Cyrus Lakdawala

Capablanca

move by move



EVERYMAN CHESS

chesstouring.com

Cyrus Lakdawala

Capablanca

move by move

EVERYMAN CHESS
www.everymanchess.com

chesstouring.com

First published in 2012 by Gloucester Publishers Limited, Northburgh House,
10 Northburgh Street, London EC1V 0AT
Copyright © 2012 Cyrus Lakdawala
The right of Cyrus Lakdawala to be identified as the author of this work has been
asserted in accordance with the Copyrights, Designs and Patents Act 1988.
All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a
retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic,
electrostatic, magnetic tape, photocopying, recording or otherwise,
without prior permission of the publisher.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.
ISBN: 978 1 85744 936 5
Distributed in North America by The Globe Pequot Press, P.O Box 480,
246 Goose Lane, Guilford, CT 06437-0480.
All other sales enquiries should be directed to Everyman Chess, Northburgh House,
10 Northburgh Street, London EC1V 0AT
tel: 020 7253 7887 fax: 020 7490 3708
email: info@everymanchess.com; website: www.everymanchess.com
Everyman is the registered trade mark of Random House Inc. and is used in this work under licence from Random House Inc.

Everyman Chess Series
Chief advisor: Byron Jacobs
Commissioning editor: John Emms
Assistant editor: Richard Palliser
Typeset and edited by First Rank Publishing, Brighton.
Cover design by Horatio Monteverde.

chesstouring.com

Contents

Foreword
Bibliography
Introduction

1 Capa on the Attack
2 Capa on Defence
3 Capa on Exploiting Imbalances
4 Capa on Accumulating Advantages
5 Capa on Endings

Index of Opponents

chesstouring.com

Foreword

The *Move by Move* format is designed to be interactive, and is based on questions asked by both teachers and students. It aims – as much as possible – to replicate chess lessons. All the way through, readers will be challenged to answer searching questions and to complete exercises, to test their skills in key aspects of the game. It's our firm belief that practising your skills like this is an excellent way to study chess.

Many thanks go to all those who have been kind enough to offer inspiration, advice and assistance in the creation of *Move by Move*. We're really excited by this series and hope that readers will share our enthusiasm.

John Emms
Everyman Chess

chesstouring.com

Bibliography

1.d4, Volume One, Boris Avrukh (Quality Chess 2008)
The Best Endings of Capablanca and Fischer, A.Matanovic (ed.) (Informator 1978)
Bobby Fischer – The Greatest?, Max Euwe (Sterling Publishing 1979)
Capablanca, Edward Winter (McFarland & Company 1989)
Capablanca: A Primer of Checkmate, Frisco Del Rosario (Mongoose Press 2010)
Capablanca's Best Chess Endings, Irving Chernev (Dover 1978)
Capablanca's Hundred Best Games of Chess, Harry Golombek (Hardinge Simpole 1947)
Find the Right Plan, Anatoly Karpov & Anatoly Matsukevich (Batsford 2008)
The Four Knights: Move by Move, Cyrus Lakdawala (Everyman Chess 2012)
The Greatest Ever Chess Endings, Steve Giddins (Everyman Chess 2012)
The Immortal Games of Capablanca, Fred Reinfeld (Dover 1942)
Jose Raul Capablanca, 3rd World Chess Champion, Isaak & Vladimir Linder (Russell Enterprises 2010)
Jose Raul Capablanca: Games, 1901-1924, Alexander Khalifman (ed.) (Chess Stars 2004)
How to Reassess Your Chess, 4th Edition, Jeremy Silman (Siles Press 2010)
My Chess Career, Jose Raul Capablanca, George Bell (Hardinge Simpole 1920)
My Great Predecessors, Volume One, Garry Kasparov (Everyman Chess 2003)
New York 1927, Alexander Alekhine (Russell Enterprises 2011)
The Nimzo-Indian: Move by Move, John Emms (Everyman Chess 2011)
The Praxis of My System, Aaron Nimzowitsch (G.Bell & Sons 1929)
The Slav: Move by Move, Cyrus Lakdawala (Everyman Chess 2011)
The Unknown Capablanca, David Hooper & Dale Brandreth (Batsford 1975)

Electronic/Online
Chess Today (with annotations from Paul Motwani and Ruslan Scherbakov)
ChessBase 10
Chesslive database
The Week in Chess

chesstouring.com

Introduction

What others could not find in a month's study, he saw at a glance." – Reuben Fine.
It isn't easy to write a book about one's chess hero and remain an unbiased annotator. This is what I wrote about Capablanca in another book: "When it comes to all things Capa, I am one of those love-struck annotators who itches to give every move he played an exclamation mark." And another: "As a faithful acolyte of Saint Capa, I hope you will forgive me for sneaking in yet another of the Blessed One's games into the book." So you see, it won't be easy, but in this book I try and remain objective, revealing Capablanca's warts as well as his double exclams.

Capa's opening play, especially in the earlier part of his career, was uninspiring at best, so we don't spend much time there. Fischer theorized: "Some kid of 14 today, or even younger, could get an opening advantage against Capablanca ... " On the other hand, Capa's middlegame play, especially when it came to pawn structure and planning, was two or more generations ahead of his time. If you look at his handling of the King's Indian against Menchik (Game 31), it looks as if a contemporary GM like Karpov or Kramnik plays the white pieces against a C-player who bought books on KID but didn't bother to study them. Strategically, Capa had a deceptive, elegant way of threading through the maze, the only sighted person among the multitude of his day. He would somehow find a way of removing the complexity of any position, no matter how chaotic, and translate it into a plan which we can all understand. In the late middlegames and endings he has no rival and may well be the greatest player of all time. Only Bobby Fischer could make a case to be his equal in technical endings. Hopefully, after going over the games in this book, some of this will rub off on us!

A Look at Capa's Career

The four-year-old Jose Raul Capablanca quietly watched his father and a fellow army officer play chess each night. One evening, tot-Capa corrected his father after an inaccurate move and suggested another. When Capa's father checked the suggested move, it turned out to be an improvement! Don Jorge Capablanca then played his son a game – and lost! He ran out into the street and shouted "A miracle!" after his four-year-old son beat him in his very first chess game. Thus began the career of the most naturally gifted player of all time.

Shortly afterward, the four-year-old Capa attended the Steinitz-Chigorin world championship match in Havana in 1892. This match left a powerful imprint upon his mind. He also watched astounded as the American GM Harry Nelson Pillsbury performed a 16-board blindfold simultaneous display. "Pillsbury's displays ... electrified me." Capa's interests as a youth included such diverse fields as mathematics, history, philosophy, violin and baseball. His parents sent him to the U.S. to study chemical engineering at Columbia University on the strict promise that he avoided playing chess. Luckily for us, he disobeyed them. Legend has it that he breezed through and aced a horrifically complex three-hour engineering problem in just 40 minutes in his final exams.

He quickly earned a reputation in the United States as an unbeatable amateur and earned a match shot in his first real test in 1909 with then U.S. Champion Frank Marshall, a player in the Top 10 in the world, and an overwhelming favourite against the unknown but gifted Cuban amateur. Capa outplayed Marshall both strategically and tactically in two out of three phases of the game. The result was an embarrassingly lopsided +8-1=14 bloodbath in Capa's favour. Capablanca held his own in the opening ("His heart is not in it," said Znosko-Borovsky about Capa in the opening stages of the game), and dominated the American in the middlegame and ending, as his pieces glided along with the flow of a concert pianist's fingers along the keys. Next, Capa toured the U.S. on a simultaneous exhibition tour; the newspaper headlines read: "Beyond all Expectations!" and "Astonishing!" He managed to avoid losing a single game in his first ten

chessthurin.com

simuls.

The crushing victory over Marshall earned Capa an invitation to the elite GM event, San Sebastian 1911, where he vaulted to world prominence with a stunning first place finish. Suddenly Capa usurped Rubinstein's spot as Lasker's natural challenger. Lasker dodged Capa for a full decade in a world title match. Meanwhile, during the years before and after World War I, Capa lapped up ten first place finishes, often with overwhelming scores, like a hungry cat with a bowl of cream. In short matches, he also beat the likes of Teichmann and Alekhine, among others. Finally in 1921, the pressure in the press grew unbearable for Lasker, who finally agreed to a championship match in Havana. Capablanca methodically broke Lasker down with a never-before-seen level of technical accuracy, defeating Lasker by +4, without a loss in the match.

So difficult was Capa to beat that he went ten years without losing a tournament game, from the St Petersburg tournament of 1914 to New York 1924, where he finally lost a game to Réti. (It was believed the only reason for that defeat was loss of composure when Capa's rumoured mistress walked into the tournament hall while Capa's wife – and the press! – also attended!) When he was world champion, his dominance was absolute and his first place finish – without a single loss – was almost a forgone conclusion. In the chess world, Capa was the beginning, the middle and the end, both God and devil – the way Fischer would have been had he continued playing after he won the World title from Spassky.

Capa continued to dominate until the unthinkable happened: He lost his world title to Alekhine. A grossly overconfident Capa entered the match unprepared psychologically for the new and improved Alekhine. In the end, Capa lost the match because he had never previously been tested to the degree with which Alekhine pressed him. Capa was simply unprepared for this caprice of fate. The loss of his title had a contracting effect on Capa's style. Now terrified of defeat, he began to play super safely, a bit like a Petrosian prototype. Nevertheless, he continued to be placed at the very top of elite tournaments and even defeated world champion-to-be Max Euwe +2=8 in a short match as late as 1931.

Capa's Style

Capa was the consummate incrementalist/minimalist, who would win squeakers by a single tempo in positions everyone else drew. Znosko-Borovsky said that Capablanca was the first player to truly introduce the concept of piece harmony/activity over structure. His opponents rarely failed to look awkward and clunky. Playing over the games in this book, the difference is noticeable. It can be a jarring sight to see a ballerina waltzing with Frankenstein. His strength rocketed from the late middlegame into the ending. The fewer the pieces, the stronger he played. Don't believe for a second that Capablanca was a pure positional player. He was also probably the best tactician in the world between 1917 and 1927. Capa's games erupted with "little combinations", short-range but unexpected shots which he conjured at a glance. He was also capable of combinations and calculations on a grand scale, as in his game against Bernstein from St Petersburg 1914 (Game 8), but was generally too lazy or cautious to enter such positions on a regular basis.

In each chapter we encounter three Capablancas:

1. The young, aggressive adventurer, 1901-1915.

2. The mid-years, where Capa ruled as uncontested king at the height of his powers, 1916-1927.

3. In his final period, from 1928 to his death in 1942, we see a very cautious, super-positional player, plagued by health issues like high blood pressure and chronic headaches during his games. Apparently time and poor health managed to kill Capas 1 and 2 by this point. Even in this period he produced many magnificent strategic gems and dazzling endings.

chesstouring.com

Viewing the ease with which he won, the reader may get the feeling that Capa played chess while his

opponents played checkers, or some other game. If any of this rubs off, our own play will hopefully turn more subtle and harmonious.

Capa the Greatest?

Well, I'm sorry to disappoint, but in my opinion Capablanca was the *second* strongest player in the history of the game, behind Fischer but ahead of Morphy and Kasparov. Capa easily possessed the most natural talent but was also, unfortunately, the laziest world champion, who couldn't be bothered to log heavy study hours. Had he been ingrained with the fanatical zeal of an Alekhine or a Fischer, then Capa would most certainly have reached the number one spot. Of course, this is all total speculation and it's impossible to say who was or wasn't the greatest. The only marker we go by is to gauge who dominated his peers most in his prime. No player ever logged an impossible, mythical performance like Fischer did immediately before his match with Spassky – not even Capablanca.

The Format of the Book

In the end, this book isn't so much about Capablanca as it is about us extracting lessons and learning from Capablanca. The *Move by Move* interactive, question and answer format is designed for the reader to put in a little sweat going through the games. The reader is challenged with exercises in planning, discovering combinations, calculation and critical decisions. Of course, you are not obligated to do the exercises, but if you do put in the work, there will be a payoff in the end.

The chapters are arranged by theme: Attack; Defence; Exploiting Imbalances; Accumulating Advantages; and Endgames. Since Capa's games were rarely one dimensional, several of the games fit into multiple chapters.

Behold, the Awesome Power of Capa!

I became an accidental beneficiary of a Capa-boost in rating. Normally my USCF rating hovers in the 2500-2550 range. As soon as I began work on this book (I looked at so many Capa games that sometimes the pieces began to merge in my blurred vision!) my rating unexpectedly began to climb ... and climb ... until it reached 2588, only ten points away from my peak rating from 1998. Such a thing is unheard of for a 51-year-old geezer like me. (You know you are old when you have so many candles on your birthday cake that there is no hope of blowing them out.) Was this the result of a placebo effect or perhaps rating inflation? I'm not sure. A sample of one isn't exactly scientific proof, but I stubbornly maintain that my rating shot up as a result of Capa's disembodied, ectoplasmic spirit rubbing off. So he gets full posthumous credit for my unexpected rating hike.

The revelation of a long dead genius still remains available to us today. After examining Capa's games in detail you begin to ask yourself the question in each position: Where is the essential core?

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to editor, Grandmaster John Emms, for offering the opportunity to write a book about my hero. Thanks to Jonathan Tait for the final edit. Thanks also to the Capaphiles, David Hart, Peter Graves and Tom Nelson, for their insightful discussions on all things Capa; and finally, thanks to the pit crew, Nancy, Regional Vice President of Commas, and computer handyman Tim.

I hope you enjoy reading the book as much as I enjoyed writing it. May your play always achieve Capa-like accuracy and harmony.

chesstouring.com

Cyrus Lakdawala,

San Diego, June 2012

chesstouring.com

Chapter One

Capa on the Attack

The words “Capablanca” and “attack” are not normally associated with one another. As a kid who studied Capa, I remember mostly going over endings and positional games. His attacking games never really stuck out. Researching this book, I was shocked at just how many amazing king hunts Capablanca produced. In fact, at one point I had over 100 candidate games for this chapter! Attacks were mainly the product of the younger, more impetuous Capa, but even then, only once in a while, like an overweight person indulging in a dessert on occasion. After Capablanca became world champion in 1921, his play grew more cautious and the number of his attacking games sharply receded. I suppose he had his reputation to defend, and avoiding loss became the prime directive over winning brilliantly. Even late in his career, Capa was still capable of the occasional sparkler, like his game against Levenfish, the final game of the chapter.

Capablanca certainly had all the necessary requirements of a great attacker: Intuition, positional build-up skills two generations ahead of his rivals, a perfect sense of timing, and unrivalled combinational skills, especially in short range calculation. If his temperament were different and he didn’t fear a loss to such a great degree, Capa could have been another Morphy, Tal or Alekhine. But he chose not to. He wanted to be Capa instead. Emanuel Lasker once observed with shock, that Capablanca didn’t get the normal artistic exaltation which arises from combinations or a beautifully produced attack in his own games. Capa’s two bottom lines were: Victory and, barring that, avoiding loss. Even with this business-like temperament, Capa managed to pull off many beautiful attacking games when he decided to let go and be someone else. Before entering this chapter I quote myself from another book: “And you thought Saint Capa was just an endgame player!”

Game 1
J.Corzo y Prinzipe-J.R.Capablanca
8th matchgame, Havana 1901
King’s Gambit (by transposition)

Corzo, our hero’s early rival, later went on to become one of Capablanca’s biggest fans, even writing a regular column in – what else? – *Capablanca Magazine*.

1 e4 e5 2 Nc3 Nc6

Today, the Vienna Game is more commonly met by 2 ... Nf6 3 f4 d5.

3 f4 exf4 4 Nf3 g5

Question: Still a Vienna?

Answer: The game transposed to a line of the King’s Gambit. We choose our openings as a way of reflecting our natures. The King’s Gambit and Colle player are two very different people.

5 h4 g4

What 12-year-old isn’t delighted to enter the violent Hamppe-Allgaier Gambit on either side?

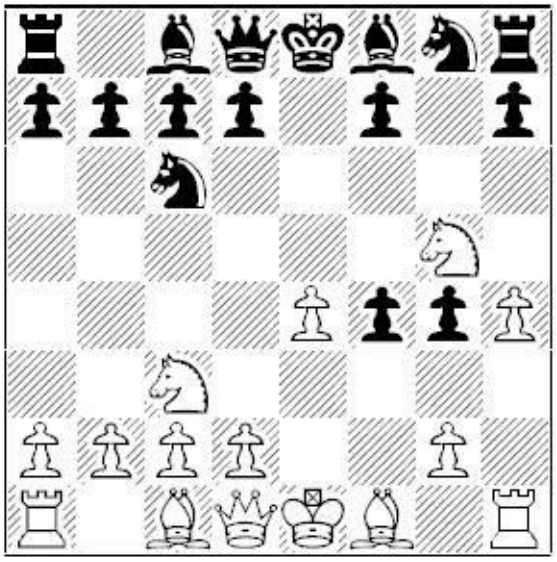
Question: Isn’t it an unsound gambit?

Answer: Relax and allow Corzo his fun. I believe it was H.L.Mencken who defined puritanism as a fear that someone, somewhere, was having a good time! A century ago, the line was exceedingly dangerous to Black. Today, the computers have proven you correct and ruined White’s fun with powerful defensive schemes favouring Black. Just as people are born, live their lives, and pass away, the same holds true for some chess openings. GM Nigel Short has an amusing theory about the King’s Gambit in general: “The only reason the King’s Gambit is playable is because Black has about ten good lines, but he

chesstouring.com

can only play one at a time. That's actually why it's okay."

6 Ng5



We are reminded of the Men at Work song: "Who can it be knocking at my door? Go away! Don't come round here no more!"

Question: A blunder? White's knight is trapped.

Answer: The knight is on a suicide mission, a deliberate piece sac for initiative and attack.

6 ... h6

Question: Why not 6 ... f6?

Answer: White gets reasonable compensation for the piece after 7 Qxg4 h5 8 Qf5 Nce7 9 Qxf4, J.Goetze-D.Rupel, Seattle 1984.

7 Nxf7 Kxf7 8 d4

Others:

a) 8 Bc4+ d5! (a quick ... d7-d5, even at the cost of a pawn, is standard operating procedure in Black's simple goal of survival) 9 Bxd5+ Kg7 10 d4 Bd6 (goading White forward) 11 Bxc6 (11 e5 Bb4 comes to the same thing) 11 ... bxc6 12 e5 Bb4 13 Bxf4 Be6 14 Qd3 Ne7, when Black achieved a light-square blockade and stood clearly better, G.Welling-V.Mikhalevski, Gibraltar 2008.

b) 8 Qxg4 Nf6 9 Qxf4 Bd6! looked like shaky compensation for the invested piece, T.Kalisch-L.Hazai, Gold Coast 1999.

8 ... d5

A pawn is a tiny investment if he gets rapid development in exchange.

9 exd5

9 Bxf4 looks better than Corzo's choice, but even here White is hard pressed to prove he gets full compensation for the piece.

9 ... Qe7+ 10 Kf2

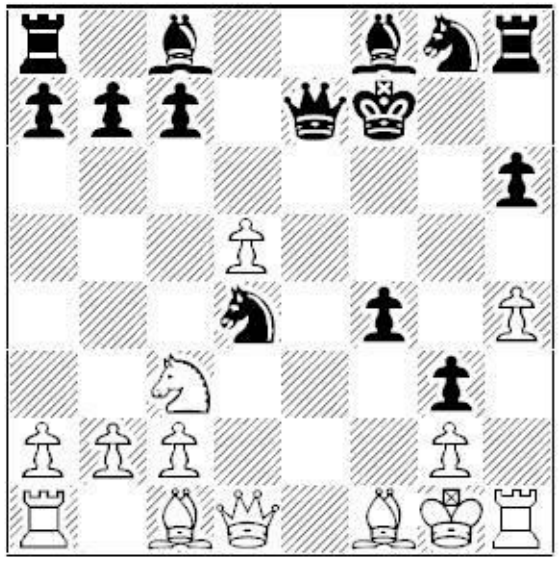
Corzo's attempted improvement over his unsound 10 Be2? f3 11 gxf3 gxf3 12 0-0 Qxh4, which gave Capa a winning position in the sixth game, although he botched it and only drew. Capablanca writes: "Corzo analyzed the position and told someone that he should have played K-B2 (10 Kf2). When I heard this I analyzed the situation myself and decided to play it again, as I thought that Black should win with the continuation that I put in practice in this game." Very sneaky! So the prodigy went home and began studying the position and came up with a fantastic idea in his home prep.

chesstouring.com

10 ... g3+! 11 Kg1

Now the h1-rook remains unused for the remainder of the game.

11 ... Nxd4!!



This brilliant return sac takes firm control over the initiative.

12 Qxd4

Question: What compels White to accept? He can just pick off f4 instead.

Answer: Let's take a look at your line: 12 Bxf4 Nf5 (threatening a nasty queen check on c5) 13 Qh5+ Kg7 14 Qg4+ Kh7 15 Rh3 (to make air for the king) 15 ... Nf6 16 Qf3 Rg8 17 Bd3 Kh8 and White's initiative comes to an end.

12 ... Qc5 13 Ne2 Qb6!

The point. Black threatens the devastating ... Bc5.

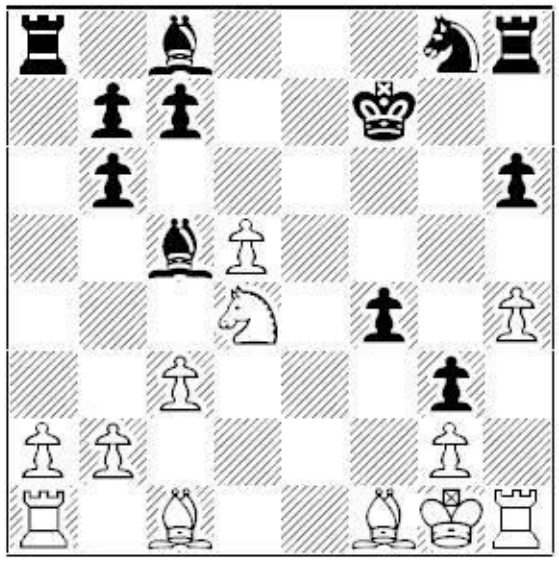
14 Qxb6

Black's initiative also rages on after 14 b4 Bxb4 15 Be3! (the only move) 15 ... fxe3 16 Qxh8 Bf8! 17 Qe5 Bd6.

14 ... axb6 15 Nd4

After the queen exits, the knight proves to be an unreliable understudy.

15 ... Bc5 16 c3



chesstouring.com

Exercise (planning): The fight for d4 is the centre of gravity in the universe. It looks like White has everything under control. He doesn't. There is an odd but strong way for Black to increase the pressure on d4. How?

Answer: **16 ... Ra4!**

Threat: ... Rxd4!.

17 Be2

His king needs air. The tricky 17 b4 is met by the counter-tricky 17 ... Rxb4!.

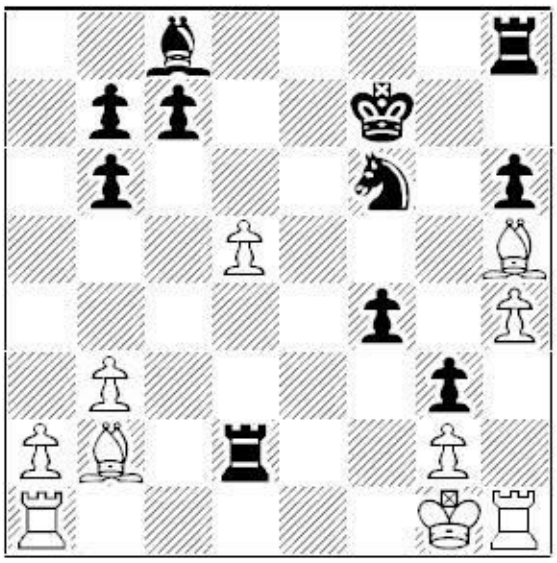
17 ... Bxd4+ 18 cxd4 Rxd4

How annoying for White: f4 remains defended. Even from an early age, Capa's pieces magically coordinate despite raging complications.

19 b3

Threatening to poke both black rooks along the a1-h8 diagonal.

19 ... Nf6 20 Bb2 Rd2 21 Bh5+



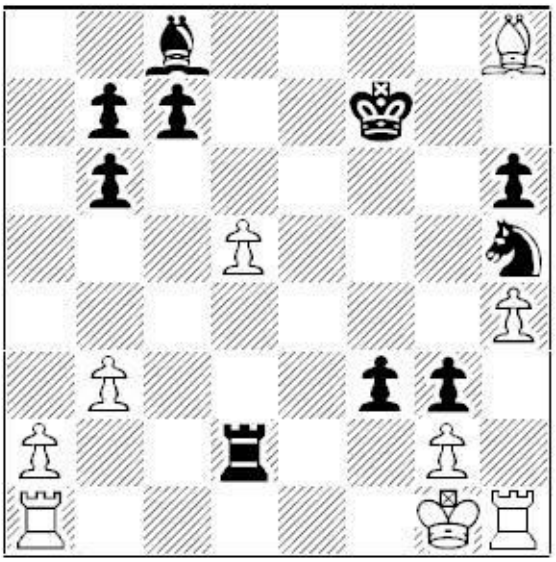
White fires a bullet into the wall to test the forensics of the position. The move is also a diversionary tactic designed to try and throw the young Capa off.

Exercise (critical decision): It looks like White managed to develop and now hopes to grab some initiative. What should Black do about it?

Answer: The exchange sac gives Black a crushing attack.

21 ... Nxh5! 22 Bxh8 f3!

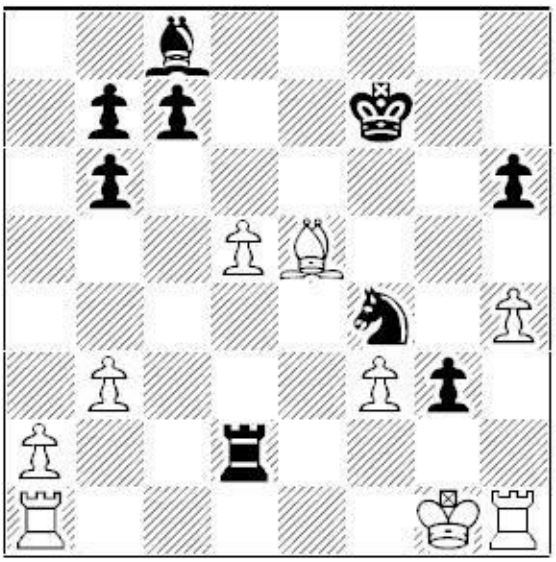
chesstouring.com



Clearance. A powerful early display of Capa's nimble feel for where his pieces should go: f4 is ripe for occupancy.

23 gxf3 Nf4 24 Be5

24 Rc1 Rf2! 25 Rxc7+ Bd7! and White is curiously helpless against the inevitable ... Ne2 mating pattern.



Exercise: White's defences – layers on an old wedding cake – crumble. Black can force resignation in a few moves. How would you play here?

Answer: The white king's fevered dreams conjure very real phantoms, as he tosses in his sweat-soaked bed.

24 ... Rg2+! 25 Kf1 Rf2+ 26 Ke1

26 Kg1 Ne2 mate!

26 ... Nd3+ 0-1

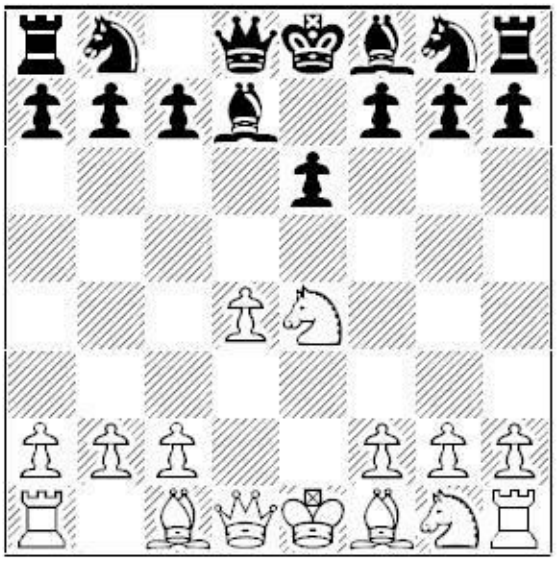
27 Kd1 g2! 28 Rg1 Nxe5 leaves White completely helpless.

Are you ready for a mindblower fact? Hooper and Brandreth claim in *The Unknown Capablanca*, that the prodigy consumed just five minutes on his clock for the entire game.

chessloving.com

Game 2
J.Corzo y Prinzipe-J.R.Capablanca
Casual game, Havana 1902
French Defence

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Bd7



Question: What is the idea behind Black's strange last move?

Answer: This is the first recorded game with the Fort Knox variation of the French Defence. The idea is to develop the bishop via c6 and chop a white knight, either on e4 or f3. Then Black plays ... c7-c6 and we get a Caro-Kann-like formation where Black eliminates his potentially bad bishop and then switches the pawn structure to the opposite colour of his remaining bishop.

5 Nf3 Bc6 6 Bd3 Nd7 7 0-0 Ngf6 8 Bg5

Illogical. This is the kind of move club players tend to bang out without thought.

Question: How can a move which simultaneously
develops and pins be wrong?

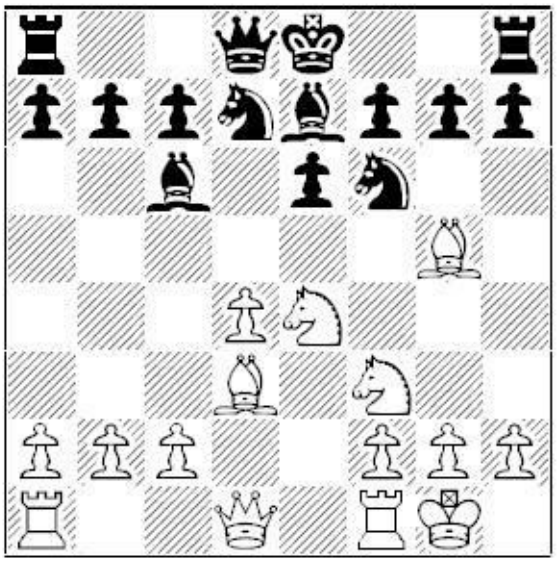
Answer: White's last move increases the likelihood of trades.

Question: How would this factor help Black?

Answer: Although Black's position stands solid, his only worry is that he remains cramped. If this is the case, swaps are in his favour. 8 Ng3 and 8 Ned2 to keep pieces on the board is the modern way to play as White.

8 ... Be7

chesstouring.com



9 Nxf6+

Others:

a) 9 Bxf6 Nxf6 10 Qe2 0-0 11 c4 Bxe4 12 Bxe4 c6 13 Rad1 Nxe4 14 Qxe4 Qc7 15 Rd3 Bf6 16 b3 Rad8, when White should theoretically stand a tad better but my experience in the line argues otherwise. White's extra space is counter-balanced by Black's target on d4, S.Belkhodja-A.Berelowitsch, German League 2002.

b) 9 Ned2 is probably the best move for White, who avoids mass exchanges: 9 ... h6 10 Bh4 0-0 11 Re1 b5!? and Black's control of the central light squares gives him a reasonable position, N.Vink-T.Bottema, Wijk aan Zee 1998.

9 ... Bxf6

Remember, every swap helps Black. After 9 ... Nxf6 10 Ne5!? Qxd4 11 Nxc6 bxc6 12 c3 White's bishop pair and superior pawn structure give him a good return for the invested pawn.

10 Be3

Corzo belatedly realizes that he should keep pieces on the board; however, now his eighth move proves a clear waste of a tempo.

10 ... 0-0 11 c3 b6

Intending to chip away at White's centre with ... Bb7 and ... c7-c5. The alternative is to go super solid with 11 ... Bxf3 12 Qxf3 c6. I play this line as Black once in a while, and also reach such positions from the Caro-Kann, and even from the Slav, with White's pawn on c4 rather than c3. White's bishop pair is an advantage only on paper, just as long as Black doesn't allow the position to open prematurely.

12 Qc2?! Kh8

Question: Shouldn't Black damage White's pawn
structure by chopping the knight on f3?

Answer: Correct. I'm not certain why Capablanca shouldn't, wouldn't or couldn't take on f3. In this case the young Capa gets too cute. Better to bite with 12 ... Bxf3! 13 gxf3 (h7 is taboo: 13 Bxh7+?? Kh8 14 gxf3 g6 15 Bxg6 Rg8) 13 ... g6 and the damage to White's structure is more meaningful than his bishop pair and light-square control.

13 Nd2

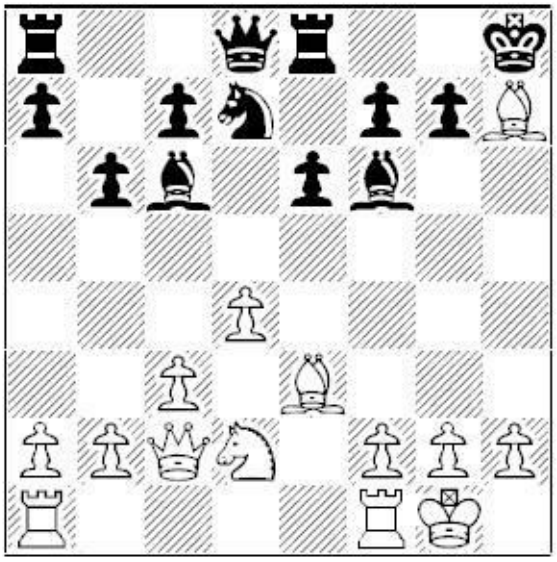
13 Bxh7?? Bxf3 14 gxf3 g6 15 Bxg6 Rg8 wins a piece for no compensation.

chesstouring.com

13 ... Re8

Eventually, Black seeks the freeing break ... e6-e5.

14 Bxh7?



Poor judgment. White's dream of attack fails to correspond with reality. It was P.T.Barnum who said: "There is a sucker born every minute!" Black's king is perfectly safe and three pawns aren't enough.

14 ... g6 15 Bxg6 fxg6 16 Qxg6

Question: I disagree with your assessment of the sac. White extracted three healthy pawns for the piece, exposed Black's king and now enjoys an attack. Shouldn't the assessment be: Advantage White?

Answer: In the end what we want doesn't count for much. It's what we get that matters. Black stands clearly better for the following reasons:

1. White failed to assemble sufficient reinforcements to commit to such a radical course of action and there simply is no attack.
2. White kindly opened the g-file for Black's rook and his future attack down that file, taking aim at g2.
3. Black has a grip on the light squares.
4. White passers can't be pushed until a considerable amount of material comes off the board.

16 ... Qe7?!

Yielding to instinct. Black shouldn't be in a rush to swap queens. White's attack simply doesn't exist. 16 ... Re7!, retaining queens, is much stronger.

17 f4?!

Now light-squared punctures dot White's position, as on a pox-scarred face.

Question: Once again I disagree with your assessment of White's last move. I like it. He clamps down on e5, preventing Black's freeing break, creates a target on e6, and prepares Nf3 and Ne5.

Answer: White's last move was a strategic error, typical for the time, where White in his delusion of an attack weakens his light squares further, especially g2. He also destroys the potency of his remaining bishop whose menial job on e3 is quite at odds with his previous station in life and self-esteem. With 17 f3 Rg8 18 Qh6+ Qh7 19 Qxh7+ Kxh7 20 Ne4 White keeps his disadvantage to a minimum.

17 ... Qh7

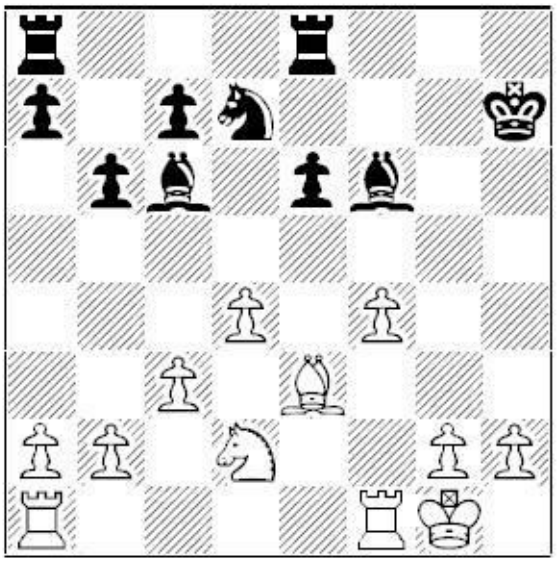
Even as a child, Capa's instinct was to swap down to an ending, a realm he ruled with an iron fist.

18 Qxh7+

chesstouring.com

Otherwise Black begins to attack with ... Rg8.

18 ... Kxh7



Black stands better because White's kingside pawns have little chance of advancing due to the danger to his king. Black's light-squared bishop rules the long diagonal and worries White about potential attacks on g2.

19 Nf3 Rg8

Target: g2.

20 Rae1 Rg6 21 Bd2

The ugly bishop walks a few paces behind his more powerful brothers on Black's side. I would play 21 Ng5+ to try and seal the g-file. Black can eventually break the blockade or induce White into weakening further with h4.

21 ... Bd5 22 b3 Rf8

22 ... b5 isn't necessary yet.

23 Kh1

Naturally not 23 c4?? Bxf3 24 Rxf3 Bxd4+.

23 ... c5

Principle: Open the game when you have the bishop pair.

24 dxc5

Question: Doesn't this help Black?

Answer: It does. But 24 Be3 isn't much better. Frisco Del Rosario writes: " ... but White is spellbound into keeping the line open to the e6-pawn." And 24 Ng5+ fails to help White anymore: 24 ... Kh8 25 c4 Bb7 26 dxc5 Nxc5, when Black's pieces become more and more active.

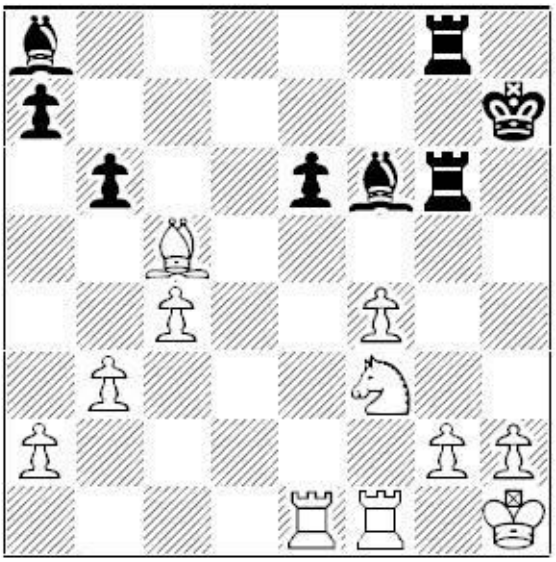
24 ... Nxc5 25 c4 Ba8

Question: What is the point of Black's last move?

Answer: Just a precaution. Capa avoids future tricks on his bishop if White ever seizes the seventh rank.

26 Bb4 Rfg8 27 Bxc5

chesstouring.com



Exercise (critical decision): We can recapture the bishop. But we can also sac the piece back and play 27 ... Rxg2. Judge the ramifications. Is it worth it?

Answer: It sure is: g2, like gravity, quickly brings White down, as the contagion on the light squares continues to spread. White's position, for so long a three-legged stool, finally collapses as Black's light-squared bishop gathers demonic power down the h1-a8 diagonal.

27 ... Rxg2! 28 Be3!

The only move. Corzo walks into mate in each of the following lines:

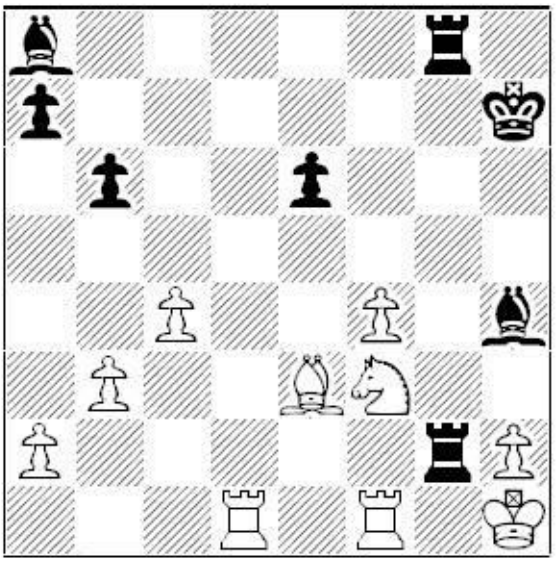
a) 28 Bg1?? Rxg1+!.

b) 28 Rxe6?? bxc5 29 Rxf6 Bxf3.

c) 28 Bd6?? Rg1+! 29 Rxg1 Bxf3+.

28 ... Bh4! 29 Rd1

White can safely rule out 29 Nxh4?? Rg1 mate (twice)!



Exercise (combination alert): Black has a shot which short-circuits the defence. Let's see if you can find it.

chesstouring.com

Answer: The bishop's hypnotic oscillations continue with a beautiful interference. Get used to this kind of thing in the book. The math always seems to work for Capa's side alone.

29 ... Bf2!!

Keep in mind that Black was a 13-year-old kid and White the IM/GM strength Cuban champion.

30 Rd7+

White's forces are sent scattering like a nest of eels startled by the approaching shark. 30 Rxf2 Rxf2 31 Rd7+ Kh6 32 f5+ Kh5 33 Rh7+ Kg4 34 Bxf2 Kxf3! (all alone and all powerful: for Black's king, loneliness is the price of his absolute power) 35 Bg3 Rd8! mates in five moves.

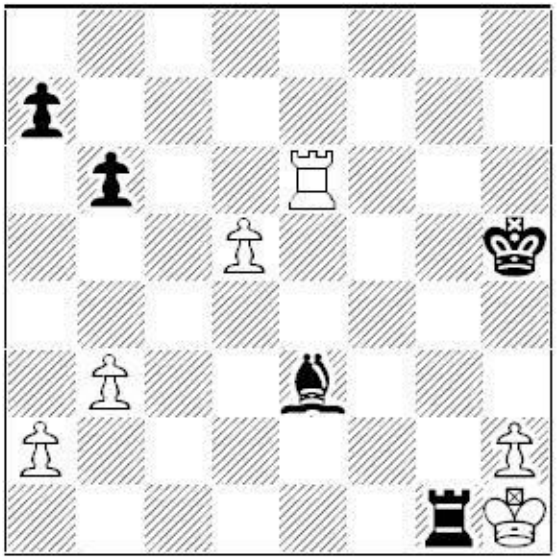
30 ... Kh6 31 Rd5

A move like this is a synonym for resigning. The rest is easy since 31 Rxf2?? Rg1 mate and 31 h4?? Bxf3 fail miserably.

31 ... Bxe3 32 Ng5 R2xg5

Not the best move but the simplest – the Capa trademark.

33 fxg5+ Rxg5 34 Rf6+ Kh5 35 Rxe6 Bxd5+ 36 cxd5 Rg1 mate!



Game 3

J.R.Capablanca-O.Bernstein

San Sebastian 1911

Ruy Lopez

Which narcotic is as deliciously addictive or intoxicating as revenge over an oppressor? San Sebastian 1911 was one of the strongest tournaments ever held. Only established giants of the game were invited, with the exception of the young Capablanca who squeaked in on the merit of his crushing +8 -1 =14 match victory over Frank Marshall – a player who may have been deserving of an invitation to San Sebastian himself. As expected, a few of the more prickly participants protested the entry, the loudest of which was Bernstein, Capa's first round opponent. Can anyone guess what happened next? The universe has a sense of humour and must have planned the whole thing. The story ended happily for all but Bernstein, who duly got clubbed like a baby seal while Capa walked away with the tournament brilliancy prize for this game.

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nf6

How very fashionable, the Berlin Defence to the Ruy Lopez.

chesstouring.com

4 0-0

4 Nc3 transposes to Spanish Four Knights.

4 ... Be7

Question: This move isn't normal, is it?

Answer: In 1911, there was little opening theory to speak of, and even strong GMs basically winged it! Today, the Berlin tabiya ending arises after the moves 4 ... Nxe4 5 d4 Nd6 6 Bxc6 dxc6 7 dxe5 Nf5 8 Qxd8+ Kxd8.

5 Nc3

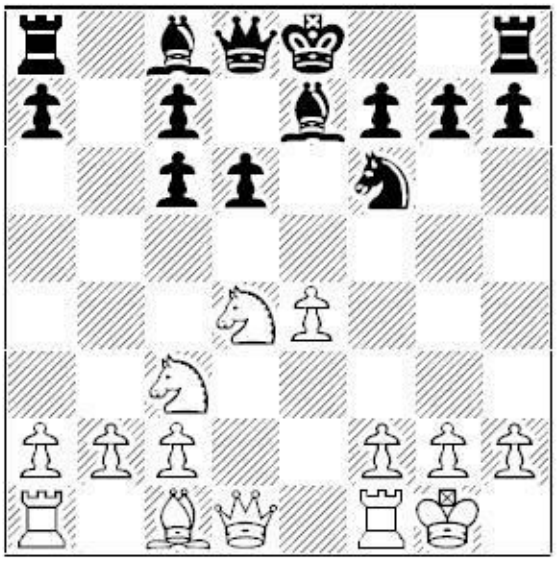
Back to Four Knights. The most logical way to continue may be to protect the e-pawn with 5 Re1, and at the same time leave open the possibility for c2-c3 and d2-d4.

5 ... d6 6 Bxc6+

Question: Premature?

Answer: Probably the bishop shouldn't capture unforced on c6 like this, though it may transpose to book lines later on. Better to keep options open with 6 d4.

6 ... bxc6 7 d4 exd4 8 Nxd4



This structure is called the "little centre". White enjoys more space and greater central control, while Black holds the bishop pair.

8 ... Bd7 9 Bg5 0-0 10 Re1

White plans the disruptive e4-e5 next.

10 ... h6

Question: Isn't this weakening?

Answer: The move weakens Black, yet looks correct after his next move.

11 Bh4 Nh7!

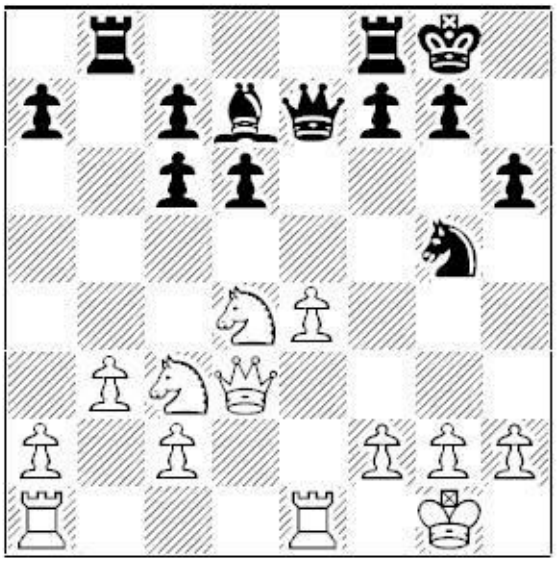
Principle: Swap when you are cramped.

12 Bxe7

I would keep pieces on the board with 12 Bg3.

12 ... Qxe7 13 Qd3 Rab8 14 b3 Ng5!?

chesstouring.com



15 Rad1

Question: Can White go pawn hunting with 15 Qa6?

Answer: It gets him nowhere after 15 ... Qe5 16 Rad1 Ne6.

15 ... Qe5 16 Qe3 Ne6

Preventing f2-f4.

17 Nce2

Once again fighting for f4.

17 ... Qa5

I would continue the swap policy with 17 ... Nxd4 18 Nxd4 c5.

18 Nf5 Nc5!?

Bernstein, underestimating his world champion-to-be opponent, begins to drift his pieces away from his king's guard.

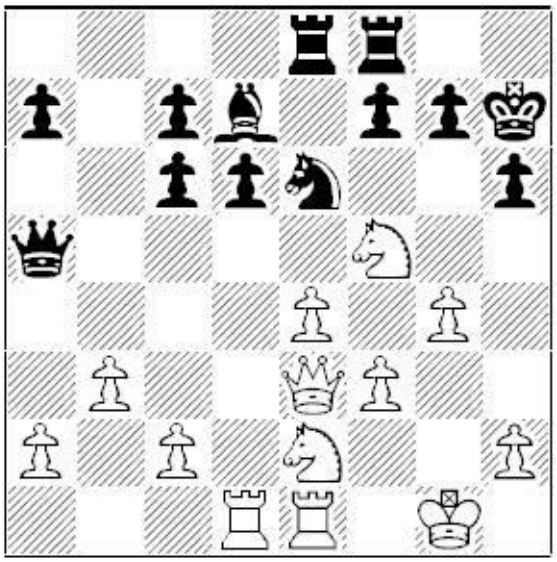
Question: Why didn't Black take on a2?

Answer: Pawn-grabbing adventures have consequences. In this case White gets a powerful attack after 18 ... Qxa2? 19 Qg3! (now Nf4 and e4-e5 are in the air; regaining the pawn by 19 Qc3 is also good) 19 ... Ng5 20 Qc3! Bxf5 21 exf5 and if Black tries to hang on to everything with 21 ... Qa6? (instead Black must agree to enter the unpleasant but necessary line 21 ... Ne4 22 Qxc6 Nf6 23 Ra1) 22 Ng3 f6 23 Re7 Rf7 24 Rde1 Rbf8 25 h4 Nh7 26 Nh5!, when the returning Qg3 is ruinous for Black.

19 Ned4 Kh7 20 g4! Rbe8 21 f3 Ne6 22 Ne2!?

How very odd to see the high priest of positional play kneeling at the altar of attack. This is the kind of speculation one associates with Tal, not Capa, who boldly offers pawns on the queenside in order to generate the attack.

chesstouring.com



Question: Is it sound?

Answer: I don't know; probably not. Kasparov didn't think so and awarded the move a dubious mark, claiming: "I think that by around the year 1925 the Cuban would no longer have played 22 Ne2?!."

Question: You have the nerve to overrule Kasparov's assessment!?

Answer: Well, I admit that is a bit on the presumptuous side, but I feel that Kasparov, while technically correct, possibly underestimated the practical chances behind Capa's sac. I remember reading an article where Smyslov bemoaned Tal's con artist style, yet Tal kept winning and went on to swindle the world title from Botvinnik.

22 ... Qxa2 23 Neg3!?

All or nothing. We are conditioned to seeing Capa play for subtle points. Instead he plays the position like a raging comet, buying Black off at the going market rate: Two pawns in exchange for a speculative attack.

23 ... Qxc2!?

A move played under the theory that a rich man can buy his way into heaven. When ambition and reality collide, it is usually the former who sustains injury. Black reasons: If a small sample is good (a2), then how much better to take possession of the whole (c2)? The threat is ... Qc5. Kasparov liked this move, but Lasker gave it a question mark and suggested 23 ... f6 24 Nh5 Rf7.

24 Rc1 Qb2 25 Nh5

We get a growing sense of accumulating peril around Black's king. Capa writes: " ... it is this knight that is going to decide the game." Kasparov mockingly adds: "But only because of Black's weak play."

25 ... Rh8?

Question: Can Black go for a piece with 25 ... g6?

Answer: It loses to 26 Qxh6+ Kg8 27 e5! (interference) 27 ... gxh5 28 gxh5 (White threatens the simple Kh1 and Rg1+ mating; there is no defence) 28 ... Qxb3 29 Re2!.

Question: Well then, what move do you suggest?

Answer: Both Kasparov and *Houdini* suggest that Black remains slightly better after 25 ... g5!.

26 Re2! Qe5

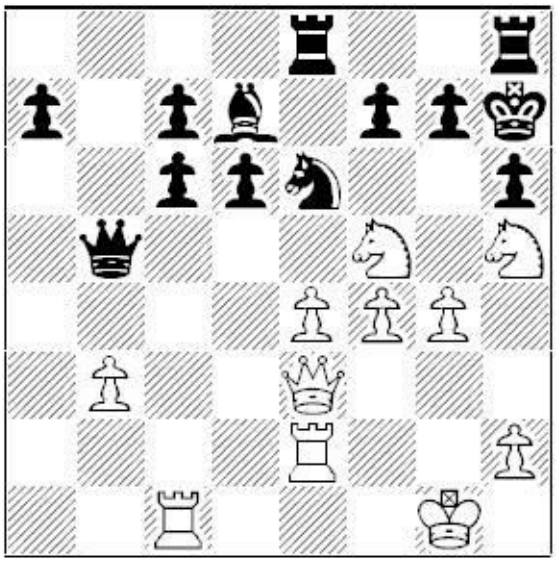
If he tries to hide the sweepings under the rug with 26 ... Qa3, then 27 Nhxg7! pierces the defences.

27 f4

chesstouring.com

Removing the queen's coverage from the critical f6- and g7-squares.

27 ... Qb5



Black's queen taps her foot in impatience and finally leaves. The key kingside dark squares now remain outside her field of vision.

Exercise (combination alert/critical decision): Black's king is caught within the pendulum of those ominous knights and the time to sac has arrived. But the question arises: Which knight shall we sac and on what square?

Answer: **28 Nfxg7!**

The f6-square is the weak link and Black quickly collapses.

28 ... Nc5?!

The knight, with a croak of disbelief, realizes g7 isn't really hanging, and stays well clear as if from a noxious odour. As bad as it looks, he had to try 28 ... Nxg7 29 Nf6+ Kg6 30 Nxd7.

29 Nxe8

Now White has a vicious attack and isn't even material down.

29 ... Bxe8 30 Qc3! f6

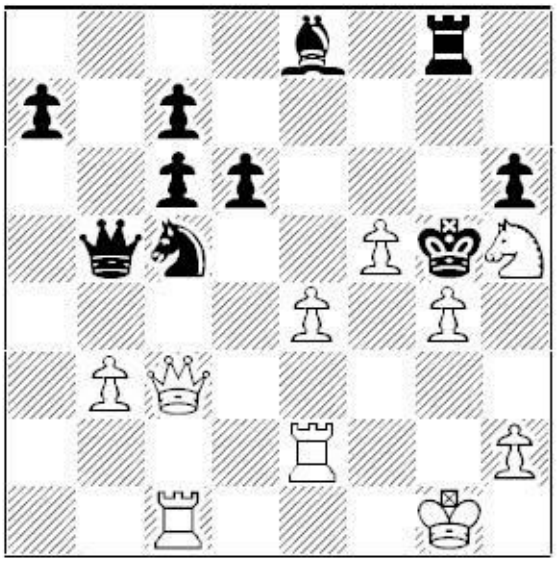
30 ... Rg8 31 Nf6+ Kg7 32 Re3 is also totally hopeless for Black.

31 Nxf6+ Kg6 32 Nh5! Rg8 33 f5+

Black's king gets driven into a pocket of emptiness where he gets hunted down.

33 ... Kg5

chesstouring.com



Black also gets slaughtered after 33 ... Kh7 34 Nf6+ or 33 ... Kg5 34 Qe3+ Kxg4 35 Rg2+.

34 Qe3+ 1-0

Irony alert: Bernstein gets crushed by the weakling he wanted to ban from the tournament! To Bernstein's credit, he became a Capa convert and magically transformed into one of Capa's greatest fans after this game.

Game 4

J.R.Capablanca-J.Mieses

Exhibition game, Berlin 1913

Benoni Defence

1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 c5

The Benoni/Schmid Benoni was a virtually unknown idea at the time the game was played.

3 d5 d6 4 c4

4 Nc3 is the Schmid Benoni.

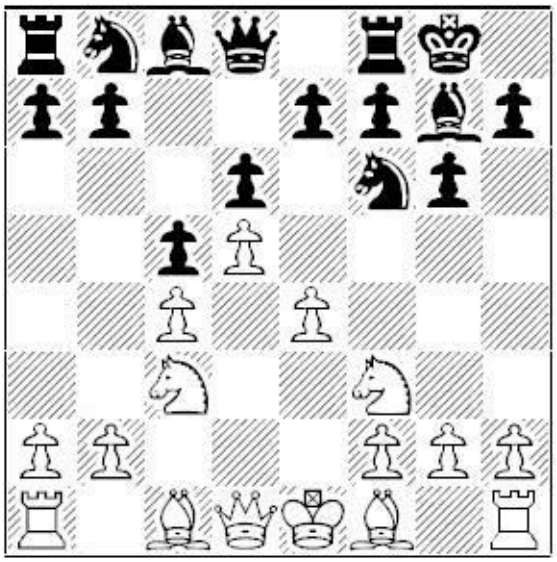
4 ... g6

Question: Can Black play 4 ... b5 here, transposing to a Benko Gambit?

Answer: Only if Mieses was clairvoyant and gazed into the future, since the opening had yet to be invented!

5 Nc3 Bg7 6 e4 0-0

chesstouring.com



7 Be2

I tend to play 7 h3 in this position.

Question: To what purpose?

Answer: In the Benoni, Black's problem piece is his light-squared bishop. He is generally okay if he can later swap it off with ... Bg4 and ... Bxf3. h2-h3 denies Black this possibility. Also, remember, Black is somewhat cramped so any trade tends to be to his benefit.

7 ... e6

Question: What if Black plays King's Indian style with 7 ... e5?

Answer: Then I suggest Petrosian's system with 8 Bg5. White scores very well from this position and you get a favourable version since Black sealed c5 with a pawn.

8 0-0 exd5 9 exd5

Today, the more dynamic 9 cxd5, creating opposite wing majorities, is more commonly played.

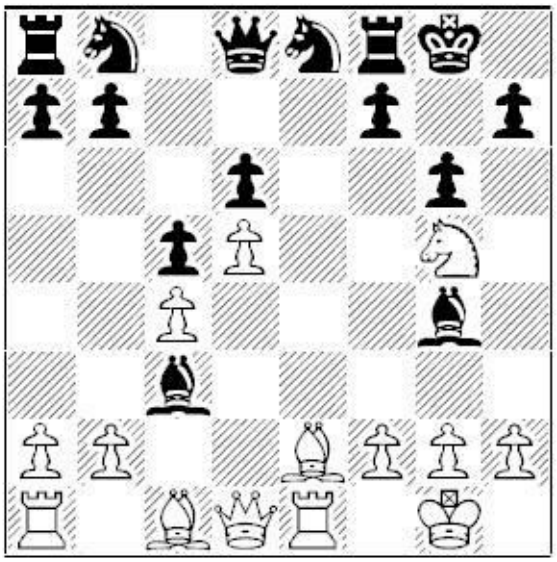
9 ... Ne8

Question: I don't understand the reason for this
unforced retreat. Why did Black play it?

Answer: I was going to give the move a "?!" mark until I remembered my vow not to criticize the openings of the old lions. As *The Who*'s Tommy warns: "You can't speak evil. Your mouth is sealed." I don't understand the strange knight retreat either and Mieses is no longer here to explain, so the motivation behind the move remains an eternal mystery. Black should play for trades with 9 ... Bg4!.

10 Re1 Bg4 11 Ng5 Bxc3?!

chesstouring.com



Clearly Black lives beyond his means. I wonder if this was Mieses' idea behind his earlier knight retreat. If so it's a strategically sour idea.

Question: Why? It seems a fair trade. Black gives up his good
bishop to damage White's queenside pawns.

Answer: Capa got by far the better of the bargain. Black weakened all the sensitive dark squares around his king; whereas his dream of exploiting White's broken queenside pawns is no more than a twisted vision, which never comes to pass.

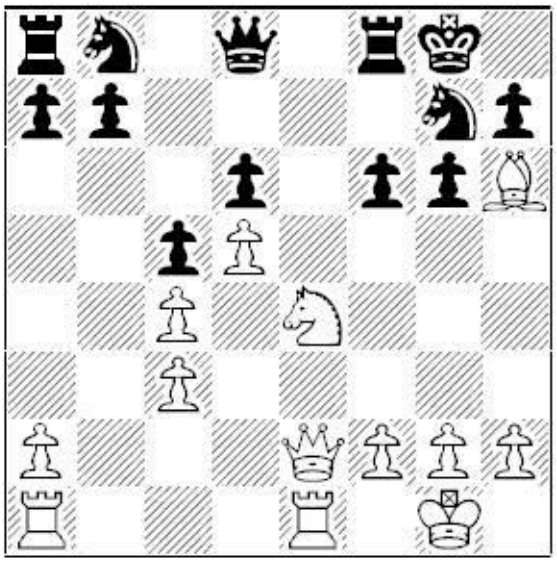
12 bxc3 Bxe2 13 Qxe2 Ng7?!

13 ... Nf6, covering e4 and looking for swaps, was better. Mieses, a Grandmaster-strength pure tactician and attacker, tended to fold like a cheap umbrella against Capa, who just wouldn't let Mieses get the type of game he flourished in. In fact, Mieses' lifetime record versus Capa was an unhappy 0%, a record even I could match if I ever get around to building a time machine to go back and challenge the Cuban legend.

14 Ne4

Both d6 and f6 are sensitive points in Black's position.

14 ... f6 15 Bf4 Ne8 16 Bh6 Ng7



chesstouring.com

Question: Why self-pin?

Answer: Black avoided the game-ending trap 16 ... Rf7?? 17 Ng5!.

Now let's assess the position after 16 ... Ng7:

1. White managed to weaken the pawn front around Black's king.
2. Black is especially tender on the dark squares and sorely misses his dark-squared bishop.
3. White has a menacing build-up of pieces near Black's king.

Exercise (planning): So the question arises: What plan should be implemented to flare up White's attack?

Answer: Step 1: Come all ye faithful. Awaken his only dormant piece.

17 Rad1! Na6

Step 2: Lift the rook to the third rank.

18 Rd3! f5?

The impatient make poor defenders. I guess Mieses' mood, by now dark as sin, and sick and tired of the escalating abuse, nudged him to lash out impulsively with this ineffective stabbing motion. He should sit tight with 18 ... Nc7.

19 Ng5

Thanks for the square! The knight, an apparition born from mist, emerges on g5.

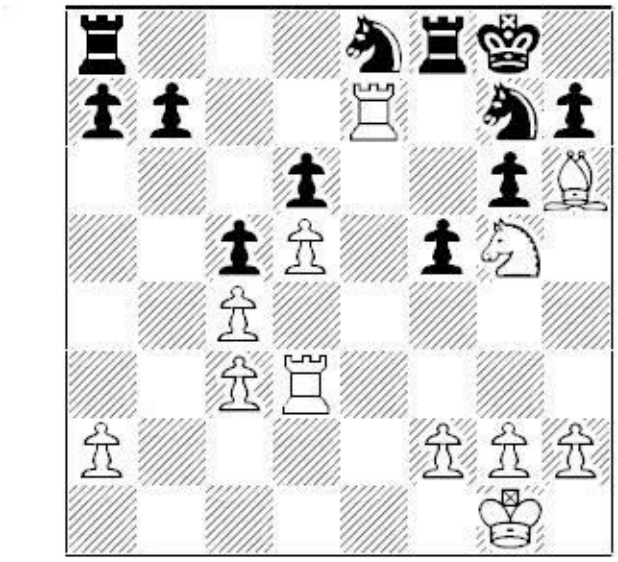
19 ... Nc7

19 ... Re8 20 Re3 is of no help to Black either.

20 Qe7 Qxe7

20 ... Nce8 changes nothing. White would continue as he did in the game.

21 Rxe7 Nce8



Exercise (planning): Taking on b7 is okay but somehow feels like a petty distraction in such a position where Black can barely move. Let's go after Black's king instead. Find your target and come up with a plan.

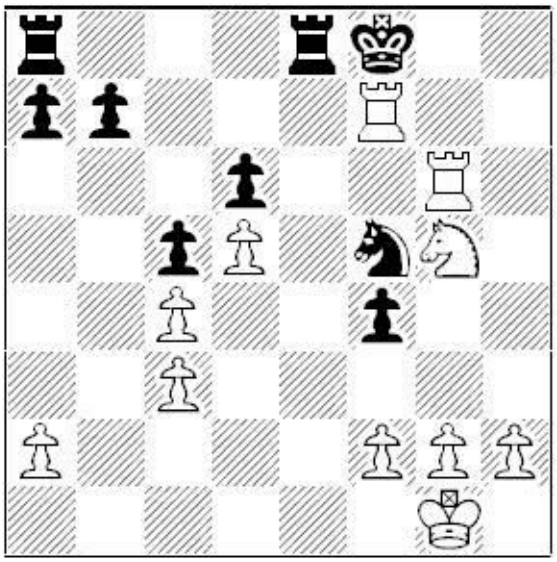
Answer: Target h7, the weakest link.

22 Rh3! f4 23 Bxg7 Nxg7 24 Rxh7

Black begins to discard material the way one scrapes mud off a filthy shoe.

24 ... Nf5 25 Re6! Rfe8 26 Rxg6+ Kf8 27 Rf7 mate!

chesstouring.com



This attack, like virtually all of Capa's attacks, was founded on solid positional chess.

Game 5
J.R.Capablanca-F.Dus Chotimirsky
Exhibition game, St Petersburg 1913
Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 Na5

A strange move order by today's standards but we abide by a statute of limitations, so I won't complain about strange or inaccurate opening moves throughout the book.

Question: What is the move order mostly played today?

Answer: The main path would be 8 ... 0-0 9 h3 Na5 10 Bc2 c5 11 d4.

9 Bc2 c5 10 d4 Qc7 11 Nbd2

White can also play 11 h3, 11 a4, and 11 d5.

11 ... Nc6

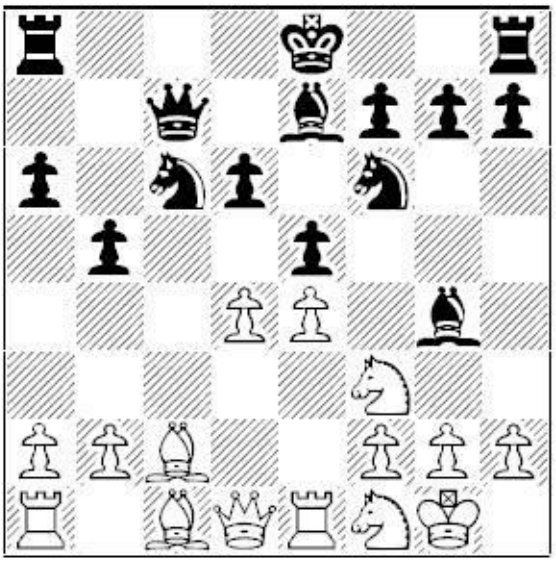
11 ... 0-0 12 Nf1 Nc6 13 Ne3 Re8?! 14 Nd5! Nxd5? (Black should just move his queen) 15 exd5 Na5 16 dxe5 dxe5 17 Nxe5 and White won a pawn, R.J.Fischer-W.Donnelly, Milwaukee 1957.

12 Nf1?!

This allows an annoying pin. 12 d5 Nd8 13 a4 Rb8 was probably better, C.Ahues-A.Rubinstein, Hamburg Olympiad 1930.

12 ... cxd4 13 cxd4 Bg4

chesstouring.com



This is the danger of White holding back on h2-h3.

14 d5 Nd4 15 Bd3 0-0 16 Be3 Rac8!?

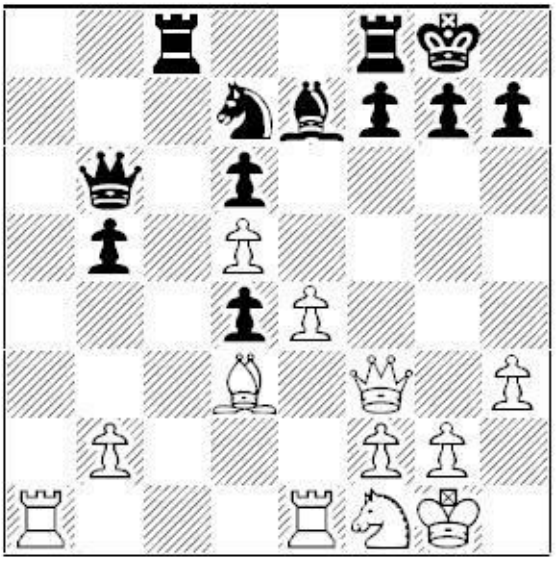
Question: Why doesn't Black damage the pawns by taking on f3?

Answer: I would do just that. Perhaps he feared a future attack down the g-file after 16 ... Nxf3+ 17 gxf3 Bd7 18 Ng3 which is about equal.

17 Bxd4

He hands Black a weak pawn, at the cost of the bishop pair and degrading his control over the dark squares.

17 ... exd4 18 a4 Qb6 19 axb5 axb5 20 h3 Bxf3 21 Qxf3 Nd7



An interesting imbalance arises with the presence of the opposite-coloured bishops. The principles are:

1. Opposite-coloured bishops favour the attacking side. In this case nobody has an attack yet.

2. In endings, opposite-coloured bishops allow the pawn (or pawns) down side greater drawing chances.

chesstouring.com

22 Rec1 Nc5 23 b4 Na4?

Overly ambitious.

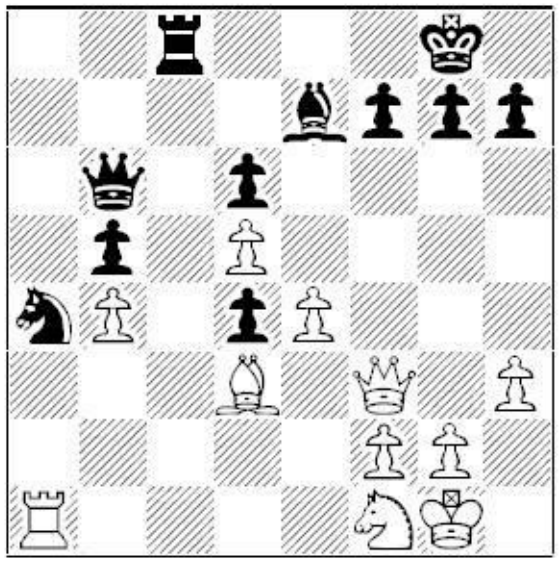
Question: What don't you like about the move? He plans to plant his knight on c3, in the heart of White's territory.

Answer: Believe it or not, Black underestimates the problems to his king, as Capa soon launches a deeply hidden attack. The balance of power remains unaltered after the correct 23 ... Nxd3! 24 Rxc8 Rxc8 25 Qxd3.

Question: Whose position do you prefer?

Answer: I actually prefer Black, who controls the c-file and dark squares.

24 Rxc8! Rxc8



Exercise (combination alert): White has a trick in the position which creates very real threats to Black's king.

Answer: **25 e5!**

Threat: Qf5!. Black must weaken his kingside to prevent it. White must confidently calculate the next few moves to be certain of the effectiveness of his first shot, without allowing a retaliatory response.

25 ... g6

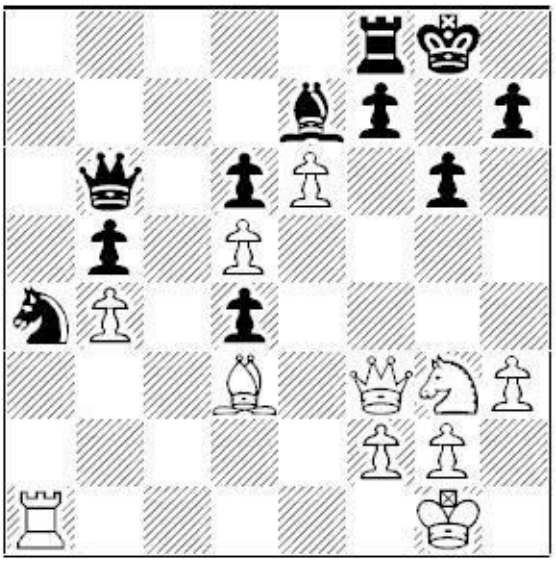
25 ... Rf8 26 e6! g6 transposes.

26 e6! Rf8

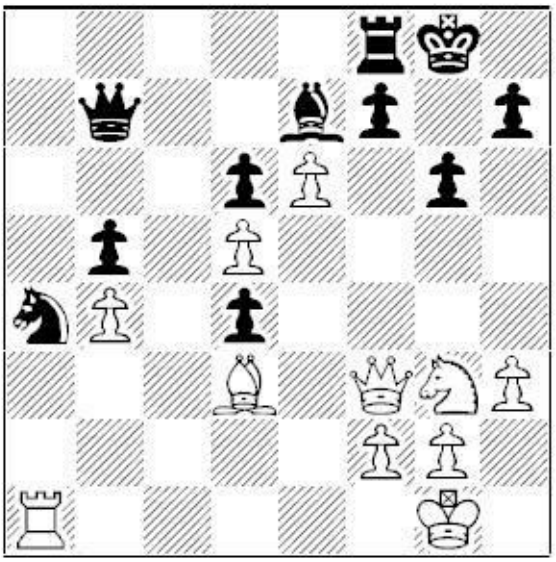
White gets a winning position after 26 ... fxe6?! 27 dxe6 Rf8 28 Qg4 Rf6 29 Ng3 d5 30 Nf5! Qxe6 (30 ... Rxe6 31 Bxb5!) 31 Nxe7+ Qxe7 32 Qxd4, when Black is about to drop at least one pawn and remains with a shaky king.

27 Ng3!

chesstouring.com



The knight finds accommodations on f1 thoroughly unsuitable, and seeks an upgrade. **27 ... Qb7?**
Instead:
a) 27 ... fxe6? 28 Qg4 e5 29 Bxg6 hxg6 30 Qxg6+ Kh8 31 Nh5 mates.
b) 27 ... Qc7! is Black's best defensive try: 28 Bxb5 Nc3 29 exf7+ Rxf7 30 Qd3 Qb7.



White has access to another trick where Capa's pieces begin to boil over on the kingside. Black soon loses his fragile trusteeship over the kingside, and punctures and corrosion degrade what was once a stable structure.

Exercise (combination alert): Let's see if you can find White's idea:

Answer: Step 1: White snaps the rein, urging his horse on. The knight is immune.

28 Nf5! fxe6

Question: What if Black plays it cool with a move like 28 ... Kh8?

Answer: Black's troubles don't go away. For example: 29 Qe4! fxe6 30 Nxe7 Qxe7 31 dxe6 Nc3 32 Qxd4+ Qg7 33 Qxd6!.

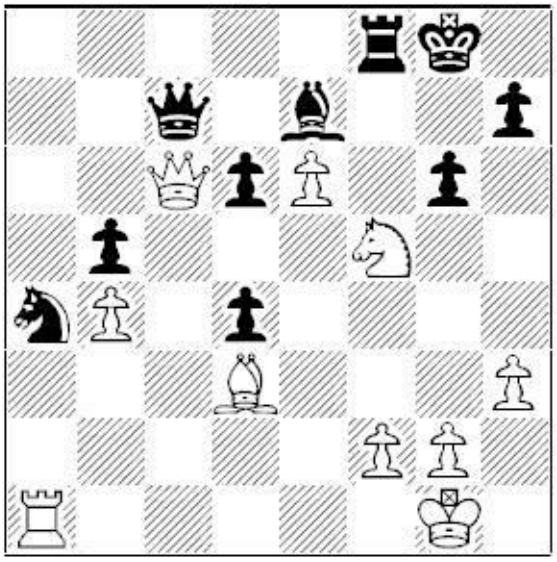
Step 2: Overload Black's queen.

chesstouring.com

29 dxe6! Qc7

Step 3: Overload her again!

30 Qc6!



Have you ever been in the ocean when the tide was so strong that a wave knocked you down? You get up, then another immediately tosses you around again. This is Black's fate.

30 ... Qd8

Black's queen, chafing under her sister's rule, furrows her brow and backs off.

31 Nxe7+ Qxe7

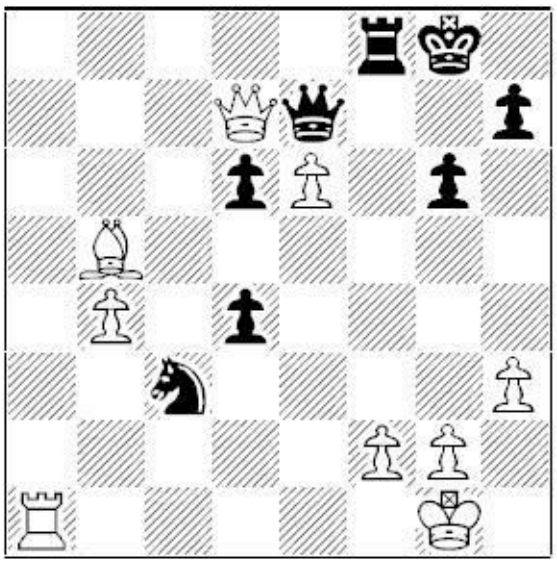
Step 4: Win a pawn and create a passed b-pawn.

32 Bxb5 Nc3

Step 5: Simplification.

33 Qd7!

White's queen, on the other hand, stands resplendent among the unwashed rabble surrounding her.



33 ... Qxd7

Black's poor confused queen reminds me of the time when I introduced my wife – then girlfriend – Nancy, to my relatives, whose baffling names she could neither pronounce nor remember.

chesstouring.com

34 Bxd7

Game over. The passed e- and b-pawns decide.

Question: I admit this is a brilliant game
but why did you put it in the *Attack* chapter?

Answer: Dang, I was hoping you wouldn't notice. This was one of the games which didn't really fit into any chapter in the book. For instance, Capa was never on the defensive, so Chapter 2 is out. I'm not really sure which imbalance Capa did or didn't exploit; and he really didn't win by accumulation of advantages, so there goes Chapters 3 and 4. Finally, it doesn't fit with the endgame chapter either since he has a trivially won game once the queens go off, so no Chapter 5! Although Capa didn't crown his attack with mate, he really did gain all his advantages by *threatening* to attack. So here it is in Chapter 1!

34 ... Rb8

34 ... Nd5 35 Ra6 Ne7 36 Rxd6 Rb8 37 Rxd4 leaves Black three pawns down.

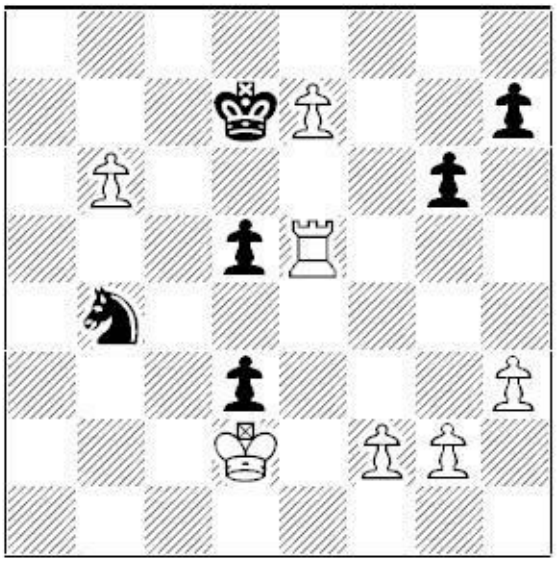
35 e7 Kf7 36 Re1!

Following Lasker's advice: The threat is stronger than its execution.

36 ... Re8 37 Bxe8+ Kxe8 38 Re6 d5 39 Kf1 Nb5

39 ... d3 40 Ke1 ends the d-pawn's dream.

40 Ke2 Nc7 41 Re5 Na6 42 b5 Nb4 43 b6 d3+ 44 Kd2 Kd7!?



Question: What the hell!?

Answer: Clear proof that Dus C was an aspiring and gifted comedian. A suicidal person, unable to do the deed (resign!), sometimes provokes another, hoping to be killed. 44 ... Nc6 45 b7 is no improvement!

45 e8Q+ Kd6 46 Qe7+ Kc6 47 Qxb4 1-0

Game 6

J.R.Capablanca-Masyutin

Casual game, Kiev 1914

Dutch Defence

1 d4 f5 2 e4

Contrary to popular belief at most chess clubs, the Staunton Gambit isn't all that hot an opening for White.

chesstouring.com

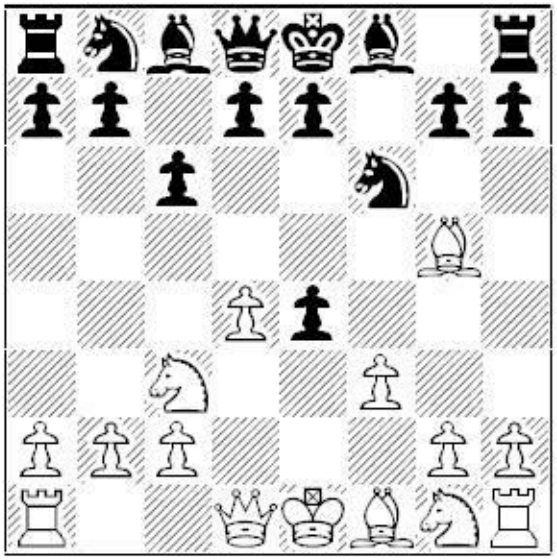
Question: Wouldn't one expect a more positional approach
against the Dutch with Capa as White?

Answer: Actually, Capa, who was remarkably rigid in his pronouncements and opinions on openings, once wrote that the Staunton was White's "best" choice in the position. Frisco Del Rosario tells a story about a Mexican amateur who talked Capablanca into giving a private chess lesson. The student showed Capa his game: 1 e4 c5. Capa claimed the Sicilian was unsound and "full of holes"! Then Capa went on to explain that 2 Ne2! was White's best move, and perhaps a refutation. "Why?" asked the amateur. Capa answered "No importa!" – not important! Capa refused to answer the question despite his confused student's importunate pleas.

2 ... fxe4 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 c6

4 ... Nc6 is another effective method for Black to deal with the Staunton Gambit: 5 d5 Ne5 6 Qd4 Nf7 7 h4 e5! 8 Qa4 c6 9 0-0-0 Qb6 and the two correspondence GMs reached an exceedingly sharp position, K.Wiacek-G.Timmerman, 15th CC Olympiad 2006.

5 f3



5 ... exf3!?

Question: This looks dangerous. Does Black have to accept the gambit?

Answer: Returning the pawn with 5 ... e3 is the way I would go: 6 Bxe3 d5 7 Qd2 Nbd7 8 0-0-0 b5! 9 g4 Nb6 10 h4 e6 11 h5 b4 12 Nb1 Nc4 13 Qe1 Qa5 and I prefer Black in this admittedly messy position, A.Raetsky-A.Korobov, Abu Dhabi 2010.

6 Nxf3 e6

6 ... g6 is another way to develop. Then 7 Bd3 Bg7 8 Qd2 0-0 9 h4 d5 10 Bh6 gave White compensation for the pawn, M.Samkov-I.Bocharov, Berdsk 2008.

7 Bd3 d5

Question: Doesn't this hand White a huge hole on e5?

Answer: It does, but Black's last move is not so bad. He needs his fair share of the centre. Black gives up such holes in variations of the French Defence – and usually without being up a pawn!

8 0-0 Nbd7?!

8 ... Be7 is the correct move order.

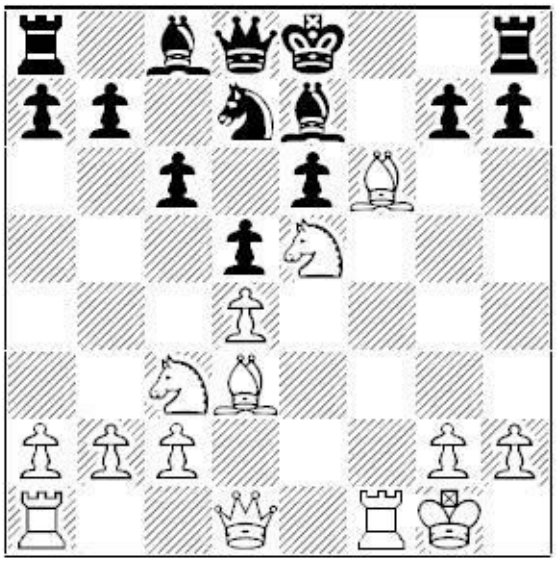
9 Ne5

As was his usual custom, Capa's legendary accuracy is nowhere to be found in the opening stages of the game. 9 Qe2! exploits Black's inaccurate last move.

chesstouring.com

9 ... Be7 10 Bxf6!?

I would play 10 Qe2.



10 ... Bxf6?!

A move clearly intended to goad his opponent.

Question: This looks suicidal. Why on earth would Black allow White a queen check on h5?

Answer: This may be a question Mr. Masyutin's psychiatrist would be better qualified to answer. Perhaps the fear and peril of a chess game became a thrill in itself. After the correct 10 ... Nxf6!, if White tries the same idea with a sacrificial attack it fails after 11 Rxf6? Bxf6 12 Qh5+ Ke7 13 Qf7+ Kd6 14 Nc4+? dxc4 15 Ne4+ Kd5 16 Nc3+ Kxd4! (denying White a perpetual check) 17 Rd1 Kc5 when Black's king escapes the net and Black remains a rook up.

11 Qh5+ Ke7

11 ... g6? fails to 12 Bxg6+ hxg6 13 Qxg6+ Ke7 14 Rxf6! Nxf6 15 Qg7+ Kd6 16 Nf7+.

12 Bxh7?!

The trouble with this move is that Black can now force queens off the board.

Question: Then what would you suggest as White's best path to attack?

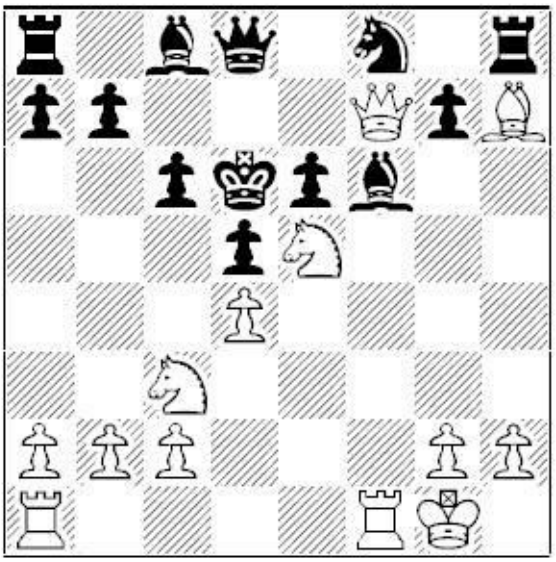
Answer: Probably something like 12 Rae1 and if 12 ... Qb6 13 Ng6+ hxg6 14 Qxh8 Qxd4+ 15 Kh1 Kd6, though even then, Black gets compensation for the exchange in the form of a strong centre and dark-square control.

12 ... Nf8??

Black, impelled by a mood of over-exuberance, decides to undertake a madman's mission, allowing White a breathtaking sacrificial mating binge. 12 ... Qe8! forces queens off and equalizes, since White should avoid 13 Ng6+? Kd8 14 Qh3 Bxd4+ 15 Kh1 Qxg6! 16 Bxg6 Rxh3 17 gxh3 Bf6, when the endgame is clearly in Black's favour.

13 Qf7+ Kd6

chesstouring.com



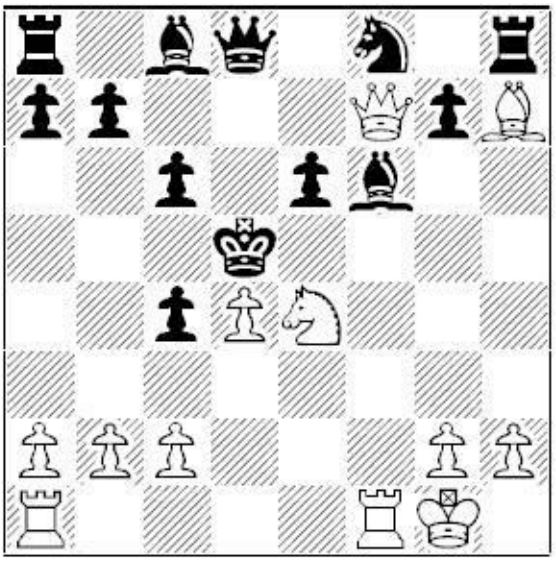
Exercise (critical decision): Soon, Black's nimble king is destined to be the shaper of monumental events. Continue the attack, even if you can't visualize the position to mate.

Answer: Clear e4 for the other knight.

14 Nc4+!

A military force must be comprised of disposable parts. If you are unwilling to take on casualties while attacking then chances of victory recede.

14 ... dxc4 15 Ne4+ Kd5



Exercise (combination alert): Black is not kidding and has not been not kidding for quite some time now, and look where it has gotten him. Same question. How to continue the attack?

Answer: **16 Rf5+!**

Turmoil mixed with rage is the mysterious mechanism which transforms a crowd into a mob.

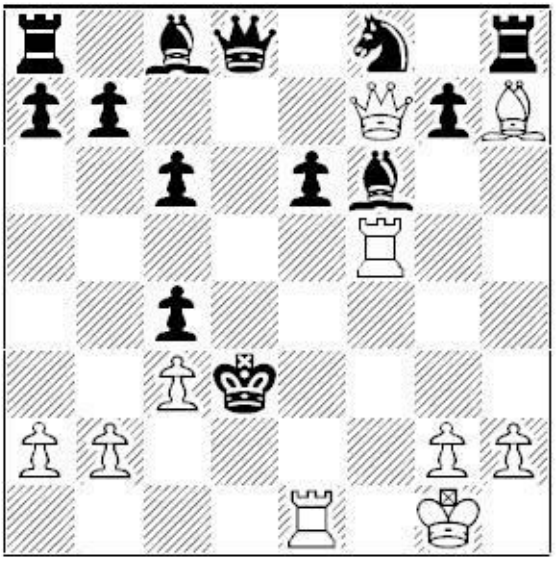
16 ... Kxe4

chesstouring.com

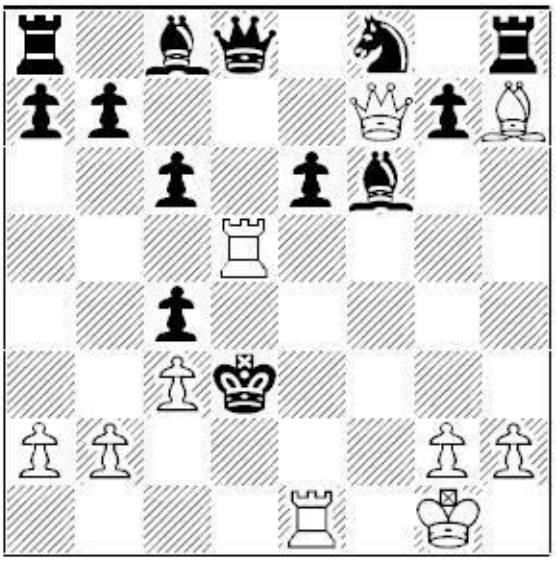
Or 16 ... Kxd4 17 c3+ Kd3 18 Nc5+ Ke3 19 Rf3+ Kd2 20 Rf2+ Ke3 21 Re1 mate!

17 Re1+ Kxd4

The king blows by on a fickle breeze.
18 c3+ Kd3



Exercise (combination alert): Please come in. Welcome to my humble home! Black's poor king, a slave to old inertia, arrives at his final resting place. Mate in one (!) move.
Answer: **19 Rd5 mate!**
Double checkmate!



It was the biblical Job who complained: "What I greatly feared has come upon me." Note how most of Black's loutish pieces sit on their original squares, while Black's king on d3 radiates silent protest.

Question: Black didn't seem like a very strong player. Was he?

Answer: Nobody even seems to know Masyutin's first initial! Black was clearly in a league a million miles below Capablanca, and I am almost certain Everyman won't have me working on the book: *Masyutin: Move by Move*! But I didn't want to fill this one exclusively with games against Alekhines and Laskers. Sometimes we crave carnage and the only way to satiate the thirst is to include a bloodbath versus some unknown amateur!

chesstouring.com

Game 7

A.Alekhine-J.R.Capablanca

St Petersburg 1914

Ruy Lopez

This game was perhaps the beginning of what would become an old grudge, much the way die-hard Beatles fans view Yoko. Long before the two giants became enemies and bitter rivals, they were for a brief few days, friends. It was said Alekhine and Capa were inseparable at the St Petersburg tournament ... until the party. A young baroness invited the two GMs to a party at her home in their honour. Both were hoping to make a splash with high-born Russian ladies in attendance. Unfortunately for Alekhine, Capa's charm rating was somewhere in the 2850 range. The tragic result: Capablanca 1 Alekhine 0. Capa charmed the living daylights out of the young ladies and had them all clapping their hands in delight with his wit, his easy elegance, and also his Rudolph Valentino-style good looks. Sergei Shishko described the power of Capa's charisma in almost worshipful tones: "Capablanca arrived in a tuxedo with a shiny ivory chrysanthemum in his lapel. The spirited Cuban had a golden tan and expressive velvety eyes which seemed to sparkle." It was whispered that the shy and socially inept Alekhine sat in a corner mumbling to himself, thinking dark thoughts about Cubans, as Capa danced the night away. Perhaps it is possible to simultaneously love and hate another, since Capa and Alekhine mutually admired and despised each other for the rest of their lives.

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 d6

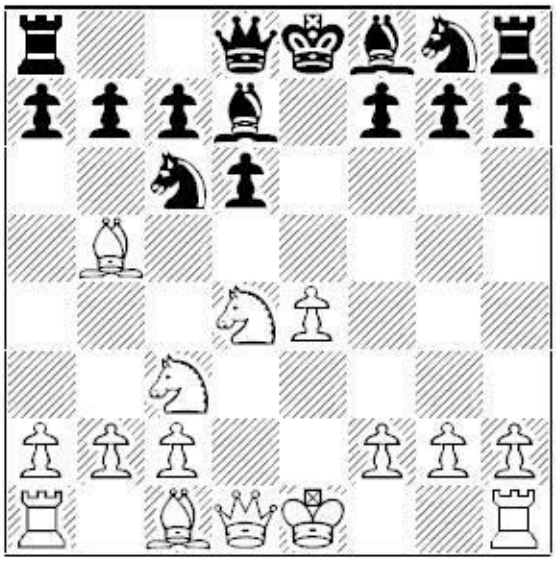
Question: A bit passive?

Answer: Ruy Lopez theory was still in its infancy at the time and most players, even very strong ones, automatically played the solid/passive Steinitz line. Of course, there were exceptions: Please see Frank Marshall's psychotic Marshall Gambit against Capa next chapter!

4 d4

White's best chance at an edge.

4 ... exd4 5 Nxd4 Bd7 6 Nc3



6 ... Nf6

Question: Since Black is cramped, wouldn't it be in his best interest to swap off a pair of pieces with 6 ... Nxd4 7 Bxd7+ Qxd7 8 Qxd4?

chesstouring.com

Answer: In theory you are correct, yet this seems to be an exception to the principle. White has a clear

advantage due to superior development and control over the centre. Watch how quickly Black got into trouble in the following game: 8 ... Nf6 (8 ... Ne7 looks safer since it doesn't allow White any contact) 9 Bg5 Be7 10 0-0-0 0-0 11 e5 Ne8 (11 ... Nd5! is better but still not good for Black) 12 Bxe7 Qxe7 13 exd6 Nxd6 14 Nd5 left Black fighting for his life, S.Rublevsky-B.Ferrandi, Ajaccio (rapid) 2004.

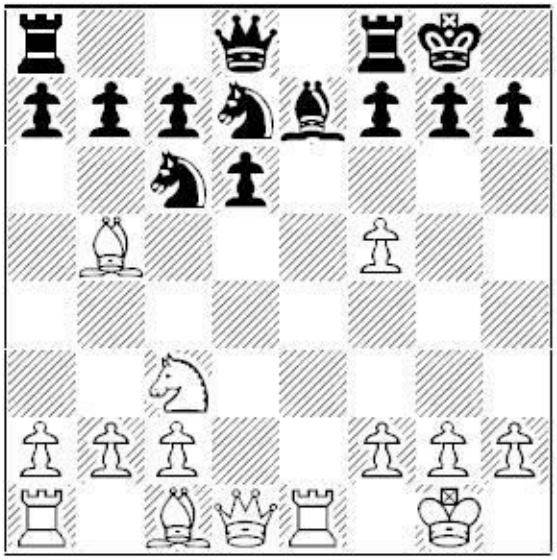
7 0-0 Be7 8 Nf5!?

White gambles that his bishop pair and increased control over the light squares are more meaningful than the damage done to his pawn structure.

Question: Is that a good gamble?

Answer: I don't think so. Black should be dynamically equal. The best strategy is to take on c6 and then play for e5, when equality is not so easy to come by for Black: 8 Bxc6 bxc6 9 Bf4 0-0 10 e5! with an edge to White, E.Najer-V.Bologan, Poikovsky 2006.

8 ... Bxf5 9 exf5 0-0 10 Re1 Nd7!



A subtle positional idea, frowned upon by *Houdini*, but better appreciated by humans. Capa's refined strategic intuition tells him to abandon control over d5 temporarily in order to use f6 for bishop or queen. The d7-knight is rerouted to b6. In this way he relieves his cramped position.

Question: But won't White bag both black bishops after Nd5 next move.

Answer: He will, but Capa's spider senses tell him this is okay. And I think he is correct.

11 Nd5 Bf6 12 c3 Nb6 13 Nxf6+ Qxf6 14 Bxc6!?

White was probably better off avoiding this swap.

Question: Why don't you like the move?

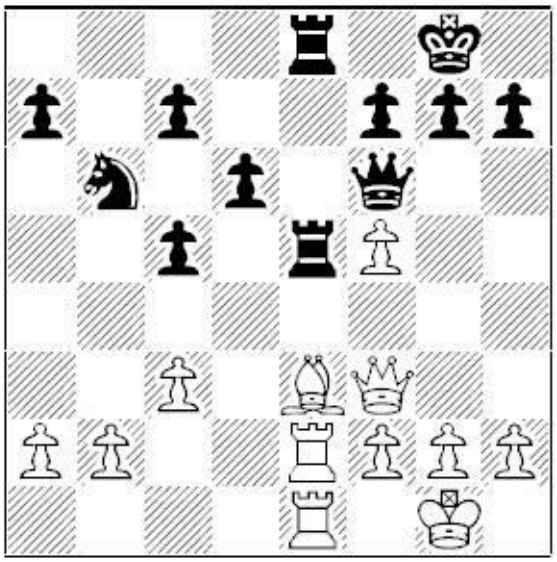
Answer: I think, in a way, White did his opponent a favour since he gave away one of his bishops and altered more than harmed Black's structure.

14 ... bxc6 15 Qf3 Rfe8 16 Be3 c5 17 Re2

White has an interesting disruptive idea with 17 b4!? Qxc3 18 bxc5 dxc5 19 Rac1 Qa3 20 f6 Nd7! 21 fxg7 Ne5, but oddly enough I think Black stands better. His king is surprisingly safe despite the enemy pawn in his gullet on g7; his knight radiates strength on e5, and he owns a few passed pawns.

17 ... Re5! 18 Rae1 Rae8!

chesstouring.com



An intuitive pawn sac.

Question: What pawn sac?

Answer: Black essentially abandoned his queenside to Qb7.

Question: What does Black get for it then?

Answer: Capa, like Fischer, had an almost religious faith in the power of centralization of his pieces. In this case Capa gambles that his kingside build-up leads to a direct attack on White's king.

19 Qb7?!

Here we go! Alekhine the optimist swoops in for the spoils.

Question: I take it from your dubious mark that you think

Alekhine's last move was incorrect?

Answer: Alekhine underestimated the power of Black's coming attack. He should go for 19 Bf4 Rxe2 20 Rxe2 Rxe2 21 Qxe2 h6 22 Qe8+ Kh7 23 Qe4, when he should be able to hold the position.

Question: How is one to know when to go

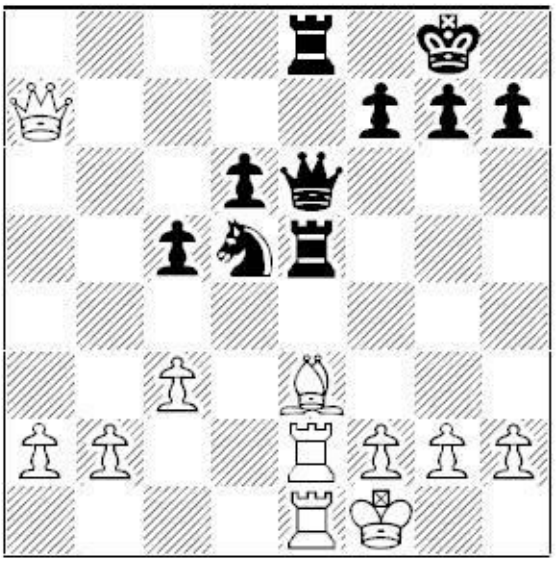
pawn hunting or when to avoid it?

Answer: To take the plunge or to hold back? Such questions provoke heated outcry and debate among annotators. There is no formulaic answer to your question. Simply listen to your intuition, but when in doubt decline!

19 ... Qxf5 20 Qxc7 Qe6 21 Qxa7 Nd5 22 Kf1?

After 22 Qb7 f5! Black's attack begins in earnest. The same holds true for 22 g3 f5!. White is under pressure in both lines, but both are superior to Alekhine's choice.

chesstouring.com



This game was played in the early stages of Alekhine's career, when Alekhine was not yet Alekhine. And even when he became Alekhine, defence was never his strong suit. Black's attack gets out of control after White's panicked last move.

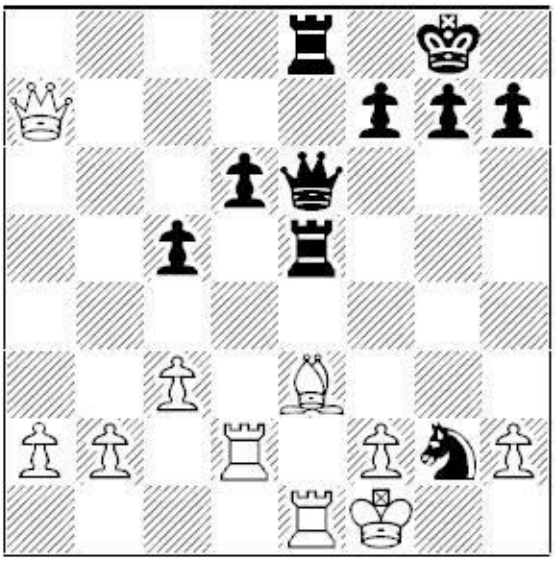
Exercise (combination alert): How would you begin the assault as Black?

Answer: Target e2 and g2. The knight is immune.

22 ... Nf4!

White's bishop stares aghast at how easily the knight manoeuvred around him.

23 Rd2 Nxg2!



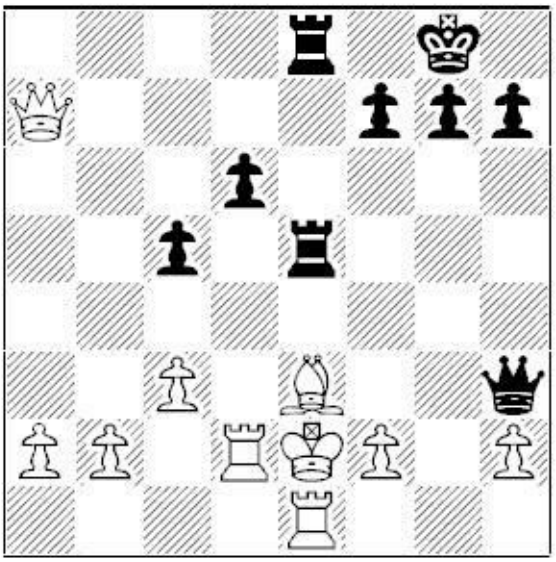
White's kingside pawns prove not to be the impenetrable geological barrier Alekhine had imagined. Capa's move is the right idea, and still very strong, yet the third best move. A strong move is not necessarily the best move.

Here Capa missed the killing sequence 23 ... Qc4+!! (tossing in this innocuous check alters things radically; the simple 23 ... Qg4! 24 f3 Qe6 also wins easily) 24 Kg1 and now the sac obliterates White: 24 ... Nxg2! 25 Kxg2 Rg5+! 26 Bxg5 Qg4+ 27 Kf1 Qh3+ 28 Kg1 Rxe1 mate!

chesstouring.com

24 Kxg2 Qg4+ 25 Kf1 Qh3+ 26 Ke2

No choice, since 26 Kg1?? Rg5+! walks into mate.



Exercise (combination alert): How can Black indulge in a bit of war profiteering?

Answer: Of course, just crash through on e3.

26 ... Rxe3+! 27 fxe3 Qxe3+

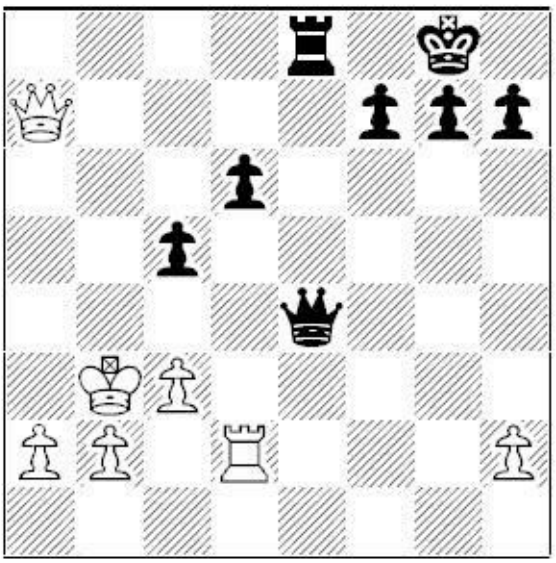
White drops pawns the way a snake sheds old skin, as he barters away his kingside for an empty purse.

28 Kd1 Qxe1+ 29 Kc2

White's safety valve: Run away!

29 ... Qe4+ 30 Kb3?

30 Kc1 Qf4 31 Qd7 Re1+ 32 Kc2 h5! was better, when White is losing but still able to put up some resistance.



Exercise (combination alert): The shell-shocked Alekhine blunders again. Black has an immediate knockout. Can you find what two world champions missed?

30 ... Qc6?!

chesstouring.com

Okay. It's official. The thrill is gone. Capa misses.

Answer: 30 ... Ra8! is a killer: 31 Rxd6 (31 Qd7 c4+ 32 Kb4 Rb8+ 33 Ka3 Qe3 34 Rd5 Qb6 wins) 31

... h6! 32 Qd7 (guarding against ... Qa4 mate) 32 ... Rb8+! 33 Ka3 Qc2! and White is completely helpless against the multiple threats on b2 and a rook check on a8.

31 a4!

Alekhine desperately hopes to offer his king some degree of sanctuary on a2 or a3, the way a sparrow builds its nest, twig by twig. But it is not enough to keep the hawk at bay.

31 ... d5 32 a5

Question: Doesn't this open White up to a queen check on b5?

Answer: It does, but everything loses at this point. For example, after 32 Qa5 Black flushes the king out with 32 ... Rb8+ 33 Kc2 Qg6+ 34 Kc1 Qg1+ and if 35 Kc2? Qa1 36 Kd3 Qb1+.

32 ... Qb5+ 33 Ka3 Rb8 34 Ka2 h6!

No rush. Black covers his back rank before proceeding with the distasteful business of murder.

35 a6

35 Rc2 Re8! 36 Rc1 Re2 37 Qb6 Rxb2+ 38 Ka1 Qxb6 39 axb6 Rxb6 is equally hopeless. It is generally a bad idea to enter a rook and pawn ending three pawns down against Capa!

35 ... Qb3+ 0-1

Alekhine had no wish to hang around for 36 Kb1 Re8 37 Rc2 Re1+ 38 Rc1 Re2.

Game 8

J.R.Capablanca-O.Bernstein

St Petersburg 1914

Queen's Gambit Declined

1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 c4 e6 4 Nc3 Nbd7 5 Bg5 Be7 6 e3 c6

Kasparov dubs this move with a "?!" mark but there is nothing intrinsically wrong with it. This is simply an old school Orthodox Queen's Gambit Declined.

Question: What is the issue? Black's opening looks solid to me.

Answer: Well, there is no issue right now. It is Bernstein's coming play which is the problem. Let's put it this way: What is weak now was normal then. Back then even strong GMs, including Capa himself, basically winged it in the opening, concocting all sorts of moves which would make the modern GM cringe. So in the opening stage, we shouldn't judge 1914 openings by today's standards. Believe me, a hundred years from now some annotator will be saying you and I played the opening like donkeys!

7 Bd3 dxc4 8 Bxc4 b5

This is the real error. ... b7-b5 is totally out of place in this situation since it will be next to impossible for Black to enforce ... a7-a6 and the freeing break ... c6-c5 without serious consequences.

Question: Then what plan would you suggest for Black?

Answer: Something like 8 ... Nd5 9 Bxe7 Qxe7 10 0-0 0-0 11 e4 Nxc3 12 bxc3 b6 13 a4 Bb7 14 a5 c5 keeps White's advantage to a minimum, N.Dzagnidze-M.Gurevich, Chalkida 2009.

9 Bd3 a6

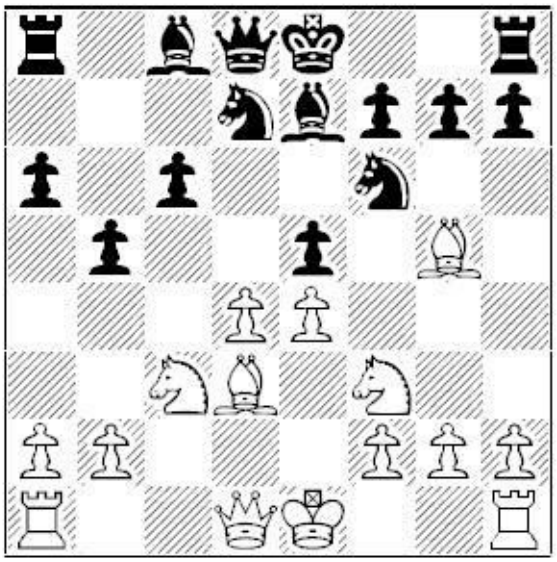
Hoping to play ... c6-c5 next move.

10 e4!

Much stronger than castling. White's strategic threat is e4-e5, then swap bishops, leaving Black cramped, with a bad bishop and weak dark squares.

10 ... e5?

chesstouring.com



A move clearly at war with logic. Bernstein incorrectly reasons: Risk is the price for a chance at freedom. But his move passes the threshold of risk and enters the realm of foolhardy.

Question: How so?

Answer: Black now must expend huge effort to regain it, which in turn allows White a considerable development lead.

Question: What should Black play instead?

Answer: Both Golombek and Kasparov suggest 10 ... c5. Kasparov's analysis runs: 11 e5 Nd5 12 Bxe7 Qxe7 (12 ... Nxe7?! 13 Ne4 is even worse for Black) 13 Nxd5 exd5 14 0-0 c4 15 Bc2 0-0 "with a somewhat inferior, but acceptable game."

11 dxe5 Ng4 12 Bf4

Kasparov gives this rather obvious response an exclam for some reason.

12 ... Bc5 13 0-0 Qc7?!

The open c-file is not a happy spot for the queen. Black should acquiesce to the admittedly glum line 13 ... Qe7 14 e6! fxe6 (not 14 ... Qxe6?? 15 Ng5) 15 e5 with advantage to White.

14 Rc1

Eyeing the exposed queen on c7.

14 ... f6

Question: Why not simply regain the pawn with 14 ... Ngxe5?

Answer: After 15 Nxe5 Nxe5 16 Qh5! (Kasparov gives 16 Nxb5! cxb5 17 b4) 16 ... Bd4 17 Nd5 Qd6 18 Rxc6! Qxc6 19 Bxe5 Black is not going to survive for long.

15 Bg3 fxe5?!

Better to rescue the dangling knight with 15 ... Ngxe5.

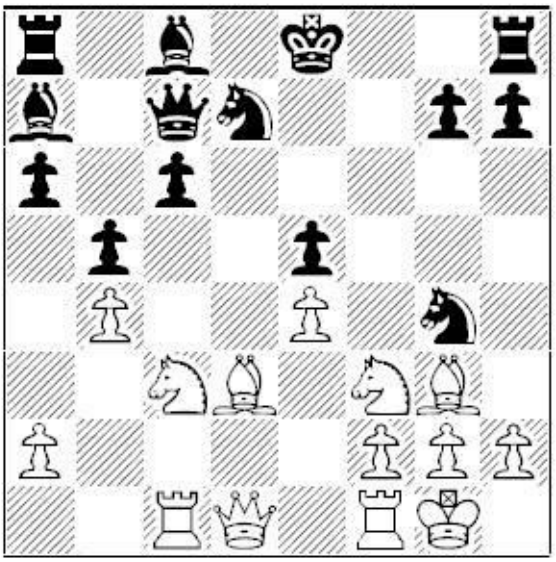
16 b4!

16 Ng5 Ndf6 17 Qb3 also looks very strong.

16 ... Ba7

16 ... Bxb4? 17 Nd5 Qd6 18 Nxb4 Qxb4 19 Rxc6 is horrible for Black.

chesstouring.com



Black is woefully behind in development and his position teeters. In battle, normal caution shouldn't extend to the moment which requires a decisive, swift (and generally risky!) course of action.

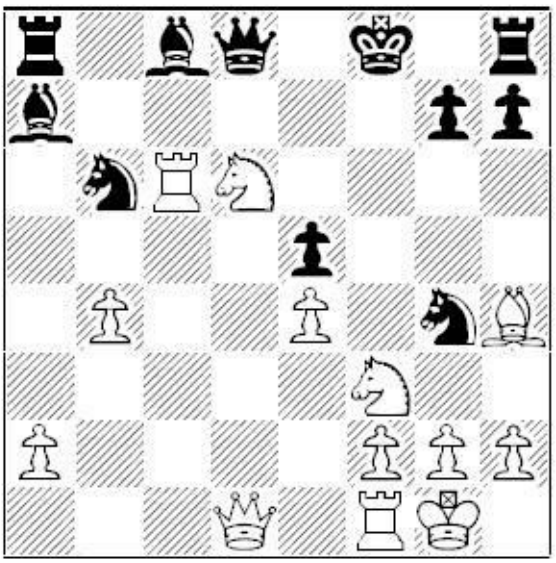
Exercise (critical decision): Intuition tells us that a forceful continuation is needed. How would you pursue the attack?

Answer: The time to strike has arrived. From this point I'm not sure how much Capa actually saw, or if he even had a sequential framework for what comes next. Instead, Capa just began the attacking idea and flowed loosely with the chaos, calculating when the need arose.

17 Bxb5! axb5 18 Nxb5 Qd8 19 Nd6+ Kf8 20 Rxc6 Nb6

We sense the hidden energies within White's position. Now they are unleashed.

21 Bh4!!



Skills, if left untested, have a way of degenerating. Capa begins an attack which requires almost inhuman calculation ability to succeed over the board. The move is given an exclam by Capa, Golombek and Kasparov. In typically dramatic fashion, I trump them all by awarding the move the two exclams it truly deserves! Reuben Fine, a GM/psychologist and contemporary of Capablanca, claimed that Capa was something of an idiot savant, in that he made the correct move without knowing why it was correct.

chesstouring.com

Question: Do you buy this argument?

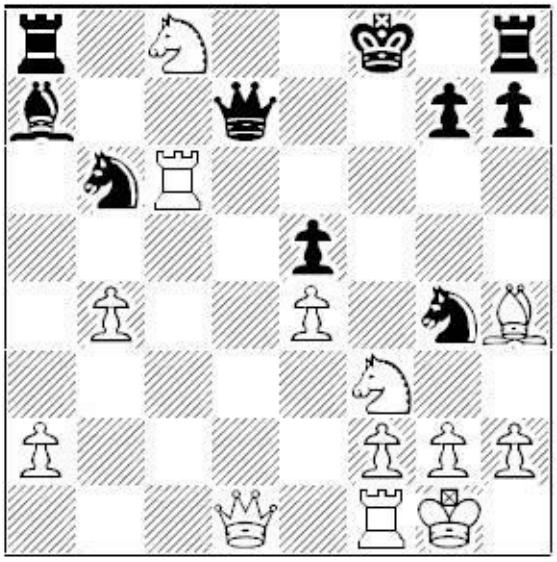
Answer: No, I don't buy Fine's theory. Having gone through Capa's games, I am convinced he possessed computer-like accurate calculation skills as well. In fact, Capablanca said he visualized the position up to the 30th move from this point. The implications: Either Fine is wrong or Capa is a liar.

Question: What is the point of White's last move?

Answer: The move is a precursor to a mind-bendingly deep exchange sac which drives Bernstein's king out into the wilderness for the remainder of the game. Just watch. For the record, the mundane 21 Nxe5 gives White tons of compensation and a winning position as well.

21 ... Qd7 22 Nxc8!

Here is the exchange sac. White's minor pieces soon seep through the porous defences and Black's king gets banished to the nethermost regions of the board.



22 ... Qxc6 23 Qd8+

The software always has to go and ruin the mystique. *Houdini* points out that 23 Be7+!! finishes Black off immediately: 23 ... Kf7 (or 23 ... Ke8 24 Qd8+ Kf7 25 Ng5+ Kg6 26 Qxh8) 24 Ng5+ Kg6 25 Qxg4 Qxc8 26 Ne6+ Kf7 27 Qxg7+! Ke8 (27 ... Kxe6 28 Rd1! mates) 28 Nd8! is crushing. But of course, only computers see such lines.

23 ... Qe8 24 Be7+! Kf7 25 Nd6+ Kg6

The king tentatively hobbles forward while his spirit lags a few paces behind.

26 Nh4+

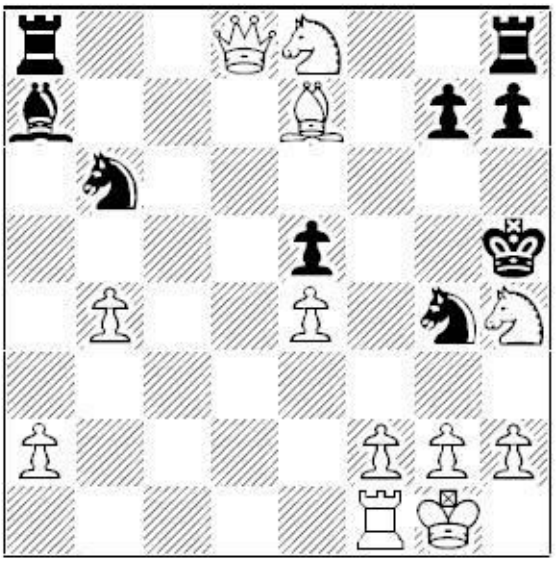
Horrible, unspeakable threats hang in the air.

26 ... Kh5

The king flings himself against the bars of his cage in frustration.

27 Nxe8!

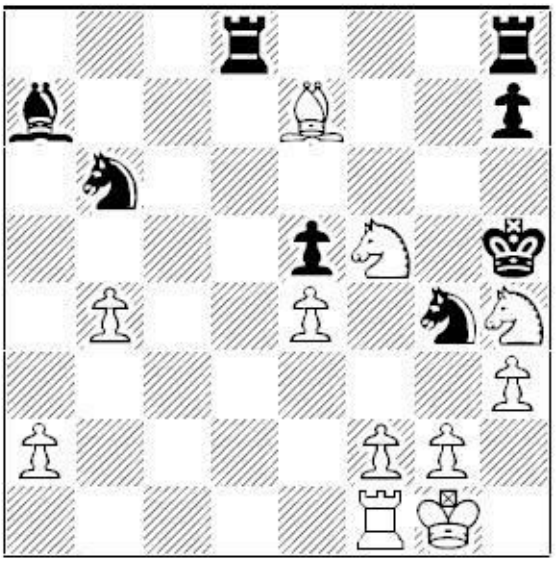
chesstouring.com



27 ... Rxd8 28 Nxg7+

Queens come off the board but the attack remains. White's pieces swarm over Black's king like a street gang mugging a straying and lost tourist.

28 ... Kh6 29 Ngf5+ Kh5 30 h3!



This is the point Capa visualized and assessed when he played 21 Bh4!!. Black has no chance of escape.

30 ... Nc8

30 ... Rdg8 31 hxg4+ Rxg4 32 f3 Rxh4 33 Bxh4 is also hopeless; and 30 ... Rd7?? 31 hxg4+ Kxg4 32 f3+ Kf4 33 g3 mate is even worse.

31 hxg4+ Kxg4

Bernstein breaks his personal long jump record. In his 1911 San Sebastian game against Capa, his king only reached g5! Here his king, wandering about on g4, played a deadly and rather hopeless game of hide and seek with White's attackers.

32 Bxd8 Rxd8

chesstouring.com

The game is over. Black managed to escape checkmate at the cost of a totally hopeless three pawns deficit.

33 g3 Rd2 34 Kg2 Re2

Question: Shouldn't he at least take the free a-pawn?

Answer: The pawn is poisoned: 34 ... Rxa2? 35 Nf3 Bb8?? 36 Rh1! mates.

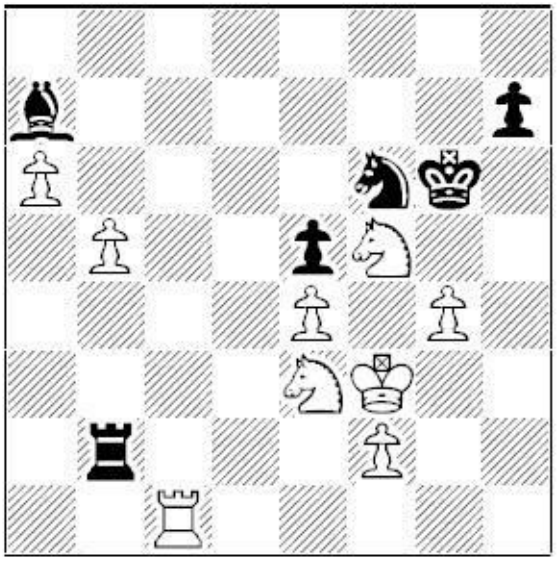
35 a4! Nb6

And just in case you ask about taking the "free" e-pawn, I would like to point out 35 ... Rxe4 36 f3+ pops a rook.

36 Ne3+ Kh5 37 a5 Nd7 38 Nhf5 Nf6

Many of the old-timer GMs were notoriously late resigners. Kasparov very politely wrote: "Bernstein 'forgets' to resign."

39 b5 Bd4 40 Kf3 Ra2 41 a6 Ba7 42 Rc1 Rb2 43 g4+! Kg6



Exercise (combination alert): White has a method of picking up a full piece. How?

Answer: Double attack: Mate on g7 and hanging bishop on a7.

44 Rc7! Rxf2+

A dramatic bit of bluster.

45 Kxf2 Nxg4+ 46 Kf3 1-0

Game 9

J.R.Capablanca-A.Israel

Casual game, Buenos Aires 1914

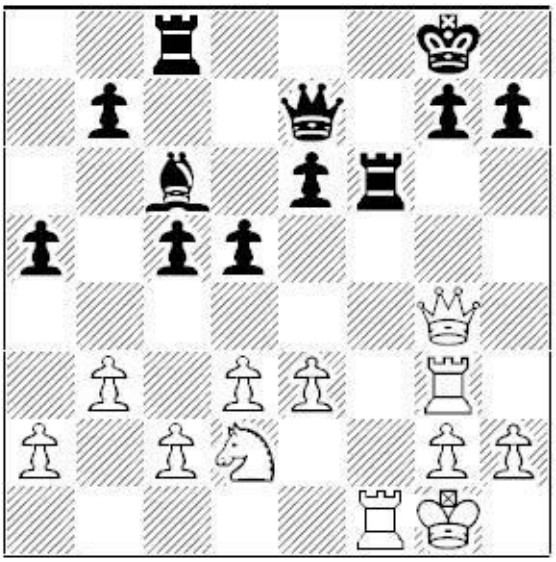
Bird's Opening

1 f4

We all enjoy an alien opening spin once in a while. Ancient and semi-modern sometimes merge.

Compare Capa's game with R.J.Fischer-H.Mecking, Palma de Mallorca Interzonal 1970: 1 b3 d5 2 Bb2 c5 3 Nf3 Nc6 4 e3 Nf6 5 Bb5 Bd7 6 0-0 e6 7 d3 Be7 8 Bxc6 Bxc6 9 Ne5 Rc8 10 Nd2 0-0 11 f4 Nd7 12 Qg4! Nxe5 13 Bxe5 Bf6 (he should probably play 13 ... g6 but I don't like his game even then) 14 Rf3! Qe7 15 Raf1 a5 16 Rg3 Bxe5?! (16 ... g6 is necessary) 17 fxe5 (Fischer achieved a winning position with remarkable ease) 17 ... f5 (17 ... g6 18 Rf6 isn't all that tempting for Black either) 18 exf6 Rxf6.

chesstutor.com



Exercise (combination alert): White to play and win material.

Answer: 19 Qxg7+! Qxg7 20 Rxf6! and Fischer duly converted.

1 ... d5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 b3 e6 4 Bb2 c5 5 e3 Nc6 6 Bb5 Bd7 7 0-0 a6

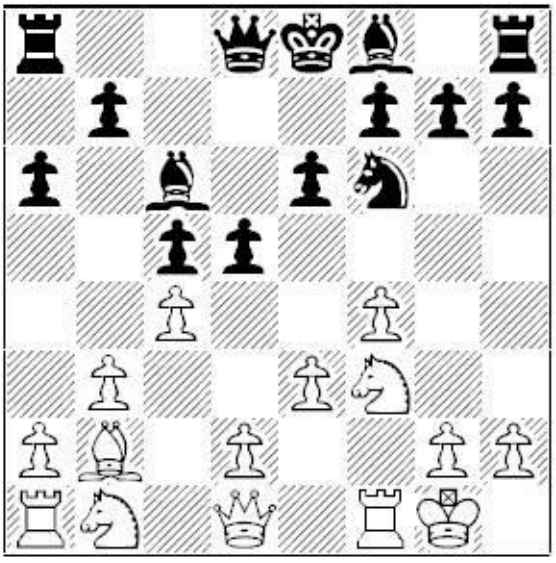
Once again, I strive to restrain myself from splattering the page with a "?!" mark.

Question: What is wrong with the move?

It puts the question to White's bishop.

Answer: Except that it's not such a difficult question he puts to the bishop, since White's answer is painfully obvious. White would eventually take unprovoked, since his strategic goal is conquest of e5. So Black loses a tempo.

8 Bxc6 Bxc6 9 c4



White shouldn't be in a rush to open the centre after handing over the bishop pair. I prefer Fischer's treatment: d2-d3, Nbd2 and Ne5.

9 ... Nd7

With 9 ... b5! Black preserves his light-squared bishop and increases central contact.

chesstouring.com

10 Nc3 Qc7 11 Rc1

11 f5! follows the principle: Pry the position open when leading in development.

Question: Thou shalt ... thou shalt not! I don't know
when to apply the principles. Advice?

Answer: You don't have to look for principles on every move. But if a serious imbalance arises – like a lead in development – then look for its antidote. In this case, open the game.

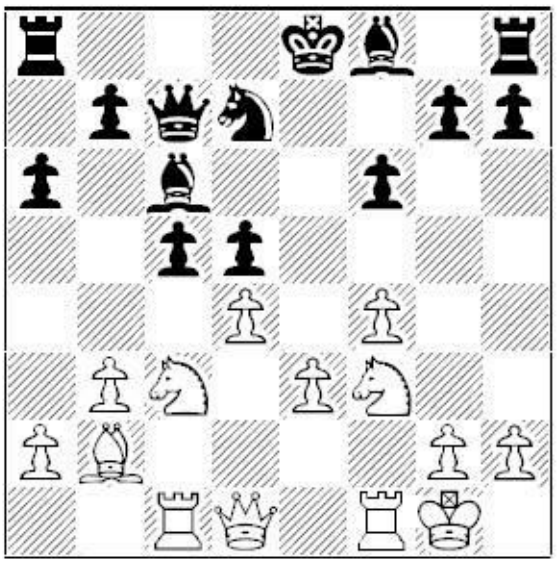
11 ... f6?!

La, lala, lala. Black thinks he has all day. Oh, good. We passed the opening and I can finally start doling out punishing annotations to Black.

12 cxd5

12 f5!? also looks dangerous for Black.

12 ... exd5 13 d4!



Question: Why an exclam? His last move creates a hole
on e4 and makes his e-pawn backward.

Answer: Both of which Black has no way of exploiting. On the other hand White opens the game and makes good use of his own soon-created hole on d4.

13 ... Rd8 14 dxc5 Nxc5?!

Black falls dangerously behind. The developing recapture with the bishop was better.

15 Nd4 Qf7

Question: Why didn't Black develop this time?

Answer: White threatened b3-b4, followed by Ne6, forking queen and rook after 15 ... Bd6? 16 b4! Ne4 17 Nxe4 dxe4 18 Ne6.

16 b4! Nd7

Black can't cope with 16 ... Ne4? 17 Nxc6 bxc6 18 Nxe4 dxe4 19 Qc2.

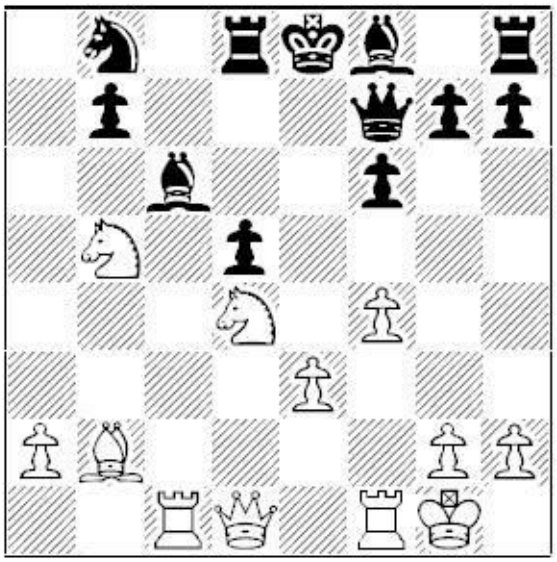
17 b5

Simply blasting open the centre with 17 e4! dxe4 18 Nxc6 bxc6 19 Nxe4 was also very strong.

17 ... axb5 18 Ncxb5 Nb8?

He had to try 18 ... Nc5.

chesstouring.com



Exercise (combination alert): White has a tactical trick which tosses Black about. (Hint: The tactic involves the knights.)

Answer: **19 Ne6! Bxb5**

Question: This looks like total collapse. Why didn't Black just calmly lift his rook? I see no harm then.

Answer: I admit that Black's last move looks like he cuts off his hand to remove a splinter. But if he lifts the rook as you suggest, he isn't all that much better off since White responds just as calmly with 19 ... Rd7 20 f5!, and the parasite attaches itself firmly to its host. FYI, the hanging knight on b5 is not so hanging after 20 ... Bxb5?? 21 Rc8+ Ke7 22 Ba3+ Rd6 23 Qxd5! with a quick mate to follow.

20 Nc7+ Kd7

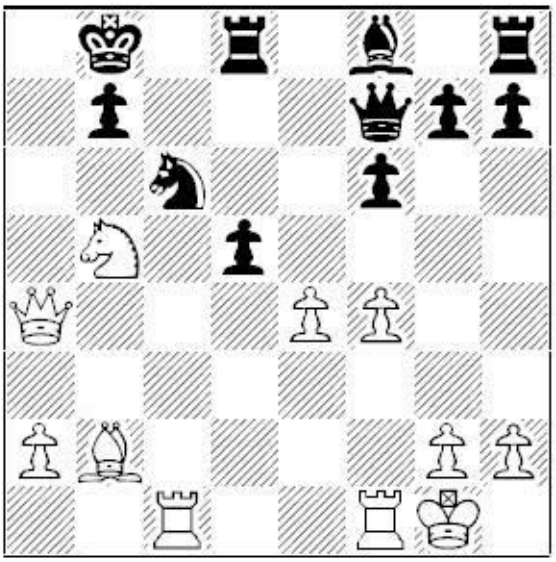
Gulp. He takes his money out of the bank and puts it all in a paper sack, hoping it will remain safe there.

21 Nxb5

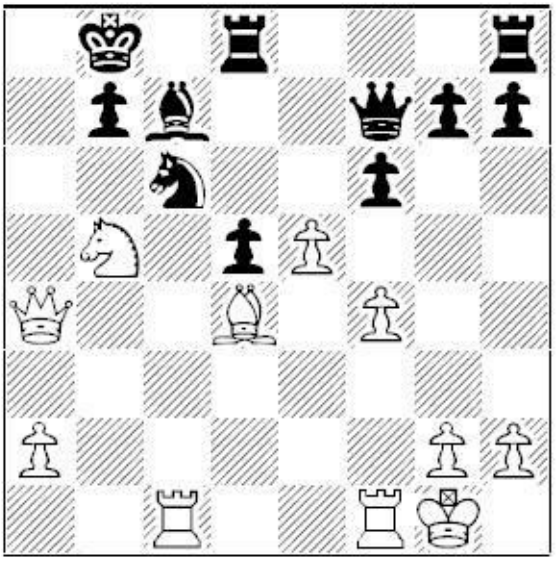
Have you ever tried to make a smoothie in a high-speed blender and forgot to put the top on? To call Black's position a disaster is an insult to past disasters! Usually one sacs a rook to achieve attacks of such magnitude. The rest is beautiful carnage.

21 ... Nc6 22 e4 Kc8 23 Qa4 Kb8

chesstouring.com

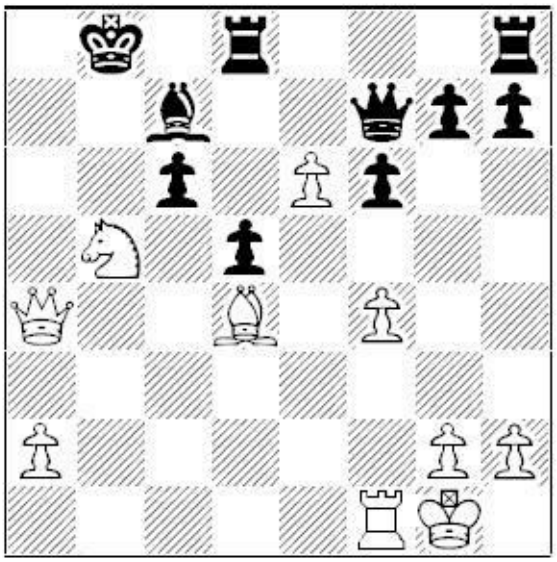


Exercise (planning): Find a way to fuel White's attack.
Answer: **24 Bd4! Bd6 25 e5 Bc7**



Exercise (planning): Where is White's breakthrough?
Answer: Burn down the village and kill them all!
26 Rxc6!
Destroying the final relevant defender. White's attack soon bears bloody fruit.
26 ... bxc6 27 e6!

chesstouring.com

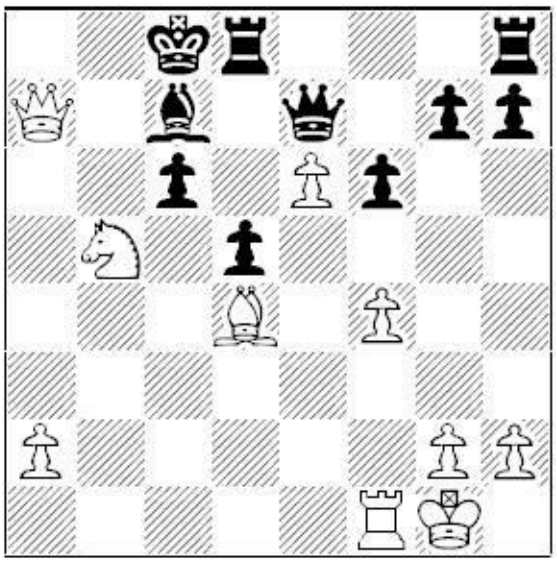


Cutting off d7 as an escape route for Black's king. Black has precious little life remaining with White's pieces enclosing.

27 ... Qe7

The queen, who must keep watch over c7, hopes to crawl her way back into relevance, all the while viewing her more powerful sister on a4 with terror-glazed vision.

28 Qa7+ Kc8



Black's worthless defenders are strewn about like nails driven into a wall by a drunk. Capablanca found a forced mate in five moves. The computers tell me there is a mate in three!

Exercise (combination alert): Can you find
the quicker mate missed by Capa?

29 Qa8+

Well, this is mate in five moves. Capa misses the quicker:

Answer: 29 Qa6+! Kb8 30 Ba7+ Ka8 31 Qxc6 mate!

29 ... Bb8 30 Qxc6+ Bc7 31 Qa8+ Bb8 32 Rc1+ 1-0

chesstouring.com

Game 10

J.R.Capablanca-E.Bogoljubow
Moscow 1925
Queen's Gambit Accepted

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 dxc4!?

A rather odd point to enter the Queen's Gambit Accepted, but I will stick by my guns and continue the stubborn refusal to criticize the opening of the old lions by modern standards.

4 e4

The only path to try and extract an advantage against Black's eccentric move order. 4 e3 c5 transposes to normal QGA lines.

4 ... c5!?

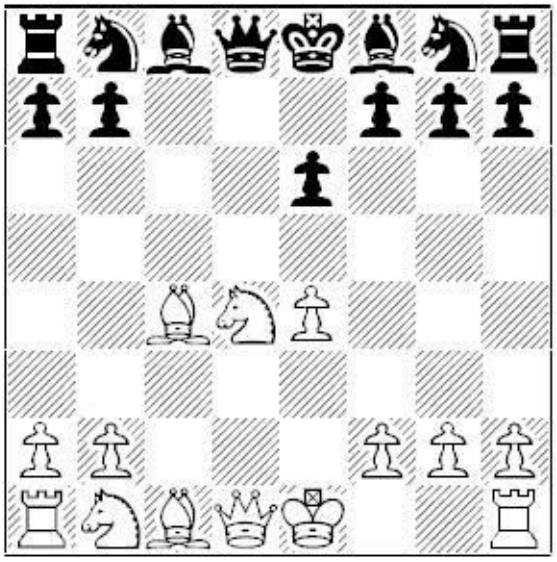
Now Bogo is just asking for it.

Question: What don't you like about Black's last move?

Answer: It violates the principle: Don't open the position when behind in development. 4 ... b5 is very playable at this point and has been tried by both Kasparov and Karpov: 5 a4 c6 6 axb5 cxb5 7 b3 Bb7 8 bxc4 Bxe4 9 cxb5 Nf6 10 Be2 Be7 11 0-0 0-0 12 Nc3 Bb7 only looks like a slight edge for White, F.Vallejo Pons-G.Kasparov, Linares 2005.

5 Bxc4 cxd4 6 Nxd4

The logical capture. Capa uncharacteristically dodges a queen swap since he commands a considerable lead in development.



6 ... Nf6

Instead, 6 ... a6 7 0-0 Nf6 8 Nc3 Qc7 9 Bb3 Bd6 10 Kh1 Bd7 11 f4 e5? was A.Graf-R.Mainka, Dresden 2003 (11 ... Bc5 12 e5 is still awful for Black but necessary). Now Black is in deep trouble after the simple 12 Nf3!.

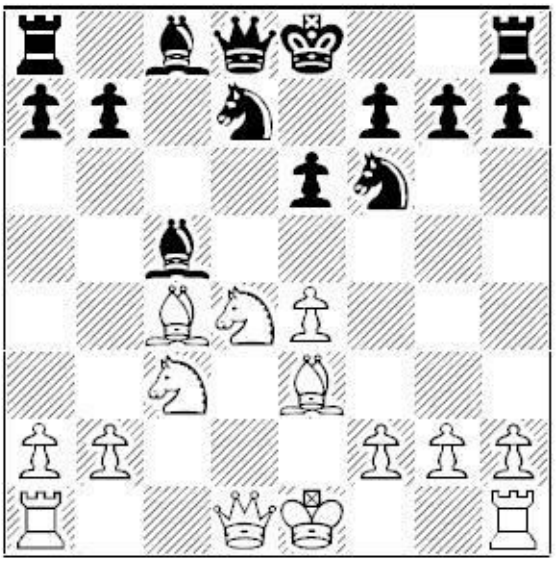
Question: What is wrong with 6 ... e5 forcing queens off the board?

Answer: It doesn't live up to its advertising after 7 Qa4+! Nd7 (7 ... Bd7? is harshly met by 8 Qb3!) 8 Nf5, when Black didn't get queens off the board and managed to fall even more dangerously behind in development.

7 Nc3 Bc5 8 Be3 Nbd7

chesstouring.com

8 ... 0-0 avoids White's coming sac.



Exercise (critical decision): Use your intuition. White can play the solid 9 0-0, with a pleasant edge in development. But those sacs on e6 also look tempting. Should we sacrifice? If so, which piece do we sac?

Answer: The sacrifice of the bishop on e6 puts an impossible defensive burden on Black.

9 Bxe6!!

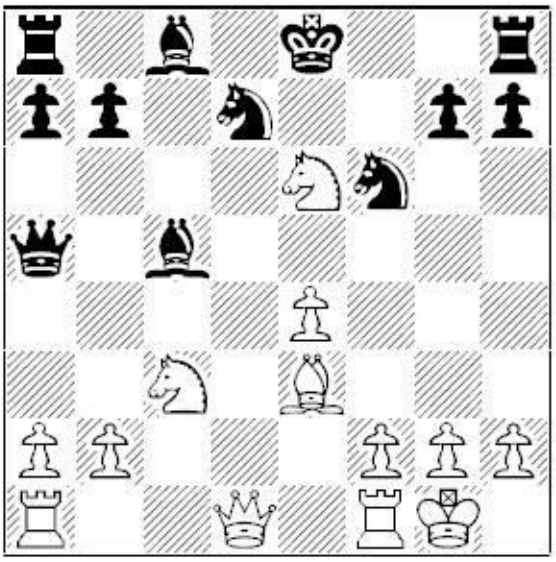
The witch doctor tosses the bones and through his mysterious powers, correctly interprets the scatter. The sac is sound. Capa's infallible intuition strikes once again. With this move, White dedicates himself to a path of no return. Now for both sides, security is a thing of the past and their joint futures lie somewhere in a hazy future: Kill or be killed. After this sac White has a firm grip on the initiative and he isn't satisfied with his development lead and edge by just castling.

9 ... fxe6 10 Nxe6 Qa5

Question: Why didn't Black play 10 ... Qb6?

Answer: White gets compensation with interest for the piece after 11 Nxc5! Nxc5 12 Rc1, when it is annoyingly difficult for Black to free himself from the pin.

11 0-0!



chesstouring.com

Excellent judgment.

Question: I don't get it. Why didn't White take the g-pawn with check, wrecking Black's castling privileges as well?

Answer: It costs White time. After 11 Nxg7+?! Kf7 12 Nf5 Ne5:

a) 13 Qb3+ Be6 14 Qxb7+ Nfd7, Black's pieces are horrifically active and he actually stands better.

b) 13 0-0 Bxf5 14 exf5 Bxe3 15 Qb3+ Kg7 16 Qxb7+ Nf7 17 fxe3 Rab8, Black's king is completely safe and his pieces once again run amok with activity.

11 ... Bxe3?!

Bogo underestimates the force of White's coming attack. He undoubtedly played the move to seize a hole on e5, but opening the f-file more than makes up for it. He should try 11 ... Bb4 12 Bd4, though even then Black fights for his life.

12 fxe3 Kf7

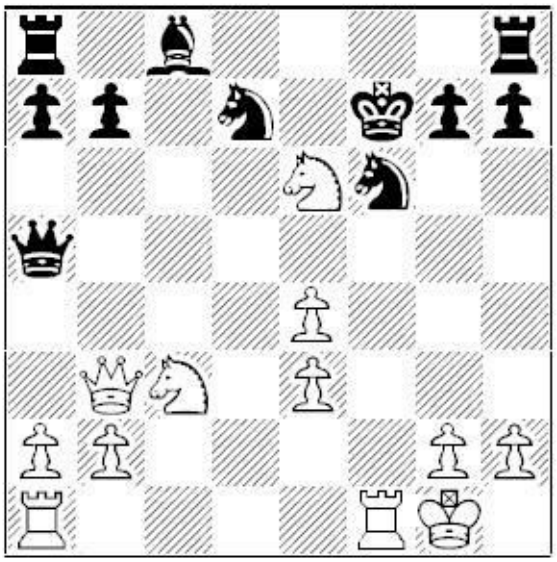
Alternatives:

a) 12 ... Rg8 13 Nb5!.

b) 12 ... Ke7 13 Nxg7 Rg8 14 Nf5+ Kd8 15 Rc1.

In both cases it is hard to imagine Black's king surviving.

13 Qb3!



13 ... Kg6

No choice but to continue his Sunday stroll through the minefield.

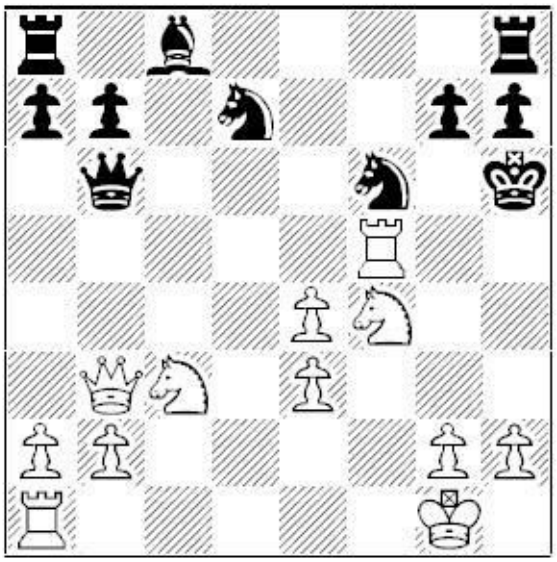
14 Rf5! Qb6

14 ... Ne5 15 Nd5! Re8 (15 ... Bxe6?? 16 Nf4+ is crushing) 16 Rxe5 Bxe6 17 Rxe6 wins, due to the coming knight fork on f4.

15 Nf4+ Kh6

Something cannot arise from nothing. All combinations must contain the spark of the preceding cause. In this position, there is indeed something for White, but the combination is deeply imbedded in the dark corners of the position. So hidden that it lay just outside the reach of Capablanca's intuition.

chesstouring.com



Exercise (combination alert): Take about 15 minutes and look for a mating pattern. If you find it, I take my hat off to you – and so does Capa!

16 g4?!

The most vulnerable moment in a chess game, the one where our guard goes down, can be the point where you have the firm belief that you are in possession of all the answers. Maddeningly, the combination flickers just out of reach of Capa's consciousness. He missed:

Answer: 16 Qf7!!, threatening a deadly check on h5. Black must soon give up heavy material to avoid mate: 16 ... Qxe3+ 17 Kh1 g6 18 Ne6! Ne8 (nor does he save himself with 18 ... Rg8 19 Nd5! Qxe4 20 Rxf6, or 18 ... gxf5 19 Qg7+ Kh5 20 Ne2!! and White mates in four moves) 19 Rf3 Ne5 20 Rh3+! Qxh3 21 Qf4+ Kh5 22 Qg5 mate!

16 ... g5!

The only move but a good one. Black is right back in the game.

17 Qxb6?!

Capa's old weakness: Swapping when he shouldn't. 17 Qf7! turns the game into a total muddle after 17 ... Rf8 18 Qe7 Qxe3+ 19 Kg2 gxf4 20 Rf1! when it's anybody's game to win or lose.

17 ... axb6 18 Rd1 Rg8

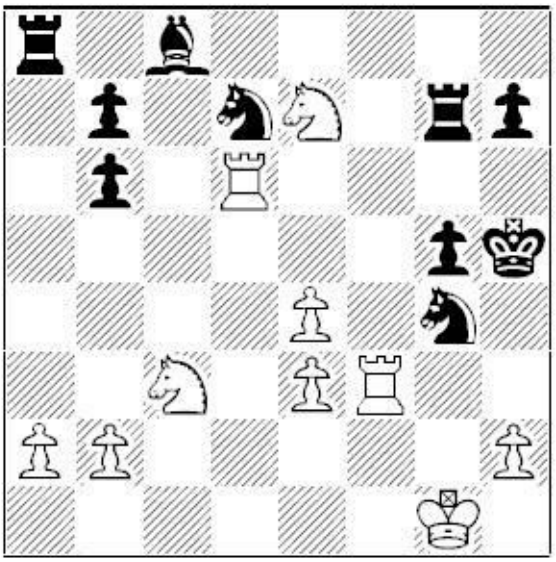
Not surprisingly, Black avoids 18 ... gxf4 19 exf4 Rg8 20 g5+ Kh5 21 Rd3 Ne8 22 Rh3+ Kg4 23 Kg2. The computers reassure me in soothing tones that Black is quite safe, but a human would need his head examined to enter such a den of evil for his king voluntarily.

19 Nfd5 Nxg4?!

This allows White's attack to re-ignite. 19 ... Nxd5 was better.

20 Ne7! Rg7 21 Rd6+ Kh5 22 Rf3!

chesstouring.com



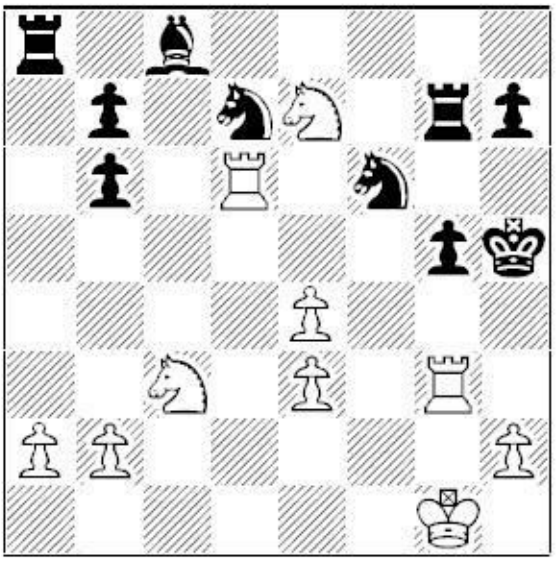
Threatening mate in one.

22 ... Ngf6 23 Rh3+ Kg4

Question: Have you noticed that nearly all of Capa's opponents' kings end up on g4 or h5?

Answer: You forgot about d3! Please return to Capablanca-Masyutin to refresh your memory. Bogo's king balances precariously on the high wire, faced with sudden death on either side of him, yet, unlike the other unfortunate king marchers from this chapter, remains defiant.

24 Rg3+ Kh5



When you are lost in the wilderness, one direction is as good as another.

Exercise: Capa has the draw if he wants. (He doesn't!)
But is there a way we can play for the win? (There is!)

Answer: **25 Nf5! Rg6**

Question: This looks illogical. Why did Black block off the escape hatch for his king on g6?

chesstouring.com

Answer: If 25 ... Rg8 26 Rh3+ Kg6 27 Rh6+ Kf7 then 28 e5! short circuits one knight's connection to the other.

26 Ne7?!

The position is so horrifically complex that Capa's string of his normally rare missteps continues. White wins in problem-like fashion after 26 Rh3+! Kg4 27 Kg2! Nc5 28 Ng3!! (White threatens e4-e5!, followed by a rook check on d4) 28 ... Ne6 29 e5 Ne8 30 Rxe6!! Bxe6 31 Rh5! and there is no defence to the inevitable and rather humiliating h2-h3 mate!

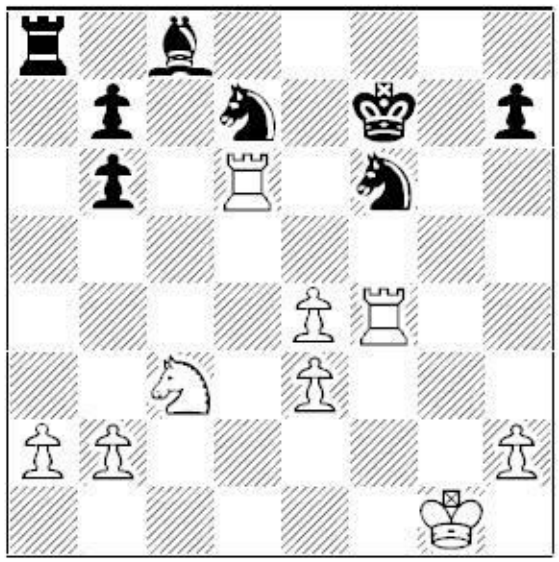
26 ... g4

Black is okay after 26 ... Nc5!.

27 Nxg6 Kxg6?

The powerful are rarely prepared psychologically when their desires are casually rebuffed. Black puts up greater resistance with 27 ... hxg6! 28 e5! Ne8 29 Rd4 Nxe5 30 Rd5 Ra5! 31 Nb5! Bd7 32 a4! Rxa4 33 Rxe5+.

28 Rxg4+ Kf7 29 Rf4!



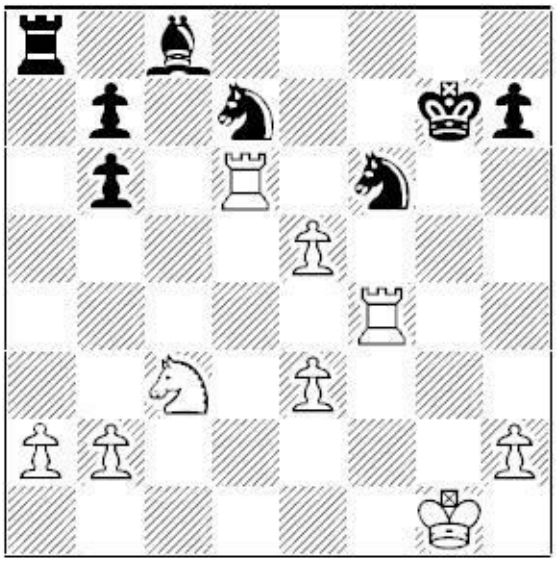
Dual threats: e4-e5 and Nd5. Now all is as it should be. For the remainder of the game the guilty black forces look about left and right, surveying their surroundings for threats, while White's pieces move about carefree and innocent.

29 ... Kg7

29 ... Ke7 30 e5 Ne8 31 Nd5+ Kd8 32 Rf8 is curtains.

30 e5!

chesstouring.com



30 ... Ne8 31 Re6! Nc7 32 Re7+ 1-0

Question: Why did Black resign!?

Answer: His pieces are tied into knots. For example: 32 ... Kg6 33 Rc4! Na6 34 Rg4+! Kh6 (34 ... Kf5 35 h3!) 35 Rg8! (threatening to take on d7) 35 ... Nc7 36 Rh8! Kg6 37 e6 wins.

Game 11

J.R.Capablanca-Ed.Lasker

Lake Hopatcong 1926

Queen's Gambit Declined

In this one Capa faces the other Lasker. All through the seventh grade I carried around Edward Lasker's book *Chess Secrets I Learned from the Masters* and must have read it ten times (surreptitiously during math class). My favourite chapter, of course, was the one on Capa. I don't have a copy anymore and really should re-order the book. Good books, like good friends should be visited.

1 Nf3 Nf6 2 c4 c6 3 d4 d5 4 Nc3 e6 5 Bg5 Nbd7

In those days sharper gambit lines in the Semi-Slav, like the Moscow (5 ... h6 6 Bh4 dxc4 7 e4 g5 8 Bg3 b5) and the Botvinnik (5 ... dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 Bh4 g5 9 Nxg5 hxg5 10 Bxg5 Nbd7), hadn't been invented yet:

6 e3 Qa5

The Cambridge Springs Variation was one of the hot lines at the time.

7 cxd5

Capablanca played 7 Nd2 against Alekhine in the next chapter (see Game 19).

7 ... exd5 8 Bd3 Ne4 9 0-0! Ndf6

Question: Why didn't Black accept the pawn by capturing on c3?

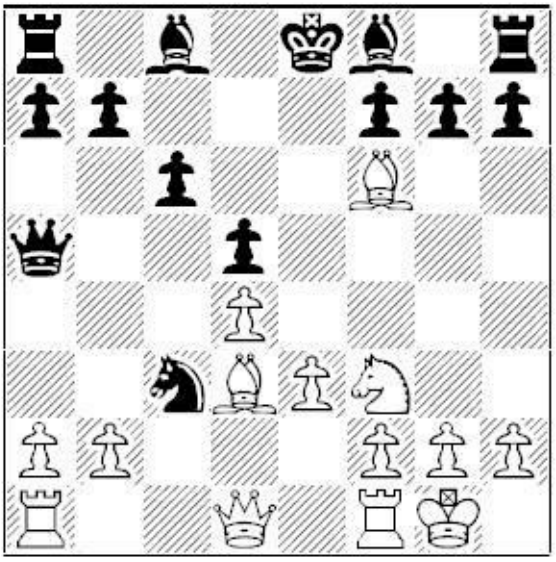
Answer: He could, but Black falls behind in development. For example: 9 ... Nxc3 10 bxc3 Qxc3 11 e4! dxe4 12 Bxe4 Bd6 13 Bd2 Qa3 14 Re1 0-0 15 Re3! Qa6 16 Bd3 Qb6 17 Re4 Qd8 18 Bg5! Nf6 (18 ... f6? 19 Rh4! gives White a winning attack) 19 Rh4 gave White a scary build-up around Black's king in M.Lomineishvili-M.Romanko, European Women's Championship, Plovdiv 2008. I don't think I would want to take on Black in this position against Capa. Would you?

chesstouring.com

10 Bxf6

He could also retain the tension with 10 Bh4.

10 ... Nxc3?



Black misevaluates the coming position and commits the error of playing it with too strong a grasp. Later he faces the danger of being overwhelmed by the weaknesses he creates. Better to play the position with a light touch and flow and simply recapture on f6. Even then, after 10 ... Nxf6 11 Qc2, I don't think Black fully equalized.

Question: Why not?

Answer: Maybe this is just a stylistic bias because I happen to like such structures for White, but the position looks like a typical Queen's Gambit Exchange line, except White is a little more ahead in development than normal. The black queen is misplaced on a5 as well, where a2-a3 and b2-b4 start a minority attack and gain a tempo to boot. I don't think Black's bishop pair makes up for all this.

11 bxc3 gxf6

Black's (incorrect) gamble: He purposefully allowed his kingside structure to be damaged to open the g-file for his rooks, and also obtained the bishop pair. With religions it is one thing to recite the proper words and quite another to have faith in them. Black makes motions as if to attack, but deep down I suspect he didn't really believe in his attack, and rightfully so.

Question: I don't understand. Isn't this a good deal for Black?

Answer: The absence of a thing is often a warning sign that reality fails to coincide with expectations. How easy it is to formulate a plan, only to underestimate significant details. Black's trouble lies in the following factors:

1. Black is seriously behind in development, meaning his future attack never materializes.

2. Black's own king fails to find safety from horizon to horizon since White owns the open b-file and can easily open the c-file as well.

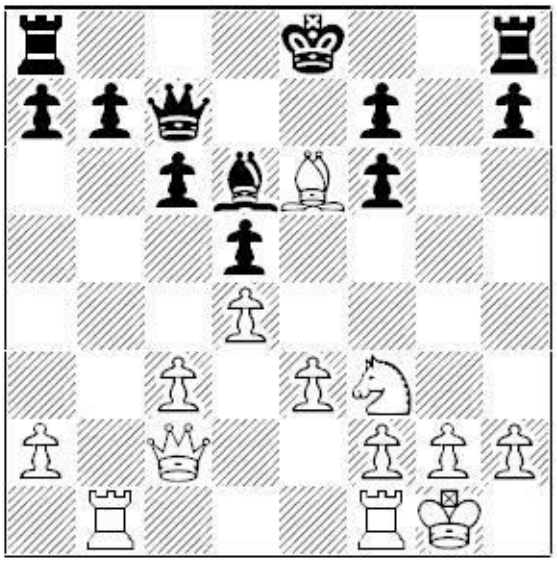
3. Add to that Black's inferior structure, just in case the players uneventfully reach an ending. Then Black will be struggling in that scenario as well.

12 Qc2 Bd6 13 Bf5

Principle: When your opponent owns the bishop pair, swap one of them off.

13 ... Be6 14 Rab1 Qc7 15 Bxe6!

chesstouring.com



Excellent strategic judgment. White voluntarily fixes Black's structure in order to achieve the e3-e4 pawn break.

15 ... fxe6 16 e4 0-0-0!?

The queenside is the canvas upon which Black paints his fate. He hopes to escape peril in the centre or kingside but faces an even greater one on the queenside, where White is simply faster. Who can blame Black, though, for avoiding the pessimistic 16 ... 0-0 17 c4 when White has all the pressure at zero risk.

17 c4 Bf4 18 Rb3

Multipurpose:

1. The rook prepares a doubling or tripling on the b-file.
2. The rook covers against tricks on f3.
3. If Black later induces g2-g3 and then turns it into a sac target, White's rook covers g3 laterally.

18 ... dxc4 19 Qxc4 Qf7

He still dreams of attack and moves a key defender away from the problem zone. 19 ... Rhe8 was better.

20 Rfb1 Rd7 21 e5!

Cutting the bishop off from the defence of his king.

21 ... fxe5

Question: Black's last move looks incorrect. Wasn't 21 ... f5 better?

Black then has control over a hole on d5 and some

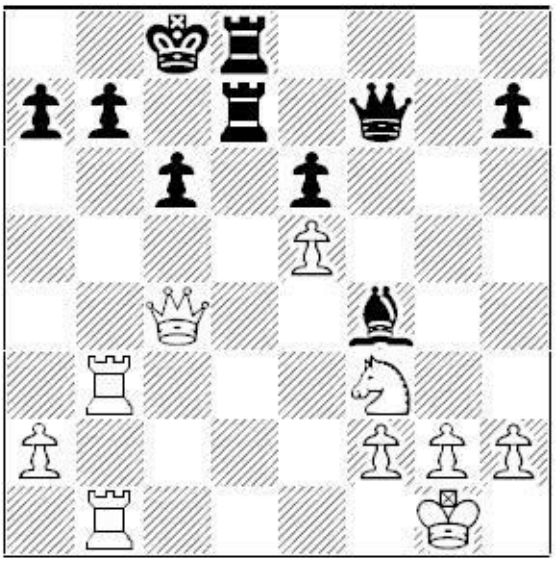
pressure on the backward d4-pawn.

Answer: Deal with the wolf lurking on your front yard. Who cares about a wolf pack roaming elsewhere? These are all subtle positional factors. Unfortunately, White replies with a sledgehammer response. The problem with your line is that d4 is not so backward after the crushing 22 d5! with a triple attack on the hanging bishop on f4, as well as the c6- and e6-pawns.

22 dxe5 Rhd8

If Black pleads extenuating circumstances and goes into a defensive crouch with 22 ... Rc7, then 23 g3 Rg8 24 Rd1 h5 25 Rd6 Rg6 26 Qa4! a6 27 Qd4! (threat: Qa7!) 27 ... Kb8 28 Rd8+ Rc8 29 Rd7 wipes Black out.

chesstouring.com



Exercise (combination alert): Black's queenside sways like a wheatfield in the wind. Look for a shot.

Answer: **23 Qxc6+! Kb8**

Of course, acceptance is suicide:

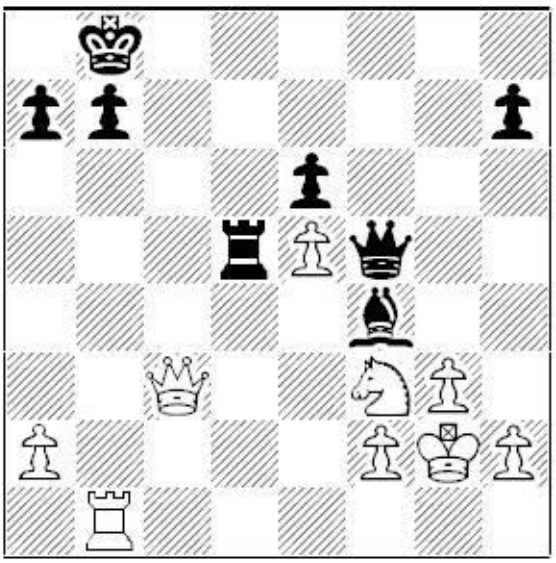
a) 23 ... bxc6?? 24 Rb8+ Kc7 25 R1b7 mate!

b) 23 ... Rc7? walks directly into a second combination: 24 Rxb7! when Black can resign.

24 g3

Nonchalantly leaving his queen "hanging" while covering his back rank.

24 ... Rd1+ 25 Kg2 Rxb1 26 Rxb1 Rd5 27 Qc3 Qf5?



Exercise (combination alert): Black's last move fails to meet the threshold and allows Capa a trick. Let's see you can find it.

Answer: Double attack.

28 Qb4! b5

The inventiveness of the desperate. All that remains is for White to quell a few isolated pockets of resistance.

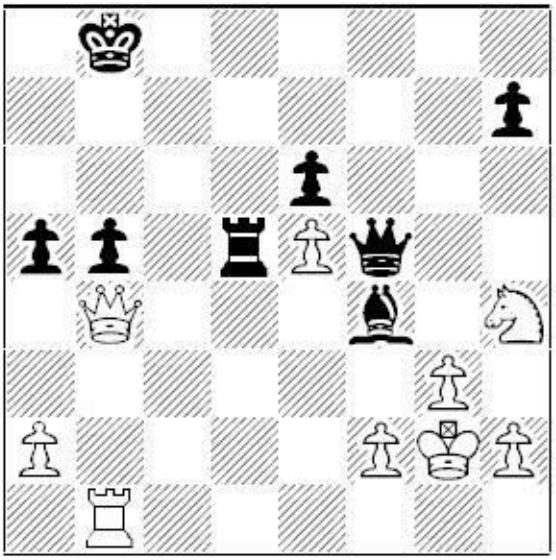
chesstouring.com

29 Nh4!

Overloading Black's queen. Of course not 29 gxf4?? Qg4+ which lets Black right back into the game, while 29 Qxf4?? hangs the rook to 29 ... Qxb1.

29 ... a5

29 ... Qc2 30 gxf4 wins.



Exercise (combination alert): The beggar on a5 demands an audience with the ruler of the country but we need not comply. Find one good move and you force Black's resignation.

Answer: Simplification.

30 Qxb5+! 1-0

Game 12

J.R.Capablanca-G.Levenfish

Moscow 1935

Semi-Slav Defence

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 e3 e6 5 Nc3 Nbd7 6 Bd3 dxc4 7 Bxc4 b5 8 Bd3 a6 9 e4

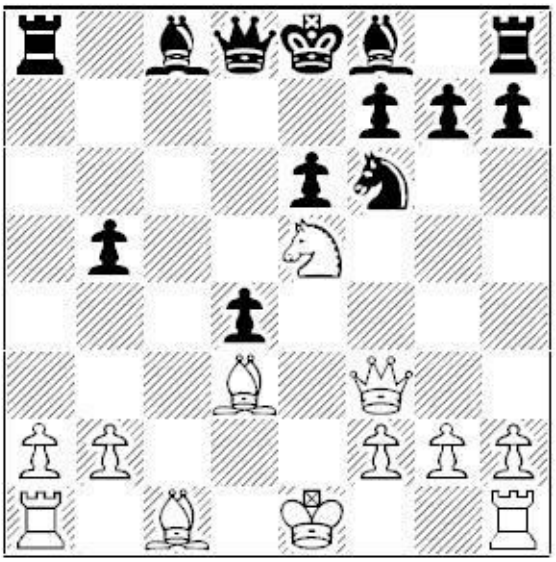
For the record, 9 0-0 Bb7 10 Qe2 c5 11 a4, C.Schlechter-J.Perlis, Ostend 1906, was the earliest Meran Semi-Slav I found in the database.

9 ... c5 10 e5 cxd4 11 Nxb5 Nxe5

11 ... axb5 12 exf6 gxf6 13 0-0 Qb6 14 Qe2 Bb7!? 15 Bxb5 Rg8 led to an almost irrationally sharp game, V.Kramnik-V.Anand, 5th matchgame, Bonn 2008.

12 Nxe5 axb5 13 Qf3!?

chesstouring.com



Question: Why doesn't Capa take on b5 with check?

Answer: That is possible but Capa prefers to go after initiative rather than regain his pawn. The river of the Meran branches into several tributaries. 13 Bxb5+ Bd7 14 Nxd7 Qa5+ 15 Bd2 Qxb5 16 Nxf8 Rxf8 17 a4 Qc4 18 b3 Qd3 19 Qf3 Qe4+ 20 Qxe4 Nxe4 21 b4 Ke7 is a bafflingly unbalanced ending, V.Kramnik-G.Kasparov, Wijk aan Zee 1999.

13 ... Ra5

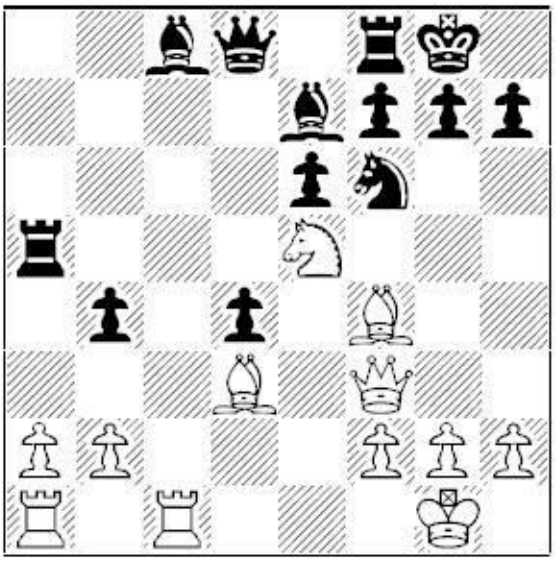
13 ... Bb4+! disrupts castling for White: 14 Ke2 Rb8 15 Qg3 (15 Nc6 is well met by 15 ... Bb7) 15 ... Qd6! 16 Nc6?! (not all combinations should be played just because we see them; something like 16 a3 is better) 16 ... Qxc6! 17 Qxb8 0-0 gave Black a ferocious attack for the exchange, P.Meyer-E.Torre, Lugano 1986.

14 0-0 b4

Question: Does White have enough for a pawn?

Answer: I believe he does. His lead in development in such an open position ensures some kind of coming kingside attack, and if not an attack, then at least an initiative.

15 Bf4 Be7 16 Rfc1 0-0



chesstouring.com

17 Qh3!

Target: h7. Now Nc6 becomes a real threat. The position is what military strategists term a target-rich environment.

Question: I think the players missed a decisive shot for White with

17 Rxc8 Qxc8 18 Nc6, winning material. What do you think?

Answer: If you visualize just one ply deeper, then you find Black's escape hatch 18 ... Bd8!.

17 ... Rc5?

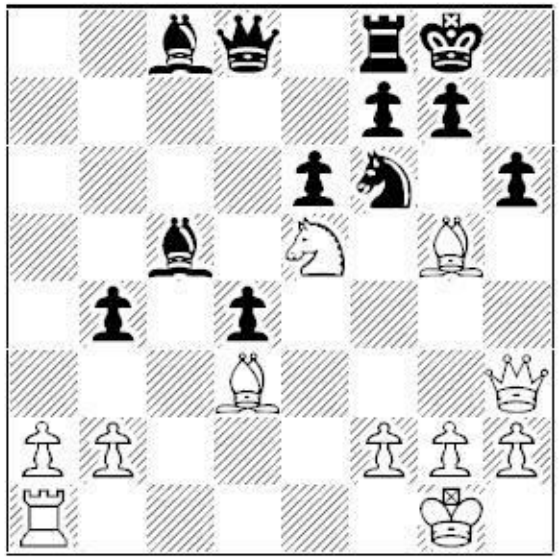
Black willingly collaborates in the planning of his own funeral arrangements. After the correct 17 ... Bb7! 18 Ng4 g6 19 Bc7 Qa8 20 Bxa5 Qxa5 he probably has enough compensation for the exchange.

18 Rxc5 Bxc5 19 Bg5

The simple threat to take on f6 forces a crucial weakening of the defensive barrier around Black's king.

19 ... h6

19 ... g6?? loses on the spot to 20 Qh4 Be7 (20 ... Kg7 21 Bh6+ Kg8 22 Nc6) 21 Nc6.



Exercise (combination alert): We all sense that White must be winning with all those pieces lurking around Black's king. How should we proceed?

Answer: No more mister nice guy! Pile on f6.

20 Ng4!

Only with this move does White pull the strings which make the puppets dance.

20 ... Be7 21 Bxf6!

The correct capture. He needs the knight for a sac on h6.

21 ... gxf6

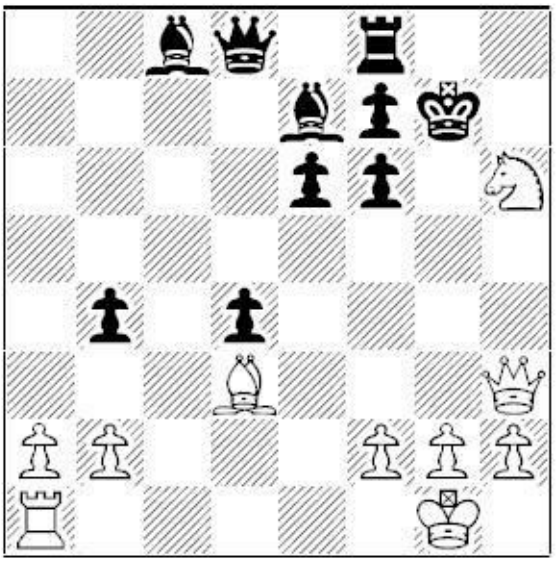
21 ... Bxf6 22 Nxh6+ (so obvious that it doesn't even deserve an exclam) 22 ... gxh6 23 Qxh6 Re8 24 Bh7+ Kh8 25 Bg6+ Kg8 26 Qh7+ Kf8 27 Qxf7 mate!

22 Nxh6+!

The sloppy 22 Qxh6? allows Black to defend after 22 ... f5.

22 ... Kg7

chesstouring.com



I am certain Levenfish's mind, racked by regret, was a streaming barrage of "maybe if" and "if only". He must have looked back on his careless decision on his 17th move, at first with shock, and then the maturing realization of the consequences to come. Black's unfortunate king sits horribly awkward and out of place among his enemies, like the victim of a practical joke duped into showing up to a party wearing a costume – except it isn't a costume party!

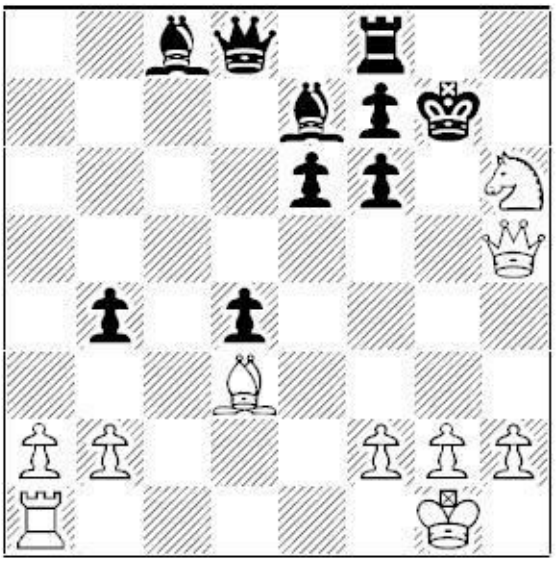
Exercise (combination alert): Our pieces swarm around Black's king but, as we all know, application of the exact details is where the majority of our screw-ups occur. Let's carefully work out the finish.

Answer: Cover thy nakedness!

23 Qg4+! Kh8

If he takes the knight, Black's king is mocked by fate after 23 ... Kxh6 24 Qh4+ Kg7 25 Qh7 mate!

24 Qh5 Kg7



Exercise (combination alert): The circle of enemies around Black's king grows smaller. Find the final breakthrough.

chesstouring.com

Answer: Please hold your applause until the end.

25 Nxf7!

He makes it look so easy, doesn't he?

25 ... Rh8

25 ... Rxf7 26 Qh7+ Kf8 27 Qh8 mate!

26 Qg6+ 1-0

chesstouring.com

Chapter Two

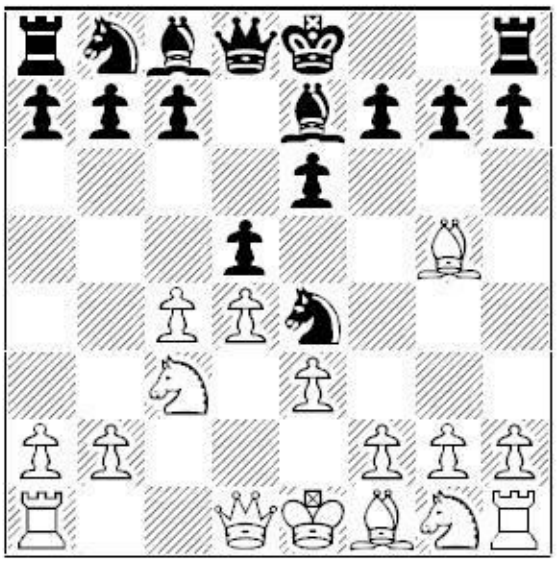
Capa on Defence

Danger greatly adds inspiration to Capablanca's playing." – Znosko-Borovsky.

They say adversity has a way of toughening a person, and mere survival is a far more modest goal than victory. A player cannot survive ten years without a loss against the best players in the world without being one of the greatest defenders of all time. Capa did the impossible when he survived one desperate position after another, or faced one vicious attack after another, from the end of the St Petersburg tournament of 1914, all the way to New York 1924, where the law of averages finally caught up and he lost to Réti. Capa's uncanny shifting adaptability under pressure continually confused opponents and allowed him to survive the most awful positions. Surprised, or under attack, he was virtually unmateable due to his calculation skills (see Marshall's Marshall Gambit and the Janowski games from this chapter). His unrivalled superiority in endings allowed him to salvage the most God-awful situations (versus Rubinstein and Flohr). No matter how bad it got, somehow Capa always found a way to ride out the storm. In this chapter, one gets the eerie feeling that the blue sky was there before the storm clouds appeared and sky still remained when the clouds disappeared.

Game 13
F.Marshall-J.R.Capablanca
5th matchgame, New York 1909
Queen's Gambit Declined

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Be7 5 e3 Ne4



Question: Is this logical? Black moves his knight twice in the opening.

Answer: Actually he moves it one more time before he is done. There is a strange logic to the Lasker Variation of the Queen's Gambit Declined. Black's main worry in the QGD is the fact that he remains

chessjourney.com

cramped for a long time. By playing the Lasker, Black gets easing swaps, albeit at a cost of time and the improvement of White's pawn structure.

Question: This isn't the exact move order of a Lasker QGD, is it?

Answer: It is a precursor to the modern move order, which usually runs: 5 ... 0-0 6 Nf3 h6 7 Bh4 Ne4 8 Bxe7 Qxe7 9 Rc1 c6 10 Bd3 Nxc3 11 Rxc3 dxc4 12 Bxc4 Nd7 13 0-0 b6 14 Bd3 c5 15 Be4 Rb8, V.Kramnik-G.Kasparov, Las Palmas 1996. There is no doubt that the advantage lies in White's better developed hands but converting that to a victory is another matter.

6 Bxe7 Qxe7 7 Bd3

White can also recapture with a piece on c3 by tossing in 7 Rc1.

7 ... Nxc3 8 bxc3 Nd7 9 Nf3 0-0 10 Qc2 h6 11 0-0 c5

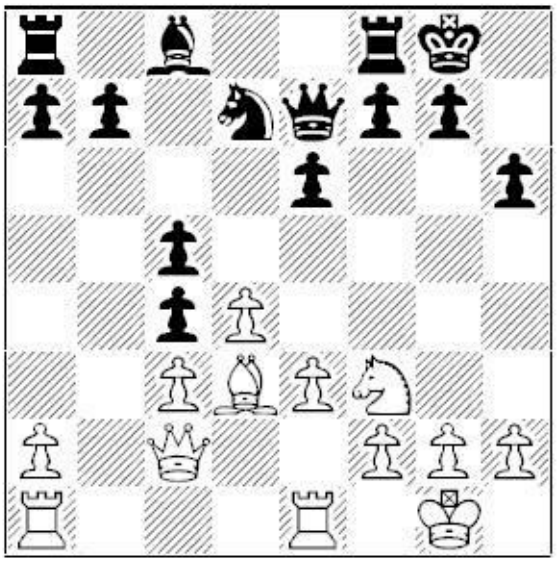
White stands slightly better after 11 ... dxc4 12 Bxc4 b6 13 e4 c5 14 d5 exd5 15 Bxd5 Rb8 16 c4, mainly due to that annoyingly posted bishop on d5.

12 Rfe1

It was probably more accurate to toss in 12 cxd5 exd5.

12 ... dxc4!

The rote 12 ... b6?! 13 cxd5 exd5 14 e4! opens the game in White's favour.



Question: Why give an exclamation mark to a rather obvious move?

Black simply frees his position – hardly an earth-shattering concept.

Answer: The exclam is for *when* the move was played, not the move itself. 12 ... dxc4 may seem obvious to the modern reader, but in 1909 one was considered eccentric for abandoning the pawn centre. Capa intuitively understood the hypermodern concept: A large pawn centre may also turn into a liability in the future if chipped away on the wings.

13 Bxc4 b6

Smoothly preparing to complete his development.

14 Qe4!?

I'm not a big fan of this move. Marshall was good at what he did but sometimes what he did wasn't so good! Typically, Marshall wastes no time transferring his queen over to the kingside in the hopes of launching an attack. The trouble is I'm not sure what exactly he plans for his queen once it gets there. Black's position on the kingside looks quite solid and there is no easy way to begin an attack. A more positional player would probably have gone for the simpler and stronger 14 e4.

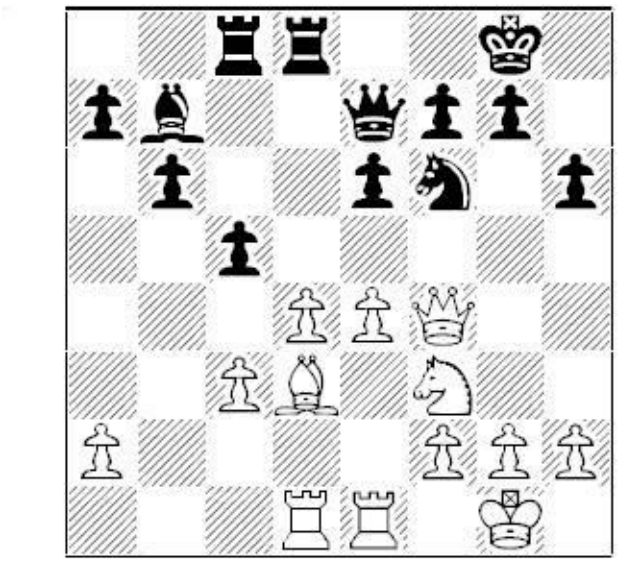
chesstouring.com

14 ... Rb8 15 Bd3 Nf6 16 Qf4 Bb7 17 e4 Rfd8 18 Rad1 Rbc8

(see following diagram)

19 Re3?!

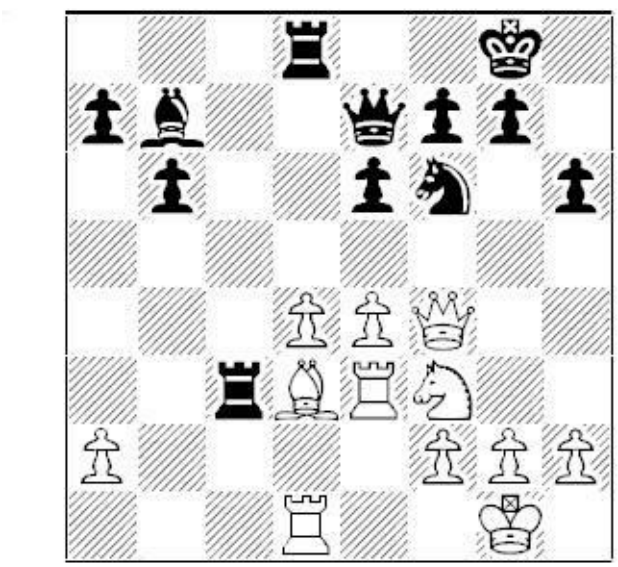
Great courage mingled with poor judgment makes for an unhappy marriage. Marshall feeds the fictional attack with another piece, but the game continuation shows that he clearly overlooked or underestimated the force of Capa's vicious counterattack.



Question: Can't White produce a dangerous assault with the idea 19 e5 Nd5 20 Qe4?

Answer: The trouble is that after the simple 20 ... g6 there is no good way to cover c3, since Black threatens discoveries on White's now exposed queen: 21 Qg4 Nxc3! 22 Bxg6 fxg6 23 Qxg6+ Qg7 24 Qxe6+ Kh8 25 Rd3 cxd4 is just unsound for White. Now 26 Nh4? is met by the tricky 26 ... Ne2+! (playing on White's loose back rank) 27 Kh1 Nf4.

19 ... cxd4 20 cxd4 Rc3!



Principle: counter in the centre when attacked on the wing.

21 Bb1

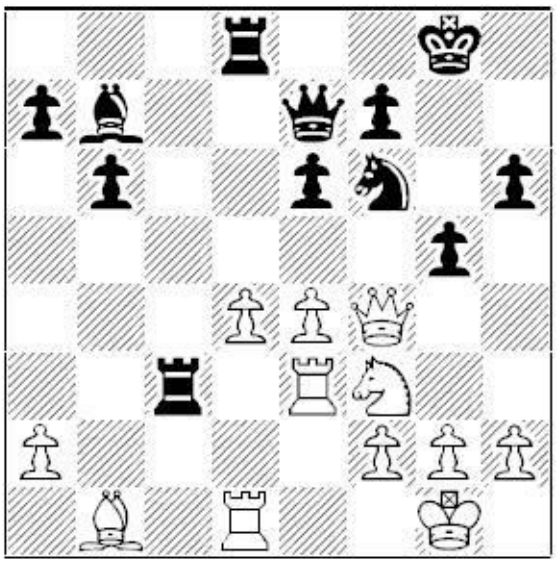
chesstouring.com

Question: What if White goes bonkers with 21 g4?

Answer: Then Black goes counter-bonkers with 21 ... g5!, forcing the win of the e4-pawn or else

compelling White into a dubious piece sac on g5. For example: 22 Nxg5? Rxd4! and if 23 Nf3 Nd5! 24 Qb8+ Rc8 is quite horrible for White.

21 ... g5!



Question: What? We were all taught not to lash out with pawn moves around our king but here we see Capa doing just that.

Answer: Capa's last move was a well-thought-out shot which forces the win of material.

22 Nxg5

Marshall must take the plunge since:

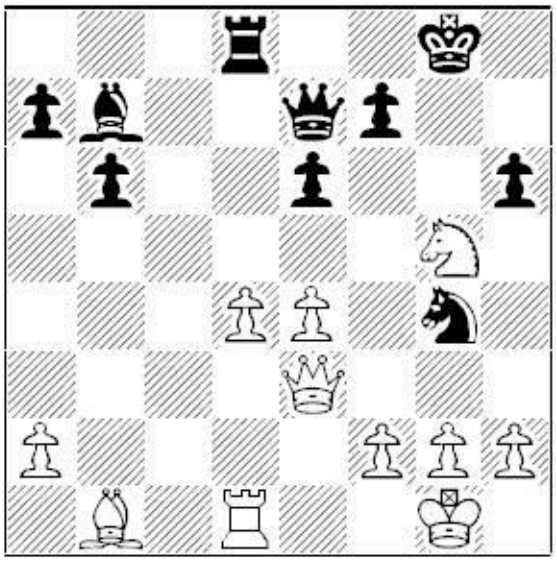
a) 22 Qg3? fails to 22 ... Rxe3 23 fxe3 Nxe4 when White lacks compensation.

b) 22 Qe5?? fails to 22 ... Ng4.

22 ... Rxe3 23 Qxe3!

Marshall avoids the trap 23 fxe3? Nh5!, forcing White to enter an ending with only two pawns for his piece after 24 Qxf7+ Qxf7 25 Nxf7 Kxf7.

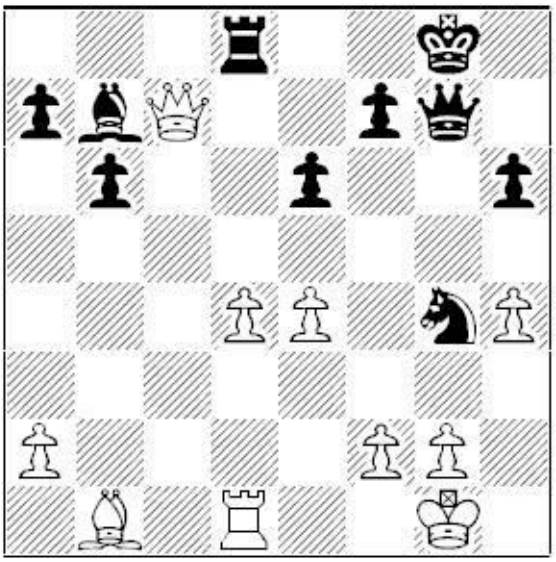
23 ... Ng4!



chesstouring.com

I'm not sure if this tricky in-between move may have escaped Marshall's attention.

24 Qg3 Qxg5 25 h4 Qg7 26 Qc7!



Exercise: Maybe Marshall had seen this far and thought he was winning material back. He doesn't. Black has two methods of hanging on to his material gains. Find one of them.

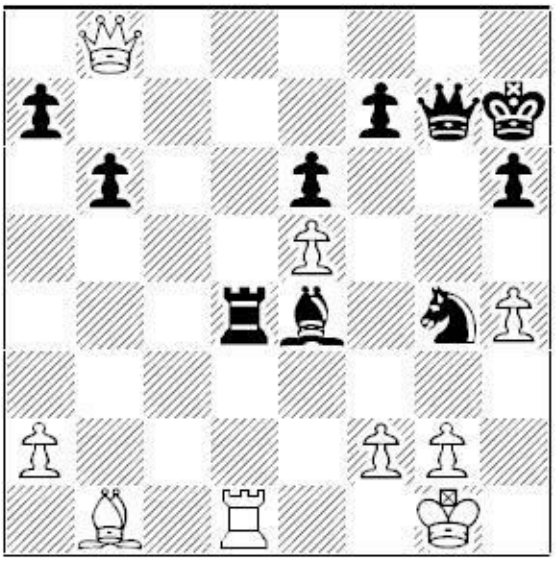
Answer: **26 ... Rxd4!**

The second best move. The computers say 26 ... Qf6! is even stronger.

27 Qb8+ Kh7 28 e5+

Question: Should Black be resigning!?

28 ... Be4!

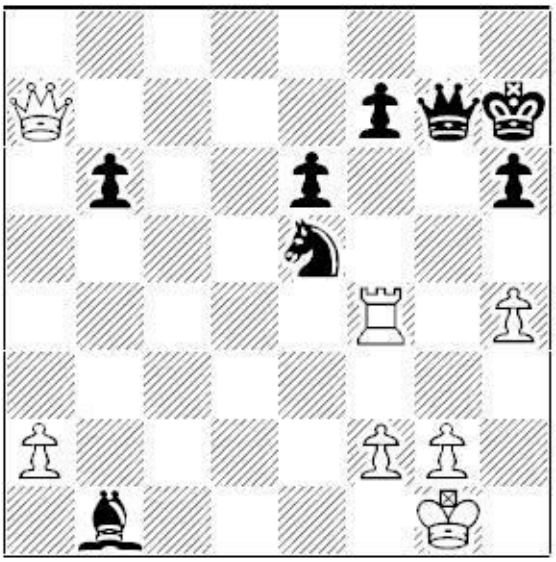


Answer: Everything is under control. Capa's pieces float upon the current of the position, flowing, blocking and defending with liquid grace, and going where it takes them.

29 Rxd4 Bxb1 30 Qxa7 Nxe5 31 Rf4

31 Qxb6?? walks into 31 ... Nf3+.

chesstouring.com



Exercise (combination alert): It looks like White emerged from the complications okay. But as the old saying goes: Don't believe everything you see. Capa's startling next move reveals that it is actually White who must protect his king.

Answer: Centralization with a vengeance. Was this was how Michelangelo envisioned David when everyone else saw only cold, shapeless marble?

31 ... Be4!!

The bishop, soaked in power, gazes hungrily at g2 with the love-smitten eyes of a teenager. White's initiative is at an end and fades quickly, the way a vivid dream does upon awakening.

32 g3

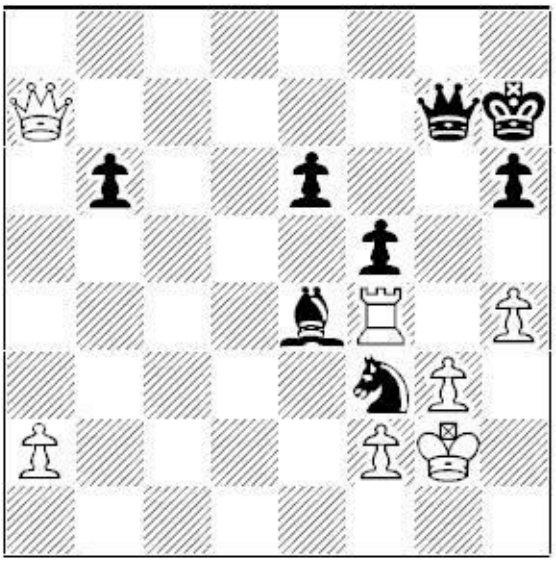
The bishop is immune: 32 Rxe4? Nf3+ 33 Kf1 (33 Kh1?? Qa1+ mates) 33 ... Nd2+ forks.

32 ... Nf3+ 33 Kg2!

Marshall finds the only move. 33 Kf1?? walks into a mate in five moves: 33 ... Qa1+ 34 Kg2 Qg1+ 35 Kh3 Qh2+ 36 Kg4 Ne5+ 37 Kh5 Bg6 mate!

33 ... f5

33 ... Nxh4+! was also very strong.



chesstouring.com

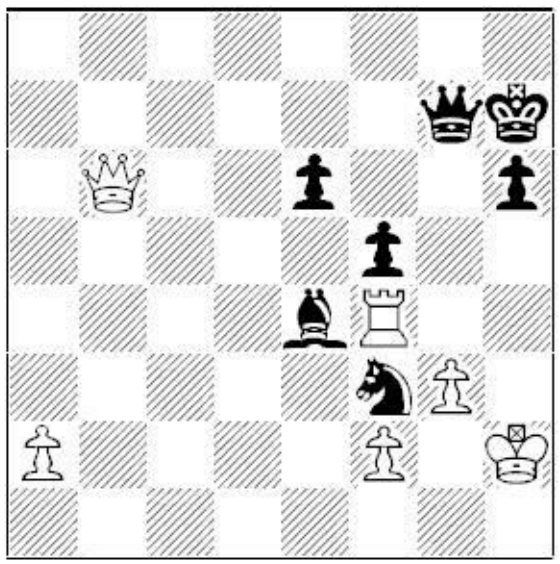
Exercise: Make a decision: Should White trade queens and then take the knight on f3?

Answer: It's a trap!

34 Qxb6!

Marshall avoids the diabolical trap 34 Qxg7+?? Kxg7 35 Rxf3 h5 36 a3 b5, when zugzwang forces White to cough up a full rook.

34 ... Nxh4+ 35 Kh2 Nf3+



36 Rxf3!

White wouldn't last long after 36 Kg2? Ng5+.

Marshall puts up maximum resistance by giving up material to try and banish the drifting spirits which torment his king.

36 ... Bxf3 37 Qxe6

Black continues to spill pawns, as blood oozes from his gashes. He has only two remaining. The ending is as unreadable as enemies approaching behind a haze of smoke on the battlefield, and I won't bore you with long, complicated lines.

Question: What is the essence of the position?

Answer: Let's discern the peculiarities of the position:

1. Black must above all, avoid perpetual check.
2. Black must organize an attack on White's king without walking into number 1 – perpetual check.
3. At the same time, Black must also stem the tide of White's surging a-pawn in its quest to queen.

Conclusion: Juggling the three tasks and winning will be next to impossible, yet Capa manages to pull it off.

37 ... Be4

Black can't wait around all day because White will be busy pushing the passed a-pawn.

38 f3!

Now Black's bishop lacks an anchor.

38 ... Bd3 39 Qd5 Qb2+! 40 Kg1

Not 40 Kh3?? Bf1+ 41 Kh4 Qh2 mate!

40 ... Bb1 41 a4

chesstouring.com

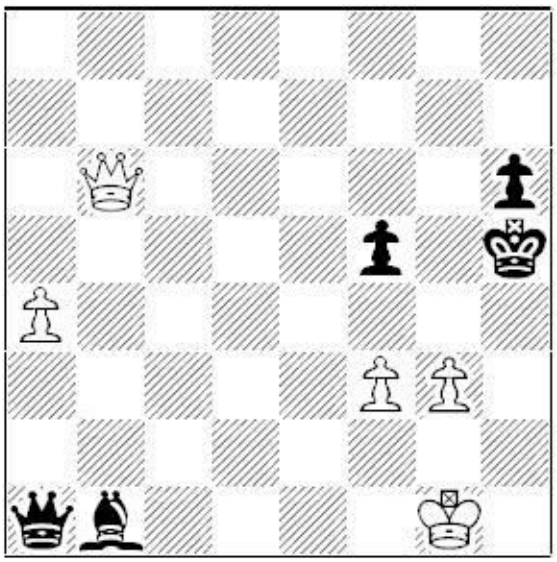
Or 41 Qd7+? Qg7 when suddenly both g3 and a2 hang simultaneously. White would have to trade queens into a hopeless ending to save a pawn. One key factor in Black's favour: Should the game reach h-

pawn and bishop versus White's lone king, then Black wins since his bishop is on the correct colour of the queening square.

41 ... Qa1!

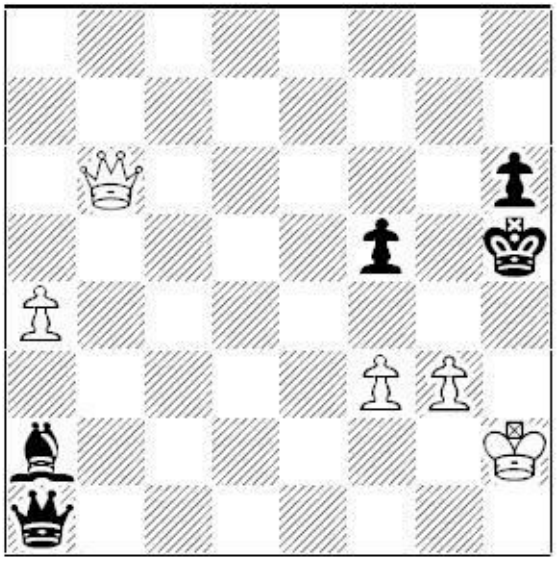
Threatening a murderous discovery on e4.

42 Qb7+ Kg6 43 Qb6+ Kh5!



Black's king seeks shelter in a cozy little nook on h5. It's remarkable how often Capa played with an exposed king, yet managed to avoid mate or perpetual check. Besides this one, his games against Janowski and Lasker from this chapter alone pop into mind.

44 Kh2 Ba2!!



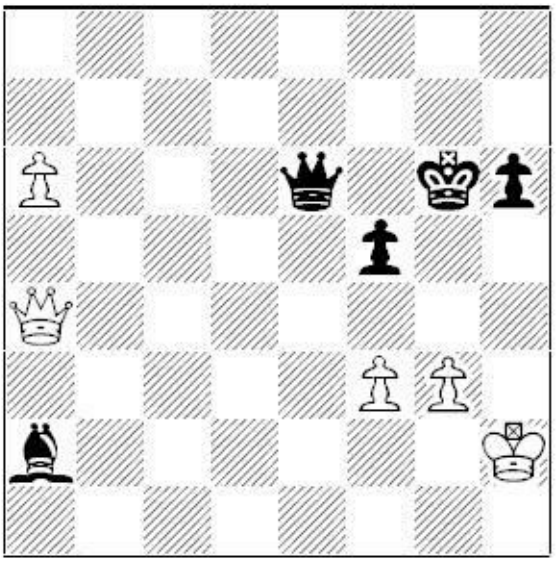
Moves like this are why he was nicknamed "the chess machine". Capa concocts a computer-like method of avoiding future perpetual checks. Marshall continues to resist but Capa was attuned to a level of accuracy to which Marshall was completely unaccustomed.

45 Qb5 Kg6!

The point of his 44th move. Now checks on e8 are covered by a bishop block.

chesstouring.com

46 a5 Qd4 47 Qc6+ Qf6 48 Qe8+ Qf7 49 Qa4 Qe6! 50 a6



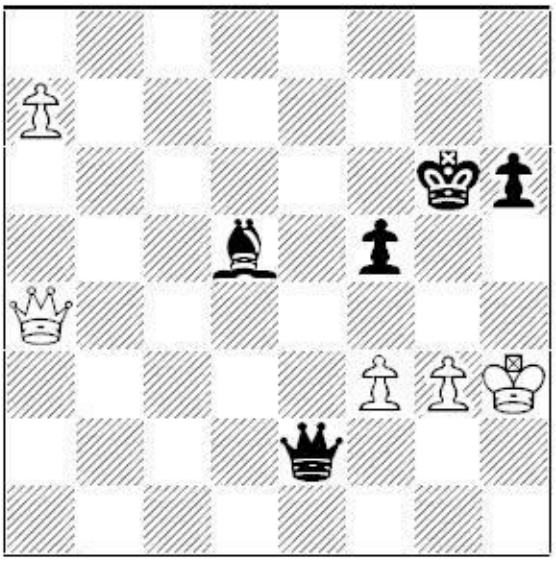
Exercise (combination alert): The a-pawn continues forward like driftwood up a lazy river. We must find a method of getting to Marshall's king before the pawn promotes or ties us down totally. How would you conduct Black's attack?

Answer: Forced mate in 21 moves, declares *Houdini*!

50 ... Qe2+ 51 Kh3

51 Kg1 Bd5 leads to the same. Notice that White is denied even a single check on a wide open board.

51 ... Bd5! 52 a7



Exercise (combination alert): White is about to queen but Black doesn't care. Mate takes precedence.

Answer: **52 ... Bxf3! 0-1**

White's king, eyes downcast, submits to his fate. There is no good defence to ... Qg2+ and ... Qh2 mate. Again, every white queen check is covered on an open board. Remarkable.

A supernatural game like this leaves an indelible imprint upon our collective chess consciousness. I have come to the depressing realization that my brain is ill-equipped and too small to comprehend the magnitude of such play!

chesstouring.com

Game 14
J.R.Capablanca-D.Janowski
San Sebastian 1911
Tarrasch Defence

1 d4 d5 2 e3

Perhaps the young Capablanca may have felt intimidated in the presence of the world's chess elite at San Sebastian. His choice of the ultra-safe Colle against a world championship contender shows that he felt most insecure in the opening, which he generally just hoped to bypass without disaster befalling him.

2 ... Nf6 3 Nf3 c5 4 c4

Slightly bolder than 4 c3 which is the Colle proper, or 4 b3, the Zukertort Colle.

4 ... e6 5 Nc3 Be7

This is dangerous for Black since he lands in a Reversed Queen's Gambit Accepted two moves down.

Question: Don't you mean *one* move down?

Answer: *Two* moves. White gains a move simply from the fact that he is playing White, not Black, in the position; and he gains the second because Janowski moves his dark-squared bishop to e7 before recapture of the c5-pawn.

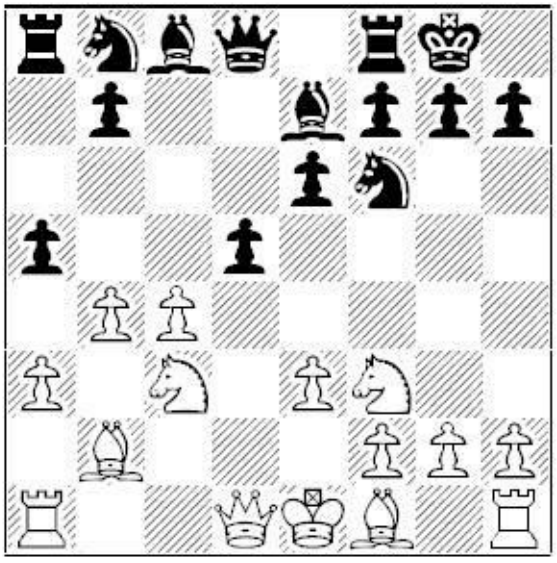
Fischer showed an effective path to a dynamically equal game through 5 ... Nc6 6 a3 Ne4! 7 Qc2 Nxc3 8 bxc3 Be7 9 Bb2 0-0 10 Bd3 h6 11 0-0 Na5 12 Nd2 dxc4 13 Nxc4 Nxc4 14 Bxc4 b6 15 e4 Bb7, T.V.Petrosian-R.J.Fischer, 8th matchgame, Buenos Aires 1971.

6 dxc5! 0-0 7 a3

Kasparov thinks 7 cxd5 is the most accurate move in the position.

7 ... Bxc5 8 b4 Be7 9 Bb2 a5!

This is the downside of White playing a2-a3 and b2-b4 rather than b2-b3. Janowski induces a hole on c5, which he can later occupy with a piece.



10 b5

Question: Why must White comply? Can't he just bypass and play for a queenside pawn majority?

chesstouring.com

Answer: White overextends after 10 c5? b6 which wins a pawn and decimates the queenside pawn

majority.

10 ... b6

At the time of this game, Janowski was not yet terrified of Capa and takes on an isolani, which he could avoid with 10 ... dxc4 11 Bxc4 b6.

11 cxd5 exd5 12 Nd4

White also gets to occupy a hole on d4.

12 ... Bd6

This is the third time he moved this bishop. Not surprisingly, White stands slightly better.

13 Be2 Be6

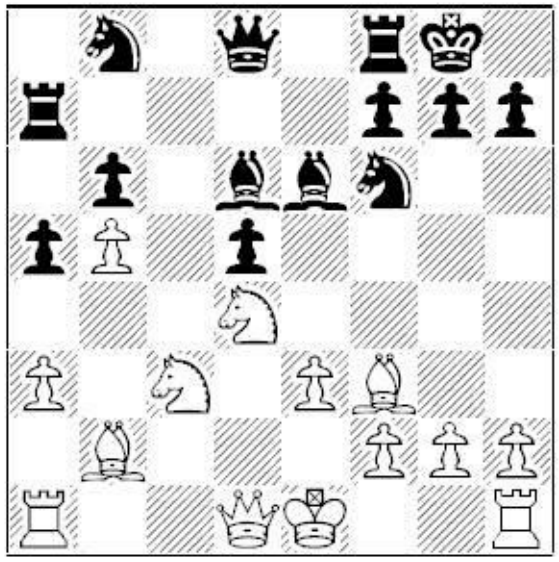
Or 13 ... Bb7 14 0-0 Re8 15 Rc1 Nbd7 16 Nc6! Bxc6 17 bxc6 Nc5 18 Nb5 Be5 19 Bxe5 Rxe5 20 Bg4! Nxg4 21 Qxg4, when White's passed pawn creates difficulties for Black.

14 Bf3?!

Playing to pressure the d5-isolani directly, but this loses time to a future ... Ne5 and also weakens c4. For some strange reason, Capa's intuitive feel for where his pieces should sit just didn't activate until the opening phase was over. The Rc1/Nc6 plan to occupy c6 would be more effective.

14 ... Ra7!

Janowski finds a way to activate his rook.



Question: Why doesn't Black simply develop his b8-knight and then play his rook to c8?

Answer: Black must keep some degree of watchfulness over c6, otherwise the d4-knight swoops in.

15 0-0 Rc7 16 Qb3?!

A common chess dilemma: You try to solve problem X (how to pressure d5?) with solution Y (16 Qb3) – the consequences of which in turn create unwanted problem Z (he weakens c4 and risks an eventual tempo loss by ... Nc5).

16 ... Nbd7!?

Black reasons that he can't live in fear forever and allows White's knight into c6 to develop his own.

17 Rfd1!?

Question: Shouldn't Capablanca jump into c6?

Answer: If a gift is offered, it is rude to decline. 17 Nc6! Nc5 18 Qd1 Qd7 when White stands a shade better.

chesstouring.com

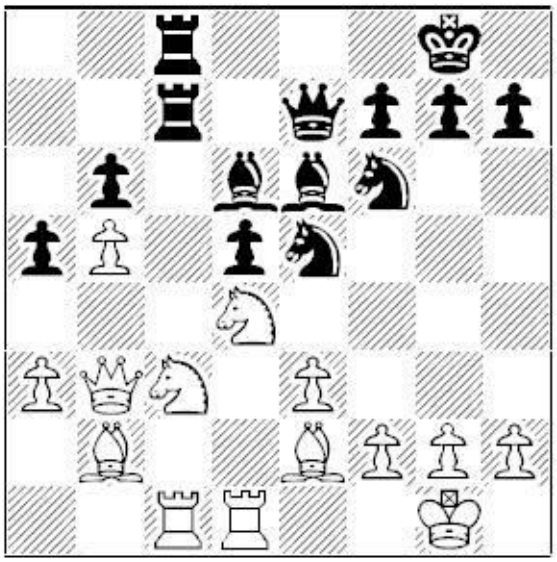
17 ... Ne5!

Even stronger than 17 ... Nc5 18 Qa2 Nfe4.

18 Be2

Meekly backing down. The more aggressive 18 Na4 works out in Black's favour after 18 ... Nxf3+ 19 Nxf3 Rc4. Now the greedy attempt to damage Black's structure with 20 Bxf6? is effectively rebuffed by 20 ... Qxf6! and if 21 Nxb6? Rg4! 22 Nd4 Bxh2+! with a nasty attack. And 18 Bxd5?? is instantly refuted by 18 ... Rxc3!.

18 ... Qe7 19 Rac1 Rfc8



Janowski outplays his inexperienced opponent and stands better.

Question: Why is Black better? The position looks balanced to me.

Answer: Let's assess:

1. White exerts some pressure on the d5-isolani, as well as b6 with a future Na4. He also occupies d4.

2. Black's pieces have eyes for c5, c4, e5 and e4. The hole on c6 is under control for now.

3. Nos. 1 and 2 seem to balance each other out but a malaise also falls over White's kingside, a morning fog, with Black's ominous build-up aiming at White's king. This factor alone, I feel gives him the edge, and if not a mathematical edge, then at least the superior practical chances.

20 Na4

Trades help White for two reasons:

1. Trades reduce Black's attacking chances.

2. Trades lead to endings, where Capa had no rival!

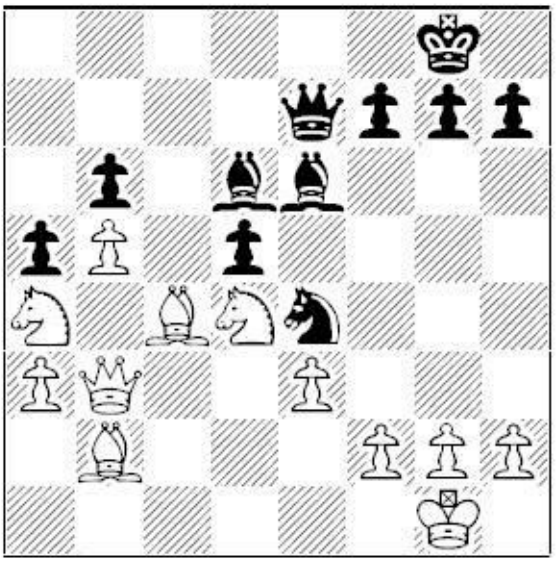
20 ... Rxc1 21 Rxc1 Rxc1+ 22 Bxc1 Ne4! 23 Bb2?!

The b6-pawn is poisoned: 23 Nxb6?? Qc7 simultaneously attacks two hanging pieces. Correct is 23 g3 to prevent what followed.

23 ... Nc4! 24 Bxc4

No choice, or White loses a pawn.

chesstouring.com

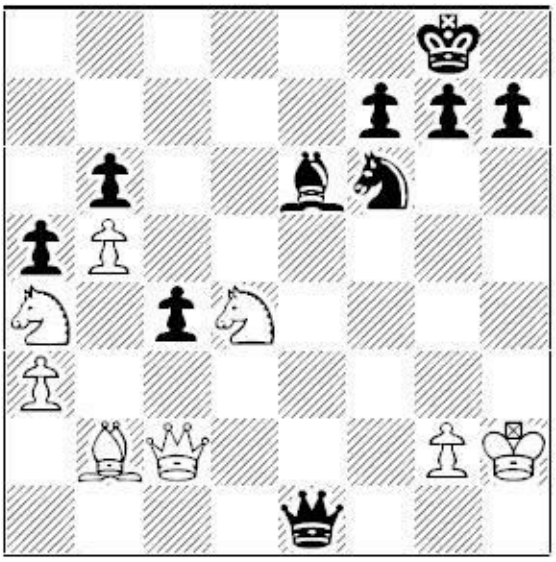


Exercise (combination alert): Black has a dangerous sacrificial idea in the position. Do you see it?

Answer: **24 ... Bxh2+! 25 Kxh2**

With this piece sac, Janowski gets White's king to prance around in a rather undignified manner. Declining was out of the question: 25 Kf1?? Nd2+ or 25 Kh1?? Qh4.

25 ... Qh4+ 26 Kg1 Qxf2+ 27 Kh2 Qg3+ 28 Kg1 dxc4 29 Qc2 Qxe3+ 30 Kh2 Qh6+ 31 Kg1 Qe3+ 32 Kh2 Qg3+ 33 Kg1 Qe1+ 34 Kh2 Nf6!



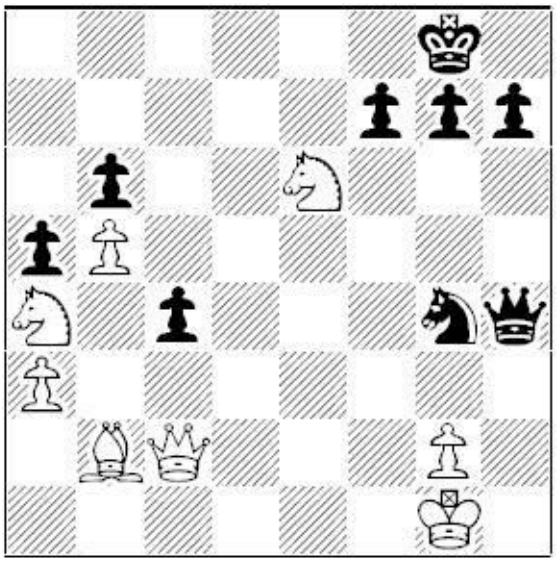
The temporary sac of a second piece follows. Of course Janowski isn't interested in drawing with the upstart. He has plenty of pawns for the piece and also retains an enduring attack, despite the reduced material.

35 Nxe6 Qh4+ 36 Kg1 Qe1+ 37 Kh2 Qh4+

The checks are designed to gain time on the clock and also to show Capa just who is boss! White's poor king prances about as awkwardly as a nervous teen at his first high school dance.

38 Kg1 Ng4!

chesstouring.com



Exercise (critical decision): White's king is under siege and the position is a swirling pool of confusion and ambiguities. His choices are 39 Qd2 and 39 g3. One of them loses; the other continues to put up resistance.

Answer: **39 Qd2!**

The only move! I don't know if Capa found this via intuition or through pure calculation power. 39 g3? loses to 39 ... Qxg3+ 40 Qg2 (threatening a back rank mate on a8) 40 ... Qe1+ 41 Qf1 Qxe6 42 Qf4 Qe1+ 43 Kg2 Qe2+ 44 Kg1 h5 45 Nxb6 Ne3!, when White's king can't survive Black's queen and knight attacking combination.

39 ... Qh2+ 40 Kf1 Qh1+ 41 Ke2 Qxg2+ 42 Kd1 Nf2+! 43 Kc2 Qg6+ 44 Kc1

White's king, guided by unseen forces, somehow managed to reach the relative safety of the queenside. Capa has been on the defensive since the opening, but Janowski soon learns that an opponent who has been fooled in the opening isn't necessarily a fool.

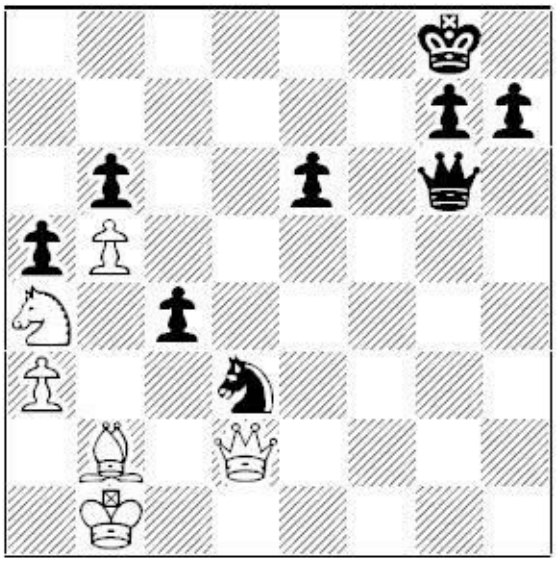
44 ... Qg1+ 45 Kc2 Qg6+

Dance!

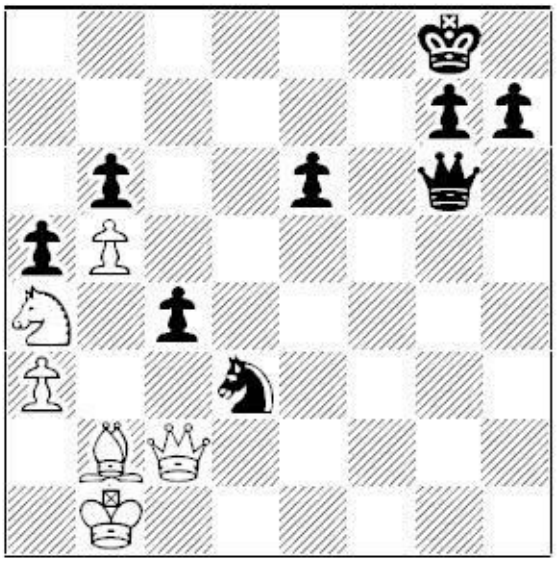
46 Kc1 Nd3+ 47 Kb1 fxe6!

The correct recapture. Black snags four pawns for the piece and stands better. His main idea is just to push his h-pawn down the board to make a new queen. White isn't busted yet if he manages to pick off the pawn on b6 and turn his b5-pawn instantly into a queening threat.

chesstouring.com

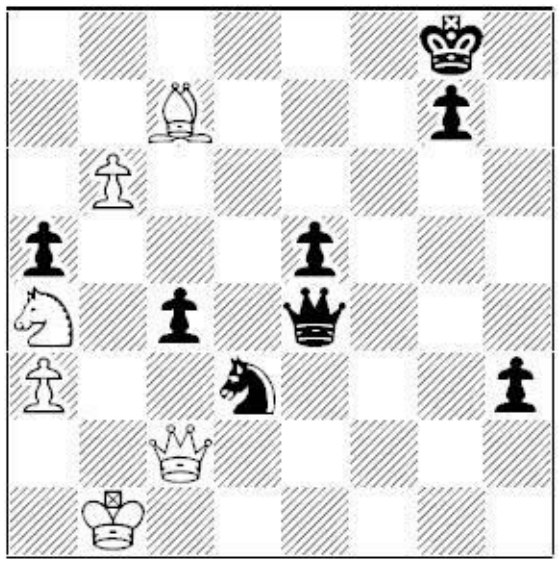


Question: Why didn't Black recapture on e6 with his queen?
Answer: White is back in the game after 47 ... Qxe6? 48 Qg2! f6 49 Qc6!.
48 Qc2
Capa isn't going to fall for 48 Nxb6?? Qg1+ 49 Ka2 Qxb6.



Exercise (planning): White's king, after an arduous journey, finally reaches safety. Black has four pawns for the piece. What should he do now?
Answer: Try and promote one of them to a new queen!
48 ... h5! 49 Bd4!
Stronger than 49 Qxc4?! h4! 50 Nxb6 h3 when the h-pawn rapidly approaches the queening square.
49 ... h4 50 Bxb6
The race begins: White's passed b-pawn versus Black's h-pawn.
50 ... h3 51 Bc7 e5
Cutting off the bishop's coverage of h2.
52 b6!
chesstouring.com
White avoids the tricky line 52 Qxc4+? Kf8 53 Bxa5 Nb4+ 54 Kb2 Qg2+ 55 Kc1 Qc2+! 56 Qxc2 Nxc2 and Black's h-pawn promotes.

52 ... Qe4!



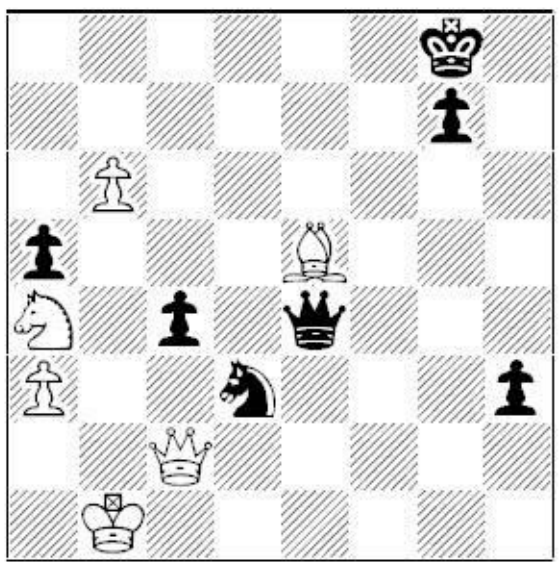
At necessity's urgings, Janowski commandeers e4 for his queen, utilizing every drop of energy the position contains and wringing it dry. His last move is a powerful multipurpose centralization which halts b7, covers c4, and prepares to shepherd his own h-pawn down the board.

53 Bxe5!?

When all your options lose, there isn't much of a choice but to try a swindle. Capa tries to muddle the issue, seeing that 53 Nc3 loses to the problem-like 53 ... h2!!:

a) 54 Qxh2?? Qe1+ 55 Ka2 (55 Kc2?? Qc1 mate) 55 ... Qxc3 and b7 isn't possible due to ... Qb3+.

b) 54 Nxe4? h1Q+ 55 Ka2 Qxe4 56 Qb1 Qg2+ 57 Ka1 Nc5!.



53 ... Qe1+??

Janowski misses his opportunity to crown his masterpiece with 53 ... Qh1+! 54 Ka2 Nxe5 55 Qb2 Qg2! when Black queens and White doesn't.

54 Ka2 Nxe5?!

Perhaps Janowski goes into shock from the startling convulsion of recent events. Black crosses the thin line which separates daring from foolhardy. The trouble is Black's dreams exceed the capabilities of his position. Janowski, who refuses to submit to expediency and take the draw, is just asking for it. It is

chesstouring.com

impossible to change one's inner nature. An optimist remains an optimist morning, noon, evening, and even while dreaming. Janowski, an addictive gambler who was in the habit of gambling away his tournament prize money, deeply (and incorrectly) believed in his own luck, and overpressed. It was high time to partially recoup some of his losses and take a perpetual check with 54 ... Nc1+ 55 Kb2 Nd3+.

55 b7

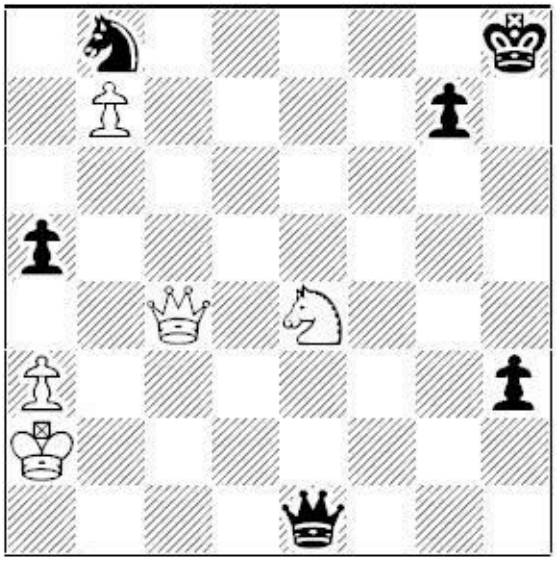
Now the b-pawn is a real force. Watch how Black's feared h-pawn, now still as an insect, never gets to move again. Capablanca wrote: " ... the endgame coming is perhaps the finest of its kind ever played over the board, and that for some unknown reason it has not been properly appreciated. It is a masterpiece, of which I am very proud." Above all other things, Capa was a modest man!

55 ... Nd7

Certainly not 55 ... Nc6?? 56 Qxc4+ Kh7 57 Qxc6.

56 Nc5! Nb8 57 Qxc4+ Kh8 58 Ne4!

Now White stands better. Black doesn't have access to a single check in a wide open position.



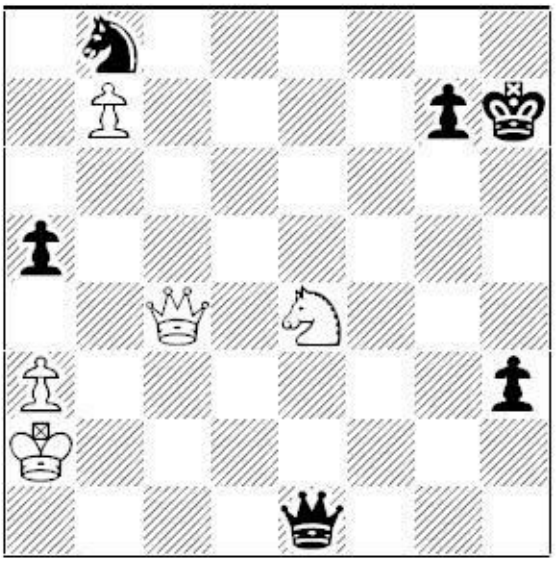
58 ... Kh7?

The losing move.

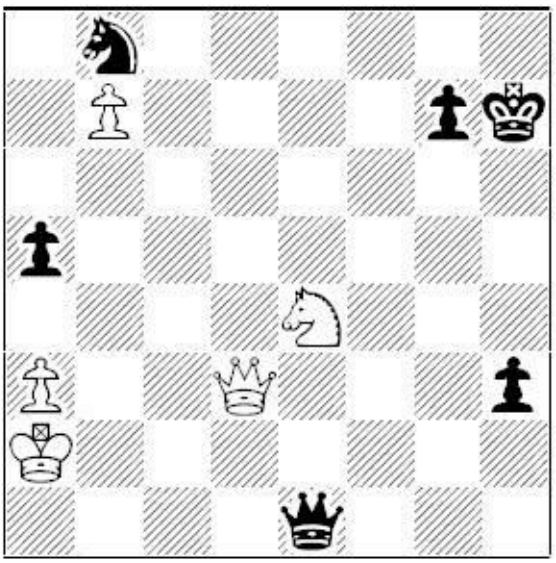
a) 58 ... Qe3! saves Black after 59 Qc8+ Kh7 60 Qxh3+ (on 60 Qf5+ Kh6 Kasparov gives 61 Nf2! which allows White to save the game) 60 ... Qxh3 61 Ng5+ Kg6! 62 Nxh3 Kf5 with a drawn ending.

b) The tempting 58 ... h2?? loses to 59 Qc8+ Kh7 60 Qh3+ Kg8 61 Qe6+! Kf8 (61 ... Kh8?? 62 Qe8+ Kh7 63 Ng5+ wins the queen) 62 Qd6+! Kf7 63 Ng5+ Ke8 64 Qxb8+ and wins.

chesstouring.com



Exercise (combination alert): White to play and win.
Answer: Double attack. White's next move threatens mate and also the h3-pawn.
59 Qd3!!



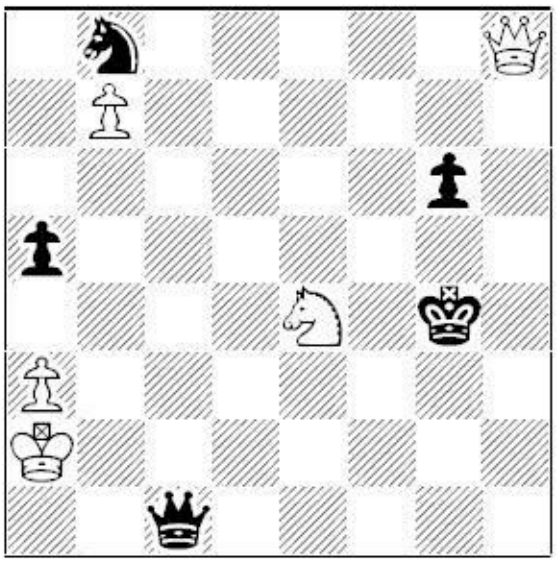
Suddenly, White's position pulses with energy. Once again Black is denied a single check.
59 ... g6
On 59 ... h2?? White mates in study-like fashion with 60 Ng5+ Kh6 61 Nf7+! Kh5 62 Qf5+ Kh4 63 Qf4+ Kh3 64 Ng5+ Kg2 65 Qf3+ Kg1 66 Nh3 mate! Why is it variations like this never, ever occur in my games?
60 Qxh3+
The annoying protuberance is finally removed. Black's h-pawn, for so long anticipating its coronation in its none-too-splendid Sunday best, instead loses its life on h3.
60 ... Kg7 61 Qf3!
Remarkable control. Again, no checks for Black.
61 ... Qc1
chesstouring.com
61 ... Qh4 62 Qc3+! wins.
62 Qf6+ Kh7 63 Qf7+ Kh6 64 Qf8+!

White's queen and knight team, malice personified, relentlessly stalk Black's king for the remainder of the game.

64 ... Kh5

64 ... Kh7?? 65 Nf6 mate!

65 Qh8+! Kg4



Exercise: White has a game-ending move. Let's see if you can find it.

Answer: **66 Qc8+! 1-0**

Possibly this game was the most painful loss of Janowski's life, after which emotions must have arisen to which no name or description can be attached.

Game 15

N.Pavlov & A.Selesniev-J.R.Capablanca

Consultation game, Moscow 1914

Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Bxc6 dxc6 5 d4

Question: Why did White give up the bishop pair and then immediately open the centre?

Answer: An elemental goal for White in the Exchange Lopez is to secure a healthy kingside pawn majority versus Black's crippled majority on the queenside. This ensures a won king and pawn ending. Of course, Black gets the bishop pair and it is still a long, long way to the dreamed-of pawn endgame. Fischer conclusively proved that 5 0-0!, leaving all structural options open, is the most accurate path.

5 ... exd4 6 Qxd4

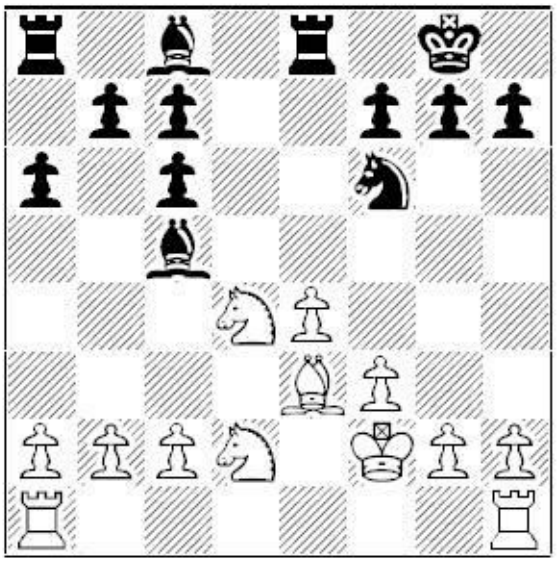
Every exchange helps White.

6 ... Qxd4 7 Nxd4 Bc5

I won't give him the mark but I will say it: Dubious! This isn't such a great spot for the bishop, which normally gets developed to d6. 7 ... c5, followed by ... Bd7 and ... 0-0-0, looks better.

8 Be3 Nf6 9 f3 0-0 10 Nd2 Re8 11 Kf2

chesstouring.com



White stands better. Black has nothing to do and no targets to speak of.

11 ... Be6?!

Question: Why criticize this move? I realize Black returns the bishop pair, but in doing so he connects his pieces and completes development.

Answer: In this case Capablanca hides a radical agenda and dresses it up in the garb of reasonableness. He frets over troubles, both abstract and unreal. Alekhine correctly diagnosed Capa's universal tendency/weakness to simplify for simplification's sake, even when his position deteriorated with the simplification. Here he shouldn't have returned the bishop pair, Black's only tangible compensation for his slightly inferior structure. Also, White gets to swap two pairs of pieces, getting closer to his cherished king and pawn ending.

12 Nxe6 Bxe3+ 13 Kxe3 Rxe6 14 Kf2 Ne8 15 Rhd1 Nd6 16 Nf1 Rae8 17 Re1!

White negates the ... f7-f5 threat.

17 ... a5

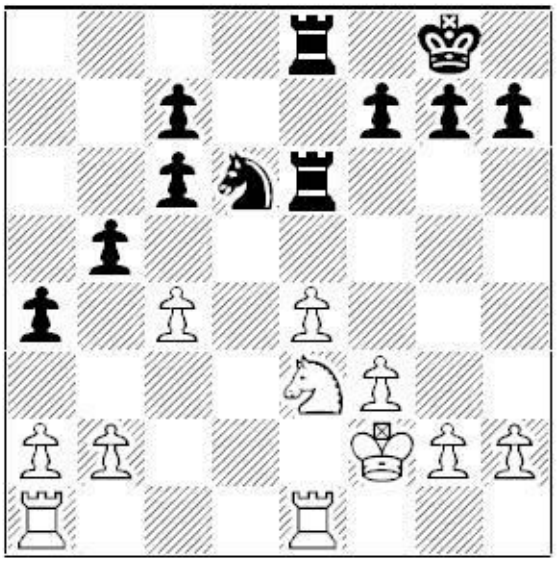
Capa takes action on the queenside, the only place he can.

18 Ne3 a4 19 c4

Even superheroes have off days. Black messed up the opening to be sure. But past is past. What concerns Capa now is survival in the present. The question is: Should Black remain passive or should he take risks to remedy his position? I would probably say be passive – and lose.

19 ... b5!?

chesstouring.com



This rash move bursts through the door of his previous restraint. Capa impatiently refuses to sit tight and simply wait. But in taking action, he takes on peril as well. When in the heat of battle, mingled with a bad position, it is no easy matter to curb the inner tempest of emotions and decide between lashing out and a logical, measured response. If hope of gain isn't enough of a motivation, then add the fear of doing nothing and losing without a fight, and we reach the threshold.

Question: It looks to me like Capablanca is in the process of losing
his temper over an imagined affront. Isn't his move overly risky?

Answer: It is risky indeed, and it is difficult to judge if this is a correct decision or not. However, the alternative, remaining completely passive, is not such a trifling thing as you say. Passivity has its own particular risks: A slow, lingering death.

20 Rac1 Rb8 21 cxb5 Rxb5 22 Re2

White puts his faith in the plan of hammering away on the c-pawns – a plan which never comes to pass.

Question: Is Black busted?

Answer: If not busted, he is clearly in the vicinity. White has a healthy kingside pawn majority, while Black's queenside is chutney. He must nurse three weak pawns. Black's pressure on b2 fails to fully compensate.

22 ... Kf8 23 Ke1

Question: Can White pile on with 23 Rc3?

Answer: Black can put up stiff resistance with a line like 23 ... g6 24 Rec2 Rb6 25 Rc5 Nb7 26 R5c4 Ra6 27 Rb4 Nd6 28 Rb8+ Ke7 29 g4 Re5, when Black remains under pressure but White also strains to make progress. Of course the allies don't fall for the cheapo 23 Rxc6?? Nxe4+.

23 ... Rb6 24 Nc4

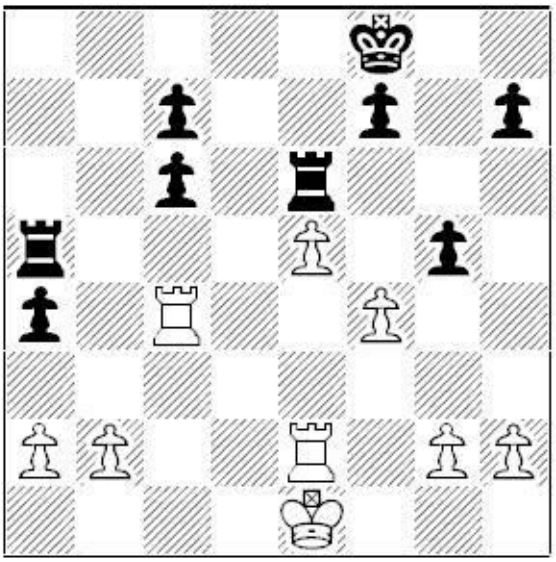
White probes with an air of tentative inquiry by beginning a plan to remove the knights from the board.

24 ... Ra6 25 e5?!

This loosens White's game on the light squares, which Capa later exploits with his king. Now Black just barely manages to draw in the coming double rook ending, mainly due to his counterattack on b2. White's best shot at a win would be to retain the knights.

25 ... Nxc4 26 Rxc4 Ra5 27 f4 g5!

chesstouring.com



Ingenious simplicity. It is in Black's best interest to reduce the number of pawns on the board.

28 g3 gxf4 29 gxf4 Ke7 30 Kf2 c5

I would have jumped at a chance to reduce the pawns with 30 ... f6.

31 Rec2 Rb6!

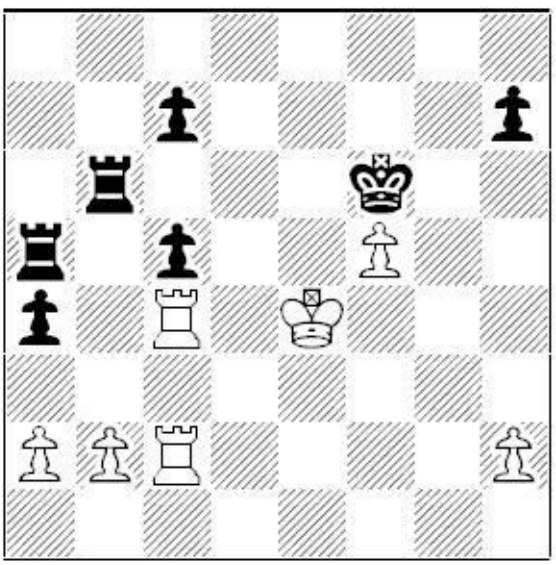
Reminding White that b2 is also a target.

32 Kf3 Ke6 33 Ke4 f5+! 34 exf6

Question: Why didn't White simply back off his king
and attain a protected passed pawn?

Answer: This would allow the black king entry with 34 Kd3 Kd5.

34 ... Kxf6 35 f5



Exercise (planning): Black, though tied down to his pawn weaknesses,
has a method of generating much needed counterplay. How?

Answer: Principle: Activity takes precedence over material in rook endgames. Black sacs a pawn to reach a drawn rook and pawn ending.

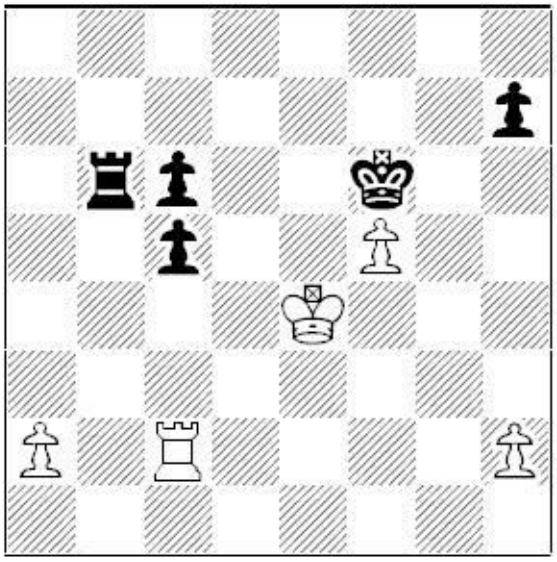
chesstouring.com

35 ... Rab5! 36 Rxa4

White goes foraging and comes up empty handed, but there is nothing better. 36 Rxc5 Rxc5 37 Rxc5

Rb4+ 38 Ke3 Rxb2 is also drawn.

36 ... Rxb2 37 Rac4 Rxc2 38 Rxc2 c6!



A key move in the equation. White's king must be kept out of d5. Black is happy to sac both c-pawns for the white a-pawn. Now White's former superiority is but a memory. What a feeling of wonder when the previously inconceivable (holding a draw from a rancid position!) becomes a reality.

39 Rxc5 Ra6

White can't make progress.

40 Rc4

Or 40 Rc2 Ra4+ 41 Kd3 Ra6 and White has nothing better than to repeat.

Question: Can't White make something of his outside, passed a-pawn.

Answer: The outside passer is merely an advantage on paper. White fails to make the slightest progress after 42 Kc4 Kxf5 43 Kb4 Rb6+ 44 Kc5 Ra6.

40 ... Rxa2 41 Rxc6+ Kg5 ½-½

White's fall from lofty ambition out of the opening to his currently downgraded estate, a drawn position, is stark.

Game 16

A.Rubinstein-J.R.Capablanca

St Petersburg 1914

Queen's Gambit Declined

Rubinstein and Capablanca were stylistic twins, yet Rubinstein lacked a certain quality which Capa possessed.

Question: Which quality?

Answer: I don't know! When I interviewed Spassky in 1986, I asked him why someone like him went on to become world champion, but other incredibly gifted players like Rubinstein (to be fair, Rubinstein never got a title shot!), Keres and Korchnoi, hovered at the top but failed to reach the summit? Spassky told me the reason he won the title was that he was absolutely honest with himself about his own failings and strove tirelessly to eradicate them. I am not implying that Rubinstein, Keres and Korchnoi were dishonest with themselves, but we sense a missing element. What that mysterious element is I can't say.

chessstrivers.com

1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 c4 e6 4 Nc3 Nbd7 5 Bg5 Be7 6 e3 0-0 7 Rc1 Re8 8 Qc2 c6

The Orthodox QGD, the dullard's paradise. Didn't players at this time get tired of unsweetened gruel for breakfast every morning? One wonders what heights Capablanca would have reached had he possessed the Alekhine/Fischer opening work ethic.

9 Bd3 dxc4 10 Bxc4 b5

My mother always said that if you hang around with questionable friends you begin to take questionable actions yourself.

Question: What is wrong with the move?

Answer: Capa plays Bernstein's rather awful pet idea from Game 8 in Chapter 1. This game was actually played a few rounds before the Capablanca-Bernstein game, but I think Capa was familiar with the idea. Some ideas are better left stored in the basement closet. 10 ... Nd5 is preferable, as Lasker played against him (see Game 28). But even better would be to simply avoid this ridiculously passive line as Black!

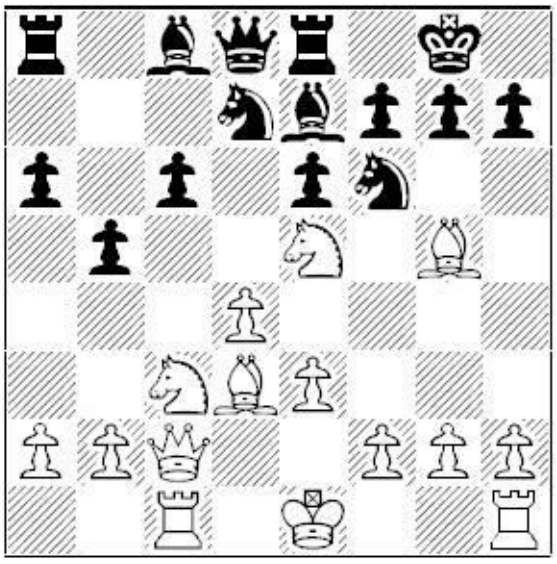
11 Bd3 a6?

Also wrong.

Question: How so? Black secures b5 in order to play ... c6-c5.

Answer: A break which he achieves on move 25 in this game! It is too slow, and in the meantime White clamps down on the c5-square. Kasparov suggests 11 ... Bb7 12 0-0 h6 13 Bxf6! gxf6!? (the fight was for the critical c5-square; Kasparov gave recapture with the knight, which gave White the advantage) 14 Rfd1 a6 15 Ne4 f5 16 Nc5 Nxc5 17 dxc5 Qc7, when White stands better but Black has his chances with the bishop pair.

12 Ne5!



This powerful disruption idea is given "!" by Tarrasch.

12 ... Bb7

12 ... Nxe5 is of no help. 13 dxe5 Nd5 14 Bxe7 Qxe7 15 Bxh7+ Kh8 16 Be4 Qc7 17 f4! Qb6 18 Nd1! Nxe3?? 19 Qxc6 and Black has too many hanging pieces.

13 Nxd7! Qxd7 14 Bxf6! Bxf6

On 14 ... gxf6 White's best plan is to ignore the free h7-pawn and go for the blockade instead with 15 Ne4!.

chesstouring.com

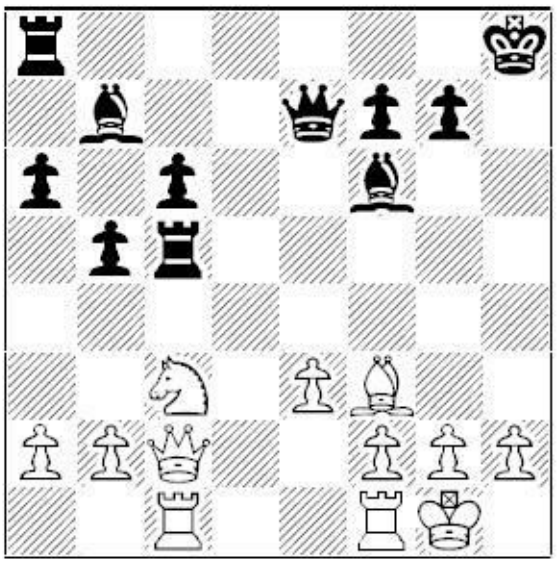
15 Bxh7+ Kh8 16 Be4

Black is busted after the much stronger 16 Ne4! Be7 17 h4!.

16 ... e5 17 dxe5 Rxe5 18 0-0

After his customarily limp opening play, Capa finds himself a full pawn down against the leading contender for the world title at the time. Black's bishop pair helps but clearly doesn't offer enough compensation. No benefit is gained by dwelling on that which we lack the power to change. Now Capa begins the process of methodically improving his position, move by move.

18 ... Qe7 19 Bf3 Rc5!



Capa composes himself for a vigorous defence. We don't get to pick the family we are born into. In this case the dark-squared bishop must carry the burden for his dysfunctionally lazy brother on b7. Capa tries to make good use of his dark-squared bishop by inflicting damage to White's queenside structure. His plan looks stronger than activating his queenside majority with 19 ... c5.

20 Qe2

20 Qb3 is met with 20 ... a5 with some but not enough counterplay for the pawn.

20 ... Bxc3 21 Rxc3

Kasparov suggests returning the pawn with 21 bxc3!? Qf6 22 Rfd1 Rxc3 23 Rxc3 Qxc3 24 Be4! with the initiative and attacking chances for White. But the problem is that this line suits Kasparov's style, not Rubinstein's. Rubinstein, like Capablanca, loved to play risk-free chess, and so naturally he kept his extra pawn rather than return it and speculate.

21 ... Rxc3 22 bxc3 Rd8 23 Rd1 Rxd1+ 24 Qxd1 Kg8 25 h4 c5

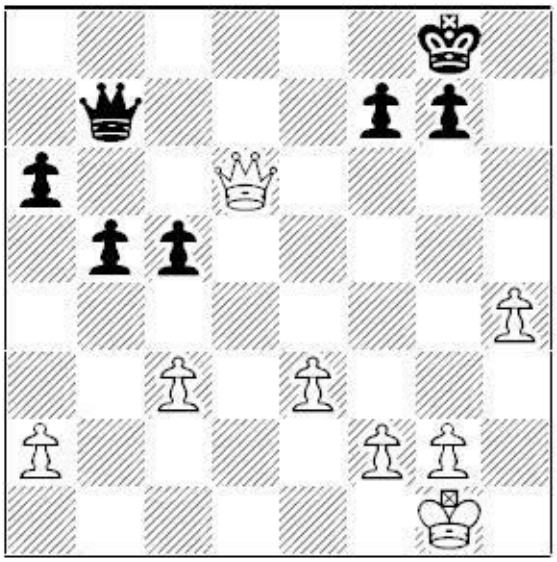
Correctly activating his pawn majority.

Question: Why did White leave his h-pawn to be taken on h4?

Answer: Be careful. That is a trap. The h-pawn is taboo due to 25 ... Qxh4?? 26 Qd7.

26 Bxb7 Qxb7 27 Qd6

chesstouring.com



Both players had foreseen this position but Capa assessed it more accurately. First, let's find the clues to unlock the peculiarities of the position:

1. White is a pawn up.
2. White's infiltrating queen looks more active than her counterpart.
3. White's king is safe from perpetual check.
4. Black's 3-2 queenside pawn majority looks faster than White's 4-2 majority on the other side.

Exercise (critical decision): White has three points in his favour; we have only one on Capa's side. What is our best shot at survival and counterplay?

Answer: Black survives only due to the vagary of a single anomaly in the position: He can create a fast passed pawn.

27 ... b4!

Question: How does this create a passer?

It looks to me like Black just dropped a pawn.

Answer: Please see the game continuation.

28 Qxc5?!

Suffering an agony of indecision, Rubinstein remains tongue-tied and unable to respond properly to Black's burst of counterplay. After this natural move White's advantage fades quickly. Tarrasch, Keres and Kotov all gave 28 c4! as White's best chance. Keres, after lengthy analysis of the ending, added: "Even after 28 c4! Black could have played on, retaining excellent drawing chances."

28 ... bxc3 29 Qxc3 Qb1+

There it is. Black creates a passed a-pawn.

30 Kh2 Qxa2 31 Qc8+ Kh7 32 Qf5+

Rubinstein's resolve turns into pudding, realizing he is the victim of a cruel joke. There is no win, despite his extra pawn. The queen's function, an abandoned boat on a dry lake bed, is at odds with her existence. One queen alone fails to deliver checkmate. All White can do is play for perpetual check.

32 ... g6!?

Capa begins to play for the win a pawn down, refusing the perpetual check which is his after 32 ... Kg8.

Question: Can't White play for mate by pushing his pawns on the kingside?

chesstouring.com

Answer: He has no effective way of doing so. For example: 33 h5 a5 34 Qg5? Qxf2 35 h6? Qf6 36

Qxa5 Qxh6+ 37 Kg1 Qxe3+ and it is White who finds himself a pawn down and fighting for the draw.

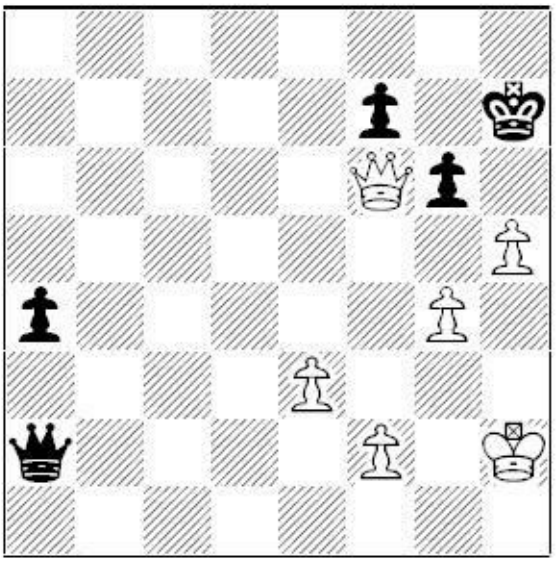
33 Qf6 a5 34 g4

Not liking the way the wind blows down the a-file, White hopes to divorce himself from the proceedings by hurrying to expose Black's king and deliver perpetual check.

34 ... a4

The passed a-pawn continues his unseemly display of gloating, as he glides down the file toward the queening square.

35 h5



35 ... gxh5

Question: Can Black play for the win with 35 ... Qe6?

Answer: That is a blunder which risks loss after 36 hxg6+ Kg8 37 Qd8+ Kg7 38 gxf7 Qxf7 39 Kg3, when White may get chances to deliver mate before Black promotes.

36 Qf5+

Keres thought 36 gxh5?! Qe6 would give Black all the chances to win.

36 ... Kg7 37 Qg5+

Drawing or losing a won game leaves an awful aftertaste which no known sweetener is capable of cloaking.

37 ... Kh7 38 Qxh5+ Kg7 ½-½

Kasparov commented upon the deceptive ease with which Capa drew a pawn-down ending against one of the greatest endgame players in the history of the game.

Game 17

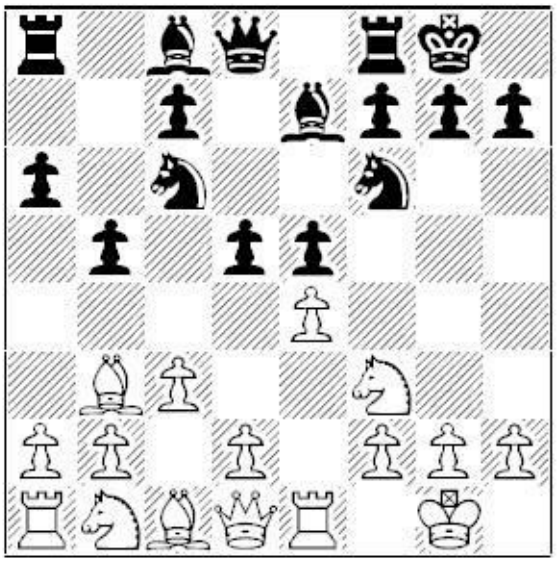
J.R.Capablanca-F.Marshall

New York 1918

Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 0-0 8 c3 d5!!

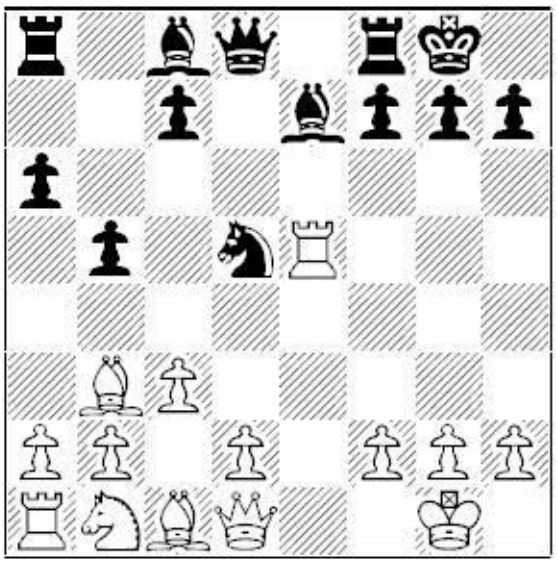
chesstouring.com



A moment frozen in time and enshrined in the forever. Marshall introduces his deadly Ruy Lopez gambit which lives on well after his own death. To this day nobody has come close to refuting it and virtually every Lopez player in the world top ten embraces Marshall's side.

9 exd5 Nxd5 10 Nxe5 Nxe5 11 Rxe5

So we have a standard Ruy Lopez Marshall Gambit – except this is the first one ever played! Malice often takes cover behind a sweet smile. I believe it was Edward Lasker who wrote that Marshall hid his opening secret for nearly a decade, lying in wait for Capa, his would-be victim. We chess players are a devious lot. Who among us may claim an unsullied conscience or clean hands when it comes to opening preparation, the nature of which is to confuse and deceive? The fact that Capablanca survived a sound attacking line, nine years in the brewing, is an astounding testament to his phenomenal defensive skills.



11 ... Nf6

The old school line. Today, virtually everyone plays 11 ... c6, where Marshall's gambit has successfully withstood the test of nearly a century of theory.

12 Re1

chesstouring.com

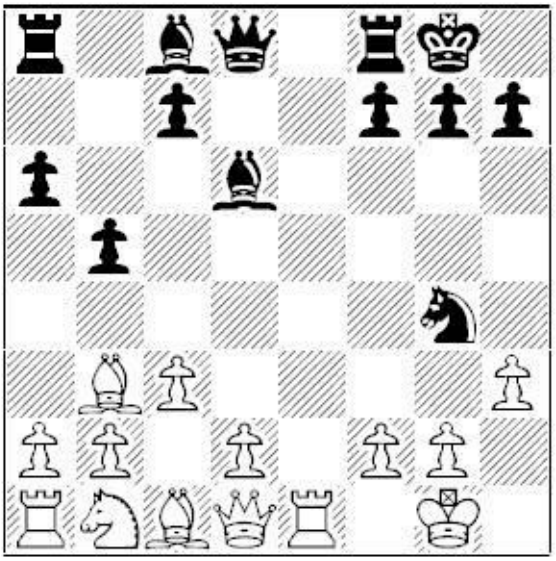
Question: Is 12 d4 a more accurate move here?

Answer: It simply transposes after 12 ... Bd6 13 Re1 Ng4 14 h3 Qh4 15 Qf3.

12 ... Bd6 13 h3

Preventing ... Ng4.

13 ... Ng4!?



Question: Hey, you just said "preventing ... Ng4" didn't you?

Answer: Oops, mea slight culpa! Let's answer your question with a question/exercise.

Exercise: The obvious question we ask ourselves: Can we take the gift knight, or should we exercise caution with a move like Qf3 instead?

Answer: The knight is poisoned.

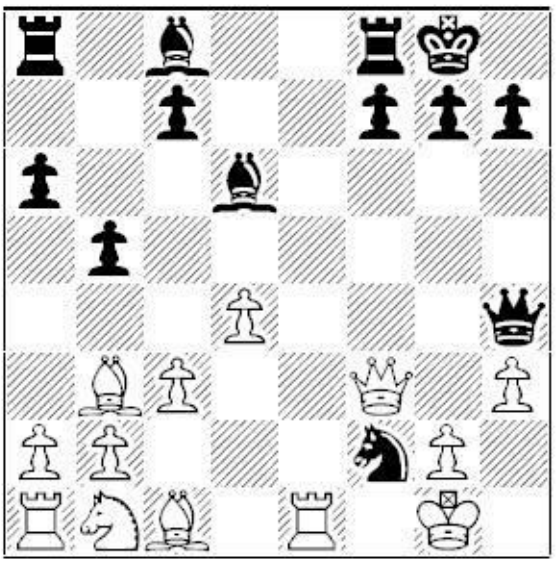
14 Qf3!

14 hxg4? Qh4 15 f3 (or 15 Qf3 Bh2+! 16 Kf1 Bxg4 17 Qe4 Bf4!, when those evil bishops whisper to each other in tones so faint, only they can hear) 15 ... Bb7 16 d4 Rfe8 gives Black a decisive attack.

14 ... Qh4 15 d4

Of course 15 hxg4? transposes to the previous note after 15 ... Bh2+!.

15 ... Nxf2!



chesstouring.com

The knight, giddy and lost in reverie, enters without thought of exit. Marshall, who wore such attacks as a badge of office, subscribed to the philosophy/prayer: "Lord, help me behave. But not just yet!" The

pesky knight continues to foster dissent and division in White's camp, warning of hellfire, as a preacher would to his frightened congregation – or so he hopes. Marshall aims to keep his attack flowing with that vital lubricant: Blood! However, the knight's bluster fails to intimidate Capa, whose next move is icily cool under fire. Instead:

a) 15 ... h5 16 Re2 Bh2+ 17 Kh1 Rb8 18 Bxf7+! (18 Re8! is even stronger) 18 ... Kh8 19 Qd5 is horribly complicated but in White's favour, J.Smeets-L.Perdomo, Kochin 2004.

b) 15 ... Bh2+ 16 Kf1 Bd6 17 Bf4 Bb7 18 Qxg4 Qxg4 19 hxg4 Bxf4 20 g3 Bd6 21 Nd2 and Black failed to get full compensation for the pawn, namely because the queens came off the board, A.Mori-J.Vozda, correspondence 2005.

16 Re2!

Health is a higher priority than money. The rook, eyes sparkling with mockery, asks the presumptuous knight where it will go now. Capa stated the obvious when he wrote: "I repeatedly demonstrated during the course of the match, in repulsing Marshall's onslaughts." As Muhammad Ali once said: "It's not bragging if you back it up!" The computer line, 16 Re3!, covering h3 sacs is also possible and favours White.

Question: Why isn't White taking that hanging rook on a8?

Answer: Mate takes precedence over greed:

a) 16 Qxa8?? Nxh3+! mates in seven moves.

b) 16 Qxf2?! Bh2+! (16 ... Bg3?? 17 Qxf7+ and it is Black who walks into mate) 17 Kf1 Bg3 18 Qd2 Bxh3! is not so clear.

16 ... Bg4!?

Question: What do we do if Black sacs his bishop on h3?

Answer: White should be able to defend after the tempting 16 ... Bxh3 17 gxh3 Nxh3+ 18 Kf1. Your suggestion may be Black's best line but should still work out in White's favour since his king is relatively safe.

17 hxg4 Bh2+ 18 Kf1 Bg3 19 Rxf2

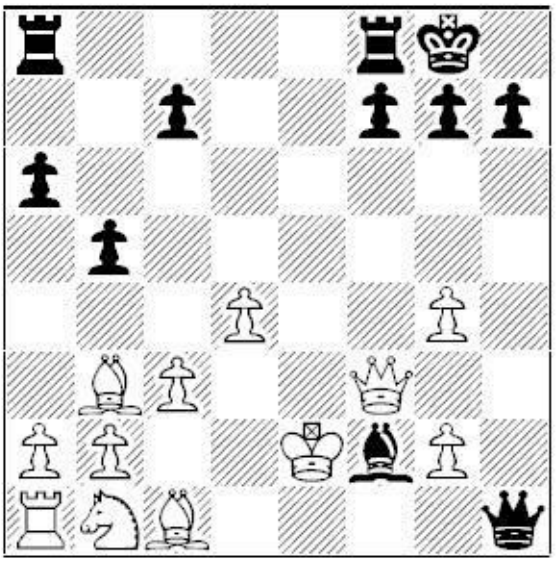
Question: Isn't 19 Re3 stronger?

Answer: 19 ... Qh1+ 20 Ke2 Qxc1 21 Qxg3 Nd1! isn't so clear.

19 ... Qh1+ 20 Ke2 Bxf2

White consolidates after 20 ... Rae8+? 21 Be3 or 20 ... Qxc1? 21 Bxf7+! Kh8 22 Qxg3 Qxb2+ 23 Nd2 Qxa1 24 Rf1! Qb2 25 Qd3! (White threatens to sac his queen on h7 and deliver mate) 25 ... h6 (25 ... g6 26 Qe3! and Black is helpless since he has no good way to cover the check on e5) 26 g5 with a winning attack.

chesstouring.com



Exercise (critical decision): How would you defend as White here?

Answer: Cover the critical e1-square. Capa defends with delicate precision.

21 Bd2!!

After the automatic 21 Qxf2? Qxc1 22 Kd3 follows 22 ... c5! and all of a sudden White's exposed king feels an urgent need to recite the Lord's prayer.

21 ... Bh4 22 Qh3 Rae8+

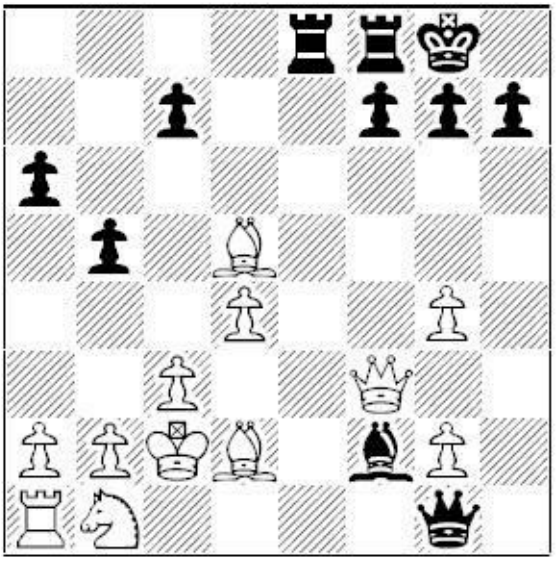
Question: Isn't White dead here? His king is on the run in the middle of the board, and his rook and knight are frozen on their original squares.

Answer: On the run for now. The destination is c2, where he will be safe, mainly due to an absence of light-square power on Black's side. Capa even manages to free his queenside pieces, though that is another story.

23 Kd3 Qf1+ 24 Kc2

Live long and prosper! The king, after a harrowing journey, now feels much better arriving on c2.

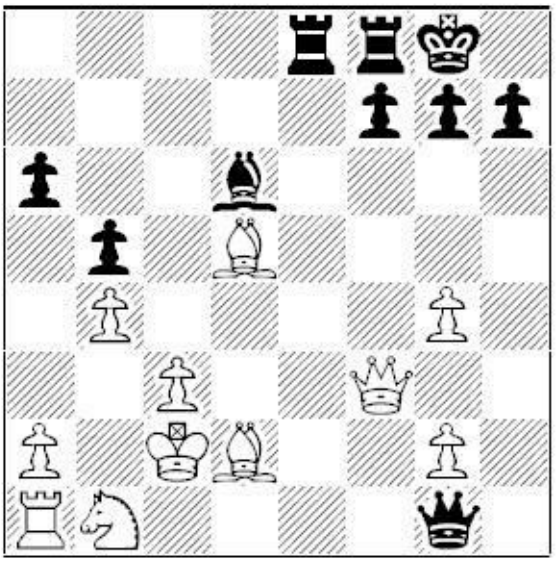
24 ... Bf2 25 Qf3 Qg1 26 Bd5!



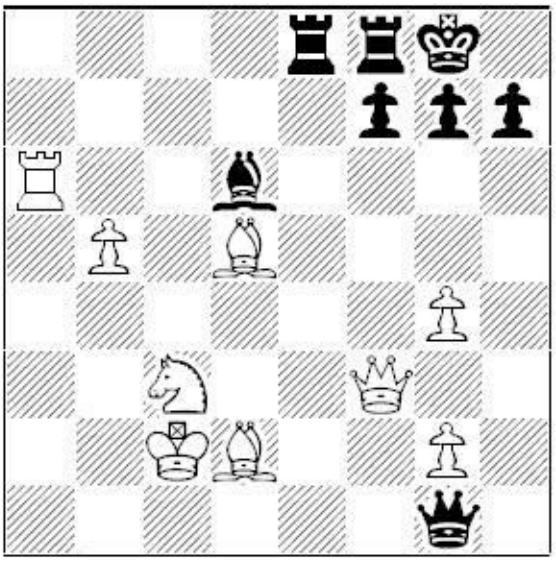
chesstouring.com

Centralizing, as well as clearing the way for b2-b4 and Kb2, if necessary.

26 ... c5 27 dxc5 Bxc5 28 b4 Bd6



Exercise (planning): The king looks safe for the moment but White still has one huge obstacle to overcome: How to develop the a1-rook?
Answer: Open the a-file. The ancient creature, dormant for millennia, begins to stir in the pit from a1.
29 a4! a5!?
A good practical move. Marshall strains to pry open the queenside. Still, it falls short.
30 axb5 axb4 31 Ra6
This rook, for so long shrouded in the shadow regions on a1, finally emerges.
31 ... bxc3 32 Nxc3

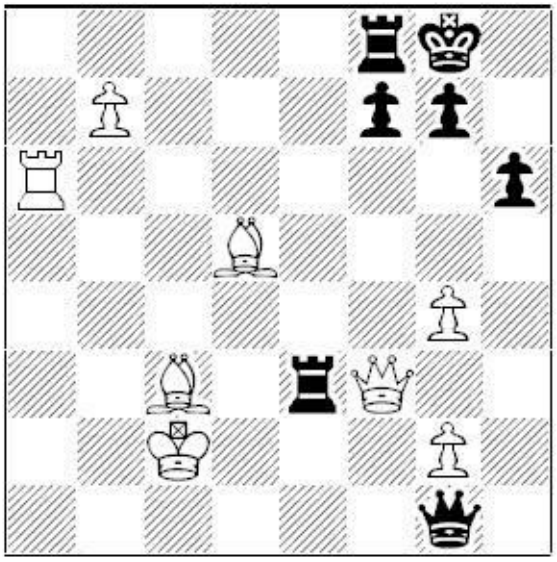


Game over.
Question: Why? Isn't White's king exposed?
Answer:
1. White's formally sleeping pieces emerge to excellent squares.
2. The king, seemingly exposed, is in no danger.
3. White exerts pressure on f7.
4. His passed b-pawn is ready to march forward.

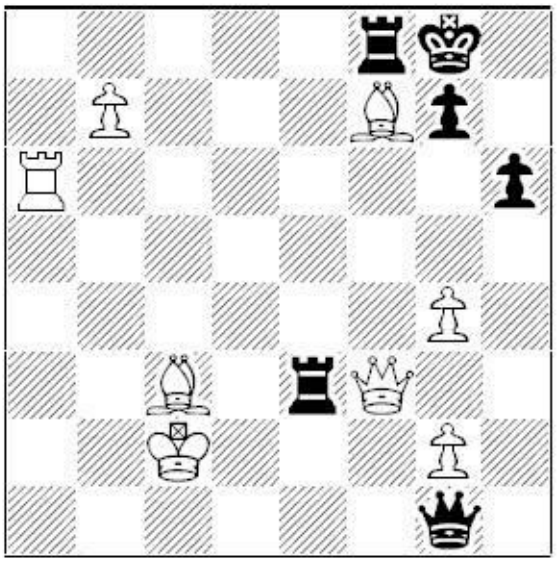
chesstouring.com

32 ... Bb4 33 b6 Bxc3 34 Bxc3 h6 35 b7

Forever eliminating ... Rc8.
35 ... Re3



Exercise (combination alert): White to play and deliver checkmate.
Answer: **36 Bxf7+! 1-0**



Exercise (calculation): Let's visualize all the mating lines
without moving the pieces. Ready? Here we go.
Answer:
a) 36 ... Rxf7 37 b8Q+ Kh7 38 Rxh6+! Kxh6 39 Qh8+ Kg5 40 Qh5 mate!
b) 36 ... Kh8 37 Rxh6 mate!
c) 36 ... Kh7 37 Qf5+ Kh8 38 Rxh6 mate!
I can't imagine any other player in the world at that time, except possibly Lasker, who would have survived Marshall's assault without exam prep.

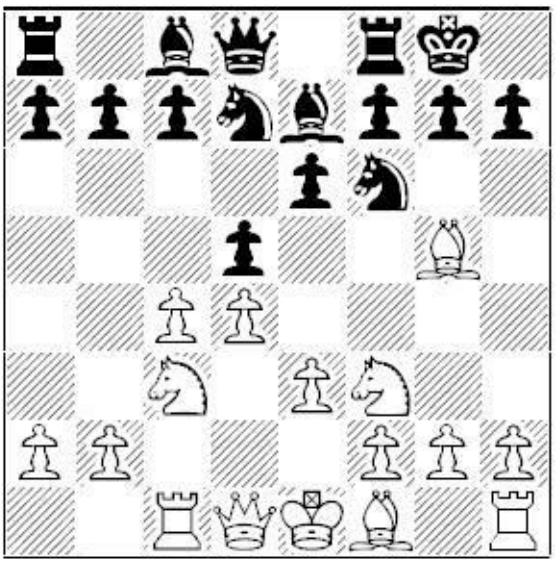
Game 18
chesstouring.com
J.R.Capablanca-Em.Lasker
5th matchgame, Havana 1921

Lasker tried to pull a fast one on Capa in their negotiations for the title match by originally demanded an unfair clause, which stated that the champion retains his title if the challenger wins by a single point. In effect, this would mean the challenger would have to win the match by two points. Capa objected in a letter to Lasker: "Moreover, such a match would not be an even match, but would be more in the nature of a handicap contest, wherein I, as the challenger for your title, would be compelled to give you a handicap of one game." I have a feeling this is why Schlechter played like such a madman in his final match game versus Lasker when Schlechter led by a point. Fischer tried to pull this same trick on his challenger, Karpov, but fortunately FIDE stepped in and disallowed it.

1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 c4 e6 4 Bg5

Compare Capa's opening play with Fischer's against Spassky in their world championship match: 4 Nc3 Be7 5 Bg5 0-0 6 e3 h6 7 Bh4 b6 8 cxd5 Nxd5 9 Bxe7 Qxe7 10 Nxd5 exd5 11 Rc1 Be6 12 Qa4 (Fischer borrows Capa's queen manoeuvre) 12 ... c5 13 Qa3 Rc8 14 Bb5 a6 15 dxc5 bxc5 16 0-0 Ra7 17 Be2 Nd7 18 Nd4! Qf8 19 Nxe6 fxe6 20 e4! d4 21 f4 Qe7 22 e5 Rb8 23 Bc4 Kh8 24 Qh3! Nf8 25 b3 and White ruled the light squares, R.J.Fischer-B.Spassky, 6th matchgame, Reykjavik 1972.

4 ... Nbd7 5 e3 Be7 6 Nc3 0-0 7 Rc1



7 ... b6!?

Black is clearly looking to pick a fight. Lasker wasn't interested in grovelling for a draw with the old school Orthodox Queen's Gambit Declined plan of 7 ... c6.

7 ... a6 is a modern way of infusing some life into a dry position. The sneaky idea is to take on c4 only after White moves his f1-bishop and then follow with ... b7-b5, ... Bb7 and ... c7-c5, with an extra tempo over a normal Queen's Gambit Accepted.

Question: How should White avoid that fate?

Answer: The easiest way is to just take on d5, transposing to an Exchange QGD, when Black's ... a7-a6 doesn't always fit with the position.

8 cxd5 exd5 9 Qa4!?

Not such a great non-developing decision. Capa isn't backing down either and risks falling behind in development, which he could easily avoid by developing his bishop to b5 (which he played in game one of this match, and also against Teichmann in Chapter 3; see Game 25) or e2 or d3.

chesstouring.com

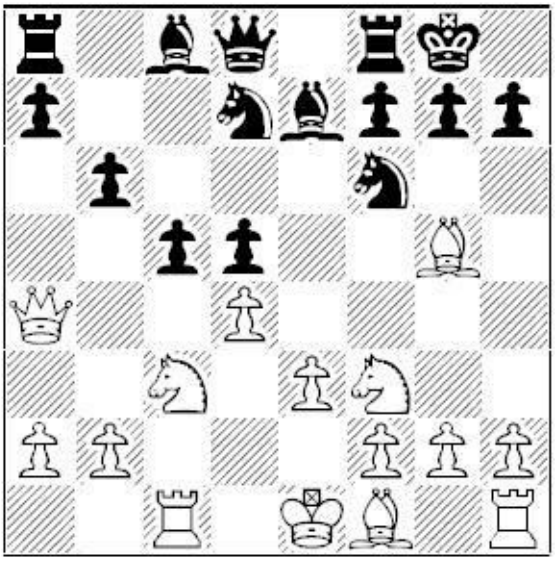
Question: What is the point of White's last move?

Answer: The queenside light squares were weakened the moment Lasker played 7 ... b6!?. Capa instinctively understood this and fought for them, eyeing a6 and c6 as potential infiltration squares later on.

9 Bb5 Bb7 10 Qa4?! (10 0-0 a6 11 Ba4 c5 12 dxc5 Nxc5 13 Bc2 Nce4 14 Bxe4 dxe4 15 Qxd8 Rfxd8 16 Nd4 and White's knight post on d4 gave him the edge, J.R.Capablanca-E.Sergeant, Hastings 1929/30) 10 ... a6 11 Bxd7 Nxd7 12 Bxe7 Qxe7 13 Qb3 Qd6 allowed Lasker to equalize in the first game of the match.

9 ... c5!

Lasker correctly ignores the "threat" of Qc6 and happily offers his d-pawn for a scary-looking development lead.



10 Qc6!?

An exceedingly risky decision. Capa plunges into the complications without compunction or fear, courting annihilation with a smile. Sacrifices, much like horror movies, can be scary to some but not to others. Capa, in a world championship match nonchalantly decides to embark upon a pawn-grabbing adventure, banking on his remarkable defensive powers. The score was tied at this point – all draws. I guess Capablanca wanted to force a showdown.

Instead, after 10 Ba6 h6 11 Bh4?! (11 Bf4 is better) 11 ... cxd4! (... Nc5 is threatened) 12 exd4 Nh5! 13 Bg3 Bxa6 14 Qxa6 Bg5! 15 Rd1 Re8+ 16 Kf1 Ndf6 Black stood better as White's h1-rook will be hard to develop, B.Gelfand-N.Short, 2nd matchgame, Brussels 1991.

10 ... Rb8 11 Nxd5

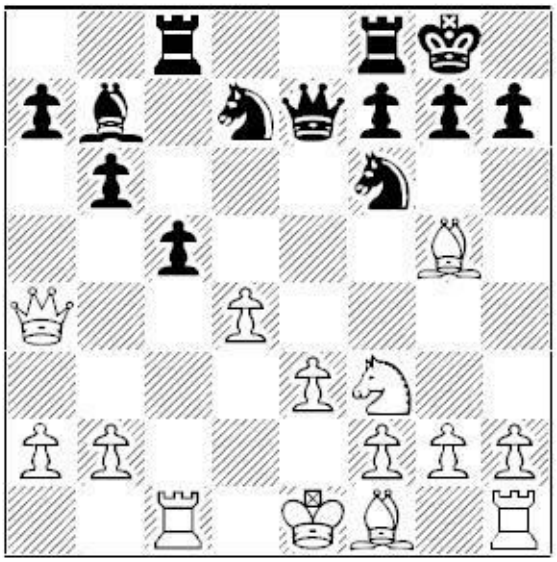
Down the hatch. The fledgling knight opens its beak for a serving in the nest.

11 ... Bb7

Lasker wants to keep queens on the board. His option is 11 ... Nxd5 12 Qxd5 Bb7 13 Bxe7 Qxe7 14 Qg5 Qxg5 15 Nxg5 cxd4 16 Rd1 Nf6 17 Rxd4 Rbc8, when Black's huge development lead gives him excellent compensation for the pawn. Still, I doubt White stands any worse after 18 f3!.

12 Nxe7+ Qxe7 13 Qa4 Rbc8

chesstouring.com



Kasparov didn't like Black's last move.

Question: Isn't White completely busted? I don't see how his king will escape to safety.

Answer: Capa landed in a precarious situation, but I wouldn't go so far as to say he is busted. The computers think White survives but one must play like a computer to do so. And Capa does just that in the coming moves.

Question: Why didn't Black take on f3?

Answer: Kasparov says that was "definitely the best chance". Still, White lives on after 13 ... Bxf3! 14 gxf3 cxd4 15 Qxd4 Rbc8 16 Rxc8 Rxc8 17 Be2, when Black seems to have enough for the pawn.

14 Qa3 Qe6

Houdini gives the tricky line 14 ... Qe4! 15 Be2 cxd4 and now White escapes by diplomatically returning the pawn by castling.

15 Bxf6

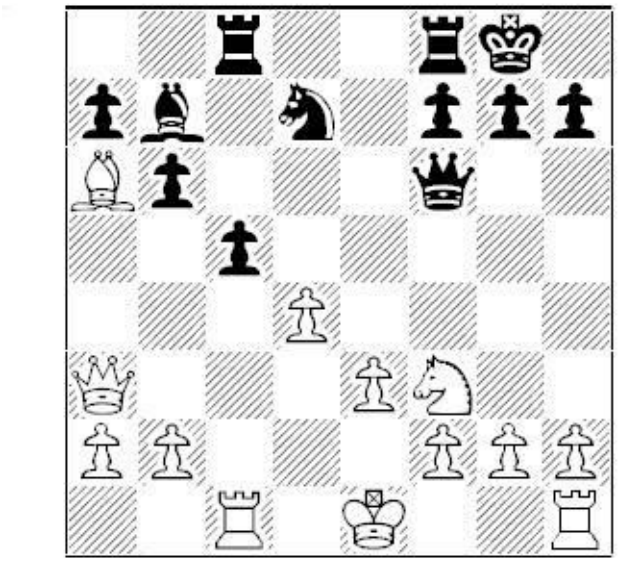
The more pieces off the board the better.

15 ... Qxf6?!

Black gets loads of compensation for his pawn after 15 ... Bxf3! 16 Bxg7 cxd4 17 Ra1 Kxg7 18 gxf3.

16 Ba6!

chesstouring.com



16 ... Bxf3!

Lasker decides to sac the exchange. After 16 ... Bxa6 17 Qxa6, Black is unable to take on d4 due to a hanging rook on c8.

Question: I have a cute idea for Black: 17 ... Nb8 and if 18 Qxa7 then

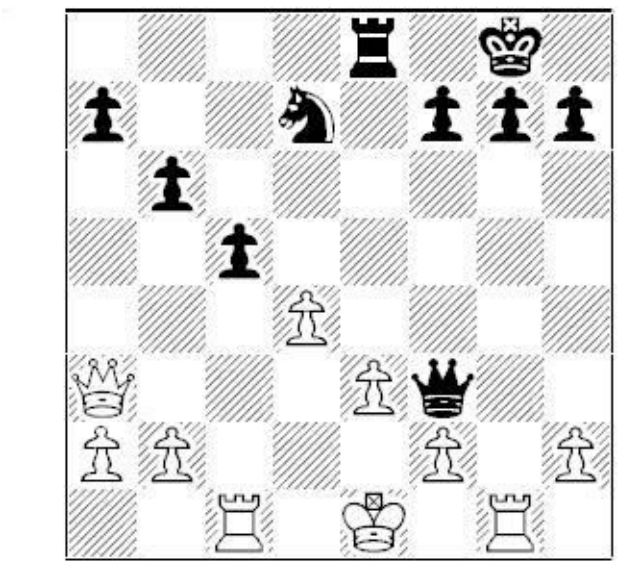
Black can open the game by taking on d4 with 18 ... cxd4. Does this work?

Answer: It's a clever idea but it fails to the counter-clever 19 Rxc8 Rxc8 20 Nxd4! and White wins with two extra pawns. Black's back rank is too loose to generate threats.

17 Bxc8 Rxc8

17 ... Bxg2 18 Rg1 is similar to the game.

18 gxf3 Qxf3 19 Rg1 Re8



Question: Does Black have full compensation?

Answer: Let's assess:

1. Black is down a full exchange.
2. White's king is caught in the middle and not likely to find safety for a long time to come.
3. Material is somewhat reduced, favouring the defending side, White.

chesstouring.com

Conclusion: Two out of three factors fit in White's favour, so advantage White; but we shouldn't

discount Black's practical chances since it is not at all easy to navigate the White side.

20 Qd3 g6 21 Kf1 Re4?!

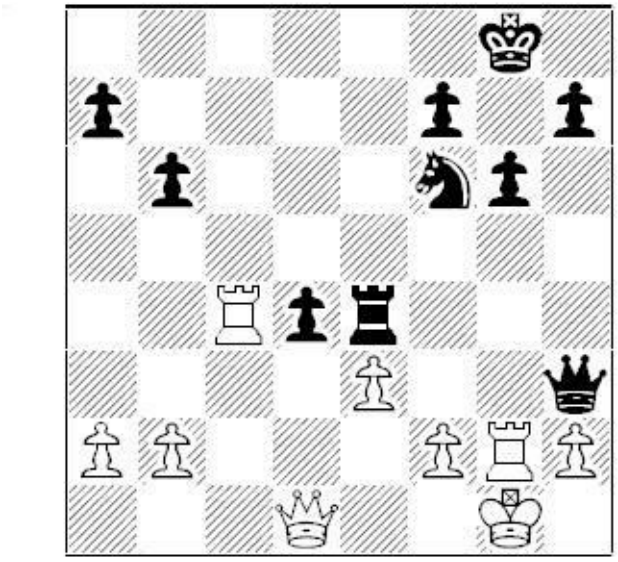
Right idea; wrong move order. Correct was 21 ... Nf6! 22 Qd1 Qh3+ 23 Rg2 and only now 23 ... Re4! 24 Kg1 cxd4, when Black receives reasonable compensation for the exchange.

22 Qd1?!

This transposes to the above note. 22 dxc5! Nxc5 23 Qe2 Qf5 24 Rd1 was better, although even here, consolidation of the extra exchange is a monumental defensive task.

22 ... Qh3+ 23 Rg2 Nf6! 24 Kg1 cxd4 25 Rc4!

Not 25 exd4? Nd5 26 Rg3 Qf5 with huge attacking chances for the exchange.



"Wonderful!" writes Lasker about this move, which forces the removal of Black's attacking rook. Capa successfully threads his way through Black's maze until he exits and views the horizon.

25 ... dxe3 26 Rxe4 Nxe4

Question: Why didn't Black play the in-between capture with check on f2?

Answer: 26 ... exf2+?? fails tactically to 27 Rxf2 Nxe4 28 Qd8+ Kg7 29 Qd4+, picking off the knight.

27 Qd8+ Kg7 28 Qd4+ Nf6 29 fxe3 Qe6 30 Rf2

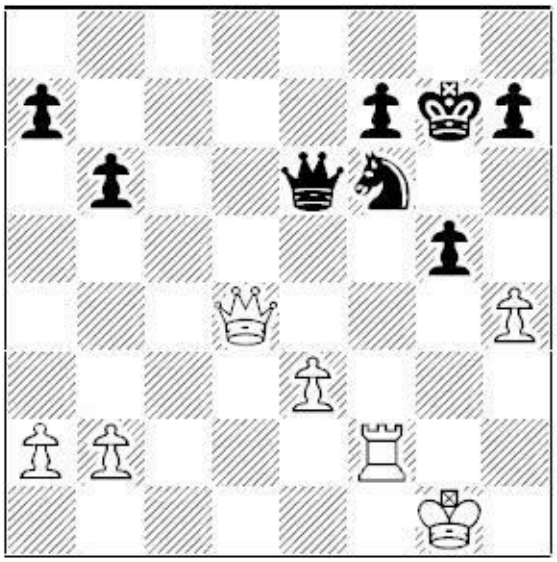
This is not going to be easy. White's lightly-guarded king stands quite alone, surrounded by nothingness and vulnerable to perpetual checks later on.

30 ... g5

In order to escape the pin with ... Kg6.

31 h4

chesstouring.com



A new dynamic entered. Black has a choice:

a) Play 31 ... h6, allowing 32 h5, in this case with a perpetual pin on f6. But Black is going for a fortress, banking that White can't make progress.

b) Play 31 ... gxh4 opening both kings.

Exercise (critical decision): One path leads to a draw, the other to shadows and confusion. Which one would you play?

31 ... gxh4?!

In any given position you can collect all the relevant data and still come up with the wrong plan. The natural, but incorrect decision gives White chances to win. Surprisingly, White can't make progress after the self-pinning.

Answer: 31 ... h6!! – I had the computers give it a go as White and they fell flat. For example: 32 h5 (Black's pinned down pieces lie around like drunks passed out in an alley; yet White can't do a thing to exploit it) 32 ... Qe7 33 e4! Qe6 34 Rf5 Qe7 35 b4 Qe6 36 b5 Qe7 37 a4 Qe6 38 Qc3 Qe7 39 Kh2 Qe6 and White is out of ideas and must acquiesce to the draw.

32 Qxh4 Ng4 33 Qg5+ Kf8 34 Rf5! h5!?

Question: Why not take on e3?

Answer: 34 ... Qxe3+ 35 Qxe3 Nxe3 36 Rf4 isn't going to be so easy for Black to draw. He has too many pawn targets for that roaming rook.

35 Qd8+ Kg7 36 Qg5+ Kf8 37 Qd8+ Kg7 38 Qg5+ Kf8 39 b3

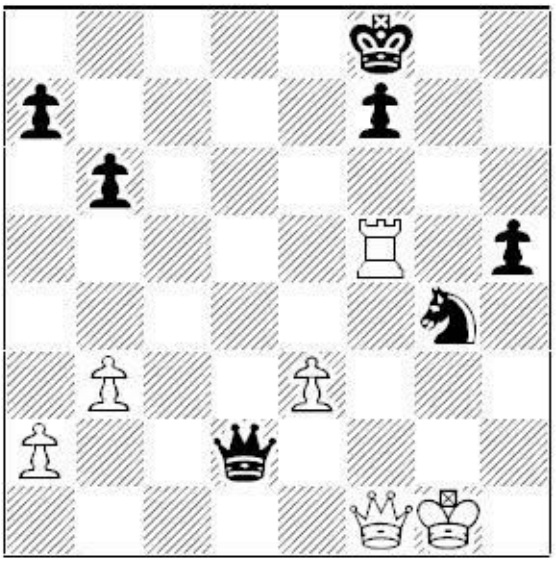
Kasparov criticizes this natural move and gives 39 Qxh5! Qxe3+ 40 Kg2 Qd2+ 41 Kg3 Nh6 42 Rd5 Qe1+ 43 Kg2 Qe4+ 44 Kf2. White's king tries to sneak away with the soft tread of a mouse while Black's queen, his shadow, strives to keep up stride for stride. Paradoxically, Black can't sustain an attack or give perpetual check in this position since White's king hops over to the queenside to eventual safety. This may be true, though not so easy to find over the board!

39 ... Qd6!

Target: g3.

40 Qf4 Qd1+ 41 Qf1 Qd2?

chesstouring.com



Exercise (combination alert): The giants each miss a mate for White. What did Lasker and Capa overlook?

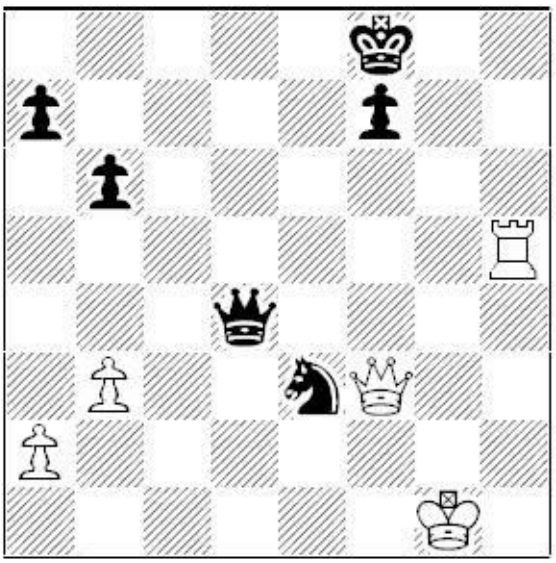
42 Rxh5?

The wrong pawn. Capa tries to unlock the door with a bent key.

Answer: 42 Rxf7+! Ke8 43 Rf8+ Kd7 44 Qf7+ Kc6 45 Rc8+ Kb5 (45 ... Kd6 46 Rd8+) 46 Qc4+ Ka5 47 Qa4 mate!

42 ... Nxe3 43 Qf3 Qd4!

The queen's fortuitous arrival should save the day. "Amazing resourcefulness," says Kasparov, who claims the position may now be drawn.



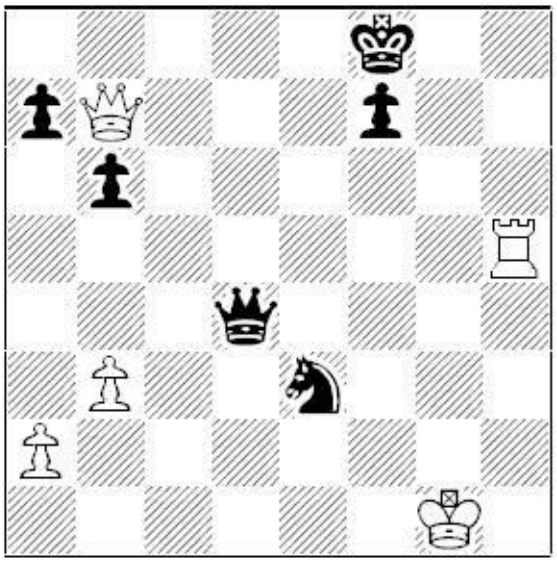
44 Qa8+ Ke7 45 Qb7+

At this point Lasker still had 15 minutes on his clock but fatigue and age got the better of him, robbing him of a well-deserved draw.

45 ... Kf8??

45 ... Kd6! avoids the exchange of queens and should draw.

chesstouring.com



Exercise: White has a method of taking queens off the board,
and picking up the knight to boot. How to achieve the goal?

Answer: **46 Qb8+! 1-0**

After 46 ... Ke7 47 Qe5+! White's queen appears a reflection of her unhappy sister.

In this game Lasker threw the kitchen sink at Capa, who simply used it to wash his hands. In such a magnificent loss, one senses the greatness in the player that Lasker was in his prime.

Game 19

J.R.Capablanca-A.Alekhine

7th matchgame, Buenos Aires 1927

Queen's Gambit Declined

The question arises: How on earth did Capablanca lose his 1927 title match to Alekhine? Capa was clearly the superior player up to around 1929, when he began to decline and Alekhine approached his prime. No one ever dreamed it would happen – probably not even Alekhine! The truth is Capa lost to himself, not Alekhine, by failing to take his rival seriously and declining to properly prepare for the match. To only experience victory was the precursor of his defeat. It was rumoured that Capa hit the night clubs of Buenos Aires each evening seeking female and alcoholic entertainment, while the focused, monomaniacal Alekhine did what he always did: study, prepare, lay in wait for the next game. In the end, it was Capa's faith in the infallibility of his own genius and simple hubris which cost him the match and title. To his discredit, Alekhine, who must have known deep down inside, that an enraged and focused Capa would probably have defeated him in a rematch, never offered his great rival another shot at the title.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 Nbd7 5 Bg5 c6 6 e3 Qa5

The Cambridge Springs line of the Queen's Gambit Declined, a lively change from the normally dreary Orthodox lines, which GMs at the time churned out like mannequins from the factory.

Question: What is Black playing for?

Answer: The initiative! Black has all sorts of tricks like ... Ne4, ... Bb4 and ... d5xc4, which in some cases uncovers his queen against a loose bishop on g5.

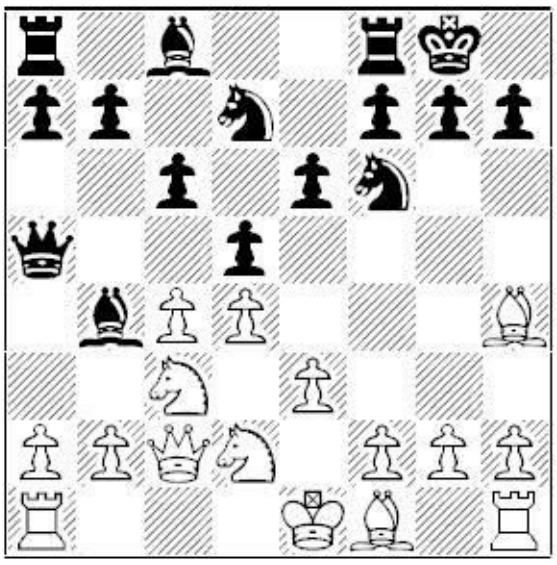
chesstouring.com

7 Nd2

Question: Why retreat an already developed piece?

Answer: In order to take the sting out of ... Ne4. It also discourages ... d5xc4 since White has options of recapturing with his knight after playing Bxf6 first.

7 ... Bb4 8 Qc2 0-0 9 Bh4!?



A theoretical novelty at the time. Capa's home prep had the effect of totally throwing Alekhine off. 9 Be2 is the main move today.

Question: What is the idea behind 9 Bh4?

Answer: Mainly, White keeps clear of tricks on his bishop from ... Ne4 and ... d5xc4. Of course, he expends a tempo to do it, so it isn't such a great TN. Still, in this game, it proved a smashing success since it had the effect of provoking Alekhine into an attempted refutation.

9 ... c5

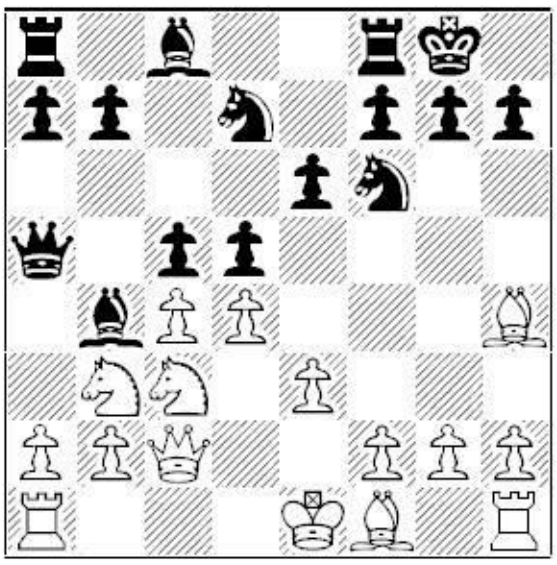
It looks logical to open the position since White is now behind in development.

Question: How did that happen?

Answer: White took two moves each with the dark-squared bishop and his g1-knight.

Black can also try 9 ... e5!? 10 dxe5 Ne4 11 Ndxe4 dxe4 12 e6! with complications, H.Bellmann-C.Fryll, correspondence 2000.

10 Nb3



chesstouring.com

10 ... Qa4!

Question: Why give this artificial-looking move an exclamation mark?

Answer: Black should equalize and it is best through process of elimination. Let's look:

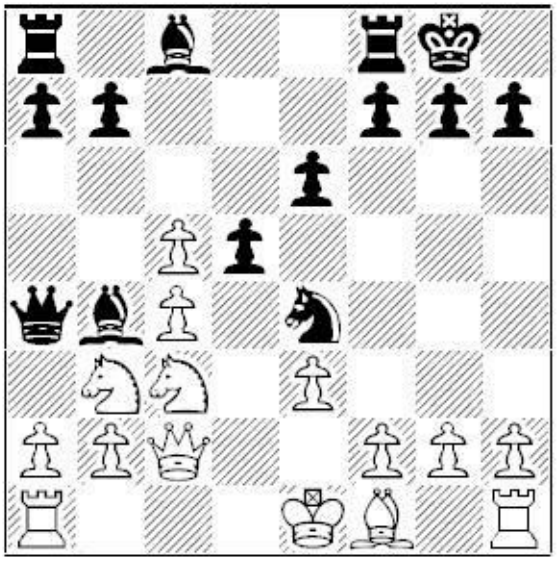
a) 10 ... Qc7 is met by the annoying 11 Bg3.

b) 10 ... Qb6 11 dxc5! Bxc5 (11 ... Nxc5 12 Bxf6 gxf6 13 cxd5 looks unhealthy for Black) 12 Nxc5 hands White the bishop pair.

11 Bxf6

Avoiding 11 dxc5 Ne4, when Black hopes to make trouble in the centre and on the queenside.

11 ... Nxf6 12 dxc5 Ne4!?



After a staggering 70-minute think, Alekhine offers a rather questionable pawn sac, where he essentially pulls the pin and throws, yet the grenade lands intact and unexploded.

Question: How can such a strong player take over an hour for a move and make a not-so-great one?

Answer: I have come to the realization that such deep sea dives do not necessarily ensure a deep move in return. Most strong players find their good moves rather quickly and only burn time on their clocks reassuring themselves of the correctness of the details.

As for Alekhine's move – which has been condemned as an error by perhaps every annotator from Capa's time on – I am not so sure it is an error, as much as a speculative pawn sac. The move places difficult defensive problems in front of Capa, so it has its practical value.

Question: Well then, what would you suggest for Black as a path to equality?

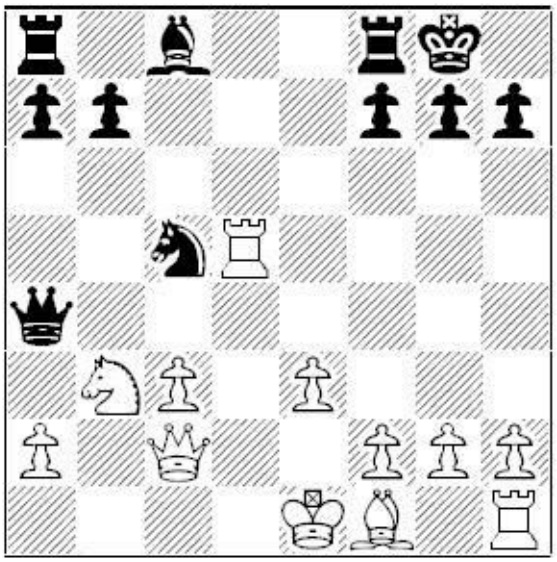
Answer: Don't get fancy and just work to regain the pawn with something like 12 ... dxc4 13 Bxc4 Qc6 14 0-0 Bxc5 15 Nxc5 Qxc5, when it is hard to imagine White extracting anything from his tiny development lead. For example, after 16 Ne4 Nxe4 17 Qxe4 Qb6, the attack on b2 gives Black enough time to develop with ... Bd7 next move – unless White speculates by 18 Rad1!? Qxb2 19 Rd4 Qb6 20 Rfd1 with compensation for the pawn.

13 cxd5 Bxc3+ 14 bxc3 Nxc5

After 14 ... exd5 15 Rd1 Be6 (15 ... Nxc5 16 Rxd5 transposes to the game continuation) 16 Rd4! White stands better.

chesstouring.com

15 Rd1 exd5 16 Rxd5



16 ... Nxb3?

I feel this is the true error. Alekhine shouldn't have fixed White's weakened queenside pawns. I tried 16 ... b6! on several of my students and had them defend White's position. Supremely gifted as most of them are, they all, to a man and woman, folded like poker players holding a bad hand – as White! Now I am not saying Capa would have done the same against Alekhine, but still, it feels like Black may have enough compensation for the pawn.

Question: What is the exact compensation after 16 ... b6?

Answer: The list runs:

1. White is behind in development, with king in the centre, inability to castle or efficiently develop his f1-bishop.

2. White has weak, potentially target pawns on the queenside, especially the one on the open c-file.

17 axb3 Qc6 18 Rd4 Re8

Question: What did Black get for his pawn sac?

Answer: A development lead, though I doubt it is large enough to justify his sacrifice. Black's position is vaguely threatening, but a show of force without true focus or a clear target is just that: A show without any true menace to White.

Question: How does White develop his kingside?

Answer: By offering to swap his g-pawn for Black's h-pawn. Like this!

19 Bd3! Qxg2

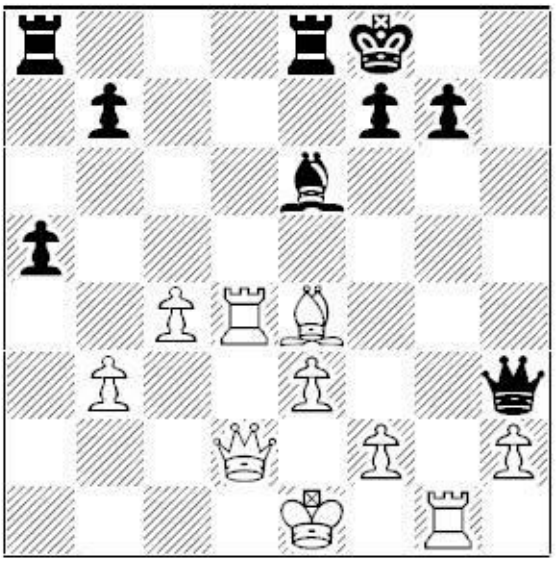
This opens the g-file against Black's king, but there is no choice, since otherwise White just castles and stays up a pawn for nothing.

20 Bxh7+ Kf8 21 Be4 Qh3 22 Qd2 Be6 23 c4

A queen check on b4 is in the air.

23 ... a5! 24 Rg1!

chesstouring.com



The retaliatory counterattack begins.

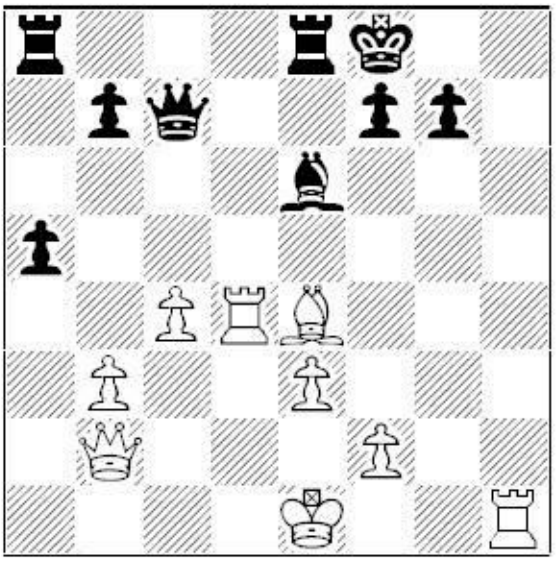
Question: Can White get away with taking on b7?

Answer: I wouldn't have even considered it, but *Houdini* assures me that White can with the tricky line 24 Bxb7 Rab8 25 Bc6 Rxb3 26 Qd1!. Even here Black gets attacking chances for the exchange. I much prefer Capa's human move. Why defend when we can go on a counterattack?

24 ... Qxh2

Alekhine regains his lost pawn, but now the initiative and attack fall firmly into White's hands.

25 Rh1! Qc7 26 Qb2!



White's forces, silent as cats, lay in wait on just the right squares and at the right time. With his uncanny intuition of relevant squares, Capa targets the weak link: g7.

26 ... Qc5

The unfulfilled queen, a childless woman with a strong nurturing instinct, wanders about, looking to be of use.

Question: Why doesn't Black get on with his attack by tossing in 26 ... a4?

chesstouring.com

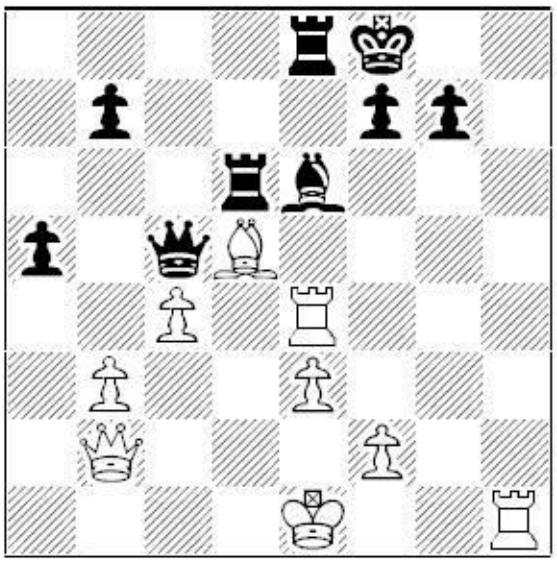
Answer: The move walks into a forced mate! Black's position is in far more danger then outer appearances suggest. Just watch: 27 Qa3+! Kg8 28 Bh7+ Kh8 29 Bf5+ Kg8 30 Rdh4 and Black is done.

27 Bd5!

This bishop, stubborn and mean-spirited in equal measure, remains on d5 no matter what the intimidation from the other side.

27 ... Ra6 28 Re4! Rd6

Of course White's bishop is untouchable: 28 ... Bxd5?? 29 Rh8 mate!



The prelude to a possible exchange sac from Black, whose pieces give the white bishop on d5 icy, malignant stares, yet are powerless to budge him from his post.

Exercise (planning): White's attack is in full force. How shall we continue?

Answer: **29 Rh7!**

Attacking g7 is far stronger than chasing the king with 29 Rh8+?! Ke7 30 Rxe8+ Kxe8 31 Qxg7 Qb4+, when Black is back in the game.

29 ... Ke7

No choice. The gangrenous limb on g7 must be amputated since:

a) 29 ... f6?? hangs a piece to 30 Rh8+ Kf7 31 Rxe8.

b) 29 ... g6?? 30 Qg7+ Ke7 31 Qxf7+ mates.

30 Qxg7

Threatening to take on f7. The pressure becomes all but unbearable for Black.

30 ... Kd8

The exhausted king rolls out of bed, a sick but dutiful man who refuses to sleep away a work day. If 30 ... Rf8 31 Bxe6 Rxe6 32 Rf4! Qb4+ 33 Ke2 and f7 falls.

31 Bxe6 fxe6 32 Qxb7

Typically, Capa prefers to simplify out rather than pursue an attack with the winning but riskier line 32 Re5 Qb4+.

32 ... Qb4+ 33 Qxb4 axb4 34 c5! Rc6 35 Rxb4 Rxc5 36 Ra7 1-0

Alekhine realized all that remains are a few half-hearted wisps of resistance. Not even the Almighty can hold a two pawn down ending against Capa.

Game 20

A.Alekhine-J.R.Capablanca

New York 1927

Queen's Indian Defence

chesstouring.com

Alekhine's tournament book *New York 1927* is one of the most mean-spirited and intellectually dishonest chess books ever written. The Russian, who quite obviously grappled with deep jealousy issues when it came to all things Capa, spouts venom throughout the book on his favourite target. Examples of the hate-speak:

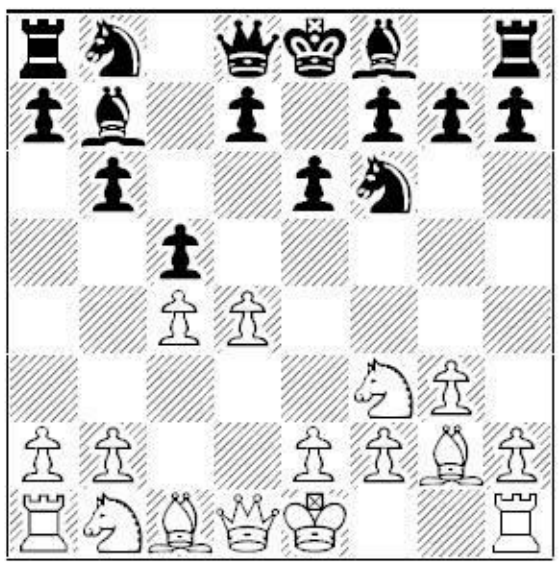
1. "In the endgame, he (Capablanca) is not to be feared by a first-class master."
2. "It's unbelievable how self-consciously and weakly Marshall always plays against Capablanca!"
3. "Only then did it finally become clear to me how exaggerated were the general shouts of praise with which the quality of his performance in New York (1927) were greeted."
4. " ... his self-confidence grew in the extreme, indeed turned into self-idolization." Well, okay, I admit criticism number 4 was possibly true!

Trust me. The entire book is like this! The tournament was played only a few months before their world championship match, and Alekhine was anxious to show Capa just who was boss. Well, as it turned out, Capa was boss and chairman of the board. He skated to a crushing victory 3½ points ahead of his nearest rival – Alekhine. In their personal games, they drew three, but Alekhine's single loss to Capa turned out to be one of the most humiliating of his life.

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 b6

Capablanca successfully played the Queen's Indian at a time when few even knew what it was, essentially a hypermodern concept of controlling the centre via the wings.

4 g3 Bb7 5 Bg2 c5!?



Inviting a Benoni hybrid, but not such a good way of entering one. 5 ... Be7 is the more common route today.

6 d5!

Alekhine takes up the challenge "to avoid a draw", he says in the tournament book. 6 0-0 cxd4 7 Qxd4 is the Hedgehog formation.

6 ... exd5

Question: Doesn't this just drop a pawn for White?

Answer: No. Please see White's next move.

7 Nh4

chesstouring.com

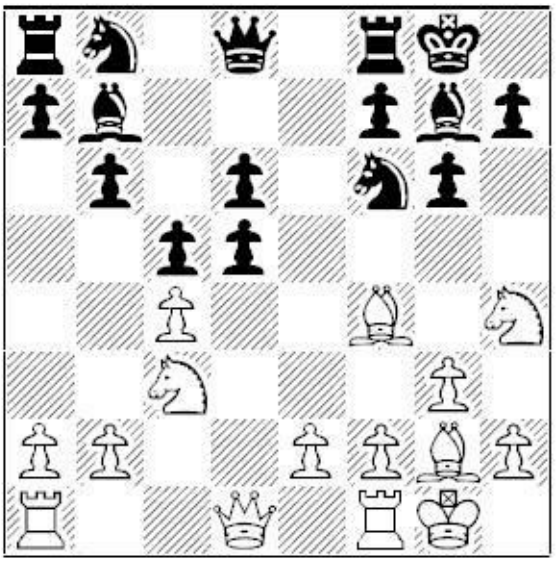
The pin regains the lost pawn. 7 Ng5 has been tried a few times: 7 ... Ne4 8 Nxe4 dxe4 9 Nc3 f5 10 Bf4 Qf6 11 0-0 and White's development lead compensated for the missing pawn, E.Kengis-M.Womacka,

Baden-Baden 1990.

7 ... g6 8 Nc3 Bg7 9 0-0 0-0 10 Bf4

This natural but weak move allows Black to equalize. Instead, 10 Bg5! gives White an excellent Benoni. If Black tries 10 ... h6? then 11 Bxf6 Qxf6 (11 ... Bxf6? is met by the shocking 12 Nxg6!, winning on the spot) 12 Nxd5! Bxd5 13 Qxd5 Nc6 14 Qxd7 Rac8 15 Rad1! sees White emerge a pawn ahead in all variations (the threat is Rd6!), J.Fedorowicz-V.Mezentsev, San Francisco 2007; while 10 ... Qc8 11 cxd5 gives White a much better version of the game continuation.

10 ... d6



11 cxd5

Question: Isn't this just a bad Benoni for Black too, whose light-squared bishop hits a pawn wall on d5.

Answer: Black looks okay here. Keep in mind, White's knight went off for a jaunt on h4, so he lost time as well. Annotators often say a position is "equal". Perhaps a distinction should be made between equality and equity. In this dynamically balanced position, Black has equity.

Question: Why can't White keep recapturing on d5 with pieces, with the intention of hammering away on Black's backward d6-pawn?

Answer: Your idea is playable and perhaps safer than the one Alekhine went for, but in most Benoni structures, Black gets counterplay against this plan. In this case Black looks fine after 11 Nxd5 Nxd5 12 Bxd5 Bxd5 13 Qxd5 Na6 14 Qd2 Qe7 15 Rad1 (15 Bxd6 is met by 15 ... Rfd8) 15 ... Rad8, when White would be foolish to take on d6.

11 ... Nh5

To take the pressure off d6.

12 Bd2 Nd7 13 f4?!

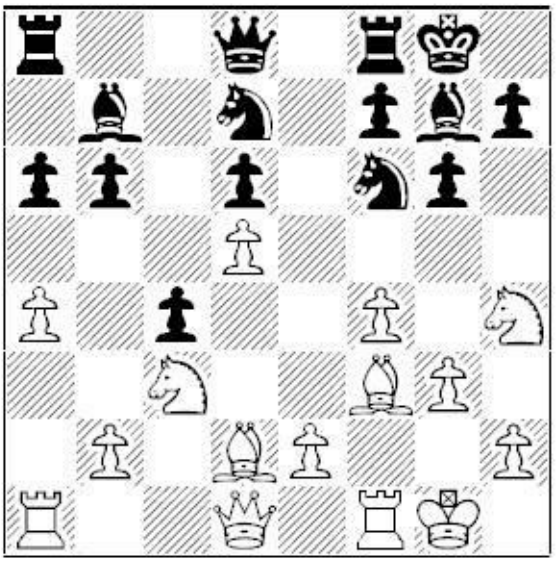
Correctly criticized by Alekhine who gives 13 e4, threatening Nf5. Now instead of Alekhine's 13 ... Nhf6, Black can try the more enterprising 13 ... Re8!, and if White follows through with Alekhine's planned 14 Nf5, Black doesn't look too bothered after 14 ... gxf5 15 Qxh5 fxe4 16 Nxe4 Nf6 with equity!

13 ... a6 14 Bf3?!

I hate that feeling when you sense something is amiss but you still choose to ignore the misgivings. Alekhine writes: "A totally weak move after which the game is hard to save. Losing time, only to place one's own piece on a worse square in order to force an opponent's to a better one."

chesstouring.com

14 ... Nhf6 15 a4 c4!



Very strong now that White no longer has easy access to Nd4 and Nc6. Black vacates c5 for his knight.

Question: Isn't it going too far giving your hero an exclamation mark for this rather obvious Benoni plan?

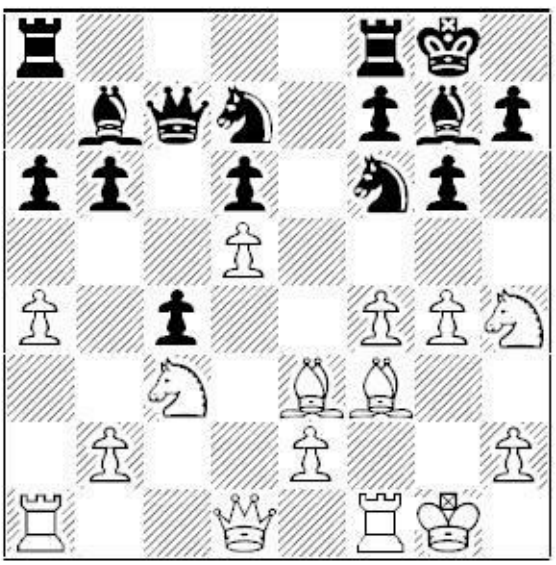
Answer: The plan is obvious *today*, mainly because of games like this one. Don't take such plans for granted. Someone first invented them. You and I are just copycats. At that time it was a novel idea, so the exclam is for the creativity behind it.

16 Be3

Question: This move looks incorrect. Why did Alekhine block his e-pawn?

Answer: I think Alekhine was worried about the line 16 e4 b5. The queen check on b6 indirectly protects the not-so-loose b5-pawn.

16 ... Qc7 17 g4?!



Thus begins the attack which never was. Alekhine says he just went for it since he considered his position strategically busted anyway.

Question: Is this ferocity or simply desperation? Is White really lost here to the point where he must begin such a desperate attack?

chesstouring.com

Answer: I'm not sure. A famished tiger views everyone else as food. Perhaps the move is a sign of

both ferocity and desperation. Let's try a calmer strategic approach, say 17 b4, before Black locks things down with ... Nc5: 17 ... cxb3 18 Qxb3 Rac8 19 Bd4 Qc4 20 Qd1 Ne8! 21 Bxg7 Nxg7 22 Ne4 f5! (White can't touch the d6-pawn) 23 Ng5 Nc5. Clearly White stands worse here too, but perhaps not as bad as what happens after his lash-out move.

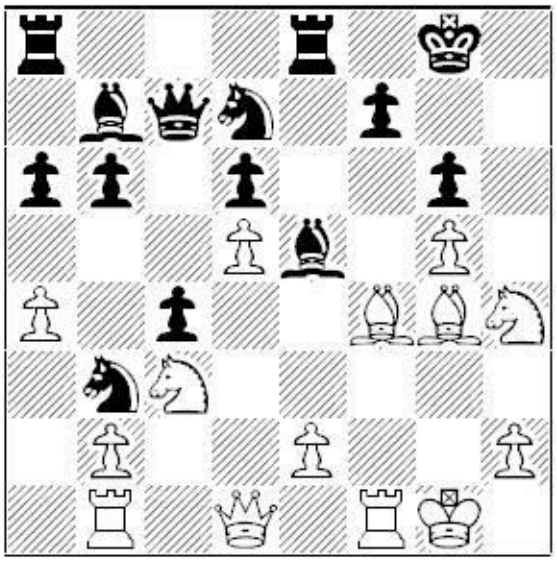
17 ... Nc5 18 g5 Nfd7 19 f5!?

The pawn lunges forward with a cry of outrage. White, hoping to brazen it out, gains more real estate without purposeful destiny. In so doing he leaves a gaping hole on e5, similar to the aftermath of a pulled tooth.

19 ... Rfe8 20 Bf4 Be5

Before he gets shut out with f5-f6.

21 Bg4 Nb3 22 fxg6 hxg6 23 Rb1



Exercise (critical decision): Black can play 23 ... Bxc3 24 bxc3 Qc5+ which picks off White's d5-pawn. Would you give up your precious dark-squared Benoni bishop for White's central pawn?

Answer: It's not even close. White collapses after the swap.

23 ... Bxc3!

Question: Really? Giving away his dark squares?

Answer: Principle: Counter in the centre when attacked on the wing. It was a good decision. White can't easily exploit the dark squares since his pawn on g5 gums up the works.

24 bxc3 Qc5+

The counterattack begins in earnest. Black's queen watches her rival on g1 with cold eyes.

25 e3 Ne5 26 Bf3

26 Be2 Bxd5 is also completely hopeless.

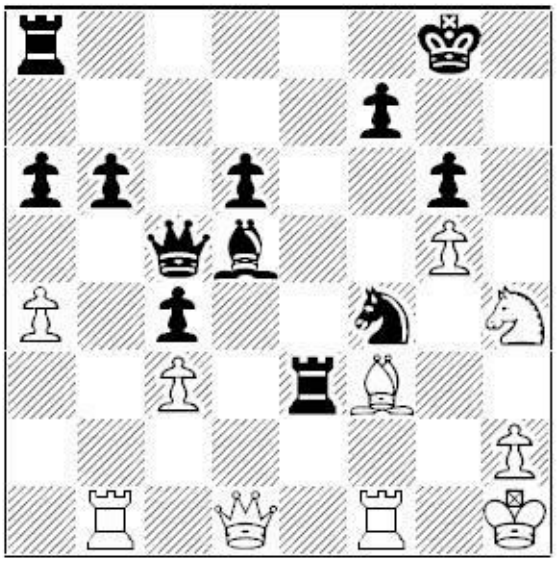
26 ... Nd3 27 Kh1 Bxd5 28 Rxb3 Nxf4

Question: Are there other ways for Black to win?

Answer: As Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote: "Let me count the ways." Another win lies in 28 ... cxb3 29 Qxd3 Bc4 30 Qd1 Bxf1.

29 Rb1 Rxe3

chesstouring.com



The “attack” descends into a murky, troubled dream and White’s deranged forces talk to themselves, as if addressing the air. The rest is a bloodbath. Alekhine claims he was in too much time pressure to know to resign. More tournament book hogwash. The true reason, of course, was that Alekhine simply couldn’t muster the courage to stick his hand out and resign to his hated rival.

30 Ng2 Rxf3 31 Rxf3 Nxg2 32 Kxg2 Re8 33 Kf1 Bxf3 34 Qxf3 Qxg5 35 Re1 Rxe1+ 36 Kxe1 Qg1+ 37 Kd2 Qxh2+ 38 Kc1

The castaway on the deserted island watches glumly as his rescue ship recedes into the horizon.

38 ... Qe5 39 Kb2 Kg7 40 Qf2 b5 41 Qb6 bxa4 42 Qxa6 Qe2+ 0-1

Such losses between rivals leave deep scars within the mind. Alekhine paid Capa a very rare compliment at this point: “I feel ashamed of this game, but readily admit that my opponent took impeccable advantage of my errors.” Resentment is futile in the face of elemental calamity!

Game 21

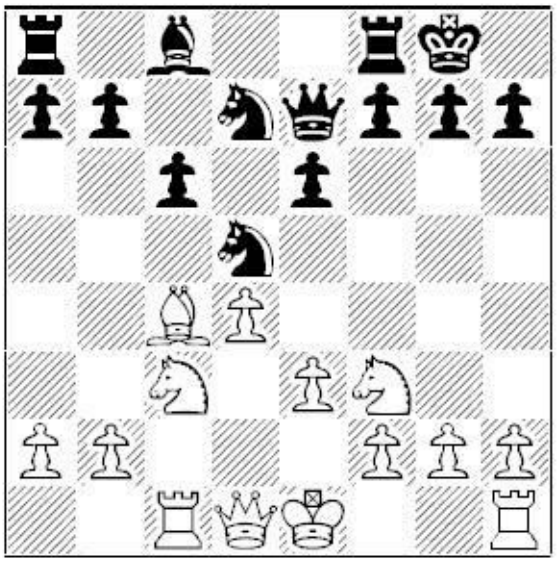
A.Alekhine-J.R.Capablanca

22nd matchgame, Buenos Aires 1927

Queen’s Gambit Declined

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 d5 4 Bg5 Nbd7 5 e3 Be7 6 Nf3 0-0 7 Rc1 c6 8 Bd3 dxc4 9 Bxc4 Nd5 10 Bxe7 Qxe7

chesstouring.com



Ah yes, the soggy taste of yesterday. Strangely enough, Capa was sometimes cunning and sometimes predictable in his choice of openings. Fearing Alekhine's opening preparation, he goes with the dullard's favourite, the old-style Orthodox Defence, solid but nauseatingly passive, with almost no hope for victory for Black.

11 Ne4

Principle: Avoid swaps if you hold a space advantage.

11 ... N5f6 12 Ng3 Qb4+ 13 Qd2

Question: Well, isn't this a swap?

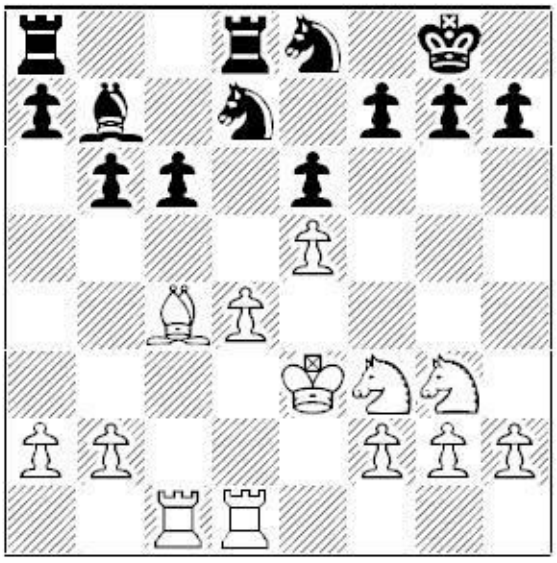
Answer: Yes, but a good one for White, who leads in development and space in the endgame. Black is nowhere near equality.

13 ... Qxd2+ 14 Kxd2 Rd8 15 Rhd1 b6 16 e4 Bb7 17 e5 Ne8

Question: Why didn't Black occupy the hole on d5?

Answer: What hole? White seals it with a cork by capturing immediately. White retains his bind after 17 ... Nd5 18 Bxd5! cxd5 (18 ... exd5 19 Nf5 c5 20 Re1 is no picnic for Black either) 19 Rc7 Rab8 20 Rdc1.

18 Ke3!



chesstouring.com

A new advantage: White's active king helps out in the centre.

18 ... Kf8 19 Ng5 h6 20 N5e4 Ke7 21 f4

Gaining more territory. Capablanca's biggest psychological error in this match was underestimating just how much Alekhine had improved strategically and in the opening.

21 ... f5

Capa fights for some territory himself, but at the cost of making his bishop even worse.

22 Nc3 Nc7

Question: Why all this manoeuvring? Why not
break free with the immediate 22 ... c5?

Answer: I agree that Capa takes his sweet time getting ready to get ready. This isn't the best timing for ... c6-c5. White simply bypasses with 23 d5!, when Black's position deteriorates.

23 Nge2 g5

Question: Now White can't bypass. What about the ... c6-c5 break here?

Answer: Caution can be an antidote which keeps us alive in a game of plots, counterplots and deceptions. 23 ... c5 is playable but fails to achieve equality after 24 dxc5 Nxc5 25 Rxd8 Rxd8 26 b4 Ba6 27 Bxa6 N5xa6 28 a3 Nb8 29 Nd4. The c6-square is tender and White continues to hold a spatial advantage.

24 h4!?

Essentially forcing a closure of the kingside. It is not in Black's best interest to start a two-front war by opening the kingside.

24 ... g4 25 Ng3

Question: What is the point of posting a knight on g3?

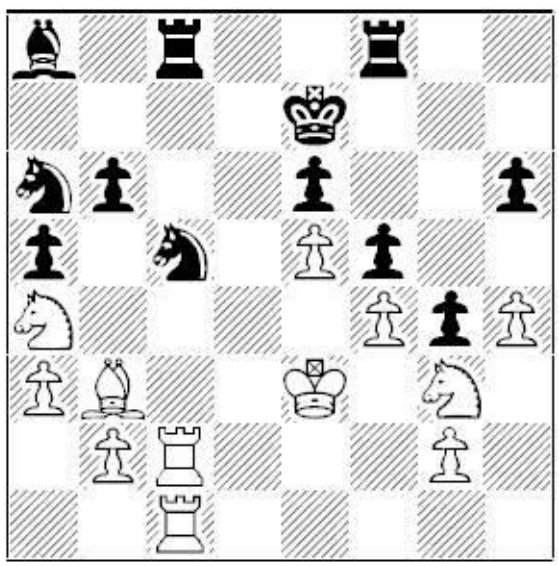
Answer: Perhaps White angles for a future d4-d5 trick, hoping to undermine f5.

25 ... a5 26 Bb3 Rac8 27 a3 Rf8 28 Rd2 Ba8 29 Rdc2 c5!

Well timed. Black's patient defence is close to being rewarded with equality.

30 dxc5 Nxc5 31 Na4! N7a6

The battle approaches, only we don't know the when or the where.



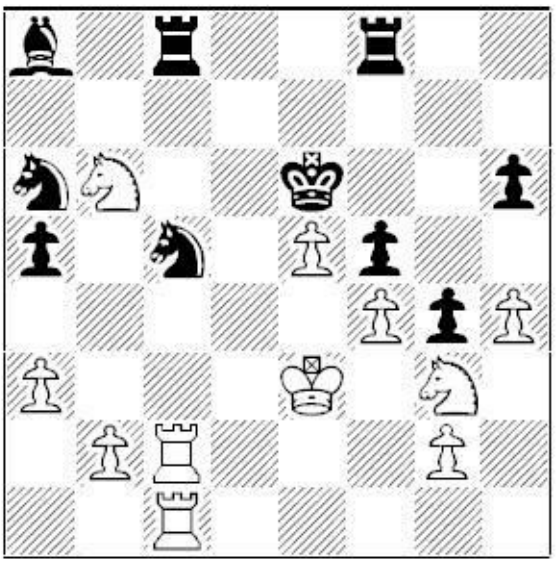
32 Bxe6!

My mistake! Okay, now we know the when and where! The disgruntled underling, coveting his boss' station, finally strikes. Anger (Alekhine had plenty to spare!) is the precursor to violence. This brilliant piece sac destabilizes Black all across the board. On paper and on silicon Black is okay, but he must

chessbooms.com

thread his way through complex problems just to stay equal.

32 ... Kxe6 33 Nxb6



Exercise (critical decision): Where to move the rook, b8 or d8?

One forces a draw, while the other allows White to apply pressure.

33 ... Rb8?!

A misstep.

Answer: Capa can force a draw with 33 ... Rcd8! 34 Nxa8 Rd3+ 35 Kf2 Rxa8 36 Rxc5 Nxc5 37 Rxc5 Rb8 38 Rc6+ Kd7 39 Rc2 Ke6 (39 ... Rdb3!? 40 Rd2+ Kc7 41 Rc2+ Kd7 is drawn too) 40 Rc6+.

34 Nxa8 Rb3+

Black also struggles after 34 ... Rxa8 35 Ne2! Nb3 36 Rc6+ Kf7 37 R1c3 a4 38 Rxh6.

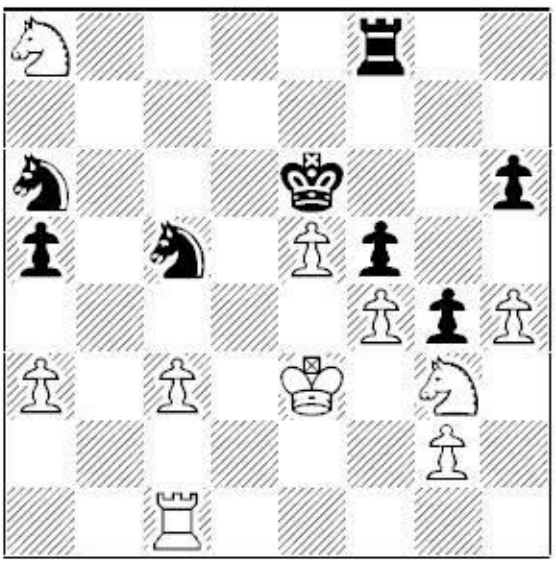
35 Rc3

The only move. Alternatives lose instantly:

a) 35 Kf2?? Nd3+.

b) 35 Ke2?? Rxg3 36 Rxc5 Nxc5 37 Nc7+ Kd7 38 Rxc5 Rxg2+.

35 ... Rxc3+ 36 bxc3!



chesstouring.com

This shocking recapture throws Capa back on the defensive. He must have expected the rote 36 Rxc3?!

Rxa8 37 Ne2 Rb8 38 Nd4+ Kd5 39 b3 with an unclear position.

36 ... Rxa8 37 Rd1!

The point of his pawn recapture on c3. White's rook infiltrates and Black's pawns begin to fall – in fact all of them!

37 ... Rf8 38 Rd6+ Ke7 39 Rxh6

Alekhine begins to plunder all which Capa holds dear.

39 ... Nc7 40 Rh7+ Kd8 41 c4 N7e6 42 Ra7 Nc7!

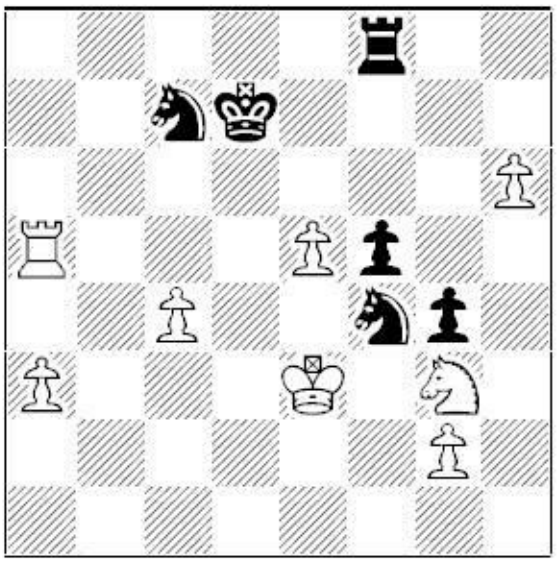
Question: Why didn't Capa save his a-pawn?

Answer: Because he would drop his much more important f-pawn in its stead after 42 ... a4? 43 Ra8+ Ke7 44 Rxf8 Nxf8 45 Nxf5+, when White has too many pawns for just one piece.

43 Rxa5 N5e6 44 h5

Black is in deep trouble. White has four pawns for the piece and passers everywhere.

44 ... Kd7 45 h6 Nxf4!



This simplifying combination breaks up White's pawns, whereby Capa eventually picks them up one by one. Black's nimble forces must run twice as far and twice as fast to halt the now broken armada of White's pawns. The future remains a succession of frightening question marks for Black.

46 Kxf4 Ne6+ 47 Ke3 f4+

Regaining the lost piece.

48 Kf2 fxg3+ 49 Kxg3 Rh8 50 Rd5+ Ke7 51 c5 Rxh6

When my son was younger I was his Shaolin Kung Fu training partner. We learned: When facing multiple assailants, your best bet of survival is to kill off the weakest first and only then turn your attention to the remainder. Capa first picks off the weakest link on h6.

52 c6 Nf8 53 Rc5 Kd8 54 Kxg4

All the flesh gets gnawed off the bone. Still four pawns for the piece and all passed, but all isolated. Alekhine's massive expenditure of attacking energy only resulted in a tired indeterminacy. White's fortunes begin to wane as Black's waxes. Watch how Capa methodically hunts them down one by one over the remainder of the game.

54 ... Rg6+ 55 Kf3 Kc7

The timid chipmunk emerges from his hole after enduring a long and bleak winter.

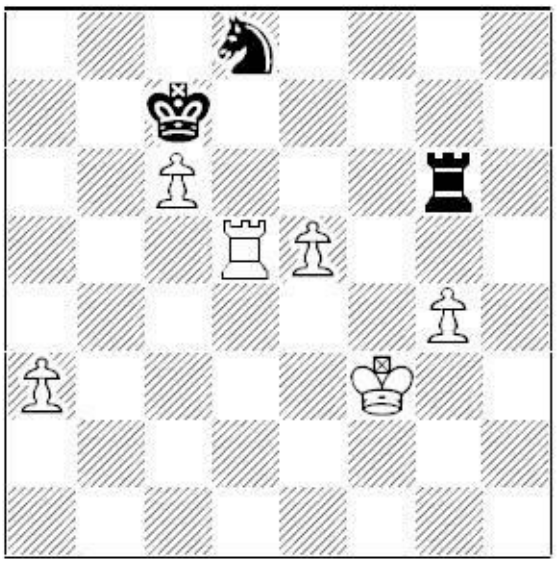
chesstouring.com

56 g4 Ne6 57 Rd5!

Alekhine attempts a skilful misdirection. 57 Rc4 Rg5! picks off a pawn.

57 ... Nd8!

Whip-quick to sense danger, Capa avoids the trap 57 ... Kxc6? which gives White serious chances to win after 58 Rd6+ Kb5 59 a4+! Kxa4 60 Ke4!.



58 Rc5 Ne6 59 Rd5 Nf8

He can go back to d8, but tempts Alekhine with 60 Rd6 Rxd6 61 exd6+ Kxd6, when Black holds the draw.

60 Ra5 Rxc6 61 Ke4 Rc1 62 Ra7+ Kc6 63 Ra6+ Kd7 64 Ra7+ Ke6 65 Ra6+ Ke7 66 a4 Nd7!

Threat: ... Re1+.

67 Rh6?!

Alekhine is the only one who can lose now. It is high time to force the draw with 67 Ra7 Ke6 68 Ra6+ Ke7.

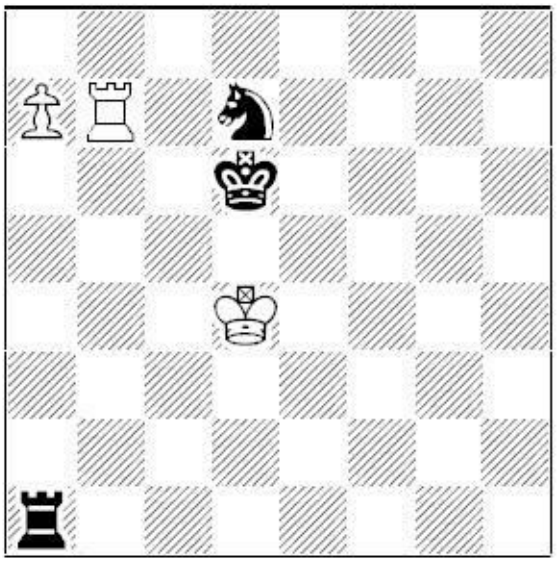
67 ... Re1+ 68 Kd4 Nxe5 69 a5

69 g5 Nf7 70 Rh7 Rg1 picks off the g-pawn.

69 ... Nxg4

The autumn leaves continue to drop.

70 Rh7+ Kd6 71 a6 Ra1 72 a7 Nf6 73 Rb7 Nd7!



chesstouring.com

One by one, the pawns die screaming. ... Kc6 wins the final straggler on a7. Alekhine has been thoroughly outplayed from a superior ending and now must take reasonable care to avoid losing.

Question: Does Black have chances to win?

Answer: Not at GM level. I once had queen and knight versus IM Jon Yedidia's lone queen and thought I had chances. I didn't. That one is also quite easily drawn by the piece-down side.

74 Rb2 Rxa7

The pawns, once so ominous, now all float face down like drowned rats.

75 Rd2 Nc5 76 Kc4+ Kc6 77 Rh2 Ra4+ 78 Kc3 Rg4 79 Kd2 Rg3 80 Rh5 Kb5 81 Ke2 Kc4 82 Rh4+ Kc3 83 Kf2 Rd3 84 Rf4 Kd2 85 Kg2 Rd5 86 Kf3 Kd3 ½-½

Of course Capa could play on for a while but the nightlife awaited, so he agreed to the draw.

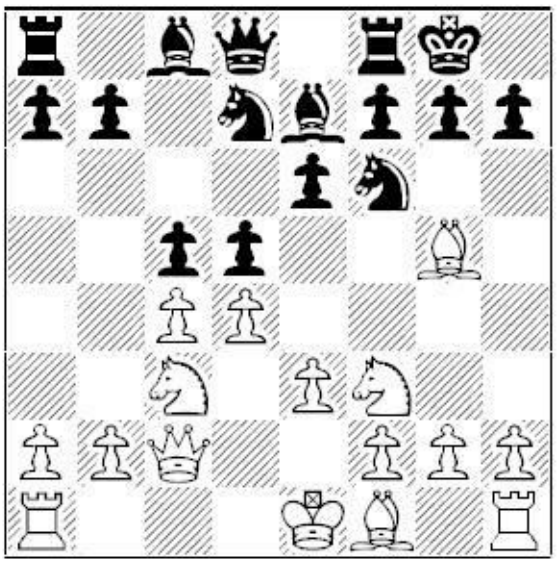
Game 22

S.Flohr-J.R.Capablanca

Moscow 1935

Queen's Gambit Declined

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 Nbd7 5 Bg5 Be7 6 e3 0-0 7 Qc2 c5



Capablanca tried this freeing break quite often. I don't think it equalizes.

Question: Why not? It immediately frees Black's game.

Answer: The trouble is White usually forces an isolani upon Black – generally a passive one, where Black lacks the dynamic piece play or attacking potential usually inherent in most isolani positions.

8 cxd5

White can also retain the tension with 8 Rd1 Qa5 9 cxd5 (weaker is 9 Bd3 h6 10 Bh4 cxd4 11 exd4 dxc4 12 Bxc4 Nb6 13 Bb3 Bd7, when Black gets a reasonable position against the isolani since White's queen is misplaced on the open c-file; this was the epic 10th game of the Lasker-Capablanca match, which we look at in Chapter 4 – see Game 37) 9 ... exd5 10 Be2 c4 11 0-0 Re8 12 Ne5 Bb4 13 Nxd7 Nxd7 14 Bf3 Bxc3 15 bxc3 Nf8 16 Bf4 Bd7 17 Rb1 Bc6 18 Bd6 and White's bishop pair and control over the dark squares meant more than Black's grip on the light squares and control over e4, J.R.Capablanca-F.Yates, London 1922.

chesstouring.com

8 ... Nxd5

Capa loved swaps!

9 Bxe7 Qxe7

White also gets a tiny edge after 9 ... Nxe7 10 Bd3 cxd4 11 Nxd4 Nf6 12 0-0 Bd7 13 Rfd1, T.Radjabov-M.Krasenkow, European Championship, Antalya 2004.

10 Nxd5 exd5 11 Bd3 cxd4

This looks quite obliging. 11 ... g6 12 dxc5 Nxc5 is a better way to grovel from Black's side, A.Shirov-J.Piket, Dos Hermanas 1995.

12 Nxd4 Qb4+?!

Question: Hey, what about your policy of not criticizing in the opening?

Answer: Well, we just got past the opening now, so Capa is fair game! Also, this move is a lousy one, even for 1935!

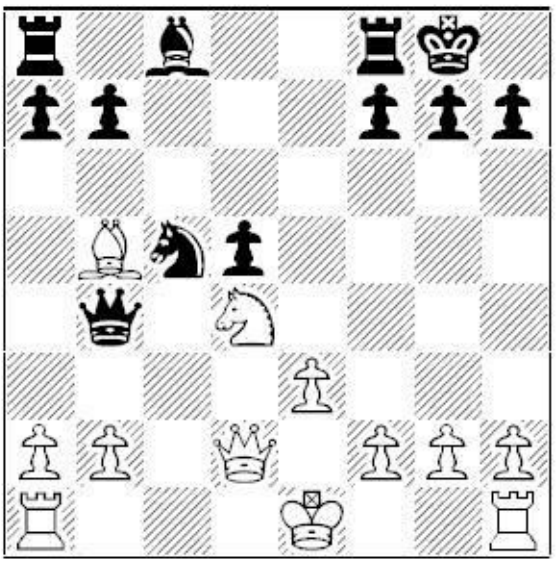
Question: How so?

Answer: Black has a lame isolani position, which gets even lamer into a bad ending once queens go off.

13 Qd2 Nc5?!

It's never too late to say you are sorry and do a take-back with 13 ... Qb6!, retaining the queens.

14 Bb5!



Ensuring a very favourable endgame.

14 ... Qxd2+ 15 Kxd2 a6 16 Bd3

White wants a pure, good knight versus bad bishop ending.

16 ... Be6 17 Rac1 Rfc8 18 Rc2 Nxd3!?

Matters got worse and worse for team Capa, who faced one of the best technical players of his time. Players who try and mimic Capa's play (i.e. me!) usually come across as forgers who practice signing the name hundreds of times before actually signing the real cheque. Flohr, an early version of Ulf Andersson, was an exception and really did naturally play like Capa, but a weaker version.

Question: Why did he swap?

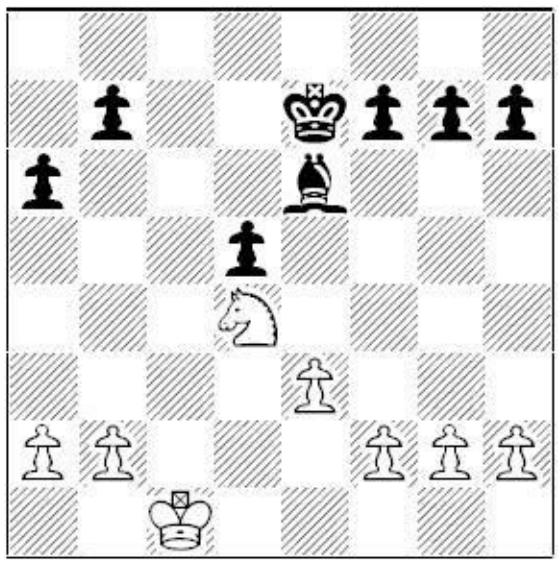
Answer: He would have had to eventually since White was about to double rooks on the c-file. Still, I agree that the swap may be suspect and would go for 18 ... a5 19 Rhc1 b6 with a slightly less nauseating position than Black gets in the game.

chesstouring.com

19 Kxd3 Rxc2 20 Kxc2 Kf8 21 Kd2 Rc8 22 Rc1 Rxc1 23 Kxc1 Ke7

Steve Giddins, in his book *The Greatest Ever Chess Endings*, writes: "Many lines of the QGD, as

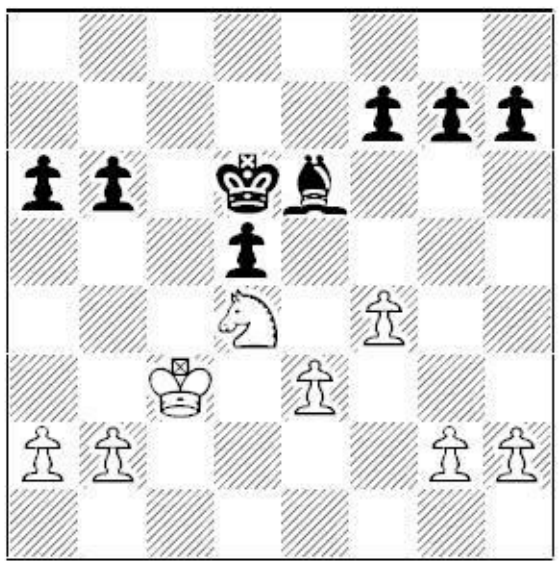
well as other openings, result in Black obtaining an IQP, and if things go wrong, an endgame such as this can easily arise. A large majority of such endings end in a win for White, but in the present game Capablanca demonstrates that such a position should be tenable, with the right defensive plan and its accurate execution."



24 Kd2 Kd6 25 Kc3 b6!

Capa sets his structure to cover the much neglected dark squares and deny White's king entry on the queenside. If you compare this game to Capa's win against Reshevsky in the final chapter (Game 46), we see the slight difference is that Reshevsky was already committed to ... b7-b5. This allowed the white king entry to c5.

26 f4



The balance sheet of Black's fears:

1. A bad bishop versus White's powerhouse knight.
2. An isolani, fixed on the same colour as his remaining bishop.
3. White controls d4 and soon gets his king there, achieving an advantage in king's position.
4. Nothing to do but wait and see how White plans to torment.

chesstouring.com

Conclusion: This is a classic position of the haves versus the have-nots. Only Capa's superhuman

defensive/endgame abilities saved him here. The rest of us would lose this as Black!

26 ... Bd7 27 Nf3 f6! 28 Kd4

Step 1: White's king reaches its optimal spot on d4.

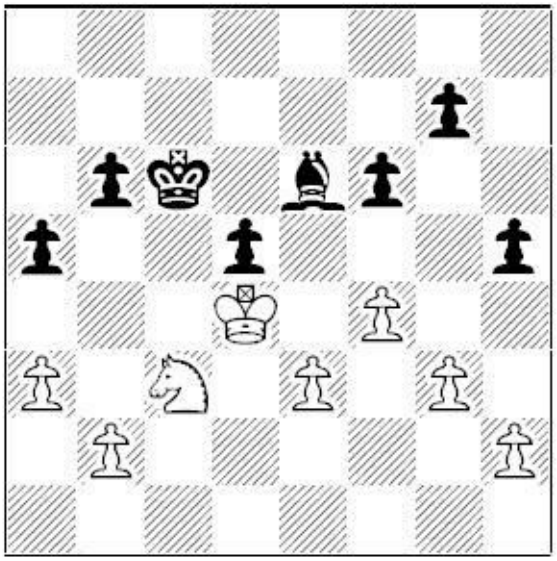
28 ... a5 29 Nd2 Bc8 30 Nb1 Be6

The aimless bishop, overstuffed and undercooked, looks out the window, staring at everything and nothing. Keep in mind, inaction is not the same thing as surrender.

31 Nc3

Step 2: The knight, a ballerina on her toes, spins around on the dance floor, tying Black to d5.

31 ... Kc6 32 a3 h6 33 g3 h5!!



Question: Why did Black fix a pawn on the same colour as his remaining bishop?

Answer: Capa spotted a deep anomaly. If he continues normally and marks time, White wins with the following manoeuvre given by Ilya Rabinovich: 33 ... Kd6 34 Ne2 Kc6 35 Ng1 Kd6 36 Nf3 Kc6 37 Nh4! Kd6 38 f5! Bf7 39 g4 Kc6 40 Ng2 Kd6 41 Nf4 (zugzwang!) 41 ... Kc6 42 Ne6! Bxe6 43 fxe6 Kd6 44 e7! Kxe7 45 Kxd5 Kd7 46 a4 and Black fails to hold the king and pawn ending.

34 b4 axb4 35 axb4 Kd6

But now what? Progress doesn't come easily.

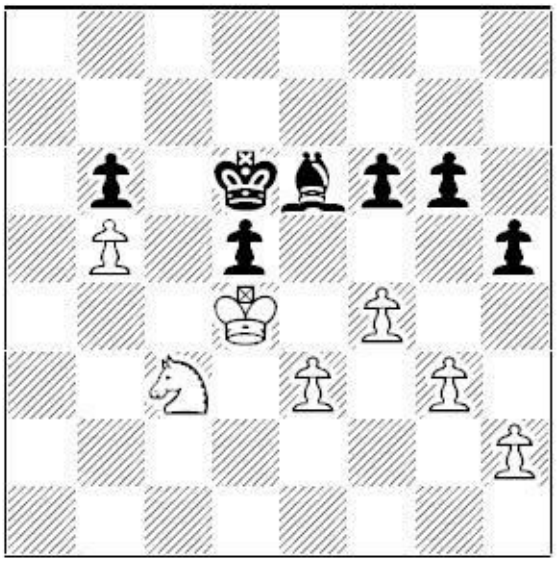
36 b5

Question: Is this a good move? It feels like White just gave Black a target on b5.

Answer: He did, but he also fixed a weakness on b6, so it's a trade-off.

36 ... g6! 37 Na4 Kc7 38 Nc3 Kd6

chesstouring.com



Exercise (planning): White has reached an impasse. How to make progress?

Answer: Sac a pawn to give Black five separate isolanis and add maximum defensive pressure to his position.

39 f5! gxf5!

No choice. The bishop, lacking the strength to protest or resist, meekly remains at his post, since recapture with the bishop drops a pawn after 39 ... Bxf5? 40 Nxd5 Bd7 41 Nxf6 Bxb5 42 Nd5!, when ... Kc6 isn't possible due to the fork on e7. After Black drops b6, the knight and three versus bishop and two ending is a technical win for White.

40 Ne2! Bd7 41 Nf4 Be8

It is critical that Black hangs on to h5.

42 Nxd5 Bxb5

After sleeping through the battle, the bishop finally makes himself useful by doing something.

43 Nxb6

Now all the pawns are on the same side of the board, which assists Black in his goal to draw. Playing through this game leaves you with a feeling that the justice was on White's side, yet he failed to win, since the power somehow allied itself to Black.

43 Nxf6? would be foolish, since after 43 ... Be2 Black hangs on to his h-pawn and now has a newly minted passed b-pawn.

43 ... Bc6 44 Nc4+ Ke6 45 Nb2 Bb5 46 Nd1 Be2 47 Nf2 Bf1! 48 Nd3

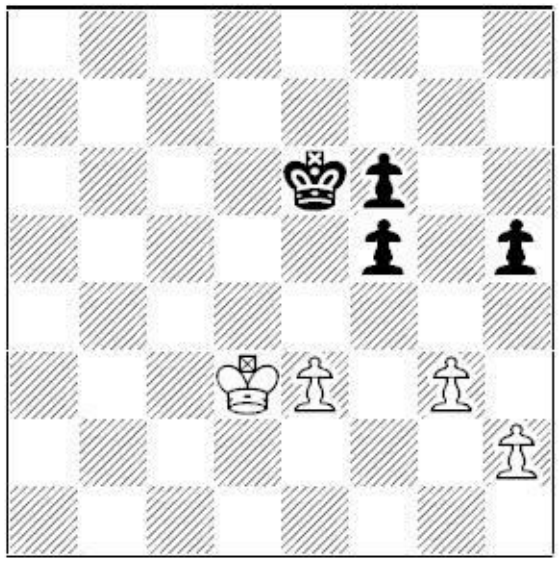
With agony of spirit, Flohr puts his knight up for sale to the highest bidder by threatening Nf4. Black has no choice but to try his luck in a king and pawn ending.

48 ... Bxd3

The once bad bishop exchanges himself for White's once all-powerful knight. Keats wrote that there is nothing more melancholy than the death of something that was once beautiful.

49 Kxd3

chesstouring.com



As in most king and pawn endings, a microscopic misstep carries fatal consequences. We must not allow White a zugzwang.

Exercise (critical decision): Should we face his king on d5,
or should Black play the king to e5? One loses; the other draws.
Think very carefully before making this decision.

Answer: **49 ... Ke5!!**

After 49 ... Kd5? 50 Kd2! Black gets zugzwanged, no matter where he plays:

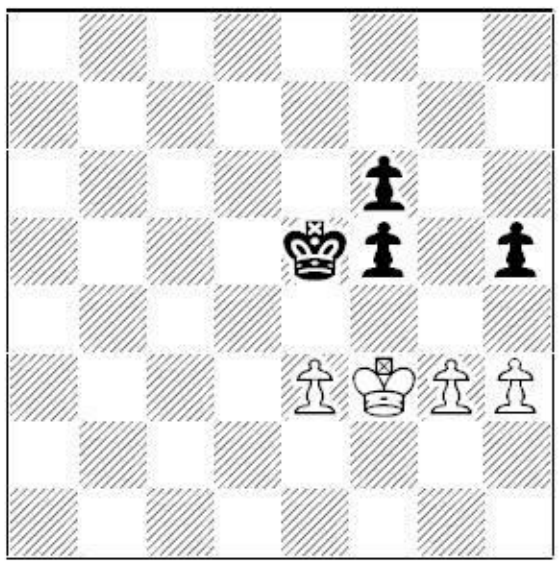
a) 50 ... Ke5 51 Ke1!! (zugzwang!) 51 ... Kd5 52 Kf2 Ke4 53 Ke2 h4 (53 ... Kd5 54 Kf3 Ke5 55 h3! transposes to note 'b') 54 gxh4 f4 55 h5! Kf5 56 exf4 wins.

b) 50 ... Ke4 51 Ke2 Kd5 52 Kf3 Ke5 53 h3! Kd5 54 Kf4 Ke6 55 h4 and zugzwang!

50 Ke2 Ke4 51 h3

51 Kf2 h4! 52 gxh4 f4! is drawn, only because White's king happens to sit unhappily on f2.

51 ... Kd5! 52 Kf3 Ke5 ½-½



Remarkable. White, who had the advantage from sunrise to sunset in this game, fails to make progress after 52 ... Ke5 53 h4 Kd5 54 Kf4 (White's king, who for so long sought a passport to f4, finally gets there, and still can't win) 54 ... Ke6 and it is White who must give ground, or go for the drawn line 55 e4

chesstouring.com

fxe4 56 Kxe4 f5+ 57 Kf4 Kf6.

chesstouring.com

Chapter Three
Capa on Exploiting Imbalances

Rarely in a chess game do the parties arrive at that strange border called common ground. More often than not, we end up with our respective imbalances. In this chapter we examine Capa's mastery of imbalances, be they opposite wing pawn majorities (against Marshall and Bogoljubow), opposite-coloured bishops (against Teichmann), or extra space (Treybal and Menchik). Somehow Capa's imbalance always flowered while his opponent's soured. Mysteriously, Capa's opponents soon found themselves in desperate need of a compass. Normally, in the games in this chapter when the initial imbalance arises, the position looks approximately level. However, two and two don't always add up to four when one side skilfully plies his own imbalance while suppressing the opponent's.

Game 23
F.Marshall-J.R.Capablanca
23rd matchgame, New York 1909
Tarrasch Defence

1 d4

If I were Marshall's chess coach, I would annotate this with a "?!" mark.

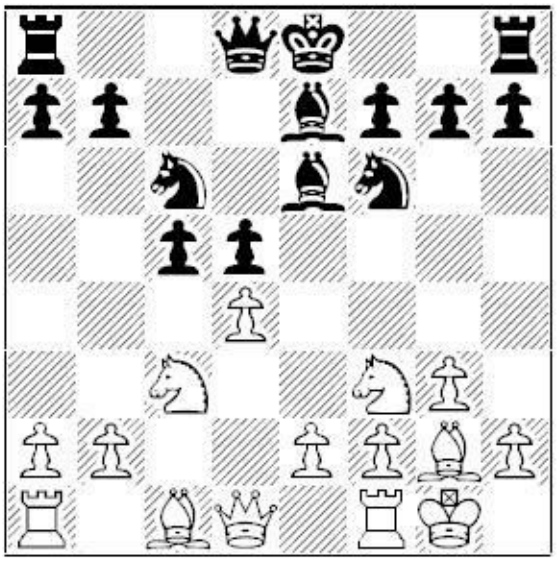
Question: Why?

Answer: The strategic byways of 1 d4 don't suit Marshall, a pure tactician. His best bet against Capablanca would be to open with 1 e4! and keep pieces on the board. If you are destined to take a beating, then take a beating with your boots on and go down fighting!

1 ... d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c5

For his entire life, Capa was unafraid to take on an isolani, just as long as he retained piece activity.

4 cxd5 exd5 5 Nf3 Nc6 6 g3 Be6!? 7 Bg2 Be7 8 0-0 Nf6



9 Bg5

Inaccurate, since it allows Black a freeing manoeuvre next move. Instead:

a) 9 dxc5 Bxc5 10 Bg5 d4 11 Bxf6 Qxf6 12 Ne4 Qe7 13 Nxc5 Qxc5, F.Marshall-Em.Lasker, 4th matchgame, USA 1923, and White stands better after 14 b4! Qxb4 15 Rb1.

chesstouring.com

b) 9 b3 also looks okay for White since it isn't clear that Black's bishop really belongs on e6 just yet.

9 ... Ne4! 10 Bxe7 Qxe7 11 Ne5

White gets nothing from 11 dxc5 Nxc3 12 bxc3 Qxc5 13 Rb1 b6 either.

11 ... Nxd4 12 Nxe4 dxe4 13 e3!

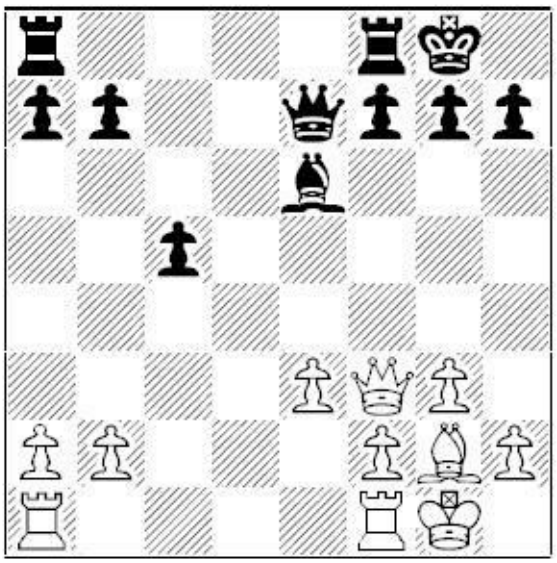
The hasty 13 Bxe4? is met by the tricky line 13 ... Rd8! 14 Qa4+ Bd7 15 Nxd7 b5! 16 Qa3 Qxe4 (threatening mate in one) 17 f3 Qe7 18 Nxc5 Nc2.

13 ... Nf3+ 14 Nxf3 exf3 15 Qxf3

Question: Isn't Marshall playing a bit timidly this game?

Answer: Normally, Marshall's mind was a fertile breeding ground for psychotically aggressive notions, but not this time. This was the 23rd game of the match and Capa had beaten the stuffing out of him, and all of Marshall's aggressive instincts along with it.

15 ... 0-0!



16 Rfc1?!

Wrong rook, wrong file. If White plays only to stop Black's majority, he risks losing.

Question: What do you suggest?

Answer: Euwe correctly suggests the plan e3-e4, followed by Qe3 and f2-f4 to activate his own majority.

Question: Why did White avoid taking the b7-pawn?

Answer: Black immediately regains it with a rook on the seventh rank and a passed c-pawn to boot: 16 Qxb7?! Qxb7 17 Bxb7 Rab8 18 Be4 Rb4 19 Bc6 Rxb2 with advantage to Black.

16 ... Rab8

Houdini says the position is dead equal but is fooled.

Question: Why? It looks like neither side has anything.

Answer: Despite the material parity, Marshall has little reason for elation. One key imbalance favours Black. Both sides have pawn majorities on their respective wings. Black's is mobile and ready to roll forward, while White's lies dormant.

Question: Surely such a minor factor won't lead to anything, will it?

Answer: If your pawn majority moves forward while the other side's sleeps, it is as if you are a pawn up. This game is probably the finest example of how to handle opposite wing majorities in chess history. I remember playing it over when I was around nine years old, in awe at the ease with which Capa won. I am 51 as I write this, and the sense of wonder remains at Capa's seamless victory.

chesstouring.com

17 Qe4?!

Piece play is incorrect in this position. Once again, White should activate his majority with 17 e4

followed by Qe3 and f2-f4, when he still stands worse.

17 ... Qc7

Dodging Bh3 ideas.

Question: In front of White's rook?

Answer: Don't fear ghosts. White can do nothing to exploit the queen/rook position.

18 Rc3 b5 19 a3

19 b3 looks better.

19 ... c4

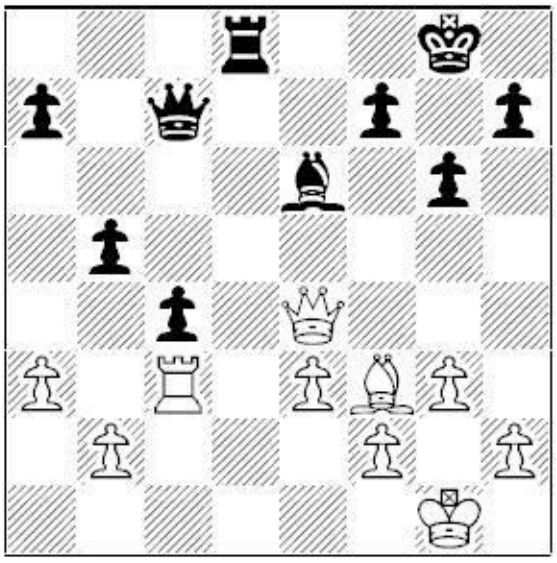
Question: Doesn't this violate principle? Black places his pawns on the same colour as his remaining bishop.

Answer: For now. The pawns soon roll forward, changing colours, so it isn't a violation of the principle unless the pawns get stuck on that colour for the remainder of the game.

20 Bf3?!

An awkward attempt to halt Black's majority. He should play 20 Rd1.

20 ... Rfd8 21 Rd1 Rxd1+ 22 Bxd1 Rd8 23 Bf3 g6!



Before you complain about pawns on the wrong colour, this is the correct luft since Black may want ... Bf5 possibilities later on to assist his pawns forward.

24 Qc6?!

He shouldn't be begging for swaps.

24 ... Qe5!

Black's queen, eyebrows raised in distaste, decides she doesn't care for the company of her needy sister and leaves. Capa swaps but on his terms.

25 Qe4 Qxe4 26 Bxe4 Rd1+ 27 Kg2 a5 28 Rc2 b4

A wild wind pushes the wave forward.

29 axb4 axb4 30 Bf3 Rb1

Principle: Place your rook behind passed pawns, yours or the opponent's.

31 Be2 b3

Everything is secure.

32 Rd2!

chesstouring.com

Question: Can't White draw by entering a rook and pawn ending with 32 Rc3?

Answer: What rook and pawn ending? Black wins with the trick 32 ... Rxb2 33 Bxc4 Rc2!, picking off a piece.

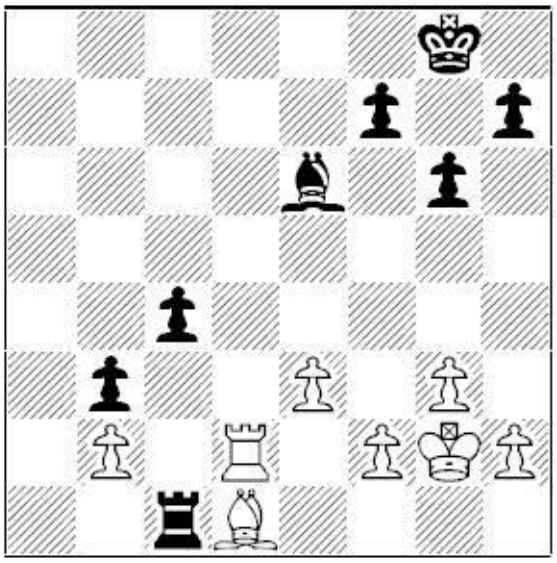
32 ... Rc1!

Threat: ... Rc2.

Question: Can Black win with a rook sac on b2 to push his pawns through?

Answer: A line of great bravado, but unfortunately you walked into Marshall's cunning trap! 32 ... Rxb2? 33 Rxb2 c3 34 Rb1 c2 35 Bd3! should hold the draw.

33 Bd1



Exercise (combination alert): White's rook and bishop stand
sentinel to protect the frightened flock. But now Marshall faces
that universal punisher of past bad decisions: Painful consequences.
Black to play and win a piece.

Answer: **33 ... c3! 34 bxc3 b2!**

Overload. The pawn sinks into bliss on b2.

35 Rxb2 Rxd1 36 Rc2

Principle: Rooks belong behind passed pawns.

36 ... Bf5!

Oh, no you don't! The bishop puts a giant exclamation mark behind the rook's discomfort.

37 Rb2 Rc1

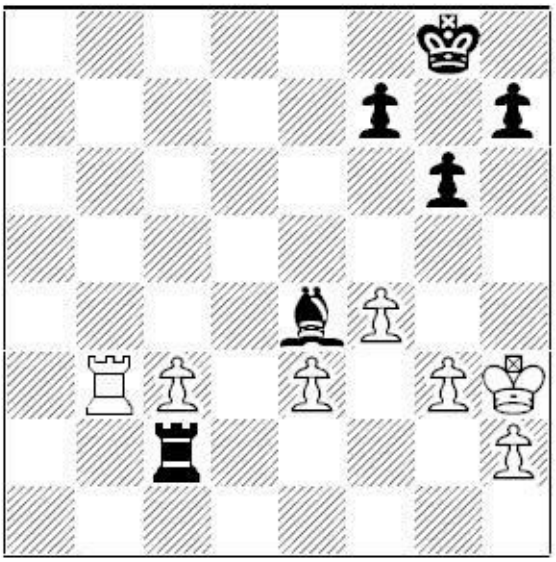
White's rook, with a look of injured accusation, is obliged into awkward, lateral defence.

38 Rb3 Be4+! 39 Kh3

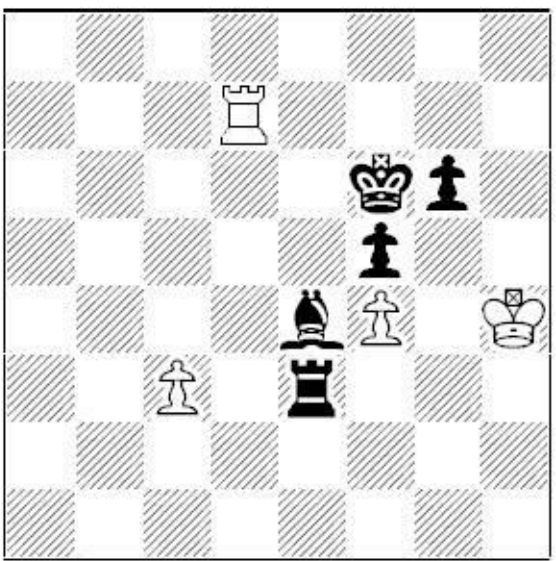
39 f3? Rc2+ picks off f3.

39 ... Rc2 40 f4

chesstouring.com



Exercise (planning): Black can win White's h-pawn by force. How?
Answer: **40 ... h5!**
Threatening ... Bf5+.
41 g4 hxg4+ 42 Kxg4 Rxh2 43 Rb4 f5+! 44 Kg3
44 Kg5?? is a helpmate after 44 ... Kg7.
44 ... Re2
This nasty rook leaves a trail of pain in its wake. Now the e-pawn drops.
45 Rc4 Rxe3+ 46 Kh4
Sigh. Nobody ever resigned in those days!
46 ... Kg7 47 Rc7+ Kf6 48 Rd7



Exercise (combination alert): Suddenly, White's king is thrust into a war zone, when all he ever wanted was to live out his life in peace. Black to play and force mate.
Answer: Seize control over h3.
chesstouring.com
48 ... Bg2! 49 Rd6+ Kg7 0-1
The white king's dream of unrestricted travel ends on a sour note. It's a forced mate in five moves,

despite the temporary vacancy on g5.

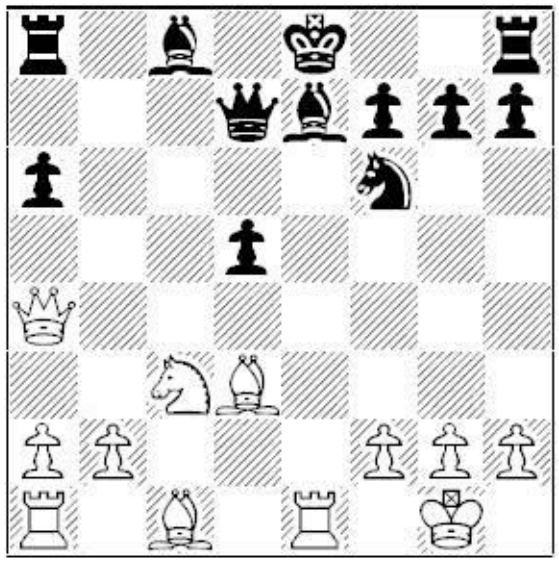
It is a rare thing indeed to watch a player like Marshall, who normally fed on violence, so effortlessly subdued. Why fight when no battle is necessary for victory?

Game 24
H.Kline-J.R.Capablanca
New York 1913
London System

1 d4

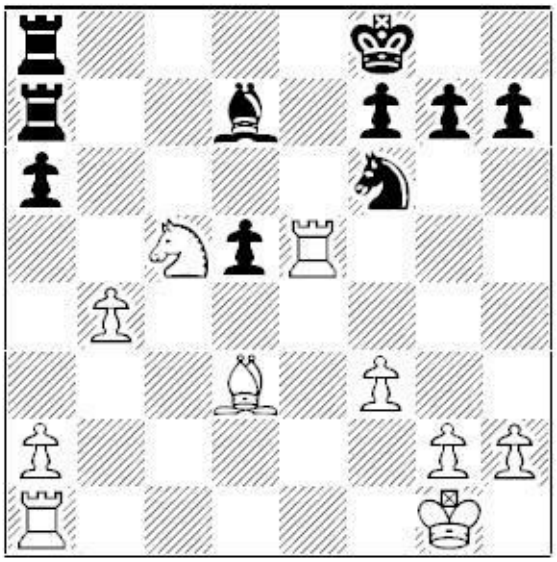
Exercise: Compare Capa's strategic decisions to Fischer's in this classic game:

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 a6 5 Bd3 Nc6 6 Nxc6 bxc6 7 0-0 d5 8 c4 Nf6 9 cxd5 cxd5 10 exd5 exd5 11 Nc3 Be7 12 Qa4+ Qd7 13 Re1!!



(Fischer spurns the exchange sac 13 Bb5 axb5 14 Qxa8 0-0, after which Black takes over the initiative with ... d5-d4 and ... Bb7) 13 ... Qxa4 14 Nxa4 Be6 15 Be3 0-0 16 Bc5! (eliminating Black's best piece and weakening the dark squares, just as Capa did in this game) 16 ... Rfe8 17 Bxe7 Rxe7 18 b4! Kf8 19 Nc5 Bc8 20 f3 Rea7 21 Re5 Bd7

chesstouring.com



22 Nxd7+!! (a brilliant decision; Fischer exchanges off Petrosian's bad bishop, just as Capa did this game) 22 ... Rxd7 23 Rc1 Rd6 24 Rc7 Nd7 25 Re2 g6 26 Kf2 h5 27 f4 h4 28 Kf3 f5 29 Ke3 d4+ 30 Kd2 Nb6 31 Ree7 Nd5 32 Rf7+ Ke8 33 Rb7 Nxb4 34 Bc4 1-0 R.J.Fischer-T.V.Petrosian, 7th matchgame, Buenos Aires 1971.

1 ... Nf6 2 Nf3 d6 3 c3 Nbd7 4 Bf4

The London System is probably the most hated opening in chess, and formally one of my main weapons as White. As the unchallenged king of tedium, I wrote a book on the London System, the perfect weapon for the dull and talentless.

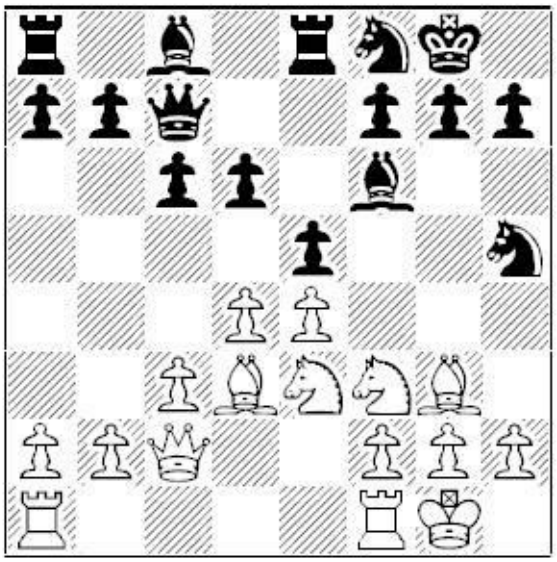
4 ... c6 5 Qc2!? Qc7

Not a very good move. Black's queen shouldn't stay on the same diagonal as White's dark-squared bishop.

6 e4

A true, red-blooded Londoner always moves his e-pawn to e3! The move played is not in the spirit of the London, which requires a more cowardly response, like 6 h3 e5 7 Bh2.

6 ... e5 7 Bg3 Be7 8 Bd3 0-0 9 Nbd2 Re8 10 0-0 Nh5 11 Nc4 Bf6 12 Ne3 Nf8!



chesstouring.com

Destination: f4.

Question: Why isn't Black capturing on g3?

Answer: Black is more interested in landing a piece on f4. If he takes on g3, then after hxg3, Black loses control over f4.

13 dxe5

Relieving the tension only helps Black.

13 ... dxe5 14 Bh4 Qe7! 15 Bxf6 Qxf6

Capa was a century ahead of his time in his sensitivity to colour complexes. In this case White is weak on the dark squares.

Question: Really? I don't see any weakness at all on dark.

Answer: Here f4, a dark square, is weak. Watch how Capa milks it.

Question: Enough for victory with such symmetry?

Answer: Enough to take the initiative.

16 Ne1

Question: Why an unforced retreat?

Answer: In order to play g2-g3. But Capa beats him to it.

16 ... Nf4 17 g3

Weakening, but White can't tolerate a piece embedded in his territory forever.

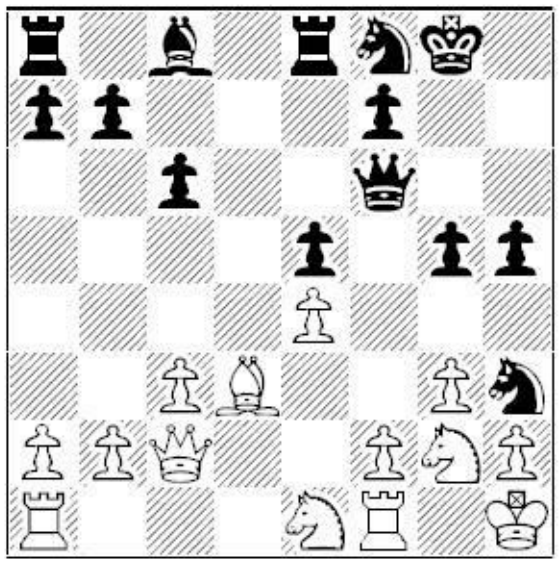
17 ... Nh3+

Perhaps he should take on d3 since White's light squares around his king look tender.

18 Kh1 h5! 19 N3g2

Intending f2-f4.

19 ... g5?!



A rare strategic overreach from Capa. Desire for the elusive "more" is a bottomless pit.

Question: Doesn't this weaken f5?

Answer: It does, but Capa probably talked himself into the move by reasoning that the weakening of f5 is outweighed by the fact that Black gains space and threatens attack.

Question: How would you play it?

Answer: Well, with the hindsight of a century, I would play 19 ... Ne6 and if 20 f4 exf4 21 gxf4 then 21 ... Qh6! 22 f5 Nc5, when White's position stands at the cusp of overextension.

chesstouring.com

20 f3 Ng6 21 Ne3 h4?!

Ah, conceit, that magical elixir which never fails to induce dubious plans! Now Capa gives up control

over g4. Capa often treated non-GM strength opponents with utter contempt, as he displayed in this game. The trouble is he always got away with it! Capa was especially prone to a chess disease I call "power blindness", which is when the much stronger player plays recklessly/carelessly, as if anything wins. But in defence of Capa's decision, I quote GM Nicholas Rossolimo: "When one plays a weaker rival, one should always play for beauty for the benefit of both players and the spectators, or else the game is a waste."

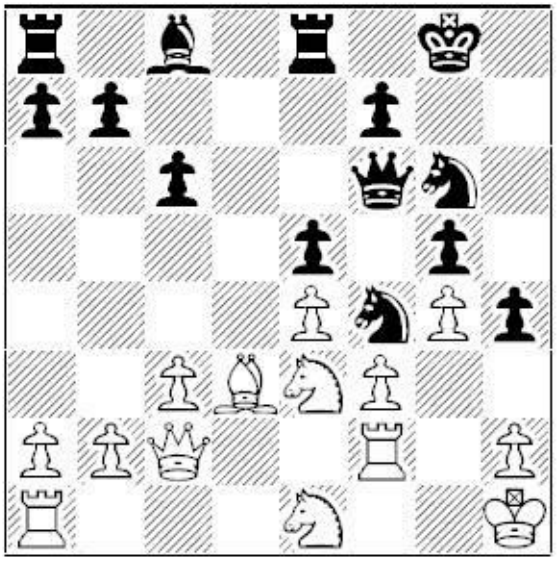
22 g4?

Creating a gigantic lesion on f4. Once you open Pandora's box, it never closes again. This is a hideous strategic error by today's standards, but in 1913 even strong players happily banged out such nauseating moves. Of course he should retain control over f4 by playing 22 Ng4 Qh8 23 Kg2!.

22 ... Nhf4

Thanks for inviting me into your home!

23 Rf2



23 ... Nxd3!!

A profoundly deep strategic decision, which reminds me of the game above where Fischer shockingly exchanged off Petrosian's bad bishop for a knight and went on to win with a bishop versus knight imbalance.

Question: Wasn't that White's bad bishop?

Answer: It was, but keep in mind these factors:

1. White's bishop may get activated on c4.

2. Capa wanted a bishop versus knight imbalance with so many target white pawns fixed on light squares.

3. Black controls f4 but he has two knights which may go there. So, logically, he removes the redundancy.

24 Nxd3 Be6 25 Rd1 Red8 26 b3 Nf4 27 Ng2

Question: Something is amiss. Nobody pours ketchup over oatmeal. Why didn't White occupy f5?

Answer: Matters are not so simple. After 27 Nf5 Rxd3 28 Rxd3 Bxf5 29 exf5 Nxd3 30 Qxd3 Rd8 Black controls the only open file. Now if White plays 31 Qe3??, intending to challenge with Rd2 next, he gets clobbered by 31 ... Rd1+ 32 Kg2 h3+! 33 Kxh3 Rg1! mating.

chesstouring.com

27 ... Nxd3 28 Rxd3 Rxd3 29 Qxd3 Rd8

Question: Why didn't Black take on g4?

Nimzowitsch also pointed out this omission.

Answer: He should have. Capa hated messy complications of any sort, but in this case they are clearly in his favour after 29 ... Bxg4! 30 Nxh4 Rd8 31 Qc2 Bh3 32 Nf5 g4! 33 fxg4 Qg5, when White can barely move.

30 Qe2 h3!

Creating back rank issues for White.

31 Ne3 a5! 32 Rf1 a4 33 c4

Weakening another dark square, d4.

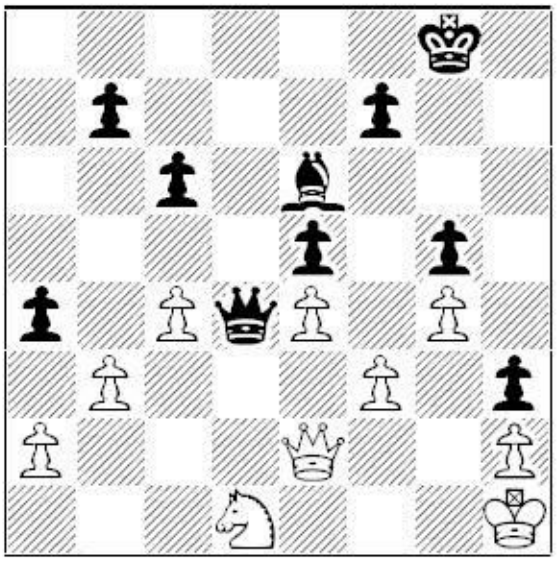
33 ... Rd4 34 Nc2 Rd7!

Note that Black just gained a tempo.

35 Ne3 Qd8 36 Rd1 Rxd1+ 37 Nxd1?

White's king is not so secure. He should try and take queens off the board with 37 Qxd1 Qb6 38 Qd3.

37 ... Qd4!



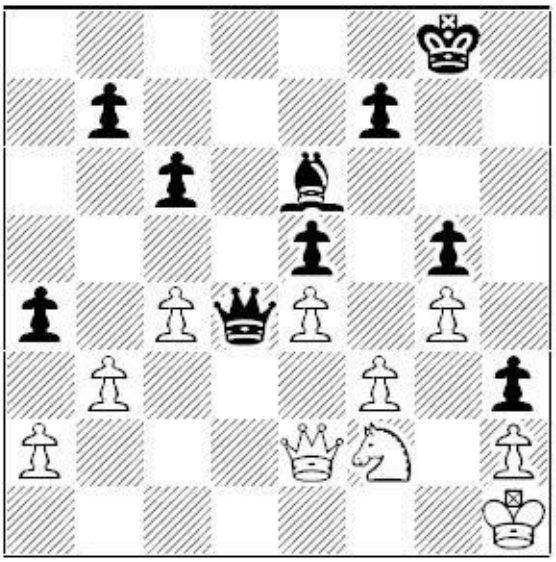
Sparks shoot out from the sorceress' fingertips as she gathers power. The puncture on d4 attests to White's distress. Just look at the competency differential between Black's queen and bishop, and White's sorry queen and knight.

38 Nf2

An assessment of the imbalances:

1. Black's queen flaunts her wealth like an heiress with an obscenely expensive diamond ring. She rules on the chronically weakened dark squares.
2. Black's bishop is superior to White's knight since it menaces so many fixed pawn targets.
3. White must be careful of back rank issues.

chesstouring.com



Exercise (critical decision): You can play a queen check on a1,
but look around. There is something much stronger.

Answer: Confrontation. When a foreign entity introduces itself to a closed ecological system, all hell tends to break loose on the native flora and fauna.

38 ... b5! 39 cxb5

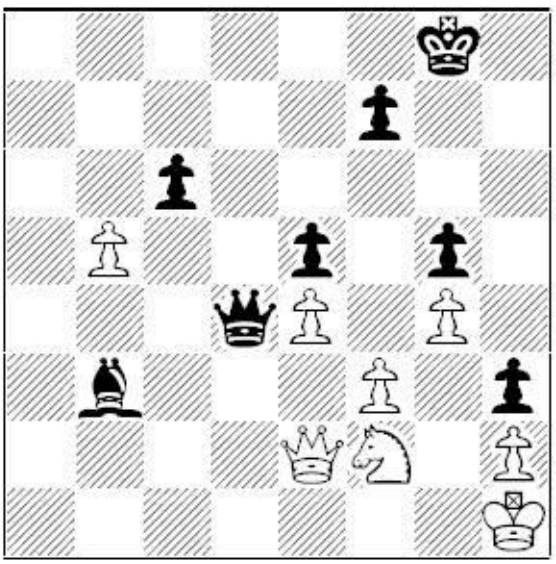
39 Nxh3 bxc4 40 bxc4 f6 and c4 falls, after which Black simply pushes his passed c-pawn down the board.

39 ... axb3

Houdini gives 39 ... Bxb3!! and then follows with some ridiculously complex manoeuvres to prove the win. Capa's move is much simpler!

40 axb3 Bxb3!

Black continues to prosper on the queenside at White's expense.



41 Nxh3

41 bxc6?? loses on the spot to the back rank check 41 ... Qa1+.

chesstouring.com

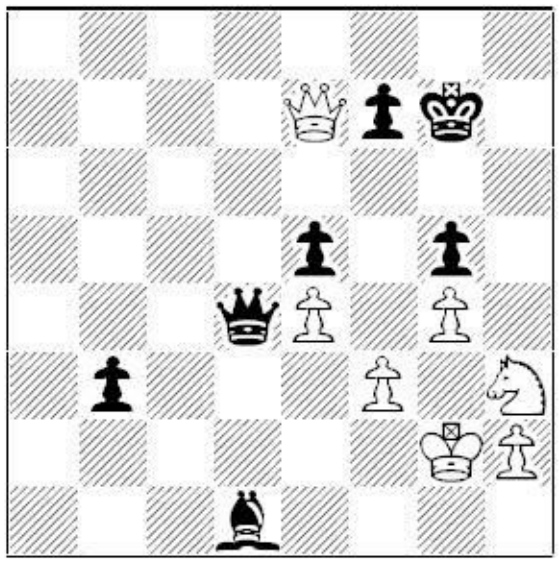
41 ... Bd1! 42 Qf1 cxb5 43 Kg2

Frustratingly, White finds himself in a situation where many attempts on Black's king are possible but

none are probable. For example: 43 Nxg5 Qd2 44 Nh3 b4 45 Ng1 b3 46 Qb5 Qc3 and there is no perpetual check for White.

43 ... b4 44 Qb5 b3 45 Qe8+ Kg7 46 Qe7

46 Nxg5?? is nothing more than a failed assassination attempt after 46 ... Qd2+ 47 Kg3 Qxg5.



Exercise (calculation): Calculate the consequences of

46 ... b2. Does White have perpetual check?

Answer: He doesn't.

46 ... b2!

"The forward march of the pawn is irresistible," writes Capablanca.

47 Nxg5

Or 47 Qxg5+ Kf8 48 Qh6+ Ke7 49 Qg5+ Kd7 50 Qf5+ Kd6 51 Qf6+ Kc5 52 Qe7+ Kb6 53 Qf8 Bxf3+! 54 Kxf3 Qd3+ 55 Kf2 b1Q when Capa's joke wears thin. There is no perpetual as Black's king runs to d1.

47 ... Bb3

Yet another game where Capa's exposed king escapes mate or perpetual check.

48 Nxf7!?

White decides to die defiant, with a curse on his lips. Stringing together the final remnants of will power, the panther gathers for one last futile charge, pouncing on and attacking a tree.

48 ... Bxf7

The bishop slaps the knight on the back with false bonhomie.

49 Qg5+ Kf8 50 Qh6+ Ke7 51 Qg5+ Ke8 0-1

No perpetual.

Game 25

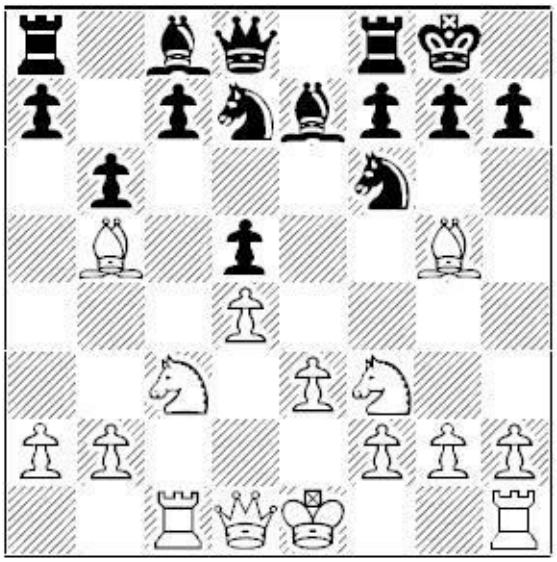
J.R.Capablanca-R.Teichmann

Exhibition game, Berlin 1913

Queen's Gambit Declined

1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 c4 e6 4 Bg5 Be7 5 Nc3 Nbd7 6 e3 0-0 7 Rc1 b6 8 cxd5 exd5 9 Bb5

chessfouring.com



A safer and probably better choice than 9 Qa4 c5 10 Qc6!? which Capablanca tried successfully against Lasker in the last chapter (Game 18).

Question: Why play the bishop to b5 rather than d3,
which looks more natural?

Answer: There is nothing wrong with playing to d3, but posting the bishop on b5 also looks good. In this structure, when Black eventually plays ... c7-c5, we end up in a hanging pawns or isolani position. In both cases swaps tend to help White. On b5 the bishop has the option to chop the d7-knight if the need arises.

9 ... Bb7 10 0-0 a6 11 Ba4 Rc8

Or 11 ... b5 12 Bc2 and then Black loses the hanging pawns option when he plays ... c7-c5.

12 Qe2 c5

Question: Premature?

Answer: Probably not, otherwise why play ... Rc8? Instead, Black can try the simplifying 12 ... Ne4 13 Bxd7 Qxd7 14 Nxe4 dxe4 15 Ne5 Qe6 16 Bxe7 Qxe7 17 Nc6 Qd6 18 Qc4 with an edge to White, who is the only one who can win here, A.Sorin-G.Soppe, San Martin 1995.

13 dxc5

Question: Why does White give up the centre?

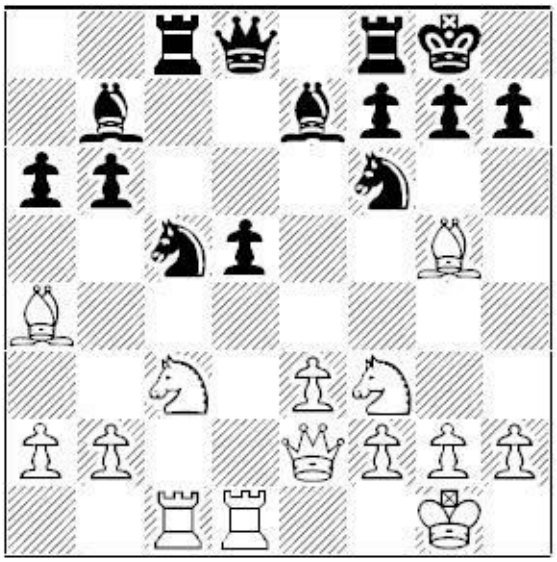
Answer: If he doesn't take on c5, Black may play ... c5-c4, followed by ... b6-b5 with an ominous queenside pawn majority rolling forward.

13 ... Nxc5

Black goes for an isolani set-up. Black's queen looks rather uncomfortably posted in the hanging pawns version after 13 ... bxc5 14 Rfd1 Nb6.

14 Rfd1

chesstouring.com



Question: Giving up the bishop pair?

Answer: Yes, for two reasons:

1. As mentioned before, swaps help the side playing against the isolani.
2. Knights are perfect blockading pieces.

14 ... Nxa4?!

Teichmann initiates the first imbalance. I wouldn't have been in a big rush to take. The swap takes the life out of Black's game.

15 Nxa4 b5 16 Rxc8

It is also tempting to hand over both bishops with 16 Bxf6 Rxc1 17 Rxc1 Bxf6 18 Nc5 Bc8 19 b4, when White's knights more than hold their own against the bishops.

16 ... Qxc8 17 Nc3 Qc4 18 Nd4

White stands better with an iron blockade on d4. As we leave the opening, Black fervently hopes his today goes a bit smoother than his yesterday. It doesn't.

18 ... Qxe2?!

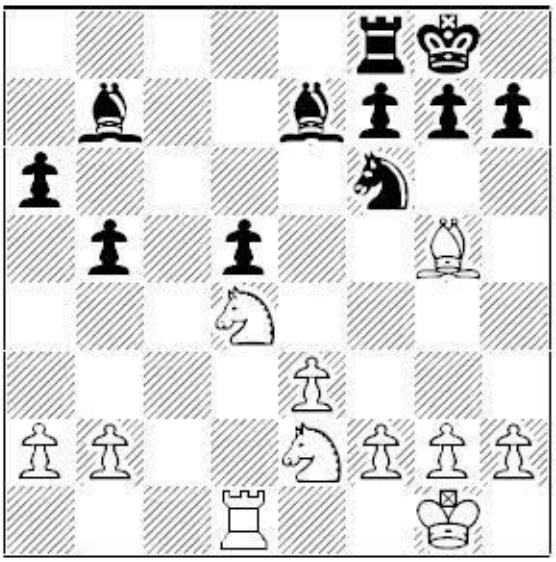
A natural pacifist has no stomach for warfare. Swapping is not the correct path to a draw in such positions and it only helps White.

Question: Doesn't 18 ... b4 force White to take on c4?

Answer: No. White has the zwischenzug 19 Nf5! Bd8 20 Nd6! Qxe2 21 Nxe2, when he gets a similar, possibly even better, version of the game.

19 Ncxe2!

chesstouring.com



19 ... Rc8

Question: Shouldn't the knight be kept out of f5?

Answer: After 19 ... g6 20 Rc1 Rc8 21 Rxc8+ Bxc8 22 Nc6 Kf8 23 Nxe7 Kxe7 24 Nd4 we reach a situation similar to the game.

20 Nf5 Kf8

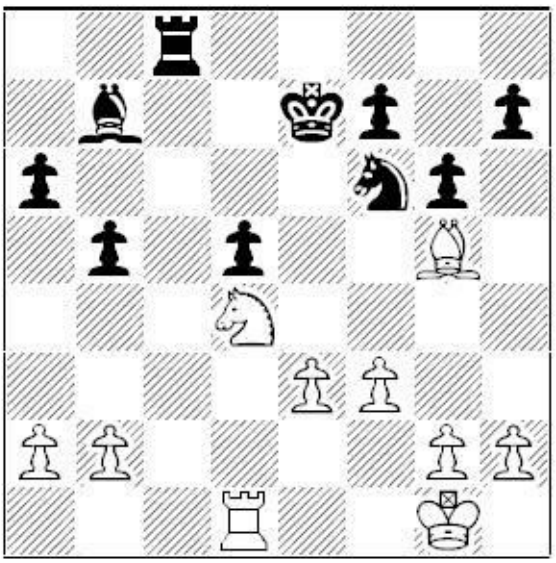
Question: Why give up his one trump when he can back the bishop up?

Answer: Those knights are looking pretty tough, and I'm not so sure ownership of the bishop pair constitutes a trump. Also, backing up the bishop with 20 ... Bd8? allows the tactic 21 Nd6 Rc7 22 Bxf6! Bxf6 23 Nxb7 Rxb7 24 Rxd5, winning a pawn due to Black's loose back rank.

21 Nxe7 Kxe7 22 Nd4 g6?!

Question: Why did he do this? Now it will be very difficult to break the pin.

Answer: I think you are correct in thinking Black's last move was an overreaction. Still, Nf5+ was a huge strategic threat and I guess Teichmann couldn't stomach the thought of playing the miserably passive 22 ... Rg8.



chesstouring.com

Exercise (planning): White to play and force the win of a pawn.

Answer: **23 f3!!**

This most natural of moves induces Black to hand over a pawn. The bizarre threat is to walk the king all the way to e5 and win Black's pinned knight.

23 ... h6!?

Our wants don't enter the equation in situations of life and death.

Question: Didn't Black just panic? I don't see how

White makes progress if Black does nothing.

Answer: Here is a sample if Black simply waits: 23 ... Rc7 24 Kf2 Bc8 25 g4 Bd7 26 Kg3!! Rb7 (the need to defend the knight forces Black's rook off the c-file) 27 Kf4 Rb6 28 Rc1 Ke8 29 Bxf6! (now White gets the mother of all good knight versus bad bishop positions) 29 ... Rxf6+ 30 Kg5! (hi there!) 30 ... Ke7 31 Rc7 (threatening to take on d7) 31 ... Rd6 32 Kh6!, when h7 falls and White retains a crushing bind all the while.

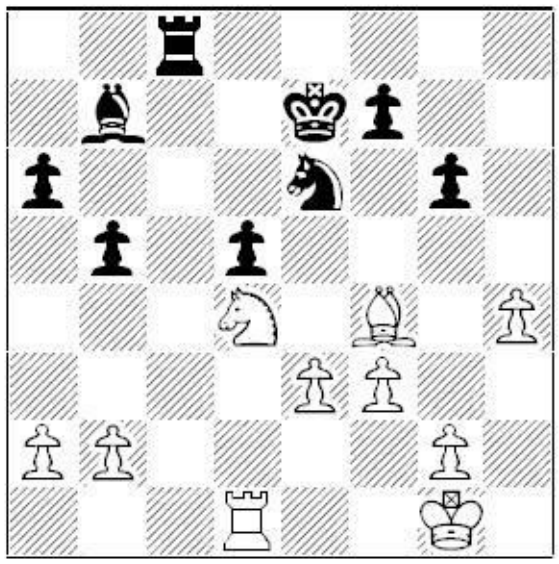
24 Bxh6 Nd7

Free at last. With his pawn sac, Teichmann hopes to follow FDR's plan to get past the Great Depression: Relief, recovery, reconstruction.

25 h4 Nc5!

Teichmann sees that his best shot at holding would be to take the knights off the board in an opposite-coloured bishops ending. After the naive 25 ... Rh8 26 Bf4 Rxh4?? 27 Bg5+ Black hangs the rook.

26 Bf4 Ne6



27 Nxe6!

Here we see Capa's eerily perfect intuition at work. The new imbalance: Opposite-coloured bishops. Capa is unafraid of the prospect since his bishop is clearly superior. Since I don't have Capa's intuition or self-confidence in victory in the position which arose in the game, I would deliberately allow the degradation of White's kingside structure to avoid the opposite-coloured bishops with 27 Nb3 Nxf4 28 exf4.

27 ... Kxe6

Perhaps Black had more drawing chances with 27 ... fxe6 28 Rd2 Kf6 29 Bg5+ Kf7 30 Kf2 e5, when 31 f4! exf4 32 Bxf4 Kf6 33 g4, followed by Kg3, Rh2 and h4-h5, creates an outside passed pawn.

28 Rd2 Rh8

I think Black's best defensive set-up is to play 28 ... f6 and then do nothing.

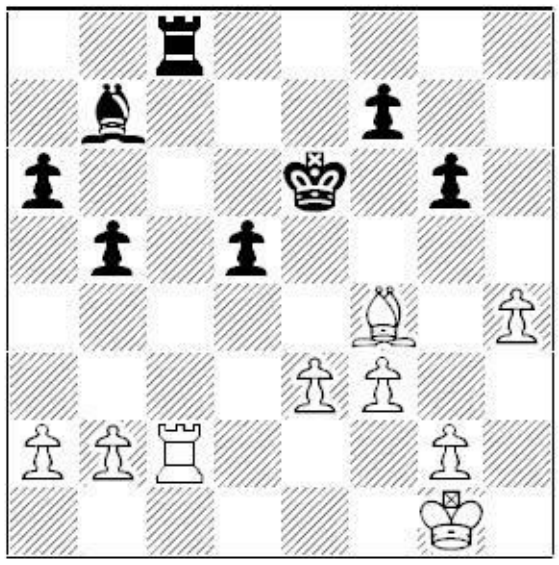
chesstouring.com

29 Rc2!

Setting a strategic trap.

29 ... Rc8

Not 29 ... Rxh4? 30 Rc7 Ba8 31 Rc8 Bb7 32 Rb8 Bc6 33 g3! Rh5 34 g4 Rh7 35 Rc8 Bb7 36 Rc7 Ba8 37 Ra7 Bc6 38 Rxa6 Kd7 39 Ra7+ Ke6 40 Bg5 d4 41 e4, when Black can barely move.



30 Rxc8!

Wow. White drives down a road without any turns. A pure opposite-coloured bishops with the absence of other pieces is one of the hardest to convert when up a pawn, yet White cheerfully enters it. Capablanca was acutely sensitive to the most minute alterations of patterns and the tiniest shifts in environment. Something told him the opposite-coloured bishops position is a win. Analysis proves his decision correct.

30 ... Bxc8 31 Kf2 d4!?

Teichmann sacs another one with a fatalistic shrug, but it comes too late and without meaning, like the belated birthday card you received from your aunt, who forgot to send it earlier.

Question: Why did he just give away a pawn?

Isn't this just extravagant excess?

Answer: It was probably an overreaction. Teichmann wanted air for his bishop. But really, it doesn't constitute an error since he loses if he does nothing. For example: 31 ... f6 32 b4 Bd7 33 Ke2 Bc8 34 Kd3 Kf5 35 g4+ Ke6 36 Kd4 f5 (36 ... Bb7 37 Kc5 Bc8 38 Kc6 Bd7+ 39 Kb7 Be8 40 Kxa6 Bd7 41 h5 gxh5 42 gxh5 Kf7 43 h6 Kg6 44 Bd6! Kxh6 45 a4! wins similarly) 37 g5! Bd7 38 Be5 Bc8 39 f4 Bb7 40 Kc5 Bc8 41 Kc6 Bd7+ 42 Kb7 Be8 43 Kxa6 (the king scales the sheer, vertical side of the mountain to pick up a pawn) 43 ... Bd7 44 a4! bxa4 45 b5 and the tyre iron slices through the soggy pumpkin as all resistance is smashed aside.

32 exd4 Kd5 33 Ke3 Be6

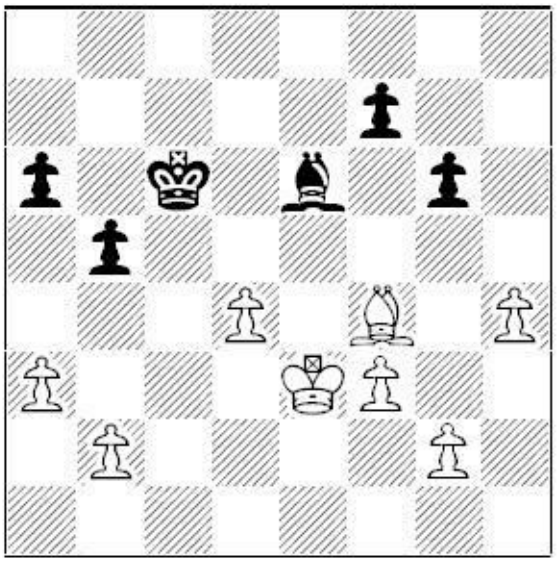
33 ... f5 34 Be5 Bd7 35 Kf4 Be8 36 Kg5 Ke6 37 g4 creates a passed h-pawn.

34 Kd3 Kc6 35 a3 Bc4+

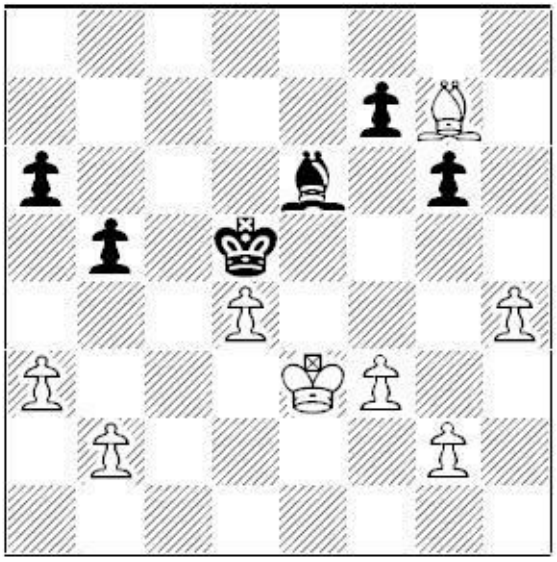
After 35 ... Bf5+ 36 Ke3 Kd5 37 g4 Bb1 38 Be5 Ke6 39 Kf4 f6 40 d5+! Kxd5 41 Bxf6 Ke6 42 Bc3 Bc2 43 Kg5 Kf7 44 f4 Bd3 45 h5 gxh5 46 Kxh5!, the two connected passers win easily and Black's dream of drawing on the basis of opposite bishops, so close to birth, dies stillborn.

36 Ke3 Be6

chesstouring.com



Exercise (planning): It takes multiple strings to manipulate a marionette. A single string won't make it dance.
Work out a multi-step path to White's victory.
37 Bh6! Kd5
Answer: Step 1: Transfer bishop to its optimal post on g7.
38 Bg7! 1-0



Teichmann abdicates, realizing a king is no longer a king without subjects. For example: 38 ... Bf5 39 Kf4 Bb1 40 g4 a5 41 Kg5 (the kingside is the theatre where the drama is played out) 41 ... Ke6 42 f4! (Step 2: Clog the black bishop's path on the b1-h7 diagonal) 42 ... Bc2 (or 42 ... f5 43 gxf5+ Bxf5 44 h5!) 43 f5+! gxf5 44 gxf5+ and the pawn can't be taken (44 ... Bxf5 45 d5+), so White opens a path to promotion for his h-pawn.

Game 26
J.R.Capablanca-D.Janowski
St Petersburg 1914

chesstouring.com

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Bxc6

The heavy manoeuvring games which arise from the Exchange Lopez admirably suited Capa's style. I am surprised he didn't play the opening more often.

4 ... dxc6 5 Nc3!? Bc5

Too mechanical. Capa made the same mistake last chapter versus Pavlov and Selesniev in Game 15. I don't think c5 is the correct spot for the bishop and would play 5 ... f6 instead.

Question: Why don't you like c5? It's the most natural spot for the bishop.

Answer: The trouble is White soon challenges it with d2-d3 and Be3?

Question: How does that bother Black?

Answer: Black has the bishop pair so he doesn't want to swap or lose time backing his bishop off.

6 d3

It makes no sense to take on e5. After 6 Nxe5 Qg5 7 d4 Qxg2 8 Qf3 Qxf3 9 Nxf3 Bb4 Black's bishop pair in the open position means more than White's pawn centre.

6 ... Bg4

This is a "who cares?" type of pin. White is often happy to play h2-h3 and g2-g4 in such positions.

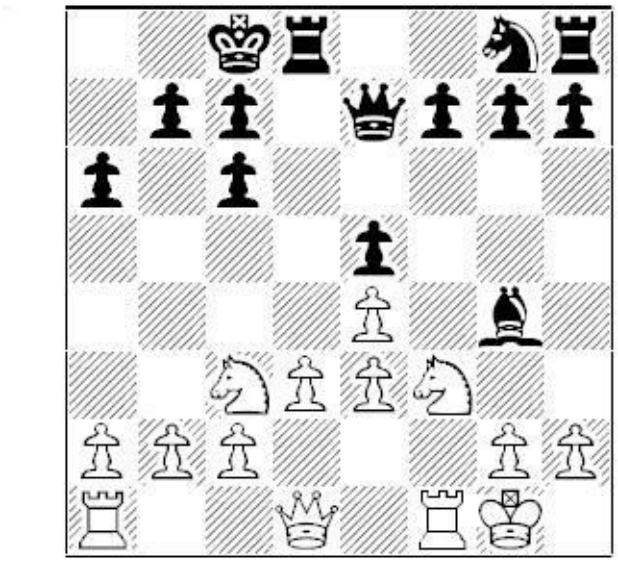
7 Be3 Bxe3?!

Another strategic error. He should apologize and back off to d6 instead. By taking on e3, Janowski just eliminated his own bishop pair, strengthened the opposing centre and also opened the f-file for White.

8 fxe3 Qe7

He should probably reserve e7 for the knight and play 8 ... f6.

9 0-0 0-0-0?!



One shouldn't rush to embrace every imbalance. Before attempting to cure a disease, a physician must first locate it. Janowski offers his mind to security and his heart to attack – unfortunately, an attack which only exists in his imagination. White is much faster since he can pry open Black's game at b5 very quickly. Black should play 9 ... Nh6 intending ... f7-f6 and ... Nf7.

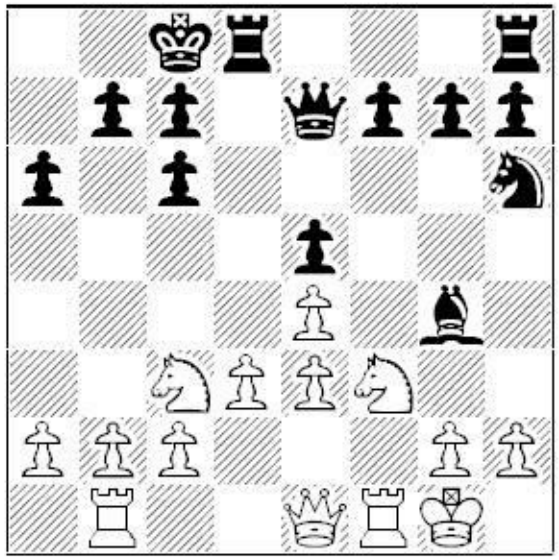
Kasparov said that Capa mainly won his games due to his greater strategic understanding. So far was Capa ahead of his peers strategically, that sometimes it almost felt as if one player understood the castling and en passant rules while all his opponents were unfamiliar with the basic rules of chess.

chessbooming.com

10 Qe1 Nh6

Kasparov amusingly observes: “Of course 10 ... f6 is more accurate, but that was how they played chess then!” It is fun to watch the old guys in action with the hindsight of a century of knowledge on your side.

11 Rb1!!



The hinge on the door swings left.

Question: Why give such an obvious attacking move a double exclamation mark?

Answer: FYI, Kasparov also gave the move two exclamation marks. 11 Rb1!! is an “obvious attacking move” – *today*. At that time, playing Rb1, foregoing the unnecessary a2-a3 was a totally new attacking plan.

11 ... f6 12 b4

Here we go.

12 ... Nf7

The knight, tired of life on the periphery, returns from exile hoping to be of relevance.

13 a4

White lights the tinder and a line-opening b4-b5 looms.

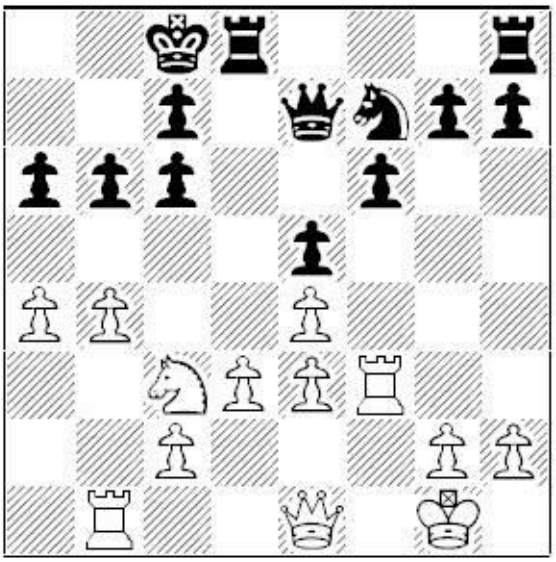
13 ... Bxf3

Question: An unforced capture?

Answer: Capa wrote that Janowski “simplifies, hoping to lighten White’s attack.” If Black tries to jump-start his own attack he looks woefully slow. For example: 13 ... h5 14 b5 cxb5 15 axb5 a5 16 b6, when White’s attack is a million miles in the lead.

14 Rxf3 b6!

chesstouring.com



Exercise (planning/critical decision): Janowski halted the b4-b5-b6 threat. Should Capa go for 15 b5 anyway? Factor in the line 15 b5 cxb5 16 axb5 a5, which gives Black a passed a-pawn.

Answer: He should play it since it opens d5 for White's knight, which is far more important than Black's passed a-pawn.

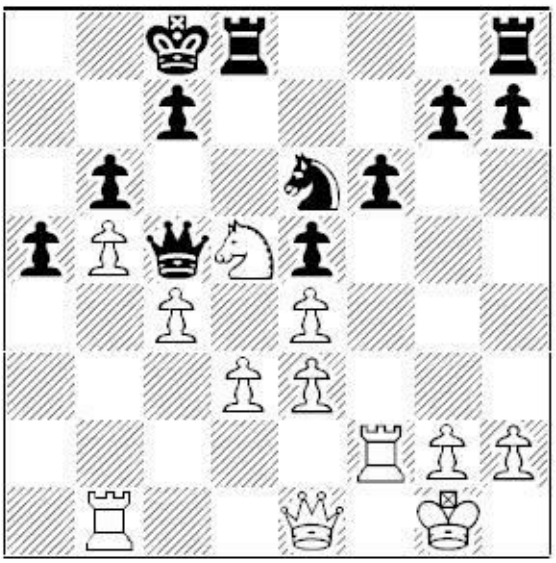
15 b5! cxb5 16 axb5 a5 17 Nd5

A dictator abandons the affection of the people, swapping it for a grip on power. The knight is an unchallenged ruler on this square.

17 ... Qc5 18 c4

To ensure that Black can't sac and get a pawn for an exchange on d5.

18 ... Ng5 19 Rf2 Ne6



Exercise (planning): There is no doubt that the advantage lies with White. But now what? Come up with a plan to improve Capa's position.

Answer: Step 1: Play first for the d3-d4 break.

chesstouring.com

20 Qc3! Rd7 21 Rd1! Kb7?

The losing move. Black's king prepares for the coming ordeal through prayer and fasting. As it turns

out b7 isn't such a hot square for the king. Better was 21 ... Qd6! 22 d4 Ng5 23 Qd3 exd4 24 exd4 Re8 25 Re1, when White still has work to do to prepare the c4-c5 break.

22 d4 Qd6

Step 2: Force the c4-c5 break. Black collapses with alarming speed.

Question: What if Black plays his queen to f8 instead?

Answer: It's a slight improvement by saving a tempo from White's coming c4-c5, but one that would in no way save Black. White would play just as he did in the game. For example: 22 ... Qf8 23 c5 exd4 24 exd4 bxc5 25 Qxa5 Qa8 26 Qc3 is a winning attack for White.

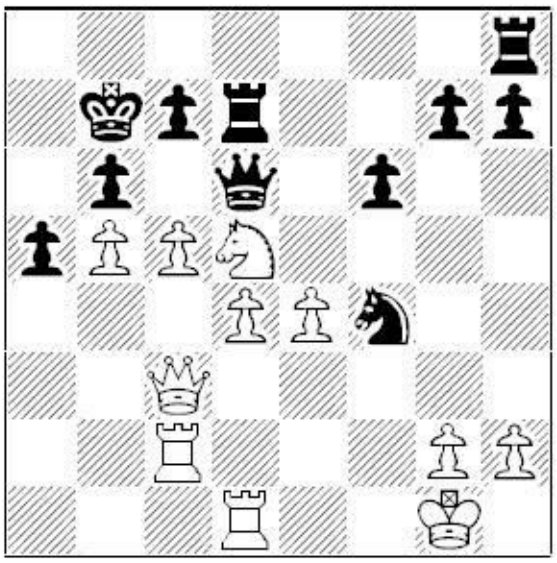
23 Rc2!

Now there is no way to prevent the coming c4-c5.

23 ... exd4 24 exd4 Nf4

Dropping a rook, but it actually didn't matter a bit. 24 ... Ng5 25 Re1 Rf7 26 c5 is crushing.

25 c5!



If hell had a main street, it would look a lot like the c-file.

25 ... Nxd5

Lancing the boil, but the pus remains.

26 exd5

Double attack on Black's queen and also his d7-rook (with c5-c6+).

26 ... Qxd5 27 c6+

Game over. Black's king perspires considerably more than the weather indicates.

27 ... Kb8

Hey, I said "Game over!" One great mystery I have never been able to crack is why so many GMs of old refused to resign, and played on in positions where they would have no chance against a 600 rated kindergartener. We don't need to read the tea leaves to predict the rest.

28 cxd7 Qxd7 29 d5 Re8 30 d6 cxd6 31 Qc6 1-0

Such wins, without the appearance of effort against world class opponents, were the main reason so many of the top players in the world at the time feared Capa.

Game 27

chesstouring.com

D.Janowski-J.R.Capablanca

New York 1916

Slav Defence

1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 d5 3 c4 c6 4 Nc3 Bf5

Today, this move is known to be an error. Capa's shaky opening play, as is customary in many of his earlier games, is the lone jarring element to an otherwise beautiful whole.

5 Qb3

The wrong move order. As I point out in *The Slav: Move by Move* (order it and I promise your life will change for the better!), White gains a clear advantage through the move order 5 cxd5! cxd5 6 Qb3.

5 ... Qb6 6 Qxb6 axb6 7 cxd5 Nxd5

The correct recapture. Otherwise White's knight gets access to b5.

8 Nxd5

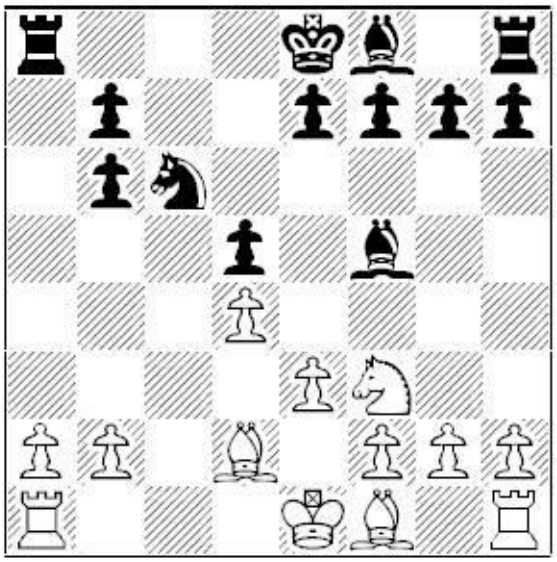
White can also speculate with the pawn sac 8 e4!? Nxc3 9 exf5 Rxa2 10 Rxa2 Nxa2 11 Bd2 b5 12 Bd3 Na6, when White threatens to infiltrate down the a-file with Ke2 and Ra1.

8 ... cxd5 9 e3

Question: Why did White lock his bishop inside the chain?

Answer: He wants his bishop on d2 to cover against ... Nb4. He probably feared something like 9 Bf4 Nc6 10 a3 b5! 11 e3 b4, J.Henriksson-B.Eriksson, Vaxjo 1992, which actually looks fine for White after 12 a4.

9 ... Nc6 10 Bd2



10 ... Bd7!!

Question: What? Black's last move makes no sense. Please explain!

Answer: I am positive Capa was a time-traveller from the future. Black moves an already developed piece, retreating it to boot. Capa intends a future ... Na5, ... b6-b5, ... Nc4 plan in case White later plays a2-a3. To implement this idea he needs coverage of b5. This is a well-known strategic plan today, but was unheard of when this game was played. Strategic ideas from the future seemed to grow with frequency within Capa's mind.

11 Be2?!

A small inaccuracy which forces castling.

Question: What is wrong with castling?

chesstouring.com

Answer: In endings your king should be of use in the middle. 11 Bd3 e6 12 Ke2 was better.

11 ... e6 12 0-0 Bd6 13 Rfc1 Ke7!

Principle: The king is a fighting piece when queens come off the board.

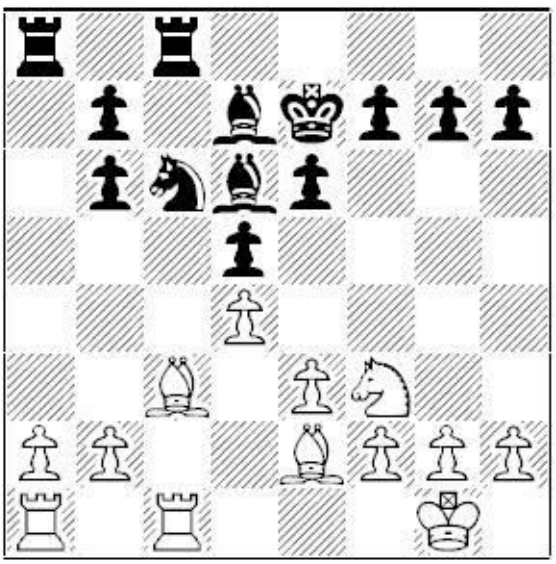
14 Bc3

Question: Is it correct to assume that Janowski is intimidated by his opponent and is playing as dull as possible to score the draw?

Answer: It does look that way. I have found that avoidance of complications results in a nasty karmic repercussion of bringing them later on anyway.

14 ... Rhc8

It feels like Black already stands slightly better.



Question: What about Black's weak, doubled, isolated b-pawns?

Answer: White has no way to menace them, so they are not weak.

15 a3?! Na5

Strategic target: c4.

16 Nd2 f5!?

I wouldn't have played this move which gives White opportunities on e5 with his knight.

17 g3

Black stands slightly better after 17 b4 Nc4 18 Nxc4 dxc4.

17 ... b5

This is why Black played 10 ... Bd7.

18 f3

Question: Shouldn't White trade off that
potentially powerful knight on a5?

Answer: I thought that also, but then after looking at 18 Bxa5 Rxc1+ 19 Rxc1 Rxa5 20 Nf3 b4 21 axb4 Ra2 22 Rb1 Ba4, White continues to struggle for equality. Still, this may be his best line.

18 ... Nc4 19 Bxc4! bxc4 20 e4 Kf7 21 e5?

A terrible strategic blunder for our time but quite normal for 1916. Janowski plugs up his own hole on e5. Black's bishop pair is meaningless if White continues with 21 exd5! exd5 22 f4!, intending Nf3 and Ne5.

Question: If this is the case, then wouldn't you
agree that Capa got lucky to win?

chesstouring.com

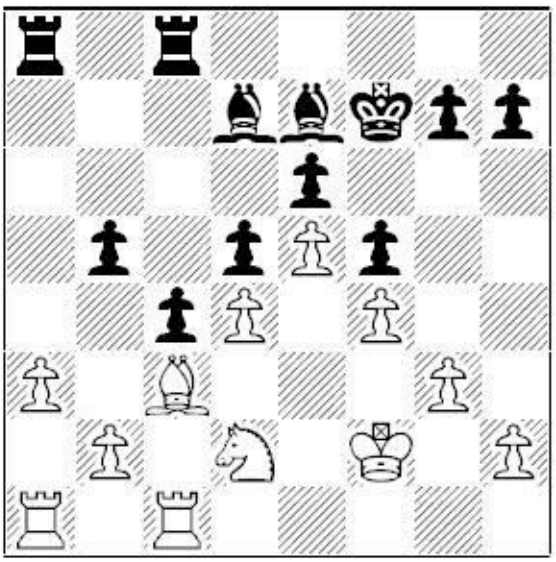
Answer: I suppose so, but keep in mind that a manoeuvre like this, which a club player would find today, was no easy thing to spot for a GM a century ago. Don't take our knowledge for granted. I am

reminded of Jane Austen's heroine from *Mansfield Park* who so wisely remarked: "It could have all turned out differently, I suppose. But it didn't."

21 ... Be7 22 f4 b5 23 Kf2

Question: Why not swap off the bad bishop with 23 Bb4?

Answer: He would like to, but the manoeuvre drops a pawn after 23 ... Bxb4 24 axb4 Ra4!.



Exercise (planning): Come up with a long-term plan for Black.

Answer: Step 1: Take control over b4, preparing to double rooks and play for ... b5-b4 later on.

23 ... Ra4! 24 Ke3 Rca8 25 Rab1

Step 2: Grab space on the other wing.

25 ... h6! 26 Nf3 g5 27 Ne1 Rg8 28 Kf3

He should consider 28 Ng2 to recapture on f4 with his knight.

28 ... gxf4 29 gxf4 Raa8 30 Ng2 Rg4 31 Rg1

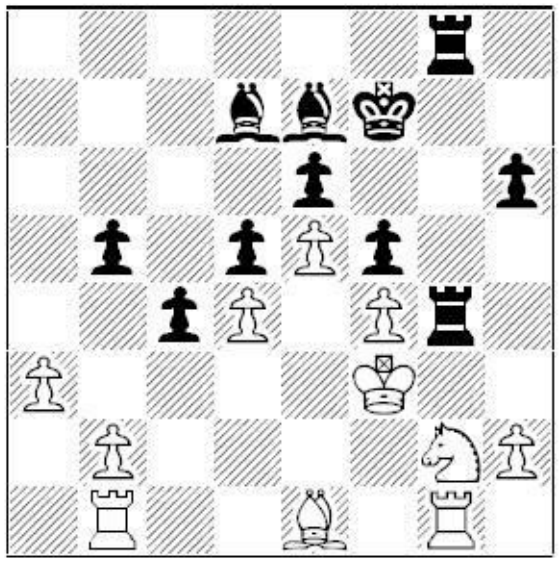
Or 31 Ne3 Rh4 32 Rh1 Rh3+ 33 Ke2 Rb8 and Black continues to make progress.

31 ... Rag8 32 Be1

Every imbalance favours Black:

1. Black has the bishop pair.
2. He also pressures White down the g-file with his rooks.

chesstouring.com



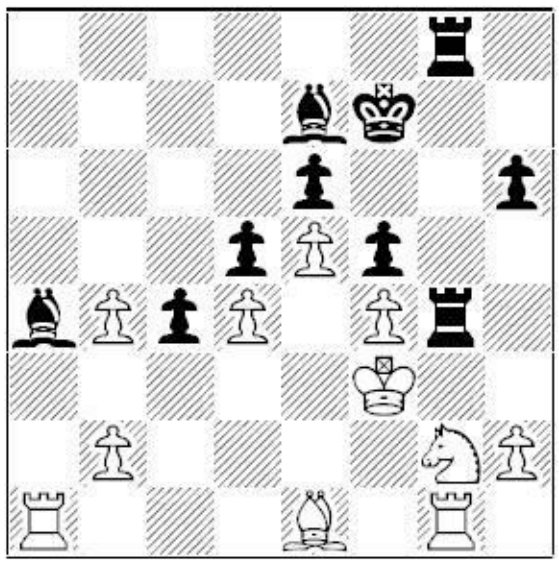
Exercise (planning): Black's only temporary problem is his bad, light-squared bishop stuck behind his pawns. Is there a way to activate it?

Answer: Clearance. Bishops are more effective when hunting in pairs. Black's formally bad bishop is driven to fulfil his dark fantasy, intending ... Ba4-c2-e4, after which no one will dare demean him with the term "bad" again.

32 ... b4! 33 axb4

33 Bxb4 Ba4! 34 Rbc1 (34 Bxe7? Bc2!) 34 ... Bxb4 35 axb4 Rb8 keeps White on the defensive.

33 ... Ba4 34 Ra1!



A brilliant strategic decision. White seeks a counterattack down the a-file rather than suffer grim defence with 34 Rc1? h5 35 h3 R4g7, when White is almost in zugzwang.

34 ... Bc2 35 Bg3?

Rather than this apathetic gesture of tolerance, *Houdini* points out the startling temporary piece sac 35 Ra7!! Be4+ 36 Ke3 which holds the game. If Black takes the bait with 36 ... Rxg2 37 Rxg2 Rxg2 38 Bh4 Rxh2 39 Rxe7+ Kf8 40 Bf6 Rxb2 41 Rxe6 Rxb4, then White should hold the draw despite his deficit.

chesstouring.com

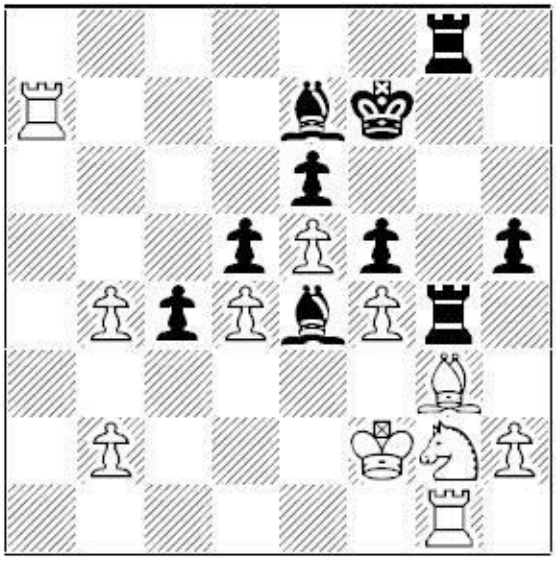
35 ... Be4+ 36 Kf2

White incorrectly reasons: If a person (Black's bishop on e4) is obnoxious without being physically

threatening, then tolerate him.

36 ... h5! 37 Ra7?

White puts up more resistance with 37 Ne3 h4! 38 Nxg4 hxg3+ 39 hxg3 fxg4, though even here it's difficult to believe he holds the game.



Exercise (combination alert): White's forces circle outward to the threats which surround them, but it doesn't do him any good. Black to play and win material.

Answer: This one is easy and most of you probably predicted it in your sleep.

37 ... Bxg2!

The good/bad bishop displays his claws by forcing White into a pin.

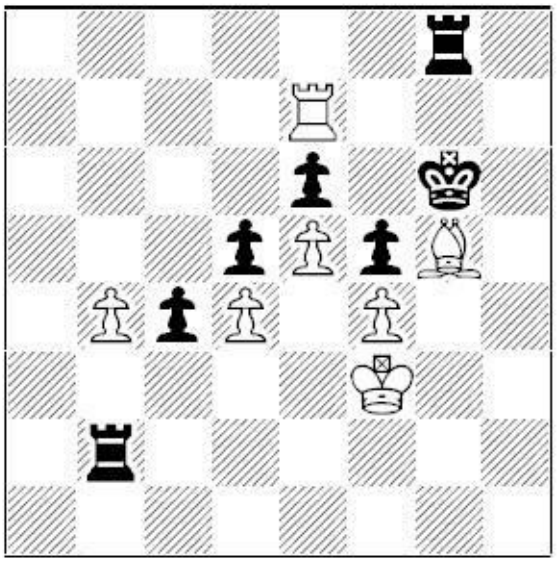
38 Rxg2 h4

This wins an exchange at a minimum.

39 Bxh4

Not much choice, but White is obliged to spend on a scale too grand to reconcile with his current lack of funds. He is also busted after 39 Rxe7+ Kxe7 40 Bxh4+ Kd7 41 Bg3 Rb8.

39 ... Rxg2+ 40 Kf3 Rxh2 41 Bxe7 Rh3+ 42 Kf2 Rb3 43 Bg5+ Kg6 44 Re7 Rxb2+ 45 Kf3



chesstouring.com

Exercise: The blind, disoriented king gropes his way down the hall unassisted. White's forces, formally in the service of their king's defence, all desert him. Black to play and force checkmate.

Answer: White's pieces sob by the shore as they watch their king swept away by the current.

45 ... Ra8!

Threat: ... Ra3 mate!

46 Rxe6+

A parting joke.

46 ... Kh7 0-1

Capa is not going to fall for 46 ... Kh5?? 47 Rh6 mate.

Game 28

J.R.Capablanca-Em.Lasker

11th matchgame, Havana 1921

Queen's Gambit Declined

1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 e6 3 c4 Nf6 4 Bg5 Nbd7 5 e3 Be7 6 Nc3 0-0 7 Rc1 Re8 8 Qc2 c6

Both sides play a game of chicken, which Lasker wins. Black will only take on c4 when White moves his light-squared bishop.

9 Bd3

Capa refuses to participate in the waiting game and decides to lose a tempo.

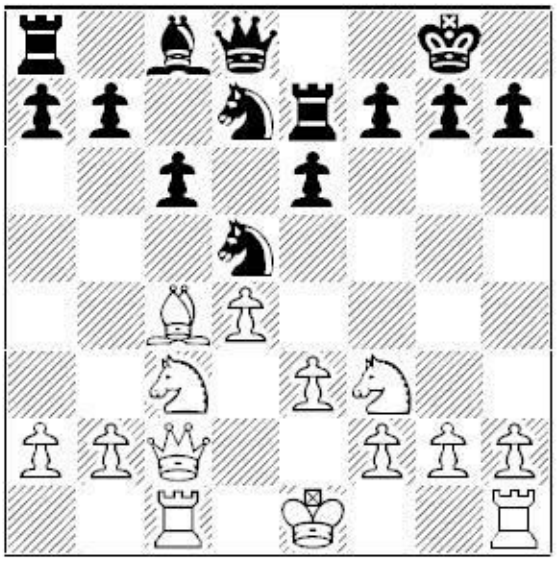
Question: What do you suggest instead?

Answer: I had White once in this position and played 9 a3 Nf8 10 h3, and I guess my opponent got sick and tired of waiting for me to move the f1-bishop, and took on c4. 10 ... dxc4, C.Lakdawala-J.Booth, San Diego 1981. If Black, I would stubbornly continue to wait with 10 ... b6 or 10 ... Ng6.

9 ... dxc4 10 Bxc4 Nd5

The standard swapping mechanism to relieve the cramp. Capablanca barely survived the strategically suspect 10 ... b5?! in his game against Rubinstein last chapter (Game 16).

11 Bxe7 Rxe7!?



chesstouring.com

Technically, this is a poor move.

Question: Why didn't Lasker retake with his queen?

Answer: Kasparov punished Lasker's move with "?!" but keep in mind, Lasker, desperate for a win, goaded Capablanca on with deliberately inaccurate moves. I am certain Lasker was perfectly aware his move was dubious. He simply wasn't interested in playing for a draw with the standard 11 ... Qxe7, when Black eventually tries for the freeing break ... e6-e5. In essence, Lasker had little to lose and gambled (incorrectly) that he could provoke Capa into a rash course of action.

12 0-0 Nf8!?

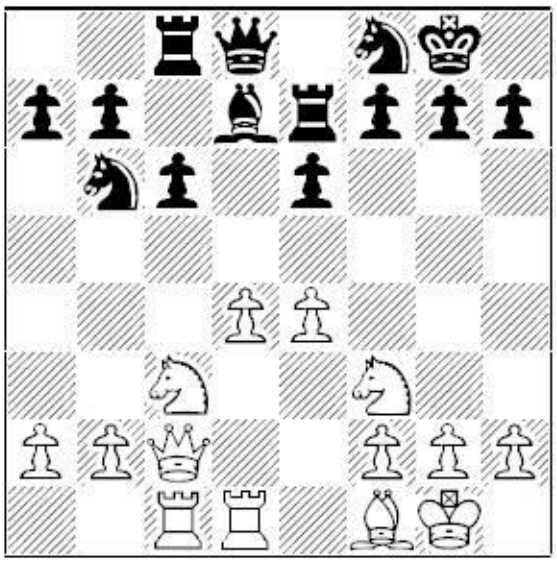
Same philosophy. Once again spurring the sane course, 12 ... Nxc3 followed by ... b7-b6.

13 Rfd1 Bd7 14 e4 Nb6?!

Question: Why did you criticize Lasker's last move?

Answer: He went too far in his complicate-at-all-costs strategy. Lasker broke the principle: Trade when cramped. Therefore, he should have swapped on c3.

15 Bf1 Rc8



Exercise (planning): Black plans the freeing break ... c6-c5 to challenge White's space advantage. What would you do about it?

Answer: Grab even more space and halt the freeing break.

16 b4! Be8

The roaches, though driven out of sight, yet remain within the walls. Lasker pulls a Steinitz by scrunching up all his pieces on the first rank, perhaps hoping to egg Capa on to overextension in the future. In doing so he initiates a contractionary spiral, losing more and more space. This was actually one of the worst strategies against Capa, who was a master at grabbing territory without ceding an inch of concession.

17 Qb3 Rec7 18 a4

More space.

18 ... Ng6 19 a5

... and more.

19 ... Nd7 20 e5

And more!

Question: Doesn't he give Black the d5-square?

chesstouring.com

Answer: White gets more than he gives in the bargain, since d6 beckons for a knight.

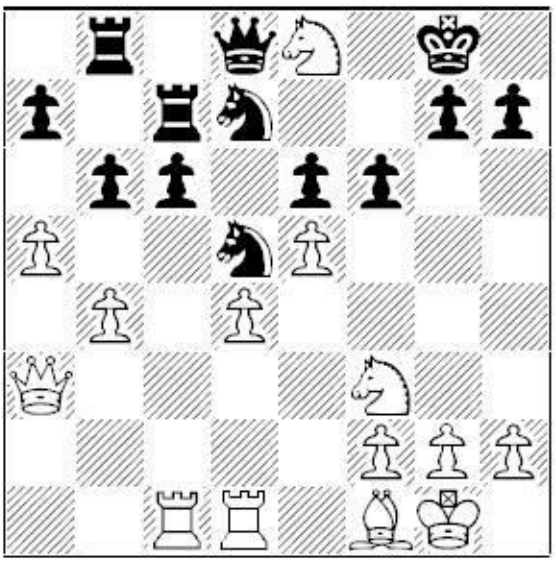
20 ... b6 21 Ne4

Eyeing the freeing ... c6-c5 break as well as the hole on d6.

21 ... Rb8 22 Qc3 Nf4 23 Nd6 Nd5 24 Qa3 f6!?

Levenfish and Panov suggest 24 ... Qe7 and only then ... f7-f6, in order to guard the loose e6-pawn.

25 Nxe8!



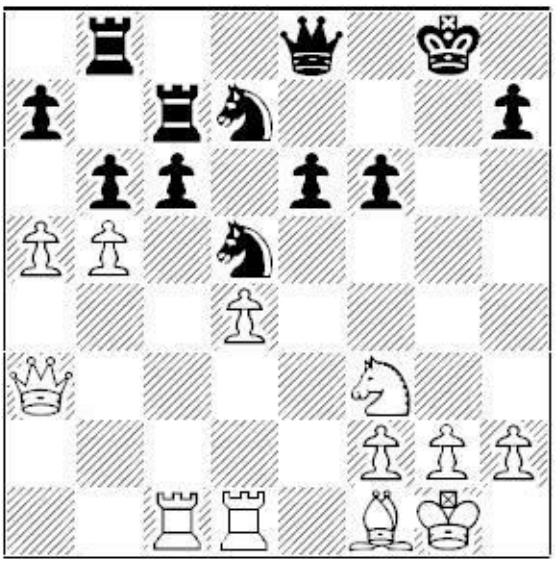
Before Black's bishop emerges to h5.

25 ... Qxe8 26 exf6 gxf6!

Question: Why did Black compromise his kingside?

Answer: The pawn recapture looks correct, since e5 must be kept under control. Black is in even worse shape after 26 ... N7xf6 27 Ne5.

27 b5!



Question: Why is White trying to swap away all his queenside pawns?

Answer: Capablanca writes: "Once those two pawns are exchanged, White can devote all his attention to the attack against the king without having anything to worry about on the other side."

27 ... Rbc8!

chesstouring.com

Not 27 ... c5?! 28 dxc5 Nxc5 29 axb6 axb6 30 Nd4, when White's b5-pawn ties Black down and gives him cause to worry about infiltration on c6.

28 bxc6 Rxc6 29 Rxc6 Rxc6 30 axb6 axb6

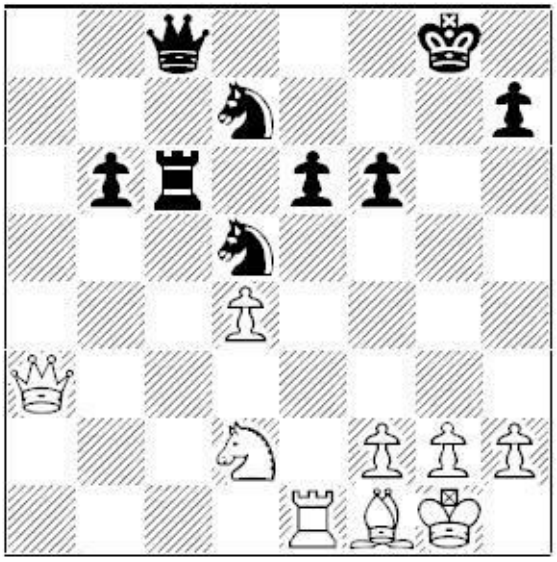
Question: White previously had the favourable imbalance of a massive space advantage, which is nowhere to be seen. Did he lose his advantage?

Answer: Capa cashed in his space advantage for other forms of wealth:

1. White has multiple pawn targets to choose from on b6, e6, f6 and h7.
2. White's isolani on d4 isn't weak, and covers the key c5- and e5-squares.
3. White's remaining bishop rules the light squares and is the best minor piece on the board.
4. Black's king is slightly exposed.

Conclusion: Advantage White.

31 Re1 Qc8 32 Nd2!

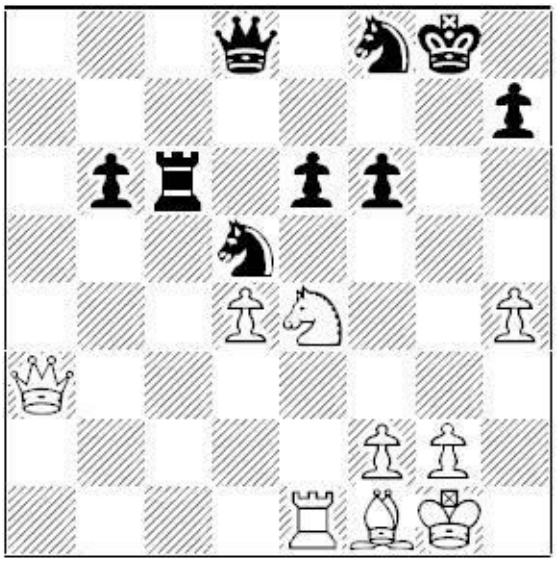


Capa's uncanny positional instinct tells him his f3-knight, though sitting pretty, actually doesn't do much. He takes it out for a stroll, in search of targets in Black's camp.

32 ... Nf8

The fly in a sealed bottle bumps the side and remains there for the remainder of the game. Lasker suggests 32 ... Rc3! 33 Qa1 Nf8 34 Ne4 Rc7 as a superior defence for Black.

33 Ne4 Qd8 34 h4!



chesstouring.com

Question: What is the point of White's last move?

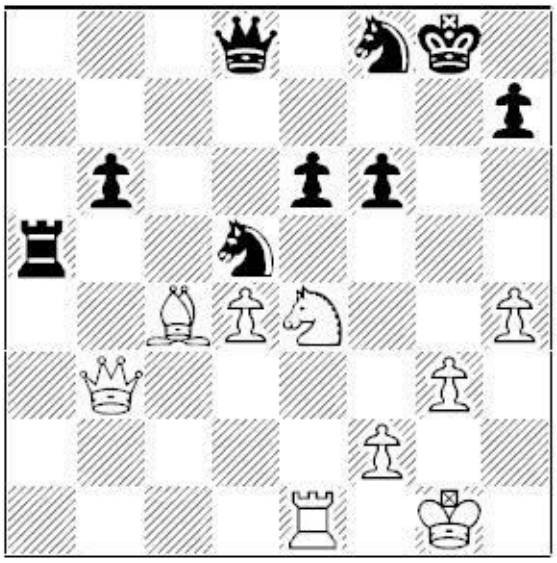
Answer: Besides initiating a hostile gesture in the direction of Black's king, White prevents ... f6-f5, which would be met with Ng5.

34 ... Rc7 35 Qb3 Rg7 36 g3 Ra7 37 Bc4!

White's forces keep a discrete distance from Black's king but dream of smashing in Lasker's wall of opposition. Both white minor pieces are superior to both black knights.

37 ... Ra5

If Black ignores the threat, he gets hit with 37 ... Rc7?? 38 Bxd5 exd5 39 Qxd5+!.



Exercise (planning): The pressure mounts on Black's position. Find a way to increase it.

Answer: Break the blockade.

38 Nc3! Nxc3 39 Qxc3

Now White's bishop rules over Black's gaunt knight with the expressionless eyes.

39 ... Kf7 40 Qe3!

Target: e6.

40 ... Qd6 41 Qe4

41 d5! e5 42 h5 was also possible.

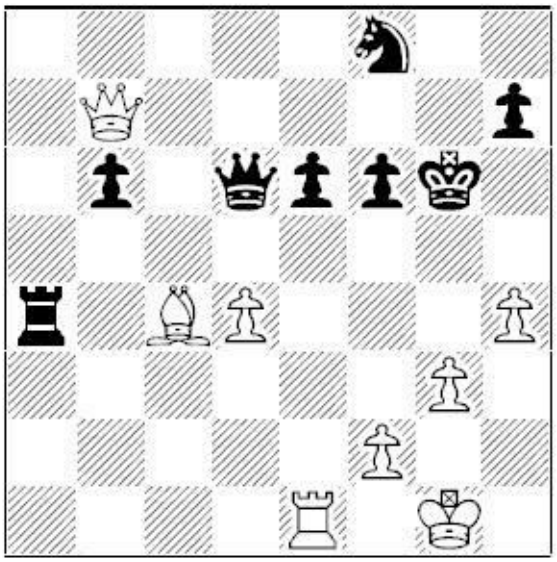
41 ... Ra4?

"Suicide!" writes Lasker, who should have played his rook to a7 to prevent White's next move. Lasker tosses in this careless move, almost as a disjointed afterthought.

42 Qb7+ Kg6

Probably Lasker had intended 42 ... Qe7 and then realized it was unplayable due to 43 Qc6 Rb4 44 Bxe6+! Nxe6 45 d5.

chesstouring.com



Capa gets lazy and misses a combination. Kasparov writes: “Before Alekhine, no one could force Capa to really work! And the latter, naturally, was accustomed to winning with little effort. However, in Buenos Aires 1927 this habit was to cost the Cuban dearly.” Unfortunately this is true. The legend of the infallible chess machine is simply a folktale for the simple-minded. Capa was very human and made mistakes – but fewer of them than anyone else in chess history, in my opinion.

Exercise (combination alert): This is a very tough one. Can you work out an immediate knockout punch which escaped Capa’s notice? Take 15 minutes to try and solve the problem.

43 Qc8?!

A mild case of brain freeze afflicts Capa.

Answer: 43 h5+! Kh6 44 Qf7 Qd8 45 Bd3 Rxd4 46 Rxe6!! wins on the spot.

43 ... Qb4?!

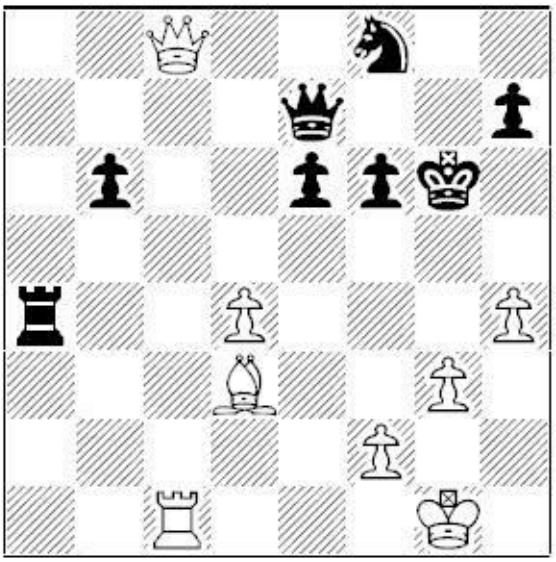
After 43 ... Kh6! 44 Bxe6 Rxd4 White’s advantage wouldn’t have been so easy to convert.

44 Rc1! Qe7?

As in many of his losses in this match, Lasker noticeably tires at the end of the games. 44 ... Ra7 was forced.

45 Bd3+!

chesstouring.com



Making way for the rook to c7.

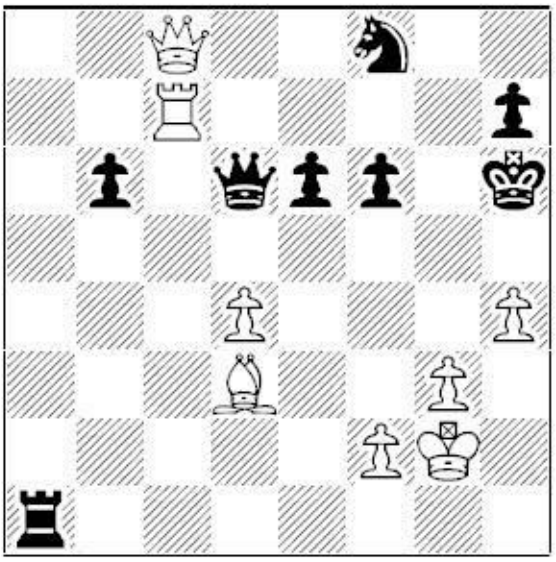
45 ... Kh6

45 ... f5 46 Rc7 Ra1+ (just so Qe8+ won't pick up the stray rook on a4) 47 Kh2 Qd6 48 Qe8+ Kh6 49 Qf7 is curtains.

46 Rc7

The distance between the forces diminishes with each move as Capa's pieces slowly encroach.

46 ... Ra1+ 47 Kg2 Qd6



Exercise (combination alert): It has taken three quarters of forever to break down Lasker's defences. Now we stand on the threshold of the black king's lair. Do we dare enter? White to play and force mate.

Answer: An eye for an eye and a queen for a knight. Forming an alliance with an untrustworthy ally can be worse than fighting alone. Black's sorry knight isn't up to the job of defending h7.

48 Qxf8+! 1-0

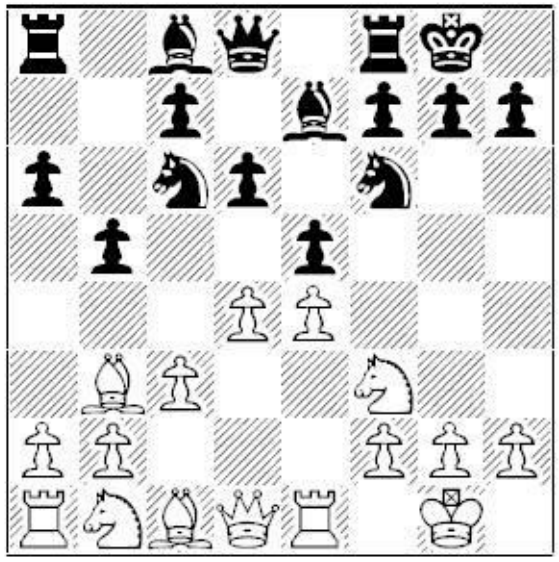
The aged black king, eyes dimmed by time, sees death approaching and regretfully counts up the many sins of his youth from his poor opening.

chesstouring.com

Game 29
J.R.Capablanca-E.Bogoljubow
London 1922
Ruy Lopez

Alekhine played Bogoljubow and Euwe (who he lost to, then beat) as his hoped-for punching bags in title matches, rather than face Capablanca – who was the logical, legitimate challenger – in a rematch.

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 d4



Question: Isn't 9 h3 the normal move?

Answer: Yes, preventing the pin is played far more often than Capa's choice, 9 d4, which he tried five times in his career.

9 ... exd4

Premature. Black had no need to hand White the centre. Pinning immediately is far more logical: 9 ... Bg4 10 Be3 exd4 11 cxd4 Na5 12 Bc2 c5 is approximately equal according to modern theory.

10 cxd4 Bg4 11 Be3

Returning the favour.

Question: How?

Answer: By playing his bishop to e3 too early, White walks into the tempo-gaining ... Na5 and ... Nc4. Best is to ignore Black's "threat" to capture on f3. After 11 Nc3! b4 (11 ... Bxf3?! 12 gxf3 only helps White, who picked up bishop pair, light-square control, strengthened his centre and opened the g-file for a potential future attack) 12 Nd5 Rb8 13 Ba4 Nxd5 14 Bxc6 Nb6 it is advantage White, who dominates the centre and may soon apply pressure down the c-file, G.Kamsky-A.Lenderman, Philadelphia 2006.

11 ... Na5 12 Bc2 Nc4

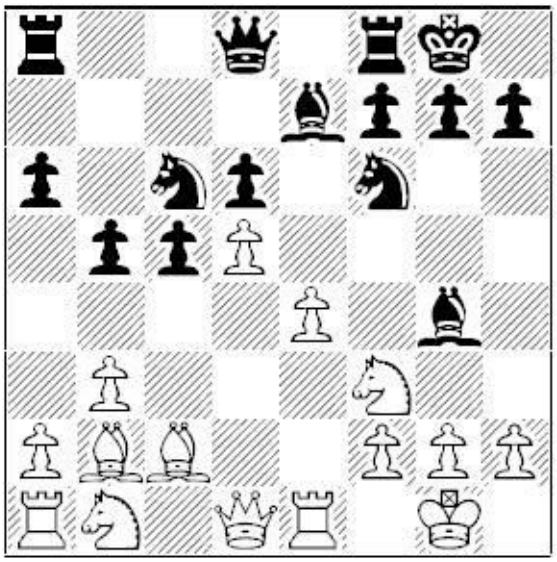
Black can also hold off on ... Nc4 and play the immediate 12 ... c5, E.Sutovsky-G.Kamsky, World Team Championship, Ningbo 2011.

13 Bc1 c5 14 b3 Na5

Or 14 ... Nb6! 15 Nbd2 Nfd7 16 h3 Bh5 17 Bb2 Re8 with a Benoni-like position which is quite okay for Black, V.Kramnik-M.Adams, Dortmund 2005.

15 Bb2 Nc6 16 d5!?

chesstouring.com



Creating two imbalances with a single move:
1. Kingside versus queenside pawn majorities.
2. Capa agrees to give up the bishop pair.

16 ... Nb4 17 Nbd2 Nxc2 18 Qxc2

Bogo emerged from the opening quite well, with a Benoni-like position in which he has access to a few piece trades. I believe it was GM Yasser Seirawan who once told me (right after he beat me in a Benoni!): If Black manages to swap off two pairs of pieces in a Benoni, he stands equal or better.

18 ... Re8 19 Qd3 h6?!

An unnecessary weakening. It was better to begin the fight for e5, starting with 19 ... Nd7.

20 Nf1 Nd7 21 h3

21 N3d2!?, retaining pieces on the board, is how I would play White.

21 ... Bh5!?

I would have chopped on f3.

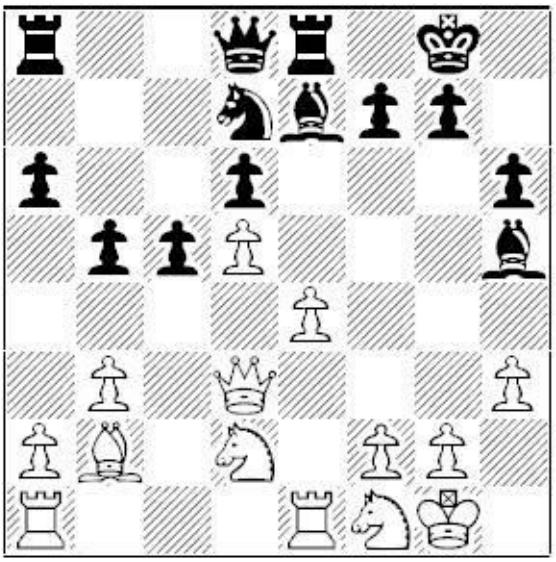
Question: And give up the bishop pair?

Answer: Yes. Black's light-squared bishop soon ends up in the nether regions.

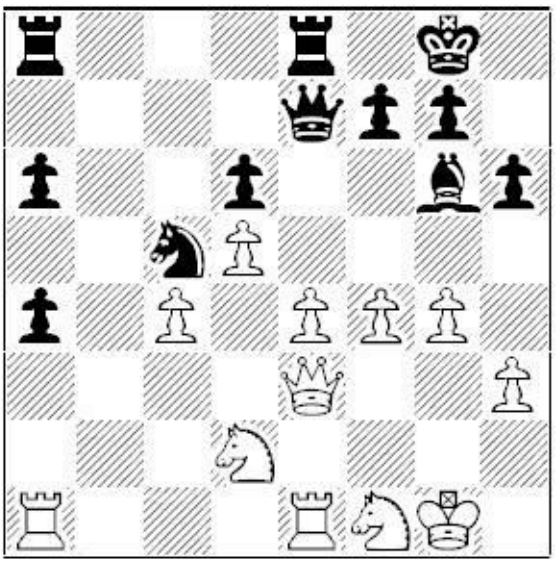
22 N3d2!

Good man, Capa. He wisely takes my advice. White's multipurpose last move does the following:
1. Takes away Black's ... Bxf3 option.
2. Prepares to roll the kingside majority with f2-f4.
3. Fights for c4 in case White later wants to toss in a2-a4.

chesstouring.com



22 ... Bf6 23 Bxf6 Qxf6 24 a4!? c4!
24 ... b4?! gives up control over the c4-square.
25 bxc4 Nc5 26 Qe3 bxa4 27 f4 Qe7 28 g4 Bg6



We reach a deeply unbalanced situation:
1. Black has bishop and knight for two knights.
2. White owns a massive block of central pawns and has the option of pushing on with e4-e5 or f4-f5.
3. Black has doubled, passed and protected a-pawns.
4. Black has possible infiltration ideas down the b-file, and on b2 and b3 later on.
Conclusion: The position looks dynamically balanced but I actually prefer Black.
Exercise (planning): The question is: Should we as White play 29 f5,
burying his bishop but at the cost of handing over the e5-square?
Answer: It's a good deal for White's side.
29 f5!
29 e5 Bd3 allows the bishop to decant on d3.
chesstouring.com
29 ... Bh7
The bishop falls into a fitful sleep on h7 and continues to toss and turn.

Question: Is Black's bishop as buried as you say? At some point he can simply play ... f7-f6, move his king and then play his bishop to g8, when it eventually emerges.

Answer: The question you should ask is: Can Black get away with ... f7-f6? If White ever gets a knight to d4 or f4, it then entrenches itself on e6 like a kidney stone in Black's position.

30 Ng3 Qe5 31 Kg2 Rab8

Eyeing infiltration to b2 and b3.

32 Rab1 f6!?

Allowing a potential nightmare scenario of a white knight on e6. Black should play 32 ... Rb2, when he retains a good position.

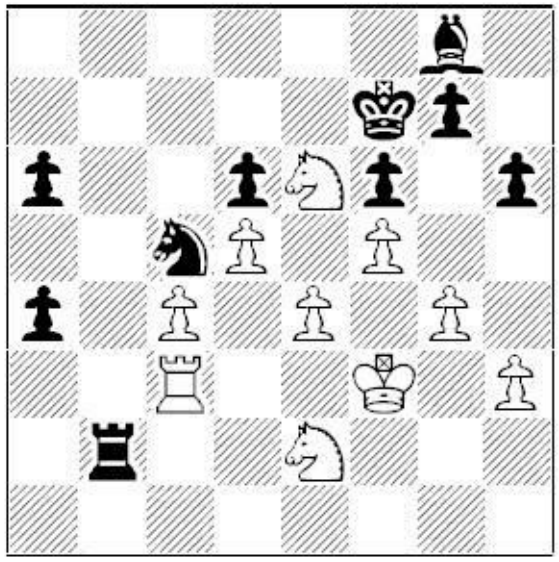
33 Nf3 Rb2+ 34 Rxb2 Qxb2+ 35 Re2 Qb3 36 Nd4! Qxe3!?

Black banks on his passers in the ending. 36 ... Qxc4 37 Ne6 Rc8 38 Nh5 a3 is dead equal according to *Houdini*. Which comes first: Black's passed a-pawn or White's attack? I don't know.

37 Rxe3 Rb8 38 Rc3 Kf7 39 Kf3 Rb2 40 Nge2 Bg8

This poor guy, cloaked in shame for so long on h7, dreams of freedom some day.

41 Ne6



Black must sort through an amalgamation of confusing and conflicting plans. One holds the draw, while the other leads to suffering. The answer remains hidden beneath layers of subterranean truths known only to Capa:

Exercise (critical decision): Which one would you play? a) 41 ... Nxe4, a mini combination, winning a pawn by overloading White's king.

b) 41 ... Nb3, ignoring the combination and go all out to promote his lead, passed a-pawn.

41 ... Nb3?!

The wrong decision swings the advantage to White's side.

Answer: Bogo just barely holds the draw if he grabs the pawn with 41 ... Nxe4! 42 Kxe4 Rxe2+ 43 Kd4 Rd2+ 44 Rd3 Rxd3+ 45 Kxd3, when White' s king will go on to pick up a4, but after 45 ... Bh7 46 Kc3 g6 47 Nd4 gxf5 48 gxf5 Ke7 49 Kb4 Kd7 50 Kxa4 Kc7 51 Ka5 Kb7 52 h4 h5! is zugzwang! White must make way with his king, allowing Black to draw.

chesstouring.com

42 c5!

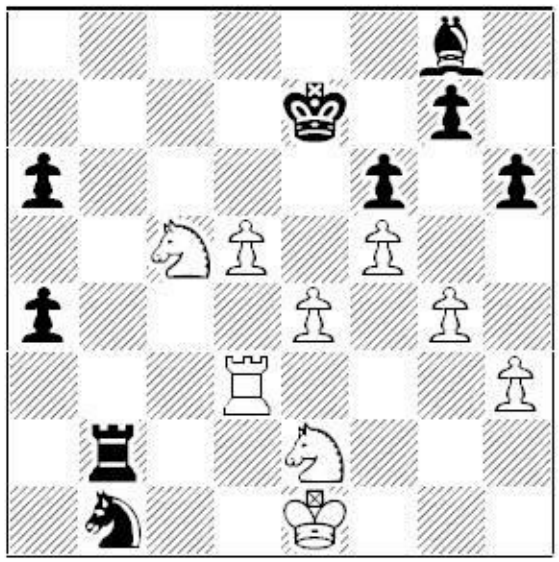
Suddenly, we begin to see the faintest glimmer of counterplay from White's side. Capa forces a passer,

distilled from his own pawn majority, one which proves more potent than Black's on the a-file.

42 ... dxc5 43 Nxc5 Nd2+ 44 Kf2 Ke7 45 Ke1 Nb1!

Bogo takes control over the a3-square.

46 Rd3!

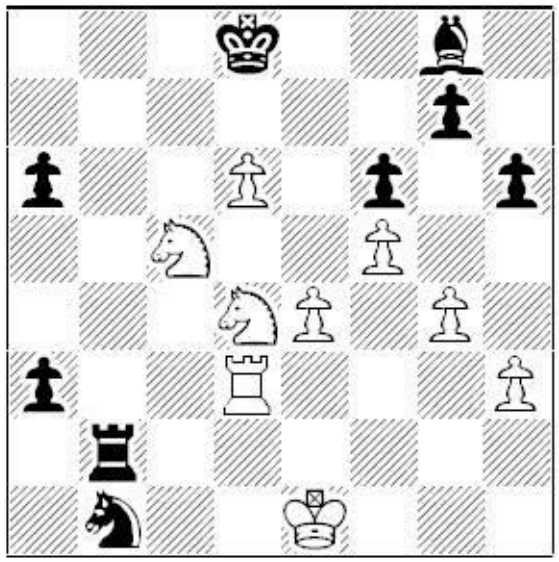


White gets ready to ram his own passer through. Somehow, Capa keeps a stern watch over his opponent's deeply passed a-pawn, like a cold stepfather, who treats his new son with fairness but never warmth.

46 ... a3?

The losing move. Black wants to hold on to everything, but keep in mind, everything is expensive. His move is too slow. He has to cough up his precious passer by stalling White's d-pawn with 46 ... Kd6! 47 Nxa4, although Black is the one fighting for the draw.

47 d6+ Kd8 48 Nd4!



The knight pair's aperture of influence grows at an alarming rate, with the devastating threat of a check on c6, followed by d6-d7 and promote.

chesstouring.com

It is now clear that White is completely winning. But when Capa initiated this entire queening race on his 41st move it looked to any sane person that Black was the one who was faster.

Question: How did Capablanca know that Black's surging,
passed a-pawn was more of a gesture than an actual menace?

Answer: I don't have a clue. Capa just knew though his wordless, logic-defying intuition, which infallibly pushed him toward the correct path. This is why we study his games. We also desire access to this elusive power of chess omniscience. If not in this life then, maybe if we are lucky, the next!

48 ... Rb6

A forehead-smacking moment for Bogoljubow who must have realized at this point that he was dead lost. Black's rook, whose blood suddenly turns to milk, makes a hasty apology and leaves to cover c6. Suddenly all the energy evaporates from Black's pieces, which performed so creditably in days past. If 48 ... a2 49 Nc6+ Kc8 50 d7+ and the pawn queens with check.

49 Nde6+

Did I mention that White had a secondary threat of a knight check on e6?

49 ... Bxe6 50 fxe6 Rb8 51 e7+ Ke8 52 Nxa6 1-0

Black's king emerges from the business end of the meat grinder in the line 52 ... a2 53 Nxb8! a1Q 54 d7+ Kxe7 55 d8Q+, mating in a few moves.

Game 30

J.R.Capablanca-K.Treybal

Karlsbad 1929

Semi-Slav Defence

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 e6 4 Bg5!?

A little weird, but the move can transpose to main lines.

4 ... Be7

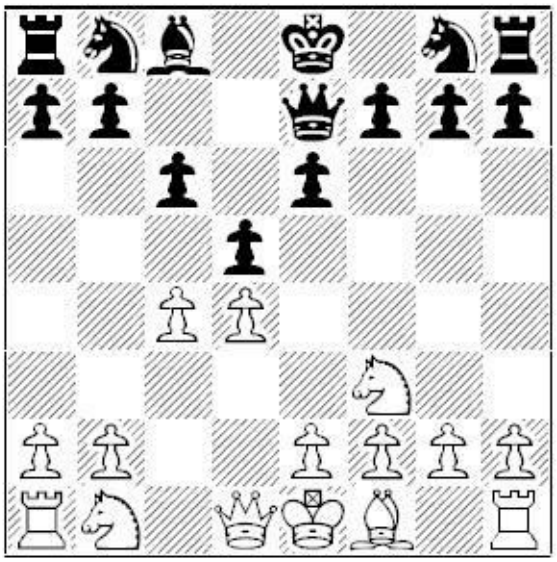
The most combative way to deal with White's last move is to make him gambit a pawn by 4 ... f6!? 5 Bf4 dxc4 6 e4 b5, A.Graf-E.Sveshnikov, Alushta 1994, when the position resembles all those fashionable gambits which arise out of the Semi-Slav these days.

Question: You said Black can transpose to main lines.
How would he accomplish it?

Answer: Simply play 4 ... Nf6 5 e3 Nbd7 6 Nc3 and now you have a choice of the Cambridge Springs or QGD Orthodox on the next move with 6 ... Qa5 or 6 ... Be7.

5 Bxe7 Qxe7

chesstouring.com



Question: Hasn't this swap helped Black who is more cramped?

Answer: It helps Black in that way, but also keep in mind the dark-squared bishop was Black's good bishop.

6 Nbd2

Question: Why did White play his knight to
a passive square rather than play 6 e3?

Answer: There are two possibilities:

1. I assume Capa wasn't in the mood to speculate with a pawn sac in the line 6 ... dxc4 7 Bxc4 Qb4+ 8 Nbd2 Qxb2, although White has a massive development lead for the pawn and central space, more than enough compensation.

2. Perhaps Capa wanted to play for e2-e4 in one go next move.

6 ... f5

Not such a wonderful idea.

Question: Why not? Black plays in Stonewall Dutch
style and also prevents e2-e4.

Answer: Black plays in lousy Stonewall Dutch style! He is missing his good, dark-squared bishop, essential in a Stonewall Dutch.

Question: I don't think that is correct. I have seen White in Stonewalls play the manoeuvre b2-b3 and Ba3 swapping off the dark-squared bishops.

Answer: Condemned by your own confession! You just gave the main reason why the Stonewall Dutch isn't so popular for Black.

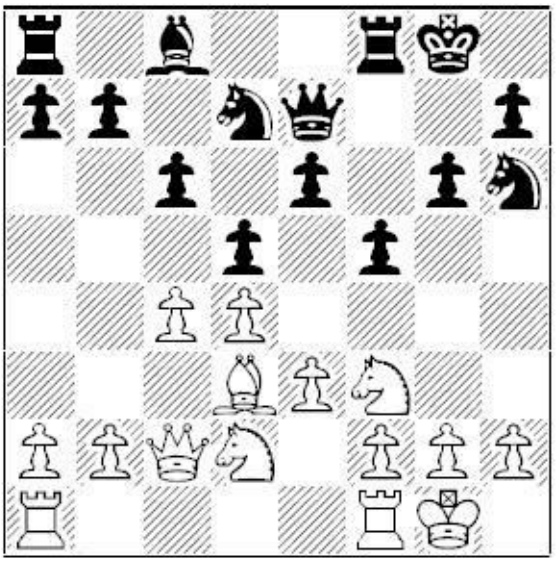
7 e3 Nd7 8 Bd3 Nh6

Question: Why did Black develop his knight to the rim?

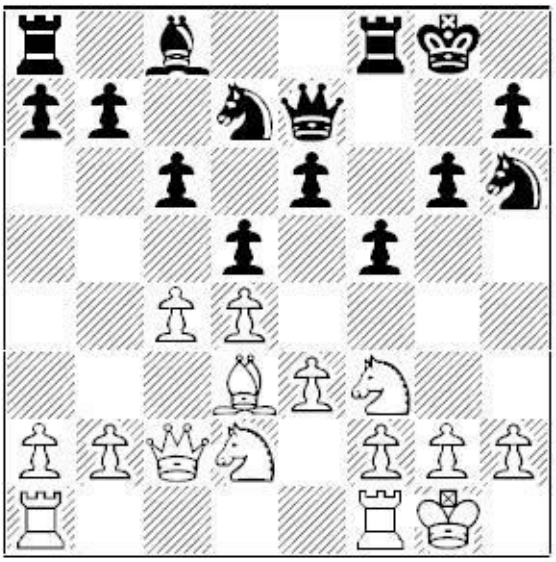
Answer: His idea may be to challenge for the e5-square with a future ... Nf7.

9 0-0 0-0 10 Qc2 g6?!

chesstouring.com

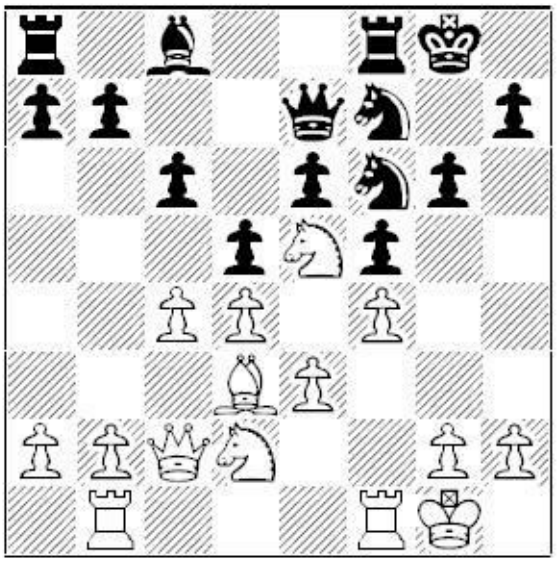


Thank goodness. The opening is officially over and I can hand Black the "?!" he so richly deserves.
Question: Let me guess: More pawns on the
wrong colour of his remaining bishop?
Answer: Correct. Also, the move looks purposeless.



Exercise (planning): Come up with a plan for White.
Answer: Expand on the queenside.
11 Rab1! Nf6
He probably should play ... Nf7 first to keep White's knight out of e5.
Question: Can Black free himself simply by playing for ... e6-e5?
Answer: As long as tension remains in the centre, this plan would leave Black with an isolani in a listless position. For example: 11 ... e5?! 12 dxe5 Nxe5 13 cxd5 cxd5 14 Nxe5 Qxe5 looks like no fun at all for Black, who just handed over the d4-square to his opponent and must also nurse a weak isolani on d5.
12 Ne5 Nf7 13 f4!

chesstouring.com



13 ... Bd7

Question: Why not plug up the hole on e5?

Answer: In this case Black risks "good knight versus bad bishop" after 13 ... Nxe5 14 dxe5 Ne4 15 Nb3! Bd7 16 Bxe4 fxe4 17 c5.

14 Ndf3 Rfd8 15 b4 Be8 16 Rfc1 a6 17 Qf2 Nxe5 18 Nxe5 Nd7

Of course, the moment Black plays his knight to e4, White chops it, getting a dream good knight versus bad bishop position.

19 Nf3!

Principle: The side with space should avoid swaps.

19 ... Rdc8 20 c5

Principle: Fix your pawns on the opposite colour of your remaining bishop. The move also grabs more territory.

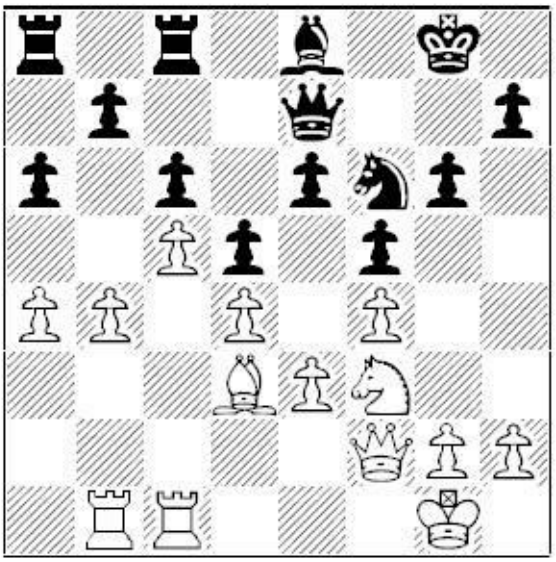
20 ... Nf6 21 a4

White accrued the following imbalances in his favour:

1. A giant space advantage on the queenside. White can play for a b4-b5 break any time he likes.
2. Black has a bad bishop.
3. White may be able to use the e5-square for his knight, but if Black tries the same with e4 for his knight, White immediately takes it, leading to the dreaded good knight versus bad bishop scenario.
4. White also has the potential to expand on the kingside.
5. Black can only wait.

Conclusion: Black has landed in a dire strategic situation.

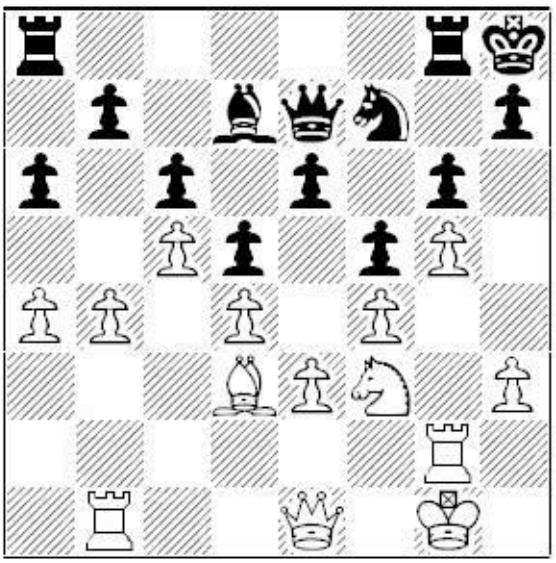
chesstouring.com



21 ... Ng4 22 Qe1 Nh6 23 h3!

It's what we all seek in life: More! In this case, more space on the kingside.

23 ... Nf7 24 g4 Bd7 25 Rc2 Kh8 26 Rg2 Rg8 27 g5!



Question: Why close the kingside? Shouldn't White play for an attack by preparing h3-h4-h5 instead?

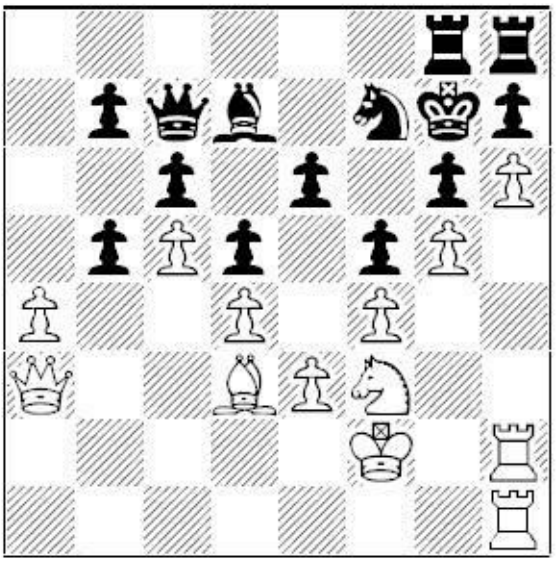
Answer: The kingside is Black's only potential realm of counterplay. White shuts out all ... g6-g5 ideas. Also, the kingside is not quite closed yet. White can still push his h-pawn.

27 ... Qd8 28 h4 Kg7 29 h5 Rh8 30 Rh2 Qc7 31 Qc3 Qd8 32 Kf2 Qc7 33 Rbh1 Rag8 34 Qa1 Rb8 35 Qa3 Rbg8 36 b5!

Perfectly timed.

36 ... axb5 37 h6+!

chesstouring.com



Also perfect timing. White closes the kingside.

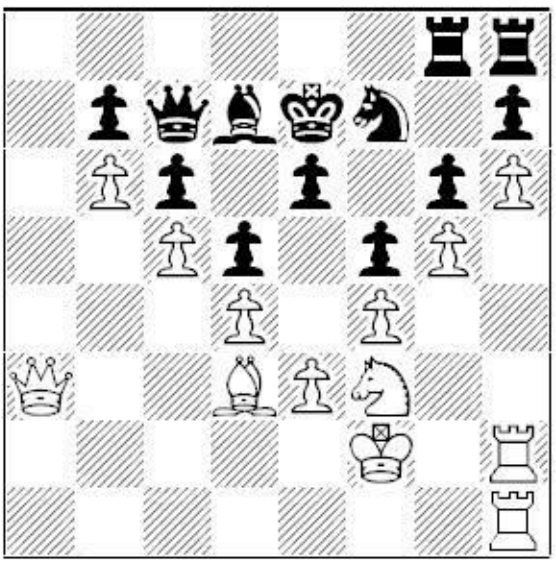
Question: Shouldn't the pawn marinate longer on h5?

Answer: No. By playing the move now, Capa temporarily buries Black's rooks and sends Black's king to the tactically unfavourable f8-square.

37 ... Kf8 38 axb5 Ke7

Black's king hoped to hide in a pocket of shadow on f8, but even here he wasn't safe. Note that 38 ... cxb5?? drops a piece to 39 c6+, when Black's king finds himself the unhappy recipient of anguish.

39 b6



White's vast kingdom spans from b6 to h6.

39 ... Qb8 40 Ra1 Rc8

Attempting to challenge White on the open file would be futile, since he sidesteps with 40 ... Qa8 41 Qc3 Qb8 42 Rhh1, followed by tripling on the a-file as in the game continuation.

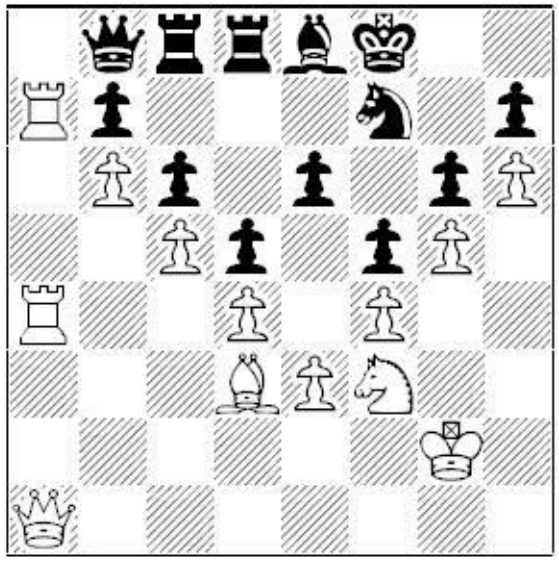
41 Qb4 Rhd8 42 Ra7 Kf8 43 Rh1 Be8 44 Rha1 Kg8 45 R1a4 Kf8 46 Qa3 Kg8 47 Kg3 Bd7 48 Kh4 Kh8 49 Qa1 Kg8 50 Kg3 Kf8 51 Kg2

chesstouring.com

Capa takes his sweet time, but keep in mind: My doctors always keep me waiting an eternity in the reception area before they see me. Perhaps they learned this in medical school as a method of

demonstrating their power over their patients?

51 ... Be8



Black feverishly does nothing with a fury, hoping his firewall holds. Deliberate inaction is in its strange way an action. Despite all of White's obvious strategic pluses, Black still cherishes dreams of a fortress draw. We all love to lie to ourselves sweetly. Remember, a fortress is only as strong as the defenders inside.

Exercise (planning): How can White make progress?

Answer: Transfer his knight to target b7.

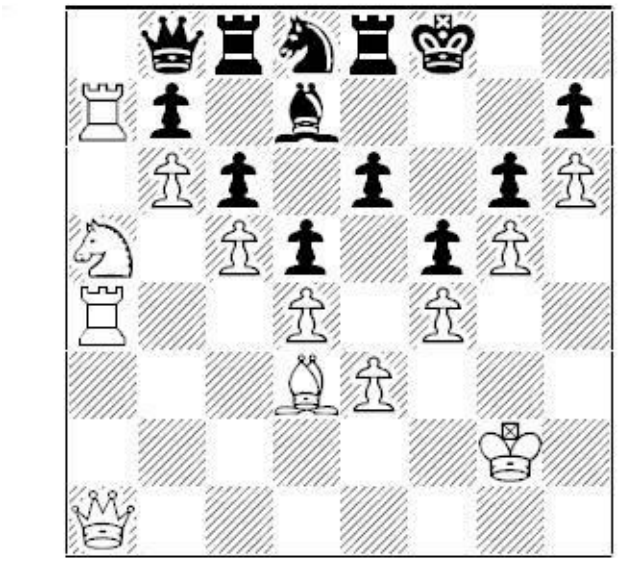
52 Nd2! Bd7

Question: I understand that Black rushes to protect b7, but isn't his last move artificial? Why not simply protect it with the rook on d7, followed by ... Nd8 with a dead draw?

Answer: Well, there is good news and there is bad news concerning your plan. The good news is that your plan does indeed cover b7 adequately. The bad news is it loses control over a8 and you just dropped poor Treybal's queen! When planning, you must unify the abstract with the real. After 52 ... Rd7?? 53 Ra8! White's rook woos Black's queen like an insistent suitor, who is unwilling to take "No!" for an answer.

53 Nb3 Re8 54 Na5 Nd8

chesstouring.com



Exercise (combination alert): Now that is what I call a space advantage! Find a shot and Black collapses.

Answer: The end goal of sacrifice isn't what we give up as much as what we hope to gain. Suddenly Black's grip on b7 grows tenuous.

55 Ba6!

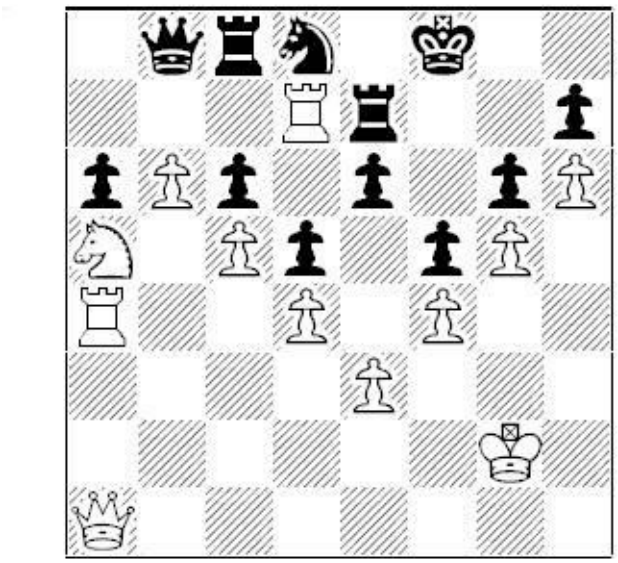
The boorish bishop elbows his way in, oblivious to Black's cry of protest.

55 ... bxa6 56 Rxd7

The fallen white bishop's comrades rise up to take his place.

56 ... Re7

Or 56 ... Kg8 57 Nb3, when Black's a6-pawn drops and with it the game.



Exercise (combination alert): You have another shot which wins more material.

Answer: Extend the scope of your generosity and destroy the defender of c6. The knight finds himself taken to the "return" window at the store.

chesstouring.com

57 Rxd8+! Rxd8 58 Nxc6 1-0

And then mega-fork!

Game 31
J.R.Capablanca-V.Menchik
Moscow 1935
King's Indian Defence

Today, there are many female GMs. At the time this game was played, Vera Menchik was an anomaly: A woman who played at international level. Her male colleagues didn't all take kindly to her entry in what was traditionally an all-male sport. The story goes of Viennese master Albert Becker, who vehemently objected to Menchik's entry to the Karlsbad tournament of 1929. He ridiculed her by declaring that any man who loses to her would be a lifetime member of the "Vera Menchik Club". Guess who the very first member was? You guessed it. The illustrious Becker learned the fine art of humility when he found himself in the unhappy role of Menchik's first victim in the tournament.

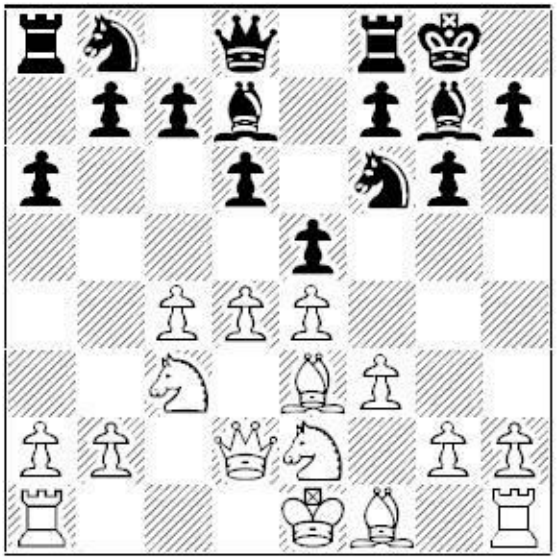
Sadly, Menchik's life was cut short when she was killed in a V-1 rocket bombing raid in England during WWII.

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 f3

The King's Indian Sämisch was a rare guest in 1935.

5 ... 0-0 6 Be3 e5 7 Nge2 a6!? 8 Qd2 Bd7?

As you may suspect, 1935 wasn't exactly halcyon days for KID theory!



I haven't quite decided if curiosity is a vice or a virtue. It grows painfully obvious that Menchik was simply experimenting in the opening and didn't have a clue how to actually play it!

Exercise (planning): Black's last move is a strategic error. How do we punish it?

Answer: Cut off ... Nc6 and close the game.

9 d5! Ne8 10 g4!

An obvious move if played today. Capa discourages ... f7-f5 and annexes yet more territory. It looks as if White is a modern GM playing an amateur who bought books on the KID but didn't bother reading them! Every black piece looks misplaced.

Do any of you own Bronstein's tournament book of the Zürich 1953 Candidates tournament? Take a look at the King's Indians in that. Even the world's top players handled them horribly by modern comparison. For some reason, they took forever to play the key ... f7-f5 break. This game, played in 1935

tells a tale: Capa plays as if the year were 2012. His opponent plays the KID like someone would in well, 1935!

10 ... h6?

Black had to try 10 ... f5, come what may.

11 h4

Question: What is wrong with taking the free pawn on h6?

Answer: I was afraid you were going to ask. You must analyze Black's logical response: 11 Bxh6?? Qh4+ wins a piece.

11 ... Kh7 12 Ng3!

That is the end of the ... f7-f5 break. Black is strategically lost since White has a free hand on both wings.

12 ... c5 13 Bd3 Qa5!?

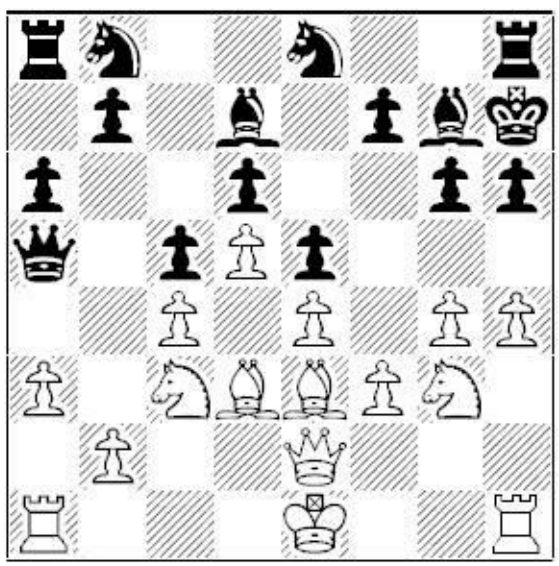
I have a feeling Menchik would have done much better sticking with the QGD. Maybe the time has arrived for the desperado 13 ... b5!?, enticing White into a very favourable Benko Gambit – but please remember: The Benko had yet to be invented!

14 Qe2 Rh8

Question: I don't get it. Could you explain?

Answer: You may be searching for meaning and secret encryption where there is none. Black doesn't have anything constructive to do and simply plays a very odd-looking waiting move. Sometimes an odd move remains just what it is, an odd move.

15 a3!



15 ... Qd8

Frederick the Great once proclaimed: "He who defends everything, defends nothing." One wonders why she played ... Qa5 earlier. Day after dreary day, my rude dogs, Al and Kahless, bark frantically at our good natured mailman, Russ, as he delivers our mail. The moral: Even watchdogs, dutiful as they are, can overdo it! Black, now hiding under her bed and locked into a bunker mentality, perceives threats everywhere – just like my dogs!

16 b4!

Capa gains space on both wings.

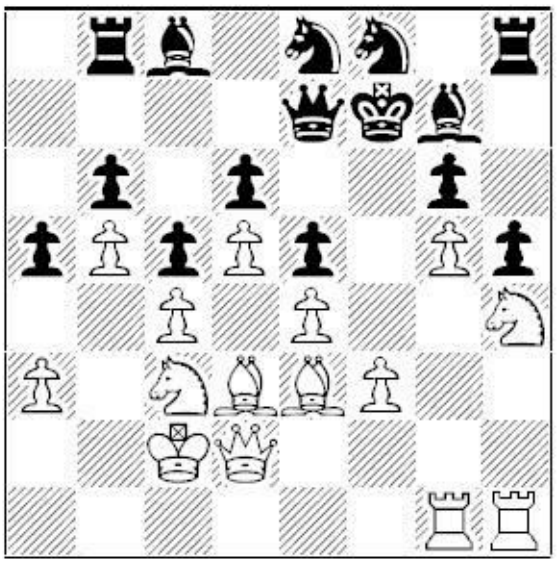
chesstouring.com

16 ... b6 17 Qb2 Bc8 18 Ke2

Capa is intent on going after Menchik's king. He can also play exclusively on the queenside by

inducing the lock-up of the kingside first with 18 h5 g5 19 0-0, and only then turn his attention to queenside infiltration.

18 ... Nd7 19 Rag1 Rb8



Exercise (planning/critical decision): Sometimes it is confusing to have many good options. White decides to go after his opponent's king. Come up with a plan to do so.

Answer: Step 1: Close the queenside.

20 b5!

Question: Isn't closing the queenside a strategic error?

Answer: Capa's brilliant strategic decision is just the opposite. It becomes all but clear that the kingside is the canvas of Capa's desires. By closing the queenside he eradicates the possibility of sudden queenside distractions while he is attacking on the other wing.

20 ... a5

Question: Why must Black comply?

Answer: No choice, otherwise White takes on a6 and begins to attack on the queenside.

Step 2: Before launching an attack, transfer the king to the now closed queenside.

21 Kd1

Question: Isn't White putzing around with his king?

Answer: When in total control, the longer road is often the better way to travel. Before commencing with the kingside attack, Capa brings his king over to the safety of the now closed queenside.

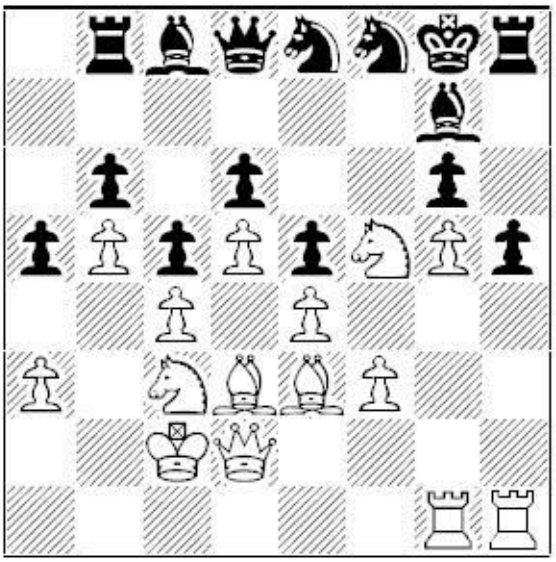
21 ... Kg8 22 Qd2 Nf8 23 Kc2 f6?!

This gives White a contact point. She should do nothing and then continue with that plan. In that case, White would probably make preparations for the similar g4-g5 and then f3-f4, planning to pry open the f-file.

24 g5! fxg5 25 hxg5 h5 26 Nf5!

The appetizer before the feast. The pseudo sac marks the beginning preparations for the coming assault and the final moments of peace experienced by Black's king.

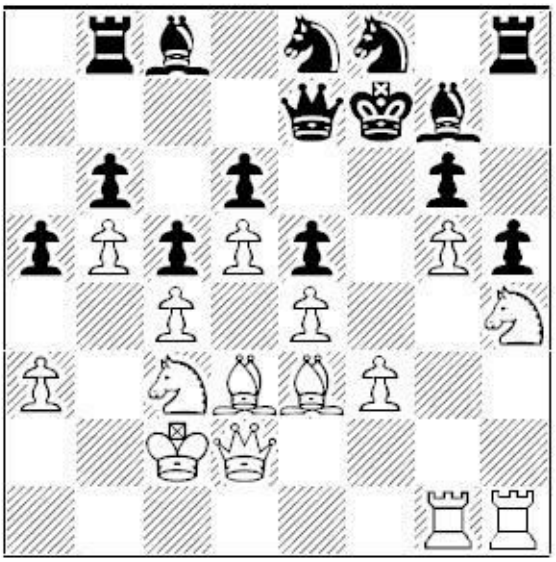
chesstouring.com



26 ... Kf7

26 ... gxf5? is even worse since 27 exf5 gives White a monstrous attack, as well as opening the e4-square for White's pieces.

27 Nh4 Qe7



Exercise (planning): Formulate a plan for White to make progress.

Answer: Prepare the f3-f4 break. The queen gently brushes f4 like a sweetheart's fingertips on her lover's face. Black tries desperately to hurry her king over to the queenside but the plan takes too much time.

28 Qh2! Nc7?

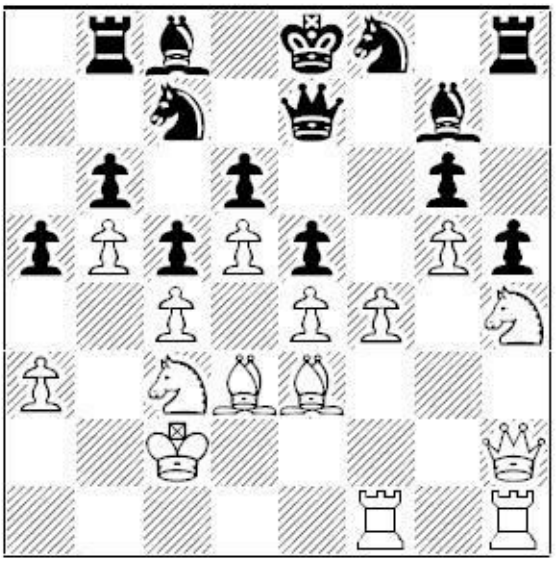
Black was unaware that d6 needed help. 28 ... Rb7 was better, keeping the knight where it was on e8.

29 Rf1 Ke8

Each step the king takes proves more difficult than the last. The king was actually safer on g8.

30 f4

chesstouring.com

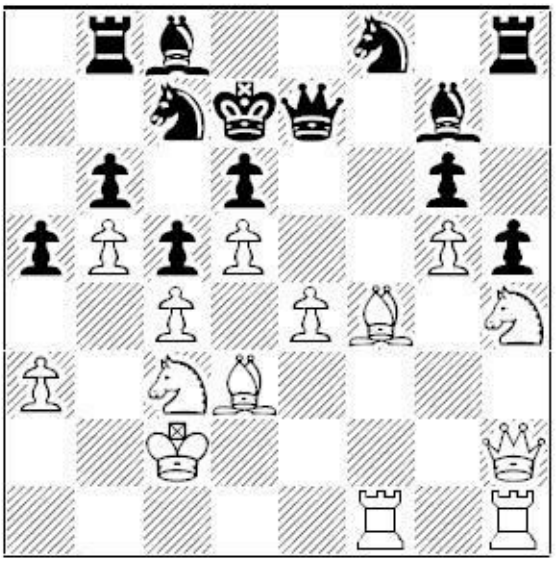


Imbalance number one (space) gives rise to imbalance number two: an attack. The break arrives with crushing force, as Capa's moves radiate an aura of inevitable encroachment.

30 ... exf4

30 ... Kd8 31 f5 is also crushing for White.

31 Bxf4 Kd7



Black accrued many strategic crimes this game. The time has come for White to extract justice.

Exercise (combination alert): Black's king/queen duo turn out to

be clumsy dance partners and continually step on each other's big feet. White has a killing shot. Use the force, Luke: Do you see it?

Answer: The swarm of locusts feed through a wheat field.

32 Bxd6! 1-0

After 32 ... Qxd6 33 Rf7+ the hammer comes down on the walnut.

This game, which I almost tossed into the *Attack* chapter, shows just how far ahead strategically Capa was for his time. No wonder they all thought the King's Indian was unsound for Black in those days.

chesstouring.com

Chapter Four
Capa on Accumulating Advantages

This chapter (and perhaps the entire book!) is all about the art of strategic build-up. British GM George Thomas lamented that he always knew exactly how Capablanca would beat him, but there was nothing he could do about it! Capa plays the role of the master assassin who subdues his targets through slow poison. Imperceptibly, his position grew better and better by tiny increments, until his confused opponents realized they were busted, but, like Thomas, had no idea how they got there! The games in this chapter resemble one of those Salvador Dali paintings, where Capa's forces take on a hyper-reality, while his unfortunate opponent's forces slowly diminish, finally melting into dissolution.

Game 32
J.R.Capablanca-A.Burn
San Sebastian 1911
Ruy Lopez

For the younger readers who may be thinking Capablanca clobbered some unknown amateur, here is a little biographical information about English GM Amos Burn.

Burn learned chess at the very late age of 16, taking lessons from future world champion Wilhelm Steinitz. He rapidly improved to become one of the best players of the late 19th century. Nimzowitsch singled Burn out as one of the six best defensive players of the day in his hypermodern bible: *New Testament: The Praxis of My System*.

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 d3

Capa dominated in blocked positions where his positional insight shined.

5 ... d6

Question: Is there a way for Black to exploit White's rather slow last move?

Answer: Black would do well to enter a ... Bc5 formation where White's d2-d3 costs him a tempo, since in that line White normally achieves d2-d4 in one shot. An example: 5 ... b5 6 Bb3 Bc5! 7 0-0 (or 7 Nxe5 Nxe5 8 d4 Bxd4 9 Qxd4 d6 and the nasty threat of the Noah's Ark trap ... c7-c5-c4 gives Black equal chances at a minimum) 7 ... d6 8 c3 h6 9 a4 Rb8 10 d4 Bb6 and Black equalized since White took two moves to achieve d4, P.Leko-V.Kramnik, 8th matchgame, Miskolc (rapid) 2007.

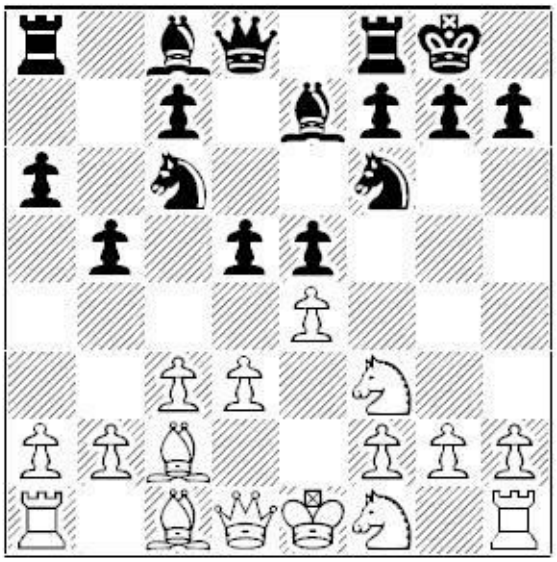
6 c3 Be7 7 Nbd2 0-0 8 Nf1 b5 9 Bc2

Question: Why not play to the more active b3-square?

Answer: He gets chased away with ... Na5, followed by ... c7-c5, which only helps Black.

9 ... d5!

chesstouring.com



White played too passively for an advantage. Black's last move takes full advantage by achieving the Marshall Gambit break, but without a pawn sac.

10 Qe2 dxe4

Inaccurate. Release of central tension helps White. Black stands well after 10 ... Be6.

11 dxe4 Bc5?!

This turns out to be a superficial move since Black gets stuck in an annoying pin on g5.

12 Bg5 Be6 13 Ne3 Re8

As awful as it looks, I would have chopped on e3 and suffered in silence.

Question: And hand over the bishop pair?

Answer: White's e3-knight is too powerful to leave on the board. Admittedly, Black's position still looks worse after 13 ... Bxe3 14 Qxe3 h6 15 Bh4 Qe7.

14 0-0

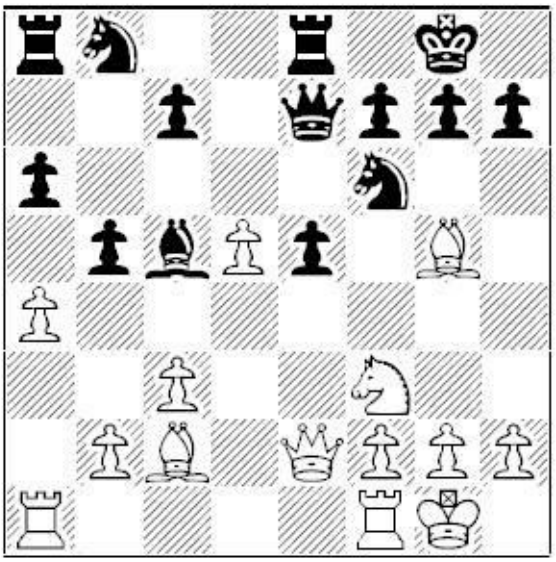
14 Rd1 Qe7 15 Nd5 Bxd5 16 Rxd5 Bd6 17 0-0 h6 18 Bxf6 Qxf6 would also be better for White, whose light-squared bishop proves superior to his counterpart.

14 ... Qe7?

Black missed his last opportunity to fork over the bishop pair with 14 ... Bxe3 and minimize the damage.

15 Nd5! Bxd5 16 exd5 Nb8 17 a4!

chesstouring.com



Principle: Issue a challenge when leading in development.

Question: What about 17 d6!, playing for tricks on h7/a8 with Bxf6 and Qe4?

Answer: The material-loving computers like your move but I actually prefer to play for the initiative and a bind the way Capa did in the game, rather than sell our good position cheaply for a little material. I suppose in the end, both moves are strong and which one you pick is a matter of style.

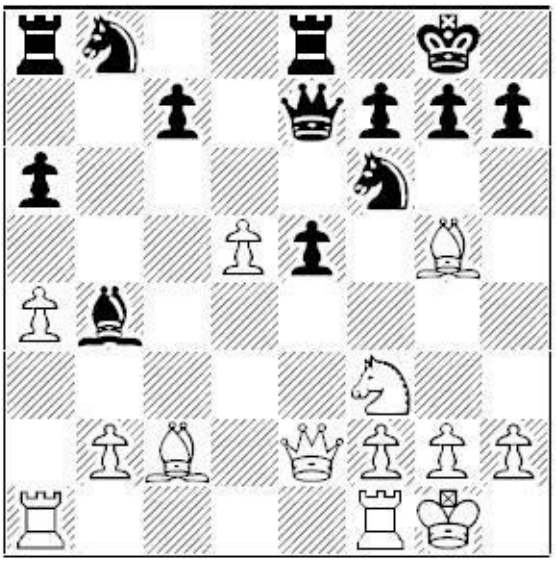
17 ... b4

Question: Why not 17 ... Nbd7? The b5-pawn isn't really hanging because White's b2 also hangs at the end to ... Rb8.

Answer: Not if White tosses in 18 b4! Ba7 19 axb5. White wins a pawn since b2 is no longer loose.

18 cxb4 Bxb4?!

Does a good deed in the present eradicate a past crime? Black should cut his losses with 18 ... Bd6.



Exercise (combination alert): Look for a double attack trick which wins a pawn for White.

chesstouring.com

Answer: Destroy the defender of e4.

19 Bxf6! Qxf6

Then double attack.

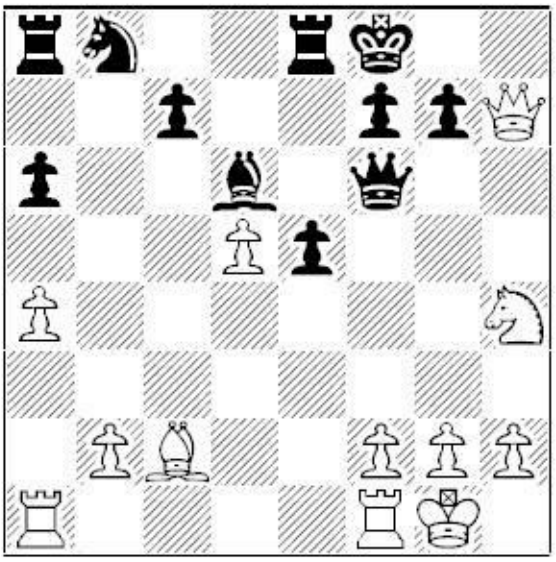
20 Qe4!

The fickle queen blows kisses to both the bishop on b4 and the h7-pawn.

20 ... Bd6 21 Qxh7+

Black is fortunate his rook isn't still on f8.

21 ... Kf8 22 Nh4!



A silent glare may be more disconcerting than an angry response. Nf5 hovers over Black, as the vulture looks forward to its next meal.

22 ... Qh6!

Believe it or not, beggaring the pawn structure is Black's most tenacious defensive path. He has little choice but to enter a hideous ending, which proves too difficult, even for a player of Burn's defensive prowess. Alternative roads are littered with dead ends:

a) 22 ... g6?? loses on the spot to 23 Bxg6!.

b) 22 ... Nd7? also fails to help: 23 Qh8+ Ke7 24 Nf5+ Kd8 25 Qxg7 and White picks off another pawn.

23 Qxh6 gxh6 24 Nf5

Total domination of the light squares.

24 ... h5 25 Bd1

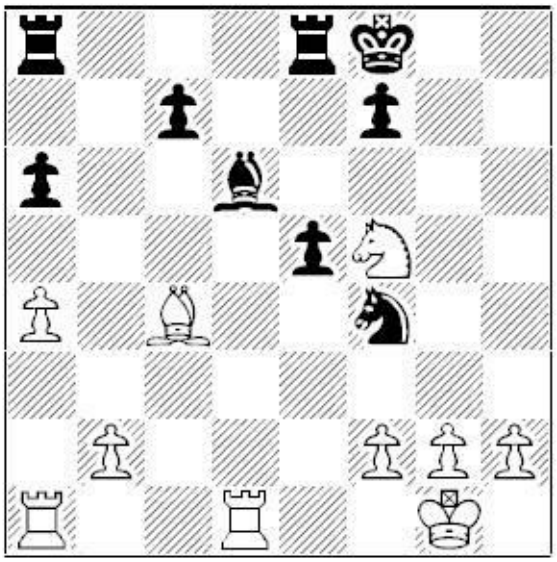
There goes pawn number two, but this one is only temporary. Keep in mind that Capa is playing a strong GM, yet brushes him aside with soft, fluid moves which look deceptively easy to find. The beautiful illusion of his games is that the rest of us, life's ordinary, dare to believe that we too can play this way.

25 ... Nd7 26 Bxh5 Nf6

Black regains one of the lost pawns.

27 Be2 Nxd5 28 Rfd1 Nf4 29 Bc4

chesstouring.com



Let's put our case together and prove Black is busted by collecting the evidence:

1. White is a pawn up.

2. Black has three pawn islands to two, with two queenside isolanis. White, on the other hand, must worry about a target b-pawn on the open file, whose defence may turn into a drag on momentum.

3. We have opposite-coloured bishops, generally favouring the pawn-down side, but not in this case, since White's bishop performs far better.

4. White has a powerfully posted knight in the hole on f5.

5. White has a connected, passed h-pawn.

6. White dominates on light squares.

Conclusion: A lost ending for Black who must deal with multiple positional woes.

29 ... Red8 30 h4!

See number five on the list!

30 ... a5 31 g3 Ne6!?

Question: Why did Black avoid 31 ... Nh5, rather than allow White to damage his pawns further?

Answer: Burn was busted in either case and runs empty on viable defensive plans. Black reasons/gambles: If White's bishop goes off the board, then it becomes harder to defend b2.

32 Bxe6

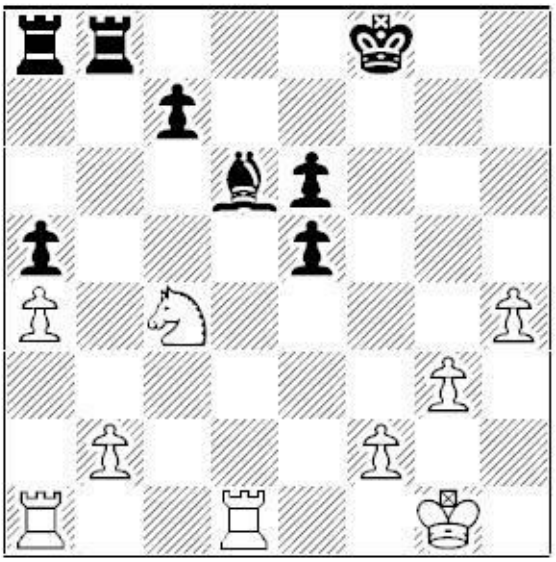
White eagerly agrees to a separation of church and state, giving up bishop for knight plus damage to structure.

32 ... fxe6

He ejects White's powerfully posted knight, only to send it to c4, another power square.

33 Ne3 Rdb8 34 Nc4

chesstouring.com



A new situation arises:
1. Good knight versus hobbled bishop.
2. Four isolanis burden Black.
3. White's lone target on b2 is defended.
4. White increased his passed pawn count to two: Both h- and g-pawns.

34 ... Ke7 35 Rac1 Ra7

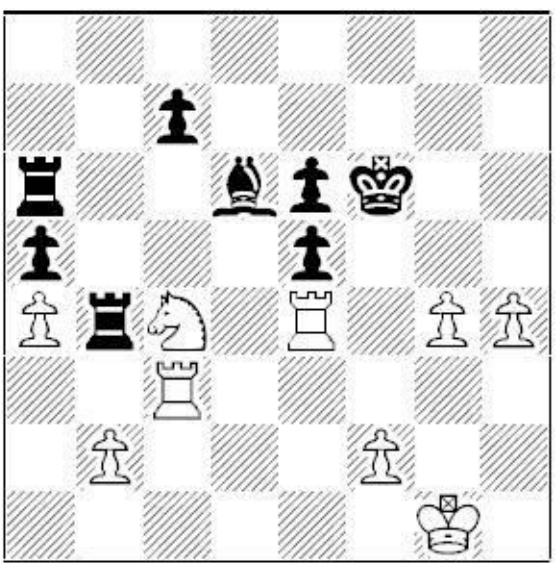
Question: Doesn't 35 ... Rb4 regain a pawn?

Answer: It doesn't. After 36 Nxd6 cxd6 37 Rc7+ Kf6 38 Rxd6 Rxa4 39 Rb6 White wins a double rook ending.

36 Re1 Kf6 37 Re4 Rb4 38 g4! Ra6

I am so glad you didn't ask why Black didn't go for 38 ... Rxa4?? 39 Nxd6.

39 Rc3!



Capa played flawless chess in controlled, strategically won situations. The rook heads for its optimal post on f3.

chesstouring.com

39 ... Bc5 40 Rf3+ Kg7 41 b3

How maddening for Burn. Capa slickly secures his b- and a-pawns. Meanwhile, those two connected

passers on the kingside prepare to roll. As usual, Capa's play strikes you as almost too easy, the way he patches together unrelated geometric patterns into a seamless whole. Conversely, the disjointed play of his unfortunate opponents rarely fails to jar us!

41 ... Bd4 42 Kg2 Ra8 43 g5 Ra6

The normally defensively inventive Burn admits he is out of ideas. He can't even play 43 ... Rab8? since a5 hangs, while b3 remains protected.

44 h5 Rxc4!?

In an expansive gesture of creative abandon, Burn strikes with the flat of his sword. It has been my experience that a little freak-out before resigning soothes the spirit.

45 bxc4 Rc6 46 g6 1-0

Game 33

J.R.Capablanca-A.Alekhine

Exhibition game, St Petersburg 1913

Semi-Slav Defence

Mozart versus Beethoven. This is the second match up between the great rivals where Capa capitalized on Alekhine's still immature positional skills.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 e3 Nf6

3 ... Bf5 is also quite playable with this move order.

4 Nf3 e6 5 Nbd2

Question: Why develop to d2 rather than to c3?

Answer: Actually, playing to d2 is quite fashionable today. GM Boris Avrukh recommended this set-up in his 1 d4 series. The idea is to discourage ... d5xc4. White may recapture on c4 with his knight, which then controls the key e5-square.

5 ... Nbd7 6 Bd3 Be7 7 0-0 0-0 8 Qc2

This move comes with some risk since the queen may end up misplaced and lose a tempo on c2 if the c-file opens later on. More common are 8 b3 and 8 e4 dxe4 9 Nxe4.

8 ... dxc4

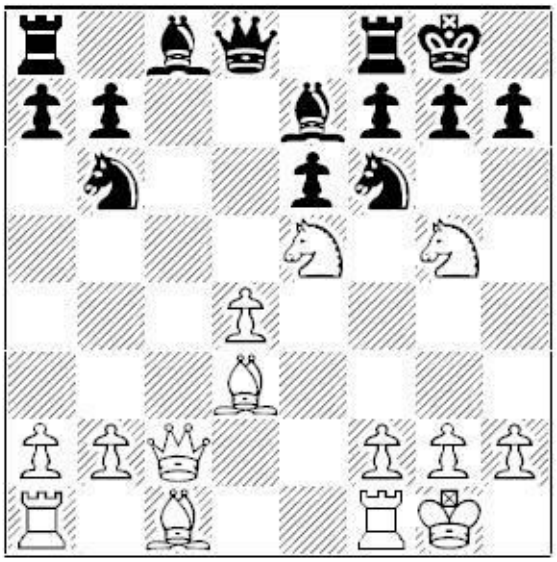
Alekhine was never one to grovel, but in this case he probably should do it and play 8 ... b6 9 e4 dxe4 10 Nxe4 Bb7, though after 11 Nxf6+ Nxf6 12 Rd1 Qc7 13 c5! White stands slightly better, D.Berczes-A.Bernei, Hungarian Team Championship 2011.

9 Nxc4 c5 10 Nce5 cxd4 11 exd4 Nb6

We reach a classic isolani position. Most pure positional players are not crazy about playing the isolani side. Capa was an exception, and willingly took on the isolani throughout his career.

12 Ng5!

chesstouring.com



A good investment. White induces a weakness at a cost of time.

12 ... g6

Question: This move weakens all his dark squares. Wouldn't he be better off kicking the knight back with 12 ... h6?

Answer: Your suggestion walks into mate! The knight has no intention of backing up: 13 Bh7+ Kh8 14 Nexf7+ Rxf7 15 Nxf7 is mate!

13 Ngf3

Threatening Bh6, followed by Ng5 again.

13 ... Kg7

Watch how easy it is for Black to get crushed after natural moves: 13 ... Nfd5 14 a3 Bf6 15 h4! Bxh4?! 16 Bh6 Re8? (16 ... Bf6 is forced) 17 Nxf7! Kxf7 18 Bxg6+! with a decisive attack.

14 Bg5

The goal is to swap dark-squared bishops in order to weaken the dark squares around Black's king.

14 ... Nbd5?!

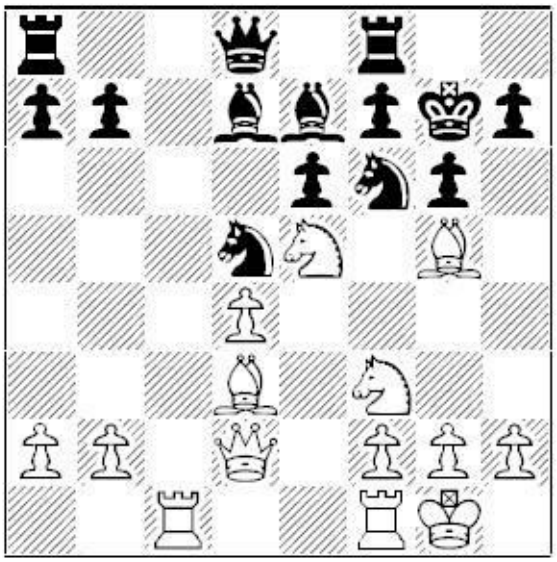
The wrong knight. Black should do everything he can to take pieces off the board. 14 ... Nfd5! is correct, which ensures a trade on e7 since Black also threatens ... Nb4.

15 Rac1 Bd7

White stands better after 15 ... Nb4 16 Qd2! Ng8 (not 16 ... Nxd3? 17 Bh6+ Kg8 18 Qxd3! and White threatens the rook on f8 and also Ng5, winning material) 17 Bxe7 Qxe7 18 Bc4.

16 Qd2

chesstouring.com



Target: h6.

16 ... Ng8 17 Bxe7

Question: Does this trade hurt or benefit White?

Answer: The swap eases Black's game somewhat but also weakens him on the dark squares, so both sides are okay with it.

17 ... Qxe7 18 Be4

This move worked out incredibly well for White, yet may be inaccurate. 18 Bc4 is stronger.

18 ... Bb5?

Question: What is the idea behind Black's last move?

Answer: I don't have a clue what the bishop is supposed to be doing on b5, where it pursues an inexplicable agenda and allows damage to Black's structure. Much better was the natural 18 ... Ngf6! 19 Bxd5 Nxd5 which looks approximately even.

19 Rfe1 Qd6

It is too late for 19 ... Ngf6 20 Bxd5 Nxd5 21 Rc5! Bd7 (21 ... Ba6? loses to 22 Rxd5! exd5 23 Ng4! and Black can't deal with the swarming white attackers) 22 Rxd5! exd5 23 Nxg6 Qxe1+ 24 Qxe1 hxg6 25 Qe7, when the queen and knight attacking duo give White a winning position.

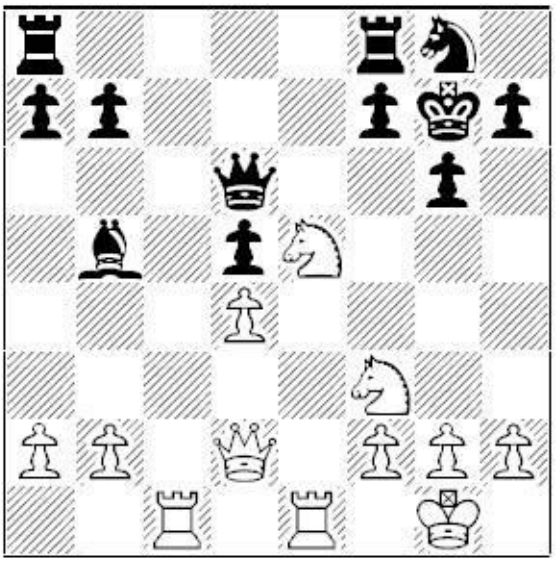
20 Bxd5!

Perfectly timed.

20 ... exd5

20 ... Qxd5?? hangs a piece to 21 Rc5.

chesstouring.com



White accumulated the following advantages:

1. He leads in development.
2. Black has a potentially bad bishop, since most of his pawns sit on the same colour.
3. Black is weak on the dark squares.

Exercise (planning): Capa spotted a subtle path to invasion in the position. Let's see if you can find it.

(Hint: Don't exclusively focus your attention on the kingside.)

Answer: Invade c7.

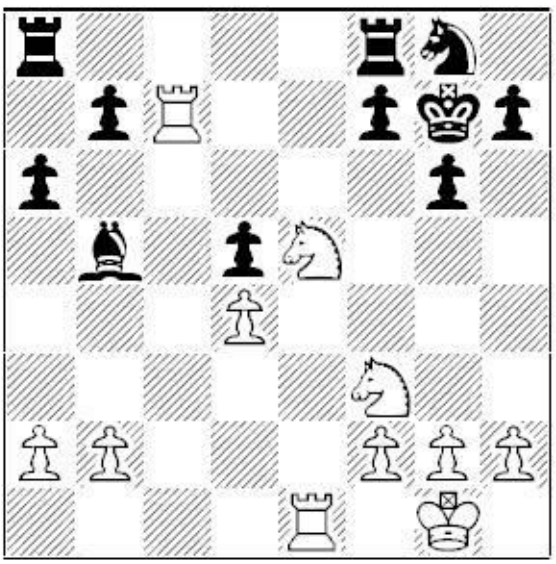
21 Qa5!

Capa had an incredible feel for weakness on one colour. In this case Black's dark squares, especially c7, are ripe for invasion.

21 ... a6?!

Black is under heavy pressure in the ending after 21 ... Qa6 22 Qxa6 Bxa6 23 Rc7, but this was still a lot better than what he got in the game.

22 Qc7! Qxc7 23 Rxc7



chesstouring.com

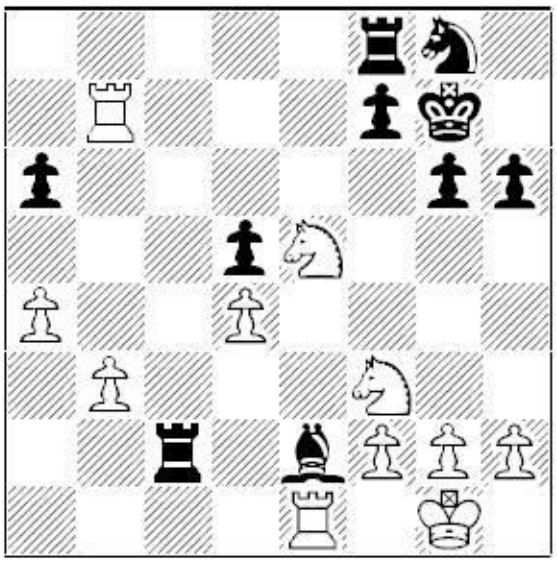
It is clear Capa won the skirmish bloodlessly and without cost. He threatens both the b7-pawn and also

the game-ending Ng5!.

23 ... h6 24 Rxb7 Rac8

24 ... Rab8 25 Rc7 Rbc8 26 Rec1 Ne7 is better, though Black's game remains hopeless even here.

25 b3 Rc2 26 a4 Be2



Exercise (combination alert): Black hopes to erect a defensive wall to keep change out. He can't. Find just one deadly move and Black's position crumples.

Answer: Target g6.

27 Nh4!

In a single move, the Eastern horizon grows a sullen red in flames.

27 ... h5

A list of Black's depressing non-options:

a) 27 ... Kf6 28 Nd7+ wins the exchange.

b) 27 ... g5 28 Nhg6! and Black collapses just the same.

c) 27 ... Bh5 28 g4 traps the bishop, as if 28 ... g5 29 Nf5+ Kf6, then 30 Rb6+ Rc6 31 Rxc6 mate!

28 Nhxg6

The position turns into Capa's tactical wonderland as his knights spin about like lovers at a dance. The time has come for Black to resign.

28 ... Re8

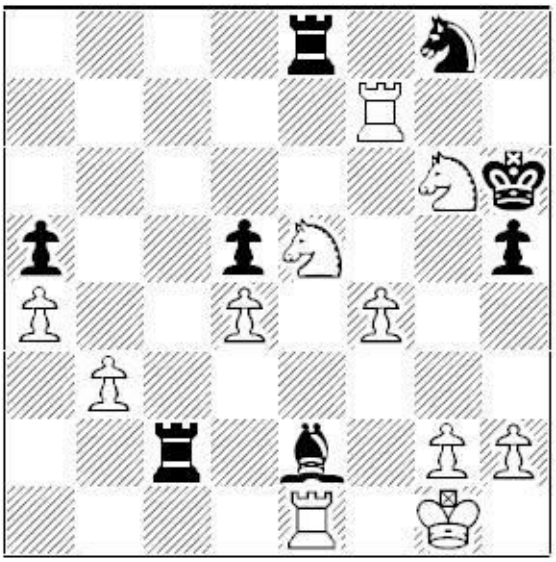
He didn't hear me. The desertions around Black's king continue unabated.

29 Rxf7+ Kh6 30 f4!

Cutting off g5 as an escape route.

30 ... a5

chesstouring.com



Exercise (combination alert): White to play and win even more material.

Answer: Back again.

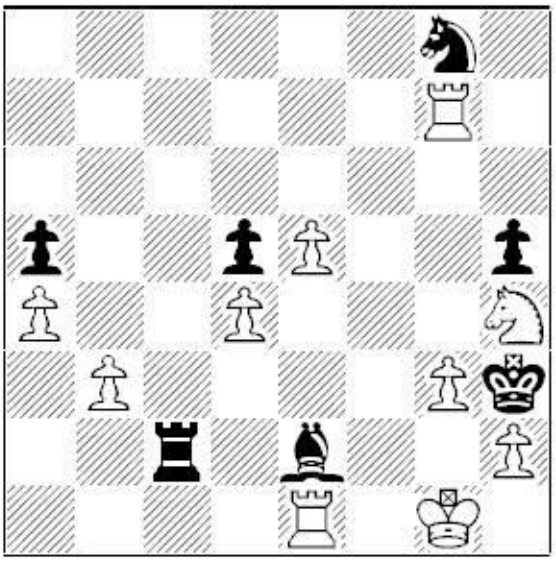
31 Nh4!

Threat: Nf5 mate. This knight jumps from branch to branch with simian agility. Compare this game with Capa's befuddling knightfest against Yates in the final chapter (Game 58).

Question: Aren't you going to indulge in a rude comment about
Alekhine's failure to resign against your hero?

Answer: I fight the urge. It is hard to love Alekhine but easy to respect his artistry. Alekhine achieved the remarkable in defeating Capablanca in 1927, when Capa was still the superior player. He accomplished the goal by proving that hard work sometimes upends lazy genius. A soldier understands his enemies better than his loved ones. Alekhine understood his opponent; Capa didn't, and grossly underestimated Alekhine in the match. A champion is more than just the sum of his victories. *When* they win matters immensely. Alekhine scored the bulk of his lifetime wins against Capa during his world championship match – exactly when they counted most.

31 ... Rxe5 32 fxe5 Kg5 33 g3 Kg4 34 Rg7+ Kh3



chesstouring.com

Exercise (combination alert): Black's king creeps

forward, he believes unwatched. Alekhine, absurdly,
refuses to resign. White can force mate in two moves.

Answer: The knight is deaf to the black king's pleas. As Harry Truman once said: "If I can't get them to see the light, then I will make them feel the heat!"

35 Ng2! 1-0

Mate on f4 follows.

Alekhine didn't take kindly to humiliation and apparently he had very bad manners when it came to inanimate objects. The story goes of Alekhine destroying the furniture in his hotel room after a particularly vexing loss to Yates. I wonder how his furniture held up after this loss to Capa?

Game 34

F.Dus Chotimirsky-J.R.Capablanca

Exhibition game, St Petersburg 1913

London System

1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Bf4

This is a nightmare! Another London loss in this book!

3 ... c5 4 c3

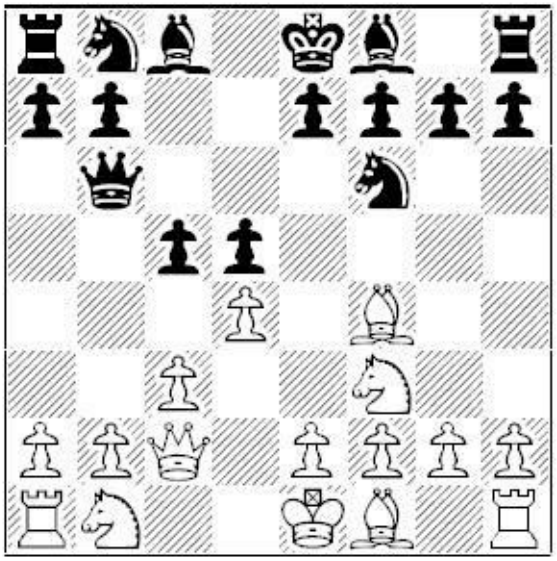
Here is the universal, infallible London System rule: The more you try and avoid complications, the more you get them.

Question: Did White avoid the move order 4 e3 to avoid 4 ... Qb6?

Answer: Probably so, but this order is perfectly fine for White since he can now play 5 Nc3!, when Black dare not take the poisoned b2-pawn.

4 ... Qb6 5 Qc2

The queen gets misplaced on c2. 5 Qb3 is better, when White gets excellent chances for equality!



5 ... cxd4!

By transposing to an Exchange Slav, Black ensures that White's queen gets targeted on the open c-file.

6 cxd4 Nc6 7 Nc3! Bd7

Question: What is wrong with grabbing White's hanging d-pawn?

chesstouring.com

Answer: A lot! Black falls woefully behind in development after the greedy 7 ... Nxd4?! 8 Nxd4 Qxd4

9 e4!, when Nb5! and Rd1 are in the air.

8 e3 Rc8

My Slav instincts tell me this is slightly inaccurate.

Question: Why? Black's move is totally natural.

Answer: I think Capa moves the wrong rook. He should castle first, bring his f-rook to c8, and then bring his queen back to d8. I wish FIDE would ban the Exchange Slav. I would play it like this: 8 ... e6 9 Be2 Be7 10 0-0 0-0 11 Rac1 Rfc8! 12 a3 Qd8.

9 Rc1 e6 10 Be2 Be7 11 0-0 0-0 12 Qb1

White's queen wisely gets off the c-file.

12 ... Qa5!? 13 Nd2

There is no profit in chasing Black's queen.

13 ... a6 14 Nb3

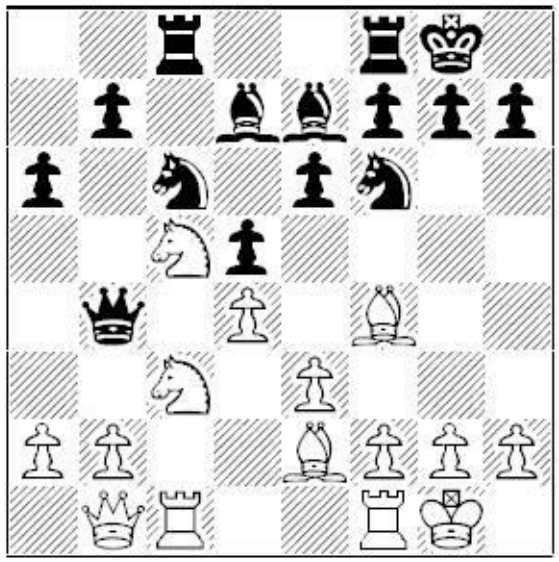
The queenside is anybody's to take and represents a disturbing unknown. On 14 a3 Na7!, intending ... Nb5, is good enough for equality.

14 ... Qb4!

Question: Isn't Black's queen in danger, floating on b4?

Answer: Not really. Capa sets his opponent up for an amazing trap by feigning weakness to lure White's knight forward. Who is the bigger fool? Someone who trusts everyone, or someone who trusts nobody?

15 Nc5?



Which he falls for! This is White's first and last true error in the game.

Exercise (combination alert): White thinks he sacs a pawn for compensation. But look closer. Black has a devilish trick to win a pawn without giving White the slightest trace of compensation.

Answer: **15 ... Nxd4!**

Question: Where did that come from!?

Answer: Black wins at least a pawn in all lines. Dus Chotimirsky undoubtedly expected 15 ... Bxc5 16 a3 Qa5 17 dxc5 Qxc5 18 Ne4 Qb6 19 Nxf6+ gxf6, when he gets the bishop pair and attacking chances for his pawn.

16 exd4

chesstouring.com

Dus C goes into shock and decides to hand over a second pawn. He should probably cut his losses with 16 Nxd7 Nxe2+ 17 Nxe2 Nxd7.

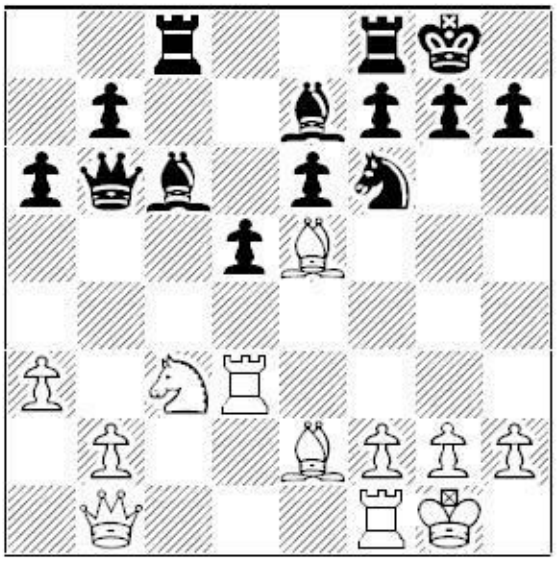
16 ... Bxc5

Be gone vile demon! It's always so pleasant when an exorcism goes well.

17 a3

White decides to live with a two pawn deficit. 17 dxc5 Qxf4 18 b4 d4 19 Nd1 e5 is also completely hopeless for White.

17 ... Qxd4 18 Bg3 Be7 19 Rcd1 Qb6 20 Be5 Bc6 21 Rd3



Black is up two clean pawns but White hopes to drum up a miracle kingside attack. I can't tell you how many times students have shown me positions like this where they should win easily but end up botching it, forcing me to pull out what remains of my hair. Don't underestimate how hard it is to win a clearly won game. Watch carefully how Capa denies his opponent even a glimmer of a chance for the remainder of the game. He does this by continually feeding on the advantages he already owns.

21 ... Nd7

A good move, chasing a potential attacker back.

22 Rh3 f5

Well, that pretty much ends the attack. Forward movement of his f-pawn was a bonus from Black's previous move.

23 Bf4 d4

Principle: Distract in the centre when attacked on the wing. Capa immediately activates his central majority.

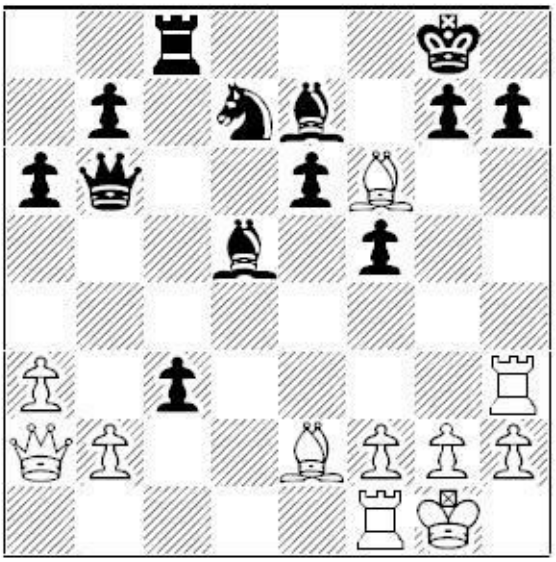
24 Qa2 Rf6 25 Bg5 dxc3!

The devastating counterattack begins. Capa, like the universal parent, warns his opponent: Behave or face punishment.

26 Bxf6 Bd5!

Zwischenzug!

chesstouring.com



27 Qxd5!?

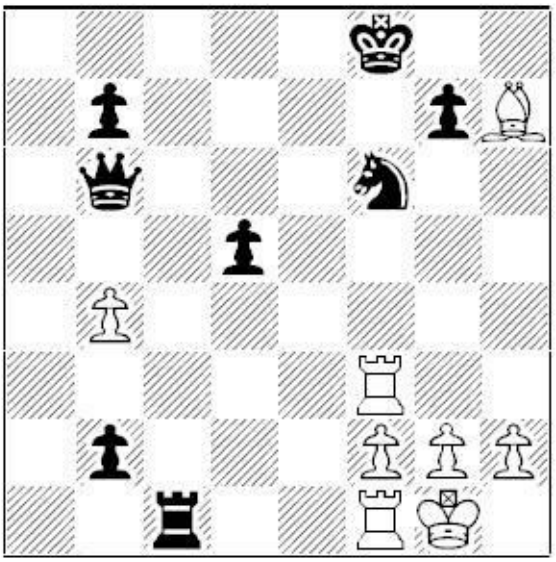
Question: Do you think White may possibly be overfeeding the fire of his non-attack?

Answer: Gulp! Nietzsche would agree: "That which does not kill us makes us stronger." The queen toasts her triumphant centralization a tad prematurely! Dus C trips out with a show of artistic excess, and the queen "sac" doesn't exactly salve his aching heart. When a material deficit grows totally out of control, it tends to lose meaning. White is just as busted a queen down as he was before he sac'ed! 27 Qb1 c2 28 Qc1 Bxf6 was equally depressing for White.

27 ... exd5 28 Bxe7 cxb2 29 Bd3 Rc1 30 Bb4 a5 31 Bxf5 axb4

White keeps giving and Black keeps taking. Dus C reminds me of the Black Knight from the Monty Python *Holy Grail* movie who kept fighting, even after arms and legs had been lopped off in the battle!

32 Bxh7+ Kf8 33 Rf3+ Nf6 34 axb4



Exercise (combination alert): Dus C claps his hands around his ears, refusing to listen to common sense and resign, like the sinner who refuses to repent. How can Capa get his opponent to change his mind about his non-resigning philosophy?

chesstouring.com

Answer: Checkmate him!

34 ... Qb5! 0-1

Finally, this move talks White into a deathbed repentance. Dus Chotimirsky resigns, not wishing to face 35 Bd3 Qxd3! 36 Rxd3 b1Q.

Game 35

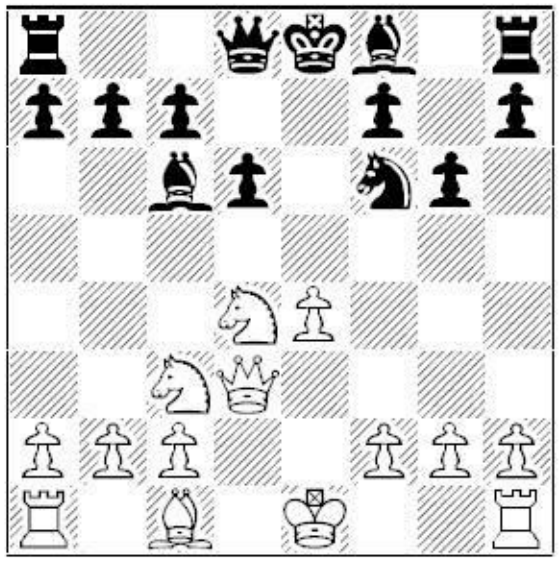
A.Nimzowitsch-J.R.Capablanca

St Petersburg 1914

Ruy Lopez (by transposition)

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bb5 d6 5 d4 Bd7 6 Bxc6 Bxc6 7 Qd3 exd4 8 Nxd4 g6?!

A careless move. Black lacks the time for such luxuries. Luckily for Capablanca, his position later transforms into a startlingly original strategic idea for the time.



Question: How can a move be good and bad at the same time?

Answer: Technically, the move is dubious. Yet later Capa managed to attain Benko Gambit pressure for the pawn – even though the Benko Gambit had yet to be invented! Euwe writes: "It was not so difficult to foresee the loss of a pawn by force ... but Capablanca apparently did not imagine that such a thing could happen in the solid Steinitz Defence of the Ruy Lopez. Capablanca's mistakes are just as clear as his good moves."

9 Nxc6

Years later, Alekhine, having seen what befell Nimzowitsch, greatly improved upon White's play: 9 Bg5! Bg7 10 0-0-0 Qd7 11 h3 0-0 12 Rhe1 Rfe8?! (12 ... h6 is better) 13 Qf3! Nh5 14 g4 and Black's game is on the edge of collapse since he must hand over his dark-squared bishop, A.Alekhine-A.Brinckmann, Kecskemet 1927.

9 ... bxc6 10 Qa6!?

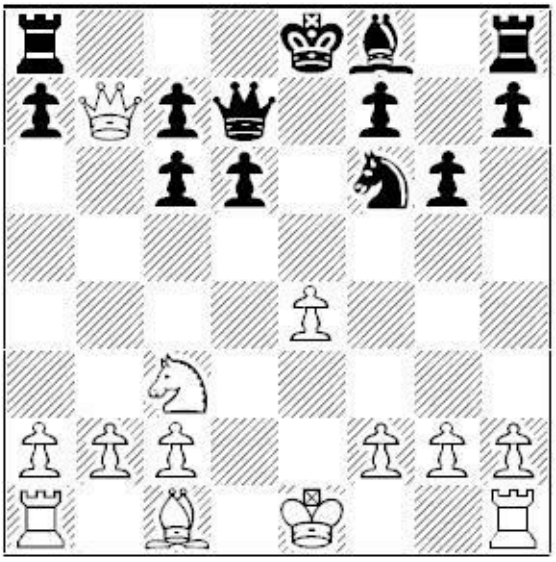
I would avoid this pawn grab. Nimzowitsch bites, guiltily planning to appropriate a pawn while his development suffers, reminding us of Alekhine's similar pawn-grabbing misadventure from Chapter 1 (Game 7).

10 ... Qd7 11 Qb7!?

chesstouring.com

Thieves tend to justify larceny with the thought: My need is greater than yours. When you embark on a

risky plan, consistency isn't necessarily a virtue. It isn't too late to say you are sorry and play 11 0-0.



11 ... Rc8 12 Qxa7 Bg7 13 0-0 0-0

Question: I don't understand what you are talking about. Where is the compensation? Isn't Black just busted, down a pawn?

Answer: Who do you believe: Me or your lying eyes!? On the contrary, Black has full compensation – and then some – for the pawn with Benko Gambit-style pressure soon to follow on the queenside.

14 Qa6 Rfe8 15 Qd3 Qe6 16 f3 Nd7! 17 Bd2?!

White, still immersed in the conviction of his fictional superiority, fails to notice the danger around him. If Nimzowitsch had an inkling of the events which soon transpire, he would surely have made the tacit draw offer by entering the line 17 b3! Ne5 18 Qe2 (18 Qd2 Nc4 19 bxc4? fails to 19 ... Qxc4 20 Bb2 Rb8 when Black regains the material with heavy interest) 18 ... Nc4! 19 Qd3 Ne5.

17 ... Ne5 18 Qe2 Nc4

Capa pounces on White's inaccuracy by occupying c4.

19 Rab1

He clings to the baby on b2 with frantic urgency.

19 ... Ra8

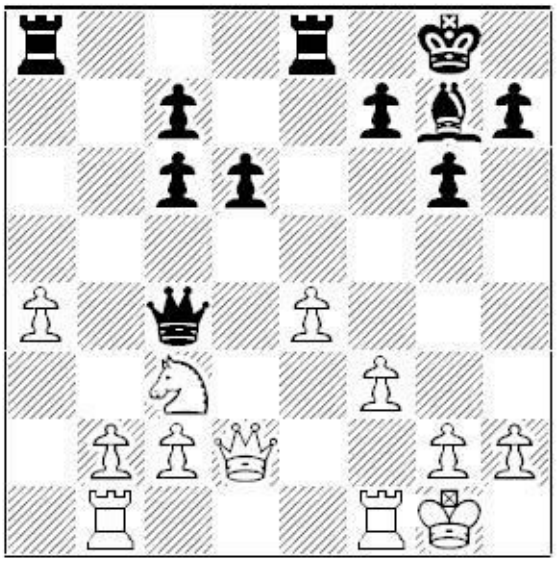
19 ... d5! also puts White under pressure.

20 a4?

The much anticipated resurrection of the queenside structure fails to materialize. White's misplaced forces, wary as field mice, soon scatter and fall apart, as Nimzowitsch conveniently makes just the right number of wrong moves to lose the game. Better was 20 b3! Nxd2 21 Qxd2 Ra3!, though even here Black's pressure remains unchecked.

20 ... Nxd2 21 Qxd2 Qc4!

chesstouring.com

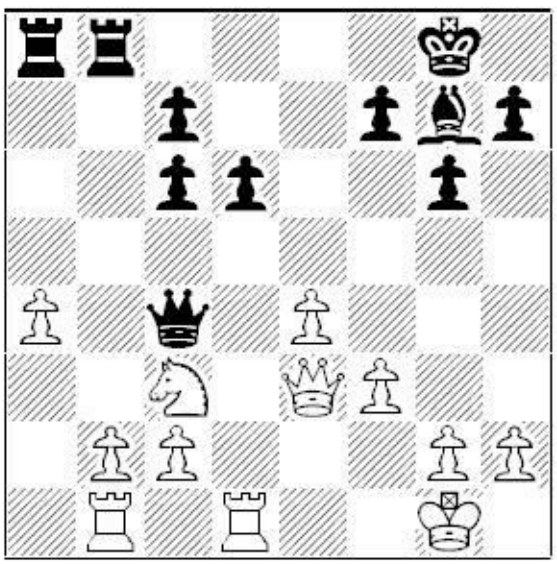


The prim headmistress, disapproving of boisterous conduct, touches her forefinger to her lips and orders silent obedience on the queenside.

22 Rfd1 Reb8

Pal Benko-approved! Capa's pieces happily engulf the vast vacancy of queenside terrain. Now the pressure down the a- and b-files soon grows irresistible.

23 Qe3



Exercise (planning): We can take on c3 and win our pawn back, but this isn't Black's best plan. Find one strong move and White folds.

Answer: The end product of White's toil: A Benko Gambit from hell.

23 ... Rb4!

Black's threats mount as White must deal with both ... Bd4 and the simple plan of ... Rab8 and ... Rxb2.

Question: Where did this pressure come from?

I take back my earlier claim of White's superiority.

Answer: Poor Nimzo was probably wondering the same thing. His previous notion of superiority probably rang hollow, even to his own ears. He fell victim to a strategic concept which had yet to be invented: Open lines, which at that time were thought only effective when attacking the opponent's king,

chesstouring.com

are also effective when applying strategic pressure, as in the case of this game down the a- and b-files.

24 Qg5?

The queen, unwilling to share her queenside's misfortune, panics and makes a hasty and undignified exit. White had to adjust to the new reality, hand over the exchange, and roll up in a ball with the line 24 Rd3 Bd4 25 Rxd4 Qxd4 26 Qxd4 Rxd4.

24 ... Bd4+ 25 Kh1 Rab8

Phantoms lurk everywhere and nowhere as White trembles in their presence. The queenside collapses as b2 falls.

26 Rxd4 Qxd4 27 Rd1 Qc4 28 h4 Rxb2 29 Qd2 Qc5 30 Re1 Qh5 31 Ra1 Qxh4+ 32 Kg1 Qh5 33 a5

Where do you think you're going?

33 ... Ra8 34 a6 Qc5+ 35 Kh1 Qc4 36 a7 Qc5

There goes a7.

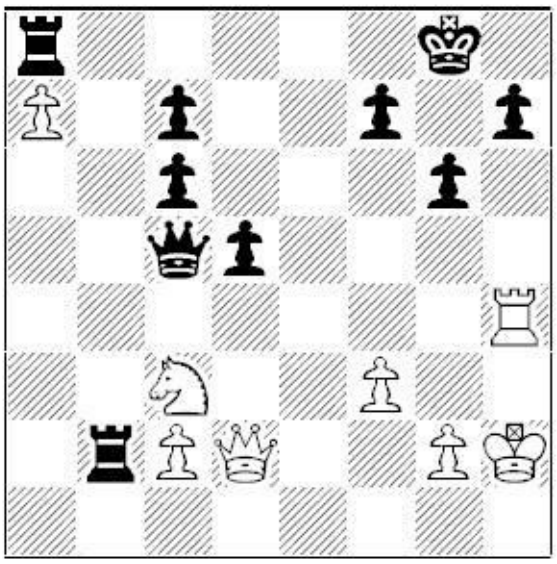
37 e5 Qxe5

And now White's e-pawn falls.

38 Ra4 Qh5+ 39 Kg1 Qc5+ 40 Kh2 d5!

A little precaution to protect against a final white lunge with Ne4.

41 Rh4



Exercise: Should we worry about Qh6?

Answer: It is a hollow threat.

41 ... Rxa7! 42 Nd1 0-1

Or 42 Qh6 Qxc3! and there is no mate.

Game 36

J.R.Capablanca-Allies

Consulation game, Bradford 1919

Dutch Defence (by transposition)

Capablanca, like Muhammad Ali, lost some of his best years due to war – in Capa's case WWI. So instead of playing a world championship match against Lasker, he found himself playing the Allies!

chesstouring.com

Question: Who were the allies in this game?

Answer: England, the United States and France? I have no idea who they were. Probably a few master-strength players from the region.

1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 e6 3 c4 c6 4 e3

Question: Why does White voluntarily shut in his dark-squared bishop?

Answer: In these Semi-Slav "V" formations, ... d5xc4!, followed by ... b7-b5 hanging on to the pawn, can be a real threat. So White, not wanting to watch out eternally for ... d5xc4, covers it. The c1-bishop has two paths to development:

1. Fianchetto with b2-b3.
2. White enforces the e3-e4 break, freeing his bishop.

4 ... f5 5 Bd3 Bd6 6 0-0 Nf6 7 b3 0-0 8 Bb2 Nbd7 9 Nbd2

Question: Why not post the knight on c3?

Answer: White's target square is e5. His simple plan will be to post a knight on e5 and then follow with Nbd2 and f2-f4.

9 ... Ne4 10 Ne5

It is important to land on e5 before Black takes control over that square with his queen; for example, after 10 Qc2 Qf6!.

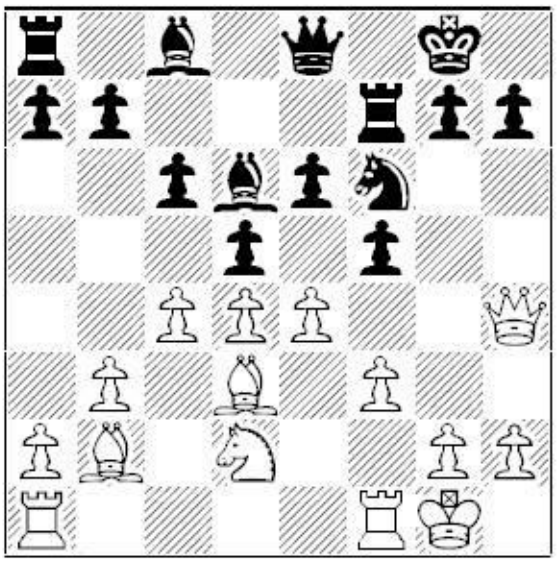
10 ... Ndf6

Retaining pieces only helps White. 10 ... Nxd2! 11 Qxd2 Nxe5 12 dxe5 Be7 is Black's best shot at equality.

11 f3 Ng5!?

These days we play our openings the way we put on an old and familiar garment. If you read 11 books on a line and play it for 15 years there is little mystery for you. It's easy to forget that, in Capa's day, such positions were weird, alien territory for both sides. A perfectly acceptable action in one culture may be considered a disgraceful one in another. Black pursues complications and attacks with the energy of youth caught in the pangs of infatuation. The mysterious allies, spurred on by an unspoken chivalric code, again spurn swaps, hoping to be the lucky bulls that gored the matador if he had an off day.

12 Qe1 Qe8 13 Qh4 Nf7 14 Nxf7 Rxf7 15 e4!



Principle: Open the position when better developed.

chesstouring.com

15 ... Be7

Question: Can Black draw by forcing an opposite-coloured bishops

position with 15 ... Bb4 16 Rad1 Bxd2 17 Rxd2 dxe4 18 fxe4 Nxe4?

Answer: This line forces opposite-coloured bishops but loses to 19 Bxe4 fxe4 20 Rxf7 Qxf7 21 Rf2 Qe8 22 Ba3!, forcing the win of Black's queen. Most of Capa's opponents failed to secure the draw even when they did achieve opposite-coloured bishops. Just ask Teichmann from the last chapter and Nimzowitsch in the next one!

16 Qe1 Nd7?!

Swearing a vow to attack is easy; keeping the vow is not.

Question: Black's move looks ridiculous.

What is the purpose of this retreat?

Answer: I fail to find a single logical reason. One of the Allies must have talked the others into it for some obscure reason, but we will never know who, or what the reason was behind the move.

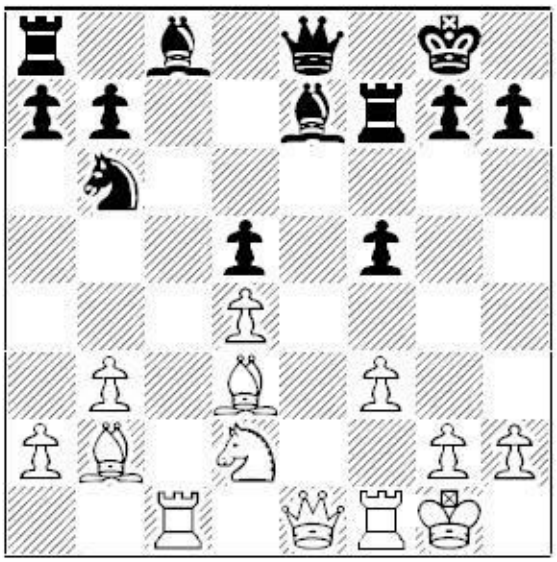
Question: Is this another one of those one-sided Capa-versus-amateurs bloodbaths you talked about in Chapter 1?

Answer: It is, but a strategic slaughter this time. Also, stop picking on the poor Allies. Who knows, you may be a descendent of one of them! The Allies should continue to develop with something like 16 ... Bd7, although even then Black's position fails to inspire confidence.

17 exd5 exd5 18 cxd5 cxd5 19 Rc1

Houdini mistakenly claims this position is equal. White has several weak points to work on, such as e5, e6 and c7.

19 ... Nb6?!



Exercise (planning): Black just moved the knight in the wrong direction. Find a way to exploit this misstep.

Answer: Plant a knight on e5.

20 f4!

Idea: Nf3 and Ne5. If Black had played his knight to f6, this manoeuvre would lose most of its potency since Black's knight gets easy access to e4.

20 ... Qd8?!

Black's position begins to swirl down the toilet bowl after this move. It is always embarrassing to admit you are wrong, but in this case Black should head for e4 with his knight anyway: 20 ... Nd7 21 Nf3 Nf6.

chesstouring.com

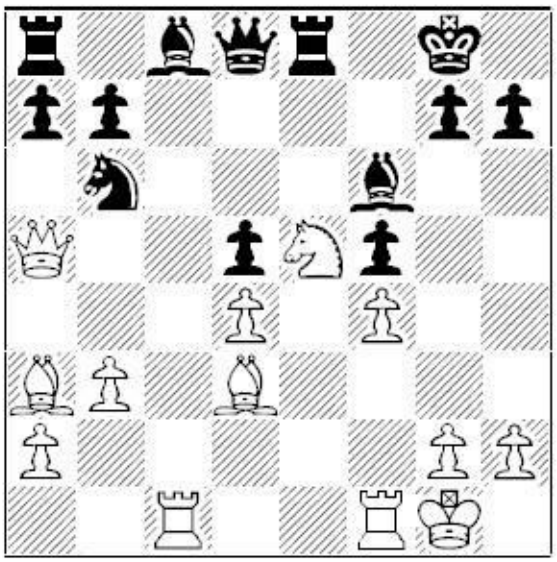
21 Nf3 Bf6 22 Ne5 Re7

Walking into a tempo loss.

23 Ba3 Re8

Or 23 ... Rc7 24 Qe3! and White soon takes over the c-file.

24 Qa5!



Shades of his game against Alekhine from this chapter (Game 33).

24 ... Be6 25 Bb5!

Note Capa's generosity with his needle, poking here, pinching there.

25 ... Nd7 26 Qxd8 Rexd8 27 Rc7

Infiltration. It all looks so simple. Black is busted.

27 ... Bxe5?!

Adding the bishop pair a and passed e-pawn to White's already impressive strategic resume. 27 ... Nf8 looks a little better, though Black is still quite busted after 28 Rxb7.

28 fxe5 a6

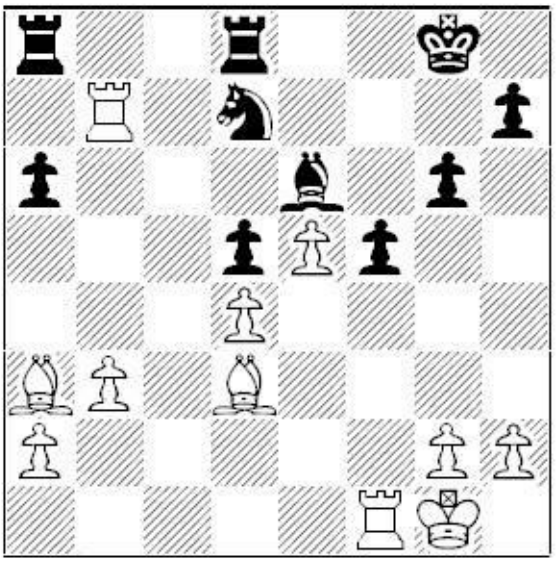
28 ... b6?? 29 Be7 wins material.

29 Bd3

White wins a pawn with a double attack on f5 and b7.

29 ... g6 30 Rxb7

chesstouring.com



Complete strategic domination for White:
1. He is up a pawn.
2. He has a connected, passed pawn on e5.
3. He owns the bishop pair in an open position.
4. His rook infiltrates the seventh rank.
5. He rules the dark squares.

30 ... Rdc8 31 Rc1 Rxc1+ 32 Bxc1 Rc8 33 Bd2

No rook entry for Black.

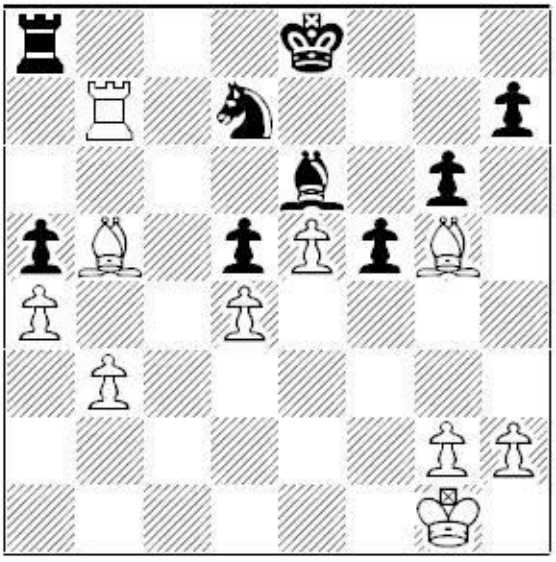
33 ... Ra8 34 Bg5 Kf7 35 a4 a5?

A mistake, though it hardly mattered at this point.

36 Bb5

Hola! The bishop gives the knight a little nudge in the ribs and forces Black's king into a pin.

36 ... Ke8



Exercise (combination alert): Capa's mosaic is missing just one tiny piece. How does he end the game?

chesstouring.com

Answer: Enter an opposite-coloured bishops position.

37 Bxd7+! Bxd7 38 e6! 1-0

As in other Capa games, opposite-coloured bishops fail to offer Black relief. The impoverished allies can ill-afford charity. Black must give up a piece or face 38 ... Bc8 39 Rxh7.

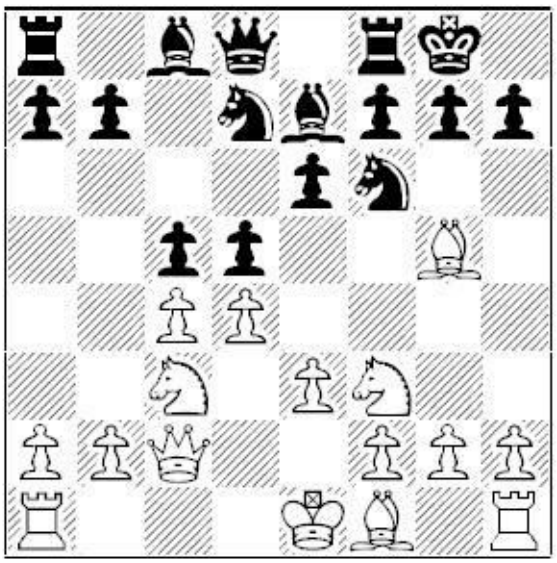
Game 37

Em.Lasker-J.R.Capablanca

10th matchgame, Havana 1921

Queen's Gambit Declined

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Be7 5 e3 0-0 6 Nf3 Nbd7 7 Qc2 c5



8 Rd1

Lasker loved tension in any position. I feel the best path to an advantage is the immediate 8 cxd5 as Flohr played against Capa in Chapter 2 (Game 22).

Question: Can White go crazy by castling on opposite wings with 8 0-0-0?

Answer: White can but it's a high risk venture: 8 ... Qa5 9 cxd5 exd5 10 dxc5 Nxc5 and Black is happy to sac his d-pawn. *Houdini* likes White, but Kasparov feels Black has the better chances. When it comes to assessment, always go with the human!

8 ... Qa5

The queen wisely removes herself from the d-file.

9 Bd3

Lasker agrees to give up a tempo. In the seventh game of the match, Capablanca, as White, released the tension with 9 cxd5 and got too little to realistically play for the win after 9 ... Nxd5! (9 ... exd5 10 Be2 c4 11 0-0 Re8 12 Ne5 gave White perhaps a small edge, J.R.Capablanca-F.Yates, London 1922) 10 Bxe7 Nxe7 11 Bd3 Nf6 12 0-0 cxd4 13 Nxd4 (too many pieces swapped off to take on an isolani) 13 ... Bd7 14 Ne4 Ned5, when Black equalized and drew quickly.

9 ... h6

Just in case you didn't notice, White threatened Bxh7+!.

10 Bh4 cxd4

Alekhine suggested 10 ... Nb6.

chesstouring.com

11 exd4

Question: Can White avoid an isolani position and play 11 Nxd4?

Answer: It lacks dynamism to do so, but sure, the move is playable and dead equal after 11 ... dxc4 12 Bxc4 Nb6 13 Bb3 Bd7.

11 ... dxc4 12 Bxc4 Nb6 13 Bb3 Bd7

Black has a nice version of an isolani position.

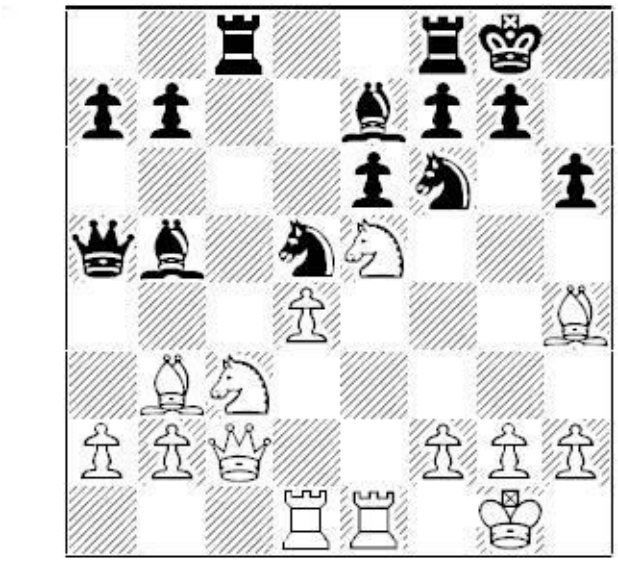
Question: Why? He has yet to engineer a single piece trade.

Answer: True, but White's queen sits awkwardly on the open c-file, handing Black a tempo. White also wasted a tempo with his earlier Bd3, taking two moves to capture on c4, so Black is better developed than he would normally be.

14 0-0 Rac8 15 Ne5 Bb5

Capablanca criticized this move and suggested 15 ... Bc6.

16 Rfe1 Nbd5?!



17 Bxd5?!

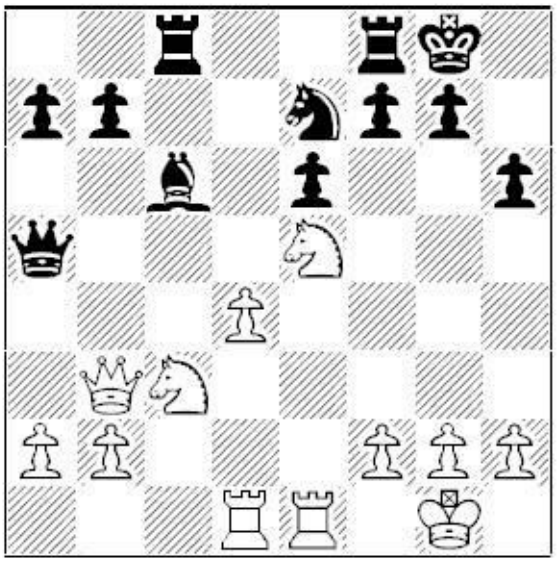
Lasker makes the same error Teichmann made last chapter (in Game 25). It makes no sense to keep swapping down when White is the one with the isolani.

Breyer suggested 17 Bxf6! Bxf6! (17 ... Nxf6? loses on the spot to 18 Ng6! Rfe8 19 Rxe6!!) 18 Bxd5 exd5 and now 19 Ng4!, when d5 is under heavy pressure to the coming Qf5!.

17 ... Nxd5 18 Bxe7 Nxe7 19 Qb3 Bc6!

Kasparov made no comment on this move but, for the time, it was an original strategic decision. I think most masters of the day would have played 19 ... Ba6 to avoid the deliberate weakening of Black's structure.

chesstouring.com



20 Nxc6 bxc6

Capablanca correctly gauged that his backward and isolated c-pawn was actually stronger than White's isolani on d4.

Question: Don't the mutual pawn weaknesses cancel each other out?

Answer: Euwe writes: "It is noteworthy that in this position White's queen pawn is weaker than Black's queen's bishop pawn; the main reason for this is that Black's queen four square (d5) is very strong."

21 Re5 Qb6 22 Qc2 Rfd8 23 Ne2?!

White falls under pressure after this meek response. 23 Na4 would be more consistent.

23 ... Rd5 24 Rxd5

Lasker claimed this was a blunder, giving instead 24 Re3, but then *Houdini* points out 24 ... c5! 25 Rc3 Rcd8! with a clear plus.

24 ... cxd5

From this point on, Capa plays flawlessly.

25 Qd2 Nf5 26 b3

Lasker also criticized this move, giving 26 g3 as better.

26 ... h5 27 h3

Lasker, by now a complete downer on himself, claimed this was another error and gave 27 Ng3 instead, but as Kasparov points out, White's position is "cheerless" after 27 ... Nxg3 28 hxg3 Qc7.

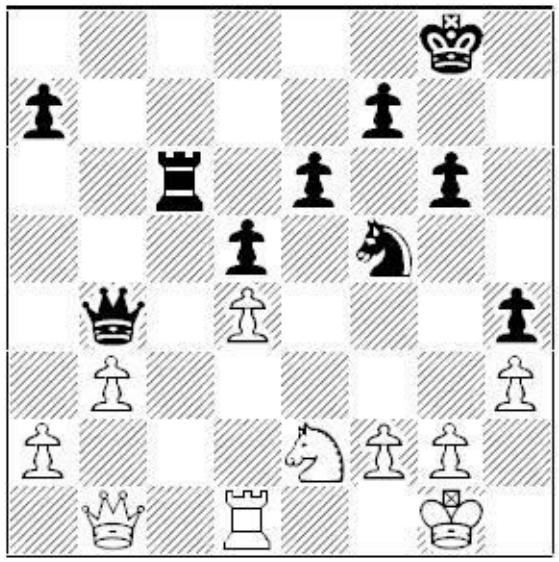
27 ... h4!

Question: Why is he trying to prevent Ng3? White would
have to capture away from the centre.

Answer: Capa's move was designed to discourage g2-g4 instead.

28 Qd3 Rc6 29 Kf1 g6 30 Qb1 Qb4 31 Kg1

chesstouring.com



Exercise (planning): It is clear that Black stands much better but how to make progress? Come up with a concrete plan to do so.

Answer: Begin a queenside minority attack, swapping a pair of pawns on that wing. The end result will be another isolani for White to nurse. This game has to be one of the earliest and most clear examples of how to conduct a minority attack successfully.

31 ... a5!

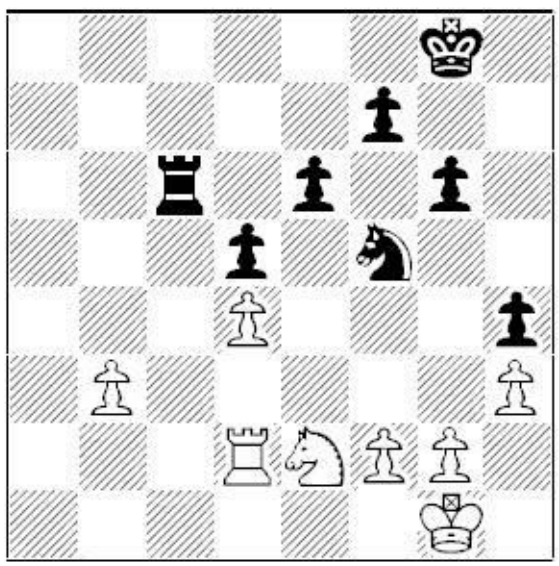
Question: What is a minority attack?

Answer: It is when the player with the fewer pawns on one side of the board launches them forward. The idea here is to swap Black's a-pawn for White's b-pawn, saddling White with a second isolani.

32 Qb2 a4

The tyranny of the minority exerts its power over the masses. Now ... Rb6 may be coming, so White allows queens to come off the board.

33 Qd2 Qxd2 34 Rxd2 axb3 35 axb3



Question: I realize White stands worse, but even if he drops his b-pawn he probably draws. Isn't this an acceptable ending for him?

chesstouring.com

Answer: I strongly urge you to stop accepting such rancid positions! You are misassessing.

Imperceptibly, by fractions of a centimetre, Black's game keeps improving. Capa managed to seed Lasker's position with two permanent, chronic pawn weaknesses. Later, Lasker did indeed lose his b-pawn and yet failed to secure the draw.

35 ... Rb6

Principle: If you can, force the opponent's rook into awkward lateral defence.

36 Rd3

36 Rb2? drops a pawn to 36 ... Rb4.

36 ... Ra6! 37 g4

Kasparov gives 37 Nc3 Ra1+ 38 Kh2 Rc1 39 b4 Rc2 40 Kg1 Rb2 41 b5 Rb4!, when White drops his b-pawn and remains with a weak d-pawn after 42 Ne2 Rb1+ 43 Kh2 Rxb5.

37 ... hxg3 38 fxg3 Ra2 39 Nc3 Rc2!

No rest for Lasker. Black's rook chases the knight like children at play, threatening ... Nxd4!, overloading White's rook.

40 Nd1 Ne7! 41 Nc3 Rc1+ 42 Kf2 Nc6 43 Nd1!

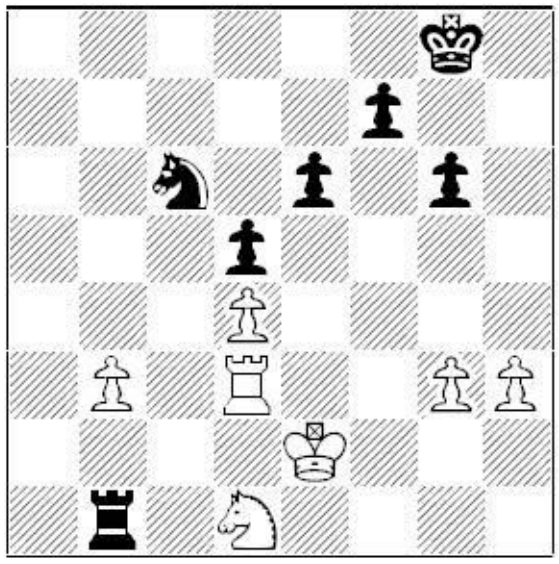
Lasker sets up a deep trap.

43 ... Rb1!

... which Capa deftly dodges: 43 ... Nb4 44 Rd2 Rb1 45 Nb2!! (now Black has a "combination") 45 ... Rxb2? 46 Rxb2 Nd3+ 47 Ke2 Nxb2 48 Kd2 was the point. The knight is trapped and White draws.

44 Ke2?

With each passing move, Lasker's belief in his survival grows less a conviction and more a theory. The chronically ill b3- and d4-pawns are, as doctors like to call it, pre-existing conditions. We the ordinary can take heart. Even world champions do dumb things from time to time.



Exercise (combination alert): Beset with weary frustration under the heavy positional pressure, Lasker walks into a simple trap. Can you find the combination for Black which Lasker missed?

Answer: **44 ... Rxb3!**

The knight fork on d4 allows Black his trick.

45 Ke3

A parent in a life-and-death situation has no time to mourn the loss of a child if other children remain in danger. Lasker, having dropped b3, now fights ferociously for the life of the others.

chesstouring.com

45 ... Rb4!

Pinning White down to his biggest weakness, d4.

46 Nc3 Ne7 47 Ne2 Nf5+ 48 Kf2 g5 49 g4 Nd6 50 Ng1 Ne4+ 51 Kf1

The king must simmer at the bottom of the pot to avoid the loss of a second pawn. If 51 Ke3? then 51 ... Rb1 52 Nf3 Rh1!.

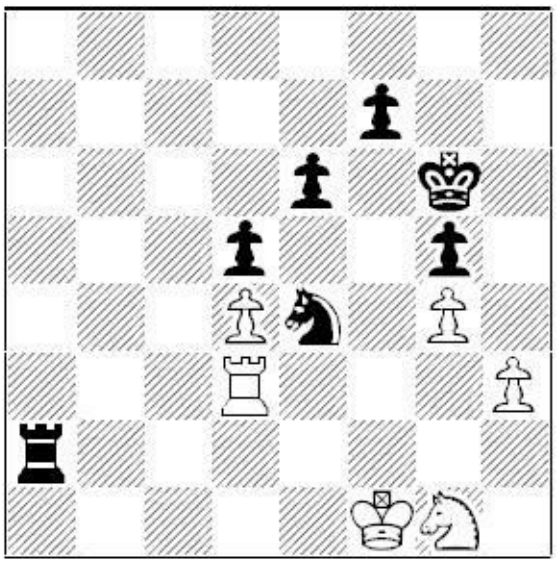
51 ... Rb1+ 52 Kg2 Rb2+ 53 Kf1 Rf2+ 54 Ke1 Ra2

Capa messes with his opponent's head a while before taking action, allowing Lasker to stew in the memory of errors and regrets.

55 Kf1

The king, body riddled with welts and contusions, slumps back, too weak to move, and too beaten down to grow angry.

55 ... Kg7 56 Re3 Kg6 57 Rd3



Exercise (planning): The door to White's survival closes quickly.

Work out a step by step winning plan for Black to convert.

Answer: Step 1: Transfer the king to d6.

57 ... f6! 58 Re3 Kf7 59 Rd3 Ke7 60 Re3 Kd6 61 Rd3 Rf2+ 62 Ke1 Rg2 63 Kf1 Ra2 64 Re3

Step 2: Play ... e6-e5 and create a passed d-pawn.

64 ... e5 65 Rd3 exd4 66 Rxd4 Kc5 67 Rd1

Step 3: Push it down the board!

67 ... d4 68 Rc1+ Kd5 0-1

69 Rd1 Nf2 70 Rb1 d3 is utterly hopeless for White.

Game 38

E.Bogoljubow-J.R.Capablanca

New York 1924

Colle Opening

1 d4 Nf6

I played this game the same day I annotated Capa's win over Bogo, winning by simply following Capa's instructions! As all dumb, cheating students (like me!) understand, copying off the smart kid's (Capa's!) exam pays dividends: 1 ... d6 2 Nf3 Bg4 3 Nbd2 Nd7 4 b3 Ngf6 5 Bb2 e6 6 h3 Bh5 7 e3 Be7 8

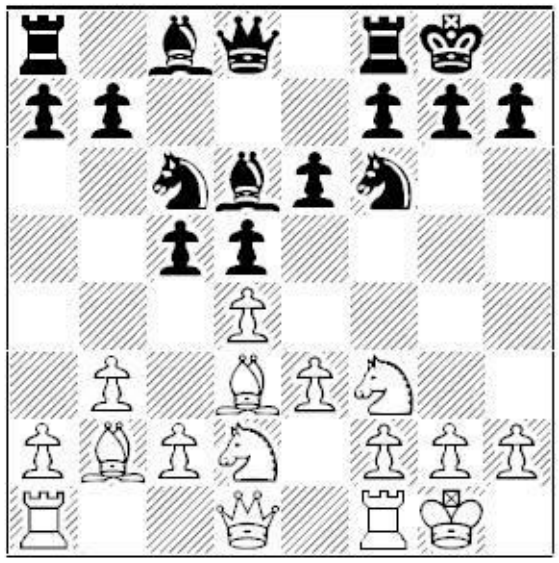
chessturing.com

Bd3 c5 9 0-0 0-0 10 Re1 cxd4 11 exd4 d5 12 Nf1 Rc8 13 Ng3 Bg6 14 Bxg6 hxg6 15 Qd3 Qa5 16 Rec1?! (16 a3) 16 ... Ba3 17 Bxa3 Qxa3 18 c3 Rc7 19 Rc2 Rfc8 20 Rac1 a6 21 Qe3 b5 22 Qd3 Ne8 23 h4 Ndf6 24 Ne5 Nd6 25 Qe2 Nf5 26 Nxf5 gxf5 27 Qe3 Qe7 28 Qh3? Ne4 29 h5 Qg5 30 Qf3 Nf6 31 c4? bxc4 32 bxc4 dxc4 33 Rxc4?? Rxc4 34 Rxc4 Rxc4 0-1 J.Pryor-C.Lakdawala, Gambito rapid 2012. White resigned since 34 ... Rxc4 35 Nxc4 Qc1+ picks off the knight. Capa's games and strategic ideas are rich with real-time practical value.

2 Nf3 d5 3 e3 e6 4 Bd3 c5 5 b3

The Zukertort Colle, the most aggressive sibling in the normally introverted Colle family.

5 ... Nc6 6 0-0 Bd6 7 Bb2 0-0 8 Nbd2



8 ... Qe7

Question: Why not play 8 ... Nb4?

Answer: White simply retreats his bishop to e2, then boots Black's knight back to c6, by tossing in a2-a3, and finally returns to d3 with his bishop. The result: no change.

9 Ne5!?

He can also play 9 a3 to prevent Black's following manoeuvre.

9 ... cxd4! 10 exd4 Ba3!

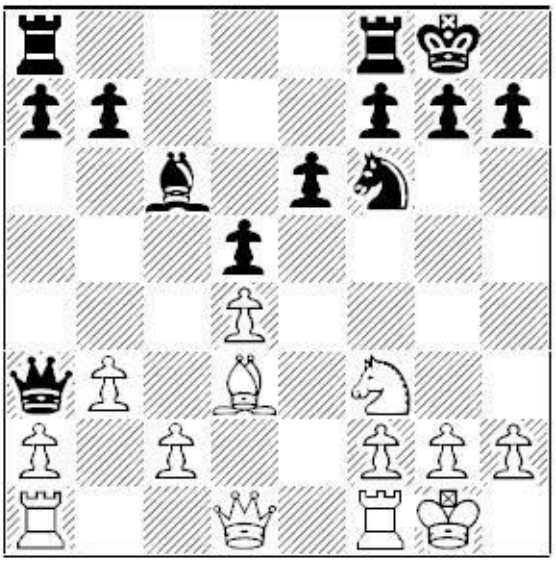
The bishop clears his throat, hoping to get his brother's attention. With this swap, Capa removes the air from White's attacking position.

11 Bxa3 Qxa3 12 Ndf3

According to the Chesspub.com team this move is inaccurate and should be replaced by 12 c3! where, they say, White still has a chance for an edge. Bogo mistakenly plays for his now non-existent future attack. I read accounts of Bogoljubow's legendary optimism. Like most super-GMs, Bogo was an unassuming and modest man, once making the claim: "When I am White, I win because I am White. When I am Black, I win because I am Bogoljubow!"

12 ... Bd7 13 Nxc6 Bxc6!

chesstouring.com



Question: Isn't White better since Black has a bad bishop?

Answer: The position is deceptive. Black stands at least equal due to the open c-file. He will try and swap away his bad bishop via b5.

14 Qd2 Rac8 15 c3 a6!

Intending to debadify the bishop via b5.

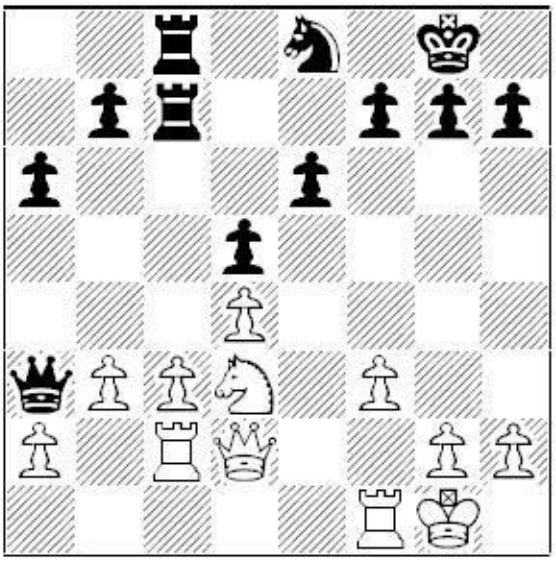
16 Ne5 Bb5 17 f3?!

There is biding one's time and then there is stalling. Where is Bogo's optimism when he needs it? Bogo, intimidated by his opponent, feels threatened and mistakenly decides to go totally passive and keep his guard up. He is still okay if he takes on the hanging pawns with 17 c4 dxc4 18 bxc4 Bc6 19 Qe3, protecting his d-pawn and threatening a discovered check on h7. In this case a few green chutes of grass pop up through the cracks in the concrete.

17 ... Bxd3 18 Nxd3 Rc7

Now Black soon picks on the backward c-pawn.

19 Rac1 Rfc8 20 Rc2 Ne8!



chesstouring.com

Redeploying to d6, where the knight clamps down on White's c3-c4 break.

21 Rfc1 Nd6 22 Ne5 Qa5 23 a4?!

If you are going to grovel then be consistent! White's last move is at cross purposes with his own best interests. Every pawn move for White on the queenside constitutes a subtle degradation of his position. Better to do nothing and play 23 Qe3, when ... Nb5 can be met with c3-c4.

23 ... Qb6

Capa's prime directive in the position: Poke and annoy. He keeps blowing into the balloon until his opponent is the one who pops.

24 Nd3?!

Question: Why dubious? It looks like White gets the initiative for the pawn with Nc5 and Rb2.

Answer: The initiative is pure facade. In this case, Bogo bargains for more than he should give. My guess is an optimistic nature isn't a good fit with a plan which requires endless grovelling! Bogo's faith in his ability to survive waivers as he scapegoats his b-pawn in a desperate attempt at what turns out to be purely fictional piece activity. He probably felt he would lose in the long run if he went passive and suffered in silence with 24 b4 a5! 25 b5 Nc4 26 Nxc4 Rxc4 27 Ra2 Qc7 28 Ra3, when Black eventually engineers an ... e6-e5 pawn break, with or without ... f7-f6.

24 ... Qxb3

If someone gives you free money, accept and stash it away in your bank account.

25 Nc5 Qb6 26 Rb2 Qa7

Threat: A knight fork on c4.

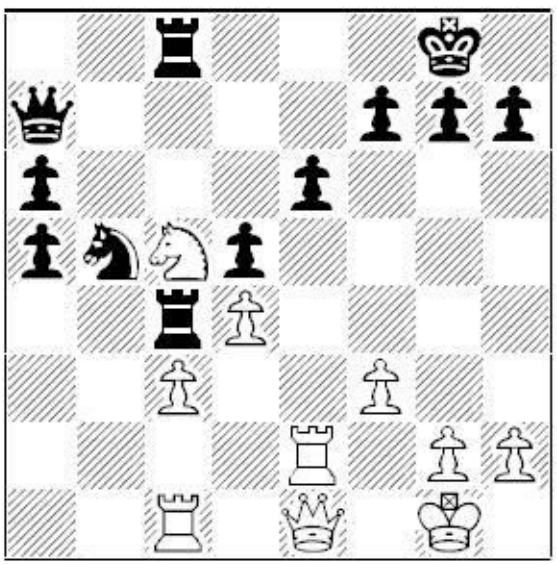
27 Qe1 b6

Out!

28 Nd3 Rc4 29 a5?!

This half-hearted attempt burdens destiny with excessive demands. Rather than muting his grievances, Bogo haphazardly tosses another pawn, hoping his control over c5 will give him some play. He gets nothing for it. 29 Rb4 is superior, though still hopeless.

29 ... bxa5 30 Nc5 Nb5 31 Re2?



White just blundered in a lost position. Black's queen, hidden away on a7, like an actress, doesn't allow the audience to see her true self behind the mask of performance.

Exercise (combination alert): Find the clever shot which eventually brings the queen into the spotlight and puts Bogo away.

chesstouring.com

Answer: Step 1: Open the c-file. Compare Capa's trick with the similar one he pulled on Dus

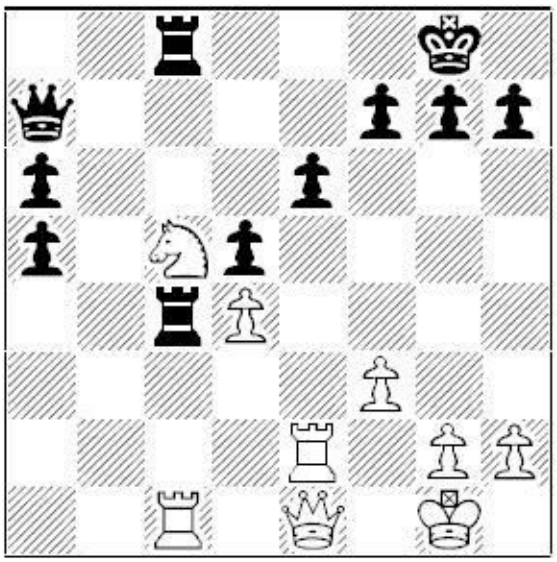
Chotimirsky in this chapter (Game 34).

31 ... Nxd4!

Capa was unrivalled in his hyper-alert ability to spot short-range combinations.

32 cxd4

Step 2: X-ray/double attack on c1 and g1. The queen, hidden on a7, emerges triumphant in the end.



32 ... R8xc5! 0-1

Black's queen, still hidden away on a7, decides the game.

Game 39

J.R.Capablanca-A.Alekhine

3rd matchgame, Buenos Aires 1927

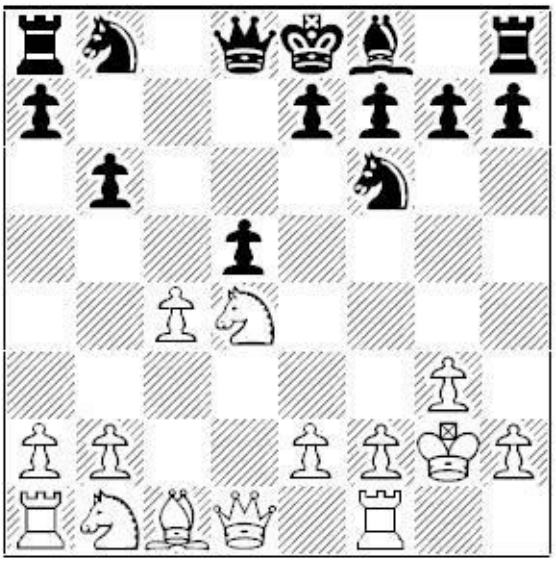
Queen's Indian Defence

1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 b6 3 g3 Bb7 4 Bg2 c5 5 0-0 cxd4 6 Nxd4 Bxg2 7 Kxg2 d5!?

Risky, but possibly still playable. From a practical standpoint it may be wiser to slowly prepare ... d7-d5 with something like 7 ... g6 8 c4 Bg7 9 Nc3 Qc8 10 b3 Qb7+ 11 f3 d5 12 cxd5 Nxd5 13 Nxd5 Qxd5 14 Be3 Nc6 15 Nxc6 Qxc6 16 Rc1 Qe6 17 Qd3 0-0, when White was unable to make anything of his lead in development, M.Tal-L.Polugaevsky, USSR Championship, Moscow 1976.

8 c4!

chesstouring.com



Principle: Open the game when ahead in development.

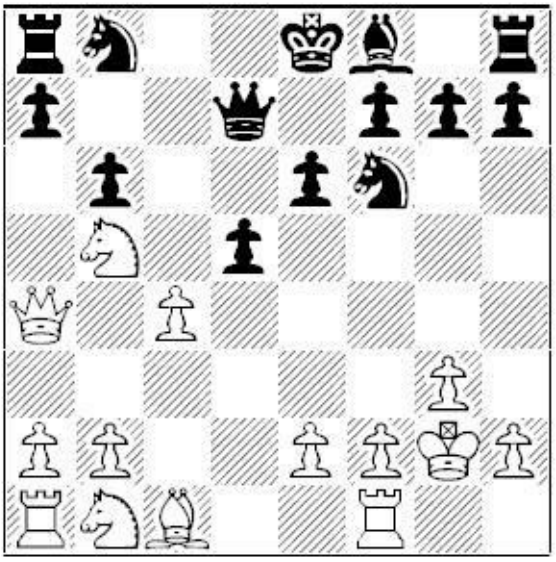
8 ... e6?

This innocuous move costs Alekhine dearly. He should clear the centre with 8 ... dxc4! 9 Qa4+ Nbd7 10 Rd1 Qc8 11 Na3 a6 12 Qxc4 e6 13 b3 Qb7+ 14 Qc6 Qxc6+ 15 Nxc6 Rc8 16 Nd4 Bc5 17 Bb2 0-0, when the storm had passed and Black equalized, R.Knobel-M.Read, correspondence 1998.

9 Qa4+! Qd7

After 9 ... Nbd7 10 cxd5 Nxd5 11 e4 N5f6 12 Rd1 Black has to deal with unpleasant pressure on the c6-square and d-file.

10 Nb5!



Threat: Nc7+.

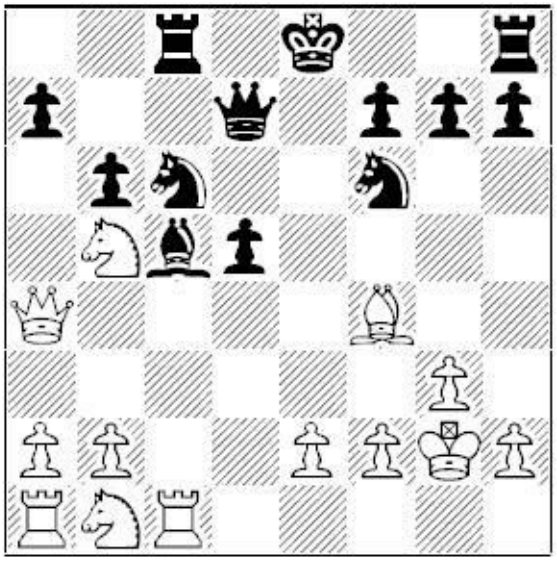
10 ... Nc6 11 cxd5 exd5!

Question: Why not recapture with the knight
instead of taking on a weakness?

Answer: Black falls dangerously behind in development and ends up in a dreadful position after 11 ... Nxd5? 12 e4 Nf6 13 Bf4 Rc8 14 N1a3 Be7 15 Rfd1 Qb7 16 Nc7+! Kf8 (the knight can't be touched) 17 Rac1.

chesstouring.com

12 Bf4 Rc8 13 Rc1 Bc5



Exercise (combination alert): White must act quickly to exploit his lead in development. What would you play here?

Answer: Principle: Create confrontation when ahead in development.

14 b4! Bxb4?

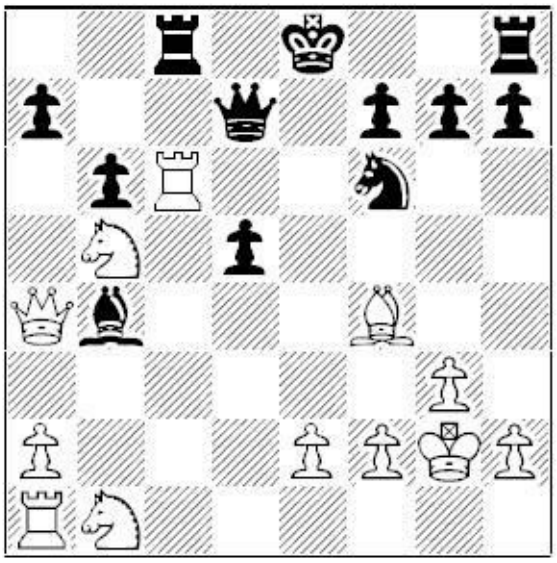
Alekhine reasons: Better to lose a limb than life itself. Correct reasoning, but he picked the wrong limb! He can minimize the pain by handing over an exchange for a pawn in the line 14 ... Nxb4! 15 Nd6+! Ke7 16 Qxd7+ Kxd7 17 Nxc8 Rxc8.

Question: Why must Black give any material when he can simply retreat with 14 ... Be7?

Answer: Retreat of the bishop loses instantly to 15 Nc7+.

15 Rxc6!

Removal of the defender.



15 ... Rxc6 16 Qxb4 Ne4 17 Nd2?!

chesstouring.com

The positional player's disease: Refusal to weaken in order to increase piece activity. Instead, after 17 f3! Nc5 18 N1c3 0-0 19 Rd1 Black collapses quickly.

17 ... Nxd2 18 Qxd2

Question: Why did Capa allow Alekhine to castle?

Answer: Black gets to castle no matter how White recaptures. For instance: 18 Bxd2 Rc5 19 Nd4 Rc4 20 Qb2 0-0.

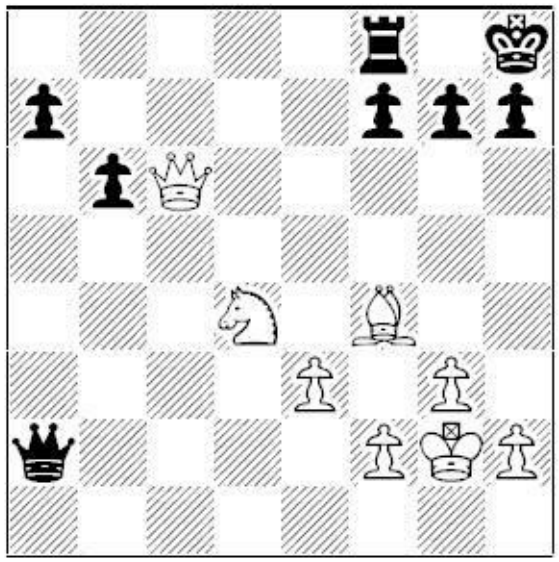
18 ... 0-0 19 Rd1 Rc5 20 Nd4 Re8 21 Nb3 Rcc8 22 e3 Qa4 23 Qxd5! Rc2 24 Rd2 Rxa2

Black hopes for a future payday from his two connected passers on the a- and b-files.

25 Rxa2?!

Positional player's disease number 2: Underestimating one's own initiative. Capa, with feline indifference, swaps when he should keep pieces on the board. 25 Rd4! Qa6 26 Rc4! is much better, when the coming Rc7 is decisive.

25 ... Qxa2 26 Qc6 Rf8 27 Nd4 Kh8



Exercise (planning): White is slightly up in the material count with two minor pieces for rook and pawn. However, if he sits around, Black's two connected passers rumble forward. Come up with a plan for White.

Answer: Play for a direct attack on Black's poorly defended king.

28 Be5! f6

Question: Didn't Black just help out his opponent by weakening?

Answer: Black can't save himself if he avoids weakening. For example: 28 ... Qa5 29 Bd6 Rg8 30 e4! Qg5 31 Nf5 Qf6 32 Qb7 Qe6 33 Ba3 a5 34 Nd6 Rf8 35 Qxb6 is hopeless for Black.

29 Ne6!

The power of White's forces amplify in exponential magnitude.

29 ... Rg8

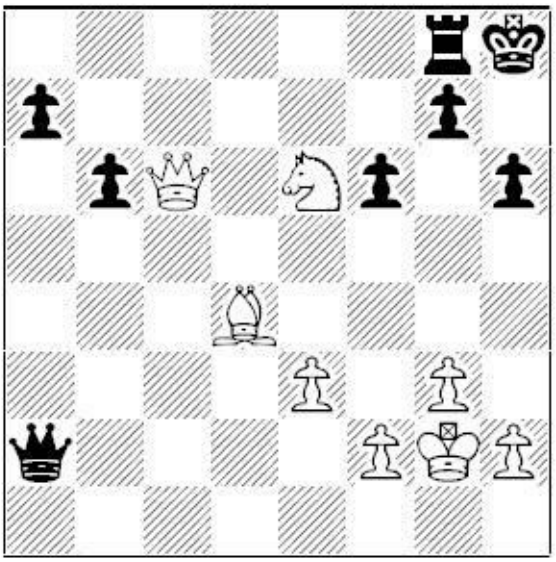
In past centuries royals married for political alliances, when love had to give way to power and survival. The rook/king duo is a loveless but necessary marriage to keep Black's king alive for the moment. Black's rook, a parody of its former self, clutches g7 as a hungry monkey would a ripe banana.

30 Bd4

As always, Capa's pieces are perfectly placed. The bishop takes aim at Black's king and also keeps an eye out in case Black's passers attempt a queening run.

30 ... h6

chesstouring.com



31 h4!

Another attacker surges forward.

Question: Didn't White just miss a killing sac on g7?

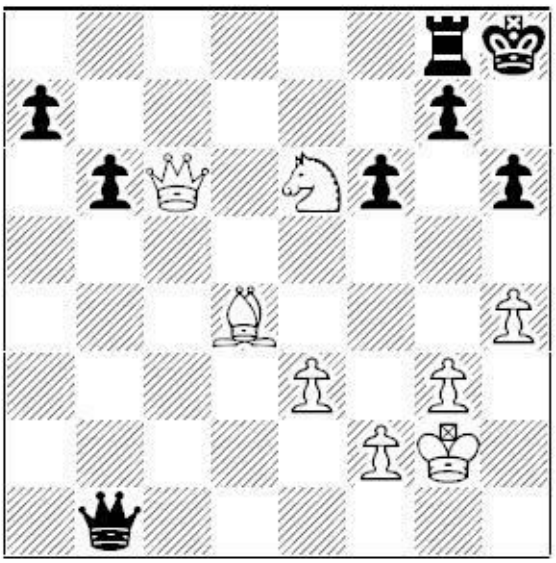
Answer: Your line should win but it isn't the best path. 31 Nxg7 Rxg7 32 Bxf6 Kh7 33 Bxg7 Kxg7 is not as clear since White still has to worry about those queenside passers.

The principle: A queen ending is the worst one to be up a pawn or pawns.

I learned this the hard way. I remember losing one as a kid. Up three pawns, I thought I was about to upset an expert. Unfortunately he queened first and my extra pawns meant nothing.

31 ... Qb1

31 ... Kh7 32 e4! Qe2 33 Qd5 Re8 34 Qf5+ Kg8 35 Bxf6! decimates the defensive barrier.



Exercise (combination alert): Find the knockout punch.

Answer: **32 Nxg7!**

Capa collects on an old debt by pressing the knife to Black's throat and extracting a single drop of blood. Sacs on g7 and f6, for so long the silent sub-narrative in the position, now grow very real. Even though Capa lost his title match to Alekhine, this crushing victory must have given him great satisfaction. Vengeance fails to return our dead, but it does make us feel a lot better!

chesstouring.com

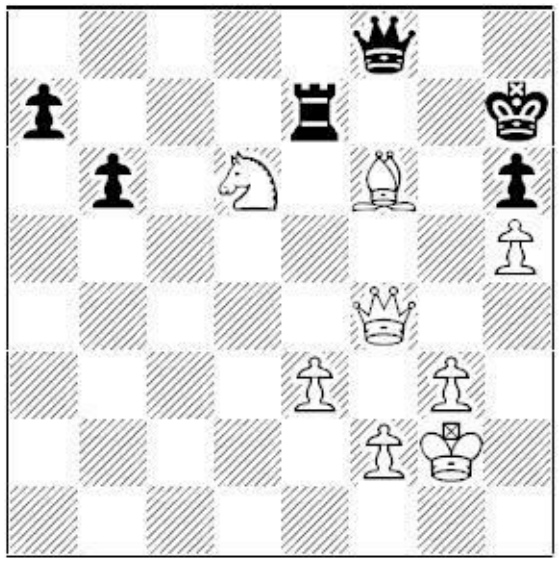
32 ... Qg6

After 32 ... Rxg7 33 Qxf6 Qe4+ 34 Kg1 Qb7 35 Qxh6+ Kg8 36 Bxg7 Qxg7 37 Qxg7+! Kxg7 38 Kf1!, White's king, within the square of the a-pawn, is easily capable of halting Black's two passers. The same cannot be said of Black's poor king, who gets overwhelmed by the white armada on the other side.

33 h5! Qf7 34 Nf5 Kh7

After 34 ... Rf8 35 Nxh6 Qxh5 36 Bxf6+ Kh7 37 Qd7+! Kxh6 38 Qg7 is mate!

35 Qe4 Re8 36 Qf4 Qf8 37 Nd6 Re7 38 Bxf6



Black's beleaguered king descends into a madman's nightmare and soon the ocean of attackers spits out the bloated corpse on the beach.

38 ... Qa8+ 39 e4 Rg7 40 Bxg7 Kxg7 41 Nf5+ Kf7 42 Qc7+ 1-0

The queenside passers never had time to move forward a single square.

Game 40

J.R.Capablanca-V.Ragozin

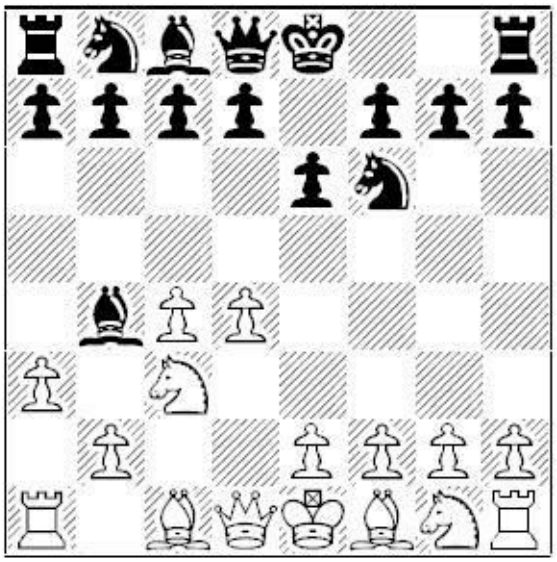
Moscow 1935

Nimzo-Indian Defence

Capa's prime was behind him when this game was played, yet his aura of invincibility remained. Watch how tentatively the Russian Grandmaster plays the Cuban legend.

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 a3

chesstouring.com



A very un-Capa opening choice.

Question: What is this line?

Answer: I may need to forward your question to my editor, GM John Emms, an expert on the line, who recently authored a *Move by Move* book on the Nimzo, and also heads the Nimzo-Indian section on the website Chesspublishing – but I will try to explain. The Sämisch Variation is perhaps White's most radical choice versus the Nimzo-Indian. He expends a tempo to force ... Bxc3+, a move Black often plays later on anyway. White gets the bishop pair and a rolling centre, while Black gets the long-term chances due to his superior structure. In essence White must attack or face a difficult tomorrow should an ending arise. Today, it isn't played too often since theory worked out promising defensive schemes for Black's side. As time marches on and computers grow stronger, the attacking side always seems to take one on the chin theoretically.

4 ... Bxc3+ 5 bxc3 d6

A modern interpretation of the line may run: 5 ... c5 6 e3 0-0 7 Bd3 Nc6 8 Ne2 b6 9 e4 Ne8 10 0-0 Ba6 11 Ng3 Na5 12 f4!? Bxc4 13 Bxc4 Nxc4 14 f5 cxd4 15 cxd4 f6, B.Jobava-R.Wojtaszek, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011.

Question: Does White get full compensation here?

Answer: I harbour grave doubts about White's compensation for the pawn at this point, but Jobava is a super-GM and perhaps knows something about the position I don't.

6 Qc2

Playing for e2-e4 in one go.

6 ... 0-0 7 e4 e5 8 Bd3 c5 9 Ne2 Nc6 10 d5

Question: Doesn't locking the centre help Black, who has the knights?

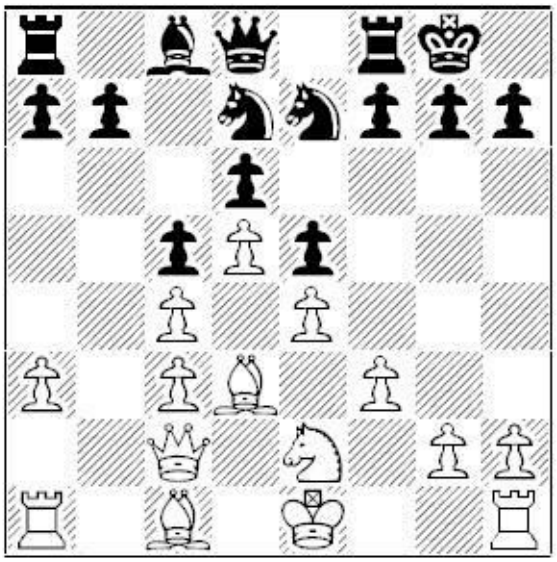
Answer: It does and it doesn't. Remember, White plans a kingside attack based on his extra space. Principles have an odd way of working, even when we don't fully understand them. White follows the principle: Lock the centre before launching a wing attack.

10 ... Ne7

10 ... Na5 11 a4 Nh5 (better is 11 ... b6 12 Ng3 Ba6 13 Qa2) 12 h4 Qf6 13 f3 h6 14 Kf2 Bd7 15 Bd2 a6? 16 Qb2! Rfc8 (16 ... Qd8 17 g4 gives White a powerful attack) 17 Qb6 Qd8 18 Qxd6 with a superior position for White, D.Navara-D.Andreikin, Havana 2011.

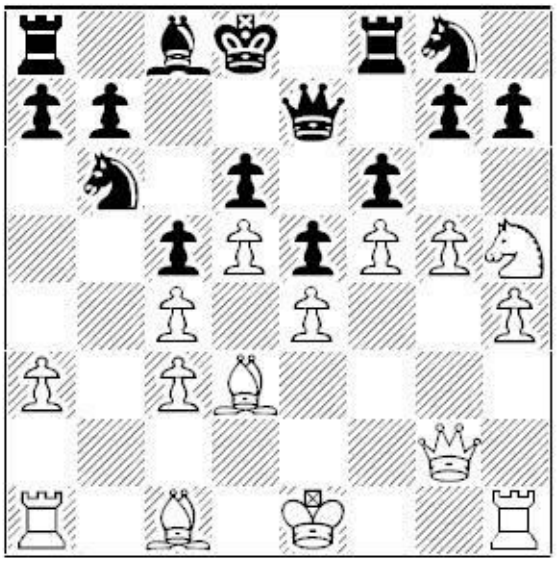
chesstouring.com

11 f3 Nd7



Exercise (planning): White hopes for a kingside attack.
How would you proceed?
Answer: Pushing pawns and gaining kingside space.
12 h4!!
For the time a startlingly original idea, which is much stronger than castling.
12 ... Nb6?!
Black misplaces his knight in a naive attempt to engineer ... f7-f5.
13 g4!
Nyet! Of course, Capa isn't going to allow Ragozin his break.
13 ... f6 14 Ng3 Kf7!
Nothing spooks the herd more than the scent of predators nearby. Ragozin, not liking the look of dark clouds on the kingside, correctly decides to leave town and head for the relative safety of the queenside.
15 g5!
No less than a cry to arms. Capa waves the bloody shirt to ignite the revolution on the kingside. Compare Capa's play with his game against Menchik from the previous chapter (Game 31).
Question: What good does it do to open the kingside
if Black's king runs away to the other side?
Answer: Although Black's plan denies White a direct attack, in no way does it dampen White's kingside initiative.
15 ... Ng8 16 f4! Ke8 17 f5!
As he did in his game against Treybal last chapter (game 30), Capa annexes territory at a pace which warms the hearts of dictators worldwide.
17 ... Qe7 18 Qg2 Kd8 19 Nh5!

chesstouring.com



Targeting g7 as an entry point. If White gets his knight to e6, Black will be strategically busted.

19 ... Kc7 20 gxf6! gxf6

20 ... Nxf6? drops a pawn to 21 Qxg7 Rf7 22 Qh6.

21 Ng7!

Destination: e6. The knight enters the dark cave, aware of the watching eyes around it.

21 ... Bd7 22 h5 Rac8 23 h6! Kb8 24 Rg1 Rf7 25 Rb1 Qf8

The queen's lips grow thin in annoyance. g8 must be defended against sudden Ne6 tricks.

26 Be2!

Eyeing h5 for the bishop.

26 ... Ka8

The king celebrates the fact that he sneaked through White's net since the mesh wasn't fine enough to trap him – yet. Black hopes to utilize a cheap and abundant labour force on the queenside to keep his king safe.

27 Bh5 Re7

Question: Can't Black buy some freedom
with an exchange sac for a pawn?

Answer: Black can't bribe his way out of this one. The exchange sac fails to alleviate the pressure after 27 ... Nxc4 28 Bxf7 Qxf7 29 Qe2 b5 30 Ne6. White retains a crushing bind and there is no answer to infiltration with Rg7 next.

28 Qa2 Qd8 29 Bd2 Na4 30 Qb3 Nb6

Question: Shouldn't Black be trying for
counterplay through the a ... b7-b5 break?

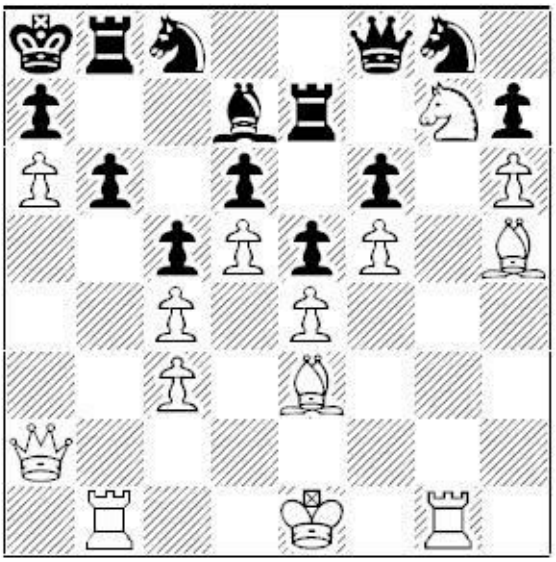
Answer: Capa's iron grip on the position sees to it that all Black breaks sputter and fail miserably. For example: 30 ... Rb8?? 31 Ne6 Bxe6 32 fxe6 Nb6 33 Bf7 wins.

31 a4! Rb8

The a-pawn is taboo: 31 ... Bxa4? 32 Qa2 Bd7 33 Ne6 Bxe6 34 fxe6. The trouble is that Bf7 is threatened, and if Black makes way for the knight with 34 ... Rec7??, then the knight on b6 hangs to 35 Rxb6 because Black has generously opened the a-file.

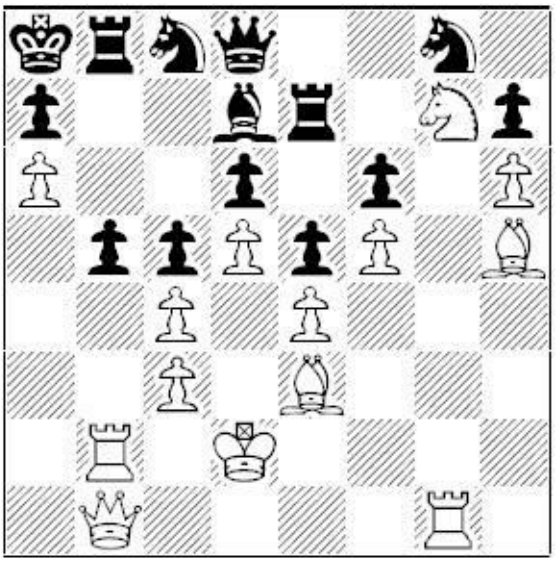
32 a5 Nc8 33 Qa2 Qf8 34 Be3 b6 35 a6!

chesstouring.com



About now, Ragozin was probably admiring Treybal's position from last chapter! Black's one and only prayer is that White overextends in his attempts to get him. Unfortunately for him, Capa almost never overextended, due to his masterful positional control.

35 ... Qd8 36 Kd2 Qf8 37 Rb2 Qd8 38 Qb1 b5!?



Tolerance has its limits. Black attempts a clumsy rearguard uprising. But who can blame him? One can turn the other cheek for only so long.

Question: What if Black does nothing and
shuffles between f8 and d8 with his queen?

Answer: White then patiently times a proper entry down the g-file. For example: 38 ... Qf8 39 Rg3 Qd8 40 Qg1 Qf8 41 Ne8! (threatening mate in one) 41 ... Rxe8 42 Bxe8 Qxe8 43 Rxg8 wins.

39 cxb5 Nb6 40 Qa2 c4

Before White plays the move himself.

41 Qa3! Qc7 42 Kc1! Rf8 43 Rbg2! Qb8

43 ... Bxb5?? loses instantly to 44 Ne6.

chesstouring.com

44 Qb4 Rd8 45 Rg3

What a squeeze! In such positions, Capa toys with his helpless opponent, avoiding the immediate 45

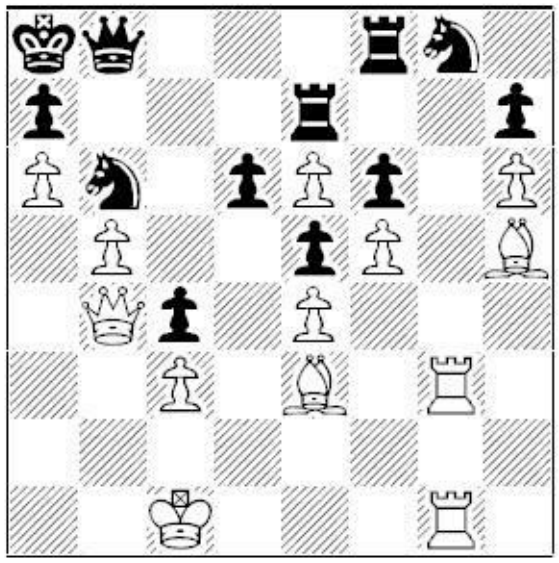
Ne6.

Question: Isn't the line 45 ... Rc8 46 Rg7 crushing for White?

Answer: It is, but what is the rush? Sometimes when my position is incredibly good, I tend to be slow to take action, simply because I enjoy the view so much!

45 ... Rf8 46 Ne6 Bxe6 47 dxe6

The sum of all of Black's fears: Death by asphyxiation. Ragozin opens his mouth to speak but the words won't come out. It's almost difficult to believe that Capa's opponent was a strong GM of his day. There is no good defence to the coming Bf7.



47 ... Rc7

47 ... Qd8 48 Bf7 wins, as does 47 ... Rd8 48 Bf7.

48 Qxd6 Ne7 49 Rd1 1-0

In the history of chess literature, it's hard to find a superior example of how to exploit a territorial advantage than this game. I maintain my claim that Capa was two or more generations ahead of his day strategically. It once again looks like a modern day world champion, such as Kramnik, suddenly transported by time machine to Moscow, 1935, and played the white pieces.

Game 41

J.R.Capablanca-M.Euwe

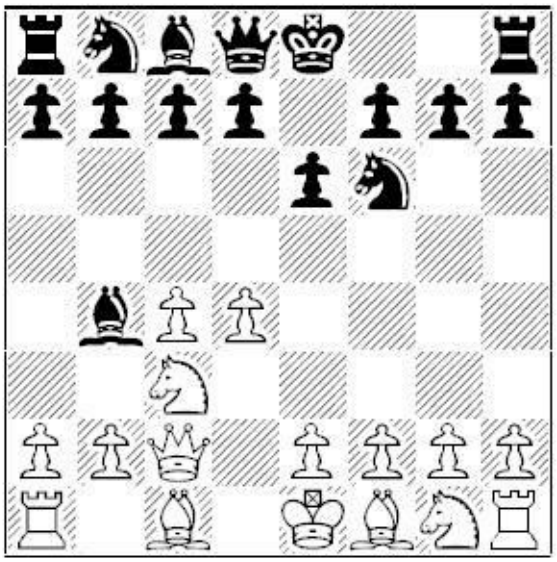
AVRO Tournament, Holland 1938

Nimzo-Indian Defence

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2

Capa's specialty line against the Nimzo. Unlike the position he reached versus Ragozin (in Game 40), this time Capa may recapture on c3 with his queen, preserving the integrity of his pawn structure.

chesstouring.com



Question: This seems to be a better path
than allowing Black ... Bxc3, b2xc3 – correct?

Answer: I prefer this line over the Sämisch, but keep in mind, 4 Qc2 costs White time to avoid weakening his structure: Qc2, a2-a3, Qxc3 and then move the queen again if Black plays ... Ne4 later on.

4 ... d5

4 ... 0-0 and 4 ... c5 are also played here.

5 cxd5 Qxd5

5 ... exd5 can heat up quickly. For example: 6 Bg5 h6 7 Bh4 c5 8 dxc5 g5 9 Bg3 Ne4 10 e3 Qa5 11 Nge2 Bf5 12 Be5 with head-spinning complications, G.Kasparov-N.Short, 9th matchgame, London 1993.

6 Nf3 c5

Today the main line runs 6 ... Qf5 7 Qxf5 exf5 8 a3 Be7 9 Bf4 c6 10 e3, when it is deceptively difficult to extract anything from the position, S.Zhigalko-R.Wojtaszek, Polish Team Championship 2011.

7 Bd2 Bxc3 8 Bxc3 cxd4

Question: Can Black regain the bishop pair with 8 ... Ne4?

Answer: The move simply drops a pawn to 9 dxc5!.

9 Nxd4 e5 10 Nf5 Bxf5 11 Qxf5 Nc6

Question: Isn't this position just bad for Black?

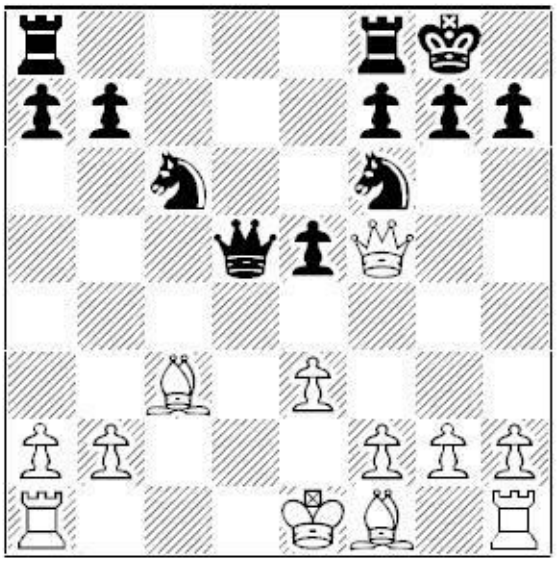
Answer: Not necessarily. White has both bishops, but don't discount Black's development lead and greater central control.

Question: Is an open position better for the bishops
or for the side with a lead in development?

Answer: From my experience, the side leading in development usually benefits the most, but perhaps not here. The chances look dynamically balanced. Stylistically, I would take White if given a choice.

12 e3 0-0

chesstouring.com



Exercise (planning): White has obvious problems completing his development. If he moves his f1-bishop he drops g2. If he moves his a-rook he drops his a2-pawn. Come up with a plan to complete development.

Answer: Temporarily sac the g-pawn.

13 Be2! Qe4

White stands a shade better in the ending if Black takes the pawn: 13 ... Qxg2 14 Bf3 Qg6 15 Qxg6 hxg6 16 Bxc6 bxc6 17 Bxe5.

Question: This doesn't look like much for White, correct?

Answer: I agree in theory, but still: White can play for a win due to potential pressure on c6 and the bishop over knight imbalance. Nobody in their right mind would willingly enter a slightly worse technical ending versus Capa!

14 Qf3

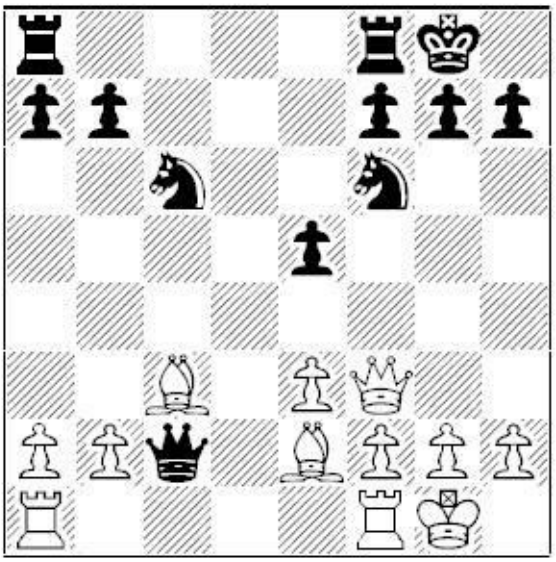
Playing for the win. 14 Qxe4 Nxe4 15 Rc1 Nxc3 16 Rxc3 Rac8 17 Bf3 Na5 is drawish.

14 ... Qc2!?

Hoping to prevent castling. Euwe didn't like the prospects of an ending versus Capa's bishop pair after 14 ... Qxf3 15 gxf3 Nd5 16 Bd2, but his chances look better here than in the line he played in the game.

15 0-0!

chesstouring.com



Anyway.

15 ... Rad8

15 ... e4?, which disconnects White's queen from the e2-bishop, fails miserably to 16 Qg3 Qxe2 (16 ... Ne8? 17 Bb5! a6 18 Rac1 traps Black's queen) 17 Bxf6 g6 18 Qf4 Qh5 19 Rfd1 Qf5 20 Qxf5 gxf5 21 Rd7 and Black can barely move.

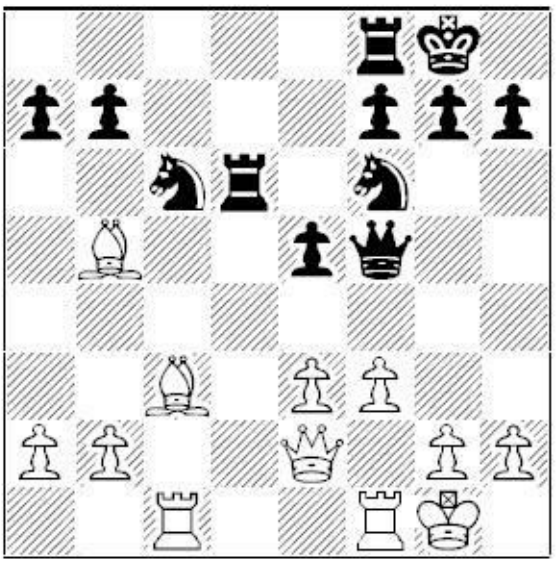
16 Bb5

Double attack on c6 and the e5-pawn. Capa missed the strange computer trick 16 Ba6!, which leads to a clear advantage for White.

16 ... Rd5 17 Rac1 Qe4?!

He should try his luck in a slightly inferior position after 17 ... Qg6 18 Bxc6 bxc6 19 Bb4.

18 Qe2! Rd6 19 f3 Qf5

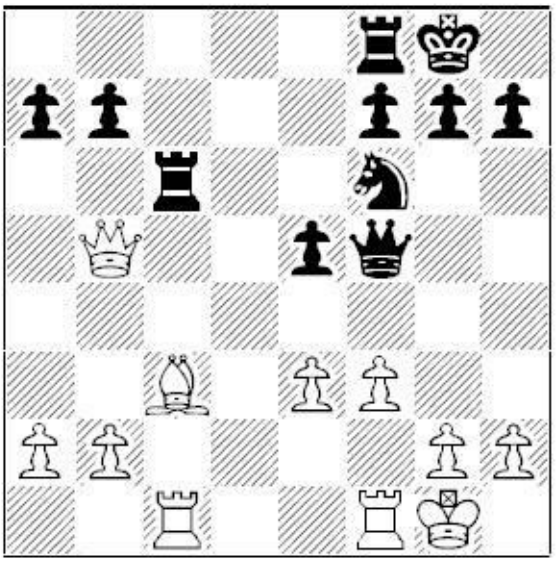


Exercise (combination alert): Look around. White can win material by setting up a double attack.

Answer: Part of the power of ownership of the bishop pair is the fact that one of them can usually be exchanged off for a knight at will at the favourable moment. This is one such moment.

chesstouring.com

20 Bxc6! Rxc6 21 Qb5!



There it is. Both e5 and b7 are loose. Black must abandon one of them.

21 ... Rfc8 22 Qxb7 Qd3 23 e4

White is up a clean pawn and weakness-free. This move may actually be stronger than the weird computer-shot 23 Qxa7 R6c7 24 Bd2!! Rxc1 25 Bxc1. Only computers and people with strange brains like Morozevich, Shirov and Nakamura are capable of spotting geometric anomalies like this.

Question: Isn't this better than what White got in the game?

Answer: I'm not so sure. In this case White hangs on to both pawns but is also strangely tied down and passive. He may have difficulty making progress without handing over a pawn.

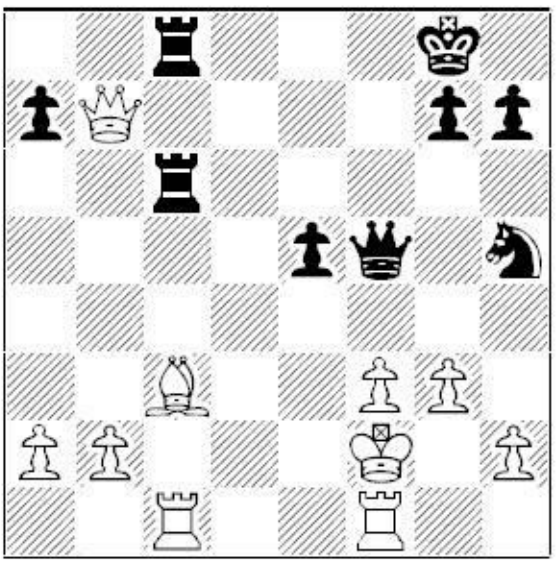
23 ... Nh5

Euwe, gauging the temperature, decides his position is untenable in the long run and launches a last ditch, all-out attack.

24 g3 Qe3+ 25 Kg2 Qg5 26 Kf2!

Note how Capa deprives Black of a key bargaining chip by leaving his queen on b7. In doing so, Black can't easily swing the c6-rook into the attack since he hangs his other one on c8.

26 ... f5!? 27 exf5 Qxf5



chesstouring.com

Euwe is no miser who parcels out coins carefully. He refuses to step on the brakes and back off with

27 ... Nf6. When all logical avenues have been exhausted, human nature dictates that we turn to gambling.

Exercise (critical decision): Euwe dares Capa to play

28 g4, which wins a piece. Would you go for it?

Answer: White should accept the piece. The sac is unsound since Black's attack can't be sustained. Black's shaky theory behind the sac: Culpability in one crime can be erased by committing another, which fixes the first! A person cannot simultaneously be both spontaneous and calculating, yet Euwe's sac gives one the impression of just that.

28 g4! Qf4 29 gxh5 Qxh2+ 30 Ke3

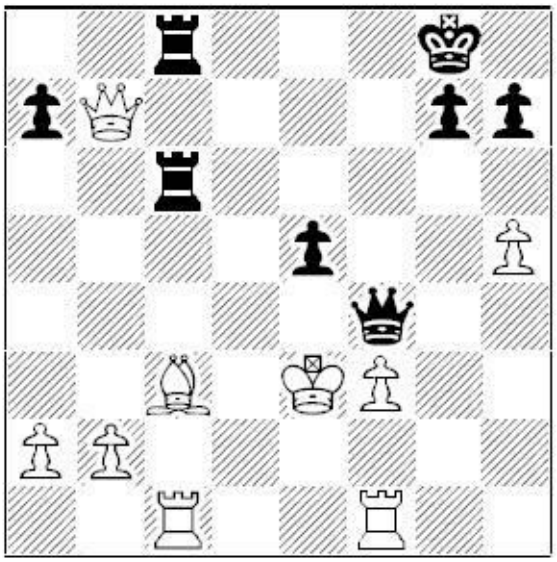
Every scar on a soldier's body is hard earned.

Question: Why isn't this game in the *Defence* chapter of the book?

Answer: I almost bunged it in there. It also fit in Chapter 3, *Exploiting Imbalances*, since it's a good example of how to play bishops against a knight pair. Capa's games were rarely one dimensional.

30 ... Qf4+

The lone attacking queen, an enraged teddy bear, fails to intimidate. Euwe tries in vain to grab hold of something tangible in his attempted attack but instead reaches for a reflection of a reflection.



31 Ke2 Qc4+ 32 Ke1 Qd3

Black's attack also runs out of gas after 32 ... Qh4+ 33 Rf2 Qh1+ 34 Kd2 Qxh5 35 Rg1 Qh6+ 36 f4!.

33 Qb3+ Kh8 34 Rc2!

Too many defenders; too few attackers. Capa balances his pieces with ease upon an uneven surface. His last move renders Black's would-be attack null and void.

34 ... Rf6

White consolidates after 34 ... Qe3+ 35 Re2 Qc1+ 36 Kf2 Qf4 37 Rh1 Rf8 38 Bxe5.

35 Rd2 Qf5 36 Qc2 Qf4 37 Qe4

The secret of successful defence: Centralize.

37 ... Qg3+ 38 Rff2 Qg1+ 39 Ke2 Rff8 40 h6! 1-0

chesstouring.com

Chapter Five
Capa on Endings

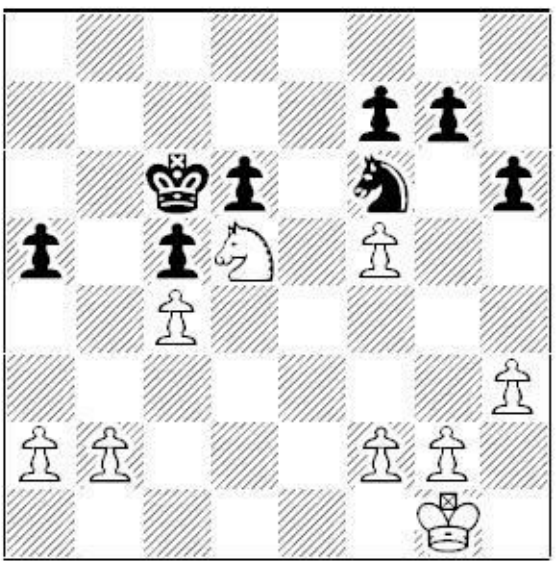
We finally get our hands on the good stuff. Capa's endings continue to exert their fascination upon new generations, long after his death. No player in the history of the game monopolized a single phase as Capa did in endings. He wasn't just superior to his opponents in the endgame. He consistently dominated, even after his prime. Capa invariably found hidden meaning in the most trifling shifts in the position, to which most of his opponents were oblivious. If he stood better in the ending, he nearly always won. In drawish endings he often won. And when he stood worse – you guessed it! – he usually still drew or won.

It was difficult to pick from so many instructive examples. This chapter is but a tiny sliver of the whole. Unlike other chapters in the book, where the games are ordered chronologically, in this chapter we start with the more basic endgames and then progress to the more crowded ones with more pieces on the board.

Game 42
J.R.Capablanca-A.G.Conde
Hastings 1919
Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 d6 6 Bxc6+ bxc6 7 d4 exd4 8 Nxd4 Be7 9 Nc3 Bd7 10 Bg5 0-0 11 Qd3 Re8 12 Rfe1 h6 13 Bh4 c5 14 Nf5 Bxf5 15 exf5 Qd7 16 h3 a5 17 Re2 Nh7 18 Bxe7 Rxe7 19 Rxe7 Qxe7 20 Nd5 Qd7 21 Re1 Re8 22 Rxe8+ Qxe8 23 Qe3 Qd7 24 Qe7 Qxe7 25 Nxe7+ Kf8 26 Nd5 Ke8 27 Nxc7+ Kd7 28 Nd5 Kc6 29 c4 Nf6

The incessant haggling continues. Black seeks control over d5 as the vital component to his strategy, even at the cost of a pawn down king and pawn ending.



Exercise (critical decision): Assess the position. Should we trade knights, or is the king and pawn ending drawn if we do so?
Answer: Take the plunge.
30 Nxf6!

chesstouring.com

Capa soon proves that Black chased a conclusion which the position refuses to support. Black is dead

lost in the king and pawn ending.

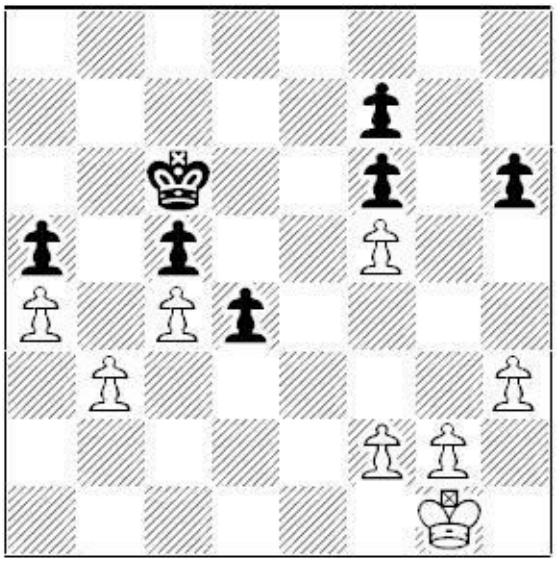
30 ... gxf6

Black threatens ... d6-d5 next, which either gives him king position or a protected, passed d-pawn if ... d5-d4 is allowed.

31 a4!?

Capa didn't like 31 Kf1 d5 32 cxd5+ Kxd5 33 Ke2 Ke4 which the computers say wins for White as well.

31 ... d5 32 b3! d4



Question: Isn't Capablanca's 31st move a "??"

The position has to be a dead draw now.

Answer: It isn't. Let's assess:

1. White is up a doubled extra pawn on the kingside. It is important to realize that White can still create a passed pawn with his majority. At the moment this doesn't seem to bother Black a bit since his king can await and block the coming passer on the kingside.

2. Black's pride and joy is his passed and fortified d4-pawn. This pawn keeps White's king honest and near the d1 queening square.

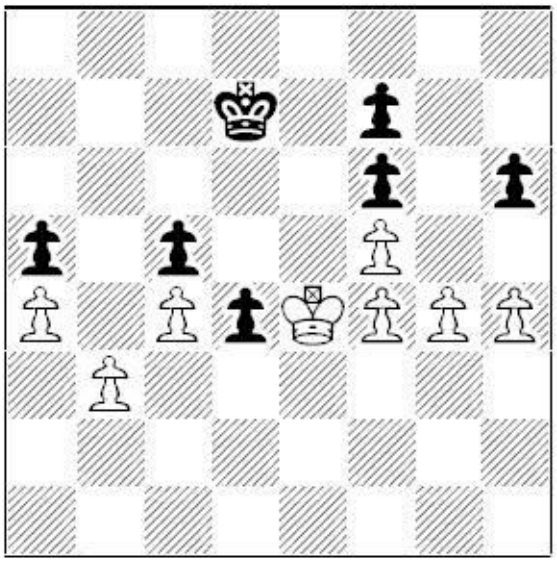
The position does indeed look drawn, but looks are deceptive. The position contains a hidden win for White which Capablanca had foreseen.

33 f4

Denying the black king entry via e5.

33 ... Kd6 34 g4 Ke7 35 Kf2 Kd6 36 Kf3 Ke7 37 Ke4 Kd6 38 h4 Kd7

chesstouring.com



Exercise (planning/combination alert): The position looks like a dead draw, with neither side able to make progress. If you discover the correct idea, we find that Capa's side does indeed win. How?

Answer: Sac the (almost!) useless b3-pawn in order to create a second passer. Capa tosses his pawn negligently forward one move into hostile territory, as if any square will do.

39 b4!!

Capa's last move must have had the effect of a slap across the face to his opponent, as the armies abruptly collide with titanic force.

39 ... axb4

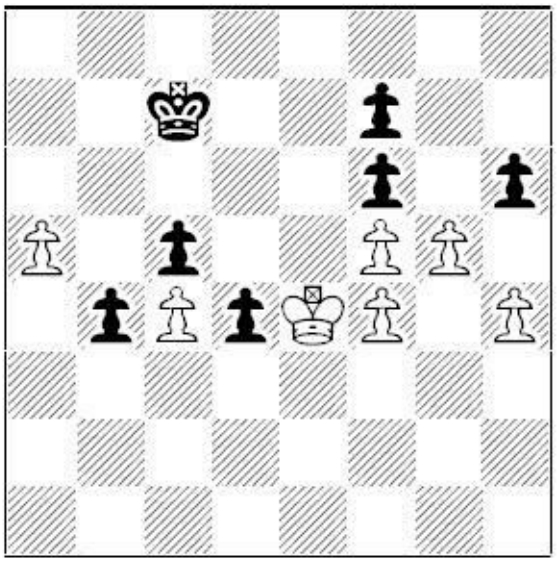
It doesn't matter which way Black captures. White wins with exactly the same plan both ways.

Question: Wait a minute. If this is the end of the world, then the end

of the world doesn't seem so bad. How does White's pawn sac help? Capablanca just handed Black two passers as well.

Answer: He gave Black a duo of passers only one file apart. This means White's king is perfectly equipped to halt them both. On the other hand, White's passers, a world apart, mean Black's king is helpless to stop them.

40 a5 Kc7 41 g5!



chesstouring.com

Sorry rabbit, this is the turtle's race to win. The second passer-in-waiting soon emerges.

41 ... fxg5 42 fxg5 hxg5 43 hxg5 b3

Where do you think you are going? Black's pawn sits only two squares from promotion, yet it feels like infinite distance.

44 Kd3

The crow grows attracted to the shiny object on b3. The optimistic b-pawn, hoping to win a race, finds itself in a cul-de-sac.

44 ... Kd7

Make up your mind. Are you trying to halt the a-pawn or the g-pawn? Black's king, floating in a limbo of indecision, can only barricade one or the other. When you are lost and without a GPS, each direction looks much like the others.

45 g6 fxg6 46 fxg6 1-0

Black's king, with a sigh of resignation, passively witnesses the operation unfold, utterly powerless to partake.

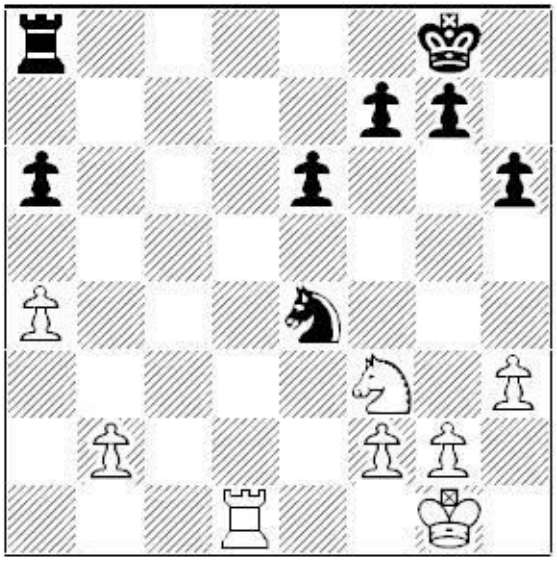
Game 43

O.Duras-J.R.Capablanca

New York 1913

Queen's Gambit Accepted

1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 c4 e6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 e3 a6 6 Bxc4 b5 7 Bd3 Bb7 8 a4 b4 9 Nb1 c5 10 0-0 Nc6 11 dxc5 Bxc5 12 Qe2 Qd5 13 Rd1 Qh5 14 Nbd2 Na5 15 Nf1 0-0 16 Ng3 Qg4 17 e4 Nb3 18 Rb1 Rfd8 19 Be3 Nxe4 20 Bc2 Bxe3 21 Qxe3 Nbc5 22 h3 Qg6 23 Nxe4 Rxd1+ 24 Rxd1 Bxe4 25 Bxe4 Nxe4 26 Qd4 h6 27 Qxb4 Nf6 28 Qb7 Qe4 29 Qxe4 Nxe4



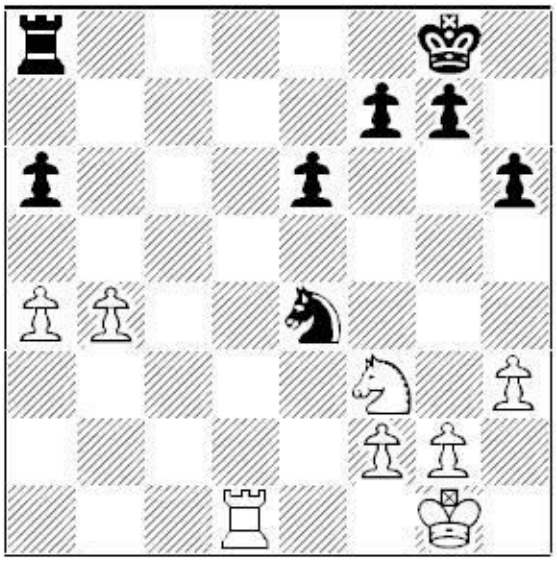
Question: Who stands better?

Answer: The only significant imbalance is opposite wing pawn majorities. White has a 2:1 queenside pawn majority, normally an advantage. As we shall see, his majority isn't so easy to mobilize. I would assess the position as "+=". White stands better but Black should hold the draw. However, these generalities don't apply to Capa, who routinely won slightly inferior endings throughout his career.

chesstouring.com

30 b4?

The correct path lies in 30 Ne5! a5 (attempting to fix in place White's majority of two with a single unit) 31 Rd4 Nc5 32 Rc4 Nb3! 33 Rc3 Rb8 34 Nd7! Rd8! (34 ... Rb4?! 35 Rc8+ Kh7 36 Nf8+ Kg8 37 Nxe6+ is at least a draw if White wants one) 35 Rxb3 Rxd7 36 Rb5 Rd2 and should end in a draw.



Exercise (combination alert): The easiest mistake is the "natural" move. In this case White mistimes the mobilization of his majority. Black to play and force the win of a pawn.

Answer: Double attack on d1 and a4.

30 ... Nc3! 31 Rd3

Instead:

a) 31 Ra1 Rb8 32 Ra3 Nd5 picks off a pawn.

b) 31 Rd7 a5! (31 ... Nxa4?! 32 Ne5 should give White enough kingside counterplay to hold the draw) 32 bxa5 Rxa5 and a4 falls, all the while Black's well-placed rook deprives his opponent of Ne5 counterplay.

31 ... Nxa4 32 Ra3 Nb6

As long as the rook on a8 is protected, b4-b5 is not a threat.

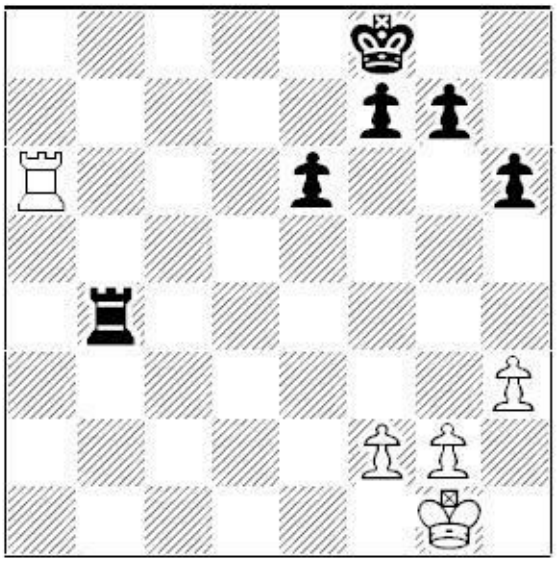
33 Ne5 Kf8 34 Nd3 Nd5 35 Ra4

Intending Nc5.

35 ... Rb8 36 Rxa6 Nxb4 37 Nxb4 Rxb4

So White made significant progress in his goal to draw the game by clearing the queenside of pawns.

chesstouring.com



Question: Is this a dead draw?

Answer: It *is* a draw since all pawns are on one side but by no means a *dead* draw. Black's practical chances shouldn't be underestimated. This is one of those positions everyone thinks is a trivial draw, yet would lose to someone on the pawn-up side who knows what they are doing. I have seen strong GMs lose the pawn-down side in 4 versus 3 situations – just as Duras is destined to this game. We all think we know how to draw here, but few do! So let's learn it. Which patient was ever cured by ignoring the doctor's prescription?

38 Ra7

If 38 g3!, intending h3-h4 next move, then Black should prevent this optimal defensive set-up with 38 ... g5!.

38 ... h5

Intending ... h5-h4.

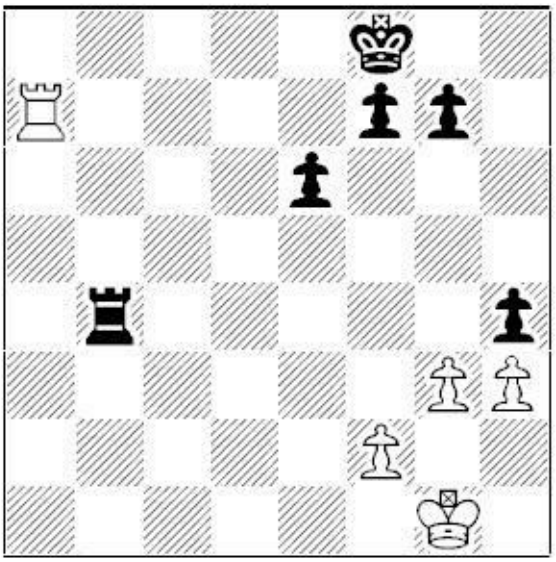
39 g3!?

Those with an excess of nervous energy must always be occupied with a project. White hopes to achieve his best set-up next move with h3-h4. Instead, he should probably just slide over with 39 Kf1 and wait around to see how Black makes progress.

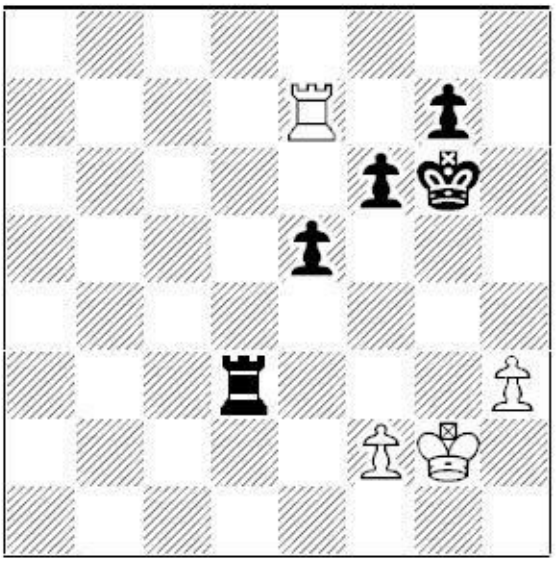
39 ... h4!

Quick as a hunter who spies a ripple of motion in the forest, Capa removes the possibility of White organizing his perfect defensive set-up with h3-h4 by playing ... h5-h4 himself.

chesstouring.com

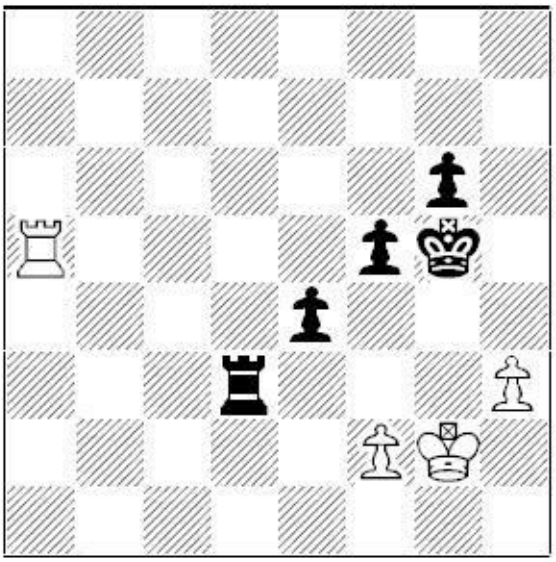


Question: Don't pawn trades help the defending side?
Answer: Not when the trade entails handing the opponent a weakness.
40 gxh4?!
Logically swapping down but, in doing so, Duras litters his position by taking on a fragmented structure. I think he was better off with the anti-principled move 40 g4. Of course, here he must deal with a hole on f4 which Black's king may later occupy. But it feels like Black may have a harder time converting in this version.
40 ... Rxh4 41 Kg2 e5 42 Kg3 Rd4 43 Ra5 f6 44 Ra7 Kg8!
The king sneaks by, unseen in the dead of night, out of his imprisonment on the 8th rank, via h7.
45 Rb7 Kh7 46 Ra7 Kg6 47 Re7 Rd3+ 48 Kg2
48 Kg4?? f5+ 49 Kh4 Kf6 50 Ra7 g5+ 51 Kh5 Rxh3 mate would be a pretty stupid way for White to lose.



Exercise (planning): Black needs to roll his kingside pawns forward by playing for ... f6-f5. How can he engineer this strategy?
Answer: By protecting his e-pawn first.
48 ... Rd5! 49 Kg3 f5 50 Ra7 Rd3+ 51 Kg2 e4 52 Ra4 Kg5 53 Ra5 g6

chesstouring.com



About this point Duras probably suffered a sinking feeling about his previous sense of accomplishment at achieving his “drawn” position, dampened further by the fact that his position may not be tenable anymore.

Question: Can White hold the draw by simply
shuffling his rook along the sixth rank?

Answer: Watch how quickly White’s position degrades if he follows this plan: 54 Ra6 Rd2 (threat: ... e4-e3) 55 Kg1 f4 56 Rb6 f3! 57 Re6 Kf5 58 Re8 (the rook mumbles awkward apologies and hastily abandons his post, ending White’s sixth rank strategy; if 58 Ra6? Rd1+ 59 Kh2 e3 wins on the spot) 58 ... Rd1+ 59 Kh2 Rf1 60 Kg3 Rg1+ 61 Kh4 g5+ 62 Kh5 Rg2 63 Rf8+ Ke5 64 Re8+ Kd4 65 Rd8+ Kc4 66 Re8 Kd3, when f2 falls and Black wins easily.

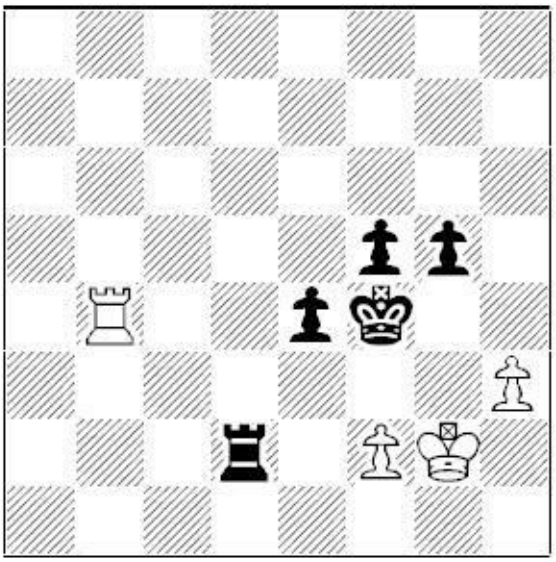
54 Rb5 Kf4 55 Ra5 Rd2 56 Ra4

Preventing ... e4-e3.

56 ... Kg5

Threat: ... e4-e3!.

57 Kg1 Kf4 58 Kg2 g5 59 Rb4



chesstouring.com

Exercise (planning): Black’s dream of victory begins to gel into reality.

Come up with a plan for Black to make progress.

Answer: Make way for the f-pawn to roll forward.

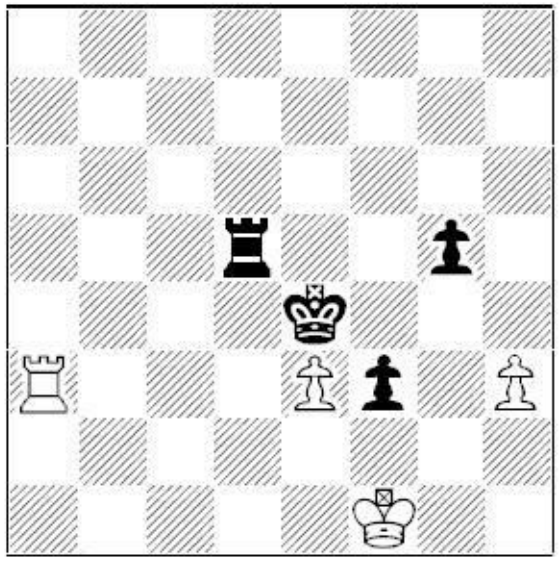
59 ... Ke5! 60 Rb5+ Rd5 61 Rb8 f4 62 Rg8 Kd4 63 Kf1 Kd3 64 Ra8 e3! 65 Ra3+

65 fxe3 Kxe3 66 Kg2 Rd2+ 67 Kf1 Rd1+ 68 Kg2 f3+ 69 Kh2 f2 70 Re8+ Kd3 71 Rd8+ Kc2 72 Rc8+ Kb3 73 Rb8+ Kc4 74 Rc8+ Kb5 75 Rb8+ Kc6 76 Rc8+ Kd7 forces promotion.

65 ... Ke4

Capa's nimble king flicks about the board like tongues of flame in a fire. Meanwhile, White's nervous king, fearful of looming mate threats, flinches every time he sees his own shadow.

66 fxe3 f3!

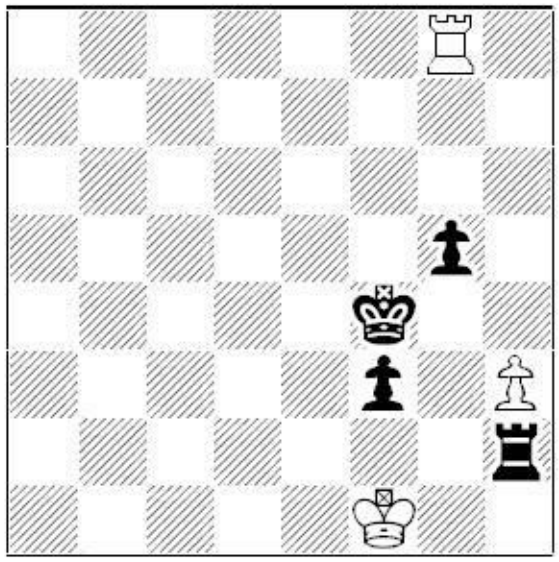


Black's win, a Polaroid photo, slowly appears into clarity. 66 ... fxe3?! 67 Ra8! isn't so easy.

67 Kg1

White's king suffers from what Martin Luther King described as "a degenerating sense of nobodyness." 67 Ke1 Rd3 68 Ra5 Kxe3 69 Re5+ Kf4 70 Ra5 Re3+ 71 Kf2 Re2+ 72 Kf1 Re5 73 Ra3 Kg3 also does the trick.

67 ... Rd3 68 Ra8 Kxe3 69 Re8+ Kf4 70 Rg8 Rd1+ 71 Kf2 Rd2+ 72 Kf1 Rh2!



chesstouring.com

The finishing touch. The h3-pawn falls and resistance melts like snow on a warm spring day.

73 Kg1

73 Rh8 Kg3 threatens mate on h1 and also the h-pawn.

73 ... Rxh3 74 Rg7 g4 75 Rg8 Kg3 0-1

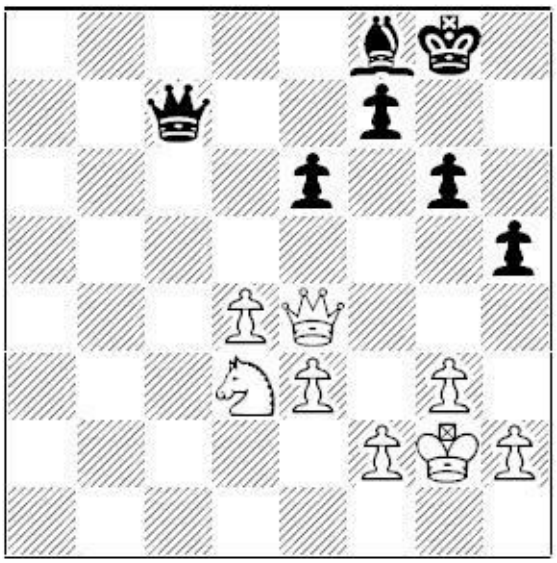
Game 44

J.R.Capablanca-A.Alekhine

29th matchgame, Buenos Aires 1927

Queen's Gambit Declined

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Nbd7 5 e3 c6 6 Nf3 Qa5 7 Nd2 Bb4 8 Qc2 dxc4 9 Bxf6 Nxf6 10 Nxc4 Qc7 11 a3 Be7 12 g3 0-0 13 Bg2 Bd7 14 b4 b6 15 0-0 a5 16 Ne5 axb4 17 axb4 Rxa1 18 Rxa1 Rc8 19 Nxd7 Qxd7 20 Na4 Qd8 21 Qb3 Nd5 22 b5 cxb5 23 Qxb5 Ra8 24 Rc1 Ra5 25 Qc6 Ba3 26 Rb1 Bf8 27 Bxd5 Rxd5 28 Nxb6 Rd6 29 Qb7 h5 30 Nc4 Rd7 31 Qe4 Rc7 32 Ne5 Qc8 33 Kg2 Bd6 34 Ra1 Rb7 35 Nd3 g6 36 Ra6 Bf8 37 Rc6 Rc7 38 Rxc7 Qxc7



Question: Can White win?

Answer: Let's assess:

1. White is up a pawn.

2. Effectively, all the pawns sit on the same side of the board and White has no passed pawn. This factor favours Black.

3. The queen and knight team is superior to Black's queen and bishop, due to the potential attacking power inherent in Q/N.

3. If queens come off the board, the knight and five pawns may still beat bishop and four pawns – but only on the condition of no radical alteration to the structure.

Conclusion: I would rate White's chances to win slightly lower than 50%.

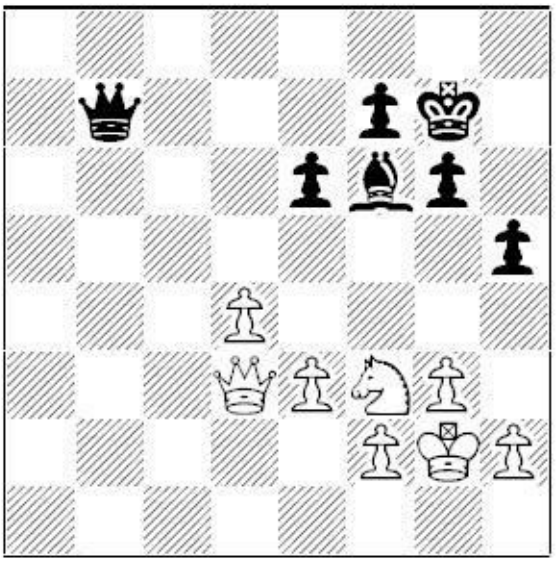
39 Ne5 Bg7 40 Qa8+ Kh7 41 Nf3

Question: Why did White transfer his knight from dead centre to f3?

Answer: It is crucial for White to keep the knight on the board. He can't allow a swap for Black's bishop, since the queen ending is probably drawn. Also, with his knight on f3, White's king is safe from queen checks on the long diagonal.

chesstouring.com

41 ... Bf6 42 Qa6 Kg7 43 Qd3 Qb7



Exercise (planning): How does White make progress?

Answer: Play e3-e4 and d4-d5, creating a passed d-pawn.

44 e4 Qc6 45 h3 Qc7 46 d5 exd5 47 exd5 Qc3!

Perfectly timed. If queens come off, the advanced d-pawn may turn into a defensive liability for White.

48 Qxc3?!

Capa's old disease crops up, his tendency to swap no matter what the requirements of the position. Sometimes it is wiser to bend in order to avoid breaking. His best shot to win is to keep queens on the board with 48 Qd1! Qa1 49 Qe2 Qb2 50 Qe4, though even then, it looks impossibly difficult to win this one.

48 ... Bxc3 49 Kf1 Kf6

Black intends ... Ke7 and ... Kd6, tying White down to his d-pawn. After 49 ... Kf8 50 Ke2 Ke7 51 Kd3 Ba5 52 Ne5! Be1 53 Ke3 Bc3 54 Nc4 keeps Black's king away from the d-pawn.

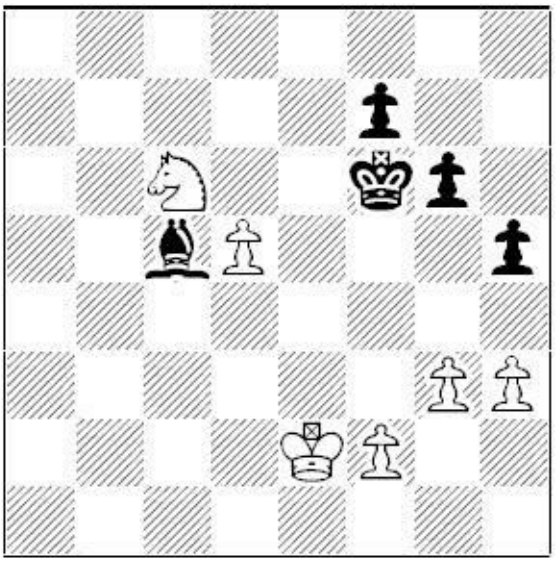
50 Ke2 Bb4 51 Nd4! Bc5

51 ... Ke5?? hangs the bishop to 52 Nc6+.

52 Nc6!

Capa cleverly encases his d5-pawn as if it were a precious and delicate family heirloom, passed on from generation to generation.

chesstouring.com

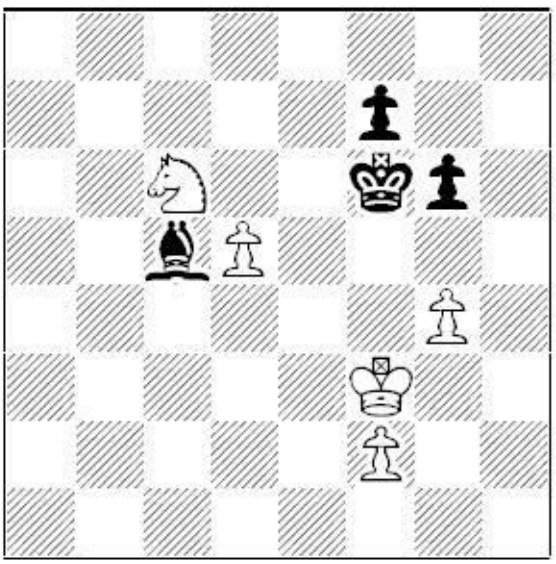


52 ... Kf5 53 Kf3 Kf6 54 g4

Question: Why is White trading pawns?

Answer: Every pawn trade helps Black, but Capa needs to get his pawns off the dark squares, away from the influence of Black's bishop.

54 ... hxg4+ 55 hxg4



There are few pawns on the board and White's d-pawn must be closely watched and guarded. Alekhine is almost there with the draw.

Exercise (planning/critical decision): In this position he has a choice of plans: a) 55 ... Bb6, to wait and ask White how he will make progress.

b) 55 ... Kg5, to get active with his king.

55 ... Kg5?

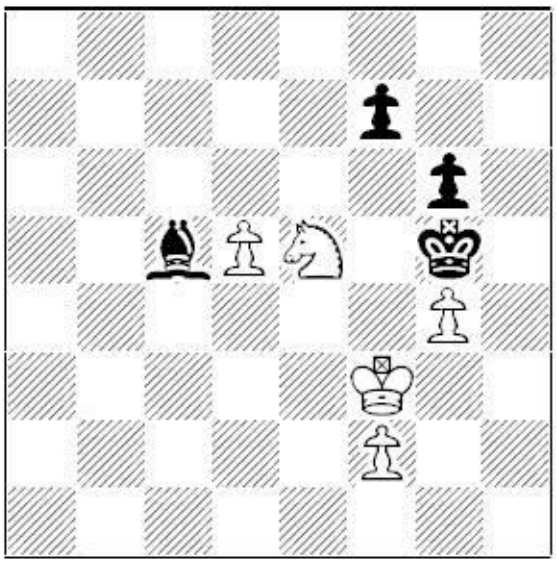
If we are on a budget, it is sometimes wise to rein in our spending habits when we shop. In this instance, Alekhine wants more than his position is willing to give as his innate tendency to stay as active as possible leads him astray.

chesstouring.com

Answer: White is unable to make progress if Black simply waits. For example: 55 ... Bb6! 56 Ke2 Bc7 57 Ke3 Kg5 58 Ke4! f5+! (58 ... Kxg4? loses to 59 Ne5+ Kg5 60 d6! f5+ 61 Kf3! Bb6 62 d7 Kf6 63

Nc6) 59 gxf5 gxf5+ 60 Kd3 Kf4 and Black should hold the draw without any trouble. A good general thinks like the enemy but then goes one step further.

56 Ne5!



"Thou shalt not steal," said the thief! Capa strikes whip-quick as White's last move wins a pawn at a minimum.

56 ... Bd4

Question: How can White win if Black simply pushes his f-pawn forward?

Answer: White utilizes a tactic in your line: 56 ... f5 57 d6! fxg4+ 58 Kg2, when the advanced d-pawn costs Black a piece.

57 Nxf7+

I am always outraged when I witness my dogs befouling one of my beloved fruit trees in the backyard. Alekhine must have had similar emotions at this point about the outrageous violation of his f-pawn.

57 ... Kf6 58 Nd8!

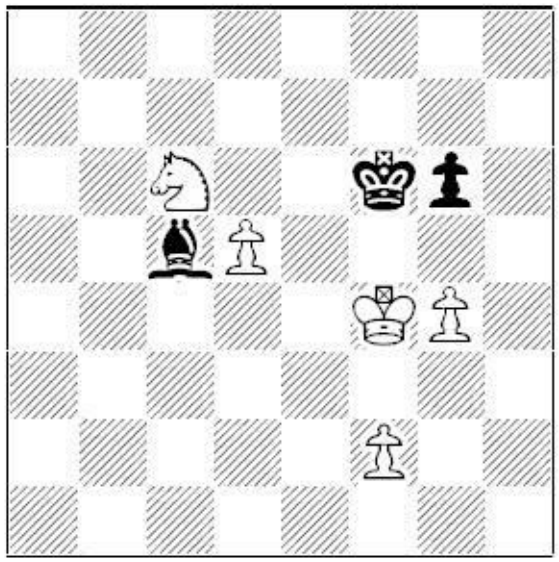
The nimble knight continues to rise and sink, its propulsion oars on a rowboat.

58 ... Bb6

58 ... Ke5?? allows White a winning king and pawn ending after 59 Nc6+ Kxd5 60 Nxd4 Kxd4 61 Kf4.

59 Nc6 Bc5 60 Kf4!

chesstouring.com



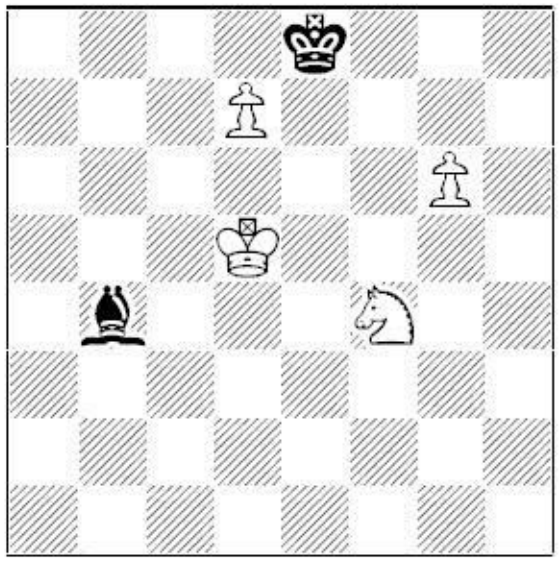
60 ... Bxf2 61 g5+ Kf7 62 Ne5+ Ke7

Necessity demands homage. The rather flagrant bribe of one pawn in exchange for mercy is accepted – I mean the pawn, not the mercy part! If 62 ... Kg7? 63 d6 Bb6 64 Nc6 Kf7 65 d7 wins the bishop.

63 Nxg6+ Kd6 64 Ke4 Bg3 65 Nf4 Ke7 66 Ke5 Be1 67 d6+ Kd7 68 g6 Bb4 69 Kd5!

Black quickly runs short of tomorrows, as hopes of an impenetrable wall collapse. Of course Capa is not going to fall for the lowbrow drawing trap 69 g7?? Bc3+ 70 Kd5 Bxg7.

69 ... Ke8 70 d7+! 1-0



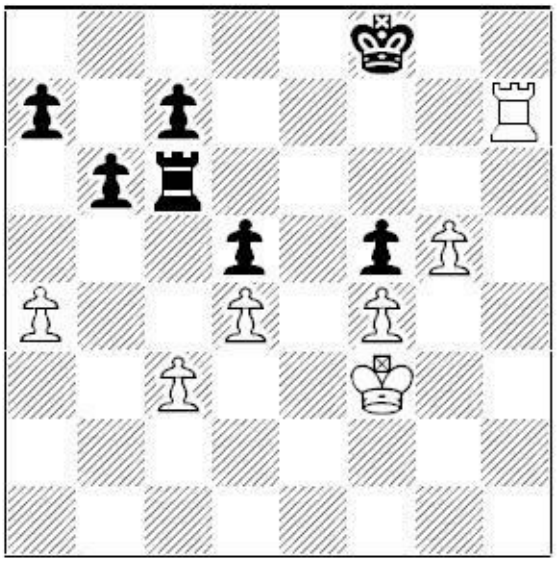
The insects sneak into the house through the cracks.

Game 45
J.R.Capablanca-S.Tartakower
New York 1924
Dutch Defence

chesstouring.com

1 d4 e6 2 Nf3 f5 3 c4 Nf6 4 Bg5 Be7 5 Nc3 0-0 6 e3 b6 7 Bd3 Bb7 8 0-0 Qe8 9 Qe2 Ne4 10 Bxe7

Nxc3 11 bxc3 Qxe7 12 a4 Bxf3 13 Qxf3 Nc6 14 Rfb1 Rae8 15 Qh3 Rf6 16 f4 Na5 17 Qf3 d6 18 Re1 Qd7 19 e4 fxe4 20 Qxe4 g6 21 g3 Kf8 22 Kg2 Rf7 23 h4 d5 24 cxd5 exd5 25 Qxe8+ Qxe8 26 Rxe8+ Kxe8 27 h5 Rf6 28 hxg6 hxg6 29 Rh1 Kf8 30 Rh7 Rc6 31 g4 Nc4 32 g5 Ne3+ 33 Kf3 Nf5 34 Bxf5 gxf5



During the Christmas of 1969 my family visited Blacksburg, Virginia, where my uncle was an engineering professor at Virginia Tech. Having saved my allowance for an eternity, and with a little monetary assistance from Santa, I wisely invested in my first Capablanca book. Both the name and author of the book are long forgotten, but what I do remember is this diagrammed position versus Tartakower. I took one look and grew convinced Capa's side was losing. Don't make the same mistake I made when I was nine-years-old!

Exercise (planning): How would you evaluate this ending? Is the position even or does one side stand better? The second part of the question is: whatever your evaluation, come up with a plan for White.

Answer: *Houdini* says "+=" or slight edge for White. The fact is, it is White who is winning since he has an extra piece – his king. His next move allows king entry via h4. The plan:

1. Infiltrate to f6.

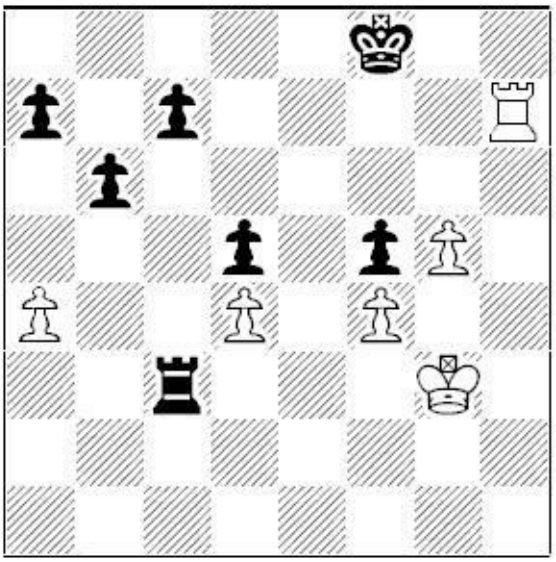
2. With Black's king cut off, try either queening or play directly for checkmate with king/rook and pawns teaming up.

35 Kg3!

He leaves c3 as a gift on Black's doorstep.

35 ... Rxc3+?!

chesstouring.com



In his book, *The Greatest Ever Chess Endings*, Steve Giddins points out an analytical dual between chess journalist Vladimir Goldin and GM Igor Zaitsev. Goldin claimed a draw for Black with 35 ... Kg8! (clearly Black's best practical try) 36 Rd7 Rxc3+ 37 Kh4 Rf3 and now Goldin's analysis continued 38 g6? Rxf4+ 39 Kg5 Re4 40 Kf6 Re8!, when Black's rook reaches the first rank, which puts White's win at risk; for example, 41 Kxf5 Rc8! 42 Ke6 c5! should save Black. But GM Igor Zaitsev found a hole in Goldin's line: 38 Kh5!! Rxf4 39 Kg6 Kf8 40 Kf6 Re4 41 Rf7+! Kg8 42 Rxc7 Re8 43 Kxf5, where White reaches the Goldin line but with the c7-pawn already eliminated. In this case White wins.

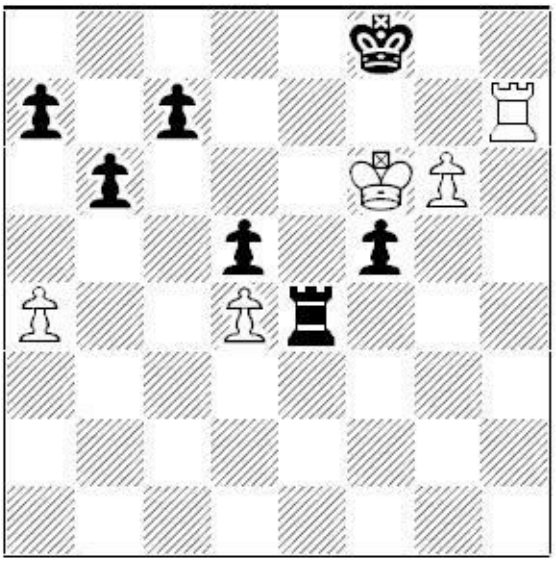
36 Kh4 Rf3

Question: It looks to me like Black wastes time going after f4.

Why not try a queening race with 36 ... c5?

Answer: White is faster in every line: 37 dxc5 d4 (or 37 ... bxc5 38 g6 d4 39 Kg5 d3 40 Kf6 Ke8 41 g7) 38 g6 d3 39 cxb6 axb6 40 Rd7 Ke8 41 g7 and White reaches the goal first.

37 g6! Rxf4+ 38 Kg5 Re4 39 Kf6!



Question: Why dance around the f-pawn, rather than take it?

chesstouring.com

Answer: A Zen koan for you to solve: What is the only thing a sword cannot cut? The answer: Itself! Capa's move, which declined Black's f-pawn, was a shocking revelation to me in 1969. It looked to

me at the time that White's king had lost his mind, like a man who resorts to wearing tinfoil hats to prevent radio waves from entering his brain. (We may discuss this theory some more if I ever write a book on Fischer!) With his last move, White conveys an unspoken "or else!" to his opponent by threatening mate in one and thus gains a tempo. Black would actually be better off without his f-pawn, which for now, shields White's king from annoying checks.

39 ... Kg8 40 Rg7+ Kh8 41 Rxc7

Another back rank mate threat looms and White's king, rook and g-pawn make common cause to hunt the opposing king like wild game. Abandonment by family is a primordial human fear. Black's forlorn king is the divorced parent who moves to another city and by now barely knows his own children.

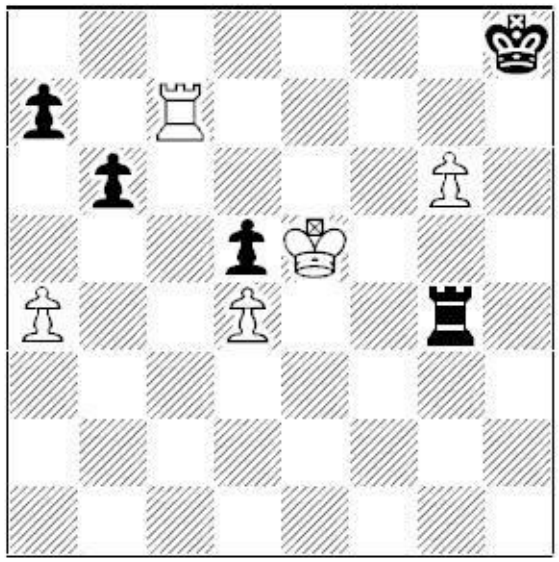
41 ... Re8 42 Kxf5

The correct moment to take the f-pawn. Well, I did say Black would be better off without the pawn, didn't I?

42 ... Re4 43 Kf6

Re-litigating the old mate threat.

43 ... Rf4+ 44 Ke5 Rg4



Exercise (combination alert): How can White hold on to his g-pawn and then pick off d5?

Answer: By offering to go into a won king and pawn ending.

45 g7+! Kg8

After 45 ... Rxg7 46 Rxg7 Kxg7 47 Kxd5 Kf7 48 Kc6 Ke7 49 Kb7 Kd6 50 Kxa7 Kc6 51 Ka6 Kc7 52 d5 Kd6 53 Kxb6 Kxd5 54 a5 promotes.

46 Rxa7 Rg1

Question: Why not continue the harassment from g5?

Answer: The rook backs away with the laboured, false friendliness of an enemy before a more powerful foe. Black walks into a quick mate in this line: 46 ... Rg5+ 47 Kf6 Rg1 48 Ra8+ Kh7 49 Rh8 mate!

47 Kxd5

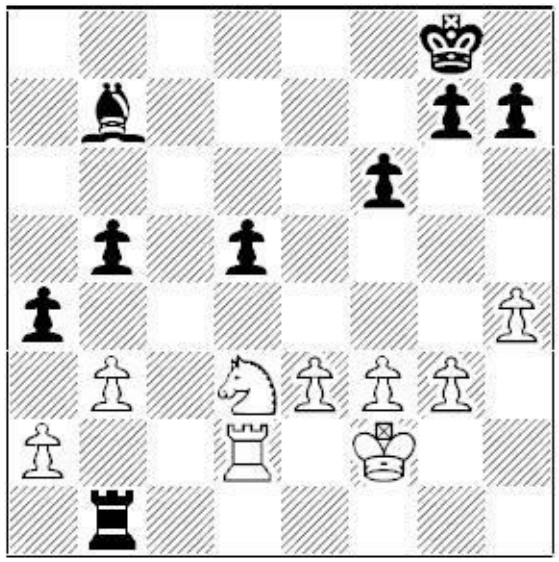
Capa lassoes yet more pawns with the ease of a ranch-hand roping fat, lazy, wayward cows. Time for Tartakower to resign. Naturally he didn't. Perhaps it was under the assumption that a beaten general can still hope to negotiate favourable terms of surrender?

chesstouring.com

47 ... Rc1 48 Kd6 Rc2 49 d5 Rc1 50 Rc7 Ra1 51 Kc6 Rxa4 52 d6 1-0

Game 46
J.R.Capablanca-S.Reshevsky
Nottingham 1936
Queen's Gambit Accepted

1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 c4 dxc4 4 Qa4+ Nbd7 5 Qxc4 e6 6 g3 a6 7 Bg2 b5 8 Qc6 Ra7 9 Bf4 Bb7 10 Qc1 c5 11 dxc5 Bxc5 12 0-0 0-0 13 Nbd2 Qe7 14 Nb3 Bb6 15 Be3 Rc8 16 Qd2 Ne4 17 Qd3 Nec5 18 Nxc5 Nxc5 19 Qd1 Ba8 20 Rc1 Rac7 21 b3 Nd7 22 Rxc7 Rxc7 23 Bxb6 Nxb6 24 Qd4 Nd5 25 Rd1 f6 26 Ne1 Bb7 27 Bxd5 exd5 28 e3 Qe4 29 h4 a5 30 f3 Qxd4 31 Rxd4 Rc1 32 Kf2 Ra1 33 Rd2 a4 34 Nd3 Rb1



Compare this game to Capa's defence against Flohr in Chapter 2 (Game 22).

Question: I assume this is an example of good knight versus bad bishop, but given that, doesn't Black's active rook easily make up for it?

Answer: Let's answer the question with an exercise:

Exercise (planning): Your claim is exactly correct. But what if
White had a way of forcing rooks off the board?
Then his advantage would be unquestioned.

Answer: **35 Rb2! Rxb2+**
No choice but to swap since Black loses if he gets cute: 35 ... Rd1?? 36 Ke2 Rg1 37 bxa4 wins.

36 Nxb2 Bc6 37 Nd3 g5! 38 hxg5 fxg5 39 Nb4 axb3 40 axb3
I hope nobody thought about taking the "free" bishop.

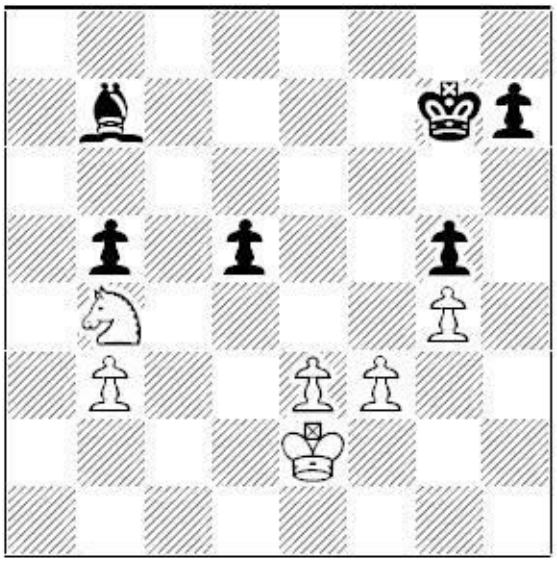
40 ... Bb7 41 g4!

Question: Isn't White's last move incorrect?
He places more pawns on the target light squares.

Answer: It was critical for White to halt ... h7-h5! when he must deal with the threat of ... h5-h4, creating an outside passed pawn for Black.

41 ... Kg7 42 Ke2

chesstouring.com



Black has two defensive postures:

Plan a) Play for ... Kg6 and ... h7-h5; after White takes, Black recaptures with his king and then plans infiltration with ... Kh4 and ... Kg3.

Plan b) Black centralizes his king on e5, then manoeuvres his bishop to e8, and follows with ... h7-h5 to reduce the number of pawns on the board.

Exercise (planning/critical position): Which plan would you choose?

42 ... Kg6?

A fatal choice.

Answer: Plan b) was correct: 42 ... Kf6! 43 Kd3 Ke5 44 Nc2 Bc6 45 Kc3 Be8! 46 Nd4 h5! 47 gxh5 Bxh5 48 Kb4 g4! 49 fxg4 Bxg4 50 Kxb5 Ke4 51 Kc5 Kxe3 52 b4 Bd7 53 Kxd5 (threat: Nc6 to shut out the bishop) 53 ... Ba4! and Black draws.

43 Kd3 h5

Reshevsky's defensive goal: Remove as many pawns from the board as possible, but his plan is the wrong way to do so.

Question: How about 43 ... d4, liquidating his pawn weakness on d5?

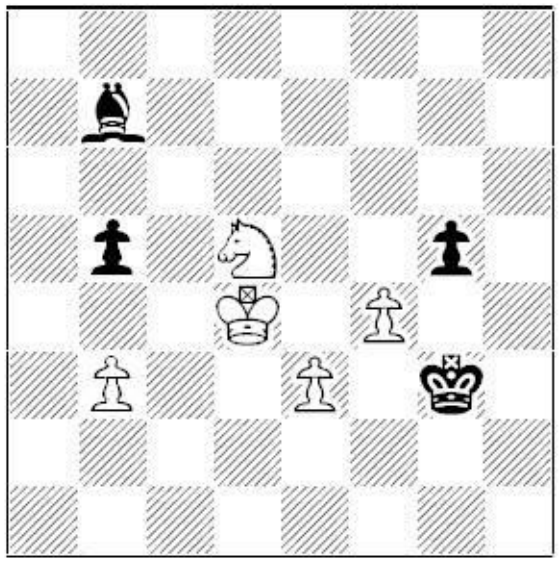
Answer: You must factor in White's obvious response 44 e4! when the d4-pawn drops. Don't consider your ideas exclusively. Put yourself in your opponent's place and factor in an appropriate response. Then you won't miss such tricks.

44 gxh5+ Kxh5 45 Kd4 Kh4 46 Nxd5 Kg3

The malcontent on g3 threatens to make trouble for White's f-pawn.

47 f4!

chesstouring.com



Capa boldly allows Black an unopposed, passed g-pawn, seeing that it can be stopped while his passers surge.

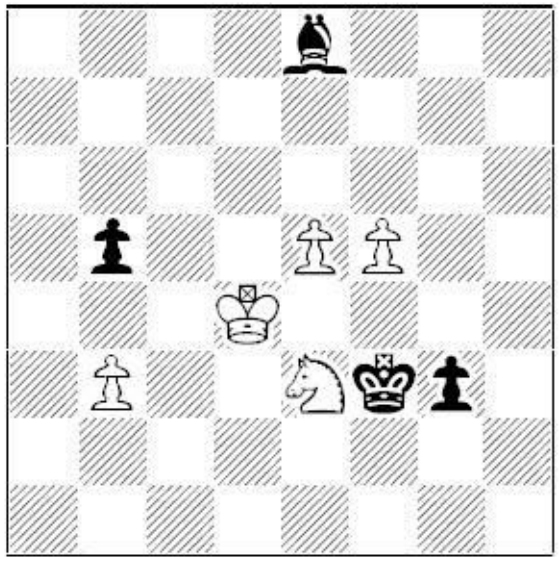
47 ... g4 48 f5 Bc8 49 Ke5!

The king undermines the bishop's authority over the e6-square. 49 f6? Be6 lets Black right back in the game.

49 ... Bd7 50 e4 Be8 51 Kd4?

A blunder, which could have thrown away half a point. After the correct 51 f6! Kf3 52 Nf4 g3 53 Kf5 Bd7+ 54 Kg5 Be8 55 e5 Bf7 56 Kf5 Bxb3 57 e6 Bxe6+ 58 Kxe6 Kxf4 59 f7 White wins by a tempo.

51 ... Kf3! 52 e5 g3 53 Ne3



Let's take a shot at an impossibly hard problem. Black clings to life by the thinnest of threads, yet deeply hidden in the position lay a remarkable way for Black to save himself.

Exercise (critical decision): Look at 53 ... Bh5 and also 53 ... Kf4.

One of them holds the draw for Black. What does your intuition tell you?

53 ... Kf4?

chesstouring.com

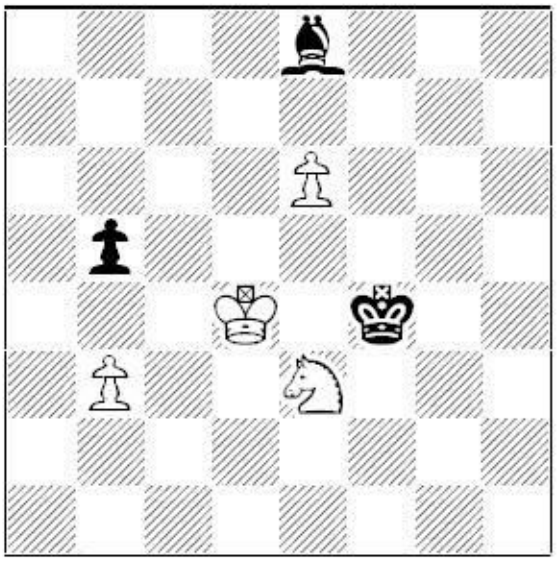
A panicked opponent ensures your victory. Now Black's counterplay grows cold as old ash in the fireplace.

Answer: Black draws in problem-like fashion after 53 ... Bh5!! (release the Kraken! – the bishop moves soundlessly into the picture, a blurred, grey form of an intruder in a surveillance video) 54 e6 Bg4! (zugzwang; unbelievably, White can't make progress) 55 b4 Kf4 56 Kd3 Kf3! (56 ... Bxf5+? fails to 57 Nxf5 g2 58 Nd4!, or 57 ... Kxf5 58 e7 g2 59 e8Q g1Q 60 Qe4+! and all Black king moves lead to a dead lost king and pawn ending) 57 Kd2 g2! 58 Nxg2 Kxg2 59 e7 Bh5 60 Ke3 Kg3 61 f6 Kg4 62 Kd4 (an optimistic and misguided student suggested 62 Ke4?? as a winning try, but I ask for whom? 62 ... Be8! 63 Ke5 Kg5 64 Ke6 Kg6 65 Ke5 Bf7! and Black actually wins due to zugzwang) 62 ... Kf5 63 Kc5 Kxf6 draws.

54 e6!

Now everything falls back on track. White wins.

54 ... g2 55 Nxg2+ Kxf5 56 Kd5 Kg4 57 Ne3+ Kf4 58 Kd4! 1-0



The remnants of Black's resolve drain slowly like old bath water. Reshevsky understands too late that he entered a dead end with no escape, as 58 ... Bh5 59 e7 Bg6 60 b4 Bh5 61 Nd5+ Kf5 62 Nc7 and e8Q wins the bishop.

Game 47

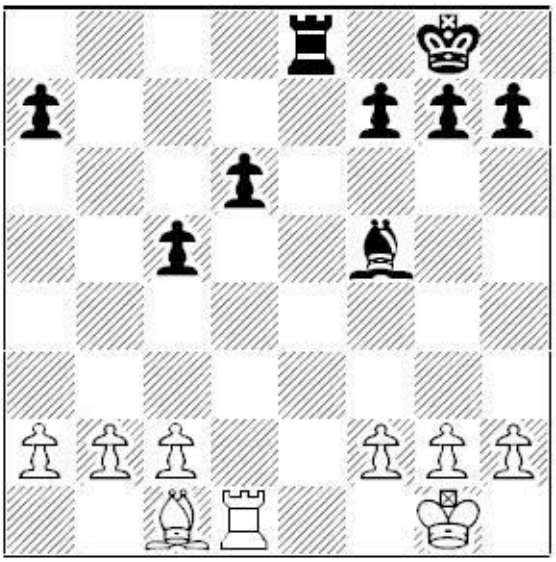
J.R.Capablanca-R.Réti

Exhibition game, Vienna 1914

Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nf6 4 0-0 Nxe4 5 d4 Be7 6 Qe2 Nd6 7 Bxc6 bxc6 8 dxe5 Nb7 9 Nc3 0-0 10 Re1 Nc5 11 Nd4 Ne6 12 Be3 Nxd4 13 Bxd4 c5 14 Be3 d5 15 exd6 Bxd6 16 Rad1 Qf6 17 Qh5 Rb8 18 Bc1 Qf5 19 Qxf5 Bxf5 20 Ne4 Rfe8 21 Nxd6 cxd6 22 Rxe8+ Rxe8

chesstouring.com



Question: Dead drawn?

Answer: Only king versus king is dead drawn! Of course, with correct play neither side should lose this one, which falls into the familiar "how on earth did he win?" category. White's microscopic edge is due to the fact that his pawns are slightly more secure than Black's, yet the presence of opposite-coloured bishops greatly increases the likelihood of a draw.

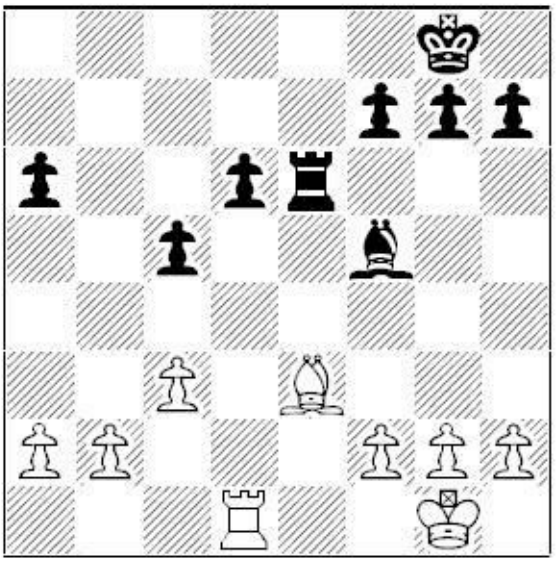
23 Be3! Re6

Question: Shouldn't Black be trying to liquidate with 23 ... Bxc2?

Answer: The line leads to the loss of a pawn for Black, though perhaps at the end he may still achieve a draw after 24 Rxd6 h6 (not 24 ... Rc8? 25 Bxc5! and White wins a pawn in a more favourable position due to Black's loose back rank) 25 Ra6 Rb8 26 Bxc5 Rxb2 27 h3, when White wins a pawn but even here conversion to the full point looks like a nightmare.

24 c3 a6

Better to play 24 ... a5! to prevent White's plan.



Capa would only need to glance at such a position to drink in the essential elements. It looks like White has nothing. Now look closer.

chesstouring.com

Exercise (planning): How can White create an

imbalance which allows him to play for the win?

Answer: The plan comes into clarity and substance. Create a queenside pawn majority.

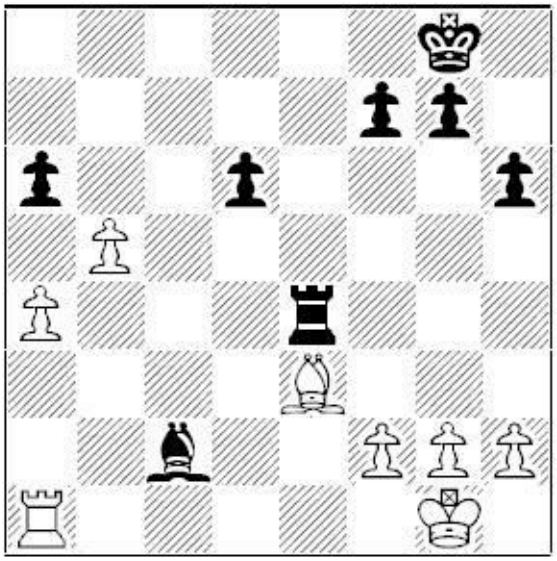
25 b4! cxb4 26 cxb4 h6 27 a4!?

This is actually an offer of a pawn in order to create a passer.

27 ... Bc2

It's understandable that Réti wasn't interested in the line 27 ... Re4!? 28 b5! Rxa4 29 b6, when White's deeply embedded passer gives him chances to win. Capa kept this idea in mind and stored it for future use in a little room in his mind.

28 Ra1 Re4 29 b5!



A passed b-pawn is the catalyst to White's winning ambitions.

29 ... Rxa4

Réti yields to economic imperative, accepting the pawn in exchange for his future suffering.

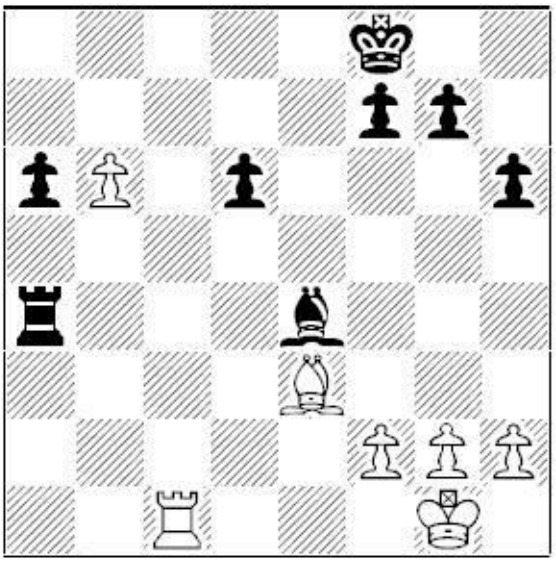
30 Rc1! Be4 31 b6

There we go, the same situation as in the above note. If there is but a single bone and two dogs, growling generally follows.

31 ... Kf8?

Black should be able to hold things together in the line 31 ... Rb4! 32 Rc8+ Kh7 33 f3 Bd5 34 Rd8 Rb3 35 Kf2 a5 36 Rxd6 Be6.

chesstouring.com



Exercise (combination alert): White's preparations are filled to overflow and the time for direct action has arrived. Black's last move was a serious tactical error which allows White to win a piece. Let's see if you can find it.

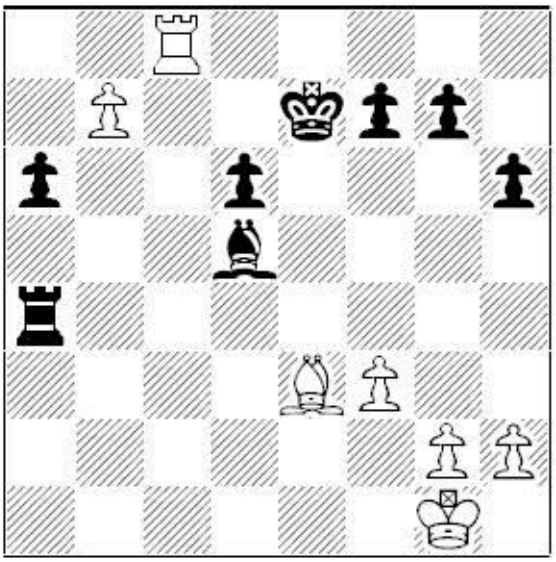
Answer: Good fortune awaits White. All that is required is to reach out and grab it. The following sequence is forced.

32 f3! Bd5 33 Rc8+!

Question: Doesn't this just help Black who gets to centralize his king for free?

Answer: Before the water comes to a boil, the lobster relaxing in the pot thinks to himself: "Ah, so warm and cozy!" Tactics override strategic considerations! Perhaps Réti thought he had everything under control at this point.

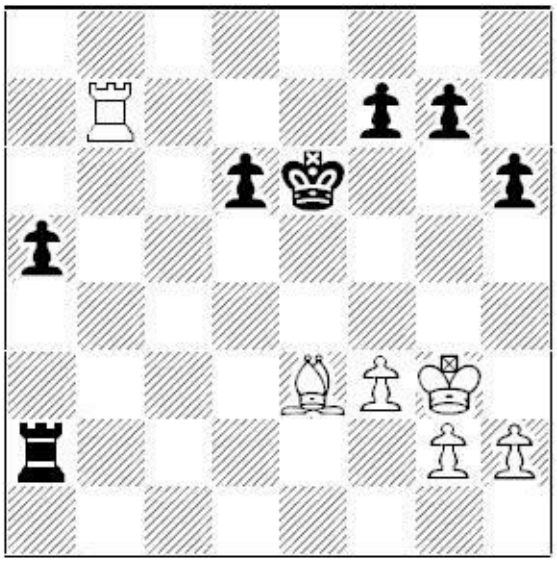
33 ... Ke7 34 b7!



The clever point. White's b-pawn, with an air of indifference, moves forward to a guarded square. Suddenly, White's good gets a lot better, while Black's bad gets a lot worse.

chesstouring.com

34 ... Bxb7 35 Rc7+ Ke6 36 Rxb7 Ra1+ 37 Kf2 Ra2+ 38 Kg3 a5



Black's misfortunes have yet to conquer his spirit. We have all been here: White has a won game but won games don't win themselves. How many times have we botched such positions? Watch how Capablanca gives Réti zero chances to save himself.

Question: What are the difficulties White must overcome?

Answer: An Assessment:

1. White is up a piece for two pawns, more than enough to win if he suppresses Black's counterplay.

2. Black has split passed pawns, both about to move down the board. White must construct a plan to halt them.

3. White's king is out of the loop of action on g3.

Conclusion: White is winning but must play accurately to get the job done.

39 Ra7

Principle: Place your rook behind enemy passed pawns.

39 ... a4 40 Ra6

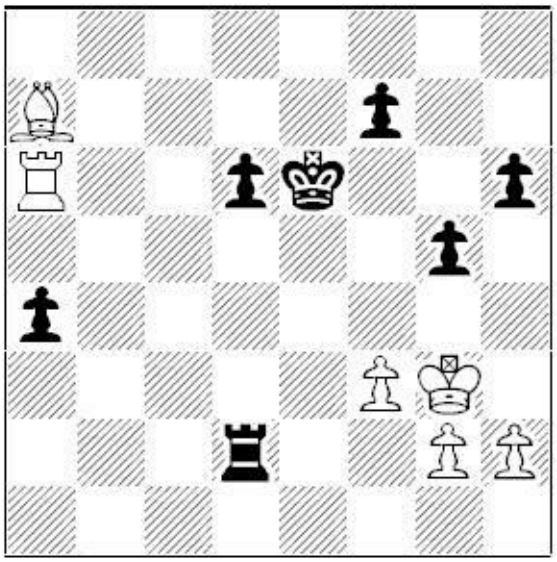
Threatening Bf4.

40 ... g5

After 40 ... Ke7 41 Bf4 d5 42 Bd6+! Ke8 (42 ... Kd7? 43 Bf8! wins.) 43 Ra7 d4 44 Kf4! (the key move to White's victory; he gives up his g-pawn in order to activate his king) 44 ... Rxg2 45 Ke4 Rd2 46 Rxa4 picks off all of Black's passers.

41 Bc5! Rd2 42 Ba7!

chesstouring.com



Threatening the a4-pawn, as well as Bb8.

42 ... f5 43 h4 f4+ 44 Kh3 Kf5 45 hxg5 hxg5 46 Rxa4 Rd1

Threatening mate on h1.

47 g4+! fxg3 48 Kxg3 1-0

White's king unexpectedly arises from his sickbed. Black's d-pawn no longer constitutes a threat, so Réti resigned.

Game 48

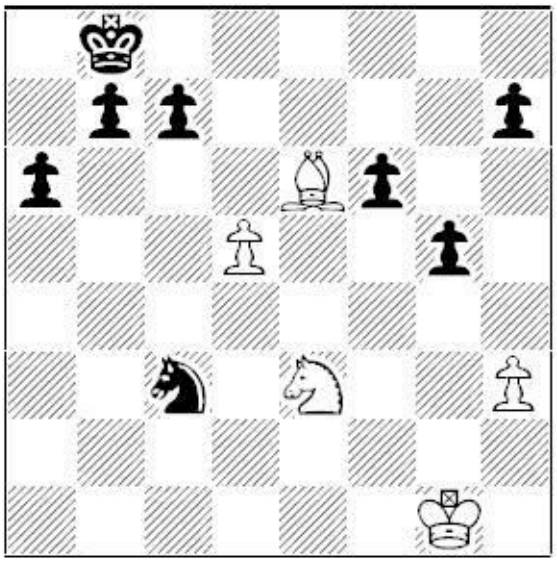
F.Marshall-J.R.Capablanca

St Petersburg 1914

French Defence

1 d4 e6 2 e4 d5 3 exd5 exd5 4 Nf3 Bg4 5 h3 Bh5 6 Be2 Nc6 7 0-0 Bd6 8 Nc3 Nge7 9 Be3 f6 10 Qd2 Bf7 11 Rae1 a6 12 a3 Qd7 13 Nh4 0-0-0 14 f4 Nb8 15 Bg4 Be6 16 f5 Bf7 17 Ne2 Rde8 18 Bf4 Nec6 19 Bxd6 Qxd6 20 Nf4 Nd8 21 c3 Nbc6 22 g3 Na5 23 Rxe8 Rxe8 24 Nhg2 Nc4 25 Qf2 Qb6 26 Nd3 Qb5 27 Re1 Nxa3 28 Rxe8 Bxe8 29 Ngf4 Nc4 30 Bf3 Bf7 31 Qe2 Qd7 32 Nc5 Qd6 33 Nce6 g5 34 Nxd5 Nxe6 35 fxe6 Bxe6 36 Bg4 Qxg3+ 37 Kh1 Kb8 38 Bxe6 Nxb2 39 Ne3 Na4 40 Qd2 Qf3+ 41 Kg1 Qc6 42 d5 Qxc3 43 Qxc3 Nxc3

chesstouring.com



Question: With four pawns for the piece, this should be
a relatively simple win for Black, correct?

Answer: Win, yes, simple, no. The ending is more tricky than it looks since Black's kingside pawns are unprotected. If they all fall, then White gets a passed h-pawn as well.

Question: So what? That takes forever. What about
Black's two passers on the queenside?

Answer: Let's not overlook a minor detail: White is up a piece! He may be able to construct a sac for Black's passers. I maintain the win is not so simple for Black.

44 Ng4

Destinations: f6, h7 and g5.

44 ... a5

Time to roll the passers.

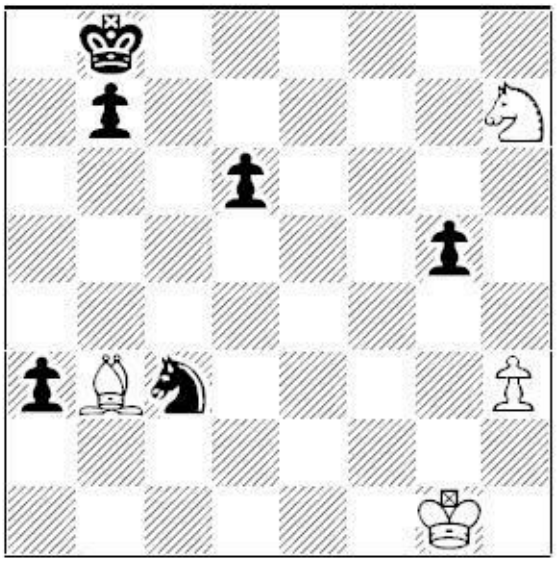
45 Nxf6 a4 46 Nxh7 a3 47 d6

No choice but to give Black another pawn. The aisle must be cleared at any cost to cover a2 from the queening attempt.

47 ... cxd6 48 Bb3

Not 48 Nxg5??, since 48 ... d5 cuts the bishop off the a2 sac square.

chesstouring.com



Exercise (planning): How to create order from the raw materials before us? Come up with a winning plan for Black.

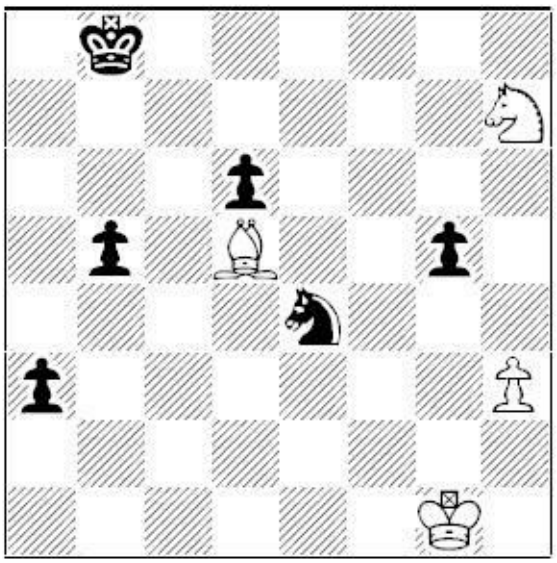
Answer: Step 1: Protect g5. There is no reason to rush. Our passers can wait. Deprived of a passed pawn, White has no counterplay. From this point Capablanca deftly sidesteps Marshall's diversionary tactics.

48 ... Ne4! 49 Bd5

This does little to allay White's worries but, to be fair, there was no defence. White is simply too slow after 49 Kg2 Kc7 50 Ba2 (50 Kf3?? drops the bishop to 50 ... Nd2+) 50 ... Kb6 51 Kf3 Nc3 52 Bb3 Kc5! 53 Nxg5 Kb4 54 Bg8 d5.

Step 2: Push the queenside passers. The knight is immune from capture on e4.

49 ... b5!



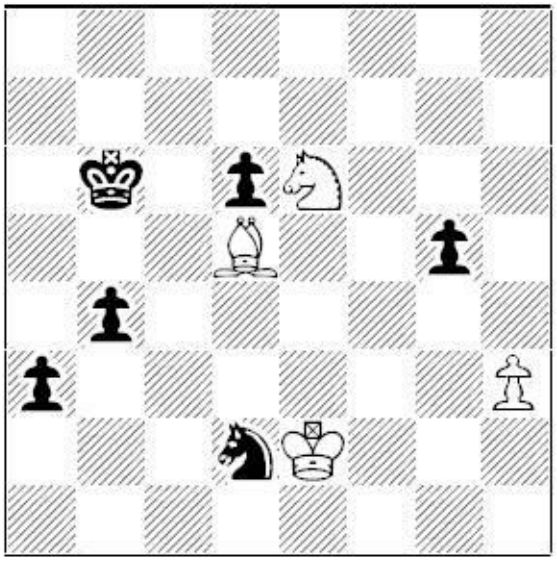
How disconcerting for Marshall, whose last move was rendered utterly meaningless as the knight continues to stand silent guard over g5.

50 Nf8 Kc7 51 Ne6+ Kb6 52 Kg2 b4 53 Kf3 Nd2+

chesstouring.com

Relaxed is good; lax is not. More accurate was 53 ... b3! 54 Bxb3 Nd2+ 55 Kg4 Nxb3 which covers the d4-square and denies White Nd4 and Nc2.

54 Ke2



Exercise (combination alert): Black to play and promote to a pawn.

Answer: Time to flip the switch. The passers pour in as their numbers swell. The b-pawn is Norman Bates; the a-pawn is Norman Bates dressed up as his dead, murdered mother. Whenever I go over a Capa/Marshall game, I always come away with the impression of a professor lecturing a student ill equipped to absorb the lesson.

54 ... b3! 55 Kxd2 a2

Game over.

56 Bxb3 a1Q 57 Kd3

Question: Doesn't White have some chance to draw if he takes the g-pawn?

Answer: Watch out for double attacks! 57 Nxg5? Qa5+ wins the knight as White's fortunes arrive at a low ebb.

57 ... Qf1+ 58 Kd4 Qxh3 59 Bd5 Qf5 60 Kc4 g4 61 Kd4 g3 0-1

Game 49

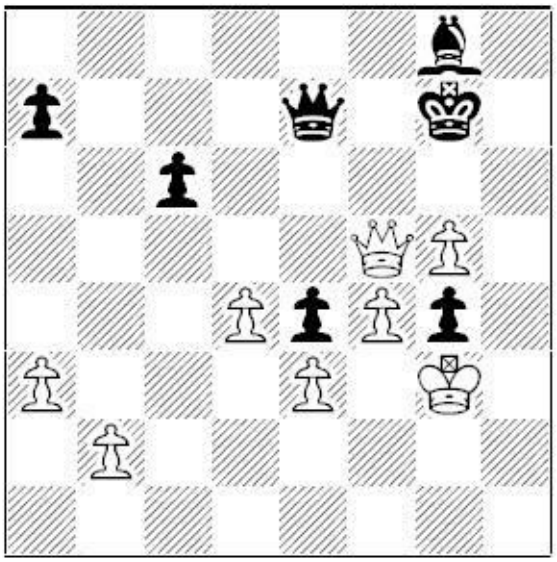
J.R.Capablanca-Em.Lasker

New York 1924

Slav Defence

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 c6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 cxd5 5 Nf3 Nc6 6 Bf4 e6 7 e3 Be7 8 Bd3 0-0 9 0-0 Nh5 10 Be5 f5 11 Rc1 Nf6 12 Bxf6 gxf6 13 Nh4 Kh8 14 f4 Rg8 15 Rf3 Bd7 16 Rh3 Be8 17 a3 Rg7 18 Rg3 Rxg3 19 hxg3 Rc8 20 Kf2 Na5 21 Qf3 Nc4 22 Qe2 Nd6 23 Rh1 Ne4+ 24 Bxe4 fxe4 25 Qg4 f5 26 Nxf5 exf5 27 Qxf5 h5 28 g4 Rc6 29 g5 Kg8 30 Nxd5 Bf7 31 Nxe7+ Qxe7 32 g4 hxg4 33 Qh7+ Kf8 34 Rh6 Bg8 35 Qf5+ Kg7 36 Rxc6 bxc6 37 Kg3

chesstouring.com



Exercise (critical decision): White has two pawns for the piece, but since g4 eventually falls, he gets three. As Black would you play 37 ... Qe6 offering to swap queens?

Answer: It is suicide to swap queens in such a position. The meek queen trade is an interpretation which fails to accord with Lasker's normally optimistic world view.

37 ... Qe6?

Anarchy is the drug of choice for adrenaline addicts like Lasker. He would only stand slightly worse after 37 ... Bd5!.

Question: Well, can't White force queens off with 38 Qe5+?

Answer: He can if he wants to lose! After 38 ... Qxe5 39 dxe5 Be6 White's three connected passers are solidly blockaded. Black's winning plan is simply to infiltrate with his king via h5: 40 b4 Kg6 41 Kh4 Bf5 (White soon gets zugzwanged) 42 a4 Bd7 43 a5 a6 (every pawn on the wrong colour of the remaining bishop, but still winning!) 44 Kg3 Kh5 45 Kg2 Be6 46 Kg3 Bf5 (zugzwang!) 47 Kh2 Kh4 wins.

38 Kxg4 Qxf5+ 39 Kxf5

Lasker walks away from the accident bruised and bloodied but still standing and alive. White has three pawns for a bishop, and king position, giving him a winning ending.

39 ... Bd5 40 b4 a6 41 Kg4

41 Ke5! Kg6 42 a4 Bb3 43 a5 Bd5 44 b5! was also winning. When one side's forces flow and mesh so perfectly and purposefully, we get the impression that fate gives White a helping hand.

41 ... Bc4 42 f5 Bb3 43 Kf4 Bc2 44 Ke5 Kf7

The fire must be fed. Overload the bishop.

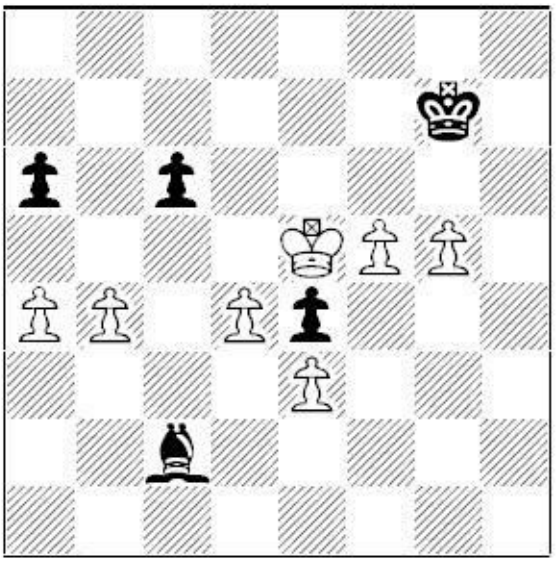
45 a4!

Black hears the mice scratching behind the walls.

45 ... Kg7

45 ... Bxa4 46 Kxe4 is an easy win for the three connected passers.

chesstouring.com



Exercise (combination alert): Come up with a breakthrough idea for White.

Answer: Create another passed pawn. Capa stashes away pawns the way an alcoholic hides ill-concealed bottles of alcohol in the house.

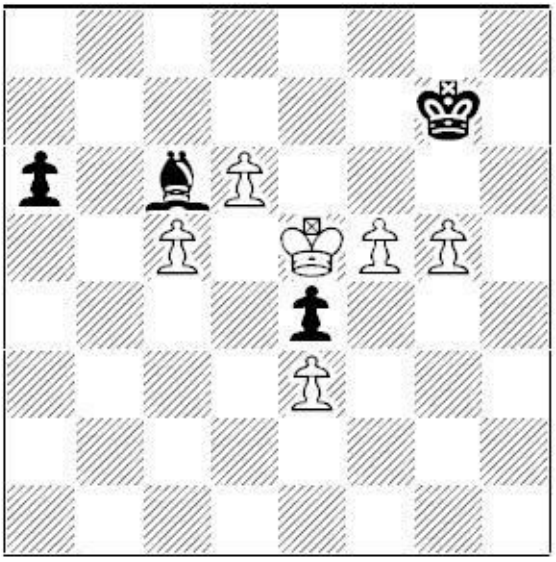
46 d5! Bxa4

Or 46 ... cxd5 47 b5 Bxa4 48 bxa6 Bc6 49 a7 Ba8 50 f6+ Kf7 51 g6+! Kxg6 52 Ke6 and White queens first.

47 d6 c5

A desperate bid to halt the promotion and create a passed pawn of his own.

48 bxc5 Bc6



Exercise (critical decision): Should we go on offence or defence as White? We can play 49 Kd4 to meet the threat of ... a6-a5-a4, or we can go for it with 49 Ke6, making it a queening race. What would you do?

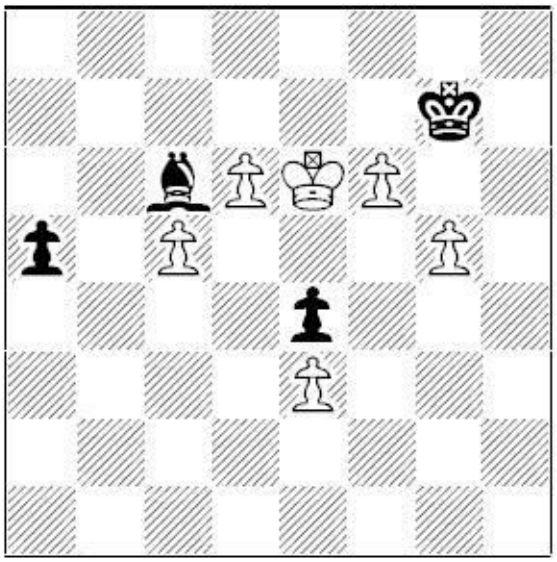
Answer: White is faster in the queening race.

49 Ke6! a5

chesstouring.com

Too slow.

50 f6+ 1-0



The fisherman examines his net and asks: “What did I catch today?”

Exercise (calculation): Without exercise the brain atrophies.

Let’s work out the following queening (and rooking!) sequence in our mind’s eye without moving the pieces. Ready? Set. Go!

Answer: 50 ... Kf8 51 g6 a4 52 d7 (the unruly pawn gracelessly barges his way in) 52 ... Bxd7+ 53 Kxd7 a3 54 c6 a2 55 c7 a1Q 56 c8R! mate! Well done if you made it to the end!

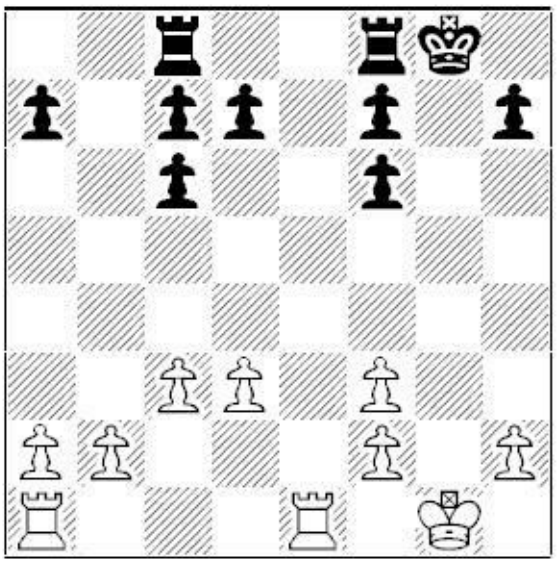
Game 50

J.R.Capablanca-A.Kupchik

Havana 1913

Four Knights Game

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bb5 Bb4 5 0-0 0-0 6 Bxc6 bxc6 7 Nxe5 Qe8 8 Nd3 Bxc3 9 dxc3 Qxe4 10 Re1 Qh4 11 Qf3 Ba6 12 Bf4 Rac8 13 Be5 Bxd3 14 cxd3 Qg4 15 Bxf6 Qxf3 16 gxf3 gxf6



chesstouring.com

Euwe writes: “White has a small advantage: Black’s rook pawns are both vulnerable and besides his

bishop pawns are doubled."

Question: What about White's weak pawns?

Answer: Black has trouble exploiting White's weak kingside isolanis, mainly because White is on the move and with it he takes and holds on to the initiative for the remainder of the game. Black simply fails to find targets in White's camp and fights shadows on a wall.

17 Re4!

Question: Why not to the seventh rank?

Answer: Superficially that looks better but isn't. After 17 Re7 Rfd8 18 Rae1 Kf8 19 R1e3 Rb8 20 b3 Rb5! Black's other rook gets active and White has no constructive plan to improve his game.

17 ... Rfe8 18 Rae1 Re6

Neither side is willing to fix the other's pawns.

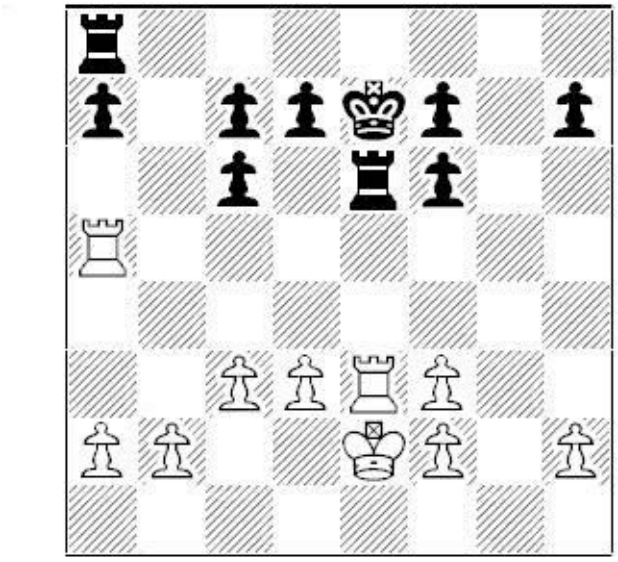
19 R1e3 Rce8

This accomplishes nothing. Black should remain active with 19 ... Rb8! 20 b3 Rb5!. Even a slight reduction in one's suffering is better than nothing.

20 Kf1 Kf8 21 Ke2 Ke7 22 Ra4

Reminding his opponent of his weakness.

22 ... Ra8 23 Ra5!



Preventing ... a7-a5.

23 ... d5

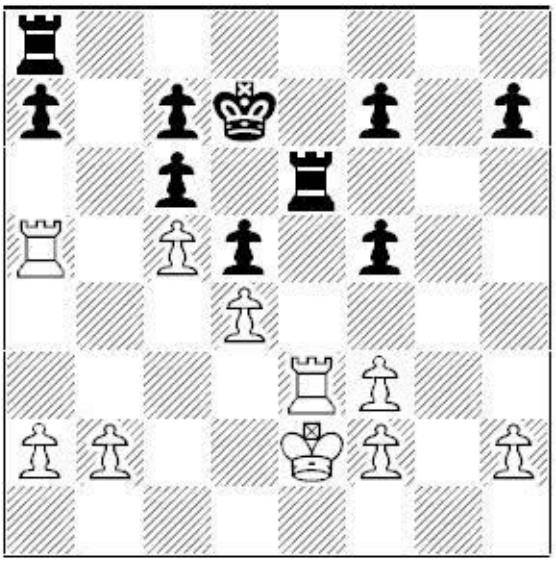
A driver cuts in front of him so Black decides to honk his horn and play ... d7-d5 to deny White Re4, Kd2, and R-moves to the a- or h-file.

24 c4 Kd6 25 c5+! Kd7 26 d4

Now a7 is a major liability.

26 ... f5

chesstouring.com



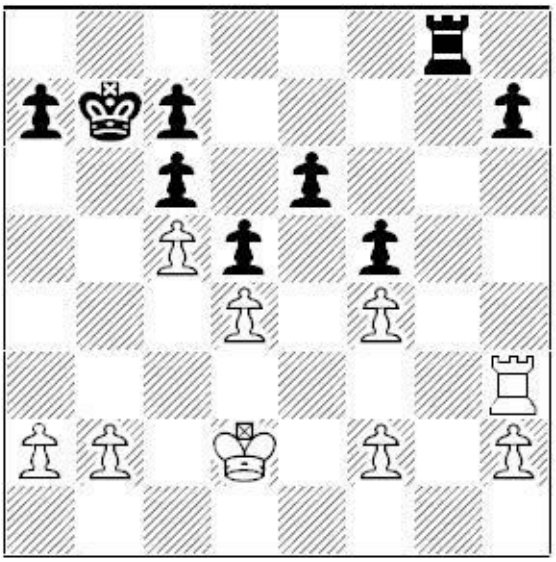
27 Rxe6! fxe6 28 f4 Kc8 29 Kd2 Kb7

At long last, Black's rook earns its freedom. Now the insufferable turns into the barely tolerable.

30 Ra3!

Divide and conquer. Off to the other front.

30 ... Rg8 31 Rh3



Exercise (critical decision): Black must decide between passive defence with 31 ... Rg7 or go active and sac a pawn with 31 ... Rg1. Which one would you go for?

Answer: Principle: In rook endings activity tends to trump material.

31 ... Rg7?

A person may only be considered old when he or she gives up on a long-cherished dream. The rook grows obdurate, incorrectly refusing to cede ground. It was crucial to give up a pawn to break through the veil of passivity. Sometimes we must do what is right, not what is easy. Euwe gives lengthy analysis showing 31 ... Rg1! 32 Rxh7 Rb1! should hold the draw for Black.

chesstouring.com

32 Ke2! Ka6

Question: If active is best then why not go

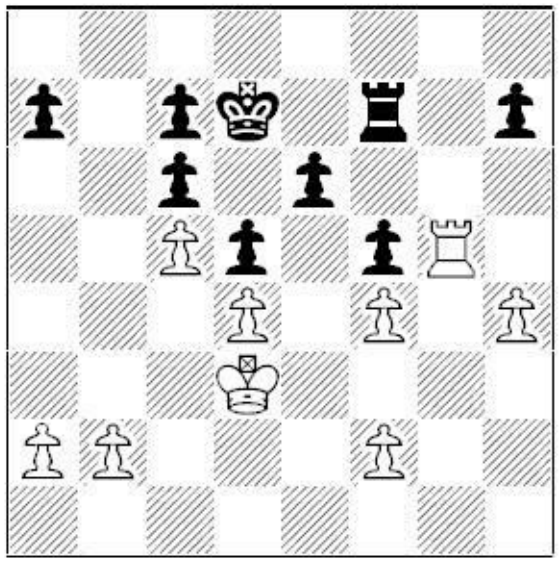
for the same line now with 32 ... Rg1?

Answer: There is one gigantic difference: In this case White gained a precious tempo, possibly two, since Black's king blocks his a-pawn. For example: 33 Rxh7 Rb1 34 h4 Rxb2+ 35 Kf3 Rxa2 36 Rg7 Ra3+ 37 Kg2 a5 38 h5 and the h-pawn is too fast.

33 Rh6 Re7 34 Kd3 Kb7 35 h4 Kc8 36 Rh5!

Getting ready to take over the g-file.

36 ... Kd7 37 Rg5 Rf7



Exercise (planning): Admittedly, Black is tied down, but what comes next? The raw materials are set before us. How to vitalize them into a cogent plan to make progress?

Answer: Step 1: Charge into the queenside with his king.

38 Kc3!

Heading for a5.

38 ... Kc8 39 Kb4 Rf6 40 Ka5

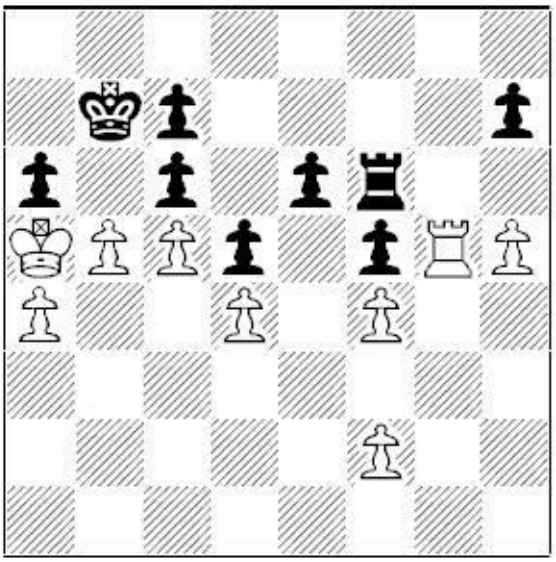
The power differential between the two kings is the difference between the radiance of the sun and the light of the moon.

40 ... Kb7

Step 2: Push all the queenside pawns until he reaches a collision point on b5.

41 a4! a6 42 h5 Rh6 43 b4 Rf6 44 b5!

chesstouring.com



Prying open Black's pawn cover, Capa goes after the creature in its own lair on b7.

44 ... axb5 45 axb5 Rf8

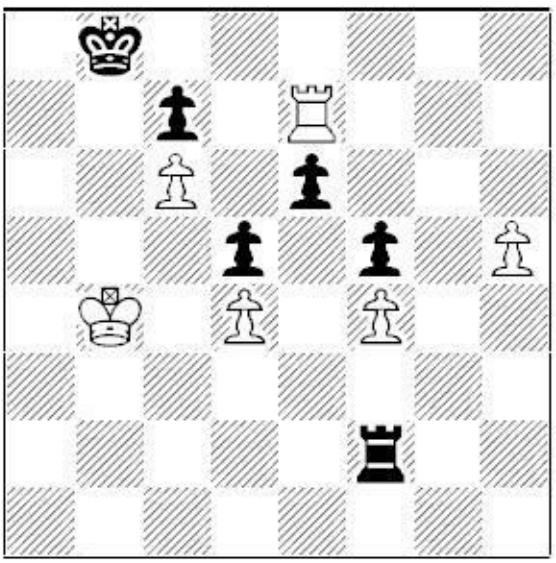
If 45 ... cxb5 46 Kxb5 c6+ 47 Ka5 Rf7 48 h6 and Rg7 follows with deadly effect.

46 Rg7 Ra8+ 47 Kb4 cxb5 48 Kxb5 Ra2

Step 3: Apply a chokehold with c5-c6.

49 c6+ Kb8 50 Rxh7 Rb2+ 51 Ka5 Ra2+ 52 Kb4 Rxf2 53 Re7!

Houdini incorrectly gives 53 h6? Rh2 54 Rh8+ Ka7 55 h7 Rh3 56 Ka4, claiming a winning advantage for White. I took Black's side and held a draw.



53 ... Rxf4

After 53 ... Rh2 54 Rxe6 Rxh5 55 Kc5 Rh4 56 Re5 Rxf4 57 Re8+! Ka7 58 Rc8 Rf1 59 Rxc7+ Kb8 60 Rf7 White picks off d5, when his two advanced passers win easily.

54 h6!

Headed for promotion. The white king turns his back on his d-pawn. His h-pawn is all that matters.

54 ... Rxd4+ 55 Kb5 Rd1 56 h7

chesstouring.com

Impressive alchemy on Capa's part. The pawn promotes to something far more valuable.

56 ... Rb1+ 57 Kc5 Rc1+ 58 Kd4 Rd1+ 59 Ke5 Re1+ 60 Kf6 Rh1 61 Re8+ Ka7 62 h8Q Rxh8 63

Rxh8 Kb6 64 Kxe6 Kxc6 65 Kxf5

Tears are futile, yet we still shed them. Two pawns are not enough for a rook.

65 ... Kc5 66 Ke5 c6 67 Rh6! Kb5 68 Kd4 1-0

Euwe cited this game as one of Capablanca's very best endings.

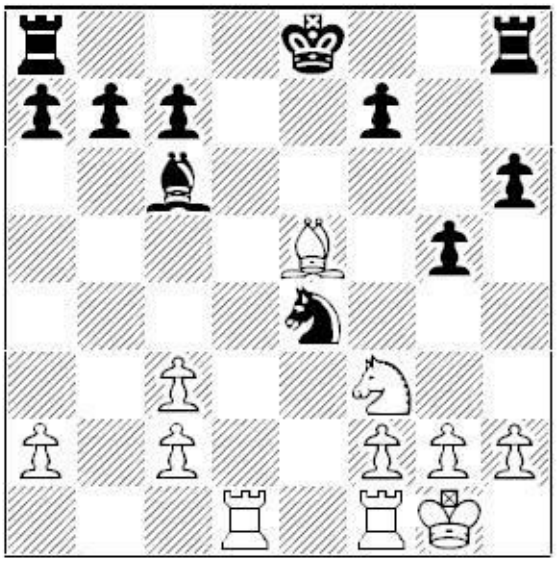
Game 51

A.Nimzowitsch-J.R.Capablanca

Riga 1913

Italian Game

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bc4 Bc5 5 d3 d6 6 Bg5 Be6 7 Bb5 h6 8 Bh4 Bb4 9 d4 Bd7 10 0-0 Bxc3 11 bxc3 g5 12 Bg3 Nxe4 13 Bxc6 Bxc6 14 dxe5 dxe5 15 Bxe5 Qxd1 16 Raxd1



Question: I realize you are not covering the middlegame in this chapter, but Nimzowitsch played a passive, lame game so far, correct?

Answer: I agree. Nimzowitsch normally marched to a drum only he heard. Here though, he plays in a rather meek, un-Nimzo-like, orthodox manner. I remember a line from the television show *Kung Fu*, where that font of wisdom, Master Po, declares: "It is no disgrace to lose – if one has fought to win." Many of Capa's opponents claimed they played below par against him, just as Fischer's opponents did. Fischer once said he never once played a healthy opponent!

I remember with amusement, an article Larsen wrote for *Canadian Chess Chat Magazine* in 1972, titled something like "Heat Wave in Denver" explaining away his 0-6 1971 Candidate's match defeat at Fischer's hands as a fluke! I remember a quote which went something like: " ... and Fischer didn't prove to me he could beat me in a single game under normal conditions." Really? 0-6 wasn't good enough proof?

It's very difficult to keep your composure when facing a legendary talent. In Nimzo's case we see another of Capa's opponents fall under a self-hypnotic and self-fulfilling prophecy of his own defeat in the belief in the futility of resisting Capa's machine-like accuracy.

Question: Who stands better? I see a better-developed White versus a structurally-superior Black.

chesstouring.com

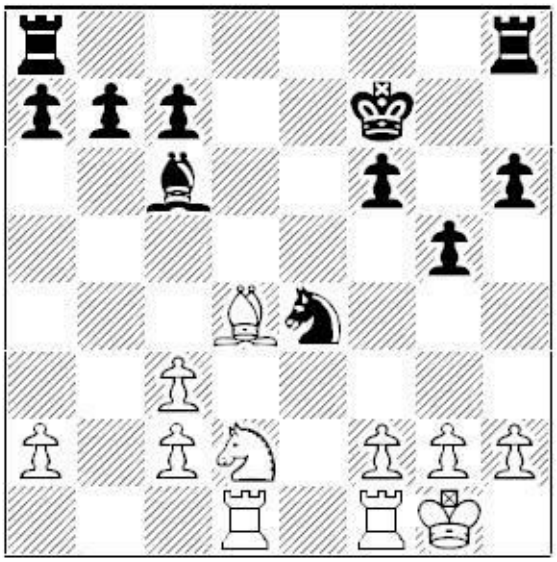
Answer: That is essentially correct. We also have the presence of opposite-coloured bishops which, at

the moment, may help White's drawing chances since he may drop a pawn later on. Now the key question is: Can White do anything with his development lead? Capa and the computers say no. Structure matters and Black stands better.

16 ... f6 17 Bd4

He declines c7, almost as an afterthought. Rather than such cautious reservation, White may have had better chances simplifying with 17 Bxc7 Nxc3 18 Rde1+ Kf7 19 Ba5 Nb5 20 c4 Nd6 21 Nd2, when his position looks better than the one he got in the game.

17 ... Kf7 18 Nd2



Generally, the side trying to hold the draw seeks to remove extraneous pieces from the board, aiming for a pure opposite-coloured bishops position to maximize drawing chances. As in his game against Teichmann from Chapter 3 (Game 25), Capa is happy to cooperate.

18 ... Rhe8!?

I would be nervous about the drawing power of opposite-coloured bishops and would keep the knights on the board with 18 ... Nd6.

19 f3 Nxd2 20 Rxd2 Rad8 21 g4!?

Question: Why did he toss in g2-g4?

Answer: White wants to fix f6 as a potential target and play f3-f4.

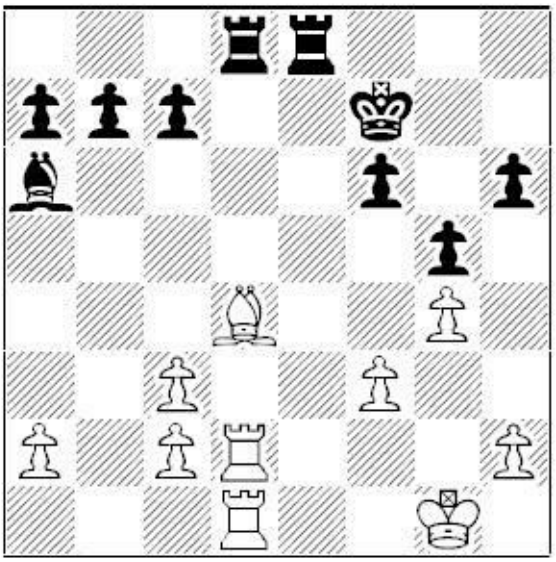
21 ... Bb5 22 Rb1

Question: If White wanted to play for f3-f4,
then why move his rook off the file?

Answer: Nimzo changed his mind, probably seeing the line 22 Rff2 Re1+ 23 Kg2 b6, and now if White proceeds with his plan 24 f4?? then 24 ... Bc6+ 25 Kg3 Rxd4! wins a piece, since ... Re3+ is a deadly threat.

22 ... Ba6 23 Rbd1

chesstouring.com



Exercise (combination alert): Black to play and win a pawn.

There are two ways. You get credit for finding either one.

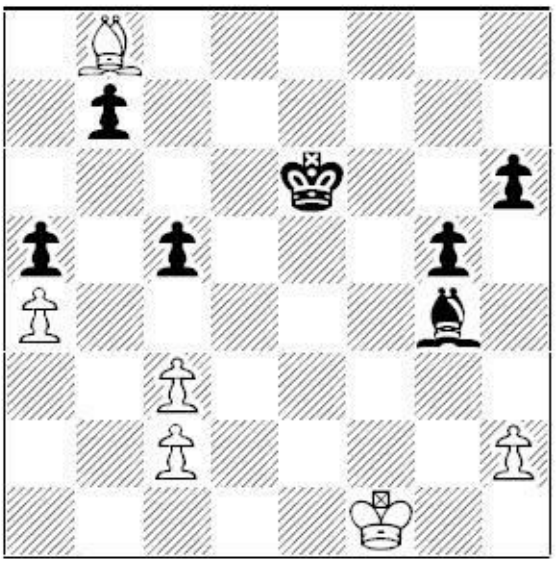
Answer: **23 ... Re2!**

Threatening ... c7-c5! White has no choice but to take on e2. Also strong was 23 ... Be2! 24 Re1 Bxf3 25 Rf1 c5!.

24 Rxe2 Bxe2 25 Re1 Bxf3 26 Rf1 c5! 27 Bxf6?

White had more drawing chances entering the rook and pawn ending after 27 Rxf3! cxd4 28 Rd3 Rc8 29 Rxd4.

27 ... Rd1! 28 Be5 Rxf1+ 29 Kxf1 Bxg4 30 a4 Ke6 31 Bb8 a5!!



This almost looks like a typo.

32 Ke1!

Question: Wasn't Capablanca's last move a blunder?

White can play 32 Bc7 picking off a5.

Answer: Ah, but does he? Nimzo avoided a devilish trap. Black has a study-like win here after 32 ... b5! 33 axb5 a4 34 Kf2 a3 35 b6 Kd7 36 c4 Kc6 37 Ke3 Be6 38 Kd3 a2 39 Be5 Kxb6 zugzwang! Now if White just waits with 40 Ba1, then Black activates his majority on the other side with 40 ... h5! 41 Ke4 h4

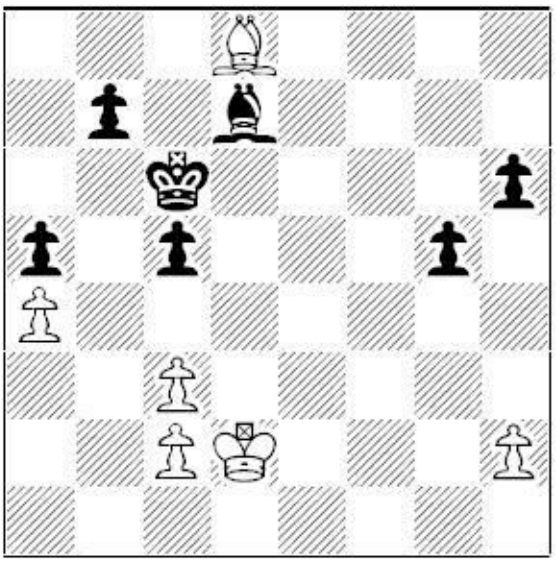
chesstouring.com

42 Bc3 g4 43 Kf4 Bf5! winning.

32 ... Kd5 33 Kd2

Tricks, tricks! This time Black meets 33 Bc7 with 33 ... Kc6!, when the a-pawn is untouchable.

33 ... Bd7 34 Bc7 Kc6! 35 Bd8



Exercise (planning): The bishop, with saint-like forbearance, once again refuses to retaliate by taking on a5 (and get himself trapped!). How can Black in this position force the win of a pawn?

Answer: Step 1: Protect a5.

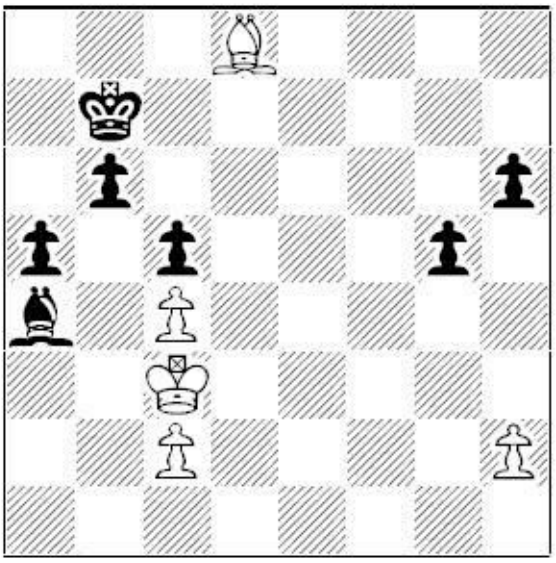
35 ... b6 36 c4 Kb7!

Step 2: Get his king out of the way. Capa relates a story about how Nimzowitsch, at the next tournament, bet Capablanca money that the position was still drawn. Capa, not having looked at the position since, accepted the bet, glanced at Nimzowitsch's idea and refuted it on the spot! This left poor Nimzo short on cash, as well as pride.

37 Kc3

Step 3: Take it!

37 ... Bxa4



chesstouring.com

The white a-pawn dies and the heirs are legally unable to claim his estate. Emergency protocol advises us to remain calm in such situations. Nimzo does just that, placing all his drawing hopes on the opposite-coloured bishops (just as Teichmann and Thomas did in this book!).

38 Kb2 Bd7 39 Kb3 Be6!

Threat: ... b6-b5.

40 Kc3 a4 41 Kd3 Kc6 42 Kc3 g4 43 Bh4 h5

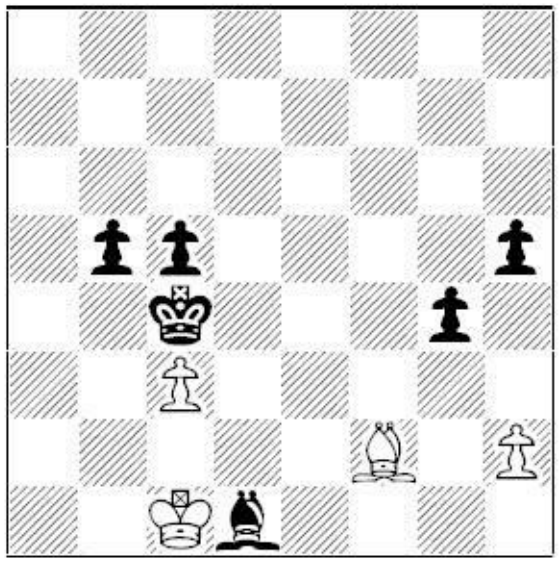
Question: How does Black make progress? His kingside pawns can't advance without the help of his king, and his king is stuck on the queenside defending his weakness on b6.

Answer: Capa's answer is simple: Eliminate his weakness on b6. Like this:

44 Bg3 a3! 45 Kb3 Bxc4+! 46 Kxa3 b5

No more weakness on b6.

47 c3 Kd5 48 Bf2 Be2 49 Kb3 Bd1+ 50 Kb2 Kc4 51 Kc1



51 ... Bf3

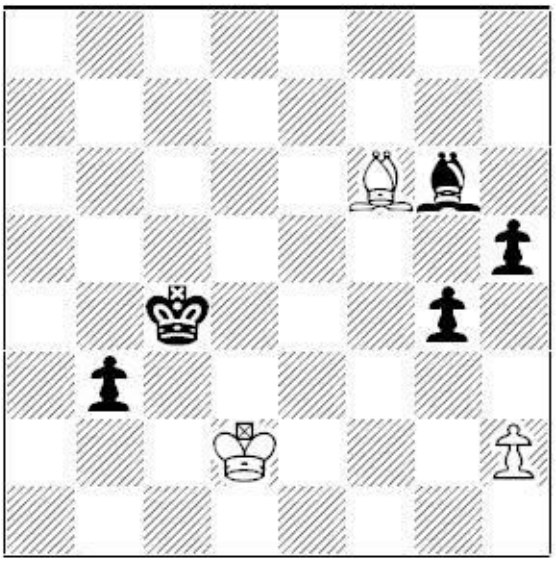
Question: Can Black sac a piece and get three healthy pawns for it by taking on c3?

Answer: Your idea wins. For example, 51 ... Kxc3! 52 Kxd1 c4 53 Kc1 Kd3 54 Bc5 c3 55 Bb4 h4 56 Bd6 Kc4 57 Bc7 b4 58 Kc2 b3+ 59 Kb1 Kd3 60 Bf4 b2 61 Bd6 Kd2 62 Bf4+ Kd1 zugzwang – Black wins.

Declining the bishop also fails to save White: 52 Bxc5 Bc2 53 Be7 b4 54 Bg5 Kb3 55 Be7 Bf5 56 Kd2 h4! 57 Bxh4 Kb2 58 Bf6+ Kb1 59 Be5 b3 60 Bf6 b2 winning a piece.

52 Kd2 b4 53 cxb4 cxb4 54 Bh4 Be4 55 Bf6 Bg6 56 Bh4 b3 57 Bf6

chesstouring.com



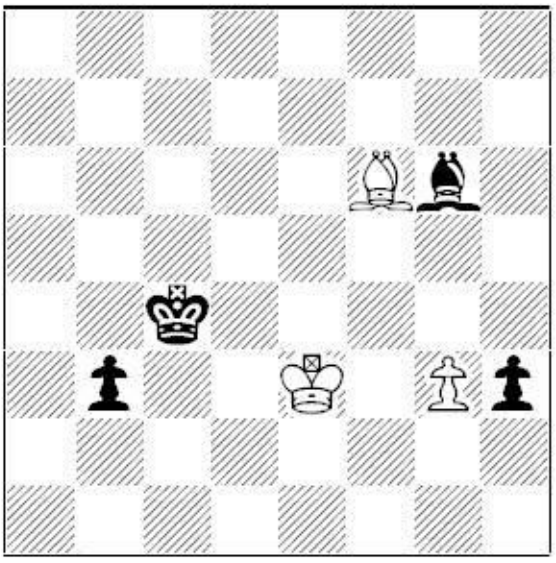
Exercise (combination alert): White has both ... b3-b2 and ... h5-h4 covered. Or does he? Look more deeply. White still has considerable hidden defensive baggage in the position. How can Black make progress?

Answer: Step 1: Overload the glass-jawed bishop, who can't take a punch. The h4-square isn't quite as covered as White had imagined.

57 ... h4! 58 Ke3

Step 2: Sacrifice a pawn in order to create a second passer.

58 ... g3! 59 hxg3 h3!



Sir, your bags have arrived. White's firewall breaks down.

60 Kf2 Bf5 61 g4

Or 61 Kg1 Bg4 62 Kh2 Kd3 and Black wins exactly as he does in the game.

61 ... Bxg4 62 Kg3

Step 3: Win a bishop by escorting the passed b-pawn heavenward.

62 ... Kd3 63 Kh2 Kc2 64 Kg3

chesstouring.com

White makes a brave show of defiance but the end result is never in doubt. White's disembodied king, suspended in the ether, can only watch but somehow can't connect with Black's bishop, who sits immune

on g4.

64 ... b2 0-1

Unfortunately for Nimzo, after 65 Bxb2 Kxb2 Black owns the correct coloured bishop for the h-pawn and wins.

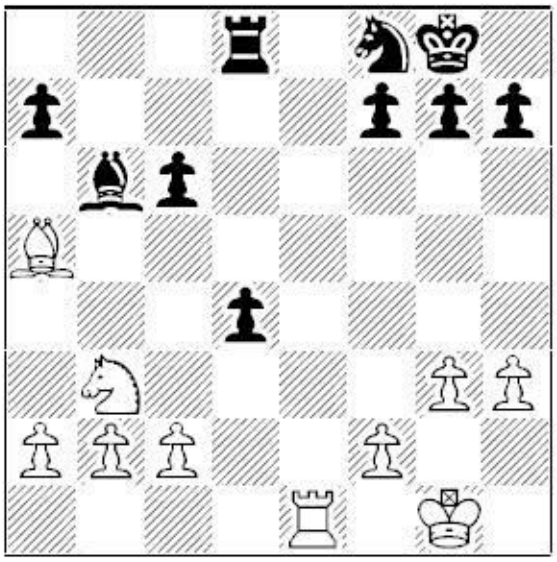
Game 52

J.R.Capablanca-A.Rubinstein

Berlin 1928

Queen's Pawn Opening

1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 c5 3 dxc5 e6 4 e4 Bxc5 5 exd5 exd5 6 Bb5+ Nc6 7 0-0 Nge7 8 Nbd2 0-0 9 Nb3 Bb6 10 Re1 Bg4 11 Bd3 Ng6 12 h3 Bxf3 13 Qxf3 Nce5 14 Qf5 Nxd3 15 Qxd3 d4 16 Bd2 Qf6 17 Re4 Rad8 18 Rae1 Qc6 19 g3 Rfe8 20 Ba5 Rxe4 21 Qxe4 Nf8 22 Qxc6 bxc6



White has only one plus in the position: He gets his rook to the seventh rank.

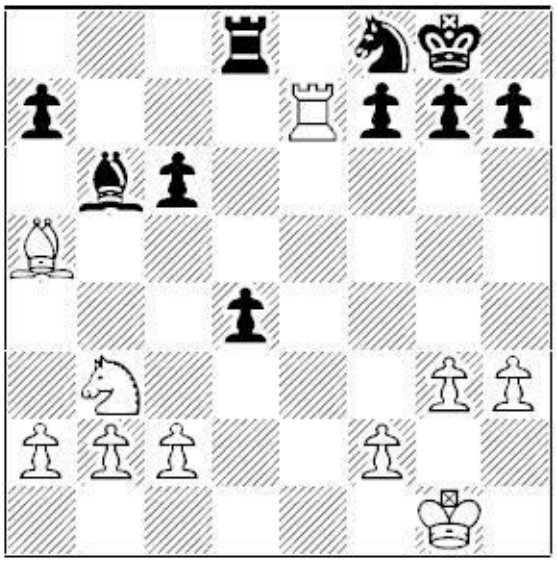
Question: Is this enough to win?

Answer: Not really. Black should be able to hold things together on the queenside. Capa never let issues like drawn positions stop him from winning anyway! Somehow he manages to squeeze out the win against the second best endgame player in the world at the time. We already know who was best.

23 Re7

Black has a choice: Centralize with 23 ... Rd5 in an attempt to make White take on b6, straightening out Black's queenside pawn structure. Or play ... d4-d3 to reduce the number of pawns on the board and ease his defensive task.

chesstouring.com



Exercise (critical decision): Which one would you play?

23 ... Rd5?

The wrong one. The logical defence eludes Rubinstein and fades as he tries in vain to grasp on to a drawing plan.

Answer: Black has excellent chances to hold in the simplifying line 23 ... d3! 24 cxd3 Rxd3 25 Bxb6 axb6 26 Rb7 Nd7 27 Rc7 c5 28 Rc8+ Nf8.

24 Bxb6! axb6 25 Rb7 Nd7

This is the exact position Black could have had in the 23 ... d3 line, except that his d4-pawn would be traded off. Capa takes deadly advantage of this omission.

26 Rc7 Rd6

After 26 ... c5 27 Rc8+ Nf8 28 Nd2, suddenly White threatens Rb8 followed by Nc4, picking off b6.

Question: So what? Can't Black just play 28 ... b5?

Answer: He can, but his pawns become loose after 29 b3!, threatening Ne4. Play might continue 29 ... f5 30 a4! (a passer emerges) 30 ... d3 31 c4 bxc4 32 bxc4 Re5 33 a5 Re2 34 a6! Re1+ 35 Kg2 Ra1 36 Rxc5 Rxa6 37 Rxf5 and White wins a pawn, while Black's d-pawn remains in mortal danger.

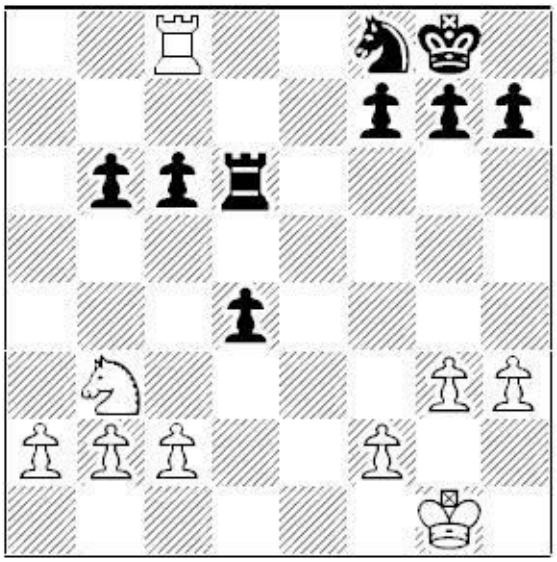
27 Rc8+

Gaining a tempo.

27 ... Nf8

The knight, with trembling lower lip and hurt feelings, sulks into the gloom on f8.

chesstouring.com



Exercise (planning): With Black's knight tied up and unable to help defend the queenside, how can we jump on this opportunity to win b6?

Answer: Create immediate confrontation.

28 Nd2!

Threat: Nc4.

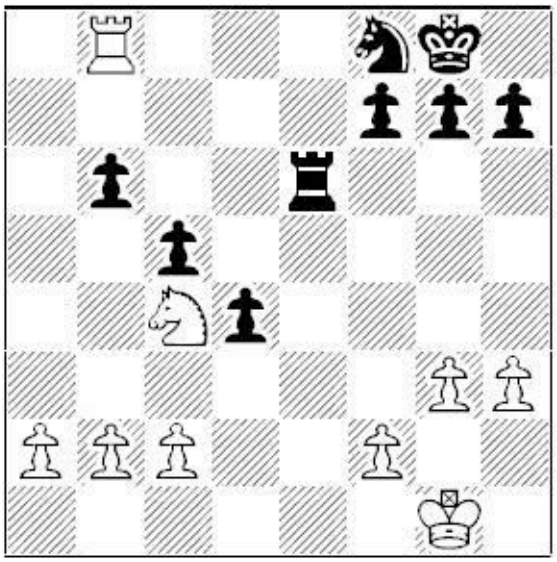
28 ... c5

Black squirms and attempts to escape, but Capa blocks him at every turn from this point.

Question: Why not 28 ... b5 to keep White's knight out?

Answer: In that case the knight does an about-face and retraces his route with 29 Nb3!, threatening the unanswerable Na5.

29 Nc4 Re6 30 Rb8!



Capa strings his coordinates together perfectly on the focal point b6.

30 ... Re1+ 31 Kg2 g5

Question: Why can't Black go on his own counterattack on c2 by playing 31 ... Rc1?

chesstouring.com

Answer: That is a blunder. White would respond 32 Nxb6 when there is no good answer to the coming

Nd7.

32 a4 Ra1 33 Nxb6

Feeding time at the lion cage.

33 ... Kg7 34 Rc8 Ne6 35 Nd7! Rxa4 36 Nxc5 Rb4

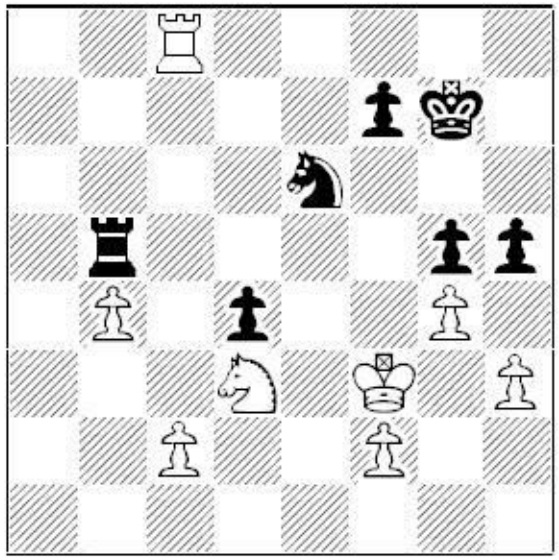
Rubinstein rummages through his meagre belongings, unable to find a solution. After 36 ... Nxc5 37 Rxc5 Black is defenceless as a baby in the womb since White can set up with the plan b2-b3, b3-g4, and then transfer his king to d3.

Question: What if Black's rook counterattacks the kingside pawns?

Answer: That is the point of g3-g4. White can then play Rf5 and Rf3, covering his kingside pawns. Meanwhile Black's d-pawn falls.

37 Nd3 Rb5 38 Kf3 h6 39 b4 h5 40 g4!

To be able to play Ke4 in the future without allowing Black to compose resistance with ... f7-f5+.



40 ... hxg4+ 41 hxg4 f6 42 Rc4 Kf7 43 Nc5! Nd8

A move perhaps based on the theory that a soldier may survive a losing battle by not drawing attention to himself. The humble knight bows, paying homage to his master on c5. Also hopeless was 43 ... Nxc5 44 bxc5 Ke7 45 Ke4.

44 Nb3! 1-0

The second pawn falls, while ... Nc6 is prevented.

Game 53

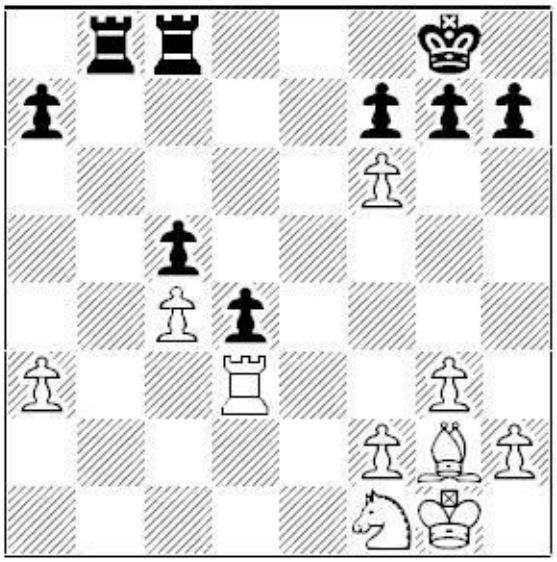
E.Canal-J.R.Capablanca

Budapest 1929

Queen's Indian Defence

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 b6 4 g3 Bb7 5 Bg2 Bb4+ 6 Bd2 Bxd2+ 7 Nbxd2 0-0 8 0-0 c5 9 dxc5 bxc5 10 Qc2 Nc6 11 Rfd1 Qb6 12 a3 Rab8 13 Rab1 Rfc8 14 e4 e5 15 Qd3 d6 16 Nf1 Nd4 17 Nxd4 exd4 18 b4 Qc6 19 bxc5 dxc5 20 Rxb7 Qxb7 21 e5 Qb3 22 exf6 Qxd3 23 Rxd3

chesstouring.com



Question: Is Capablanca losing? White has a bishop and knight for a rook.

Answer: Under normal circumstances you would be correct in assuming that a bishop and knight team would beat two rooks, but this position contains a few hidden anomalies:

1. White's rook is tied down to Black's powerful, passed d-pawn.
2. Should a pair of rooks come off the board, then White may have difficulty defending his a-pawn; and if he drops his a-pawn, then Black's passed a-pawn looms large.
3. White may have some chances for a direct attack upon Black's king.

The computers like White as well. *Houdini* assesses at +.44, advantage for White; *Rybka* assesses at +.26, while *Fritz* agrees with you with +.75, nearly a winning advantage for White.

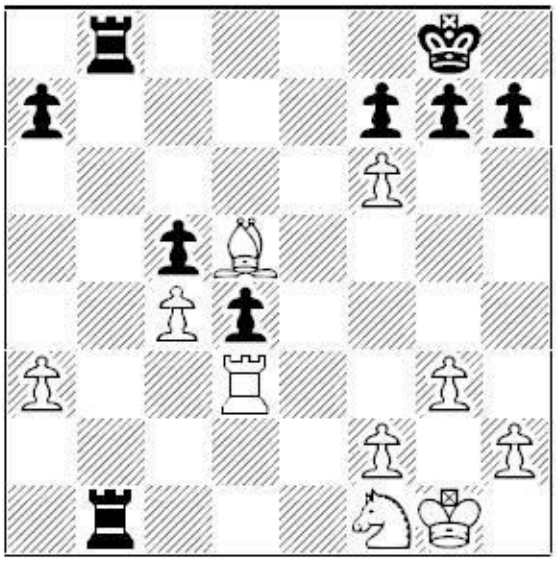
Question: What is your assessment?

Answer: After analyzing with the computers, I agree with *Houdini*'s assessment. White stands better in a very sharp ending.

23 ... Rb1

Planning ... Rcb8 and ... R8b3, to take rooks off the board and/or win White's a-pawn.

24 Bd5 Rcb8



chesstouring.com

Exercise (planning): How would you play White? You have a choice

between 25 Kg2, unpinning, or 25 Rf3, going on the attack.

25 Kg2?

A serious misjudgment. White's planning GPS system is clearly broken. He allows rooks off the board.

Answer: Capa would have had to sweat to earn the draw after the correct 25 Rf3!, going on the attack and dodging a rook swap. Computer analysis runs 25 ... R1b3 26 Rf5 g6 27 Re5 R3b6 28 Re7 Rxf6 29 Rxa7 Rb2 30 f4 Ra2 31 Rc7 d3 32 Rd7 Rb6! 33 Be4! f5! 34 Bxd3 Rbb2, when Black generates enough counterplay from his rooks on the seventh. Either side can still win from this interlocked stage, like evenly matched wrestlers straining for an advantage.

25 ... R8b3

Of course! Rooks come off the board. This means Black no longer has to worry about his king. White's a-pawn, on the other hand, is not long for this world. Chances are now even.

26 Rxb3 Rxb3 27 Nd2 Rxa3 28 Ne4

So White drops a3 but picks off c5.

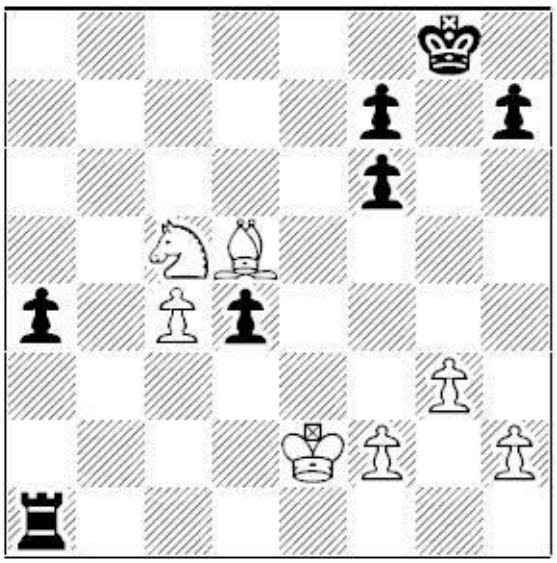
Question: Which one is faster?

Answer: Apparently the race is approximately even – if both sides play correctly, which they don't!

28 ... a5

The race begins: two passers to one.

29 Nxc5 gxf6 30 Kf1 a4 31 Ke2 Ra1



Exercise (critical decision): White's knight must choose between two directions: 32 Nd3, staying close to the surging black a-pawn; or 32 Nd7, going on a counterattack on Black's f-pawn. One draws; the other loses.

32 Nd3?

This is not the time for half measures. White opts for a passive plan which yields meagre fruit.

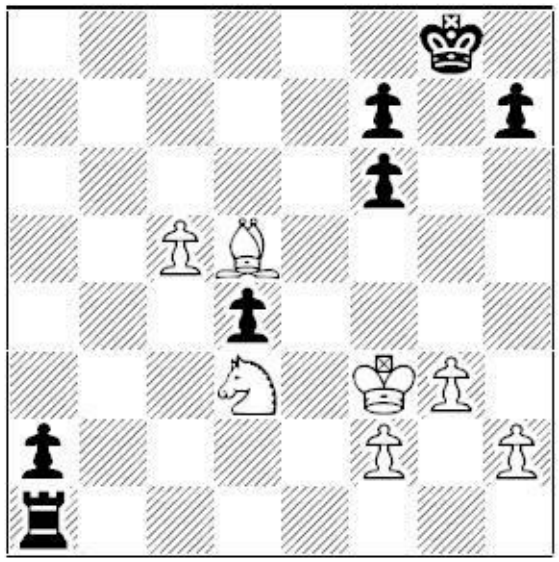
Answer: White must boldly counterattack to hold the game with 32 Nd7! a3 33 c5 a2 34 Bxa2 Rxa2+ 35 Kd3. Now Black can't afford to take on f2 due to the passed pawn on c5. Note that Black's king cannot help out since he is denied entry from f8. After 35 ... Ra7 36 Nxf6+ Kg7 37 Nd5 Kf8 38 Kxd4 the probable result is a draw.

32 ... a3 33 c5 a2

Threat: ... Re1+ and ... a1Q. The a-pawn, now seething and pulsing with unharnessed energy, is impossible to contain.

chesstouring.com

34 Kf3



Exercise (combination alert): The crowd tosses rose petals in the a-pawn's path as it nears coronation. Black has access to a simple trick which forces the win of a piece for his a-pawn.

Answer: Double attack.

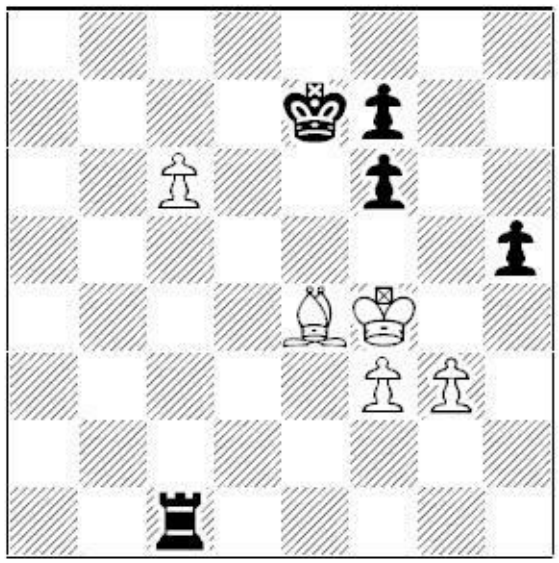
34 ... Rd1! 35 Bxa2 Rxd3+ 36 Ke4 Rd2

What a difference from the variation White could have entered on his 32nd move. In this case Black's d-pawn is still alive, as is his f6-pawn. Both were taken by White in the other line.

37 Bc4 Kf8!

Black's king must help out by moving into the square of White's passed c-pawn.

38 f3 Rxh2 39 Kxd4 Ke7 40 Bd3 h5 41 Ke3 Rg2 42 Kf4 Rg1 43 Be4 Rc1 44 c6



White's c6-pawn is the prop upon which his body hangs. Black can't afford the time to sac the exchange back with ... Kd6 and ... Rxc6, since White would win the resulting king and pawn ending. But we have a little trick in the position.

Exercise (combination alert): White's bishop stands his ground with misplaced pride. How can Black force the win of the c6-pawn?

chesstouring.com

Answer: Zugzwang! Silence sometimes carries greater meaning than words.

44 ... Rc3!!

The black rook smiles as if at a secret joke.

45 c7

Question: I don't get it. Why did White just discard his c-pawn as though it were a used napkin?

Answer: He loses it in every line. For example: 45 Bd5 (or 45 Kf5 Rc5+) 45 ... Rc5 46 Be4 Ke6 47 g4 (47 Ke3 f5 picks off c6) 47 ... h4 48 Ke3 Kd6 49 Kf2 Rxc6!, and if White takes the rook he now loses the king and pawn ending after 50 Bxc6 Kxc6 51 Kg2 Kd5 52 Kh3 Ke5 53 Kxh4 Kf4.

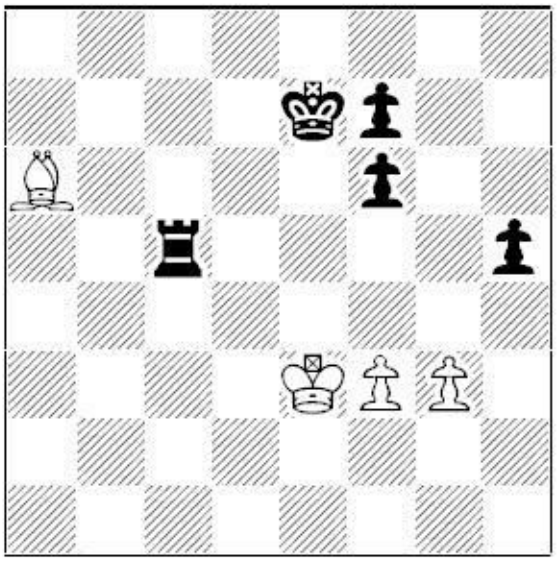
45 ... Rxc7

The pawn satiates the rook's dark craving – for now.

46 Bd5

The bishop, though technically alive, may as well be dead or in a coma, his life merely empty motion, attacking nothing and going nowhere.

46 ... Rc5 47 Ba2 Rb5 48 Ke3 Ra5 49 Bc4 Rc5 50 Ba6



Question: White's last move looks illogical. Why not keep a bead on f7 and stay on the diagonal?

Answer: In that case Black wins with the following plan: 50 Ba2 f5 51 Kf4 Kf6 52 Bb3 Rb5 53 Ba2 Rb4+ 54 Ke3 f4+! 55 gxf4 h4 56 Bd5 h3 57 Kf2 h2 58 Kg2 Rb2+ 59 Kh1 Kf5 60 Bxf7 Kxf4 61 Bd5 Kg3 and mates in two moves.

50 ... Ke6 51 Kf4 Rc3 52 Bf1 f5 53 Ba6 Kf6 54 Bb7 Rc4+ 55 Ke3 Kg5

55 ... f4+! is also an easy win.

56 Kf2 f4

Black creates his own passed h-pawn and resistance ends.

57 Kg2 f5 0-1

Game 54

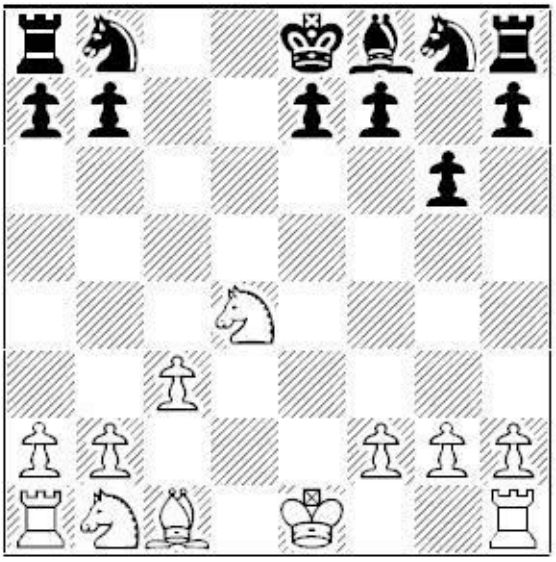
L.Merenyi-J.R.Capablanca

Budapest 1928

Sicilian Defence

chesstouring.com

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 g6 3 c3 d5 4 Bb5+ Bd7 5 Bxd7+ Qxd7 6 exd5 Qxd5 7 d4 cxd4 8 Qxd4 Qxd4 9 Nxd4



We reach an ending typical for the c3-Sicilian, with opposite wing pawn majorities.

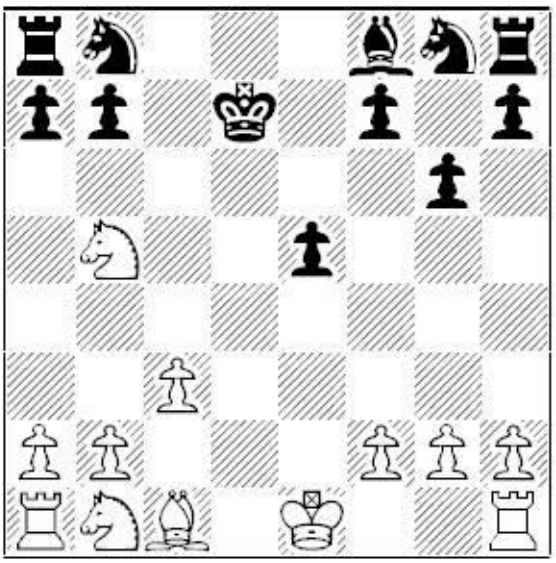
Question: Isn't a queenside pawn majority generally considered superior in an ending?

Answer: Correct, but remember, Capa's side controls more of the centre due to his e-pawn. The position looks close to even, if not just even.

9 ... e5!?

I'm not sure whether this move should be labelled confident or cocky! Clearly Capa is in an adventurous mood and provokes his weaker opponent. The simple 9 ... a6 is the safer choice.

10 Nb5 Kd7!



Based on the Steinitzian principle: The king is a fighting piece, so use it!

Question: This looks crazy. Why not 10 ... Na6?

Answer: The trouble with your suggestion is that it rules out ... a7-a6 and allows White's knight free rein on b5.

chesstouring.com

11 Ke2 Kc6!?

Question: It feels to me like Black is on a suicide mission.

Why didn't he kick the b5-knight instead?

Answer: The move isn't as crazy as it looks. Remember, Black's king must soon vacate the open d-file, so why not now? Capa continues the high wire act with a chillingly cold provocation, which can be more unsettling than an angry response. The move also displays Capa's level of self-confidence, which bordered on arrogance, in endings versus lower-ranked opponents. He strives at great risk to increase the complexity level of the ending and, I would add, did a pretty good job of it too! I bet 99.99% of all chess players would play 11 ... a6 without thinking.

12 a4 Nd7

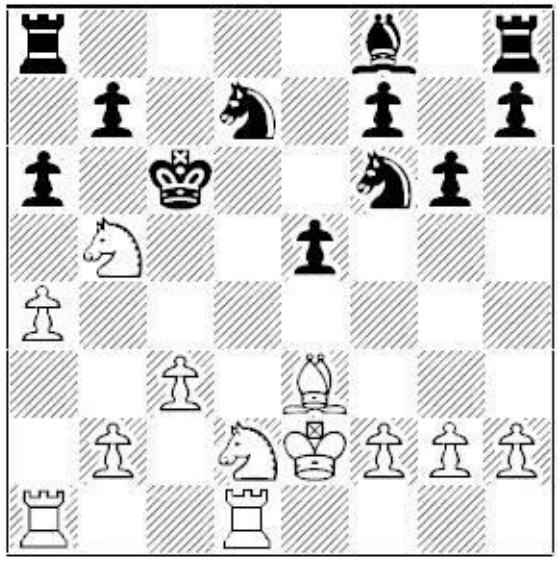
Still no ... a7-a6.

13 Be3 a6 14 Rd1!

The knight is immune.

14 ... Ngf6 15 Nd2

Perhaps contemplating shenanigans. If White gets a knight to a5, he delivers checkmate.



15 ... Rd8 16 Na3

White can also try 16 Nc4!? axb5 17 Nxe5+ Nxe5 18 Rxd8 with a messy position.

16 ... Nd5 17 Ndc4 b6 18 Rd2

Preparing to double rooks on the d-file.

18 ... Bxa3

A second imbalance appears: Two knights versus bishop and knight.

Question: Isn't that one also in White's favour?

Answer: I don't think so. Black's knights look very active. I'm not exactly sure what White's bishop does on e3. Let me tell you a little secret. I do the same thing, play knight versus bishop, all the time when facing a lower rated player I hope to beat. Not because the knight is better but simply because it adds imbalance and tension to the game.

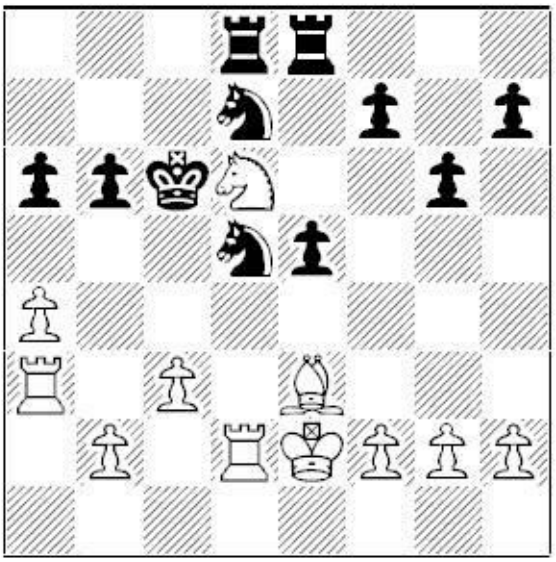
19 Rxa3

If 19 Rad1!? Black should continue 19 ... Nxe3 20 fxe3 Kc7!, avoiding the cheapo 20 ... Be7?? 21 Rxd7!.

19 ... Rhe8 20 Nd6?!

There is a fine line between brilliant and superficial. White's fancy move turns out to be a waste of energy.

chesstouring.com



20 ... Re7!

Quite nonchalant. There is an old saying which goes: If you argue with a fool, then passers-by may wonder just which one of you is the fool.

Question: Can the knight be taken?

Answer: The knight actually can be taken in the line 20 ... Kxd6 21 c4 N7f6! 22 cxd5 (22 Bxb6? Rc8 23 cxd5 Ne4! 24 Rd1 Rc2+! 25 Kd3 Rxb2 is in Black's favour) 22 ... Nd7, playing to win the d5-pawn later.

21 c4?

This move, which brims with unjustified optimism, creates punctures on the dark squares. This is all Capa needs.

21 ... Nxe3 22 fxe3 Nc5

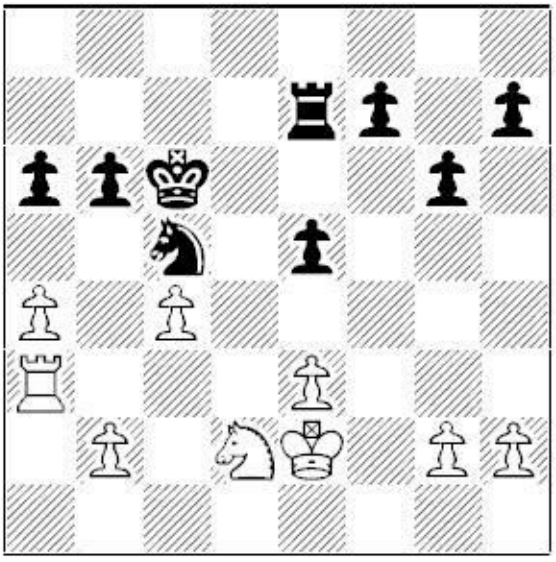
Question: Winning a piece?

Answer: No, White counted on his next move.

23 Ne4!

The knight backs away in protest.

23 ... Rxd2+ 24 Nxd2



chesstouring.com

Exercise (planning): Come up with a way to negate White's queenside pawn majority and also weaken him further on the dark squares.

Answer: **24 ... a5!**

Riddling the queenside with holes.

Question: But doesn't Black's last move create a gaping hole on b5 as well?

Answer: It does, but Capa simply works around the hole, which surprisingly does White little good.

25 Nb1

Heading for b5.

25 ... Rd7 26 Nd2

Well, maybe not! White realized 26 Nc3? walks into 26 ... Nd3! which wins a pawn. For example: 27 b3? (27 Ra2?? Nc1+) 27 ... Nc1+! 28 Ke1 Rd3 29 Nd1 Kc5 and White can resign.

26 ... e4!

Limiting White's knight and taking firm control over d3.

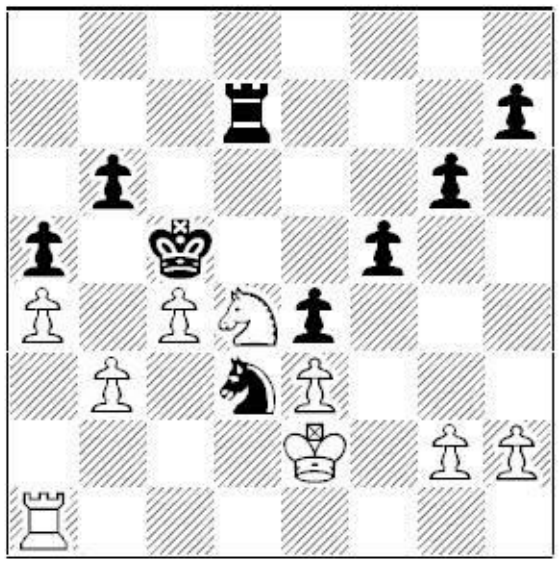
27 Nb3 Nd3 28 Nd4+ Kc5

Every black piece is superior to its white counterpart.

29 b3 f5

Now ... f5-f4 is in the air.

30 Ra1



Exercise (critical decision): Black can sac an exchange for a pawn on d4. If we do sac, are we on our way to glory or are we indulging in a grand daydream?

Answer: You have excellent strategic judgment if you chose to go for it. Black's remaining forces crackle with energy after the sac.

30 ... Rxd4!! 31 exd4+ Kxd4

The alpha dog asserts himself. Black's king infiltrates with deadly effect.

32 g3?

Houdini suggests 32 h4!, which makes the win tougher, but Black should convert after 32 ... f4 33 Kd2 h6!.

32 ... g5!

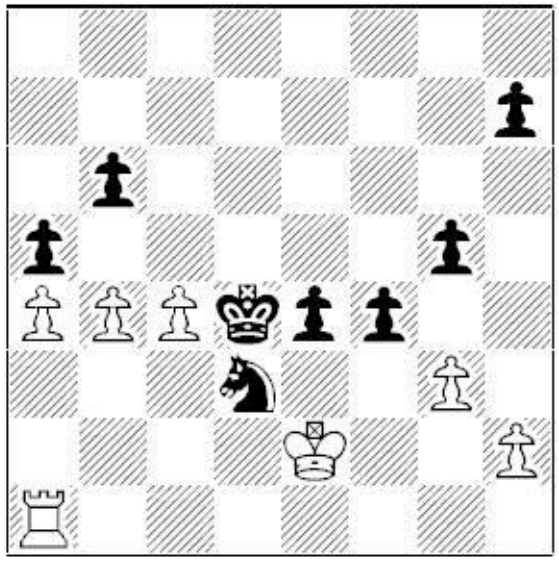
chesstouring.com

The brazen kingside passers intrude without bothering about an invitation from White.

33 b4

After 33 h4 f4! 34 hxg5 f3+ White has no answer to the e- and f-pawn charge.

33 ... f4!



He refuses to be distracted on the other wing.

34 c5

The wild lunge to glory – a desperate hope, disguised as a plan – ends in failure.

34 ... f3+ 35 Kf1 e3 36 Re1

Black is faster after 36 cxb6 e2+ 37 Kg1 e1Q+! 38 Rxe1 f2+!.

36 ... bxc5 37 Rxe3

White's last move renders satire moot. 37 b5 Nxe1 38 b6 (38 Kxe1 c4 does the trick) 38 ... Nd3 gets there first.

37 ... Kxe3 38 bxa5 c4! 0-1

White is swept away on the whims of uncontrollable forces. White queens first but Black rooks with mate: 39 a6 c3 40 a7 c2 41 a8Q c1R! mate!

Game 55

J.R.Capablanca-G.A.Thomas

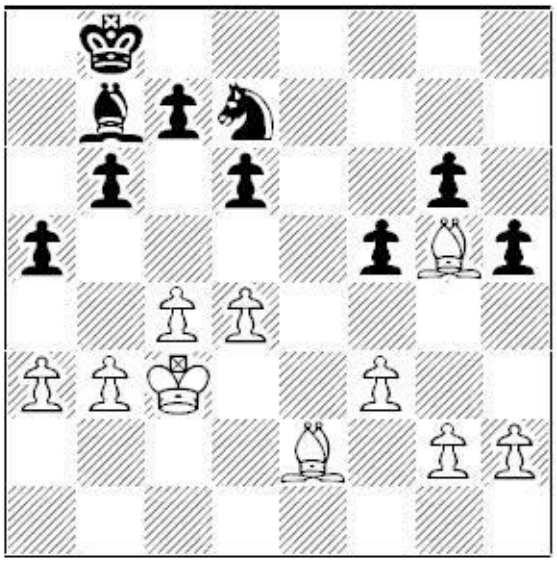
Hastings 1929/30

Bogo-Indian Defence

1 Nf3 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 d4 Bb4+ 4 Nbd2 b6 5 e3 Bb7 6 Bd3 Ne4 7 a3 Bxd2+ 8 Nxd2 Nxd2 9 Bxd2 f5 10 Qh5+ g6 11 Qh6 Qe7 12 f3 d6 13 e4 Nd7 14 0-0-0 0-0-0 15 exf5 exf5 16 Bg5 Qf8 17 Qh4 Re8 18 Rde1 Qf7 19 Kc2 a5 20 b3 Bc6 21 Kc3 h5 22 Rxe8+ Rxe8 23 Re1 Bb7 24 Qf2 Kb8 25 Rxe8+ Qxe8 26 Qe2 Qxe2 27 Bxe2

White's position is so powerful that I dare say he is winning.

chesstouring.com



Question: I see that White stands better, but aren't you going too far claiming a win for White this early?

Answer: Let's assess:

1. White has the bishop pair.
2. White controls more space.
3. White's king is out and about while Black's mopes about, stuck in the lower levels.
4. Black's kingside pawns are fixed on the same colour as his remaining bishop.
5. White's king has potential access to the kingside via the dark squares f4 and g5.
6. All of Black's everything looks wrong! Just take a look at the desolate landscape of Black's pawns at odd angles, and the twisted black pieces all on awkward squares! Conclusion: I stick to my guns: Black is busted.

27 ... Bc8

I would try for freedom with 27 ... c5.

28 Be7!

Depriving the knight of squares and also preventing ... c7-c5 dreams.

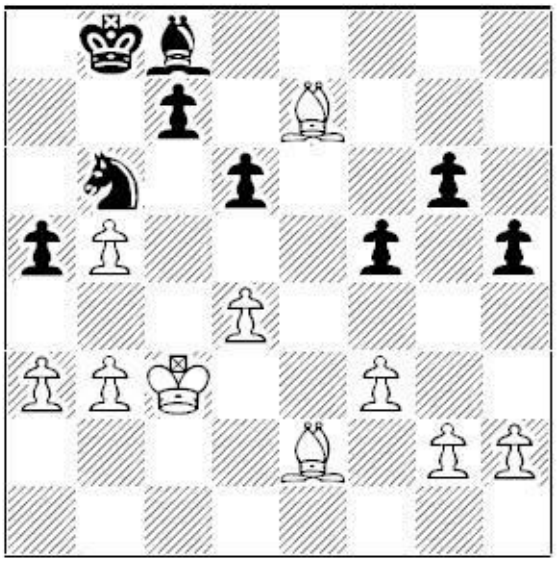
28 ... b5!?

Question: Isn't this just panic on Black's part?

Answer: Black has good reason to panic! Let's play out a scenario: 28 ... Kb7 29 g4! (principle: create confrontation when your opponent isn't ready for it) 29 ... hxg4 30 fxg4 Nb8 31 Bf3+ Ka7 32 g5 Be6 33 Bd8 Na6 34 h4 Bf7 (to halt h4-h5) 35 b4 axb4+ 36 axb4 (threat: b4-b5!) 36 ... c5 (36 ... Kb8?? saves the c-pawn but drops the knight after 37 b5) 37 bxc5 bxc5 38 Be7 wins a pawn while retaining a crushing position.

29 cxb5 Nb6

chesstouring.com



Exercise (planning): Black intends to massage away his headache through fortification of the blockade square d5. We can stop him by playing 30 Bc4. However, this leads to opposite-coloured bishops. Should we allow this possibility?

Answer: We should. For some mysterious reason, Capa was immune from the drawing effects of opposite-coloured bishops throughout his career.

30 Bc4! Nxc4 31 bxc4 Kb7 32 d5!

Just look at the difference between the opposing bishops; the contrast is stark.

32 ... f4!?

Black decides to get a haircut and shave away a pawn.

Question: Why give away another pawn?

Answer: Stop asking questions to which there is no answer! Sometimes reason is a suspect method of deriving truth. One shouldn't expect to chart a chess game with total precision. Better to factor in a few unexpected byways and turns provided by your opponent's caprices and whims. Black struggles beyond endurance, as his universe seems constructed solely of weak dark squares and imprisonment for both king and bishop.

The reason Black sac'ed is that doing nothing is slow, certain death. Without the sac Black's bishop sits alone with his fears while White's king simply infiltrates the kingside. For example: 32 ... Bd7 33 Kd4 Be8 34 Bf6 Bf7 35 h4 Be8 36 Ke3 Kc8 37 a4 Kb7 38 Kf4 (a shrill wind blows through Black's kingside dark squares, and f4 and g5 are deep holes sunk into the ground) 38 ... Kb6 39 Bd4+ Kb7 40 Kg5 Bf7 41 Kf6 Be8 42 Ke7 and yet another indignity heaped upon the poor bishop. White wins.

33 a4

Now a5 is a perpetual target for the dark-squared bishop.

33 ... Bf5

Freedom! The bishop leaves prison with time off for good behaviour.

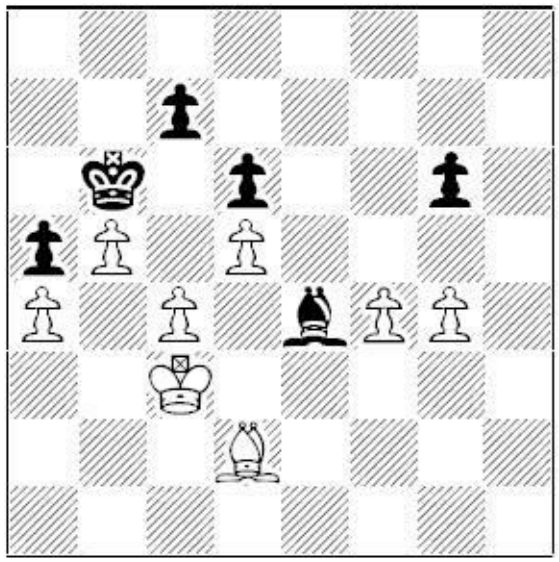
34 Bg5 Kc8 35 Bxf4 Kb7 36 h3 Bb1 37 g4 hxg4 38 hxg4 Ka7

Shuffling aimlessly, Thomas struggles to find a defensive plan (which doesn't exist!) but only manages to produce a shapeless nothingness.

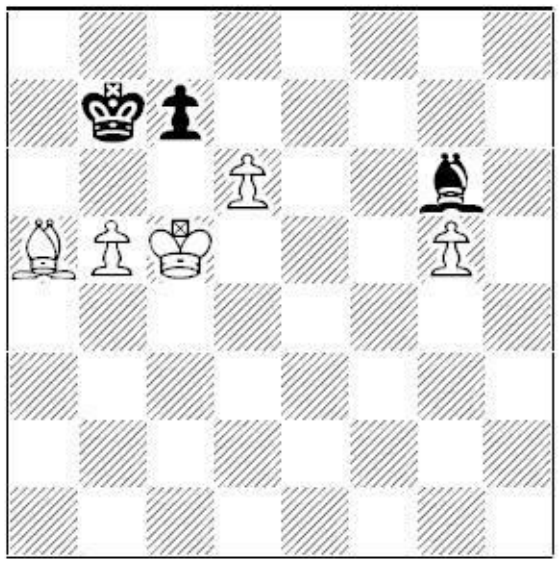
39 Bd2 Kb6 40 f4 Be4

Capa's little joke: 40 ... Kc5?? 41 Be3 mate!

chesstouring.com



Exercise (planning): Come up with conversion plan for White.
Answer: Step 1: Sac temporarily to create a passer.
41 f5! gxf5 42 g5 f4
No choice.
43 Bxf4 Bg6 44 Be3+ Kb7
The king doesn't know how he got here. He doesn't even know where "here" is.
Step 2: Work to create a second passed pawn on the queenside.
45 c5 dxc5 46 Kc4! Bc2 47 Kxc5 Bxa4 48 Bd2 Bc2 49 Bxa5 Bg6 50 d6
A second passer emerges. For the record, 50 Bxc7! also wins: 50 ... Kxc7 51 d6+ Kc8 52 b6 Bf7 53 Kd4 Bg6 54 Ke5 Be8 (the bishop walks off a little too quickly, the way a nervous child hurries past the graveyard in the dark) 55 Ke6 zugzwang! White wins.



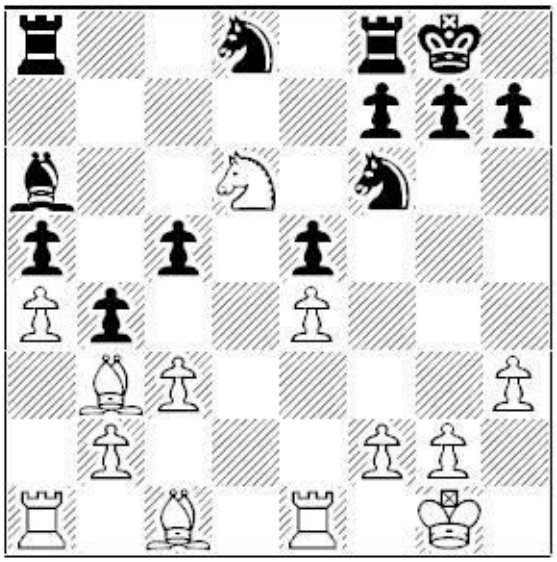
50 ... cxd6+ 51 Kxd6 1-0
Black can't deal with assaults on two fronts. For example: 51 ... Bd3 52 b6 Bg6 53 Ke7 Ka6 54 Kf6 (White's bishop is immune) 54 ... Be4 55 g6 Kxa5 56 g7 Bd5 57 b7 and White makes a new queen.

chesstouring.com

Game 56

J.R.Capablanca-M.Vidmar Sr
New York 1927
Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 Na5 9 Bc2 c5 10 d4 Qc7 11 Nbd2 0-0 12 h3 Nc6 13 d5 Nd8 14 a4 b4 15 Nc4 a5 16 Nfxe5 Ba6 17 Bb3 dxe5 18 d6 Bxd6 19 Qxd6 Qxd6 20 Nxd6



Black regained his pawn but not equality. White owns the bishop pair, the c4-square, and control over the light squares in general. Let's see how Capablanca made use of these advantages.

20 ... Nb7

Question: Why not play 20 ... Rb8 which forces White to swap a pair of bishops? This follows the principle: When the opponent has

the bishop pair, swap one of them off if possible.

Answer: Voltaire wrote: "All generalities are wrong, including this one!" This is an exception to the principle. If Black enters your line, there follows 21 Bc4 Bxc4 22 Nxc4 Nc6 23 Bg5 Nd7 24 Red1 Nb6 25 Nxb6 Rxb6 26 Rd5 c4 27 Be3 Ra6 28 Rc5 and White picks off a pawn.

21 Nxb7 Bxb7 22 cxb4 cxb4 23 f3

Question: Didn't Black's game just get better?

It feels like he gained some ground on the light squares.

Answer: White has the bishop pair, but added to that is the fact that a5 and b4 are fixed on dark squares and vulnerable.

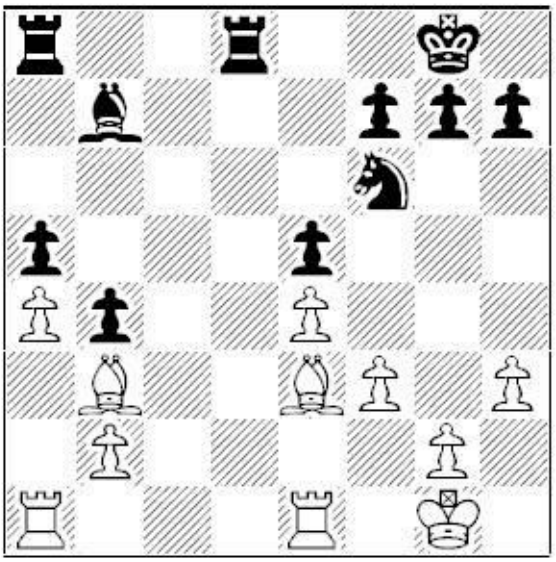
Question: But isn't dark the colour Black wants?

Dark is opposite to his light-squared bishop.

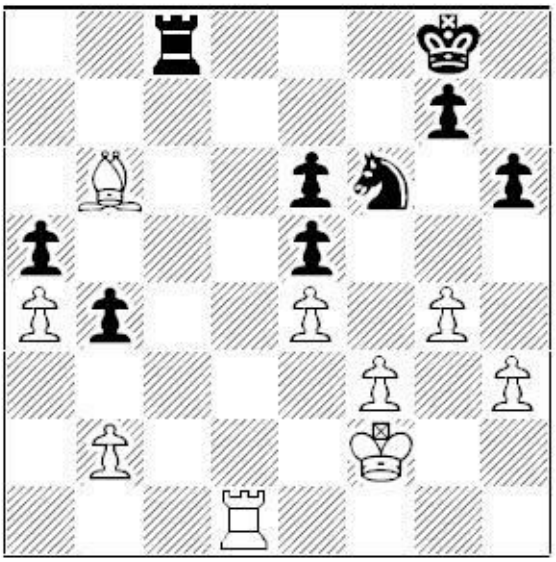
Answer: I'm afraid this is yet another exception to the principle. If rooks come off the board, all White has to do is to manoeuvre his bishop to b6, c7 or d8 and Black's pawns get swatted like flies.

23 ... Rfd8 24 Be3

chesstouring.com



The bishop's destinies are stitched together in common purpose.
24 ... h6 25 Red1 Bc6 26 Rac1 Be8 27 Kf2
He begins to centralize his king.
27 ... Rxd1 28 Rxd1 Rc8 29 g4
Seizing kingside territory.
29 ... Bd7 30 Bb6
And there it is, simple as that. Black is totally tied down to a5.
30 ... Be6
Hoping to extract pus from his wound before infection sets in.
Question: Why didn't Black just protect his a-pawn?
Answer: He can lose one or the other, after 30 ... Ra8 31 Bc7!.
31 Bxe6 fxe6



Exercise (planning): In the matter of a single move you can prove that all of Black's insights, as well as his resistance, evaporate. What is White's best path to an easy win?
Answer: Simplification.

chesstouring.com

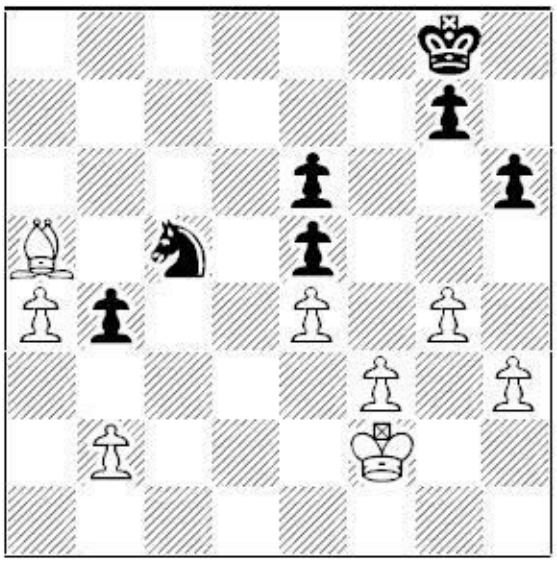
32 Rd8+!

Capa slyly jams a banana in the opponent's exhaust. There goes Black's only threatening piece.

32 ... Rxd8 33 Bxd8

The bishop's sphere of influence, spokes on a giant wheel, radiates in every direction.

33 ... Nd7 34 Bxa5 Nc5



We can only fight with the army we have on hand. The survivalist knight seeks sustenance by living off the land. White wins a pawn. But look closer. You have a way of showing that Black's defensive plan is no more than an impressionist painter's tortured abstraction of reality.

Exercise (combination alert): White can win the pawn in a way which forces Black to lose his knight in a few moves. How?

Answer: **35 b3!**

Most accurate. White forces a passed a-pawn, the furthest away from Black's king.

35 ... Nxb3 36 Bxb4

Now bishop and a-pawn conspire with sinister purpose.

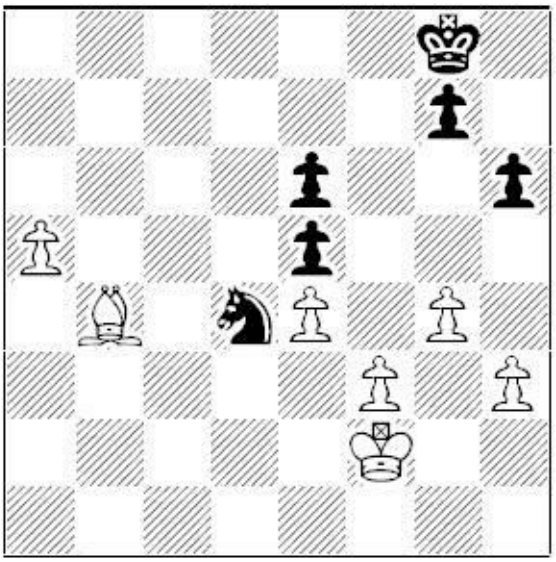
36 ... Nd4

36 ... Kf7 doesn't help. Black's king is outside the square of the passer and can't assist in halting it after 37 a5.

37 a5 1-0 *(see following diagram)*

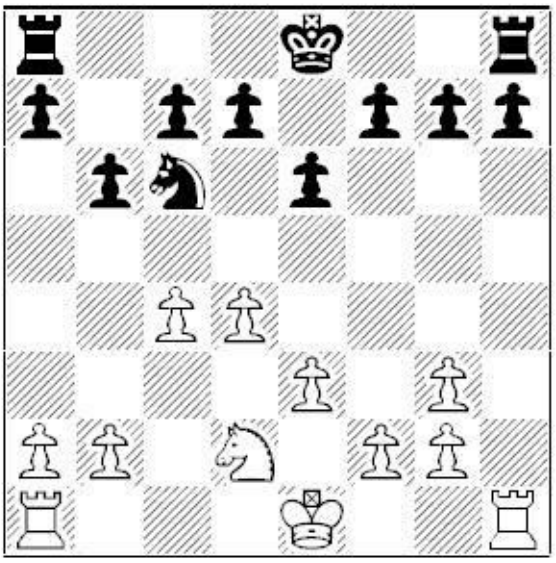
The pawn costs Black his knight after 37 a5 Nc6 38 a6!. The insolence! White's bishop refuses to budge. Meanwhile, Black's destitute knight sits on the margins of society. Some live life while others are content to watch life pass by.

chesstouring.com



Game 57
E.Bogoljubow-J.R.Capablanca
Bad Kissingen 1928
Queen's Indian Defence

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 b6 4 Nc3 Bb7 5 Bg5 Be7 6 e3 Ne4 7 Bxe7 Qxe7 8 Nxe4 Bxe4 9 Nd2 Bb7 10 Be2 Qg5 11 Bf3 Bxf3 12 Qxf3 Nc6 13 Qg3 Qxg3 14 hxg3



White stands a shade better.

Question: Why? The position looks completely equal to me.

Answer: Well, it's not much but White's extra space should count for something.

14 ... Ke7

A common mistake for lower rated players is to castle in such situations. If queens come off the board, and you judge that there is no real danger to your king, then use it. After saying this, Bogo correctly brings his king to the middle and later on gets mated there! There are anomalies to every rule!

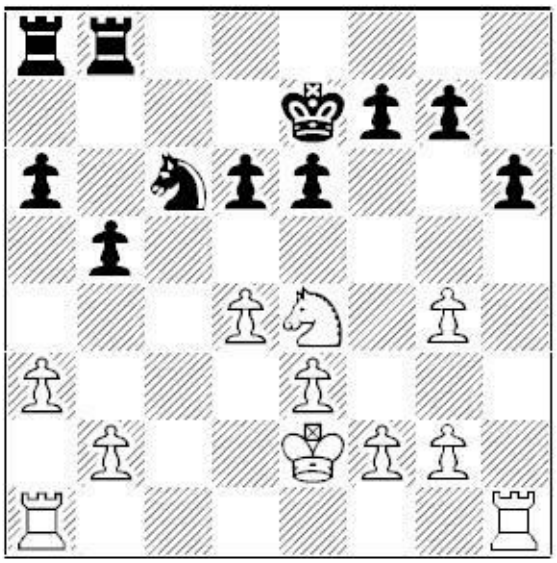
15 g4 h6 16 a3 a6 17 Ke2 Rhb8!

Capa decides to start activity and grab space on the queenside.

18 Ne4

This turns out to be a bit of a time waster, but still, no harm done yet. 18 Rac1 b5 19 c5 is how I would play White.

18 ... b5 19 c5 d5 20 cxd6+ cxd6



21 f4

A move based on the philosophy: It isn't a lie if you believe it! Technically White's last move is not a mistake, but I get the feeling Bogo overestimates his position and plays for a win when he should be thinking about drawing. So entrenched is Bogo in his delusion of superiority, that from this point on he pushes away rationality as a man who overindulges at a banquet and pushes away his greasy plate of half-eaten food. The biggest fallacy one can make in life is the assumption that the people you encounter appraise your qualities as highly as you do!

Question: What should White do?

Answer: Just challenge the c-file by 21 Rac1 Rc8 22 Rc3 Na5 23 Rhc1 with an approximately equal position. Bogo soon rues his decision to retain rooks on the board.

Question: How about the pawn sac 21 d5?

Answer: Optically it looks good for White, but I don't completely trust his compensation at the end of the line 21 ... exd5 22 Nc3 d4 23 Nd5+ Kd7 24 e4 Ne5 25 f3 d3+ 26 Kf2 Rb7. Still, this is an idea for the adventurous of spirit.

21 ... Rc8 22 f5?!

With each move I like White's position less and less. Bogo makes a stab at a plan, but what he does is more of a contrivance. At best, what he gets is a rude rendition of an imitation of a plan.

22 ... Na5 23 Kd3 Nc4 24 Rab1 d5! 25 Nc3?!

The knight, with a sheepish expression of acknowledged guilt, returns. It should hop into c5 instead, though even then White stands slightly worse after 25 Nc5 e5!.

25 ... Rc6 26 fxe6 fxe6 27 g5?

Another outburst from Bogo. Nothing degrades a position faster than when one side plays as if holding advantage when the actuality is the opposite.

chesstouring.com

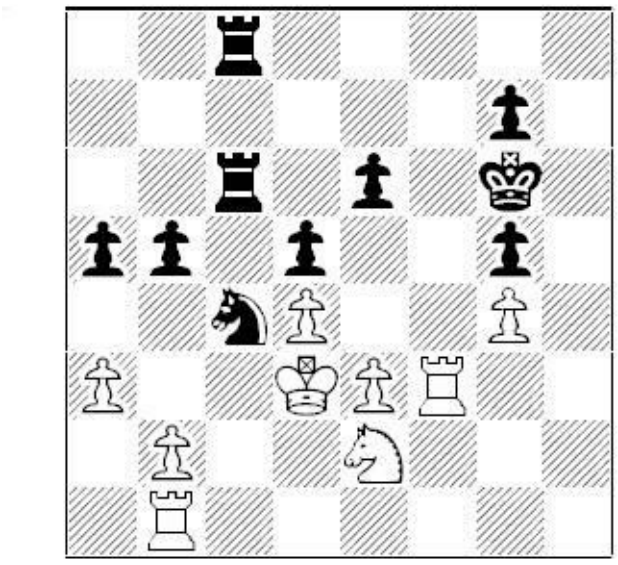
27 ... hxg5 28 Rh5 Kf6 29 Rh3 Rac8

Threat: ... Nxb2+, undermining support of c3.

30 Ne2 a5

Too cautious. After 30 ... e5! 31 dxe5+ Nxe5+ 32 Kd2 Rc2+ White collapses quickly.

31 Rf3+ Kg6 32 g4?

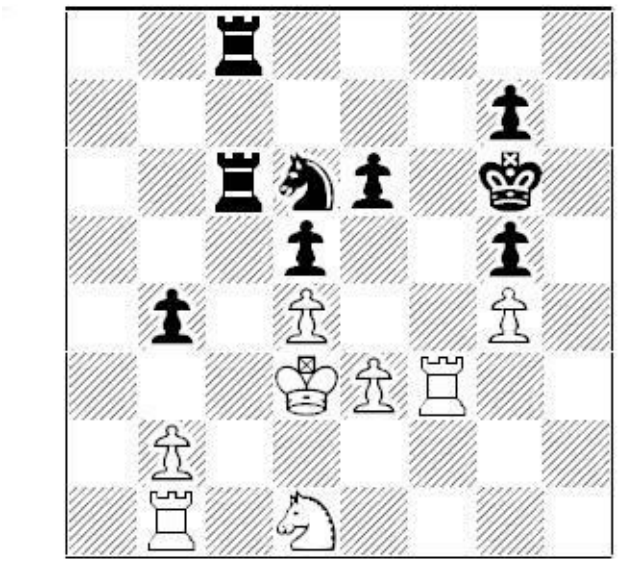


Exercise (planning): Contrary to popular belief, Capa was not infallible. Turning away from the rush and clamour, he incorrectly continues his policy of over-caution. Can you spot the crushing move Capa rejected?

32 ... Nd6?!

Answer: White falls apart after the simple line opening 32 ... e5!, when 33 e4 fails to save him due to 33 ... dxe4+ 34 Kxe4 Nd2+.

33 Nc3 b4! 34 axb4 axb4 35 Nd1



Question: Wouldn't it have been more logical to play

35 Na4, intending to plant itself on c5?

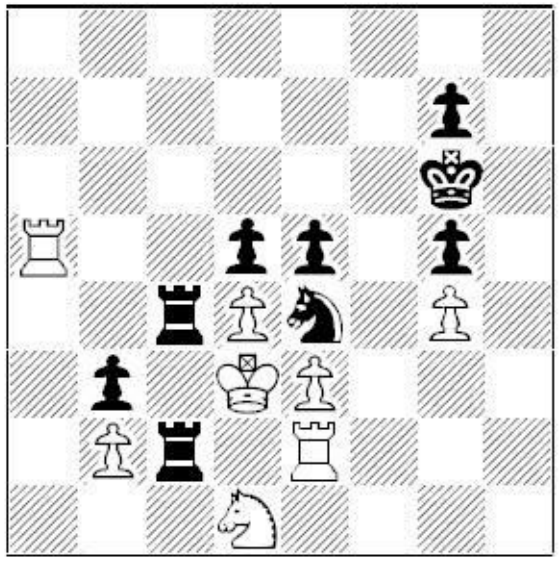
Answer: The problem with that plan is that after 35 ... Rc2! 36 Nc5 b3! White's knight must leave its post on c5 and take on b3: 37 Nxb3 (37 Rh3? Nc4 is crushing) 37 ... Ne4, when White is curiously helpless. For starters ... Nf2+ wins the exchange, while ... Rh2 followed by ... Rcc2 is even stronger.

chessloaning.com

35 ... Rc2 36 Rf2 b3 37 Ra1 Ne4 38 Re2 R8c6! 39 Rb1 e5! 40 Ra1

If 40 dxe5 R6c4! and there is no defence to ... Nc5 mate!

40 ... R6c4! 41 Ra5



At this point, Bogoljubow must have been assaulted by strange feelings and emotions which are not easy to define. White's unfortunate king is the embodiment of all that is wrong in his world.

Exercise (combination alert): Black to play and deliver mate in two moves.

Answer: Clearance. I have never been able to answer the question: Does artistic exaltation enter through the mind, emotions or the heart?

41 ... Nc5+! 0-1

When the rich squander what the rest of us would keep, it represents a status symbol of defiant excess. After this trick the knight's eyes glow with not-so-secret amusement, because of 42 dxc5 e4 mate! Nothing is left of White's king but the vacant stare of a corpse into nothingness.

Game 58

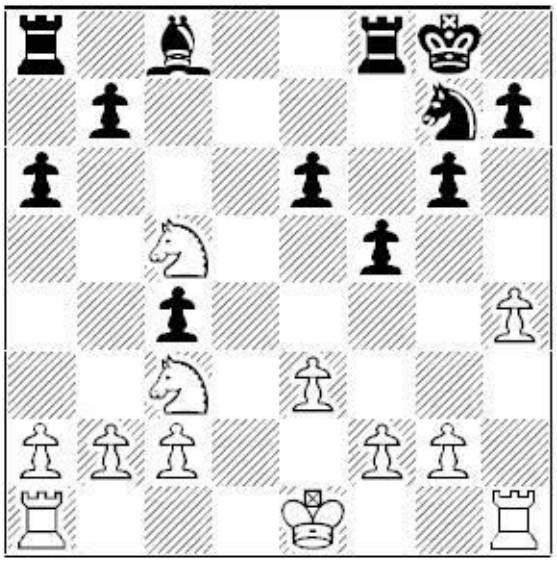
J.R.Capablanca-F.Yates

New York 1924

Queen's Pawn Opening

1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 Bf4 Bg7 5 e3 0-0 6 h3 c5 7 dxc5 Qa5 8 Nd2 Qxc5 9 Nb3 Qb6 10 Be5 e6 11 Nb5 Ne8 12 Bxg7 Nxg7 13 h4 a6 14 Nc3 Nc6 15 Bd3 f5 16 Qd2 Ne5 17 Be2 Nc4 18 Bxc4 dxc4 19 Qd4 Qc7 20 Qc5 Qxc5 21 Nxc5

chesstouring.com



After profoundly uninspiring opening and early middlegame play, Capa goes on to win one of his most beautiful (and confusing!) endings.

Question: Isn't bishop and knight generally superior to a pair of knights?

Answer: Everyone seems to think so but, from my own experience, two knights aren't a disadvantage in most structures. In fact, I often encourage such an imbalance if I am the higher-rated player.

21 ... b6!?

This move creates a slight weakness on the queenside. He should have grabbed the file straight away with 21 ... Rd8.

22 N5a4 Rb8 23 0-0-0 b5

Question: Why did Black allow the knight back into play?

Answer: No choice, since Rd6 was coming.

24 Nc5 Rb6

He stops Rd6.

25 a4

Capa is anxious to create confrontation while Black is ill prepared.

25 ... Nh5!

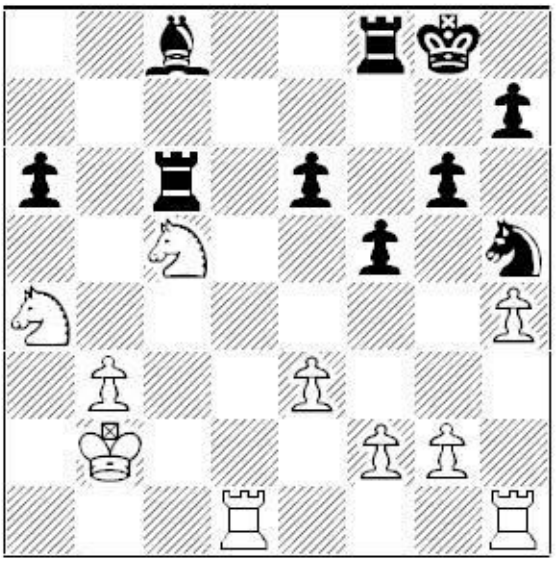
Yates finds a good way of reactivating his knight.

26 b3! cxb3 27 cxb3 bxa4

I would try 27 ... Rc6 28 b4 bxa4 29 N3xa4.

28 N3xa4 Rc6 29 Kb2

chesstouring.com



White's b-pawn is more secure than Black's a-pawn.

29 ... Nf6 30 Rd2 a5 31 Rhd1 Nd5 32 g3 Rf7 33 Nd3

Eyeing e5.

33 ... Rb7 34 Ne5 Rcc7 35 Rd4 Kg7 36 e4! fxe4!?

Question: Why did Black take on an isolani?

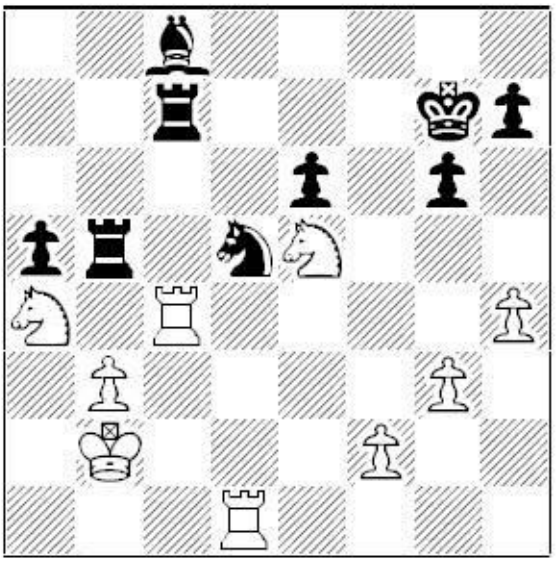
Answer: It may be a questionable decision. Yates decides upon a structural concession to retain his powerful knight outpost on d5. Perhaps it was more prudent to play 36 ... Nf6 or 36 ... Nb4.

37 Rxe4 Rb5

Question: What is Black hoping for?

Answer: Yates attempts a half-hearted volley, hoping to organize some kind of attack on b3, but falls short.

38 Rc4!

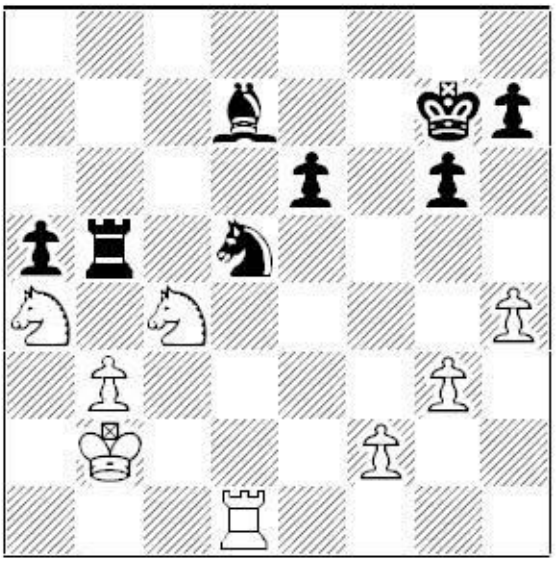


Question: Why an exclamation mark?

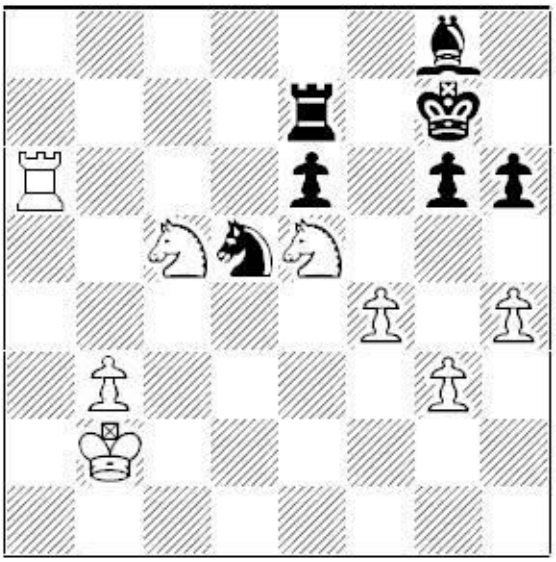
Answer: Black's main source of counterplay is against b3 and White's king. A pair of rooks off the board essentially dissolves Black's attack, and therefore his counterplay.

pressburg.com

38 ... Rxc4 39 Nxc4 Bd7



Exercise (combination alert): White to play and win a pawn.
Answer: **40 Nc3! Rc5**
Or 40 ... Rb7 41 Nxd5 exd5 42 Nxa5 Rb5 43 Rc1! and White emerges a pawn up.
41 Ne4 Rb5 42 Ned6!?
42 Ra1 picked off a5 straightaway.
42 ... Rc5 43 Nb7 Rc7
The harried and dispirited rook realizes he is outmatched by the killer knight team, and backs off.
44 Nbxa5 Bb5 45 Nd6 Bd7 46 Nac4 Ra7 47 Ne4 h6 48 f4
Ensuring an outpost on e5, while fixing e6 as a perpetual pawn weakness.
48 ... Be8 49 Ne5 Ra8 50 Rc1 Bf7 51 Rc6! Bg8 52 Nc5
Target: e6.
52 ... Re8 53 Ra6 Re7

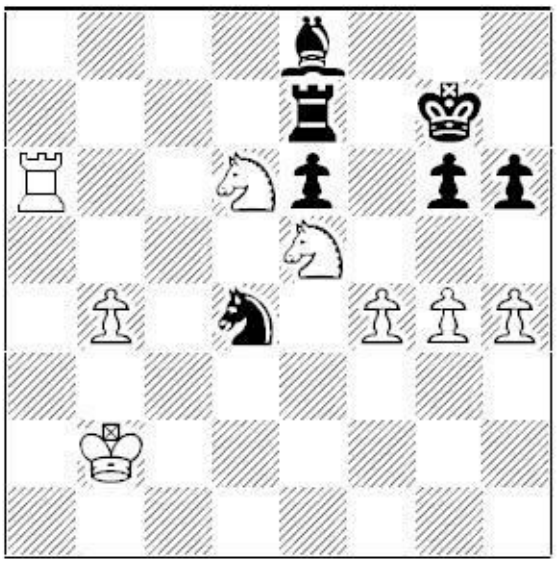


Exercise (planning): Black is down a pawn and is tied up as well.
How do we continue to improve White's position?
chesstouring.com
Answer: Shepherd the b-pawn forward.
54 Ka3! Bf7

Do you still think bishops are so superior to knights? This poor guy is destined for a string of disappointments.

55 b4 Nc7 56 Rc6 Nb5+ 57 Kb2 Nd4 58 Ra6 Be8 59 g4!? Kf6 60 Ne4+ Kg7 61 Nd6

"Two riders were approaching and the wind began to howl." Are you as confused as I am by the brooding knight pair's unfathomable gyrations? They remind me of truant children, who ditch school for the day and, unsupervised, run wild through town.



61 ... Bb5 62 Ra5 Bf1 63 Ra8 g5!?

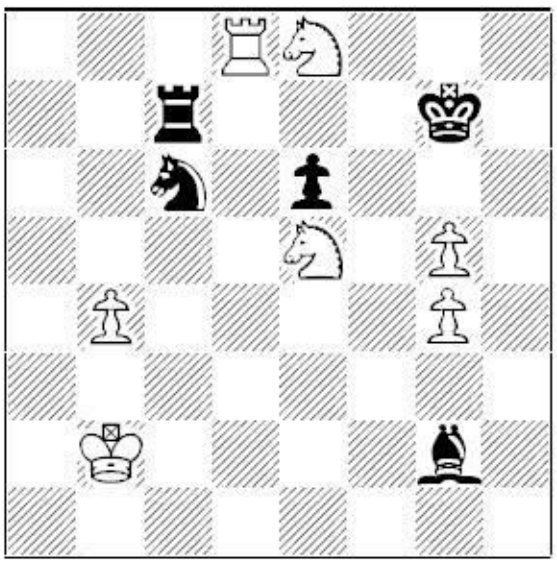
Question: Why did Black give away a pawn?

Answer: Two out of three voices in Yates' head told him to sac, so he went with the majority. The superhuman knights violate all laws of decorum, prancing about in an undignified but effective manner. Yates, by now, wrapped in a gauze wrap of befuddlement, points his gun at shadows and fires without any return on his rage.

64 fxg5 hxg5 65 hxg5 Bg2 66 Re8! Rc7 67 Rd8!

Threatening a fork on e8.

67 ... Nc6 68 Ne8+



chesstouring.com

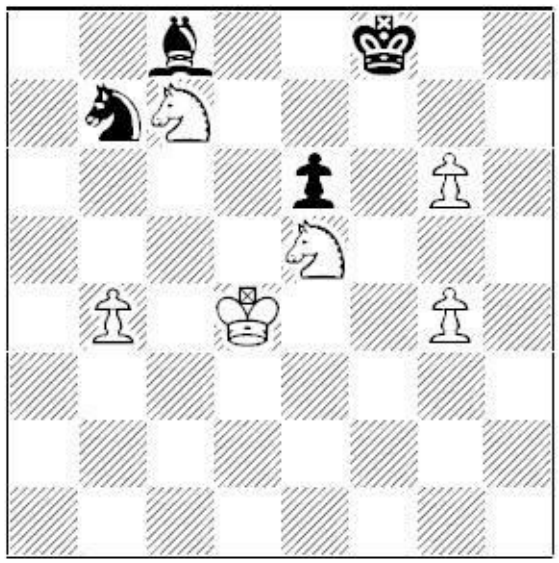
The colours run together and it's getting hard to distinguish one knight from another. What a beautiful

display of controlled confusion. Have you ever seen knights work like this? After playing through this game, I made a firm decision: If they don't have chess in heaven, I'm not going!

68 ... Kf8 69 Nxc7+ Nxd8 70 Kc3

White has passers on both sides, while all Black has is his lack of counterplay and growing sense of depression.

70 ... Bb7 71 Kd4 Bc8 72 g6 Nb7



Exercise (combination alert): Black wants to activate his knight with ... Nd6 next. How can we prevent this?

Answer: The annoying knights have a nasty habit of popping up in places where they are not welcome. Black swats and misses, unable to silence the mosquitoes.

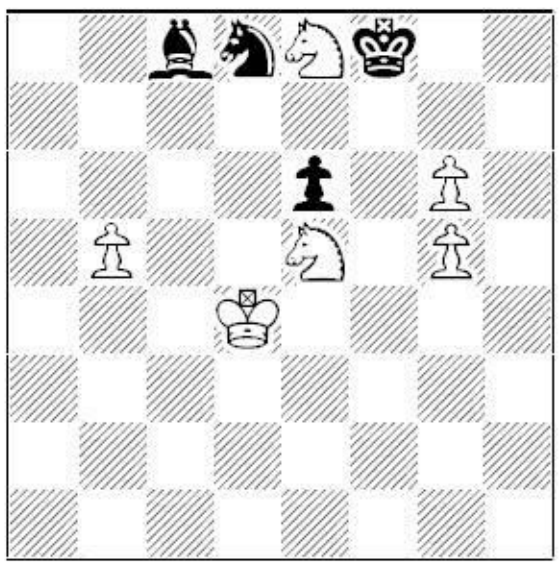
73 Ne8!!

White knights appear everywhere, as if there are four of them.

73 ... Nd8

73 ... Kxe8? 74 g7 queens at once.

74 b5 Kg8 75 g5 Kf8



chesstouring.com

Exercise (planning): With quickened pulse and fire in his heart, Capa unleashes a deadly endgame

onslaught. How to engineer a mating next?

Answer: Step 1: Entomb the king on g8.

76 g7+! Kg8 77 g6! 1-0

Step 2: Cut off f7 and h7 by 77 g6.

Step 3: Transfer the e5-knight to deliver checkmate: 77 ... Bb7 78 Ng4 mating on h6 or f6, or 77 ... Nb7 78 Nc6! and mate on e7.

Game 59

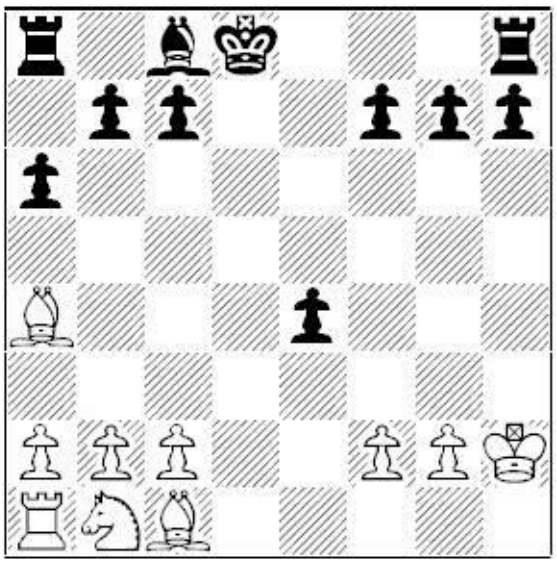
J.R.Capablanca-Ed.Lasker

New York 1915

Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Nxe4 6 d4 exd4 7 Re1 d5 8 Nxd4 Bd6 9 Nxc6 Bxh2+ 10 Kh1 Qh4 11 Rxe4+ dxe4 12 Qd8+ Qxd8 13 Nxd8+ Kxd8 14 Kxh2

Apparently Capa overslept and appeared 59 minutes late for the game, just one minute short of forfeiture! Even with an hour missing from his clock, he manages to navigate a tricky opening and follow with a flawless ending.



Question: I am not convinced Capablanca played the opening and middlegame all that well. Isn't Black at least equal here?

Two pawns and a rook are a lot for two minor pieces.

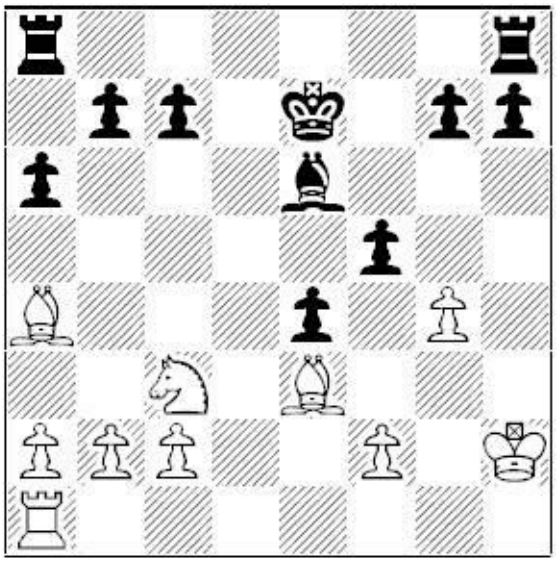
Answer: You would be right if Black's e-pawn still sat on e5. But this isn't the case. Black's pawn on e4 weakens all his central dark squares. That, coupled with his slight lag in development, should offer White a clear advantage.

14 ... Be6 15 Be3!

Capa alertly prevents ... c7-c5! which would endanger White's light-squared bishop. For example: 15 Nc3?! c5! 16 Bg5+ Kc8, D.Adla-I.Barreto, Fortaleza 1994. Now Black has at least equal chances after 17 a3 c4! 18 Nxe4 b5 19 Nd6+ Kc7 20 Nxb5+ axb5 21 Bxb5.

15 ... f5 16 Nc3 Ke7 17 g4!

chesstouring.com



This disruptive move ensures Black won't have time for ... h7-h6, ... g7-g5 and ... f5-f4 later.

17 ... g6?

With this move Black weakens his dark squares and soon ends up with fixed pawn targets. His best shot at survival is to clear the centre with 17 ... fxg4 18 Nxe4 Bd5.

18 Kg3

Capa activates his king and sees a potential pocket for himself on f4.

18 ... h5

Too late for 18 ... fxg4 19 Nxe4 since Black's earlier ... g7-g6 weakened multiple dark squares.

19 gxf5 h4+ 20 Kh2

The young Capa wasn't normally this meek but his intuition told him to back off.

Question: What do you suggest?

Answer: Maybe I am crazy but I would rush in headlong with 20 Kf4!? gxf5 21 Ke5.

Question: Isn't that suicidal?

Answer: I'm not sure, but my intuition (not quite in the same league as Capa's!) says White will survive the advanced outpost. If he does, the rewards are great. The computers think it is okay, but they are not clairvoyant and don't know what will happen 15 moves from now.

20 ... gxf5

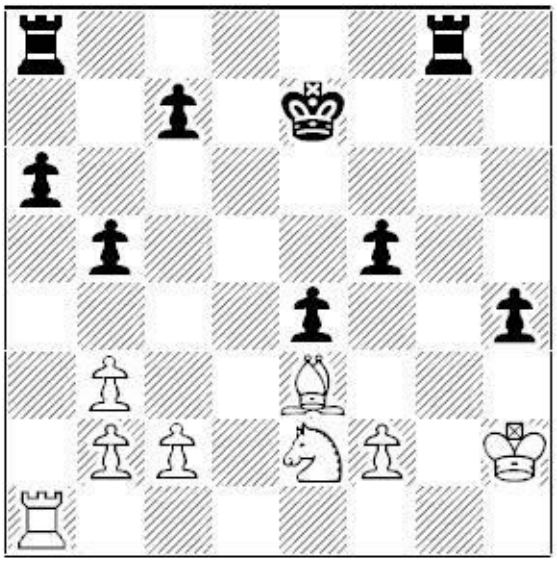
20 ... Bxf5? isn't possible due to 21 Nd5+ Kd8 22 Rd1 Kc8 23 Ne7+ Kb8 24 Nxf5 gxf5 25 Rd7, when Black's game is not a pretty sight.

21 Ne2!

Ensuring a comfortable home on f4 for the knight.

21 ... b5 22 Bb3 Bxb3 23 axb3 Rhg8

chesstouring.com



Exercise (planning/combination alert): Unbelievable as this sounds, White has a forcing way of picking off Black's central pawns. What would you play as White in this position?

Answer: **24 Rd1!!**

This move is counter-intuitive but very strong – so strong that even the computers in their confusion incorrectly assess the position as even. The truth is: Black is busted after this move.

Question: Why counter-intuitive?

Answer: After Black challenges the d-file, a pair of rooks comes off the board. My experience has been that the side with the minor pieces should keep a pair of rooks on the board. But in this instance, Capa spotted an anomaly: Black is unable to defend his kingside pawns if a pair of rooks are exchanged – or indeed not exchanged! White's last move is proof that pure logic isn't a dependable tool 100% of the time.

24 ... Rad8

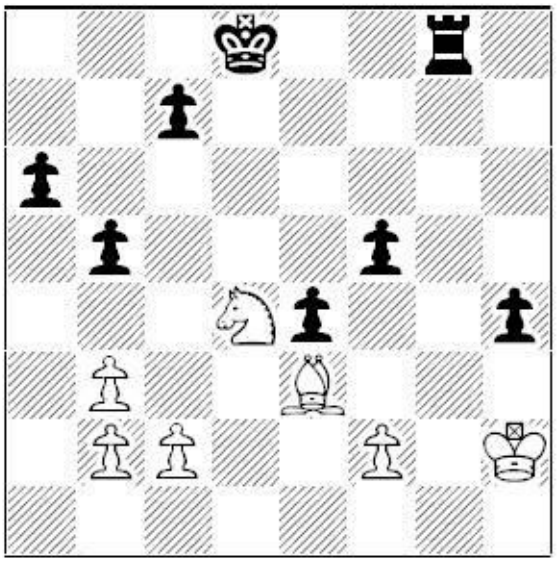
Black must challenge the open file. 24 ... Kf6 fails to 25 Rd5! Rad8 26 Rc5 Rd7 27 Nd4 when Black's pawns dwindle and fall.

25 Rxd8! Kxd8

25 ... Rxd8?? loses to 26 Bg5+.

26 Nd4!

chesstouring.com



The venom in Capa's plan begins to take effect. Suddenly, f5 conveniently provides White with a stationary and undefendable target. Black's entire structure, an old and weathered house in urgent need of repair, begins to crumble.

26 ... Kd7

Now we see Capa's clever idea: f5 falls, since 26 ... Rf8?? loses to 27 Ne6+.

27 Nxf5 a5 28 Nxh4 a4 29 bxa4 bxa4 30 Ng2 Rb8 31 Bd4 Rb4 32 Bg7 Rc4 33 Ne3

A vivid display of that familiar Capa perfection. How incredibly annoying for Lasker. White's pieces always arrive on the right square at the right time.

33 ... Rc6 34 c4 Rg6

Cutting off White's king – for now.

35 Bc3 Kd6 36 Bd4 Kd7?

36 ... c5 was forced.

37 Nd5 Rc6 38 c5 Rg6 39 Be3!

Computer precision. The move is even stronger than the immediate 39 Nc3 Ke6 40 Nxa4 Kd5 which allows Black's king to advance.

39 ... c6

Black's king entry from either direction is closed: 39 ... Ke6?? 40 Nf4+ and 39 ... Kc6?? 40 Ne7+.

40 Nc3

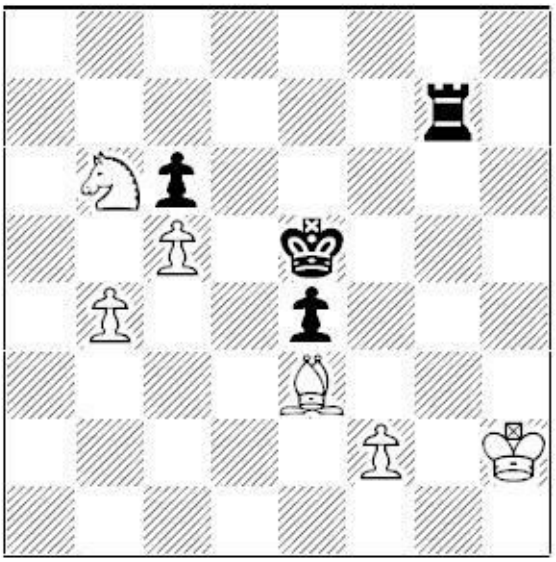
Double attack. Black sheds pawns the way an insect moults its husk. So habituated is Capa at cheating his opponent out of pawns, that he regards the theft as his birthright.

40 ... Ke6 41 Nxa4 Rg8

41 ... Kd5 42 Nc3+ keeps Black's king out of c4.

42 b4 Ke5 43 Nb6 Rg7

chesstouring.com



Exercise (planning): Come up with a multi-step plan for White to cast order on the position and force the win.

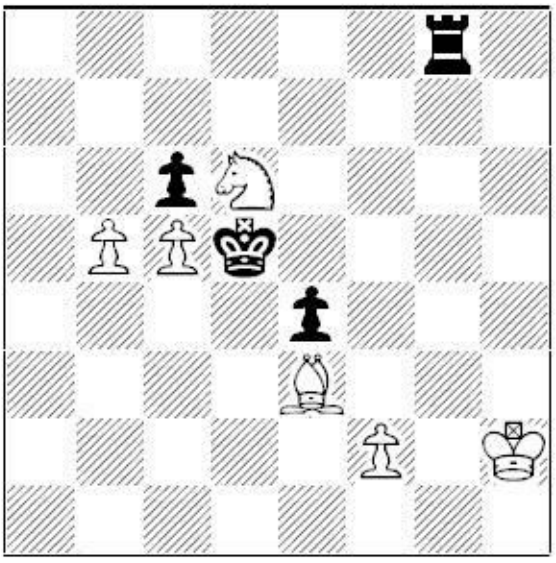
Answer: He must work to create a passed pawn on the queenside.

Step 1: Transfer the knight to its optimal post on d6, where it prepares b4-b5, cuts Black's king off entry into c4, and also keeps an eye on e4.

44 Nc4+! Kd5 45 Nd6

Did I mention that the knight also conveniently prevents ... Rb7?

45 ... Rg8 46 b5!



Step 2: Erode Black's hopes further by creating a passed pawn on the queenside.

46 ... cxb5 47 Nxb5 Rg6 48 Nc3+ Ke5 49 Ne2!

Perfect timing. Now ... Kd5 isn't possible.

Step 3: Support the passed pawn down the board. White's bishop and knight work together as a single sentient organism.

49 ... Ra6 50 Nd4 Kd5 51 c6 Ra7 52 Kg3

chesstouring.com

Step 4: White's long dormant king emerges.

52 ... Rg7+ 53 Kf4 Rf7+ 54 Kg5 Rg7+ 55 Kf6 Rh7 56 Kg6 Rc7 57 Bf4 Rc8 58 Be3 Rc7 59 Kf5!?

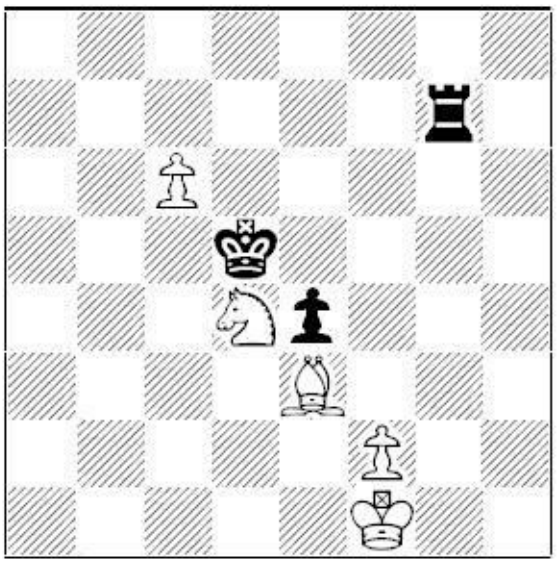
Remarkable patience. Capa heads back into the ditch with his king with a change of plan. Otherwise White has a tricky, problem-like, computer win: 59 Kf6 Rh7 60 Bf4!! Kxd4 61 c7 Rh8 62 Ke6 Kc5 63 Be5! Ra8 64 Kd7 Ra7 65 Kd8 Ra8+ 66 c8Q+ Rxc8+ 67 Kxc8 Kc4 68 Bf4 consolidating.

59 ... Rf7+ 60 Kg4 Rg7+ 61 Kh3 Rh7+ 62 Kg2 Rg7+

Question: I don't understand all these voluntary king retreats. What is Capablanca doing?

Answer: While it is true that White is winning, the king's extravagant, retro-march seems to exceed the elemental fact of his won game. When the facts change, Capablanca's plan changes. The goal is to enable White's king to help support his passed c-pawn. Lasker cut him off on the kingside, so the king, roaming the board free as thought, enters the queenside via f1, while Black's perplexed rook looks on helplessly.

63 Kf1!



The plan revealed: White's king, finally resting at an oasis of tranquillity, away from the pesky rook, soon approaches from the other direction.

63 ... Ra7 64 Ke2 Ra2+ 65 Kd1 Kc4

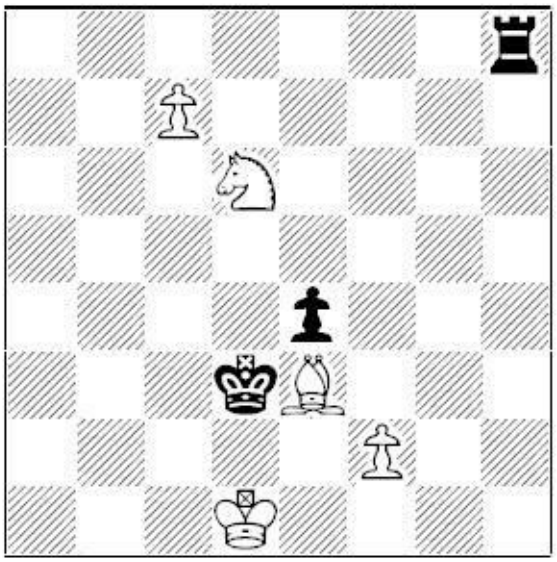
65 ... Ra7 66 Kc2 Ra5 67 Kc3 Ra4 68 Kb3 Ra8 69 c7 Kd6 70 Bf4+ Kd7 71 Nb5 Kc8 72 Nc3 wins.

66 c7 Ra8 67 Nf5

Threatening to help the pawn to the queening square.

67 ... Kd3 68 Nd6 Rh8!

chesstouring.com



Exercise: White to play and win. Be careful. Don't blow this one!

Answer: **69 Kc1! 1-0**

Capa avoids one last sneaky cheapo. I sincerely hope you avoided the embarrassing 69 c8Q?? Rh1 mate!

chesstouring.com

Index of Games

Alekhine.A-Capablanca.J.R, 22nd matchgame, Buenos Aires 1927
- Alekhine.A-Capablanca.J.R, New York 1927
- Alekhine.A-Capablanca.J.R, St Petersburg 1914
- Bogoljubow.E-Capablanca.J.R, Bad Kissingen 1928
- Bogoljubow.E-Capablanca.J.R, New York 1924
- Canal.E-Capablanca.J.R, Budapest 1929
- Capablanca.J.R-Alekhine.A, 29th matchgame, Buenos Aires 1927
- Capablanca.J.R-Alekhine.A, 3rd matchgame, Buenos Aires 1927
- Capablanca.J.R-Alekhine.A, 7th matchgame, Buenos Aires 1927
- Capablanca.J.R-Alekhine.A, Exhibition game, St Petersburg 1913
- Capablanca.J.R-Allies, Consulation game, Bradford 1919
- Capablanca.J.R-Bernstein.O, San Sebastian 1911
- Capablanca.J.R-Bernstein.O, St Petersburg 1914
- Capablanca.J.R-Bogoljubow.E, London 1922
- Capablanca.J.R-Bogoljubow.E, Moscow 1925
- Capablanca.J.R-Burn.A, San Sebastian 1911
- Capablanca.J.R-Conde.A.G, Hastings 1919
- Capablanca.J.R-Dus Chotimirsky.F, Exhibition game, St Petersburg 1913
- Capablanca.J.R-Euwe.M, AVRO Tournament, Holland 1938
- Capablanca.J.R-Israel.A, Casual game, Buenos Aires 1914
- Capablanca.J.R-Janowski.D, San Sebastian 1911
- Capablanca.J.R-Janowski.D, St Petersburg 1914
- Capablanca.J.R-Kupchik.A, Havana 1913
- Capablanca.J.R-Lasker.Ed, Lake Hopatcong 1926
- Capablanca.J.R-Lasker.Ed, New York 1915
- Capablanca.J.R-Lasker.Em, 11th matchgame, Havana 1921
- Capablanca.J.R-Lasker.Em, 5th matchgame, Havana 1921
- Capablanca.J.R-Lasker.Em, New York 1924
- Capablanca.J.R-Levenfish.G, Moscow 1935
- Capablanca.J.R-Marshall.F, New York 1918
- Capablanca.J.R-Masyutin, Casual game, Kiev 1914
- Capablanca.J.R-Menchik.V, Moscow 1935
- Capablanca.J.R-Mieses.J, Exhibition game, Berlin 1913
- Capablanca.J.R-Ragozin.V, Moscow 1935
- Capablanca.J.R-Reshevsky.S, Nottingham 1936
- Capablanca.J.R-Réti.R, Exhibition game, Vienna 1914
- Capablanca.J.R-Rubinstein.A, Berlin 1928
- Capablanca.J.R-Tartakower.S, New York 1924
- Capablanca.J.R-Teichmann.R, Exhibition game, Berlin 1913
- Capablanca.J.R-Thomas.G.A, Hastings 1929/30
- Capablanca.J.R-Treybal.K, Karlsbad 1929

chesstouring.com

Capablanca.J.R-Vidmar.M Sr, New York 1927
Capablanca.J.R-Yates.F, New York 1924
Corzo y Prinzipe.J-Capablanca.J.R, 8th matchgame, Havana 1901
Corzo y Prinzipe.J-Capablanca.J.R, Casual game, Havana 1902
Duras.O-Capablanca.J.R, New York 1913
Dus Chotimirsky.F-Capablanca.J.R, Exhibition game, St Petersburg 1913
Flohr.S-Capablanca.J.R, Moscow 1935
Janowski.D-Capablanca.J.R, New York 1916
Kline.H-Capablanca.J.R, New York 1913
Lasker.Em-Capablanca.J.R, 10th matchgame, Havana 1921
Marshall.F-Capablanca.J.R, 23rd matchgame, New York 1909
Marshall.F-Capablanca.J.R, 5th matchgame, New York 1909
Marshall.F-Capablanca.J.R, St Petersburg 1914
Merenyi.L-Capablanca.J.R, Budapest 1928
Nimzowitsch.A-Capablanca.J.R, Riga 1913
Nimzowitsch.A-Capablanca.J.R, St Petersburg 1914
Pavlov.N & Selesniev.A-Capablanca.J.R, Consultation game, Moscow 1914
Rubinstein.A-Capablanca.J.R, St Petersburg 1914

chesstouring.com