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BCM EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW: **Henrik Carlsen**



MY SON, MAGNUS

THE MAKING OF A CHESS PRODIGY

CHESS, CHILDREN AND PARENTS:

THE UPS AND DOWNS IN THE LIFE OF A CHILD CHESS PLAYER

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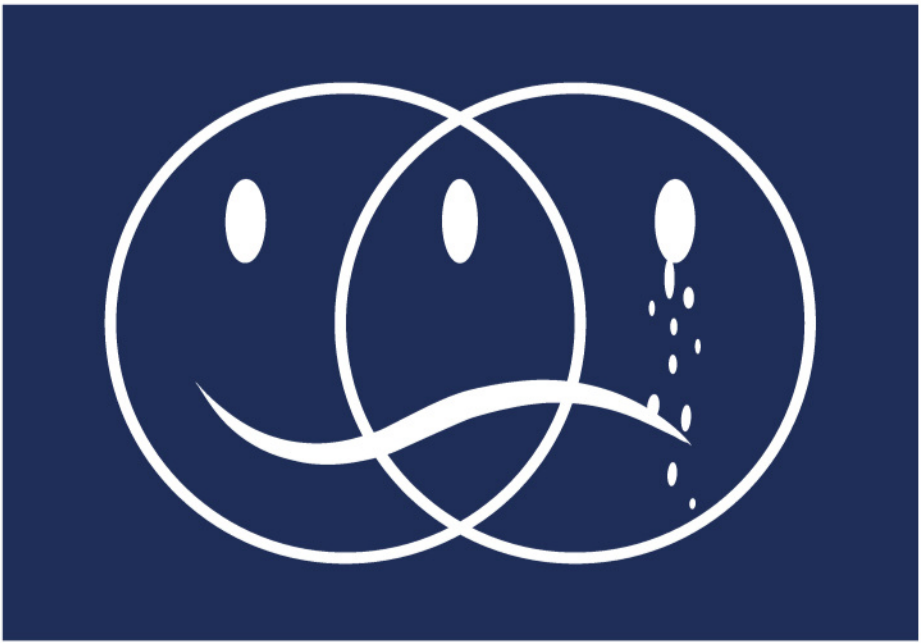
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CHESS, CHILDREN AND PARENTS

THE UPS AND DOWNS IN THE LIFE OF A CHILD CHESS PRODIGY

EXPLAINED BY A GRANDMASTER AND COACH



In the chess world, we can take a look at two types of parental upbringing. A dominant father (a former boxer) who took his teenage son to the USA and who was not a stranger to beating him when he was disappointed in him... A caring father, a harmonious and loving family who allowed the child to develop their own interest in chess...

By GM Aleksandar Colovic; www.alexcolovic.com
Photo: shutterstock.com

Some time ago, I realised that the path to the top of the chess world is rather straightforward. All of the players who are now at the top have followed it.

It starts with the talent of the child. They must be very good and show an early promise. From that moment onwards, the machinery takes over.

In the beginning, it is usually the parents who invest in their child's future. If they are lucky, they will attract sponsors, who will cover the expenses for playing in tournaments, travel, coaching (with the best coaches in the world, who are anything but cheap) and hardware (access to strong engines running on powerful computers is a must today).

With the above structure in place, all that remains is for the child to love to work on chess and play in tournaments around the world. All the time! They are likely to be taken out of school, or have special arrangements with the school, and their life will consist of chess training and playing, both over-the-board and online.

The expectation then will be that, as a result of these investments of time, money and effort, great achievements will follow. Usually, they do.

As the child's rating grows, they get more opportunities to face top opposition. First, this will happen online, where access is more democratic. They will play thousands of blitz games with the world's best players, gaining invaluable experience and practice.

If things go well, soon enough they will be invited to prestigious online and over-the-board events. Big events such as Wijk aan Zee, Grenke and Stavanger are always eager to invite the next big chess star.

In this phase of the career, it is crucial to take one's chances and score decent results in order to prove that the child is "the real thing", thus securing future invitations. If the child becomes a media darling, even a few bad results can be tolerated. As an example of this, Carlsen's first Wijk aan Zee was a disaster (four losses, no wins), yet he was invited the following year, when he won the event!

Consistent practice with the world's best teaches the child to consider this type of effort as normal. They get accustomed to this skill of play, which inevitably leads to a rise in their own level of play. This makes the child feel at least equal to these players, that they belong there, and, if their talent allows it, to take the next step from being equal to being better than them.

Success is inevitable if all of the above happens. And this is exactly what every chess parent hopes for.

However...

Children experience immense stress when they play tournaments that they know are important. This stress is often imposed by those around them - parents and coaches. Many talented children have quit chess as a result of the pressure that is imposed on them by the people who are supposed to help them succeed.

If this pressure is external, there is also internal pressure that the children impose on themselves. The former is somewhat easier to manage, especially if the parents and the coaches are aware enough that they are imposing it; the problem with the latter is that sometimes only the child knows it's there.

They say expectation is frustration. The reason is that expectation is tied to a result and being obsessed with a result is a good guarantee not to achieve it.

We can only control what depends on us. In chess, as in life, what depends on us is only our own efforts. In chess, our own efforts produce the moves we make on

the board. This is the only thing a player should be concerned about when playing a game of chess, irrespective of how important it may be.

The results should come as a consequence of these efforts. If we concentrate on the results, we are sabotaging the efforts that should bring those results by taking away the mental resources that are needed for them.

When a child (or parent/coach) is obsessed with a result it means that they are not interested in the process that should bring that result. And this type of external motivation will always fail long-term.

To succeed, a player must have internal motivation, one that comes from joy when playing the game and working on it.

This is the single, most important trap that so many players, parents and coaches fall into. With the parents and the coaches, it is often an ego thing, when they try to prove their worth through the child's success.

Today's society's obsession with results doesn't help either. Life is so fast, one success is quickly forgotten and a new one is expected immediately. Everybody seems to forget that the talented child is first and foremost a child, and not a money-making machine that should be exploited to the maximum.

I remember reading Andre Agassi's biography, "Open". He writes that he hated tennis. Tennis was imposed on Andre when he was merely three years old, when his father gave him a tennis racket and he was allowed to swing it and smash things around the house with it. His childhood was merciless training and playing tournaments. It is not surprising that soon enough he started to resent that and, as a teenager, he started to have certain psychological issues.

Agassi reached the top, but how many are there who didn't? Countless young people crack under pressure and never "reach their potential". And in such circumstances, it's not their fault. Those children, their parents and lives are rarely in the headlines, TikTok videos and Instagram feeds.

Life is so fast, one success is quickly forgotten and a new one is expected immediately. Everybody seems to forget that the talented child is first and foremost a child, and not a money-making machine that should be exploited to the maximum

In the chess world, we can take a look at two types of parental upbringing. A dominant father (a former boxer) who took his teenage son to the USA and who was not a stranger to beating him when he was disappointed in him is the story of Gata Kamsky's childhood. A caring father, a harmonious and loving family who allowed the child to develop his own interest in chess is the story of Magnus Carlsen's childhood.

Gata Kamsky reached the top, but he failed to beat Karpov in the 1996 FIDE World Championship match, thus never becoming a World Champion. He suffered a breakdown after this and left chess for eight years, while also severing contacts with his father.

Magnus Carlsen reached the top and became a World Champion.

This is the difference love, affection, understanding and support can make in a child's life. If these are present, the happiness of the child will be priceless compared to all the money and fame they may have.



THE BRITISH CHESS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2023:

MICHAEL ADAMS AND LAN YAO TAKE THE CROWN

By BCM Staff
Photo: British Chess Championships / Dennis Dicen

A spectacular eighth victory for Michael Adams, who won the event for the first time as far back as 1989. Second consecutive crown for Lan Yao who also won a WGM norm

The British chess championships were held in Leicester from the 22 to 30 July, at the De Montfort University. The competition featured eight categories - from the Championship to the Open to over 65s and down to under 8-year-olds - but also featured a series of smaller chess tournaments. All the tournaments were played under the Swiss system, where the players had 90 mins for the first 40 moves, plus 30 minutes, with 30 seconds added from move one.

England's Number Two, GM Michael Adams, came first in the Championship, finishing on 7.5/9, with six victories, three draws and no defeats. Steven A Jones came in second place, with 6.5 points. Four players ended up sharing third to sixth place, with six points: Daniel Fernandez, Harry Grieve, Matthew Wadsworth and Dutch FM Yichen Han.

Adams' biggest competitor in the event was the 28-year-old Daniel Fernandez. Adams came out victorious in their direct clash in round four. Despite staging an opening surprise with the Scandinavian, Fernandez left his king exposed in the centre which Adams used and ended up winning.

This victory marks a monumental success for Adams, who first claimed the British Championship title at the tender age of 17 in 1989. He has now won the British Chess Championship an astounding eight times: in 1989, 1997, 2010, 2011, 2016, 2018, 2019, and now in 2023!

WIM Yan Lao finished top among women players in the Championship, with an overall score of 5.5/9. In the final round, she drew with Richard Pert (who also finished the tournament with 5.5 points). Her strong performance against formidable players not only earned Yao the title but also a WGM norm.

The Open category saw four players sharing first place, each finishing with seven points: Brandon Clarke, Andrew Lewis, Aditya Verma, and Mikhail Sedykh. In the Over 65 category, Alan Punnett secured first place, while Keith Arkell topped the Over 50s tournament. The Under-16s category had a five-way split for first place, with Rohan Pal coming out on top.

A detailed report from the British Chess Championships, including an analysis of games, will be published in the September issue.

MY SON, MAGNUS

THE MAKING OF A CHESS PRODIGY



In an exclusive, in-depth interview, the father of one of the greatest chess players in history talks openly about his son's path in life, the challenges and struggles, and how the whole Carlsen family dealt with it

By Milan Dinic; Photo: Henrik Carlen, FIDE, BCM

(the family photos were provided to BCM exclusively, for the purpose of this interview, and belong to Henrik Carlsen)

Henrik Carlsen (61) is the father and manager of Magnus Carlsen, the former World Champion in classical chess and the reigning World Champion in Rapid and Blitz, and the world's top-rated player. An engineer by training, Henrik is also known to be a good chess club-level player.

Henrik accompanied Magnus to the inaugural edition of the Global Chess League in Dubai in late June. We agreed to sit down and do an interview for BCM about his perspective on Magnus - both as a person and as a chess player.

I met Henrik for the first time in 2019, in Moscow, during the World Rapid and Blitz Chess Championship. The first impression I got was of an approachable, calm, unassuming and inconspicuous person, despite his son's global fame and celebrity status. But underneath that unobtrusiveness is a determined character with clear ideas about important life questions - such as bringing up children, for example - and a very precise (engineering) approach to issues in general.

"Calm, polite and easy-going, typical Scandinavian", I said, to which Henrik responded - "yes, but also, remember - Vikings"!

In the first part of this interview which you are now reading, Henrik provides a glimpse into Magnus Carlsen's childhood, early development, and family dynamics, shedding light on how his interest in chess blossomed and how his family supported and shaped his journey.

We started by talking about Magnus' childhood - what was he like as a child?

'Curious and playful and interested in a lot of things. He was a normal kid. In retrospect, it was probably significant that he had this ability to focus for a long time on specific topics for hours and keep that focus. That led to him making progress'.



Magnus Carlsen's entry to chess came via puzzles. His sisters - three of them, Ellen (34), Ingrid (32), and the youngest, Signe (26) - were at least as quick at picking up puzzles, according to their father.

While all the younger members of the Carlsen family could put together a big jigsaw puzzle 'before they turned two', Magnus is the only one who continued having that interest in puzzles a little bit further. 'The same thing with Lego, geography, sports results and sports in general', his father adds.

One of the things often mentioned by people who know Magnus Carlsen from an early age is that he had an amazing memory. In his 2014 book *How Magnus Carlsen became world champion*, his long-time coach and seven-time Norwegian champion (as well as former Norwegian football national team striker) Simen Agdestein notes that by the age of five Magnus could recall flags, capitals and populations of all the countries in the world.


Interview with Henrik Carlsen in Dubai

'Once he got interested he could spend hours every day looking into these things', Henrik explains.

A 2020 study from the University of East Anglia has found that children learn to do jigsaw puzzles only when they have reached a certain stage of development and have linked their experience in solving puzzles (because of their visual element) to the 'relationship between a picture and what it is about'. Given that chess is a lot about memorising (*picturing)* the position and understanding it, there seems to be a link.

'In retrospect, that was important for his development as a chess player', says Henrik.

Solving puzzles seems to be a childhood tradition in the Carlsen family.

'In the broader family, the cousins did these things. My brother was a bit like that as a kid. It was kind of not unusual from my perspective, but it turned out it could be significant', said Henrik. 'For the time being, we thought that was just quite normal'.

The family trips that launched a chess career

Magnus played his first tournament at the age of eight: at the Norwegian Chess Championship in 1999; he scored 6/11. When it became clear that the boy had a strong interest in chess and was very talented, his family adapted to that and supported him. I asked Henrik - how did that affect or change the family dynamics? For it wasn't just about him and his wife Sigrun, but also their three daughters. Did it overshadow the rest of the family?

'It's a complex issue and something my wife and I have been thinking about', he starts.

'Early on chess was a bit of a nerdy thing. Even though Magnus' results were pretty good, it was never seen as a big part of his life. But then we went on this one-year trip with the children, to educate them. The girls of course noticed and understood that chess played a big role in that trip. We went to a lot of tournaments but tried also to go to historical sites.

The family trip Henrik is referring to is often mentioned as one of the key times in Magnus Carlsen's upbringing, but it also says something about how Henrik and his wife approached the tricky question every parent faces - how to prepare your children for life.

The trip took place between the second half of 2003 and the first half of 2004.

'It wasn't really one trip - we went by car for nearly half a year in autumn and then again early the following year', Henrik explains.

'We came back home for Christmas and, while we had planned to go to Asia for a few months in the spring, the experience of travelling with four children told us that the youngest two couldn't cope with



On one of the many trips around the world: Henrik and Magnus in 2002

anything. They were from 14 down to six, and the six-year-old and the nine-year-old couldn't do much. Obviously, it would have been difficult to travel for months by plane and move from place to place'.

Since the logistical challenges prevented them from going to Asia, the family decided instead to go on a series of several week-long trips to nearer destinations, most of which they went to by car.

'With the car came a lot of luggage space. It was an old rusty car, so we were not afraid of going to other cities and places and had no fear of getting robbed or the car being stolen.'

The destinations included neighbouring countries such as Sweden and Denmark, but also Moscow, Iceland and Dubai where the family went by plane. The family also spent quite a lot of time in the huts owned by Henrik's parents on the Norwegian coastline. 'The kids enjoyed it a lot'.

As Henrik explains, the trips were used to show children life and teach them skills in different places from their own. 'We think it worked', he said.

We then move on to a slightly touchy issue - the decision to take the children out of school for these long trips. In the UK and many other countries, parents struggle even with taking children away for a day or two during term time… Henrik laughs as we get onto this subject.

'Long before that, we had the idea that homeschooling would be advantageous for our children, but life kind of took us over. Four kids, two jobs… It wasn't that easy to combine things and you have to prioritise. So, we were not able to pursue this goal of homeschooling although we were interested in that'.



Henrik and Magnus on the sofa in their family home in 2000

On Parenting

Henrik points to parenting as a key factor in setting a role model for the children: 'It's important to understand your role as a parent. Growing up, you have this idea that parents are adults and they always behave that way, and that's not the case. Parents are adults, but they also have feelings and good and bad days, and they also make mistakes. So, as a parent, if you accept and understand that you are far from perfect and that you're not at your best every day, you struggle the best way you can. It's not about doing 100 per cent every day, but it's about making an effort, some days more than others'.

He then takes a pop at politicians: 'When you have politicians flying private jets to conferences where they tell people they cannot fly because of the climate, don't they understand that's not how humans work?', Carlsen senior asks.

'They do what you do, not what you tell them. The same with kids. You cannot tell the kids what to do. You have to show them. It's very difficult and not all of us manage, but as long as you understand that you have to try at least to be an example, that's a good start. Whether you succeed, the kids and society will be the judge of that.

'Parenting is a struggle and you have to put in some work and you're no longer free to decide how you spend your 24 hours'.

Homeschooling and character building

The 2022 OECD 'Education at a Glance' report puts Norway ahead of most other countries in terms of the quality of the educational system and opportunities offered to students.

'Why did you want to do homeschooling?', I asked.

'I thought that, while they learn a lot of social skills in schools, it's not an efficient way for a bright child to learn. Not efficient at all', Henrik resolutely points out.

'It's rather detrimental in some ways having to stomach all these hours at school without being challenged', he explains.

'I'm not saying my kids suffered in any way at school, but, to take an example: Magnus was quite good in maths when he started school. Later on, however, when we had some measurements taken, his arithmetical capability was much worse than in the first grade, and this was after having 500 hours of math in school. This is because he probably didn't listen at all. It didn't reach him'.

As Henrik sees it, this isn't just a challenge for schools in Norway but an issue with the schooling system in general.

'That's not to diminish the role of teachers, because I think they are mainly idealistic, well-meaning and really want what's good for the children. However, it's really a difficult job to have an average group of kids that you want to help for a long time. It's very difficult. You also need to be extremely bright to appreciate the subtleties and differences among children at quite a young age. They pose a significant intellectual challenge to a teacher', Henrik says.

Regrets and drawbacks

As we wrap up this part of the conversation, I asked Henrik if he has any regrets when looking at those early days.

'Not really. Magnus is now a very famous person. That has had some clear drawbacks. My only regret is if he somehow ends up being less happy than he would if he had a more sheltered life'. As Henrik says this, he pauses and looks away for a few seconds, deep in thought.



Henrik with his children in Salzburg in late August of 2003, on their way south across Europe

What I noticed in talking to Henrik about Magnus is how surprisingly down-to-earth he is about his son and his life. While having such an approach is usually the best in life, I realise that emphasizing this in the case of Magnus is a very important tool for the Carlsen family to keep their wits about and, as Henrik later said, steer clear 'of the glitter and the distractions'.

'Neither my wife nor I have been tiger parents. All of the children in the family have their own path, without being dominated or overshadowed by the others', he says.

Magnus' three sisters

Reflecting on the other three children: 'For the girls, you have to ask them, but I think they got a lot of opportunities through chess. We travelled a lot thanks to the game.'



Magnus aged 4 playing with Lego

He notes that the girls were accepted by the chess community: 'They like the chess community in general, especially the two older girls, and have a lot of friends there. I think - and I hope - that chess has been beneficial to them as well, but you'd have to ask them. I'm not the judge'.

The same level of pride comes from him when talking about his other children, not just Magnus.

'All of our children are doing different things in life. Our oldest daughter Ellen is a doctor and she has two kids. The second one, Ingrid, wanted to become a dancer and was doing that for some years but it was not too easy to get jobs and now she's been studying law for two years. She is also an instructor at training centres. She was working hard and taking responsibility, which is something a lot of youths struggle with nowadays. Now she is very mature and understands what life is about'.

Of all their children, the youngest - Signe - is the only one to choose a career path close to that of Sigrun and Henrik.

'My wife and I are engineers. Just as my father wanted his sons to become engineers, I was hoping that maybe one of my kids would like to become an engineer as well. Fortunately, I didn't give any advice because the youngest one is very independent, but she chose to become a computer engineer. It was her own choice', Henrik says with a smile.

'As for Magnus, he's a professional chess player - he has other interests but hasn't studied in a regular way. The kids have different things that interest them. I find that interesting and heartening.'

In the second part of the interview to be published in the next issue of BCM:

Magnus Carlsen's road to stardom and the weight of the crown – the price of fame


2023
Date: 1-15 July, 2023
Venue: Shanghai&Chengqing, China

THE MATCH FOR THE TITLE OF WOMEN'S WORLD CHAMPION: CHINA – 3RD TO 25TH JULY 2023

QUEEN OF THE BOARD: JU WENJUN RETAINS HER CHAMPIONSHIP TITLE

HOW THE CHINESE PLAYER DEFEATED COMPATRIOT LEI TINGJIE TO WIN THE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP MATCH FOR THE FOURTH CONSECUTIVE TIME

By Milan Dinic

Photo: FIDE Official Photos / Stev Bonhage / David Llada

In a thrilling and tough match which lasted 12 classical games, World Champion Ju Wenjun defended her title after defeating challenger Lei Tingjie with a score of 6.5:5.5. Apart from defending the title, Ju also won €300,000 in prize money, while €200,000 went to the runner-up Lei Tingjie.

This is Ju's fourth victory in a world championship match since she first won the crown in May 2018. With this victory Ju - who is only 32 - has equalled the score of compatriot Hou Yifan, who also won the title four times.

The match was a tough, gruelling struggle where each side gave little chance to the opponent. Unlike the April match for the absolute World Championship title between Ian Nepomniachtchi and Ding Liren, where both players had huge swings in each game, Ju and Lei were playing extremely precisely according to the chess engines.

In the end, out of 12 games played, only three ended with a victory. As it turned out, all three victories were scored by the player with white pieces.

THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE MATCH

There are two distinct aspects to Chinese culture. One which is revealed in fireworks, spectacular events and grandiose buildings, and the other - more subtle, calm and fine. The event in China resembled more of the second.

The match took place in two Chinese cities - first in Shanghai (where Ju comes from) and then in Chongqing (where Lei is from). While the players, the media and the organisers enjoyed great conditions, playing in marvellous halls, the tone of the event was much more low-key. There wasn't much drama or fanfare (save on the board), as the



The Match Opening Press Conference

Chinese organisers - no doubt thanks to their party discipline and experience - made sure that everything functioned orderly. The crowds of school children and tours of 'special visitors', alongside the Chinese media which gave a lot of attention to the match, quietly and discreetly came and went, without causing any disturbance.

This atmosphere was also echoed in the players, who always appeared calm and spoke softly and were very much behaving as if they were just one of the visitors and not the most important people there. Despite being opponents vying for the ultimate chess crown, the tension between them - which must exist in a match - was not noticeable.

While Ju Wenjun was occasionally spotted with her coach Pentala Harikrishna, Lei mostly kept to herself, occasionally being seen with Teimour Radjabov.

SURPRISE AND STEEL: WHAT JU WENJUN AND LEI TINGJIE SHOWED IN CHINA

The 26-year-old challenger Lei Tingjie started the match with more confidence than her opponent: she was springing opening surprises, played more quickly, and gained more initiative. After the first four games of the match - despite all ending in a draw - it seemed that Ju was on the back foot, struggling. In game five, Lei was the first to break the ice and score a victory. But she didn't let herself get carried away - "I had many 'first victories'", she noted. Her caution was right, for Ju was proving not only to be stubborn in finding the right ways to counter Lei's initiative but, also, to press her opponent hard even in a position where she had a minimal advantage and where the game was a draw.

Ju was seeking respite and - playing on her experience - calmed things down and

relatively quickly ended the following game (round six), which was also the last one in her native Shanghai. With two days of rest as the chess caravan moved to central China, both players continued to press hard in the second part, playing highly precisely. What is notable about this match is that in neither game that ended in a draw did either player achieve a significant advantage, but they were always close to being even, which is a testimony to how tough and precise both Ju and Lei have been.

Ju's resilience and determination to play even on the smallest advantage paid off in game eight, when Lei finally broke. After holding off until the endgame, Lei misplayed and allowed her opponent to take a commanding lead. Instead of finishing Lei quickly, Ju went for a position where she had a minimal advantage, but she gradually squeezed a victory in the end.

Three more draws followed where, again, neither side had managed to achieve a commanding lead in the position. Then - as everything was hanging on the final game - Lei's wave broke.

After putting on a strong performance, where she played bravely and actively, Lei chose a more passive line, instead of the mainline aggressive approach that her position demanded, and soon ended in a significantly weaker position than Ju. This was also the only game in the match where there was a material imbalance on the board (Ju had a knight and a bishop for a pawn and a rook). Ju felt her moment had come and she did not allow her opponent to escape. As early as move 29 in game 12, Lei was in dire straits. Following the famous chess quote that *no one ever won a game by resigning*, Lei fought on, hoping for a chance to make a comeback. Finally, on move 62, she had to surrender.

Ju Wenju's victory is a spectacular achievement. As FIDE President Arkady Dvorkovich put it: "To win a world crown is an amazing success, but to do it for a fourth consecutive time, as Ju Wenjun did, is something else". With the victory in the match, Ju Wenjun has equalled the score with the world's top-rated woman player, even now, Hou Yifan, who also won the match four times. Unlike Hou, who decided to dedicate her life to a career in academia, Ju has shown no signs of intending to leave chess and is now on the path to set a record and win a fifth match for the crown. In the history of women's chess, only the legendary Vera Menchik achieved more - winning the crown eight times!

Despite her defeat, Lei showed admirable fighting spirit, creativity and initiative. In the final press conference she said "I will be back", and - if she continues with the level of play shown in the match in China - she most probably will be back.

In the following lines, we will take a look at the three decisive games of the match. The analysis of the games was written up by the author, but the true analysis was done by grandmasters such as Alik Gershon and Xi Yu (who were the official FIDE commentators of the match), as well as the great Judit Polgar and former Women's World Champion Alexandra Kosteniuk, and, also, by The Grand Chess Inquisitor of our time, 'the Engine'. We are thankful to all of them for their input.

THE THREE DECISIVE GAMES OF THE WOMEN'S WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP MATCH

Game five:
Lei takes the lead

Following four games where she seemed to be the one having more initiative, she finally scored in game five. In a complicated game, Lei seized the initiative early on and gradually tightened her grip on Ju Wenjun's subdued defences. This was the first game in the match where one side had a clear advantage.



Lei Tingjie - **Ju** Wenjun

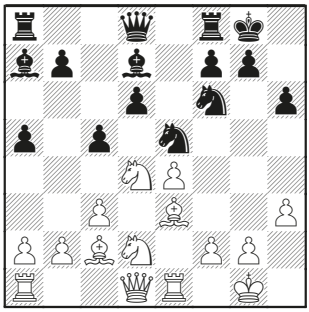
FIDE Women's World Championship
Shanghai/Chongqing CHN (5.1)

The challenger Lei Tingjie was White in this game, and again - as in games one and three - she opened with **1.e4**. Lei's usual move is 1.d4 but, in the match, she switched to opening with 1.e4.

Ju responded with the standard **1.e5**. Unlike in the previous two encounters where Lei opted for the Ruy Lopez, here she went for the Italian game, with **3.♗c4**. Another opening surprise by the challenger.

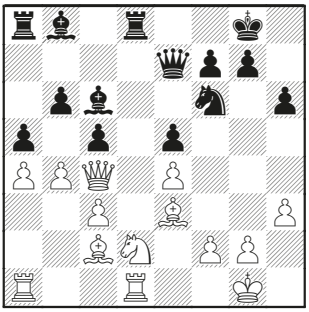
The opponents played a long manoeuvring game with many nuances, as Grandmaster Alik Gershon pointed out, and by move 14, stepped into uncharted territory.

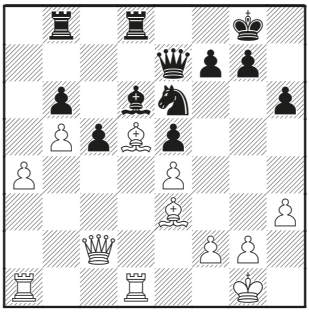
After Lei made the thematic d3-d4 push in the centre, she got a slight edge which increased after somewhat committal **14...c5** by Ju.



With this move, Black blocked her dark-squared bishop and weakened the light-squares, which later had grave consequences.

In subsequent play, Lei then launched a push on the queenside, but Ju's response was far from optimal.





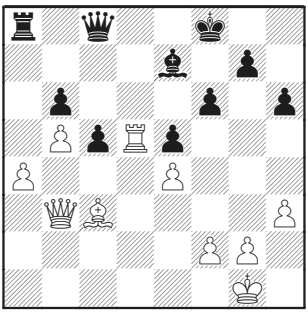
Here Ju took the pawn with **21…axb4?!** Better options were 21…♖d6 and 21…♗b7.

As played, White got a clear advantage and control over the light squares in the centre. Over the next several moves, Lei built up the pressure while Ju was forced to switch to defending. After the Women's World Champion carried out a sound manoeuvre ♘f6-e8-c7-e6 with the idea of ♘d4, Lei had a very important choice to make.

Lei could have continued to ramp up the pressure with 30.♕c4, which, most probably, promised more, but, instead, she traded her light-squared bishop for Black's knight with 30.♗xe6. White was still better, but Black had a break after some of the pieces had been removed from the board. Still, within a few moves, White again tightened her grip on the game.

Ju's toughest moment came in round five

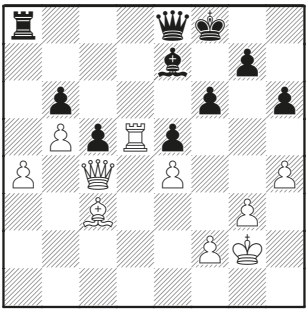




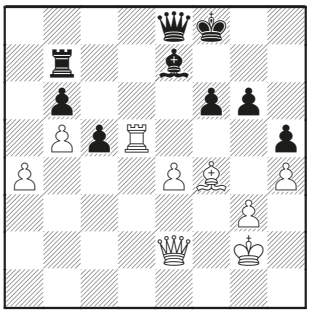
An extremely uncomfortable position for Black. With no active play, Ju has to defend passively, while Lei can gradually improve her position and probe Black's defence here and there, taking no risks.

By this point, both sides had under 10 minutes, but with three more moves to the first time control, it seemed safe.

After **38.g3 ♕c8 39.♔g2 ♕e8 40.h4** it became clear that White was preparing a break either in the centre or on the kingside to stretch Black's defence.



40…h5?! This control move made by Ju appears to be the last straw that broke the camel's back as White breaks through on one of the wings. With the precise **41.♗d2!** Lei put the bishop in a position where it could see both flanks, noted Grandmaster and former World Champion Alexandra Kosteniuk. On the next move, White played f2-f4 and began the final push.



45.e5! - the clincher. Ju Wenjun was visibly nervous at this point. She spent nearly 23 minutes trying to find the best response, but her position is beyond salvation. With five minutes on the clock, Ju played **45…♕a8** (a lesser of many evils was ♖d7, although, after 46.♕f3, it's still virtually impossible to hold), but it failed to **46.♕f3!** played by Lei in under a minute.

After trading the queens, Lei penetrated with her rook into Black's camp and got to the b6-pawn. With a single passer against White's two, Ju had no reasonable defence. Soon she had to give her bishop for one of them.

Ju played on, hoping for a miracle, but it wasn't meant to be. On move 65, the Women's World Champion resigned.

White gradually picks up all of Black's pawns and promotes her h-passer.

In the post-game interview Lei was asked if she felt any pressure: "If you feel it, you have it; if you don't feel it, you don't have it. I'm just happy to be here", Lei responded.

Lei, who had a concerned look on her face during the press conference, was asked why she seemed not as happy as in the past four games which ended in a draw. Her response: "You can't show you're happy in front of people. I won a lot of "first win" [games] in my life… maybe I will be happy later".

Ju acknowledged that this was a tough game for her as she was weaker, but tried not to show any emotion and was mostly reserved. "This match puts more pressure on me than other tournaments, but this is something I have to endure".

Game Eight: Ju Wenjun equalises after a Lei slips in a drawn endgame

After a loss in round five, Ju did not give into desperation. She calmed things in game six and left her home town in Shanghai without a victory, planning a comeback in the second part of the match. Games six and seven ended in a draw after tense positional debates.

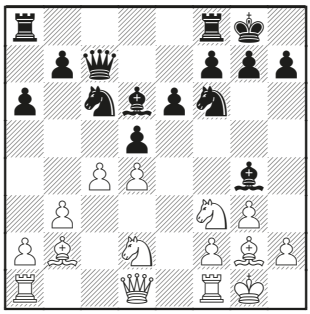
Now, the tables turned on Lei. Ju Wenjun defeated Lei Tingjie in game eight, as the challenger misplayed in the endgame. Instead of finishing her opponent swiftly, Ju went for a position with a minimal advantage. In a long trench-style endgame fight that proceeded, where progress was measured in inches: Lei had to hold a very uncomfortable position. Although the computers gave White a minimal edge, from a practical standpoint this was a very tough endgame for Black, who was doomed for a long defence, with any mistake being fatal. Miraculously, Ju allowed Black one last chance for a draw in the end on move 56. Even though Lei made the drawing move, she missed the saving idea, choosing the wrong continuation, and White was winning again.

Ju Wenjun - Lei **Tingjie**

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Most of the time, Ju Wenjun would open 1.d4, but now she played **1.♘f3** - keeping her options open. Lei responded with **1…d5** and after **2.e3 c5**, Ju opted for a double fianchetto set-up, stepping into uncharted territory with the early **6.d2–d4**.

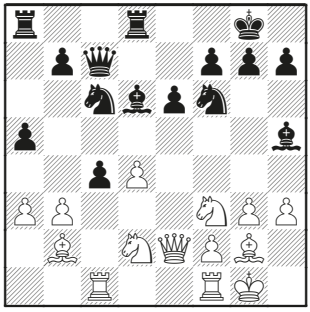
Grandmaster Alik Gershon said that it has become clear that the "team Ju is trying to take the initiative in the openings", to respond to the fact that, in the first part of the match, Lei was the one launching opening surprises.



Both sides have finished their development, entering a long positional manoeuvring game.

12.a3 a5 13.h3 ♗h5 14.♕e2 ♖fd8 15.♖ac1
Commenting on the position, Grandmaster Judit Polgar - the strongest woman chess player in history - was a bit critical of the challenger, saying that she "feels that Lei is misplacing her pieces a bit. Pawn on a5, rook on d8… If you want to have a good spot it should be on e8…".

Polgar pointed to important moments in the positions, such as this one: "This is very tricky in this complicated middlegame position - where do you put your rooks? When you play a system, it's very important to understand the position of the rooks. When the position opens up, the rooks will play an important role, but then you're not going to have time to regroup them so easily, so where you position them early in the game matters".





15…dxc4 Lei abandoned holding the tension and decided to take on c4, inviting White to the so-called hanging pawns structure. Ju spent quite a bit of time thinking about her move, although bxc4 was obvious.

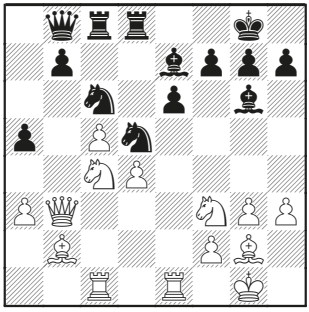
"I'm shocked", said Polgar - commenting on the length of time Ju was taking in this seemingly clear position.

16.bxc4, played after eight minutes.

16…♗e7 16.♕e3 ♖ac8 18.♖fe1 The position was still even, but now the d-file is open for Black. At the same time, one of the main attacking opportunities for White is to sacrifice the d-pawn with a d5-push and open the h1-a8 diagonal for the white-squared bishop, as noted by Judit Polgar.

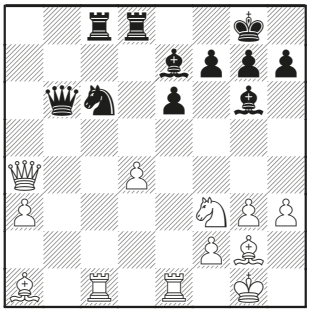
However, it seemed that the challenger was struggling to find the right moves and get into the groove for the position on the board.

Ju picked up the speed in which she was playing her moves and also got a slightly better position, with more initiative across the board.

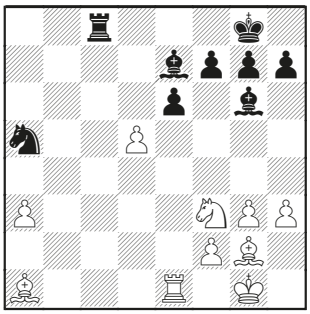


21…a4! A move suggested by the computer. Lei is giving up a pawn to force massive exchanges on the board. It allowed

Black to trade several poorly coordinated pieces and regain some space for play.



Despite being a pawn down, Black has enough activity to counter it. Also, White's d5-pawn is hanging. Black now decided to exchange the queens, and the game was going towards a draw.



With this move, Ju got rid of her isolated pawn.

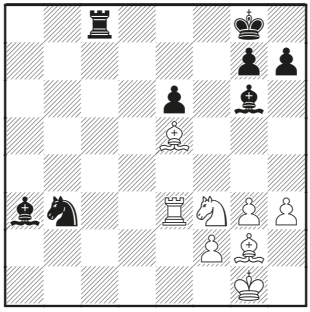
Now, instead of simply snatching the a3-pawn (28…♗xa3), Lei decided to do something different.

28.…♘b3? was a step in the wrong direction, offering White some chances.

29.dxe6 Played almost instantly by Ju. By this point, Ju had 25 minutes on the clock, and Lei was down to 10 minutes.

29…fxe6 30.♗e5 White is slightly better. As Lei was thinking, the time on her clock was slipping. She responded in three and a half minutes. With just seven minutes on her clock and ten moves away from the first time control, it was becoming increasingly uncomfortable for the challenger.

30…♗xa3? What was a good choice two moves ago now put Black on the brink of defeat. Lei should have secured the position of her b3-knight with 30…♗e8, followed by ♗a4.

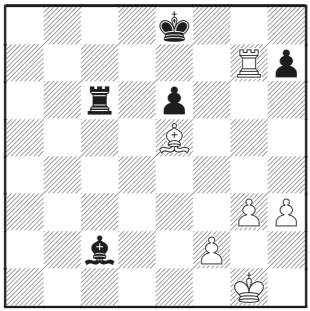


31.♖e3! The tables have completely turned on Lei. She was in deep trouble without time to carefully think things through.

31…♗c2 32.♘d4? Instead of the strongest move, 32.♘e1, which would most probably have decided the game, Ju opted for an inferior move, which significantly helped Black fight back.

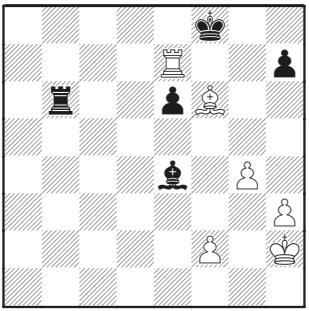
Now, with a series of exchanges, Black defused a lot of the pressure.

32…♘xd4 33.♖xa3 ♘c6 34.♗xc6 ♖xc6 35.♖a8+ ♔e7 36.♖a7+ ♔e8 37.♖xg7



Black is a pawn down; her king is cut off on the eighth rank. The position is very much in Ju's style - playing on a small advantage, trying to squeeze a victory by testing different plans. Although the computer assessed the position as equal, in a practical game, Black was up for a long uphill struggle, with any slip being fatal.

Soon the two reached move 40 and the first time control. A long trench-style battle was ahead.

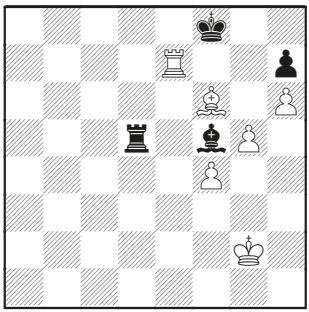


Either 42.♖c7, or 42.f3 even was leading White to a much better position. Instead, Ju played **42.h4?!,** nearly allowing Black to equalise. However, Lei was not up to the challenge.

42…♖b3? After 42….♖b2 ! Black's task of saving the game would have been much easier. White got the upper hand again.

43.♖xe6 ♗f3 44.g5 - being two pawns down, this is extremely difficult for Black to hold.

White gradually advanced her pawns and then started pushing her king forward. Lei continued to fight back and tried to build a line of defence on the light squares.



And now a miraculous thing happened: White needed to play ♖a7, ♖c7 or ♖e1. Instead, White made a mistake, thus dropping the advantage completely!

56.♔f2?? After this seemingly natural move, Black got a great chance to escape. **56…♖d2+! 57.♔e3** and Lei could have saved the game with 57…♖d3+: Black holds, proving the saying - it's never over until it's over! However…

57…♖d6?? Most probably, the challenger missed the fact that, after 57…♖d3 58.♔e2 ♖d4!, attacking the f4-pawn, her rook can't be taken as it leads to a drawn opposite-coloured bishop endgame.

White was in control again while Lei faced an insurmountable task of defending this position with a couple of minutes on the clock. Eventually, Ju implemented one of the winning ideas - an exchange sacrifice to promote a pawn - and sealed the deal on move 72.

With this victory, Ju Wenjun levelled the score. With four more games planned for the classical match, the race was again wide open.

Game Twelve:
The encounter which decided the match

This was the first time Ju Wenjun had reached a final of a world championship match with a tied score - 5.5:5.5. In all three of her previous matches, she was either leading or trailing.

Despite holding the world champion to a tie after 11 games, springing several surprises during the match and showing excellent opening preparation and tactical skills, the 26-year-old challenger Lei Tingjie cracked under pressure in the final round.

Playing as White in what turned out to be the final game in the match, the defending World Champion Ju Wenjun punished her opponent's errors in the middlegame to emerge significantly better. In the Queen's Gambit Reversed Lei Tingjie opted for a lesser-known line. Despite the position demanding that Black should play more aggressively, Lei chose a more cautious approach. In an even position in the middlegame, Lei made a critical error, after which White had a strong advantage.

Ju Wenjun - Lei Tingjie

FIDE Women's World Championship
Shanghai/Chongqing CHN (12.1)

After 1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.e3 Lei went for 3…c5 entering the Queen's Gambit Reversed.

With 4.dxc5 Ju took the most straightforward approach. An alternative was to play 4.c4 and offer the option of transitioning into different theoretical lines. The opponents quickly made a series of well-known moves.

4…e6 5.b4 a5 6.c3 axb4 7.cxb4 b6 8.♗b5+ ♗d7 9.♗xd7 ♘bxd7 10.a4 bxc5 11.b5

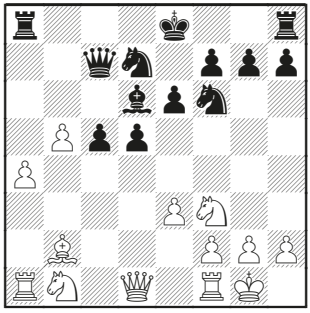
The position is roughly even. White has two passers on the a-and-b-files but slightly lags in development. Black is to develop the bishop, castle and is going to play in the centre, trying to hold up White's queenside advance. White will put her bishop on b2, on a powerful diagonal, aiming at the black king's fortress.

Wesley So has played this position three times with Black. He lost to Alireza Firouzja in 2020 but then won against Le Quang Lien and Bluebaum the following year.

An interesting move for Black to consider here was 11… g5 to go for an extremely sharp game.

11…♕c7 A better place for the queen is on b8, as, with her being on c7, Black can lose a tempo if White manages to make a b6 push.

12.♗b2 ♗d6 13.0-0



Black still had the opportunity to proceed here with the aggressive move 13…g5. In fact, 13… g5 was played in all the three previous games that reached that position - but they all ended in a draw.

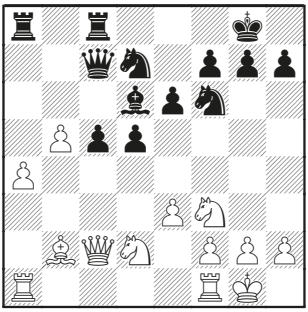
It seems that the position was inviting Black to play more aggressively or risk entering a slightly inferior game. Was this Ju Wenjun's intention all along, assuming that Lei would not dare to play gutsy moves like this one?

13…0-0 Lei played this move after 18 minutes of thinking.

14.♘bd2 ♖fc8 14…e5 was considered a better move here for Black, increasing the pressure on the centre to push d4 at some point.

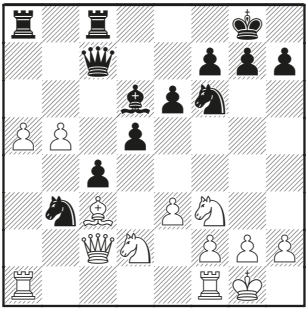
Ju took her time here. The best option, according to the engines, was 15.♕b1, reinforcing the b5-pawn. Ju played 15.♕c2 instead.

Again chess engines insist on 15…e5 with the idea of 16.e4 c4, with a lot of complications.



But Lei played 15…c4?! to which White immediately responded with 16.♗c3. Now it's much harder for Black to hold up the white pawns on the queenside. White plans to get her f1-rook to b1 and f3-knight to e5, to support the pawn advance.

16…♘c5 17.a5 And the pawns were off: 17…♘b3



"Black is in trouble", said Grandmaster Alik Gershon about the position. Indeed, the computer gave a commanding lead to White at this point.

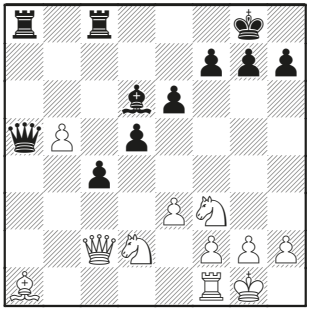
The optimal move for White here was 18.♖a2, after which Black would struggle to keep up.

Instead, after thinking for 15 minutes, Ju played 18.♗xf6? A huge blunder, immediately handing over the advantage to Black.

18…♘xa1! 19.♗xa1 ♕xa5 Black got a rook and one of White's passers for a knight and a bishop. This is the first game in the match where a material imbalance was on the board.

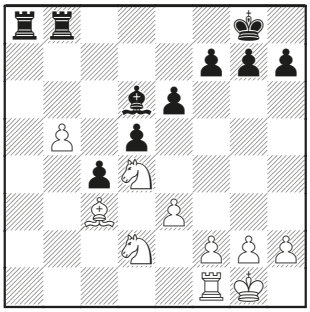
"Instead of White having a commanding advantage, it's anybody's game again", noted Grandmaster Alik Gershon.

It was an important respite for Lei, who was now lagging on the clock.



20.♕c3 Ju spent nearly 20 minutes calculating the consequences of the queens being exchanged. Usually, in this type of position, the side with two minor pieces wants to keep the queens on the board. The World Champion decided otherwise. The computer considers 20.♗c3 to be a slightly better alternative here.

After 20…♕xc3 21.♗xc3 ♖bd8 22.♘d4, the fight around the b5-pawn had begun.

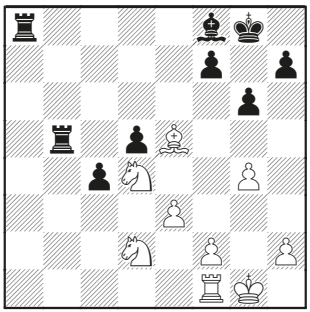


22…e5? A serious positional and tactical mistake by Lei. Black weakened her pawn chain and the e5-pawn. 22…♖a3 or 22…♗c5, pressuring White, offered much better perspectives for the challenger.

23.♘f5 Now Black is again in trouble as the e5 pawn falls. Still, White will need to find many precise moves to get the advantage, noted Grandmaster Alik Gershon.

24.♗xe5 ♖xb5 25.g4 Making a "luft" for the king, but it was an inaccuracy by Ju. 25.♗d4 or 25.♗c3 seemed more natural.

After 25…g6 26.♘d4, the opponents reached the last critical position in the game.



26…♖b2? After this move, Black has no way out. Lei could have put up much more stubborn resistance with 26…♖b6, recommended by chess engines.



Always with a smile, even after a defeat: Lei Tingjie

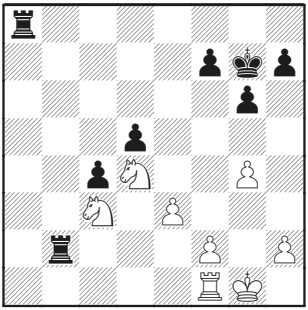
27.♘b1! White now has a huge advantage as she achieves an ideal set-up for her knights. "As a human, it's difficult to consider ♘b1 as an obvious move", noted Grandmaster Xu Yi. Impressive technique by Ju.

The exchange of a pair of rooks with 27…♖a1 does not change much, as, after 28.♘c3 ♖xf1 29.♔xf1, White is in total control.

27…♗g7 Lei opted to trade the bishops, but White emerged even stronger.

28.♗xg7 ♔xg7 29.♘c3 White is now winning. "You know this is lost", said Grandmaster Gershon, lamenting Lei's position.





In subsequent play, White gradually got to the opponent's weak pawns while Black had no counterplay. Soon Ju got the d-passer and started advancing it, supported by all of the white pieces. Lei resisted to the very end but eventually had to accept the inevitable.

Since Black can't prevent the promotion of the d7-pawn, Lei capitulated.

JU WENJUN'S FIRST REACTION AFTER DEFENDING THE TITLE: I'M EXCITED AND RELIEVED

In the first interview after winning the crown for the fourth time, Ju Wenjun was surprisingly calm.

"I am excited but also relieved that it is finally finished. This is very emotional for me", she said, although not showing much emotion.

"Now my happiness is on 9/10", she added with a smile.

When asked to compare this victory to her previous ones, Ju said: "Each time is very special for me. It's really good and both players played well this time, so it's even more special".

"I was more lucky", she concluded.

Lei Tingjie showed more emotions and was smiling during the press conference, despite a heavy loss.

"The match finally finished. No more pressure. There are so many things to look forward to doing. For me, this is kind of a relief and I look forward to relaxing", Lei said.

"I will be focused on the future and will try my best to play good chess. I was very happy to play against Ju in this match and I learnt a lot".

"I will be back", Lei said.

Hou Yifan
on chess in China
and the match for the
18th Women's World Champion:

IT'S ALL ABOUT FINDING THE BALANCE BETWEEN EXPERIENCE AND MOTIVATION

Ahead of the Match in China to determine the 18th Women's World Champion, I was in Dubai for the inaugural edition of the Global Chess League and there I caught up with Hou Yifan.

A former Women's World Champion (2010-2017) and still the highest-rated player on the FIDE Women's rating list (2628), Hou has left a strong mark on chess with her exceptional skill and results. Despite deciding to move to academia, she is still present in the chess world and her recent resurfacing at the Global Chess League in Dubai was a chance to ask her in person about the match between Ju Wenjun and Lei Tingjie and chess in China.

The first thing I asked Hou was to explain how China got into a position to have the crown in both the Women's and the Open category.

"As a Chinese player, I am happy to see how chess develops in our country. That is actually the work of not our generation but all of the Chinese players from before - even back to the 60s and 70s", she explains, pointing out the strong common spirit which was built among the Chinese players over the years.

"We also have traditions to play together - both men and women - and we learn".

The rise and success of Chinese chess in recent years have gone hand in hand with increasing government support for the game. "That helps a lot", Hou acknowledged, noting that chess plays a greater role in Chinese society now than a few years back.

Hou Yifan was five and a half when she got introduced to chess.

"It was a coincidence because none of my family members play chess, nor was it big in my home town (Xinghua, in the east of China). I just happened to see a chess board somewhere in the street".

Hou had a chess teacher, but at the time - in 1999 - online wasn't a big thing and there weren't many online resources.

"I went to a private chess club and my coach was an amateur chess player. He would take out the books and we would start rehearsing a few opening moves and then we just start playing. It was a very exciting period for me. Now it's different and much more modern".

Hou was one of several Chinese chess players to win medals and pave the way for the country to climb to the top of the chess world. Ding Liren's success in winning the World Championship Match in Astana sparked talk of Chinese dominance in chess.

"Even though the titles are both in China, I wouldn't say China is dominating the chess world. In the open section, Magnus decided not to compete but, personally, I think he is the strongest", Hou said adding: "To win a title does not equal dominance".

But the story is different in women's chess where nine of the 17 women's world champions so far have come from China.



Hou Yifan. Credit: Global Chess League / Maria Emelianova

"We are really one of the best teams, that's for sure," Hou said as she explained that there are different factors at play.

"Before we used to have these traditions of training together with men, but it wasn't that common in recent years. For the moment, the women players get support from the Federation and a huge number of people working with them".

"When I was young, a few matches were organised by the federation, helping me a lot. For example, just before I won my world championship title, I had a match with Anatoly Karpov which was very useful and I also got some advice from him", she added.

When talk turned to the match in China between Ju Wenjun and Lei Tingjie, Hou was cautious.

"It's hard to say what will happen. Ju is experienced and has won the title before, Lei is young and maybe she is more motivated. It will depend on their prep and how they build their shape up".

I asked Hou if it was easier to defend the crown or to attack the title.

"For me, it doesn't matter. It's simply focusing on chess games. I was comfortable with both".

According to the currently highest-rated woman player, the key to success is finding the right balance between motivation and skill.

"If you lack motivation, you just enjoy yourself, but that has its drawbacks. To have motivation but lack experience - it reminds me of Firouzja in the 2020 Candidates; he didn't do well but he tried hard. There should be a balance. The players will find the most suitable path for themselves. It's not the same for everyone. You should see what makes you feel more ready", Hou said.

THE MEDIUM IS THE OBSTACLE

By Grandmaster Raymond Keene OBE



The immortal Renaissance artist Michelangelo claimed to see the structure of his ethereal statues imprisoned in the marble block. It was, for him, merely a question of freeing the final beauty from the encasing form. Canadian structuralist and professor of semiotics Marshall McLuhan coined the phrase 'the medium is the message'. Freeing the aesthetic object from the marble medium was Michelangelo's *ne plus ultra*.

But what if frustrated genius begins to experience the medium as an obstacle and resorts to extremes of violence to overcome its resistance? In chess terms one saw this with the Alekhine of those years both during his sensational victories at San Remo 1930 and Bled 1931 and in the years after, certainly extending to his title defeat against Euwe in 1935. As Alekhine increasingly bowled over his illustrious victims in coruscating style, the champion's

impatience and thirst for triumph resulted in games where he strained the legitimate potential of his positions to the point where extreme taking of risk became the order of the day.

The same syndrome can be observed in art, where post-First World War artists grew frustrated with traditional art forms and started to strain the accepted parameters of what constituted high art, literature or musical composition.

For example, the Dada Movement, which arose during the First World War, represented a complete break with conventional conceptions of aesthetics. A key member and link to chess was Marcel Duchamp. Dada was officially launched in 1916 at the Cafe Voltaire in Zurich by poets and artists, such as Tristan Tzara and Hans Arp, and was a direct reaction to the mass slaughter, contradictory propaganda and inexplicable insanity of World War I. Independent but sympathetic groups emerged soon afterwards in New York, Berlin and Paris. These various groups were thematically connected by their rejection of idealism, aesthetic conventions which had outlived their relevance to contemporary conditions, and contemporary society's continuing embrace of 'rationalism' and 'progress' in spite of the patent irrationality of the ongoing world conflict.

"*They condemned the nationalist and capitalist values that led to the cataclysm of the war and employed unorthodox techniques*, *performances and provocations to jolt the rest of society into self-awareness*. *The absurdity of Dada activities created a mirror exposing the absurdity in the world around them*": *Oxford Art Online*.

Marcel Duchamp, for example, outraged the art world with his ready-mades, such as *Fountain* (which is simply an inverted urinal). He further participated in that paean to illogic, the film Entr'acte (1924), where Duchamp's game of chess against Man Ray on the roofs of Paris, is one of the few clips which even remotely approaches any kind of rational sense. Also complicit in the anti-rational fabric of Entr'acte were composer Erik Satie, director René Clair and artist Francis Picabia.

The latter, like Max Ernst and Man Ray, not to mention Duchamp himself, went on to design his own chess set.

After the close of hostilities, many of the Dada artists embarked on the intellectual voyage to Surrealism, which in its turn was officially inaugurated (also in 1924), when the writer André Breton published his *Manifesto of Surrealism*.

Similarly to its precursor Dada, Surrealism was characterised by a profound disillusionment with and condemnation of the Western emphasis on logic and reason. Breton, though, wanted to create something more specific out of Dada's nonsensical and seemingly disparate and unfocused activities.

Consequently, Surrealist works veered towards predication on the psychoanalytical theories and *Traumdeutung* of Sigmund Freud, relating to the irrational and instinct-based drives of the unconscious or dreaming mind.

Those artists who subscribed to Surrealism included René Magritte, Man Ray, Joan Miro, Meret Oppenheim, Dorothea Tanning and Salvador Dalí. Man Ray, as we have seen, was a chess sparring partner of Duchamp, while several of the above became obsessed with chess and, like Alexander Calder, joined Ernst, Man Ray and Picabia in creating their own chess sets. Both Dada and Surrealism intended to undermine established values, while their contrarian stance served as an important precursor to many late 20th-century artistic developments.

I have often maintained that chess mirrors developments in life, in particular intellectual, artistic and military

developments. A case in point is the elaboration of the theory of the chess blockade by Aron Nimzowitsch, inspired, perhaps, by trench warfare on the Western front from 1914-1918. A further striking example is the rise of Hypermodernism in chess, at around the time that Dada and Surrealism began to emerge and in some ways dominated the intellectual post-Bellum landscape. To Grandmasters reared on the classical precepts of chess, as espoused by Dr. Siegbert Tarrasch, Hypermodernism must have seemed irrational. However, the goal of chess is not just to challenge and shock, but primarily to win; therefore a core of reason and purpose must most certainly have lain behind the Hypermodern modes of thinking.

The Hypermodern school is the name given to a number of ingenious writers and players in the 1920s (Julius Breyer, Ernst Grünfeld, Aron Nimzowitsch, Richard Réti and Xavier Tartakower) who reacted strongly against the influence of Tarrasch and his severely classical school, which they regarded as over-dogmatic and tending to produce routine play. If Nimzowitsch represents the Marcel Duchamp of the group, and Duchamp eagerly used Nimzowitsch's openings in his own games, then ideologue Richard Reti was the André Breton, with perhaps Julius (aka Gyula) Breyer as Dada founder Tristan Tzara. By the use of paradox and colourful imagery, they made a convincing case that appealed very much to the young. Breyer's famously controversial and provocative remark: "*After 1.e4 White's game is in the last throes*", reveals the chief domain for their activities: the chess openings. In particular, Réti and Nimzowitsch brought a new concept to the theory of the centre, preferring in many ways to observe it, rather than occupy it.

In this arena, they favoured the half-open and closed defences to the King's pawn (such as Alekhine's Defence, 1. e4 ♘f6; the French Defence, 1. e4 e6; the Sicilian Defence, 1. e4 c5; and the Caro-Kann 1. e4 c6). As Black against 1. d4, they chose, and developed to a great degree, the fianchetto defences, such as the King's Indian and Queen's Indian, while Grünfeld even invented an entirely new defence that was named after him, one which positively invited White to construct a mighty pawn centre, which Black would undermine from the wings (1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 g6 3. ♘c3 d5). One name is, paradoxically, absent from the Hypermodern roster, the great Alexander Alekhine. Inventor of the most controversial and quintessentially Hypermodern defence, 1. e4 met by the ultimate provocation 1… Nf6, Alekhine distanced himself from any association with schools or movements. A lone Titan he considered himself, and a lone Titan he was, in spite of his creation of the most extreme Hypermodern defence, one which, to an even greater extent than the Grünfeld Defence, tempts White into constructing a gigantic pawn centre. In art terms, Alekhine's defence, along with Nimzowitsch's parallel provocation 1. e4 Nc6, might be seen as the chessboard parallel to Duchamp's *Fontaine*.

One of the major advantages of playing Hypermodern systems as White is that they rely far more on general strategic understanding than rote memorisation. However, this does not mean that both sides are not set onerous problems to solve. In the modern era Hypermodern systems as White have mainly been championed by Vladimir Kramnik and Lev Aronian. Both these players have frequently set very difficult problems for their elite opponents with these complex systems.

Richard Réti himself is one of the most fascinating and colourful characters in the history of chess. Réti developed theories that were regarded as little less than revolutionary in his era. He asserted that, contrary to classical principles, the centre need not be occupied by pawns. This must have seemed like heresy to the classically-minded grandmasters of his day. As we have seen, this new approach was dubbed 'Hypermodern' and led to the development of the Réti Opening (1. ♘f3).

Réti (1889-1929) was the grandmaster and writer who principally conveyed the teachings of the hypermoderns to the chess public.

Réti had intended to complete his doctorate in mathematics at the University of Vienna and he carried his doctoral thesis around with him in a small booklet, which, however, he lost and never recovered. Réti's absent-mindedness was to become legendary, it being said that wherever his yellow briefcase was to be found, Réti was sure to be somewhere else. The loss of his mathematical notes apparently drove him to near suicide, as he later confided to his older brother Rudolph. Then destiny intervened, and (Richard) Réti received an invitation to the Netherlands, as Chess Master in Residence. He accepted, resolving to pursue a chess career, instead of becoming an academic.

This was a choice which has faced many young devotees of the game, including maths genius, Dr. John Nunn, who renounced his tenure at Oriel College, Oxford, in order to pursue a professional chess career, which was to include victories against world champions Tal, Petrosian, Karpov and Anand. As for myself, I had to decide between pursuing a Doctorate in German literature at Trinity College, Cambridge, or trying to become a chess Grandmaster. Ultimately the siren summons of Nimzowitsch and Réti overcame my devotion to Goethe and Schiller. Regarding Réti's dilemma, Brother Rudolph said, "*It haunted him throughout his life*, *and he never found a definite answer to it*." Others, such as Adrian Hollis, Professor Nathan Divinsky and Jonathan Mestel, juggled chess and University life, but ultimately preferred a professional career in the groves of Academe. In the case of Hollis a kind of inner emigration took place, when he replaced the hurly-burly of over-the-board combat, with the complexities of chess by correspondence, in which craft he rose to become a correspondence Grandmaster.

With Réti, mathematics' loss was chess's gain, as more successes followed during 1920: first at Amsterdam ahead of leading Grandmasters Geza Maróczy and Xavier Tartakower, not to mention future World Champion Max Euwe. First at Vienna ahead of Breyer, Grünfeld and Tartakower and, most impressive of all, first prize at the great tournament of Gothenburg, Sweden, an event that included most of Europe's most prominent players.

This was, indeed, a result worthy of a potential world champion. Then came a pause in Réti's chess playing career. He had become involved in the occupation of writing about chess. Starting off as a newspaper columnist, he was, in the words of Harry Golombek, to become "*a great and vital writer on the game*." It was the writings of a certain German incompetent, Franz Gutmayer, that provoked Réti to react, refute and write his masterpiece *Die Neuen Ideen im Schachspiel*, Vienna 1922, which appeared under the title *Modern Ideas in Chess*, London/New York 1923. For the first time in the history of books on chess a writer capable of a genuine historical survey of the evolution of chess ideas, and also of a colourful and poetic picture of the state of contemporary chess, had made his appearance.

Returning to the active playing of the game, he now participated in practically all the great tournaments of the 1920s. In the great New York event of 1924 he won the brilliancy prize for a celebrated win over Bogoljubov and inflicted upon Capablanca his only defeat of the tournament - indeed, and astonishingly, the world champion's only loss in eight years.

By 1927 Réti was coming back into true grandmaster form. Then, returning to Prague, he prepared for publication his second great book: *Masters of the Chessboard*, but, tragically, he never managed to complete it. He was taken ill with scarlet fever and died at the age of 40 in a Prague hospital in 1929. This premature death was a disaster for the chess world, but, once again, in the hallowed opinion of Harry Golombek, "it should be stated that, had he written only *Modern Ideas in Chess*, he would still," with Philidor, "have belonged to the chess Immortals."

The Dada, Surrealism and Chess Hypermodern movements might have seemed the epitome of illogic to the classically-minded denizens of the bastions of traditionalism, but all three tendencies indicated evidence in their own fields of what Sigmund Freud had, somewhat belatedly, described as *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (*Civilisation and its discontents*). In chess we now, once again, see similar signs of tremors on the chessboard, indicative of wider disturbing implications. For example, the ostensibly ridiculous Bongcloud Opening (1. e4 e5 2. ♔e2), and similarly weird offshoots, are being given credence at the highest echelons, being employed by such exalted superstars as World Champion Magnus Carlsen as well as Hikaru Nakamura, whilst claiming such illustrious victims as world number six, Wesley So.

Meanwhile, the exploits of that erratic British genius, the late lamented Michael Basman, who has defeated not only John Nunn, with the eccentric 1. g4, but also World Title Candidate, Jon Speelman, with the even more eccentric 1. e4 g5, have been categorised and lauded by Gerard Welling in his book *U Cannot be Serious! Avant-Garde Strategy in Chess*. In one game after Carlsen's 1. g4 his opponent, Rauf Mamedov, simply downed tools and resigned.

Chess, in its own modest way, may be indicative of the greater dangers: small symptoms, with far wider implications. Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* (1912, often described as the most important novel of the twentieth century) brilliantly exposes in microcosm those very ante-Bellum discontents which engaged the Dadaists and which Sigmund Freud eventually caught up with and delineated in his *Unbehagen* (1929). In my opinion, the English parallel to Mann's masterpiece is Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Poison Belt*, 1913, the original cover of which depicts the hero, Professor George Challenger, as the spitting image of World Chess Champion Wilhelm Steinitz, whom I am convinced that Sir Arthur encountered during dinners at Simpson's-in-the-Strand.

To quote Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Book II, "*to compare great things with small*", Sir Arthur adduces a blurring of the (sic) Frauenhofer Lines in the spectrum, as a portent of something far more hazardous. The fictitious Professor Challenger writes: "*I have read with amusement*, *not wholly unmixed with some less complimentary emotion*, *the complacent and wholly fatuous letter of Professor XXX which has lately appeared in the columns of* The Times, *upon the subject of the blurring of Frauenhofer's lines in the spectra* ,*both of the planets and of the fixed stars*. *He dismisses the matter as of no significance*. *To a wider intelligence it may well seem of very great possible importance- so great as to involve the ultimate welfare of every man*, *woman and child upon this planet*."

And as for Professor Challenger's litmus test of the Frauenhofer Lines, in my Lexicon, read: chess openings! Perhaps the solution, in a bewildering ocean of global contradiction and apparent irrationality, is to cultivate one's own garden and derive solace from the Panglossianly self assured words of that arch-classicist, Alexander Pope:

"*All nature is but art*, *unknown to thee;*

All chance, *direction which thou canst not see;*

All discord, *harmony not understood;*

All partial evil, *universal good*.

And spite of pride, *in erring reason's spite*,

One truth is clear, *whatever is*, *is right*."

(*Essay on Man*, 1733)

But perhaps the real answer lies in the frustration of the top players such as Carlsen and Nakamura with the obstructive medium of orthodox chess. By resorting to the Bongcloud, 1. g4 and Fischerrandom (Chess360), such elite Grandmasters are echoing Alekhine's impatience with

the very medium of chess. The ultimate symbol, of course, being Magnus Carlsen's renunciation of the world title which he had defended so tenaciously for many years.

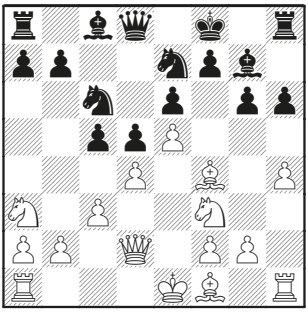
Jon Ludvig Hammer vs Magnus Carlsen

Live Chess (2023) (blitz), Chess.com, Jan-05

1 e4 g6 2.d4 e6 Black's opening with g6 and e6: this has not been widely practised since games by Steinitz, Anderssen, Morphy, Paulsen and Staunton from the 1850s, the latter two winning with it! Worth mentioning also was its modern revival in a top-level blitz game between Vachier-Lagrave and Nakamura, played in 2016, in which Nakamura was victorious with Black.

3.♘f3 ♘e7 4.h4 h6 5.♗f4 ♗g7 6.♕d2 d5 7.e5 And here, on the very outer limits of theory, Hammer deviates from 7.♘c3, played in a Sveshnikov win against Zorman in 1996.

7...c5 8.c3 ♘bc6 9.♘a3 ♔f8?

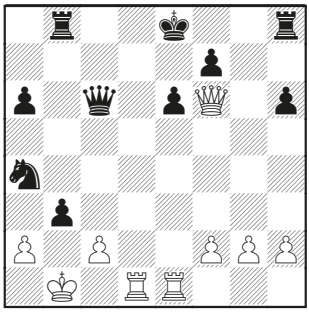


Carlsen's pawn sac. This strikes me as reborn evidence of Alekhine-style impatience. Carlsen is trying to tear White apart with his bare hands. Such a forcing approach can lead to disaster in even the most experienced and talented hands. Two examples follow.

An excellent example of this can be seen in our first example. In the game Asztalos vs. Alekhine, Bled, 1931, Black survived , but quite fortuitously.

The following diagram is after Black's 23rd move, with White to play.

Asztalos vs. Alekhine



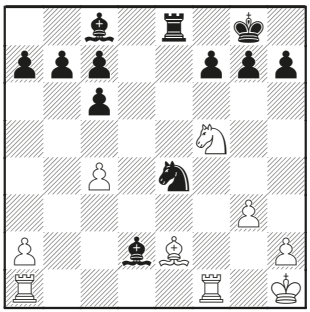
Here, Asztalos played the not unreasonable 24.axb3 and the game was drawn after 52 moves. However, he had failed to spot a refinement in the attack he had rejected, for fear of being mated.

After 24.♕xh8+ ♔e7 25.♕xb8 fails to 25... ♕xc2+ with a mate to follow. But had he looked a little closer he would have seen the intermezzo, 25.♖d7+!! ♕xd7 26.♕xb8 and White should be able to convert his not-inconsiderable material advantage into the full point.

In our next example, the archetypal hypermodernist Richard Réti, playing White against Carlos Repetto in 1925, overthinks and over-theorises, the end result being an absurd bondage of dogmatism, before moving on to a near-inevitable loss in 30 moves.

1.c4 e5 2.♘f3 e4 3.♘d4 ♘c6 4.♘xc6 dxc6 5.♘c3 ♘f6 6.g3 ♗c5 7.♗g2 ♗f5 8.O-O O-O 9.♔h1 ♕d4 10.♕b3 ♖fe8 11.♘d1 ♖ad8 12.♘e3 ♗c8 13.♕c2 ♕e5 14.f3 ♕h5 15.b4 ♗xb4 16.fxe4 ♕xe2 17.♗f3 ♕d3 18.♕xd3 ♖xd3 19.♗e2 ♖xd2 20.♗xd2 ♗xd2 21.♘f5 ♘xe4

Réti vs. Repetto



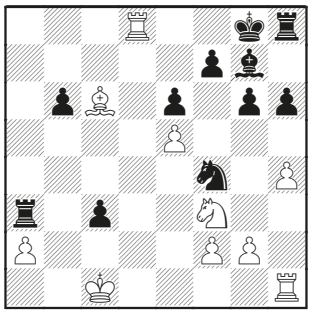
We return to our main game, chastened a little by history?

10.dxc5 b6 11.cxb6 ♕xb6 12. ♗d3?! It is at this point that Hammer drops a clanger. He remains better after this inaccuracy, but loses considerable momentum. Correct was 12.♘b5! when Stockfish gives the following line, for example: 12...♖b8 13.b4 a5 14.a4 ♗a6 15.♖b1 ♔g8 16.♗e2 ♘f5 17.g4 ♘fe7 18.h5 with a significant advantage to White.

12...♗a6 13. b4 d4 14. b5?! dxc3 15. ♕e3? Destroying his considerable accumulation of advantages in a single move. Could the chance of offering a queen exchange have overruled some more primitive urge to scalp such a highly-prized prey? White would have retained his significant advantage after 15.♕e2 ♘d4 16.♘xd4 ♕xd4 17.♗e3 ♕a4 18.bxa6 ♕xa3 19.O-O ♗xe5 20.♖ab1 ♗f6 21.h5 g5 22.♖b7.

15...♘d5 16.♕xb6 axb6 17.bxa6 ♘xf4 18.♗e4?! More slippage from a player who must feel that, by now, he is sliding uncontrollably towards an inexorable end. 18.♗b5 ♘b4 19.O-O-O ♘xa6 20.♘c4 ♘c5 21.a4 ♘fd3+ 22.♔c2 ♘xf2 23.♘xb6 offered a little more resistance than the text move, though White remains worse.

18...♖xa6 19 ♗xc6 ♖xa3 20.O−O−O ♔g8 21.♖d8+



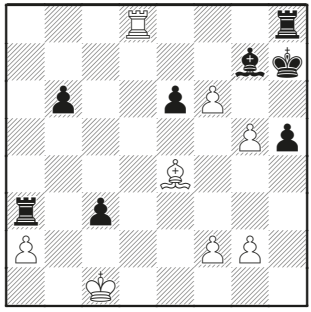
21...♔h7??

And after all of Hammer's preceding errors and inaccuracies, it is left to our ***Chumpion*** to adorn the game with a losing blunder. Stockfish gives mate in 10, but the bonfire of the vanities is quickly extinguished while exhibiting some kind of self-immolating beauty.

Carlsen will rue missing that; if, instead of the ill-fated 21...♔h7, he had ventured 21... ♗f8, he was likely to have won further material, after 22.♔b1 c2+ 23.♔xc2 ♖xa2+ 24.♔b3 ♖a3+ 25.♔b2 ♘d3+ 26.♔b1 ♔g7!

For example, 27.♖d1 ♘b4 28.♘d4 ♖a5 29.f4 ♗e7 30.♖xh8 ♔xh8 31.h5 g5 32.g3 ♖a3 33.f5 ♖xg3 34.fxe6 fxe6, delivers the world's finest endgame practitioner an initiative and advantageous position with a two pawn surplus. "Rien ne va plus!"

22.♘g5+ hxg5 23.hxg5+ ♘h5 24.♖xh5+ gxh5 25.♗e4+ f5 26.exf6#



In this case, the world did indeed end with a bang, rather than with T S Eliot's infamous "whimper"!

GRAND CHESS TOUR - ZAGREB, CROATIA - FROM 5TH TO 10TH JULY



CARLSEN'S DOMINATION AT FAST TIME CONTROLS CONTINUES

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

The SuperUnited Rapid and Blitz part of the Grand Chess Tour took place in Zagreb, Croatia, from 5 to 10 July.

As the name suggests, it comprised of a rapid round-robin event followed by a blitz double round-robin, with the results of the rapid counting double: a win in the rapid was worth two points and a draw one point, with the usual chess scores of a point for a win and half a point for a draw kept in the blitz.

The Grand Chess Tour has a rigid roster when it comes to who can play in the tour, but they try to spice things up with wild cards. In Zagreb, the participants were Nepomniachtchi, Firouzja, Caruana, Rapport and Duda, with the wild cards Carlsen, Anand, Gukesh, Saric and Lupulescu.

The rapid portion was won jointly by Caruana and Nepomniachtchi, with six points out of nine, half a point ahead of Carlsen. It is still an achievement to win a tournament when Carlsen is playing in it, and both Caruana and Nepomniachtchi showed that they no longer feel inferior when it comes to rapid chess.

The progress Caruana has made at faster time control after losing 0-3 to Carlsen at the World Championship tie-break in London in 2018 is impressive. Proof of his massive improvement is the fact that he beat Carlsen with Black!

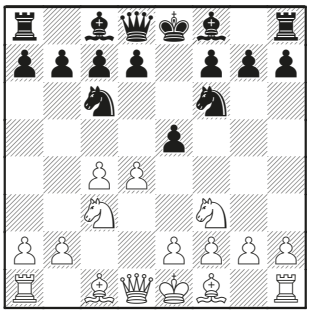
Magnus **Carlsen** - Fabiano **Caruana**

SuperUnited Rapid 2023 Zagreb CRO (4.1)

1.c4 Carlsen used this move to win game one of the rapid tie-break in London.

1...♘f6 2.♘c3 e5 3.♘f3 The game in London went 3.g3 ♗b4 4.e4!? 0-0 5.♘ge2 1-0 (55) Carlsen,M (2835)-Caruana,F (2832) London 2018.

3...♘c6 4.d4



A new direction in the games between these two players, though Carlsen had already played like this recently. In their match Caruana was successful at neutralising White's attempts after 4.g3 d5 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.♗g2 ♗c5.

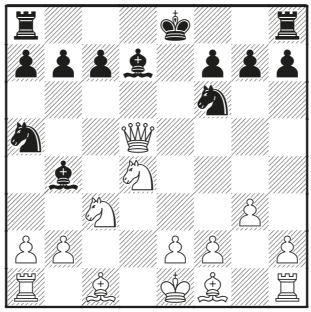
4...exd4 5.♘xd4 ♗b4 6.g3 ♘a5!? This is Caruana's surprise that he had prepared for the London match! Some surprises wait for years before they are employed!

6...0-0 7.♗g2 ♘e5 *(7...♖e8 8.0-0 h6 9.♘d5 gives White a small advantage: 0-1 (63) Carlsen,M (2853)-Nakamura,H (2775) chess.com INT 2023)* 8.♕b3 ♗c5 9.♘c2 d6 10.♘a4 was also pleasant for White: 1-0 (46) Carlsen,M (2853)-Wojtaszek,R (2670) Warsaw POL 2023.

7.♕d3 White defends the pawn on c4 and prevents the doubling of the pawns after ...♗xc3.

7...d5! With active play in the centre Black doesn't allow White to establish a grip, for example as in the games cited after 6...0-0.

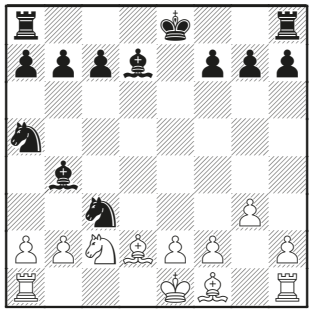
8.cxd5 ♕xd5 9.♕b5+ ♗d7 10.♕xd5?!



After this Black obtains a better endgame.

It's very difficult to play 10.♕xb4 without revising your lines before the game. And yet, this is the only way for White not to become worse! Now things become a mess after 10...♕xh1 11.♘db5 *(11.♕xa5?! ♗h3 is good for Black.)* 11...♗h3 *(or 11...♖c8 12.♗g5 ♘c6 13.♕c5 b6 14.♕e3+ ♗e6 15.♗xf6 gxf6 16.♕f4, when White has enough compensation for the exchange.)* 12.♘xc7+ ♔d7 13.♘xa8 ♕xf1+ 14.♔d2 ♖xa8 15.♕xa5 ♕xf2 Material is equal, the engine says 0.00, but with both kings unsafe, anything is possible.

10...♘xd5 11.♗d2 ♘xc3 12.♘c2?



A tactical oversight that costs White a pawn.

12.bxc3 was the obvious move, but after 12...♗c5 White doesn't really have compensation for the isolated pawns on the queenside. He should be able to draw, but he will be tortured before that.

12...♘xa2! 13.♘xb4 The best move under the circumstances. Now at least White gets the bishop pair.

13.♖xa2 ♗xd2+ 14.♔xd2 ♘c4+ 15.♔c1 a6 is just a clear pawn up.

13...♘xb4 14.♖xa5 ♘c2+ 15.♔d1 ♘d4 The bishop pair is a small consolation, but, as they say, better something than nothing.

16.f3?! As good strategy commands, Carlsen puts the pawns on the same square colour as the opponent's bishop, but this allows Black to consolidate quickly.

16.♗c3 was a better try as it spoils the harmony in Black's position. 16...b6 17.♖e5+ ♘e6 the knight cannot stay in the centre as in the game. 18.♔c1 0-0-0 19.b4 trying to control Black's queenside advance. Black is still a lot better after 19...♖he8 20.♗g2 c5 but White can fight after 21.♖d1 cxb4 22.♗xb4 as the bishops have obtained an open queenside to play on.

16...♗e6! The bishop is better on e6 and now the knight manages to remain in the centre.

17.♗c3 b6 18.♖g5 A hapless square for the rook, but going back was just giving Black a free hand to advance.

18...0-0-0 Black is a pawn up and ahead in development.

19.♔e1 g6 20.♔f2 f6 The rook is trapped. A rare case of Carlsen losing with White in mere 20 moves.

21.♖g4 ♗xg4 22.fxg4 ♖he8 The rest is rather simple.

23.h4 c5 24.h5 g5 25.h6 ♘b5 26.♗e1 ♖d1 27.e3 ♘d6 28.♔f3 ♔c7 29.♗e2 ♖b1 30.♗d3 ♖xb2 31.♗xh7 ♘c4 The threats are ...♖xe3 and ...♘e5xg4.

0-1

The progress Caruana has made at faster time control after losing 0-3 to Carlsen at the World Championship tie-break in London in 2018 is impressive



However, the early leader of the rapid was Anand, who finished the first day with 2.5 out of three, beating Rapport and Lupulescu and drawing with Firouzja. On the second day, he continued in the same confident manner: he beat Saric and drew with Caruana with Black. But then came the turning point.

Historically, Anand always had problems playing Carlsen. Apart from the two lost World Championship matches, this year he lost all six games he played against him. Often even Carlsen in sub-optimal form has been capable of turning his fortunes around by starting with a win over Anand.

Before round six of the rapid, Anand was leading with 4/5 while Carlsen had 2/5, having lost two games in a row to Caruana and Firouzja.

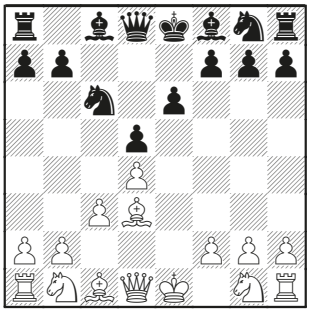
Magnus **Carlsen – Visvanathan Anand**

SuperUnited Rapid 2023 Zagreb CRO (6.4)

1.e4 c6 The Caro-Kann was Anand's main defence against 1.e4 in Zagreb. The opening turned out to be very popular in the event, as later Carlsen, Firouzja, Duda and Gukesh started implementing it! Curiously enough, Carlsen played the Caro-Kann against Anand himself when they met in the blitz!

2.d4 d5 3.exd5 Carlsen chooses the Exchange Variation, leading to a reversed Carlsbad structure.

3...cxd5 4.♗d3 ♘c6 5.c3 e6



A surprising choice, as it is considered a concession from Black to shut his bishop on c8. Of course, these players know much better than this, but it's still curious to see Anand employ such a passive set-up against Carlsen.

6.♗f4 ♗d6 7.♗xd6 The exchange of the dark-squared bishops favours White, as now Black is left with somewhat weaker dark squares and a passive light-squared bishop. Still, the solidity of Black's position should suffice for equality, though the position remains easier to play with White.

7...♕xd6 8.♘f3 ♘ge7 9.0-0 0-0 10.♖e1 f6 Deviating from a previous game by Carlsen. Black prepares the ...e5 push.

10...♘g6 11.♗xg6!? hxg6 12.♘e5 ♘e7 13.h4 gave White initiative on the kingside in the game: 1-0 (58) Carlsen,M (2853)-Pantsulaia,L (2564) chess.com INT 2023.

11.c4 A typical reaction to Black's plan. With his last move Black has weakened the e6-pawn, so White opens the position and intends to attack it by using the open e-file and the a2-g8 diagonal. However, after

11...dxc4 12.♗xc4 ♘f5 Black reacts by counter-attacking the d4-pawn, forcing White to either sacrifice it or push it forward.

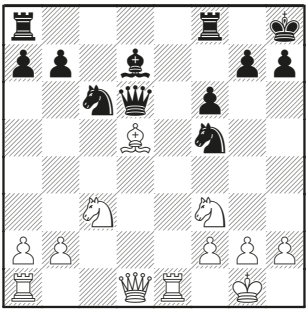
13.d5 Carlsen goes forward. The exchange of the central pawns solves Black's problem of the weak pawn on e6, but White still keeps some initiative thanks to his better-placed pieces - Black's knight on f5 and the bishop on c8 are not ideally placed, with the knight in the way of the bishop's development.

13...exd5 The natural continuation, but this allows White a free initiative.

13...♘a5 was critical as it forces White to sacrifice a pawn. After 14.♗d3 exd5 15.♘c3 ♘c6 16.♘b5 ♕d8 17.♕b3 White

has certain compensation in view of his activity, but Black is a pawn up.

14.♗xd5+ ♔h8 15.♘c3 ♗d7



Black has finished development, but White's initiative is annoying.

16.♕b3 ♕c7 17.♖ad1 ♖ad8 18.h3 White has mobilised his pieces and makes a useful move, a luft, that will be handy in the future. Black's problem is that his pieces are not very harmonious, but he doesn't have weaknesses, so he can hope to extinguish White's initiative.

18...♗c8 Giving extra cover to the b7-pawn.

18...♗e8 looks unnatural, but it's the engine's way to activate the bishop by ...♗f7 or ...♗g6. 19.♕a3 ♕d6 20.♕xd6 ♘xd6 21.♗b3 is still unpleasant for Black, as now White threatens ♘a4-c5.

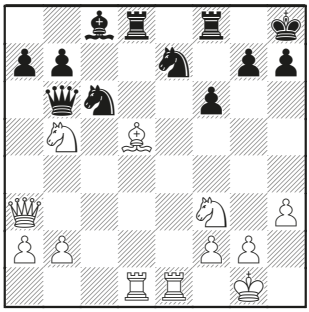
19.♕a3 Preparing ♘b5 by getting away from the pin after ...♕b6.

The immediate 19.♘b5 was possible, as the pin after 19...♕b6 can be dealt with after 20.♗xc6! ♖xd1 21.♕xd1 bxc6 Black must spoil his structure as taking with the queen loses the pawn on a7. 22.♘d6 ♘xd6 23.♕xd6 ♖d8 24.♖e7! with a big advantage to White, who has better pieces and better structure.

19...♘fe7 This loses a pawn, but Black obtains compensation.

19...a6 stops ♘b5, but doesn't solve the problems. 20.♕c5 ♕d6 21.♕c4 is still unpleasant for Black, but at least he's still with equal material.

20.♘b5 ♕b6



21.♘xa7 A simple tactic to win a pawn, which is how any human would play.

An engine, on the other hand, would ignore it and play 21.♘d6 ♘xd5 22.♖xd5, which is presumably better than being a pawn up.

21...♘xd5 22.♘xc8 ♖xc8 23.♖xd5 ♖a8 The only move to offer resistance: Black forces the exchange of queens and doubles White's extra pawn.

24.♕b3 ♕xb3 25.axb3 The pawn is a doubled one, and this is the reason the engine wants to continue playing with equal material. Black has good drawing chances here.

25...♖f7?! Too passive.

25...♖fd8 was natural and good. 26.♖b5 *(or 26.♖ed1 ♖xd5 27.♖xd5 ♖a1+ 28.♔h2 ♖b1 29.♖b5 ♖xb2 30.♖xb7 h5 and Black's activity should allow him to draw.)* 26...♖d7 and the rook is again on the seventh rank as in the game, but it's much more active than on f7.

26.♖e4 Now White again resumes control.

26...♔g8 27.b4 ♖d8? Another passive choice. It's surprising how Anand plays



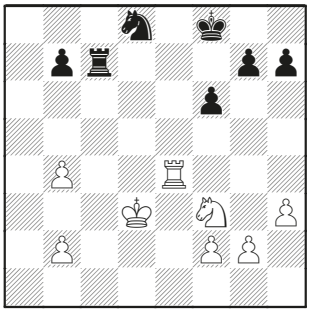
Historically Anand always had problems playing with Carlsen

against Carlsen, as if feeling doomed and choosing passive continuations consistently.

27...♖a4 attacking the b4-pawn was active defence. 28.♖e8+ ♖f8 29.♖xf8+ ♔xf8 30.b5 ♖a5! Black keeps harassing the b-pawn, thus limiting the movement of the white rook.

28.♖xd8+ ♘xd8 29.♔f1 Black has exchanged his only active piece and now cannot activate his position even if he wanted to.

29...♔f8 30.♔e2 ♖c7 31.♔d3



31...♔f7? Uncharacteristically, Anand neglects his knight. Perhaps he thought the rook endgame in the game was a draw.

31...♘f7 32.♘d4 ♖d7 33.♔c2 ♘d6 still offered good chances to save the game.

32.♘d4 ♘c6 33.♘xc6 ♖xc6 34.♖c4 ♖d6+ 35.♖d4 Black loses because his king is too far away and cut off from the queenside.

35...♖b6 36.♖d7+ ♔g6 37.♔c4 ♖c6+ 38.♔b3 b6 39.♖d2 Preparing $a4-b5 without allowing counterplay after ...♖c2.

39...♖e6 40.♔a4 40.♔c4 ♖e5 41.b5 with ♖d6xb6 was another option.

40...♖e5 41.f4 ♖e4 42.♖f2 h5 43.f5+ ♔g5 44.♔b5 h4 45.♔xb6 ♖xb4+ 46.♔c5 ♖b3 47.♔c4 ♖b8 48.b4 Black has nothing on the kingside, while the b-pawn marches forward.

48...♖c8+ 49.♔d5 ♖b8 50.♔c5 ♖c8+ 51.♔d6 ♖b8 52.♖b2 ♔xf5 53.b5

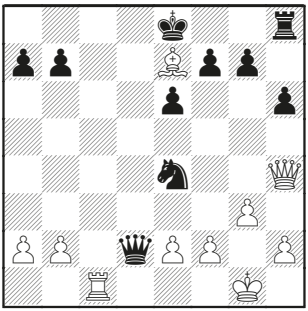
1-0

The game marked the start of Carlsen's ascent and Anand's decline. After the game Anand didn't win a single rapid game, losing to Gukesh and drawing Duda and

Nepomniachtchi. Carlsen, on the other hand, drew with Rapport and beat Duda and Lupulescu, before embarking on an incredible run in the blitz the following day. The game with Duda featured a remarkable move.

Magnus Carlsen - Jan-Krzysztof Duda

SuperUnited Rapid 2023 Zagreb CRO (8.4)



It may appear that White had messed up, as his rook is hanging and there are also the threats of ...♕xe2 when the pawn on f2 would hang and ...f6, shutting the bishop. But the former World Champion had everything under control with the stunning

20.♗g5!! When it turns out that White wins thanks to the threat of ♖c8.

20...♘xg5 20...♕xe2 21.♗e3 preserves the bishop and threatens both ♖c8 and ♕xe4.

21.♖c8+ ♔e7 22.♖xh8 With an extra exchange White won with direct attack against Black's exposed king.

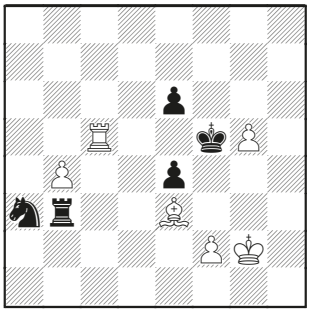
22...♕xe2 23.♕b4+ ♔f6 24.♕f4+ ♔g6 25.♔g2 e5 26.♕e3 ♕xb2 27.h4 ♘e6 28.♕e4+ ♔f6 29.♖e8 ♕b5 30.♖b8 ♘c5 31.♕d5 a6 32.♖f8

1-0

The blitz massacre started with a 104-move win over Caruana with Black, when Caruana couldn't hold a theoretically drawn queen endgame of 2 vs 1 on one wing. After that, Carlsen just beat everybody. Everything was going his way, the opponents were obliging and he kept winning. Here's one example.

Magnus Carlsen - Ian Nepomniachtchi

SuperUnited Blitz 2023 Zagreb CRO (6.4)



White should win this, as practically he has two pawns more, but it wasn't necessary to give him the win by self-mating.

48...e5?? 48...♔g6 49.♖e5 was what Black tried to avoid, but the trick consists of the following: 49...♘c2 50.♖xe6+ ♔f7 and now the natural capture of the pawn on e4 leads to a surprising draw after 51.♖xe4? *(51.♖f6+ ♔g7 52.♗c5 should still win for White.)* 51...♖xb4 52.♖xb4 ♘xb4 and Black manages to establish a blockade of the passed pawns on the light squares after 53.♔g3 ♔g6 54.♔g4 ♘c6 55.f4 ♘e7.

49.♖c6 Now Black gets mated or the g-pawn promotes.

49...♖b2 49...♔g4 50.g6 ♖xb4 51.♗c5 wins the knight on a3 if Black doesn't want to allow the pawn to promote.

50.♔g3 Mate on f6 comes on the next move.

1-0



Carlsen celebrating his specatcular 9-0 run

An unbelievable 9/9 against the majority of the world's best players is unheard of: even Fischer's amazing win in Herceg Novi in 1970 didn't feature a 100% score against his opponents.

On the second day of the blitz, Carlsen started with two draws and four wins, then slowed down and lost two in a row, before winning in the last round for a final 6/9 for that day. The incredible 15/18 in the blitz allowed Carlsen to win the SuperUnited event in Zagreb with a comfortable margin of three and a half points.

The tournament in Zagreb confirmed what we already knew. When in good form, at faster time controls Carlsen is still the world's best player.

Recently he was asked whether he will try to become a classical World Champion again. His reply was ¤With the current length of the games, I don't think so." This is all we need to know - faster time controls will be the mainstay of chess entertainment, with Carlsen as the main actor in the never-ending show.

SUPERUNITED RAPID & BLITZ CROATIA 2023

Pos.	Name	GCT POINTS	PRIZE MONEY
1	**Magnus Carlsen**	WC	$40,000
2	**Ian Nepomniachtchi**	10	$30,000
3	**Alireza Firouzja**	8	$25,000
4	**Fabiano Caruana**	7	$20,000
5	**Gukesh D**	WC	$15,000
6	**Richard Rapport**	5	$11000
T-7	**Jan-Krzysztof Duda**	3.5	$9,500
T-7	**Viswanathan Anand**	WC	$9,500
9	**Ivan Saric**	WC	$8,000
10	**Constantin Lupulescu**	WC	$7,000

Openings for Amateurs

By Pete Tamburro; ptamburro@aol.com



Source: wikipedia.org

FISCHER SHOWED THE WAY IN THE RUY LOPEZ

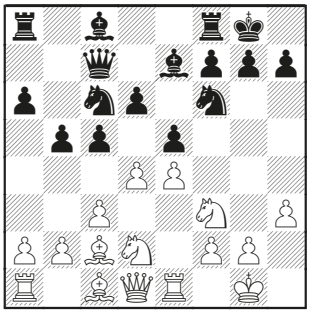
Whether it was the Exchange Variation with 4.♗xc6 or the Main Line of the Ruy Lopez, Bobby Fischer left a legacy of great games in the Ruy Lopez. Aside from the lessons we learn from him in this game, there is one other larger lesson. So many amateurs are fascinated by gambits with their sharp attacks and lots of excitement.

Yet, the bottom line is that this style of play is a version of "hope chess". You hope your opponent doesn't know the line as well as you do. If he does, well then you learn about how to play endings a pawn down. Once you get better, the defence gets better. With the Ruy Lopez, you have a battle of ideas and you don't have to sacrifice a pawn. As you play over the classic games you pick up all sorts of different strategic lessons and you find yourself applying those lessons to other openings. This is one of those classic games.

Robert **Fischer** – Erich **Eliskases [C98]**

Mar del Plata Mar del Plata, 1960

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♗b3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 ♘a5 10.♗c2 c5 11.d4 ♕c7 12.♘bd2 ♘c6

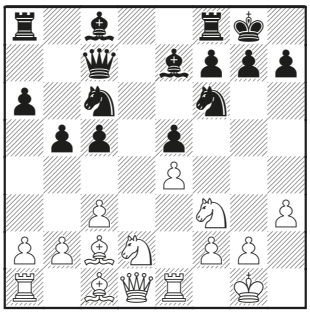


We've looked at 12.d5 for White here. Now we're going to see a different approach to handling this position. It's called the Rauzer Attack, based on a game Rauzer-Riumin, Leningrad, 1936.

Bogoljubov played it in 1924. However, one can go mad trying to figure out whose name should be on a variation. What is interesting, and worthy of some thought, is why White would take away from the centre and not leave Black in a more cramped position as after d5.

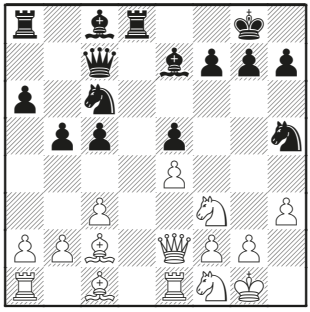
13.dxc5 Fischer played 13.d5 twice, winning both, and played 13.dxc5 ten times and won nine. He could play either side, but clearly preferred the more open game. If you seriously get into studying the Ruy, you have to play over his games. He has a lot to teach.

13...dxc5



Here we are. White's plan has options. The key knight is the queen's knight which will gallop to f1 and then is most likely to head to d5 at some point, depending on what Black does with his king's knight. The white king's knight, again depending on Black, has ideas of heading to h4 and f5. In some lines, as you will see, ♘g5 comes in handy. The two bishops will lie back to see what happens in the centre with the e4 pawn. If that pawn gets to move forward or recapture, the bishops come to life. The queen's rook will support a possible a4 to hit the black pawn structure. The king's rook may support a pawn push. A pawn move to keep in mind is, as with other Closed variations, will be g4. This game and the variations show you many of the possibilities.

14.♘f1 ♖d8 15.♕e2 ♘h5



Why the knight on the rim? Because 15...♗e6 16.♘e3.

A) 16...♖ac8 17.♘g5 ♗d7 18.♘d5±;

B) 16...g6 17.♘g5 ♗c8 18.♘d5 ♘xd5 19.exd5 ♗xg5 20.♗xg5 ♖xd5;

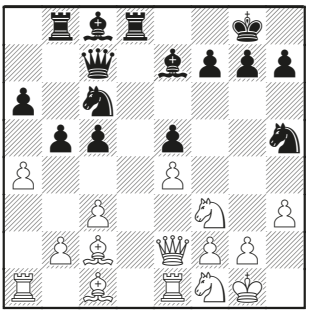
B1) The engine likes this better: 21.a4 ♖b8 *(21...bxa4 22.♕c4)* 22.axb5 axb5 23.♖ad1;

B2) 21.♖ad1 Lipnitsky, quoted by Fischer;

C) 16...h6 17.♘h4 ♗f8 18.♘hf5 g6 19.♘g4 ♘xg4 20.♕xg4 ♘e7 21.♕g3 ♔h7 22.♘h4 ♗g7 23.f4 exf4 24.♗xf4 ♕a7 25.♖f1±.

16.a4 Fischer played 16.g3 against Bisguier in his historic 11-0 1963-64 US championship, and is found in "60". However, he felt his Mar del Plata move from back in 1960 was better. Looking up the game led to it's being used here because it is a wonderful lesson in the Ruy Lopez. 16...♗xh3 17.♘g5 ♗xf1 *(17...♗xg5 18.♗xg5 f6 19.♕xh5 ♗xf1 20.♗xf6±)* 18.♕xh5 ♗xg5 19.♗xg5 f6 20.♗xf6!± One annoying aspect of "60" is that Fischer is not very Chernev-like in explaining a fair number of his judgments; for example, why 16.a4 is better.

16...♖b8



Black's best move. Why? First, why 16.a4? This may sound simple, but it's a threat! In studying the Ruy Lopez, an opening of subtle nuances, one realizes that it's more likely an accumulation of small victories that is going to produce an overall win. It's about square control, yes, but that isn't the only consideration.

It may even be psychological because now, for example, Black has four possible choices. Lots of room for impreciseness. Eliskases was generally a very precise player. What was the threat? Because the rook is undefended, White for the moment threatens axb5. One of the most challenging timing decisions you will encounter in the Ruy Lopez is when to play a4. Another great Fischer example is his first game in the return match against Spassky. In our game, Black's queenside pawn structure is under attack with a4, and, as Steinitz might have reminded us here, all pawn moves are weakening in some way.

Let's look at the alternatives in our game:

16...b4 17.g4! Another Ruy feature we've talked about before is the ability to hit the queenside or kingside, sometimes at the same time. As is often the case, a g4 move is not only proper aggression, but safe from a black counter-attack. White outnumbers Black on the kingside. 17...♘f4 18.♗xf4 exf4 19.e5 g6 20.♕c4. Being able to get to c4 is no accident. The b4 pawn move provided it. 20...♗f8 21.♕xf4±;

16...bxa4 17.♖xa4 ♖b8 Might as well have played Rb8 the move before. 18.♗d3 a5 19.♗c4 ♘f4 20.♗xf4 exf4 21.e5± with a nasty e6 threat.; 16...♗b7 17.♘e3 ♘f4 18.♕f1 c4 19.g3 ♘d3 Trying to justify the entire knight path. 20.♘d5± ♖xd5 21.exd5 ♘xe1 22.♕xe1 ♘a5, but at a considerable cost. Look at how the Lopez bishop's range has increased. The e5 pawn is under attack and ♕e4 is a threat as well as ♕xe5.

17.axb5 axb5 Look who has the run of the rook file, which can be problematic for Black. At some point, that will be something for Black to resolve.

18.g3 g6 The refutation of 18...♗xh3 given above is still valid. White just took the opportunity to open the rook file. Fischer had given 16.g3 an exclamation, yet said 16.a4 was "sharpest". They're both very good.

Fischer said it was probably best to just go back with 18...♘f6. If so, then a familiar plan would be 19.g4 *(Or 19.♘e3 ♗e6 20.♘g5 ♗c8 21.g4 h6 22.♘f3 ♗d6 23.g5 hxg5 24.♘f5 and White is going to keep Black busy coming up with a sturdy defence. Both sides will have to study this.)* 19...♗e6 20.♘e3, with a game of equal chances with lots of play. *(20.♘g3 ♗c4 21.♕e3 b4 and Black has activity.)*

19.h4 Fischer really liked this. It adds to the control of the dark squares.

19...♗e6 20.♘e3 c4 21.♘g5! Exchanging doesn't help the dark squares and h6 or f6 just makes the castled position weaker.

21...♗xg5 22.hxg5 ♘a5 23.♘g4 ♗xg4 No choice because of h6 and f6.

24.♕xg4 ♘b3 25.♗xb3! No believer in keeping the two bishops at any cost. White is left with a powerful dark-squared bishop and Black is left with an offside knight. Also, the e5 and b5 pawns will require the attention of major pieces to defend them.

25...cxb3 26.♗e3 ♖a8 27.♖xa8 ♖xa8 28.♖d1 ♕c6 Doomsday follows 28...♖d8 29.♕e2 ♖xd1+ *(29...♖d7 30.♖d5 ♖xd5 31.exd5 ♕d7 32.c4 bxc4 33.♕xc4 ♘g7 34.♕xb3)* 30.♕xd1 h6 31.gxh6 ♘f6 32.♕xb3.

29.♖d5 f5 A desperate attack.

30.♕d1 f4 31.gxf4 exf4 32.♕xb3 A key tempo, threatening the discovered check.

32...♕c4 Black tries some activity, but the game is over.

33.♕xc4 bxc4 34.♗d4 f3 35.♗e3 h6 36.gxh6 ♘f6 37.♖d6 ♔f7#.

38.♖xf6+! An exasperating moment for Black.

38...♔xf6 39.♗d4+ ♔g5 40.h7 ♔f4 41.♔h2 g5 42.h8♕ ♖xh8+ 43.♗xh8 g4 44.e5

1-0

This game actually flowed very easily and demonstrated a good many ideas worth filing away. In my first Openings for Amateur book, you were shown four model "siege" games. This game is a bit more lively and open. There is lots of room for stylistic differences.

Addendum to the June article

In the June issue we accidentally omitted one important analytical line from the Openings for Amateurs column. We are publishing that line here, with apologies to the author Pete Tamburro and the readers.

5...♕g6 Here there is a handful of alternatives:

A. 5...♘e7 6.♘e3 d5 *(6...♕e5 7.d4! exd3 8.♗xd3 d5 9.0-0 d4 10.♘c4+-)* 7.♘cxd5 ♘xd5 8.♕h5++-;

B. 5...♕e7 6.♘d5+-;

C. 5...♕e6 6.♘e3 c6 7.d3 d5 8.dxe4 dxe4 9.♗c4+-;

D. 5...c6 6.♘xe4 ♕e6 *(6...♕g6)* 7.♕h5+ g6 *(7...♔d8 8.♕e5 d5 9.♘g5! ♕e8 10.♕xe8+ ♔xe8 11.♘e3 h6 12.♘f3 ♗d6 13.b3! ♘e7 14.♗b2 ♔f7 15.♘e5++-)* 8.♕e2 d5 9.♘ed6+ ♔d8 10.♘xb7+! ♔c7 11.♕xe6 ♗xe6 12.♘ca5+-;

A very complicated line is 5...♕f7 6.♘e3 d5 (Complicated and requiring study is 6...c6 Kosten, The Latvian Gambit Lives 7.d3 exd3 8.♗xd3 d5 *(8...♗b4? 9.0-0 ♗xc3 10.bxc3 d5 11.♖e1 ♘e7 12.♗a3+-)* 9.0-0. The critical position for Black in this variation.- Kosten 9...♗d6 10.♘exd5 cxd5 11.♘b5! (11.♘xd5? ♗e6 *(11...♗xh2+? 12.♔xh2 ♕xd5 13.♖e1+ ♘e7 14.b3 ♘bc6 15.♗a3 ♕a5 16.♗xe7 ♘xe7 17.♕f3 ♕g5 18.♖ad1 ♗d7 19.♕xb7)* 12.♖e1 ♘c6 13.♗c4 ♗e5 14.♘b4 ♘ge7) 11...♗c7 12.♖e1+ ♔d8 13.♗g5+ ♘f6 with two distinct paths:

A. A line that the engine gives a distinct edge to, but there are lots of ways for White to dissipate the advantage with one inaccurate move. 14.c4 *(*This choice has more concrete calculation.)

B. *14.♗e4 ♖e8 15.♗xd5 ♖xe1+ 16.♕xe1 ♗xh2+ 17.♔f1! ♕e8 18.♗xf6+ gxf6 19.♕xe8+ ♔xe8 20.g3 ♗xg3 21.fxg3 ♔d8 22.♖d1 ♘d7 23.♔f2* and White's lead in piece placement combined with Black's vulnerable kingside pawns should score for White.*)*

14...♗d7 *(14...d4 15.♗e4 ♘bd7 16.♘xc7 ♔xc7 17.♕xd4 ♖e8 18.♗f4+ ♔d8 19.♗f5* and Black's stuck in the centre.*)* 15.♘xc7 ♔xc7 16.♕f3! *(16.cxd5 ♕xd5 17.♗f4+ ♔d8)* 16...♔c8 17.b4 ♘c6 *(17...dxc4? 18.♗xc4+-)* 18.♖ac1 h6 19.♗h4 ♖e8 20.♖xe8+ ♗xe8 21.cxd5 ♕xd5 22.♕e3 ♔d8 23.b5 ♘e7 24.♗e2 ♗d7 25.♗xf6 gxf6 26.♕xh6

We hate to get to move 26 in an opening analysis, but, considering the fluid nature of the game, it seems appropriate here. The piece sac has isolated the black king in the centre and will pick up the third pawn for the piece - all connected and passed. White can keep the long-range threats while developing a plan as to when to advance those pawns and how many - before or after a possible queen exchange.) 7.♘exd5 ♗e6 8.♗c4 ♘a6 9.♗xa6 bxa6 10.♘e3 ♘f6 11.♕e2 ♗c5 12.b3 0-0 13.♗b2.

BRAVE NEW CHESS WORLD



NETFLIX SERIES **THE QUEEN'S GAMBIT** BECOMES A GAME

From TVs to phone, the famous series has now been transformed into a mobile game and released on Play Store

The Netflix mini-series The Queen's Gambit has made a profound impact on the chess world, attracting the attention of not only chess players but also a broader audience. Now, the series has also become a game!

Released as a branded title on the Play Store, "The Queen's Gambit Chess" is a game developed by Netflix Games, aimed at newcomers to the board game, capitalising on the success and popularity of the show.

Chess can be sometimes intimidating for beginners. The Queen's Gambit Chess game takes a different approach than the usual way of entering the chess realm. Instead of just playing chess, the game guides players into the world of chess through the journey of the series' protagonist, Beth Harmon.

The game serves as an entry point for those unfamiliar with the show, offering polished gameplay and - from what we could tell from the reviews - promises an enjoyable experience.

Like most mobile games, it's based on a reward system. As players engage in matches, they earn coins, which can be used to purchase upgrades. While seasoned chess players might find this mechanic patronising, it might serve as positive reinforcement for beginners.

A CHESS ROBOT THAT USES CHATGPT TO INSULT YOU DURING THE GAME

Raspberry Pi has developed a project (headed by developer Noah Davis) where a person can play against a virtual opponent using a real chess board but with a catch: The Pico-powered chess-playing robot utilises ChatGPT for text-to-speech functionality, enabling the opponent to throw insults at the player during the game. Additionally, the robot employs Stockfish to optimise its moves and provide a challenging and cunning adversary.

The chess board is equipped with Hall effect sensors, and the chess pieces have magnets underneath to trigger these sensors, allowing the system to track the position of each piece throughout the game. The team also designed a robotic arm capable of picking up and moving the pieces. LEDs installed on the board indicate whose turn it is to play, illuminating blue for the current player.

The Raspberry Pi team was intrigued by the project and published details in a recent blog post.



The game also provides helpful visual aids, such as highlighting pieces in danger of capture and offering a move suggestion through the 'Beth's Vision' button which should help newcomers get into chess more.

The gameplay itself is divided into tutorials that teach basic chess techniques and timed challenges, with speedy completion earning players more stars. For those who prefer a more straightforward approach to chess, an optional 2D mode is available. This flexibility accommodates different playstyle preferences. As 'The Queen's Gambit Chess' caters for beginners, it also offers an online multiplayer mode.

After a boom in online chess during the Covid-19 pandemic, the game has now found a new way of entering into the online world. While for many this is far away from chess, more initiatives in the online world which feature chess will possibly bring about more surprises when it comes to the game and its popularity.

BCM Staff

18+

WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

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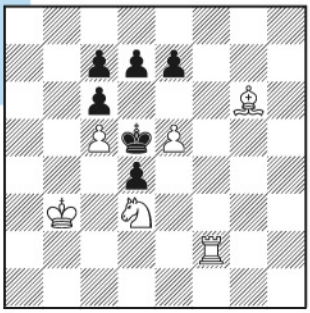


PROBLEM WORLD

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

Solutions are given on page 510

1

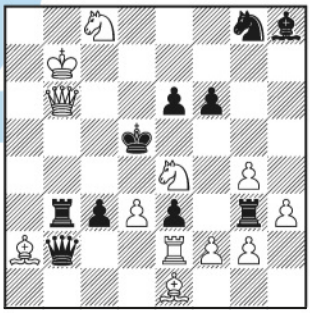


Steven Dowd (USA)

Mate in 3

ORIGINAL

2

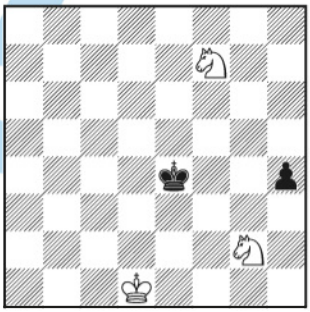


Leonid Lyubashevsky and Leonid Makaronez (Israel)

Mate in 3

ORIGINAL

3

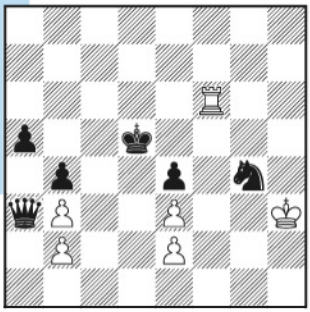


Stanislav Hudak (Slovakia)

Helpmate in 3 - 2 solutions

ORIGINAL

4



Yuri Bilokin (Ukraine)

Helpmate in 4 - 2 solutions

ORIGINAL *after Christopher Jones*

THE ACCIDENTAL MAESTRO
OR THE MAN WITH NO AMBITION

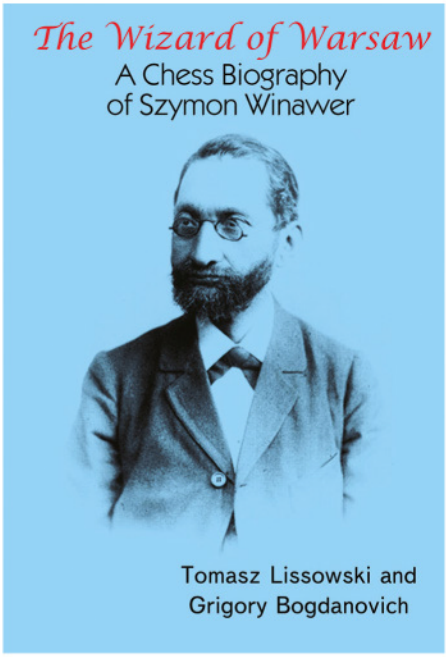
A REVIEW OF "THE WIZARD OF WARSAW: A CHESS BIOGRAPHY OF SZYMON WINAWER", BY TOMASZ LISSOWSKI AND GRIGORY BOGDANOVICH, ELK AND RUBY PUBLISHING 2023

By Peter O'Brien

This absorbing work gives us several things at once. Part One, covering some 190 pages and splendidly written by the Polish chess historian Tomasz Lissowski, is not simply a chess biography of Winawer, a hitherto rather neglected figure (a totally undeserving neglect which this book will surely remedy). It is, in fact, a biography of Poland during the years of Szymon's own life (1838 - 1919).

At the very beginning, there is a full sheet giving the family tree, beginning with Israel Jakob (probably born in the late 18th century) and carrying through to the great-great-grandchildren of Szymon, five of whom are alive today. These majestic genealogical patterns (I was reminded of the similar Odessa origin tree at the start of Edmond de Vaal's sumptuous "The Hare with the Emerald Eyes") say so much about the remarkable Jewish families which have contributed enormously to European life and arguably constitute the spinal cord of European chess.

This family was living in the territories of the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth, an entity very much in the limelight today with the Russian invasion of Ukraine. And those Jewish families did not have surnames, nor were there official birth and death registers for people living outside the cities. But that situation altered in 1795 with the Third Partition of Poland. Warsaw and all territories to the North and West of the three key rivers (Pilica, Vistula and Bug) were given to the Prussians. Two years later, as part of an edict (the "General Judenreglement"), the Prussian King ordered all the Jewish families now under his jurisdiction to give themselves surnames. It appears that most families chose a surname associating themselves with the specific place where the family came from. For Szymon's forebears, that place was Wieniewa, once a suburb of Lublin (and today part of the city centre) and home to one of Poland's oldest and most important Jewish communities. Hence their chosen name became Winawer - and it was this numerous family that was living in Warsaw.



LEARNING CHESS AT THE AGE OF 20!

While Israel Jakob was accumulating substantial assets in a trading business, he was given the valuable status of "Schutzjude", meaning he and his family could not be thrown out of Warsaw if the city authorities suddenly decided the Jewish population of the city was too large. The status mattered. In the 20 years following the Third Partition and up to the Congress of Vienna in 1815, control of Warsaw changed hands several times. At the Congress, the Duchy of Warsaw was partitioned among the empires of Austria, Russia and Prussia. That was more or less the way things stayed for the following 100 years. It guaranteed frequent changes in the situation of Jewish families and life for Szymon which would require great adaptability and agility - an ever-evolving mix of strategy and tactics.

In these circumstances, it is scarcely surprising that Szymon's mother considered chess to be a waste of time. Indeed, the game was strictly forbidden in the family home and Szymon did not learn the moves until he was 20!! Today this is unthinkable. Several of the outstanding players in the world right now have been grandmasters for several years before the age when Winawer even knew how the game was played.

He appears to have just picked up how to play from observation. Given his subsequent performances, it certainly seems that Winawer must be regarded as one of the true natural talents of the game. It is true that in 1832 the Tsar of Russia became the King of Poland and nominated as Namiestnik (Viceroy) the outstanding Field Marshal Ivan Fyodorovich Paskevich, who was an avid chess player. Yet he died in 1856, i.e. before the age when Szymon learned the moves. Nevertheless, there seems little doubt that the intense Russian presence made a crucial difference to chess playing in Poland.

Alexander Dimitrievich Petrov, one of the 19th century's central figures as far as chess is concerned, settled in Warsaw in the 1840s and died there in 1867. His activities stimulated interest in the game, and helped to popularise play in coffee houses, patisseries and similar places. Games were played mostly at quite rapid speeds and for stakes (a feature of several of the great cities of Europe then, and still observable now). Winawer was of course very occupied in running (successfully) the family business originally started by Israel Jakob and in the early 1860s had already started a family (he eventually had 5 children). But he certainly would have seen countless games played and seems to have been familiar with publications on the game, especially in German.



Field Marshal Ivan Fyodorovich Paskevich was an avid chess player

FROM THE WORLD FAIR TO CHESS

None of this, however, could have possibly prepared the chess world for what came next. In 1867 the World Fair in Paris, which ran from April to November, attracted some 52,000 entrepreneurs

from 42 countries - an extraordinary achievement. Winawer went there as part of expanding his own business.

A top-level chess tournament was organised as part of the Fair. The way it was organised and operated was certainly peculiar. Winawer, who by the time the tournament began had more or less finished his business dealings, seems to have been allowed to pay to participate. Some people were invited but did not show up, others played some games and then withdrew. There was a time limit (10 moves per hour, with sandglasses doing the measuring), but overstepping that limit only resulted in a payment of a 20-franc fine to continue. Quite astonishingly, a drawn game was counted as a loss for both players!! Altogether 13 players stayed the course in the double-round event, and among them we can count Steinitz, Kolisch, Neumann and De Vere - by no means everyone then at the top of world chess, but still a formidable gathering indeed. Lo and behold, Winawer finished second with 19 points from the available 24. If ever a star was born, this was it. The style of his play perhaps said even more than the result. A look at the games reveals a command not merely over his opponents, but an understanding of the game way ahead of his time.

From that one result onwards, Winawer's position in the firmament was established. He immediately became the great figure of Polish chess, was regularly invited to the top tournaments until his retirement from active play in 1901, and became a member of some of the leading chess bodies in Europe.

VALUING CHESS ART OVER CHECKMATE

But he never ceased to surprise. Why? Since chess for Szymon always remained essentially a hobby, his performances were truly unpredictable. Splendid results were interwoven with disastrous failures. The unpredictability stretched to "within game" variability. Looking at his games (we have records of about 350 played, of which 132 are reproduced, in whole or in part, in the book), I find it hard to think of any other truly wonderful artist who could produce passages of exquisite play followed by crass blunders. He could overlook extremely obvious checkmates in a couple of moves (for himself or against him), lose pieces, and commit "oversights" of all kinds.

Indeed, Bogdanovich, in his excellent second part of the book which is explicitly concentrated on Winawer's games, is driven to the speculation as to whether some of this was somehow "deliberate" (meaning, for instance, that he did not deliver a checkmate in two because he had seen a beautiful alternative way of finishing a game, even if this depended upon his opponent going down a specific path). Although I myself once witnessed a game where a player refused his opponent's resignation and demanded he stay at the board until he had been mated, it is difficult to credit that even Bogdanovich himself would believe his charming theory.

The re-evaluation of chess history, and especially of the insights of earlier players, is now in full swing (see, for instance, my BCM reviews of the major books by Hendriks and Hoffmeister). So it is perhaps no surprise that Bogdanovich, in the latter 100 pages of the book, makes a very compelling case for treating Winawer as a superb positional player, and not only a highly gifted combinational expert.

To begin with, Bogdanovich rightly stresses that the attempt to split the one from the other actually makes little sense. As many great players have underlined, you can hardly have

one without the other. He shows the many dimensions in which Winawer's positional acuity was of the highest order. I learnt much from the emphasis on the Warsaw Wizard's grasp of pawn play in all of its dimensions (taking us way beyond Philidor). If the reader wants one example, I would recommend the game (given on pp.203 and 204) in which Winawer outplayed Louis Paulsen (himself an exceptionally fine player, also I think underrated today) at Vienna 1882. But every aspect of positional play is here. Winawer unquestionably had an understanding, a chess intuition, which can stand comparison with the legendary names of the game.

Chess in earlier times, like chess in the COVID and post-COVID worlds, went through all sorts of changes, ranging from physical playing conditions to sponsorships and prize monies, to time limits and scoring methods. This book contains copious links to all of these, and Winawer himself is involved in most of them.

He was, it seems, rarely to be seen without his trademark "outpost cigar". This particular cigar gave off a truly bad smell and certainly did not help any of his opponents. Winawer, who was universally loved and recognised as a true sportsman in every sense, nevertheless would not switch to other brands even when he was offered them. His presence made a major difference to support for chess tournaments in Warsaw and In Poland generally. In effect, he acted as a guarantee for things, even if he himself did not play in a given event. Notably, it was in the last years of the 19th century that prize monies for chess events rose considerably, a factor contributing to the growing signs of professionalisation in the game. Time controls altered substantially, with a trend (though uneven) towards insisting on faster play.

THE 'OBSESSION WITH THE DRAW' ISSUE

Scoring methods were a constant source of change. An indicator of their significance today can be seen in the recently finished Stavanger tournament. Magnus, for instance, was unbeaten against seven of his nine opponents (a record similar to both the first and second in the tournament, Nakamura and Caruana), yet finished way down the field. The reason for that was the treatment of drawn games. The same 'obsession with the draw" dominated the second half of the 19th century.

Earlier we saw that in Winawer's triumphant entry onto the world stage (Paris 1867) draws were simply counted as losses. In his final tournament (Monte Carlo 1901), the method of handling draws was less dramatic but also more awkward. If the opponents drew their game, they were awarded a quarter-point each. They were then obliged to play a second game with colours reversed. If that too was drawn, then each was given another quarter-point. But if the latter game was decisive, the winner collected another half-point (giving a total of three-quarters of a point from the game) and the loser nothing. Hence from a tussle with a specific opponent, a player might finish up with anything from zero to one and all quarter-point intervals in between.

A LOW-KEY FIGURE

This review is titled in part "The Accidental Maestro". From his late learning of the game onwards, Winawer appears to have almost stumbled through the chess world. He wrote very little, was certainly never in any sense a professional, yet undoubtedly left a huge legacy. And that legacy is replete with chess of the very highest order.

The review also bears the label "A Man without Ambition". Despite his enormous talent, Winawer at no stage appears to have

harboured a desire to be a world champion or any such thing.

When Tsar Nicholas II organised the great St Petersburg tournament of 1914 he invited all living players considered to be "Grandmasters" (thus inventing the title). Winawer was among them, but in fact declined the invitation. Even then, it would seem that the Wizard of Warsaw wanted to stay low-key.

Nevertheless, I do think that Winawer was truly ambitious for one thing. He was a true Pole and he wanted his country to have its independence again. And that he lived to see. Just before he died in 1919 Poland was at last again independent. His wife and three of his children had died before him but "Pan Szymon" was there. We have come full circle. He would be proud to see his country's influence on the international scene today.



Winver Grave

Correction:



This is the famous 1834 McDonnell versus De La Bourdonnais position. Due to a technical problem, the position of page 433 of the July issue should have been the one printed here. We apologise to the readers.

BCM Editor

QUOTES AND QUERIES

THE MINIATURES THAT PRODUCED NEW IDEAS IN CHESS

By Alan Smith

6236 Miniature chess games have an enduring attraction. Here are three that showcase a new idea in the opening.

Joseph Henry **Blake** - George Brunton **Fraser**

Correspondence, 1888

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6 4.d3 ♘e7 5.♘c3 Not 5.♘xe5?? c6 6.♘c4 d5.

5...c6 5...♘g6 was Steinitz's recommendation, Blake analysed 6.h5 h5 7.♗c4 ♗e7 8.♘g5 0-0 9.♘d5! when black needs to hold on to the h5 pawn.

6.♗c4 ♘g6 7.h4! h5 8.♘g5 8.d4 ♗b4 9.dxe5 ♘xe4 10.♕d4 ♕a5 11.♕xe4! is also very strong Taubenhaus - Goetz Cafe de la Regence 1890.

8...d5 9.exd5 cxd5 10.♘xd5! ♘xd5 11.♕f3 ♗e6 11...f6 loses to 12.♗xd5.

12.♘xe6 fxe6 13.♗b5+ ♔e7 14.♗g5+ ♘f6 15.♕xb7+ ♔d6 16.♗d2 A century later Efimenko - Cherniaev Coventry 2005 varied with 16.c4 ♖c8 17.♗d2 ♖c5 18.♕xa7 and 1-0 (32).

16...e4? He had to try 16...a5 when Blake analysed 17.c4 ♖c8 18.♕a6+ ♔e7 19.♗xa5.

17.♗b4+ ♔e5 18.♗c3+ ♔f4 19.♕f7 ♘e7 20.♕xe6 ♘f5 21.♕e5+ ♔g4 22.d4 ♘xh4 23.♖xh4 ♔xh4 24.♕g3#

British Chess Magazine 1889, p154-156

The following is probably the stem game of Black's counter gambit. Tartakower and du Mont approved, but the reason it is not seen more often is that white can just play 6.Nf3

Richard Hilary **Newman** - Francis George **Tims Collins**

City of London CC, 1939

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♘c6 6.♗g5 ♕b6 7.cxd5 ♘xd4! An improvement on 7...♕xb2? 8.♖c1 which led to a speedy debacle in the game Botvinnik - Spielmann Moscow 1935.

8.♗e3 e5 9.dxe6 ♗c5 10.exf7+ ♔e7 11.♗c4 ♗g4 12.♘f3 12.♕xg4? loses to 12...♘c2+ 13.♔d1 ♖hd8+ 14.♔xc2 ♘xg4

Barden, 12.♕c1 was played in Schardtner-Sallay Budapest 1969 when Barden's 12...♖hc8 was better than 12...♗f5, Sallay still won in 27 moves.

12...♕xb2 13.♖c1 ♖hd8 14.♗xd4 ♖xd4 15.♕e2+ ♖e4 16.♖c2 ♕xc2

0–1

Huddersfield and Holmfirth Examiner, 22nd April 1939

Readers who wish to check out Barden and Sallay's notes on the 1969 game can find them in the *Guardian* from 8th August 1969. The next game was a clash of the generations, the players were born sixty years apart.

Gary **Lane** - Andrew Rowland **Thomas**

Devon, 1980

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♗c4 ♘f6 5.0–0 ♘xe4 6.♖e1 d5 7.♗xd5 ♕xd5 8.♘c3 ♕a5 9.♘e4 ♗e6 10.♘eg5 10.♗d2 is a reasonable alternative.

10...0–0–0 11.♘xe6 fxe6 12.♘g5 12.♖xe6 is usual, this is probably a novelty.

12...♗b4 13.♖xe6 ♖de8 14.♕g4 ♔b8 15.♗f4 ♗d2 15...♗c5.

16.♘f7 ♖xe6 17.♕xe6 ♖f8 17...♖c8.

18.♗d6 ♖c8 19.♗g3 ♗c5 19...♕h5.

20.♘e5 ♘e7 20...♘xe5 21.♗xe5 hitting d4 and g7.

21.a3 ♗c5 22.♗h4 g5 23.♗xg5 23...♘g6 24.♘d7+ ♔a8 25.♘b6+ costs black the exchange.

1–0

Western Morning News, 15th October 1980

Shortly after this loss, Thomas moved down to board 3 in the Devon team. He took good advantage of his attacking chances.

Andrew Rowland **Thomas** - Simon **Finn**

Devon – Gloucestershire, 1980

1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 g6 4.♗e2 ♗g7 5.h4 Neither 5.g4 nor 5.♗e3 are considered by Botterill and Keene.

5...c5 6.d5 0–0 6...h5 is so much safer.

7.h5 e6? Botterill and Keene recommend 7...b5! 8.hxg6 b4! as played in Wade - N. Littlewood Ilford 1964.

8.hxg6 fxg6 9.dxe6 ♗xe6 10.♘h3 ♔h8? 10...♗xh3 avoids what follows.

11.♘f4 ♗f7 12.♕d3 ♘c6 13.♘cd5 ♘xd5 14.exd5 ♘b4 15.♘xg6+! 15...♗xg6 16.♕xg6 ♔g8 17.♕xh7+ ♔f7 18.♗h5+ ♔f6 19.♕g6+.

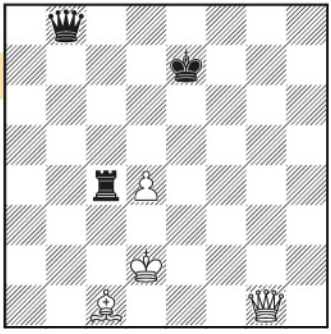
1–0

Western Morning News 8th October 1980

Endgame Studies

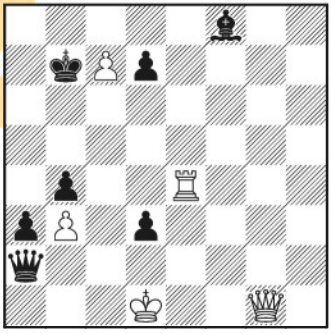
by Ian Watson
ian@irwatson.uk

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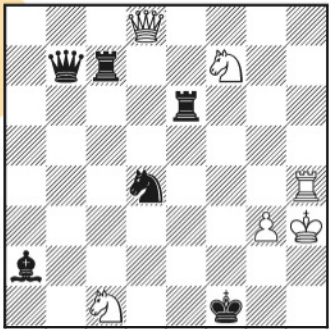
A. Zhukov
Azerbaijan Solving Championship 2023
WIN

2



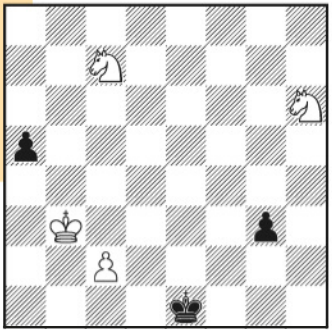
A. Jasik
Pat a Mat 2008
DRAW

3



A. Lewandowski
The Problemist 1990
DRAW

4



M. Liburkin
64 1939
WIN

Studying in the holidays

Four studies for you to solve, if you get bored on the beach. They are all studies that were used in recent national solving championships.

The first is from the 42nd Azerbaijan Chess Solving Championship in June in Sumgait. It was composed by Aleksandr Zhukov specially for the event. Twelve of the 33 competitors solved it correctly. Our second study was used in the 44th Lithuanian championship in May in Kedainiai. Just under half the solvers scored full points on it. The Lewandowski study was used in the Israeli Open Solving Championship in June in Ra'anana. That championship was won by the world's top solver and current World Chess Solving Champion, Danila Pavlov. He, of course, solved this study correctly, but only five other competitors did so. The final study, by one of the greatest endgame study composers, Mark Liburkin, was fully solved by just over half the competitors in the 45th German Solving Championship in Gera in June.

As usual, I challenge you to fully solve all four studies, and so to match the best. Good luck!

The usual solving procedures apply: You'll need to set up these positions on a board. In solving events, you can use a chess set and you can move the pieces to try and help you solve. You solve against the clock; for these four studies give yourself an average of 30 minutes for each one, so 120 minutes in total. Points are awarded according to how much of the composer's solution you find, with five points available for each study if you find it all. In the answers, I'll show you where the points were awarded. You need to find the composer's main line; you can also write down sidelines if you're not sure what the main line is, but only the main line moves earn points. So, look for the most artistic, elegant line.

The solutions are on page 511.

SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS (See page 500)

This month's problems

Two three-movers to start with, followed by a couple of helpmates (collaborative ventures in which Black begins, so that in Stanislav's problem you are looking for two bwbwbw# sequences). In both cases, the first of the two problems should be easier to solve than the second. In all four cases, there is no indignity in preferring simply to read on and enjoy the solution!

Timing is everything

In Steven's three-mover, Black has a limited range of options, but precision is required. We can't threaten mate next move, but we can set up mate on the following move. If we play 1.♗f5, 1…e6, attacking the bishop, successfully defends. If we play 1.♗h7, we're prepared to meet 1…♔e6 with 2.♗g8 and 1…e6 with 2.♖e2 (forcing mate next move), but 1…d6 refutes. Indeed, 1…d6 is Black's most disruptive move, and serves as the refutation also of 1.e6. The try 1.♖f7 allows for 1…d6 (2.♖xe7) but no longer allows for 1…♔e6, which is its refutation. The key is 1.♖e2!. Black again defends with 1…d6 and it is now (not on move one!) that we play 2.♗f5. Black then has just three legal moves, and they lead to nicely differentiated mates - 2…e6 3.♗e4; 2…dxc5 3.♘f4 and 2…dxe5 3.♖xe5.

"Unpinning"...

…is the caption that the two Leonids put under their diagram. You will see why when you go through the solution. The white queen is pinned by the black rook and queen, albeit that black rook is itself pinned. The immediate attempt to free the white queen by 1.♔c7? fails to 1…♕a3!. The key is 1.♕b4!. The queen remains pinned, but mate is threatened by 2.♘b6+ 2.♔e5 3.♕d6. Black has four defences. After 1…e5, the time is right to play 2.♔c7!, and now after 2…♔e6 3.♕c4 is mate. After 1…♕a3 we play 2.♘xc3+ ♔e5 (2…♕xc3 is no longer available) 3.f4. After 1…♖xg4 it's 2.♕b5+ ♔d4 3.fxe3 (in these later lines the queen can exert its influence even without being unpinned); and after 1…♔e5 the move is 2.f4+, with two alternatives - 2…♔d5 3.♘b6 and 2…♔xf4 3.♗xg3.

Back once more to the murky world of helpmates

In Stanislav's problem, we see the black king neatly rounded up for two pleasant and well-matched mates - 1.♔f3 ♘g5+ 2.♔f2 ♘h3+ 3.♔f1 ♘e3 and 1.1.♔f5 ♔e2 2.♔g6 ♔f3 3.♔h5 ♘f4. The mates are both pure - the first is classified as a model mate, the second (because it makes use of the black pawn and therefore of all the units on the board) achieves the accolade of being an ideal mate.

Yuri's more complex problem takes as its starting point a problem of mine that appeared in the journal of the British Chess Problem Society, *The Problemist* (of which back copies are available on the website www.theproblemist.org/). Yuri has taken one of the two solutions of the forerunner problem and has grafted on another solution that fits congenially with it. You will see what I mean upon playing through the solutions, in which the two pawns that start out on b3 and b4 end up, in reverse order, occupying a4 and b3 with mating effect - 1.a4 bxa4 2.♕xe3+ ♖f3 3.♕c5 ♖d3+ 4.♔c4 b3 and 1.♘e5 bxa3 2.♘d3 exd3 3.♔c5 d4+ 4.♔b5 a4.

SOLUTIONS TO ENDGAMES (See page 508)

Zhukov

1.♗a3+ (0.5 points) **♔e6 2.♕g6+** (+0.5 points = 1) **♔d5 3.♕f5+** (+1 = 2) **♔xd4 4.♗c5+** (+1.5 = 3.5) **♖xc5 5.♕d3+** (+0.5 = 4) **♔e5 6.♕g3+** (+1 = 5) wins. Not too hard to solve; the first move is rather obvious, because the White queen can't do the business unaided, and the position of the Black queen on b8 suggests that an eventual skewer will arise.

Jasik

1.c8♕+ ♔xc8 2.♖c4+ (1 point) **♔b7 3.♕h1+ ♔b8 4.♖xb4+** (+2 = 3) **♗xb4 5.♕h8+ ♔c7 6.♕b2** (+2 = 5) axb2 stalemate.
The pieces around the White king shout "stalemate', but you still have to find how to complete the construction, and the final White move is still surprising, indeed stunning.

(Lewandowski)
1.♖f4+ ♔e1 2.♕xd4 (1 point) **♕h1+ 3.♔g4 ♖g6+ 4.♘g5** (+1 point = 2) **♗e6+ 5.♖f5** (+1 = 3) **♖c4 6.♘d3+** (+1 = 4) **♔d2 7.♘f4+** (+1 = 5) ♖xd4 stalemate.

That this one is also a stalemate is scarcely foreseeable. Fortunately for the solver, White has limited choice at any stage else Black's attack will be terminal. So, you can solve this one by just playing the obvious moves and seeing where it gets you. After a few moves, the stalemate net starts to be visible.

Liburkin

1.♘f5 (1 point) **g2 2.♘h4** (+1 = 2) **g1♕ 3.♘f3+ ♔d1 4.♘xg1 a4+ 5.♔c3** (+1 = 3) **a3 6.♘d5 a2 7.♘e3+ ♔c1 8.♘e2+** (+1 = 4) **♔b1 9.♔d2** (+1 = 5) a1♕ 10.♘c3+ ♔b2 11.♘c4 mate. If you chose to play ...a4+ earlier, you got the points, provided you transposed into the composer's solution. So, you could have written 1...a4+ 2.♔c3 g2 3.♘h4 etc.

The difficulty with solving this one is to make the right choices early on - hence why you got a point even if you only got White's first move right. Some of the sidelines are: 1.♘e6? g2 2.♘d4 ♔d1 3.♘f3 a4+ 4.♔c3 a3 draws;

1.♘g4? g2 2.♘e5 ♔e2 wins for Black; in the main line, 2.♘d4? ♔f2 and again Black wins. In the main line, there's also 2...g1♘ 3.c4 ♘e2 4.♘e6 winning.

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