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WORLD CUP IN BAKU: A MONTH-LONG MARATHON OF UPSETS AND SURPRISES

GM RAY KEENE:
HOW DO
CHESS MASTERS
EAT?

**HENRIK CARLSEN FOR BCM (PART 2):
MAGNUS' ROAD TO STARDOM: THE WEIGHT OF THE CROWN
AND THE PRICE OF FAME**

Interview with Steven A. Jones who surprisingly came in second in the British Chess Championships: 'I DON'T HAVE ANY FEAR IN PLAYING FOR THE WIN AGAINST STRONG OPPONENTS'



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Royal Game receives a right royal boost in the UK!



£1M PACKAGE TO SUPPORT CHESS

In a ground-breaking move, a comprehensive package of measures worth nearly £1 million has been unveiled by the UK government to promote chess in England

On 22 August 2023, the UK government announced a £1M package to support chess in England. This bold and long-awaited strategic initiative aims to inspire a new generation of chess players, promote wider engagement with the game particularly in primary schools in disadvantaged areas, and bolster elite competitive play.

The overall thinking was summarised in a speech in July 2023 by the UK's Culture Secretary Lucy Frazer in which she highlighted the multifaceted benefits of chess. She said:

“Chess is a brilliant way for young people to develop skills such as patience and critical thinking. It is something constructive on which to spend their time and feel part of. It inspires creativity and sparks the competitive spirit.

We want to give more young people the opportunity to find the thing that they love and realise their potential. So this package is focused on getting more young people playing chess and supporting them to develop their talent.

We're also equipping our elite chess players with expert coaching to help them dominate at the highest levels of the global game and restore England's reputation among the best in the world.”

The whole initiative is congruent with the Culture Secretary's vision to provide young individuals with productive outlets beyond their school environments, offering them “someone to talk to, something to do and somewhere to go.”

The plan, which is set to be a game-changer, encompasses diverse components designed to target various facets of chess

development across the country. Underlining a commitment to fostering chess talents at an early stage, the Department for Culture Media and Sport will invest £500,000 over two years in the English Chess Federation (ECF). This injection of funds will play a pivotal role in nurturing emerging talents by facilitating expert coaching, training camps, and advanced computer analysis for international competitions. A portion of this funding will be dedicated to supporting visually impaired and deaf players to compete in their own elite-level competitions.

In addition to the funds allocated to the ECF, and to enhance accessibility and engagement with the game, the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities will allocate £250,000 to 85 local authorities in England in order to install 100 new chess tables in public parks and outdoor green spaces. This initiative aims to provide opportunities for more people to connect, play, and develop their problem-solving skills while also combating social isolation.

Notably, the drive to expand chess education also extends to children in primary schools, particularly in disadvantaged areas. The Department for Education will in addition give grants of up to £2,000 to at least 100 schools, enabling them to introduce chess sets, online tutorials, and learning platforms to encourage more children (particularly girls) to learn to play the game. This concerted effort to make chess accessible at a young age is expected to contribute to students' wellbeing, cognitive development and problem-solving abilities.

The chess community and players in the UK have not been slow to voice their enthusiasm for the new funding for chess. Harriet Hunt, International Master and former World Girls' Champion, expressed her support: "I am delighted that this government funding will enable the next generation of English talents to reach their potential and compete successfully at the highest level internationally."

David Howell, one of the UK's leading players, hailed the initiative as a boon for the chess community: "Chess has been my life and, as a professional player, the news of support from the government is music to my ears. Hopefully, this will inspire the next generation of chess players, as well as bringing the joys of the game that I love to an even wider audience."

Jitendra Singh, father of the UK's standout chess prodigy Shreyas Royal, warmly welcomed the funding as a huge step in helping young aspiring players (and their parents) develop their talents.

This comprehensive package of investment could and hopefully will be a turning point for chess in England, providing as it does substantial direct cash support for chess in various ways and signalling an important change of attitude at the governmental level.

So let us applaud and congratulate the UK government for taking such a bold step, particularly at this time of fiscal challenge.

It is of course true that more could be done - chess in the UK is still not officially recognised as a sport which means it is not eligible for financial support from Sport England or other UK sport funding bodies.

But this is a moment for optimism about the future of chess, and a moment when the UK chess community should collectively say thank you to those in charge.

Chess players and administrators will now eagerly anticipate a reenergised interest in chess at all levels from this substantial boost to funding and infrastructure. And let us dare to hope that the UK will soon re-emerge as a major force in world chess, and that our elite talents will once again rank among the very best players in the world.

Editor



A CLOSER LOOK AT THE 2023 BRITISH CHESS CHAMPIONSHIPS

By IM Shaun Taulbut

Photo: British Chess Championships

The British Chess Championships were held at De Montfort University in Leicester from the 20th until 30th July 2023. In the Championship Michael Adams won with 7.5/9 with Steven A Jones second with 6.5/9 and a tie for 3rd to 6th place between Daniel Fernandez, Harry Grieve, Matthew Wadsworth and Yichen Han, all with 6/9. Michael Adams won the first prize of £5000 and Steven A Jones - a 2175-rated-player(!) - the second prize of £2500. The 3rd to 6th prizes were £1500, £1000, £1000 and £750 and these were shared equally between those in 3rd-6th places.

Lan Yao won the Women's Championship and the prize of £1000 and Yichen Han the Under-21 Championship.

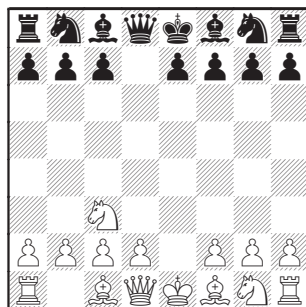
In this issue, we will take a closer look at some of the top games from the British Chess Championships.

In the first round the favourite and highest graded payer Michael Adams beat Steven A Jones and in round three Michael Adams on 2.5/3 met Daniel Fernandez who had 3/3 and this was their game, featuring the Scandinavian Defence against 1.e4.

Michael Adams - Daniel Fernandez

109th ch-GBR 2023 Leicester ENG (4.1)

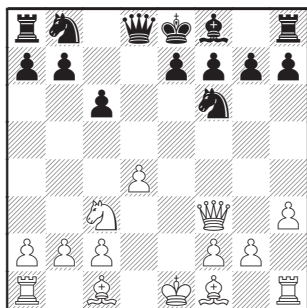
1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖xd5 3.♘c3 ♗d8



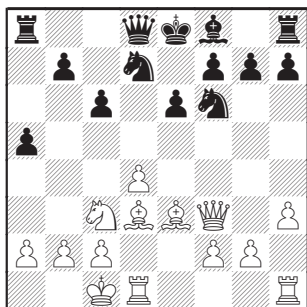
The most cautious of the queen moves; the alternatives are 3...♗a5 and 3...♗d6. White has a lead in development so Black must be careful.

4.d4 ♗f6 More combative is the kingside fianchetto 4...g6 played by Blackburne, eg 5.'e3 (*Strongest is 5.♗f4 ♗g7 6.♗d2 as in Fischer- Robatsch Varna 1962*) 5...♗g7 6.♗c4 ♗c6 7.♗ge2 ♗h6 8.♗d2 ♗f5 9.0-0 a6 10.h3 b5 11.♗d5 ♗b7 12.♗xc6+ ♗xc6 13.f3 h5 14.♗f4 ♗d6 15.♗d3 b4 16.♗e4 ♗b5 17.♗xd6+ cxd6 18.♗e3 ♗c8 19.♗he1 0-0 20.♗b1 ♗a5 21.♗c1 ♗d7 22.g4 ♗e6 23.♗g5 ♗c4 24.♗e2 ♗fc8 25.♗xe7 ♗c7 26.♗dd2 ♗xe7 27.d5 ♗f6 28.♗b3 ♗d7 29.♗e4 ♗a4 30.♗xc4 ♗xc4 31.g5 ♗xg5 32.♗xc4 ♗xd2 Meitner-Blackburne Vienna 1873 0-1.

5.♗f3 ♗g4 6.h3 ♗xf3 7.♗xf3 c6 Black has surrendered the bishop pair but plans to control d5

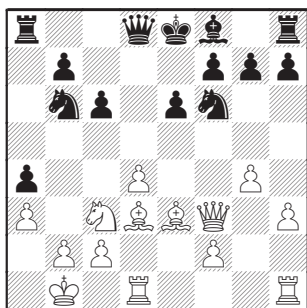


8...e3 e6 9...d3 Nbd7 10.0-0 a5



10...Bb4 looks stronger, threatening to capture the white knight on c3 but Black hopes to generate counterplay on the queenside.

11.g4 Bb6 12.Qb1 a4 13.a3

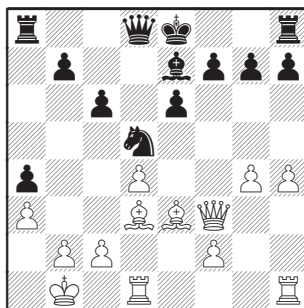


Preventing Black from disrupting the queenside with ...a3.

13...Bc7 14.h4 White prepares g5 to harass the black knight and attack the black king if he castles queenside.

14...Nbd5 Not 14...h6, when 15.g5 is much better for White.

15.Nxd5 Nxd5



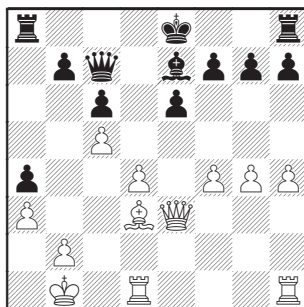
The alternative 15...Qxd5 16.Qe2 is worth consideration. Now White makes an interesting choice, allowing the exchange of his dark-squared bishop but further increasing his lead in development.

16.c4 Nxe3 17.Qxe3 Also worth consideration was 17.fxe3 Qxh4 (17...Qd7 18.g5 0-0 19.Qg4 with good attacking chances for White) 18.d5 cxd5 19.cxd5 exd5 20.Qb5+ f8 21.Qxd5 Qe7 22.Qd7 Qf6 23.Qxb7 with a decisive attack against f7.

17...Qb6 If 17...Qxh4 18.d5 Qe7 19.dxe6 fxe6 20.f4 is decisive, with the threat of trapping the bishop on h4 with g5.

18.c5 Qc7 18...Qb3 19.Qe2 Qd5 20.Qc4 Qd8 21.f4 with strong play for White.

19.f4



White is ready to break through with f5 and the black king is poorly placed in the centre; Castling kingside is unattractive as White can launch a pawn storm with g5 and h5, and castling queenside leaves the pawn on a4 vulnerable.

19...b6 20.f5 exf5 If 20...bxc5 21.fxe6 cxd4 22.exf7+ ♔f8 23.♖xd4 with a decisive advantage for White.

21.d5 f4 After 21...bxc5 22.d6 ♖xd6 23.♙xf5 ♖f6 24.♗hf1 ♖xh4 25.♙d7+ ♔f8 26.♙xc6 ♖c8 (26...♗b8 27.♖e5 is winning) 27.♖e6 wins;

or 21...cxd5 22.♙b5+ ♔f8 23.cxb6 ♙c5 24.bxc7 ♙xe3 25.♗xd5 g6 26.gxf5 ♔g7 27.♙d7 ♙b6 28.♖c1 ♙xc7 29.♗xc7 is winning.

22.♖e4 cxd5 23.♙b5+ ♔f8 24.♗xd5 ♖d8 25.♗hd1 ♗xd5 26.♗xd5 g6 27.c6 ♙f6 28.g5 ♖e7 29.♖xe7+ ♙xe7 30.c7 ♔g7 31.♗d7

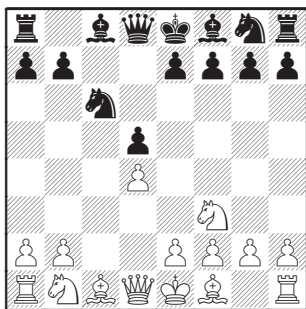
1-0

Daniel Fernandez did very well to bounce back after this loss beating Mark Hebden and then Matthew Wadsworth in the following game.

Matthew J Wadsworth – Daniel Fernandez

109th ch-GBR 2023 Leicester ENG (6.2)

1.c4 c6 2.♘f3 d5 3.cxd5 cxd5 4.d4 ♘c6



5.♘c3 ♘f6 6.♙f4 a6 7.♗c1 ♖b6 Aiming to disturb White's development by attacking the pawn on b2.

8.♘a4 ♖a5+ 9.♙d2 ♖d8 10.♖b3 White has the edge on the queenside.

10...e6 11.♘b6 ♗b8 12.♘e5 White continues with his attack; 12.e3 was more prudent.

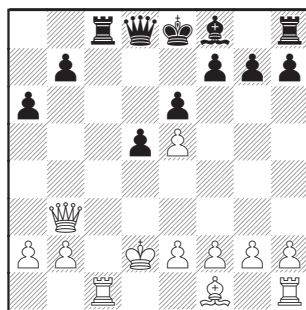
12...♘e4 The most accurate move.

After 12...♘xd4 13.♖a4+ ♘b5 14.♙a5 ♖d6 15.f4 ♙d7 16.e4, with a strong attack: 16...dxe4 17.♘bxd7 ♘xd7 18.♗d1 is winning for White.

13.♘xc8 If 13.♘xc6 bxc6 14.♗xc6 (14.♙a5 ♙d7 15.e3 ♙d6 16.f3 ♘f6 17.♙xa6 ♙c7 is winning for Black) 14...♙d7 is winning for Black.

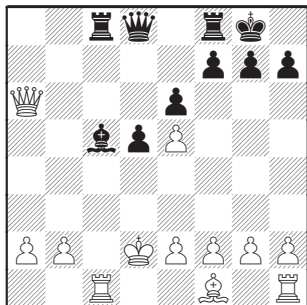
13...♘xd2 After 13...♘xe5 14.dxe5 ♗xc8 15.♖xb7 ♗xc1+ 16.♙xc1 ♖a5+ 17.♔d1 ♘xf2+ 18.♔c2 ♖c5+ 19.♔b1 ♘xh1 20.♖a8+ ♔d7 21.e4 dxe4 22.♙xa6 ♖xe5 23.♖b7+ ♖c7 24.♙b5+ ♔d8 25.♙g5+ f6 26.♖a8+ ♔e7 27.♙f4 e5 28.♖e8+ ♔d6 29.♙e3 Black cannot escape easily with a draw by perpetual check.

14.♔xd2 ♘xe5 15.dxe5 ♗xc8



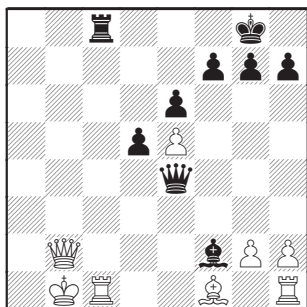
16.♖xb7 Best is 16.♗xc8 ♖xc8 17.e3, with an equal position.

16...♙c5 17.♖xa6 0-0



Now the white king is exposed on d2 and Black has direct threats including ...Wg5+.

18.♔d1 ♖a8 19.♗d3 ♙xf2 20.e3 ♖xa2
21.♗d4 ♗g5 22.♙e2 ♖xb2+ 23.♗xb2
♗xe3+ 24.♔d1 ♗e1+ 25.♙c2 ♖c8+
26.♔b1 ♗e4+



The white king cannot move to the a-file because of ...♖a8+, winning.

27.♖c2 ♙d4 28.♙a6 After 28.♗b3, ♗e1+ mates.

28...♙xb2 29.♙xc8 ♙xe5 30.♙d7 ♗b4+
31.♙a2 ♗a5+ 32.♔b3 ♗b6+ 33.♙a3 ♙d6+
White resigned as, after the king goes to the a-file, ...♗a7+ wins the bishop and the game.

0-1

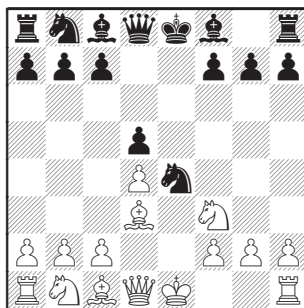
At the end of the seventh round Michael Adams and Daniel Fernandez were in the

lead with 6/7 followed by Yichen Han with 5/7. In round eight Daniel Fernandez was paired with Harry Grieve, the 2022 British Champion, and they had a tense struggle as follows

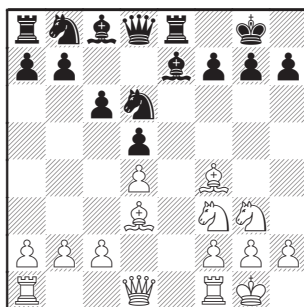
Harry Grieve - Daniel Fernandez SIN

109th ch-GBR 2023 Leicester ENG (8.2)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♗xe5 d6 4.♘f3 ♘xe4
5.d4 d5 6.♙d3

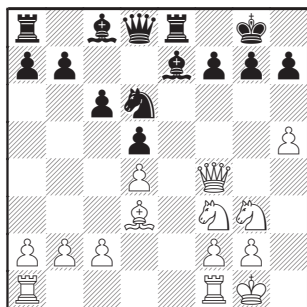


6...♘d6 7.0-0 ♙e7 8.♘c3 c6 9.♙e2 0-0
10.♘g3 ♖e8 11.♙f4



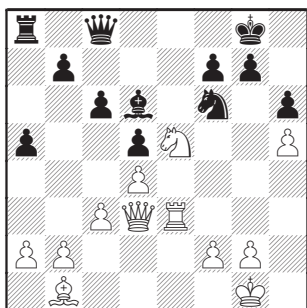
White has a space advantage and uses this to build up a kingside attack: 11...♘d7
12.h4 ♘f8 13.♗d2 ♘g6 14.h5 ♘xf4
15.♗xf4.

White has surrendered the bishop pair to bring his queen into an attacking position, but Black has no weaknesses.



15...h6 16.♖ae1 ♗f8 17.c3 a5 18.♙b1
♜xe1 19.♜xe1 ♘e8 20.♙f5 ♙f6 21.♙e5
♙xf5 Not 21...♙xh5 22.♙xh6+ which
leads to mate.

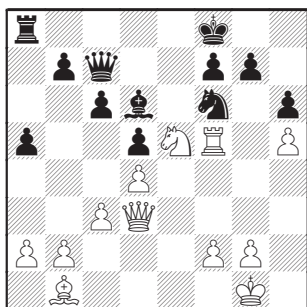
22.♙xf5 ♙c8 23.♙d3 ♙d6 24.♖e3



White brings his rook to the third rank to
further threaten the black kingside

24...♙f8 25.♖f3 ♙c7 26.♖f5

White defends the outpost on e5 and the game
revolves around the control of this outpost.

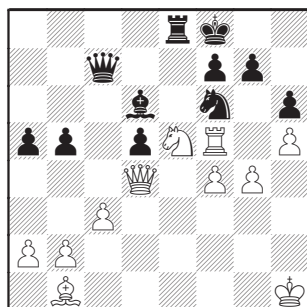


After 26.♖xf6 gxf6 27.♙g4 ♙e8 28.g3
♙d7 29.♙e3 f5 30.♙xf5 ♙e1+ 31.♙g2
♙e6 Black is better, so White defends the
knight on e5 and the struggle continues
around the control of the e5-square.

26...♖e8 27.f4 c5 28.♙h1 b5 Preparing...
b4 to undermine the white queenside.

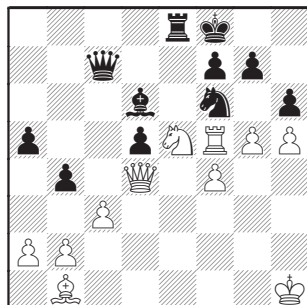
29.g4 White continues his attack plan; not
29.♙xb5 cxd4, when Black is much better.

29...cxd4 30.♙xd4



Not 30.cxd4 ♙c1+ 31.♙g2 ♙xb2+, which
is winning for Black.

30...b4 31.g5



31...hgx5 Best was 31...♙xe5 32.fxe5
(After 32.♖xe5 ♖xe5 33.fxe5 ♙xh5 34.gxh6
gxh6 Black is slightly better) 32...♙xh5
33.♙g2 (33.gxh6 ♙g3+ 34.♙g2 ♙xf5
35.♙xf5 gxh6 36.e6 bxc3 37.♙h8+ ♙e7
38.♙g7 cxb2 39.♙xb2 ♖g8+ 40.♙h1 ♙g3

41.♖b7+ ♔f6 42.♖xf7+ ♔e5 43.♖c7+ ♔xf5 *is winning for Black*) 33...g6 34.♖f1 hxg5, when Black is better.

32.h6 gxf4 A practical try was 32...gxh6 33.♖xf6 (33.♔g6+ ♔g8 34.♖xf6 ♖e1+ 35.♔g2 fxg6 36.♖xg6+ ♖g7) 33...♔xe5 34.fxe5 ♖xe5 when Black has drawing chances.

33.hxg7+ ♔g8 If 33...♔xg7 34.♖g5+ ♔h6 (34...♔h8 35.♖xf4 ♔xe5 (35...♔h7 36.♖x7) 36.♖h4+), 35.♖xf4 is winning.

34.♖xf4 ♖e6 34...♖xe5 35.♖xe5 ♔xe5 36.♖h6.

35.♖h6 ♔h7 36.♖f6

This game won the Alexander best game prize for 2022 British Champion Harry Grieve.

In round eight Michael Adams drew with Yichen Han and then in the final, ninth round, he beat Jonah Willow while Steven A Jones beat Daniel Fernandez. This left Michael Adams as the winner by a whole point.

Adams played consistently at a high level to win, beating his rivals Nick Pert, Harry Grieve and Daniel Fernandez, and deservedly won his eighth title (clinching the first one as far back as 1989)!

1-0

Also, a great result for Steven A Jones and Women's Champion Lan Yao.

FINAL RANKING AFTER 9 ROUNDS							
Rk.	SNo.	Namr	FED	Rtg	TB1	K	rtg+/-
1	1	GM Adams, Michael	ENG	2666	7.5	10	4.1
2	32	Jones, Steven A	ENG	2175	6.5	20	62.8
3	3	GM Fernandez, Daniel H	ENG	2518	6	10	-1.1
	5	IM Grieve, Harry	ENG	2459	6	10	5.1
	7	IM Wadsworth, Matthew J	ENG	2431	6	10	1
	10	FM Han, Yichen	NED	2412	6	10	0.1
7	2	GM Pert, Nicholas	ENG	2536	5.5	10	-10.3
	4	GM Gasanov, Eldar	UKR	2481	5.5	10	-7.8
	6	GM Hebden, Mark L	ENG	2436	5.5	10	-2
	8	IM Pert, Richard G	ENG	2421	5.5	10	-11.4
	9	IM Willow, Jonah B	ENG	2421	5.5	10	2.2
	13	IM Eggleston, David J	ENG	2358	5.5	10	-8.9
	15	IM Kanyamarala, Tarun	IRL	2344	5.5	10	-1.7
	17	FM Derakhshani, Borna	ENG	2341	5.5	10	3.5
	18	FM Balaji, Aaravamudhan	ENG	2334	5.5	20	-15.8
	19	FM Claridge-Hansen, William	ENG	2332	5.5	20	13.4
	23	IM Ledger, Andrew J	ENG	2299	5.5	10	14.7
	24	IM Rudd, Jack	ENG	2286	5.5	20	17
	31	WIM Yao, Lan	ENG	2242	5.5	20	37.6
	36	Boswell, Jacob Connor	ENG	2163	5.5	20	4

**INTERVIEW WITH STEVEN A. JONES
(RATED 2175) WHO SURPRISINGLY
CAME IN SECOND IN THE BRITISH
CHESS CHAMPIONSHIPS**

'I DON'T HAVE ANY FEAR IN PLAYING FOR THE WIN AGAINST STRONG OPPONENTS'

By James Pratt; abcdparrot@hotmail.com
Photo: S. Jones

I caught up with **Steven Jones** on online after he had shown great patience and good humour, your scribe attempting entry without due aplomb. *Some things never change!*

Steven, 30, is a Project Manager based in Ascot and, unsurprisingly, a member of his local Basingstoke club.

SJ: 'I moved to the Basingstoke area in 2017, and have felt very settled in the area sense. It is my partner's neck of the woods, we have been in the house for about three years now and the local chess scene keeps me on my toes!'

Originally from the North - he spoke fondly about his first games in the Warrington League - he was pleased to pay tribute to an early teacher, George Davison.

SJ: 'George was incredible for me and so many other young players in the region. It is a huge testament to the impact one enthusiastic person can have on chess that the U18 Cheshire County team that won the national championships had all eight players go through the same junior club ran in a junior school on Friday nights. I would never have found chess the way I did without that and without the friends I made from that time; my best friend from the age of four and I -

**STEVEN
JONES**



Chris Chadwick - still talk chess whenever we can.'

Steven eventually graduated from Royal Holloway in Egham. He seems to have thrived on it!

SJ: 'My dad taught me the rules at six and I would play him pretty much every single day. I didn't win my first game until I was eight. It still helps me now knowing that no matter how badly I play, I won't go on a two-year losing streak again.'

University was a wonderful experience for me. I met my partner in first-year halls of residence, and the block was so supportive with my chess. They would joke whenever I went to games that I needed to win to get let back in, but then I remember the reaction when in my third week on university I beat my first IM and we had the biggest celebration party. I grew so much in those three years: it set me up for adulthood, no doubt about it.'

Though seeded a modest thirty-third in a field of sixty-four aspirants, the untitled man finished second - second alone - in the British Chess Championship in Leicester, runner-up to England's greatest ever grandmaster, Mickey Adams, but ahead of many higher rated, younger and, in so many cases, more experienced players. In Elo terms this is

about 2473, an IM norm but nothing grander. And as to that he honestly seemed not to mind. Not that he came without cups and the jangle of medals, having been placed 2nd in Basman's *Delancey Terafinal* as long ago as 2009. Congress success followed.

SJ: 'I have never been a touted player but I back myself and get a lot of joy out of surpassing expectations. Having spent a lot of time with high-rated players, something I've noticed that sets me apart from some of my contemporaries is that I don't have any fear in playing for the win against strong opponents. I play the best move if I can and if I am better then I intend to win. Having done some coaching and spoken with others, it shocks me that this mentality isn't as common as you might expect, there's a lot of aiming to draw or being in a terrible mental state before the game begins. I have always been dangerous, I've beaten enough strong opponents not to be overawed before games start.'

I asked him first about accusations of cheating in the game, a recent bugbear that clouded the English Chess Forum. I noticed the testing going on whilst I was watching the event and our man seemed totally unfazed.

'I was oblivious to this before the interview! I have had a check of the forum since and it was interesting to read through the comments; it was quite clear quite fast that it was more a case of 'trolling' than a genuine belief I had cheated.

I think in general, though, it is important for me to acknowledge my position on cheating scrutiny in chess. I have absolutely no problem with people correctly recognising that this event was a bit anomalous on paper and it is worth thinking critically when odd results happen. I think if you look through my games it is quite abundantly obvious I was not cheating, but I don't get offended by people asking the right questions. I don't think we should be encouraging witch-hunts but nor do I think we should

be shutting down reasonable questions because cheating really does represent an existential threat to the game we love.

Tangentially, I cannot understand in the slightest the appeal of cheating in chess and think that those caught cheating should face very strong action. The way I think of it is that if I tomorrow decided I wanted to win the Olympic 100m; I could take every performance enhancing drug under the sun and wouldn't be able to do it. That would still be incredibly wrong, but it is performance enhancement to an already talented individual. Using an engine for chess completely removes the player from the game, there's no sense of accomplishment, no reason. I think people with the mindset to do that, to inflict the damage it would cause on chess players and the game as a whole, need to be taken out of the competitive scene when identified.'

I asked about pre-tournament preparation and here he used Ravi Haria's new book on the Rossolimo 3.'b5 Sicilian, not a text with which I was familiar.

SJ: 'It's a very good book! One of Ravi's anti-Sicilian series. Trying to find improvement areas from the black side was anything but trivial.'

He explained that as the championships unfolded (it has recently been shortened to 9 rounds) he became better at predicting his opponent's moves; the options became clearer.

SJ: 'The event was only average for me after the first four rounds, and I was well beaten in the fourth round by Ankush Khandelwal and had a big reflection on what wasn't going right. I've never taken this approach before, but I made a spreadsheet after my fourth game in which I listed out all the moves that I'd missed during my calculations.

I made 21 miscalculations during the first four games, which was about one every ten moves (not too terrible). The

concerning thing was that, of the 21 miscalculations, 12 of the times I missed literally the move that my opponent played on the board: mistakes at the depth of less than one move of depth.

I made a really concerted effort to tighten this up for the rest of the event, and the impact it had was immense. It's always been the issue for me kicking on, not the good I do but the unforgivably bad moves I make. I believe I showed if I can be solid then I can be a threat and do some exciting things in the near future. I guess we will find out soon.'

Though this had been his career best - best so far - he added that he hoped better results would still be his. By the time this is read by *BCM* readers he should have played in Gavin Wall's Masters in Newcastle, so we'll have to see! I wished him well and thanked him for his time.

Daniel H Fernandez - Steven A Jones

British Championship Leicester ENG (9.2)

1.e**4** c5 2.b3 First played by John Cochrane in the nineteenth century, today a fav with the Azerbaijani GM Vasif Durarbayli but what about Fernandez? It can appear in his games, almost, but as the gambit 2.b4?!

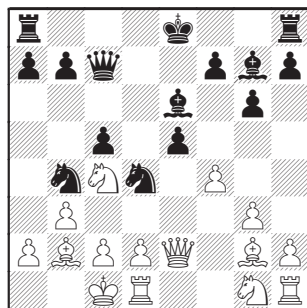
2... **c6** 3.**b2** **f6** 4.e5 **d5** 5.g3 **d6** 6.ex**d6** **xd6** Howell, writing in 'The Times', claimed 'Black has won the opening battle.' I am not sure.

7.**g2** e5 8.**a3** **e6** 9.**c4** **c7** 10.**h5**?! Provocation or just time-wasting? **e2** a move earlier and a timely **f2-f4** are surely better.

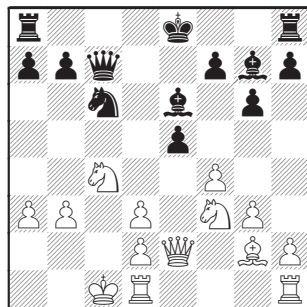
10... **g6** Black has formed a bind with effective central control. White, a grandmaster and tournament No.2 seed, is getting in a mess.

11.**e2** **g7** 12.f4 "?" Says Howell and this time I do agree.

12 ... **db4** 13.0-0-0 **d4**



14.**xd4** **cx**d4 15.a3 **d3** 16.c**xd3** **c6** 17.**f3**



17...**b5**! Excellent timing.

18.**fxe5** **xe5** 19.**xa8** How long did the GM spend on the clock to settle on this snatch? Black, unrelenting, sharpens his spears.

19 ... **bx**c4 20.d**xc4**? 0-0 Later Jones gave 20 ... **xc**c4 21 **bx**c4 and only now 21 ... 0-0 as preferable.

21.f**xe5** & **xa8** 22.d4 White's defences are as thin as a membrane and as useless as a pantomime cow's tail!

22 ... & **b8** 23.d5 **f5** 24.b4 **xe5** 25.g4 & **e8** 26.**f1** **gx**g4 27.c5 **f4**+ 28.**b2** & **e2**+ 29.**b3** **e5** 30.**a4** a6 31.c6 **f5** 32.**a5** **c7**+ 33.**xa6** **e3** 34.**b5** **b6**+ 35.**c4** **a6**+ 36.**c3** **xa3**+ 37.**c4** **a6**+ 38.**c3** **c2**+ 39.**b3** **a2**#

0-1

An odd end to a cheating controversy: Hans Niemann, Magnus Carlsen and Chess.com reach an agreement



Storm in a teacup

By GM Aleksandar Colovic

“This is the way the world ends,
Not with a bang but a whimper.”

T. S. Eliot, “The Hollow Men”

When last September then World Champion left the Sinquefeld Cup after losing a game to Hans Niemann, the world went crazy with speculation about the reasons for this unprecedented flashpoint in Carlsen’s career.

Soon that speculation turned into concrete accusations of cheating on Niemann’s part. The American grandmaster was ostracised by many in the chess community, starting with the famous streamer Hikaru Nakamura and including the world’s dominating chess server, chess.com.

Niemann did not accept the accusations against him without a fight. In October of that year he filed a lawsuit in Missouri against Carlsen, Nakamura and chess.com, seeking (at least) \$100 million in compensation from each for what he claimed was the damage to his reputation.

At first, the lawsuit was dismissed on technical grounds, but Niemann intended to take matters further.

FIDE decided to launch its own investigation into the matter and, while it took months to prepare, the report of the Fair Play Commission (FPL) was eventually submitted to the Ethics and Disciplinary Commission (EDC) for consideration and a final decision. However, not wanting to affect the proceedings of the civil lawsuit brought by Niemann in Missouri, FIDE decided to postpone the publication of the FPL report.

The chess world meanwhile was divided into two camps - some believed Carlsen in spite of him giving no evidence to support his accusations, while others believed Niemann thinking that he had every right to sue his accusers since no evidence to support the accusations against him had been adduced.

These allegations caught the attention of the outside world, too. Famous people who have nothing to do with chess felt free to express their opinions. This even grabbed the interest of Elon Musk, a genius who is often disdainful towards chess. In his usual somewhat eccentric style, one of Musk's tweets even suggested that anal beads (it really takes a genius to come up with this!) might have been used in order to cheat...

It is in fact not unusual for people who have not delved more deeply into chess to ridicule it. They only see the surface - the 64 squares, 32 pieces, symmetry on the board, the hunched chess players - and simplistically conclude that the game is "boring." The great German chess player Siegbert Tarrasch would have felt sorry for them (one of his most famous quotes is "Chess, like love, like music, has the power to make people happy"), but Tarrasch would no doubt have regarded such a failure to understand the depth and beauty of chess and the rich diversity it can offer as undoubtedly standing to the great loss of the game's detractors.

And so it is with Musk, who perhaps subconsciously realises that his genius in other areas does not extend to chess and so he feels the need to deride the game.

Nonetheless, the dispute between Carlsen and Niemann meant that chess was all over the news and everybody was talking about it. It's debatable whether that was a good thing or not, in view of the "cheating" storyline, but at least chess once again was up there in lights and, for a brief period at least, was once again (sort of) popular.

Months passed and no news came out from the concerned parties. Which only gave rise to more speculation.

And then, a few days before this issue of BCM went to print, the following statement was issued by chess.com:

"Chess.com and Hans Niemann have resolved their differences and are moving forward."

You can read the whole statement on their website.

Each side also issued a very carefully written (probably by lawyers) and coordinated statement:

'We are pleased to report that we have reached an agreement with Hans Niemann to put our differences behind us and move forward together without further litigation. At this time, Hans has been fully reinstated to Chess.com, and we look forward to his participation in our events. We would also like to reaffirm that we stand by the findings in our October 2022 public report regarding Hans, including that we found no determinative evidence that he has cheated in any in-person games. We all love chess and appreciate all of the passionate fans and community members who allow us to do what we do.' - Chess.com

'I acknowledge and understand Chess.com's report, including its statement that there is no determinative evidence that Niemann cheated in his game against me at

the Sinquefeld Cup. I am willing to play Niemann in future events, should we be paired together.' - Magnus Carlsen

'I am pleased that my lawsuit against Magnus Carlsen and Chess.com has been resolved in a mutually acceptable manner, and that I am returning to Chess.com. I look forward to competing against Magnus in chess rather than in court and am grateful to my attorneys at Oved & Oved for believing in me and helping me resolve the case.' - Hans Niemann

What was expected to be a bombshell lawsuit ended in a friendly agreement.

In other words, the lawsuit was drawn. With a whimper.

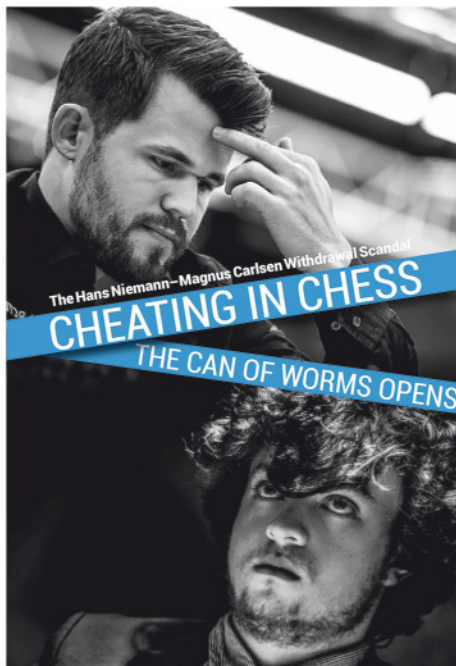
However, as in every drawn game, one side has more to be happy about than the other. In this particular draw, it seems that Niemann is the one happier with the result in spite of not getting the millions he had claimed.

Chess.com decided to reinstate him on their server (for a second or third time - some players rightfully asked how is it that he gets more chances than others who only get one, and was the threat of a lawsuit strong enough for chess.com to relent?), despite chess.com stating that they “stand by their findings.”

Carlsen's own statement seems to hinge on a single, face-saving word - “determinative.” When you compare Carlsen's concluding statement (see above) it denotes a stark change from his furious reaction when leaving St. Louis more than a year ago and the strong conviction of harm having been done to him. But now the wordsmiths have come up with this excellent word, “determinative,” which appears to allow everybody to continue believing what they had done and said while also allowing them to sign a peace treaty.

The last important part of this saga that may (or may not) see the light of day is the FIDE report. The intriguing part here is that FIDE's rules essentially state that where a manifestly unfounded accusation is made (i.e. one without presenting any evidence) then sanctions against the accuser shall follow. In light of the above statements, with Carlsen acknowledging that there was no determinative proof of Niemann cheating in the game against him, the accusation he made might be considered to be manifestly unfounded. So, will FIDE take action against the former World Champion, or will FIDE align itself with the amicable settlement between Carlsen and Niemann and also comfortably conclude the entire affair with another drawn result and a judicious whimper or even silence?

We shall simply have to wait and see, as the clock of the chess world's most important body continues to tick down...





WORLD CUP IN BAKU: A MONTH-LONG MARATHON OF UPSETS AND SURPRISES

By GM Aleksandar Colovic
alexcolovic.com
Photo: FIDE Official
Stev Bonhage
Anna Stourman

The event in Baku will be remembered for some of the best games in chess as well as because of yet another achievement by Magnus Carlsen. The former World Champion accomplished a significant milestone by capturing his inaugural World Cup title, the only tournament that was missing from his immense collection of victories

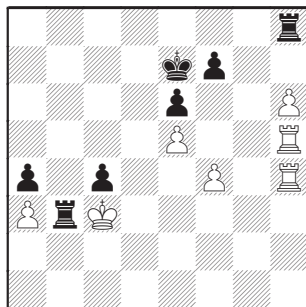
The FIDE World Cup in Baku took place from 30 July to 24 August. The almost full month gruelling competition is among the most beloved and popular in the world. The reason for this is that the two-game knockout matches produce so many upsets and surprises that we get a welcome break from the never-ending elite round-robins.

In Baku, the upsets and surprises were happening every day. For example, pre-tournament favourites like Mamedyarov and Abdusattorov lost their first matches to Tin Jingyao and Sanal Vahap respectively. Grischuk also lost his first match to Daneshvar Bardiya, deep into the tie-breaks with a score 5-4.

To give you a taste of the “action” that was omnipresent at the World Cup, here’s an appetizer from the second round, where another favourite (in the match) bit the dust.

Sam Shankland - Ivan Schitco

FIDE World Cup 2023 Baku AZE (2.1)



Shankland was pressing the whole game, but his opponent defended well and now it was time to settle down for a draw. However...

57. ♖xc4?? The other king moves led to a draw.

57... ♖c8+ 58. ♔d4 ♖bc3! There is no defence against ... ♖8c3#. A shocking loss for the favourite, who couldn't win the second game on demand and was eliminated from the competition.

0-1

There were many stories in the World Cup, happy and sad, triumphant and tragic. I will take a look at the biggest three of them.

NINJA ABASOV

I met and played Nijat Abasov 10 years ago at an open tournament in Italy. Our game was an uneventful draw. I was higher rated than him back then (though he was rated almost 2500) and I finished a clear second in the tournament, while he finished half a point behind me. My impression of him was of an intelligent and curious young man who was not entirely sure how far he could go. I have followed him over the years as he comfortably crossed into the 2600 territory and stayed there without much effort. In spite of this, he was always in the shadow of his eminent compatriots - not only Radjabov and Mamedyarov but also Mamedov, Guseinov and Safarli. However, in this event in Baku, he outshone all of them, earning him the nickname Ninja Abasov, as somebody on the internet wittily called him.

Except for the first round, when he eliminated Rodwell Makoto of Zimbabwe, Abasov was an underdog in every match afterwards. He started with a win over Fressinet 2.5-1.5, with three draws and a win with White in the rapid tie-breaks. This match set the tone for the style of his progress - playing for draws in the classical games and keeping his opening surprises and looking for his chances in the tie-breaks at faster time controls. In the past, this strategy has been used by lower-rated players with success, but in order to be successful, the lower-rated player must still play some decent chess!

The next, and much bigger surprise, was his elimination of one of the tournament favourites, Anish Giri. In the preview I did for my Youtube channel I noted that Giri is not quite the same at faster time controls - his results are markedly worse, especially compared to his fellow elite players. This was borne out in the match with Abasov, where first Giri couldn't hold a draw to win the match and later lost with White after being outplayed in the Dragon Sicilian.

The game where Abasov equalised the score in the second rapid game was an impressive, if uneven game where even Giri got his chances. His opening innovation in a well-known theoretical position also deserves praise.

Nijat Abasov - Anish Giri

FIDE World Cup 2023 Baku AZE (3.4)

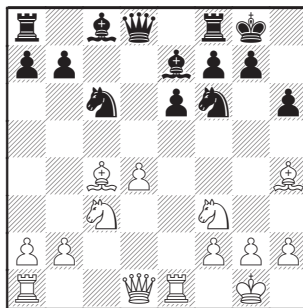
1.d4 ♘f6 2.e4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♙e7 Giri was relying on the QGD in this match and it served him well. In this game he needed a draw to progress to the next round, so he sticks to one of the most solid openings in chess.

5.♙g5 h6 6.♙h4 dxc4 This capture is a relatively recent short-cut. Instead of the vast theory of the main lines of the QGD, Black strives for a position with an IQP for White (or a symmetrical position, depending on White's choice on move 9) which is quite acceptable for him.

7.e3 One of Black's ideas is that 7.e4?! is met by the typical trick 7...♗xe4! 8.♗xe4 ♙xh4 when Black has already solved his problems.

7...c5 8.♙xc4 cxd4 9.exd4 Naturally, in a must-win situation White goes for the more dynamic option with an IQP instead of the symmetrical position with 9.♗xd4.

9...0-0 10.0-0 ♗c6 11.♖e1



After 11.♖e1 ♗h5! was the strong move that Karpov introduced in his match with Korchnoi in Merano, winning an exemplary

game that made it to all textbooks on how to play against the IQP. Giri has also used this move before. 12.♙xe7 ♘xe7 13.♙b3 (13. d5 leads to mass simplifications and a draw after 13...exd5 14.♙xd5 ♘xd5 15.♘xd5 ♘f6 ½-½ (36) Vidit,S (2695)-Giri,A (2783) Wijk aan Zee 2019) 13...♘f6 14.♘e5 ♙d7 15.♞e2 ♚c8 16.♘e4 ♘xe4 17.♞xe4 ♙c6 18.♘xc6 ♚xc6 with an advantage for Black in: 0-1 (43) Korchnoi,V (2650)-Karpov,A (2690) Merano m/9 1981.

11...♘h5 The same idea is applicable with a rook on e1, too.

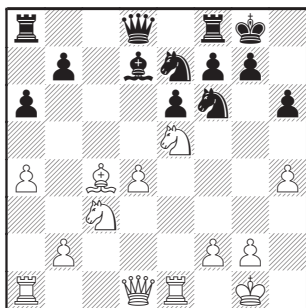
12.♙xe7 ♘xe7 13.♘e5 White must try to win, so he keeps the IQP.

In their classical encounter, Abasov chose the simplifying 13.d5 just like Vidit did in Wijk against the same opponent (see the previous note). Not surprisingly, the game was drawn without too many adventures: 13...exd5 14.♘xd5 ♘xd5 15.♙xd5 ♘f4 16.♙e4 ♙e6 17.♞d4 ♞xd4 18.♘xd4 ♙d5 ½-½ (37) Abasov,N (2632)-Giri,A (2775) Baku AZE 2023.

13...♘f6 14.a4 Curiously enough, White now plays three moves in a row with pawns, the first one of the queenside...

14...a6 15.h4 Then one on the kingside...

15...♙d7



16.g4! And now another one on the kingside, signalling an attack! It's rare to

see a pawn storm in IQP positions, but White's centre is stable and he must take some risks in view of the match situation. This is quite a creative opening preparation, especially as the engine is unconvinced and gives the boring 0.00.

16...♘c6 16...♙e8 17.g5 ♘d7 18.gxh6 gxh6 is what the engine proposes, but it's understandable that Giri didn't want to weaken his kingside. 19.♘d7 ♙xd7 20.♞h5 ♘h7 21.♘e4 is very unclear.

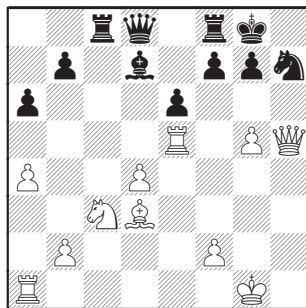
17.g5 hxg5? Clearly surprised, Giri makes it worse than it objectively was. This is a stark example how much an opening surprise is important in modern chess. Even an elite grandmaster couldn't find his way after being surprised and ended up lost mere 2 (!) moves after his opponent's 16.g4!

17...♘xe5 18.dxe5 ♘h7 is preferable, though White keeps attacking chances after 19.♙d3 ♙c6 20.♚e3.

18.hxg5 White should be winning now, though a lot of play remains.

18...♘xe5 19.♚xe5 ♘h7 20.♞h5 Black is passive and only helped White bring more pieces to the queenside.

20...♚c8 21.♙d3?



Natural, retreating with tempo, but this helps Black as he actually wants to play his next move.

It was better to keep the bishop on the a2-g8 diagonal with 21.♙b3! as this stops ...f5 and also threatens g6, to weaken the e6-pawn. 21...g6 stops g6, but after 22.♗h6 threatening ♔g2 and ♖h1. 22...♙c6 23.♙d1 White crashes through, with the threat of ♙d3-h3 or d5.

21...f5! Now Black is back into the game.

22.gxf6 ♜xf6 23.♗h4 ♔f7 24.♙ae1 ♙h8 25.♗g5 ♙h6 Black managed to consolidate, though at least visually White still has the initiative.

26.♙1e3?! 26.♙e4 is best according to the engine, stopping ...♙c6, but after 26...♜xe4 27.♜xe4 ♙c6 Black is in no way worse.

26...♙c6! Now Black takes over the initiative. The crude threat is ...♙h1♯.

27.♙f1? This should have lost, but tie-breaks have their own rules.

27.f3 is better, but after 27...♗h8! it is Black who starts to attack the opponent's king.

27...♜d5? Black wants an endgame to secure himself against an attack, but misses a good chance.

27...♗xd4! was brave and decisive. After 28.♙xe6 ♜g8 the threat is still ...♙h1. Black's king is safer here and this gives him a decisive advantage.

28.♙g3 White is equal now.

28...♗xg5 29.♙exg5 ♙g8 Under normal circumstances Giri would have never lost this endgame.

30.♙g6+ ♙f6 30...♙e7 31.♙e4 Attacks the pawn on g7 and that is most likely why Giri didn't play it. Still, after 31...♜xc3 32.♙xc6 bxc6 33.bxc3 g6 the double-rook endgame should be a draw.

31.♙e4 ♜e7 A rather surprising move, leaving White with an active knight.



Nijat - Ninja - Abasov:
A huge surprise from Azerbaijan

I wonder why Giri didn't go for the simplifications after 31...♜xc3 32.♙xc6 bxc6 33.bxc3 as Black should have little trouble drawing this endgame. For example, even an active play sacrificing a pawn should suffice: 33...♙c8!? 34.♙xg7 c5 with enough counterplay.

32.♙xc6 ♜xc6 It was better to take with pawn, but then it would have been better to play that position without knights!

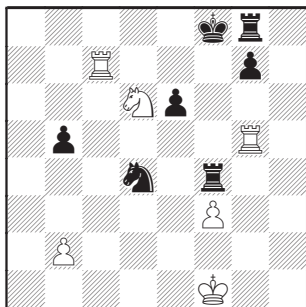
33.♜e4+ White has an unpleasant initiative now.

33...♙f7 34.♙f3+ ♙e7 35.♙b3 b5 36.♙c3 ♙h4! The only move for Black to stay in the game. This already indicates that his choice on move 31 was rather risky, forcing him into a position where he needs to find only moves.

37.axb5 axb5 38.f3 ♜xd4 39.♙c7+ ♙f8?? Cracking under pressure.

39...♙d8 was the only move. It looks scary, but Black holds. 40.♙gc5 (40.♙a7 ♙h1+ 41.♙g2 ♙gh8 is also fine for Black.) 40...♙e8 41.♜g5 (41.♙xg7 ♙e7) 41...♙e7 42.♜f7+ ♙e8 43.♜d6+ ♙d8 and White has nothing more than a perpetual.

40.♜d6 ♙f4



41. ♖g4! Perhaps Giri missed this move?

41... ♖xf3+ 41... ♖xg4 42. ♖f7# being the point.

42. ♕g2 Black loses a piece as the knight on d4 cannot move and defending it allows ♖xe5, winning the rook on f3.

1-0

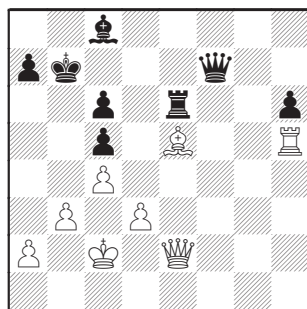
Next in line was previous World Cup winner Svidler. The same strategy worked again, solid draws in classical and an immediate pounce on Svidler's blunder in the second rapid game.

The next two matches were won in classical, first against Salem, a 2-0 sweep, though in the second game he was risking a serious attack on his king and then 1.5-0.5 against Vidit.

Reaching the semi-finals - and with this a qualification for the Candidates Tournament (in view of Carlsen's practically guaranteed refusal to play there) - is a dream come true for any player and Abasov made that dream come true. The first match he lost was to none other than Carlsen, but even in that match, he missed a golden opportunity in the first game when he could have won it (and later a few opportunities not to lose).

Magnus Carlsen - Nijat Abasov

FIDE World Cup 2023 Baku AZE (7.1)



Carlsen was pressing after a favourable opening, but Abasov defended well and now the position is objectively equal.

34. ♖h2? A blunder that neither of the players noticed.

34. ♕b2 ♖e8 35. ♕a3 ♖e7 with the idea to activate the bishop with ...♕g4 is one way to continue the game.

34... ♖g6? Missing a one-in-a-million chance.

34... ♖f1! Carlsen admitted that this move never entered his head. The idea is ...♖g6-g2, starting a surprising attack. 35. ♖d2 ♖g6 36. ♖h2 is a way to control the second rank, but now the attack switches to the first rank: 36... ♖g1 37. ♕b2 ♖b1+ 38. ♕c3 ♕f5! what a massive transformation of the pieces of both armies. The passive black pieces are delivering the final blow (the threat is ...♖d1 and the pawn on d3 cannot be defended) while White's active pieces are sentenced to utter passivity.

35. ♕f4 White is safe now, with the position going back to equal, but it is White who has the easier game, as he can probe the weaknesses on c5 and h6.

35. ♖xh6 ♖xh6 36. ♖xh6 ♖f2+ is an easy draw after 37. ♖d2 ♖xd2+ 38. ♕xd2 ♕b6

35...♟f6 One of the several possible moves, but this choice indicates that Black was set on passive defence.

35...♞g7! looks the most concrete, threatening ...♞a1 and/or ...♞g1. 36.♙d2 ♞a1 gives Black strong counterplay and no worries at all. 37.♙c1 ♞xa2+ 38.♙b2 a5 with the idea ...a4 ensures Black won't suffer.

36.♙e3 ♙f5?! The bishop is activated, but the other two pieces are stuck behind it.

36...♞g6 was a better way to activate the pieces. 37.♞xh6 this is White's best chance. (37.♞xc5 ♞f1 38.♙d2 ♞a1 39.♞a5 ♙g4 gives Black good compensation.) 37...♞xh6 38.♞xh6 ♞e7 is passive, but quite drawable after a long suffering.

37.♙xc5 ♞g6?! In this phase of the game Black fails to coordinate his pieces in an optimal way.

37...♞e6 38.♙d4 a5 was a more harmonious way, though not a solution to all problems. That chance was missed earlier. 39.♙d2! (39.♞xh6? ♙xd3+! is the idea of Black's defence. 40.♙xd3 ♞f1+ 41.♙d2 ♞e1+ 42.♙d3 ♞f1+ leads to a perpetual check.) 39...♞g6 and the game goes on.

38.♙c3 Going to b2 is even stronger, but Carlsen wanted to have the option to play ♙b4.

38...♞e6? Too many weak moves by Black.

38...♞e8! was the only way to stay in the game. The threat is ...♞e1, so White must play 39.♙b4 ♙xd3 40.♞h3 with the threat of ♞e3-e7 with a strong attack for White, though it's not quite winning yet.

39.♞h4? Missing the win.

39.♙xa7! was a tactical solution that works. 39...♞g7+ (39...♙xa7 40.♞f2+ wins the bishop on f5; 39...♙xd3 40.♞b8+ ♙a6 41.♞b6#) 40.♙d4 leaves White two healthy pawns up.

39...♙g4 40.♙xa7? One move earlier this was working, now surprisingly it doesn't. Another surprise is Carlsen messing up the technical phase of the game. It seems that these calculational positions where his opponent has counterplay aren't among his favourite ones.

40.♞f4 was the best way. 40...h5 41.♞h1 ♞f6+ 42.♞xf6 ♞xf6 43.♙b4 gives White good winning chances, but also some drawing chances to Black. It would have been a long game.

40...♞f6+?? The wrong square.

40...♞g7+! was correct, covering the seventh rank. After this check the position is a draw. 41.♙d4 (41.d4 ♙xa7 42.♞xg4 ♞xg4 43.♞c7+ is another perpetual; 41.♙b4 ♙xa7 42.♞g1+ ♙b7 43.♞xg4 c5+! 44.♙xc5 ♞e5+ 45.♙b4 ♞b6+ 46.♞xb6+ ♙xb6 is a complicated line leading to a draw after 47.♞g6+ ♙b7 48.♞xh6 where a rook and four (!) pawns are not weaker than a queen.) 41...♞g5! threatens ...♞c1. 42.♙b6 (42.♙b4? this even loses to 42...♞e2! 43.♞g3 c5+! and White gets mated! 44.♙xc5 ♞d2+ 45.♙a4 ♙d7+ 46.♙a3 ♞a5#) 42...♙xb6 43.♞xg4 ♞xg4 44.♞b8+ is a perpetual and that's the best White has.

41.♙b4 White wins now.

41...♞e5 42.d4 ♞e7+ 43.c5 Too many pieces hanging - the rook on e5 and the bishop on g4, especially as the rook cannot move in view of ♞b8.

1-0

He also managed to put pressure on Carlsen in the second classical game, but the former World Champion held firm.

In the match for third place, facing former World Championship candidate Caruana, he won a miniature in the first classical game.

Nijat Abasov - Fabiano Caruana

FIDE World Cup 2023 Baku AZE (8.1)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 d5 3.c4 e6 4.g3 The Catalan was a popular choice in Baku. Abasov used it for the first time in this game.

4...♙e7 5.♙g2 0-0 6.0-0 dxc4 Caruana has tried many lines against the Catalan, but here he goes for what is considered the main line.

7.♖c2 a6 Firmly in the classical territory, not venturing the long lines after 7...b5, which has been analysed to a draw and it was the line Nepomniachtchi prepared for his match with Carlsen.

8.a4 ♙d7 9.♖xc4 ♙c6 10.♙g5 Equally popular is 10.♙f4.

10.♙f4 ♙d6 11.♖d3

10...♗bd7 Another option is 10...♙d5.

11.♗c3 h6 12.♙f4 A rare move compared to the capture on f6. This was Abasov's surprise for this game.

12...♙d6 This is the usual reaction for Black when White plays ♙f4, as for example on move 10.

13.♖d3 The queen is comfortable on d3 because thanks to the knight on c3 Black cannot play ...♙e4. Additionally, the queen supports the e4-push.

13...♙xf4 14.gxf4 a5 A typical move for Black in this line, but in view of White's straight-forward plan in the centre and kingside, perhaps it made sense to play more dynamically with 14...b5!?

14...b5!? 15.♖fc1 (15.axb5 axb5 16.♗xb5 ♖xa1 17.♖xa1 ♖b8 18.♗a3 ♖xb2 is equal. *With things happening on the queenside, White cannot build up his play on the other side of the board as in the game.*) 15...b4 16.♗b1 ♙e4 17.♖b3 ♖e7 is quite

acceptable for Black, who established better control over the central squares. 18.♗bd2 ♙d5 19.♖d3 c5 with good counterplay.

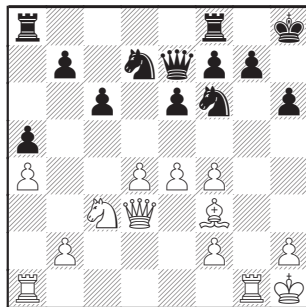
15.♖h1 White's plan is simple - pile up along the g-file and combine it with the central advance e4-e5.

15...♙xf3 Another typical operation for Black in this line, but one that leaves him passive where he can only rely on the solidity of his position.

15...♗d5 16.e3 ♖e7 17.♖g1 ♖h8 leads to similar play, but the presence of the knight on f3 and the bishop on g2 makes it more difficult for White to use the g-file.

16.♙xf3 c6 17.♖g1 ♖h8 18.e4 White has easy play now.

18...♖e7?!



The problem with this move is that it takes away the e7-square from the knight.

18...♗c5!? sends the knight to b4, but perhaps Caruana didn't want to put the knight far away from the kingside. 19.♖e3 ♗a6 20.♖g3 (20.e5 ♗g8 21.♗e4 ♗e7! with the idea of ...♗f5 is good for Black. *This is why Black needs the e7-square free.*) 20...♗b4 21.♖ag1 ♖g8 is very solid for Black with no easy way forward for White, but again, Black is forced to sit still and wait.

19.♖g3 White doesn't rush, though he could have pushed e5 immediately.

19.e5 was quite good. After 19...♖h7 20.♗e4 ♗b6 21.♗d6 ♗c8 22.♗c4 the knight on c8 is badly placed and White can continue to double on the g-file.

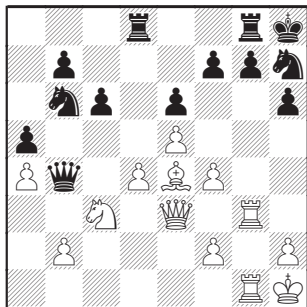
19...♖ad8 20.♖ag1 ♖g8 21.e5 ♗h7 21...♗e8 was an alternative. The knight covers the d6-square and is not subject to an attack after ♗e4 as in the game. 22.♖h3 (22.f5? ♗xe5; 22.♗e4 f5 23.exf6 ♗dxf6 gives Black counterplay against White's isolated central pawns.) 22...f5 23.♗h5 still looks unpleasant for Black, but he's solid and can resist White's attack, for example 23...♗c7 24.♖g3 ♗f8.

22.♖e3?! Moving away from the d-file, but allowing Black to consolidate.

22.♗e2 was better, safely covering the d4-pawn and intending f5. 22...♗b6 (22...f5 23.♖b3! this stops ...♗b6-d5. 23...♗b8 24.♖b6 ♖b4 25.♖xb4 axb4 26.h4 is a good endgame for White, but Black is still solid.) 23.f5 exf5 24.♖xf5 g6 25.♖c2 c5! introduces dynamics in the position, which increases Black's chance as White cannot calmly build up his attack. After 26.♖b3 ♗d7 27.♗d5 cxd4 28.♗xf7 ♖g7 29.♗xg6 ♗g5 the position becomes a mess, where the objective evaluation of somewhat better for White matters little.

22...♗b6 22...f5 was a good alternative. 23.♗e2 ♗b6 with ...♗d5 next.

23.♗e4 ♖b4??



It's interesting that Caruana spent almost 25 minutes on this blunder.

23...f5 was natural and a move Black should sooner or later play. 24.exf6 (24.♗b1 ♗d5 is OK for Black.) 24...♗xf6 25.♗f5 ♗de8 26.♗g6 ♗bd5 27.♖e5 ♗d8 is unclear, White's activity is enough compensation for his pawn weaknesses; 23...g6 is also fine, though it's a risky move because Black should always be careful about possible sacrifices with f5 or on g6.

24.♗xh7! ♗xh7 25.♗e4 All of a sudden Black is getting mated!

25...♖e7 25...♗h8 26.f5 exf5 27.♖xg7! leads to mate.; 25...♖xd4 26.♗g5+ ♗h8 27.♗xf7+ ♗h7 and now White wins in more than one way, for example 28.♖f3 threatening ♖h5-g6. (or 28.♖xd4 ♗xd4 29.♗xh6; or 28.♗xd8) 28...♗d5 29.♖xd5 ♗xd5 30.♗xh6 with a winning position.

26.f5 Some of the possible finishes are 26.f5 exf5 (26...♗d5 27.f6! ♗xe3 28.♖xg7+ ♖xg7 29.♖xg7+ ♗h8 30.fxe7 ♖a8 31.♖xf7; 26...♖h4 27.♖h3) 27.♗f6+ ♗h8 (27...gxh6 28.♖xh6+ ♗xh6 29.♖h3#) 28.♖xh6+! gxh6 29.♖xg8+ ♖xg8 30.♖xg8#

1-0

His somewhat risky repertoire with the black pieces was masterly exploited by Caruana in the second game, who entered a sharp line where precise memorisation was required - a strategy similar to Caruana's famous win against Vachier Lagrave at the Yekaterinburg Candidates when the line in question was the notorious Poisoned Pawn. Abasov didn't recall his preparation and Caruana equalised. In the tie-breaks, Abasov didn't stand a chance and lost 0-2, mostly because he was out-prepared and surprised in the openings.

It's worth noting that this was also a great result for Caruana, who qualified for the next Candidates and who vowed to prepare and do better than in the last one.

Carlsen will most likely not play next year's Candidates, which makes Abasov a participant in this tournament. He is the lowest-rated player to play the Candidates in the history of the event and will certainly be considered an outsider, however, given the time he has to prepare for it, he will definitely be a better player by then. The other participants will already know what to expect of him, but having a new face in Toronto will certainly add to the dynamics of the event.

THE FOUR INDIAN MUSKETEERS

A lot of expected of the new wave of Indian prodigies and they didn't disappoint. Nihal (19), Gukesh (17), Erigaisi (19) and Praggnanandhaa (18) have already established themselves as a force to be reckoned with and they certainly proved their worth in Baku. Of these four, Sarin was stopped by Nepomniachtchi in the fourth round, but he was successfully replaced by the "veteran" Vidit (28), who avenged his compatriot by beating Nepomniachtchi in the next round.

The four Indian musketeers all made it to the quarter-finals! In other words, half of the participants still in contention were Indians.

Such a success was not really expected, but the young grow up fast and take the places of the old(er). We may have expected Giri to finally make it to the Candidates (in truth, he may still do so from the Grand Swiss or the FIDE Circuit), but we will have Praggnanandhaa there instead.

Each of these four players had an incredible tournament. Vidit played the most games, eliminating Mastrovasilis, Bluebaum and Nepomniachtchi on tie-breaks (4.5-3.5, 5-4 and 4-2 respectively), Bacrot in classical 1.5-0.5, before being eliminated by Abasov with the same score.

Gukesh was impressive, he only needed tie-breaks to eliminate Esipenko (2.5-1.5) and his run of classical wins (2-0 against Iskandarov, 1.5-0.5 against Narayanan, 1.5-0.5 against Wang Hao) brought him as high as seventh

in the world on the live rating list, surpassing Anand and Giri! His loss to Carlsen showed a clear shortcoming in his play, something that he also noted in an interview, an insufficient (for elite level) technique in endgames. Nevertheless, this incredible result will see him eighth in the world on the September rating list, which at the age of 17 is definitely a sign that the sky is the limit for the youngster. It is worth reminding that he still can qualify for the Candidates from the Grand Swiss tournament, which will take place on the Isle of Man from 23 October to 6 November.

Erigaisi was very confident, too. He needed tie-breaks to eliminate Azarov in round two (3.5-2.5) and from then on won his matches in classical, beating Fedoseev, Sindarov and Grandelius 1.5-0.5. These victories sent him on a crash course with his compatriot and friend Praggnanandhaa.

Praggnanadhaa dispatched Lagarde and Navara (both 1.5-0.5) before a crucial round-four match with one of the pre-tournament favourites Nakamura.

This was the real test of character for the youngster and he passed it with flying colours. After two balanced classical games, the match went to tie-breaks. Nakamura is famously fantastic at faster time controls, but now this didn't show at all. It was uncharacteristic for Nakamura to mess up his preparation in the first game, where in a theoretical position he erred as early as move 9!

Hikaru Nakamura – R Praggnanandhaa

FIDE World Cup 2023 Baku AZE (4.3)

1.c4 Nakamura often plays the English Opening, but always with a concrete idea in mind.

1...♟f6 2.♟c3 e5 3.♟f3 ♟c6 4.g3 ♟b4 5.♟d5 An alternative to the move 5...♟g2.

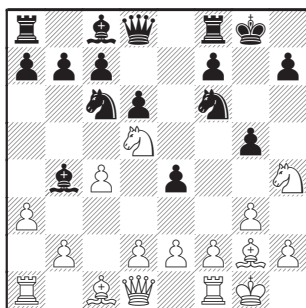
5...e4 The sharp reply. The alternative is moving the bishop back to c5. Now the white knight is forced to h4, a square where

it can easily perish. White hopes to obtain compensation in that case.

6.♟h4 0-0 7.♙g2 d6 8.0-0 Nakamura sacrifices the knight on the rim.

8.♞xb4 is another option. 8...♞xb4 9.a3 ♞c6 or 9...♞a6!? 10.d3 with a complex middlegame ahead.

8...g5 9.a3??



Clearly a case of messed-up preparation.

9.d4 is the only move. After 9...h6 10.a3 White also has other moves at his disposal. (10.♞e3; 10.♞xb4 ♞xb4 11.f3) 10...♙a5 11.♞e3 gxf4 12.b4 ♙b6 13.c5 White regains the piece with a messy endgame ahead after 13...h3 14.♙h1 dxc5 15.dxc5 ♖xd1 16.♞xd1 ♙xc5 17.bxc5 as in the game ½-½ (83) Kramnik,V (2753)-Sadhwani,R (2620) Krasnogorsk 2022.

9...♙a5 Now Black remains a piece up without compensation for White.

10.d3 10.d4 ♞xd5 11.cxd5 ♞b8 makes sure the bishop on a5 is safe and the knight on h4 isn't.

10...♞xd5 11.cxd5 ♞b8 The same motif as in the note to White's 10th move. White is simply a piece down for nothing and the rest is a conversion phase. A strange opening mishap from Nakamura.

12.dxe4 gxf4 13.♙h6 ♖e8 14.gxf4 ♖xf4 15.♖c1 f6 Covering the dark squares.

Nihal Sarin (19)



Gukesh D (17)



Arjun Erigaisi (19)



R Praggnanandhaa (18)



16.♔h1 ♘d7 17.♙f4 ♘e5 18.♙g3 ♔h5
19.♖g1 ♘g6 20.f4 ♙b6 21.e3 ♕f7
Removing the king from the vulnerable
g-file and threatening ...♙h3 to finish
development and exchange pieces.

22.e5 Desperate, but White must try something.

22...dxe5 23.fxe5 ♘xe5 24.♔c3 ♙h3
25.♙af1 ♙xg2+ 26.♖xg2 ♘g4 Both pawns
on e3 and d5 are hanging.

27.d6 cxd6 28.♔b3+ d5 29.♔a4 ♖e4
30.♔d1 ♙xe3 31.a4 ♖ae8 32.♔b3
b6 33.♔b5 ♙d4 Threatening ...♘e3.
Nakamura had enough and resigned.

0-1

In the second game, Nakamura tried a Modern set-up, but while this may work in Titled Tuesdays, it didn't against a focused Praggnanandhaa who kept everything under control, didn't allow a single chance, and won the game convincingly.

Beating one of the favourites 2-0 in rapid gave incredible confidence to the teenager and fueled his next victory against another surprise in the event, Ferenc Berkes, rated "only" 2615. Berkes eliminated Gelfand, Vitiugov and Ponomarev before losing 0.5-1.5 to Praggnanandhaa.

The quarter-finals saw the duel of the friends Erigaisi and Praggnanandhaa. It's notable that these two took walks together even after the games they played! A win practically guaranteed a place in the Candidates, but one of them had to step aside.

In a fluctuating match that started with Erigaisi winning with Black, forcing Praggnanandhaa to equal the score by doing the same in the second game, eventually, it was Praggnanandhaa who controlled his nerves better. Two draws in the rapid were followed by four consecutive wins for the black pieces

before Praggnanandhaa won the sudden-death game with White!

In the semi-final Praggnanandhaa met Caruana. This was another incredible match where Caruana was pressing in both classical games and was winning by force in the first rapid game and yet all these games finished in draws. A great achievement and testament to Praggnanandhaa's resilience. As usual in matches, if you don't score, you concede. Praggnanandhaa took his first chance to win - in the fourth rapid game, the first one played with the time control of 10 minutes + 10 seconds per move (the first two rapid games were played with the time control of 25 minutes + 10 seconds per move). Caruana couldn't come back and Praggnanandhaa made it to the final.

MAGNUS CARLSEN

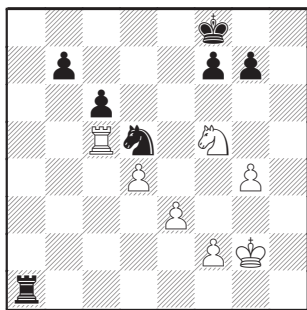
It has been a strange period for Magnus Carlsen. His reluctance to play classical chess was countered by his acceptance to play the World Cup. As he admitted after the tournament, he decided to do so after his poor showing at Norway Chess, but even this decision was questionable as he realised that only winning the event would make it worthwhile. It's clear that putting so much pressure on oneself, when winning is all that matters, is far from an optimal state of mind.

And yet, in spite of the self-imposed pressure and the food poisoning that he suffered during the semi-final, Carlsen managed to win the only tournament he hadn't won in his career.

While the first few rounds were rather smooth, his first scare came in round four, when he met Germany's star Vincent Keymer. Carlsen lost the first classical game in an uncharacteristic manner - by blundering in an equal endgame.

Vincent Keymer - Magnus Carlsen

FIDE World Cup 2023 Baku AZE (4.1)



The position is objectively equal, but White has some visual initiative in view of his active pieces and compact central mass.

36.g5 White gains more space on the kingside.

The immediate 36.♘d6 is met by the simple defence of the pawn by 36...♖b1 and Black is fine.

36...♗c7?? A strange case of Carlsen failing to apply prophylactic thinking and missing his opponent's idea. He had many moves at his disposal that kept the balance. For example:

36...g6 37.♘d6 ♖b1; 36...♖a2 37.♗g3 ♗e7 38.♘d6 b5; 36...♗e7 37.♘d6 b6 38.♖c2 ♖a5 in all cases with an equal position.

37.♘d6 Suddenly White wins a pawn. It's a double attack in fact, as it's not only the b7-pawn that is attacked, but also the f7-pawn cannot be defended in view of the threat ♖f5 - this was White's idea with his move 35.g5 - he took control over the f6-square and Black can no longer play ...f6 to defend against that attack.

37...g6 37...♖b1 38.♖f5 wins the pawn on f7.

38.♗xb7 White is technically winning now and he converts confidently.

38...♖b1 39.♘d8 Forcing a knight endgame.

39...♖b5 The only way not to lose a second pawn.

40.♖xb5 cxb5 41.♘c6 ♗e8 42.♗b4 The knight endgame is won for White as he simply pushes his central pawns forward.

42...♗e7 43.f4 ♗d6 44.♗f3 ♗e6 45.♗e2 ♗g7 46.e4 ♗h5 47.♗f3 ♗g7 48.♘d3 The immediate 48.e5+ is also possible. 48...♗c7 49.d5 ♗b6 50.♗d3

48...♗h5 48...♗e6 49.♗e3 with d5 and e5 to come.

49.♗e3 ♗g3 50.d5 Black is in sort of zugzwang. If the king moves ♗d4 comes, if the knight moves ♗d4 comes again.

50...♗c7 51.♗d4 ♗b6 52.♗e5 Keymer is a materialist.

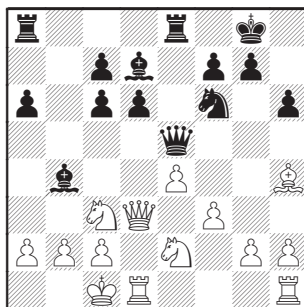
52...b4 53.♗xf7 b3 54.♗e5 ♗e2+ 55.♗e3 ♗b5 56.♗d3 ♗c3 57.d6 ♗c6 58.e5 These pawns were meant for rolling. Carlsen resigned.

1-0

Even more uncharacteristically, the blunders didn't stop there. In the second classical game, which was a must-win for him to stay in the tournament, Carlsen blundered again.

Magnus Carlsen - Vincent Keymer

FIDE World Cup 2023 Baku AZE (4.2)



In a must-win situation Carlsen got a playable position after the opening. Here, however, he commits a big mistake.

16.a3?? 16.g4!? was an aggressive option. Black should strike in the centre with 16...d5 17.h3!? (17.♙g3 ♖g5+ 18.♙f4 ♖g6 19.h3 dxe4 20.fxe4 leads to a complex middlegame.) 17...dxe4 18.fxe4 is another complicated position with chances for both sides;

16.♙g3 was decent. After 16...♖g5+ 17.♙f4 ♖a5 18.a3 ♙c5 19.♟d4 everything lies ahead.

16...♙xc3 17.♖xc3 ♖xc3?? Keymer missed a glorious chance to send the former World Champion packing. I think the reason he missed this chance is that he didn't believe it was there, he didn't look for it. He didn't sense something was wrong and the chance went unnoticed. Carlsen's look of relief once the danger passed was priceless.

17...♟d4! 18.♖xe5 (18.fxe4 ♖xe4 is the double attack on the light pieces that wins material for Black.) 18...♙xe5 19.fxe4 ♙xe4 again the double attack, this time with a rook, gives Black a winning position.

18.♟xc3 Now the endgame is a bit more favourable for White. Black played well for a long time, but eventually the inevitable happened.

1-0

Luck favours the strong, they say. It was certainly the case here.

The tie-break wasn't much easier, two draws in the 25+10 rapid games were followed by a draw in the first 10+10 game. Only in the second of these games did Carlsen finally manage to win a game and the whole match.

Carlsen's post-match interview was confusing. when he openly asked himself

what was he doing there (a question he had been asking himself since round one!), claiming classical chess is "stressful and boring" for him. And yet, there he was, spending time and energy trying to win a World Cup. Trying to do this in spite of knowing that he will not play at the Candidates, a stance he has repeated consistently, expressing his displeasure at the slow time controls.

Playing classical events while talking against classical control is certainly contradictory. Carlsen is scheduled to play the European Club Cup and the Qatar Open, which are two more classical events for him this year.

After the match with Keymer, Carlsen beat Ivanchuk 2-0 (the Ukrainian had problems arriving in Baku and had a great run until that point), Gukesh and Abasov 1.5-0.5 before the final with Praggnanandhaa.

The game against Gukesh was yet another marvellous demonstration of Carlsen's endgame technique and a clear message to the youngster about what he should work on.

Gukesh D - Magnus Carlsen

FIDE World Cup 2023 Baku AZE (6.1)

1.d4 ♟f6 2.♙f4 Gukesh tried to surprise Carlsen with the London System. Nowadays nobody should be surprised by the London System, but, strangely as it may sound, Carlsen was.

2...b6 So Carlsen tried to surprise his opponent in return, but Gukesh would have none of it.

3.♟c3! Probably the only way to challenge Black's move-order. But now at least the game has nothing to do with the usual London System set-ups.

Something like 3.e3 ♙b7 4.♟f3 g6 5.h3 ♙g7 6.♙e2 0-0 7.0-0 d6 with ...c5 next leads to a reversed Reti Opening.

3...♘b7 4.f3 White wants to build a full centre with e4.

4...e6 The alternative is 4...d5, but Carlsen prefers more French-like ideas.

5.e4 a6 Covering the b5-square and avoiding ♖b5 ideas.

5...d5 is possible, as 6.♖b5 ♖a6 is not too scary.

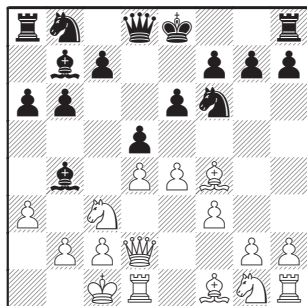
6.♞d2 d5 7.0-0-0 7.exd5 ♘xd5! (7...♖xd5 is also possible, but it gives White free play after 8.♖xd5 ♘xd5 9.c4 ♘b7 10.0-0-0) 8.♖xd5 ♖xd5 9.♘g5 ♞d7 is comfortable for Black as the knight is stable on d5. It cannot be chased away with c4 in view of ...♘b4.

7.e5 ♖fd7 8.♘g5 ♞c8 is a good French for Black who gets in ...c5 quickly.

7...♘b4 Still playing with French motifs.

7...b5!? is an interesting alternative.

8.a3



White decides to keep the centre more fluid.

8.e5 is a major option. 8...♖fd7 9.♘g5 ♞c8 (9...♘e7 is probably simpler 10.♘xe7 ♞xe7 11.f4 c5 is a typical French position, which means it's complex and with chances for both sides.) 10.a3 ♘xc3 11.♞xc3 c5 12.f4 ♖c6 13.♖f3 cxd4 14.♞e1!? (14.♖xd4 ♖xd4 15.♞xd4 ♞c5 is slightly worse, but holdable, for Black.) 14...♞c7 15.♘h4 with ♘f2 in mind.

The position is complicated, White's pair of bishops should give him a slight edge here.

8...♘xc3 9.♞xc3 dxe4 10.d5 Gukesh shows aggressive intentions but after the forcing 10.♘xc7 leads to simplifications and an equal endgame after 10...♖d5 11.♘xd8 ♖xc3 12.bxc3 ♘xd8.

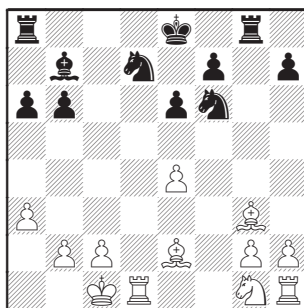
10...♖xd5 11.♞xg7 ♞f6! 12.♞xf6 ♖xf6 We land in an endgame which is balanced.

13.♘e5 ♖e7 14.♘xc7 ♖bd7 White's pair of bishops is compensated with Black's smooth development and central control.

15.♘g3 ♖hg8 16.♘e2 White defends the pawn on f3 so that he can finish development with ♖h3.

16...♖e8 A prophylactic move, avoiding a check on d6.

17.fxe4



White decides to simplify the game.

In the case of 17.♖h3 Black can play 17...♖h5 not fearing a check on d6, thanks to his last move. After 18.♘d6 ♖xg2 19.♖hg1 ♖xg1 20.♖xg1 ♖hf6 White has certain compensation for the pawn as his dark-squared bishop is particularly strong.

17...♖xe4 18.♘f3 ♖xg3 19.hxg3 19.♘xb7 ♖a7 20.hxg3 ♖xb7 21.♖xh7 ♖xg3 22.♖d2 is similar to the game.

35.♖a5! f4 36.♗c2! the tough move, giving up g2 with check, but activating the king. After 36...♖xg2+ 37.♗d3 ♖g5 38.♗e4 ♖f5 39.♖a7+ ♗f6 40.♗f3 White should be able to draw because Black cannot coordinate his pieces to get his pawns moving and keep his opponent's counterplay at the queenside controlled, at the same time.

35...♗f6 36.♖a2 f4 Now White has nothing to oppose the central advance.

37.♖c2 ♖g3 Stopping c4.

38.♗a2 ♗e5 White is passive and in rook endgame that equals death.

39.♗b2 ♗d5 40.♖d2+ ♗e4 41.♗b3 e5 42.♖e2+ ♗f5 43.♖d2 e4 44.♖d5+ ♗f6 45.♖xb5 e3 Black's pawns are too far advanced.

46.♖b6+ ♗f5 47.♖b5+ ♗e4 48.♖b8 e2 One of the black pawns will cost White a rook and the second one will promote to a queen.

0-1

In the semi-final against Abasov, Carlsen committed another blunder. You can see the excerpt from that game above. Just like in the match with Keymer, his opponent didn't notice it.

I have the impression that these blunders have become a tad more present in Carlsen's games than before. For the time being, he has avoided being punished, but that won't last for long if he continues to afford these opportunities to his opponents.

The final was marred by Carlsen's food poisoning, which led him to seek a quick draw in the second game when he had the white pieces. In the tie-break he won a technical game against the teenager with the black pieces before easily drawing with White in the second game, thus winning the match and the tournament.

R Praggnanandhaa - Magnus Carlsen

FIDE World Cup 2023 Baku AZE (8.3)

1.e4 e5 2.♖f3 ♗c6 3.♗c4 ♗f6 In important encounters Carlsen sticks to his World Championship preparation.

4.d3 ♗c5 5.a4 One of the many ways for White to play the Giuoco Piano.

5...d6 6.0-0 6.a5 has been played by Carlsen himself. After 6...a6 7.c3 ♗a7 8.0-0 0-0 we have the usual Italian stuff. 1-0 (50) Carlsen,M (2862)-Vidit,S (2726) chess24.com INT 2020.

6...a5 The alternative is to play ...a6.

7.♗e3 One of the moves that the engine likes. There are others, too, like 7.c3, 7.h3, 7.♖e1, 7.♗bd2 etc.

7...♗xe3 8.fxe3 0-0 9.♗bd2 ♗e7 Carlsen plans ...♗g6 or a central expansion, preparing ...c6 and ...d5.

9...♗e6 was Giri's choice. After 10.h3 ♗xc4 11.♗xc4 ♖e7 12.♖f2 b6 13.♗fd2 ♗b8! 14.♗b1 ♗bd7 he strengthened the knight on f6 and drew in: ½-½ (21) Aronian,L (2735)-Giri,A (2764) Wijk aan Zee NED 2023.

10.♗h4 The idea behind this move is to dissuade Black from ...♗g6, but here Black can go for it.

10...c6 Carlsen decides to expand in the centre.

10...♗g6 was still possible, for example 11.♗f5 (11.♗xg6 hxg6 12.♖f3 ♖e7 with ...♗e6 to come, with equality.) 11...c6 12.♗b3 d5 13.♖f3 ♗e6 14.♖f2 with unclear play, but White can claim he has an annoying knight on f5 and play on the f-file.

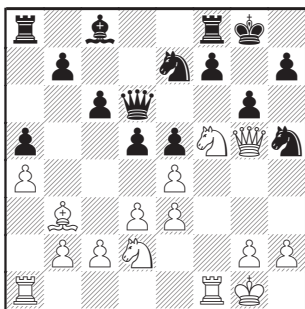
11.♖e1 Intending ♖g3.

11...d5 12.♘b3 ♖d6 Lending the knight on f6 extra protection, but allowing White some initiative on the kingside.

12...♙e6 13.♖g3 ♘d7 is a more compact way to deal with White's play. 14.♖f2 ♗b6 15.♖af1 ♙h8 with a tense position for both sides.

13.♖g3 ♘h5 14.♖g5 g6?! 14...♘f6 is better, though it's understandable why Carlsen was reluctant to waste a move like this. The retreat, however, creates the threat of ...♘g4. 15.h3 h6 16.♖g3 ♘h5 17.♗h2 ♘f6 with a position where Black isn't worse.

15.♘f5?

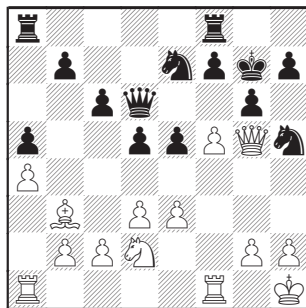


A mistake in evaluation. After the exchanges Black has no problems.

15.♘hf3! was better. The threat is to take on e5, so Black must play 15...f6 but after 16.♗h4 Black's position is a bit loose, being susceptible to opening of the centre. 16...♘g7 17.♖ae1 the last preparation before d4. (17.♘g5!? ♘h5! forces the knight back; 17.d4!? this is immediately possible. 17...exd4 18.e5!? ♗b4 19.e4 leads to very sharp play where Black must be careful. 19...fxe5 20.♘g5 ♖xf1+ 21.♖xf1 ♘h5 22.♗f2 ♘f4 23.♘df3 with a messy play.) 17...♘e6 18.d4 exd4 19.exd5 cxd5 (19...♘xd5? 20.e4 ♘dc7 21.e5! shows the dangers Black is facing.) 20.e4 ♙g7 21.exd5 ♘xd5 22.♘xd4 with strong initiative for White, who is better developed and has a safer king.

15...♙xf5 16.exf5 ♙g7 Black is fine now.

17.♙h1?!



A vague move that only helps Black.

17.♖ae1 is better. It's a "mysterious rook move" whose idea is seen deep into one line. 17...♗f6 (17...♖ae8 is safer, but also more complex.) 18.♗g4 ♘xf5 19.e4 ♘h6 20.♗d7 ♗d8 21.♗xd8 ♖axd8 22.exd5 cxd5 23.♖xe5 here we see the deep idea behind putting the rook on e1 on move 17. 23...♘f6 24.c3 ♘f5 with a fairly balanced endgame.

17...♗f6! 18.♗xf6+ ♘xf6 19.fxg6 hxg6 The endgame is more pleasant for Black, who has a better structure and central control.

20.e4 dxe4 With this exchange Black isolates the e4-pawn and then quickly attacks it.

21.dxe4 ♖ad8 22.♖f2 ♖d4 This was Carlsen's idea on move 20.

23.♖af1 White's counterplay is on the f-file.

23...♙eg8 Carlsen keeps the tension in the position.

23...♘xe4 leads to simplifications. 24.♘xe4 ♖xe4 25.♖xf7+ ♖xf7 26.♖xf7+ ♙h6 27.♙g1 is easy for White.

24.c3 ♖d7 The first attempt at activity was fended off, so Carlsen retreats and regroup.

25.♖e2 ♜e7 Freeing the d7-square for the knight.

26.♙c2?! Somewhat passive and time-wasting.

The immediate **26.♘c4** was preferable. *26...♞a8 (26...b5 27.axb5 cxb5 28.♗xa5 ♜c7 doesn't really bring much. After 29.♙c2 the knight can drop back to b3.) 27.♘b6 is the difference with the game, the knight is still on f8 and not on d7, thus not controlling the b6-square. 27...♞a6 28.♘c8 ♜c7 (28...♞d7? 29.♙c4 ♞a8 30.♘b6 wins for White.) 29.♘d6 ♞d7 30.♘c4 and the knight's pirouette made Black's position less harmonious and coordinated.*

26...♘d7 Carlsen is cautious with his pawns.

26...b5 is an alternative, stopping ♘c4. 27.♞a1 ♞a8 28.♘b3 (28.♙g1 ♞b7 29.♗f3 ♘d7 30.g4!? with the idea of g5 leads to an interesting endgame with mutual chances.) 28...♞ea7 29.♞d2 with a complex endgame.

27.♘c4 ♞a8 28.g4?! But Pragganadhaa isn't. White could still improve the position of his pieces before committing like this.

28.♞ef2 ♘gf6 29.♘d6 b6 (29...♞e6 30.♞d2) 30.h3 and White's activity doesn't allow Black to untangle; 28.♘d6 ♘c5 29.♞ef2 ♞f8 30.b3 is another way to play.

28...f6 Carlsen doesn't allow g5, but it was possible to do so.

28...♘gf6!? 29.♘d6 (29.g5 ♘h5 exposes the f4-square.) 29...♘xg4 30.♘xb7 ♘b6 31.♘c5 ♞aa7 is sharper than the game, with both sides having damaged pawn structures.

29.♞g2 ♘h6 30.g5 Before Black could stop this move with ...♘f7, when the weakening of the kingside would make less sense.

30...fxg5 31.♞xg5 ♘f7 32.♞g2 Played with the idea of swinging the rook to the d-file.

32.♞g3 is an alternative, with the idea of using the rooks on the g-file. **32...♞e6**

33.♘e3 ♞f6 34.♞fg1 the threat is ♘f5 and when the king comes to the h-file, ♞h3. This is why the rook retreated to g3. **34...♘h6 35.♘c4** intending ♞d1, attacking the knight that defends the pawn on e5. **35...b5 36.axb5 cxb5 37.♘e3 a4 38.♘d5 ♞d6** with a dynamically balanced endgame.

32...♞e6 33.♞d2 It was still possible to play on the kingside with **33.♘e3 ♞f6 34.♞fg1 ♘f8 (34...♘c5 35.♘f5+ ♘h7 36.♘e7 ♘h8 37.♞g4 is another unclear position.) 35.♘f5+ ♘h7** with a rook on g2 there is no check on the h-file. **36.♞g3!?** an interesting sacrifice. **36...gxf5 37.♞g7+ ♘h6 38.exf5 ♞e8 39.♞g3 ♘h7 40.♞g7+ ♘h6 41.♞g3** with a repetition.

33...♞f6 34.♞xf6 34.♞fd1!? the rooks are ineffective on the d-file, as there is no entry point, for example **34...♘c5 35.♘b6 ♞h8** though the position is still equal;

If White wanted to exchange rooks, he could have brought the king closer to the centre with **34.♙g1 ♞xf1+ 35.♙xf1 ♘f6 36.♘b6 ♞h8 (36...♞a6 37.♘d7 ♘xd7 38.♞xd7 ♘b6 39.♙d3! with the idea of ♙c4 and suddenly White wins! 39...♙f8 40.b4 axb4 41.a5 traps the rook.) 37.♘c4** forcing a repetition as the rook must go back to a8 to defend the a5-pawn.

34...♘xf6 35.b4 35.♘b6 ♞a6 (35...♞h8 36.♘c4 ♞a8 is a repetition.) 36.♘d7 ♘xd7 37.♞xd7 ♘b6 38.♙d3!? (38.b3 is also fine, the rook is awkward on b6 while 38...c5 weakens the d5-square. 39.♞d5 c4 40.bxc4 ♞b2 41.♙d1 Black has compensation here, but only for equality.) 38...♞xb2 39.♙c4 ♞f2 with the king on h1 this square is available, something that wasn't the case in the analogous line after **34.\$g1. 40.♞xb7 ♘f8** with approximate equality, as both sides have a lot of weaknesses.

35...axb4 36.cxb4 ♘f8 Black centralises the king.

37.♙g2 37.♘b6 ♞e8 38.♘d7+ ♘xd7 39.♞xd7 ♞e7 40.♞d2 should again be a

draw. (40.♖xe7 ♗xe7 41.♔g2 is another draw, the king will defend the pawn on e4 and then the bishop can be activated.)

37...♗e7 38.a5 ♖h8 White missed several options to make a draw easily and now has to deal with the impending activation of Black's pieces on the kingside. The position is still a draw, but he needs to be more careful.

39.♖e2?? The first small step in the wrong direction. White doesn't think he should do anything urgent and stay put, but what's clear is that it is Black who has easier play and can build up his play on the kingside.

39.♗d3 ♖h4 40.♖b2! with the idea of b5 is the engine's suggestion. It's a difficult line to choose as in order to do so White must feel the urgency to switch from normal to dynamic play in search of counterplay. 40...♗xe4 (40...♖g4+ 41.♗f1 ♖f4+ 42.♗g2 changes little.) 41.b5 cxb5 42.♖xb5 the double attack on e5 and b7 ensures that White regains the pawn.

39...♗h5 40.♗g1 ♗f4 41.♖d2 ♖h3 Black made obvious progress and all of a sudden White has only move to stay in the game.

42.a6? But he doesn't find it and it's not surprising. After a whole game of normal

play White couldn't adjust to the sudden (in the last few moves) change of scenery. His attempt at dynamic counterplay comes 3 moves too late.

42.♗d1! was the only move, an unobvious one at that. The idea is to meet 42...♖c3 with 43.♖c2.

42...bxa6 43.♗a4 ♖c3 43...♗g5! was even stronger. 44.♖c2 ♗f3+ 45.♗h1 ♗f6 and the pawn on c6 is taboo in view of ...♗d4.

44.♗a5? This is too much. Even visually it's clear that White cannot possibly survive with his pieces offside on the a-file.

44.♖c2 was more resilient. 44...♖f3 45.♗xc6 ♗g5 should still be winning for Black. Now White must stop ...♗h3 by 46.♗d7! but after 46...♖b3 47.♗c8 ♖b1+ 48.♗f2 ♗xe4+ 49.♗f3 ♗g5+ 50.♗f2 ♖h1 Black should eventually win, though White can play on, unlike in the game.

44...♗g5 45.♖c2 ♗gh3+ 46.♗f1 ♖a3 Threatening mate on a1 and the bishop on a4.

47.♗xc6+ ♗f6

0-1

WHO WON AND WHO LOST RATING POINTS IN BAKU

A final note on the democratic nature of the World Cup. One look at the classical rating changes of the top players, we see that only Carlsen, Caruana (both 3.8 points) and Gukesh (7.4 points) won rating.

Everybody else lost, starting with Nakamura (7 points), Nepomniachtchi (8.2), Giri, (9.4), So (15.8), Mamedyarov (13) etc.

The conclusion is that more players should be given a chance and then the elite may not look as untouchable as it appears when seeing it play their round robins.

THE WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

The women's cup also had its fair share of surprises.

In round two, one of the tournament favourites, Kateryna Lagno, was eliminated by Mary-Ann Gomes of India in tie-breaks. The former Iranian, now Spanish, player, Sarasadat Khademalsharieh was also eliminated in round two, losing 1.5-0.5 to Aulia Medina Warda from Indonesia. Teodora Injac from Serbia managed to eliminate former World Champion Alexandra Kosteniuk by winning both games in the tie-break.



Winner, Aleksandra Goryachkina

Worth noting is Elisabeth Paetz's result, who eliminated reigning World Champion Ju Wenjun in the tie-breaks in round four.

That same round saw the curious pairing of Mariya vs Anna Muzychuk. The sisters always make draws, but this time one of them had to win. After two draws in classical, Anna was more successful in the rapid, winning it 1.5-0.5.

The women's tournament had the typical Hollywood scenario of the heavy favourite (Goryachkina) battling the unexpected underdog. Even though Nurgul Salimova isn't really a newcomer, being an IM with a rating 2403, she was definitely not a player many expected to see in the final.

For Salimova the most important match was the semi-final against Anna Muzychuk, as victory in that match secured her participation in the Women Candidates. That match was full of drama.

After two draws in classical Salimova took the lead by winning the first rapid game with Black. Muzychuk struck back by doing the same. Then in the next game

Salimova took the lead again by winning in a miniature.

Nurgul Salimova – Anna Muzychuk

FIDE World Cup Women 2023 Baku AZE (6.5)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 This is not Muzychuk's normal choice against 1.d4, but she used the QGA twice against Salimova.

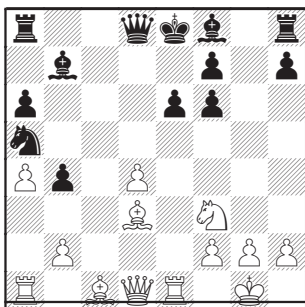
3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.e3 e6 5.♙xc4 c5 6.0-0 a6 7.♞e1 Their classical encounter saw Geller's idea 7.e4!? b5 8.♙e2 ♘xe4 9.a4 b4 10.♘bd2 ♙b7 11.♘xe4 ♙xe4 12.♙e3 with compensation for the pawn: ½-½ (41) Salimova,N (2409)-Muzychuk,A (2504) Baku AZE 2023.

7...♘c6 Other options are 7...♙e7 and 7...b5.

8.♘c3 b5 In his triumphant Berlin Grand Prix Nakamura played 8...♙e7 9.dxc5 ♞xd1 10.♞xd1 ♙xc5 and held the endgame without much trouble. ½-½ (31) Grischuk,A (2764)-Nakamura,H (2736) Berlin 2022.

9.♙d3 ♙b7 10.a4 b4 11.♘e4 cxd4 Deviating from the main stream theory, which is 11...♘a5.

12. ♖xf6+ gxf6 13. exd4 ♘a5?!



It appears that Muzychuk mixed up her lines while trying to remember how Black should play. This move is 2 moves too late.

13... ♖e7! is better, keeping an eye on the d5-square. Black must still finish development, so she'd better not allow the opening of the game. 14. ♖d2 ♗d6 15. a5 h5 with the idea of ... ♖h6 leads to a very sharp middlegame.

14. ♖f4 White develops normally and soon enough crashes through - Black's king stuck in the centre makes it very difficult for Black to defend.

14... ♖c8?! Black had to try to exchange some pieces.

After 14... ♖d6 15. ♖xd6 (or 15. ♖h6 ♖f8 16. ♖d2) 15... ♗xd6 16. ♖c1 the problem of the safety of Black's king makes her position problematic long-term.

15. ♗e2 ♖d6 16. ♖h6 ♖b3 16... ♖f8 17. ♖xf8 ♗xf8 18. ♖xa6 wins a pawn, but this was probably the lesser evil for Black.

17. ♖ad1 White is ready to blast open the position.

17... ♗a5 18. d5! Crashing through.

18... ♖xd5 18... ♗xd5 19. ♖b5+ wins the queen.

19. ♖xa6 ♖c5 20. ♖b5+ ♖d8 20... ♗e7 21. ♖e3 wins material as if the rook escapes ♖xd5 comes.

21. ♖e3 ♖c7 22. ♖xd5 exd5 23. ♖b6 With the pretty threat of ♗e8, mating.

1-0

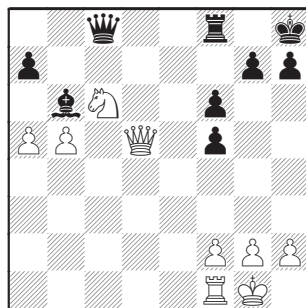
After this Muzychuk couldn't come back and Salimova was in the final.

Credit must go to Muzychuk, who managed to win the match for third place by beating Tan Zhongyi 1.5-0.5 and securing her place in the Candidates.

The final was another story of "you don't score, you concede." It was Salimova who had advantages and winning positions in the first three games (two classical and the first rapid), failing to capitalise on them. The position in the first rapid game seemed so easily winning, but it required some precise (if not very difficult) calculation, which Salimova failed to do.

**Nurgyl Salimova –
Aleksandra Goryachkina**

FIDE World Cup Women 2023 Baku AZE (7.3)



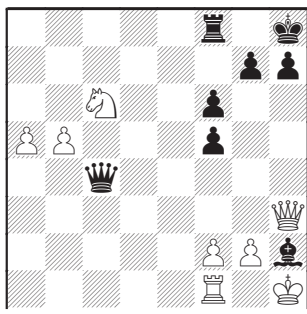
Salimova completely outplayed her opponent in the London System and should be easily winning. Her passed pawns on the queenside simply march forward.

29.a5 ♖c7 30.♗xa7 ♖b8 31.♗c6 ♖xh2+ 32.♗h1 ♖f4 Black's faint hope is to stir up counterplay against White's king as nothing can stop the pawns.

33.♖f3 This wins, too, but it allows Black to hang on for a while.

33.♗d4! was the cleanest win. The knight comes back to f3 to guard the king and Black doesn't have a useful discovered check after 33...♖h6 34.♗xf5! ♖h5 35.♖f3.

33...♖h4 34.♖h3 ♖c4



35.♗xh2? A move based too much on general principles, in this case that the pawns should promote, and too little on calculation. It turns out that Black has sufficient counterplay with her active queen.

35.♖b1 was simple and strong. The bishop must retreat and then White will consolidate. 35...♖c7 (35...♖c2 36.♖b3 ♖xf2 37.♗xh2 is hopeless for Black.) 36.♗g1 with the idea of ♖b3 and then the pawns can march forward.

35...♖xf1 36.♖xf5 ♖c4 White cannot win anymore.

37.a6 g6 38.♖d7 Allowing a perpetual check.

38.♖b1 was the only move to play on. Black should draw by playing only moves, starting with 38...♖e8 39.a7 (In case of

39.g3 ♖e2 40.♗g1 ♖c5 41.♖f1 ♖a2 the pawns are under control.) 39...♖f4+ 40.♗g1 ♖d2 41.b6 ♗g7 again the only move! 42.a8 ♖ luring the rook away from the e-file, but still insufficient. (42.b7 ♖e1+ 43.♖xe1 ♖xe1+ 44.♗h2 ♖xf2 45.b8 ♖ ♖h4+ with a perpetual check.) 42...♖xa8 43.b7 ♖e8 44.b8 ♖ ♖e1+ 45.♖xe1 ♖xe1+ 46.♗h2 ♖xf2 and with a single pawn left White cannot win this position.

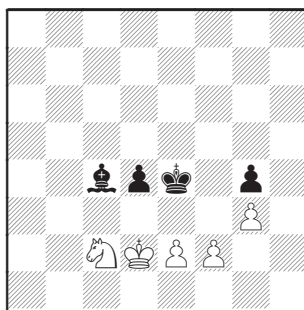
38...♖f4+ 39.♗g1 ♖c1+ 40.♗h2 ♖f4+ 41.♗g1 ♖c1+ 42.♗h2

½-½

After this incredible save, Goryachkina got a small advantage in the next game, which in spite of being a draw, managed to nurture to a win. The draw was perhaps elementary in the following position, but after a month-long slugfest, we can excuse the players for missing these things.

Aleksandra Goryachkina -
Nurgyul Salimova

FIDE World Cup Women 2023 Baku AZE (7.4)



Salimova defended well and here she could force a draw by reducing the material even more.

68...♖a6?! But she missed the simple tactic. Now White obtains two connected passed pawns and can continue to play for a win, in spite of the objective evaluation being a draw.



A surprise in the finals:
Nurgyul Salimova

68...♗xe2! 69.♜xd4 (69.♗xe2?? d3+ 70.♗d2 dxc2 71.♗xc2 ♗f3 even wins for Black.) 69...♗c4 and White cannot possibly win this position.

69.♜e1 ♗b5 70.f3+ gxf3 71.exf3+ ♗d5 72.♜d3 White can certainly make progress here by trying to activate her king and advance her pawns. The position remains a draw until move 89.

72...♗c4 73.♜f2 ♗e5 74.♜d3+ ♗d5 75.♜e1 ♗e5 76.♜c2 ♗d5 77.♜e1 ♗f5 78.♜e2 ♗c4+ 79.♗f2 ♗e5 80.♜g2 ♗b5 81.♜f4 ♗c4 82.♜h3 ♗b5 83.♜g5 ♗c4 84.♜e4 ♗d3 85.♜d2 ♗b5 86.♗g2 ♗d5 87.g4 ♗d3 88.♗g3 ♗b5 89.♗f4 ♗e2? The decisive mistake as it allows ♗f5. Black had to stop this move. She had two moves to do so, moving the bishop to d3 or d7.

89...♗d3 90.♜e4 ♗e2; 89...♗d7 90.♗g5 d3 91.f4 ♗d4.

90.♗f5 Now White wins by simply pushing her pawns.

90...♗d3+ 91.♗f6 ♗c2 92.g5 ♗d3 93.g6 ♗c6 94.g7 ♗h7 95.♗f7 ♗d5 96.f4 d3 97.♗e7 Preparing f5.

The immediate 97.f5?? would be very unfortunate in view of 97...♗xf5! 98.g8♖ ♗e6+.

97...♗d4 98.f5 ♗e3 99.♜c4+ ♗d4 100.♜b2 d2 100...♗c3 101.♜xd3 is the simplest.

101.f6 ♗c3 102.♜d1+ ♗c2 103.♜f2 d1♖ 104.♜xd1 ♗xd1 105.f7

1-0

It was a stellar run for Salimova, who, like Abasov, will certainly use the time until the Candidates to further raise her level. Goryachkina, on the other hand, is a well-established force in women's chess and confirmed her status as a favourite, one she will carry to the Candidates as well. As for Muzychuk, if she manages to add a bit more stability to her play, don't forget that her peak rating was 2606, she will also have excellent chances of winning the Candidates.

FIDE WORLD CUP 2023 BAKU AZE SUN 30TH JUL 2023 - THU 24TH AUG

Rk.	Namr	Pts
1	Carlsen, Magnus	2.5
2	Praggnanandhaa, R	1.5
3 rd - 4 th		
3	Caruana, Fabiano	3
4	Abasov, Nijat	1

FIDE WORLD CUP WOMEN 2023 BAKU SUN 30TH JUL 2023 - THU 24TH AUG

Rk.	Namr	Pts
1	Goryachkina, Aleksandra	2.5
2	Salimova, Nurgyul	1.5
3 rd - 4 th		
3	Muzychuk, Anna	1.5
4	Tan, Zhongyi	0.5

MAGNUS CARLSEN'S ROAD TO STARDOM: THE WEIGHT OF THE CROWN AND THE PRICE OF FAME

By Milan Dinic; Photo: Henrik Carlen, BCM

In the second part of this interview, Henrik Carlsen shares his memories of Magnus' path to the chess Acropolis, the circumstances in Chennai and the first World Championship match victory, but also talks about the doubts and struggles the chess crown brings

This is part two of our three-part interview with Henrik Carlsen (61) the father and manager of Magnus Carlsen, the former World Champion in classical chess and the reigning World Champion in Rapid and Blitz and now - the winner of the World Cup in Baku (the only big chess title Carlsen was missing!).

The road to stardom

In the early 2000s, Magnus Carlsen started making ripples in the chess world and even the non-chess media picked up on the 'wunderkind' from Norway.

The first time I heard more about him was at the 2003 European Youth Chess Championship in Budva, Montenegro (at the time, Yugoslavia). I was also playing in that tournament in Budva, but in a different age group. While my days mostly consisted of getting beaten by peers from across Europe, my father - a journalist and a chess fan - was having fun reconnecting with his chess friends and enjoying the games.

I remember him mentioning to me 'this incredible kid from Norway who is going to be a world champion one day' (one of the rare predictions my father made which turned out to be correct!). Magnus was playing in the under-14 category and ended up with 7.5/9.

The tournament in Budva took place at the end of September, a month after Magnus was awarded the title of International Master. This was one of the first tournaments Magnus played in that seminal period of his life when his parents took the entire family for trips across the world.

"The first real idea of Magnus being world champion came when he was nine and a half, and played some of the juniors in Norway"

I asked Henrik when was the first time he thought his son could become a world champion.

He first puts a caveat - 'I did not want to have specific expectations on his behalf' - and then responds: 'The first real idea of him being world champion came when he was nine and a half, and played some of the juniors in Norway. Despite being a much weaker player than someone like Kasparov at the same age, he was making rapid progress. When he was nine and a half, he achieved a draw against the best Norwegian junior at the time and I thought: this could lead somewhere if he continues to be interested in chess.'

Conversations between parents and children on any topic are often uneasy, but how does one even approach their child to talk about them becoming - a world champion?

'We never did that', Henrik quickly responds. Jokes are usually the best way to ease the pressure and relax things, and that's how the Carlsens approached it.

'We talked about some incremental steps because he had some ideas about becoming International Master and Grandmaster. He even had an ICC account [the Internet Chess Club, the first online chess server, founded in 1995 - note, BCM] 'IMtobesoon' and then a 'GMtobesoon'. The whole family was into making jokes about this, and that helped ease the pressure of the seriousness'.

But then there was a moment of breakthrough in 2007. In the Corus tournament, he had nine draws and four losses, scoring only 4.5/13. Then, in the round-robin tournament in Linares, his creativity and strength just sprang from him: in a field featuring chess legends such as Viswanathan Anand, Levon Aronian, Peter Leko, Vasyl Ivanchuk, Veselin Topalov, Peter Svidler and Alexander Morozevich, Magnus finished second. With 7.5/14, he was just behind Anand (who beat him both times). In that



Magnus Carlsen and
Vasily Smyslov

event, he defeated Ivanchuk both times - a stunning achievement for someone who was not that known or respected at the top at that time.

'In Linares in 2007 he felt that he could compete with these big guys at some point and his first small attempt was in 2008', notes Henrik.

In 2008 Magnus took part in the FIDE Grand Prix six-tournament series, a qualifier for the World Chess Championship 2012. He finished in tied third place in the first tournament in the series, held in Baku. However, he later decided to withdraw from the Grand Prix cycle, criticising the FIDE leadership of the time for "changing the rules dramatically in the middle of a World Championship cycle".

This was the first big moment when Carlsen showed he has strong principles and is not afraid to speak out for them: a trait which is admirable but could also be double-edged. 'He got irritated', Henrik remembers. 'He



Magnus Carlsen in Budva in 2003

was and is a principled young man and it did not make sense to him to change the cycle rules - during the cycle. What made us a bit annoyed was that Makropoulos [the then FIDE Vice President, note BCM] tried to defend this as a 'good deal' for the players, but that made no sense to us'.

Magnus dropped off in 2008 and he didn't try to become World Champion in 2011. His strong performance and convincing results, however, were pointing in the direction of the world championship.

Three weeks in Chennai

In 2013 Magnus Carlsen made history. In the match for the title of World Champion, he not only defeated the great Viswanathan Anand but did it on Anand's home turf. The match took place in Chennai, the capital of India's most southern state, where Anand comes from.

The outcome was a shock for the Indians. They thought that, with the match taking

place in their country and with their number one asset, Vishy Anand, they were destined to keep the chess crown at home. During my visit to India in April this year I had a conversation with one chess arbiter whose name is Anand ('my father was obsessed with chess and Vishy and he named me after him', he told me), who explained how the 2013 match hit them hard. While I cannot quote the exact sentence, he said something along the lines: 'Nobody could believe it. Magnus was a kid - talented, strong, big, but still, a kid. And Vishy was and is - Vishy! And we were playing in India'. 'How could this be, sir!', he said, quite emotionally.

On the 2013 Match in Chennai against Anand: 'We understood that Magnus was very nervous. That was something a little bit unusual'

Here's Henrik's take on the moment his son became World Champion.

'Thinking about those three weeks he spent in Chennai, the fact that he won and the moment he won are not of particular importance really because it was such a unique experience overall', he explains.

'Playing your first championship match in such a different cultural setting from that which you're used to. A lot of media interest, different sounds and smells. It was so exotic and overwhelming and amazing! In a way it was larger than life, the whole experience'.

But the match wasn't a smooth sail for Magnus who was in a lot of trouble in the first few games against Anand and wasn't feeling very comfortable.

'We understood that Magnus was very nervous. That was something a little bit unusual', remembers Henrik.

'While a lot of chess players have nerves to some extent, he had seemed unusually good at focusing on the game itself and not on the consequences, the result of the game. He could normally shield himself from consequences.'

Henrik attributes his son's stability in character to coming from 'a middle-class background in arguably the best country in the world in terms of social security and having a homogenous society'. Describing Magnus as a 'balanced young man without too many expectations leaning on him from the outside', Henrik

When Magnus decided he wanted to become World Champion in 2012 it was not something that he thought he would continue to do for a long time

thought his son had enough strength to withstand the pressure of the match.

'But to play a world championship match is something special. It's something you haven't done before and you can't really prepare for that.'

'Magnus' nervousness eased when he realised that he had "survived" the first three rounds against Anand. He said, "OK, he didn't punish me", and he leaned back during the games that followed. You could see from the body language that he was saying "I can handle this".'

This attitude was partly helped by the fact that Magnus was fortunate not to lose any of the first games despite being under pressure.

'That changed the dynamics. The last one and a half weeks of the match were just a fantastic experience. There was such confidence in the team in Chennai because you could feel Magnus was comfortable'.

Carlsen would go on to defend his crown four more times before deciding to abdicate from the chess throne.

The weight of the crown

In July 2022 Magnus Carlsen announced that he would not be defending his title of World Champion, citing lack of motivation and fatigue. His announcement, however, didn't really come as a huge surprise and some welcomed the end to what was turning into a soap opera of intrigue and speculation in chess. At the time it was already widely speculated that the Norwegian was unlikely to play a match. Furthermore, it wasn't the first time Carlsen's routineness to defend the crown had come to the fore.

When he made the announcement Carlsen was 31. By that point, he had won five consecutive matches for the chess crown and achieved the highest



Magnus Carlsen VS Anatoly Karpov
World Blitz Championship, 2007

rating in history to date (2882), had a comfortable score against all of his contemporaries and won every possible prestigious chess tournament (albeit the World Cup, which he will try to win now in Baku in August!).

I asked Henrik Carlsen, 'When did being a world champion start becoming a problem for Magnus?'

'Immediately, I would think', he responded quickly. I was a bit surprised by the answer.

'First, when he was told after defeating Anand that he would have to defend his title one year later. I think he didn't decide to play that match at all until early September 2014. When he told me in St Louis (during the Sinquefeld Cup, where he finished second, behind Fabiano Caruana - note BCM) that he had made his mind up, I thought he had decided not to defend his title. My impression was that he was leaning that way. We signed a contract a week later and he played'.

According to his father, when Magnus decided he wanted to become World Champion in 2012 it was not something that he thought he would continue to do for a long time.

'It was something he wanted to try to become and accomplish. Immediately after that, it became a bit of a burden. He understood intuitively that, if you win, you have to win again and again. And the match is a difficult thing - you invest all this effort, anguish and nerves and, if you lose, you haven't achieved anything, it's for nothing'.

I have heard several strong players, including two ex-participants in world championship matches, saying something along these lines. In chess, as a competitive sport, you measure your achievements in terms of results. And if you lose a match one way or the other it doesn't make much difference to the results. Yes, the process is important and as a human being you must put in

an effort and learn from the experience, but again if you lose - you have lost. It's therefore a mentally hard thing to play again and again.

'In that sense, playing Caruana was a bit simpler', explains Henrik.

In 2014 he was again up against Anand. This time it was a significantly more confident Magnus, and it was clear that Vishy was the one struggling to make a confident impression. After beating Anand in the second game, the Indian struck back in the third. Magnus again scored in games six and the eleventh - a crucial game - without losing any others, and thus secured his title.

In 2016 Carlsen faced Sergey Karjakin in New York. Following seven consecutive draws, Karjakin broke the seal in game eight by winning. It seemed that in this match Carlsen was closest to breaking, but he fought back and won in game ten and held a draw in the final two games. In the rapid - where Carlsen is almost universally unmatched - he won two and drew two games, to secure the title.

Then came the London match of 2018 when Carlsen was up against Caruana. All games in the classical part of the match ended in a draw - a brief reminder of the Karpov-Kasparov matches. Then, in the Rapid, Carlsen outshone his opponent.

In his final World Championship match (so far?), in 2021 in Dubai, Carlsen confidently defeated Ian Nepomniachtchi by 7.5:3.5.

This is how his father assessed the matches: 'Magnus felt that Caruana was his equal, so it was a match to see who could win. While in the other matches, he felt, at least in matches two, three and five "I have to win, I'm supposed to win, I'm a better player." And that's hard mentally'.



Henrik Carlsen with daughter Ingrid at the Qatar Masters Open 2015

Photo: David Llada

The price of fame

When Magnus Carlsen plays in a world championship match or an important event, the Norwegian national broadcaster has a special live programme dedicated to it. Millions across the country tune in to watch his match. Carlsen is also the only chess person to be depicted in the *Simpsons*. Whenever he appears at a chess event, he is mobbed by the crowds asking for autographs.

Not many people can handle fame. Especially those who are young. The music world is full of them - "Club 27" (ie, those



who died at the age of 27) includes the likes of Brian Jones, Jim Morrison, Amy Winehouse, Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix. Carlsen was 27 when he defeated Caruana to defend his crown...

I asked Henrik if there were any moments when Magnus struggled with this and how he handles it.

'I think as children become adolescents and then adults there are some intellectual fights which happen during the process of maturing. With the kids, you are not always in agreement on everything. Listening to what a lot of other people have experienced, we were very fortunate to have children who were reasonable and nice', Henrik explains.

Living in Norway made things easier. 'People are generally respectful. They

'People are generally respectful. They approach Magnus on the street quite a lot. Sometimes he needs to do a bit more planning than most people, to avoid too many interruptions'

approach Magnus on the street quite a lot. Sometimes he needs to do a bit more planning than most people, to avoid too many interruptions', Henrik explains.

'There is also a mental cost to this', he notes: 'If people go out in a group, they are with friends. If they are on their own, they might be listening to music or something or they might be in their thoughts. So, if you go on your own and are interrupted too much, it's just painful. So, Magnus wants to avoid too much interruption if he can.'

'We have seen so much passion and support and appreciation for what Magnus has been doing. We have had more than half of the population tune in to the world championship matches on TV, so it's something that has captured the nation. People appreciate what he is doing and they treat him and the family with a lot of appreciation.'

The conversation then moves on to the rest of the family.

'I don't think the other kids or my wife feel they are famous in that sense. One of our daughters has been commenting on chess on TV so she is probably more recognisable to the average Norwegian, but I don't think that has impacted her too much in her daily life.'

In the third part of the interview to be published in the next issue of BCM: Magnus' place in history and his future

HOW DO CHESS MASTERS EAT? FEASTING WITH GRANDMASTERS

By Grandmaster Raymond Keene OBE



How do chess Grandmasters fuel their little grey cells to achieve maximum efficacy during their often lengthy chessboard battles? I have argued the case for a marine-based diet, rich in brain foods, such as Omega-3 fatty acids, DHA (Docosahexaenoic acid) and EPA (Eicosapentaenoic acid), as advocated by Professor Michael A. Crawford, Director of the Institute for Brain Chemistry and Human Nutrition at London's

Imperial College. Indeed, during the Howard Staunton Memorial Tournament, which I organised with one of Britain's most distinguished artists, Barry Martin, at Simpson's-in-the-Strand, Britain's foremost grandmaster, Nigel Short MBE, was so convinced by Professor Crawford's opening oration, that he adopted an entirely piscine regime during the competition, which he then proceeded to win.

There are, though, alternatives. Garry Kasparov, for example, favoured the demolition of a large rare-cooked steak about one hour before his games. Most other elite grandmasters, not to mention we lesser mortals, might succumb to drowsiness after a large meal, becoming inattentive during the opening phase of a game. Writing from bitter personal experience, I can assure readers that even Grandmasters can go catastrophically astray during the initial few moves, if the brain is not fully engaged.

Kasparov's secret antidote to the dangers of mental torpor in the opening moves of a game was that he knew his openings so well that he could navigate such dangerous stretches on autopilot. Kasparov could then rely on the fact that the mental energy provided by the steak would kick into action in the early middle game, when he needed it most.

The former World Champion Magnus Carlsen favours Lebanese and Chinese cuisine, with a considerable trend towards vegetarian dishes, and in general the top modern players are quite ascetic in their habits.

Back in the day, chess players used to feast more extravagantly than their modern counterparts and, on the whole, were more friendly towards strong spirits, gourmandising and reliance on nicotine.

Forexample, there was the Georgian method, which raised conspicuous consumption to a whole new level of intensity. In 1974 I competed in a Grandmaster level tournament in Tbilisi, capital of Soviet Georgia. The rounds were punctuated by three evening banquets, to which all contestants were invited. A long central table was always laden with Georgian delicacies, fuelled by heroic quantities of Soviet caviar, blinis and pelmeni, all washed down with vintage champagne and Russian brandy or vodka. To ensure that sufficiently gargantuan measures of alcohol were being consistently consumed,

the hosts always appointed a table captain, or Tamada, to deliver suitably elaborate toasts, whereupon the guests were expected to drain their glasses, in expectation of a top-up for the inevitable next toast.

My Georgian friends explained that their curative antidote, after such record-breaking volumes of food and accompanying lubrication, was to struggle into the garden, dig a hole in the ground, lie over it, with space for the belly in the hole, and cry out a promise to God that this would be the last time for such super-over-indulgence... until the next time, that is.

After the third and final banquet, I departed in the early hours with my friend, Icelandic Grandmaster Guðmundur Sigurjónsson. We scoured the streets for a cab in vain, until I saw a car glide sedately into view, with a flashing green light and a seemingly smartly dressed gentleman in a peaked hat at the wheel. I promptly hailed the long-awaited cab, in spite of Sigurjónsson nervously tugging at my arm and urging me to desist.

The car pulled over, and, with my Icelandic companion becoming ever more tense, for reasons which I utterly failed to comprehend, I addressed the driver, stating in my vestigial Russian: "Gastinitza Iveria pojalsta" or words to that effect, thus indicating that he should please drive us to the Hotel Iveria, where we were staying. On being informed that we were two chess grandmasters in need of a lift, the driver politely saluted, ushered us into car and duly headed towards the Hotel Iveria. The siren, which suddenly sounded, should have given me the first clue, plus the fact that we were sitting in a cage, unusually located at the back of the cab. As alert readers will have by now deduced, I had hailed not a taxi, but a police car!

In foreign tournaments the only chess banquets I have encountered to rival those in Georgia were those served up in so-called government rest houses in Shanghai,

Guangzhou and Beijing. The most lavish consisted of nineteen separate courses: fish carved into the shape of dragons, crispy duck, dried baby scorpions, and, instead of vodka, a distilled Chinese spirit called Maotai (which seemed to the British delegation to resemble a peculiarly potent brand of rocket fuel) - no wonder the government needed a rest after such repasts.

England in the Middle Ages witnessed some spectacular feasts, with up to forty deer and a thousand chickens regularly sacrificed on the twin altars of Dionysus and Hestia, but such excess had little or nothing to do with chess, apart from the presence of bishops, or perhaps Grandmasters of military crusading orders.

Generalities apart, one of the most elaborate medieval feasts for which there is specific hard evidence (such as actual accounts of

expenditure) was the installation of the new Archbishop of York, the aristocratic George Neville, brother to "Kingmaker" the Earl of Warwick, in 1466. It included as main ingredients: 104 peacocks, 4,000 ducks, 204 cranes, 400 herons, 1,000 sheep and 104 oxen.

High-status food tended to be separately served to high-status people, of course (such as the items at the start of the above list) and was often recorded as especially impressive. As historian Richard Eales has noted, it's not too clear that the participants did much afterwards - or if they did play chess they would have been utterly oblivious to their results.

The most extravagant banquet ever held in the UK in connection with chess was staged during the London 1883 tournament, which saw Johannes Zukertort triumph, ahead of such luminaries as Wilhelm Steinitz,

MENU.

Wines.

Manzanilla.

Hockheimer.

Chablis.

Pommery and
Greno.

Ruinart
Père et Fils,
1874.

Margaux.

Dessert Wines.

Amontillado.
Old Port.
Château Pomys,
1870.

Hors-d'œuvres.

Potages.

Consommé aux Laitues Farcies. Crème d'Asperges.

Poissons.

Saumon, Sauces Gênoise et Hollandaise.
Côtelettes d'Homard, Sauce Riche.

Entrées.

Ris de Veau à la Printanier.
Noisettes de Mouton à la Chasseur. Pommes Nouvelles.

Relevé.

Filet Piqué à la Portugaise.

Rôti.

Poulet de Grains. Caneton.
Pommes Paille. Salade Française.

Légume.

Asperges, Sauce au Beurre.

Entremets.

Pêches Farcies aux Macarons.
Gelée aux Fraises. Petits Fours.
Ice Pudding.
Dessert. Coffee.

<u>Wines</u>	<u>Food</u>
	Hors-d'oeuvres
	<i>Soups</i>
Manzanilla	Clear soup with stuffed lettuce
Manzanilla	Cream of asparagus
	<i>Fish</i>
Hockheimer	Salmon with Genovese and Hollandaise sauces
Chablis	Lobster cutlet with rich sauce
	<i>Starters</i>
Pommery & Greno	Sweetbreads with Spring vegetables
	Noisettes of mutton in huntsman's style with new potatoes
	<i>Second Starter</i>
Champagne Ruinart 1874	Portuguese style larded fillet of beef
	<i>Roasts</i>
Chateau Margaux	Corn-fed chicken with straw potatoes
Chateau Margaux	Roast duckling with French salad
	<i>Vegetables</i>
	Asparagus with butter sauce
	<i>Entremets & Desserts</i>
Amontillado Sherry	Stuffed peaches with macaroons
Old Port	Strawberry jelly & Petits Fours
Chateau Pomys 1870	Ice Pudding
Chateau Pomys 1870	Desserts & Coffees

Mikhail Tchigorin and our own Joseph Henry Blackburne. Here is that lavish menu from the book *Games Played in the London International Chess Tournament, 1883* edited by James Innes Minchin.

Although the tournament was held in London, the menu was doubtless deemed to increase in prestige if rendered in French. Here is my translation of the menu into English:

It is said, possibly apocryphally, that when the toast to the best chessplayer in the world was pronounced, both Zukertort and Steinitz leaped to their feet.

In spite of such culinary excursions and adventures, there can be no doubt that the dining establishment which has entertained by far the greatest number of chess Grandmasters, whether in the UK or worldwide, is that self-same Simpson's-in-the-Strand (*pictured above*), where, as we have seen, Nigel Short converted, if briefly, to a DHA-enriched diet of lobsters, oysters and Dover sole, in order to boost his little grey cells for the chessboard combat to come. Simpson's standard fare focuses traditionally on roast lamb and beef, carved at the table from mobile silver trolleys.

During the 19th century Simpson's was, in fact, the world's greatest chess club, with coffee and cigars proving as popular as roast beef and lamb. A famous chess board and pieces situated at the top of the main staircase still commemorate the exploits on the 64 squares of such chessboard immortals as Howard Staunton, Adolph Anderssen, Paul Morphy and Emanuel Lasker. On my 50th birthday the *genius loci* Brian Clivaz (now of *L'Escargot* in Soho, London) invited me to play a couple of games on this hallowed chessboard turf, and generously inscribed my name on the plaque, along with the gods of the game.

Simpson's was the location of the masterpiece known as The Immortal Game, won by Anderssen in 1851. So impressed were both the loser and the onlookers that top-hatted runners were despatched down the Strand to telegraph the moves to the *Café de la Régence* in Paris, the then epicentre of Gallic chess activity, the original, sadly, no longer being extant. You will find this game following.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle can be added to the illustrious list of patrons who frequented Simpson's, and he rewarded Sherlock Holmes with "*something nutritious*" there after solving the cases of *The Illustrious Client* and *The Dying Detective*. It is my belief that Sir Arthur observed the chess champion Wilhelm Steinitz in action at Simpson's, borrowed his shaggy hair and beard, huge domed forehead and short, but muscular stature, to describe the epitome of the scientific adventurer, Professor George Challenger, from his novels *The Lost World* and *The Poison Belt*.

I conclude with the brilliant *tour de force* by the two combatants, referenced earlier, who contested what has become known as 'The Immortal Game.' Play it below, and enjoy the rich spice of chess at the high table. And since all great meals require a two-dessert finish, I also recommend the game by the winner of that world-class tournament, held in London in 1883

between Johannes Zukertort and Joseph Henry Blackburne, the absolute pinnacle of Zukertort's chess creativity.

Errors arise in top games, both from contemporary tournaments, with some of their weird openings possibly influenced by the perverted, heretical abomination of **Fischerrandom**, and from the romantic and classical eras. To my mind, with their driving imperative to fight for the initiative, the Romantic games of Anderssen, error-free though they are not, exhibit an epic quality which games such as Nakamura v Xiong.

As for the Immortal Game, controversy still persists as to whether Black played ... Bxg1 first, or Qxa1+ first. In the heat of pyro-sanguinary combat, I cannot believe that Black would have passed up the opportunity to capture a rook **with check before capturing the rook on g1**.

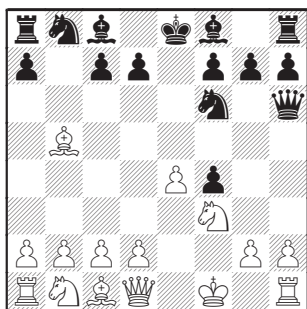
In that case, and much analysis has been lavished on this, Black's final, fatal error was to miss the possible salvation offered by 18... ♖xa1+ 19 ♜e2 and now not the greedily cooperative, if consistent 19... ♙xg1 but the cold-blooded 19... ♚b2!! when Black might have survived, and Anderssen's magnificent, epic conception would have been consigned to the wastepaper basket of history, instead of being lauded by such Illuminati as Steinitz and Lasker as one of the most magnificent duels of the mind of the entire 19th century.

Adolf Anderssen - Lionel Kieseritzky

Casual game, Simpsons-in-the-Strand, London, 1851

1.e4 e5 2.f4 exf4 3.♙c4 ♖h4+ 4.♔f1 b5?! Bryan's Counter Gambit, and to modern eyes a very dubious idea. For his pawn, Black lures the white bishop from its attacking post and creates an avenue of development for his own queen's bishop on b7. In 1851, even masters regarded this as sufficient compensation for a pawn.

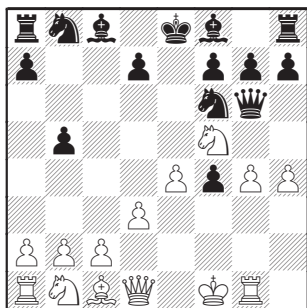
5.♙xb5 ♜f6 6.♜f3 ♖h6



7.d3 ♖h5 Black should have played 7...♙b7. The transparent threat of ...♘g3+ which the text move introduces is parried simply.

8.♘h4 ♖g5 9.♙f5 c6 10.g4 ♘f6 Better would have been 10...cxb5 11. gxf6 but Black evidently expected to win White's g4 pawn after the hoped for continuation 11. ♙c4 ♖xg4. Instead of cooperating in this fashion, Anderssen gives up his bishop, the first of many sacrifices in this brilliant game.

11.♖g1 cxb5 12.h4 ♖g6



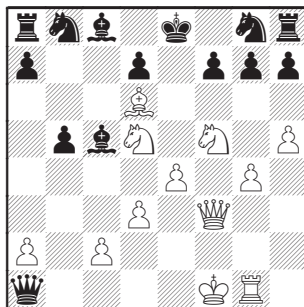
13.h5 ♖g5 14.♖f3 White now has the terrible threat of ♙xf4, trapping Black's queen. In order to create an avenue of escape for the queen, Black has to retreat one of the few pieces he has already developed.

14...♘g8 15.♙xf4 ♖f6 16.♘c3 ♙c5 17.♘d5 The introduction to a grandiose combination in which White sacrifices

both rooks and the queen in order to deliver checkmate.

17...♖xb2 18.♙d6 Closing the noose around the black king.

18... ♖xa1+



Black wins his first rook.

19.♙e2 ♙xg1 Black does not believe White's attack and captures the second rook.

20.e5 ♘a6 21. ♘g7+ ♙d8 Now comes the queen sacrifice to cap all of White's earlier efforts. No wonder this was known as 'The Immortal Game.'

22.♖f6+!! ♘xf6 23.♙e7 checkmate.

Sadly, Covid shut Simpson's down and it has not yet reopened. Indeed, an auction of Simpson's memorabilia was held on 2nd August. Items included the wooden cabinet with a chess display, organised by Barry Martin, Clive Davey, Brian Clivaz and myself, all founding members of the Howard Staunton Society, which has organised several Grandmaster-level tournaments at Simpsons. I do not know whether the auction augurs well or badly for Simpson's. The absence of the famous Simpson's chess set and pieces, usually adorning the foyer, played upon by Morphy, Lasker and other luminaries, implies that Simpsons, the Lords hallowed turf equivalent for chess, might yet survive as the bearer of the flame of London's illustrious chess history.

Openings for Amateurs

THE OPEN DEFENCE TO THE RUY LOPEZ

By Pete Tamburro;
ptamburro@aol.com

And then, there's the Open Defence. As I mentioned in previous columns, it is impossible to cover the Ruy Lopez in this type of series. What I have tried to do is whet your appetite. You have seen the varied themes in the main closed line of the Morphy Defence and even in the Berlin Defence. You've seen the Schliemann in this column and my first two Openings for Amateurs books.

There are different ways to approach Black's scheme, which, by the way was strongly supported and played by Tarrasch and later greats. The most popular White line is 9.c3, which has good reasons. It also has more complex strategic challenges and even a gambit line known as the Dilworth Attack for Black. Thus, I recommend a line that gained notoriety back in the great World Championship Tournament of 1948. Paul Keres' name became associated with this line, although he only played it five times and had a 50% score with it. Still, most players new to the Ruy Lopez would feel more comfortable with this line because the positions are a bit clearer and there are no deep gambits to worry about. As you get comfortable with this opening, you can "graduate" to the c3 line.

Boris Ivkov - Johannes Donner

Capablanca Memorial Tournament
Havana (3), 1965

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗xe4 6.d4 Nothing exciting comes from 6.♞e1 ♘c5 7.♙xc6 dxc6 8.♗xe5 with an early draw likely, although Black might try to make something of the two bishops against a lesser opponent.

6...b5 An exciting line, known as the Riga Variation, that is one that should be committed to memory is: 6...exd4 7.♞e1 d5 8.♗xd4 ♙d6 9.♗xc6 ♙xh2+ 10.♙h1!! (*A perpetual check results from 10.♙xh2*) 10...♞h4 11.♞xe4+! dxe4 12.♞d8+! ♞xd8 13.♗xd8+ ♙xd8 14.♙xh2±.

7.♙b3 Black should be ready for the speculative 7.d5 ♗e7 8.♞e1 bxa4 9.♞xe4 d6 10.c4 f5±.

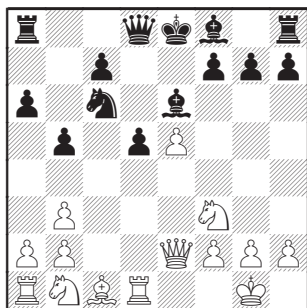
7...d5 8.dxe5 White can try 8.♗xe5 ♗xe5 9.dxe5 c6 10.♗d2 ♗xd2 11.♞xd2 ♙f5 12.♞f4 ♙g6 13.♙e3 ♙e7, if there's an edge, it's microscopic. (*13...c5 14.c3 ♙e7 15.♙d1± and the White bishops will have pressure on the Black queenside after ♙f3 and the rooks will help as well.*)

8...♙e6 9.♞e2 Sure. Vacate d1 so the rook can indirectly attack the queen. The d5 pawn is then pinned so White can plan c4 with an attack on the Black pawns. It's a pretty clear plan--nothing terribly deep.

9...♗c5 9...♙c5 10.♗bd2 ♙f5 11.a4 ♞b8 12.♗xe4 ♙xe4 13.axb5 axb5 14.♙e3 ♙xe3 15.♞xe3 ♙xf3 16.♞xf3 0-0 17.♞e3±.

10.♞d1 ♗xb3 10...♙e7 11.♙xd5 ♙xd5 12.♗c3 ♗b4 13.♗e1 c6 14.a3 ♗xc2 15.♗xc2 ♗b3 16.♗xd5 cxd5 17.♞b1 ♞c7 18.♞d3±.

11.cxb3!!



Rossolimo, in annotating the game, really liked this approach: "An ingenious idea! Instead of making the mechanical move axb3, White prepares to block the black squares on the weakened queenside and in the centre." (Chess Life, Nov. 1965, p236.)

11...♙e7 12.♘c3 0-0 13.♙e3 ♘a5 Black's best chance for equality was 13...♗d7 14.♖ac1 (Sokolov liked 14.♖d2) 14...♗ad8= But not 15.♘e4 (15.h3) 15...dxe4 16.♖xd7 exf3 17.gxf3 ♙xd7 and Black will win.

14.♖ac1 ♘b7 14...c5 15.♘e4 c4 16.bxc4 ♘xc4 17.h3±.

15.♘e4 White can use the pin here, and it's quite effective. The big idea is that there are now three White pieces hitting that key c5 square. If White keeps the c7 pawn backward, Black's game becomes quite difficult, as demonstrated by Capablanca in Chess Fundamentals. We will cover that in the next column.

15...♙g4 16.h3 A fascinating tactical thrust in the centre would be 16.♗c2 ♙xf3 17.gxf3 c5 18.♘d6!! ♘xd6 (18...♙xd6 19.♖xd5 ♖c8 20.exd6) 19.♖xd5±, but the pawn move works as well.

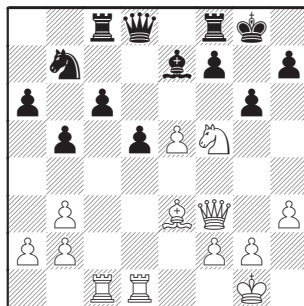
16...♙xf3 The aggressive central placement of the White pieces doesn't allow for a bishop retreat: 16...♙h5 17.♘g3 ♙g6 18.♘d4 c5 19.♘df5 d4 20.♗f3 ♖b8 21.b4+.

17.♗xf3 c6 17...dxe4 18.♖xd8 exf3 19.♖xa8 ♖xa8 20.♖xc7 ♘d6 21.♖xe7 ♘f5 22.♖a7±.

18.♘g3 Still preventing c5 because of the pressure on d5.

18...♖c8 19.♘f5 It's worth noticing that the weak black squares are fatal to Black. The ♙e3 can go to b6 when necessary. Even g7 will be under attack by ♗g4 and possibly ♙h6. The d5 pawn still needs to stay where it is.

19...g6



A surprising move from a player of Donner's stature, but 19...♙h8 wasn't good either. But to add to the dark square catastrophe, well....

20.♖xd5!! A pretty blow that wraps things up.

20...♗e8 20...cxd5 21.♖xc8 ♗xc8 22.♘xe7+.

Black Resigned. Rossolimo donated an ivory chess set for the brilliancy prize game in this tournament, and Ivkov won, much to Rossolimo's satisfaction.

21.♙h6 Black Resigns.

21...cxd5 22.♖xc8 ♗xc8 23.♘xe7+ ♙h8 24.♗f6# Next, we'll take a look at how Capablanca, using one of his games as a model, instructed a generation on the importance of the c5 square in the Open Defence in the 9.c3 line.

1-0

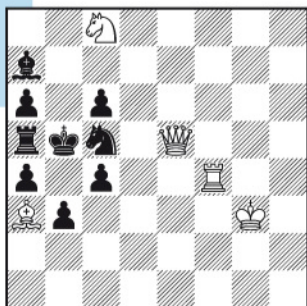
PROBLEM WORLD

by Christopher Jones

cjajones1@yahoo.co.uk

Grandmaster of Chess Composition

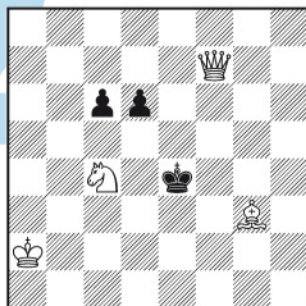
Solutions are given on page 574



Kabe Moen (USA)

Mate in 2

ORIGINAL



Abdelaziz Onkoud (France)

Mate in 3

ORIGINAL



**Leonid Lyubashevsky and
Leonid Makaronez (Israel)**

Mate in 3

ORIGINAL



Ljubomir Ugren (Slovenia)

Helpmate in 8

ORIGINAL

QUOTES AND QUERIES

THE KITCHIN CORRESPONDENCE TOURNAMENT

By Alan Smith

6237 The Kitchin correspondence tournament was first contested in 1901. Eight leading Yorkshire players, including four county champions, contested the first event in memory of Charles Stuart Kitchin.

Two of the contestants made significant contributions to the opening theory. Walter Gledhill analysed 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♗c3 ♗f6 4.e5 ♗fd7 5.♖g4!?, the Gledhill Attack. John Hall was the first player to employ the sequence 1.e4 ♗f6 2.e5 ♗d5 3.d4 d6 which he used to win the final of the 1893 Yorkshire championship.

Alfred Denham - Walter Gledhill

Kitchin correspondence, 1901

1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♗xd4 ♗c5 5.♗e3 ♖f6 6.c3 ♗ge7 7.♗b5 The Paulsen Attack, this line has never been trendy, but it is still tricky.

7...♗xd4 7...0-0 8.0-0 ♗b6 9.f4 d6 10.♗a3 L.Paulsen - Anderssen, Leipzig 1877, Gunsberg suggested 8...♗xc3 9.bxc3 d5 10.♗c3 dxe4 11.♗xe4 ♖g6

was equal, but Walbrodt improved with 10.f3.

8.cxd4 ♗b4+ 9.♗c3 ♖g6 10.0-0 ♗xc3 Surrendering the bishop pair to win a pawn.

11.bxc3 ♖xe4 This is a risky pawn grab.

12.♗e1 ♖h4 13.g3 ♖f6 14.♖d2 h6 15.♗f4 0-0 16.♗e5 ♖b6 17.♗ab1 ♗g6 18.♗xd7 White has a healthy lead in development.

18...♖a6 19.♗b5 ♖a5 20.♗d3 a6 21.♖c2 f5 22.♖b3+ ♗h7 23.♖c4 c6 23...♗xe5 24.♗xe5 ♖a3 does not work, 25.♖xc7 ♖xa2 26.♗e7 ♖g8 27.♗c4 ♖h8 28.♖e5!

24.♗d6 ♗d8 25.♗c5 ♗d5 25...b5.

26.♗b6 ♖a3 27.♗e8! h5 29.♖b3 b5 30.♖d1 ♗h6 31.♖d2+ f4 32.gxf5 ♖c7 33.f5+ ♗f4 34.♗e5

1-0

Huddersfield Daily Examiner,
16th July 1901

John Musgrove - Alfred Denham

Kitchin correspondence, 1901

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.♖c3 ♜f6 5.♙d3 ♙d6 6.♜f3 c6 7.0-0 0-0 8.♞e2 ♙g4 9.♙e3 ♞bd7 10.♞g3 ♖c7 11.♗d2 ♜fe8 12.♞ae1 ♞e4 13.♖c1 Thus far the players have followed Blackburne - J. Schwarz, Berlin 1881.

13...f5! A big improvement on Schwarz's play 13...♙xf3 14.gxf3 ♞xg3 15.hxg3 ♙xg3 16.♞g2! which led to a brilliant win for White in 28 moves.

14.♞e2 ♞e6 15.♙f4 ♙xf4 16.♞xf4 ♞h6 17.♞e5 ♞xe5 18.dxe5 g5 19.f3? White needed to try 19.♞e2 and then to answer 19...♖xe5 with 20.♞g3.

19...♖b6+! 20.♖e3 ♖xe3+ 21.♞xe3 gxf4 22.♞ee1 ♙h5 23.fxe4 fxe4 24.♙e2 ♞f8 25.♞f2 ♙xe2 26.♞fxe2 ♞e6 27.c4 ♞xe5 28.cxd5 cxd5 29.♞d1 ♞f7 30.♞d4 ♞f6 31.♞c2 ♞f7 32.♞f1 ♞e6 33.♞c3 f3

0-1

Leeds Mercury, 9th November 1901

Alfred Denham - John Edmund Hall

Kitchin correspondence, 1901

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖xd5 3.♞c3 ♖d8 4.d4 ♞f6 5.♙c4 5.♞f3 is almost invariably played.

5...♙g4 6.f3 ♙f5 7.♞ge2 e6 8.g4 ♙g6 9.♞f4 ♙d6 10.h4 ♙xf4 11.♙xf4 h5 12.g5 ♞fd7 12...♞d5 13.♞xd5 exd5 14.♙d3 ♙xd3 15.♖xd3 g6 16.♖b5+.

13.♖e2 0-0 14.0-0-0 c6 15.♙d3 ♙xd3 16.♞xd3 g6 17.♞e4 ♞a6 18.♞b3 b5 He had little choice 18...♖c8 19.♞d6 or 18...♞b6 19.♞f6+ ♞h8 20.♙e5 were both grim.

19.♙d6 ♞e8 20.♙e5 ♞c7 21.♞c3 Winning a pawn.

21...♞d5 22.♞xc6 ♖a5 23.a3 ♞xe5 24.dxe5 ♞eb8 25.♞d1 ♞e7 25...b4 was his only hope 26.♞a6 ♖c7.

26.♞c5 ♖a4 27.♞d7 ♞f5 28.♞cc7 ♞f8 29.♖d3 ♖a5 30.b4 ♖b6 31.♞d6 a5 31...♞xd6? 32.exd6 leaves black without an answer to the threat of 33.♞xf7!

32.♞xf7 ♞xf7 33.♞xf7 axb4 34.♞fd7 ♞f8 35.axb4 ♖g1+ 36.♞b2 ♖b6 37.♖c3 ♖b8 38.♖c5 38...♖a8 39.♞g7+! ♞xg7 40.♖e7! Gunsberg.

1-0

Huddersfield Daily Examiner,
18th November 1901

Alfred Denham - Walter Atkinson

Kitchin correspondence, 1901 - 1902

1.e4 e5 2.♞f3 ♞c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♙c4 ♙c5 5.c3 d3 5...♞f6 is a Giuoco Piano.

6.b4 ♙b6 7.b5 Gunsberg analysed 7.♖b3 ♖e7 8.0-0 d6 9.a4 a6 10.♙g5 ♞f6 11.♞bd2 0-0 which he gave as level.

7...♖e7 7...♞a5 8.♙xd3 d5 is best.

8.0-0 ♞d8 8...♞e5 is dubious, James White analysed 9.♞xe5 ♖xe5 10.♖b3 ♖h5 11.e5 when black is struggling.

9.e5 ♞e6 10.a4 f6 10...f5 was correct.

11.♞bd2 f5 12.a5 ♙c5 13.♞b3 a6 14.♖xd3 ♖f8 This protects f5, but gets in the way of castling.

15.bxa6 b6 16.axb6 cxb6 17.♙xe6! Removing a key defender.

17...dxe6 18.♞d1 h6 19.♞h4 ♞e7 20.♞xc5 bxc5 21.a7 Threatening 22.♖f3.

21...♘f7 22.♚f3 ♘d5 23.♘xf5 exf5
24.♚xd5+ ♙e6 25.♚b7+ ♚e7 26.♚xe7+
♘xe7 27.♙e3 ♚hc8 28.♚db1 ♚c7 29.♚b8
♙d5 He can't round up the a7 pawn
because of ♙xc5+.

30.f4 ♙b7 31.♙xc5+ ♘e6 32.c4 32...♚xc5
33.♚xb7 ♚cc8 34.♚a6+.

1-0

Huddersfield Daily Examiner,
29th January 1902

The battle for second place was decided by
the following game:

Walter Atkinson - Walter Gledhill

Kitchin correspondence, 1901-1902

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0
b5 6.♙b3 ♙c5 7.c3 ♙b6 8.d4 ♚e7 9.♙g5
h6 10.♙h4 ♙b7 11.♙d5 d6 12.a4 g5 13.♙g3
0-0 14.dxe5 dxe5 15.♘xe5 ♘xd5 16.♚xd5

♘xe5 17.♚xb7 ♚fd8 18.♙xe5 ♚xe5
19.♚c6 ♚ab8 20.♚xh6 ♙xf2+! 21.♘h1
♚b6 22.♚h3 ♚f6 23.g3 ♙xg3 24.♘a3 ♙f4
25.♚f2 ♘g7 26.axb5 ♚h8 27.♚d3 ♙xh2
28.♚xf6 ♚xf6 29.♘g2 ♙e5 30.♚h1 ♚xh1
31.♘xh1 ♚f2 32.♚h3 ♚e1+ 33.♘g2 ♚e2+

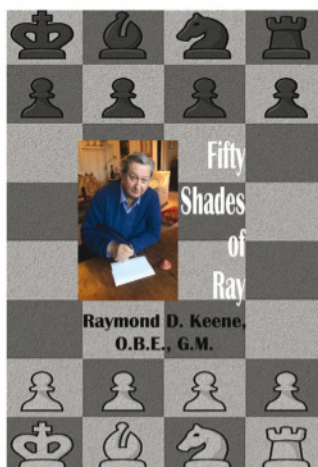
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Leeds Mercury, 15th February 1902

The four county champions all struggled.
Final scores:

Denham	+4=3
Gledhill	+5-2
Atkinson	+4-3
Wildman	+2=3-2
Hall	+2=2-3
Musgrove	+2=2-3
Rev Peach	+2=1-4
Woollard	=3-4

Hardinge Simpole



is delighted to announce
the publication of

Fifty Shades of Ray

**Chess in the year of the
Coronavirus Pandemic**

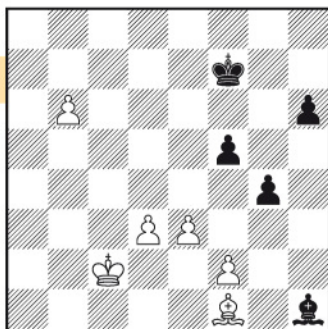
Raymond D. Keene

*With an Introduction
by CJ de Mooi*

Endgame Studies

by Ian Watson

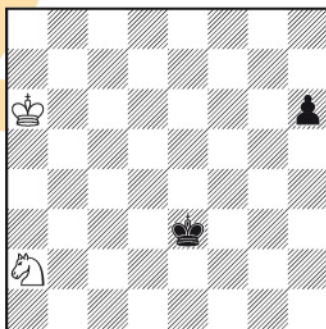
ian@irwatson.uk



S. Didukh

SSh/ST 2004

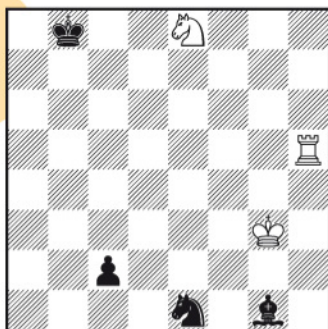
WIN



W. Mees

Nouveau Trait Complet 1952

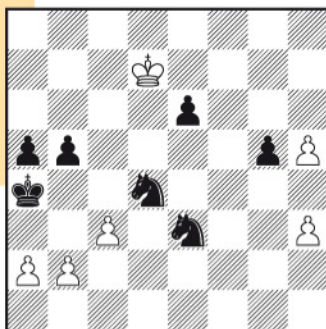
DRAW



J. Fritz

Narodni Listy 1933

DRAW



P. Arestov

Georgian Internet Ty 2011

WIN

TEST-SOLVING

I usually set you solving tests, but this month it's test-solving. I do a lot of test-solving; when there is going to be a solving competition, one person chooses the problems, and another person test-solves them, meaning he solves them and decides if they are suitable for use in the competition.

There are many criteria for suitability. Most importantly, it must be possible for White to achieve the stipulation - if it's a mate in four, but Black can delay the mate until move five, or if it's a win study and Black can draw, then the composition is bust and mustn't be used. The compositions also have to be the right level of difficulty, so you have to consider how strong the solvers in the competition are going to be - if no one could solve it in the time allowed, or if everyone would be able to solve it much more quickly than the time allowed, you reject it. You also want the compositions not to be well-known - you don't want some of the competitors to recognise and remember them and be able to write the solution down straight away. I've looked at some of the solving events held this year, and in one of them there was a study by Kubbel; I recognised it, and I even remembered how the solution goes. It was perhaps a marginal case - it wasn't one of the most famous studies, so maybe it was okay to use, but personally, if I had been the test-solver, I would have recommended it be replaced.

For most compositions, it's not hard to check those things. With studies, several other things are more difficult to deal with. This month, your task is to be a test-solver - solve the studies, but also identify the issues with them and decide whether they are suitable for a competition. Here are some of the issues that a study test-solver has to look out for:

- White duals. Studies should have a unique series of white moves. Sometimes, study composers allow there to be duals in

the later play, meaning alternative white moves late on. Study composers usually aren't composing for solving tourneys, so their solution line may have such branches later on, but that makes real difficulties for solvers. This issue can be dealt with, by shortening the solution line so that it ends on the previous white move, but the test-solver must identify it, and tell the tourney organiser to only give points up to that move.

- Cooks. These are alternative white moves that achieve the stipulation, and that occur early in the solution. These make the study unsound and so the test-solver must find them and reject the study.
- Possible cooks. These are alternative early white moves that might achieve the stipulation, but it's all but impossible for a solver to analyse the variation to a result. The test-solver has to examine all White's options and decide whether the solver will be able to analyse them clearly.
- Black duals. These are still more awkward. In any study, Black has multiple options but only one of them is part of the composer's solution. Usually, the alternatives fail more easily than in the composer's solution or lead to positions where White's next move isn't the only one that works; if solvers will be able to realise that, then the black duals can be ignored by the test-solver. However, it often isn't a clear decision. If the test-solver thinks that the strongest solvers might not identify clearly what the composer intended, then the study should be rejected.

In these four studies, there are two that are cooked, one that is unclear but might be cooked, and one that has a serious black dual. See if you can solve all four, and find the defects, and then decide if you reject or allow each study.

The solutions are on page 575.

SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS

This month's problems

We start with a very approachable problem; in Kabe's two-mover there is a mate already set for every black move apart from 1...b2 - so what to do about that? Then two contrasting three-movers. Which do you find harder to solve - a miniature (just seven pieces) with wide scope on an open board or a diagram such as that of the Leonids with two armies of twelve men and lots of configurations that may suggest ways to disentangle the complexities? Finally, a typical puzzle from Ljubomir - as regulars will need no reminding, Black will initiate a collaborative sequence, eight moves on either side, leading to a position in which Black is mated.

An incomplete block with change mates...

...is Kabe's description of the two-mover. If it weren't for 1...b2, this would be *complete* block (1...c3 2.♖b4; 1...♙b8 2.♜xc5; 1...♙b6 2.♘d6), though even in complete block problems it can be difficult to find a key move that would preserve all White's possibilities, and White may have to change his mating responses to certain black moves (a description of a *mutate* problem). Here we have to rejig White's forces so as to have a mating reply to 1...b2, and the way to do this is to play 1.♖f5! Now the new pin on the 5th rank allows 1...b2 2.♜xb2, and there are two changed mates - 1...c3 2.♜e2 and 1...♙b8 2.♜xb8 (both also relying on the new 5th rank pin). One mate is unchanged: 1...♙b6 2.♘b6.

A miniature three-mover

As might be inferred from my introductory comments, I've always found three-movers on an open board deceptively difficult to solve. Perhaps you had the same experience with Abdelaziz's. Seductive is the try 1.♘b2 (threatening 2.♜f4+ ♘d5 3.♜c4), but White has nothing after 1...c5!. A subtler approach is required, and 1.♙b3! creates zugzwang. There are four possibilities - 1...♘d3 2.♜f3+ ♘d4 3.♙f2;

1...♘d4 2.♜f5, to be followed by 3.♙f2;

1...d5 2.♜f4+ ♘d3 3.♜e3;

and 1...c5 2.♙c3 d5 3.♜f4. As ever with such problems, I'm impressed by how much accurate play can be achieved with so few pieces. Well done if you found these unique variations!

A very non-miniature three-mover

Unless you're a top solver, you may need to read on to glean all the nuances of the Leonids' three-mover. The key is 1.♙f2!. This threatens 2.♜d4+ cxd4 3.♙b5. If 1...♘d7 White plays his two moves in the opposite order: 2.♙b5! (threat 3.♜d4), and now if 2...♘c3 then 3.♜b3. If 1...♘xe6, 2.g8=♜ forces mate next move by ♜xe6. Another defence is 1...♙b7, met by 2.c4+! bxc3 e.p. 3.♜xb7 (very well visualised if you saw that one!); or 1...♘c3 2.♜b3+ c4 3.♜xc4; or 1...a6 2.♘c4! ♘c3 3.♘b6 (or 2...♘d7 3.♘e3); or 1...♙c6 2.♘axc6, with the deadly threat of 3.♘e7. Plenty of pinning play, and also plenty of white knight play.

Back yet again to the murky world of helpmates

Ljubomir specializes in helpmates like our fourth problem: *minimals* in which the one white officer begins in deep storage from which it eventually emerges, after a fairly miraculously accurate sequence of moves,

(See page 568)

to administer mate - 1.♔b5 ♖h2 2.♞g1+ ♖h3 3.♞g5 ♖h4 4.♞hg6 ♖xf6 (free at last!) 5.♞d4 ♖d7 6.♞d6 (had you anticipated, from the diagram, that the move ♞h6>d6 would be played?!) ♖xg5 (or, from the diagram, *this* move?!) 7.♔c4 ♖xf5 8.♔d5 ♖b6. We finish with a *model* mate - each potential flight square is either blocked or guarded just once. The transformational possibilities in long helpmates are always

seen especially richly in Ljubomir's, and I sometimes think that despite the very considerable distance between helpmate play and the combativeness of a competitive game this capacity for visualising surprising reconfigurations may (apart from any aesthetic pleasures) have some benefit for the practical player. (Though in my playing days I never dabbled in helpmates on the same day as playing a match!)

SOLUTIONS TO ENDGAMES

(See page 572)

Didukh

1.f3 ♖xf3 2.e4 fxe4 3.d4 e3 4.d5 ♖xd5 5.♔c4 ♖xc4 6.b7 e2 7.♔d2 and wins. Unfortunately, White can also play 1.♔c3; the threat is 2.e4, and if 1...♖b7 2.♖g2 ♖xg2 3.e4. A big cook, on move one, makes this definitely unusable.

Mees

1.♖b4 h5 2.♖c6 ♖e4 3.♖a5 h4 4.♖c4 h3 5.♖d2+ ♖e3 6.♖f1+ ♖f2 7.♖h2 draws. When I was looking at this study, I chose 2...h4 3.♖e5 h3 4.♖g4+ ♖f3 5.♖h2+. The composer's line is better because Black makes it more difficult for White to achieve the draw - the knight is forced to a more circuitous route. The issue with this study is that the black dual 2...h4 is followed by a sequence of unique white moves, so the solver might consider that it must be the composer's intention. A difficult judgement, but on balance I don't think this study should be rejected. By the way, I looked up this study and found that it was 'anticipated', meaning that there was an earlier and very similar study. Nikolai Grigoriev published, in 1932, a study with the identical solution and the only difference in position was that the h-pawn started on h7. That doesn't prevent the study being used in a solving event, although one

should mention the anticipation on the answer sheet that is circulated after the solving finishes.

Fritz

1.♖b5+ ♖c8 2.♖b4 ♖h2+ 3.♖h3 c1♞ 4.♖c4+ ♞xc4 5.♖d6+ ♖xd6 stalemate. That's clearly what the composer intended, but there's a major flaw - White can simply capture the h2 bishop. So, we have a cooked study: it has a white alternative on move three. 3.♖xg2 ♖f3+ 4.♖g2 ♖d2 5.♖d6+ ♖d7 is met by 6.♖d4 or 6.♖e4. This study certainly has to be rejected.

Arestov

1.h6 ♖f3 2.h7 ♖e5+ 3.♖xe6 ♖g6 4.♖f7 ♖h8+ 5.♖g8 g4 6.hxg4 ♖xg4 7.♖g7 b4 8.c4 b3 9.a3 wins. There are several sidelines that the composer gave: 2.♖xe6? g4 3.hxg4 ♖xg4 4.h7 ♖g5+ 5.♖f5 ♖xh7; 4.♖f6? ♖h8 5.♖g7 g4 6.hxg4 ♖xg4 7.♖xh8 ♖f6 8.♖g7 ♖xh7 9.♖xh7 b4 10.c4 b3 11.a3; and 9.axb3+ ♖b4 10.♖xh8 ♖f6 11.♖g7 ♖xh7 12.♖xh7 ♖xb3 13.c5 ♖xb2. He also gave 1.cxd4? ♖f5 2.♖xe6 ♖g7+, but this line seems to be winning for White after 3.♖f6 ♖xh5+ 4.♖xg5 (my computer agrees); if so, the study is cooked on move one. It might not be, but there is enough doubt, so the study should be rejected.



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