishop out, is now immediately able to connect the major pieces, especially the rooks, to cause positional problems along the a-file.

13...0-0 14.axb5 axb5 15.♕d3!±



15...♗a6 Black never gets his positional wish of getting ♘c5 in. Rohde anticipates this throughout. 15...♘c5 16.♗xc5 dxc5 17.d6!+-

16.♖a3! He could also play 16.♖a2 , but Rohde follows a decision-making process going back to at least Purdy. When placing rooks along a rank you should always decide the best square for BOTH and then move accordingly, rather than just think about the one rook to a square and then have somebody say those immortal words, "Wrong rook!" Do you see his plan? Stay tuned!

16...♕c7 16...♗g5 17.♗xg5 ♕xg5 18.b4 f5 19.♖fa1+-

17.♖fa1 ♕b7 18.b4 Deny squares.

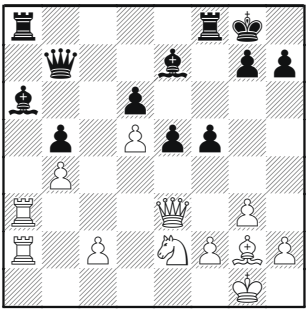
18...♘b6 19.♗xb6! A wonderful example of liquidation! Rohde is heading toward the endgame. He can visualise the position after the sequence and has correctly evaluated that it's time to give up a bishop for a knight. He certainly doesn't want the horse at c4 any more than at c5. Look at Black's bishops! They are in sad shape. The knight was the only truly mobile piece Black had.

19...♕xb6 20.♕e3!! Perfect positional judgment! Can you see what happens if Black exchanges?

20...♕b7 Browne is an elite GM. He sees it: 20...♕xe3 21.fxe3 ♗b7 22.♖xa8 ♖xa8 23.♖xa8+ ♗xa8 24.♘c3 f5 25.e4+- and the pawn on b5 will soon join his friends in the box.

21.♖1a2 The plan we talked about on move 16 has arrived. The doubled rooks' pressure is there with the added bonus that c2 is protected. Black's only counterplay is along the c-file, and now that is nipped in the bud.

21...f5



Browne tries to complicate things with a kingside demonstration, hopefully to shake his non-titled opponent. 21...♖fc8 22.♘c1 ♖c4 23.c3.

22.♕c3! I love this move! Why would White move his queen to a square where it will be chased by a rook? Because he's heading to a1 to form Alekhine's Ram if Black does that!

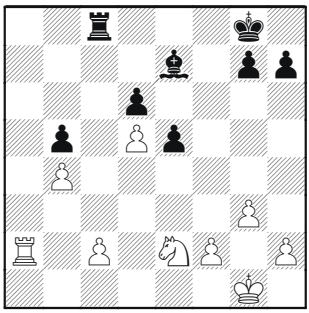
22...f4 22...♖fc8 23.♕a1+-.

23.♕c6 We have reached the point in the position when just about everything works as Black is lost. Yes, White could have played 23.gxf4 exf4 24.♗f3; or even 23.♕a1 , but he's really sticking this liquidation concept in Black's face.

23...f3 23...♖ac8 24.♕xa6 ♕xa6 25.♖xa6 f3 26.♗xf3 ♖xf3 27.♖a8 ♖ff8 28.♖8a5 ♖b8 29.♘c3 and the knight is far superior to the bishop who is bumping into his own pawn and not able to defend his pawn on b5.; 23...♕xc6 24.dxc6 is not really an option.

24.♗xf3 ♖ac8 25.♕xa6 At this point there was a dazzling bit of tactical fireworks available with 25.♖xa6! ♖xc6 26.dxc6 ♕c8 27.♗d5+ ♔h8 28.♖a8 ♕xa8 29.♖xa8 ♖xa8 30.♘c3 ♗d8 31.♘xb5 g6 32.c7 ♖c8 33.cxd8♕+ ♖xd8 34.♘a7 ♖b8 35.b5 ♔g7 36.c4 ♔f6 37.♘c6 ♖b6 38.♔g2 ♔f5 *(38...g5 39.♔f3 h5 40.♔e4 g4 41.♘b4 ♔e7 42.♗c6 ♔e6 43.♘d5 ♖b8 44.b6+-)* 39.♘e7+ ♔f6 40.♘c8+-. However, consider the circumstances. You're beating a GM. Why get fancy? Make it simple and bask in the glow!

25...♕xa6 26.♖xa6 ♖xf3 27.♖a8 ♖ff8 28.♖xc8 ♖xc8



Forces are now greatly reduced. Black has no counterplay. Consolidate the position and win.

29.c3 e4 30.♖a6 ♔f7 31.♖b6 ♗f6 32.♖xd6 ♗xc3 33.♖c6! The simplicity and effectiveness of this plan is a great lesson to play over. Black could resign here.

33...♖xc6 34.dxc6 ♗e5 35.♘d4 Adding insult to injury here.

35...♔e7 36.♘xb5 ♗b2 36...♔d8 37.♔f1 ♔c8 38.♔e2 ♗f6 39.♔e3

37.♔f1 ♔d8 38.♔e2 ♗c1 39.♔d1 39.♘c3 ♗b2 40.♘xe4

39...♗g5 40.♔c2 h5 We're in 5.00 plus for White country here. Everything wins. The knight and pawn keeping the Black king on the first rank is decisive. Yet he moves the knight almost as a taunt because the king can't go to c7 because of the forking check. The devastation is complete.

41.♘d6 ♗e7 42.♘xe4 ♗xb4 This really is much ado about nothing.

43.♔b3 ♗e1 44.♔c4 ♔c7 45.♔d5 g6 46.h3 ♗b4 47.f4 ♗e1 48.g4 hxg4 49.hxg4 ♗b4 50.f5 gxf5 51.gxf5

1-0

I hope you enjoyed this five part exploration into the lesser travelled dark recesses of the Najdorf.

The big lesson is that you have to not only treat them seriously, but you need to study the ideas - the thematic moves and plans that make up both sides of the Najdorf. We've also learnt that knowing thematic moves and properly timing them are two different skills. Lastly, and the great bugaboo of all amateur players, you don't want to miss some tactical opportunity that someone - or your chess engine - will point out to you after the game is over. These were purposely not the latest in theory because the games are models for learning concepts, which will last you much longer than the latest theoretical novelties, though you still have to watch out for the occasional Jon Edwards out there!



QUOTES AND QUERIES

THE MARCH OF THE KINGS

By Alan Smith

6230 Your columnist has been an avid reader of other chess columns for over half a century. One intriguing one was Leonard Barden's offering on "Korchnoi's King march Gambit." published in the *Guardian* on 3rd October 1969. The column featured a game Korchnoi - Plachetka Luhacovice 1969, a Czech Benoni where Korchnoi disdained castling and won a messy game in 31 moves. Here are two entertaining king marches.

White castled early on in the following game but found himself tied down. He duly escaped by marching his king from g1 to b2. Both players would go on to play in the British Championship.

William Alfred Paley **Hughes** - Hubert Ernest **Price**

Worcestershire - Staffordshire, Dudley 1903

1.e4 e5 2.♗c4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 ♘xe4 4.♗xf7+ This goes nowhere fast, 4.♕h5 ♘d6 5.♗b3 is a wild line.

4...♔xf7 5.♘xe4 d5 6.♘g3 ♘c6 7.d3 ♗c5 7...♗e7 is more flexible.

8.♘1e2 ♕f6 8...♖f8 is better.

9.0–0 ♗g4 10.♗e3 d4 11.♘e4 ♕g6 12.♗d2 ♗e7 13.f3 ♗h3 14.♘2g3 h5 15.♕e2 h4 16.♘h1 ♖af8 17.a3 ♗f6? This regrouping does not work out well, maybe Black should try 17...♔e8!? heading for c8 and then double rooks on the f-file.

18.♖f2 ♘e7 19.♔f1 ♗c8 20.g4 hxg3 21.♘hxg3 ♘f5 22.♔e1 ♗h4 23.♖g2 ♘xg3 24.♘xg3 ♗h3 25.♖g1 ♖h5 26.♔d1 ♔g8 27.♔c1 ♖hf5 28.♕e4 ♗xg3 29.♖xg3 ♕h5 30.b3 c6 31.♔b2 Completing his escape.

31...♖xf3 32.♖g5 ♕h7 33.♕xe5 White has the better position and the safer king.

35...♖3f5 34.♕xd4 ♖xg5 35.♗xg5 ♕f5 36.♖g1 ♕f2 37.♗e3 ♕f6 38.♖g3 ♗f5 39.♕xf6 ♖xf6 40.♗xa7 ♖h6 41.♖g5 g6 42.♗b8 ♔f7 43.♖g2 ♖h3 44.♗g3 ♖h8 45.♔c3...

1–0

Even opposite-coloured bishops could not save this one.

Birmingham Daily Post, 31st January 1903

Your columnist has conducted a couple of king marches. Here is the second of those, played in round two after both players had won in the first round.

Eddie **Dearing** - Alan **Smith**

St Albans Open, 2004

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 e5 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.d3 ♗b4 5.e4 d6 6.g3 0–0 7.♗g2 ♗g4 8.h3 ♗xf3 9.♕xf3 ♘d4 10.♕d1 a5 11.0–0 c6 I had never faced this line, so when I looked it up after the game, I was pleased to find that all this had been played before.

12.f4 12.♗e3 ♗c5 13.♔h2 ♘e6 14.♕d2 ♕e7 15.♘e2 ♗xe3 16.♕xe3 c5 was Summerscale - Adams Lloyd's Bank 1987.

12...♗c5 13.♔h1 ♘e8 14.f5 I am not sure about this.

14...f6 15.♗d2 ♘c7 16.h4 b5 17.g4 h6 18.♖c1 ♔f7 Heading for a safer home.

19.♕e1 b4 20.♘d1 ♗b6 21.♘e3 ♘a6 22.♖f2 ♘c5 23.♗f1 ♔e7 24.♕d1 ♔d7 25.♖h2 ♖h8 26.♗e1 ♔c7 27.♗f2 ♔b7 28.♗g2 ♖a7 29.♘f1 ♔a8 30.♘g3 His best try is probably 30.♗xd4 exd4 when he can choose between 31.e5 dxe5 32.♗xc6+ or 31.♘g3 ♘d7 32.♘e2 ♘e5 33.♘f4.

30...♕e8 31.♘h5 ♘a6 32.♕d2 ♗c5 33.♖g1 ♕f7 34.♗e3 ♘c7 35.♖f1 ♔b8 36.♘g3 ♕g8 Reaching the time control. The rational approach in this position is to repeat moves and offer a draw, but rational thinking is not always top of the agenda in weekend tournaments.

37.g5 hxg5 38.hxg5 ♖xh2+ 39.♔xh2 ♕h8+! An irritating check.

40.♗h3 40.♔g1 allows 40...fxg5.

40...fxg5 41.♗xg5 ♘e8 42.♔g2 ♘f6 43.♕d1 d5! 44.cxd5 cxd5 45.exd5 ♕g8 46.♔h2 ♕xd5 47.b3 a4 48.♗g2 ♕f7 49.bxa4 ♕xa2 50.♗xf6 gxf6 51.♕h5 This attempted infiltration goes nowhere.

51...♕g8 52.♗h3 ♖h7 53.♕g6 ♕h8 54.♖c1 54.♕g4 ♖h4.

54...♖xh3+ 55.♔g2 ♖h2+ 56.♔f1 ♕h3+ 57.♔e1 ♘f3+ 58.♔d1 ♖d2 #

0-1

6233 Early queen exchanges often involve the black king being caught in the centre. This is not always bad, but black still needs to take care, as the following examples demonstrate.

Victor Hextall **Lovell** - Arthur **Mackenzie**

Leicester - Birmingham 1930

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.f4 e5?! This has a point or two, but 5...0-0 6.♘f3 e5 is a better try Uber -Tylor BCF ch 1925.

6.dxe5! Best. 6.fxe5 dxe5 7.dxe5? ♕xd1+ 8.♔xd1 ♘g4 is what Black was angling for.

6...dxe5 7.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 8.♘f3 8.fxe5 ♘g4 9.♗g5+ ♔e8 10.♘d5 also favours White, as in a game Horowitz - Almgren USA ch 1944.

8...exf4 9.♗xf4 ♘h5 10.♗g5+ f6 10...♗f6.

11.♗e3 c6 12.♗e2 ♖e8 13.0−0−0+ ♔c7 14.♘d4 Now Black faces two threats but only spotted one.

14...f5 Preventing 15.g4 trapping his knight, but allowing something worse. 14...♗f8! may just hold on.

15.♘db5+ 15...cxb5 16.♘xb5+ ♔c6 17.♖d6 #

1-0

Observer, *20th April 1930*

Helmut **Pfleger** - Zadok **Domnitz**

Tel Aviv Olympiad, 1964

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♗e2 e5 This avoids the Averbakh Variation, but allows white an easy edge.

6.dxe5 dxe5 7.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 8.f4 ♘fd7 9.♘f3 c6 10.0−0 exf4? Opening lines is going to help the better-developed player. 10...♔e8 is better.

11.♗xf4 f6 12.♖ad1 ♔e8 13.e5! A temporary pawn sacrifice.

13...fxe5 14.♗g3 ♘c5 Played to prevent 15.♘e4.

15.♗xe5 ♗xe5 16.♘xe5 ♗e6 17.b4 ♘cd7 18.♘f3 ♔e7 19.♘g5 ♘f8 20.♘xe6 ♘xe6

21.♗g4 ♘d7 22.♖de1 ♘df8 23.♘e4 ♘d8 24.♘c5+ ♔d6 25.♖f6+ ♔c7 26.♖e7 ♔b8 26...♔b6 27.♖d6! a5 28.♖xd8 Golombek.

27.♖xb7+! 27...♘xb7 28.♘a6#.

1-0

Liverpool Daily Post, 6th February 1965

Harry **Schussler** - Yasser **Seirawan**

Reykjavik, 1986

1.d4 d6 2.c4 e5 3.♘c3 3.dxe5? dxe5 4.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 and black is already better.

3...g6 4.dxe5 4.♘f3 is more flexible.

4...dxe5 5.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 6.♘f3 ♗g7?! Transposing into a position he had played before, but surely 6...f6! is superior, after which black should have few problems.

7.e3 7.g3 c6 8.♗g2 ♗e6 Ligterink - Seirawan Lloyd's Bank 1981.

7...c6 8.b3 e4? 9.♘d4 f5 9...c5 10.♘de2 leaves black's position full of holes.

10.♗a3 ♘f6 11.0–0–0 ♔c7?? Positionally desirable, but tactics dictate otherwise. 11...♔e8 was mandatory.

12.♘db5+! cxb5 13.♘xb5+ ♔b6 13...♔c6 14.♖d6#.

14.c5+ ♔a5 14...♔a6 15.♘c7+ ♔a5 16.♖d4 ♗d7 17.♖a4+! ♗xa4 18.b4#

15.♖d4!

1–0

European, 10th May 1990

OBITUARY: **WŁODZIMIERZ SCHMIDT**

A native of Poznan, one of fifty Polish Grandmasters that stretch back to the wanderings of Tartakower and Najdorf, **Włodzimierz Schmidt** (10th April 1943 - 1 May 2023), IM 1968, GM 1976, has died, only a few days shy of his eightieth birthday. He was to win his national championship 14 times between 1971 and 1994!

At the 1974 Nice Olympiad he played a massive 21 games all on top board in just one of his 14 World Team Championship appearances. In 2004 he became a FIDE Senior Trainer.



Source: pzszach.pl

Włodzimierz **Schmidt** - Jan **Przewoznik**

St George, Polish Championship 1981

1.d4 b5 2.e4 ♗b7 3.♗d3 a6 4.♘f3 ♘f6 5.♕e2 e6 6.♘bd2 Przewoznik may have been saving this newly christened contrivance to test his grandmaster colleague. We find no record that he played it again anywhere. 6.a4 was, of course, Karpov-Miles, Skara 1980, a game known to both players at the time, no doubt.

6 … c5 7.dxc5 ♗xc5 8.e5 ♘d5 9.♘e4 ♗e7 10.c3 h6 11.a4 ♕a5? 12.♗d2 bxa4 13.c4 ♘b4 14.0-0 ♘8c6 15.♗c3 Rc8 16.♗b1 0-0 17.♘f6+! ♗xf6 18.exf6 g6 19.♖xa4! ♕h5 20.♗xb4 ♘xb4 21.♖xb4 ♗xf3 22.♕xf3 ♕xf3 23.gxf3 and 1-0 in 43.

Colleagues speak of a level-headed champion and a superlative trainer. A picture emerges of a formal gentleman, deeply respected.

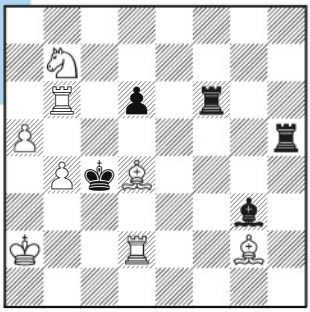
James Pratt

PROBLEM WORLD

by Christopher Jones
cjajones1@yahoo.co.uk
Grandmaster of Chess Composition

Solutions are given on page 318

1

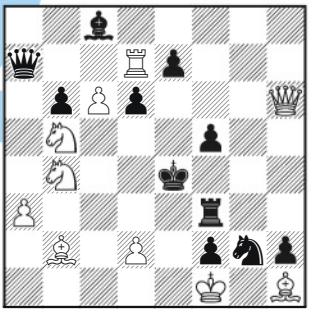


Antonio Tarnawiecki and Kabe Moen (Peru / USA)

Mate in 2

ORIGINAL

2

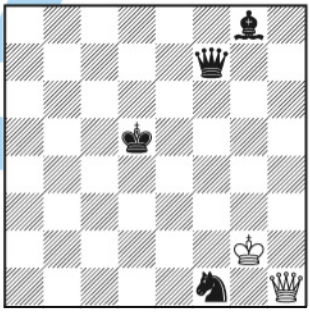


Leonid Lyubashevsky and Leonid Makaronez (Israel)

Mate in 3

ORIGINAL

3

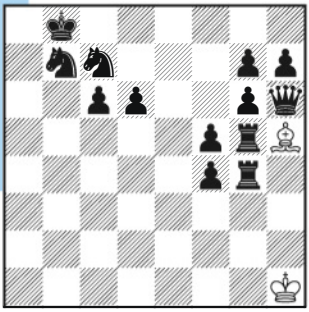


Evgeny Gavryliv (Ukraine)

Helpmate in 3 (b)Nf1>h3

ORIGINAL

4



Ljubomir Ugren (Slovenia)

Helpmate in 8

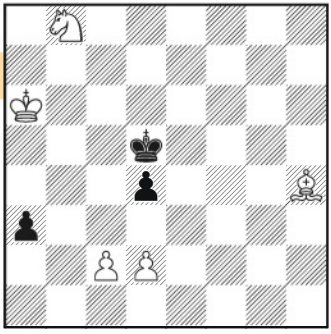
ORIGINAL

Apologies – in the April issue I labelled Kurt Keller's problem "Helpmate in 4" when it should have been 'Helpstalemate in 4'. Apologies indeed to the composer and to readers.

Endgame Studies

by Ian Watson
ian@irwatson.uk

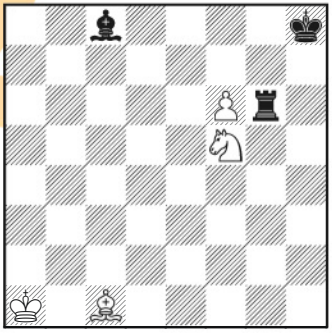
1



No.1

WIN

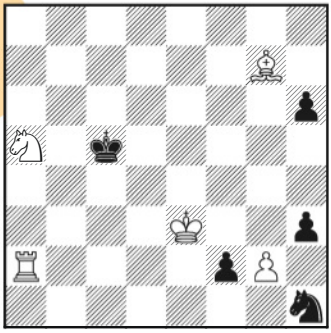
2



No.2

WIN

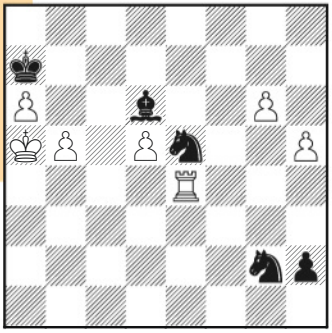
3



No.3

WIN

4



No.4

WIN

Remembering the Classics

Four of the finest studies ever. I mainly put lesser-known or new studies in this column, so it's time for some balance-redressing.

These are classics, but do you remember them? Many of you will have seen these studies before, but that doesn't automatically mean you can recall the full solution, so solving them will either test your solving skills or test your memory (or both). For the expert aficionados, who can remember both, here's a further challenge - can you remember: the composers? the publications or tourneys they appeared in? and even remember the years? Good luck with those...

I was reminded of these superb studies by reading a book by Werner Keym "Anything But Average - chess classics and off-beat problems". It's about many kinds of chess puzzles, but its first chapters are dedicated to the most famous over-the-board games and the most splendid studies. (It's published by Nightrider Unlimited. The ISBN is 978-3-935586-16-0, and if you Google that ISBN you'll find the distributor's website.) This month's studies are all in Werner's book.

If these studies are new to you, you truly have a treat; if you know them, you have a different but equal pleasure: wallowing in the nostalgia of the first times you saw them, as I have been doing.

The answers are on page 319.

SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS

This month's problems

This month we have one light and one heavier problem in each of the genres we most usually feature. You may quite quickly determine the only move to force mate next move in our starter problem, but will have to work harder to see the ramifications of the interesting position co-produced by our regular Israeli contributors. When we turn to the helpmate genre (in which Black, playing first, does all he can to help White mate him) you may find the three-mover approachable, while the typical concoction from our regular Slovenian contributor may either require some cudgelling of the brain or the easier method of reading the solution and being impressed afresh by the skill shown in producing long interesting solutions that pass the test of computer soundness!

A light but quite substantial starter

In our first problem your eye may be drawn to the bishop at d4. If it retreats down the d4-a1 diagonal there is a threat of 2.♖d4. But 1.♗a1 would be a mistake as it allows a pinning defence 1…♖f2!. So the key is 1.♗b2!. Now there are some defences that show nice interference effects. The rook at f6 and bishop at g3 can get in each other's way (in problem parlance a Grimshaw): 1…♖f4 2.♘xd6 and 1…♗f2 2.♗f1. Another interference is 1…♗e5 2.♗d5 (similarly, 1…♖d5 2.♗xd5); and finally note 1…♖xa5+ 2.♘xa5.

A very substantial second course

Well done if you solved this one. The eye-catching key-move is 1.♗c1!, which has the virtue of supplying the black king with a flight square, e5. The threat is 2.d3+ and now either 2…♖xd3 3.♕f4 or 2…♔e5 3.♗b2 (a 'switchback'). If Black defends with 1…d5 we have 2.d3+ ♔e5 3.♖xd5. A lot of interest surrounds the 'half-pin' on the line h1-e4. If the f3 rook moves to say b3 then we have 2.♗xg2+ after which there is 2…♖f3 3.♕e3 and 2…♔e5 3.d4. If 1…♖f4 (guarding against 3.d4) then instead it's 2.♗xg2+ ♔e5 3.♘d3. Well, what if Black exploits that flight square ceded by the key move? The answer is the line 1…♔e5 2.d4+ ♔e4 3.♕e6. A different mate on e6 is seen after 1…♕xa3 - 2.♖xe7+ ♗e6 3.♗xe6. And as well as the above line that ended in 3.♘d3 there's one that ends with the pawn going to that square - 1…e5 2.♕h4+ and now after either 2…♘xh4 or 2…♘f4 it's 3.d3 (exploiting the half-pin - Black can't play 3…♖xd3). In this last line, Black has two other responses to 2.♕h4+, both of which fail - 2…f4 3.♕h7 and 2…♖f4 3.♗xg2. As well as the interest in the half-pin and in the mates by different pieces on d3 and e6, it's striking that the moves Bxg2, Pd2>d3 and Pd2>d4 all crop up in various lines both as a second and as a third (mating) move.

A helpmate miniature

Evgeny's helpmate (a 'miniature' as it has less than eight pieces; also a 'minimal' in that it has only one white piece aside from the king) has a feature that pleasantly recalls his helpmate in the last issue: the black king stands in solitary splendour - all the work of black occupation, or white guard, of the eight squares around the king must be achieved in the course of the six collaborative 'half-moves' constituting the solutions. It turns out that the role of the black knight is to determine whether the white queen starts by going to f1 (eliminating the guard on g3) or to h3 (eliminating the guard on f2) - a very clever mechanism. So we have the (a) solution 1.♔e5 ♕xf1 2.♕d5+ ♔g3 3.♗e6 ♕f4 and the (b) solution (showing a one-move-further-on procession down the g8-c4 diagonal) 1.♔d4 ♕xh3 2.♕c4 ♔f2 3.♗d5 ♕e3 - a mating configuration that echoes the mate in part (a). And note that both mates are *ideal* mates - each square around the black king is accounted for either by one white guard on it or by occupation by a black unit.

(See page 315)

A solving challenge (or just read on for the solution!)

Another *magnum opus* from Ljubomir! - typically resourceful play is featured. On first inspection of the diagram who would surmise that in the final mate position, with the black king at c8 (to which the logistics determine he can only move late on in the solution, on move seven), one of the black rooks would have landed up at b8? And, of course, there is intricate needlework as the white bishop (like Evgeny's problem, this is a *minimal*) and white king thread their ways through to d7 and e7 respectively - 1.f3 ♔h2 2.f4 ♔h3 3.♖a5 ♔xg4 4.g5 ♗e8 5.♖a8 ♔f5 6.g6+ ♔f6 7.♔c8 ♔e7 8.♖b8 ♗d7.

SOLUTIONS TO ENDGAMES

(See page 316)

No.1 By Leonid Kubbel
published in Shakhmatny Listok in 1922

1.♘c6 ♔xc6 2.♗f6 ♔d5 3.d3 a2 4.c4+ ♔c5 5.♔b7 a1♕ 6.♗e7 mate. 3.d3 is nearly impossible to foresee, or even to see when you get to move three.

No.2 By Vladimir Korolkov
published in Lelo in 1951

However, you can have all the points if, instead, you gave the composer as John Selman, the publication as *Tijdschrift v.d. KNSB*, and the year as 1949. That's because Selman composed a very similar position, with a very similar solution, so arguably has priority.

1.f7 ♖a6+ 2.♗a3 ♖xa3+ 3.♔b2 ♖a2+ 4.♔c1 ♖a1+ 5.♔d2 ♖a2+ 6.♔e3 ♖a3+ 7.♔f4 ♖a4+ 8.♔g5 ♖g4+ 9.♔h6 ♖g8 10.♘e7 ♗e6 11.fxg8♕+ ♗xg8 12.♘g6 mate. Magically.

1...♖f6 2.♗b2; 1...♖g8 2.fxg8♕+ ♔xg8 3.♘e7+. 2.♔b1? ♗xf5+; 2.♔b2? ♖f6. From move three, White's king steps along the Black squares to avoid bishop checks. 4.♔c3? ♖c2+ 5.♔d4 ♖d2+ 6.♔~ ♖d8 or in this line 5.♔b4 ♖b2+ 6.♔c5 ♖c2+ 7.♔b6 ♖b2+ 8.♔c7 ♖b7+ 9.♔xg4? ♗xf5+; 9.♔h5/f6? ♖g8.

No.3 By Abram Gurvich and Genrikh Kasparyan
All Union Physical Culture & Sport, 1955

1.♗d4+ ♔d5 2.♔e2 h2 3.♖a1 f1♕+ 4.♔xf1 ♔xd4 5.g4 ♘g3+ 6.♔g2 h1♕+ 7.♔xg3 and wins because the queen is, astonishingly, dominated.

1.♖xf2? ♘xf2 2.gxh3 ♘xh3 3.♗xh6 ♔d5 4.♔f3 ♔e5 5.♔g3 ♘g1 6.♔f2 ♘h3+. 4.♖xf1? ♘g3+. 5.♖a4+? ♔e5 6.♖h4 ♘g3+ 7.♔f2 h1♕ 8.♖xh1 ♘xh1+ 9.♔f3 h5.

No.4 By Leopold Mitrofanov
Rustaveli Memorial Tourney, 1967

However, that 1967 setting was found to be incorrect and the diagram position is a corrected version that was published in *Vecherny Leningrad* in 1971. Multiple bonus points if you knew all that!

1.b6+ ♔a8 2.♖e1 ♘xe1 3.g7 h1♕ 4.g8♕+ ♗b8 5.a7 ♘c6+ 6.dxc6 ♕xh5+ 7.♕g5 ♕xg5+ 8.♔a6 ♗xa7 9.c7 ♕a5+ 10.♔xa5 ♔b7 11.bxa7 wins.

1...Kb8 would block the b8 square that Black's bishop needs on move four. 2.g7? h1♕ 3.g8♕+ ♗b8 4.a7 ♕a1+. 7.♔a6? ♕e2+. 8...♕a5+ 9.♔xa5 ♗xa7 10.c7.

Such a queen sacrifice to deflect a queen has become known as "Mitrofanov's move". One writer also called it "A move from another world."

IT´S NOW EVEN EASIER TO SUBSCRIBE TO BRITISH CHESS MAGAZINE

An exclusive chess magazine!

We have some great news to share!

BCM GOES INTERACTIVE!

We are delighted to announce an exciting new partnership with one of the world's most innovative publishers of Chess eBooks, **Forward Chess**. Using state of the art technology, Forward Chess now enables BCM readers to witness the magic of the chess board unfold onscreen literally before their eyes.

Check it out and contact Forward Chess at ***forwardchess.com*** and experience the magic of movement!

Purchase or renew your subscription and have *BCM* delivered to your door*:*

On-line: visit our website ***www.britishchessmagazine.co.uk***
Email: contact ***support@britishchessmagazine.co.uk***, we'll get back to you right away
By post: write to *BCM* at Albany House, 14 Shute End, Wokingham, Berkshire, England RG40 1BJ with a cheque payable to *British Chess Magazine Limited,* your post and email addresses (and if possible a contact phone number)



PRINTED MAGAZINE

£55 UK

**$114**^{99} Non-UK

12 issues per year postage included

Thank you for your continuing support!

BRITISH CHESS MAGAZINE, the World's Oldest Chess Journal