

JUDIT POLGAR

A game of Queens



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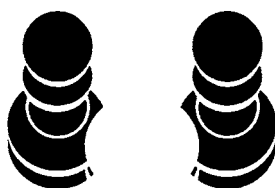
Judit Polgar Teaches Chess 3

A Game of Queens

by

Judit Polgar

with invaluable help from Mihail Marin



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Judit Polgar Teaches Chess 3 — A Game of Queens

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Key to symbols used

±	White is slightly better
∓	Black is slightly better
±	White is better
∓	Black is better
+—	White has a decisive advantage
—+	Black has a decisive advantage
=	equality
≡	with compensation
↔	with counterplay
∅	unclear
?	a weak move
??	a blunder
!	a good move
!!	an excellent move
!?	a move worth considering
?!	a move of doubtful value
#	mate

Preface

In explaining the birth of this book, much of what I wrote in the first volume is of course still relevant. I started flirting with the idea of publishing a collection of my best games a long time ago.

For years, I was aware that the moment when I could fulfil my dream was far away. As a professional player, I spent most of my time and energy playing in tournaments and training, so each time the idea of my book popped up, I had to say to myself “Later, later...”

By coincidence, several publishers approached me during this period. Although I was not prepared to embark on any definite project yet, I could feel that the whole idea was, little by little, starting to take shape.

The critical moment

The 2009 World Cup proved to be a decisive moment in the birth of my books. In the third round I played Boris Gelfand, a very strong opponent who eventually went on to win the event. I lost the first match game with Black, and during my preparations for the second one, I found myself with no clue about how to break down his favourite Petroff Defence.

I decided to improvise with the Bishop's Opening, and in the early middlegame started a sacrificial attack in the best spirit of the King's Gambit, my favourite opening as a kid. This turned out to be Gelfand's only defeat in a classical game in the whole tournament. I eventually lost the playoff, but this did not spoil the magic: it felt like for a moment the Judit from 1988, who many (including myself) had forgotten, had come back to deliver her trademark brilliances.

With this nostalgic feeling, I decided that the time had finally come to write my book, in which the little girl from the past would play an important role. On the way back home, while waiting to embark at Moscow airport, I made it “official” by sharing my thoughts with my husband Gusztav. He was delighted with the idea and I appreciate very much his enthusiasm, support and encouragement ever since.

Preliminary details

There were a few technical details to be worked out before starting to work. Most of my best games have been published worldwide, in countless magazines and even in a few books about my chess career written by other authors. Therefore, I aimed for a different approach than *just* “Judit's selected games”.

After much hesitation, I chose to structure the material as a manual rather than an autobiography. This way, it would be instructive for young players or amateurs aspiring to progress, but also offer a guideline to their parents or trainers. True, there would be a wealth of autobiographical stories, but they would pop up without respecting a chronological order.

Without any false modesty, I can say that I played entertainingly and quite well from an early age, and it soon became clear that one book would not be enough to cover my whole career.

To make this rather unusual project come true, I needed a publisher who would allow me the freedom of action I needed. I decided to work with Quality Chess after I met their Creative Director, Jacob Aagaard.

I was captivated by Jacob's enthusiasm, optimism and his acceptance of making the book the way I wanted it. We soon reached an agreement and he offered his invaluable feedback during the complex writing process.

Since I had no experience as a book writer, I also needed the help of a close collaborator.

Even before the project had taken shape, I had shared my ideas with my old friend Bob (Mihail Marin). I have known Bob since 1990, when he stayed with my family in Budapest on several occasions. We were playing chess, training and having lots of fun. Many years later we worked together regularly and he even accompanied me as a second to a few tournaments.

I knew that Bob has lots of knowledge and broad experience in many areas of chess. He is a successful writer and has created many good books. But even more importantly, I appreciate his love and enthusiasm for chess.

Bob gladly joined my project and now that this trilogy is done, I can say that he has been a great adviser and helper throughout. In addition, working as a pair proved joyful and entertaining.



Novi Sad 1990: (l. to r.) My Mother, Pal Benko, Susan, Marin, Hazai, Me!, Morvay & Sofia

Sources of information

A few games and fragments in this volume have not been published before. I have input them all from my dusty archive of scoresheets.

From my early years as a chess player, my coaches taught me to regularly write down the time taken both by my opponent and myself. This was meant to provide the coaches with information about my way of thinking, my possible superficiality at critical moments or, on the contrary, my hesitations.

This information also proved useful for this book. In my comments, I have frequently referred to the situation on the clock, in order to draw interesting conclusions of a psychological nature. And, as a curiosity, I would add that I have not given up the habit of writing down the time even today...

I also drew a wealth of information from my old opening notes and game annotations. Luckily, my whole archive has survived several changes of apartments over the years!

The structure

The first volume covered the period from my early years until 1991, when at the age of 15 years, 4 months and 28 days, I broke Fischer's record by roughly one month and became the youngest-ever grandmaster.

The second volume covers the period from my first tournament as a grandmaster in 1992 until 2000. In the beginning of this period I had to prove that I could perform at the levels expected of a grandmaster. 2000 was a year of fantastic successes – it was the year I got married, which I still consider an excellent move!

This third volume covers the period from 2001 until the present day. These were the years when I was in the Top Ten in the world. In other words, I became *one of them*, as Anand phrased it at Wijk aan Zee.

The first four chapters aim to support this view, and feature my games against four of the greatest players in history: *Kasparov*, *Karpov*, *Korchnoi* and *Anand*.

The happiest and most exciting period started when my two children became part of my life. Being a mother is a wonderful feeling, but it posed me with the challenge of combining my career with family life. The reader can read about how I coped with this task in the chapters *Oliver* and *Hanna*.

Over the years, my accumulating experience offered me a wider and deeper understanding of the game in all its phases. The chapters dedicated to the *Opening*, *Middlegame* and *Endgame* illustrate some typical aspects of each stage, but also the tight connection between them.

There follows a chapter examining some of my most *Unexpected Moves*. The strong contrast between the logical fluency of the former three chapters and the abrupt changes of situation in the latter offers a complete overview of the game of chess in general.

Having reached a high position in the rating list, participating in European and World Championships became an important part of my career. My most memorable moments when trying to climb the Chess Olympus are covered in the penultimate chapter of the book.

The last chapter has a symbolic meaning. It mainly deals with my win over Gelfand at the 2009 Khanty-Mansiysk World Cup. This game gave me the final boost to write this series of books,

thus adding a new dimension to my life for several years – that of a writer. In this chapter I also describe my other chess-related activities over the past few years and in the present.

These three books took years of hard work, but I feel fully rewarded. On May 5th, while I was working with Bob on the third volume, the news arrived that the second one had won the Book of the Year award from the ACP. We celebrated with champagne and then returned to work...

A nostalgic journey to the past

This trilogy has offered me an unforgettable journey through 30 years of tournament chess. I feel happy to have shared with the reader all my memorable moments and my perspective on an impressive gallery of great players and tournaments. This unique adventure into the past has also helped me to learn a lot about myself.

Although I have changed a lot as a person over the years, I am glad that I did not lose any of my love for chess or my pleasure in playing beautiful games.

Many times people have asked me about the reasons of my early successes.

Talent and ambition must have played a significant part, but my family environment was the most important factor. Both my parents were teachers by profession and by inclination. My sisters and I are grateful to them not only because they dedicated their lives to our success, but even more so because they raised us with a positive scale of values.

I was fortunate to be the youngest of three sisters, so my parents already had a lot of experience when they started bringing me up as a chess player.

Moreover, growing up around my elder sisters Susan and Sofia was very stimulating and they offered their help whenever I needed it. No words are rich enough to describe my feelings towards Susan and Sofia. And I am happy that after all these years we are still very close friends, despite the huge geographical distances between us.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express thanks to:

All my trainers, coaches and sparring partners.

The organizers, sponsors, opponents and arbiters, without whom chess life could not exist.

My enemies, who stimulated me to improve myself.

My lovely husband, Gusztav, who supported my efforts in writing about my career.

My son Oliver and my daughter Hanna for being such wonderful children and making my life so beautiful. They were patient and understanding every time mommy explained she still had some work to do on the book. By now, they must know that if you are doing something, you should do it right and that hard work enriches you.

Last but not least, thanks to my chess fans. I hope you will enjoy this book.

Judit Polgar

Budapest, September 2014

Introduction to Chapters 1-3

My Battles with Three Legendary Ks



Anatoly Karpov, Judit Polgar, Garry Kasparov and Viktor Korchnoi

By 2001 I had acquired sufficient tournament experience in the company of the greatest players, who are rightly considered historical figures, to realize they are not gods but humans after all, and that they were bound to occasionally make mistakes. In order to have a fair chance against them, the basic requirements are not to be frightened and to discover their weak spots! The following three chapters offer an idea of how I managed to cope with these difficult tasks against three players who dominated a chess era: Kasparov, Karpov and Korchnoi.

Over the years, I figured out a draft recipe of how they created their outstanding results and careers: talent, training, love for the game or even fanaticism, support, fighting spirit, perseverance, knowledge, timing, critical thinking, motivation, ambition, presence, individual character, discipline, preparation, ability to deal with pressure, ability to make decisions, spotting mistakes and correcting them, a certain degree of selfishness, reacting properly to the unexpected, spontaneity, good memory, concentration, focus, diligence, ability to handle time trouble, using the thinking time rationally, recovering in time after losses and victories...

The list of ingredients may be incomplete, but nevertheless it should offer an insight into the basis of their high performance.

Every great player has his or her unmistakable fingerprint and leaves behind his or her unique chess trademark. People enjoy attaching a synthetic label to each champion, and I will try to describe in just a few words the styles of the three great Ks.

Kasparov was a killer; you could feel this already in the opening and, if you survived that far, also in the middlegame.

Karpov was a positional magician who would always torture you as long as there was a trace of winning chances left (and sometimes even when there were no chances at all).

Korchnoi was (and still is, despite age and health problems) a fearless and uncompromising fighter.

Chapter 1

Kasparov



Presenting Kasparov with a gift. Garry kindly accepted our invitation to be the guest of honour at the 7th Aquaprofit-Polgar Festival in Budapest.

For more than two decades, Garry Kasparov was the most prominent figure in world chess; it is not an exaggeration to say that most of my career developed under his imposing shadow as unchallenged Chess God.

By the time I made my first steps in chess, he was already a rising star, and considered the biggest potential challenger to Karpov's supremacy. I was only eight years old in 1984, when the first Karpov – Kasparov match took place. One year later the sensational news arrived: Kasparov had turned over a new page in chess history by defeating Karpov at his second attempt!

I have the most vivid memories of this series of titanic battles. I was following the match via a live broadcast on a Soviet TV channel (which was available in Hungary in those years) and was deeply impressed by the level of knowledge displayed, as well as the level of tension in the fight.

During the 1987 Seville match, the fourth of the series, Sofia and I became more actively involved in the events by writing a column in a daily newspaper, with commentaries on the games. And of course I was following most of Kasparov's tournament games from a distance. When I started playing the King's Indian with Black, a closer examination of his games revealed amazing new depths.

In those years, the possibility that one day I might meet or even play against Kasparov was more like a dream, and its fulfilment seemed so far away.

But in fact it was not long before I got to know Kasparov personally. Readers of the first volume will be familiar with Kasparov's interest in my games, as well as his kind support and advice. As a creator of modern history himself, Garry was one of the first to foresee that something historical was going to happen in the women's section of the 1988 Thessaloniki Olympiad: three young sisters breaking the Soviet hegemony...

Over the years, Kasparov opened a new dimension in opening preparation. His appearance in a playing hall would instantly be noticed by most people – there was some sort of special energy he emanated.

When he sat down at the chess board you could not help feeling he would eat you alive... When preparing against him the main thing was to keep in mind that he is human and I should not be afraid of him any more than reasonably necessary, but this was easier said than done.

I have written in Volume II about some previous meetings – at the 1992 Immopar Trophy, our first game in Linares 1994, and my missed chance for a draw in Dos Hermanas 1996.

The games played over the next few years did not bring any improvement in my score. Garry won our qualifying rapid mini-match in Geneva 1996 by 1½–½, and defeated me with relative ease in Linares and Tilburg 1997. It became increasingly clear that I had psychological problems when meeting such a mighty idol of my childhood.

The turning point in my duels with Kasparov arrived in the last round of Wijk aan Zee 2000. Garry had already won the tournament, irrespective of the result of our game, so he could afford to play at his leisure and at full strength without letting his attention be distracted by the tournament situation. It was then that I felt for the first time that I was ready to put up a real fight! I challenged Kasparov on his own territory, choosing his own favourite 6...♗g4 in the 6.♖e3 Najdorf. In the end I eventually drowned, but I felt that I had put up a real battle, leaving all my inhibitions behind.

Our games the next year confirmed my subjective impressions, by bringing a long-desired break in my series of losses. The scene could not have been chosen better. For more

than a decade, Linares was unanimously considered to be the strongest tournament of the year, being called by many the *Wimbledon of chess*. Kasparov's name is closely connected with the tournament's history; he won it many times and whenever he failed to do so it was regarded as a surprise.

The 2001 edition started with fewer players than in the good old days. Only six – Kasparov, Karpov, Grischuk, Shirov, Leko and myself, to play in a double round-robin system. Kasparov won by a large margin, once again proving he was in a class of his own. He scored an impressive 7½ out of 10, while all the other players shared 2nd to 6th with 4½ points each.

However, I also had reasons to be content. I was the only player to draw both games against the winner, which yielded me the best tiebreak (the Sonneborn-Berger coefficient) and, logically, second place in the tournament.

It was not only the result that made me happy about these games; I also sensed that I had made Kasparov feel uncomfortable at certain moments, which had not happened before! The games boosted my self-confidence and proved that my play had become stronger.

Garry Kasparov – Judit Polgar

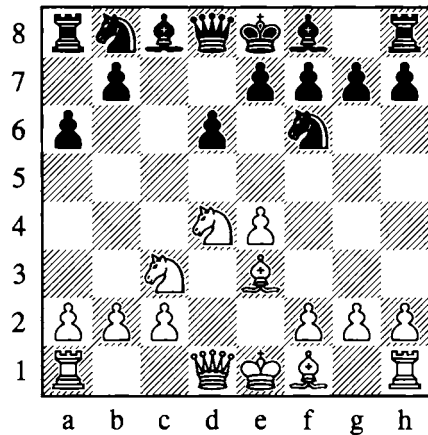
Linares 2001

It was customary that players were allowed to arrive at the hotel a couple of days before the tournament, but the drawing of lots took place during the official dinner the evening before the first round. In Spain, dinner starts late, not before 20:30, so after finding out the first-round pairing, players would sneak out one by one to start their preparation.

I started the tournament with two Blacks in a row. In the first round I gained a huge advantage against Grischuk, then a rising young talent, but could not win. My second opponent was Kasparov and I awaited this

game with excitement rather than fear. I had long planned to challenge him on his own territory by choosing the Najdorf Sicilian, an opening variation about which Garry knew much more than anybody else. I had tried this experiment, aimed at making him fight against himself, at Wijk aan Zee 2000, when Garry won after a huge battle. This time I decided to refine my plan by deviating on move 10, heading for more of a positional game without any sharp tactics in view.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6
5.♘c3 a6 6.♗e3



I had little doubt that he would play this, since the English Attack had been his almost exclusive weapon against the Najdorf since the late 90s.

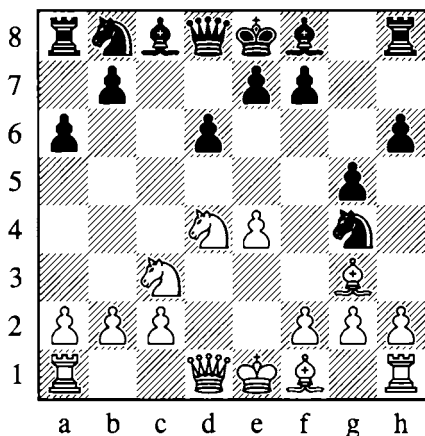
6...♗g4

Kasparov started playing this move in 1996 and enriched the whole line with many valuable ideas.

I chose this line based on the thought that if it was his main weapon, objectively it could not be too bad. Besides, Kasparov knowing “everything” about this position would not spare him from the psychological problem that he was basically fighting against his favourite weapon.

I had already lost a few games without putting up a real fight and this time I said to myself that, whatever will happen in the end, it should be a tough battle!

7.♖g5 h6 8.♗h4 g5 9.♖g3



White has forced a weakness in the black kingside, which makes castling short improbable. On the other hand, Black has achieved some stability on the dark squares and the g3-bishop is somewhat restricted.

9...♗g7 10.h3

10.♗e2 h5 11.♗xg4 hxg4 is the other main line, featuring another type of original structure, with difficult but balanced play.

10...♗e5

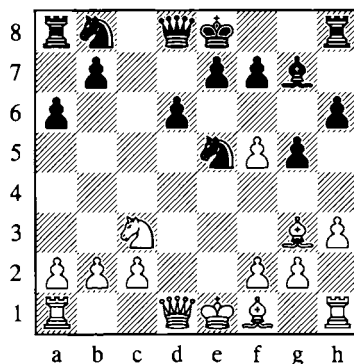
Only now had I deviated from our Wijk aan Zee game, which went 10...♗f6. After the game move, both sides are bound to start a long manoeuvring phase, which suited perfectly my plan of slowing down Kasparov's usual impetus in the opening.

11.f3

The start of a logical strategic plan. The bishop will be more effective on the g1-a7 diagonal, over-defending the d4-knight and targeting the queenside (and the b6-square in

particular). In the long run, I have to be ready to meet g2-g3 and f3-f4, after which I would risk losing stability in the centre.

During my preparation with Lev Psakhis I was worried about the resolute 11.♗f5 ♗xf5 12.exf5 with a very unusual structure.

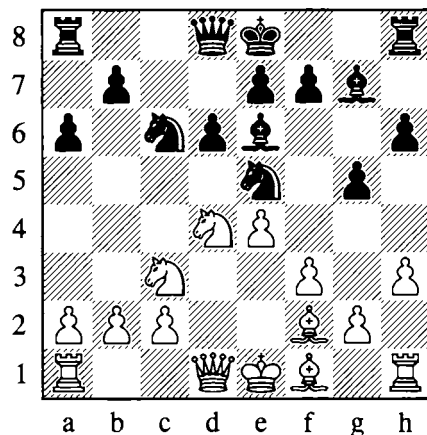


Rather than forcing matters so early, Kasparov seemed to be more inclined for a slow positional battle.

11...♗bc6 12.♗f2 ♗e6

This is the most popular move.

Since the exchange on e6 would only strengthen Black's control in the centre, it is a more restrictive move order than 12...♗xd4 13.♗xd4 ♗e6, although in most cases it leads to a transposition.



13. ♖d2 ♜xd4

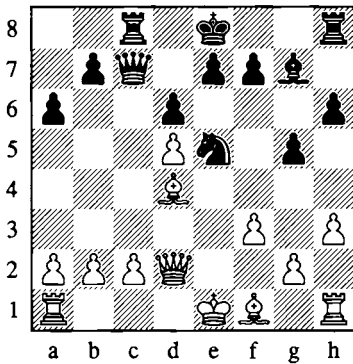
But now I had concrete reasons to release the tension.

Developing the queen at once with 13... ♖a5 gives White the additional possibility of 14. ♜b3 ♙xb3 15. cxb3. In exchange for the somewhat spoiled structure, he would gain some control of the light squares. It is worth mentioning that one of the games to go this way was Leko – Kasparov, Linares 2000.

14. ♙xd4 ♖a5

I chose this move because I liked the idea of inducing a weakening of the queenside with a2-a3.

14... ♙c8 is a major alternative. I will show two interesting and unusual ideas from games played about a decade later. 15. ♜d5 ♙xd5 16. exd5 ♖c7

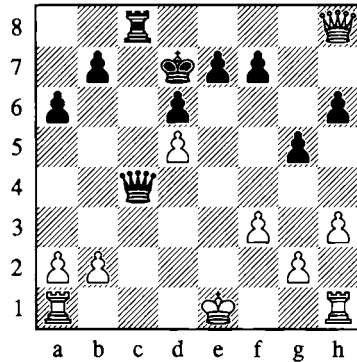


White cannot castle long because of 17... ♜xf3! 18. gxf3 ♙xd4.

Karjakin – Nakamura, Medias 2011, went 17. c3, but this allowed the activation of the black queen with 17... ♖a5.

The interesting thing is that the ambitious 17. c4 fails to consolidate White's space advantage because of: 17... ♜xc4! 18. ♙xc4 ♙xd4 19. ♖xd4 The h8-rook is hanging; did Black miscalculate? 19... ♖xc4!! Not really,

there are more things to come – chess is so beautiful! 20. ♖xh8† ♜d7



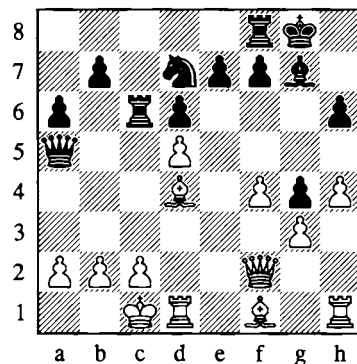
I find this image very pure. Everything White has done so far contributes to the success of Black's combination, resulting in a draw by perpetual check.

White is underdeveloped and his rooks are passive on their initial squares. The queen is on a third corner, having prematurely departed from her active mission, while the king is exposed in the centre.

The kingside weaknesses are also essential. With the pawn on h2, White would have 21. ♖c3 and if 21... ♖h4† then 22. g3.

The way it is, play could continue: 21. ♖h7 ♖b4† 22. ♜f1 (or if 22. ♜d1 ♖d4†) 22... ♖c4† 23. ♜g1 ♖d4† 24. ♜h2 ♖e5† with a draw by perpetual.

The second recent game went: 15. 0–0–0 ♖a5 16. ♖f2 ♙c6 17. g3 0–0 18. f4 ♜d7 19. h4 g4 20. ♜d5 ♙xd5 21. exd5



White has gained space in the centre but with his development incomplete the evaluation depends on the safety of the d5-pawn. 21...♖c5! A beautiful exchange sacrifice. If 22.♗xc5 ♘xc5 Black gets a massive attack on the dark squares. In Karjakin – Gelfand, Wijk aan Zee 2012, White rejected the sacrifice, but this left the d5-pawn vulnerable.

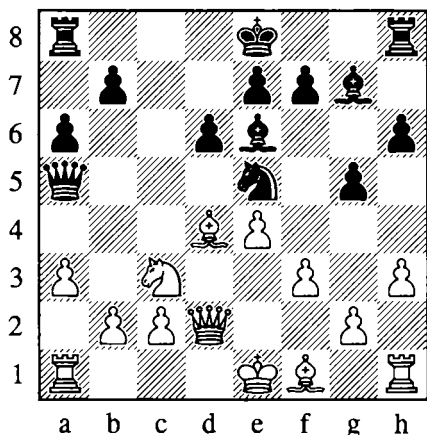
One important conclusion from these games is that White should not display territorial ambitions while his development is incomplete. Black's position is so flexible that most likely he (or she) would find a tactical way to break the bind.

15.a3

The obvious idea behind this move is not the most dangerous. Apart from preparing to castle without allowing ...♗xa2, White sets up a net around the black queen, making ♖f2 followed by ♗b6 a very strong threat.

I would have met 15.♖f2 in the same way as in the game, with 15...♗g8 since 16.♗b6 is not dangerous: 16...♖b4 17.0-0 ♘d7 Freeing my queen and retaining a good blockade on the dark squares.

There recently have been some games with 15.h4, a move which deserves further investigation.



15...♗g8!

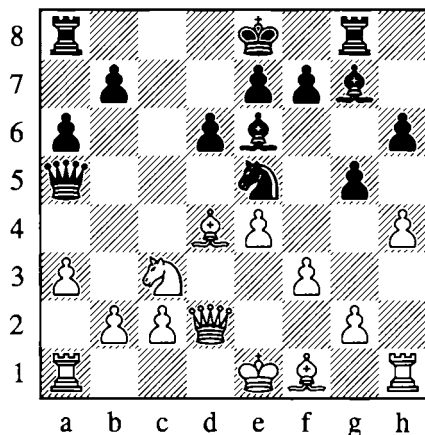
An important move, protecting the bishop in order to allow the knight to jump around. It could go either forward with ...♘c4, with some attacking ideas in mind, or backwards, with ...♗g6, aiming to keep a solid dark-squared blockade.

16.h4

The most flexible continuation, developing the king's rook and not defining the king's intentions yet.

If 16.0-0-0 ♖c8 followed by ...♘c4, I would have a clear target (the white king) and have some initiative due to my better development.

Or if 16.♖f2 ♗g6, neutralizing the threat of ♗b6 and stabilizing the kingside.



16...♖c8

A typical Sicilian move, putting pressure on the c-file and creating the potential threat of an exchange sacrifice on c3.

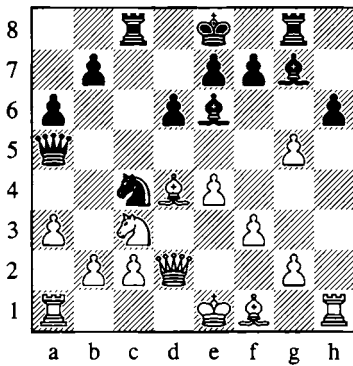
Of course it is an important decision, since after the consecutive rook moves, my king will be confined to the centre. Usually, Black cannot afford this in the Sicilian, but my central stability and overall piece activity are good justifications for it.

17.hxg5 hxg5

This is the kind of move most players would play automatically and yet I spent 16 minutes on it.

I discovered that the unexpected 17...♖c4 was an interesting alternative, but I did not analyze it seriously. Things would become too concrete and rather risky without home preparation. I feared that Kasparov might have actually analyzed it, and thought it would be much wiser to head for a solid endgame.

I allowed myself the luxury of thinking for so long on a move I knew I was going to choose because I had plenty of time and wanted to gain a deep awareness of even the tiniest details of the position.

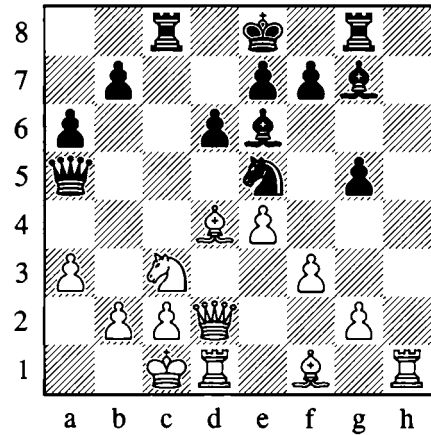


Anyway, here are some possible lines after the intermediate knight jump: 18.♙xc4 ♙xd4 19.♙b5†! (This typical intermediate move, ruining my structure, is more unpleasant than 19.♙xe6 ♜xc3 with huge complications but roughly equal chances.) 19...axb5 20.♞xd4 Black has a choice between 20...b4 21.♞xb4 ♞xg5, 20...♞xg5 and 20...hxg5, but I would prefer White.

18.0-0-0

18.♞h7 would have prevented ...♖c4 and I would have had to look for a way to unpin my knight. A possible continuation is 18...♙f6 19.0-0-0 ♖d7. In the near future, my knight

might go to f6, kicking the rook away, and the e5-square could be occupied by my queen, with a nice central regrouping.

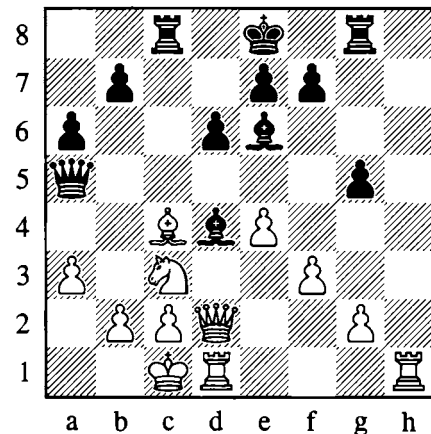
**18...♖c4**

Finally exiting from the peaceful positional path which would have continued with 18...♖g6. My move abandons the idea of a blockade, but offers some attacking chances instead.

19.♙xc4 ♙xd4

A necessary intermediate move, giving White a choice.

If 19...♞xc4 20.♙xg7 ♞xg7 21.♞h8† White's control of my back rank offers too many attacking chances.



20. ♖xd4

An important alternative is the familiar:

20. ♖b5†

This was played in a later game:

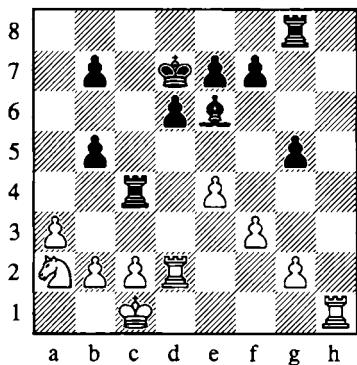
20...axb5 21. ♖xd4 ♜c4 22. ♖d2 ♔d7

22...b4 would lead nowhere due to 23. ♘a2.

23. ♘a2

23.g4 was recommended by Ljubojevic with the evaluation 'slight edge to White' but after 23...♜g8 White would be helpless against the threat of ...♜xc3.

23... ♖xd2† 24. ♜xd2



The position is roughly equal, although in Bologan – Xu Jun, Beijing 2000, White won in 81 moves.

20... ♜xc4 21. ♖a7

The queen invasion sets up some threats, but they are not so strong yet.

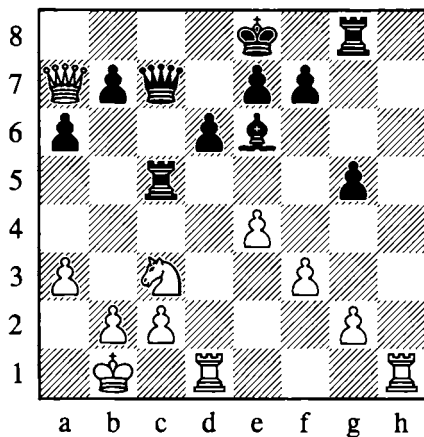
21... ♖c7

My coordination looks great, but there is still an important detail to solve – the king has to get out of the way of my major pieces, in order to allow their proper coordination. Depending on circumstances, the king could go either to d7 or to g7.

Meanwhile, White always has to be ready to meet ...♜xc3.

22. ♔b1

Played after only one minute and probably aimed at taking the steam out of my positional threat.

22... ♜c5

I played this apparently modest retreat after 11 minutes. It might have come as a surprise for Kasparov that his queen does not have a retreat now. My coordination is not good enough to trap the queen, but I will gain the necessary time to evacuate my king.

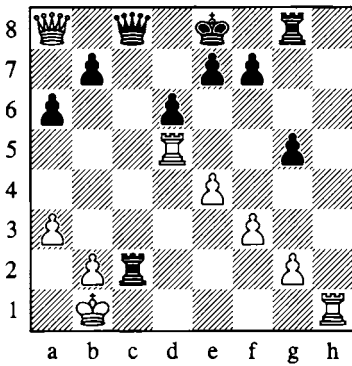
23. ♘d5?

Kasparov initiated this forcing sequence after 11 minutes of thought. It was typical of him to look for concrete ideas without wasting any tempos, but this time he overlooked my 26th move.

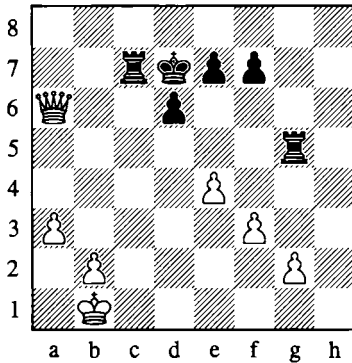
It would have been possible to keep manoeuvring with 23. ♜d4!?, planning ♜b4.

23... ♘d5 24. exd5

During the post-mortem analysis, Garry claimed that 24. ♜xd5 would have been the correct move. It does not seem to offer White an advantage, though. 24... ♜xc2 25. ♖a8† ♖c8

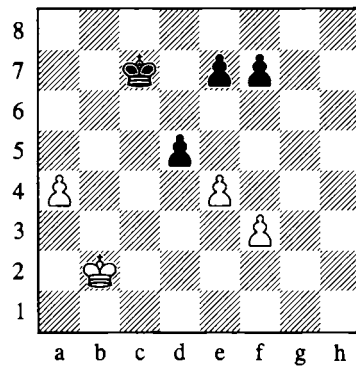


Black seems to have repelled the attack, but the complications are not over yet. 26.♖xg5! I confess that I overlooked this funny tactical blow; Kasparov saw it but considered it insufficient. 26...♖xg5!? Liquidating to an interesting but drawn ending. (Garry rejected 24.♖xd5 because of 26...♔f8 27.♖xg8+ ♔xg8 28.♗a7 ♖c5. This looks safe enough for Black, but there is some tension left.) 27.♖h8+ ♔d7 28.♖xc8 ♖xc8 29.♗xb7+ ♖c7 30.♗xa6



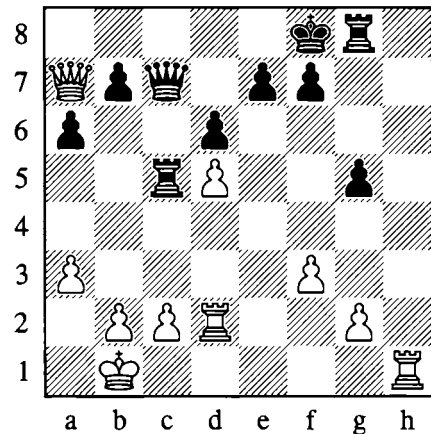
It may seem that White retains an advantage, but in fact Black can force a draw: 30...♖xg2 31.♗b5+ ♔d8 32.a4 ♖cc2 33.♔a2 ♔c7 34.♔a3 ♖xb2 35.♗xb2 ♖xb2 36.♔xb2 d5!

After the pawn exchange the ending is drawn. If Black had exchanged all the pieces on b2 one move earlier he would not have had this resource and his position would have been critical, maybe lost, in view of the remote passed pawn.



Back to the game.

24...♔f8 25.♖d2



A multipurpose move; in some cases, White could double rooks with g2-g4 and ♖dh2. Kasparov refrained from 25.c3, which would not have allowed his next move.

25...♔g7

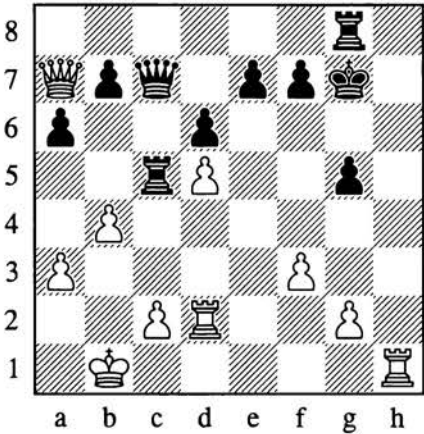
With the queen captive on a7, the black king feels safe on the kingside. I felt happy that I had managed to complete my regrouping at last, controlling the invasion squares along the h-file and allowing the long-awaited ...♖c8.

26.b4

This is the move Kasparov had relied on. If his queen manages to get back to the centre, my king would be in great danger. On the

other hand, if anything unexpected happens, White's queenside weaknesses might tell.

Clearing the second rank with 26.g3 would have been a logical alternative, but it would not have caused me any major problems either. 26...a5! 27.♖hh2 b5 With roughly equal play.

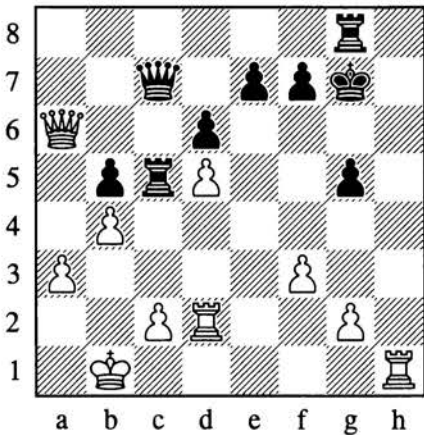


I remember how excited I was when I found the idea played in the game, which not only came as a complete surprise to my opponent, but also placed him in a dangerous position.

26...b5!!

This is the only way to prevent the white queen returning to life.

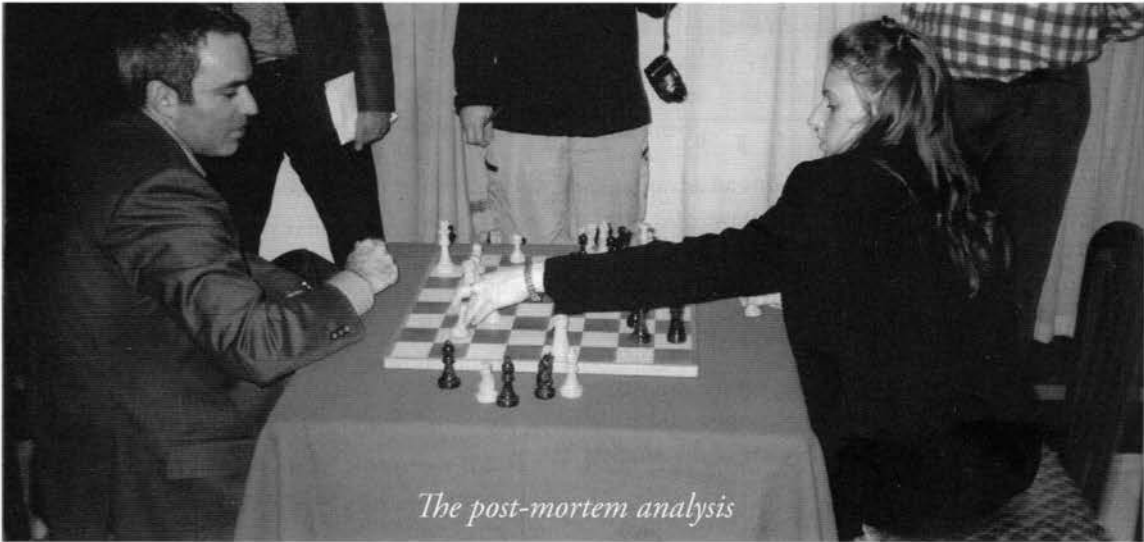
27.♙xa6



Garry needed 11 minutes to recover from the shock, getting down to only 14 minutes on his clock. If White exchanges queens, the double rook endgame would be rather unpleasant.

27...♞c3!

After playing this active move I offered a draw. I had more time on my clock (19 minutes) and liked my position. Against any



other opponent I might have played on, but I was curious to test Kasparov's spirit in a position which could be dangerous for him. Besides, after his acceptance this became my first draw against him in a classical game...

1/2–1/2

A possible continuation proving that a draw was a logical result after all is:

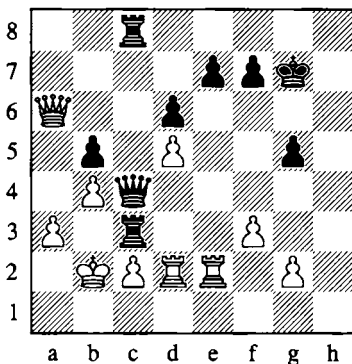
28.♖e1!

A strong centralizing move.

If 28.♙xb5? ♜xa3 Black's attack is very threatening.

White would not be in time with his kingside counterplay either: 28.g4 ♜c8 29.♞dh2 ♜xc2 30.♙xc8 ♙xc8 31.♞xc2 ♙a8 Grabbing a pawn with a promising ending.

28...♜c8 29.♞ee2 ♙c4 30.♞b2



White has managed to defend all his weak spots, but cannot pretend to have any form of activity. For Black it is not simple to make further progress, so this could be called a positional draw.

Or if I wanted, I could force a draw by perpetual with: 30...♞xc2† 31.♞xc2 ♙d4† 32.♞c1 ♙a1† 33.♞d2 ♙d4†

After such a moral victory, the tournament took a favourable course. I won against Shirov in Round 4 and drew all the other games until Round 7 when I had to meet Kasparov again.

Judit Polgar – Garry Kasparov

Linares 2001

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

During my preparation, I could bet that this position would appear on the board.

6.♙e3

It felt kind of funny to have a thematic battle in this position with both colours... Having White this time, I could not help asking myself if I could do better than Kasparov in the previous game.

In any case, my attitude and focus in this game was to attack Garry's king at any cost, to give him a hard time. I wanted to put him in an unpleasant psychological situation and make him feel uncomfortable.

I managed to keep this attitude until the end of the game, even when it required sacrificing material, something that Garry surely noticed, and I hope it will become obvious to the reader from the course of events.

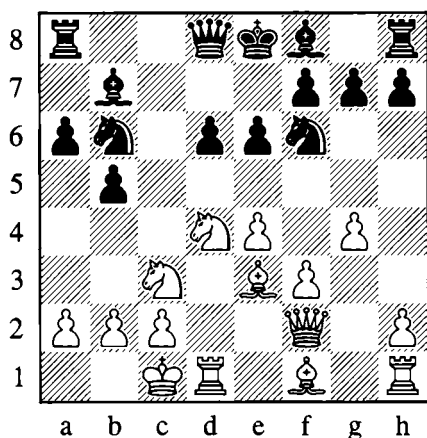
6...e6

I was well prepared, of course, against Garry's other lines, 6...e5 and 6...♞g4. His choice in this game was a hint that he was aiming for a sharp and uncompromising fight. In other words, he was playing for a win!

7.f3 b5 8.♙d2 ♞bd7

Kasparov had quite a few games with this plan. By delaying the development of his queen's bishop, he speeds up the knight regrouping to b6 and d7.

9.0–0–0 ♙b7 10.g4 ♞b6 11.♙f2

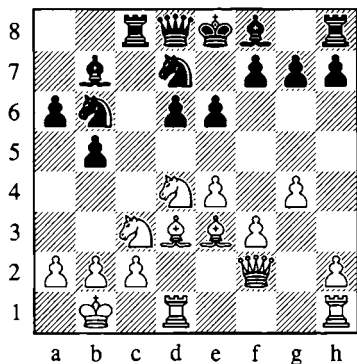


White needs to put pressure on the b6-knight. Black's next move conveniently parries the simple threat of Qxe6 , but the generally desirable manoeuvre ... Qd7-e5-c4 is impossible now.

11... Qfd7 12. Qd3

Another important move. After the queen has left the c3-knight weakened, White needs to take measures against the threat of ... Ra8-c8xc3 .

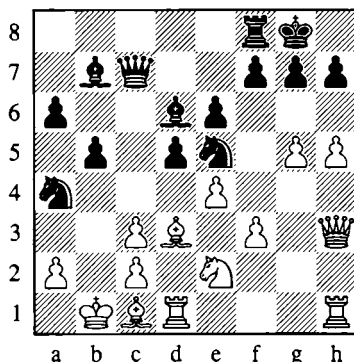
The typical Sicilian prophylactic move 12. $\text{Qb1}!!$ would be too slow. One year earlier Kasparov had won a nice game against it: 12... Rc8 13. Qd3 ? Rather careless.



13... Rxc3 ! 14. bxc3 Qc7

There are no forcing lines and no rush in Black's plan, meaning that the exchange

sacrifice was mainly positional. In the long run, Black will find it much easier than his opponent to create threats against the king. 15. Qe2 Qe7 16. g5 0-0 17. h4 Qa4 18. Qc1 Qe5 19. h5 d5 20. Wh2 Qd6 21. Wh3

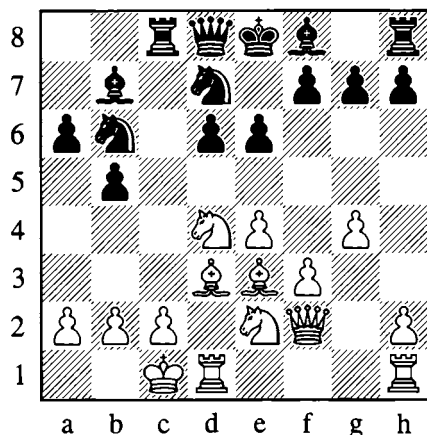


So far, it seemed that Black would mainly play against the doubled pawns but now he provokes radical structural modifications, aiming to open lines around the enemy king. 21... Qxd3 22. cxd3 b4 23. cxb4 Rc8 24. Qa1 dxe4 25. fxe4 Qxe4 26. g6

The d-pawn has to be ready to defend the long diagonal – so not 26. dxe4 ? $\text{Qe5}+$. 26... Qxh1 27. Wh1 Qxb4

And five moves later Black collected the full point in Movsesian – Kasparov, Sarajevo 2000.

12... Rc8 13. Qce2



Neither of us had spent much time until this moment, but now we both started facing choices, which means the real game was about to begin.

13...♖e7

This is just one of numerous natural moves available, for instance 13...♖c7 and all kind of knight jumps forward.

Kasparov's choice is the most *logical* in a deeper meaning of the term – in positions with mutual attacks on the opposite wings, it is important to keep a fair balance between defence and attack. The apparently modest bishop development slows down (although it cannot really prevent it) the thematic advance of the g4-pawn.

I would add that 13...d5?! is premature in view of 14.e5!. The e5-pawn is indirectly defended by the pressure along the f2-b6 diagonal: 14...♗xe5 15.♗xe6 fxe6 16.♗xb6

14.h4

The other way of preparing g4-g5 was 14.f4 but despite Black having temporarily released the pressure in the centre with ...♗f6-d7, I was not keen to weaken the e4-square.

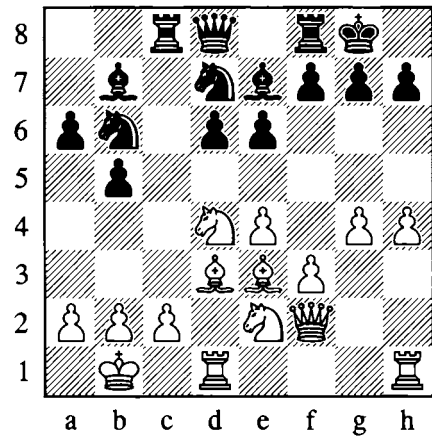
The intention of my last move is to carry out the standard attack with g4-g5, h4-h5 and g5-g6 while keeping an eye on Black's plans; one permanent worry is the thematic central break ...d6-d5.

14...0-0

We both played the last couple of moves relatively slowly. By now, Garry had spent 25 minutes compared to my 21.

Since my attack is still a few tempos away from becoming threatening, Kasparov does not shy away from castling. He probably considered it the most flexible move, allowing him to orientate his counterplay according to my plans.

15.♖b1

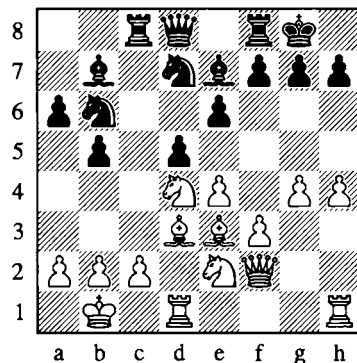


Together with ♖g1-h1 in positions where the king has castled short, this move is almost a *must* in the Sicilian. It removes the king from the dangerous c-file, protects the a2-pawn and clears the c1-square for a bishop retreat in case of ...♗c4.

15...♗a4?!

Kasparov played this after only two minutes. I had the feeling that he was happy with his position, but I had my reasons for being content that his knight has jumped away from the centre.

The last few moves had changed the dynamic balance, making 15...d5!? entirely possible.



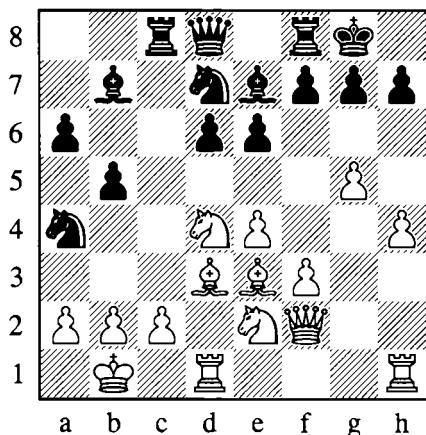
The main difference with respect to a similar

line above is that after 16.e5 (?) ♖xe5! 17.♗xe6 fxe6 18.♕xb6 ♖d6 the f3- and g4-pawns are hanging.

I would have had to choose between 16.exd5 ♖xd5 17.♗g5 and 16.g5, ignoring the central tension and carrying on with my attack.

My feeling is that Garry wanted to keep the central break in reserve for a better moment.

16.g5



16...♖dc5

After the game, Kasparov said that this was an experiment on his part. I assume his main idea was to keep the queen on d8 for as long as possible, so that I cannot play h4-h5 without first over-defending the g5-pawn.

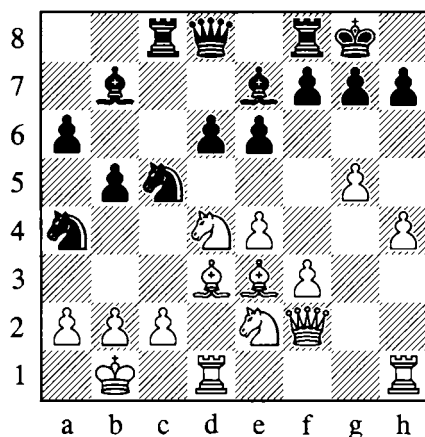
However, it is not clear in which way the last move increases Black's attacking potential. The e4-pawn is rock-solidly defended and there are no tactical ideas available on the queenside.

16...d5 was less logical with the knight on a4. I could choose between the calm 17.♖g2 followed by h4-h5, and the resolute 17.g6 hxg6 18.h5 with sharp play. In this line, the possibility of opening the d3-h7 diagonal with a well-timed exd5 comes in handy.

We can see here one possible idea behind Kasparov's last move. Without the possibility of exd5, 17.g6 would be less dangerous.

Besides, after having defended the e6-pawn with his previous move, Black could play 17...fxg6!?

In view of White's possible improvement on the next move, I would suggest 16...♖e5, leading to a more harmonious position than in the game. Black leaves the c-file open and the c5-square available for the other knight, for the eventuality of b2-b3. Apart from attacking the bishop, the knight also puts pressure on the f3-pawn.



17.♖g3?

A serious mistake, despite my 14 minutes of thought. My idea was to over-defend the e4-pawn in order to prepare a massive pawn attack starting with f3-f4. But the obvious drawback of my move is that it weakens the c3-square, making the sacrifice ...♖xb2 followed by ...♖a4† a potential threat.

17.b3 was better because it suits the spirit of flexible thinking one should follow in the Najdorf. Black's last move has obstructed the c8-rook so he cannot take advantage of the weakening of the c3-square. Besides, the black knights are somewhat clumsy now.

For instance:

17...♖xd3 18.cxd3

This strengthens White's centre and leaves the b7-bishop passive.

18...♖c3†

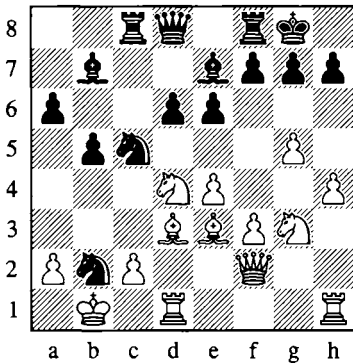
18...♖c5 allows White to attack with simple moves: 19.♙g3 ♗c7 20.h5

19.♖xc3 ♙xc3 20.♙b2

Black's counterplay has been extinguished and White retains a big space advantage.

17...♗c7

Garry finally decided to develop his queen after thinking for 22 minutes. I have the impression that he used the time mainly on checking the consequences of 17...♖xb2.



This does not look dangerous for White: 18.♖xb2 ♖a4† 19.♖a1 ♖c3 (threatening ...♗a5) 20.♖b3 ♖xd1 21.♙xd1 Material is evenly balanced but I would prefer to be White. My minor pieces are likely to be more dangerous than his rook for attacking purposes.

The last move makes the threat of sacrificing on b2 more dangerous.

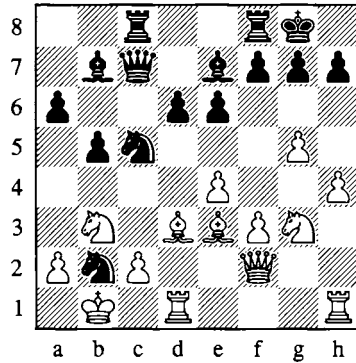
18.♖b3

I suddenly felt the urge to create a barricade in front of my king.

The straightforward 18.h5? would allow Black to launch a huge attack: 18...♖xb2 19.♖xb2 ♖a4† 20.♖c1 (20.♖b1 ♖c3† 21.♖c1 d5 is similar, but in addition the d1-rook is hanging.) 20...d5 Followed by ...♙a3† and/or ...♗c3.

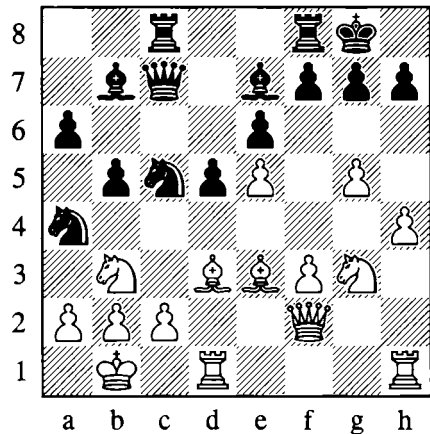
18...d5

Kasparov needed only four minutes to convince himself that my last move provided an effective defence against 18...♖xb2.



The main thing is that after 19.♖xb2 ♖a4† 20.♖b1 ♖c3† my king would find safety with 21.♖a1! since 21...♗a5 is not possible. If 21...♖xd1 22.♙xd1 the game would be double-edged, but White should not be worse.

19.e5!



During the 19 minutes I spent on choosing this move I realized that the game was going too much Garry's way. Black has an active and dynamic position with many tactical threats around my king.

I started looking for a move that would be unpleasant for my mighty opponent, and

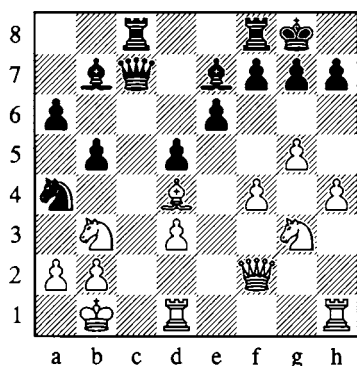
decided that sacrificing a pawn for the sake of the initiative would be a good solution.

The idea is not new, of course – its main aim is to reduce the tension in the centre and decrease the b7-bishop's activity, at least temporarily.

19...♖xe5

Garry did not hesitate long before grabbing my pawn – only six minutes!

19...♜xd3 20.cxd3 ♖xe5 would be a worse form of doing the same. Black would indeed eliminate one of my attacking pieces, but he would also consolidate my control in the centre: 21.♙d4 ♖c7 22.f4

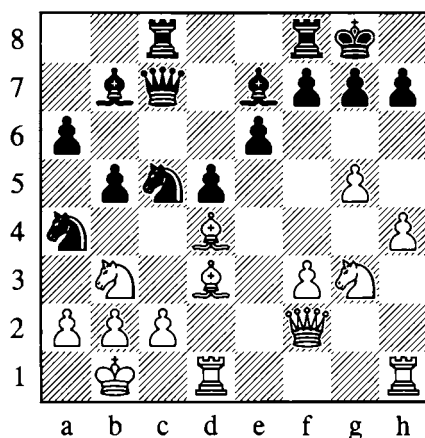


White has a wonderful blockade on the dark squares and Black has lost all his attacking chances. In the long run my attack might well break through.

It was obvious that Kasparov would really hate to get such a position with Black!

The familiar sacrifice would not yield anything special this time: 19...♜xb2 20.♙xb2 ♜a4† 21.♙b1 ♜c3† 22.♙a1 ♜xd1 23.♞xd1 with double-edged complications.

20.♙d4 ♖c7



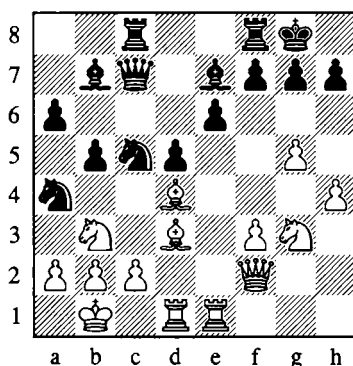
The pawn sacrifice yielded me two tempos for the attack and opened some active diagonals for my bishops. Three of my minor pieces are targeting the enemy king, while my own king is absolutely safe.

There is a concrete problem, though: Black is threatening ...e6-e5.

21.f4?!

Unfortunately, I became so excited by the prospect of starting a real attack against Kasparov that I played almost without thinking. My move prevents Black's central expansion but only at the cost of weakening the e4-square.

The centralizing 21.♞he1! would have been a more effective way of fighting for the dark-squared blockade.

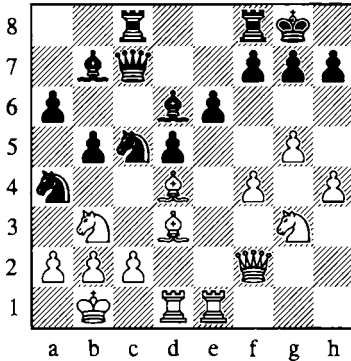


I rejected it because of:

21...♔d6

When I thought I would have no way of stopping ...e6-e5. A deeper look into the position would have revealed to me that I could pose concrete problems with:

22.f4!!



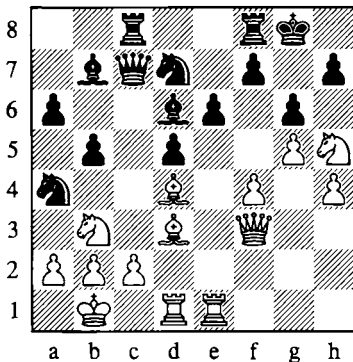
With the rook on e1 the weakening of the e4-square is no longer relevant, and the battery along the c7-h2 diagonal does not help Black much. For example:

22...♙xf4? 23.♖h5

This would yield White too strong an initiative.

22...♗xd3 would allow the activation of my rook: 23.♙xd3 g6 24.♙f3 followed by h4-h5xg6 with a huge attack, which would no doubt have made Garry feel very uncomfortable.

Continuing the fight for the dark squares with 22...♗d7 would not spare Black from trouble either: 23.♗h5! g6 24.♙f3

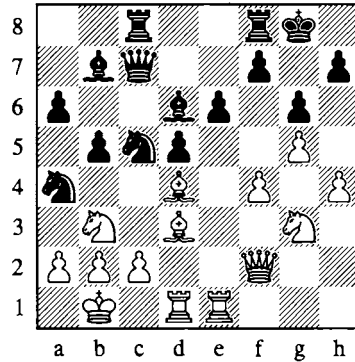


The position is very dangerous for Black, as practically all my pieces are attacking.

Black's best chance would have been:

22...g6!

Preventing ♖h5 and making the threat of ...♙xf4 look serious.



A passive defence with ♖g3-e2 would leave me short of attacking ideas, but:

23.♗xc5 ♗xc5 24.♗f1!!

This would have retained the initiative. White ignores the threat and plans the killing manoeuvre ♗f1-e3-g4.

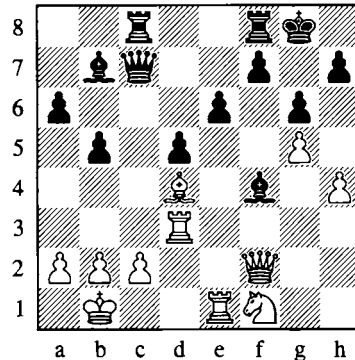
24...♗xd3

A necessary concession.

The immediate pawn capture loses a piece:

24...♙xf4? 25.♙xc5

25.♙xd3 ♙xf4



Black is two pawns up, but White has more than one way to continue the attack and take advantage of the weakness of the dark squares:

26.♞f3

Preparing an exchange sacrifice to eliminate the main defender of the dark squares.

The more restrained 26.♞c3 ♞d6 27.♞xc8 ♞xc8 28.♟e3 also looks promising.

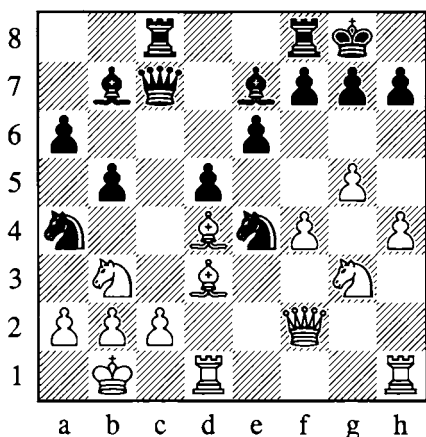
26...e5 27.♞xf4! exf4 28.♟h2

Followed by ♟g4. As usual with opposite-coloured bishops, the attack is very dangerous.

21...♟e4

This is the principled and natural reaction, putting the b7-bishop to work. Garry spent ten minutes on it, and I had the impression that he did not feel too comfortable about the turn the game had taken. He probably wanted to extinguish my attack as soon as possible and reduce my d3-bishop's activity at once.

The solid 21...♞fd8 22.♟h5 ♟f8 would have been a worthy alternative, followed soon by ...♟e4.

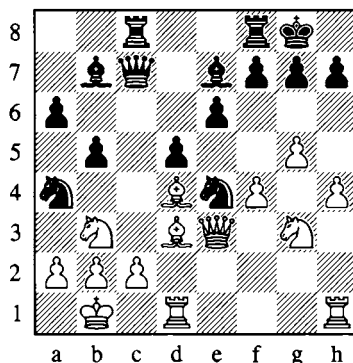


22.♟xc4?!

For some reason I considered this to be forced, so I played it after only two minutes.

Looking back, I notice that the excitement produced by attacking against the most feared attacking player of the time made me treat a crucial phase of the game superficially, when in fact I had important choices to make.

During the post mortem Garry rightly indicated that 22.♞e3! would have offered me entirely adequate compensation.



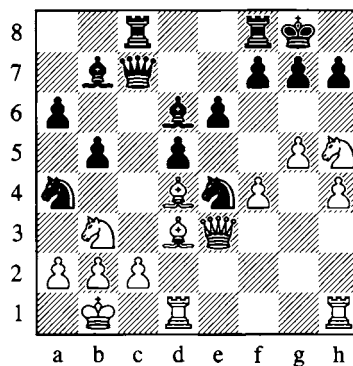
The centralized knight is unstable and Black faces an important choice.

Releasing the tension with 22...♟xg3? 23.♞xg3 would lead to a type of position I had grown up with, and I would have played it with a broad smile on my face. My bishops would cut like blades and the pawn storm would arrive soon.

Consolidating the knight mechanically would also lead to trouble: 22...f5? 23.♟h5 g6 24.♟f6+

The best solution is to maintain the tension dynamically with:

22...♟d6! 23.♟h5



23...e5!

Black has to keep playing actively.

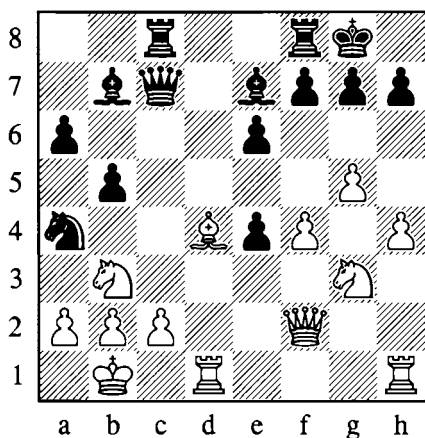
The cooperative 23...g6? offers White too much play: 24.♙xe4 gxf5 25.♙d3 ♙xf4 26.♜f3 (With the simple threat of ♜xh5.) 26...e5 27.♙f5! An important move, preventing the bishop from being locked out by ...e5-e4.

24.fxe5 ♙xe5

The position has stabilized somewhat, but the fight for the dark squares is continuing: 25.♜hf1 ♜fe8 26.♜f5

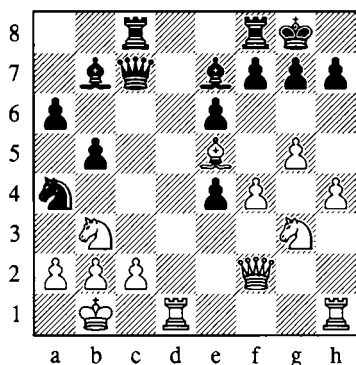
White's superior activity compensates for the missing pawn.

22...dxe4



23.♜he1

Three minutes were enough to convince me that my initially planned 23.♙e5 would run into a strong zwischenzug.



23...e3!

Suddenly, Black is very active and I face coordination problems.

24.♜h2

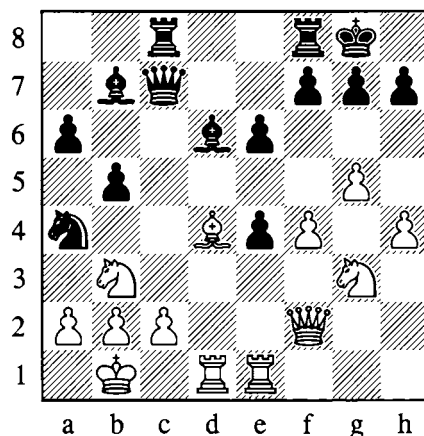
I have to hide my queen, since 24.♜e2 ♜c4! would only help Black to develop his initiative even more.

24...♜c6 25.♙a5 ♜b6 26.♙xb7 ♜xb7 27.♜e2 ♜c6

Black has the initiative.

When playing my last move I was still full of optimism, but things changed after Black's strong reply.

23...♙d6!

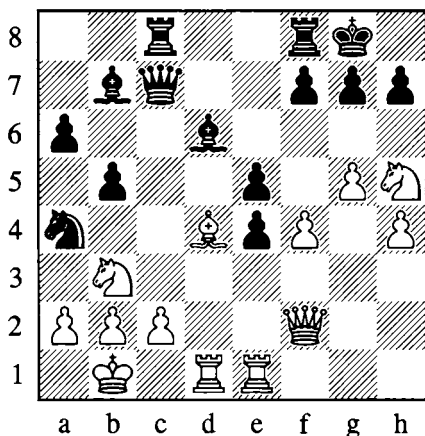


Much to his credit, Garry felt that this was a critical moment and he spent 19 minutes on this excellent move, leaving himself 28 minutes to reach move 40. This way of fighting for the dark squares is familiar to us, but the circumstances are favourable for Black this time.

Finally, I understood that I had had a good position only for a moment and that I had missed the offered chance. This change of mood was reflected in my relatively long think (12 minutes) on the practically forced next move. This did not create major problems on the clock yet, since I still had 31 minutes left to reach the control.

24. ♖h5

If 24. ♖xe4 then 24... ♙xf4 followed by ...e6-e5 would make a fiasco of my dark-squared strategy.

24...e5

It was clear to me that I had landed in a bad position and that by just playing the best moves I would only prolong the game but not save it against such a formidable opponent.

I decided to 'go nuts' and play some really unexpected moves, which might nudge Kasparov off balance.

25. c3!!

I used only three minutes on this move, provoking Garry to think for 12 minutes.

This is not really a piece sacrifice, since 25...exd4 26. ♖xd4 would hit g7 and d6 simultaneously, thus regaining the material. The purpose of the last move was to remove the c-pawn from a vulnerable square.

While Garry was thinking, I discovered that the move he eventually played would keep me in trouble.

25...f6!

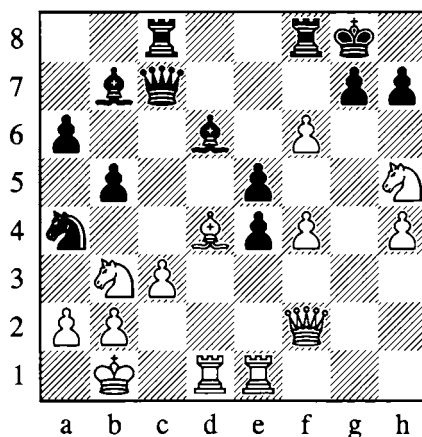
Very nice and strong at the same time. By covering the d4-g7 diagonal, Black makes the threat of ...exd4 real. Since 26.fxe5 fxe5 or

26. ♙e3 exf4 are both hopeless, I had to look for the best way of sacrificing a piece.

26. gxf6

The situation was becoming so critical that I spent more than half of my remaining time until I was left with just 13 minutes.

26. ♖xg7 does not work out well because of 26... ♖xg7 27. gxf6 ♖xf6 28. ♖g3+ ♖g6 when White has nothing to show for the sacrificed piece.

**26...exd4 27. ♖xd4**

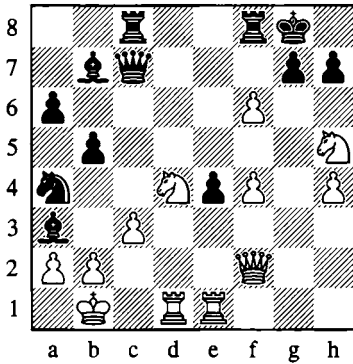
I played this almost instantly, having planned my next move already. Instead 27. ♖xd4 g6 is hopeless for White.

27...g6?

A natural move, but defending against ghosts. Garry played it quickly, and took off his wristwatch, putting it next to the board. This was a typical reflex gesture for Kasparov and the message I used to get from it was that from that moment on, he would be completely focused, and play even better than in the previous phase. Later in the fight he would also tend to take off his jacket.

In our game I thought it obvious he was becoming nervous, a normal feeling when the king's position has been weakened.

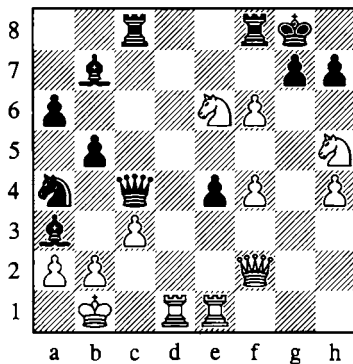
White's attack was not so threatening yet and, being a piece up, Black should have started demolishing my king's defence with: 27...♙a3!!



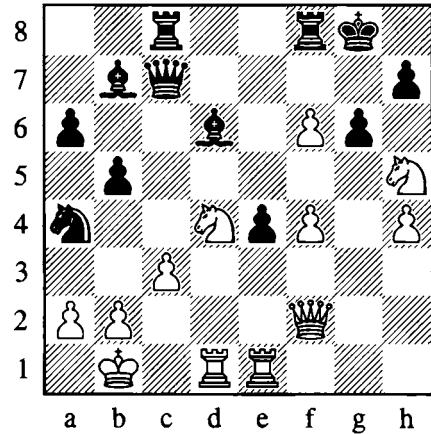
I hope the reader will excuse us both for having missed this resource. With little time on the clock, such a move is hard to think of. In the good old days, one would be proud if he (or she) could find such a move even in home analysis, but nowadays the computer engines spot it within seconds. Something is lost, in the field of pure creativity, but something else is gained – in accuracy.

On the other hand, had the game continued this way, I would hardly have annotated it in this book...

28.♘e6 (Or if 28.fxg7 ♜f7 the g7-pawn would ensure the black king's safety.) 28...♞c4



29.♘xf8 ♙xb2 White is defenceless against ...♘xc3†. My king's position looks as if a bomb had just landed.

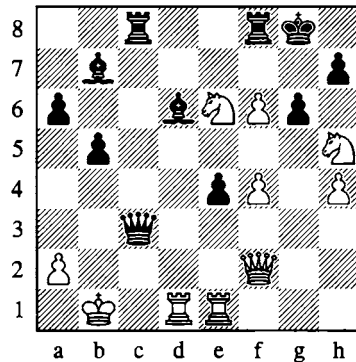


28.f5!!

The perfect complement to 25.c3!! – for the second time in this game, I do not remove the piece from an attacked square.

Garry counted on:

28.♘e6 ♘xc3† 29.bxc3 ♞xc3



With a powerful attack:

30.♞e3 ♞b4† 31.♞b3 ♞c4

Garry suggested 31...e3, but the position is not entirely clear: 32.♞xe3 ♞e4† 33.♞xe4 ♙xe4† 34.♙b2 The idea of ...e4-e3 is correct, but needs some refinement.

32.♘xf8 ♙xf8 33.♘g3

And finally 33...e3! leaves me without much hope; my king is weak and the bishops are killing.

After my move, Kasparov spent 11 minutes, leaving himself with only four more to get to the control. He had not expected the move and the fact that I played it instantly added to the shock.

You can imagine how excited I became: just a few moves earlier I was lost, but much to my surprise I did not see a win for Black anymore. While Garry was thinking, I could almost read his train of thoughts on his expressive face. Here is a faithful transcription: He did not do anything to hide that 28.f5 came as a surprise, but looked like a man who was reconsidering the position in search of the clearest win.

Minutes later, he displayed surprise that there is no win. And soon after, he started feeling that his king might be in danger after all.

He was shaking his head, raising his eyebrows, pulling faces...

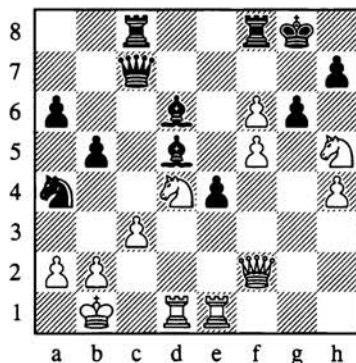
But then he calmed down – after all the position could not be dangerous for him, on the condition that he accepts that the game should end in a draw.

28...gxh5

This does indeed lead to a draw by force.

If he had had more time, let's say 40 minutes, he might have understood it was too early to resign himself to a draw:

28...♔d5!



This would not only strengthen Black's attack, but also allow the defensive ...♔f7.

29.fxg6 hxg6 30.♖g1!

If 30.♖g2 ♔f7 Black would repel the attack and retain his decisive material advantage.

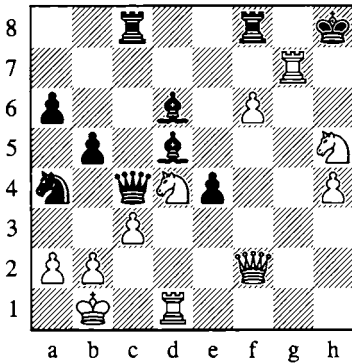
30...♖c4

With the white queen working on the dark squares, 30...♔f7? would allow strong counterplay with 31.♖e3 followed by ♖h6. The bishop is useful for defending the g6-pawn but blocks the seventh rank, leaving



g7 undefended.

31.♖xg6† ♕h7 32.♞g7† ♕h8



Even if he spotted 28...♔d5!, Garry might have failed to make a cold-blooded evaluation of this position: the black king is out of any danger!

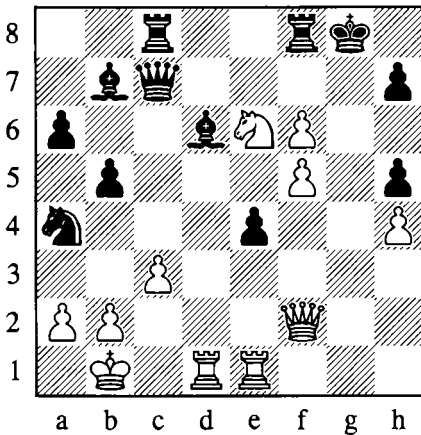
33.♘b3 e3!

Once again we see this thematic pawn advance.

34.♞xc3 ♞e4†

Material is balanced after the queen exchange, but Black's bishops would be killing; Black would retain good winning chances.

29.♘e6



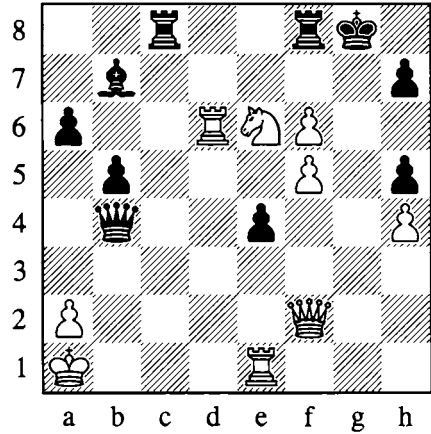
29...♘xc3†!

Forcing a draw just when things started looking critical.

30.bxc3 ♞xc3 31.♞xd6

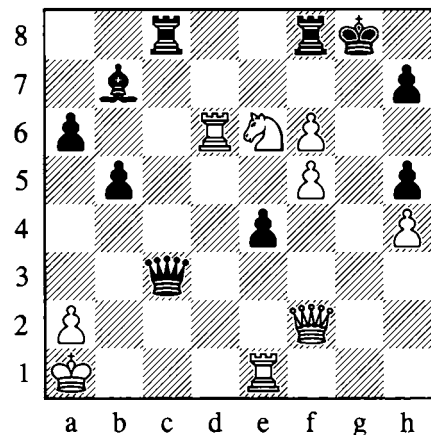
31.♞g1† ♕f7 would also lead to a draw by perpetual.

31...♞b4† 32.♕a1



32...♞c3†

For practical reasons, 32...♞xd6?! would be unnecessarily dangerous, although objectively it should also lead to a draw: 33.♞g2† ♕f7 34.♞g7† ♕e8 35.♞xb7 ♞c4!= This square was, or could have been, used on different occasions in this game as the start of strong counterplay. This time, the rook defends the e4-pawn, covering the e-file and leaving White with nothing better than a perpetual check with the knight (g7-e6).



33.♙b1 ♖b4† 34.♙a1 ♜c3† 35.♙b1
 ½–½

After this mini-match with Kasparov I had the feeling that I had lost any 'complex' against him and that I was ready to approach our future games with full confidence.

The post-mortem analysis was very instructive, since Garry shared many interesting ideas and views.

It had been announced that the winner of the best game of the tournament would receive a prize of a valuable men's watch. Eventually, our game was elected as the most interesting and since it did not have a winner, we both got the prize. And of course, the organizers took care that mine was a women's watch, and quite a beautiful one, I must say...

This game was so memorable for me that I have it immortalized in an original way. On our seventh wedding anniversary, my husband asked the artist Sam Havadtoy (who is of Hungarian origin) to create an artwork representing the final position of the game.

Havadtoy's trademark is three-dimensional pictures built up on antique laces. He had famously made a series of 41 artworks representing the positions after each pair of moves of the 3rd game of the 1972 Spassky – Fischer match.

I had met Havadtoy a long time ago while he was together with Yoko Ono.

History decided that these were to be my last games at a classical time rate against Kasparov. Our chess contacts continued in different forms, though.

We met during the 2002 rapid KO tournament in Prague and Garry eliminated me 1½–½. There was a small epilogue, though, suggesting that I had gained Garry's respect as a player. When the tournament was over, he invited me to his suite to play blitz games for a couple of hours. The atmosphere was relaxed and pleasant, and it seems that I was impressed by this experience, since in my diary I even wrote down the number of Garry's room: 821!

In the beginning of June 2002 I played in the Moscow Grand Prix rapid event. Garry happened to be around at the closing ceremony and invited me and my husband Gusztav to visit him at Makarska, where he used to spend many of his summers together with his family, to relax and recharge himself with energy for the upcoming events.



I was overwhelmed by the invitation and it did not take me long to accept it; six weeks later we were on our way to Makarska. Garry's mother, Klara, was there as well as many other members of his family. It was obvious that Garry was splitting his time between chess training and having a vacation.

It was a thrilling experience to witness how the World Number 1 prepared, but equally interesting to see his purely human side, away from the tournament tension and all the surrounding glory.

Our daily routine included four to five hours of chess training in the afternoon. Garry had a powerful computer loaded with the latest analysis engines, which he knew how to use rather well. However, Garry chose to have somebody else sitting in front of the computer to deal with the engines, while he would rather use his own mind to analyze on the board.

Apart from the unique chess experience, I celebrated my birthday together with Garry doing some exciting things such as riding on the banana boat! True to our fighting spirit, we set up a challenge to see who could last longer on the boat.

By coincidence, less than a month later I scored my only official win against Garry! True, it was just a rapid game, but the occasion was special. Following in the tradition of some historic matches between the USSR and the 'Rest of the World', a mighty Russian team faced a selection of the best non-Russian players. The match was played over ten boards using the Scheveningen system, and was hosted in the Kremlin!

With hindsight, I believe I was morally prepared for such a prestigious victory after holding my own in the games at Linares; and having known Garry in private at Makarska surely helped me to get rid of any inhibitions!

Russia against the World

In 1970 the formidable Soviet team, made up of five World Champions and several World title Candidates, defeated the 'Rest of the World' selection by the tiniest margin: 20½–19½. The event was held in Belgrade and consisted of four rounds of games over ten boards, with two reserves for each team.

This titanic clash was then named *The Match of the Century*, but just two years later this title was "robbed" by the even more sensational Spassky – Fischer match.

The Soviets improved their result in the 1984 return match, which was played using the same system, as they won by 21–19. Of the 24 players who took part, only five had played in Belgrade 1970, but one had 'changed teams' in the interim – Korchnoi.

Despite the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the significant emigration of very strong "Soviets", Russia remained a formidable chess power. When the third match of this kind was organized in 2002, in the very heart of Moscow – the Kremlin – the Russians were clear favourites on paper.

The match used the Scheveningen system – each board of one team met, one by one, each board from the opposing team. (I specified "board" and not "player" because the reserve players could step in at any time). We used a rapid time rate (25 minutes each with an increment of 10 seconds per move).

It was probably for nostalgic reasons that the event was called *The Match of the New Century*; if so, the nostalgic people surely faced a bitter disappointment as the Rest of the World won by a considerable margin: 52–48.

The **Russian** team placed the following players in the order of their rating (though the board number did not have much importance in the Scheveningen system): **Kasparov** (2838), **Kramnik** (2807), **Bareev** (2726), **Morozevich** (2716), **Grischuk** (2702), **Svidler** (2690), **Khalifman** (2690), **Karpov** (2687), **Dreev** (2676), **Zvjaginsev** (2673), **Rublevsky** (2658), **Motylev** (2634). In 1984 Kasparov played on the second board, behind Karpov. In the meantime he had stepped up to the top spot, which he never abandoned. We can see that Karpov's rating had declined quite a lot.

The **Rest of the World** had **Anand** (2755), **Ponomarev** (2743), **Leko** (2722), **Ivanchuk** (2711), **Gelfand** (2710), **Shirov** (2697), **Short** (2682), **Polgar** (2681), **Akopian** (2678), **Azmaiparashvili** (2676), **Smirin** (2676), **Radjabov** (2610). Remarkably, eight members of our team were born in the territory of the former Soviet Union!

The event lasted for four days; since these were rapid games, we had multiple rounds every day. Our team captain, Yasser Seirawan, devised a cunning strategy aimed at neutralizing our opponents' most dangerous weapon. On the final round of each day, he would confront Kasparov with a player who had not played in the earlier rounds of that day. This way, the already tired World Champion would face an opponent who had fresh energy; even for him, not such an easy situation.

This anti-Kasparov Jolly Joker plan worked out wonderfully well as Kasparov scored a modest 4 points out of 10.

I displayed poor form on the first day. At the evening team meeting, before the second day, Yasser suggested that I have a rest for the first two rounds of the second day, but asked me whether I would mind stepping in with the white pieces against Kasparov in the final round of the day.

I greeted the idea with enthusiasm, of course... And here is my only ever win against Kasparov!

Judit Polgar – Garry Kasparov

Russia – World, Moscow (rapid) 2002

1.e4 e5

A big surprise. Throughout his career, Kasparov tried many openings against 1.d4, but after 1.e4 he remained very much a Sicilian player.

2.d3 d6 3.b5 d6

I remember very well that Garry had played the Berlin a few times in our friendly blitz games in Prague, but did not expect him to try it out in an official game.

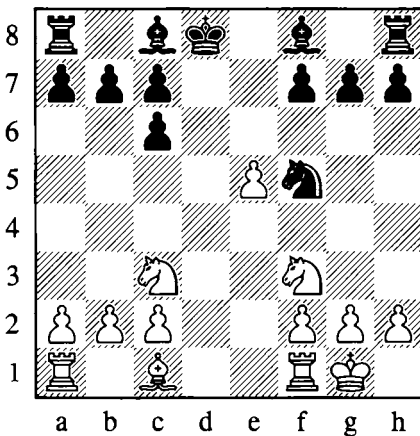
The Berlin Defence is a fashionable and reliable variation nowadays, but things were different until 15 years ago. I remember that in the mid 90s my good friend from the States, Alex Sherzer, who used to live in Hungary and visit us on a daily basis, was a true fanatic about the Berlin Wall. He claimed it was not a draw which he was pursuing with it; he was playing for a win!

With hindsight, I can understand Alex's idea. The Berlin is not sharp in the common meaning

of this word, since the queens leave the board early. But the symmetry is broken after the early exchanges in the centre, making the strategic fight unbalanced and not so easy to understand.

Years later Kramnik made a brilliant choice to take it up as his main weapon in his 2000 match against Kasparov, completely neutralizing the World Champion's attacking repertoire with 1.e4. I could not believe, though, that Kasparov could have been influenced to such an extent by the "paralysis" he had experienced during the match to take up the variation in his own repertoire. I think it simply does not suit his style at all.

4.0-0 ♖xe4 5.d4 ♖d6 6.♗xc6 dxc6 7.dxe5 ♖f5 8.♙xd8† ♔xd8 9.♖c3



Over the past decade, a huge amount of theory has developed starting with this position. More than 4000 games have been played and there are so many possible transpositions that you can easily lose your head. It is not the kind of opening you can study using a concrete approach. You should instead try to understand the typical structures and plans. For Black, it is essential to know which types of fortress are defensible and know how to turn the tables and take over the initiative from his apparently passive position.

Among the greatest specialists in this opening I would mention Kramnik, Topalov, Karjakin, Almasi and not least Carlsen. But practically every strong player now uses the Berlin Defence on a regular basis.

9...h6

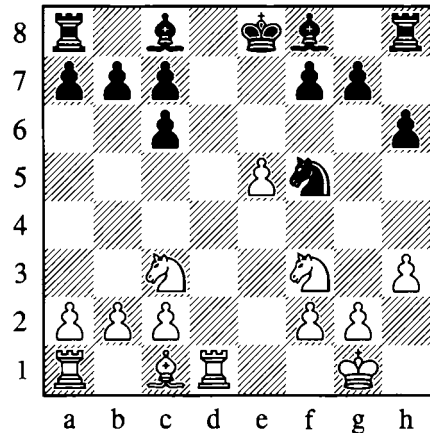
This was the fashion in those years, but now 9...♗e8 is more common (see for instance my game against Karjakin, page 332).

In a wider sense, the question is to which wing will Black transfer his king.

9...♗d7 was some sort of surprise prepared by Kramnik for the match. In principle, Black does not define the king's fate yet, but Kramnik's relatively innovative plan was to go to b7.

10.♗d1† ♔e8 11.h3

Creating the potential threat of g2-g4, although in principle I do not like to hurry with weakening my kingside.



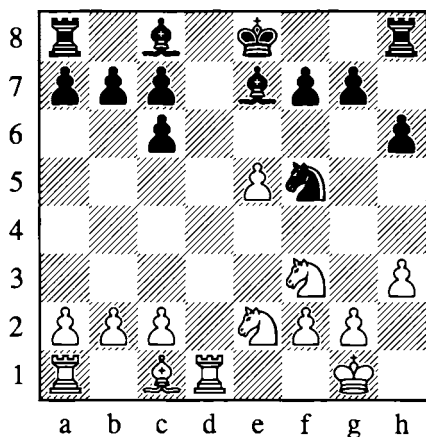
11...♗e7

A developing move preparing to meet g4 with ...♖h4.

11...♗e6!? planning ...♗b4 followed by ...♗d5 (and maybe ...♗d8 somewhere in between) is possible.

The most paradoxical move is 11...♞e7, moving the knight away before it is attacked. Black will play ...♞g6 next, pressuring the e5-pawn and the f4-square. The latter detail somewhat inhibits g2-g4. Later, Black can develop his bishops without having to worry about his knight's stability.

12.♞e2



A typical manoeuvre, preparing either ♞e2-f4, or, after kicking the enemy knight away with g2-g4, ♞d4-f5.

12...♞h4

This was a new move, but I find the knight jump slightly premature. The developing 12...♙d7 is more natural.

I have a feeling that Kasparov did not have any specific preparation for this game and that he simply hoped to outplay me in the endgame.

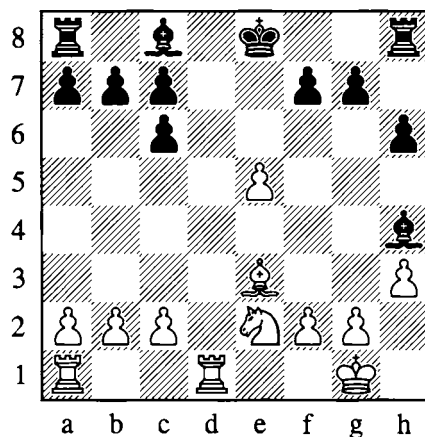
There are some elements that make it clear Kasparov played this game with some handicaps. He was tired while I was fresh; he did really expect to be playing me; his opening choice was not inspired. These elements made this game much less tense and hard-fought than those from Linares, for instance.

They say that the road to victory is more important than the victory itself. I entirely

agree with this, which for the purpose of this game could be translated as saying it would have been more enjoyable to have faced a more relaxed Kasparov and in one of his trademark variations.

And yet, believe me – defeating Kasparov offers a unique feeling under any circumstances...

13.♞xh4 ♙xh4 14.♙e3



14...♙f5

This looks a bit provocative but is consistent with the 12th move, which had cleared the f5-square. It later turned out that it helped me carry out my plan, but objectively Black should still be fine.

The modest 14...♙d7? makes a lot of sense.

A possible continuation is 15.♙d4 ♙e7 16.♙ad1 ♙d8 with some pressure for White. My dream would be to get my pawns to g4 and f5, followed by ♞f4 with a complete kingside crush. This is not so simple to accomplish, as Black can react with ...h6-h5 and ...g7-g6, so the plan usually stays as just a dream.

On the queenside, things would most likely lead to a structure with white pawns on a4, b3, c4 and black pawns on a5, b6, c7, c5. In many cases this could lead to a positional draw, as neither player can open the kingside to his (or her) favour.

Now is a good moment to express my (and, quite possibly, many other players') general feeling about the Berlin Defence.

The first impression is that it is unpleasant to play with Black, because it seems that the fight is for two results only. But the tables can turn at any moment, and experience has taught me that if White plays carelessly a moment could easily come when it is too late to settle for a draw.

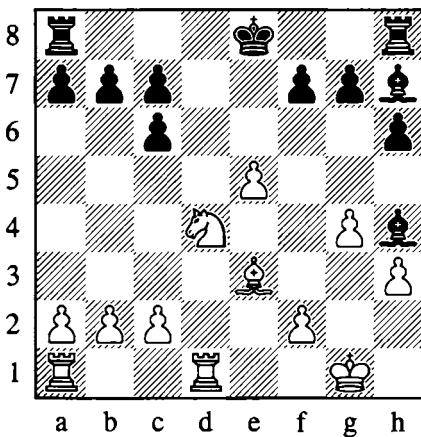
For instance, if the queenside pawns get blocked as indicated above, massive exchanges would leave the white ones vulnerable to the light-squared bishop. Not a funny ending for sure.

15. ♖d4 ♙h7

Optically, this is the most logical follow-up of ...♙f5.

However, the time loss after 15...♙d7!? is relative, since Black may well get it back with interest by a later ...c6-c5. For example, 16.g4 g6 17.♞d2 ♞d8 18.♞ad1 c5 with roughly equal chances.

16.g4!



I believe Kasparov underestimated this move. Having had tough times with White in this variation, and not being a frequent Berlin

player with Black, he might have lacked the proper feeling for danger.

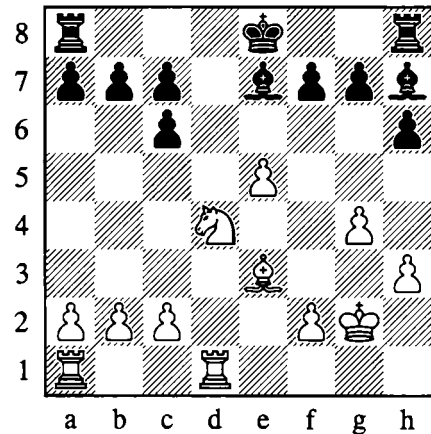
Advancing the pawns in front of my king in such a way against the world's strongest player may look a bit like a lack of respect. It may well be that subconsciously I was more daring than in the previous two games. The Najdorf Sicilian was one of Kasparov's main areas of expertise, something you could not say about the Berlin Defence.

Also, in rapid games it is easier to get rid of any kind of inhibitions than in classical (and rated!) games.

Concretely, the idea of my last move is to support the knight jump to f5. The drawback of having the bishop on the seemingly active h7-square is that ...g7-g6 would be equivalent to positional suicide.

16...♙e7 17.♞g2?!

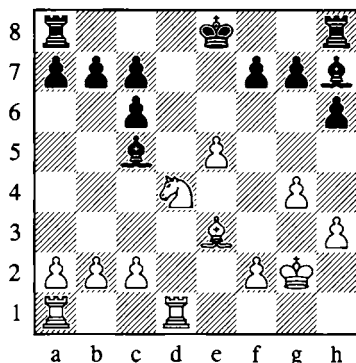
I thought that before jumping ahead it could not hurt to improve my position a little first. However, in view of the line from the next comment it would have made sense to play 17.♞f5!.



17...h5?!

Kasparov failed to take advantage of my hesitation. 17...♙c5! would have prepared a simplification to an opposite-coloured bishops ending, with approximate equality.

But probably he was not ready to settle for a draw so early, continuing to think that there was nothing wrong with his position.

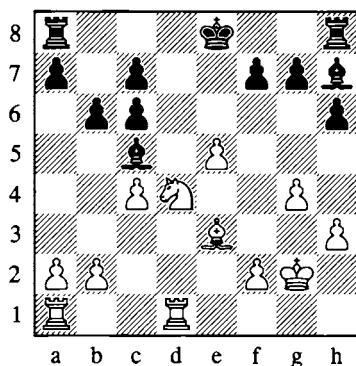


18.c4

Removing the pawn from the attacked square. If 18.♖f5 ♗xf5 19.gxf5 ♗xe3 20.fxe3 ♗d8 21.♗f3 ♖e7 22.♗d4 g6 then my space advantage is marred by the inflexibility of my centre.

18...b6!

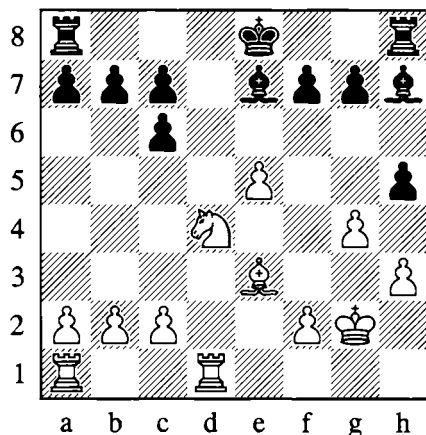
Only not 18...♗d8? 19.♖xc6 winning a pawn. The thematic 18...♗xd4 would be premature: 19.♗xd4 c5 20.♗d2 b6 21.♗ad1 ♗e4† 22.♗g3 ♗c6 23.f4 ♖e7 24.f5± In view of the permanent possibility of f5-f6, rook exchanges on d8 would be problematic, which leaves Black struggling.



With 18...b6 Black practically gains a tempo in this kind of line. The c6-pawn is taboo in view of ...♗e4†.

19.♗g3 ♗xd4 20.♗xd4 c5 21.♗d2 ♖e7 22.f4 ♗e4 23.f5 ♗ad8

After the exchange of one rook, Black should be out of danger.



18.♖f5

Better late than never; from now on White takes over the initiative.

18...♗f8

Somehow this does not look like a position Kasparov could have been aiming for. After the last move I became really optimistic, feeling that I have the game firmly in my hands. The thought that I could win the game also crossed my mind...

The alternative was:

18...hgx4 19.hxg4 ♗xf5 20.gxf5

White has a huge space advantage and Black's wings do not communicate. The only way to try to solve the latter problem is:

20...f6

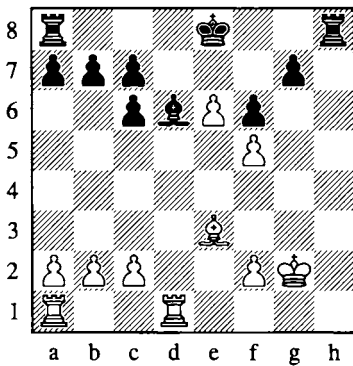
Black tries to get some squares for his bishop and king, in order to connect the rooks.

Kasparov might have relied on 20...♗h5 attacking the weak spot in my structure. If so, he surely changed his mind when he noticed that after 21.♗h1!± the pawn is taboo: 21...♗xf5? 22.♗h8† ♗f8 23.♗c5 winning the bishop.

In the above line Black would instead have to exchange rooks on move 21, but then 20...♖d8 21.♙h1 ♜xh1 would be a better version, winning a tempo in comparison with the previous line. Even so, Black would not gain much relief. 22.♜xh1 ♜d5 23.♙h8† ♘d7 24.f4 White has crushing domination. 21.e6 ♘d6

The rook lift 21...♜h5 would be even worse than one move earlier on account of 22.♜d7 with decisive infiltration.

It is interesting to follow how the insertion of the pawn moves changes the play after the natural: 21...♜d8 22.♙h1 ♜xh1 23.♜xh1 ♜d5 24.♙h8† ♘f8 Black has stopped the kingside initiative and the f5-pawn is doomed. But White can strike on the opposite wing and the weakness of the doubled pawns unexpectedly comes to the fore. 25.♙xa7 ♜xf5 26.b4 Threatening ♙c5 and forcing the further weakening of the queenside. 26...b6 27.♙b8 ♜e5 28.♙xc7 ♜xe6 29.♙xb6 We see now why it was important to provoke ...b7-b6 – White wins a pawn and should win the game.

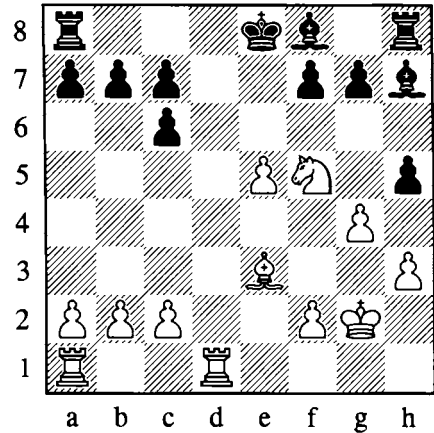


22.c4 c5 23.♙h1 ♘e7

Black has managed to stabilize his position, but White gets some time to consolidate the space advantage.

24.♘f3 ♜ag8 25.♙f4 g5 26.♙xd6† cxd6 27.♜ag1±

White will prepare f2-f4, shaking Black's fortress from its foundations.



19.♙f3!

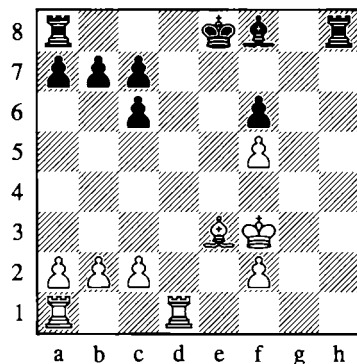
A strong centralizing move. The king gets ready to defend the f5-pawn after the possible exchanges on g4 and f5.

The hurried 19.♙g5, dreaming of doubling rooks and delivering mate on d8, would allow drawish simplifications: 19...hxg4 20.hxg4 ♙xf5 21.gxf5 ♙h5 22.f4 f6 23.exf6 gxf6 24.♙xf6 ♜xf5 25.♙e5 ♘d6 26.♙xd6 cxd6=

19...♙g6

Black improves the placement of his bishop and clears the h-file for the rook.

19...f6 would have been a radical way of challenging my space advantage. Strategically it looks sound, but concretely it does not seem to work: 20.exf6 hxg4† 21.hxg4 ♙xf5 22.gxf5 gxf6 From a structural point of view, Black has sorted things out, but now White's better development tells:

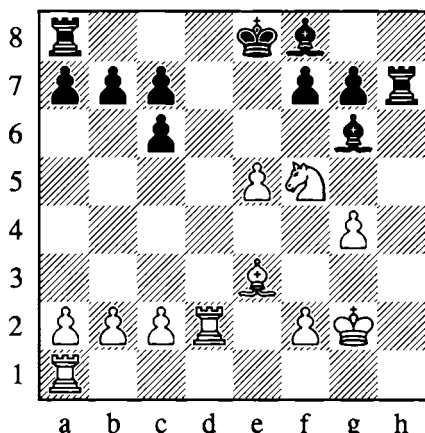


After 23.♙f4 the c7-pawn is hanging and White has the e-file and the e6-square for her attack. I imagine Garry would be happy to switch colours in such a position.

20.♖d2

With the king now closer to the centre, 20.♙g5 was entirely possible, but I wanted to double rooks first.

20...hxg4† 21.hxg4 ♖h3† 22.♙g2 ♖h7



It was obvious that I have the advantage so I looked for a way to improve my position.

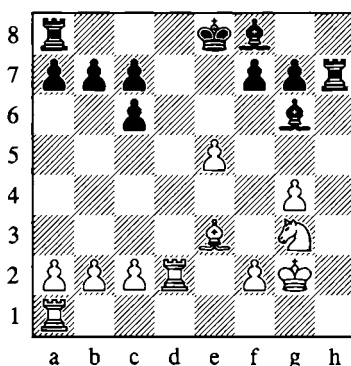
23.♙g3

I was enjoying my position and tried to play a technical game, squeezing Black little by little. We have a similar situation as with 17.♙g2 – just another questionable patient king move...

It remains an open question, though, whether good technique means being patient or, on the contrary, being aware and taking advantage of any concrete details.

On move 17 I erred by not jumping with my knight to f5. Now, I should have seriously considered stepping back from there!

23.♙g3!



Moving to the same square as in the game, but with another piece! The main threat is f4-f5.

23...f6

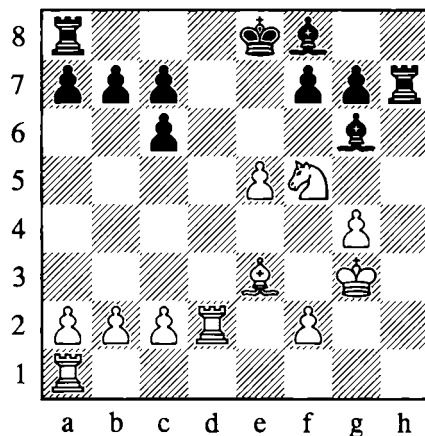
Anticipating the danger but creating new problems.

23...♖h4 does not parry the threat: 24.f4 ♖xg4 25.♙h3! wins the exchange.

Or if 23...♖d8 24.♖e2 renewing the threat.

24.♖e1 ♙e7 25.exf6 gxf6 26.♙c5 b6 27.♙xe7 ♖xe7 28.♖xe7† ♙xe7 29.♖e2† ♙d7 30.f4

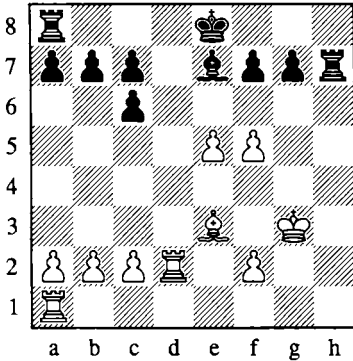
With a promising ending due to the mobile kingside majority and Black's unsafe king position.



23...f6?

Kasparov finally loses his temper, which is not surprising. For such a dynamic and aggressive player it must have been pure torture to remain patient in such a passive position.

After I temporarily disconnected my rooks, 23...♙xf5! 24.gxf5 ♖e7 would make a lot of sense.



I might have had to simply return to familiar patterns with some loss of time: 25.♖dd1 followed by ♖h1.

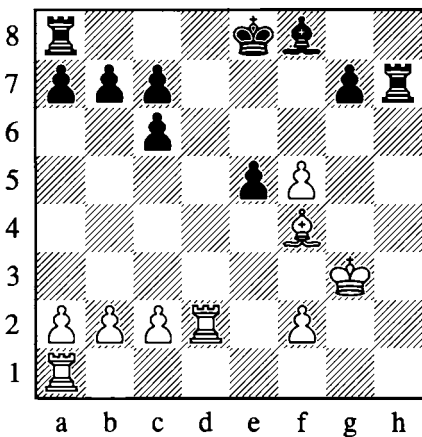
24.♙f4

Black is in big trouble now. I felt that something serious was happening and that I was going to win the game.

24...♙xf5

The principle of “better late than never” does not apply here.

25.gxf5 fxe5



26.♖e1!

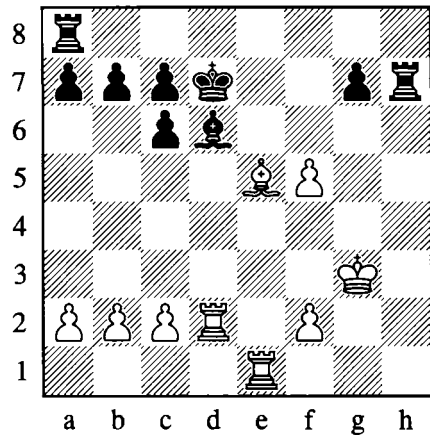
A crucial zwischenzug; White gets an overwhelming initiative in the centre.

Instead 26.♙xe5?! ♖d8 would offer Black some relief.

26...♙d6

26...♖d8? loses on the spot to 27.♖xe5† ♙e7 28.♖xe7† ♙x7 29.♙g5†.

27.♙xe5 ♙d7



A desperate attempt to keep material equality and also defend the seventh rank.

28.c4!

Another important move. Apart from the obvious c4-c5, I threaten 29.♙xd6 cxd6 30.♖e6 without allowing 30...d5.

At this point Kasparov was shaking his head in discontent and his face showed pure suffering; he surely understood that he was going to lose.

28...c5 29.♙xd6 cxd6 30.♖e6

White wins a pawn while retaining the attack. In double rook endings, the latter aspect is always dangerous.

30...♖ah8 31.♖dxd6† ♙c8

I paused here for a moment, in order to focus on winning my won position!

32.♖d5

I wanted to force the weakening of the seventh rank with ...b6, but 32.♖e7 was just as good.

32...♖h3† 33.♕g2 ♖h2† 34.♕f3 ♖2h3† 35.♕e4

Black's attempts to harass my king have failed. His Majesty is about to become just another attacking piece!

35...b6 36.♖c6† ♕b8

36...♕b7 37.♖g6 wins the g7-pawn.

37.♖d7

The seventh rank invasion is decisive.

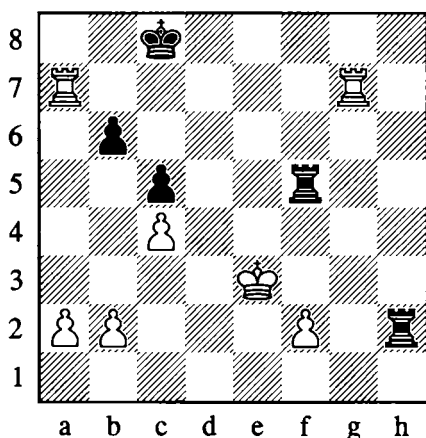
37...♖h2 38.♕e3

Not really necessary, but why give away my pawn?

38...♖f8

Or if 38...♖2h3† 39.♕e2 followed by ♖cc7.

39.♖cc7 ♖xf5 40.♖b7† ♕c8 41.♖dc7† ♕d8 42.♖xg7 ♕c8 43.♖xa7



If 43...♕b8 then 44.♖af7 simplifying to an easily won rook ending with two extra pawns. Kasparov shook my hand but then rushed away from the playing hall, obviously angry with himself.

1-0

I received warm congratulations from Yasser; this win over the leader of the Russian team proved that our opponents were not invulnerable. I had to give a press conference about this game, which made the day's headlines.

Shortly after, I received the following letter:

Our society has always had the fixed idea that chess is a men's game, and that women can never be good chess players. Now Judit Polgár has proven this to be wrong. She has redrawn the map of our brains with her talent and bravery. Thank you, Judit! Thank you in the name of the present and future women of the world!

*I Love You,
Yoko Ono*

My last over-the-board meeting with Kasparov took place during the 2006 Zurich blitz tournament, celebrating Korchnoi's 75th birthday. You will find more details about this special event in the Korchnoi chapter on page 84.

By that point, both our lives had changed completely compared to the previous years.

Kasparov had officially announced his retirement from tournament chess during the Linares 2005 closing ceremony. Ever since, he has kept a close connection with the chess world, by writing books and getting actively involved in chess politics, but he never again played a game at a normal time rate.

Meanwhile, I had become a mother. My son, Oliver, was born in 2004 and my daughter Hanna was just six weeks old.

Later, in 2011, I joined Kasparov at a presentation about chess in schools at the European Parliament in Brussels. Ever since, we have supported each other in matters of chess education.

Chapter 2

Karpov



With Karpov in Budapest

As curious as this may sound, I never felt any kind of pressure when playing against Anatoly Karpov. I reached safe or even promising positions on many occasions, but somehow it systematically happened that he would slip away like a fish, saving all the bad positions and winning when there seemed to be no danger for me. Although the opening was not Karpov's favourite territory, he had the ability to create a lot of pressure in certain positional systems, such as the Fianchetto King's Indian.

Karpov is the greatest *player* I ever met, and I do not refer to tournament games only. Whatever he plays, he does it with full ambition, with a winner's approach and passion. Rather than discouraging him, his defeats had a highly motivating effect on Karpov. After losing, he would start the next game with renewed ambition. At least this is the impression I got from watching him playing blitz games, tennis, card games and even pinball!

If we restrict the discourse to chess, we can understand the extent to which Karpov enjoyed *playing* from the huge number of tournaments he took part in, and won, and his continuous travelling around the world.

I played my first game against Karpov in Madrid 1992. I had White and the fight ended in a draw after only 16 moves. For many years, I had bad results against him, but my win in our 1998 rapid match (covered in Volume II) marked a turning point. The match was anything but clear-cut and I cannot claim I outplayed him. Time was the decisive factor, but this was not incidental. Over the whole period I knew him, Karpov suffered chronically from time trouble.

In 1998 Karpov won his last (and rather controversial) FIDE World title, but then stayed out of the cycle. After 2000 it became obvious that he had lost part of his former strength.

At the same time, I had some of my best years, so there is little wonder that in 2003 I finally obtained my first ever victory against Karpov in a classical game.

Anatoly Karpov – Judit Polgar

Wijk aan Zee 2003

I have always considered Wijk aan Zee my most difficult tournament of the year, requiring thorough preparation and strong focus. The festival takes place in January, when the weather is anything but friendly – it is cold, rainy and at times very windy. True, once I arrive there, I feel the organizers' warmth dissolves all these negative aspects; this surely is not the first time I have mentioned that I like playing in Holland!

But one way or another, the tournament itself is long and tough.

This year's edition was special to me as I started with my highest ever rating, 2700, placing me in shared 13th-14th position in the world rankings. Over the next years I improved even more, reaching a peak of 2735, which placed me eighth in the world.

I did not feel that I was really playing better than before. The difference was that I had *stabilized* in the way that I stopped pushing for a win when I did not have objective reasons to do so. I was ready to save my energy by occasionally making relatively fight-less draws and moving on to the next game.

Much to my joy, I managed to once again prove this quality at Wijk aan Zee 2003. The tournament started well, with draws against Topalov and Van Wely and a convincing third-round win over Timman.

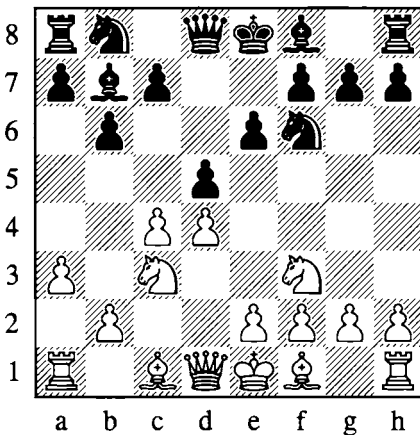
The fourth-round game against Karpov was the first critical test – and I passed it successfully!

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3

I was wondering why Karpov chose this move order instead of his usual 2.c4. In my earlier games against him I tried out the King's Indian and then the Grünfeld, but in the later games the theoretical dispute took place in the Queen's Indian and the Nimzo-Indian. Eventually I decided that the only thing he wanted to avoid was the Benoni, which I had used in the rapid match against him (see Volume II).

2...e6 3.c4 b6 4.a3

Our previous classical game (Buenos Aires 2001) went 4.g3 ♗a6 5.♖a4. I remember that game well for two reasons: it was played on a sadly historical date (September 11th) and I endured a long "torture" while Karpov displayed some great technique.

4...♗b7 5.♘c3 d5**6.cxd5**

In our Linares 2001 game Karpov played 6.♗g5 ♗e7 7.♖a4+ ♗d7 8.♖xd7+ ♘bxd7 9.♘b5. I sacrificed a pawn with 9...0-0! and obtained a great position, but eventually lost in 80 moves.

6...♘xd5 7.♖c2 ♘xc3 8.♖xc3

This is aiming for active piece play.

In Round 8, Krasenkow played the more popular and strategically more consistent 8.bxc3 against me.

8...h6

Karpov himself used to play 8...♘d7 9.♗g5 ♗e7 10.♗xe7 ♖xe7. Regarding the last move, please refer to my comment on move 17.

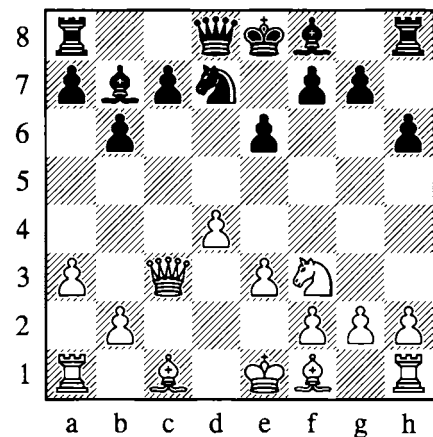
9.e3

If 9.♗f4 I planned to neutralize White's bishop with 9...♗d6. For instance 10.♗xd6 cxd6 or 10.♗g3 ♘d7 with control over the critical e5-square.

9...♘d7!?

The normal move is 9...♗e7, but Anand has tried also 9...♗d6.

The idea of my almost-new move was to speed up the queenside counterplay with ...c5 followed by ...♖c8. When preparing it I had in mind an improvement over the only game in which Black had played this way.

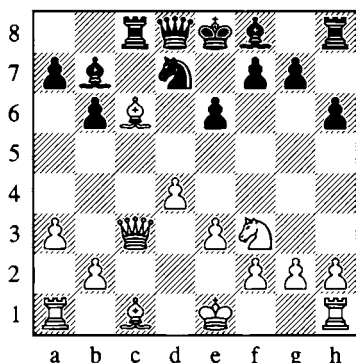
**10.b4N**

Karpov thought for 12 minutes on this ambitious move, which has the drawback of neglecting his development.

Dreev – Aseev, Soviet Union 1988, continued with 10.♗b5 ♗d6 11.♗c6 with advantage for White.

But after 10.♖b5, instead of allowing the queenside blockade, I was intending to sacrifice a pawn with:

10...c6 11.♗xc6 ♜c8



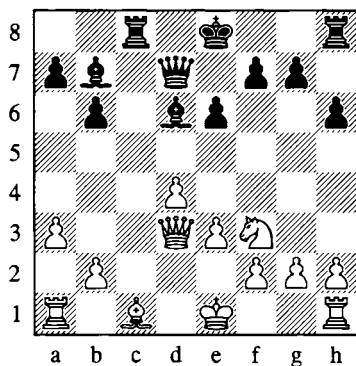
12.♗xd7+

It is probably safer to return the pawn with 12.d5!? but White has no advantage after: 12...♗xc6 13.dxc6 ♖b8 14.b4 ♖xc6 15.♗b3 ♗e7=

12...♗xd7 13.♗d3

Or 13.♗b3 ♗d5 14.♗d3 ♗d6 looks even more active for Black.

13...♗d6



Black's better development and active bishops offer at least adequate compensation. If 14.0-0 Black could even consider starting an immediate attack with 14...♗xf3 15.gxf3 ♜c5 followed by ...♞h5. The rook is taboo because of ...♗xh2+ winning the queen.

I must confess that I did not expect Karpov's move, but then I figured out a way to transpose to another line of my preparation.

10...♗e7

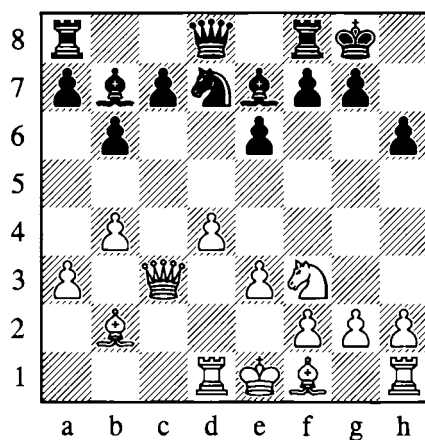
I did not consider 10...c5 seriously, since this was what White had prepared against. 11.dxc5 bxc5 12.♖b5 cxb4 13.axb4 White's lead in development and the pin on the knight may prove unpleasant for me.

10...a5 crossed my mind briefly, but I decided to make some developing moves before undermining the white queenside.

11.♗b2 0-0

There is no danger in castling right into the range of the battery on the long diagonal, since d4-d5 can be conveniently answered with ...♗f6. Things would have been different if I had played the seemingly more active 10...♗d6.

12.♞d1

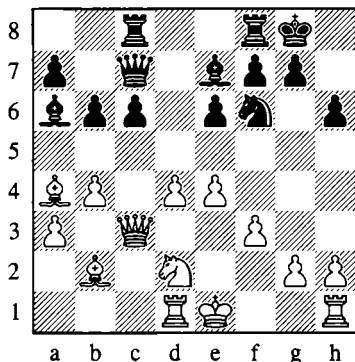


This move took Karpov another 13 minutes. It was obvious that he was trying hard to prevent my freeing ...c7-c5, but in doing so he neglected his development. Since my play became very concrete starting from this moment, Karpov will soon have to pay the price for his risky attitude.

12...a5!

After 14 minutes I decided to deviate from my initial preparation.

The game Hardicsay – Adorjan, Hungary 1986, (in which White used a different move order, with b2-b4 and ♖b2 before e2-e3) finished spectacularly: 12...♙c8 13.♙b5 c6 14.♙a4 ♙a6 15.e4 ♘f6 16.♘d2 ♚c7 17.f3



And now: 17...♘d5! This knight sacrifice is about pure tactics. No matter if White plays 18.exd5 or moves his queen away, Black would mate with 18...♙h4† 19.g3 ♙xg3† or, jokingly, 19...♚xg3†.

And yet, optically the knight jump to d5 reminds me of my positional knight sacrifices against Karpov which occurred on the same square (see Volume II).

13.b5

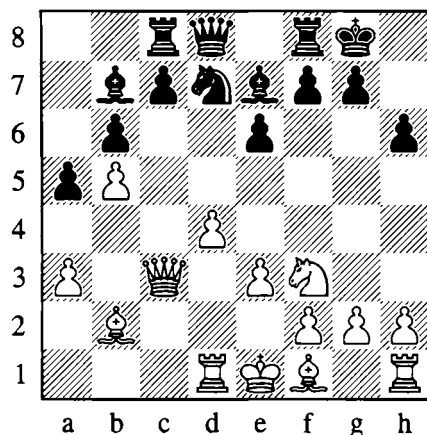
Practically forced. Otherwise White would get a weak pawn on either b4 or a3.

13...♙c8

After the recent structural modifications, Black can open the c-file without facing pressure on the d-file. This will turn all White's previous efforts to stop ...c7-c5 into merely a loss of time.

If White was better developed, my planned ...c7-c6 would just leave me with a weakness on b5, but the way it is Karpov will not have enough resources to keep the blockade.

By this point I was feeling quite optimistic, mainly because White is at least two tempos away from getting castled.

**14.♙b3!:**

Karpov spent 13 minutes on this move, which is actually preparing the blunder from two moves later.

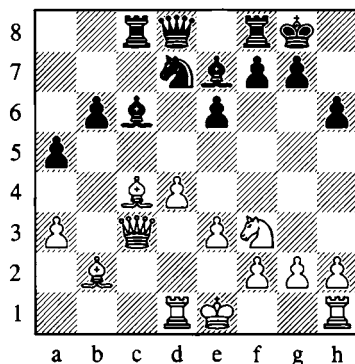
14.♘e5 would fail to keep things under control after 14...♘xe5 15.dxe5 ♚e8 followed by ...c7-c6.

It would have been best to develop:

14.♙c4 c6 15.bxc6

If 15.♚d3 cxb5 16.♙xb5 ♘f6, followed by ...♙e4 and ...♚d5, Black's blockade in the centre would be more effective and threatening than White's on the queenside.

15...♙xc6



16. ♖d3

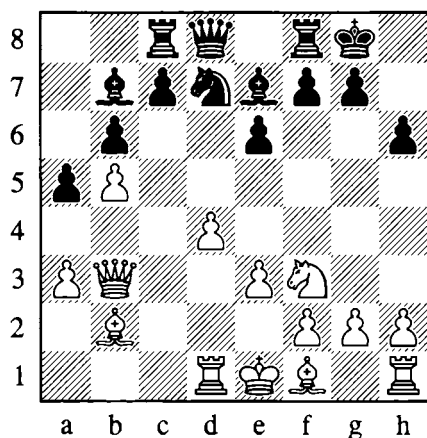
The tactics work out well for Black after: 16.d5? ♙f6 17.♖b3 ♙xd5 18.♙xd5 ♖c5 19.♖a2 exd5 Due to the presence of his king in the centre, White cannot retrieve the pawn, for instance: 20.♙xd5 ♖d3† 21.♙d2 (Preventing ...♙c2, but stepping into the fire along the d-file.) 21...♖xb2 22.♙xd8 ♙fxd8† With a strong attack. White's Royal Pair are in trouble – the king is exposed and the queen is passive.

16...♖f6 17.0–0

Playing for a blockade with 17.♙b5? would allow 17...♙e4 18.♖e2 ♙c2 with a strong initiative.

17...♖e8!?

Followed by ...b5 with queenside counterplay.



14...c6

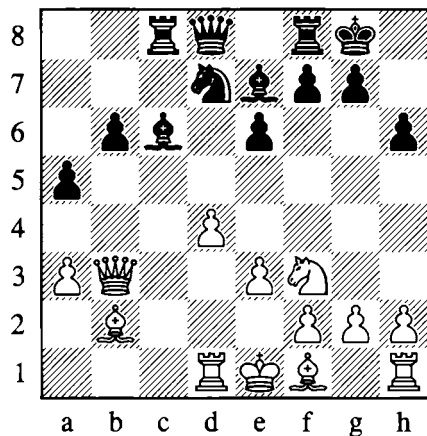
I preferred this move over 14...c5 because I wanted to make sure that I will exchange the b5-pawn. Objectively, the two moves may be equivalent and of course 15.bxc6, en passant, would transpose to the game.

15.bxc6

Following his plan. 15.♙e2 would also fail to keep things under control: 15...cxb5 16.♖xb5 (Or if 16.♙xb5 ♙d6 White could still not castle because of the bishops' pressure.) 16...♙c2 Black plans ...♙b4† or ...♖c8.

15...♙xc6

After the game I checked whether this position was ever played before and was surprised that a game between computers had actually reached it!

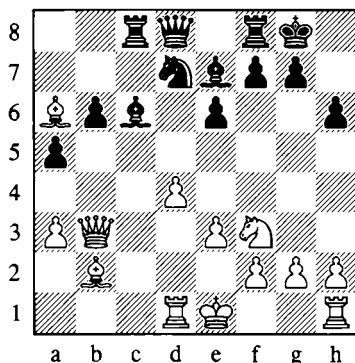


16.♙b5?

Played instantly and, judging from Karpov's later reaction, overlooking my answer. There is no simple way out of the trouble, though.

If 16.♙e2 b5 Black is better. The tactical point is that after 17.♙xb5 a4! a deadly check on a5 would follow soon, for instance 18.♖xa4 ♙a8 19.♖b3 ♖a5† winning the bishop.

16.♙a6 practically wins a tempo, but does not solve all the problems either.



16...♙c7 17.0–0 b5

17...a4 is also very promising: 18.♖d3 ♖a8 19.♗e2 ♜b8 (threatening ...b5) 20.♙b5 ♙xb5 21.♗xb5 ♖a5 The weakness of the a3-pawn causes White big problems.

18.♙b5 ♜b7 19.a4 ♗b8 20.♙c3 ♙xb5 21.axb5 ♜xb5 22.♗a4 ♙b4

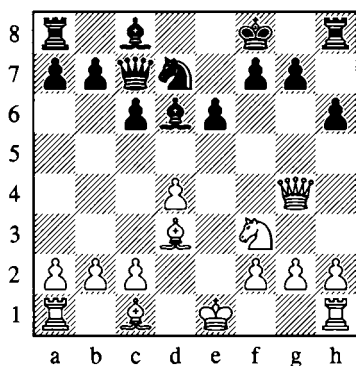
The outside passed pawn makes Black's play very pleasant.

16...♙b4†!

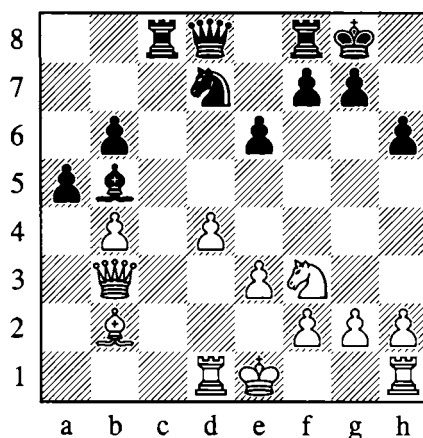
I played this strong move after five minutes, although I saw it instantly. The problem was that the simple 16...♙d5 17.♖d3 ♙f6 also looks pleasant for Black.

17.axb4 ♙xb5

As a result of my small combination, the white king has been kept in the centre. Psychologically, it may have been not so difficult for Karpov to live with it. Apart from the variation indicated in the comments to Black's eighth move, Anatoly has repeatedly played the following Caro-Kann set-up: 3.♖c3 dxe4 4.♙xe4 ♙d7 5.♙d3 ♙gf6 6.♙g5 e6 7.♗e2 ♙d6 8.♙f3 h6 9.♙e4 ♙xe4 10.♗xe4 ♗c7 11.♗g4 ♙f8



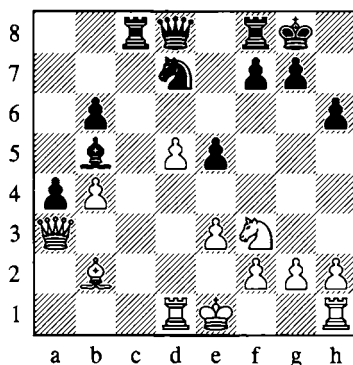
The detail that makes the present position very dangerous for White is the presence of opposite-coloured bishops. My bishop is far more active than the white one, and I felt that we were playing for two results already: White could not hope for more than just surviving!



18.bxa5

Karpov probably used his seven minutes to adapt to the new circumstances. In view of the strong positional threat of ...a5-a4, his last move is virtually forced.

The attempt to create some counterplay in the centre with 18.d5 would fail to: 18...a4! 19.♗a3 e5!



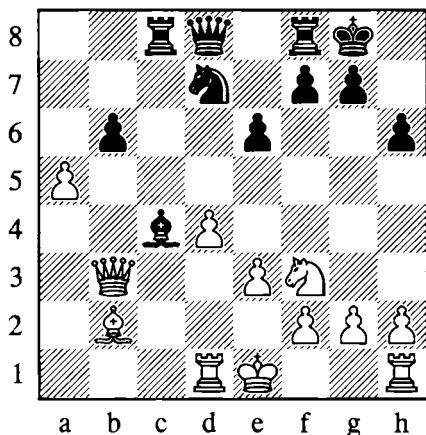
Black has a huge advantage. The passed pawn is strong, the bishop cuts like a blade, and the threat of ...♗d8-f6-g6 will cause White trouble on the light squares.

I have pleasant memories about such positions when the enemy king is detained in the centre. See, for instance, my game against Akopian in Volume II or with Pantsulaia (page 308).

Taking the pawn would only make things worse for White: 20.♙xe5 ♙xe5 21.♙xe5 ♜c2

22.♖d2 ♜xd2 23.♙xd2 ♜xd5† 24.♙d4 ♜xg2
with a decisive attack.

18...♙c4



19.♞a3

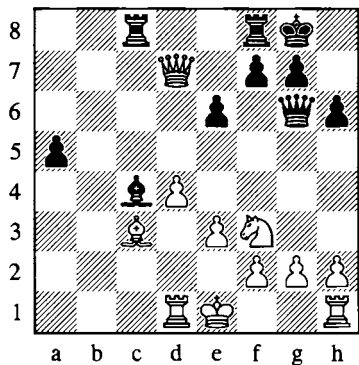
Karpov played this instantly, but I was expecting:

19.♞a4 bxa5 20.♙c3

My plan was to sacrifice a piece with:

20...♞f6 21.♞xd7 ♜g6

This is sharp and promising, and reflects the direction typically followed by my brain. I may say that I never really “grew up” from this point of view; I always look for spectacular solutions and sacrifices, probably because beauty gives me too much pleasure to resist it!

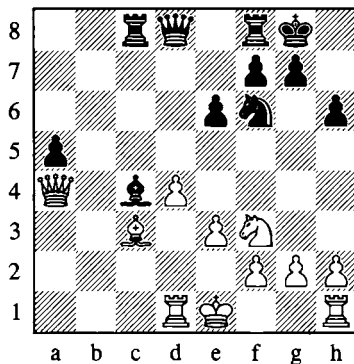


Anyway, in the line above, White could have reacted with:

22.d5!

Obtaining some counterplay with chances of surviving.

Had Karpov chosen 19.♞a4, I should have rejected the beauty of 20...♞f6 in favour of the simple, but more effective, 20...♙f6 which would allow me to keep a huge advantage at no risk.



21.♞xa5 (21.♙xa5 ♜d5 is even worse.)

21...♞xa5! Paradoxically, the queen exchange offers me a practically winning position, as White will be playing a rook down. 22.♙xa5 ♜a8 Followed soon by the rooks doubling along the second rank.

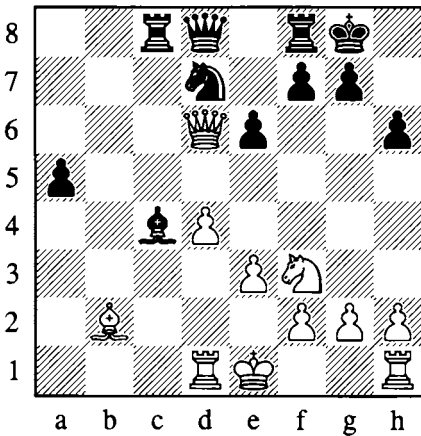
19...bxa5

I evaluated the position as being very hard to save for White, but Karpov used to be very stubborn in defence.

20.♞d6

The difference with respect to the previous variation is that after 20.♙c3 my knight would not be hanging, allowing 20...♞f6 with total comfort.

Karpov's last move was probably aimed to prevent my queen's departure, but White basically loses one tempo.

**20...b5!**

Not only defending the knight, but also clearing the c-file for my rook.

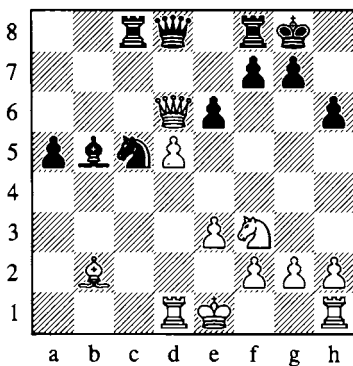
21.d5

Anatoly played this desperate move after 14 minutes. White tries to get active play in the centre and on the long diagonal.

21...c2

I felt happy with this move and spent only one minute on it. The only thing I checked was that 22.d4 was not working out well (see below).

The engines prefer: 21...d5!?



If 22.xd8 fxd8 23.d5 exd5 threatening ...f6 followed by ...d3+, but also a slow invasion on the light squares starting with ...b3.

Or if 22.dxe6, then 22...d3+ 23.xd3 xd3 wins the exchange.

I rejected 21...c5 because of 22.g3 “with some counterplay”. It seems that after 22...f6 White is simply helpless, but over the board the position would not be so easy to handle with Black. I believe that my decision was correct from a practical point of view, and I would probably play the same way now.

22.d2

22.d4 loses to 22...xb2 23.xb5 xb5 24.dxe6 fxe6 25.xd7 xd7 26.xd7 xb1+ 27.d1 xd1+ 28.xd1 xf2 with a completely winning rook ending.

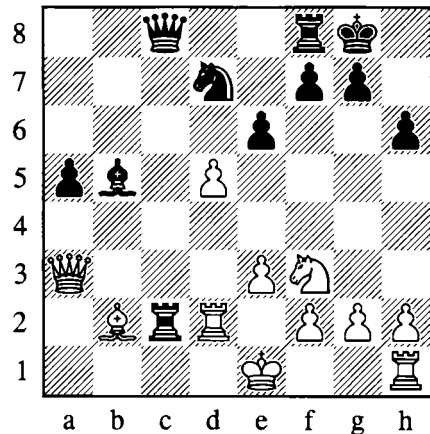
22...c8

I remember very well that I was sure the position should be winning, but I failed to find a forced win. This was somehow typical of my games against Karpov, as mentioned above.

I decided to simply strengthen my position without letting him sneak away, until a win would be in sight.

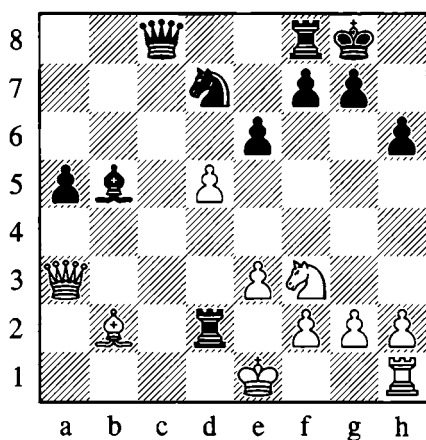
23.a3

I had calculated the following line: 23.dxe6 xb2 24.xb2 xc1+ 25.d1 xb2 26.exd7 d8 27.d2 a1+ 28.d1 a3 concluding that “I would win somehow”. This is correct; with his worries about his king, White cannot put up any resistance against my passed pawn.



23...♖xd2

I was aware of the danger of Karpov slipping out of my hands, and was as focused as I could be, but here I failed to find the shortest win: 23...♖c4! 24.♘d4 ♖xd2 25.♙xd2 ♜xd5 26.♜xa5 ♖b8 In view of the threats of ...e5 and ...♜xg2, White could resign without any regrets.

**24.♙xd2!?**

The best practical chance. Instead 24.♘d2 ♘c5 is curtains.

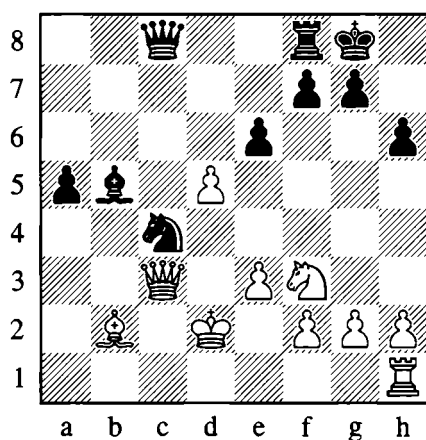
24...♘b6

After 11 minutes I found the strongest continuation of the attack.

24...♜c4 would have been less accurate in view of 25.♜c3 ♜xd5† 26.♜d4 with some chances to save the endgame. Under no circumstances would I have exchanged the queens at this stage.

25.♜c3

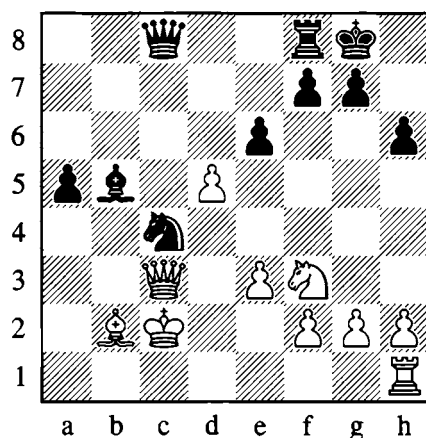
If 25.♜b3 I planned 25...♘c4† 26.♙e1 ♙a4. For instance: 27.♜c3 ♘xb2 28.♜xb2 ♖d8 A familiar picture: Black attacks with an extra rook.

25...♘c4†**26.♙c2**

It looks strange to step onto a light square, but Karpov had good reasons to choose this move.

If 26.♙e1 e5 27.♘xe5 ♘xe5 28.♜xe5 ♜g4 White would have to sacrifice a piece with ♜xg7† now or on the next move, with no chance to save the game in either case.

Karpov might have hoped for chances after 26.♙c1 but noticed at the last moment that 26...♘xb2 27.♜xc8? loses to the zwischenzug 27...♘d3†.

**26...e5**

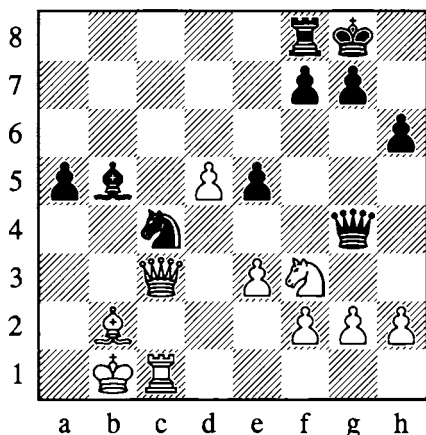
26...f6 was also possible, but I could not resist the temptation of opening the c8-h3 diagonal for my queen.

27.♔b1

White has finally managed to prepare the h1-rook's development, but his king has no reliable shelter on the queenside.

27...♖g4!

A strong move, creating threats on both wings. Apart from the obvious ...♖xg2, ...♖b8 will put the white king in a critical situation.

28.♞c1**28...♞b8!**

I correctly identified and executed the more dangerous threat. 28...♖xg2?! is less convincing as after 29.♖xe5 ♖e4+?! 30.♖c2 White could hope.

How many times do we hear players claiming: "I was completely winning!" This does not matter if you do not stay focused. Rather than getting angry at an opponent who does not resign in a "ridiculous" situation, you should do yourself a favour by being accurate in winning positions. You can always complain to your friends about your opponent's lack of courtesy after the scoresheets are signed...

29.♞c2

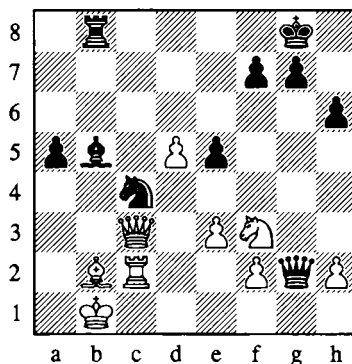
29.♔a1 would not save White either: 29...♔a6! 30.♞c2 ♖xb2 31.♞xb2 ♖a4+! A neat queen switch from one wing to the other.

32.♔b1 ♖d1+ 33.♔a2 ♞c8 34.♖xa5 ♔c4+ 35.♔a3 ♖a1+ mating soon.

29...f6

Neutralizing any attempt by White for activity. I was really choosing my moves carefully so that I would not give the slightest saving chance to my opponent.

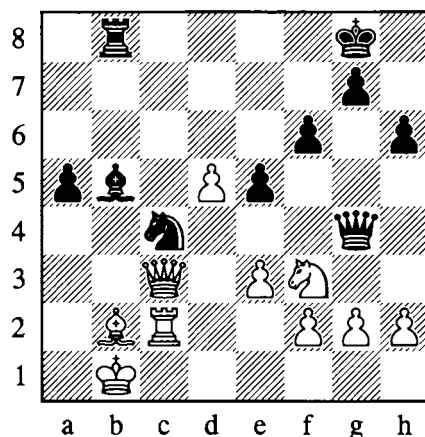
However, the greedy 29...♖xg2 was good enough by this stage.

**30.♖xe5 ♖h1+ 31.♔a2**

31.♞c1 leads to an interesting mating pattern: 31...♖e4+ 32.♔a1 ♖xe5 33.♖xe5 ♖a4+ 34.♔b1 ♔d3+ All White's pieces are on dark squares, but the king gets killed on the light squares.

31...♖xb2 32.♞xb2 ♖xd5+

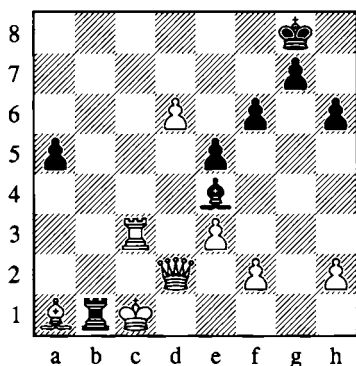
With an extra pawn and a continuing attack.



30.d6 ♖xg2 31.♘d2 ♖h1† 32.♙a2

Karpov had only three minutes left to reach move 40, but this was the least of his problems.

I quickly calculated the following line: 32.♞c1 ♘xd2† 33.♖xd2 ♖e4† 34.♙a1 ♖a4† 35.♙b1 ♙c6 36.♞c3 ♙e4† 37.♙c1 ♖a1† 38.♙xa1 ♞b1#



Sorry if it looks too concrete, but this is how my brain works!

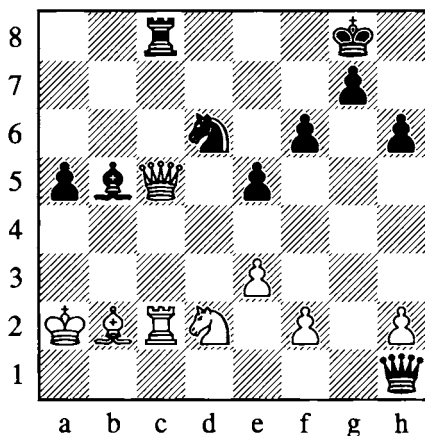
32...♘xd6

Black has two extra pawns and much more than that...

33.♖c5

I planned to meet 33.f3 with the regrouping 33...♙e8 followed by ...♙f7†.

33...♞c8



Facing decisive material losses, Karpov resigned. If 34.♖xd6 ♞xc2 35.♖b8† ♙h7 36.♖xb5 ♞xd2.

0-1

After breaking the psychological barrier against Kasparov, doing the same against Karpov gave me a lot of courage. I felt that something was definitely happening in my career.

This game gave me such a boost that Wijk aan Zee 2003 (by then arguably the strongest tournament of the year) yielded my best ever tournament result. I will speak more about the tournament in my comments to the game against Anand. For now I would just add that later during the tournament, when asked about my play, Anand answered: "She is one of us."

Finally, the whole year proved incredibly successful for me; was it a consequence of the boost given by this game, or just confirmation that I had indeed become stronger?

By coincidence, my next game against Karpov also took place in Holland. For a change, I had White this time, but the result was the same!

Judit Polgar – Anatoly Karpov

Hoogeveen 2003

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6

During the best years of his career, Karpov played the Petroff only occasionally, probably depending on the opponent's style, sporting aim or his own mood. His main weapon used to be 2...♘c6 and the main lines of the Ruy Lopez.

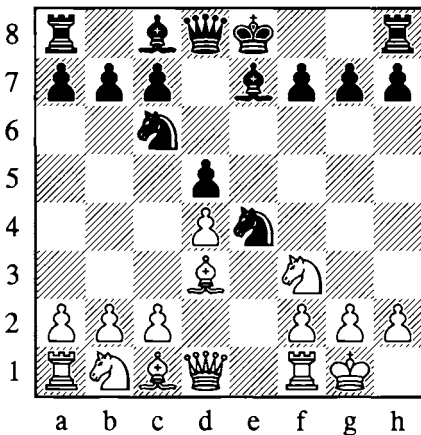
After 2000, he seemed to dedicate much less time to opening preparation, which probably made it difficult to stay up to date in the long Ruy Lopez lines. For a player with unique positional skills like Karpov, the Petroff Defence is a lot easier to handle from this point of view, so it is little wonder that for the later

years of his career it became his main opening.

One year before our game, Karpov had successfully used it in a four-game rapid match against Kasparov – his only match win against his historic rival!

One way or another, I was expecting the Petroff, but I also did some preparation against the Caro-Kann, another solid opening favoured by Karpov.

3.♟xe5 d6 4.♞f3 ♞xe4 5.d4 d5 6.♞d3 ♟e7
7.0-0 ♞c6



Black often starts with 6...♞c6 but I feel this is actually only a matter of taste.

8.c4

This is clearly the main move, but on other occasions I have also tried 8.♞e1, 8.♞bd2 and 8.♞c3.

There have been years when every second opponent played (or could have played) the Petroff. In such situations one gets tired of getting deeper and deeper into the analysis of the long theoretical lines, which have been studied by the entire chess community. Preparing surprise lines every now and then surely makes sense, if for nothing else than just to confuse the opponent and push him into time trouble.

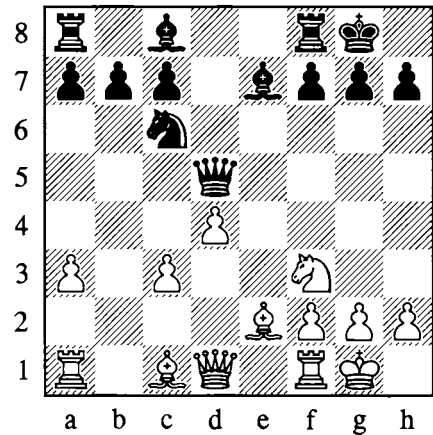
From a broader perspective, I say “wow”

to those who can play any main opening with either colour. Preparing against such an opponent always leaves some uncertainty in the air. I cannot think of a better example of such a universal player than Vassily Ivanchuk.

8...♞b4 9.♟e2 0-0 10.a3

The move order starting with 10.♞c3 permits Black more options. Apart from the main line with 10...♟f5, Black can also try 10...♟e6.

10...♞c6 11.cxd5 ♟xd5 12.♞c3 ♞xc3
13.bxc3



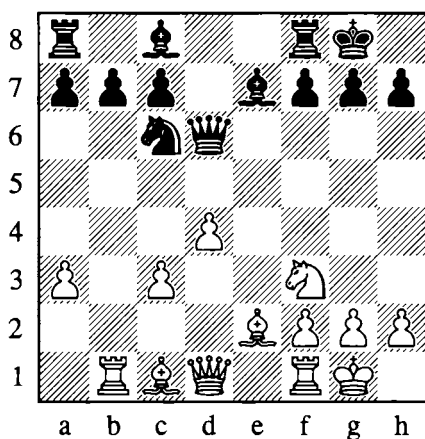
13...♟d6

A logical multipurpose move. Black prevents the natural ♟c1-f4 and gets the queen out of the way of the white pawns. This way c3-c4 would not arrive with gain of time, allowing Black to immediately react with ...♟g4 followed by ...♟f6, with increasing pressure. In the near future, Black hopes to block the enemy pawns with ...♟e6 and ...♞a5.

I find it unbelievable that nobody had played this move before; and even more so that nobody ever repeated it after this game!

13...♟f5 transposes to the main line, while 13...♞a5 was played in Polgar – Adams, Sofia 2005.

14.♖b1

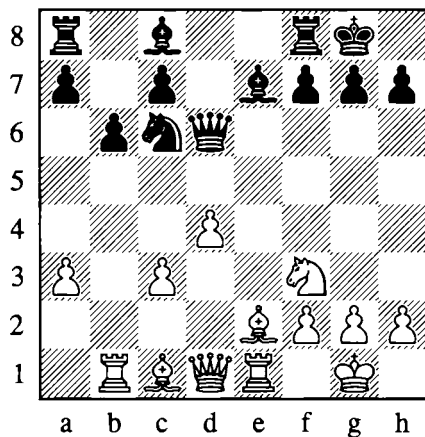


By gluing the c8-bishop to the defence of the b7-pawn, White gains an important tempo to further activate my rooks. One possible plan is to switch to a kingside attack with ♖b1-b5-h5, but the simple control over the fifth rank from b5 would also be quite annoying for Black.

14...b6

The most natural way of neutralizing the pressure along the b-file, but weakening the c6-square will give me additional tactical ideas in the near future.

15.♞e1!



An instructive moment. It is quite obvious that my plan involves ♕d3 and ♞e1, but which move order to choose?

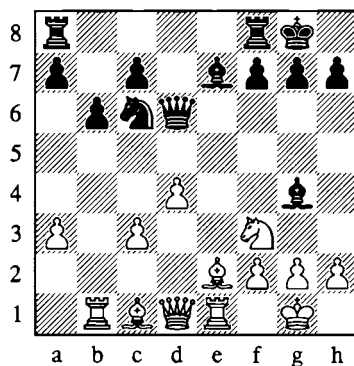
I find my move to be the most accurate, because I am prepared to meet 15...♗g4 with 16.h3 and if 16...♕xf3 then 17.♕xf3. My bishop would be more effective on the long diagonal than the queen in the similar line 15.♕d3 ♗g4, etc. Additionally, my bishop could also go to f1, if circumstances change.

True, it may all lead to a transposition, but sometimes games are decided by an accumulation of such small nuances.

15...♗e6

As I mentioned above, this is the most natural follow-up of Karpov's novelty 13...♞d6.

I also mentioned 15...♗g4 above, but actually it deserves a more detailed examination.



The point is that

16.h3

allows Black to go for the following complications:

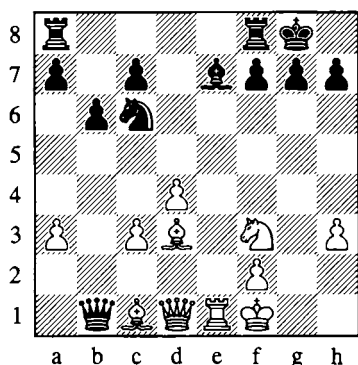
16...♕xh3! 17.gxh3 ♞g6† 18.♔f1!

It is important to keep the f2-pawn defended, as in some lines it may be hanging – see below.

18...♞xb1

I had seen this and was ready to play it, since all Black's pieces are either undeveloped or hanging, yielding me a strong initiative.

19.♕d3



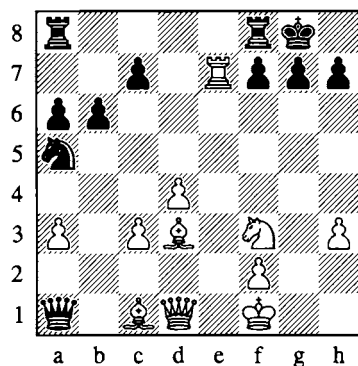
19...♖a1

With the king on h1 rather than on f1, Black could have played 19...♖a2 20.♖a4 ♘a5 21.♙xe7 ♗xf2 and White's position becomes shaky. The way it is he has nothing better than 20...♖d5 21.♙e4 ♖h5 when the quiet move 22.♙g2! keeps things under control before inevitably winning material.

20.♙b5

Since Black does not have ...♖d5 anymore, this is best.

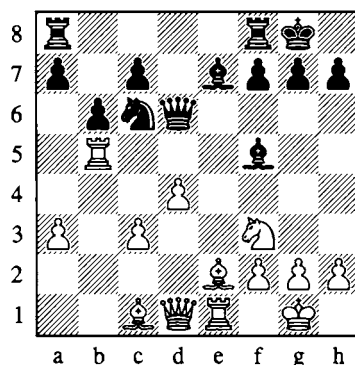
20...♘a5 21.♙xe7 a6 22.♙d3



Material is about even, but I would very much prefer to play this position with White, if given a choice. The main thing is that all the minor pieces are targeting the poorly defended enemy kingside.

Black could not take advantage of my delaying ♙e2-d3 either:

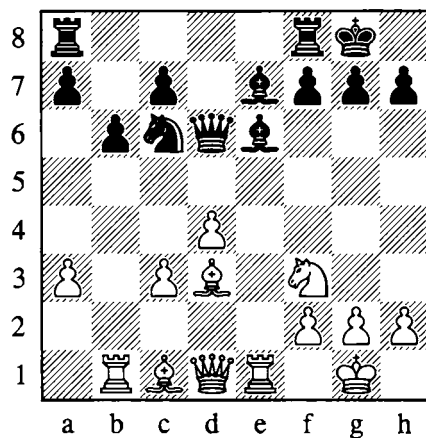
15...♙f5 16.♙b5



Black cannot control the position with 16...♙g6? due to a neat tactical operation: 17.♙xf5! ♖xf5 18.♙d3 ♖d7 19.♖c2 h6 20.♙b5 Retrieving the sacrificed material with interest.

Instead of 16...♙g6, Black would do better to play 16...♙g6. But once the bishop has defined its intentions, my bishop could take control of another important diagonal with: 17.♙c4! In all these lines we can feel the impact of provoking ...b7-b6.

16.♙d3



Now nothing was stopping me from activating my bishop.

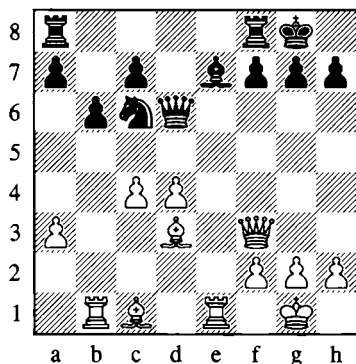
16...♙ae8

Karpov's decision to complete his development was correct, but it remains an

open question whether 16...♖fe8 (followed by ...♗ad8) or 16...♗ad8 would have been better.

One thing is clear though, with incomplete development, Black should not strive for concrete action yet:

16...♗d5? 17.c4 ♗xf3 18.♖xf3

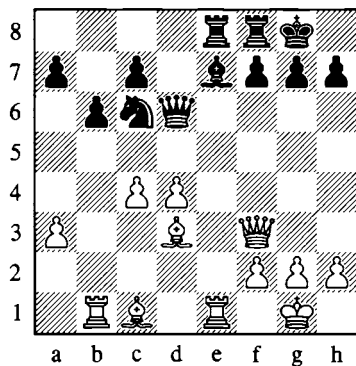


The d4-pawn is defended indirectly. If 18...♗xd4 19.♖e4, threatening mate on h7 and attacking the bishop at the same time. Or if 18...♖xd4, then 19.♗b2 ♖d6 20.♗e4 wins material.

This means that White's centre would ensure a strong initiative, for instance:

18...♗ae8

18...g6 neutralizes one of the bishops but opens new prospects for the other after 19.♗b2.



19.c5!

The power of the hanging pawns is fully

revealed when they both advance during the same forcing operation. The merits of the last move will be revealed in the next comment.

19...bxc5 20.♗f4 ♖f6

The point is that 20...♖xd4 loses material to 21.♗b5, taking advantage of previously having cleared the f1-a6 diagonal.

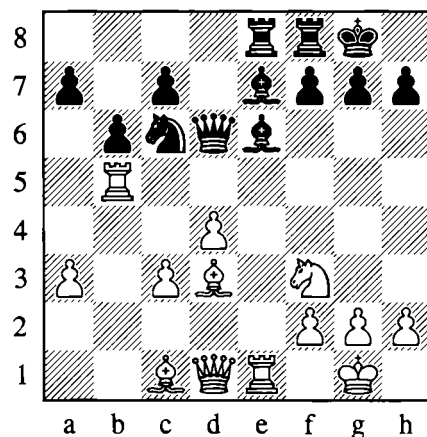
21.d5 ♗d4 22.♖e4 g6 23.♗h6

White wins an exchange since 23...♗d6? allows the decisive 24.♖xe8!

17.♗b5

I had been looking forward to executing this rook lift ever since I had played 14.♗b1. On the way, I also spotted some tactical beauties and I was eagerly hoping that Karpov would play 17...a6.

17.♗d2!? would have been worth considering.



17...♗a5?

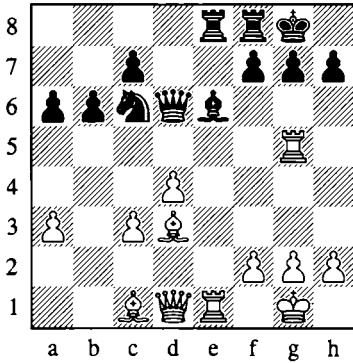
Karpov played this weak move after 20 minutes. Taking the knight away from the centre allows me an effective manoeuvre to strengthen my position, so I did not regret too much that he had not fallen into my prepared variation after:

17...a6

Ironically, I later found out that my initial optimism was exaggerated:

18.♗g5 ♗xg5!

My thematic line continued: 18...axb5?
 19.♞xe6 fxe6 20.♞xh7+ ♔h8 21.♞h5 with
 mate to follow soon: 21...♞xg5 22.♞xg5 ♞f6
 23.♞xf6 gxf6 24.♞g6+ ♔g7 25.♞h7+ ♔f8
 26.♞f7#
 19.♞xg5



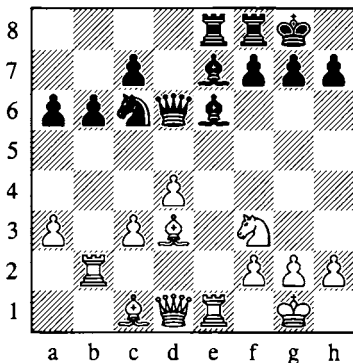
I stopped here thinking that the bishop pair and the super active rook would ensure me a huge advantage, but I overlooked a small tactical nuance:

19...♞b3!

It is worth mentioning that this trick would not have worked if Black had played the other rook on e8, due to 20.♞xe8 with check! 20.♞d2 b5

With balanced play.

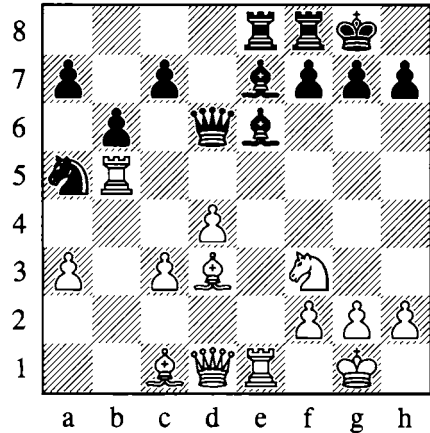
The solid 18.♞b2!?, leaving the a6-pawn under attack and planning ♞be2, would be better.



18...♞d5 19.♞be2 ♞xf3 20.gxf3 The unchallenged control of the light squares and

the rooks' hyper-activity are more important than the kingside weakness.

Black's best seems to have been 17...♞f6!? taking the e5-square under control before playing the thematic ...♞a5.



18.♞be5!

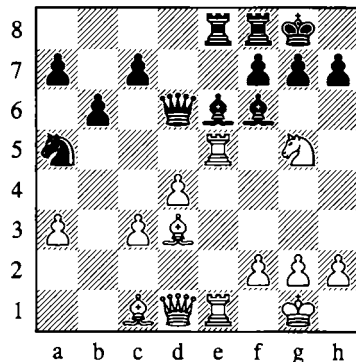
Immediately taking the offered square.

18...♞c6

Karpov played this without too much hesitation – just three minutes. The strength to admit one's mistake is an important quality, but it does not save Black from problems here.

The other way of attacking the rook would also offer White a strong attack:

18...♞f6 19.♞g5



19...♙xg5

19...♙xe5 20.dxe5 followed by ♙xh7† and ♖h5 leads to mate.

20.♙xg5

Black cannot put up adequate resistance against the combined pressure of all White's pieces.

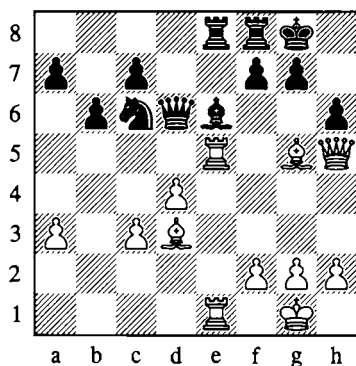
20...♘c6

If 20...f6? 21.♖h5 with deadly threats.

21.♖h5 h6

21...g6 would allow a thematic combination:

22.♙f6! (Threatening both 23.♖h6 and 23.♖xh7† ♙xh7 24.♖h5† ♙g8 25.♖h8 mate.) 22...gxh5 23.♖g5 mate.



22.♙xh6!

Given the numerical superiority of the attack, White should not bother about the attacked pieces, but rather proceed with demolishing the black barricades.

22...♙xe5

If 22...gxh6? the simplest is 23.♖g5† hxg5 24.♖h7 mate.

23.♙xg7

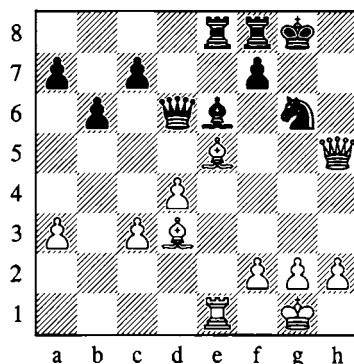
Continuing the cascade of sacrifices and leaving the black king naked.

23...♘g6

A desperate defence.

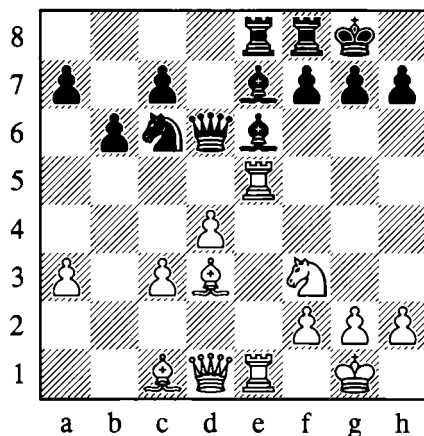
If 23...♙xg7 24.♖h7† ♙f6 25.dxe5† ♖xe5 the intermediate 26.♖h6† followed by ♖xe5 places the dot over the i.

24.♙e5



Black has no satisfactory defence against ♙xg6.

After Karpov's move I was extremely happy, as I was aware that things had gone terribly wrong for Black. For 13 minutes I hesitated between several tempting continuations but failed to choose the strongest one.



19.♖5e2

I preferred this retreat over 19.♖5e3 because I wanted to keep the possibility of ♘f3-g5.

19.♖xe6!

I intuitively felt this would be killing, but somehow I could not decide on such radical means. I believe that a top player, let's say Anand, would certainly choose this way of continuing the attack, without even calculating much. Here is a possible continuation:

19...fxe6 20.♖c2 h6 21.♗b5

Threatening a decisive regrouping with ♖e4 and ♗d3, among others.

21...a6

What else? If 21...♗f5? then 22.♗c4!.

22.♗xa6

The simplest. White has a pawn for the exchange and most of Black's light squares are irremediably weak. The only open question is how long Black will be able to struggle on.

19...♗d7

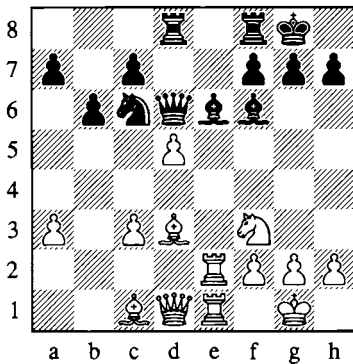
It was obvious that Karpov did not want to allow me any second chances of choosing the exchange sacrifice. Played after just six minutes, the modest bishop retreat is the best practical defence.

19...♗f6?!

This would lose material:

20.d5 ♖d8

If 20...♖xd5 21.♗xh7+! followed by ♖xd5, the pin along the e-file is decisive.



21.♗xh7+!

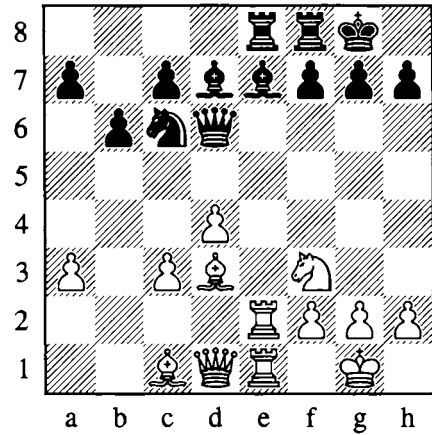
An effective way of getting out of the pin along the d-file.

21...♗xh7 22.♖c2+ ♔g8 23.dxe6

Once again, White's pieces are perfectly coordinated for the attack.

The pin created by 19...♗g4 is not disturbing. But the pins along the e-file and the b5-e8 diagonal after 20.♗b5 surely are!

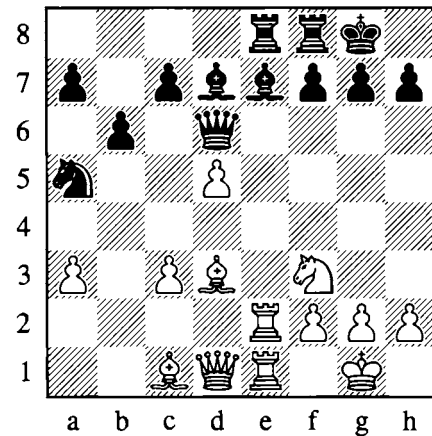
Or if 19...♗d8, getting out of the dangerous pin, I would gain time for my attack with: 20.♗g5! ♗xg5 21.♗xg5 ♖d7 22.♖c2+



20.d5

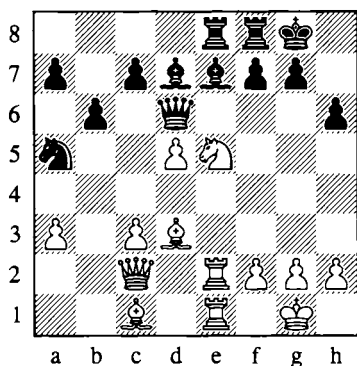
After the rook retreat on the previous move, I took the first opportunity to cross the middle of the board again with my soldiers.

20...♗a5



21.♗e5

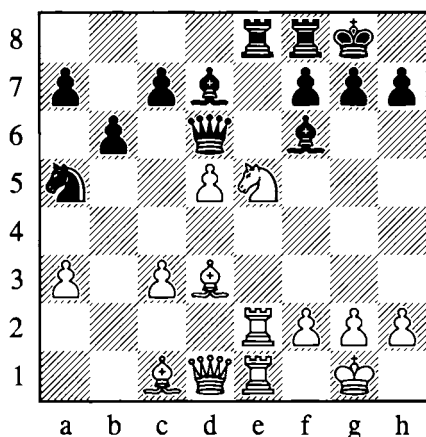
This continues the same space-gaining policy, but 21.♖c2! would have been unexpectedly strong. If 21...h6 the knight jump is even stronger: 22.♗e5 The immediate threat is ♗f4 with material gains, and the potential pin along the e-file is very dangerous.



For instance, if 22...♙f6 23.♙h7+ ♔h8 24.♙xf7+ ♚xf7 25.♚xe8+ White wins a pawn and takes the bishop pair, with a relatively simple win.

Black should probably sacrifice the h7-pawn with 21...♙f6, but this would hardly offer him an easy life.

21...♙f6



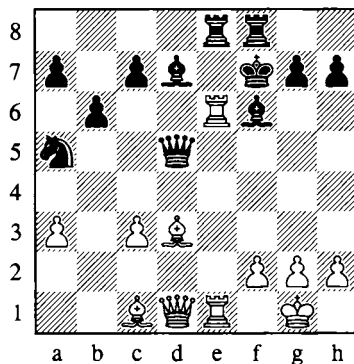
Black's pieces finally occupy the right places, but only with considerable loss of time, something one can rarely afford in the opening.

22.♙f4!

I decided to increase my pressure systematically, since the position did not yet seem ripe for concrete action.

22.♙xd7 ♚xd7 23.♙f5 would be adequately answered with 23...♚d8. White has more space and the bishop pair, but Black retains a solid position.

22.♙xf7? does not work at all: 22...♙xf7 23.♚e6 ♚xd5!



Black can bravely take the pawn, since "winning the queen" would cost White too much material.

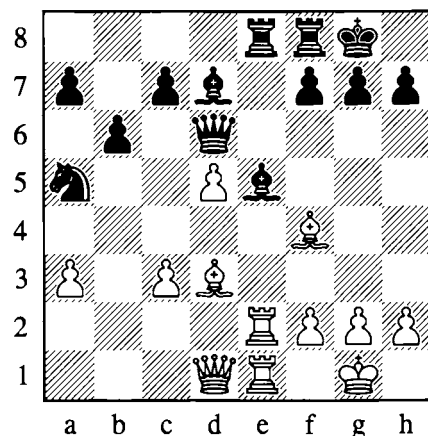
24.♙g6+

Or if 24.♚xe8 ♚xe8 25.♚xe8 ♙xe8 26.♙g6+ ♔e6! forcing simplifications to an ending where Black has overwhelming activity.

24...hxg6 25.♚xd5 ♙xe6

With a decisive material advantage.

22...♙xe5



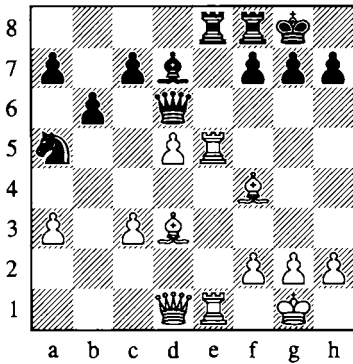
Black could no longer tolerate the active knight.

23. ♖xe5!

I decided on this move by intuition, spending only two minutes on it. I clearly wanted to go after Karpov's king, not settle for just a better ending.

23. ♖xe5

This was not a bad move either:



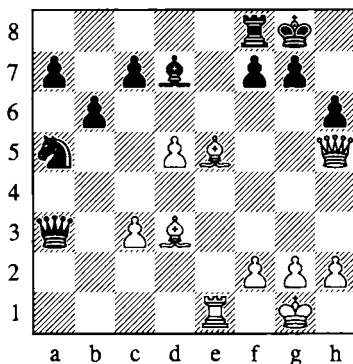
23... ♖xe5?

This would lead to an accelerated form of the attack, compared to the game, since after:

24. ♖xe5 ♖xa3

I would have the d1-h5 diagonal free for my queen:

25. ♖h5 h6

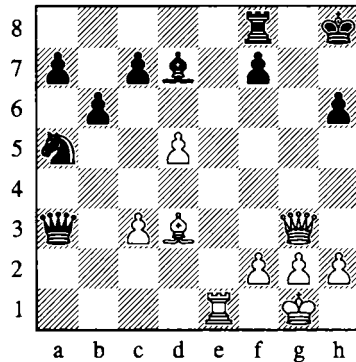


26. ♖xg7!

A thematic sacrifice, but its tactical justification is not so obvious:

26... ♖xg7 27. ♖e5† ♖g8 28. ♖g3† ♖h8

It may seem that White has nothing better than a perpetual check, since Black has at his disposal the defensive move ... ♖d6. But if that is the problem, then let's remove the c7-pawn with gain of time!



29. ♖xc7!!

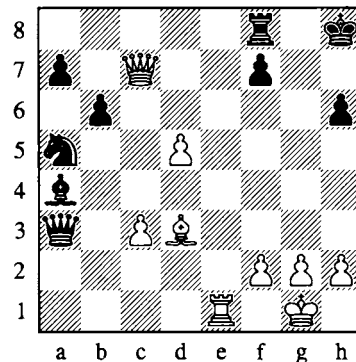
Black loses his stability now and one can feel that White should be winning, but it is interesting that against each reasonable answer by Black there is a different concrete antidote!

29... ♖a4

This has the drawback of leaving the f5-square undefended, but keeps the possibility of a ... ♖e8 defence if White plays in a similar way as against 29... ♖c8.

If 29... ♖a4, aiming to keep both the f5- and e8-squares under control, White wins with 30. ♖e5† ♖g8 31. ♖e3 followed by ♖g3†.

Or if 29... ♖c8 30. ♖e5† ♖g8 31. ♖f6! followed by ♖xh6 and Black does not have the defence ... ♖e8.



30. ♖f4

30. ♖e5† ♕g8 31. ♖e3 is less convincing now because of: 31... ♖c1† 32. ♕f1 ♕c2! The bishop returns into play unexpectedly, saving Black's day.

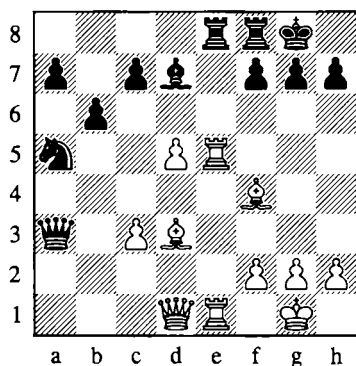
30... ♕g7 31. ♖g4† ♕h8 32. ♖f5

With mate in a few moves:

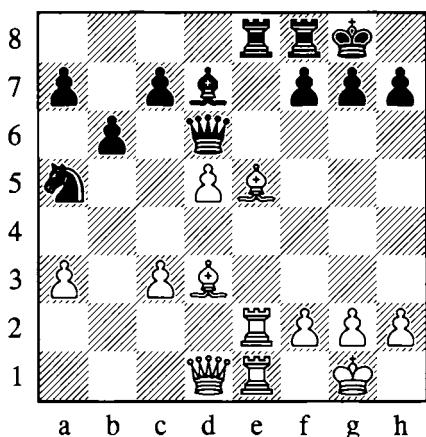
32... ♕g7 33. ♖h7† ♕f6 34. ♖xh6#

All these lines are not easy to calculate in advance, but one should trust 26. ♕xg7 by intuition and foresee 29. ♖xc7.

However, Black would do better with: 23... ♖xa3!



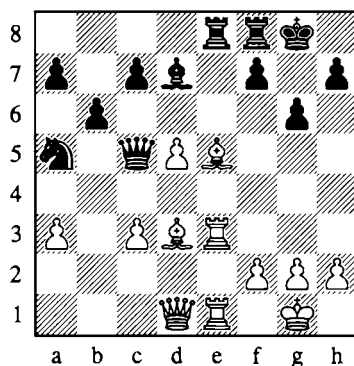
24. ♖xe8 ♖xe8 25. ♖xe8† ♕xe8 26. ♖e1 ♕d7 27. ♕xc7 The ending is promising for White, but Black is far from being lost.



23... ♖xa3?!

After playing this brave (too brave) move, Karpov had only eight minutes left to reach move 40.

He should have kept his queen closer to the centre with: 23... ♖c5! After 24. ♖e3 White has the initiative, but Black can retain a viable position with the paradoxical: 24...g6!



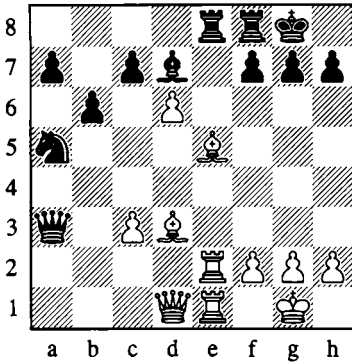
The weakening of the long diagonal is not so relevant yet, since I could not easily set up a queen and bishop battery. I would probably have had to settle for positional pressure with 25. ♕f1! defending the d5-pawn and looking for opportunities later to continue my attack.

24. ♖e3

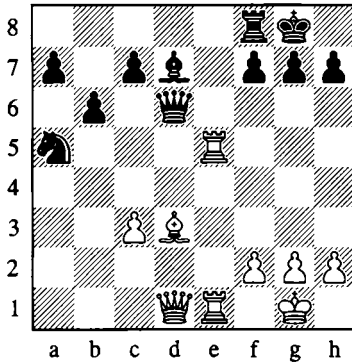
After nine minutes of hesitation I could not resist creating the threat of a thematic combination. I realized that to an alert player my intentions would be rather transparent, but I was very much focused on delivering mate.

I was not even thinking of 24. ♕xc7 ♖xe2 25. ♖xe2 ♖c5 with a defensible position for Black.

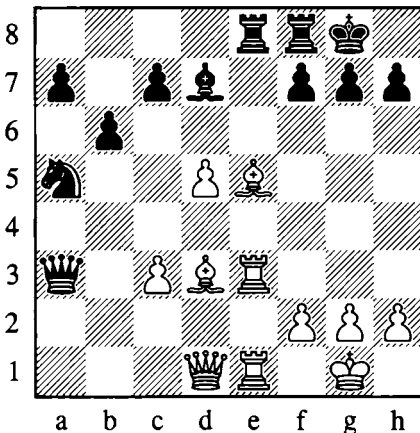
The objectively stronger 24.d6! crossed my mind only briefly.



With a little bit of attention I would have noticed that Black would be in real trouble. For instance: 24...♖xe5 (24...cxd6 25.♙xd6 wins the exchange as the bishop is taboo due to ♙xh7+.) 25.♖xe5 ♖xd6



Black seems to be well off materially, but 26.♙d5! followed by ♖xd7 once again exploits the theme of the discovered attack ♙xh7+.



24...♖c5??

I could not believe my eyes when Karpov played this after five minutes of thought! Why was I allowed to deliver a type of combination I had been familiar with ever since I was a kid?

Instead of his careless move, Karpov should have blocked one of my bishops, although making a choice would not be simple.

24...f6?

This looks suspicious from the start, because it weakens the a2-g8 and b1-h7 diagonals.

The tactical refutation is highly instructive, though:

25.c4!

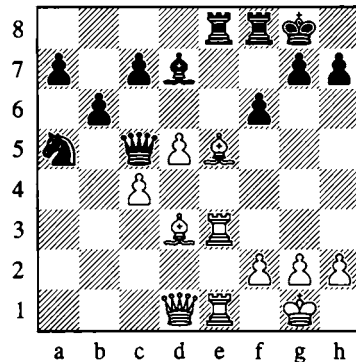
The start of a series of moves based on the discovered attack ♙xh7+.

Launching my queen into the attack would be premature: 25.♖h5 h6 26.♖g6 ♖xe5 Black has nothing to worry about, mainly because the queen defends the f8-rook.

25...♖c5

If 25...♖a2 then winning is 26.♖h5 h6 27.♖g6 ♖xe5 28.♖h7+ ♖f7 29.♙g6+ ♖e7 30.♖xg7+ followed by ♖xf8+.

Or 25...♖b4 26.♙c3 is similar to the main line.



26.♙d4!

White removes the bishop from the attacked square with gain of time.

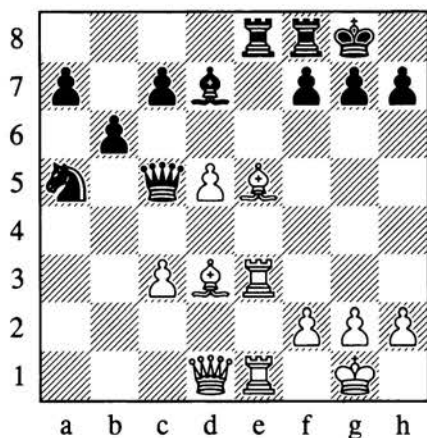
26...♖d6

And now finally the time has come to start the decisive attack with:

27. ♖h5!

24...f5 does not look right either. Black weakens the dark squares, yielding my dark-squared bishop the stability it needs. I could play something simple like 25.c4 with complete domination.

The most solid defence would have been the familiar 24...g6, when I should probably have continued my attack in a somewhat slower key with 25.h4.



25. ♖xh7!

Having trained on tactics from a very young

age, this sacrifice came as naturally as a baby's smile, as Fischer would have said.

25... ♖xh7 26. ♖h5†

By now Karpov must have recognized the pattern of 26... ♖g8 27. ♖xg7, which has been known ever since Lasker – Bauer, Amsterdam 1889, and Nimzowitsch – Tarrasch, St Petersburg 1914. Actually my combination is even simpler to calculate than the classic ones, which makes it clear that Karpov's blunder was caused by a moment of chess blindness.

If 27... ♖xg7 then 28. ♖g3† ♖f6 29. ♖g5 mate. The main defence against the double bishop sacrifice is supposed to be 27...f6, but here it is ineffective due to 28. ♖xf6 ♖xf6 29. ♖g3†. White's dynamic superiority is simply overwhelming.

1–0

A first-round win in such a short tournament (just six rounds!) almost guarantees a good result. On my way to first place, I only faced one critical moment – my 4th-round save with Black against Karpov, which was examined in Volume II.

For my game against Aronian from the same event, see page 210 in this volume.

The final classification of this traditional four-player double round robin was Polgar 4, Sokolov 3, Aronian 3, Karpov 2.

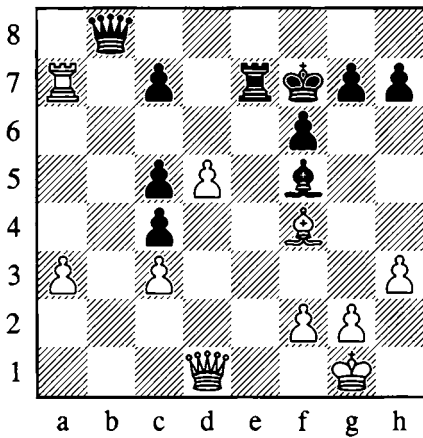


Less than a week after the Hoogeveen tournament, I met Karpov again, in a rapid game at Cap D'Agde. This was becoming a traditional rapid tournament and that year FIDE assimilated it as the Rapid World Championship!

Karpov once again played the Petroff and we followed the same line as in Hoogeveen, but later the game took a completely different course.

Judit Polgar – Anatoly Karpov

Cap D'Agde (rapid) 2003



White is very active and the black king is somewhat exposed. Concretely, this does not seem easy to exploit. The black bishop is ready to parry the check on h5 and if my rook retreats, Black could become active with 29...♖b3.

By coincidence, the only move that allows me to keep the advantage is similar to my missed opportunity (before Karpov's blunder) in the previous game!

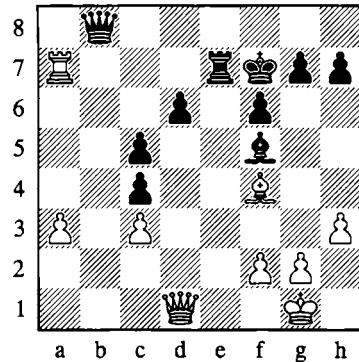
29.d6!

The same pawn break, also supported by the f4-bishop, but with completely different tactical ideas. The concrete variations are far more complex and difficult to calculate than

in the previous case, but even though this was only a rapid game, I managed to live up to the task.

29...♜xa7

The alternative was 29...cxd6:



30.♞d5†!

This is the correct sequence of checks.

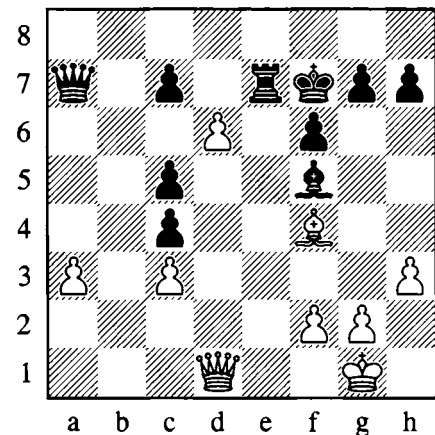
If 30.♞h5† ♔f8 31.♞xe7 Black is in time to defend his bishop with 31...♞b1† followed by ...♔e7.

30...♞e6 31.♞h5†

Now that the bishop has been distracted to the left, the queen hits from the other side.

31...♔f8 32.♞a6±

Black cannot parry ♞xd6 and ♞xh7 at the same time.



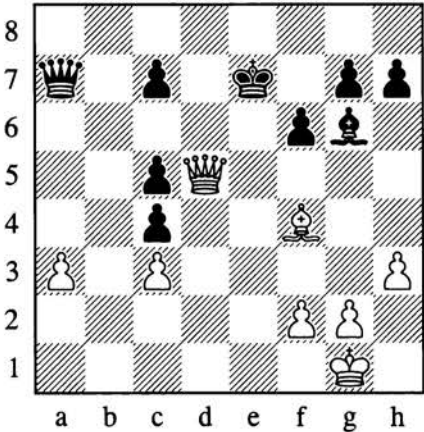
30.♞h5†!

This is an echo of the line above; the queen delivers the checks in the reversed move order.

30...♙g6 31.♚d5†! ♔f8

Avoiding the following nice variation with pawn under-promotion. 31...♞e6 32.dxc7 ♙e4 33.♚d7† ♞e7 34.♚xe7†! ♔xe7 35.c8=♙† Forking the royal couple.

32.dxe7† ♔xe7

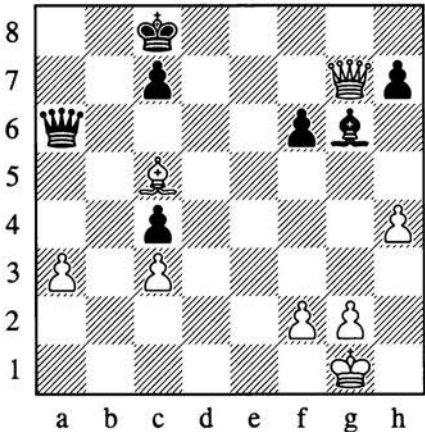


33.♙e3!

A very effective retreat, maintaining the rhythm of the attack by taking advantage of

the unfortunate placement of the black king and queen. This is another echo-line, since now it is the bishop which threatens to fork Their Majesties!

33...♚a6 34.♙xc5† ♔e8 35.♚g8† ♔d7 36.♚xg7† ♔c8 37.h4



As a result of the forcing manoeuvre, I obtained a material and positional advantage. The rest of the game is not so relevant, but I managed to win in the end.

...1-0



Chapter 3

Korchnoi



Playing blitz with Korchnoi in Zurich

As time has passed, my respect for Korchnoi has constantly grown. His passion for chess does not seem to have diminished with age. As I am writing these lines he is confined to a wheelchair, but this does not stop him from looking for new opportunities to play in tournaments.

I have to admit that his wife Petra amazes me to no lesser extent. For decades, Petra has been living in admiration of Korchnoi and dedicated all her efforts to his success. Her constant help consists of a wide range of activities: accompanying him to tournaments and sitting close to him throughout the games, checking the pairings for him, bringing him coffee at the same time each game, and last but not least, learning how to use chess programs so that Korchnoi can focus on the chessboard and avoid getting his eyes tired by the screen and his mind perverted by the engines.

The following story tells it all about Petra's dedication to her husband. During a tournament Petra had suffered a physical injury which she hid from Korchnoi, but spoke about to the organizer while the games were underway. The organizer, a good friend of mine, offered to take her to a doctor to check if everything was okay, but she replied: "If I go, I will not be able to give Viktor Lvovich his cup of coffee at the right time. I do not want him to worry during the game about why I am not there."

Viktor Korchnoi – Judit Polgar

Budapest 2003

This was the first time in 40 years that such a strong tournament was organized in Hungary. There was extensive daily press coverage and, to make things even more special, the Prime

Minister himself opened the tournament.

Readers of the second volume may remember that in 1998 I had played a rapid match here against Karpov, but if we are looking for the last classical game, we have to go back to my 1993 match with Spassky.

But if we are speaking about tournaments rather than matches, we must go back to the culmination of the first volume: the 1991 Hungarian Championship!

The 2003 tournament was a major event in Hungary – a country which despite its rich chess tradition had not hosted such a high-level tournament for a long time.

Apart from being very strong, the field included *fighting* players, making the tournament interesting to follow. The foreign players Gelfand, Short, Korchnoi, Movsesian and Lutz, were joined by the top Hungarian players: Leko, Almasi, Berkes, Acs and myself.

For me, there could hardly be a more interesting start than a first-round game against the ever-young Korchnoi.

1. ♖f3

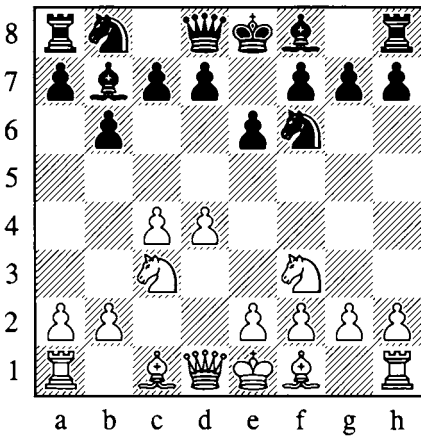
For Korchnoi, a player with vast experience and an ample repertoire, it must have been relatively easy to choose the course of events in the early phase of the game, especially since my own repertoire was rather limited and thus a bit inflexible.

The first move casts some shadows over White's real intentions. Depending on my reaction, he could opt for different types of position.

1... ♖f6 2. c4 b6 3. ♖c3

With this move order I had to develop my bishop at once in order to prevent e2-e4. Korchnoi might have refrained from transposing to the main lines with 3. d4 e6 4. ♖c3 ♖b4.

3... ♖b7 4. d4 e6



Finally the game enters the main tracks, but Korchnoi's next move is not the most fashionable.

5.♙g5

In principle, Korchnoi's choice did not surprise me too much. I expected that he would play something other than his main systems. Against the Queen's Indian, he usually plays the fianchetto, but most frequently he goes for the Rubinstein Nimzo-Indian.

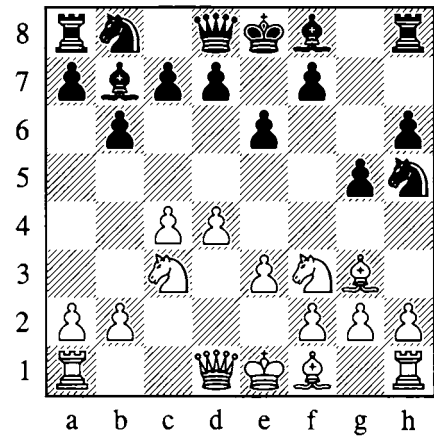
A friend of mine told me that some time ago he happened to hear an interesting evaluation by Korchnoi on the 5.a3 system. It is a good move, Viktor said, but I cannot play it since it bears the name of my biggest enemy, Petrosian!

The story may be true, since Korchnoi never played the a2-a3 system in the 20th century. However, the passing years seem to have added some flexibility to Korchnoi's principles, as after 2000 he used this line in a dozen games.

5...h6 6.♙h4 g5 7.♙g3 ♘h5

I had prepared this line some years ago, but never played it in an official game. This made me confident that Viktor could not know what to expect from me in the opening.

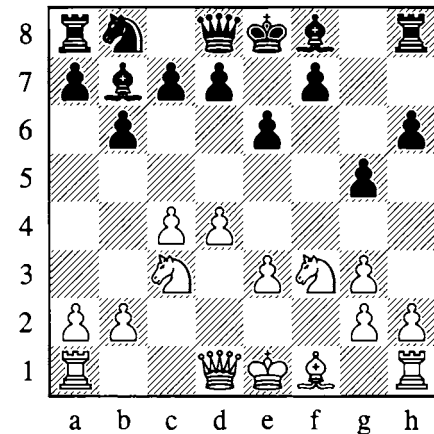
8.e3



8...♘g3 9.fxg3

A rare and strategically risky continuation. White's obvious idea is to castle short and exert pressure along the f-file. And yet, I believe that the drawbacks of this continuation are more relevant in the long run. In the absence of the queen's bishop, the dark squares in White's camp are now very weak. With the e3-pawn vulnerable, his whole centre is a bit shaky.

The main move 9.hxg3 looks more logical to me. It respects the principle of capturing towards the centre, does not create any weaknesses and opens the h-file for the king's rook.



From a structural point of view, my position looks absolutely great. If I get to play ...g4, ...h5, ...f5, ...♙h6 and ...♙g5, White's position

would become very suspicious. However, this is easier said than done, since I am slightly underdeveloped.

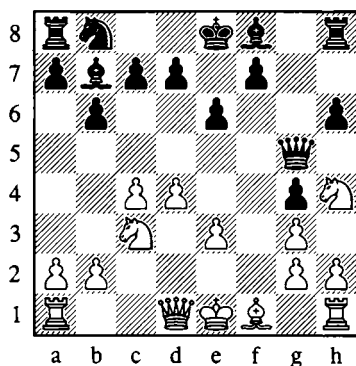
We can already draw up a draft approach for both sides. Black needs to finish the opening safely and then become ambitious strategically, while for White it is essential to maintain the initiative.

9...♘g7?!

This natural move actually does not suit the general plan and might have caused some later problems.

The bishop belongs on the h6-c1 diagonal, but could still be useful on its initial position, too. I should have played the energetic:

9...g4! 10.♖h4 ♔g5



We can see why it was so important to play ...g5-g4 as soon as possible. If White had played ♘f1-d3 already, he could defend the e3-pawn very conveniently with ♔e2.

11.♔d2

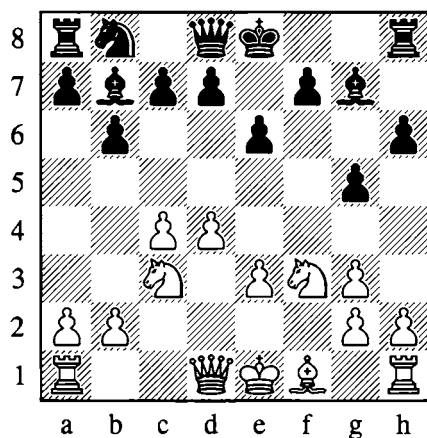
This more or less forced move has more than one drawback.

11...♖c6 12.♘d3

If 12.♖e4? ♘b4! 13.♖xg5? hxg5 and Black wins a piece.

12...0-0-0

Black plans ...h5 and ...♘h6, while White's generally desirable 13.0-0 allows 13...♖xd4 eliminating an essential pawn and weakening the dark squares even more.



10.♘d3 ♖c6

So far, Korchnoi had played relatively quickly, spending only five minutes and giving the impression that he had prepared properly for the game, or at least that he knew how to handle the position. I was considerably slower, having used 22 minutes already.

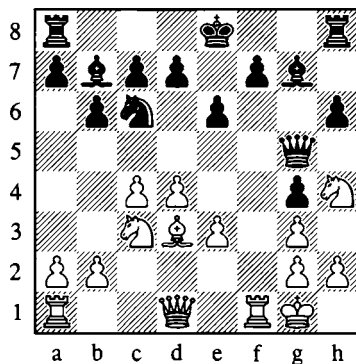
11.0-0

Korchnoi spent 12 minutes on this natural move. I believe he was trying to get *into* the position and acquire the needed perception of its slight nuances, rather than looking for alternatives to the game move.

11...♔e7

This was still part of my preparation. I remembered the following rapid game in which Black's premature activity caused him major problems:

11...g4 12.♖h4 ♔g5



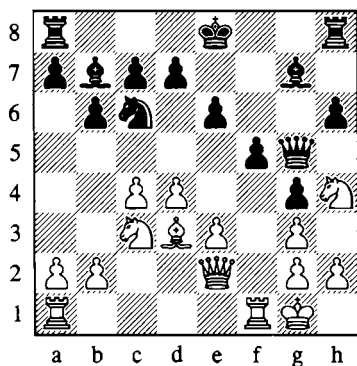
This attack against the Achilles' Heel comes too late, as White can defend very comfortably:

13. ♖e2

Under the given circumstances, ♘c3-e4 is a strong threat, more or less forcing the next move.

13...f5

If Black could castle long and play ...♙h8, his position would be just great, but time is an important factor in chess.



14. ♙xf5! exf5 15. ♙xf5

Seirawan – Polugaevsky, Roquebrune (rapid) 1992, soon ended in a draw, but I had analyzed it and come to the conclusion that White could have obtained a fantastic position with accurate play.

Quite obviously, I did not intend to give such an enterprising player as Korchnoi the opportunity to sacrifice on f5.

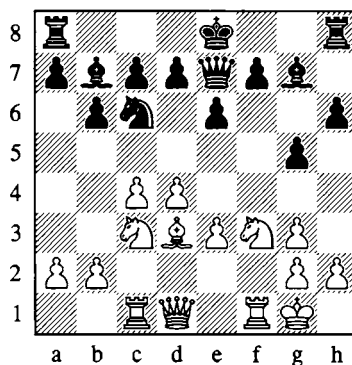
12.a3?!

Viktor played this relatively quickly, but I believe it does not correspond to the spirit of the position. True, White prepares a massive attack with b2-b4 and avoids ...♘b4 (or ...♙b4 as an answer to ♙a4), but these are rather slow plans.

The impulsive 12.d5?! would create irreparable weaknesses on the dark squares without really adding to White's initiative.

I believe that White should have kept developing with:

12. ♙c1!



Preparing to set up pressure along the c-file with c4-c5.

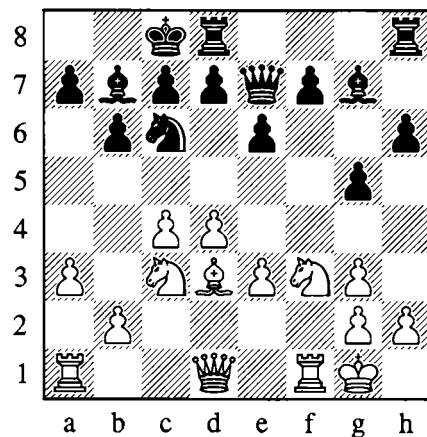
12...g4!?

It makes sense to delay castling, since this would put the king right in the firing line, for instance 12...0-0-0 13.c5 bxc5?! 14.♘a4 cxd4 15.♘c5 with a dangerous attack.

13.♘h4 h5 14.c5 ♙h6

With sharp play. Eventually, I would have to castle long anyway, but I would only do so after distracting White's pieces a little to the defence of the dark squares.

12...0-0-0



Since the previous move practically offered me a tempo, I decided to use it for the most flexible move, leaving for later the decision about how to carry out my kingside counterattack.

13.♞c1

Korchnoi played this after a long think – 15 minutes.

He might have initially intended:

13.b4?

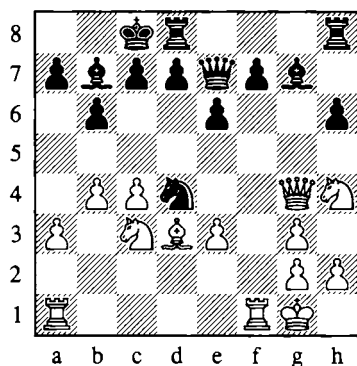
If so, he surely saw that Black has the tactical blow:

13...g4 14.♘h4 ♘xd4

Taking advantage of the hanging position of the c3-knight, but he might have relied on:

15.♞xg4!?

This seems to keep things under control.



However, Black has the unexpected:

15...♙e5!!

Securing the bishop and the knight at the same time, based on:

16.exd4 h5! 17.♞e2 ♙xd4† 18.♙h1 ♙xc3

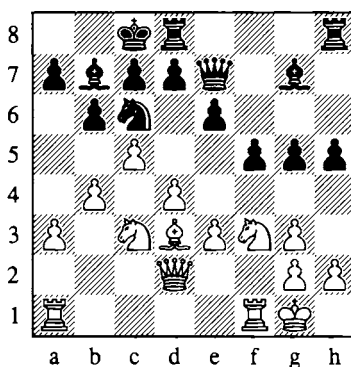
With an extra pawn and a great position.

The other natural developing move, 13.♞d2, would fail to put any pressure on my queenside, allowing me to carry out my kingside plan in its most flexible form:

13...f5

This is an important part of the plan, since 13...h5 14.b4 h4 could be met with 15.g4.

14.b4 h5 15.c5



15...h4!

This is the maximalist form of Black's attack. Before playing ...g5-g4 it is important to force White to occupy the h4-square.

As always, the hurried 15...g4 would allow the stabilizing 16.♘h4.

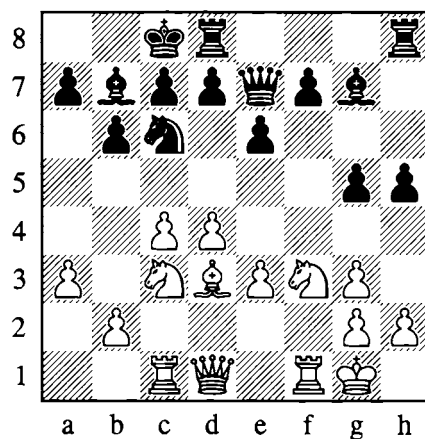
16.gxh4

Since there is no pressure on the c-file, 16.d5 is adequately met with 16...♘e5.

16...g4

With a crushing attack.

13...h5



14.c5!?

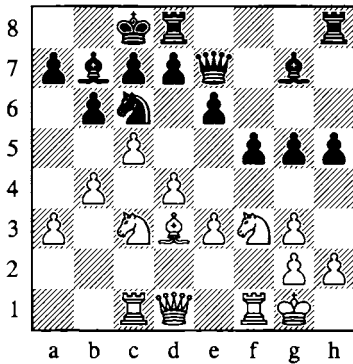
For the second time in this game, Korchnoi takes an important decision after just a short think (five minutes this time). His move is

inconsistent with the earlier a2-a3 and has a tactical flaw.

I remember that at this moment we both were very happy with our position; irrespective of its objective evaluation, a uncompromising fight was very much on!

Once he had spent a tempo on preparing the massive pawn attack, now was the time to start it:

14.b4! f5 15.c5



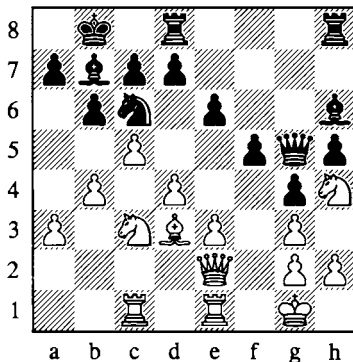
15...g4!?

I would have had to play this one move earlier than I would have liked to!

15...h4 16.d5! would lead to a huge mess, since the antidote from the similar line with ♖d1-d2 instead of ♖c1 would not work here:

16...♗e5? 17.d6! With a decisive attack due to the threats along the c-file.

16.♗h4 ♖g5 17.♖e2 ♗h6 18.♖fe1 ♗b8



The position has stabilized but White's attack looks more realistic. A possible continuation is:

19.♗a6 ♗xa6 20.♖xa6 ♖xe3†

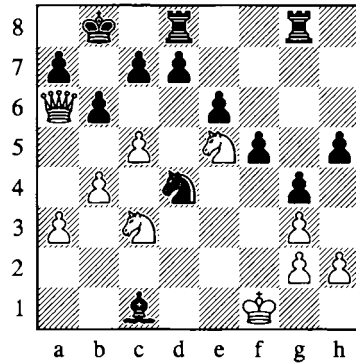
This wins material but fails to reduce the potential of the white attack.

21.♖xe3 ♗xe3† 22.♗f1 ♗xc1 23.♗g6 ♖hg8

Or if 23...♗xd4 24.♗xh8 ♖xh8 25.♖d3 e5 26.♗e2 ♗xe2 27.♗xe2 and too many black pawns are hanging.

24.♗e5 ♗xd4

If 24...♗xe5 25.dxe5 threatening ♗b5.



25.♗e2! ♗c6

25...♗xe2 26.c6 also leads to mate.

26.♗xc6† dxc6 27.b5

With a decisive attack.

In view of all this, it would have been best to meet 14.b4 with the prophylactic 14...d6, leading to a complex fight.

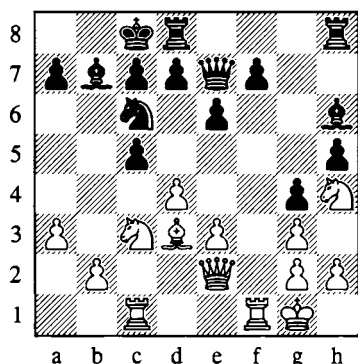
14...g4!

An important move, aiming to undermine the white centre before striking on c5.

15.cxb6!?

Korchnoi took this difficult decision after 15 minutes.

If 15.♗h4 ♗h6 16.♖e2 the position would be ripe for: 16...bxc5!



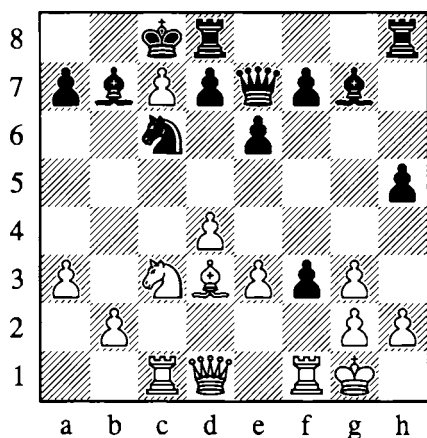
The main point is that after 17. d4 cxd4 White would have to invest too much material into his attack.

15...gxf3

I saw no reason to reject the sacrifice.

If 15...axb6 16. d4 h4 White would have a natural queenside attack starting with ♖a4 and ♙a6. If ...♙g7-h6, he could comfortably defend the pawn with ♜fe1.

16.bxc7



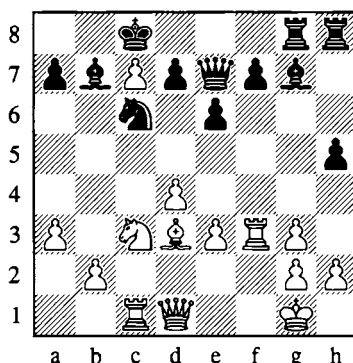
I felt that the time had come for an important decision. Would the c7-pawn act as a shield for my king, or as an attacking unit? I thought for 10 minutes before making my next move.

16...♙xc7!

I thought that after:

16...♜dg8 17. ♜xf3

White would have excellent attacking chances, in addition to the three pawns for my piece.



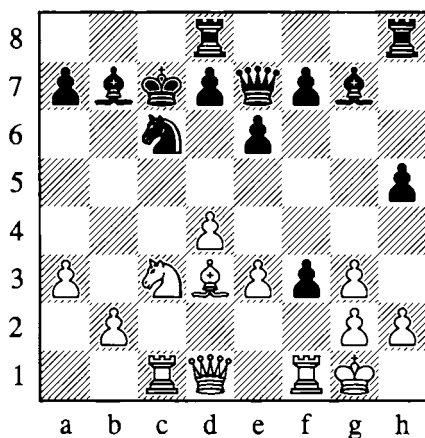
In view of the simple plan of ♖a4 and ♙a6, I would very much prefer to be White. For instance:

17...h4 18. ♖a4 hxg3 19. h3!

Unlike the c7-pawn, the g3-pawn is an obstacle in the way of Black's attack.

If 19. ♜xg3? ♙h6 the whole kingside is vulnerable.

Now 19...♙h5, planning ...♜a5, fails to 20. b4, adding the threat of b4-b5 to Black's existing problems.



17.d5

Played instantly. Korchnoi must have planned it when sacrificing the piece.

17.♞xf3 would allow my king to evacuate the dangerous area with 17...♖b8. If 18.♞a4 ♞c8 White's attack would soon be extinguished.

I would answer 17.♞xf3 in the same way: 17...♖b8 The main point is that 18.♞xf7 ♞d8 keeps things under control. My extra (dark-squared) bishop will soon become very strong and White's pawns would not be threatening at all.

White's last move surely looks strong. I cannot take the bothersome pawn because of the fork ♖xd5† but the really worrying detail is that dxc6 is not even the main threat! Indeed, if 17...fxg2? White wins with the elegant fork 18.d6†!. Any capture on d6 would be answered with 19.♖b5†, killing one of the members of the Royal Family.

17...♞g5!

A crucial move, attacking e3, removing the queen from the lethal forks and controlling the d5-square.

It had obviously escaped Korchnoi's attention. He raised his eyebrows and pulled a strange grimace with his mouth in an uncensored expression of his surprise.

18.dxc6?!

This turns a clearly worse position into a technically lost one. During his 14-minute thought, Korchnoi must have overlooked my 22nd move.

It is true that White's position was not rosy anyway. If 18.♞xf3 exd5 19.♖xd5† ♖b8 and White has insufficient compensation for the piece.

Or if 18.♞xf3 exd5 19.♖b5† ♖b8 20.♖d6 ♞e7! 21.♖xf7 ♖e5! keeping the material advantage intact.

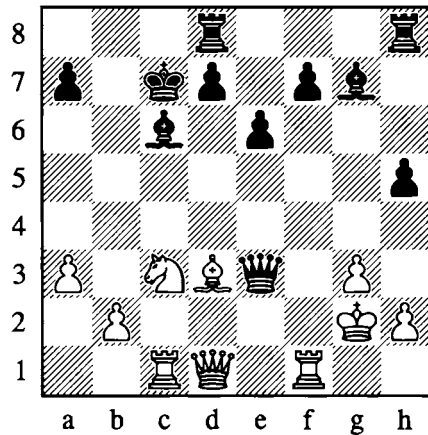
18...♞xc3†

This causes more damage to White's position than it may look at first sight. There is no adequate way of getting out of the check.

19.♖h1

19.♞f2 would avoid the forcing line from the game, but with the rook pinned I would not fear any counterplay along the f-file (♞xf3 followed by ♞xf7) and could bravely weaken my seventh rank with 19...dxc6 winning the d3-bishop.

19...fxg2† 20.♖xg2 ♖xc6†



21.♖e4

If 21.♖e4 f5 I would be winning for several reasons: material advantage, piece activity, bishop pair, superior king safety...

21...♖xc3! 22.♖xc6

So far everything was forced, but now there comes a small surprise for White.

22...♞d2†!

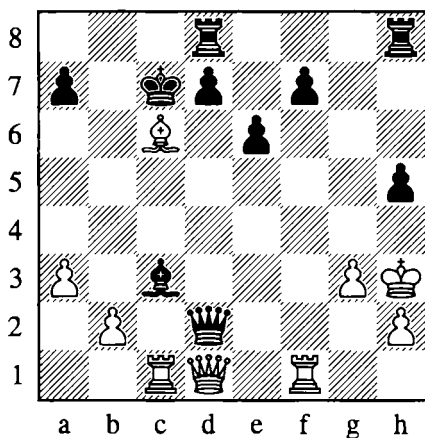
Korchnoi might have counted on 22...♖xb2? which would lead to a winning attack for White: 23.♞c4 dxc6 24.♞xf7† ♖b6 25.♞a4+–

23.♔h3

An interesting decision, probably taken by the method of elimination.

If 23.♖xd2 ♕xd2 24.♞c2 I would take his bishop and defend mine at the same time with: 24...dxc6+

The drawback of retreating with 23.♔h1 would be that after 23...dxc6 24.♞xf7† ♕c8 White could not continue his attack with 25.♖a4 since the c1-rook would be hanging with check. This would leave him with 25.♖xd2 ♕xd2 26.♞xc6† ♕b8 27.♞xe6 ♕a5 when Black should win with a bit of technique.



With the king on h3, the line above would not work out well for me. I had to readapt myself to the new situation and find another way of exploiting the precarious placement of his king.

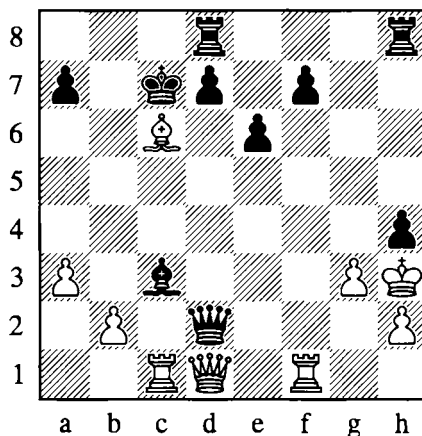
23...h4!

The decisive blow. As mentioned in the comments to my first win over Karpov, it is very important to actually win the winning positions!

I was not satisfied with the prospect of a better ending after 23...♖xd1 24.♞cxd1 ♕xb2. In fact, after 25.♕a4 White would threaten not

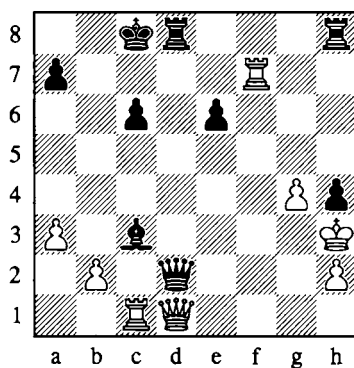
only ♞xf7, but also ♞f1-f2-c2, with a far from clear evaluation.

I understood how unpleasant my last move was to Korchnoi from the fact that he now had his longest think of the entire game: 19 minutes!

**24.♞xc3**

Actually, White had quite a few alternatives (but only bad ones) to choose from.

24.g4 would weaken the third rank, which would be relevant in at least two moments in the following line: 24...dxc6 25.♞xf7† ♕c8!

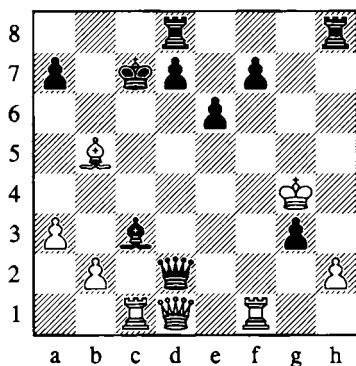


Without the insertion of ...h4 and g4, White would win with ♖a4, but now this is impossible due to ...♞d3† mating soon. This leaves him with 26.♖xd2 ♕xd2 27.♞xc6† ♕b8 28.♞xe6. With the pawns still on g3 and h5, White would have some hope because of

his king's activity, but the way it is 28...♖d3† would send the king backwards and start attacking the queenside pawns: 29.♔g2 ♜b3→

White could not afford to retreat with the bishop:

24.♙b5 hxg3† 25.♔g4



25...♜g2

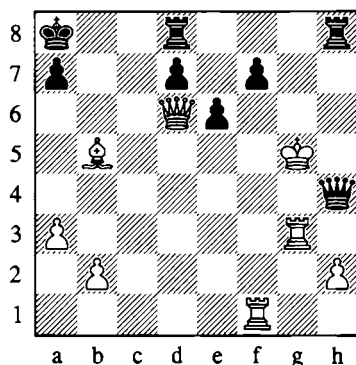
The strongest continuation of the attack.

My initial plan was 25...♜xd1† 26.♜fxd1 ♔b6 with a very favourable ending, but I am sure that once the king had reached g4 I would have looked for a more direct way of finishing things off.

26.♜xc3† ♔b8 27.♜d6†

Or if 27.♔f4 gxh2, apart from the mating threats, Black can also consider ...♜xf1† followed by ...h1=♜ or immediately ...h1=♜.

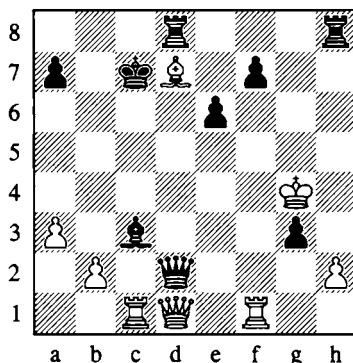
27...♔a8 28.♜xg3 ♜e4† 29.♔g5 ♜h4#



Quite a nice mate!

From a practical point of view, the trickiest move would have been:

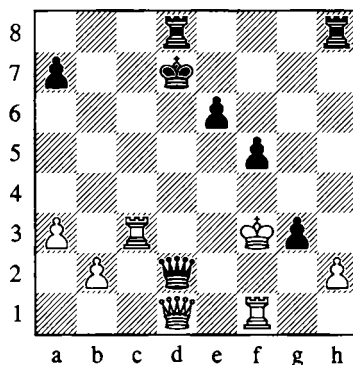
24.♙xd7 hxg3† 25.♔g4



Quite an unusual and confusing position. One clearly feels it should be completely winning but finding the concrete best moves is not easy.

25...f5† 26.♔f3 ♔xd7 27.♜xc3

It may seem that White has tricked his opponent with a complex system of pins, but it is not over yet.



27...♜h2!!

What a beautiful move! Black grabs another pawn and defends the pinned queen, but the tactical complications initiated by this move are very difficult to evaluate.

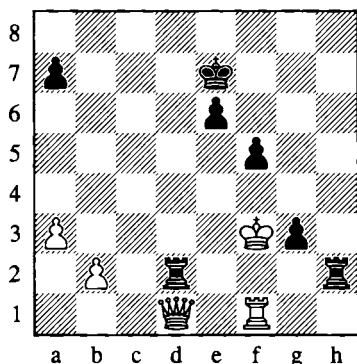
For computers, it all looks simple, but the human continuation would be 27...♔e7 28.♜xd2 ♜xd2 29.hxg3 ♜xb2 with an extra pawn but not a winning position yet.

28.♞d3† ♔e7!

The only way to stay out of the white queen's range.

29.♞xd2 ♞xd2

Black has only one rook and two pawns for the queen, but the attack is decisive.



For instance:

30.♞b3

An active but also exposed square for the queen.

It is important to control the d3-square as if 30.♞c1 ♞d3† 31.♔f4 ♔f6! White can avoid mate only at the cost of huge material losses. Or if 30.♞b1, defending the d3-square from a safer position, then 30...g2 31.♞f2 ♞xf2† 32.♔xf2 ♞h1 and the queen would be too passive. If it had the possibility of an intermediate check, followed by ♔xg2, he would be winning.

30...g2

Threatening ...♞h3†.

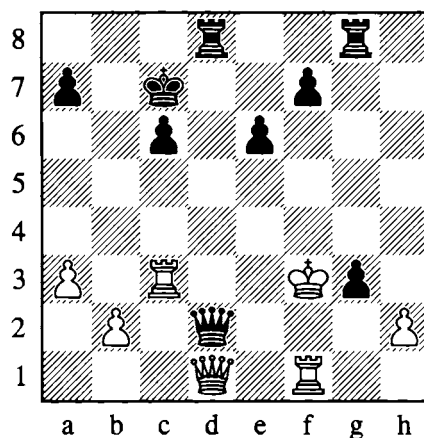
31.♞b4† ♔f7 32.♞g1

32.♞b7† leads to mate: 32...♔f6 33.♞g1 ♞h3† 34.♔f4 e5#

32...♞h3† 33.♔f4 ♞h4†

This wins the queen and transposes to a won rook ending.

24...hxc3† 25.♔g4 ♞hg8† 26.♔f3 dxc6!



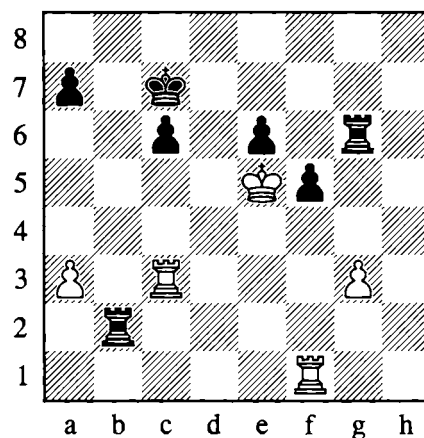
A familiar theme. I regain the piece while defending the queen at the same time. I knew that even if there was no mate, my extra pawns should guarantee the win.

27.♞xd2 ♞xd2 28.hxc3 ♞xb2 29.♔e4

White is desperately trying to oppose my large material advantage with his hyper-active pieces.

29.♞fc1 ♞b6 keeps things under control.

29...f5† 30.♔e5 ♞g6



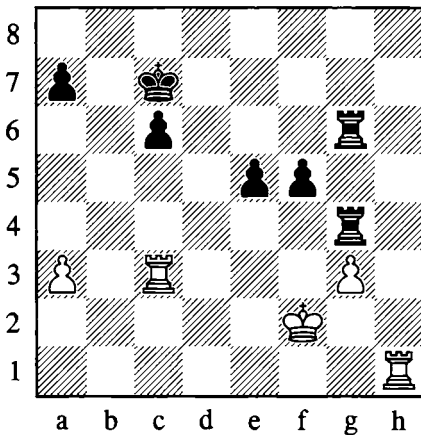
My rook defends the e6-pawn while keeping the g3-pawn under observation. Things will get even better soon.

31.♖h1 ♜e2†

I knew I should not hurry, but rather improve my position slowly while keeping my material gains.

32.♙f4 ♜e4† 33.♙f3 ♜eg4

The attack against the e6-pawn was removed, and the g3-pawn is now under serious pressure.

34.♙f2 e5

Black cannot win without gaining space, but one cannot get anything without giving away something else. In this case, the advance of the e-pawn weakens the f5-pawn, which will give the play a more concrete character, at least for a while.

35.♜f3

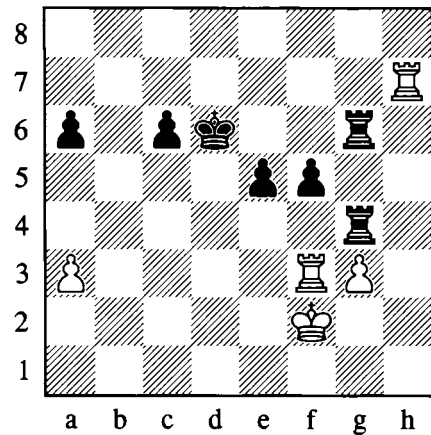
Or if 35.♜h7† ♜g7 36.♜h6 ♜4g6 37.♜h5 ♜f6 followed by the king's centralization ...♙c7-d6-d5.

35...♙d6!

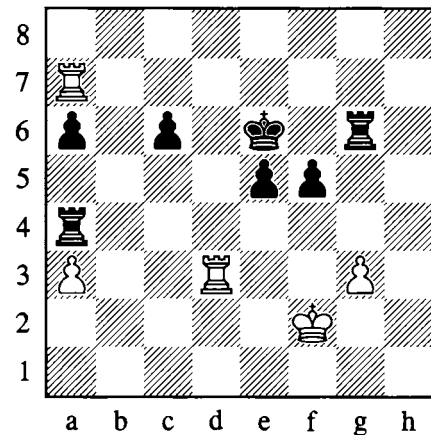
The f5-pawn is indirectly defended for the time being. Exchanging it for the g3-pawn would lead to the radical activation of my rooks.

36.♜h7

We both had less than five minutes on the clock, so I did not want to force matters yet.

36...a6**37.♜a7**

The indirect defence of the f5-pawn keeps working after 37.♜f7 ♙e6 38.♜7xf5 ♜xg3—+.

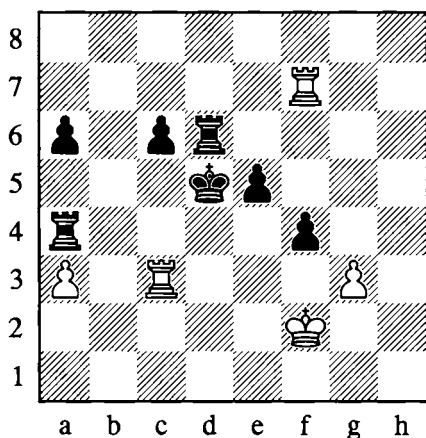
37...♜a4 38.♜d3† ♙e6**39.♜c3**

Immediately after the game, Korchnoi claimed that 39.♜c7 would have regained a pawn at once. For many players this is a typical instant reaction just after resigning, but Korchnoi's personal touch adds some arrogant and even insulting way of saying it.

In any case, his wish to prove there was a way to save the game was not based on reality:

39...♖c4 40.♞a7 (Or if 40.♞cd7, threatening mate in one, 40...♞c2† 41.♕e1 ♕f6.) 40...e4 41.♞e3 ♞c2† 42.♕e1 ♞h6 With a decisive attack.

39...♕d5 40.♞d7† ♞d6 41.♞f7 f4



It took me seven moves since the previous advance of a kingside pawn, but White did not achieve anything positive in the meantime.

42.♞b7 ♞c4 43.♞d3† ♕c5 44.♞db3 ♞d2† 45.♕f3 fxg3 46.♕xg3 ♞dc2

I would exchange one rook soon, and even such a fighter as Korchnoi considered further resistance futile.

0-1

Starting the tournament with such an interesting win over a living legend is like waking up with a broad smile. And I kept smiling as I won the next two games against Acs and Almasi (for the latter, see page 229).

Then I slowed down a bit with draws in Rounds 4 to 6, but in Round 7 I won a fantastic game against Berkes (page 181). Unfortunately, I ruined my chances for first place with an eighth-round loss against Short.

The final standings were Short 6½, Polgar 5½, Leko 5, etc.

The next game of mine I will show bears a strong symbolism for the general theme of this chapter. It was played in a tournament where the field was the three big Ks and myself!

Zurich 2006 was a blitz double round-robin tournament celebrating Korchnoi's 75th birthday. The organizer was Dr. Wirth, a man I had first met in 1987, as I mentioned in the first volume.

I appreciated Dr. Wirth's chess activities very much and when he invited me to this event I knew I did not want to miss out, although there was a small practical problem: just six weeks before the tournament I gave birth to my second child, Hanna! Eventually, I decided that taking her with me and my husband to the tournament would not cause major problems. And indeed, we divided the work perfectly: Gusztav took care of Hanna while I was playing, and I breast-fed her between the games!

Korchnoi's participation took place under even more unusual circumstances. On August 17th, Viktor started playing in the Banyoles Open in Spain. After five rounds he had accumulated 4½ points, but then he was allowed to take two half-point byes to travel to Zurich in Switzerland. The blitz tournament took place on the 22nd and already on the next day Viktor won another important game... in Banyoles!

Before we get to my game, let's see that game of Viktor's from Banyoles.

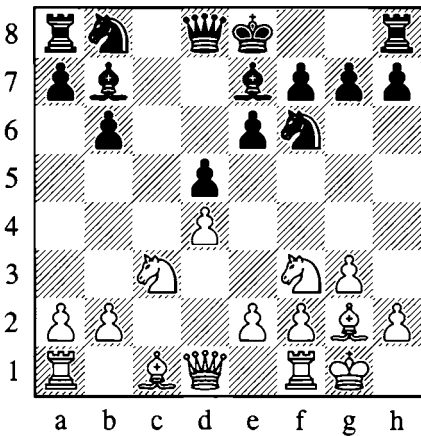
Viktor Korchnoi – Sergei Tiviakov

Banyoles 2006

1.♕f3 ♕f6 2.c4 b6 3.g3 ♖b7 4.♗g2 e6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.d4 c6

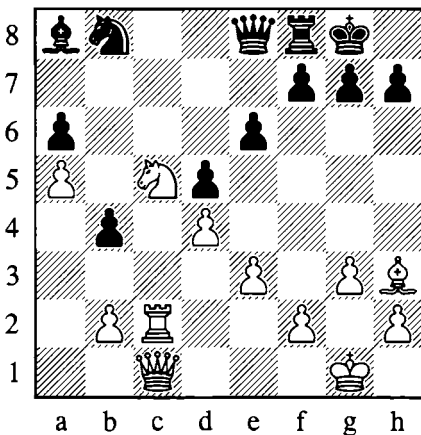
One of Tiviakov's favourite schemes. Black intends to play ...d7-d5 without getting hanging pawns.

7.♕c3 d5 8.cxd5 cxd5



This symmetrical structure is supposed to be safe for Black if White has fianchettoed his king's bishop. But the ease with which Korchnoi positionally outplays his opponent is stunning.

9. ♖a4† ♜fd7 10. ♙f4 a6 11. ♞fc1 0-0
12. ♜d1 b5 13. a4 b4 14. ♜b1 ♜c6 15. ♜bd2
♜b6 16. a5 ♜a7 17. ♜b3 ♞ac8 18. ♞c2 ♜cb8
19. ♞ac1 ♞xc2 20. ♞xc2 ♙c6 21. ♙xb8 ♜xb8
22. ♜c1 ♙b7 23. ♜e5 ♙d6 24. ♙h3 ♙a8 25. e3
♜e7 26. ♜d3 ♜e8 27. ♜dc5 ♙xc5 28. ♜xc5



Black is completely paralyzed. Tiviakov's attempt to free his position is understandable, but will in fact accelerate the inevitable.

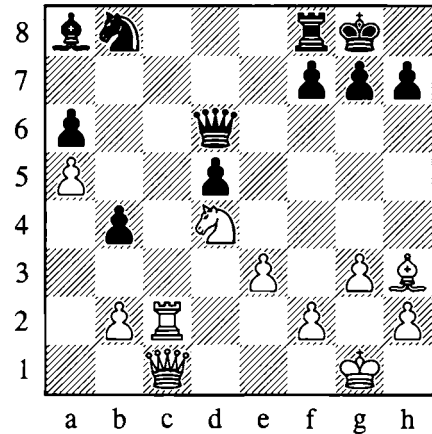
28...e5 29.dxe5 ♜xe5

Hoping to get counterplay with ...d4 and ...♜d5.

30. ♙g2!

The start of a well-timed minor-piece regrouping, in accordance with the new requirements of the position.

30...♜f5 31. ♜b3 ♜d7 32. ♜d4 ♜d6 33. ♙h3!



Now that the d5-pawn has been safely blocked, the bishop returns to its dominating position.

33...♜d7 34. ♞c8 ♙b7 35. ♞c7

Black loses a piece.

1-0

With such a great result, a last-round draw yielded Korchnoi a tournament win in Spain.

Let's return to the blitz event in Switzerland. Despite being by far the oldest participant in Zurich and finishing last with just a half of a point, this kind of intense playing activity clearly suggests that at the time Korchnoi was to a great extent still a professional player.

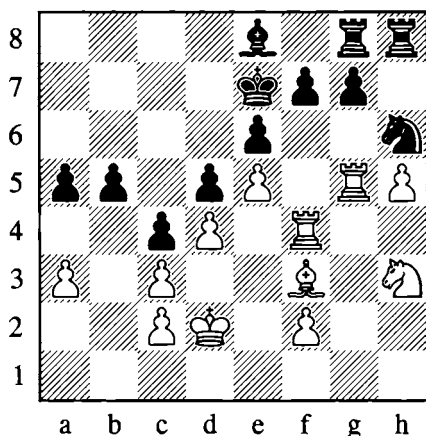
Kasparov had officially announced his retirement from tournament chess one year earlier and only took part in special rapid and blitz events.

Without making it official, Karpov was not far from being in the same position. Occasionally he still played classical games (mainly in team matches), but mostly he played in simuls and in rapid and blitz tournaments.

Speaking about myself, I was returning from a break in my career after becoming a mother for the second time. I will say more about this kind of break in the chapters dedicated to Oliver and Hanna.

Judit Polgar – Viktor Korchnoi

Zurich (blitz) 2006

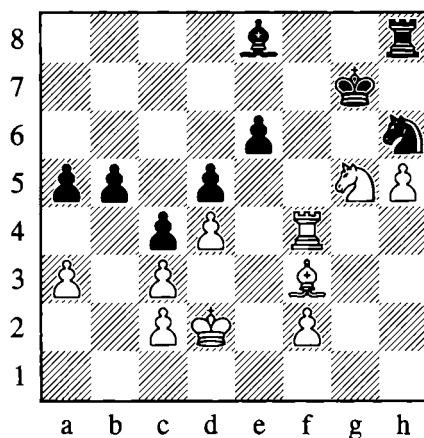


This game was played in the last round. Korchnoi played the McCutcheon French, a specialty of his in the later period of the career. The structure is to some extent similar to that from my game against Panno (see Volume II, page 223). I exert kingside piece pressure, but Black's structure is rather solid. And just like Panno, Korchnoi displayed premature pawn activity and saw his kingside structure rapidly ruined.

30...f6? 31. Bxg7+!

A simple combination, winning a pawn.

31...Bxg7 32. exf6+ ♔f8 33. fxg7+ ♔xg7 34. ♖g5



34...♕f7?

This second mistake makes things even worse.

Black should have kept his "bad" bishop to defend the good pawns with 34...♕d7. In view of his better structure, Black would have retained a playable position.

35. ♖xf7!

The paradoxical idea of exchanging an active knight for a passive bishop was famously used by Fischer in two games of his 1971 Candidates Final against Petrosian. This kind of operation, giving away a static superiority, is justified when one gets some other form of advantage out of it. In this case, the weakening of the e6-pawn will prove decisive.

35...♖xf7 36. Bg4+ ♔f8 37. Bg6 Bb6 38. ♕g4 ♖e7 39. ♕xe6 1-0

The final classification was: Kasparov and Karpov 4½/6, Polgar 2½, Korchnoi ½.

My last tournament game with Viktor took place six years later in Gibraltar 2012.

Over the past decade, the Gibraltar Open has grown into a serious international festival. This small part of the Iberian Peninsula has its

special attractions. A British territory where many people speak Spanish, Gibraltar's trademark is the omnipresent macaques, a species of monkey which by some unknown miracle managed to cross the Gibraltar strait from the African continent.



*Not the famous Gibraltar monkey, but a young chimpanzee
Gusztav brought home for a visit*

The chief organizer who dreamt up the event is Brian Callaghan. His main idea is to invite to the tournament a wide variety of players. They aim to have participants from as many countries as possible, but also from every age category. They offer conditions to a large number of top female players, giving them the chance to compete with some of the world's strongest male players.

In 2012 I had a "so-so" tournament, but when the last-round pairing faced me with my old opponent and colleague, I knew the game would be hard fought and interesting. Despite having entered his 80s, Korchnoi kept fighting like a lion; in the previous edition he had demolished Caruana by throwing forward his kingside pawns with enviable energy.

I also had the feeling that Viktor would have his own opinion after the game, regardless of the final result...

Judit Polgar – Viktor Korchnoi

Gibraltar 2012

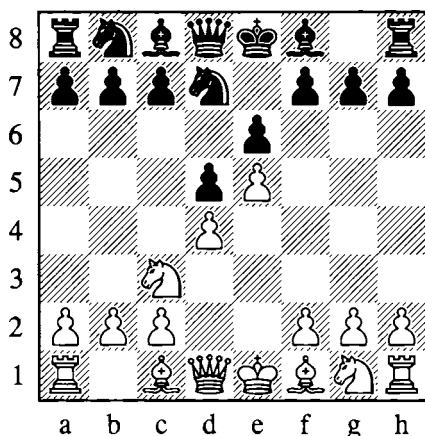
1.e4 e6

I did not have any doubt regarding Viktor's opening choice. Over the decades he had played practically every opening, but during the last few years he strongly restricted his repertoire. Besides, he used the French in most games against me.

2.d4 d5 3.♖c3 ♖f6 4.e5

Deviating from the blitz game above (where I chose 4.♗g5). This time I wanted to get a complicated middlegame by avoiding early exchanges.

4...♗fd7



5.♗ce2!?

5.f4 is clearly the main move, but I had also occasionally played the game continuation. The most memorable game was against Short (see Volume II).

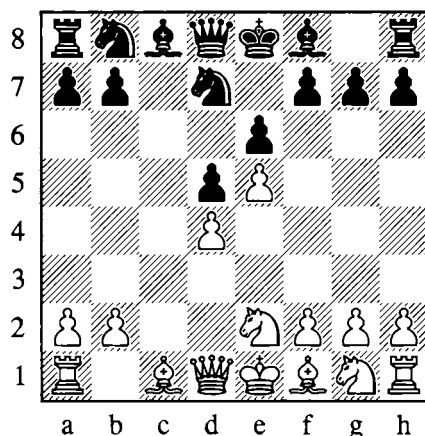
Looking through my opponent's games, I decided this was a good moment to give it a new try.

5...c5 6.c3 cxd4

Generally speaking, it is inadvisable to give up the tension so easily, but Korchnoi had in mind a clear plan. Quite possibly, he deliberately continued the psychological battle initiated by my fifth move.

On two previous occasions he had played 6...♗c6 7.f4 b5, reaching a position I would not mind playing at all. The main line actually goes 7...♗b6 8.♗f3 f6. A typical French position, promising a huge battle. White enjoys a big space advantage, but completing development is far from easy in view of the thematic knight sacrifices on e5.

7.cxd4



7...f6

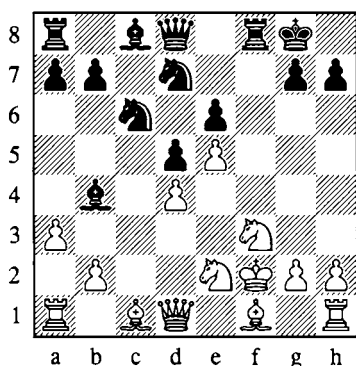
This straightforward method of breaking up the centre is typical for the 3.♗d2 ♗f6 4.e5 variation.

8.exf6

The safest answer. Even though it does not offer big chances for an advantage, the alternative 8.f4 is quite risky.

Quite possibly, Korchnoi's choice was inspired by the following unfortunate opening experience for me:

8.f4 fxe5 9.fxe5 ♗b4† 10.♗f2 0-0† 11.♗f3 ♗c6 12.a3

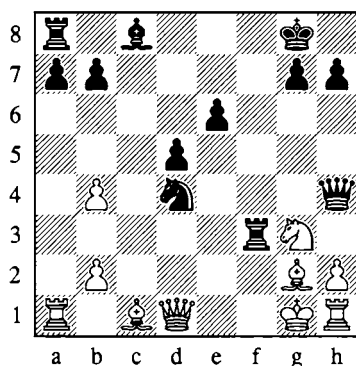


White's position is not as solid as it looks. My opponent decided upon the thematic sacrifice:

12...dxe5 13.axb4 ♖h4† 14.♔g1 ♜xf3† 15.gxf3 ♝xf3

With a strong initiative. Only a few moves later, he missed a spectacular win:

16.♜g3 ♜xd4 17.♜g2



Polgar – Gilberto Hernandez, Merida 2000, went 17...♜f7 and I eventually repelled the attack and won, but Black missed a very strong continuation:

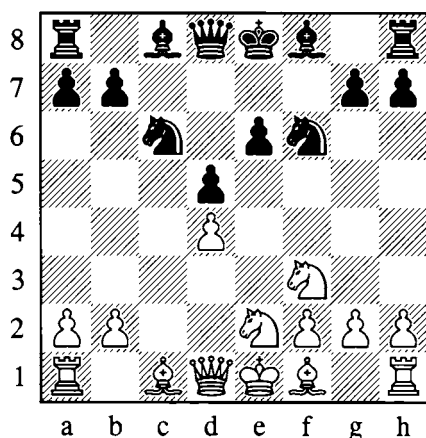
17...♜e2†! 18.♜xe2 ♜d4† 19.♜e3 ♝xe3 20.♜f2 ♜d7

Followed by ...♜f8, for instance:

21.♜f1 ♜f8! 22.♜xe3 ♝xf1†!

Black wins the queen. I had no wish to get involved in such a scenario for a second time, of course.

8...♜xf6 9.♜f3 ♜c6

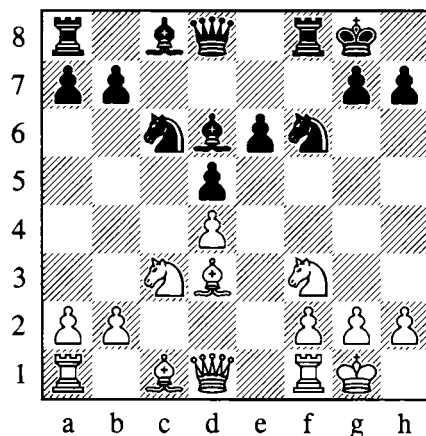


If White could play ♜f1-d3 (!?) we would transpose to the 3.♜d2 variation. The fact that in this case the king's knight would be on e2 and its colleague on f3 would not be relevant. The way it is, I have to move my knight away from e2, depriving myself of the thematic bishop exchange with ♜c1-f4.

10.♜c3 ♜d6 11.♜d3

11.♜b5 is an important alternative, fighting for the e5-square. I was more focused on the e4-square, though.

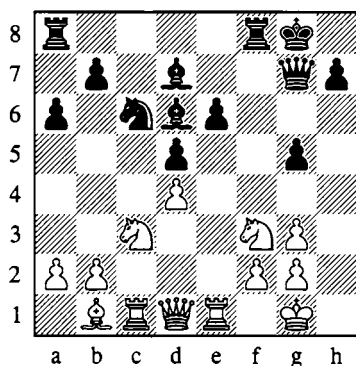
11...0-0 12.0-0



12...♜e8?!

I was surprised by Korchnoi's decision to start an attack with incomplete development.

12...a6 followed by ...♖c7 was more natural. The following game had launched a new fashion some 30 years ago: 13.♗g5 ♖c7 14.♗h4 ♜h5 15.♗e1 g6 16.♗c1 ♗g7 17.♗b1 ♗d7 18.♗g3 ♜xg3 19.hxg3 g5

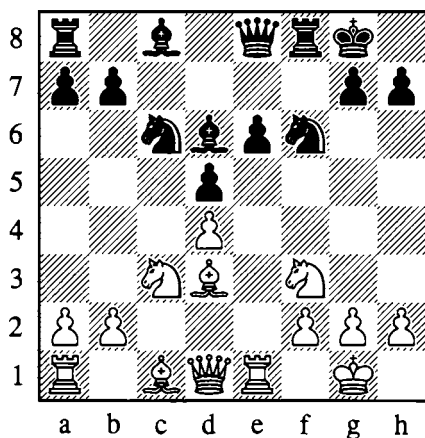


With an initiative for Black who won only six moves later in Kudrin – Korchnoi, Beersheba 1984. It is hard to say why Korchnoi refrained from his old plan; maybe his innate creativity pushed him to look for something new.

12...♗d7, planning ...♗e8-h5 was the other move I was expecting.

12...e5!? was also possible, but after the exchanges in the centre White would retain the more pleasant play due to the relative weakness of the d5-pawn.

13.♗e1



The rook is well placed on the half-open file. It puts pressure on e6 and takes measures against ...e6-e5.

13...♖h5

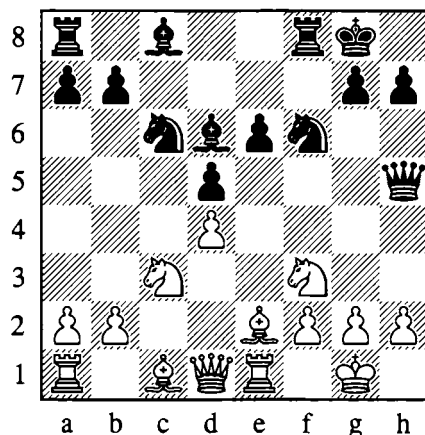
Consistent, but continuing to neglect his development.

13...♗d7 was safer, but then the natural question is why not develop the bishop on the previous move, without taking the e8-square away from it?

14.♗e2?!

The temptation to intimidate the queen was too great, but the threat of ♜f3-e5 is not actually so effective.

14.h3 would be the more logical (and better!) reaction, preventing ...♜f6-g4 and keeping the bishop on the active diagonal.



14...♗g6?!

There was no need to retreat the queen yet.

Black should have restarted his developing process with 14...♗d7. Then if 15.♜e5?! ♗h4 the pressure against the d4- and h2-pawns would have been annoying. 16.f4 would only make things worse because of 16...♜xd4! when the e1-rook would be hanging.

There would be nothing better than 15.h3 followed by ♔e3 and ♖c1, meaning that it would have been better to advance the h-pawn at once.

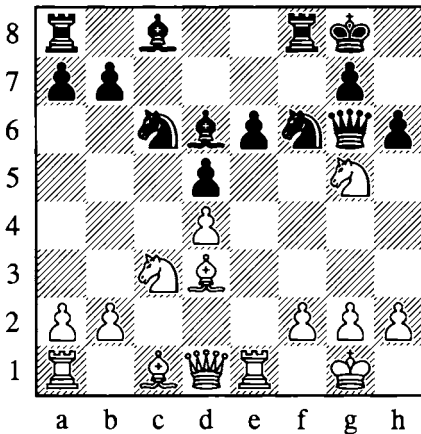
The last move may look like an invitation to a repetition, but knowing Korchnoi I am sure he did not play for a draw at all. It probably was more some kind of psychological test. Korchnoi surely knew that I was also playing for a win and so he invited me to disclose my intentions.

15.♘g5

My aim was to provoke the weakening ...h7-h6, but as the game shows that is not necessarily an achievement.

I should have restricted his counterplay with either 15.♘d3 ♗h5 16.h3 transposing to the recommendation above, or else 15.a3 and then continued my development.

15...h6 16.♘d3



16...♗e8

The endgame resulting after the following line would have been about equal: 16...♗h5 17.♗h5 ♘h5 18.♘e6 (There was no way back. If 18.♘f3 ♖xf3 19.gxf3 ♘xd4 with fantastic compensation for the exchange.) 18...♗e8 19.♔g6 ♖xe6 20.♖xe6 ♔xe6 21.♔xh5 ♘xd4 I believe that my opponent did not

even consider this line, preferring to keep the queens on the board and have a fighting game.

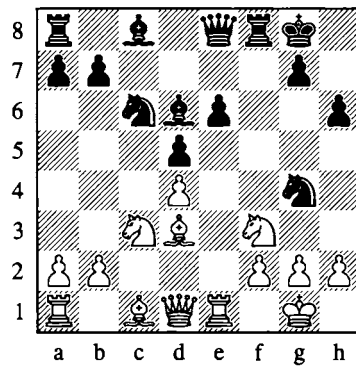
17.♘f3

We have reached almost the same position as after 13.♖e1, with the small difference that in the process the h7-pawn has moved forward. I thought this should favour me in view of the weakened g6-square, but Korchnoi must have considered ...h7-h6 useful for attacking purposes.

17...♗h5

Returning to the same plan initiated a few moves earlier.

17...♘g4 would have been an interesting way of proving 15...h6 useful.



With the pawn on h7, I could answer: 18.♔xh7+! ♔xh7 19.♘g5+ followed by ♗xg4.

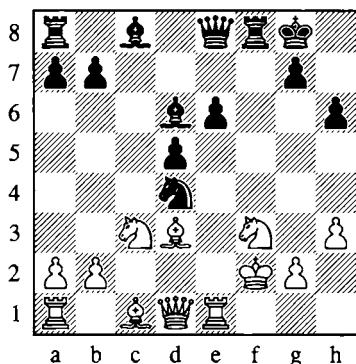
18.h3

Or if 18.♘b5 ♔b8 19.h3 ♘xf2 20.♔xf2 a6 21.♘c3 ♘xd4 with the same kind of counterplay. Moreover, White would not have the resource from the main line as after 22.♔h7+? ♔xh7 23.♗xd4 Black wins the queen with 23...♔a7.

18...♘xf2!

A thematic sacrifice, forcing the king to step into a dangerous area.

19.♔xf2 ♘xd4



Black threatens 20...♖xf3 21.gxf3 ♜h5 with an initiative. White could release the tension with:

20.♙h7+ ♜xh7 21.♞xd4,

But this would not offer an advantage:

21...♞g6 22.♞g4 ♙c5+ 23.♙g3

Relatively best.

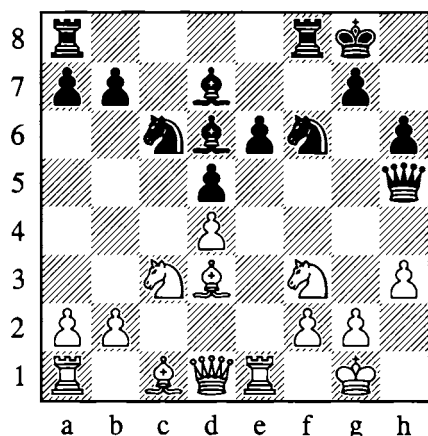
23.♙e3? d4 regains the piece with interest.

23.♙e2 ♞c2+ 24.♙d2 e5 with a huge attack.

23...♙d6+

With a probable draw by perpetual.

18.h3 ♙d7



Both of us finally played the moves recommended at an earlier stage, moving one step closer to completing development.

19.a3

This looks like a solid move, but I actually had aggressive intentions. By preventing ...♖b4 I prepared to take advantage of the weakness of the g6-square with ♞c2.

The natural 19.♙e3!? is worth considering.

19...g5!

This slightly unusual move did not really surprise me; readers of the previous volumes will already know my inclination for g2-g4 and ...g7-g5.

Coming from a player aged 80, the move deserves the highest praise – quite an amazing amount of energy and love for chess...

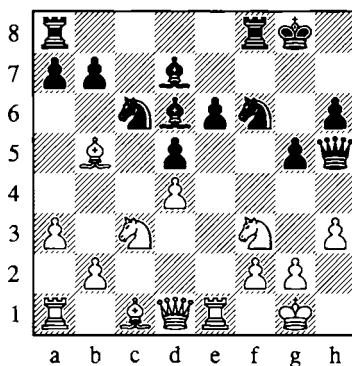
The resolute advance of the g-pawn is a multipurpose move. Black prepares to meet ♞d1-c2 with ...♙g8-g7, defending the g6-square, creating the threat of ...g5-g4 at the same time.

The opening and early middlegame had been marked by small psychological games, but now everything becomes straightforward and concrete. Unfortunately, one can feel that White is a bit behind in development.

20.♖b5

Trying to spoil Black's coordination. After the bishop retreat to b8, the a8-rook will be out of play.

Fighting for the e5-square with 20.♙b5 would not promise an advantage, mainly because of my lagging development.



20...♖ae8

20...g4? would be premature: 21.♗xc6 ♗xc6 22.♖xe6 gxf3 23.♖xd6 or 21...bxc6 22.♜e5 with good control on the dark squares and an unpleasant pin along the d1-h5 diagonal. 21.♗xc6 ♗xc6 22.♜e5 ♖xd1 23.♜xd1 ♗xe5 24.♖xe5 ♜d7

Followed by ...e6-e5 with an initiative.

20...♗b8

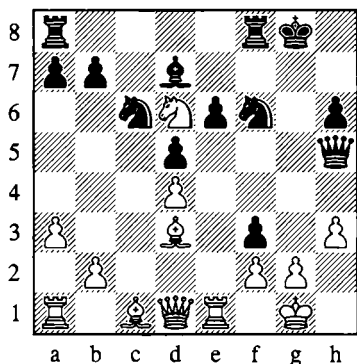
20...g4?! was a spectacular alternative, but I believe that, just like me, Korchnoi did not take it seriously. Black does not want to part with his attacking bishop.

Still, the resulting position would be very interesting:

21.♜xd6

21.hxg4? would be suicidal: 21...♜xg4 22.♜xd6 ♖xf3! 23.♖xf3 ♖h2† 24.♜f1 ♖h1† 25.♜e2 ♜xd4† 26.♜d1 ♗a4†! It is remarkable to see almost every black piece cooperating harmoniously in the king hunt. White cannot avoid ...♜xf3 with check.

21...gxf3



The position looks complicated, but Black does not have enough resources to maintain the strength of his attack. There are several ways of calming things down, for instance:

22.♗c2!

Preparing to meet ...fxg2 with ♖d3.

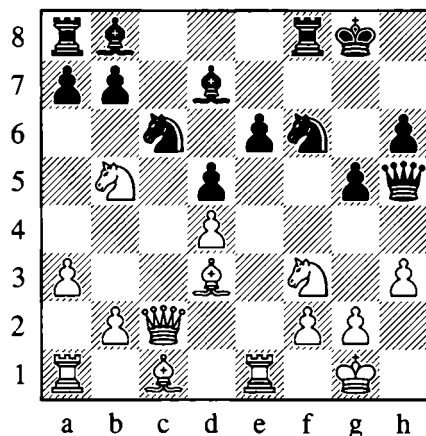
22...♜h8

Hoping to increase the pressure on g2 with ...♗g8.

23.♖e3 fxg2 24.♖g3

It will soon be White who is attacking on the kingside.

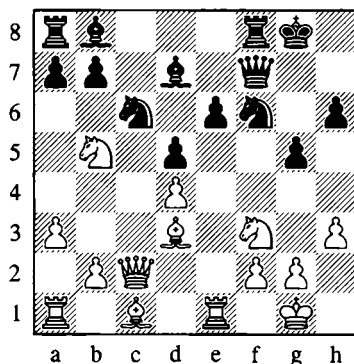
21.♖c2



21...♜g7

Korchnoi is not the kind of player to retreat his pieces when there is an alternative.

And yet, 21...♖f7, planning ...♖g7 might have been more flexible.



22.♗e3

Before undertaking anything concrete, it is useful to over-defend the f2-pawn with a developing move.

22.♜e5 would be premature: 22...♜xe5

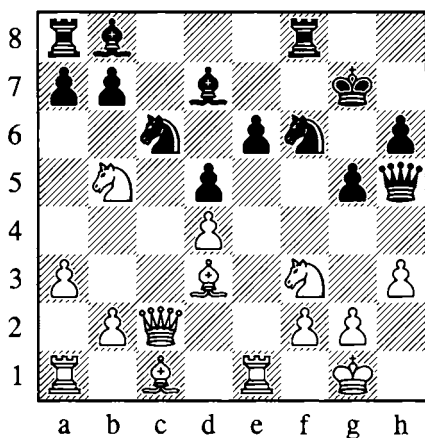
23.dxe5 ♙xb5 24.♙xb5 ♜e4 with an initiative.

22...♞g7 23.♞d2

This natural way of preventing ...g5-g4 leaves the e4-square insufficiently defended:

23...♜e4 24.♙xe4 dxe4 25.♞h2 ♜e7

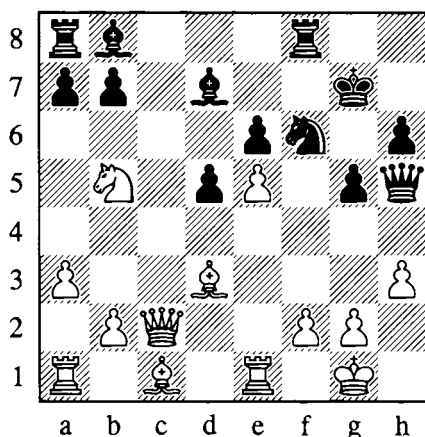
Followed by ...♙c6 and ...♞f5 with adequate counterplay.



22.♞e5

After occupying this important square I became optimistic, but the position is not so simple yet.

22...♞e5 23.dxe5



23...♜e4

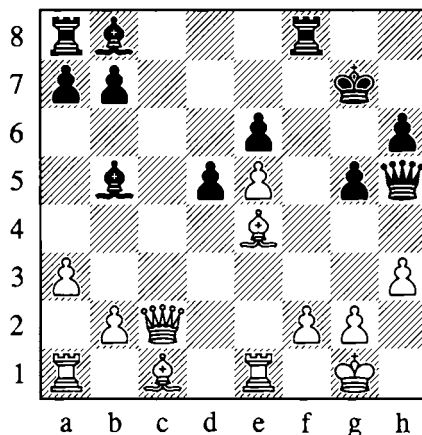
The only way to retain active counterplay.

23...♙xb5? would lose a piece to the zwischenzug: 24.exf6†!

I remember that around this moment Petra brought Viktor's coffee. She was also over 80 years old, but did not give the impression of an old lady at all. Despite the passing years, she kept dressing up nicely and with excellent taste. She also loves wearing nice jewellery on her neck, ankle and fingers, but her trademark is covering her head with a coloured scarf perfectly matching her dress or jacket. During Viktor's game, she is usually chewing gum and solving crosswords, but occasionally she would be knitting.

She is a lady I will always remember – I cannot stop admiring the way she has supported Viktor over the years!

24.♙xe4 ♙xb5



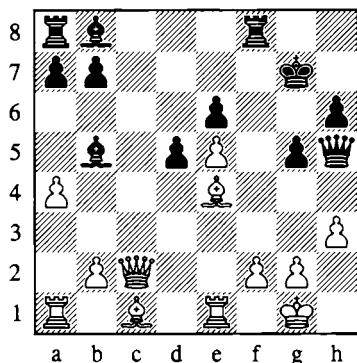
A curious situation with my bishop virtually trapped in the middle of the board. If 25.♙d3 ♙xd3 26.♞xd3 ♞g6 Black takes control of the dark squares with excellent play, while 25.♙f3 would allow 25...♞xf3 with dangerous counterplay.

Obviously, I need a zwischenzug, but I failed to choose the most effective one.

25.♞b3

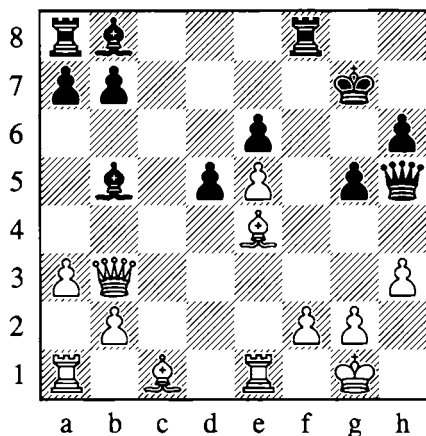
I thought it would not hurt to put some pressure on b7, but I misjudged a small detail.

25.a4! would have ensured some advantage.



If 25...♙a6 26.♙f3 ♖xf3 27.gxf3 I could play ♖a1-a3 next, defending my kingside. In this line it is important that Black cannot activate his bishop along the long diagonal with ...d5-d4 and ...♙b5-c6.

This would leave Black with 25...♙c6, but after 26.♙d3 I would remain in control of the position.



25...dxe4?

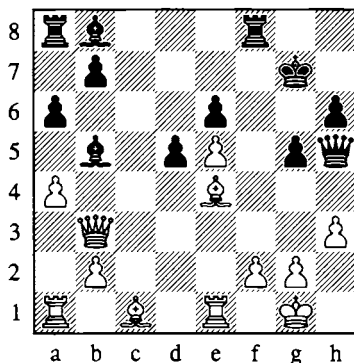
Giving up the tension too easily.

25...a6!

This would have been better, gaining a tempo by clearing the a7-square for the b8-bishop.

26.a4

If 26.♙f3 ♖h4 with active play. The natural developing move 27.♙e3 would once again allow the thematic sacrifice on f3.



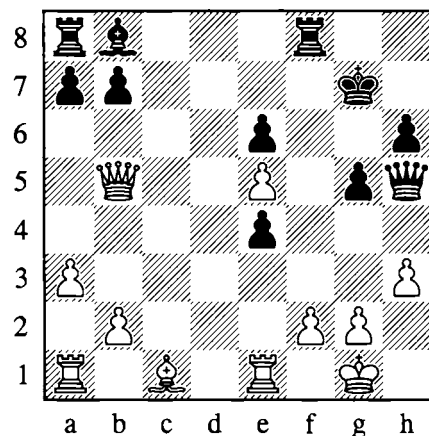
26...♙c4!

During the game I thought this was simply impossible!

27.♙xb7+ ♖f7 28.♙xf7+ ♖xf7 29.♙f3 ♙a7

Followed by ...♖b8. Black's superior activity and more flexible structure offer him full compensation.

26.♙xb5

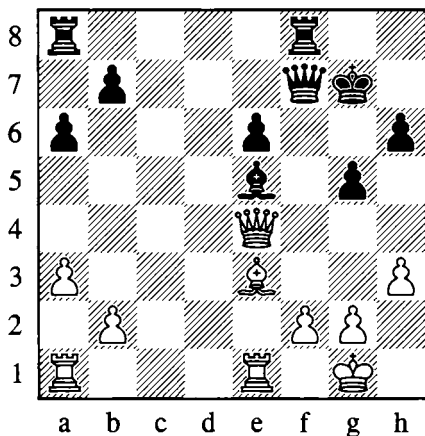


Suddenly, things are completely different than in the line above. Black's coordination is poor and his pawns are hanging. White has a clear advantage.

26...♖f7 27.♙e3

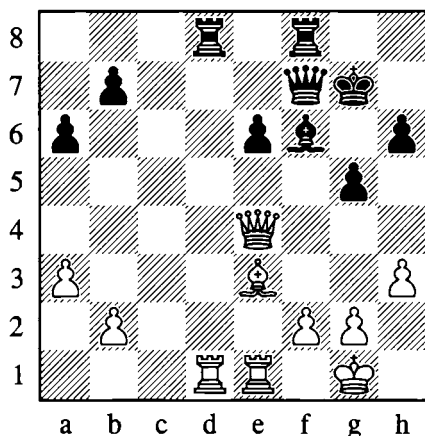
Finally developing the bishop, which stabilizes the kingside completely.

27...a6 28.♖b4 ♙xe5 29.♖xe4



Since 29...♙xb2? allows 30.♖b1 followed by 31.♖xb7 and wins, White retains the better structure and superior activity.

29...♙f6 30.♖ad1 ♖ad8



A curious moment: it took 30 moves before both players completed their development. I felt that due to the exposed black king and chronically weak e6-pawn I should win with accurate play.

31.♙c5 ♖fe8 32.♖xd8 ♖xd8

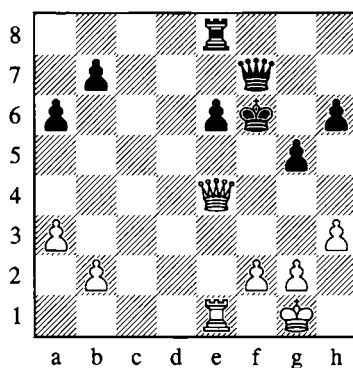
In his youth, Korchnoi would gladly grab pawns and stubbornly defend the resulting passive positions. With greater experience, he started treasuring dynamic factors and activity more than material.

In this case, giving up the weak pawn for the sake of activating the rook is the best practical chance.

32...♙d8

This would keep the pawn, but doom Black to complete passivity:

33.♙d4+ ♙f6 34.♙xf6 ♖xf6



With major pieces on the board, the vulnerability of the black king is a practically decisive factor.

35.♖e3

A thematic rook lift, targeting both sides, but the simple 35.f4, opening the kingside, is also good enough.

35...♙g7 36.♖b3 ♖e7

36...b5 would weaken the sixth rank. 37.♖f3 (Preventing any counterplay based on ...♖f8.) 37...♖e7 38.♖c3 Followed by ♖c6. The pressure against both wings would soon yield White an extra pawn.

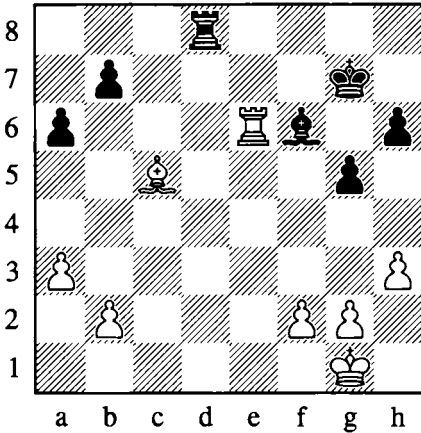
37.♖f3 ♖g6 38.♖e5+ ♙g8 39.♖f6 ♖g7

Black is almost completely paralyzed. Apart from pawn moves, he would have to restrict himself to ...♖e8-e7-e8. I could start gaining queenside space with:

40.b4

And then make some kingside progress with f2-f3 and the spectacular ♖g1-h2-g3-g4-h5.

33.♟xe6 ♟xe6 34.♞xe6



34...♞d5?!

A curious decision.

In order to increase his drawing chances, Black should have reduced the number of pawns: 34...♙xb2! 35.♞e7† ♖g8 36.♞xb7 ♙e5 37.♖f1 The endgame is difficult for Black, but there is still some hope.

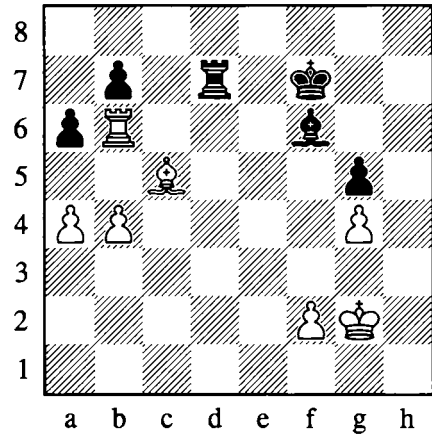
35.b4!

Black's queenside pawns are more exposed than mine, an aspect Korchnoi might have underestimated.

35...♞d1† 36.♖h2 h5 37.g4!

Black's g-pawn, which had marked the start of his kingside counterplay, is safely blocked now, turning into a major weakness.

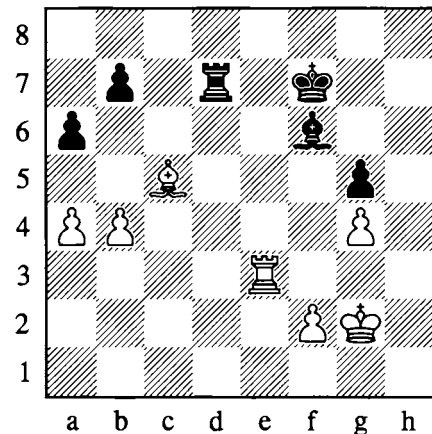
37...hxcg4 38.hxcg4 ♞d3 39.a4 ♖f7 40.♞b6 ♞d7 41.♖g2



After having gained space on both wings, my plan was to bring my king to f5, in a moment when ...♞d5† would not be available, and then exchange rooks.

In such endings it makes little sense to speak about the objectively best move. The main thing is to improve the position gradually without allowing Black any trace of counterplay.

41...♙d8 42.♞h6 ♖g7 43.♞e6 ♖f7 44.♞e5 ♙f6 45.♞e3



Korchnoi managed to expel my rook from the sixth rank, but now his king is cut off vertically.

45...♙d8 46.a5 ♞d5 47.♖f3 ♙f6 48.♖e4 ♖e6



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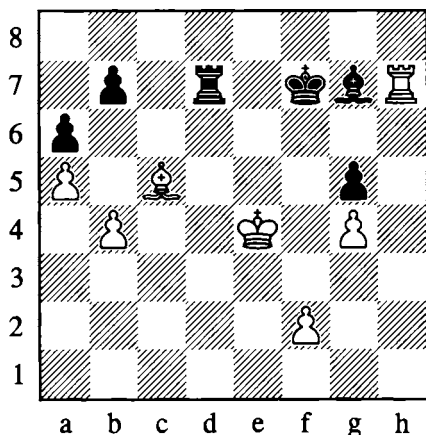
There is no way of making progress in the centre, so I have to open a new front.

49. ♖h3! ♜d7

Hoping to build some sort of fortress.

49...♞e5† would allow my king to transfer to the queenside: 50.♜d3 ♜d5† 51.♞c4 The black pawns would be in great danger.

50. ♖h1 ♜f7 51. ♖h7† ♙g7



52. ♖h3!

The kingside diversion has somewhat spoiled Black's coordination. Now is a good moment to switch back to the centre.

52... ♜e6 53. ♜d3 ♜xd3

53...♞c7 is equally hopeless: 54.♜d6† ♜f7 55.♜f5 wins the g5-pawn.

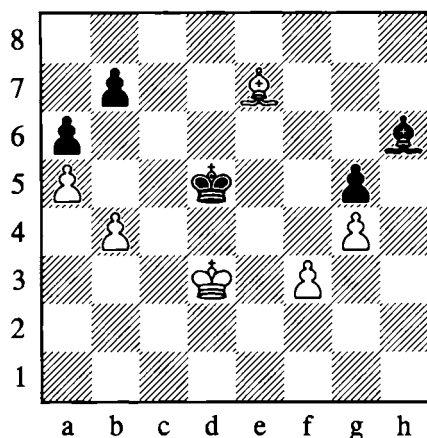
54. ♜xd3 ♜d5

For the time being, Black has managed to prevent my king becoming active, but the chronic weakness of the g5-pawn becomes the decisive factor.

55. ♙e7! ♙h6

Quite a clumsy placement for the bishop.

56. f3



Black is in zugzwang. His bishop cannot move, so his king has to abandon its dominating position.

56... ♜e6

By attacking my bishop, Black prevents my king's advance, but this is only temporary.

If 56...♜e5 57.♙c5 Black could not play 57...♙g7 in view of 58.♙d4† winning the bishop. 57...♜d5 would transpose to the game while if 57...♜f4 the temporary retreat 58.♜c2, threatening ♙d6 mate, would actually be the start of the final attack: 58...♜e5 59.♙e3 followed by ♜d3 with similar play as in the game.

57. ♙c5 ♙g7

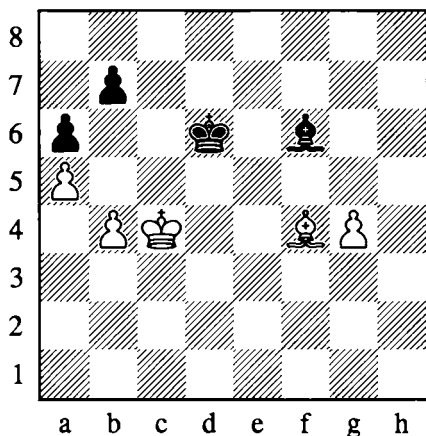
Or 57...♜d5 58.♙e3 creates a zugzwang with immediate effects: my king would advance on the very next move. 58...♜e5 59.♜c4 ♜d6 60.b5 Clearing space on the fifth rank in order to switch to a kingside attack. 60...axb5† 61.♜xb5 ♜c7 62.♜c5! followed by ♜d5-e5-f5.

58. ♙e3 ♙f6 59. ♜c4

In this moment I had a feeling of *déjà vu*, thinking of my Munich game against Anand (published in Volume I).

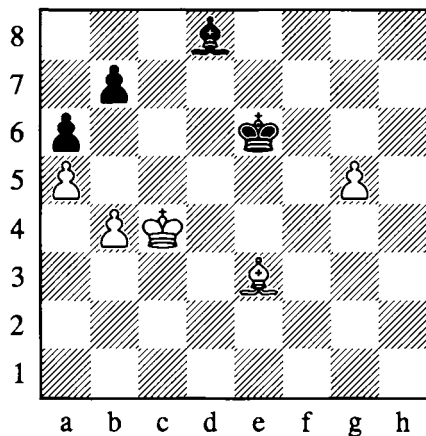
59...♙d6 60.f4

Everything has its own time. Having taken full advantage of the g5-pawn's weakness, I now exchange it to create a dangerous passer.

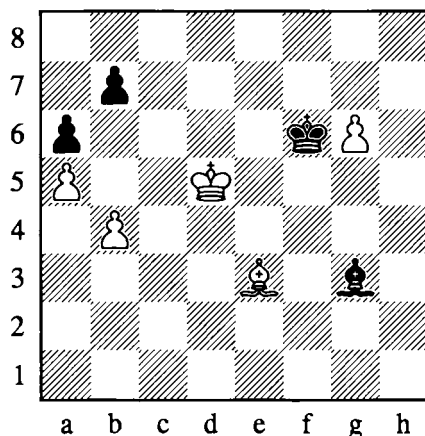
60...♙xf4 61.♙xf4†**61...♙e6**

Keeping the king close to the pawn.

If 61...♙c6 62.g5 ♙b2 63.g6, the threat of ♙d2-c3 forces Black to transfer his king to the opposite wing anyway: 63...♙d7 64.♙d2 ♙e6 65.♙c3 The bishop is optimally placed here, supporting the g-pawn and defending the queenside pawns. 65...♙c1 66.g7 ♙f7 67.♙c5 ♙e3† 68.♙d6 b6 69.♙c6 With a simple win.

62.g5 ♙d8 63.♙c3

Making sure Black does not exchange any pawns with ...b7-b6. In some cases, this would expose Black to the surprising break b4-b5 – we will see more about this in my endgame with Almasi on page 229.

63...♙c7 64.g6 ♙f6 65.♙d5 ♙g3

Still trying to keep my king cut off from the queenside pawns.

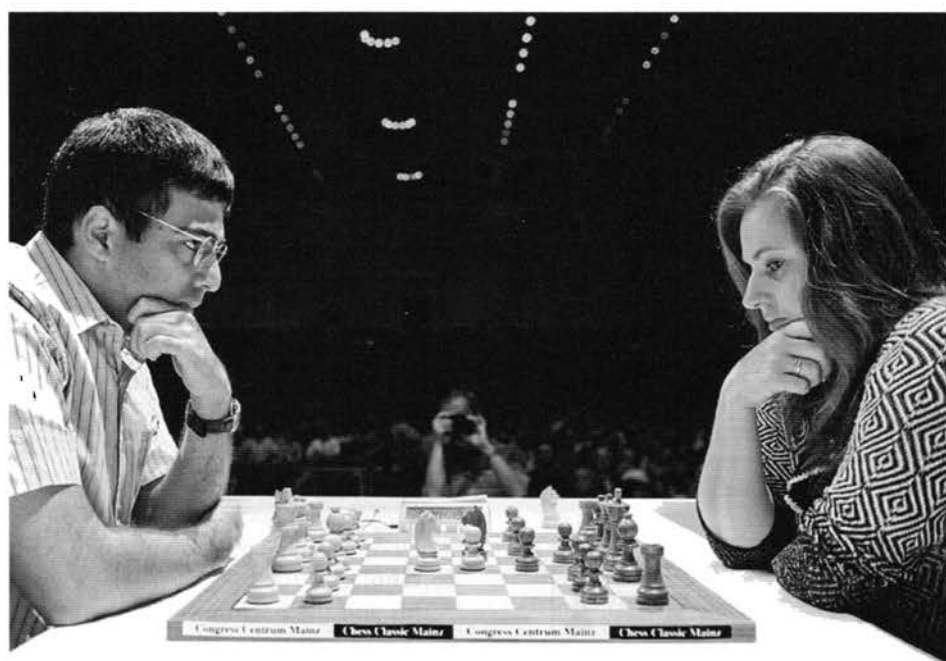
66.♙c5

Korchnoi resigned without allowing me to play the simple winning line: 66...♙b8 67.g7 ♙f7 68.g8=♙† ♙xg8 69.♙e6 ♙g7 70.♙d7 ♙f6 71.♙c8 When he left the board, something in his attitude suggested: "You were lucky today, but next time I will take my revenge..."

1-0

Chapter 4

The Rapid Match with Anand



The rapid match in Mainz against Anand was very tense

It was with great pleasure that I received an invitation to play a rapid match with Anand as the main event of the 2003 Mainz Chess Classic festival.

Vishy was considered the best rapid chess player. He had won six times in Mainz prior to our match and now has a lifetime record of 11 wins out of the 13 editions of the festival.

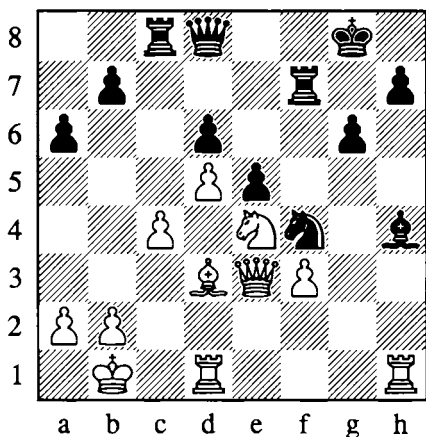
The main organizer, Hans-Walter Schmitt, decided to add spice to this already great festival by adding a Fischer-random tournament. He was a great fan of Anand, known in those days as the Tiger from Madras (Madras was then the name of Chennai, Vishy's hometown). It surely is more than a coincidence that the logo of the festival was a tiger...

The festival was hosted by the Hilton Hotel and before the start of the first round Freddy Mercury singing "We are the Champions" was played on the loudspeakers, giving the moment a special character.

I was well prepared and my husband joined and supported me during the match. I knew that I would have chances if I stayed alert to catch any opportunities.

Judit Polgar – Viswanathan Anand

Game 1



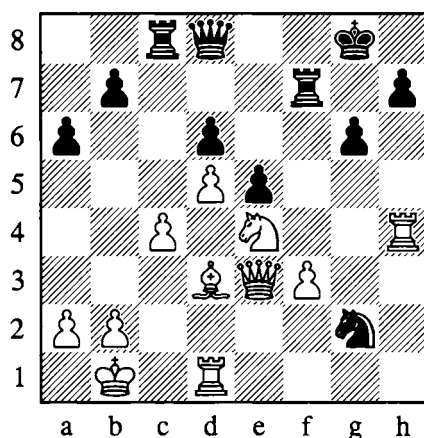
Anand played the Najdorf Sicilian in the first game of the match, which led to a sharp position with opposite-side castling.

With his last move, 24...♖f4, Vishy aimed to prevent my next move and he was extremely surprised it did not:

25.♜xh4! ♜g2

This zwischenzug is what he was relying on, stopping his calculating too soon.

If 25...♜xh4 26.♜xd6 ♜xd3 I should not hurry to take either of the rooks, for instance 27.♜xc8 ♜f2! but rather leave the fork intact with: 27.♜xd3± I would soon regain the exchange when my mobile centre would secure a clear advantage.



26.♜h6!

This and the next move are the keys to my tactical operation.

26...♜xh4

Black needs to keep the d6-pawn defended as if 26...♜xh4 27.♜xh4 ♜xh4 28.♜xd6 he would be much worse. One detail is that 28...♜xf3? loses to 29.♜xf7 ♜xf7 30.♜f1.

27.♜g5!

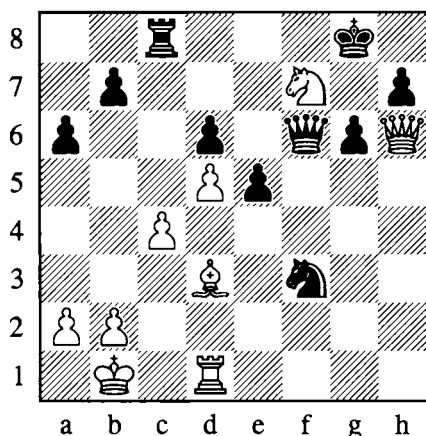
Only this move brings full clarity. In view of the threats of ♜xf7 and ♜xh4, Black is

suddenly lost. Anand started to get nervous, for very good reason...

27...♖xf3

A last imaginative resource.

28.♖xf7 ♜f6



It may seem that there is still hope for Black, as the f7-knight is trapped.

29.♜h3!

The last finesse, clearing the h6-square with gain of time.

29...♜f8 30.♖h6†

After saving my extra piece, I still faced some technical difficulties, but I managed to win in the end.

...1-0

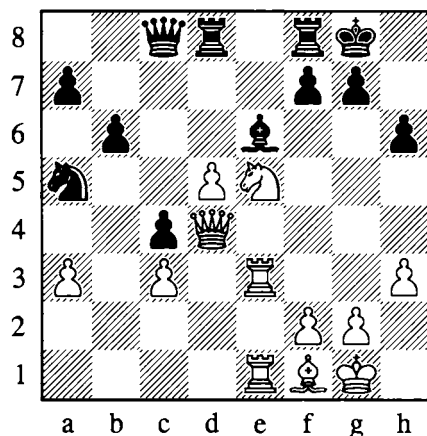
I did not have much time to enjoy the feeling of having taken an early lead, as after a short break the second game of the day started.

Viswanathan Anand – Judit Polgar

Game 2

During my preparation I came up with the idea that the Petroff would be a wise choice against Anand. He had experienced some problems obtaining an advantage with White in earlier games, and he also played it with Black.

Psychologically this looks like coherent reasoning, but in fact I was committing the same type of mistake as Kasparov did when he chose the Berlin against me (see page 36). The Petroff is a good defence, but not to everybody's taste – I did not feel comfortable in the position and Anand outplayed me in the middlegame.



My knight is out of play and the pinned d5-pawn is stronger than it looks.

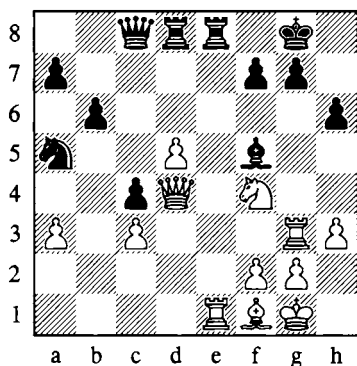
25.♖g6!

Clearing the e-file for the rook battery while attacking my rook and threatening to win the queen with ♖e7†.

25...♖c6

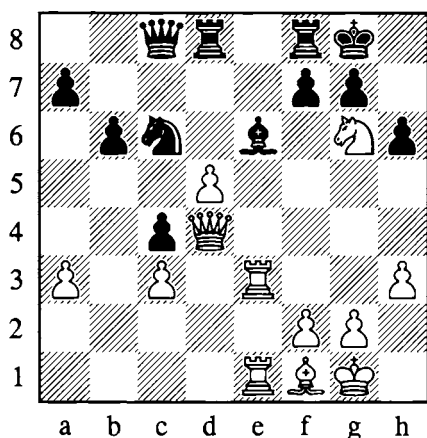
I tried to solve all the problems by returning the knight into play, but this just delays the loss of material.

25...♖fe8 would save the rook and queen, but after 26.♘f4 ♕f5 27.♞g3:



White would have a decisive attack. Too many of his pieces would be targeting my poorly-defended king. 27...f6 would fail to defend the long diagonal due to 28.♞xf6 while 27...g6 and 27...♕g6 would be equally hopeless after 28.♘h5.

Or if 25...fxg6 26.♞xe6+- White would have too many threats, such as ♞xg6, d5-d6, ♞e7 or, if the knight moves away, ♕xc4 or ♞xc4.



26.♞h4

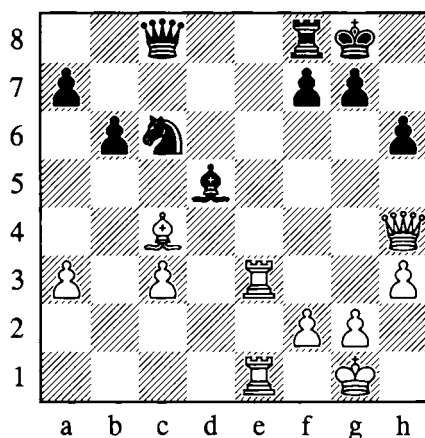
The queen has left the attacked square, unpinning the pawn and adding the threats of dxc6 and dxe6 to the existing ♘xf8.

26...♕xd5

This looked like the best practical chance.

If 26...fxg6 27.dxe6 my position would be awfully passive. The only way to prevent e6-e7 would be 27...g5 allowing 28.♞xc4 with an extra pawn and a huge space advantage.

27.♘xf8 ♞xf8 28.♕xc4+-



To be honest, I do not know why I chose to play on in this hopeless position. I understood, of course, that losing against Anand is a possibility, but I was very unhappy with my opening choice and my failure to put up any resistance.

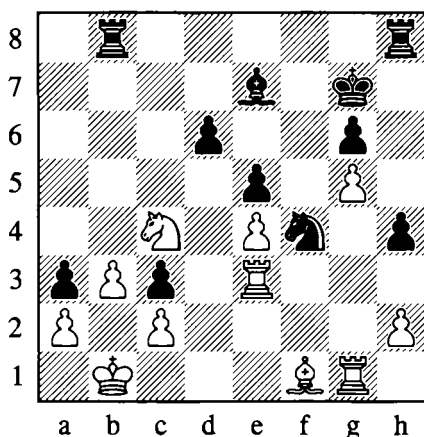
...1-0

The next day I was ready for the fight again, and decided to play sharply, without fearing Anand's amazing instincts in the Sicilian. After all, I said to myself, I grew up with the Sicilian!

According to the match rules, we switched the colours of the first game from one day to another. So my painful loss with Black was followed by another game with the same colour.

Viswanathan Anand – Judit Polgar**Game 3**

Anand played 6.f3 against my Najdorf and I reacted with the sharp 6...♝b6. Vishy obtained an advantage out of the opening, but I managed to confuse him with a series of unexpected moves. This caused him not only to lose the advantage, but also to blunder in one move.



White's last move was 34.♞e3?, exposing his rooks to a simple geometrical motif.

34...d5!

What a shock! White drops an exchange and the game is practically over.

35.exd5 ♙c5

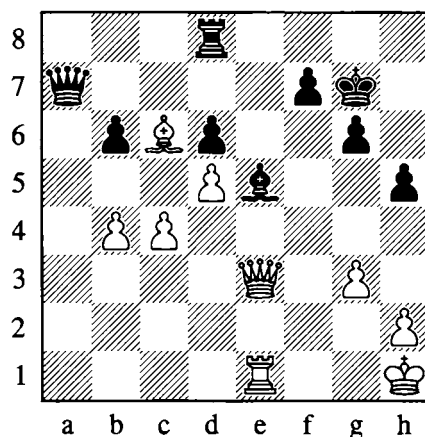
Anand played on until move 57. He probably wanted to recover after the unexpected turn of events, as after the opening he could hardly have imagined that he would lose! And he might have used this time to deal with the fact that for the second time in the match he would be trailing, so he was getting into the right mental state for the next game.

...0-1

Judit Polgar – Viswanathan Anand**Game 4**

After taking the lead again, I decided to play solidly and chose the positional 6.♙e2 system against the Najdorf. But this turned out to be a similar psychological mistake as in Game 2, because solid and careful play is “not my cup of tea”.

I simply played badly and landed in a dangerous position.



Positions with opposite-coloured bishops and major pieces are dangerous for the defensive side anyway, but here there are some aggravating details.

My bishop seems to occupy a dominating position, controlling some squares and diagonals deep in Black's territory, but it is completely cut off from the kingside.

Black's bishop is, on the contrary, optimally placed. It controls most of the important sectors of the board and, most significantly, it puts pressure on my king.

I hoped to be in time with c4-c5, exchanging some pawns and maybe queens, but did not realize that Black's attack would be faster.

34...h4!

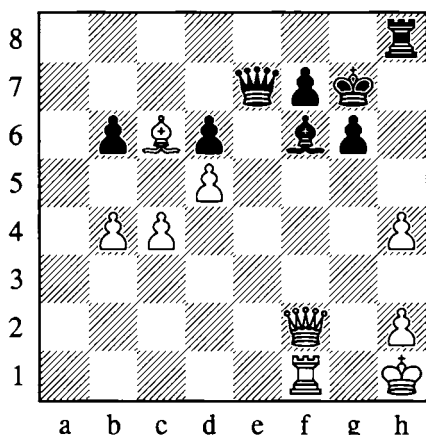
This simple move weakens my king's defence, threatening ...hxg3 followed by ...♞h8.

35.gxh4?!

This way of opening the h-file only speeds up Black's attack.

I should have been consistent with 35.c5 hxg3 36.cxd6, forcing the black bishop to leave the long diagonal with 36...♙xd6. Black has a huge advantage anyway and I am almost sure that I would not have been able to hold the position, but at least Anand would have had to display some inventiveness.

35...♖h8 36.♗f2 ♕f6 37.♖f1 ♜e7



After a general regrouping, bringing all his pieces into the attack, Black is winning. The h4-pawn is doomed and the h2-pawn is likely to share its fate.

...0-1

For the second time, Anand levelled the score.

The first two days had convinced the public that this would be a hard-fought match and that Vishy, the big favourite, may well not win. On the morning of the third day, Hans-Walter's wife joined my husband and me at the breakfast table, and asked me the innocent question: "What size do you wear?" I knew exactly what that meant. The tradition in the main event was that the champion gets a jacket as a trophy. So I smiled... and went on to win my next game!

Judit Polgar – Viswanathan Anand

Game 5

I sat down for this game with optimism. I had won the first games of both previous days and wanted to keep this tradition going.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♙e3 e6

It is interesting that Anand chose the most dangerous system for Black. It meant he was full of confidence despite the shaky course of events so far.

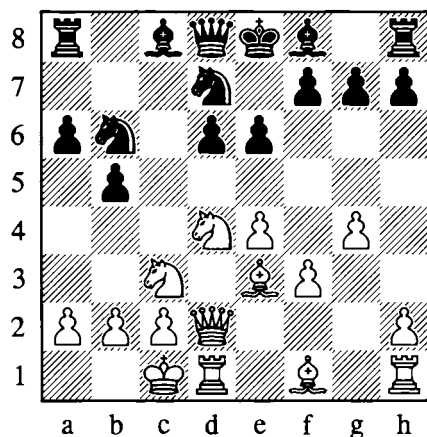
7.♙f3

This time I refrained from 7.g4, as in our Dos Hermanas 1999 game. The game of my life, I would say (Volume II, page 337).

7...b5 8.g4 ♘fd7

In principle, this is the same plan as was chosen by Kasparov in Linares 2001 (page 21), but with a different move order. The knights will land on b6 and d7 and it is not important that in this game it will be the king's knight that reaches b6, rather than its colleague.

9.♗d2 ♘b6 10.0-0-0 ♘8d7



Another small, and not so relevant, difference is that Anand delays his queen bishop's development. But the main difference was that on the next move I refrained from ♖d2-f2, aiming to complete my development and centralization as soon as possible.

11.♗d3

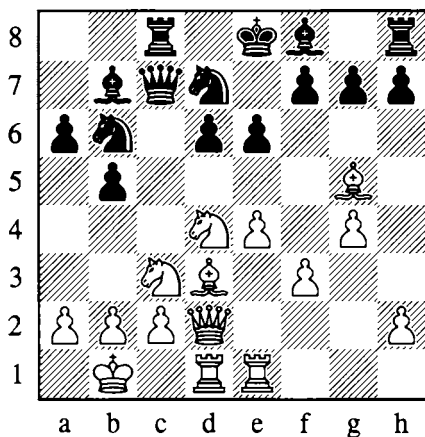
Not only consolidating my control in the centre, but also preparing ♗he1.

11...♙b7 12.♕b1 ♖c8 13.♙g5!?

This very rare move was an over-the-board inspiration. I felt that in rapid chess White's position is easier to play, so taking the game away from the known paths looked like a good idea.

13...♖c7 14.♗he1

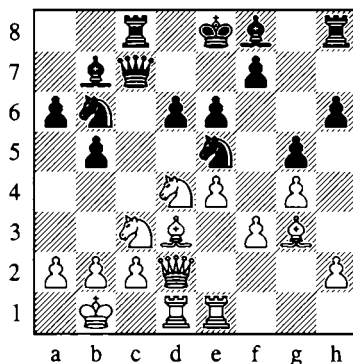
White's play is very straightforward. I was already preparing the thematic sacrifice ♖c3-d5.



14...♖e5

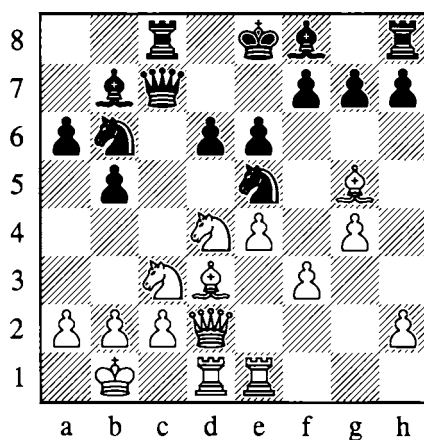
Before centralizing his knight, Black could have tried to ensure its stability with 14...h6, which would be an interesting move to try. 15.♙h4 g5 16.♙g3 ♖e5 A similar plan was used by Topalov in the Hoogeveen 2006 tournament (page 143). With the e-file safely covered, the sacrifices on f5 and d5 do

not work out well, but another thematic one would be possible.



17.♖cxb5 axb5 18.♙xb5† ♖ed7 19.♗e3 Most of White's pieces are ready to attack Black's weakest spot, the d6-pawn. This way my bishop manoeuvre ♗e3-g5-h4-g3 is entirely justified.

It is quite probable that I would have chosen this type of aggressive continuation. I was in an attacking mood, which not only was true to my style, but had worked out well in the first and third games.

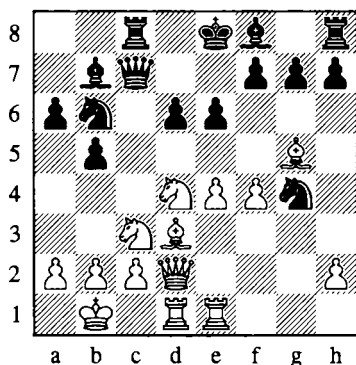


15.f4

This is the only way of giving meaning to my previous moves. I need to open the central files in order to take advantage of my strong centralization.

15...♖ec4

The greedy 15...♖xg4? would take the knight away from the main area of interest and leave it hanging slightly.

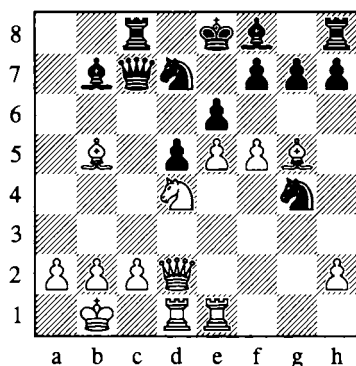


One possible continuation is:

16.e5! d5

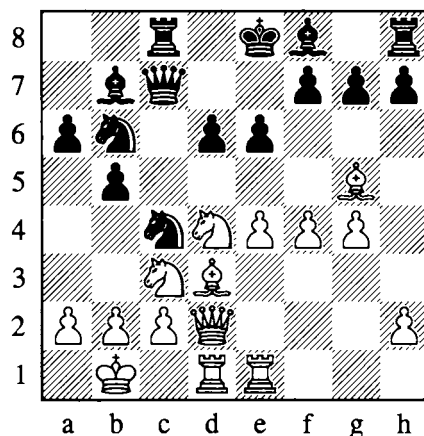
Opening the d-file with 16...dxe5 would allow a thematic mating combination: 17.♖dxb5 axb5 18.♗xb5† ♕c6 19.♗xc6† ♗xc6 20.♗d8† ♗xd8 21.♗xd8#

17.♖cxb5 axb5 18.♗xb5† ♖d7 19.f5



My bishops are cutting like crossed blades while all my other pieces exert relentless pressure along the central files.

15...♖xd3 16.cxd3 would leave Black underdeveloped and without any queenside attacking plan. I could soon switch to queenside play with ♗d1-c1.



16.♗c1

While building up my attack, I also had to take Black's threats into account – a typical Sicilian issue. My last move defends against 16...♖xb2, which can be met with 17.♖cxb5 axb5 18.♗xb5† ♖d7 19.♗xb2.

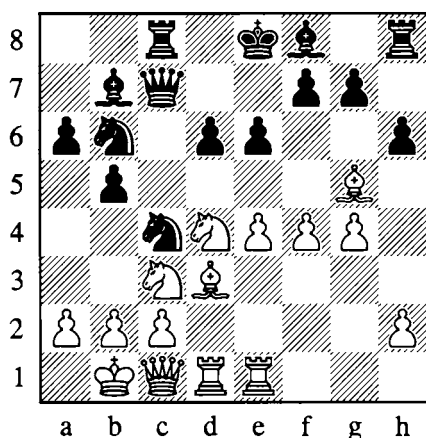
It is worth mentioning that such a mobile piece as the queen cannot really be passive on c1. In fact, just a few moves later, Her Majesty will re-emerge into play with great effect.

16...h6

It is not easy for Black to complete his development. For instance, if 16...♗e7 17.♗xe7 ♗xe7 18.♖f5 with a strong initiative.

I would have met the counterattacking 16...b4 in the same way as in the game: 17.♖d5 with similar play.

With his last move, Anand might have intended to start a kingside counterattack, opening files and squares after 17.♗h4 g5, in a similar way as I did against Shirov at Buenos Aires 1994 (Volume II, page 375). I did not let him go that far, though. As a matter of fact, the bishop will stay under the h6-pawn's attack for eight moves!



17. d5!?

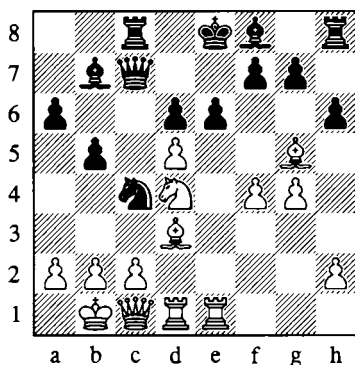
I was happy to deliver the sacrifice I had been playing for since the opening.

17...c5!

The safest answer. I have no concrete threats yet, so from a practical point of view it does not make sense to open the centre.

17...exd5? would be simply bad: 18.exd5+ dxe5 (18...d7 19.f5# would be an amusing mating pattern.) 19.fxe5 dxe5 20.fxe5+ fxe5 21.fel+- After winning the queen, I would retain a decisive attack.

The ultimate consequences of 17...dxd5 18.exd5 are harder to calculate, but one can feel that it might be dangerous for Black.



For example:

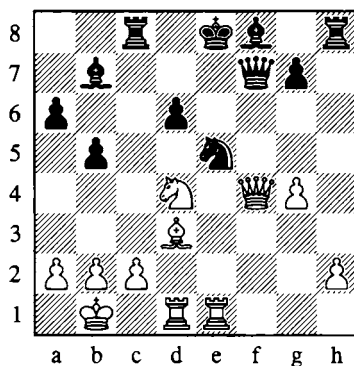
18...hgx5 19.dxe6

This looks really yummy for White. During recent analysis I found an amazing line which I am glad to share with you.

19...gxf4 20.fxf4

The simple 20.fxf4+ would be a good practical decision, yielding White an advantage after: 20...xf7 21.fxf4+ g8 22.f5 d5 (the only way to parry f6+) 23.fxb5!

20...d5 21.fxf4+ fxf7

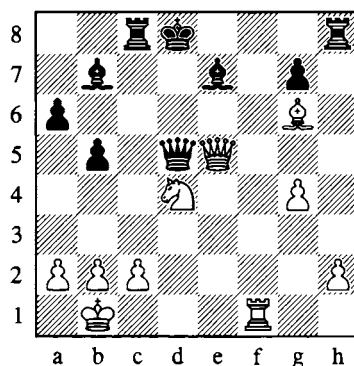


22.fxe5!

A typical combination, opening lines for the attack, but White needs to calculate very deeply.

22...dxe5 23.fxe5+ e7 24.fel f5 25.fg6+ d8

So far, both sides' play has been natural, but I gave this whole line for the sake of the next move.



26.♖d1!!

The only winning move; everything else loses. This is so typical of the Sicilian and other sharp openings. It is not enough to get a winning position, one also has to find the winning moves.

26...♗d7

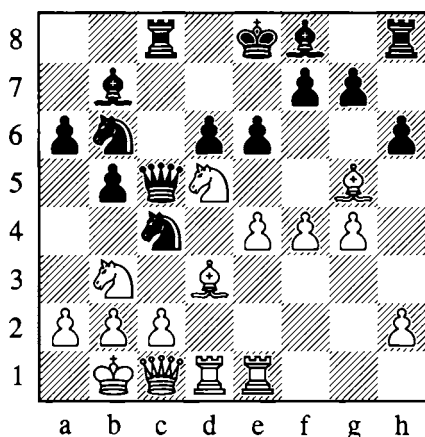
26...♖xe5 27.♜e6 is a spectacular mate.

27.♙f5+ ♖e8 28.♖xd5 ♙xd5 29.♙xc8

With two extra pawns and a winning position.

Instead of 18...hxg5, Black should play 18...♙xd5, but I am sure Anand did not like the position after 19.♙h4. I was looking forward to such attacking ideas as f4-f5, or even sacrifices on e6.

18.♜b3!



A simple move confronting Black with a difficult decision.

18...♖f2?

This apparently active incursion surprised me, as it will actually deprive Black's queenside of the queen's caring defence.

The correct answer was: 18...♖c6! Psychologically, it is understandable that such a modest retreat is not easy to decide upon,

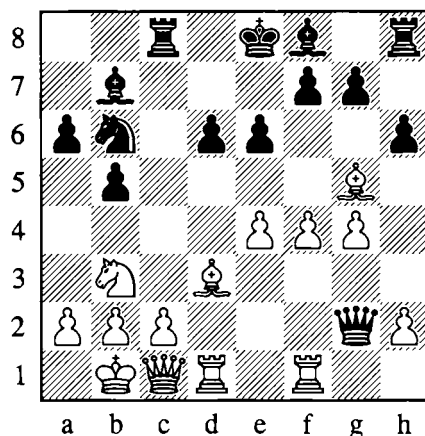
especially in a rapid game. The queen is not really exposed, with the exception of the fact that I could force a repetition with 19.♜d4, which was not in the least my intention.

Since 19.♙h4 ♜a4 would offer Black great counterplay, I would have had to exchange my active knight before retreating with the bishop: 19.♜xb6 ♖xb6 20.♙h4 With complicated play.

19.♖f1!

Anand immediately understood that he was in real trouble; there is no way back for the queen.

19...♖g2 20.♜xb6 ♜xb6



21.♖e3!

An important intermediate move, activating the queen and continuing to ignore the threat of ...hxg5.

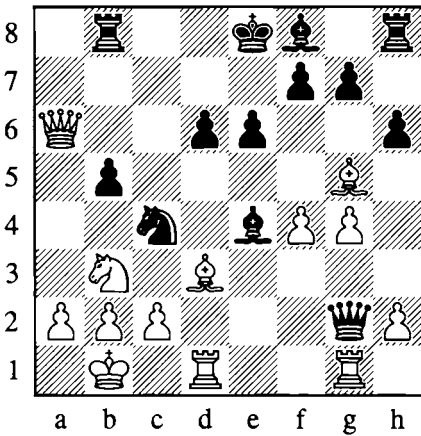
21...♜c4 22.♖a7

Black's lack of development and coordination is obvious, as his pieces are hanging.

22...♙xe4

If 22...♙c6 then 23.f5, putting the f7-square under pressure and preparing the solid bishop retreat to c1.

23.♟xa6 ♜b8 24.♞g1



24...hxg5?

Anand finally loses his patience and grabs the fearless bishop.

The only way to prolong the fight would have been the intermediate move: 24...♞b7! 25.♟xb5† ♜c6 26.♞xc4 hxg5 27.fxg5 ♞xh2 28.g6 White is only a pawn up, but with reasonable technique I should win.

25.♞xg2 ♞xg2 26.♞xc4 bxc4 27.♟a4†

And in view of 28.♟xc4, Black resigned. I think that at this point it was a relief for Anand that the game was over.

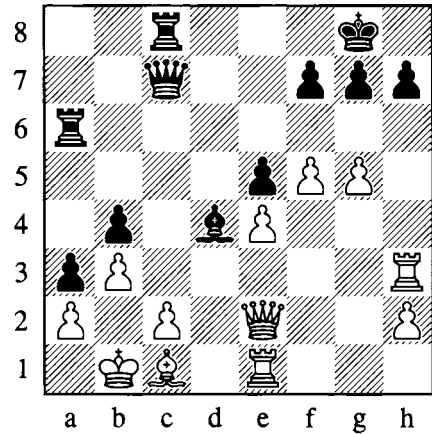
1–0

As the match was getting closer to the end it was filled with ever-growing tension. I had stepped into the second half with the right foot, but in the next game I faced the delicate psychological task of breaking the tradition of the previous days, according to which Anand would level the score immediately.

For once, my opening choice was principled. I abandoned any thoughts of playing solidly and chose the Najdorf Sicilian. However this did not bring the desired result.

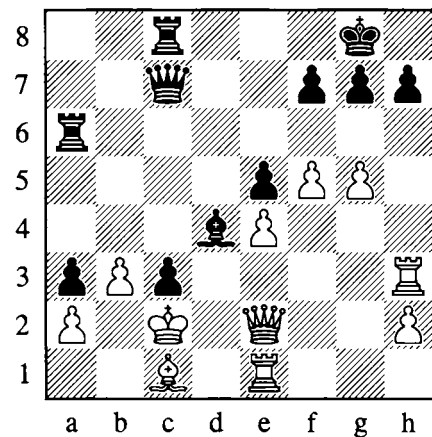
Viswanathan Anand – Judit Polgar

Game 6



Anand has won a pawn and kept kingside attacking chances. I still had hopes of using the c3-square for my counterplay, but Anand crossed my plans with surgical precision.

36.c4! bxc3 37.♞c2!



Suddenly, my c-pawn turned into a perfect shelter for the white king.

37...♞d6

I was still hoping to get some attacking chances by retreating my bishop and sacrificing

the exchange with ...♖d2†, but Anand's next move made my illusions vanish.

38.♖d1!

White is slightly better and, what's even worse, the play is rather one-sided. With the queenside secured, White can organize his kingside attack at his leisure.

Anand took advantage of my later inaccuracies and equalized for the third time.

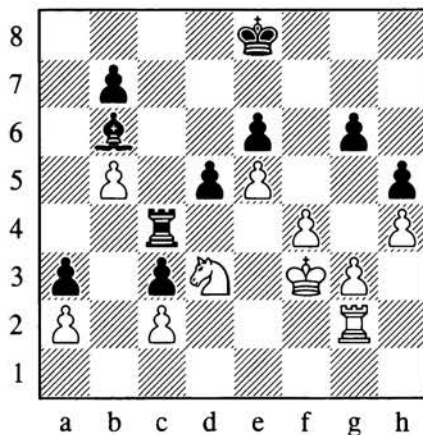
...1-0

There were two things that made the match really unusual. After six games, we had had no draws at all. In addition, I would invariably win the first game and lose the second, irrespective of the colour.

The fourth and decisive day started with the usual question: would I take the lead again, this time with Black?

Viswanathan Anand – Judit Polgar

Game 7



Things went fine for me in a Najdorf Sicilian and a balanced middlegame petered out into an endgame with reasonable counterplay for Black.

Since 43...♖e4 could be met with 44.♖e2, I played:



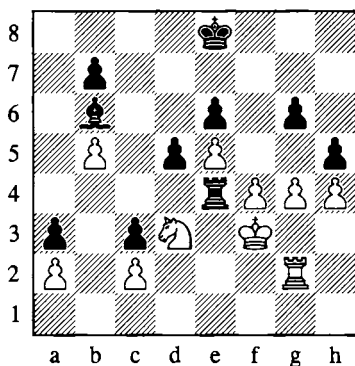
chesstouring.com

43...♖a4

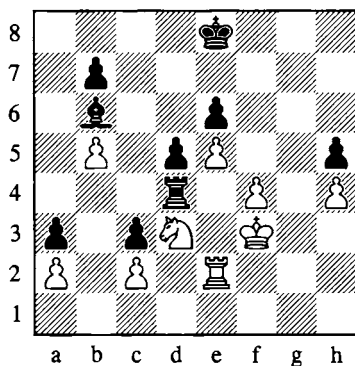
The threat of ...♖a4-a5xb5 forces White to open the kingside.

44.g4 hxg4†

I gave up my initial intention of 44...♖e4 because of a hallucination.



In a sudden instant of panic, I noticed that after 45.gxh5 my planned 45...♖e3† can be answered with 46.♔g4, defending the h5-pawn. For unclear reasons, I did not consider the simple recapture: 45...gxh5! (Preventing the king's activation and renewing the threat of ...♖e3†.) 46.♖e2 ♖d4

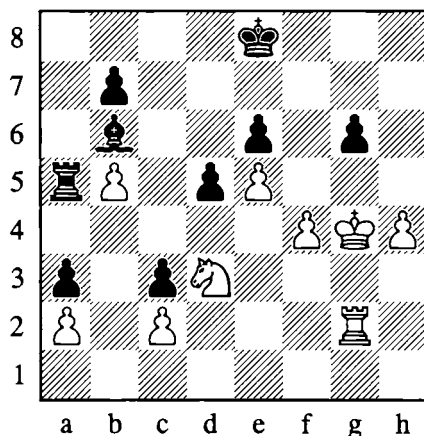


It is hard to believe that Black could lose this position. I would play ...♔f7 next, defending the invasion squares along the g-file. White would have to permanently watch out for my threat of ...♖e4-e3† while the h4-pawn would be weak.

45.♔xg4 ♖a5?

Underestimating the power of White's attack.

The correct defence was 45...♔f7!, keeping the flexibility of the rook. If 46.♔f3 ♖e4 or 46.♔g5 ♖a8 followed by ...♖h8. The game would have most likely ended in a draw.



After my move, Anand played 46.♔g5 and eventually won, with a bit of help from me. I believe that it is instructive to analyze the objectively stronger:

46.♔f3!

The king clears the g-file for the rook, taking advantage of the fact that ...♖e4-e3† is not a threat after my previous rook retreat.

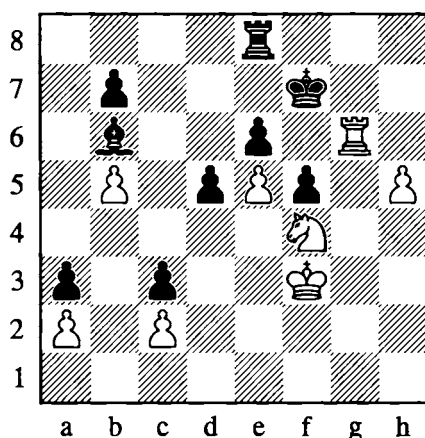
46...♔f7 47.♖5!

A very strong positional move, and not easy to find in rapid chess. White clears the f4-square for his knight in order to attack the base of Black's pawn chain on e6.

47...gxh5

47...exf5 is even worse: 48.e6†! The pawn is taboo because of ♖xg6† winning the bishop. So 48...♔e7 49.♖f4 followed by ♖xg6 when the e6-pawn would win the game.

48.h5 ♖a8 49.♖g6 ♖e8 50.♖f4



White threatens $\text{♙f6}\dagger$, winning the e6-pawn, and if 50... $\text{♚d8}\text{?}$ then 51.h6 threatening $\text{♙g7}\dagger$ is devastating.

With hindsight, I believe I lost this game because I wanted to win too much, instinctively relying on the “daily pattern”.

This result came as a shock, as until move 45 I had felt that things were very much under control. After that moment, I failed to notice that we were already playing for three results...

I was trailing for the first time in the match and the main question was whether I could fight back as effectively as Anand had done so far.

Unfortunately, the last game was marred by an unpleasant incident. After the usual break between games, we returned to the stage but found out that the Open group prize-giving ceremony had not finished, so our start was going to be delayed.

I decided to go to my room, which was a considerable distance through the corridors. I arrived back with a delay of about two minutes. I could see from a distance that Anand was already sitting in his chair, so I quickened my steps to the stage, in order to avoid making him wait for too long.

I was shocked to notice that my clock was already ticking and I had only 23 minutes instead of the initial 25.

I had not completely recovered from the previous loss and took the missing minutes as a new psychological blow. I was so affected that I played really badly and could not even offer reasonable resistance with White.

Despite the unfortunate final day, I still remember this match as being one of my most memorable events, full of excitement, interesting ideas, tactics and tension. I had played a balanced match against the strongest rapid chess player of the time!

After the match I decided, together with my husband Gusztav, that I had accumulated too much stress over the past few years, and so I chose to put classical tournaments “on hold” and settle for having a family.

The next chapter describes my comeback, two years later.

Chapter 5

Oliver



On the beautiful morning of August 10th 2004, my first child, a boy named Oliver, was born.

The road to becoming a mother was not smooth at all. In the spring of 2002 I had to cancel my participation in the Dubai Rapid Grand Prix at the last moment, due to a miscarriage. A tough experience, but as a fighter I had to learn to live with it, as so many other women do.

Life soon rewarded me for my sorrow. One year later I passed the 2700 rating barrier for the first time. I felt that in 2003 my chess was better than ever. Even more than the rating, my play and approach proved that I really belonged “up there”, with the elite.

After my match with Anand, as covered in the previous chapter, my husband and I decided that I would not play in the 2004 Wijk aan Zee tournament. We did not want the inevitable tension and stress of the tournament of the year to affect Oliver’s coming into our lives in any way.

After Oliver’s birth I received the following lovely letter from the tournament organization:

Wijk aan Zee, 9th September 2004

The members of the Corus Chess Committee congratulate you on the birth of your son Oliver. Jeroen told us that everything went fine. A happening with so much joy, we thought, needs a special gift.

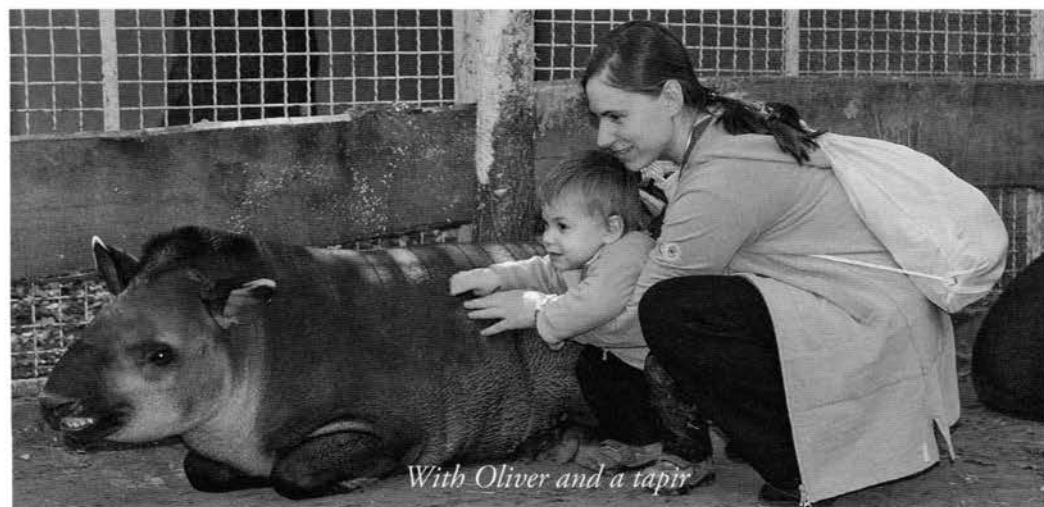
We asked the famous goldsmith Klaas-Jan Stammers from Bergen in North-Holland to make a special gift in the shape of a crowned caterpillar.

In the beginning the caterpillar looks slow and only on the earth but after a while it will become a wonderful butterfly. The resemblance with a baby can be made quickly. We are sure that with your care you will make a beautiful ‘butterfly’ out of Oliver.

And why the crown? This is obvious because Judit is, in the heart of all chess players in Wijk aan Zee, the queen of chess. The kindness of Gusztav has given him the title of King. So with the Royal couple as parents we regard Oliver as your little prince and this deserves a crown.

We wish you a lot of happiness with Oliver and hope to see the three of you in the near future (hopefully in Wijk aan Zee).

*With regards on behalf of the Corus Chess Committee,
Arno Vrins*



With Oliver and a tapir

My break from competitive chess lasted for 14 months. When I arrived at my first tournament as a mother, at Wijk aan Zee 2005, the main question for my fans, my colleagues, the organizers and (why would I hide it?) myself, was whether I had become a different player and person.

My successful return to tournament play would not have been possible without the constant help and support of my husband from the very day Oliver was born. Ever since we met, Gusztav loved travelling with me to tournaments, but this time he stayed home with our son, and followed the games from afar.

Wijk aan Zee is a long and tough tournament so, rather than travelling alone, I decided to ask my good old friend Mihail Marin (the same person who helped me to write this series of books!) to accompany me as a second. He has known me for a long time and his presence gave me self-confidence from the start of the tournament.

On January 15th 2005, I sat down for my first official game in more than one year:

Judit Polgar – Peter Svidler

Wijk aan Zee 2005

1.e4!

Maybe I have changed since Oliver came into my life, but my first move did not.

1...e5

In those years, Svidler's main weapon was the Sicilian but he also played the Ruy Lopez from time to time. Since I had a good score against him, Peter might have wished to play a solid game.

2.♖f3 ♖c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♖f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.♗e1 b5 7.♗b3 0-0

As far as I knew, Peter had played the

Marshall Attack only once before our game. From this perspective, his move order might have been just a way of testing my intentions, leaving open the possibility of returning to the closed lines of the Ruy Lopez on the next move.

8.c3

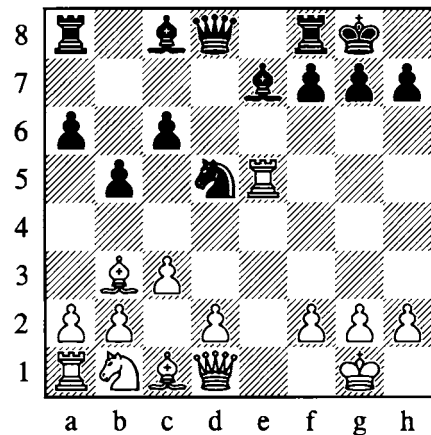
I have also tried the Anti-Marshall systems, introduced by 8.h3 and 8.a4, but this time I was ready to go for the main lines.

Peter now had his first break from automatic play, pausing for three minutes before replying.

8...d5

Not just an experiment; after this game, Peter played the Marshall Attack on several occasions.

9.exd5 ♖xd5 10.♖xe5 ♖xe5 11.♗xe5 c6



The Marshall Attack is a very interesting gambit. Black escapes the typical “Spanish torture” at the cost of one pawn, hoping that the bishops’ pressure along the c8-h3 and b8-h2 diagonals, combined with the queen incursion to h4 and the radical advance of the f-pawn, would offer him a strong attack.

The play can get very tactical, but many times it liquidates to endings in which White’s extra pawn is not enough to win.

In the late 80s and early 90s John Nunn was the only top player who used the Marshall Attack on a regular basis. In those times, it looked more like an adventure, but the next generations analyzed it thoroughly and play it with increasing success.

The use of computers played a big part in proving the gambit was playable, but given White's material advantage their "advice" can at times be misleading.

When preparing for my 1999 Dos Hermanas game against Adams, I found an interesting new idea in the Marshall Attack. The computer evaluated that in the resulting position I would have a huge advantage, so I went to the board full of optimism, but Adams reacted very accurately. I saw that I could force a draw by perpetual, but stubbornly relied on the engine's evaluation and... allowed Adams to win in good style. I would add that in the Marshall Attack the computer's general optimism can be quite misleading.

In the new millennium, the Marshall Attack is considered an almost unbreakable variation and most players have started to avoid it. Nowadays, it almost looks like an adventure if White allows it...

12.g3

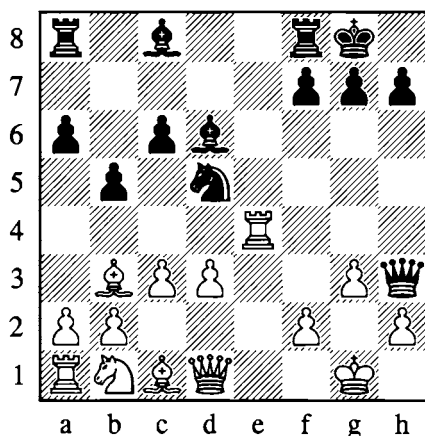
This was the first time I tried this move. Earlier I had played 12.d3, 12.d4 or even 12.♟xd5.

12...♟d6 13.♞e1 ♖d7

Peter spent 11 minutes on this move, transposing to the 12.d3 ♟d6 13.♞e1 ♖h4 14.g3 ♖h3 line.

The main alternative is 13...♟f5 as played by Anand, Adams and Svidler himself in later years.

14.d3 ♖h3 15.♞e4



Up to this point I had spent 20 minutes. This is a typical syndrome after a long break from competition – one becomes slower, needing more double-checking, and is less self-confident. I also felt a high degree of responsibility: it would have been so good to start the tournament in a positive way!

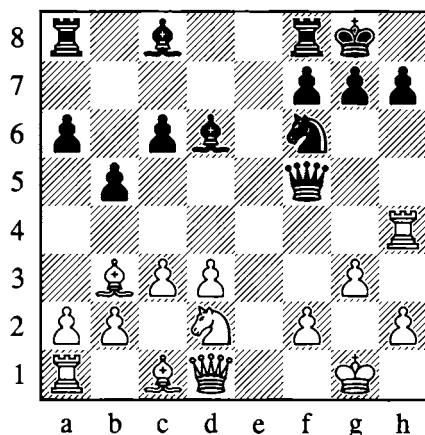
15...♟f6

15...♖f5 is the more popular move.

16.♞h4

Right in time to parry ...♟g4.

16...♖f5 17.♟d2

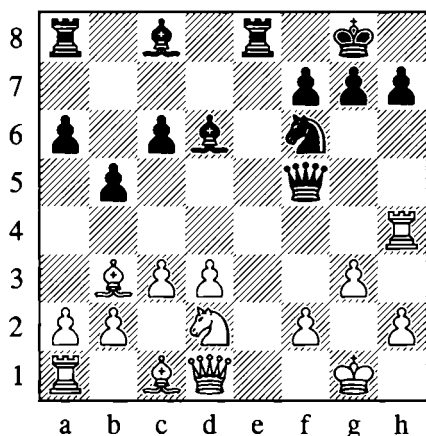


17...♞e8!?

This came as a new move to me, but later I discovered it had been played once in a game between lower-rated players.

It looks like a natural continuation, but in the game I managed to find a way of underlining Black's delayed queenside development.

The main line is 17...g5 with the following interesting sequence: 18.♖h6 ♖g4 19.♗e4 ♗xh6 20.♗xd6 ♗g6 21.♗e4 White's bishop pair and Black's multiple weaknesses on the dark squares yield White at least good compensation for the exchange.



18.♗e4

I do not really understand why it took me 23 minutes before playing this most natural move. I probably tried to figure out what Peter could have had in mind with his last move.

18...♗xe4

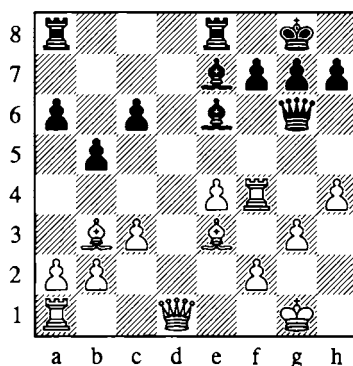
18...♗e7 would be too passive to bother White. There would be several favourable continuations, the most natural being 19.♖f4 ♗g6 20.♗xf6+ ♗xf6 21.♗e3 with an extra pawn and normal development.

19.♖xe4

I took this important decision after 11 minutes. I feared playing with my rook on the

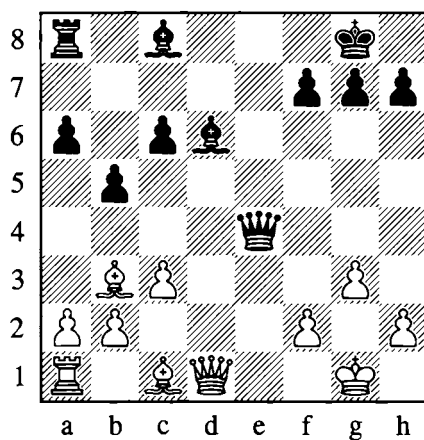
edge of the board and opted for safety. I also realized that after returning the pawn I would retain a slight advantage, especially when seeing 22.♗g5.

Objectively, 19.dxe4 would have offered better chances of a concrete advantage: 19...♗g6 20.♗e3 ♗e7 21.♖f4 ♗e6 22.h4



The rook enjoys some safety now and although converting the material would not be easy, the play would remain rather one-sided. A pawn is a pawn after all!

19...♖xe4 20.dxe4 ♗xe4



21.♗c2

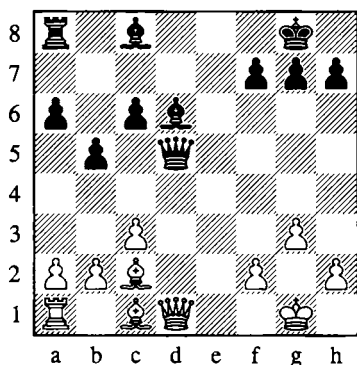
Only not 21.♗xd6? ♗h3 threatening mate on either g2 or e1.

After my move, Peter understood that this was an important moment and spent 22 minutes on his answer.

21...♞e7?!

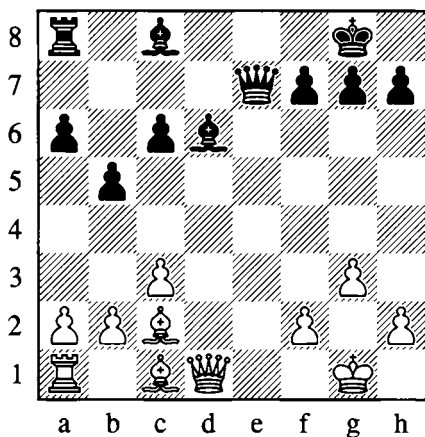
After the game, Svidler confessed that he had hoped that this retreat would allow him to complete his development properly. Most likely, he did not see my answer coming.

He recommended 21...♞d5!? as an improvement.



Objectively, he was right, but the ending resulting after 22.♞xd5 cxd5 23.♙e3 would be a bit unpleasant for Black, especially for an active player like Svidler.

I could regroup with ♜d1 and ♙d3 and press for a long time. Nevertheless, Black should be able to hold with careful defence.



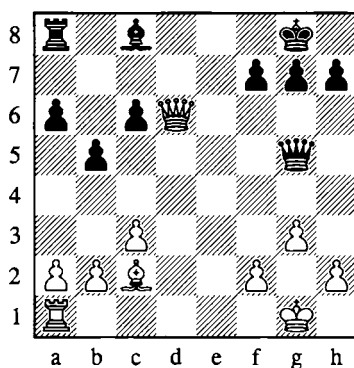
22.♙g5!

The only way to maintain the initiative. Black has to decide whether to move his queen again or weaken his king's position. Peter did not have enough patience to evaluate the alternatives properly and answered after only five minutes.

22...f6?!

With the king on g8, Black should think twice before weakening the a2-g8 diagonal (and the e6-square in particular). Peter probably wanted to gain a tempo for his development, but he underestimated the consequences of weakening the e6-square.

After: 22...♞xg5?! 23.♞xd6±



White's advantage would be obvious. After the forced 23...♞d5 I would have a pleasant choice between 24.♜d1, maintaining the initiative, and 24.♞xd5 cxd5 25.a4 with an excellent endgame. The missing dark-squared bishops make a big difference with respect to the ending mentioned in the comments to 21...♞e7.

The only move to keep White's advantage within bearable limits was:

22...♞c7?!

True, Black delays his development, but he avoids creating major weaknesses in his position. I would have more than one way to

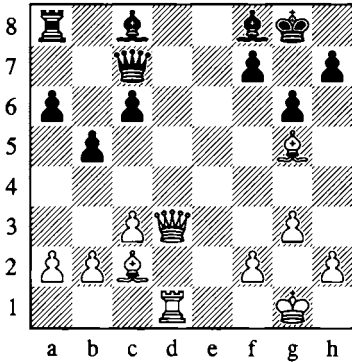
make use of the offered tempo to retain some pressure.

The simplest of them is:

23. ♖d3 g6

This weakening move still leaves Black many more defensive possibilities than Svidler's ...f7-f6.

24. ♖d1 ♕f8



It is interesting to note that three out of Black's four pieces occupy their initial squares and yet this is the best position Black would get in the whole game. White has no immediate threats and needs to regroup, making the development of the c8-bishop inevitable.

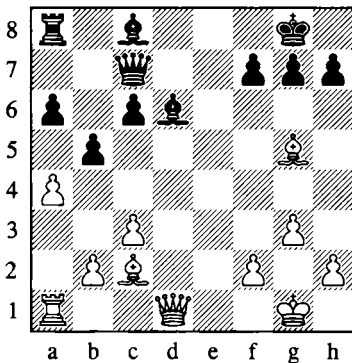
25. ♗f3 ♕e6 26. ♕e4 ♖c8

Black is just in time to defend everything, but defending may not be what one wishes for in this opening. Play may continue:

27. ♕f4 ♗b6 28. ♕e5

With a slight initiative.

23. a4!? is a bit more subtle.

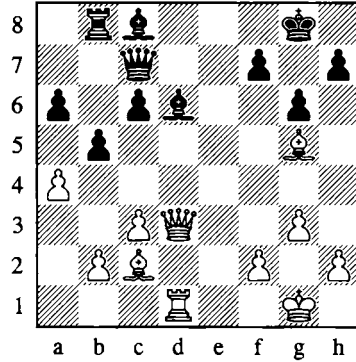


White prepares for a pleasant endgame in which after a4-a5 the a6-pawn would be a permanent source of worries for Black. If Black tries to maintain his structural integrity with:

23... ♖b8

The following familiar sequence would create new problems:

24. ♗d3 g6 25. ♖d1

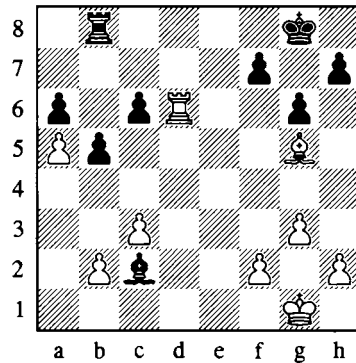


The main point is that the generally desirable 25... ♕f8 loses to 26. ♕f4, so Black needs to look for something else.

25... ♕f5

Or if 25... ♕e5 26. ♕d8 ♗a7 27. ♗e2! Black's coordination would fall apart.

26. ♗xd6 ♗xd6 27. ♖xd6 ♕xc2 28. a5



White's superior activity and the permanent weakness of the a6-pawn ensures a lasting advantage, despite the presence of opposite-coloured bishops.

Stubbornly preventing the disaster on e6.

27.♖e4

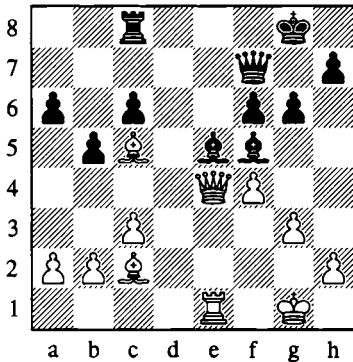
The possibility of gaining a tempo in this moment explains why 24.♗h5 would have been premature.

27...g6 28.f4

The bishops are hanging so Black has to conjure up some miracle to survive.

28...♙f5

Better than 28...♙d5 29.♗b4 ♙b8 30.♞e7 with a decisive invasion.



29.♗xf5!

Simplifying to a very promising ending.

29...gxh5 30.♙b3 ♗xb3 31.axb3 ♙c7 32.♞e7±

With complete domination and the better structure.

25.♞d1!

Suddenly, the other bishop becomes the main target, but getting out of the pin with 25...♗c7? would bring its colleague back into the limelight due to 26.♗e4!.

25...♞d8

Svidler might have considered my last move impossible in view of 25...♙g4? overlooking the simple 26.♞xd6!.

26.♙e4

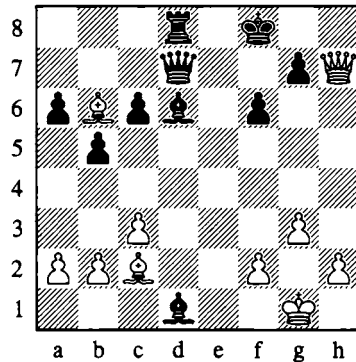
Played rather quickly, after just five minutes.

I had the dilemma of whether to play:

26.♙b6

Svidler considered this to be better. I must confess that I stopped my calculations too early, being too lazy to go all the way:

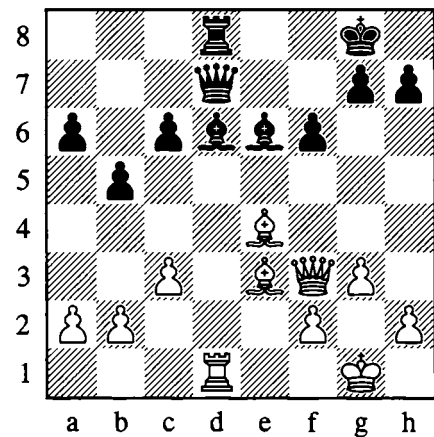
26...♙g4 27.♗d3 ♙xd1 28.♗xh7† ♖f8



I thought there would not be anything better than 29.♗h8† leading to a drawn opposite-coloured bishops ending despite my extra pawn. But amazingly, I could force a four-bishop ending with an extra pawn and every chance to win:

29.♙f5! ♗e8 30.♙g6 ♗e6 31.♗h8† ♗g8 32.♗xg8† ♖xg8 33.♙xd8

Despite my imperfect calculation at this stage, the move I played is also very strong.



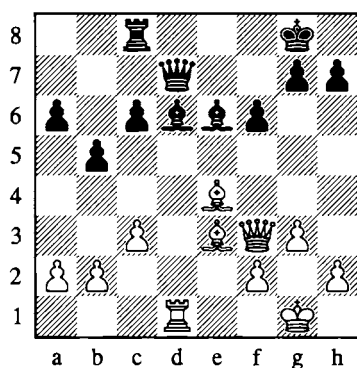
26...♙xa2

This move is not without logic. The bishop moves away from the vulnerable square while

keeping the dangerous diagonal defended and grabbing a pawn on the way. Still, there is a hidden detail that Svidler surely overlooked during his nine-minute think.

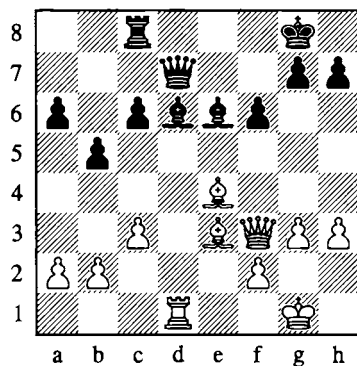
26...♙g4? would lose material to: 27.♞xd6 ♙xf3 28.♞xd7 ♞xd7 29.♙xf3+—

The best practical chance would have been: 26...♞c8!?



During the game I was relying on 27.♙f4?! failing to notice that the dynamic balance has changed, making 27...♙g4! entirely possible: 28.♞xd6 ♙xf3 29.♙xh7† ♞xh7 30.♞xd7± Despite the missing pawn, Black has good chances to save the game.

The winning move would be the paradoxical: 27.h3!!



I doubt this would have come to my mind immediately, but I remember that I felt the

position should be close to winning due to all these pins, so I would have looked for a surgical solution.

White prevents ...♙g4 while renewing the threat of ♙f4. Since 27...♙xh3? 28.♞h1! leaves Black hopelessly exposed to the threats of ♞xd6 or ♙f4 and to the X-ray attack against h7, he would have had to try: 27...f5 28.♙c2 ♞e7 29.♙xf5

White has an extra pawn and an active position.

27.♙b6

Since 27...♞c8 28.♙c5 and 27...♞e8 28.♙xc6 are curtains, things get critical for Black.

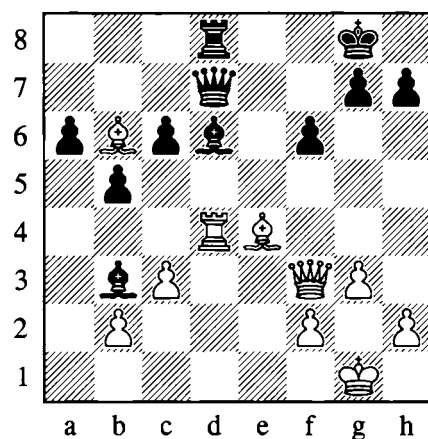
27...♙b3

Svidler must have placed great hopes on this zwischenzug, forcing my rook to weaken the back rank in order to keep the pin.

28.♞d4!!

The winning move, preparing to obstruct the a2-g8 diagonal with a well-timed c3-c4 (see the next comment).

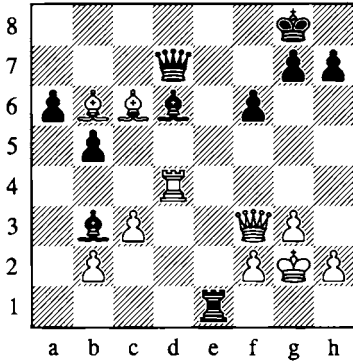
If 28.♞d2 ♞e8 29.♙c5 ♞e6 or 29.♙xc6 ♞e1† 30.♙g2 ♞e6 matters would be anything but clear.



28...c5

Desperation.

The key point behind my last move is that after: 28...♙e8 29.♙xc6 ♖e1† 30.♙g2 The rook is very active, controlling important squares along the d-file and the c4-square at the same time.

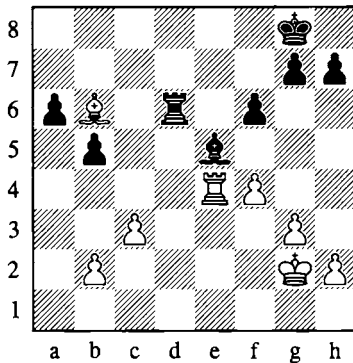


The main thematic line is: 30...♗e6 31.c4!! (Threatening ♙d5 and ♗xb3 at the same time.) Now 31...♙xc4 32.♖xc4 would not change anything, of course.

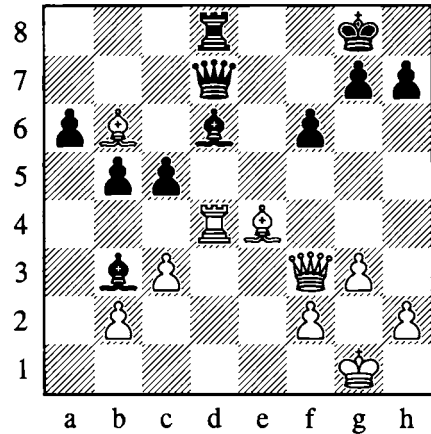
Or 30...♗e7 31.♙d5† ♙xd5 32.♗xd5† ♖e6 33.♖e4 with a decisive pin.

Now 33...♙f7 loses to the simple 34.f4 g6 35.♙d8 ♗e8 36.g4.

The more spectacular line is: 33...♙e5 34.f4 ♗d6 35.♗xd6 ♖xd6



36.♙f2!! Leaving the black bishop trapped in the centre of the board!



29.♙xc5

29.♖d2 also wins: 29...♙e8 30.♙d5† ♙xd5 31.♗xd5† ♖e6 32.♙xc5

But the game continuation allows me to display the main idea behind the rook lift to d4.

29...♗e6 30.c4!

1-0

What a wonderful feeling it was to win my first official game after such a long time. It was good to realize that “I can still play chess.” Right after the game, Svidler himself remarked: “Nothing has changed...”

Wijk aan Zee is a long tournament, though. As refreshing as it might be to start with a win, this far from guarantees a favourable final result. The only correct approach is... scoring whenever you get a chance, as the next day you may well get another 2700+ opponent.

From Rounds 2 to 9, things did not run my way; I lost two games and drew six, without a single win. I returned to 50% with my tenth round win against Topalov. After the 11th round draw with Anand, I felt that the time had come to climb back to a positive score.

Judit Polgar – Ivan Sokolov

Wijk aan Zee 2005

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6
5.0-0 ♙c7 6.♞e1 b5 7.♙b3 d6 8.c3 0-0

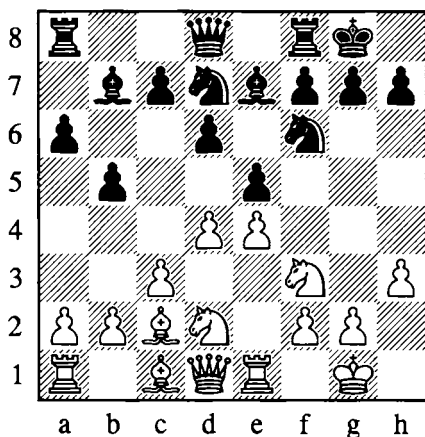
Ivan has played the Ruy Lopez throughout his career, so he has had the time to try out all kinds of systems: the Berlin Wall and the Marshall Attack, the Open and Bird variations, as well as several systems in the closed variations.

Back in 1994 in Madrid, I won my first game against Ivan by somewhat restricting his choice with 9.d4, but by 2005 I used to stick to the main lines.

9.h3 ♘b8

No more Marshall Attacks for me in this tournament!

10.d4 ♘bd7 11.♘bd2 ♙b7 12.♙c2



12...c5

In our 8th round game, Short played the main line 12...♞e8 and I used my good old weapon 13.b3, which had served me well during my 1993 match against Spassky (see Volume II). I obtained a huge advantage but failed to win.

Ivan had played the game move before, so it did not come as a surprise to me. He might

have relied, though, on the fact that I had never before faced it in practice.

13.d5

It looks logical to block the centre after Black no longer has the freeing ...c7-c6. In the long run, Black will have to re-develop his bishop, most likely with ...♙c8-d7.

If White wishes to maintain the tension in the centre, the alternatives are 13.♘f1 ♞e8 14.♘g3 and 13.b3.

13...g6

13...c4 is a typical reaction after d4-d5, but since White has not weakened the b3-square yet with a2-a4, 14.b4 would be possible.

14.♘f1 a5

This was a new move, aiming to transform the fight into a race on the opposite wings. Black plans to take the initiative on the queenside with ...c5-c4, ...♘d7-c5, ...♙a6, ...b5-b4, ...♞c7 and so on.

The traditional plan is 14...♘h5 15.♙h6 ♘g7 as played by Gligoric in the 70s. One famous game is Karpov – Gligoric, Riga Interzonal 1973, which ended in a win for the future World Champion.

If I would limit myself to just carrying out the kingside plan, the consequences of the novelty would be rather unclear and, most likely, everything would be decided by just one tempo.

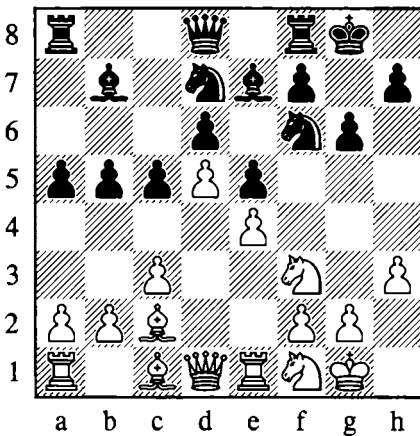
One of the reasons why the Ruy Lopez is so complicated and interesting is that both sides can alternate moves on the opposite wings. In order to handle this method well, one has to have a clear idea about one's own plan and anticipate the opponent's intentions.

At times, the slightest structural change on either wing may cause a major readjustment of plans. In a wider sense, one must always have

an understanding of what is happening across the whole board.

In positions with a blocked centre, piece exchanges tend to occur rather late. It may well happen that on move 30 or 40 there would still be all the pieces on the board! Under such circumstances, opening the position by tactical means can be possible and you have to make sure the coordination of your pieces is adequate for such circumstances. Obviously, all these points complicate the process of planning and anticipating.

Having more space, White is in a better situation from this point of view. My next move is a good illustration of many of the aspects mentioned above.



15.a4!

This is the best way to cross Black's intentions, taking advantage of the weakening of the b5-square.

If 15.♟g3 c4 it would be too late for the thematic break: 16.a4 b4 Threatening to lock in my bishop and rook forever with ...b4-b3. With my knight on g3 already, Black would have little trouble defending his c4-pawn.

15...b4

Black could not avoid weakening the c4-square, so it looks safer to keep his structure compact at least.

If 15...♙a6 16.axb5 ♙xb5 I could immediately switch to queenside play with 17.♙a4 ♖b6 18.♟d3d2 followed by ♟e3 and the occupation of the c4-square. This line proves the flexibility of my development, which allows me to change plans according to the circumstances.

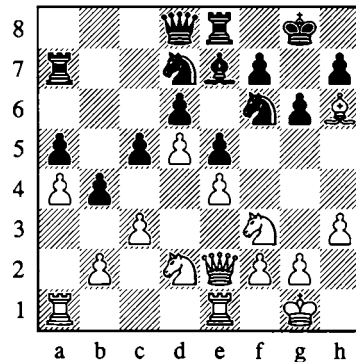
16.♙d3!

An important move in the fight for the light squares. I could of course block the queenside with 16.c4, retaining some attacking chances on the kingside, but this would have simplified Black's defence considerably. For the attacking side it is always better to keep the tension on both wings.

16...♖c7

Threatening to break the blockade with ...c5-c4.

Exchanging the passive bishop with 16...♙a6 would simplify my task of occupying the light squares. 17.♙xa6 (17.♙b5 is also possible) 17...♞xa6 18.♖e2 ♞a7 19.♙h6 ♞e8 20.♟d1d2! Followed by ♟c4.



Although this may look like a loss of time, it actually is more of a display of flexibility. The other knight should stay on f3, controlling the g5-square and thus avoiding ...♟h5 followed by ...♙g5.

Having more space and a good blockade on the light squares, I could combine play on

both wings. One important thing would be to prevent any kind of counterplay for Black, even if this might require investing some tempos on apparently neutral moves.

On the queenside my plan would be to find a good moment for c3xb4. If ...c5xb4, my rook might land on c6, while ...a5xb4 would leave me with a strong passed pawn.

On the kingside, I could play ♖h2, g4, ♜g1, getting prepared for a rapid switch with ♕c4-e3-f5.

Black would have nothing better than waiting passively for the execution.

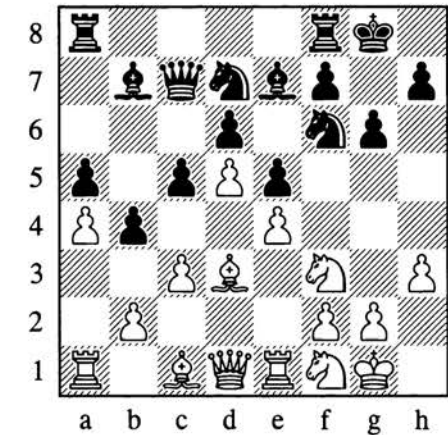
inaccurate move, I failed to anticipate Black's counterplay.

I should have played 17.♙b5 or 17.♙h6 followed by 18.♙b5 and only later transferred my knight to c4.

17...bxc3!

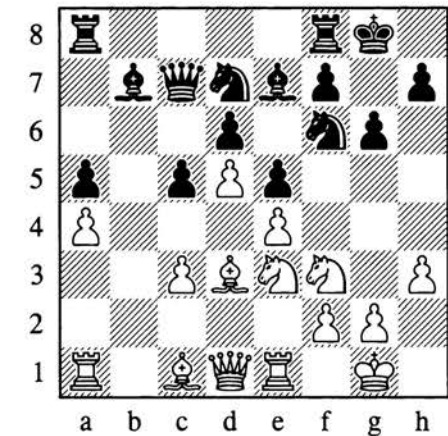
The correct move order to break the blockade, as if 17...c4 18.♕xc4 bxc3 I could stabilize my knight with 19.b3!. The c3-pawn would be doomed.

18.bxc3

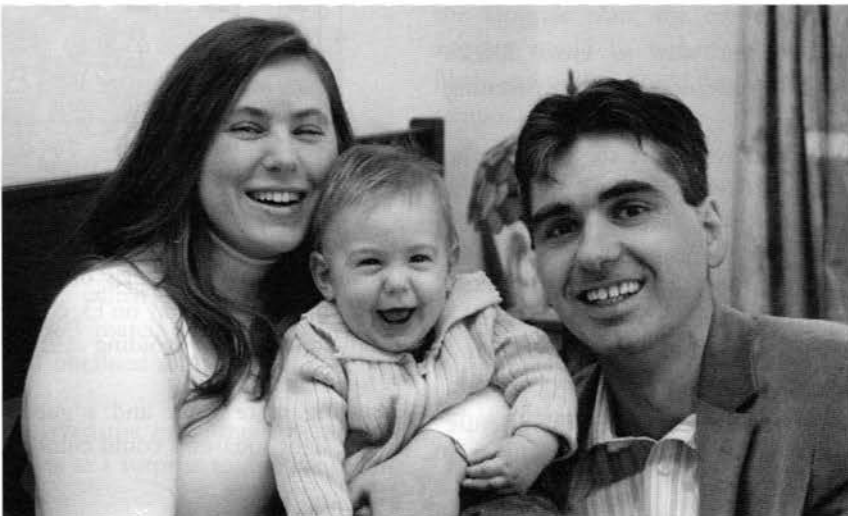


17.♕e3?!

During the 11 minutes I spent on this



18...c4!



This came as a surprise and during the 16 minutes I spent on my next move my surprise became even greater that his move really is working!

19.♙c2

I thought this would offer me the best practical chances.

19.♘xc4 requires some detailed analysis, though. Black would get nowhere with the thematic combination 19...♘xe4 20.♙xe4 ♙xd5 because of 21.♘e3 ♙xe4 22.♙xe4 with firm control of the light squares.

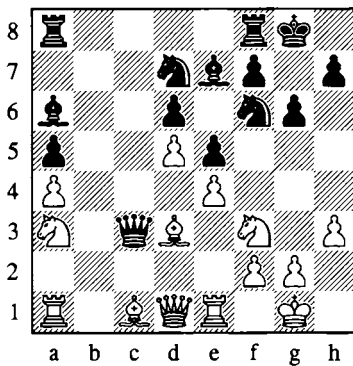
Better would be the simple:

19...♙a6

Activating the bishop. The best answer would be the not very nice-looking:

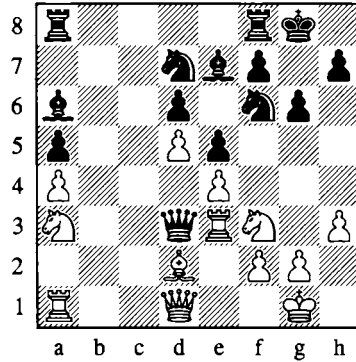
20.♘b2!

The knight seems to be passive on b2, but it defends the a4-pawn and is ready to return into play with ♘b2-c4 at a later moment. Unfortunately, the logical 20.♘a3, aiming to occupy the b5-square, does not work for dynamic reasons: 20...♙xc3

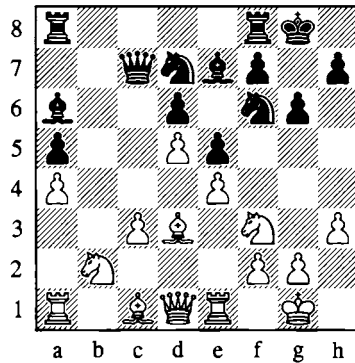


1) 21.♙xa6 ♙xa1 22.♙b5 ♙fc8 23.♘c4 During the game I calculated 23...♙ab8 and stopped, not being happy with my position. However, 23...♙xc4 24.♙xc4 ♘c5 would be even stronger. Once again, the a4- and e4-pawns are weak.

2) 21.♙d2 ♙xd3 22.♙e3 fails to trap the queen:



22...♙f1! Returning the extra bishop and exchanging the queen rather than losing it. 23.♙xf1 ♙xf1 24.♙xf1 ♘c5 If White were better coordinated, she would have an advantage, due to the “bad” black bishop. The way it is, White loses a pawn.



20...♙xc3 21.♙xa6 ♙xa6 22.♙e2

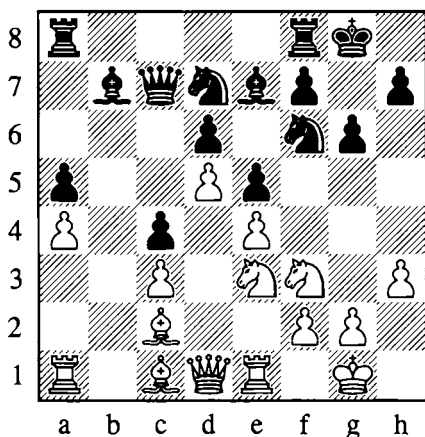
Over-defending the knight in order to allow the bishop to develop.

22...♙c8 23.♙g5

Objectively, White may still have some advantage. Black is quite active, but in the long run the knight jump would put him under constant pressure.

I remember that during the game I was very disappointed that 20.♘a3 does not work, finding 20.♘b2 very unappealing at the same

time. By the method of elimination, I chose the game move, after which the position is fairly balanced, but still complicated and with chances for both sides.



19...♙a6

Black rightly decides to improve his position little by little.

The impulsive 19...♘c5 20.♘d2 ♘d3 21.♙xd3 cxd3 22.c4 would doom the d3-pawn and leave the b7-bishop passive.

20.♘d2

For the time being, there can be no talk about a kingside attack. I was just very worried about a possible ...♘c5 and focused on preventing it.

20...♜fc8

This move has two main ideas. It clears the f8-square for the bishop and also over-defends the c4-pawn, thus allowing a regrouping with ...♞a7 and ...♙d8-b6, with very active play.

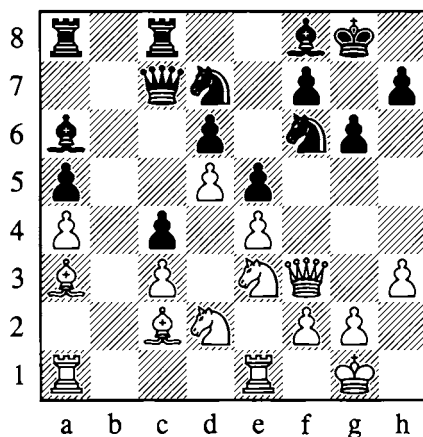
20...♘h5 is the kind of move I always have to watch out for, but the typical 21.♘f5 would do for now.

21.♙a3

With my knights blocking the c1-h6 diagonal, this is the only way to develop the

bishop. By putting pressure on the d6-pawn, I prevent the black bishop transferring to b6.

21...♙f8 22.♞f3



Connecting the rooks and putting pressure on the f6-knight.

22...♙g7

Ivan probably wanted to free his d7-knight, but frankly I was expecting the more active 22...♙h6.

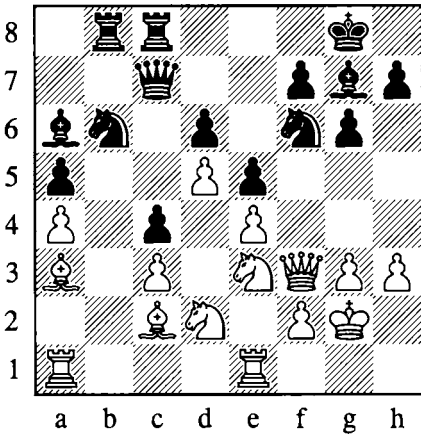
23.g3

Finally I switch to an active plan consisting of ♜g2 and ♘g4. If ...♘xg4, hxg4, I could start an attack along the h-file with ♜h1.

23...♜ab8 24.♜g2 ♘b6?

Black has a good position, but he does not have time for everything! Ivan's plan is quite ambitious but rather slow: ...♘fd7-c5-d3. Moreover, it allows an unexpected switch in my play.

24...h5 would have been a better way of keeping the balance between the opposite wings, planning ...♘h7 and ...♙h6, with ...♘h7-g5 or ...h5-h4 to be taken into account at all times.



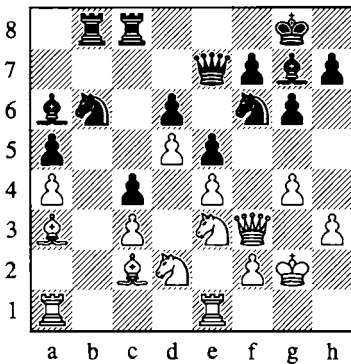
25.g4!

Now is the only moment when this resolute advance of the g-pawn works. Normally, Black would be happy to answer with ...♙g7-h6-f4, but right now this is impossible due to the fact that the d7-knight has moved away.

25...♘fd7

Black does not pay attention to my attack and keeps carrying out his queenside plan.

25...♞e7 would have been an important alternative, aiming to fight back on the kingside.



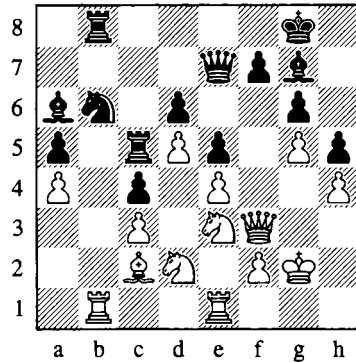
The immediate threat is ...♙h6 and 26.g5 would not do because of 26...♘h5 followed by an invasion on the f4-square. I would instead parry the threat with:
26.h4

Planning h4-h5.

26...h5 27.g5 ♘fd7

For the time being, Black does not seem to be in danger, but the potential threat is ♘e3-f5. For instance:

28.♞ab1 ♘c5 29.♙xc5 ♞xc5



With all my pieces optimally placed, I could finally deliver the tactical blow:

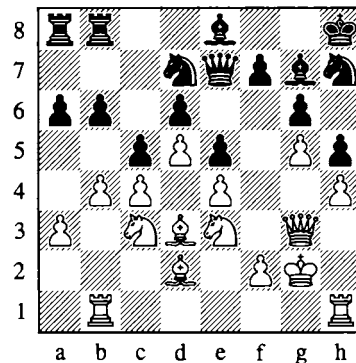
30.♘f5! gxf5 31.exf5

Despite the computer's scepticism, my feeling is that Black is crushed!

After the game I showed this idea to my second, and years later this inspired him to defeat a strong opponent:

Mihail Marin – Julio Granda Zuniga

Andorra 2012



White has an ample space advantage, but no favourable pawn breaks in sight, since f2-

f4, ...exf4 would only activate the d7-knight and the g7-bishop. At the same time, Black plans 26...cxb4 27.axb4 a5, followed by ...d5 soon.

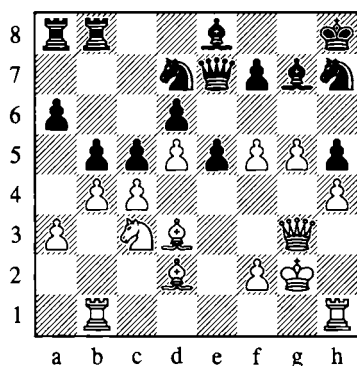
26. d5!

Time trouble was approaching and White played this without any hesitation.

26...gxf5 27.exf5

Despite the missing piece, White threatens to improve his position with quiet moves: d4, f3xh5 and at the right moment f5-f6. If Black reacts with ...f7-f6, the simple g5-g6 followed by f5xh5-g4 and h5-h6 would crush him.

27...b5!?

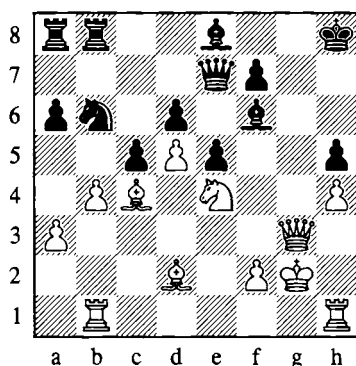


The only way to get some play. The game continued 28. f3 and White eventually won, but the strongest line would have been: 28. d4 bxc4 29. dxc4 d6 30. f6

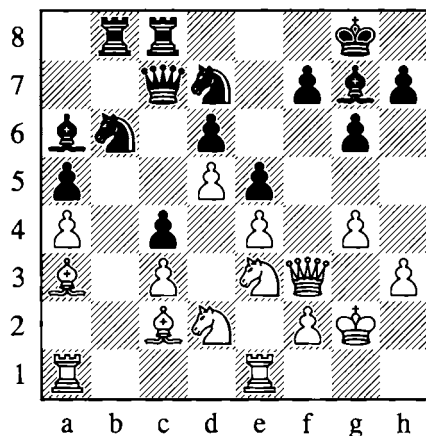
White regains the piece while retaining the attack.

For instance: 30...dxf6 31.gxf6 dxf6 32. g5+—

Or else: 30...dxf6 31.gxf6 dxf6



32. g5!!+— Actually, this is what White had missed when playing 28. f3. The h-file opens with decisive threats.



26. h4

I continue my attack without disclosing my real intentions yet: it could be g4-g5 or h4-h5.

26...d5 27. dxc5!

I wanted to exchange Black's most threatening piece.

If 27. h5 d3 28. dxd3 cxd3 the black c4-pawn would have cleared space for most of the black pieces massed on the queenside.

27...dxc5

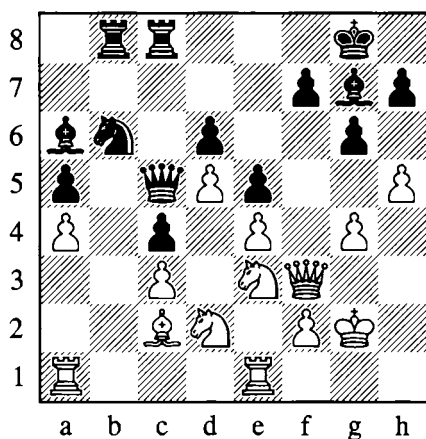
Apart from the strategic idea of my previous move, there is also a dynamic element involved: the black queen will soon have to return to the seventh rank to defend the kingside.

28.h5?!

This inaccuracy, underestimating Black's possible answer mentioned in the next comment, fortunately remained without consequences.

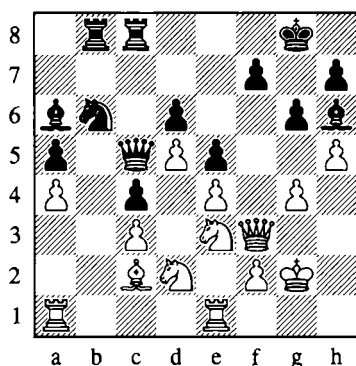
28.g5 might have led to a different type of position.

But if I wanted to attack with h4-h5, I should have prepared it with 28.♖h1!, possibly transposing to the game.

**28...♗d7**

After seven minutes, Ivan fails to grab his chance. His move looks logical, preparing to defend the kingside with ...♗f8 and allowing the start of effective counterplay with ...♖b2.

I do not know whether he underestimated the power of my attack or simply thought that 28...♗h6! would be too risky, thus sharing my opinion when playing my last move.



The main question remains which way to recapture after 29.hxg6.

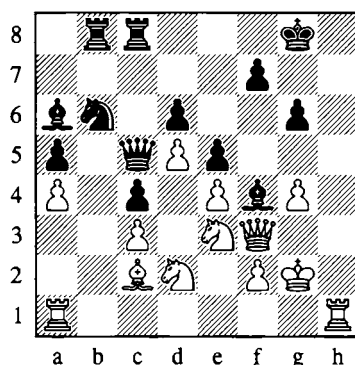
The strategically solid move is:

29...hxg6?

But in fact this leads to trouble:

30.♖h1 ♕f4

It may seem as if Black has managed to defend, while keeping nice control on the dark squares. But I had managed to see a bit further than that, much in the spirit of the chapter *Fluid Attacks* from the second volume.



31.g5!!

A thematic multipurpose move, clearing space for my knight and rook, but also offering the queen support on f6 in certain lines.

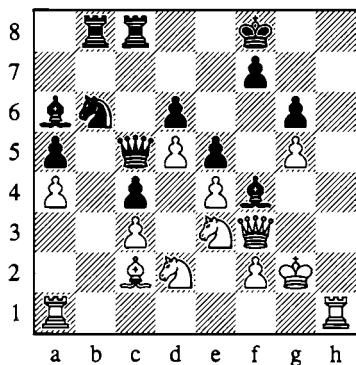
31...♕f8

Trying to evacuate the danger area before it is too late. Other moves fail to thematic combinations.

If 31...♕g7, hoping for ...♖h8, then: 32.♖h7! Gaining time to double on the h-file. 32...♕xh7 33.♖h3! Since 33...♕g7 34.♖h6! ♕g8 35.♖h1 is curtains, Black has to play 33...♕g8 when 34.♖h1 ♕f8 35.♖h8! ♕e7 36.♖f6! wins.

The pawn is pretty much poisoned: 31...♕xg5 32.♖h8! This time, the rook sacrifice has the aim of leaving the f7-pawn undefended. 32...♕xh8 33.♖xf7 ♕h4

The only way to avoid immediate mate.
 34.♖h1 g5 35.♜f6† ♔g8 36.♙f3 ♜c7
 37.♙f5 With a massive and decisive attack.



32.♞h4!?

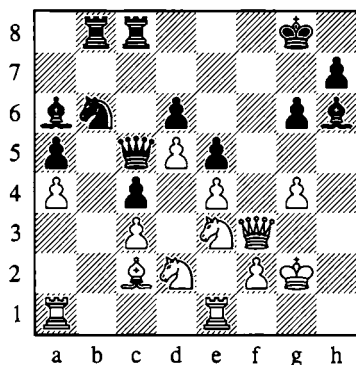
Aiming to remove Black's main defender, his bishop.

32.♞h7 is also possible.

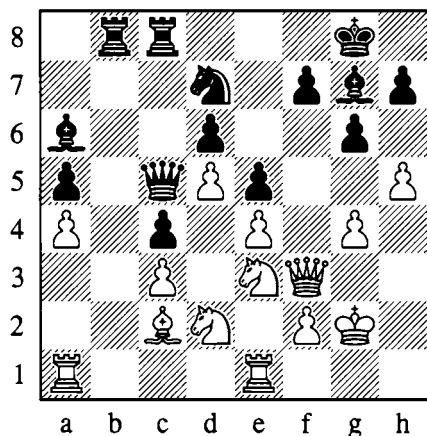
32...♔e7 33.♞xf4 exf4 34.♜xf4

With crushing pressure.

But we both seem to have underestimated:
 29...fxg6!



By clearing the f-file and the seventh rank, Black manages to escape wet out of deep water. There seems to be nothing better than forcing a perpetual check with: 30.g5 ♕xg5 31.♜g4 ♕f4 32.♜e6† ♔f8 33.♜f6† ♔g8=

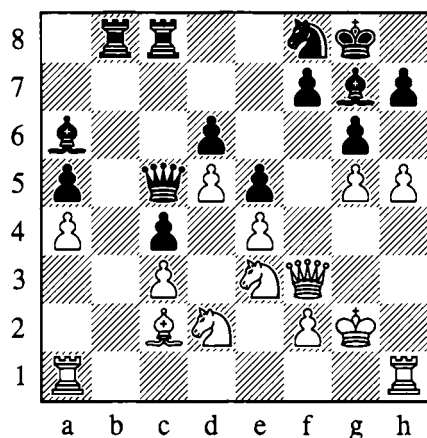


29.♞h1!

Not giving Black a second chance. Ivan must have understood that the position is less easy that he might have hoped, as he spent 14 minutes, leaving himself only 19 minutes to reach move 40.

29...♙f8 30.g5

This pawn advance, no longer connected with a sacrifice, prepares the knight's incorporation into the attack with ♞g4.

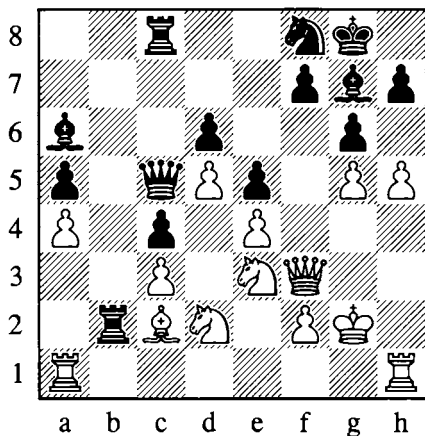


30...♞b2

Sokolov hoped that by attacking my bishop he would keep my knight busy.

A more solid, but also passive, approach would have been 30...♜c7 31.hxg6 fxg6. I could have

played 32.♖a2 preventing Black's queenside counterplay and planning to activate the bishop with ♗d1-g4 and/or the thematic knight sacrifice ♘e3-f5. White's advantage would be beyond any doubt.



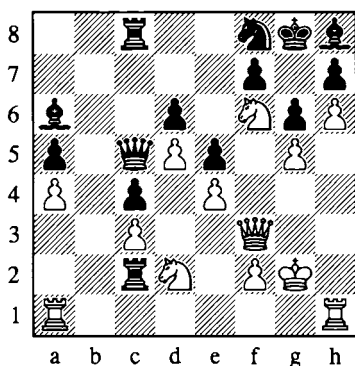
31.♗g4!

During my six-minute think, I correctly evaluated that a bishop would not be too high a price to pay for my attack, but I failed to anticipate all the concrete details, as we will see.

31...gxh5

Black has to eliminate my dangerous h-pawn.

If 31...♖xc2 32.h6 he could not play 32...♗h8 due to 33.♘f6†.



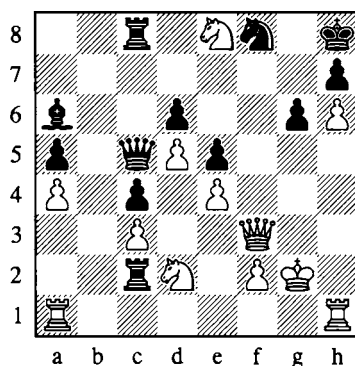
A fantastic position! The black king has no squares so 33...♗xf6 is forced, when 34.♖xf6 will mate soon.

This means that, instead of 32...♗h8, the only defence is:

32...f5 33.gxf6 ♗xf6

Only not 33...♗h8 34.f7 mate!! A fantastic mating net!

34.♘xf6† ♗h8 35.♘e8!



I stopped my calculations here, thinking that in view of the threats of ♖xf8 mate and ♖f6† (or ♖f7) followed by ♖g7 mate, it was all over. In fact, Black could hang on with:

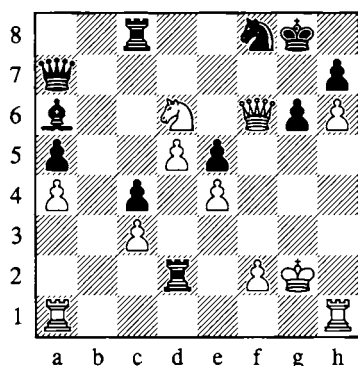
35...♗g8! 36.♖f6 ♖a7

Parrying all the immediate threats.

Now is the time to speak about how the approach to defence has changed in modern times under the influence of the computers. Engines have taught us that miraculous saving moves are available in the most unexpected situations, and players do not give up their resistance so easily in positions which would have been considered simply hopeless just a few decades ago.

I must confess that there is a fair chance I would have panicked a bit if I had faced this unexpected defence. The position is still winning, but the concrete way is not obvious.

37.♘xd6! ♖xd2



Black is a piece up and the pressure against the f2-pawn seems to restrict my active possibilities. The only winning path is the quiet move:

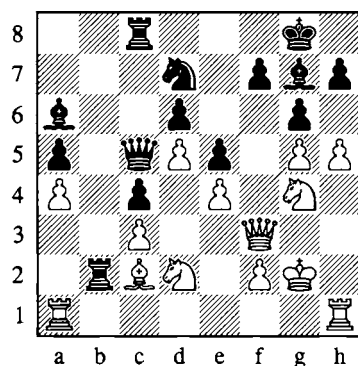
38. ♖h3!!

Threatening ♜f3 followed by ♘f7 and mate on either g7 or h8 and thus forcing:

38... ♜d3 39. ♜xd3 cxd3 40. ♘xc8 ♙xc8 41. ♜d1 ♙a6 42. ♜xe5

Since the pressure on f2 has been removed, White can safely take this central pawn, followed by the unstoppable advance of the central pawn mass.

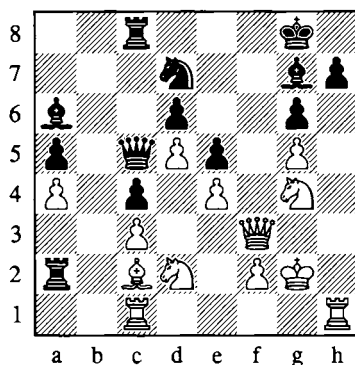
In the analysis above, the black king's lack of space proved decisive in certain moments. This makes 31... ♘d7, clearing the f8-square and defending the f6-square, worth mentioning.



The only problem is that the defence of the h7-square would be weakened. True, 32.hxg6 fxg6 33. ♜xh7, based on 33... ♙xh7 34. ♜f7

followed by ♜h1, would be premature due to 33... ♜f8 34. ♜h3 ♜f4 when the hanging second-rank pieces would restrict my active possibilities.

Instead the quiet 32. ♜a1, threatening the same combination, would be simply winning, as Black could not do much to improve his position. For instance, 32... ♜f8, hoping for 33.hxg6 fxg6, would only make things worse after the simple 33. ♜h3, while after any neutral move such as 32... ♜a2 the combination would work out better: 33.hxg6 fxg6

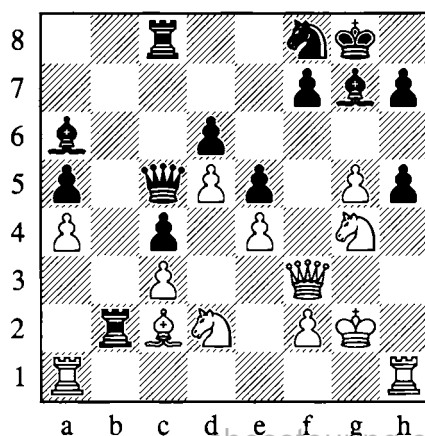


34. ♜xh7 ♜f8 35. ♜h3 ♜f4

My bishop (and subsequently the second rank) would be safely defended, allowing me to either strengthen my attack with 36. ♘f3 or even start forcing operations with:

36. ♘h6† ♙xh7 37. ♘f5† ♙g8 38. ♘e7†

Black's pieces would be hanging, but this would not be relevant if my bishop was also hanging.



After Sokolov's move there are two possible knight checks, but only one wins.

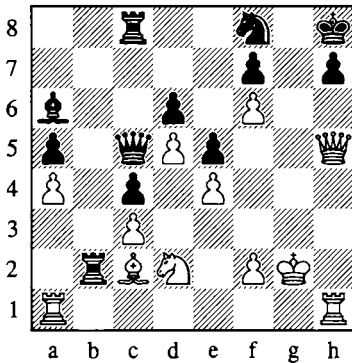
32. ♖f6†!

If 32. ♖h6†? ♙xh6 33. gxf6 ♘g6 34. ♖f6 ♕f8 and the king escapes.

32... ♙xf6

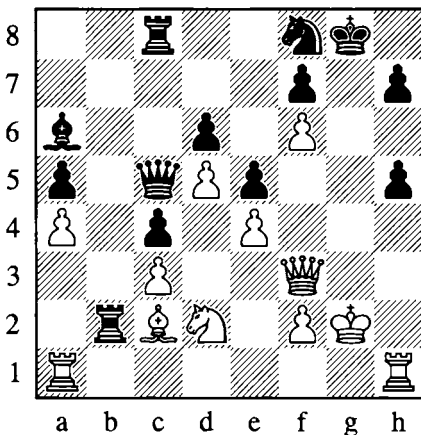
Practically forced.

If 32... ♕h8 then 33. ♖xh5 threatens mate in two with 34. ♖xh7† so Black could not avoid taking the knight anyway: 33... ♙xf6 34. gxf6



His situation would be worse than in the game. The f8-knight needs to defend the h7-pawn, so there is no defence against ♖h6-g7 mate.

33. gxf6



My main threat is ♖xh5-h6-g7 mate, so Black has some time to organize his defence or even try to start counterplay. There are two main ways and Sokolov made his decision only after 12 minutes.

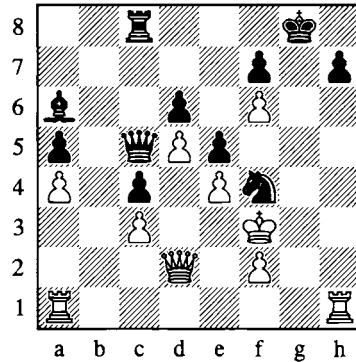
33... ♘g6

If instead:

33... ♖xc2 34. ♖xh5 ♖xd2

The threat on f2 would force me to deviate from the main path with:

35. ♖g5† ♘g6 36. ♖xd2 ♘f4† 37. ♕f3



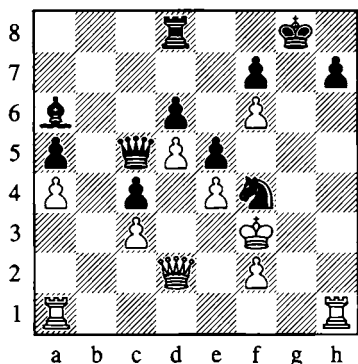
Black has a small material advantage and his knight has managed to cut off my queen from the attack. However, the other black pieces are mere spectators. Moreover, the f6- and (surprisingly!) d5-pawns create a deadly net around the enemy king, allowing me to carry out the attack with only my rooks.

The immediate threat is 38. ♖ag1† ♕f8 39. ♖xh7 ♕e8 40. ♖g8† ♕d7 41. ♖xf7 mate! There can be no hiding in the corner, as 37... ♕h8 38. ♖h6 followed by ♖ah1 is curtains.

So the best Black could do is:

37... ♖d8

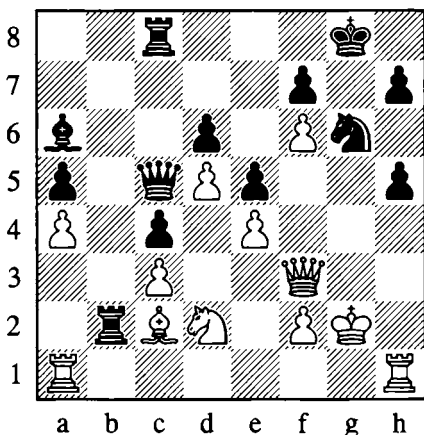
Preparing the king's escape along the path f8-e8-d7-c8, but this would not save him either.



38. ♖ag1† ♕f8 39. ♖xh7 ♕e8 40. ♖g8† ♕d7
41. ♖xf7† ♕c8 42. ♖fg7

And the f6-pawn would soon queen.

After Ivan's last move, many people (including my second!) thought my attack was about to run out of steam. I had my own secret plans, though!



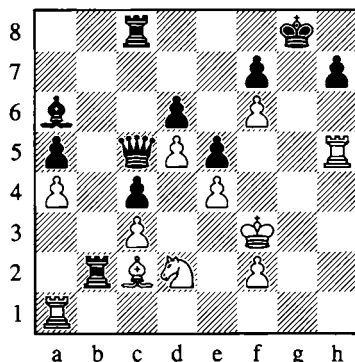
34. ♕f1!!

I am no longer sure when exactly I found this quiet but killing move. I spent only three minutes on it, which means it came to my mind either during my opponent's relatively long think or even before that.

By getting my king out of the g6-knight's range, I renew my threat of ♖xh5.

However I will not hide that while my opponent was thinking, I briefly entertained

myself with the queen sacrifice 34. ♖xh5 ♕f4† 35. ♕f3 ♕xh5 36. ♖xh5, threatening the same mating mechanism as in the previous comment, but I soon understood that it would not work for several reasons.

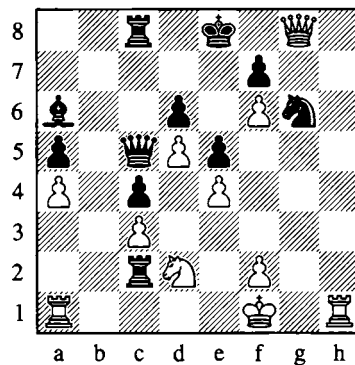


The most convincing refutation is 36... ♖xc2 37. ♖g1† ♕f8 38. ♖xh7 ♖xc3† 39. ♕e2 ♖h3! deflecting my rook from the seventh rank, so that the king can escape with ... ♕e8.

34...h4

Hoping to slow down my attack along the h-file.

If instead 34... ♕f8 35. ♖xh5 ♖xc2 36. ♖xh7 ♕e8 37. ♖g8†:

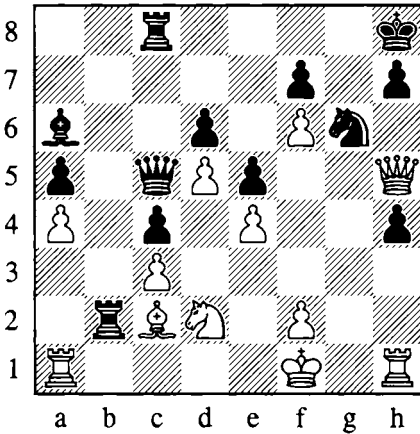


Now 37... ♕d7 38. ♖xf7† ♕d8 is obviously hopeless, but there is even a cute mate available: 39. ♖h8† ♕xh8 40. ♖e7 mate.

The essential point is that 37... ♕f8 fails

to protect the king due to 38.♚xf8+! ♜xf8
39.♜h8 mate.

35.♚h5 ♜h8

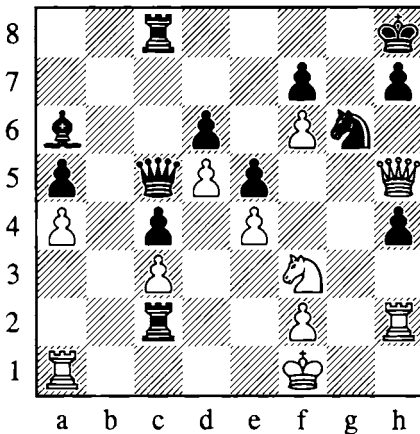


36.♜f3!

When I played this I saw the winning variation all the way to the end. There is no need to defend the bishop, which is not taking part in the attack anyway.

White threatens 37.♚h6 ♜g8 38.♜g5 or 37.♜g5 ♜f8 38.♚h6.

36...♜xc2 37.♜h2

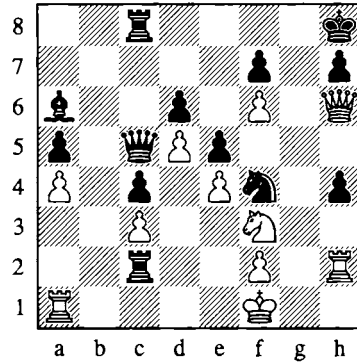


Parrying the mate on f2 and renewing my own threats. Black needs radical measures.

37...♜xf2+

It would have been trickier to keep this desperate resource in reserve with 37...♜f4.

Now the tempting 38.♚h6? looks as if it would simply win, but in fact it allows a fantastic defence.



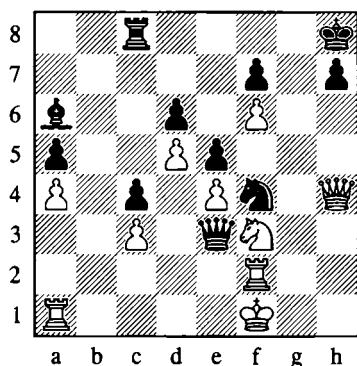
38...♜xf2+ 39.♜xf2 ♜g8 (planning ...♜c8)
40.♜g5 ♜xg5 41.♚xg5 ♚xf2+ 42.♜xf2 ♜h3+
43.♜g2 ♜xg5 44.♜b1 h5 Black would lose the bishop, but get several pawns in compensation for the exchange.

The winning continuation would be: 38.♚h4 h5 39.♚g5 The similar combination does not save Black anymore: 39...♜xf2+ 40.♜xf2 ♚xf2+ 41.♜xf2 ♜h3+ 42.♜e3 ♜xg5 43.♜xg5 ♜g8 And now I would have a choice between 44.♜h1 followed by ♜xh5-h7 with a continuing attack, and 44.♜b1 with a decisive invasion along the b-file.

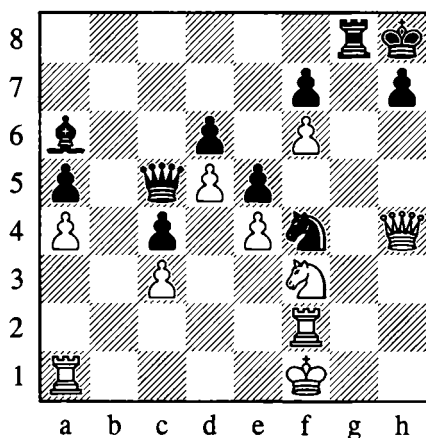
38.♜xf2 ♜f4 39.♚xh4 ♜g8

Probably hoping for 40.♜g5 ♜xg5 41.♚xg5 ♚xf2+! which would transpose to an acceptable line from the previous comment, with the only difference that the h4-pawn would be missing.

The counterplay based on 39...♚e3 would not suffice either.



40. d2-g5 h5 41. e1 ♔d3† 42. ♖g1 (Threatening ♗xf4 followed by ♗xh5 and mate.) 42... ♖g8 43. ♗xf4 exf4 44. ♖f3! Preventing ...♗g3 and threatening ♗g5† with mate to follow.



40. ♗h2!

Ivan resigned without giving me the chance to show my last trick: 40... h5 41. ♗xh5†! ♖xh5 42. ♗xh5 mate!

1-0

I remember how happy I was about the final attack, being especially proud of my quiet move ♖g2-f1.

A last-round draw with the winner of the tournament, my compatriot Peter Leko, maintained my +1 score, with a rating performance of 2747. The final classification at the top was: 1st Leko 8½/13, 2nd Anand 8, 3rd Topalov 7½, 4th–7th on 7 points were Polgar, Grischuk, Adams, Kramnik (in the exact order of our tiebreaks).

This tournament convinced me that even though my priorities had changed after Oliver's birth, I had preserved my former strength and I was still able to play good moves and games.

After Wijk aan Zee my rating reached 2732. A few months later I had another good result in Sofia, bringing me to my lifetime peak rating of 2735, placing me in eighth position in the world rankings.

On the basis of my rating, I qualified for one of the eight places in the 2005 San Luis World Championship. In life you sometimes need to be lucky. When Oliver was one year old, my husband and I were planning to have a second child, so my qualification to the World Championship, clearly the highest point of my career, arrived at the right moment...

Chapter 6

Hanna



Six weeks old

Preparing for the World Championship was hard enough, but the really difficult part was the tournament itself. I travelled to Argentina only three days before the start, reducing the acclimatization period to the minimum, but even so I was away from my son Oliver for 27 days!

The tournament did not exactly go my way. I was slow and uninspired and there is just one game I can be really proud of – with Kasimdzhanov (see page 297).

My loving husband understood that I was having a difficult time and decided to join me for the second half of the tournament. This did not change much in my overall result, but it certainly offered me the psychological comfort I needed so badly.

I was not sure how Oliver would react on my return home. He was just a bit more than one year old, so these 27 days surely were a long period for him. For the first five minutes he stared at me in a questioning way; even though I am a patient and rational person, I had to make use of all my strength and understanding when I saw him resisting my attempts to take him in my arms. After a while that seemed to last forever, he understood that his mammy had returned home and he gave me the biggest hug ever... In such uniquely happy moments who would care about the unfortunate result in the World Championship?

Besides, life once again rewarded me for the difficult moments in Argentina – nine months later I gave birth to my second child, a baby girl we named Hanna.

This time, my break from competition was a bit shorter; Hanna was three and a half months old when I played my next tournament. But once again I made my comeback in Holland, at the Essent Hoogeveen tournament.

This event had reached its 10th edition and I was playing here for the eighth time! I find the atmosphere in Hoogeveen very pleasant and there is no other tournament in which I participated so frequently.

One of the customs I will always remember with pleasure is the sponsor's dinner, which is organized every year on the free day. Only the four participants in the A group and a few grandmasters from the B group are invited, due to the fact that the restaurant 't Olde Posthuus is very small; but the food is really lovely there!

My participation remained unsure for a long while. FIDE planned to organize the Candidates tournament during the same period, but eventually decided to postpone it until Spring the next year. And of course going away from my Hanna was not an easy step to decide upon.

In the first round I defeated Ivan Sokolov with the white pieces and in the second round I had the same colour against Topalov.

Veselin came to Holland straight from Elista, where he had just lost his title in the controversial match against Kramnik. It was quite unexpected that he decided to play in Essent so soon after the match.

It was obvious that he was in an unusual mood and that he had not recovered from the tiredness of the match. Besides, he had had no time for special preparation for the tournament, while his opponents certainly had!

Topalov probably thought that the months of preparing for Kramnik would also serve him well for this short tournament. And I believe that if he had won the match, he would have had enough of a boost to crush everybody in the tournament, too.

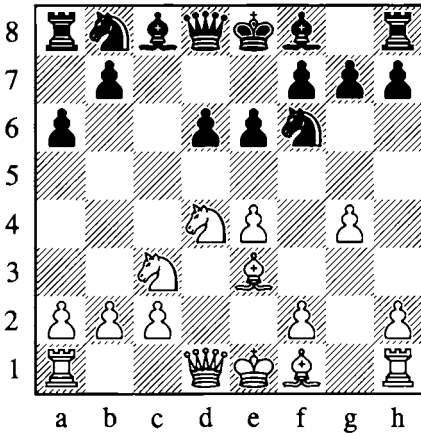
Judit Polgar – Veselin Topalov

Hoogeveen 2006

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

In our two previous encounters Veselin had chosen the Berlin Defence, but the Najdorf Sicilian was his main weapon so it did not come as a surprise to me.

6.♙e3 e6 7.g4



I had played this line only twice before, against Anand at Dos Hermanas 1999 (see Volume II) and Kasimdzhanov in San Luis 2005 (page 297 in this volume). In both cases I won in good style.

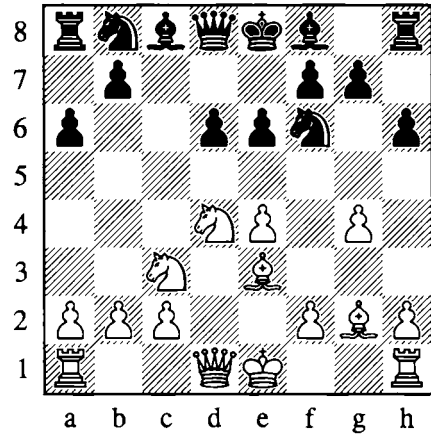
You could say this was my weapon against World Champions, and it once again worked well in this game.

7...h6

Veselin did not spend any time on this move, leaving little doubt about the fact that he knew well what he was doing.

The aforementioned games went 7...e5 which is the critical line, immediately questioning the viability of White's early attack.

8.♙g2



8...g5?!

This highly committal move was also played very quickly. Black's obvious intention is to take control of the dark squares, but in doing so he badly neglects his development.

Once again the greedy advance of the e-pawn is possible, but after 8...e5 9.♘f5 g6 10.♙e2 gxf5 11.exf5, followed by 0–0–0 and f4, White would have overwhelming compensation for the piece.

8...♘c6 is the most logical and probably best move. One of its merits is that White cannot continue his development with, say, 9.♙e2 due to 9...♘xd4 10.♙xd4 e5, winning the daring g4-pawn. Therefore, the prophylactic 9.h3 is needed, offering Black a tempo for his development.

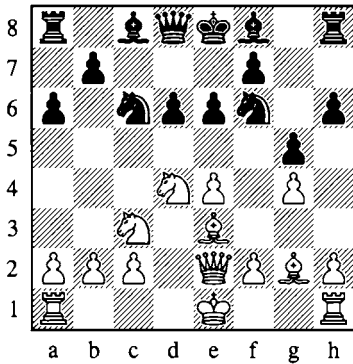
9.♙e2

After four minutes I did not see any reason to deviate from the typical way of developing in this line.

9...♘bd7

The safest way of getting the knight to e5.

If 9...♘c6 I could already use my lead in development for concrete action.

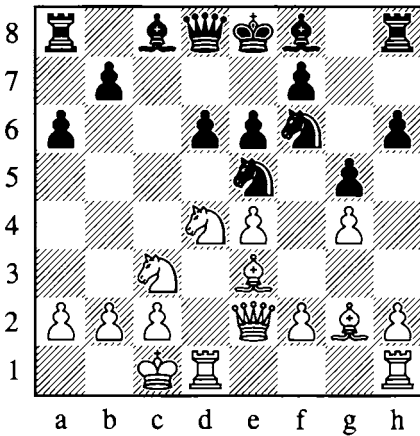


10.♖xc6 bxc6 11.h4 ♖g8 12.hxg5 hxg5 13.e5
♘d5 14.♘e4 dxe5 15.0-0-0 With a killing
initiative, including threats such as c2-c4, or
♗f3 and ♖h7.

10.0-0-0

I was not sure about the consequences of
10.h4 ♖g8 11.hxg5 hxg5 12.0-0-0 ♘e5, when
my g4-pawn would lack the natural defence of
h2-h3.

10...♘e5



11.h3

I spent nine minutes on this natural move.

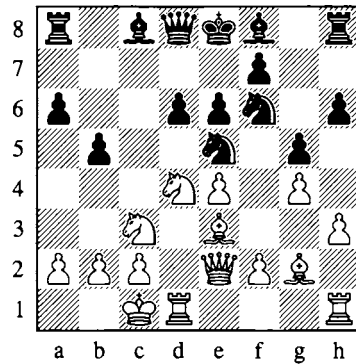
I felt a strong temptation to sacrifice the g4-
pawn with 11.f4 gxf4 12.♙xf4, but eventually
I decided that my lead in development was

big enough to afford spending a tempo on a
consolidating move.

11...♘fd7

After seven minutes Topalov decided to
consolidate his central knight.

11...b5 would be premature, offering me the
tactical opportunity to change the slow course
of the game.



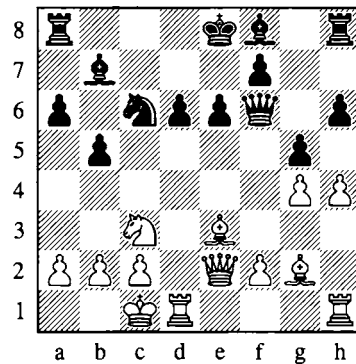
12.♘c6! ♘xc6

After 12...♗c7 13.♘xe5 dxe5 14.h4 ♖g8
15.hxg5 hxg5 16.f3 it is difficult to say where
the black king could go from the centre.

13.e5 ♙b7 14.exf6±

White has a huge advantage due to the black
king being in the centre.

14...♗xf6 15.h4



This is getting really stormy for Black and
the king on e8 pays the price.

15...gxf4 16.♖e4 ♔d8 17.♙c5 d5 18.♗xd5
exd5 19.♕f6#

12.f4

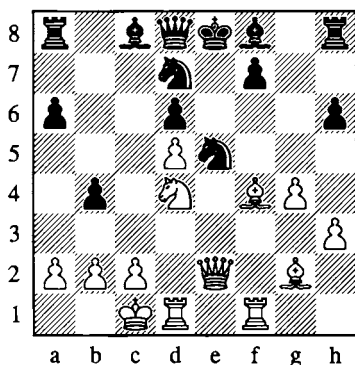
I took some time (seven minutes) before playing this, since I wanted to make sure that the attack along the f-file is more effective than 12.h4!?, which also looks quite natural.

12...gxf4 13.♙xf4 b5 14.♗hf1

Despite Black's stability on the dark squares, I had the feeling that my position was better. My considerable lead in development creates the permanent threat of the thematic knight sacrifices ♖d5 and ♖f5. Moreover, there is no obvious way for Black to move his king into absolute safety. Most likely, it will have to stay in the centre, offering me a clear target.

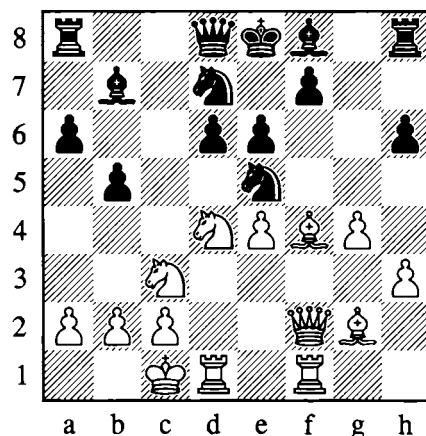
14...♙b7

I planned to meet 14...b4 with 15.♖d5 exd5 16.exd5, without calculating anything concrete.



My intuition told me I should have at least adequate compensation. This is entirely true, as Black faces the constant threats of ♖f5, ♖c6 or even ♖e6, but the simpler 15.♖a4 would offer me an advantage at no cost.

15.♗f2



I was quite happy to find this multifunctional move after 10 minutes of thought. It increases the pressure along the f-file, prepares the manoeuvre ♖c3-e2-g3, as well as the unblocking ♖d4-f3.

Moreover, any natural queen move by Black, preparing to castle long, would run into a winning combination, for instance: 15...♗c7 16.♙xe5 ♖xe5 17.♗f6 Followed by 18.♖xe6 irrespective of where the rook would go. If 17...♗h7, the f8-bishop would be hanging, while after 17...♗g8 it would be the rook that would be hanging.

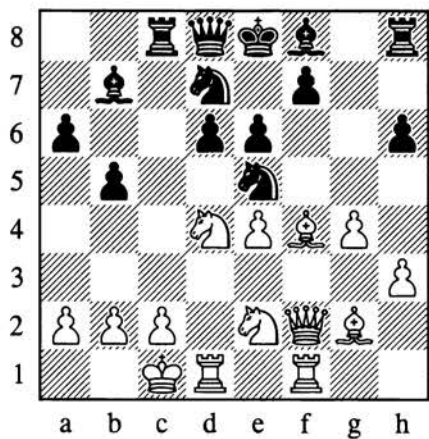
Topalov must have felt uncomfortable after my last move, since he now thought for 19 minutes – twice as much time as he had invested in all the previous moves!

15...♗c8

A highly committal move, dooming the black king to stay in the centre. Topalov probably could not refrain from threatening his trademark exchange sacrifice.

The most flexible and probably best continuation would have been 15...♗h7!?, over-defending the f7-pawn in order to prepare the queen's development and to be able to meet ♙xe5 with ...dxe5!. For instance 16.♙b1 ♗c7 17.♖ce2 0-0-0 with some counter-chances for Black.

16.♘ce2



This manoeuvre was part of my plan anyway, so I did not hesitate to prevent Topalov's intended sacrifice.

16...♙g7?

It seems that with this and his previous move, Topalov effectively invited me to transfer my knight to h5, but this was what I was dreaming of anyway!

16...♙e7! would have been a better way to anticipate my plans. Black threatens ...h6-h5 without fearing g4-g5 anymore, so my answer would be forced.



17.♘g3 ♙g5 18.♘h5 White exerts strong pressure, and the black king's situation remains insecure. However, Black enjoys some stability on the dark squares, which makes the position quite complicated.

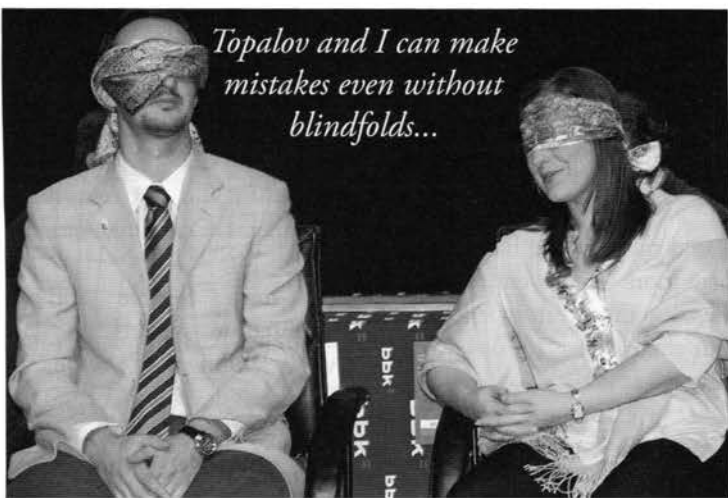
17.♘g3

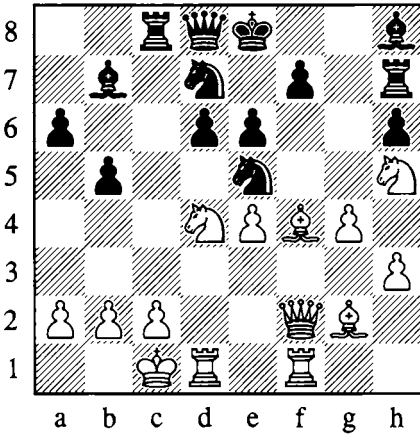
Played without thinking.

17...♞h7

But now I thought for eight minutes, trying to understand whether it made any sense to delay the knight jump with, say, 18.♞b1. Eventually I decided it did not.

18.♘h5 ♙h8





19.♔b1

In the Sicilian, when White has castled long, this prophylactic move is a must if you do not have a concrete win or plan in view yet. The b1-square is so much safer for the king than c1, avoiding intermediate queen or bishop checks on the h6-c1 diagonal, knight checks on d3 or bishop checks on b2 (after ...♘e5-c4). Besides, the king safely defends the a2-pawn; could one ask for more from a single move?

This kind of quiet move, without a concrete purpose, has a natural tendency of offering the opponent the opportunity to blunder – as I mentioned in the first volume.

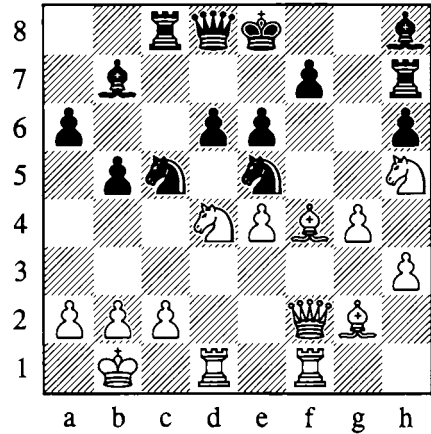
Topalov's answer is another illustration of this fact, despite his seven minutes of thought.

19...♘c5?

Disconnecting the knights, while Black's development is incomplete, could have led to irreparable consequences.

I expected 19...♝b6, when I planned to regroup with 20.b3 followed by ♘f4-c1-b2, when I felt quite good about my position.

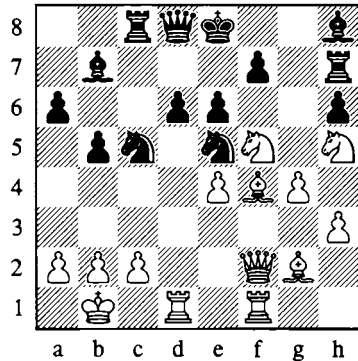
Despite spending ten minutes on my next move, I failed to see the winning tactical idea.



20.♙g3?

Unfortunately, I did not look for anything better after I found this move. I felt quite happy about creating the threat of ♙h4 and focused on checking the position arising after it.

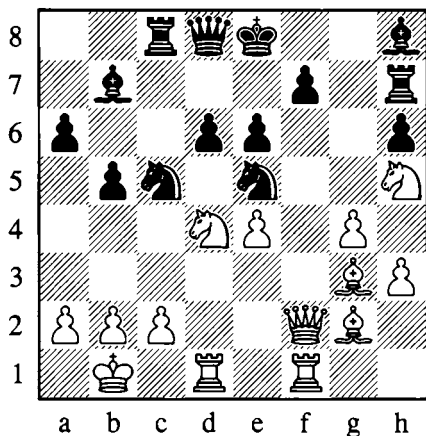
The spectacular 20.♘f5! would have won material, due to the poorly coordinated and even hanging black pieces.



20...exf5 (Defending the d6-pawn would not save Black either: 20...♗c6 21.♘fg7+ ♙xg7 22.♘xg7+ ♗xg7 23.♙xe5 With a decisive advantage.) 21.♙xe5 ♙xe5 22.♝xf5+- Black cannot save his h7-rook without allowing mate on f7.

Had I played this line, the game that would have resulted would have been much less interesting, and there would not have been

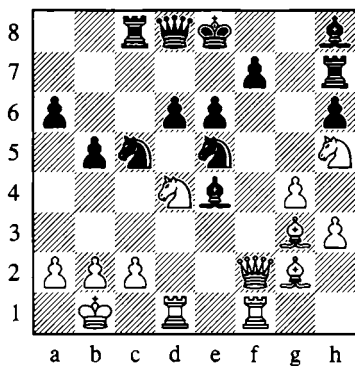
any black king march in its final part. Quite probably, I would not have included the game in this volume, so... no regrets about the missed opportunity!



20...♞xc4?

Veselin spent 15 minutes before embarking on this risky adventure, which will eventually take his king to a5!

20...♞xc4? would be simply bad in view of another thematic combination.

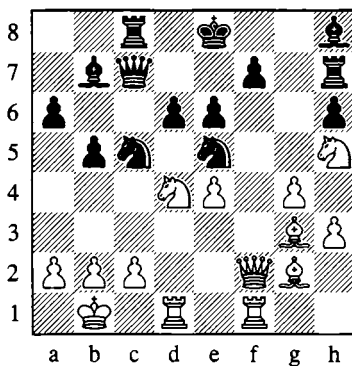


21.♞xe6! ♞xe6 (21...fxe6 would lead to mate: 22.♞f8+ ♞d7 23.♞xd6+ ♞e8 and 24.♞f8 or 24.♞f8 are both mate.) 22.♞xc4 With a huge gain of material.

Black should have been concerned about his development:

20...♞c7

Making the threats on e4 real.



21.♞h4!

Defending the pawn indirectly.

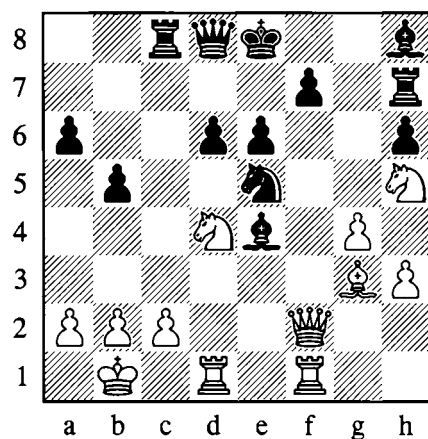
21...♞xe4 22.♞xc4 would transpose to the game, while 21...♞xe4 22.♞f6 would lead to similar consequences.

Black would have nothing better than admitting his mistake on the 19th move with:

21...♞cd7

Over-defending the f6-square. Having gained two tempos, White would certainly have a big advantage, but there would be no forced win in view.

21.♞xc4 ♞xc4

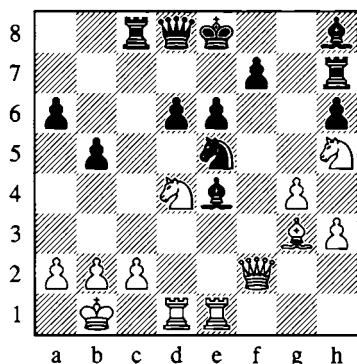


22.♞h4



I played this instantly since I had long planned to invade the f6-square.

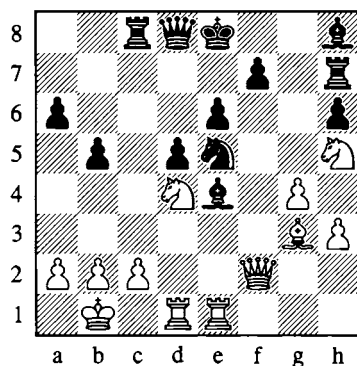
After the opening of the e-file, 22.♖fe1!? would have been very strong, too.



Black would have had no satisfactory way to defend against the rook's pressure.

22...d5

If 22...♗g6, then 23.♗xe5 ♗xe5 24.♗xe5! forces Black to open the d-file completely. 24...dxe5 25.♖f6† There is no good square for the king. If 25...♗f8 26.♖xh7† ♗xh7 27.♖xe6† or 25...♗e7 26.♖c6† ♗xc6 27.♗xd8 ♗xd8 28.♗a7 and wins. Or if 22...♗d5 23.♖f5 threatening ♗xd5 followed by ♗h4.



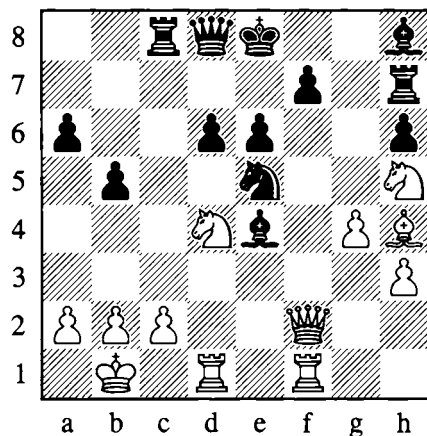
23.♖xe6!

Opening the d-file with gain of time.

23...fxe6 24.♗xe4 dxe4 25.♗xd8† ♗xd8

From a material point of view, Black is OK,

but after the quiet move 26.a3! avoiding any back-rank problems, his poor coordination would leave him helpless against threats such as ♖f6† or ♗b6.



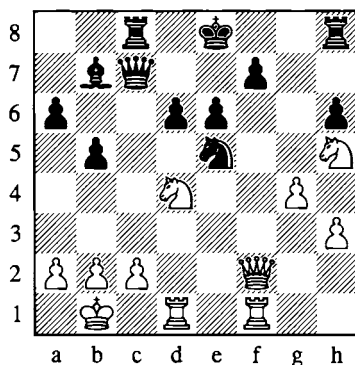
22...♗c7 23.♗f6

Finally taking advantage of the weaknesses created by 8...g5. The immediate threat is 24.♗xh8 ♗xh8 25.♖f6† winning the e4-bishop.

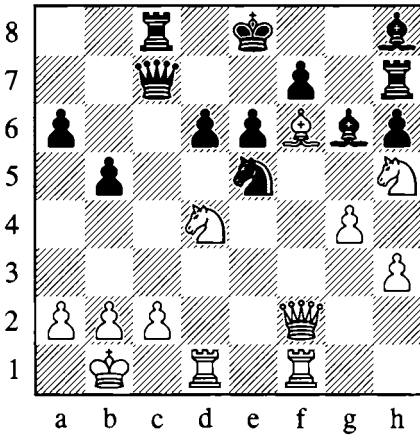
23...♗g6!

Topalov finds the only move that allows him to play on.

It was essential to over-defend the f7-square since 23...♗b7 allows the following elegant combination, which I had seen during the game: 24.♗xh8 ♗xh8

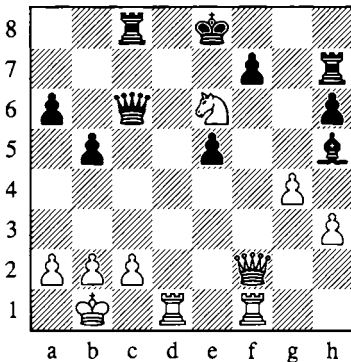


25.♖g7†! A surprising check, creating an unexpected mating net. The king has to watch its step in order to avoid a fork with ♖xe6† (either of them!) 25...♗e7 26.♞f6† ♕d7 27.♞xf7† ♖xf7 ♖d8 29.♖dxe6 mate.



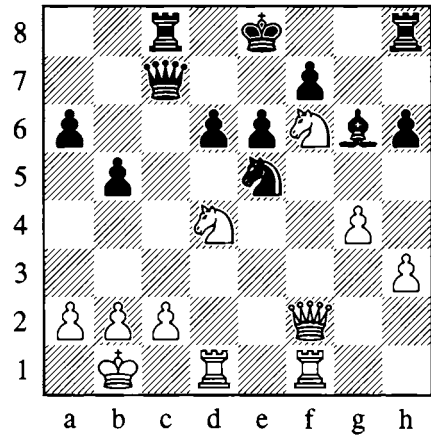
24.♗xh8 ♗xh8

I have a feeling that after 24...♗xh5 we both calculated the following variation: 25.♗xe5 dxe5 26.♖e6 And I think we both stopped here. In order to make the line even more convincing it is worth continuing a little further: 26...♞c6



27.♖d4! A nice detail, forcing Black to leave the e-file completely undefended. 27...exd4 28.gxh5 White will be a pawn up soon, while keeping a strong attack.

25.♖f6†

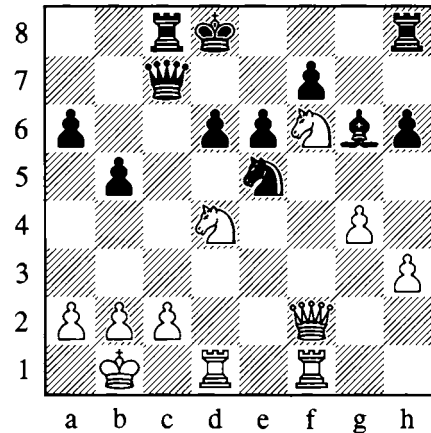


25...♗d8

It took Veselin only one minute to choose the most stubborn defence.

25...♗f8? would lose on the spot to 26.♖d5! exd5 27.♖e6†. Nothing is changed by 26...♗xc2† 27.♗a1, renewing the threat.

25...♗e7?! 26.♞h4 would leave the king in a very delicate situation.



It is interesting to stop here for a moment. The position looks very promising for White, whose pieces are on ideal squares. The f6-knight paralyzes the black forces while the black king is awkwardly placed.

And yet, Black enjoys some stability in the centre, partly due to his extra pawn, and there is no immediate tactical solution available. In such cases, one should play across the whole board and bring every possible resource into the attack.

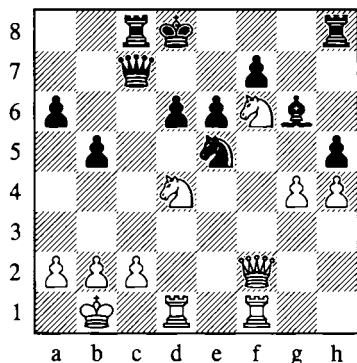
26.h4!

Remarkably, the only winning move. After eight minutes of thought, I understood that I needed to drive the bishop away from its stable position, which would also weaken the f7-pawn.

26...♖c5

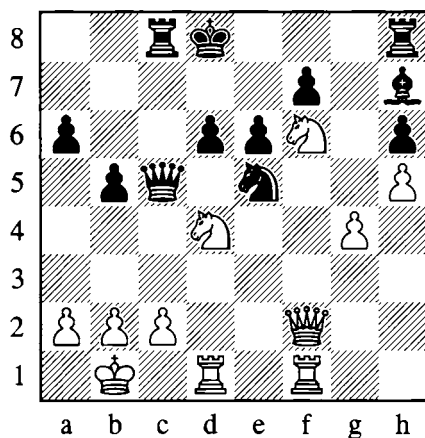
After six minutes, Topalov decides to clear a path for his king, not knowing it was going to lead to the scaffold...

If he had tried to put up resistance on the light squares with 26...h5, I would have switched to a simple attack on the dark squares.



27.♖f4! One rarely gets something without giving away something else. Black's last move weakened the g5-square, making ♖g5 a deadly threat. 27...♗xc2† 28.♗xc2 ♖xc2† 29.♕a1 Black's counterplay has come to an end. After the exchange of the black bishop, White's next move would most probably be 30.♗e4, attacking the vulnerable d6-pawn and keeping ♖g5† in reserve.

27.h5 ♗h7



Not a great square for the bishop (this is no Caro-Kann!) but the only one available.

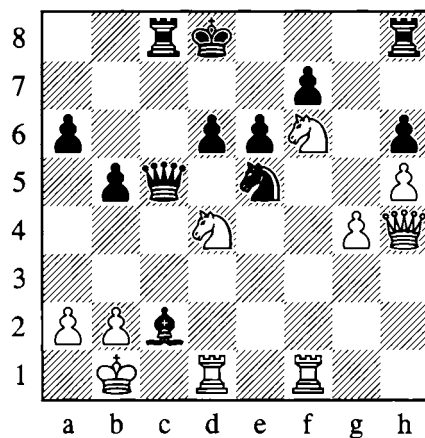
28.♖h4

After having pushed the bishop back, this X-ray attack is decisive.

28...♗xc2†

Ten minutes were enough to convince Topalov there was nothing better. If 28...♕c7 then 29.♗xh7 ♖xh7 30.♗xf7† followed by 31.♗xe6† wins the queen.

In this line we see the effects of h4-h5: the f7-pawn and the bishop are both vulnerable.



29.♗xc2

29.♕a1 would also win, but after three

minutes I decided that my continuation was the most clear-cut from a practical point of view.

29...♖xc2† 30.♔a1

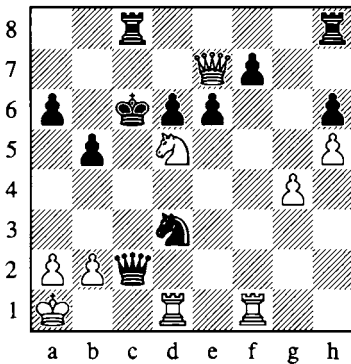
Black's counterplay proved to be just a straw fire, and now Topalov took nine minutes looking for a way to parry the threat of 31.♕d5† followed by ♖e7 (mate).

One important problem is that my knight indirectly controls a whole series of squares in view of the multitude of discovered checks followed by forks. So apart from saving his king, Black has to avoid losing the exchange as well.

30...♞c4

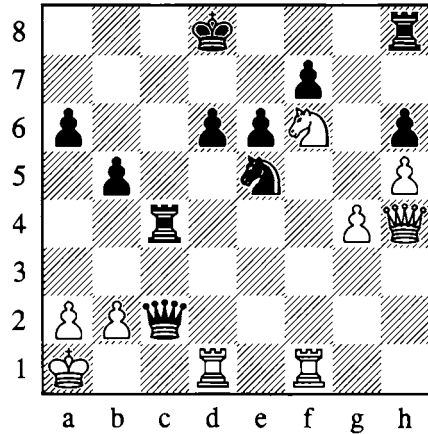
If 30...♞c6 then 31.♕d5† ♕d7 32.♖e7† ♕c8 33.♕b4+– wins the exchange.

30...♕d3 leads to somewhat more complex play but with the same evaluation: 31.♕d5† ♕d7 32.♖e7† ♕c6



33.♕b4†! Forcing Black to open the d-file. 33...♕xb4 34.♞xd6† ♕c5 35.♞xe6† with mate to follow soon.

The nicest win arises after 30...♕e7 31.♕g8† ♕f8 32.♕e7 and if 32...♞e8 33.♕g6† ♕xg6 34.♖f6 and wins.



31.♕e4†

I was feeling in my element during this phase of the game, playing quickly and confidently. On the last move I only spent two minutes.

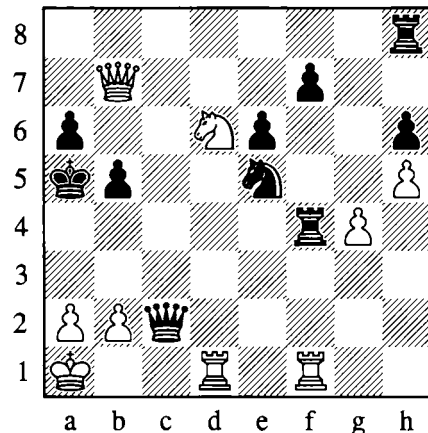
31...♕c7 32.♕xd6

Attacking the rook and threatening ♕xf7.

32...♞f4

Topalov found this nice resource after eight minutes. It is not enough to save the game, though. I now thought for eight minutes, calculating everything until the end of the game.

33.♖e7† ♕b6 34.♖b7† ♕a5



A rather unnatural square for the black king, but during the game I remembered that Topalov had faced this situation before, against Kasparov at Wijk aan Zee 1999. On that occasion, the black king walked all the way to d1, but this did not save the game.

In our game, things did not get so far.

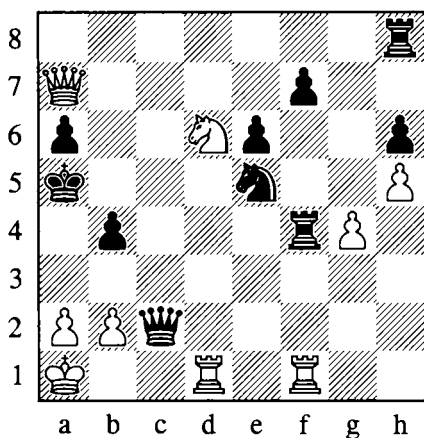
35. ♖a7

As pointed out by Topalov after the game, 35. ♖b1 wins as well.

35...b4

Clearing some breathing space for the king.

There was no time for 35... ♖xf1 due to the forcing sequence: 36. ♖b7+ ♔b4 37. ♗d4+ ♖c4 (If 37... ♗c4 38. ♗d6+ ♔a4 39. ♗a3 mate) 38. ♗c5+ ♔a4 39. b3+ and wins.



36. ♖fe1!

A quiet move, stepping away from the tension and preparing for the final attack.

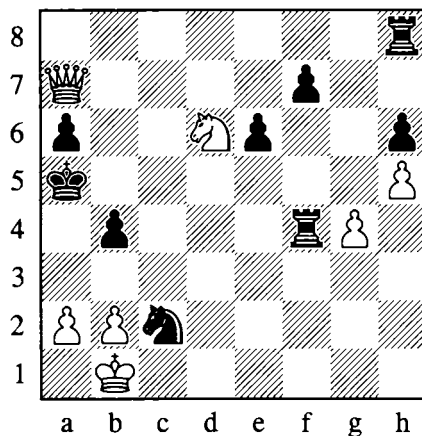
36...♖f3 37. ♖c1

As a mere human I was very excited by the prospect of a trivial win; having planned my last move in advance, I did not look for anything better!

The engines imperturbably prefer 37. ♖b7+ with mate in seven, but the main point is that

after 37... ♖b5 the best move is a “quiet” one: 38. ♖d6!

37...♖xe1 38. ♖xc2 ♖xc2+ 39. ♔b1



The black knight is hanging and there are several mating threats, so Topalov resigned.

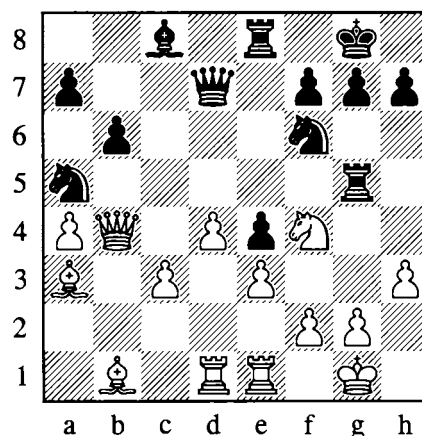
1-0

This game won the tournament's best game prize, which was a beautiful glass vase!

Starting with two wins after a one-year break felt absolutely great. In Round 3 I drew with Black against Mamedyarov and then I once again defeated Ivan Sokolov in Round 4:

Ivan Sokolov – Judit Polgar

Hoogeveen 2006



White is a pawn up and has a normal set-up. If his centre was allowed to advance, with the support of his bishops, it would become threatening.

Black's chances consist of the possibility of starting a kingside attack with the participation of all my pieces, with the exception of the a5-knight. For the time being, the part played by this knight is merely defensive, allowing Black to set up some sort of blockade on the light squares.

One can feel, though, that if the knight could jump to c4 with total comfort, the balance would decisively tilt in Black's favour. This is what actually happened later in the game: ...♞a5-c4 caused White's immediate resignation.

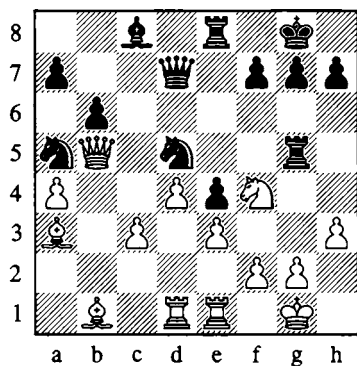
25...♞d5

Exchanging the main kingside defender and taking more control of the light squares.

26.♞xd5

White releases the tension too easily – after one minute. Maybe he was satisfied with a draw and expected the variation from the next comment.

The active 26.♞b5! would have been better.

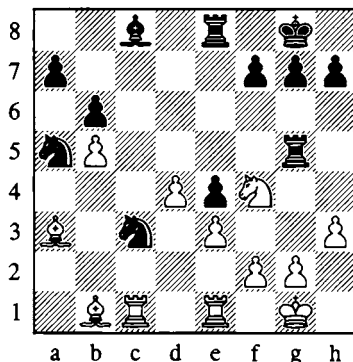


I would have had a choice between two continuations, but White would have been doing all right in either case.

1) I could regain the pawn with:

26...♞xb5 27.axb5 ♞xc3 but after 28.♞c1

It would be irritating that I could not take the strong b5-pawn, which blocks my two queenside pawns.



If 28...♞xb5? then 29.♞e7! would take advantage of the back-rank weakness to trap my active rook. It is probable that Sokolov did not notice this hidden resource, which led him to believe that 26.♞b5 would simply cost him two pawns.

I would have had to play the simple:

28...♞xb1! 29.♞xb1 ♞c4

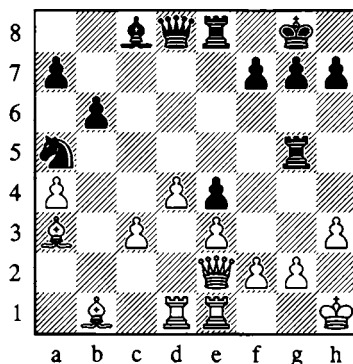
With approximate equality.

2) Since my main plan is to attack on the kingside, it is best to keep on the queens.

26...♞d8!?

This move defends the g5-rook, threatening ...♞xf4.

27.♞xd5 ♞xd5 28.♞e2 ♞g5 29.♞h1

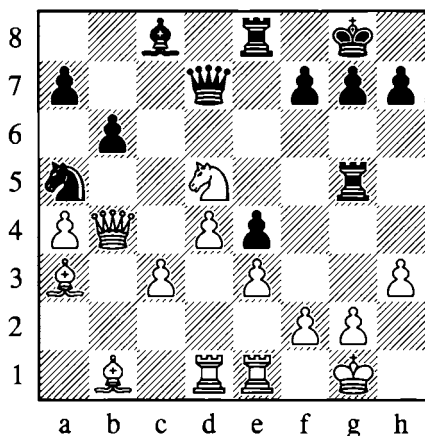


If White gets a tempo to play d4-d5, his chances would be better, but Black has an immediate drawing combination:

29...♙xh3! 30.gxh3 ♖c8 31.♔h2 ♜b8+

With the pawn on d5 this would fail to d5-d6.

32.♔h1 ♜c8=



26...♜xd5

It took me eight minutes to decide that I could play for more than just a draw with:

26...♜xd5 27.♔xg2 ♜xh3+ 28.♔g1 ♜g4+

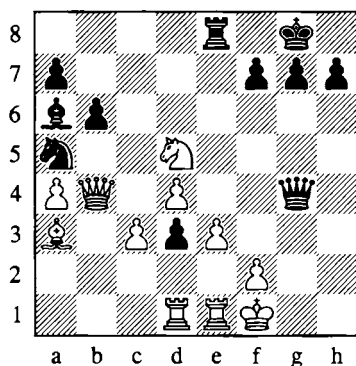
The king could safely go to h2 or h3, since the rook lift ...♜e6 would allow ♜f8 mate!

29.♔f1

This seemingly risky move does not change the result either:

29...♙a6+ 30.♔d3 exd3

But now White would have to spot the only saving move:



31.♔c7!

Attacking the bishop and protecting the king against the discovered check. After having taken the escape square on e2 under control, it would be time to switch back to the perpetual check:

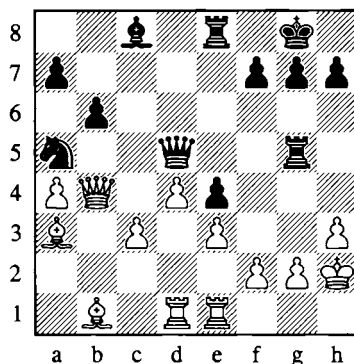
31...♜h3+=

My move strengthens the kingside threats and prevents ♙a2, which would activate the bishop and put an end to my blocking plan.

27.h4

Another quick decision, after only two minutes. White removes the pawn from the exposed square and hopes to induce a lack of harmony in my position.

27.♔h2? would lose by force.



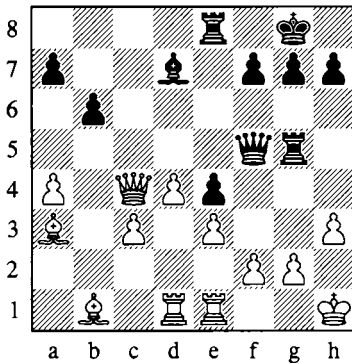
27...♙xh3! 28.gxh3 (28.♜b5 is refuted by 28...♜d8.) 28...♜f5 Targeting the f2- and h3-pawns. With his queen out of play, the king is doomed. 29.f4 ♜h5 wins.

The attempt to include the queen in the defence does not quite work:

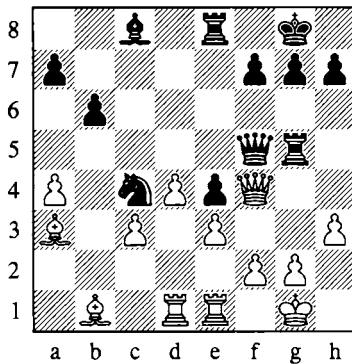
27.♜d6 ♜f5 28.♜f4

White is best advised to keep harassing my queen.

If 28.♔h1 I could play the thematic 28...♔c4! when the only way to avoid losing material would be 29.♜c6 ♔d7! 30.♜xc4 but then the king would again be helpless:



30...Rg2! 31. Kh2 Qf3+ 32. Kh2 The computer announces mate in 23 with 32...Qxf2+, but I am not strong enough to see that. I would play 32...Kh3 33. Rg1 Qe6+ with a double attack against the royal couple.
28...Qc4

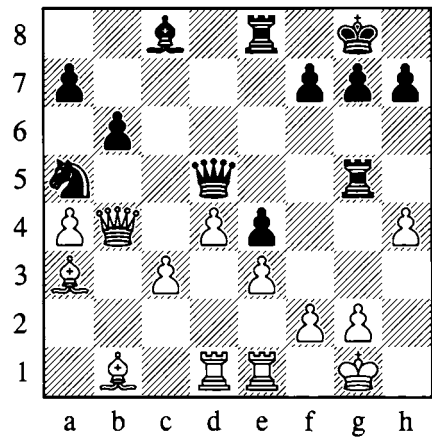


29. Qc1

Exchanging queens would only help me to develop my initiative: 29. Qxf5 Qxf5 (threatening ...Kh3) 30. h4 Rg6 The domination of my knight over the a3-bishop results in the win of an exchange, after either 31. Qc1 Qg4 or 31. Qb4 a5 32. Qa2 Qb2 33. Qb1 Qd3.

29...Rg6 30. Qh2 Qd7

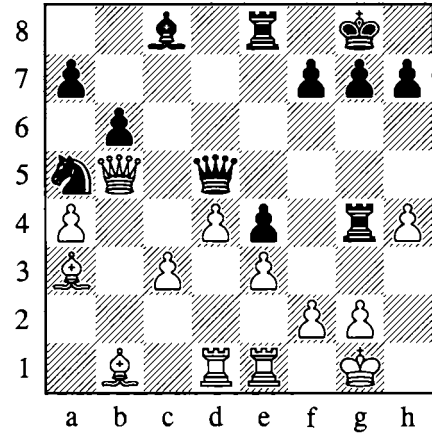
Black is in complete control of the game. White is in no immediate danger, but his position is extremely passive, as shown by the fact that his most advanced piece is the queen, on just the second rank!



27...Rg4 28. Qb5

This familiar idea, which could have been played a few moves ago, does not neutralize my initiative.

Once again, the queen invasion to d6 would have failed to solve the problems: 28. Qd6 Qh5 29. g3 Rg6 Apart from ...Qc4, I would have the brutal mating idea of ...Qf3 and ...Kh3.



28...Qd8!

I remember I was really proud of this retreating move.

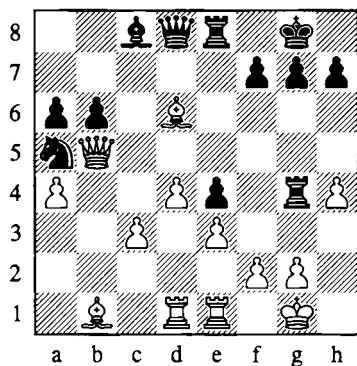
28...Qxb5 29. axb5 Qc4 30. Qc1 Qd7 would have been good enough for a satisfying domination on the light squares, but I wanted to play for mate!

29.g3

Defending the h4-pawn, but creating irreparable light-squared weaknesses.

Quite sadly, White cannot use the d6-square to transfer the bishop to the kingside either:

29.♔d6 a6

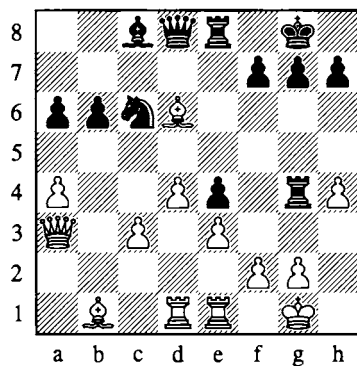


In the first phase, I would force the queen to go back to a passive square, from where it would fail to bother me with back-rank threats.

30.♖b4 ♘c6

30...♙xg2† also works, but why not push the queen one step further from the king before delivering the sacrifice?

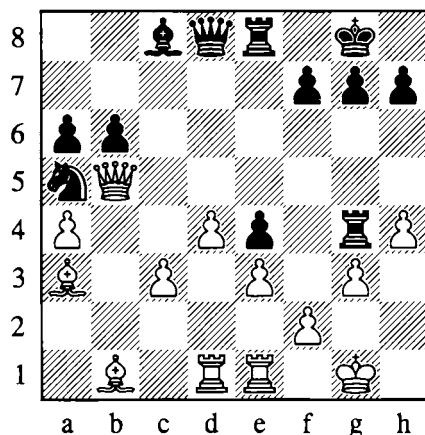
31.♗a3



31...♙xg2†! 32.♔xg2 ♖xh4

Threatening ...♔h3, ...♗g4-f3 followed by mate on g2.

33.♙h1 ♗g4† 34.♔g3 ♖f3† 35.♔h2 ♙e6-+

29...a6

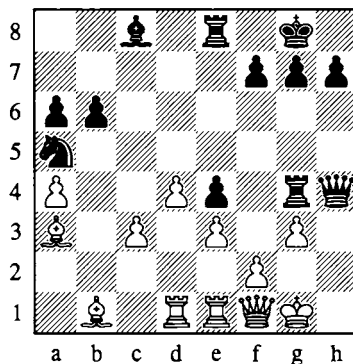
Forcing the queen to go elsewhere, in order to make ...♖xh4 a real threat.

30.♖b4?

After only three minutes, White decided to return his queen to this unfortunate square, from where it fails to provide the king with any help.

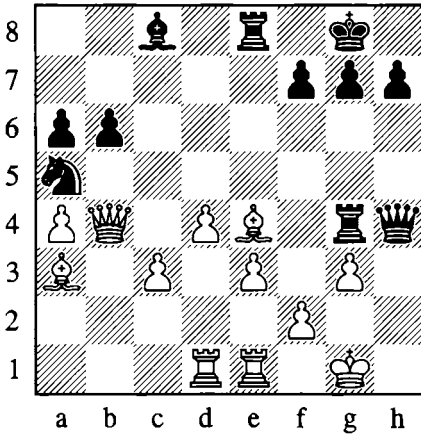
30.♖h5? would leave the c4-square undefended, allowing a decisive knight activation: 30...♘c4 31.♔c1 g6 32.♖h6 ♘d6 Followed by ...♘f5 with an unexpected queen trap.

The best chance to put up some resistance would have been: 30.♖f1! Defending the c4-square and the kingside at the same time. 30...♖xh4



31.♔d6! Finally, White can use the d6-square with some comfort. By over-defending the g3-pawn, White allows the freeing f2-f3, avoiding the danger of a decisive attack. True, Black's control of the light squares would have ensured a long-term advantage after, say: 31...♞h5

30...♞xh4 31.♔xe4



Sokolov must have put great hope in this move. Neither of my rooks can take the bishop, as one needs to protect my king and the other must protect my queen, but I had some hidden plans, too!

31...♞xg3!

Weakening the kingside and clearing the fourth rank for the queen.

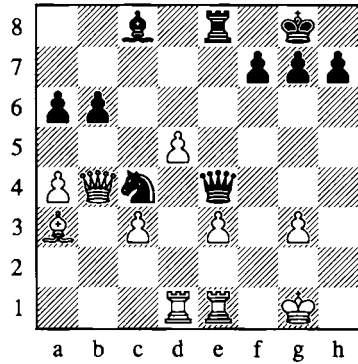
32.fxg3 ♞xe4

At the cost of an exchange, I have managed to achieve a perfect combination of my two main plans: light-squared domination and a kingside attack.

33.♞d2

Aiming to bring in some defenders.

White would not be saved by 33.d5 due to: 33...♔c4!

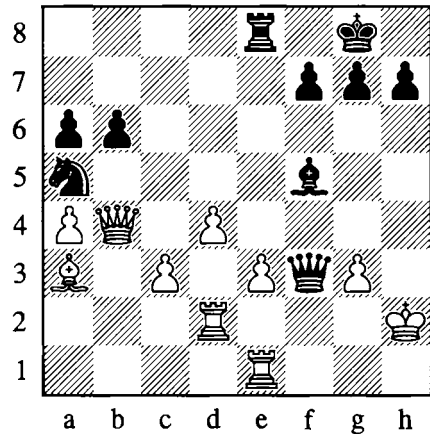


The blockade offered by this move is not so stable, but obstructing the fourth rank for just an instant has decisive effects. White can win the knight, but in the meantime his king will succumb to the attack. 34.♞d4 ♞f3 35.♞xc4 ♞xg3† 36.♔f1 ♔h3† 37.♔e2 ♞xe3† and wins.

33...♞f3 34.♔h2 ♞h5†

Just a repetition of moves in time trouble, helping me to get closer to move 40.

35.♔g1 ♞f3 36.♔h2 ♔f5



Increasing my control of the light squares but, more importantly, threatening ...♔e4.

As a curiosity, all the white pieces are placed on dark squares, with the exception of the insignificant a4-pawn.

37.e4

A thematic move, fighting against the blockade, but it does not change anything.

37...♙xe4 38.♖xe4 ♔xe4 39.d5 ♘c4

The knight occupies the perfect square, keeping the white queen out of the game. In order to defend the second rank, White would have to abandon the d5-pawn, leading to a decisive material advantage for Black with a continuing attack.

0-1

With this win, I took a full point lead over Mamedyarov. We played each other in the next round – Round 5. I was White and Mamedyarov used a very risky variation, in which White sacrifices a piece while keeping the draw by perpetual in her pocket most of the time.

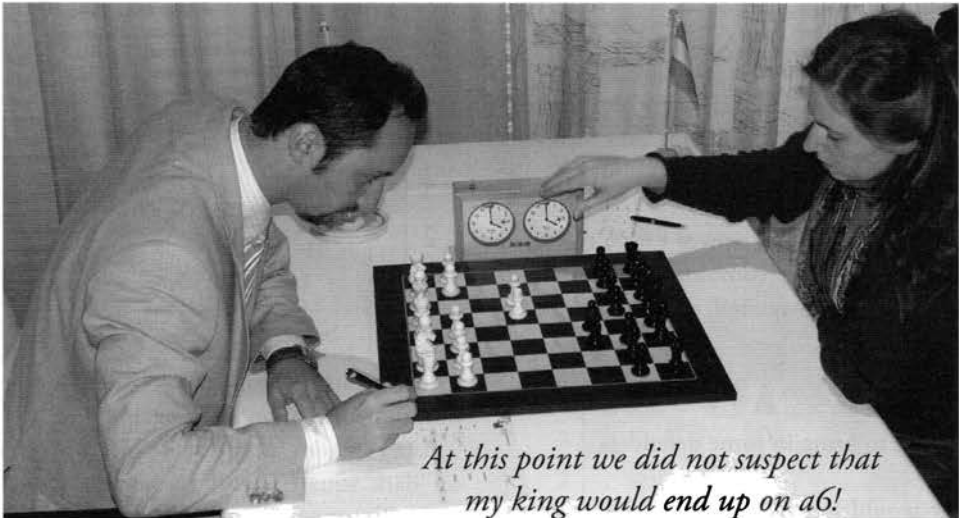
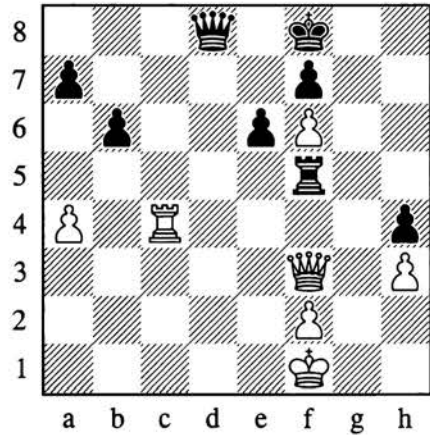
I did not expect that line and had problems remembering my old analysis. At some point, I thought I was on the winning track, so I avoided the draw and... started looking for equality only when it was too late.

This loss came as a cold shower. I shared the lead with Mamedyarov, but I knew that if we finished level then he would win precisely because he won our mini-match.

Given the tense tournament situation, I tried my best in the last-round game against Topalov.

Veselin Topalov – Judit Polgar

Hoogeveen 2006



At this point we did not suspect that my king would end up on a6!

We played a Nimzo-Indian and the game, with its breathtaking ups and downs, could safely be called a rollercoaster.

After we reached the time control on move 40, I had the feeling that the most logical result would be a draw. I did not believe my extra pawn would have much significance, since my king was vulnerable.

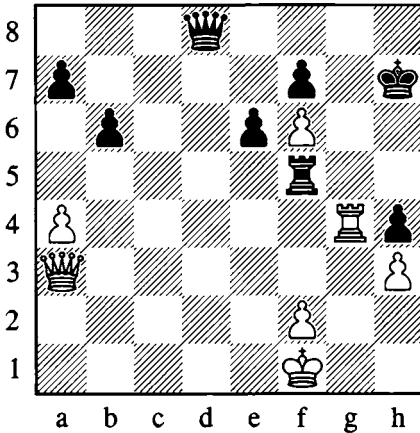
It looked as if the other last-round game, Mamedyarov – Sokolov, would end in draw, so it seemed I would finish the tournament in second place, tied on points with the winner.

My guesses regarding the games' results were wrong, but I anticipated the final tournament standing correctly.

41. ♖a3† ♕g8

Avoiding the trap 41...♖e8? 42.♖c8!, based on 42...♗xc8 43.♗e7 mate.

42. ♖g4† ♕h7



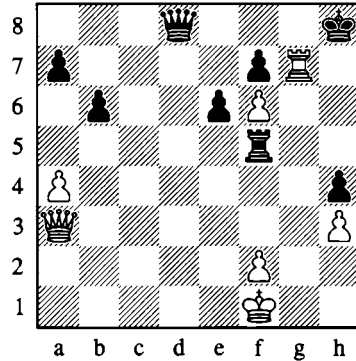
43. ♖xh4†

Topalov had been pressing for a long time and his advantage after move 29 was so huge that now he could not adapt himself to the changed circumstances: White needed to display some accuracy to reach a draw.

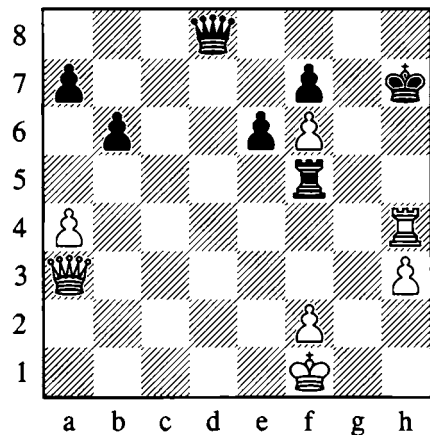
He did not treat this phase of the game superficially, though; for instance, on the last move he spent ten minutes. He clearly

underestimated my king's vitality, otherwise he would not have let it escape from the h-file.

The safest path was not trivial to find: 43.♖g7†! Keeping the king cut off on the edge of the board. 43...♕h8



44.♗e7! This is definitely not the first move that comes to mind, since it allows a series of seemingly dangerous checks. 44...♗d1† 45.♕g2 ♗f3† 46.♕h2 As curious as it may seem, Black has nothing better than forcing a draw by perpetual check: 46...♗xf2† 47.♖g2 ♗f4† 48.♕h1=



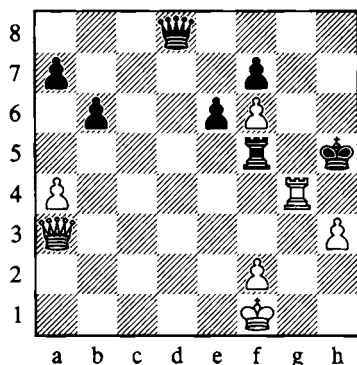
43...♕g6 44. ♖g4†

Played after another five minutes.

44.♗g3† ♖g5 parries the attack at once.

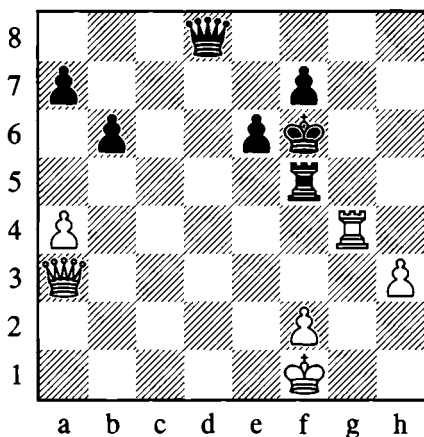
44...♔xf6!

44...♔h5 would have been entirely possible, but White could force a draw.



45.♖h4! ♕xh4 46.♗g3! ♔h5 47.♗g4! ♕h6 48.♗g7! = Quite a nice mechanism!

By this point, I had started to think of more than just a draw, so I decided to embark on a long king excursion to the queenside.

**45.♖c3!**

Topalov kept thinking on every move; he played the last one after five more minutes.

45...♔e7

I was, on the contrary, playing rather quickly. From move 41 until now I spent only two minutes!

46.♖d4 ♖d5?!

From a practical point of view, this is the best decision; I chose it after eight minutes of thought.

46...♗b8!

Objectively this would have been even stronger, but it was not easy to decide to allow the enemy queen to c6. I was definitely playing for a win, but I wanted to do so in *safe mode*!

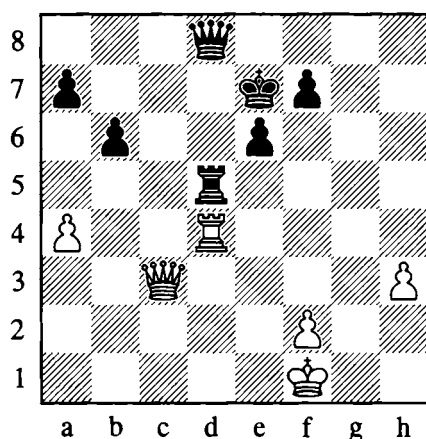
47.♗c6

47.♗a3! is parried by 47...♔e8 – not an easy move at all...

47...♖c5 48.♗e4 ♗e5

Parrying all the threats and preparing for either powerful counterplay or a promising rook ending.

After my move, White obtains drawing chances again.

**47.♖c4**

It would have made sense to provoke ...e6-e5 with: 47.♖f4!? (threatening ♗f6!) 47...e5 48.♖c4 The pawn advance results in a further weakening of Black's position. For instance, the consolidating ...♖d5-f5 is no longer possible. In addition, my sixth rank may prove weak. 48...♗d6 49.♖c7! ♕f8 50.♖xa7 ♖d1! 51.♔e2 White keeps holding his own.

47...♔d7

Finally, I had a feeling of relative safety with my king on a light square.

48.h4?

This was the first move in a series that Topalov played without thinking, and it turned out to be a mistake. Since White does not threaten or attack anything yet, I gain a valuable tempo to improve my queen's position.

Topalov should have kept harassing my king before it was too late:

48.♖g7! ♜e7

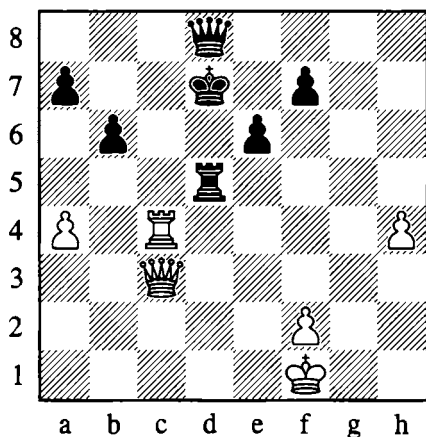
After 48...♔e8 49.♖h8† ♔e7 50.♖c3 we return to the position after 47.♞c4.

49.♖g8 ♞c5 50.♞d4† ♞d5

Or 50...♔c7 51.♖a8! with every chance of a perpetual.

51.♞c4

Black has nothing better than allowing a draw by repetition.

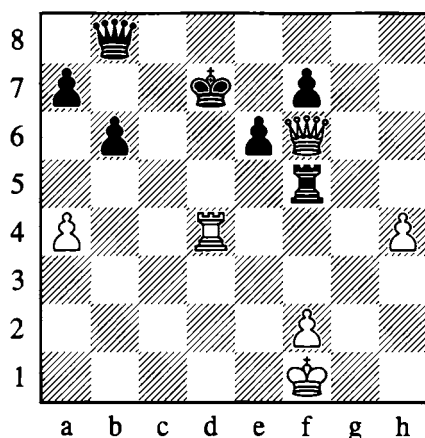


48...♖b8!

A very important move, taking the b8-h2 diagonal under control and, among other things, preventing ♞f4.

49.♖f6 ♞f5 50.♞d4†

50.♞d4† ♞d6 forces a queen exchange with a very good ending.



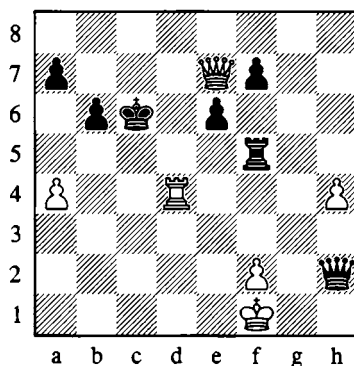
50...♔c6!

Geometrically, the best way to reach a safe shelter. After His Majesty reaches the a6-square, my major pieces would take care of the technical job.

I have a feeling that my move came a surprise for Veselin, who now invested 12 minutes.

51.♞c4†

If 51.♖e7 ♖h2!:



What a square! The queen defends d6 and attacks at the same time.

52.♞c4†

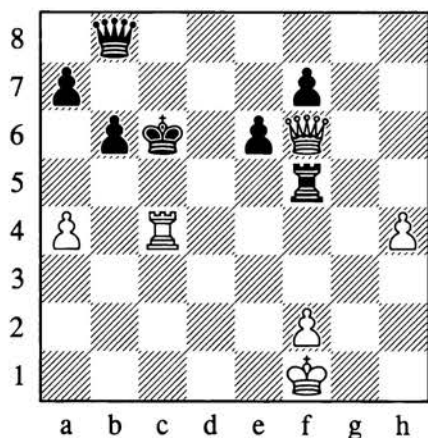
52.♞d7† ♔c5 with absolute safety on c5!

52...♔d5!

Believe it or not, my king is well placed in the centre of the board.

53.♞c2 ♖h1† 54.♔e2 ♖f3† 55.♔d2 ♖xf2†

With a decisive counterattack.



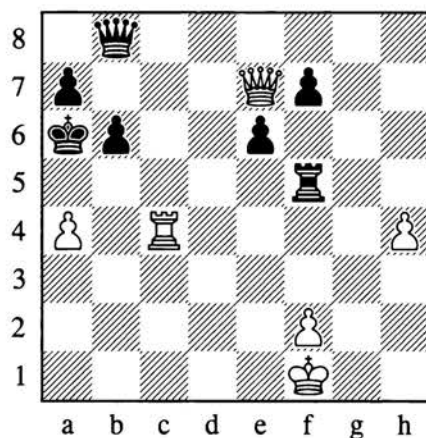
51...♔b7

Getting one step closer to the final destination.

52.♙e7+!

It is always tempting to give checks, but 52.♙d4 would have offered better survival (and counterattacking) chances, since the queen is strong in the centre.

52...♔a6



After ensuring my king's safety, I have secured a huge advantage.

53.♞c7?

It may seem that this move ties me to the

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defence of the a7-square. This is partly true, but... we have to play on the whole board!

53...♖a8!

I had planned this move in advance. It is the only winning move; suddenly, the white king has no shelter to hide from my attack.

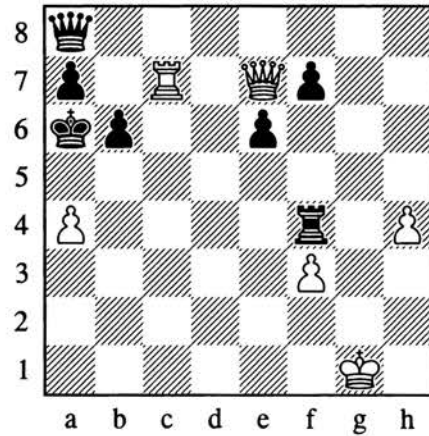
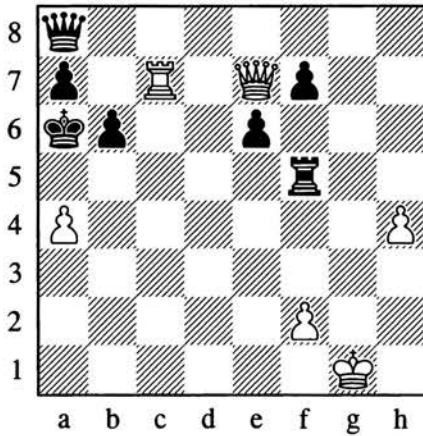
54.♔g1

54...♞f4!

Threatening ...♞g4†.

55.f3

Desperation. 55.♞g5 e5 Planning to centralize the queen with ...♞d5 (instead 55...♞xa4 would also be good enough). 56.♞g2 ♞xg2† 57.♔xg2 ♞xh4 58.♞xf7 ♞xa4 With a winning rook ending.



*Flanked by Mihail Marin
and Jacob Aagaard*

55...♖xf3

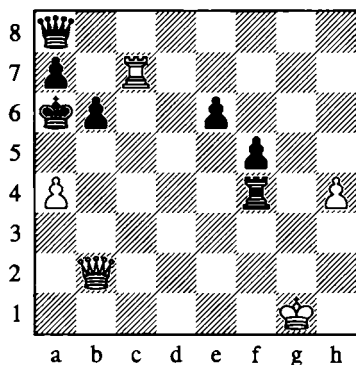
The only winning move, but I do not need any more!

56.♖g5

Threatening ♖b5 mate.

56...f5!

Parrying the threat and allowing my own attack to develop freely. The following is a nice winning variation, although it is not the only one: 57.♖g7 ♖f4! 58.♖b2



58...♖f1†! A neat tactic, winning the queen.

59.♕xf1 ♖h1† 60.♕e2 ♖g2†

Even without calculating this, it is obvious that White has no hope, so Topalov resigned.

0-1

I cannot help comparing the king march from this game with that from my game against Majul, see Volume I, page 165. True, the circumstances and the level of the opponent were quite different, but planning such a manoeuvre well in advance belongs in the same category of strategic thinking.

The happiness of finishing the tournament with such an entertaining win could not be marred by the fact that Mamedyarov also won, thus depriving me of yet another glass chess set. And I feel equally happy now as I share the games with you...

When I arrived home I noticed how happy Oliver and Hanna were: this had been an unusually short tournament, so I came back to them quicker!

Chapter 7

The Opening



*The famous investor George Soros is a believer in the Sicilian.
What few people know is that Soros was born in Hungary!*

I have never considered the opening as being the strongest part of my game. A big part of my training methods, as described in the first two volumes, was instead aimed at making me feel comfortable in the typical middlegame positions arising from my openings. Besides, I have always suffered a bit from the limited character of my repertoire, leading to some lack of flexibility when preparing for a specific game, and exposing me as a fixed target for my opponents' preparation.

On the other hand, this approach helped me to remain creative when analyzing a concrete variation. I am always looking for new and unexpected opening ideas. True, not all of them passed the scrutiny of analytical checking, but finding a special idea which proves worth trying out in an official game is very rewarding. The 1994 game with Shirov from Volume II is one of my favourite examples of this kind.

Somewhere around 2004 to 2005 I experienced a general crisis in my opening preparation. I had a tough battle with myself to accept the fact that, whether I liked it or not, I had to use the engines on a daily basis, double-checking my old analysis as well as all my new ideas. I can say that the whole concept of preparation changed due to the intrusion of technology into chess!

In my childhood, I received information from magazines and tournament bulletins, from the *Chess Informant* and the *New in Chess Yearbook*, from my trainers and the huge *cartotheque* created by my parents (please see Volume I for more details). In modern times, I had to switch to databases, electronic magazines and all kinds of Internet portals and sites.

In the past, I had relatively little information, but I was working out things in deep detail, trying to get the most out of it. Nowadays, dealing with such powerful tools requires a clever sorting out of the information and maintaining a critical view towards the engines' variations. To describe things schematically, it often looks as if we practically moved from the analytical to the synthetic approach.

Many top players use databases with only games above a certain level, for instance between players rated over 2500. With roughly 1000 games played daily, this surely saves a lot of time, but it also presents the risk of missing valuable ideas from lower-rated players.

The engines' evaluations can at times be very misleading. These days, one can frequently hear a player complaining that he had lost from a position with a "+4" advantage, but this is not always relevant from a sporting point of view. In order to prove the advantage, one sometimes needs to find one far-from-obvious move, or even a whole series of such moves. You should not stop analyzing an opening variation before you understand *why* it is winning.

The good news is that chess is far from being exhausted by the use of engines. The examples included in this chapter illustrate a wide range of situations. One can still prepare certain lines schematically, or even improvise at the board. And it is still possible to catch strong players on the wrong foot in forcing attacking lines, or to look for practical chances in irrational but objectively "0.00" positions.

In the next game, my preparation had a rather general character, but I relied on the safety net provided by using an unexpected opening, against which my opponent could not have made any special preparation.

Alexander Motylev – Judit Polgar

European Club Cup, Kallithea 2002

This game was preceded by a small adventure. The playing hall was just next door to our hotel, but this did not prove close enough that day, when it happened to be raining heavily. My clothes and shoes got so wet that my husband had to bring me new ones from our hotel room, for a complete change!

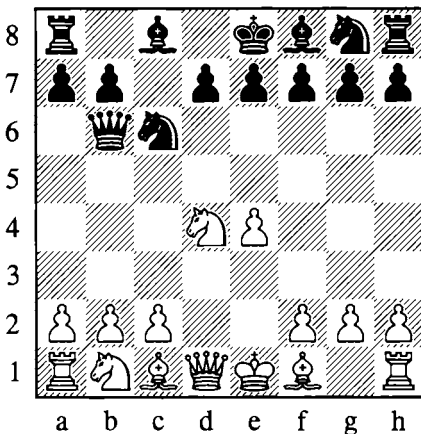
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6

I had the feeling that my second move came as a bit of a surprise for my opponent; I had played the Najdorf against him one year earlier.

In those years, Motylev was more than just a talented young player, since in 2001 he won the Russian Championship. He also had a reputation as an expert against the Sicilian.

Over the years he became known as a coach for the Russian men's team, while playing less and less in tournaments. But recently he made a glorious comeback by winning the 2014 European Individual championship in Yerevan, where I was also playing.

3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♖b6



The evening before the game I found several reasons to choose this variation rather than my usual Najdorf or Paulsen.

I thought that the effect of the surprise would be greater since this was the last round and it started at an earlier time than the previous ones.

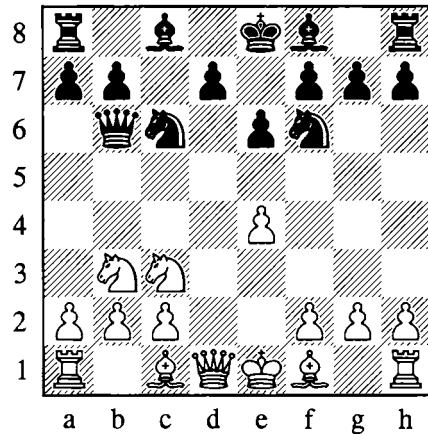
During my preparation I found a game in which my opponent used a plan with ♗e2 and 0–0–0. I would gladly play this kind of position which, on the other hand, did not seem to suit Motylev's style very well.

The general idea of the last move is to force White to retreat his knight from the strong central square. In some other Sicilian lines, such as the Scheveningen or the Paulsen, Black gladly loses a tempo with the queen (...♕d8-b6-c7) or the bishop (...♗f8-c5-e7) to induce ♘b3. The distinctiveness of this line is that Black carries out this plan before defining the central structure.

5.♘b3

This is by far the most common move, but the attempt to change the course of the game with 5.♘b5 is an important alternative.

5...♘f6 6.♘c3 e6



7.♗e2

Motylev is following his previous game in this line. When I am White, I prefer the more natural 7.♗d3.

7...♙b4 8.♙d2 0-0

This was the moment when my husband arrived to rescue me with the dry clothes and shoes.

9.a3

Played as if asking me whether I would mind parting with the bishop pair.

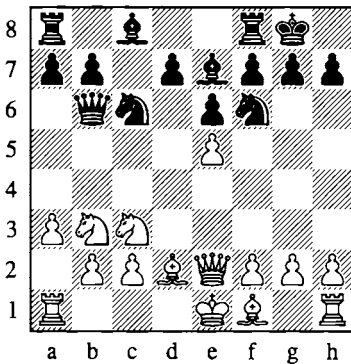
9...♙e7

Looking ahead, my decision proved to be inspired, as at a later stage my bishop will practically decide the game.

9...♙xc3 10.♙xc3 e5 is the other line, but I do not like Black's position. For instance: 11.0-0-0 ♖d8 12.♙d6! ♙c7 13.♙xf6 gxf6 14.♙g4† ♖h8 15.♙h4 ♙d6 16.f4 with a strong attack on the dark squares, Adams – Knezevic, France 1997.

10.0-0-0

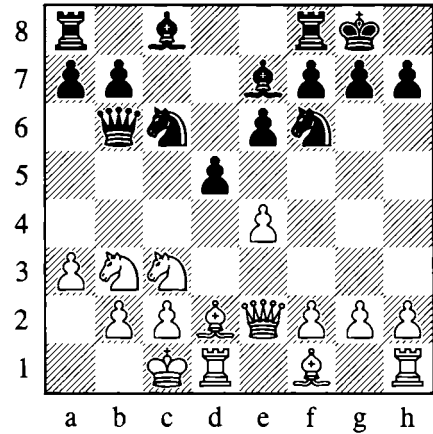
A few months earlier Motylev had played: 10.e5



10...♙d5 11.0-0-0 d6 12.exd6 ♙xd6 13.♙b5 ♙e5 14.c4 a6 15.cxd5 exd5 16.♙e3 ♙xb5 17.♙xb5 axb5 18.♙xb5 ♙e6 And now, in Motylev – Kunte, Calcutta 2002, White would have retained a small advantage with: 19.♙he1±

For this game, I had prepared 10...♙e8,

inviting White to justify the early central aggression.

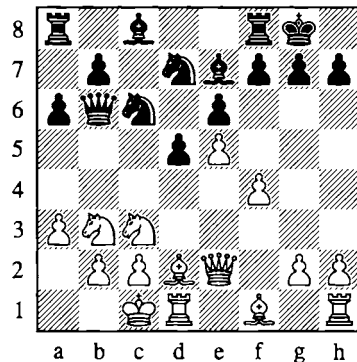
10...d5

Taking full advantage of the specific move order, I prepared this typical Sicilian break without the usual loss of a tempo (...d7-d6-d5). The game now acquires the contours of the French Defence, irrespective of White's reaction.

11.exd5

Alexander did not even spend a minute on this move; obviously he had a clear idea about which kind of structure he wanted to have against me.

The critical continuation is: 11.e5 ♙d7 12.f4 a6



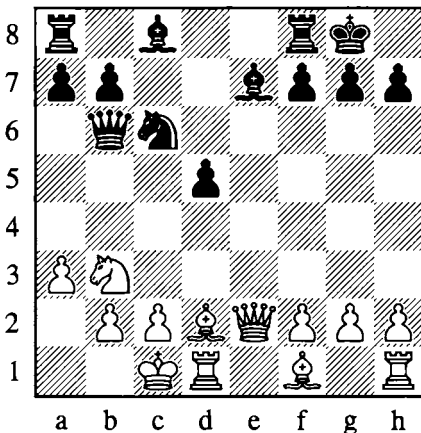
With respect to some main lines of the French Defence, White's development is not optimal. He will need to clear the way for his bishop to d3 in order to create some kingside threats and spend some time on occupying the d4-square.

I planned ...♖c7 followed by ...b5, resulting in the usual race with mutual attacks on the opposite wings. I did not analyze much and had no clear evaluation of the position, but was sure that it would lead to a real fight.

11...♘d5 12.♘d5

Motylev openly aimed for a position with a black isolani, but his last move clears the path for my c8-bishop. Instead it would have made sense to consider a neutral developing move such as: 12.g3!?

12...exd5

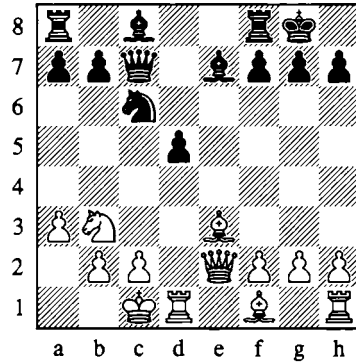


13.♗c3

Motylev played this new move after his first long think: 16 minutes. White has some problems with completing his development while keeping my isolani under observation.

The last move was probably aimed at defending the white king and targeting the black one. Its drawback is that it allows my queen to stay on the optimal b6-square, from where it puts pressure on both wings.

A game played earlier that year went: 13.♗e3 ♖c7



Now White has a choice:

a) 14.♖xd5?! ♗e6, followed by developing the rooks to d8 and c8, would offer Black too strong an initiative.

b) If 14.♗d2, trying to restore the harmony in White's set-up, Black should reply: 14...♗f6 15.♘d4 ♗xd4! This time I would have had nothing against giving away my bishop, since this would speed up my development and initiative. 16.♗xd4 ♗f5 Followed by ...♖ac8 with strong pressure against the white queenside.

c) 14.g4?! ♗e5 with counterplay, Konguvel – Sherbakov, Goodricke 2002.

d) White should probably play the restrained 14.g3, aiming to complete his development before displaying any ambitions.

13...♗e6

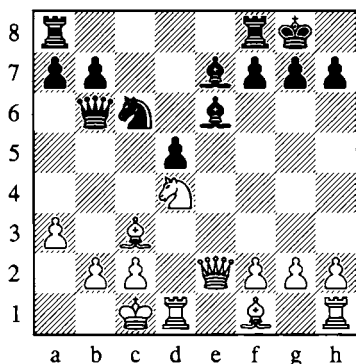
The main purpose of this move is development; defending the d5-pawn is just a welcome side-effect.

14.♗f3

Played after another relatively long think – ten minutes. The idea of transferring the queen

to g3 is consistent with ♖d2-c3, but it will prove too slow.

I was expecting 14.♘d4, starting the fight for the d4-square, the result of which will have a strong impact on the course of the game.

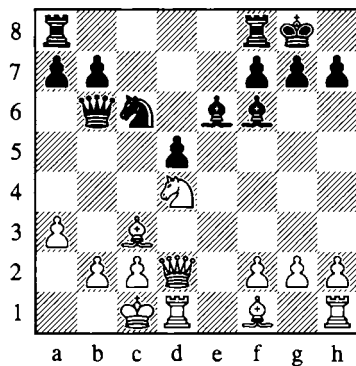


14...♙f6 15.♖d2

With his development incomplete, White needs to block the isolani, not try to win it.

15.♘xe6 would be dangerous for White: 15...♙xc3 16.bxc3 fxe6 17.♖xe6† ♔h8 Black would have too much play for the pawn(s).

Or if 15.♘xc6 ♙xc3?! 16.♘e7† ♔h8 17.♖b5! White would have a slight initiative, but instead the zwischenzug 15...♙g5† followed by ...bxc6 would lead to a very comfortable position.



15...♙fe8!

A prophylactic move, preparing to recapture

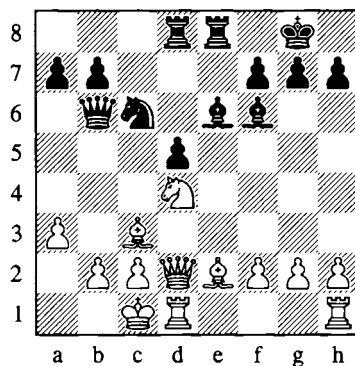
with the rook on e6 and preventing the intermediate check on e7 after ♘xc6, ...♙xc3.

16.♙e2

Getting closer to completing development.

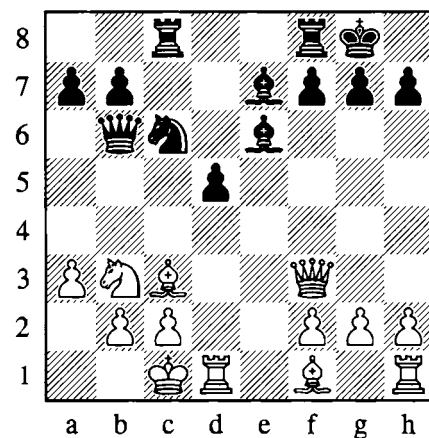
16.♘xe6 ♖xe6 17.♙xf6 ♖xf6 only activates Black's play.

16...♙ad8



Black is fully mobilized and has a good position, but White's stability in the centre ensures him against early trouble.

14...♖ac8



I spent 12 minutes on this move. It is clear that one rook belongs on the c-file, but 14...♖fd8 was a worthy alternative, preparing ...d5-d4.

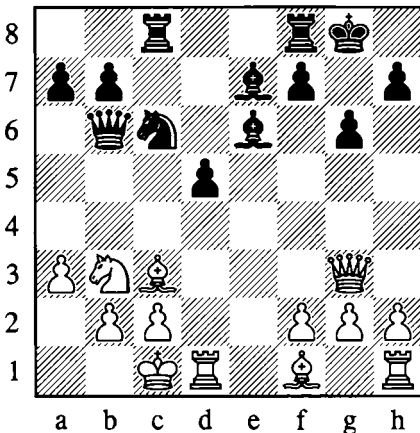
15.♖g3

Motylev spent another 14 minutes, giving me the impression that he was not sure about the viability of his plan.

15.♔d3 looks logical, as 15...d4? would lose the pawn to 16.♘xd4, based on ♔xh7† if Black captures all the way. I would have reinforced the threat with 15...♙fd8 16.♘d4 ♘xd4 17.♔xd4 ♔c5 18.♔xc5 ♖xc5 planning either ...d5-d4 or ...♙d6-b6 with very active play.

Or if 15.♘d4? ♔f6 White can no longer keep his stability: 16.♘xc6 ♖xc6 with a deadly pin along the c-file.

15.♕b1 looks like a reasonable move, but it does not solve White's development problems after the natural 15...♙fd8.

15...g6

The weakening of the long diagonal is not dangerous and the game shows that White's h4-h5 will be too slow.

It is interesting to compare the last move with 24...g6, as suggested in the comments to 24...♖c5?? in my 2003 Hooageveen game with Karpov (pages 67-68), and ...g7-g6 as given a

couple of times in the comments to 22...f6?! from my 2005 Wijk aan Zee game with Svidler (pages 120-121). In all cases, ...g7-g6 is the safest way of slowing down White's attack.

The main difference in the current game is that with my last move I am preparing to take over the initiative, while in the previous games ...g6 would have been a way of minimizing White's advantage.

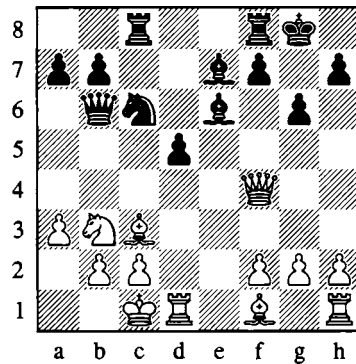
16.h4

Still taking his time: nine minutes spent on this move.

White could have tried to organize an attack on the long diagonal with:

16.♖f4

Followed by either ♘d4 or ♖h6.



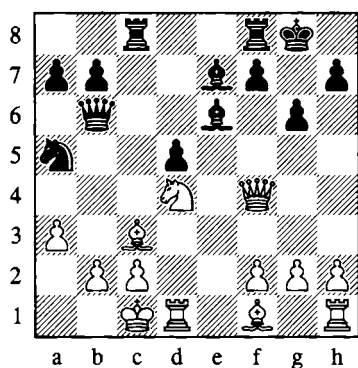
The refutation is elegant and far from obvious:

16...♘a5!!

The knight bravely jumps onto an attacked square, in order to open the c-file and prepare to eliminate the dangerous c3-bishop with ...♙xc3. In other words, one sacrifice for the sake of preparing a second one.

17.♘d4

The only way to try to keep some stability. If 17.♔xa5 ♖xb3 or 17.♘xa5 ♙xc3 18.bxc3 ♖xa5 the white king would be in deadly danger.



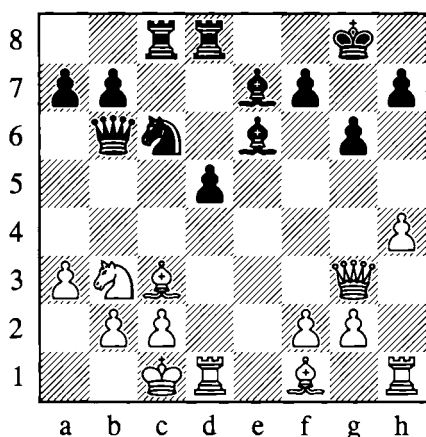
17...♞xc3!

Ruining the king's residence and taking control of the dark squares.

18.bxc3 ♞xa3†

Black has a pawn for the exchange and a lasting attack.

16...♞fd8

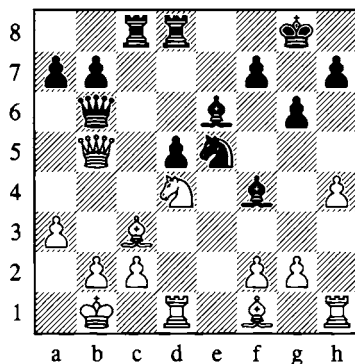


I was feeling very comfortable and playing relatively quickly. I was not worried about White's attack at all, since I trusted that my superior development would ensure I have the advantage.

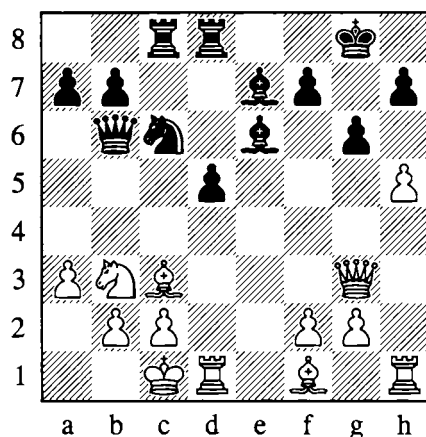
17.h5?

Motylev spent ten minutes on this mistake. This was the last moment when he could have blocked my isolated pawn: 17.♞d4 I could have changed the character of the game with

some queen harassment! 17...♞d6! 18.♞d3 ♞f4† 19.♞b1 ♞e5 20.♞b5



20...♞xc3! A familiar idea; Black eliminates White's most active piece and gets a structural advantage. 21.♞xb6 axb6 22.♞xe6 fxe6 23.bxc3 ♞g4 Black regains the exchange by force, keeping the better structure.



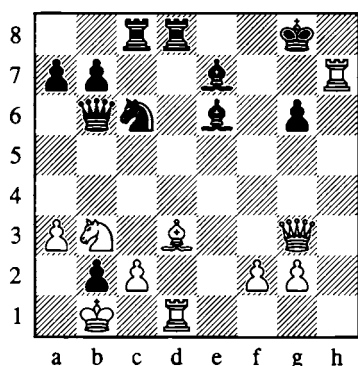
17...d4!

I invested 12 minutes on this thematic move in order to check all the concrete details.

18.hxg6 hxg6!

We both made the captures quickly. 18...dxc3? 19.gxf7† would lead to mate.

I rejected 18...fxg6 on account of 19.♞d3 dxc3 20.♞xh7 cxb2† 21.♞b1, failing to notice a small detail.



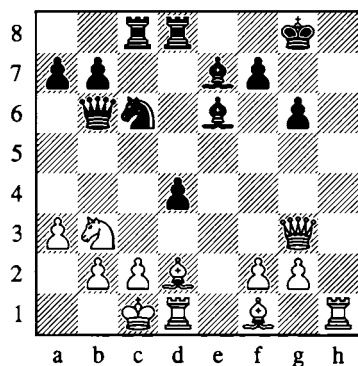
21...♙f5! This defends and wins, taking advantage of the pin along the d-file.

But in fact White has a different saving idea: 19.♞h2 h5 20.♞g3! This means my move was stronger, despite my inaccurate calculation.

19.♜xd4

I had the impression that my opponent also felt happy with his position, and that his nine minutes of thought had convinced him that I had overlooked the idea behind this move.

If 19.♙d2 I planned 19...♙xb3 followed by ...♙f6, but it would have been even better to open the c-file before executing the intended capture.

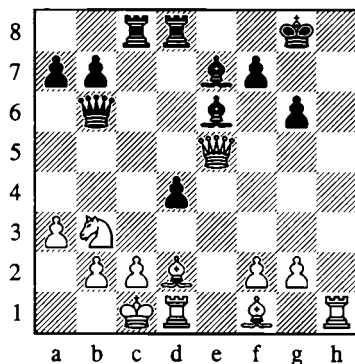


19...♜e5!!

The most spectacular aspect is inviting the queen to capture the knight, thus creating the threat of mate in one!

20.♞xe5

If 20.♙b4 ♙xb3 21.♞xb3 I could make full use of my superior development with the thematic 21...d3! putting all my pieces to work: 22.♙xd3 a5 23.♙c3 ♞xb3 24.cxb3 ♞xc3† 25.bxc3 ♜xd3† 26.♜c2 ♜xf2 with good winning chances in the endgame.



20...♙f6!!

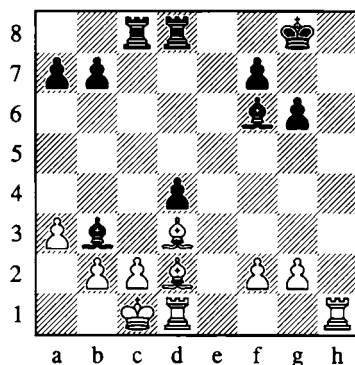
Another spectacular move in the same style as the previous one.

21.♞b5

Relatively best.

21.♞xf6 would lose the queen to 21...♞xc2† 22.♜xc2 ♙xb3† followed by 23...♞xf6. The king could try to avoid the bishop check with 22.♜b1 but the king would lose its own life after 22...♞xb2†! 23.♜a1 ♞a2† followed by mate.

21...♞xb5 22.♙xb5 ♙xb3 23.♙d3



The feeling of stability is illusory.

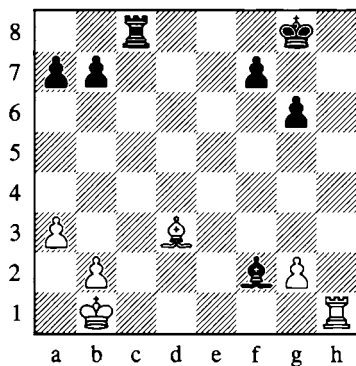
23...♙xc2! 24.♙xc2 d3

In such cases, the forceful advance of the isolani is clear evidence of Black's superior mobilization.

25.♙c3 ♙xc3

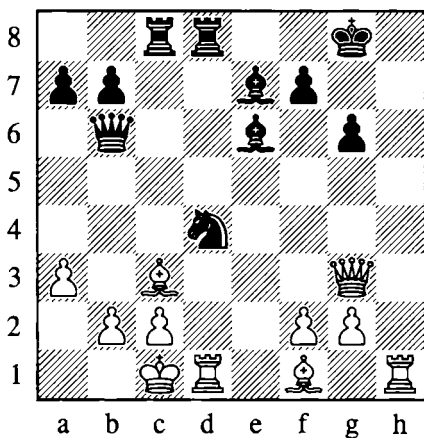
Black wins at least one pawn, for instance:

26.♞xd3 ♞xd3 27.♙xd3 ♙d4† 28.♙b1 ♙xf2



With rooks on the board, the presence of opposite-coloured bishops does not guarantee the draw at all.

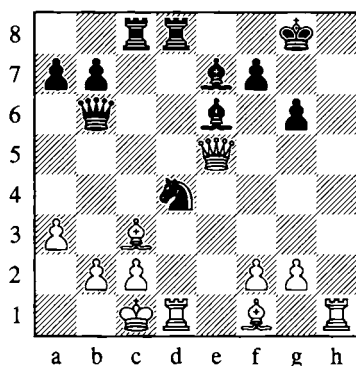
19...♞xd4



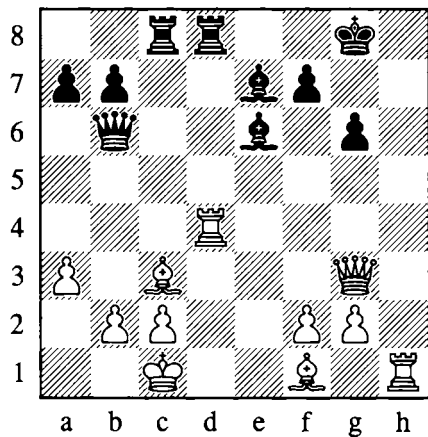
20.♞xd4

This is the move Motylev had relied on.

The immediate queen activation 20.♞e5 would lose due to the unconnected white rooks.



20...♞b3†! 21.cxb3 ♞xc3† 22.♞xc3 ♙g5† 23.♙c2 ♞xf2† 24.♙b1 ♞xd1† 25.♙a2 ♙f6 Black has won a piece and now she parries the threats along the long diagonal, creating decisive threats of her own.

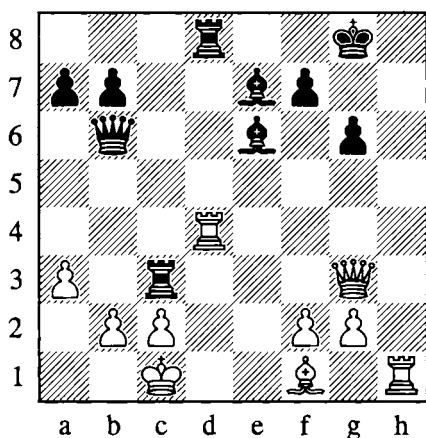


20...♞xc3!!

I remember how proud I was when I discovered this idea during the game, and even now I have very pleasant memories about my last move and the whole game.

After White's most dangerous attacking piece (and quite a useful defensive one) disappears, it will suddenly be Black's turn to attack.

Motylev had relied on 20...♞xd4 21.♞e5 when the relatively best line 21...♙g5† 22.♞xg5 would leave Black struggling slightly.



21.bxc3

One important point is that White cannot keep the integrity of his structure with 21.♞xd8† ♞xd8 22.♞xc3 due to 22...♙g5† 23.♟b1 ♞d1 mate!

Starting from this moment, the game becomes an excellent illustration of the power of the bishops supported by the queen. More than once, the bishops' activity in all directions (left/right and forward/backward) will be very effective.

In such situations I like to compare the bishops with two samurai swords.

21...♞xd4 22.cxd4 ♞xd4

Restricting the enemy king to the danger area. White is an exchange up, but this can hardly be felt since my mobilization remains far superior.

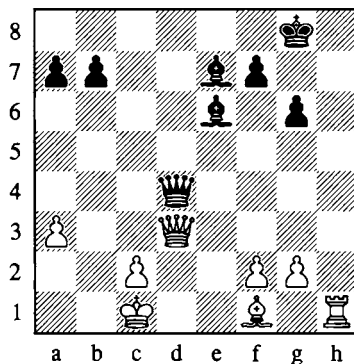
White has a rather wide choice, but my opponent found the best defence after only five minutes:

23.c3

It is essential to restrict my activity on the dark squares.

23.♞b8† takes the queen too far from the centre and fails to create any threats after 23...♙f8 when Black threatens to unpin the bishop with ...♟g7, followed by ...♙xa3† with a decisive attack.

Centralizing the queen with 23.♞d3 would lose to a series of accurate moves.



23...♙g5† 24.♟d1

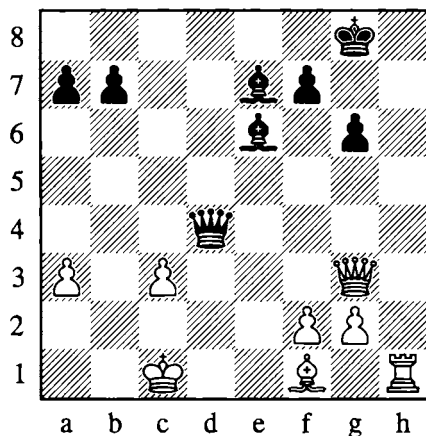
Or if 24.♟b1 ♞e5 threatening ...♞e1† and ...♙f6 at the same time: 25.♞e2 ♞c3+ 24...♞a1† 25.♟e2 ♞e5† 26.♟d1 ♙g4†!?

Forcing a weakening of the e3-square to make it accessible for the queen.

27.f3 ♙f5 28.♞c4 ♞e3

It is worth noting that the g5-bishop helps create threats along the h6-c1 diagonal, but also defends the d8-square against a decisive queen invasion.

29.♞d5 ♙e6 30.♞d3 ♞c1† 31.♟e2 ♙c4+ Winning the queen due to mate on d2.



23...♞c5!

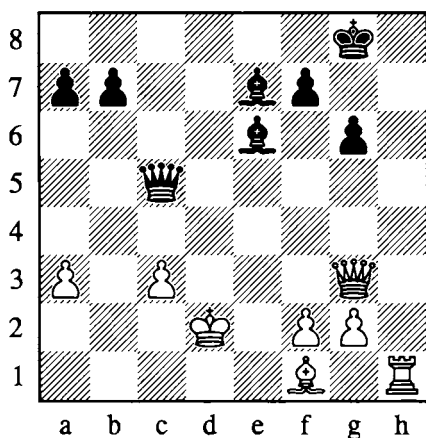
I had to resist several temptations, such as taking the a3-pawn with check or starting

some other way of forcing play. Eventually, I realized that my queen stands optimally on c5, controlling several important files and diagonals and preventing White's highly desirable ♖d3.

The spectacular 23...♗g5† would only lead to a draw: 24.♖xg5 ♖xc3† 25.♔d1 ♖b3† 26.♗e2 ♖c4† with perpetual check.

The greedy 23...♖xa3† helps White to get coordinated at the cost of two pawns: 24.♔c2 ♖b6 25.♖e5! ♖xf2† 26.♖e2 After White has completed his development, the rook may become irritating; surely a situation to avoid!

24.♔d2



Not giving up hope of playing ♖f1-d3.

24...♗g5†

A good move but, despite the 14 minutes I spent on it, not the best!

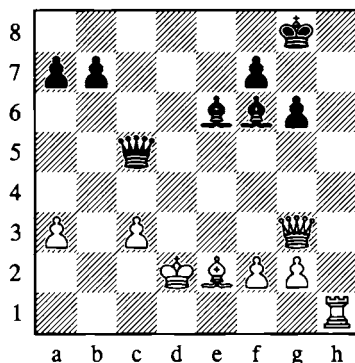
I rightly refrained from 24...♖xa3?, allowing the centralizing: 25.♖e5!

I should have played yet another quiet move: 24...♖f6!

Not only preventing ♖d3 but also preparing to secure the king against any trouble with ...♗g7.

25.♖e2

25.♖b8† ♖c8! does not improve White's position since the c3-pawn would be hanging.



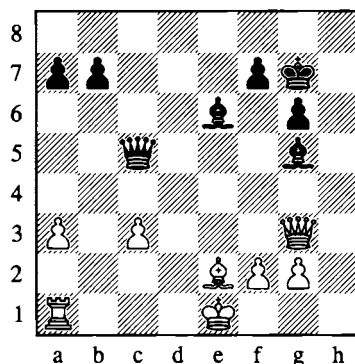
25...♗g7

After having achieved the perfect kingside regrouping, I could now start to consider pawn grabbing. If White prevents this with:

26.♖a1

I could exploit the rook's departure from the h-file with:

26...♗g5† 27.♔e1?



27...♖h4! 28.♖f3 ♖d5 Winning the f2-pawn and making vanish the white's king last hope of safety. Quite an impressive use of the bishops!

25.♔c2?!

Motylev thought that the king would be relatively safe on the queenside, thus committing the same error in judgement as myself on the previous move.

He should have stayed as close as possible to the opposite wing with:

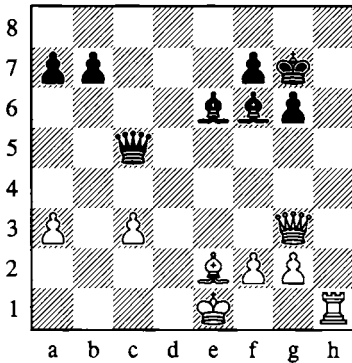
25.♔e1!

Not fearing the apparent exposure in the centre. I would have needed to display some accuracy in finding a few not-very-obvious moves to keep my initiative, but even so, White would have retained good saving chances:

25...♖g7 26.♙e2

Both players are continuing to regroup without paying attention to the opponent.

26...♙f6



Finally some interaction, but White is best advised to ignore it.

27.♖f1!

27.c4 would save the pawn, but delay the king's evacuation to the extent that it may become problematic to escape at all.

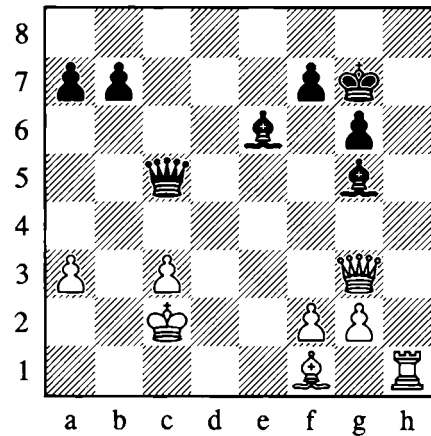
27...♙d4 28.♙d3 ♙a1† 29.♙d1 ♙c1 30.♙c2 ♙xa3

The king may well escape now, but the c4-pawn is in danger and my a-pawn could become very dangerous.

27...♙xa3 28.♖g1 ♙c1† 29.♖h2 ♙d2 30.♙d3 ♙xd3 31.♙xd3 a5

The a-pawn looks dangerous but White will be able to simplify to an opposite-coloured bishops ending where his missing pawn would not be a problem.

25...♖g7!

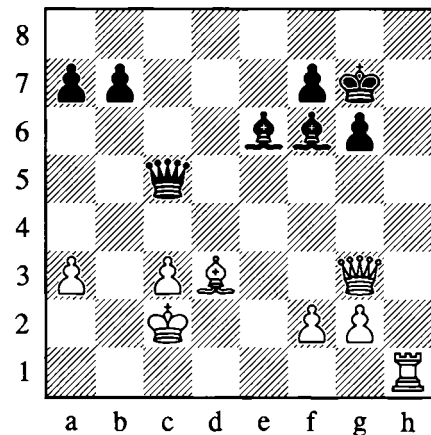


Better late than never! I eventually understood that in the absence of immediate threats a quiet move could be very confusing for White.

26.♙d3

The only reasonable move since after 26.♙e2 ♙d5 White would be helpless against no fewer than three annoying checks, on d2, e4 and a2. From d3, the bishop somewhat restricts my queen.

26...♙f6



But now the c3-pawn becomes vulnerable, allowing me to complete my regrouping with gain of time.

27.♖b1?

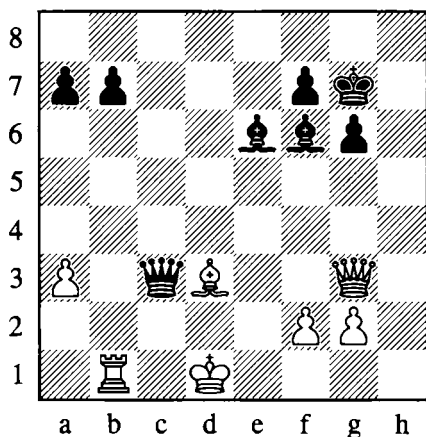
After this move my opponent had only 47 seconds left on the clock, but more importantly, his position was suddenly lost.

Motylev's desire to finally complete his development is understandable, but it will turn out that the rook is worse placed on b1 than on h1.

27.♗e3 would have offered better chances of continuing the fight, although after 27...♗xc3† 28.♔d1 ♖xa3 his position would have been simply bad.

27...♗xc3†

I played this with great excitement since I had seen everything until the end.

28.♔d1**28...♕g5!**

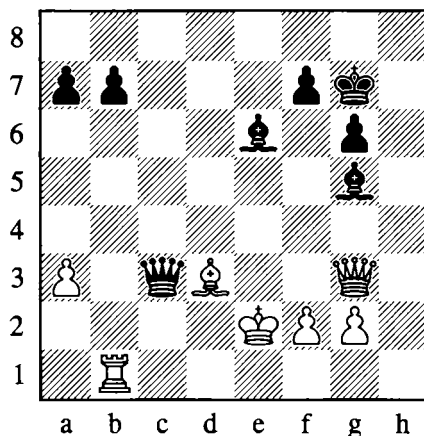
The decisive blow.

29.♔e2

The drawbacks of having the rook on b1 can be seen after 29.♗xg5 ♗xd3† when 30.♗d2 is not possible. Moreover, after 30.♔c1 ♕f5 White does not have the counterattacking ♗h6†, since the queen lacks the rook's support. Instead, 31.♖b2 ♗c3† is curtains.

29.f4 would be an interesting way of changing something in the dynamics of the position: 29...♕xf4 30.♗xf4 ♗xd3† 31.♔c1 Now if 31...♕f5, White starts checking with 32.♗e5† (which was not possible in the previous line with the queen on g5), but I planned 31...♗c3† 32.♔d1 ♕b3† when White would have to go into a hopeless queen ending with 33.♖xb3 since 33.♔e2 ♗c2† loses the rook.

After the game move it may seem that White is just one step away from escaping. In principle, this is true, but he will not be allowed to make that step...

**29...♕g4†!**

Beautiful bishop play, but this is not even the final touch!

30.♔f1

30.♗xg4 loses two pieces to 30...♗d2† 31.♔f1 ♗xd3†.

30...♕f4!

The culmination of the bishops' teamwork, with the perfect coordination of an operatic duo! Since the d3-bishop needs defence, we can say that the bishops have trapped the white queen.

0-1

And since I mentioned teamwork, I will add that my club team Polonia Warsaw won the bronze medals.

Many must have thought that the spectacular attack from the next game was the fruit of thorough opening preparation, but I can assure you that it was pure over-the-board inspiration.

Judit Polgar – Ferenc Berkes

Budapest 2003

I made a perfect start to this event with 3 out of 3 – a great result at this level – but then I slowed down a bit, losing in the fifth round; before this game I had 4/6.

At the time my opponent was the Under-18 European Champion and I remember that after the game I commented that we will be hearing a lot about him in the future. Since then he has become a strong grandmaster and a constant presence in the Hungarian Olympic team.

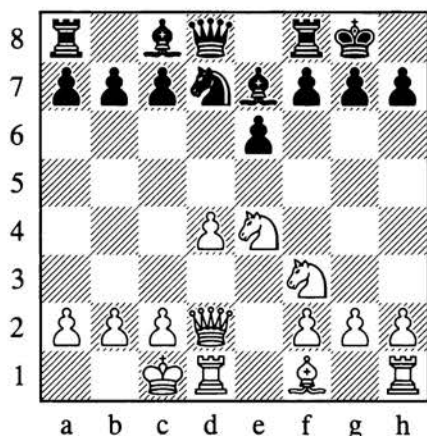
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6

The French Defence was Berkes' main weapon, but his last move was probably intended as a surprise, as he had never played it before.

4.♗g5

In earlier games I blocked the centre with 4.e5 quite frequently, but that day I felt more comfortable about the bishop move.

4...dxe4 5.♘xe4 ♗e7 6.♗xf6 ♗xf6 7.♘f3 ♘d7 8.♞d2 0-0 9.0-0-0 ♗e7



This variation used to be a specialty of Evgeny Bareev, who has since retired from tournament activity.

We had played relatively quickly so far: I had spent eight minutes while my opponent had used only four! But now I had my first long think (15 minutes). Since I did not expect this variation, I tried to guess which plan would be the most unpleasant for my opponent.



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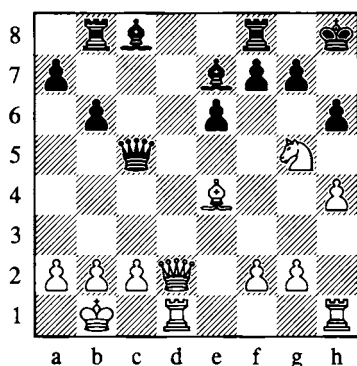
10.♔d3

A natural move, but the aggressive 10.♔c4 and 10.h4 are also popular.

10...b6

Berkes spent only two minutes on this move, which means he had made up his mind before the game.

The blindfold game Topalov – Bareev, Monte Carlo 2003, played just a few weeks earlier, went: 10...c5 11.♖xc5 ♖xc5 12.dxc5 ♔d5 13.♗b1 ♔xc5 14.h4 Black is behind in development and facing concrete kingside threats. He should have played the prophylactic 14...h6 with a defensible position. Bareev's careless 14...b6? led to immediate trouble after: 15.♕g5 h6 16.♕h7† ♖h8 17.♕e4 ♖b8



18.♗f4! A decisive move, attacking the b8-rook and the f7-pawn simultaneously.

11.♕eg5

After seven minutes I had spotted a surprising attacking idea, which could work if my inexperienced opponent would play the most natural moves.

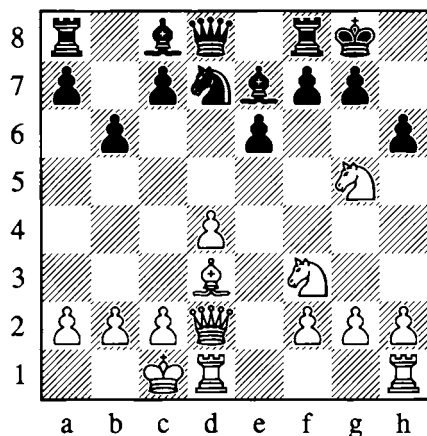
11...h6

Berkes answered after only three minutes, making me trust that he did not feel any danger yet.

The safest continuation was played a couple

of years later: 11...♕xg5 12.♕xg5 ♕f6 followed by ...♕b7, with balanced play in Gashimov – Bareev, Gothenburg 2005.

The last move is not a mistake yet, but it shows Berkes' reluctance to exchange his bishop for my g5-knight, an attitude that will soon cost him dearly.

**12.♕h7†**

After ten more minutes, I could not resist setting up the planned trap, although I intuitively felt that 12.h4 may be better objectively.

12...♖h8 13.♕e4

Although I had made up my mind already, I spent another five minutes double-checking everything.

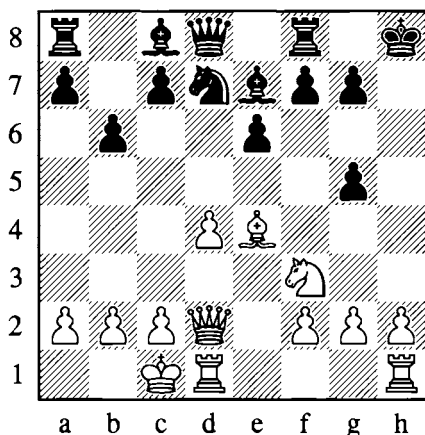
13...hxg5?

The decisive mistake. My opponent confessed after the game that during the 11 minutes he spent on it, he saw my answer, but could simply not believe it would work!

White does not have the time to take the rook because of 14...g4, when the knight cannot go away due to 15...♕g5, so the threat of ♕xa8 should remain in reserve.

If 13...♖b8 White would keep the initiative with 14.h4.

The best move was 13...♗xg5! as played one year later in Volokitin – P.H. Nielsen, Germany 2004. After 14.♘xg5 ♖b8 15.♘f3 ♘f6 Black had an entirely viable position.



14.g4!!

I played this move with great excitement, everything seemed to work out perfectly – what a spectacular piece sacrifice!

Black has to spend a tempo to save his rook, allowing me to open the h-file with h2-h4.

It seems that only now did Berkes understand that something very serious was going on, as he spent 14 minutes before answering.

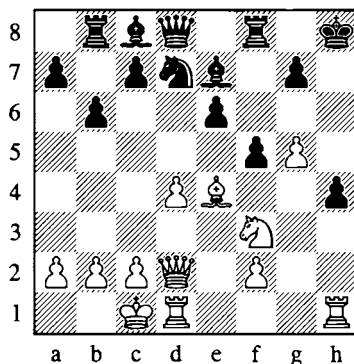
14...♖b8

In principle, 14...c6 looks a bit better, as it clears the c7-square for the queen. But concretely, there is no way that Black can use this small difference compared to the game. For instance, after 15.h4 g6 16.hxg5+ ♗g7 17.♗f4 ♖h8 18.♖xh8 ♗xh8 the same move as in the similar line below still works, for slightly different reasons: 19.♘e5 ♘xe5 20.♖h1 ♗xh1+ 21.♗xh1 ♘d7 22.♗xc6 The only difference is that the rook is trapped on a different square.

15.h4 g6

After seven minutes, Berkes decided upon this desperate attempt to regain some kingside coordination with ...♗g7 and ...♖h8.

15...gxh4 16.g5 f5 would not reduce the force of my attack.



17.♗f4!

The shortest way to the h-file.

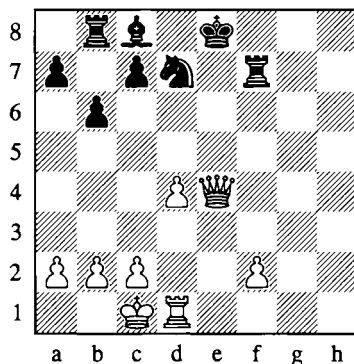
17...fxe4 18.♗xh4+ ♗g8 19.♗h7+ ♗f7 20.♗h5+ g6

20...♗g8 21.g6 is curtains.

21.♗h7+ ♗e8 22.♗xg6+ ♖f7 23.♖h7

It seems that it is all over, but Black can still try to resist by returning a large amount of material.

23...♗xg5+ 24.♘xg5 ♗xg5+ 25.♗xg5 ♖xh7 26.♗g6+ ♖f7 27.♗xe6+ ♖e7 28.♗g6+ ♖f7 29.♗xe4+

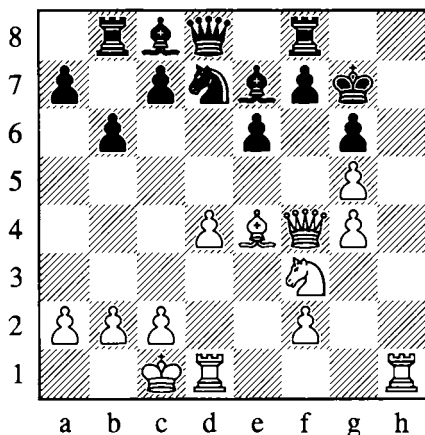


Black stands all right materially, but his coordination is poor. If 29...♗d8 30.♖e1 followed by ♗e8+ or 29...♗f8 30.♖h1 and White's attack is winning.

Or if 15...f5 16.hxg5+ ♗g8 17.gxf5 ♖xf5 18.♗xf5 exf5 19.♗f4+- White would be

attacking while the material count is more or less equal.

16.hxg5† ♖g7 17.♚f4!



Once again, this is the best square for the queen transfer. On the way to the h-file, it also puts pressure on the queenside.

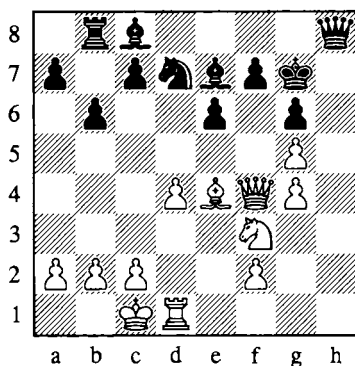
White's attack may seem a bit slow, but Black's development is even slower! He has a wide choice, but no saving move.

17...♗b7

Continuing to develop and hoping to exchange at least one of my attacking pieces – the bishop.

With his major pieces incompletely coordinated, Black would not be successful in his fight for the h-file:

17...♙h8 18.♙xh8 ♚xh8



19.♘e5!

Despite having a piece less, White keeps attacking with quiet moves. This is possible only because Black is seriously behind in development.

19...♙g8

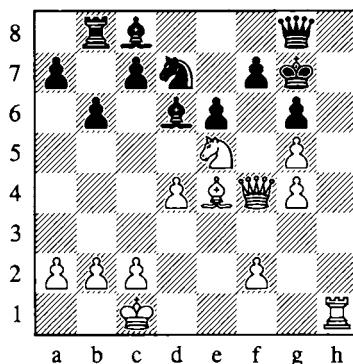
If 19...♘e5 then 20.♙xe5† ♖g8 21.♙xc7 ♗xg5† 22.♖b1 unexpectedly traps the rook. This line illustrates the lack of communication between Black's opposite wings.

20.♙h1

Another apparently peaceful move. It may seem that Black can neutralize the attack with:

20...♗d6

But White is ready with some tactical fireworks.



21.♙h7†!

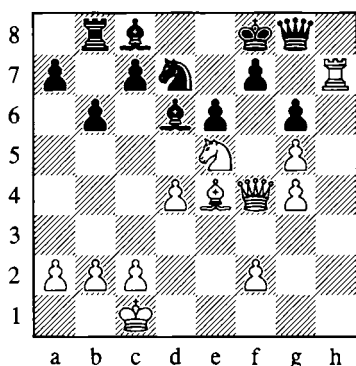
I was very happy when I found this resource. It is the only winning move and quite a beautiful one. It is really amazing how many beautiful ideas I found in this game and how perfectly everything works together.

21...♖f8

Trying to evacuate the danger zone, but a bitter surprise awaits the black king.

21...♖xh7 leads to forced mate: 22.♙h2† ♖g7 23.♙h6#

Also hopeless is 21...♙xh7 22.♙xf7† ♖h8 23.♘g6†.



22.♖h8!

White wins the queen, since 22...♜xh8 23.♜xf7 is mate.

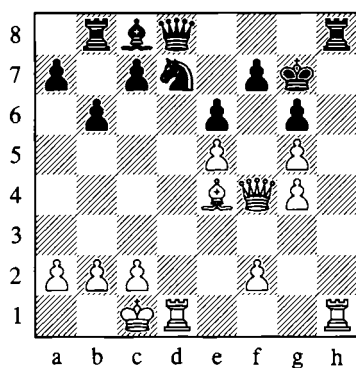
Another apparently logical try which would fail because of Black's lack of development is:

17...♙d6 18.♘e5 ♙xe5 19.dxe5

White threatens 20.♖h7† ♔xh7 21.♜h2† ♔g7 22.♜h6† ♔g8 23.♖h1, so the next move is forced:

19...♖h8

Now there is more than one way leading to Rome, for instance 20.♖xh8 ♜xh8 21.♙c6 or 20.♜f6†, but the computer's suggestion is by far the most convincing.



20.♖h6!

White maintains the tension, leaving Black completely paralyzed.

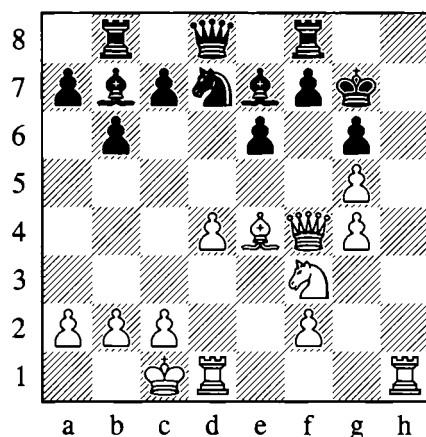
20...a5

There is nothing else other than neutral pawn moves.

If 20...♙b7 21.♖xd7 ♜xd7 22.♜f6† mates.
21.♙c6 ♖xh6 22.gxh6† ♔f8 23.g5

There is no adequate defence against 24.♖xd7 ♖xd7 25.♜f6 ♜xf6 26.exf6, attacking the bishop and threatening h6-h7 at the same time.

Finally, 17...♖g8 allows the simple combination 18.♖h7† ♔xh7 19.♜xf7† followed by 20.♖h1 mate.

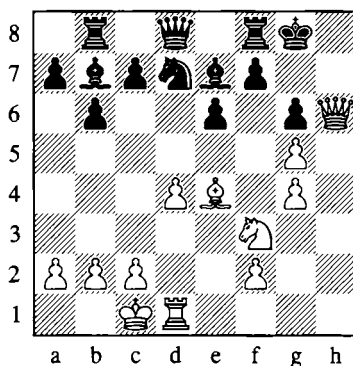


18.♖h7†!

A thematic combination, made possible by the fact that my bishop is still alive, despite what might seem an inevitable exchange.

18...♔xh7 19.♜h2† ♔g8

The bishop's lethal action is revealed after: 19...♔g7 20.♜h6† ♔g8



21. ♖xg6!

21. ♖h1?! would allow Black to prolong the fight a bit: 21... ♖xg5† 22. ♘xg5 ♜xg5† 23. ♜xg5 ♖xe4

21... ♖xg5†

The only way to avoid forced mate, but it does not save the game.

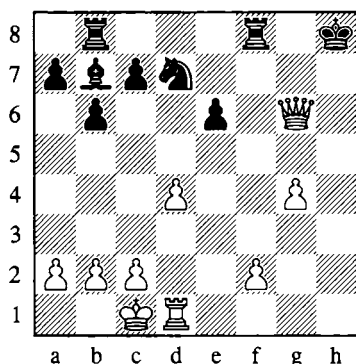
22. ♘xg5 ♜xg5† 23. ♜xg5

White retains a decisive material advantage.

For example:

23... fxg6? 24. ♜xg6† ♖h8

The bishop's control of the h1-square does not save Black from mate.



25. d5!

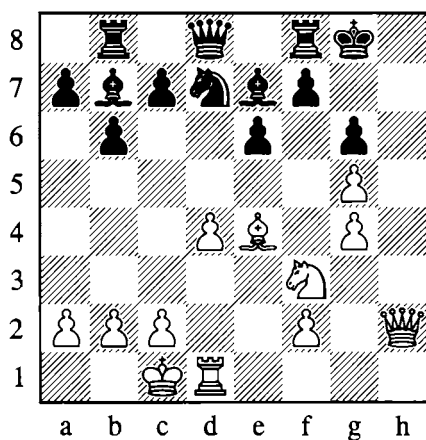
Opening the d-file for a decisive invasion.

25... ♖xd5 26. f3!

The second case of interference on the long diagonal.

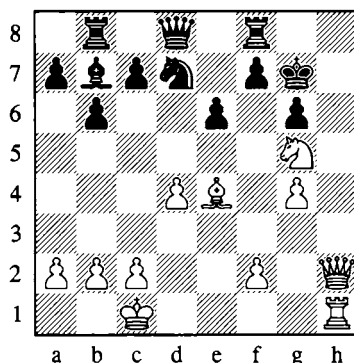
26... ♖xf3 27. ♖xd7

With mate in two.

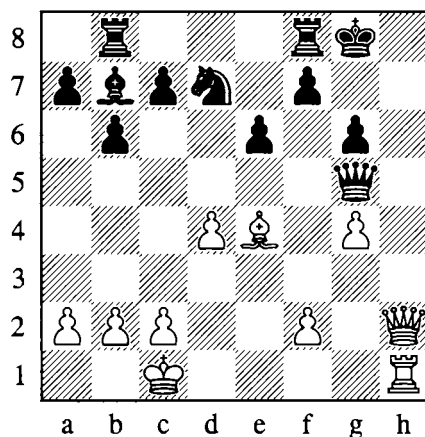


20. ♖h1 ♖xg5† 21. ♘xg5 ♜xg5†

If Black thought he could escape with 21... ♖g7, then the following combination must have come as a cold shower.



22. ♘xe6†!! Weakening the g6-pawn and opening the seventh rank. 22... fxe6 23. ♜h7† ♖f6 24. g5†!! The final touch, leading to mate on the next move. 24... ♖xg5 25. ♜h4# Not an everyday mating picture!



22. f4 ♜xf4†

What else?

23. ♜xf4 ♖xe4 24. ♜xe4

And Black decided to call it a day. Despite the approximate material equality, the black king remains hopelessly vulnerable.

1-0

When people asked my opponent why he resigned he replied: “I was not enjoying this game, but it was a nice one; why would I ruin it by playing on in a hopeless position?”

I took this as a nice gesture and appreciated my young opponent’s sportsmanship.

Deep inside, I knew that this game would one day shine in one of my books! Even today I would call this one of the most memorable games ever!

After the successful improvisation of the previous example, we now switch to the opposite situation. In the next game I obtained a decisive attack by simply showing my home analysis.

Judit Polgar – Shakhriyar Mamedyarov

Bled Olympiad 2002

This was my sixth appearance at an Olympiad.

Bled is a picturesque city alongside the glacial lake of the same name, not far from Hungary. Our hotel room had a nice view of the lake, around which we had long walks every day. The pleasant surroundings and possibly the great meals provided the perfect chemistry for playing in good spirits, although the playing hall was much too small to host both the men’s and women’s Olympiads.

We had a couple of new rules at this Olympiad. First of all, there was the doping test. After the end of every round, a few randomly-chosen players had to submit themselves to the test. Even today it is not clear what kind of doping could really help a chess player. This is not a physical sport and a chess event normally lasts between one and two weeks, which is unusual for other types of competition.

We also faced the most radical change of time rate ever. At the Istanbul Olympiad in 2000 we had had 100 minutes for the first 40

move, 50 minutes for the next 20 and then 10 minutes for the rest of the game; with an increment of 30 seconds on every move. In Bled, all we got was 90 minutes (+30 seconds per move) for the whole game – quite a brutal reduction of the total time!

The new time control required not only more thorough opening preparation, but also careful planning of... visits to the toilets, which were situated quite far from the playing area. Once you exhausted the main 90 minutes, there was no chance to go to the bathroom until the end of the game.

I felt relieved that by the next time I played in an Olympiad, in 2008, the time control had become a bit milder, with a control on move 40 and an additional half an hour for the rest of the game.

I had won my first-round game but then made two draws. This game took place in the fourth round.

Playing against the Azeri team was an interesting experience. It is not about its composition, which was the same as, say, ten years later, but about the players’ ages: Radjabov 15, Mamedyarov 17, Gashimov 15, Guseinov 15.

This was my first game against Mamedyarov and I did not know much about him. He was considered a very talented young player; since then he has become a world-class player and he played in the recent Candidates Tournament.

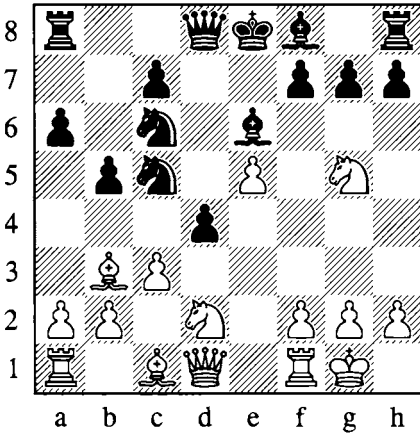
1.e4 e5

In those years, Mamedyarov clearly was a 1...e5 player, but later he broadened his repertoire.

2.♟f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♜xe4 6.d4 b5 7.♙b3 d5 8.dxe5 ♙c6 9.♘bd2 ♜c5 10.c3 d4

Mamedyarov had played this before and I was looking forward to playing a sacrifice I had prepared some time ago.

11. ♖g5



11... ♗d5

Up to this point, Mamedyarov had spent (I cannot really say he had *thought* for) two minutes. I was surprised about how lucky I was in getting the chance to show my analysis.

After this game, Black completely abandoned the last move, switching to the long forcing line: 11... ♗xc6 12. ♖f3 0-0-0 13. ♗xe6† fxe6 14. ♖xc6 ♖xe5 15. b4 ♖d5 16. ♖xd5 exd5 17. bxc5 dxc3 18. ♖b3 d4 19. ♗a3 This is supposed to be drawn with correct play, but both sides can stumble along the way. In practice, Black scored rather well.

12. ♖xf7!

This had been played before, but the conclusions were far from clear. The sacrifice suits my style perfectly and analysis convinced me that it offers White an overwhelming attack.

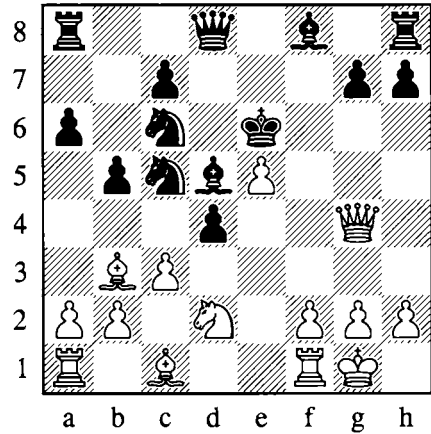
12... ♗xf7?

If 12... ♗xf7? 13. ♗xf7† ♗xf7 14. ♖f3† White regains the knight, keeping an extra pawn and, more importantly, a crushing attack.

13. ♖f3†

A spectacular check, using the pin along the a2-g8 diagonal and forcing the black king to advance into a dangerous area.

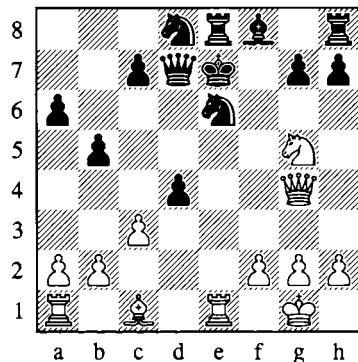
13... ♔e6 14. ♖g4†



14... ♗f7?

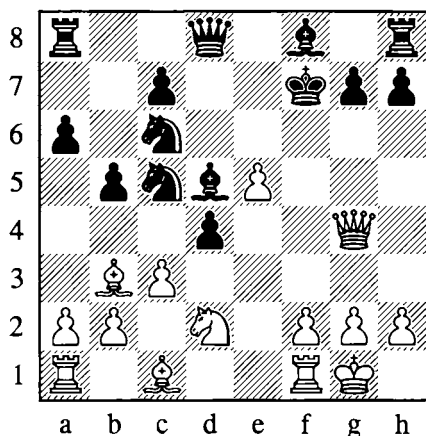
Strangely enough Mamedyarov also played this new move (which later proved to be the decisive mistake) within a minute. I assume it was part of his preparation, but then I wonder what he could have overlooked.

The only move to offer some vague chances of survival is: 14... ♗e7 15. e6 With the king on e7, Black's coordination is awful and everything works out perfectly for White. 15... ♗xe6 16. ♖e1 ♖d7 17. ♗xe6 ♖xe6 18. ♖f3 ♖e8 19. ♖g5 ♖cd8



Svidler – Anand, Dos Hermanas 1999, had reached this position and 20.♙f4! would have been an improvement. Black's position is as bad as it looks, despite the extra piece; White should win with accurate play. The only defence against ♗xc7, undermining the e6-square, or the simple ♖e5 followed by ♖ae1, would be 20...h6 21.♘f3! but now White has the additional threat of ♘e5-g6.

This is the kind of attack which should occur in only one game, inhibiting anyone with Black from repeating the risky experiment. Mamedyarov's opening choice can only be explained by the superficiality of his preparation.



15.♞f5+

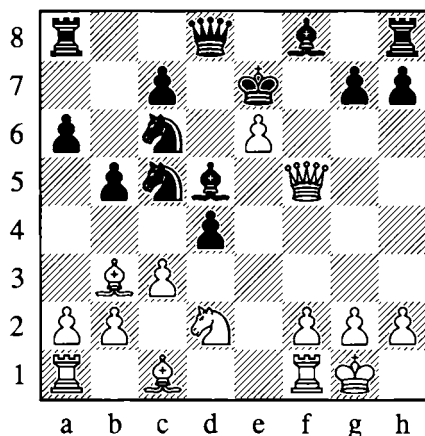
I spent ten minutes before playing this strong move, in order to get used to the fact that, after allowing the devastating sacrifice, Mamedyarov also chose the worst defence.

Since he now sank into a 12-minute think, he might have analyzed only the previously played 15.e6+, which is also quite strong and yielded White a win in a game between lower-rated players: Coelho – Januario, Teresina 2000.

15...♙e7

15...♙g8 would be a great move if it was not for 16.e6! threatening mate in one and forcing Black to return the piece with: 16...♘e5+–

16.e6!



I need to get rid of this pawn, which on e5 only provided the black king with shelter. In view of the threat of ♞f7+ Black will not be able to ignore the pawn on e6.

Around this moment Svidler, who happened to pass nearby my board, whispered in my ear: "He did not even get to 14...♙e7?"

16...♙xe6

Played after 32 minutes; Mamedyarov must have finally understood the seriousness of his situation.

16...♘xb3 17.♘xb3 would help me to develop. 17...♙xe6 18.♖e1 ♞c8 19.♙g5+ ♘d6 The engine gives mate in 13, which is completely irrelevant. To tell the truth, I was planning to just win the game with the natural sequence 20.♙f4+ ♙e7 21.♘c5 ♘d8 22.♖xe6+ ♘xe6 23.♖e1.

17.♖e1!

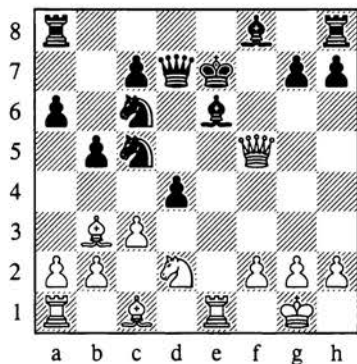
Regaining the piece with 17.♞xc5+ was also good, of course, but I wanted to take full advantage of the open e-file.

17...♚d6

Aiming to defend all the minor pieces.

I was not entirely sure about how to meet:

17...♚d7



When you feel the position is completely winning, it is important to choose the continuation which gives the fewest chances of survival. Most likely, I would have once again refrained from piece grabbing in

favour of maintaining the initiative:

18.♙xe6!

I was also aware that 18.♙xc5† ♔d8 19.♙g5† ♙e7 20.♙xg7 ♙g8 21.♙xh7 should win, due to my extra pawns.

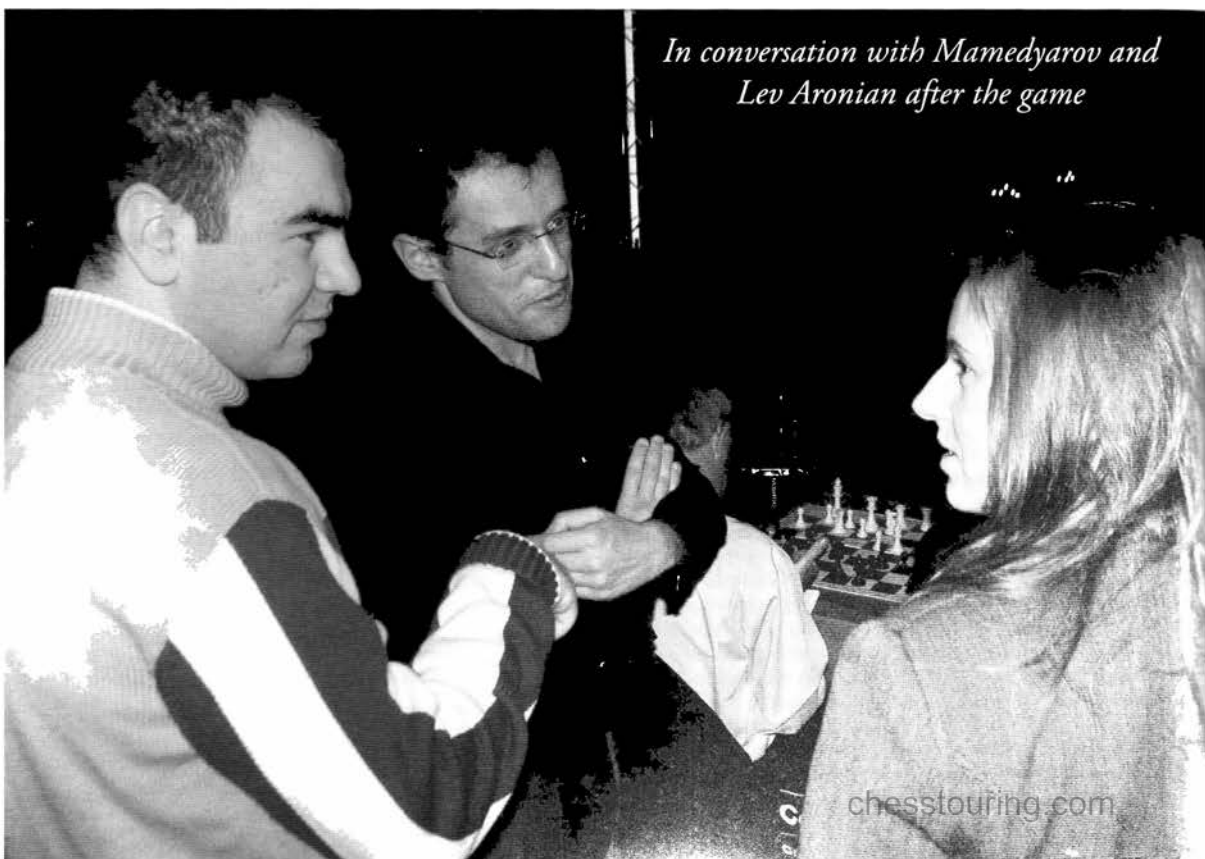
18...♙xe6 19.♙b3 g6 20.♙f3!+—



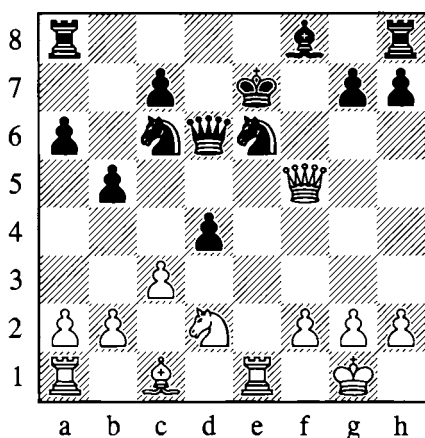
Both knights are pinned and Black faces the strong threats of ♙c5 and ♙g5†.

18.♙xe6 ♙xe6

In conversation with Mamedyarov and Lev Aronian after the game



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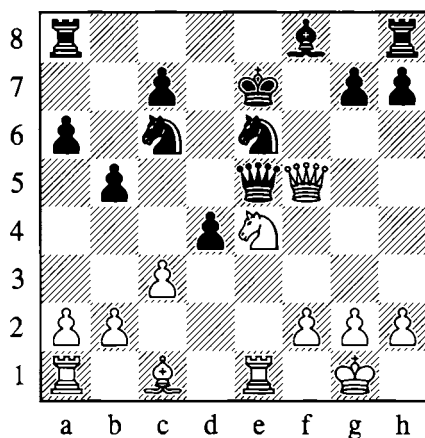


Up to this point I had spent only 15 minutes, but now I stopped for eight minutes to make an important decision.

19.♘e4

This is the most forcing continuation, not giving Black any time to breathe. My initial intention was 19.♘b3.

19...♞e5



20.♙g5+

It is always a pleasure to play such long developing moves.

20...♙d7

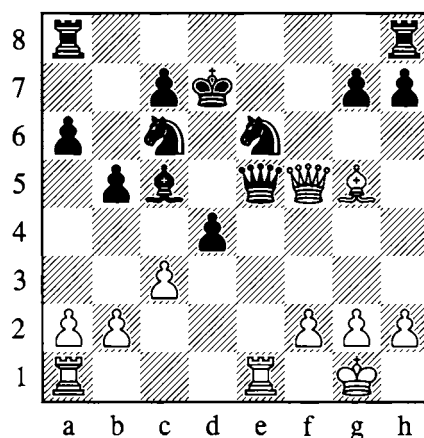
If 20...♘xg5 21.♘xg5 or 20...♙e8 21.♘f6+ gxf6 22.♙xe5 and White wins the queen.

21.♘c5+

It was this nice tactical trick that helped me make my decision on move 19.

21...♙xc5

The point is that 21...♞xc5 22.♞xe6 mates.



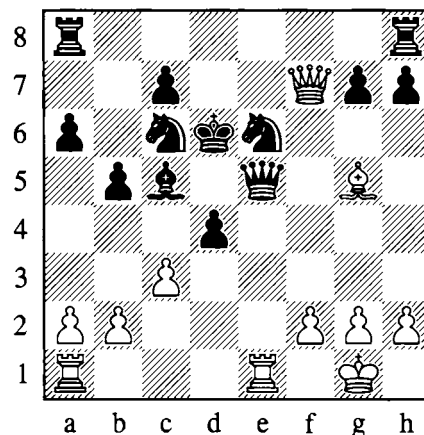
22.♞f7+

There was nothing wrong with taking the queen, but I wanted to finish the game off in the fastest possible way.

22...♙d6

The last hope to keep his position together.

Other moves lose too much material. 22...♙c8 23.♙xe5 and the e6-knight is hanging, or if 22...♙e7 23.♙xe5 ♘xg5 24.♙xg5 and the bishop is pinned.



23. ♖e7†!

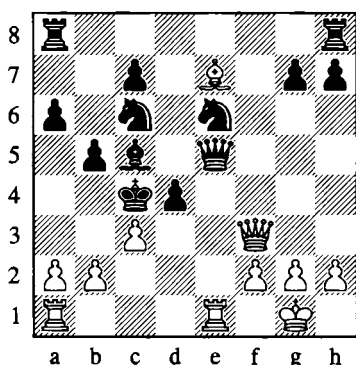
A nice final touch, which I had to see in advance, as it is the only winning move!

The following simple lines convinced my opponent of the uselessness of further resistance:

23... ♖xe7 24. ♖xe5 ♖xe5 25. ♖e1† followed by 26. ♖xe6 mate.

23... ♖d7 24. ♖xc5† wins too much material.

23... ♖d5 24. ♖f3† ♖c4



The black king's hyperactivity leads to a funny mate with 25.b3.

1-0

It was inspiring, of course, to win such a short and spectacular game. The Olympiad went very much my and my team's way. In the end, I won the silver medal on Board 3 and the team finished second, behind the Russian team then still headed by Kasparov.

For decades, Hungarian chess fans had been cherishing the memory of our national team's gold medals at the Buenos Aires 1978 Olympiad. The generation which obtained the next comparable success was completely new – in 1978 none of us were playing chess, while some of us had not even been born.

This result allowed me to reach the magic 2700 rating barrier for the first time. The next game was played at the first tournament where I started with my new rating.

The last game from this chapter prepares for the transition to the next one, which is dedicated to the middlegame. I delivered my sharp novelty after both sides had completed development, meaning that the middlegame had just started. This is a typical situation nowadays, but it was also not entirely uncommon before the invention of chess engines.

Judit Polgar – Viswanathan Anand

Wijk aan Zee 2003

After 11 rounds I had an excellent +3 score, without losing any games, and was trailing Anand by half a point. We played the decisive encounter for first place in the 12th round.

1. e4 c6

To be honest, this was the opening I was expecting least.

I had prepared mainly against the Petroff, which Anand had used twice in this tournament already and which definitely suited his sporting aim of neutralizing my white pieces. I also dedicated some attention to the Sveshnikov Sicilian, as in the earlier rounds I had failed to prove anything convincing in this opening against Shirov and Kramnik.

Finally, I prepared a bit against the French, but not the Caro-Kann. Anand had never played it against me before!

2. d4 d5 3. ♖c3 dxc4 4. ♖xe4 ♖f5

This has long been known to be a very solid, although somewhat passive, system of development. However, Black can give the game a double-edged character if he castles short, as happens in this game.

5. ♖g3 ♖g6 6. h4 h6 7. ♖f3 ♖d7 8. h5 ♖h7 9. ♖d3 ♖xd3 10. ♖xd3 ♖gf6

There are two main moves here, 11. ♖f4 and 11. ♖d2, taking either the c7- or the a5-squares away from the black queen. Actually, the difference is a bit deeper. After 11. ♖f4

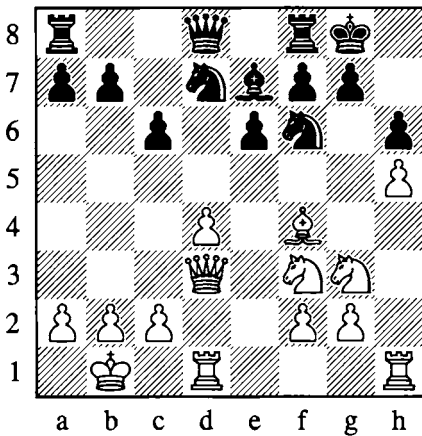
♚a5† White cannot tolerate the queen on a5, because this would prevent her from castling long. Therefore, 12.♙d2 is the normal answer, transposing after 12...♚c7 to 11.♙d2 ♚c7.

This means that White's choice on move eleven (either after Anand's last move or the more popular 10...e6) is only relevant in the lines when Black does not develop his queen so early.

11.♙f4 e6 12.0-0-0 ♙e7 13.♘b1

A useful prophylactic move, defending the a2-pawn and avoiding any intermediate check along the c1-h6 diagonal.

13...0-0



White has a space advantage on the kingside and in the centre, but breaking Black's compact structure is not easy. There are several active plans available.

White could attack in the centre with ♖he1, c2-c4, d4-d5. After exchanging the e6-pawn, the g3-knight could jump to f5 with annoying pressure. Black's best antidote is to meet c2-c4 with ...b7-b5 undermining the important d5-square, even if this will cost him a pawn.

With the king "parked" on the kingside, Black always has to be ready to meet ♚d3-d2 followed by ♙xh6, although this arises rather rarely.

The third possible plan occurred in the game.

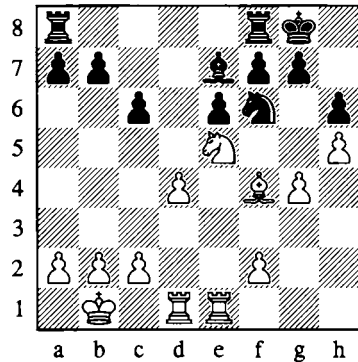
14.♙e4

This is the main continuation. My key idea is to clear the path for the g-pawn and start a direct attack, in the best tradition of Sicilian lines with opposite-side castling.

14...♚a5

At that time, a rare move.

Black usually plays: 14...♙xe4 15.♚xe4 ♙f6 16.♚e2 ♚d5 Attacking the h5-pawn and preparing to offer an exchange of queens. 17.♙e5 ♚e4 18.♚xe4 ♙xe4 19.♖he1 ♙f6 20.g4



Without queens, the last move is not the start of an attack. It just defends the h5-pawn, securing a stable advantage and making the game rather one-sided. Black may well be able to defend after a long struggle, but it would certainly not be an enjoyable process.

15.♙xf6† ♙xf6 16.g4!?

When analyzing this move some time before Wijk aan Zee, I discovered to my surprise that it had not been played before! And since Vishy had surprised me with his first move, I found it right to pay him back in kind.

16.♙e5 is a logical and solid continuation. 16...♖ad8 17.♚g3 ♙h8 18.c4 c5 White's play

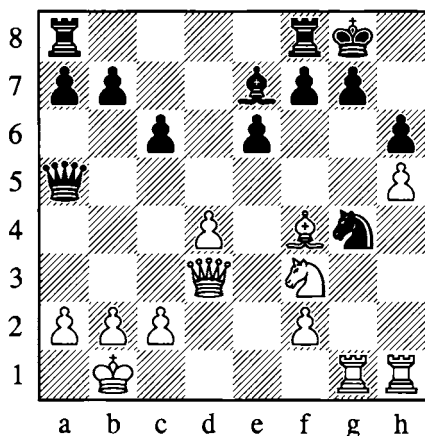
is a little bit more pleasant. But in modern chess one can often say "This is nice to play with White" but just a few moves later Black more or less equalizes.

Vishy answered after only two minutes, although it was clear that he did not expect my previous move.

16...♖xg4

My feeling is that he had briefly looked at the pawn sacrifice, but could not take it seriously. Be that as it may, Black has to pick up the gauntlet, otherwise g4-g5 would offer White a strong attack.

17.♗dg1



17...♞f5!

After 10 minutes Anand took the best practical decision.

17...f5?! 18.♗e5 would be rather one-sided. I could strengthen the pressure along the g-file at my leisure.

The main alternative to the last move is 17...♖xf2.

You can play such a risky move in only two situations. Either there is no other reasonable option or you have analyzed it thoroughly with the engines.

The latter situation can save you time and give you comfort and self-confidence. Use a strong computer with at least eight cores and give the engine enough time!

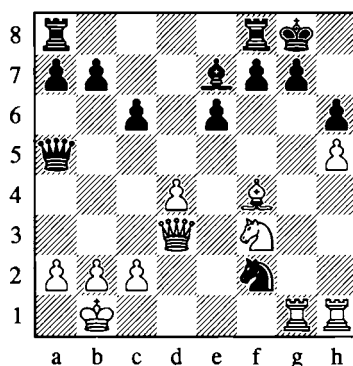
I will never forget a conversation I had with Vishy. After one of his games I told him "Your position was really dangerous." "If you check and double-check it at home," he answered, "then it is not dangerous at all."

There could be no better description of the modern reality of opening preparation. I would add that this approach works out well not only in chess, but in real life as well!

However, this day Vishy did not feel like grabbing the second pawn; he had not analyzed it and whatever his intuition told him about the objective evaluation, he surely did not want to give me the advantage of playing along my home analysis.

In fact, I had failed to find an advantage. White has many ideas, but Black can defend with accurate play. "So why did you choose this line for the decisive game?" the reader may ask.

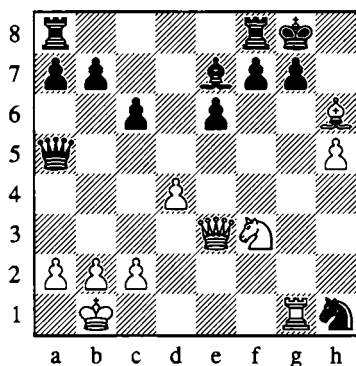
It was more than just a bluff. Over-the-board chess is a sport, and proving the objective reality is not easy in such complicated positions. Fine, Black can draw with a series of accurate moves, but the probability of going wrong along the way is high. And do not forget that playing a position without knowing the objective evaluation while the opponent does, can be very confusing.



White has to choose the best square for the queen.

18. ♖f1

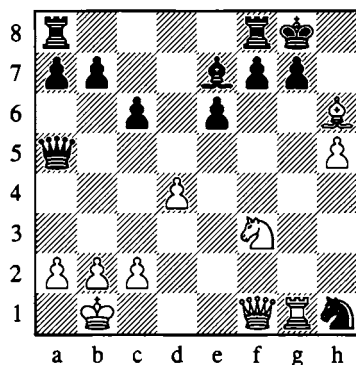
In the main line the undefended position of the bishop on h6 saves Black, but 18. ♖e3 has the drawback of weakening the control over the h1-square: 18... ♘h1 19. ♕xh6



Things look scary for Black, but the next move parries all the big threats: 19... ♖xh5! 20. ♕xg7 ♖fd8 In the main line, with the queen on e1, 21. ♕e5† followed by ♖xh1 would win, but here Black is perfectly fine.

18... ♘h1 19. ♕xh6

If 19. ♖g2, then 19... ♕f6 20. ♕e5 ♖d8 and White has nothing better than a spectacular draw by perpetual: 21. ♖xg7† ♕xg7 22. ♖xg7† ♘h8 23. ♖xf7† Moreover, 19... ♕g5 would allow Black to hope for an advantage.



19... ♘h7!

The only way to prevent the devastating ♖xg7†. Obviously, this would have been

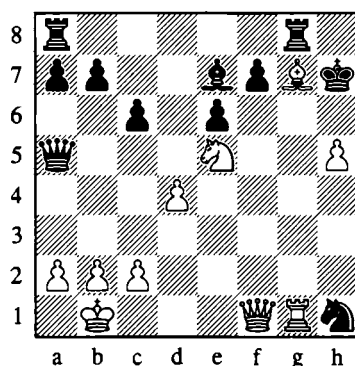
ineffective in the line above starting with 18. ♖e3.

20. ♕xg7 ♖g8

If 20... ♖f5?, taking measures against the threatened ♕e5, the move ♖c1-b1 unexpectedly proves useful for attacking purposes: 21. ♖c1 There is no satisfactory way of parrying ♖h6 mate.

21. ♕e5

White threatens ♖xf7. If 21... f6 then White wins with 22. ♖g2 threatening ♖g6 mate, or if 21... ♖af8 22. h6 followed by the knight capture, White would have a very strong initiative for only one exchange. Still, Black has an unexpected saving resource.



21... ♖g3!!

Forcing the rook to step forward, thus dismantling the possible battery after ♖g2. Moreover, the back rank loses an important defender, as we will see. By the way, Black could also have chosen the reversed move order: 20... ♖g3!! 21. ♖xg3 ♖g8

22. ♖xg3 f6 23. h6 fxe5

With the rook on g1, White would win with ♖f7, but the way it is White needs to spend a tempo to avoid the back rank mate on e1.

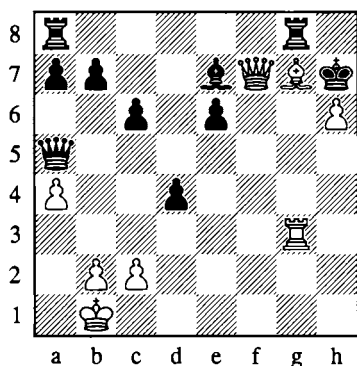
24. a4

24. ♖g1? does not work because of: 24... ♖af8!

25. ♕xf8 ♖xg1 26. ♖xg1 ♕xf8+

After 24. a4 the similar line does not work because after 25... ♖xg3 rather than ... ♖xg1 the white queen would not be pinned,

allowing 26. ♖f7† with decisive threats.
24...exd4 25. ♖f7



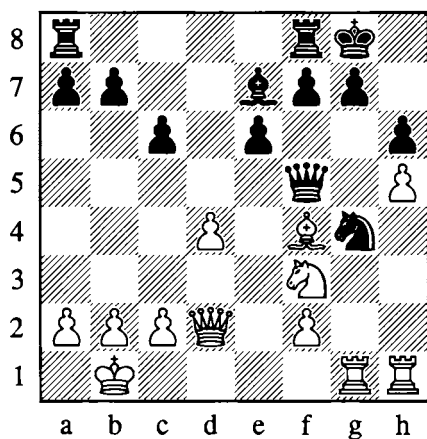
25... ♖e1† 26. ♔a2 ♖xg3

We can see that the knight has decoyed the rook onto a perfectly exposed square!

27. ♙e5† ♔xh6 28. ♙xg3 ♖xg3 29. ♖xe6† ♔h7
30. ♖xe7† ♖g7 31. ♖h4† ♔g8 32. ♖xd4

Typically, after a fierce tactical battle the game has liquidated into a draw. But you must understand that finding the series of only defences might have been out of the reach even of such a formidable player as Anand.

18. ♖d2



I was still following my analysis. I had examined 18... ♔h7 and 18... ♙b4, but after a deep 27-minute think it was Vishy's turn to surprise me.

18...g5!

18... ♙b4? would leave the h4-square undefended without pushing the queen away from the attacking diagonal at all: 19. ♖c1! Threatening either ♔h4 or ♖h4.

18... ♔h7?

This would avoid the pins along the g-file and over-defend the h6-pawn, but the king is nevertheless exposed on h7.

19. ♔h4 ♙xh4

If 19... ♖d5, defending the knight indirectly based on the hanging h1-rook, White would gain a decisive tempo with 20. ♖d3†. For instance: 20... ♔h8 21. ♖g3 wins or 20...f5 21.c4 ♔xf2 (otherwise 22. ♖xg4 would win the knight) 22. ♖xg7† ♔xg7 23. ♖g3† ♙g5 24.cxd5 ♔xh1 25. ♖g1 with a decisive material advantage.

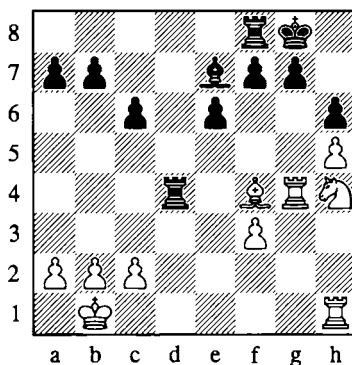
20. ♖xh4 ♔f6 21. ♙e5

Threatening ♖f4, with a strong attack.

Actually, 18... ♔h8 would be a safer king move, although White would keep the initiative with: 19. ♔h4 ♖d5 20. ♖e1!?

During the post mortem we analyzed:

18... ♖ad8!? 19. ♔h4 ♖e4 20.f3 ♖xd4 21. ♖xd4 ♖xd4 22. ♖xg4



22... ♖fd8!

The second rook move to d8 is no less surprising than the first one.

Anand showed the line: 22...f5 23.♙e5 fxg4
 24.♙xd4 with advantage for White.
 23.c3 ♖d1† 24.♞xd1 ♞xd1† 25.♙c2 ♞h1
 26.♜g2 ♞xh5

With three pawns for a knight and a balanced ending.

19.hxg6

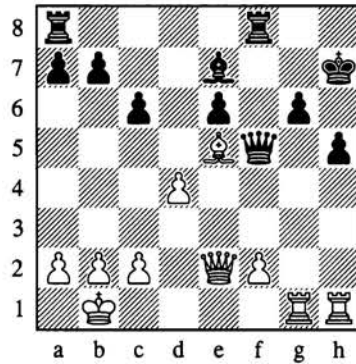
Despite the surprise, I answered after just two minutes. I did not have much of a choice as I needed to open files for my attack.

19...fxg6

But now I thought for 20 minutes.

20.♙xh6

My other candidate was 20.♞e2 defending the bishop indirectly in view of ♞xe6† and ♞xg4. 20...h5 Over-defending the knight in an attempt to keep the g-file closed. 21.♜e5 ♜xe5 22.♙xe5 ♙h7



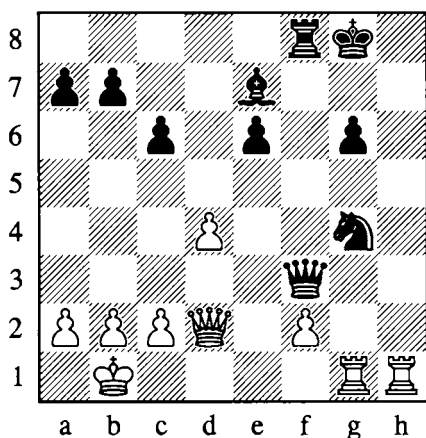
During the post mortem we agreed that White has full compensation, but not more. Black's position would be hard, if not impossible, to crack. The engines' "0.00" more or less supports this point of view.

20...♞xf3

Played instantly.

21.♙xf8 ♞xf8





Black has a small material advantage, but his king remains exposed and he has not stabilized the position completely.

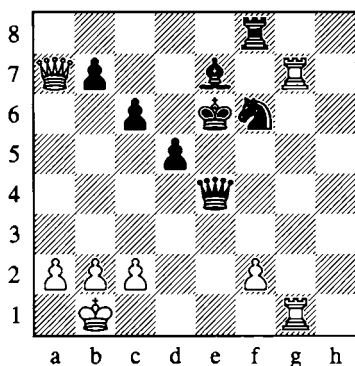
22.d5!

Clearing the d4-square for the queen. I played this thematic pawn break after only three minutes, as I had seen it when deciding upon 20...exh6.

22...cxd5

Vishy took this decision after 19 minutes, hoping to use the c-file for his counterplay.

22...exd5 would have kept the structure more compact, but would not have avoided the draw either: 23.♖d4 Hitting a7 and g4 at the same time. 23...♟f6 24.♞xg6† ♟f7 25.♞hg1 ♞e4 26.♞g7† ♟e6 27.♞xa7

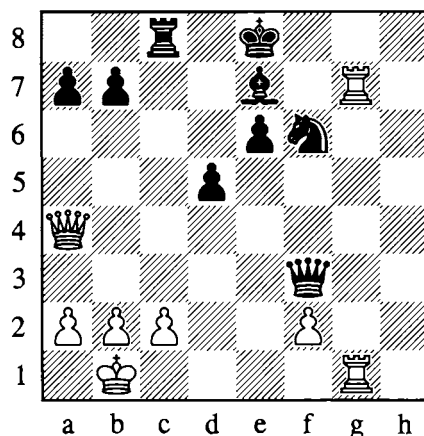


Almost restoring material equality; with his king exposed from both sides, Black cannot claim an advantage.

23.♞d4 ♟f6 24.♞xg6† ♟f7 25.♞hg1 ♞c8 26.♞g7† ♟f8 27.♞h4

Threatening ♞h8† followed by mate.

27...♟e8 28.♞a4†



Accompanied by a draw offer. My plan was to meet 28...♟f8 with 29.♞h4, forcing the repetition.

Vishy considered the draw a fair result, especially as it allowed him to keep his half-point lead, and so he accepted my proposal.

Other lines would not offer Black any chances for an advantage either. For example: 28...♟d7 29.♞h7 ♟d8 30.♞a5† ♟e8 31.♞a4 with just another draw by repetition or 28...♟d8 29.♞xa7 ♞e2 30.♞b6† ♞c7 31.c3 and Black cannot coordinate his pieces easily.

½-½

In the last round I drew with Radjabov, and Anand drew with Bareev.

The final result: Anand 8½/13, Polgar 8, Bareev 7½, Shirov, Van Wely, Grischuk, Kramnik, Ivanchuk 7 etc.

I would add that Anand and I were the only undefeated players.

Chapter 8

The Middlegame



The famous composer Ennio Morricone is a big chess fan

Between the opening and endgame the gods have placed the middlegame – Tarrasch

The middlegame is the most interesting, complex and hard-to-analyze phase of the game. It is the stage that offers the richest opportunities to outplay the opponent and in which the most important changes of situation take place.

The proper study of the opening phase cannot be conceived without becoming familiar with the main ideas of the ensuing middlegame structures. The more typical positions one knows, the easier it will be to stay on the right track, at least in the early middlegame.

And yet, sooner or later we are left on our own, without familiar patterns to rely on. This is the moment when creativity starts playing the main part, which actually makes the middlegame my favourite territory.

Due to the large number of pieces on the board, one has to develop a feeling for harmony in order to keep one's own army fit for the fight. Just like the conductor of an orchestra, the skilled player will assign precise tasks to each piece.

In positions resulting from such complex openings as the Ruy Lopez or the King's Indian, it is essential to pay close attention to both wings and all the important sectors, since the play usually has a global character with mutual plans on either side.

The middlegame cannot be approached properly without taking into account its connection with the next phase of the game, the endgame. Piece exchanges and structural modifications should be evaluated not only according to their immediate impact, but also from the perspective of their long-term consequences after potential simplifications. What is good and useful in the middlegame may well be bad in the endgame.

All the complete games in this book have a consistent middlegame phase, with thorough analysis of the crucial moments.

Therefore, the examples included in this chapter aim to illustrate just some of the typical aspects at the most general level: the critical moment, the turning point, tactical traps, combinations and the transition to the endgame.

Games between well-prepared players tend to have a linear character until the moment when the fight enters the middlegame jungle. Most likely, the evaluation of the position would be somewhere in the range between slight advantage to White and *almost* equal.

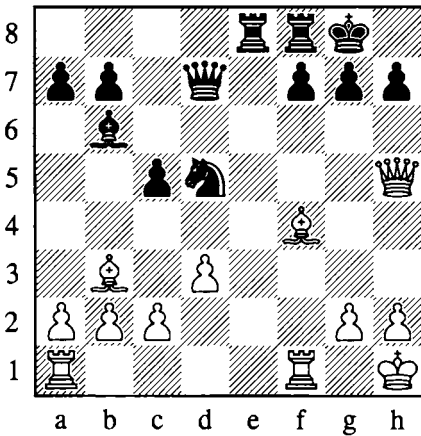
For Black it is important to spot the right moment when an unexpected move, or a series of moves with well-masked intentions, would offer the chance to turn the tables. This was precisely what happened in the first example:

Sergei Movsesian – Judit Polgar

World Cup (2.2), Khanty-Mansiysk 2011

I qualified for the 2011 World Cup from the Aix-les-Bains European Championship, one of my most wonderful tournaments. I will speak more about the World Cup in my comments to the games with Karjakin and Dominguez, which were played at a later stage.

I drew with White in my first game against Movsesian and we were both aiming for a solid position in Game 2.



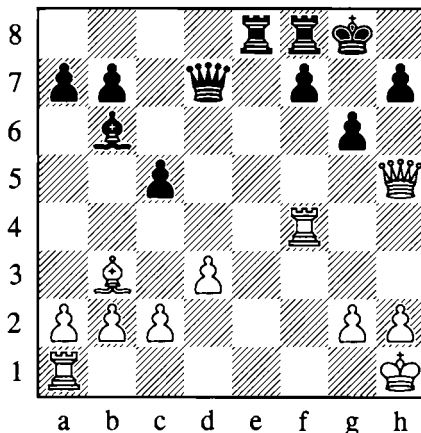
White has emerged from the opening with a pleasant position. He has no weaknesses and the b3-bishop has no rival on the light squares. If allowed to activate rooks with Rf1-f3 , Raf1 , Rf3-h3 , he would gain a very strong attack.

20... Qxf4 21. Rxf4

This exchange seems to suit White's intentions rather well. With opposite-coloured bishops, the attacking side is supposed to have a serious advantage.

In addition, Black faces two strong threats already: Rh4 and Qa4 .

21...g6!



Strategically the correct move, placing the

pawns on squares of the opposite colour to my own bishop. Concretely, it invites White to define his intentions. Will he remain faithful to the solid policy with, say $22.\text{Qd5}$, most likely leading to an equal position, or continue his attack?

22. Qh6

Very logical, since the threat of Rf4-h4 is even stronger now.

An alternative was:

22. Qf3

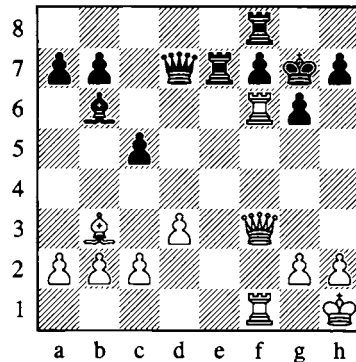
I would need a few moves to free myself from the pin:

22... Re7 23. Rf1 Qg7

Planning to take over the initiative with ...f7-f5, ...c7, ...fe8.

24. Rf6

This does not offer chances to keep the blockade for very long.



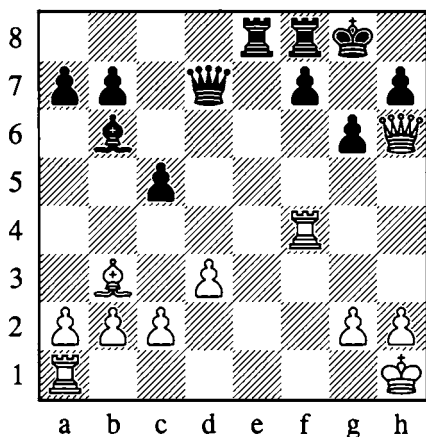
24...c4!?

I like this move best, since it solves the problem at once and unbalances the position strategically.

The slower regrouping $24...\text{Qd8}$ $25.\text{c3}$ Qc7 $26.\text{Qc4}$ Qd7 would also work out well. In order to prevent the aforementioned plan, White should play $27.\text{Re6}!$? when $27...\text{Qg5}$ followed by ... Re7 would equalize completely.

25. Qxc4 Qd4 26. Rf4 Qxb2

Black has active pieces and the more compact structure. White should adopt a waiting policy, since advancing his central pawns would only result in new weaknesses.



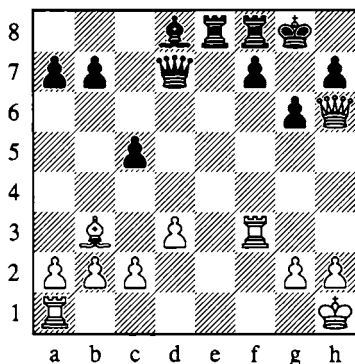
22...♙d8!

This came as a very unpleasant surprise for my opponent, who had been enjoying his position so far but now seemed to start asking himself why his initiative had vanished. After parrying both threats with one stroke, my coordination suddenly looks more natural.

23.♟a1

Movsesian played this natural move after eight minutes. By now he surely saw my answer, but he did not find the strength to change the course of events.

A better try was: 23.♟f3!



White renews the threat of attacking h7, forcing me to show some accuracy. 23...♟d4! (The only saving move, preparing to defend h7 with ...♟g7.) 24.♟a1 ♟e7 25.c3 ♟g7 26.♟g5 b6 There are no real dangers for Black, but it would be really hard to take over the initiative the way I did in the game.

At first sight, the last move is very strong. White threatens 24.♟xf7 ♟xf7 25.♟xf7 when my exposed king prevents me from taking advantage of White's back-rank weakness, for instance 25...♟e1† 26.♟f1† or 25...♟xf7 26.♟xf7 with check!

But this can be solved in a simple way:

23...♟h8!

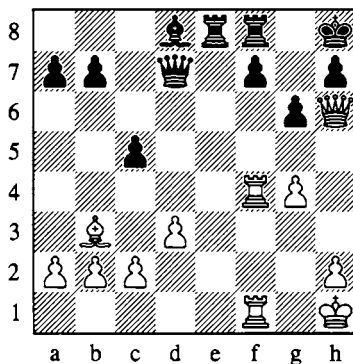
Not only defending the pawn indirectly, based on White's back-rank weakness, but also unpinning it and creating the positional threat of ...f7-f5.

By now, I was getting optimistic, feeling that this might be the turning point of the game. After seven minutes, my opponent seems to have come to a similar conclusion since he accompanied his next move with a draw offer.

24.♟e4?!

Hoping to simplify to a drawn opposite-coloured bishops ending, but practically dooming himself to defending in a rather one-sided and slightly unpleasant position.

Instead, he should have prevented my kingside expansion with: 24.g4! True, this is not the kind of move to play when offering a draw.

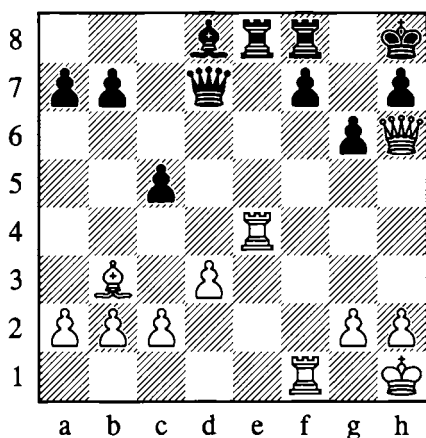


The reader probably already knows about my natural inclination towards the moves g2-g4 and ...g7-g5, but I must confess that in this case even I did not take it into account!

The white king is not in real danger after, for instance: 24...♖c6† 25.♙f3 followed by ♜e4.

I was not sure how big my winning chances were after Movsesian's move, but I thought that even if the game would end in a draw, it would be useful to start the rapid playoff games with the psychological advantage of having put him under pressure.

After five minutes of this kind of analysis of the game *and* match situation, I decided to play on.



24...f5

Suddenly, the beautiful b3-bishop is left without a target, and my f-pawn becomes rather threatening. The white king has fewer pawns to protect him than mine, and the plan of ...f5-f4-f3 would expose him even more.

25.♞e3 ♙f6

I completed my bishop manoeuvre with great relief. Only six moves earlier it was hitting my own c5-pawn whereas now it has finally reached the longest diagonal available.

26.♞fe1?

An active move, defending the b2-pawn

indirectly (26...♙xb2? 27.♞e7! wins) and, quite possibly, an attempt to prove that White can keep equality from a position of force. Surprisingly, it gives me the possibility of winning a pawn with a couple of accurate moves.

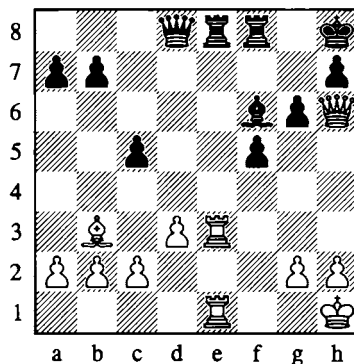
26.c3 was safer. I could play 26...b5 followed by ...a7-a5 with an initiative on both wings.

26...♙g7?!

After rejecting the draw, I was prepared for a long game, in which I was supposed to squeeze out the advantage (and hopefully the win) little by little. Therefore, I only spent one minute on this neutral move which does not spoil anything essentially.

Eventually, the game developed according to the scenario described above and I won on move 54, but not without my opponent's help.

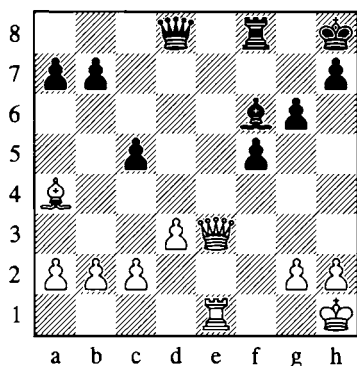
Had I been more alert, I might have spotted 26...♖d8! with the simultaneous threats of ...♙g5 and ...♙xb2. Both of these threats require some explaining.



If 27.c3? ♙g5 28.♞xe8 ♞xe8 29.♞xe8† ♖xe8 White loses the queen due to the back-rank weakness.

27.h3 would avoid this problem, but allow 27...♙xb2! instead. The point is that 28.♞e7 does not work anymore, since the f8-rook is over-defended.

White's best chance is 27. ♖a4 ♜xe3 28. ♜xe3.



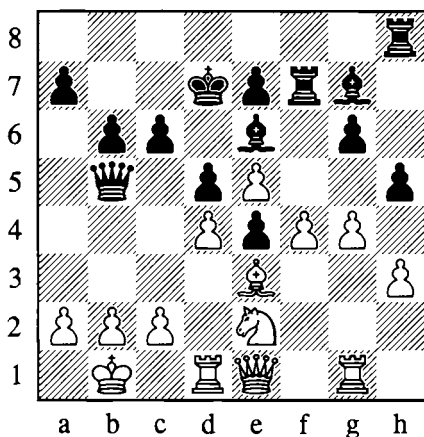
Now 28... ♜a5! defends the c5-pawn with gain of time. After 29. ♖b3 ♜xb2 it would still be difficult to win, but the extra pawn would make my chances more realistic.

We have seen that in order to turn ♚ into a ♜ position, some concessions or even just hesitations by the opponent are essential.

For White, who is supposed to get at least a somewhat better position out of the opening, the critical middlegame moment should be seen as an opportunity to seal or convert the accumulated advantage, rather than a turning point. In principle, this is best achieved by dynamic means, as in the next game.

Judit Polgar – Andrei Istratescu

Bled Olympiad 2002



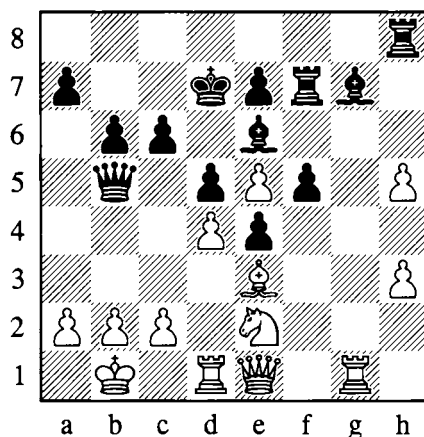
My space advantage ensures better mobility for my pieces. The g7-bishop cannot take part in the fight and the black queen is completely cut off from the kingside.

When heading for this position, Black might have hoped that his e6-bishop would secure him against my thematic pawn breaks – f4-f5 or b2-b3 followed by c2-c4. If this was true, his position would be safe enough, but Black's strong control of the f5-square does not prevent:

25.f5!

A strong move with several positive effects. I clear the f4-square for my knight, turn the e6-bishop into a "big pawn" and open the g-file for my attack.

25... ♜xf5 26. ♜xf5



Black's poor coordination becomes even more obvious after the opening of the kingside. At the same time, all my pieces are ready for the attack.

26...f4!

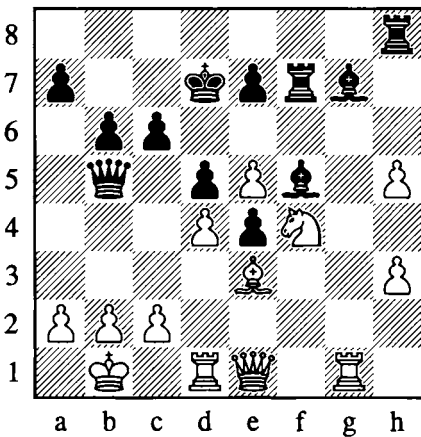
The only move to prevent the e6-bishop from suffocating.

I planned to meet 26... ♜xh5 with 27. ♖f4 with a perfect blockade on the dark squares.

27...♖h6 28.♗g5 Followed by ♖g3 when Black could not avoid losing one of his kingside pieces.

My position would be so good already that (in addition to 27.♗f4) there would be at least one more winning continuation: 27.♗g6 (threatening not only ♗f4, but also ♗xe6) 27...f4 This time, this counter-break does not prolong the fight as it did in the game. 28.♗xf4 ♖h6 29.♖g3 ♗xg6 30.♖xg6 With a decisive material gain.

27.♗xf4 ♗f5



I was very enthusiastic about my position and switched to “positional squeezing mode” too soon by playing:

28.b3

This proved enough for a win in 60 moves, but everything was prepared for a decisive attack:

28.♖h4! (Threatening 29.e6† ♗xe6 30.♗xe6 ♗xe6 31.♖g4†.) 28...e6 29. ♗g6 ♖h7 30.h6 Black's pieces are in big trouble and his king is unsafe.

Sacrifices

In the middlegame, even more than in the other phases of the game, tactics and strategy should go hand in hand. When making their general plans, players should stay alert to the concrete details of the positions in order to avoid what later could be called “unlucky” losses.

Throughout the long history of chess, plenty of books with thematic combinations have been published and all the strong players are familiar with them. And yet, combinations continue to pop up at grandmaster level. If the player was told that his (or her) intended move is about to allow a decisive tactical operation, the player would most likely spot the whole sequence. But in practical games, one does not get such “live” hints, and even if he is familiar with the possibility of a thematic sacrifice, he might think that it would not be entirely correct.

The next four examples illustrate, one by one, each of the possible piece sacrifices: the knight, the bishop, the rook and the queen sacrifice. Actually, the previous game (with Istratescu) can also be regarded as an organic part of this section, by featuring a pawn sacrifice.

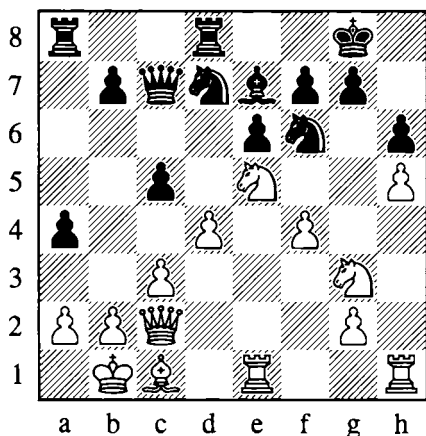
Here are two typical combinations based on the vulnerability of the king.

Judit Polgar – Bartłomiej Macieja

Budapest (training rapid game) 2002

The reader will be familiar with my habit of playing training games as an important part of my general preparation. In the first volume there are several games played with my trainers, and in the second there is one with none other than Vladimir Kramnik – at the time a future World Champion.

I strongly recommend this method to all those who wish to gain confidence and stability in their openings or simply maintain their sporting form.



Black's last move was 19...c5. Even though the f7-pawn is vulnerable, he failed to understand the strength of my thematic combination.

20. ♖xf7!

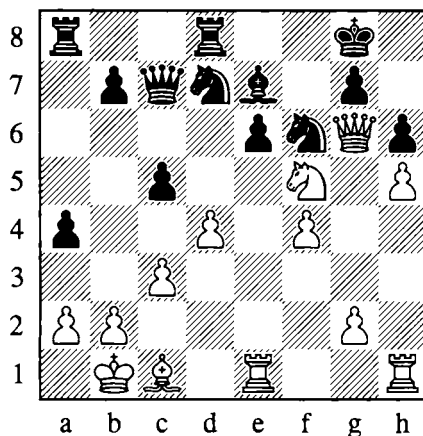
Starting to demolish the king's residence and inviting His Majesty to take a dangerous walk.

20... ♜xf7 21. ♖g6+ ♜g8

Black keeps the f8-square available for his knight. If 21... ♜f8 then 22. ♖xe6 when ♜g3-f5 is unstoppable. The same idea does not work after the last move because of 22... ♜f8 repelling the attack.

22. ♜f5!

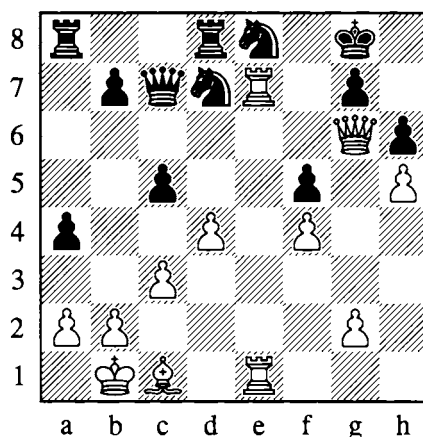
The real point of the sacrifice, which probably was what my opponent had overlooked. It is a common pattern in the Caro-Kann, and one always has to check whether it is working. With a queen and two knights targeting the king, one should always be aware of such possibilities.



22...exf5 23. ♖xe7

Black's major pieces are massed far away from his king and there is no satisfactory way of defending g7.

23... ♜e8 24. ♖he1



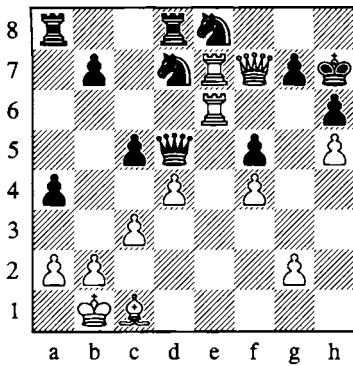
24...cxd4

This does not improve Black's position even a single bit, but there was no way of gaining effective communication between the opposite wings.

For instance, 24... ♖c6 25. ♖le6 ♖d5 26. ♖f7+. The only thing Black can choose is on which square he would be mated:

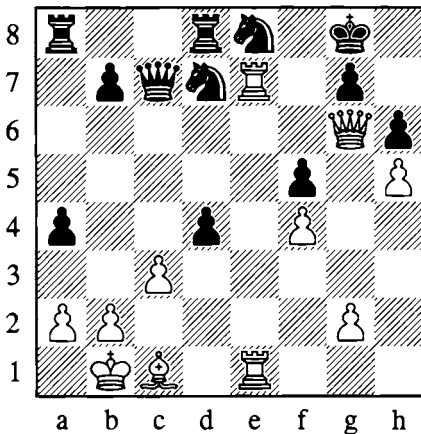
26... ♜h8 27. ♖xh6+ gxh6 28. ♖h7#

Or 26...♔h7:



27.♞xh6†! ♔xh6 28.♞g6#

Or if 24...♞a6 25.♞f7† ♔h7 26.♞xe8 ♞xe8 27.♞xe8 with mate on g8 to follow in no more than two moves.



25.♞xg7†!

Not the only winning move, but the most convincing one.

25...♞xg7 26.♞e7

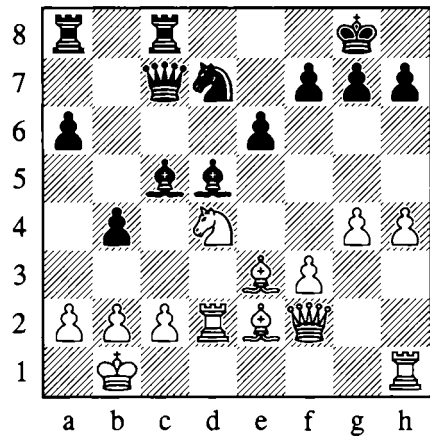
There is no way of defending the g7-square.
1-0

In this example, Black's Achilles' heel was on f7. For a change, in the next game the blow will arrive on a2.

Viswanathan Anand – Judit Polgar

Rapid Chess World Ch., Cap D'Agde 2003

This game was played only a few months after our Mainz rapid game (covered in Chapter 4), so, following the match pattern, we were both expecting a decisive game.



Black is perfectly mobilized and practically all my pieces are targeting the enemy king. White still needs a tempo (♞hd1) to get fully coordinated, while his pawn attack has not started properly yet.

I realized that this was a favourable moment and immediately took my chance:

20...♞xd4

Opening the c-file, weakening the defence of the c2-pawn, and forcing White to leave the d2-rook undefended.

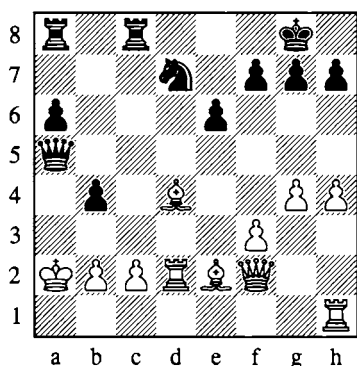
21.♞xd4 ♞xa2†!

Parting with the second bishop in order to increase the chaos reigning in White's camp, and gain time for the attack.

22.♔c1

Anand decided to step away from the thematic line of my combination:

22.♔xa2 ♞a5†



23.♔b3

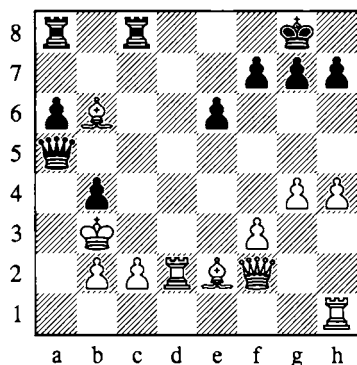
The king has to go for this risky adventure.

23.♔b1 runs into 23...b3 threatening ...♙a2† and ...♙xd2 at the same time. Black wins an exchange, while retaining the attack.

23...♘b6!

I had seen this, and the whole line right up to mate, before embarking on the combination. It is not the only win, but it surely is the fastest.

24.♙xb6



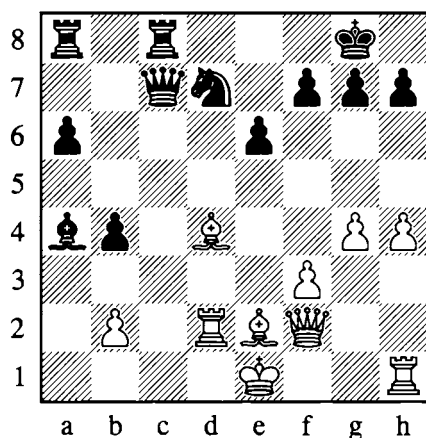
24...♙c3†! 25.bxc3 ♙a3† 26.♔c4 ♙xc3#

After the game move I could continue my attack with a material advantage already.

22...♙b3 23.♔d1

If 23.♙d3 ♙a5 and White cannot avoid losing material.

23...♙xc2† 24.♔e1 ♙a4



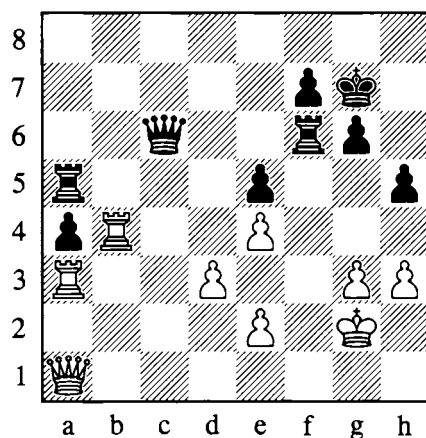
Two extra pawns and the initiative yield Black a decisive advantage, and I won on move 39.

...0-1

I have been playing tournament chess for more than 30 years. The following spectacular game took place in one of my most recent tournaments, played shortly before I completed my work on this book.

Danyil Dvirnyy – Judit Polgar

European Championship, Yerevan 2014

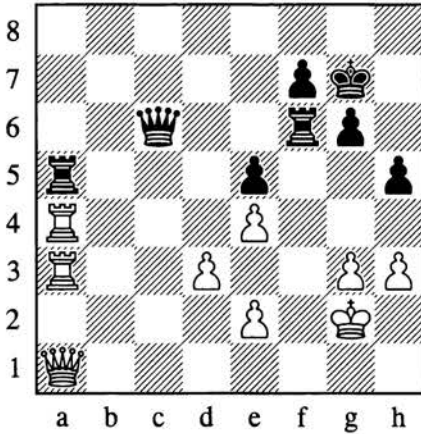


For quite some time, my opponent had successfully blocked my passed pawn. At this point he had only four minutes left and might

have overlooked the point behind my rook lift to the sixth rank.

47. ♖bxa4?

White should have been more circumspect and kept a balance between the opposite wings with, say, 47. ♖e1.



47... ♖c2!

I played quickly, since I had been dreaming about this attacking idea ever since I started my rook manoeuvre. My opponent did not seem surprised by my rook sacrifice, but he must have thought it would only yield a draw.

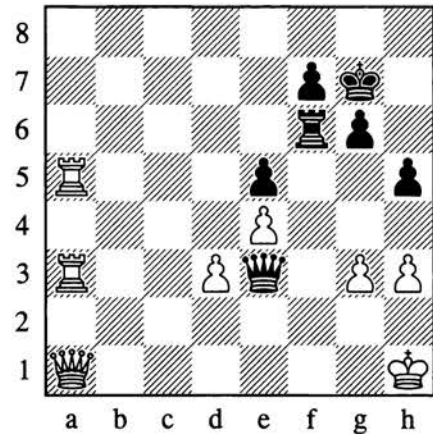
48. ♖xa5

White cannot defend e2 properly.

48. ♖a2 leaves the first rank vulnerable to: 48... ♖d1!

Or if 48. ♖a2 ♖xa4! pinning and diverting the a2-rook.

48... ♖xc2† 49. ♔g1 ♖e3† 50. ♔h1



The last sequence was not difficult to foresee, but the next move came as a shock to my opponent.



Before the game with Dvirnyy

chesstouring.com

50...♖f2!

Dvirnyy became very upset after I played this move. He quickly understood that he had no proper defence against ...♖f3† followed by ...♖g2 mate.

For instance, 51.d4 defends the f3-square but makes e4 available for my queen: 51...♖xe4† 52.♙g1 ♖g2#

Or White could have defended the e4-pawn with 51.♖xe5† but it is interesting that not even this gain of tempo, while a rook up, can save White. 51...♙h7 52.d4 There is no check available along the long diagonal, but 52...♖e1 mates.

0-1

It was more than the precise calculation that made me happy with this game. I had actually

anticipated the spectacular final phase a few moves earlier, when activating my rook. And when the favourable moment arrived, I did not need a second invitation!

One moment of carelessness in an apparently dull position led my opponent to defeat in the next game.

Judit Polgar – Levon Aronian

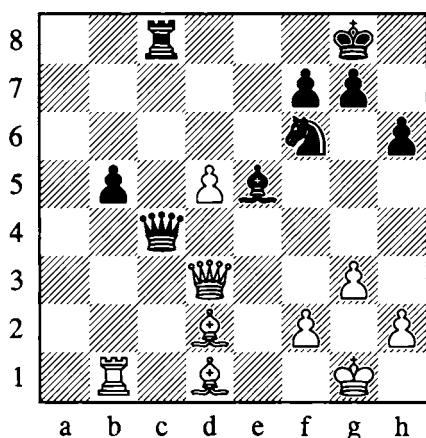
Hoogeveen 2003

In the fifth round I had lost, allowing Aronian to join me in the lead with 3 points. The direct encounter took place in the sixth and last round.

I decided to play a solid positional game, but was looking ahead for hidden tactical nuances.



*In conversation with
Levon Aronian*



Aronian had spent only one minute on his last move, 28...♙c7-c4? which seems to force general simplifications with an inevitable draw.

I spent only two minutes on double-checking my idea before delivering the decisive blow:

29.♞c1!!

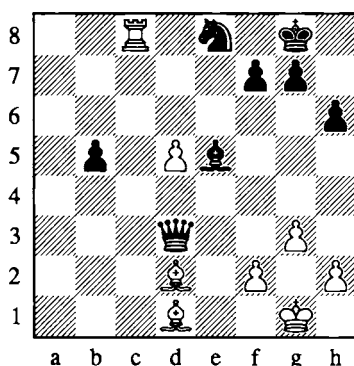
This came as a shock to Aronian. He looked really unhappy after realizing that his carelessness would force him to part with his queen.

29...♙xc1

A sad necessity.

This type of combination is known in positions where the white queen is defended, allowing White to meet 29...♙xd3 with 30.♞xc8† followed by the recapture on d3.

The hidden nuance in our case is that the queen is indirectly defended, as 30...♙h7 would run into 31.♞c2 winning an exchange. It may seem that Black can try the tricky 30...♙e8, hoping for 31.♞xe8†? ♙h7 when it would be Black who wins.

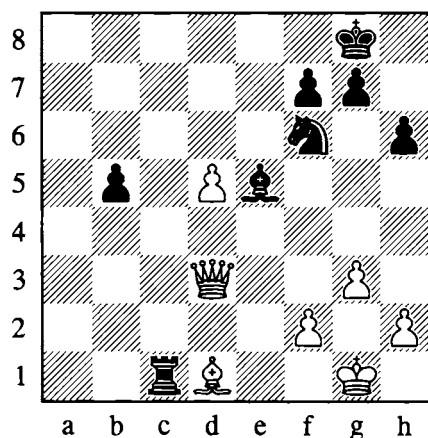


However, after the zwischenzug 31.♞c2!! everything would work out perfectly for White. The b5-pawn and the e5-bishop prevent Black from defending his knight with 31...♙b5 or 31...♙e2, respectively.

The queen cannot abandon the c2-h7 diagonal due to 32.♞xe8 mate, which means Black would have to part with Her Majesty anyway.

All these tactics mean my queen “sacrifice” is only temporary, but the main thing is that it came as a complete surprise to my opponent and that it works out rather well.

30.♞xc1 ♞xc1



31.d6!

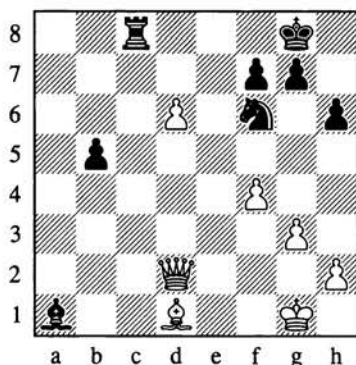
It is essential to prevent the blockading move ...♞d6.



31...♖d7

The blockade on d7 is not so effective, since this square can be attacked by my bishop. Besides, after the clearance of the a2-g8 diagonal, the f7-pawn will become an attractive target.

If 31...♖c3 then 32.♙d2 ♜c8 33.f4 and the long diagonal surprisingly becomes too short for the bishop: 33...♙a1



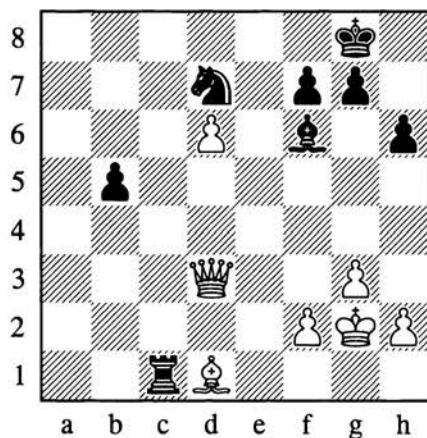
34.♔g2! An important prophylactic move, preparing the decisive 35.d7 ♜d8 36.♙a5 with a double attack, without allowing the saving check on d4.

32.♔g2

Unpinning the bishop for the final attack.

32...♙f6

Black cannot eliminate my pawn with 32...♖c6 due to 33.♙xb5 ♜xd6 34.♙g4 winning a piece.



33.♙c2

The most consistent and strongest move. I was not entirely satisfied by 33.♙xb5 ♜xd1 34.♙xd7 g6 35.♙e8† ♔g7 36.d7 h5, realizing that it may not be winning.

33...g6 34.♙b3 ♔g7 35.♙d5 ♜e5 36.d7

And Levon resigned.

This last-round win gave me first place on my own, and yet another chess set made out of glass – the traditional trophy in the Essent Hooqveen tournament.

1-0

Simplifying to a winning ending

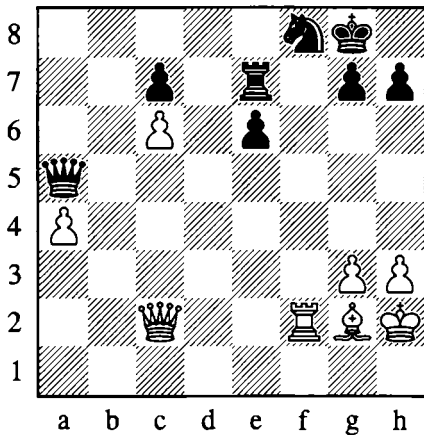
Once you have achieved a practically winning position, it is always an open question about how to bring the full point home. When I was younger, I would keep the queens on the board and try to mate my opponent as quickly as possible.

But as time passed, I broadened my approach and started looking for safer ways. The mating net may prove illusory, while a technically winning ending offers a guarantee of a favourable outcome.

The last game of this chapter is a good illustration of this, but can also be regarded as a natural transition to the next chapter, which is dedicated to the endgame.

Judit Polgar – Bu Xiangzhi

Khanty-Mansiysk Olympiad 2010



I have an advantage on practically every sector of the board. The a4-pawn is a dangerous candidate for promotion, the c6-pawn secures a huge space advantage and the black king is exposed.

There are many ways leading to Rome. Many years ago, I might have centralized my queen with 37.♔e4 followed by a rook invasion along the f- or b-files, but now I was looking for simpler ways.

37.♔d2!!

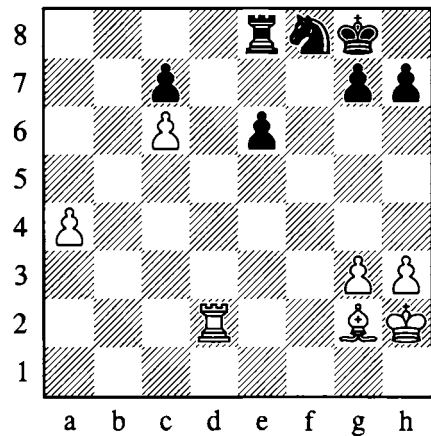
I was very happy when I discovered this simplifying method. I was 100% sure that the ending would be winning. My teammates also felt relieved when they realized that no matter how long it would take, I would win one way or another.

37...♔xd2

Absolutely forced. If 37...♔xa4? 38.♔d8 ♔f7 39.♔xf7 ♔xf7 40.♔xc7† and the c6-pawn would soon promote.

Against other queen moves, such as 37...♔a7, I would just advance my passed pawn.

38.♔xd2 ♔e8



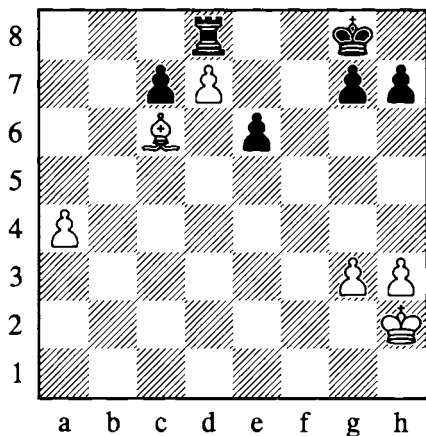
After the queen exchange, Black has to hurry to use his rook to block the passed a-pawn. Now I could simply push the pawn to the sixth rank, supporting it with ♔a2 and ♔f1 if necessary. However, I had a more radical plan, which I carried out after seven minutes of double-checking.

39.♔d7!

Forcing Black to give me a second passed pawn and opening the long diagonal for the bishop.

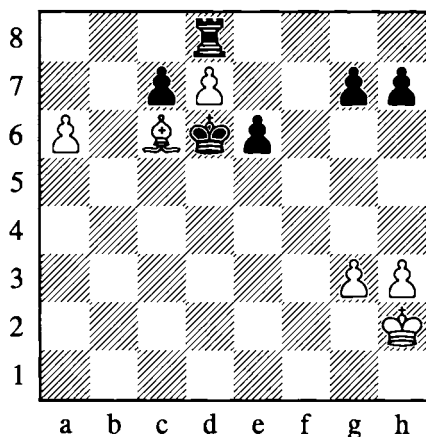
39...♖xd7

Forced, since if 39...♞c8 40.a5 Black could not avoid taking my rook anyway.

40.cxd7 ♞d8 41.♞c6

A remarkable position. The bishop defends the d7-pawn and supports the advance and promotion of the a-pawn, without even needing the help of my king.

In addition, the bishop blocks the c-pawn, which could have become a source of counterplay for Black. It is worth mentioning that without this pawn on the board, Black could defend – see the comment on move 44.

41...♖f7 42.a5 ♖e7 43.a6 ♖d6

It almost looks as if Black is arriving in time to defend, but when sacrificing the exchange I had already seen my next move.

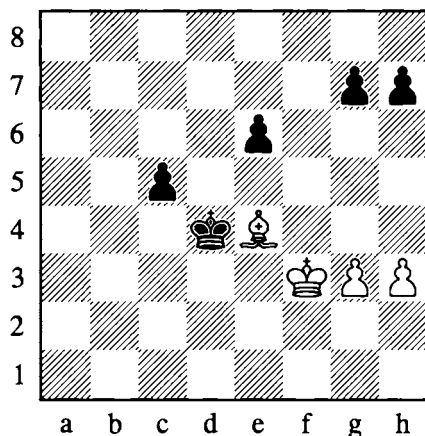
44.♞b7!

Ensuring the promotion of the a-pawn. Unfortunately for Black, his own pawn prevents the saving 44...♞c7.

44...♖xd7 45.a7 ♖d6 46.a8=♚ ♞xa8 47.♞xa8

It may seem that Black has some chances to save this ending, since his king is actively supporting his passed pawns and the colour of the h8-square would guarantee a draw if my g-pawn was exchanged.

In fact, the black pawns are easy to control by placing the bishop on e4, and the exchange of my g-pawn can be avoided with a minimum of care.

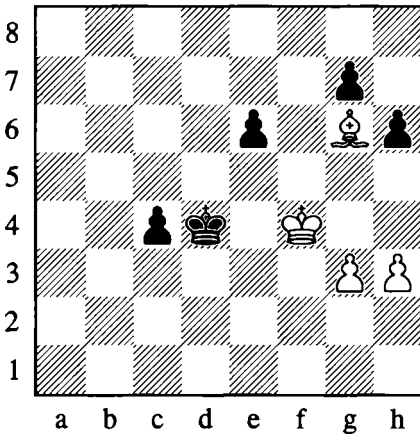
47...♖e5 48.♞g2 ♖d4 49.♖f3 c5 50.♞e4**50...h6**

The most natural answer.

Keeping the kingside pawns on light squares would make them easy targets. If 50...g6 51.g4 (threatening g4-g5 and h3-h4-h5) 51...♖e5 52.g5 Black could set a last trap with 52...h6! hoping for 53.gxh6? ♖f6 with a draw, but 53.h4 keeps the g-pawn and wins.

51. ♖g6

A logical move, freeing my king from the task of defending the bishop, but not the only correct move. Concrete moves are not so important here, the main thing is to have a clear plan and stick to it.

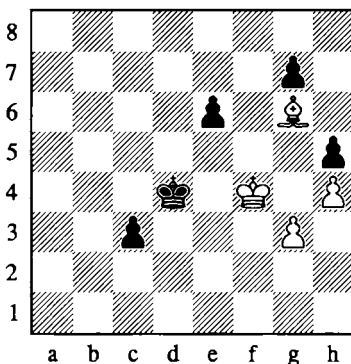
51...c4 52. ♖f4

As in many similar endings, I make progress by using a series of zugzwang positions. In order to avoid losing territory, Black will be forced to expose his passed pawns by advancing them.

52...♗c3!?

The most active continuation, eventually restoring material equality just before reigning.

Here are two lines that illustrate the zugzwang policy.

52...c3 53. h4 h5

54. ♗c2! If Black moves his king, I would win one of his pawns with either ♗e5 or ♗e3, so the next move is forced. 54...e5† 55. ♗f3 ♗d5 56. ♗e3 Winning one of the pawns soon anyway.

Or if 52...e5† 53. ♗f3 ♗d5 54. ♗e3 ♗e6 55. ♗e4 with a similar result.

53. ♗f7!

Preparing to take the e6-pawn and then give up my bishop for the other one. With my king so much closer to the kingside than its rival, this is the simplest way.

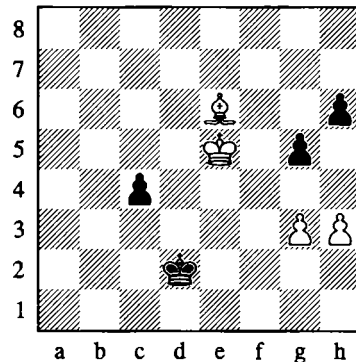
53...g5†!?

Setting a last trap.

If 53...♗d2 then White's play is too easy: 54. ♗xe6 c3 55. ♗b3 c2 56. ♗xc2 ♗xc2 57. ♗f5+–

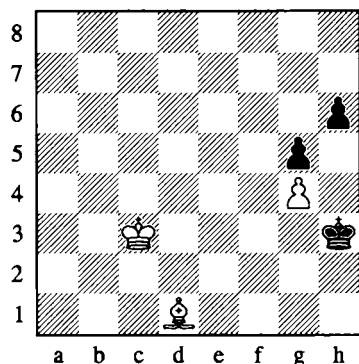
54. ♗e3

It was not too late to spoil the win with: 54. ♗e5? ♗d2 55. ♗xe6

**55...c3!**

Winning an essential tempo over the line 55...♗e3 56. ♗xc4 ♗f3 57. g4 ♗g3 58. ♗f7 ♗xh3 when White is just in time for: 59. ♗h5!+–

56. ♗b3 ♗e3 57. g4 ♗f3 58. ♗d4 ♗g3 59. ♗xc3 ♗xh3 60. ♗d1



It seems as if White has stabilized the position, but Black saves himself by just one tempo.

60...♔g3

The king hurries closer to the h8-square, in order to prepare ...h6-h5.

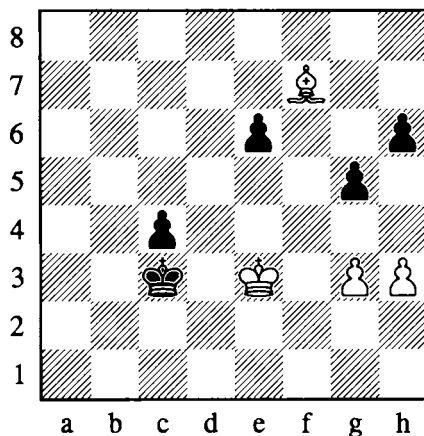
61.♔d4 ♕f4 62.♔d5 h5!

Just in time.

63.gxh5 ♕f5=

Followed by ...♕f6.

I should mention that my move was not the only one. 54.♕e4 and 54.♕g4 are not a bit worse.



54...♕b2 55.♕xe6 c3 56.♕f5 c2 57.♕xc2 ♕xc2 58.g4

Facing the unstoppable march of my king to g6, Bu resigned.

1-0

This was the last game to finish in our match and it sealed our victory over China by 2½-1½.

Hungary played a great tournament and tied for 3rd with Israel. Unfortunately, we missed out on the bronze medals on tiebreak, which was quite painful since we had played against most of the top teams.

But in chess, as in life, one also needs a bit of the winner's luck...

Chapter 9

The Endgame



Chessboxing at the 2012 Aquaprofit-Polgar Chess Festival

When reaching the endgame one has to deal with a lot of factors, not only from a chess perspective, but also from an emotional point of view.

Some grandmasters can be very strong endgame players if they have an advantage, but this does not necessarily make them good defenders in the endgame. The opposite also applies, of course.

It is completely wrong to think that the reduced material makes the endgame simpler to play than the previous phases of the game. There is a whole set of rules, principles and, not least, theoretical positions one has to know.

Without pretending to exhaust the subject, I would enumerate some of the basic endgame rules.

Staying active is one of the highest priorities. This includes the king, which is an essential piece in the endgame. Many times, the king's activity is the decisive factor.

Patience is important – in better, equal or worse positions alike. But patience should not overshadow alertness. Long and slow manoeuvring phases are typically interrupted by *concrete* moments.

In the endgame, maybe even more than in the other phases of the game, making decisions is one of the most difficult tasks. It is a wise policy to confront the opponent with choices between apparently equivalent continuations.

Placing the opponent in zugzwang is one of the most effective methods in the endgame. The reduced material allows dominating the enemy pieces to such an extent that the way to victory may be paved with a whole series of zugzwang positions! The knight ending against Vocaturo features quite a few zugzwang positions.

A passed pawn is a very dangerous weapon in the endgame. Even if the pawn cannot promote, it will sap energy out of the opponent's position, allowing a winning plan on the opposite wing. My games with Almasi and Pantsulaia offer a good illustration of this.

Thorough knowledge of theoretical positions is essential not only when such a position arises, but also when deciding upon a piece exchange or some other important change of the situation. Anticipating and evaluating the ensuing endgame is easier and more effectively done when you know the theory.

Finally, you should never lose your belief in... miracles! Even when the result of the game seems to be sealed, there may be a hidden resource available, ignoring all the rules and common sense. I could not describe my game with Grischuk other than as a miracle that came true.

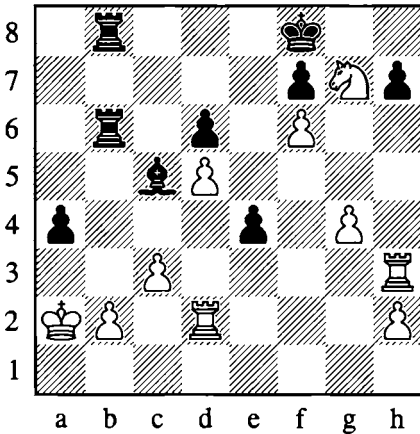
Every concrete endgame (with queens, knights, or opposite-coloured bishops) has its specific rules. Therefore, I grouped the examples from this chapter accordingly.

Since we have just finished the middlegame chapter, I will start with two examples featuring certain **middlegame elements**. Unsurprisingly, the queen will be the main hero in both cases.

Viswanathan Anand – Judit Polgar

Parla (blitz) 2006

This game was part of a small match consisting of two 25 minute, two 15 minute rapid and two 5 minute blitz games. I lost the match but had some good moments, as in the position below.



There are no queens on the board (yet!) and this position could well be described as a queenless middlegame.

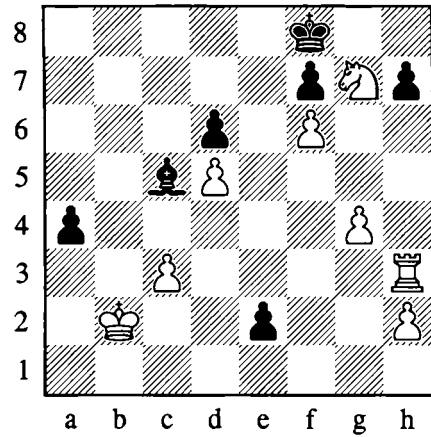
White's attacking attempts have spoiled his overall harmony, without reaching a concrete, threatening stage. At the same time, my army is perfectly coordinated, allowing me to combine my passed pawn and the pressure against b2 in a decisive way.

40...e3

Before delivering the small combination, it is essential to gain a tempo by advancing the pawn closer to the promotion square.

41.♖e2 ♜xb2†!

Exchanging the e2-rook, the only piece which could stop my pawn.

42.♜xb2 ♜xb2† 43.♙xb2 e2

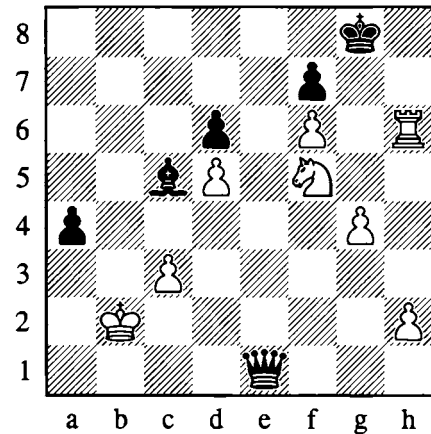
The pawn cannot be stopped, so White has to try to make something out of his attacking mechanism.

44.♜xh7

The threat of mate-in-one can be parried easily and with gain of time.

44...♙g8 45.♜h6

It is essential to defend the f6-pawn in order to create the next mating net.

45...e1=♖ 46.♙f5

Threatening 47.♙e7† ♙f8 48.♜h8 mate. In order to get more than a perpetual, I need to deliver my checks with some accuracy.

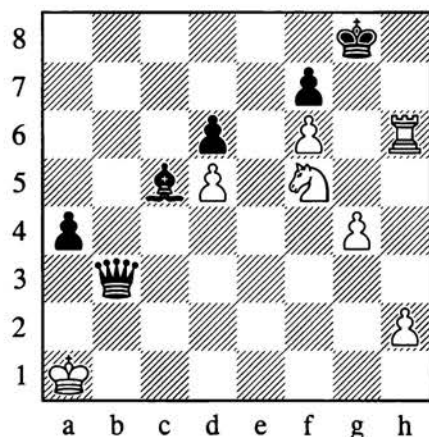
Had White played 45.♖h3, defending the c3-pawn and thus securing the f6-pawn indirectly, I would have won the rook with 46...♗f2† followed by 47...♗f1†.

46...♗d2† 47.♕b1 ♗d1† 48.♕a2

48.♕b2 a3† leads to mate.

48...♗b3† 49.♕a1 ♗xc3† 50.♕b1 ♗b3† 51.♕a1

If 51.♕c1 then 51...♗e3† wins the rook.



51...♗d4†!

Finally dismantling White's attacking set-up.

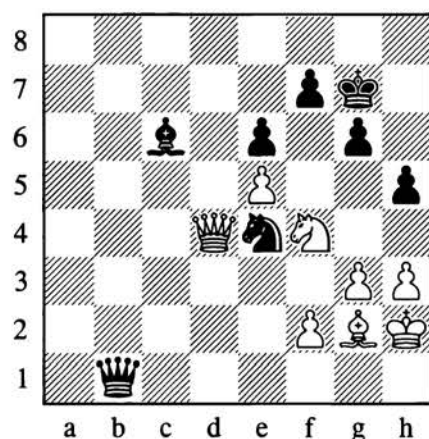
52.♗xd4 ♗c3†

0-1

Despite the presence of queens, the next example does not suit the description of *middlegame*. And yet, the first phase features some interesting tactical elements.

Judit Polgar – Rauf Mamedov

Turkish Team Championship, Konya 2012



In parliament being awarded the Order of Merit of the Republic of Hungary – Commander's Cross with Star

When heading for this position, Black probably hoped that the reduced material would secure him a draw, despite the relative instability of his pieces.

35. ♖d3

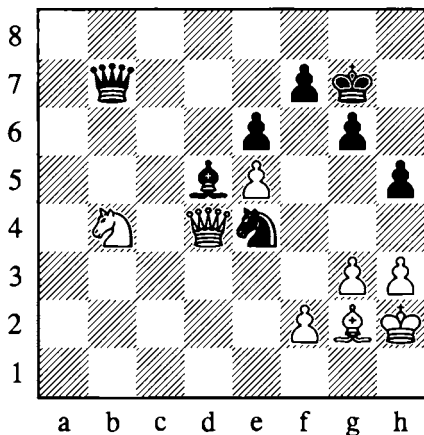
During the game, I had the feeling that Mamedov had seen this, but, faithful to his style, he had even designed a small tactical trick to avoid material losses.

35... ♜b7 36. ♖b4!

But he probably underestimated the strength and final consequences of this move.

Black's saving idea is revealed after 36. ♗xe4 ♗xe4 37. ♖c5. The double attack can be well met with 37... ♜d5! solving all problems.

36... ♗d5



Everything is defended, but Black's position crumbles anyway.

37. ♖xd5 exd5

Forced, since the knight was hanging.

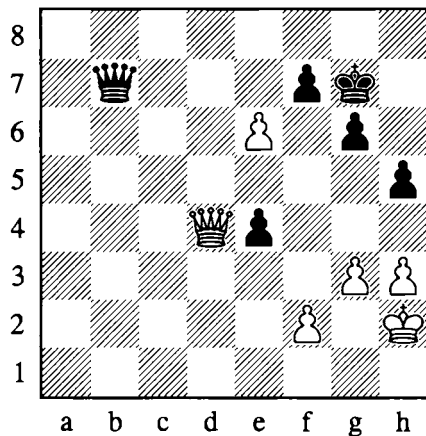
38. ♗xe4

It is essential to eliminate this knight. 38. e6† would be a mistake due to 38... ♖f6.

38... dxe4

After clarifying matters in the centre, the time has come for the decisive breakthrough:

39. e6†!



In queen endings, a far-advanced passed pawn is usually a telling factor. With my king safely defended, there is little Black can do against the unstoppable advance of the e-pawn.

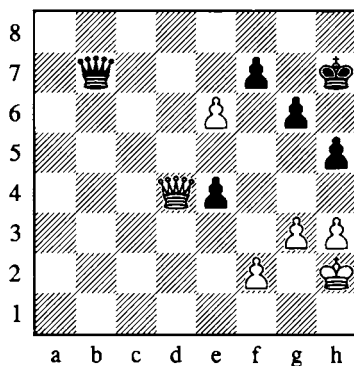
39... ♖h6?!

Slightly simplifying my task.

39... f6? would not be any better due to 40. ♜d7†.

The only way to prolong the fight, without changing the result, was:

39... ♖h7



40.♖d7! Thematic, and the only winning move. 40...♗b2 41.♗xf7 ♖g7 White can win in several ways, but I would choose the “human” 42.♗f4 winning the second pawn for free.

40.♗h8†

In view of 40...♔g5 41.♗e5† ♔h6 42.e7 Black resigned.

1–0

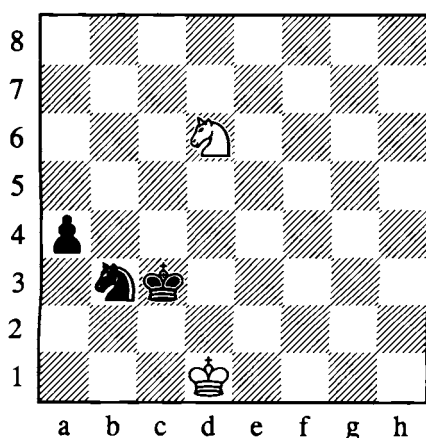
Knight endings

An old rule says: knight endings are like pawn endings. This does not refer to the technical methods used, but only to the evaluation of the position.

The presence of knights makes the fight very complicated and hard to predict, even when there is only one pawn left on the board.

Evgeny Miroshnichenko – Judit Polgar

European Championship, Ohrid 2001



A rook pawn is a knight's biggest enemy. If such a pawn has crossed the middle of the board, as in this game, precise calculation is required in order to find the most effective trajectory for the defending knight.

My “attacking” knight is perfectly placed. It

controls the promoting square, and together with my king it creates a barrier in front of the white king and takes away the d4-square from the white knight as a potential route to block the pawn.

We were getting deep into the seventh playing hour, when time trouble and tiredness start playing a part. We both knew the endgame was drawn, but working out the defensive line proved not so simple.

79.♘b5?

Optically, this looks very logical, since it brings the knight closer to the pawn. In fact, it is the decisive mistake, as after my simple answer the knight will have to jump away.

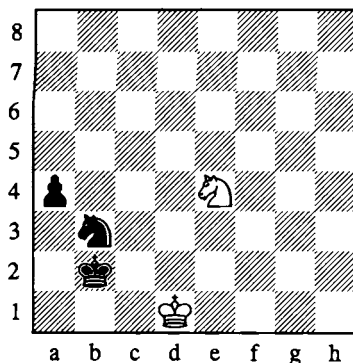
White could have achieved a draw with:

79.♘e4†!

This and the next move are counterintuitive since they take the knight really far from the pawn. The essence of the position is that the white knight alone cannot stop the pawn, but if allowed to step to c2, the king could help stop it. This means that White needs to combine the plans of catching the pawn with either of his pieces.

79...♔d3

The apparently decisive 79...♔b2 would allow the knight to display its vitality.



80.♘d6! Not a trivial move if you are unfamiliar with theoretical knight endings.

If 80...a3 81.♖c4† eliminating the pawn or
80...♖a5 81.♖b5=.

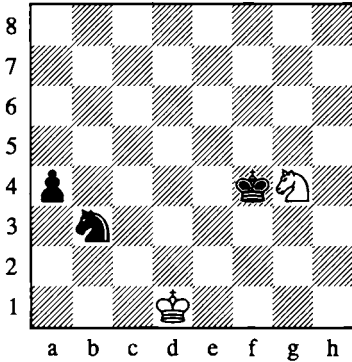
80.♖f2†!

The continuation of the policy explained above.

80...♗e3 81.♖g4† ♗f4

The king has to keep attacking the knight, in order to avoid ♗d1-c2.

If 81...♗f3 82.♖e5† followed by 83.♖c4=.



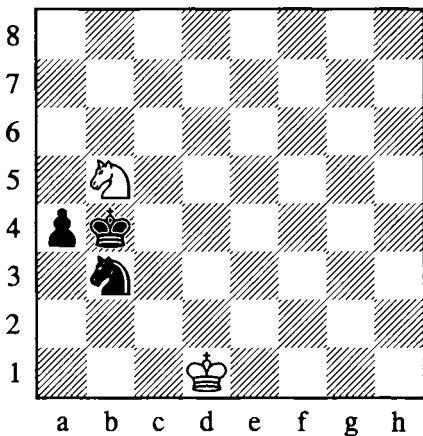
82.♖f6!

The last in a series of subtle moves. Although the black king has avoided an immediate check, gaining time for:

82...a3

The knight can take its revenge with:
83.♖d5† ♗e4 84.♖b4 (or even 84.♖c3†)
safely stopping the pawn.

79...♗b4!→



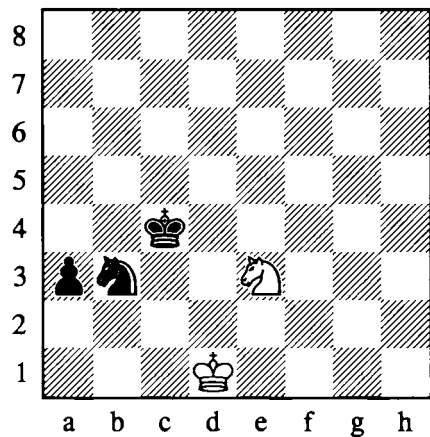
The knight has no favourable squares or routes available. Black gains a vital tempo to advance the pawn.

80.♖c7 a3 81.♖d5†

This series of knight jumps is less effective than those in the analysis above.

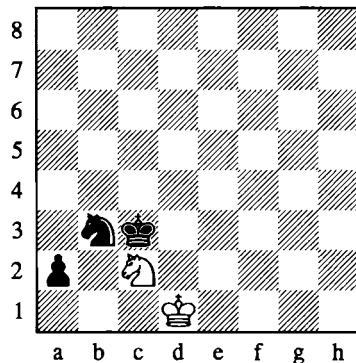
One important detail is that 81.♗c2 a2 82.♗b2 does not work since the a1-square is controlled by the knight.

81...♗c4 82.♖e3†



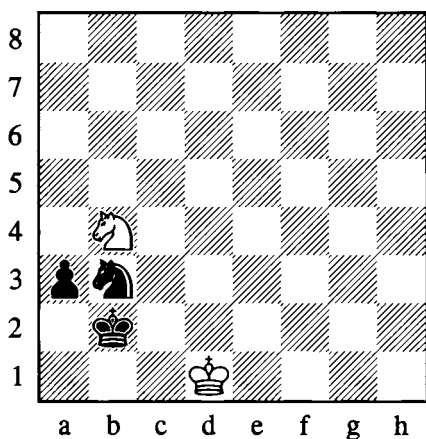
82...♗c3!?

The paradoxical retreat 82...♗c5! would have won faster. White would be forced to play 83.♖c2 cutting off his king's path to b1. 83...a2 84.♗e1 ♗c4 85.♗d1 ♗c3



With a decisive zugzwang.

83. ♖d5† ♜b2 84. ♖b4



White has managed to defend for the time being, but I had a concrete winning plan in mind.

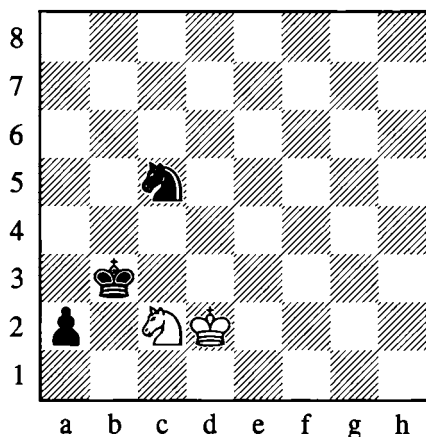
84... ♖c5!

Clearing the b3-square for the king and taking away the d3-square from the enemy knight.

85. ♜d2 ♜b3 86. ♖c2

Had I retreated to some other square with my knight, White could play 86. ♖d3 and if 86... a2? 87. ♖c1† with a draw.

86... a2



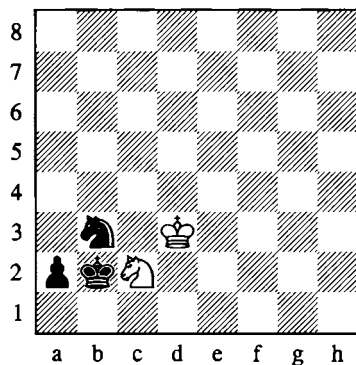
87. ♖a1†

Or if 87. ♜c1 ♜c3 88. ♜d1 ♖b3 transposing to the final position of the comment to the 82nd move.

87... ♜b2 88. ♜d1!?

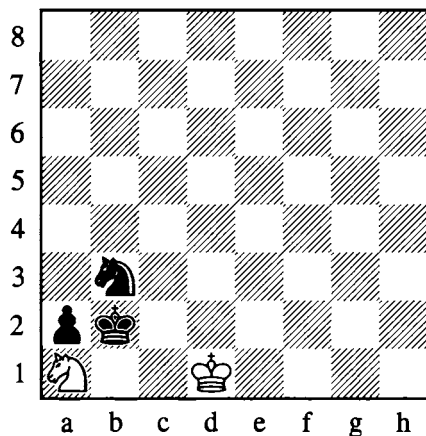
From a practical point of view, it is advisable to chase the miracle in this way.

88. ♖c2 ♖b3† 89. ♜d3 would allow me to deliver an elegant double deflection:



89... ♖d4! Neither of the white pieces can safely take the knight.

88... ♖b3!



The final touch. I had no intention of cornering my king with 88... ♜xa1? when White would have to play his king to the

square of the same colour as that occupied by the knight: 89.♔c1! Black would have no way of placing the white king in zugzwang, so the game would end in a positional draw.

We will come across this idea in the comments to my games with Almasi and Kosteniuk below.

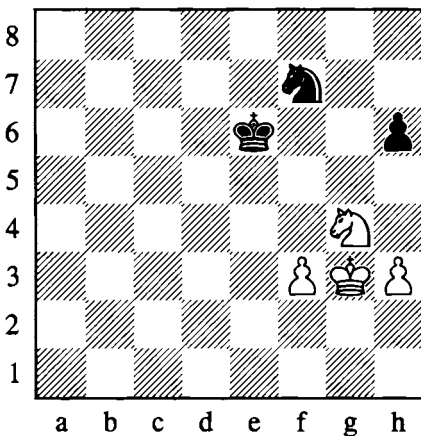
After my last move, it may seem that after 89.♖c2 Black would win with 89...♖d4, but then White could simply return his knight to the corner. The simplest would be 89...♔c3 leading to a familiar zugzwang position, so White resigned.

0–1

This was a perfect illustration of the hidden nuances of a relatively simple position. Things get even more complex if we add one pawn to each side.

Judit Polgar – Daniele Vocaturo

Istanbul Olympiad 2012



With so little material on the board my opponent must have thought that a draw would be in sight. He has managed to defend his h6-pawn in time, and if allowed to play ...♔e6-f5 his fortress would be absolutely safe.

45.♔f4

When I played this, I had the feeling that the position should be winning. Analysis proved my evaluation was right. Black is in zugzwang; the knight is tied to the defence of the pawn and the black king must defend f5, in order to prevent my king advancing.

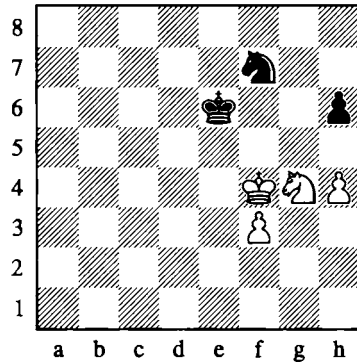
For instance:

45...♔e7

Hoping for 46.♔f5? ♖g5 attacking both my pawns, but I could build up an even more effective zugzwang position with:

46.h4 ♔e6

46...h5 47.♖e5 would clear my king's path to g5.



47.h5!

Black can no longer prevent my king's advance:

47...♔e7 48.♔f5

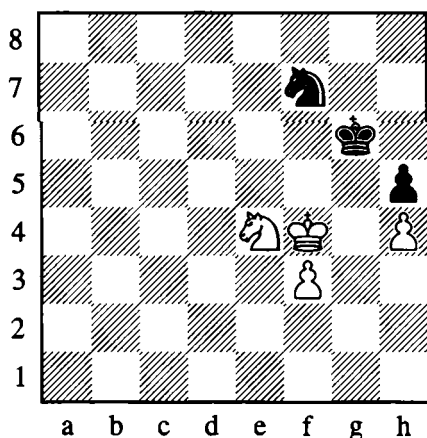
White will soon win the h6-pawn.

In view of all this, Black has to weaken the g5-square and expose his pawn with:

45...h5 46.♖f2 ♔f6

The king aims to free the knight from the task of defending the g5-square, and gets ready to defend the h-pawn.

47.♖e4† ♔g6 48.h4

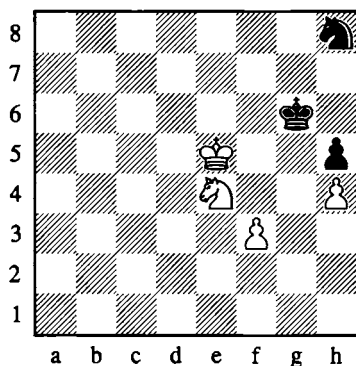


Having increased my domination over the past few moves, my initial feeling about the endgame had turned into certitude: I was positive I would win the game!

Black cannot allow f4-f5 , so he has a choice between three knight moves.

48...h8?

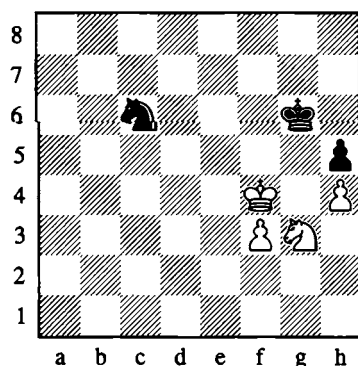
A cunning defence, hoping for the impatient:
49. e5 ?



49...h6!! This smart regrouping move, followed by ...g6 with a counterattack against h4, would save the game.

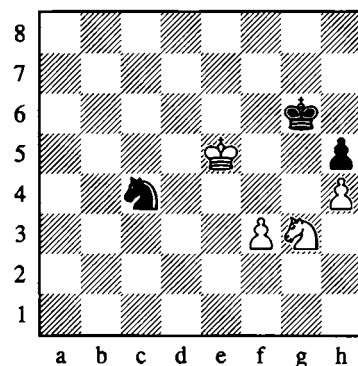
Black's alternatives would allow my king to centralize, dominating the knight and preparing to advance the f-pawn.

For instance: 48...d8 49. g3 c6



50. e4 Taking away the important e5- and d4-squares from the knight.

Or if: 48...h6 49. g3 f7 50. e4 $\text{d6}+$
51. e5 $\text{c4}+$



52. e6 With a symmetrical domination with respect to the previous line.

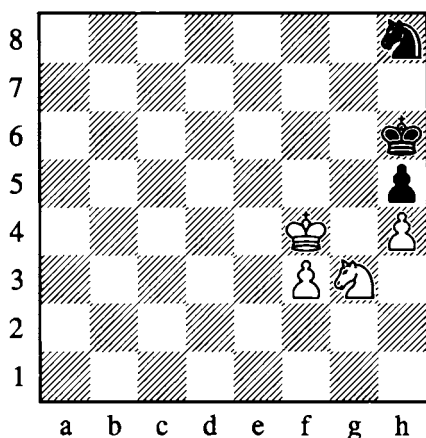
In both cases, Black could not prevent the decisive advance of my passed pawn.

49. g3 !

Avoiding the aforementioned trap and tying the king to the defence of the pawn.

49...h6

Still hoping to regroup with ...g6. If 49...f7 50. e4 with similar play as in the previous lines.

**50. d5!**

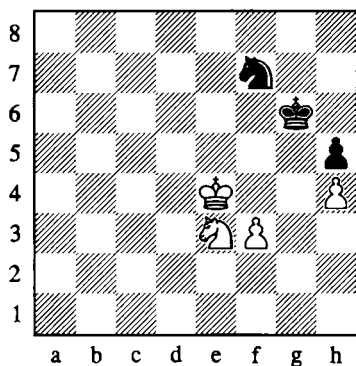
Forcing the king to block the knight's access to g6, since 50...d7 would allow 51. d5.

50...d6 51. d3

An effective knight manoeuvre, preparing to meet the later ...d8-g6 with d2.

51...d6

If 51...d7 52. d4:

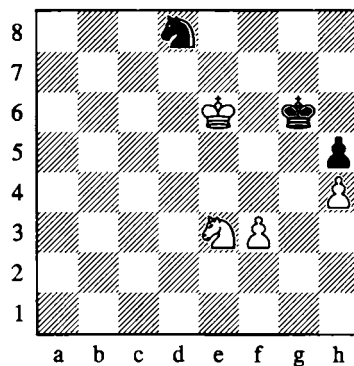


My main plan would be to advance the pawn to f5, thus taking away the e6- and g6-squares from the king, who would have to go to f6. Then d3-d5 would push it away, when either d4 or d4-g5 would win the h5-pawn.

52...d6

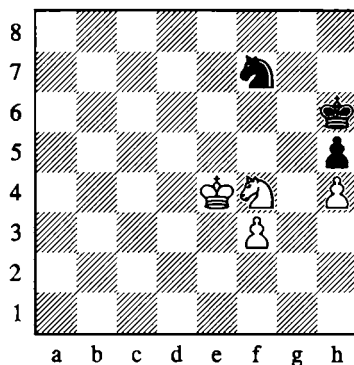
We are familiar with the fact that the knight cannot display much activity in the fight

against my centralized king: 52...d6 53. d5 d7 54. d6 d8



55. d5 Yet another form of domination over the knight. True, a bishop would be even more effective for this purpose, but the king is good enough. 55...d6 56. f4 d7 57. f5 The first phase of the plan has been fulfilled. 57...d6 58. d4 d7 59. d5 d6 60. d4 White wins the h5-pawn.

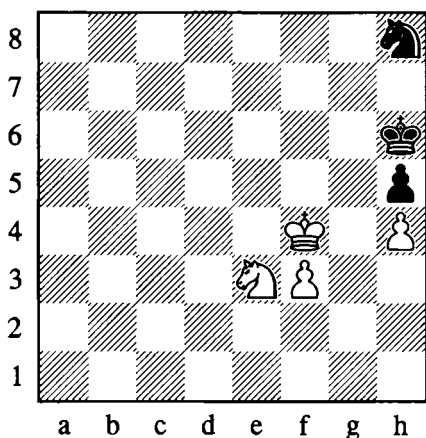
53. d5 d6 54. d4 d7

**55. d5**

I intuitively prefer this method (based on domination) over 55. d5 which should also win, though. 55...d6 56. d6 d7 57. d2 Clearing the path for the f-pawn and defending the h4-pawn in advance. We can see that the g2- and g3-squares are very useful for my knight.

55...d8 56. d2

Followed by f4-f5. The black knight has no easy access to the h4-pawn.



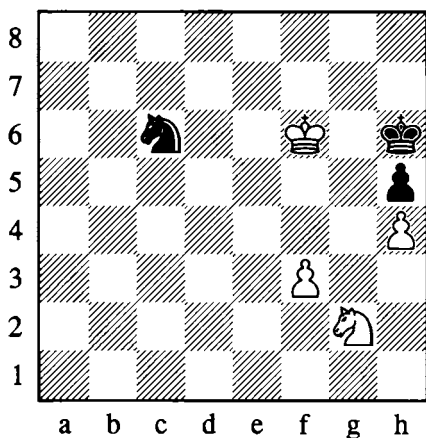
52.♔f5

After thorough preparation, my king finally steps in. From now on, the black king will be confined to passivity.

52...♖g6 53.♖g2

Black's counterplay has been extinguished and my f-pawn is unstoppable.

53...♖e7† 54.♖f6 ♖c6



55.♖e3

The most ambitious move, aiming to win the h-pawn, and preventing ...♖d4 in view of the knight exchange with ♖e3-f5†.

The straightforward 55.f4 was also perfectly good.

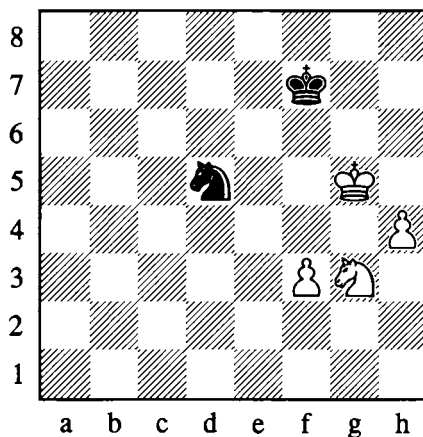
55...♖h7 56.♖f5 ♖b4 57.♖g5

My king and knight's teamwork is instructive and typical for this kind of ending. Together, they take away any breathing space from the enemy king, helping me to get my king to g5 and so winning the last black pawn.

57...♖d5 58.♖g3

There was no hurry to take the pawn; I preferred to keep dominating the knight.

58...♖g7 59.♖xh5† ♖f7 60.♖g3



Two extra pawns in a knight ending will usually ensure the win, but some good technique is still required, as we will see with my miraculous save against Grischuk, which is the final section in this chapter.

60...♖f6 61.h5 ♖h7† 62.♖h6 ♖f6 63.♖e4 ♖g8†

Or if 63...♖d5 64.♖g5 the "opposition" of my king and the black knight is horizontal rather than vertical as in the game.

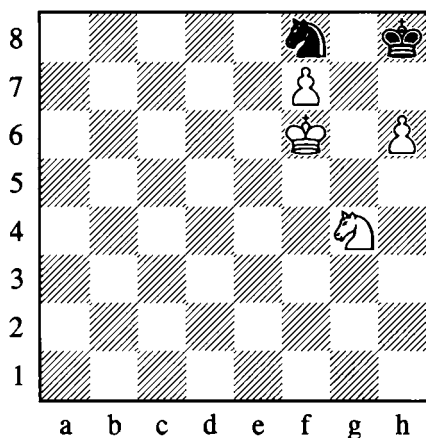
64.♖g5 ♖e7 65.f4 ♖c6 66.h6

By now the engines give a clear evaluation – mate in 22! As a human I may need a bit longer, but with a minimum of care the result is already sealed.

66...♔g8 67.f5 ♖e5 68.♖f6† ♔h8

Hoping for stalemate. Instead if 68...♔f8 then 69.♖g4 ♖f3† 70.♔f6 wins.

69.♖g4 ♖d7 70.♔g6 ♖f8† 71.♔f7 ♖h7
72.f6 ♖g5† 73.♔g6 ♖e6 74.f7 ♖f8† 75.♔f6



75...♖g6

The last try, as 76.♔xg6 stalemates Black.

76.♖e5

Black resigned without testing my abilities in the following line: 76...♖f8 77.♔e7 (Only not 77.♖g6†?? ♖xg6 78.♔xg6 with stalemate!) 77...♖h7 78.♖g6 mate.

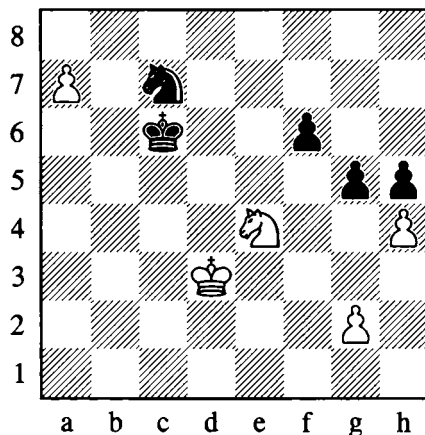
1-0

In the examples above, the fight took place mainly on one wing. The time has come to widen the front.

The presence of an outside passed pawn usually has a decisive influence in many types of ending. The next game is not an exception.

Judit Polgar – Zoltan Almasi

Budapest 2003



Almasi's last move 71...g5 was a desperate attempt to eliminate all my pawns. After the exchanges on g5, Black's king would win the a7-pawn and his knight would try to give up its life for the g-pawn.

This was not to be, though, due to a small tactical detail.

72.g4!!

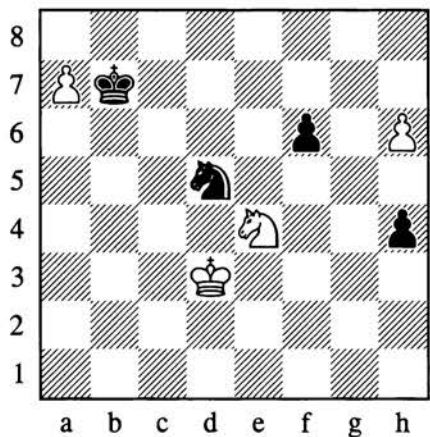
A thematic pawn break, creating a second passed rook pawn. Black will not be in time to neutralize both of them.

Readers of the first two volumes may be used to my natural inclination towards the moves g2-g4 and ...g7-g5. This time, this move has a more concrete character than ever.

72...gxh4

72...hxg4 would not have changed the character of the fight: 73.h5 ♔b7 74.h6 ♖d5 75.♖d6† This is what I had planned, in similar style with the game continuation, but it is not the only winning move. 75...♔xa7 76.h7 ♖f4† 77.♔e4 ♖g6 78.♔f5 ♖h8 79.♖e4 ♔b6 80.♔xf6 ♔c6 81.♔g7 ♔d5 82.♔xh8 ♔xe4 83.♔g7 g3 84.h8=♞ Black's counterplay is too slow by one tempo.

73.gxh5 ♖b7 74.h6 ♘d5



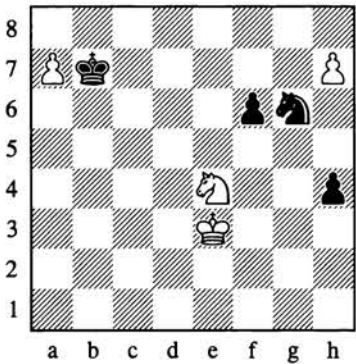
75.♘d6†!

During the game I was very proud of this move. Even though analysis proves it is far from the only winning move, I still consider it the clearest method from a practical point of view.

The knight clears the king's path to g6, anticipating Black's ...♘f4† followed by ...♘g6.

It is worth analyzing the following variation, in which this principle of harmonious cooperation between the king and knight is essential at the critical moment:

75.h7 ♘f4† 76.♖e3 ♘g6



77.♔f3!

The impatient 77.♘xf6? would be a typical mistake, depriving the king of the f6-square and throwing away an essential tempo: 77...♙xa7 78.♙e4 ♖b7 79.♙f5 ♜h8 With the knight on any other reasonable square, White would win with ♙xf6, but the way it is, Black is just in time to save the game: 80.♜g4 ♙c6 81.♙f6 ♙d7 82.♙g7 ♙e7 83.♙xh8 And now 83...♙f8 or 83...♙f7 with a positional draw.

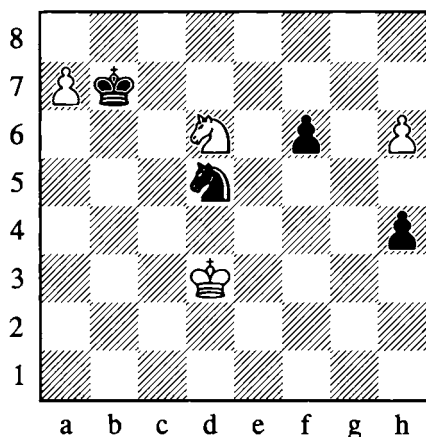
77...♙xa7 78.♙g4 ♖b6 79.♙f5 ♜h8 80.♙xf6

White wins, since the black king is one step too far from the f7- and f8-squares.

What we should learn from these lines is that most of the time “completely winning positions” are actually won by one tempo. This is probably what Tartakower had in mind when stating that “Chess is the tragedy of a single tempo”.

Endgame play requires patience and accurate calculation even more than the other phases of the game. It is a common psychological trap to think that the game will win itself.

Whenever I feel I am at risk of becoming impatient during a game, I stand up and take a short walk, look at the other games, and then return to my own to get focused again. As an alternate method, taking a bite of chocolate is not bad either.



75...♙xa7 76.h7 ♜f4† 77.♙e4 ♜g6 78.♙f5 ♜h8 79.♙xf6

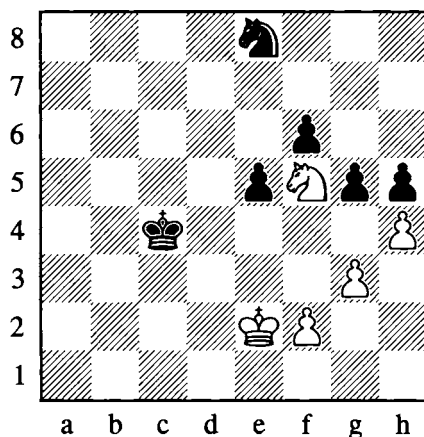
If 79...h3 80.♜e4 the pawn is not dangerous, so Black resigned.

1–0

Ironically, six years later I was caught by an almost identical trick as in the previous game:

Alexandra Kosteniuk – Judit Polgar

World Blitz, Moscow 2009



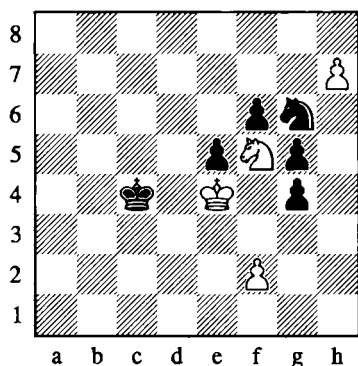
I had had an advantage throughout the game, and still hoped to convert my extra pawn – then the cold shower arrived:

63.g4!

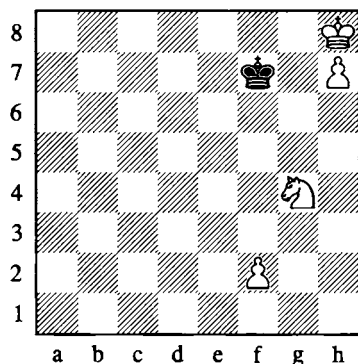
The white knight is perfectly placed, while my knight occupies virtually the worst square for fighting against the passed rook pawn that will inevitably be created after the last move.

63...♜c7

Or if 63...hxc4 64.h5 ♜c7 65.h6 ♜e6 66.h7 ♜f4† 67.♙e3 ♜g6 68.♙e4 followed by ♜f5-g3 and ♙e4-f5xf6-g7 with a familiar scenario. True, in this line my king would be closer to the kingside than Almasi's king was, but the presence of the f2-pawn would make a big difference.



68...♖h8 69.♖g3 ♘c5 70.♙f5 ♘d6 71.♙xf6
 ♘d7 72.♙g7 ♘e7 73.♙xh8 ♘f8 First of
 all, the f2-pawn would stop the black ones,
 allowing the knight to collect them one by one.
 74.♖f5 ♘f7 75.♖e3 ♘f8 76.♖xg4 e4 77.♖f6
 ♘f7 78.♖xe4 g4 79.♖g5† ♘f8 80.♖e4 ♘f7
 81.♖f6 ♘f8 82.♖xg4 ♘f7

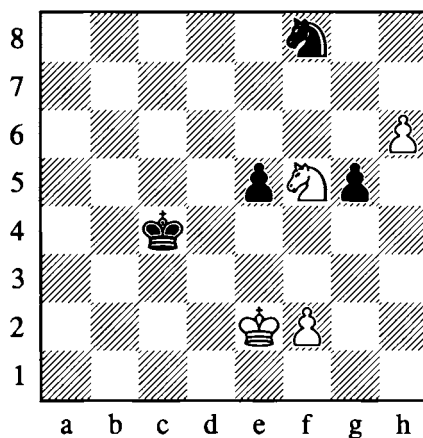


After helping to fulfil these formalities, the
 pawn would create the decisive zugzwang:

83.♖h6† ♘f8 84.f3

The black king would have to let its opposite
 number out of the corner. As we know, the
 knight alone could not achieve this, if Black
 chooses the right square for the king on move
 73.

64.gxh5 ♖e6 65.h6 ♖f8 66.hxg5 fxg5



Kosteniuk's 67.♙f3 was correct, and
 eventually gained her a win after mutual
 inaccuracies. But from a practical point of
 view, the simplest would have been:

67.♖e3†

Taking the d5-square from my king.

67...♙d4 68.♙f3

Followed by ♙g4 and wins.

Opposite-coloured bishop endings

In the absence of any other pieces, opposite-coloured bishops lead to positions which have drawish tendencies. Even in the most critical situations, there may be a way of building a fortress.

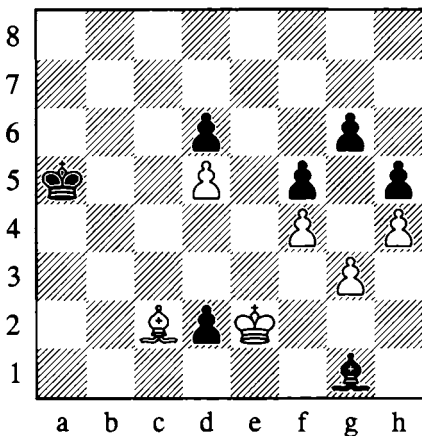
The following game is one of my best saves in such endings.

Judit Polgar – Vladimir Kramnik

Wijk aan Zee 2003

Together with my games against Karpov (page 46) and Anand (page 192) this is one of my most memorable games from this tournament.

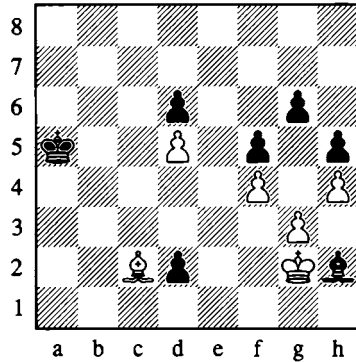
I had been worse for a long time and had to make use of all my energy and imagination to hold my own against Kramnik's outstanding technique. The following fragment illustrates the amount of calculation that can be needed in this *technical* and supposedly dull phase of the game.



Black has two main trumps, his passed pawn and the vulnerability of my kingside pawns. The only element that gives me hope is the remoteness of Vladimir's king. If Black gets the time to play ...♖b4-c3, the game will be over, so I need to take action at once.

76.♔xd2!

The only alternative was 76.♔f1?, aiming to save the kingside, but this would allow Black to force a winning pawn ending: 76...♙h2 77.♔g2



The bishop is trapped but the black king now has enough time to approach. 77...♔b4! 78.♔xh2 ♕c3 79.♙a4 ♔b2 80.♔g2 ♕c1 81.♔f2 White lacks just one tempo to stop the pawn. 81...d1=♚ 82.♙xd1 ♔xd1 83.♔e3 ♔e1 84.♔f3 ♔f1 Despite White's efforts, Black wins all the kingside pawns anyway.

76...♙h2

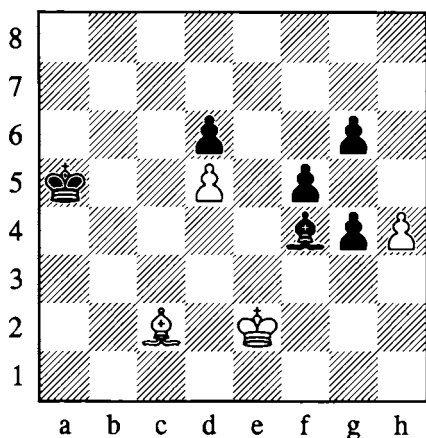
If allowed to play ...♙xg3 and ...♙xh4, Black would win slowly by bringing his king into the fight. With the a4-square under control, I cannot counterattack with ♙c2-a4-e8, which means I have to find another way of activating my bishop.

77.g4!

A typical breakthrough and once again my favourite move. Black will get two connected passed pawns, but will have to advance them onto dark squares, offering me chances of a successful blockade.

Black's gain of a tempo on the next move did not put me off, since I had calculated further than that.

77...♙xf4† 78.♔e2 hxg4

**79.h5!**

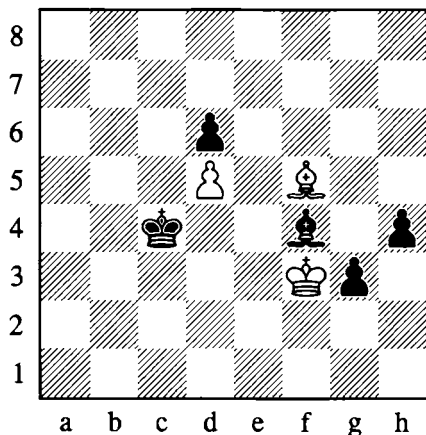
The logical follow-up to the first break. Everything has to be done before the enemy king approaches.

79...gxh5 80.♖xf5 ♜b4

After activating my bishop, the next step is to force the black pawns onto dark squares. Just as before, I cannot waste a single tempo. If Black attacks my d5-pawn before I attack his pawns, the game would be over.

81.♗g6! h4 82.♗f5 g3 83.♔f3

The kingside pawns have been stopped but the presence of the d-pawns offers Black chances to keep some pressure.

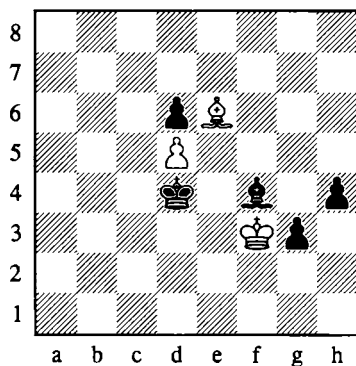
83...♜c4

Kramnik also acts in the quickest possible way. For the time being, his bishop is taboo in view of ...g3-g2.

84.♗h3!

Another accurate choice and the only saving move! The threat of ♖xf4 becomes real, offering me the time to defend the d5-pawn with my king, while the bishop keeps the connected pawns under control.

Trying to switching the roles of my pieces with 84.♗e6? would yield too much activity to the black king: 84...♔d4 There are two restrictions for White: the need to defend the d5-pawn and the need to prevent ...h4-h3. There are only two possible moves.

**a) 85.♗c8!?**

Keeping the d5-pawn defended indirectly.

85...♗d2

The bishop is heading for e1. From this square, it will defend the g3-pawn without being attacked by the king. This will increase the strength of the potential threats of ...h3 and ...♔xd5.

85...♔xd5? would run into 86.♔xf4! g2 87.♗b7† and draws.

86.♗c6 ♗e1!

The rope tightens around White, who is in zugzwang.

87.♔g2 ♔e4

A perfect square for the king, attacking the



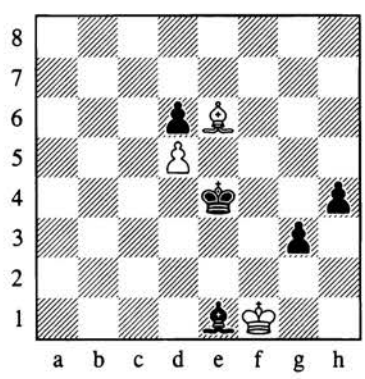
Kramnik is well known for playing on to the death

d5-pawn and ready to invade through f3 if my king moves away.

b) 85.♖g2 leads to similar play, but offers Black the chance to go wrong.

88.♖f1

The only try. Now if 88...♙f2 then 89.♖g2, but Black can do better.



88...♖f3! 89.♙h3

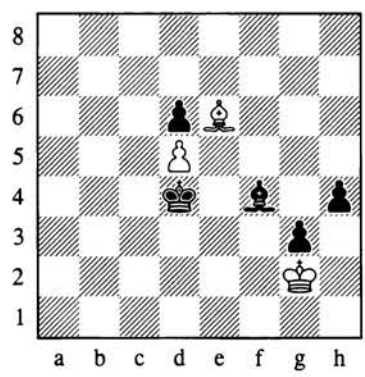
The only way to stop ...g3-g2.

89...♙f2!

An instructive zugzwang position. Black has no threats of his own, but White has to open the gates of the fortress with the next move.

90.♙g2+ ♖g4

Followed by ...h4-h3 and wins.

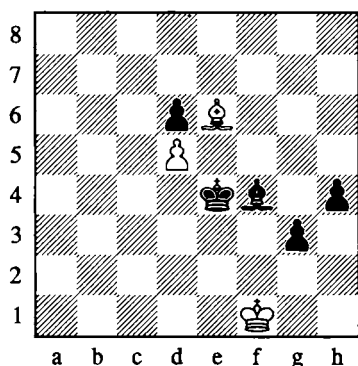


85...♖e4

It is again zugzwang! One of my pieces is forced to abandon its optimal square.

86.♖f1

Or if 86.♙g8 Black unblocks the g-pawn with 86...h3+! 87.♖xh3 ♖f3. In this line, the d5-pawn is my biggest enemy, preventing me from stopping the g-pawn with ♙d5+.



Black has a choice now.

b1) 86...h3?

This impatient move would throw away the win.

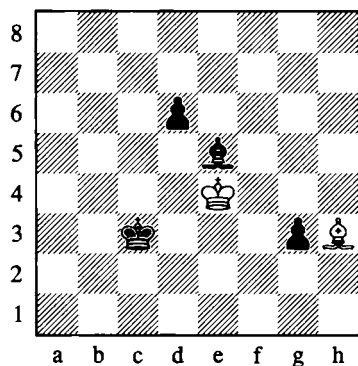
87. ♖xh3 ♜xd5 88. ♖e2

This position has some similarities with the endgame arising after 49.exd5 in my game with Karpov from Volume I (page 184).

88...♜d4

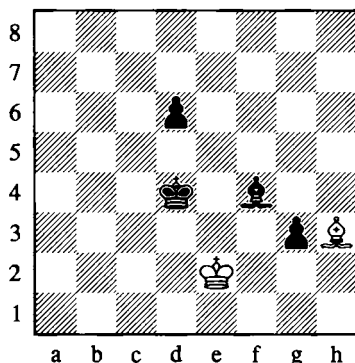
It is important to fight for space while clearing the path for the d-pawn.

88...♜c4 would allow 89. ♖f3 ♜e5 90. ♖e4. After occupying this important square with the king, White will be able to block the pawns with a mechanism known from endgame books. 90...♜c3



91. ♜g2 ♜d2 92. ♖f5 ♜e3 93. ♖g4 ♜d4 94. ♖f5 The white king walks along the h3-e6 diagonal, accompanying its rival which moves along the f2-c5 diagonal. There are no

zugzwang positions available, since White can mark time with bishop moves along the long diagonal.

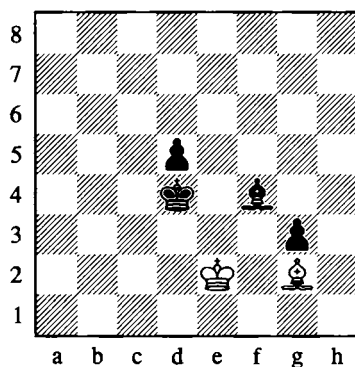


89. ♜g2!

The only saving move, aiming for an effective regrouping.

Since the e4-square is not available, 89. ♖f3? would not help: 89...♜e5 90. ♜g2 d5 Black breaks the blockade and wins.

89...d5



90. ♜d1!

Now is the right moment for this retreat since the hanging d5-pawn prevents Black from gaining space with ...♜e3. The white king is rushing to c2, in order to prevent the systematic plan of ...♜c4, ...d4, ...♜c3.

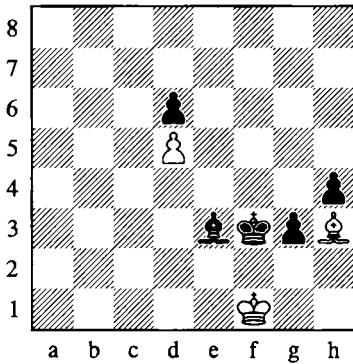
90...♜c4 91. ♜c2

White has regrouped in time, being ready to meet 91...d4 with 92. ♜f1†.

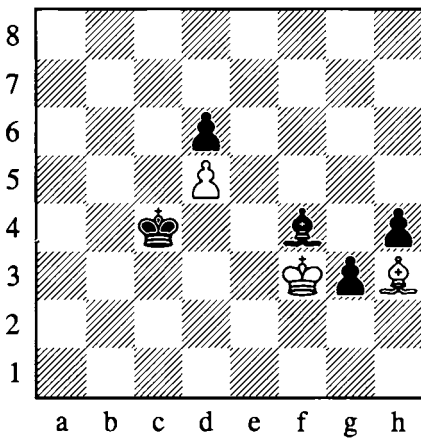
Or if 91...♜h6 92. ♜f1† ♜d4 93. ♜g2, maintaining the *status quo*.

The correct winning method would be:

b2) 86...♔f3! 87.♙h3 ♙e3



With a familiar zugzwang position. 88.♙g2+ ♔g4+ followed by ...h3.



84...♙e5 85.♔e4!

The last accurate move, completing the saving regrouping.

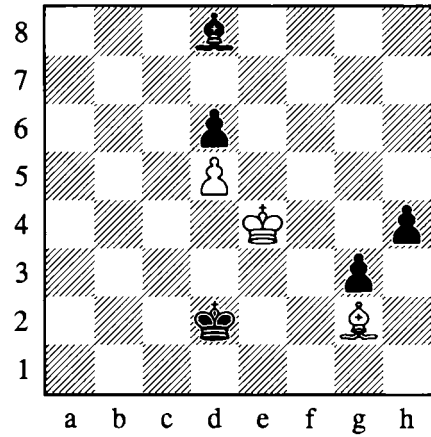
If 85.♙e6? ♔d4 White would be in zugzwang.

85...♙f6

We had been playing for nearly seven hours and both knew that the draw was inevitable. However, it is quite natural that Kramnik decided to test me for another dozen moves.

The next series of neutral moves was probably aimed at reducing my vigilance before switching to an active plan.

86.♙f1+ ♔c3 87.♙g2 ♔c4 88.♙f1+ ♔c5
89.♙g2 ♙e7 90.♙f1 ♙d8 91.♙g2 ♔c4
92.♙f1+ ♔c3 93.♙g2 ♔d2!?

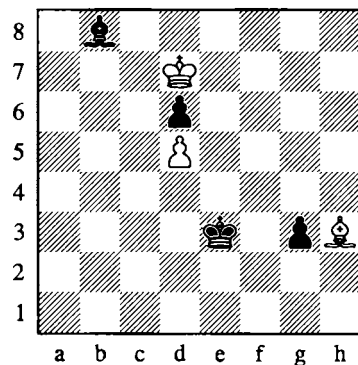


Finally displaying his last trump.

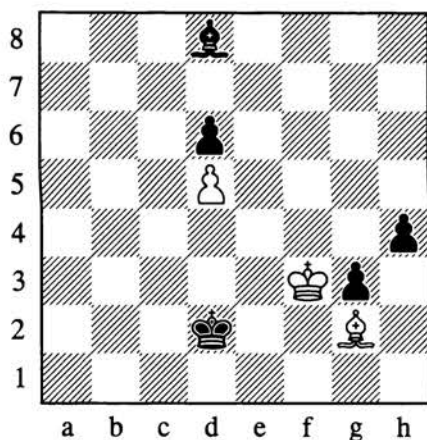
94.♔f3

Preparing for the safe regrouping with ♔g4-h3.

Actually, the seemingly risky 94.♔f5 would also be possible. 94...h3 95.♙xh3 ♔e3 Black threatens ...♔f2, but White can save the game by counterattacking: 96.♔e6 ♙c7 97.♔d7 ♙b8



98.♔c6!! Threatening ♔b7. Suddenly, the net tightens around the black bishop, so Black has to give away the d6-pawn with an obvious draw.



94...♖d3 95.♗g4 ♕e3 96.♗h3 ♜f6 97.♜h1

Kramnik finally convinced himself that it was a dead draw, so he decided to call it a day before reaching move 100.

½–½

I remember how exhausted, yet satisfied with my defence, I was after this game. It almost felt as if I had won, so I decided that I deserved to treat myself with a special meal at an excellent Italian restaurant!

Rook and opposite-coloured bishop endings

With rooks on the board, opposite-coloured bishops are in no way a guarantee of a peaceful result. If one of the players has an attack, the “defending” bishop may prove to be of little use.

The culminating moment of the next game has something in common with the previous examples; please refer to move 36.



At the 2012 Aquaprofit-Polgar Festival I played a simul against children from all 27 EU countries

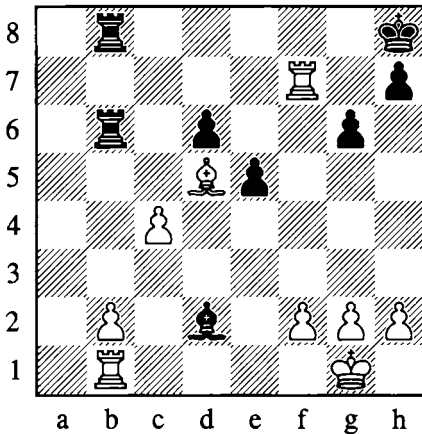
chesstouring.com

Judit Polgar – Romain Edouard

European Championship, Aix-les-Bains 2011

I had started working on the first volume of this series some time before the 2011 European Championship. For the first time in my career, I did not focus solely on playing well and trying to win, as I felt eager to create some valuable examples for Volume III, the one you are holding in your hands!

Combining sporting and creative ambitions with literary ones proved effective. I obtained one of my best ever results and I have included no fewer than four games from this event in this volume.



Despite the reduced material, Black's position is difficult. His king is passive and likely to fall under attack, while my bishop and f7-rook are very active.

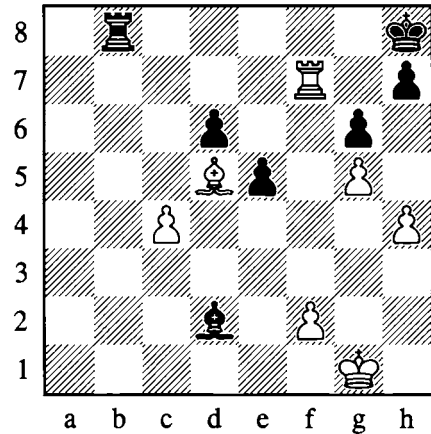
Black will regain the pawn on the next move, forcing the exchange of one pair of rooks. In the meantime, I need to start building a mating net around the black king.

31.h4 Bxb2 32.Bxb2 Bxb2 33.g4!

Very straightforward. If allowed to play a few moves in a row, I would deliver mate with g4-g5 followed by Bf8†, meeting ...Kg7 with Bg8 mate. Facing such a strong threat, Black has to retreat his rook to the back rank.

It may seem that the connection with the previous examples is a bit loose. I did indeed play my trademark g2-g4, but not as a pawn break. Before drawing any conclusions, I invite you to follow the game for three more moves!

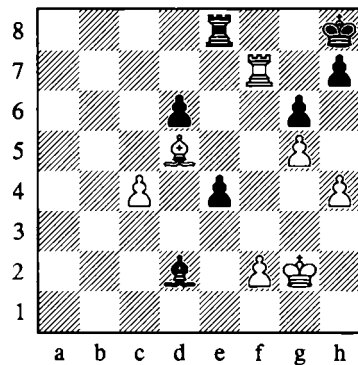
33...Rb8 34.g5



34...Ed8?!

The introduction to the wrong plan. Black defends the d6-pawn in order to prepare ...h7-h6 without fearing the double attack Bf6.

It would have been better to aim for a different pawn exchange with: 34...Ee8 35.Kg2 e4

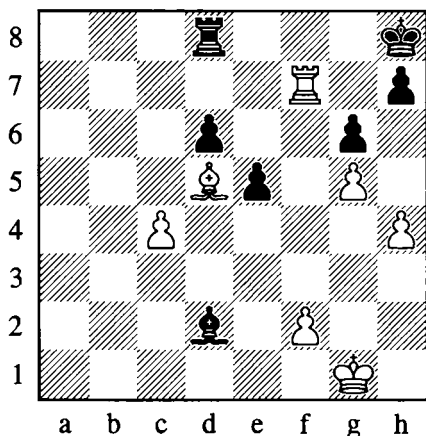


36.Kg3 (Or if 36.Bf6 then 36...Kb4 followed by ...Kc5.) 36...e3 37.fxe3 Kxe3 38.Kg4 Kd4 39.Ed7 Ke5 40.h5±

Black's position remains awfully passive, but

his bishop has at least achieved stability on a good square. It defends the d6-pawn and some kingside squares at the same time.

In both of the above lines, Black should be able to hold a draw with accurate play, but in practice it would be unpleasant and difficult.



35.♔g2

It felt good to make a neutral move, improving my position slightly and planning to increase the pressure with ♔g3-g4 followed by h4-h5. This way, my opponent could not become suspicious about how much I was looking forward to seeing him carry out his obvious idea.

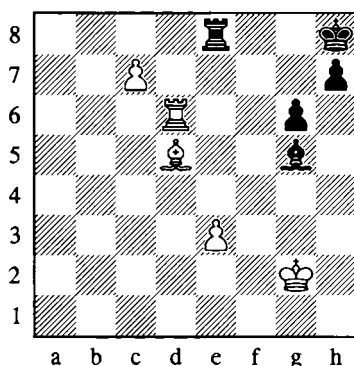
35...h6??

Consistent, played after just one minute... and losing! This is one of those games in which one fights for four tough hours, only to lose with one careless move.

It is true that the aforementioned plan would be less effective now that my king has moved onto a light square:

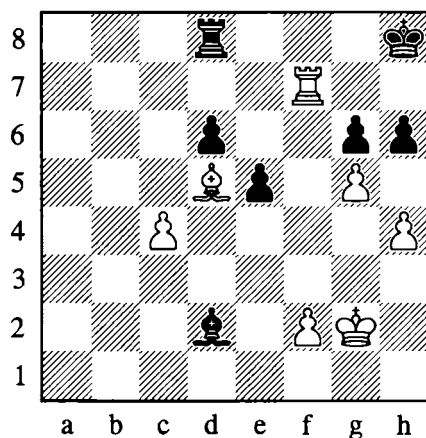
35...♞e8 36.♞f6 e4

If 36...♞b4 White could consolidate with 37.f3 not fearing 37...♞e1 in view of 38.♔h3± followed soon by ♔g4 and h5.
37.♞xd6 e3 38.fxe3 ♞e1? 39.c5 ♞xh4 40.c6 ♞xg5 41.c7



With the king on g1, Black would save the game by one tempo, with 41...♞c8 42.♞c6 ♞xe3† 43.♔g2 ♞f4. Or if 42.♞d7 ♞xe3† followed by 43...♞b6 would attack the passed pawn and defend against 44.♞d8† at the same time.

The way it is, White wins.



36.h5!

I played this decisive break with a big smile on my face – it was a little bit like when, as a kid, I managed to catch my opponents in my traps.

Geometrically, this position strongly reminds me of my game with Almasi, after my g2-g4. The main difference is that the passed pawn that will inevitably be created will contribute to setting up a mating net, rather than *just* racing towards the promoting square.

36...♖g8

A desperate defence.

If 36...gxf5 37.g6 ♔g8 38.♖h7† ♔f8 39.g7† White promotes the pawn and mates soon.

37.♖d7

Attacking the rook and forcing Black to make a decision.

37...♗g7

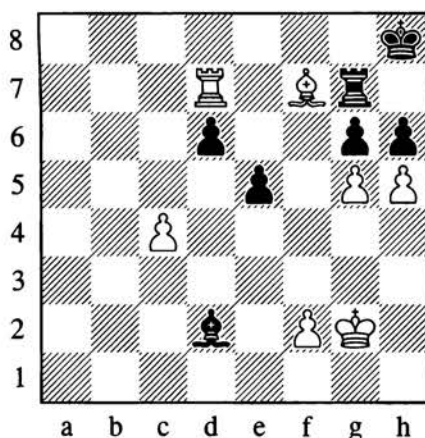
The only move to defend the g6-square, but not for long.

38.♕f7!!

I was really happy with this move, suffocating the black rook and king.

The simple 38.♖d8† ♔h7 39.♖xd6 ♖c7 40.hxg6† ♔g7 41.gxf6† ♕xf6 42.♔f3, with two extra pawns, would also win.

My continuation was not only more elegant, but also more effective, since it immediately convinced my opponent of the uselessness of continuing the fight.



Here are some possible lines to prove Black's helplessness:

38...hxg5 39.♖d8† ♔h7 40.hxg6† ♔h6 41.♖h8† mates on the next move.

38...gxf5 39.♖d8† ♔h7 40.g6† wins not only the exchange, but a whole rook: 40...♖xg6† 41.♕xg6† ♔xg6 42.♖xd6†

38...♕xg5 39.hxg6 followed soon by a decisive back-rank check.

1-0



My guess is that nearly a million photos have been taken of me over the last decade

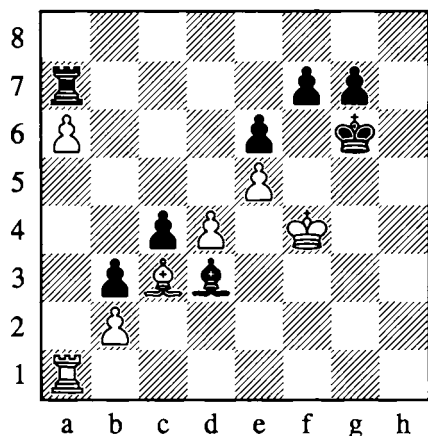
We could feel that in this example I was practically fighting with an extra piece, since the black bishop could not interfere with mine in any way.

When speaking about an attack with opposite-coloured bishops, the king is *not* the only possible target. The attack could take place on the queenside, or have a global character.

This is the case in the next fragment, where the vulnerability of the black king only played an auxiliary role.

Judit Polgar – Levan Pantsulaia

European Team Championship, Warsaw 2013



I have a far-advanced passed pawn, while Black's extra pawn does not make itself felt. My king is active and safe, which cannot be said about Black's.

As so often is the case in endings with opposite-coloured bishops, the final evaluation depends on whose bishop will prove stronger. If Black could transfer his bishop to d5, he would be out of danger. But pawns that are not blockaded have a natural tendency to advance (Nimzowitsch):

68.d5!!

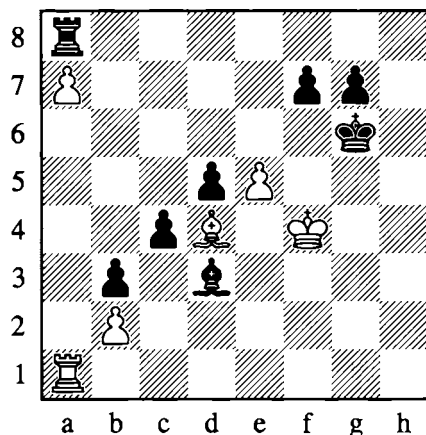
Clearing the d4-square and making my

bishop cut like a blade after it gets there. Black's bishop now has no easy access to the long diagonal, and his next move, which is forced, will put yet another stone in his path.

68...exd5

Black could not allow me to create a second passed pawn.

69.♙d4 ♜a8 70.a7



After the pawn has reached the seventh rank, Black is on the edge of disaster. My main plan is to transfer my rook to b8, but there are also some attacking ideas on the g- and h-files.

70...♙h5

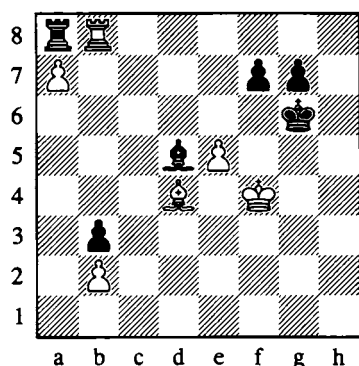
This allows a forcing manoeuvre that wins the black rook.

The most principled defensive try would have been:

70...c3!? 71.♙xc3 d4

Making use of basically the same method as me. The black bishop needs the long diagonal to join the rook in setting up some sort of fortress.

72.♙xd4 ♙c4 73.♜a5 ♙e6 74.♜b5 ♙c4 75.♜b8 ♙d5



From a static point of view, Black seems to have every chance of resisting, as there is no way I can increase the pressure against the a8-square. True, White could approach with the king and then exchange on a8 and win the bishop for the a-pawn, but in the meantime Black could endanger the e5-pawn with ...♗f5-e4 and advance his g-pawn.

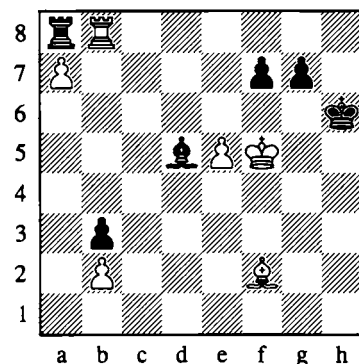
However, Black suffers from a chronic lack of mobility. His rook is caged, the bishop has to defend both a8 and b3, and the f-pawn must stand still in order to avoid creating a second passed pawn for White. The only piece enjoying some (true, very limited) freedom is the king.

These are enough elements to give us a hint about the most effective winning method: zugzwang!

76.♗f2

Of all the half-waiting moves, this is the best. Since the main idea is to reduce the king's mobility, it is useful to control the h4-square.

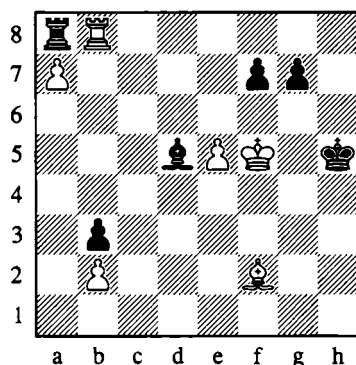
76...♗h6 77.♗f5



77...♗h5

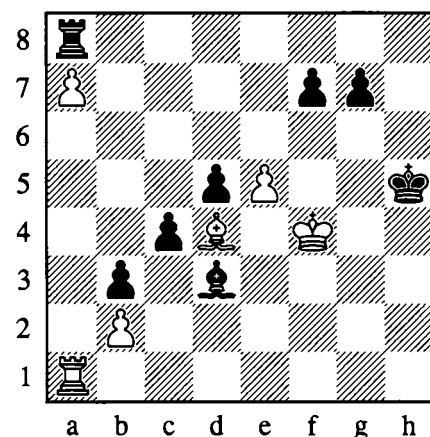
Now and at other moments, the check on e6 fails to mark time: 77...♗e6† 78.♗e4 ♗h3 The only way to get back on the long diagonal, but Black loses the b-pawn: 79.♗xb3 Followed by ♗b8 and the advance of the b-pawn to b7.

77...♗h7 78.♗e3 leads to an amusing position when Black is completely paralyzed. If 78...g6† 79.♗f6 White would win with ♗xa8 followed by ♗xf7 and advancing the e-pawn.



78.♗b4!

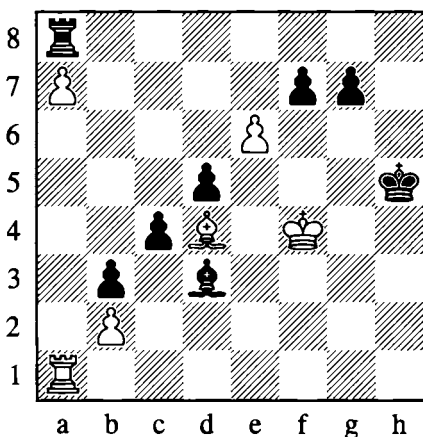
We can see another merit of the move ♗d4-f2: the fourth rank has been cleared and White can create mating threats with a simple rook switch. In order to save the king, Black would have to make one of the familiar concessions, either 78...♗e6† or advancing the g-pawn, with fatal consequences as we know.



71.e6!

Black may neglect the issue of pawn breaks, but I certainly do not! After clearing the long diagonal completely, my bishop will support a decisive invasion by the rook.

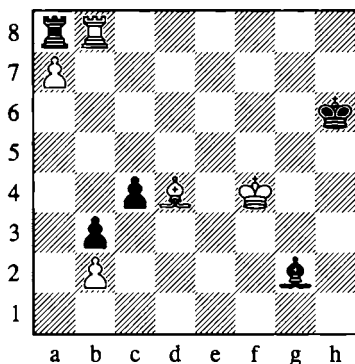
The move order 71.♖h1† ♕g6 72.e6! would have been more restricting, forcing a transposition to the line from the next comment. However, I saw that the game continuation wins, so I did not bother about the move order so much.

**71...g5†!?**

The other thematic line goes:

71...fxe6 72.♖h1† ♕g6 73.♖g1† ♕h6 74.♖xg7 Threatening ♖b7-b8. Clearing the long diagonal would not cause any technical problems:

74...e5† 75.♗xe5 d4 76.♗xd4 ♗f1 77.♖b7 ♗g2 78.♖b8



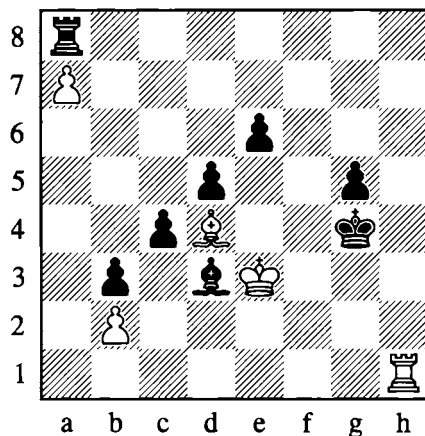
In contrast to the line given in the comment to the 70th move, Black has no kingside pawns and no counterplay, so I could win with the simple ♕f4-e5-d6-c7 followed by ♖xa8 and ♕b8.

Pantsulaia's zwischenzug secures the g7-square against the invasion, but hands me control of the h8-square, allowing me to readjust the plan just slightly.

72.♕e3!

As will be revealed a few moves later, the king should move closer to the queenside.

72...fxe6 73.♖h1† ♕g4

**74.♖h8**

I had seen this when preferring 71.e6! over 71.♖h1†.

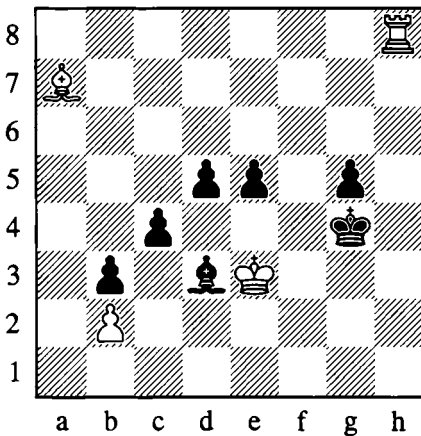
74...♖xa7

The only way to try to put up some resistance.

75.♗xa7

Had my king been elsewhere than e3, Black could have played: 75...c3! The way it is, this would fail to 76.♕xd3 cxb2 77.♖h1.

75...e5



Optically, Black has a fantastic position, with huge compensation for the rook. However, the presence of opposite-coloured bishops continues to be the decisive factor, as Black cannot prevent his pawns from being blocked on light squares.

76. ♖f8?

The question mark is for the practical difficulties this move will cause me. This was the fifth playing hour; it was in the final time control and I was getting a bit tired.

I could have won quickly by immediately attacking the pawns: 76. ♖b8 d4† 77. ♖d2 e4 78. ♖e5 c3† 79. ♖c1! Black's counterplay is over and so is the game.

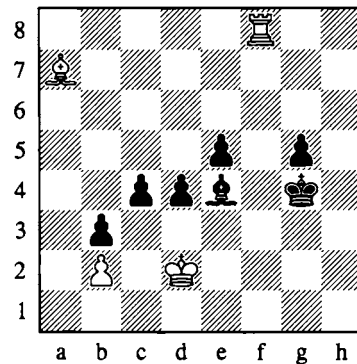
When I played my last move I thought that cutting off Black's king could not hurt, without realizing that the wasted tempo would allow Black to organize some counterplay, causing me to struggle for an extra ten moves.

76... ♖g6

Threatening ...c4-c3.

76... d4† 77. ♖d2 ♖e4

This would have set up a trap.



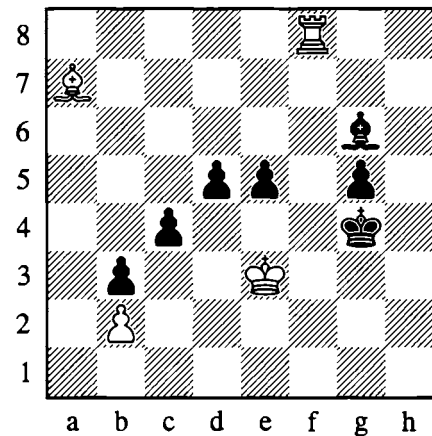
78. ♖c8!

It is important to keep the c-pawn under control.

The careless 78. ♖b8? would throw away the win: 78... c3† 79. ♖c1 d3! With the rook on c8 this would be ineffective due to 80. ♖xc3, but the way it is, it saves the game: 80. bxc3 d2† 81. ♖xd2 b2 82. ♖f1 =

78... c3† 79. ♖c1 cxb2† 80. ♖xb2 ♖c2 81. ♖e8 ♖f5 82. ♖b8 e4 83. ♖a7 d3 84. ♖e3

The pawns are blocked and they will start falling like ripe apples.



77. ♖d2 d4

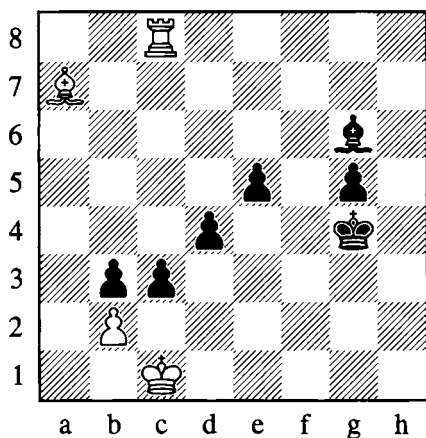
Facing the danger of seeing his pawns blocked after ♖a7-b8, Black has no time to lose.

78. ♖c8

Forcing Black to shoot all his bullets until the gun is empty.

78...c3†

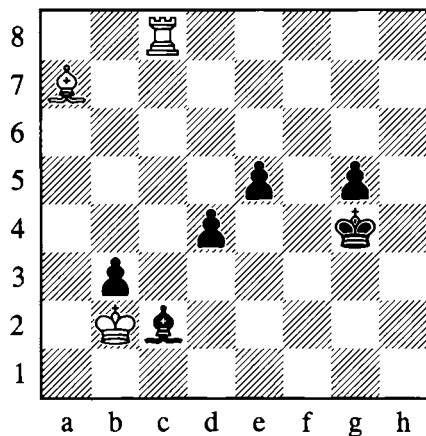
Instead returning with the bishop would practically lose two tempos, allowing me to neutralize the pawns easily after 78...♔d3?! 79.♙b8.

79.♙c1

Black has achieved maximum activity – which is more of a dead end actually. None of his pawns can advance without weakening either another pawn or some squares.

79...cxb2†

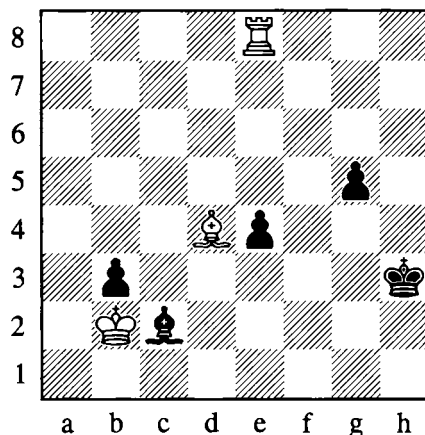
The other way of releasing the tension was: 79...c2 80.♙c5 e4 81.♙c6 Attacking the bishop and the d4-pawn at the same time.

80.♙xb2 ♙c2**81.♙f8!**

The rook lands on f8 again, but with more positive effects than the first time. Deprived of ...♙g4-f3, Black is in some sort of zugzwang since 81...♙g3 would run into the pinning 82.♙b8, which is the main threat anyway.

81...♙h3 82.♙e8!

Once the king has stepped away from the central pawns, this is the fastest win.

82...e4 83.♙xd4

The rest is simple.

83...g4 84.♙g8 ♙g3 85.♙c3 ♙f3 86.♙f8† ♙g2 87.♙d2 g3 88.♙e5 ♙d3 89.♙g8 ♙f3

Black resigned without waiting for 90.♙xg3†. 1–0

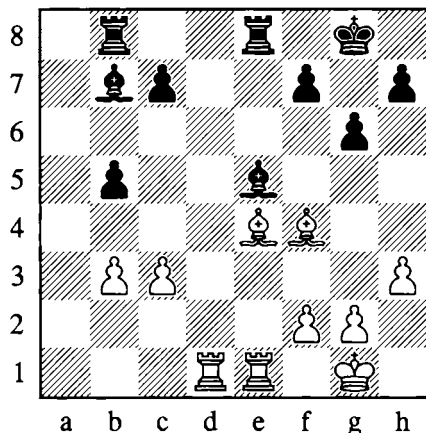
This endgame gave me artistic pleasure, but two years earlier I had played an even more memorable game against Pantsulaia (page 308).

Opposite-coloured bishops are well suited for establishing domination, especially in positions with reduced material – that is, in the endgame.

Converting the advantage in such situations is by no means easy, but the fight tends to be very one-sided.

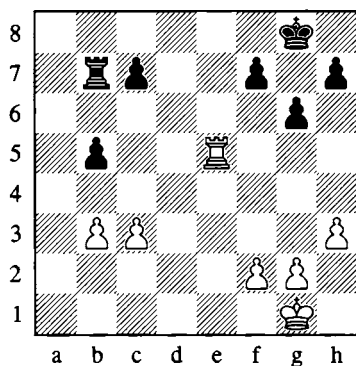
Judit Polgar – Evgeny Postny

World Team Championship, Ningbo 2011



The position is symmetrical and it may seem that it will inevitably simplify to a drawn endgame.

For instance: 24. ♖xe5 ♜xe5 25. ♖xb7 ♜x1+ 26. ♜x1 ♜xb7 27. ♜e5 This would offer White only a symbolic initiative. If allowed to play b3-b4, I would retain a small but stable advantage due to my active rook, but Black has a clear way to force a draw.



27...b4! Blocking my b3-pawn and turning it into a weakness. 28.c4 ♜a7 29. ♜b5 c5! Only a temporary pawn sacrifice, since Black will get the b3-pawn soon. 30. ♜xc5 ♜a3=

Or if I captured the other bishop: 24. ♖xb7 ♖xf4 25. ♜xe8+ ♜xe8 26. ♖c6 ♜e5 27. ♜g3 ♜c5 Black solves all his problems.

And yet, in the position above White's mobilization is just a little better, since I have both rooks on open files. I managed to find a way to make use of this minimal advantage to gain the more pleasant endgame.

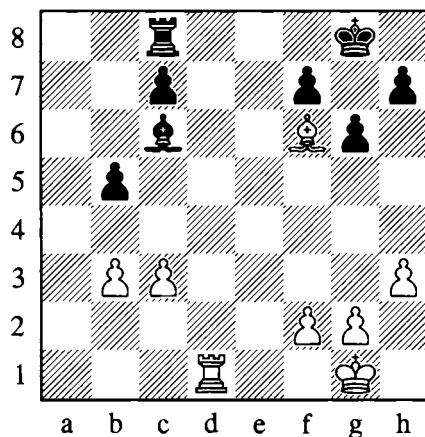
24. ♖c6!

This simplifies to a rook and opposite-coloured bishops ending in which my active rook and the weakness of Black's dark squares will keep some advantage for White.

24... ♖xc6 25. ♜xe5

I exchanged one rook in order to weaken the eighth rank and tie Black's remaining rook to its defence.

25... ♜xe5 26. ♖xe5 ♜c8 27. ♖f6



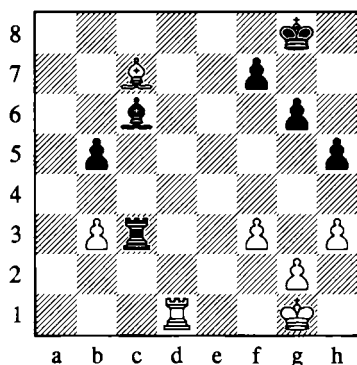
I had little doubt that objectively the game should end in a draw, but not without some accuracy from Black over the next few moves. I hoped to find ways to keep the tension for as long as possible, thus increasing the chance that my opponent would go wrong.

27... ♖f8

During the game I thought this was too slow, but I might have been biased by the fact that it allows my favourite move, g2-g4. Analysis convinced me that Postny's choice was best.

Black does not have effective ways of fighting for kingside space:

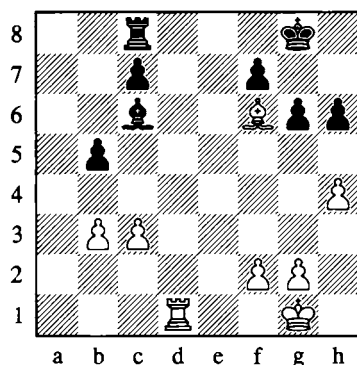
If 27...h5 28.f3 ♖e8 29.♔d8 wins a pawn. The counterattack 29...♗e3, hoping for 30.♗c1 ♔d5 with equality, would fail to 30.♔xc7! when 30...♗xc3? loses to a geometrical motif:



31.♔e5! Followed by ♖d8† and mate.

After the game move, the similar line no longer works for White, since the king can escape via e7.

I would have met the more subtle 27...h6, hoping for ...g6-g5 and the king's activation via h7-g6, with 28.h4.



28...h5 would only delay my kingside activity due to 29.f3 ♖f8 30.♔f2 followed by either ♖g3-f4 or g2-g4.

28.g4

Gaining space and preparing to consolidate the bishop with g4-g5.

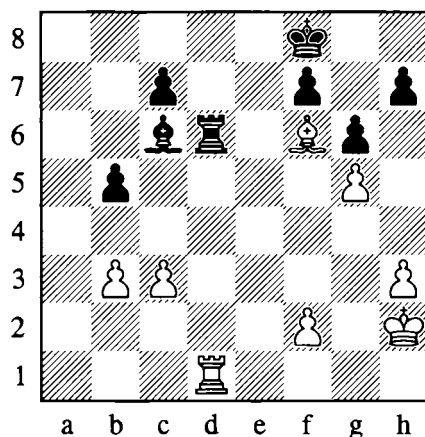
28...♗e8

Now is a good moment to activate the rook, since the familiar 29.♔d8 fails to win a pawn due to 29...♔f3! 30.♖d3 c6 with equality.

29.♔h2

I considered activating my king to be my highest priority, but 29.g5 was a reasonable alternative. It might have transposed to the game, but would have prevented ...h7-h6 which Black could have tried on a couple of occasions.

29...♗e6 30.♖d8† ♗e8 31.♖d1 ♗e6 32.g5 ♖d6



Black has managed to activate his rook, but his fight for equality has not reached its end yet.

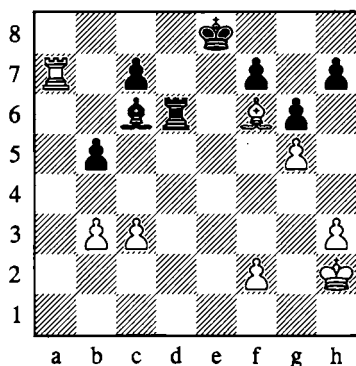
33.♗a1

The a-file does not offer direct access to the back rank, so the king is out of immediate danger. However, the threat of ♗a7 still causes Black some discomfort.

33...♞d2?!

Black's desire to finally display some activity is understandable, but it would have been better to solve the core of his problems – his king's passivity.

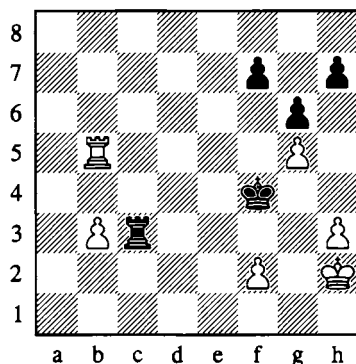
Postny might have rejected 33...♞e8 because of 34.♞a7! but it would have made sense to examine this position a bit more deeply.



Black has a principled choice to make: defend passively with 34...♞d7 or activate the king with 34...♞d7, even though this would cost him a pawn in the end.

I would have been happy to see 34...♞d7 on the board. Black keeps material equality but dooms himself to long-term passivity. I would have continued 35.b4 ♞e4 36.♞g3 c5 37.♞a1 with a similar scenario as in the game.

Black would have done better to activate his king at any cost: 34...♞d7! 35.♞e5 ♞d3 36.♞xc7† ♞e6 37.♞xc6† ♞xe5 38.♞c5† ♞f4 39.♞xb5 ♞xc3



The forcing sequence has won a pawn and transposed to a rook ending. White's extra pawn and kingside space advantage would in many cases ensure a win, but in this case, due to his hyperactive king, Black should have little trouble holding.

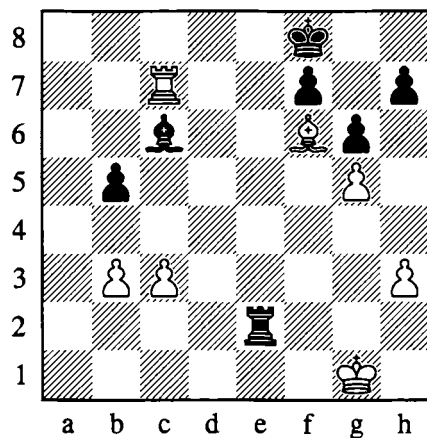
Of course, such decisions are hard to take during the game. But experience teaches us that a pawn can be a fair price to pay to activate our most passive piece. Even when we do not see immediate reasons for worry, it is most likely that we would later regret our passivity at the critical moment.

34.♞a7!

I felt that it was essential not to waste time defending the f2-pawn. The f7-pawn is safely blocked, so Black will not feel like he has a kingside majority at all.

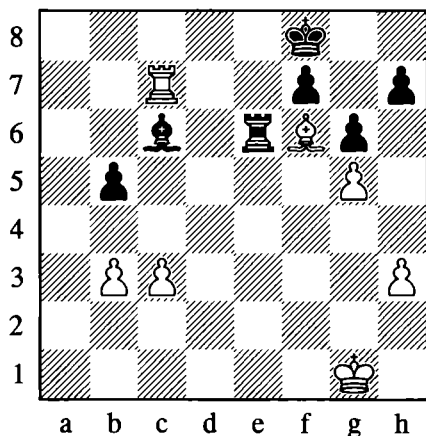
34...♞xf2† 35.♞g1 ♞e2

The rook has to return to the e-file, to secure the black king against back-rank problems.

36.♞xc7**36...♞e6(?)**

From a practical point of view, a serious mistake, which leads to a passive position and makes Black's defence very unpleasant. Objectively, the move is viable, though.

The correct defence was 36...♔d5! 37.c4 bxc4 38.bxc4 ♕f3 followed by ...♞e6. Black would keep the bishop on the long diagonal, defending the c6-square and offering good chances for a draw.



37.♞c8†!

Forcing the next move after which Black will only have one mobile piece – his rook.

It would be an exaggeration to claim my last move is winning, but it surely makes this prospect more realistic than before.

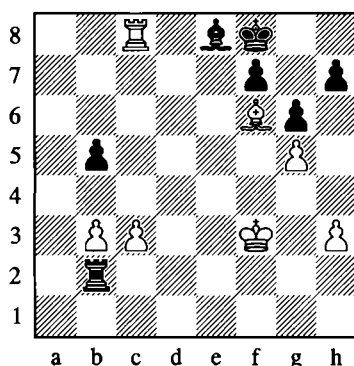
37...♕e8 38.♖g2!

Activating the king is a natural plan, but it is important to use the g-file for this purpose for the time being. The tactical detail is that 38...h5, preventing the dangerous plan h3-h4-h5, would be met with 39.gxh6! when 39...♞xf6? would arrive without check, allowing 40.♞xe8†! ♕xe8 41.h7, promoting.

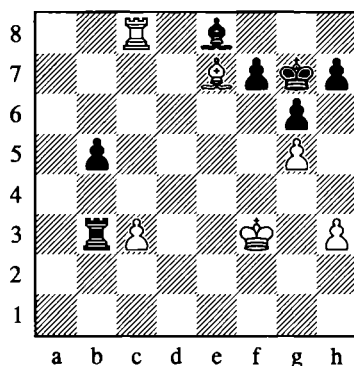
38...♞e2† 39.♖f3 ♞e6

Black has lost two tempos, but made the threat of ...h7-h5 real by decoying my king to the f-file.

During the game we both considered 39...♞b2 to be too dangerous because it leaves the e8-bishop vulnerable.

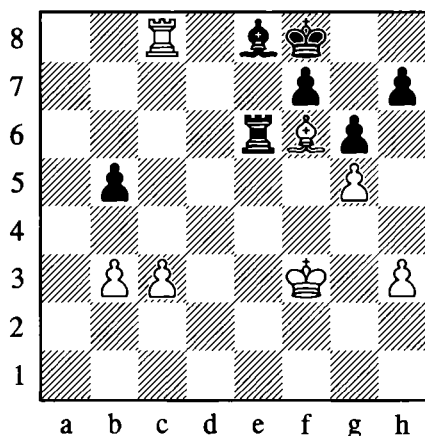


I intended to play: 40.♞c7?! ♞xb3 41.♕e7† ♖g7 42.♞c8, thinking I would win. I had overlooked a fantastic saving move, though.



42...f5!! 43.♞xe8 (or if 43.gxf6† ♖f7) 43...♖f7 Regaining the bishop with equality.

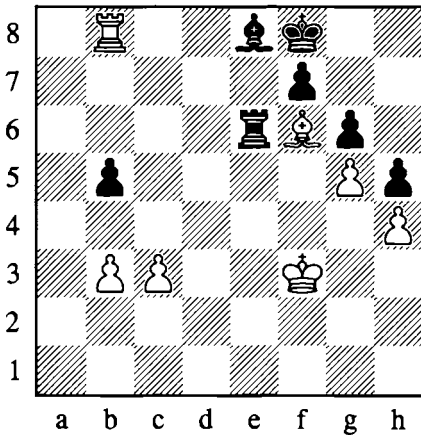
Had Postny played 39...♞b2, I may well have fallen into this trap. But objectively, White would retain all the pluses of the position with 40.b4.



40.h4 h5!

Securing the kingside against any pawn breaks.

It would have made less sense to open the h-file with 40...h6 41.♔g3 hxg5 42.hxg5 because only White could use it for an attack.

41.♖b8

After reaching the time control, I became confident that I would win. The position is by no means winning yet, but I relied on a few psychological factors. I felt that Postny was getting tired and besides he had not much to play for, since Hungary was leading 2½–½ in the match, with just this game to go.

41...♖e1

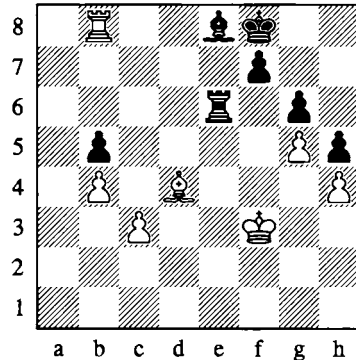
Black keeps my king cut off from the d5-square, hoping to attack the h4-pawn at the right moment.

42.c4

I briefly considered 42.♔d4, noticing that some ideas based on ♔c5† could work out well. I rejected it when I discovered the consequences of a well timed ...♔f8–e7 would be far from clear. Under no circumstances would I allow the king to escape from its box!

All these thoughts crossed my mind in less time than it takes to describe them. The following analysis proves my evaluation and decision were right:

42...♖e6 43.b4

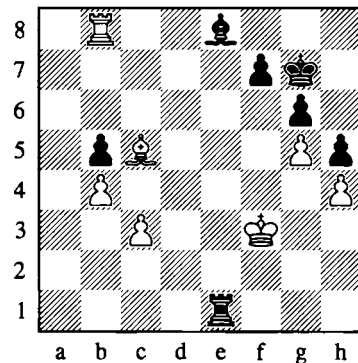


Black is almost in zugzwang, but *almost* is an important word.

43...♔e7!

The only saving move.

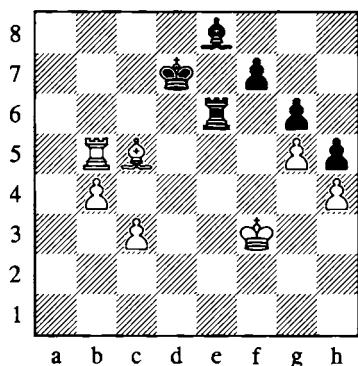
If 43...♖e1? 44.♔c5† ♔g7:



45.♔e3! Black could not restore his fortress with 45...♔f8 due to 46.♔f2! and after the rook moves away from the e-file then 47.♔c5†. This would leave him with 45...♔c6† 46.♔f2 ♖h1 47.♔d4† f6 48.gxf6† ♔f7 49.♖c8 followed by ♖c7† and wins.

Or if 43...♔g8 then 44.c4! bxc4 45.b5 would make the b-pawn unstoppable since the rook would be busy defending the bishop.

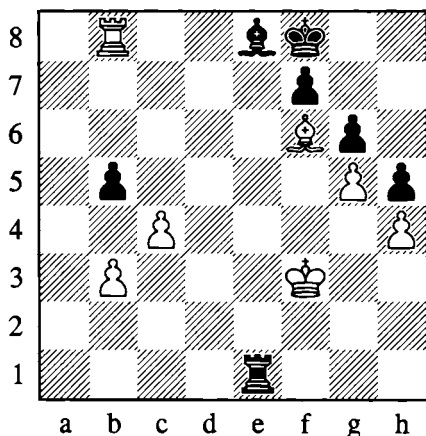
44.♔c5† ♔d7 45.♖xb5



White has won a pawn, but Black suddenly achieves perfect coordination.

45...♙c7! 46.♞a5 ♙c6† 47.♙f2 ♞e4

Regaining the pawn with excellent play.



42...♞xc4

Black cannot afford to be greedy:

42...♞b1?

This would win a pawn but lose the game at once:

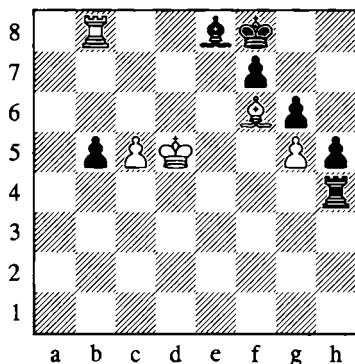
43.c5! ♞xb3† 44.♙e4

The c-pawn cannot be stopped without material losses. In this endgame it is notable that activity and coordination are more important than material.

44...♞h3

Or if 44...♞b4† 45.♙d5 ♞c4 46.c6! threatening ♙d4-c5† wins, based on 46...♞xc6 47.♞xe8† ♙xe8 48.♙xc6.

45.♙d5 ♞xh4



46.♙e5

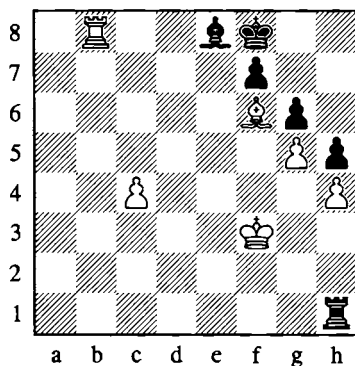
Black will lose his bishop to ♙d6† since 46...♙e7 would run straight into mate: 47.♙d6† ♙d7 48.c6 mate!

43.♞xc4 ♞e6?!

Postny must have resigned himself to the thought that he would have to defend passively until the end of the game.

Now was a good moment to become active with:

43...♞h1!



As dangerous as his position may look, I believe that Black should be able to force a draw.

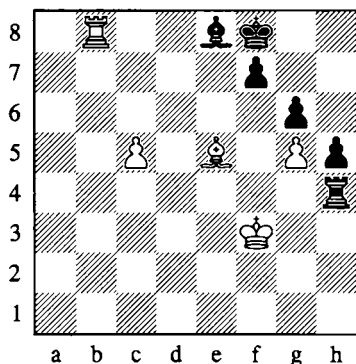
44.c5

44.♙d4 is met by the familiar: 44...♙e7!

Activating the king does not help either: 44.♙e4 ♞xh4† 45.♙d5 ♞h1! Preparing a series of annoying checks along the first

rank. 46.c5 ♖d1† 47.♔d4 ♕e7= Black is active enough to prevent the advance of the c-pawn. Sooner or later White would have to force a draw by perpetual, since the h-pawn could become threatening.

44...♞xh4 45.♙e5



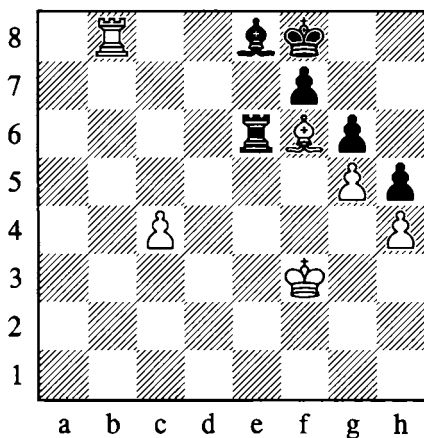
45...♕e7!

Once again, activating the king solves the problems.

46.♙d6† ♕d7 47.♙f4

Threatening c5-c6†.

47...♕e7!=



44.c5

Now Black is walking on a tightrope; for a while Postny will find a series of only moves.

44...♞c6!

Black needs to attack the dangerous pawn.

44...♕g8? would leave the bishop insufficiently defended, allowing 45.c6!.

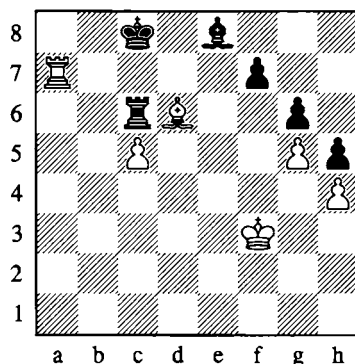
Or if 44...♞a6? then 45.♕e4 ♞e6† 46.♕d5 ♞a6 47.c6! ♞xc6 48.♞xe8†! wins.

45.♙e5!

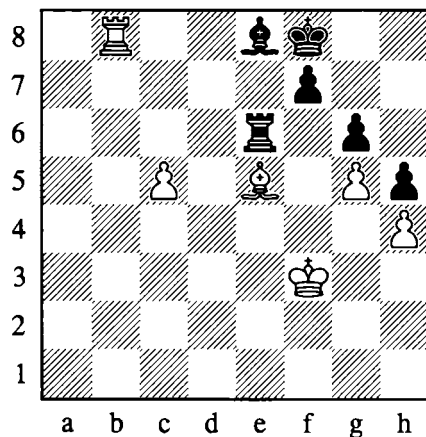
Defending the pawn indirectly and threatening to win the bishop with ♙d6†.

45...♞e6!

For once, moving the king out to e7 would lose. 45...♕e7 fails due to the piece congestion after 46.♙d6† ♕d7 47.♞b7† ♕c8 48.♞a7:



The black rook is immobilized, and Black can do nothing to stop the white king invading. 48...♙d7 49.♕e4 ♕d8 50.♕e5 ♙e6 51.♕f6 ♞c8 52.♞xf7! ♙xf7 53.♕xf7+— Collecting all the kingside pawns and winning with ease.



46.♔e4!

Maintaining the rhythm of the attack.

46...♙e7

Postny must have been very happy that his king now seems active, but it is an illusion.

47.♞b7†

Forcing Black to make an important decision.

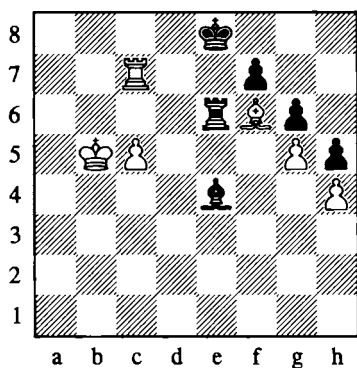
Instead if 47.♔d4 ♕c6 Black would be absolutely fine.

47...♔d8?

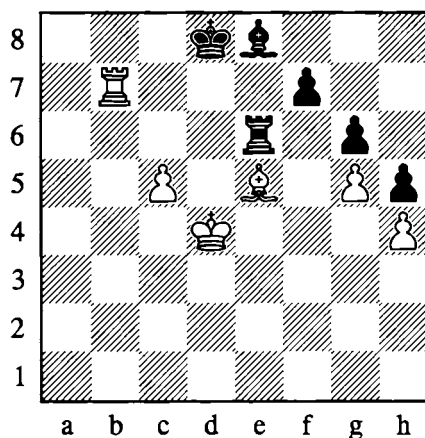
A serious mistake.

Psychologically, it would be unpleasant to return the king to its cage, but it is absolutely necessary to defend the f7-pawn, in order to allow the activation of the bishop.

After 47...♔f8! I could keep trying breaking the fortress, but in principle Black should hold. 48.♔d4 ♕c6 49.♞c7 ♖e8 50.♙f6 ♙f3 51.♔c4 ♕c6 52.♔b4 ♙f3 53.♔a5 ♕e4 54.♔b5



Hoping to play c5-c6 but after 54...♙d3†! 55.♔b4 ♕e4 there is no obvious way of making progress.

48.♔d4**48...♙d7?**

This passive move leaves Black in a lost position.

Black should have activated his bishop even at the cost of the f7-pawn: 48...♙c6 49.♞xf7 Winning would be by no means simple, but I would have better practical chances than one move earlier.

49.♞a7?!

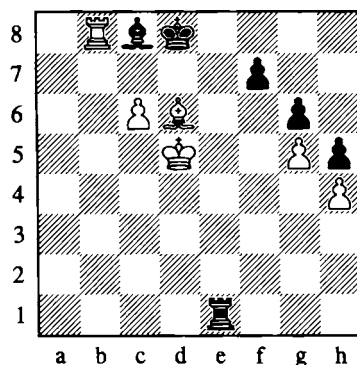
This hesitant move allows Black to return to a survivable position.

I actually saw the winning move:

49.♞b8†!

Forcing Black into a fatal pin after: 49...♙c8 50.♔d5 ♖d7 51.♙d6 ♞e1 52.c6† ♖d8

Having reached this position, I was not sure about how to make further progress.



The most convincing win would have been:
53.♖a8!

Threatening ♖b4-a5†.

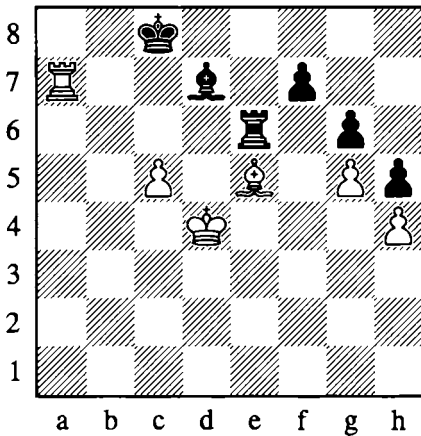
53...♞d1† 54.♗c5 ♞c1† 55.♗b5 ♞b1† 56.♖b4
♗c7 57.♞a7† ♗b8 58.♞xf7

White has won a pawn and keeps the attack.

49...♗c8?

The final and decisive mistake in this game. From now on, I did not allow my opponent another chance to escape.

Once again, Black should have activated the bishop with 49...♖c6.



50.♖d6!

Threatening ♗d5 followed by c5-c6. After this move Postny had two minutes left compared with my 13, but we also had a 30 seconds per move increment.

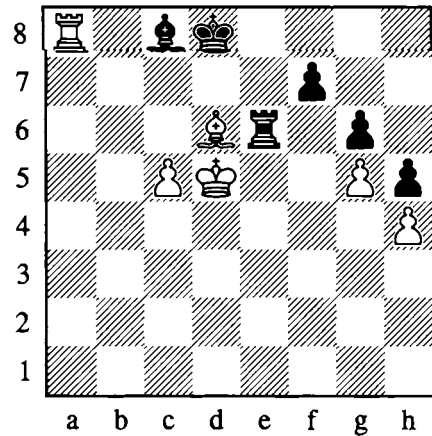
50...♗d8

If 50...♞e2, planning to meet ♗d5 with ...♞d2†, I would win the bishop with: 51.c6 ♞d2† 52.♗e5 ♞e2† 53.♗f4 ♖xc6 54.♞c7† ♗d8 55.♞xc6 ♗d7 56.♞b6 ♞e6 57.♖c5+—

51.♞a8†!

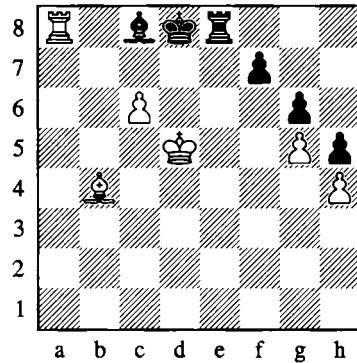
Finally hitting on the right plan. Better late than never!

51...♖c8 52.♗d5



52...♞e2

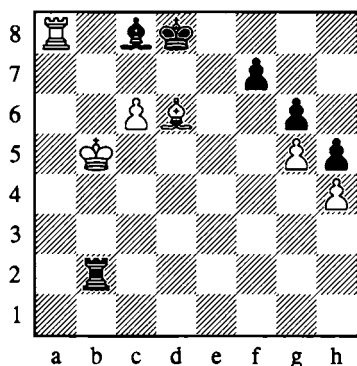
I planned to meet 52...♗d7 with: 53.c6† ♗d8 54.♖b4! I was proud of this idea, although it is not the only winning bishop manoeuvre. 54...♞e8 (Aiming to defend the bishop after 55.♖a5† ♗e7.)



55.♖c5! White has a crushing domination and, what is even worse, Black is in zugzwang. For instance: 55...♗c7 56.♞a7† ♗b8 57.c7 mate!

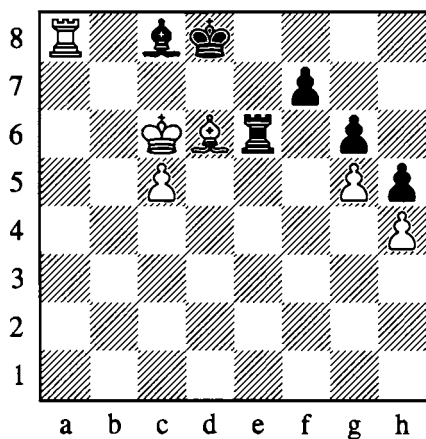
53.♗c6

53.c6! would have been the most direct way: 53...♞d2† 54.♗c5 ♞c2† 55.♗b5 ♞b2†



Having reached this position in my calculations, I did not realize that 56.♖b4 wins. I still had not paid attention to the a5-d8 diagonal! After 56...♖b1 57.♕c5 ♜c1† 58.♕d5 ♜d1† 59.♕e5 the checks are over and ♖a5† will win the bishop.

53...♞e6



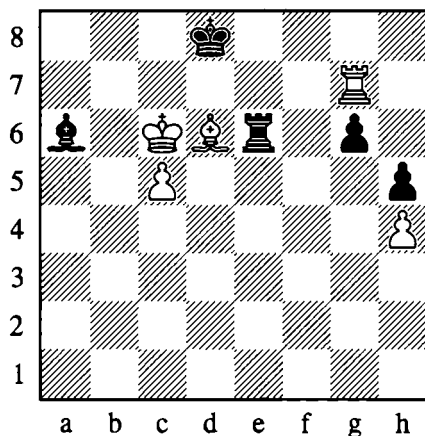
54.♞a7

54.♕d5! followed by c5-c6 would have more or less transposed to the previous line.

54...f6 55.gxf6 ♞xf6

The exchange of a pair of pawns has not relieved Black's position at all. In fact, my rook has gained a new and wider front of action.

56.♞h7 ♞e6 57.♞g7 ♖a6



58.♕d5

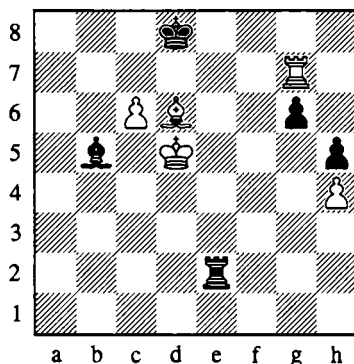
Finally clearing the path for the c-pawn.

58...♞e2 59.c6

At this point I understood that my position was completely winning, but I also knew that I had to stay focused until the end.

59...♕e8

59...♖b5 would have set a trap.



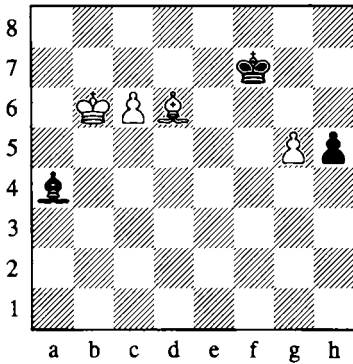
If 60.c7†? ♕c8 both black pieces would control e8, offering a defence against the back-rank check. However, I would have had a wide choice of winning moves, for instance:

60.♕c5! ♖a4 61.♞g8† ♞e8 62.♞xe8† ♕xe8 63.♕b6

White will win the bishop and keep the kingside counterplay under control.

63...g5 64.hxg5 ♖f7

Or if 64...h4 65.g6! and the black king can no longer approach the g-pawn.



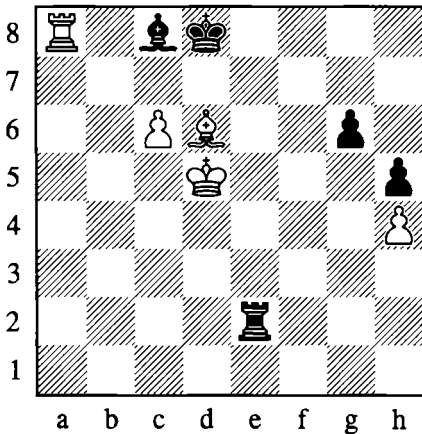
65.♔g3!

The last accurate move. White will defend the g5-pawn with ♔h4, while stopping the h5-pawn at the same time.

60.♞a7

Now was a good moment for 60.c7! ♞d2† 61.♔c6 ♞c2† 62.♔b6+— but my move does not spoil anything either.

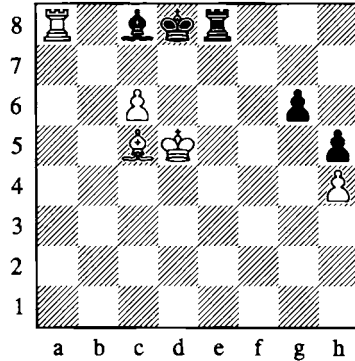
60...♔c8 61.♞a8 ♔d8



It is curious that we have reached a similar position to the one arising after 53.c6 in the comments to White's 53rd move, except with the absence of the f7- and g5-pawns. The evaluation is the same.

62.♔f4

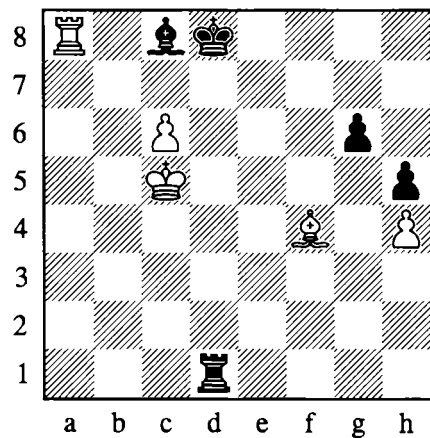
Curiously, I still did not see the idea of preparing the check on the a5-d8 diagonal with 62.♔b4! ♞e8 63.♔c5.



Black is in zugzwang. Leaving the eighth rank with the rook would lose the bishop to 64.♔b6†. The two available moves along the back rank (63...♞g8 and 63...♞h8) would give up the possibility of a rook check on the 6th rank, allowing 64.♔d6.

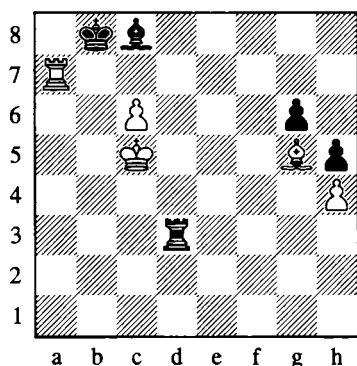
Finally, after 63...g5 64.hxg5 ♞g8 65.g6 I would soon win the bishop.

62...♞e1 63.♔d6 ♞d1† 64.♔c5

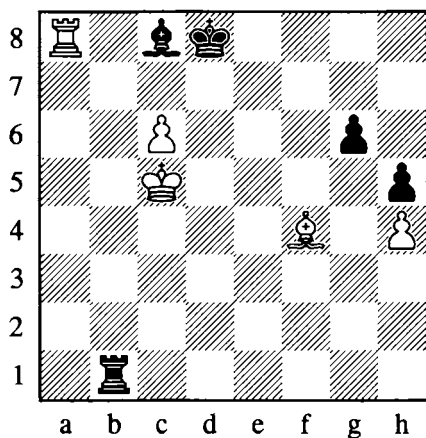


64...♞b1!†

This fails to harass my king. 64...♞d3, preparing ...♞c3†, would have put up more resistance. 65.♔g5† ♔c7 66.♞a7† ♔b8



The black king has not improved its position at all; on the contrary, it will get a “warm reception” on the queenside. 67.♖e7 ♜c3† 68.♘b6 ♜b3† 69.♘a5 ♜c3 70.♙f4† ♔a8 71.♘b6 ♜b3† 72.♘c7 Followed by ♜e8 and ♙e3 with a decisive attack.



65.♙d2!!

Finally spotting the correct idea, which caused my opponent’s immediate resignation. 1–0

The engines suggest 65.♙g5† ♔c7 66.♙d2 with mate in 13. However, at this stage of the game such nuances are not relevant.

In such endings with a slight but long-term advantage, I recommend playing on until every possibility is exhausted. From a practical point of view, it is very likely that your opponent will become tired by such a joyless defence,

and start to make unnecessary concessions and mistakes.

The very least your persistence would gain is some extra knowledge about that specific endgame, but in many cases it will also yield the full point!

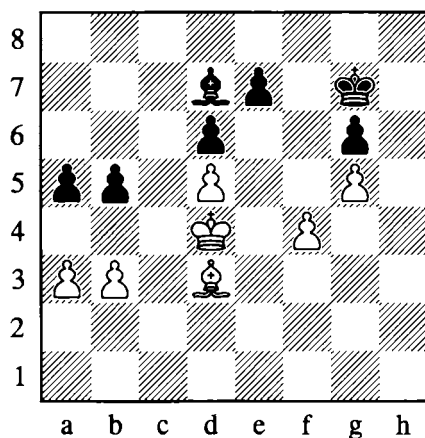
Same-coloured bishop endings

These endings tend to have a duller appearance than those with opposite-coloured bishops. The opponent’s bishop can at least partly neutralize ours, so there is less room for carrying out one’s own play without the opponent’s interference.

The beauty of these endings is their subtle nature. What may seem like a simple and linear win, could actually involve a lot of technical details, requiring clarity of thought and precision.

Judit Polgar – Gadir Guseinov

European Championship, Aix-les-Bains 2011



I have a space advantage in the centre and on the kingside, and the g6-pawn is weak. Another structural detail is that if bishops are exchanged and we both carry out the available pawn breaks (f4-f5 and ...e7-e6) I will get a remote passed pawn – a decisive factor in the pawn ending.



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Before switching to the kingside plan, which I had formulated already, I found it useful to create yet another weakness on a light square in Black's camp, the b5-pawn.

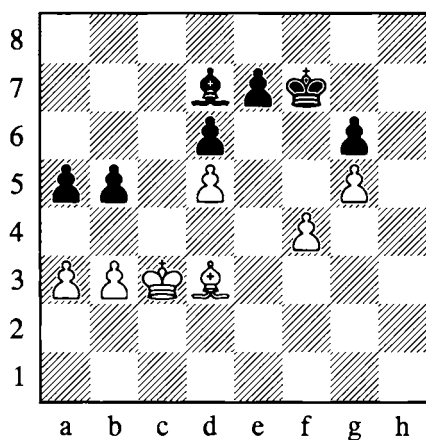
40.♔c3!

This is the kind of position where time is not so important, since Black can do little other than sit and wait. With my last move, I wanted to play b3-b4 at a point when Black is forced to keep the a-pawns on the board with ...a5-a4, since ...axb4† ♔xb4 would lose the b5-pawn.

At this point of the game it was hard to predict whether the absence of the a-pawns after 40.b4 axb4 41.axb4 would have a telling influence over the final outcome, but from a practical point of view one should increase the winning chances by any small detail available.

The variations given in the comments to the 49th and Black's 50th move actually prove that the a-pawns could be essential for the win.

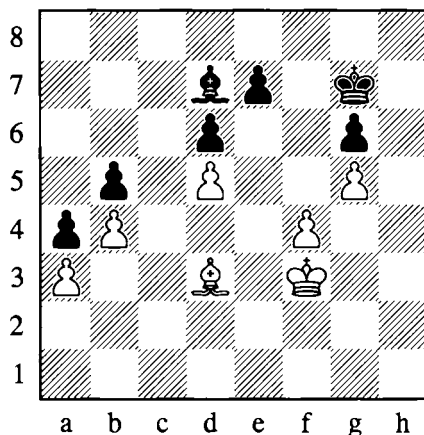
40...♕f7



After the time control, I had the feeling that my opponent thought the game would be over soon, as there is no obvious way for me to break through.

I had different views, though, and considered my position rather promising.

41.b4! a4 42.♕d4 ♕g7 43.♕e3 ♕f7 44.♕f3 ♕g7

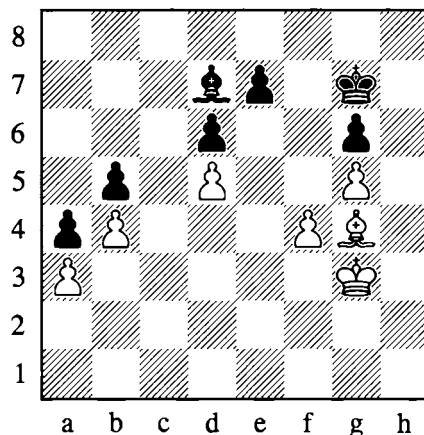


45.♕g3

I played my king manoeuvre quickly, since I already knew what I wanted: to control the g4-square and exchange bishops with ♕e2-g4. In doing so, I did not pay attention to details. It was only a few moves later that I understood I had to refine my plan slightly.

45.♕g2! would have been a shorter way to reach the game position after 51.♕h4: 45...♕f7 46.♕g3 ♕g7 47.♕h4

45...♕f7 46.♕e2 ♕g7 47.♕g4



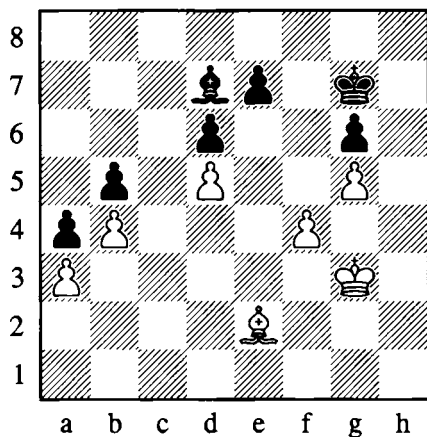
47...♔f5!

The point is that with the current placement of the kings, the pawn ending would be drawn:

48.♔xf5? gxf5 49.♔h4 ♕g6=

Fortunately, this oversight did not have any consequences, since I could simply “undo” my last move:

48.♔e2! ♔d7



49.♔f1

I understood that I had to offer the bishop exchange with my king on h4, and worked out the following forcing variations:

49.♔h4 ♕f7 50.♔g4 ♔xg4

The familiar 50...♔f5? does not work here due to: 51.♔xf5 gxf5 52.♔h5+–

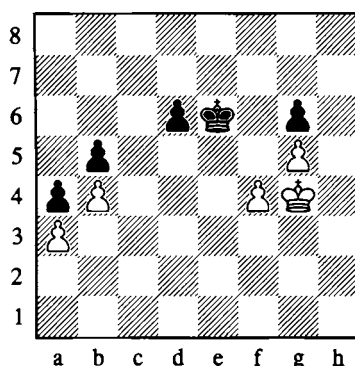
50...e6 puts the pawn in a pin and allows White to gain an important tempo over the main line: 51.♔g3 ♕e7 52.dxe6 ♔xe6 53.♔e2 ♔d7 54.♔d3 ♕f7 55.♔f3 Followed by the decisive infiltration ♕e3-d4.

Finally, 50...♔e8 51.♔e6† more or less transposes to the game.

51.♔xg4

White threatens f4-f5 with a simple win so the next move is forced.

51...e6 52.dxe6† ♔xe6



It may seem that something has gone wrong for me, as Black has got his passed pawn and I have not.

53.f5†!

Even a pawn down, the outside passed g-pawn decides the game in White's favour.

53...gxf5† 54.♔h5 ♕f7

54...f4 55.♔g4 leads to the same.

55.g6† ♔g7

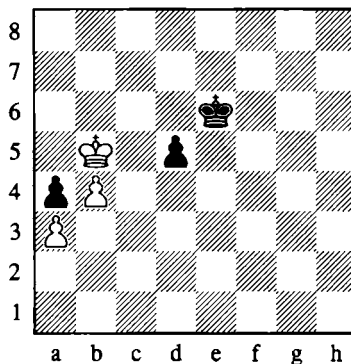
Or if 55...♔f6 56.♔h6 promoting soon.

56.♔g5 f4

The only chance.

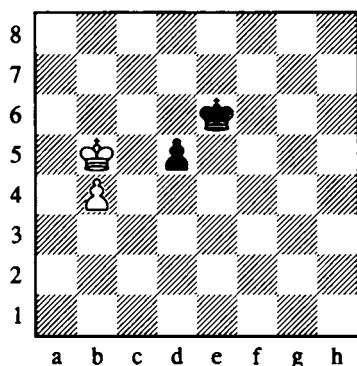
57.♔xf4 ♔xg6 58.♔e4 ♕f6 59.♔d5 ♕e7

60.♔c6 ♔e6 61.♔xb5 d5



White has a pleasant choice between 62.♔xa4 d4 63.♔b3 and 62.♔c5 ♕e5 63.b5 gaining a decisive tempo in the pawn race by promoting with check.

It is easy to see that with no a-pawns, the position above would be drawn.

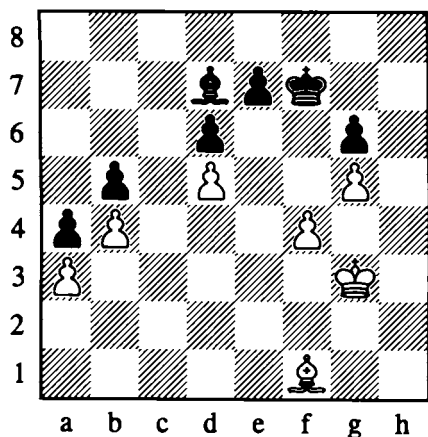


In the latter line, Black would simply go 62...♔d7.

I was confident about the correctness of my calculations, but I thought it was not principled to allow so much counterplay and win by just one tempo.

Therefore, I designed a way to play ♔e2-g4 in a moment when the black king is not on f7, so that ...e7-e6 is not possible. This had to be done with care, since the pawn break remains a constant issue along the way.

49...♔f7



50.♔d3

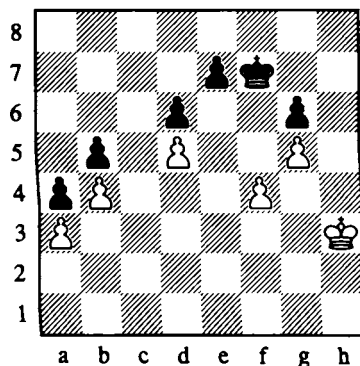
The start of a manoeuvre designed to “lose” a tempo – in similar style to the king triangulations in pawn endings. From d3, the

bishop prevents 50...e6, since after 51.dxe6† Black would lose one of the attacked pawns.

50.♔h3?

This impatient move would be a typical mistake:

50...♔xh3 51.♔xh3

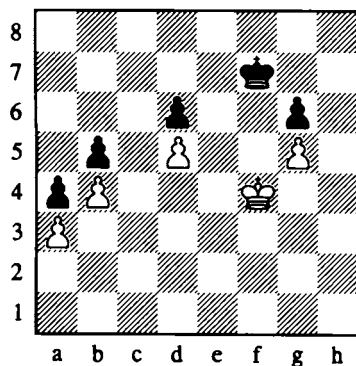


51...e5!

Taking full advantage of the white king being on h3 rather than on g4, making dxe6† followed by f4-f5† impossible.

Actually, 51...e6 also draws, but only because after 52.♔g4 Black can play 52...e5 anyway, as instead 52...exd5? 53.f5 wins.

52.♔g4 exf4 53.♔xf4



A perfect mutual fortress in which neither player can win or lose, no matter how well or badly he or she plays.

50...♔g7

Due to the weak b5- and g6-pawns, Black's actions are strongly restricted.

The main alternative to the last move was:

50...♙e8

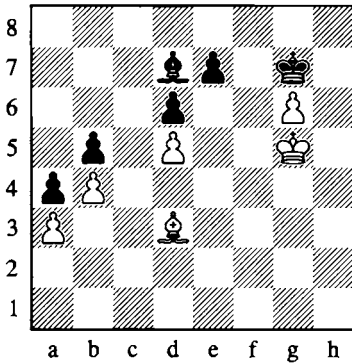
But this would allow my thematic pawn break under favourable circumstances:

51.f5 gxf5 52.♙xf5 ♖g7 53.♙g4 ♜f7

Or if 53...♙f7 54.♙d7 ♙xd5 55.♙xb5 ♙b3 56.♙c6 and the b-pawn promotes.

Obviously the a-pawns are very important in this line.

54.♙h5 ♖g7† 55.g6 ♜f6 56.♙d3 ♖g7 57.♙g5 ♙d7



There may be more than one road to victory, but good old zugzwang is the most reliable:

58.♙f5 ♙e8 59.♙b1 ♙d7 60.♙d3

We have the same position as in the diagram above, but Black is to move. He has nothing better than retreating and handing over the keys to the fortress.

60...♙e8 61.♙f5 ♖g8 62.♙h6

And wins.

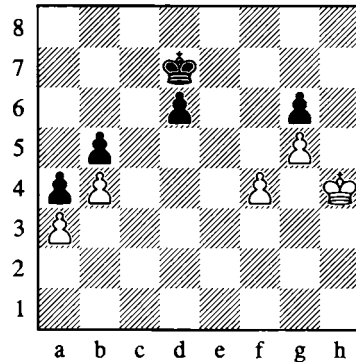
51.♙h4 ♙e8

Guseinov must have understood by now the dangers that awaited him.

His last move is a deviation from the main thematic line I was aiming for:

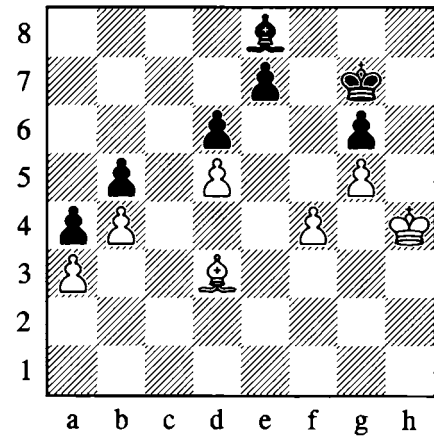
51...♙f7 52.♙e2 ♖g7

The break 52...e6 does not work now either: 53.dxe6† ♜xe6 54.♙g4† ♜e7 55.♙xd7 ♜xd7 With respect to the line from the comments to the 49th move, Black's king is one step further from the centre, allowing an immediate win with:



56.f5 gxf5 57.g6 ♜e7 58.♙g5+
53.♙g4 ♙xg4 54.♙xg4 ♜f7 55.f5

White wins without having to calculate the consequences of the pawn break ...e7-e6.



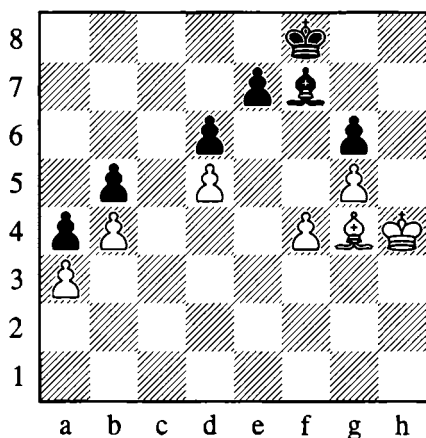
52.♙e2 ♖f8

Or 52...♙d7 53.♙g4 transposes above.

53.♙g4

With the plan of ♙c8-b7-c6, paralyzing Black just before I play f4-f5.

53...♙f7



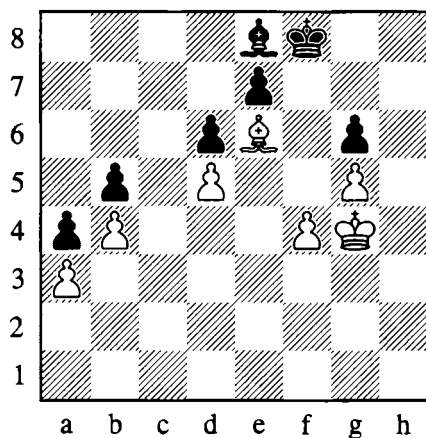
54.♙e6!

The simplest, although 54.♙d7 should also win.

54...♙e8

The pawn ending arising after 54...♙xe6 55.dxe6+ is depressing for Black. His king would have to stay on the kingside to prevent f4-f5, while my king is free to walk over and collect the queenside pawns.

55.♙g4!



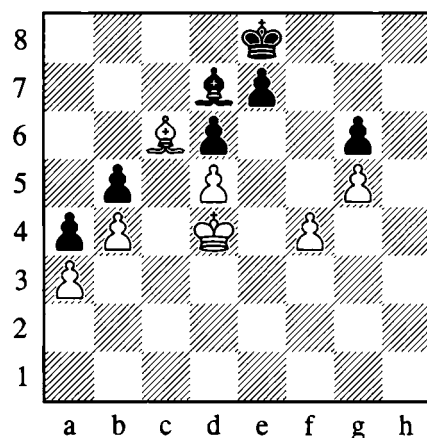
Starting a new phase of the general plan. My king has helped the bishop to paralyze Black, but now the king should go to over-defend the d5-pawn in order to free the bishop for the manoeuvre ♙c8-b7-c6, without having to calculate the consequences of ...♙f7.

55...♙g7 56.♙f3 ♙f8 57.♙e4 ♙g7 58.♙c8 ♙f7 59.♙d4 ♙f8 60.♙b7 ♙d7 61.♙c6 ♙e8

Allowing a nice finish.

If 61...♙xc6 62.dxc6 ♙e8 63.f5 the black king would be helpless against my far-advanced passed pawns.

Or if 61...♙e8 62.♙xe8 ♙xe8 my king would again change direction with 63.♙e4 followed by f4-f5.



62.f5!

If 62...gxf5 then 63.g6 wins, so...

1-0

I was very content with my technique in this game, and I am still proud of it now.

Pawn endings

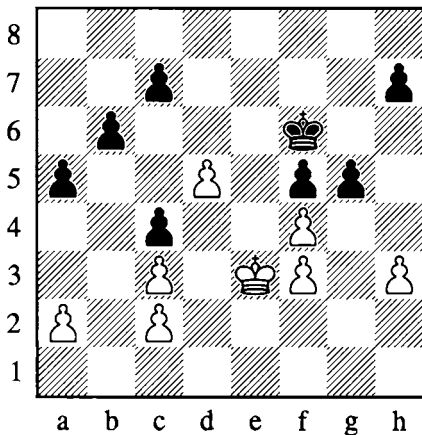
To be honest, pawn endings were never my favourite. It is *not* that I consider them easy to play or dull. On the contrary, it is rather to do with the misleading character of their apparent simplicity, and the difficulty in spotting the hidden subtleties.

Despite the reduced material ("there are only pawns left, after all!") it can be really difficult to calculate all the relevant variations; even at the highest level, basic mistakes occur with some frequency.

All these points made me treasure my win in the following game.

Michael Adams – Judit Polgar

Wijk aan Zee 2008



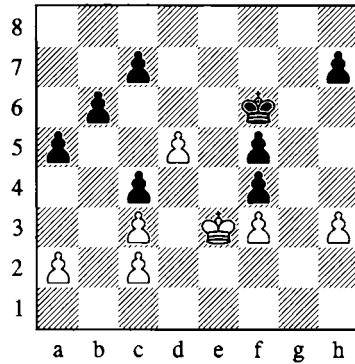
The structure is unusual, with many doubled pawns but a more flexible structure for Black.

White's last move 38.d5 was the decisive mistake. Adams cleared the d4-square for his king, hoping that this would yield him counterplay, but this was only partly true.

38...h5!

My opponent must have underestimated this move, which threatens to create an outside passed pawn with ...g5-g4.

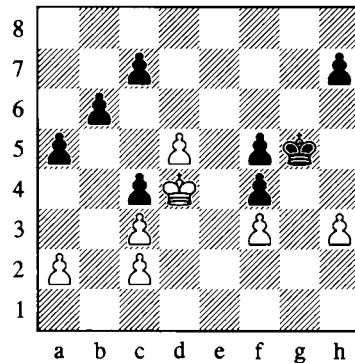
His last move would have been justified after:
38...gxf4?



39.♔d4!!

The consistent continuation, ignoring the material balance and aiming for king activity. The natural 39.♔xf4? would place the kings in opposition, and Black has just enough pawn moves to put White in zugzwang: 39...b5 40.h4 h5 41.a3 a4. Actually, this is a mutual zugzwang, but sadly for White, it is his turn to move. 42.♔e3 ♔e5. After winning the d5-pawn, Black will create the decisive threat of a queenside breakthrough: 43.d6 ♔xd6 44.♔f4 c5 45.♔xf5 b4. Promoting the a-pawn.

39...♔g5



40.♔e5!

Another instructive moment.

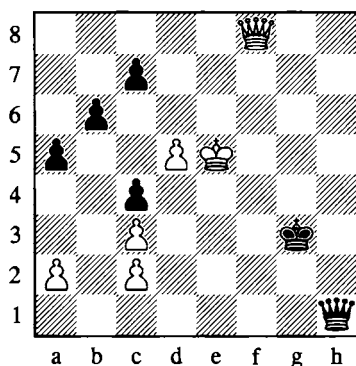
Just as on the previous move, White has to abstain from immediate pawn grabbing:

40.♔xc4? ♕h4 41.♔b5 ♕g3! Black has to clear the path for the most advanced promotion candidate. Taking the h3-pawn would even lose by one tempo! 42.♔c6 ♕xf3 43.♔xc7 ♕g2 44.d6 f3 45.d7 f2 46.d8=♚ f1=♚ Another virtue of the 41st move is revealed: after the promotion of the first f-pawn, the second one has become a dangerous candidate, against which White has little to show.

40...♕h4 41.♔xf4 ♕xh3 42.♔xf5

A typical pawn race with equal chances is about to start.

42...♔g3 43.f4 h5 44.♔e5 h4 45.f5 h3 46.f6 h2 47.f7 h1=♚ 48.f8=♚



With the white king so close to the queenside, where all the pawns are, it would be me who needs to go for a draw starting with:

48...♚e1†

This mass of variations is a good illustration of my preliminary considerations about pawn endings in general. When playing his 38th move, my opponent might have been too caught up in this jungle, failing to foresee the seriousness of my threats after 38...h5!.

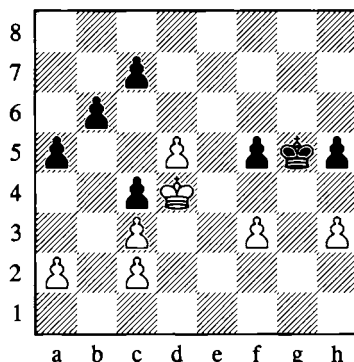
39.a3

A complacent waiting move.

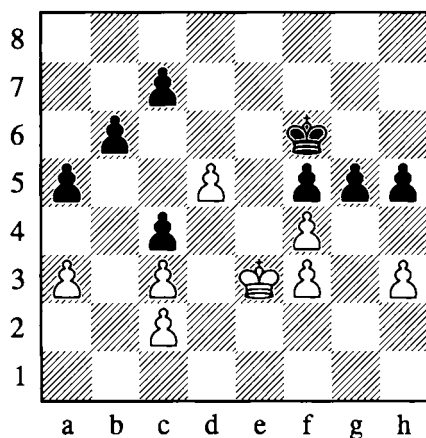
Adams did not advance the pawn further with 39.a4, rightly fearing that after 39...g4 I would

soon create a second passed pawn with ...b6-b5.

The thematic variation was: 39.fxg5† ♕xg5 40.♔d4



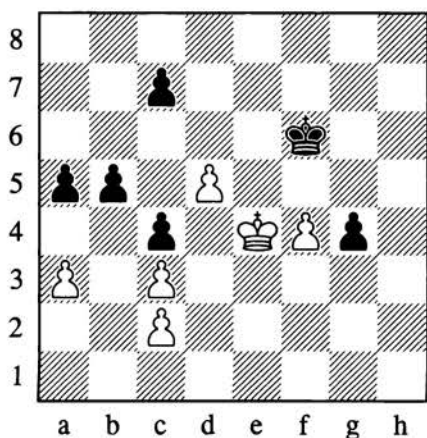
If we compare this position with that after 39.♔d4!! from the first comment above, we notice that the absence of my f4-pawn does me a great service, offering my king a shorter path to the f-pawn. 40...♔f4 41.♔xc4 ♕xf3 42.♔b5 ♕e4 43.♔c6 f4 The d-pawn is too slow since White needs to spend a valuable tempo on 44.c4 before taking on c7.



39...g4

This would also be the winning move against virtually all other moves than 39.a3.

40.fxg4 fxg4 41.hxg4 hxg4 42.♔e4 b5



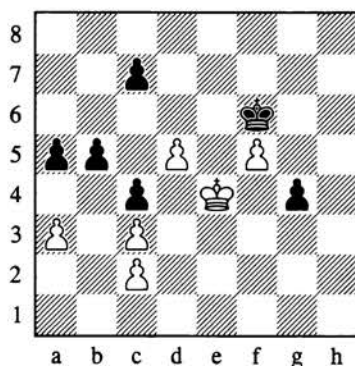
43.♔d4?!

It seems as if my opponent had completely lost the thread.

Still losing, but a tougher test, was:

43.f5

Now there would be several winning moves, but their idea would be the same: liquidating the kingside, and winning the d5-pawn. Here is an illustrative line:



43...g3 44.♔f3 ♔xf5 45.♔xg3 ♔e4 46.♔f2 ♔xd5 47.♔e3 c5

In order to win, Black needs to combine two ideas: a gradual king advance and the potential threat of a queenside breakthrough.

48.♔d2 ♔e4 49.♔e2 a4 50.♔d2 ♔f3 51.♔d1 ♔e3 52.♔c1

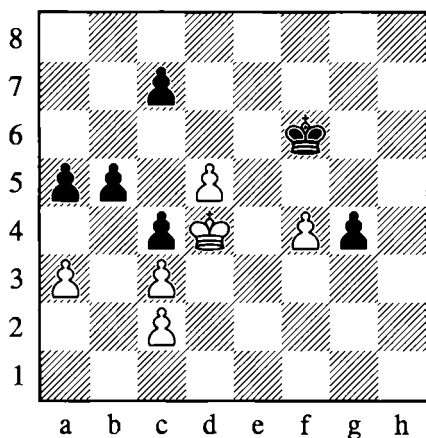
The white king has to concede even more space, since keeping the opposition with 52.♔e1 would take the king too far from the queenside, allowing 52...b4+.

52...♔e2 53.♔b1 ♔d1 54.♔b2 ♔d2

Winning the c3-pawn next.



Family is the central theme of my life. Here with Sofia, our mother Klara, and Susan



43...♙f5 44.♙e3 a4

White loses his f4-pawn, so Adams resigned.
0-1

Miracles

I would define a chess *miracle* as a completely unexpected move or manoeuvre, ignoring the common rules and preconceptions, which leads to a favourable situation where everything works perfectly and all the elements fit together in the right places.

There are several games in this volume featuring true chess miracles. I would include in this category 14.g4!! from the Berkes game (page 183) and the rook manoeuvre from the Yilmaz game (page 282). I have only created a special miracle section in the endgame chapter because it is easier to identify and isolate them in short sequences with only a few pieces left.

Alexander Grischuk – Judit Polgar

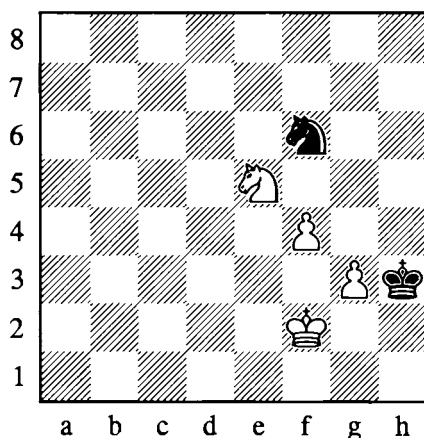
Biel 2007

For the first 60 moves, I could simply not believe that this game would feature as one of my favourites. I was practically lost out of the opening but I kept fighting with a persistence that made some people wonder what I was hoping for.

The knight endgame with two connected extra pawns is known to be winning, but I had managed to set up a cunning trap.

There is an old piece of practical advice which suggests that after reaching the time control one should take a short break, either by walking away from the board or drinking a glass of water. This is the best way to get rid of the tension that accumulated in the recent time trouble.

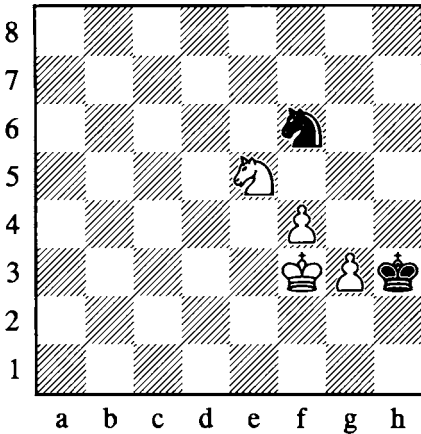
Grischuk skipped this stage and played after only two minutes. Actually, there seems to be little to think about, since Black is threatening ...♙e4†.



61.♙f3??

The most natural move, parrying the threat and dominating my king. I am pretty sure that Grischuk believed that this would be the move that convinced me of the uselessness of any further resistance.

The correct move was 61.f5! not fearing 61...♙e4† 62.♙f3 ♖xg3 due to 63.f6 with a technical win: 63...♙f5 64.f7 ♙d4† 65.♙e4 ♙e6 66.♙f5 ♙f8 The knight has stopped the pawn for the moment, but will soon be helpless against the combined attack of the white king and knight. 67.♙f6 ♙g3 68.♙e7 ♙h7 69.♙d7 ♙f4 70.♙f6 promoting the pawn.



61...d4!!=

What a shock! The knight is taboo because of stalemate.

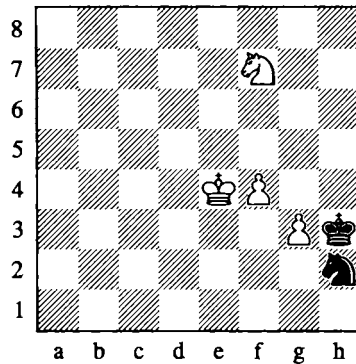
Alexander was so surprised that he spent almost all his remaining time (nearly one hour) on his next move. For the first, say, ten minutes, he might have been half-amused by the trick, half reproaching himself for his careless previous move. But as the time passed, I could see he was getting more and more uncomfortable, most likely failing to find a forced win.

I was calculating at the same time as him, while walking around the stage, and I started to realize that this was more than just a joke – indeed, the game should end in a draw!

This is one of the most unbelievable positions I have ever seen, where the result is against every principle: White has two extra pawns and his pieces are more active than mine, but still he cannot win!

62.d3

During his painful hour of calculating, Grischuk surely reached the following position:
62.d3 f7 d2 63.e4



Now the natural move is:

63...d3?

But it loses to:

64.d5!

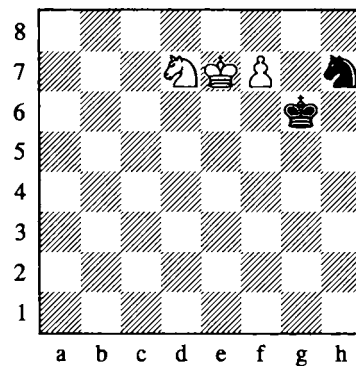
Dominating the black knight and threatening to advance the pawn. For instance:

64...d1

During the regrouping process, Black needs to avoid his pieces falling under a double attack by the white knight. It would be useful to approach with the king, but 64...d4 loses to 65.d3.

65.f5 d4 66.f6 d3 67.d5 d5 68.f7 d6 69.e6 d7 70.e7 d5 71.d7 d6

Even though the black king seems to be close enough to the pawn, it cannot change the result:

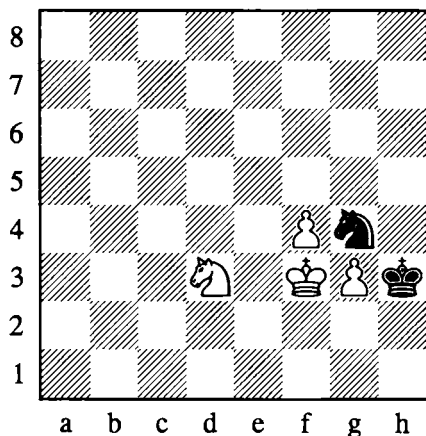


72.d6!

White would promote soon.

I can only imagine Alexander's disappointment when he noticed that 63...♖f1! wins the g3-pawn and stops the f-pawn at the same time.

The last move was probably intended as a refinement of this idea.

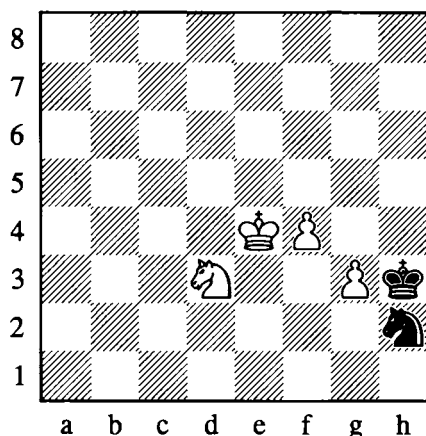


62...♖h2+

The only way to parry ♖d3-f2+.

63.♗e4

63.♗f2 would lead nowhere after 63...♖g4+.



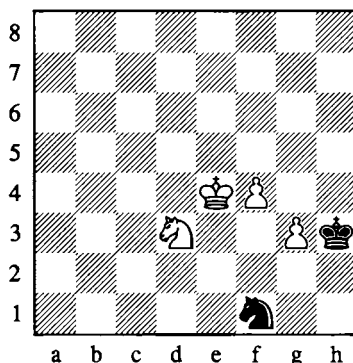
63...♖g4!!

As incredible as it may seem, this is the only correct move and it does save the game.

63...♗xg3? 64.♖e5 would transpose to the comment to 62.♖d3.

Amazingly, the same method as after 62.♖f7 above does not work here:

63...♖f1?



64.♖f2+

This wonderful check makes all the difference. Black is forced to take the pawn with the king, thus blocking the knight's access.

64...♗xg3

Another fine point is that 64...♗g2, hoping for ...♖xg3 anyway, fails to 65.g4! ♗xf2 66.g5 when the white pawns cannot be stopped.

65.f5 ♖d2+

Since g3 is not available, the knight has to choose a longer trajectory, with a familiar scenario:

66.♗d5 ♖f3 67.f6 ♖h4 68.f7 ♖g6 69.♖d3 ♖f8 70.♗d6 ♗g4 71.♗e7 ♖h7 72.♖e5+ ♗g5 73.♖d7

Followed by ♖f6.

64.♖e5

Returning to the starting position with the intention of testing me with another plan.

64...♖f6+

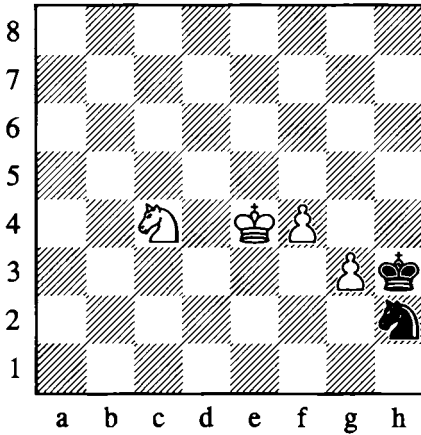
Not the only drawing move; 64...♖f2+ was just as good.

65.♗f3

If 65.♗f5 ♗xg3= my knight would be indirectly defended due to the hanging f4-pawn.

65...♖g4

At this point we both knew the game would end in a draw, but it was understood that Alexander would keep looking for a miracle of his own.

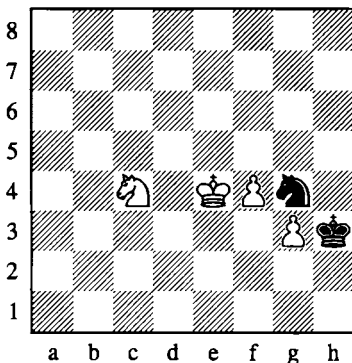
66.♖c4 ♖h2† 67.♗e4

The position is only partly similar to that after 63.♗e4. As before, 67...♗xg3 is met with 68.♖e5, but the two possible knight moves switch roles now.

67...♖f1!!

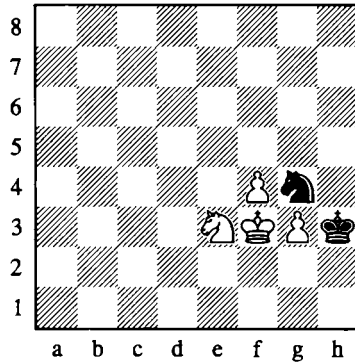
In the absence of the threat of a check on f2, this is the only saving move.

67...♖g4? would lose.



68.♖e3! A resource that was not available with the knight on d3. It would be tempting

to think that the known method 68...♖f6† 69.♗f3 ♖g4 could still save the day.



However, with the knight defended on e3 rather than hanging on e5, 70.f5! wins.

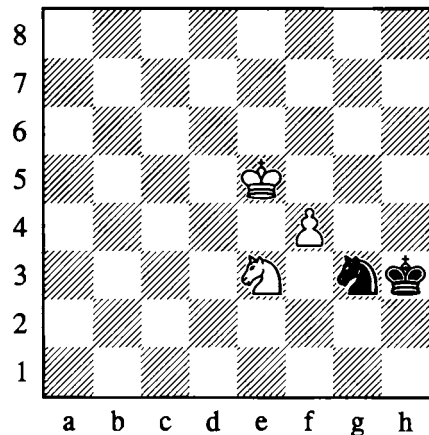
68.♖e3

White could no longer keep both his pawns, but his last move still retains some tension.

68.g4 ♗xg4 69.♖e3† would exchange the knights, but in a way that leads to a draw: 69...♖xe3 70.♗xe3 ♗f5=

68...♖xg3†

68...♖d2† would also draw, but it was hard to refrain from taking one of the connected pawns.

69.♗e5

My knight is well placed for stopping the pawn, but my king has very restricted mobility. The natural 69...♔h4? trying to approach the area of interest, loses to 70.♖f5†, exchanging the knights.

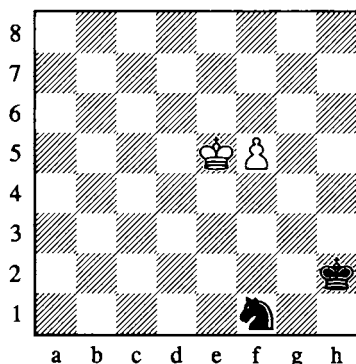
69...♔h2!

Just marking time. White has no way of clearing the path for his pawn.

70.♔d6

A neutral move, possibly played with the hope of confusing me.

The deflection 70.♖f1† does not work, either: 70...♖xf1 71.f5

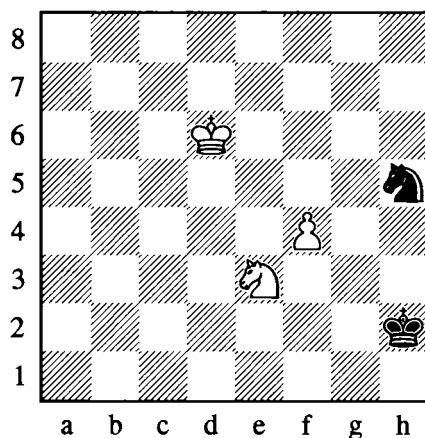


Now 71...♖e3 72.f6 ♖g4† eliminates the pawn.

70...♖h5

There are many drawing methods, but the manoeuvre initiated by the last move settles the result at once.

There was still a trap to avoid. If 70...♖e2? 71.f5 ♖g3 (apparently forcing 72.f6 ♖e4†) unexpectedly loses. 72.♖f1†! This time the deflection works perfectly! 72...♖xf1 73.f6+— The knight is too far away to stop the pawn.



71.f5 ♖g7 72.f6

Without waiting for 72...♖e8†, Grischuk offered a draw with great sadness. I could perfectly understand my opponent's feelings, but could not help being extremely happy. It was about more than just saving the game; the unexpected idea, as well as the excellent piece of calculation, pleased my sense of aesthetics.

½–½

The next day, a spectator who had not followed the game until the end, asked me whether the result registered on the official website was mistaken. Indeed, there had been nothing in the first 60 moves to make a draw look like a possible outcome.

I could not help thinking that I may never again make such a miraculous save at this level!

Chapter 10

Unexpected Moves



The moment Magnus Carlsen resigned

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This chapter follows my trademark thread that runs through all three volumes of this series. In Volume I we had the ample *Tricks* chapter, while in the second volume there was *Thunder from a Blue Sky*.

This is also a natural development of the theme illustrated by the previous chapter's final game: the miracle.

Unexpected moves always make me happy, especially if it is me who is delivering them, but also if I see them in other players' games. I love the game and its artistic side and for me *unexpected* and *beautiful* are related concepts.

Knowing that I have been playing chess for 30 years, some people ask me whether I ever get bored of it. My view is that the deeper you delve into any artistic or creative territory, the wider the possibilities are. Knowledge and experience do not exclude beauty, but rather refine its meaning.

Depending on which side you are on, the spectator's, the victim's or the executor's, an unexpected move can make you raise your eyebrows, or explode into applause, it can ruin your mood or bring you into despair in just an instant, or lighten your face with a broad unrestrained smile and make you feel like flying.

Perceived from the outside, these moves may look like amusing jokes, but finding them requires a deep understanding of the position.

The first example is very special to me not only because of the beauty of the unexpected idea, but also because I tricked none other than the World Number 1!

Magnus Carlsen – Judit Polgar

Mexico City (rapid) 2012

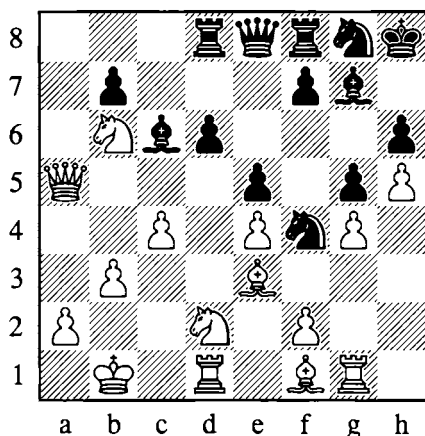
This was my second participation in the UNAM University tournament. The inaugural edition in 2010 was memorable for me, as I won ahead of Topalov and Ivanchuk. I will never forget the explosion of applause after I sealed the final result with a win using the King's Gambit.

This was the second edition, after a one-year break. The enthusiasm surrounding the chess festival was amazing. I remember an incident that is unique in my whole life. I could walk the 50 metres from the hall hosting the closing ceremony to my car only under the protection of a human chain. I was together with Kasparov and Karpov, who had been invited as guests of honour...

I won my semi-final match against the local player Manuel Leon Hoyos, and played the final against Carlsen. The match consisted of two rapid and two blindfold games.

Carlsen had become Number 1 in the world on 1st January 2010, so playing him was rather interesting. We were Number 1 in the men's and women's lists, respectively, but neither of us was World Champion!

I had first heard of Magnus during the 2002 or 2003 Benidorm festival. Grandmaster Simen Agdestein, whom I have known for decades, had travelled to the Spanish resort as the trainer of a very young boy. "You should remember the name Magnus Carlsen, because you will be hearing a lot about him in the future," Simen warned me, and the future proved him right...



This was the first rapid game.

White is a pawn up and the structure seems to be safely blocked. In other words, a long one-sided fight was to be expected, but I thought differently.

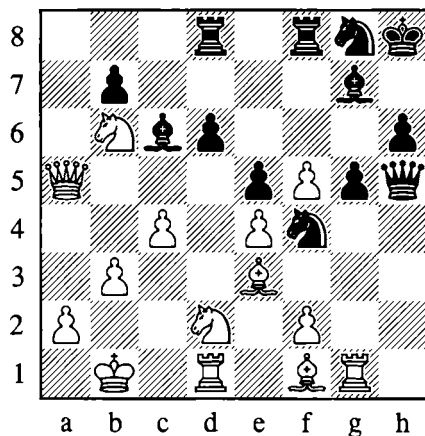
23...f5!?

This is far from the first example in this book illustrating the dynamism of unblocked pawns. In the King's Indian, the f-pawn usually gets the support of the g6-pawn, but one has to live with the concrete circumstances.

24.gxf5

24.exf5 does not look like the proper solution, since after 24...e4 my KID bishop would become too strong.

24...♖xh5

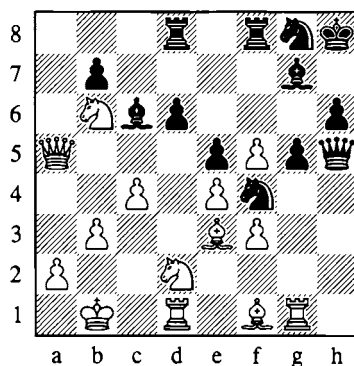


White's structural stability has not been shaken, but his incomplete development and imperfect coordination makes itself felt, just a bit.

25.♞e1

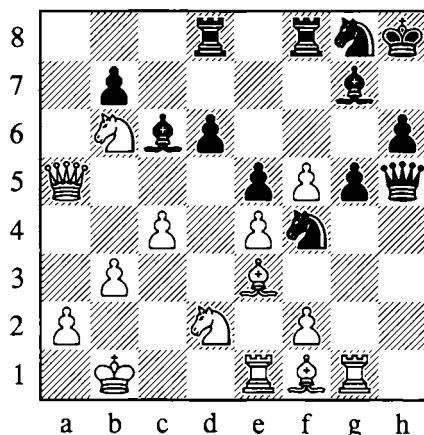
A slightly curious decision. The rook is not doing much on e1 and it will become vulnerable after White's blunder on move 28.

25.f3? would allow a small tactical operation.



25...♞e4† 26.♞xe4 ♖xf3 Regaining the piece with interest – specifically, two pawns.

The most natural and best move would have been 25.♞c1, with chances to gradually squeeze out a victory.



25...♞f6

By attacking the e4-pawn, I keep creating one-move threats, forcing Magnus to make choices on every move. In rapid chess this can be particularly annoying.

If the game was played at a normal time rate, I doubt that I could have saved this position.

26. ♖d5

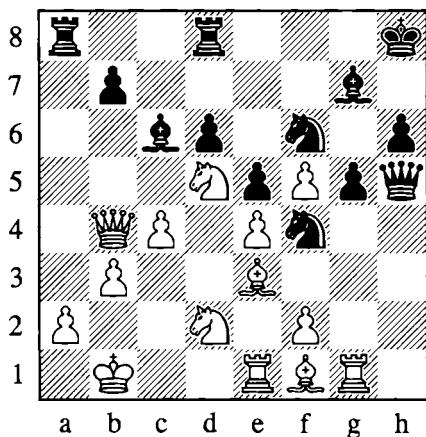
Rightly avoiding 26. f3 g4, undermining White's centre.

26... ♜a8 27. ♜b4

Attacking the d6-pawn.

So far, White has retained his stability and the extra pawn, but there are plenty of tactical opportunities in the air and I was eagerly looking forward to trapping Carlsen in some of them.

27... ♜fd8



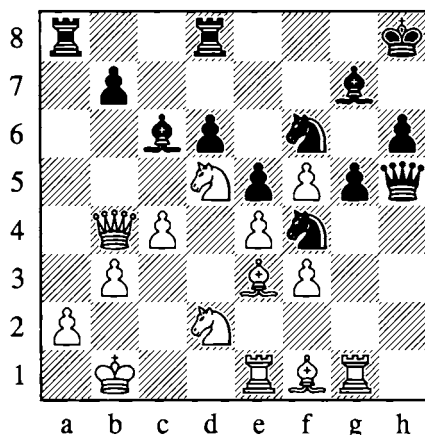
After a series of active moves, I finally made a defensive one. For the first time in this fragment, White could make his choice without any pressure. It may be more than just a coincidence that precisely now he made the losing move.

28. f3??

I could not believe my eyes when I saw this.

I was planning to prepare a piece sacrifice on d5 anyway, but now I had an even better possibility.

White should have reduced the tension with 28. ♖xf6 ♜xf6 29. a4 planning to slowly increase his advantage with ♜b4-c3-c2, ♖b1-b2, ♖d2-b1-c3-b5, ♜d1, ♜b6. True, this would be time consuming and I would have looked for a tactical way of carrying out the breakthrough ...d6-d5, which could prove effective in mutual time trouble.



28... ♜h4!

In order to understand the shock this move caused to Magnus and the whole audience, I should describe the playing circumstances.

The match took place in a small theatre with about 250 seats. All the spectators wore headphones that allowed them to follow live grandmaster commentaries. This way, they could have a perfect view of the on-board events without disturbing the players.

When the effects of my last move became clear, many loud expressions of surprise came from the audience, while Magnus was shaking his head in sheer discontent.

He had good reasons for that: by attacking the rook, my queen gained a tempo to create a pin on the fourth rank, with inevitable material gains.

At the moment, the fourth rank is overcrowded with pieces and pawns, which was probably why Carlsen overlooked the trick.

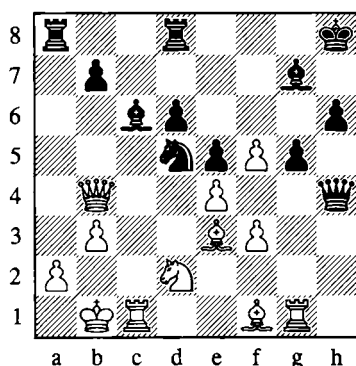
29.♖c1

Sadly, there is nothing better for White, as the rook was hanging with check.

29...♙xd5?

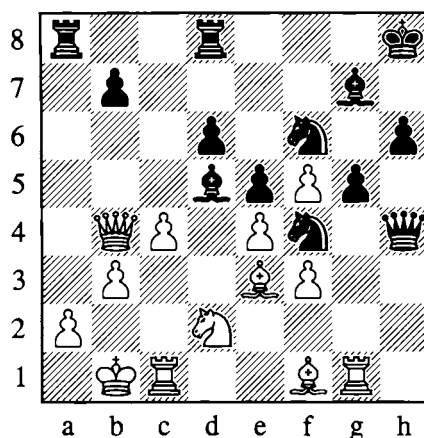
But even more sadly, once I had the win in my hand, I became so excited that I immediately gave it away...

The correct way to exploit the pin was:
29...♙4xd5! 30.cxd5 ♖xd5



White cannot defend his e3-bishop and the best he could do would be to get a pawn for it with 31.♙xg5, but this would be just hopeless anyway.

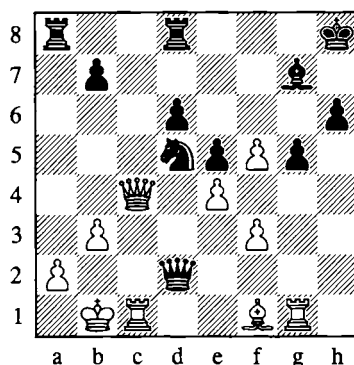
When choosing the game move I wanted to avoid this latter possibility, falling into a known psychological trap. When you feel that *everything* is winning and that you are successively rejecting one promising continuation for an even better one, there is a danger that something is not right. Time and physical strength are limited during a game (especially if it is a rapid one) so if you find a winning line you should double-check it and play it!



30.cxd5?

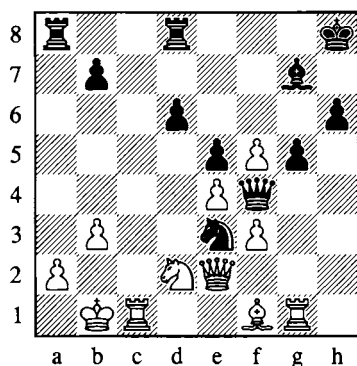
Unbelievable! Carlsen also got confused, and failed to take his chance.

When deciding upon my previous move, I had considered the intermediate 30.♙xf4!, reaching the conclusion it would favour me. 30...♖xf4 31.cxd5 ♖xd5 32.♖c4 Both knights are hanging, but I thought 32...♖xd2, threatening ...♖xa2 mate, would be curtains.



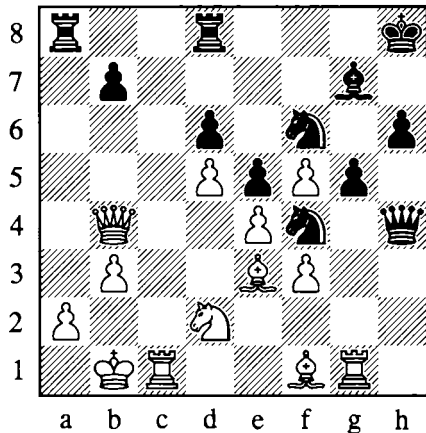
In reality, I stopped my calculations one move too early, since 33.♙g2 parries the threat and gains the needed time to win back the knight.

If the game had gone this way, I would probably have noticed White's defence one move earlier and deviated with 32...♙e3 33.♖e2. Black is better, but I would need to display some creativity to get the attack going.



33...d5 is not a bad move, but probably better would be 33...♖xf5 34.exf5 d5. In view of the dangerous threats along the h8-a1 and h7-b1 diagonals, White would have to return the piece with ♖d2-e4 soon, thus blocking my e5-pawn.

It is difficult to offer advice about when to stop calculating, especially with little time on the clock. It is also a matter of intuition, which can be developed by solving tactical positions and practising.



30...♖4xd5

It is all over now. The bishop cannot be defended, so the fork is decisive.

31.♙xg5 ♖xg5!

The clearest win, forcing an exchange of queens due to the hanging rook on g1.

32.♙xg5 ♖xb4 33.♙g2 d5

White kept playing until move 50 but could not save the game.

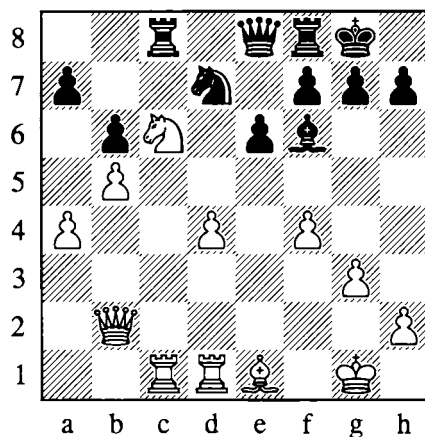
...0-1

Magnus levelled the score in the second rapid game and won both blindfold games, reaching an overall score of 3-1. This was my first win over Carlsen, but I would hope not the last!

My unexpected move from the next game was of a different nature. It surely was less spectacular than the trick from the Carlsen game, but its merit was that it surprised and confused a World Champion, who had thought it impossible.

Vladimir Kramnik – Judit Polgar

Russia vs. The Rest of the World, Moscow 2002



White is better developed and enjoys a huge space advantage. The hanging a7-pawn and the threat of ♙b4 ensure he has a strong initiative. In other words, if something unexpected does not happen, I could well resign in just a few moves.

I managed to find the only move to put up a fight against White's strong position.

25...♖b8!

I had the feeling that Kramnik had not realized this was possible. Caught by surprise he reacted inadequately.

26. ♖xa7?

This careless move turns the tables. White had at least two better continuations.

26. ♗b4

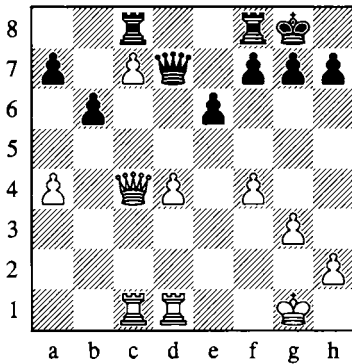
This would have retained a slight initiative:

26... ♖xc6 27. bxc6

27. ♗xf8 would not work because of the zwischenzug: 27... ♖xd4! ♢

Or if 27. ♗xc6 ♗xc6 28. bxc6 ♜xc6 29. ♗xf8 ♜xa4! attacking the rook and followed by ... ♗xf8, I would get two pawns for the exchange and excellent chances due to the weakened position of the white king.

27... ♗e7 28. c7 ♗xb4 29. ♜xb4 ♜d7 30. ♜c4



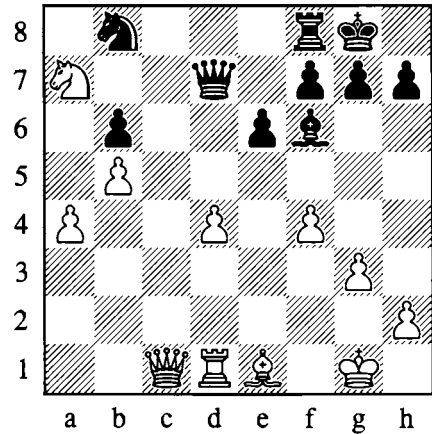
White has a strong passed pawn and the threat of opening the centre with d4-d5. I could try to equalize gradually with:

30... f5

Followed by ... ♗f7.

Objectively, the strongest and most consistent move would have been the calm retreat 26. ♖e5!, neutralizing my bishop's pressure and leaving me with a passive knight, while renewing the threat of ♗b4.

26... ♗xc1 27. ♜xc1 ♜d7!



Right after the white queen has retreated to the back rank, my queen steps forward, restoring my lost coordination.

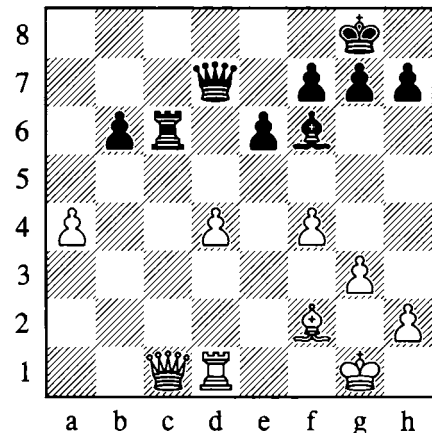
28. ♖c6

White would preserve all his advantage if he could defend his outpost on c6, but he lacks a tempo for that.

28... ♗c8

At this point I noticed an expression of panic on Vladimir's face. He must have finally realized that his beautiful position had turned into ruins in just an uninspired instant.

29. ♗f2 ♖xc6 30. bxc6 ♗xc6 ♢



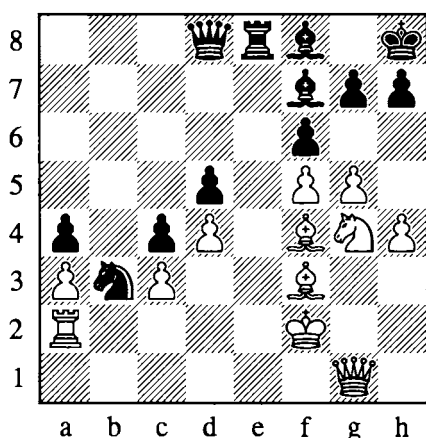
After regaining the pawn, I had a clear advantage due to White's numerous weaknesses and passive bishop. Kramnik eventually managed to save a draw in a rook ending.

...½-½

Tarrasch wrote: "If one piece stands badly, the whole position is bad." True, but if that piece improves its position by some miracle, things may change radically.

Nigel Short – Judit Polgar

Najdorf Memorial, Buenos Aires 2001



The centre is blocked and the fight seems to take place mainly on the wings. White has a promising kingside attack, involving almost all his pieces and a mobile pawn chain, while my queenside prospects are less clear. Far from being active, my knight is rather out of play.

At least these must have been Nigel's thoughts when playing the apparently consistent and attacking, but actually careless, 36. ♖g4?.

36... ♜c5!?

Suddenly, my knight joins the battle with great effect.

The expression on Nigel's face when seeing this move left little doubt that he had overlooked it and was not happy at all about it.

Sadly for White, the knight is taboo due to the unfavourable alignment of his king and queen: 37. dxc5 ♜xc5† 38. ♜e3 ♜xe3! 39. ♜xe3 ♜xe3† 40. ♜xe3 ♜b6† And I win the queen.

37. ♜g2 ♜d3

Once the knight has transferred to such a fantastic square, White's situation became critical. Nigel resigned only nine moves later.

...0-1

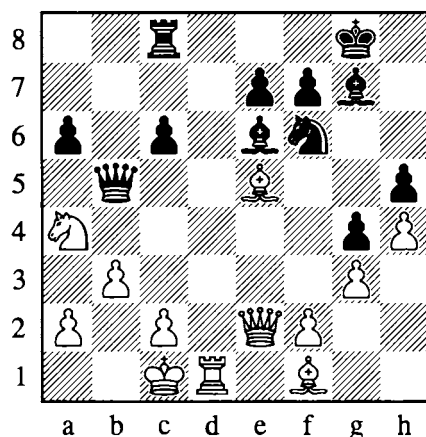
My surprise move in the next game had two instant and opposite effects on the players. I could not refrain from a broad smile, while for my opponent it acted as a really cold shower.

Ruslan Ponomarev – Judit Polgar

Benidorm (rapid) 2002

The Superstars Hotel Bali was a strong rapid tournament held in Benidorm, Spain. The field included the reigning World Champion Ruslan Ponomarev and the 12th World Champion Anatoly Karpov, but also former Soviet Champion (and trainer of me) Lev Psakhis and a talented 12-year-old boy named Sergey Karjakin!

This game was played in Round 4 and turned out to be the direct encounter between the tournament winners.





Both sides have a structural advantage on the wing that hosts their king. From a static point of view, White's chances may look better, since my isolated pawns could become very weak in the endgame.

Ponomarev's last move, 23.♙f1, created the crushing threat of 24.♙e1 ♜b7 25.♘c5 followed by ♘xe6. He rightly assumed that exchanging queens with 23...♜xe2 24.♙xe2 would leave him with a very pleasant ending, but he overlooked a small tactical detail.

23...♙c4!!

In such a stable position, this understandably came as a shock for the World Champion. The bishop moves onto the best-defended square in White's camp, based on the hanging white knight and e5-bishop.

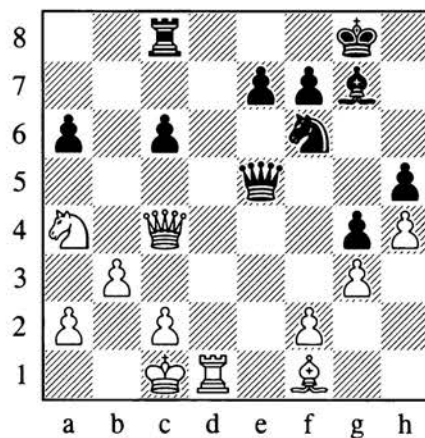
24.♜xc4?!

Ponomarev decides to keep his structure intact, but leaving me in control of the dark squares is a high price to pay.

Ignoring the bishop with 24.♜e1 would lead to similar consequences as in the game, since after 24...♙f1 White would have to give away the bishop anyway with 25.♙xf6 ♙xf6.

The clearly unappealing 24.bxc4 was still worth considering. True, Black has nothing to complain about after 24...♜xa4 but White could regroup with 25.♞d3 ♜xa2 26.♜e3, ensuring his king's safety and keeping some compensation for the pawn and the structural damage in view of his bishop pair.

24...♜xe5



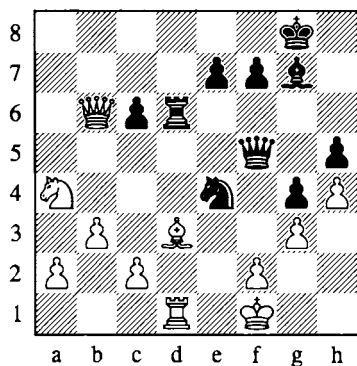
White's position is by no means lost, but the constant worries on the dark squares make it difficult to play, especially with little time.

25.c3

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This move, hoping to secure the long diagonal once and forever, has the drawback of more or less tying up the knight to the defence of the c3-pawn.

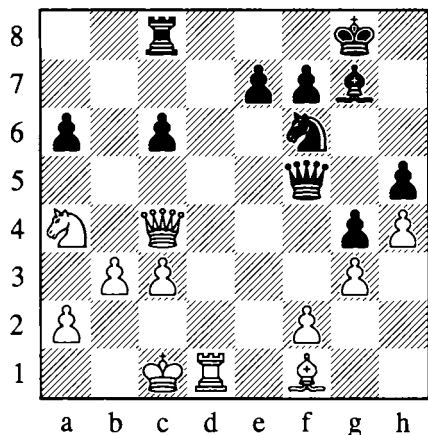
White could not afford to take the undefended pawn with: 25.♟xa6? ♟a1† 26.♞d2 ♞d8† 27.♞d3 ♞e4† 28.♞e1 ♟e5 29.♞f1 ♟f5 30.♟b6 ♞d6



The white king has escaped to the kingside, but this has not reduced the force of Black's attack.

25.♟d4!? was worth considering, with objective equality but easier play for Black.

25...♟f5



Attacking f2 and controlling the b1-h7 diagonal.

Ponomarev could not cope with the dangers surrounding his king and resigned only 13 moves later.

...0-1

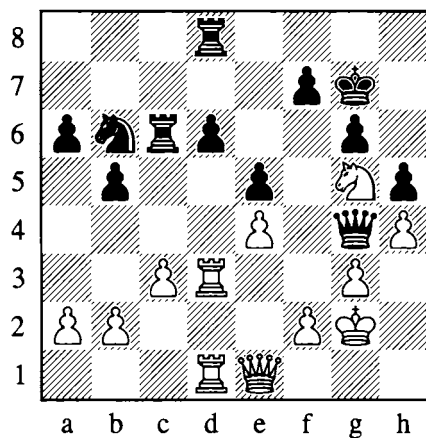
The final classifications were: Polgar and Ponomarev 8/11, Shirov and Karpov 7½, etc. In order to decide the absolute winner, I had to play a two-game blitz match with Ponomarev. I won 1½-½ and was proclaimed champion.

This tournament will stay in my memory forever. I had a great time in Benidorm and achieved my best ever performance in rapid chess.

In the games examined so far, my opponents were of the highest possible calibre: three World Champions and a world title challenger. This does not make the following example less special to me, since it was one of my last games before completing the work on this volume...

Judit Polgar – Mustafa Yilmaz

European Championship, Yerevan 2014



I achieved the more pleasant position out of the opening. The structure is typical for the Najdorf Sicilian (and also for the Sveshnikov), but after exchanging several minor pieces, the weakness of the d5-square and d6-pawn became more relevant.

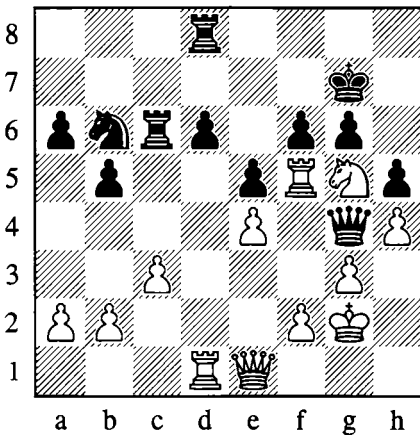
And yet, the centre is stable for the time being and action on the wings can be expected. Black would try to provoke the weakening b2-b3 with either ...♖c4 or ...♘a4, while I would hope for a kingside attack.

Black's last move was: 27...♔g7? Under different circumstances, this would be a nice way of consolidating, but after one minute I noticed an unbelievably beautiful idea.

28.♟f3!

At this point, I was not sure whether my opponent understood what was awaiting him, but I thought he could not change anything anyway. I felt my heart beating faster with excitement and impatience to create the unique picture on the next move.

28...f6?! 29.♟f5!!

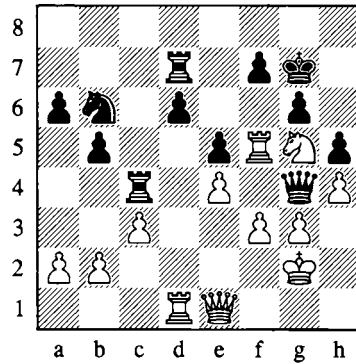


This position proved shocking not only for my opponent, but also for most of the players who were passing by our game, who stopped for a moment to understand what was going on. Could it be true that White's rook and knight are hanging?

Once the optical illusion evaporates, the idea becomes obvious: the black queen will be inevitably trapped with f2-f3.

Had my opponent anticipated my idea, he could have set a subtle trap one move earlier

with 28...♟d7. If I played as in the game with 29.♟f5 ♟c4 30.f3 he could save his queen with an unexpected move of his own.

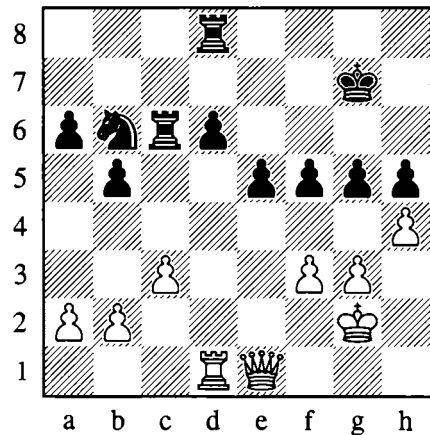


30...♟xe4!! As usually happens with the kind of unexpected moves examined in this chapter, everything works out well for Black.

Let's go back to the position that could have arisen after 28...♟d7:

Instead of 29.♟f5, the quiet move 29.b3!! would have prevented ...♟c4, leaving Black helpless against the threat of ♟f3-f5 followed by f2-f3, since the d7-rook blocks the retreat of the queen for a decisive instant.

29...fxg5 30.f3 ♟xf5 31.exf5 gxf5

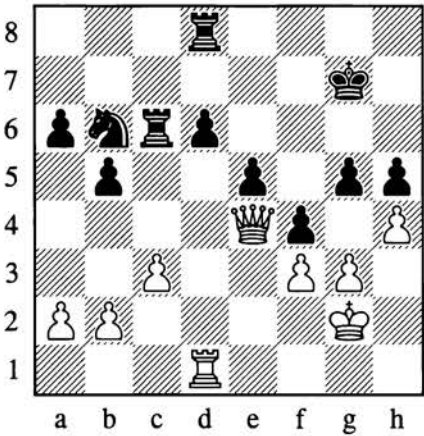


The position is winning, but in such cases it is best to finish it off as quickly as possible.

32. ♖e3!

Preparing a decisive queen invasion into enemy territory.

32...f4 33. ♖e4



33... ♜cc8

My opponent overstepped the time limit while playing this move. I would have replied 34. ♖b7+ ♔d7 35. ♜xd6+.

I had also calculated 33... ♜c7 34. ♜xd6! ♜xd6 35. ♖xe5+ ♜f6 36. ♖xc7+ and wins.
1-0



With Magnus Carlsen in the London Eye

Chapter 11

Official Competitions



With a trophy and medal at the 2011 European Championship in Aix-les-Bains

As a chess professional I have always treated every single event with a maximum of seriousness and care, aiming to achieve the highest possible performance. And I believe that the Elo rating system, which takes into account every single game played in official competitions or private tournaments alike, offers the most important and reliable measurement of the players' strengths and the best clue as to who is the best among equals at the very top at any given moment.

So which are the elements that make the official competitions so special to me that I decided to dedicate such a big chapter to them?

European and World Championships, Olympiads and European Team Championships can be *very* special if you win a medal. And the moment when, standing on the podium, you listen to your national anthem and see your flag raised is really unique.

In the eyes of the wider public, results in official competitions enjoy much greater recognition, and tend to exert a certain fascination over the fans.

Team competitions

I consider chess an individual sport – I always did, but I am ready to admit that team competitions have a different atmosphere than individual ones.

For many decades, the results in the Olympiads were determined by the simple addition of the individual board results, but I feel that from the moment when match results replaced the old system, notions such as team spirit and teamwork started taking clearer shape.

To tell the truth, I started liking team competitions as much as individual ones. Winning the gold medals at the 1988 and 1990 Women's Olympiads are unique memories, especially since our team was made up of my sisters and me plus Ildiko Madl. But winning the silver medals at the 1999 Batumi European Team championships and at the Bled 2002 Olympiad were also unforgettable experiences.

During team competitions the team members spend a lot of time together, dining at the same table, making small excursions, sharing their experiences of the previous round or making plans for the next one during the daily team meetings.

During tense matches, looking at your colleagues' games can have a strong impact not only on your mood, but also on your over-the-board strategy. It often happens that one of the players has to take a risky decision in an equal position in order to try to compensate for the unfavourable course of the game of one of his or her colleagues, or, on the contrary, take a safe path in a promising situation just to ensure the overall match win.

Colour issues are quite important in a team with one reserve player. To be honest, I am always ready to play, no matter how many Blacks or Whites in a row I get, but in principle this can turn into a conflict if not handled properly by the captain.

For me, to a greater extent than with any other kind of tournament, the emotional environment of team competitions is a mixture of enthusiasm and high spirits, winning and losing, happiness and disappointment. The best is when there is something to cheer for; these are special occasions when you can recall all the important moments of the fight, and forget all the tension.

It is very rewarding when your game finishes last and your win seals a favourable team result – I will never forget the explosion of enthusiasm with which my teammates and captain congratulated me after beating Bu Xiangzhi (page 213). But the opposite can also happen. There were occasions when I finished last and lost, thus becoming responsible for the match loss. Nobody ever put the

blame on me during the long evenings after such disappointments, but I knew well myself how things were...

There are two categories of medals awarded in team competitions: team medals and individual ones on each board, including the reserve.

Over the years I have won five team medals. In Thessaloniki 1988 and Novi Sad 1990 we got the gold medals in the Women's Olympiad. Later, in the Open (Men's) competitions, I won silver at the Batumi 1999 European Championship and at the Bled 2002 and Tromsø 2014 Olympiads.

My collection of individual medals includes three gold medals in the Women's Olympiads, gold in Batumi 1999 and bronze in Bled 2002. Although individual medals have a special personal meaning, this has never been a priority for me – the team's interests always came first. I would not refrain from playing in the last round even if a draw would risk me losing the individual medal; please see the story on page 132 in Volume II.

I have included my best games played in Olympiads in the period covered by this volume in the previous chapters.

Here I will only add that it would not be true to claim that everything is 'milk and honey' and that there were never some small conflicts during team competitions. But generally speaking, I find playing in a team an interesting experience, in a different way than individual competitions.

The 2nd Individual European Championship, Ohrid 2001

It happened that at the time the 2nd European Championship took place, I did not have any other tournaments in my schedule, so I decided to travel to Ohrid, Macedonia, even though there was a war situation around, and it was considered a dangerous place.

My husband accompanied me and we stayed in a hotel next to Lake Ohrid. My main initial aim was to win a medal, but qualification for the KO World Championship looked like a reasonable "Plan B". I came close to fulfilling the main plan, lacking just a bit more energy for the playoff match, but I qualified for the World Championship by a comfortable margin.

Judit Polgar – Levon Aronian

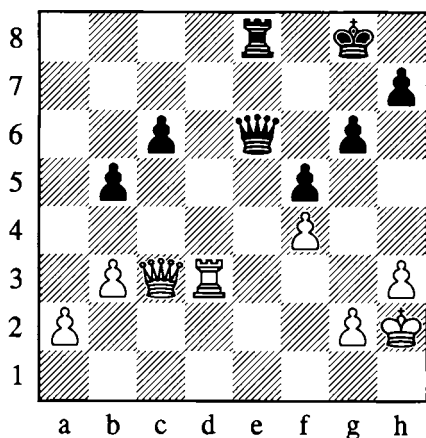
European Championship, Ohrid 2001

This was the first ever time I played against Aronian. Shortly before the game, which took place in the second round, I was told that my opponent was a very talented Armenian hope.

The bare numbers did not recommend him as such. At the age of 18 he was rated 2528, which was not enough to place him in the top 100, while in the World junior list he occupied a modest 14th place. It seems he was the late-developing type – not a common thread among modern champions.

Later, I had the opportunity to know Levon better when he visited me in Budapest and we had some effective and pleasant training sessions together.

Aronian is a very interesting and intelligent person and, due to his chess knowledge and understanding and his fantastic preparation, probably the strongest threat to Magnus Carlsen's supremacy. Levon's biggest psychological problem seems to be the pressure created by the fact that he is a national hero in Armenia. He will be able to become World Champion only if he frees his shoulders of this burden.



Despite the apparent simplicity of the position, there are a few elements favouring me. Although the two f-pawns are symmetrical, Black's ...f7-f5 counts as a serious weakening of his king, while my king enjoys comfortable safety. The queen is optimally placed on c3, controlling the weak diagonal, but all of this would hardly suffice for a palpable advantage if it were not for one queenside detail...

35.a4!

Adding an outside passed pawn to Black's existing worries.

35...bxa4 36.bxa4

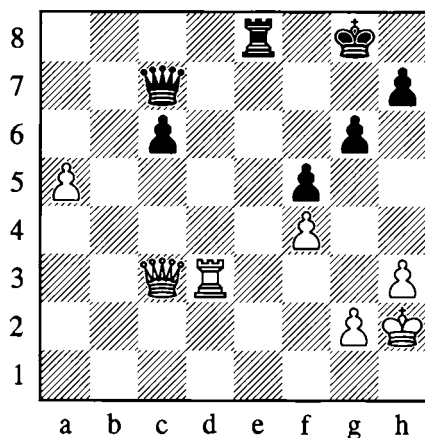
Suddenly, Black cannot fight against my pawn and defend his king properly at the same time. My position is practically winning and it took me only eight more moves to prove it.

36...♖c8

This looks very passive, but it is hard to recommend anything more active.

36...♖e4 is ineffective due to 37.♗d4 defending both attacked pawns and followed by a4-a5.

37.a5 ♕c7



38.♗d2!

A strong regrouping move. The queen defends both pawns and helps create the threat of ♗d3-d7. Typically, the strongest battery has the queen placed behind the rook. At the same time the queen keeps the possibility of delivering a well-timed check on the a2-g8 diagonal.

38...♗e7

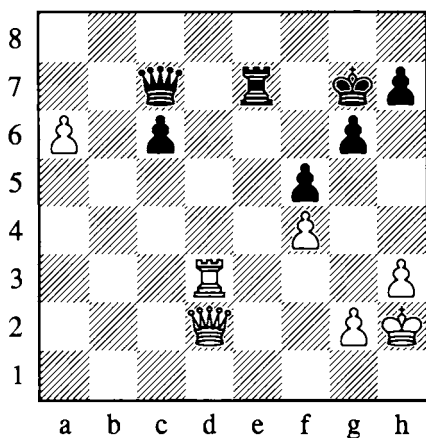
Practically forced.

38...c5 would prepare to meet ♗a2† with ...c5-c4, but my queen has other possibilities of getting involved in the attack along the seventh rank. 39.♗d7 ♕c6 40.a6! Since 40...♗xa6 loses to 41.♕c3 or 41.♗b2, my pawn would reach the seventh rank, with decisive effect.

39.a6

There are more weak diagonals, files and ranks than Black can defend, worried as he is by the alarming advance of the a-pawn.

39...♔g7



40. ♖b3!

A well-timed switch to the b-file. I threaten ♖b7 thus proving the pawn to be useful for attacking purposes, too.

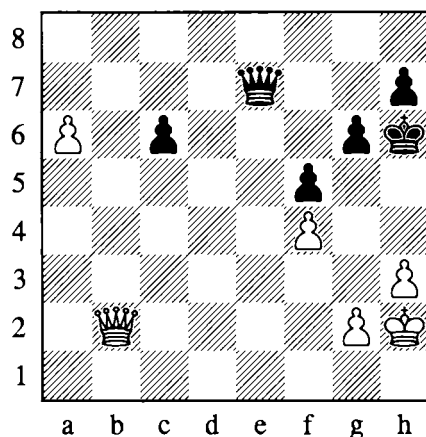
40... ♖a7 41. ♖b2† ♔h6

Black tries to reach relative safety for his king, but the a-pawn is too strong.

42. ♖b7 ♖e3

Or if 42... ♖xb7 43. ♖xb7 ♖e3 44. ♖b8 followed by a6-a7-a8=♖ with a similar situation as in the game.

43. ♖xe7 ♖xe7



44. ♖b8!

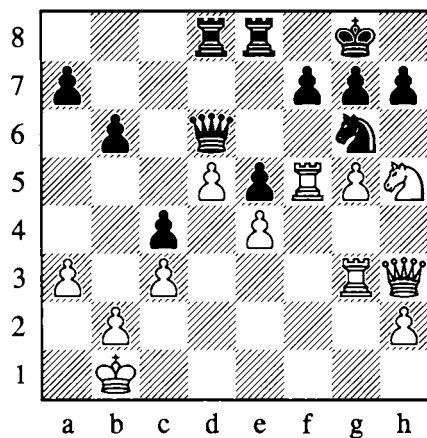
In the previous phase, my queen had done a great job, controlling important diagonals and files, and now the queen delivers the final touch. From b8, it defends the f4-pawn, which is the only relatively weak spot in my position, and prepares the advance and promotion of the passed pawn.

With no counterplay left, Aronian resigned.
1–0

I have examined my fourth round win over Miroshnichenko in the endgame section. The next example is taken from Round 8.

Judit Polgar – Karen Asrian

European Championship, Ohrid 2001



I had been putting pressure on my opponent for quite some while and was confident about the success of my attack. I only needed to find the right moment for the execution, which arrived when Asrian was in heavy time trouble.

33. ♖xg7!

A thematic combination, which however required some accurate calculation.

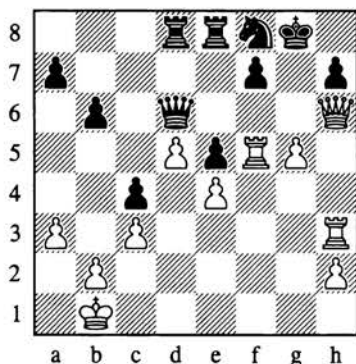
33... ♖f4

Resignation.

The main line of the combination goes:

33...♙xg7 34.♖h6† ♕g8 35.♗h3 ♜f8

Or if 35...♗d7 36.♖xh7† ♕f8 37.♗f6, followed by ♖xg6, regains the knight and retains a decisive attack.



36.g6!

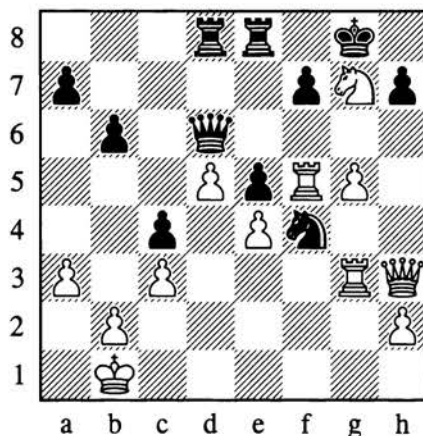
When allowing the knight sacrifice, my opponent might have overlooked the final touch of the combination. The most clear-cut threat is 37.gxh7† ♕h8 38.♖g7†! ♕xg7 39.h8=♖† ♕g6 40.♖g8 mate!

36...♖xg6

Relatively best, since 36...fxg6 allows mate in two: 37.♗xf8† ♖xf8 38.♖xh7 mate.

37.♗g3

Black loses his queen.



34.♜xe8

Not the only win.

34...♗xe8 35.♖h6

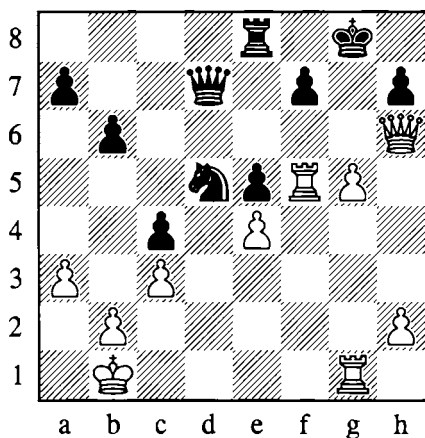
With an exchange and a pawn up, my position is simply winning. But it is always better to stay focused until the end and keep making the best moves, without being influenced by the opponent's time trouble.

35...♗d7 36.♗g1

Defending the back rank in anticipation of Black's next desperate move.

36...♜xd5





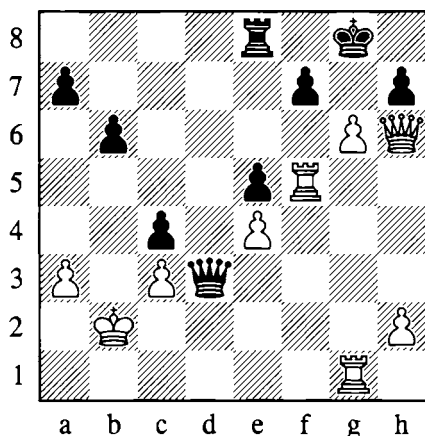
37.g6!

Once the knight has abandoned the control of the g6-square, this thematic break wins quickly.

37...♖xc3†

The main variation is 37...fxg6 38.♗xg6† hxg6 39.♙xg6† ♔h8 40.♗h5† and mates.

38.bxc3 ♔d3† 39.♕b2



After noticing that the d2-square is unavailable, putting the perpetual check out of his reach, my opponent resigned.

1-0

This was my fourth win in eight rounds,

yielding me some extra energy for the upcoming rounds.

The following is my win from Round 11.

Judit Polgar – Sergei Tiviakov

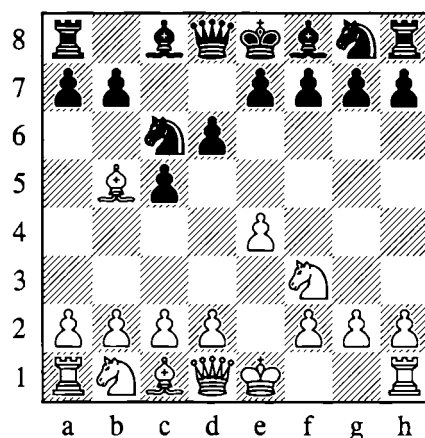
European Championship, Ohrid 2001

With three rounds to go I was on +4, but I evaluated that +5 would be necessary for a medal. I felt that playing with White was a good reason to try to take another step upwards, but I did not wish to take excessive risks. In fact, many players on the neighbouring boards were focused on just keeping their +4 level with three final draws, as this would offer them one of the 23 qualifying spots for the World Championship.

1.e4 c5 2.♖f3 ♖c6 3.♗b5

My opponent probably intended to play his favourite Accelerated Dragon, but that day I felt that the Rossolimo variation was the right way to play the game out without offering Black too many active possibilities.

3...d6



This is the move I was most expecting. Tiviakov has a fixed repertoire and does not mind repeating the same lines.

4.c3

A solid positional move, aiming to build up a strong centre with d2-d4. The most popular variation is 4.0-0 followed by ♖xc6, which leads to a completely different structure, but I am not a fan of that plan.

4...♟f6 5.♞e2 ♔d7

The other possible plan is 5...♙g4 followed by ...♟d7, ...g6 and ...♙g7, with some control over the central dark squares. In some rare cases, Black plays ...e7-e5.

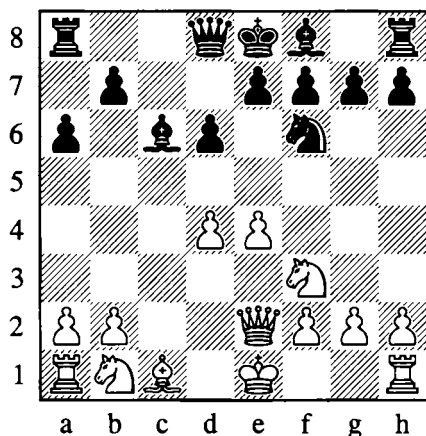
Tiviakov prefers fighting to gain the bishop pair rather than giving it away.

6.d4 cxd4 7.cxd4 a6

A logical move, forcing me to define my intentions regarding the bishop.

8.♙xc6

Two rounds earlier, Tiviakov faced 8.♙a4 against Nevednichy, reacting with 8...e5, but I thought 8...d5 would be a strong improvement.

8...♙xc6**9.d5**

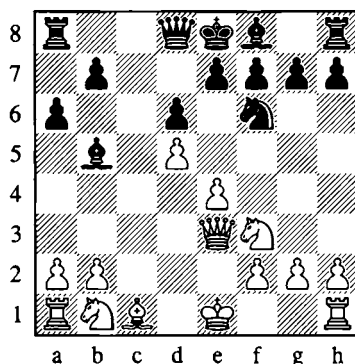
This was my prepared novelty.

I did not wish to allow Black to consolidate on the light squares after, for instance, 9.♟c3 d5.

9...♙d7

This passive retreat surprised me.

A few months later, Tiviakov improved with 9...♙b5! which was the move I was expecting. 10.♞e3



10...g6 11.♟c3 ♔d7 12.0-0 ♙g7 Due to the unfortunate position of the white queen, obstructing the c1-bishop, Black had comfortable play in Glek – Tiviakov, Bastia 2001.

Even more ambitious would have been 10...a5 11.♟c3 ♙a6 when I would have had to work a bit in order to get castled.

10.♟c3 g6

A small psychological duel starts now. Should Black play ...♙d7-g4 at an early stage, fearing that White would prevent it with h2-h3? I did not consider it necessary to waste a tempo, since the exchange on f3 would not reduce my stability in the centre, while giving away the bishop pair would leave Black with little if any chances of counterplay.

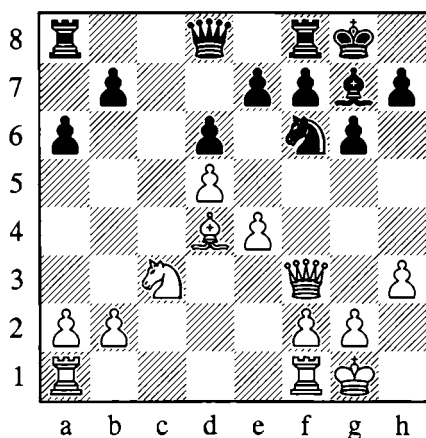
11.0-0 ♙g7 12.♙e3 0-0 13.♙d4

This was the regrouping I was aiming for and I felt happy with my position. White has more space and better development and Black always has to be ready for the central break e4-e5.

13...♙g4

The draw offer accompanying this move was probably intended to test my mood and intentions under the aforementioned tournament circumstances. Since I did not feel I was risking much, I stayed faithful to my initial plan.

14.h3 ♖xf3 15.♞xf3

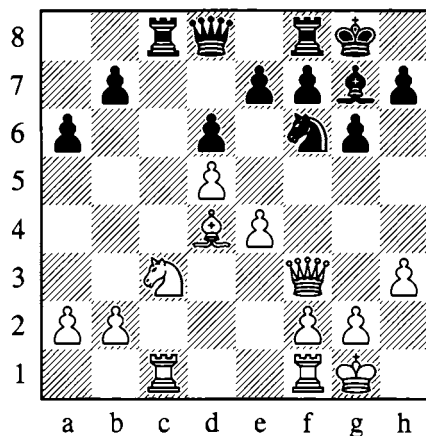


15...♞c8

A good developing move.

One of the positive effects of exchanging the light-squared bishops is clearing the d7-square, but Black should not hurry with 15...♘d7 due to 16.♖xg7 ♜xg7 17.♞e2 followed by f2-f4 with attacking chances in the centre and on the kingside.

16.♖ac1

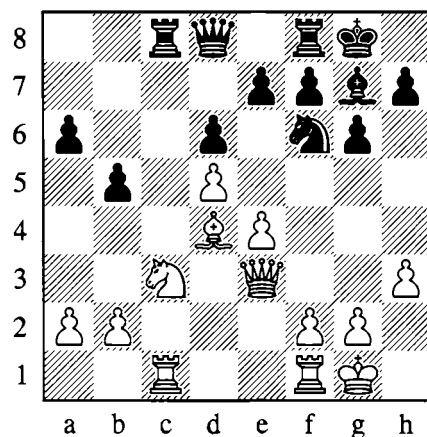


16...b5?!

I was happy when Sergei played this, as I considered it more of a weakening than an active move.

Black should have decided upon a way of completing his development, for instance 16...♞a5 or 16...♞d7!? possibly followed by ...e7-e6.

17.♞e3



Unlike in the Glek – Tiviakov game, this is a good spot for the queen after my bishop has reached d4. The queen defends the bishop and clears the path for the f-pawn.

17...♞d7 18.♘e2!

After the imprudent advance of the b-pawn, my main plan was to invade the c6-square. The concrete way of achieving this is far from clear, since I still have to find a good square for the bishop in order to allow ♘d4-c6.

I did not mind exchanging rooks, since this would not solve the core of Black's problems – the queenside weaknesses.

18...e6

After my voluntary knight retreat, Tiviakov considered now was a good moment to break in the centre.

Before carrying out this thematic plan, it would have been safer to exchange all the rooks with 18... Rxc1 19. Rxc1 Rc8 followed soon by ...e7-e6.

19.dxe6 Wxe6

When weakening the d6-pawn, Tiviakov relied on this double attack against the e4- and a2-pawns. But as the game proves, taking the a2-pawn will hand over the initiative.

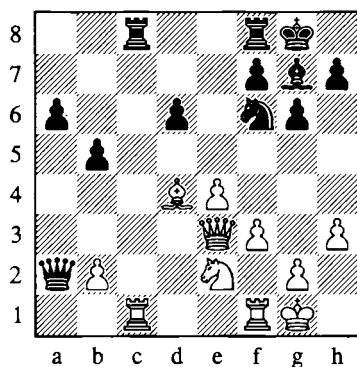
20.f3!

It was essential to consolidate the centre, while inviting the enemy queen to embark on a risky adventure.

20... Rxc1

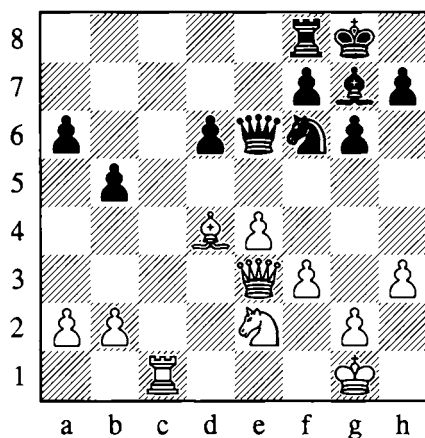
Black's intention to accept the sacrifice in order to get some compensation for his structural defects is understandable. However, giving up the c-file is a serious mistake, which helps me to develop my initiative.

20... Wxa2 would have been safer.



Tiviakov probably disliked that after 21. Ra1 Wc4 22. Rfc1 Wb4 23. Qc3 Wc5 24. Wxc5 dxc5 25. Rxa6 I would regain the pawn with persisting pressure, but this would have been a lesser evil compared to the game.

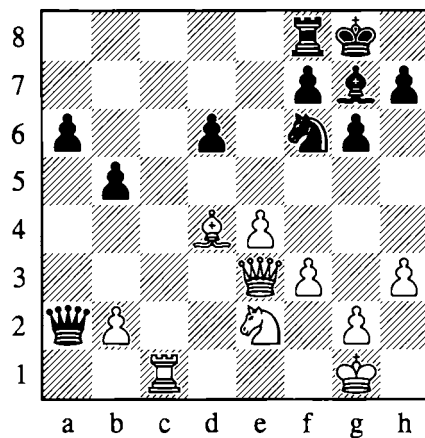
21. Rxc1



21... $\text{Wxa2}?!$

Consistent but too risky.

It was not too late to settle for a worse ending with: 21... Rc8 ! This was the best option even though Black is clearly worse as he still has a weak d6-pawn and a weak d5-square, so Black would face a long and unpleasant defence. After 22. Rxc8 † Wxc8 23. Wd2 White would have a stable advantage due to the central weaknesses.



22. Rc6 !

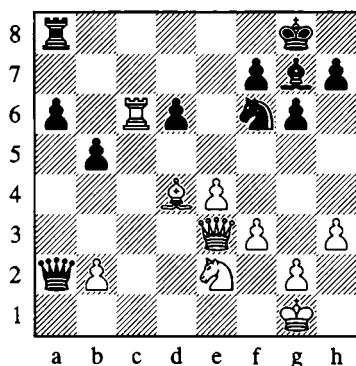
My opponent must have overlooked or underestimated this move or the regrouping initiated by it. With his pieces poorly coordinated, Black faces problems defending his d6- and a6-pawns and the back rank at the same time.

22...♖d8

The most natural defence.

22...♗e8 would be too passive. After the prophylactic 23.♕h2 it would be very difficult to choose a move for Black.

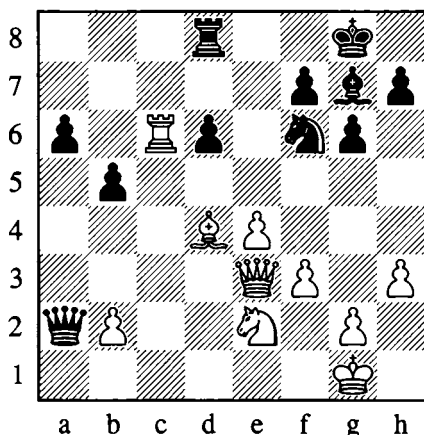
22...♖a8 would have been interesting, preparing ...♗e8 without leaving the rook passive on f8.



If 23.♖xd6 ♗e8 24.♖d5 ♖c8 Black would get counterplay.

Or if 23.♖c3 ♖e6 Black would defend both his hanging pawns.

White's best answer would be 23.♗f4! preventing the queen's return and renewing the threat of ♖c3.

**23.♖c3!**

After my second-round game against Aronian (page 287) and my Wijk aan Zee 1998 game with Anand (Volume II, page 328) this is yet another example of the effectiveness of the battery created by placing the queen behind the rook.

In addition, this move creates a queen and bishop battery, thus gaining a tempo.

23...♗e8

My opponent stubbornly keeps his extra pawn.

It would have been better to regain coordination with 23...♖e6, although after 24.♖xa6 I would have a clear advantage.

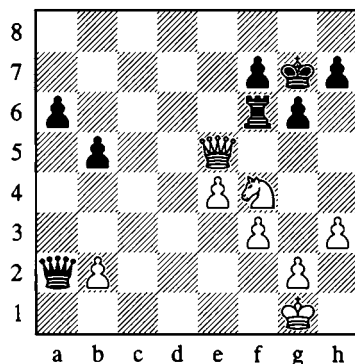
24.♗xg7 ♗xg7

Black has somewhat reduced the pressure, but now the f6-square is chronically weak.

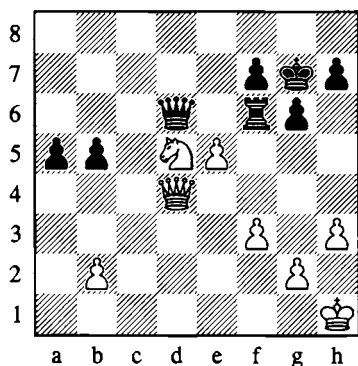
25.♗f4!

A simple yet very strong move, preparing an invasion via the weak squares.

Initially, I entertained myself trying to find a forced win after 25.♖xd6 ♖xd6 26.♖c8† ♗e8 27.♖xe8† ♗g7 28.♖e5† ♖f6 29.♗f4, but I soon understood that Black can regroup in time.



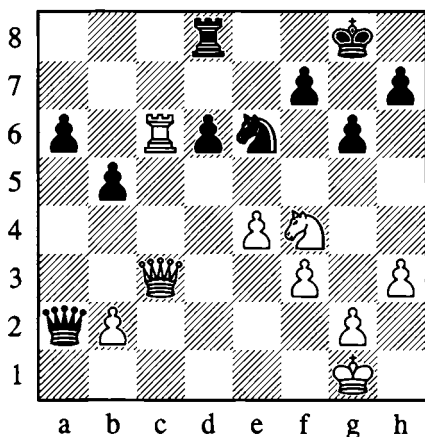
29...♖c4 30.♗d5 ♖c5† 31.♗h1 ♖d6 32.♖d4 a5 White has a dominating position, but no real threat. Surprisingly, 33.e5 does not win!



33...xf4!! The maximum I could get is to regain the exchange.

After realizing that these complications are far from clear, I decided to increase my advantage with simple moves, hence the knight jump in the game.

25...d6



26.xf6!

This is even stronger than the natural 26.d5, since Black's pieces are now hanging.

26...e8 27.d5

Black is completely paralyzed and unable to meet simple threats such as exd6-d7.

27...a5 28.exd6 c4

If 28...c5, preventing d7, the simplest of many wins would be 29.c3 attacking the

knight and threatening f6+.

29.d7 c5+

Just a spite check before resigning.

30.h2

Both 30...f8 and 30...f8 are hopeless due to 31.e7+.

1-0

Two draws in the final rounds yielded me a tie for 3rd-4th place with Azmaiparashvili, who was my former trainer and also a second to Kasparov for his world title matches against Karpov.

I lost the playoff match and 'fell off the podium'. It was not until ten years later that I won the bronze medal, tied for first place; more about this a bit later in this chapter.

The World Championship final tournament San Luis 2005

This was the first time I had the opportunity of playing in the final phase of the World Championship cycle. I qualified due to my rating (I was rated 2735 and was ranked 8th).

I was happy that Argentina hosted the event, as I had played five times in this country previously and had only pleasant memories about it.

It remains an open question what it takes to win, or at least get a medal, in such a strong event. I would include on the list the following elements: being in good chess form and having good preparation, mental stability, good physical condition, handling losses as a part of the tournament and getting ready for the next game, handling the pressure if by chance you get close to winning the tournament.

I dedicated two months to preparing for this tournament. I was jogging and having chess training every day, and I tried to put myself in a "winner's mood".

I travelled to San Luis with my old friend Mihail Marin while my husband stayed at home with our son Oliver. We stayed in a nice hotel by the lake Potrero de los Funes, on the outskirts of San Luis.

I vividly remember the flight from Buenos Aires to San Luis. We embarked on a small 10-seat aircraft with propellers, which was continuously shaken by unimaginable turbulence during the almost two hours of flight.

I later experienced similar turbulent events during the tournament, but the moments I remember with satisfaction are all from the following game.

Judit Polgar – Rustam Kasimdzhanov

World Championship Final, San Luis 2005

I met the reigning World Champion with White in the third round. My play and the final result of this game prove that I had not spent the two months in vain. But wishing for something too much can backfire, which unfortunately happened to me in San Luis, at least from the perspective of the final tournament result.

1.e4 c5

For many years, 1...e5 had been Rustam's main weapon, but he had also played the Sicilian over the previous few years. At this stage, I could not have known that he had prepared the Sicilian Najdorf as his main opening for San Luis.

In such competitions, where all the players prepare specially against their opponents, it is a good practical decision to come up with a surprise weapon. But for me, the opening played in this game came as a pleasant surprise, since I had a trump up my sleeve...

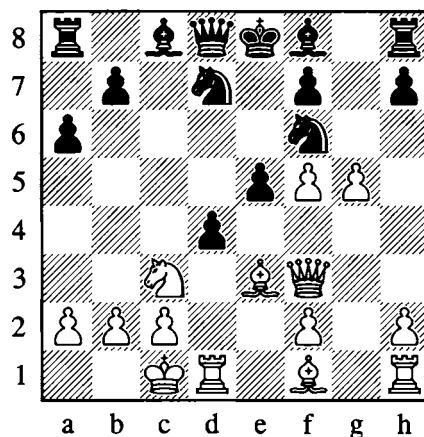
2.♖f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♖xd4 ♖f6 5.♖c3 a6 6.♗e3 e6 7.g4

The reader will be familiar with this variation from the comments to my Essent Hooageveen game against Topalov (page 143).

7...e5

Kindly picking up the gauntlet. Topalov preferred the more restrained 7...h6.

8.♗f5 g6 9.g5 gxf5 10.exf5 d5 11.♗f3 d4 12.0-0-0 ♖bd7



13.♗xd4!?

A rare continuation I had prepared specially for this event.

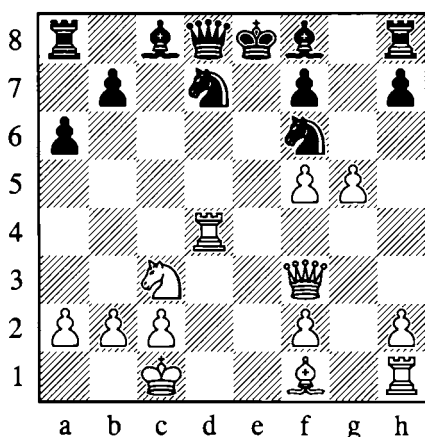
Many years earlier I had analyzed 13.♗d2 dxc3 14.♗xc3 with Jan Timman, a player whose enthusiasm for chess I admire very much and who in his time was one of the strongest players in the world. Our preparation paid off and in Dos Hermanas 1999 I won one of my best ever games, against Anand (see Volume II, page 337).

In the interim the variation was thoroughly analyzed and tested in practice. In such sharp lines, deviating from the known paths and hitting the opponent with a relatively early surprise is a good practical idea. The position is essentially too complicated to allow good orientation without some concrete knowledge.

I analyzed the game move with Emil Sutovsky, who is known for his aggressive style, which had yielded him a series of fantastic wins. Emil proved an excellent analysis partner and I went into the game against Kasimdzhanov full of confidence.

Rustam took a few minutes before answering. There is nothing better than accepting the sacrifice, so his small delay was a clear hint that he was indeed surprised.

13...exd4 14.♞xd4



But now Rustam had a really long think – 34 minutes. I was comfortable, feeling that I had won the first part of the theoretical duel. The second test was about proving my analysis correct against such a strong opponent.

White has sacrificed two pieces for three pawns, which is a long way from a satisfactory material equivalent. The fight actually turns into a race: will Black be able to get his king into safety and complete his development before my attack becomes too strong?

14...♞g7?

A logical developing move, aiming to get castled and bring the king into safety. With only a couple of previous games played in this line, there is little wonder that this move was a novelty.

I believe that the best move is 14...♞c5, developing with gain of time. After 15.♞d2 ♞c7 16.gxf6 ♞xf6 I intended to improve on Pulkkinen – Oll, Helsinki 1990 (0–1 in 28 moves) with 17.♞d5. My analysis with Emil revealed many interesting ideas, but objectively Black should probably hold the position.

Surprisingly, we did not analyze Rustam's move. Objectively, it is a mistake that places Black in great danger, but it forced me to work earlier than I expected, after so many days of analyzing this whole attacking idea.

15.♞g1

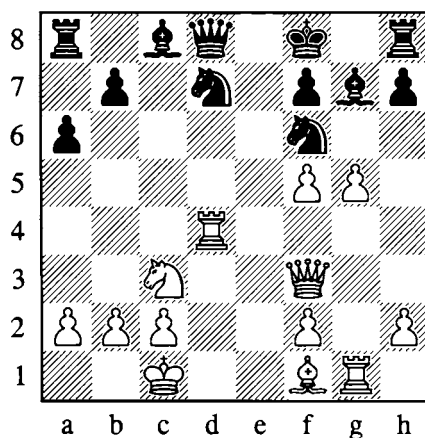
I spent 14 minutes on this move. The pattern was familiar to me from my aforementioned game with Anand, where the 15th move had been the same: 15.♞g1!

The idea behind the last move is to prevent Black from castling, since 15.0–0? would lose to 16.gxf6. Due to the pins along the d- and g-files, Black would have only 16...♞xf6 but then 17.♞dg4 would be decisive.

15...♞f8

Rustam also took his time on this move: 20 minutes.

The main alternative was 15...♞g8 but after 16.♞c4 ♞f8 17.♞e1 White's lead in development would be decisive.

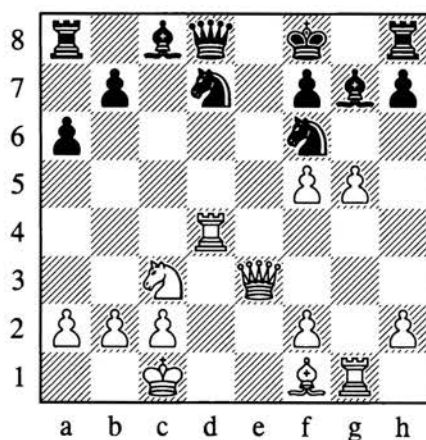


16.♞e3

Still following the pattern from my game with Anand, where ♞f3-e3 happened after the intermediate capture on f6. And yet, in such positions concrete details are important and one cannot count on similarities, so I spent 18 minutes checking everything.

The last move creates two main threats: gxf6 ...♙xf6, ♞h6 and the calm retreat ♞e3-d2, increasing the pressure along the d-file.

The developing 16.♙c4! would have been stronger. It would have put pressure on f7 and allowed the centralization of the g1-rook, which has done its job on the g-file already, by preventing Black from castling.

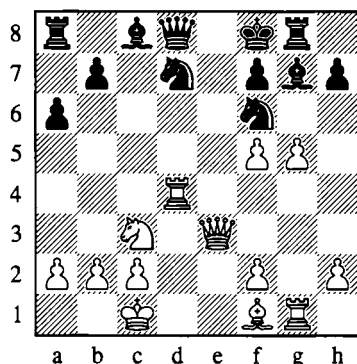
**16...♞e7**

19 minutes were not enough for Kasimdzhanov to find the safest defence.

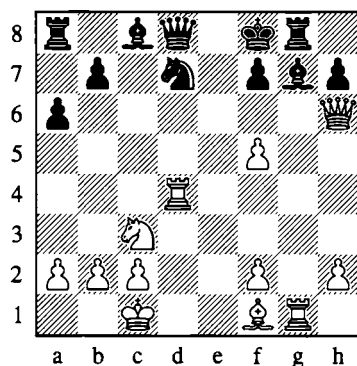
With Gusztav in San Luis



During the game I was worried about 16...♖g8! creating some sort of pin along the g-file.



It would threaten to move away the f6-knight and then meet 18.f6 with 18...♗xf6. At the same time, after 17.gxf6 ♗xf6 the threatened 18.♖h6† would be less effective due to 18...♗g7.



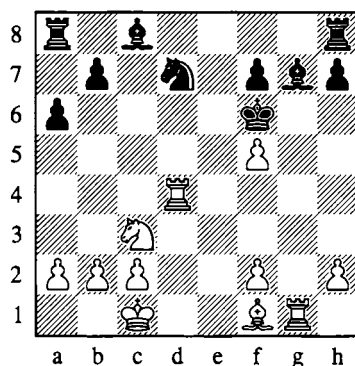
I would have had nothing better than 19.♖xg7 ♖xg7 20.♖xd7 ♖xd7 21.f6 ♖g4 22.fxg7† ♖xg7 23.♖d6† ♖g8 24.♖d8† ♖f8 25.♖g5† with a draw by perpetual check.

17.♖d2

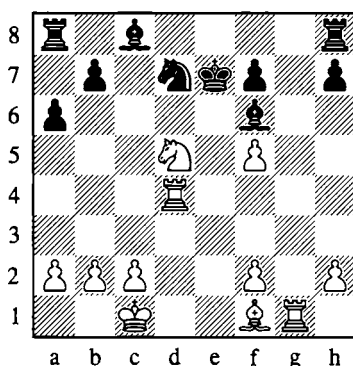
After ten minutes I refrained from my initially intended sequence:

17.♖xe7† ♖xe7 18.gxf6† ♗xf6

Only not: 18...♖xf6?

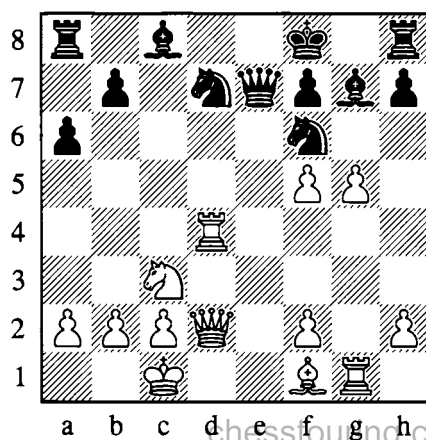


19.f4! Taking the e5-square under control and threatening 20.♗d5† ♖xf5 21.♗h3 mate! Black could save his king only by returning the piece with, say, 19...♖e7 or 19...♗b6 20.♖d6†, with a lost position.
19.♗d5†



19...♖e8!

The only way to avoid trouble. I would still keep adequate compensation for the piece with 20.♖e4† but I was not satisfied with this.

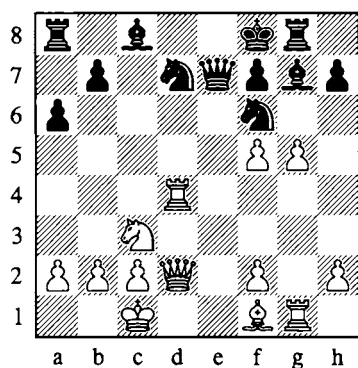


17...h6?

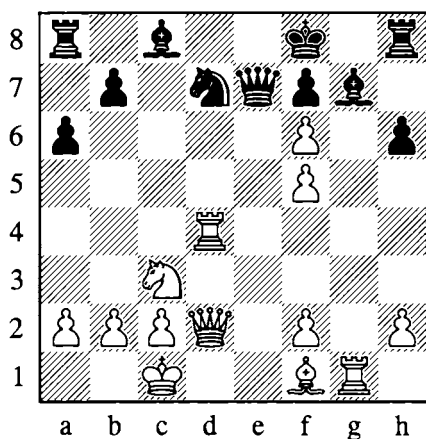
After seven minutes Black decides to force events, as he could not stand the pressure anymore.

The last move has two important drawbacks. It loses a tempo and deprives the bishop of the h6-square, which will prove important at a later stage.

Once again, Black should have set up some resistance along the g-file with: 17...♖g8!

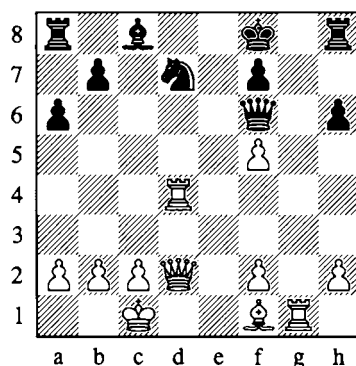


I planned 18.♖g3 defending the rook and thus eliminating the potential pin, with the possible regrouping ♗g2 and ♜e3. With the constant threat of gxf6 looming, the position would have been incredibly difficult and unpleasant to play with Black.

18.gxf6**18...♖xf6**

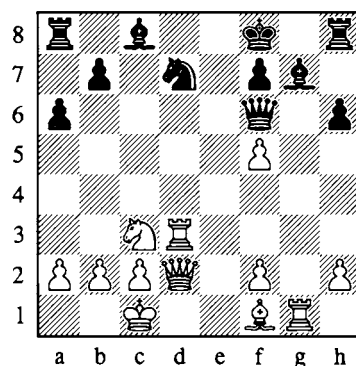
Played after only four minutes, this obviously was planned on the previous move.

18...♖xf6? would allow too strong an initiative: 19.♖d5 ♜e5 20.♖xf6 ♜xf6 (Or if 20...♖xf6 21.♖d8+ ♖e8 22.♖c4 threatening ♖e1.) Black is still a piece up but his position is lost in many ways, due to his lack of development.



For instance: 21.♖d6 ♜xf5 22.♖d4 wins; also winning would be the developing 21.♖c4 followed by ♖d6.

The best defence would have been 18...♜xf6! although the calm 19.♖d3 would have maintained the pressure.



I would have had several plans and threats, such as ♖d3 or ♖d5 followed by ♜b4+ or even the calm f2-f4, taking the e5-square away from the black pieces. And if 19...h5 I could play another “quiet” move: 20.♖b1 Objectively,

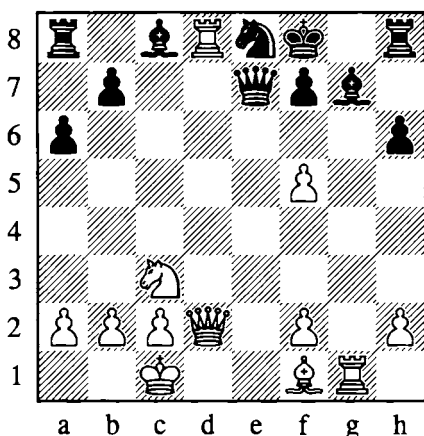
White would keep a huge advantage, but proving this in a practical game would require a long series of “best moves”.

After the game continuation all I needed to find was one good but far-from-obvious move – the 20th. I am sure Rustam did not see it in advance.

19.♞d8†

I needed 17 minutes to find the winning idea.

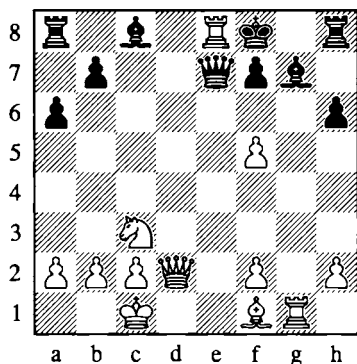
19...♜e8



20.♞b5!!

I saw this kamikaze move, gaining a vital tempo for the attack, before playing my previous one, but I checked it again for another seven minutes.

The tempting 20.♞xe8† was less convincing.



20...♜xe8

But not 20...♞xe8? 21.♜d5 with a fantastic domination despite being a rook down. Black cannot simultaneously parry the threats of ♞b4† and f5-f6.

21.♞xg7 ♞xf5 22.♜d5 ♞d6

Black finally made some progress with his development, but his position remains dangerous. After my move, he is just lost.

20...axb5

My opponent reacted quickly, after only three minutes.

20...♞xf5 21.♞xa8 axb5

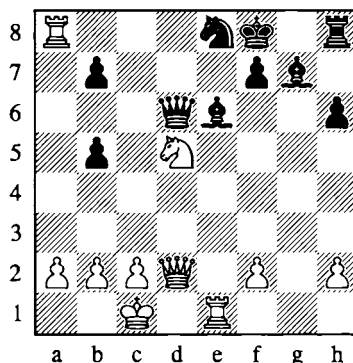
This would lose in many ways. A “human” continuation would be:

22.♜d5

22.♜xb5!? threatening ♜d6 is also strong.

22...♞d6 23.♞xe8†

Objectively, the computer suggestion 23.♞e1 is stronger. 23...♞e6

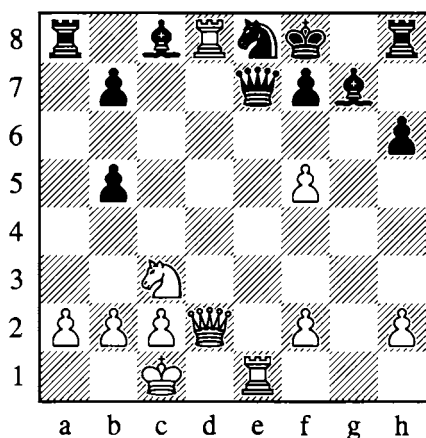


24.f4! Threatening f4-f5. 24...h5 25.♞d3 Avoiding the pin along the c1-h6 diagonal and renewing the old threat, while creating a new one, ♞xb5 – White wins.

23...♜xe8 24.♞xg7

With an extra pawn and a technically winning position.

21.♞e1



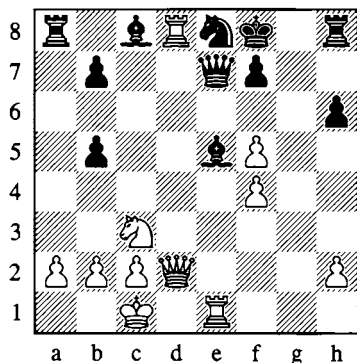
It can be felt that the win is not far away, but Black's next move came as a surprise to me.

21...b4!!

Rustam spent 16 minutes on this zwischenzug, leaving himself with just 13 more to reach move 40. The double exclamation mark refers only to the psychological impact of the move, which caused me to make a serious mistake.

I had taken into account two main defences.

The most natural of them was 21...♙e5 22.f4 when Black has no adequate way of defending the e-file. After winning the queen, I would gain even more material, due to Black's poor coordination.



The following are some sample lines:

a) 22...♙d6

This loses in many ways, but my favourite is:

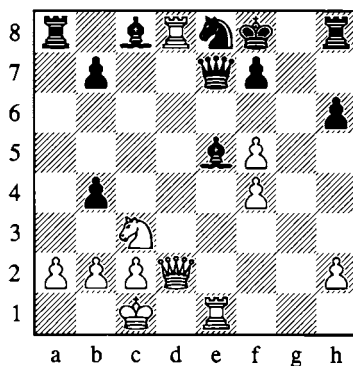
23.♙xd6! ♚xe1†

23...♙xd6 24.♙xe8†! wins the queen.

24.♙xe1 ♜xd6 25.♙e5+–

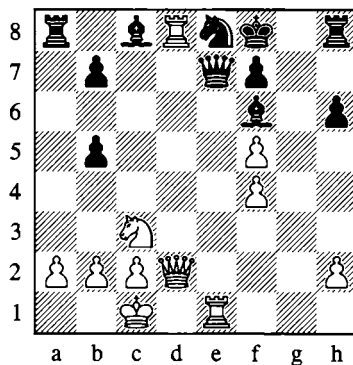
With a decisive double attack.

b) The intermediate advance of the b-pawn with 22...b4 is less confusing than in the game.



23.♙xe5 bxc3 24.♙d4 A strong centralizing move. 24...♙xa2 25.♙xe8† ♜xe8 26.♙xe7† ♜xe7 27.♙c5† ♜d8 28.♙d5† White wins the a2-rook.

c) 22...♙f6



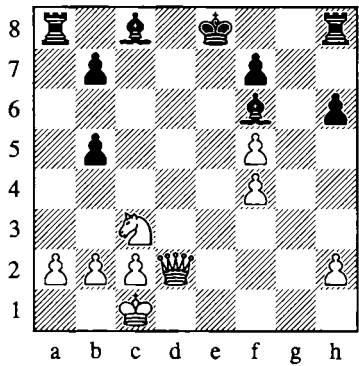
23.♙xe8†!

This is the strongest move and one I was very proud of having found during the game.

23...♙xe8

Or if 23...♜xe8 24.♜d5 with a winning attack.

24. ♖xe8† ♜xe8



25. ♖e4

25. ♖d5 also wins, but the main line is clearer.

25... ♗e7

Or if 25... ♗d8 26. ♖d6† ♜e7 27. ♖d5! threatening f5-f6† or ♖c5 with decisive threats.

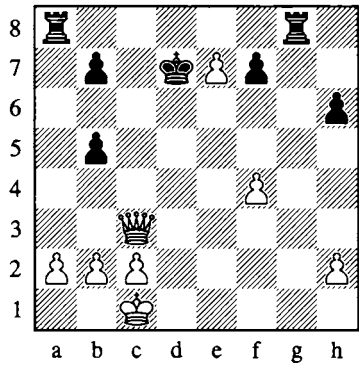
26. f6 ♖g8 27. ♖d6†!

Once again, the simplest among many good moves.

27... ♜d7 28. ♖xc8†

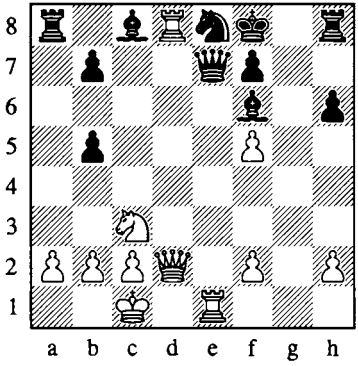
Not the only winning move, but the most technical one.

28... ♜xc8 29. ♖c3† ♜d7 30. fxe7



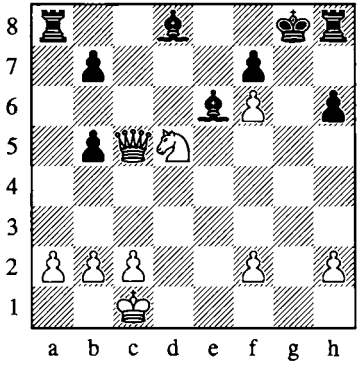
In this open position, the queen is much stronger than the black rooks, especially as Black has many weak pawns.

There is not much to be added about 21... ♗f6.

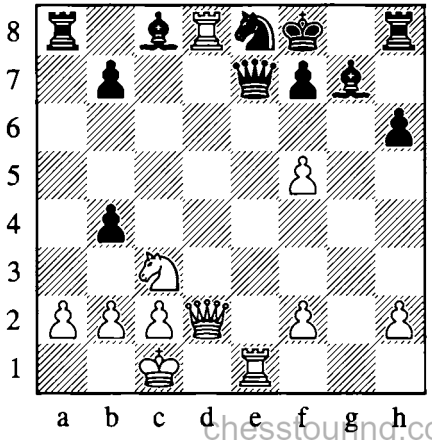


The only difference with respect to the variations above, with the pawn on f4 rather than on f2, is that after 22. ♖xe8† ♜xe8 23. ♖xe8† ♜xe8 the only winning move would be 24. ♖e4!.

If instead 24. ♖d5 ♗d8 25. ♖e3† ♜f8 26. f6 ♗e6 27. ♖c5† ♜g8:



White would lack the decisive move ♖c5-g1†.

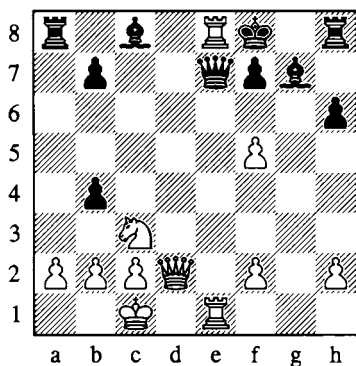


22. ♖b5??

This is how you can lose a game instead of completing the beautiful work done so far.

I played this move practically without spending any time, telling myself: “OK, he is lost anyway and just wants to prolong the fight for one more move!”

What is worse, I saw the winning 22. ♖xe8†! but for some reason I thought I no longer needed such radical means.



22... ♗xe8

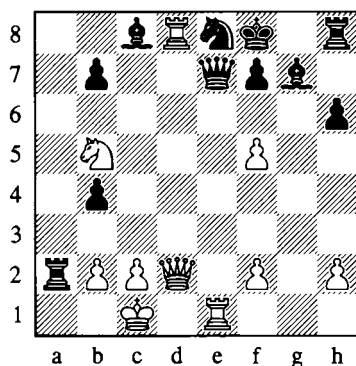
Or if 22... ♖xe8 23. ♖d6† wins.

23. ♖d5 ♖xe1† 24. ♖xe1† ♗f8 25. ♖c7

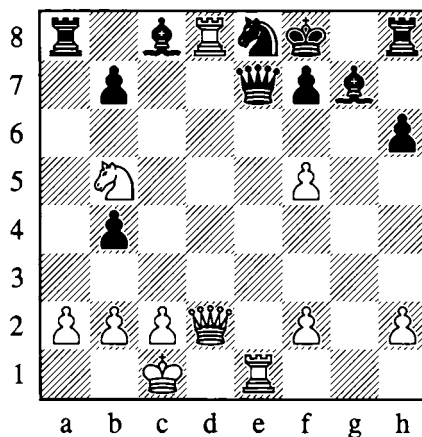
On account of the threat of ♖e8 mate, White wins the a8-rook.

I thought my move was winning in view of the following variation:

22... ♖xa2



23. ♖xe8†! The only winning move; anything else loses! 23... ♗xe8 24. ♖xe7† ♗xe7 25. ♖d6† ♗e8 26. ♖c7 mate. This is why I needed my knight on b5!



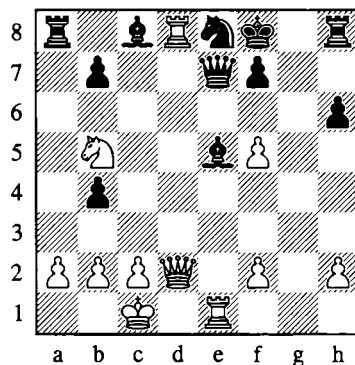
22... ♗xb2†?

My opponent, who was already approaching time trouble, played this after five minutes. Immediately after pressing the clock, he noticed a missed opportunity, and started shaking his head and showing a strong emotional reaction.

I was very surprised by his behaviour, as I had no idea that after:

22... ♗e5!!

It would be Black who is winning, rather than White!



Black would parry the threat of ♖xe8† by defending the e-file for a decisive instant.

23.♔b1

One important point is that 23.f4 would run into 23...♞xa2, threatening ...♞a1 mate, when 24.♔b1 ♞xb2† would hardly improve White's position. In this line the negative consequences of my 22nd move are decisive: the a2-pawn is undefended and the bishop attacks b2.

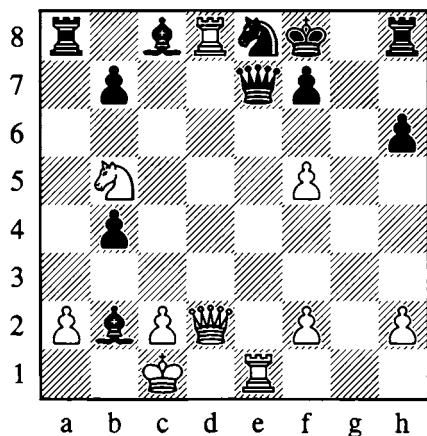
23...♔g7 24.♞d5

24.f4 would fail to: 24...♞xf4!

24...♞g5

Black would retain a material advantage and repel all the major threats.

It is such a pity that my superficiality (or impatience?!) spoiled the game.



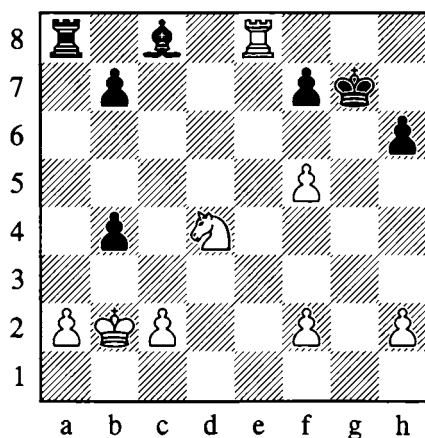
23.♔xb2

After 14 minutes I saw no reason to reject the sacrifice, even though I was sure 23.♔b1 would also win.

23...♞f6† 24.♞d4

A good practical decision. In the endgame I will have an extra pawn and better piece mobilization.

24...♔g7 25.♞xe8 ♞xe8 26.♞xe8 ♞xd4†
27.♔xd4



Black's main problem is the pin on the back rank, not the missing pawn. The final result is beyond any doubt, but my opponent kept playing as he was still affected by the missed opportunity on move 22.

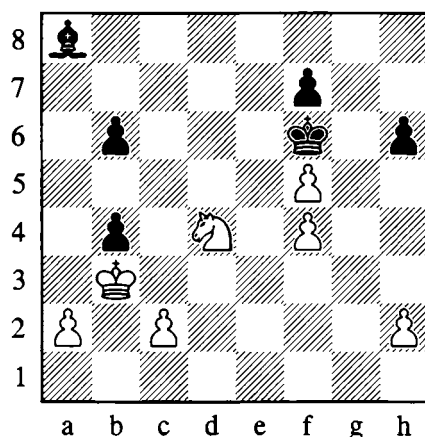
27...♔f6 28.f4 b6 29.♞d8

Black will now lose some of his numerous weak pawns.

29...♔b7

29...♔e7 30.♔c6† ♔f6 31.♔xb4 is no improvement for Black.

30.♞xa8 ♞xa8 31.♔b3



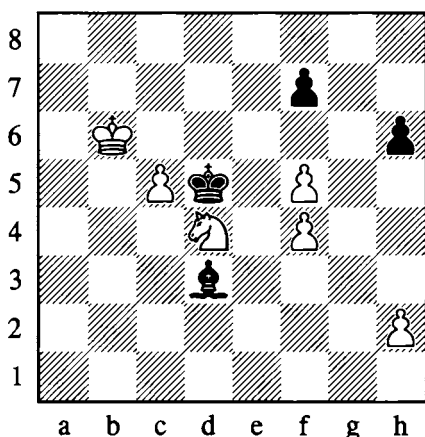
My doubled pawns prove useful by creating a barrier in front of the enemy king. In

contrast, Black's doubled pawns are just weak and doomed.

31...♙d5† 32.♙xb4 ♖xa2 33.♙b5 ♖b1
34.c3

Avoiding the trap 34.♙xb6? ♖xc2! with enough counterplay.

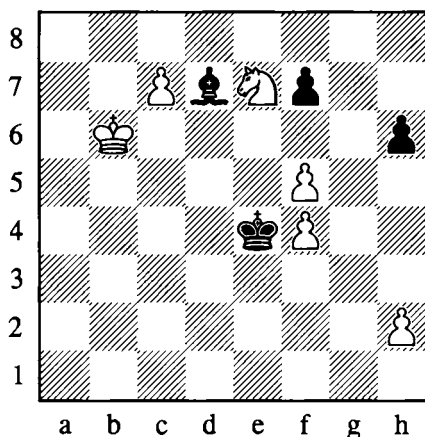
34...♙e7 35.♙xb6 ♙d6 36.c4 ♙d3 37.c5†
♙d5



38.♘c6!

The knight is heading for e7, in order to defend the f5-pawn and prevent Black from creating counterplay with his f7-pawn.

38...♙e4 39.♘e7 ♙c2 40.c6 ♙a4 41.c7 ♙d7



42.♙c5!

The final touch. After ♙d6 the bishop will not have any squares available along the h3-c8 diagonal, and my pawn would promote.

1-0

Immediately after resigning, my opponent fretfully claimed he had been winning! Even after understanding what he had in mind, I was still dissatisfied with his behaviour, which seemed to suggest that he had been winning all the way! I knew that, despite a mutual exchange of mistakes at the critical moment, I had played a good game and completely outplayed him.

Fortunately, I did not keep this bitter feeling for long. The next day Rustam approached me and apologized for his excitable reaction.

I was deeply impressed. I believe that in any sport every person handles the difficult and painful situations in different ways, but very few realize when they have overreacted. Never before had an opponent apologized to me after losing.

The final result of the tournament is well known: Topalov claimed the world title by a comfortable margin. But there was a lot of suspicion in the background, and I will tell the part of the story I know.

We were playing on a small stage of an amphitheatre inside the hotel. The stage was good enough to host four chess tables, but no more than that. Having drawn number 8 (the last one) at the opening ceremony, Topalov played all his games on the same board, which happened to be the closest to the path leading to the spectators VIP section. Some of the players felt that in this way Topalov's manager, Silvio Danailov, was given the opportunity of standing close to Topalov's game, with the risk that he could interfere in one way or another.

Sometime during Topalov's string of victories in the first half of the tournament, the

chief arbiter approached me and asked whether I had anything to complain about regarding this situation. I answered that as long as everything was according to the rules, I had nothing against it. Later, after the tournament was over, some of my colleagues expressed to me their doubts about the new champion's correctness.

Ironically, Topalov found himself on the opposite side of the issue during his Elista match with Kramnik. I guess that such doubts are now part of modern chess, and we will never know the absolute truth about this or that specific situation...

Individual European Championship Aix-les-Bains 2011

Ten years after Ohrid, playing again in a European Individual Championship was an interesting challenge. In the interim, the championship had become a yearly routine and was enjoying increasing popularity; there were 393 participants from more than 50 countries.

The tournament was hosted in several playing halls. The top 20 boards were on the stage of a theatre, and there were many more on the first floor in the same building. Games from the bottom half of the list took place in another building, which was a five-minute walk away.

I was playing in fewer tournaments than previously, as I was involved in several other off-board activities, which I will describe in detail in the final chapter. Therefore, my main aim was just to finish in the top 23, which would ensure qualification for the World Cup. Actually most of the players had the same goal, so playing on the theatre's stage was the main attraction!

My husband joined me for the event, and supported me all the way. The tournament took place between March 21st and April 3rd and we enjoyed very pleasant weather.

Following my loss in the previous round, my seventh-round game against Levan took place on the first floor. The score of 4/6 was not enough to keep me on course to qualify, so I was ready for a big fight.

Levan Pantsulaia – Judit Polgar

European Championship, Aix-les-Bains 2011

1.c4

There are two main possibilities when somebody starts the game with this move. He can either intend avoiding certain openings before transposing to normal 1.d4 positions or else he could be a pure "English" player.

As a kid, I did not care too much about the move orders after 1.c4, since no one could stop me from playing my King's Indian moves. Later, I also included the symmetrical English (1...c5) in my repertoire. But in this game I knew that my opponent was not a 1.d4 specialist and so I expected him to play some set-up based on keeping the d-pawn on its initial square. Therefore, I decided to challenge him in the centre from the first moves.

1...e6

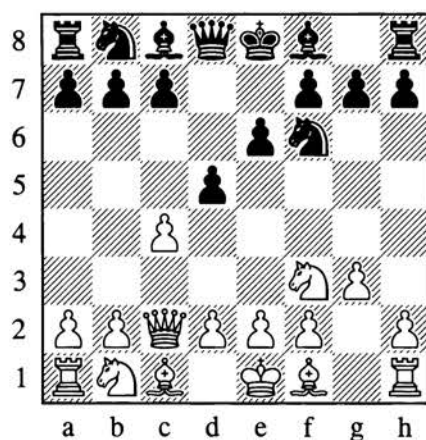
This could not have come as a real surprise for Levan, since I had played it two rounds earlier against Reinderman.

2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.g3 d5 4.♖c2

This was the first time I had faced this move, but there were a few previous games with it.

4.d4 would transpose to the Catalan Opening, which enjoys enormous popularity nowadays, but as said this was not part of my opponent's style.

As Levan played his last move without thinking, the first thought that came to my mind was that he hoped to take advantage of my state of mind after the previous round's loss. From this point of view, surprising me as early as move four looks like a reasonable idea.



4...c5



At the start of the game

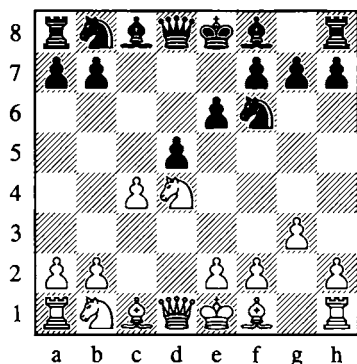
After four minutes I found no reason to refrain from this active and natural move, keeping the tension in the centre. If allowed, I would be happy to play ...d5-d4 in the near future. I already felt happy with my position.

5.d4

It is understandable that White reacts in the centre, possibly hoping for a Tarrasch type of structure, but the queen's exposure on c2 makes the position really dangerous for him.

5...cxd4 6.♖xd4

My opponent played this after 14 minutes, making me think that we were both on our own already. Moreover, I realized that I had obtained a favourable version of the following line: 1.c4 c5 2.♖f3 ♖f6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♖xd4 e6 5.g3 d5



When 6.♗g2 is the main (and practically only reasonable) move.

I was familiar with this position since I had won a very complicated game against Gelfand and I was sure that 6.♗c2, transposing to my game with Levan, was not a serious option!

The alternative was 6.cxd5, but here too the early queen development causes White problems: 6...♖xd5 7.♖xd4 ♖b4! 8.♗c4 White is lucky that the hanging c8-bishop

does not allow the small combination 8...♗xd4 9.♗xd4 ♖c2†, but after 8...e5 followed by ...♗e6 Black would obtain a strong initiative and a big lead in development.

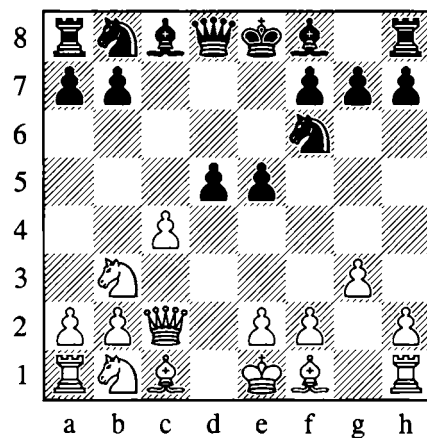
6...e5

After realizing the similarity with the aforementioned line, I played this after only four minutes, trusting that Black has every right to fight for the initiative.

7.♖b3?

A serious mistake, played after nine minutes.

It would have been safer to play 7.♖f3 ♖c6 (7...d4 would also be possible, since the e5-pawn would not be hanging due to ...♗a5†) 8.cxd5 since after 8...♗xd5 the long diagonal would be covered. Neither of us was familiar with the fact that 8...♖xd5 9.a3 ♗e6 was played in the classic game Takacs – Alekhine, Kecskemet 1927, which was won by Black in only 19 moves!



7...♖c6

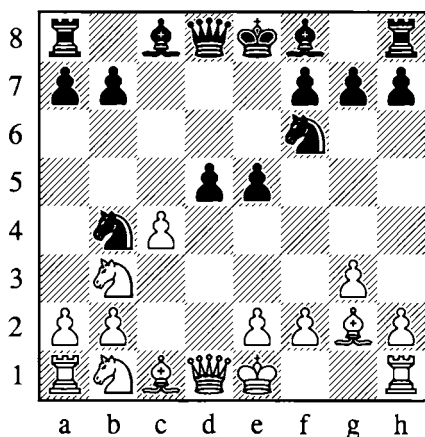
I spent five minutes before playing this natural and strong developing move, as I could not really believe that I had an advantage with Black after just seven moves!

8.♗g2 ♖b4

That day, Garry Kasparov had come for a short visit to the Europeans and around this moment he had a glance at my game. I know Garry pretty well and I immediately understood that he liked my position as well!

9.♚d1

The impatient queen has to return to its initial square without having achieved anything. 9.♚c3 would run into 9...d4, while 9.♚d2 would block the c1-bishop.



9...dxc4

Another relatively quick decision, after only three minutes.

10.♘3d2

Abstractly, the queen exchange would favour me because the white queen has already moved twice. Concretely, it would simply be bad because it would allow ...♘c2† soon.

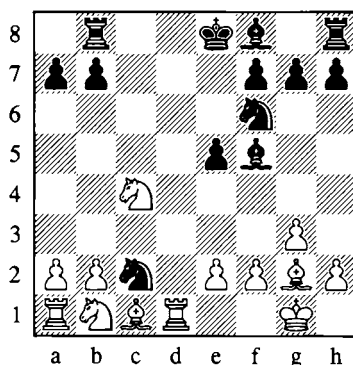
10...♙f5?!

As revealed in the next comment, the threat of ...♘c2† is easy to parry, so it would have been better to keep developing the kingside with 10...♙e7.

11.♘a3?!

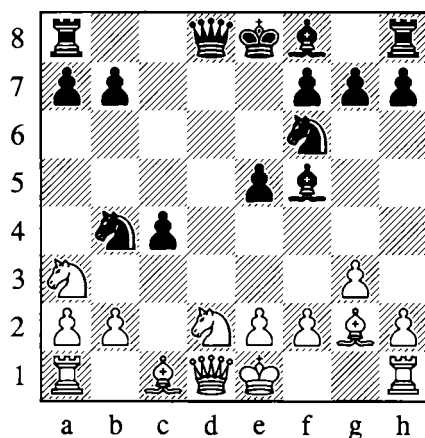
For some reason, we both thought this was forced.

Actually, 11.0–0! was entirely possible since 11...♘c2? would fail to 12.e4. Or if 11...♙b8 threatening to defend the extra pawn with ...b7-b5, 12.♘xc4 ♚xd1 13.♙xd1 ♘c2:



Black seems to be winning, but White has a miraculous saving move. 14.♘e3! ♘xa1 15.♘xf5 with great compensation for the exchange.

Instead of forcing events, I should play 11...♚c7 with some advantage, but at least White would have managed to castle.



11...b5!

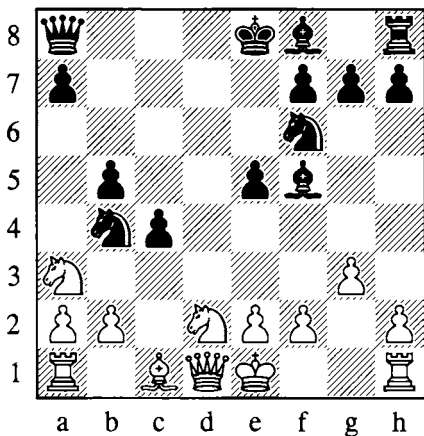
I had planned this exchange sacrifice on my previous move, but I invested eight minutes in double-checking it.

12.♙xa8

White is forced to pick up the gauntlet.

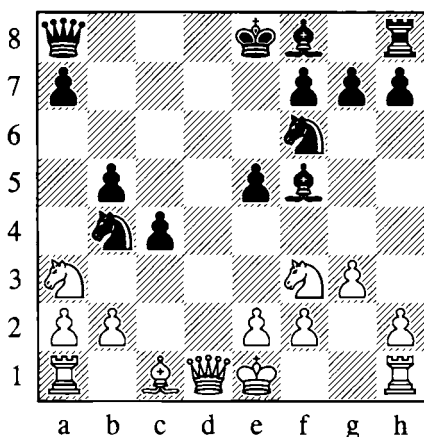
If 12.0-0 ♖b8 the passive a3-knight would prevent White from claiming any kind of compensation for the pawn.

12...♞xa8



13.♘f3

Having missed the right moment to get castled, things are more complicated for White now. If 13.0-0 ♗h3 14.♘f3 I would probably have delayed regaining the exchange, in order to keep the knight pinned and my e5-pawn indirectly defended. For instance 14...a6 15.♖e1 ♗c5 16.♗e3 ♗xe3 17.fxe3 ♘fd5 with a practically winning position.



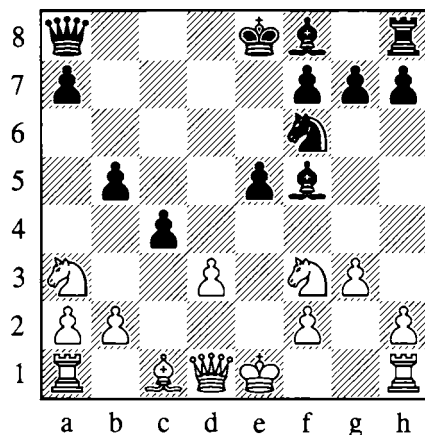
13...♘d3+

After 17 minutes I could not resist the temptation of preventing White from castling and then attacking his king while a rook down.

After the game Garry suggested the simple 13...a6 when 14.0-0 ♗h3 would transpose to the line above.

14.exd3

My opponent was so shocked that he took four minutes before playing this forced reply.



14...♗xd3!

Since my main aim was to prevent the white king from castling, I played this instantly. I intuitively evaluated that the incredible power of my bishop combined with the overall weakness of White's light squares, the miserable placement of the queen's knight and White's poor development in general should yield me more than enough compensation for the sacrificed rook.

14...♗xa3?! would allow White to gain some relief with 15.0-0! ♗g4 16.♗g2 with "only" excellent compensation for Black.

14...♗g4, ensuring the retrieval of some material with ...♗xf3, was also strong, but once again White could get castled and avoid the immediate danger.

After my last move, White faces the combined threat of checks on b4 and e4.

15. ♖xb5!

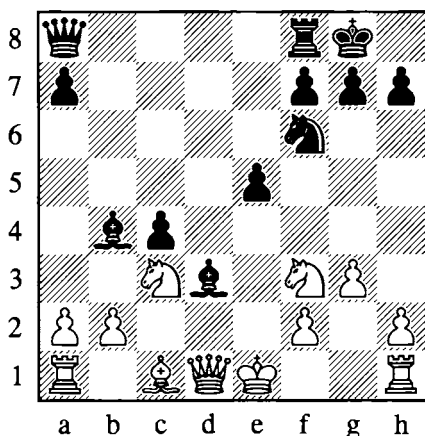
The only defence, preparing to parry ...♙b4† with ♖c3.

If 15. ♖c2? ♜e4† 16. ♖e3 ♙b4† 17. ♙d2 I could exploit the double pin with 17... ♖g4 or 17... ♖d5 when White could prevent mate only at the cost of huge material losses.

15... ♙b4†

I played this and my next move quickly, since I was sure I wanted to get castled as soon as possible in order to include my rook in the attack.

16. ♖c3 0-0!



Before increasing the pressure with ...♖d5 or ...♖e4, it was important to avoid ♜a4 landing with check.

Finally White gets a tempo to organize his defence, but in principle his position looks absolutely awful.

17. ♞g1

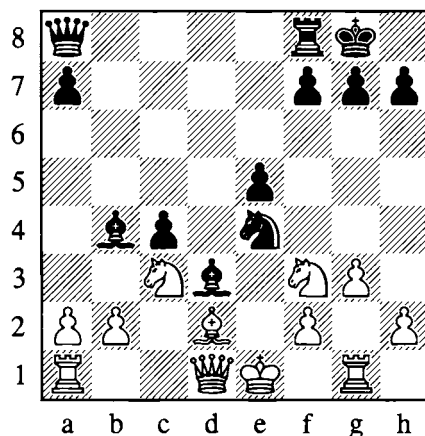
After six minutes White finds the only move that allows him to keep fighting. As revealed in the next comment, it was absolutely essential to unpin the knight.

17... ♖e4

The hurried queen incursion 17... ♜e4† 18. ♙e3 ♖d5 would be parried with 19. ♖d2! taking advantage of the fact that the rook is not hanging on h1! To tell the truth, I did not check the following line, which offers Black good compensation for the exchange but no more than that: 19... ♖xc3 20. ♖xe4 (if 20. bxc3 ♙xc3† White would be completely paralyzed) 20... ♖xd1† 21. ♖xd1 ♙xe4

My move increases the pressure without exchanging queens.

18. ♙d2



It was my turn to have a relatively wide choice and I invested eight minutes on my next move.

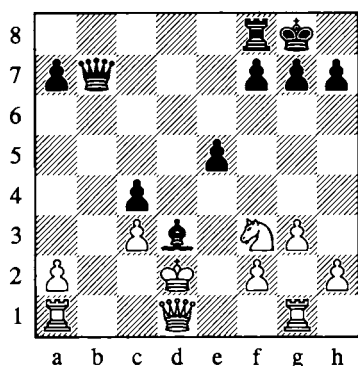
18... ♞d8?!

I picked up the right piece but... dropped it two squares earlier than I should have done!

At first I thought I could win with:

18... ♖xc3 19. ♙xc3 ♙xc3† 20. bxc3 ♜e4† 21. ♖d2 ♜b7

With the simultaneous threats of ...♞d8 and ...♜b2†; eventually I had to admit that this would not offer more than a draw.



22.♙e1!

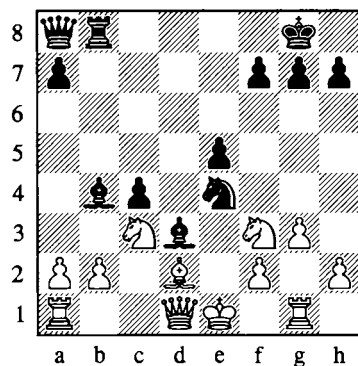
Only not 22.♙c1? ♜b8 23.♙d2? ♙b1+ 24.♙xb1 ♜xb1 mate.

The last move gets ready to meet 22...♜d8 with 23.♙d2 and 22...♙b2 with 23.♜c1 so there is nothing better than:

22...♙e4+

With a draw by repetition.

Later on Jacob Aagaard shared with me his discovery that the strongest move was: 18...♜b8!!



I had considered this move, but failed to evaluate its merits correctly.

The threats of invading along the b-file are stronger than the pressure along the d-file, which is somewhat restricted by the d3-bishop. Some of the immediate threats of the last move are ...♙b4-a5, ...♙b4-c5 (which I also noticed during the game!) or 19...♙xc3 with the possible continuation

20.♙xc3 (20.bxc3 ♙e4+ is even worse) 20...♙xc3+ 21.bxc3 ♙e4+ 22.♙d2 ♜b2+ 23.♙c1 ♜c2+ 24.♙xc2 ♙xc2 25.♙d2 ♙g6 with the decisive threat of ...♙a4.

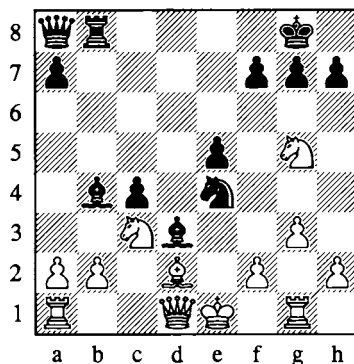
White's best chance for survival would have been:

19.♙g5!?

Defending the e4-square against ...♙xc3 followed by ...♙e4+.

If 19.♜c1? ♙xc3 20.bxc3 ♙a3 White could not prevent the black rook's invasion, for instance 21.♜a1 ♙b2 with the combined threats of ...♙xa1 followed by ...♜b1 and ...♙e4+.

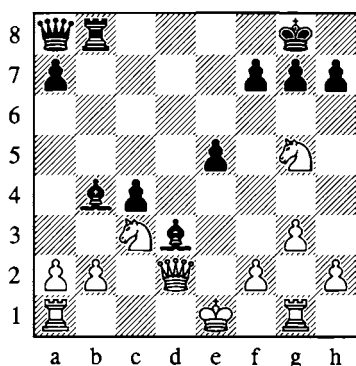
I planned to meet 19.♙c1 with: 19...♙xc3 20.♙xc3 ♙xf3 21.♙e3 ♙b7! Keeping the queens on and strengthening the threats along the b-file. 22.♜d1 ♙xc3+ 23.bxc3 ♙b2 24.♙d2 ♙a3! I was happy to find this calm retreat, putting the dot over the i. The threat of ...♜b2 is decisive. While this whole line is very practical, objectively 19...♙c5! would have been even stronger.



19...♙xc3 20.♙xc3

Aiming to defend the b2- and c3-squares.

If 20.♙xc3 ♙a5! White could not defend b2 adequately, for instance: 21.♙c1 ♜xb2 22.♙xb2 ♙b7+ 23.♙c1 ♙xc3 This reminds me a bit of the game with Morylev on page 169, where my bishops displayed similar deadly activity.



20...f6!

The only winning move and not an easy one to foresee. The main idea is to force the knight to abandon the defence of the f3- and e4-squares. There is no satisfactory defence for White as he cannot avoid losing a knight, leaving me with more than enough compensation for just an exchange.

21.♖e6

21.♖h3 would cause White problems with his king's knight shortly after he had somewhat improved the situation of the other knight: 21...♗f3 22.♗e3 ♗g4! wins the knight.

21.0-0-0 does not improve the king's situation: 21...fxg5 22.♗de1 e4 followed by ...♙c5 and/or ...♗b7 with decisive pressure. Or 21.♖ge4 ♙xe4 22.0-0-0 ♗d3 with a similar evaluation.

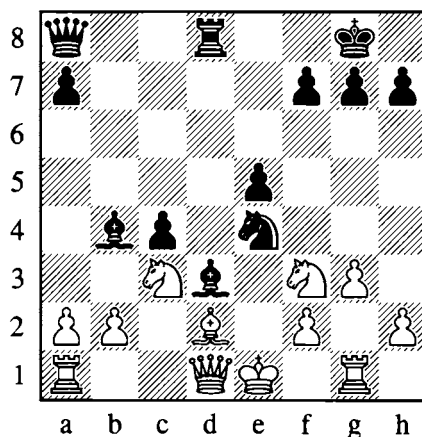
Finally, if 21.a3 ♙xc3 White would not get any relief by eliminating one of the bishops since the b2-square would remain vulnerable after 22.bxc3 fxg5 or 22.♗xc3 ♗b3 23.♗d2 fxg5.

21...♗c6

This quiet move wins the knight while retaining the familiar kind of overwhelming pressure.

Now is a good moment to say that while intuition can offer good guidance in this type of position, one cannot manage without massive and accurate calculation.

I rejected 18...♗b8!! because I did not entirely trust that I could afford to do anything I wanted while a rook down!

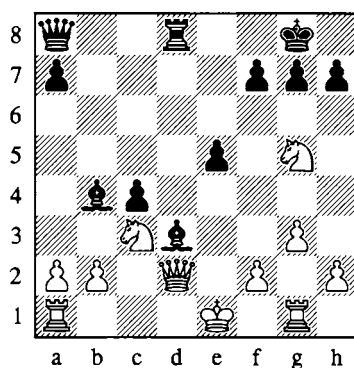


19.♗c1

In the absence of the threats along the b-file, this offers White chances to hold on. The main threat of the last move is ♗e3, somewhat freeing his position and keeping a big material advantage.

The familiar knight jump 19.♖g5 would induce some differences with respect to the similar lines above:

19...♖xd2 20.♗xd2

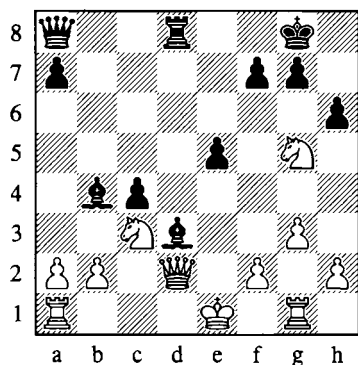


20...h6!

This was my intention and it is indeed the strongest move.

If 20...f6 21.♖e6 White would gain a

tempo due to the fact that my rook would be hanging. And yet, the knight's sudden display of vivacity is not enough to spare White from problems: 21...♔d6 22.♖c7 ♜b7 23.♗7b5 ♜b6 24.a3 Jacob evaluates this position as balanced, but let's continue the variation with the natural moves: 24...♙f8 25.b4 ♜xb5 26.♖xb5 ♜xb5+ White is two exchanges up and has managed to solve the problems with his backward b-pawn, but after ...a7-a5 the bishops would be dictating matters anyway.

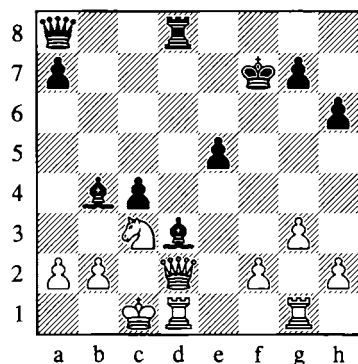


21.♖xf7

Grabbing a pawn is the best way the knight can perish.

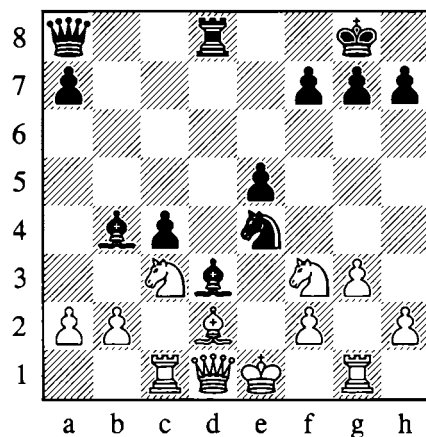
If 21.♖h3 I planned: 21...♙xc3 22.bxc3 ♙e4! With the rook on d8 this comes with gain of time. 23.♜e3 (Preparing to meet 23...♙g2 with 24.g4, defending the knight.) 23...♙f3 Followed by ...♔d3. Actually, the immediate bishop retreat 21...♙e4 would have been even stronger.

21...♙xf7 22.0-0-0



22...♙g8!?

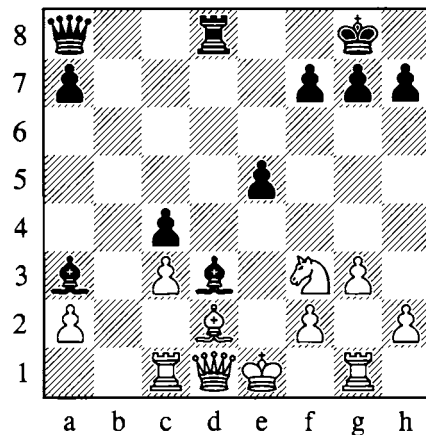
After placing my king into safety I would have continued with ...♜b8, ...♙c5 and ...e5-e4 with deadly pressure.



19...♖xc3

Played after just four minutes.

20.bxc3 ♙a3



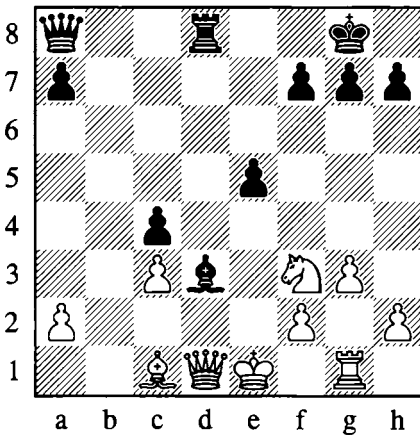
I must confess that at this moment it crossed my mind that I might offer a draw. I felt that I had not made the most out of my position and the possibility of losing the game was upsetting. If I wanted to keep chances of qualifying, I simply could not afford a second defeat!

But then my curiosity to find out the truth about this intriguing position proved stronger, and there was no better way of doing so than playing on.

21. ♖e3!

Threatening ♜d2 and thus forcing me to take the rook. If 21. ♖a1? ♙b2 followed by ... ♖b8 it would suddenly be over.

21... ♙xc1 22. ♙xc1



22... ♖b8!

Better late than never! By occupying the b-file I wanted to prevent ♙e3 followed by ♜d2 with a perfect regrouping for White.

23. ♜d2

With the bishop on c1, this knight retreat leaves White passive, but there was no better way to stop ... ♖e4†.

23... ♗d5

With this natural centralizing move I aimed at preventing the freeing f2-f3 due to the decisive intrusion ... ♗d5-c5-e3 and I also created the threat of ... ♗a5 followed by ... ♗xc3. Crossing White's plans and keeping him passive is the right strategy, especially if we take into account the time remaining to reach move 40: 15 minutes for White and 19 for Black.

Another move of this kind which strongly came into consideration was 23... ♗c6, which would also prevent White's next move.

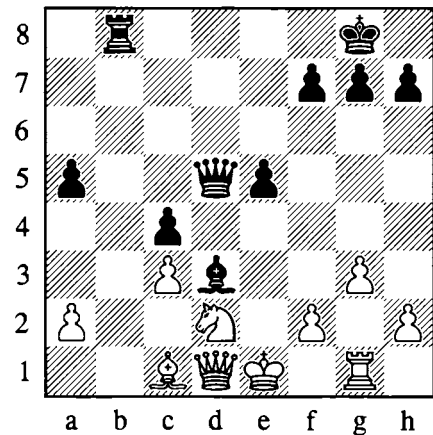
24. ♗a4

White prevents ... ♗a5 and threatens to activate his queen with ♗xa7 possibly followed by ♗e3.

24... a5 25. ♗d1

After having forced me to occupy the a5-square with a pawn, the queen retreats for the second time to its initial square, getting ready to protect the king against attacks from the opposite side.

White's main worries were connected with ... e5-e4 followed by ... ♗e5 and ... e4-e3. The last move allows him to meet 25... e4 with 26. ♗g4, possibly followed by ♗f4-e3.



25... h6!

I played this strong move after just one minute. I considered it useful to secure my king against back rank problems while increasing my control over the dark squares, but I also intended it as a cunning trap.

I felt that after having avoided problems along the e1-a5 diagonal, my opponent would like to challenge me with ♗d1-f3, which allows an unexpected blow.

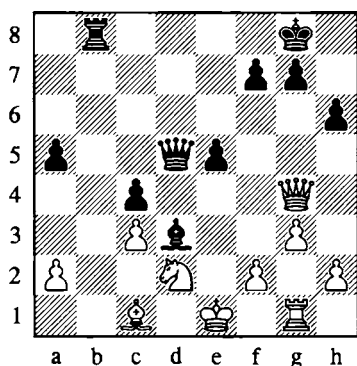
My heart started beating faster when I saw

my opponent's hand approaching the area occupied by his Royal Couple, meaning that he intended to move his queen and I was hoping that Her Majesty would stop on f3.

26. ♖f3?

Losing outright.

Actually, my last move would have proven useful even after the relatively better 26. ♖g4:



The queen only *looks* active on g4, being strongly restricted by my pawns and bishop. The main thing is that with the g5-square controlled by my h6-pawn, there is no route available to e3. My queen would have enjoyed greater mobility, with the possibility of keeping both wings under pressure after the strong:

26... ♖c6!

The main threat is 27... ♖a4, attacking the a2-pawn and preparing ... ♖c2 at the same time.

27. a3

If instead 27. ♖d1 I could bother White in the centre with: 27... e4!

The text move prepares to meet ... ♖a4 with ♖d1, but I could create some sort of zugzwang with:

27... a4!

For instance:

28. ♖f3 ♖b1!

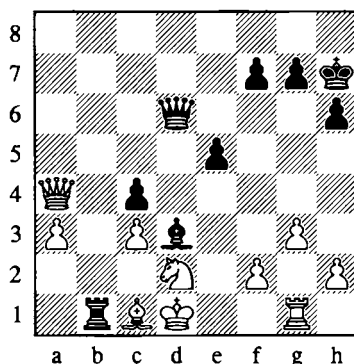
The same trick as in the game!

29. ♔d1 ♖d6!

Black threatens 30... ♖xc1†! with a decisive attack and 30. ♔xb1 loses the queen to 30... ♔e4†.

White needs to defend the a3-pawn with:

30. ♖a8† ♔h7 31. ♖xa4

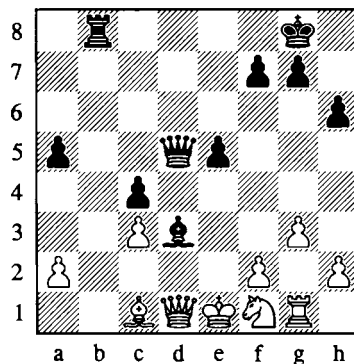


Black has complete domination and several ways to win. One of them starts with the re-centralizing:

31... ♖d5!?

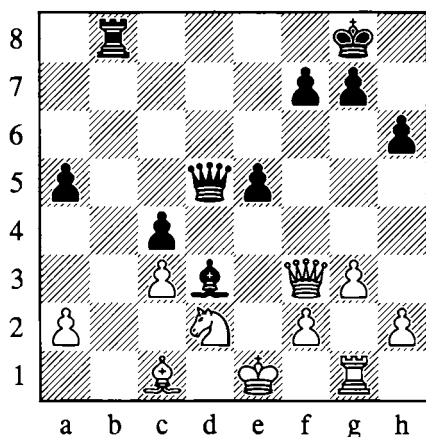
The rook is taboo because of ... ♖f3† followed by ... ♖e2 mate and the main threat is ... ♖b3 followed by ... ♖xc3 and ... ♔c2†.

The regrouping 26. ♔f1 would have similar drawbacks. White would consolidate on the dark squares but allow dangerous queenside activity.



26... ♖c5! (preventing f2-f3) 27. ♔e3 ♖b1
White is completely paralyzed and can do

little more than wait for a slow execution. For instance 28.f3 would allow 28...♖b2!! based on the fact that the e3-knight is hanging.



26...♖b1!!

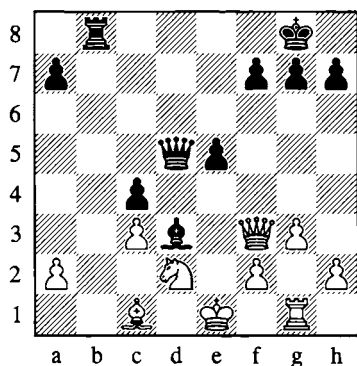
What a shock! Both black major pieces are attacked, but both are invulnerable! If 27.♖xd5 ♖xc1 mates or 27.♘xb1 ♖xf3 is curtains.

27.♘d1

The third retreat to d1 would not make much of a difference: 27.♖d1 ♖a1!

27...e4 28.♖f4 ♖a1

I had spotted the idea of ...♖b1!! before my opponent's 24th move. It is worth mentioning that if my back rank was still vulnerable (with no ...h7-h6 played), 24.♖f3 would have been best met in a different way.



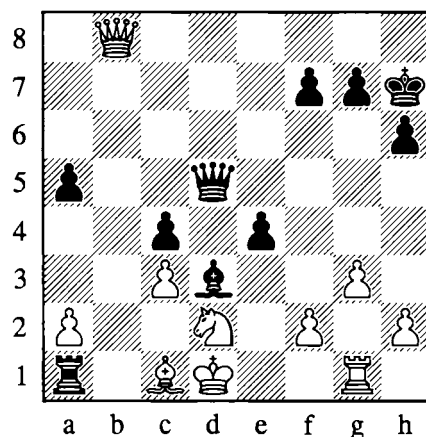
If 24...♖b1?! 25.♘d1 e4 26.♖f4 the generally desirable 26...♖a1 would have allowed mate in two.

24...♖a5! would have been much stronger, hitting c3 and a2.

29.♖b8†

Played with seven minutes left on the clock.

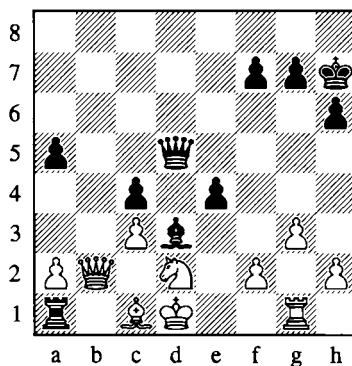
29...♙h7



30.g4

Preventing ...♖h5† followed by ...♖xh2, but creating new weaknesses.

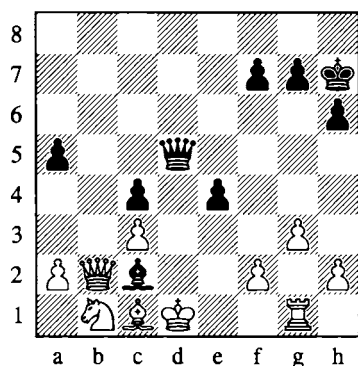
If 30.♖b2 I planned to win with the simple 30...♖h5†, but there is a more elegant way.



30...♖b1!!

The point is that:

31.♘xb1 ♙c2†



Black sets up a beautiful mating net.

32.♙e2

32.♙xc2 ♞d3 mate is one move shorter.

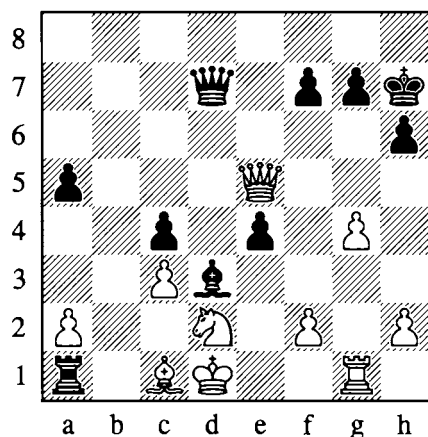
32...♞d3† 33.♙e1 ♞d1 mate.

30...♞d7

After the game I realized that this was my only move backwards! It does not mean much from a practical point of view, but it gave me a special feeling...

The main threat is ...♞a4†, but the queen also keeps the d-file under observation.

31.♞e5

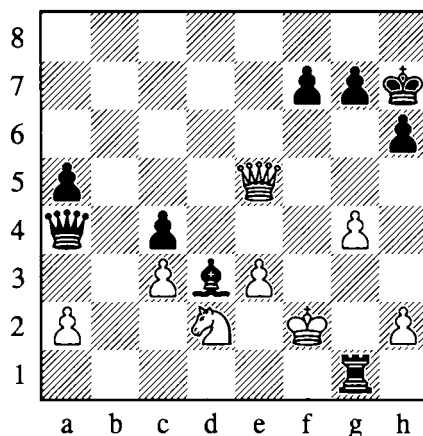


31...e3!

Clearing the b1-h7 diagonal is essential in order to avoid a perpetual check starting with ♞f5† after my queen goes to the queenside.

The move order 31...♞a4† 32.♙b3 e3! would have been just as good, though.

32.fxe3 ♞a4† 33.♙e1 ♞xc1† 34.♙f2 ♞xg1



In view of 35.♙xg1 ♞d1† White resigned.

0-1

On the way back to the hotel, I had a happy chat with Garry, who also enjoyed my game!

For me this was the turning point in the tournament. This win gave me so much self-confidence and energy that I won three more games in a row, against Guseinov (page 258), Lupulescu (a tough game with Black) and Iordachescu (see the next game).

Judit Polgar – Viorel Iordachescu

European Championship, Aix-les-Bains 2011

This game took place in the penultimate round. We were both on a comfortable +5, meaning that even half a point out of the last two games would be enough to qualify.

But by now I had greater ambitions, dreaming of winning the championship, ten years after having failed to win a medal in Ohrid.

I imagine that my string of three consecutive wins over the previous rounds put additional



pressure on my opponent. I felt in great shape, a phrase which is easier to feel intuitively than it is to explain in words.

And since we have touched on this subject, what are the practical elements of being in "excellent shape"? Inspired opening choice, a subtle feel for the pulse of the game, accurate calculating making things work out perfectly, the feeling that you could kick the ball into the enemy goal from under your own goalposts...

This is just a sketch, but the important thing is that when you feel in great form you are also inclined to take greater risks, increasing your chances of winning.

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5

From all the solid openings in his repertoire, I had a feeling before the game that my opponent would choose the Caro-Kann. He must have relied on the fact that over my whole career the Panov Attack was my main weapon, while after the classical 3.♘c3 Black's position is quite solid.

However, I had prepared a surprise.

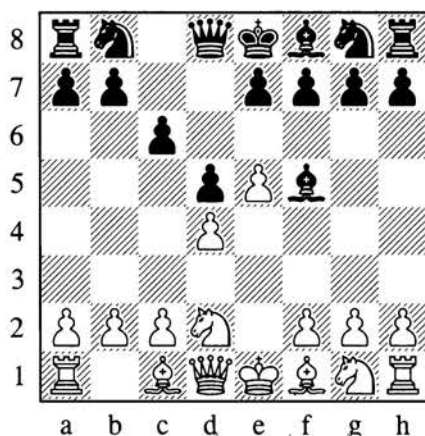
3.e5

I had never played the Advance variation in a classical game before. My opponent seemed unhappy with my choice, probably because he understood that it was going to be a sharp fighting game.

3...♗f5

This is one of the most complicated tabiyas of modern theory. Strong players have tried more than ten different moves, without reaching a clear conclusion about which is really the best.

4.♘d2

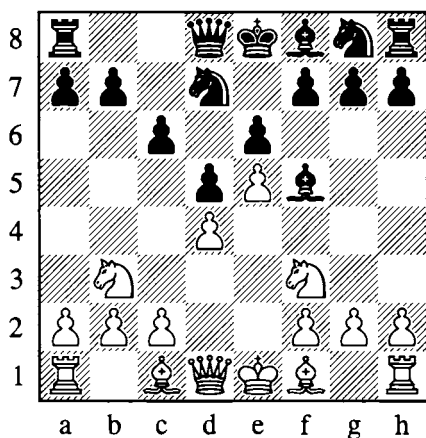


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The knight is heading for b3 in order to take measures against Black's planned ...c6-c5.

This line has the practical merit of being far less explored than some other continuations, among which 4.♖f3 is the most popular.

4...e6 5.♘b3 ♘d7 6.♘f3



Black faces a relatively wide choice of plans. He could prepare ...c6-c5 with 6...a6, preventing the nasty check on b5, or keep developing with 6...♘e7 followed by either ...♘e7-c8 or ...♘e7-g6. Alternatively, Black could think of the f5-bishop's safety with either 6...h6 or the game move.

All these plans have merits and drawbacks, requiring thorough homework in order to avoid over-the-board confusion.

6...♗g6

Viorel had faced this variation twice. In one of them he played 6...♘e7 and in the other he preferred the game move. Obviously, I had prepared against both possibilities.

7.♗e2 ♘h6

The other possible way of reaching f5 with the knight is 7...♘e7. My opponent might have disliked 8.♘h4, but I would have castled anyway, with a possible transposition to the game continuation.

8.0-0

Spoiling Black's structure with 8.♗xh6 gxf6 is always something to consider in such situations. I did not like parting with my bishop since after ...♗g7 followed by castling on either side and ...f7-f6, Black would get active play.

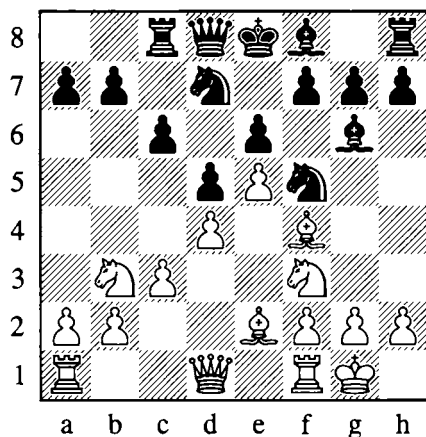
8...♘f5 9.c3

The most popular continuation is 9.♗d2. I considered my move a more flexible anticipation of ...c6-c5 since it keeps the possibility of developing the bishop more actively.

9...♞c8

Black is going straight for an early ...c6-c5 break. The natural alternatives 9...♗e7 and 9...a6 are more popular.

10.♗f4



This developing move was a novelty. Apart from the natural ♖d2, I wanted to prepare g2-g4 followed by ♗g3, ensuring my king's safety despite the territorial ambitions on that wing.

So far, my opponent had not spent much time, but now he took 13 minutes before taking the committal decision:

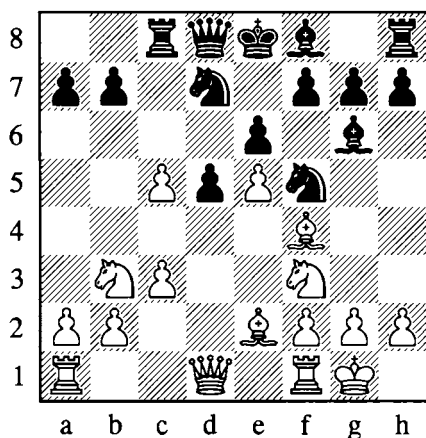
10...c5?!

Although thematic, this pawn break is premature with the black king still in the centre and far from castling. The solid 10...♙e7 was preferable, leading to a complex middlegame. If asked to give a more specific evaluation, I would add that the better player (or the one with stronger nerves) should win!

11.dxc5

I spent eight minutes on this move.

In principle, the counter-break c3-c4 is thematic in this variation, but I thought 11.c4 was rather premature and so I looked for a more favourable moment to advance my c-pawn.



11...♙xc5

The only way to keep the possibility of castling.

If 11...♙xc5 12.♙xc5 ♙xc5 13.♙a4† I could keep the black king in the centre without the necessity of sacrificing material.

12.♙xc5

White gets the advantage of the two bishops and good control over the d4-square, making the game rather one-sided. It felt good to know that I could play for a win without much risk. However, the character of the position changed abruptly only a few moves later.

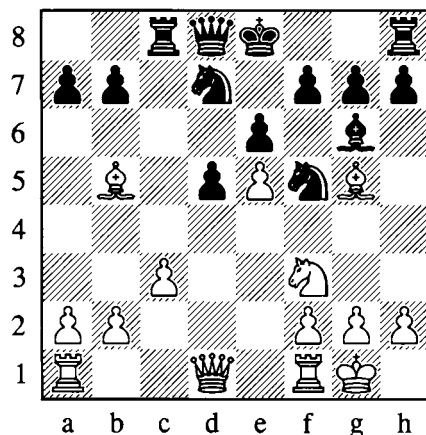
12...♙xc5

If 12...♙xc5 I would have had a pleasant choice between a series of favourable alternatives. I might have played 13.♙b3 ♙c7 14.♙d4 with a lead in development, a space advantage and the bishop pair.

13.♙b5† ♙d7

This is why Black needed to keep his knight, but the pin is unpleasant.

14.♙g5



During my five-minute think about this active move, I already foresaw the piece sacrifice on move 16.

14...♙c7?!

Typically for positions with lagging development, even a natural move such as this can lead to big problems.

The ultra-solid and passive 14...♙e7± would have been preferable, but one can understand Black's reluctance to pin his second knight. A possible continuation would have been 15.♙xd7† ♙xd7 16.♙xe7 ♙xe7 17.♙b3 followed by ♙a3† and ♙d4. Apart from the prospect of an ending with a good knight against a bad bishop, White would also keep the initiative.

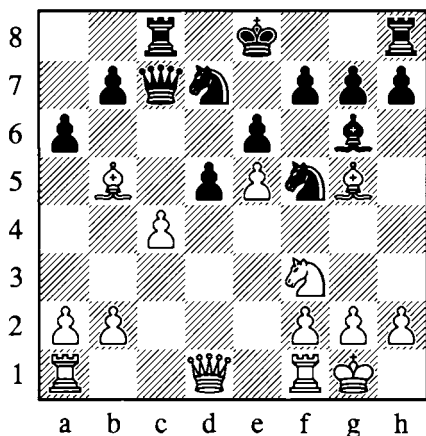
15.c4!

I spent six minutes double-checking the exciting attacking idea I had designed a bit earlier.

15...a6

I have a feeling that over the four minutes spent on this move my opponent came to understand what was awaiting him, but probably he could not believe it would really be so dangerous.

If 15...dxc4 16.♖c1, followed by ♖xc4, the pin on the d7-knight would be decisive.

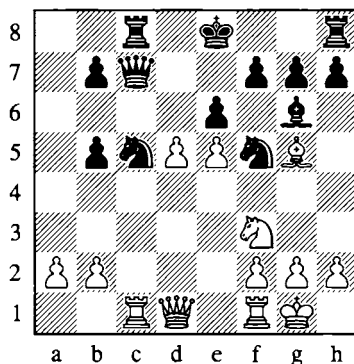
**16.cxd5!!**

The culmination of my previous sequence of moves – I sacrifice a piece for the sake of opening lines in the centre and I prevent the black king from castling. Even though in principle I had taken my decision already, I spent another 11 minutes before embarking on this adventure.

16...axb5 17.♖c1 ♖b8

After three minutes Black decided to keep his material advantage.

Placing the knight under another pin with 17...♗c5 was hardly appealing, but some accuracy would be needed from White:

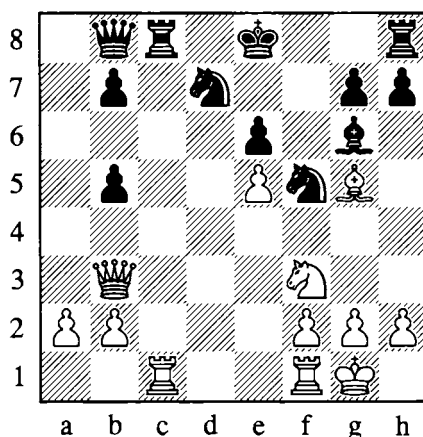
**18.g4!**

Before the natural b2-b4, it is better to force the other knight into passivity.

After the hurried 18.b4 Black would manage to survive with 18...♗d7! 19.bxc5 ♖xd5 20.♖xd5 exd5 21.♖fd1 h6 22.♗f4 ♗h5 23.♖xd5 ♗xf3 24.gxf3 ♖e7. His centralized king and stability on the light squares would offer Black adequate compensation for the pawn.

18...♗h6 19.b4 ♖d7 20.bxc5 ♖xd5 21.♖xd5 exd5 22.h3

Due to Black's pawn weaknesses and the passivity of the knight, White has a clear advantage.

18.dxe6 fxe6 19.♖b3

I played the last three moves rather quickly, as I was convinced that they were best. I felt

that I had full compensation for the piece and lots of threats against the black king and his poorly coordinated army, but I also knew that my position was far from winning, and everything still had to be decided over the board.

For Black, this was the critical moment when he had to make a choice between at least five alternatives. I believed that my opponent (who still had 56 minutes) would take his time on his next move, so I decided to do my own calculating job while his clock was ticking.

I was in the middle of the process when Viorel surprised me by answering after only 7 minutes:

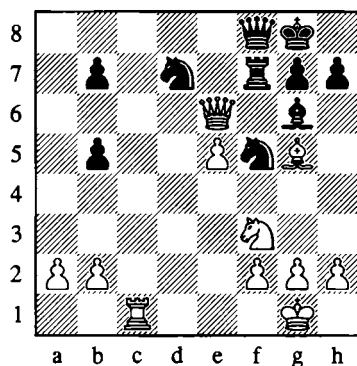
19...♖f8?

Had he spent more time on this important decision, my opponent might have realized that delaying the connection between his rooks would have grave effects.

There were four other moves to be considered:

My first worry when I decided to sacrifice the piece was determining whether Black could get castled:

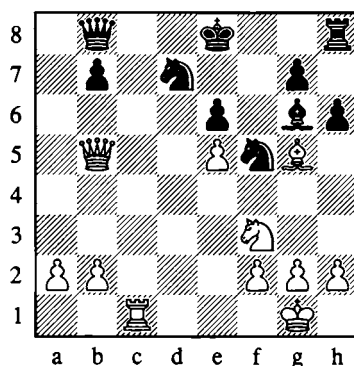
19...0-0? It turns out he could not: 20.♞xe6† ♜f7 21.♞xc8† ♞xc8 22.♞c1 ♞f8



I was planning 23.♞c7 ♖c5 24.♞d5 winning, but it appears that the quiet move

23.♞b3 threatening e5-e6, or in some cases ♞c7, would have been even stronger.

19...♞c4!? was an important way to reduce the strength of my attack. I would probably have played: 20.♞xb5 ♞xc1 21.♞xc1 h6!



White could force a draw by repetition with 22.♞d1 ♞c7 23.♞c1 ♞b8, but I could also play on with 22.♞d2 followed by ♞b4, keeping the enemy king in the centre.

Black could carry out a similar idea with:

19...♜f7 20.♞xb5 ♞c6!

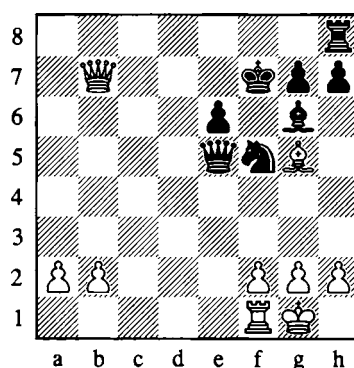
The only move. Once again, Black sacrifices a pawn on the c-file, with good chances to take a bit of the steam out of my attack.

21.♞xc6 bxc6 22.♞xc6

I must confess that while my opponent was thinking, I reached the position after:

22...♖xe5 23.♖xe5† ♞xe5 24.♞b7†

I considered it winning for White.

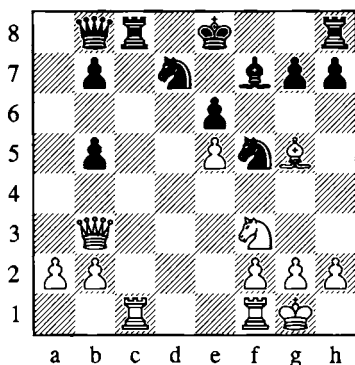


Viorel must also have thought he was going to lose the rook after a back-rank check, but in fact Black can defend with:

24...♔f8!

Preparing to cover the back rank with ...♙e8. True, White would keep a strong initiative with the developing move 25.♞d1, but the whole fight would lie ahead.

The most interesting defence would have been 19...♙f7!? with some interesting tactical ideas.

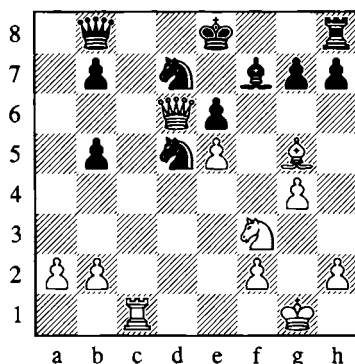


20.♞xc8+ ♜xc8 21.♞c1 ♜b8 22.g4

During the game I calculated:

22...♙e7 23.♜b4 ♙d5 24.♜d6

And I thought I was winning.



The immediate threat is 25.♜xb8+ ♙xb8 26.♞c8+ winning the rook, while if 24...♜a8 the c7-square becomes available for 25.♞c7, based on 25...♙xc7 26.♜e7 mate.

However, just like in the line starting with

19...♔f7, Black would have a far-from-obvious way of saving his rook:

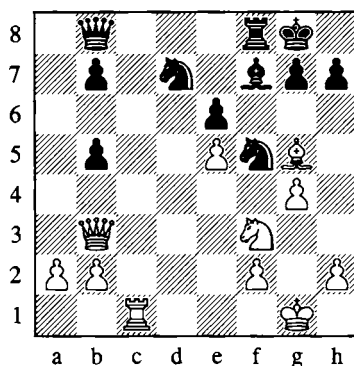
24...♞g8!

Preparing to meet the threatened sequence with 26...♙d7, when the rook is defended.

And yet, White could improve earlier with: 23.♙xe7! Eliminating the knight before it occupies a dominating position on d5. 23...♔e7 24.♜a3+ ♔e8 25.♙d4 With the decisive threat of ♙xb5-d6+.

But this is not the end of the story, since after 22.g4 Black could finally get his king into safety with:

22...0-0!



23.♜xb5

23.gxf5 ♙xe5 is fine for Black.

23...♙e8 24.gxf5 ♞xf5 25.♜b3 ♙f8

Due to his control on the light squares and the weakened position of the white king, Black would have adequate compensation for the pawn.

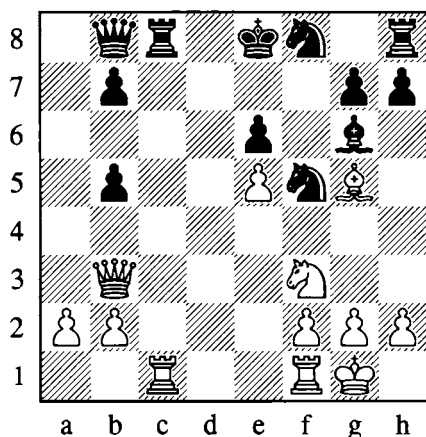
After completing the analysis of these lines, I can say that 19...♙f7 is my favourite, followed by 19...♞c4 and 19...♔f7.

But over the board everything is much more complicated, so which qualities are required to work through this jungle of variations?

First of all, one needs considerable powers of calculation, but evaluating the resulting

positions accurately is at least as important and actually more difficult to master. Sometimes, one needs to rely on intuition when choosing between two apparently equivalent moves.

And finally, patience and strong nerves are essential, since analyzing such a position while under the pressure of a tournament consumes a lot of nervous energy. If we were to define Black's last move abstractly, then "impatient" would probably be the word.



20. ♖xb5+ ♜f7

At first sight this does not look that bad for Black – not worse than after some of the alternatives examined above – but things get very concrete now.

21. ♜xc8 ♜xc8 22. ♜c1 ♜b8

The only reasonable way of defending the b7-pawn and the c7-square.

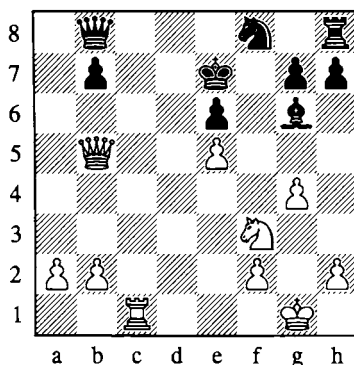
I had foreseen that after 22... ♜d7 I would win with 23. ♜xd7+ ♜xd7 24. ♜c7! ♜e8 25. ♜c8+ winning the rook. This time, there is no miraculous defence for Black!

23. g4!

A key move, attacking Black's only active piece, which also defends the e7- and g7-squares.

23... ♜h6

If 23... ♜e7 24. ♜xe7 ♜xe7 White's position surely looks promising, but in such situations it is important to find the strongest among several tempting continuations.



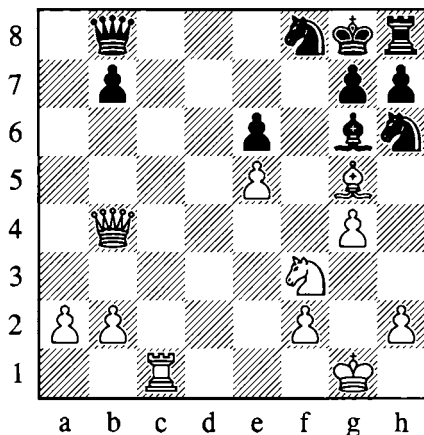
25. ♜b6! Threatening a decisive invasion with ♜c7+. Balancing on the precipice would not save Black: 25... ♜d7 26. ♜b4+ ♜d8 27. ♜d4 ♜xe5 28. ♜e1 ♜e4 29. ♜f3 White wins the bishop.

24. ♜b4

A smart queen retreat, threatening either ♜e7+ or ♜f4+.

And yet, the familiar manoeuvre 24. ♜b6, threatening ♜c7+, might have been even stronger.

24... ♜g8



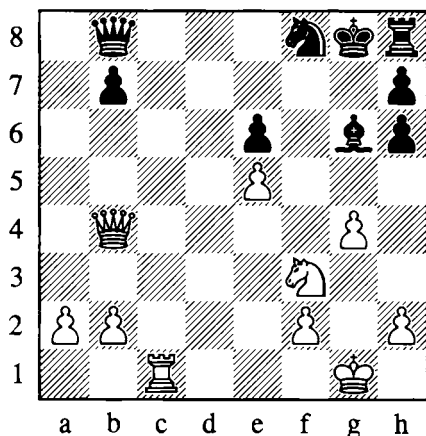
After six minutes I decided that, as passive as it looked, the h6-knight was an important defensive piece, so I did not hesitate to exchange it!

25. ♖xh6

After the apparently promising 25. ♖e7 Black could defend stubbornly with 25... ♖f7. Black would pretty much hold on after: 26. ♖c7 h6!

According to the engines 25. ♖d4 is by far the strongest move, but I am content with my choice.

25... ♗xh6



26. ♖e7

With the straightforward idea of ♖c7-g7 mate followed by ♖g7 mate.

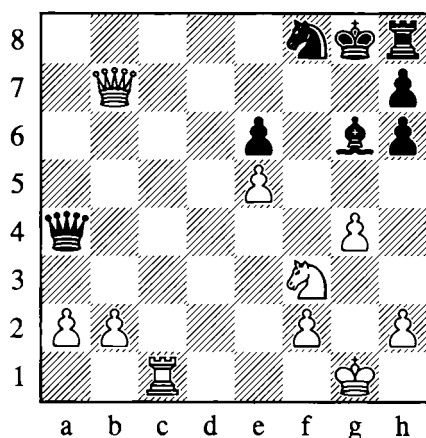
26... ♖e8

The only defence, but it costs Black another pawn.

27. ♖xb7

Given the clumsy crowding of the black pieces, simple threats such as ♖c7-g7 mate, or the advance of the queenside pawns towards promotion, are hard to parry.

27... ♖a4!?



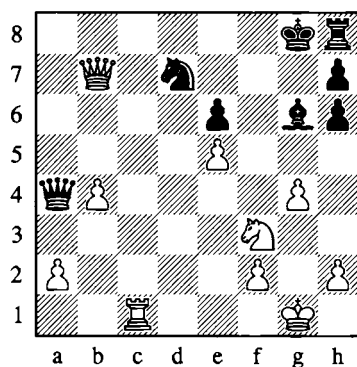
Black's only chance is to look for some activity against my weakened king's position. The last move attacks g4 and creates the threat of ... ♖e4.

28. b4!

A great move, cutting off the black queen from my kingside, and starting the slow advance of the queenside pawns at the same time.

28... ♖e8

28... ♖d7 looks like a better practical chance, although objectively Black's position would be hopeless anyway.



29. ♖g2

An important move, avoiding the check on d1 after the rook becomes active.

29... ♖f7 30. ♖c6 ♖d8 31. ♖d6

White plans to defend the g4-pawn with h2-h3, followed by ♖d4. The weakness of the e6-pawn and the double pin on the knight are decisive.

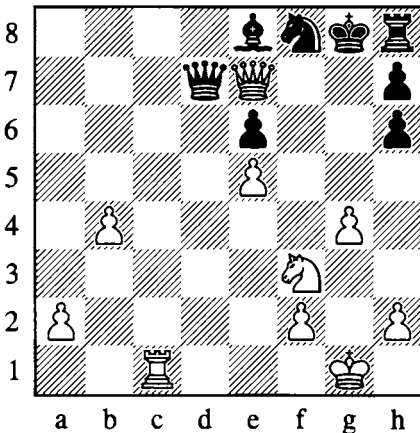
29. ♖e7

The queen returns to this optimal square, threatening to pin Black's pieces with ♖c8.

29... ♗d7

This came as a pleasant surprise, since I had foreseen my next move when playing 29. ♖e7.

I was expecting 29... ♕c6 when 30. ♖d4 looks strong enough, but the computer's suggestion of 30. ♖f6 practically puts Black in zugzwang! 30... ♕xf3 31. ♖xf3 Threatening either ♖c8 or ♖c7. 31... ♗a7 32. ♖c8 ♖f7 33. ♕g2! Preparing the king's centralization and the unstoppable advance of the b-pawn.



30. ♖c7!

This forces the queen exchange in a way that prevents Black from completing his development before my pawns become too dangerous.

30... ♖xe7

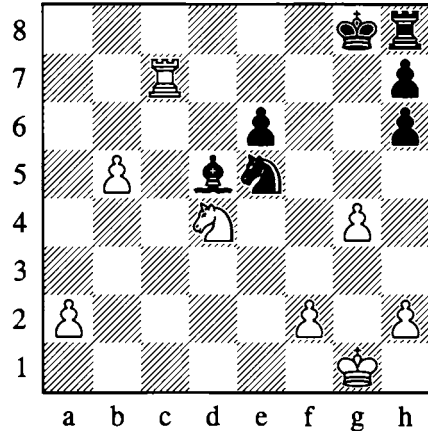
If 30... ♖d1† then 31. ♕g2 ♕d7 32. ♖b7 followed by ♖b8 wins.

31. ♖xe7 ♕c6

The bishop has finally reached the long diagonal, but one active piece is not enough to save the game, while the material advantage does not make itself felt in any way.

32. ♖d4 ♕d5 33. b5 ♖g6 34. ♖c7 ♖xe5

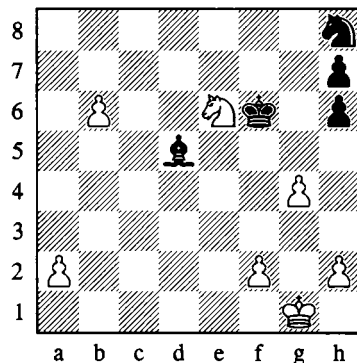
The knight now enjoys some activity as well, but with his king and rook desperately passive and dominated by my rook, Black cannot fight against my passed pawns.



35. f4

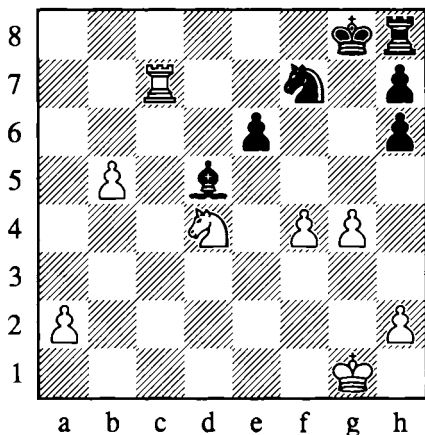
I was happy with this move, but with a bit more of effort I would have chosen the simpler: 35. b6 ♖f7 36. ♖c8† ♕g7 37. ♖xe6† ♕f6 38. ♖xh8 ♖xh8

I stopped my calculating here, one move too early.



White wins with either 39.♖d8 or 39.♖c5 followed by 40.b7, simplifying to a knight ending with two extra pawns.

35...♖f7



Hoping to finally get the rook into play after ...♖g7, but I did not allow it so easily.

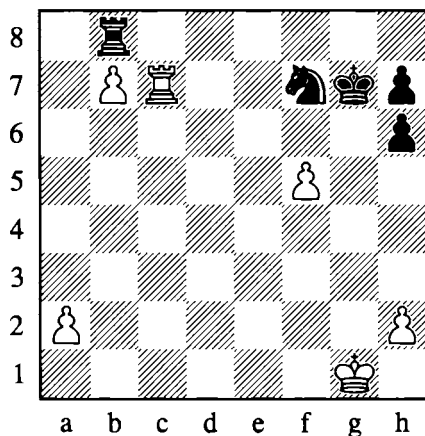
36.f5!

A strong concrete decision, ruining Black's last hopes.

36...exf5 37.♖xf5 ♖e6 38.b6

While Black is desperately trying to free his kingside, my pawns get nearer and nearer to promotion.

38...♖xf5 39.gxf5 ♖g7 40.b7 ♖b8



Black has been in time to parry the threat of ♖c8, but with his knight pinned he is helpless against the advance of my second queenside pawn.

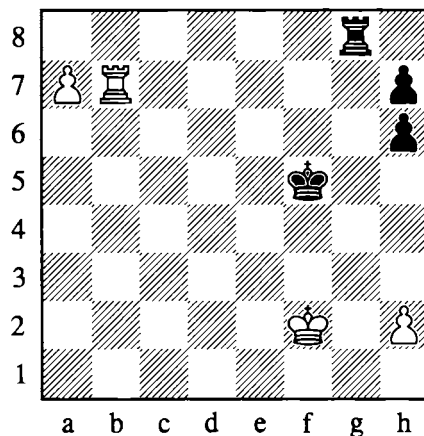
41.a4 ♖f6 42.a5 ♖d6 43.a6

Everything works out for White by just one tempo, but this is good enough to win the game.

43...♖xf5

Or if 43...♖e8, hoping for 44.a7 ♖xb7 45.♖xb7 ♖e1† followed by 46...♖a1, the most convincing win would have been 44.♖c6 ♖e5 45.♖xd6 ♖xd6 46.a7 promoting one of the pawns.

44.a7 ♖g8† 45.♖f2 ♖xb7 46.♖xb7



The black rook cannot get behind my pawn as in the line above, so there is only one way of parrying the threat of ♖b7-b8.

46...♖a8

Actually I was expecting my opponent to resign, but little by little I tried to figure out whether he had some hidden saving resource in mind.

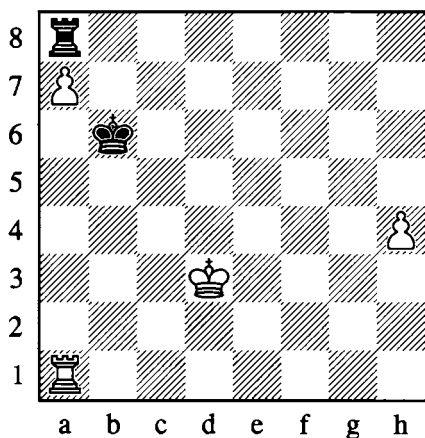
47.♖e3 ♖e5 48.♖xb7

Black is in zugzwang. Any king move would allow my king to advance on either wing, while the game move loses another pawn.

48...♖c8 49.♗d3 ♗d5 50.♖xh6 ♗c5 51.♖a6
♖a8 52.h4

By now I had become aware of Viorel's cunning idea, but I found more than one way to avoid the trap.

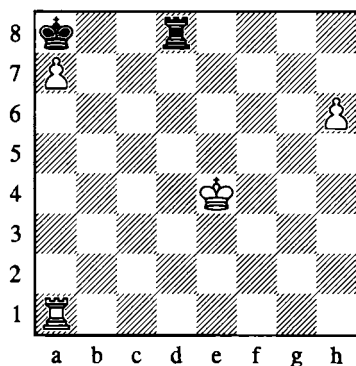
52...♗b5 53.♖a1 ♗b6



54.♗c4!!

From a practical point of view, the most convincing move, causing Black's immediate resignation.

54.h5 would win as well, but only with a bit of caution at the critical moment. 54...♗b7 55.h6 ♖d8† 56.♗e4 ♗a8



Unexpectedly, 57.h7?? throws away the win: 57...♖h8 58.♖h1 ♖xh7 59.♖xh7 stalemate! Instead of 57.h7?? the simplest win would be

57.♖b1, threatening to exchange rooks with ♖b8†, and if 57...♗xa7 58.h7 the black king would be too far to help stop the h-pawn.

My last move aimed at placing Black in zugzwang by keeping the pressure on the queenside: 54...♗b7 55.♗b5 ♖h8 56.a8=♖† and the h-pawn would promote soon.

1–0

You can imagine that after such a fantastic string of four consecutive wins I was walking on the clouds with happiness. My 'plus six' score was enough for a tie for 1st-4th, resulting in a bronze medal on tiebreak.

After ten years, I finally took revenge for my relative failure in Ohrid...

FIDE World Cup, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011

This was my third visit to Khanty-Mansiysk. I had qualified for the FIDE World Cup from the Aix-les-Bains European Championship.

I had retained some extreme meteorological impressions from my first experience there, for the 2009 World Cup, which was held in the cold month of February. One night when we returned from the playing hall to the hotel it was minus 38 degrees!

By contrast, the first thing that comes to my mind when I think of my second visit to the Siberian city is that the 2010 Olympiad was the best organized of all those I have participated in!

The playing conditions were also outstanding during the 2011 World Cup. The event took place at the Chess Academy, which had been built specially for hosting chess competitions. The building is very modern and it gives the impression that chess is respected there. There are chess motifs everywhere, even on the bathroom tiles!

The live coverage was excellent, offering pleasure not only to chess enthusiasts all over

the world, but also to the participants. There were five cameras following the games and players, with live commentary in Russian and English. Moreover, the press room was always prepared to broadcast the post-mortem comments of the players or occasional guests. In short, I believe it must have been a dream to follow this event online!

Judit Polgar – Sergey Karjakin

World Cup (3.1), Khanty-Mansiysk 2011

In the first two rounds I eliminated Corrales from Cuba and Sergei Movsesian (more details about the latter match on page 200).

In the third round I faced the tournament favourite, at least on rating, Sergey Karjakin who at 2772 was ranked fifth in the world. It is always a question which colour is best to have in the first game of a mini-match. If you “waste” the white pieces with a draw, you may feel under pressure in the second game, although this was not the case in the match with Movsesian. In any event, against Karjakin the white pieces did their job in our first game.

1.e4 e5 2.♟f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 ♜f6

I prepared for this game with the help of Zoltan Almasi, who has been my training partner for many years. Zoltan was eliminated at an earlier stage, but stayed in Khanty-Mansiysk to help me prepare for my games.

We also had a brief look at the Zaitsev variation, but we thought the Berlin Defence was the most probable choice of my opponent. Karjakin had used it against me at the 2010 Khanty-Mansiysk Olympiad and, besides, the variation is very well suited for match purposes, when one usually tries to neutralize the opponent's White.

Karjakin's choice did not bother me at all, since Almasi is one of the leading experts on the Berlin, which gave me confidence during the preparation.

4.0-0 ♜xe4 5.d4 ♜d6 6.♙xc6 dxc6 7.dxe5 ♜f5 8.♙xd8† ♜xd8 9.♜c3 ♜e8

There are many other moves possible, for instance 9...h6 as played by Kasparov (see page 37) or 9...♜e7 as popularized by Almasi many years ago.

We knew that Karjakin favoured the game move, so we focused on it during our preparation.

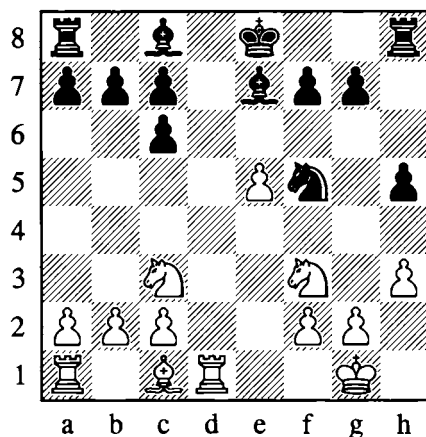
10.h3 h5

10...♙e7 used to be the fashion for some time, but the game move is clearly the one most played by elite players such as Kramnik, Karjakin, Grischuk, Ponomarev, Bacrot, So...

11.♞d1

Deviating from the logical and most popular move 11.♙f4, which is usually followed by ♞ad1 and ♜fe1.

11...♙e7



12.♜e4

I had analyzed this rare move with Hazai, a long time ago. When showing my old notes to Zoltan, he liked this move and we deepened the analysis together.

Now is a good moment to speak about the positive influence of having a second during a match like this.

Apart from purely technical matters, such as carefully checking the concrete lines you intend to play, coming up with tips and advice, or looking for the opponent's hidden weaknesses from a different, more objective, angle, there are also two important psychological aspects.

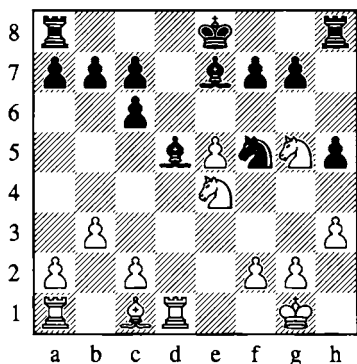
It builds up one's confidence to feel that the second is unconditionally supporting you and rooting for you during the game. At the same time, the simple thought that you have a second might be worrying for the opponent. For instance, when Karjakin noticed Almasi among the spectators he most likely remembered that he is a Berlin expert, and understood that he had helped me to prepare.

The last move increases the control over the g5-square, preparing for Bg5 and if $\dots \text{Bg5}$ Ne4xg5 . From e4, the knight also controls the c5-square, while the c2-pawn is free to advance, in order to restrict the c8-bishop. Last but not least, hitting the opponent with an early surprise is useful even if the unexpected move is not really killing.

12... Bd7

Karjakin played this new move after only two minutes.

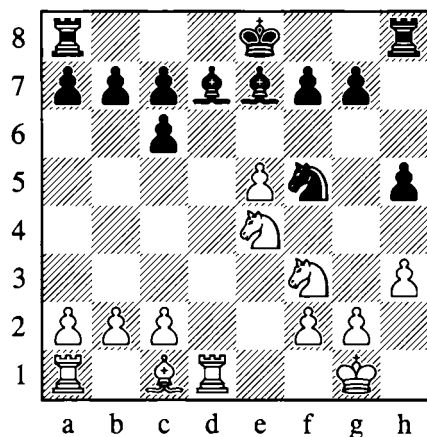
Curiously, nobody has repeated it since and in the few games where White has tried my experiment, Black reacted with the seemingly more active 12... Be6 13. Nfg5 Bd5 14.b3. This is the position White is heading for with 12. Ne4 .



One big problem in the Berlin Defence is that Black can usually carry out his slow regrouping unhindered. Play rarely takes on a concrete or forcing character in the early phase, making White's lead in development irrelevant.

This subtle way of neutralizing White's initiative is more than a struggle for equality. Nowadays, many players use the Berlin as a way of playing for a win and I must confess that I have 'burned myself' with White a few times, failing to find dynamic ways of meeting Black's static approach.

Things are a bit different in this position. Black is still struggling to complete his development and he faces the concrete threat of c2-c4. I assume we will see more games with this line, but I believe that after 14...b5 15. Ne3 Bd8 as, for instance, in Azarov – Bacrot, Plovdiv 2012, there is objectively little chance of White being better.



Karjakin's move is intended to be more flexible. The bishop waits for a safer moment to go to e6, but could also change direction with $\dots \text{c6-c5}$ followed by $\dots \text{Bc6}$.

13.b3

I also played a flexible move, increasing my control over the light squares and keeping the possibility of developing the bishop to g5, f4

or b2, according to the concrete needs. Since c2-c4 is part of my plan, I found it useful to defend the c4-square in advance.

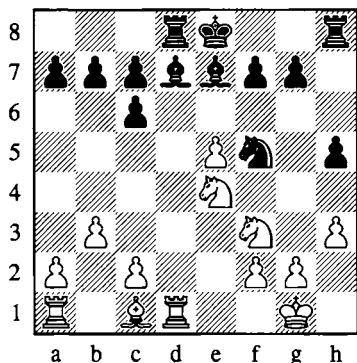
I find 13.♔g5 ♜d8 safe enough for Black and would suggest 13.♙f4 ♜c6 looks premature since 15.♞e1 exposes Black to the thematic pawn break e5-e6.

13...h4

Karjakin spent 11 minutes on this strategically ambitious move. Black increases the stability of his knight and allows the activation of the king's rook to h5.

Activating the bishop with 13...c5 14.♙f4 ♜c6 looks premature since 15.♞e1 exposes Black to the thematic pawn break e5-e6.

I think Black should have continued developing with 13...♜d8. The rook would be useful on d8 in more than one case.



For instance:

14.c4

Or if 14.♔g5 ♔xg5 15.♙exg5 ♔e7 Black completes his development without fearing ♙xf7 since the bishop is over-defended.

14...c5 15.♙c3 ♜c6 16.♙d5

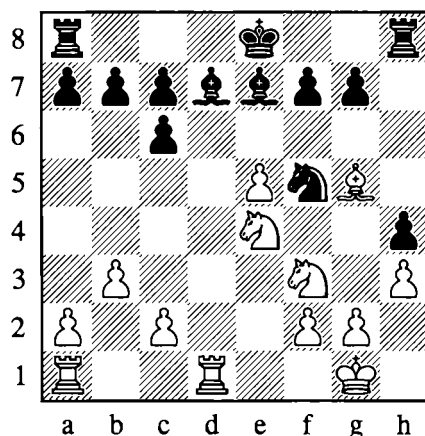
It may seem that White has a dominating position, but Black can free himself at once: 16...♔xd5 17.cxd5 ♙d4!=

With the idea that if 18.♙xd4 then 18...♞xd5.

One way or another, I was happy with Karjakin's decision to spend a valuable tempo on a pawn move, instead of centralizing his rook.

And since the time had come to develop my bishop, I spent seven minutes on checking which would be the best square for it.

14.♔g5



14...♜d8

This answer came after just one minute.

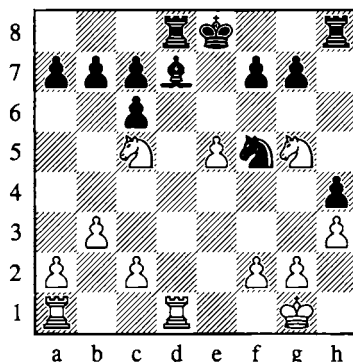
14...♔e6 would reveal the merits of my half-waiting move 13.b3 by allowing 15.c4 depriving the bishop of the d5-square.

Since Black has delayed his development, 14...♔xg5 would land him in trouble:

15.♙fxg5 ♜d8

Preventing ♙xf7.

16.♙c5

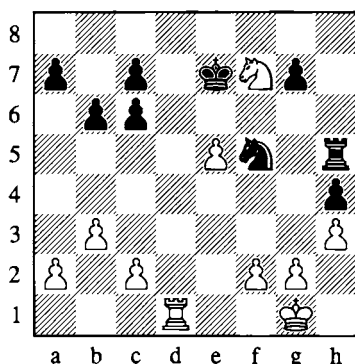


We can notice that even ...b7-b6 would have been more useful than the hyper-ambitious ...h5-h4. With the f7- and b7-pawns hanging, the only way to stay alive is:

16...b6 17.♞xd7 ♞xd7 18.♜xd7 ♔xd7
19.♜xf7 ♞h5

Hoping in vain to trap the knight.

20.♞d1† ♕e7



21.♜d8!

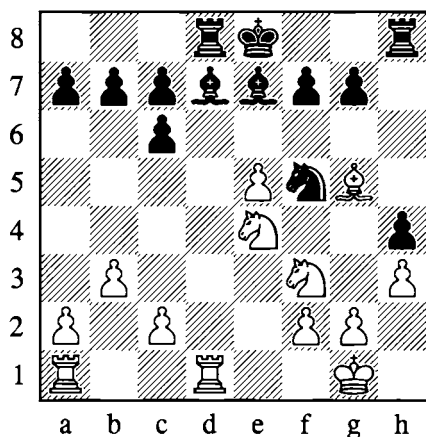
Threatening to escape via c6.

21...♞h6

The knight cannot return to its own territory, but in order to keep it imprisoned Black needs to keep his rook on h6.

22.b4!?

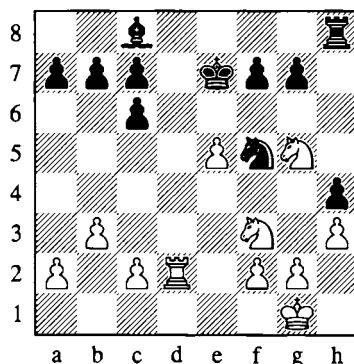
White is a pawn up and has several promising plans, involving either a2-a4 followed by b4-b5 or centralizing the king.



15.c4

After six minutes I decided to make another half-waiting move of the same sort as 13.b3.

I refrained from the natural 15.♞d2 as after 15...♙c8 taking on d8 would actually lose a tempo, while after 16.♞ad1 ♙xg5 17.♜exg5 ♞xd2 18.♞xd2 ♕e7 Black would be perfectly coordinated.



In fact, I would rather change seats in this position, in view of the typical plan of placing all the queenside pawns on dark squares and waiting for the right moment to play ...a5-a4 or ...c5-c4. Or if White blocks the position with a2-a4 and c2-c4, the b3-pawn might prove weak some day.

15...b6

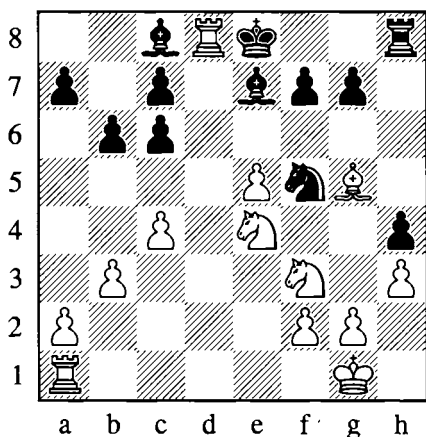
Embarking on a waiting game after only two minutes.

15...♙xg5 16.♜fxg5 ♕e7 would have been more straightforward, but Black hoped to induce me to take on e7, thus offering him additional tempos.

16.♞d2

After 15 minutes I did not find anything better than forcing events along the d-file. This will cost me a tempo, but there was no other way I could improve my position and wait for Karjakin to release the tension.

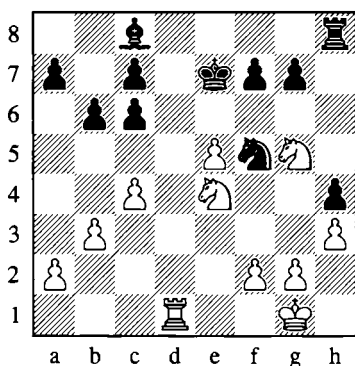
16...♙c8 17.♞xd8†



17...♙xd8

17...♙xd8! would have been more precise.

18.♞d1 ♙xg5 19.♜fxg5 ♙e7



Having completed his development, Black would be ready to break in the centre with ...f7-f6.

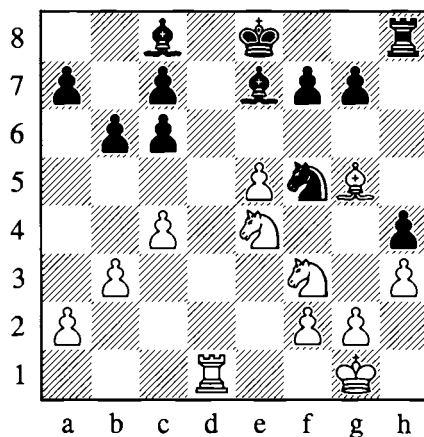
Both sides have to pay a lot of attention to the d4- and d5-squares.

I could prevent ...c6-c5 (planning ...a7-a5-a4 and ...♜d4) with 20.c5 but in chess you cannot control every square. Black could react with 20...f6 21.exf6† gxf6 22.♜f3 ♙e6.

Instead of 20.c5 I would have played 20.♜c3! taking measures against ...c6-c5 and allowing some activity along the central files after ...f7-f6.

18.♞d1† ♙e8

18...♙d7 would lose the bishop to 19.e6 fxe6 20.♜e5.



19.♙f4!

This was a good moment to switch to another set-up. By avoiding the exchange of bishops, I prevented Black's harmonious set-up with the king on e7. At the same time, I put indirect pressure on the c7-pawn. Black can forget about breaking with ...f7-f6 and White is actually considering e5-e6 quite seriously.

It is interesting that Karjakin had played pretty fast so far, having spent 35 minutes altogether. Did this mean that he was fearless and confident, or on the contrary, nervous and impatient? Most probably, there was a paradoxical mixture of all these feelings.

Anyway, his next move also came quickly, after just one minute.

19...c5

This active move, clearing the long diagonal and taking the d4-square under control, convinced me that Karjakin was playing for a win.

Black had safer, but also more passive, alternatives. For instance 19...♙e6 20.♜fg5 ♞h6 with satisfactory stability in the centre.

Or if he wanted to allow e5-e6, he could

have refrained from exposing his c-pawn with, say: 19...♖h5 20.e6 ♕xe6 21.♕xc7 f6

20.e6

After three minutes I found no reason not to change the course of the game.

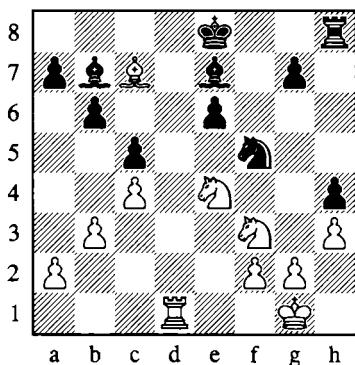
20.♘c3 was a logical alternative, but after 20...c6 21.a4 ♕e6 Black would be very stable and the weakness of the d6-square would not offer White any advantage.

20...♕xe6?

Karjakin failed to anticipate the danger and played this serious mistake after just one minute.

It may look illogical to weaken the kingside structure with 20...fxe6! when the capture with the bishop is available, but there were dynamic reasons for preferring this move.

21.♕xc7 ♖b7

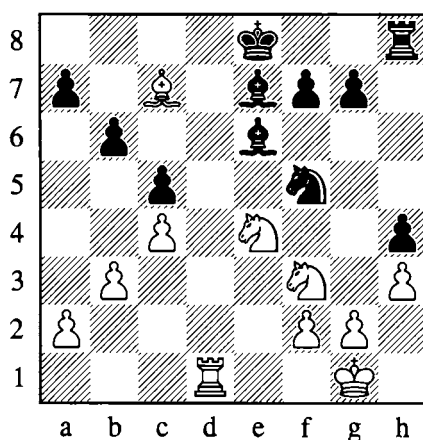


The difference is that the bishop is active on the long diagonal, attacking the e4-knight with gain of time and thus avoiding trouble with the c5-pawn. If:

22.♘eg5 ♖h6

Followed by ...♗g6 with latent pressure against the g2-square. It is worth mentioning that in this set-up the move ...h5-h4 proves useful.

21.♕xc7



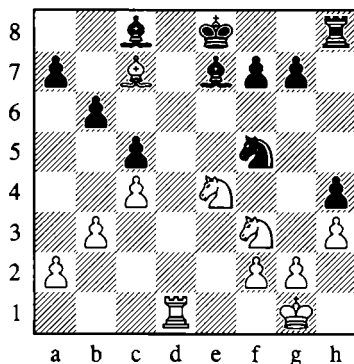
Suddenly, the threat of ♕b8 puts the queenside pawns in danger. It is curious that if Black had the right to castle he would actually be better, due to his bishop pair and active pieces.

Now that the position has opened up, one of the main drawbacks of the Berlin Defence makes itself felt – the black king prevents the rook from connecting with the queenside.

21...f6?

Karjakin must have felt that something had gone wrong, as he took ten minutes before answering. However, he failed to find the best defence.

21...♕c8! would have been a strong multipurpose move. Despite the waste of time, the bishop should be heading for the long diagonal, but the hidden detail is that on the way it clears the sixth rank.

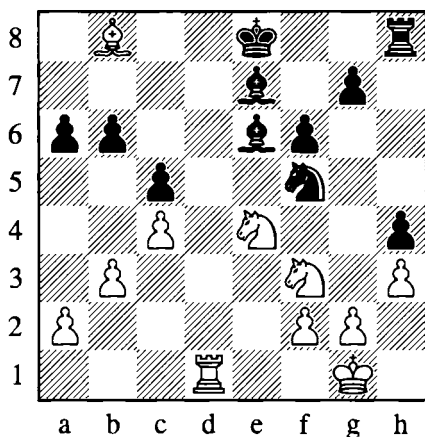


This way, after 22.♙b8 a6 he would be able to defend the b6-pawn with ...♞h6.

I could have retained a slight advantage with: 22.♘c3! Ironically, a knight retreat to a previous location answers the bishop retreat. 22...♙b7 23.♘d5± In the absence of the c7-pawn, the d5-square is all White's. Black does not have any other weaknesses, but he still has to defend in a rather one-sided game.

Karjakin's last move may look constructive for the kingside configuration, but just like his earlier ...h5-h4, there are some dynamic drawbacks. Obstructing the sixth rank and weakening the e6-square offers me an unexpected resource at a later point.

22.♙b8! a6



23.♙a7

It is interesting that during my six-minute think I did not even consider 23.♙c7! b5 24.♘xc5!± based on 24...♙xc5? 25.♞d8† winning the rook.

When playing my last move I had foreseen the whole idea behind my next one already, and so I did not look for alternatives.

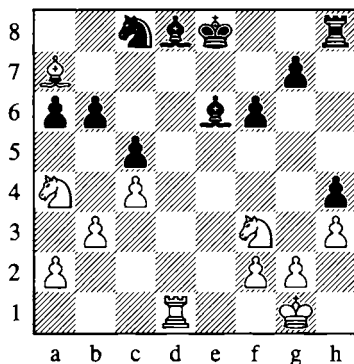
23...♙d8 24.♘c3!

I am convinced that Karjakin had overlooked this move, as he now sank into deep thought for 16 minutes – his record in this game so far. As unexpected as it may seem, Black will not be in time to parry the threat of ♘a4.

24...♞f7?!

At first sight it may seem that Black could defend with:

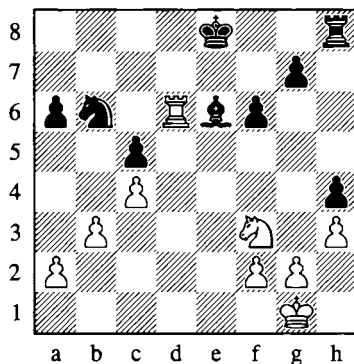
24...♞e7! 25.♘a4 ♘c8



However, I had prepared the trick:

26.♙xb6! ♙xb6 27.♘xb6 ♘xb6 28.♞d6

Taking full advantage of the drawbacks of ...f7-f6. I stopped my calculating here, which was reasonable since there was nothing better than 24.♘c3! anyway.



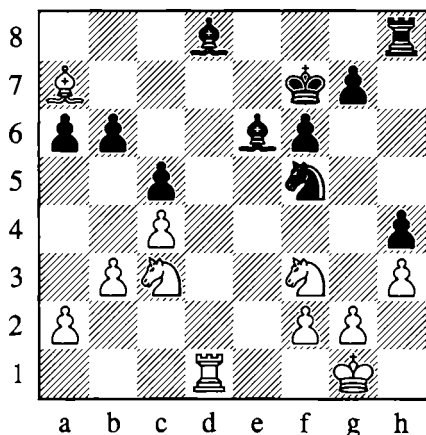
But after discovering my intentions, Karjakin should have gone a bit further:

28...♙c8! 29.♙xb6 ♞d7

Threatening to trap the rook and forcing me to weaken my compact queenside structure.

30.b4±

The extra pawn would offer me some advantage, but Black's activity entitles him to hope for a draw.



25.♖a4

Whatever angle I am looking at it from, this wins a pawn!

25...b5

Obviously forced. After losing the b6-pawn, Black would also have had worries about his weak c5-pawn.

26.♘xc5 ♙c8

Black rightly decides to keep the light-squared bishop, which may become active later. In certain cases, exchanging the other bishop for one of my knights would ensure a draw with opposite-coloured bishops.

If 26...bxc4 27.♘xe6 ♙xe6 28.bxc4± I would simply be a pawn up.

27.cxb5!

Avoiding getting a weak pawn on c4 and hurrying to create an outside passed pawn.

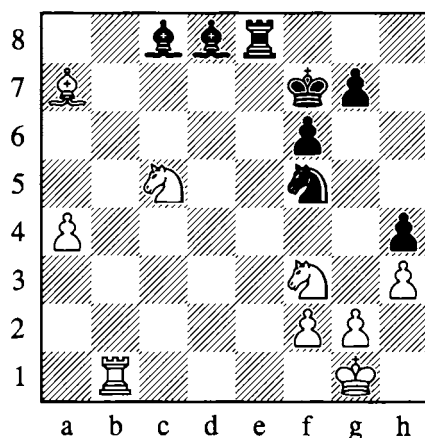
27...axb5 28.a4 bxa4 29.bxa4 ♙e8

Despite my queenside activity, the passed pawn is not easy to promote. The apparently modestly-placed bishop pair is quite effective

in controlling the squares in front of my pawn and restricting my active knight.

In order to make progress, I need to bring more forces into the fight.

30.♞b1



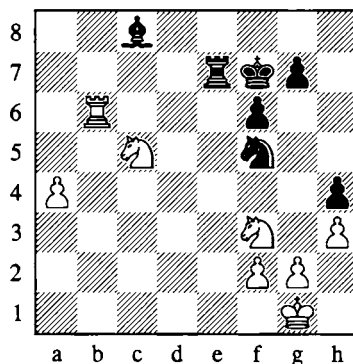
Planning to fight for the dark squares with ♙b6 followed by a4-a5.

30...g5?

Karjakin played this almost instantly, without paying attention to my threat. I believe that at this point he became very nervous and could not focus properly.

As a curiosity, all his kingside pawn moves on dark squares have been strategically coherent but concretely questionable or simply bad.

Black had to bring his rook into the queenside fight with: 30...♞e7! 31.♙b6 ♙xb6 32.♞xb6





32...♖c7! This is the point. Black needs to challenge the dominating knight's stability in order to have any hope of saving the game.
 33.♘b3 ♖c2 34.a5 ♖a2 With reasonable chances to hold.

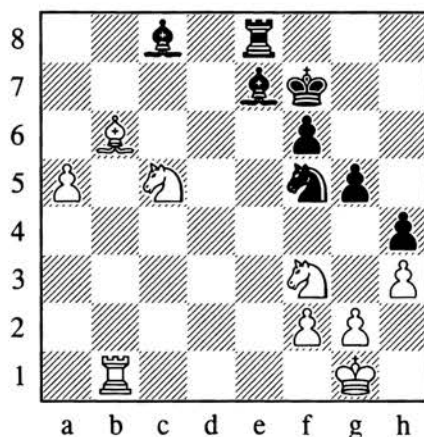
31.♙b6

Ensuring the rapid advance of the passed pawn.

31...♙e7

Another instantaneous move; Karjakin probably hoped to save the game due to opposite-coloured bishops.

32.a5

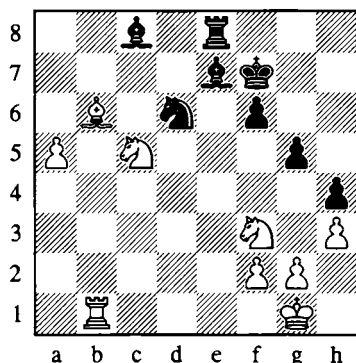


32...♙xc5

Consistent but insufficient.

chesstouring.com

32...♘d6, threatening ...♘c4, is an important alternative, which demands extreme accuracy in concrete play.



33.♞c1

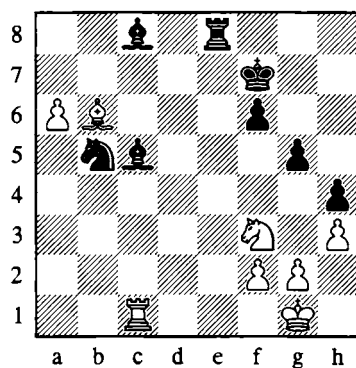
Defending c4.

If 33.a6? ♘c4 34.a7 ♙f5, followed by ...♞a8, White would lose the extra pawn.

33...♘b5 34.a6!

The only clear-cut win. Although it is by no means obvious, I would have had to find this move if we had arrived at this position.

34...♙xc5



35.a7

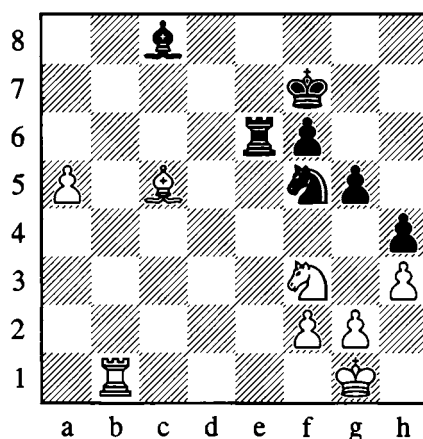
Once the pawn has reached the seventh rank, the situation becomes critical for Black. The hidden point is:

35...♘xa7? 36.♞xc5!

And the knight is trapped!

This line is a good example of the importance of taking into account any small details in the technical process.

33.♙xc5 ♞e6



34.♞b6!

I spent four of my remaining 12 minutes on this move. As a general rule, the player with a material advantage should not exchange rooks in endings with opposite-coloured bishops, but the situation here is a bit special.

First of all, the black rook was doing a fine job helping the bishop to stop my pawn. Secondly, the rook exchange would not lead to a pure opposite-bishop ending, since there are still knights on the board. Finally, Black will be under pressure on both wings. On the queenside, where there is a dangerous passed pawn, and on the kingside, where all the black pawns are on dark squares and vulnerable to my bishop.

34...♘g7

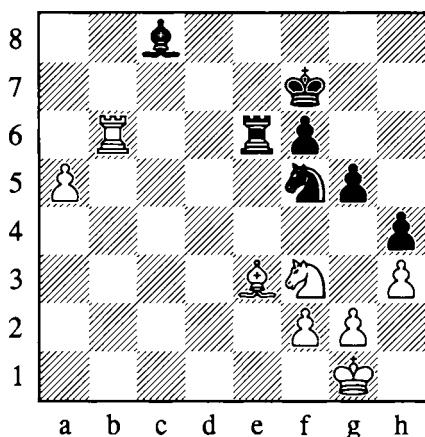
Trying to escape the bishop's domination.

If 34...♞xb6 35.axb6, threatening a knight transfer to a5, White should win by combining threats on both wings. And yet, now or on the next move, Black should have exchanged on b6, just to retain some practical chances.

35.♙e3

Creating the threat of ♞b8 followed by ♙xg5, which would simplify to a won rook and three pawns versus two minor-piece ending.

35...♖f5



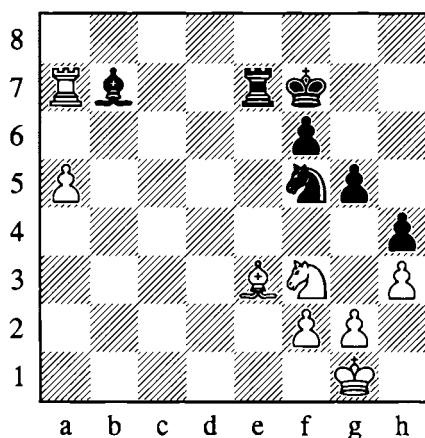
36.♖b8!

The start of a long forcing manoeuvre, which leads to the activation of my pieces and the exchange of rooks under favourable circumstances.

36...♗e8 37.♖a8

Threatening a5-a6 and practically forcing the next move.

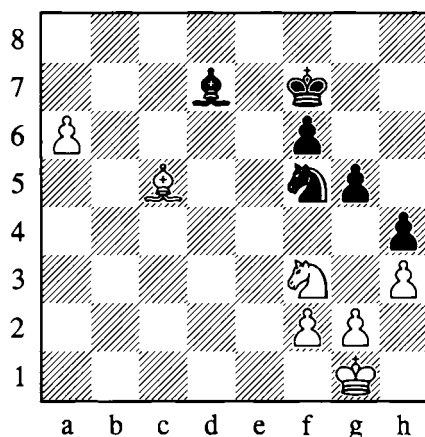
37...♕b7 38.♖a7 ♗e7



39.♕c5

Forcing the rook to abandon the e7-square, so that the black king does not move closer to the queenside after the rook exchange.

39...♗d7 40.a6 ♕c6 41.♗xd7† ♕xd7



The pawn has crossed the sixth rank and the black king is still far away. These elements define the "favourable version" of the rook exchange.

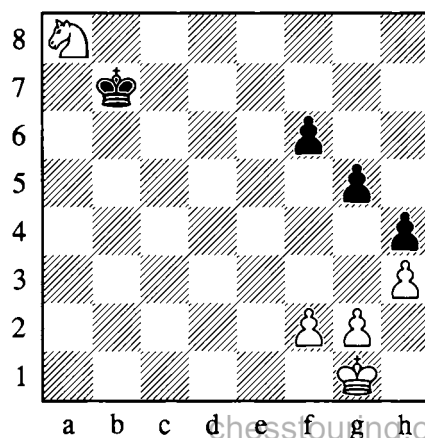
42.♖d2 ♗e6 43.♖c4 ♕c6 44.♖b6

I had calculated all of this line, in which White wins by a tempo. The pawn's promotion is ensured and the black king lacks just one tempo in his attempt to save the game.

44...♖d6 45.♕xd6

45.a7 is also winning, but my move corresponds better to a professional attitude. The position has to be cleaned of impurities, making things simple in practice and analysis.

45...♗xd6 46.a7 ♗c7 47.a8=♖ ♕xa8 48.♖xa8† ♗b7



Black has managed to trap the extra knight, but his king is too far from the kingside.

49.f4!

The fastest way of activating my king, which caused Black's immediate resignation.

1-0

You can imagine how happy I was after defeating a strong opponent in such a difficult-to-break opening. But I did not have much time to enjoy the pleasant feeling, as the next day I had to meet the same opponent with Black.

I chose the Open Spanish, an opening I had tried out mainly in blitz and rapid games and only occasionally in classical games.

Somehow, everything worked out perfectly well for me in this match. I later found out that Karjakin had analyzed a strong novelty in the line I played, but he could not remember it exactly, so I achieved a draw with relative ease.

With this match win I advanced to the last 16, but I did not know my future opponent

immediately. According to the pairings I was to face the winner of the Dominguez – Lysyj match. After two games, the score was even, 1-1. The playoffs were scheduled for the next day (which was a day off for me) and lasted the longest time possible. After eight games the tie could not be broken, but Dominguez finally decided the match in his favour by winning the sudden death (and ninth) game.

Accordingly, in the fourth round I had to play against the strongest Cuban player since Capablanca.

I lost my first game with White, so I was in a must-win situation in the second game. In such situations it does not make sense to focus on opening preparation, but rather on getting into the mood and becoming inspired for a very long game, in which even a strong and stable player like Dominguez might get nervous and take some unfortunate decisions.

The game turned out to be one of the longest in my whole career and, though not without some ups and downs, it ended in success.



At the 2010 Olympiad in Khanty-Mansiysk. My teammates are to the left, chatting

Leinier Dominguez – Judit Polgar

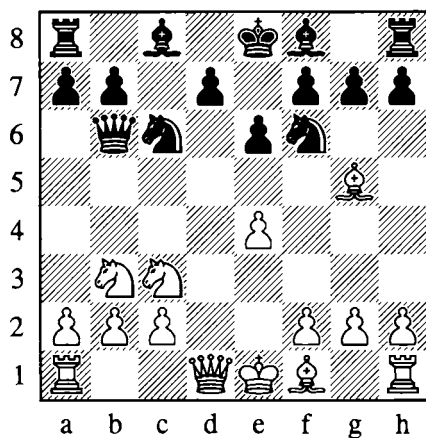
World Cup (4.2), Khanty-Mansiysk 2011

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♖b6

I decided to step away from my main weapon, the Najdorf variation, since Dominguez is known as a great opening expert and plays the Najdorf with Black himself! As for my other main variation, the Paulsen, it does not look so appropriate when one needs to win at all costs.

I have played the ...♖b6 line every now and then, as for instance in the game against Motylev, on page 169. It offers Black the possibility of having a genuine Sicilian fight without too much theory.

5.♘b3 ♘f6 6.♘c3 e6 7.♗g5

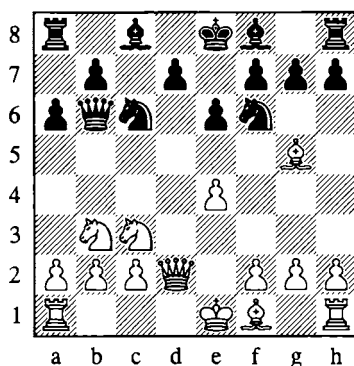


An active developing move, aiming to transpose to some sort of Rauzer variation if Black plays ...♗e7 and ...d6 soon. The most frequent moves are 7.♗d3 and 7.♗e3, but for some time 7.♖e2 (as played by Motylev in the aforementioned game) was considered best.

7...a6 8.♖f3

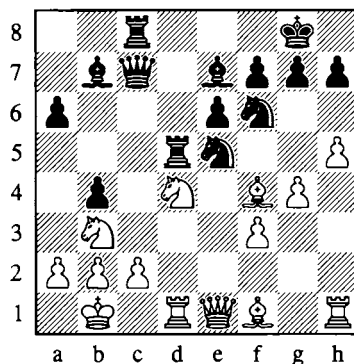
This move slightly surprised me, as I was mainly expecting:

8.♖d2



Dominguez played it only in the eighth game of our match, a five-minute blitz game deep in the playoffs. Over the next ten moves I managed to build up my attack at greater speed than my opponent:

8...♖c7 9.0-0-0 b5 10.f3 ♗e7 11.♔b1 0-0 12.g4 ♘e5 13.♗f4 b4 14.♘e2 ♗d8 15.♘ed4 ♗b7 16.♖e1 ♗ac8 17.h4 d5 18.exd5 ♗xd5 19.h5



White is still a couple of tempos away from creating strong threats. Possibly feeling that my activity was becoming overwhelming, Leinier made a panicky draw offer, but I had planned my small combination already.

19...♘xf3! 20.♖g3

20.♘xf3 ♖xc2† leads to mate.

Or if 20.♗xc7 ♘xe1 White loses a pawn while the kingside pawns are also in great danger.

20...e5 21.♗g2 exf4 22.♖xf3 ♗xd4 23.♘xd4 ♗xf3 24.♗xf3 ♘d7

I won the queen for a rook, but Leinier needed seven more moves before accepting defeat, not only in the game, but also in a match which had started so well for him.

8...♙e7 9.♖g3 d6

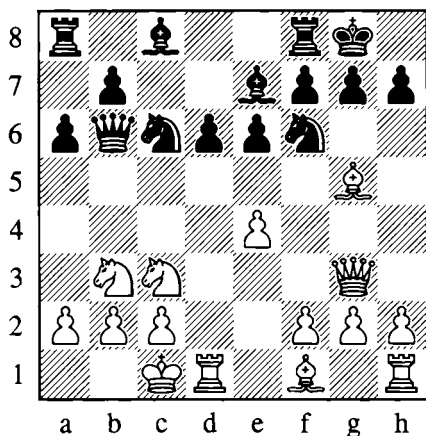
Objectively, 9...♘h5! 10.♗h4 ♘f6 is a strong continuation. The threat of ...h7-h6 leaves White vulnerable along the h4-d8 diagonal, making a queen retreat to g3 probable in the near future.

But for obvious reasons, allowing a repetition was not an option in this game.

10.0-0-0

This is the strongest move, but I was happy when White castled long. It meant we were going to have a real fight, offering me chances to level the score in the match and keep fighting for qualification.

10...0-0

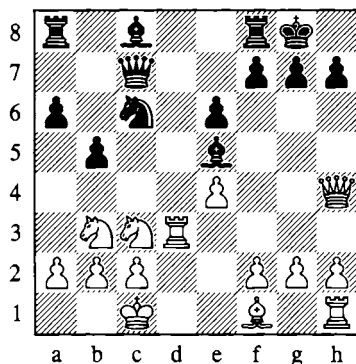


11.♙b1

In the Sicilian with opposite-side castling, it is almost always good to insert this move, and it is just too sad when White does not have the time for it!

I could not even dream that White would exchange his dark-squared bishop to win

the d6-pawn: 11.♙xf6? ♙xf6 12.♗xd6 ♖c7 13.♗d3 ♙e5 14.♗h4 b5

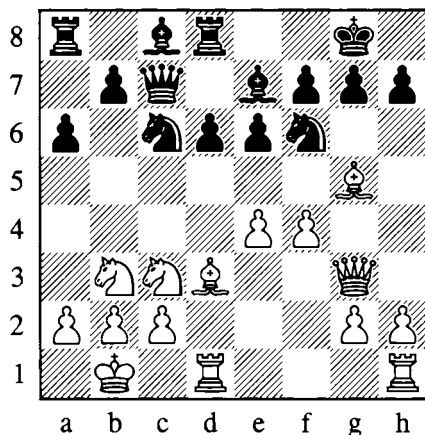


With fantastic compensation.

11...♗d8

11...♘h5 12.♗h4 ♙xg5 13.♗xg5 ♘f6 looks like a safe alternative, but I was interested in keeping as many pieces as possible on the board.

12.f4 ♖c7 13.♙d3



Facing a non-theoretical Sicilian when needing just a draw is not easy, but in the first part of the game Leinier is up to the task. He places his pieces actively, creating all kinds of threats: e4-e5, f4-f5, ♖h4 followed by e4-e5 or ♙h6.

This is the right attitude: if you need a draw with White, then play for a win!

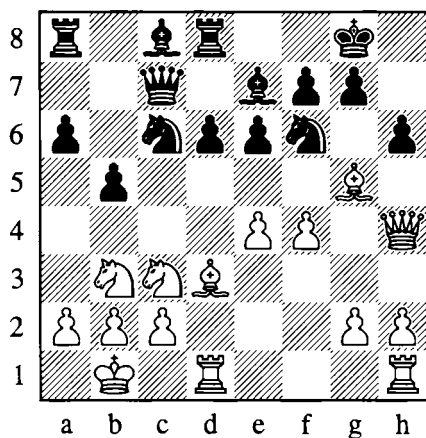
13...b5

In the Sicilian, Black cannot do without this move. By playing it, I also invited my opponent to show his cards.

14. ♖h4!

This strong active move, heading for a piece sacrifice, shows what a great player Leinier is and how strong his nerves are. The specific match circumstances did not prevent him from going for the best continuation, even though this implies risk and nervous tension. White's only problem was that he had only 28 minutes left to reach move 40.

I must confess that I was surprised and impressed at the same time.

14...h6**15. ♕xh6!**

Exchanging on f6 would be out of the question, so the sacrifice was forced. But the exclamation mark is to reiterate my respect for Leinier's attitude.

15...gxf6?

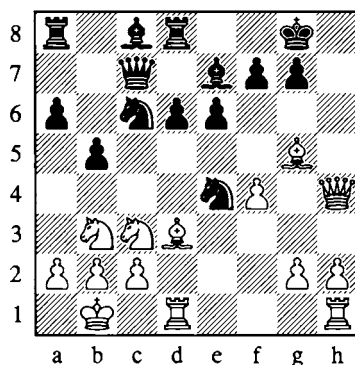
I played this too quickly, after only three minutes, underestimating the force of White's attack. There were two better alternatives.

I believe that we both overlooked that after 15...♕xe4! 16. ♖h3 ♕xc3† 17. bxc3 Black

can slow down White's attack with the calm 17...g6! with an unclear position.

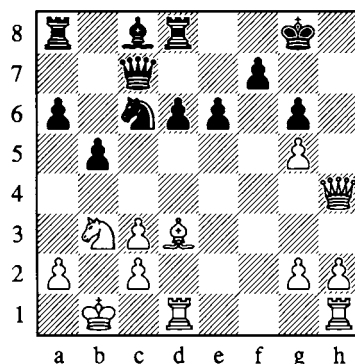
Or if:

16. ♕g5!



16...♕xg5!

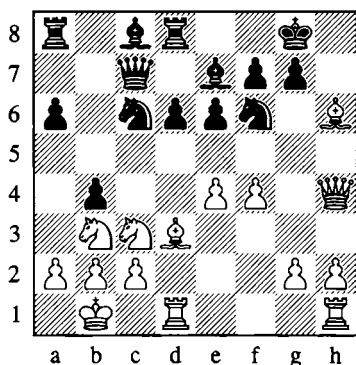
Now is the right moment to exchange bishops, forcing White to recapture with the pawn. If 16...♕xc3† 17. bxc3 g6 18. ♕d4 Black's pieces would be hanging, forcing 18...♕g5 19. ♖xg5 planning h4-h5. 17. fxg5 ♕xc3† 18. bxc3 g6



White's first wave of attack has been extinguished and his structure has been chronically weakened. The game remains enormously complicated with more or less even chances.

Since after the game continuation, ♕c3-d5 is a permanent threat, it makes sense to force White to define his intentions immediately with:

15...b4!



16.♙xg7

16...♜d5 may transpose below.

16...♙xg7 17.♞g5+ ♜f8

17...♜h8? would be like stepping into the lion's mouth: 18.♜d5 exd5 19.exd5+—

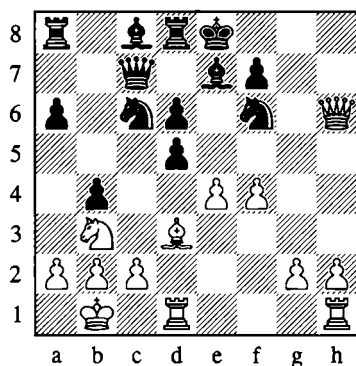
18.♞h6+ ♜e8

The king is close to reaching safety, but White has not exhausted his resources yet.

19.♜d5

The spectacular 19.♞h8+ ♜d7 20.♜c5+! would lead to just another perpetual check – and my elimination! 20...dxc5 21.♙b5+ ♜d5 22.♜xd5 exd5 23.♞xd5+ ♙d6 24.♞h3+ ♜e7 25.♞h4+ ♜e8 26.♞h8+ The king cannot get out of the white queen's range.

19...exd5



Had we reached this position, the game would have most likely ended with 20.♞h8+ ♜d7 21.♞h3+ with perpetual check, but

under different circumstances White could have played on with 20.exd5 ♜xd5 21.♞he1 pinning the e7-bishop and threatening 22.♞h8+ ♜d7 23.♙f5 mate! I could have defended with either 21...♙g4 or 21...♞b6, with an irrational position which offers White enough compensation.

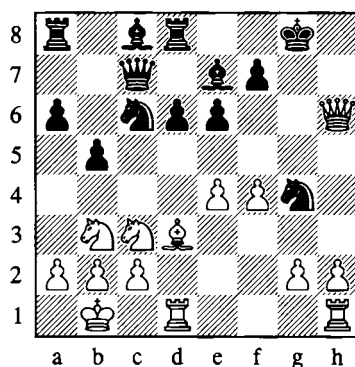
16.♞xh6

After opening up my king's position, White has several dangerous threats such as e4-e5, ♜c3-d5 and the slow ♞he1-e3-g3+. But from a practical point of view, what bothered me most was the possibility of perpetual check.

16...♜e8

After five minutes I played the only move that allows me to keep playing, even though in a dangerous position.

I could not consider 16...♜g4 seriously, since White could practically force a repetition with 17.♞h3. In fact, he could even do better than that.



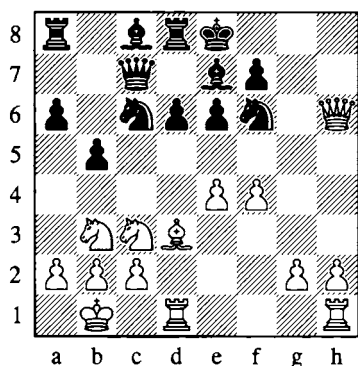
17.♞h5 ♜f6

Or if 17...♜f2 18.e5 f5 19.g4 opening the position with decisive threats.

18.♞g5+ ♜f8

18...♜h8 would allow White to gain a decisive tempo for his attack with: 19.♞h6+ ♜g8 20.♞he1+—

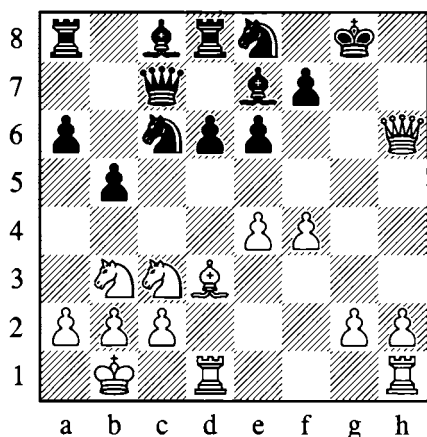
19.♞h6+ ♜e8



Let's compare this position with the one arising after 18...♔e8 in the line starting with 15...b4! above. The only difference is that the c3-knight is not attacked, which allows White to destroy the black king's dreams of safety with:

20.e5!

With a strong attack.



17.e5?!

White spent nine minutes on this crucial decision, leaving himself with a quarter of an hour to reach move 40.

The other thematic move 17.♘d5! was more promising.

17...exd5 18.exd5 f5?!

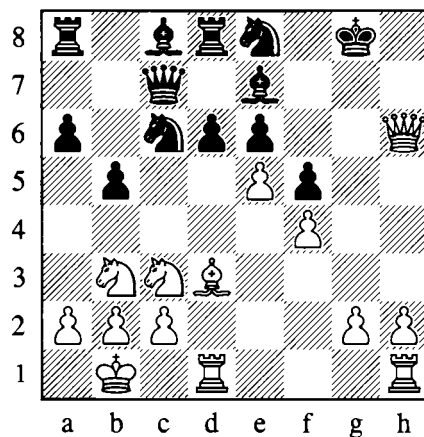
I would have been forced to choose this move since 18...♙f6 would have allowed White to force a draw with 19.♙h7† ♔h8

20.♙g6†. Just to be accurate, it is worth mentioning that he could also play on with 20.dxc6, although this would probably not have happened in the game.

19.dxc6 ♙f6 20.♙he1

I would definitely prefer White, but from a practical point of view Black also has chances after 20...♙g7.

17...f5



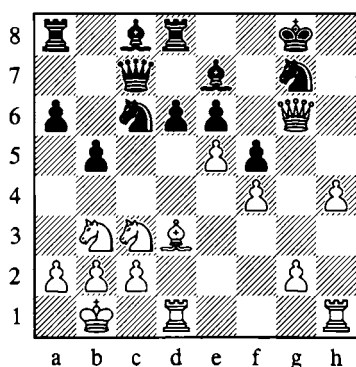
I parried the threat on h7, aiming to restore my coordination with ...♙f8. White is once again confronted with a difficult choice. There are several promising continuations, all of them seeming to guarantee at least a perpetual check, but in a practical game the draw was not so easy to reach.

18.♙xf5!

Another fantastic move, played after six minutes. The sacrifice is thematic, tempting and, from a practical point of view, the right decision. Leinier did not have enough time for a thorough analysis of the alternatives, but we both were sure that White's last move should yield him the desired draw; evaluating such irrational positions intuitively is an ability which comes with experience.

But sometimes the absolute truth is beyond human reach. Objectively, White could have

won with: 18.♖g6† ♘g7 19.h4!!

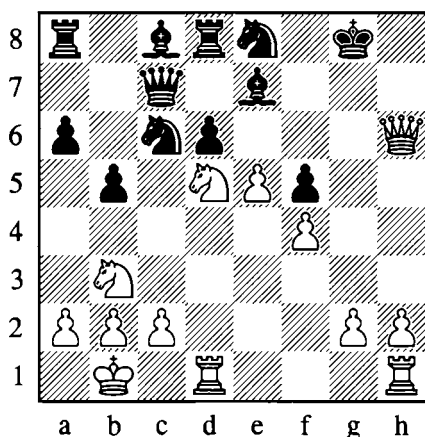


It may seem incredible that White can afford to play such a quiet move, but Jacob Aagaard's detailed analysis in *Attack & Defence* proves that Black has no satisfactory defence.

18...exf5 19.♘d5

Things start looking scary for Black. In view of the manoeuvre ♖d1-d3-g3† White seems to be threatening more than just a perpetual check.

Inserting 19.♖g6†! ♘g7 before the knight jump 20.♘d5 would allow Black to take over with 20...♖d7 21.♘f6† ♙xf6 22.exf6 ♖f7 23.♖g5 ♙a7. All Black's pieces are active and there is no attack left for White.

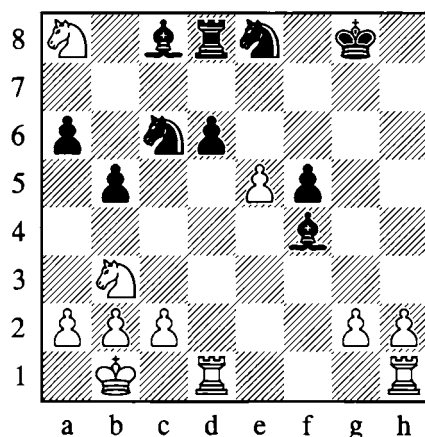


19...♙f8!

A strong defence, putting an end to the attack, avoiding the immediate draw and forcing a transposition to a very unusual ending.

If 19...♖a7 then the least White could do was 20.♖d3 ♙f8 21.♖g3† ♙g7 22.♘f6† ♙f8 23.♘h7† with a draw. This line shows that Black could not play 19...♖d7 because it would put the queen at the mercy of a knight fork.

20.♘xc7 ♙xh6 21.♘xa8 ♙xf4



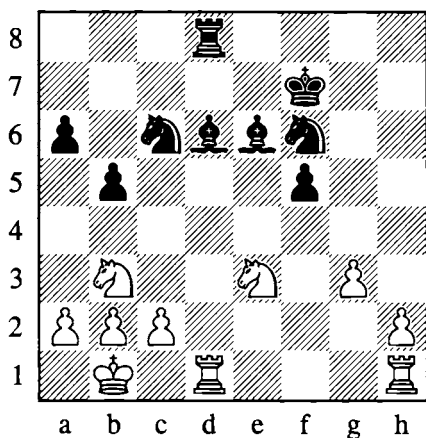
The material balance (rook and two pawns for two bishops) would slightly favour White if he did not have to lose time saving his cornered knight.

Leinier had played the last few moves quickly, accumulating some time so that he now had 11 minutes compared to my 21.

22.exd6 ♙xd6 23.♘b6 ♙e6 24.♘d5 ♙f7

I was not sure about the objective evaluation of the position. I feared that I had too few pawns left to retain winning chances, but given my piece activity I felt I could at least have a balanced game with Black. And in the long run the psychological pressure might cause White to lose the thread.

25.♘e3 ♘f6 26.g3



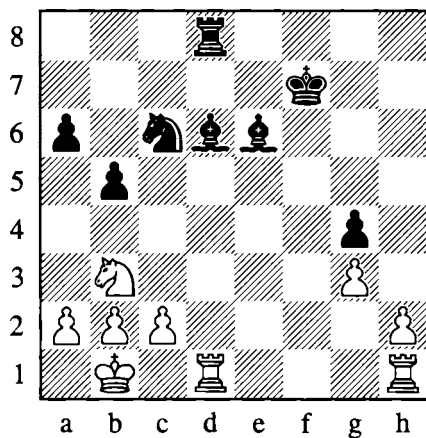
26...d4?!

Objectively, I do not like this move, since it loses control of the e4-square. During the game I thought it would be a good idea to turn the h2-pawn into a weakness.

My decision was unexpected for my opponent who one move later failed to react in the best way.

The normal continuation would have been 26...d4 27.♖hf1 ♜g6 28.♘d2 with approximate equality.

27.♘g4 fxg4



My main problem after losing control in the centre was that I could no longer avoid

the rook exchange, removing any danger for White. In fact, it would only be Black who needs to be careful.

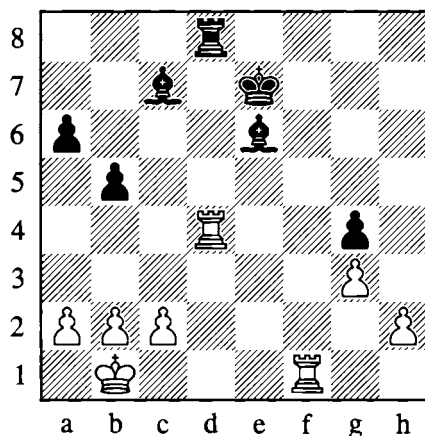
28.♘d4

White's eagerness to exchange pieces is understandable, but it would have made sense to finally complete his development with 28.♞he1.

28...♘xd4 29.♞xd4 ♜c7

Since I could not avoid the exchange, I decided to offer it at once. Surprisingly, this managed to confuse my opponent.

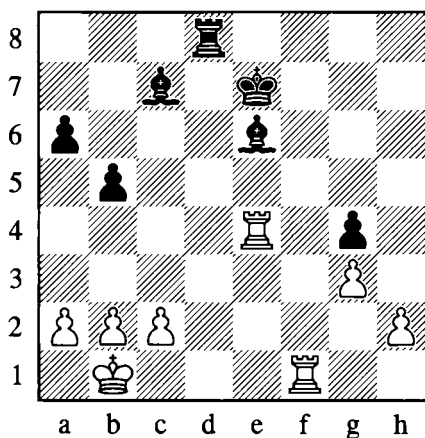
30.♞f1 ♜c7



31.♞e4?!

A strange decision, which was probably a consequence of nervous tension. It is well known that two minor pieces are stronger when assisted by a rook, so the player with two rooks should be only too happy to force the exchange. But on the other hand, White's last move pins my bishop, thus ensuring the rooks' activity, so objectively it should still be OK, although from a practical point of view it complicates White's task.

After 31.♞xd4 ♜xd4 32.c3 it is very difficult to imagine that Black would win.



White's position remains playable even after the last inaccuracy, but the chance of going wrong increases.

The immediate threat is 32.♖fe1 ♕d6 33.♙xg4, so I over-defended my g4-pawn.

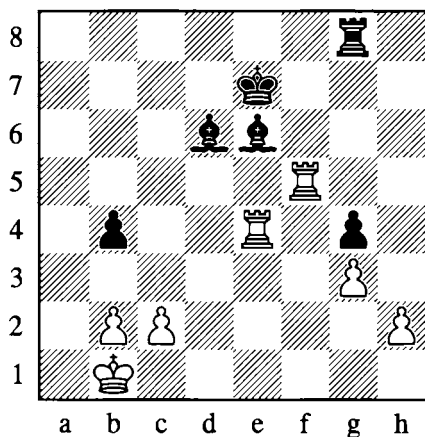
31...♗g8 32.a4

Quite possibly, Leinier kept his active rook for the sake of this move, reducing the number of pawns even further. However, he will not manage to liquidate the queenside.

32...♕d6 33.♙xb5 ♙xb5 34.♗f5

White keeps playing actively, using his rooks to provoke more pawn exchanges.

34...b4



I was aware that after exposing my b-pawn, the best I could hope for was a rook and bishop versus rook ending, but I felt this was my best practical chance anyway. These endings are theoretically drawn, but defending for 50 moves is not always simple, especially with the additional sporting burden of fighting for qualification.

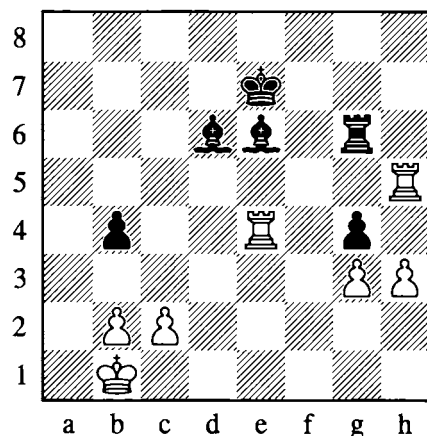
35.♗h5

Preparing h2-h3.

35...♗g6

Trying to activate my king with ...♔d7-c6.

36.h3



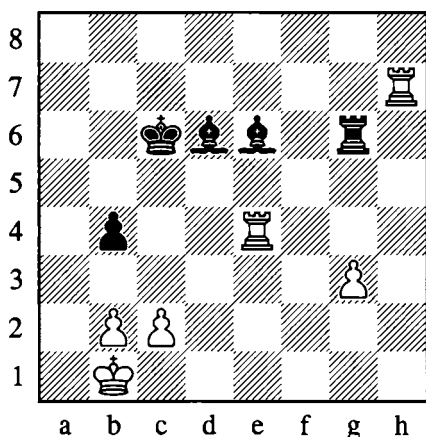
At this point I started fearing that the game really would end in a draw, since I had only one pawn left!

36...gxf3 37.♗xf3 ♔d7 38.♗h7†

Leinier had been in time trouble for six moves already, which made him miss a chance right before the control.

The most straightforward draw was 38.♗hh4 threatening to simplify with ♗xb4. If 38...♗xg3 39.♗h7† ♕e7 the only thing White needs to do is prevent the back-rank mate with 40.b3!= inevitably followed by ♗xb4.

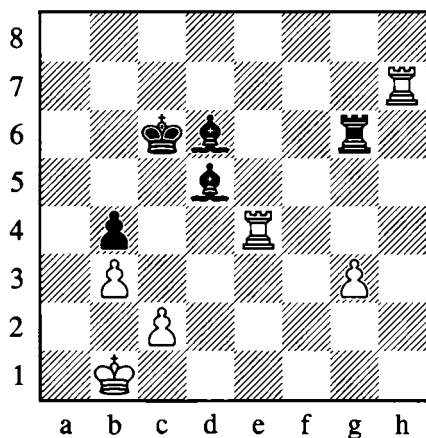
38...♙c6



39.b3

Once again, doubling rooks would ensure a draw: 39.♖hh4! b3 40.cxb3! Black could win the exchange with 40...♙f5 but this would only bring the game closer to a theoretically drawn ending.

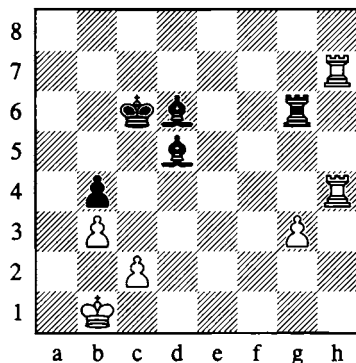
39...♙d5



An unpleasant move to meet with just seconds remaining on the clock. It is not so simple to decide where to put the attacked rook!

40.♖e3

Not really a bad move, but once again it would have made sense to connect rooks with: 40.♖eh4!

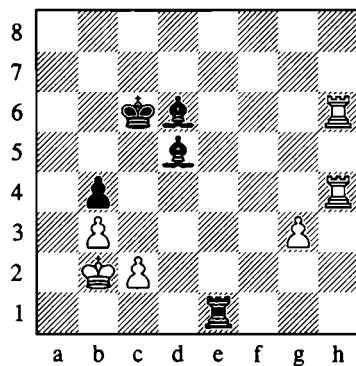


40...♖e6

The only way of avoiding immediate liquidation.

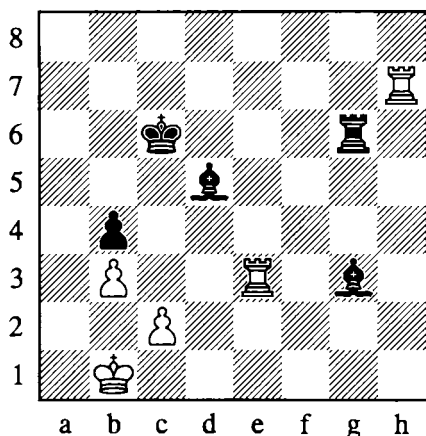
Capturing the g3-pawn would simplify White's defence, for instance: 40...♖xg3 41.♖7h6 ♙c5 42.♖xd6 ♙xd6 43.♖xb4= Or 40...♙xg3 41.♖xb4 ♙e5 42.c3 ♙xc3 43.♖c4† ♙xc4 44.bxc4 reaching a safe version of the dreaded endgame with a lot of time still on the clock.

41.♖7h6 ♖e1† 42.♙b2



There are two ways of parrying ♖xb4 or ♖xd6 followed by ♖xb4. 42...♙e4 is ineffective due to 43.♖4h5 followed by ♖xd6† and ♖b5, but 42...♙e6 may offer better chances to keep the tension, at least for a while.

40...♙xg3



White has managed to reach the time control and so get out of time trouble, but the real trouble is still there! Black's main threat is to transfer the bishop to c3 without exchanging rooks, after which White's position would simply be lost.

In order to save the game, White must understand that he should aim for the rook versus rook and bishop ending while there is still time for it, but it is not easy to decide to doom oneself to 50 moves of one-sided defence. Besides, achieving this relatively safe ending requires some concrete decisions, which is difficult after four hours of play.

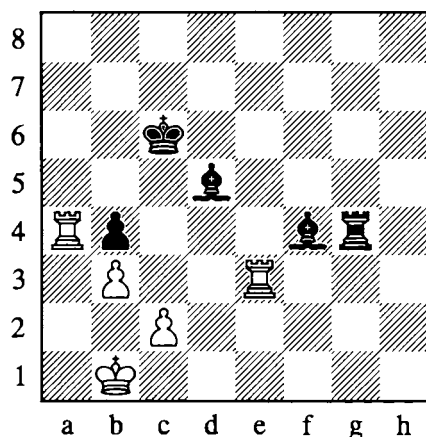
41. ♖a7

Now was a good moment to exchange my last pawn with 41.c3! ♕f4 42. ♖he7! letting the torture start as soon as possible, while White still has time and energy to defend. It is worth mentioning that after move 40 we received 30 more minutes plus 30 seconds per move to finish the game.

41... ♜g4 42. ♖a4

Threatening ♜xg3, ♜xb4 or c2-c3 at the same time, but missing another good moment for the crucial operation: 42.c3! ♕f2 43. ♖ae7= I believe that we both missed this not-at-all-obvious idea.

42... ♕f4!

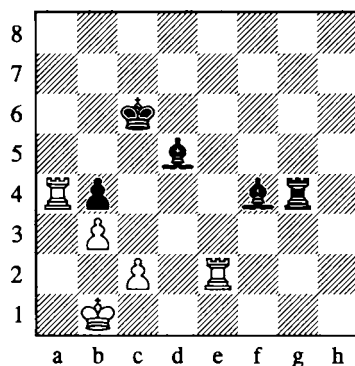


Parrying all the threats and keeping the tension since 43. ♖xb4? loses to 43... ♜g1† followed by ... ♕xe3.

43. ♖e1?

The last of a series of hesitations, played after just one minute and finally landing White in a lost position.

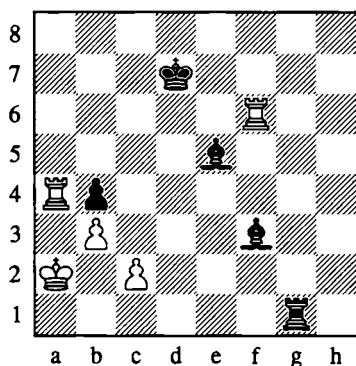
White could still save the game with 43. ♖e2! leading to a fantastic variation with unexpected moves on both sides.



43... ♕f3 44. ♖e6† ♕d7 45. ♖f6!

The pawn and the bishops are hanging, but Black still has resources.

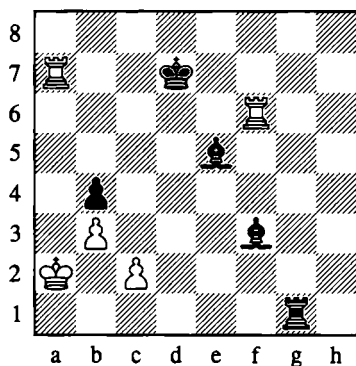
45... ♜g1† 46. ♕a2 ♕e5



It is White's turn to be hanging. The bishop attacks the rook while also creating the threat of ...♖a1 mate.

47.♖a7†

The character of the position changes practically on every move. Who is winning? The only king retreat which does not allow 48.♖f8 mate is 47...♔e8, but that loses the e5-bishop to 48.♖e6†.



By the method of elimination, Black has to play:

47...♔b7!!

And once again it may seem that White is in trouble.

48.c3!!

The culmination of this fantastic tactical struggle.

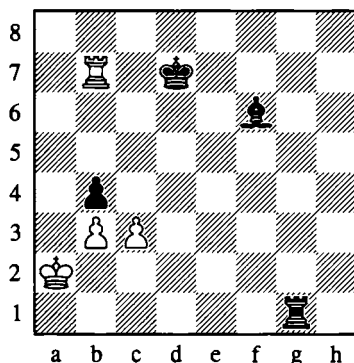
The other possible move order, based on 48.♖b7†? ♔c8 49.c3, exposes the rook too soon, allowing 49...♔xb7 50.♖f5 bxc3 and the c-pawn promotes.

48...♔xf6

48...bxc3 is ineffective due to: 49.♖xb7†

♔c8 50.♖bb6=

49.♖xb7†



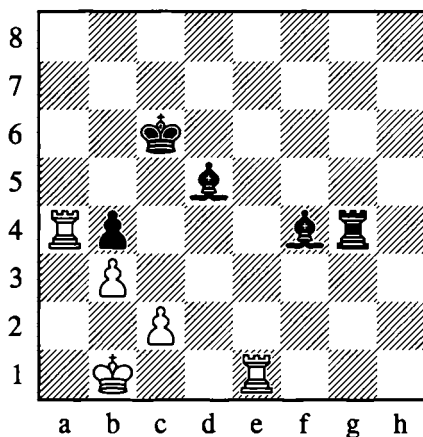
White is holding by a miracle. The premature ♖xb4 would lose to ...♔xc3 attacking the rook and threatening ...♖a1 mate, but the checks along the b-file save the game. The black king has to keep away from the c-file because of 50.♖xb4 ♔xc3 51.♖c4† and should not go too far from the queenside (which means onto the e-file) because ♖xb4, ...♔xc3 could be met by a saving check followed by b3-b4.

49...♔d8 50.♖b8†!

With the king on the d-file 50.♖xb4? loses to 50...♔xc3 51.♖b8† ♔c7.

50...♔d7 51.♖b7†

And so on.



43...♔d2

Finally ensuring the bishop can transfer to c3.

44.♟d1 ♖c3

White is doomed to passivity, as he needs to defend the back rank and the a-file against my rook invading to a1. Black should win slowly but surely by activating the king, but I made some unnecessary inaccuracies along the way, almost throwing the win away.

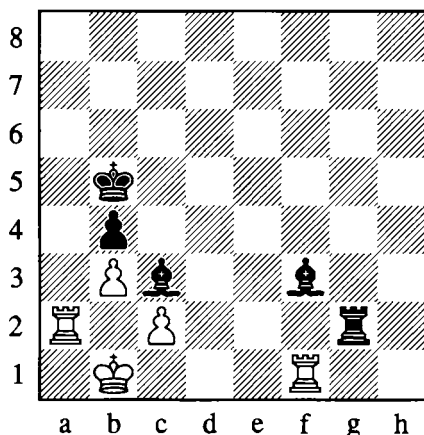
45.♟a6† ♕b7 46.♟a5 ♖e4

Adding the weakness of the c2-pawn to White's problems.

47.♟a4 ♟g2 48.♟a2 ♕b6

According to my scoresheet, White had 17 minutes left compared to Black's 21.

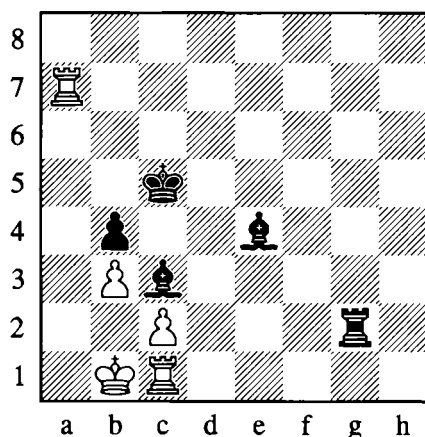
49.♟d6† ♕b5 50.♟d1 ♖f3 51.♟f1



51...♕c5!

My plan was to transfer the king to the second rank, leaving the white rook short of squares along the first rank. By this point I was getting nervous, feeling that the position should be won, but lacking the patience to work out the concrete details correctly. For the first time in the game, the pressure of the result was on my shoulders, since all Leinier could do was sit and wait.

52.♟a7 ♖e4 53.♟c1



53...♕b6

An unnecessary hesitation. I should have continued my plan without delay with: 53...♕d4!

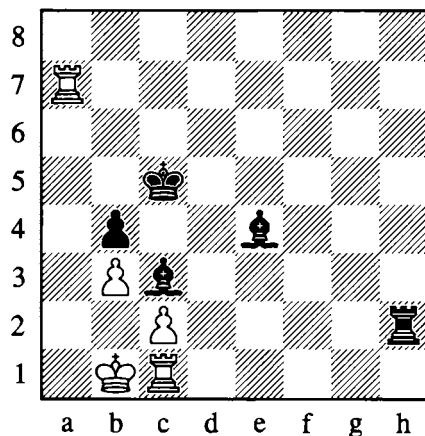
54.♟a2 ♟g3 55.♟f1 ♖g7

Threatening ...♟xb3†, but there is a simple defence.

56.♕c1 ♟g2 57.♕b1 ♟d2 58.♕c1 ♟h2
59.♕b1 ♖c3 60.♟d1 ♖f3 61.♟f1 ♕c5

I did not make any progress over the last ten moves. The only difference with respect to the position from the previous diagram is that my rook is on h2 rather than g2.

62.♟a7 ♖e4 63.♟c1



63...♔d4!

But now I finally started what should have been the decisive attack.

64.♞d7† ♕e3 65.♞e7 ♞h6 66.♞a7 ♜d2 67.♞g1 ♕f2 68.♞d1 ♕e2 69.♞g1 ♜e3

69...♞h3!, threatening ...♞xb3†, would have been simpler. If 70.♕b2 ♞c3 White can resign.

My problem was that my hand was already shaking with emotion while I was looking for the very best way to finish off the game.

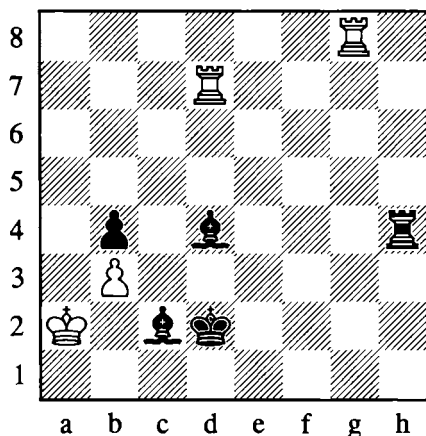
70.♞e7!

The only move that allows White to prolong the fight. The other rook did not have any available squares left on the back rank.

70...♞h4 71.♞g8 ♜d4 72.♕a2

White is walking on a very narrow ledge. We were both down to six minutes on the clock and things were getting very tense, although it was nothing compared with what was going to come later.

72...♔d2 73.♞d7 ♜xc2



Suddenly, there is a huge threat: 74...♜b1†! 75.♕xb1 ♞h1† 76.♕a2 ♞a1 mate! This may not have been so obvious for everybody, since after the game somebody told me that 74.♞b8 would draw!

Anyway, after the last move it seemed as if White would have to resign, but Leinier delivered an unpleasant surprise.

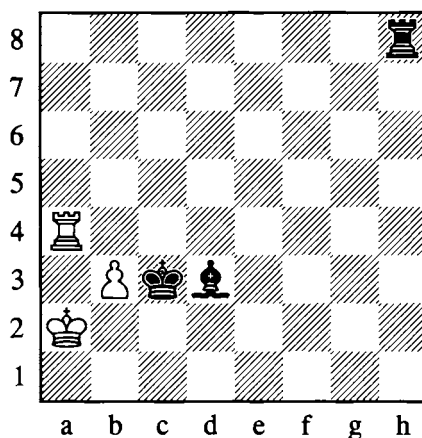
74.♞h8(!!)

The rook moves into a double attack, while parrying the deadly threat.

74...♞xb8(?)

This natural move unnecessarily prolongs the fight. I rightly assumed the resulting ending was winning, based on the unfortunate position of the white king, but I failed to find the elegant 74...♕c1!! finishing the game at once in view of the threat of ...♜b1 mate.

75.♞xd4† ♜d3 76.♞xb4 ♕c3 77.♞a4



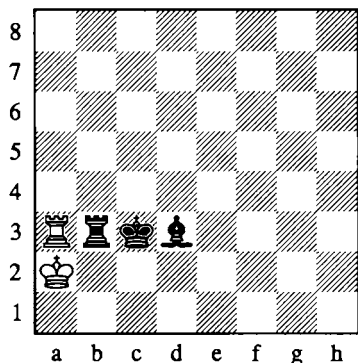
White has managed to eliminate my last pawn but my pieces are optimally placed for the final attack. The b3-pawn is as good as lost, but Black still needs to find the best way to take it in order to avoid freeing the white king.

77...♞h2†?

Throwing the win away. I am familiar with the theoretical rook and bishop versus rook positions, but under pressure I overlooked several small things.

First of all, when calculating the consequences

of the winning move 77...♖b8!! I stopped one move too early: 78.♖a3 ♖b4 79.♖a4 ♖xb3 80.♖a3

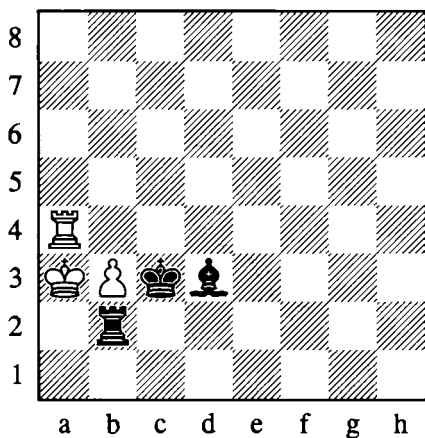


I thought this would be the end of my hopes, overlooking the simple 80...♙b1! winning the rook.

78.♙a3

At this point I realized I had misplayed my winning position.

78...♖b2



Fortunately, my opponent had just one minute left and did not grab the offered chance.

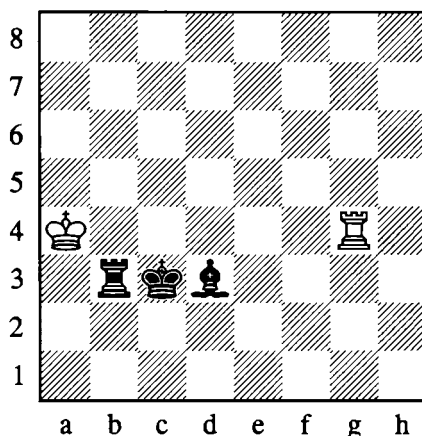
79.♖g4?

Putting me back on the winning track.

You can imagine how horrified I was when I realized that 79.♖b4!! ♖b1 80.♙a2 ♙xb4 would lead to stalemate! I love such study-like ideas, but if this one had actually occurred in my game I would have gone mad.

For some reason, I had also missed a simpler save: 79.♖a7 ♖xb3† 80.♙a4 ♖b8 81.♖c7† ♙c4 82.♙a5 With a theoretical draw which I actually knew. I should probably blame it on the symptom described in the next comment.

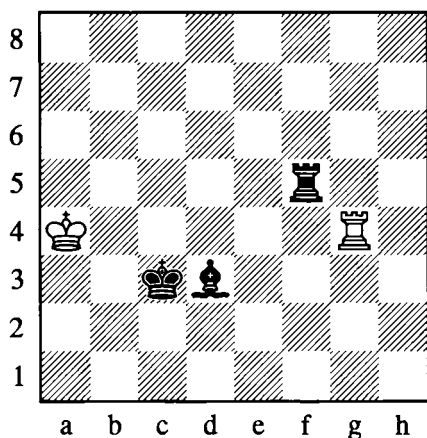
79...♖xb3† 80.♙a4



I knew for sure that this was winning, but in the books this construction is examined with the king on the back rank. With his king on the side, I got slightly confused, failing to understand that a quick win was in sight, without the need of carrying out the typical laborious manoeuvres.

My friend Mihail Marin told me a funny story related to this issue. His former trainer GM Ghitecu once got a drawn version of this ending with the enemy king cut off on the side, which caused his opponent to move his chair to the side of the table so he could remember the defensive ideas. Maybe I should have done the same?

80...♖b1 81.♙a5 ♖b5† 82.♙a4 ♖f5



Threatening ...♙c2+.

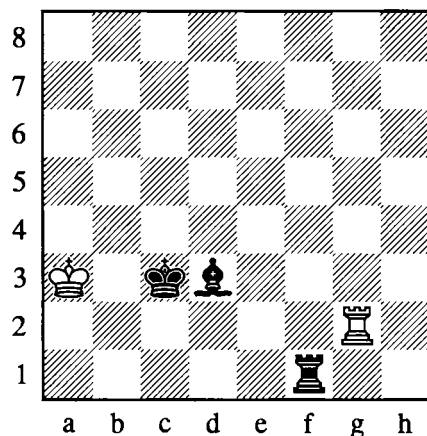
83.♙g3

The only alternative was 83.♙a3 ♖f1 84.♙g2 ♖b1 85.♙h2. This is a position one has to know, together with the way of dominating the rook and creating zugzwang ideas. 85...♙f1!! 86.♙f2 ♙c4 87.♙f3+ ♙d3 88.♙f2 ♖b3+ 89.♙a2 ♖b7 90.♙a1 ♙e7 White cannot defend against the simultaneous threats along the first rank and the a-file.

83...♙f4+?

I still do not understand how I could miss the simple 83...♙f1! 84.♙a5 ♖f6 winning. As mentioned above, I thought I still had to work a bit in order to get this attacking pattern.

84.♙a3 ♖f1 85.♙g2



I started to get nervous at the thought that I knew that the position was winning, I knew the manoeuvres, and yet, with so much at stake, I could not focus to finish it off!

85...♙h1

As mentioned in the comment to 83.♙g3 above, 85...♙b1! wins. I managed to get to this position only on move 106!

86.♙b2

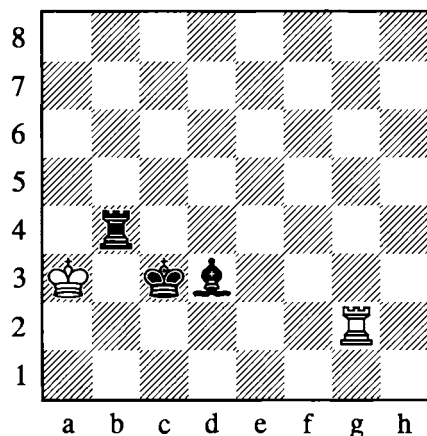
I was very irritated that I had forgotten about this defence, which prolongs the fight. Fortunately, I had played the previous sequence quickly, accumulating a few minutes, so I could restart planning.

And it was good that I remembered the next move was forced.

86...♙a1+ 87.♙a2 ♖b1 88.♙g2

As we know from the previous comments, in order to win, I only needed to reach this position with White to move.

88...♖b3+ 89.♙a4 ♖b4+ 90.♙a3



90...♖b6

But for the second time I failed to create the zugzwang with: 90...♖b1!

91.♙g4 ♙a6+ 92.♙a4 ♖b6 93.♙g4 ♖b7 94.♖h4 ♖b1 95.♖h2 ♖b6

Had I been a bit calmer I would have discovered 95...♙f1! reaching the same zugzwang position as after move 107.

96.♖h4 ♙f1

Finally I started to remember the pattern, but not its exact form.

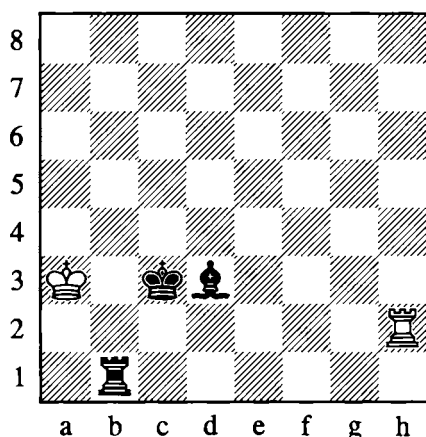
97.♖g4 ♖b5 98.♖g3† ♙d3 99.♖g4 ♖b1 100.♖g2 ♖b3† 101.♙a4 ♖b5 102.♖g4

We had already had this position after move 82. I was quite unhappy when I realized we were practically going in circles.

102...♖f5 103.♙a3 ♖f1 104.♖g2 ♖b1

I finally felt that I was on the right track, but I was also alarmed about the danger of three-fold repetitions.

105.♖h2



105...♙f5?

Immediately after playing this, I understood that the bishop should have gone to f1.

106.♖g2 ♙d3

What an irony! Just when I had managed to remember the winning method, Leinier could have stopped the clock and claimed a three-fold repetition with:

107.♖h2

He had actually been throwing brief looks at his scoresheet for quite a while, but probably he could not remember exactly which position had already occurred twice before. He also knew that if his claim was proven wrong, the penalty would be an addition of two minutes on my clock – a present he obviously was not keen to offer me, since lack of time was my main problem ever since the ending arose on the board.

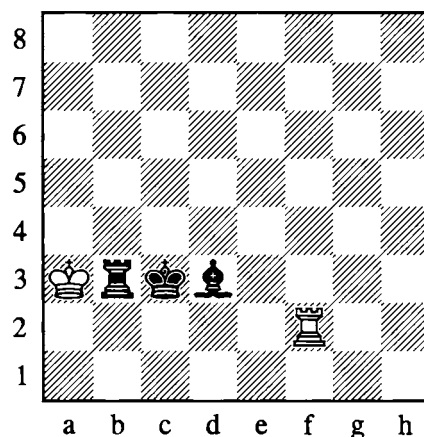
Sometimes one really needs a bit of luck, in chess as in real life!

107...♙f1!

Yes! I did it!

But I believe that by this point many had started thinking I would never manage to find my way.

108.♖f2 ♙c4 109.♖f3† ♙d3 110.♖f2 ♖b3†



111.♙a2

Or if 111.♙a4 ♖b6 White does not have the defence 112.♖f5, which is one important point of the domination and zugzwang issues.

111...♖b6 112.♙a1 ♖g6

Without trying his last, very hypothetical, chance 113.♖g2, hoping for stalemate, which can be refuted easily with 113...♖e6, Leinier resigned.

0-1

This game featured the most tense and interesting situations in my career. A few months later, somebody told me that this was the best sporting show he had ever watched. He loved football, he added, but this game and the live commentary were more than his other favourite sport could offer!

The tiebreaks were scheduled for the next day, at the same time as the classical games had been. I find this quite appropriate, as it allows the players to maintain their tournament rhythm, recover from fatigue, and do some preparation.

Moreover, the players who had managed to qualify after two games would get a mostly welcome free day; but not in my case this time!

At some previous events, the tiebreaks started, after a short break, on the same evening as the second game. I find this far too tiring and prejudicial to the quality of the games.

Having equalized the score in such a dramatic way, I sat down for the first rapid game (at the rate of 25 minutes plus 10 seconds per move) with a certain psychological advantage. While I could enjoy my sporting achievement, Leinier surely needed a lot of effort to forget his missed opportunities.

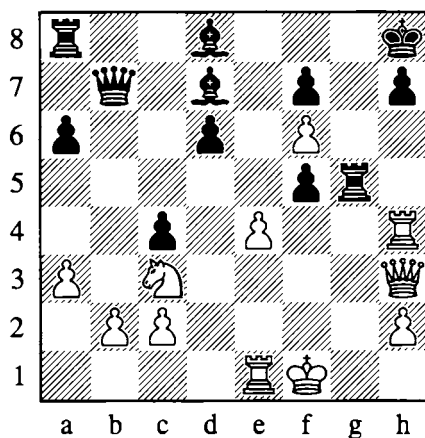
I had the white pieces and decided to avoid a theoretical Najdorf battle by choosing the Closed Sicilian. This proved a correct decision as I won, but then I wrongly chose the Scandinavian with Black and lost.

We were standing at 2–2 and had to play two more games at the rate of ten minutes plus ten seconds per move. Once again, I started well, winning the first game with White.

Judit Polgar – Leinier Dominguez

World Cup (4.5), Khanty-Mansiysk 2011

This time I entered the sharp Najdorf, meeting it with the Sozin Attack (6.♙c4), a variation I loved to play in my earlier years.



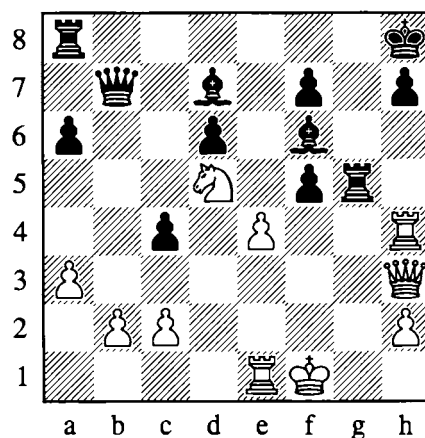
Despite his extra piece, the position looks dangerous for Black, and Leinier could no longer stand the f6-pawn.

27...♙xf6?

27...♙g8! would have repelled the attack, with a possible transposition to the line from the next comment.

28.♘d5!!

The key move. Instead I believe that Leinier was counting on 28.♖xh7? ♙g8 29.♘d5 ♙g7 parrying all the threats.

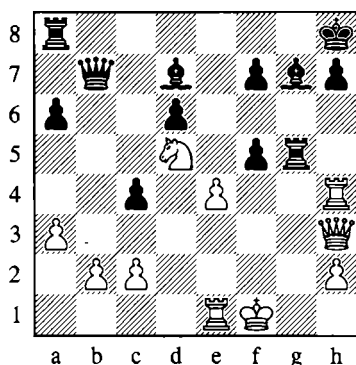


28...♙xb2?

An ineffective attempt to include the queen in the defence of the king.

The first line I had to calculate was: 28...♔g7?

29.♖xh7† ♔g8 30.♗h6!



29.♘e7!!

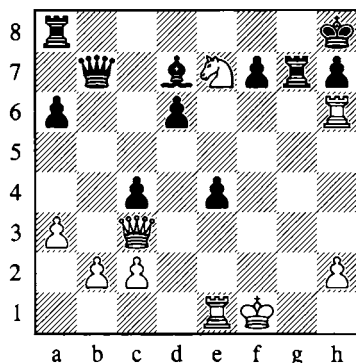
Preventing the king escaping from the corner. For instance:

29...♔h6 30.♖xh6 ♖g7 31.♗c3

Pinning the rook and threatening 32.♖xh7† ♔xh7 33.♗h3 mate.

31...fxe4

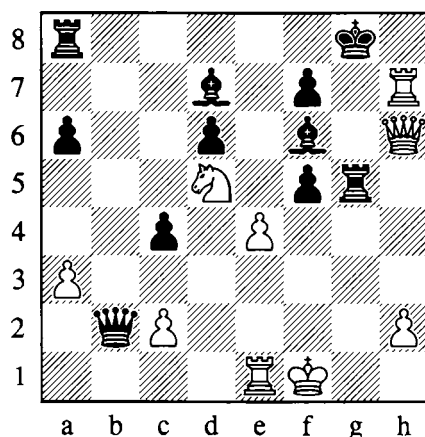
Controlling h3.



32.♗f6!

Renewing the threat of ♖xh7† followed by ♗h4 mate, which Black can avoid only at the cost of huge material losses.

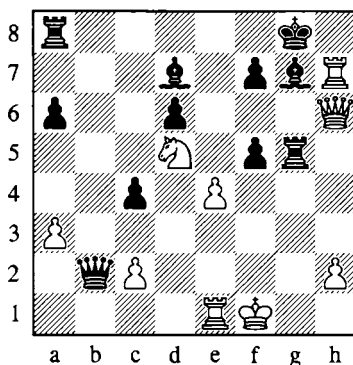
28...♖g1†! would have been an unexpected saving move. 29.♔xg1 ♔xh4 30.♗xh4 ♖g8† 31.♔h1 ♖g6 The weakness of the kingside dark squares ensures, in several ways, at least a draw by perpetual, but possibly not more than that.



And the game is over.

30...♔d8

At first sight it may seem that 30...♔g7 would win.



This would be true after 31.♔e7† ♔f8, but 31.♖h8†! ♔xh8 32.♔e7 mates.

31.e5!

Cutting off the queen from the kingside and threatening ♖h8 mate.

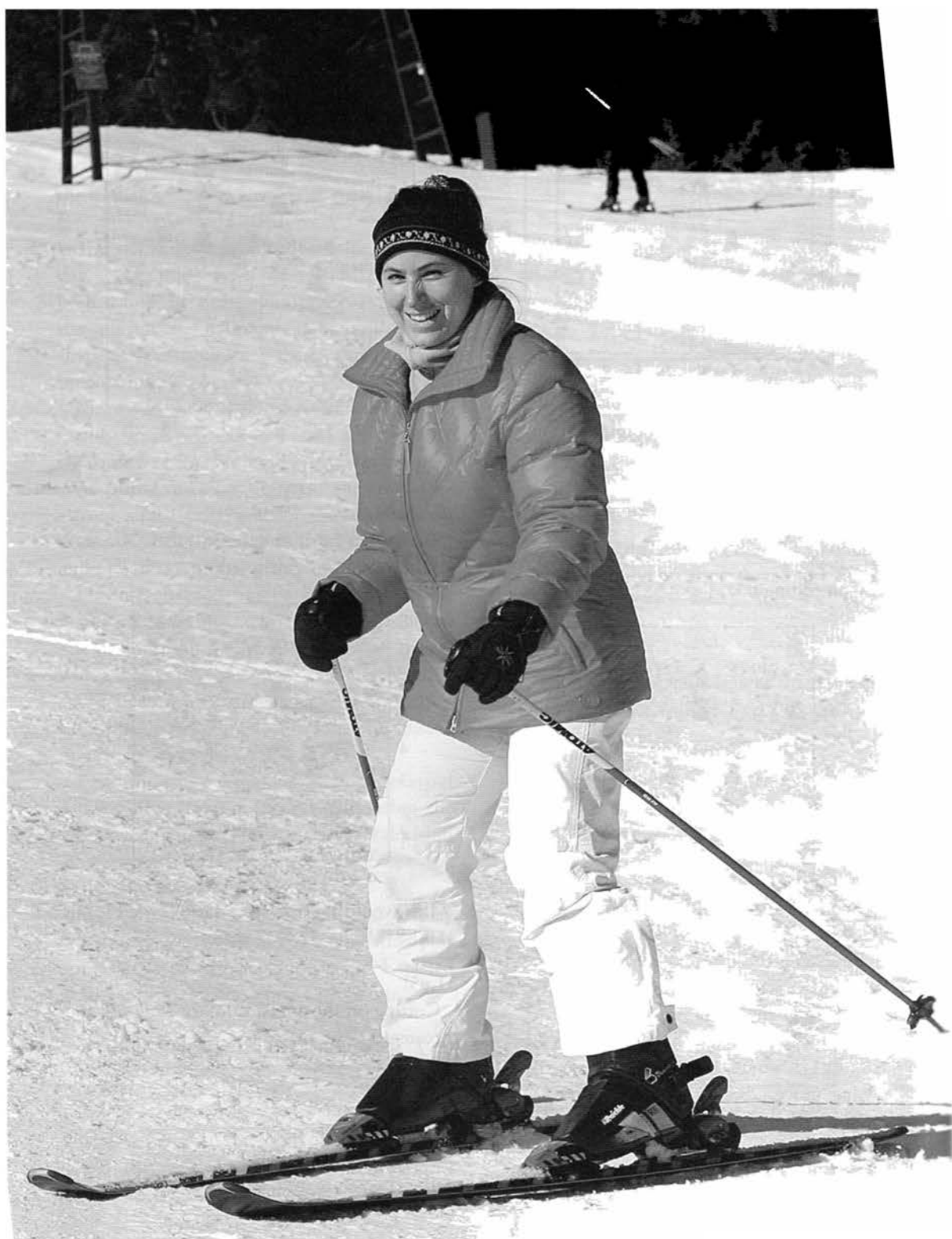
31...♖g1†

Desperation.

32.♔xg1 ♖d4† 33.♔f1

The checks are over, so Leinier resigned.

1-0



chesstouring.com

I was very happy to take the lead again but it did not last for long, as a few minutes later we started the fourth game of the playoff. I did not give up my initial idea and repeated the Scandinavian, which once again turned out to be a mistake.

The score became 3–3, with all games decisive, as in my match against Anand in Chapter 4.

For the next two games we had the time control of five minutes plus three seconds per move. This time I could not win with the Closed Sicilian, and if the eighth game had ended in a draw, we would have played a sudden-death game to finish the match.

I mentioned my win in this game in the comments to the epic second game above.

So I moved on to the quarterfinal and my next opponent was Svidler. I made an easy draw with Black in Game 1, but the next day I pushed too hard in a great position resulting from the Najdorf, and lost. This defeat would not have been so painful if it had not been caused by an unnecessary mistake. I should have drawn and gone for the playoff.

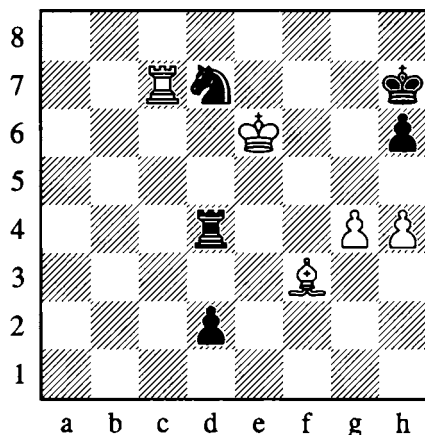
But I have to admit that Svidler played a fantastic tournament, and after eliminating me, he went on to win the World Cup!

This was a fantastic event for me and one of my best ever results. And I will remember my second game against Leinier Dominguez forever!

As a curiosity, I would mention that two years earlier, in the same place and in the same kind of competition, I had managed to defend the rook versus rook and bishop ending much more easily than I managed to win against Leinier.

Dieter Nisipeanu – Judit Polgar

World Cup (2.8), Khanty-Mansiysk 2009



This was the eighth game of the match, deep in the playoffs, and I needed a draw to qualify for the next round.

50...h5!

The only saving move; it works because of the “wrong corner”. If 51.♖xd7 ♜xd7 52.♙xd7 hxg4 White cannot promote his pawn.

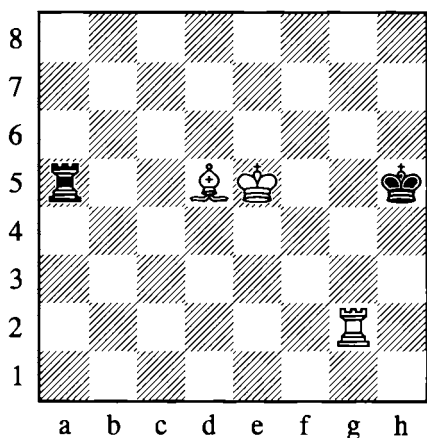
51.g5 ♜g6 52.♖xd7 ♜xh4 53.♖xd2 ♜xg5

Despite having reached a drawn ending, I could not afford to relax. I knew that Dieter would fight for a win until the end, since after a draw he would have to pack up and fly home.

54.♙e5 ♖a4 55.♖g2† ♜h6 56.♙e4 h4 57.♙f4 h3 58.♖g3 h2 59.♖h3† ♜g7 60.♖xh2

Coincidence meant that shortly before this event, I suggested to my training partner that we review the theory of this ending. “It could bring in some points,” I explained. So when this position appeared on the board, I was in the best possible shape to defend it!

60...♖a1 61.♙e5 ♖a5† 62.♙d5 ♜g6 63.♖g2† ♜h5

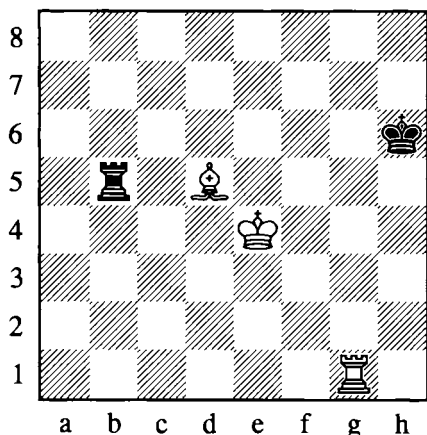


This is the critical position of Black's defensive set-up. What has to be known is that ♕e5-e4 would be best met with $\dots\text{♖h6}$, and ♕e5-e6 with $\dots\text{♖h4}$.

64. ♕e4 ♖h6 65. ♕e6 ♖g5

An important move, freeing the king from the edge of the board.

66. ♖a2 ♖b5 67. ♕f4 ♕g6 68. ♖d2 ♕f6
 69. ♕c4 ♖b4 70. ♖d4 ♖a4 71. ♕c4 ♕g5
 72. ♖d5† ♕g4 73. ♖c5 ♖a1 74. ♕e6† ♕g3
 75. ♖g5† ♕f2 76. ♕d5 ♖a4† 77. ♕d3 ♖a7
 78. ♖f5† ♕g3 79. ♕e3 ♖a3† 80. ♕e4 ♖a4†
 81. ♕e5 ♖a5 82. ♖g5† ♕h4 83. ♖g8 ♕h5
 84. ♖g1 ♖b5 85. ♕e4 ♕h6



Against Black's best defence, White cannot reach the set-up with ♕f6 and ♕e6 . Even this set-up would not be winning, but it would demand Black defend very carefully.

86. ♕f7 ♖g5 87. ♖h1† ♕g7 88. ♕e6 ♕f6
 89. ♕d7 ♕e7 90. ♖h7† ♕d6 91. ♕f5 ♖g1
 92. ♖d7† ♕c6 93. ♖d3 ♕c5 94. ♖c3† ♕d6
 95. ♖d3† ♕c5 96. ♖d5† ♕c6 97. ♕e5 ♖e1†
 98. ♕e4 ♕c7 99. ♖c5† ♕b6 100. ♖c2 ♖g1
 101. ♕d5 ♖g6 102. ♕e6 ♕b5 103. ♕d5 ♖g5†
 104. ♕d6 ♕b4 105. ♖b2† ♕c3 106. ♖b3†
 ♕c2 107. ♖f3 ♕d2 108. ♕d5 ♕e2 109. ♖h3
 ♕f2 110. ♕c5 ♖g3 111. ♖h2† ♕e3 112. ♖h4
 ♖g5 113. ♕c4 ♖g7 114. ♖e4† ♕f2 115. ♕d3
 ♖g3† 116. ♕d4 ♖g7 117. ♖f4† ♕g3 118. ♕e3
 ♖a7 119. ♖b4 ♖a3† 120. ♕b3 ♖a7 121. ♕c2
 ♖e7† 122. ♕e4 ♖a7 123. ♖b6 ♖a3† 124. ♕d3
 ♕h3 125. ♖b4 ♖c3 126. ♕e2 ♕g3 127. ♖e4
 ♖a3 128. ♖e3† ♕f4 129. ♖f3† ♕e5 130. ♕e3
 ♖a1 131. ♖f5† ♕e6 132. ♕d4 ♖a4† 133. ♕e3
 ♖a3 134. ♖b5 ♖a1 135. ♕d4 ♖d1 136. ♖b3
 ♕d6 137. ♖b6† ♕c7 138. ♕e4

$\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

I had successfully defended this ending for nearly 70 moves. I could have claimed a draw earlier, after 50 moves, but I was so short of time and defending so confidently that I forgot about my "rights" and just played on and on.

With this draw I happily moved forward to the match against Gelfand; more about this in the next chapter.

Chapter 12

Where It All Started



The 2002 team that won silver medals at the Bled Olympiad: Polgar, Gyimesi, Leko, Almasi, Ruck with Acs in front. In 2014 we did it again!

From my experience with chess players I have come to the personal conclusion that while not all artist are chess players, all chess players are artists.

– Marcel Duchamp

The last game in this volume is one of my most memorable ever. I managed to defeat a very strong opponent in my best fearless and spectacular style, which characterized my games as a kid.

But, as mentioned in the introduction, there is more than that behind my decision to conclude the trilogy with this win. It was precisely this game which inspired me to write this trilogy.

I had lost the first match game, a situation we are familiar with from the comments to the match with Leinier Dominguez, so I will not dwell on the general psychological aspects. As the game unfolds, I will only highlight those related specifically with this game.

Judit Polgar – Boris Gelfand

World Cup (3.2), Khanty-Mansiysk 2009

1.e4

This move somehow stayed glued to me over the years; I am a born 1.e4 player!

1...e5

Boris is renowned for his excellent opening preparation, and surprising him is extremely difficult. He had been a leading expert in the Sicilian Najdorf for decades, but in 2009 he started using the ultra-solid Petroff as his main weapon.

Winning against this opening “on demand” is anything but easy, so I did some very special preparation, taking into account several objective and subjective factors.

I tried to understand Boris’s chess personality in depth. Which would be the most significant threads of his style, which kind of positions would he want to get on that specific day and

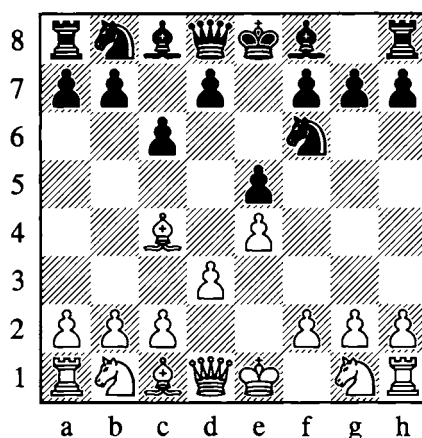
situation? What would he expect from me and what not? Which type of positions would make him feel unsure and how could I take him onto unfamiliar territory as early as possible?

All these questions distilled into one of my most inspired opening choices ever:

2.♕c4!!

There were two main reasons behind this surprising decision. Boris had played the Petroff more than 100 times and was clearly feeling safe in the resulting positions. For my part, I had never played the Bishop’s Opening before!

2...♘f6 3.d3 c6



While checking my opponent’s games I discovered that he likes to meet the usual 4.♘f3 with 4...d5 followed by ...♕d6 and ...♘bd7. And since in this game I was mainly playing *against* my opponent’s style, the priority was to prevent the active central set-up.

4.♖e2!!

Actually, only this was meant to be the real surprise and it worked, as Boris now took his first serious think – nine minutes.

4...♕e7

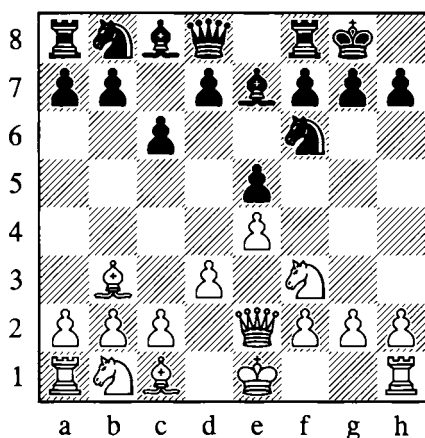
The most popular move and quite a logical continuation. On the other hand, it also

marked a first psychological success for me, by taking Boris out of his usual schemes as early as on move four!

In fact, the consistent 4...d5, which is very much in Boris's enterprising style, would have been entirely possible: 5.exd5 cxd5 6.♖xe5† ♕e7 7.♗b5† ♖c6 8.♖f3 0-0 Black's lead in development compensates for the sacrificed pawn.

Had the game been played under different circumstances, my opponent might have chosen this way, but the tournament situation required safety, and I was right in assuming that Boris would not go for complications.

5.♖f3 0-0 6.♗b3



The e5-pawn is defended indirectly due to the possibility of ...♗a5†.

6...d6

I am sure that during his five-minute think Boris considered 6...d5, but once again he decided to play according to the match situation rather than follow his instincts.

7.0-0

By this point I considered that the first mission had been accomplished. We were

heading for a complex middlegame, without the risk of an early liquidation of the tension or simplification. Move by move my opponent was going to have a relatively wide choice of apparently equivalent alternatives, which was likely to prove tiring, stressful and... time consuming.

7...♖bd7 8.c3

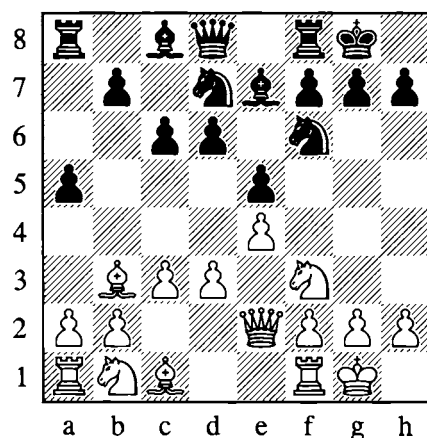
Increasing my control in the centre, and securing the bishop against the threatened ...♖c5.

The position bears some similarity with the Italian Game and the Breyer Ruy Lopez, but there are some small differences, too. That was what I was aiming for – a familiar structure requiring independent concrete decisions.

8...a5

A strong and energetic move.

I was expecting something in the spirit of the Breyer Ruy Lopez, such as 8...h6 followed by ...♗e8 and ...♗f8.



9.a4

During the game this looked like the most natural reaction, first of all because I was focused on preventing Boris from carrying out his plans, in the same way as on the fourth move.

I would now consider continuing my development with 9.♖bd2 b5 10.d4.

9...b5

A logical follow-up of the previous move, but I expected a more solid plan. Apart from the aforementioned ...h7-h6 followed by ...♗e8, Black could consider 9...b6 followed by ...♙a6 (or ...♙b7) and ...d6-d5 in the long run, as well as 9...♘c5 10.♙c2 ♙e6.

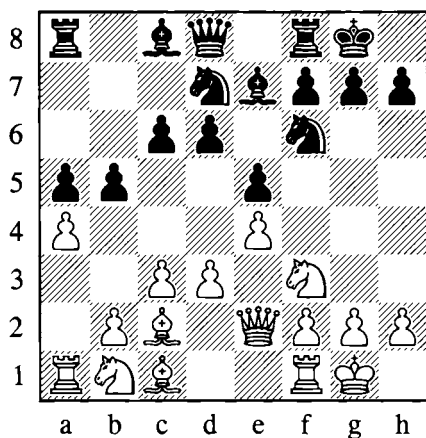
This is quite typical for such positions with an undefined structure and all the pieces still on the board. There are plenty of plans and ideas available and the situation can change after every move.

I am sure that Gelfand did not have the least reason for discontent, but probably he was starting to realize that it was going to be a long game.

10.♙c2

Planning to meet 10...♘c5? with 11.axb5 cxb5 12.d4 when Black would start regretting having pushed his queenside pawns so early.

10.axb5!? cxb5 11.♙e3 would have been a worthy alternative, but I did not wish to define the queenside structure so soon.



10...♙a6

Black develops and prevents my central expansion with d3-d4. In the long run,

this will prove a committal move, since the bishop will not take part in the kingside defence.

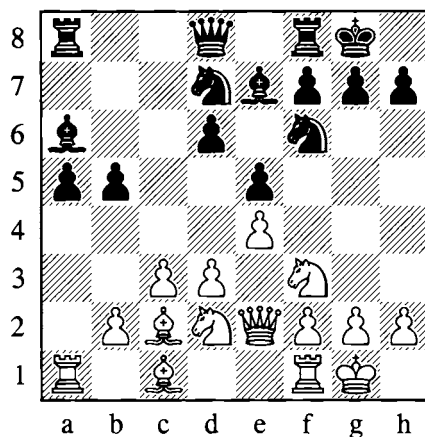
11.axb5

I finally decided to give up the queenside tension since after 11.♖bd2 I was a bit worried about 11...b4.

11...cxb5

The seemingly active 11...♙xb5 would actually doom the bishop to relative passivity after: 12.c4 ♙a6 13.♙d2 ♙b7 14.♘c3± White has a more compact structure and better development.

12.♖bd2



12...♗c7

This is not a bad square for the queen but I was expecting 12...♗b6, keeping an eye on d4 and over-defending the bishop, a detail which could have been useful later.

13.d4

I had the feeling that Boris was surprised by this move. Psychologically, such moments are important, when one is playing against a certain move or plan, but the opponent carries it out anyway.

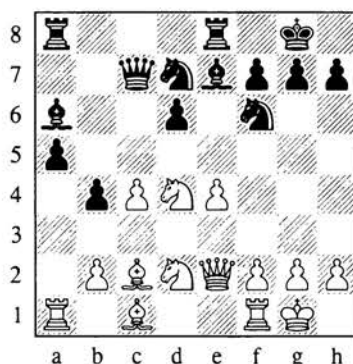
13...a4?!

A bad decision after eight minutes. Black increases his control of the light squares, but gives White the time to regroup properly and prepare for a kingside attack.

The active 13...b4 would have been better. I was focused on making 14.c4 work.

The forcing 14...♖b6 15.♙xa5 ♜xc4 16.♙xa6 ♜xd2 17.♙xa8 ♜xf3† 18.♚xf3 ♙xa8 19.♙b3 would lead to approximate equality, although the constant pressure of my light-squared bishop might prove unpleasant in the long run.

However, the simple 14...exd4 15.♜xd4 ♙fe8 planning ...♜c5 and ...♙f8, with combined threats of pawn moves such as ...a5-a4 and ...d6-d5, would offer Black excellent play.



Actually, I would prefer playing with Black, for which reason 14.♙d3 (instead of my planned 14.c4) would have been better.

14.♙d3

Not giving Black a second chance to play ...b5-b4.

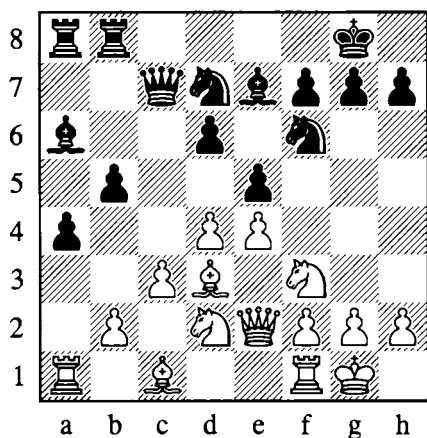


I had many tense games and matches with Boris Gelfand

14...♖fb8

This natural move fails to create any queenside threats while weakening his kingside defence. Boris might have relied on the fact that so far we have had a positional game in the centre and on the queenside.

Even with a loss of time, unpinning the pawn with 14...♖b6!? would have made sense.

**15.♘h4!?**

I wanted to immediately take advantage of the last move's drawback. Even though I was not sure whether it was the best move (I am underdeveloped after all) I felt happy to finally find an interesting plan, leading to a position which would inspire me, and allow me to play for 'double or nothing'. This thought gave me some sort of freedom and creative pleasure!

15...g6 16.f4

This reminded me of the King's Gambit, my favourite weapon as a kid, which made me feel confident in the unclear complications that ensue.

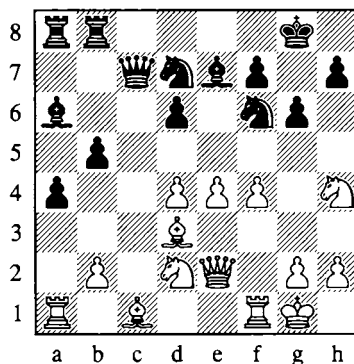
Black has a wide choice now, but this is precisely what must have been psychologically unpleasant for Boris, who would have surely preferred clarity on his way to the next round.

16...exf4

Played after only four minutes.

16...exd4

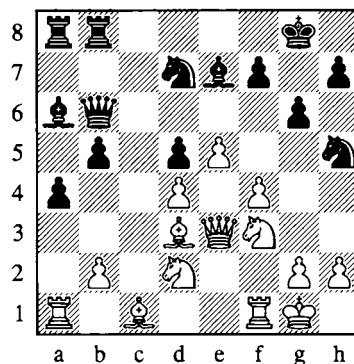
This was not an easy move to decide upon, because it allows White to build up a strong centre. However, Black's superior development would have allowed him to stabilize the position satisfactorily.

17.cxd4**17...♖b6!**

An important move, preparing ...b5-b4 in order to exchange my most dangerous attacking piece – the d3-bishop.

18.♘hf3 d5!

Forcing White to establish the structure in the centre before organizing the attack.

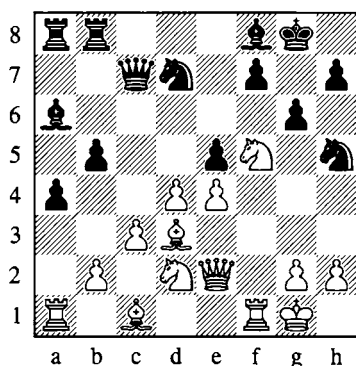
19.e5 ♘h5 20.♖e3**20...b4!**

Despite appearances, this is not really a pawn sacrifice.

21.♖xa4 ♗xd3 22.♖xa8 ♖xa8 23.♖xd3 ♘xf4 24.♖e3 ♘e6

With a safe blockade on e6, which neutralizes White's space advantage.

The attempt to keep the tension and invade the f4-square with 16...♖h5 would be riskier:
17.♖f5 ♗f8 18.fxe5 dxe5



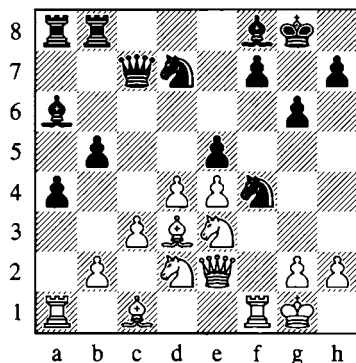
19.♖e3!?

During the game I felt tempted to try the piece sacrifice 19.♖f3, but it may not be enough.

19...♖f4

Inserting the exchange on d4 before jumping with the knight would not change the character of the position: 19...exd4 20.cxd4 ♖f4 21.♗xf4 ♗xf4 22.♖f3 ♗c8 23.♗d2 ♗b7 24.♖d5 with huge activity.

Or if 19...♗a7 20.♗f2 attacking f7, with complications.



20.♗xf4!

Forced, but quite strong.

20...exf4 21.♖d5 ♗d6 22.♖f3 ♗h6 23.♗e1

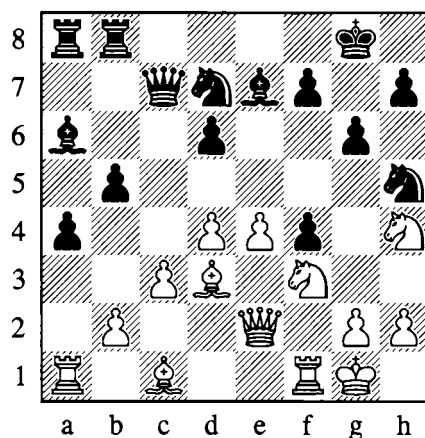
Threatening ♗h4. The structure strongly resembles those arising from the King's Gambit, with White strongly centralized, which compensates for the material deficit.

17.♖df3

Continuing development and bringing more pieces into the attack.

17.♗xf4 was out of the question due to 17...♖h5 while 17.♗f3 would unpin the b-pawn, thus allowing 17...b4.

17...♖h5



18.♗d2

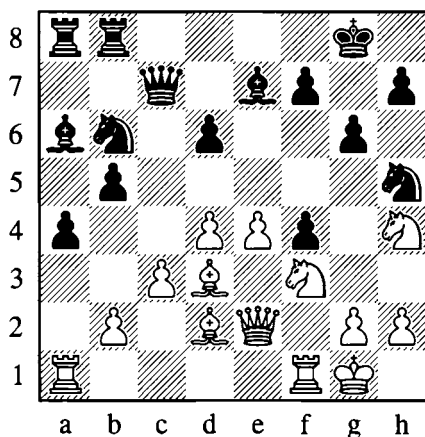
My initial intention was the typical King's Gambit break 18.g4, but I failed to find a good way of continuing the attack after 18...fxg3.

Since Black is not yet prepared for ...b5-b4, I decided I could afford to connect rooks with the game move.

18...♖b6?

Played rather quickly (maybe *too* quickly) after only three minutes. Boris continued to follow his blockading plan on the light squares, underestimating the dynamic potential of my attack.

It would have been better to return the rook to the vulnerable area with 18...♖e8!, putting some pressure on my queen and preparing for the tactical fight.



19.g4!

The turning point of the game. When playing my last move, opening lines on the kingside without thinking of the material balance, I felt a bit like the 15-year-old girl I used to be. Losing the first game of such a short match usually causes some psychological problems, but this time my desire to win offered me the freedom of playing the kind of entertaining moves one never stops dreaming about.

If I had to define my play in this phase of the game, I would call it a mixture of love, enthusiasm and gambling spirit.

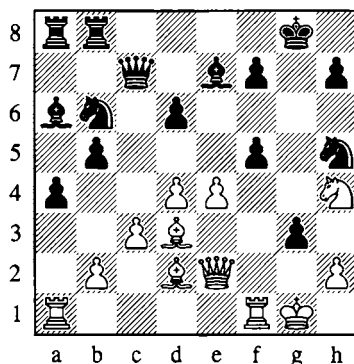
19...fxg3

Thorough analysis suggests that objectively Black might be better, but this was irrelevant under the given circumstances, with only 17 minutes left to reach move 40 (compared to my 31) and the need to make a draw.

As a general comment, there are many moments when Black could insert ...gxh2†, but in principle it may be useful to keep the pawn on g3, controlling the f2-square. In most cases, I could hardly afford to spend a tempo on hxg3, so ...gxh2† remains a permanent possibility.

20.♖g5

I also considered 20.♖f5 gxf5 21.♖h4:



As scary as this might seem for Black, I did not believe it could work. For instance: 21...♖g7 22.♖xf5 ♖xf5 23.♖xf5 with only some compensation. Besides, I love knights and did not want to part with them so easily.

20...♖c4?

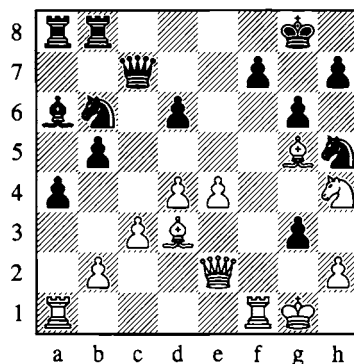
A strange decision after a relatively long think – eight minutes. Boris sticks to his static queenside plan as if nothing was happening on the opposite wing.

Before jumping ahead with the knight, he should have taken some preventive measures.

20...♖xg5!

Not an easy move to make, as now the weakness of the dark squares becomes more relevant, but it was essential to eliminate my active knight.

21.♖xg5

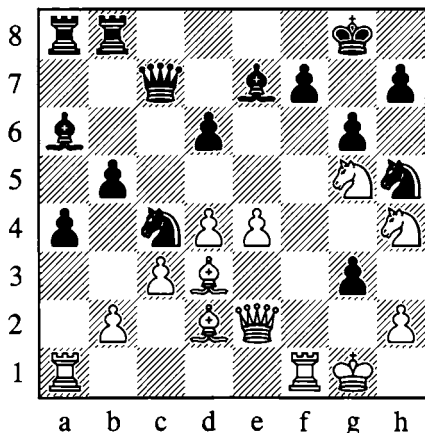


21...♙c8!

Another difficult decision; Black's pieces need to hurry back to defend. This move is directed against my thematic ♖h4-f5.

22.♟f3 ♖c4

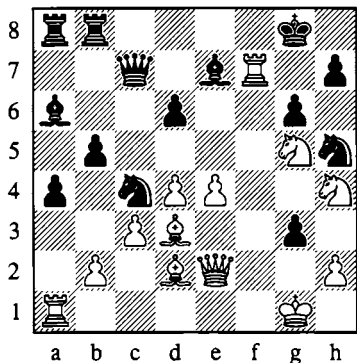
This is the kind of position I would *not* be happy to play against an engine, but in a tournament game I would believe in my chances. Black has two extra pawns, but his king is weak and his overall coordination is far from perfect.



21.♖f5

A spectacular, thematic and dangerous move, but... not the best!

After seven minutes I thought the natural 21.♞xf7! would be unclear.



Indeed, White's pieces seem to be hanging, but tactically everything would have worked out perfectly well.

21...♟d8

This move, unpinning the bishop in order to attack the g5-knight, confused me.

I saw that if 21...♖xd2, hoping for 22.♟xd2? ♙xg5!, I would win with: 22.♖f5!!

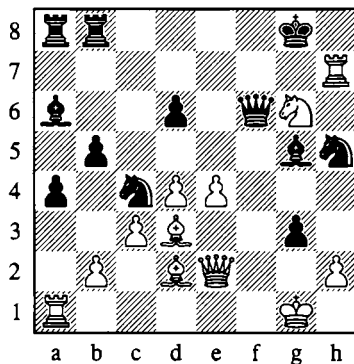
22.♞xh7 ♙xg5

Once again, Black cannot afford to take the bishop: 22...♖xd2 23.♖xg6 ♙xg5 24.♟xh5 with a decisive attack.

23.♖xg6!

Intuitively, I could feel that Black's pieces were too far from his king to offer a proper defence. Concretely, I could not see how to proceed after:

23...♟f6



It is curious that I had seen the spectacular refutation of 21...♖xd2 above, but I failed to calculate the relatively natural:

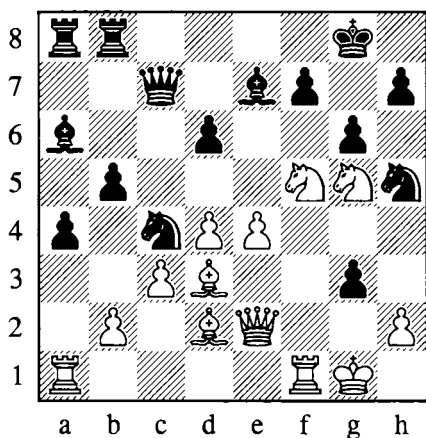
24.♖e7† ♖f8

The rook is taboo: 24...♖xh7 25.e5† wins the queen.

25.♙xg5 ♟xg5 26.♞f1† ♖e8 27.♖d5

With decisive threats, since Black's counterplay comes to an end after:

27...gxf2† 28.♖xh2 ♟h4† 29.♖g1 ♟g3† 30.♟g2+—

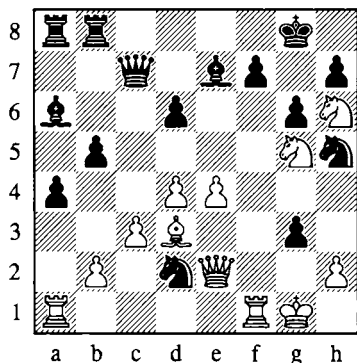


21...Qxg5

A pragmatic decision, eliminating a dangerous attacking piece and simplifying his calculations.

21...Qxd2 22.Qh6†

This is less dangerous than it may seem; Black holds by a hair.



22...Qh8!

22...Qg7 would run into: 23.Qxf7† Qxh6 24.h4 Qh8 25.Qxd2+— True, the computer prefers 24.Qxh7† with mate in 13, but this is less obvious to me.

23.Qhxf7†

White needs to keep up the rhythm of the attack.

If 23.Qxf7 Qxg5 24.Qxc7 Qxh6 Black has a safe king position and enough compensation for the queen.

23...Qg8 24.Qh6† Qh8 25.Qxd2

The position has normalized somewhat; White is a pawn down but retains strong kingside pressure. For instance:

25...Qxg5 26.Qxg5 gxh2† 27.Qxh2 Qf8 28.Qe2

With a persistent initiative.

22.Qxg5 f6

Trying to consolidate on the dark squares.

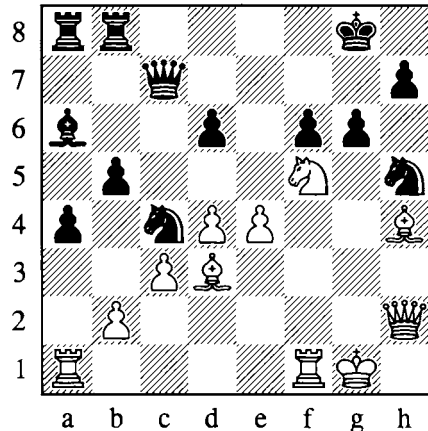
23.Qh4

As long as the h5-knight is hanging, there is no rush to play 23.Qh6† when I could not see how to continue my attack after 23...Qg7.

23...gxh2†

Since hxg3 followed by g3-g4 had become a threat, Black finally decides to release the tension.

24.Qxh2



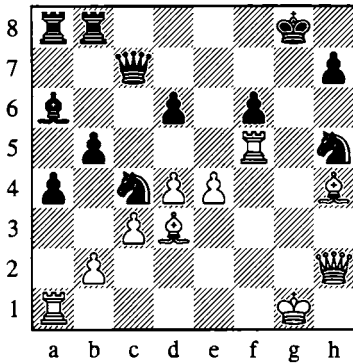
Clearing the e2-square for the bishop in order to challenge the stability of the important defensive knight on h5. This type of additional threat tends to be unpleasant in time trouble.

24...Qf8

In time trouble Boris tries to play safe. On the other hand, keeping the tension offers me more possibilities to complicate matters.

The seemingly risky 24...gxf5 would actually have led to balanced play, but a huge effort in calculation and imagination would have been necessary to establish that.

25.♟xf5



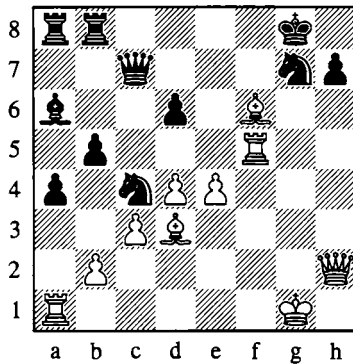
25...♞g7!

If 25...♟f7 26.♞h1, followed by ♟g1† and e4-e5, White would have fantastic compensation.

26.♞xf6

This looks very dangerous but Black has an incredible defence.

26.♟xf6 ♟f8 is inoffensive.



26...♞xb2!!

An amazing queenside resource at a moment when the main theatre of action is on the opposite wing! Black challenges White's stability, aiming to distract the attacking queen from the kingside.

Black is well advised to keep his g7-knight, since after 26...♞xf5? 27.exf5 ♟f7 28.♟h4!

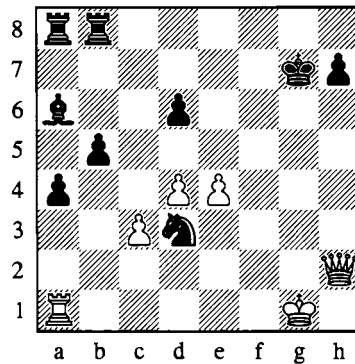
White's attack would be decisive, while the similar resource as in the main line does not work here: 27...♞xb2 28.♞c2!! followed by ♞f2 and ♟g1† with a decisive attack.

27.♟g5

If 27.♟xb2 then 27...♞xf5 28.exf5 ♞f7 gains time to defend.

The already familiar 27.♞c2 is not effective after 27...♟f8, threatening to eliminate the dangerous bishop with ...♟xf6. 28.e5 ♞xf5 29.♟g2† ♞g7 White does not have anything better than forcing a draw by repetition with: 30.♟e4 ♞e6 31.♟g4† ♞g7=

27...♞xd3 28.♞xg7 ♟xg7 29.♟xg7† ♞xg7



The white queen is not strong enough to trouble the exposed black king. Black has a dangerous queenside passed pawn and the white king is not so safe either.

30.♟xd6

Or if 30.♟g3† ♞h8 31.♟xd3 b4! followed by ...b4-b3, when White should look for a saving perpetual.

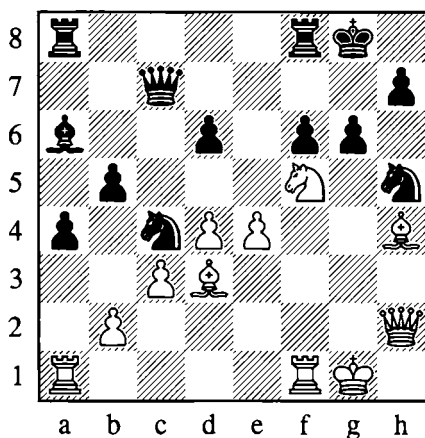
30...♟f8 31.♟g3† ♞h8 32.♟xd3 ♟f6!?

Not the only move, but a safe one. The rooks become very active now, ensuring a draw.

33.♟h3 ♟g8† 34.♞h1 ♟g6 35.♟d7 ♟h6† 36.♞g1 ♟hg6†

And so on.

Instead of the forcing 26.♞xf6 I might have had to play the neutral 26.♟f3!? keeping Black under dangerous pressure, which would be especially unpleasant in time trouble.

**25.♙e2**

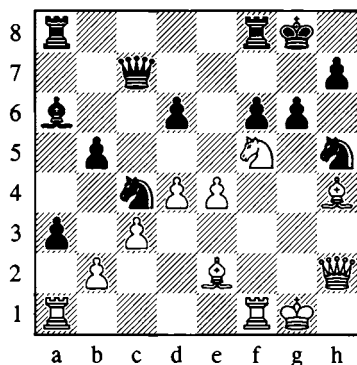
Executing my threat.

For reasons explained below, 25.♙xc4† ♜xc4 26.♞e7† ♔g7 27.♞d5, with strong compensation, would have been better.

25...gxf5

A logical continuation; it is hard to imagine an alternative.

And yet, the computers have a different opinion: 25...a3!!



Once again, as in the case of ...♞xb2 in the previous comment, a queenside move offers a defence against the kingside worries.

26.bxa3 ♞d2 27.♙xh5 ♞xf1 28.♞h6† ♔g7 29.♙xf1

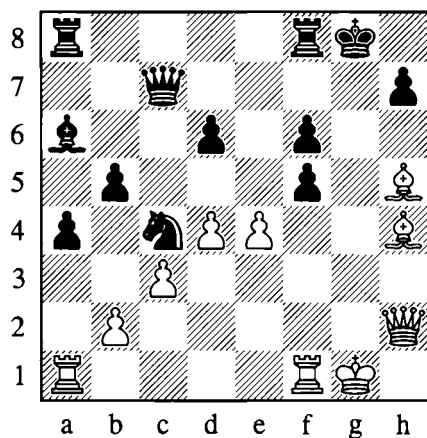
This position looks dangerous, but Black can finally use the weakness of the c3-square to activate his queen.

29...♜xc3 30.♞f5† gxf5 31.♜xd6

There are many lines leading to a draw; one of them is as follows:

31...♔h6 32.♜f4† ♔xh5 33.♜xf5† ♔h6 34.♜f4† ♔h5 35.♜f5†

With a draw.

26.♙xh5

My bishops occupy very active attacking positions.

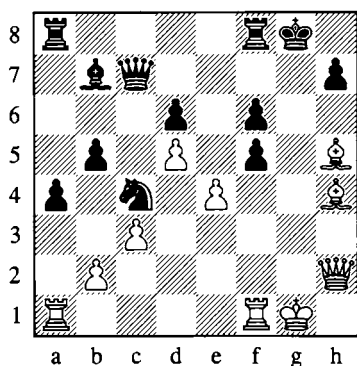
26...fxe4?

The final mistake, placing the black king in serious danger.

In order to stay in the game, Black should attack the e4-pawn, underlining the fact that my king is not so safely placed either.

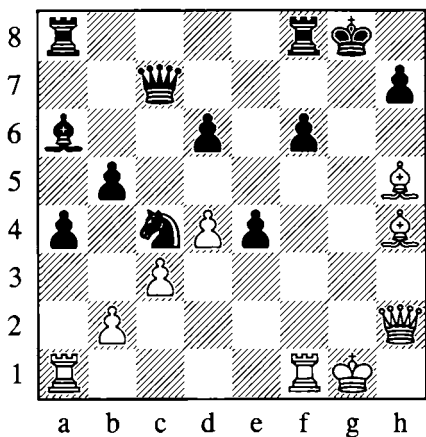
If 26...♜g7† 27.♔h1 ♙b7 28.d5, blocking the bishop and renewing the threat of ♙g1, Black could regroup by using the e5-square: 28...♜e7! 29.♙ae1 fxe4 30.♜g2† ♔h8 31.♙xe4 ♞e5 32.♙ef4 ♞d7 White has full compensation for the two pawns, but possibly not more than that.

The immediate bishop retreat 26...♙b7! would be even stronger since after 27.d5 Black would not need to lose a tempo to avoid ♙g1.



27...♙c8!? Defending the f-file by preventing ♙xf5. If e4xf5, the bishop could return to b7, while otherwise Black could regroup with ...♙h8, ...♙e7, ...♙e5.

If we compare the consequences of the game move with these lines, we can easily understand its main drawbacks. Black opens the f-file for White's attack and deprives himself of any chance for counterplay along the long diagonal.



27...♙f4!!

When the idea of this move crossed my mind for the first time, I had no doubt that it was the best move. I reinforce the threat of ♙xf6, and prepare to activate my queen with ♙h6.

I also had the feeling that I could actually win this game and level the score, which gave me a special thrill!

Gelfand must have counted on 27...♙xf6 which would allow him to reduce the tension: 27...♙xf6 28.♙xf6 ♙g7† 29.♙g2 ♙xg2† 30.♙xg2 ♙xb2 Black has two pawns for the exchange, which ensures excellent compensation.

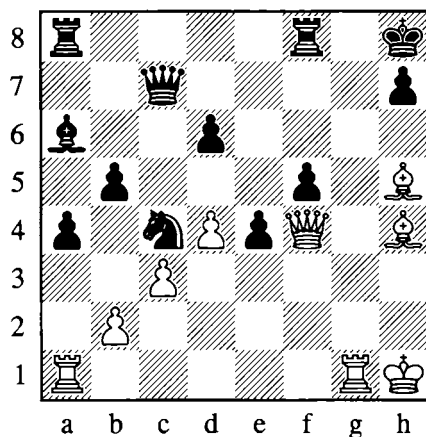
27...f5?

Another weakening move after which the game is basically over.

27...♙g7†? 28.♙h2 ♙h8 would also not work out well: 29.♙g1 ♙e7 30.♙af1 Followed by ♙h6 with a deadly attack with the participation of all White's pieces.

27...♙e7 28.♙h2 ♙h8 would have been relatively best, hoping to get an acceptable version of an exchange sacrifice on f6 (♙xf6, ...♙xf6).

28.♙h1 ♙h8 29.♙g1

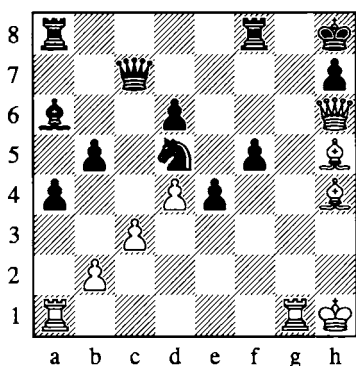


29...♙f7

With only one minute left, my opponent must have smelt defeat.

During the game I initially considered 29...♙b6 to be the best defence, with the aim of defending the dark squares from d5, but I found a reliable refutation of this plan:

30. ♖h6 ♘d5



31. ♖g2!

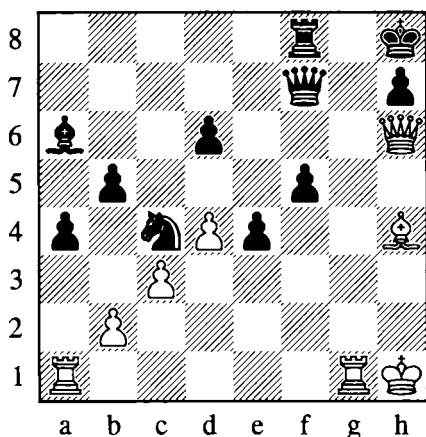
There is nothing Black can do against my rooks doubling along the g-file. The bishops control many essential squares, preventing the queen from defending the f6- and f8-squares properly.

31...f4

Or if 31...♖g8 32. ♖ag1 ♖xg2 33. ♖xg2 ♖g8 34. ♕f6† ♘xf6 35. ♖xf6† with mate in sight. 32. ♖ag1 ♗d7 33. ♕g4 ♗g7 34. ♖xg7† ♘xg7 35. ♕e6† ♘h8 36. ♕xd5

I calculated until this point, which is more than enough. White's extra piece is only part of Black's worries; in fact he will be mated soon.

30. ♕xf7 ♖xf7 31. ♖h6 ♖f8



32. ♖g6!

This move is the best and forced Boris's immediate resignation. The threats are ♕f6† and ♖f6, while 32...♖xg6 33. ♖xf8† ♖g8 34. ♕f6 mates.

1-0

Beside the sporting achievement (this turned out to be Boris's only defeat on his way to winning the Cup) what made me really happy was the way I played – which is not very common at this level.

Unfortunately (for me!) Boris is one of the strongest rapid players in the world and after four playoff games I was eliminated.

Boris has always been a great fighter and around 2009 he was having some of his best years. After winning the World Cup he also qualified for a world title match with Anand, coming close to defeating him – but “coming close” does not count in such cases...

While I was working on this trilogy, some major changes took place in my life. I got involved in many other activities rather than just training and playing, but most of these activities are directly related to chess.

In 2010, together with my sister Sofia, I wrote *Chess Playground*, a book dedicated to kindergarten kids who wish to learn chess. Based on this book, we later developed an app for iPhone, iPad and Windows 8.1.

This was just the beginning of my path into the world of chess education. Shortly after, in the autumn of 2011, I was supporting Kasparov's efforts in the European Parliament to prove the educational merits of chess and turn chess into a recognized part of the school program in the European Union. One year later, I established the Judit Polgar Chess Foundation. My foundation's biggest achievement so far is that chess as a method of skill development became part of the Hungarian national curriculum in September 2013.

Back in 2007 I had the idea of a chess festival in Budapest and so I contacted chess enthusiast Tamas Nadasi, the president of Aquaprofit, for sponsorship and support. The festival started as a light afternoon event for chess amateurs, but I became so enthusiastic in building it up that in 2013 we had Garry Kasparov as guest of honour and had 5000 visitors in just one day!

Over time I became the director of the festival and in 2013 the Judit Polgar Foundation took over the role of organizer. I truly appreciate the constant support of Aquaprofit over the years, offered in the belief that chess is a very important part of culture and education.

The festival became a family event, with lots of different activities, aimed at proving that chess has 1001 facets! The festival is much more than just about me and my sisters – we have kids' competitions, puzzles, lectures, education, art, music, dance and many more activities. In 2014 the festival will host for the second time the International Educational conference.

Finally, Sofia and I started developing the Chess Palace educational program, based on the board, coordinates and basic rules of chess, aiming at helping teachers and instructors not only in teaching chess, but also in developing the kids' love for the game. The program is developed for the first and second grades and we have a pilot running for pre-schools. Apart from the pure chess basics, it features chess songs, on and off chessboard games and much more. More details can be found at: www.juditpolgarchesspalace.com

I am very proud of the Chess Palace program as it involved working with a serious team including Sofia, teachers, kids, designers, and so on. About 100 Hungarian schools took it as part of their school program, which is rather rewarding!





Shortly before this book was sent to the printer, I made one of the most important decisions in my life – to retreat from competitive chess.

The reader may ask why? And why now?

At the age of 38, I had been competing for more than 30 years, and taken part in more than 300 tournaments, which means I have played more than 3000 tournament games; earlier this year I received the Guinness world record for being the highest-rated female player for 25 years! And even though I will surely still enjoy chess by following top tournaments, analyzing interesting positions and games, or solving studies, I felt like spending more time with my family and focusing on working for my foundation over the upcoming years. Playing chess was an important, even essential, part of my life, and I feel happy to have embraced this career, but now is a good moment to look for other priorities.

But before taking this important step, I had one more event to take part in – the Tromsø 2014 Olympiad.

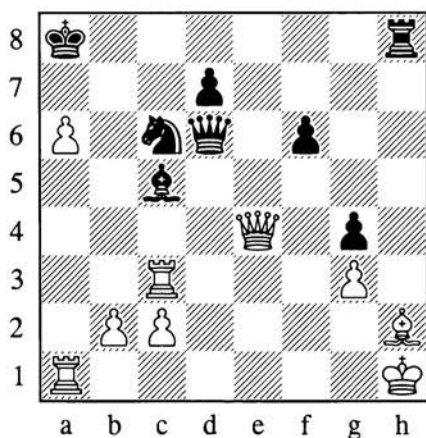
At the start of the first round I had the same feelings as before other important events and Olympiads. We, the Hungarian team, travelled to Tromsø with the open aim of winning a medal. We knew that if we managed to stay in the top 10 after Round 8, then a good performance in the final three rounds could make our dream come true.

After my son's 10th birthday, just two days after my fourth win in Tromsø, I publicly announced my retirement in an interview for *The Times*. Things turned out well for my team in the final rounds and, 12 years after Bled, we once again won the silver medals. I felt that destiny could not have given me a better present for my last tournament...

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And since the first volume opened with a chapter about tricks, I find it appropriate to end the trilogy with my last trick in an official game.



My opponent, the Venezuelan **Andres Guerrero**, had just played 33.g3. Can you find a forced win?

My last Olympiad, my last medal, my last trick... All this sound a bit too *definitive*. Maybe it is better to add "for quite a while" since when it comes to important things, I would never say never...

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Records and Results

Records

Rated number one on the Women's Rating list since January 1989, a Guinness world record
Named "Woman Chess Player of the 20th Century" by ICWA
Broke Bobby Fischer's record, by becoming the youngest grandmaster in history in 1991
Eight times winner of the Chess Oscar
First and so far only girl to win twice the World Youth Chess Championship for boys
First and so far only woman to enter the top ten of the World Rankings
First and so far only woman to win a medal at the Open Individual European Championship

World Chess Champions I Have Defeated

Smyslov (1957-1958)
Spassky (1969-1972)
Karpov (1975-1985, 1993-1999)
Kasparov (1985-2000)
Khalifman (1999-2000)
Anand (2000-2002, 2007-2013)
Ponomarev (2002-2004)
Kasimdzhanov (2004-2005)
Topalov (2005-2006)
Carlsen (2013-present)

Individual Chess Highlights (covered in this volume)

2001 Ohrid, Macedonia, European Championship, 3rd-4th place
2001 Hoogeveen, Holland, 1st-2nd place
2001 Linares, Spain, 2nd-6th place
2003 Hoogeveen, Holland, 1st place
2003 Benidorm, Spain, 1st place
2003 Wijk aan Zee, Holland, 2nd place
2005 Sofia, Bulgaria, 3rd-4th place
2005 San Luis, Argentina, FIDE World Championship, 8th place
2005 Rishon le Zion, Israel, Blitz World Championship, 5th place
2006 Zurich, Switzerland, 3rd place
2006 Hoogeveen, Holland, 1st-2nd place
2007 Vitoria, Spain, 3rd-4th place
2010 Mexico City, 1st place
2010 Rocca di Papa, Italy, 1st place
2011 Aix-les-Bains, France, European Championship, 1st-4th place, bronze medal
2011 Khanty-Mansiysk, Russia, World Cup quarter-finalist
2012 Caxias do Sul, 1st place

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Team competitions (covered in this volume)

- 2002 Moscow, Russia. The Rest of the World team defeated Russia, and I defeated Garry Kasparov.
- 2002 Bled, Slovenia, Chess Olympiad. I won a silver medal with the Hungarian team, and an individual bronze medal.
- 2002 Polish Team Champions, Polonia Warsaw team.
- 2006 British Team Champions, Wood Green team.
- 2007 Hungarian Team Champions, Aquaprofit Nagykanizsa team.
- 2008 Italian Team Champions, Chieti team.
- 2009 Hungarian Team Champions, Aquaprofit Nagykanizsa team.
- 2010 Hungarian Team Champions, Aquaprofit Nagykanizsa team.
- 2010 Khanty-Mansiysk, Russia, Chess Olympiad. 3rd-4th place with the Hungarian team.
- 2011 Hungarian Team Champions, Aquaprofit Nagykanizsa team.
- 2011 Greek Team Champions, Peristeriou team.
- 2014 Tromsø, Norway, Chess Olympiad. I won a silver medal with the Hungarian team.

Exhibition matches (covered in this volume)

- 2003 Shanghai, China. I defeated Bu Xiangzhi in a blitz match 5-1
- 2010 Prague, Czech Republic. I defeated David Navara 6-2

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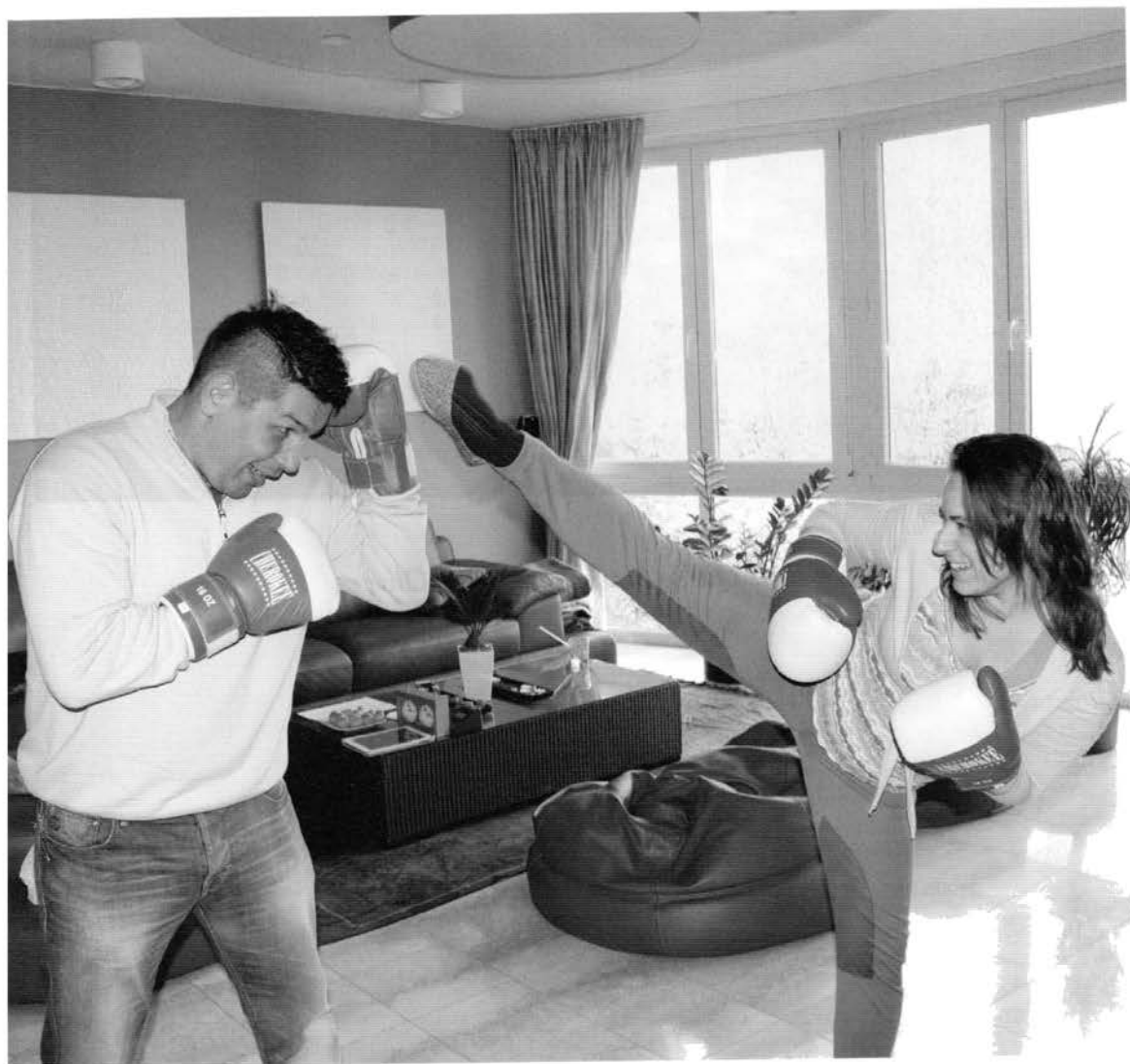


The kids enjoy Chess Palace



Gusztav and I meet a cheetah

I always love to attack! The defender is boxing world champion Mihaly Kotai





My little Queen Hanna and King Oliver

JUDIT POLGAR

A game of Queens



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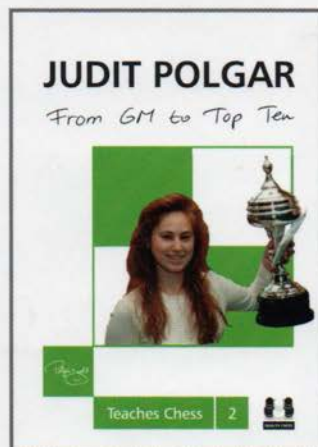
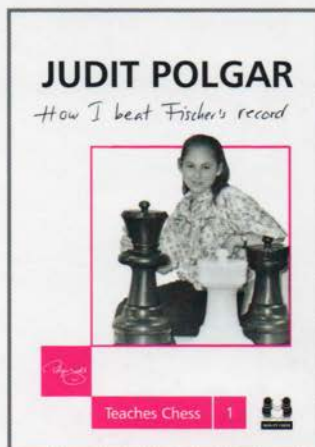
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