

The World's Oldest Chess Journal

Volume 144



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- HOW DO BRITONS SEE CHESS?
- HOW MANY KNOW HOW TO PLAY?
- SHOULD CHESS BE RECOGNISED AS A SPORT?
- DO THEY KNOW WHO THE WORLD CHAMPION IS OR WHERE HE IS FROM?



**THE WORLD RAPID AND BLITZ CHESS CHAMPIONSHIPS
AND AGAIN – IT'S MAGNUS CARLSEN, TAKING BOTH CROWNS...**



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WHY DO TOP CHESS PLAYERS STRUGGLE WITH THE DRESS CODE?

In every major global chess event there is almost always a problem about the players following the dress code. Who is to blame for this and do we really need a dress code for chess?

In May 1921, after the world chess championship match, the New York Times published the article “Capablanca unlike old chess masters”, noting that the “new champion has appearance of a New York broker - not absorbed in game”. The article provides the following description of Capablanca: “In appearance the new champion is utterly unlike the popular conception of a chess player. The beard, the spectacles, the furrowed brow, the rounded shoulders, the clouds of smoke, the careless attire - all absent... Furthermore he is good-looking, smooth-shaven... He dresses with care, has excellent manners and converses in fluent English, including an apt use of idioms. Also, unlike the traditional chess master, he is by no means absorbed in the game. Everything interests him...”.

Fast forward to today - the same problem persists: many chess players at the top still struggle with these things. One recent example came from Ian Nepomniachtchi - a two-time candidate for world champion and one of the top chess players in the world. In the most recent World Rapid and Blitz, he appeared wearing a sweatshirt which looked as if it had had black and yellow paint mixed on it. Surprisingly, FIDE allowed it as, according to the most recent decision of the Athletes Commission, hoodies and similar attire were, oddly, deemed acceptable.

As I have been attending global chess events more regularly in recent years (at the invitation of FIDE, to serve as the press officer), I have often found myself dealing with media questions about players’ protests and reactions to the dress code.

The FIDE dress code has been implemented since the World Rapid and Blitz in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in 2017, and other organizers have followed. FIDE has maintained that

attire should be tasteful and respectful and that it should help promote the professional nature of chess tournaments. Caps, clothing with offensive writing, slippers, sportswear and shorts are prohibited.

However, after six years and counting, some of the top players still seem to have an issue and stage “protests” by dressing inappropriately and then calling it a “scandal” when they get pulled up on this.

Why is all this relevant, you might ask? Live and let live, who cares - the moves, the game are important. Hold on. Chess is, of course, the most important thing, but the appearance and the behaviour are also important as they send a message - to the public and, also, to the sponsors who usually pay for the travel, accommodation and even a fee for the top players to take part in events (plus the prizes).

Unlike many other sports - chess struggles severely with sponsorship. Having players with a sloppy and dishevelled appearance who are not media-friendly doesn’t help get those sponsors. I spoke to some of them, including Rex Sinquefeld who is the main chess sponsor in the US, and they also noted this.

If you asked the players, however, the arguments usually go down the line that they just want to play chess or, that it is “uncomfortable” to dress formally, but also, that the “rules aren’t clear”. I don’t buy the last argument as, for years now, they have had examples of what is appropriate and what isn’t. Also, if in doubt as to what is/isn’t appropriate - check with the organizers or, go for the obvious more formal shoe/dress. Not an “extravagant sneaker” by Burberry or a “glamorous slipper” by Fendi - it’s not the brand, it’s what it looks like which is what matters (as it should be in real life).

This is likely to persist as an issue in chess events, but it’s more a scandal caused by the players themselves, and not FIDE or the organisers.

Editor, BCM





THE WORLD
RAPID AND BLITZ
CHESS CHAMPIONSHIPS
SAMARKAND, UZBEKISTAN

AND AGAIN – IT'S MAGNUS CARLSEN, TAKING BOTH CROWNS...

By Milan Dinic

Photo: FIDE Official / Anastasia Korolkova, Lennart Ootes, Maria Emelianova

The annual World Rapid and Blitz Chess Championships took place in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. The event went smoothly and Magnus Carlsen came out top in both competitions, repeating his success in Almaty in 2022. I was there as the press officer of the event and here I will share the key highlights from the six days of this chess bonanza.

THE EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

The World Rapid and Blitz is one of the most popular tournaments among players and one of most watched annual chess events in the world. This year it was even more important for some - Anish Giri had to make it to the top three in the Rapid or win the Blitz, while Arjun Erigaisi of India had to win the Rapid if either wanted to qualify for the 2024 Candidates. Neither managed to achieve that.

Three days of Rapid and two days of Blitz saw the world's top-rated player emerge victorious in both competitions, once again confirming his dominance in faster time controls. In the Women's tournament, Russian players (participating under the flag of FIDE) took first place - Anastasia Bodnaruk was crowned Women's World Rapid champion while Valentina Gunina took the Blitz crown.

Despite the event going smoothly, there were three incidents which caught the attention of the world: Anna-Maja Kazarian, a Dutch chess player and popular streamer, was fined 100 euros (£86) by FIDE for wearing what the organization's arbiters deemed "sports shoes" (see the picture); Daniil Dubov and Ian Nepomniachtchi were both penalised for a pre-arranged draw (see the boxout); and there was Jan-Krzysztof Duda's refusal to shake hands with Denis Khismatullin from Russia (see the boxout).



Among 150 players in the Open and 117 in the Women's tournament, there were no players from the UK. In fact, some of the top world names were missing from the event, including Americans Hikaru Nakamura, Wesley So and Leinier Dominguez, as well as Israeli players and the (almost forgotten?) World Champion, Ding Liren.

THE OPEN RAPID

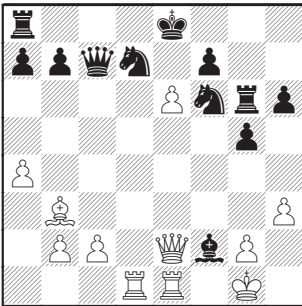
The Open Rapid tournament, after its initial five rounds, has seen a captivating start. Notably, five exceptional players top the standings with 4.5 points each. Among them are Arjun Erigaisi, the 2022 champion from India, defending Rapid champion Magnus Carlsen, Yu Yangyi of China, Bulgaria's Ivan Cheparinov and India's Vidit Santosh Gujrathi.

Bulgaria's Ivan Cheparinov emerged as a surprise on the first day of the Rapid, as he was not ranked in the top 20. Opening strongly with three wins and a draw, Cheparinov ended the day with an impressive combination to score against Richard Rapport.

Ivan Cheparinov - Richard Rapport

World Rapid 2023 Samarkand UZB (5.3)

1.e4 c6 2.♘f3 d5 3.d3 ♖c7 4.♘c3 dxe4
5.dxe4 ♘d7 6.a4 ♘gf6 7.♙c4 ♘b6
8.♙b3 ♙g4 9.h3 ♙xf3 10.♚xf3 e6
11.♙g5 ♘bd7 12.0-0 ♙d6 13.♖ad1 h6
14.♙e3 g5 15.♖fe1 ♖g8 16.♙d4 ♖g6
17.♚e2 ♙e5 18.♗d5 cxd5 19.exd5 ♙xd4
20.dxe6 ♙xf2+



This miscalculation in tactics cost Rapport.

21.♚xf2 ♘c5 22.exf7+ ♔f8 23.♚f5 ♔g7
24.♙e8 ♖xe8 25.♚xf6+ And now, after
taking on f6, White promotes to a knight and
takes the queen on c7, ending a piece up.

1-0

The beautiful thing about the Rapid and Blitz is that there are combinations on the board and swings in games which are not common in Classical games. As time constraints mean players can calculate less and have to rely more on their creativity and gut, this can lead to amazing victories but, also, catastrophic defeats.

One of the most exciting games of the first day of the Rapid was played between Conrad Holt from the US and one of the top seeds, Shakhriyar Mamedyarov from Azerbaijan. Despite getting the upper hand in the King's Indian and approaching victory, Mamedyarov (playing as Black)



Ivan Cheparinov surprised all on the first day of the Rapid

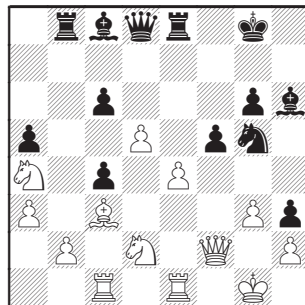
blundered. In a very sharp position where both sides were attacking, Black allowed an impressive combination on the board after which he ended a piece down.

Vishy Anand, who was the commentator on the official broadcast, called this “the game of the year”. Judge for yourself.

Conrad Holt - Shakhriyar Mamedyarov

World Rapid 2023 Samarkand UZB (3.20)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.e3 e6
5.cxd5 exd5 6.♙d3 ♙g7 7.♘ge2 0-0
8.0-0 a5 9.♙d2 ♖e8 10.♖c1 c6 11.f3 b5
12.♚e1 ♘bd7 13.♚f2 ♘b6 14.a3 ♘c4
15.♙xc4 bxc4 16.♗a4 ♖b8 17.♖fe1 h5
18.♙c3 ♙h6 19.♘g3 h4 20.♘f1 h3 21.g3
♘h7 22.♗d2 ♘g5 23.e4 dxe4 24.fxex4 f5
25.d5?

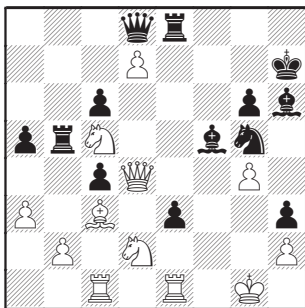


After this move, White is in severe trouble. 25.exf5 ♖f8 26.d5 ♔xd5 27.f6 ♖b7 28.♗e7 offered better options.

25...fxe4 26.♔d4 ♔h7 27.d6 ♖b5 28.♘c5 ♗f5? The first big mistake by Black. 28...e3 was the way to continue.

29.g4! Now the position is equal as 29...e3 does not work as it would have in the previous move.

29...e3 30.d7



And now, the tables are about to turn completely on Mamedyarov.

30...exd2! 31.dxe8♗ ♔xe8 32.♖xe8 dxc1♗+ 33.♘f2 ♗g1+ 34.♘xg1 ♘f3+ A nice geometry!

35.♘f2 ♘xd4 36.♗xd4 ♗g7 37.♖e7 ♗xg4 38.♗xg7 g5 39.♗d4+ ♘g6 40.♘g3 ♗f5 41.♗g7+ ♘h5 42.♖f7 ♗g6 43.♖f8 ♗b1 44.♘xh3

1-0

Mamedyarov finished the Rapid with 7/13, barely passing 50% and ending up in the middle of the scoreboard, way below his 12th-place starting position.

Carlsen's path to victory

The defending World Rapid (and Blitz) Champion, Magnus Carlsen, began with a draw against significantly lower-rated Nikita Petrov from Montenegro, but he swiftly gained momentum, clinching victories in subsequent rounds, including a striking win over Parham Maghsoodloo, seizing his knight with a king in the top left corner of the board.

The second day started well for Carlsen as he scored a critical victory against India's Vidit Santos Gujrathi. Both sides were evenly matched for the most part, but in a knight endgame, Vidit's nerves gave way - he blundered one pawn and then another, ending completely lost. After the game, Vidit - visibly shaken - was seen standing over the board for about a minute, wandering aimlessly into the distance.

Things didn't go Carlsen's way in the remaining three games of the day where he drew with Erigaisi, Yu and Keymer. While the line played against Yu was sharp, the position was always even. The only real opportunity Carlsen had was in the final game of the day, against Germany's Vincent Keymer. Carlsen managed to force an endgame where his white knight was stronger than Keymer's black bishop, but - despite being significantly better on time - the Norwegian blundered and allowed Keymer to draw. Still, this was enough for Carlsen to enter the final day of the Rapid in shared first place, with Yu and Fedoseev, all on seven points out of nine.

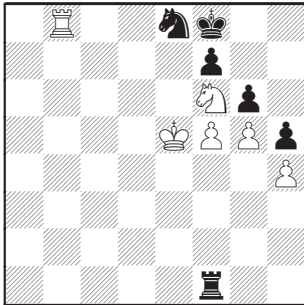
Vladimir Fedoseev (playing under the flag of Slovenia) joined the leaders on the second day, after having a good run - scoring three consecutive wins (against Narayanan, Gareyev and Erigaisi) on day two. In round nine, Fedoseev had a golden opportunity to defeat Yu Yangyi and emerge as the sole leader in the Open. However, he misplayed a winning endgame and allowed the Chinese GM to secure a draw.



Surprised! Yu Yangyi

Vladimir Fedoseev – Yu Yangyi

World Rapid 2023 Samarkand UZB (9.2)



Fedoseev achieved a commanding position in the endgame. The Chinese GM Yu - known for always being very composed and focused - stubbornly defended, trying to eek his way out.

59...♖e1+ 60.♔d4?? A grave mistake by Fedoseev. Instead, he should have continued with: ♔f4 and then, at best: 60...♖f1+ 61.♔e3 ♔e7 62.♖xe8+ ♔d6 63.♖d8+ ♔e7 64.♖d7+ ♔f8 65.♖d5 ♖a1 66.♖d4 ♖e1+ 67.♔f2 ♖a1 68.♖d8+ ♔e7 69.♖d7+ ♔f8 70.♔d5 ♔g7 71.f6+ ♔g8 72.♔f4 and White is winning. But now, not only is his king cut off but Black takes the pawn on f5 and he now has a runner. The position is equal and, after the exchanges, the two agreed to split the point.

60...gxf5 61.♔d3 f4 62.♔d2 ♖e6 63.♔xh5 f3 64.♔g3 f2 65.♖b4 ♔d6 66.♖f4 ♔e4+ 67.♔xe4 ♖xe4 68.♖xf2 ♖xh4 69.g6 ♖d4+ 70.♔e3 ♖d7 71.♔e4 ♔g7 72.♖xf7+ ♖xf7 73.gxf7 ♔xf7

½-½

Groundhog day

The final day of the Rapid started with a direct duel for first place between Carlsen and Fedoseev in which Norwegian came out with a convincing victory.

With 10 points out of 13 games (with seven wins, six draws and no defeats), Magnus Carlsen emerged on top in a fierce competition of 150 strong players. His outstanding performance earned him not just the championship title but also the first prize of \$60,000.

“It feels great. I thought the key moment was the first game [today] against Fedoseev... he was the only one who could catch me.

“Sometimes I was playing my games a little bit too safe, but I don’t think I was really in trouble [in this tournament]”.

Asked if he sometimes feels like living in the movie *Groundhog Day*, given the number of times he has won world championships in various categories, Carlsen replied - “I’m happy with that comparison... Hopefully, it will be *Groundhog Day* next time as well”.

Carlsen named Vladimir Fedoseev, whom he defeated in round ten while playing with the black pieces, as his most formidable opponent in the championship.

Vladimir Fedoseev - who was trailing the Norwegian by half a point and had a chance in the final round to catch up - decided not to risk it and had a quick draw with Dmitry Andreikin to secure second place. Yu Yangyi finished third.

Duda refuses to shake hands with a Russian player

Poland's number one GM Jan-Krzysztof Duda refused to shake hands with Russian GM Denis Khismatullin before their game in the Rapid. The game ended in a draw. Khismatullin has not filed a complaint and wrote in a statement that he does not plan to do so.

FIDE responded to this with the following statement sent to BCM:

In chess, players traditionally shake hands or greet each other in a manner aligned with social norms before and after each game. However, it's important to note that this convention is not a formal component of the laws of chess or any official FIDE regulations.

Should a player feel directly impacted by another's refusal to shake hands or by any perceived offensive/inappropriate gesture, they have the option to file a complaint with the FIDE Ethics and Disciplinary Commission (EDC). The EDC will conduct an investigation and consider potential sanctions only if a formal



complaint is lodged. Notably, in the specific instance between Duda and Khismatullin during their game, Mr. Denis Hismatullin did not submit any complaint to the EDC.

It is worth noting that a similar case occurred between grandmasters Mikhail Kobalia and Kirill Shevchenko at the European Individual Chess Championship 2023 in Serbia. Shevchenko declined to shake his opponent's hand, prompting Kobalia to call the arbiter and lodge a protest. Subsequently, Shevchenko received an official warning from the EDC.

THE WOMEN'S RAPID:

Anastasia Bodnaruk becomes the new Women's Rapid Champion

Bodnaruk started dominating the event on the second day when she emerged as the sole leader. On day three, she continued to maintain her lead, but, with three draws in the final three rounds, she allowed two more players to share the top with her.

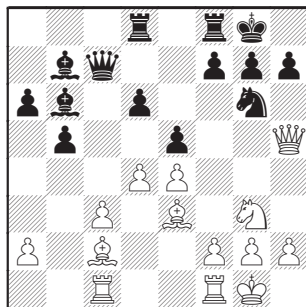
Bodnaruk did not lose a single game in the Rapid. Her most important victory came in round eight against Zhu where she finished with a brilliant combination!

Anastasia Bodnaruk - Zhu Jiner

World Rapid Women 2023 Samarkand UZB (8.1)

In a popular sideline of the Sicilian, Black managed to maintain parity for most of the game. However, an error in the middlegame allowed White to take the initiative and win.

1.e4 c5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 ♘d4 4.♙c4 e6
5.♘ge2 ♚c7 6.d3 a6 7.♘xd4 cxd4 8.♘e2
b5 9.♙b3 ♙c5 10.c3 dxc3 11.bxc3
♘e7 12.0-0 ♙b7 13.d4 ♙b6 14.♙c2
d6 15.♙e3 0-0 16.♖c1 e5 17.♘g3 ♖ad8
18.♚h5 ♘g6

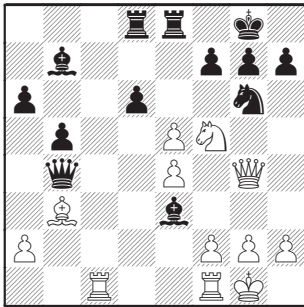


This is where Black's problems start.



Tension and nerves:
Koneru vs Bodnaruk in the tiebreaks

19.♖f5 ♖fe8 20.♔g4 ♗xc3 21.♙b3 ♗b4
22.dxe5 ♙xe3



23.♙xf7+!! A brilliant combination.

23...♗xf7 24.♖c7+ ♗g8 25.♖xg7+ ♗f8
26.fxe3 ♗xe4 27.♖xg6 ♗xg4 28.♖xg4
♖xe5 29.♗xd6+ ♗e7 30.♗xb7 ♖d2 31.e4
h5 32.♖g7+ ♗e6 33.♖gf7 ♖g5 34.♖f2
♖d7 35.♖f6+ ♗e5 36.♗c5 ♖d2 37.♖e6+
♗d4 38.♗b3+

1-0

In the Blitz tiebreak (with three minutes and a two-second addition per move), Bodnaruk and Koneru had a fierce battle.

The Indian player emerged victorious in the first game, winning as Black. She then lost the second game in the match. According to regulations, if the two-game match is drawn, a single game shall be played with a time control of three minutes for each player and two seconds increment per move. If that game also ends in a draw, the players will continue to play, changing colours in each game, until one side wins.

The third game ended in a dramatic draw. After a 10-minute break, it was time for the fourth and final game: Koneru had a solid position but ended in time trouble. In a rush, she misplayed her moves and ended up losing - handing over the victory to Anastasia Bodnaruk.

With 8.5/11: Anastasia Bodnaruk, Lei Tingjie and Koneru Humpy (who was the winner of the 2019 Women's World Rapid) were sharing first to third place.

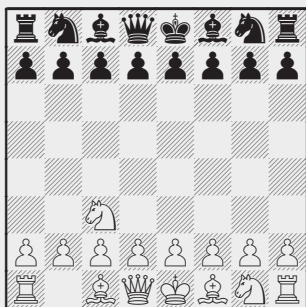
Thanks to better tiebreaks, Bodnaruk and Koneru went to the playoffs while Lei Tingjie finished third.

This is the first rapid title for Bodnaruk, who defeated India's Koneru Humpy with 2.5:1.5 in the tiebreak match to secure first place and a prize of \$40,000.

"It's hard to say how I'm feeling, but I'm very happy to have won this match," Bodnaruk said in her immediate reaction.

The “dance of the knights” or, simply, horsing around at the board

In round 11, Grandmasters Daniil Dubov was playing as White against Ian Nepomniachtchi. The game in question lasted 13 moves: 1.♭f3 ♭f6 2.♭d4 ♭d5 3.♭b3 ♭b6 4.♭c3 ♭c6 5.♭e4 ♭e5 6.♭g5 ♭g4 7.♭f3 ♭f6 8.♭g1 ♭g8 9.♭c5 ♭c4 10.♭a4 ♭a5 11.♭c3 ♭c6 12.♭b1 ♭b8 13.♭f3 and they agreed a draw in the following position:



The arbiters analysed the moves, and, after round 12, the Chief Arbiter of the tournament, Ivan Syrov, made the decision to reduce the points both players scored in the game. Explaining his decision, Chief Arbiter Syrov said: “in my eyes both players are responsible for it, I consider they prearranged the result of the game. My opinion is based on the moves they played”.

Grandmasters Dubov and Nepomniachtchi objected to the decision, which was referred to the Appeals Commission. In the meantime, the arbiters of the tournament have decided to postpone the publishing of new pairings/standings until Friday morning, local time in Samarkand (pending the decision of the Appeals Commission).

Both players faced a lot of criticism online, some of it from fellow competitors,

including Magnus Carlsen who thought that the decision of FIDE Arbiters to strip the players of their points from that game was justified.

Nepomniachtchi later commented on the game in his podcast:

“I’m not a fan of this game, I’m not proud or something. I don’t find it too shameful, but of course it’s not something I would be glad to remember. So to those of you, I think there is some part of chess fans who found this disrespectful, I’m just sorry. It was never meant to be like this. It was obviously a form of protest, which I also find maybe too much, but basically, what’s done is done.”

Just ten days after this, Ian Nepomniachtchi and Daniil Dubov had another draw by doing the horsey dance, this time in a chess.com online event.

Decision of Chief Arbiter IA Ivan Syrov, World Blitz Championship 2023

Tournament -Blitz
Round 11
board 2

game: Dubov Daniil -Nepomeiachtchi Ian

The game on board 2 finished drawn after move 12

1.Nf3 Nf6 2.Nd4 Nd5 3.Nb3 Nb6 4.Nc3 Ne6 5.Ne4 Ne5 6.Ng5 Ng4 7.Nd3 Nf6 8.Ng1 Ng8 9.Nc5 Nc4 10.Na4 Na5 11.Nc3 Ne6 12.Nb1 Nb8 1/2-1/2

After opening next round and checking the game, I waited till both players finish their games in round 12 and ask them to confirm, if they had played the above mentioned moves, they both confirmed, yes. They both did not see any problem, mentioned that the round was late.

My decision is because of this:

FIDE Laws of chess:

11.1. The players shall take no action that will bring the game of chess into disrepute.

12. Options available to the arbiter concerning penalties:

12.9.5. reducing the points scored in the game by the offending player.

Reason: in my eyes both players are responsible for it, I consider they prearranged the result of the game. My opinion is based on the moves they played.

Samarkand, December 25th 2023

CA IA Ivan Syrov

THE BLITZ TOURNAMENT

As per tradition, the World Blitz was split between two days.

The first day of the Blitz saw 12 rounds played in the Open and nine in the women's tournament.

The Blitz Open – and again, it was Carlsen

The first day of the Blitz in the Open tournament saw Vladislav Artemiev emerge as the main contender for the top place. He became the sole leader after defeating R Pragnanandhaa in round six. After three consecutive draws tragedy struck in round 10 - Artemiev erred in the opening as Black against Sarin and was forced to defend a bad position which he ultimately lost. In round 11, however, he made a comeback against Sjugirov to again emerge as first among the tournament leaders. In round 12 Artemiev decided to slow down and made a quick draw with Erigaisi, finishing the day in first place, leading a group of seven players.

Magnus Carlsen registered six draws and seven wins on the first day. In round 12, he faced Ian Nepomniachtchi, whom he had defeated twice in the match for the World Champion title. Despite an intense game with both sides transitioning to an endgame while in time trouble, a crucial imprecision by Carlsen provided Nepomniachtchi with a significant opportunity, which he missed, resulting in an immediate draw.

On the start of the second day, in round 13, Carlsen was stunned by Maxime Vachier-Lagrave.

Playing the Sveshnikov Sicilian, Carlsen allowed his opponent to win an extra pawn. The Norwegian tried to complicate things by pushing his knight towards White's ranks, but the 2021 World Blitz Champion, MVL, responded with a timely exchange sacrifice to enter a comfortable,

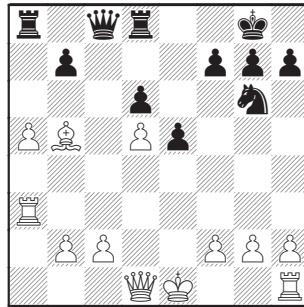
dominating position and proceeded to victory, advancing on the queenside.

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave - Magnus Carlsen

World Blitz 2023 Samarkand UZB (13.1)

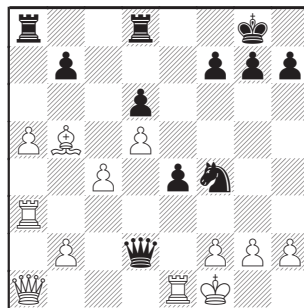
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 e5 6.♘db5 d6 7.♘d5 ♘xd5 8.exd5 ♘e7 9.a4 ♘g6 Here 9...a6 was necessary. 10.a5 ♘e7 11.♘e3 0-0 12.♘xa7 Carlsen allows White to snatch a pawn.

12...♘d7 13.♘b6 ♔c8 14.♖a3 ♘xb5 15.♘xb5 ♘d8 16.♘xd8 ♖xd8



White has an extra pawn and a comfortable position. No compensation for Black.

17.0-0 ♔c5 18.c4 ♔b4 19.♔a1 ♘f4 20.♖e1 ♔d2 21.♙f1 e4



Carlsen is trying to complicate things on White's kingside, but MVL responds in a timely fashion.



Despite leading for most rounds in the Blitz, he slipped at the end: Vladislav Artemiev

22.♖c1 ♜xc1 23.♞xc1 ♘d3 24.♞xd3! Sacrificing the exchange but eliminating Black's last chance to complicate things. Now, White is comfortable and he continues to press with his advantage on the queenside.

24...exd3 25.b4 ♞ac8 26.♞d1 ♞c7 27.♞xd3 ♞e7 28.♞e3 ♜f8 29.♞e2 f5 30.♞d3 ♞xe3+ 31.fxe3 ♞e7 32.♞d4 ♞f8 33.c5 f4 34.e4 f3 35.gxf3 ♞f4 36.a6 bxa6 37.♞xa6 g5 38.b5 g4 39.b6 dxc5+ 40.♞xc5 gxf3 41.d6+ ♞d7 42.♞b5+ ♞e6 43.♞c4+ ♞e5 44.b7 ♞f8 45.d7 f2 46.♞c6 ♞d4 47.♞f1

1-0

This was Carlsen's only defeat in the Blitz. He then made a strong comeback, winning six games in a row! Despite being the winner of the tournament, Carlsen emerged as the leader only in round 18. Until then, the leader was Vladislav Artemiev, who dominated from day one.

Carlsen finished the Open Blitz with 15.5 points won in 21 games. Daniil Dubov came in second, just half a point behind Carlsen. Vladislav Artemiev - who was the leader of day one, and led for most of the second day of the Blitz - finished third on 14.5 points.

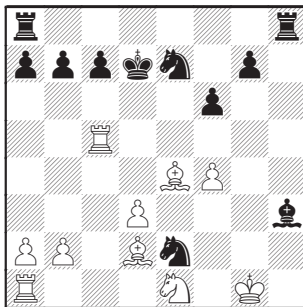
The Unlucky Vladislav Artemiev

Artemiev made just one slip in the whole tournament - on the second day, in round 18, losing to Serbian GM Aleksandar Indjic (who is a surprise of the tournament, defeating top world Grandmasters and finishing in ninth place, ahead of Duda, Rapport, Caruana, Yu and many other well-known players!).

Vladislav Artemiev - Aleksandar Indjic

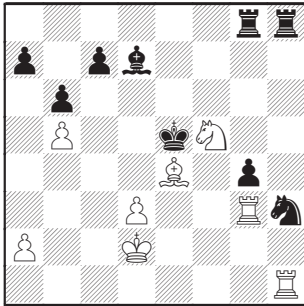
World Blitz 2023 Samarkand UZB (18.2)

1.♘f3 d5 2.g3 ♞g4 3.♞e5 ♞f5 4.c4 f6 5.♞f3 dxc4 6.♞a4+ ♞c6 7.♞xc4 e5 8.♞g2 ♞d7 9.♞c3 ♞e6 10.♞a4 ♞ge7 11.0-0 ♞f5 12.d3 ♞c5 13.♞d2 ♞b6 14.♞fc1 h5 15.♞e4 h4 16.♞c5 ♞xc5 17.♞xc5 hxg3 18.hxg3 ♞fe7 19.♞e1 ♞h3 20.♞e4 ♞d4 21.♞xd7+ ♞xd7 22.f4 exf4 23.gxf4 ♞xe2+



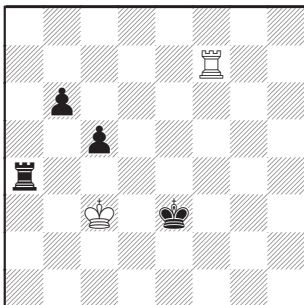
White is a pawn down, his king exposed and pieces misaligned. Artemiev was in trouble.

24.♔f2 ♖d4 25.♖c4 ♗dc6 26.♗f3 ♕e6
 27.♖c5 b6 28.♖cc1 ♔ag8 29.b4 ♗d8
 30.b5 ♗f7 31.♖b4 ♗d6 32.♖xd6 ♗xd6
 33.♗d4 ♕d7 34.♖h1 g5 35.fxg5 fxg5
 36.♗e3 ♗d5+ 37.♗d2 ♗f4 38.♖ag1 ♗h3
 39.♖g3 g4 40.♗f5+ ♗e5



A mistake by Indjic, allowing White to equalise. 40...♖xf5 offered more. 41.♖xf5 ♗f2 42.♖xh8 ♖xh8 43.♖g2 ♖f8 44.♖xf2 g3 45.♖f4 ♗e5.

41.♗e3 ♗f4 42.♖g2 g3 43.♖f1+ ♗e5
 44.♖f3 ♗g5 45.♖fxg3 ♗xe4+ 46.dxe4
 ♖xg3 47.♖xg3 ♗xe4 48.a4 ♖h2+ 49.♗c3
 ♖a2 50.♗b4 a5+ 51.bxa6 c5+ 52.♗b3
 ♕e6+ 53.♗c3 ♖a3+ 54.♗d2 ♖xa4
 55.♖g6 ♖a2+ 56.♗c3 ♕f7 57.♖f6 ♖a3+
 58.♗b2 ♖xa6 59.♖xf7 ♗xe3 60.♗c3 ♖a4



Artemiev is completely lost and wasn't doing great on time. Still, he played on.

Hikaru Nakamura's absence

Hikaru Nakamura won second place in the World Blitz in 2022 and is considered to be one of the best blitz players. He decided not to compete in Samarkand, complaining about the distance from the US and travel challenges for flying to Uzbekistan, saying “it is disappointing and very, very unacceptable” (that Uzbekistan is the host since it’s far away from the US and is hard to get to). I discussed this statement with some of the players in Samarkand - including some of his top-chess colleagues from the US, and most were not impressed by this comment, noting that when events are held in the US or Europe, it is very hard for Asian players to come, without even factoring in the challenges of getting a US or EU visa.

61.♖e7+ ♖e4 62.♖b7 ♖b4 63.♖e7+ ♗f4
 64.♖e8 ♗f5 65.♖e7 ♗f6 66.♖e8 ♖b1
 67.♗c4 ♖b2 68.♖e1 ♖b4+ 69.♗c3 ♗d4
 70.♖b1 ♗d6 71.♗c4 ♗e6 72.♖e1+ ♗d7
 73.♗b5 ♖f6 74.♖e2 ♖h6 75.♖e1 ♗d6
 76.♗d1+ ♗c7 77.♖f1 ♖h4 78.♖f7+ ♗d6
 79.♖f6+ ♗d5 80.♗xb6 ♖b4+ 81.♗a5
 ♖b8 82.♗a4 c4 83.♗a3 c3 84.♖f7 ♗c4
 85.♗a2 c2 86.♖c7+ ♗d3 87.♗d7+ ♗c3
 88.♖c7+ ♗d2 89.♗d7+ ♗c1 90.♖h7
 ♖a8+ 91.♗b3 ♗b1

0-1

This loss allowed Carlsen to take the lead, and Artemiev just couldn't catch up, achieving one victory and two draws in the final rounds.

Daniil Dubov finished in second place, just half a point behind Carlsen. However, the “game” which he drew with Nepomniachtchi (see the boxout about this) led to both players being stripped of half a point and it was exactly this half a point that Dubov was missing to reach the tiebreaks with Carlsen.

This triumph marks double-double for Carlsen, mirroring his feat in the previous edition of the WRB in 2022 in Almaty, Kazakhstan, where he also claimed victory in both categories.

“I am very satisfied with the performance and especially the results,” Carlsen added.

The Women’s Blitz – Gunina all the way

Valentina Gunina was unstoppable in the Women’s Blitz. With eight victories and one draw, she emerged as the sole leader after the first day, a point and a half ahead of a group of five players sharing 2-6th place. She continued strongly on day two and, despite former World Champion Alexandra Kosteniuk’s remarkable performance, desperately trying to catch up with the leader, Gunina was confident and won without ever surrendering the lead.

A one-time gold and two-time silver medallist in the World Blitz, Gunina started with a remarkable streak of seven consecutive victories (including against the 2022 Women’s Blitz Champion, Bibisara Assaubayeva) and became the sole leader from round six. Her first draw came in round eight, with India’s Harika Dronavali. At this stage, Anastasia Bodnaruk, fresh from her Women’s Rapid win, ascended to second place, trailing by just half a point at seven points. Challenged in the final round of the day, Gunina clinched a decisive victory against Bodnaruk with the black pieces, finishing the day with 8.5/9, a point and a half ahead of her closest competition.

Reflecting on her performance at the end of the first day, Gunina remarked: “I feel tired, but I [would] feel more tired not playing chess.” She pointed out that last year in the World Blitz she was also the leader after day one, but then lost four games in a row on the second day. “One day you can play great, the other day you can lose everything”.

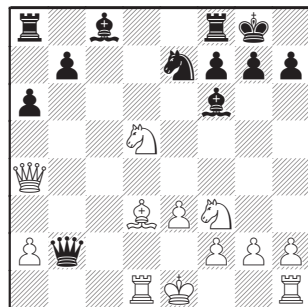


In the critical game of round 16, Gunina defeated the Women’s World Champion in classical chess, Ju Wenjun, and entered the final round as the sole leader, with half a point of advantage.

Valentina Gunina – Ju Wenjun

World Blitz Women 2023 Samarkand UZB (16.1)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 c5 5.cxd5 cxd4 6.♖xd4 exd5 7.♙g5 ♙e7 8.e3 0-0 9.♖d1 ♘c6 10.♗a4 ♗b6 11.♙b5 a6 12.♙d3 ♗xb2 13.♙xf6 ♙xf6 14.♘xd5 ♘e7??



Second world Blitz title after 11 years:
Valentina Gunina



a chance to equalise but even to win!
33...♖xd1! 34.♗xh6 ♖xe4 35.♙xe4 ♖d2+
36.♘g3 ♗e7 37.♗g5 ♗d5 38.♙xd5 ♖xd5
39.♗f4 ♙c5 40.♗e4 ♖d2 41.♗a8+ ♘h7
42.♗xa6 ♙xe3 43.h4 ♙c4 44.h5 gxf5
45.gxf5 ♙f2+ 46.♘f4 ♖xa2 and Black is
winning. But Ju missed this.

**33...g5?? 34.♗f6+ ♘f8 35.♖xd8+ ♗xd8
36.♗d6+ ♘g7 37.♗h5+**

1-0

This is the second Blitz crown for Gunina,
who first won it in 2012.

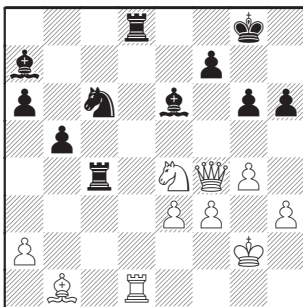
In every round, Gunina was closely
followed by former Women’s World
Champion Alexandra Kosteniuk. With
three draws and five victories on the
second day, Kosteniuk finished in second
place, with 13.5 points. She did her best
to catch up with the leader. However, the
advantage Gunina had (in part thanks to
Kosteniuk who lost in their direct duel on
day one) turned out to be too far to reach.

China’s Zhu Jiner finished third, with
12.5 points, winning in seven out of eight
games on the second day of the Blitz.

The 2021- and 2022-Women’s World
Blitz Champion, Bibisara Assaubayeva,
finished in sixth place, leading the group
of nine players with 11 points.

A huge blunder by the Women’s World
Champion, allowing her queen to get trapped.
Playing 14...♙c3 or 14.b5 was better.

**15.♖b1 ♙c3+ 16.♘f1 ♗xb1+ 17.♙xb1
♗xd5 18.♗g5 h6 19.♗e4 ♙e5 20.h3
♙e6 21.g3 ♖ac8 22.♘g2 ♖c4 23.♗d1
b5 24.♗h5 ♙b8 25.♖d1 ♗e7 26.♗e2
♙d5 27.f3 ♖fc8 28.♗f2 ♙e6 29.g4 ♙a7
30.♗d3 g6 31.♗d6 ♗c6 32.♗e4 ♖d8
33.♗f4??**



This is the moment when the position
completely turned and Ju not only had

Ian Nepomniachtchi congratulating
Gunina on her victory in the World Blitz



2023 FIDE WORLD RAPID & BLITZ CHAMPIONSHIP RAPID OPEN

Rk	SNo	Name	FED	Rtg	Pts.	TB1	TB2	TB3	TB4	w-we	K	rtg*/-
1	1	GM Carlsen, Magnus	NOR	2818	10	99	103.5	2640	0	0.44	10	4.4
2	11	GM Fedoseev, Vladimir	SLO	2716	9.5	98	102	2627	0	1.25	10	12.5
3	15	GM Yu, Yangyi	CHN	2699	9	99.5	105.5	2651	0	1.41	10	14.1
4	18	GM Vidit, Santosh Gujrathi	IND	2691	9	98.5	104.5	2625	0	1.16	10	11.6
5	79	GM Murzin, Volodar	FID	2547	9	97	101	2661	0	3.86	10	38.6
6	4	GM Vachier-Lagrave, Maxime	FRA	2767	9	96	102	2620	0	-0.15	10	-1.5
7	13	GM Dubov, Daniil	FID	2712	9	94	100.5	2591	0	0.28	10	2.8
8	14	GM Praggnanandhaa, R	IND	2706	9	93.5	98.5	2552	0	-0.23	10	-2.3
9	37	GM Andreikin, Dmitry	FID	2629	9	92	98	2582	0	1.50	10	15
10	20	GM Grischuk, Alexander	FID	2678	9	92	98	2537	0	-0.05	10	-0.5

2023 FIDE WORLD RAPID & BLITZ CHAMPIONSHIP RAPID WOMEN

1	51	IM Bodnaruk, Anastasia	FID	2265	8.5	73.5	76.5	2414	0	4.49	10	44.9
2	8	GM Koneru, Humpy	IND	2444	8.5	71.5	76.5	2328	0	1.19	10	11.9
3	3	GM Lei, Tingjie	CHN	2517	8.5	71	75	2315	0	0.05	10	0.5
4	21	IM Salimova, Nurgyul	BUL	2371	8	71	74	2293	0	1.05	10	21
5	29	WGM Zhai, Mo	CHN	2351	8	70	75	2336	0	1.91	10	38.2
6	1	GM Ju, Wenju	CHN	2575	8	66	69.5	2325	0	-1.00	10	-10
7	14	GM Gunina, Valentina	FID	2412	8	65.5	70.5	2272	0	0.35	10	3.5
8	6	GM Lagno, Kateryna	FID	2463	7.5	69	72.5	2338	0	-0.05	10	-0.5
9	5	GM Goryachkina, Aleksandra	FID	2486	7.5	68.5	73.5	2283	0	-0.94	10	-9.4
10	42	IM Garifullina, Leya	FID	2287	7.5	68.5	72	2343	0	2.41	10	48.2

2023 FIDE WORLD RAPID & BLITZ CHAMPIONSHIP BLITZ OPEN

Rk	SNo	Name	FED	Rtg	Pts.	TB1	TB2	TB3	TB4	w-we	K	rtg*/-
1	1	GM Carlsen, Magnus	NOR	2887	16	256.5	265.5	2673	0	-0.15	10	-1.5
2	8	GM Dubov, Daniil	FID	2763	15.5	262.5	272.5	2700	0	3.01	10	30.1
3	3	GM Artemiev, Vladislav	FID	2799	15	260.5	271.5	2702	0	1.59	10	15.9
4	11	GM Vachier-Lagrave, Maxime	FRA	2748	14.5	260.5	269	2670	0	1.64	10	16.4
5	4	GM Nepomniachtchi, Ian	FID	2795	14	263	271	2670	0	-0.18	10	-1.8
6	14	GM Erigaisi, Arjun	IND	2729	14	256	264	2652	0	1.03	10	10.3
7	6	GM Aronian, Levon	USD	2772	14	239.5	247.5	2597	0	-1.32	10	-13.2
8	89	GM Lazavik, Denis	FID	2556	14	233	239	2590	0	4.10	10	41
9	39	GM Indjic, Aleksandar	SRB	2631	13.5	256.5	266	2674	0	3.76	10	37.6
10	5	GM Duda, Jan-Krzysztof	POL	2775	13.5	255	265	2640	0	-0.85	10	-8.5

2023 FIDE WORLD RAPID & BLITZ CHAMPIONSHIP BLITZ WOMEN

1	24	GM Gunina, Valentina	FID	2348	14	170	177	2380	0	5.91	10	59.1
2	7	GM Kosteniuk, Alexandra	SUI	2455	13.5	173.5	182	2326	0	1.99	10	19.9
3	18	GM Zhu, Jiner	CHN	2384	12.5	170	178.5	2338	0	2.60	20	52
4	63	WGM Munkhzul, Turmunkh	MGL	2211	11.5	176.5	184	2408	0	6.91	20	138.2
5	3	GM Lagno, Kateryna	FID	2522	11.5	165.5	173.5	2338	0	-1.11	10	-11.1
6	5	IM Assaubayeva, Bibisara	KAZ	2476	11	168.5	175	2338	0	-0.67	10	-6.7
7	12	GM Dronavalli, Harika	IND	2420	11	168	173	2329	0	0.29	10	2.9
8	33	WGM Kamalidenova, Meruert	KAZ	2314	11	161.5	167.5	2330	0	2.45	20	49
9	9	GM Muzychuk, Anna	UKR	2447	11	160.5	168	2236	0	-2.06	10	-20.6
10	16	GM Stefanova, Antoaneta	BUL	2398	11	158.5	165.5	2270	0	-0.48	10	-4.8



TWO GOLDS FOR ENGLAND

By IM Shaun Taulbut

England won two World Championships at the World Senior Championships; Michael Adams won the over 50s and John Nunn won the over 65s. Both Michael Adams and John Nunn won their tournaments on tie break.

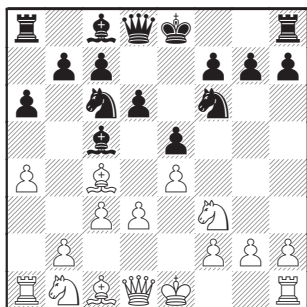
We will take a look at two of the most interesting games from the event.

We start with a win by Michael Adams in the over 50s.

Devaki Prasad - Michael Adams

31st World Senior 50+ Citta del Mare ITA (5.2)

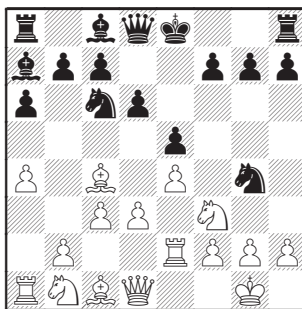
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♗f6 4.d3 ♙c5 5.c3 a6 6.a4 d6



7.0-0 ♙a7 8.♖e1 Also possible is 8.♙e3 ♙xe3 9.fxex3 ♖e7 10.♗bd2 with an equal position.

8...♗g4 Black attacks f2 almost forcing White's next defensive move.

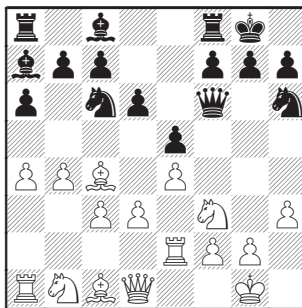
9.♗e2



9...♖f6 Black develops his queen but White is able to take the initiative with ♙g5

10.b4 10.h3 ♗h6 11.♙g5 ♖g6 12.♗bd2.

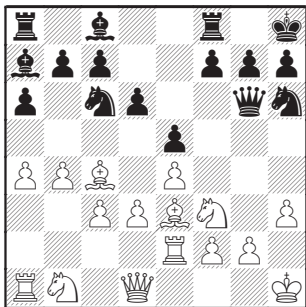
10...0-0 11.h3 ♗h6



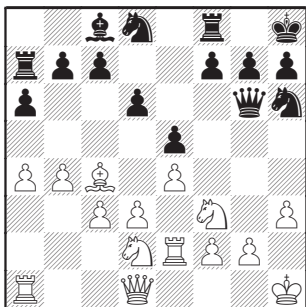
12.♙e3 12.♙g5 ♖g6 13.♗bd2.

12...♖g6 Black prepares a later ...f5.

13.♙h1 ♙h8



14. ♖xa7 ♜xa7 15. ♘bd2 ♞d8

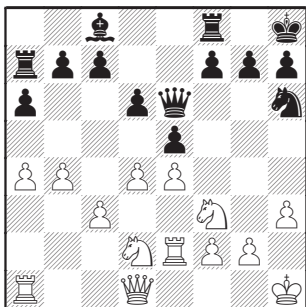


15...f5 is playable and if 16.b5 Black can then retreat the knight.

16. d4 ♘e6 With the threat of ...♘f4.

17. ♙xe6 The best move exchanging the knight.

17... ♖xe6



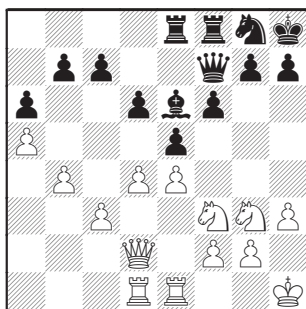
Defending e5; Black has a slight edge because the Black bishop has good play.

18. ♘f1 f6 19. a5 ♖f7 Black prepares to develop his bishop.

20. ♘g3 20... ♘e3 is better.

20... ♖a8 21. ♖d2 ♙e6 22. ♜ee1 Also playable is 22. d5 ♙d7 23. c4 f5 with equality.

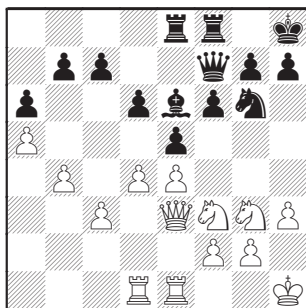
22... ♖ad8 23. ♖e3 ♜de8 24. ♖d2 ♘g8 25. ♖ad1



Better is 25. d5 ♙d7 26. c4 ♘e7 27. c5 f5 28. ♜ac1 ♜c8 29. ♘g5 ♖g6 30. exf5 ♘xf5 31. ♘xf5 ♙xf5 32. f3 with a slight edge for White.

25... ♘e7 26. ♖e3 26. d5 ♙d7 27. c4 h6 28. ♖c3 f5 is slightly better for White.

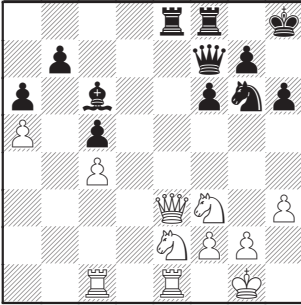
26... ♘g6



27. ♘e2 Passive; 27. d5 ♙d7 28. ♖a7 ♜b8 is equal.

27...h6 28.♔g1 ♕b3 29.♖b1 29.♗c1 is essential White may have been worried about 29...♕c4 30.♘g3 ♖f4 but after 31.♘d2 ♘d3 32.d5 ♗xe1 33.♗xc4 White emerges with two pieces for rook and pawn.

29...♕c2 30.♖bc1 exd4 31.♘exd4 ♕xe4 32.c4 c5 33.bxc5 dxc5 34.♗e2 ♕c6



35.♖c3 To defend the knight on f3; If 35.♖xc5 ♕xf3 36.gxf3 ♗h4 is winning for Black.

35...♖d8 White is now severely restricted so gave up.

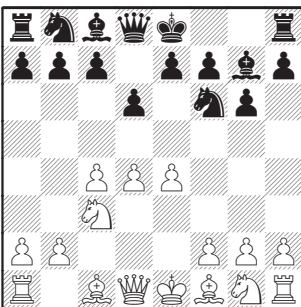
0-1

John Nunn played a brilliant attacking game against Tony Stebbings

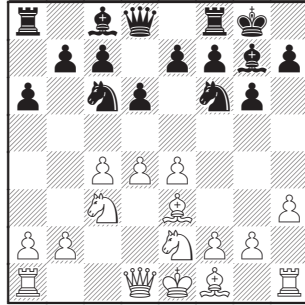
Anthony Stebbings - John Nunn

31st World Senior 65+ Citta del Mare ITA (4.1)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 ♕g7 4.e4 d6



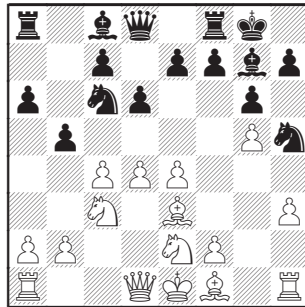
5.h3 0-0 6.♕e3 ♗c6 7.♘ge2 a6



The Panno variation.

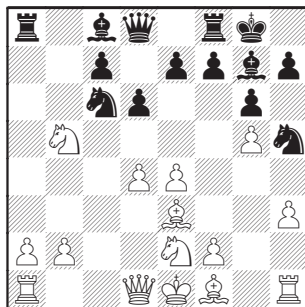
8.g4 b5 Also possible is 8...♗a5 9.♘g3 ♗d7 10.♖d2 c5 with counterplay.

9.g5 ♗h5



The alternative is 9...♗d7 10.h4 bxc4 11.h5 allowing White more play on the kingside.

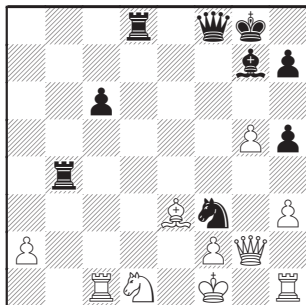
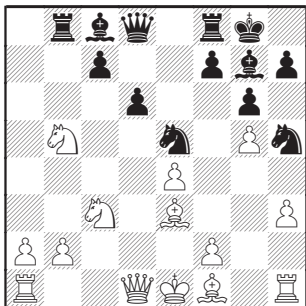
10.cxb5 axb5 11.♗xb5



11...♖b8 Worth consideration is 11...♘a5
 12.♘ec3 c6 13.♘a3 d5.

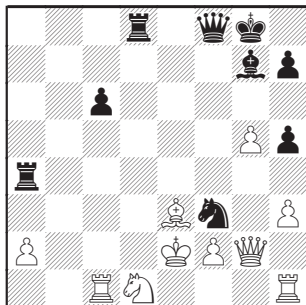
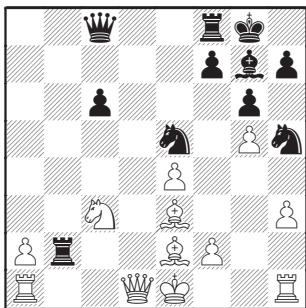
22.♚e4 ♚f8 23.♘d1 ♖b4 24.♚g2 ♘f3

12.♘ec3 e5 13.dxe5 ♘xe5.



25.♚e2 ♖a4

14.♙e2 c6 15.♘xd6 ♖xb2 16.♘xc8 ♚xc8



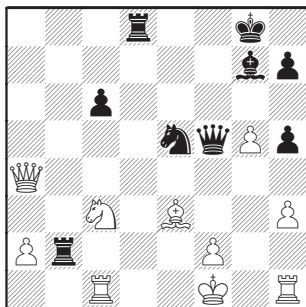
17.♖c1 If 17.♙xh5 gxh5 18.♚f1 ♖d8
 19.♚xh5 ♚a6+ 20.♚g2 ♘c4 is winning
 for Black as White cannot defend his pieces.

Now it becomes clear; White cannot capture the knight with ♚xf3 because of ..♖xa2+ so White is lost.

26.♖c2 ♚f5 27.♖c1 ♖xa2+

17...♖d8 18.♚a4 ♚e6 19.♚f1 f5 20.exf5
 ♚xf5 21.♙xh5 gxh5

0-1



**1ST WORLD SENIOR 50+ CITTA DEL MARE ITA WED 25TH OCT 2023 - SUN 5TH NOV 2023
 LEADING FINAL ROUND 11 STANDINGS:**

Rk	SNo	Ti	Team	FED	RTG	Pts	TB1	TB2	TB3
1	1	GM	ADAMS, Michael	ENG	2670	8.5	0.5	72	77
2	13	GM	ATALIK, Suat	SRB	2427	8.5	0.5	72	76.5
3	16	GM	NOVIK, Maxim	LTU	2375	8	0	74	79
4	11	GM	GODENA, Michele	ITA	2441	8	0	63	67
5	5	GM	MOROVIC FERNANDEZ, Ivan	CHI	2488	7.5	0	73	78
6	2	GM	STEFANSSON, Hannes	ISL	2529	7.5	0	70	74.5
7	3	GM	DLUGY, Maxim	USA	2520	7.5	0	68.5	73.5
8	20	IM	CUMMINGS, David H.	CAN	2325	7.5	0	65.5	70.5
9	52	FM	NIKOLAIDIS, Konstantinos	GRE	2096	7.5	0	63	68
10	8	GM	HOLZKE, Frank	GER	2473	7.5	0	62.5	67
11	32	IM	PRASAD, Devaki V	IND	2200	7	0	69.5	74
12	4	GM	STURUA, Zurab	GEO	2514	7	0	69	73.5
13	7	GM	BISCHOFF, Klaus	GER	2473	7	0	68	73
14	9	GM	MINASIAN, Artashes	ARM	2462	7	0	66.5	72
15	17	GM	MRVA, Martin	SVK	2366	7	0	66.5	71

**1ST WORLD SENIOR 65+ CITTA DEL MARE ITA WED 25TH OCT 2023 - SUN 5TH NOV 2023
 LEADING FINAL ROUND 11 STANDINGS:**

Rk	SNo	Ti	Team	FED	RTG	Pts	TB1	TB2	TB3
1		GM	NUNN, John D M	ENG	2560	8.5	0	70.5	76
2		GM	FTACNIK, Lubomir	SVK	2451	8.5	0	69.5	75
3		GM	LEGKY, Nikolay A	FRA	2348	8	0	74.5	80
4		GM	KNAAK, Rainer	GER	2451	8	0	72.5	78
5		GM	CAMPORA, Daniel H.	ARG	2343	8	0	71.5	77
6		GM	VAGANIAN, Rafael A	ARM	2493	8	0	68.5	73.5
7		IM	REPRINTSEV, Alexander	UKR	2227	8	0	64.5	69.5
8		FM	MADEIRA, Wagner Martins	BRA	2012	7.5	0	70.5	74.5
9		IM	RENMAN, Nils-Gustaf	SWE	2324	7.5	0	69.5	75
10		IM	ROOZE, Jan	BEL	2245	7.5	0	68	72.5
11		IM	ROOS, Louis	FRA	2257	7.5	0	67.5	72.5
12		GM	FERNANDEZ GARCIA, Jose Luis	ESP	2379	7.5	0	67.5	72.5
13		IM	PETLAN, Peter	SVK	2192	7.5	0	67.5	72
14		GM	BALASHOV, Yuri S	FID	2390	7.5	0	66	70
15	11	IM	BIRNBOIM, Nathan	ISR	2342	7.5	0	64.5	69.5

WHAT DO BRITONS KNOW ABOUT CHESS?



HOW DO BRITONS SEE CHESS?
 HOW MANY KNOW HOW TO PLAY?
 SHOULD CHESS BE RECOGNISED AS A SPORT?
 DO THEY KNOW WHO THE WORLD CHAMPION IS OR WHERE HE IS FROM?

By Milan Dinic

Recent polling data sheds light on the chess landscape in Britain. One in eight Britons (13%) play chess regularly. YouGov data also shows a rise in the number of people in Britain who support recognising chess as a sport

Before we move further with analysing this and other available public opinion data about chess in Britain, I need to make an important disclosure: I work at YouGov as a Director of Content Strategy and Innovation. The polling data analysed here, however, is all from publicly available sources. Also, I had no part in conducting the study for the Chess Awareness Barometer. Now, back to the data...

The Chess Awareness Barometer, established by World Chess in 2022, consists of two surveys – one in the UK and the other in Germany. The survey was conducted between 25th August and 3rd September.

While the data shows that 13% play chess regularly, the number of club players in the UK has witnessed a significant decline. Merely six percent of active players are associated with chess clubs, with 41.2% having previously been club members but disengaged over time. Most likely, the rise of online chess has contributed to this, as it has made the game more accessible and easier to play.

DOES ANYONE KNOW WHO THE WORLD CHAMPION IS?

The survey has found that just two percent of Britons know the name of the current world champion, Ding Liren, while seven percent correctly identified that the current holder of the world crown is from China. The results in Germany were similar to the UK: just two percent of the respondents knew that Ding was the champion, while three percent said the world champion comes from China.

Unsurprisingly, the study shows Magnus Carlsen ranked highest in both countries in the question about who the world champion is, but the overall awareness was very low – just nine percent in the UK and 10 percent in Germany. Instead, when it came to the question of where the current world champion is from, the most popular option was the stereotypical answer – Russia (16% in the UK and 11% in Germany selected this). The survey has also shown that in both countries women are notably more likely than men to say they don't know who the world champion is (79% vs 64%) or where he comes from (68% vs 55%).

Answer	Total 4402	UK 2266	GER 2136	Men 2144	Women 2258	18...24 445	25...34 672	35...44 722	45...54 770	55+ 1792
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Which one, if any, of the following do you think is the current World Chess Champion?

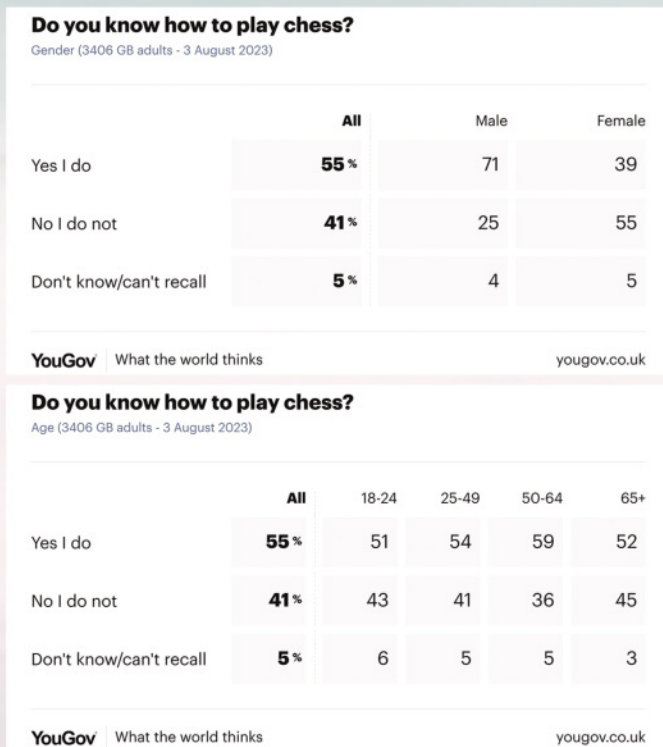
Garry Kasparov	5%	3%	7%	5%	5%	2%	3%	5%	6%	6%
Viswanathan Anand	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%	1%
Fabiano Caruana	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%	2%	1%	0%
Magnus Carlsen	10%	9%	10%	15%	4%	17%	13%	8%	10%	7%
Sergey Karjakin	2%	1%	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%	3%	1%	1%
Vladimir Kramnik	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	4%	4%	3%	1%	1%
Levon Aronian	1%	0%	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%	2%	1%	0%
Ding Liren	3%	2%	3%	4%	2%	7%	4%	2%	2%	2%
None of these	4%	3%	5%	4%	5%	8%	6%	4%	4%	2%
Don't know	72%	77%	65%	64%	79%	56%	63%	68%	73%	79%

In which one, if any, of the following countries do you think the current World Chess Champion was born?

Russia	14	16	11	13	14	14	12	13	15	14
India	2%	2%	2%	2%	5%	3%	2%	4%	1%	2%
United States	2%	3%	2%	3%	2%	2%	5%	4%	2%	2%
China	5%	7%	3%	5%	5%	8%	7%	5%	6%	3%
Norway	9%	8%	10%	14%	4%	14%	12%	9%	9%	7%
Armenia	2%	1%	2%	2%	1%	2%	1%	3%	1%	1%
United Kingdom	2%	1%	2%	2%	1%	5%	2%	2%	1%	1%
Georgia	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%	1%
None of these	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%	5%	2%	3%	1%	1%
Don't know	61%	59%	64%	55%	68%	48%	55%	55%	62%	69%

HOW MANY BRITONS KNOW HOW TO PLAY CHESS?

The study above prompted us to look at some other recent research on the perception of chess in Britain. As it turned out, YouGov had more data on this.



A nationally representative survey by YouGov, conducted in August, uncovered that just over half of Britons (55%) say they know how to play chess, while four in ten (41%) don't. There are significant gender gap: there are more chess players among British men (71%) than women (39%).

Moreover, there seems to be a small class disparity in chess involvement. The ABC1 group (middle class) reported a higher likelihood of playing chess than the C2DE group (working class): 59% vs. 49%.

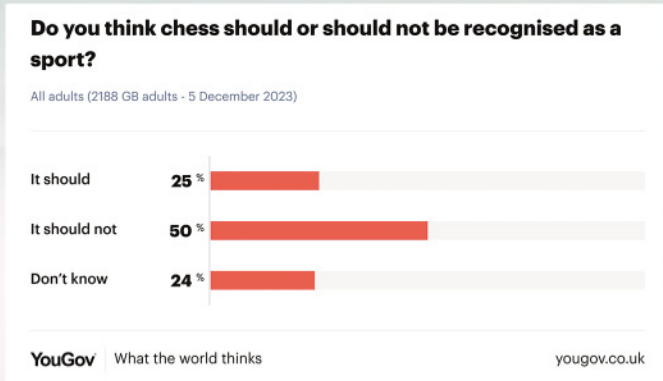
AND HOW MANY BRITONS (DIS)LIKE THE GAME?

Another YouGov tool – Ratings, which measures the popularity and fame of anything and everything based on the continual collection of responses from the British public – shows that 38% of Britons like chess, but over a quarter (28%) don't.

Three in ten (31%) have a neutral view of the game.

WHO THINKS THAT CHESS SHOULD BE RECOGNISED AS A SPORT?

The data also shows that the number of people in Britain who think chess should be recognised as a sport is on the rise.



A YouGov poll from 5th December has found that a quarter of Britons (25%) think it should, while half (50%) say it should not. This is an increase from a poll on 1st December 2017 conducted by the pollster with the same question, which found that just 16% thought chess should be considered a sport, while two-thirds (65%) objected to the idea.

Recent polling data shows that the biggest support for chess to be recognised as a sport is among the under-50 age group (where 33% support the idea), compared to just 17% among those who are older!

THE STATUS OF CHESS IN BRITAIN

BCM contacted ECF President Nigel Lawson, and British GM Nigel Short for a comment on the results.

As he was in Ukraine on a journalistic assignment at the time, Lawson briefly got back to us to say "Chess should be recognised as a sport in the UK, but I have no idea when it would (not will) happen".

Nigel Short, probably the best-known British grandmaster, thought the results showed two things:

"One, that chess is popular in the UK and, two, that there is a disconnect between the ability to play chess and the knowledge of the chess scene. Contributing to the latter is the lack of official recognition of chess as a sport. Despite being recognised by the IOC as a sport, the British Olympic Association does not recognise chess as a sport, which is damaging and should be challenged".

Short also commented on the recent £1M boost given to chess by the government saying that, "had something similar been done when I was fighting for the title of world champion, chess in Britain would have had a much different part over the past three decades".

In the opinion of this magazine, the results above – especially the number of people who know how to play chess or have a positive opinion about the game - are encouraging and provide a solid base to get chess official recognition and a place among recognised sports in Britain.

Chess is recognised as a sport in 170 countries and, as of 1999, FIDE is also part of the IOC. Furthermore, including chess – in education and daily life – can contribute to improving social skills, building a person’s personality and improving numeric skills which is a big issue in our society.

Some encouraging steps have recently been taken by the government.

As mentioned above, the government recently announced a £1M package to support chess in England. Out of that, half will go to the English Chess Federation, a quarter of a million to 85 local authorities so they can install 100 new chess tables in parks and the rest will go to chess programmes in at least 100 schools. Announcing the initiative, the UK Culture Secretary, MP Lucy Frazer said “Chess is a brilliant way for young people to develop skills such as patience and critical thinking. It is something constructive on which to spend their time and feel part of. It inspires creativity and sparks the competitive spirit.”

However, this comment does not rhyme well with the way chess has been received by the government in recent years, where there is little interest in allowing the game to be recognised as a sport.

The other part of the problem is, of course, money. Although not very financially demanding, as it’s not recognized as a sport chess has no access to government support for sports.

Some in the chess community have expressed hope that chess might get a greater boost from the government if Labour take power, as Rachel Reeves (Labour MP serving as Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer) is fond of the game and is a former Under-14 British Champion.

Despite the lack of state support, in recent years British chess has made notable results. While some have pointed out that these results came in the senior category, it is worth noting that England narrowly missed winning a medal at the recent European team championship. Also, the 8-year-old WCM Bodhana Sivanandan made history by becoming England’s first world youth champion in over a quarter of a century and stunned the world recently in Croatia after an outstanding 8.5/13 at a very strong blitz tournament in Croatia.

The exile of Russian and Ukrainian players – some of whom have connections with the UK, including Nikita Vitiugov who moved to the English Chess Federation recently – may provide a boost to the UK chess scene where the lack of experienced and strong GM coaches is a problem.

As the chess landscape evolves, the influx of talented players and increased initiatives could herald a transformative era for British chess, provided the necessary recognition and resources are bestowed upon this intellectually enriching game.



THE RETURN OF THE LONDON CHESS CLASSIC

**A GREAT SHOW BY
BRITISH CHESS PLAYERS**

By GM Aleksandar Colovic
www.alexcolovic.com

It is very difficult for a chess tournament to come back. Once the tradition stops, many things need to fall back into place for a comeback

The London Chess Classic ran for 11 years uninterrupted - from 2009 until 2019. Then the pandemic shook the world and the tournament was not organised for three years (in 2021 a match England - Rest of the World was staged).

The event managed to attract an exciting field: four home players (Michael Adams, Nikita Vitiugov, Luke McShane and Britain's brightest talent, 14-year-old Shreyas Royal) and six foreigners (Gukesh, Amin Tabatabaei, Hans Niemann, Andrei Volokitin, Jules Moussard and Mateusz Bartel).

The tournament provided an opportunity for all of the players, but they were quite diverse for each of them.

For the reigning World Champion over 50, and former world number four, Michael Adams, to prove that he can still play at the top of his game.

For the new English player, Nikita Vitiugov, to show his might in front of the home fans.

For Luke McShane, to confirm that being employed at the City doesn't affect his chess strength.

For the 14-year-old Shreyas Royal, to continue the excellent form from the Grand Swiss and score a GM norm.

For Hans Niemann, to show that the cheating insinuations after his unbelievable eight out of nine at the Tournament of Peace (which finished a day before the London Classic) were completely unfounded.

For Gukesh, with a clear first win, an almost last-minute opportunity to overtake Anish Giri in the FIDE Circuit standings.

For Jules Moussard, a chance to finally show his true potential.

For Mateusz Bartel, Andrei Volokitin and Amin Tabatabaei, a chance to play at an elite event, gain rating and improve their world standings.

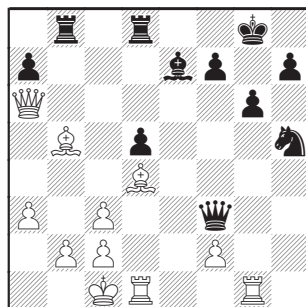
GUKESH STARTED WELL, BUT...

The tournament started with an early lead for Gukesh. After the disaster at the Grand Swiss, the Indian prodigy was determined to take things into his hands and started with a strong 2.5 out of three, beating Bartel and Volokitin while drawing with Vitiugov. The only player to keep up the pace was Adams, who beat Bartel and Tabatabaei and drew with Niemann.

In the fourth round Gukesh faced Moussard. Things were looking bright for the Indian player, who obtained a winning position.

Gukesh Dommaraju - Jules Moussard

London Chess Classic (4), 04.12.2023



In the Petroff, Black gave up his queenside pawns to open files against White's king, but White's bishops control everything.

22.♔e2 The first step towards bringing the bishops backwards. As the bishops leave their central positions Black's pieces obtain more scope.

White could have taken another pawn with **22.♕xa7** since after **22...♖a8** **23.♗b6** Black's pieces don't have the necessary coordination to create any counterplay.

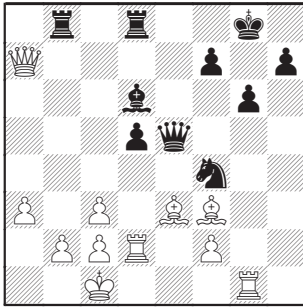
22...♗f4+ **23.♔e3** Retreating the other bishop.

23.♖b1 was an alternative, but White had to find some difficult moves in the following lines: **23...♖g7!** **24.♗xa7** (or **24.♕xa7 ♖a8** **25.♔e3!** **♗e5** **26.♔d4!** important moves to improve the position of the bishop. **26...♗f4** **27.♗d3 ♖db8** and now after **28.♗g3!** **♗xg3** **29.♖xg3 ♕xa3** **30.b4** Black regained the pawn, but White's queenside pawns and pair of bishops give White a very promising

endgame.) 24...♖f5 25.♙b6 ♖a8
26.♗b7 ♖ab8 27.♙c7! ♖xb7 28.♙xf4
♙xa3 29.b3 with good winning chances
in the endgame.

23...♗e5 24.♗xa7 ♘f4 25.♙f3 ♙d6
White is a pawn up and Black doesn't
really have any threats. Still, the open
files on the queenside make it somewhat
uneasy for the first player.

26.♖d2??



The pressure gets to the 17-year-old.
Now instead of winning a well-played
game and reaching 3.5/4 he loses on
the spot.

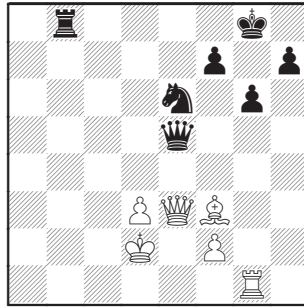
26.♗d4! centralisation! Now White
exchanges queens by force: 26..♗f5
27.♙g4! ♗xg4 28.♖xg4 ♘e2+ 29.♙b1
♘xd4 30.♖gx4 White is a clear pawn up
and should win the endgame.

26...♙xa3! A nasty shot!

27.♖d4 27.bxa3 ♗xc3 28.♙d4 ♗xf3
is winning for Black, who is up on material
and has the safer king. 27.♗xa3 ♖a8 and
in view of the mating threat of ...♖a1
White must give up his queen.

27...♙xb2+ 28.♙d2 ♘e6 Black has won a
pawn and destroyed the shelter around the
white king. He's now winning.

29.♖d3 ♙xc3+ 30.♖xc3 d4 31.♖d3 dxe3+
32.♗xe3 ♖xd3+ 33.cxd3



33...♘d4! The dot on the i. White loses
material in view of the threat ...♗b2 and/
or ...♘xf3.

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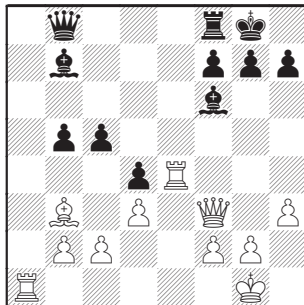
A tragedy for the Indian player, which
broke his stride. In the next round he barely
escaped a second loss in the game with
Adams, before winning against McShane.
Still, he couldn't muster another win (in
fact, he was close to losing against Royal in
a game he certainly hoped to win) and even
spoil his event with a final-round blunder
against Niemann (more on this game later).

THE EXTRAORDINARY JULES MOUSSARD

The French player had a decisive role in the
tournament. After turning a loss into a win
against Gukesh, he did the opposite in the
game against Adams.

Jules Moussard - Michael Adams

London Chess Classic (6)



After a correctly played opening, where the players followed a correspondence game from 2022, White finally deviated from that game with:

20.g3 In the correspondence game White immediately moved the queen from the pin with 20. ♕e2.

20...h6? Unexpectedly, this natural move is a mistake.

20... ♗xe4?! is bad because after 21. ♕xe4 the difference in the activity of the bishops gives White a stable advantage;

20... ♖c7 was best, keeping the tension in the position and at the same time introducing the idea of ... ♖c6. 21. ♕f4 ♕b6! 22. ♖e1 ♖c6! shows Black's idea - often the strong light-squared bishop and the weakened long diagonal are worth at least the exchange that White has. After 23.f3 c4 24.dxc4 bxc4 25. ♗a4 ♕b6 Black has excellent compensation - his bishops are active, White's king is weakened as are his queenside pawns.

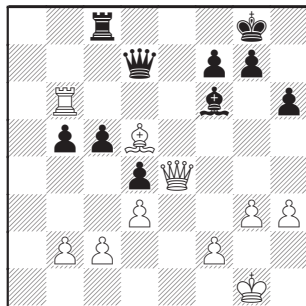
21. ♕f5! Now Black is forced to take on e4, when the position with opposite-coloured bishops is in White's favour.

21... ♗xe4 22. ♕xe4 White's bishop attacks the pawn on f7 while Black's bishop is quite useless.

22... ♖c8 23. ♖a6 ♕c7 23... ♖e5 24. ♕b7 ♕c7 25. ♕xb5 wins a pawn with a continuing initiative.

24. ♗d5 ♕d7 24... ♖e5 now this is better as White doesn't have the move ♕b7 as in the previous note. Still, after 25. ♕f3 ♖d8 26. ♗c6 b4 27. ♗b5, with ♗c4 next, White will torture Black until the end of the game.

25. ♖b6



25... ♖d8? Adams tries to keep the material balance, but ends up tied to the defence of the pawn on f7.

25... ♕xh3? leads to mate after 26. ♖xf6! gxf6 27. ♕g6+ ♗h8 28. ♕xf6+ ♗h7 29. ♕xf7+ ♗h8 30. ♗e4; 25... ♖e8 was the best try. 26. ♕g2 (or 26. ♗c6 ♖xe4 27. ♗xd7 ♖e1+ 28. ♗g2 b4 29.h4 Black will suffer, but is not lost.) 26... ♖e1+ 27. ♗h2 ♖e5 28. ♗c6 ♕c7 29. ♖xb5 g6 Black has improved the position, but lost a pawn. However, the extra pawn matters little as White cannot create a passed pawn on the queenside, so Black's drawing chances are now higher.

26. ♗c6 ♕xh3 27. ♗xb5 ♕h5 28. ♗c4 ♖f8 29. ♗g2 Black can barely move.

29... ♕g5 30. ♖b7 h5 Allowing a combinational finish. In truth, the disaster on f7 couldn't be avoided for too long.

30... ♖e5 31.f4! ♕d6 (31... ♕xe4+ 32.dxe4 with e5 next wins for White.) 32. ♖xf7! ♗h8 33. ♖b7 wins for White, as Black won't be able to defend his king from the attack along the light squares.

31. ♗xf7+! ♖xf7 32. ♕e6?? A tournament winner always has a lucky moment.

32. ♖b8+ ♗d8 (32... ♖f8 33. ♕e6+ is the correct moment to put the queen on e6.) 33.f4 ♕f6 34. ♕d5 White wins the pinned bishop, with a winning endgame.

32...♙e7 White is now simply a piece down, so he resigned.

0-1

THE MASTERY OF MICHAEL ADAMS

As the saying goes, every tournament winner is lucky. This was Adams's third win in the event and it turned out to be sufficient for clear first place.

A tremendous result for Adams, who at the age of 52 shows that it is still possible to win tournaments even when being the oldest participant in a field that consists of some of the world's biggest talents.

Here's one of his wins, where he outplays Bartel with seemingly easy and natural moves.

Michael Adams - Mateusz Bartel

London Chess Classic chess24.com (3)

1.e4 c6 Bartel also plays the French Defence, but perhaps wanted to avoid the positions from the Tarrasch Variation, an all-time Adams favourite.

2.d4 d5 3.e5 ♘f5 4.♗f3 e6 5.♙e2 ♗d7 6.0-0 a5 Black has a wide choice here, with the most popular moves being 6...♗e7, 6...h6, 6...♙g6 and 6...c5.

7.a4 f6 A possible plan for Black in this line, but a risky one, too. This undermining move weakens the position of the black king.

8.♙e3 A rare move for Adams, with the main moves being 8.c4 or 8.♗bd2. The move is not bad at all, of course.

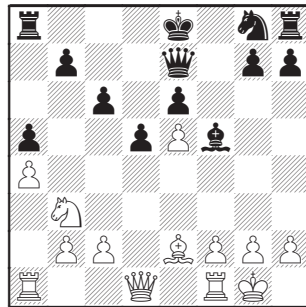
8...♗b6 8...fxe5 looks like a better option, as played by Eljanov previously. After 9.♗xe5 ♙d6 10.f4 ♗e7 the position is complex, with chances for both sides.

9.♗bd2 White completes development and is ready to play in the centre.

9...fxe5 9...♗xb2?! is very risky for Black. After 10.♗c1! White threatens both ♗h4 and c4. Black is seriously lagging in development while White is ready to open the game.

10.♗xe5 ♗xe5 11.dxe5 ♙c5 12.♙xc5 ♗xc5 Black seeks exchanges as a way to speed up his development, but they still don't solve the problem of his unsafe king.

13.♗b3 ♗e7



14.♙h5+! White invests two moves in order to further weaken the black king.

14...g6 15.♙e2 Forcing further weakening as now the threat is g4 and f3, to trap the bishop on f5.

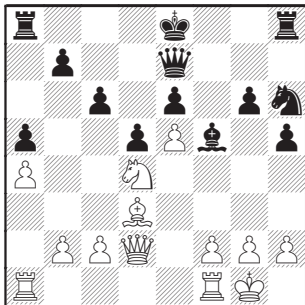
15...h5 16.♗d2 Targeting the pawn on a5. Notice how Adams doesn't allow a single move of respite.

16...♗c7 17.♙d3 By exchanging the bishop on f5, White opens the way to the pawns it defended.

17...♗h6?! 17...c5 was better, as it restricts the knight on b3. Perhaps Bartel didn't want to open a hole on b5. After 18.♙xf5 gxf5 19.♗c3 b6, 20.♗d4 threatens both ♗xe6 and ♗b5. 20...♗xe5 looks extremely risky for Black. The engine doesn't mind it at all as 21.♗xe6 ♗xc3 22.bxc3 ♗d7 23.♗f4 ♗f6 looks like a holdable endgame for Black.

18.♞d4 The knight reached the central destination. Now White threatens to take on f5 and then on e6.

18...♞e7



19.♖a3! A beautiful and efficient way to develop the rook.

19...♙xd3 20.♖xd3 ♞f5 Black wants to exchange the centralised knight. In spite of all these exchanges Black is not closer to solving the main problem in the position - that of his king.

21.♞xf5 It was also possible to keep the knights on the board by retreating to f3 or e2, but Adams doesn't want to waste time.

21...gx f5 22.c4 Seeking to open files and get closer to the black king.

22...♙f7? A brave idea à la Steinitz, who claimed that the king is fully capable of taking care of himself. Unfortunately, it doesn't work.

22...0-0-0 was much safer for the king, though the play remains sharp, for example: 23.♖c1 ♙b8 24.c5 (24.cxd5 ♖xd5 25.♖xd5 exd5 26.♞f4 ♖e8 is fine for Black.) 24...♖hg8 25.b4 axb4 26.f4 stopping ...♞g5 and, with ♞xb4 next, White has initiative on the queenside, but Black isn't without chances on the g-file.; 22...♞b4 was another good option for Black. 23.♞g5 with a safer king White should keep the queens

on board. 23...♞e7 24.♞e3 0-0-0 this looks scary as ♞a7 looms, but Black holds. 25.♖fd1 (25.♞a7?! doesn't work after 25...dxc4! 26.♞a8+ ♙c7 27.♞xa5+ ♙b8 is OK for Black, who controls the d-file now.) 25...♞b4 with unclear play.

23.cxd5 exd5 24.♖e1 ♙e6 This was Black's idea. The king as a blockading piece is not very common in the middlegame and here Adams proves why this is the case.

25.♖g3 Threatening ♖g6.

25...♞f7 26.b4! Nicely combining play on both wings, White opens the game and eventually gets to the blockading king.

26...h4 27.♖b3 f4 28.bxa5 ♖ag8 29.♞b4 Breaking through. The threat is ♞d6.

29...♖h7 29...♞e7 30.♞xf4 is also hopeless.

30.♞d6+ ♙f5 31.♖xb7! The concluding combinational finish.

31...♞xb7 32.♞f6+ ♙g4 33.♞e6+ ♙h5 34.♞xg8 An attack against a wandering king plus a passed e-pawn give White an easily winning position.

34...♖g7 35.♞f8 d4 36.e6 c5 37.♞xg7! The e-pawn will win the black queen, leaving White a full rook up.

1-0

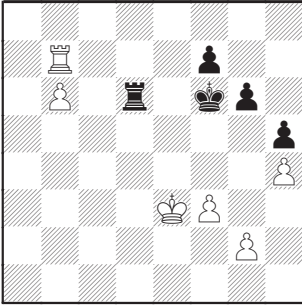
THE TENACITY OF SHREYAS ROYAL

Shreyas Royal won two games and displayed an enviable tenacity, something that could also be observed during the Grand Swiss at the Isle of Man.

In round two, he reached the following rook endgame against Tabatabaei.

Shreyas Royal – Amin M Tabatabaei

London Chess Classic (3)



44.g3 White is winning here - Black's rook attacking the pawn from the side is not as well placed as from behind because White can combine the threats of ♖b8 and b7 and approach with the king, which cannot be checked as the black rook is limited in its movement.

44...g5 Black wants to do something before he's suffocated.

44...♙e6 45.♙e4 ♙f6 is an attempt to do nothing, but after 46.♞b8 Black is in a zugzwang. He will either let the white king advance further, or will let White activate his rook. 46...♞d1 (46...♙e6? 47.b7 wins on the spot thanks to the threat of ♞e8.; 46...♙e7 47.♙e5 f6+ 48.♙e4 White threatens b7 and ♞h8. 48...♞d7 49.b7 ♙d6 is a clever attempt to hide from the check, but now the kingside pawns fall after 50.♙f4 ♙d5 51.♞f8 ♞xb7 52.♞xf6; 46...♙g7 47.♙e5 ♞c6 48.♙d5 ♞c3 49.♞a8 ♞b3 50.♙c5 is a simple win as Black has no counterplay on the kingside.) 47.♞c8 ♞b1 48.♞c6+ the rooks exchanged roles - now the black rook is behind the pawn and the white rook is on the side of it. 48...♙e7 49.♙d5 and White wins by approaching his passed pawn with the king.

45.♞b8! Royal spots a pretty tactic.

45...gxh4 46.♞h8! Thanks to the threat of ♞h6 White wins quickly.

46...♞e6+ 46...hgx3 47.b7 g2 48.♙f2 wins the rook for the b-pawn.

47.♙f4 hxg3 48.b7 The most forcing way, one that required some calculation.

48.♙xg3 was also winning, for example 48...♞e7 49.♞xh5 with ♞b5 next - when the stronger side can place the rook behind the pawn it is usually decisive.

48...g2 49.b8♞ g1♙ 50.♞d8+! Royal calculated everything precisely.

50...♞e7 51.♞h6+ ♞g6 52.♞d4+ ♙e6 53.♞b6+ ♙d5 After $\text{53...♙d5 54.♞xg6 fxg6 55.♞xg6}$ the win is elementary as the f-pawn will cost Black the rook.

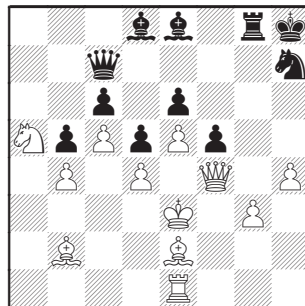
1-0

Smooth conversion thanks to some precise calculations.

The French player was a generous visitor. He was winning against Royal in round eight, but again, like against Adams, turned a winning position into a lost one.

Jules Moussard - Shreyas Royal

London Chess Classic (8)



The time control has passed and White is a pawn up with domination on both wings. However, Moussard played the careless:

41.♖d3? 41.♖f2! was better, keeping the pawn on g3 well-protected.

41...♗f6! A great resource for Black - suddenly the hopeless knight on h7 is transferred to the central e4-square.

42.♖g1 Black's move is possible because the knight cannot be taken: 42.exf6 ♖xg3+ wins White's queen.

42...♗e4 Black is not at all worse now. In fact, it is White who needs to be careful.

43.♖c2? Another king move and this time it's the decisive mistake.

43.♗c3 ♖h7 44.♗e1 bolsters the pawn on g3. With the knight on e4 Black doesn't risk losing, but that knight also prevents White from thinking about conversion of his extra pawn.

43...♖h7! A strong move that takes advantage of the vulnerable white king. Black now threatens ...♗xg3 and after the exchange of rooks when white's queen takes on g3 then the discovered check ...f4 will win material. Black also threatens the simpler ...♗xh4, thanks to the pin on the g-file.

44.♖b3 White's position was already beyond salvation.

44.♗c1 was an alternative, though White should still be lost after 44...♖xg3! 45.♖xg3 ♗xg3 46.♗d3 ♖xh4 47.♗b7, a curious voyage by the knight on the rim. 47...♖xf4 48.♗xf4 ♗h4 49.♗d6 ♗d7 50.♗f7+ ♖g7 51.♗g5 ♖g6 52.♗h3: from one rim to the other, with no remedy in sight after 52...♖h5 53.♗f2 ♗e4

44...♗xh4! 45.♗c3 ♗xg3 In only five moves White managed to lose both his

kingside pawns. An incredible turnaround! Royal was precise in the conversion and won in 68 moves.

0-1

Needing a draw in the last round against Adams, Royal kept his nerve, played a controlled game and achieved the draw without problems. It was a double win for the home players - Adams secured a tournament victory and Royal scored his second GM norm!

HANS NIEMANN BACK IN THE GAME

After scoring eight out of nine in Zagreb at the Tournament of Peace, Hans Niemann flew directly to London to play the Chess Classic. Speculations about his play in Zagreb were many, even coming from the organisers themselves!

Niemann started with three draws before beating Royal. A friendly draw with Tabatabaei followed this before he lost two games in a row.

Volokitin introduced a new plan in the Berlin endgame and outplayed the American in convincing fashion.

Andrei Volokitin - Hans Niemann

London Chess Classic (6)

1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.♗b5 ♗f6 The Berlin is the elite's main option when wanting to be solid.

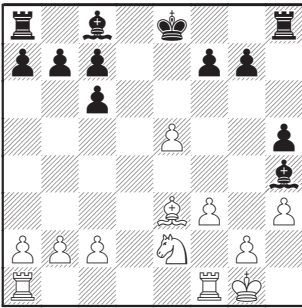
4.0-0 Not many players are willing to enter the endgame nowadays, but Volokitin is one of them.

4...♗xe4 5.d4 ♗d6 6.♗xc6 dxc6 7.dxe5 ♗f5 8.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 9.h3 ♗e7 The trendy line. Long time ago the knight maneuver ...♗e7-g6 was quite popular, while the

traditional main line starts with the move 9...h5 followed by ...e8. The third plan is to send the king to the queenside after 9...d7.

10. dxc3 d4 A very concrete approach by Black, seeking further exchanges while neglecting development. Modern theory confirms that Black can play like this.

11. d4xh4 e3xh4 12. e3e3 h5 13. de2 e8 14. f3!?



After the standard Berlin theory, Volokitin plays a rare move. So far in this position White usually played for f4, but Black is strong on the light squares, so Volokitin's idea to put his kingside pawns on light squares, to fight for their control, makes a lot of sense.

14... e7 Not a bad move, though Black could have activated the light-squared bishop immediately.

14...f5!? 15. d4 e7 kept the bishop on a more active diagonal. 16. g4 d8 17. f5 xf5 18. gxf5 f6! gives Black enough counterplay as 19. e6 is met by 19...g6! undermining White's advanced pawns.

15. g4! Now the bishop has no access to the f5-square and is quite limited. Niemann was likely hoping to break up the grip with his next move.

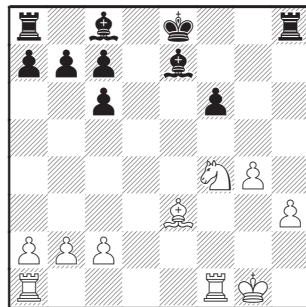
15...f5?! A typical thrust, but it works in White's favour here.

15...b6 was an alternative, to develop the bishop on a6 or on the long diagonal. 16. d4 (After 16. f5e1 e4 17. ed1 b7 18. d4 c5 19. g2 hxg4 20. hxg4 g5 Black has counterplay with the active bishops.) 16...hxg4 17. hxg4 (17. fxg4 as White took in the game, to keep the f-file open is possible, but Black now doesn't need to push ...f5. 17...e6 18. fd1 d8 and Black is fine.) 17...f5! now with the f-file closed this works well for Black. (17...e6 18. f5e1 d8 19. g2 is still more pleasant for White, who can push upwards on the kingside.) 18. exf6 e6xf6 19. eae1 f7 20. c3

16. exf6 gxf6 Black hopes for a second ...f5, but White will manage to keep the kingside under control.

16...xf6 was the more natural recapture, though it doesn't solve all problems. After 17. e4 hxg4 18. hxg4 e4+ 19. dxd4 f7 20. ad1 Black still suffers because of the passive bishop. 20...e7 21. db5!? ad8 22. dc3 with ideas like doubling on the d-file or de4, with unpleasant initiative for White.

17. d4 hxg4 18. fxg4!



Perhaps Niemann underestimated this recapture. Now the black king won't be entirely happy on the f-file, plus White has a passed pawn on the h-file.

18. hxg4?! f7 is fine for Black, as the king is safe now on the f-file.

18...f5? Consistent, but bad.

18...♔f7 was more restrained and better. 19.♞ae1 (19.♘h5 *this is not dangerous for Black because after 19...♙e6 20.♘xf6 ♙xf6 21.g5 ♞xh3 22.♞xf6+ ♔e7 White is too extended to keep control of the position.*) 19...♙d7 20.♔g2 c5 21.♘d5 ♙c6 22.c4 ♞ae8 is still a typical acceptable Berlin for Black.

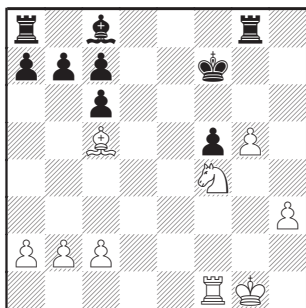
19.♞ae1! Now White's initiative is too strong. The position resembles more a middlegame where White is attacking Black's king.

19...♔f7 20.♙d4 ♞d8 21.♞xe7+ Beautiful, even if it allows Black to escape.

21.♙e5 was stronger. Black cannot really untangle and defend against the attack of all White's pieces.

21...♔xe7 22.♙c5+ ♔f7 23.g5 Play on domination.

23...♞g8?!



A strange move, forcing White what he wanted to play anyway.

23...b6 24.♙e3 ♙a6 was better, when Black isn't worse;

23...♞e8 with the idea of ...♞e4 was also better than the game move.

24.h4 Now White's kingside pawns are defended.

24...♙e6? The final mistake.

24...b6 Black had to get rid of the strong bishop. 25.♙e3 ♙a6 26.♞e1 ♞ae8 is still an unclear position.

25.♔f2 White is winning now as Black's pieces are stepping on each other's toes.

25...♞g6 A Petrosianesque passive exchange sacrifice, but White is not forced to take.

26.♞g1 Threatening h5.

26...♞ag8 27.♞e1 White is repeating moves to gain time.

27...♞e8 28.♞g1 ♞eg8 29.♙d4 The bishop is transferred to the e5-square.

29...♙d5 30.♙e5 b5 Black can only wait.

31.♙xc7 ♙e4 32.♞d1 White breaks through along the d-file.

32...♙xc2 33.♞d7+ ♔e8 34.♞d8+ ♔f7 35.♞d7+ ♔e8 36.♞d2 ♞g7 36...♙e4 37.♞d8+ ♔e7 38.♘xg6+ ♞xg6 39.♞a8 is winning as Black cannot both defend his queenside and maintain the blockade of the kingside pawns.

37.♙e5 ♞h7 38.♙f6 ♞f8 38...♞xh4 39.♞d8+ ♔f7 40.♞d7+ ♔e8 41.♞e7+ ♔f8 (41...♔d8 42.♞g7+ wins a rook.) 42.♘e6#.

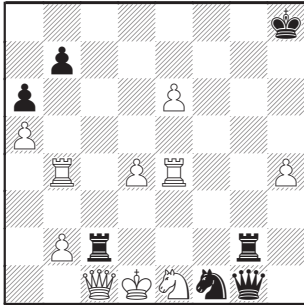
39.♞d8+ 39.♞d8+ ♔f7 40.g6+ ♔xf6 41.♞xf8+ ♔e7 42.gxh7 and the h-pawn promotes.

1-0

The next loss was spectacular.

Hans Niemann - Mateusz Bartel

London Chess Classic (7)



Bartel sacrificed a pawn as early as move 12 and mess reigned on the board ever since. Objectively White is winning, but in spite of having the time to think after the time control on move 40, Niemann missed the winning line.

44. ♖xc2? This misses the win and now Black has the better chances, though the game should be a draw.

44. ♖h6+! ♔g8 45. e7 was the fastest win, but White had to see that after 45... ♗g2+ 46. ♖xd2 ♗xd2+ 47. ♔c1 wins as the e-pawn promotes with check. The checks after 47... ♗d1+ end quickly: 48. ♔xd1 ♗e3+ 49. ♔d2 ♖f2+ 50. ♔c3 ♖xe1+ 51. ♔b3 ♖d1+ 52. ♔a2 the king hides and White will mate soon;

44. e7 was another winning move. 44... ♗xc1+ 45. ♔xc1 ♗g8 46. e8 ♖xe8 47. ♗xe8+ ♔g7 48. ♗xb7+ ♔f6 49. ♗f3 and White has a decisive material advantage, though it will take some time to finish the game.

44... ♗xc2 45. ♗xc2 ♗e3+ 46. ♔d2 ♖f2+ 47. ♔d3 ♗xc2 What a position! White's advanced passed pawns should ensure against a loss, but playing with a naked king against a queen and a knight makes White's task difficult.

48. d5? This is too much. White had to give up the other rook, but this was difficult to see.

48. ♗xb7! was correct. After 48... ♖f3+ 49. ♔d2! ♖xe4 50. e7! we reach a fantastic position where a rook and a pawn are holding against a queen and a knight! 50... ♖g2+ 51. ♔c1 ♖g8 52. ♔xc2 ♖c8+ 53. ♔b1 ♔g8 is the engine's preferred line, but White has a fortress after 54. ♗b3 by simply keeping the rook on the third rank and not caring about the pawns.

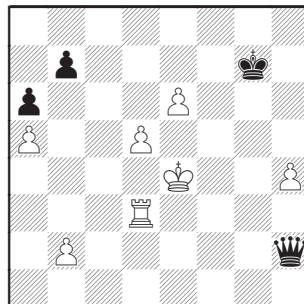
48... ♗xb4+ 49. ♗xb4 ♖c5?! 49... ♖f3+ 50. ♔c4 ♖f4+ 51. ♔c3 ♖c7+ 52. ♔d3 ♔g8 was more precise as Black brings the king to control the pawns. Now after 53. ♗d4 ♖g3+ 54. ♔c4 ♖e3! White cannot advance the d-pawn as the pawn on e6 falls with check.

50. ♗d4! Now the queen is forced to blockade the passed d-pawn.

50... ♖d6 51. ♔e4 ♔g7 The position is difficult to play for both sides. Objectively it should be a draw, but obviously White risks more here.

52. ♗d3? 52. h5! was correct, to distract Black's forces from the central pawns. 52... ♔f8 (if Black goes after the h-pawn then White draws after 52... ♔h6 53. ♔f3! ♔xh5 54. ♗e4 ♖e7 55. d6 ♖xd6 56. e7 and Black must give perpetual check.) 53. h6 ♖e7 54. ♔f5 and Black cannot make progress.

52... ♖h2!



Now Black picks up the h-pawn and keeps the central pawns under control.

53. ♖c3 53.d6 ♖e2+ 54. ♘d4 ♖xe6 55. ♘c3 ♖d7 is winning for Black, as the king will replace the queen in the blockading position.

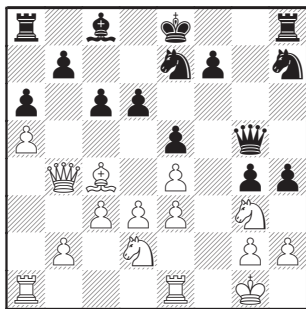
53... ♖xh4+ 54. ♘f5 ♖h5+ 55. ♘e4 ♖h4+ 56. ♘f5 ♖h2 Stopping ♖c7. Black went on to bring the king to e7 to blockade the passed pawns and used the queen's greater mobility to win White's queenside pawns. Bartel won in 75 moves.

0-1

Niemann only managed to come back to 50% after Gukesh blundered a pawn in the last round.

Hans Niemann - Gukesh D

London Chess Classic (9)



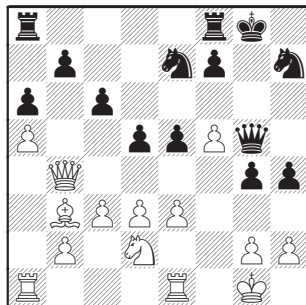
18. ♗f5 The first critical moment of the game. Black has a choice how to take on f5.

18... ♗xf5 It's likely that Gukesh was worried about the piece sacrifice on move 21 after the alternative capture with the knight.

18... ♗xf5 keeping the bishop alive was an alternative. After 19.exf5 d5 20. ♖d6 f6 21.e4!/? a sharp attempt to open the game,

leading to unclear play after (21. ♗b3 h3 22.g3 ♗xf5 is better for Black.) 21...dxc4 22. ♗xc4 h3 23.g3 ♖h6 intending ... ♖f8.

19.exf5 d5 20. ♗b3 0-0?



An uncharacteristic blunder for players of such caliber, simply missing a direct attack that cannot be parried.

20...0-0 was the correct castle, leaving the g8-square available for a rook.

21. ♖a4! The kingside pawns cannot be defended now.

21...g3 22. ♖xh4 ♖xh4 23. ♖xh4 gxh2+ 24. ♖xh2 f6 24... ♗xf5 25.e4 leads to loss of the e5-pawn after White takes exd5.

25.e4 White is a clear pawn up and won without problems.

25... ♖f7 26. ♗f3 ♖g7 27.d4! Opening the game and activating the light-squared bishop.

27...exd4 28. ♗xd4 ♗g5 29.exd5 ♗xd5 30. ♖h6 ♗f7 31. ♗f1 Moving away from possible tricks with ... ♗f3.

31... ♖ag8 32.c4 ♗c7 33.c5+ ♗d5 34. ♗xd5+ cxd5 35. ♗e6 White wins more material, so Black resigned.

1-0

The tournament was a great success for British chess. A winner and a GM norm for the young talent, who could have possibly imagined a better scenario? It's worth ending with a quote from the winner, famous for saying that the biggest accomplishment of his career was avoiding a real job: "It's huge, because to win any tournament at the age of 52 is just really amazing and this one is a completely different level to the other successes I had this year—in many ways it's probably my best ever result!"

LONDON CHESS CLASSIC 2023 – DEC 1, 2023 - DEC 11, 2023

Rk	Name	Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Pts
1	GM Michael Adams	2661		1	½	½	1	½	½	1	½	½	6
2	GM Amin Tabatabaei	2692	0		½	1	1	½	0	½	1	1	5.5
3	GM Gukesh Dommaraju	2720	½	½		1	1	0	½	0	½	1	5
4	GM Andrei Volokitin	2659	½	0	0		1	1	1	½	½	½	5
5	GM Mateusz Bartel	2659	0	0	0	0		1	1	1	½	1	4.5
6	GM Hans Moke Niemann	2667	½	½	1	0	0		1	½	½	½	4.5
7	GM Shreyas Royal	2438	½	1	½	0	0	0		1	½	½	4
8	GM Jules Moussard	2635	0	½	1	½	0	½	0		1	½	4
9	GM Nikita Vitiugov	2704	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	0		½	3.5
10	GM Luke McShane	2631	½	0	0	½	0	½	½	½	½		3





Photo: David Liada

FIDE ETHICS & DISCIPLINARY COMMISSION DELIVERS VERDICT IN CARLSEN/NIEMANN CASE, BUT DOUBTS REMAIN

In December the FIDE Ethics & Disciplinary Commission (EDC) announced their decision in the much-debated cheating case involving Magnus Carlsen and Hans Niemann

The case, stemming from events following the Sinquefield Cup in St Louis Missouri in 2022, has drawn significant attention both within the chess community and from international media.

The incident unfolded after Carlsen lost to Niemann in the third round of the 2022 Sinquefield Cup. Carlsen subsequently withdrew from the tournament. In their next encounter, in an online tournament, Carlsen abruptly resigned after one move, implying that he had been a victim of cheating by Niemann. Admitting to past online cheating as a teenager, Niemann vehemently denied cheating in over-the-board matches.

The FIDE President, Arkady Dvorkovich, instigated an investigation following Carlsen's allegations.

FIDE's Fair Play Commission conducted a detailed investigation and in the end

found no evidence supporting Carlsen's accusations against Niemann regarding over-the-board play.

The investigation involved analysis by IM Kenneth Regan, an advisor to FIDE on computer cheating. Regan's scrutiny of Niemann's games did not yield statistical evidence supporting cheating in over-the-board tournaments within the past three years. However, discrepancies emerged in Niemann's admission of online cheating as a teenager, indicating potential occurrences of cheating after he turned 17 and in rated online games.

Following the standard procedure, the report was referred to FIDE's Ethics and Disciplinary Commission (EDC) for a decision on possible sanctions.

The EDC, after a thorough examination, found Carlsen not guilty on three charges of (a) making manifestly unfounded accusations of cheating, (b) disparagement of FIDE's Reputation and Interest, and (c) attempting to undermine Niemann's honour. However, Carlsen was found guilty of withdrawing from the tournament

without a valid reason, leading to a fine of 10,000 euros. Carlsen has the right to appeal the decision within 21 days, but it seems he is satisfied with and prepared to accept the outcome.

The EDC emphasized that Carlsen's withdrawal, viewed as an act of "bad sportsmanship", failed to adhere to prescribed procedures for confidentially addressing concerns about fair play. As the then World Champion and highest-rated player, Carlsen's actions set a negative example, and hence the EDC imposed the fine.

The EDC highlighted that irrespective of the mode — online or over-the-board — cheating remains an assault on the sport's integrity and it rejected the notion that a distinction could be made between the two formats.

Despite apparently differing opinions on whether Carlsen's accusations harmed the reputation of chess, the EDC disagreed that they negatively impacted FIDE itself. Instead, it recognized the case's ability to generate heightened awareness about cheating in chess.

Following the EDC's decision, in an interview with a Toronto based TV station, the Norwegian said: "I am happy to be finished with the case...It's clear that there were worse scenarios," he added, saying he would have played more online had he been banned.

The EDC's verdict and the investigatory and disciplinary process serve as a notable instance underscoring the complexities of addressing accusations in high-stake competitions and upholding fair play in the realm of professional competitive chess. Let us highlight some of the implications of the affair:

- As a matter of governance, the EDC operates independently of the FIDE executive team. Its report notes that it had received a letter from the FIDE

president, Arkady Dvorkovich, in which he shared his views on the case

- The EDC's press release following its decision can be construed to suggest that Carlsen accused Niemann only after the American publicly said he cheated when he was younger, which is not the case. Niemann's confession came after Carlsen made his accusations
- The EDC decision might be seen as undermining the FPL investigation in that the EDC effectively decided to take no action against Carlsen for having made serious allegations without bringing forward supporting evidence
- FIDE and the EDC seem to have aligned themselves with the amicable settlement of the matter between the principal protagonists, Carlsen and Niemann (as reported in the September 2023 issue of BCM). However, in so doing there may be collateral damage as FIDE may be thought to be sending out some mixed messages, namely that "fair play" regulators can't actually catch anyone cheating, and that any strong international player can accuse anyone else of cheating with impunity and without providing hard evidence. It is interesting to note that Nakamura has recently been accused by Kramnik of cheating.

Be all that as it may, the good news is that the dispute between Carlsen and Niemann is finally over, not only as between themselves but also as regards possible sanctions by FIDE.

An important issue central to the integrity of chess has had a top level global airing with a blaze of publicity. Cheating in any sport can never be fully eliminated, but anyone minded to engage in shady practice when playing chess is now on notice that the world is watching more closely than ever.

Editor, BCM

CHESS: THE MIND'S MARTIAL ART



By Grandmaster Raymond Keene OBE

The geometry of Chess is beautiful. The artist Marcel Duchamp believed that: 'Every chess-player experiences a mixture of two aesthetic pleasures: firstly, the abstract image, linked with aesthetic ideas; secondly the rational pleasure of ideographically implementing this image on the chessboard. Not all artists may be chess-players, but all chess-players are artists.' Chess is a sensual as well as a 'purely mental' delight. A good chess set is a work of art. As you play and learn in this vibrant universe of black and white squares, you come to love the feel of the pieces in your hand, and to revel in the dramatic diagonal sweep of the bishop, the delightful leap of the knight, and the powerful thrust of the rook. For those given to reflection, chess offers a mirror to self-understanding.

Can you follow through when you have made a plan? How do you hold up under pressure? Are you impatient? Are you mentally lazy? Can you manage time? Do you play to win or to draw? Does fear of making mistakes prevent you trying something creative? Do you attend to details? Are you a gracious winner, a sore loser. As well as teaching you about your own strengths and weaknesses, chess can develop your ability to understand others. To succeed at chess, you must learn to think like your opponent, even if your opponent's style of thinking is very different from your own.

But chess is also a fight, a brutal fight. As I pointed out in a column last year, a resonance exists between martial arts and chess, both activities in which the

one can successfully challenge the many. I recall the amazement with which I first saw those cinematographic classics by Akira Kurosawa, where the heroic and seemingly octopus-armed Samurai warrior, portrayed by Toshiro Mifune, annihilates wave after wave of attacking hordes, consisting of swordsmen who are inferior to the master.

The parallel with chess is unmistakable. In our game, a master, or Grandmaster, can invite attack from multiple opponents simultaneously, yet still emerge victorious. My own record in this respect came in 1973, when, at the Dragon School Oxford, I took on 107 opponents at one and the same time. In three hours, I registered 101 wins, 5 draws and 1 loss, for a percentage of 96%.

Then in Mexico, some years later, I played against 19 opponents, a lesser number of assailants, but the difference was that on that occasion I had no sight of the board. This is known as blindfold chess or chess *à l'aveugle*. Others have far exceeded these feats, in terms of numbers, but even so, the principle is clear. As I observed last year, when first introducing this topic, in chess, as with Japanese dexterity in wielding the chosen blade of the Samurai, the katana, greater skill can outwit greater numbers.

As I also reported last year, early in October 2023, I encountered 20 opponents from the Brighton Chess Club, in an event expertly organised by Michael Gyure, to celebrate the club's new headquarters in Brighton's Queens Hotel.

This month I analyse what I consider to be the best game from that event and also draw attention to my book *Samurai Chess*, co-written with martial arts expert and all-around profound thinker, Michael Gelb. The main thrust of our argument is that both martial arts and chess can teach important life lessons, but that by playing chess, rather than exercising the katana, one stands less chance of being eviscerated.

In mid-17th century Japan, Miyamoto Musashi, the invincible Samurai warrior, wrote *Go Rin No Sho*, A Book of Five Rings, a penetrating analysis of victorious Samurai strategy. For over three centuries this martial arts masterpiece remained a Japanese secret, but in 1974 it was discovered by the West. Almost overnight, the new translation sold more than 120,000 copies in hardback, catapulted to best-seller status in paperback and drew lavish praise from leading newspapers around the world. *Time Magazine* wrote: 'On Wall Street, when Musashi talks, people listen.' *The New York Times* added that Musashi's strategy was 'suddenly a hot issue on Wall Street'.

Musashi's central message is one of 'wider application', of 'transferability'. Achieving mastery in one discipline arms you with the weapon to transfer those skills to all other areas of life. Although on the surface Musashi's book is specifically a guide to Samurai swordsmanship, at deeper levels it provides a blueprint for strategy, decision and action in the home, on the battlefield, in the corporate boardroom - in fact, wherever you choose to apply it. Musashi summarised its essence thus, stating and re-stating his theme throughout the book: 'From one thing, know ten thousand things. When you attain the Way of strategy there will not be one thing you cannot see If you know the Way broadly you will see it in everything.'

In spite of its undoubted brilliance, Musashi's book has two drawbacks for a modern audience. First, Musashi frequently expresses himself in obscure and impenetrable Zen terminology. Secondly, the 21st century reader will find it difficult, if not impossible, to participate at any meaningful level in Musashi's prime metaphor, that of Samurai swordsmanship, when with a real blade you face an opponent whom you must kill before he kills you. We are not likely to wield a Samurai sword in a life or death situation. Samurai swordsmanship will always remain beyond most people's personal experience.

Accordingly, in my book with Michael Gelb, we consider the easy-to-learn game of chess, already well established as an important thinking and business metaphor. Our text re-interprets and updates Musashi's martial arts message, and extends it through a new dimension, a martial art of the mind. The phrase martial art was, in fact, first used in English in Alexander Pope's 18th century translation of Homer's Iliad.

In its various manifestations (Western, Japanese and Chinese) chess is the world's most popular mind sport, with well over 600 million devotees (YouGov stats). Chess is also at the cutting edge of the quest for artificial intelligence. Six times World Champion Garry Kasparov, for example, twice faced off in matches against IBM's Deep Blue super-computer with million-dollar prize funds were at stake. Now the Deep Mind company of Demis Hassabis CBE, originator of AlphaZero, has attained a £400 million price tag when acquired by Google. Most importantly, though, chess offers the experience of real victory, without killing, and the parallel experience of real defeat, without having to die. Playing chess, you face pressure of time, you must assess risk accurately, and you must think globally and locally: in other words, it is all down to you. You truly win or you truly lose.

There are no accidental or chance results in chess. The ethos of entitlement and the syndrome of blaming others for setbacks are both alien to the game. Indeed, it is the qualities of personal enterprise and self-reliance that distinguish chess. The chess-player should not blindly accept the pronouncements of authority. Thinking for yourself is what counts. At the chessboard, real situations beckon and, as Musashi would have put it, in mastering chess, you master in microcosm all forms of combat and strategy, for any application you may choose. In my personal view, chess is the ultimate Right-wing game!

‘If chess were a game only, chess would never have survived the serious trials to which it has, during the long time of its existence, been often subjected. By some ardent enthusiasts chess has been elevated into a science or an art. It is neither; but its principal characteristic seems to be - what human nature mostly delights in - a fight. Not a fight, indeed, such as would tickle the nerves of coarser natures, where blood flows and the blows delivered leave their visible traces on the bodies of the combatants, but a fight in which the scientific, the artistic, the purely intellectual element holds undivided sway.’
- Emanuel Lasker, *World Chess Champion 1894 to 1921*

Chess is open to everyone, regardless of age, gender, physical or economic status, and offers many specific and profound benefits.

International Grandmasters can play many opponents simultaneously and remember all the moves from each game. They were not born with this skill: they developed it through intense practice and concentration. Memory is the cornerstone of intelligence and the database for creative thinking. All creative thinking is the result of new combinations of recalled ideas. As you learn chess openings and basic patterns of play you begin to flex and strengthen your memory muscles. I have, for example, as noted above, challenged 107 opponents placed in a giant square around me, at Oxford 1973, and in three hours lost just one game, winning 101 and drawing 5. After the display I could remember all the moves of every single game. According to Leonardo da Vinci, ‘Iron rusts from disuse, water that does not flow becomes stagnant, so it is with the human mind.’ Much of what passes for mental decline with age results from ‘disuse’. Research has shown that individuals who regularly play mental sports are less susceptible to Alzheimer's and other diseases

associated with advancing years. Chess keeps your mind agile, strong and clear as you get older.

'Life is like a game of chess: we draw up a plan; this plan, however, is conditional on what - in chess, our opponent - in life, our fate - will choose to do.' - Arthur Schopenhauer, Parerga and Paralipomena, 1851

In many areas of life, one can get by with waffling, finger-pointing and obfuscation, but not on the chessboard. Chess is a game of decision-making. The root of the word 'decide' means 'to kill the alternatives'. In chess, you must decide on a move in a given time, make it, and be prepared to live with the consequences. As World Champion Emanuel Lasker commented, 'On the chessboard, lies and hypocrisy do not survive long.' Asked what use chess was to him, the German philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz replied that it provided 'practice in the ability to think and innovate. Wherever we have to make use of reason, we need an elaborate method to reach our goals. And moreover: a person's resourcefulness is most apparent when playing.' Innovation and 'resourcefulness' are even more important today. The ability to analyse a problem, plan its solution, and then carry out that plan is life's most important skill. Chess hones this ability in a unique and dramatically effective fashion.

'Improvement of... endeavour, the prevention of idleness, and the training of far-sighted, logical mental enjoyment.'

Jacobus de Cessolis writing in about 1300 about the invention of chess. De Cessolis was a Dominican monk who employed chess allegories in his sermons. 'Arabian texts of the 10th century AD not only praised the beauty of chess, the authors of the period also recommended chess as an educational aid in the development of logical thinking. They further held the opinion that chess could lead to an

insight into things to come, could enhance friendships, and also protect against loneliness. The Arabs became enthusiastic players and all classes of society were enchanted by the game. Even the Caliphs played and were very generous to the masters, the best of whom was As-Suli, showering them with gold and gifts. As-Suli's fame was so great that he was later credited with having invented the game. Almost 300 years later it was still considered a great honour for a master to be likened to As-Suli.' - Finkenzeller, Ziehr and Buhner, *Chess: a Celebration of 2000 Years*

Ask any top head-hunter what kind of person they seek to hire for senior management positions. They will tell you that, besides the basics of strong analytical and decision-making skills, they need people with superior strategic-thinking abilities who are willing to be accountable for their actions: people with insight into others, who can plan and act under pressure, especially in the face of uncertainty. There is no better way to develop these abilities than through chess and other mind sports. Indeed, a background in chess may prove better preparation for business success than even an MBA or a PhD. In 1990 Bankers Trust, a leading US financial institution, ran advertisements in *Chess Life*, the world's widest-read chess magazine, seeking talent for its trading division. The advertisements generated over a thousand resumé's; the bank interviewed a hundred respondents and hired five, two of them chess grandmasters, the other three international masters. During World War Two the British Government code breaking centre at Bletchley Park hired all the strongest UK chess masters. One of them, two times British Chess Champion, C.H.O'D. (Hugh) Alexander, was portrayed prominently in *The Imitation Game*, the Turing-centric film about the breaking of the Nazi codes.

One of the gurus behind the Bankers Trust programme was international chess master

Norman Weinstein, who became the bank's top foreign exchange trader, before moving on to Odyssey Partners. Weinstein attributes his success to his chess background. In an interview in 1994 with *Forbes*, Weinstein emphasised:

"In chess, you learn to plan variations of play, to make a decision tree. One thing I find myself better in than most people is developing a strategy and implementing it. I'll say, 'If he does this, we'll do that,' whereas many very, very bright people will talk in generalities."

As an example Weinstein discussed his approach to analysing the possible break-up of the European monetary system:

"To make a play on this involved shorting a number of currencies, which is very expensive to do. So I ... did a poll of traders and economists, asked them to guess the probabilities of a break-up, and ran these through the risk-return analysis. The results made it clear that it would be profitable to keep on shorting the market, despite the day-to-day losses. It paid off in about one month."

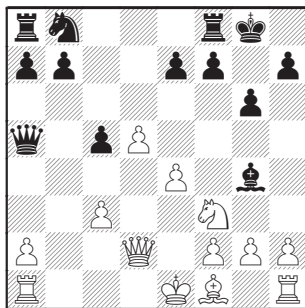
Raymond Keene - Paul Edwards

Simultaneous display vs Brighton Chess Club (x20)

1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♗f3 ♕g7 5.cxd5 ♗xd5 6.♕d2 0-0 More accurate would have been Bobby Fischer's choice, immediately challenging White's centre with ...c5. As played, White completes his plan, preserving his centre and trading off Black's important dark-squared bishop.

7.e4 ♗xc3 8.♕xc3 c5 9.d5 ♕xc3+ 10.bxc3 ♖a5 A misdirected move, although known to theory. Now is the time for, 10...♕g4 (while the queen can still be pinned down on d1) with the speculative 11.h3 ♕xf3 12.♖xf3 f5!?, or even, 10...e6 11. d6 ♕d7 12.♖d2 ♕c6.

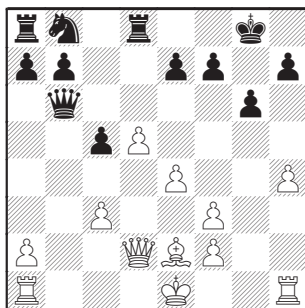
11.♖d2 ♕g4 A deviation from known theory. Although superficially similar to the previous note, here, in comparison, the black queen is misplaced.



Theory mentions 11...e6, ...♗d7, ...b5, ...♖d8; all of which the analysis engine regards as superior to the text. In particular, the engine views 11...e6 12. c4 ♖xd2+ 13.♗xd2 b6 14.♕d3 ♖d8 as perhaps the best line for Black, although it is clear that, even so, White enjoys considerably greater control of terrain in the position, as he does with, 11...♗d7 12.a4 ♖b8 13.♕d3 b5 O-O bxa4 15.h4 ♕a6 16.♕xa6 ♖xa6 17.h5; well worth the pawn.

12.♕e2 ♕xf3 13.gxf3 ♖d8 A distinct mistake. Black would have done better to try 13...♗d7 14.♖b1 ♖ab8 15. O-O b5.

14.h4 ♖b6?



Black cannot afford to waste time with his queen. His plan is to rush his

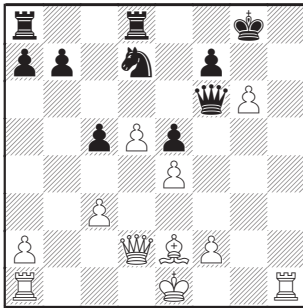
most powerful piece to the defence of his king, but the best way to constrain White's advantage is with either a) 14... h5 15. ♖b1 ♘d7 16. c4 ♗a6 17. f4 b5 18. ♙xb5 ♜db8 19. ♖b3 ♙xb3 20. axb3 Qa1+ 21. ♔d1 a5; or b) 14... ♘c6 15. h5 e6 16. hxg6 fxg6 17. ♔f1 exd5 18. exd5 ♗c7 19. ♗g5 ♔e5 20. f4 ♘f7, when White enjoys a small but important advantage in both cases.

15. h5 ♗f6 Slightly better was 15... ♘d7 16. hxg6 fxg6 17. f4 ♔h8 18. O-O-O ♖g8 19. ♔g4 ♘f8 20. e5 ♖b8.

16. f4 e5 17. hxg6 hxg6 Necessary was 17... fxg6 to limit the damage; but the damage is already considerable.

18. f5 It was a hard choice between the text move and 18. fxe5 ♗xe5 19. ♔d3 when Black can choose from a wide range of moves, none of which significantly advances his cause, e.g. 19... b5 20. f4 ♗g7 O-O-O b4 22. e5 bxc3 23. ♗xc3.

18... ♘d7 19. fxg6

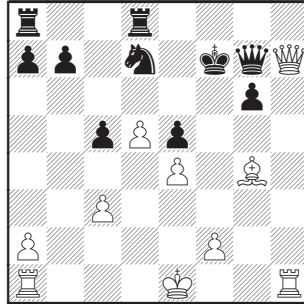


Even stronger was 19. O-O-O b5 (19... ♘b6 20. Rdg1 Rd6 21. ♖h3 a6 22. ♗h6 ♗g7 23. ♗h4 ♔f8 24. f4 ♖e8 25. ♗h8+ ♗xh8 26. ♖xh8+ ♔e7) 20. ♖dg1 c4 21. ♗h6 ♗g7 22. fxg6 ♗xh6+ 23. ♖xh6 ♘f6 24. g7 ♘h7 25. d6 f6 26. f4, when White is clearly winning.

19... fxg6 20. ♗h6 Slightly dropping the ball. White develops clear winning

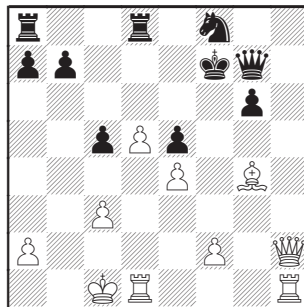
chances after 20. d6! ♘b6 21. O-O-O ♔g7 22. ♗h6+ ♔f7 23. ♗h7+ ♗g7 24. ♖h3 ♗xh7 25. ♖xh7+ ♔f6 26. d7 ♖f8 27. ♖d6+.

20... ♔f7 21. ♗h7+ ♗g7 22. ♔g4



22... ♘f8 A natural defence, but mistaken. Black essentially equalises after 22... ♖h8 23. ♔e6+ ♔f6 24. ♗xg7+ ♔xg7 25. ♔e2 ♘b6 26. ♖hg1 ♘c4 27. ♖g5 ♔f6. The cunning saving resource is 22... ♖h8 23 ♗xg7+ ♔xg7 24. ♖xh8 ♖xh8 since 25. ♔xd7 fails to ♖h1+. With the chosen move Black may have thought that he was repelling boarders, but White's riposte, hard to find, is murderous.

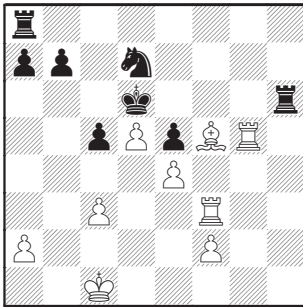
23. ♗h2 ♘d7 24. O-O-O ♘f8?



Repeating his error. Black tips the game back into an inexorable spiral of defeat. However, even after best play, Black is probably a goner. The last chance in the

last chance saloon was 24...♖h8 25.♗g3 ♖xh1 (25...♗b6 26.f4 ♖xh1 27.♖xh1 ♖h8 28.♙e6+ ♗f8 29.♖f1 ♗e8 30.f5 ♗h6+ 31.♗b1 ♗c4 32.♗xg6+; 25...♖ad8 26.♖xh8 ♗xh8 27.♙e6+ ♗e7 28.♗xg6 ♗f6 29.♖g1 ♗xf2 30. d6+) 26.♖xh1 ♗f8 27.f4 exf4 28.♗xf4+ ♗f6 29.♖f1 ♗xf4+ 30.♖xf4+ ♗e8 31.e5 ♖d8 32.d6... Black is going nowhere.

25.♖d3 ♖d6 26.♖f3+ ♗e7 27.♗h4+ g5 28.♗h5 ♖f6 29.♙f5 ♗d7 30.♖g1 ♗h6 31.♗xh6 ♖xh6 32.♖xg5 ♗d6



Logic dictates that there must always be one final step too far - and this is that. Black was postponing the inevitable a little longer with either a) 32...♖d8 33.♙xd7 ♖xd7 34.♖xe5+ ♗d6 35.♖ff5 ♖h1+ 36.♗c2 ♗c7; or b) 32...♗b6 33.♖g7+ ♗d6 34.♖xb7 ♖e8 35.♖xa7 ♖a8 36.♖xa8 ♖xa8 37.♗d2 ♗b6.

33.♖g7

Black resigns 1-0

Wholly sufficient for the win, yet arguably more elegant, was 33.♙xd7 c4 (33...♗xd7 34.♖g7+ 35.♗e8 35.♖g8+ ♗e7 36.♖xa8) 34.♖f7!! when Black is floundering to find any kind of defence against White's various threats.

VERICA NEDELJKOVIĆ, 1929–2023: SERBIAN GRANDMASTER WHO RATTLED SOVIET WOMEN'S CHESS DOMINANCE

Verica Nedeljković (94), the world's oldest woman Grandmaster and a respected academic, passed away on December 13, 2023, in Belgrade

Born Verica Jovanović-Tošović on September 16, 1929, in Pridvorica near Chacak (Čačak) in central Serbia, she will be remembered for her achievements both on and off the chess board.

An exceptional student, Nedeljkovic pursued mechanical engineering at the University of Belgrade, graduating in 1955 as Yugoslavia's first female shipbuilding engineer. Her remarkable career in academia paralleled her achievements in chess, where she excelled as a player and later as a lecturer at the University of Belgrade.

Her passion for chess developed during her schooling days in Čačak, where she first learned the game. Moving to Belgrade in 1948 for further studies, she joined "Red Star" ("Crvena Zvezda"), a club that became an integral part of her life's chess journey.

Nedeljković's ascent in the chess world was marked by numerous historic milestones. She won the title of National Master in 1950 (after winning the Yugoslav championship for women, in Skopje), and later the title of International Master (after winning

the Zonal tournament in Herceg Novi, in 1954). She became a Grandmaster in 1977, after taking second place at the Women's Candidates in Plovdiv (Bulgaria). Her result in Plovdiv was the biggest success of Yugoslav women's chess until Milunka Lazarevic and Alisa Maric.

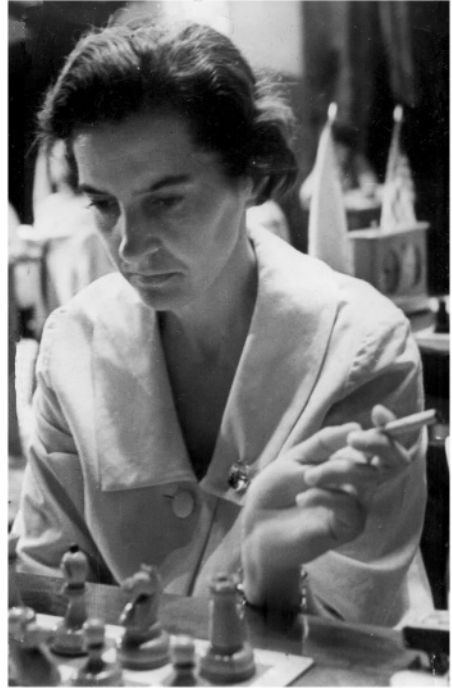
Throughout her illustrious career, Nedeljković amassed an impressive array of championships and honors, including - being a six-time women's champion of Yugoslavia, winner of four Western-European Zonal tournaments and had five consecutive appearances at the Women's Candidates(!) - from 1955 to 1967.

In her active years spanning from the 1950s to the early 1970s, Nedeljković became the first to put into question the almost unchallenged dominance of Soviet women in chess. Notably, she maintained even scores against World Champions Elisaveta Bykova (1.5:1.5) and Nona Gaprindashvili (3.5:3.5) and a lead against Olga Rubtsova (1.5:0.5).

Her contributions extended beyond individual achievements. Nedeljković played an integral role in Yugoslavia's Olympic success in women's chess, securing a silver medal at the Split Olympiad in 1963. Her remarkable performance, winning all 12 games played, remains an unparalleled feat in the annals of women's chess. She also played second board at the 1963 Olympiad in Oberhausen (Germany).

Outside the chess arena, Nedeljković pursued a distinguished academic career at the University of Belgrade, contributing significantly to the Department of Material Resistance at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering. Her published works and co-authored scientific research papers stand as enduring testaments to her scholarly contributions.

Nedeljković's accomplishments were duly recognized with an array of honors



and awards, underscoring her immense impact on Yugoslav and Serbian sports. Notably, she received the "National Sports Award" from the Government of the Republic of Serbia in 2007, cementing her enduring legacy.

She was married to the renowned Yugoslav International chess master Srećko Nedeljković (who passed away in 2011). Their joint dedication to chess was evident in their support for the sport, sponsoring tournaments and nurturing young talents.

Verica Nedeljković's legacy remains engraved in the history of chess, academia, and sports in the former Yugoslavia. Her impact on the world of chess, coupled with her groundbreaking contributions to academia, ensures that her memory will endure as an inspiration for generations to come.

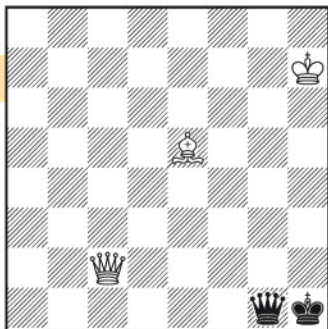
Milan Dinic

Endgame Studies

by Ian Watson

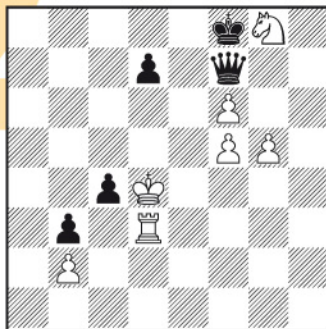
ian@irwatson.uk

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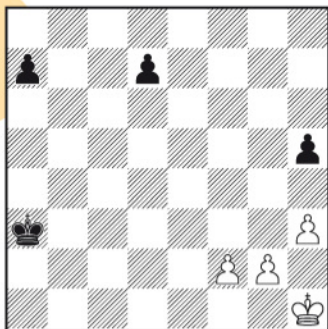
J Vancura
28 Rijen 1924
WIN

2



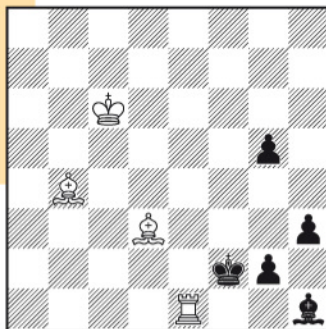
M Klyatskin
Izvestia 1924
WIN

3



P Byway
Tidskrift for Schack 1994
WIN

4



P Michelet
Original composition (after J Behting) 2024
WIN

LANG SYNE AND NOW

Long since and today. Two studies from a hundred years ago, and two from our current generation of composers.

Vancura died in 1921, but his notebooks outlived him and some of his works were published several years after his death. He was only 23 years old when he died, but somehow created 60 compositions in his short time. He was an excellent analyst - this study was easy for me to check today with databases but imagine looking at all the alternative queen moves without electronic aids. Then imagine trying to find a sound position among the plethora of possible positions that have KQB/KQ.

I hadn't heard of Mikhail Klyatskin before I found this study, but he must have been a strong otb player. He took part in the Moscow Championship of 1921, and a game he played against the winner Grigoriev is on players.chessbase.com. That Grigoriev was the great composer of pawn endgames. Klyatskin was another strong composer who died far too early; he was 30.

The third study is by one of our regular contributors to this column, Paul Byway. It's from 1994 but features in an endgame study book by John Beasley that has just been published, and also has a link back in time. Paul derived this study from one by the same Grigoriev. It joins today to long since.

The final study is by our other most frequent contributor, Paul Michelet. It too is a development from an early study, by Behting; Paul has added a fine front end to an already attractive endgame. Thus, our composers of the 21st century pay tribute to their great predecessors.

The solutions are on page 63.

QUOTES AND QUERIES

THE LABYRINTH OF NAMING CHESS OPENINGS

By Alan Smith

6247 The naming of chess openings is not a science. One player's Ruy Lopez is another player's Spanish. The labyrinth of IQP positions encompasses variations of the Queen's Gambit Declined, Nimzo-Indian, Sicilian and Caro-Kann.

I remember reading *Informator 7* and being puzzled by a Petroff Defence lumped in with the French Defences. Of course, the sequence 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♗xe5 d6 4.♗f3 ♗xe4 5.d3 ♗f6 6.d4 d5 transposes into an Exchange French Defence.

Another example is 1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 d6 3.d4 exd4 4.♖xd4 ♗c6 5.♙b5 with a position which can arise from both the Philidor and the Ruy Lopez.

6248 The Trompowsky is named after the Brazilian amateur Octavio Trompowsky who played the opening for over a decade, but the opening is older than that.

Efim Bogoljubow - Samuil Wainstein

Triberg 1916

1.d4 ♗f6 2.♙g5 e6 3.e4 White could also try 3.♗d2, while 3.♗f3 would transpose into what we now know as the Torre Attack.

3...h6 4.♙xf6 ♖xf6 5.♗c3 5.♗f3 is a Torre Attack.

5...♙b4 5...d6 6.♖d2 g5 was played in Anand - Karpov mg6 Geneva 1998.

6.♗f3 6.♖d2 is also viable.

6...d5 7.♙d3 c5 8.0-0 cxd4? 8...c4 is better 9.♙e2 ♙xc3 10.bxc3 with an unbalanced position.

9.♗b5 ♗a6 10.a3 ♙c5 11.b4 dxe4 11...♙b6 12.exd5

12.♙xe4 ♙e7 13.♖e2! 0-0 13...e5? 14.♗xe5 ♖xe5?? 15.♙c6+ bxc6 16.♖xe5 cxb5 17.♗fe1 ♙e6 18.♖xb5+

14.♖ad1 ♗fd8 15.♗e5 ♙d6 16.f4 ♗c7 17.♖xd4! ♗xb5 18.♖xb5 ♙c7 18...♙xe5 19.fxe5 ♖g5 20.♗fd1

19.♗fd1 ♖e7 20.♖xd8+ ♙xd8 Not the best example of the bishop pair.

21.c4 a5 21...a6 22.c5 axb4 23.c6 ♖a7 24.axb4 f6 24...♙c7 25.♗g6 ♖c7 26.cxb7 ♖b6+ 27.♗h1 1-0 27...♖xb5 loses on the spot to 28.♖d8+.

Het Volk, 30th March 1918

This line of the Trompowsky is a lot like a French Defence, which is all very well, if Black understands the imperatives of that defence.

6249 There is another branch to the Trompowsky, 1.d4 d5 2.♙g5, pinning the ghost of the black knight. This line was investigated by a couple of players, without success. White's first win was the following game.

Fred Brown - Ernest Jones Bateman

Bath, 1900

1.d4 d5 2.♙g5 ♙f5 Brown - Atkins Bath 1900 varied with 2...c5 3.dxc5 f6 4.♙e3 e5 5.c3 a5 6.g3 ♗c6 7.♙g2 ♗ge7

3.♗d2 ♗f6 4.♗g3 h6 5.♙h4 ♗c6 6.c3 ♖d7 7.e3 g5 8.♙g3 g4 9.♗e5 ♗xe5



10. ♖xe5 ♗g8 11.c4 c6 12.cxd5 ♖xd5
 13. ♖g1 ♗e4 14. ♖c4 ♗a5 15. ♖e2 ♖xd2+
 16. ♖xd2 ♗xd2 17. ♗xd2 e6 18. ♖ac1
 ♗b4+ 19. ♖e2 ♗e7 20.a3 ♗d6 21. ♖xd6+
 ♗xd6 22. ♗d1 ♗g5 23. ♗d3 ♖xd3+
 24. ♖xd3 ♗h5 Both players press during
 the double rook endgame. White takes
 better care of his king.

25. ♖h1 ♗g8 26.e4 f5 27.e5+ ♗d5 28.g3
 ♗e4 29. ♗d2 f4 30. ♖e1+ ♗d5 30... ♗f5
 is much better. 31. ♖c3 ♗xd4 32.b4 ♖xh2
 33. ♖d3+ ♗c4 34. ♖e4+ ♗b5 35. ♖xf4 ♗h5
 36. ♖f7 b6 37. ♖xa7 ♖xe5 38. ♗c3! 38...c5
 39.a4+ ♗c6 40.b5#.

1-0

Nottinghamshire Guardian,
 13th October 1900

Levitzky and Roland Scott were both fans
 of the line, which can transpose into the
 1.d4 ♗f6 2. ♖g5 line after 2...d5.

6250 The Trompowsky was not a
 mainstream opening for some time.
 Hort and Vaganian experimented with
 it and Bill Hartston wrote a survey of
 the theory for the BCM. Julian Hodgson
 enriched the opening with some fresh
 ideas, of which the following is a good
 example.

Julian Hodgson - Mark Hebden
 Lloyd's Bank, 1986

1.d4 ♗f6 2. ♖g5 ♗e4 3.h4!? White is
 happy to concede the bishop pair for a half
 open h-file.

3...d5 3...c5 4.dxc5 ♖a5+ 5. ♗d2 ♗xg5
 6.hxg5 g6 is all very logical, white's
 next two moves take a leap into fantasy,
 7. ♖h4! ♗c6 8. ♖c4!? Hodgson - Pein
 Lloyds Bank 1990.

4. ♗d2 ♗xg5 4... ♗xd2 5. ♖xd2 e5 6.dxe5
 ♗c6 7. ♖g5 ♖e7 8. ♗f3 ♖g4 9. ♖d2 ♖d7

10.0-0-0 was a 1992 game between the same players.

5.hxg5 e5 6.dxe5 ♖xg5 7.♗gf3 ♖d8 8.e4 ♗c6 8...dxe4 9.♗xe4 ♖xd1+ 10.♖xd1 does not blunt White's edge eg **10...♗f5 11.♗d3 ♗g6 12.e6!**

9.exd5 ♖xd5 10.♗c4 ♖c5 11.♖e2 ♗f5 12.♗b3 ♖e7 13.0-0-0 ♗d7 14.e6! A speculative pawn sacrifice which disrupts Black's position.

14...fxe6 14...♗xe6 15.♗xe6 ♖xe6? 16.♖b5!, 15...fxe6 16.♖h4!

15.♖xd7! ♗xd7 15...♖xd7 allows **16.♗g5 ♗d8 17.♗xh7.**

16.♗b5 ♗e8 17.♗bd4 ♖d8 17...♖c8 avoids material loss, but otherwise does not help.

18.♗xc6+ bxc6 19.♗xc6 ♖f6 20.♗xd8 ♗xd8 21.♖b5 The dust has settled and it is clear Black is struggling.

21...♖f4+ 22.♗b1 ♖d6 23.♗g5 ♖d7 24.♖b8+ ♗e7 25.♖xa7 A little insurance: White should win, even if Black makes it to the endgame.

25...h6 26.♖a3+ ♗f6 26...♗e8 27.♖f3! and Black's h-pawn is still pinned.

27.♗e4+ ♗f7 28.♖f3+ ♗g8 29.♖d1 ♖e8 30.♖g3 ♖f7 31.♖d7! ♖f5 32.f3 c5 33.a4 h5 34.♗d6 ♖d5 35.♗e8!

1-0

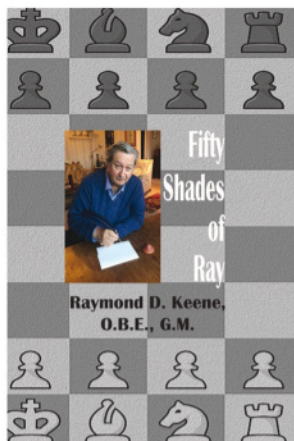
Gloucester Citizen,
15th November 1986

White's energetic play denied Mark Hebden time to untangle. That doesn't happen every day.

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Chess in the year of the Coronavirus Pandemic
With an Introduction by CJ de Mooi

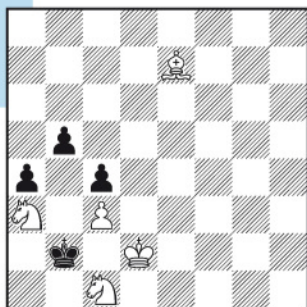
PROBLEM WORLD

by Christopher Jones

cjajones1@yahoo.co.uk

Grandmaster of Chess Composition

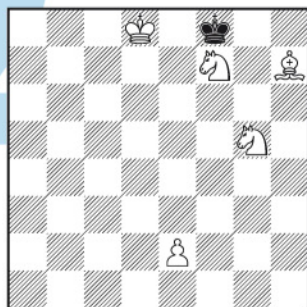
Solutions are given on page 62



Steven B. Dowd (USA)

Mate in 4

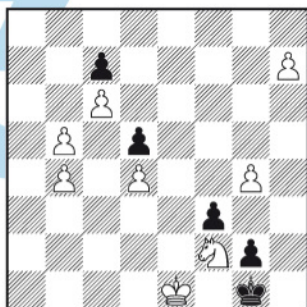
ORIGINAL



Paul Michelet (London)

Mate in 5

ORIGINAL



Paul Michelet (London)

Mate in 9

ORIGINAL



Stanislav Hudak (Slovakia)

Helpmate in 3 - 2 solutions

ORIGINAL

Openings

for Amateurs By Pete Tamburro; ptamburro@aol.com

SOME EQUALITIES ARE LESS EQUAL THAN OTHERS

By Pete Tamburro; ptamburro@aol.com

We've seen how symmetrical positions can't even be trusted to be equal, thanks to the game by Reshevsky we looked at. Now, we offer an old Exchange Variation of the Ruy Lopez (yawn...) in the hands of Capablanca. He makes it look so simple (now that's interesting...) that you almost want to play it all the time. You might be saying to yourself that you're no Capa with rook and pawn endings, but you owe it to yourself to study how one central theme is carried from the opening to the middle game to the ending. This will be of great help no matter what opening you play. I ran across this game in an old BCM volume (1913) and went looking to see if Golombek had included it (no) or Chernev had put it in his magnificent Capablanca's Best Chess Endings (yes!). Chernev's key points will be included in the notes.

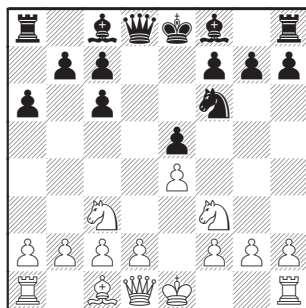
**José Raúl Capablanca -
David Janowski**

New York (3), 1913

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c3 ♗f6 4.♙b5 Yes, it starts out as a Four Knights, and there is a lesson here in the notes for beginners whose chess teachers - like me - start them out with that opening.

4...a6?! This may be a Ruy Lopez reflex action by Black, but, because the knight is already on c3, you don't get those same a6 benefits as in the Ruy.

5.♙xc6 dxc6



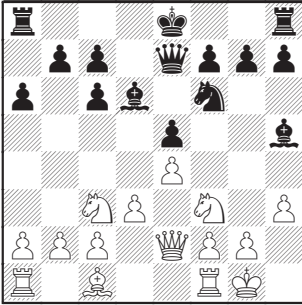
6.0-0 Objectively best, and what students should know is 6.♗xe5 ♗xe4 7.♗xe4 ♔d4 8.0-0 ♗xe5 9.d4 ♗f5 and now Chernev quotes a famous game, Znosko-Borovsky vs. Rubinstein, with Rubinstein having a really bad day. (*Better is 9...♗d5! 10.♗e1 ♙e6 11.♙g5 ♙d6 12.b3 b5 13.♖c1 b4 14.♗f3 0-0 15.♗xd6 ♗xd6 16.c3 bxc3 17.♗xc3 and Black's queenside pawns will be a liability, but White will have to work hard.*) 10.♗e1 ♙e6 11.♙g5 ♙d6 12.g4 ♗g6 13.f4 f5 14.♗xd6+ cxd6 15.d5+-

6...♙g4 This inhibits d4, but it's possible Capablanca didn't have that in mind.

7.h3 ♙h5 The well-known h5 idea doesn't work here: 7...h5 8.hxg4 hxg4 9.♗xe5 ♗d7 10.♗xg4 (or even 10.♗xf7) .

8.♗e2 ♙d6 An idea from Black in theory would be 8...♗d7 9.d3 f6 and that would have been quite playable.

9.d3 ♗e7?

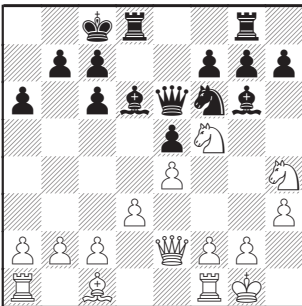


10. ♖d1 And this is why the queen move to e7 wasn't as good. The knight will make its way to f5, forcing either a loss of time or the giving up of one of Janowski's precious (to him) bishops. Most amateur players, though, looking at this position would still see it as pretty equal.

10...0-0-0 11. ♖e3 ♗g6 12. ♖h4! Oh, Capa does want that f5 square!

12... ♖hg8 12... ♖h5 To protect g7 rather than have the queen or rook do menial chores. **13. ♖ef5**

13. ♖ef5 ♖e6



Now White plays not the best move, but the move that was part of his plan. The plan itself is straightforward. The f-file will be controlled by White. There is also the tactical threat of ♖xd6 and f5 followed by g4. It's a little mini-lesson. While spending a lot of time trying to figure out the best plan, it may be more



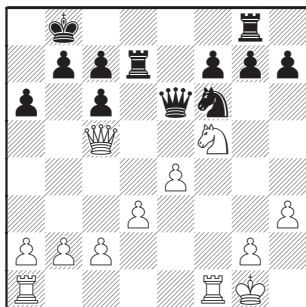
economical to play a clear, good plan that works. It's a bit the opposite of Lasker's advice, but time is the key factor in deciding that.

14.f4 Sharper was **14. ♖xd6+ cxd6** (*White can switch to the queenside attack if 14... ♖xd6 15. ♗e3 ♖d7 16. ♖fb1 b6 17.b4*) **15.f4 exf4 16. ♗xf4 d5 17. ♖f2 d4 18. ♖f3 ♖d7 19.c3 ♖c5 20. ♖ad1+-.**

14... ♗xf5 15. ♖xf5 exf4 16. ♗xf4 The engine gives **16. ♖xd6+ ♖xd6 17. ♗xf4 ♖d4+ 18. ♖f2 ♖xb2 19. ♗g3±** but, in going over games with an engine, you can't forget the human being playing the game and making decisions for a reason. What was Capa's reason? My guess is that he wanted that lovely knight outpost and dared Black to play g6, which would only weaken f7.

16... ♗c5+ 17. ♗e3 ♗f8 18. ♖f2 ♖d7 19. ♗c5 What's he doing that for? Remember his plan: control of the f-file. As White exchanges off the minor pieces and White piles on the pressure on the f-file with his major pieces, the winning chances increase.

19... ♗xc5 20. ♖xc5 ♖b8



When I was a youngster, I bought *The Chess Players Compendium* by William Cook (1910 ed.). It was a tabular reporting of the first 20 moves of master and amateur games with a few notes and advice. He figured that after 20 moves you should have an idea of where the game was going. So, we are going to stop here because Chernev stopped briefly here to give Capa's three-step plan: "a... To double the rooks on the King Bishop File to induce the inevitable advance...f7-f6. b. To exchange Queens and Knights. c. To advance the King Knight Pawn to g4 and g5 to eliminate Black's Bishop Pawn, and thereby create a passed Pawn on the King file."

It's not hard to imagine that this was Capa's reason for d3 and later f4. The position was about equal, but Capa slowly and methodically prevented counterplay while at the same time building up positives of his own: the half-open f-file, the great knight outpost and the opportunity to double on that file.

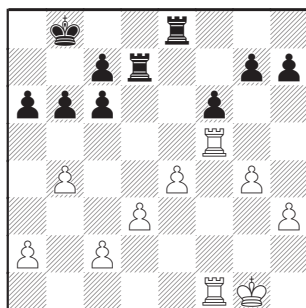
21. ♖f2 ♜e8 22. ♜af1 f6 Target!

23. b3 Capa could have played 23. ♘d4 because he knew Black's knight was headed for d6 to exchange and ease pressure, but here we have a world-class player who's going to exchange on his terms. After ♘d4, he knows why Black could not take on a2, but he's got other fish to fry and simply protects a2 with the b3 move.

23... ♗d6 24. ♖f4 ♗xf5?! This is fascinating to me and why I love to play over games. One grandmaster is exchanging because he believes it increases his drawing chances. The other grandmaster is exchanging because it increases his winning chances!

25. ♖xf5 ♖xf5 26. ♖xf5 Go back and review what Chernev wrote on move 20.

26... ♖e8 27. g4 b6 28. b4!!



Prevention! Black will not be able to undo those awkward queenside pawns. In our first elementary lesson on this Exchange structure we are taught that pawns on a4, c4 and b3 can just sit there and exchange only when forced and this stops the pawns on that side dead in their tracks. With the pawn on d3 White would find that a bit of a headache. With one move, Capa solves that problem! You can't forget that even though your plan is to move along on the kingside, you have to maintain stability on the other half of the board.

Granted, this works, too: 28. g5 fxg5 29. ♖xg5 c5 30. h4 a5 31. ♖f4±.

28... ♖b7 29. ♖f2 b5 30. a4 ♖d4 31. ♖b1 Those "interior lines" we mentioned in the July issue come in handy here.

31... ♖e5 32. ♖e3 ♗d7 33. a5 OK, queenside stabilised. On with the plan!

33... ♖e6 34. ♖bf1 ♖de7 The last stage of the plan, worked out long ago, is now ready

to be initiated. Very instructive. Worth noting is that 4,000 views of this position are cited on Chessbase. Take the hint! Watch and learn...

35.g5 fxg5 36.♖xg5 ♖h6 37.♖g3 ♖he6
38.h4 g6 39.♖g5 h6 40.♖g4 ♖g7 41.d4
♙c8 Poor Janowski! A truly futile gesture.
The king can't come over to help because
of what Capa had taken precautions to
accomplish on the queenside.

42.♖f8+ ♙b7 43.e5 g5 44.♙e4 ♖ee7
45.hxg5 hxg5 46.♖f5 ♙c8 47.♖xg5 ♖h7
48.♖h5 ♙d7 He still can't come over, but
he hasn't got anything else to do, so he
does.

49.♖xh7 ♖xh7 50.♖f8 ♖h4+ 51.♙d3
♖h3+ 52.♙d2 c5 52...♖h2+ 53.♙c3
♖h3+ 54.♙b2 and the a6 pawn will fall.

53.bxc5 ♖a3 54.d5 Black resigns.

1-0

What do we learn from this game? Janowski was equal, but Capa had more possibilities of trying to drum something up.

Capa came up with a good workable plan, cut off counterplay and, when everything was set, he put that plan in motion. The central concept was occupation and control of the f-file followed by the kingside pawn advance.

Defence, even in equal positions, is difficult if one's opponent has a slight initiative or one little structural theme to hammer away at. For those of you who want to learn more from Capa and his endgame play, Chernev's book is a treasure and it's in algebraic. A bargain at almost any price. There is a more advanced modern book by Vassilios Kotronias: How to Play Equal Positions. It is a marvellous book of instruction. In-depth notes that explain ideas - and the attitude required to play these types of positions. My highest recommendation!

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SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS

(See page 57)

This month's problems

Very little preamble is needed this month - three orthodox problems that should be enjoyable and quite easy to understand, even if not necessarily to solve! And then, for a digestif, another helpmate contributed by Stanislav Hudak, which, for readers versed in the world of helpmates, where Black initiates a sequence in which he collaborates with White to get himself mated, should not present too great a solving challenge.

An attractive four-mover

In Steven's problem, a move such as 1. ♖b4 makes no headway, and so it becomes clear that White must find a more committal move, which is going to entail giving the black king more scope in the short term. The very good key is 1. ♖f6!, leaving the knight at a3 vulnerable to capture. There is no threat. As Steven says, 1. ♖f6 "creates a battery White can only open with Black's assistance". What can Black play? If 1... ♗xa3 then 2. ♖c2 b4 3. ♖b1 bxc3 4. ♖e7#. If 1... b4 then 2. ♗xc4+ ♖a1 3. cxb3+ ♖b1 4. ♗a3#. (4. ♖e7 and 4. ♗a3 are both nice *switchback* mates.) Finally, if 1... ♖a1 2. ♖c2 b4 3. cxb4+ c3 4. ♖xc3#.

Excelsior...

...is the descriptor for a pawn progressing all the way from the second to the eighth rank in the course of a solution. Seeing the outlying white pawn at d2 in the first of Paul's problems, and seeing furthermore that the mating sequence takes five moves, astute readers may have arrived speedily at the charming line of play that lands up with three white knights rounding up the black king in a beautiful midboard ideal mate ("ideal" here signifying that each of the black king's potential flight squares is guarded by just one of the white pieces and that all of the white pieces, including the white king, are involved in this enterprise) - 1. e4 ♖g7 2. e5 ♖f8 3. e6 ♖g7 4. e7 ♖f6 5. e8=♗#. It is felicitous that 2... ♖f6 and 4... ♖f8 are impossible moves.

Cornering the black king

In Paul's second problem, the task is to keep the black king occupied while we marshal the resources to administer mate. Whenever the black king is at h2 we have to prevent his playing ...g1=♖, so good timing is required. The solution runs thus: 1. h8=♗ (not h8=♖ stalemate!) ♖h2 2. ♖e5+ ♖g1 3. b6 cxb6 (only move) 4. ♖b8 b5 (again, an only move - indeed, all Black's moves are only moves) 5. c7 ♖h2 6. c8=♖+ ♖g1 7. ♖c7 ♖h2 8. ♖h7+ ♖g1 9. ♖h2#. Great precision - Paul points out that doing things in a different order, starting with 1. b6? or 1. g5?, does force mate - but not until move ten! The 7. ♖c7 motif (in itself a sort of switchback, as the rook was occupying that square in its earlier life as a pawn) is a familiar and attractive one for getting a piece to the h-file without allowing stalemate.

The digestif

Two move sequences lead to nice model mates in our helpmate - 1. d6 ♖e6 2. ♖b7 ♗b5 3. ♖a6 ♖c8 and 1. ♖f6 ♖c4 2. ♖e7 ♖d4 3. ♖d6 ♗b5. (They don't count as 'ideal' mates, because, as I should perhaps have said about our second problem, a mate doesn't qualify for that description if there is a black piece on the board that isn't being used in the mate.) Neat lines of play in a pleasantly light setting, though some problem buffs might prefer it if it were possible somehow not to have the repetition of the move ...♗b5.

SOLUTIONS TO ENDGAMES

(See page 52)

Vancura 1924

1.♔h8 ♖f2 2.♗e4+ ♗g2 3.♗e1+ ♗g1 4.♗d2 ♖f2 5.♗d5+ ♗g2 6.♗d1+ ♗g1 7.♗f3+ ♗g2 8.♗h5+ ♔g1 9.♙d4+ ♔f1 10.♗d1 mate

Klyatskin 1924

1.♖xb3 cxb3 2.g6 ♗xg8 3.♔c5 d6+ 4.♔d4 wins after e.g. 4...d5 5.♔c5 d4 6.♔xd4 ♔e8 7.f7+ or 6...♗h8 7.g7+ .

Alternatives for Black in the main line are: 3...♗f7 4.gxf7 ♔xf7 5.♔d6; 2...♗e8 3.♔h6; 2...♔xg8 3.gxf7+ ♔xf7 4.♔e5; 1...♗e8 2.♔h6 ♗a8 3.g6 ♗a7+ 4.♔e4 d5+ 5.♔f3; 1...♔xg8 2.♖b8+ ♔h7 3.g6+. For White there are: 2.♔h6? ♗h7; 1.♖e3? ♔xg8 2.♖e7 ♗h5 3.g6 ♗h4+.

Byway 1994

1.f4 ♔b4 2.g4 hxg4 3.h4 d5 4.f5 ♔c5 5.h5 d4 6.f6 ♔d6 7.h6 d3 8.f7 ♔e7 9.h7 d2 10.f8♗+ ♔xf8 11.h8♗+ wins. 4.h5? allows Black to run his pawn and achieve 7...d1♗+, so White instead drags the Black king to the eighth rank. This was based on studies by Grigoriev and Khatchaturov from 1930 and 1947, improving them by eliminating duals and adding the attractive refusal to capture.

Michelet 2024

1.♖g1 ♔xg1 2.♙c5+ ♔h2 3.♙d6+ ♔g1 4.♙g3 g4 5.♙a6 h2 6.♔b5 and White's king does a stepladder walk along the diagonal, ending with Ke3 and then mate with ♙f2.

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