

**Joel Benjamin**

**CHESSBOARD  
COMBAT**

NEW IN CHESS



**THE  
GIVE  
AND TAKE OF  
CHESS TACTICS**

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**Joel Benjamin**

**Chessboard Combat**  
**The Give and Take of Chess Tactics**

**New In Chess 2023**

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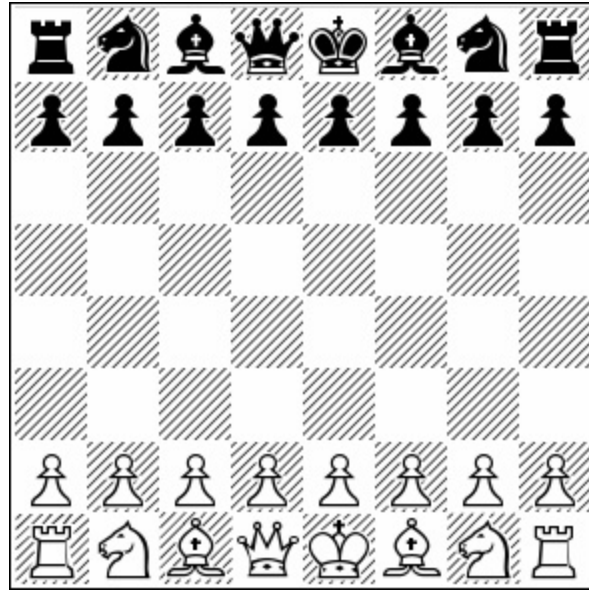
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# Explanation of symbols

The chessboard with its coordinates:



K King

Q Queen

R Rook

B Bishop

N Knight

<sup>2</sup> White stands slightly better

<sup>3</sup> Black stands slightly better

± White stands better

μ Black stands better

+– White has a decisive advantage

–+ Black has a decisive advantage

= balanced position

! good move

!! excellent move

? bad move

?? blunder

!?! interesting move

?! dubious move

# mate

ch championship

zt zonal tournament

izt interzonal tournament

ct candidates tournament

tt team tournament

ol olympiad

m match

cr correspondence

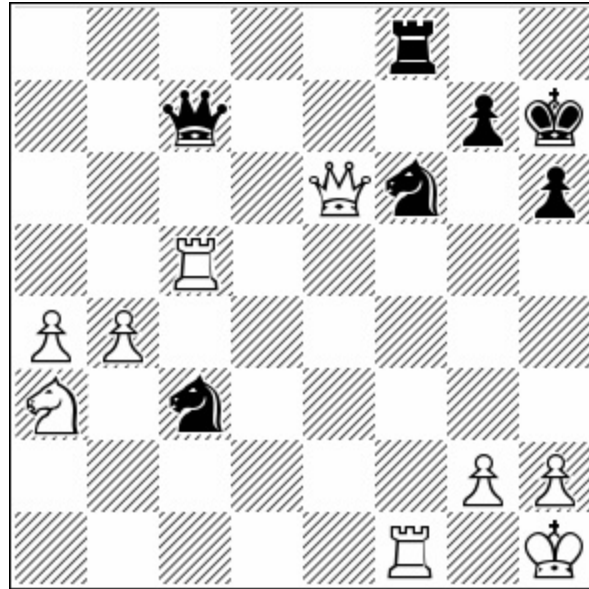
## Introduction

We live in a Puzzle Rush world. Just like chess players studied openings in the Kasparov era, today's enthusiasts spend countless hours solving tactical puzzles. Certainly there is a lot of value in that effort, and increasing pattern recognition will help find moves in tournament games. But there is a downside – we always know who is supposed to win!

Chess in real life is not that way, and not just in the obvious point that no one taps us on the shoulder and tells us to look for tactics. Sometimes tactics work, and sometimes they don't. Sometimes your opponent (who also studies tactics) has a few tricks up their sleeve, too.

One of my favorite books when I was a child was *Chess Traps, Pitfalls and Swindles* by I.A. Horowitz and Fred Reinfeld. Full of colorful descriptions of Caissic battles, it imprinted upon me the give-and-take nature of chess tactics. On several occasions I have used positions from the book in camp classes. Several students, steeped in the 21st century mindset, asked me which side was supposed to win, when that was in fact part of the question posed to them.

Several of the examples here could be classified as traps and swindles in the Horowitz/Reinfeld mode, but that is not the overall theme. Players, mostly grandmasters, face all kinds of challenges in attack, defense, and counterattack. I love the tone of the struggle I learned from my favorite childhood book, which we see in the following memorable example:



It's Black's move. We can easily run the gamut in how this one should end.

**1...Ng4! 2.Qg8+!! Kg6!! 3.Qe6+ Kh7 4.Qg8+ ½-½**

What a thrill ride in a handful of moves! At various points we expect all three possible results. I'm sure the position was staged (and ingeniously so!); the knights in particular seem conveniently placed. But all of the positions I have included in this book are real. In many cases, the players didn't know which result to expect either.

I'm hoping to capture some of that Horowitz/Reinfeld spirit here. Tactics should be fun, to be enjoyed, not grinded out. I am certain that the games here will entertain the readers, but we all want to take something away to help improve our tactical understanding. There are lessons to be learned from the dozens of skirmishes in these pages. I have striven to find rules and give useful advice wherever possible. That said, if a logical approach was all we needed to get the tactics right, we would all be grandmasters.

The largest chapter I have dubbed 'Strike, Counterstrike'. That term encapsulates the fundamental principle of the book, the two-way nature of tactics in chess. From there the games are grouped according to theme and situation. Negotiating tactics in special circumstances like having a difficult position or having the possibility of a draw require their own set of practical

ideas.

My Game of the Week/Weekly Recap video series on the Internet Chess Club provided the primary source for games. It makes sense that so many of those games fit the bill for this book; back and forth tactics particularly appeal to me, so those games were chosen for a good reason in the first place. Most of the games are of relatively recent (21st century) vintage, though there are some classics and lesser known gems from the past.

In annotating many of the ICC games I found much of the analysis had to be greatly reworked because the newer, stronger engines saw things differently than their predecessors!

As usual, I have something to say about the role of chess engines in this book. Several games are pre-computer classics that have been enjoyed for years. The engines not only permit a greater degree of correct analysis, they uncover a lot of hidden resources that might otherwise never come to light. Many of the newer games might not even make the cut without this extra set of ‘eyes.’ Engines allow a level of tactical sophistication that we otherwise would not be able to reach; certainly it is more than Horowitz and Reinfeld could have dreamed of.

While I think the games are enriched by computer analysis, I try to keep it all in perspective. There are limits to what humans can expect to see, especially with increasingly faster time limits. The computer move is not necessarily the best move by human standards – an important point in ensuring that my advice stays genuinely practical. I should also say that pointing out so many mistakes found or confirmed by chess engines does not diminish my admiration for the great abilities of most of these players. I am even more impressed when the grandmasters get everything right! Readers should likewise not be too discouraged if they can’t always find the best answer either.

A book on tactics should give the readers an opportunity to test their mettle. The nature of these games, which often have several critical tactical moments, don’t always yield a definitive result after tactical shots. Still, I have chosen positions for each chapter to put in quiz form. All the positions,

presented before their main chapters, are taken from games in the text. Most positions occurred in the games, but some are just reflected in the notes. Either way, all solutions can be found in the chapters.

*Joel Benjamin*

*Waldwick NJ, USA, February 2023*

## Acknowledgements

Thanks again to the crack staff at New In Chess, now capably helmed by Remmelt Otten. Thank you to Allard Hoogland for all his useful advice on my earlier NIC books.

Thank you to Josh Wieder for his contribution, and to my dear friend and fellow author Ken Levine for his musical suggestions.

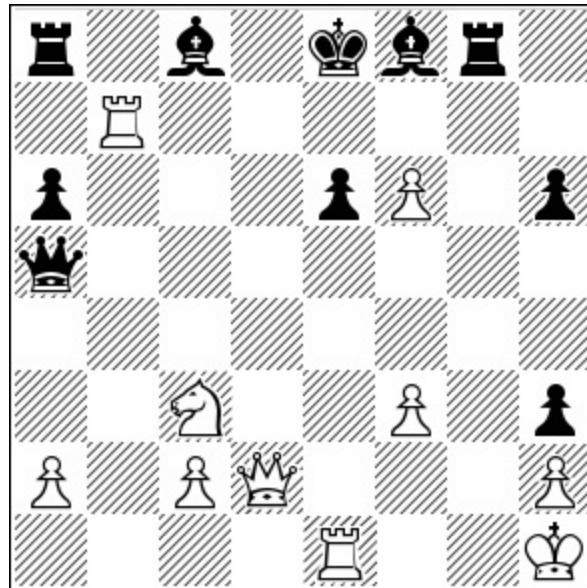
The games were analyzed with Stockfish 14, which led to new discoveries in a lot of old games! Komodo 13.1 64bit served as a backup, as Stockfish tends to combine quality analysis with unrealistic (at least in human terms) evaluations. I occasionally noted this phenomenon in the book.

I used old reliable ChessBase 13 to work on the games and flesh out missing moves from games found elsewhere. Very few got into the territory, but I had the Syzygy endgame tablebase when needed. Now we are up to access to seven piece databases, as more and more endgames are solved!

Shout out to all the old writers of my childhood, but especially Israel Horowitz and Fred Reinfeld for *Chess Traps, Pitfalls and Swindles*. That book takes me back to other memories of those great days. In that light I would like to dedicate this book to those who inspired me, my old teachers George Kane, Julio Kaplan, and Sal Matera.

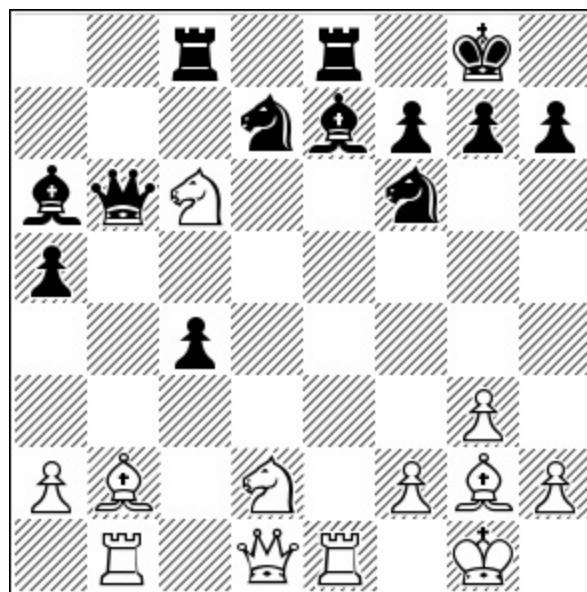
# Strike, Counterstrike – Puzzles

1 (go to the solution)



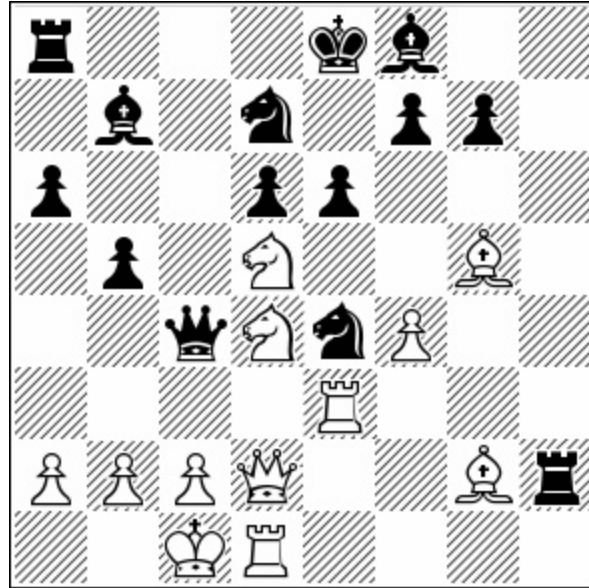
*Black to play wins  
Pichot-Cheparinov*

2 (go to the solution)



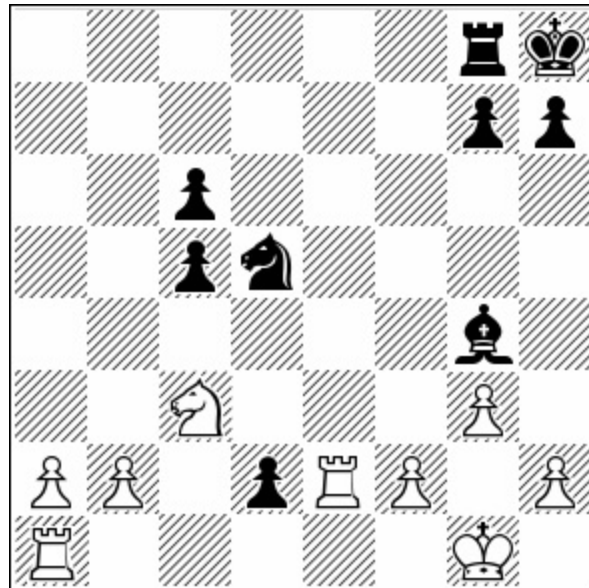
*Black to play wins*  
*Krasenkow-Nakamura*

**3 (go to the solution)**



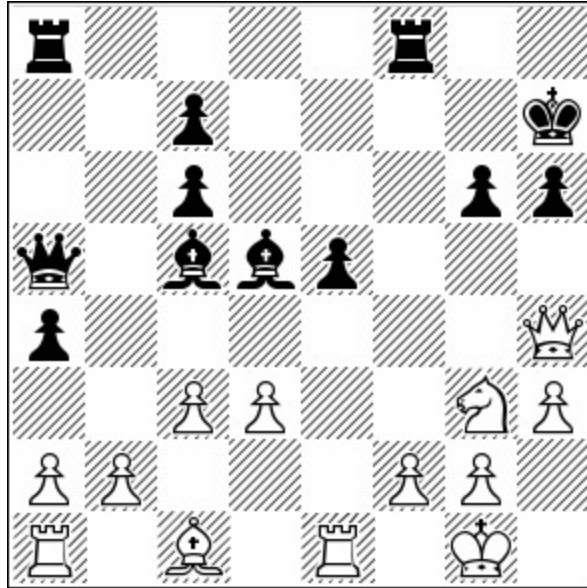
*White to play wins*  
*Antipov-Schwartz*

**4 (go to the solution)**



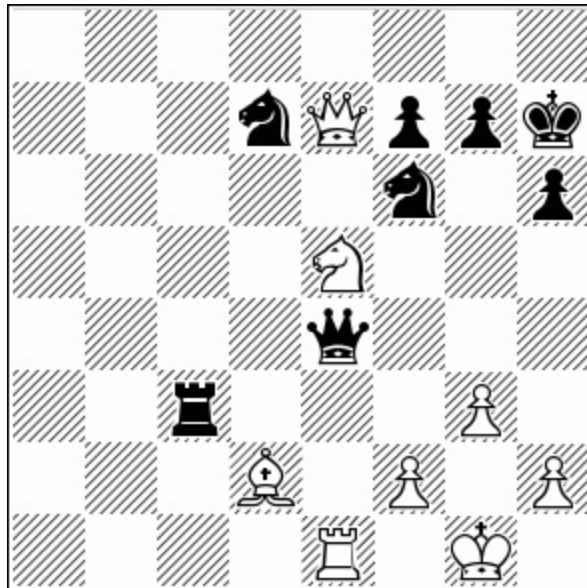
*Black to play wins  
Onischuk-Akobian*

**5 (go to the solution)**



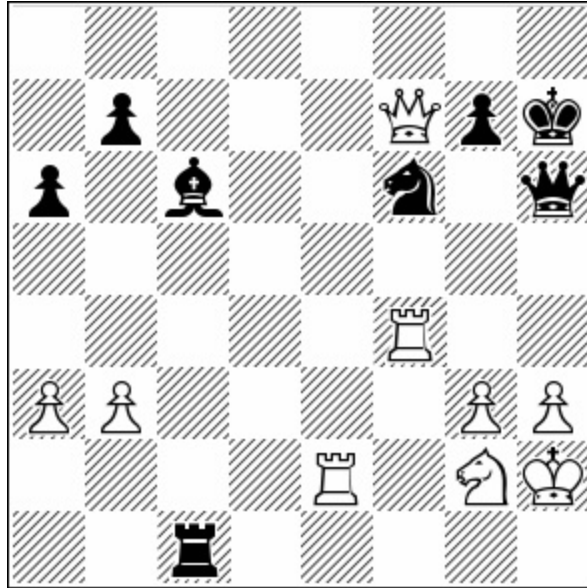
*Black to play draws  
Mamedyarov-Karjakin*

**6 (go to the solution)**



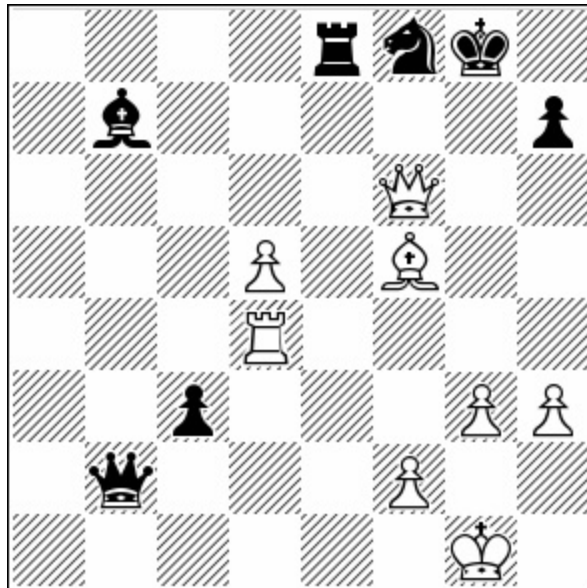
*Black to play wins  
Jones-Huschenbeth*

**7 (go to the solution)**



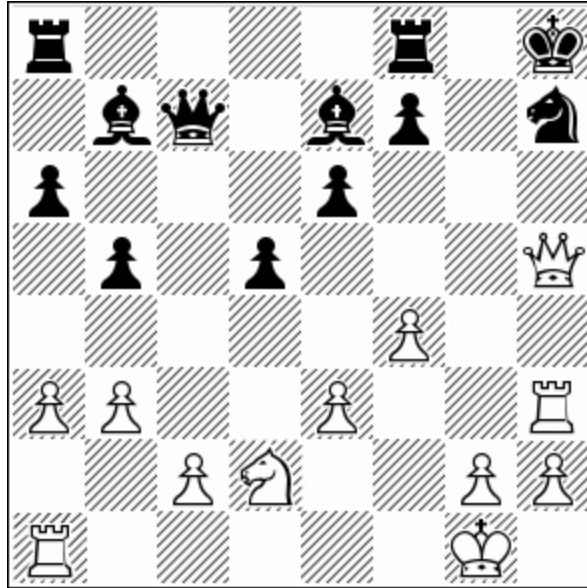
*Black to play wins  
B.Kogan-Benjamin*

**8 (go to the solution)**



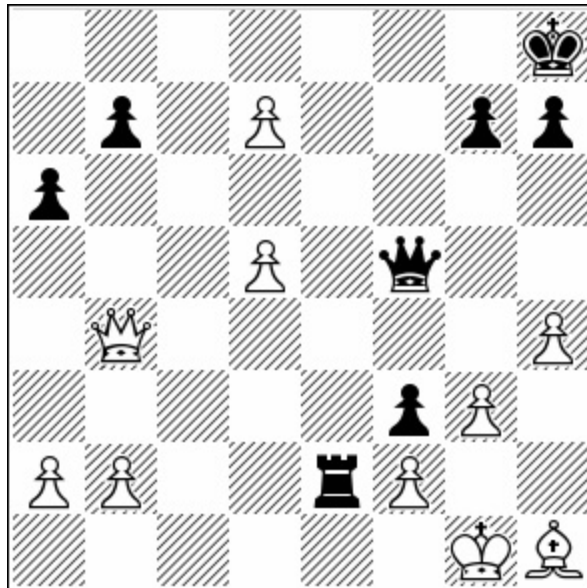
*Black to play draws*  
*Eljanov-Andreikin*

**9 (go to the solution)**



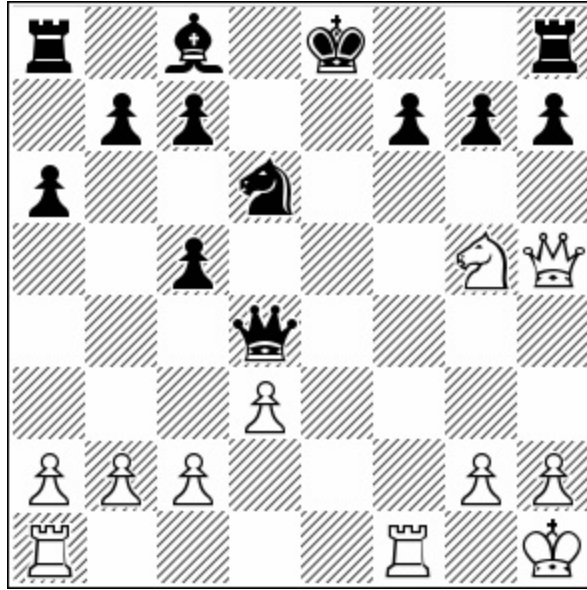
*Black to play wins*  
*Filatov-Mayer*

**10 (go to the solution)**



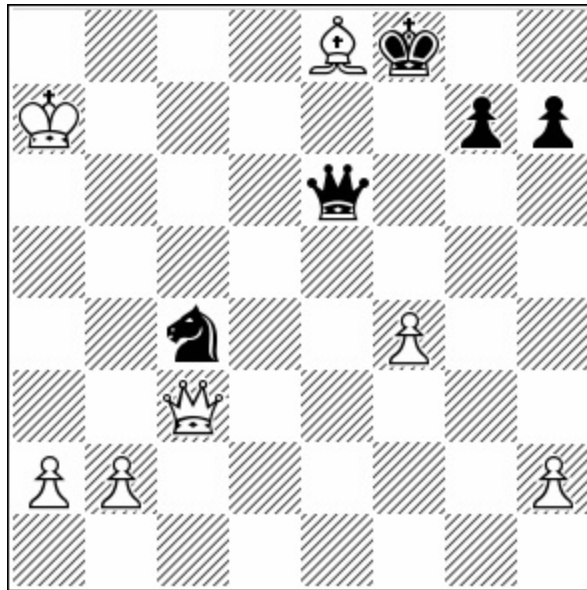
*Black to play wins  
Kamsky-Polgar*

**11 (go to the solution)**



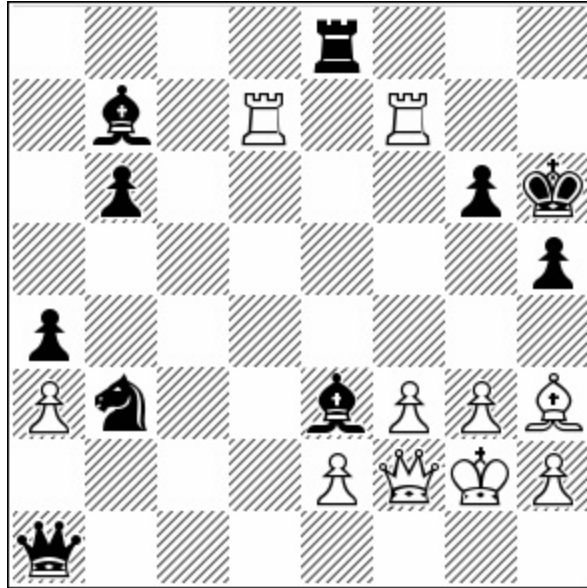
*White to play wins  
Benjamin-Kamsky*

**12 (go to the solution)**



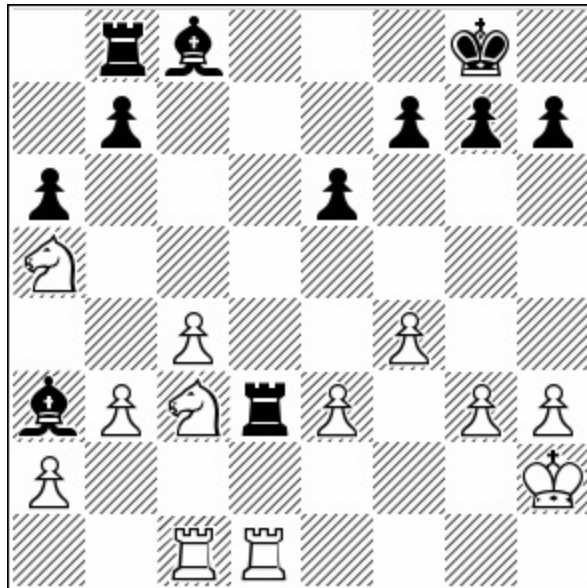
*Black to play wins*  
*Arulaid-Tal*

**13 (go to the solution)**



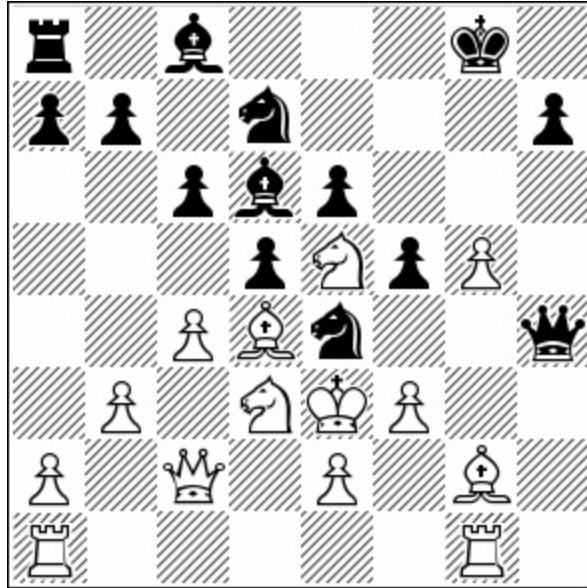
*White to play wins*  
*Dubov-Carlsen*

**14 (go to the solution)**



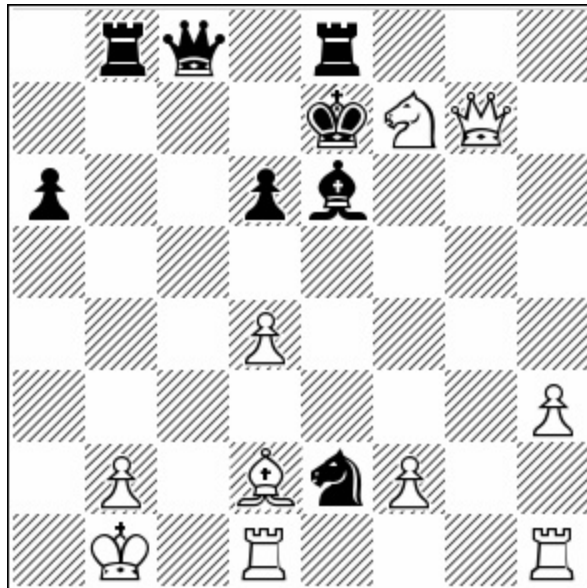
*Black to play wins*  
*Mamedyarov-Lenderman*

**15 (go to the solution)**



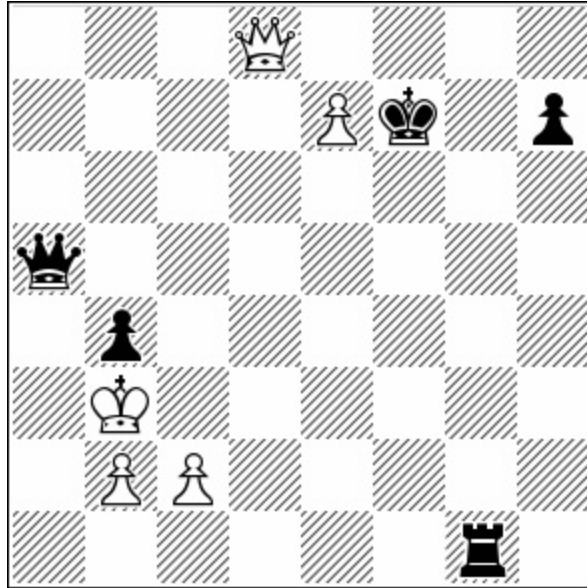
*Black to play wins*  
*Kotov-Bondarevsky*

**16 (go to the solution)**



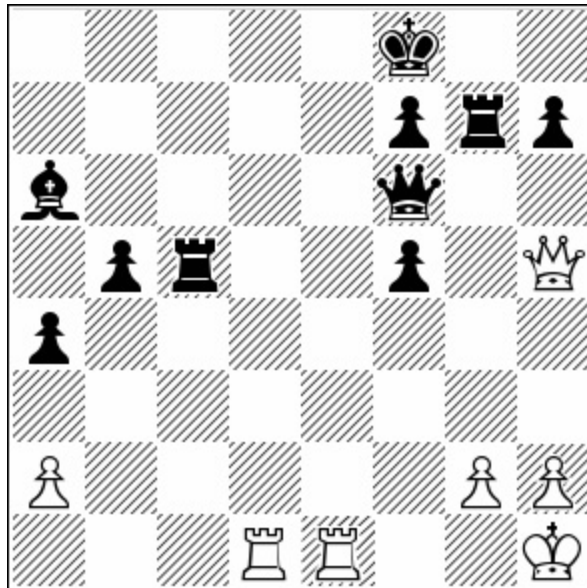
*Black to play wins*  
*Babula-Kovacevic*

**17 (go to the solution)**



*Black to play draws*  
*Sevian-Bok*

**18 (go to the solution)**



*White to play wins*  
*Emms-Yermolinsky*

## ***Chapter 1***

# **Strike, Counterstrike**

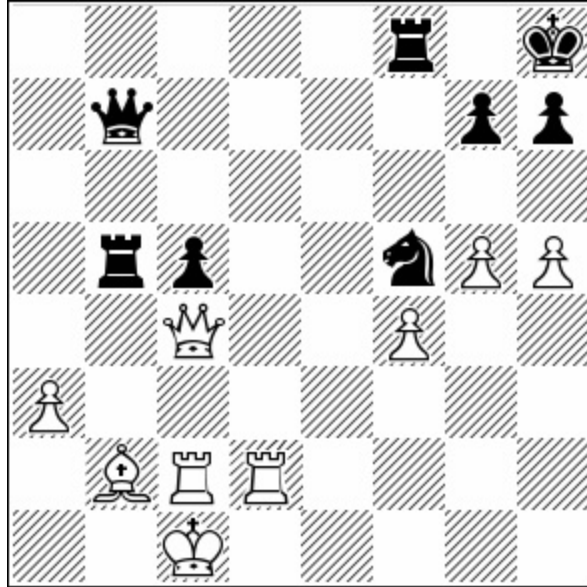
Here we see the fundamental give-and-take nature of chess tactics. In this chapter we explore various tactical motifs; the one common thread is the battle between the two players to put their stamp on the tactics of the game.

### **Me First**

We must always be alert to our opponent's potential threats, but 'ignoring' them can work if our own attacks can solve the problem.

Game 1 – English Opening  
**Hikaru Nakamura** 2753  
**Francisco Vallejo Pons** 2716  
Sao Paulo/Bilbao 2011

**1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.g3 Bc5 4.Bg2 a6 5.e3 d6 6.Nge2 Nge7 7.b3 Ba7 8.Bb2 Rb8 9.d3 Bf5 10.Qd2 Qd7 11.h3 0-0 12.f4 Be6 13.d4 Nf5 14.Bxc6 bxc6 15.0-0-0 exd4 16.exd4 Ne7 17.g4 f5 18.g5 Bf7 19.Ng3 a5 20.h4 a4 21.Nxa4 Bxc4 22.bxc4 c5 23.Nc3 Rb4 24.Qd3 cxd4 25.Nb5 d5 26.Nxa7 c5 27.cxd5 Qxa7 28.a3 Rb6 29.Qc4 Nc8 30.d6+ Kh8 31.d7 Qxd7 32.Rh2 Qb7 33.Rc2 Rb5 34.Nxf5 Rxf5 35.Rxd4 Rf8 36.Rdd2 Ne7 37.h5 Nf5**



Black has set up forking threats, either by the direct ...Nf5-e3 or ...Qb7-h1+ first. But Black gains no respite as Nakamura sidesteps the threats with more offense.

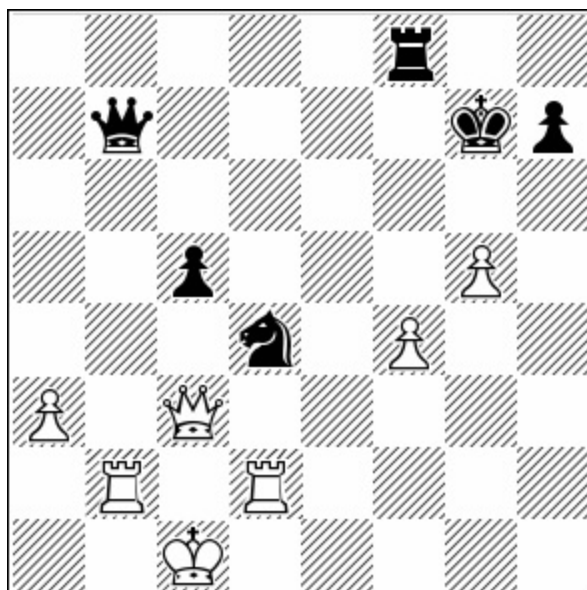
### **38.h6! Rxb2**

38...Qh1+ 39.Rd1 Qxd1+ 40.Kxd1 Ne3+ 41.Kc1 and Black is reminded of the threat to the g7-pawn.

### **39.hxg7+ Kxg7 40.Qc3+!**

The in-between check dashes Black's hopes for a fork again. 40.Rxb2 Qh1+ 41.Rd1 Qxd1+ 42.Kxd1 Ne3+.

### **40...Nd4 41.Rxb2**



White was able to overcome resistance and convert his material advantage.

### **Queen See One, Too**

Akiba Rubinstein is famous for his slick endgame play, which has been praised in the next two games, for example. But he knew how to use tactics to get those superior endgames! What is odd about this duo (the first appeared in Horowitz and Reinfeld), is that the key move in the tactics is the same, and one you wouldn't expect to decide a game. GM and chess personality Ben Finegold used to say (for some reason I can't recall) 'Qc2 wins.' Maybe he was off by one square?

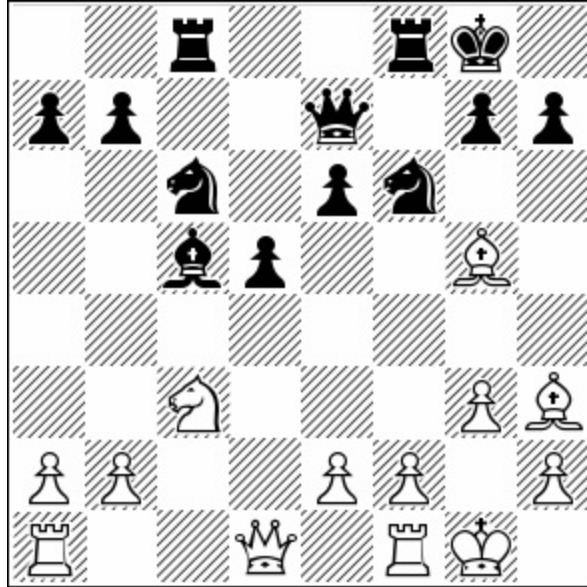
Game 2 – Tarrasch Defense

**Akiba Rubinstein**

**Jose Raul Capablanca**

San Sebastian 1911

**1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 c5 3.c4 e6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 Nc6 6.g3 Be6 7.Bg2 Be7 8.0-0 Rc8 9.dxc5 Bxc5 10.Ng5 Nf6 11.Nxe6 fxe6 12.Bh3 Qe7 13.Bg5 0-0**



White has a tactic, but it's only just the beginning.

### 14.Bxf6 Qxf6 15.Nxd5

The knight won't be captured, at least not right away – 15...exd5 16.Qxd5+ Kh8 17.Bxc8 is a non-starter. But Rubinstein had to reckon with a potential pin on this piece.

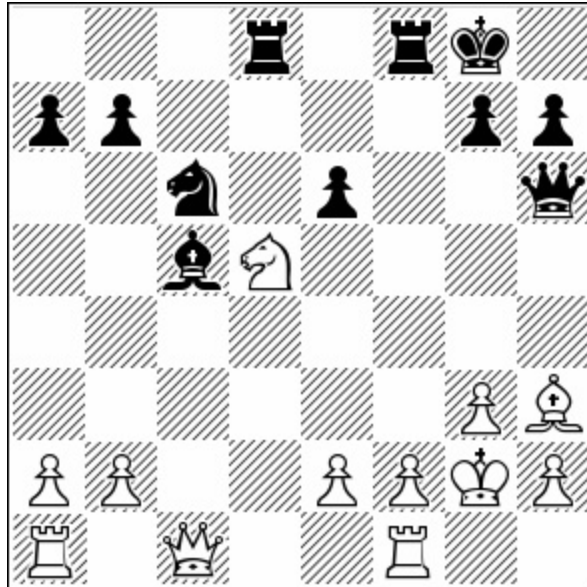
### 15...Qh6!?

This counterattack seems to call White's combination into question. Objectively stronger was 15...Bxf2+ 16.Kh1 (16.Kg2 Qe5 17.Rxf2 Rxf2+ 18.Kxf2 Rd8 19.Ne7+ Kh8 20.Nxc6? Qf6+) 16...Qh6 (now 16...Qe5 17.Nf4 is strong, as the king is better protected than on g2) 17.Kg2 and White retains some advantage.

### 16.Kg2!

It is important to keep the bishop working on the h3-c8 diagonal, and not just to keep pieces protected. After 16.Bg2 Ne5! Black suddenly has a kingside attack, as four pieces are converging on f2 and h2.

### 16...Rcd8 17.Qc1!!



White escapes the pin with a counterattack.

Two captures are hopeless – 17...Qxc1 18.Bxe6+ Kh8 19.Raxc1, and 17...Rxd5 18.Qxh6 gxh6 19.Bxe6+.

So Capa had to settle for

**17...exd5 18.Qxc5**

and Rubinstein eventually won in the endgame.

Rubinstein must have played the killer move with a wry smile on his face. The blow bears an eerie similarity to this gem from two years before.

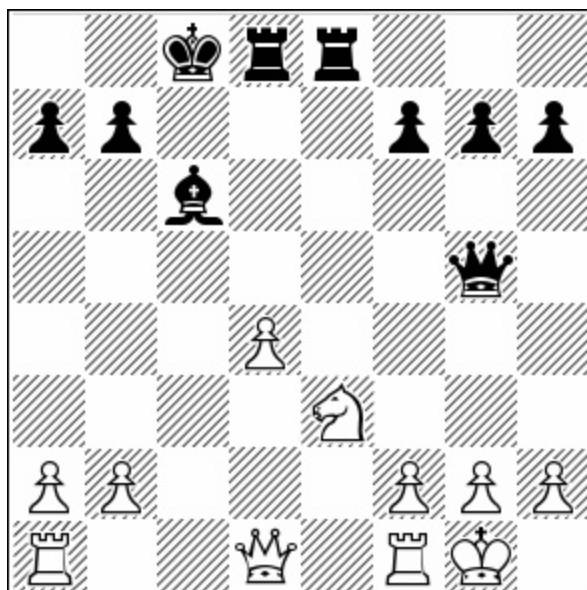
Game 3 – Queen’s Gambit Declined

**Akiba Rubinstein**

**Emanuel Lasker**

St Petersburg 1909

**1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.c4 e6 4.Bg5 c5 5.cxd5 exd5 6.Nc3 cxd4 7.Nxd4 Nc6 8.e3 Be7 9.Bb5 Bd7 10.Bxf6 Bxf6 11.Nxd5 Bxd4 12.exd4 Qg5 13.Bxc6 Bxc6 14.Ne3 0-0-0 15.0-0 Rhe8**

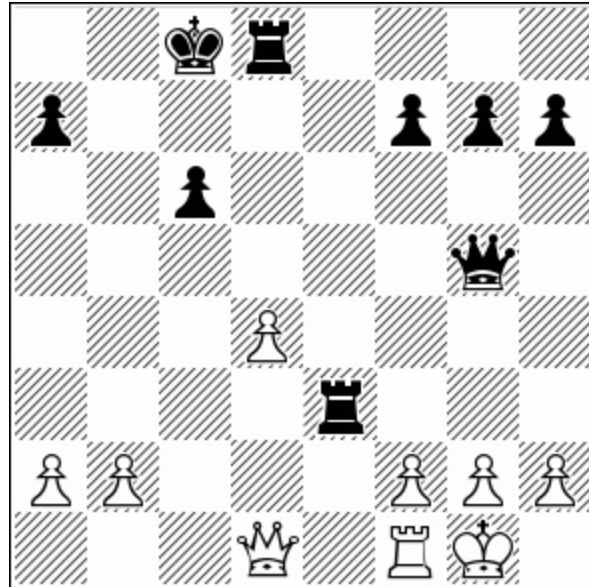


White has plucked a pawn, but the black pieces have become suddenly active, with the threat of 16...Rxe3 drawing attention. 16.Qd2 is an obvious defensive move, and a clever try at that because 16...Bxg2? 17.f4! is a devious piece-winning trap. But Black can proceed calmly; 16...Re4 17.Rad1 Rxd4 18.Qxd4 Rxd4 19.Rxd4 keeps the game tight. There's no rule that says White has to choose a defensive move. 16.d5 Bxd5 17.f4 Qe7! 18.Nxd5 Qc5+ comes up short, though this variation is useful for the future.

### **16.Rc1!**

The key to this indirect defense appears in a few moves. Black doesn't have a great choice because after 16...Kb8 17.d5! is now working: 17...Bxd5 18.h4! (18.f4 Qe7 19.Nxd5 Qd6 saves the piece) 18...Qe5 (after 18...Qxh4 19.Nxd5 Qe4 20.Rc5 White holds on to the extra piece) 19.Rc5 and the pin is deadly.

### **16...Rxe3 17.Rxc6+ bxc6**



**18.Qc1!**

The pin keeps the pawn count in White's favor.

**18...Rxd4 19.fxe3!**

Black cannot defend both the c6- and the f7-pawns.

**19...Rd7 20.Qxc6+ Kd8 21.Rf4**

Rubinstein converted his advantage in a rook ending.

### **Good timing**

When a sacrificial attack requires the investment of a great deal of material, the chances of meeting terrifying threats with a counter-sacrifice will often turn the game around.

Game 4 – Sicilian Defense

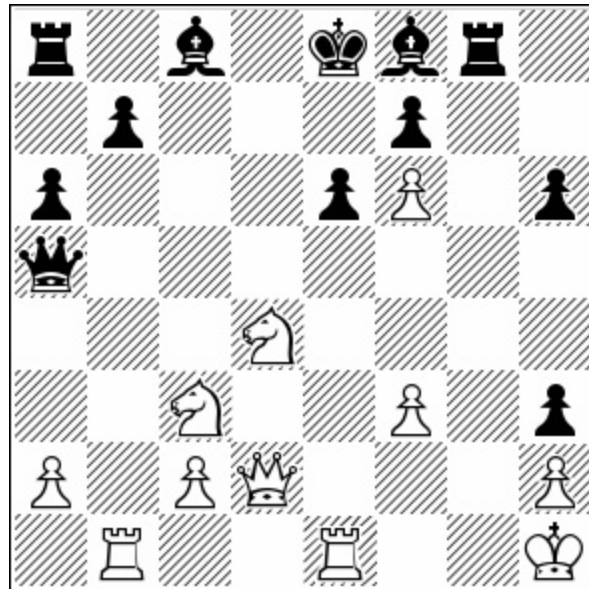
**Alan Pichot 2552**

**Ivan Cheparinov 2699**

Gibraltar 2018

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Bg5 e6 7.f4 h6 8.Bh4**

**Qb6 9.Qd2 Qxb2 10.Rb1 Qa3 11.e5 dxe5 12.fxe5 g5 13.exf6 gxh4 14.Be2  
Qa5 15.0-0 h3 16.Bf3 Nd7 17.Kh1 Ne5 18.Rfe1 Nxf3 19.gxf3 Rg8**



It is so often kill or be killed in the Poisoned Pawn Najdorf. The engine will say that White can retain decent chances with 20.Qd3, but how could Pichot resist the beautiful sacrifice?

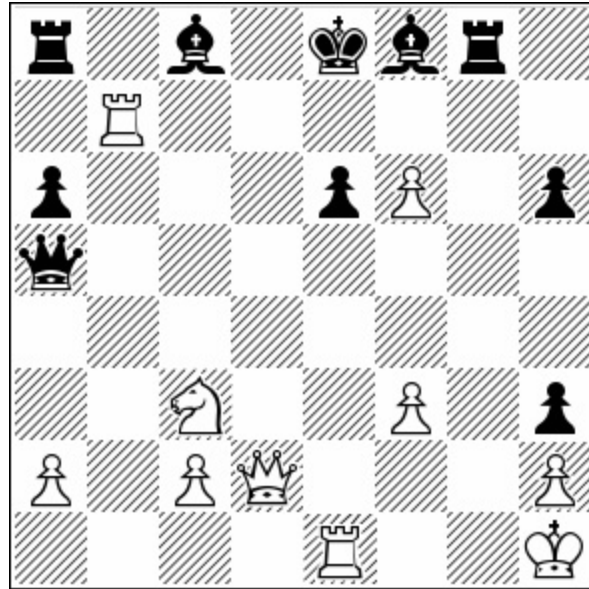
**20.Nxe6?!**

I threw in the exclamation mark because I like the spirit. Black is almost lost; indeed, 20...Bxe6 21.Rxb7 would leave him with no good defense to the threats of 22.Qd7# and 22.Rxe6+.

**20...fxe6 21.Rxb7**

(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 1:*

White looked forward to a heroic victory after 21...Bxb7 22.Rxe6+ Kf7 23.Qd7+ Kg6 24.f7+ Kh7 25.fxg8=Q+ Kxg8 26.Rg6+ Kh8 27.Qf7. But Black has a miracle of his own.



**21...Rg1+!!**

Well, Black does have some surplus stuff with all the wood White is throwing onto the fire. Capturing this rook will either deflect his attacking rook – 22.Rxg1 Bxb7–+ – or win a critical tempo for defense.

**22.Kxg1 Qc5+!**

This intermezzo makes a huge difference, as White would have a perpetual after 22...Bxb7? 23.Rxe6+ Kf7 24.Qd7+ Kg8 25.f7+ Kg7 26.Qd4+, etc.

**23.Kh1 Bxb7 24.Rxe6+ Kf7 25.Qd7+ Kg8**

The king is much more snug after the rook gave its life to vacate this square.

**26.f7+ Kg7 27.Qd3 Qg5 28.Qd4+ Kxf7 0-1**

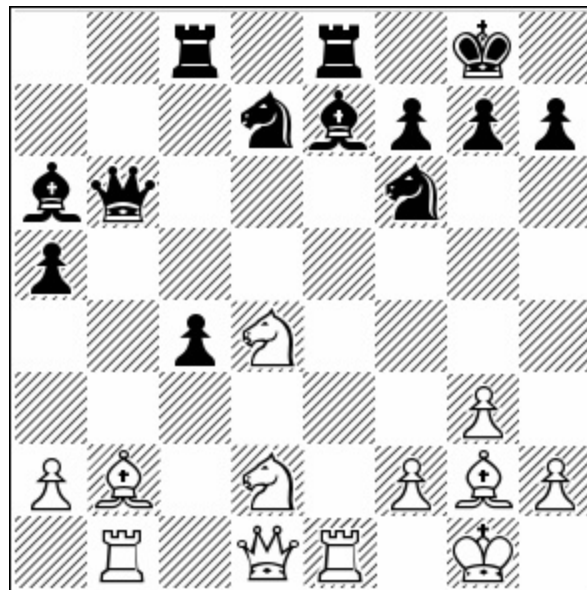
### **Direct to Offense (Queen Sac Edition)**

Sometimes the best defense is a good offense. It can come at a moment when the opponent expects only a defensive move of some kind. The sweetest examples occur when the defender, in the face of an attack or threat, launches a counter-sacrifice to turn the tables, and nothing stuns the opponent quite

like a queen sacrifice. Amazingly, two strikingly similar examples happened in grandmaster play within a month of each other!

Game 5 – Réti Opening  
**Michal Krasenkow** 2668  
**Hikaru Nakamura** 2648  
Barcelona 2007

1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 d5 4.Bg2 Be7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3 a5 7.Nc3 c6 8.d4 Nbd7  
9.Qc2 b6 10.e4 Ba6 11.Nd2 c5 12.exd5 cxd4 13.Nb5 exd5 14.Nxd4 Rc8  
15.Re1 b5 16.Bb2 Re8 17.Qd1 bxc4 18.bxc4 Qb6 19.Rb1 dxc4!



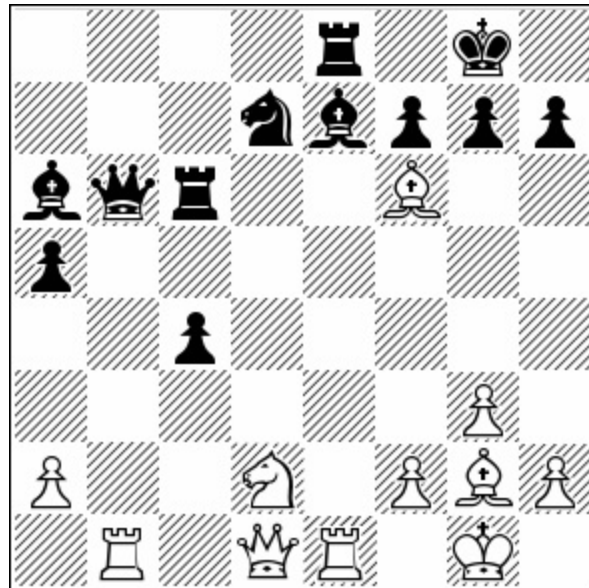
Nakamura has boldly concluded that White cannot exploit the exposed position of the black queen. After the tame 20.Bc3 Qc5 Black would have retained slightly better chances.

**20.Nc6?**

One can hardly fault Krasenkow for believing the knight to be invulnerable. Nakamura's counterpunch is slightly obscured by the presence of a reasonable answer in 20...Bb4.

(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 2:*

**20...Rxc6! 21.Bxf6**



**21...Qxf2+!!**

Necessity is the mother of invention – without this shocker, Black would simply be lost. The achievement is in the anticipation of this move rather than its calculation, which is not very difficult. These moves tend to be overlooked more often by the victim, as the sacker is more motivated to find such a special move and make it work, while Krasenkow likely focused on more plausible moves.

**22.Kxf2**

Krasenkow has no choice but to allow Nakamura his fun, as 22.Kh1 Rxf6 23.Ne4 Qa7 just leaves Black distinctly ahead in material.

**22...Bc5+ 23.Kf3**

Venturing into the wild blue yonder is the only option. 23.Kf1 c3+! (Black only has to avoid 23...Rxf6+? 24.Bf3) 24.Re2 c2 is utterly devastating. 23.Bd4 Bxd4+ 24.Kf3 Rf6+ 25.Kg4 Ne5+ is more or less the same as the game.

**23...Rxf6+ 24.Kg4 Ne5+ 25.Kg5**

After 25.Rxe5 Bc8+ 26.Kh4 Rxe5, White can only avoid mate for a few moves.

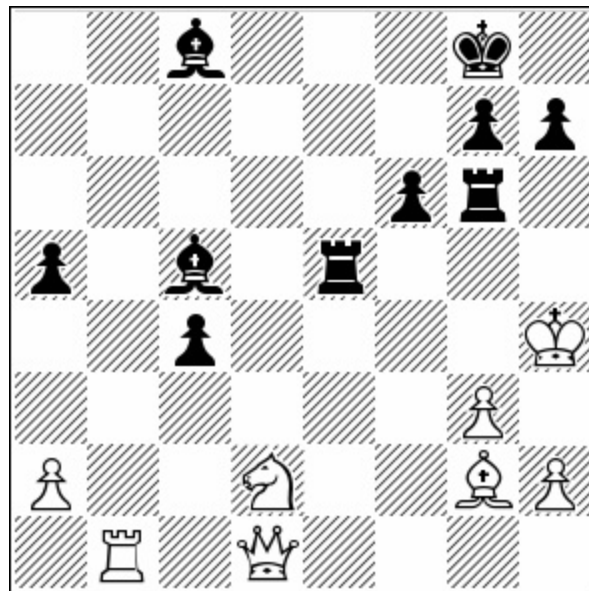
**25...Rg6+ 26.Kh5**

26.Kf4 fares no better: 26...Nd3+ 27.Kf3 Rf6+ 28.Kg4 Bc8+ 29.Kg5 Rxe1 and White cannot survive more than a few moves, e.g. 30.Qxe1 Rg6+ 31.Kh4 Rh6+ 32.Kg5 f6#.

**26...f6**

26...Bc8 is apparently a forced mate, but either quiet move offers White zero hope so there is no reason to quibble.

**27.Rxe5 Rxe5+ 28.Kh4 Bc8 0-1**



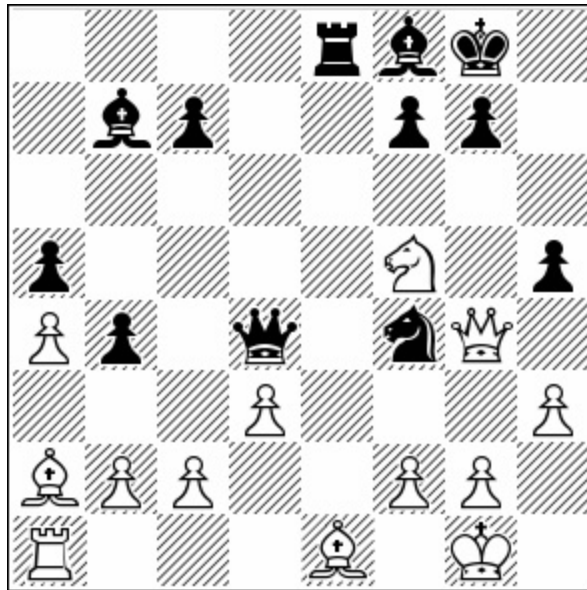
Mate is unavoidable. 29.g4 Bf2+ 30.Kh3 Rh5# paints a pretty picture.

The second queen sac counterstrike was considerably more complex.

Game 6 – Ruy Lopez  
Ivan Cheparinov 2670

David Navara 2656  
Crete Ech-tt 2007

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 0-0 8.h3  
Bb7 9.d3 d6 10.a3 Qd7 11.Nc3 Rfe8 12.a4 b4 13.Ne2 d5 14.exd5 Nxd5  
15.Ng3 Bf8 16.Bd2 a5 17.Ba2 Nd4 18.Nxe5 Qd6 19.Nf3 Rxe1+ 20.Bxe1  
Nf4 21.Nxd4 Qxd4 22.Qg4 Re8 23.Nf5 h5



Black's counterattack on the queen presents a choice to try big or play safe.

**24.Nh6+?!**

Cheparinov finds a remarkable tactical idea that runs into an equally formidable tactical response!

24.Nxd4 hxg4 25.hxg4 Nxc2 26.Bd2 Nh4 27.Be3 is the safe continuation, with Black having sufficient compensation for the pawn.

**24...Kh7 25.Qf5+ Kxh6**

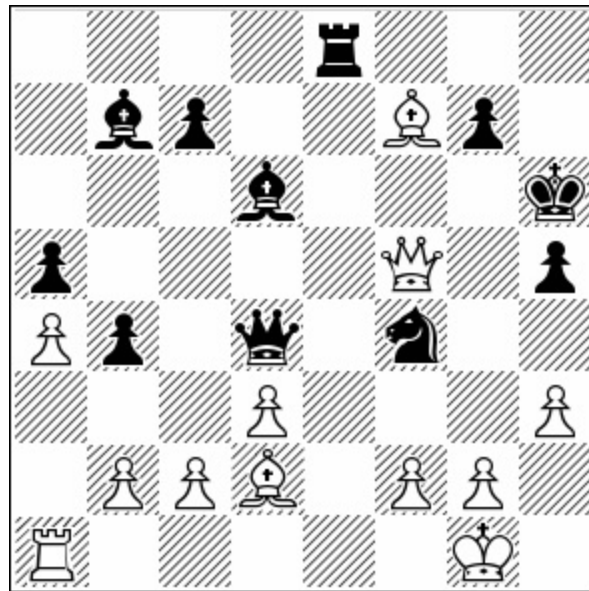
25...g6 26.Qxf7++-.

**26.Bd2 Bd6!**

It turns out that the crazily complicated 26...g5 was also an effective response: 27.h4 Ne2+! (27...f6 28.Bg8 Re7 29.c3 bxc3 30.bxc3 Qd6 31.hxg5+ fxg5 32.Qxf8+ Kg6 33.Be3! with approximately balanced chances) 28.Kf1 Qxh4 29.Qf6+ Kh7 30.Qxf7+ Bg7 31.Qxe8 Nd4 and Black's counterattack is crushing, e.g. 32.Kg1 b3 33.Bxb3 Bxg2 34.f4 Nxb3+.

Navara's choice requires great creativity but perhaps less calculation.

### 27.Bxf7



### 27...Qxf2+!!

As in our previous example, this shocking move is forced. While Krasenkow might have been alerted to the possibility because he was attacking the queen, that is not the case here. I think Cheparinov anticipating this sac on move 24 was a practical impossibility.

### 28.Kxf2 Re2+ 29.Kg1

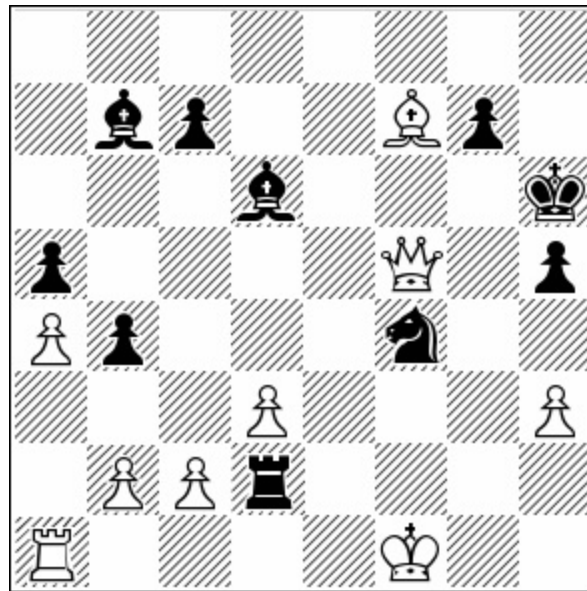
29.Kf1? Bxg2+ 30.Kg1 Rxd2 and White will lose the queen.

### 29...Rxf2+?

Navara commits a subtle yet serious error.

29...Rxd2! is the killer, the point being that 30.h4 Ne2+ would end the game. Play could continue with a number of star moves: 30.Re1! g6! 31.Re6! (31.Qf6 Nxf3+ 32.gxf3 Bh2+ 33.Kf1 Bg2#; 31.Qd7 Bc5 mates or wins the queen) 31...Rxf3 32.Kf1 Rg3! 33.Qb5 (33.Bxg6 Bc8) 33...Rf3+ 34.Ke1 Ng2+ 35.Ke2 Rxf7 and Black's minor pieces should triumph.

### 30.Kf1 Rxd2



### 31.Bg8

31.h4!! generates enough counterplay to draw; for example, 31...Bg2+ (31...g6 32.Bxg6!) 32.Ke1 Re2+ 33.Kd1 Bf3 34.Qg5+ Kh7 35.Qf5+ Kh8 36.Kc1 (36.Qc8+?? Re8+) 36...Bg4 37.Qxa5 Re1+ 38.Kd2 and here Black has no time to take the rook because of White's back-rank threat and must settle for a perpetual.

### 31...Bg2+ 32.Ke1 Re2+ 33.Kd1 Bf3 34.Qh7+ Kg5

The difference is that after 35.Kc1 Re1+ 36.Kd2 Rxa1 Black has too much material for the queen and his king can hide from checks.

**35.Ra2 Rh2+ 36.Ke1 Nxd3+!**

**White resigned.**

37.cxd3 Bg3+ 38.Kf1 Rh1# would have been the finish.

### Leave it

Those queen sacrifices on f2 were startling and crowd-pleasing to be sure, but a passive queen sac might produce even more of a shock.

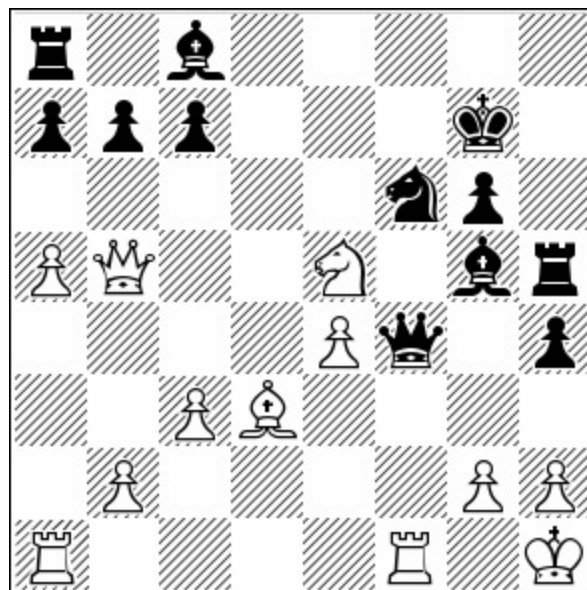
Game 7 – Trompowsky Opening

**Dmitry Kryakvin 2548**

**Denis Khismatullin 2673**

Moscow 2015

**1.d4 Nf6 2.Bg5 e6 3.e4 h6 4.Bxf6 Qxf6 5.c3 d6 6.Bd3 g6 7.Ne2 Bg7 8.0-0 Qe7 9.f4 e5 10.f5 Nd7 11.fxg6 fxg6 12.Nd2 Bf6 13.Qb3 Kf8 14.a4 Kg7 15.a5 Bg5 16.Nc4 Nf6 17.Kh1 h5 18.Ng1 h4 19.dxe5 dxe5 20.Nxe5 Qxe5 21.Nf3 Qf4 22.Qb5 Rh5 23.Ne5**



White's initiative requires an out-of-the-box response:

**23...h3!!**

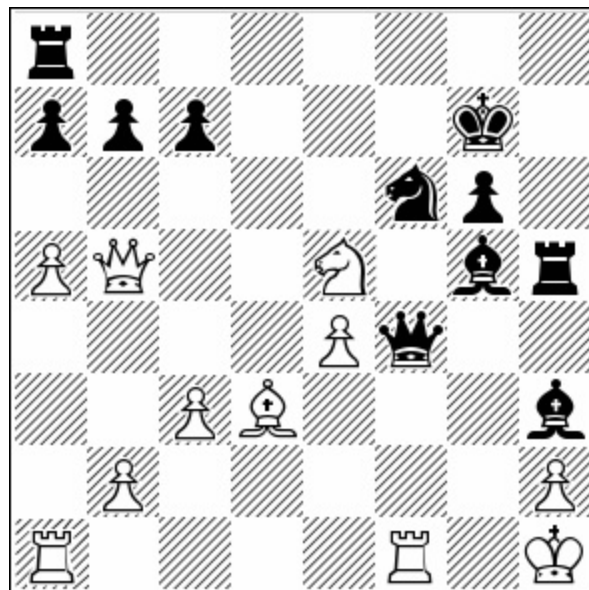
Necessity is the mother of invention. Other moves are good for White, e.g. 23...Qe3 24.Qc4, or 23...c6 24.Qc5 Nxe4 25.Bxe4 Qxe4 26.Rf7++-.

### 24.gxh3

Objectively White should play 24.Rxf4 hxg2+ 25.Kxg2 Bxf4, though Black has a comfy position as his pieces will coordinate well and counterattack.

In the game Black settled for sending the queen off to a safe square with **24...Qh4?** which lost critical time. White could have forced a win with 25.Qc4 when Black has no viable defense, e.g. 25...Rh6 26.Qf7+ Kh8 27.Qf8+ Kh7 28.Qe7+ Kh8 29.Nf7+ Kg8 30.Nxg5. White's 25.Qc5 was less effective, allowing Khismatullin to scramble with 25...Be6! 26.Qe7+ Kh6 27.Qxe6 Re8, just managing to stay in the game and even winning later after some White errors.

Black has a viable option in **24...c6**, but White can equalize after 25.Qc5 Nxe4 26.Rxf4! (26.Qd4?? Ng3+--+) 26...Nxc5 27.Rf7+ Kg8 28.Bxg6 Rh6 29.Bf5. The correct course was to make the offer White couldn't refuse with **24...Bxh3!**.



White has no choice but to capture the queen because 25...Bg2+ and mate is threatened. After 25.Rxf4 Bxf4 Black scoops up the knight as well with huge compensation for the queen. The nicest point is 26.Qxb7 Rd8 27.Qxc7+ Rd7

and the rook is immune from capture due to the pin on the knight.

## The In-Between Days

Zwischenzugs, intermezzos, in-between-moves, IBMs – however you phrase it – are an important aspect of give-and-take tactics. They can occur in different settings.

Forcing moves, like captures and attacks of queens, are meant to force a direct reaction. But IBMs can still be effective as a counterstrike when they are even more forceful than the original strike. One has to remain particularly alert for them if one's own king is a bit vulnerable.

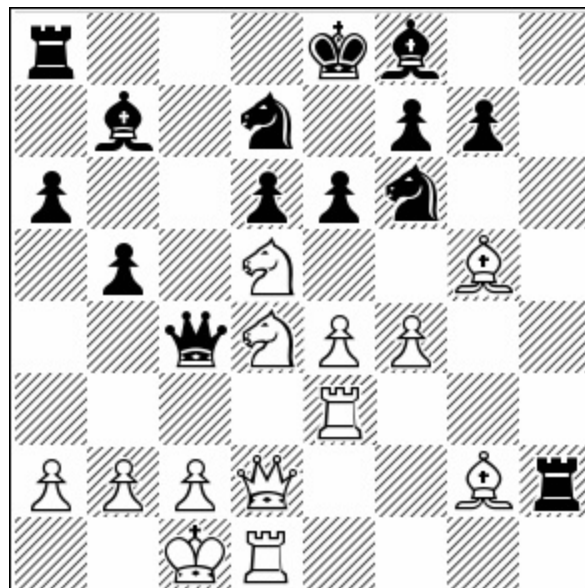
Game 8 – Sicilian Defense

Mikhail Antipov 2588

Ylon Schwartz 2267

Gibraltar 2018

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 d6 6.g4 h6 7.g5 hxg5 8.Bxg5 a6 9.f4 Qc7 10.Qd2 Nbd7 11.0-0-0 b5 12.Bg2 Bb7 13.Rhe1 Rxh2 14.Nd5 Qc4 15.Re3



The knight jump into d5 was meant to intimidate, and while Black might have been able to take the knight on the previous move, here 15...exd5?

16.exd5+ Kd8 17.Qa5+ is not an option. Black has more than one acceptable continuation. 15...Nxd5 16.exd5 Nb6 is okay, while the engine says 15...b4 is more than okay for Black.

### 15...Nxe4??

Oh, this looks strong. White's center is collapsed, the queen is attacked, and the bishop can't do much because of the pin. Or can it?

(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 3:*

### 16.Nxe6!! fxe6

16...Nxd2? 17.Nec7# is right out. 16...f5 is a choice only for the very desperate, but White has to be accurate to refute it. 17.Rxe4! fxe4 18.b3! is the solution.

### 17.Bxe4

**Black resigned**, no doubt shocked by the sudden turn of events. 17...Rxd2 18.Bg6 is a lovely checkmate, while 17...Qxe4 18.Qxh2! Qf5 19.Qh5+ g6 20.Nc7+ Kf7 21.Qh7+ Bg7 22.Nxe6 is a complete debacle.

## Deflection

Decoys are often used to remove pieces from important defensive positions, but they can also repel pieces from important offensive positions as well.

Game 9 – Queen's Pawn Opening

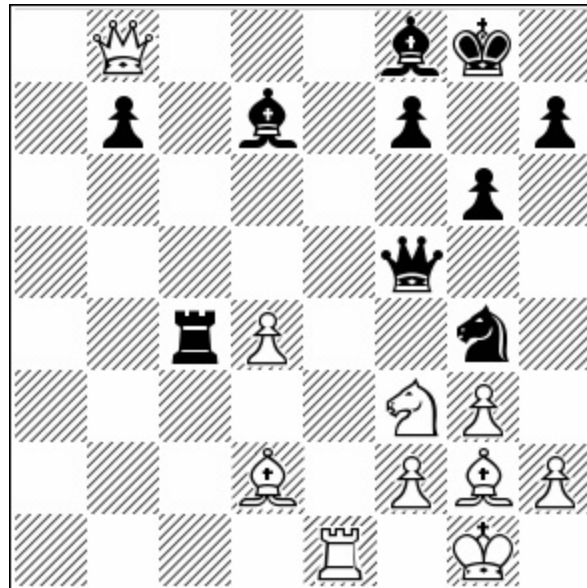
**Yaroslav Zhrebukh** 2633

**Vasif Durarbayli** 2618

St Louis Summer 2018

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 g6 3.g3 Bg7 4.Bg2 0-0 5.0-0 d5 6.c3 c6 7.Nbd2 a5 8.a4 Re8  
9.Qb3 Ra6 10.Re1 Rb6 11.Qa3 Nbd7 12.e4 e5 13.exd5 e4 14.dxc6 exf3  
15.Rxe8+ Qxe8 16.cxd7 Bxd7 17.Nxf3 Qe2 18.Be3 Bf8 19.b4 axb4 20.cxb4  
Rxb4 21.Qc1 Ng4 22.Qc7 Rxa4 23.Re1 Qb5 24.Bd2 Rc4 25.Qf4 Qf5

## 26.Qb8



On the surface Black doesn't have much to worry about. But his pieces are not well-organized, and he can find big trouble with a careless move, e.g. 26...b5? 27.h3 Nf6 28.g4 Qc2 29.Qd8 and White's initiative is already decisive.

He has a chance to force virtual equality with 26...Rc8! (investing a tempo to give up his passed pawn, but getting the tempo back later) 27.Qxb7 Rc2 28.h3 Bc6 29.hxg4 Qxf3 30.Qxc6 Qxc6 31.Bxc6 Rxd2, etc. That line may be counter-intuitive, and Durarbayli found an idea that looks somewhat promising:

### 26...Rxd4?

Obviously White is not falling for 27.Nxd4 Qxf2+ 28.Kh1 Qxd4 with a crushing position for Black, but 27.h3 Rxd2 28.hxg4 Qc2 29.Nxd2 Qxd2 looks like White's intention. Black will pick up the g4-pawn and most likely will hold a draw.

### 27.Bh6!

White still gives up the bishop for the rook, but displaces the knight and

keeps the h3-pawn. Black was not able to hold his bad position together for long:

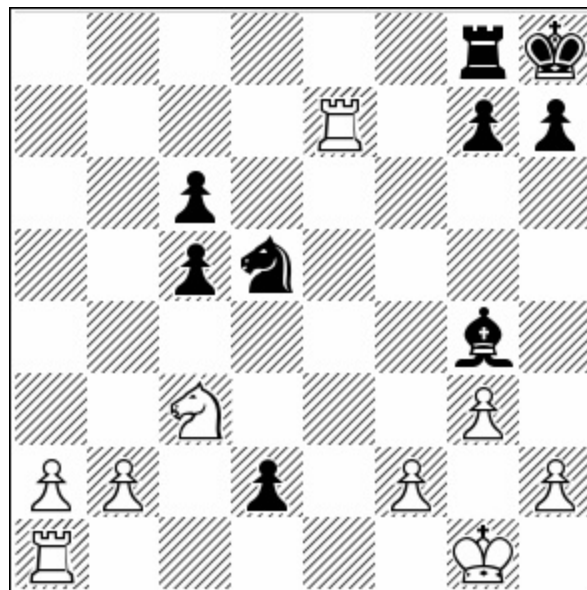
**27...Nxb6 28.Nxd4 Qd3 29.Nf3 Bc6 30.Ne5 Qd2 31.Ra1 Qd4? 32.Ra8 1-0**

## Queen for a Day

Sometimes IBMs lure pieces to death squares. It is particularly aesthetic when lowly pawns accomplish this trick, living as queens for a brief moment.

Game 10 – Dutch Defense  
**Alexander Onischuk** 2672  
**Varuzhan Akobian** 2647  
St Louis ch-USA 2018

**1.d4 e6 2.c4 f5 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.g3 d5 5.Bg2 c6 6.Nh3 Bd6 7.0-0 0-0 8.Qc2 dxc4 9.e4 e5 10.exf5 exd4 11.Ne2 c5 12.Qxc4+ Kh8 13.Ng5 Nc6 14.Bf4 Bxf5 15.Nf7+ Rxf7 16.Qxf7 Rb8 17.Bxc6 bxc6 18.Rfe1 d3 19.Bxd6 Qxd6 20.Nc3 d2 21.Re7 Rg8 22.Rxa7 Bg4 23.Qe7 Qxe7 24.Rxe7 Nd5**

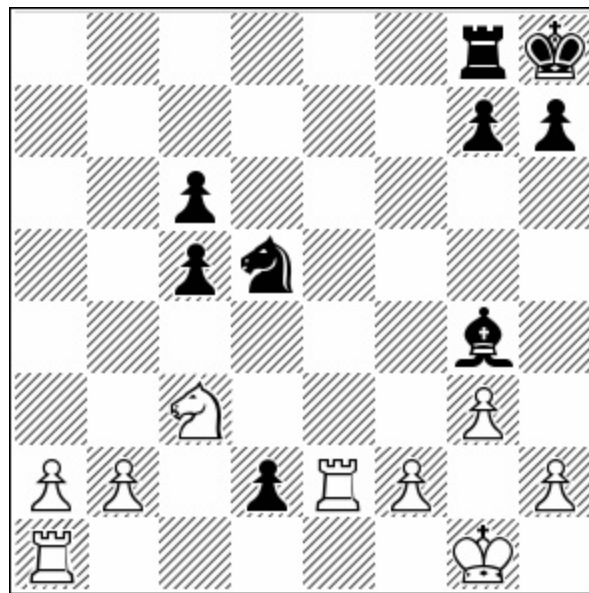


We have a very dynamic situation, with White holding a tenuous material advantage. To survive, White has to overcome an optical illusion in one line and avoid a faulty assumption in another.

## 25.Re2?

This seems not only clever, but, with the rook under attack, forced as well. The saving grace was 25.f3!! to lure the bishop to an inferior square. After 25...Bxf3 26.Rd7! is surprisingly effective. The rook somehow eyes the d-pawn through the knight! Black maintains a promising position but no immediate way to cash in.

But it seems White is reaching a relatively safe position, as 25...Nxc3 26.Rxd2 Ne2+ is certainly better for Black but the result is still in doubt.



(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 4:*

## 25...d1=Q+!

This deadly pawn in-between-move is a kind of desperado. The pawn chooses what square to be captured on.

**White resigned** because 26.Rxd1 Nxc3 leaves him with no compensation for a piece.

## Desperado

We see a more typical desperado in the following, which is one of my favorite games.

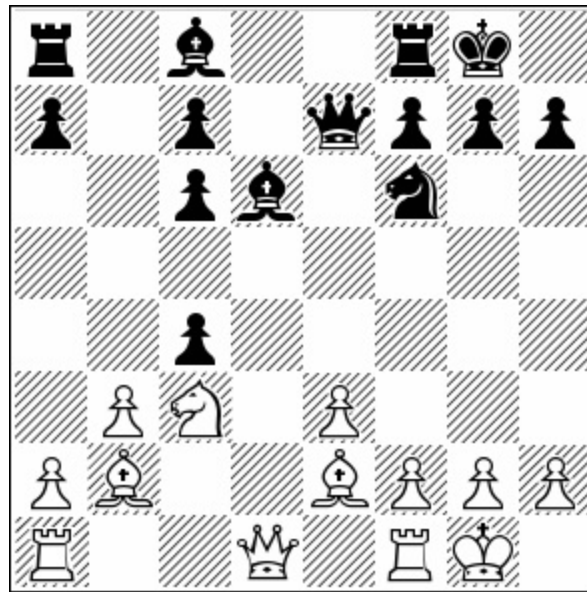
Game 11 – English Opening

Jan Timman 2625

Anatoly Karpov 2705

Montreal 1979

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 e5 3.Nf3 Nc6 4.e3 Be7 5.d4 exd4 6.Nxd4 0-0 7.Nxc6 bxc6  
8.Be2 d5 9.0-0 Bd6 10.b3 Qe7 11.Bb2 dxc4!



I love this move because it is so unnatural from a positional standpoint to give up a center pawn and leave Black with doubled c-pawns. The key is that White can't recapture without some concession.

**12.bxc4?**

This looks safer, but the truth is quite the opposite!

After 12.Bxc4 Black has attractive options but no big blow. 12...Bxh2+ 13.Kxh2 Ng4+ 14.Kg3 Qg5 15.f4 Qg6 16.Bd3 f5 17.Qe2 comes up short. 12...Ng4 13.g3 Nxh2 14.Kxh2 Qh4+ 15.Kg1 Bxg3 16.fxg3 Qxg3+ 17.Kh1 only leads to perpetual check.

**12...Rb8!**

This simple attack causes confusion in the enemy camp.

### 13.Qc1

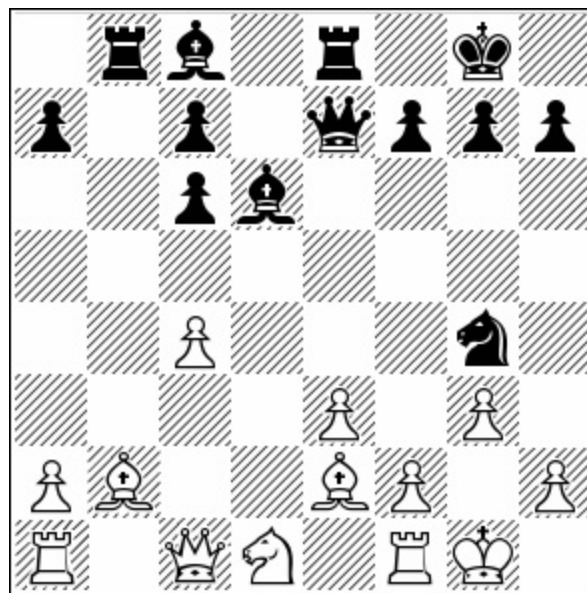
13.Rb1? Rxb2 14.Rxb2 Qe5--+

### 13...Ng4 14.g3

14.Bxg4 is not very attractive but it prevents immediate disaster.

### 14...Re8 15.Nd1?

In this book we will see defensive moves like this that don't actually defend anything. 15.e4 or 15.Bf3 were playable alternatives.

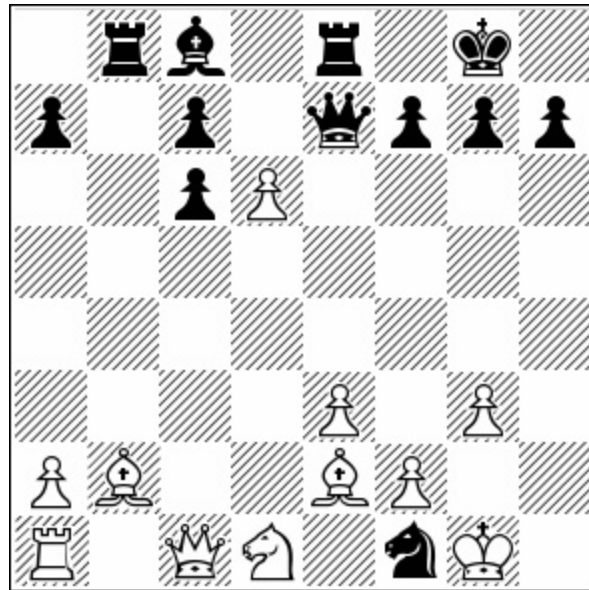


### 15...Nxb2! 16.c5!

After 16.Kxh2 Qh4+ 17.Kg1 (17.Kg2 Qh3+ is the same) 17...Bxg3 18.fxg3 Qxg3+ 19.Kh1 Re4 20.Rf4 Bh3 White's position collapses. Note that Black's 14th move was a stealthy attacking move, setting up the killer rook lift.

White's last move, however, looks like an effective counterstrike, disrupting the timing of Black's sacrifice.

**16...Nxf1 17.cxd6**



**17...Nxf1**

Karpov had seen further. The knight chews up the king's pawn cover with its last breath.

**18.fxf3**

18.dxe7? Nxe2+ 19.Kg2 Nxc1--.

**18...Qxd6 19.Kf2**

The kingside is just too poorly protected. If 19.Kg2, 19...Qd5+ 20.Bf3 Bh3+ also gets behind the defense.

**19...Qh6 20.Bd4 Qh2+ 21.Ke1 Qxg3+ 22.Kd2 Qg2 23.Nb2 Ba6 24.Nd3 Bxd3**

Simple and strong. White cannot hold out against the power of Black's rooks on open files.

**25.Kxd3 Rbd8 26.Bf1 Qe4+ 27.Kc3 c5! 28.Bxc5 Qc6 29.Kb3 Rb8+**

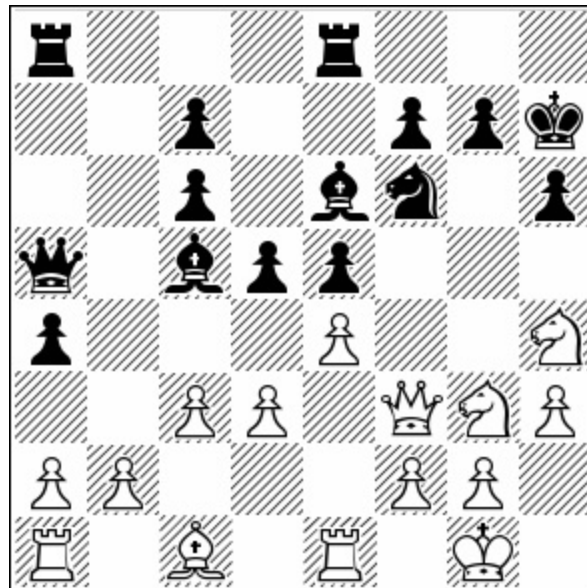
**30.Ka3 Re5 31.Bb4 Qb6 0-1**

### **Nowhere to Run, Nowhere to Hide**

In the next game we see an uncommon sort of IBM – a defensive pawn sacrifice that somehow turns around all the tactics. What seems irrelevant on the surface can significantly alter the tactical outcome.

Game 12 – Italian Game  
Shakhriyar Mamedyarov 2808  
Sergey Karjakin 2782  
Stavanger 2018 (3)

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.c3 Nf6 5.d3 d6 6.0-0 h6 7.Re1 0-0 8.h3 a5  
9.Nbd2 Be6 10.Bb5 Qb8 11.Nf1 Qa7 12.Re2 a4 13.Ng3 Qa5 14.Bxc6 bxc6  
15.Nh4 Rfe8 16.Re1 Kh7 17.Qf3 d5**



Karjakin sets the wheels in motion with action in the center.

**18.exd5 Bxd5!?**

Black could get Marshall Attack style compensation with 18...cxd5 19.Rxe5 Qb6.

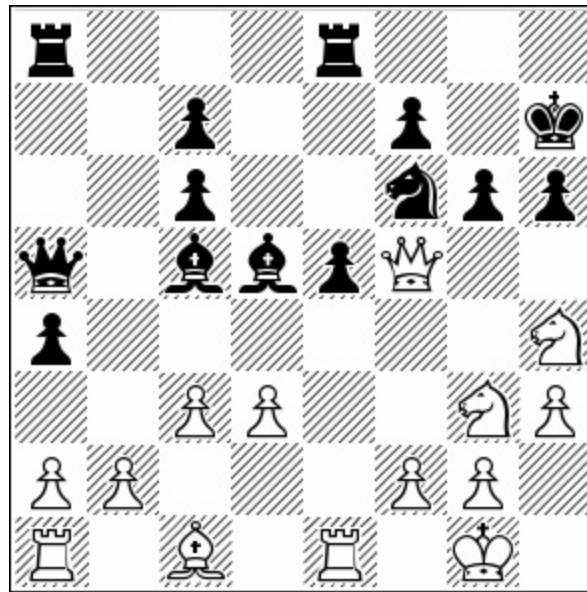
**19.Qf5+**

Has Sergey miscalculated?

19...Kg8 20.Bxh6 clips a pawn for White.

**19...g6!!**

This looks crazy, but the tactics lead to a surprising draw.



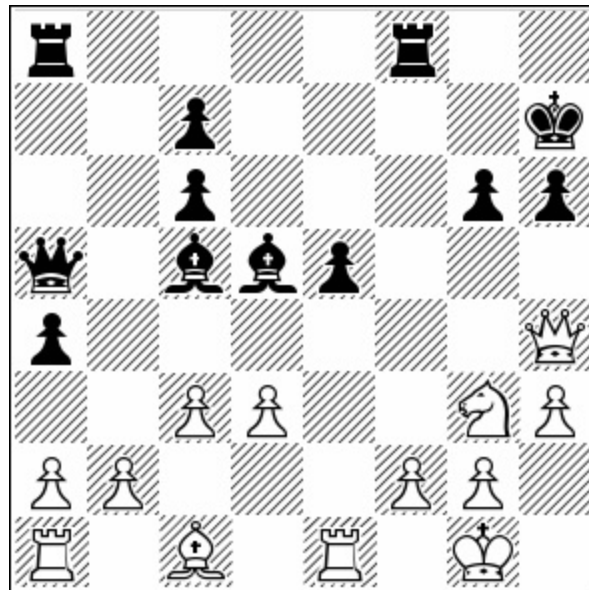
**20.Nxg6!**

Shakh answers with a finesse of his own. 20.Qxf6 Be7 21.Qxe5 Bxh4  
22.Qxe8 Rxe8 23.Rxe8 a3 can only be trouble for White, as the queen and  
bishop pair aim to exploit White's tardy development.

**20...fxg6 21.Qxf6 Rf8!**

The newly opened f-file causes a change in plans. 21...Be7 22.Qxe5 Bd6 23.Qxe8 Rxe8 24.Rxe8 now favors White, as the missing f-pawn exposes the black king.

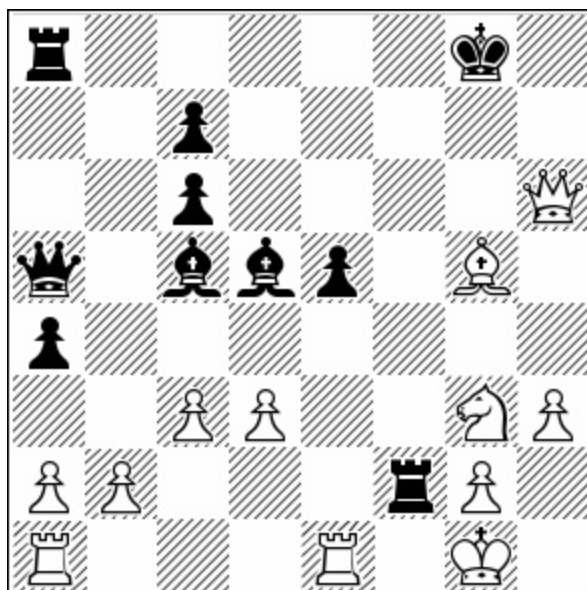
**22.Qh4**



(back to the exercises) ***Solution to Puzzle 5:***

But what now? 22...Bxf2+ 23.Kh1 Bxe1 24.Qxh6+ Kg8 25.Qxg6+ Kh8 26.Nh5 is curtains, while 22...Rxf2 23.Qxh6+ Kg8 24.Re4 (or 24.Ne4) confronts Black with the depressing reality that he has no useful discovered check.

**22...g5!! 23.Bxg5 Rxf2 24.Qxh6+ Kg8**



The disappearance of the g-pawn has dissolved White's advantage. The queen is now vulnerable to a discovered check, so there is no time to defend g2. White has to settle for perpetual check.

**25.Qg6+ Kh8 26.Qh6+ Kg8 27.Qg6+ Kh8 28.Qh6+ ½-½**

## Unbelievable

Sometimes a counterstrike is so unusual that only the greatest sense of danger could detect it coming.

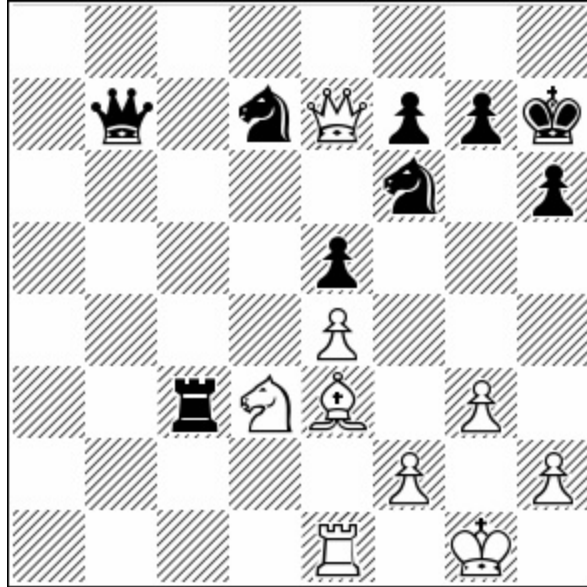
Game 13 – Catalan Opening

**Gawain Jones** 2672

**Niclas Huschenbeth** 2611

Germany Bundesliga 2021/22

**1.c4 Nf6 2.g3 e6 3.Bg2 d5 4.Nf3 Be7 5.0-0 0-0 6.d4 dxc4 7.Qc2 a6 8.a4 c5  
9.dxc5 Bxc5 10.Qxc4 Nbd7 11.Nc3 b5 12.Qd3 Bb7 13.axb5 axb5 14.Rxa8  
Qxa8 15.Qxb5 Bc6 16.Qc4 Rb8 17.Ne1 Bxg2 18.Nxg2 Rb4 19.Qa2 Qb7  
20.Ne1 Rb3 21.Qa4 h6 22.Nd3 Ba7 23.Qc4 e5 24.e4 Bd4 25.Re1 Rb6  
26.Be3 Rc6 27.Qb5 Rb6 28.Qa5 Rb3 29.Qd8+ Kh7 30.Qe7 Bxc3 31.bxc3  
Rxc3**



White had not planned to play the abject 32.Nc1, which would have kept realistic hopes of a draw.

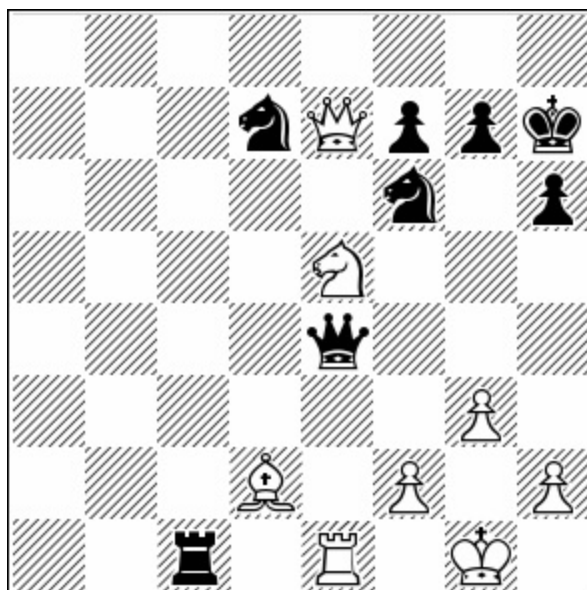
**32.Nxe5? Qxe4!**

Black could have kept a rough equality with 32...Rc7, which somewhat camouflages the devilish trap. At this point it is too late to find an off-ramp for White, even if he detects the tactical problem.

**33.Bd2**

(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 6:*

**33...Rc1!!**



**34.Rxc1 Nxe5**

With weak squares and loose pieces, White cannot resist Black's crushing attack.

**35.Bb4 Nd5 36.Qc5 Nf3+ 37.Kg2 Ne1+ 38.Kf1 Nd3 39.Qc4 Qf3 40.Kg1 Qxf2+ 41.Kh1 Qf3+ 42.Kg1 Nxc1 0-1**

### **Beat the Clock**

If you've never played a game with an analog clock, you don't know time pressure! Here both players scramble to get in decisive blows with split-second moves.

Game 14 – English Opening

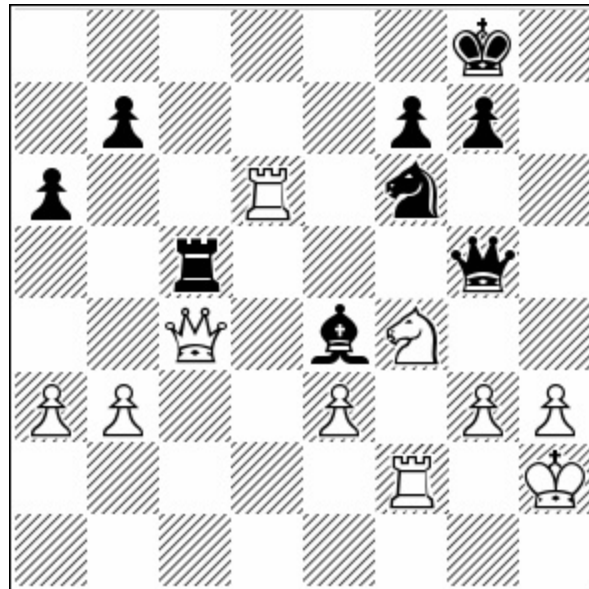
**Boris Kogan** 2440

**Joel Benjamin** 2405

South Bend ch-USA 1981

**1.Nf3 c5 2.c4 Nf6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 e5 5.Nb5 d5 6.cxd5 Bc5 7.N5c3 0-0 8.e3 e4 9.Nd2 Bf5 10.g3 Nbd7 11.Bg2 Re8 12.0-0 Rc8 13.h3 h5 14.b3 Bb4 15.Nb5 a6 16.Nd4 Bg6 17.Bb2 Ne5 18.a3 Bd6 19.Ne2 h4 20.Nf4 hxg3 21.fxg3 Bh7 22.Bd4 Bc5 23.Nc4 Nf3+ 24.Bxf3 exf3 25.Bxc5 Rxc5 26.Qd4**

**Rb5 27.Rxf3 Be4 28.Rf2 Nxd5 29.Rd1 Qg5 30.Kh2 Nf6 31.Nd6 Rd8  
32.Qc4 Rxd6 33.Rxd6 Rc5**



I drifted a bit and had to sacrifice an exchange for murky compensation. Here White has to decide if he should keep pieces back for defense or counterattack. His decision is a natural one, especially when you consider we are in for an old-fashioned time scramble, with hanging flags and no increment!

**34.Rd8+**

34.Qd4 was best, though the justification is certainly difficult to see: 34...Rc1 35.Ng2 Ng4+ 36.hxg4 Qxg4 and now White can win only with the problem-like 37.Rh6!! gxh6 38.Qd8+ Kg7 39.Qf6+ Kh7 40.Qxf7+ Qg7 41.Qe6 Bg6 42.Nh4, etc.

**34...Kh7 35.Qxf7**

White is all in, though the engine still prefers White after 35.Qe2.

**35...Rc1 36.Ng2?**

Here Kogan had to give back to the community to make a draw. 36.Rg2

Bxg2 37.Qf8 Ng4+ 38.Kxg2! (38.hxg4 Qh6+ 39.Nh5 Rh1+ 40.Kxg2 Qc6+-  
+) 38...Rc2+ 39.Kg1 Rc1+ is a perpetual.

### 36...Qxe3!

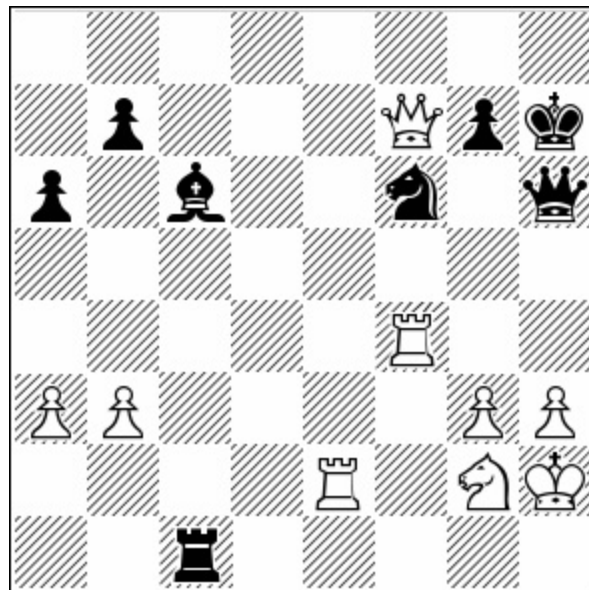
Suddenly Black is finding cracks in the white defenses.

### 37.Rdd2 Bc6?

I guess I didn't want to think about trading my beautiful bishop, but  
37...Bxg2 wins as either recapture would be met decisively by 38...Qe1.

### 38.Rde2 Qh6 39.Rf4??

This move looks nice, but doesn't defend like 39.Qe6, which would put  
White back on the winning side.



(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 7:*

### 39...Bd5??

Oh boy. I realized my mistake, peeked sheepishly at the throng of onlookers,  
and hoped I would get another chance.

**40.Qe7??**

The off-ramp was 40.Rxf6 Bxf7 41.Rxh6+ Kxh6 with a likely draw.

**40...Qxh3+! 41.Kxh3 Rh1#**

## Patience

It takes a brave player to wait just a little longer to strike when the opponent has an advanced passed pawn.

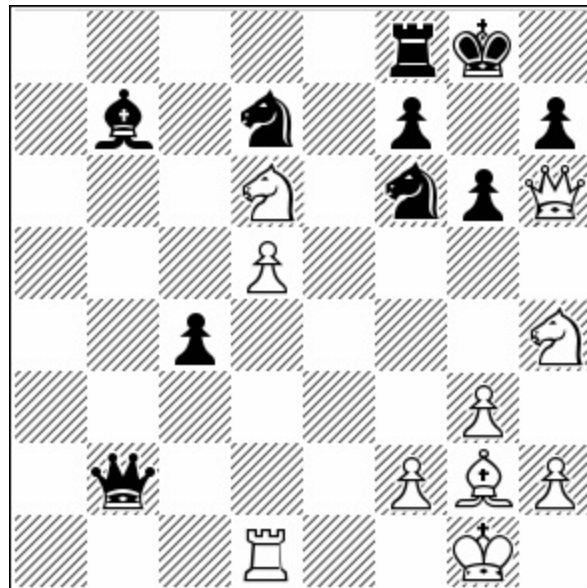
Game 15 – Queen’s Indian Defense

**Pavel Eljanov 2683**

**Dmitry Andreikin 2705**

Saratov 2011

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 b6 4.g3 Bb7 5.Bg2 c5 6.d5 exd5 7.Nh4 g6 8.Nc3 Bg7 9.0-0 0-0 10.Bg5 Qe8 11.cxd5 d6 12.Qd2 Nbd7 13.Bh6 Bxh6 14.Qxh6 a6 15.a4 b5 16.axb5 axb5 17.Nxb5 Rxa1 18.Rxa1 Qxe2 19.Nxd6 Qxb2 20.Rd1 c4**



White is poised to attack but he feels conditions are not quite right yet.

**21.h3!?**

Eljanov makes a bold decision to let the passed c-pawn live. He could take it right away, but 21.Nxc4 Qxf2+ 22.Kxf2 Ng4+ 23.Kg1 Nxf6 leaves him with no clear way to take advantage of the passed d-pawn.

White can actually sacrifice right away, but there are two problems. After 21.Nhf5 gxf5 22.Nxf5, Black can simplify with 22...Qxf2+ 23.Kxf2 Ng4+ 24.Kf3 Nxf6 25.Nxf6+ Kh8 26.Nf5, though White has some edge here.

Black has an alternate defense in 22...Ne8 23.Be4 Kh8 24.Rb1 Qc3 25.Nd6! Nef6 26.Rxb7 Qe1+ 27.Kg2 Nxe4 28.Rxd7 Qxf2+ 29.Kh3 Qf1+ 30.Kh4 Qf6+ 31.Qxf6+ Nxf6 with a likely draw.

So Eljanov kills any chance of the knight going to g4, and gives a little extra luft to his king in the process.

### **21...c3**

This dangerous pawn does block the vision of the queen, complicating the defense somewhat.

### **22.Nhf5 gxf5 23.Nxf5 Ne8 24.Be4 Kh8 25.Ng7!**

This is only possible because the c3-pawn is blocking the queen!

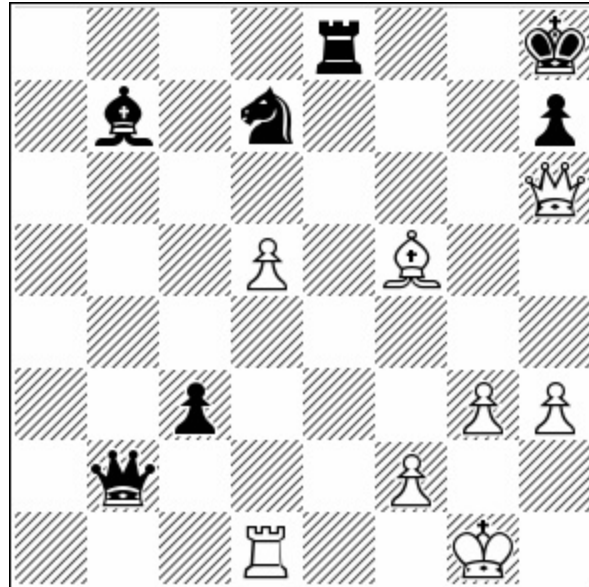
### **25...f5**

No choice here, as after 25...Nef6 26.Nh5 Black can't defend g7, h7, and f6.

### **26.Nxe8 Rxe8**

Black's c-pawn provides him with useful counterplay. But the cleanest defense was to pitch it to gain immediate control of the long diagonal: 26...c2! 27.Bxc2 Rxe8 28.Bxf5 Nf6 and White has enough pawns for the piece to draw, but no more.

### **27.Bxf5**



### 27...Nf8??

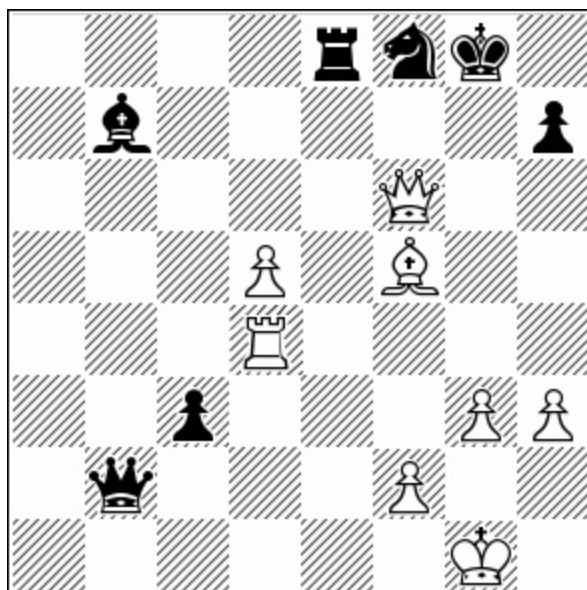
This seems forced but Black has a second chance for a counterstrike. 27...Re7 28.Bxd7 Rxd7? 29.Qf8# is a non-starter but Black can initiate counterplay with 28...Rf7!. With accurate play White can continue to press, but Black holds if he is equally adept: 29.Qe3 c2 30.Rc1 Bxd5 31.Ba4 Rf3 32.Qe8+ Kg7 33.Qe7+ Bf7 34.Qg5+ Bg6 35.Bxc2 Rf6!=.

### 28.Qf6+?!

Eljanov executes the finish in the wrong order. 28.Rd4 would have ended the game – the difference is the rook is now tethered to the back rank to guard the knight on f8.

### 28...Kg8 29.Rd4?

There is a correct path to victory, though less straightforward than Eljanov was expecting: 29.Be6+! Nxe6 30.dxe6 Rf8 31.Qg5+ Kh8 and now the multi-purpose move 32.Qc5! Kg8 (32...Re8 33.Qe5+ Kg8 34.Qg5+ Kh8 35.Qf6+) 33.e7 Re8 34.Qc4+ Kg7 (34...Kh8 35.Qf7+-) 35.Qg4+ Kh8 (35...Kf7 36.Qh5+) 36.Qd7 Bc6 37.Qxc6+-.



(back to the exercises) **Solution to Puzzle 8:**

**29...Qc1+??**

Black misses one final counterstrike! The counterattack with 29...Re1+ 30.Kg2 Qe2! saves the day. 31.Rg4+ (31.Bxh7+ Nxh7 32.Rg4+ Qxg4 33.Qd8+ Nf8 34.hxg4) is no better than a draw for White; the clever 31.Bd3 forces the lovely 31...Qe6!! and White must go for the aforementioned drawing line with 32.Bxh7+ 31...Ng6 32.Bxg6 (32.Be6+ is an optical illusion – 32...Qxe6, whoops!) 32...Qf1+ (answering a check with check is not just in the movies – 32...Bxd5+?? 33.Be4+) 33.Kf3 Qe2+ forcing a perpetual, as 34.Kf4?? Qxf2+ 35.Kg5 h6+ is suicide.

**30.Kh2 Re1 31.Bxh7+! 1-0**

Now this move wins as the queen cannot sacrifice on g4.

### Flash

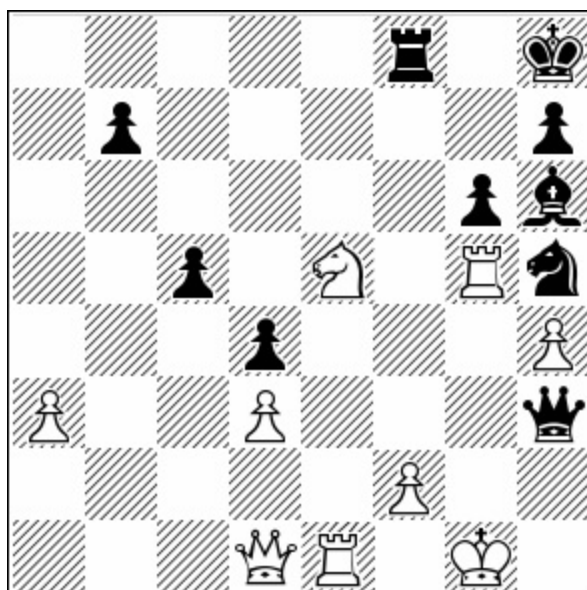
Here, flashy play distracts both players. White combines when a defensive move was called for, while Black plays the ‘heaviest’ but not the strongest retort.

Parham Maghsoodloo 2665

Murali Karthikeyan 2593

Xingtai Ach 2019

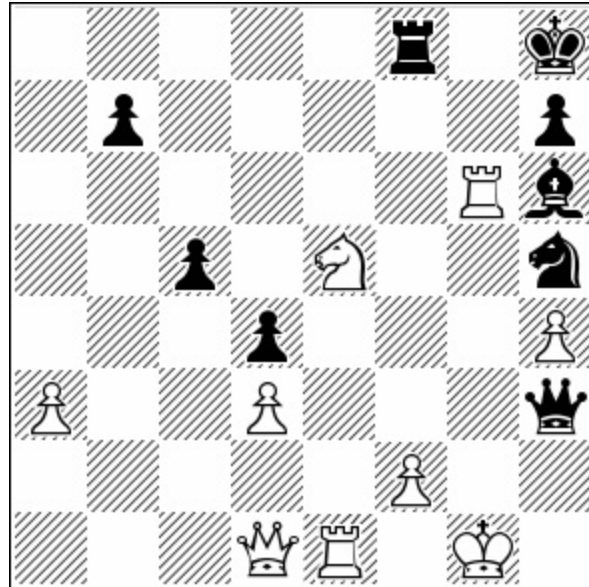
1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.Bb5+ Nc6 4.0-0 Bd7 5.Re1 Nf6 6.c4 e5 7.h3 Be7 8.d3 0-0 9.Nc3 Ne8 10.a3 Nc7 11.Ba4 f5 12.b4 Ne6 13.exf5 Rxf5 14.Nd5 Rf7 15.Be3 Ncd4 16.Bxd4 Bxa4 17.Qxa4 cxd4 18.c5 Bf8 19.Qb3 Rxf3 20.gxf3 Kh8 21.Re4 Qg5+ 22.Rg4 Qf5 23.Rg3 dxc5 24.b5 Rd8 25.Re1 g6 26.h4 Ng7 27.b6 axb6 28.Nxb6 Nh5 29.Rg5 Qxf3 30.Qd1 Qh3 31.Nc4 Bh6 32.Nxe5 Rf8



In this wild position, White is tempted by tactics that aren't really necessary

**33.Rxg6?**

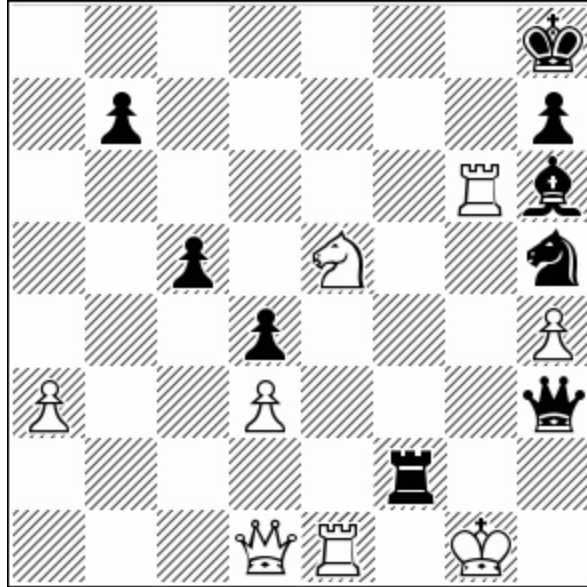
I think this flash is motivated by the feeling that simple defense is not an option. But 33.Rg2 defends pretty well, with no obvious continuation for Black, e.g. 33...Nf4 34.Rg3 Qf5 35.Qf3.



### 33...Rxf2?

33...hxg6? 34.Nxg6+ Kg7 35.Qxh5 turns the initiative over to White. Black is absolutely right to counterstrike here, but this sacrifice, as intimidating as it appears, is actually the wrong one! The rook needs to be retained for the finishing blow.

33...Be3! is the true killer. 34.fxe3 (other defenses won't prevent Ng3 anyway) 34...Ng3 35.Rxg3 (35.Rg8+ is ingenious but comes up short: 35...Rxg8 36.Nf7+ Kg7 37.Qf3 Ne2+ 38.Kf2 Qh2+ 39.Qg2+ Qxg2+ 40.Kxg2 Kxf7+ and wins) 35...Qxg3+ 36.Kh1 Rf2 and White can only avoid mate by giving away all his pieces.



**34.Nf7+??**

Desperation, or perhaps an oversight? 34.Kxf2 Be3+ 35.Rxe3 had to be tried, and indeed it holds, as precarious as it may seem. 35...Qxe3+ (35...dxe3+ 36.Kg1 hxc6 37.Nxc6+ Kg7 38.Qxh5 Qg3+ 39.Kh1 and Black's king is too exposed to promote the e-pawn) 36.Kf1 hxc6 37.Nxc6+ Kg7 38.Qxh5 Qxd3+ 39.Ke1 Qxc6 40.Qxc5 and Black can't win this either.

**34...Rxf7 35.Re8+ Bf8**

35...Rf8? 36.Rxf8+ Bxf8 37.Qxh5 would justify White's blunder. But now there's no move.

**36.Rg5 Ng3 0-1**

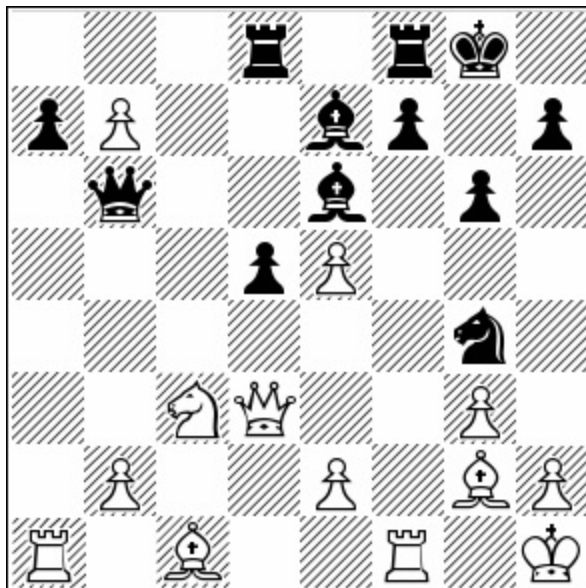
## Unconventional Captures

We are conditioned to examine capturing defended pieces with pieces of equal or lower value. But sometimes the unexpected way to capture turns the tactics upside down.

Game 17 – Old Indian Defense  
**Kacper Piorun 2657**

**Bartłomiej Heberla 2556**  
Warsaw ch-POL 2019

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 d6 3.Nc3 e5 4.Nf3 Nbd7 5.g3 c6 6.Bg2 e4 7.Nd2 d5 8.cxd5  
cxd5 9.f3 exf3 10.Nxf3 Be7 11.0-0 Nb6 12.Qd3 0-0 13.a4 g6 14.Ne5 Be6  
15.a5 Nbd7 16.a6 Nxe5 17.dxe5 Ng4 18.axb7 Qb6+ 19.Kh1 Rad8**



With the position on the precipice of tactics, the b7-pawn looms large in any possible continuation.

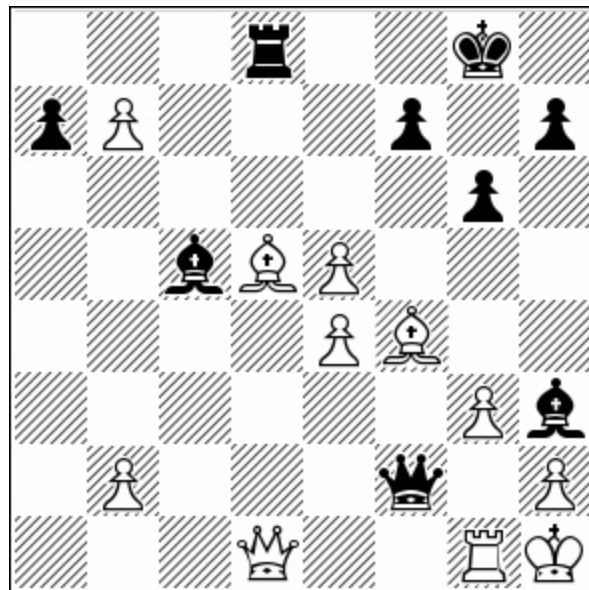
**20.Nxd5?**

Piorun naturally wants to open up the diagonal to protect his b7-pawn, but this gives Black tactics on that long diagonal. White's position is deceptively strong after more subtle approaches. 20.h3 seems to beckon Black to carry out his plans, yet it may be the best move! 20...Nxe5 (20...Nf2+ 21.Rxf2 Qxf2 22.Bh6 Rfe8 23.Nxd5 may be decisive) 21.Qe3 Qxe3 22.Bxe3 Rd7 23.Bf4 Bf6 24.Ra5 Rxb7 25.Nxd5 Bxd5 26.Rxd5 Re7 27.Bd2 and White wins material.

20.Qa6!/? Nf2+ 21.Rxf2 Qxf2 22.Bh6 is also good, as the b7-pawn remains a huge factor.

## 20...Bxd5?

This standard capture was followed by clever tactics, but White's resources were just a bit too strong. On a purely tactical level, the bishop contributes more to Black's initiative than the rook...so the correct path was 20...Rxd5! 21.Bxd5 Rd8 22.e4 (after 22.b8=Q Qxb8 23.e4 Nxe5 Black has enough compensation for the exchange, relieved by the departure of the big b7-pawn) and now the resource used in the game, 22...Qf2, looks stronger here but 23.Rxf2 Nxf2+ 24.Kg2 Nxd3 25.Rxa7 leaves Black hard-pressed to keep a queen from appearing on the board, e.g. 25...Nxe5 26.Ra8 Nd7 27.Rc8 g5 28.Be3 and the b-pawn will at least win a piece. So correct is 22...Nf2+! 23.Rxf2 Qxf2 24.Bf4 Bh3 25.Rg1 Bc5 26.Qd1.

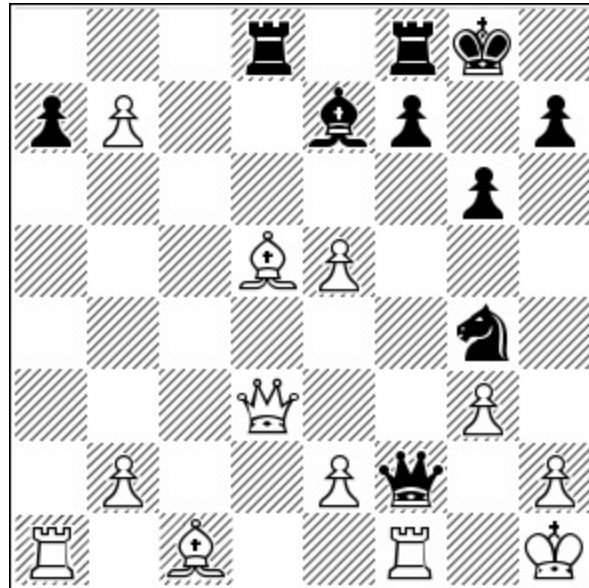


*analysis diagram*

Both players have trouble moving pieces. The tempting 26...Bg4 backfires after 27.Rf1! Bxd1 28.Rxf2 Bxf2 29.Kg2 Bb6 30.e6 and the b-pawn will cost Black more than his rook. But Black has a second and more spectacular exchange sacrifice on d5, drawing despite allowing White to queen with check! 26...Rxd5!! 27.b8=Q+ Kg7 28.exd5 Bf5 and despite the extra queen White has to accept a repetition; 29.Re1 Bh3 30.Rg1 Bf5, etc.

## 21.Bxd5 Qf2!

This could be quite a jolt for the unprepared opponent. The routine 21...Nf2+ 22.Rxf2 Qxf2 23.Be3 wins for White, as the b7-pawn cannot be contained for long.



## 22.Bg2!

The only move, but it is good enough to maintain a big advantage.

## 22...Qxf1+

If 22...Rxd3 23.Rxf2 Nxf2+ 24.Kg1, White recovers the piece and maintains his monster b-pawn, though probably Black does a little better there than in the game.

## 23.Bxf1 Nf2+ 24.Kg1 Nxd3 25.exd3

Black won the exchange only to land in a bad position – the b7-pawn, supported by the bishop pair, is too strong. White should –and did – win, after several mutual errors.

**Respect**

Sometimes the strike happens when lack of vigilance causes a player to miss a genuine strike of his own.

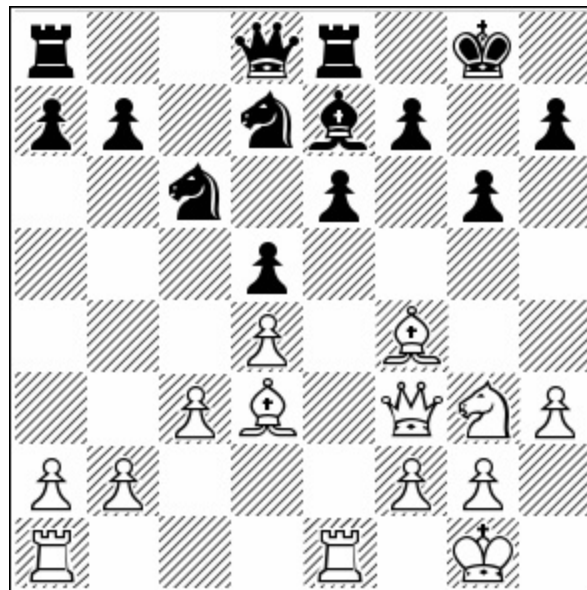
Game 18 – Caro-Kann Defense

Wesley So 2773

Hrant Melkumyan 2634

Chennai ol 2022

1.e4 c6 2.Nc3 d5 3.Nf3 Bg4 4.h3 Bxf3 5.Qxf3 e6 6.Be2 Bc5 7.0-0 Nd7  
8.exd5 cxd5 9.Rd1 Ngf6 10.d4 Be7 11.Bd3 0-0 12.Bf4 Nb8 13.Ne2 Nc6  
14.c3 Re8 15.Re1 g6 16.Ng3 Nd7



White has potential to attack the kingside with all the pieces he can send to that sector. A slightly careless move leads to surprising complications:

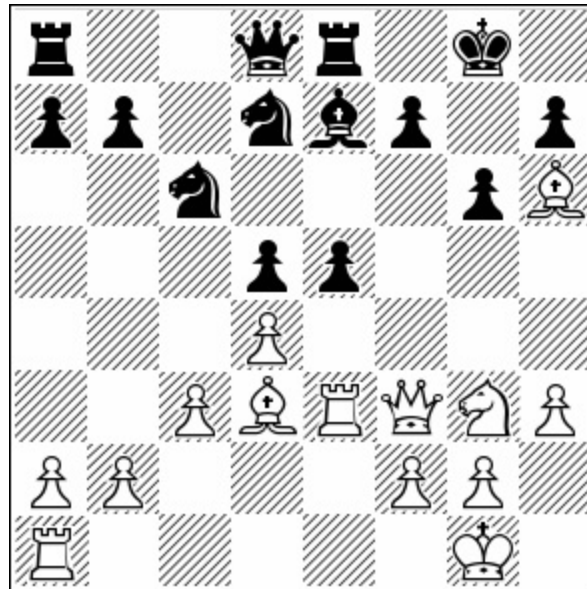
**17.Re3?!**

Here 17.Re2 would have kept control, but would also have deprived us of the ultimate crowd pleasing continuation.

**17...e5! 18.Bh6**

So played this after thinking for several minutes. He was likely dissatisfied

with 18.dxe5 Bc5 when Black seems to be taking over the initiative. In fact White is still for choice with some spirited play: 19.e6! fxe6 20.Re2, and now the engine finds some clever tactical lines, e.g. 20...Qh4 21.Rae1 Rf8 22.Nf5! gxf5 23.Rxe6 with a big advantage. Even a player as strong as Wesley So does not have Stockfish's omniscience, so he thought the text move to be the best he could do.



Melkumyan becomes complacent and loses his Spidey-sense:

**18...e4??**

The real kicker is that Black had a much stronger move than this howler, played after only two minutes thought. 18...Bf8! 19.Bxf8 e4 20.Qf4 Nxf8 transforms Black's position into an attacking powerhouse.

**19.Rxe4!**

Context matters. Knowing that White wins this game turns the combination into Puzzle Rush 101. 19...dxe4 20.Qxf7+! Kxf7 21.Bc4+ Kf6 22.Nxe4+ Kf5 23.g4+ Kxe4 24.Re1+ Kf3 25.Bd5# (or 25.Re3#). Convincing himself that Wesley was desperate enough to give a piece for two pawns was an act of willful blindness on the part of Melkumyan.

19...Nf8

So runs with the ball and hammers Black into submission.

20.Rf4 f5 21.Nxf5 gxf5 22.Rxf5 Qd6 23.Qg4+ Ng6 24.Rxd5 Qf6 25.g3 Bf8  
26.Rf5 Qe7 27.Bc4+ Kh8 28.Bg5 1-0

### History Never Repeats

Familiarity with tactical patterns not only helps us checkmate opponents, but also gives us the sense of danger to avoid victimhood as well. In the next example, the careless continuation is mated brutally while the vigilant move enables a hidden counterstrike.

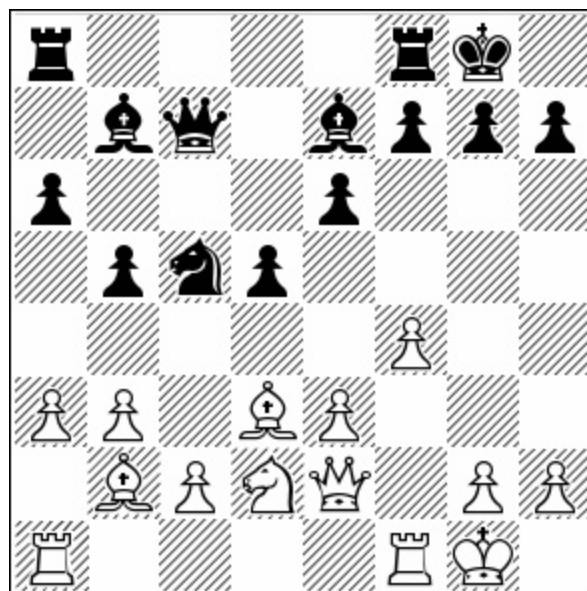
Game 19 – Colle Opening

Leonid Filatov 2293

Steven Mayer 2222

Philadelphia 2000

1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 e6 4.Bd3 c5 5.b3 Be7 6.Bb2 Nbd7 7.Nbd2 b6 8.0-0  
Bb7 9.Qe2 0-0 10.Ne5 Qc7 11.a3 a6 12.f4 b5 13.Nxd7 Nxd7 14.dxc5 Nxc5



This looks like a straightforward execution... and it is. The pattern has been well-known since Lasker-Bauer, Amsterdam 1889. Those who do not study

history are doomed to repeat its mistakes.

**15.Bxh7+ Kxh7 16.Qh5+ Kg8 17.Bxg7 Kxg7**

Refusal of the second gift fails prosaically: 17...f6 18.Qg6 Rf7 19.Bh6+ Kh8 20.Qxf7.

**18.Qg4+!**

It's sensible to keep the king confined. 18.Rf3 allows Black to give material to escape with the king: 18...Rg8 19.Rg3+ Kf8 20.Qh6+ Ke8 21.Rxg8+ Kd7, etc.

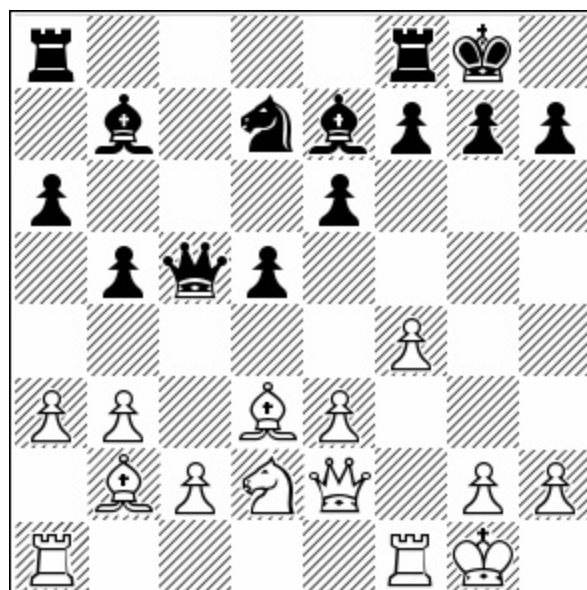
**18...Kf6**

Hari-Kiri, but 18...Kh7 19.Rf3 leads to a standard ladder mate.

**19.Qg5#**

But just before the diagram, Black made an innocent-looking mistake in recapturing a pawn with the wrong piece. Let's instead take with the queen on c5 and see what happens.

(14...Qxc5)

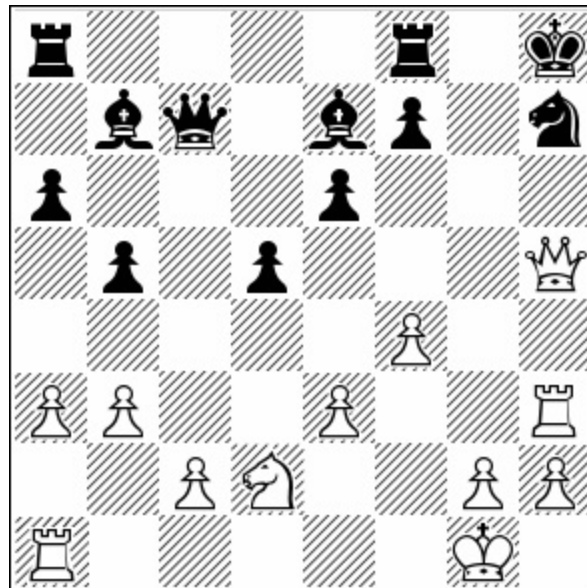


*analysis diagram*

Black had hoped to trade off the active bishop on d3, but he needed to keep the knight in a better position to defend. Can White proceed with the sacrifices anyway?

**15.Bxh7+** Kxh7 16.Qh5+ Kg8 17.Bxg7 Qxe3+! 18.Kh1 Kxg7 19.Qg4+ Kh8 20.Rf3 looks promising. But when one side sacrifices a lot of stuff, the other can give something back, too. 20...Qxf3? 21.gxf3 mates using the newly opened g-file, but 20...d4! is the way to give up the queen and take the rook out of the equation. White has to settle for perpetual check.

So let's fine tune to keep the queen from invading: **15.Bd4** Qc7 16.Bxh7+ Kxh7 17.Qh5+ Kg8 18.Bxg7 Kxg7 19.Qg4+ Kh8 20.Rf3 Nf6 (forced) 21.Rh3+ Nh7 22.Qh5 (White could – and should – bail out with 22.Rxh7+ and a perpetual) 22...Qxc2 23.e4! and Black cannot defend against mate. But there is one problem...



*analysis diagram*

(back to the exercises) **Solution to Puzzle 9:**

After 22...Bh4!! (instead of 22...Qxc2) 23.Rxh4 f6 Black is able to defend smoothly. That type of resource can be easily overlooked because our minds

may process 22...Bh4 as a non-starter, since it can obviously be removed. But with two extra pieces, Black certainly has surplus to give back.

## Hidden Resources

Mating nets can appear out of nowhere, even in the endgame. And escapes from them can hide in plain sight as well.

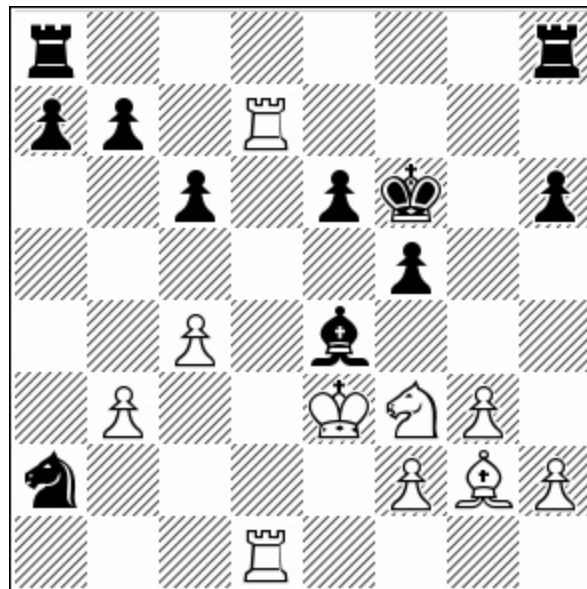
Game 20 – Réti Opening

Julian Hodgson 2500

Simen Agdestein 2545

London 1986

1.g3 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Bg2 c6 4.d3 h6 5.b3 Bf5 6.Bb2 e6 7.Nbd2 Bc5 8.e4 dxe4 9.dxe4 Nxe4 10.Nxe4 Qxd1+ 11.Rxd1 Bxe4 12.Bxg7 Rh7 13.Bf6 Be7 14.Bxe7 Kxe7 15.Rd2 Rh8 16.Ke2 Na6 17.Ke3 f5 18.Rhd1 Nb4 19.Rd7+ Kf6 20.c4 Nxa2



Hodgson spots that the black king is not as comfy as it appears.

**21.Ne5!**

Not 21.Rxb7 Rhb8 with an edge for Black. Now Black has a choice of loose pieces to grab, but 21...Bxg2 fails in two ways: 22.f4 Rhf8 23.R1d2 or

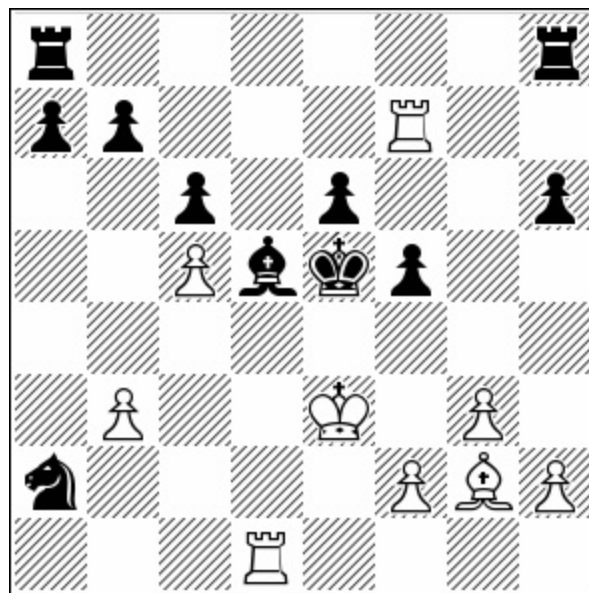
22.Rf7+ Kg5 23.Rg7+ Kh5 24.Rd4 Be4 25.Nd7 Rhf8 26.f3.

**21...Kxe5 22.Rf7 Bd5!?**

Agdestein fights back. Blocking the d-file gives his king some breathing room.

Black would be on the way to a win after 23.cxd5 cxd5.

**23.c5!**



The king is trapped again. What to do now?

**23...f4+??**

Hallucination or desperation? In any case, there was a way out. 23...Bf3!!

24.Bxf3 Raf8 safeguards the king and lets Black fight on in the endgame. In fact, Black had the same resource on the previous move, perhaps even better then.

**24.gxf4#**

Check, checkmate! Just like in the movies!

**Bird in the Hand**

Chess players are often tasked with deciding between a safe, solid continuation, and riskier play for the advantage. Your tournament situation may dictate one direction over the other, but other things being equal, the only way to know which is right is to try to work out the specifics.

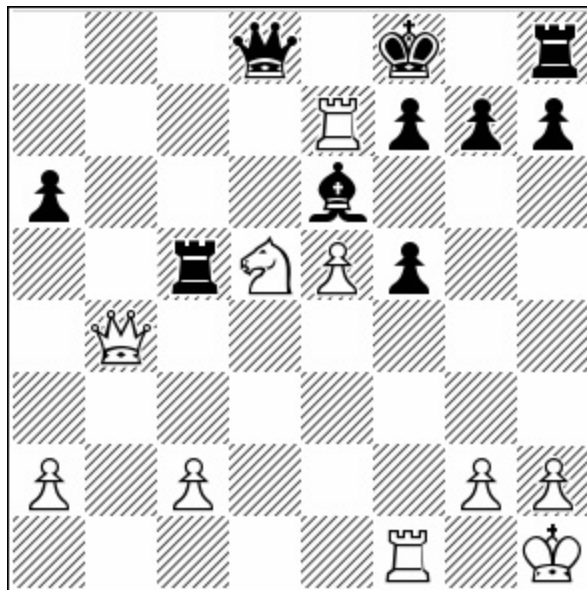
Game 21 – French Defense

**Semen Khanin** 2509

**Robert Hungaski** 2537

St Louis 2022

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e5 Nfd7 5.f4 c5 6.Nf3 Nc6 7.Be3 exd4 8.Nxd4 Qb6 9.Qd2 Qxb2 10.Rb1 Qa3 11.Bb5 Nxd4 12.Bxd4 a6 13.Bxd7+ Bxd7 14.Rb3 Qe7 15.Rxb7 Rc8 16.0-0 Qd8 17.Kh1 Bc5 18.Bxc5 Rxc5 19.f5 exf5 20.Nxd5 Be6 21.Re7+ Kf8 22.Qb4



Black can work out that he will not be in any danger after simplifying. 22...Qxd5? 23.Rc7 is not an option, but after 22...Bxd5! 23.Qxc5, Black has two quite reasonable paths. 23...Bxg2+ 24.Kxg2 Qxe7 25.Qc8+ Qe8 26.Qxf5 Qc6+ is equal, as is 23...Qxe7 24.Qxd5 g6 25.g4 f4 26.Rxf4 Kg7.

**22...Qa5?**

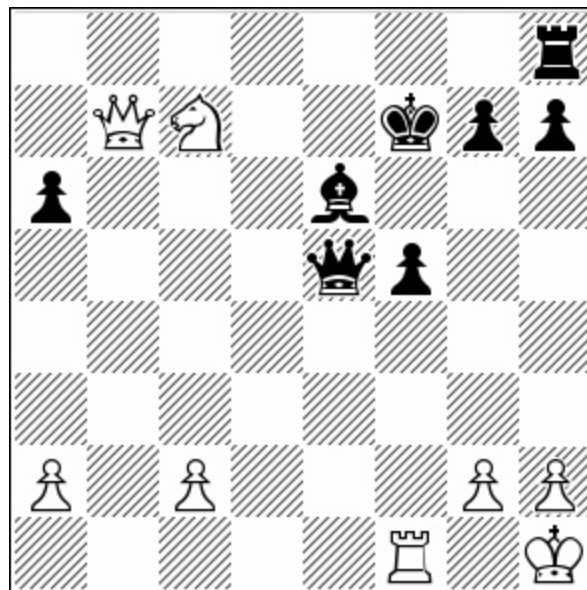
It is tempting to try to exploit the shaky relationship between the white knight

and rook, but the tactics work for White. The problem-like 23.Rd7!? is a possible answer, but only equal after the cool 23...g6, or for that matter, 23...g5.

**23.Qb8+ Rc8 24.Rxf7+! Kxf7**

Process of elimination. 24...Kg8 25.Qb7 mates shortly, as does 24...Ke8 25.Qd6 (or the stylish 25.Re7+ Kf8 26.Rxe6 Rxb8 27.Rxf5+ Kg8 28.Ne7#).

**25.Qb7+ Rc7! 26.Nxc7 Qxe5**



Hungaski had no choice, but luckily for him White's advantage is not decisive. Khanin could have played more simply with 27.Nxe6+ Kxe6 28.Qxa6+ with similar winning chances to the game. After

**27.Nd5+ Kg6 28.Nf4+ Kf6**

Black was ultimately able to secure a draw.

### **More than This**

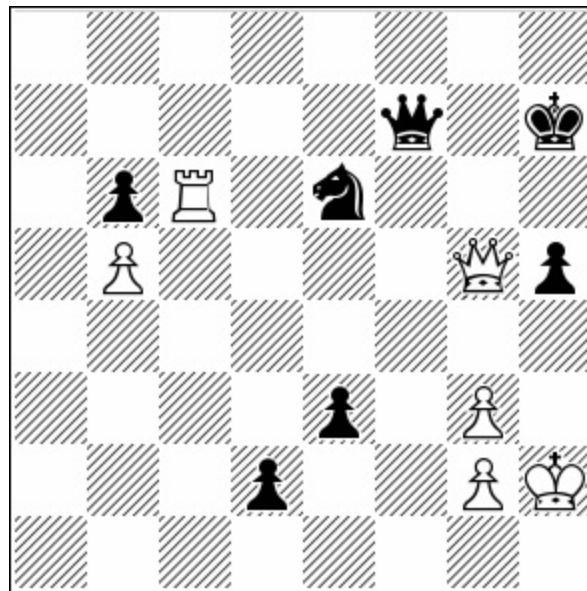
Somewhat along the same vein, the choice between forcing a technical liquidation and keeping the pressure on can be a difficult one.

Alexander Shimanov 2631

Alonso Zapata 2433

Philadelphia 2016

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 g6 3.Bg5 Bg7 4.Nbd2 d5 5.e3 0-0 6.Be2 Nbd7 7.0-0 c6 8.c4  
Re8 9.Rc1 Nb6 10.b4 dxc4 11.Nxc4 Ne4 12.Bh4 Nd5 13.Qb3 Be6 14.Qb2  
h6 15.Nfd2 Nd6 16.Bg3 Nf5 17.Be5 f6 18.Bg3 h5 19.e4 Nxc3 20.hxc3 Nc7  
21.Nf3 Bf7 22.Rfd1 Qd7 23.Na5 Rab8 24.Qc2 Bh6 25.Rb1 Nb5 26.Bc4 e6  
27.Qb2 b6 28.Nb3 Qe7 29.a3 Nd6 30.Bd3 e5 31.Re1 Rbd8 32.a4 Nb7  
33.Qc3 Rd6 34.Bc4 Nd8 35.Rbd1 Bxc4 36.Qxc4+ Nf7 37.Na1 Red8  
38.Nc2 Kg7 39.b5 Qd7 40.Nb4 c5 41.Nc6 cxd4 42.Nxd8 Nxd8 43.Re2 d3  
44.Ra2 Nb7 45.Nd2 Bxd2 46.Rdxd2 Nc5 47.f3 Rd4 48.Qc3 f5 49.exf5 gxf5  
50.a5 Kg6 51.axb6 axb6 52.Rd1 e4 53.fxe4 fxe4 54.Qd2 Rc4 55.Kh2 Qe7  
56.Qf4 Qe6 57.Ra7 Rd4 58.Rf1 Rd7 59.Ra8 Rf7 60.Rg8+ Kh7 61.Qg5 e3  
62.Rxf7+ Qxf7 63.Rc8 d2 64.Rc6 Ne6

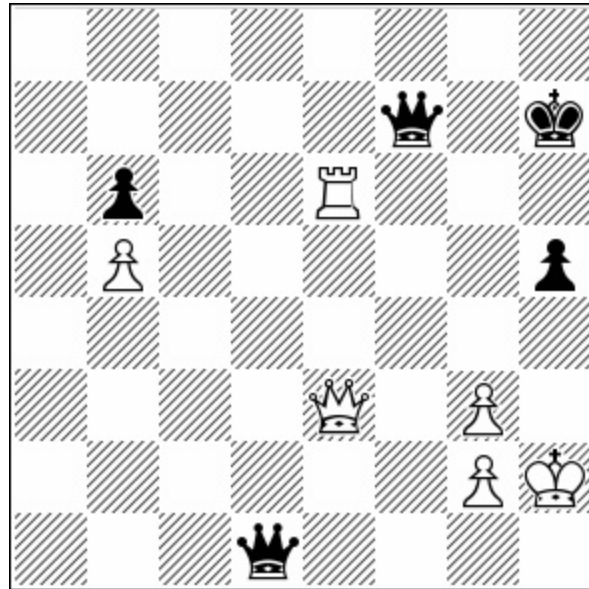


We are jumping in near the end of a seesaw battle that likely had both players desperately short of time. Major decisions will need to be made.

**65.Qd5!?**

In the 'objective' world of the engine, this is a definite mistake. White could

have effectively simplified with 65.Qxe3 d1=Q 66.Rxe6.



*analysis diagram*

White threatens 67.Re7 and, principally, 67.Qh6+ Kg8 68.Rg6+. So Black has to give a queen for a rook and get nothing in return!

So after 66...Qxe6 67.Qxe6 Qd8, how winning is the white position? He will trade the forward g-pawn for the h5-pawn and retain a solid extra pawn. Stockfish 14, in its typical exuberant fashion, gives White +4, which is certainly overblown in human terms. Komodo 13.1 says +1.7, which is probably realistic. It seems that White can probably reach a Tablebase win with a trade of pawns, which means a win is only possible with perfect play.

I'm not sure Shimanov had time to perceive 65.Qxe3 would force a queen ending, but even if he did, he would have been tempted by the text move. Black is not technically in Zugzwang, but it is hard to come up with a useful move. In fact, Zapata blundered with

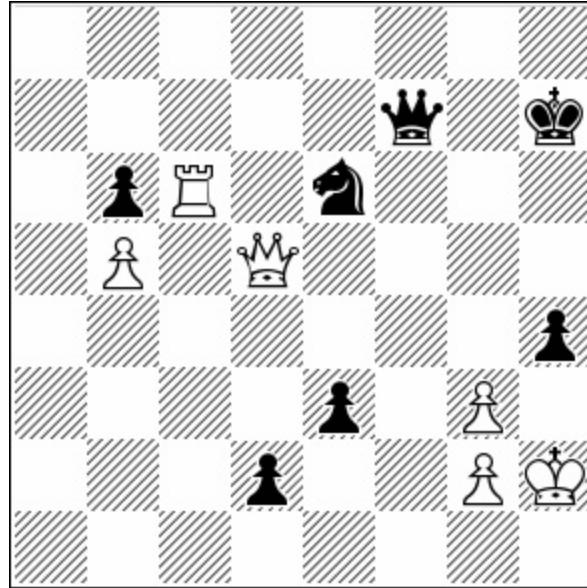
**65...Ng5?? 66.Qxg5**

and the threatened mate compelled resignation.

Waiting moves would enable White to improve his position with 66.Rxb6 or

perhaps 66.Rd6.

But Black has a way out. It would certainly be useful to expose the white king, which makes 65...h4! a logical counterstrike.



*analysis diagram*

66.gxh4 allows Black to untangle with 66...Qf4+ 67.Kh3 Ng7, when White is forced to find 68.g4! in order to draw. But after 66.Rxe6 d1=Q (66...hxg3+ is okay, too) 67.Qe4+ Kg7 68.Qe5+ Kh7 69.Re7 hxg3+ the game will end in perpetual check, whether given by White or by Black.

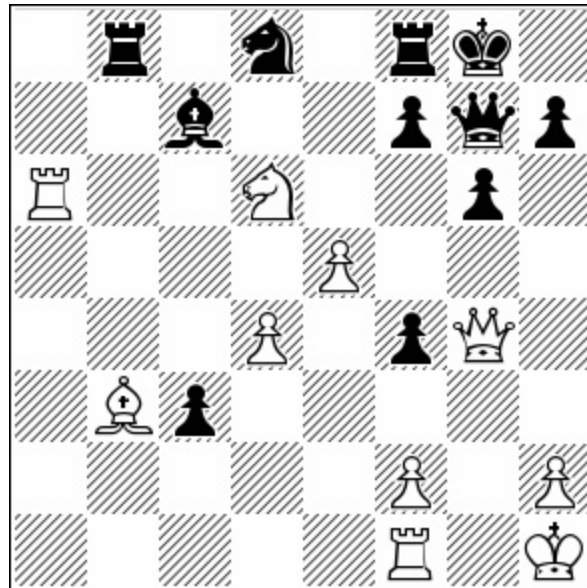
### **Defensive Countersacrifices**

One good sac can often be answered by another, gaining time or squares to defend.

Game 23 – Ruy Lopez  
Ernesto Inarkiev 2676  
Alexei Shirov 2745  
Poikovsky 2009

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 b5 6.Bb3 Bc5 7.c3 d6 8.a4 Rb8 9.d4 Bb6 10.Na3 Bg4 11.axb5 axb5 12.Nxb5 0-0 13.Bc2 Bxf3 14.gxf3 Nh5 15.f4 Nxf4 16.Bxf4 exf4 17.Qg4 Qf6 18.b4 g6 19.Kh1 Nd8 20.Bb3 c6**

**21.Na3 c5 22.Nc4 cxb4 23.Ra6 Bc7 24.Nxd6 bxc3 25.e5 Qg7**



White has been trying to press his initiative and needs a big move.

**26.Nf5!**

Without this move White is going nowhere.

**26...gxf5 27.Qd1**

27.Qxf5 Rxb3 28.Rg1 Qg6 Black obtains three pieces for the queen, so White has nothing better than 29.Raxg6+ hxg6 30.Rxg6+ fxg6 31.Qxg6+=. But now, with Black's queen devoid of squares, he needs a defensive counterstrike.

**27...Kh8**

Offering up the bishop or the queen is a sound reaction, but there was another resource in 27...Ne6!? 28.Bxe6 (28.Rg1 Ng5) 28...Kh8 29.Rg1 Qh6 (Black's clever piece offering opened up this flight square) 30.Bxf5 Bb6 (not 30...Qxa6? 31.Qh5 h6 32.e6+-) and the position is balanced.

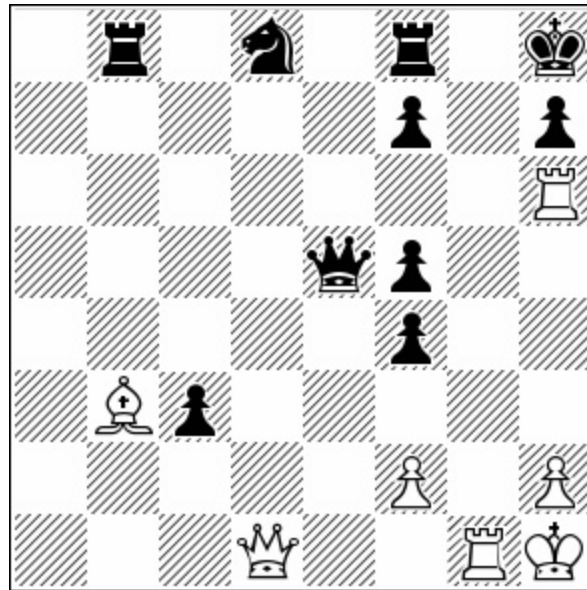
Black could also play 27...Bxe5 immediately, but if White takes the bishop, this will just transpose.

**28.Rg1 Bxe5! 29.dxe5**

This is the best practical try as 29.Rxg7 Bxg7 leaves Black with a safe king and sufficient compensation for the queen.

**29...Qxe5 30.Rh6**

With the textbook threat 31.Rxh7+ Kxh7 32.Qh5 mate.



**30...f3??**

This must be an hallucination. 30...Qe4+! 31.f3 Qe3 32.Qf1 (renewing the mate threat) 32...Rb6 (Black is in no danger after 32...Qxg1+ 33.Qxg1 Rxb3 34.Qd4+ Kg8 as well) 33.Qh3 Rxh6 34.Qxh6 Qxf3+ 35.Rg2 Qf1+ with perpetual check.

**31.Qf1**

Shirov must have been fixated on 31.Qxf3 Qe4+, but now the threat is renewed with no adequate defense.

**31...Qg7 32.Rxg7 Kxg7 33.Rxh7+**

**Black resigned**, as 33...Kxh7 34.Qh3+ Kg7 35.Qg3+ picks up the rook.

### **There Lies the Difference**

Sometimes the defender has the greater say on the direction the tactics will flow, but the difference between the variations can be extremely subtle.

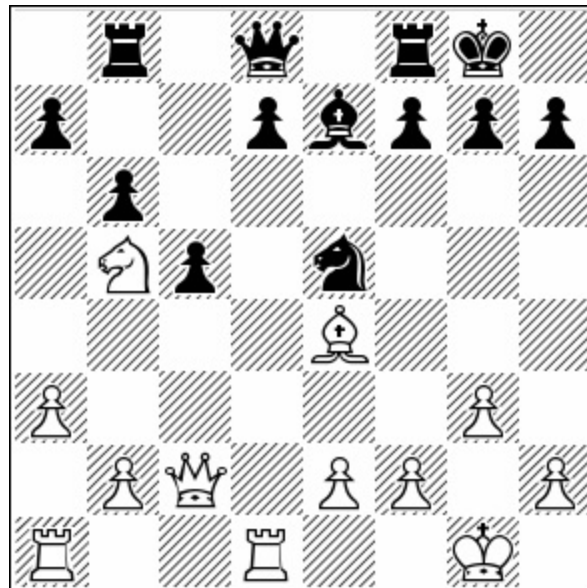
Game 24 – Queen’s Indian Defense

**Gabriel Sargissian 2642**

**Alexander Grischuk 2719**

Dresden ol 2008

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 b6 4.g3 Ba6 5.Qc2 c5 6.d5 exd5 7.cxd5 Bb7 8.Bg2 Nxd5 9.0-0 Be7 10.Rd1 Qc8 11.a3 Nc7 12.Nc3 Nc6 13.Bf4 0-0 14.Bxc7 Qxc7 15.Nb5 Qd8 16.Ne5 Nxe5 17.Bxb7 Rb8 18.Be4**



Black can't protect everything. He can make a safe move, but is it the best move?

**18...a6!?**

Risky, but objectively it's a good decision. He could keep a safe king with 18...g6 19.Nxa7 b5 20.Nc6 (20.f4 c4) 20...Nxc6 21.Bxc6 d6. One might think this is a draw because of the opposite-colored bishops, but White's cleric is

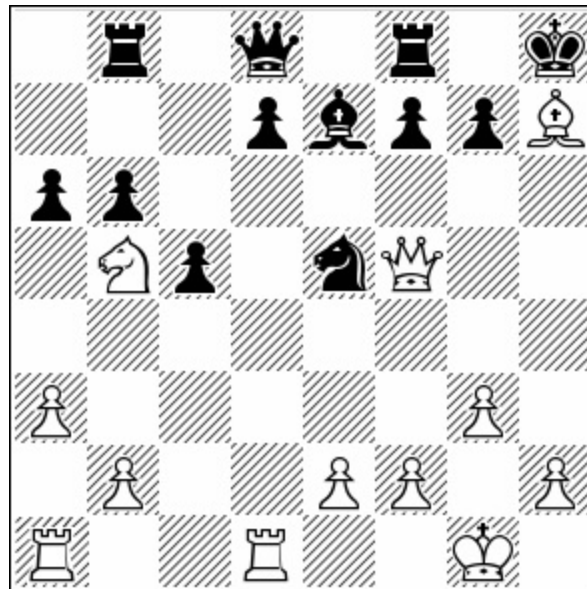
dominant and he has a potential outside passed pawn. It's just a dreary position for Black without any upside.

### 19.Bxh7+ Kh8

Losing the h-pawn has compromised Black's structure, but all is not clear as White is virtually forced to sacrifice a piece.

### 20.Qf5

20.Nc3 g6 21.Rd5 Bf6 22.f4 Ng4 23.Bxg6 Bd4+ is better for Black while 20.Rd5 Ng4 21.Rh5 Nf6 (21...Nh6 22.Nc3) 22.Rh3 axb5 offers White no better than a draw.



### 20...g6?

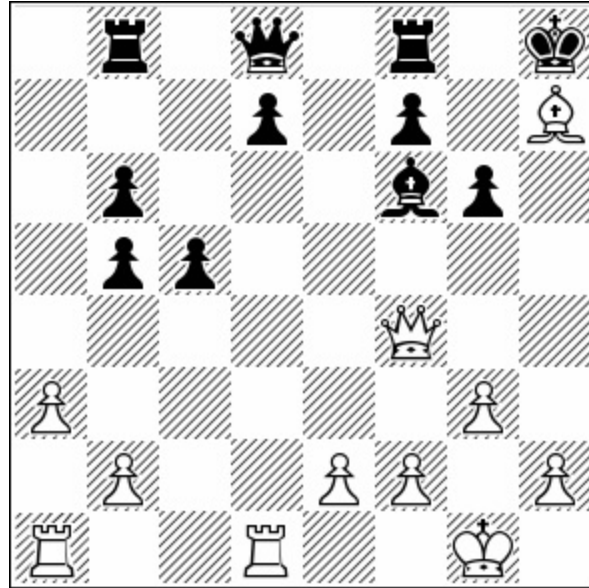
Grischuk makes the wrong call, but the mistake is very subtle.

20...axb5 21.Qh5 Ng4! 22.Qxg4 (22.Rxd7? Nf6) 22...g6! (22...Kxh7 23.Rxd7 Qe8 24.Qe4+±) 23.Bxg6 fxg6 24.Rxd7 (24.Qxg6 Rf6 is worse) 24...Qe8 and White has sufficient compensation, but perhaps not much more.

### 21.Qxe5+ Bf6

Though down a piece, Black is poised to get two-for-one.

**22.Qf4 axb5**

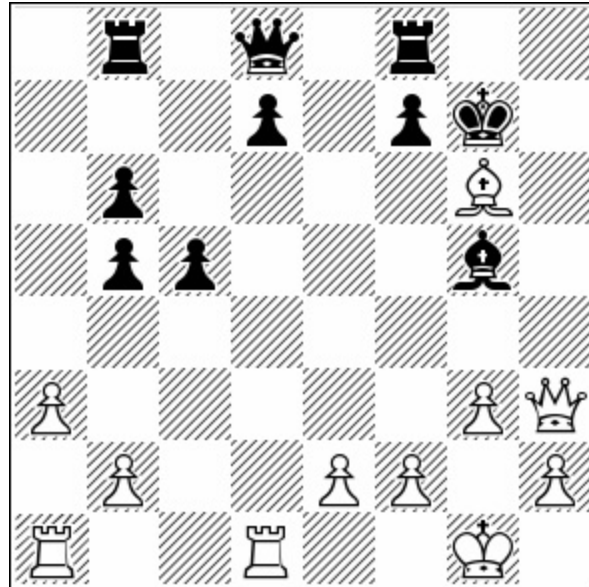


**23.Qh6!**

Not 23.Bxg6? fxg6 24.Qh6+ Kg8 25.Qxg6+ Bg7.

**23...Bg5 24.Qh3 Kg7 25.Bxg6!**

25.Rxd7 Qf6 would have been another misstep.



### 25...Kxg6

The subtle difference between this and the alternative line at move 20 is the placement of the bishop on g5 – here the capture with the pawn is not possible, which makes the defense a lot harder to coordinate.

### 26.Rd6+ Kg7 27.Rad1

White has a definite advantage, and eventually won after many ups and downs.

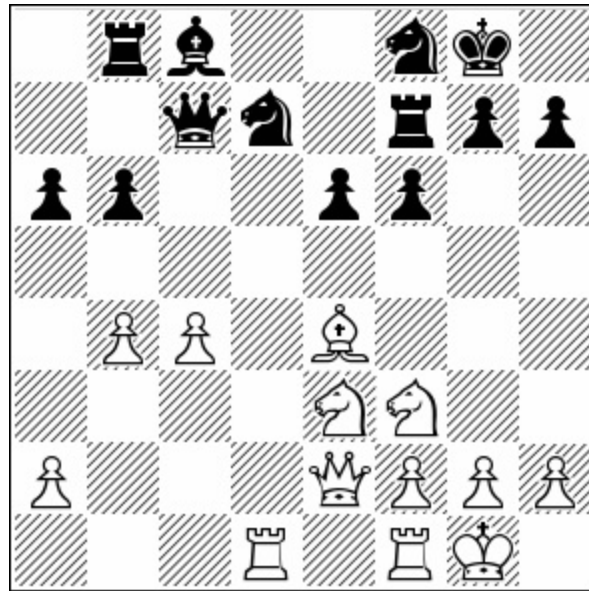
## Final Exam

Passing all the tests along the way can give the defender a well-earned draw... or sometimes an unexpected bonus.

Game 25 – French Defense  
**Vladimir Malakhov** 2710  
**Evgeny Romanov** 2639  
 St Petersburg 2011

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nd2 c5 4.Ngf3 cxd4 5.Nxd4 Nf6 6.exd5 a6 7.N2f3 Qxd5  
 8.c4 Qd6 9.Bd3 Be7 10.0-0 0-0 11.Qe2 Nbd7 12.Bc2 Re8 13.Bg5 Qc7

14.Rad1 Nf8 15.Ne5 N6d7 16.Bxe7 Rxe7 17.Ndf3 f6 18.Ng4 b6 19.Ne3  
Rf7 20.Be4 Rb8 21.b4



## **21...f5**

Romanov could have played it safe with 21...Bb7, but White would have a simple advantage with a mobile queenside majority and more active knights. But now 22.Bc2 Bb7 would give Black the more active bishop, with a more effective central majority. So it makes sense for Black to allow the sacrifice, and for White to play it as well.

## **22.Nxf5**

There isn't a huge amount of risk attached to this move, as for a small investment White will earn an enduring initiative, if not some recovery of material.

## **22...exf5**

Since the rook will go anyway, Black could have opted for 22...Rxf5 23.Bxf5 exf5 24.Rfe1 Nf6. The white rooks have lovely open files to work with while the minor pieces are passive with no footholds in the center. Even with only one extra pawn, White probably stands better.

## **23.Bd5 Bb7**

This move looks provocative because the king is teased outward, but it also helps to protect the back rank and set up counterplay on the diagonal. The alternative 23...Nf6 24.Bxf7+ Qxf7 25.Rd8 (the more direct 25.Ng5 Qc7 26.c5 h6 27.Qc4+ Kh8 28.Rd8 hxg5 29.Rxf8+ Kh7 is about equal) 25...Qc7 26.Rfd1 Bd7 27.Rxb8 Qxb8 28.c5 leaves White more comfortable, as the minor pieces aren't well-placed to handle the passed c-pawn.

## **24.Bxf7+ Kxf7 25.Rxd7+**

25.Ng5+ Kg8 26.c5 h6 27.Qc4+ Kh8 doesn't land any blows. White can play slower, but the second sacrifice of the game is very tempting and keeps the

pressure on.

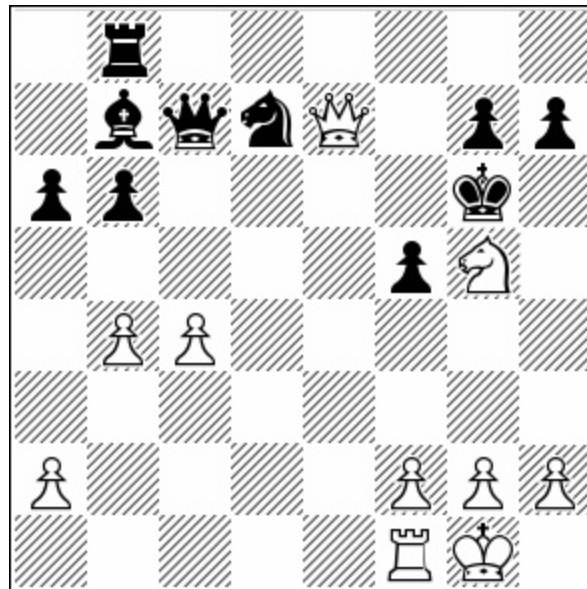
**25...Nxd7**

Of course not 25...Qxd7? 26.Ne5+.

**26.Ng5+ Kg6**

Completely forced. 26...Kf6 27.Qe6+ Kxg5 28.f4 mates or wins the queen.

**27.Qe7**



The principle threat is 28.Ne6, and Black does not have a wide range of choice here.

**27...Qxc4!**

27...Rg8? 28.Ne6 Qxc4 would have transposed, but 28.Rd1! is much stronger. After 28...Bc8 Black is hopelessly tied up and White has multiple wins; one pleasing clincher is 29.Rd4, e.g. 29...Qc6 30.Qf7+ Kxg5 31.f4+ Kg4 (31...Kh6 32.Rd3 mates) 32.Qe7 Nf6 33.Qe2+ Kh4 34.Rd3 and mate cannot be averted.

Black did have one other good option in 27...Qc6 28.Nf3 Qf6! 29.Qxd7 Bxf3

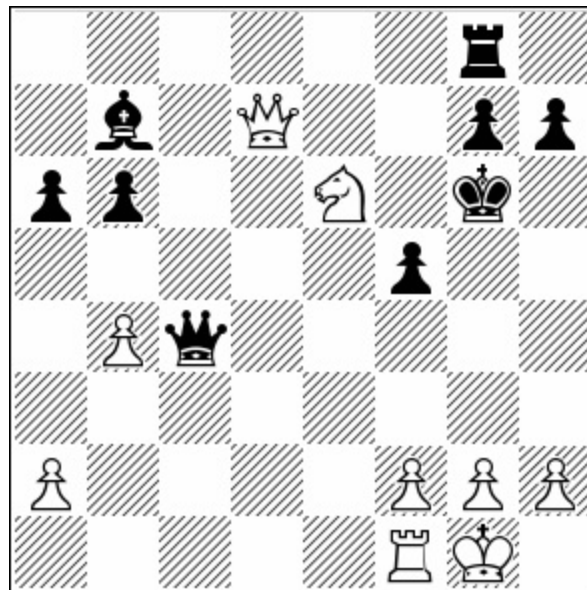
30.gxf3 Rd8 and a draw will likely result.

### 28.Ne6

Malakhov keeps up the attack as 28.Qxd7 Qd5! 29.Nf3! Rc8 30.Ne5+ Kh6 31.Qxd5 Bxd5 leads to a drawish endgame.

### 28...Rg8 29.Qxd7??

29.g3! creates a deadly mate threat with Nf4+. Black has two solid defenses: 29...Nf6 30.Nf4+ Kh6 31.Qxb7 Qxb4 and 29...h6 30.Qxd7 Qe4 31.Nf4+ Kh7 32.f3 Bc6. In both cases the position is about equal.



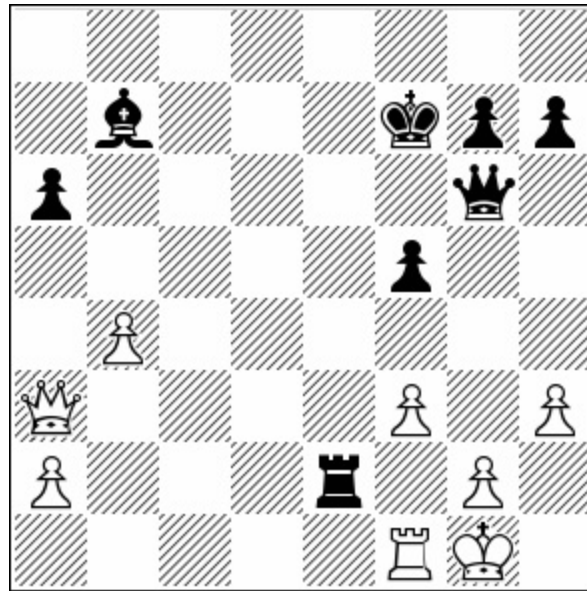
### 29...Bc8!

Shockingly, there is no answer to this skewering retreat. Malakhov might have noticed Black could aim for perpetual check with 29...Bxg2 and expected that.

### 30.Nf4+ Qxf4 31.Qc6+ Kf7 32.Re1 Rd8

White probably only played on from here because it was a team event.

33.Qxb6 Qd6 34.Qa5 Re8 35.Rf1 Re5 36.Qa3 Bb7 37.h3 Qg6 38.f3 Re2 0-1



### We Can Work It Out

Technique can be thought of as the art of converting an advantage without giving your opponent chances. Unnecessary risks are to be avoided, but the simple choice might not guarantee a result, no matter how hard you are prepared to work.

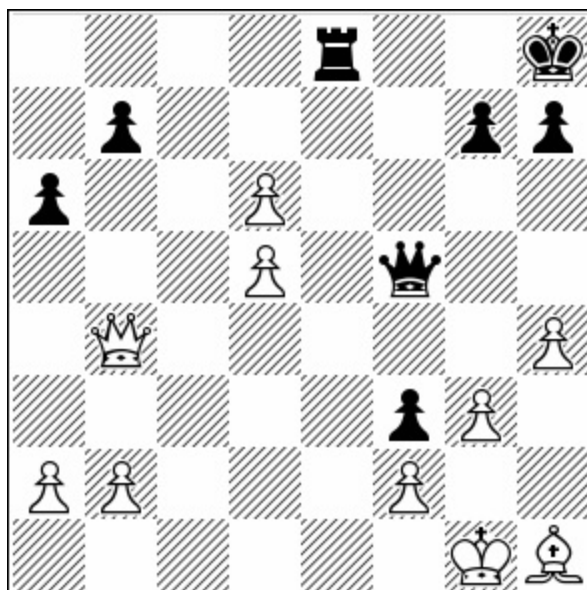
Game 26 – Sicilian Defense

**Gata Kamsky** 2695

**Judit Polgar** 2630

Buenos Aires 1994

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 Nc6 6.Ndb5 d6 7.Bf4 e5  
8.Bg5 a6 9.Na3 Be6 10.Nc4 Rc8 11.Bxf6 Qxf6 12.Nb6 Rb8 13.Ncd5 Qg6  
14.Qd3 Be7 15.g3 0-0 16.Bg2 Bd8 17.0-0 Kh8 18.Nc4 Ne7 19.Qa3 Bxd5  
20.exd5 Bc7 21.Rad1 Ng8 22.Na5 f5 23.c4 f4 24.c5 f3 25.Bh1 Bxa5  
26.Qxa5 e4 27.Rfe1 Nf6 28.cxd6 Qg4 29.Rd4 Rbe8 30.Qb4 Qh3 31.Rdxe4  
Nxe4 32.Rxe4 Qf5! 33.Rxe8 Rxe8 34.h4



The buried white bishop does not inspire confidence, but the win for Black is hardly routine. After 34...Qxd5 35.Qf4 White removes the offending f3-pawn and can put up staunch resistance down an exchange for a pawn. So Polgar shoots for the goal:

**34...Re2!**

This could be a careless move for an amateur, but it's a well-considered strike for a grandmaster.

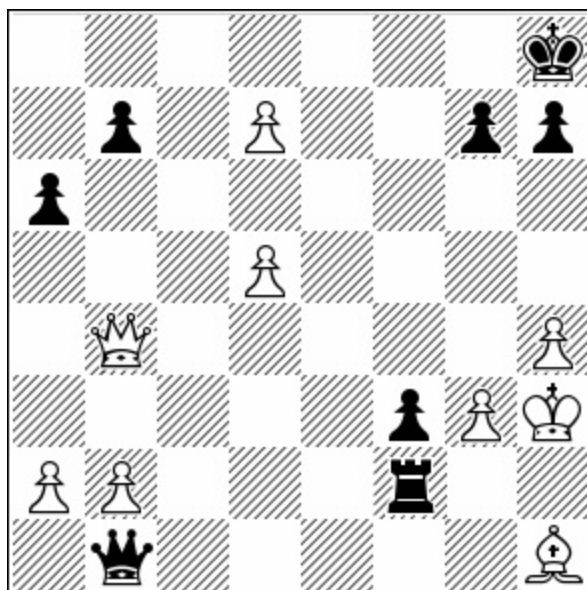
**35.d7!**

The pawn is out of control, as taking it would allow a back rank mate. So Black would be losing if she didn't have a brilliant sequence prepared.

(back to the exercises) ***Solution to Puzzle 10:***

**35...Qb1+ 36.Kh2 Rxf2+ 37.Kh3**

What now? 37...Qxh1+ 38.Kg4 and 37...Qf5+ 38.g4 would lose for Black.



**37...h5!!**

A truly multi-purpose quiet move! After 38.d8=Q+ Kh7 Black's king is snug – White's is fatally entombed.

**38.Qf8+ Kh7 0-1**

The simplest path may not lead to the simplest win. Your opponent can still provide hurdles if he is allowed to hang around. A little extra calculation can reduce the workload in the future.

Game 27 – Réti Opening

**Gregory Serper**

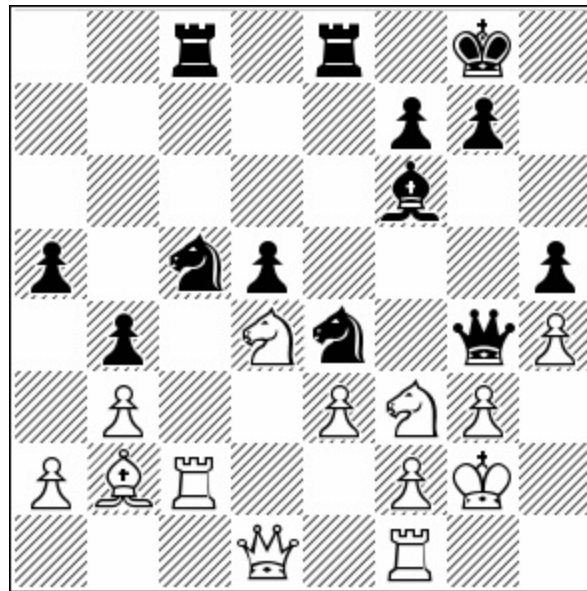
**Alexander Shabalov**

Philadelphia 1997

**1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.Bg2 c6 4.Qc2 Nf6 5.Nf3 Be7 6.0-0 0-0 7.b3 b6 8.Bb2 Bb7  
9.d3 c5 10.cxd5 exd5 11.d4 Nbd7 12.Nc3 Rc8 13.Rac1 Ne4 14.dxc5 Ndx5  
15.Qb1 Bf6 16.Nb5 Qd7 17.Nbd4 a5 18.Rfd1 Rfe8 19.e3 Ba6 20.Bf1 Bxf1  
21.Rxf1 b5 22.Rc2 b4 23.Kg2 h5 24.h4 Qg4 25.Qd1?**

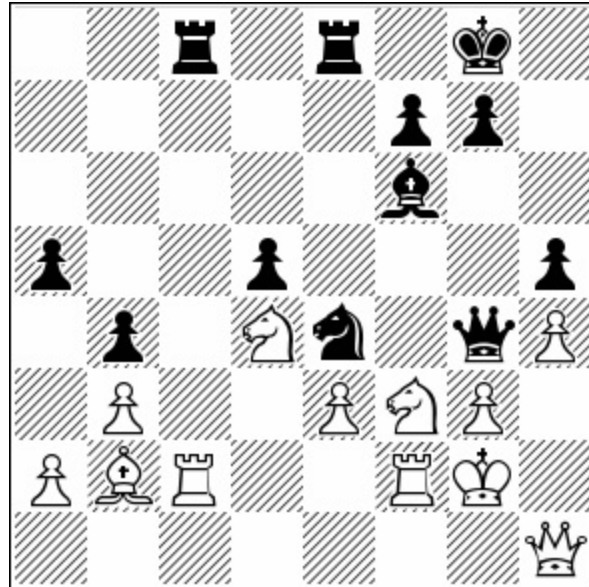
Shaba knew he would at least tie for first with a draw, but guarantee the title

with a win. His mix of solid but active play suited the situation. White needed a more careful move like 25.Ne2 to keep it balanced.



**25...Nxf2! 26.Rxf2 Ne4 27.Qh1**

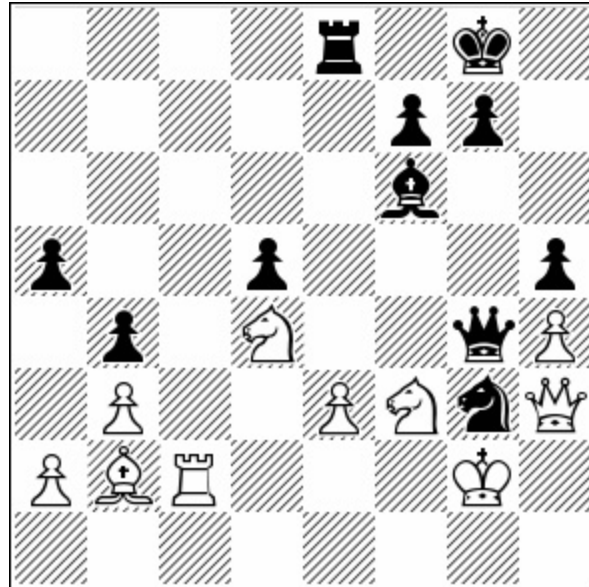
27.Kg1 was apparently a stauncher defense. Stockfish gives the amazing variation 27...Rxc2 28.Rxc2 Nxg3 29.Rg2 Rxe3 30.Kf2 Qf4 31.Rxg3 Bxh4 32.Qg1 Re4 33.Qh2 Qe3+ 34.Kg2 Bxg3 35.Kxg3 Rg4+ 36.Kh3 Rxd4 37.Bxd4 Qxf3+ 38.Qg3 Qh1+ 39.Qh2 Qf1+ 40.Kh4 Qf3 41.Qg1 g6 with a borderline winning advantage for Black, who will win the bishop in a few moves. Good luck finding all those moves for White, though!



### **27...Rxc2**

Black had a host of decisive continuations. 27...Nxf2 28.Rxf2 Rxe3 is something of a lazy choice, though there is no question that Black, with a rook, two pawns, and continuing pressure for two pieces, is well on top here. White maintains some semblance of a blockade, and it isn't obvious how his resistance will be broken down. When strong players sense their advantage is massive, they may raise their standards, wanting to leave nothing to chance.

### **28.Rxc2 Nxg3 29.Qh3**



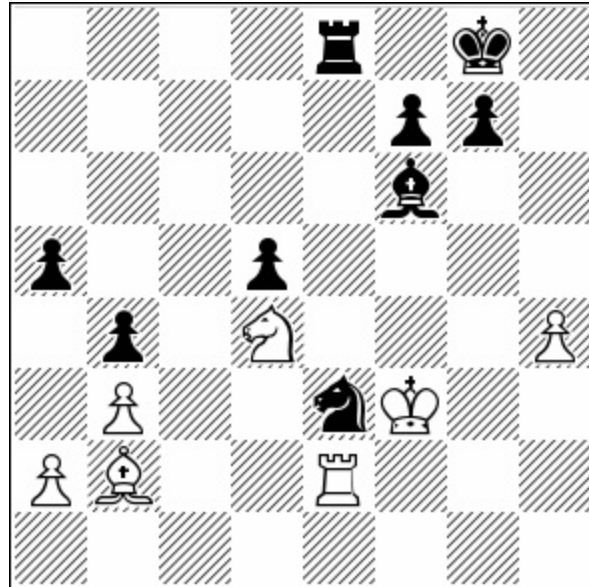
**29...Nf1+!**

This is the key move, more accurate than the similar 29...Nf5+ 30.Kh2. The variation beginning on move 27 is somewhat lengthy, but with few branches along the way. Shabalov could feel confident of calculating correctly.

**30.Qxg4 Nxe3+ 31.Kg3 hxg4 32.Re2!**

This is White's counterstrike. Shabalov had to foresee a way to deal with the pin on his knight. As a general rule, in tactics it is advisable to go another move after the last capture.

**32...gxf3 33.Kxf3**



**33...Re4!**

Shabalov had to foresee this move, as otherwise he will play a piece down.

**34.Rxe3 Bxd4 35.Bxd4 Rxd4**

Serper took advantage of some nervous endgame play from Shaba and almost managed to hold this lost endgame.

Finishing can be a tougher prospect when first place in the World Open is on the line.

### **We Can't Work It Out**

The proof of the pudding is in the eating. The last two winners made the right decision because they had the tactics worked out. There are certainly circumstances that are suited to speculate on 'a brilliant' move in belief that the next trick will come. But not if the bird in the hand will win without drama.

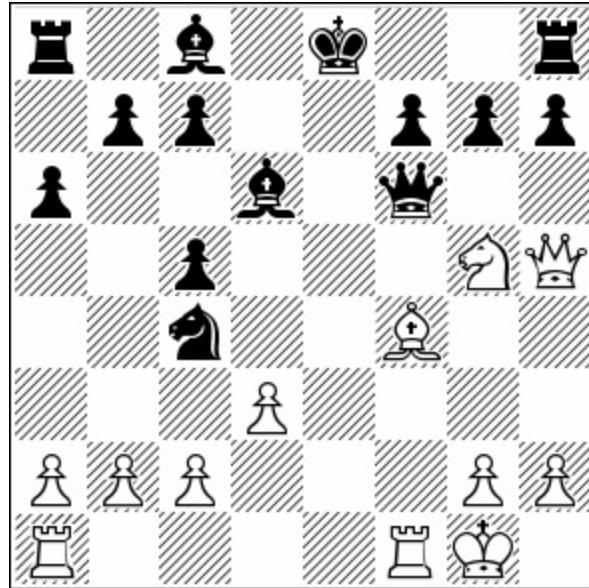
Game 28 – Ruy Lopez

**Joel Benjamin** 2540

**Gata Kamsky** 2595

Los Angeles ch-USA 1991

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Bxc6 dxc6 5.0-0 Qd6 6.d3 Ne7 7.Be3 Ng6  
 8.Nbd2 c5 9.Nc4 Qe6 10.Ng5 Qf6 11.Qh5 Bd6 12.f4 exf4 13.e5 Nxe5  
 14.Bxf4 Nxc4



I had foolishly played into the Marshall Attack in the first game, but switched gears with the Exchange Variation on the advice of Ilya Gurevich (that line became my main weapon through most of the 90s). It looks like I'm going to take the lead in the U.S. Championship finals!

### 15.Bxd6!?

The growth of chess engines has put every move up for scrutiny; grandmasters cannot hide from a single mistake. But it also can defend a player who plays a misunderstood move.

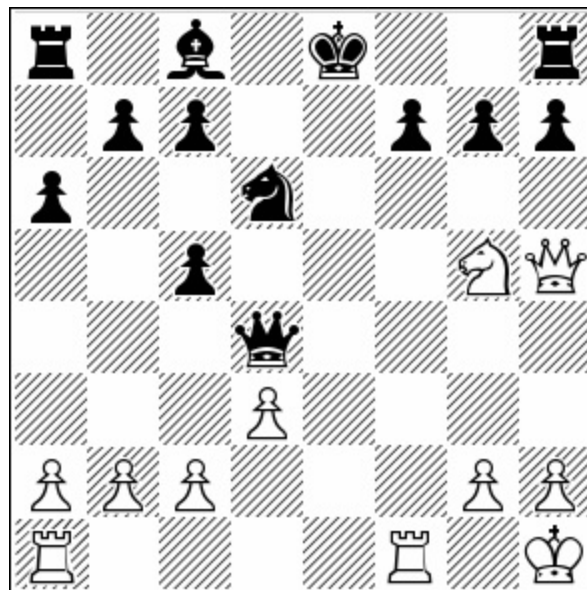
The text took a beating in the chess media; Lubomir Ftacnik in *Inside Chess* described it as 'an embarrassing blunder.' But it is actually, technically speaking, the strongest move! That said, it was still a poor decision on my part because I didn't have the win worked out.

15.Rae1+ Be7 (Black can try the unlikely 15...Kd7!?, whereupon White can transpose to the game with 16.Bxd6 but can also win much more simply with 16.dxc4 Bxf4 17.Nxf7) 16.dxc4 was a more practical way to continue (especially considering my opponent's father was causing a disturbance like

an evil manager in professional wrestling). I didn't see the forced win that I wanted, but I should have trusted the position. Black can scarcely move and his position can easily implode in a few moves: 16...Bf5 17.Qe2 (17.Be5 Qg6 18.Qxg6 hxg6 19.Bxg7 Kd7 20.Bxh8 Bxg5 should also win for White, and is perhaps a simpler human option) 17...h6 18.Bxc7 hxg5 19.Rxf5 wins, as does 16...Qg6 17.Qxg6 hxg6 18.Bd6! cxd6 19.Rxf7. In most positions White has a variety of winning moves.

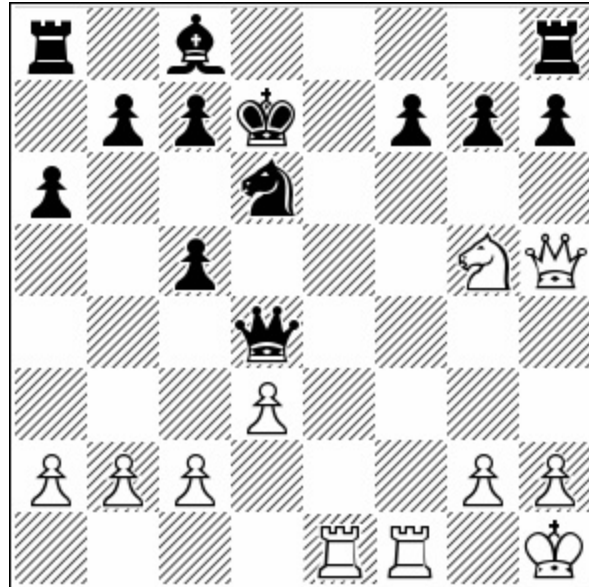
**15...Qd4+ 16.Kh1 Nxd6**

(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 11:*



**17.Rxf7??**

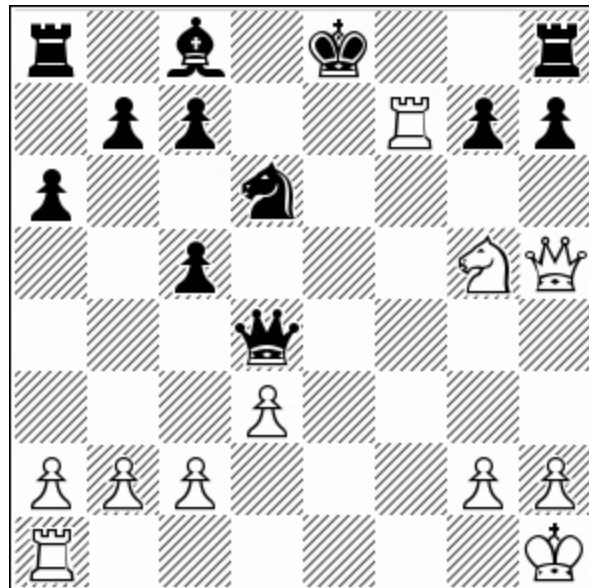
This is the move I was reduced to when nothing else seemed to suffice. I worked out that 17.Rae1+! Kd8 18.Nxf7+ Nxf7 19.Qxf7 Bd7 (19...Bg4 20.Re4 Qd6 21.Qxg7) 20.Qe7+ Kc8 21.Rf8+ would win for White, but was sent into something of a panic by 17...Kd7.



*analysis diagram*

I realized captures on f7 would not work, but I missed the strength of the switchback 18.Nf3!! . The king's run is over and it will be doomed in the center: 18...Qxb2 19.Ne5+ Kd8 20.Qg5+ (20.Nxf7+ Nxf7 21.Qxf7 also wins) 20...f6 21.Rxf6 gxf6 22.Qxf6+.

I had originally been seduced by 17.Nxf7? which wins against every move but the lovely 17...0-0!!, winning on the spot for Black.



## 17...Qg4

This cool move forces a queen trade and wins without problems. My recollection is the move being a bad break for me, but actually Black can just take the rook: 17...Nxf7 18.Qxf7+ (18.Rae1+ Kd7! 19.Nxf7 Re8--+) 18...Kd8 19.Re1 Bd7 and Black wins.

**18.Re1+ Kd8 19.Qxg4 Bxg4 20.Rxg7 h6 21.Nh7 Bd7 22.Nf6 Bc6 23.Kg1 Kc8 24.Ree7 Kb8 25.Rxc7 Ne8 26.Nxe8 Rxe8 27.Kf2 Re6 28.Rce7 Rf6+ 29.Kg3 Ka7 30.Ref7 Rxf7 0-1**

## Wild Horses

There are certain strategic concepts that players learn but have a hard time appreciating until they reach a fairly advanced level. If you ever had doubts about the power of the queen and knight combination against a queen and bishop, examine how much dominance the great Tal extracts from those two pieces.

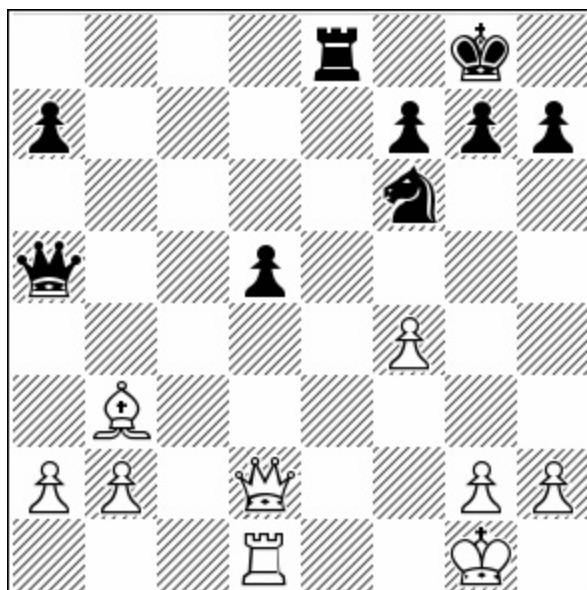
Game 29 – Sicilian Defense

**Alexander Arulaid**

**Mikhail Tal**

Voroshilovgrad tt 1955

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 d6 6.Bc4 e6 7.0-0 Be7 8.Be3 0-0 9.Bb3 Bd7 10.f4 Nxd4 11.Bxd4 Bc6 12.Qe2 b5 13.Nxb5 Bxb5 14.Qxb5 Nxe4 15.Rad1 Bf6 16.Qd3 d5 17.c4 Qa5 18.cxd5 exd5 19.Bxf6 Nxf6 20.Rfe1 Rfe8 21.Rxe8+ Rxe8 22.Qd2**



You can bet Tal explored the stock tactical idea 22...Qc5+ 23.Qd4 (23.Qf2 Re3! with decisive threats of 23...Ne4 and 23...Ng4) 23...Re1+, which can lead to a forced liquidation: 24.Kf2 Rxd1 25.Qxc5 Ne4+ 26.Ke2 Rd2+ 27.Ke3 Nxc5 28.Kxd2 Nxb3+ 29.axb3 Kf8. Black has the only passed pawn but will have the inferior king position. It seems that White can hold, but only with accurate play. It is not easy to assess the similar line 22...Qb6+ 23.Qd4 Re1+ 24.Kf2 Rxd1 25.Qxb6 Ne4+ 26.Kf3! Rf1+ 27.Ke2 axb6 28.Kxf1 Nd2+ 29.Ke2 Nxb3 30.axb3, etc.

### 22...Qb5 23.Bxd5?!

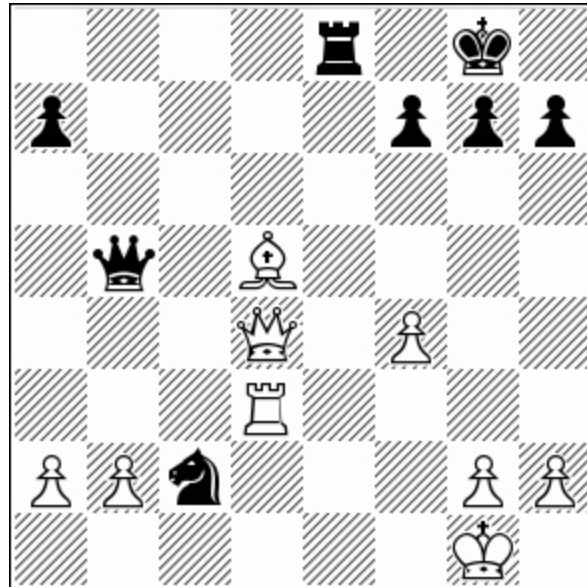
This is certainly not a practical decision. In fairness, Tal was a teenager and opponents had not yet developed respect (fear) for his tactical prowess.

A solid move like 23.Qd4 would have maintained equality without drama.

### 23...Qb6+

It is easy for most players to get carried away when spotting a cool tactical idea, but Tal would never fall for the primitive trap 23...Nxd5 24.Qxd5 Re1+? 25.Rxe1 Qxd5 26.Re8#. Still, it is a very good question whether he should have started with 23...Ng4. White has to find some forced moves, beginning with 24.Qd4. Then the knight starts hopping maniacally – 24...Ne3

25.Rd3 Nc2!



*analysis diagram*

26.Qxa7 Kh8! 27.Bxf7 Qxd3 28.Bxe8 Qd1+ 29.Kf2 Qe1+ 30.Kf3 Qxe8 and Black wins a piece as in the game, but he probably shouldn't be able to win against accurate defense.

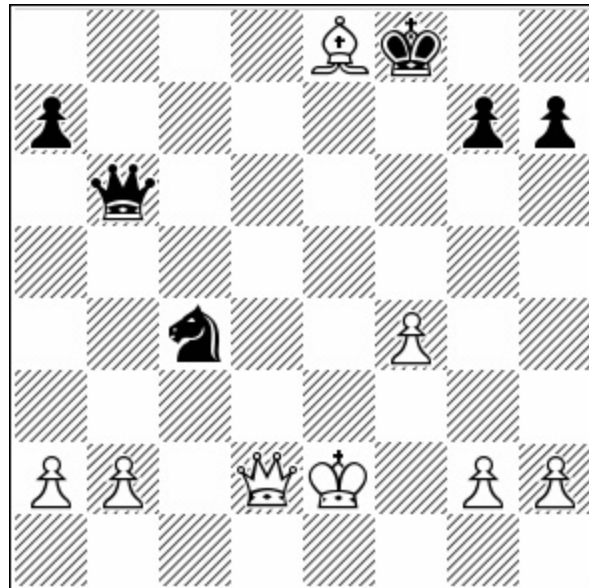
### **24.Kh1?!**

It was important for Tal to place the queen on a protected square. 24.Qf2 and 24.Qd4 both lose to 24...Nxd5 (the latter also allows the 24...Re1+ trick). But if White had properly anticipated Tal's continuation, he would have replied 24.Kf1! and the tactic from the game doesn't work, relegating Black to a dull equality.

### **24...Ng4! 25.Bxf7+!?**

White finds a clever counterstrike. 25...Kxf7 26.Qd7+ recoups the knight. In fact, White had the chance to be a spoil-sport with 25.Rf1, but the proof is terribly subtle: 25...Rd8 26.Qe2! Ne3 27.Re1 Rxd5 28.h3! (28.Qxe3?? Qxe3 29.Rxe3 Rd1#, exploiting White's back rank) and because of Black's back rank, the piece is again recovered and boredom ensues.

**25...Kf8! 26.Bxe8 Nf2+ 27.Kg1 Nxd1+ 28.Kf1 Ne3+ 29.Ke2 Nc4**



White's king has been lured into the middle and he will drop a piece if his dancing is not successful.

**30.Qc3**

This is probably the best move. 30.Qd5 has been proposed here, but it loses by force: 30...Qxb2+ 31.Kd3 (31.Kf3 Qa3+) 31...Qd2+ 32.Kxc4 Qxa2+ 33.Kd4 Qxd5+ 34.Kxd5 Kxe8, etc. White can also fight with 30.Qd3 Qe6+ 31.Kf3 Kxe8 32.Qxh7.

**30...Qe6+ 31.Kd3?**

You got to know when to hold 'em, and know when to fold 'em. White's stubborn attempts to save his bishop digs him into a deeper hole.

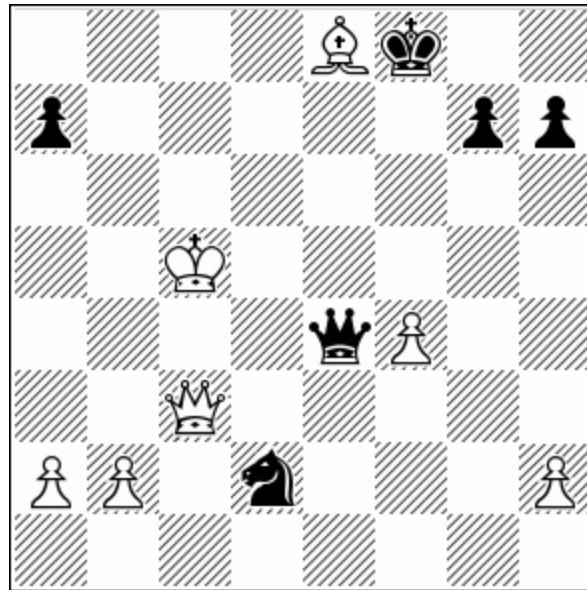
The best course was 31.Kf2 Kxe8 32.b3! (32.Qxg7? Qe3+) followed by capturing on g7. Black retains the initiative but he has dropped so low on pawns the win may be elusive.

**31...Qd5+ 32.Kc2**

Not 32.Qd4? Nxb2+--.

**32...Qxg2+ 33.Kb3 Nd2+ 34.Ka4?**

It's hard to know how to play the king to avoid tactics, but 34.Kb4 Qe4+ 35.Kc5 offered better resistance.



*analysis diagram*

In fact this would hold if not for 35...Nb1!! . Though at least here Black has difficulty consolidating his extra piece with his knight out of play.

**34...Qe4+!**

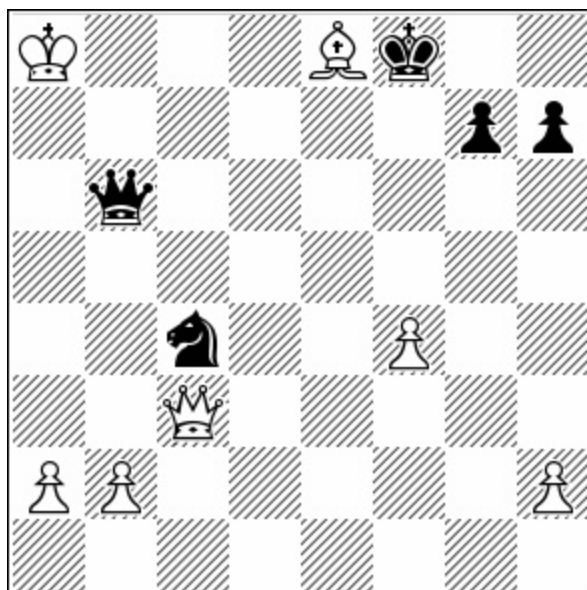
34...Kxe8 35.Qe5+ forces a perpetual.

**35.Kb5**

This loses rather mechanically, depriving us of the most attractive line:  
35.Ka5 Nc4+ 36.Ka6 Qe6+! (36...Kxe8 37.Qxg7 is not good enough)  
37.Kxa7

(back to the exercises) ***Solution to Puzzle 12:***

37...Qb6+ 38.Ka8



*analysis diagram*

38...Qc7!! 39.Qb4+ Kxe8 40.Qb8+ Qxb8+ 41.Kxb8 Nxb2-+.

**35...Qxe8+ 36.Ka6 Qa4+ 37.Kb7 Nc4**

Black consolidates move by move.

**38.Qd3 Qb5+ 39.Kxa7 Qb6+ 40.Ka8 Qc6+ 41.Kb8 Nd6 42.Qb3 Qc8+ 43.Ka7 Qc7+ 44.Ka6**

The noose tightens all around. 44.Ka8 Qa5+ 45.Kb8 Nb5 46.Kb7 Qa7+ 47.Kc6 Nd4+, etc.

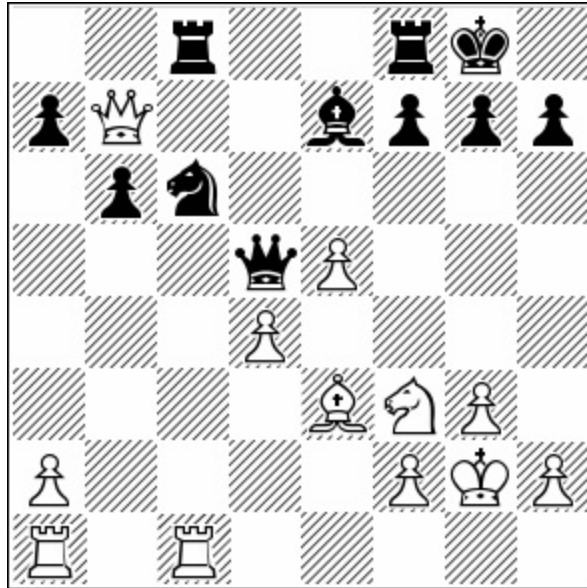
**44...Qc6+ 45.Qb6 Qc4+ 0-1**

### **Counterstrike Subtleties**

While pursuing tactical possibilities, a certain counterstrike may pop up repeatedly in variations. The outcome can hinge on subtleties like little pawn pushes that may strengthen or weaken the defenses of the king.

Joel Benjamin 2583  
Saint Louis ch-USA 2009

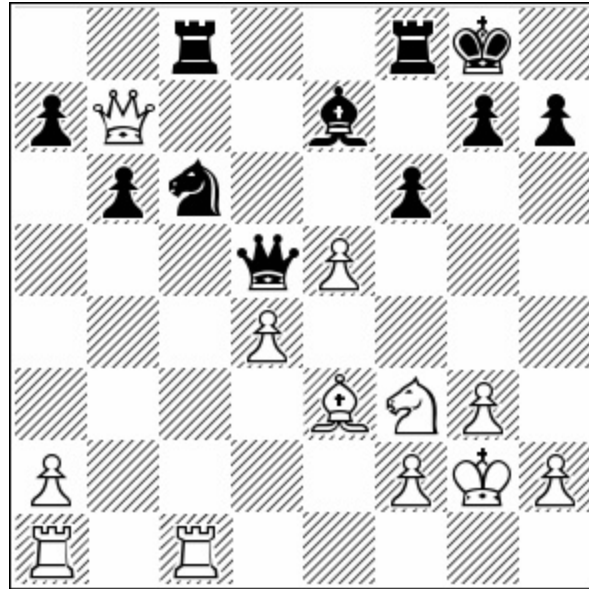
1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 b6 4.g3 Ba6 5.Qc2 Bb4+ 6.Bd2 Be7 7.e4 d5 8.cxd5  
Bxf1 9.Kxf1 exd5 10.e5 Ne4 11.Nc3 Nxc3 12.bxc3 Qd7 13.Kg2 Nc6 14.c4  
Nd8 15.cxd5 Qxd5 16.Qxc7 Nc6 17.Be3 0-0 18.Rhc1 Rac8 19.Qb7



White has invested some time grabbing a pawn with his queen, leaving her counterpart dominating on the long diagonal. That pin suggests substantial counterplay for Black, and there are two candidate moves that seek to increase the pressure. Meanwhile, White has ample counterplay of his own, revolving around the move  $Rc1xc6$  at some point, but with some follow-up options.

**19...g5?!**

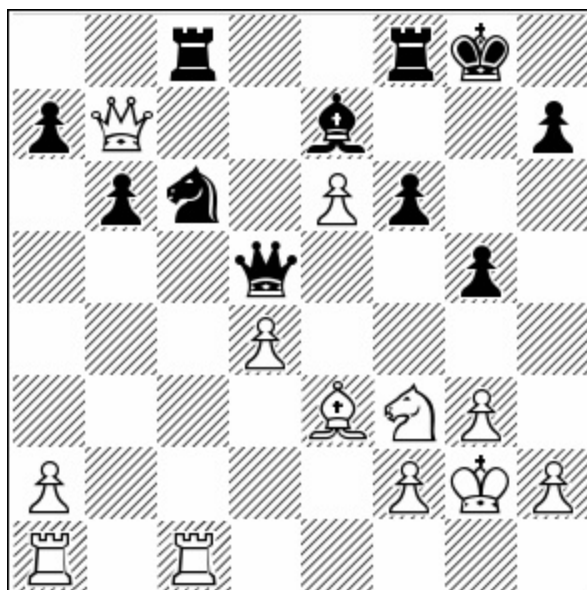
‘Objectively’ – that is, according to the engine – the text is probably weaker than the other option, 19...f6.



*analysis diagram*

White has three plausible continuations:

A) During the game I thought **20.e6** was forced; I calculated 20...Qxe6 21.d5 (White can invert this and the next move) 21...Qxd5 22.Rxc6 Rxc6 23.Qxe7 Rf7 24.Qb4 and I figured this position wasn't too bad for Black. The engine suggests 23...g5 as a friendly amendment, with a playable position for Black. 20...Bd6 would not be a good option in view of 21.Rxc6 Qxc6 (21...Rxc6 22.Rc1 Rc5 23.Qd7+–) 22.Qxc6 Rxc6 23.d5 with crushing passed pawns. But here Black can shift gears with 20...g5!.



*analysis diagram*

Now White's counterstrike 21.Rxc6 is critical, but the variations change drastically if White throws in the moves h2-h3 and ...h7-h5.

A1) **21.h3** h5 (more intense than 21...Qxe6 22.d5 transposing into the previously analyzed variation) 22.Rxc6 Rxc6 23.Rc1! (basically a free tempo; 23.Qxe7? Rxe6 24.Qxa7 g4 is clearly better for Black) 23...Rd6! (here, 23...Rc5? is not an option because after 24.Qxe7 Rxc1 25.Bxc1 g4 26.Bh6 Qxf3+ 27.Kg1 Qd1+ 28.Kh2 White escapes perpetual check) 24.Qxe7 Rxe6 25.Qxa7 (25.Qc7 g4 26.Bh6 gxf3+ 27.Kh2 Rf7 with the king escaping to h7) 25...Rxe3! (25...g4? 26.Bh6 gxf3+ 27.Kh2 and White's counterattack kills the king) 26.fxe3 g4 with a likely draw, e.g. 27.Rf1 gxf3+ 28.Rxf3 Ra8 29.Qe7 Rxa2+ 30.Kg1 Qxf3 31.Qe8+ Kg7 32.Qe7+ Kg6 33.Qe8+ Kf5 34.Qc8+ Ke4 35.Qe6+ Kd3 36.Qb3+ Ke4 37.Qe6+ and perpetual check;

A2) **21.Rxc6** Rxc6 22.Rc1 and now it is 22...Rc5! that is forced, as 22...Rd6? 23.Qxe7 Rxe6 24.Qc7! g4 25.Bh6 gxf3+ 26.Kh1 mates again. So 23.Qxe7 Rxc1 24.Bxc1 g4 25.Bh6 Qxf3+ 26.Kg1 Qd1+ and draws because the king does not have the h2-square to escape to!

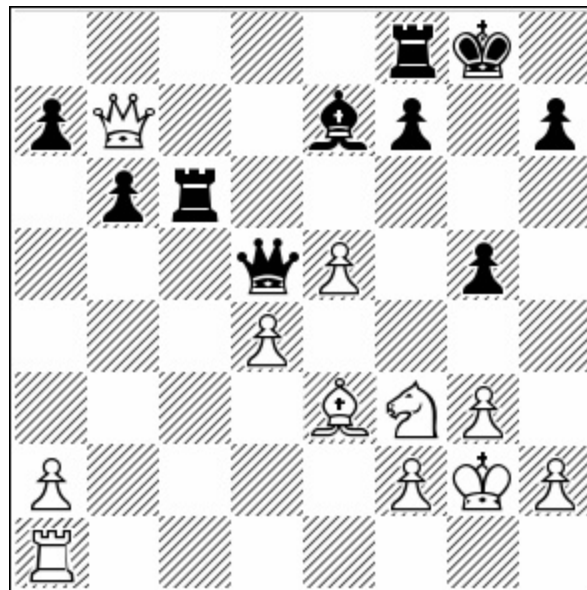
B) I didn't see **20.Rxc6** was even possible. 20...Qxc6 21.Qxc6 Rxc6 22.d5

Rc4 23.d6 Bd8 24.e6 Re8 is drawish but definitely more pleasant for White. After 20...Rxc6 I missed 21.Rc1! (21.Qxe7 fxe5–+) which in turn forces 21...Rc5 (21...Bc5 22.e6±, or 21...Rd6? 22.Rc7!+–) 22.Qxe7 Rxc1 23.Bxc1 fxe5 24.Qa3 exd4 (24...e4 25.Ne5 e3+ 26.f3 Rc8 27.Qb2 e2 28.Bd2±) 25.Qd3 and I think Black should be okay here;

C) I missed the defensive potential of **20.exf6** Bxf6 21.Rc3!. It isn't that attractive for White because even the simple 21...Ne7 22.Qxd5+ Nxd5 offers some compensation for the pawn, but the wild alternative 21...Be5 22.dxe5 Qxf3+ 23.Kg1 Nd4! (not 23...Nxe5 24.Qxc8) 24.Qxc8! Ne2+ 25.Kf1 Rxc8 26.Rxc8+ Kf7 27.Re1 Ke6 would have been tough to figure out.

### 20.h3

This looks sensible but I think White's one genuine big advantage stems from 20.Rxc6! Rxc6 and now:



*analysis diagram*

A) **21.Qxe7** g4! (not 21...f6 22.Bxg5 fxe5 23.Qa3, or 22...fxg5 23.Qxg5+ Rg6 24.Qe3 Rg7 25.Qb3) 22.Qg5+ Rg6 23.Qf4 f6 with advantage to Black. Note that the h-pawn protects the rook on g6;

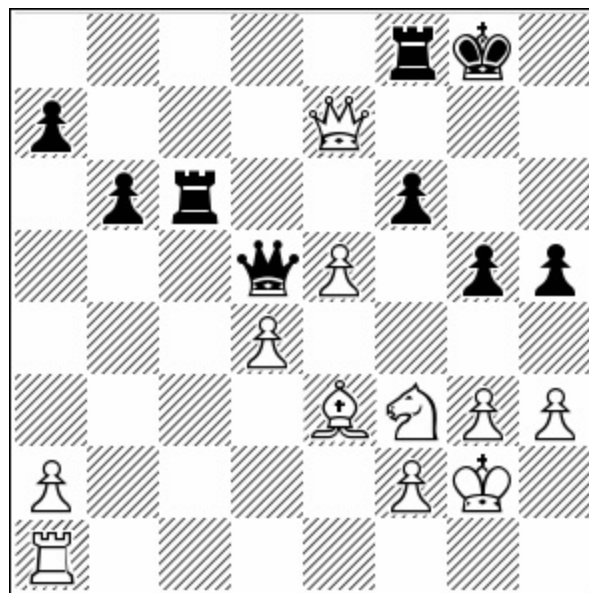
B) **21.Rc1!** Rfc8 22.Qxe7! (22.Rxc6 Rxc6 23.Qxe7 g4 24.Qg5+ Rg6 25.Qf5

b5 and Black's chances are greatly improved with a pair of rooks gone)  
 22...g4 23.Qg5+ Kf8 24.Qxg4 Rxc1 25.Bh6+ Ke8 26.Bxc1 Rxc1 27.Qg8+  
 Kd7 28.Qxh7 and White looks good in this endgame with an armada of  
 kingside pawns and a better protected king.

### 20...h5 21.g4?

I am not sure White is winning, but after Akobian's move the position tilts  
 towards Black's favor. 21.Rxc6 Rxc6 22.Qxe7 (22.Rc1 Rfc8 23.Qxe7 g4  
 doesn't seem to give White too much) 22...g4 23.Qg5+ Rg6 24.Qf5 is very  
 good for White. ...f7-f6 is not possible, so eventually Black will have to take  
 on f3, and the central pawn mass will be tough to deal with.

But Black has a surprising quiet move – 22...f6!



*analysis diagram*

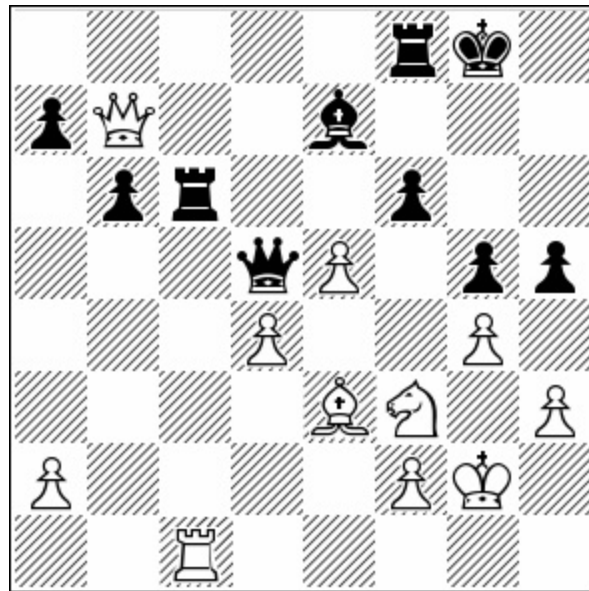
Black threatens not only 23...g4 but also 23...Re6 followed by taking on e5.  
 For instance, 23.g4? Re6 24.Qa3 fxe5 25.Bxg5 e4 26.Ne5 e3+ 27.Kg3 Qxd4  
 and Black is winning, so something like 23.Rb1 may be best, but Black  
 regains the piece and stands no worse.

### 21...f6 22.Rxc6 Rxc6

I saw that 23.Qxe7 Re6 would be promising, as in the last note, but only at this moment did I notice the possibility of Rc1. We've already encountered that idea many times in our analysis, so it was a bad miss indeed!

The caution is that we must avoid tunnel vision; the direct capture of the bishop on e7 was tough enough to combat in so many of the lines, but an eye must be kept out for alternatives!

### 23.Rc1

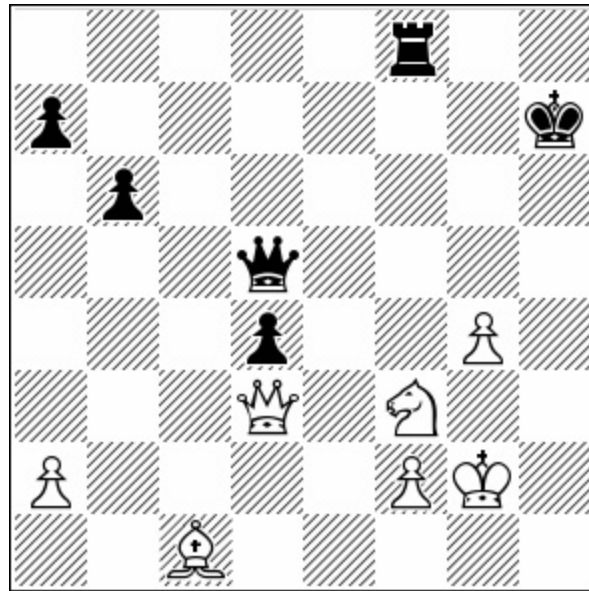


### 23...Rc5??

The failure to anticipate his idea, coupled with poor sleeping, caused my brain to blow up. I guess I accepted I had been outsmarted, and failed to look more deeply for alternatives to this plainly insufficient move.

By the time we got to the post-mortem, everyone in St Louis and cyberspace knew 23...Bc5! would have put White under pressure to find the right path. Then 24.dxc5? hxg4 25.hxg4 fxe5 is too dangerous, but White has two acceptable continuations: 24.e6 hxg4 25.hxg4 Qxe6 26.Nd2 Rf7 27.Qa8+ Rc8 (27...Kg7 28.dxc5 Qxg4+ 29.Kf1 is about equal) 28.Qe4 Qxe4+ 29.Nxe4 Re8 30.Nxc5 bxc5 31.dxc5 and I think White should hold. The engine choice is 24.Kg3 h4+ 25.Kh2 Qxf3 26.dxc5 fxe5 27.Qe7 with a balanced position.

**24.Qxe7 Rxc1 25.Bxc1 hgx4 26.hgx4 fxe5 27.Qxg5+ Kh7 28.Qe3 exd4  
29.Qd3+**



The position bares an eerie resemblance to a variation within 19...f6 we encountered before, except my kingside pawns have disappeared! The rest was routine.

**29...Kg8 30.Bb2 Rf7 31.g5 Rf5 32.Bc1 b5 33.Kg3 Qd6+ 34.Kg4 Rc5  
35.Bf4 Qe6+ 36.Kg3 Rc3 37.Qxd4 Qc6 38.Qd8+ Kh7 39.Be3 Qc7+  
40.Qxc7+ Rxc7 41.Nd4 b4 42.f4 Rc3 43.Kf3 a5 44.f5 a4 45.g6+ Kg7  
46.Ne6+ Kf6 47.Ke4 1-0**

### **Can You Hear a Pin Drop?**

In the next game, the World Champion leaves himself open to attack, banking on a pin saving his king... until the pin drops.

Game 31 – Catalan Opening

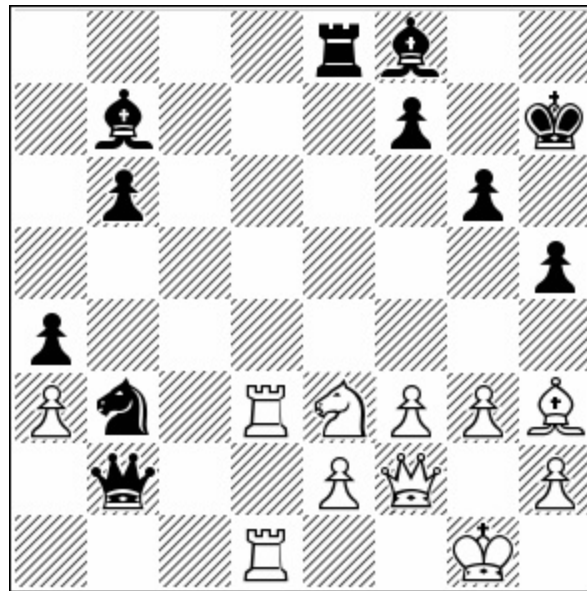
**Daniil Dubov** 2702

**Magnus Carlsen** 2862

Airthings Masters KO 2020

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 d5 4.g3 Bb4+ 5.Nbd2 0-0 6.Bg2 b6 7.0-0 Bb7 8.Ne5**

a5 9.Qc2 a4 10.Rd1 Bd6 11.cxd5 exd5 12.Ndc4 h6 13.Bf4 Re8 14.Rac1 Na6 15.a3 Bf8 16.Ne3 c5 17.Nf5 cxd4 18.Nc6 Qd7 19.Bh3 Kh8 20.Ne5 Rxe5 21.Bxe5 Ne4 22.Bxd4 Rc8 23.Qd3 Nac5 24.Qe3 Kh7 25.Bxc5 Nxc5 26.Qf3 d4 27.Rxd4 Qe8 28.Qe3 Qc6 29.f3 Re8 30.Qf2 g6 31.Ne3 Qf6 32.Ng4 Qg7 33.Rcd1 h5 34.Ne3 Nb3 35.R4d3 Qxb2



The pawn grab leaves Black vulnerable to attack, but Carlsen hopes he will have enough counterplay on White's king.

**36.Rd7 Bc5 37.Rxf7+ Kh6**

37...Kg8 38.Rxb7! Bxe3 39.Qxe3 Rxe3 40.Rd8+ the back rank decides.

**38.Rdd7 Qa1+?**

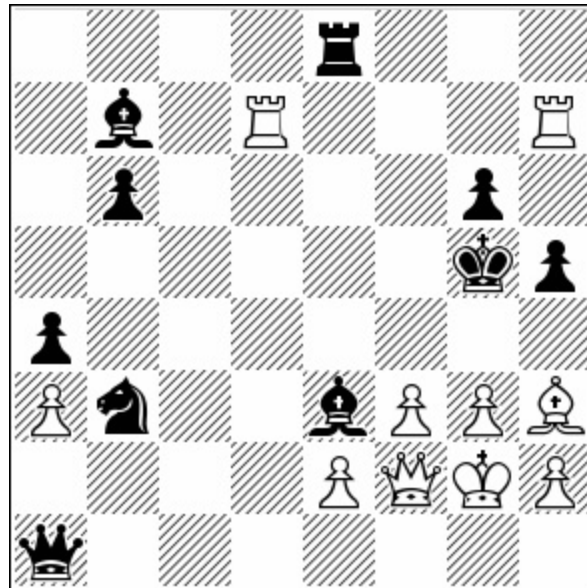
At first it seems counter-productive to drive the king off the dangerous diagonal it occupies, but there is a point; 38...Bxe3 39.Rh7+ Kg5 40.f4+ would lead to mate.

But simple defense was the better option. After 38...Qh8 White has to give up a piece, and 39.Kh1 Bxe3 40.Qe1 produces a wild position that Stockfish somehow zeroes out!

**39.Kg2 Bxe3**

It was too late for 39...Qh8, as 40.Nf5+ gxf5 41.Bxf5 Bxf2 42.Rd6 mates.  
(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 13:*

**40.Rh7+ Kg5**



The Champion's point is that White cannot use the f-pawn to force mate if it is pinned. The problem is this pin is all too fleeting.

**41.Rxb7! Rf8**

41...Bxf2 42.f4+ Kf6 43.Rhf7# is quite a lovely mate.

**42.Qxe3+**

And **Black resigned.**

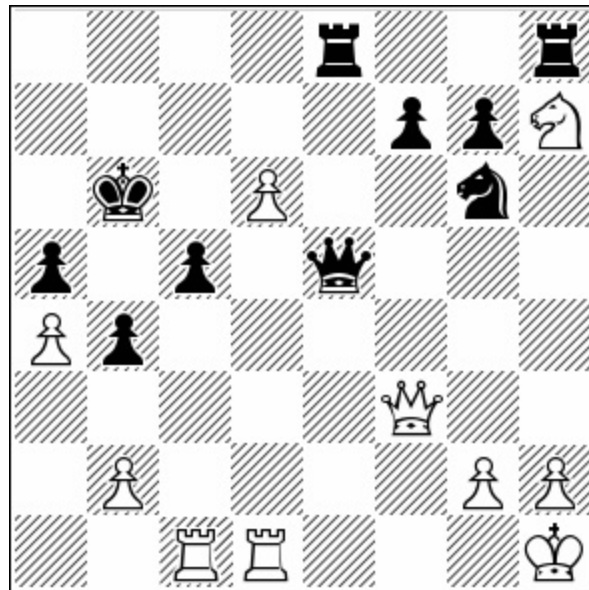
### **Walking on a Thin Line**

Sometimes defensive moves have to be integrated into the attack. When White attempts a perfect combination of the two, the counterstrike ruins his utopia.

Game 32 – English Defense  
**Vladimir Belous 2585**

**Alejandro Ramirez 2572**  
St Louis Summer International 2018

1.d4 e6 2.c4 b6 3.e4 Bb7 4.f3 d5 5.cxd5 exd5 6.Nc3 dxe4 7.fxe4 Ne7 8.Bc4 Ng6 9.Qb3 Qd7 10.Nge2 Ba6 11.0-0 Bxc4 12.Qxc4 c6 13.Bf4 b5 14.Qb3 a5 15.a4 b4 16.Bxb8 Rxb8 17.e5 Rc8 18.Ne4 Qd5 19.Qh3 Ra8 20.Ng5 Be7 21.Nxh7 Qe6 22.Qh5 Kd7 23.Rac1 Kc7 24.Ng3 Qd5 25.Nf5 Rae8 26.Nd6 Qxd4+ 27.Kh1 Bxd6 28.exd6+ Kb6 29.Rfd1 Qe5 30.Qf3 c5



White will have to part with his knight, but if he can land his queen near the king, checkmate will be a real possibility.

### 31.d7?!

This move has some purpose in keeping Black from doubling rooks on the h-file, which could free White's queen to leave for the queenside.

However, all in all White had much better chances to win with 31.Qd3 Rxh7 32.h3 Reh8 33.Re1 and now Black has to find the right square for his queen, namely 33...Qg5! (the key is keeping the c5-pawn protected; 33...Qd4 34.Qb5+ Ka7 35.Qxa5+ Kb7 36.Qb5+ Ka7 37.Qd7+ Kb6 38.Rcd1 Qf4 39.a5+ Ka6 40.Qc6+ Ka7 41.Qxc5+ Ka8 42.Re3 and White is winning) 34.Qb5+ Ka7 35.Qxa5+ Kb7 36.Qc7+ Ka8 37.Qc6+ Ka7 (37...Kb8? 38.Re8+

Rxe8 39.Qxe8+ Kb7 40.Qd7+) 38.Qd7+ Ka6=.

**31...Rxb7 32.g3??**

White had to settle for 32.h3 Rd8 33.Qd3 Ka7 34.Qb5 Rxb3+ and perpetual check follows.

**32...Rd8 33.Rd5**

We have to give Belous some credit here. His plan to converge with the rooks on c5 is powerful, and his 32nd move multi-tasked, taking away the useful f4-square from the queen. There is just one problem...

**33...Rxb2+!**

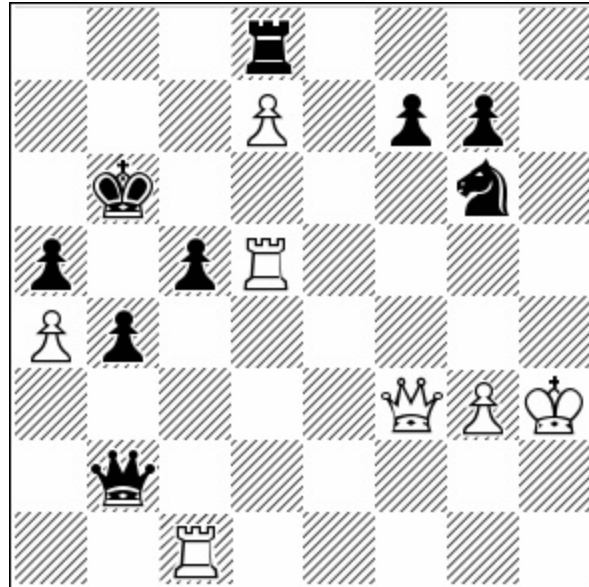
White would win without this combo – 33...Qf6 34.Qe3 (34.Qd3? Rxb2+ 35.Kxb2 Qf2+ 36.Kh3 Nf4 mates for Black) 34...Qe7 35.Qd3 and White's threats are unstoppable.

**34.Kxb2**

34.Kg1 Rg2+! would have changed nothing.

**34...Qxb2+ 35.Kh3**

Probably according to plan, as 35.Kg1 Qxc1+ 36.Rd1 Ne5! (36...Qc3 37.Rd6+ Ka7 38.Ra6+! is equal) 37.Qe2 Qxd1+ 38.Qxd1 Rxd7 Black has all the winning chances but it may prove difficult to overcome the queen on an open board.



**35...Ne5!**

White would have had no more than a draw after 35...Qxc1 36.Rd6+ Ka7 37.Ra6+! Kxa6 38.Qc6+. 35...Rh8+? 36.Rh5 would not get the job done – don't forget about the pawn on d7 – but now with the d5-rook cut off, 36...Rh8+ is a mating threat.

**36.Rd6+ Kc7**

36...Ka7 was also winning.

**37.Rxc5+ Kxd6 38.Qd5+ Ke7 39.Rc8**

39.Qxe5+ Qxe5 40.Rxe5+ Kxd7 41.Rxa5 Rb8 would have provided no hope in the endgame.

**39...Nxd7**

And **White resigned.**

## **Hypnosis**

Believing there is more to our opponent's move, when it is played by a strong(er) player, is a trap that is common among club players. Don't let your

opponent's reputation hide his blunders from you!

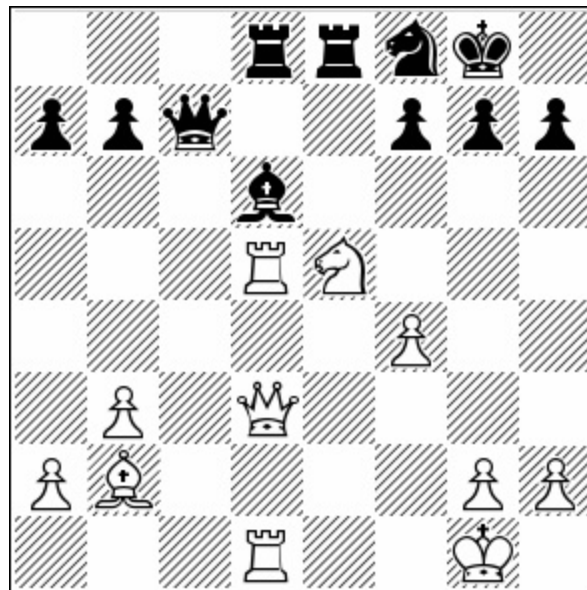
Game 33 – Alekhine's Defense

George Thomas

Max Euwe

Nottingham 1936

1.e4 Nf6 2.e5 Nd5 3.d4 d6 4.Nf3 Bg4 5.Be2 c6 6.0-0 dxe5 7.Nxe5 Bxe2  
8.Qxe2 e6 9.b3 Nd7 10.c4 N5f6 11.Nc3 Bb4 12.Bb2 0-0 13.Rfd1 Qc7  
14.Rd3 Rfd8 15.Rad1 Nf8 16.Ne4 Nxe4 17.Qxe4 Bd6 18.d5 exd5 19.cxd5  
Re8 20.f4 cxd5 21.Rxd5 Rad8 22.Qd3



The position would remain balanced after most sensible bishop moves, or even, for that matter, 22...Qc5+. Euwe wasn't satisfied with that.

**22...Ne6??**

Players as great as Euwe don't simply hand out free pieces. So Thomas, who lost a bunch of games to Euwe, wasn't going to fall for 23.Rxd6 Rxd6 24.Qxd6 Rd8 25.Qxc7 Rxd1+ 26.Kf2 Nxc7. He played **23.g3?**, weakening his position and opening the door for Euwe to go on to win.

He apparently didn't think to fact check this one, as White can grab the piece and play 25.Nd7!. White is then up a piece for real, as Black has no way to

exploit the pin, e.g. 25...Qxd6 26.Rxd6 Nf8? 27.Nf6+.

That was a rather gross example, but reputation can play a part in grandmasters missing an important tactical point. It often comes down to how motivated one is to look in the right direction.

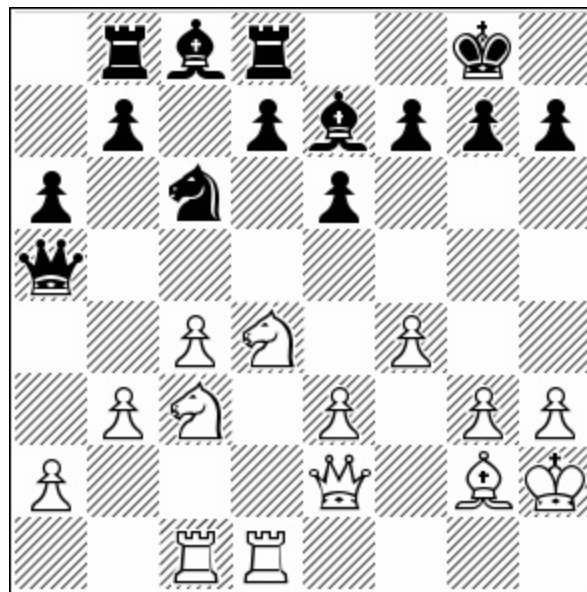
Game 34 – Nimzo-Indian Defense

**Shakhriyar Mamedyarov 2748**

**Alex Lenderman 2626**

Doha 2015

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Bb4+ 4.Nc3 c5 5.g3 Nc6 6.Bg2 Ne4 7.Bd2 Nxd2  
8.Qxd2 cxd4 9.Nxd4 Qb6 10.e3 Ne5 11.b3 Qa5 12.Rc1 0-0 13.0-0 a6  
14.Rfd1 Ba3 15.Rc2 Rb8 16.Qe2 Rd8 17.h3 Be7 18.f4 Nc6 19.Kh2 Nb4  
20.Rcc1 Nc6



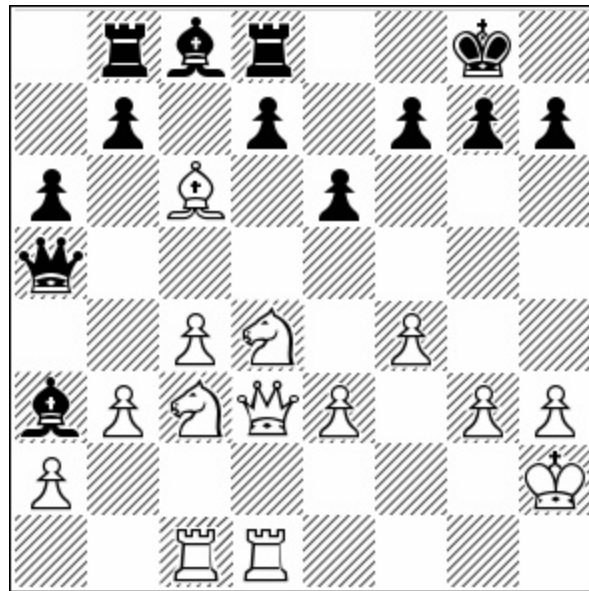
Black is struggling to develop, but hopes his dark-square control will keep him safe. Mamedyarov conceives a brilliant but flawed scheme:

**21.Qd3?!**

Props to Mamedyarov for seeing a reason to move his queen to the same file as his opponent's rook!

**21...Ba3 22.Bxc6?**

I'm tempted to throw an exclamation in there because the exchange sacrifice we see in the game is bold and exciting. However, this move just doesn't work. You have to put aside the fact that a genius just played it to figure out why! 22.Rb1 Bb4 23.Rbc1 Ba3 was of course not what Shakh was looking for.



The game now continued:

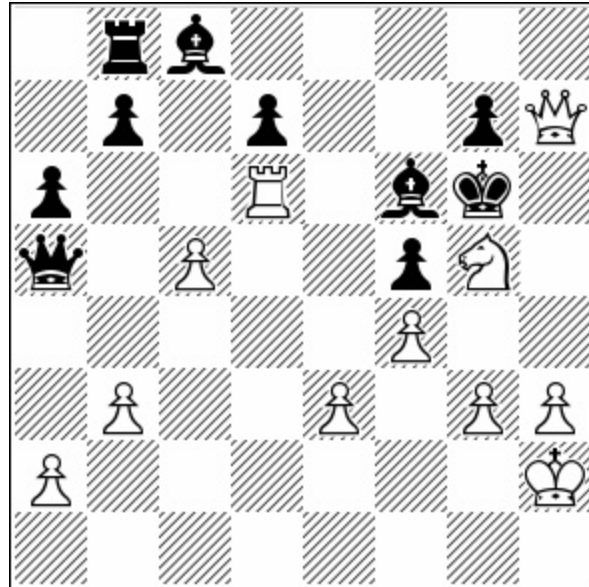
**22...Bxc1 23.Be4 Bb2**

23...Ba3 was stronger according to the computer.

**24.Nxe6!? fxe6 25.Bxh7+ Kh8 26.Ne4 Rf8 27.Bg6 Kg8 28.Qe2 Bf6 29.c5 Bc3 30.Qh5 Rf5 31.Bxf5**

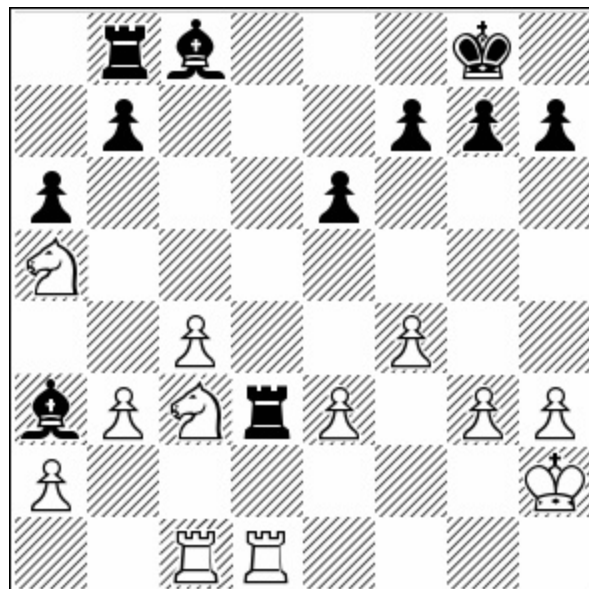
31.Qh7+ Kf8 32.Qh8+ Ke7 33.Qe8#.

**31...exf5 32.Qe8+ Kh7 33.Ng5+ Kh6 34.Rd6+ Bf6 35.Qh8+ Kg6 36.Qh7#**



Because **22...Bxc1** led to unclear play, both players probably spent most of their calculation time there. Likewise, both players had reason to accept the position on the board. Black may have stood objectively better at various moments, but there is a big difference between speculative and bad.

The other option **22...dxc6!** seems too obvious to be good. Surely Mamedyarov wouldn't allow it if it worked? Then **23.Nxc6 Rxd3 24.Nxa5...**



*analysis diagram*

(back to the exercises) ***Solution to Puzzle 14:***

We are wired to focus on captures in tactical sequences. Even here, 24...Rxd1 25.Rxd1 Kf8 is not at all clear. White has to find some further moves – 26.Rd8+ Ke7 27.Nxb7! Ra8 28.Nb1! Bc5 29.Nxc5 Kxd8 30.Kg2-just to hold (perhaps) a small advantage.

But the awkward looking quiet move **24...Rd7!!** completely turns the tables. The best White can do might be to give an exchange with 25.c5 Bxc1 26.Rxc1, though he stands clearly worse. 25.Rxd7 Bxd7 26.Rd1 Be8 leaves White's knights unfortunately placed, and he will have to part with one of them.

### **Repeat Performance**

Repetition of moves is another situation where psychology factors in. We will see in another chapter when repetitions can cause players to err in pursuing victory. But repeating from a position of strength can coax an opponent to switch to a less resistant move. In the following case, it enabled a spectacular finish for the ages.

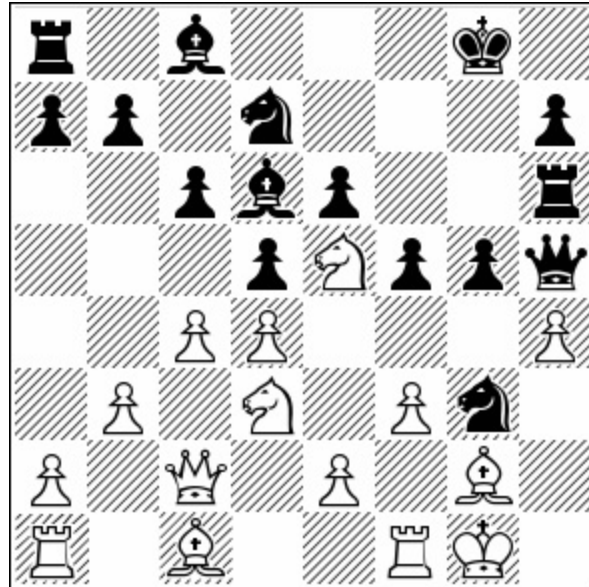
Game 35 – Dutch Defense

**Alexander Kotov**

**Igor Bondarevsky**

Leningrad 1936

**1.d4 e6 2.Nf3 f5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 d5 5.0-0 Bd6 6.c4 c6 7.Nbd2 0-0 8.b3 Qe8  
9.Ne1 Nbd7 10.Nd3 Ne4 11.Nf3 Qh5 12.Nf4 Qf7 13.Qc2 g5 14.Nd3 Qh5  
15.Nfe5 Rf6 16.f3 Rh6 17.h4 Nxc3**



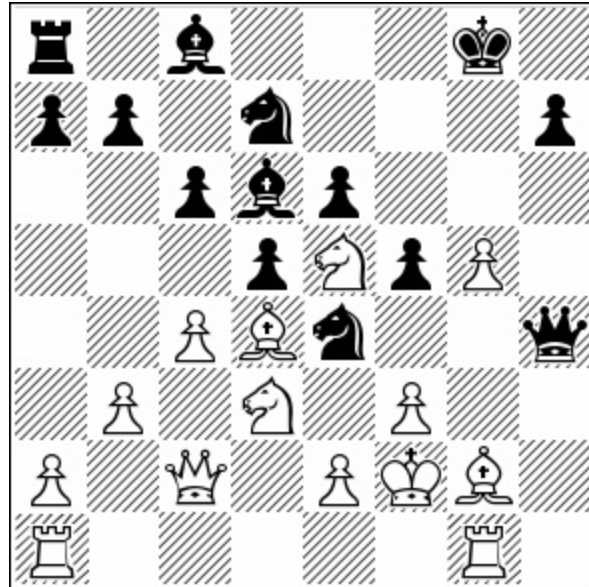
**18.hxg5?**

This shockingly bad decision enables Black's blitzkrieg attack to bear fruit. 18.Bxg5! Nxf1 19.Rxf1 Nxe5 20.dxe5 Bf8 21.Qc1 produced a competitive and perhaps even favorable for White position.

**18...Qh2+ 19.Kf2 Rh4 20.Rg1 Rxd4 21.Bb2 Qh4**

This is a problem move for White, but perhaps it was even stronger to delay it slightly – 21...Nxe5 22.Bxd4 (22.Nxe5 Qh4) 22...Nxd3+ 23.Qxd3 c5 and ...Qh4 will be powerful when it arrives.

**22.Bxd4 Ne4+**



### 23.Ke3?

White has to allow perpetual check with 23.Kf1 Ng3+ 24.Kf2 (24.Ke1 Qxd4 is clearly ruinous) but Black should not take it: 24...Qxd4+ 25.e3 (25.Kxg3 Nxe5 26.Kh3 Ng6--+) 25...Qh4 26.f4 Bxe5 27.fxe5 f4 with a huge initiative for Black. Bondarevsky has seen further than Kotov!

(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 15:*

**23...f4+ 24.Nxf4 Qf2+ 25.Kd3 Qxd4+! 26.Kxd4 Bc5+ 27.Kd3 Nxe5#**

### **Automatic for the People**

‘Take first, ask questions later’ is an obviously unsophisticated approach that can be punished in the tactics. But when the piece is a rook...and it can be taken with check, it seems more reasonable. Even so, the second move may not work to your liking after a precipitous capture.

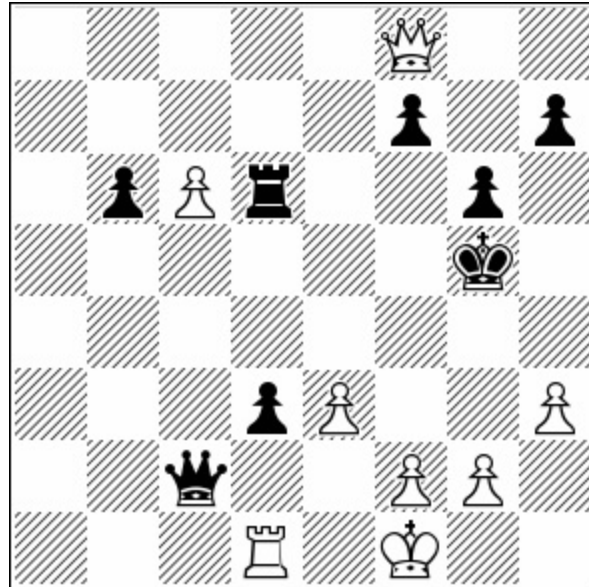
**Game 36 – Nimzo-Indian Defense**

**Denis Khismatullin 2653**

**Pavel Eljanov 2727**

**Jerusalem Ech 2015**

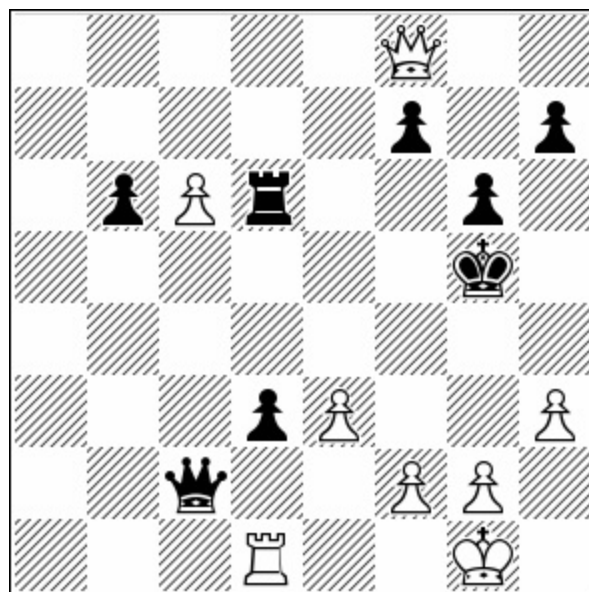
**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e3 0-0 5.Ne2 Re8 6.a3 Bf8 7.Ng3 d5 8.Be2 a6  
9.0-0 c5 10.dxc5 Bxc5 11.cxd5 exd5 12.Bf3 Be6 13.b4 Bd6 14.Bb2 Be5  
15.Na4 Bxb2 16.Nxb2 Nc6 17.Nd3 Qb6 18.Rc1 a5 19.Rb1 axb4 20.axb4  
Rad8 21.b5 Na5 22.Ne2 Ne4 23.Ndf4 Nc4 24.Bxe4 dxe4 25.Nd4 Bc8  
26.Rc1 Ne5 27.Qb3 Qh6 28.Rc5 b6 29.Rd5 Bb7 30.Rxd8 Rxd8 31.Rd1  
Qg5 32.Kf1 g6 33.h3 Nd3 34.Nc6 Bxc6 35.bxc6 Qc5 36.Qa4 Kg7 37.Qa1+  
Kg8 38.Qa4 Rd6 39.Qa8+ Kg7 40.Qa1+ Kh6 41.Nxd3 exd3 42.Qh8 Qc2  
43.Qf8+ Kg5**



Both sides are wreaking havoc with their queens. Khismatullin reckoned that he would need a quiet move to rein in the black king, as 44.f4+ Kh4 45.Qh6+ Kg3 46.Qg5+ Kh2 would just drive the king to a safe haven.

#### 44.Kg1!!

The ‘move of the year’ for 2015 makes an aesthetic impression. There aren’t all that many moves to consider, though. The most impressive part is not so much finding the move, but having the nerve to play it rather than give perpetual check.



## 44...Qxd1+?

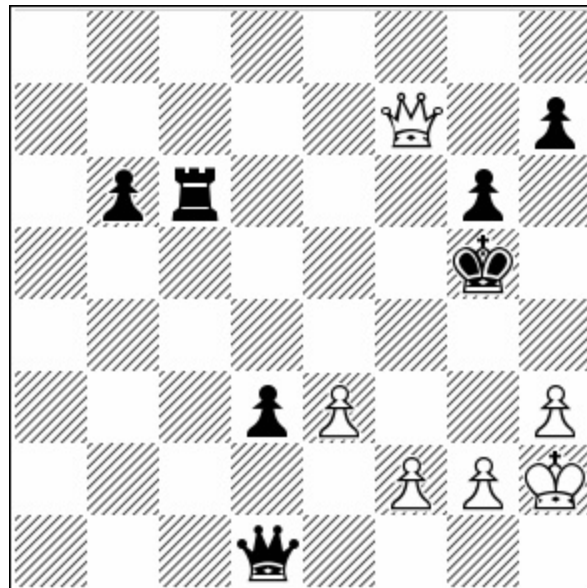
With this and the next move, Eljanov eliminates all the power in White's position other than the queen – and loses. The correct continuation was to eschew the rook and move his own rook away from the passed c-pawn!

44...Rd5!! would have saved the game. Priority one is to provide a better defense to White's attempt to form a mating net, and priority two is to keep an eye on the c-pawn. The game might have continued 45.Kh2 (45.Qxf7 Qxd1+ 46.Kh2 Rf5 47.Qe7+ Kh6 48.c7 Qc1 49.Qh4+ Kg7 50.Qd4+=) 45...Kf6! 46.e4 Rc5 47.Qd6+ (Black just holds after 47.e5+ Kxe5! 48.Re1+ Kd4 49.Qd6+ Kc3 50.c7 d2) 47...Kg7 48.Rxd3 Rxc6 49.Qe5+ Rf6 50.Rf3 Qc6. Black is stuck in an unpleasant pin but I doubt White can take advantage of it.

## 45.Kh2 Rxc6

Now 45...Rd5 46.c7 lets the pawn through.

## 46.Qe7+ Kh6 47.Qf8+ Kg5 48.Qxf7!



The mate threats will cost Black his rook for starters, with his king's life still hanging by a thread.

**48...Rf6 49.f4+ Kh6 50.Qxf6 Qe2 51.Qf8+ Kh5 52.Qg7 h6 53.Qe5+ Kh4**

53...g5 54.Qe8+ Kh4 55.Qg6 is similar.

**54.Qf6+ Kh5 55.f5!**

The last move White had to find, after which mate is inevitable.

**55...gxf5 56.Qxf5+ Kh4 57.Qg6**

There is no defense to 57...-- 58.Qxh6+ Qh5 59.g3#, so **Black resigned.**

### **Take My Bishop... Please**

There are a few occasions in the following instant classic where pieces probably shouldn't have been taken. The costliest automatic capture – in this case a bishop with check – falls into a truly insidious trap.

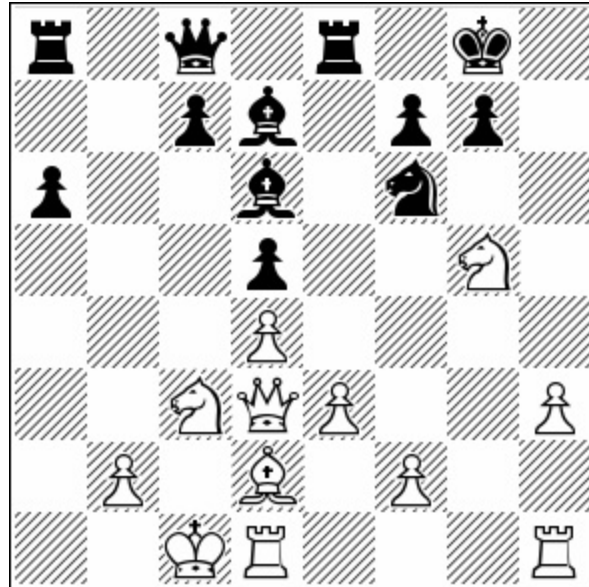
Game 37 – Nimzo-Indian Defense

**Vlastimil Babula 2574**

**Aleksandar Kovacevic 2471**

Germany Bundesliga 2022/23

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 d5 4.Nc3 Bb4 5.Qa4+ Nc6 6.e3 0-0 7.Qc2 Re8  
8.Bd2 a6 9.a3 Bd6 10.h3 h6 11.cxd5 exd5 12.Bd3 Be6 13.0-0-0 Bd7 14.g4  
b5 15.g5 hxg5 16.Nxg5 b4 17.axb4 Nxb4 18.Qb1 Nxd3+ 19.Qxd3 Qc8**



Black prepares 20...Bf5, activating the bishop while adding a useful defender to the kingside. From a practical standpoint though, Black may have been better off averting the sacrifice, and White should definitely take the plunge.

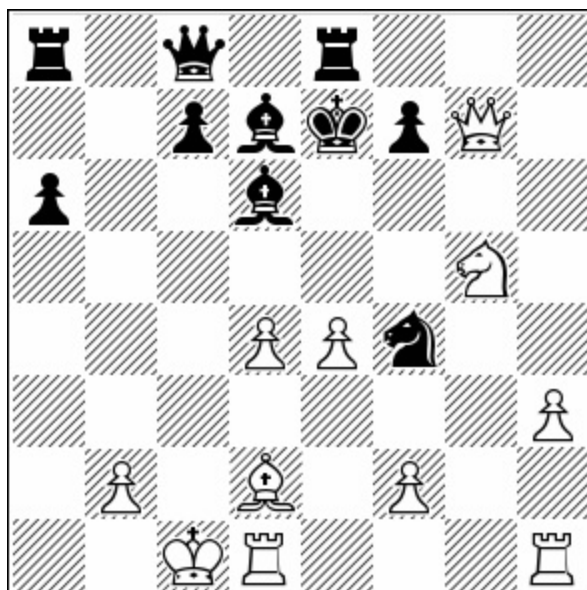
### **20.Nxd5 Nxd5**

The only way to refute a sacrifice is to accept it. But here a more prudent course was to spit on the knight with 20...Bf5! 21.Nxf6+ gxf6 22.e4 Bg6 and Black is poised to take over the initiative: 23.Nf3 (if 23.f4 Bxf4! 24.Bxf4 fxg5 25.Bxg5 Rxe4, Black's bishop kills) 23...Qb7 24.Rhg1 Rab8 25.Bc3 Bf4+ 26.Nd2 Qxe4 with a very pleasant position for Black.

### **21.Qh7+ Kf8 22.e4 Nf4?!**

Again the better option was to fight for the initiative: 22...Qb7 23.Qh5! (if 23.exd5 Rab8, Black takes over) 23...Be6 24.Nxe6+ fxe6 (24...Rxe6 might be even better, e.g. 25.Qxd5 Qxd5 26.exd5 Re2 27.Be3 Rb8 28.Rd2 Rxd2 29.Bxd2 Rb5) 25.exd5 Rab8 26.Bc3 Qxd5 with a slight but comfortable edge for Black.

### **23.Qh8+ Ke7 24.Qxg7**



### 24...Ne2+?

This check sets up the unbelievable finish, but objectively it loses defensive equity and exposes the knight to future entrapment.

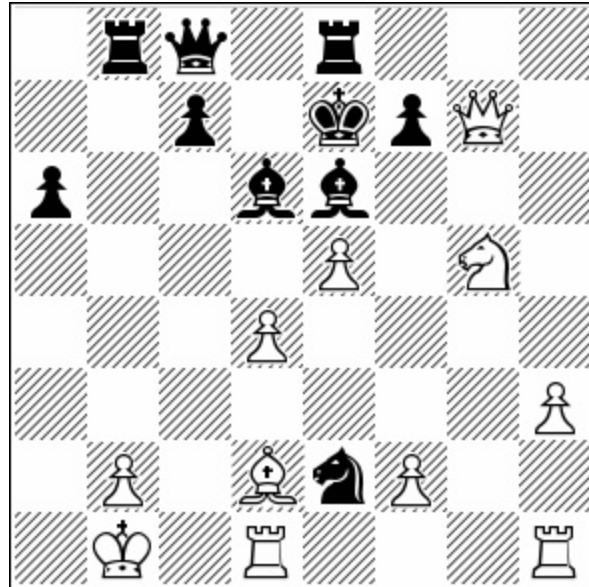
Black had two better ways to fight back: 24...Be6 (solid) 25.e5 Nd5 26.Nxe6 Qxe6 27.exd6+ Kxd6, and 24...Rf8 (crazy) 25.e5 Nd3+ 26.Kb1 Bf5 27.Qf6+ Ke8 28.exd6 Qd7.

### 25.Kb1 Be6 26.e5

This is the first but certainly not the last time 26.Nxf7 will come up. Black doesn't have much chance to defend after 26...Bxf7 (26...Rg8 27.Bg5+ Kd7 28.Ne5+ Ke8 29.Qh6 White will pick up the errant knight) 27.Bg5+ Kd7 28.Qxf7+.

### 26...Rb8

Objectively this is just wrong, but the game would not have received such notice without this diabolical trap! 26...Bd5 kept the game unclear.

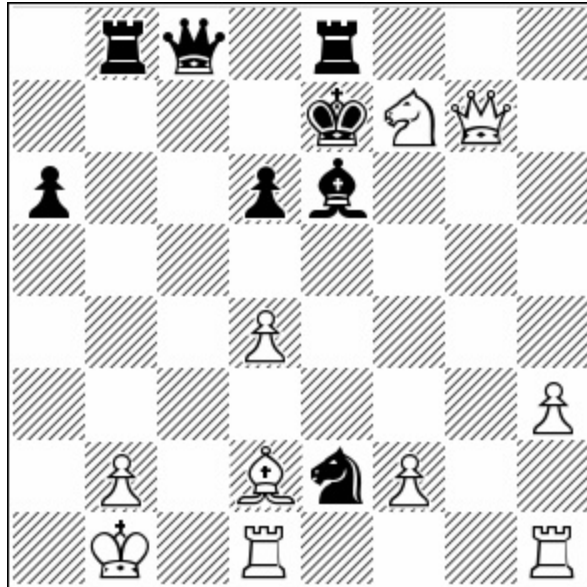


### 27.exd6+?

How can it be wrong to pick up a bishop with check? Babula will find out the hard way. The bishop isn't actually relevant to White's breakthrough. For the second time, 27.Nxf7 was decisive; 27...Bxf7 28.Bg5+ Kd7 29.Qxf7+ Be7 30.Qd5+ Bd6 31.Qc4 White will play with a bunch of extra pawns and a safer king.

### 27...cxd6 28.Nxf7?

Black hasn't a semblance of a defense here, and White has checked the usual (but not unusual) suspects like 28...Rxb2+ 29.Kxb2 Qb7+ 30.Ka1 and it stops there. Fortunately for the fans, White didn't try to bail out with 28.Nxe6 Qxe6 29.Qg4.



(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 16:*

**28...Qc2+!! 29.Kxc2 Bf5#**

Reinfeld and Horowitz would have been truly proud of this finish!

### **Don't Throw Away Your Shot**

To sac, or not to sac? Club players often reject promising sacrifices because they can't work them out, or are afraid to risk it. But what if it is more risky not to sacrifice?

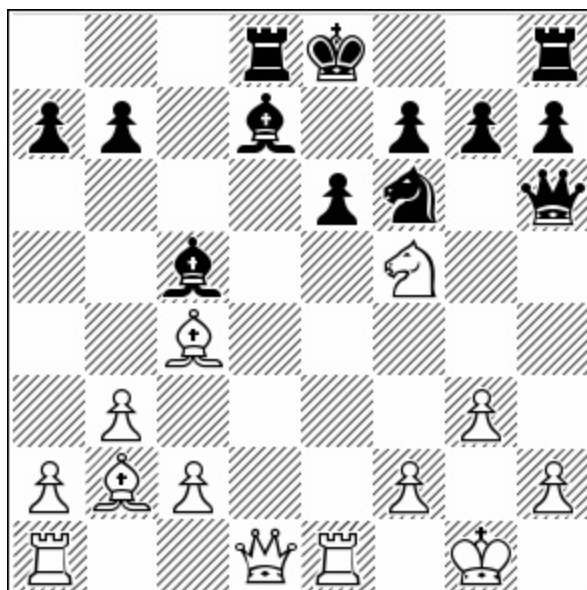
Game 38 – French Defense

**Mircea Parligras 2588**

**Yury Kruppa 2547**

Eforie Nord tt 2008

**1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nd2 c5 4.exd5 Qxd5 5.Ngf3 cxd4 6.Bc4 Qd6 7.0-0 Nf6  
8.Nb3 Nc6 9.Nbxd4 Nxd4 10.Nxd4 Bd7 11.b3 Rd8 12.Bb2 Qf4 13.g3 Qh6  
14.Re1 Bc5 15.Nf5**



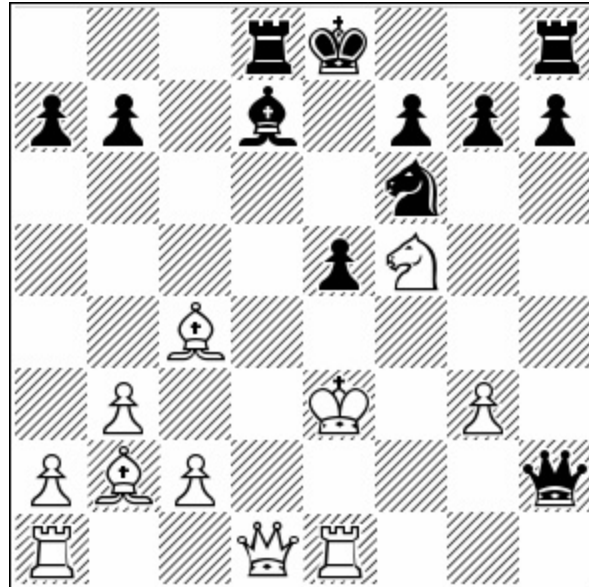
Kruppa has used something of a pet line, a queen maneuver which provoked a weakness but leaves Black a step behind in development. Now he has a big decision to make.

### 15...Qh3?

Is it wrong to query a move in a losing position? The text loses without much of a fight, as does the meek 15...Qg6 16.Nd6+ Bxd6 17.Qxd6 Ne4 (17...Bc6 18.Rxe6+ fxe6 19.Qxe6+ Kf8 20.Ba3+) 18.Rxe4 Bc6 (18...Qxe4 19.Ba3) 19.Rxe6+ fxe6 20.Qxe6+ Qxe6 21.Bxe6 and two pawns and the bishop pair more than compensate for the exchange.

Black had a chance to complicate by taking the plunge. 15...Bxf2+ 16.Kxf2 Qxh2+ 17.Ke3 at first looks quite insufficient, because Black gets mated after 17...exf5 18.Bxf6 gxf6 (after 18...0-0 19.Bxd8 Qxg3+ 20.Kd2 Rxd8 21.Kc1 White will make the extra rook stand up) 19.Qd6, etc. Black cannot handle a deadly discovered check.

But the surprising 17...e5! challenges White to find an advantage.



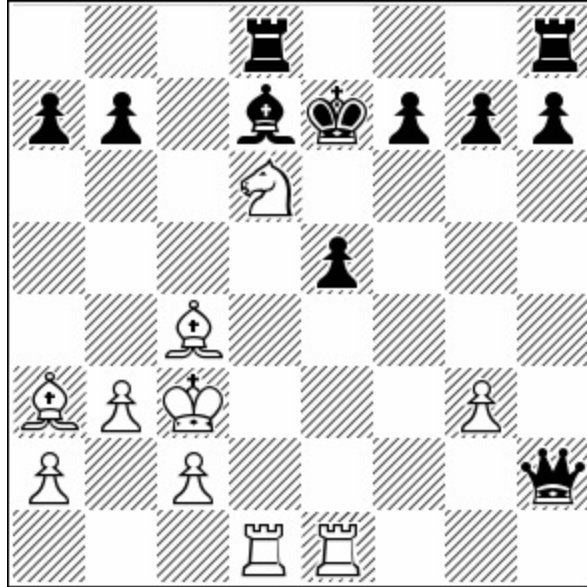
*analysis diagram*

White has several plausible dead ends:

A) 18.Nxg7+?! Kf8 19.Nf5 (19.Ne6+ is possibly more accurate, but 19...Bxe6 20.Qxd8+ Kg7 is okay for Black) 19...Bxf5 20.Qxd8+ Kg7 21.Qxh8+ Kxh8 22.Bxe5 Kg8! and White struggles to keep the black queen under wraps, so Black is pretty comfortable: 23.Re2 (23.Bxf6 Qh6+) 23...Qh6+ 24.Bf4 Qf8, etc.;

B) White can also try 18.Rh1 Qg2 19.Nxg7+ Kf8 20.Qd6+ Kxg7 21.Bxe5 Qe4+ 22.Kf2 Qf5+ (22...Be6 23.Bd3!) 23.Kg1 Be6 24.Bxe6 Qf3 25.Qc5 Rd1+ 26.Rxd1 Qxd1+ 27.Kg2 Qe2+ and White can only avoid perpetual by giving up the e5-bishop, which will bring equality anyway;

C) Only with 18.Nd6+! could White refute Black's sacrifice: 18...Ke7 (on 18...Kf8 White continues in the same way) 19.Ba3!! Ng4+ 20.Kd3 Nf2+ 21.Kc3 Nxd1+ 22.Raxd1.



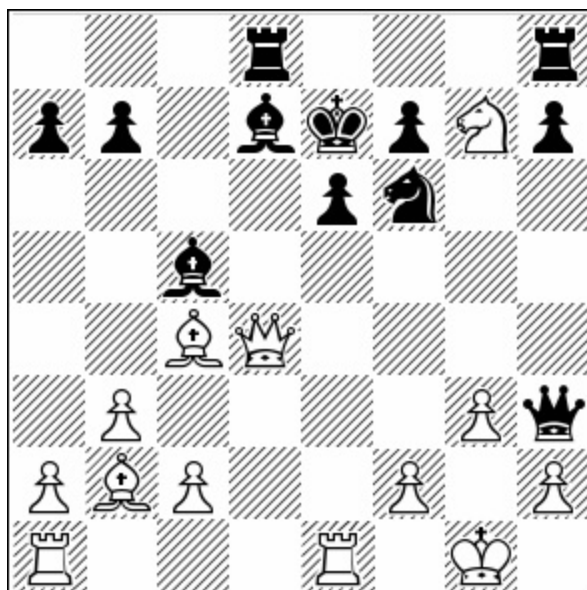
*analysis diagram*

Despite having only two minor pieces for a queen, White has a large advantage from his huge initiative.

Still, if Kruppa had discovered 17...e5!, there is no guarantee Parligras would have found the queen sacrifice.

**16.Nxg7+ Ke7 17.Qd4!!**

Powerful and pretty, this shocker leaves Black utterly without a response. Still, White has two prosaic ways to wrap up, suggesting that 15...Bxf2+ was definitely a better chance: 17.Bd4 Bxd4 18.Qxd4 Bc6 19.Qc5+ Kd7 20.Bf1 and 17.Bxf6+ Kxf6 18.Nh5+ Ke7 19.Qf3 Bd4 20.Nf4. In both cases Black's position is hopeless.



**17...Ne4**

17...Bxd4 18.Ba3+ mating is the lovely point.

17...Qg2+!? 18.Kxg2 Bc6+ 19.Kf1 Bxd4 20.Nf5+ would be a failed counterstrike.

**18.Qxe4 Bc6**

White now has more than one route to victory but his next two moves leave nothing to chance.

**19.Qh4+ Qxh4 20.Nf5+**

**Black resigned.**

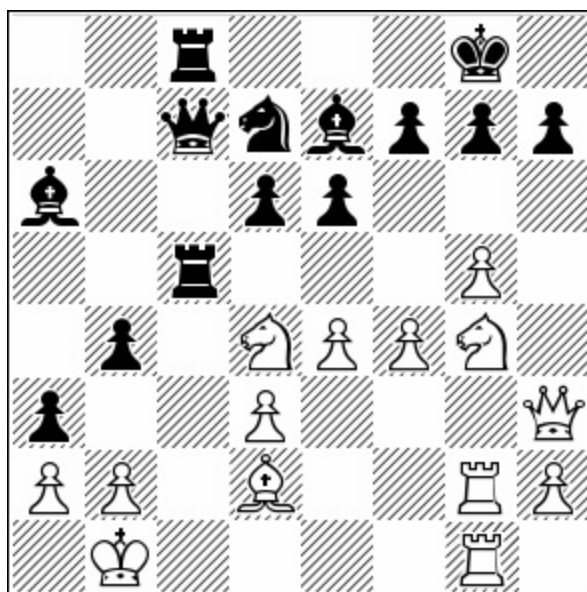
### **Both Sides Now**

When kings are on opposite wings, the Hill Street Blues adage of ‘Let’s get to them before they get to us’ is in full effect. When the armies start assailing the fortresses, making concrete threats is critical to success.

Game 39 – Sicilian Defense  
Artashes Minasian 2540

**Efstratios Grivas 2460**  
Ankara Zonal 1995

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Qb6 5.Nb3 Nf6 6.Nc3 e6 7.Bd3 d6  
8.Be3 Qc7 9.f4 a6 10.Qf3 Be7 11.0-0-0 b5 12.Kb1 Nb4 13.g4 Bb7 14.g5  
Nd7 15.Qh3 0-0 16.Rhg1 Rfc8 17.Rd2 Nxd3 18.cxd3 b4 19.Nd1 a5 20.Nf2  
a4 21.Nd4 Ra5 22.Ng4 Rc5 23.Rdg2 Ba6 24.Bd2 a3



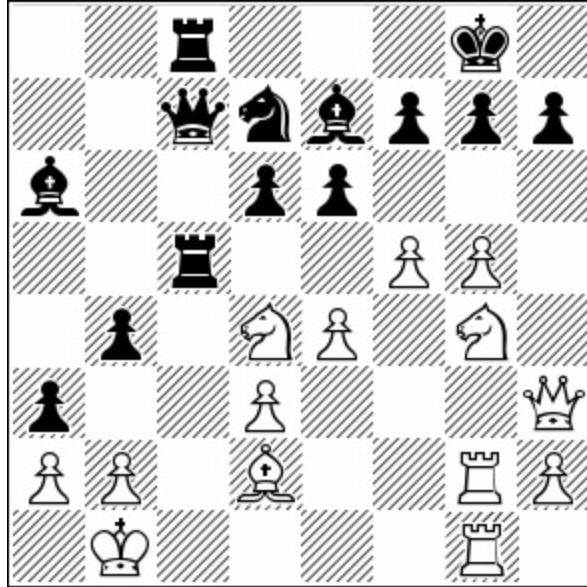
Both sides have pawn storms and impressive heavy piece artillery, but Black is about to breach the queenside. 25.b3 Rc3! won't help. Can White create strong enough counterplay before Black crashes through?

**25.Nh6+**

The other move order can also be dealt with:

A) 25.g6 fxg6! (25...hxg6? 26.Nh6+ gxh6 27.Rxg6+) 26.Nh6+ (26.Nxe6 Qb6 leads nowhere) 26...gxh6 27.Rxg6+ Kh8 transposes to the game;

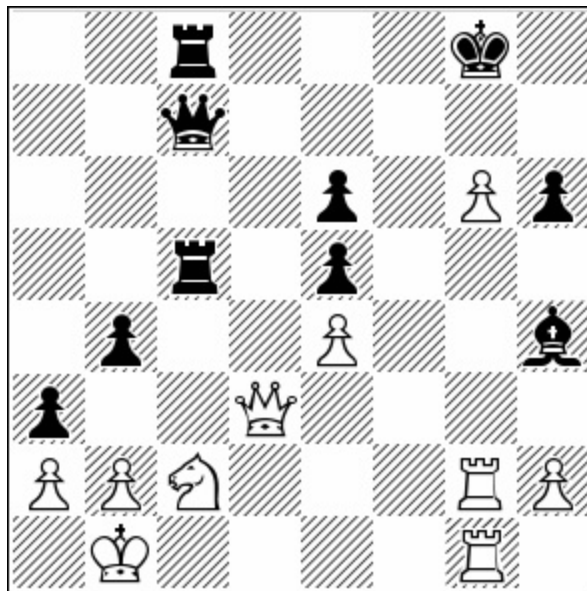
B) White apparently needed one more prep move, 25.f5!. The position defies OTB analysis, but first a couple of computer lines, with more or less forced play:



*analysis diagram*

B1) 25...exf5 26.Nh6+ gxh6 27.gxh6+ Kh8 28.Qg3 (now Black can't block with a piece on g5) 28...Bxd3+! 29.Qxd3 f4 30.Bxf4 Ne5 31.Qe3 with dynamic equality;

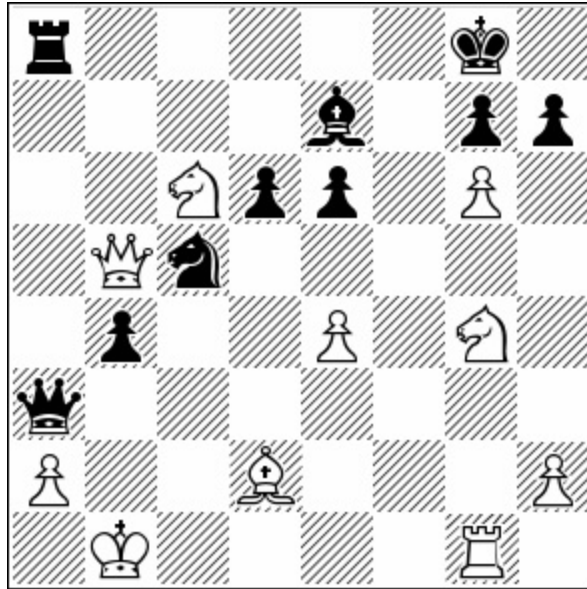
B2) 25...Ne5! 26.Nxe5 dxe5 27.g6 fxg6 28.fxg6 h6 29.Bxh6 Bxd3+ 30.Nc2! (after 30.Qxd3 exd4, Black is winning) 30...Bh4!! 31.Qxd3 gxh6



*analysis diagram*

with an edge for Black;

B3) I think more likely is 25...axb2 26.g6 fxg6 27.fxg6. White is finally creating big threats, but Black can focus attention on the queenside with a piece sacrifice: 27...Bxd3+! 28.Qxd3 Rc1+ 29.Kxb2 Nc5. White can just hang on with 30.Qb5 Rxc1 31.Rxc1 Qa7 32.Nc6 Qa3+ 33.Kb1 Ra8



*analysis diagram*

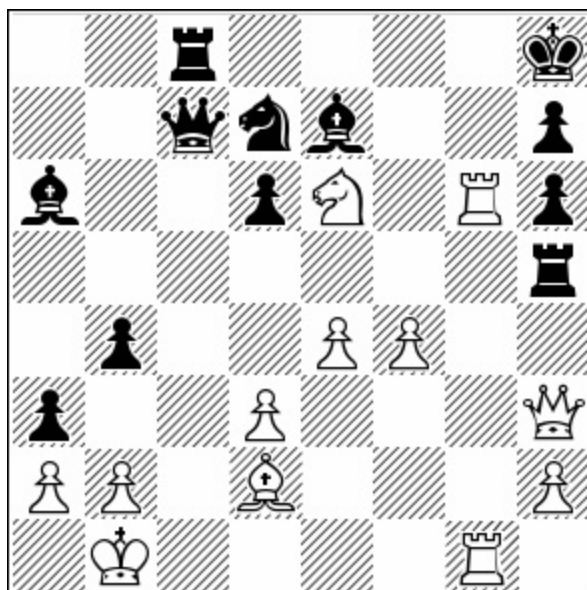
34.Nh6+! (34.Nxe7+?? Kh8 35.Qc4 b3-+) 34...Kh8 (White wins after 34...Kf8 35.Nxb4! or 34...gxh6 35.Nxe7+ Kg7 36.Qc4) 35.Nf7+ Kg8 36.Nh6+! (36.Nxe7+ Kf8 still wins for Black!) with a most unusual perpetual check.

It certainly is more human to strike at the king now before Black makes any more headway.

**25...gxh6 26.g6**

26.gxh6+ Kh8 27.Qg3 Bg5 keeps the kingside shut.

**26...fxg6 27.Rxc6+ Kh8 28.Nxe6 Rh5!**



This is certainly the best choice, though the engine will tell you Black is completely winning after various queen moves. The difference is that White is forced to simplify, leaving nothing to chance.

**29.Rg8+ Rxf8 30.Rxf8+ Kxf8 31.Qg3+ Rg5! 32.fxf5 Qb6**

From here Black just has to remain patient with defensive moves until he has time to drop the hammer.

**33.g6 Bf6 34.gxh7+ Kxh7 35.Qh3 Kg8 36.Qg4+ Kf7 37.Nf4 Nf8 38.Qh5+ Kg8 39.Qd5+ Kh8 40.Qf7 Bg7 41.Qe8 Qg1+ 42.Kc2 axb2 43.Be1 b1=Q+ 0-1**

## The Long Run

Play against both exposed kings can be a factor quite deep into the game.

Game 40 – Sicilian Defense

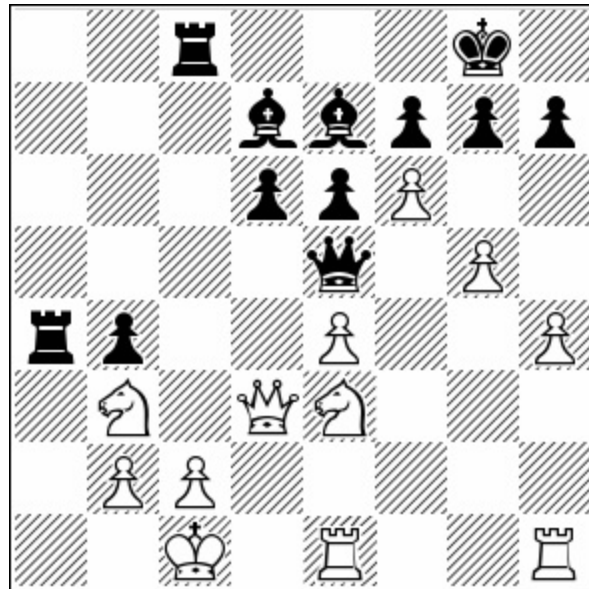
**Sam Sevian 2578**

**Benjamin Bok 2607**

Wijk aan Zee B 2016

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Bg5 Nbd7 7.Bc4 Qb6 8.Bb3 e6 9.Qd2 Be7 10.0-0-0 Nc5 11.f3 Qc7 12.g4 b5 13.Bxf6 Bxf6 14.g5**

**Be7 15.h4 Bd7 16.Rde1 b4 17.Nd1 Nxb3+ 18.axb3 a5 19.Ne3 0-0 20.Qd3 Rfc8 21.f4 a4 22.bxa4 Rxa4 23.f5 Qa5 24.Nb3 Qe5 25.f6**



At first glance it seems Black has made more headway, and two bishops should help his cause, too.

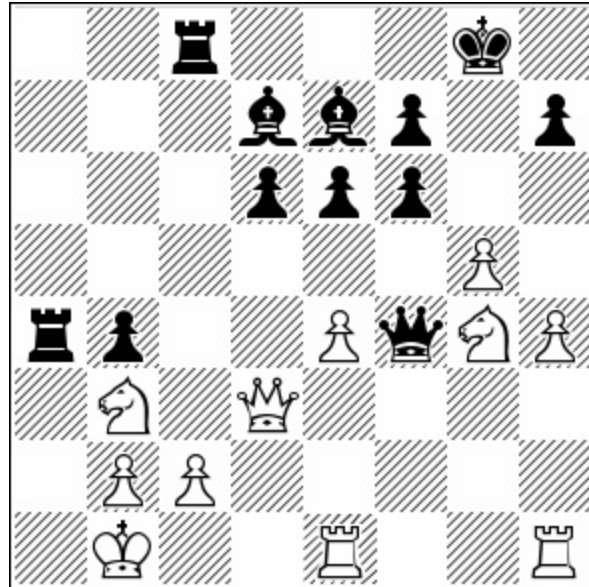
### **25...gxf6?**

Whose attack reigns supreme often comes down to timing. This mistake gives White time to press his play on the kingside. Instead 25...Bb5! would have kept the pressure on White, as there is no good flight square for the queen. If 26.Qd2 (26.Qd4 gxf6 27.Ng4 Ra1+ 28.Kd2 Rxe1 29.Rxe1 Qf4+) 26...Rca8 27.Kb1 Ra2 28.Nd1 Bd8, White is totally on the defensive while Black is poised to crash through.

### **26.Ng4! Qf4+**

It's natural to grab this tempo, but it's not that useful as the king helps defend the a-file on b1 and the black queen is still in an awkward spot. 26...Qb5 presents a difficult choice for White. Trading queens is okay for White but I suspect Sam would have speculated with 27.Qf3 when anything can happen.

### **27.Kb1**



### 27...Qxg4

This fails against accurate play, but the king cannot safely hide in the corner: 27...Kh8 28.gxf6 Bf8 (28...Bxf6 29.Rhg1! Bg7 30.Ref1, and suddenly the trapped queen forces Black to jettison material) 29.Rhg1.

Black is in big trouble here because his queen is still under fire and White has an idea to double on the g-file (with rooks or rook and queen) that is very hard to meet, e.g. 29...Bc6 30.Qe2 Ra7 31.Qg2 Rac7 32.Rgf1, again winning material.

### 28.gxf6 Kf8

It's best to run, as Black cannot defend after 28...Kh8 29.fxe7.

### 29.e5!

29.fxe7+ Kxe7 would have solved Black's problems, but now his king is dangerously constricted. 29.Rhg1, with similar ideas, would also be strong.

### 29...Ke8

After 29...d5 30.Qxh7 the g-file proves deadly, e.g. 30...Qg6 31.Qh8+ Qg8

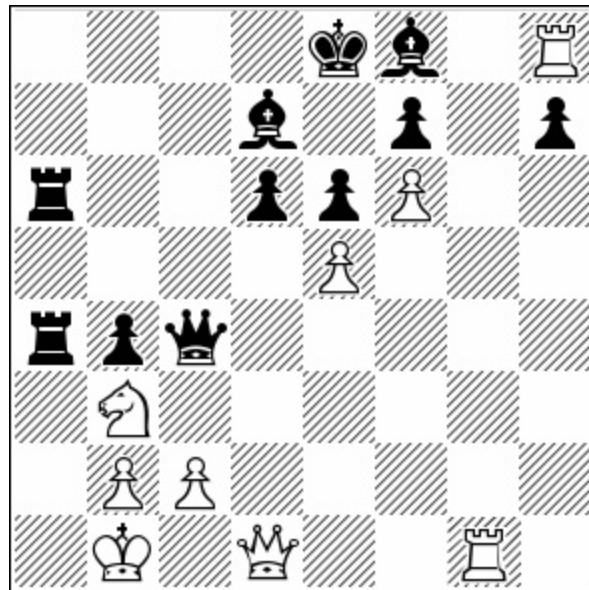
32.Qh6+ Ke8 and now 33.Rhg1 Qf8 34.Qh7 or 33.Qg7 Qf8 34.h5 both win easily.

**30.Rhg1 Qxh4 31.Rg8+**

This is good enough to win, but with a subtler follow-up than Sevan has prepared. Probably the simpler 31.fxe7 should have been preferred, as Black is pretty much helpless: 31...d5 (31...dxe5 32.Rd1 Ra7 33.Qd6 splate) 32.Ref1 Kxe7 (32...Qe4 33.Qxe4 dxe4 34.Rg7) 33.Rxf7+ Kxf7 34.Qf3+ Ke7 35.Rg7+ Kd8 36.Qf8+ Kc7 37.Qd6+, etc.

**31...Bf8 32.Rxf8+?**

Forcing continuations are tempting, but the right way was 32.Reg1 Rc6 (32...d5 33.Qe3 and White's queen penetrates one way or another) 33.Rh8 Rca6 34.Qd1 Qc4.



*analysis diagram*

Now, 35.Rgg8?! Kd8 36.Rg4! is good enough, but even better is 35.Rxf8+! Kxf8 36.Rg8+! Kxg8 37.Qg1+ with a classic mating pattern.

**32...Kxf8 33.Qxd6+ Kg8 34.Rg1+ Kh8 35.Qxd7 Raa8**

Time for defense. 35...Rca8 36.Qxf7 R4a7 37.Qxe6 Qd4 38.Rf1 Ra2 39.Qc8+ Rxc8 40.Nxd4 Rca8 41.Nb3 and White's passed pawns should eventually decide.

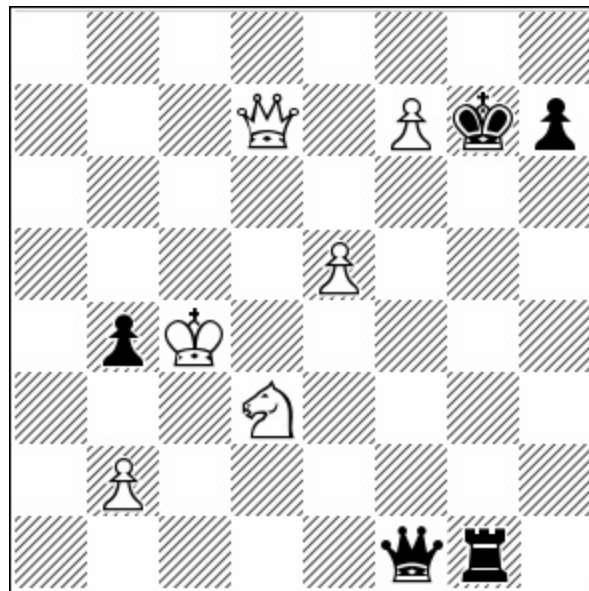
**36.Qxf7 Rg8 37.Rxg8+ Rxg8 38.Qxe6 Qe4?!**

Without a rook for defense, White is vulnerable to his king becoming exposed.

38...Qe1+ 39.Nc1 b3! is the most direct drawing method – in fact White has to find an accurate move, 40.Qf5!. It's possible that Bok had hopes to win here.

**39.f7**

39.Nc5 looks like a good chance here, and White has a spectacular win in the line 39...Rg1+? 40.Ka2 Qxc2 41.f7 Qb1+ 42.Kb3 Qd1+ 43.Kc4 Qf1+ 44.Nd3! Kg7 45.Qd7!!



*analysis diagram*

45...Qxf7+ (otherwise 46.e6 wins anyway) 46.e6! Rg4+ 47.Kd5+-. The problem with all this is that Black can play a more responsible move like

39...Qg2! and White has no way forward, as 40.f7?! Qf1+ 41.Ka2 Rf8 clips the f-pawn.

**39...Rg1+ 40.Ka2 Qa8+ 41.Na5 Qxa5+ 42.Kb3 Kg7!**

Black's king will not be easily dominated. Now 43.Qe8?? Qd5+ wins for Black.

**43.Qf6+ Kf8 44.Qd6+ Kxf7 45.e6+ Kg6**

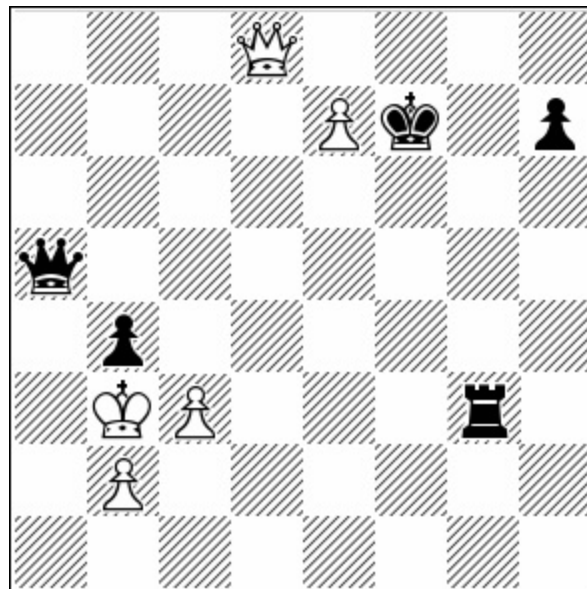
Easy does it. 45...Kg7? 46.Qd4+ gives White winning chances in the queen ending.

**46.e7+ Kf7 47.Qd8!**

White can snag the rook with 47.Qf4+ Kxe7 48.Qe3+ but here the h-pawn would be huge counterplay, even if White emerged a pawn up. However, now the black queen is dominated and the pawn is poised to queen.

(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 17:*

**47...Rg3+ 48.c3**



**48...Rxc3+! 49.bxc3 Qa3+**

The queen finds a way at the king, and soon we see a fundamental draw.

**50.Kc4 Qxc3+ 51.Kb5 Qe5+ 52.Kxb4 Qxe7+ 53.Qxe7+ Kxe7**

With stalemate on the board in a few.

½-½

### **Creative Desperation**

As I said before, in chess as in life, necessity is the mother of invention. Sensing when we need to think outside the box to deal with a tactical situation is an important skill.

Game 41 – Nimzo-Indian Defense

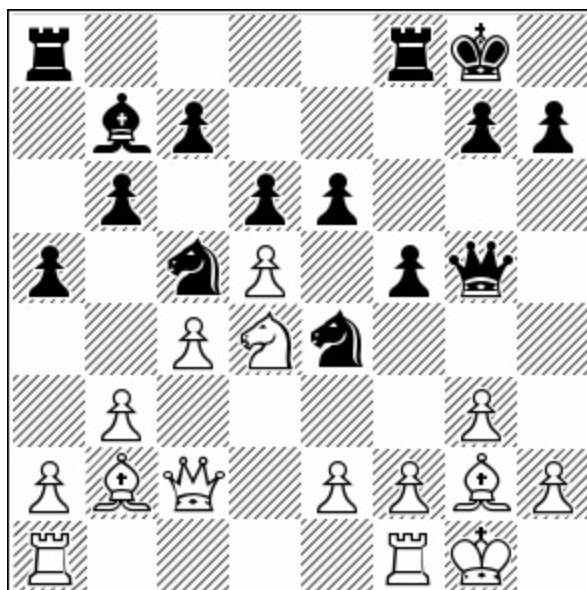
**Evgeny Bareev 2636**

**Leonid Yudasin 2550**

Philadelphia 2009

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.Qc2 0-0 5.Nf3 d6 6.g3 b6 7.Bg2 Bb7 8.0-0 Bxc3 9.Qxc3 a5 10.b3 Nbd7 11.Bb2 Ne4 12.Qc2 f5 13.d5 Ndc5 14.Nd4 Qg5**

Black opted for a dubious opening plan and faces danger from the unchecked dark-squared bishop.



### 15.f3!

A first surprise for Black, who had hoped to prevent this with his last move.

### 15...Nf6

The knight retreats to fight another day. Yudasin sees through the transparent trap 15...Qe3+ 16.Kh1 Nf2+ 17.Rxf2 Qxf2 18.Qd2 f4 19.Nc2! and the door clamps shut on the queen.

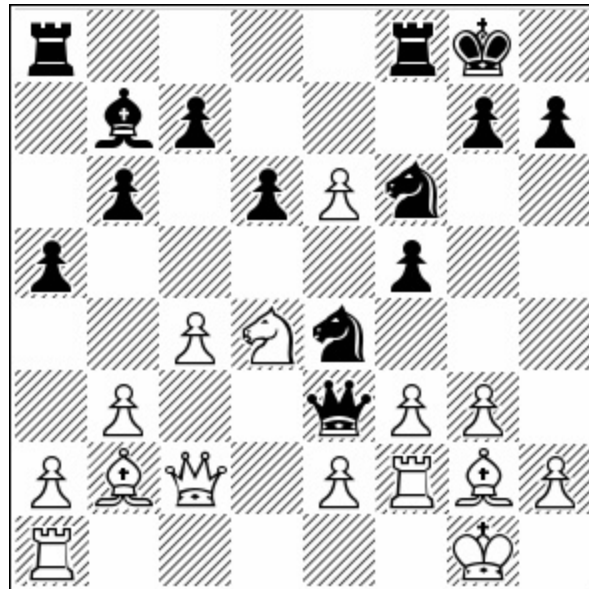
### 16.dxe6 Qe3+ 17.Rf2?

This was a strange decision, since White has a strong position without risk after 17.Kh1, e.g. 17...g6 18.Qc1 Qxc1 19.Bxc1 Rfe8 (with 19...Rae8 20.Bh6) 20.Bb2 Re7, Black is just holding. Of course, if White had a rook on f2 and a king on g1, he could just take on d5 in that last position. One can lose the forest for the trees; in fine tuning the details Bareev overlooked he had set himself up for tactics – the only real way out of this mess for Black.

### 17...Nce4!?

Afterwards Yudasin regretted not playing 17...Nfe4 18.fxe4 fxe4 19.Raf1

(19.Nf3 exf3 20.exf3 Nd3 21.Qe2 Qxf2+ 22.Qxf2 Nxf2 23.Kxf2 Rae8 24.Re1 Re7 and Black will consolidate) 19...Rxf2 20.Rxf2 Rf8 21.Bf3 exf3 22.e7! Qxe7 (22...Re8 leads to forcing play but White is okay: 23.Nf5! fxe2 24.Qxe2 Qe4 25.Qxe4 Bxe4 26.Nxg7 Rxe7 27.Nh5) 23.exf3 Qe3 with a moderate edge for Black. This is the ‘bird in the hand,’ so to speak, but Yudasin’s choice seems to end the game.



**18.Nxf5!!**

Giving a full rook with check is an amazing concept. Yet, upon reflection this move is not actually that difficult. It isn't necessary to calculate it perfectly, since everything else simply loses! 18.fxe4 Ng4 19.Raf1 Nxf2 20.Rxf2 fxe4 just gives Black a much better version of the previous variation. Black wins an exchange for no compensation.

**18...Qxf2+ 19.Kh1**

Suddenly Black's queen is in big trouble.

**19...Nh5!**

Yudasin matches his opponent's resourcefulness.

He could have continued more prosaically: 19...Qc5 20.fxe4 Rae8 21.e7 Rf7 and Black may keep some edge, e.g. 22.Rf1 Nxe4! 23.Bd4 (not 23.Bxe4 Rxf5) 23...Qc6 24.Kg1 d5. Or 22.Bd4 Qc6 23.Kg1 Nxe4 24.Rf1, transposing. 22.Qc3 looks attractive, but 22...h6! is a strong answer, as after 23.Rf1 Nxe4 24.Nxh6+ Kh7! is now available.

It has to be said that it is not at all clear to the human eye that any of this should favor Black; perhaps even the opposite. Yudasin's move zeroes out, but White has to be brilliant to get there.

**20.Bd4 Nhxg3+ 21.hxg3 Nxg3+ 22.Kh2 Qxe2**

The ball is in White's court now, as he needs to find a way out again.

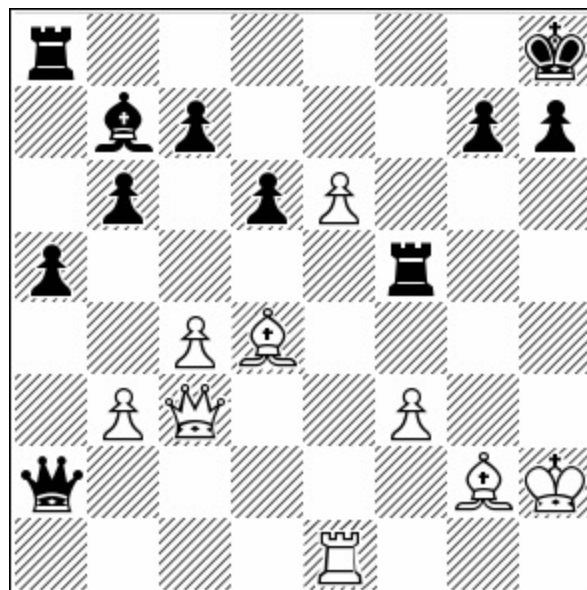
**23.Ne7+ Kh8 24.Qc3**

Not 24.Ng6+ hxg6 25.Qxg6 Nf5 26.Rh1 Kg8!-+.

**24...Nf5 25.Nxf5**

25.Re1? Nxd4 clearly favors Black.

**25...Rxf5 26.Re1 Qxa2**



Will Bareev save the game with a counterattack? No... 27.Bxg7+? Kg8 just leaves the white king in mortal danger. But he salvages a half-point in surprising fashion:

**27.Ra1! Qe2 28.Re1 Qa2 29.Ra1**

**Draw agreed**, as the open board does not permit the queen to escape.

### Forced Brilliance

Circumstances may force us into the correct move, but the reason why is not always easy to see.

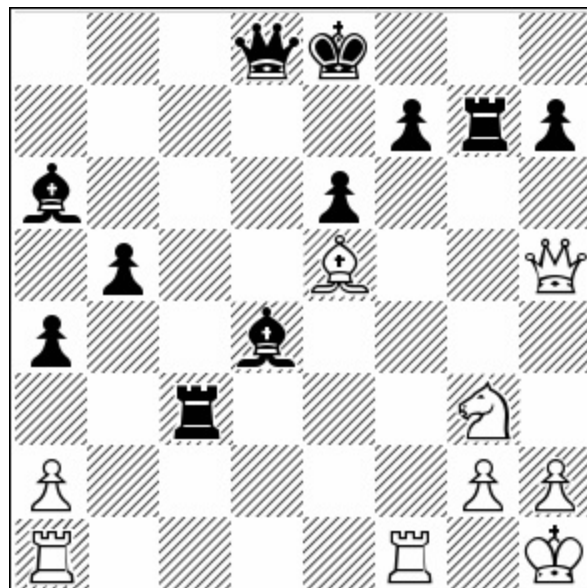
Game 42 – Sicilian Defense

**John Emms 2490**

**Alex Yermolinsky 2575**

Philadelphia 1991

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 e6 4.0-0 Nge7 5.Nc3 Nd4 6.Nxd4 cxd4 7.Ne2 a6 8.Ba4 Nc6 9.d3 g6 10.c3 dxc3 11.bxc3 Bg7 12.Ba3 b5 13.Bb3 a5 14.Bd6 Ba6 15.d4 a4 16.Bc2 Na5 17.Bd3 Rc8 18.f4 Nc4 19.Bxc4 Rxc4 20.f5 gxf5 21.exf5 Rg8 22.Ng3 Rxc3 23.fxe6 dxe6 24.Qh5 Bxd4+ 25.Kh1 Rg7 26.Be5**



First place in the World Open is on the line. On the surface it looks good for

Emms, but he has walked into problematic pins.

### **26...Rc5!?**

Emms had totally overlooked this move, dreaming about 26...Bxe5 27.Qxe5 with White well on top. But Yermo actually had something stronger:

26...Rcxg3 27.Bxg3 (27.hxg3 Qd5 28.Rae1 Bb7 29.Re2 Bxe5 30.Qxe5 Qxe5 31.Rxe5 Bd5) 27...Bxa1 28.Rxa1 Qd5 29.Qe2 Bb7 and Black is substantially better after both recaptures.

Emms now played an accidentally brilliant move because there is nothing else to try, but he couldn't find the hidden point.

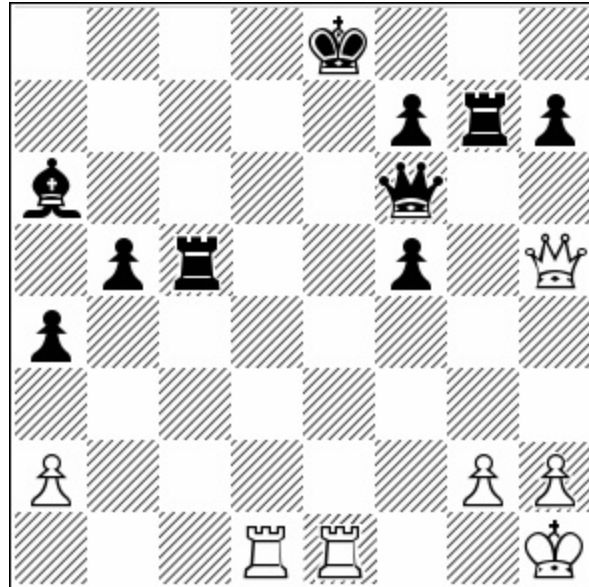
### **27.Nf5!! exf5 28.Bxg7??**

And Black went on to win easily:

**28...Bxg7 29.Rad1 Rd5 30.Rde1+ Kf8 31.Rxf5 Rxf5 32.Qxf5 Kg8 33.Qe4! h6 34.Rc1 Qb8 35.Rd1 Bb7! 36.Qe7 Kh7 37.Qxf7 Be4 38.Rd7 Qe5 39.Qf1 b4 40.Qd1 Bc6 41.Rd3 a3 42.Rg3 Qa1 43.Rxg7+ Qxg7**

and Yermo had his first, but certainly not last share of the top prize at the World Open.

But Emms had an amazing way out: 28.Bxd4 Qxd4 29.Rad1 Qf6 (Yermo points out the crazy idea of 29...Bb7!? 30.Rxd4 Rxg2 which, objectively speaking, also leads to equal game after 31.Re1+ Re2+ 32.Kg1 Rxe1+ 33.Kf2 Re4) 30.Rfe1+.



*analysis diagram*

It looks like Black is winning routinely, but after 30...Kf8,  
 (back to the exercises) **Solution to Puzzle 18:**

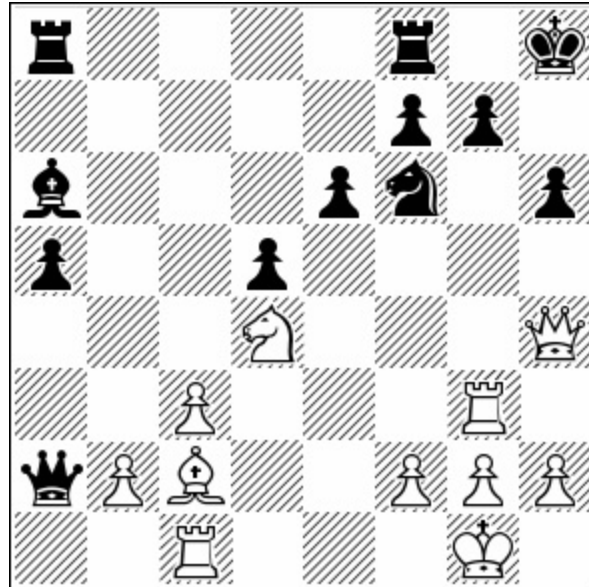
31.Qh6!! shockingly and decisively exploits Black's back rank. But 30...Re5 is not entirely satisfactory either, as 31.Rxe5+ Qxe5 32.Qh4! produces a nasty double threat. After 32...f6 33.Re1 Bb7 a draw is likely.

### **Mama Says Knock You Out**

A stunning defensive counterstrike is a thing of beauty, and the next one almost knocked me out of my chair. Of course, it only happened because my opponent left no stone unturned in looking for a way out.

Game 43 – French Defense  
**Joel Benjamin** 2554  
**Yury Shulman** 2549  
 San Diego ch-USA 2004

**1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nd2 c5 4.Ngf3 cxd4 5.Nxd4 Nc6 6.Nxc6 bxc6 7.Bd3 Nf6 8.0-0 Be7 9.Re1 a5 10.c3 Ba6 11.Bc2 Qc7 12.Qf3 Bd6 13.Qh3 0-0 14.exd5 cxd5 15.Nf3 Bf4 16.Qh4 Bxc1 17.Raxc1 Qc4 18.Nd4 Qxa2 19.Re3 h6 20.Rg3 Kh8**

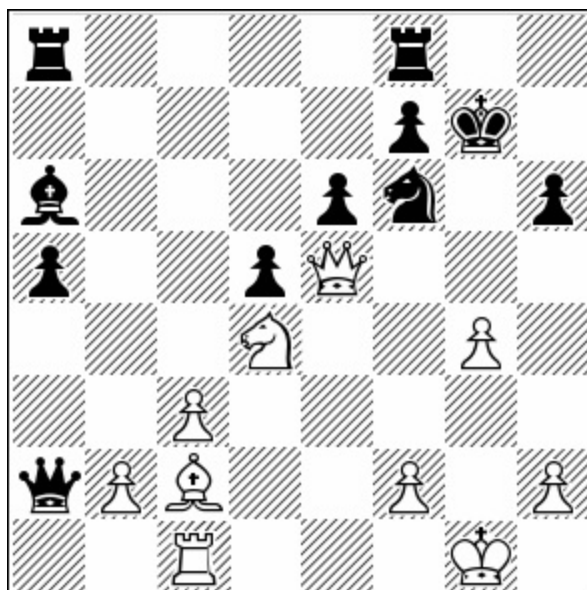


## 21.Rxg7!

This sacrifice is really a no-brainer. There aren't really any other ideas, and down a pawn, I have no time to try to drum them up. Moreover, I can always bail out with perpetual check, not the worst result against a strong grandmaster.

**21...Kxg7 22.Qg3+ Kh8 23.Qe5 Kg7 24.Qg3+ Kh8 25.Qe5 Kg7 26.h3**

White had a very serious alternative in 26.g4 with the plan of blasting open the g-file for the rook to use.



*analysis diagram*

This works well in the plausible variation 26...Rg8 27.Kh1 Qxb2 28.Rb1 Qa3 29.g5 hxg5 30.Qxg5+ Kf8 31.Qxf6 Re8 32.Qh6+ Ke7 33.Nc6+ Kd6 34.Qf4+ e5 35.Qf6+ Re6 36.Qxf7 Qxc3 37.Qxg8 Qxc2 38.Qd8+ Kxc6 39.Rb6+ Kc5 40.Qc7+ Kd4 41.Qxc2 Rxb6 42.Qd2+ with a winning position for White.

Black can pursue a more sophisticated defense along the lines of the game: 26...Bd3! 27.Bxd3 (27.g5!? Bxc2 28.Qxf6+ Kh7 29.Qxh6+ Kg8 30.Rxc2 Qa1+ 31.Kg2 Qd1 32.Re2 Qd3 and Black's queen has gotten back into the game just in time, leaving White with no better than 33.Nxe6 fxe6 34.Qxe6+ and perpetual check) 27...Qxb2 28.Nb3 (28.Rb1? Qd2 defends everything) and now there are several drawing paths, the simplest being 28...Qxb3 29.g5 Rg8.

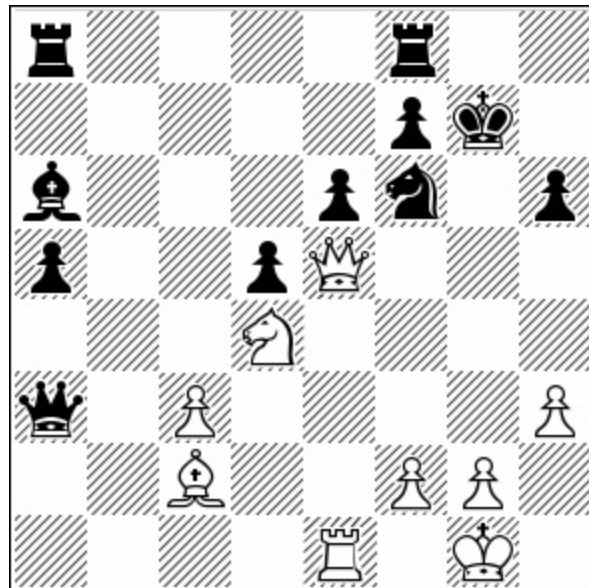
26.g4 may be the choice for a more natural born attacker, especially one used to risking everything on their intuition or calculation. I don't think I calculated it too deeply partly because I had found an attractive alternative line (not wanting to lose on time looking for more). I also liked 26.h3 because it retains the option of the repetition draw if things aren't working out.

**26...Qxb2 27.Rb1**

The queen has to be chased away – if it gets to b8 it will break my attack completely.

### 27...Qa3 28.Re1

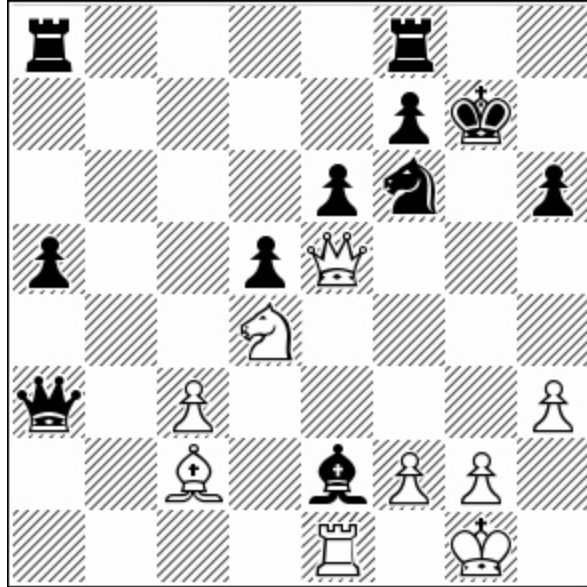
Here I was feeling pretty good about life, as I couldn't see a good defense to my threatened rook lift. For instance, 28...Rg8 29.Re3 Bc8 30.c4! (this finesse, limiting the black queen and opening up the center, is an improvement on 30.Rf3 Kf8 31.Rxf6 Qc1+ 32.Kh2 Qg5. I can't say I saw it during the game!) 30...Qc1+ (the queen can try other squares but White is doing well regardless) 31.Kh2 Ra7 32.cxd5 exd5 33.Qf4! with a winning attack.



### 28...Be2!!

This is a brilliant move, which seems at first to be impossible to find. But if I may think along with Shulman here, it seems unfair that Black cannot transfer the queen to g5; even after Re1-e3, the diagonal there is blocked. So this move eliminates that obstacle.

Now 29.Rxe2? Qc1+ 30.Kh2 Qg5 kills my attack.



**29.Nxe2**

This was the last chance to bail out with 29.Qg3+ Kh8 30.Qe5, but I had just started to believe I was winning and was feeling a bit stubborn now.

**29...Qb2**

29...Rfc8 is also possible, though objectively the position is balanced anyway.

**30.Nf4 Qxc2 31.Nh5+ Kh7 32.Nxf6+ Kh8 33.Nd7+ Kh7**

Instead, 33...f6 34.Qh5 (34.Nxf6? Qf5) seems like an unnecessary risk.

**34.Nf6+ Kh8 35.Nd7+**

Draw agreed.

I felt proud to have been a part of this game, even though I didn't win!

### **Complicate or Die**

Submitting to a lost ending is not really living. Sometimes there is truly no choice; but if there is a chance to present complications, you might be

rewarded for going for them.

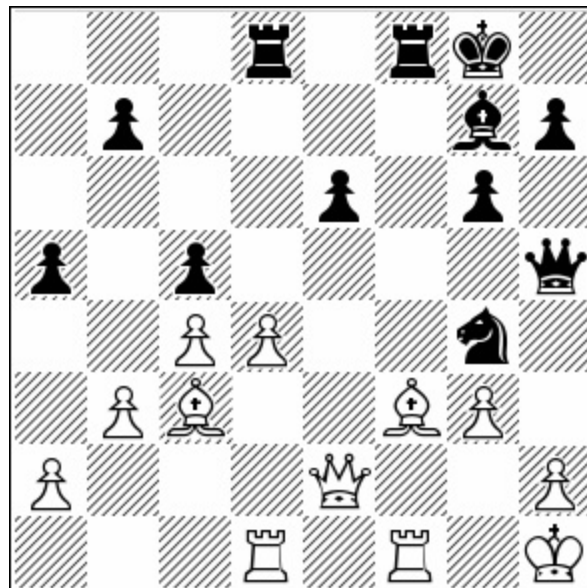
Game 44 – King’s Indian Defense

**Jonathan Schroer**

**Joel Benjamin**

U.S. League 2009

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nf3 Bg7 4.g3 0-0 5.Bg2 d6 6.0-0 c6 7.Nc3 Bf5 8.b3 Ne4  
9.Bb2 Nxc3 10.Bxc3 Be4 11.Qd2 e6 12.Qe3 d5 13.Bh3 Bxf3 14.Qxf3 f5  
15.Qd3 Nd7 16.f3 a5 17.Kh1 Qg5 18.Bg2 Qh5 19.Qe3 Rfe8 20.Qd3 Nf6  
21.e4 dxe4 22.fxe4 Rad8 23.Rad1 c5 24.Bf3 fxe4 25.Bxe4 Ng4 26.Qe2 Rf8  
27.Bf3**



**27...Rxf3!**

This is the strike I've been angling for. Both of us expected it to be a knockout blow.

**28.Rxf3 Nxh2**

In the game White settled for

## 29.Kg2?

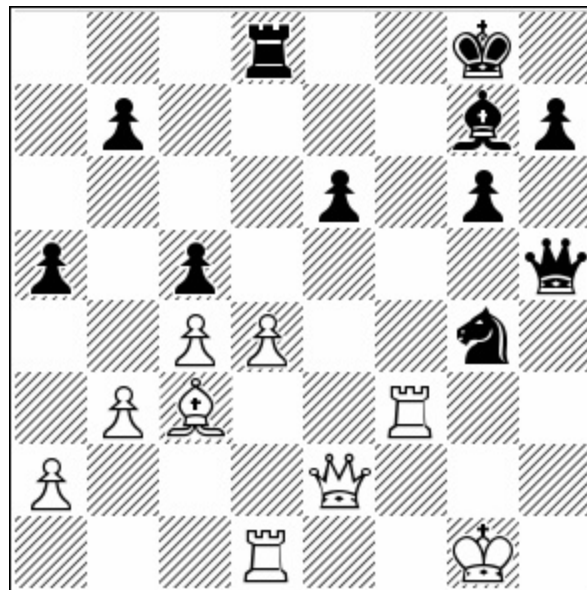
which enabled Black to play an ending with two extra pawns and little chance of going wrong:

**29...Qxf3+ 30.Qxf3 Nxf3 31.Kxf3 b6!**

And Black won after 46 moves.

White needed to keep the game complicated. There was one plausible way to do so, and one impossible way!

The natural choice here is 29.g4 Nxg4+ 30.Kg1.



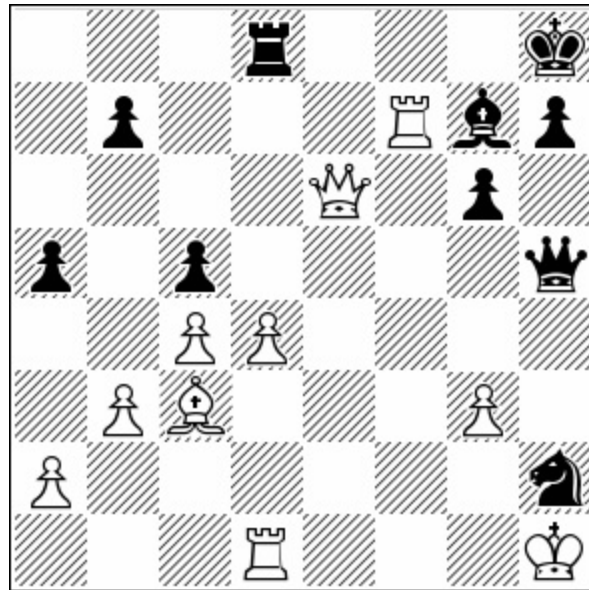
*analysis diagram*

Admittedly, White's position depends on the tactic 30...cxd4 31.Qxe6+ Kh8 32.Rxd4!, which surprisingly leaves Black vainly searching for a win. If 32...Qh2+, 33.Kf1 Qh1+ 34.Ke2 Qg2+ 35.Ke1 Qg1+ 36.Rf1 holds. This line seems unlikely, but sometimes a good approach in a desperate situation is to look for a way to unlock the potential of your pieces, despite apparent danger.

Black can play for a win with 30...Nh2 31.Rf2 Qxe2 32.Rxe2 Nf3+ 33.Kh1 (33.Kg2 Nxd4) 33...cxd4 34.Rxe6 Kf7, or 30...Qg5 31.Qxe6+ Kh8 32.Rg3

h5, but objectively White is not much worse.

The miracle that may not be possible to find OTB is 29.Qxe6+ Kh8 30.Rf7!!.



*analysis diagram*

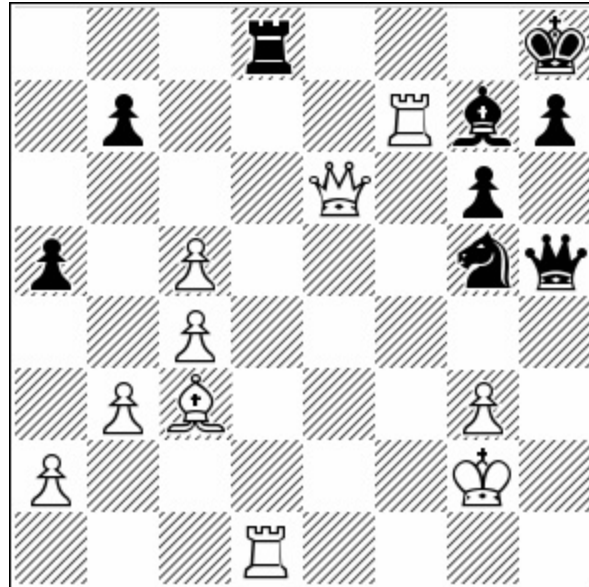
This is extreme caution-to-the wind mode! White somehow has saving (or winning) counterstrikes in all lines:

A) 30...Nf1+ 31.Kg2 Qxd1 32.Rxg7 Kxg7 33.d5+ (33.Qe5+ also works)  
33...Kh6 34.Bg7+! Kxg7 35.Qe5+! Kh6 36.Qf4+ with perpetual check;

B) 30...Qxd1+ 31.Kxh2 Qc2+ 32.Kh3 Qxc3 allows White to force perpetual check in multiple ways: 33.Rxg7 Qf3 34.Rg8+ Rxg8 35.Qe5+ Rg7 36.Qe8+ or 33.Qe7 Qxd4 34.Rxg7 Qxg7 35.Qxd8+;

C) 30...cxd4 31.Rxd4 (the most direct, but other rook moves also draw)  
31...Ng4+ (31...Nf3+? 32.Rh4 Rd1+ 33.Kg2 Nxf4+ 34.gxf4 leaves Black helpless) 32.Kg2 Qh2+ 33.Kf3 Qh1+ 34.Ke2 (34.Kxg4?? Qh5+ 35.Kf4 Bh6+ 36.Ke4 Qe2#) 34...Qg2+ 35.Kd1 Qg1+ (35...Bxd4? 36.Rf8+! Rxf8 37.Bxd4+) 36.Kc2 Bxd4 and now simplest is 37.Rxh7+ Kxh7 38.Qe7+ Kh6 39.Qh4+ Kg7 40.Qe7+ with yet another perpetual check;

D) 30...Nf3+ 31.Kg2 Ng5 appears to force resignation but actually loses to the spectacular 32.dxc5!!.

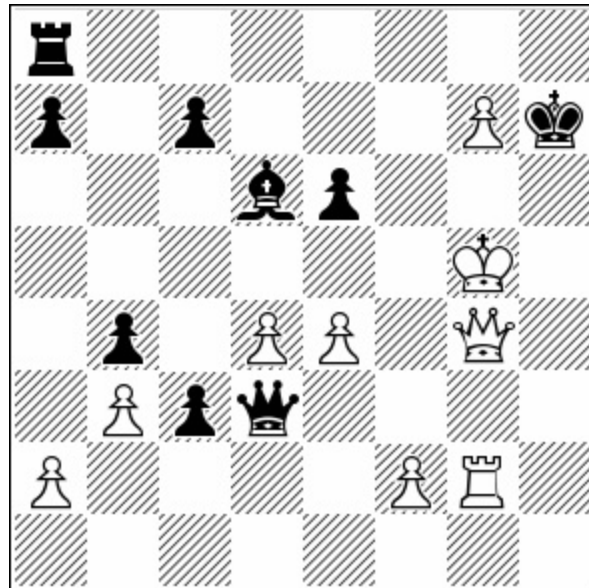


*analysis diagram*

Four different White pieces are hanging but Black can't effectively capture any of them. 32...Nxe6 33.Rxd8+ Nxd8 34.Rf8# has to be avoided, so Black's hand is forced: 32...Qxd1 33.Bxg7+ Kg8 34.Rf8+! Kxg7 35.Qf6+ Kh6 36.Rxd8 Qe2+ 37.Qf2 Qe4+ 38.Kf1 Qb1+ 39.Ke2, after which White escapes the checks and wins.

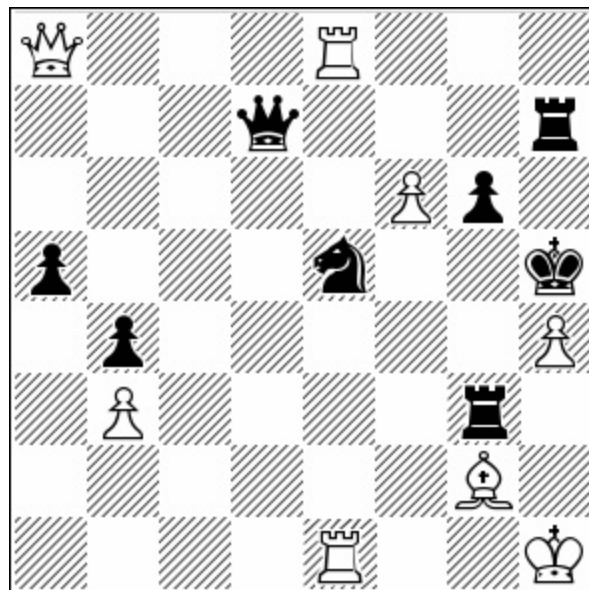
# The King Is a Fighting Piece – Puzzles

19 (go to the solution)



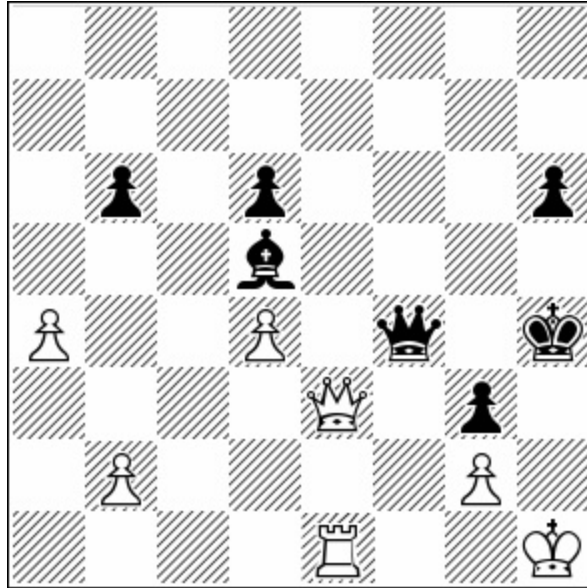
*White to play wins  
Spassky-Polugaevsky*

20 (go to the solution)



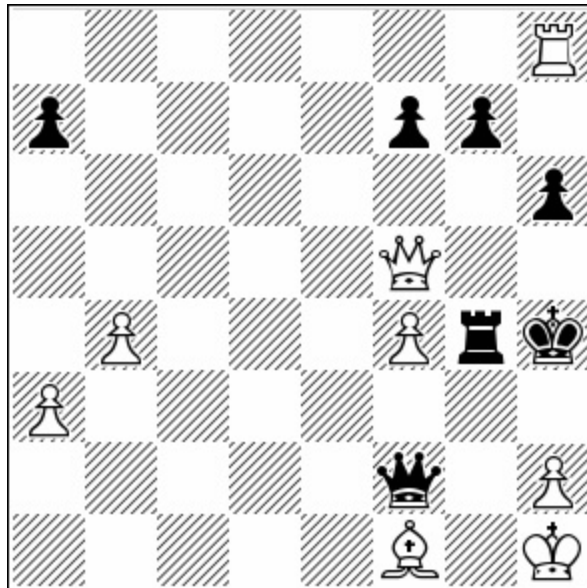
*Black to play wins  
Ganguly-Berg*

**21 (go to the solution)**



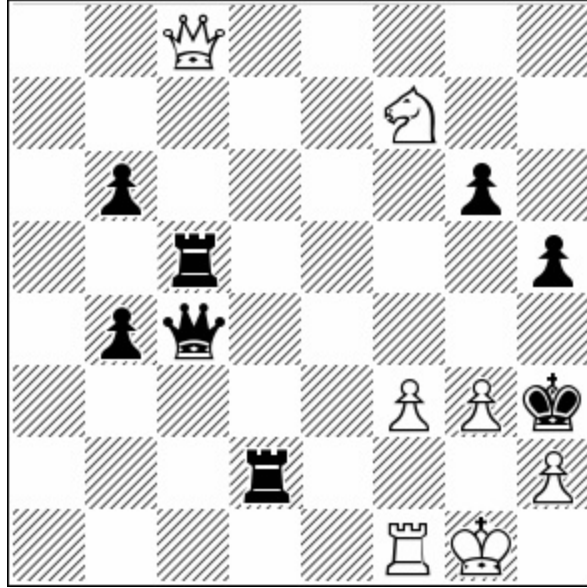
*Black to play draws  
Caruana-Nielsen*

**22 (go to the solution)**



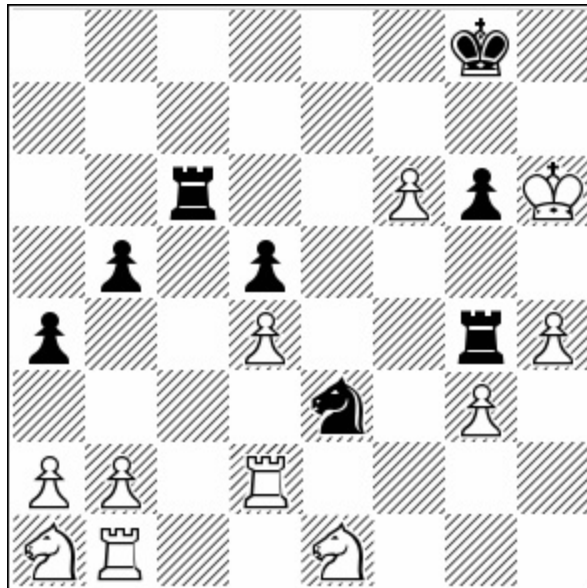
*White to play wins*  
*Laznicka-Negi*

**23 (go to the solution)**



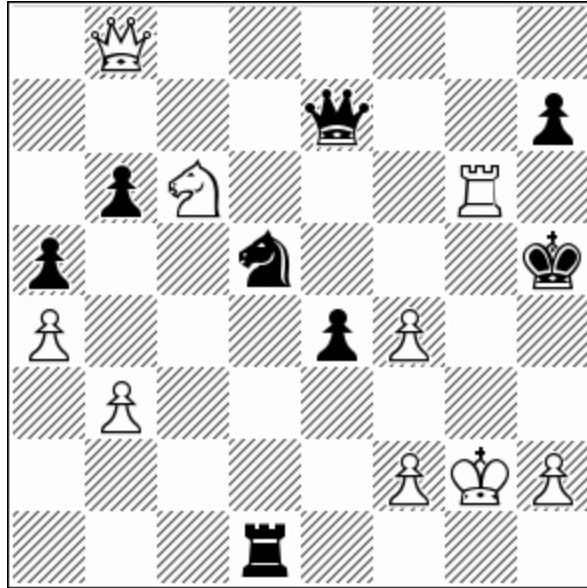
*Black to play draws*  
*Jelen-Larsen*

**24 (go to the solution)**



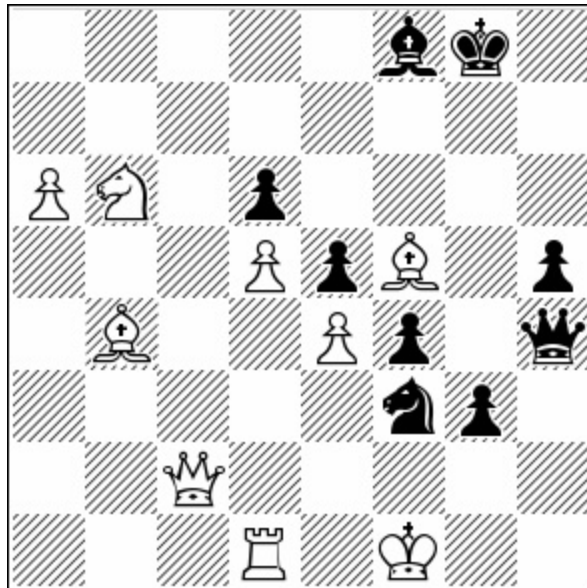
*White to play draws*  
*Shirov-Anand*

**25 (go to the solution)**



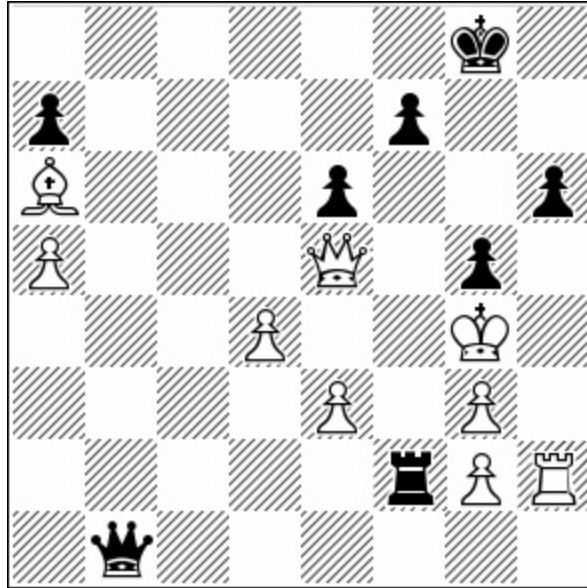
*Black to play draws*  
*Shankland-Lenderman*

**26 (go to the solution)**



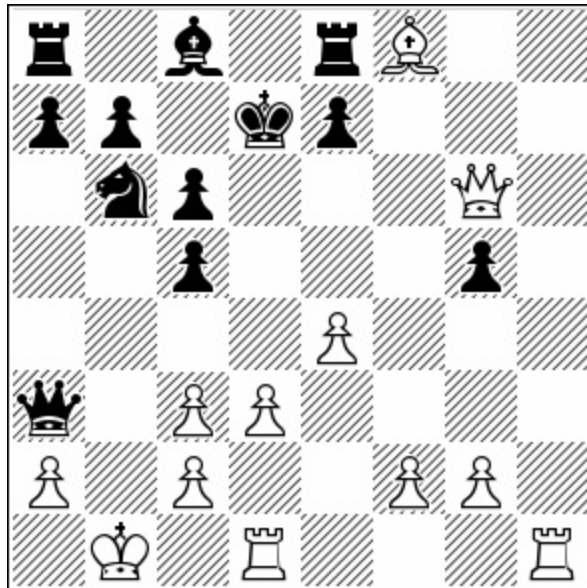
*Black to play wins*  
*Pelletier-Hagen*

**27 (go to the solution)**



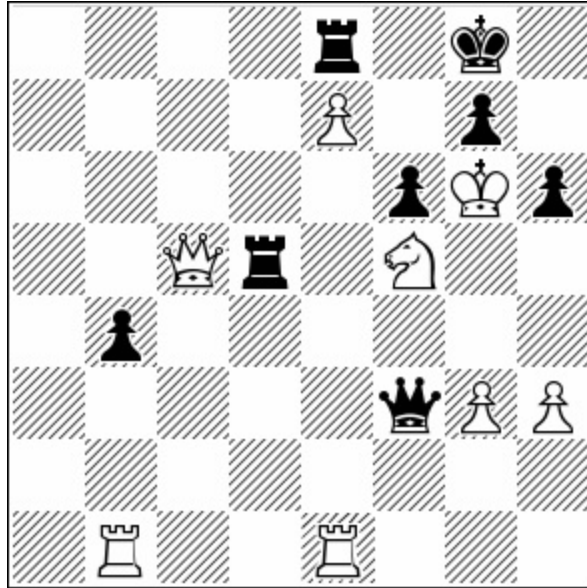
*White to play wins*  
*Plaskett-Hebden*

**28 (go to the solution)**



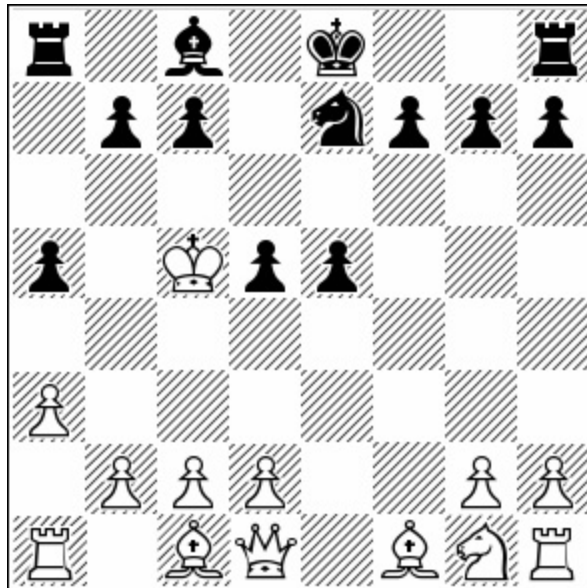
*White to play wins*  
*Wei Yi-Muthaiah*

**29 (go to the solution)**



*White to play wins*  
*Portisch-Benjamin*

**30 (go to the solution)**



*White to play draws*  
*Hamppe-Meitner*

## **Chapter 2**

# **The King Is a Fighting Piece**

What in chess is more exciting than a king hunt? So many classic examples seem so straightforward, with the king dragged like a lamb to slaughter. But in our cases matters are not so simple, as the traveling king can often not be put down by ordinary means. Not all the royal pursuits in this chapter are even successful. Sometimes a mad monarch dash is rewarded with a half-point, or even a whole one.

### **Hunting High and Low**

The Oakland Raiders used to use the motto ‘just win baby’ to describe their blue-collar approach to American football. In chess there is no need to play to the crowd when simple measures will do the job.

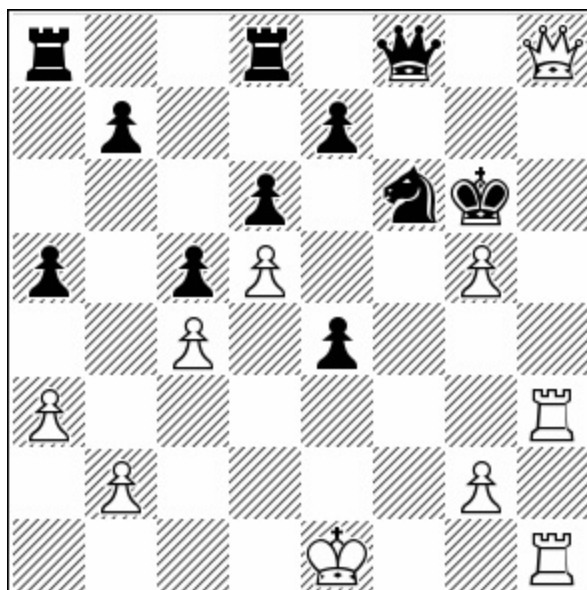
Game 45 – King’s Indian Defense

**Malcolm Pein** 2346

**Gawain Jones** 2646

Bunratty 2018

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.f3 0-0 6.Be3 c5 7.Nge2 Nc6 8.Qd2 Qa5 9.d5 Ne5 10.Ng3 Qb4 11.Nd1 Qa4 12.Nc3 Qb4 13.Nd1 a5 14.Rc1 h5 15.Rc3 h4 16.Bh6 hxg3 17.hxg3 Ne8 18.a3 Qa4 19.Bxg7 Nxc3 20.Qh6 f5 21.f4 Ng4 22.Qxg6 fxe4 23.Be2 Bf5 24.Qg5 Nf6 25.g4 Bh7 26.Rch3 Qe8 27.f5 Qf7 28.Ne3 Rfd8 29.Qh6 Qf8 30.g5 Nxf5 31.Nxf5 Bxf5 32.Qh8+ Kf7 33.Bh5+ Bg6 34.Bxg6+ Kxg6**



White has had a winning attack for some time, and has already passed up some straightforward wins. But here is the last chance for sensibility. 35.Qh4 simply wins; after the knight is removed, the black king will be defenseless against White's heavy pieces.

### **35.Rh6+??**

Never play to the crowd if there is any ambiguity! Even if this worked, there is no reason to risk it.

### **35...Kxg5 36.R1h5+ Kf4!**

White would crash through after 36...Nxh5? 37.Rxh5+ Kf4 38.Rh4+ Kg3 39.Rh3+ Kf4 40.Qh4+ Kf5 41.Rh1 Kg6 42.Qh7+ Kf6 43.Rh4! (43.Rf1+? Ke5 is unclear). Rooks, for all their glory, don't work on diagonals, allowing the black king to find comfortable shelter.

### **37.Rxf6+**

Or 37.Rh4+ Ke3 38.Rh3+ Kd4.

**37...Qxf6 38.Rh4+ Ke3 39.Rh3+ Kd4 40.Qh5 Rh8 41.Qd1+ Ke5 42.Rh5+ Rxh5 43.Qxh5+ Qf5 44.Qh2+ Qf4 45.Qh5+ Kf6 0-1**

## Deserted Palace

Sending one's own king for a walk can be a serious error as well. It is fun to calculate a stylish win, but wrong if all possibilities of blundering can be eliminated with a sober but equally powerful alternative.

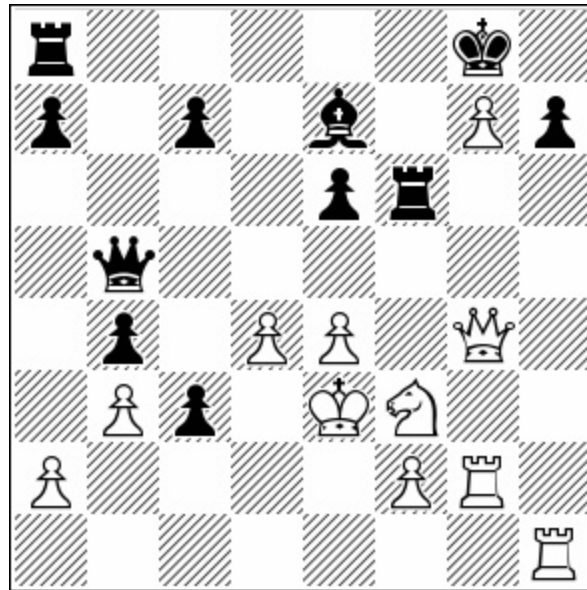
Game 46 – Queen's Indian Defense

**Boris Spassky**

**Lev Polugaevsky**

Moscow ch-URS 1961

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 b6 4.Nc3 Bb7 5.Bg5 Be7 6.e3 Ne4 7.Nxe4 Bxe4  
8.Bf4 0-0 9.Bd3 Bb4+ 10.Kf1 Bxd3+ 11.Qxd3 Be7 12.h4 f5 13.Ke2 d6  
14.g4 Nd7 15.Rag1 fxg4 16.Rxg4 Nf6 17.Rg5 Qd7 18.h5 Ne8 19.Rg2 b5  
20.c5 dxc5 21.h6 Rf5 22.Be5 c4 23.Qe4 Qd5 24.Qg4 c3 25.b3 b4 26.e4  
Qb5+ 27.Ke3 Rf7 28.hxg7 Nf6 29.Bxf6 Rxf6



**30.Rxh7!?**

This is the kind of move that would get an exclaim from annotators in the pre-engine days. And the engines don't mind it to today, except it leads to completely unnecessary complications. Instead, 30.e5 wins without any

drama. Black's hopes for a counterstrike are completely dashed, while he has no hope of defending the h-file, e.g. 30...Rg6 31.Qh5, etc.

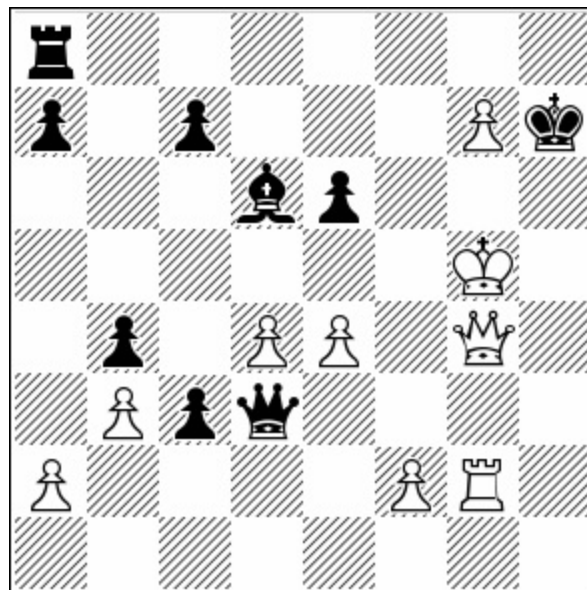
**30...Rxf3+ 31.Kxf3**

31.Qxf3 Bg5+ would cost both rooks, so the king has to come out and fight.

**31...Qd3+ 32.Kf4 Bd6+**

The engines calculate mates after 32...Qd2+, but for White! After 33.Ke5 Bd6+ 34.Kxe6 Re8+ 35.Kd7 Re7+ 36.Kc6 Black runs out of checks and faces the music.

**33.Kg5 Kxh7**



(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 19:*

**34.Kh5??**

Supposedly, Spassky had calculated 34.Kf6 Qxd4+ 35.Kf7, but decided in the moment, 'this works, too.'

**34...Qb5+ 35.Kh4**

This isn't a blunder but White could have forced a draw with 35.e5 Qe8+ 36.Kh4 Be7+ 37.Kh3 Qf7 38.Kh2 Kg8 39.Qh3 Qf4+ 40.Kg1 and Black has to give perpetual check.

**35...Be7+ 36.Kh3 Qg5 37.Qxg5 Bxg5 38.Rxg5 Rd8**

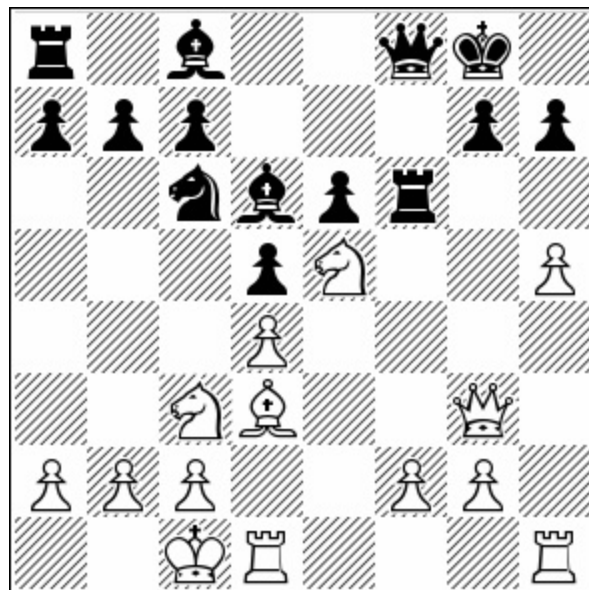
Black is comfortable in the rook ending. Still in shock from the turned tables, Spassky blundered further and eventually lost.

### Man in the Box

The crowd can be fooled. Sometimes a king hunt is actually a sign of a mating attack gone awry, with the king being allowed to escape.

Game 47 – French Defense  
Jonny Hector 2588  
Wesley So 2667  
Malmö 2011

**1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 Be7 5.e5 Nfd7 6.h4 0-0 7.Qg4 f6 8.Nf3 Rf7 9.exf6 Nxf6 10.Qg3 Nc6 11.0-0-0 Qf8 12.h5 Bb4 13.Bxf6 Rxf6 14.Bd3 Bd6 15.Ne5**



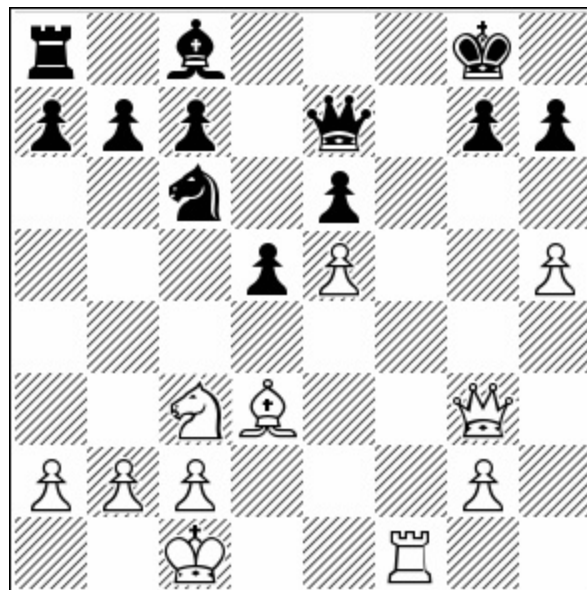
White has been offering material almost from the start in pursuit of a quick

attack.

### 15...Rxf2?!

Wesley So believes in grabbing and defending as much as any other elite player. Here he underestimates White's attack. Instead 15...Nxd4! 16.Bxh7+ Kxh7 17.Rxd4 Rxf2 was a better choice. Black's king has been exposed a bit but he has lots of counterplay.

### 16.Rdf1 Bxe5 17.dxe5 Rxf1+ 18.Rxf1 Qe7



### 19.Bg6!!

Jonny Hector has always been a natural attacking player, never afraid to go where his intuition takes him. This bold move is especially nice because White had an easy, though less effective continuation in the simple 19.h6.

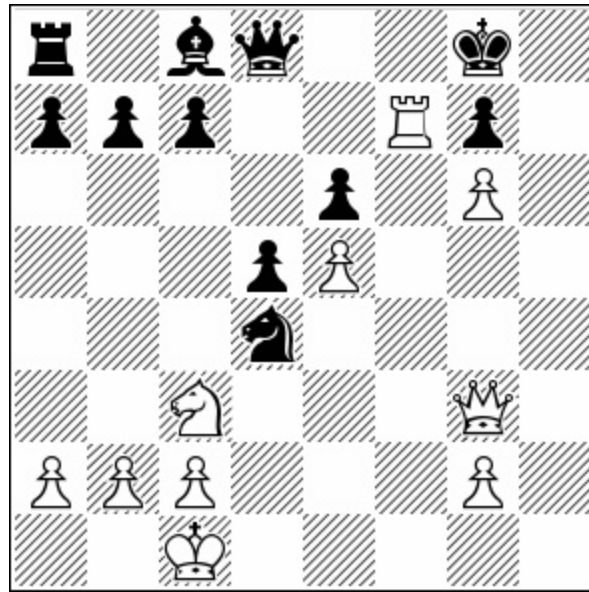
### 19...hxg6

Black might as well take the bishop as 19...Nd8 20.Ne2 Bd7 21.Nf4 will likely crash through in a few moves.

### 20.hxg6 Nd4

Black has to move to block the h-file. 20...Bd7 21.Rh1 leaves Black with no good defense to the threatened stock mate with 22.Rh8+.

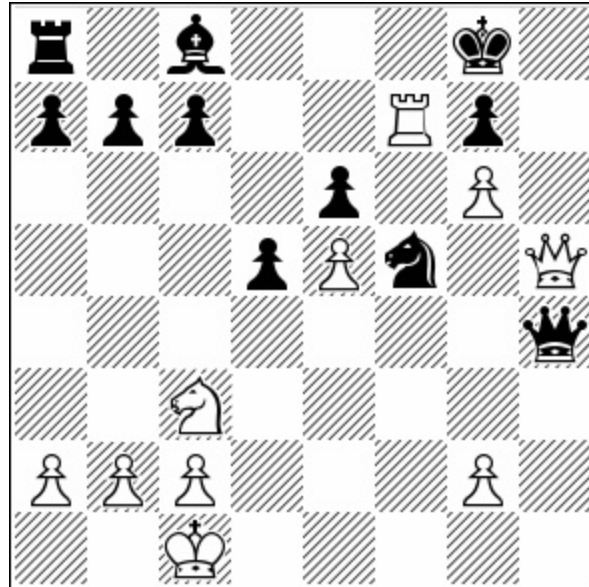
**21.Rf7 Qd8**



**22.Qf4??**

The queen settles for an indirect path to the king. The most dangerous square is h5, and White wins by sending it that way.

22.Qg4 Nf5 23.Qh5 and now the key point is that 23...Qh4...

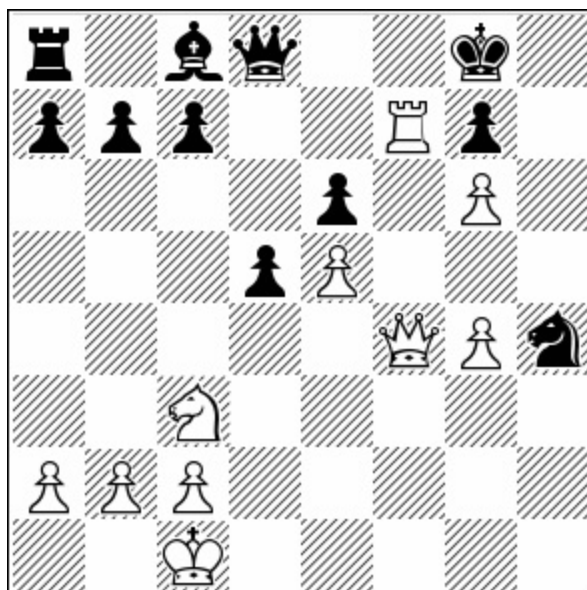


*analysis diagram*

... fails elegantly to 24.Qh7+!! (24.Rxf5 Qxh5 25.Rxh5 Bd7 is equal)  
 24...Qxh7 25.Rf8+! Kxf8 26.gxh7 and White will win after the new queen  
 shows up.

So forced is 23...Nh6 24.g4 Qe8 (24...Nxf7? 25.gxf7+ Kf8 26.Qh8+ loses the  
 queen, while 24...Bd7 25.g5 Nxf7 26.gxf7+ Kf8 27.g6 leaves Black helpless  
 to the threat of 28.Qh8+ and 29.Qxg7, after which the passed pawns bury  
 Black) 25.Rf1. Now Black seems to have a bit of a respite, but he is so  
 cramped he has little hope of surviving: 25...c6 (25...Bd7 26.g5 Nf5 27.Rxf5  
 exf5 28.Nxd5 Qe6 29.Nf6+ Kf8 30.Qh8+ Ke7 31.Qxg7+ Kd8 32.Qf8+ Be8  
 33.g7+—) 26.Ne2 Bd7 and now the simplest is 27.g5 Nf5 28.Nd4 (or 28.Ng3)  
 28...Kf8 29.Nxf5 exf5 30.Qh8+ Ke7 31.Qxg7+ Kd8 32.Rh1 Kc7 33.Rh7 and  
 the passed pawns swarm again.

**22...Nf5 23.g4 Nh4!**



Hector must have missed this move. Now White has no choice but to throw more fuel on the fire.

**24.Rxg7+ Kxg7 25.Qf7+ Kh6 26.Qh7+ Kg5 27.Qh5+ Kf4**

One only move after another, but Black is winning now.

**28.Ne2+ Ke3 29.g5 Nf3 30.Kd1 Qxg5 31.Qh7 Kf2!**

And **White resigned**.

A stylish finish. One final king move mates White by force.

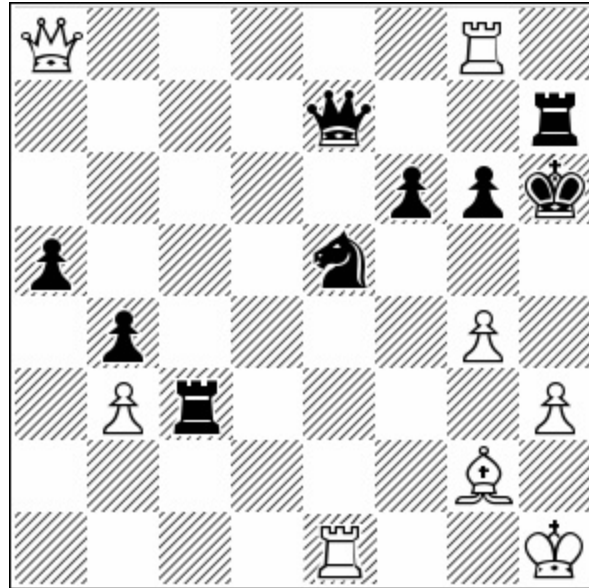
### **Advance at Your Own Peril**

Trying to drive the king up the board should not be taken lightly. Sometimes, a pursuit of the enemy king leaves one's own king to face a fearsome blowback.

Game 48 – Sicilian Defense  
**Surya Shekhar Ganguly** 2614  
**Emanuel Berg** 2606  
 Gibraltar 2009

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 e5 7.Nde2 Nbd7 8.g4**

**h6 9.Bg2 b5 10.0-0 Bb7 11.Ng3 g6 12.f4 Be7 13.Be3 exf4 14.Bxf4 Ne5  
 15.a4 b4 16.Nd5 Bxd5 17.exd5 Rc8 18.a5 Nfd7 19.Qd2 Rc4 20.b3 Rc5  
 21.Ne4 Rb5 22.Bxh6 Rxa5 23.Rae1 Rb5 24.Qf4 Qb6+ 25.Kh1 Rxd5  
 26.Bg7 Rh7 27.Bf6 Bxf6 28.Nxf6+ Nxf6 29.Qxf6 Rc5 30.Rd1 Qd8 31.Qf4  
 a5 32.Rd2 Kf8 33.Rfd1 Qe7 34.Rxd6 Rxc2 35.Qe4 Rc7 36.Rd8+ Kg7  
 37.Qa8 Rc3 38.Rg8+ Kh6 39.Re1 f6**



The position looks dynamically balanced. Black has a pawn, but his king is apparently in more immediate danger.

**40.h4?!**

In this case, other continuations are not so obvious, and the risk may appear worth taking. It's a tough decision to make on move forty, but then again, Black has to find a good reply, too.

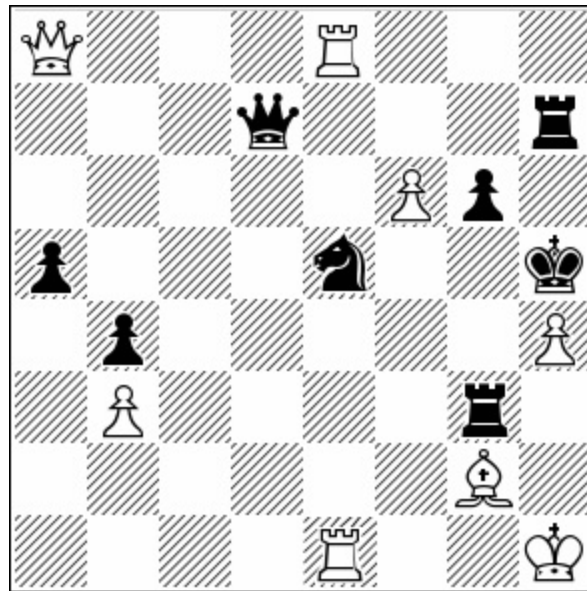
40.Qxa5 Qd6 allows Black to take over the initiative, but 40.Qe4! would have kept the pressure on Black to maintain equality: 40...Rg7 41.Rh8+ Rh7 42.Rxh7+ Kxh7 43.g5 Qd7 44.gxf6 Rxh3+ 45.Bxh3 Qxh3+ 46.Kg1 Nf3+ 47.Kf2 Nxe1 48.Qe7+ Kh6 49.Kxe1=.

**40...Rg3! 41.g5+ Kh5!**

41...fxg5? 42.Re8 costs a piece, though.

41...Rxc5 42.hxg5+ Kxc5+ 43.Kg1 Qc5+ 44.Kf1 Rh4 45.Bf3 Rh2 46.Bg2 Rh4 is yet another exotic drawing line, but Black doesn't need it.

**42.Re8 Qd7 43.gxf6**



White has finally broken down the defense of the knight on e5, but faces a massive counterattack, led by Black's own king! Still, it takes precision to make this opportunity stand up.

(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 20:*

**43...Nf3!!**

Aesthetic and brilliant at once! The knight moves to a square where it can simply be taken. And somehow its sacrifice wins a critical tempo. Compare to the more direct 43...Kxh4 44.R8xe5 Kg4+ 45.Kg1 Qd4+ 46.Kf1 Qf4+ 47.Kg1 Qd4+ which only produces perpetual check.

**44.Bxf3+ Kxh4**

The principal threat is 45...Qh3+, and 45...Kg5+ is also quite nasty. White has no choice.

## **45.Bg2**

The bishop returns, but in comparison to the variation we considered at move 43, the rook is on e8 instead of e5. This makes all the difference.

**45...Kg5+ 46.Kg1 Qd4+ 47.Kf1 Qxf6+**

There it is – White will face a killing check from a rook on the f-file.

## **48.Ke2**

Or 48.Kg1 Qd4+ 49.Kf1 Rf7+.

## **48...Qb2+ 0-1**

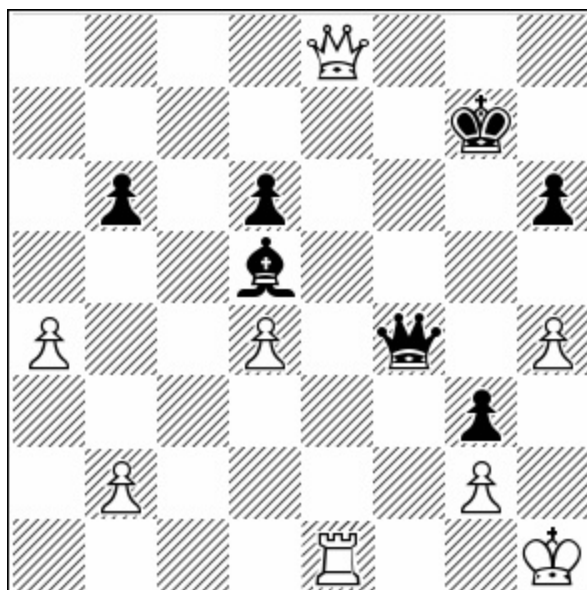
Mate is forced: 49.Kf1 Rf7+ 50.Kg1 Qf2+ 51.Kh1 Rh7+, etc.

### **Don't Mind Me**

The king can be an unexpected asset on the side of the board. In the next game it somehow sneaks in close enough to its counterpart to create a saving entanglement.

Game 49 – Ruy Lopez  
**Fabiano Caruana** 2670  
**Peter Heine Nielsen** 2680  
Amsterdam 2009

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 Nf6 4.0-0 Bc5 5.c3 0-0 6.d4 Bb6 7.Bg5 h6 8.Bh4 d6 9.Qd3 g5 10.Bg3 Nh5 11.Na3 exd4 12.cxd4 f5 13.exf5 Bxf5 14.Qc4+ Kh8 15.Bxc6 bxc6 16.Qxc6 Qf6 17.Nc4 g4 18.Nxb6 axb6 19.Nh4 Bd3 20.Rfe1 Nxc3 21.hxc3 Qxf2+ 22.Kh2 Qf6 23.Qxc7 Ra5 24.Rac1 Rh5 25.Qe7 Rxc3+ 26.gxc3 g3+ 27.Kh1 Qf4 28.Rg1 Rf7 29.Rc8+ Kg7 30.Rf8 Bc4 31.a4 Kg6 32.Rxf7 Bxf7 33.Re1 Bd5 34.Qe8+ Kg7**



Young Caruana has reached a winning position, but the process of stamping out Black's counterplay proves elusive. Liquidation into the pawn ending is the cleanest way to conclude, but Fabi probably has little time to count it out:  
 35.Re7+ Bf7 36.Rxf7+ Qxf7 37.Qxf7+ Kxf7 38.b4 Ke6 39.a5 bxa5 40.bxa5 Kd5 41.Kg1! Kc6 42.Kf1 Kb5 43.Ke2 Kxa5 44.Kf3 Kb4 45.Kxg3 Kc4 46.Kf4 Kxd4 47.g4 Kd5 48.Kf5 and wins.

**35.Qd7+ Kg6 36.Qe8+ Kg7 37.Qd7+ Kg6 38.h5+ Kg5 39.Qe7+ Kxh5 40.Qe8+ Kh4 41.Qe7+ Kh5 42.Qe8+??**

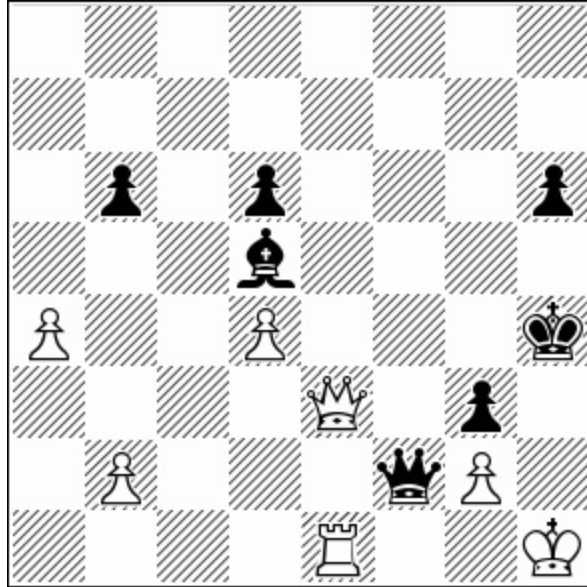
Last chance for the correct 42.Qe2+ Kg6 43.Kg1, eliminating counterplay once and for all.

White's solution is more natural but unfortunately flawed!

**42...Kh4 43.Qe3**

(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 21:*

**43...Qf2!**



Black permits a queen trade but on his own terms. After 44.Qxf2?? gxf2 45.Rf1 Kg3 the marauding king fatally entombs its opponent. But there will be no more chances to budge the queen from its dominant post, producing a surprising positional draw.

**44.Qxh6+ Kg4 45.Qg6+ Kh4 46.Qh6+ Kg4 47.Qh3+ Kg5 48.Ra1 Be4 49.b4 d5 50.Rg1 Bf5 51.Qh8 Be4**

Caruana gets no time to set up, as 52.a5 Bxg2+ 53.Rxg2 Qf1+ produces an instant perpetual.

**52.Qe5+ Kg4 53.Qg7+ Kh5 54.Qe5+ Kg4 55.Qe6+ Kg5 56.Qe7+ Kh5 57.Qe8+ Kg5 58.Qd8+ Kh5 59.Qh8+ Kg5 60.Qe5+ ½-½**

### Breaching Containment

Points in chess are awarded for trapping the king, not chasing it. Ironically, I think the victim in the next game was conscious of that fact but stumbled into what he hoped to avoid!

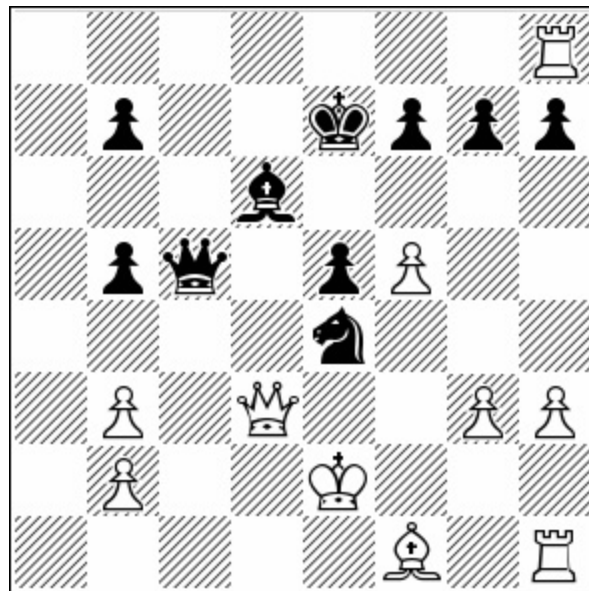
Game 50 – Sicilian Defense

**Andrey Stukopin 2586**

**Li Ruifeng 2574**

St Louis 2017

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Be3 e5 7.Nb3 Be6 8.h3  
 Be7 9.f4 Nc6 10.f5 Bxb3 11.axb3 Nb4 12.g3 d5 13.exd5 Qc7 14.d6 Bxd6  
 15.Nb5 Nxc2+ 16.Ke2 axb5 17.Rxa8+ Ke7 18.Rxh8 Nxe3 19.Kxe3 Qc5+  
 20.Ke2 Ne4 21.Qd3



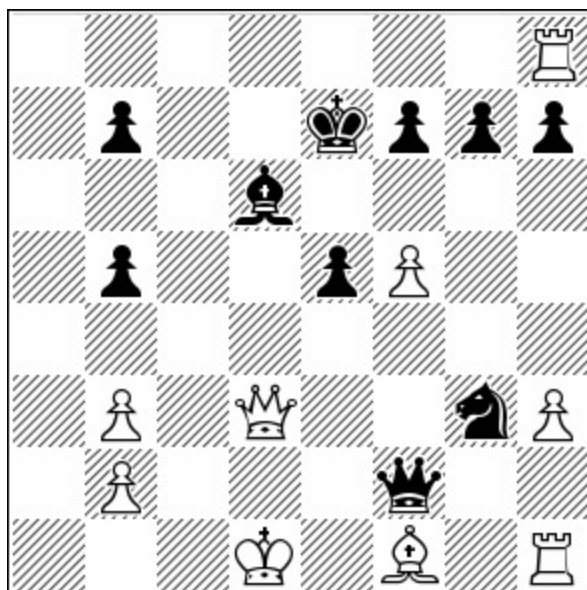
The white king is feeling very insecure, but Black's material investment is not to be disregarded.

**21...Qf2+?**

This allows the white king to relax, enabling White to counterattack. The right strike was 21...Nxc2+!! 22.Qxc2 (Black is no worse after 22.Kd2 e4 23.Qe3 Qxe3+ 24.Kxe3 Bc5+ 25.Kd2 Nxc1) 22...Qc2+ 23.Ke3 Bc5+ 24.Kf3 Qxf5+ (White's king escapes after 24...e4+? 25.Kg4 Qd1+ 26.Kh4) 25.Kg2 Qc2+ with perpetual check.

It's possible that Black gambled in an attempt to win.

**22.Kd1 Nxc2**



**23.f6+!**

White starts smartly with a pawn sacrifice to box in the black king.

**23...gxf6 24.Qd5?**

It seems sensible to control the long diagonal, but White doesn't create concrete threats. The right way was 24.Qxb5!, threatening mate on e8. White wins by keeping his king safe enough while counterattacking, e.g. 24...Qf3+ 25.Kc1 f5 (25...Qe3+ 26.Kb1 f5 27.Qe8+ Kf6 28.Bc4) 26.Re8+ Kf6 27.Qb6, etc.

**24...Nxf1 25.Qxb7+ Ke6 26.Qc8+ Kd5**

The b5-pawn that White failed to remove prevents 27.Qc4#!

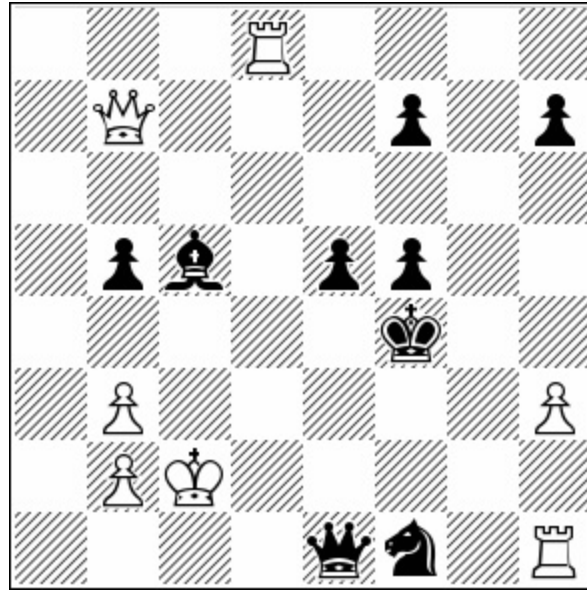
**27.Qa8+?!**

It's natural to continue pursuing the king, though 27.Qc3, defending key squares with the queen, was the better choice, with a definite advantage to White. The shame is that 27.Qb7+ was much stronger than Stukopin's choice; the queen would hit c6 on move 30, enabling the chase to continue.

**27...Kd4 28.Qa7+ Bc5 29.Rd8+ Ke4 30.Qb7+ Kf4**

There are no more checks and the white king is poorly guarded.

**31.Kc1 Qe1+ 32.Kc2 f5**



**33.b4?**

There was some hope in 33.Rxf1+ Qxf1 34.Qxf7, at least setting the trap 34...Bd4? 35.Qxf5+! Kxf5 36.Rf8+, recouping the queen. But 34...Qxh3 would still leave White in dire straits.

**33...Ne3+ 34.Kb3 Qxb4+ 35.Ka2 Qa5+ 36.Kb1 Qxd8 37.Qxb5 Qd5 0-1**

### **Which Way You Goin' Billy?**

When the king faces obvious irritation by retreating, it may seem more prudent to advance. But without downfield protection the king could regret that decision.

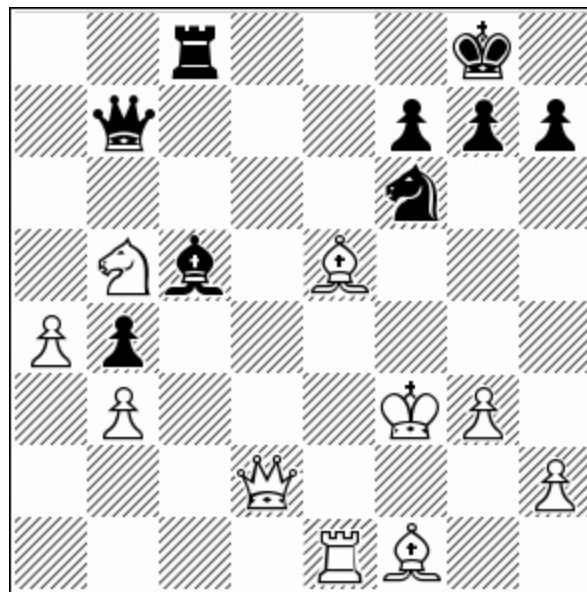
Game 51 – Sicilian Defense

**Kiril Badev 2396**

**Petar Arnaudov 2404**

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 e6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.g3 a6 7.Bg2 d6 8.0-0 Bd7 9.Nce2 Nf6 10.c4 Be7 11.b3 0-0 12.Bb2 Rac8 13.Rc1 Qb8 14.Re1 b5 15.Nxc6 Bxc6 16.Nd4 Ba8 17.cxb5 axb5 18.a3 b4 19.a4 Bb7 20.Rxc8 Rxc8 21.Nb5 e5 22.Qd2 Bf8 23.f3 Bc6 24.Bf1 d5 25.exd5 Bc5+ 26.Kg2 Bxd5 27.Bxe5 Bxf3+ 28.Kxf3 Qb7+

White made an unwise recapture a few moves ago, as 27.Rxe5 would have prevented the sacrifice. Now White has a difficult and unpleasant choice to make.



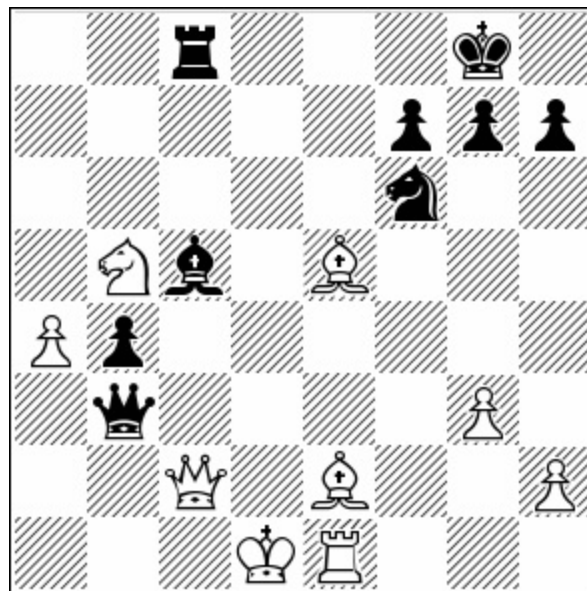
**29.Kf4??**

I don't know if Badev miscalculated this, was trying to avoid a draw, or thought the alternative was simply losing. But 29.Ke2 had to be played and was not altogether clear. Objectively it seems Black does not have more than a draw: 29...Qe4+ 30.Kd1 and now:

A) 30...Qb1+ forces White to accept a repetition, as 31.Qc1? Qxb3+ 32.Qc2 Qxc2+ 33.Kxc2 Bf2+ 34.Kd1 Bxe1 35.Bxf6 gxf6 36.Kxe1 Rc1+ 37.Kf2 b3 wins for Black. So 31.Ke2 Qxb3! (or an immediate draw with 31...Qe4+) 32.Bg2 leaves Black with nothing better than another perpetual: 32...Qc4+

33.Qd3 Qa2+ 34.Qd2 Qc4+, etc.

B) 30...Qf3+ 31.Be2 Qxb3+ 32.Qc2



*analysis diagram*

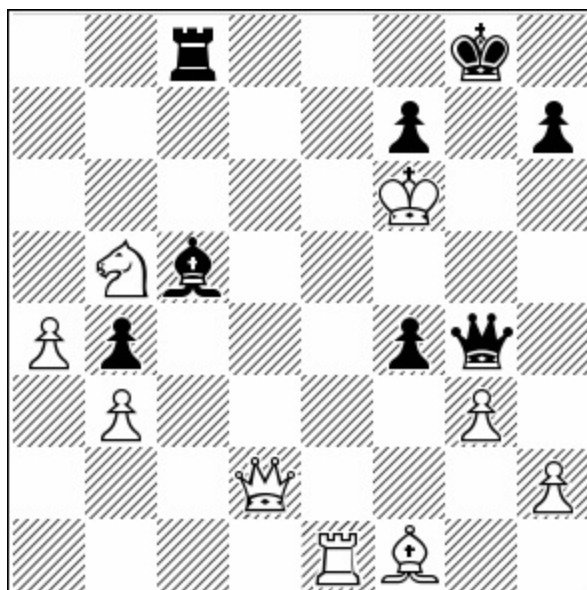
Here, liquidation does not work so well for Black: 32...Qxc2+ 33.Kxc2 Bf2+ 34.Kd1 Rd8+ (34...Bxe1 is about equal, as White does not have to trade his e5-bishop in this line, so he can keep two pieces for a rook) 35.Nd6 Ne4 36.Rf1 Nxd6 37.Kc2 and White stands better as his passed pawn is far more dangerous, backed by the bishop pair.

In other lines White can confidently return the piece as well: 32...Rd8+ 33.Bd4! Qd5 34.Qc4 Bxd4 35.Qxd5 Rxd5 36.Nxd4 Rxd4+ 37.Kc2, or 32...Qd5+ 33.Bd3 Rd8 34.Kc1! Qxd3 35.Qxd3 Rxd3. In both cases White's better king position gives more value than an extra kingside pawn.

### **29...g5+ 30.Kf5**

After 30.Kxg5 Ne4+ 31.Rxe4 Qxe4, White's king is trapped, and he will have to give lots of material to save it: 32.Bf4 Be7+ 33.Kg4 h5+ 34.Kh3 (34.Kxh5 Qg6#) 34...Qf5+ 35.Kg2 Rc2 and the queen goes.

### **30...Qf3+ 31.Bf4 Qg4+ 32.Kxf6 gxf4**



### 33.Bc4

Black has not invested too much, so he can win in several ways after 33.Qd1. The most stylish way is 33...Be7+! 34.Ke5 (34.Kxe7 Qg5+ 35.Kd6 Qc5+ 36.Kd7 Qc6+ 37.Ke7 Re8#) 34...f3 35.Bc4 Kg7 (35...Rc5+ is also crushing, and a bit more human) 36.Bxf7 Bf6+ and White will lose all his pieces.

**33...Rc6+ 34.Ke5 Re6+ 35.Bxe6 Qxe6+ 36.Kxf4 Qh6+**

The queen drops so **White resigned.**

### Stuck in the Middle with You

Surely a king cannot accept an invitation to the middle of the board with heavy pieces about. Or can it?

Game 52 – Ragozin Variation

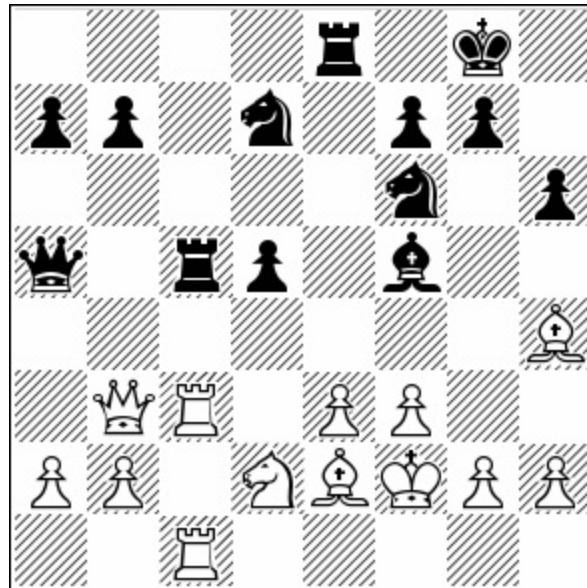
**Vasyl Ivanchuk** 2732

**Wei Yi** 2740

Hoogeveen m 2017

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.Nf3 d5 5.cxd5 exd5 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4 0-0 8.e3 Bf5 9.Rc1 Nbd7 10.Qb3 Bxc3+ 11.Rxc3 c6 12.Nd2 Qa5 13.f3 Rfe8 14.Kf2**

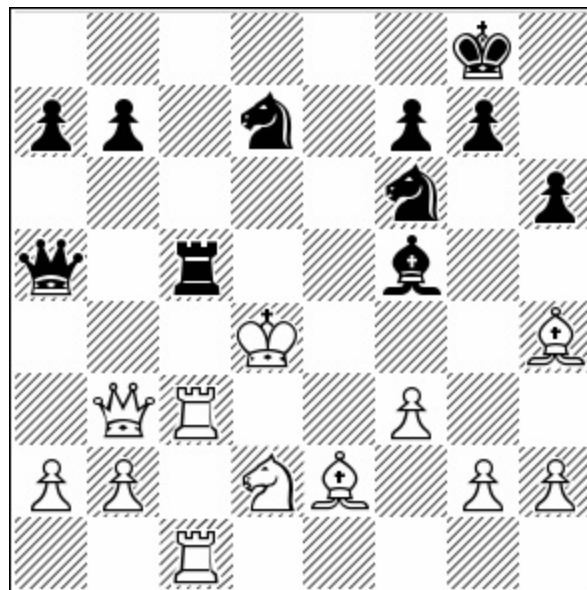
Rac8 15.Be2 c5 16.dxc5 Rxc5 17.Rhc1



Young Wei Yi has a marvelous idea, but the implementation is going to be tricky:

17...g5?

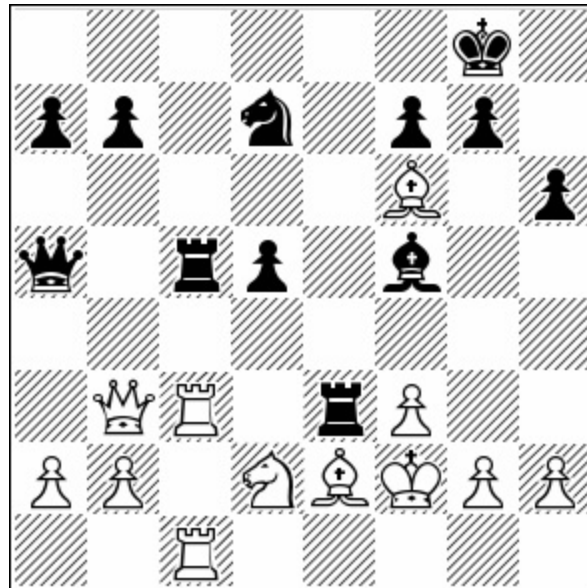
In correcting one problem, Black stumbles into a bigger one. The sacrifice could have been played immediately: 17...Rxe3 18.Kxe3? d4+ 19.Kxd4? (19.Kf2 dxc3 Black is much better)



*analysis diagram*

19...Rc4+!! and Black mates at c5 or e5 depending on the capture (19...Rxc3 also wins).

Wei Yi understandably wanted to avoid 18.Bxf6, when it isn't obvious how he should continue.



*analysis diagram*

A) 18...Rxe2+ 19.Kxe2 Qa6+ 20.Kd1! Rb5 21.Rc8+ Kh7 22.Qc3 Nxf6 23.Rc5 gives White a definite edge. 20.Kf2 was inferior because Black would have (20...Rb5 21.Rc8+ Kh7 22.Qc3 Nxf6 23.Rc5) 23...Qb6 here – not easy to foresee;

B) 18...Rcxc3 19.Rxc3 (19.Bxc3 Qc5! 20.Bd4 Rxe2+ 21.Kxe2 Qxc1 22.Qxd5 is maybe slightly better for White) 19...Rxe2+ 20.Kxe2 Nxf6 with some edge for White in a very dynamic position.

**18.Bg3 Rxe3?**

Now this is just unplayable.

**19.Kxe3 d4+ 20.Kxd4 Re5**

Desperation, because 20...Rc4+ 21.Rxc4 Qxd2+ 22.Bd3 simply loses.

**21.Bd3 Be6 22.Qxb7 Kg7 23.Ne4 Nd5 24.Bxe5+ Nxe5 25.Rc5**

And **Black resigned.**

### **Who's Zooming Who?**

It may be looking like grandmaster king hunts are less successful than cheetah hunts. Here is one that works, but resourceful counterstrikes compel spectacular play to get the win.

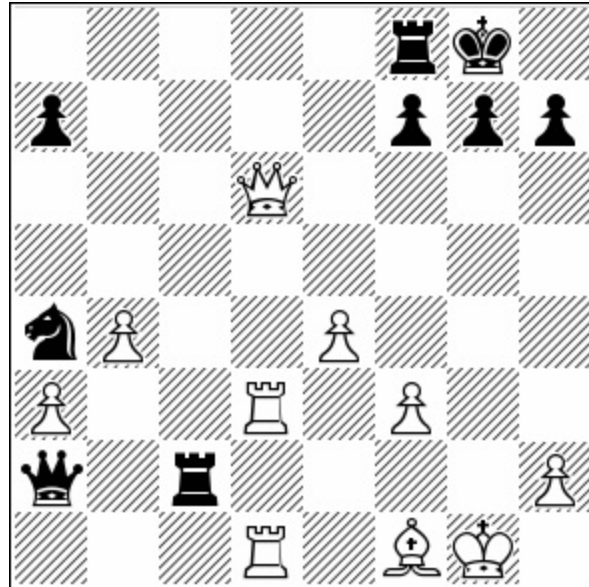
Game 53 – Slav Defense

**Viktor Laznicka 2681**

**Parimarjan Negi 2622**

New Delhi 2011

**1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e3 e6 5.Nf3 Nbd7 6.Qc2 Bd6 7.Bd3 0-0 8.0-0 dxc4 9.Bxc4 b5 10.Bd3 Bb7 11.Rd1 Rc8 12.a3 c5!? 13.Nxb5 Bxf3 14.gxf3 Bb8 15.Bf1 cxd4 16.Qe2 dxe3 17.fxe3 Qb6 18.Kh1 Nc5 19.e4 Qb7 20.Be3 e5 21.Nd6 Bxd6 22.Rxd6 Qb3 23.Rad1 Nh5 24.Qf2 Na4 25.R1d2 Nf4 26.Bxf4 exf4 27.R6d3 Qb7 28.Rd7 Qb3 29.R7d3 Qb8 30.b4 Rc1 31.Rd1 Qc8 32.Kg1 Rc2 33.R1d2 Rc7 34.Qh4 Qe6 35.Qxf4 Rc1 36.Rd1 Rc2 37.Qd6 Qa2**

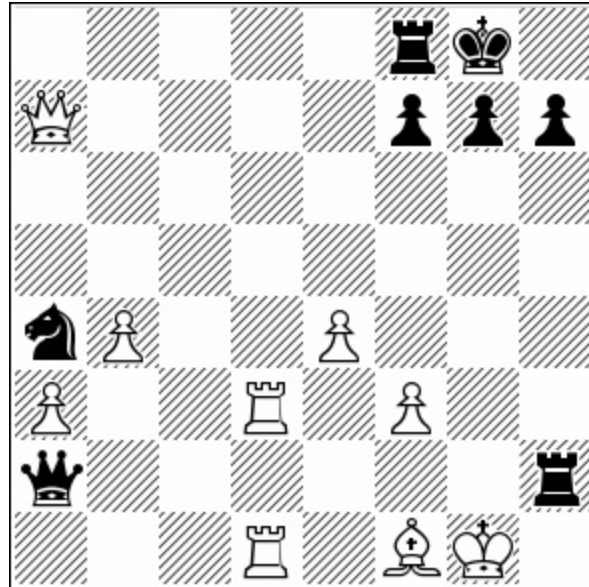


### 38.Qe7?

Fighting for much of the game against the bishop pair, Black has dropped a pawn and sees his knight stuck on the side of the board. Black's back rank is vulnerable, but the obvious way to exploit it is tactically flawed. The right way was 38.Qb8!, keeping the h2-pawn protected! To avoid a blowout Black must trade queens – 38...Qe6 39.Rd8 Qb6+ 40.Qxb6 Nxb6 41.R1d2, with White likely to convert his endgame advantage.

### 38...h6

Negi misses a stunning counterstrike: 38...Rxh2! 39.Qxa7



*analysis diagram*

39...Nb6!! 40.Qxb6 Rh6 picks up a critical tempo, forcing White to concede a perpetual or part with material: 41.Qc7 (41.R1d2 Qxd2 42.Rxd2 Rxb6 is likely drawn) 41...Rg6+ 42.Kh1 Rh6+ 43.Kg1 (43.Bh3 doesn't seem worth trying) 43...Rg6+, etc.

**39.Rd8 Rxd8 40.Rxd8+ Kh7 41.Qe5 Rc6 42.Qb8**

White is on the attack, but with his own king exposed, he must keep his eyes peeled for counterattacks: 42.Qf5+?? Rg6+ 43.Kh1 Qf2 and Black is the one crashing through.

**42...Rg6+ 43.Kh1 Rg5 44.Rh8+ Kg6 45.Qd6+ Kh5**

Best to keep running as White wins quickly and elegantly after 45...f6 46.Qd7 Nb6 47.Qe8+ Qf7 48.Bb5! Re5 49.f4! etc.

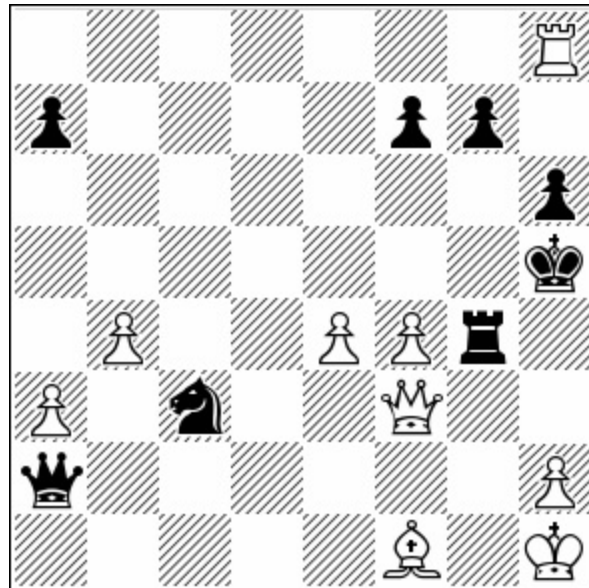
**46.f4 Rg4**

46...Qb1 forces 47.Qd3, but White easily wins the ensuing endgame.

**47.Qd1 Nc3**

The knight comes in from the corner for a brief but impactful cameo.  
47...Qf2 48.Bh3 Qxf4 49.Qxg4+ Qxg4 50.Bxg4+ Kxg4 51.Ra8+–.

### 48.Qf3



### 48...Nxe4!

An ingenious try by Negi who was most resourceful with his back to the wall!

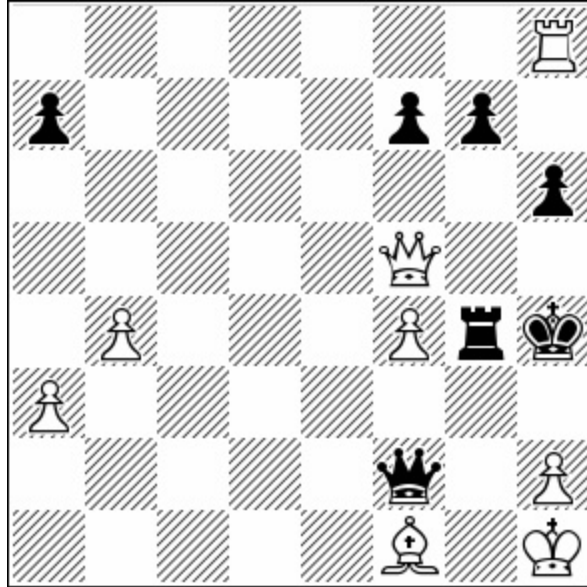
### 49.Qxe4 Qf2

It appears that Black may survive, but his tight-rope king is not quite safe enough.

### 50.Qf5+

White must plow ahead, as 50.Bg2 Rxc2 51.Qxc2 Qe1+ 52.Qg1 Qe4+ produces perpetual check.

### 50...Kh4



(back to the exercises) ***Solution to Puzzle 22:***

**51.Qf6+!!**

This move is all the more startling and aesthetically pleasing because the f6-square is unoccupied; taking something here would be far more obvious.

**51...Kh5**

51...gxf6 52.Rxh6#.

**52.Qxf7+ Kh4**

If 52...g6, 53.Qd5 mates.

**53.Qe7+ Kh5 54.Qc5+ 1-0**

How convenient is the pawn's placement on b4! Otherwise there would be no win for White.

### **Behind Enemy Lines**

A king in the middle is perilous, but a king in the middle of a wide open board should be on death row. Sometimes a king can actually find relative safety deep in enemy territory.

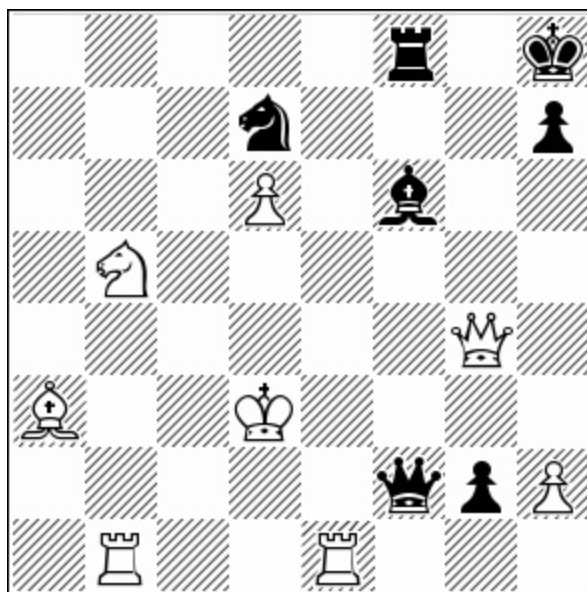
## Game 54 – King’s Indian Defense

Tin Jingyao 2427

AR Saleh Salem 2625

Tashkent 2016

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.Nf3 0-0 6.Be2 e5 7.0-0 Nc6 8.d5 Ne7  
9.Nd2 a5 10.a3 Nd7 11.Rb1 f5 12.b4 Kh8 13.Nb3 axb4 14.axb4 Nf6  
15.Nd2 c6 16.Bb2 cxd5 17.exd5 g5 18.c5 dxc5 19.d6 Ng6 20.bxc5 Bd7  
21.Re1 Bc6 22.Bf1 Nd7 23.Nb3 Nf4 24.Ne2 Ne6 25.Ng3 Nf4 26.Nc1 g4  
27.Nd3 Nxd3 28.Bxd3 Qg5 29.Qc2 f4 30.Nf5 Bf6 31.Ne7 Ra5 32.Bf5 Rxc5  
33.Qd3 Qg7 34.Ba3 e4 35.Qd1 Rxf5 36.Nxf5 Qg5 37.Nd4 e3 38.Nxc6  
exf2+ 39.Kxf2 f3 40.Nd4 Qh4+ 41.Ke3 fxe2 42.Kd3 b5 43.Nxb5 Qf2  
44.Qxg4



In this sprawling position, a rook may not be worth much more than a pawn on the seventh rank, and White has zero shielding for his king against a lot of firepower.

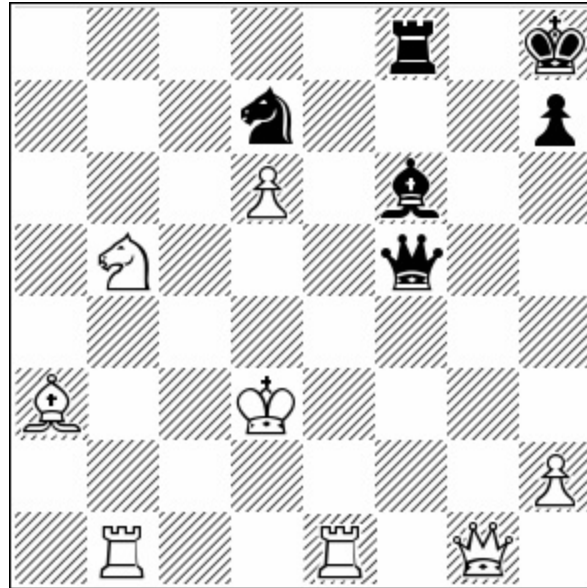
**44...g1=Q?!**

I must be fair here – it certainly looks like White will be mated. But the pawn is such a huge asset that it should not be discarded without a guaranteed

finish.

Instead 44...Ne5+ 45.Rxe5 Bxe5 leaves White helpless. No time for 46.d7 Qf1+, and 46.Qd1 Qa2 will crash through quickly. Finally, 46.Nd4 Bxd4 47.Qxd4+ Qxd4+ 48.Kxd4 Rf1 produces a fresh queen.

**45.Qxg1 Qf5+**



**46.Kc4!!**

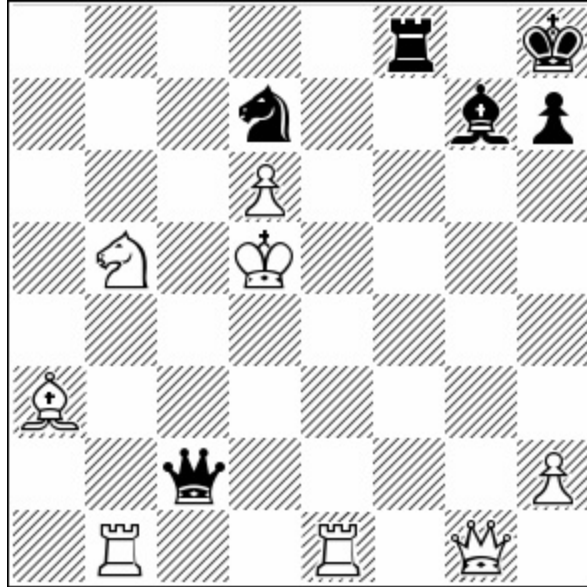
Another brilliant move is spawned by the mother of invention.

46.Kd2 Qd5+ 47.Kc2 Rc8+ 48.Nc7 Qc4+ 49.Kd1 Qd3+ 50.Kc1 Qxa3+--+; or 46.Ke3 Nb6 with mate threats in all directions.

**46...Qc2+**

After 46...Rg8 White would be wise to give up his queen, as he could easily be mated, e.g. 47.Qe3 Qc2+ 48.Kd5 Nb6+ 49.Qxb6 Rg5+ 50.Ke6 Qf5+ 51.Kf7 Bd8+ 52.Ke8 Rg8#. But after 47.Qxg8+ Kxg8 48.Nc3 or 48.Rbc1, White is putting up huge resistance.

**47.Kd5 Bg7**



It's not easy to find moves that don't lead to checkmate now.

### 48.Rf1?

It's very hard to see with the 'naked' eye, but 48.Nd4! offers Black no more than a draw: 48...Nf6+ 49.Ke5! (49.Ke6 Re8+ 50.Kf7 Qc4+ 51.Ne6 Rf8+ 52.Ke7 Nd5+ 53.Kd7 Qc8#) and now knight discoveries promise no more than perpetual check, but 49...Qc8!? is tricky to answer. The only solution is 50.Qxg7+! Kxg7 51.Ne6+ Kf7 52.Nxf8 Qc3+ 53.Kf4 Qxa3 54.Ne6 with a highly likely draw.

White has an even cleaner solution, though this involves a surprising twist: 48.Qxg7+! Kxg7 49.Rg1+ Kh8 50.Bb2+ Nf6 51.Bxf6+ Rxf6 52.Rbf1 Rxf1 53.Rxf1 Qg2+ 54.Kc5 Qxf1 55.d7 and the d-pawn is strong enough to secure a draw.

### 48...Re8 49.Rfe1 Rxe1?

Hard to explain why Black went in for this trade, which swings the pendulum back to White. 49...Nf6+ 50.Kd4 Ne4+ forces another queen sacrifice to stave off mate: 51.Kd5 Re5+ 52.Kd4 Qd2+ 53.Kc4 Qd5+ 54.Kb4 Qxb5# and 51.Ke3 Qd2+ 52.Kf3 Rf8+ 53.Kg4 Qg5+ 54.Kh3 Qh5+ 55.Kg2 Qf3#. After 51.Qxg7+ Kxg7 White has a decent collection of material for the queen, but

with his king still roaming the middle Black's practical winning chances are very high.

### **50.Rxe1**

Not 50.Qxe1 Nb6+ 51.Ke6 Qc8+ 52.Kf7 Qf5+ 53.Ke7 Qd7#.

### **50...Nf6+ 51.Ke5 Nh5+?**

White's king escapes containment after this check. 51...Qc4! would have kept matters still very difficult to sort out. After 52.Nc7 Ng4+ 53.Kf5 Nh6+ 54.Kg5 Nf7+ 55.Kh5 Ne5 Black is still fighting.

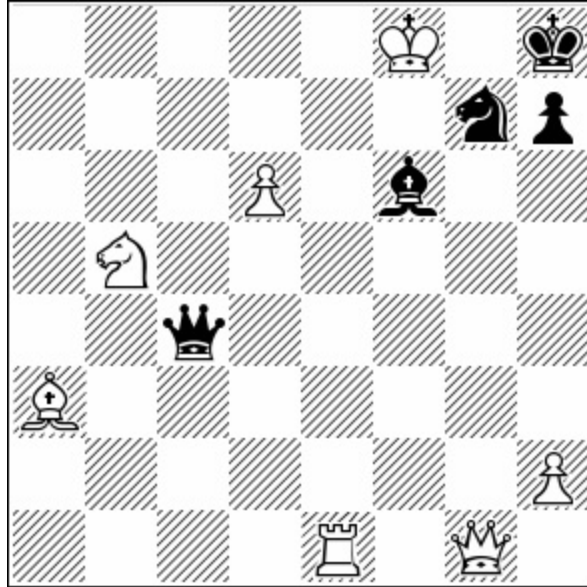
### **52.Ke6 Qc4+ 53.Ke7?**

There is a natural aversion to allowing captures with check, but 53.Kd7 Nf6+ (if 53...Qxb5+, 54.Kc7 Qa5+ 55.Qb6 wins easily) 54.Kd8 Qxb5 55.Qa7! was the only win.

### **53...Bf6+ 54.Kf8?**

The left turn was obligatory, though now 54.Kd7 Qxb5+ 55.Kc7 Qa5+ draws only because if 56.Qb6??, 56...Bd8+ snags the queen.

### **54...Ng7**



Suddenly Black is on the cusp of winning again, as White has to make an unscheduled queen sacrifice.

**55.Qxg7+ Bxg7+ 56.Ke8 Qxb5+ 57.d7 Qh5+?**

Black needed to get the bishop around: 57...Bc3 58.Rg1 h6 59.Rg3 Ba5 60.Be7 Qh5+ 61.Kf8 Qe5 62.d8=Q Bxd8 63.Bxd8 Kh7 64.Be7 Qb2 65.Kf7 Qa2+ 66.Kf6 Qf2+ 67.Ke6 Qxh2 and the Tablebase confirms Black is winning.

**58.Kd8 Qa5+ 59.Ke8 Bf6 60.Be7 Qh5+ 61.Kd8 Qa5+ 62.Ke8 Bxe7 63.Rxe7 Qh5+ 64.Kd8 Qa5+ 65.Ke8 Qh5+ 66.Kd8 Qxh2 67.Re8+ Kg7 68.Kc8**

Now it's a clear draw.

**68...Qc2+ 69.Kb7 Qb3+ 70.Kc6 Qc4+ 71.Kd6 Qd4+ 72.Kc6 Qa4+ 73.Kd6 Qd4+ 74.Kc6**

Draw agreed.

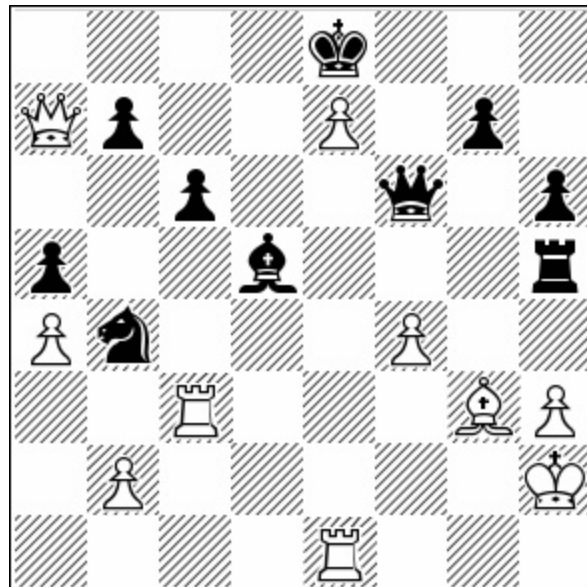
### Unnecessary Roughness

Sometimes the king can make a successful run to the other side of the board,

but shouldn't bother!

Game 55 – Ruy Lopez  
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave 2758  
Peter Leko 2723  
Beijing rapid 2014

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 Nf6 4.d3 Bc5 5.Nbd2 0-0 6.0-0 d6 7.c3 Ne7 8.d4  
exd4 9.cxd4 Bb6 10.Re1 Bg4 11.h3 Bh5 12.Qb3 d5 13.e5 Nd7 14.a4 a5  
15.Qd1 Nb8 16.Nb3 Nbc6 17.Bg5 Nb4 18.Rc1 h6 19.Bh4 c6 20.Be2 Qc7  
21.g4 Bg6 22.Qd2 Na2 23.Ra1 Nb4 24.Rec1 Qd7 25.Nc5 Bxc5 26.dxc5 d4  
27.Nxd4 Rad8 28.Rc4 Be4 29.Rd1 Rde8 30.Bg3 Ng6 31.f4 Bd5 32.Rc3 f5  
33.gxf5 Ne7 34.e6 Qc8 35.Bh5 Nxf5 36.Nxf5 Rxf5 37.Bxe8 Qxe8 38.Re3  
Qe7 39.Kh2 Kf8 40.Qe2 Qxc5 41.e7+ Ke8 42.Rc3 Qd6 43.Re1 Qf6 44.Qe3  
Rh5 45.Qa7

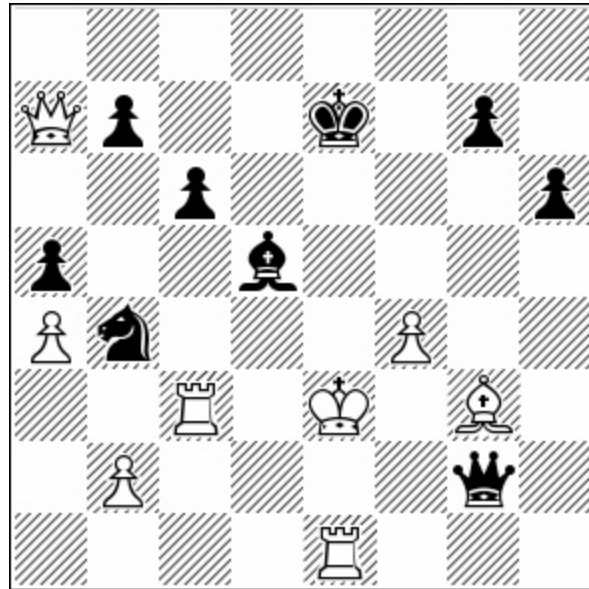


Black is forced to smoke out the white king and pray:

45...Rxh3+ 46.Kxh3 Qf5+ 47.Kh2 Qh5+ 48.Kg1 Qh1+ 49.Kf2 Qg2+  
50.Ke3 Kxe7!?

White consolidates without too much trouble after 50...Qxg3+ 51.Kd2 Qxf4+  
52.Qe3 so Leko eliminates public enemy number one and leaves White's

king in a bit of flux.



**51.Kd4+?!**

MVL marveled at how he could use three of his precious remaining minutes calculating what he described as an ‘aesthetic and unnecessary king march’. With a simple move like 51.Re2 or 51.Bf2, the king could have taken a step back to complete safety.

**51...Kf7 52.Kc5 Qxb2 53.Ree3**

In time pressure it’s a bit scary to put the queen in a vulnerable position, but White had a pretty finish with 53.Qxb7+ Kg6 54.f5+ Kh7 55.Kd6! Qxc3 56.Be5.

**53...Na6+**

The king remains elusive after 53...Nd3+ 54.Kd4 Nc1 55.Ke5 Ne2 56.Be1.

**54.Kd6 Qb4+ 55.Kd7 Qf8**

Leko would love to find the trickiest continuation. But it isn’t this move, or for that matter 55...c5. In that case, 56.Re7+ is forced, but after that White will have several winning options. Black can actually put some heat on with 55...Bf3, which requires White to find two forced moves: 56.f5! Bg4 57.Rf3! Qe7+ 58.Kc8 Bxf3 59.Rxf3 Nc5 60.Qxa5 and Black runs out of gas.

**56.Qxb7 Nc5+ 57.Rxc5 Qxc5 58.Re5 Qc3 59.Qb8 Kg6 60.f5+ Kh7 61.Re8 1-0**

## **Wrecking Ball**

On rare occasions, a king that seems to be running for its life can turn into a battering ram spearheading the counterattack against its counterpart.

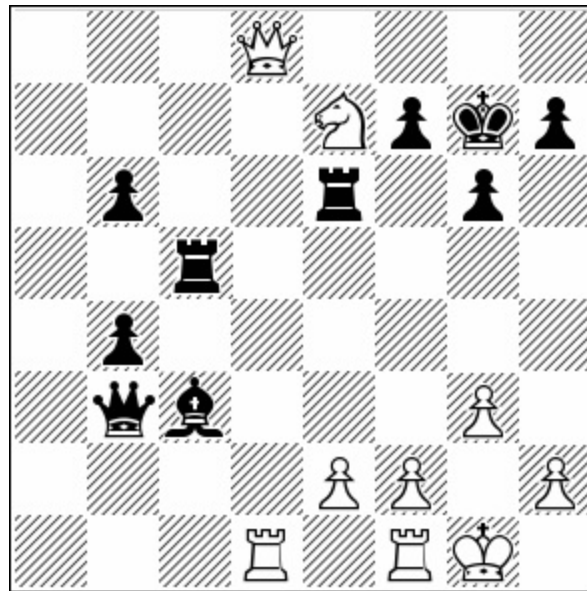
Game 56 – English Opening

**Iztok Jelen** 2370

**Bent Larsen** 2615

Ljubljana/Portoroz 1977

**1.Nf3 b6 2.g3 Bb7 3.Bg2 c5 4.c4 g6 5.0-0 Bg7 6.d4 cxd4 7.Nxd4 Bxg2  
 8.Kxg2 Nc6 9.Nc2 Rc8 10.Ne3 Nf6 11.Nc3 0-0 12.Rb1 e6 13.b3 d5 14.cxd5  
 Nb4 15.Ba3 a5 16.Qd2 Ng4 17.Ncd1 Nxe3+ 18.Nxe3 Bc3 19.Qd1 Re8  
 20.Bxb4 axb4 21.Qd3 Rc5 22.dxe6 Qa8+ 23.Kg1 Rxe6 24.Rbd1 Qxa2  
 25.Qd8+ Kg7 26.Nd5 Qxb3 27.Ne7**



Black's gains on the queenside have netted him a juicy passed pawn. He can maintain a safe position with 27...Rxe7 28.Qxe7 Re5, but a draw would be the likely result. Larsen, the uncompromising fighter, takes his king for a walk in pursuit of the full point:

**27...Qc4!?** 28.Qg8+ Kf6 29.Qh8+ Kg5

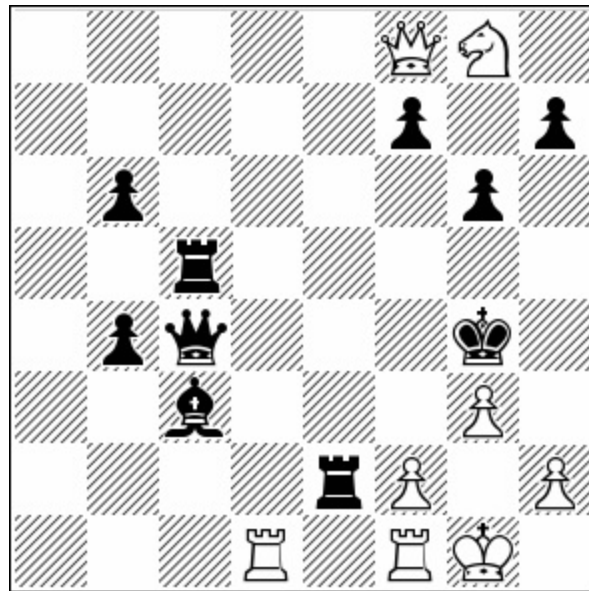
29...Kxe7?? 30.Qd8#.

**30.Qf8 Rxe2 31.Ng8**

A deep dive on the engine suggests 31.h3, preventing the king from advancing, as the strongest (and equalizing) move. But the text looks very threatening.

**31...h5??**

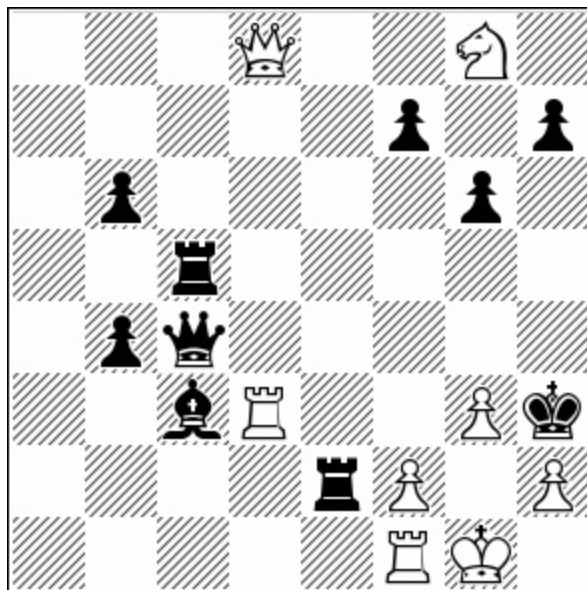
This mistake allows White to win in a number of ways. Larsen would have kept the pressure on with the ‘thematic’ 31...Kg4!.



*analysis diagram*

The king heads for a surprising air pocket while spearheading a counterattack (much like what we will see later). White has no answer to Black’s activity in the plausible line 32.Nh6+ Kh3 33.Nxf7 h5! 34.Qd8 (34.Nd6 Qg4 35.Rd3 Be1! 36.Qf4 (forced, otherwise White collapses on the back ranks) 36...Qxf4 37.gxf4+ Kg4 with a winning endgame) 34...Qg4 35.Rd3 Be1 36.Qa8 Bxf2+ 37.Rxf2 Rxf2 38.Kxf2 Rf5+ 39.Kg1 Qe2 40.g4+ Qxd3 41.Qg2+ Kh4 42.gxf5 Qb1+ 43.Kf2 (43.Qf1 Qxf1+ 44.Kxf1 b3 45.Ne5 b2 46.Nf3+ Kh3 47.Nd2 gxf5–+) 43...Qxf5+ 44.Ke3 Qc5+ 45.Kf4 Qd4+ 46.Qe4 Qxe4+ 47.Kxe4 b3 and the black pawns overwhelm White’s knight.

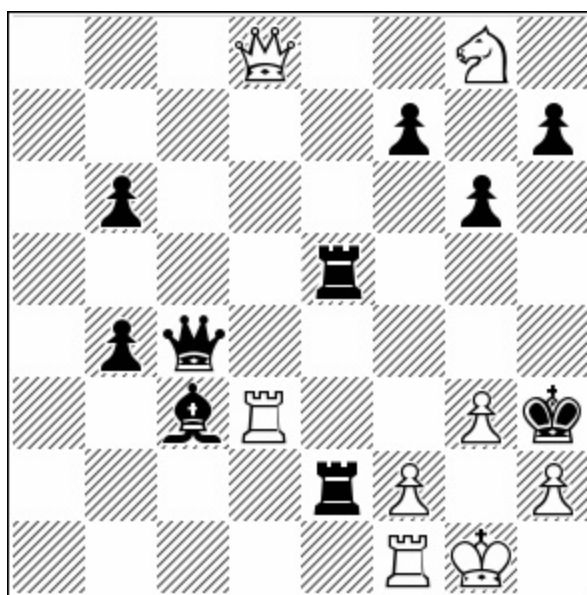
Analyzing without a computer in 1982, Jonathan Speelman proposed the sturdier 32.Qd8! but rejected the best reply 32...Kh3! because 33.Rd3 looked ‘pretty ropy’ for Black.



*analysis diagram*

Indeed, some plausible lines work out poorly, e.g. 33...g5 34.Nh6 Qe6 35.g4+ Kh4 and now the obvious clincher 36.Rh3+? fails after 36...Kxh3 37.Qd3+ Qe3!! 38.fxe3 (even sadder is 38.Qxh7? Qxf2+! 39.Rxf2 Re1+ 40.Rf1 Bd4+ and mates) 38...Rg2+ with a perpetual. Instead, 36.Rg3! Rd5 37.Qg8! Qxh6 38.Qxf7 and Black cannot prevent mate, e.g. 38...Be5 39.Qf3.

But Black is actually in a position to win with 33...Rce5!! and more unusual tactics.



*analysis diagram*

A) The subtle point is that the anticipated 34.g4+ is squashed by 34...R5e3!  
35.Rxe3+ Rxe3 36.fxe3 Qxg4+ 37.Kf2 Qg2#.

The black pieces are in perfect position for attack and defense in other lines, all of which are winning for Black:

B) 34.Nf6 Be1! 35.g4+ (35.Qd7+ Qe6 36.Qxe6+ Rxe6; 35.Rf3 Bxf2+ 36.Kh1 Rf5) 35...R5e3 36.Rxe3+ Rxe3 37.fxe3 Qe2;

C) 34.Nh6 Be1 35.Rf3 Bxf2+ 36.Kh1 R5e3, etc.

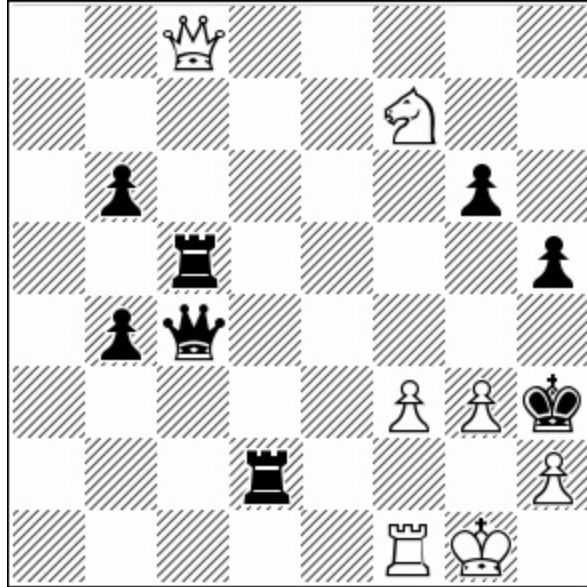
**32.Nh6! Bd2 33.Nxf7+**

White is still winning after this move, but he had more efficient choices. Speelman's 33.Rxd2 Rxd2 34.Re1 threatens 35.h4+ with devastating effect, while 33.Qg7 (or 33.Qh8) cuts off the king's retreat and finishes cleanly.

**33...Kg4 34.Rxd2??**

The right way was 34.Qd8 Qxf7 35.h3+ Kf5 36.Qd3+ Kf6 37.Qxe2 with an easy win in the offing. But it's hard to criticize Jelen – it looks like he has discovered a brilliant finish.

**34...Rxd2 35.f3+ Kh3 36.Qc8+!!**



(back to the exercises) ***Solution to Puzzle 23:***

**36...Qg4!!**

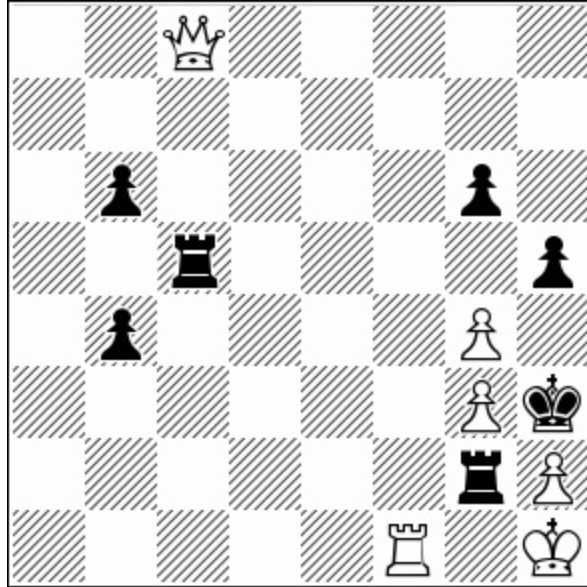
This move is so pleasing to the eye that it gets a double s'clam, despite being the only move that doesn't allow checkmate! 36...Rxc8 37.Ng5# was the plan.

**37.Ng5+!**

White has to ditch his knight to save his queen, but Larsen is emboldened to press his luck.

**37...Rxc8 38.fxc4 Rg2+ 39.Kh1 Rc5!**

Larsen is playing with house money, as White has to find the right refuge for the queen to ensure the draw.



**40.Qd8??**

Threatening mate is highly plausible, but the last move of the time control throws it all away. 40.Qe6 or 40.Qd7 both forced the draw.

**40...Rxb2+ 41.Kg1 g5! 42.Rb1 0-1**

Jelen sealed this move but **resigned** without further play, anticipating 42...Rcc2 43.Qd5 hxg4! 44.Kf1 Rcf2+ 45.Ke1 Rfg2 and Black reaches an easily won rook endgame.

42.Qe8 Rcc2 43.Qxh5+ Kxg3 would have fallen short, too.

### **Catch Me if You Can**

Even if the advancing king doesn't set up a mating net, its advance can still have its virtues.

Game 57 – Queen's Indian Defense

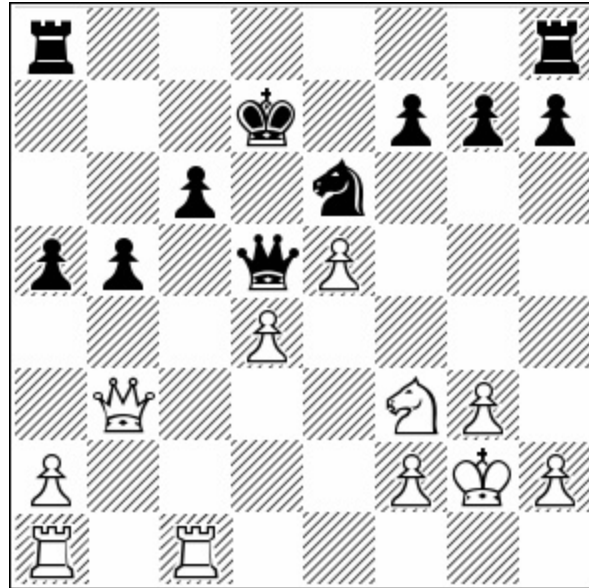
**Alexander Khuzman 2590**

**Magnus Carlsen 2786**

Kallithea tt 2008

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 b6 4.g3 Ba6 5.Qc2 Bb4+ 6.Bd2 Be7 7.e4 d5 8.cxd5**

**Bxf1 9.Kxf1 exd5 10.e5 Ne4 11.Nc3 Nxc3 12.bxc3 Qd7 13.Kg2 Nc6 14.c4 Nd8 15.cxd5 Qxd5 16.Qa4+ c6 17.Rhc1 Kd7 18.Bb4 b5 19.Qa3 Bxb4 20.Qxb4 a5 21.Qb3 Ne6**



Magnus took a step forward with the king to bolster his center and develop his knight. But most likely he planned for it to keep a low profile until Khuzman's startling rejoinder:

**22.Rxc6!?**

It certainly looked like Black was safeguarded against tactics, but there is no easy counter to this sacrifice.

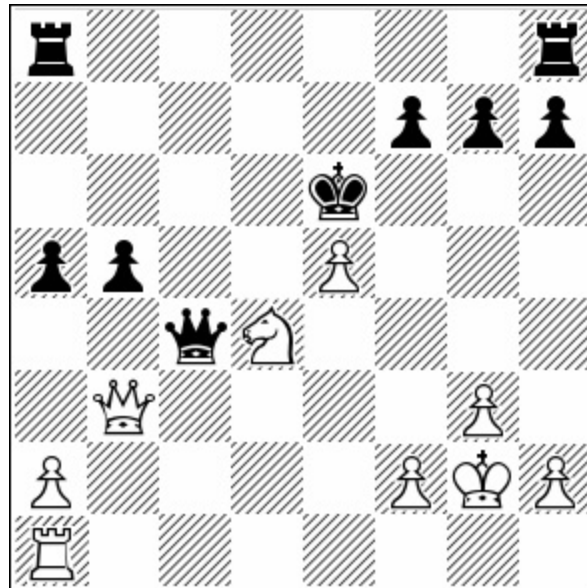
22...Kxc6? 23.Rc1+ and 22...Qxb3? 23.Rd6+ play into White's hands.

**22...Qxc6 23.d5 Qc4?!**

While this move is safer than it looks, Carlsen had a sturdier defense in 23...Qb7! 24.dxe6+ fxe6 25.Rd1+ Ke7 26.Rd6 Rhd8! (the key point) 27.Qxe6+ Kf8 and the pin on the knight keeps White from reinforcing an attack.

Despite Black's edge in this line, I think the sacrifice was worth the plunge, putting Carlsen on the defensive and avoiding the long term grind.

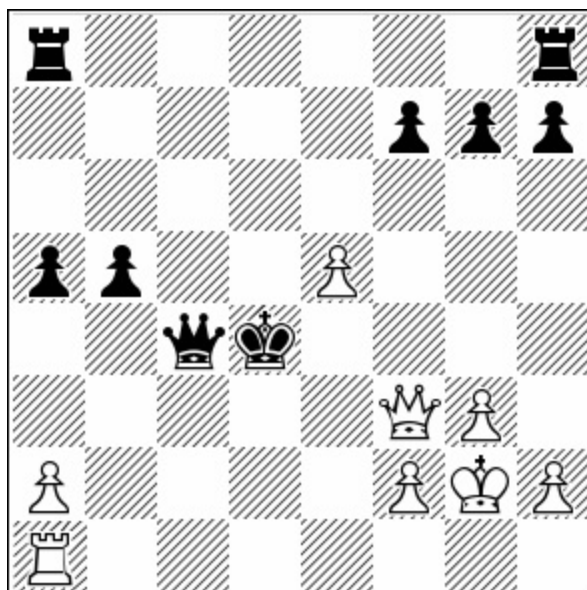
**24.dxe6+ Kxe6 25.Nd4+**



**25...Kd5!**

This jaunt may appear reckless, but it is no more dangerous than the alternatives and forces White to find the equalizer. 25...Kd7 26.Qf3 Rhd8 (forced) also offered equal chances, but 25...Ke7?! 26.Nf5+ Kf8 27.Qf3 would have given White excellent value for his investment.

**26.Qf3+ Kxd4**



**27.Qe3+??**

White is a rook down and may feel the pressure to keep up the chase.

27.Rd1+ Kxe5 leads nowhere, but the quiet 27.Re1!! keeps the king in no man's land. Black is not really in any danger, but he cannot avoid giving his queen for the rook, producing a near-certain draw: 27...Kc5 28.Qe3+ Kd5 29.e6! Rae8 30.Rd1+ Kc6 31.Rc1=.

**27...Kd5 28.Rd1+ Ke6 29.Rd6+ Ke7 30.Qg5+ Ke8**

Of course not 30...Kf8?? 31.Rd8+ with mate to follow. White manages to get the king scrambling again, but it will always be sufficiently protected.

**31.e6 Rc8 32.exf7+ Qxf7 33.Rd3 Qb7+ 34.Kh3 Rf8 35.Qh5+ Ke7**

35...Rf7 36.Qxh7 Kf8 would be less conforming to the theme, but a little less dramatic as well.

**36.Re3+ Kd8 37.Rd3+ Kc7 38.Rd5 Rce8 39.Rc5+**

39.Rxb5 Qc8+ 40.g4 Rf3+ 41.Kg2 Rf6! and the rest is easy.

**39...Kd6 40.Rxb5 Qc8+ 41.Kh4 Qc4+ 42.g4 Qd4! 0-1**

Every check is covered and White's own king is in the sights now.

## Lonely Man in the Corner

What's so interesting about a king hiding in the corner? How about when it is the corner on the far side of the board? Alexey Shirov missed a once in a lifetime chance to avert checkmate in a seemingly impossible manner.

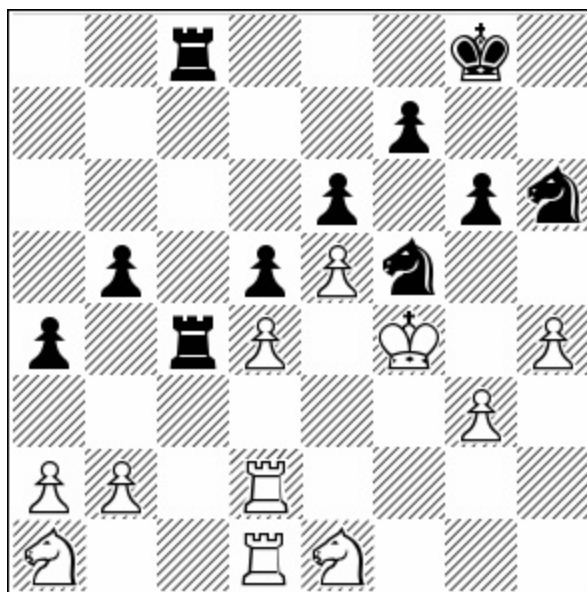
Game 58 – Caro-Kann Defense

Alexey Shirov 2709

Vishy Anand 2817

Leon 2011

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 Bf5 4.h4 h5 5.Bg5 Qb6 6.Bd3 Bxd3 7.Qxd3 Qa6  
8.Qf3 e6 9.Ne2 c5 10.c3 Nc6 11.Nd2 Nge7 12.Nb3 cxd4 13.cxd4 Nf5 14.0-0  
Be7 15.Bxe7 Ncxe7 16.g3 b6 17.Nf4 g6 18.Nh3 0-0 19.Qf4 Qe2 20.Rfd1  
Rac8 21.Rd2 Qg4 22.Qxg4 hxg4 23.Ng5 a5 24.f3 Rc4 25.Kf2 Rfc8 26.fxg4  
Nh6 27.Rad1 a4 28.Na1 Nxg4+ 29.Kf3 Nh6 30.Kf4 Nef5 31.Nf3 b5 32.Ne1



Sure, we have an endgame, but there are still enough pieces for a slow-motion king hunt.

32...f6! 33.exf6 e5+ 34.Kxe5 Ne3 35.Rb1 Re8+ 36.Kf4

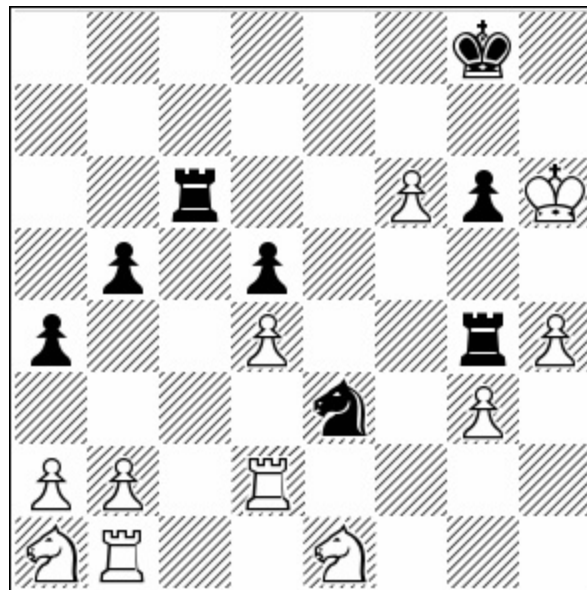
The king has to backpedal. 36.Kd6 allows an elementary forced mate.  
 36...Nf7+ 37.Kd7 Rd8+ 38.Ke7 Nf5+ 39.Ke6 Rc6#.

### 36...Rc6 37.Kg5 Re4

This forces mate, but perhaps better to do it with sacrificing the knight, in case one miscalculates! 37...Nf7+ was slightly more efficient, but Black had to foresee one tricky detail: 38.Kxg6 (38.Kf4 Rxf6#) 38...Re4 39.Rf2 (39.Rd3 Rg4+ 40.Kh5 Rxf6 41.Rxe3 Rg7 and ...Rh6 mate can only be delayed a few moves) 39...Rg4+ 40.Kh5 Rg7!! forces mate in two.

### 38.Kxh6 Rg4??

This not only looks quick and deadly, it is intuitive in that the white king already has no squares. But it allows a remarkable resource! Forced mate was available with 38...Ng4+ 39.Kg5 Nxf6 40.Kh6 Rg4 41.Rc2 (otherwise 41...Rc7 and 42...Rh7) 41...Kh8! 42.Rxc6 Ng8#.



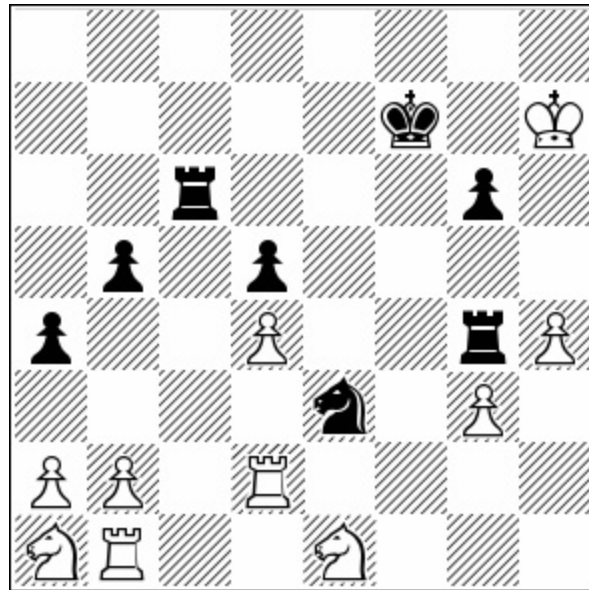
(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 24:*

### 39.Rf2?

With almost every move allowing mate in one, there weren't a lot of candidates here. Yet one of these moves leads to a spectacular second move,

which could even have saved the game!

39.f7+!! Kxf7 40.Kh7!!



*analysis diagram*

and the white king carves out enough territory to stave off checkmate. Remarkably, White does not even need to find any difficult moves after that. His rook can intrude on the c- and f-files, and his e1-knight suddenly emerges to kill mates. For instance, 40...Rc7 41.Nf3 (there are other more unlikely moves as well, like 41.Ng2 Kf6+ 42.Kg8 Re4 43.Rf2+ Nf5 44.Re1=) 41...Kf6+ 42.Kg8 Re4 43.Ne5! reduces Black to perpetual check.

**39...Nf5+ 40.Rxf5 gxf5**

White cannot avert checkmate.

**41.Kh5 Rc7 0-1**

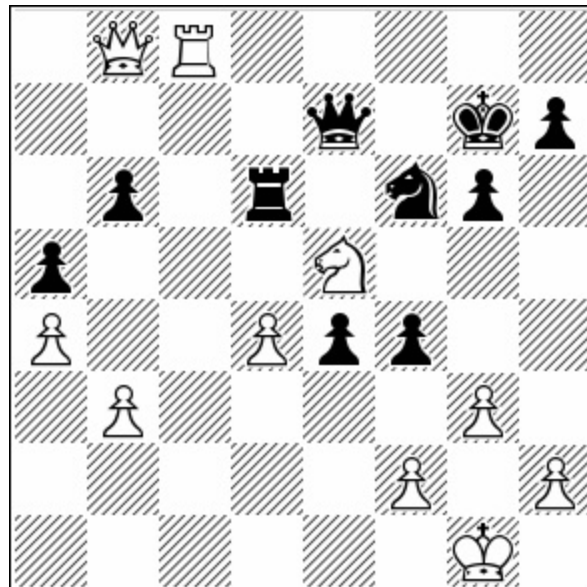
You would have to say Anand played this beautifully, and yet there was still a moment for Shirov to escape. Even the most hopeless looking situations can still permit a resource.

**Coordination Station**

In the next game we see another position where the hunted king is not the only one in danger. Sometimes forcing moves can be false leads, while simple moves that best maintain coordination are more effective.

Game 59 – Queen’s Indian Defense  
**Sam Shankland** 2498  
**Alex Lenderman** 2537  
 US Chess League 2010

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Ne4 4.g3 d5 5.Bg2 Be7 6.0-0 0-0 7.Qc2 Nd6 8.Nbd2 Nc6 9.b3 b6 10.Ba3 Bb7 11.Rac1 a5 12.cxd5 exd5 13.e3 Nb5 14.Bxe7 Qxe7 15.a4 Nb4 16.Qb1 Nd6 17.Rc3 Rac8 18.Rfc1 Ne4 19.Nxe4 dxe4 20.Nd2 f5 21.Bf1 Kh8 22.Nc4 Nd5 23.R3c2 Rf6 24.Ne5 Nb4 25.Rd2 Rd8 26.Bc4 g6 27.Qb2 Bd5 28.Rdd1 Kg7 29.Rc3 c5 30.Rdc1 cxd4 31.exd4 Rc8 32.Bxd5 Rxc3 33.Qxc3 Nxd5 34.Qc8 f4 35.Qa8 Rd6 36.Rc8 Nf6 37.Qb8



Lenderman’s dubious stab at a counterattack on move 34 was motivated by the need to win this game to square the match. Things are looking grim, as 37...fxg3 38.Rc7 gxf2+ 39.Kf1 Rd7 40.Rxd7! (sidestepping 40.Nxd7 Nxd7 41.Qb7? e3!) 40...Nxd7 41.Qc7 would be curtains.

**37...Rxd4!**

The first trick. If now 38.Rc7?, 38...Rd1+ 39.Kg2 f3+ 40.Kh3 Nd7 defends.

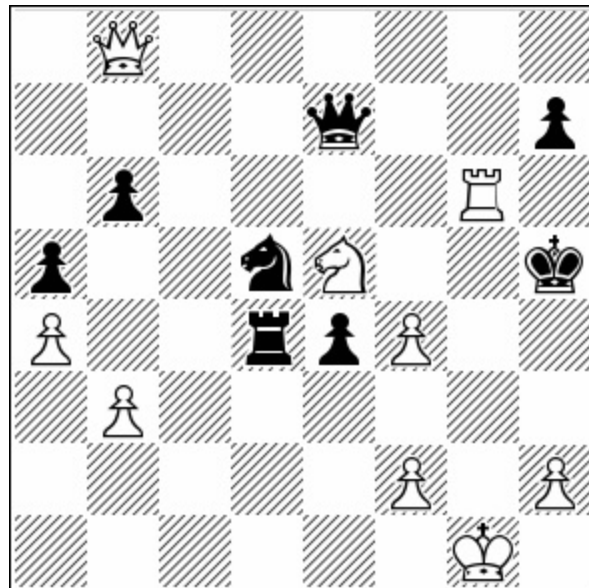
**38.gxf4! Nd5**

The black king is now sent for a walk but is surprisingly difficult to kill.

**39.Rg8+ Kh6 40.Rxg6+!**

This combo looks annihilating, as 40...hxc6 41.Qh8+ Qh7 42.Nf7+ ends any discussion.

**40...Kh5**



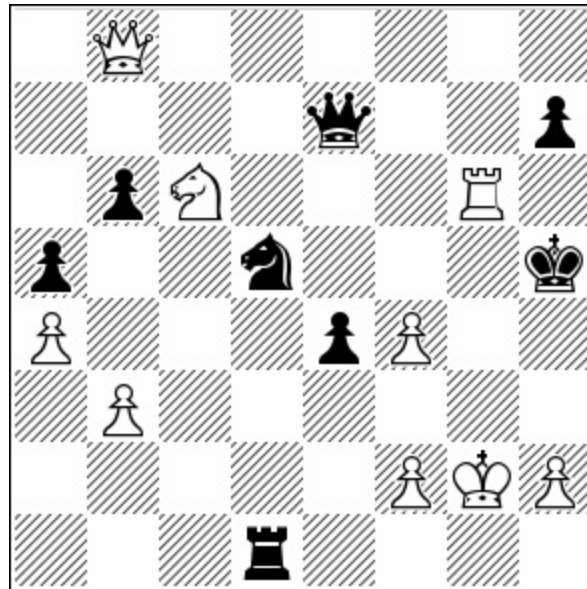
Looks like a simple finish – 41.Rg5+ Kh4 42.Ng6+ hxc6 43.Qh8+ and mates. But Black would turn the tables with 41...Qxg5+!! 42.fxc6 Rd1+ 43.Kg2 Nf4+ 44.Kg3 Ne2+ and now White has to force the draw with 45.Kh3 or get mated – 45.Kg2?? Rg1+ 46.Kh3 Nf4#.

The true killer is the consolidating move 41.Rg4!, keeping the king frozen in its unfortunate location. Black doesn't have a useful move while White has ideas of creeping closer with the queen coming to c8, g8, or h8, not to mention the silent but deadly h2-h3, renewing the threat of Rg5+ by making luft. 41...Rd1+ 42.Kg2 Rd2 43.Kg3 is one hopeless variation.

### 41.Nc6?

Forcing moves are tempting in tactical situations, but here White loses just enough coordination to give Black a path to salvation!

### 41...Rd1+ 42.Kg2



(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 25:*

### 42...Qc5?

Missing the gorgeous counterstrike 42...Ne3+!! 43.fxe3 Rd2+ 44.Kf1 Qa3, setting up an unstoppable mate on the back rank. White must counterattack, but he has to give up his rook, as 45.Rg5+ Kh4 goes nowhere. But after 45.Qe5+ Kxg6 46.Qg5+ Kf7 47.Ne5+ Kf8 White has to settle for perpetual check.

Ironically, 41...Qc5 would have sufficed for a draw, as White would not have had the maneuver executed in the game.

### 43.Qe5+

43.Rg5+ Kh4 44.Rh5+ would be the same.

**43...Kxg6 44.Qg5+ Kf7 45.Ne5+ Ke8**

45...Ke6 46.Qg4 mates or wins the queen.

**46.Qh5+ Kd8 47.Qxd1**

The smoke has cleared with White a pawn up, and Shankland eventually won the endgame.

### **Nip It in the Bud**

Desperate attacking play can compel the defender to stifle all resources that might open the floodgates. In the next game, White could not quite maintain containment. Black missed an opportunity to decisively box in White's king, after which White marched his king up the board when it could have stood its ground.

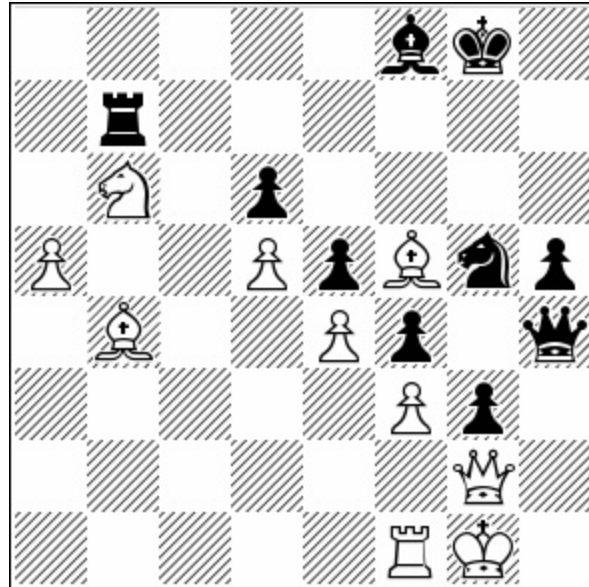
Game 60 – King's Indian Defense

**Yannick Pelletier 2599**

**Andreas Hagen 2400**

Legnica Ech 2013

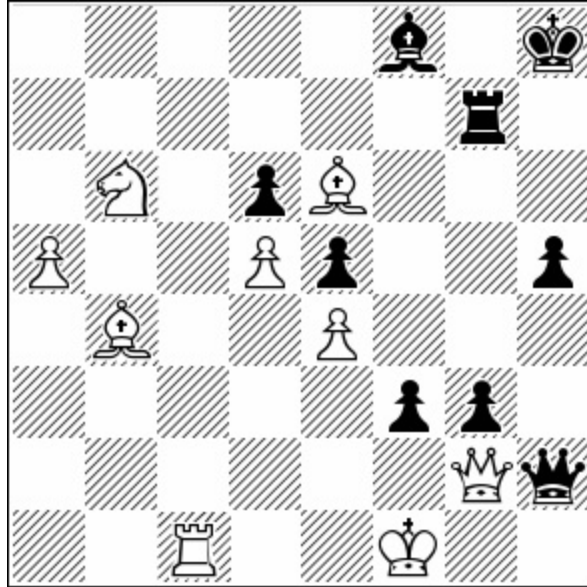
**1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.d4 0-0 5.e4 d6 6.Be2 e5 7.0-0 Nc6 8.d5 Ne7  
9.Nd2 Ne8 10.b4 f5 11.c5 Nf6 12.f3 f4 13.Nc4 g5 14.a4 Ng6 15.cxd6 cxd6  
16.Nb5 Ne8 17.Bd2 h5 18.Be1 a6 19.Nc3 Nf6 20.a5 g4 21.Nb6 Rb8  
22.Nxc8 Qxc8 23.Rc1 Qd7 24.Na4 g3 25.h3 Nh7 26.Nb6 Qe7 27.Rc3 Qh4  
28.Bd3 Ng5 29.Qe2 Rf7 30.b5 Nf8 31.bxa6 bxa6 32.Bxa6 Nfh7 33.Rc8+  
Rf8 34.Rxb8 Rxb8 35.Qc2 Nxb3+ 36.gxh3 Qxh3 37.Bc8 Qh4 38.Bf5 Ng5  
39.Bb4 Bf8 40.Qg2 Rb7**



Typical King's Indian! White is holding off further invasion but the slightest footfall can turn everything upside down.

### 41.Rd1

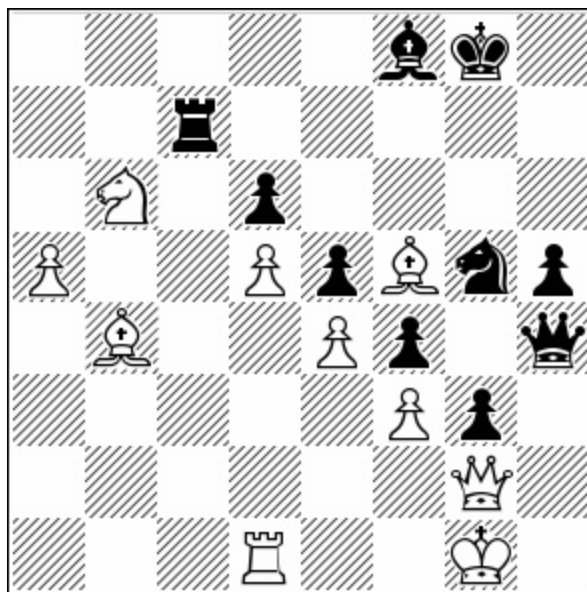
41.Qh1 seems an obvious place to start, but 41...Qxh1+ 42.Kxh1 Rc7 gives Black enough play to draw, even with White's extra piece and passed pawn. So the rook can be improved, but why not 41.Rc1, preventing Black from seizing the only open file? That obvious move falls into a diabolical trap, as Black can force a win with 41...Nxf3+!! 42.Qxf3 Qh2+ 43.Kf1 Rg7! 44.Be6+ Kh8 45.Qg2 f3!



*analysis diagram*

46.Qxh2 gxh2 47.Kf2 Rg2+ 48.Ke3 Bh6+ 49.Kxf3 Rg1 50.Rc8+ Kh7 and the promoting h-pawn will decide the game. Pelletier's move squelches the sac as he can defend the second rank with 45.Rd2 in this variation. The subtle 41.Re1 might have been even better, as when the Black comes to c2 later, White can take it and run to d1 with his king.

**41...Rc7**



### **42.a6?**

So tempting, but White needs one more defensive move. The natural choice is 42.Kf1 Rc2 43.Bd2! (43.Qxc2 Qh1+ 44.Ke2 Qxf3+ 45.Ke1 Qe3+ 46.Kf1 Qf3+ 47.Kg1 Qe3+ snags a draw) 43...Qh2 44.a6 and White should win.

### **42...Rc2!**

Appropriately causing chaos, and moreover, the sacrifice flat out works. Meanwhile, 42...Nxf3+ 43.Qxf3 Qh2+ 44.Kf1 Rc2 45.Bd2 Rxd2 46.Rxd2 Qxd2 47.Qe2 allows a winning light-square blockade.

### **43.Qxc2?**

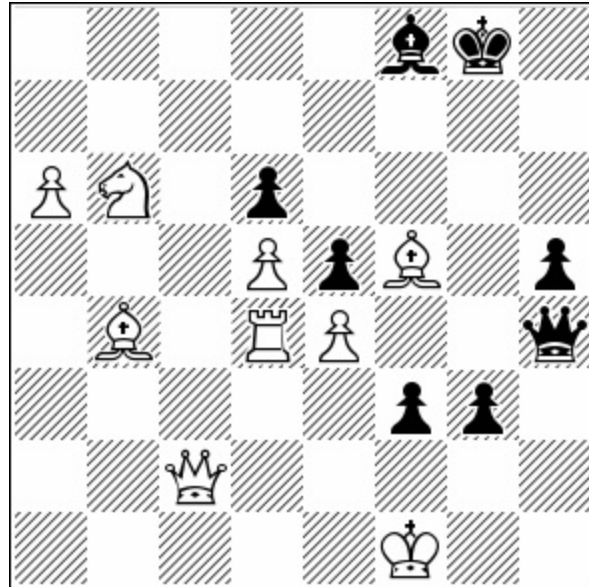
It wasn't easy to calculate the consequences of this capture, but that hardly recommends the move. 43.Bd2 was the correct move, but slightly depressing because 43....Ra2! removes the dangerous a-pawn. White has lost his obvious path to victory and Black has more time to work with his passed pawns.

### **43...Nxf3+ 44.Kf1**

(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 26:*

### **44...Qh1+?**

Missing 44...Nd4!! 45.Rxd4 f3!, winning for Black.

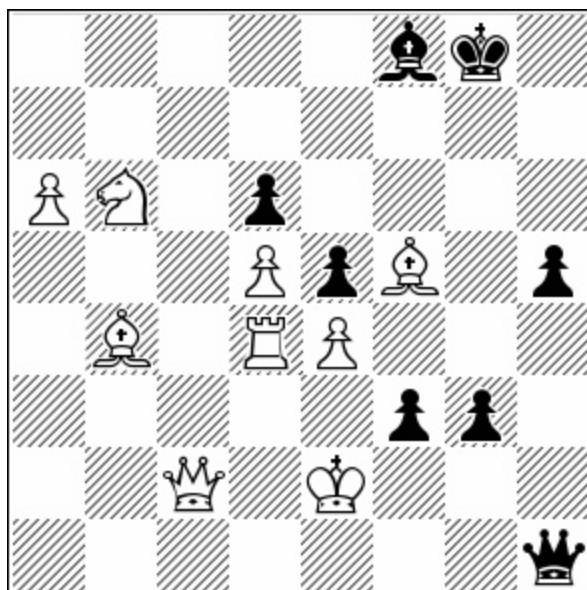


*analysis diagram*

White has nowhere to run and nowhere to hide. Avoiding 46...Qh1# will allow a decisive pawn push. The line illustrates how, when attacking, trapping the enemy king is often a better strategy than chasing it into the open.

**45.Ke2 Nd4+ 46.Rxd4 f3+**

After 46...exd4 47.Qc8 f3+ 48.Kd2 White threatens to mate with check, beginning with Qe6+, so Black dies when his checks run out.



### 47.Kd3?

It's understandable to run the king up the board where it can find better shelter, but queens are queens. White can't stop the pawns directly, but he has just enough time for a counterattack. After 47.Kd2 g2 48.Be6+! gets there first: 48...Kh8 (48...Kg7 49.Qc7+ Kh6 50.Kc2!!+-; not hard to find, but quite aesthetic) 49.Qc8 and Black again lacks the time to enjoy a fresh queen.

### 47...f2 48.Kc4 f1=Q+ 49.Rd3 g2 50.Kb5

White could have tried 50.a7 g1=Q 51.a8=Q, hoping for 51...Qd4+ 52.Kb5 Qfxd3+ 53.Qxd3 Qxd3+ 54.Nc4 when White can put up resistance, but 51...Qxb6! keeps the pressure on White's king.

### 50...g1=Q 51.Nc4

White can make a queen of his own, but will have to cough up his rook: 51.a7 Qhf3 52.a8=Q Q3xd3+ 53.Qxd3 Qxd3+ 54.Nc4 Qb3! prepares the devastating 55...Qc5+.

### 51...Qff2

Sooner or later the queens will crash through.

**52.Qb3 Qb1 53.Kc6 Qxb3 54.Rxb3 Qc2 55.Rg3+ Kh8 56.Kb5 Qa1 57.Ra3 Qd4 58.Rc3 0-1**

Not waiting for 58...Qcxc3 59.Bxc3 Qc5+.

### **Fruitless Chase**

When faced with strong mating threats, going all in to smoke out the opposing king may seem the logical thing to do. But subtler methods may be the key to staying alive.

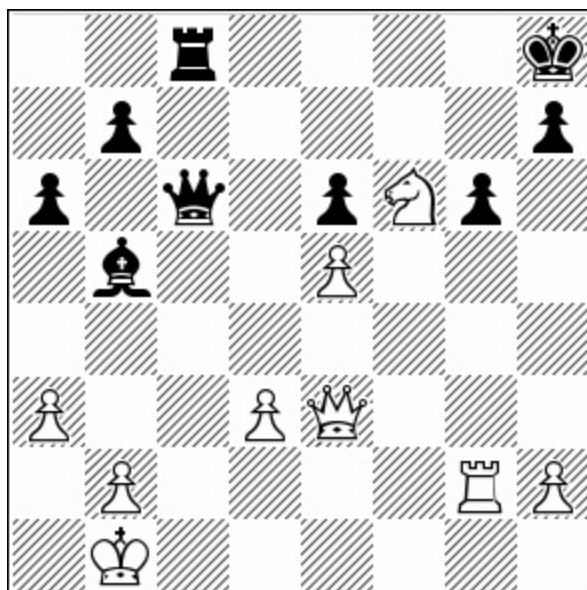
Game 61 – French Defense

**Jonathan Mestel 2450**

**Nils-Gustaf Renman 2425**

Malta ol 1980

**1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.Ne2 dxe4 5.a3 Be7 6.Nxe4 Nf6 7.Qd3 Nbd7 8.Bf4 0-0 9.0-0-0 Nxe4 10.Qxe4 c5 11.Nc3 Nf6 12.Qe1 cxd4 13.Be5 Qa5 14.Rxd4 Rd8 15.Ra4 Qb6 16.Rc4 Rd7 17.Bd3 a6 18.g4 Qd8 19.g5 Nh5 20.Rg1 g6 21.Rh4 Bxg5+ 22.Rxg5 Qxg5+ 23.f4 Qe7 24.Rxh5 f6 25.Qg1 Rxd3 26.cxd3 fxe5 27.fxe5 Qg7 28.Rg5 Bd7 29.Ne4 Rc8+ 30.Kb1 Bb5 31.Nf6+ Kh8 32.Qe3 Qc7 33.Rg2 Qc6**



Both sides have to be careful with their kings, though White's threats seem harder to deal with.

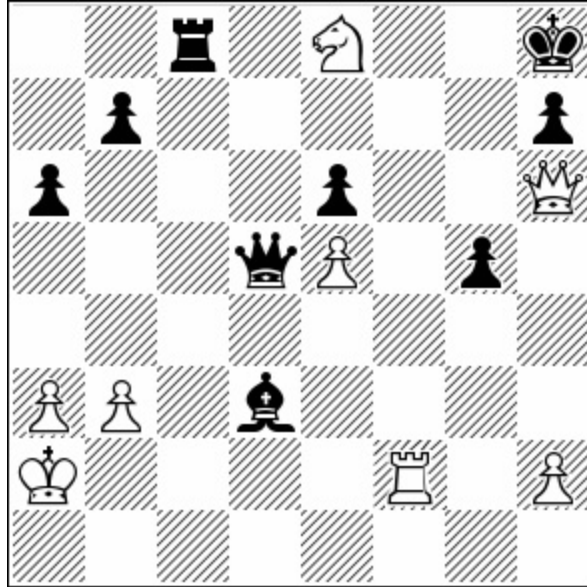
### 34.Rf2?

White has to take it slow here, as 34.Rxg6? Qc2+ 35.Ka2 Bc4+ 36.dxc4 Qxg6 would backfire bigly. But the text does not tidy up the position sufficiently to quash counterchances.

The right way was 34.Ka2!, which eliminates checks on the back rank, and, perhaps even more importantly, means Bb5-d3 will never come with check. After 34...Qxg2 35.Qh6 Black gets mated, so he doesn't really have a good answer.

### 34...Qh1+?

Sure, it's natural to go in for the counterattack, but Black needs to create more weaknesses for his play to have an impact: 34...Qc5! 35.Qh6 (35.d4 opens the a2-g8 diagonal, forcing White to stay on defense: 35...Qc4 36.Qh6? Qd3+ Black wins) 35...Bxd3+ 36.Ka2 g5 37.Ne8 Qd5+ 38.b3.



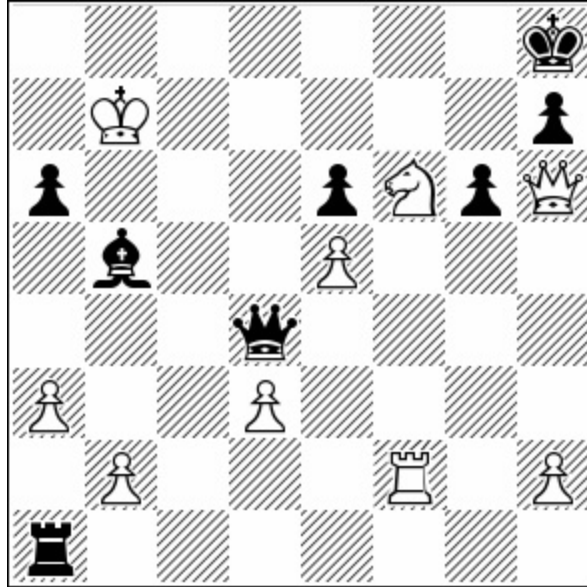
*analysis diagram*

Here, Black forces a draw with 38...Bb1+! 39.Kxb1 Qxb3+ 40.Rb2 Qd1+ 41.Ka2 Qd5+, etc.

**35.Ka2 Rc1 36.Qh6 Ra1+ 37.Kb3 Qd1+ 38.Kb4 Qa4+ 39.Kc5 b6+ 40.Kxb6**

Probably simplest, though White also wins after 40.Kd6 Qd4+ 41.Kxe6 Bc4+ 42.dxc4 Qxc4+ 43.Nd5 Qc6+ 44.Ke7 Qc5+ 45.Kf6 Qxf2+ 46.Nf4.

**40...Qd4+ 41.Kb7**



The knight beautifully dominates the queen, forcing Black to throw more wood onto the fire in futile pursuit.

According to Speelman, **Black resigned** upon resumption of the adjournment. Some sources give the following moves, which at least show how Black's checks will peter out:

**41...Bc6+ 42.Kxc6 Qa4+ 43.Kd6 Qd4+ 44.Kxe6 Qb6+ 45.Kd5 Qb7+ 46.Kd4 Qb6+ 47.Ke4 Re1+ 48.Kf3 Qc6+ 49.Ne4, etc.**

### **Block Party**

With all that can be invested in a king hunt, anything that monkeys with the timing or the coordination of the attack can bring it down. A piece sacrifice can be just the right mechanism.

Game 62 – Nimzo-Indian Defense

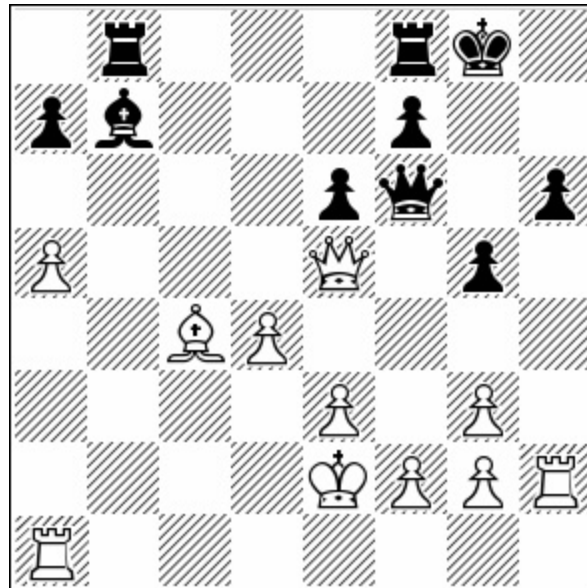
**James Plaskett**

**Mark Hebden**

England 1982

**1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 b6 3.c4 Bb7 4.Nc3 e6 5.Bg5 Bb4 6.e3 h6 7.Bh4 g5 8.Bg3 Ne4 9.Qc2 Bxc3+ 10.bxc3 Nxc3 11.hxc3 Qe7 12.a4 Nc6 13.Nd2 Na5 14.Nb3 Nxb3 15.Qxb3 Qf6 16.a5 0-0 17.Rh2 c5 18.Bd3 d5 19.Ke2 cxd4**

**20.cxd4 dxc4 21.Bxc4 b5 22.Qxb5 Rab8 23.Qe5**



Black has sacrificed a pawn for some play against White's king in the center. The next step is perhaps a bit counter-intuitive:

**23...Qg6**

Black should actually simplify here! After 23...Qxe5 24.dxe5 Kg7 Black has a more comfortable position. The reason is that White's rooks are not coordinated, leaving Black with more pieces in play on the queenside and in the center. That will make the white king a bit uncomfortable, and Black might very well nip the a5-pawn, e.g. 25.Bd3 Bc6 26.Ra2 Rfd8 27.Rc2 Ba8 28.f3 Rb3 29.Rd2 Bb7 30.Bc4 Rxd2+ 31.Kxd2 Ra3.

**24.Bd3 Ba6!**

Clever, though Hebden certainly wanted more than a draw out of it.

**25.Bxa6 Rb2+ 26.Kf1**

It's not time for the king to wander yet: 26.Kf3? g4+ 27.Kf4 Rxf2#.

**26...Rb1+ 27.Rxb1 Qxb1+ 28.Ke2 Rb8?**

For the win... but White has seen further. 28...g4! will result in someone giving perpetual check: 29.Bd3 (29.Rh4 Qc2+ 30.Ke1 Qc1+ etc.) 29...Qb2+ 30.Kd1 Rc8 31.Bh7+ Kxh7 32.Rxh6+ Kxh6 33.Qf6+ Kh7 34.Qxf7+ Kh8 35.Qf6+ Kh7, etc. It's another case of chasing the king when containing it is actually the better option.

**29.Kf3 Rb2 30.Kg4!**

White can also win with 30.Be2 Qc2 31.Kg4 Qxe2+ 32.f3. Then to survive White's counterthreats, Black will have to swap into a lost rook ending, e.g. 32...Qb5 33.Qf6 Qf5+.

The game now concluded

**30...Qg6 31.Bd3! Qg7**

31...Qxd3 32.Rxh6.

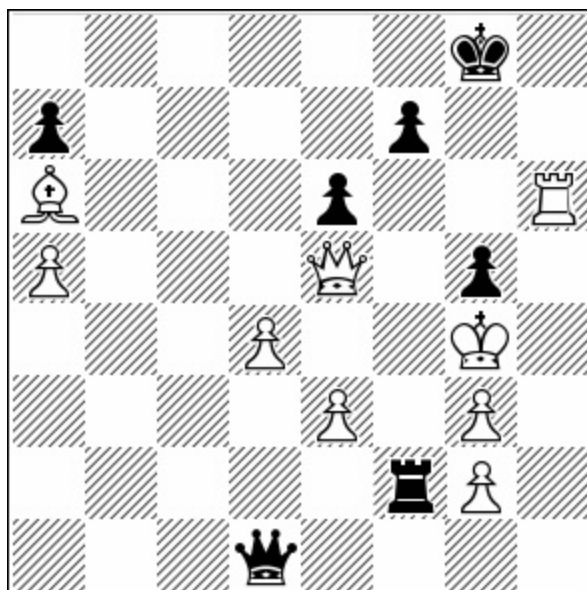
**32.Qxg7+ Kxg7 33.Kf3**

And **Black resigned**.

But what about 30...Rxf2 ?

(back to the exercises) ***Solution to Puzzle 27:***

Hebden noticed belatedly White's brilliant escape 31.Rxh6 Qd1+.



*analysis diagram*

Now the king has no options, as 32.Kxg5 Rf5+, and 32.Kh3 Qh1+ 33.Kg4 Qxh6 would win for Black. But 32.Be2!! Qxe2+ 33.Kh3 ends Black's threats, and the counterthreats on Black's king decide after 33...f6 34.Qb8+ and mate in a few.

### **It's My Turn**

We have already seen how a king hunt can arise from a failure to kill the king in its castle. Sometimes a running king can buy enough time for counterthreats on the opposing king to bear fruit.

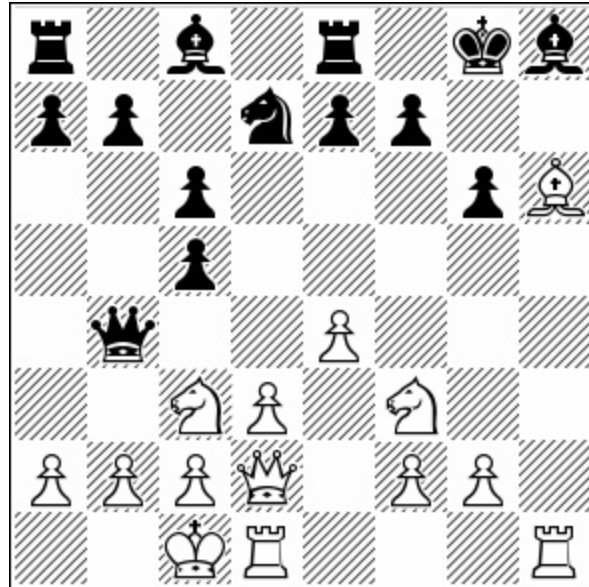
Game 63 – Sicilian Defense

**Wei Yi** 2641

**AL Muthaiah** 2215

Pune Wch-jr 2014

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 g6 4.Bxc6 dxc6 5.h3 Bg7 6.d3 Nf6 7.Nc3 0-0  
8.Be3 Nd7 9.Qd2 Re8 10.Bh6 Bh8 11.h4 Qa5 12.h5 Qb4 13.hxg6 hxg6  
14.0-0-0**

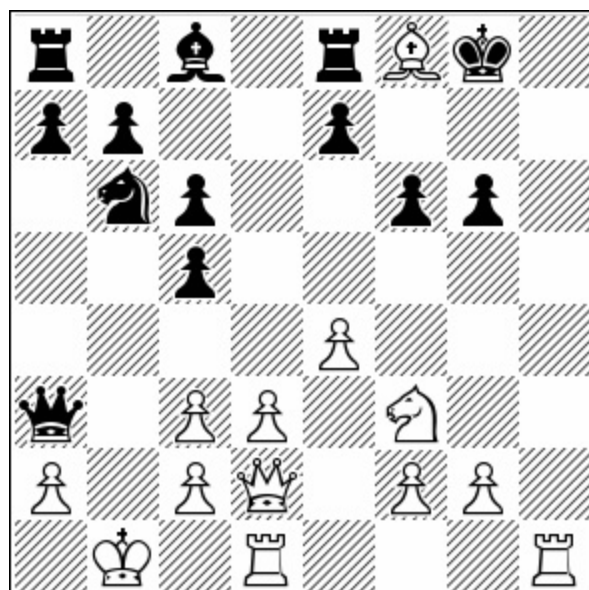


**14...Bxc3!?**

Strictly speaking, it isn't a great idea to give up this bishop and leave the king defenseless. But to exploit its absence White has to open his own king, which will matter if his attack is imprecise.

**15.bxc3 Qa3+ 16.Kb1 Nb6 17.Bf8! f6**

Concrete threats forestall counterplay. On 17...Na4, 18.Rh8+ Kxh8 19.Qh6 mates.



## **18.Qh6?!**

This looks pretty direct, but less logical than inserting an extra piece into the attack with 18.Rh8+ Kf7 19.Ng5+!. White's direct mating threats will give Black no time to defend: 19...fxg5 20.Qxg5 Ke6 21.Rh7 c4 (not the last variation where we will see Black being forced to play this to defend with the queen, but opening the d-file as a result) 22.dxc4 Rxf8 23.Qxg6+ Rf6 24.Qg4+ Ke5 25.f4+ Rxf4 26.Rh5+ and mate follows.

## **18...Kf7 19.Qg7+ Ke6 20.Ng5+!**

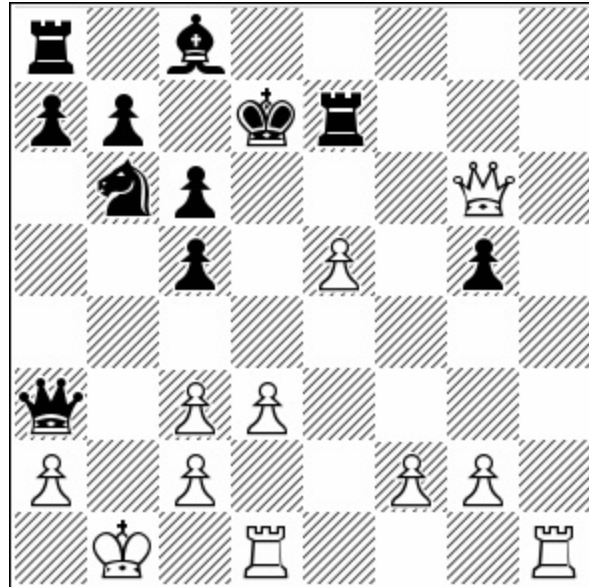
20.Rh7 Na4! calls White's bluff, as he has no actual checkmate. After 21.Qxe7+ Rxe7 22.Rxe7+ Kd6, White has to take perpetual check, as attempts at a big finish will rebound: 23.e5+? fxe5 24.Rf7+ Ke6 25.Ng5+ Kd5 26.c4+ Kd4 27.Rf4+ Kc3 28.Ne4+ Kb4 – the king escapes and White has to resign.

## **20...fxg5 21.d4?**

White had one last chance for a win, rather more subtle than what he had before: 21.Qxg6+ Kd7

(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 28:*

22.Bxe7! Rxe7 23.e5!!.



*analysis diagram*

This pawn advance maintains momentum by threatening mate beginning with 24.Qd6+. Black is forced to open the d-file to defend, falling prey to an unexpected fork: 23...c4 24.dxc4+ Kc7 25.Qd6+ Qxd6 26.exd6+ Kd7 27.dxe7+ Kxe7. It may not be obvious at first, but White will penetrate to the back rank with a rook and ultimately gang up on the pinned bishop: 28.c5 Nd5 29.Rde1+ Kf7 30.Rh8, and Black can only delay the loss of material.

### **21...c4**

Not bad, but 21...Nc4 22.Qg8+ Kd7 23.dxc5+ Kc7 24.Qxc4 Rxf8 was a less messy way to win.

### **22.d5+ cxd5 23.exd5+ Kd7 24.d6 Kc6!**

The king has escaped containment and is well-sheltered on the side of the board.

### **25.Qxg6 Bd7**

Black could have ended the game with a counterattack by 25...Bf5! 26.Qxf5

Na4 27.Qd5+ Kb6 28.Qd4+ Ka5 29.Qd5+ b5 and the checks have run out.

**26.dxe7+ Kb5 27.Rh5 Bc6 28.Qxg5+ Ka6 29.Qc5 Qxc5 30.Rxc5**

White has bailed out into a lost endgame, but somehow managed to win in the end!

### **You Can Only Hope to Contain It**

The best game of chess I was ever involved in was a loss to the legendary Lajos Portisch. I was never quite able to lasso his wandering king. Only years later – after the advent of chess engines – did I learn of a strange resource that would have contained the king and turned the tables.

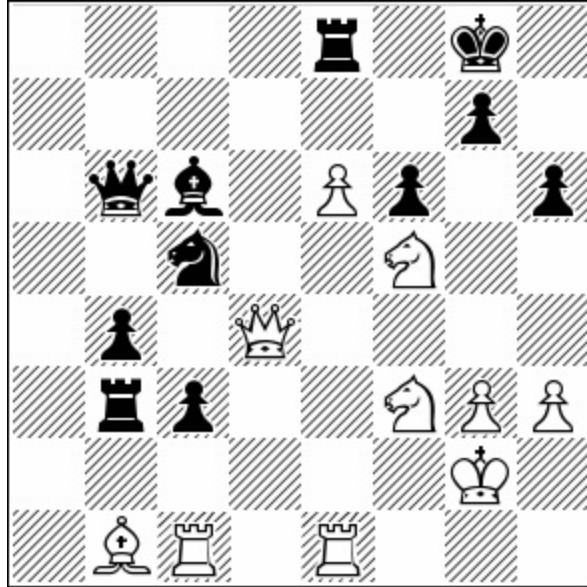
Game 64 – Benoni Defense

**Lajos Portisch** 2615

**Joel Benjamin** 2575

Szirak Interzonal 1987

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 Bd6 6.Nc3 Bc7 7.Nd2 d6 8.Nc4 a6 9.a4 Nbd7 10.Bg5 0-0 11.e4 Re8 12.Bd3 Rb8 13.Ne3 h6 14.Bh4 Ne5 15.0-0 Bd7 16.Bc2 Ng6 17.Bg3 b5 18.axb5 axb5 19.f3 c4 20.Ne2 Nh5 21.Bf2 Bb6 22.g3 Ne5 23.Kg2 b4 24.Re1 Rc8 25.Ng1 Nf6 26.Rc1 Bc5 27.Nf1 Bxf2 28.Kxf2 Qb6+ 29.Kg2 Ra8 30.Bb1 Rec8 31.Ne3 c3 32.b3 Ra3 33.h3 Bb5 34.f4 Ned7 35.Nf3 Re8 36.Nf5 Nc5 37.e5 dxe5 38.fxe5 Nxd5 39.Qxd5 Bc6 40.Qd4 Rxb3 41.e6 f6**



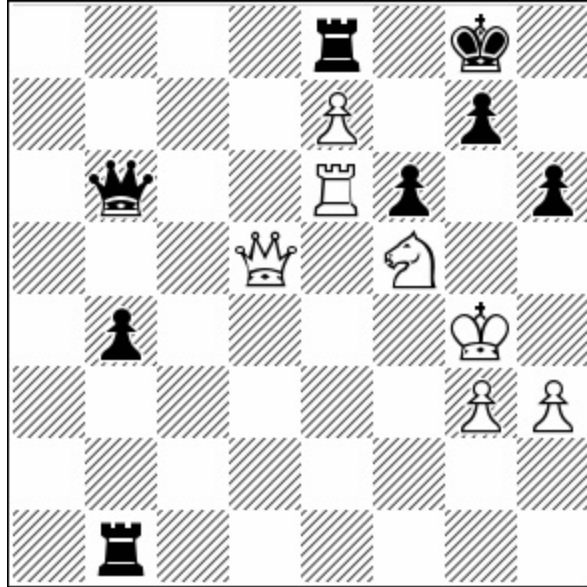
I spoiled a big advantage and let White break through in the center. While Black has some attacking assets, White should be faster.

**42.e7**

This careless move lets me back in the game. 42.Bc2 Rb2 43.e7 was the right way.

**42...Bxf3+ 43.Kxf3 c2+ 44.Kg4! Qc6**

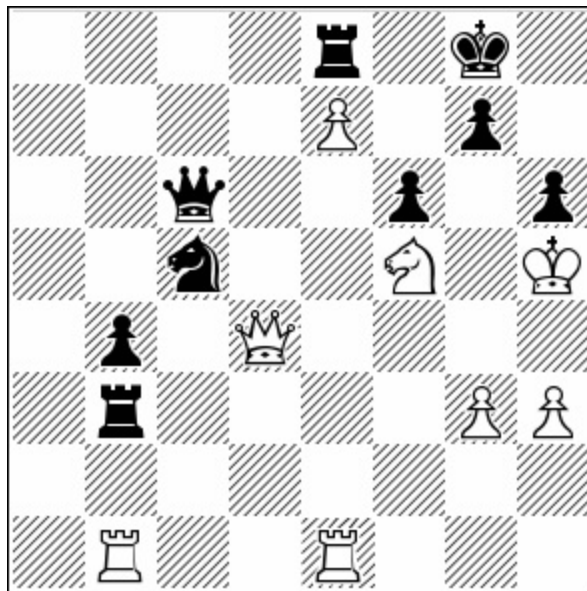
For a long time I thought this move was forced, but it turns out that 44...cxb1=Q is playable. 45.Rxb1 Rxb1 46.Qd5+ Ne6! 47.Rxe6 looks conclusive, but...



*analysis diagram*

47...Rd1!! 48.Qe4 (retreats on the diagonal will be met by similar counterattacks on the queen) 48...Qc7 49.Nxh6+ (49.Rxf6 Qd7 50.Re6 is equal) 49...Kh8 and it's only a draw.

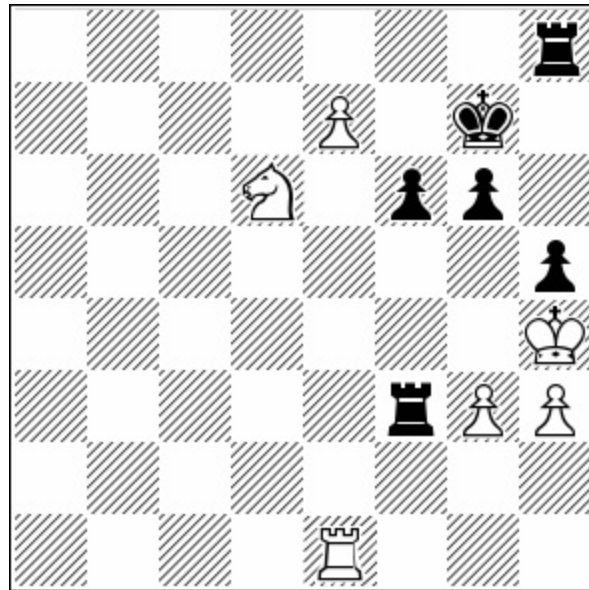
**45.Kh5 cxb1=Q 46.Rxb1**



**46...Qf3+?**

This enables Black to set a great trap, but unfortunately not more than that. Only years later, when engines drastically improved, did I learn that I could have profitably boxed in White's king, instead of sending it forward!

46...Kh7! 47.Qg4 (Black finds a lovely mate after 47.Rxb3 g6+ 48.Kh4 Nxb3 49.Qd3 Nd2! 50.Qxd2 g5+ 51.Kg4 h5+ 52.Kxh5 Qf3+ 53.g4 Qxh3+) 47...Qf3 48.Qxf3 (48.Rxb3 g6+ 49.Kh4 Qxb3 50.Nd6 f5 51.Nxe8 Qf7-+) 48...g6+ 49.Kh4 Rxf3 50.Nd6 h5! 51.Rxb4 (51.Nxe8 Kh6 and mate) 51...Nd3 52.Rbb1 Nxe1 53.Rxe1 Kh6 54.Nf7+ Kg7 55.Nd6 Rh8.



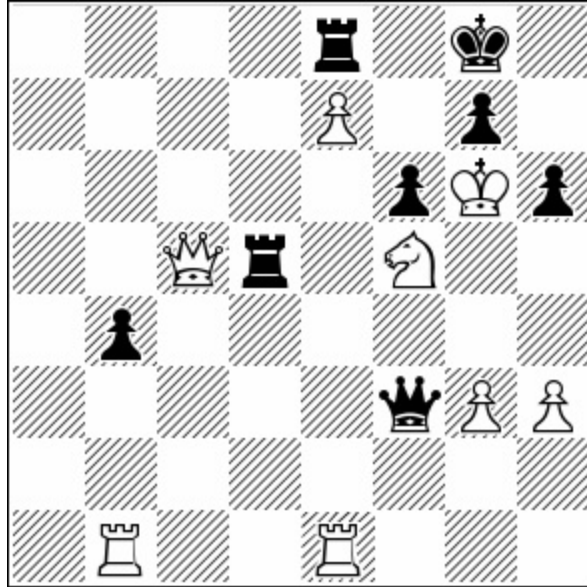
*analysis diagram*

56.e8=N+! kills the mate, but after 56...Kf8 White will have to cough up a piece. The best way is probably 57.Ne4 g5+ 58.Nxg5 f5g5+ 59.Kxg5 R5g3+ 60.Kh4 and the game teeters between a draw and a win for Black.

**47.Kg6 Rd3**

47...Rxb1 48.Qc4+ and 49.Qf7 decides.

**48.Qxc5 Rd5**



(back to the exercises) ***Solution to Puzzle 29:***

**49.Rf1!**

49.Qc8?? and 49.Qc2 look good enough, but both fail to 49...Qxg3+!  
50.Nxg3 Rg5#.

**49...Rxf5 50.Qxf5 Qxg3+ 51.Kh5**

The king should not give up its dominant outpost so easily. Much more accurate was 51.Qg4 Qd3+ 52.Rf5! Qxb1 53.Qc4+ Kh8 54.Qb5 and White's extra rook will be easier to convert.

**51...Rxe7 52.Rg1 Qc3?**

I was disheartened at this point and didn't trust 52...Qb8 53.Kh4 Re5, but it is far from trivial for White to convert his extra rook with his wild king. Never give up, never surrender!

**53.Rbc1 Re5 54.Rxc3 Rxf5+ 55.Kg6 1-0**

### **These Boots Were Made for Walking**

I'll conclude this chapter with a bit of fluff. The white king embarks on a

long journey almost from the first move. My uncle showed me this game when I was an eight-year-old novice, and it helped instill in me a love of the game. It's part of the reason I hate to see young players ignore classic games.

Game 65 – Vienna Game

**Carl Hamppe**  
**Philipp Meitner**  
Vienna 1870

**1.e4 e5 2.Nc3 Bc5 3.Na4?! Bxf2+! 4.Kxf2 Qh4+ 5.Ke3 Qf4+ 6.Kd3 d5  
7.Kc3 Qxe4**

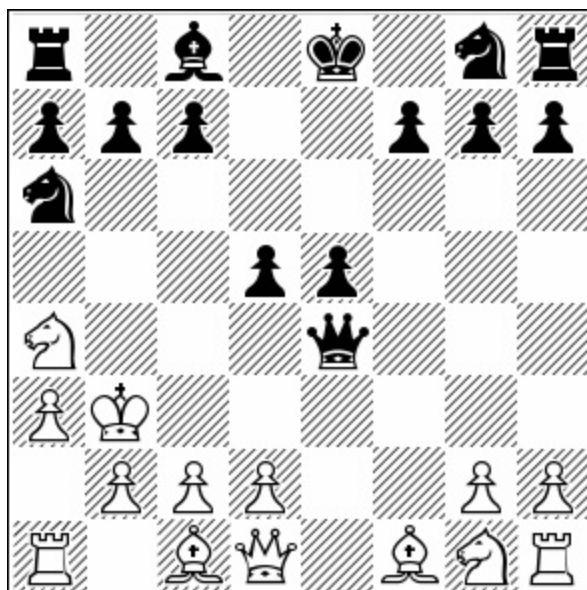
It was a bit more exact to flick in 7...d4+ first, as now 8.d4 would have favored White.

**8.Kb3 Na6**

The great Wilhelm Steinitz took the king walk four years later; after 8...Nc6! 9.c3 b5? (9...d4! is pleasant for Black) 10.Nc5 Na5+ 11.Ka3 Nc4+ 12.Bxc4 Qxc4 13.d4 a5 14.Qe2 he managed to consolidate and win in Steinitz-Steinkühler, Great Britain (simul) 1874.

**9.a3**

Again, 9.d4 should have been preferred, but it would have denied us one scintillating king chase!



**9...Qxa4+! 10.Kxa4 Nc5+ 11.Kb4**

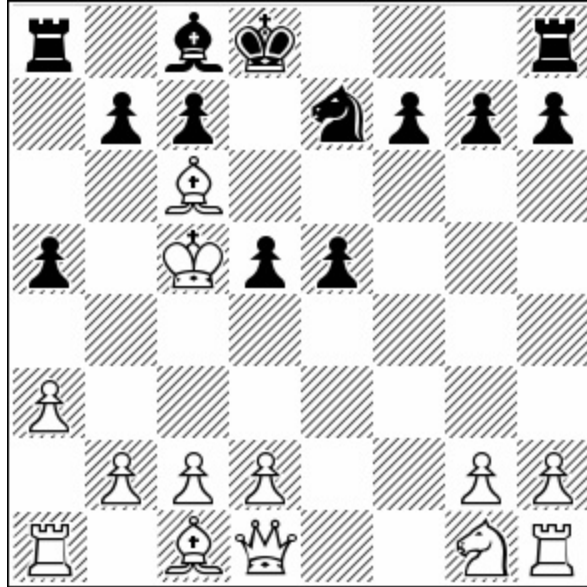
It seems there was a narrow, almost impossible to navigate path out of danger here, beginning with 11.Kb5! Ne7 (11...a5 can only be beaten by 12.b4 Ne7 13.bxa5!, while on 11...b6, 12.d4! exd4 13.Qxd4 Ne7 14.Qxc5 is the only win) and now the problem-like 12.c4! d4 13.Kxc5 a5 14.Qa4+ Kd8 15.Qxa5! Rxa5+ 16.Kb4 Nc6+ 17.Kb3. With his king escaping, White has good winning chances.

**11...a5+ 12.Kxc5 Ne7**

(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 30:*

It actually takes the mighty Stockfish a while to realize that White is not winning, and has to scramble to make a draw! Credit to Herr Hamppe, he finds it!

**13.Bb5+ Kd8 14.Bc6!!**



Without this move, White is mated, but now he is poised to back the king out. The rest of the moves are all forced, too.

**14...b6+! 15.Kb5 Nxc6!**

This stops the king's retreat. The threats of 16...Nd4+ and 16...Bd7 force the king back into the lion's mouth.

**16.Kxc6! Bb7+! 17.Kb5!**

17.Kxb7 Kd7 18.Qg4+ Kd6 and 19...Rhb8 will mate.

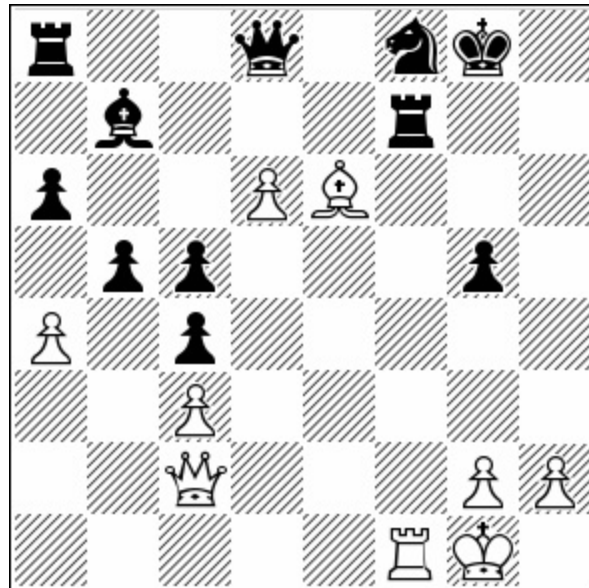
**17...Ba6+ ½-½**

We have a marvelous perpetual check – 18.Ka4? Bc4 would lead to another checkmate.

That's as purely a tactical game, start to finish, as you will ever see, and it holds up surprisingly well to 21st century computers.

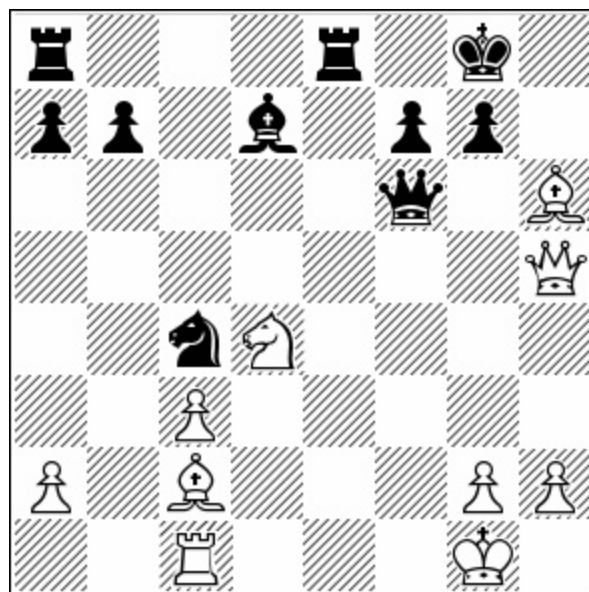
# Dodging Defenses – Puzzles

31 (go to the solution)



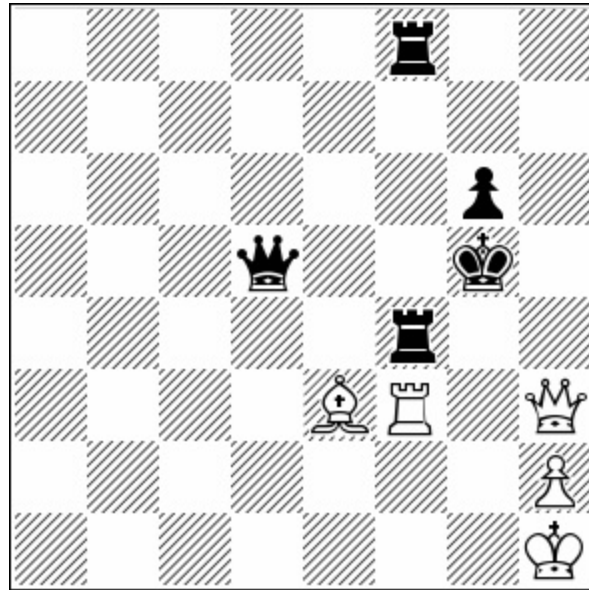
*White to play wins  
Bacrot-Aronian*

32 (go to the solution)



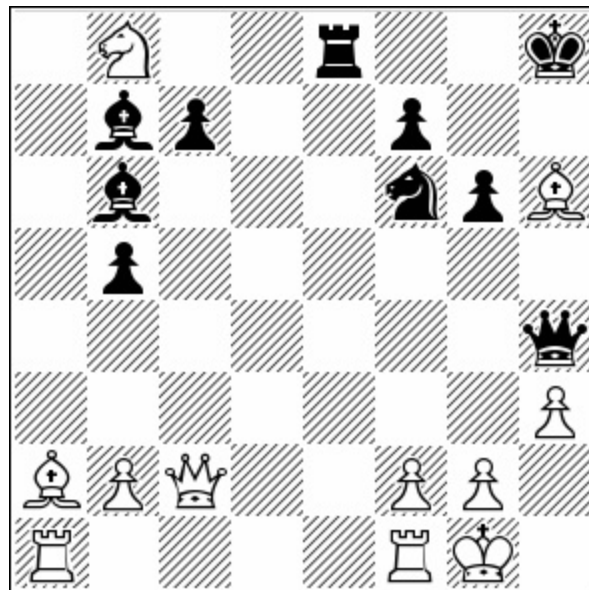
*White to play wins*  
*Gustafsson-Efimenko*

**33 (go to the solution)**



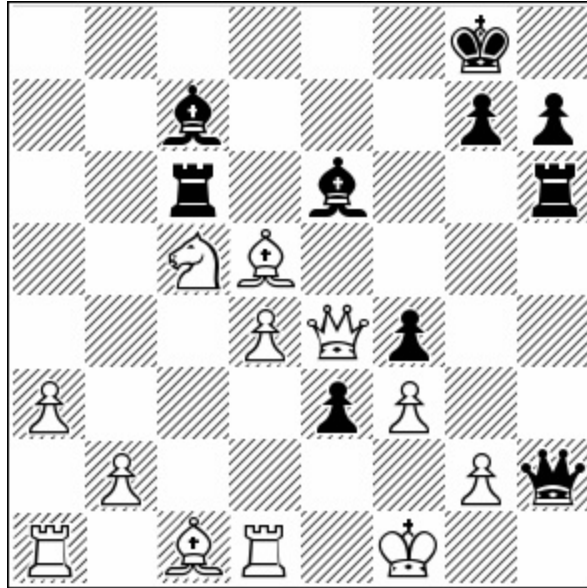
*White to play wins*  
*Benjamin-Xu Jun*

**34 (go to the solution)**



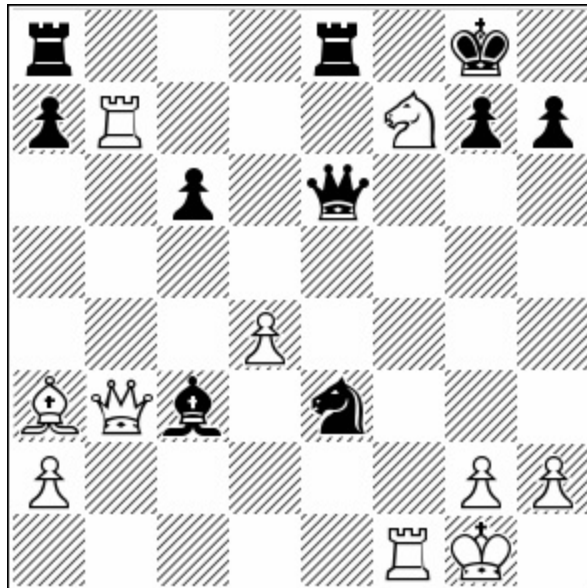
*Black to play wins  
Kamsky-Svidler*

**35 (go to the solution)**



*Black to play wins  
Sulashvili-Guseinov*

**36 (go to the solution)**



*White to play wins*  
*Lebedev-Gonak*

## **Chapter 3**

### **Dodging Defenses**

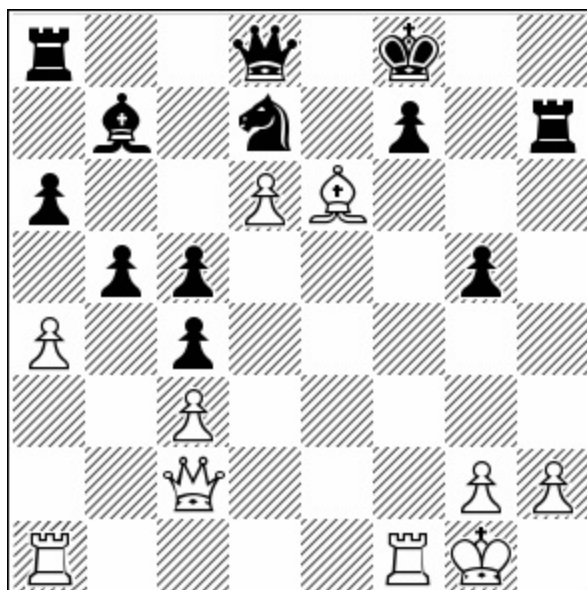
In the course of an attack, a player will be faced with many tempting continuations. The key is often to find the one that negates a particular attempt at escape for the defender.

#### **Slipping Past the Defense**

A wise man, Danish grandmaster Bent Larsen, once said that there is no mate with a knight on f8. Levon Aronian tried to prove the maxim, but failed against Etienne Bacrot's resourceful attacking.

Game 66 – Slav Defense  
**Etienne Bacrot** 2709  
**Levon Aronian** 2773  
Novi Sad Ech-tt 2009

**1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 e6 5.Bg5 h6 6.Bh4 dxc4 7.e4 g5 8.Bg3 b5  
9.Be2 Bb7 10.0-0 Nbd7 11.Ne5 Bg7 12.Nxd7 Nxd7 13.Bd6 a6 14.a4 e5  
15.Bg4 exd4 16.e5 c5 17.f4 dxc3 18.bxc3 Bf8 19.Qe2 Bxd6 20.exd6+ Kf8  
21.fxg5 hxg5 22.Be6 Rh7 23.Qc2**



Aronian is a piece ahead but under heavy pressure. The prudent option is to give back the piece to settle the position down: 23...Rg7! 24.Qf5 Nf6! 25.Qxf6 Qxf6 26.Rxf6 Rd8 27.Raf1 Rxd6 28.Rxf7+ Rxf7 29.Rxf7+ Ke8 30.Rxb7 Rxe6 31.axb5 axb5 32.Rxb5 with a likely draw in the endgame. It is entirely possible that he saw that variation but decided he didn't need it. Only by finding several surprising moves can White break down Black's defenses.

**23...Kg8? 24.Rxf7!**

Bacrot sidesteps the first, albeit obvious hurdle: 24.Qg6+ Rg7 25.Bxf7+ Kh8 leaves the king well protected.

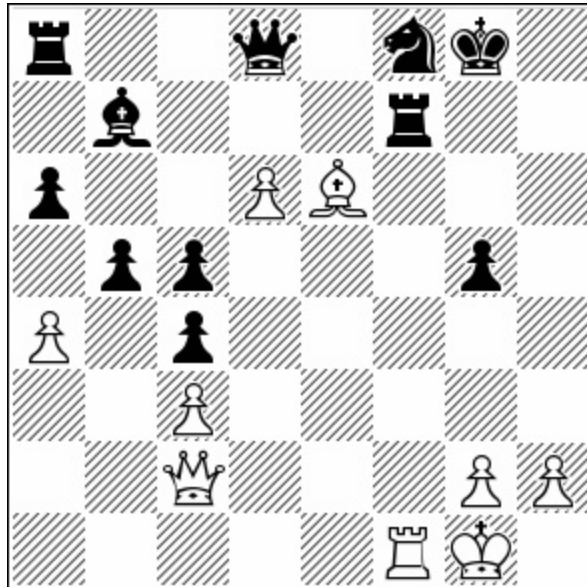
**24...Rxf7 25.Rf1!**

After 25.Qg6+ Kh8 26.Qxf7 Qf6 Black holds again.

**25...Nf8!**

Aronian picks the sturdiest knight move. After 25...Nf6 26.Qg6+ Kh8 27.Qxf7 Nh7 28.Qxb7 White regains his piece and is well on the way to victory. 25...Ne5 is a bit trickier but White has an esthetic finish: 26.Rxf7! Nxf7 27.Qg6+ Kh8 28.Qh5+! Kg7 29.Qxf7+ Kh8 30.Bf5 Qg8 31.Qh5+ Kg7 32.Qxg5+ and mate is delivered.

But it appears now that the Larsen maxim may be proven true.



(back to the exercises) ***Solution to Puzzle 31:***

**26.Qf5!!**

This is the only way to create real danger for the black king. 26.Bxf7+ Kg7 keeps invaders out, while the flashy 26.Rxf7? Qxd6! leaves White dressed up for a killing discovered check with nowhere to go!

In breaking down defenses there is a certain degree of process of elimination. Grandmasters are better at looking deeper to find the solutions when the more obvious tries fail.

**26...Nxe6 27.Qxf7+ Kh8 28.Rf6 Qxf6**

The queen has to go – 28...Qf8 29.Qxe6 will just cost Black more.

**29.Qxf6+ Ng7 30.d7**

Passed pawns have a way of showing up at the end of combinations, removing another defender to make the result clear.

**30...b4 31.cxb4 cxb4 32.d8=Q+ Rxd8 33.Qxd8+ Kh7 34.Qb6 Be4 35.Qxb4 Bd3 36.Qa5 1-0**

## Road Block

In the next game, White thwarts Black's defensive tricks with exact play, featuring a lovely interference move.

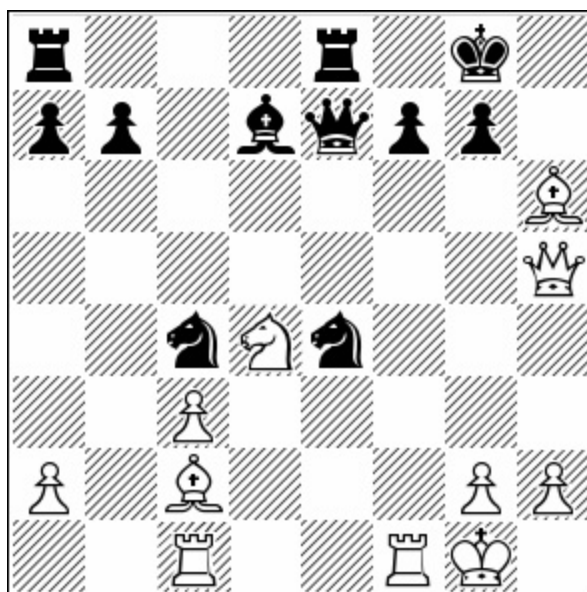
Game 67 – Ragozin Variation

Jan Gustafsson 2633

Zahar Efimenko 2702

Porto Carras Ech-tt 2011

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 d5 4.Nc3 Nbd7 5.cxd5 exd5 6.Bg5 Bb4 7.e3 c5  
8.dxc5 Qa5 9.Rc1 Bxc3+ 10.bxc3 0-0 11.Nd4 Ne4 12.Bf4 Re8 13.Be2 Qxc5  
14.0-0 Nb6 15.Bd3 Bd7 16.f3 Nf6 17.Bg5 Qd6 18.Qe1 h6 19.Bf4 Qe7  
20.Qh4 Nc4 21.e4 Nb2 22.Bc2 dxe4 23.fxe4 Nc4 24.Bxh6 Nxe4 25.Qh5



Black needs a strong counter to White's sacrifice – which is not truly a sacrifice.

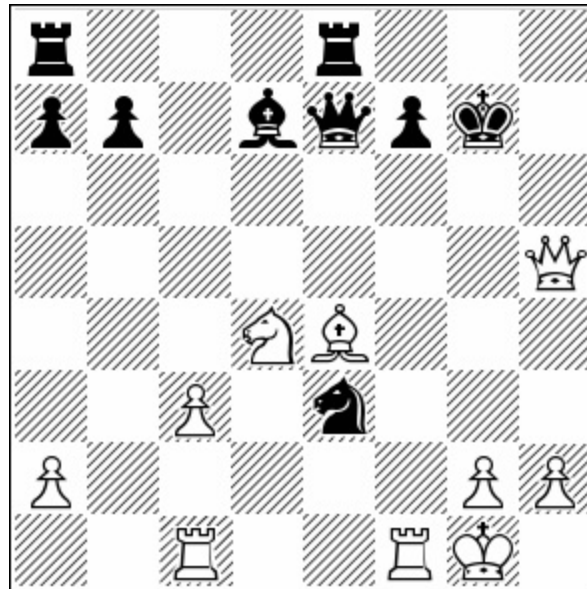
**25...Nf6?**

This looks like the most responsible move, but it simply loses by force. Black had two other interesting moves, one fancy, and one unlikely looking:

A) 25...Ne3!? has the clever idea that 26.Bxe3 is met by 26...Nf6! 27.Rxf6

Qxe3+, winning the loose rook on c1: 28.Rf2 Qxc1+ 29.Rf1 Qe3+ 30.Kh1 g6 31.Bxg6 fxg6 32.Qxg6+ Kh8 and either perpetual check or 33.Qh5+ Kg8 34.Qf7+ Kh8 when White may eschew perpetual check for 35.Qxd7 Re7, but it is not necessarily to his advantage.

There is a lot to sort through, as 26.Bb3 Nxf1 27.Rxf1 Be6 is tempting but provides no clear win. The correct response is 26.Bxg7! Kxg7 27.Bxe4.



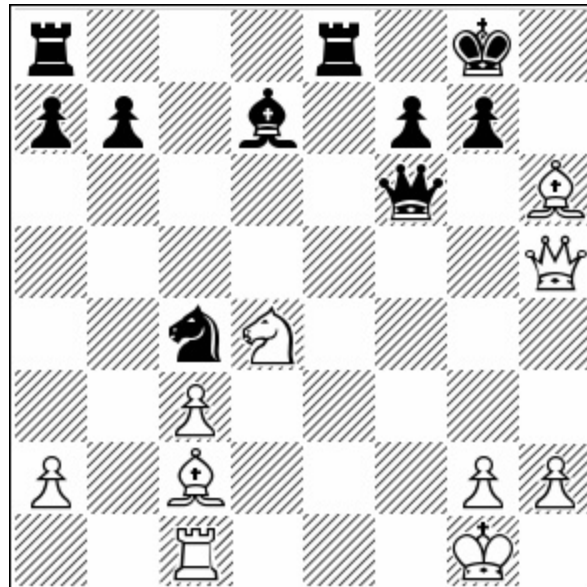
*analysis diagram*

The best try is 27...Qxe4 (27...Rh8 28.Rxf7+ Qxf7 29.Qg5+ Kf8 30.Qxe3+—) 28.Rxf7+ Kg8 29.Rf3! and Black will drop the e3-knight in order to protect his king, e.g. 29...Bg4 30.Qg5+ Kh8 31.Rg3 Qe7 32.Qh6+ Qh7 33.Qf6+ Qg7 34.Qxg7+ Kxg7 35.Nc2 with two extra pawns;

B) To save this position, Black must get past the optics of 25...gxh6! 26.Bxe4 Nd2. Compared to the previous diagram, White is on move, but the pesky pawn on h6 provides the necessary defense. White isn't even close to a win, e.g. 27.Bd5 (27.Bh7+ Kg7 28.Rce1 Qxe1 29.Qxf7+ Kh8 30.Qf6 offers only perpetual check) 27...Qe3+! (27...Nxf1?! 28.Qg6+ Kh8 29.Qxh6+ Kg8 30.Qg6+ Kh8 31.Qh5+ Kg7 32.Rxf1 is at least more pleasant to play for White) 28.Kh1 (28.Rf2 is not a winning try because 28...Qe1+ 29.Rf1 Qe3+ repeats, but 28...Nf3+ 29.Qxf3 Qxc1+ 30.Rf1 Qe3+ 31.Qxe3 Rxe3 32.Rxf7

Be6 looks better for Black) 28...Nxf1 29.Qxf7+ (29.Rxf1 Kh8! and the back rank weakness kills any winning tries) 29...Kh8 30.Qf6+ with a perpetual.

## 26.Rxf6 Qxf6



(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 32:*

## 27.Bh7+!

Finesse is required, as if 27.Bg5, 27...g6! blocks the check on h7 while counterattacking the white queen. But now 27...Kh8 28.Bg5 averts that defense, as Black's queen would be captured with check.

## 27...Kf8 28.Bg5 Re5

Efimenko may have counted on this clever defense. If 28...g6, 29.Qh4 and if the queen moves, it will be lost to Bh6+ anyway. 28...Qe5 29.Bd3 wins prosaically with the double threat of mate on h8 and taking the knight.

## 29.Bf5!!

This beautiful move opens the line to h8 for the queen while blocking the line to g5 for Black's rook.

**29...g6 30.Qh4**

30.Bxf6 gxh5 31.Bxd7 is enough to win as well but it's nice to be a queen up.

**30...Qxg5 31.Qxg5 Bxf5 32.Qh4! 1-0**

Black cannot escape both the veiled threat to his knight with 33.Nxf5 and the threat to his rook with 33.Qh8+.

### **Never Surrender**

Sometimes a mating combination seems to deliver a simple conclusion, but determined defense can force a number of accurate moves to ensure the point.

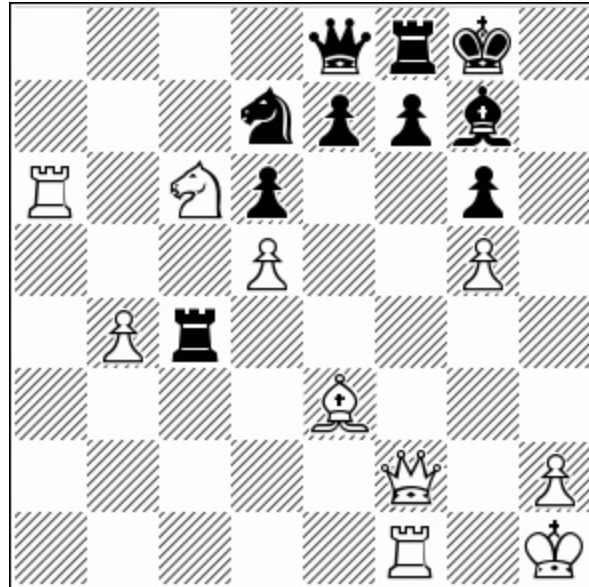
Game 68 – Sicilian Defense

**Joel Benjamin 2580**

**Xu Jun 2655**

Seattle tt 2001

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.a4 g6 7.Be2 Bg7 8.0-0  
0-0 9.f4 Nc6 10.Be3 Qb6 11.a5 Qc7 12.Nb3 Be6 13.Nd5 Bxd5 14.exd5 Nb8  
15.c4 Nbd7 16.Nd4 Rfe8 17.f5 Ne5 18.b3 Rac8 19.Kh1 Qd8 20.g4 Nfd7  
21.g5 b6 22.Qd2 bxa5 23.Rxa5 Nc5 24.b4 Ncd7 25.fxg6 hxg6 26.Rxa6  
Nxc4 27.Bxc4 Rxc4 28.Qf2 Rf8 29.Nc6 Qe8**



Black is set up for a mating combination, but he won't go quietly.

**30.Ra8!! Qxa8 31.Nxe7+ Kh7 32.Qg3**

Despite the final result, Black's subsequent play is a model for club players. Scratch and claw to stave off mate. The extra rook gives Black a little extra leeway to defend.

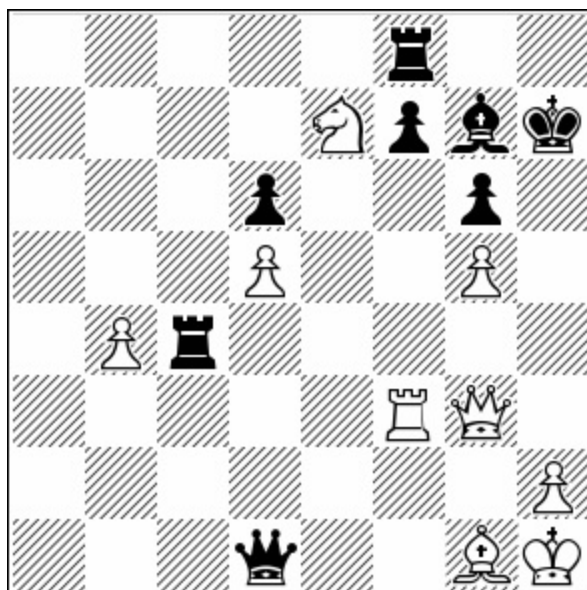
**32...Nf6! 33.Rxf6!**

The careless capture 33.gxf6? Bxf6 34.Rxf6? Qa1+ turns it upside down.

**33...Qa1+ 34.Bg1 Qd1!**

Again the most resistant as 34...Qc3 35.Rf3 Qxb4 36.Bf2 will cost a rook.

**35.Rf3!**



**35...Bh6!**

It looks a bit ridiculous, but Black continues to breathe, if barely. Now another trap has to be avoided, namely 36.Qh3? Rh4!-+.

**36.gxh6 Qb1 37.Nf5! Rxb4 38.Nxd6 Qd1**

Here, feeling a little pressure of the clock and the team event, I played it safe with

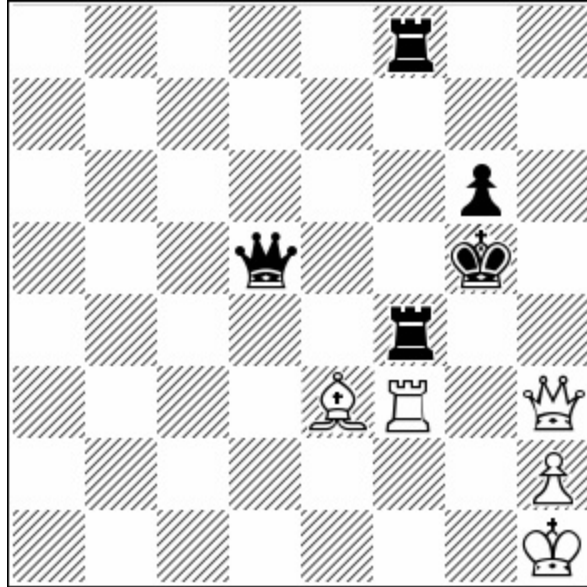
**39.Rd3 Qe2 40.Re3 Qh5 41.Qf3,**

winning the endgame on move 61.

The more appropriate finish would have been **39.Nxf7! Qxd5 40.Ng5+ Kxh6.**

This was my only concern. White shrugs off the pin to give mate in other variations, like 40...Kh8 41.Qe5+! and 40...Kg8 41.Qc7 Rb7 42.h7+ Kh8 43.Bd4+.

**41.Qh3+ Kxg5 42.Be3+ Rbf4**



(back to the exercises) ***Solution to Puzzle 33:***

A careless player may fall into a trap here – 43.Qg3+ Kh5 44.Bxf4 g5! wins back the piece and draws. But 43.Qg2+! unpins the rook, causing Black’s pieces to drop off.

### **Right Down the Line**

The defender may pin his hopes on securing a critical diagonal. It can be worth a whole lot to eliminate that obstacle.

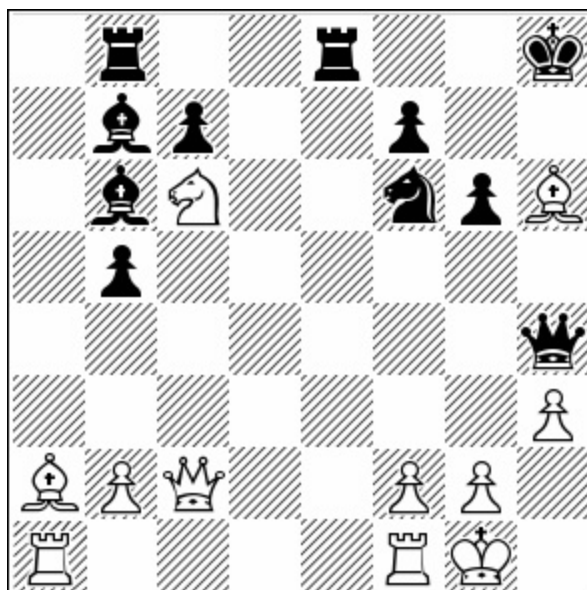
Game 69 – Ruy Lopez

**Gata Kamsky** 2741

**Petr Svidler** 2739

Khanty-Mansiysk 2011

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 b5 6.Bb3 Bc5 7.a4 Rb8 8.axb5  
axb5 9.c3 d6 10.d4 Bb6 11.Be3 0-0 12.Nbd2 h6 13.h3 Re8 14.Qc2 exd4  
15.cxd4 Na5 16.Ba2 Bb7 17.e5 Nd5 18.Bb1 g6 19.Bxh6 Nc6 20.exd6 Qxd6  
21.Ne4 Qb4 22.Ba2 Nxd4 23.Nf6+ Kh8 24.Nxd4 Nxf6 25.Nc6 Qh4**



Kamsky has gone all out in pursuit of a win because of the match situation and is past the point of finding a safe continuation.

### 26.Nxb8

White had a quite plausible try in 26.Be3, which works well on 26...Bxe3 27.fxe3 Rxe3 28.Bxf7! with an okay position. But Black obtains a crushing initiative with 26...Rxe3!! 27.fxe3 Re8 and White is surprisingly helpless – 28.Rae1 (if 28.Qc3 Rxe3 29.Qxf6+ Qxf6 30.Rxf6 Re1+ 31.Kh2 Rxa1 32.Bd5 Bc5 Black has a decisive initiative; or 28.Rxf6 Qxf6 29.Bd5 Rxe3 30.Kh1 Qd6 and Black has a large advantage) 28...Rxe3 29.Rxe3 Bxe3+ 30.Kh1 Ne4. Finally there is the bailout measure 26.Bxf7 Qxh6 27.Bxe8 Rxe8 28.Rae1 but only Black could win in that case.

(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 34:*

### 26...Re2!!

This beautiful deflection produces decisive mating threats. Svidler had to tread carefully, as the similar approach 26...Qg3 27.Nc6 Re2 28.Qc3! Bxf2+ 29.Kh1 Qxc3 30.bxc3 Bxc6 31.Rfd1 provides easily sufficient compensation for the exchange but not more against accurate defense.

## **27.Qc3**

After 27.Qxe2 Qg3 White cannot block the long diagonal and can only delay mate for a few moves.

## **27...Rxf2**

White is faced by decisive threats on two diagonals.

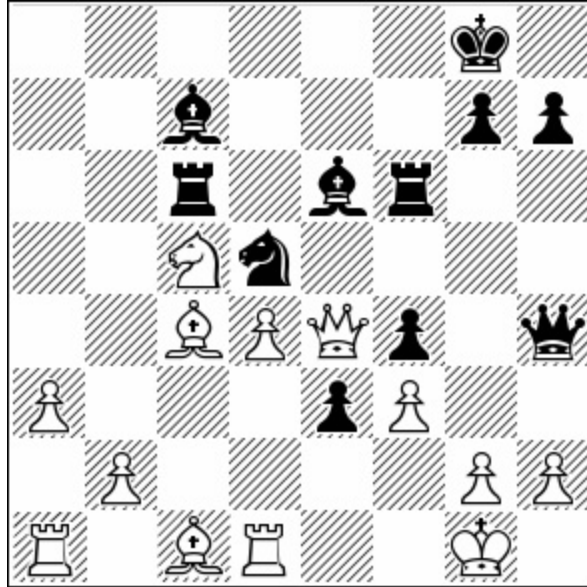
## **28.Nc6 Rxf1+ 0-1**

### **Take On Me**

An artistic way to refute anticipated defenses is to taunt the defender with a smorgasbord of captures which all fail epically.

Game 70 – Slav Defense  
**Malkhaz Sulashvili** 2491  
**Gadir Guseinov** 2625  
Baku 2008

**1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e3 e6 5.Nf3 a6 6.Qc2 c5 7.cxd5 exd5 8.Be2 Nc6 9.0-0 Be6 10.Rd1 Nb4 11.Qd2 Ne4 12.Nxe4 dxe4 13.Ne5 cxd4 14.exd4 Bd6 15.a3 Nd5 16.Qc2 f5 17.f3 e3 18.Qb3 f4 19.Bc4 Bc7 20.Qxb7 0-0 21.Nd3 Rb8 22.Qxa6 Rb6 23.Qa4 Qh4 24.Qc2 Rc6 25.Nc5 Rf6 26.Qe4**

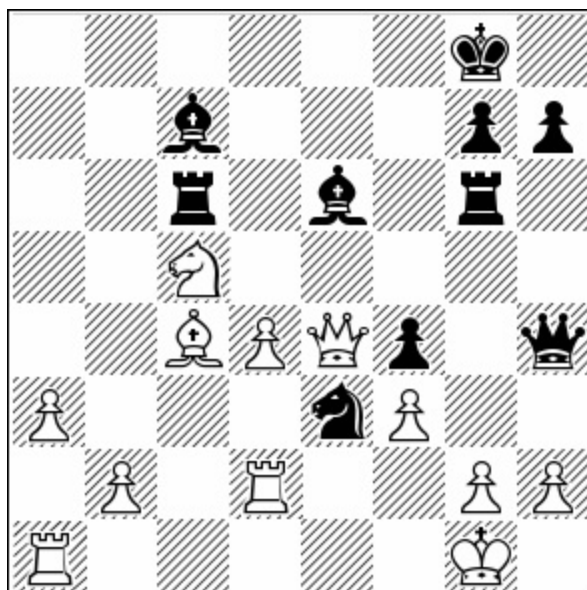


It is clear the white king is in a shaky situation, but the counterplay in the center with loose black pieces creates a sense of urgency.

### **26...Rh6!**

26...Rg6 is quite plausible as it produces an even more direct mating threat. It is not easy to see that ordinary defense will fail. 27.Rf1 Rxc5! 28.dxc5 Kf8! leaves White surprisingly defenseless. Black preserves the important bishop and takes possible checks away from White's queen. After 29.Bxd5 Bh3 30.Qxg6 hxg6, either 31...Qg5 or 31...e2 will be destructive.

But White has a defensive counterstrike in 27.Bxe3!! Nxe3 28.Rd2!.



*analysis diagram*

At the cheap cost of an inactive bishop, White has defended g2 securely and brought the focus back to the center. Then after 28...Nxc4 29.Qxc6 the rook can't be taken because of the back rank threat, so White stands better!

### **27.Bxd5**

27.h3 Rg6 leaves White's kingside too weakened: 28.Bxe3 (28.Bf1 Qf2+ 29.Kh1 Kf8 30.Nxe6+ Rxe6 31.Qf5+ Kg8 32.Qxd5 e2--+) doesn't work here because of 28...Rxe2+! 29.Kxe2 Nxe3+, mating.

### **27...Qxh2+**

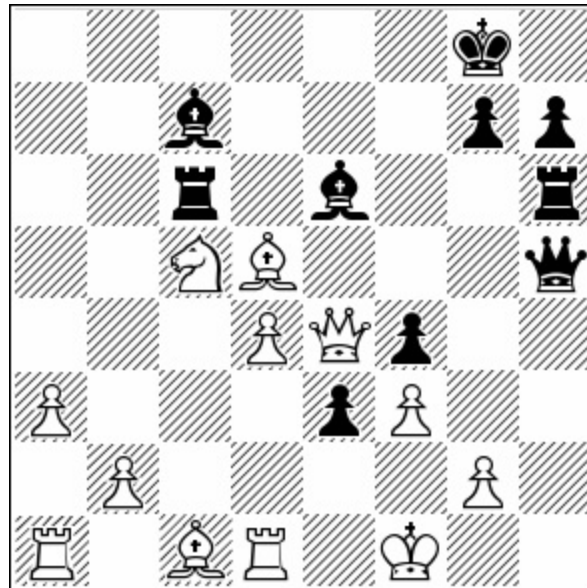
Black actually has an alternate execution of the same theme: 27...Kh8! 28.Bxe6 Qxh2+ 29.Kf1 Rxe6 with similar variations.

### **28.Kf1**

On the surface White seems to be getting away, but on closer examination, he isn't actually threatening to take anything!

(back to the exercises) ***Solution to Puzzle 35:***

**28...Qh5!!**



White has several captures to choose from, but each one allows Black to slip through the defenses.

**29.Bxe6+**

The other two captures fail in similar ways – checks open up on the c-file to prevent the successful flight of the king: 29.Nxe6 Qh1+ 30.Ke2 Qxg2+ 31.Kd3 Qc2#, and 29.Bxc6 Qh1+ 30.Ke2 Bc4+ 31.Nd3 Qxg2+ 32.Ke1 Rh1#.

**29...Rhx6 30.Qxe6+**

Black's queen will eat all in sight, but there is nothing else. 30.Nxe6 Qh1+ 31.Ke2 Qxg2+ 32.Kd3 Qc2# is a mate we've seen before, while a most stylish conclusion would have been 30.Qc2 e2+ 31.Ke1 Rxc5 32.dxc5 Qh4+ 33.Kd2 Qd8+ 34.Kc3 exd1=Q, etc.

**30...Rxe6 31.Nxe6 Qh1+ 32.Ke2 Qxg2+ 33.Kd3 Qg6+ 34.Kc3 Qxe6 35.d5 Be5+ 36.Kc2 Qa6 0-1**

### **The Trapper Trapped**

One strength of masters and grandmasters is not being easily pushed off of

moves by apparent traps. Looking a little deeper for a resource of your own can break tricky defenses.

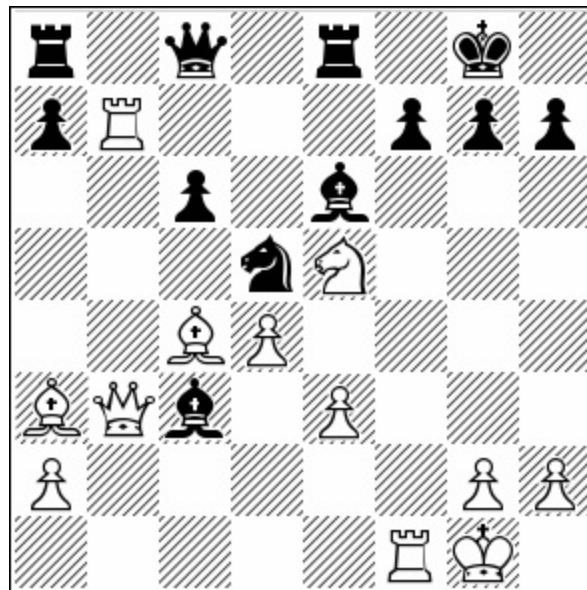
Game 71 – Slav Defence

Peter Lebedev

Gonak

Soviet Union 1938

1.Nf3 d5 2.d4 Nf6 3.c4 c6 4.Nc3 dxc4 5.Ne5 e6 6.e3 Nbd7 7.f4 Bb4 8.Bxc4  
Ne4 9.0-0 Nxc3 10.bxc3 Bxc3 11.Rb1 Nf6 12.f5 Nd5 13.fxe6 Bxe6 14.Rxb7  
0-0 15.Qb3 Qc8 16.Ba3 Re8



17.Nxf7

This starts White on a path to a brilliant finish, but he has an even smoother finish with the simple but counterintuitive capture 17.Bxd5. The point is that 17...Bxd5 allows 18.Rxf7! as the queen ‘sees’ f7 through the bishop, and it’s mate after 18...Bxb3 19.Rxg7+ Kh8 20.Rxh7+ Kg8 21.Rbg7#. But 17...cxd5 18.Rc1 simply wins a piece for White.

17...Nxe3 18.Bxe6 Qxe6

(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 36:*

**19.Nh6+! Kh8**

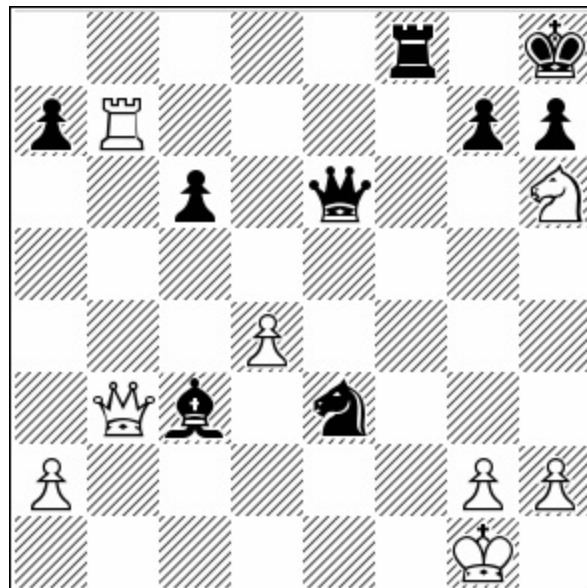
Black tries to continue resisting, as 19...gxh6 20.Rf8+ Rxf8 21.Qxe6+ ends the discussion.

**20.Rf8+ Rxf8 21.Bxf8!**

Black's traps are easily avoided, but White had to foresee the resources before entering the combination. Of course, 21.Qxe6?? Rf1# was Black's dream.

**21...Rxf8**

Not falling for 21...Qxb3? 22.Bxg7#, Black reiterates his back rank threat.



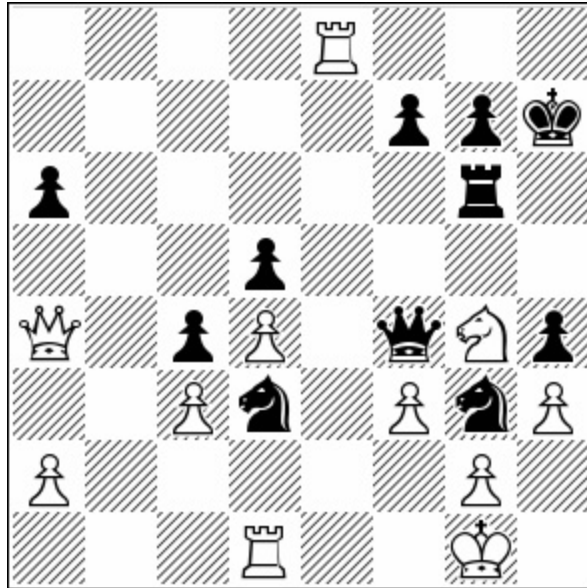
**22.Nf7+!**

**Black resigned.**

The knight blocks the file Black hoped to use for a checkmate, but its removal leads to mate in the other direction – 22...Rxf7 23.Rb8+ and a back rank finish.

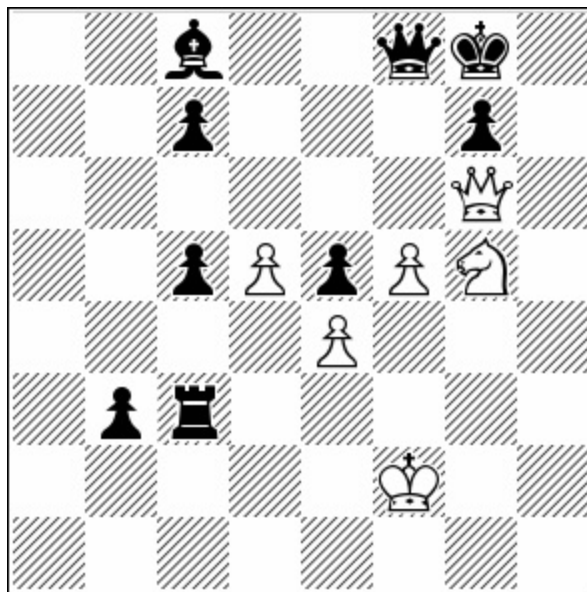
# Staying Alive – Puzzles

37 (go to the solution)



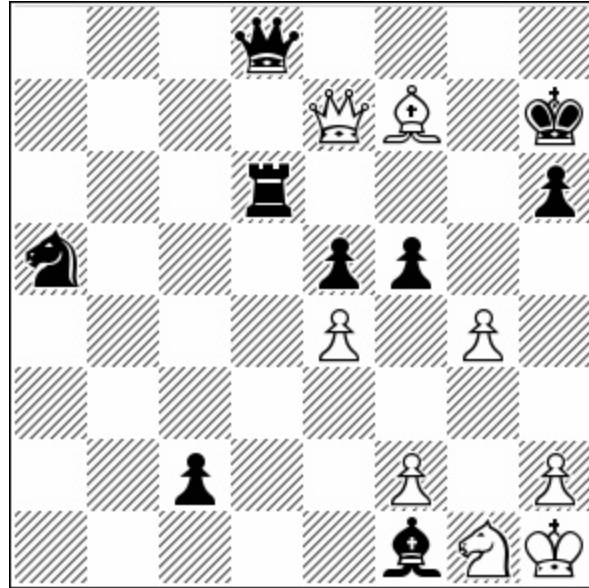
*Black to play wins  
Benjamin-Kogan*

38 (go to the solution)



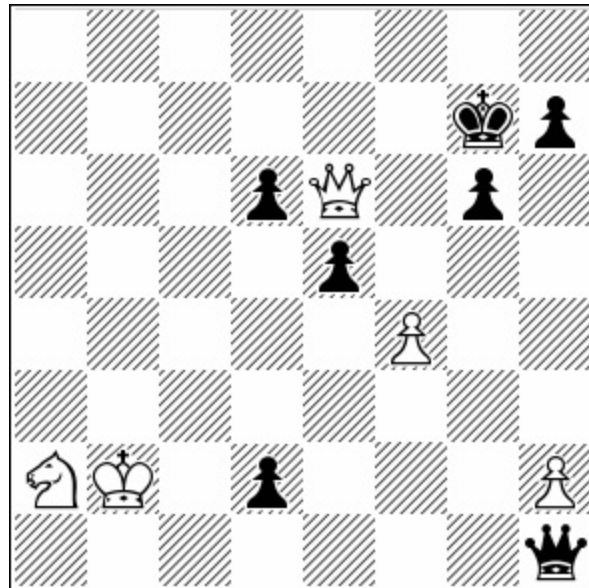
*Black to play wins*  
*Ni Hua-Filippov*

**39 (go to the solution)**



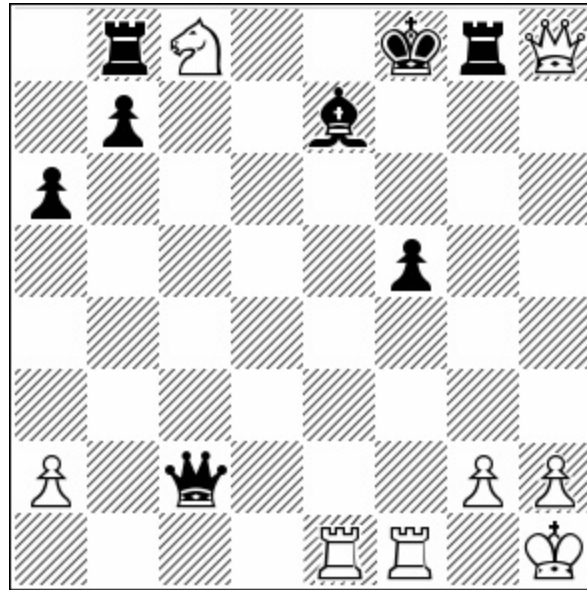
*White to play wins*  
*Bosiocic-Sokolov*

**40 (go to the solution)**



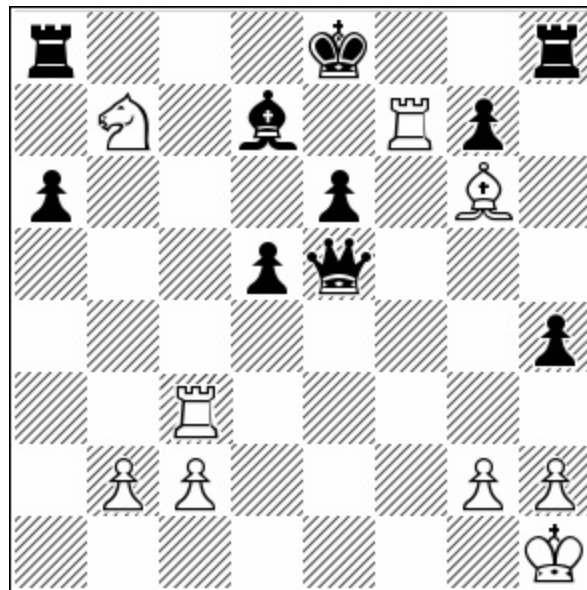
*Black to play wins*  
*Wang Yue-Cheparinov*

**41 (go to the solution)**



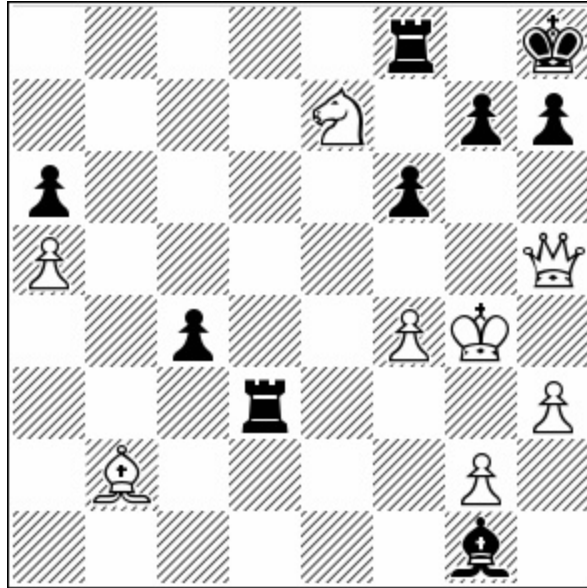
*White to play wins*  
*Yu Yangyi-Robson*

**42 (go to the solution)**



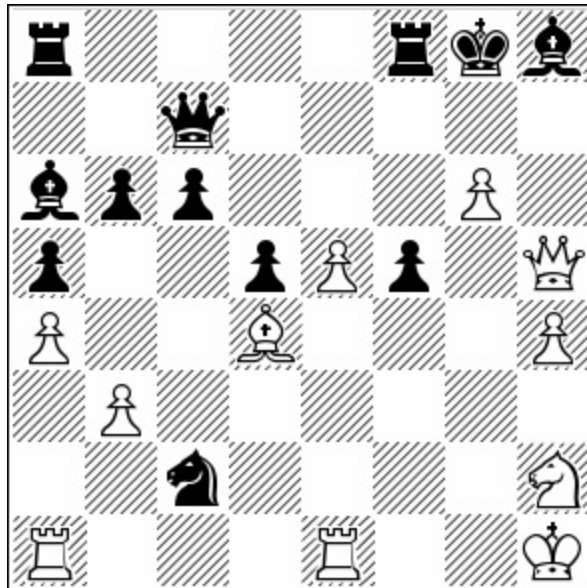
*White to play wins  
Khachiyan-Chasin*

**43 (go to the solution)**



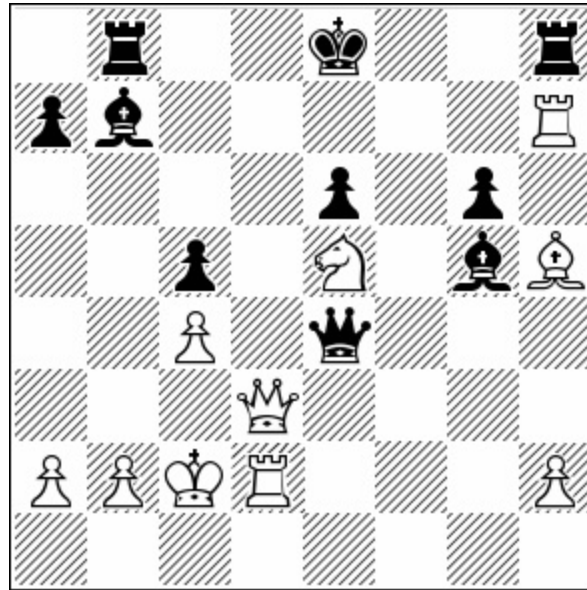
*Black to play draws  
Topalov-Nisipeanu*

**44 (go to the solution)**



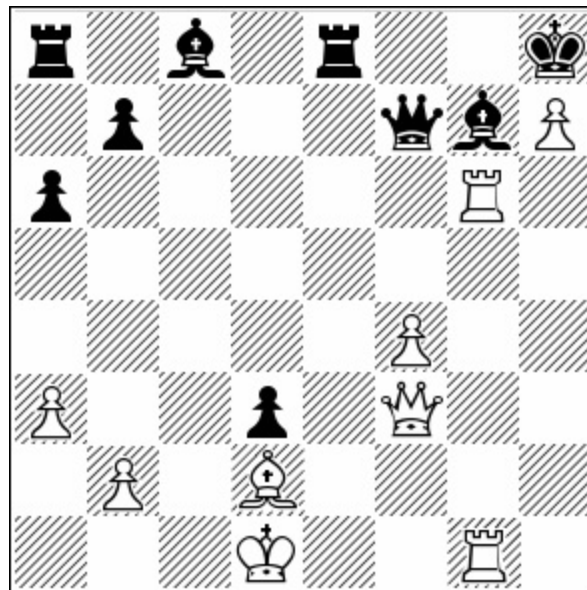
*White to play wins*  
*Formento-Solodovnichenko*

**45 (go to the solution)**



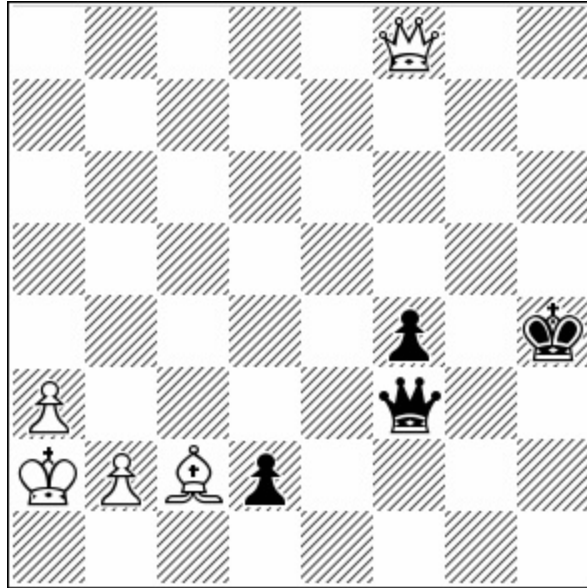
*Black to play wins*  
*Jones-Navara*

**46 (go to the solution)**



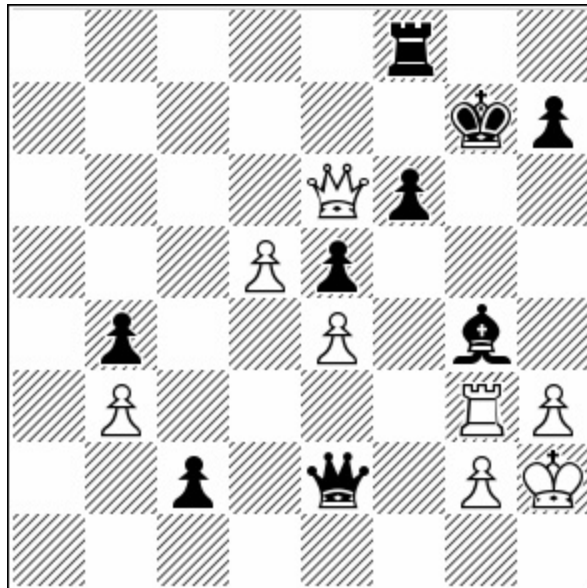
*White to play draws  
So-Sevian*

**47 (go to the solution)**



*Black to play wins  
Areshchenko-Shankland*

**48 (go to the solution)**



*White to play draws*  
*Rohde-Shabalov*

## **Chapter 4**

### **Staying Alive**

Swindling has received some attention in the literature in the last few years. I addressed the issue in a chapter from *Better Thinking, Better Chess*, and David Smerdon wrote an entire book on the fine art. Readers should understand there is a lot more to swindling than setting a diabolical trap for your opponent. Often the hard work comes well before the comeback is capped off. It can be about surviving the initial onslaught to stay in the game, or detecting the best chance to set practical problems for the opponent. The various ways to maximize survival will yield all three results here.

#### **Be Opportunistic**

When the opponent misses a win, there may be but one chance to save the game. Once the scales are balanced, it can be hard for a player to admit there is no more win.

Game 72 – Sicilian Defense

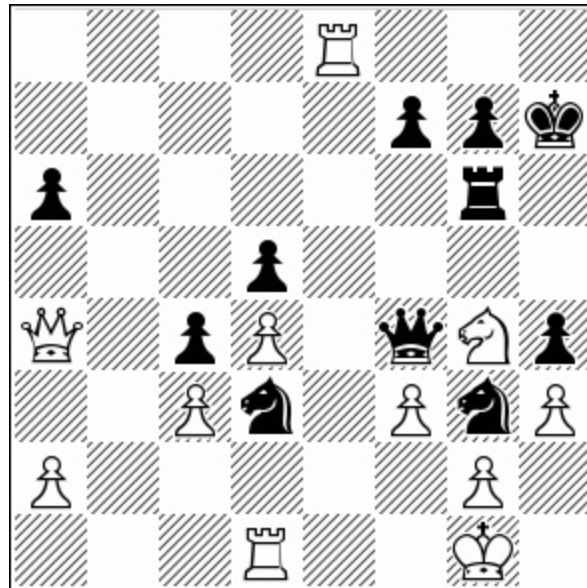
**Joel Benjamin** 2591

**Artur Kogan** 2483

Oz.com qual blitz 2000

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 e6 4.0-0 Nge7 5.Nc3 Ng6 6.d3 Be7 7.Ne2 Qc7 8.c3  
a6 9.Ba4 b5 10.Bc2 Bb7 11.Ng3 h5 12.h3 h4 13.Ne2 Rc8 14.Be3 0-0  
15.Rc1 Rfd8 16.d4 d5 17.exd5 exd5 18.Bf5 c4 19.Bxc8 Bxc8 20.Qd2 Bf5  
21.Nf4 Nf8 22.Rfe1 Be4 23.Nh2 Bd6 24.Nf1 Ne7 25.Ne2 Ne6 26.f3 Bd3  
27.Bf2 Ng6 28.Ne3 Bxe2 29.Rxe2 Nef4 30.Ree1 Nd3 31.Rcd1 Bh2+  
32.Kh1 Bf4 33.Re2 Qe7 34.Bg1 Qg5 35.Rde1 Ne7 36.Qd1 Rd6 37.Rf1 Rg6  
38.b3 Kh8 39.bxc4 bxc4 40.Qc2 Ng8 41.Qa4 Nf6 42.Ng4 Nh5 43.Bh2

**Bxh2 44.Kxh2 Qf4+ 45.Kg1 Ng3 46.Re8+ Kh7 47.Rd1**



I was winning early on, but after I cashed in poorly I saw the initiative pass to my opponent, and I've been hanging on for a while.

(back to the exercises) ***Solution to Puzzle 37:***

**47...f5?**

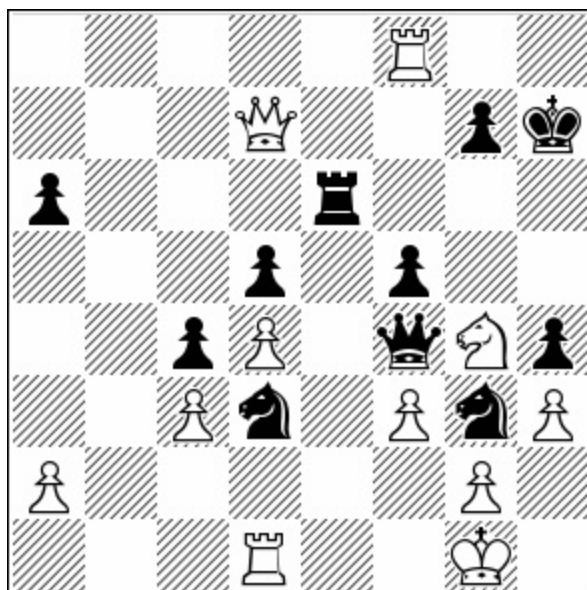
This feels like an easy move for a blitz game, but the path to the white king was 47...Rxf4! 48.hxf4 (48.fxf4 Qf2+ 49.Kh2 Nf4 50.Rg1 Nf1+ 51.Kh1 Nxf3) 48...h3 and mate follows.

**48.Rf8!**

Not only pinning the pawn, but preparing the nasty counterstrike 48...Rxf4? 49.Qe8!. To avoid mate, Black would have to pitch his knight with 49...Ne2+ 50.Qxe2, when White is up a solid exchange.

**48...Re6 49.Qd7!**

White is forced to pursue counterplay, but now perpetual check threats cannot be overcome.



**49...Qd2!?**

Such a cool move deserves a better fate! It's actually as good or bad as any other move; if Black doesn't give perpetual check, he will have to let White to the deed.

**50.Nf6+ Kh6**

Not 50...Rxf6? 51.Rxd2 or 50...Kg6? 51.Qf7+.

**51.Ng8+!**

51.Rh8+? Kg6 grinds to a halt.

**51...Kh5??**

Half a loaf is better than none. 51...Kh7 52.Nf6+ Kh6, etc.

**52.Qf7+ Rg6?**

There are various conclusions after 52...Kg5, but I like 53.Qxg7+ Kf4 54.Rxf5+ Nxf5 55.Qg4+ Ke3 56.Qg5+ Nf4 57.Rxd2. Of course, if 52...g6 53.Qh7+ Kg5 54.Qh6#.

**53.Rxd2**

Oh yeah, that's why the rook couldn't block.

**53...Nf4 54.Ne7 Nge2+ 55.Rxe2 Nxe2+ 56.Kf2 Nf4 57.Nxg6 1-0**

## Grasp at Straws

Setting up a cheapo can be artwork and demand an artistic response.

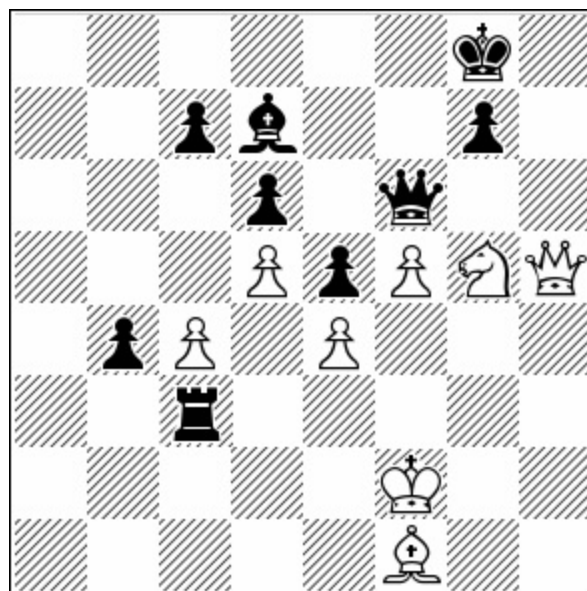
Game 73 – Bogo-Indian Defense

Ni Hua 2692

Anton Filippov 2595

Kolkata 2009

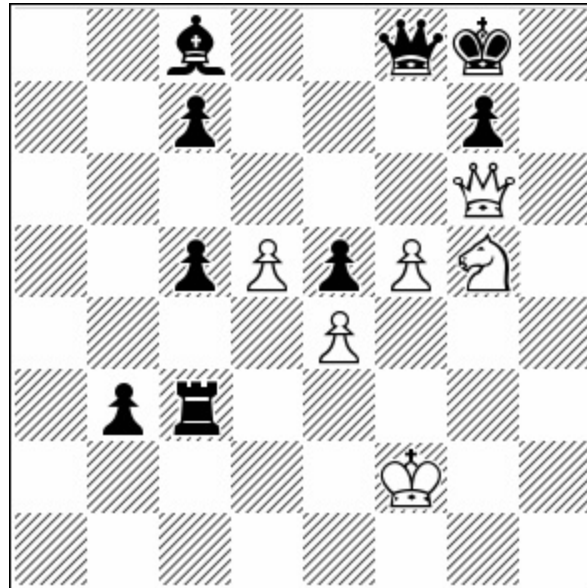
**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Bb4+ 4.Bd2 Qe7 5.g3 Nc6 6.Nc3 Bxc3 7.Bxc3 Ne4  
8.Rc1 d6 9.Bg2 0-0 10.d5 Nxc3 11.Rxc3 Nb8 12.0-0 e5 13.Nd2 Nd7 14.e4  
a5 15.f4 Nc5 16.f5 f6 17.h4 Bd7 18.g4 b5 19.b3 b4 20.Rh3 a4 21.g5 fxg5  
22.Qg4 gxh4 23.Rxh4 axb3 24.axb3 Ra2 25.Nf3 Qf6 26.Qh3 Nd3 27.Qg4  
Nf4 28.Rf2 Rxf2 29.Kxf2 Ra8 30.Bf1 Ra2+ 31.Kg1 Rb2 32.Ng5 h5  
33.Rxh5 Nxh5 34.Qxh5 Rxb3 35.Kf2 Rc3**



Black is an exchange to the good with a killer passed pawn, while White's attack can't do more than drive the black king to safety in the middle. Ni

Hua's clever try might have worked against a less resourceful opponent.

**36.c5 dxc5 37.Ba6 b3 38.Bc8! Bxc8 39.Qe8+ Qf8 40.Qg6**



Black's moves weren't forced, and if Filippov hadn't had his counterstrike, Ni Hua would have pulled off a lovely swindle.

(back to the exercises) ***Solution to Puzzle 38:***

**40...Rh3!!**

One of many times in the book where we are reminded that you can give back to the community when your opponent has been generous with his pieces.

**41.Nxh3 Qf7**

With the mate threat dealt with, Black is ready to reintroduce his passed b-pawn.

**42.Qc6 Bxf5 43.exf5 Qxf5+ 44.Kg3 b2 45.Qe8+ Kh7 46.Kh4 b1=Q**

The quickest win or the simplest? Did Filippov overlook 46...Kh6 or was it that he just didn't want to get fancy? 47.Qh8+ Qh7 48.Qd8 Kg6+ 49.Kg3

b1=Q would soon run White out of checks.

**47.Ng5+ Qxg5+ 48.Kxg5 Qc1+ 49.Kf5 Qf4+ 50.Ke6 e4 51.Kd7 Qd6+  
52.Kc8 Qxd5**

Without any counterplay, the end is just a matter of time (sixteen moves to be exact).

**53.Qe7 c4 54.Qh4+ Kg8 55.Qh3 Qe5 56.Kb7 Qd5+ 57.Kxc7 Qe5+ 58.Kb7  
c3 59.Qc8+ Kf7 60.Qc4+ Kg6 61.Kc6 Kf6 62.Qf1+ Qf5 63.Qc1 Qe6+  
64.Kb7 Qd5+ 65.Kb6 Qd4+ 66.Kc6 e3 67.Qf1+ Ke7 68.Qg2 Qe5 0-1**

### **Kitchen Sink**

To paraphrase Lloyd Christmas, one in a million is still a chance. You might as well launch that desperate attack and pray for the best.

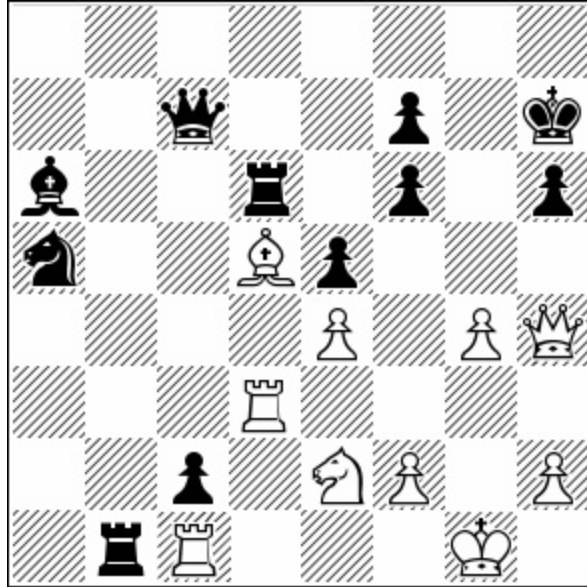
Game 74 – Réti Opening

**Marin Bosiocic 2570**

**Ivan Sokolov 2676**

Philadelphia 2012

**1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 Be7 5.0-0 Nc6 6.d4 0-0 7.Bg5 dxc4 8.e3  
Rb8 9.a4 Na5 10.Nbd2 h6 11.Bxf6 Bxf6 12.Qc2 c5 13.dxc5 b5 14.Rfd1  
Qc7 15.Nd4 a6 16.axb5 axb5 17.Qc3 b4 18.Qc2 e5 19.Ne2 Qxc5 20.Ne4  
Qc7 21.Nxf6+ gxf6 22.Bd5 Kh8 23.Qe4 Rb5 24.Qh4 Kg7 25.g4 Rd8 26.e4  
Rd6 27.Ng3 c3 28.bxc3 bxc3 29.Nh5+ Kg6 30.Rac1 c2 31.Nf4+ Kh7  
32.Rd3 Rb1 33.Ne2 Ba6**



The passed c-pawn breaks down any attempt at defense, so White correctly throws everything into a desperate attack.

**34.Rh3 f5 35.Rc3 Rxc1+ 36.Kg2**

White won't get close to a Hail Mary if he gets mated first, as in 36.Nxc1 Qxc3 37.Qe7 Qe1+, etc.

**36...Qxc3 37.Qe7 Rg1+**

Clearing the way for the c-pawn.

**38.Nxg1**

On 38.Kxg1, 38...c1=Q+ 39.Nxc1 Qxc1+ 40.Kg2 Bf1 mates.

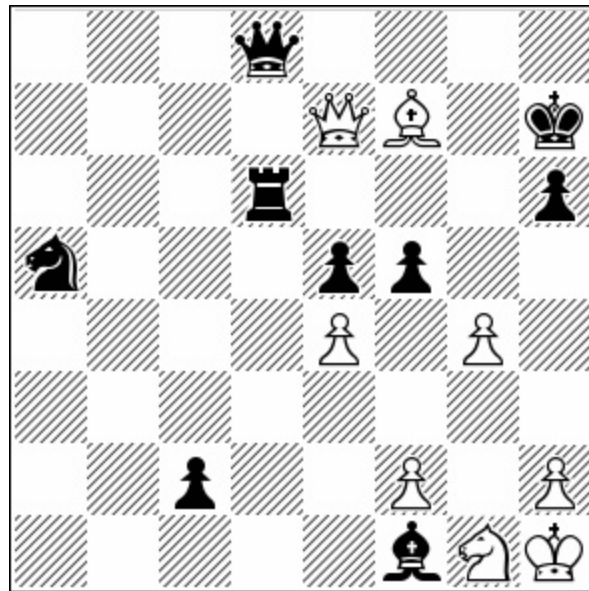
**38...Bf1+ 39.Kh1 Qc8!**

Surprisingly, this is the only way to successfully repel White's two-piece attack.

**40.Bxf7 Qd7!**

There is a little leeway here, but this second rank defense is needed. Ivan

Sokolov is not one to make elementary blunders, but 40...Qd8?? would have been an answer to White's prayers:



*analysis diagram*

(back to the exercises) ***Solution to Puzzle 39:***

41.Bg6+! Kxg6 42.exf5# is a most picturesque and fortunate mate!

**41.Qf8**

41.Bg6+ Kg8 defends.

**41...Qd8 42.Be8 Qf6 0-1**

### **Oh What a Knight!**

Perpetual check may be the last refuge of scoundrels, but an extra queen won't help you if your king cannot escape.

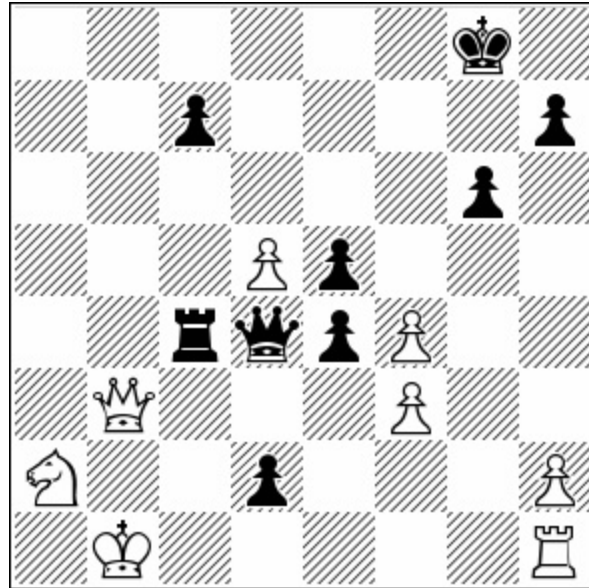
Game 75 – King's Indian Defense

**Wang Yue 2703**

**Ivan Cheparinov 2670**

Khanty-Mansiysk 2007

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.f3 0-0 6.Be3 e5 7.d5 Nh5 8.Qd2 f5  
 9.0-0-0 a6 10.Kb1 Nd7 11.Bd3 Nc5 12.Bc2 b5 13.cxb5 axb5 14.Nxb5 Ba6  
 15.Nc3 Qb8 16.Nge2 Qb4 17.Bxc5 dxc5 18.a3 Qa5 19.Nc1 Bc4 20.Bb3  
 Bxb3 21.Nxb3 Qb6 22.Qc2 Rfb8 23.Ka2 Nf4 24.Nc1 c4 25.Rd2 Bf8 26.g3  
 Bxa3 27.bxa3 Rxa3+ 28.Kxa3 Qb4+ 29.Ka2 Ra8+ 30.Na4 c3 31.Ka1 cxd2  
 32.Na2 Rxa4 33.gxf4 Qd4+ 34.Kb1 Rc4 35.Qb3 fxe4**

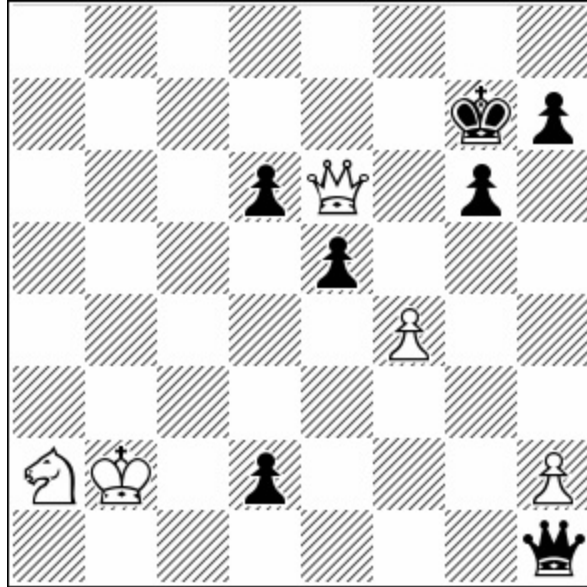


Black is now poised to march his center pawns to the end. White's continuation is forced. Wang Yue finds an idea that might have stolen a draw from a less sophisticated opponent:

**36.d6! cxd6 37.fxe4 Qxe4+ 38.Kb2 Qxh1 39.Qxc4+**

Thanks to White's 36th move, this capture comes with check, but the d-pawn is still out of control.

**39...Kg7 40.Qe6**



White's try for a perpetual is brushed aside in a pleasing manner.

(back to the exercises) ***Solution to Puzzle 40:***

Queening allows White a perpetual, but knighting is another story.

**40...d1=N+! 41.Kc2**

Otherwise Black's queen will approach with checks, but now the black knight comes back to defend and leaves Black with a simply won endgame

**41...Ne3+ 42.Kd3 Nf5 43.fxe5 Qf3+ 44.Kd2 Qf2+ 45.Kd3 Qd4+ 46.Kc2 dxe5 47.Nc3 Qf2+ 48.Kb1 Qg1+ 49.Kb2 Qxh2+ 50.Ka3 Qg3 51.Kb4 Qf4+ 52.Ka5 Qd4 53.Nd5 Qc5+ 54.Ka4 Qd6 0-1**

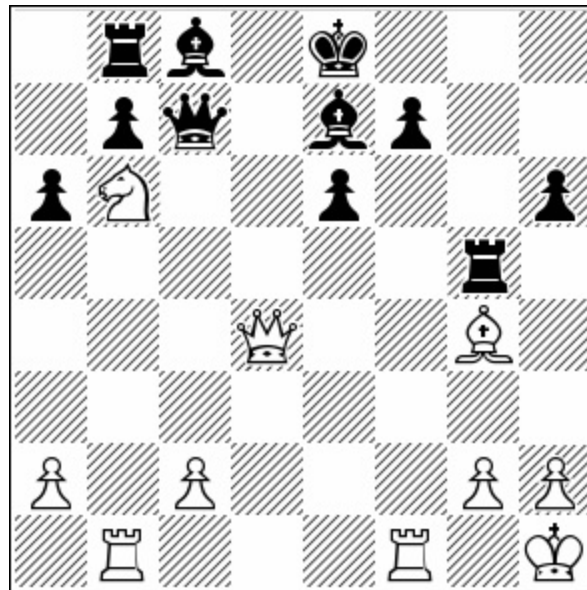
The queens will be traded, ending any hopes for a miracle.

### **Keep Calm and Complicate**

There will be days when you find yourself under the gun. Your king may be mere moves away from execution, or your opponent may be on the verge of consolidating a clear material advantage. In those cases you often need a little help from your opponent. But there is an art to the slow comeback, hanging around long enough to have a chance to coax life giving mistakes.

**Yu Yangyi 2697**  
**Ray Robson 2628**  
Las Vegas rapid 2014

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Bg5 e6 7.f4 h6 8.Bh4  
Qb6 9.Qd2 Qxb2 10.Rb1 Qa3 11.e5 dxe5 12.fxe5 g5 13.exf6 gxh4 14.Be2  
Nd7 15.0-0 Qa5 16.Kh1 Qg5 17.Qe1 Nxf6 18.Nf3 Qc5 19.Na4 Qc7 20.Nb6  
Rb8 21.Qxh4 Be7 22.Qd4 Rg8 23.Ne5 Rg5 24.Ng4 Nxf4 25.Bxg4**



We have a typically crazy position from a Poisoned Pawn Najdorf. Black's dark-squared bishop provides crucial coverage. 25...Bc5 26.Qh8+ Bf8, for example, is hard to crack, though Black has difficulty mobilizing his queenside. But Robson plays a risky move which suddenly leaves him fatally exposed:

**25...f5? 26.Bxf5! exf5**

26...Rxf5 27.Rxf5 exf5 28.Re1 produces similar, perhaps even worse problems.

**27.Rbe1 Kf8 28.Qh8+**

There's nothing wrong with this move, but White had an equally convincing

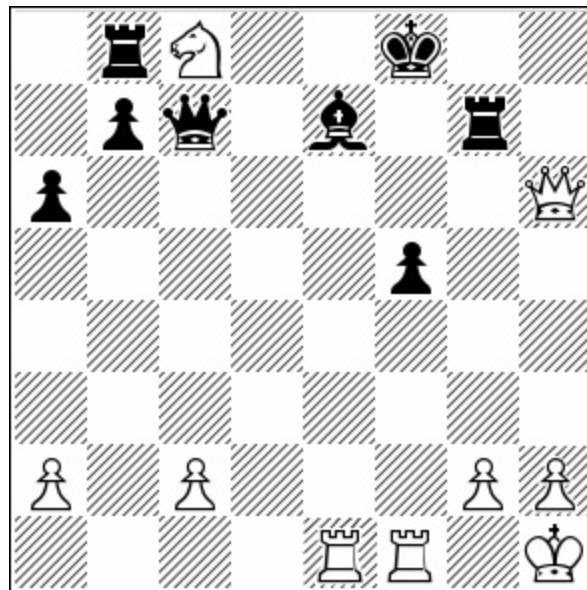
method in 28.Nd5 Qxc2 (28...Qd6 29.Rxe7) 29.Rf2.

### 28...Rg8

Forced, as 28...Kf7 29.Nd5 Be6 30.Qh7+ Rg7 31.Rxf5+ (or 31.Qxg7+ Kxg7 32.Nxc7) utterly destroys.

### 29.Qxh6+ Rg7 30.Nxc8

What to do now? 30...Qxc8 31.Rxe7 Kxe7 32.Qxg7+ is almost certainly checkmate, while on 30...Rxc8, 31.Rxf5+ Kg8 32.Qe6+ Kh8 33.Rh5+ Rh7 34.Rxh7+ Kxh7 35.Qf7+ annihilates.



### 30...Qxc2!

This at least forces White to be a little more creative to win.

### 31.Qh8+ Rg8

(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 41:*

### 32.Qh3?!

This doesn't blow the win, but now White will have to calculate. There was a simple combination here – 32.Rxf5+ Qxf5 33.Qxg8+ Kxg8 34.Nxe7+, emerging with an extra piece. The tactic echoes a classic combo Petrosian unleashed against Spassky.

**32...Rxc8 33.Rxf5+ Ke8 34.Qh5+?**

One mistake and White's advantage is gone. 34.Rxe7+ was still good enough for checkmate, though White had to calculate precisely under pressure – keep in mind this was a rapid game: 34...Kxe7 35.Qh7+ Kd6 36.Rf6+ Kd5 (36...Ke5 37.Qe7+ Kd4 38.Rf4+ Kd5 39.Qd7+ Kc5 40.Qd4+ Kb5 41.a4+ Qxa4 42.Rf5+ Kc6 43.Qc5+ Kd7 44.Qd5+ is the fastest mate but other checks work too) 37.Qd7+ Kc5 38.Qe7+ Kc4 39.Rf4+ Kd3 40.Qd6+ Ke2 41.Qe5+ Kd1 42.Rf1+ Kd2 43.Rf2+ Kc1 (43...Kd1 44.Qd4+ Kc1 45.Rf1+) 44.Qa1+ Qb1 45.Rf1+ and wins.

If Yu Yangyi got cold feet at the prospect of sacrificing more material, he also could have played 34.Rf2 Qc4 35.Qh5+ Kd8 36.Rd2+ Kc7 37.Rxe7+ Kb8 38.Qe5+ Ka8 39.h3 and the endgame advantage should hold up.

**34...Kd8 35.Rd5+?**

White needed to defend against the threat to g2 first, but already Black is better.

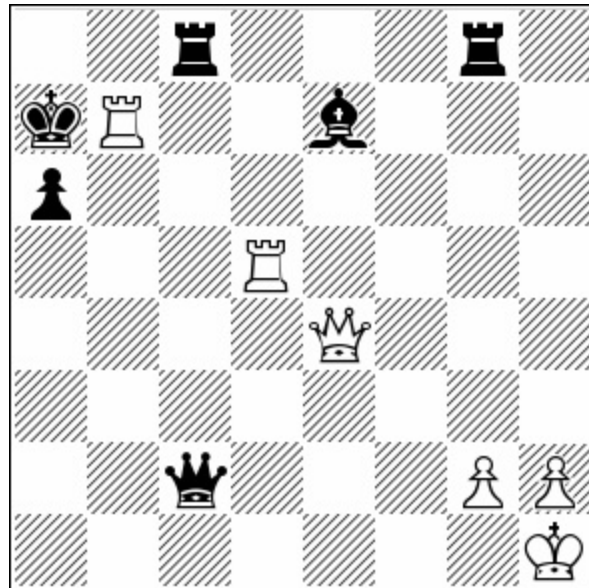
**35...Kc7 36.Qe5+**

After 36.Rxe7+ Kb8, White is doomed by his weak back rank: 37.g3 (37.Qf3 loses as in the game) 37...Qf2 38.Rd1 Rc2 39.Rg1 Rg5 and mate can only be averted by undesirable sacrifices.

**36...Kb6 37.Re2 Qb1+ 38.Re1 Qxa2 39.Qe4 Qc2 40.Rb1+**

The shoe has slipped to the other foot – now it is Yu Yangyi who goes down swinging. 40.Qf3 Rc3 consolidates easily.

**40...Ka7 41.Rxb7+**



Flashy but insufficient, as this isn't checkers.

**41...Ka8!**

41...Kxb7?? 42.Rb5+! and White mates in 14, or wins the queen if he doesn't feel like calculating.

**42.Qf3 Qxg2+!**

After several moves of scrambling defense, Robson gets his own shot in!

**43.Qxg2 Rc1+ 0-1**

## Magic

Even a steady hand can hallucinate when a strong move looks unlikely.

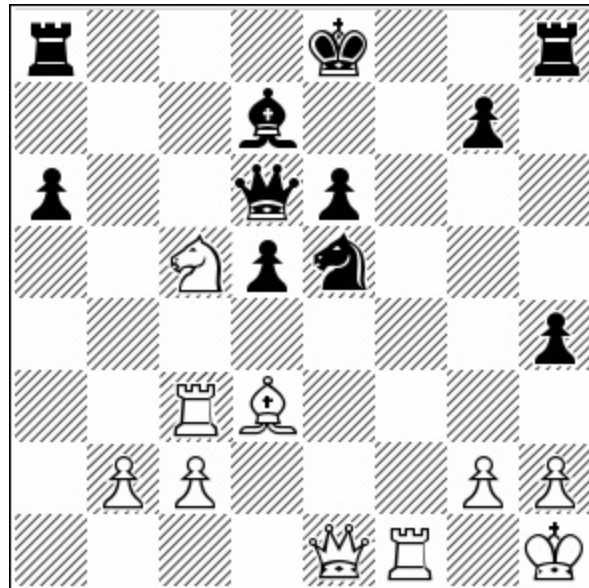
Game 77 – Sicilian Defense

**Melikset Khachiyan 2481**

**Nico Chasin 2276**

Las Vegas 2021

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.Nc3 Nc6 4.Bb5 Qc7 5.0-0 Nge7 6.d4 cxd4 7.Nxd4 a6  
 8.Nxc6 Nxc6 9.Bd3 Bc5 10.Kh1 b5 11.f4 d6 12.e5 d5 13.f5 b4 14.Na4 Bd4  
 15.Bf4 Bd7 16.a3 bxa3 17.Rxa3 Bxe5 18.Bxe5 Nxe5 19.Rc3 Qd6 20.Nc5  
 h5 21.fxe6 fxe6 22.Qe1 h4



Black's position is rickety in any case with his king stuck in the center, but White finds a lovely queen sacrifice to force a win:

**23.Qxe5! Qxe5 24.Bg6+ Kd8 25.Nb7+ Ke7 26.Rf7+ Ke8**

(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 42:*

**27.Rcf3!**

This is the key move, as White has to give back the pilfered piece after 27.Rf5+ Ke7 28.Rxe5 Kf6. But now White threatens to checkmate two different ways: one, with 28.Rxg7, or two, with 28.Rf8+ Ke7 29.R3f7.

**27...Qe1+ 28.Rf1 Rh6!?**

The computer will say that 28...Qxf1+ is the 'best' move, but 29.Rxf1+ Ke7 30.Rf7+ Ke8 31.Rxg7+ Kf8 32.Rf7+ Kg8 33.Rxd7 simplifies to a clearly winning position for White. So young Nico keeps matters complicated.

## 29.Nd6+

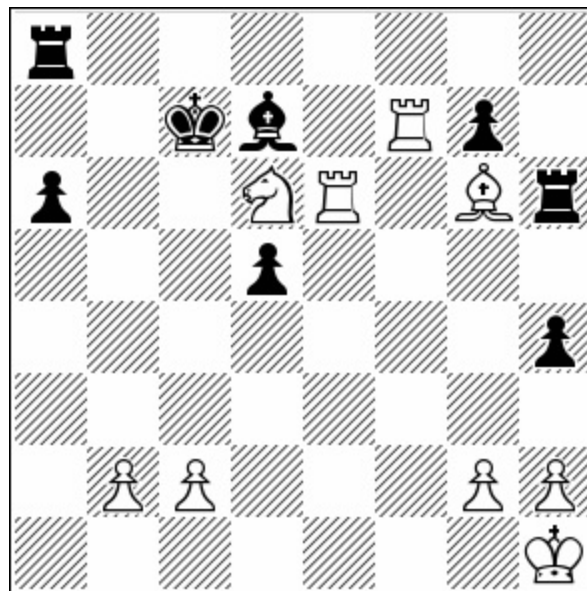
White could have forced the position Black avoids on move 30 with 29.Rxe1 Rxc6 30.Nd6+ etc.

## 29...Kd8 30.Rxe1 Kc7!?

White should win without too many problems after 30...Rxc6 31.Rf8+ Kc7 32.Rxa8 Kxd6 33.Rxa6+. The text doesn't save the game, but it provides one more tactical test.

## 31.Rxe6?

This seems to guard everything and force resignation, but it is the mistake Black was looking for! There were two straightforward paths to victory: 31.Nb7 Rxc6 32.Nc5 Rd8 33.Nxe6+, and 31.Rxd7+ Kxd7 32.Nf7. In both cases White emerges with a distinct material advantage.



## 31...Kc6!!

Kings don't normally walk into discovered checks, which is why this powerful resource slipped Khachiyan's attention. Amazingly, the jumbled nature of White's pieces forces him to cough up a whole piece.

**32.Ree7 Rxc6 33.Rxd7 Rxd6 34.Rc7+ Kb6 35.Rxc7**

White has managed to keep genuine winning chances, and pocketed the point in the end.

## Be Prepared

A lost position may require the opponent to pass up several winning continuations, but when your moment arrives, you better be ready!

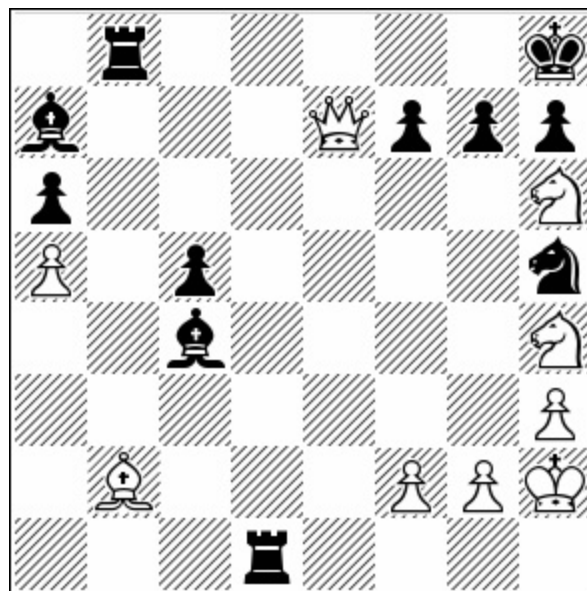
Game 78 – Queen’s Gambit Accepted

Veselin Topalov 2769

Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu 2668

Vitoria Gasteiz 2007

**1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.e4 e5 4.Nf3 exd4 5.Bxc4 Nc6 6.0-0 Be6 7.Bb5 Bc5 8.b4 Bb6 9.a4 a6 10.Bxc6+ bxc6 11.Bb2 Nf6 12.a5 Ba7 13.Nbd2 0-0 14.Qc2 Ng4 15.h3 Nf6 16.Ne5 Bd7 17.Rfe1 Qe7 18.Ndf3 c5 19.bxc5 Qxc5 20.Qd2 Qe7 21.Ba3 c5 22.Qxd4 Bb5 23.Qc3 Rfd8 24.Bb2 Nh5 25.Nc4 Rab8 26.Ne3 Qxe4 27.Ng4 Qg6 28.Nh4 Qd3 29.Qe5 Qd5 30.Nh6+ Kh8 31.Qe7 Bc4 32.Rad1 Qxd1 33.Rxd1 Rxd1+ 34.Kh2**



The queen obviously dominates over Black’s uncoordinated pieces, but Black still finds surprising resources:

### **34...Ra8!**

This is a great counter-intuitive move. The rook moves into the corner from an open file – where it was attacking a bishop! But the hanging bishop on a7 needed attention, and now it can sneak a check on b8 that can provide annoying counterplay.

### **35.N4f5**

Topalov could have gone for 35.Nxf7+ Bxf7 (35...Kg8 36.Nh6+ gxh6 37.Nf5 Bb8+ 38.g3 Bxg3+ 39.Nxg3! ends any doubt) 36.Qxf7 Bb8+ 37.g3 Bxg3+ 38.fxg3 Rd2+ 39.Ng2 Rxb2 40.Qxh5 and White is certainly winning. White could have a slight concern about the past c-pawn... keep in mind, players may set their standards high in a completely winning position.

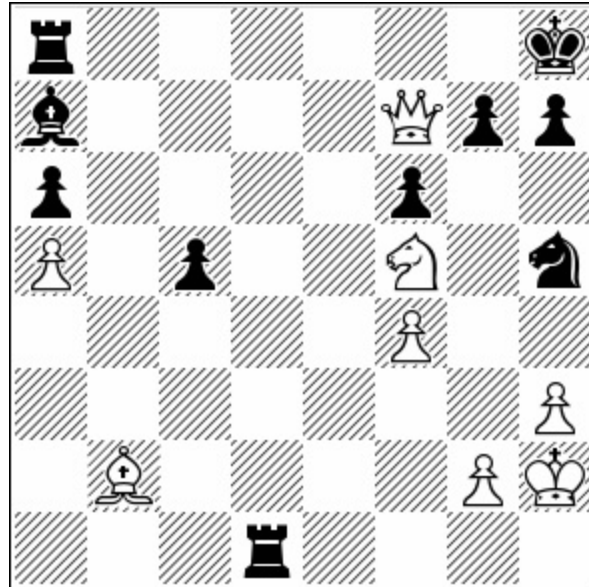
### **35...f6 36.f4**

Playing for the big finish backfires – 36.Nxg7?? Bb8+ 37.g3 Bxg3+! 38.fxg3 Bd5 and White would even be losing if he couldn't force perpetual check with 39.Nf7+. But the prosaic 36.Ng3 would have won on the spot. After the exchange of the h5-knight, Black is powerless to prevent White taking on f6 and crashing through on the long diagonal. But is it natural to trade the aggressive f5-knight for Black's offside steed?

### **36...Bd5 37.Nf7+**

The dynamic retreat 37.Qe2! was another crusher: 37...Rb1 38.Qxh5 Rxb2 39.Nf7+ and White wins one of the bishops.

### **37...Bxf7 38.Qxf7**



**38...c4!**

Further sacrifices must be made. The bishop comes alive and asks the white king to come out and play.

**39.Qxh5 Bg1+ 40.Kg3 Rd3+ 41.Kg4**

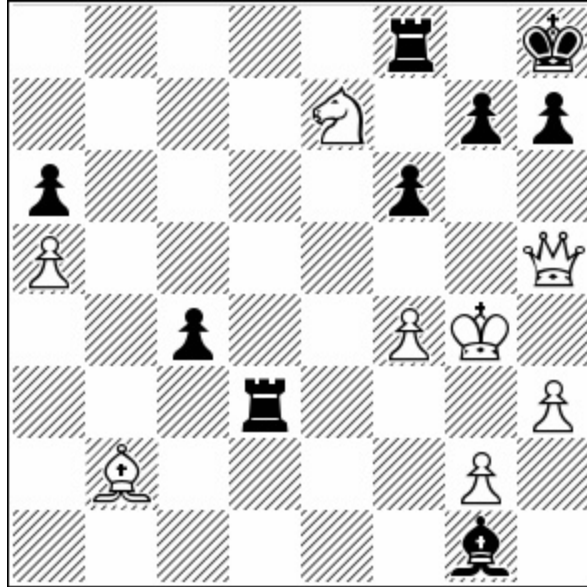
It's natural to avoid the further check on f2, but 41.Kh4 was stronger, in order to leave an escape route for the queen. After 41...Rf8 (after 41...Bf2+ 42.g3 c3 43.Qf7 White's counterattack ends all resistance) 42.Qe2, the queen reposts to the center with a winning assault in the offing.

**41...Rf8!**

The queen must be kept boxed in.

**42.Ne7??**

42.Kh4 was still good enough to win, though White would have had to admit he had wasted a whole tempo for nothing! 42.Qh4 is not very hard-hitting but it lets the queen out too, and should be sufficient to win.



(back to the exercises) ***Solution to Puzzle 43:***

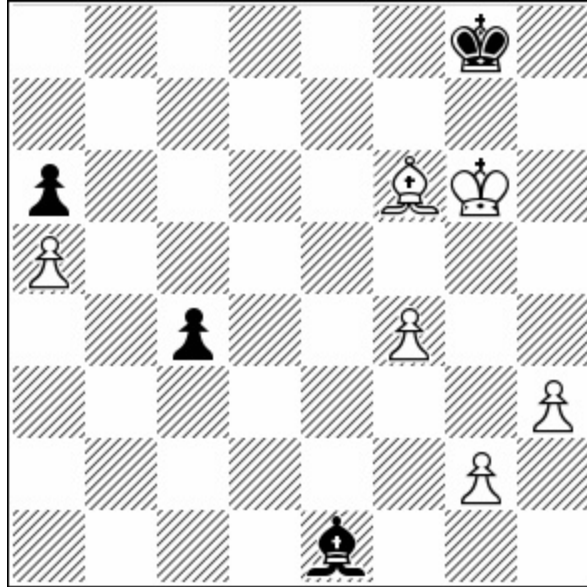
**42...Bf2??**

Nisipeanu finally has a chance to save the game but misses the opportunity 42...f5+!! 43.Nxf5 (after 43.Kg5 Rg3+ 44.Kh4 Rxc2 White is in danger of losing) 43...c3 and the win has amazingly disappeared! Winning tries only backfire: 44.Qg5 Bd4 45.Ba3? Bf6 46.Bxf8 Bxc5 47.Bxc7+ Kg8 48.Kxc5 c2 and the c-pawn will cost the bishop. White has to settle for a draw, the simplest path being returning the knight to e7 to give perpetual check.

**43.Ng6+ Kg8 44.Ne7+ Kh8 45.Ng6+ Kg8 46.Nxf8 Rg3+ 47.Kf5 g6+**

White has to return the material, but unfortunately for Nisipeanu, he will come up short in the ending.

**48.Nxg6 hxg6+ 49.Qxg6+ Rxc6 50.Kxc6 Be1 51.Bxf6**



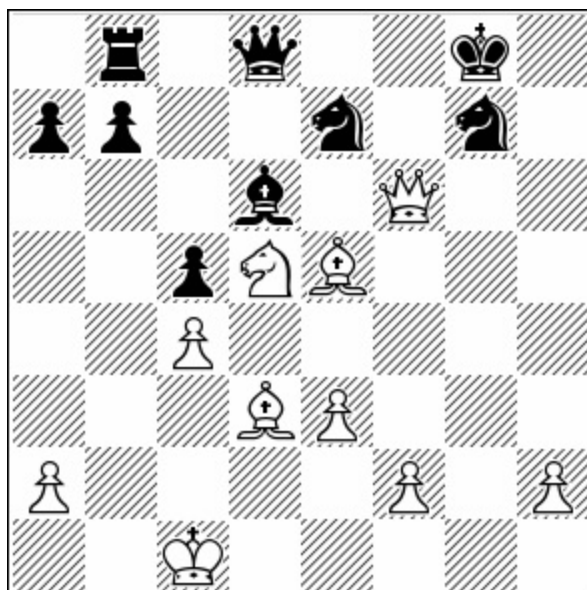
**Black resigned** in view of 51...c3 52.f5 Bd2 53.Bg7 c2 54.f6 c1=Q 55.f7#.

### Under Pressure

‘It is harder to checkmate without your queen’ sounds like a truism, but there are times when you need to take the pressure off and trade queens by any means necessary.

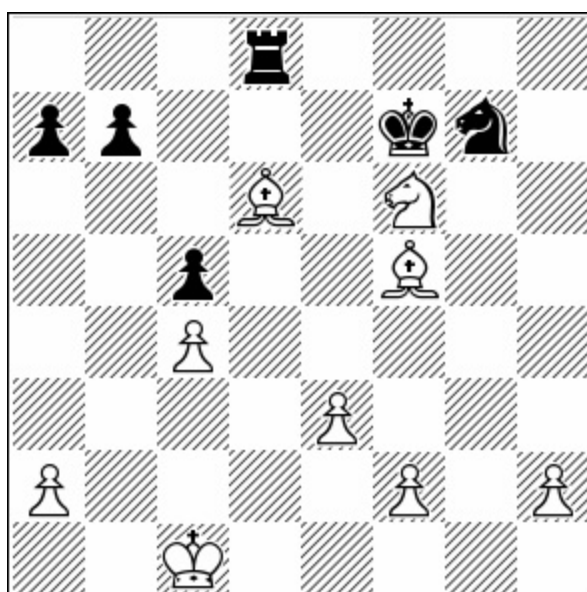
Game 79 – Réti Opening  
 Arkadij Naiditsch 2701  
 Matthias Blübaum 2631  
 Karlsruhe/Baden-Baden 2018

1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 Nf6 4.b3 Be7 5.Bb2 0-0 6.Nc3 dxc4 7.bxc4 c5 8.Rg1 Nc6 9.g4 e5 10.g5 Ne8 11.Qb1 f5 12.gxf6 Nxf6 13.Be2 Kh8 14.Ng5 h6 15.Nf3 Ne8 16.Nd5 Bf5 17.d3 Bd6 18.Bc3 Rb8 19.Qb2 Bxd3 20.Bxd3 Rxf3 21.Qe2 Rf8 22.Qh5 Ne7 23.Rxg7 Kxg7 24.0-0-0 Rf7 25.Rg1+ Kf8 26.Qxh6+ Rg7 27.Rxg7 Nxc7 28.Qf6+ Kg8 29.Bxe5



Black's foolish pawn grab put him under heavy fire, and though he possesses an extra rook, the opposing pieces are swarming around his king. With the queens on, there is no hope for survival, but can Black really give two pieces to get that life-saving swap?

**29...Nef5!! 30.Bxf5 Qxf6 31.Nxf6+ Kf7 32.Bxd6 Rd8**



Even beautiful minor pieces can have trouble coordinating without a friendly major piece. With three of White's pieces attacked, one has to be given back. It's most logical to keep the bishop pair.

**33.Bc7 Rh8 34.Be4 Kxf6 35.Bxb7 Nf5 36.Bf4?**

36.Bd5! keeps the rook off of the g-file, maintaining a decisive advantage.  
After...

**36...Rg8**

...Black found considerable counterplay and held the draw.

### Active Defense

Sometimes a strong attack can threaten to roll a player right off the board. A well-timed pushback may not solve all of your problems, but it may give you time to try to heal the damage.

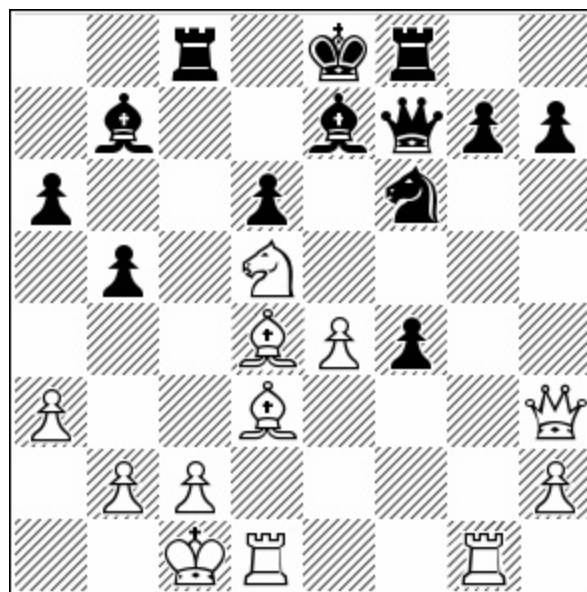
Game 80 – Sicilian Defense

**Vasif Durarbayli** 2629

**Jorge Cori** 2664

St Louis 2018

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Be3 a6 7.Qf3 Nf6 8.0-0-0 d6 9.Nxc6 Qxc6 10.g4 b5 11.g5 Nd7 12.a3 Bb7 13.Qh3 Rc8 14.g6 Nf6 15.Rg1 Qc7 16.Bd3 e5 17.gxf7+ Qxf7 18.Nd5 Be7 19.f4 exf4 20.Bd4 Rf8**



Black is under heavy pressure, and whether he even survives the next few moves will depend upon White's accuracy – and Black's resourcefulness.

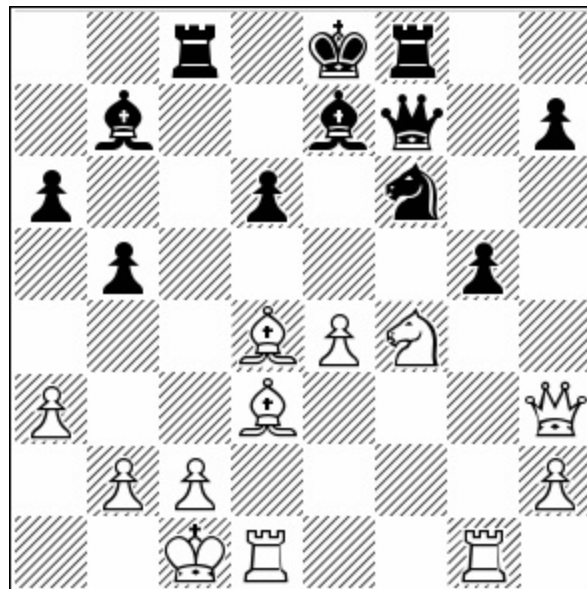
### 21.Nxf4

Natural, powerful, and simple. The knight seems ticketed for e6 where it will likely wreak havoc.

And yet, White might have scored a knockout if he had been sufficiently motivated to look for one. The elements are there; the queen is on a commanding diagonal, the rooks can dominate the center, the black king is stuck in the middle, and the two defenders there can be eliminated.

That takes us to 21.Nxf6+ Bxf6 (21...gxf6 22.Be2! f3 23.Bxf3 Qc4 24.Bh5+ Kd8 25.Bb6+) 22.e5 dxe5 23.Rge1 Qe7 24.Bxe5 Bxe5 25.Bxb5+ axb5 26.Rxe5, finito.

### 21...g5!



Black's position is still pretty bad, but he is beginning to hope to avoid immediate disaster.

### 22.Nd5

Another safe move. 22.Ne6? g4 is right out. 22.Rxg5 Nxe4 23.Rg4 might be better than the text, though it looks slightly murky at least. It may be psychologically a bit hard to give up the bishop with 22.Bxf6, but 22...Bxf6 23.Ne6 Rg8 24.e5 should be decisive.

**22...g4 23.Nxf6+ Bxf6 24.Qe3 Qg7 25.Bxf6 Rxf6 26.Kb1 Rc5**

Black is squirming away, and the next move gets him further:

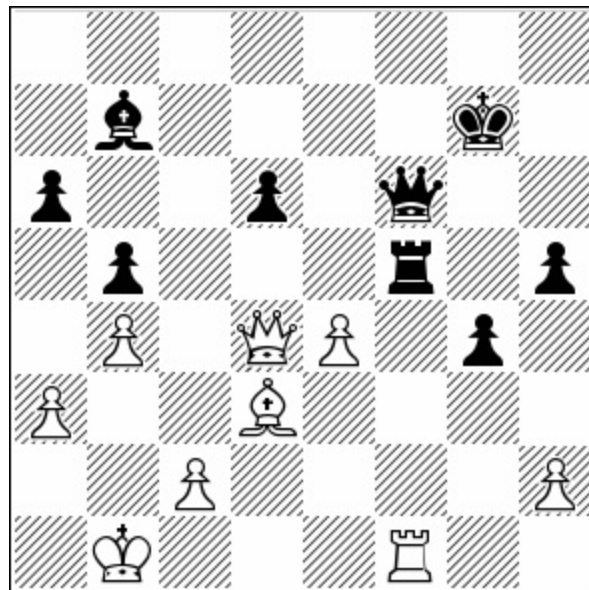
**27.Be2?! Qg5!**

Not 27...h5 28.Rxd6.

**28.Qd4 h5 29.b4 Re5 30.Bd3 Kf7 31.Rdf1 Kg7 32.Rxf6 Qxf6 33.Rf1??**

The worst kind of blunder! As long as queens and rooks stay on the board, Black has to be careful. After 33.h3 Black still had to work to survive, e.g. 33...Bc8 34.Qb6.

**33...Rf5!**



White has to trade queens or rooks, both landing him in a terrible endgame.

**34.Qxf6+ Rxf6 35.Re1 Kh6 36.Re2 h4 37.Kc1 Kg5 38.e5 dxe5 39.Rxe5+**

**Kf4 40.Rh5 h3 41.Kd2 Be4 42.Rh8 Bxd3 43.cxd3 Kf3 44.Rg8 Rf4 45.Rg6 Kg2 46.Ke3 Rf3+ 47.Ke4 Kxh2 48.Rxg4 Rg3 49.Rh4 Kg2 50.d4 h2 51.Rxh2+ Kxh2 52.d5 Rxa3 53.d6 Ra1 54.Ke5 Rd1 55.Ke6 Kg3 0-1**

## Turn the Beat Around

A comeback is not necessarily about dogged defense or a successful cheapo. Sometimes an aggressive approach is the only way to avoid an eventual strategic downfall.

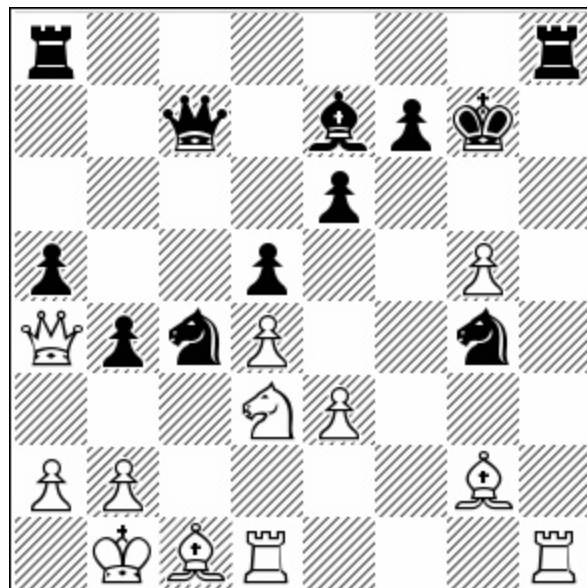
Game 81 – Slav Defense

Rameshbabu Pragganandhaa 2624

Shakhriyar Mamedyarov 2771

Oslo 2022

**1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 Bg4 5.h3 Bh5 6.Nc3 e6 7.Qb3 Qc7 8.g4 Bg6 9.Ne5 Nbd7 10.Nxg6 hxg6 11.Bg2 g5 12.Bd2 Be7 13.0-0-0 Nb6 14.cxd5 cxd5 15.Kb1 Nc4 16.Bc1 b5 17.f4 b4 18.Ne2 gxf4 19.Nxf4 g5 20.Nd3 a5 21.Qa4+ Kf8 22.h4 Nxg4 23.hxg5 Kg7**



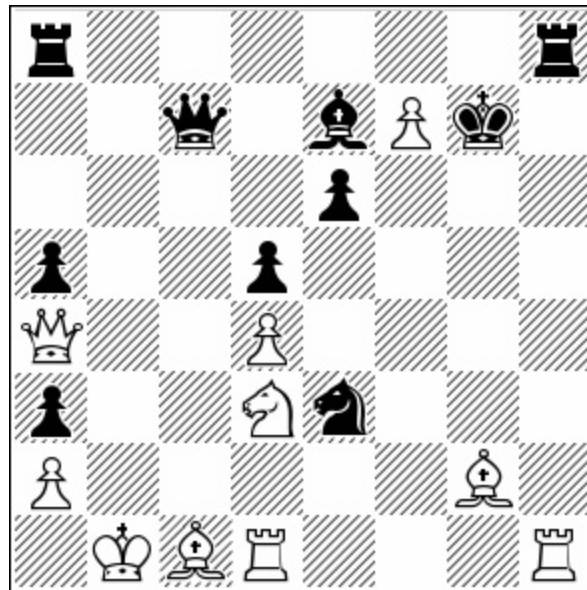
Black's pieces are obviously much better placed than their counterparts. Rather than defending against their threats, White changes the focus of the position:

## 24.g6!

There is no question that this is the right move. White suddenly develops a huge upside as Black's king is insufficiently protected.

## 24...Ncxe3?

On a certain level, this move is logical, as Black keeps more pieces around his kingside to defend. It's just that Black needed to defend by maintaining counterthreats to slow White down! So converging towards the queenside was more effective. The key point is that 24...Ngxe3 25.gxf7 allows Black to get there first with 25...Na3+! (25...Nb6 allows White to stay in the game with the stunning 26.Qe8!!) 26.bxa3 bxa3 and White needs problem-like moves to stave off mate.



*analysis diagram*

27.Bxd5 Rab8+ 28.Nb2 (28.Bb3 Qc2+ 29.Ka1 Qc3+ 30.Kb1 Rxh1 31.Rxh1 Qxd3+ and mate in a few) 28...Rxh1 29.Rxh1 exd5 30.f8=Q+ Kxf8 (30...Bxf8? 31.Bxe3 Rxb2+ 32.Ka1 Qc3? 33.Qd7+) 31.Rh8+ Kf7 32.Rxb8 Qxb8 and Black will eventually harvest the b2-knight.

## 25.gxf7 Nxg2?

White's attack now gains too much momentum. 25...b3! was the only chance, though White keeps the initiative after 26.Nc5! Bxc5 27.dxc5.

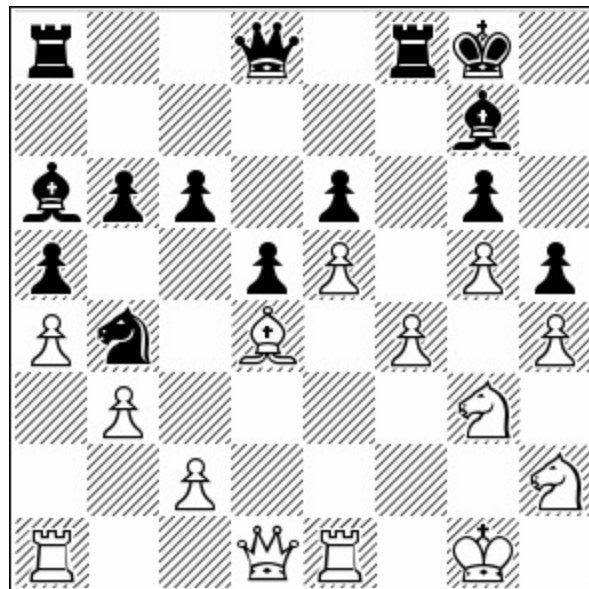
**26.Rhg1 Rh2 27.Bf4! Nxf4 28.Rxg4+ Ng6 29.Ne5 b3 30.Qxb3 Rb8  
31.Rxg6+ Kh7 32.Rg2 1-0**

### Go for Broke

Sometimes the most forceful and risky options are called for, whether they should be successful or not. In such cases, forcing your opponent to make difficult defensive choices maximizes your scoring chances.

Game 82 – Pirc Defense  
**Paolo Formento** 2133  
**Yury Solodovnichenko** 2629  
 Milan 2011

**1.e4 d6 2.d4 g6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 Bg7 5.Be2 0-0 6.0-0 Na6 7.h3 c6 8.a4 Nb4  
9.Be3 a5 10.Nh2 e5 11.f4 exd4 12.Bxd4 Re8 13.Bf3 Be6 14.g4 Bc4 15.Re1  
h6 16.h4 d5 17.e5 Nd7 18.g5 Nf8 19.Bg4 h5 20.Bh3 Ne6 21.Bxe6 fxe6  
22.b3 Ba6 23.Ne2 b6 24.Ng3 Rf8**



Black may have rued not driving the bishop away with 24...c5, as it is

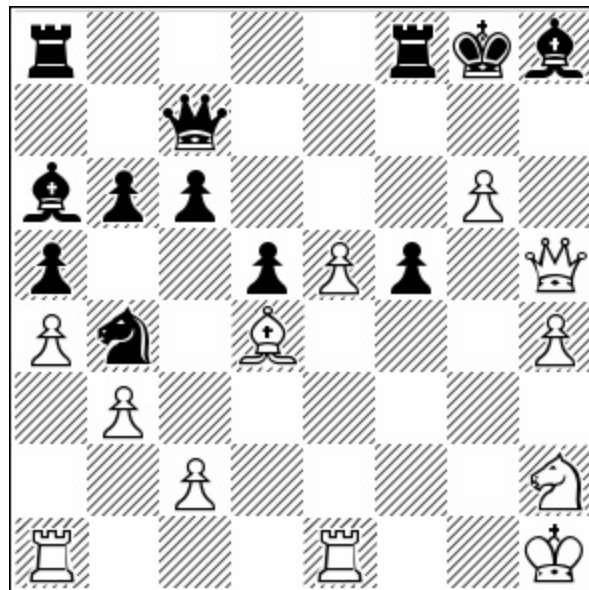
destined to jump into the attack from d4.

### 25.f5!

The engine suggests White's sacrifices are desperate and doomed to failure. Nonetheless, there isn't much point in White renouncing his attack to hold on to his stuff. 25.Qd2 c5 26.Bc3 Ra7 leaves White with a gloomy, lifeless position. But now White has a puncher's chance not only to hold, but even to score a big upset win.

### 25...exf5 26.Nxh5 gxh5 27.Qxh5 Nxc2!

Defenders often face the fundamental decision between trying to break the attack by grabbing attacking pieces (with the potential to return some of the material later), or stopping for proactive defensive moves. In this case, 27...Qc7 28.g6 Bh8 looks responsible but runs into obstacles after the multi-purpose move 29.Kh1!!.



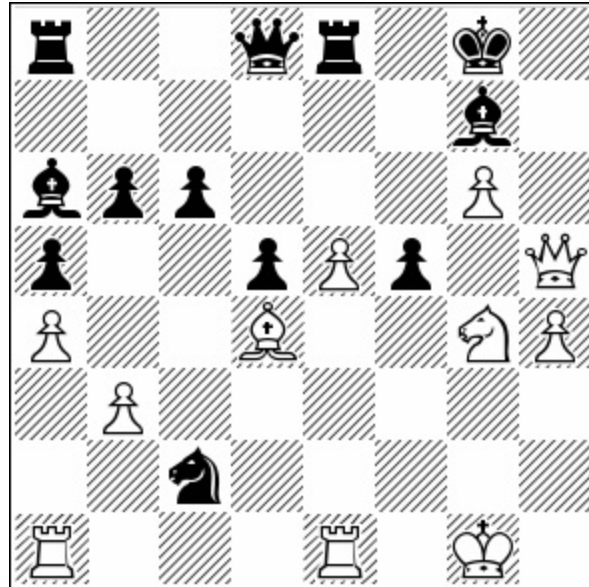
*analysis diagram*

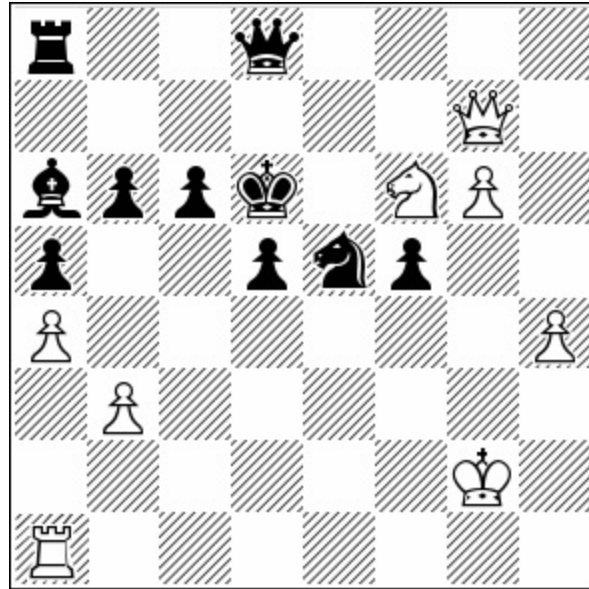
Now White would be suddenly winning after 29...Nxc2?...

(back to the exercises) ***Solution to Puzzle 44:***

...30.e6 Bxd4 (not with check!) 31.e7 Kg7 32.Qh7+ Kf6 33.exf8=Q+ Rxf8 34.Qxc7, etc. But 29...Rae8 30.g7! Bxg7 31.Rg1 Nxc2 32.Rxg7+ Qxg7 33.Rg1 Re7 34.Bxb6 keeps the result very much in doubt. White might even do better with 30.Bxb6 (another point of 29.Kh1) 30...Qg7 31.Be3.

**28.g6 Re8 29.Ng4!**





*analysis diagram*

White's kingside passers are somewhat imposing, but with this king safe Black should be able to consolidate and win.

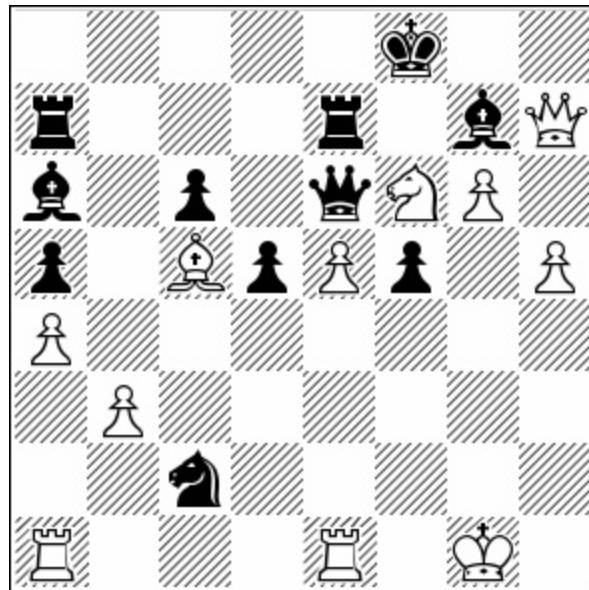
**30.Nf6+ Kf8 31.Qh7 Qe6 32.Bxb6**

The bishop that somehow did not get captured or driven away suddenly decides the game! White boxes in the king, gaining time for the final assault.

**32...Re7 33.Bc5 Raa7**

On 33...Nxe1 White continues directly 34.Bxe7+ Kxe7 (34...Qxe7 35.Qg8#) 35.Qxg7+ Kd8 36.Rxe1 with an easily winning position.

**34.h5!**



**34...Nxe1**

The Ukrainian GM must have been dizzy by now. He might have tried 34...Bxf6, but White would have likely chosen one of the two winning options. The straightforward 35.exf6 Qxf6 36.Bxe7+ Rxe7 37.Qxe7+ Qxe7 38.Rxe7 Kxe7 39.h6 should be good enough, as White will eventually queen one of the pawns, e.g. 39...Kf6 40.h7 Kg7 41.Rd1 Ne3 42.Rc1 Bb7 43.Rc5 and the bishop will go in a few moves.

White also has a more spectacular win with 35.h6! and Black is surprisingly

helpless.

After 35...Ke8 (otherwise the g-pawn runs through) 36.exf6 Qxe1+ 37.Rxe1 Rxe1+ 38.Kh2 Rxh7 39.gxh7 White will win with a new queen.

**35.h6 Nf3+ 36.Kh1 Bxf6 37.exf6**

Even with an extra rook and knight Black is completely helpless.

**37...Ke8 38.fxe7 Ra8 39.Qh8+ Kd7 40.Qxa8 Bc8 41.Qxa5 1-0**

The fact that Black had possible defenses does not detract from the inspiration of White's attacking play.

### **Surprise!**

Judit Polgar wrote in New In Chess Magazine that unexpected moves can have a psychological power beyond their 'objective' value. In the following struggle with Kasparov, Polgar not only surprised her distinguished opponent, but succeeded in changing the nature of the position.

Simply limiting the depth of your disadvantage is unlikely to save the game against a steady-handed opponent. Sometimes you need to alter the focus of the position.

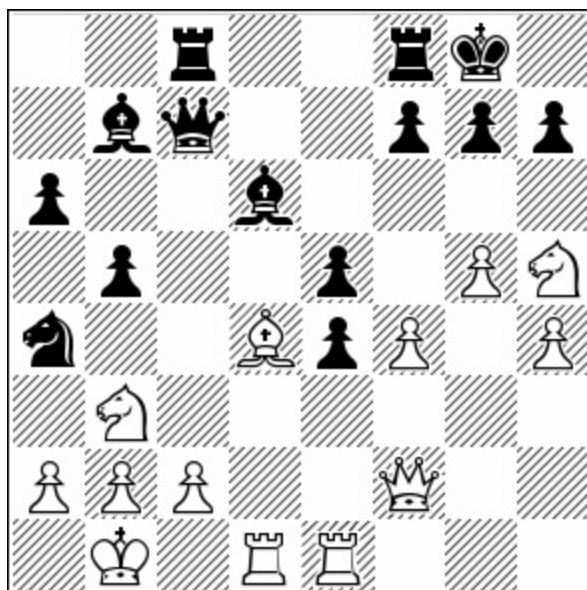
Game 83 – Sicilian Defense

**Judit Polgar** 2675

**Garry Kasparov** 2845

Linares 2001

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Be3 e6 7.f3 b5 8.Qd2 Nbd7 9.0-0-0 Bb7 10.g4 Nb6 11.Qf2 Nfd7 12.Bd3 Rc8 13.Nce2 Be7 14.h4 0-0 15.Kb1 Na4 16.g5 Ndc5 17.Ng3 Qc7 18.Nb3 d5 19.e5 Qxe5 20.Bd4 Qc7 21.f4 Ne4 22.Bxe4 dxe4 23.Rhe1 Bd6 24.Nh5 e5**



In a sharp Najdorf Sicilian, Black is a pawn up and has as much claim to the initiative as his opponent. Polgar needs to change the trajectory of the game, and finds a surprise move to begin the process:

### **25.c3!?**

At least the queen is freed from defending c2. Now 25...exd4 26.Qxd4 recoups the piece, though after 26...Be5 Black is still comfortably better.

### **25...f6!?**

The engine would punctuate this with an exclamation, but I'm not so sure it deserves one in human terms. Black is now objectively winning, but Judit gets the messy position she is looking for. Kasparov might have done better to keep things stable with 25...Rfe8 26.fxe5 Bxe5. Black's advantage is somewhere short of decisive and there is much work to be done, but it's a lot harder for White to create problems along the way.

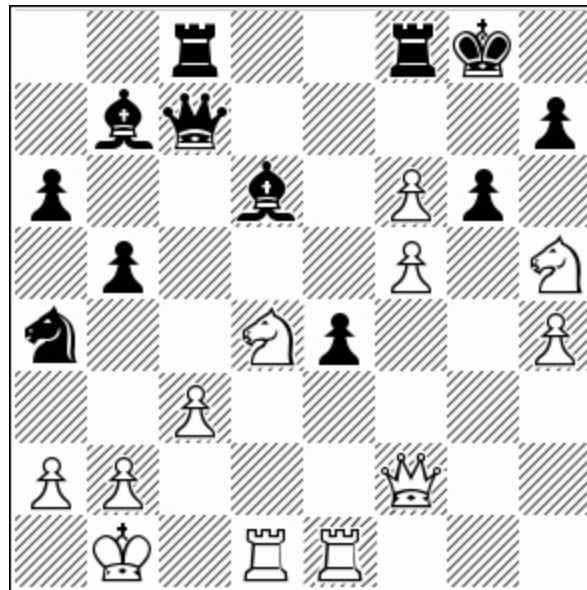
### **26.gxf6! exd4 27.Nxd4 g6?**

It's one of those moves that is played with the hand, seemingly stifling any play on the kingside. But in reality it just encourages White to open lines, and the tempo will prove costly. Black has a preponderance of pieces working on

the queenside, and the cleanest way to win is actually to press that advantage before White can get her attack in high gear. 27...Ba3! gets there first, e.g. 28.Nxg7 (28.Ne6 Qc4 29.Rd7 Bxb2 30.Rxg7+ Kh8--+) 28...Bxb2 29.Qg1 Kh8 30.Nge6 Nxc3+ 31.Kxb2 Nxd1+ 32.Rxd1 Qc3+ 33.Kb1 Rf7 and White still lacks any genuine threats.

## 28.f5!

This shot is all the more impressive when you see the more direct 28.Ne6 which allows Black to shift the focus back to the white king after 28...Nxc3+ 29.bxc3 Qxc3.



## 28...gxh5

Judit wrote that her last move visibly agitated Kasparov, who began to accept a draw as an acceptable outcome from this melee. Black can still duke it out successfully with 28...Bd5, adding both offense and defense to the fray:

29.fxg6 hxg6 30.Rg1 Qc4 31.Rxg6+ Kh7 32.Rg7+ Kh8 33.Nb3 e3! 34.Qg1 (34.Qxe3 Qe4+ 35.Rd3 Qxe3 36.Rxe3 Bf7) 34...Qe4+ 35.Ka1 Qc2 36.Rb1 Nxc3 37.Rc1 Qxb2+!! 38.Kxb2 Na4+ forces mate with the pair of bishops.

**29.Ne6 Nxc3+ 30.bxc3 Qxc3 31.Rxd6 Qb4+ 32.Ka1 Qc3+**

I agree with Judit that there was no reason to try 32...Qxd6 33.Qg1+ Kf7 34.Qg7+ Ke8 35.Qxb7 Rc4! (now forced) 36.Ng7+=.

**33.Kb1 Qb4+ 34.Ka1 Qc3+ 35.Kb1 ½-½**

### (Not) Breaking the Law

‘Barely legal’ castling may be in a class by itself for surprise moves. The following game may exhibit the biggest impact of unlikely castling to date.

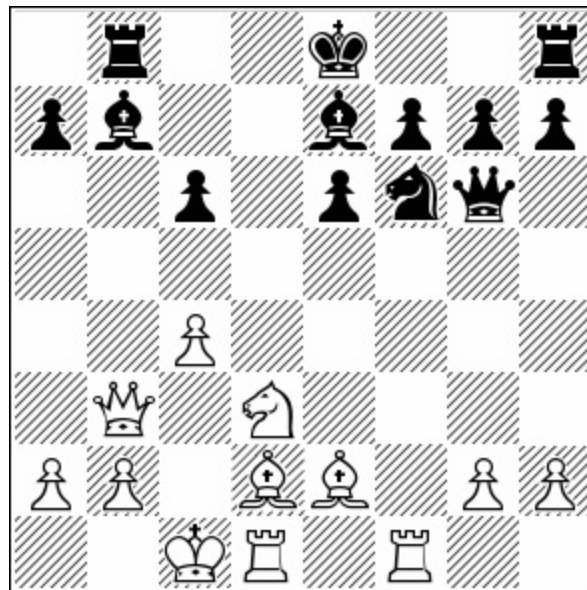
Game 84 – Sicilian Defense

**Gawain Jones 2672**

**David Navara 2700**

Charity Cup Prelim 2022

**1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 Qxd5 4.d4 Nf6 5.Nf3 e6 6.Na3 Nc6 7.Be3 cxd4  
8.Nb5 Qd8 9.Nbxd4 Nd5 10.Nxc6 bxc6 11.Bd2 Rb8 12.c4 Nf6 13.Qc2 Qb6  
14.0-0-0 Qxf2 15.Ne5 Bb7 16.Nd3 Qf5 17.Be2 Be7 18.Rhf1 Qg6 19.Qb3**



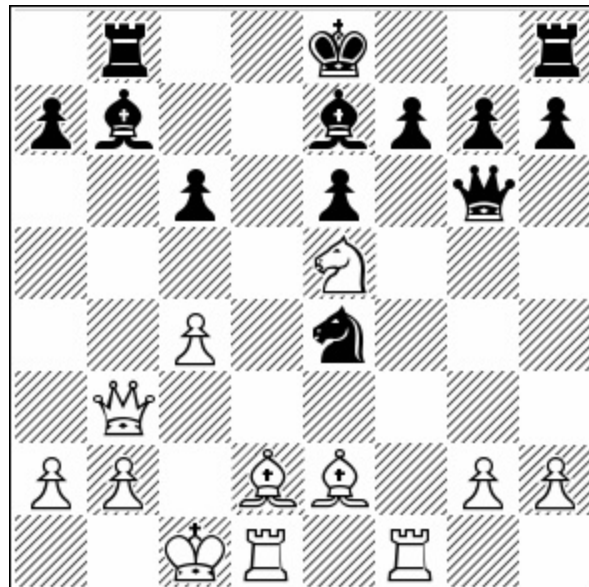
Black is just a little behind in development, which makes defending against threats problematic.

**19...Ne4?**

This is a rough question mark in a rapid game, but the two most direct replies lead to a big advantage for White. There's something to be said for the proverb, 'When in doubt, castle'. It's not a smooth path, with both sides needing to find accurate moves: 19...0-0 20.Bf4 Qxg2 21.Bf3 Qh3 22.Bxb8 Rxb8 23.Bxc6 Qxh2 24.Nf4! (24.Bxb7? Qc7 gives Black the edge) 24...g5 25.Rd2 Qh4 26.Ng2 Qh2 27.Bxb7 Qc7 28.Qc3 Rxb7 29.Rxf6 Bb4 30.Qd4 Bxd2+ 31.Kxd2 with Black worse but still fighting. Black can defend more directly with 19...Bd6 20.Nf4 and now the queen has to tap dance a bit for survival: 20...Qe4 21.Bd3 (21.Bf3 Qf5 looks precarious but would not be easy to demonstrate) 21...Qe5 22.Rde1 Bc8! 23.Rxe5 Rxb3 24.Rxe6+ fxe6 25.axb3 and Black is not much worse.

## 20.Ne5

Not bad, but 20.Bf4! was much stronger. The key point is that after 20...Bg5 (20...0-0 21.Ne5 wins a lot of material) 21.Bf3! Black has a dearth of moves to avoid material loss. After 21...Bxf4+ (on 21...f5 22.Bxe4 fxe4 23.Ne5, the king in the center is toast) 22.Nxf4 Qf5 23.Bxe4 Qxe4 24.Nxe6 fxe6 25.Qg3 Qxc4+ 26.Kb1 Rd8 27.Qxg7 Black drops his rook.



## 20...Nxd2?!

20...Qxg2 was definitely stronger. In the long line 21.Bf3 (21.Bh5 0-0 22.Bf4 may be promising but hard to evaluate) 21...Nxd2 22.Qxb7! Rxb7 23.Bxg2 0-0 24.Rxd2 Bg5 White should have the better chances but maybe not more than that.

### **21.Rxd2 Qxg2**

All's well that ends well, as Navara manages to cause confusion with this move. Objectively, the better move was 21...Qe4 22.Qg3! (22.Nxf7 0-0! would be a harbinger of things to come!) 22...0-0 23.Nd7 Rbd8 24.Rf4 Qg6 25.Nxf8 and White only wins an exchange.

### **22.Rxf7**

Now that all pieces are protected, this unpleasant intrusion is possible.

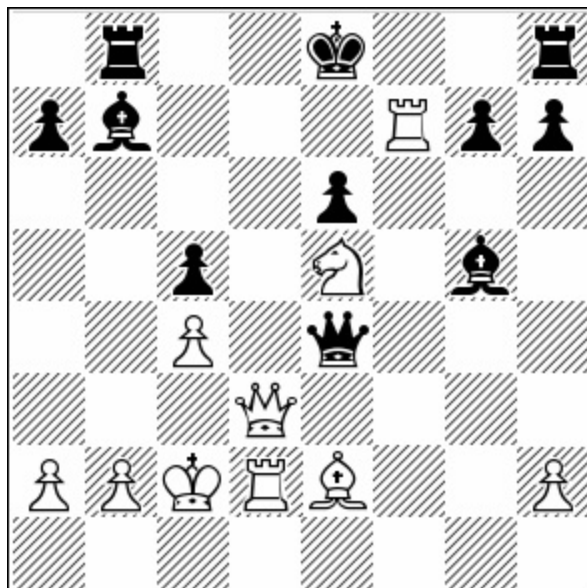
### **22...Bg5 23.Kc2**

This clever move maintains a big advantage, but White has a more direct path. 23.Qd3! leads to a quick win: 23...Rd8 (23...Bxd2+ 24.Qxd2 Rd8 25.Rd7+-; 23...Bc8 24.Qd6 Bxd2+ 25.Kxd2 Qg5+ 26.Kc2 Rb6 27.Rxg7 Qf5+ 28.Kc1 Qf4+ 29.Kd1+-) 24.Rd7 0-0 25.Rxd8 and the back rank dooms Black.

### **23...Qe4+!**

Jones was hoping for 23...Bxd2 24.Bf3! splat.

### **24.Qd3 c5**



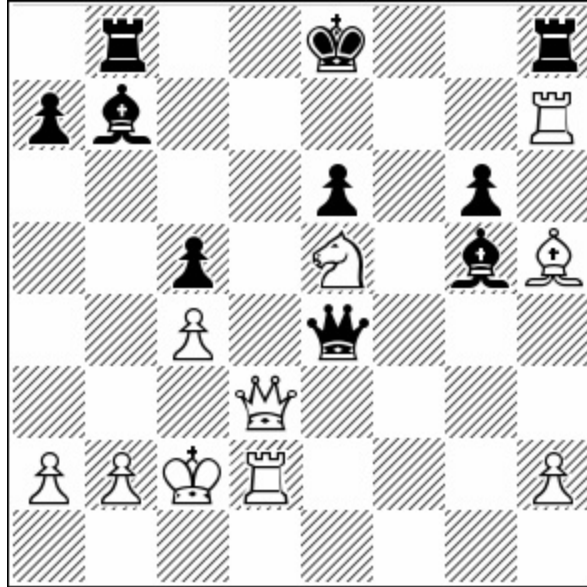
Black at least has put a queen trade on the table, and opened up his dormant bishop.

### 25.Bh5

Best, but not for the reason White thinks! 25.Rxg7 is also problematic for Black. The best he can do is 25...Rd8! 26.Nd7! Qxd3+ 27.Rxd3 Be4 28.Nxc5 (28.Bh5+ Bg6 29.Rxh7! Rxh7 30.Bxg6+ Ke7 31.Bxh7 Rxd7 – bishops of opposite colors cloud the outcome) 28...Bxd3+ 29.Nxd3 with domination. Black can hardly get his pieces coordinated while White's queenside majority looms.

### 25...g6 26.Rxh7??

This looks like a big finish but the prosaic 26.Bf3! Qxd3+ 27.Rxd3 Bxf3 28.Rdx3 would have done the trick. White is even a pawn down for the moment, but his activity will start earning him pawns shortly, e.g. 28...Be7 29.Rg7 Rb7 30.h4 Rf8 31.Rxf8+ Kxf8 32.Rxh7, etc. One tricky aspect is that this possibility was a non-starter on the previous move, but provoking ...g7-g6 eliminated the adhesive defense ...Be7-f6, which otherwise would win for Black!



(back to the exercises) ***Solution to Puzzle 45:***

**26...0-0!!**

The rook on the doorstep does not impede this maneuver in the slightest. Here the impact goes well beyond psychology; suddenly half of White's pieces are en prise.

26...Qxd3+ 27.Rxd3 Rxh7 28.Bxg6+ was the naïve expectation.

**27.Bxg6 Qxe5**

Years ago, the 1988 U.S. Champion Michael Wilder told me a tale of woe about a game he had with the stalwart New York IM Walter Shipman. Wilder was winning easily when he made a blunder, which led to a cascade of his pieces dropping off the board. But Mike was not nearly as perturbed by the blundering move as by the fact that at the end of the sequence, Shipman's bishop ended up on the only square which would enable his survival. I'm a bit reminded of Wilder here, as White would be okay if Black could not capture this knight. The queen stamps out White's big threat by being on the perfect square to defend.

**28.Re2**

28.Bf7+ Rxf7 29.Qg6+ Rg7 is the sad truth. Navara finishes with style:

**28...Be4! 29.Qxe4 Qxb2+ 30.Kd1**

30.Kd3 Rb3+ 31.axb3 Qxb3#.

**30...Qc1#**

## No Time to Lose

A position on the edge of a precipice will normally fall over. But sometimes it can stay afloat with some fast action and a little bit of magic.

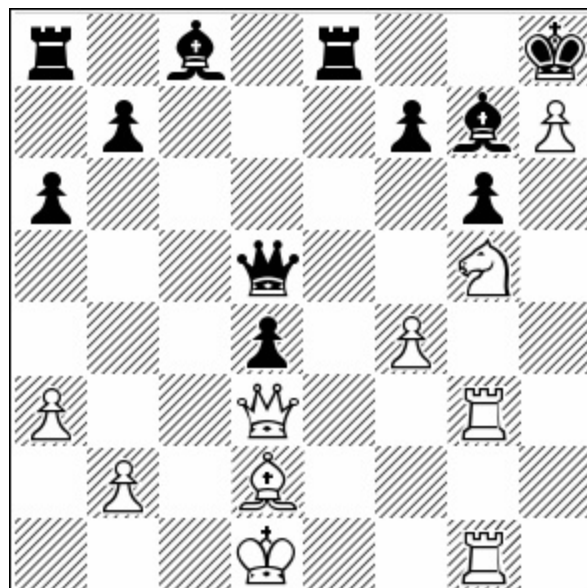
Game 85 – Nimzo-Indian Defense

Wesley So 2778

Sam Sevian 2693

Saint Louis 2022

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e3 0-0 5.Bd3 d5 6.cxd5 exd5 7.a3 Bd6 8.Qc2  
c6 9.Nge2 Re8 10.Bd2 Nbd7 11.f3 c5 12.h4 h5 13.0-0-0 a6 14.g4 hxg4  
15.fxg4 Nxg4 16.h5 Nf8 17.Rdg1 Nf2 18.dxc5 Be5 19.h6 g6 20.h7+ Kh8  
21.Rh6 Bg7 22.Rh2 Ng4 23.Rh3 Ne5 24.Rhg3 Ne6 25.Nf4 Nxf4 26.exf4  
Nxd3+ 27.Qxd3 d4 28.Ne4 Qd5 29.Ng5 Qxc5+ 30.Kd1 Qd5



Black has everything going right and White has the smallest of windows to develop meaningful play.

### 31.Qf3!

White gains time to initiate counterplay, though it looks like things are just getting worse.

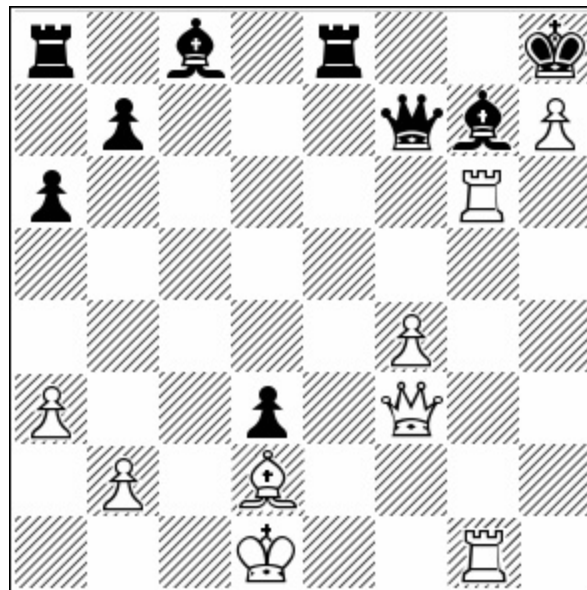
### 31...Qa2

This looks like a simple winner, but thanks to miraculous possibilities, this move could have been replaced by 31...Be6 and the bishop pair plus exposed white king would be just as decisive in the endgame.

### 32.Nxf7+!

Whether this works or not, there is nothing else to consider. Black will crash through in a few moves against other moves.

### 32...Qxf7 33.Rxg6 d3!

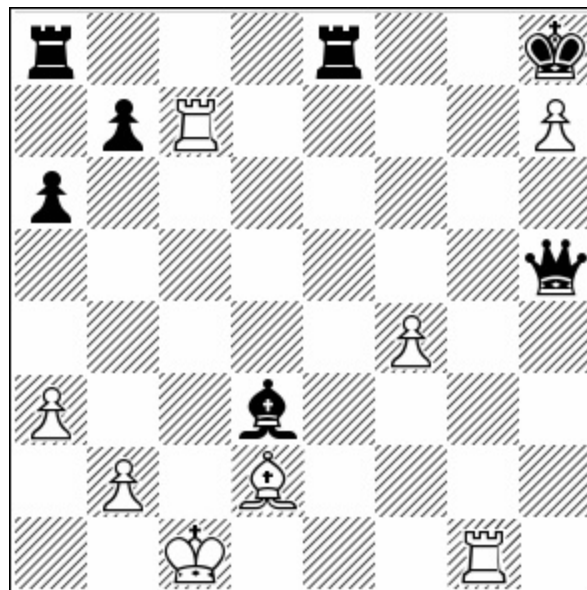


Nicely played. This move seems to secure the win for Black, as the threat to mate with 34...Qb3+ seems to end the game.

(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 46:*

### 34.Be3?

Tactics is largely about timing. A mate threat may stop you in your tracks, but giving up even large amounts of material may give you a chance to get there first. 34.Qxd3! Bf5 35.Rxg7! Qh5+ 36.Kc1 Bxd3 looks like a dead end because 37.Bc3? Qc5! limits the diagonal danger and wins, e.g. 38.Rg8+ (38.Rc7+ Qxc3--+) 38...Kxh7 39.R8g7+ Kh6 40.Rh1+ Qh5--+. But White has the miracle move 37.Rc7!!, somehow insulating his bishop from would-be assailants.



*analysis diagram*

Sevian actually saw this possibility and correctly assessed it as drawn after 37...Re7! 38.Bc3+ (38.Rxe7? Rc8+ 39.Bc3+ Rxc3+) 38...Kxh7 39.Rxe7+ Kh6 40.Bg7+ Kh7 41.f5 Rc8+? (41...Re8 42.Rc7 Qxf5=) 42.Bc3+ Kh6 43.Re6+ Kh7 44.Rg7+ Kh8 45.Rc7+.

**34...Qb3+ 35.Ke1 d2+ 36.Kf2 d1=Q**

**White resigned** because 37.Rxd1 Qc2+ wins the rook on g6. Underpromotion to a knight would also have done the trick.

## You Better Work

So far we have seen a lot of examples of the correct approach enabling a comeback, or at least making the opponent's task of winning appreciably more difficult. But sometimes there is no substitute for cold, hard calculation. I wrote *Better Thinking, Better Chess* primarily because I noticed that a lot of fairly strong students would play the first move that popped into their head. They might look it over for a few minutes, but they really didn't want to work too much. Sometimes you have to totally bear down if you want to survive. This point is perfectly illustrated by a pair of classic Euwe victories.

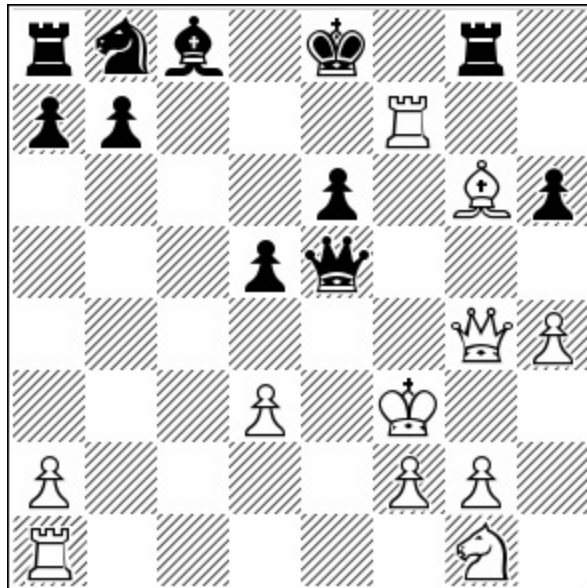
Game 86 – French Defense

**Max Euwe**

**Geza Maroczy**

Bad Aussee m 1921

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 Bb4 5.e5 h6 6.Bd2 Bxc3 7.bxc3 Ne4  
8.Qg4 g6 9.h4 c5 10.Bd3 Nxd2 11.Kxd2 Qa5 12.Rh3 cxd4 13.Bxg6 Qc7  
14.Rf3 Rg8 15.Rxf7 Qxc3+ 16.Ke2 d3+ 17.cxd3 Qxe5+ 18.Kf3



Black is under direct pressure here. There is no choice but to calculate the best way out of this mess.

In the game Black chose a move that looks responsible but offers no

resistance at all.

**18...Rf8? 19.Rf5+! Kd7**

The key point is 19...Ke7 20.Qb4+.

**20.Rxf8 Qxa1 21.Rf7+ Kd8 22.Qb4 Nd7 23.Qd6 Qh8 24.Ne2 e5 25.Nf4!**

Not the only way, but certainly clear-cut and aesthetic. The point is 25.Bf5 Qe8 26.Bxd7 Qxf7+ would come with check.

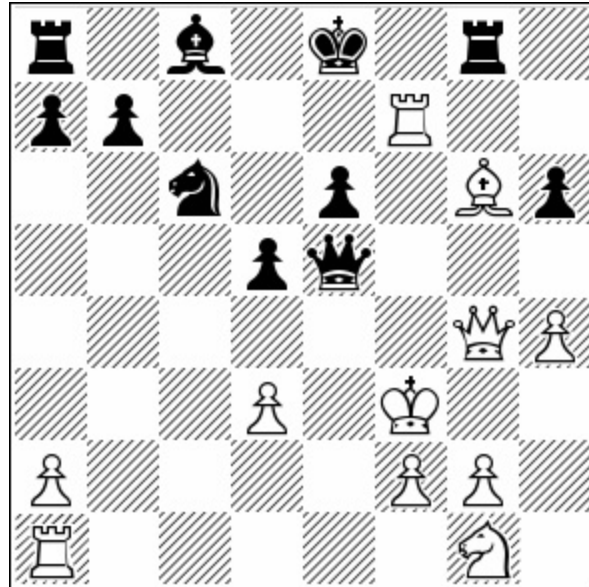
**25...exf4 26.Bf5 Qe8 27.Bxd7 Bxd7 28.Rf8 1-0**

It is an obvious point (but still worth mentioning) that step one is to avoid a forced win! Black has two candidates that would be better, but still not good choices:

A) The grab-what-you-can- 18...Qxa1, an approach often favored by club players who don't want to calculate, is dispatched most clearly by 19.Rg7+, the main point being that 19...Kf8? is mated after 20.Qf4+ Kxg7 21.Qf7+ Kh8 22.Qh7#. So 19...Kd8 is forced, but 20.Rxg8+ Kc7 21.Qf4+ e5 22.Qf7+ Bd7 23.Kg3 Qxg1 24.Qxd5 is pretty horrible. White has an even more brutal takedown in 19.Qb4! Qd1+ (19...Nc6 20.Rg7+ Kd8 21.Qd6+) 20.Ne2 Qxd3+ 21.Bxd3 Kxf7 22.Qf4+ with an easy win;

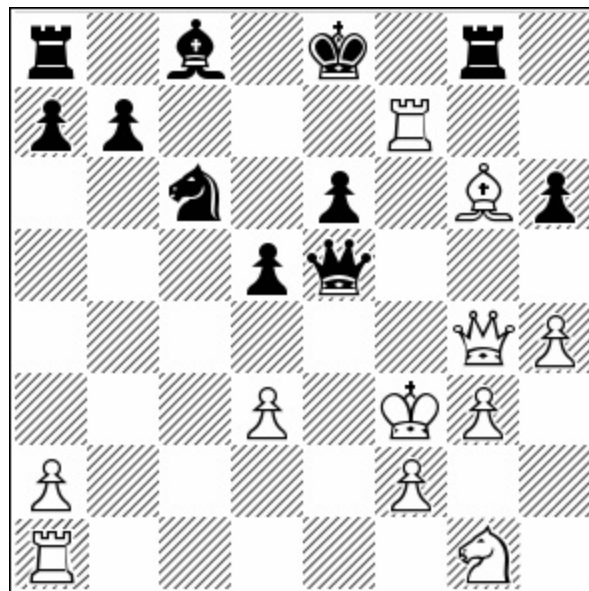
B) After the toothless 18...Kd8, White is clearly winning with 19.Rc1! a5 (19...Nc6 20.Rxc6 bxc6 21.Qb4) 20.h5 Nc6 21.Qh4+ Qg5 22.Qxg5+ hxg5 23.Re1 and the h-pawn will prove decisive in short order;

C) Cold-blooded defense often involves casting a wide net to find a way out. That is the only real way to find a defense that will give the best chance to fight on, not just exist for a few more moves. **18...Nc6!** calls White's bluff, so to speak.



*analysis diagram*

19.Rf5+? Kd8 20.Rxe5 Nxe5+ Black recoups the queen with a fork. So the best move seems to be **19.g3!** (which your opponent, if he isn't a modern day Max Euwe, may not find). White is preparing to take his king to safety and attack with his well-placed pieces. Black has another big decision to make, but at least has one more piece in the fray.



*analysis diagram*

Once again, **19...Qxa1?** is a bad option after 20.Rg7+. The same mate is on again after 20...Kf8 21.Qf4+, so Black has to abandon the rook with 20...Kd8 21.Rxg8+ Kc7 22.Kg2. Black would much rather swap the active white rook for his rook, rather than the passive one on a1.

Black also has a few 'do no harm' options, like **19...Qd6** 20.Kg2 and **19...Kd8** 20.h5. In both cases White consolidates and retains a decisive attack. It behooves Black to try to take advantage of the awkward placement of White's king on f3.

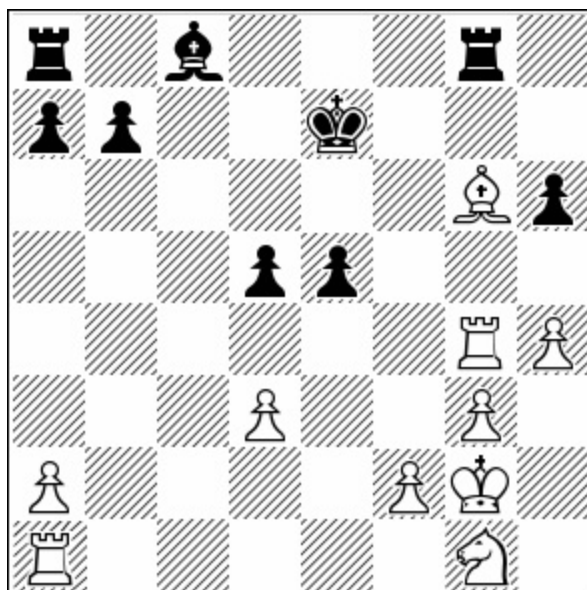
**19...Ne7** is at least a bit forcing, and White has to find some accurate moves: 20.h5! Rxg6 (20...Qxa1? 21.Qb4; 20...Nxc6 21.hxc6 Bd7 22.Re1 with a winning initiative, as Qxe1? (22...Qxe1?) loses immediately to 23.Qh4) 21.hxc6 Qxa1 22.Kg2 and White's attack should be decisive.

**19...Rf8** is a rather obvious candidate, and much stronger than the previous move, as the b4-square is now covered. 20.Rxf8+ Kxf8 21.Rb1 b6 22.Kg2 and White is clearly better, but Black is fighting.

Probably a little up the chain is the harder to find **19...Rxg6** 20.Qxg6 Ne7. Now 21.Qg7? Qh5+ drops the rook, so White is forced to give back the exchange: 21.Rxe7+ Kxe7 22.Rc1 Qf6+ and Black's burden is probably a little easier with the queens off.

The freakiest variation involves some really outside the box thinking!

**19...Qd4** looks ridiculous but leads to some surprising tactics! 20.Rf4+ Ke7 21.Rxd4 Ne5+ 22.Kg2 Nxc4 23.Rxc4 e5!.



*analysis diagram*

Wow. White has to give back the piece. The engine says White retains a definite edge with 24.Rb4 Rxc6 25.Nf3 but all results are still possible.

If you had to face this challenge in a game, there isn't one correct answer. I think you would do well to choose one of the last three options (though I think 19...Rf8 is most likely if you are below master). But there are certainly wrong answers. That is the incentive to grind out our options when we get into intense situations.

### **Max Effort**

In another of Euwe's most celebrated victories, the way out eluded a world-class grandmaster.

Game 87 – Nimzo-Indian Defense

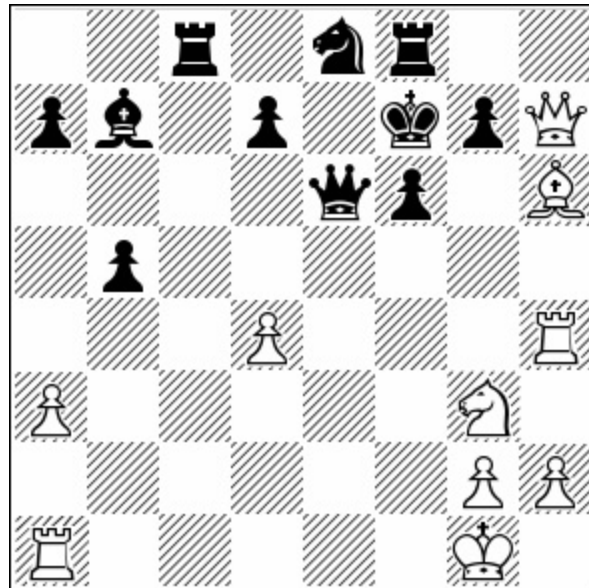
**Efim Geller**

**Max Euwe**

Zurich Candidates 1953

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e3 c5 5.a3 Bxc3+ 6.bxc3 b6 7.Bd3 Bb7 8.f3 Nc6 9.Ne2 0-0 10.0-0 Na5 11.e4 Ne8 12.Ng3 cxd4 13.cxd4 Rc8 14.f4 Nxc4 15.f5 f6 16.Rf4 b5 17.Rh4 Qb6 18.e5 Nxe5 19.fxe6 Nxd3 20.Qxd3 Qxe6**

**21.Qxh7+ Kf7 22.Bh6**



This is a famous game from one of the most celebrated tournaments ever, with two beloved books written about it (one by Bronstein, and one equally good but less well-known by Najdorf).

**22...Rh8!!**

This beautiful deflection of the queen is stuff of folklore. I can't bring myself to depart from its traditional punctuation, even though it doesn't actually force a win. Black could perhaps maintain an edge with 22...Rc3 (not 22...Qd5 23.Re4), but I don't think there is any reason to not play Euwe's move if you find it!

**23.Qxh8 Rc2 24.Rc1?**

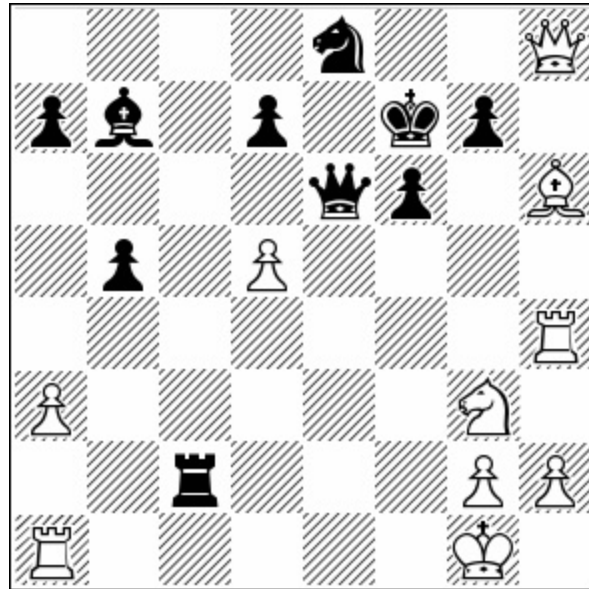
Succumbing quickly. Guarding the c4-square only delays checkmate.

**24...Rxc2+ 25.Kf1 Qb3 26.Ke1 Qf3**

And mate cannot be averted.

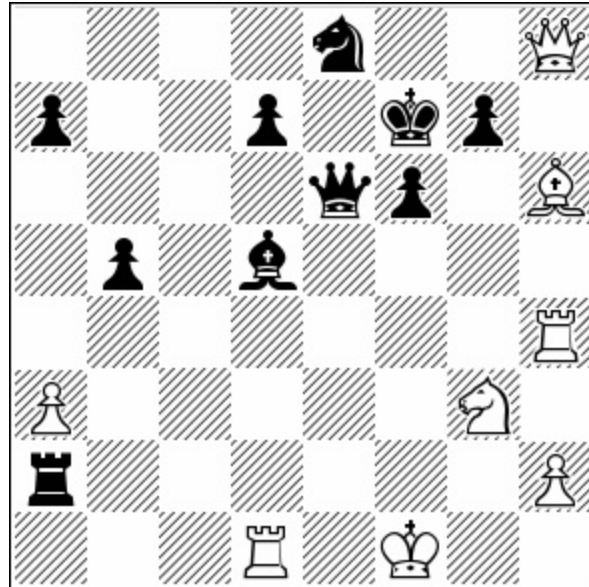
There was a chance to save the game from move 24, but it required very deep thinking to ascertain everything White needed to do to escape Black's mating

plan. The first forced move is 24.d5!



*analysis diagram*

This is a weird kind of interference motif. The queen capture on d5 would block the bishop, making 25.Re4 possible, so 24...Bxd5 is necessary. But this blocks the queen's access to squares on the e6-a2 diagonal, meaning the mate threat is not yet live. White now has to find 25.Rd1! which covers important squares. The rooks begin to coordinate: 25...Rxc2+ 26.Kf1 and now 26...Qb6? 27.Rdd4 wins for White (but not 27.Rhd4? Rxc2 and White's queen is getting trapped). There's also no advantage for Black in 26...gxf6 27.Qxf6, so 26...Ra2...



*analysis diagram*

Black doesn't seem to have a knockout threat, but most possible moves are answered by 27...Bg2+ 28.Kg1 Bf3, dominating the rook and forcing a deadly queen preparation. The only solution is to block the second rank with 27.Bd2! Bc4+ 28.Rxc4 (White also seems to hold with 28.Kf2 Qb6+ 29.Kf3, but it seems an unnecessary extravagance) 28...Qxc4+ 29.Ke1! and Black cannot prove any advantage.

It would be a tall order to work all this out at the board. I think the best hope is to take it one move at a time and avoid the immediate loss (i.e. forced checkmate) until you are finally out of danger.

### **Roll the Dice While You Can**

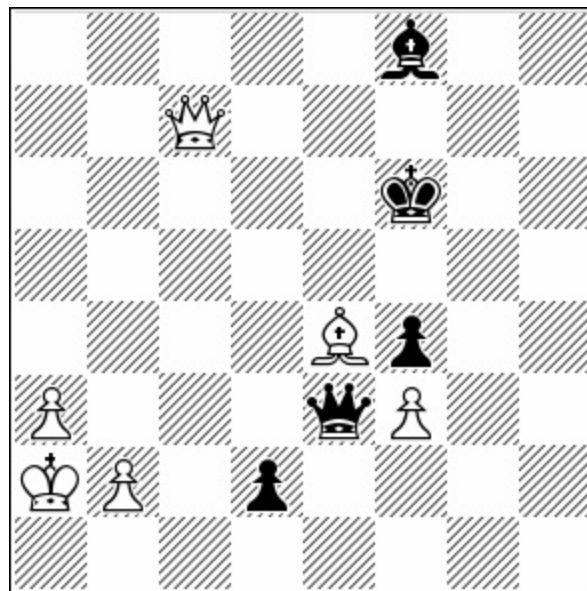
I would like to make a *Star Trek* analogy (not for the first time, if you're familiar with my books). In an episode from the original series, Spock gets the damaged shuttlecraft airborne from the crash landed planet, but with no chance to get to safety. Spock then jettisons the last bit of fuel to try to send up a flare the Enterprise might detect. Scottie praises the gamble, which, of course, (the show wasn't cancelled yet) succeeds.

In chess, when is it time to give in to desperation? We started the chapter with desperate measures in truly horrible positions. But the current

tournament landscape, with fast time control games and sudden death finishes, has changed the equation. You can no longer hope to have the time to solve problems late in games. If you feel the constant pressure will eventually coax a decisive mistake, it may be time to go for broke.

Game 88 – Sicilian Defense  
Alexander Areshchenko 2687  
Sam Shankland 2709  
Krasnaya Polyana 2021

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Be3 e5 7.Nb3 Be6 8.f3 Be7 9.Qd2 0-0 10.0-0-0 Nbd7 11.g4 b5 12.g5 Nh5 13.Kb1 Nb6 14.Na5 Rc8 15.Nd5 Nxd5 16.exd5 Bxd5 17.Qxd5 Qxa5 18.c4 Nf4 19.Bxf4 exf4 20.cxb5 axb5 21.Qxb5 Qa7 22.h4 Rc5 23.Qa6 Qc7 24.Bd3 Rb8 25.Rc1 d5 26.Rxc5 Bxc5 27.Rc1 Qe5 28.Bb5 d4 29.Bd3 g6 30.Ka1 Bf8 31.Qc4 Qe3 32.h5 Rb4 33.Qc2 gxh5 34.Bxh7+ Kg7 35.Bd3 h4 36.g6 h3 37.gxf7 Rb6 38.Rh1 Rh6 39.a3 h2 40.Qg2+ Kf6 41.Be4 Kxf7 42.Ka2 d3 43.Rxh2 Rxh2 44.Qxh2 d2 45.Qh5+ Ke7 46.Qe5+ Kd8 47.Qd5+ Ke7 48.Qe5+ Kd8 49.Qb8+ Ke7 50.Qc7+ Kf6



Black is hanging on for dear life in this World Cup rapid playoff game. His last move was actually a subtle but significant error – 50...Ke6 would have

kept the game tight.

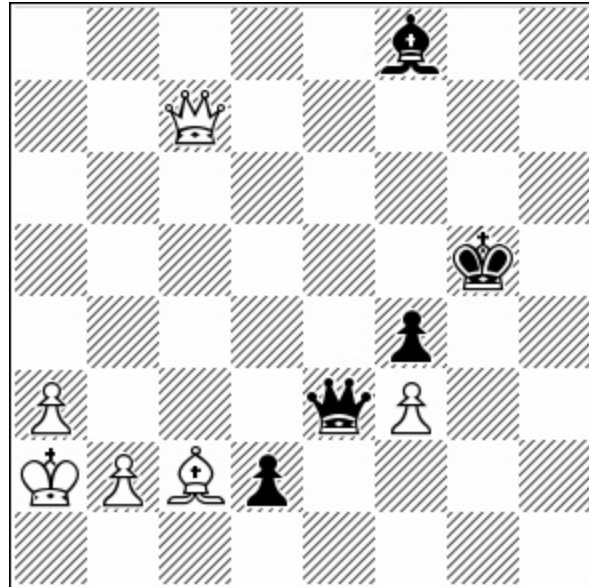
### **51.Bc2?**

The idea of switching the bishop to guard the queening square makes sense, though this is hardly an ideal moment for it. Moreover, White can actually force a win with 51.Qd8+!. The point is he can force the bishop to e7, after which mating threats will end resistance: 51...Be7 (51...Ke6 52.Qe8+ Be7 53.Qg8+ Kd7 54.Qd5+ Bd6 55.Qf7+ Kd8 56.Bc6 Qe7 57.Qd5 Kc7 58.Ba4) 52.Qh8+ Ke6 53.Qh3+ Kd6 54.Qh6+ Ke5 55.Qh5+ Kd6 56.Qd5+ Kc7 57.Qc6+ Kd8 58.Bf5.

### **51...Kg5!?**

Technically, this is a blunder. Shankland gave it an exclamation in *Chess Life*, despite admitting it was ‘a losing move in a non-lost position.’ He judged that it was worth it to make a break to improve his position, as he was likely to make a decisive mistake under time pressure over the course of many more moves.

51...Qxf3 52.Qd8+ Be7 53.Qd4+ Kf7 54.Bb3+ Kg6 55.Qxd2 Qe3 is drawable, though with greater difficulty if White does not swap queens. For that matter 51...Qd4 is a pretty good move. Perhaps Sam’s tune would be different if his gambit had backfired? Right or wrong, who can say? Big decisions often have to be made quickly, which is a powerful argument for developing our tactical instincts as much as possible.



**52.Qf7?**

Oh this move looks so crushing! How many of us would just play it upon discovery? And yet, with more patience and reflection (which are not always available in rapid chess), 52.Qc6! would have been the move to send Sam home. It does everything the text does, but also protects the f3-pawn, which makes all the difference.

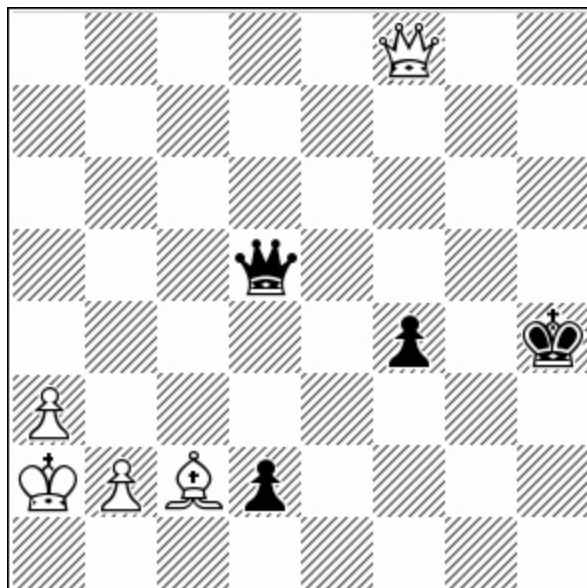
**52...Qxf3 53.Qf5+**

White continues with the plan. By knocking the king off the defense of the f-pawn, he prepares for a winning queen ending. Such a finesse can create a false sense of security, making us think that our opponent missed that particular point in going down this path.

**53...Kh4 54.Qxf8?**

(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 47:*

**54...Qd5+!!**



Areshchenko had counted on the d-pawn promoting immediately, leading to a queen ending with White having two extra pawns. But now a bizarre situation ensues; White cannot avoid Black winning a critical temp to save his f-pawn. I would have to say this theme is something new to my experience. Its unusual nature means it can plausibly escape a grandmaster's attention, if he doesn't have time to consider it in advance.

### 55.b3

55.Bb3 Qxb3+ 56.Kxb3 d1=Q+ would have been similar.

### 55...d1=Q 56.Bxd1

No time for an in-between-move – 56.Qxf4+ Qg4.

### 56...Qd2+! 57.Kb1 Qxd1+

The f-pawn is too far advanced and the white king too open for cross-checks for White to avoid the inevitable.

**58.Kb2 Qd2+ 59.Kb1 Qd3+ 60.Kb2 f3 61.Qh6+ Kg3 62.Qg5+ Kf2 63.a4 Ke1 64.Qg3+ Ke2 65.Qg4 Kd2 66.Qf4+ Kd1 67.a5 Qe2+ 68.Ka3 f2 69.Qd4+ Kc2 70.Qc5+ Kb1 71.Qf5+ Qc2 72.Qf6 Qc1+ 0-1**

## Passed Pawns

Years ago, a wise man, IM Eugene Meyer, told me that a passed pawn is good compensation for a mating attack. The reverse is true as well, or course. Next we see queening tactics versus mating/perpetual check tactics in a game so complicated it could not be truly solved without modern computers.

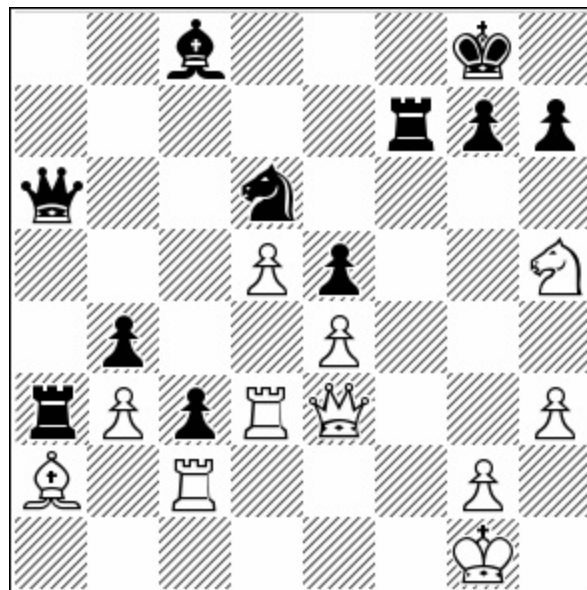
Game 89 – Slav Defense

Michael Rohde 2530

Alexander Shabalov 2475

Philadelphia 1990

1.Nf3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3 Nf6 4.Nc3 e6 5.d4 Nbd7 6.Qc2 Bd6 7.Bd3 0-0 8.0-0 dxc4 9.Bxc4 e5 10.Bb3 Qc7 11.h3 b5 12.Ng5! Bb7 13.Rd1 Rad8 14.a4 a6 15.Nce4 Nxe4 16.Nxe4 Be7 17.axb5 axb5 18.d5 Nb6 19.Ra7 Nc8 20.Ra1 c5 21.Ng3 c4 22.e4 Bc5 23.Ba2 Nd6 24.Qe2 Ra8 25.Be3 b4 26.b3 c3 27.Rac1 Ra3 28.Bxc5 Qxc5 29.Nh5 Bc8 30.Rd3 Qb5 31.Rc2 f6 32.f4 Rf7 33.fxe5 fxe5 34.Qe3 Qa6



White's position is a mess. The c3-pawn is stronger than White's bishop, so Rohde focuses on getting counterplay rather than saving that horrible piece.

**35.Kh2! Rxa2**

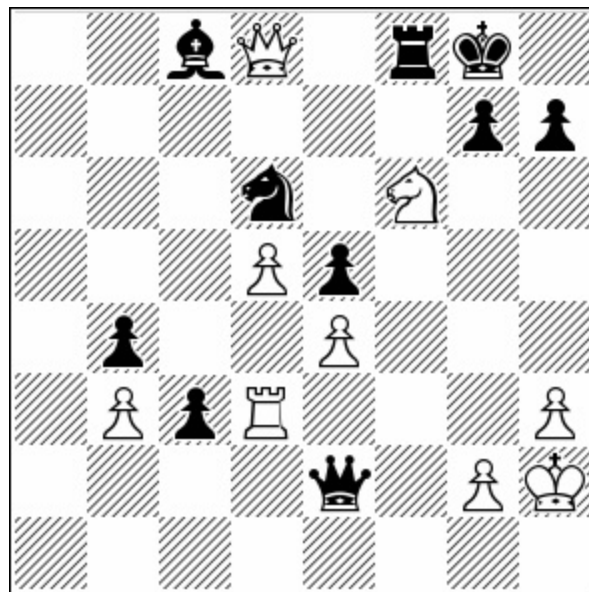
In his *Informant* notes, Shaba pointed out that Black need not take the piece: 35...Bd7 36.Qg3 Ne8 is easily winning. But there is nothing wrong with his decision.

### 36.Rxa2 Qxa2 37.Qb6 Qe2?

This is the culprit. Black wins easily after 37...Qa6 38.Qd8+ Rf8 39.Qe7 Ne8, or 37...Ne8 38.Qxb4 c2 39.Rc3 (39.Qc5 Rc7) 39...Rf2!! (not necessary, but a stylish way to finish) 40.Rxc8 Rxcg2+ 41.Kh1 c1=Q+ 42.Rxc1 Rh2+ etc.

I don't think either variation is too difficult. But sometimes you can find multiple winning moves, but choose the wrong one! In time pressure, any of us can make this mistake.

### 38.Qd8+ Rf8 39.Nf6+!



Rohde is extremely resourceful. He is still losing, but now it takes perfect calculation to prove it.

### 39...gxf6

Not 39...Kf7? 40.Qc7+ Kxf6 41.Qxd6+.

### 40.Rg3+ Bg4

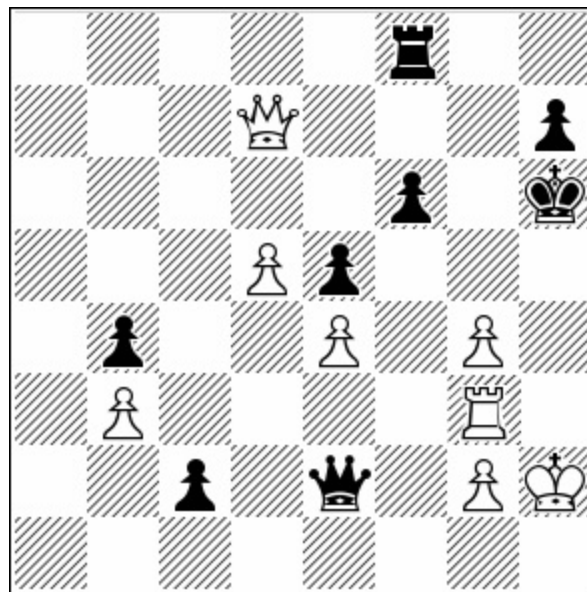
40...Kf7 might have seemed safe at first glance, but White has a forced repetition with 41.Qc7+ Ke8 42.Rg7 Rf7 43.Rg8+, etc.

### 41.Qxd6 h5!

Shaba thought he'd made the wrong choice here, but his post-game analysis was actually incorrect. It is surely a moment where engines have changed our appreciation of tactics! He gave 41...c2! 42.Qe6+ Kg7!! (42...Kh8 43.Qe7=) 43.Rxg4+ Qxg4!! 44.Qxg4+ Kh8 and the queen can't stop the pawn from queening, or make a counterthreat.

(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 48:*

But White can amazingly save the game by not allowing the queen sac – 43.Qd7+!. Now 43...Kh8 44.Qe7 and 43...Kg8 44.Qe6+ get nowhere. Even worse is 43...Rf7? 44.Rxg4+ because White will stop the c-pawn after the queen sac. That leaves 43...Kh6, which seems to win after the obvious 44.Rxg4? Qxg4 45.hxg4 c1=Q. But after 44.hxg4!! Black not only can't queen because of a mating threat, he can't defend his position at all!



*analysis diagram*

A) 44...Qxe4 45.g5+! Kh5 46.Rh3+ Kxg5 47.Rg3+ (47.Qg7+ Qg6 48.Rg3+ Kf5 49.Rxg6 c1=Q 50.Rg3 also wins) 47...Kh5 48.Qg7 c1=Q 49.Rh3+ Qh4

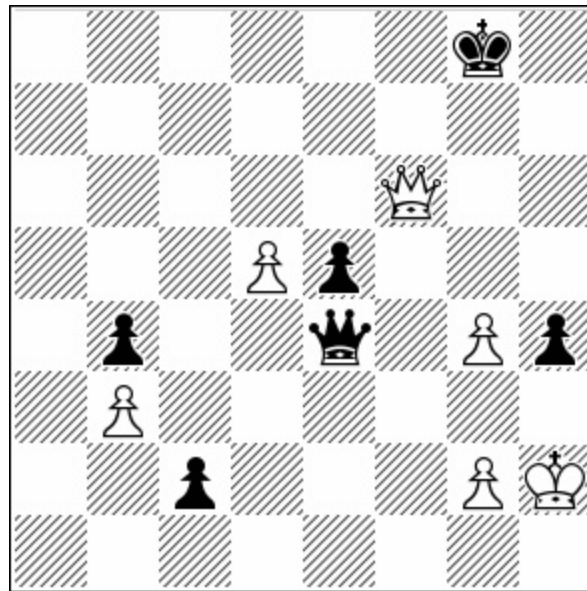
50.g4#;

B) 44...Kg6 45.g5!! Qf2 (45...Qh5+ 46.Rh3 Qxh3+ 47.Qxh3 c1=Q 48.Qh6+ Kf7 49.g6+ wins the new queen; 45...fxg5 46.Qe6 mates in a few; and 45...Qxe4 46.gxf6 Kh5 47.Qg7 mates as in Variation A) and now White wins with the spectacular multi-tasking 46.Qc6!! Qf4 (if 46...Kh5, 47.Qc7! kills) 47.gxf6+ Kh5 48.Qxc2 and Black gets at best a hopeless endgame.

### 42.Qxb4?!

There are a few tricks here as well, but 42.hxg4 was a tougher move to beat. 42...h4 and now:

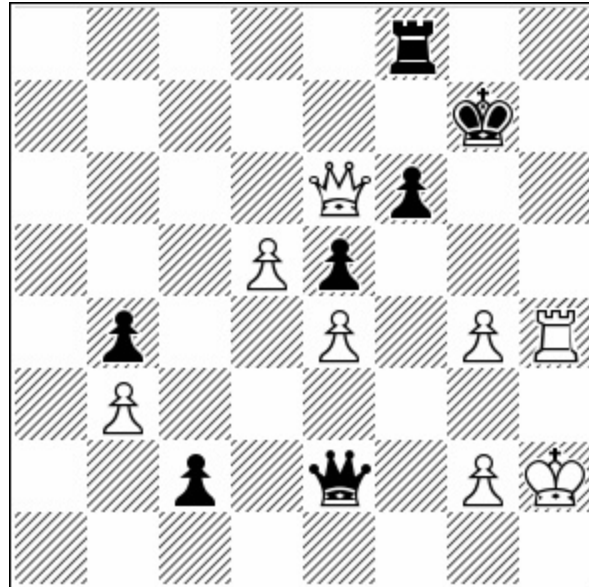
A) 43.Rf3 c2 44.Rxf6 Rxf6 45.Qxf6 Qxe4!!.



*analysis diagram*

The only winning move! White is close to a perpetual, but he never gets it: 46.Qe6+ Kg7 47.Qe7+ Kg6 48.Qe8+ Kg5 49.Qh5+ Kf4 50.Qh6+ Kxg4 51.Qg7+ Kh5 52.Qh8+ Kg5 53.Qg7+ Qg6 54.Qxe5+ Qf5 55.Qg7+ Kf4 56.Qd4+ Qe4 57.Qd2+ Kf5 58.Kg1 (58.d6 Qe5+ 59.Kh1 Qa1+ 60.Kh2 c1=Q) 58...Ke5 and another queen will come soon!

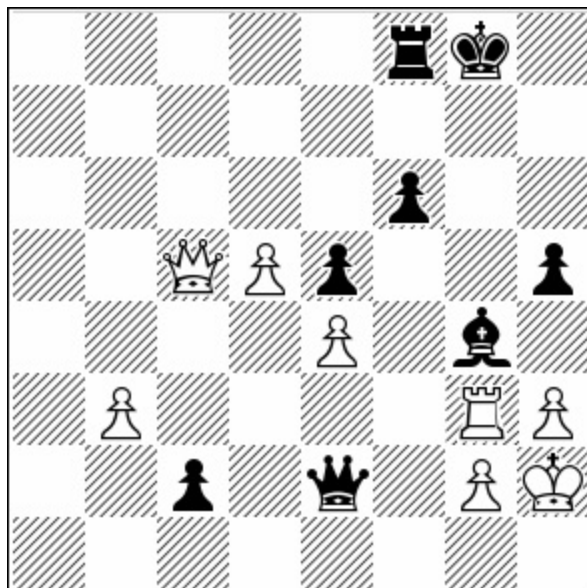
B) 43.Qe6+ Kg7 44.Rh3 c2 45.Rxh4.



*analysis diagram*

Now 45...Qxe4 46.Qd7+ Rf7 47.Qe8 is too slow, while 45...c1=Q 46.Qe7+ Rf7 47.Rh7+ Kxh7 48.Qxf7+ produces perpetual check. But 45...Qf2!! ticks all the boxes. It defends the perpetual while winning a tempo. Then 46.Qe7+ Rf7 47.Rh7+ Kxh7 48.Qxf7+ Kh6 allows the king to run free, while the c-pawn remains unstoppable. White has a trick – 49.Kh3!?, tempting Black to queen prematurely, but 49...Kg5! 50.Qg7+ Kf4 wins comfortably.

**42...c2 43.Qc5**



**43...Qd1!**

Avoiding the trap 43...Qd2? 44.hxg4 c1=Q? 45.gxh5+ Qg5 46.Qxc1 with White stealing a point, though Black would still win with 44...h4! instead, e.g. 45.Rc3 Qf4+ 46.Kh1 Ra8 with a mating attack for Black!

**44.hxg4**

Or 44.Rc3 Rc8–+.

**44...c1=Q 45.gxh5+ Qg5**

It's just a matter of time before Black consolidates.

**46.Rxg5+ fxg5 47.d6 Qxh5+ 48.Kg1 Qd1+ 49.Kh2 Rd8 50.Qc4+ Kf8 51.Qe6 Qxd6 52.Qf5+ Ke7 53.Qh7+ Ke8 54.Qg8+ Kd7 55.Qf7+ Kc6 56.Qc4+ Kb6 57.b4 Qh6+**

**White resigned.**

### **Double Resuscitation**

We will conclude this chapter with a 'twofer'. Dr. Nunn foolishly grabs a pawn and falls under a crushing attack, but somehow Black, in pursuit of

some grand finish, never collects the material available to him. Nunn makes it all the way back and even finagles a winning position, only to miss an endgame subtlety that enables his unheralded opponent to save a half-point.

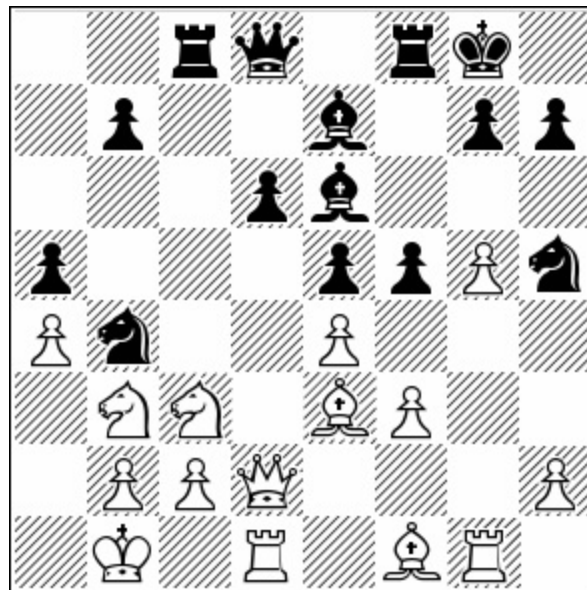
Game 90 – Sicilian Defense

**John Nunn 2601**

**Bernd Vökler 2335**

Dresden Wch-tt sen 2015

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Be3 e5 7.Nb3 Be7 8.f3 Be6 9.Qd2 0-0 10.0-0-0 a5 11.a4 Nc6 12.g4 Nb4 13.g5 Nh5 14.Kb1 Rc8 15.Rg1 f5?!**



Black's last move is logical, but tactically flawed.

**16.Bh3?**

It is generally tough to decide whether to take en passant in this type of position, but here it was the clear choice because 16.gxf6 Nxf6? runs into 17.Nc5!, the main point being that 17...dxc5 18.Qg2 wins with a double threat of taking the queen and delivering checkmate. So Black is forced into 16...Rxf6 17.Bg5 Rxf3 18.Bxe7 Qxe7 19.Qxd6 Qxd6 20.Rxd6 Bxb3 21.cxb3 Nf6 22.Bc4+ Kh8 23.Rb6 with a huge advantage for White.

### 16...Qe8! 17.exf5

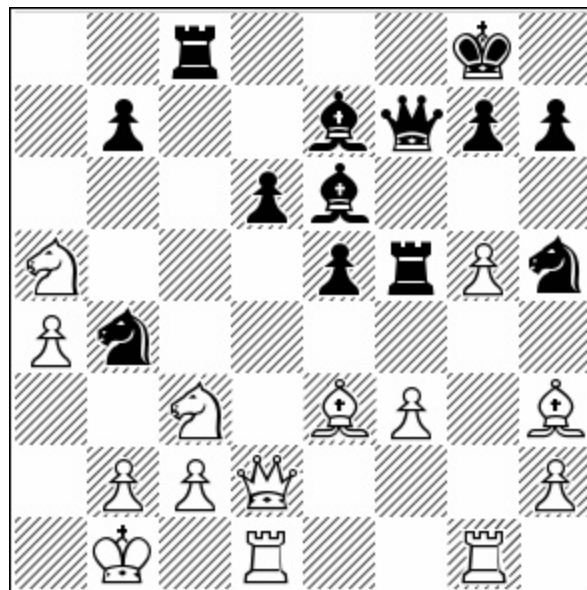
17.Nxa5 Rxc3 18.Qxc3 Qxa4 19.Nb3 Rc8 is a non-starter, but Nunn would have been better off keeping the tension and centralizing pieces.

### 17...Rxf5!

The light-squared bishop is the quarterback of the power-play, and Black is not going to lose central control by trading it.

### 18.Nxa5 Qf7!

18...Rxc3? 19.Qxc3 Qxa4 20.Nb3 doesn't work because the rook is in an awkward spot.



### 19.Nb3

White could use a bailout plan here. The best shot was 19.Nxb7 d5 20.Bxf5 Qxf5 (20...Bxf5 21.Nxd5 Bxc2+ 22.Ka1 Bxd1 23.Rxd1 is good for White) 21.Rc1 d4 22.Bxd4 exd4 23.Qxd4. White has safeguarded his king and grabbed a bunch of pawns, which might fight off the more numerous black pieces.

## **19...g6**

Not really necessary; after 19...d5 White will almost certainly have to sacrifice a piece on d4.

## **20.Bxf5?**

This seems awfully optimistic; perhaps Nunn could find no reasonable alternative.

## **20...Bxf5 21.Ne4**

No groveling here as after 21.Na1, 21...Rxc3 22.Qxc3 Qa2+ 23.Kc1 Qxa1+ 24.Kd2 Qxa4 crushes.

## **21...Nxc2**

With a couple of bishops, mobile centre and pieces on the most threatening of squares Black has more than adequate compensation for his material investment and has whipped up a ferocious initiative.

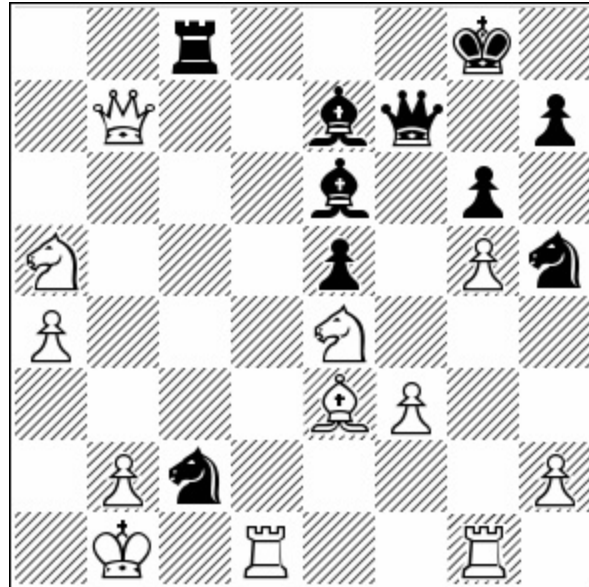
## **22.Na5 d5**

This is the first, but not the last time Black passes up a straightforward win. 22...Nxe3 23.Qxe3 d5 shouldn't have run into too many problems, e.g. 24.Rgf1 Ra8 25.Nxb7 dxe4 26.fxe4 Rxa4 27.exf5 Qa2+ 28.Kc2 Rc4+ and destruction ensues.

## **23.Qxd5 Be6**

Black should have won easily after 23...Nxe3 24.Qxf7+ Kxf7 25.Rc1 Ra8 26.Nxb7 Rxa4 but at least White isn't getting mated in the short term!

## **24.Qxb7**



**24...Ba2+?**

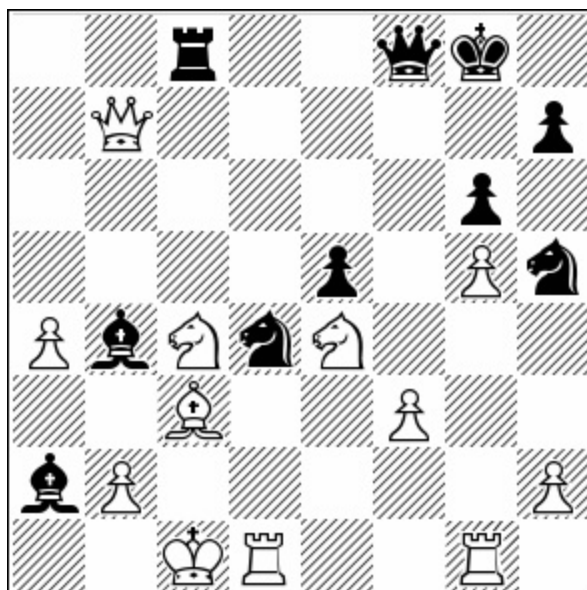
It was tempting to force the king to the middle, but simple chess was called for. 24...Nxe3 25.Rc1 Ba2+ 26.Ka1 Nc2+ 27.Rxc2 Rxc2 puts Black up a piece, and with the bishop pair to boot, Black should win.

**25.Kc1 Qf8 26.Bd2**

This was a great moment to give a little material to eliminate Black's initiative: 26.Nc3! Nxe3 27.Nc6 Rxc6 28.Qxc6 Nxd1 29.Nxa2 Qf4+ 30.Kxd1 Qd4+ 31.Kc2 Qxg1 32.Qe8+ Bf8 33.Qe6+ Kh8 34.Qxe5+ led to equality.

**26...Nd4+ 27.Bc3 Nf4**

27...Bb4 looks like such a killer, but White stays alive with the amazing interference motif, 28.Nc4!!



*analysis diagram*

28...Rxc4 29.Qd5+ Qf7 30.Qxe5 Ne2+ 31.Kc2 Bb3+! 32.Kb1 Nxc3+ 33.bxc3 (33.Nxc3 Rc8!? allows Black to keep the initiative) 33...Bxd1 34.Rxd1 Bf8 35.a5 and White has compensation for the piece.

### **28.Nf6+?**

It makes sense for White to set up a queen trade, but this could have given back too much material.

28.Rge1 was acceptable, with a whole lot of forced moves: 28...Nfe2+ (28...Bd5 29.Qa6! keeps a rough balance) 29.Rxe2 Nxe2+ 30.Kc2 Nd4+ 31.Rxd4 exd4 32.Nc6 Rxc6 33.Qxc6 dxc3 34.b3!! and Black will have to return the piece: 34...Qb8! 35.Qe6+ Kf8 36.Nf6 Qxh2+ 37.Kxc3 Qc7+ 38.Kb2 Qh2 39.Ka1 Bxb3=.

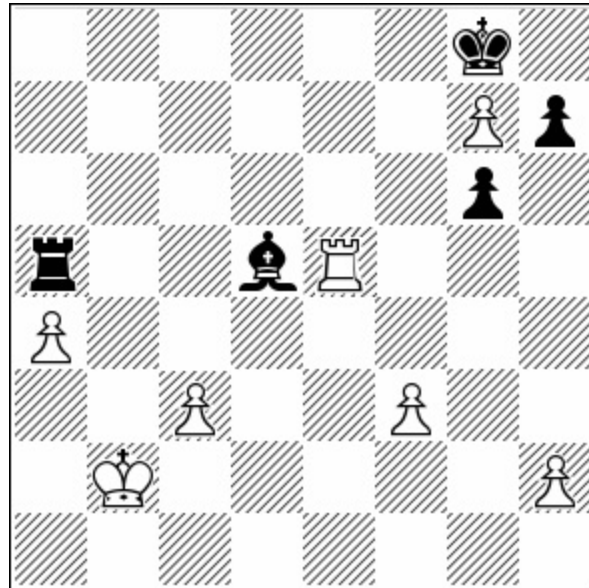
### **28...Bxf6 29.gxf6 Bd5?**

The wrong set-up for the knight fork. 29...Rb8! 30.Qe7 Nfe2+ 31.Kd2 Nxg1 grabs a whole rook instead of just the exchange.

### **30.Qg7+ Qxg7 31.fxg7 Nfe2+ 32.Kb1**

Away from the knight forks!

**32...Nxg1 33.Rxg1 Ne2 34.Re1 Nxc3+ 35.bxc3 Rc5 36.Kb2! Rxa5 37.Rxe5**



Black succeeded in trapping the knight, but can't hold his extra piece.

**37...Kxg7?**

There was no need to concede any advantage to White. 37...Rc5 was far better when after 38.c4 (38.a5 Rb5+ 39.Ka3 Bc4 40.Rxb5 Bxb5 would win for Black; the bishop holds the pawns on the long diagonal, while the king approaches) 38...Rxc4 39.Rxd5 Rxa4 and Black certainly won't lose.

**38.Ka3! Kf6 39.f4 Rc5 40.c4 Rxc4 41.Rxd5 Rxf4 42.a5**

White maintains some practical winning chances.

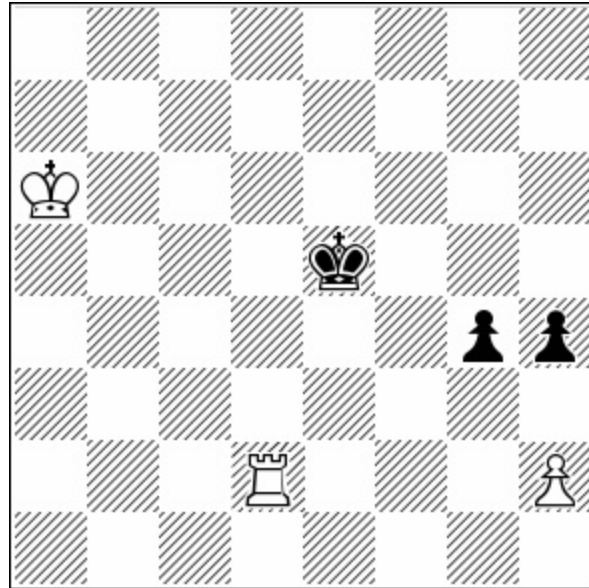
**42...Ke6 43.Rd2 Ke5 44.Rd7 Rh4 45.Rd2**

45.a6 Rh3+ 46.Ka4 Rxh2 47.Rd3 Rf2 48.a7 Rf8 49.Kb5 g5=.

**45...Rf4 46.Kb3 Rf8 47.Kc4 Ra8 48.Kb5 h5 49.a6 g5 50.Kb6 g4 51.Kb7 Rxa6?**

Every tempo counts. There's no reason not to preserve the rook for a few more beats with 51...Rg8.

### 52.Kxa6 h4



### 53.Kb5?

It's natural to bring the king back as quickly as possible, but the key to the position is to prevent the king from reaching f3.

53.Rd3! does the trick (53.Ra2 Kf4 54.Ra3! has the same effect). Then 53...Kf4 54.Kb5 g3 55.Rd4+! Kf3 (55...Kf5 56.h3!) 56.Rxh4 g2 57.Rh3+! Kf2 58.Rg3 and wins.

### 53...Ke4! 54.Kc4 Kf3 55.Rd4 h3!

This finesse clinches the draw.

### 56.Rd3+ Kg2 57.Rd2+

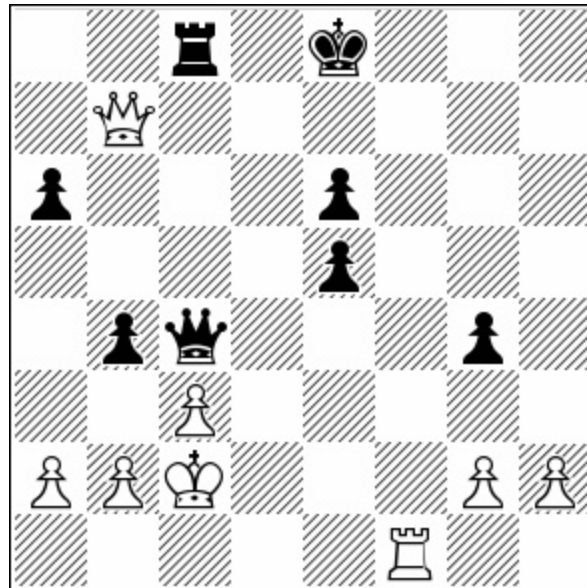
Or 57.Rg3+ Kxh2 58.Rxg4 Kh1 59.Kd3 h2=.

### 57...Kf3 58.Kd4 g3 59.Rd3+ Kg2 60.hxg3 h2 61.Rd1 Kxg3 62.Ke3 Kg2

**63.Rd2+ Kg3 64.Rxh2 Kxh2 ½-½**

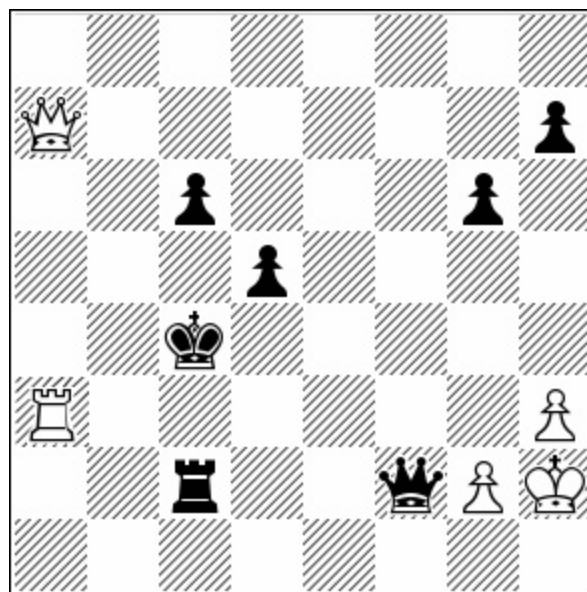
# Trying Too Hard to Win – Puzzles

49 (go to the solution)



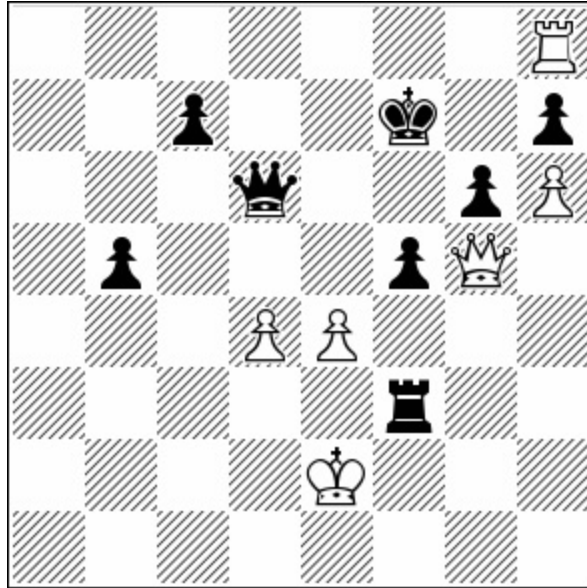
*Black to play wins  
Ivanchuk-Topalov*

50 (go to the solution)



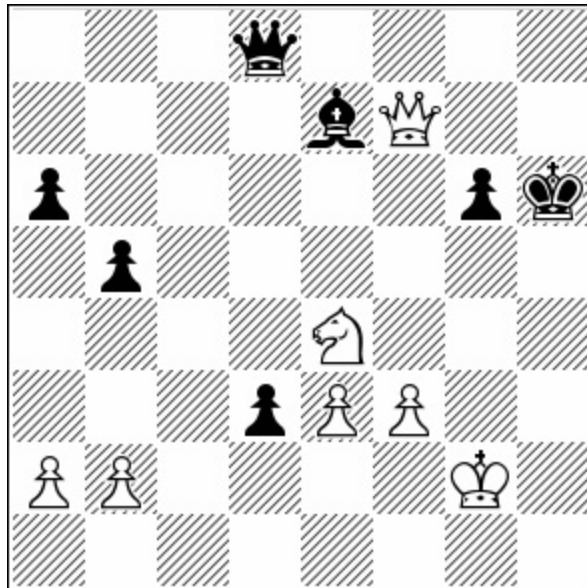
*White to play wins*  
*Sjugirov-Naiditsch*

**51 (go to the solution)**



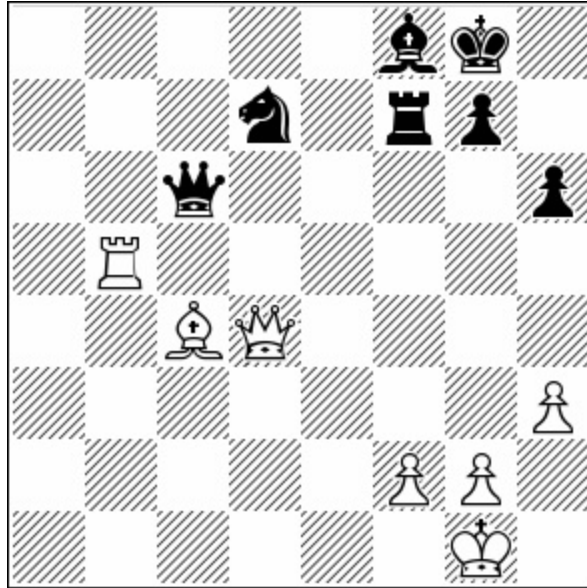
*Black to play wins*  
*Navara-Durarbayli*

**52 (go to the solution)**



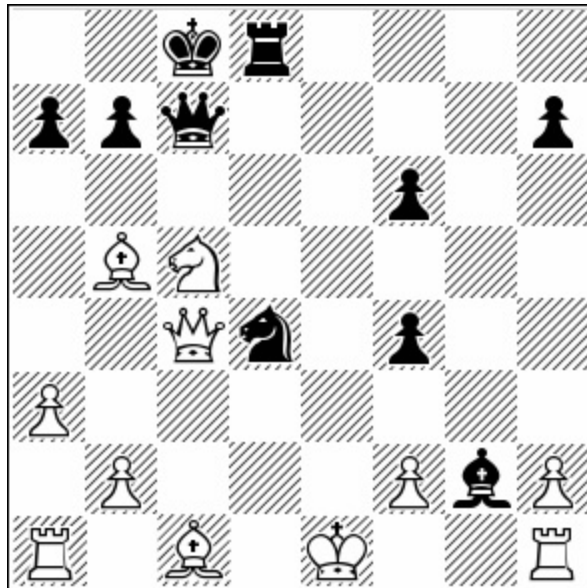
*White to play wins*  
*Naiditsch-Mikhalevski*

**53 (go to the solution)**



*Black to play wins*  
*Karjakin-Svidler*

**54 (go to the solution)**



*Black to play wins  
Svidler-Vitiugov*

## **Chapter 5**

### **Trying Too Hard to Win**

Normally it is a good thing to try as hard as you can to win a chess game. Players like Magnus Carlsen and Hikaru Nakamura have scored seemingly impossible wins out of perseverance. But there are some times when the smart move is to accept a middling result, as half a loaf is certainly better than none.

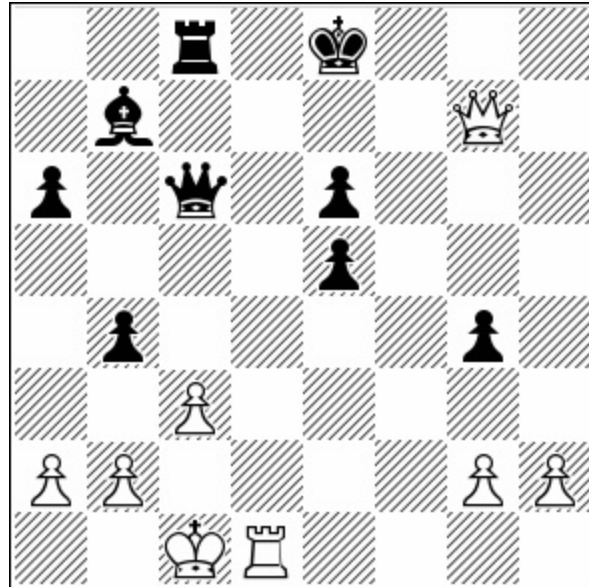
#### **Any Time at All**

Having a draw in hand can give us a false sense of security. When you think ‘I can always take a draw’ sometimes the draw evaporates after an indelicate move.

Game 91 – Sicilian Defense  
**Vassily Ivanchuk** 2746  
**Veselin Topalov** 2812  
Sofia 2009

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Bg5 e6 7.f4 Be7 8.Qf3 Qc7 9.0-0-0 Nbd7 10.Bd3 h6 11.Qh3 Nc5 12.Rhe1 Rg8 13.Bh4 g5 14.e5 dxe5 15.fxg5 hxg5 16.Bg3 Ncd7 17.Nxe6 Qb6 18.Bc4 g4 19.Qh6 fxe6 20.Bh4 Bf8 21.Qd2 Qc6 22.Bd3 b5 23.Ne4 Nd5 24.Rf1 Bb7 25.Rxf8+ Nxf8 26.Qh6 Rg6 27.Nf6+ Rxf6 28.Bxf6 Nxf6 29.Bg6+ Nxg6 30.Qxg6+ Ke7 31.Qg7+ Ke8 32.Qxf6 Rc8 33.c3 b4 34.Qg6+ Ke7 35.Qg7+ Ke8**

It has been a rollicking seesaw game so far, with both sides missing opportunities in the complications.



### 36.Rf1

White isn't yet in any danger after refusing the perpetual check that was available after 36.Qg8+. But he is putting rather more pressure on himself than his opponent to find the correct continuation.

### 36...Qc5 37.Qxb7??

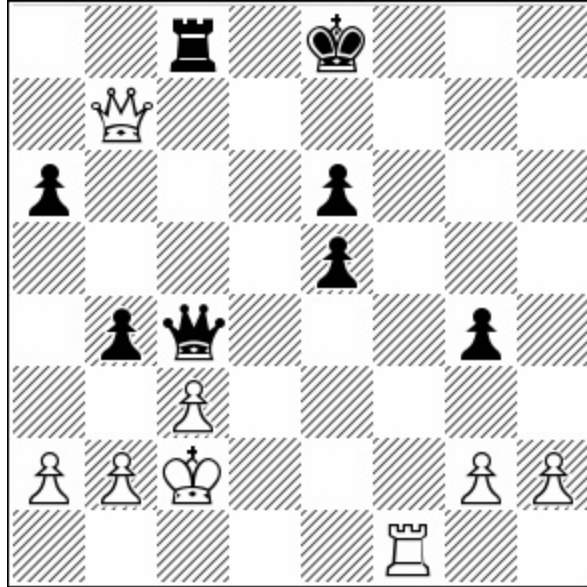
Ivanchuk had to start with 37.Qf7+ Kd8 with two options from there: 38.Qxb7 Qe3+ 39.Kd1 Qd3+ 40.Ke1 Qe3+ and Black gives the perpetual this time, or 38.Rd1+ Bd5 39.Qxe6 Qe3+ 40.Kb1 Qe4+ 41.Ka1 Kc7 42.Qxd5 Qxd5 43.Rxd5 Rf8 and White has zero winning chances in the rook ending. It's hard to see what he saw in the text move, as Black would still have perpetual check if he didn't have a win.

### 37...Qe3+ 38.Kc2

The white king can't go to d1 because the d-file is open for Black's rook.

### 38...Qe2+ 39.Kb3 Qc4+ 40.Kc2

If 40.Ka4, then 40...Qxa2+ 41.Kxb4 Rc4#.



(back to the exercises) ***Solution to Puzzle 49:***

**40...b3+! 41.Kd2**

41.axb3 Qe2+ drops the rook with check. So White has to let the pawn live, but now it decides the game.

**41...Rd8+ 42.Ke1 Rd1+ 43.Kxd1 Qxf1+ 44.Kd2 Qf4+ 45.Kd1 bxa2**

With a murderous passed pawn, Topalov finished with style.

**46.Qc8+ Kf7 47.Qd7+ Kf6 48.Qd8+ Kf5 49.Qf8+ Ke4 50.Qa8+ Kd3  
51.Qxa6+ Qc4 52.Qa7 g3 53.h3 Qb3+ 54.Ke1 Kc2**

And **White resigned.**

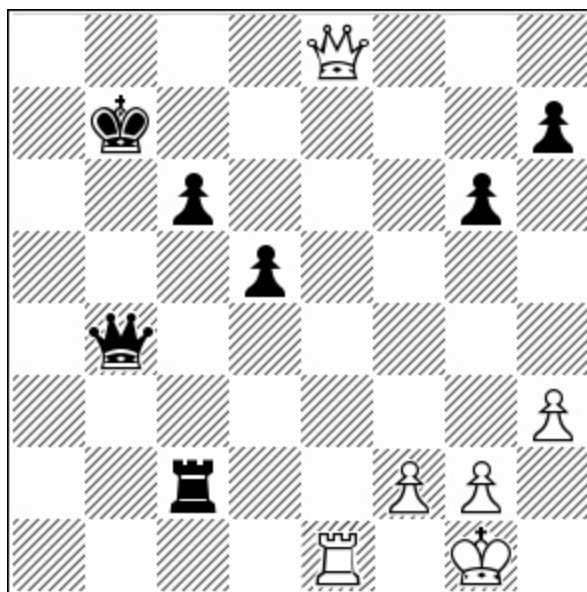
### **Don't Stop Me Now**

We have seen how king hunts can make both players excited. The hunter loses control and narrowly escapes defeat, but the hunted presses on when his king has become too insecure to continue the fight.

Game 92 – Ruy Lopez  
**Sanan Sjugirov** 2610  
**Arkadij Naiditsch** 2687

Moscow 2010

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 Nf6 4.0-0 Nxe4 5.d4 Nd6 6.dxe5 Nxb5 7.a4 Nbd4  
8.Nxd4 Nxd4 9.Qxd4 d5 10.Qd3 c6 11.a5 g6 12.Be3 Be6 13.Nd2 Bg7  
14.Bc5 Bxe5 15.Rfe1 b6 16.axb6 axb6 17.Rxa8 Qxa8 18.Bxb6 Bxb2  
19.Bc5 Qa5 20.Qb3 Qxc5 21.Qb8+ Ke7 22.Qb7+ Kd6 23.Qxb2 Ra8  
24.Qe5+ Kd7 25.Ne4 Qb4 26.Ng5 Ra2 27.Nxe6 fxe6 28.Qxe6+ Kc7  
29.Qe5+ Kb7 30.h3 Rxc2 31.Qe8



White's threats look murderous, but the black king is not easy to catch.

31...Kb6 32.Qb8+ Kc5 33.Qa7+ Kc4 34.Ra1 Kb3 35.Ra6?

Sjugirov has been pressing all game and won't stop now. 35.Rb1+ Rb2  
36.Rc1 keeps the chances equal.

35...Qe1+ 36.Kh2 Qe5+!

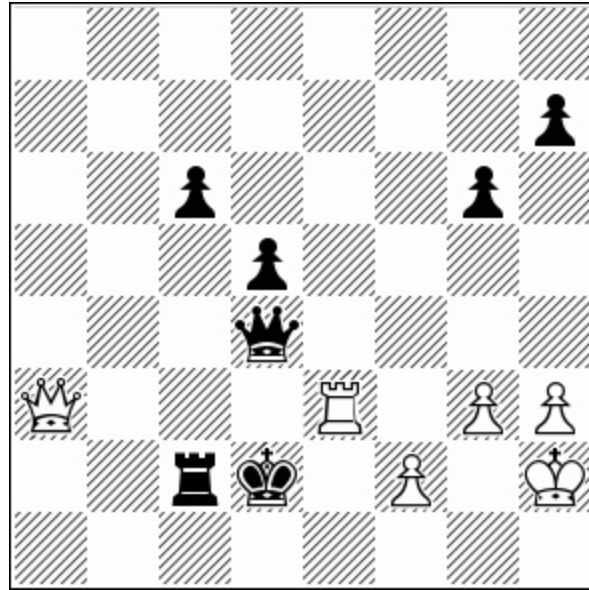
36...Qxf2 loses coordination, but the refutation is startling: 37.Ra3+ Kc4  
(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 50:*

38.Qa4+ Kc5 39.Rc3+!! Rxc3 40.Qa7+, winning the queen.

**37.g3 Kb2 38.Rb6+ Kc1 39.Qa3+ Kd2 40.Rb3 Qd4**

40...d4 was the best move to press Black's advantage.

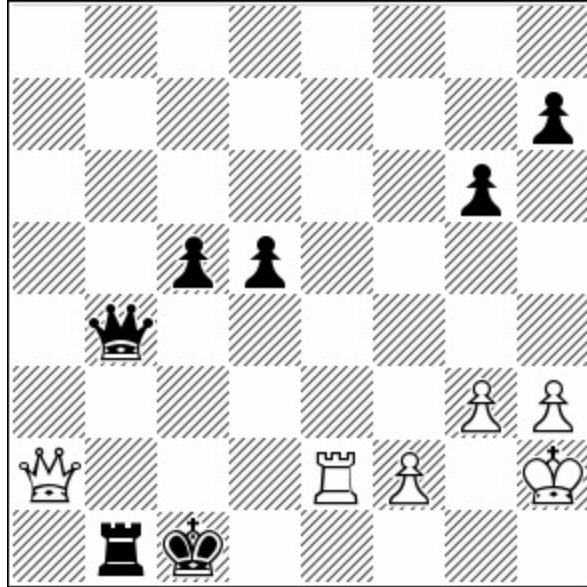
**41.Re3**



**41...c5?**

Black will not have winning chances after this mistake. 41...Qc4! covers many key squares while preparing to advance the d-pawn. 42.Qa5+ Rc3 gets nowhere; Naiditsch might have not liked 42.Qa1 but after 42...Rc1 43.Qb2+ Kd1 Black's king is surprisingly snug on White's back rank, and 44.Qf6 d4 45.Qf3+ Kd2 46.Re5 c5 leaves Black marching onward.

**42.Qa5+ Kc1 43.Qa3+ Rb2 44.Re2 Qb4 45.Qa1+ Rb1 46.Qa2**



Sjugirov, after seeing the position nearly slip away, is ready to make peace after 46...Rb2, but now Naiditsch is the stubborn one, failing to accept that his advantage has disappeared.

**46...Qc3?? 47.Qxd5 Rb2**

This move would have given Black a real advantage if not for...

**48.Qh1+**

And **Black resigned** in the face of forced mate.

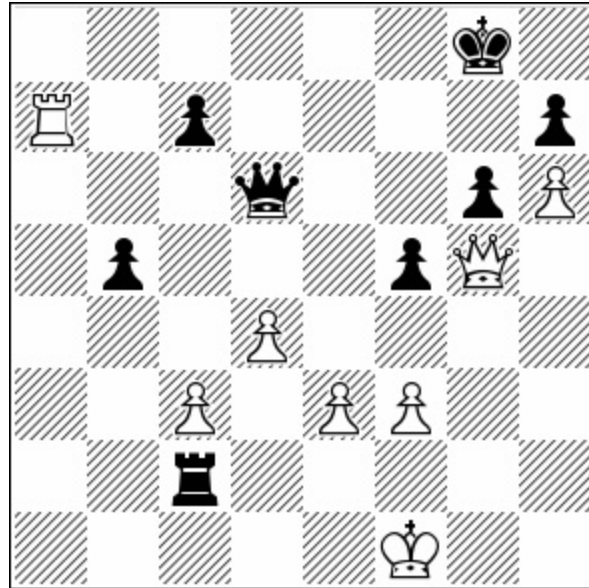
### **Perpetual Change**

When you eliminate your opponent's perpetual check threat, be careful you don't sign your king up for more trouble!

Game 93 – Ruy Lopez  
**David Navara** 2722  
**Vasif Durarbayli** 2614  
 Bilbao tt 2014

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 g6 4.c3 a6 5.Ba4 Nge7 6.d4 exd4 7.cxd4 b5 8.Bc2 d5 9.exd5 Nxd5 10.0-0 Be6 11.Nc3 Bg7 12.Bg5 Nxc3 13.bxc3 Qd7 14.Be4**

f5 15.Bc2 Na5 16.Re1 0-0 17.a4 Nc4 18.h4 Rae8 19.axb5 axb5 20.h5 Bd5  
 21.Ra7 Qd6 22.h6 Bf6 23.Qc1 Bxf3 24.Rxe8 Rxe8 25.gxf3 Bxg5 26.Qxg5  
 Re1+ 27.Kg2 Ne3+ 28.fxe3 Re2+ 29.Kf1 Rxc2



Both kings are in a vulnerable position, but White should be content that Black can force a draw after 30.Ra8+ Kf7 31.Rh8 Rc1+ 32.Kg2 (32.Ke2? Qh2+) 32...Rc2+ 33.Kf1, etc.

**30.e4?**

This prevents the perpetual but exposes White's king too much.

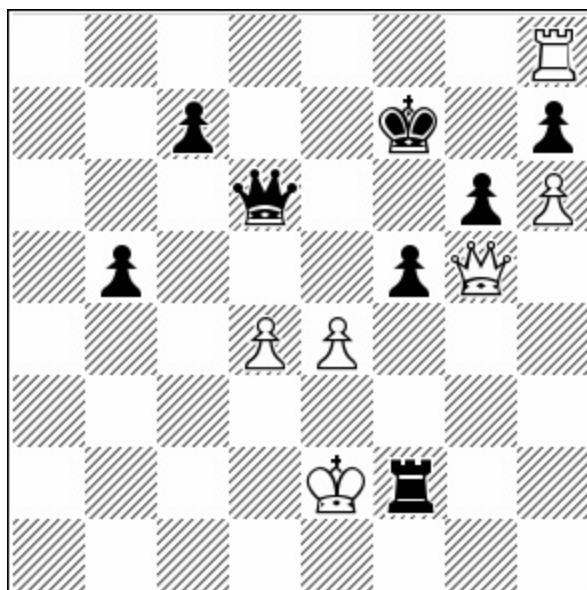
**30...Rxc3 31.Ra8+ Kf7 32.Rh8**

If 32.Rd8, 32...Rxf3+ 33.Kg2 (33.Ke2 Qa3 34.Rd7+ Ke6--+) 33...Rg3+!  
 34.Qxg3 Qxd8 wins elegantly, but even 32...Qe7 would have been more than adequate to win.

**32...Rxf3+ 33.Ke2**

(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 51:*

**33...Rf2+!**



Black is fine with other moves, but the text leads to a forced win.

**34.Ke3**

34.Kxf2 Qxd4+ snares the rook.

**34...Ra2 35.Rxh7+ Kg8 36.Rxc7**

Desperation, as Black's mating threats are lethal. There is no need to calculate 36...Qxc7 here.

**36...Ra3+ 37.Ke2 Qh2+ 38.Ke1 Ra1+ 39.Rc1 Rxc1+ 40.Qxc1 Qh1+ 41.Kd2 Qxh6+**

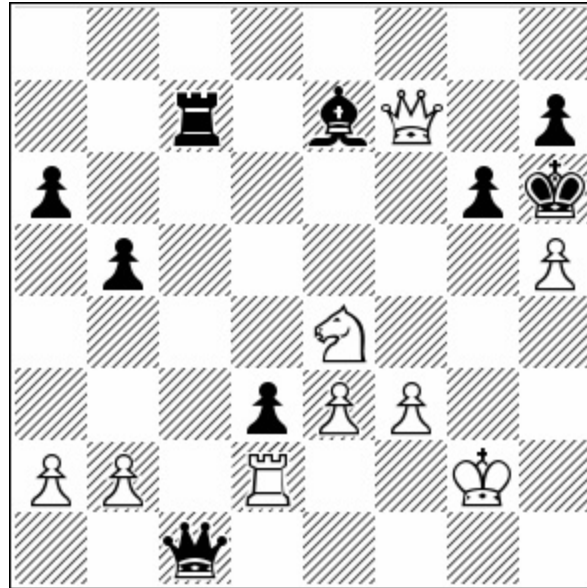
Liquidation into the pawn endgame! **White resigned.**

### **Black Pawns Don't Move Faster**

When your passed pawn is tantalizingly close to queening, a split-second decision might neglect the real danger to your king.

Game 94 – Ruy Lopez  
**Arkadij Naiditsch** 2638  
**Viktor Mikhalevski** 2632  
 Heviz 2008

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Nxe4 6.d4 b5 7.Bb3 d5 8.dxe5  
 Be6 9.Nbd2 Nc5 10.c3 d4 11.Bxe6 Nxe6 12.cxd4 Ncxd4 13.Ne4 Be7  
 14.Be3 Nf5 15.Qc2 0-0 16.Rfd1 Nxe3 17.fxe3 Qc8 18.Rac1 c5 19.Nd6 Qc6  
 20.Rd2 Ra7 21.Rcd1 c4 22.h4 Rc7 23.Rd5 g6 24.h5 Nc5 25.R1d4 Ne6  
 26.Rd1 Nc5 27.e6 Nd3 28.exf7+ Rxf7 29.R5xd3 Rxf3 30.gxf3 cxd3  
 31.Qb3+ Kg7 32.Qf7+ Kh6 33.Ne4 Qc2 34.Rd2 Qc1+ 35.Kg2



### 35...Rc2?

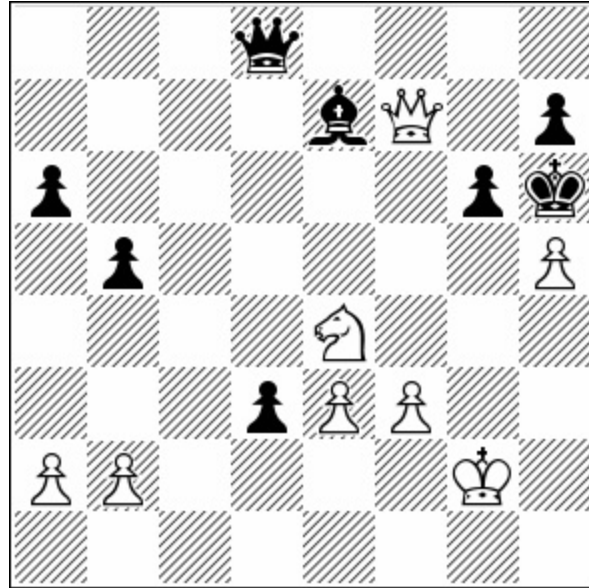
This direct move is natural, especially in possible time pressure, but it leaves Black's king too vulnerable. Better to be responsible in his own zone with 35...Bg5 (35...Rc4 is also playable) 36.Qf8+ Rg7 37.Rxd3 Bxe3 38.Rd7 Qg1+ 39.Kh3 Qh1+ and perpetual check.

### 36.Rxc2?

It would be a gutsy call in a time scramble, but White comes out on top after 36.Qxe7 Rxd2+ 37.Kg3!. One cool point is that after 37...Qg1+ 38.Kf4 Qh2+ 39.Ng3 White not only stops the check but forces Black to concede his queen to stop mate: 37...Qxb2 38.Qf8+ Kxh5 39.Nf6+ Kg5 40.Nxh7+ Kh5 41.Kf4!! g5+ (otherwise White will win the queen with 42.Nf6+) 42.Nxg5 Qxa2 43.Qg7 Qc4+ 44.Ne4 and again mate can only be averted by sacking the

queen.

**36...Qxc2+ 37.Kh3 Qc8+ 38.Kg2 Qc2+ 39.Kh3 Qc8+ 40.Kg2 Qd8??**



We all appreciate Mikhalevski's fighting spirit, but this winning attempt is a tragic blunder. Beware of over-optimistic 40th moves!

**41.hxg6 hxg6**

(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 52:*

**42.Nf2!!**

White will crash through before the d-pawn makes a difference.

**42...d2 43.Ng4+ Kh5**

43...Kg5 44.Qf4+ Kh5 45.Qh6#.

**44.Ne5 Qb6**

Or 44...Qd6 45.Qh7+ Kg5 46.Nf7+ Kf6 47.Nxd6 d1=Q 48.Qf7++-.

**45.Qh7+ Kg5 46.Qxe7+ Kf5 47.Ng4**

Checkmate is forced, so **Black resigned**.

### Pretty Poison

Cosmetic advantages can dull our sensibilities. We may understand when we probably won't win, but how can we lose a pretty position?

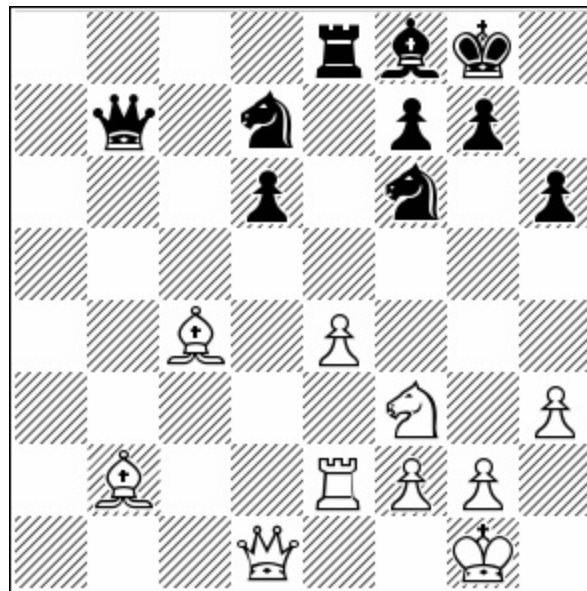
Game 95 – Ruy Lopez

Sergey Karjakin

Peter Svidler

Baku 2015

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 0-0 8.c3  
d6 9.h3 Nb8 10.d4 Nbd7 11.Nbd2 Bb7 12.Bc2 Re8 13.a4 Bf8 14.Bd3 c6  
15.Qc2 Rc8 16.axb5 axb5 17.b4 c5 18.bxc5 exd4 19.c6 dxc3 20.cxb7 cxd2  
21.Qxd2 Rb8 22.Bxb5 Qb6 23.Rb1 Qxb7 24.Bd3 Qa8 25.Rxb8 Rxb8  
26.Bb2 Qa2 27.Re2 h6 28.Qc1 Qb3 29.Bc4 Qb7 30.Qd1 Re8



White's position certainly looks nicer. He has the bishop pair and a sounder pawn structure.

**31.Bxf6**

White gives up the two bishops, which mean less when all the action is

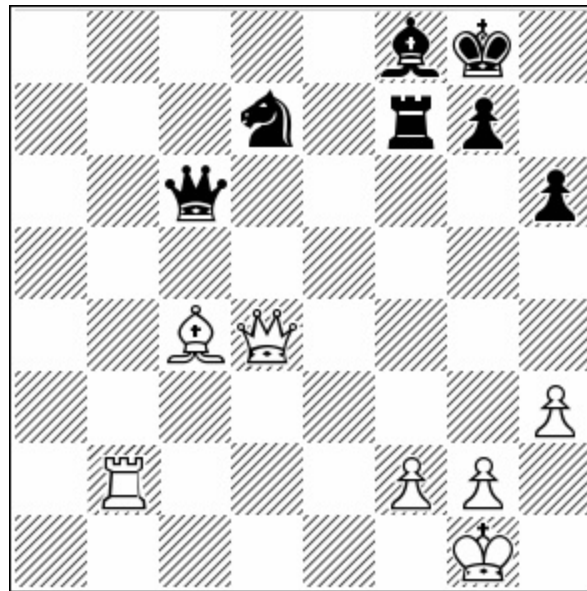
confined to one side of the board. After 31.e5 dxe5 32.Nxe5 Nxe5 33.Bxe5, White has no way to create threats.

**31...Nxf6 32.e5 dxe5 33.Nxe5 Re7 34.Qd4**

This doesn't create much pressure. 34.Qd8 Qc7 35.Qd4 (35.Nxf7 Qxc4 36.Rxe7 Qc1+=) at least provided the trap 35...Nd7?? 36.Bxf7+ Rxf7 37.Nxf7 Kxf7 38.Qd5+ with a decisive mating attack.

**34...Nd7 35.Nxf7 Rxf7 36.Rb2 Qc6**

Svidler doesn't offer any cause for optimism. 36...Qc7 37.Bxf7+ Kxf7 38.Qd5+ Kg6 may have been playable but looks less trustworthy.

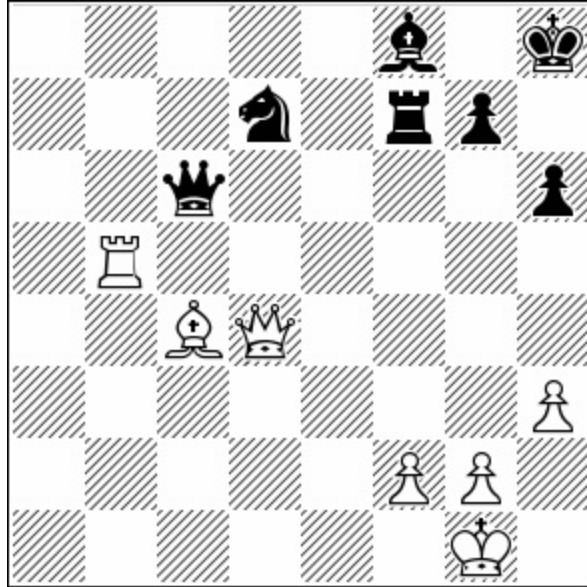


White didn't really risk anything with his sacrifice on f7, as he can 'always' take on f7, producing a dead drawn endgame. This is a good moment to acknowledge that truth with a move like 37.Qd5. Black's pieces are so purposed for defense that Karjakin can't imagine any danger.

**37.Rb5??**

(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 53:*

**37...Kh8**



Suddenly the rook is no longer there for the taking, and White is legitimately down a piece. The mistake is quickly compounded.

**38.Rd5? Nb6 0-1**

From equal to **resignation** in two moves, all self-inflicted.

### **Not Hard Enough?**

We conclude with a crazy game where the opportunity to take the safe route with perpetual check obscured a gorgeous checkmating sequence.

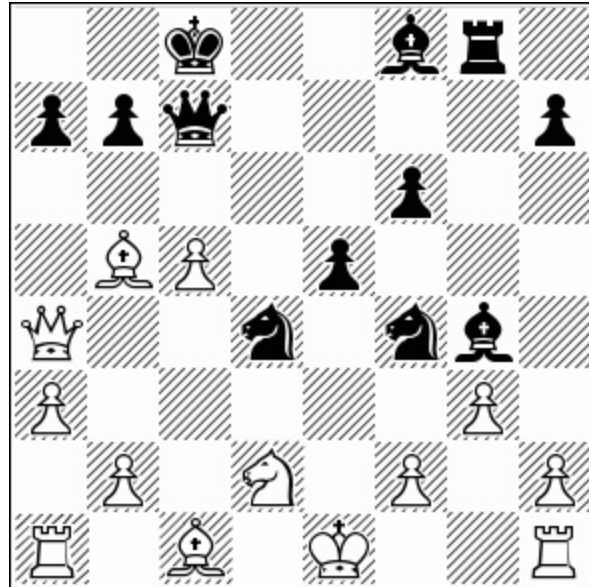
Game 96 – French Defense

**Peter Svidler** 2749

**Nikita Vitiugov** 2705

Moscow ch-RUS 2012

**1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 Qb6 5.Nf3 Nc6 6.a3 Nge7 7.dxc5 Qc7 8.Bb5 Bd7 9.Qe2 f6 10.exf6 gxf6 11.Nbd2 0-0-0 12.c4 Rg8 13.g3 e5 14.cxd5 Nxd5 15.Nb3 Bg4 16.Qc2 Nf4 17.Nbd2 Rxd2 18.Nxd2 Nd4 19.Qa4**

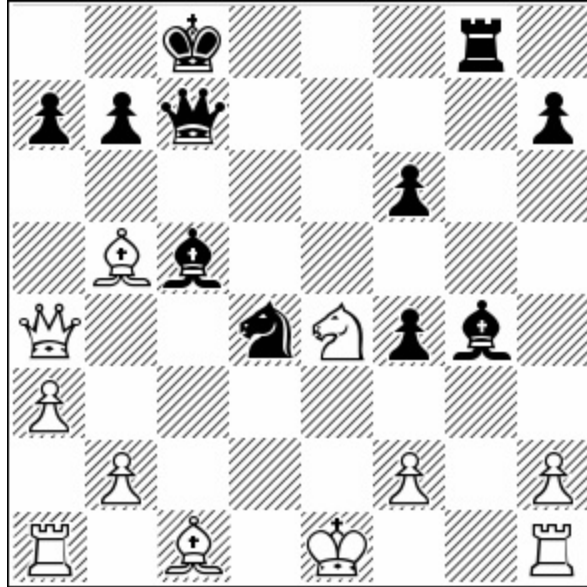


Svidler has taken huge risks and justifiably stands on the precipice of defeat.

### **19...Bxc5?!**

This doesn't throw away the win, but the additional sacrifice complicates the task. Instead 19...Ng2+ 20.Kf1 Bh3 should have won without drama. The potential discovered checks limit White's options, yet avoidance with 21.Kg1 Nf4 leads to immediate death, and in fine style, after 22.Qd1 Qc6! 23.Bxc6 Nde2+ 24.Qxe2 Nxe2#.

### **20.gxf4 exf4 21.Ne4**



White tries to block the center as best he can.

**21...Nf3+**

Forcing moves like checks suggest themselves as obvious candidates; it might have been welcome to put some time on Vitiugov's clock if he was running low. But he had a quiet killer in 21...Rd8, tightening the net on the white king. The more direct 21...Qe7 22.Bd3 f5 was also good enough.

**22.Kf1 Bh3+ 23.Ke2 Nd4+ 24.Ke1**

We are back to the same position, but with the bishop on h3 instead of g4.

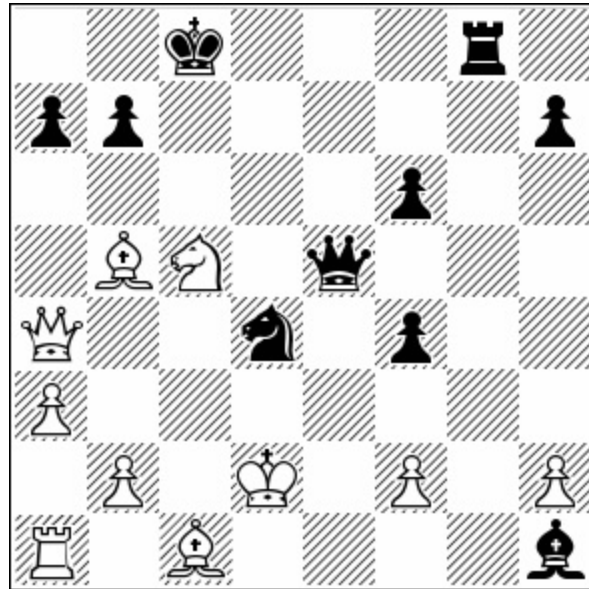
**24...Bg2?**

Now Black had a win by giving even more material – 24...Qe7 25.Bd3 Bf5 26.Qc4 Bxe4!! 27.Qxg8+ Kd7. It isn't surprising White can't defend here, but it wasn't an easy continuation to find/choose.

**25.Qc4?**

This looks like a natural tempo winner, but it gives Black a move to herd in the white king.

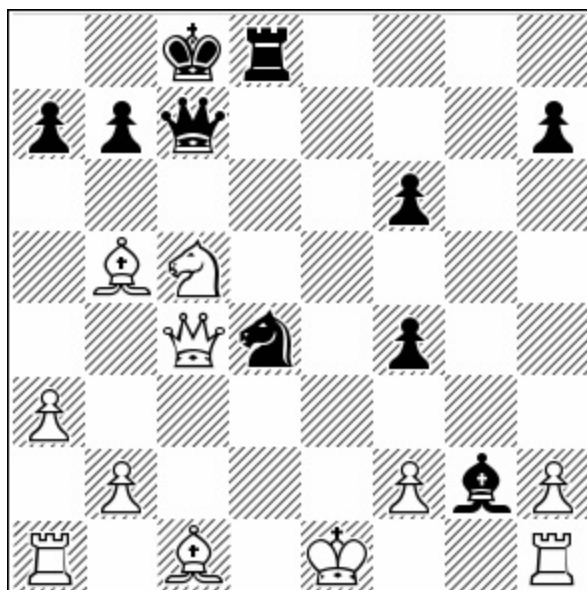
25.Nxc5 had to be played. 25...Qe5+ 26.Kd2 Bxh1 is a complete mess, though it has to be said that from here that's a victory for White.



*analysis diagram*

One crazy line is 27.Qxa7 Nf3+ 28.Kc2 Nd4+ 29.Kd3!? (29.Kb1? is met by 29...Nxb5, but 29.Kd2 can be played) 29...Be4+! 30.Nxe4 Qxb5+ 31.Kxd4 Rd8+ 32.Kc3 Qd3+ 33.Kb4 Qxe4+ 34.Kb3 and Black has a perpetual check, but no more.

**25...Rd8 26.Nxc5**



(back to the exercises) ***Solution to Puzzle 54:***

**26...Nf3+?**

Vitiugov must have been shocked to find that 26...Qe5+ 27.Kd2 leaves him without an effective check; in fact the best move there is 27...Bd5, leading to equality. The natural, centralizing check may have distracted him from the less intuitive but utterly convincing 26...Qa5+! 27.b4 (27.Bd2 Nf3+) 27...Qxb5!! 28.Qxb5 Nc2+ 29.Ke2 f3#.

**27.Ke2 Nd4+ 28.Ke1**

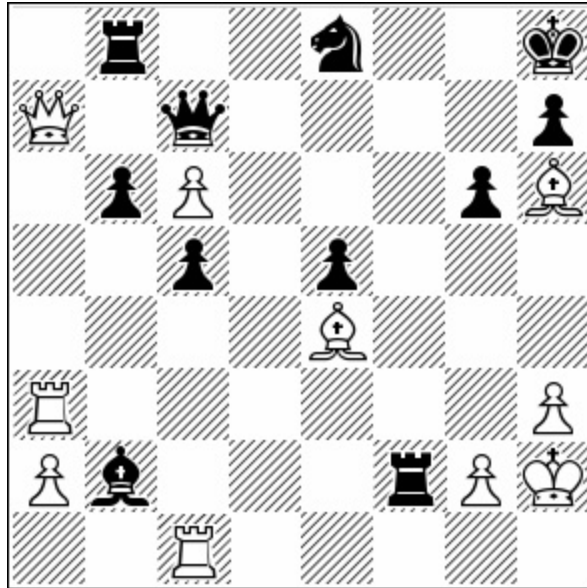
With awareness of Black's missed opportunity, White should avoid repeating with 28.Kd1, which keeps a completely murky position going. Svidler understandably permits Vitiugov the off-ramp.

**28...Nf3+ 29.Ke2 Nd4+ 30.Ke1 ½-½**

Half a loaf is better than none. But without the perpetual option, might Vitiugov have had a better chance of finding the win?

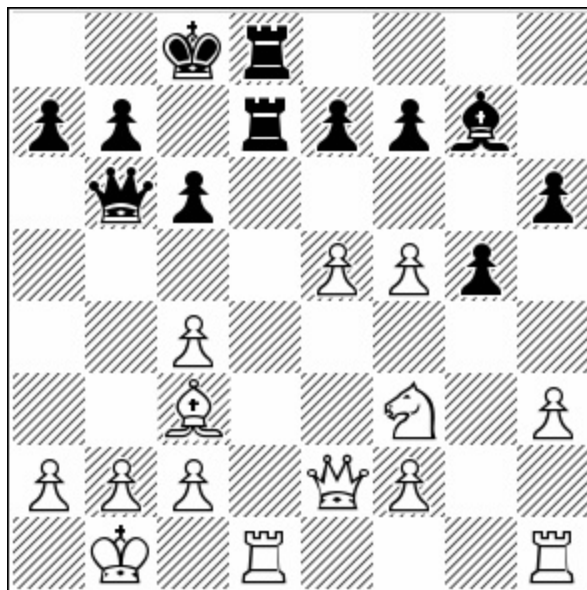
# Back Rank Tactics – Puzzles

55 (go to the solution)



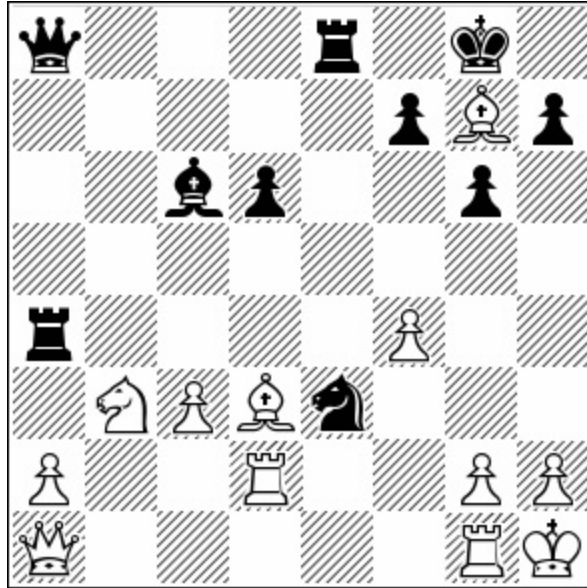
*White to play wins  
Onischuk-Eljanov*

56 (go to the solution)



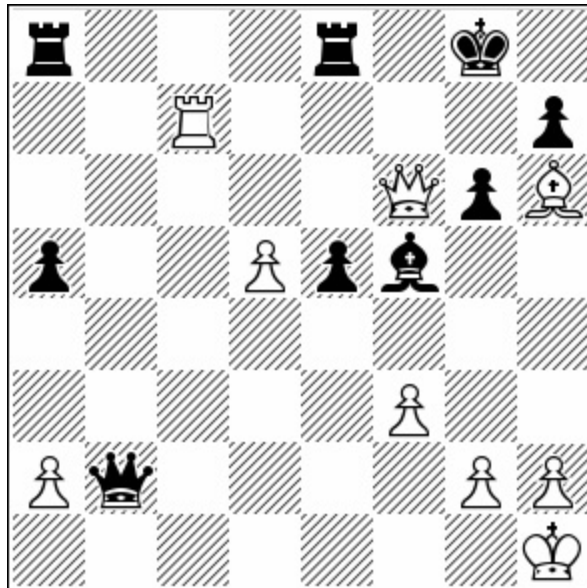
*Black to play wins*  
*Bologan-Naiditsch*

**57 (go to the solution)**



*Black to play wins*  
*Short-Nepomniachtchi*

**58 (go to the solution)**





*Black to play draws*  
*Carlsen-Anand*

## **Chapter 6**

### **Back Rank Tactics**

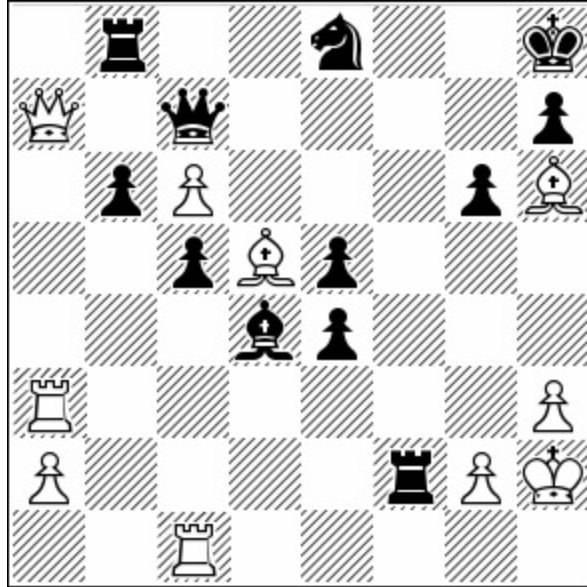
Back rank tactics get a chapter to themselves because they spotlight a concept in attack and defense. The back rank may be the key to a quick combination, or provide an unexpected defense to an opponent's assault.

#### **Kings and Queens**

Always be aware of back rank weaknesses, as the exploitation can pop up out of nowhere. In our first example, the invasion file seems a non-factor just before the combination.

Game 97 – Grünfeld Indian Defense  
**Alexander Onischuk** 2644  
**Pavel Eljanov** 2720  
Dresden ol 2008

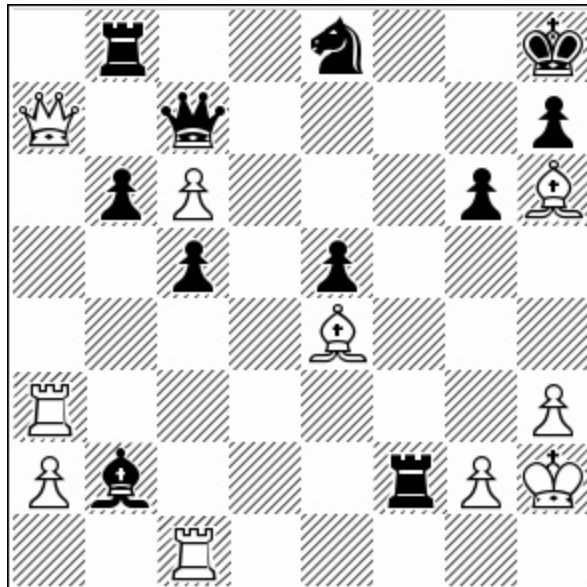
**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.Nf3 Bg7 5.cxd5 Nxd5 6.e4 Nxc3 7.bxc3 c5  
8.Rb1 0-0 9.Be2 b6 10.0-0 Bb7 11.d5 Bxc3 12.Bc4 Bg7 13.Qe2 Nd7 14.Bf4  
Nf6 15.Rfd1 Qd7 16.Ne5 Qc8 17.h3 Ne8 18.Nc6 Bxc6 19.dxc6 Bd4  
20.Rbc1 e5 21.Bh6 Ng7 22.Bd5 Qc7 23.Rd3 Kh8 24.Rf3 f5 25.Qa6 Rab8  
26.Ra3 fxe4 27.Qxa7 Rxf2 28.Kh2 Ne8**



**29.Bxe4!**

It should be noted that White has another strong move here in 29.Qb7!. Onischuk's move has the obvious practical value of removing an annoying enemy pawn. But there is the subtler benefit of this capture; White gains control of a tactically important square.

**29...Bb2?**



A simple rook skewer is not exactly an ingenious strike, but we can see why

Black was tempted. He can expect an advantage against normal replies, but Onischuk has prepared a startling way of exploiting Black's back rank.

(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 55:*

**30.Rc2! Qxa7**

The kicker is 30...Rxc2 31.Rf3!! and the black knight can't cover the back rank without dropping the queen.

**31.Rxa7 Rxc2 32.Bxc2**

The c6-pawn proved decisive in the next few moves.

**32...e4 33.Bf4 Rc8 34.Bxe4 Nf6 35.Bf3 g5 36.Bxg5 Be5+ 37.g3 c4 38.Re7 Bd4 39.c7 Ng8 40.Re4 Bf6 41.Bf4**

And **Black resigned.**

### **Out of the Blue**

Back rank tactics can befall a seemingly coordinated defensive position in the blink of an eye. But it takes keen vision to see the circumstances unfold.

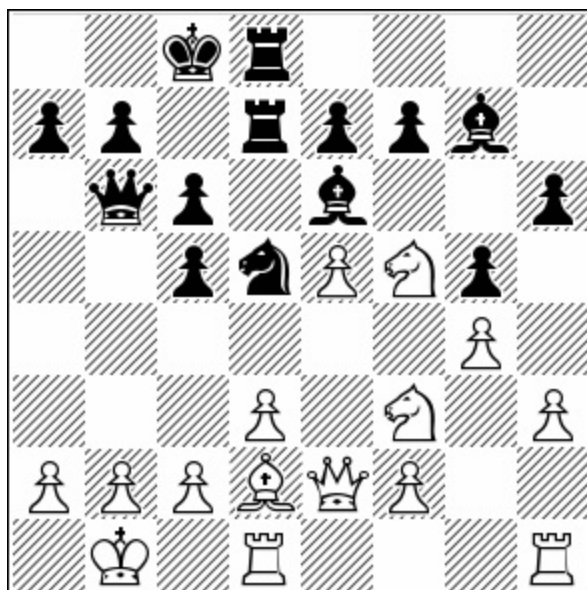
Game 98 – Sicilian Defense

**Viktor Bologan** 2680

**Arkadij Naiditsch** 2702

Chisinau 2012

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 Nf6 4.Bxc6 dxc6 5.d3 Qc7 6.e5 Nd5 7.h3 Bf5 8.Nbd2 g5 9.Ne4 h6 10.Qe2 0-0-0 11.Bd2 Qb6 12.0-0-0 Bg7 13.g4 Be6 14.Kb1 Rd7 15.Ng3 Rhd8 16.Nf5?**



Okay, it's would be a bit of a stretch to call this a strike, but White aims to neutralize or eliminate one of Black's bishops. Naiditsch willingly gives his better bishop (the bishop unopposed by an enemy bishop is generally the more dangerous one) because he has spotted a subtle tactical weakness in White's position. It turns out the knight was serving an important defensive function!

**16...Bxf5 17.gxf5 c4!**

This is the prelude to a remarkable combination. Such tactics are always easier to see for yourself than for your opponent.

The white position looks quite sturdy, and there is no reason to expect to be exploited in this fashion. It takes good vision and creativity to spot such a possibility. Most of us are not born with Naiditsch's talent, but doing tactical drills and becoming familiar with more tactical themes gives everyone a better chance of spotting such sensational ideas.

**18.dxc4**

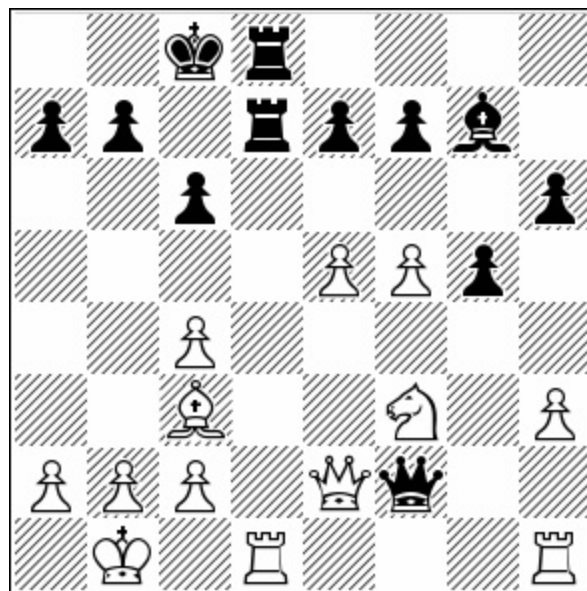
This is technically a blunder, but it is a hard move not to play. White could avoid catastrophe with 18.Ka1 cxd3 19.cxd3 Nb4 when Black has not only dissolved his weakness but created one in White's camp. After 20.Bxb4

Qxb4 21.d4 f6! White's pawns are surprisingly brittle and will start dropping off. The computer recommendation is the not very obvious 18.c3 cxd3 19.Qe4 with a much worse but not lost position.

**18...Nc3+! 19.Bxc3!**

(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 56:*

**19...Qxf2!!**



It's not quite Adams-Torre, the classic exploitation of a back rank weakness, but if you've ever seen that game, you get the idea. The hard part was dreaming of such a scenario when the d-file had three more pieces on it! Especially in a rapid game.

**20.Rxd7**

However you slice it, White has to give his queen for a rook, and the technical part is not too difficult for Black.

**20...Qxe2 21.Rxd8+ Kxd8 22.Nd4 Qh5 23.f6 exf6 24.e6 Bf8 25.Re1 c5 26.e7+ Bxe7 27.Nf5 Bf8 28.Bxf6+ Kd7 29.Ne3 Qxh3 30.Nd5 g4 31.a3 g3 32.Rd1 Bd6 33.Be5 g2 34.Nf4 Qh1**

And **White resigned**.

## Trading Places

Next we see a back rank disaster appear at the bottom of a slippery slope. A careless series of trades meets up with in-between moves setting up a murderous combination.

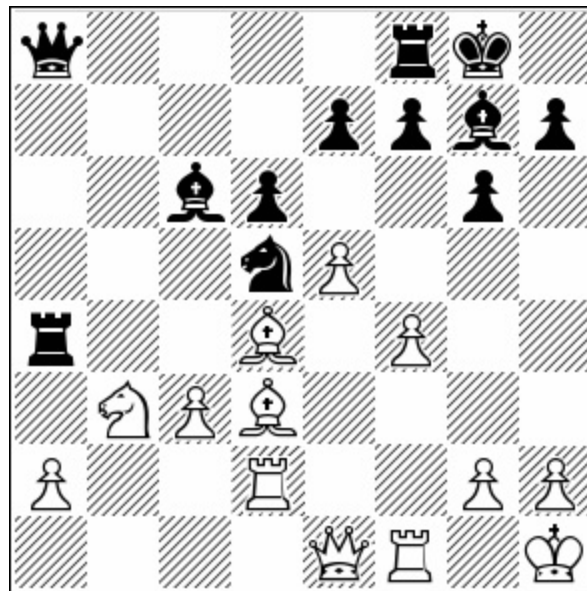
Game 99 – Sicilian Defense

**Nigel Short** 2685

**Ian Nepomniachtchi** 2695

Havana 2010

**1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 d6 3.f4 Nc6 4.Nf3 g6 5.d4 cxd4 6.Nxd4 Bg7 7.Be3 Nf6 8.Be2 Bd7 9.Nb3 Rc8 10.0-0 0-0 11.Qe1 a6 12.Kh1 b5 13.Rd1 Nb4 14.Rd2 Nxc2 15.Rxc2 b4 16.Bxa6 Ra8 17.Bd3 bxc3 18.bxc3 Ra4 19.e5 Nd5 20.Bd4 Bc6 21.Rd2 Qa8**

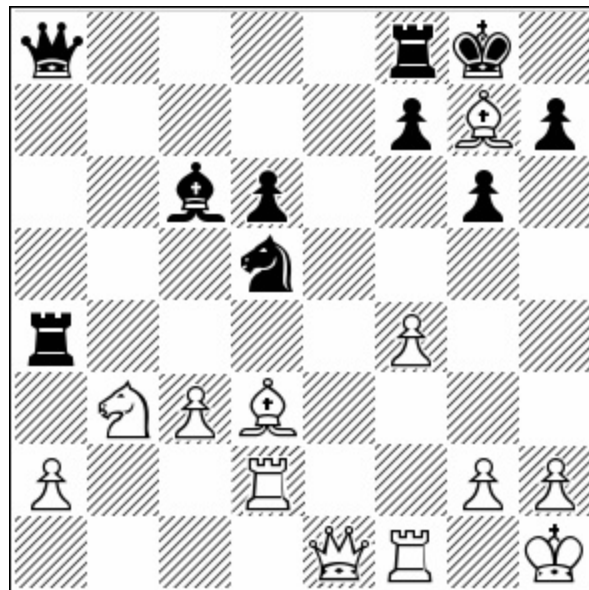


Black has definite compensation for the sacrificed pawn. His compact single island structure is easy to maintain while White has two isolated pawns. Still, we can hardly say that Black has much of an initiative at this point.

**22.exd6?**

Crushing defeats can often spring from subtle mistakes. Short mistimes his moves and allows the black pieces to burst forward. He could have killed all the tactics before they got started with 22.c4 Nb4 23.Bb1 and White has decent chances to make use of his extra pawn, e.g. 23...dxe5 (23...Nxa2? 24.exd6 exd6 25.Bxg7 Kxg7 26.Qf2 Nb4 27.Rxd6+–) 24.Bxe5 Bxe5 25.Qxe5 e6 26.h4.

**22...exd6 23.Bxg7**



**23...Re8!**

Felix Unger taught us years ago that we should never assume (even obvious) recaptures. 23...Kxg7 24.c4 Nb6 would more or less equalize, but why not at least probe with this tempo-gainer? The surprise is that Black wins without ever recapturing the bishop!

**24.Qa1?**

It's very complicated, but objectively, the queen in the corner compromises White's defenses. Instead 24.Qg3 would have kept the position roughly balanced:

A) 24...Ne3? 25.Bd4 Bxg2+ 26.Rxg2 Rxa2 27.Rff2! (27.Rfg1 Nxg2 28.Rxg2

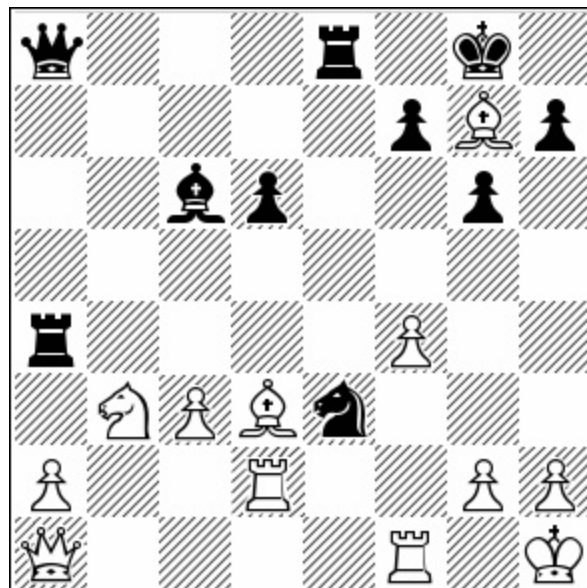
Re1+ 29.Bg1 Rd1 is unclear because White remains tied up; 27.Bxe3 Rxe3 28.Qg4 Rxd3 29.Kg1 Rxc3 is also less convincing) 27...Nxc6 28.Rxa2! Qxa2 29.Qxg2 and the two bishops confer a large advantage;

B) 24...Kxg7 25.Nd4 Ne3! (25...Rxa2 26.Rxa2 Qxa2 and now not 27.Nxc6 Re3 28.Rf3? Rxd3—+ but 27.f5! with better play for White) 26.Rg1 Bxg2+ (or 26...Bd5) 27.Rdxg2! Nxc6 28.Qxg2 Rxa2 with equality;

C) 24...Re3 25.Qh4 (25.Qg5 Kxg7 26.Nd4 Rxd4!! 27.cxd4 Qa5 28.Rdd1 h6 29.Qh4 Ba4 with an initiative for Black) 25...Kxg7 26.Nd4 Rxa2 27.Qf2=.

### 24...Ne3

24...Kxg7 25.c4+ offers White a fairly safe advantage, so it makes sense for Nepomniachtchi to speculate. However, 24...Nxf4! looks stronger. The key line is 25.Rxf4 (25.Kg1 Bxg2! 26.Rxf4 Rxf4 27.Rxg2 Qf3 with a crushing attack) 25...Rxf4 26.Bd4 Bxg2+!! 27.Rxg2 Rg4 and White is surprisingly low on suitable defenses. 28.Qg1 (28.Bf1 Re2!! or 28.Qb2 Rxd4!) 28...Re1 29.Bf1 Rxg2 30.Qxg2 Rxf1+ 31.Bg1 Qa6 gives Black a better version of what Short should have gone for.



### 25.Rg1??

(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 57:*

Here we have a clear demonstration that playing a ‘safe’ defensive move does not necessarily make your position safe. I’m not sure what Nigel saw in this move, because even the simple recapture 25...Kxg7 gives Black a commanding position.

White had to play 25.Bd4; unlike the position after 24...Nxf4, there is no mate threat. After 25...Bxg2+ (25...Nxc2 26.Kg1 holds, e.g. 26...Nh4 27.c4 Nf3+ 28.Rxf3 Bxf3 29.Bh8 with a decisive counterattack) 26.Kg1 Bxf1 27.Bxf1 Nxf1 28.Qxf1 Rxa2 29.f5 White may even be marginally better.

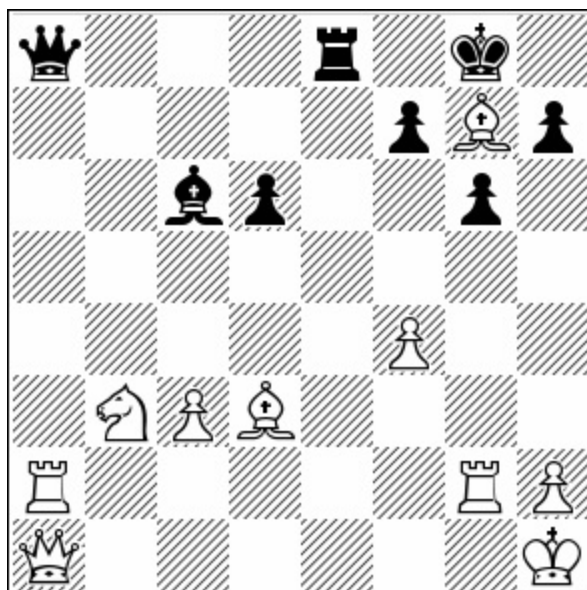
### **25...Nxc2**

It was also okay, though somewhat less forcing, to continue 25...Bxg2+ 26.Rg2 Nxc2. Strangely, the knight is more of a nuisance than a checking bishop, as 27.Kg1 Nxf4 is murderous, while 27.Rg2 Rxa2 wins like the game.

### **26.Rg2 Rxa2**

Move-order can be critical in combinations! 26...Bxg2+? 27.Kg1! avoided immediate disaster. White’s pieces are placed to defend things they somehow don’t defend. The weak back rank is the culprit here.

### **27.Rxa2**



**27...Qxa2!**

I think it is particularly appealing that White can avert mate on the back rank but only at the cost of dropping multiples pieces there.

**28.Bf1 Bxg2+**

**White resigned**, as he will end up the exchange down for nothing: 29.Bxg2 Qxa1+ 30.Nxa1 Re1+, etc.

### **Back Stabbers**

A back rank weakness can be a godsend to the defense in the bleakest looking situations. While committing forces to converge on the enemy king, the attacking player may not find the time to clean up his own backyard. The back rank counter can be manifested in seemingly silly moves.

Game 100 – King’s Indian Defense

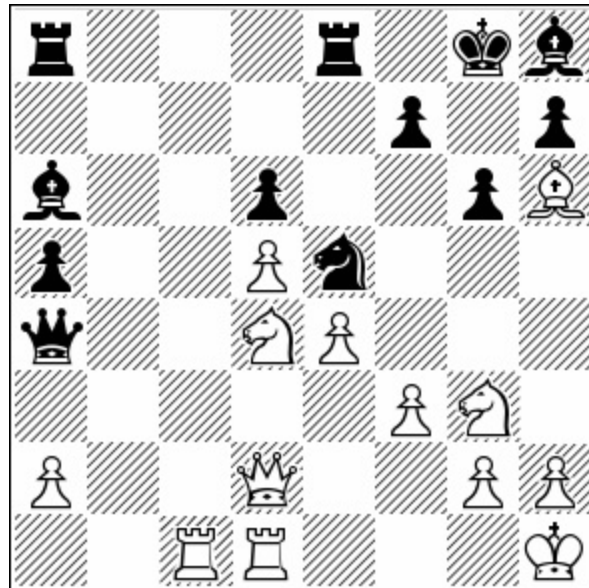
**Romain Edouard 2634**

**Jean-Marc Degraeve 2551**

Saint Quentin ch-FRA 2015

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.f3 0-0 6.Be3 c5 7.Nge2 Nc6 8.d5 Na5**

9.Ng3 a6 10.Be2 e6 11.0-0 exd5 12.cxd5 b5 13.Qd2 Nd7 14.Bg5 Qc7  
 15.Bh6 Bd4+ 16.Kh1 Re8 17.b4 Nc4 18.Bxc4 bxc4 19.bxc5 Qxc5 20.Na4  
 c3 21.Qc2 Qc4 22.Rac1 a5 23.Nxc3 Ba6 24.Qd2 Bh8 25.Rfd1 Ne5 26.Nce2  
 Qa4 27.Nd4



**27...Nd3**

Winning the exchange is not necessarily a good deal. White develops a strong attack on a black king that loses an important potential defender.

**28.Nc6 Nxc1 29.Rxc1**

White starts a powerful offensive, but the seeds of his defeat are vaguely visible. He will need to incorporate his rook in the assault, but his back rank is vulnerable. If he stops at any moment to make luft, he may lose critical attacking time.

**29...Bc8**

Going backwards is no fun, but this move at least defends against the threat of 30.Nf5!.

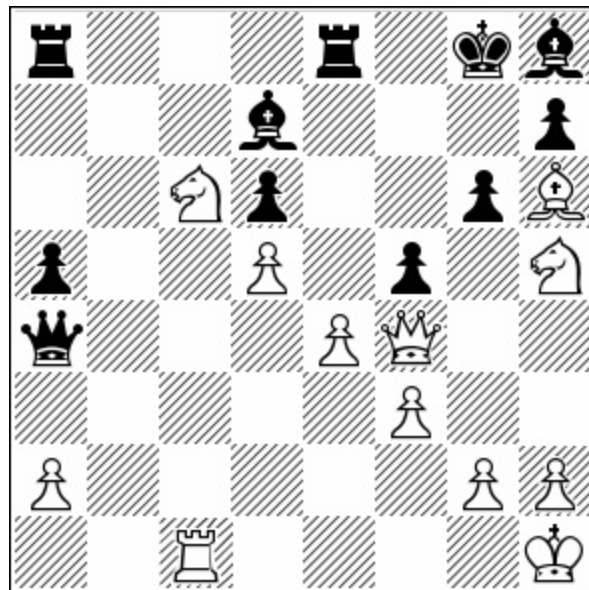
### 30.Qf4

30.Qg5 might be stronger, provoking ...f6 with the threat of Ne7+. After 30...f6 31.Qd2 White will look to win the d6-pawn.

### 30...Qa3

This guards d6, hits c1, and threatens to get on the long diagonal. Still, it allows White to penetrate with a knight check one beat quicker, and thus is the losing move! 30...Bb2 gets overwhelmed. I'll give a long line because it's fun and illustrates how Black tries to save himself with back rank tactics: 31.Nh5 f5 (31...gxh5 32.Qg5+ Kh8 33.e5+-- ) 32.Qg5 Bxc1 33.Qxc1 Bb7 34.Qa1 Re5 35.f4 Bxc6 36.fxe5 Rb8 37.Nf6+ Kh8 38.exd6 Rb2 39.dxc6 Rxa2 40.Qe1 Ra1 41.Bc1 Qxc6 42.d7 Qxf6 43.d8=Q+ Qxd8 44.Bb2+ and wins.

The best hope is to eliminate the dangerous c6-knight as soon as possible. After 30...Bd7 31.Nh5 f5, White has one safe and one crazy continuation:



*analysis diagram*

A) Safe is 32.Qxd6 Bxc6 (32...gxh5 33.Ne7+ Rxe7 34.Qxe7+-- ) 33.Nf6+ Bxf6 34.Qxf6 Ra7 35.dxc6 fxe4 36.fxe4 and the position quiets down, with

White's massive c-pawn balancing Black's extra exchange;

B) 32.g4!? (which at least clears the back rank!) leads to insanity: 32...Bxc6 33.gxf5 Be5 34.fxg6! Rf8! (34...Bxf4 35.Nf6+ Kh8 36.g7#; 34...hxg6 35.Qg4 Kh7 36.Nf4 Bxf4 37.Rg1 Rg8 38.Bxf4 Rg7 39.dxc6+–) 35.Qe3 (35.Qg5 Qa3 creates too much counterplay, so White can just make a draw with 36.gxh7+ Kxh7 37.Nf6+ Bxf6 38.Qf5+ Kxh6 39.Qh3+ Kg6 40.Qf5+ Kh6 41.Rg1 Be8 42.Qf4+) 35...Be8 36.Bxf8 Bxg6 37.Bxd6 Bxd6 38.Nf6+ Kh8 39.e5. White has sufficient compensation for the piece, and the game remains unclear.

### **31.Nh5 f5**

After 31...Qb2? 32.Qxd6, White threatens not only 33.Ne7+ but 33.Qf8+! as well.

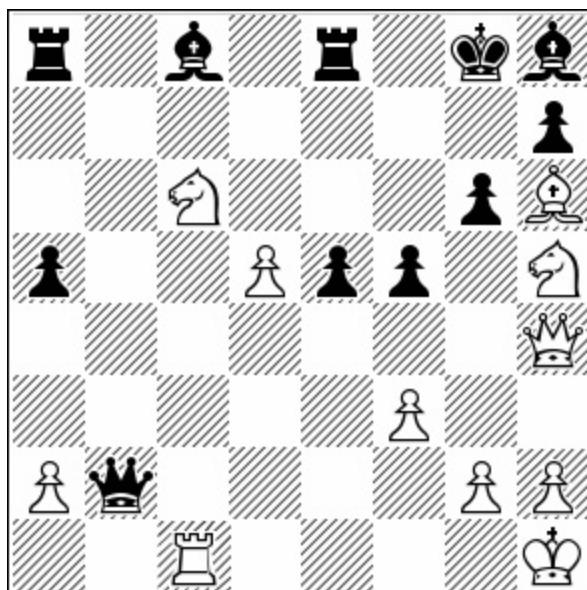
### **32.Qh4**

32.Qg5 Qb2 33.Ne7+ Kf7 34.Nxg6 Qxc1+ 35.Qxc1 looks more accurate, though it shouldn't have changed the result.

### **32...Qb2 33.e5**

This doesn't harm anything, but White had a slightly more straightforward win with 33.Ne7+! Kf7 34.Nxg6! hxg6 (34...Qxc1+ 35.Bxc1 hxg6 36.Nf4 and the attack continues) 35.Rc7+ Bd7 (35...Kg8 36.Bc1!) 36.Rxd7+ Kg8 and now White finally has time to breathe with 37.h3! and his attack is unstoppable.

### **33...dxe5**



### 34.Ne7+?!

What was good a move ago is now the wrong jump. White's last move set up 34.Nf6+, which requires a bit more subtlety to win than the previous variation: 34...Bxf6 35.Qxf6 Qb7 36.d6 Qf7 (36...Ra6 37.Nxe5 with the killing threat of 38. Nxc6, though 37.Ne7+ Qxe7 38.Qxe7 Rxe7 39.Rxc8+ Kf7 40.dxe7 is a more human finish) 37.Ne7+ Rxe7 38.dxe7 Be6 39.Qxe5 Re8 40.Bf8 and Black has little hope of holding.

### 34...Kf7 35.Nxf5?

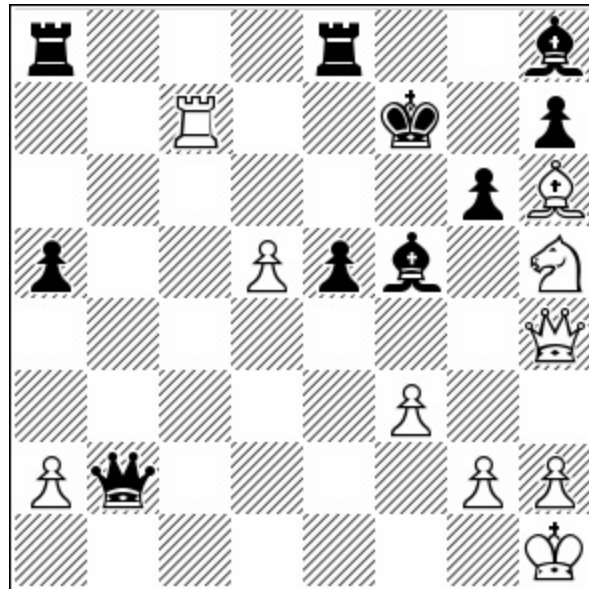
35.Rc7? would have tempted the back rank gods. 35...Ra7? 36.Nxg6+ Rxc7 37.Nxh8+ will lead to mate, but Black wins after 35...Qb1+ 36.Bc1 Ra7 37.Nxg6+ Rxc7 38.Nxh8+ Kg8 39.Qg5+ Kxh8 40.Qf6+ Kg8 41.Qg5+ Kf8 42.Qh6+ Ke7 43.d6+ Kd8, etc.

Though the sacrifice was much stronger before the inclusion of 33.e5 dxe5, 35.Nxg6 was still the best and indeed only good option here. Then, 35...hxg6? 36.Rc7+ Kg8 37.Be3 will lead to checkmate in a few, but Black sacs his queen here as well: 35...Qxc1+! 36.Bxc1 hxg6 37.Ng3 (the f4-square is no longer available!) forces White to regroup for a bit. He is still a lot better, but back rank issues remain a complication!

### 35...Bxf5!

Now 35...Qxc1+ 36.Bxc1 Bxf5 37.Ng3 is a decisive advantage, which is probably why Edouard took the f5-pawn.

### 36.Rc7+



### 36...Kg8?

This is why automatic responses can cause a lot of trouble. Black needed to decoy the rook first (again for the back rank) with 36...Bd7!! 37.Rxd7+ Kg8 and White has to spend a tempo he doesn't have, e.g. 38.h3 Qb1+ 39.Kh2 gxh5 and Black wins.

### 37.Nf6+?

One last faulty knight move. After 37.Bc1! Qxc1+ 38.Rxc1 gxh5 39.Qxh5 Bg6 40.Qg4, White still has an engine advantage, though I think 'unclear' is a proper human assessment.

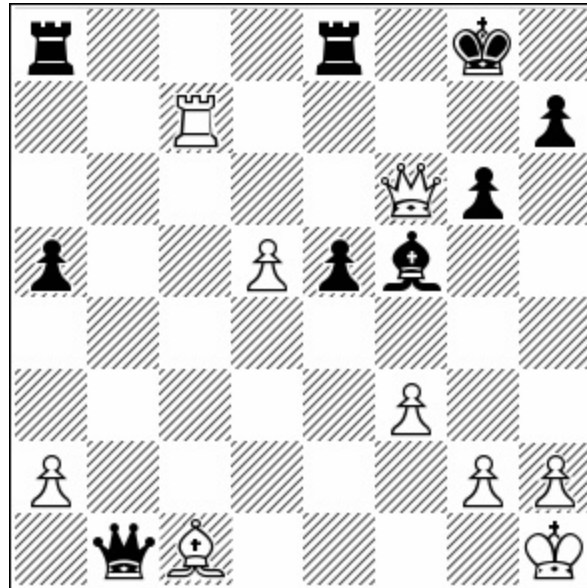
### 37...Bxf6 38.Qxf6

(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 58:*

**38...Qb1+**

White has to pull back one of his pieces and that's enough for Black to defend. If 39.Rc1, 39...Qb7 wins.

**39.Bc1**



**39...Bd7!**

The back rank has the final say.

**40.h4 Rac8 0-1**

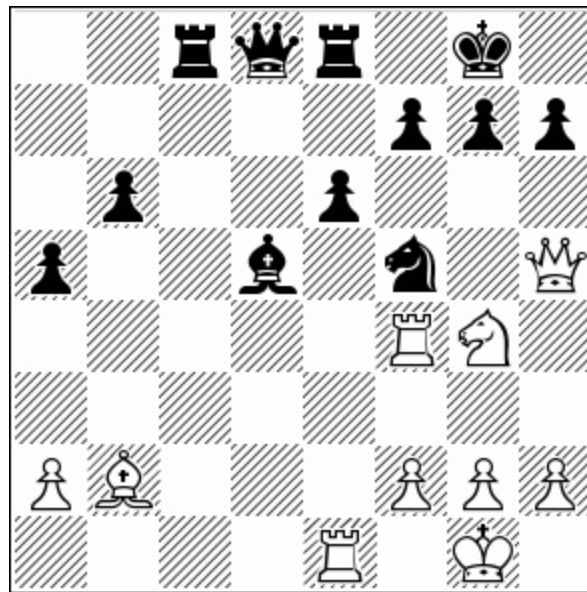
### **Knocking at Your Back Door**

The defensive and counterattacking potential of back rank exploitation was demonstrated in amazing fashion in the following game. Timing is an all important factor in tactics. Here, a sacrifice of a whole rook wins the tempo that turns everything upside down.

Game 101 – Sicilian Defense  
Pavlo Vorontsov 2220

Kayden Troff 2350  
Maribor Wch U14 2012

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.c3 Nf6 4.Be2 Nc6 5.d4 cxd4 6.cxd4 d5 7.e5 Ne4 8.Nc3  
Nxc3 9.bxc3 e6 10.0-0 Be7 11.c4 dxc4 12.Bxc4 0-0 13.Rb1 b6 14.d5 Na5  
15.d6 Bxd6 16.exd6 Nxc4 17.Rb4 Ba6 18.Ra4 Bb5 19.Rb4 Nxd6 20.Re1  
Bc6 21.Ne5 Bd5 22.Qh5 Nf5 23.Ng4 a5 24.Rf4 Rc8 25.Ba3 Re8 26.Bb2



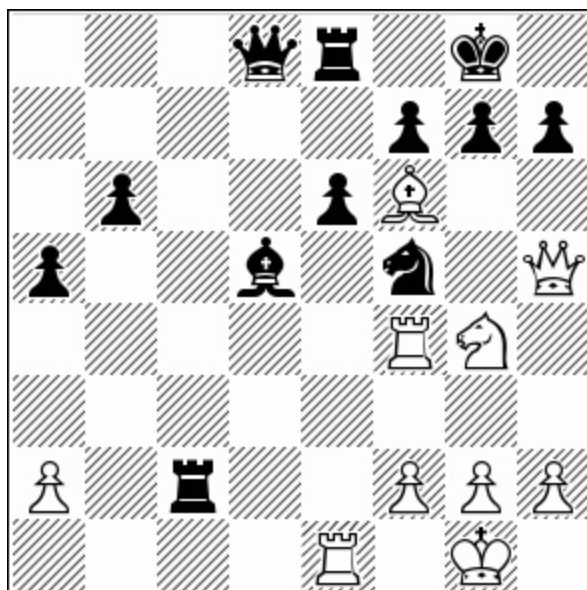
White has invested two pawns and so is committed to an attack on the king. White has numbers in the attackers/defenders ration on the kingside. But with these forces pledged upfield, White is vulnerable to a counterattack behind them.

### 26...Rc2

The computer recommends 26...Bxa2, not so much to take the pawn but to create counterattacking resources, e.g. 27.Bf6 Qd2!.

### 27.Bf6!

There is no time to lose for White, but now things are getting real around the king.



(back to the exercises) ***Solution to Puzzle 59:***

Black has to spit on the bishop – 27...gxf6 28.Rxf5 exf5 29.Rxe8+ Qxe8 30.Nxf6+ Kf8 31.Qh6+ and by guarding the back rank, White can take the queen. 27...Qc7 28.Rxf5 is right out. Finally, 27...Qc8 is insufficient after 28.Nh6+! gxf6 (28...Kh8 29.Rxf5 gxf6 30.Rxf6, or 28...Nxf6 29.Qg5) 29.Qg4+ Kf8 30.Rxf5+-. Black needs a counterstrike!

**27...Re2!!**

A brilliant and atypical back rank tactic, perpetrated by a young teenager! White has no choice but to take – without e-file control his bishop will simply be captured next move.

**28.Rxe2 Qc7**

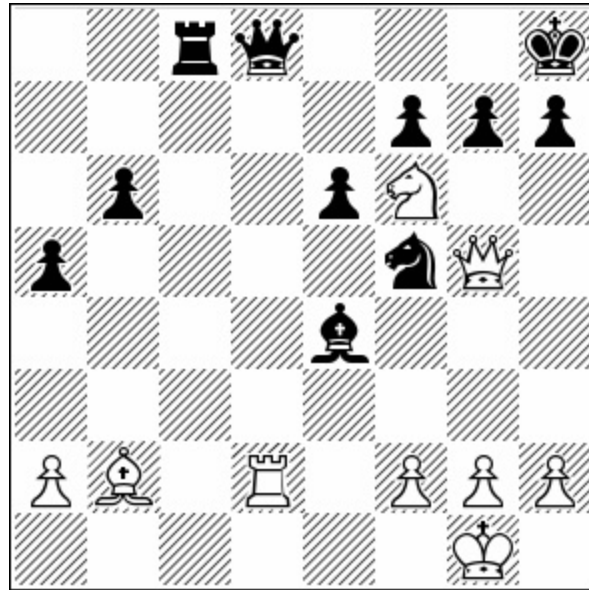
The rook sacrifice won a critical tempo. White has to give up his attacking rook to cover his back rank.

**29.Rfe4! Bxe4 30.Qg5 Rc8!**

Knocking on the back door again. Now, if 31.Re1, 31...Kf8 defends.

**31.Bb2 Qd8! 32.Nf6+ Kh8 33.Rd2**

This allows a nice finish. After 33.Re1 Ba8 34.Qh5 gxf6 35.Rd1 Black has several ways to win, the most thematic being 35...Bd5 36.Qg5 (36.Qxf7 Qg8 37.Bxf6+ Ng7) 36...Nd4! 37.Bxd4 e5 38.Bxe5 fxe5 39.Qxe5+ f6 with a solid extra piece.



**33...Qxf6!**

This last back ranker was a bit too much to handle. **White resigned.**

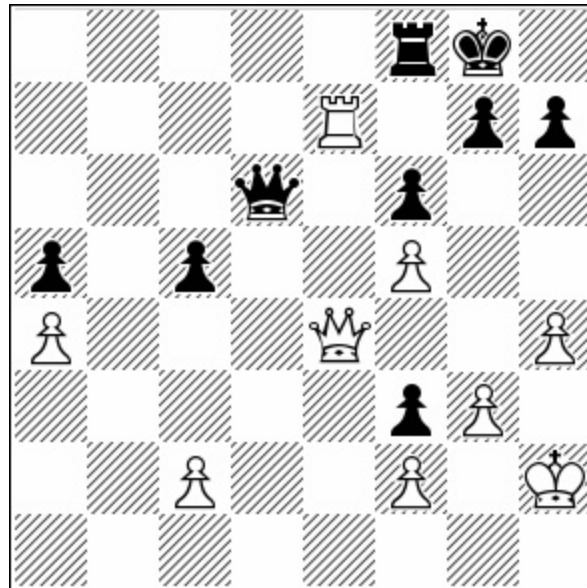
### Something in the Air

Finally, we see how powerful back rank mating threats can be dissolved by a bid for fresh air by a lowly pawn.

Game 102 – Ruy Lopez  
**Magnus Carlsen** 2863  
**Vishy Anand** 2792  
 Sochi Wch 2014

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 Nf6 4.d3 Bc5 5.0-0 d6 6.Re1 0-0 7.Bxc6 bxc6 8.h3 Re8 9.Nbd2 Nd7 10.Nc4 Bb6 11.a4 a5 12.Nxb6 cxb6 13.d4 Qc7 14.Ra3 Nf8 15.dxe5 dxe5 16.Nh4 Rd8 17.Qh5 f6 18.Nf5 Be6 19.Rg3 Ng6 20.h4 Bxf5 21.exf5 Nf4 22.Bxf4 exf4 23.Rc3 c5 24.Re6 Rab8 25.Rc4 Qd7 26.Kh2 Rf8 27.Rce4 Rb7 28.Qe2 b5 29.b3 bxa4 30.bxa4 Rb4 31.Re7 Qd6

32.Qf3 Rxe4 33.Qxe4 f3+ 34.g3



In the game Anand blundered with

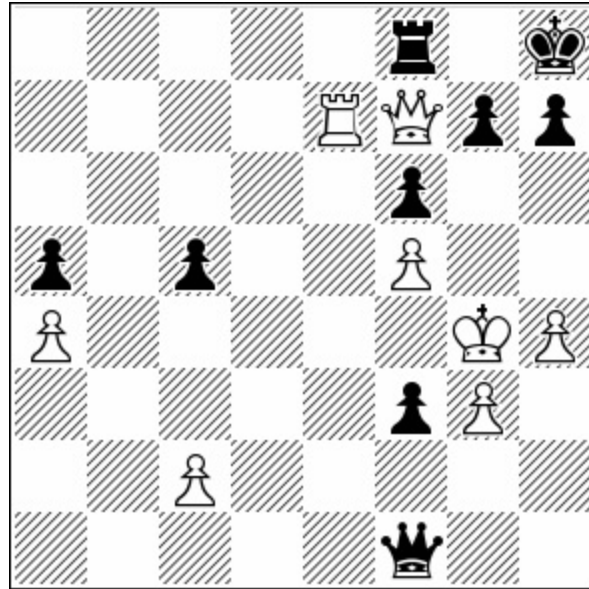
34...h5?? 35.Qb7

and discovered his king could not be defended.

He had good chances to resist with 34...Qd2, despite the fact that his back rank is left vulnerable: 35.Qe6+ (White keeps some edge after 35.Qxf3 Qxc2, but a tough fight is in store) 35...Kh8 36.Qf7.

(back to the exercises) **Solution to Puzzle 60:**

36...Qxf2+ 37.Kh3 Qf1+ 38.Kg4.

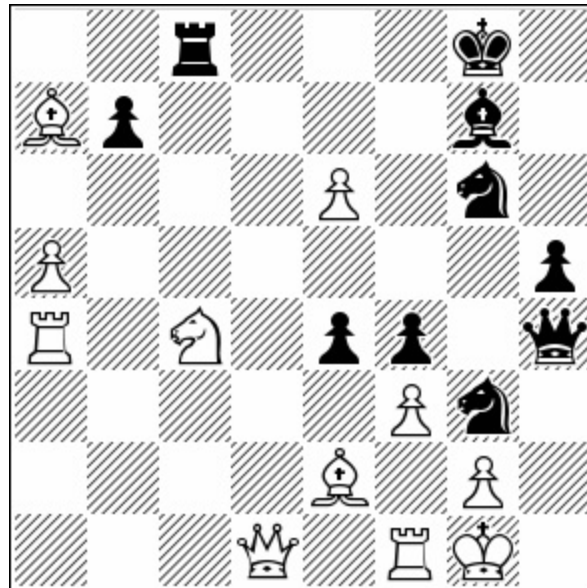


*analysis diagram*

It seems that Black is done for, as 38...Rg8 39.Re8 leads to mate. But he can slip out with 38...h5+!! 39.Qxh5+ (otherwise the queen is really hanging) 39...Kg8 and the queen has been exiled from its all-purpose square on f7. After 40.Qg6 Qc4+ 41.Kh5 (41.Kxf3 Qf1+ 42.Kg4 Qd1+ and the king cannot escape) 41...Rf7, White is forced into a repetition: 42.Re8+ Rf8 43.Re7, etc.

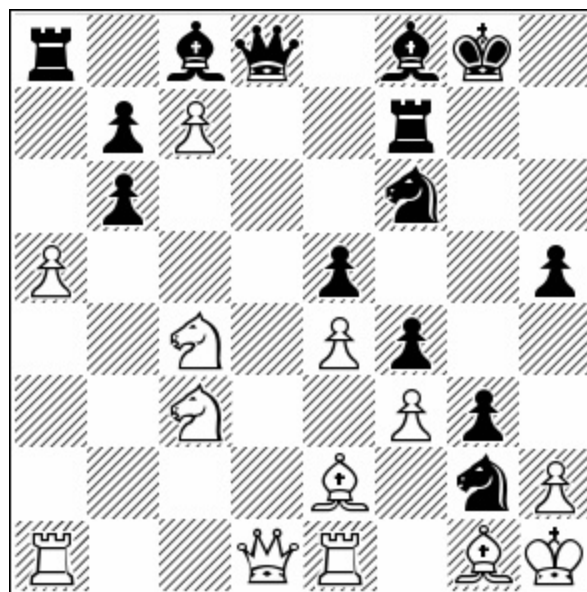
# In the Beginning... and in the End – Puzzles

61 (go to the solution)



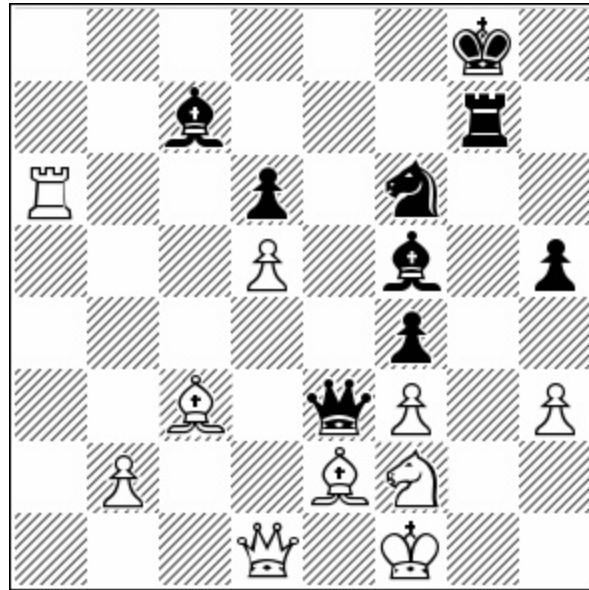
*Black to play wins  
Beliavsky-Nakamura*

62 (go to the solution)



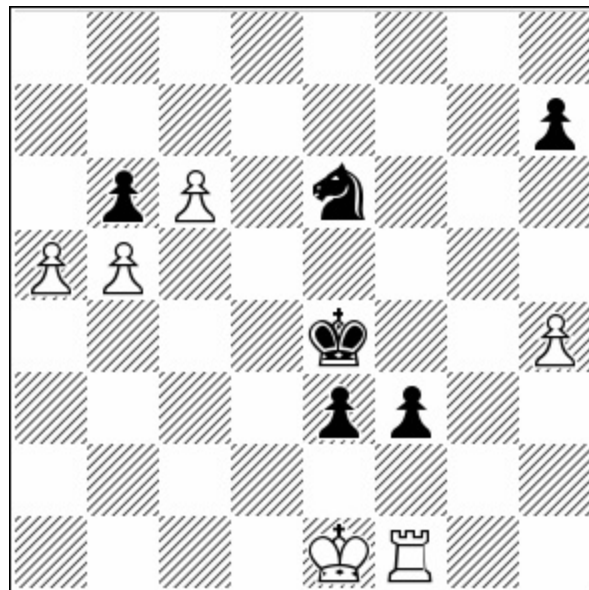
*Black to play wins*  
*Gelfand-Nakamura*

**63 (go to the solution)**



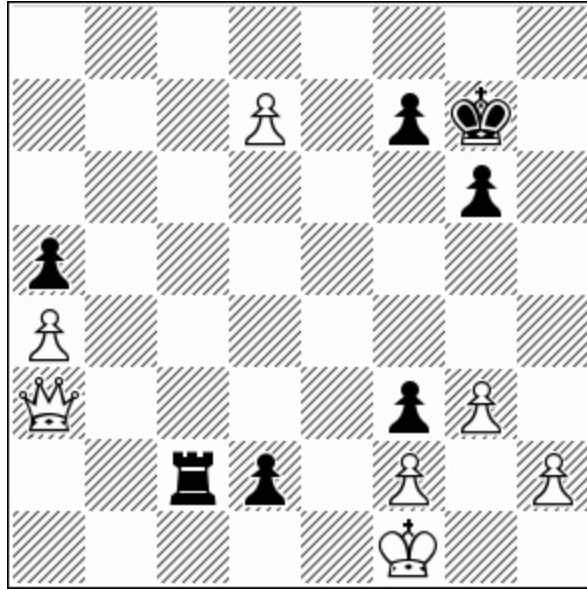
*Black to play wins*  
*Bischoff-Hebden*

**64 (go to the solution)**



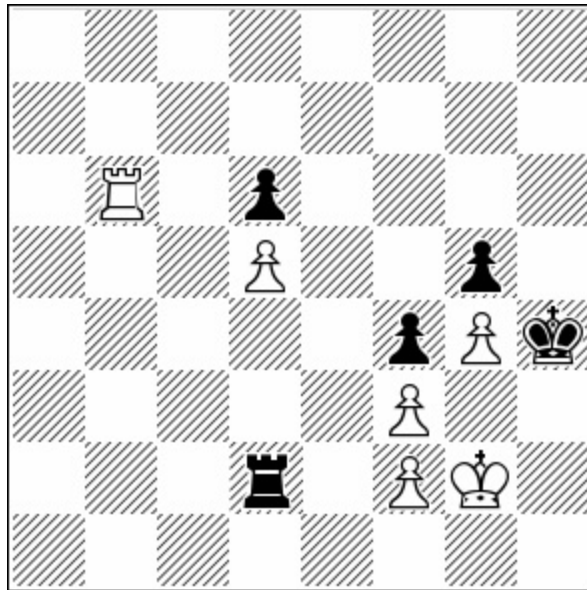
*White to play wins*  
*Davletbayeva-Ding Yixin*

**65 (go to the solution)**



*White to play wins*  
*Ermenkov-Sax*

**66 (go to the solution)**



*Black to play draws*  
*Yates-Rubinstein*

## **Chapter 7**

### **In the Beginning... and in the End**

#### **Beginnings**

Tactics are generally thought to be in the province of the middlegame. We have seen tactics arise from all manner of openings, but the choice of opening can have a profound impact on creating tactical situations. In this chapter we will examine a couple of openings that always seem to lead to fireworks.

#### **King's Indian**

It can be maddening today to watch the procession of Berlin Defenses/Giuoco Pianos and Queen's Gambits of various persuasions. A lot of fans call for more Chess 960. I'm not one of them – these games don't look like chess to me, with pieces in weird places and lack of familiar pawn structures.

The increased strength of chess engines, which can push the theory deep into the middlegame, have perhaps made edgier openings more problematic. Young Nakamura created some great entertainment with the King's Indian. Elite players (especially post-Kasparov) hesitate to take on positions the engines (figuratively) frown upon. Hopefully the approach of Hikaru 1.0 will return to the scene with more frequency, but in the meantime we can appreciate some slightly older swashbuckling.

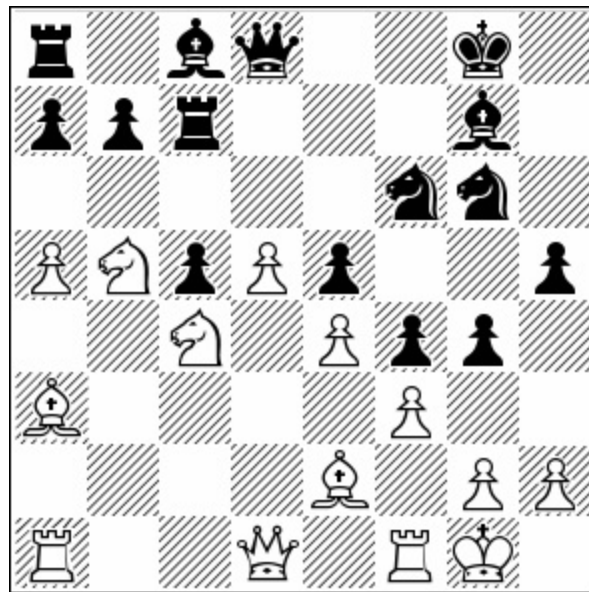
#### **In Passing**

Beliavsky deals with all kinds of piece sacrifices here, but a sneaky pawn move does him in.

Game 103 – King's Indian Defense

Alexander Beliavsky 2662  
Hikaru Nakamura 2710  
Amsterdam 2009

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.Nf3 0-0 6.Be2 e5 7.0-0 Nc6 8.d5 Ne7  
9.Nd2 Ne8 10.b4 f5 11.c5 Nf6 12.f3 f4 13.Nc4 g5 14.a4 Ng6 15.Ba3 Rf7  
16.a5 h5 17.b5 dxc5 18.b6 g4 19.bxc7 Rxc7 20.Nb5

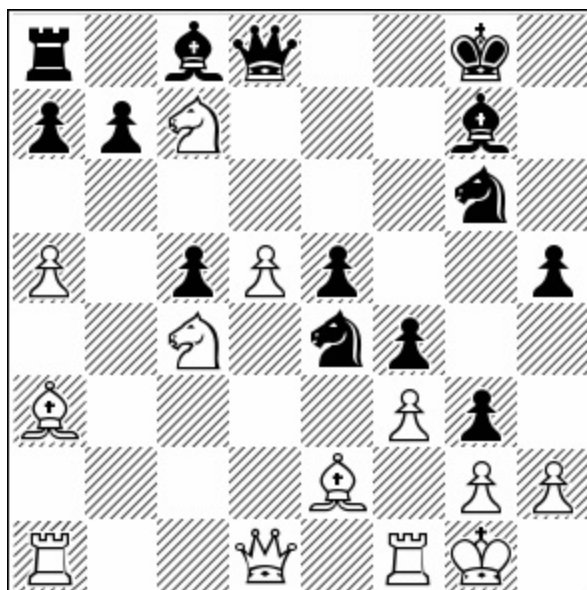


Nakamura has played va banque from the get-go, allowing White significant progress on the queenside. The engines want us to believe that White is winning, but Hikaru is just beginning to throw punches.

**20...g3! 21.Nxc7**

I feel this is a mistake which allows Black's position to gain momentum.  
21.Qc2! not only supports e4 but guards the second rank for tactics. Black may have to play defense for a while.

**21...Nxe4!**



This sacrifice clears the way for the queen to jump into the attack. White has many options here but no chance to slow things down.

## 22.Ne6

The knight, which has just taken a rook, can take another one... yet it moves in the other direction. But 22.Nxa8? would be a lazy 'let's grab stuff and see what happens' kind of move. The punishment – 22...Qh4 23.h3 Bxh3 – comes swiftly.

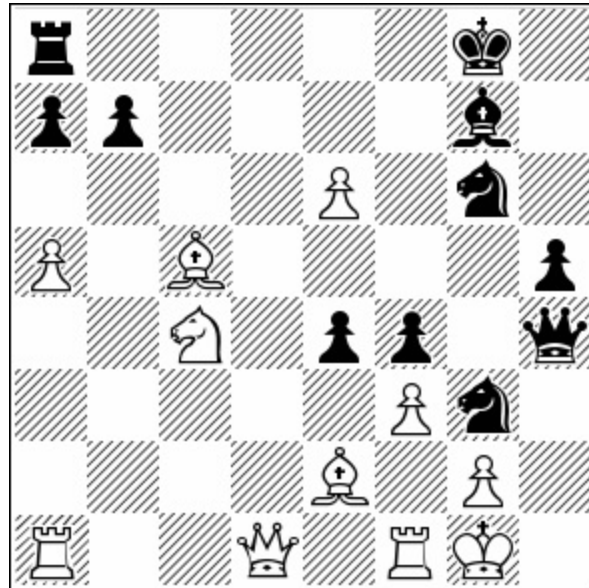
The other capture removes an attacking piece, so fares quite a bit better. After 22.fxe4 Qh4 23.h3 Bxh3 24.gxh3 Qxh3 25.Rf2 gxf2+ 26.Kxf2 Qg3+ 27.Kf1 f3 28.Nxa8 fxe2+ 29.Kxe2 Nf4+ 30.Kd2 Qd3+ 31.Kc1 Qxc4+ White's king is relatively safe and he still holds a material advantage. The problem is that this line is difficult to calculate, and hardly reliable from a human standpoint. Black looks very close to a knockout along the way!

There are a few other playable but unlikely moves here. The most natural seems 22.h3 Nc3 23.Qc2 e4 with sufficient counterplay. 22.Ra2 Qh4 23.h3 Nf2 24.Rxf2 gxf2+ 25.Kf1 Qg3 26.Bd3 e4 27.Rxf2 Bd4 is certainly okay for Black, but I doubt that either player considered that computer line.

Beliavsky's move is responsible – by knocking out the bishop, he eliminates nasty sacrifices on h3 – but his counterplay is slow while Black builds up his

attack.

**22...Bxe6 23.dxe6 gxh2+ 24.Kxh2 Qh4+ 25.Kg1 Ng3 26.Bxc5 e4**



**27.Ra4**

We shall see the downside to this square, but it does prevent 27...e3 thanks to 28.Nxe3 with a pin along the fourth rank.

27.Ra2 e3 28.Nxe3 fxe3 29.Bxe3 Nf4 seems dynamically balanced.

**27...Rc8!**

The ancillary pieces have to pitch in. If they can't directly attack the king, they can help by harassing important defensive pieces.

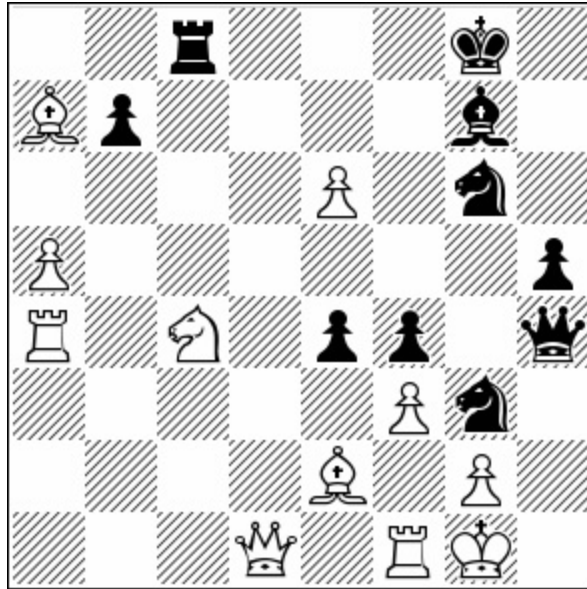
**28.Bxa7?**

This meets with a lovely refutation. We have one of those moments when the defender has to look for some measure of counterplay to break or slow down the attack. White has two options. Neither of these lines is entirely forced, or, for that matter, all that natural to find.

A) 28.e7 exf3 29.Bxf3 Nxe7 30.Bxa7 b5 31.Rb4 bxc4 32.Re1 Bc3 33.Rb7

Bxe1 34.Qxe1 Kf8 is slightly better for White;

B) 28.Nd6 exf3 29.Bxf3 Rxc5 30.Ne4 Qh1+ 31.Kf2 Rc2+ 32.Be2 Rxe2+ 33.Qxe2 Qh4 34.Qc4 Nxe4+ 35.Kg1 Ng3 36.e7+ Kh7 37.Re1 Qh1+ 38.Kf2 Qh4 39.e8=Q Ne4+ 40.Kg1 (40.Ke2 Qf2+ 41.Kd3 Qd2+ 42.Kxe4 Qxe1+--+) 40...Qf2+ 41.Kh2 Qh4+ and drawn!



(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 61:*

**28...b5!**

A lovely and unexpected tactic for strong players, who have internalized the en passant rule!

**29.Rb4**

If 29.axb6?, 29...Bd4+ mates. But the piece drop is fatal here because White cannot consolidate.

**29...bxc4 30.Bxc4 Qh1+ 31.Kf2 e3+ 32.Bxe3 fxe3+ 33.Kxe3 Nxf1+ 34.Bxf1**

Or 34.Qxf1 Qh4.

**34...Qg1+ 0-1**

## Mirror, Mirror

The next year, Nakamura scored another brilliancy in a game that mirrored the Beliavsky game for fifteen moves!

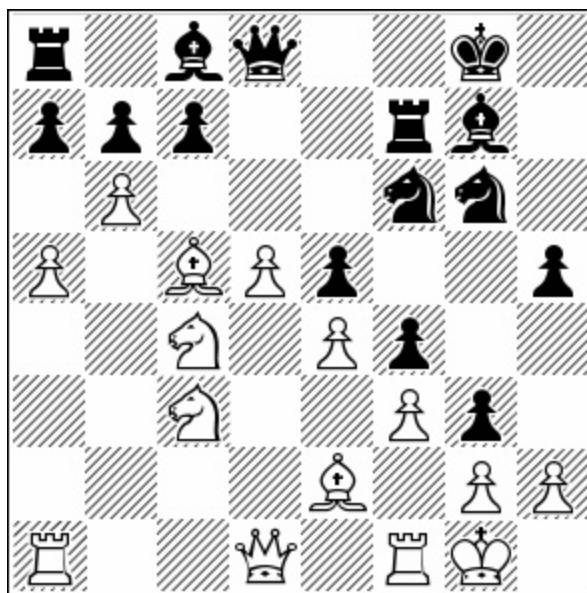
Game 104 – King’s Indian Defense

**Boris Gelfand** 2761

**Hikaru Nakamura** 2708

Bursa Wch-tt 2010

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.Nf3 0-0 6.Be2 e5 7.0-0 Nc6 8.d5 Ne7  
9.Nd2 Ne8 10.b4 f5 11.c5 Nf6 12.f3 f4 13.Nc4 g5 14.a4 Ng6 15.Ba3 Rf7  
16.b5 dxc5 17.Bxc5 h5 18.a5 g4 19.b6 g3



My old friend GM John Fedorowicz liked to say of such positions that both sides are ‘playing alone’. White has received a free hand on the queenside but he will pay dearly if he takes his eye off Black’s emerging attack on the other wing.

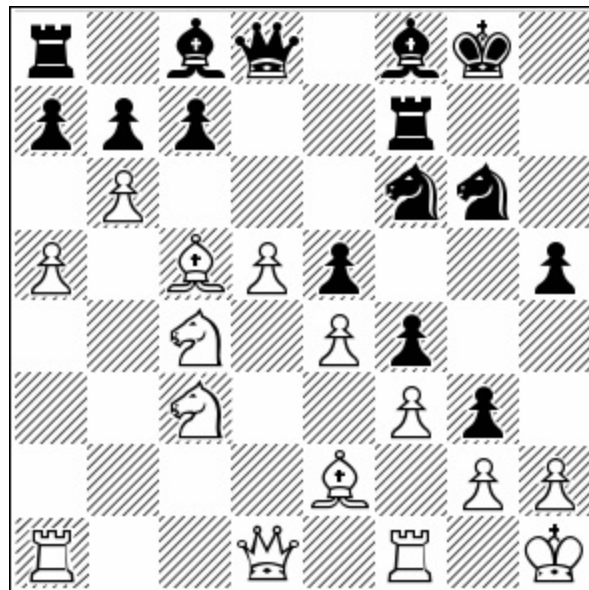
20.Nb5? collapses the black queenside but leaves White vulnerable on the other side. Black is set up for a hail of thematic sacrifices: 20...Nd7! 21.Bb4 Qh4 22.h3 Nxb6! 23.axb6 Bxh3 24.gxh3 Qxh3 25.Rf2 gxf2+ 26.Kxf2 Qg3+ 27.Kf1 Bf6 and White is helpless to defend his king.

## 20.Kh1!

This typical defensive move allows the bishop to drop back to defend from g1.

## 20...Bf8

Black isn't simply offering a trade of bishops; White can't think about capturing – if 21.Bxf8?, 21...Nxe4 22.Nxe4 Qh4 mates.



## 21.d6

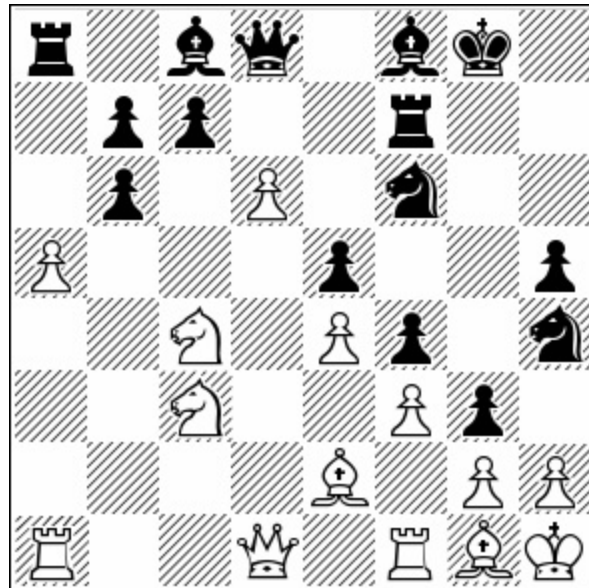
21.Bg1 Nh4 22.Re1? Nxe4! 23.Kxg2 Rg7 24.Nxe5 gxh2+ 25.Kh1 Nxe4 resulted in a quick win for Black in Roussel Roozmon-Charbonneau, Montreal 2008. Pascal and Hikaru were teammates on the New York Knights in the USCL, and that game likely convinced Nakamura the line was worth playing for Black.

## 21...axb6 22.Bg1

22.axb6 Rxa1 23.Qxa1 cxd6 is much better for Black.

## 22...Nh4!?

Now that White has h2 securely guarded, Black shifts the focus to the poorly protected g2-pawn. If 22...h4 23.h3 and the knight will not have access to the dangerous attacking post.



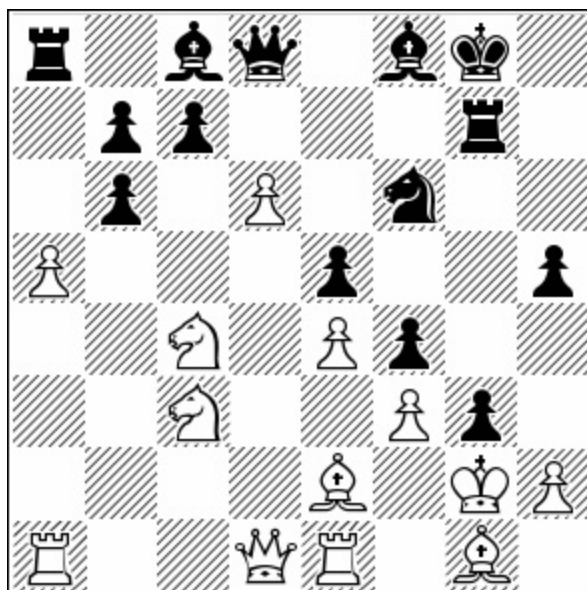
### 23.Re1?!

Again, Black's threats demand a reaction; if 23.dxc7?, 23...Bh3! crashes through. White prepares to fortify the kingside with Bf1, so Black has to make a big move now.

Despite Black's success in this game, 22...Nh4 was not repeated in later games. This is likely due to 23.hxg3!? fxg3 24.Be3, which seems to be quite good for White. White is vulnerable on the h-file, but Black's pieces are all on the wrong squares now. The attack on g2 can be turned aside, e.g. 24...Bh3 25.Rg1 Qc8 26.Bf1. This moment is a microcosm of why people do and don't play the King's Indian!

### 23...Nxg2! 24.dxc7?

The text utterly fails as an in-between move! White had to bite the bullet and grab the knight: 24.Kxg2 Rg7 and now White has three reasonable continuations:



*analysis diagram*

A) 25.hxg3 Qd7! (25...Rxf3+ 26.Kh1 Rh3+ 27.Bh2 Ng4 28.Qd5+ Kh7 29.Qf7+ Bg7 30.fxg4 Rxf2+ 31.Kxf2 Qh4+ 32.Kg2 Qg3+ only leads to perpetual check) 26.g4 hxg4 27.fxg4 Nxf4 28.Bxf4 Rxf4+ and I would prefer Black's chances here;

B) 25.Nxe5 gxh2+ 26.Kxh2 Ng4+ 27.fxg4 Qh4+ 28.Kg2 hxg4 29.Qd5+ Kh7 30.Rec1 with an insane position that only gets crazier: 30...Be6 31.Qxe6 Qh3+ 32.Kf2 g3+ 33.Kf3 Qxe6 34.Bd4 Rg5 and anything can happen;

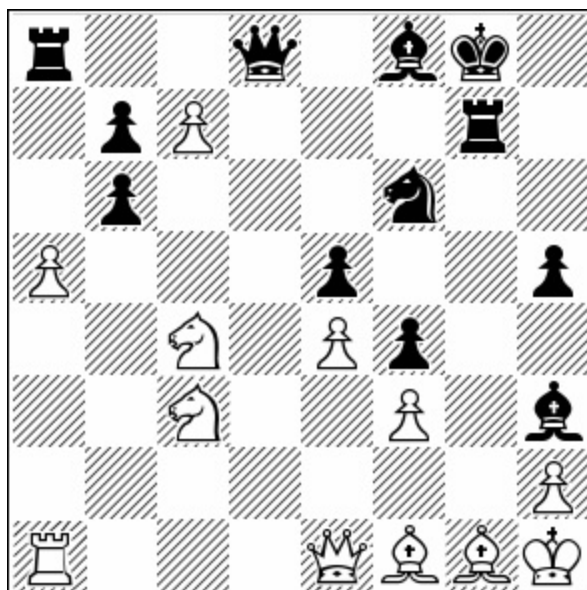
C) 25.dxc7 gxh2+ (25...Qe7 could be tried here as well) 26.Kh1 hxg1=Q+ 27.Rxg1 Qxc7 and Nakamura described this position as 'roughly balanced', which seems fair.

(back to the exercises) ***Solution to Puzzle 62:***

**24...Nxe1!**

This is the first of several IBMs exploiting the mate threat on g2 – 25.cxd8=Q? g2#.

**25.Qxe1 g2+ 26.Kxg2 Rg7+ 27.Kh1 Bh3 28.Bf1**



Black will win after the prosaic 28...Qxc7, but Nakamura's next bolt ends the game most thematically.

**28...Qd3!**

White cannot capture the queen on pain of mate on g2 for the third time... with one more time to go!

**29.Nxe5**

Avoiding the immediate finish after 29.Bxd3 Bg2# or 29.Bxh3 Qxf3+.

**29...Bxf1! 30.Qxf1 Qxc3 31.Rc1 Qxe5 32.c8=Q Rxc8 33.Rxc8 Qe6 0-1**

### **Born under Punches**

The faith is kept by many hard-working if less heralded players who appreciate the puncher's chance the KID always seems to provide.

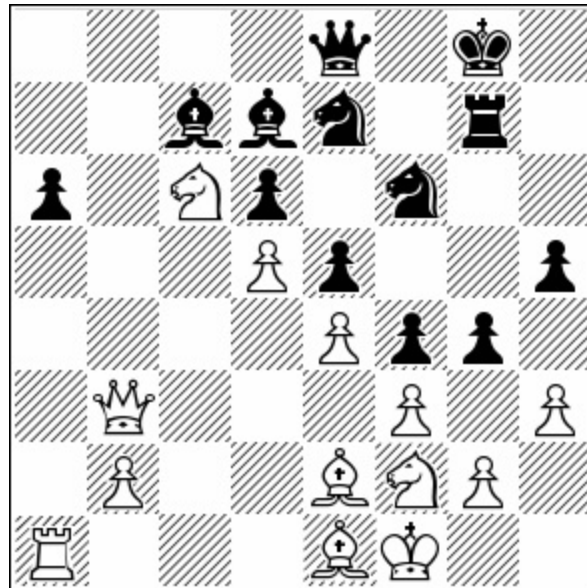
Game 105 – King's Indian Defense

**Klaus Bischoff 2553**

**Mark Hebden 2556**

Dun Laoghaire 2010

1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.d4 0-0 6.Be2 e5 7.0-0 Nc6 8.d5 Ne7  
 9.Ne1 Nd7 10.Nd3 f5 11.Bd2 Nf6 12.f3 f4 13.c5 g5 14.cxd6 cxd6 15.Nf2  
 Ng6 16.Qc2 Rf7 17.Rfc1 Bf8 18.a4 h5 19.Nb5 Ne8 20.Ra3 Bd7 21.Rc3  
 Rg7 22.h3 a6 23.Na3 Be7 24.Be1 Qb8 25.Qb3 Bd8 26.Qb4 Qa7 27.a5 b6  
 28.Nc4 bxa5 29.Nxa5 Bb6 30.Kf1 Rb8 31.Rb3 Ne7 32.Ra1 Bc7 33.Qa3  
 Nf6 34.Rxb8+ Qxb8 35.Qb3 Qe8 36.Nc6 g4



Black could hardly wait any longer for the thematic breakthrough, but White has an entire chess set trained on the square.

**37.Nxe5?**

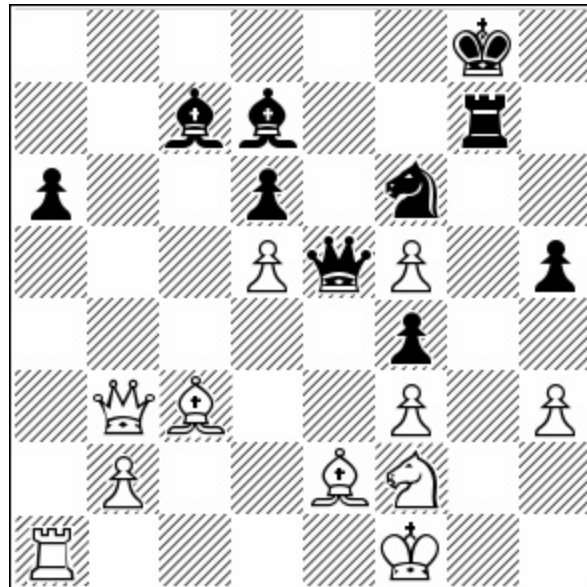
White really had no need for this combination. The only question was how to capture on g4, with 37.fxg4 hxg4 38.hxg4 being the simplest. There is simply no follow-up – 38...Nxg4 39.Bxg4 Bxg4 40.Nxg4 Rxg4 41.Nxe7+ Qxe7 42.Rxa6 is just winning for White. His queen covers everything along the third rank.

Moreover, however Black answers to this shot, White's king will be less safe with the g-file open.

**37...gxh3 38.gxh3 Nf5!**

This counterstrike breaks Black's queen into the game, though the long diagonal could be problematic for him.

**39.exf5 Qxe5 40.Bc3**



**40...Qe3?!**

Though this sets up the winning blow, objectively it shouldn't have worked. The queen should have headed to the g-file: 40...Qxf5 41.Rxa6 Qg5 42.Ra8+! (otherwise the rook comes strongly to the e-file) 42...Kf7 43.Ke1 Qg1+ 44.Bf1 Kg6 45.Bxf6 Kxf6 and the game remains tense as both kings are under fire. 46.Qc4 Re7+ 47.Ne4+ Ke5! is an amusing line; Black has about equalized despite leading with his king!

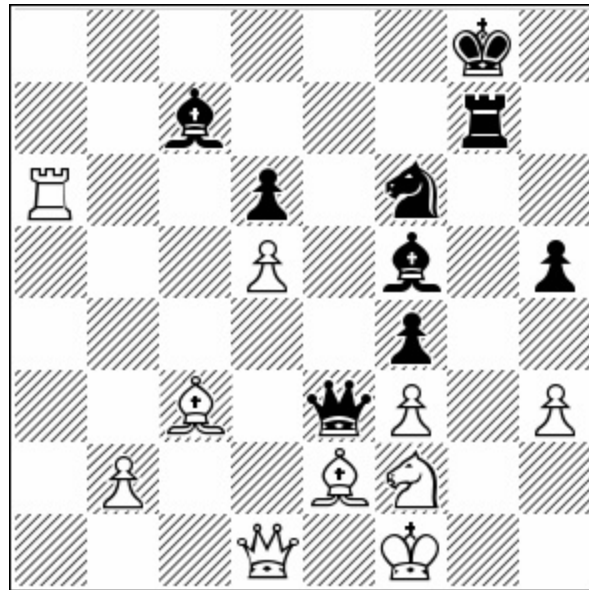
**41.Rxa6 Bxf5**

It seems clear that it would be a good idea to unpin the c3-bishop, but which square to move the queen to?

42.Qc4 gives White a big advantage. The combination from the game doesn't work because White's king would walk out into the center. Bischoff probably felt his move to be more defensively responsible because he prevented 42...Qc1+, which chases the bishop off its strong diagonal and scoops up a

pawn. But after 43.Be1 Qxb2 44.Ra8+! (44.Qxf4 Nxd5 45.Ra8+ Bb8 46.Bc4? Bxh3+ 47.Nxh3 Qg2#) 44...Bb8 (or 44...Kh7 45.Bd3, and White starts to take over) 45.Bb4 Qb1+ 46.Bd1, White takes over the initiative. Now, 46...Bxh3+? 47.Nxh3 Qxd1+ 48.Kf2 Nd7 49.Rxb8+ Nxb8 50.Qc8+ Kh7 51.Qf5+ Kg8 52.Bc3 wins for White.

## 42.Qd1??



(back to the exercises) ***Solution to Puzzle 63:***

Black is completely lost, except for one move that is completely winning.

## 42...Ne4!

That's the ballgame. It's funny how Qd1 appears more defensive than Qc4, but allows the winning shot.

## 43.Qd4

The key difference is that 43.fxe4 Bxh3+ 44.Nxh3 Qxh3+ 45.Ke1 Rg1+ costs White the queen.

## 43...Bxh3+! 0-1

Hebden avoids an optical illusion – 43...Ng3+ 44.Kg2 Nxe2+?? 45.Qxg7#. But now 44.Nxh3 Ng3+ 45.Kg2 Qxe2+ 46.Nf2 Nf5+ will disappear White's queen. So Bischoff **resigned**.

## **Marshall Law**

The Marshall Attack in the Ruy Lopez has been a bold counterattacking choice since Frank Marshall introduced the gambit against Capablanca in 1921. It has taken quite a different turn from the King's Indian, though. The Marshall lends itself so much to forcing variations that engines have beaten it to death. Indeed, grandmasters (and club players, in a trickle-down effect) tend to sidestep it not out of fear of losing, but out of fear of drawing!

Let's go back to a time when the engines were a bit less scary and the theory still developing, to see some home-cooked strikes.

Game 106 – Ruy Lopez

**Jan Smeets 2573**

**Etienne Bacrot 2700**

Wijk aan Zee B 2008

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 0-0 8.c3 d5 9.exd5 Nxd5 10.Nxe5 Nxe5 11.Rxe5 c6 12.d3 Bd6 13.Re1 Bf5 14.Qf3 Qh4 15.g3 Qh3 16.Bxd5 cxd5 17.Qxd5 Rad8 18.Qg2 Qh5 19.Be3 Bh3!?**

I believe this had not been played OTB at the time, with the safer 19...Bxd3 20.Nd2 Bf5 21.Qc6 seen a few times.

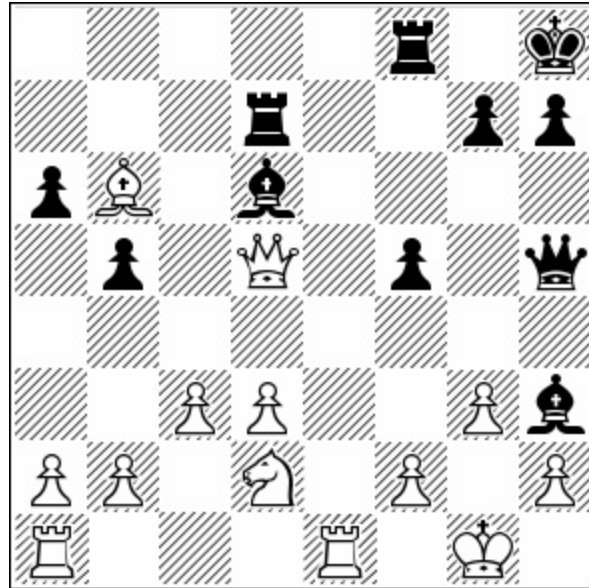
**20.Qh1 f5 21.Bb6 Rd7**

On the morning of the game, Bacrot's second Naiditsch found a flaw in his analysis: 21...f4 22.Bxd8 f3 23.Bb6 Bg2 24.Qxg2 fxg2 25.Nd2 Qg6 26.Bd4 Qxd3 27.Ne4, and only White can realistically play for a win. This actually befell an unsuspecting victim three years later in a correspondence game.

**22.Qd5+!?**

This puts the queen in a hot spot, of course, but otherwise Black would play 22...f4.

**22...Kh8 23.Nd2**



**23...Bxg3!**

White's pinning strategy is put to the test!

**24.Qxd7 Bf4**

Black has to chill a bit, as 24...Bxh2+? 25.Kxh2 offers no follow up.

**25.Qb7**

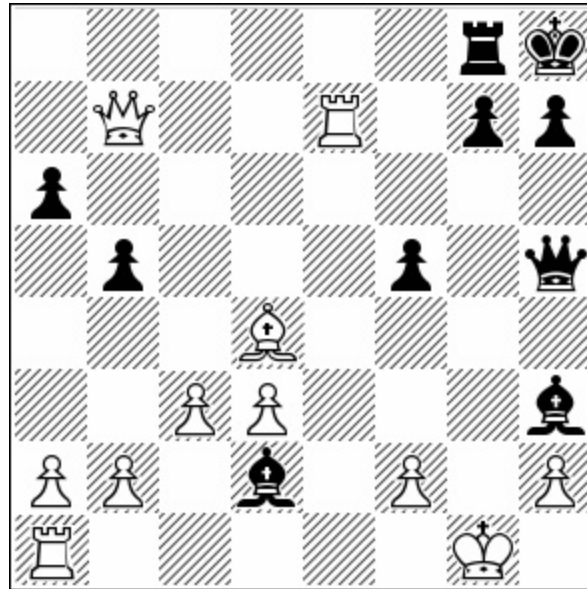
The queen needs to go on the long diagonal, but where is quite a problem to solve at the board. The text keeps pressure on g7, which has its plusses.

25.Qd5 Bxd2 26.Qd6 Qg5+ 27.Qg3 Qh6 was explored in a few subsequent games.

**25...Bxd2 26.Bd4 Rg8 27.Re7?**

This looks like a powerful move, securing the initiative, but it backfires after

Black's shock rejoinder. White could have maintained the balance with several moves, 27.Kh1 and 27.Qd5 seeming most plausible.

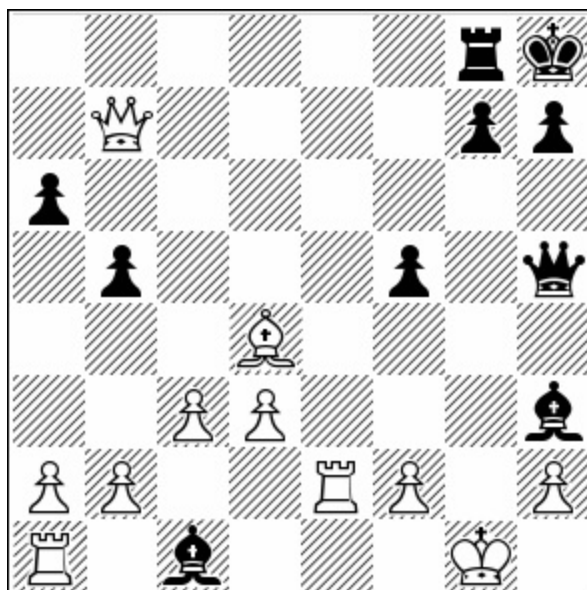


### **27...Bc1!!**

This awesome move was found in home analysis just before the game. We can certainly see how Smeets could have overlooked it. White's threat to g7 looks lethal, but any non-check is met by 28...Qd1 mate.

### **28.Re1?**

There seems to be no alternative to this ignominious retreat which provides Black with a critical tempo. 28.Rxc1 Qg5+ 29.Kh1 Qxc1+ and 28.Bxg7+ Rxc7+ 29.Rxc7 Qd1# are both non-starters. But White has a remarkable counterstrike of his own in 28.Re2!!.



*analysis diagram*

Now the rook is prepared to guard the second rank in the event of 28...Bf4 29.f3. The rook can of course be captured, but then White takes the bishop without further penalty. White is short of moves, but with intricate play he can hold:

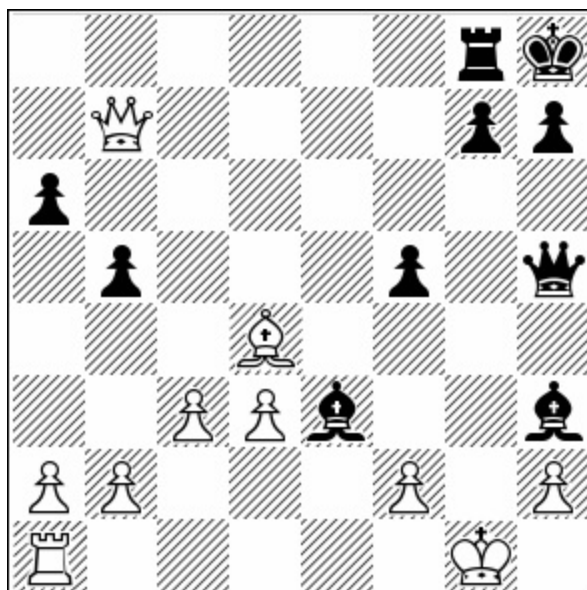
A) 28...Qg4+ 29.Kh1 Qxe2 30.Rxc1 h5 31.Rg1 Bg4 32.Kg2 Qxd3 33.f3 Qe2+ 34.Bf2 Bh3+ 35.Kxh3 Qxf2 36.Rg2 and White should survive;

B) 28...Qxe2 29.Rxc1 a5! (29...h5 30.Qc7!) and now not the hasty 30.Qc7? f4! 31.Qxf4 Re8 (this doesn't work if the h-pawn has moved, as there would be 32.Qh6+) 32.Be3 Qxb2 with a big advantage, but 30.b3 and 30.Kh1 should both suffice.

### **28...Bf4 29.Re3!?**

Black threatened to win the queen with 29.-- 29...Bxh2+ 30.Kxh2 Bg4+ 31.Kg2 (if 31.Kg3, 31...f4 mates against most 29th moves) 31...Qh3+ 32.Kg1 Bf3. It may be the case though that the threat is stronger than the execution!

### **29...Bxe3**



### 30.Bxe3

30.fxe3, keeping the black rook frozen, seems a better defense. But with White reduced to passivity, Black has an intricate winning plan that could play out like this: 30...Qe2 31.b3 h6 32.c4 b4 33.Qc6 Kh7 34.Qb7 Kg6 35.Kh1 Kh5 36.Rg1 g5 37.Rg3 Qf1+ 38.Rg1 Qf2 39.Rg3 Bg4 40.Qg2 Qe1+ 41.Qg1 Qe2 42.h3 Bf3+ and Black wins.

### 30...Re8

Apparently, 30...f4 first leads to a forced win, and White has chances to hold now with 31.Qc7. But in practice White is unlikely to make a successful defense regardless.

### 31.Bd4 Qg4+ 32.Kh1 h6

With this and the next move, Black consolidates his king position in preparation for the final assault.

### 33.f4

33.Rg1 Qxg1+ 34.Kxg1 Re1#.

**33...Re7 34.Qa8+ Kh7 35.Be5**

After 35.Rg1 Qxf4, Black maintains decisive threats to the white king.

**35...Qe2 36.Rg1 Bg4 37.Rxg4 fxg4 38.d4**

Hmmm. 38.Qe4+ Qxe4+ 39.dxe4 g5 is hopeless.

**38...Qf1#**

### **This is the End**

Endgames can be as much about tactics as technique. Those who are fortunate and clever enough to have digested Van Perlo's *Endgame Tactics* know what I'm talking about. It may be the case that the back-and-forth battles we seek here are less frequent than in middlegames, but when we find them, they are as beautiful and instructive as can be.

Promoting pawns come to the forefront, and indeed they are the essence of endgames. We've all seen tactics to force a pawn through to the eighth rank, but sometimes the battle is about actually overcoming the opponent's countertactics.

Checkmate can still be on the menu with limited material on the board. One cannot take their eyes off of stalemate possibilities as well.

### **Funky Cold Madina**

When pawns are unstoppable, the only way out may be to use your passed pawns to create mating threats. It all comes down to timing, like slowing down the opposition by any means necessary.

Game 107 – Sicilian Defence

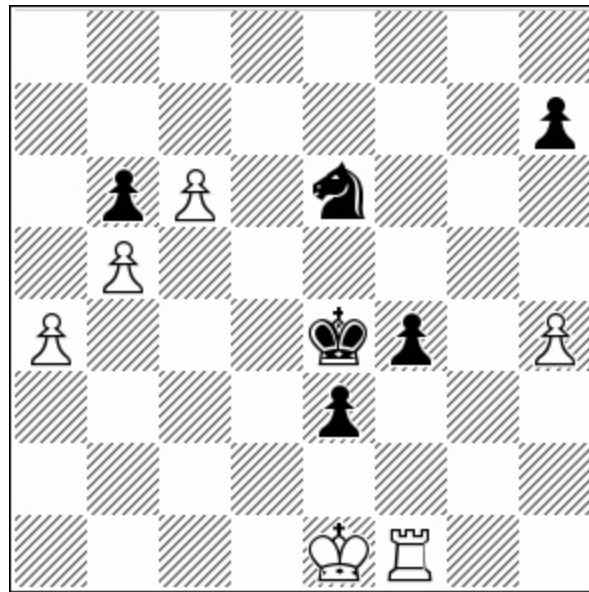
**Madina Davletbayeva** 2165

**Ding Yixin** 2424

Istanbul ol W 2012

**1.e4 c5 2.c3 d6 3.d4 Nf6 4.dxc5 Nc6 5.f3 d5 6.exd5 Nxd5 7.c4 Ndb4 8.a3**

**Qxd1+ 9.Kxd1 Na6 10.b4 Nd4 11.Be3 Nf5 12.Bf2 g6 13.Bd3 Be6 14.Nc3  
 Bh6 15.Nge2 0-0-0 16.Kc2 Be3 17.Be1 Bd4 18.Bd2 Be3 19.Be1 Nc7 20.g4  
 Nd4+ 21.Nxd4 Rxd4 22.Bg3 a6 23.Be5 Rhd8 24.Bxd4 Bxd4 25.Rad1 Bd7  
 26.Be4 e5 27.Rd2 Kb8 28.Ne2 Ba4+ 29.Kb1 Ne6 30.Nxd4 Nxd4 31.Re1  
 Kc7 32.g5 Bd7 33.Bd5 Bf5+ 34.Be4 Nxf3 35.Rxd8 Kxd8 36.Bxf5 gxf5  
 37.Re2 e4 38.Rf2 f4 39.Kc2 Nd4+ 40.Kd1 Ne6 41.h4 Ke7 42.Ke1 f5  
 43.gxf6+ Kxf6 44.b5 e3 45.Rf1 axb5 46.cxb5 Ke5 47.c6 b6 48.a4 Ke4**



Both sides are just a few moves away from a big splash.

### 49.a5

White could have been proactive in stopping Black's counterplay with 49.Rg1 f3 50.Rg4+ Kd3 51.a5 bxa5 52.b6 e2 53.Ra4 (or 53.Kf2) 53...Nd4 54.Rxd4+ Kxd4 55.Kd2.

### 49...bxa5

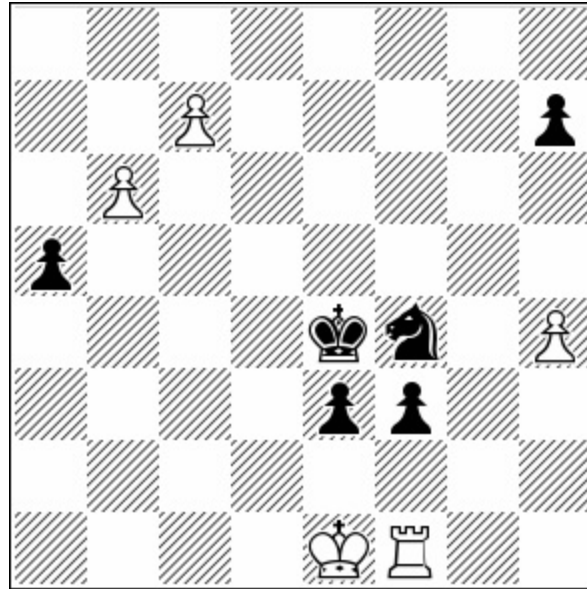
The pawn is less relevant than the tempo expended, so 49...f3 would probably have been a better try.

(back to the exercises) ***Solution to Puzzle 64:***

White has some plausible ways to go wrong, like 50.axb6?? Nf4--+ and

50.c7? Nxc7 51.axb6 Ne6 52.b7 Nc5=. But she could win as in the game with 50.Rf2!! exf2+ (50...Nf4 51.c7) 51.Kxf2 Kd5 and now the key trick is 52.c7 (52.axb6 Kd6 holds) 52...Nxc7 53.axb6 and the b-pawn queens.

**50.b6 f3 51.c7 Nf4**



**52.Rf2!**

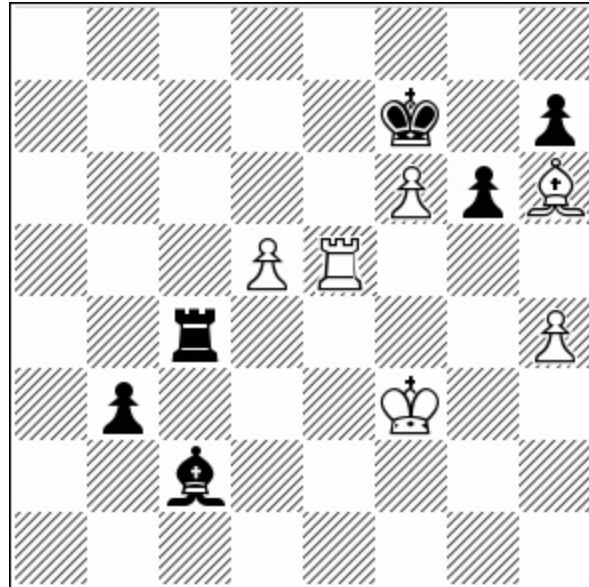
Of course not 52.c8=Q? Ng2+ 53.Kd1 e2+, but now only White gets a queen.

**52...Nd3+ 53.Kf1 Nxf2 54.c8=Q Kd4 55.Qd7+ Kc5 56.b7 Ne4 57.b8=Q Nd2+ 58.Qxd2 exd2 59.Qd8 Kc4 60.Qxd2 1-0**

### Net Loss

A passed pawn may have a free run to paydirt, but a sneaky mating net must be broken to promote in peace.

Game 108  
**Bela Radnoti**  
**Laszlo Liptay**  
 Hungary 1971



*Black to move*

Black is on the verge of queening the b-pawn, but easy does it with his king in a precarious position.

**1...Re4!**

1...b2? 2.Re7+ Kxf6 3.Rb7! would have cost Black his pride and joy, as 3...b1=Q? 4.Bg7+ Kf5 5.Rf7# is a surprise checkmate that we will revisit.

Sure, Black can also win with 1...Kxf6 2.Re6+ Kf7 3.Rb6 Rxh4, but he will have some work to do with the opposite-colored bishops.

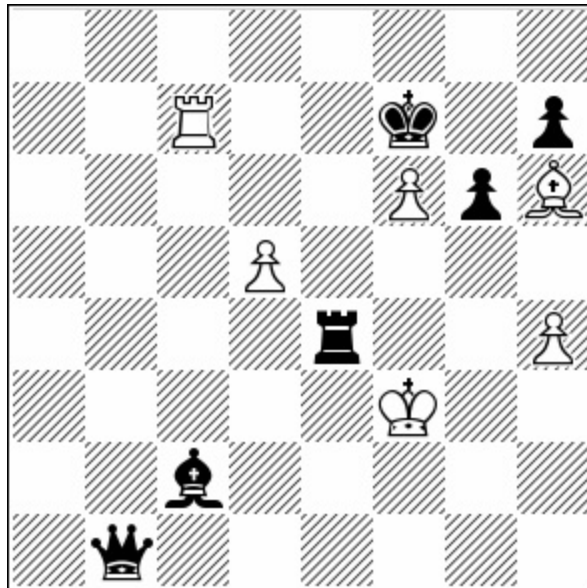
**1...Re4! 2.Re6!**

White doesn't go quietly. There wouldn't be any cheapos after 2...Rxe6 3.dxe6+ Kxe6 4.Bc1 Kxf6, but Black doesn't mind offering a little false hope.

**2...b2 3.Rc6! b1=Q**

3...Bd1+ 4.Kg3 Rg4+ 5.Kf2 b1=Q may be a bit cleaner but not nearly as aesthetic.

**4.Rc7+**



**4...Re7!!**

Sometimes the mind doesn't register such a move, as pieces don't go where they can obviously be taken. But White's devious mating net is destroyed.

4...Kxf6?? 5.Bg7+ Kf5 6.Rf7# would have elicited quite different emotions for the players.

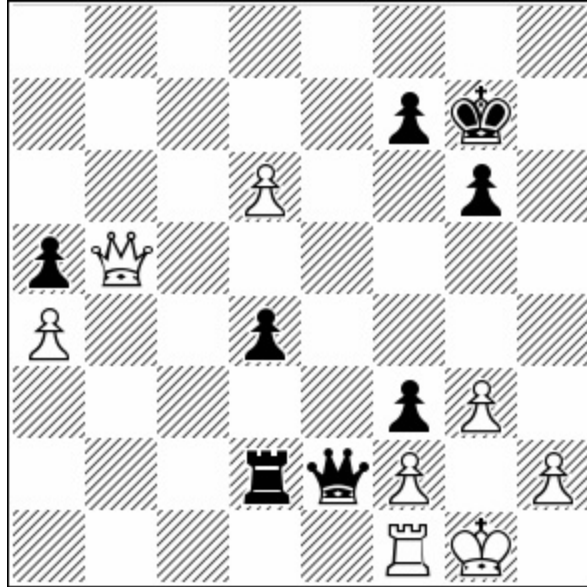
**5.Rxe7+ Kxf6 6.Bg5+ Kf5**

And **White resigned.**

### **Give a Queen, Make a Queen**

Checkmating threats can gain time in the race of passed pawns; the last subtlety can make the difference.

Game 109  
**Evgenij Ermenkov**  
**Gyula Sax**  
Warsaw 1969



*White to move*

White's back rank problems are hard to ignore, so it behooves him to queen his own passer as fast as possible:

**1.d7 d3 2.Qb3!**

But not too fast – 2.d8=Q? Qxf1+ 3.Kxf1 Rd1#.

The overly cautious 2.Qb1 Qe7, on the other hand, would only have netted a draw.

**2...Rc2 3.Qa3!**

Black reiterated the threat, so White has to again refrain from reaching for a piece from the adjacent board.

**3...Qxf1+!**

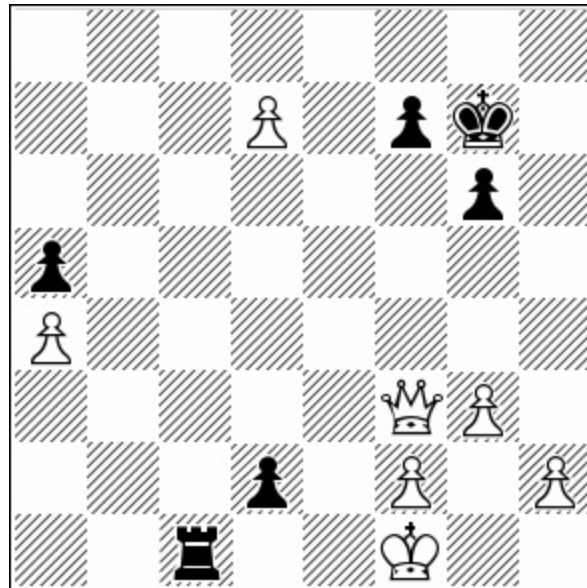
Black can't wait on this tactic, as after 3...d2 4.Qa1+ the queen guards f1 and White can finally queen safely.

**4.Kxf1 d2**

(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 65:*

It seems that Black is faster, but the Caissic gods shine on White today.

**5.Qxf3 Rc1+**



**6.Qd1!! Rxd1+ 7.Ke2 Rb1 8.d8=Q d1=Q+ 9.Qxd1 Rxd1 10.Kxd1 1-0**

The pawn ending is hopeless for Black.

### **Cat and Mouse**

The interplay between queening and mating tactics can be quite aesthetic. In the next game, the white rook and black bishop battle to see whose plot will succeed.

Game 110 – Bird Opening

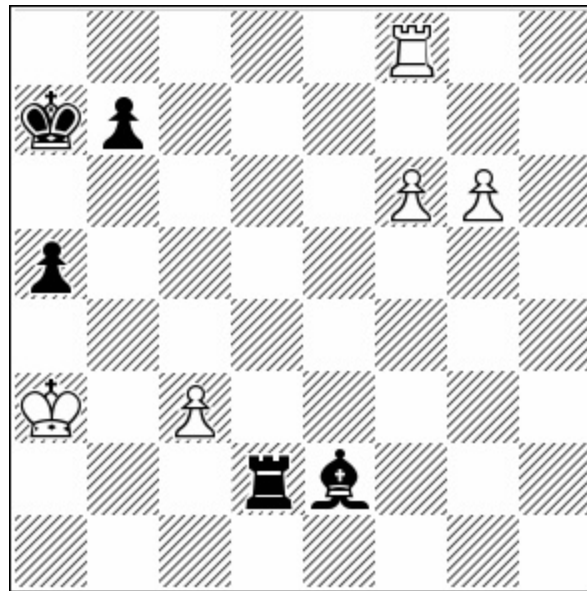
**Nikolay Legky 2400**

**Stanislav Zhelesny**

Odessa 1991

**1.f4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.g3 c6 4.Bg2 Qb6 5.c3 Bf5 6.d3 Nbd7 7.h3 h5 8.Ng5 e6  
9.e4 dxe4 10.dxe4 Bg6 11.Qe2 0-0-0 12.b4 a6 13.Be3 Qc7 14.Nd2 Nh7  
15.Nxh7 Rxh7 16.0-0-0 f6 17.Nc4 Be7 18.Qf2 c5 19.f5 Bf7 20.bxc5 e5**

21.Rxd7 Rxd7 22.Nb6+ Kb8 23.Nxd7+ Qxd7 24.Rd1 Qa4 25.Qc2 Qa3+  
 26.Qb2 Bxc5 27.Bxc5 Qxc5 28.Rd8+ Ka7 29.Bf1 Qe3+ 30.Qd2 Qxd2+  
 31.Kxd2 g6 32.Rd6 gxf5 33.exf5 Bxa2 34.Rxf6 Rd7+ 35.Kc1 e4 36.Rf8  
 Bf7 37.g4 hxg4 38.hxg4 e3 39.g5 Bh5 40.g6 Rd1+ 41.Kb2 Rd2+ 42.Ka3 e2  
 43.Bxe2 Bxe2 44.f6 a5



The white passers are formidable to say the least, so Black improves his chances of stopping them by creating a mating net.

**45.Ra8+! Kb6 46.Rc8**

White had to prevent 46...Bc4, encircling White's king.

**46...Bg4**

We see the purpose of the in-between check in the variation 46...Bh5 47.f7 Rf2 48.f8=Q Rxf8 49.Rxf8 Bxg6 50.Rf6+ and the bishop drops.

**47.Re8!**

White again keeps the bishop off the g8-a2 diagonal. 47.f7? Bxc8 48.f8=Q Be6 would have won for Black.

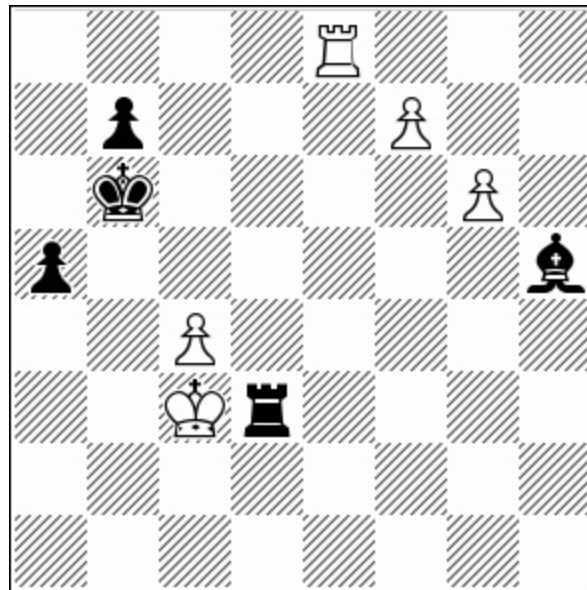
### 47...Bf3 48.c4?

It looks logical to block the dangerous diagonal, but by exposing his king to checks White permits a miraculous escape.

48.Re5! was correct, with the rook poised to sacrifice for the bishop as in the game.

### 48...Be2?

Black could have saved the game with 48...Bh5 49.f7 (49.g7 Bf7 50.g8=Q Bxg8 51.Rxg8 Rf2=) 49...Rd3+ 50.Kb2 Rd2+ 51.Kc3 Rd3+!!.



*analysis diagram*

Now 52.Kc2 Bxg6 is a dead end, so the only escape from perpetual check is 52.Kxd3 Bxg6+ 53.Kd4 Bxf7 when Black should easily hold.

**49.Rxe2 Rxe2 50.g7 Rg2 51.f7 Rxg7 52.f8=Q Rg6 53.Qf5 Rc6 54.Qb5+ Ka7 55.Ka4 Ra6 56.Qd5 Kb8 57.Qd8+ Ka7 58.Qg8 Kb6?!**

Reluctance to part with the a-pawn hastens the breakdown of the fortress, but it won't last anyway. White pushes the pawn to c5, brings the king around and plants the queen on d6, forcing a winning pawns ending.

**59.Qb8 Ra7? 60.Qd6#**

## **Going Stale**

They say that stalemate is the ultimate refuge of scoundrels. (Or is it perpetual check? Scoundrels everywhere!) The battle between stalemating tactics and anti-stalemating tactics can be fascinating.

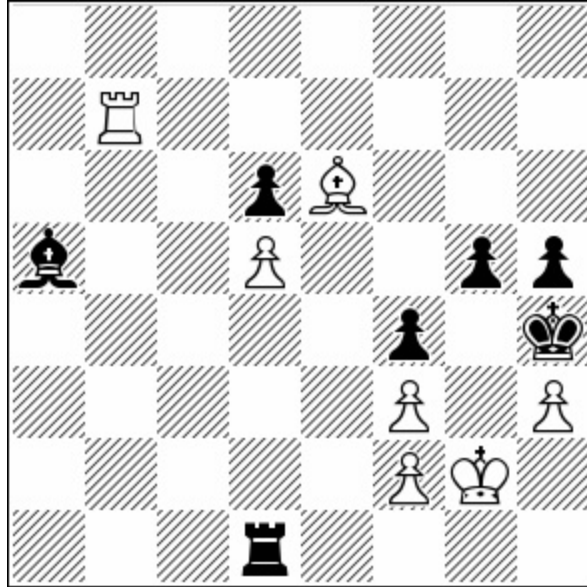
**Game 111 – Ruy Lopez**

**Frederick Yates**

**Akiba Rubinstein**

**Moscow 1925**

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3  
Na5 9.Bc2 c5 10.d4 Qc7 11.Nbd2 Nc6 12.Nf1 cxd4 13.cxd4 Bg4 14.d5 Nd4  
15.Bd3 Nh5 16.Be3 Bxf3 17.gxf3 Nf4 18.Bxf4 exf4 19.Nd2 Bf6 20.Nb3 0-0  
21.Nxd4 Bxd4 22.Qd2 Qe7 23.Rac1 Qf6 24.Rc2 g6 25.Rec1 Rfb8 26.b4  
Re8 27.Kh1 Kg7 28.Bf1 Reb8 29.Rc6 Be5 30.Bh3 Ra7 31.Bc8 Rba8  
32.Rc7 Qd8 33.Rxa7 Rxa7 34.Rc6 a5 35.Ba6 axb4 36.Qxb4 Qh4 37.Kg2  
Qg5+ 38.Kh1 f5 39.exf5 Qxf5 40.Kg2 Qd3 41.Qxb5 Qxb5 42.Bxb5 Rxa2  
43.Bd3 Rd2 44.Be4 Kf6 45.Rc2 Rd1 46.Re2 Bd4 47.Bc2 Rc1 48.Re6+ Kg5  
49.Re2 Bc5 50.h3 Ra1 51.Kh2 Ra3 52.Kg2 Rc3 53.Be4 Rc4 54.Kh2 Rd4  
55.Kg2 Kh4 56.Kh2 Rb4 57.Kg2 Rb7 58.Bd3 g5 59.Bf5 h5 60.Be6 Rb1  
61.Bf5 Rd1 62.Be4 Rd4 63.Kh2 Rd1 64.Kg2 Bd4 65.Bc2 Rc1 66.Bf5 Be5  
67.Rd2 Ra1 68.Be6 Bc3 69.Rc2 Ba5 70.Rb2 Rd1 71.Rb7**



The players have been maneuvering for thirty moves in this lifeless ending. Presumably, Rubinstein, the acknowledged endgame maestro, was trying to win, but with Yates' patient defense, it has yielded him nothing. Suddenly Yates has abandoned the defense of the second rank, and Rubinstein fails to smell the rat.

**71...Rd2??**

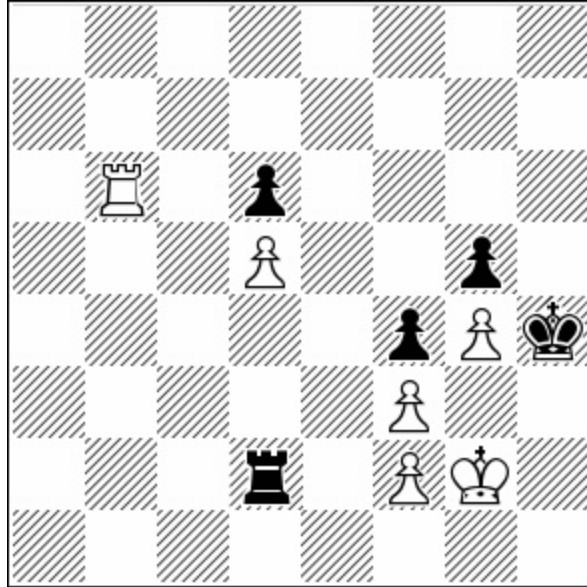
Black actually had to find 71...Be1! to keep the balance. The threat of 72...Rd2 would compel the rook to retreat back to b2.

**72.Bg4!! Bb6!**

Black has to distract the rook from access to the h-file to keep living.

**73.Rxb6 hxg4 74.hxg4?**

Yates is looking for a direct finish, but creating a stalemate situation is walking out on the edge. He could have won routinely with 74.fxg4 f3+ (74...Rxd5 75.Rb8 f3+ 76.Kh2) 75.Kxf3 Rd3+ 76.Ke4 Rxh3 77.f3 and the point would have been scored without drama (and less fun for us).



(back to the exercises) ***Solution to Puzzle 66:***

**74...Rb2?**

74...Rc2!! is the amazing drawing resource. The point is that White needs to get his rook to the right of Black's rook, so that the pawns in the middle shield it from harrassment. But 75.Rb4 Rc4! denies him the chance to get there – there is no escape from the rook sliding up and down the c-file.

**75.Rc6!!**

75.Rxd6? Rb6 with another eternal repetition.

**75...Rb1**

After 75...Rc2, White's rook is defended, so he can release the stalemate with 76.Kg1! Rb2 77.Rc8 Rb1+ 78.Kg2 and win as in the game.

**76.Rc4 Re1**

76...Rb4 77.Re4 is the same.

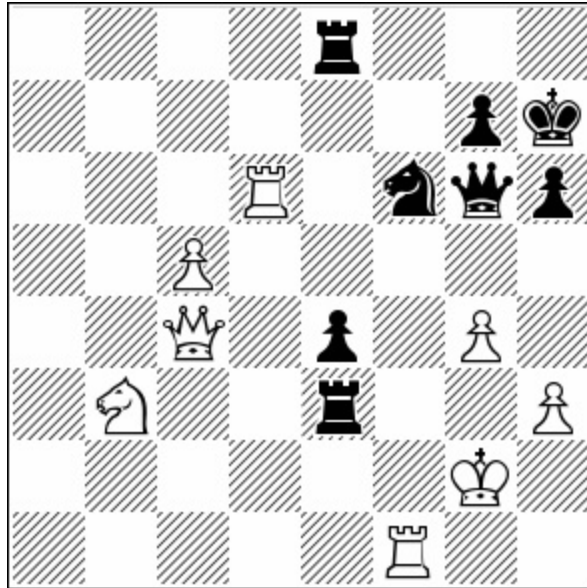
**77.Re4 Rxe4**

After 77...Re2 78.Re6! Rxe6 79.dxe6, Black has a pawn to move, much to his chagrin.

**78.fxe4 Kxg4 79.e5 f3+ 80.Kg1 Kf5 81.e6 1-0**

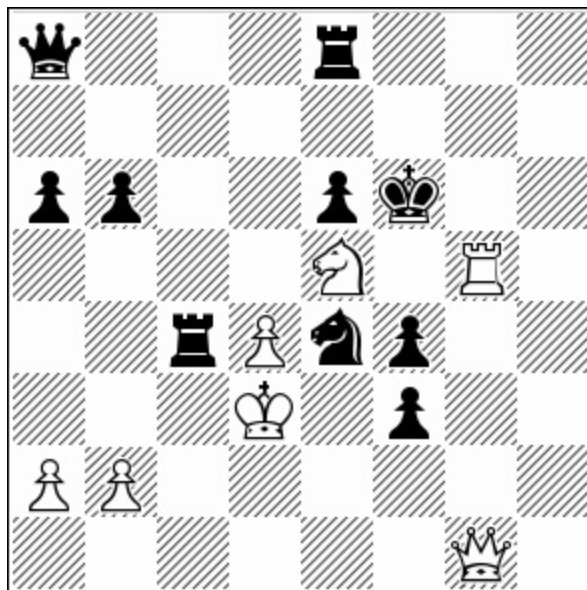
# Whoops! – Puzzles

67 (go to the solution)



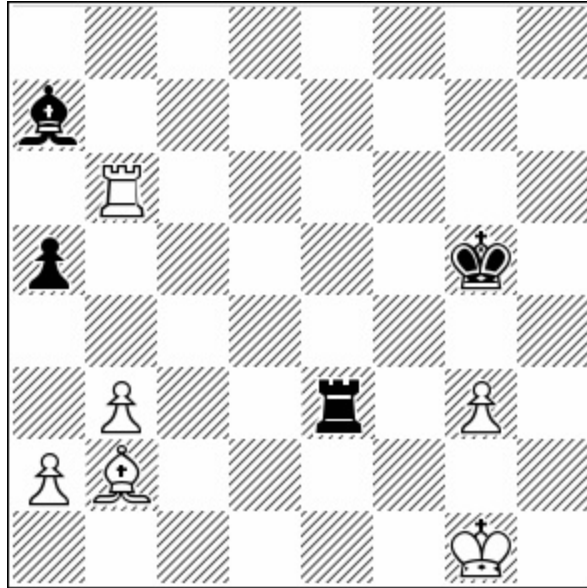
*Black to play wins  
Motylev-Tomashevsky*

68 (go to the solution)



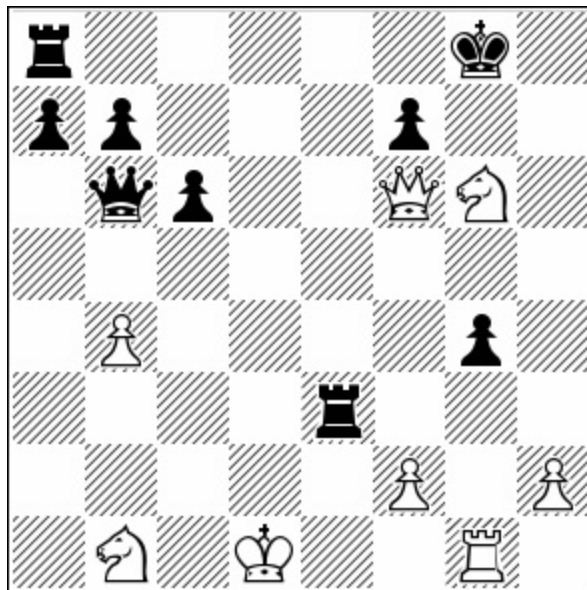
*White to play wins*  
*Nabaty-Lomasov*

**69 (go to the solution)**



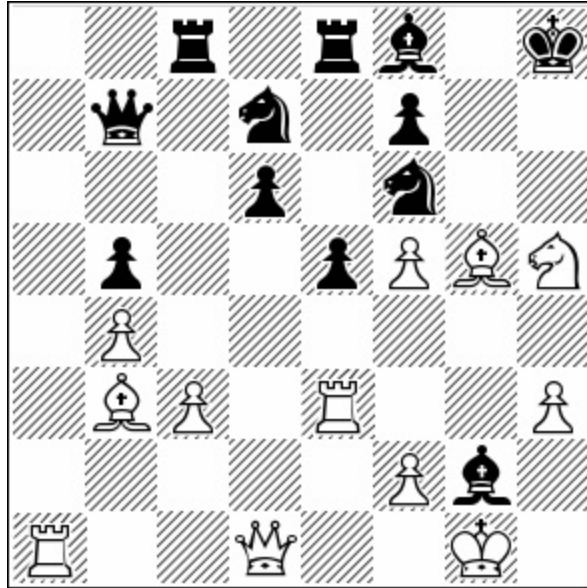
*White to play wins*  
*Sevian-Bok*

**70 (go to the solution)**



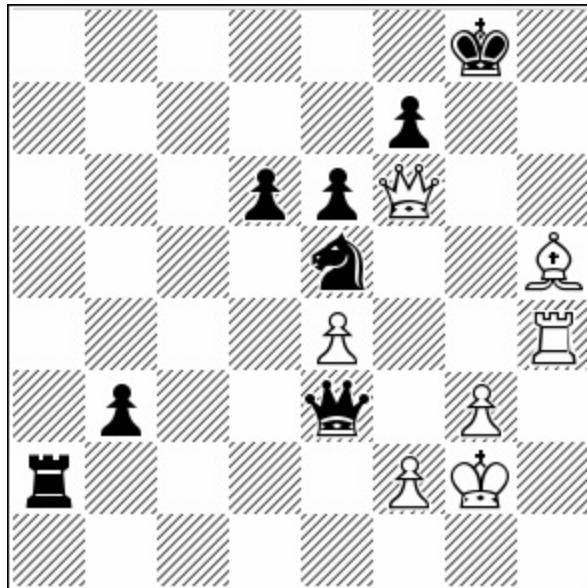
*Black to play wins  
Flores-Shirov*

**71 (go to the solution)**



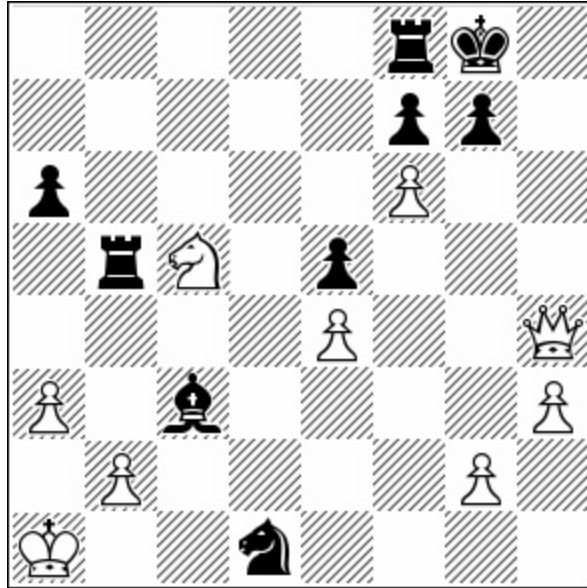
*Black to play wins  
Ni Hua-Leon Hoyos*

**72 (go to the solution)**



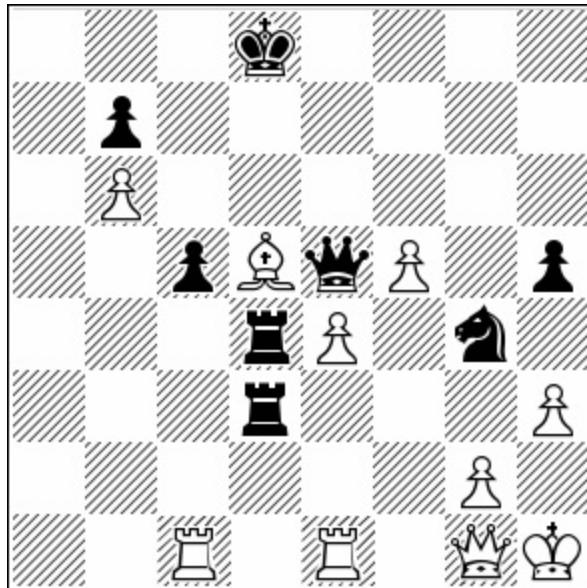
*Black to play wins  
Matlakov-Iljiushenok*

**73 (go to the solution)**



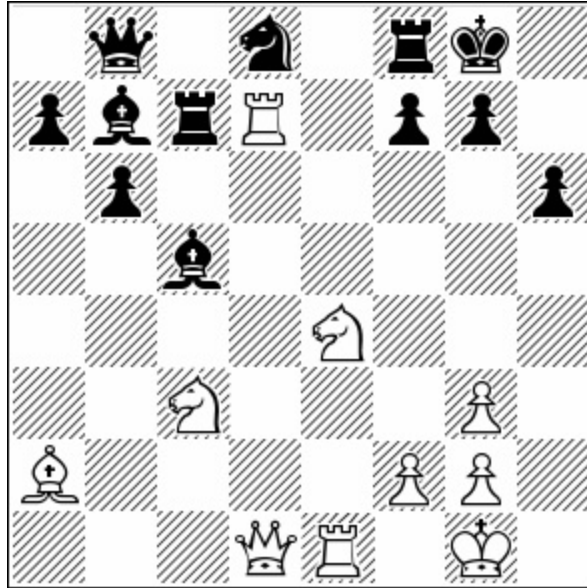
*White to play wins  
Svidler-Indjic*

**74 (go to the solution)**



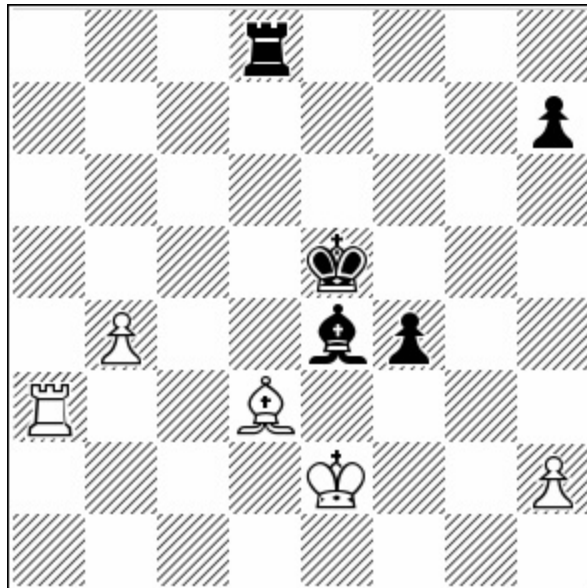
*Black to play draws*  
*Caruana-So*

**75 (go to the solution)**



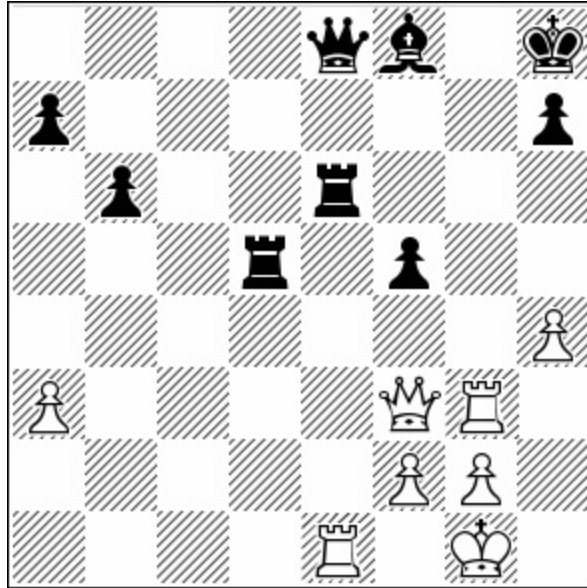
*White to play wins*  
*Flores-Shankland*

**76 (go to the solution)**



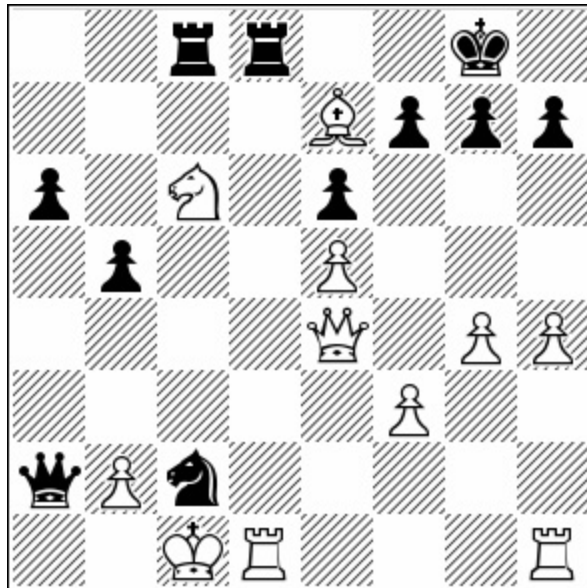
*Black to play wins*  
*Morozevich-Vidit*

**77 (go to the solution)**



*White to play wins*  
*Gupta-Ivanchuk*

**78 (go to the solution)**



*Black to play draws*  
*Svidler-Wells*

## **Chapter 8**

### **Whoops!**

The title implies that this chapter is about blunders, and to some extent it is. But the blunders obscure the tightness of the battle in many of these games. The focus here is the nature of the mistakes; a particular fatal flaw sabotaging an otherwise fine effort.

Most of the examples feature moving a piece (unsurprisingly, usually the king) to the wrong (but maybe almost right) square. We will also explore the types of misconceptions that doom our offenders to their fate.

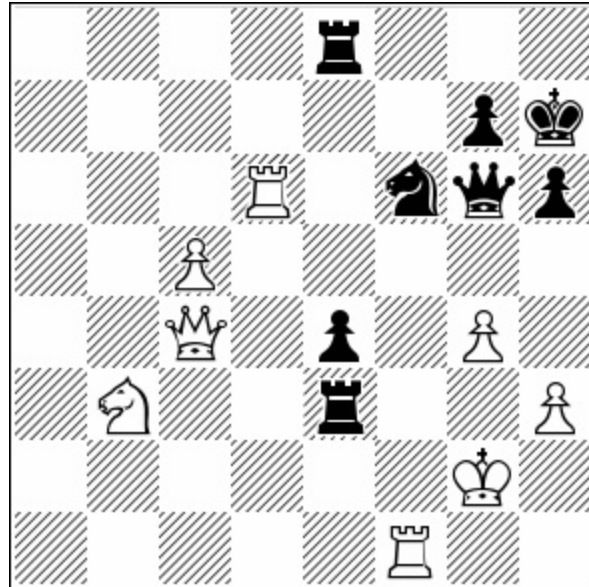
### **Carpe Diem**

He who hesitates is lost. In the following game, both players in turn throw away their shot with an instinctive ‘solid’ move.

Game 112 – Ruy Lopez  
**Alexander Motylev** 2668  
**Evgeny Tomashevsky** 2710  
Sochi rapid 2017

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 0-0 8.a4 b4 9.a5 d6 10.d3 Be6 11.Bxe6 fxe6 12.Nbd2 Qe8 13.c3 Rb8 14.d4 bxc3 15.bxc3 exd4 16.cxd4 Rb5 17.Ba3 Qd7 18.Qc2 Nxa5 19.Rec1 c5 20.e5 dxe5 21.Bxc5 Bxc5 22.dxc5 Nc6 23.Qc4 Rb4 24.Qc3 Rf4 25.Rxa6 e4 26.Ne5 Nxe5 27.Rd6 Qf7 28.Qxe5 Rxf2 29.h3 Re2 30.Rf1 h6 31.Nb3 Qg6 32.Qxe6+ Kh7 33.g4 Re3 34.Kg2 Re8 35.Qc4**

This was a rapid game, and I’m going to assume that both players were very low on time, bringing down their normal high level of play!



(back to the exercises) ***Solution to Puzzle 67:***

**35...Qg5?**

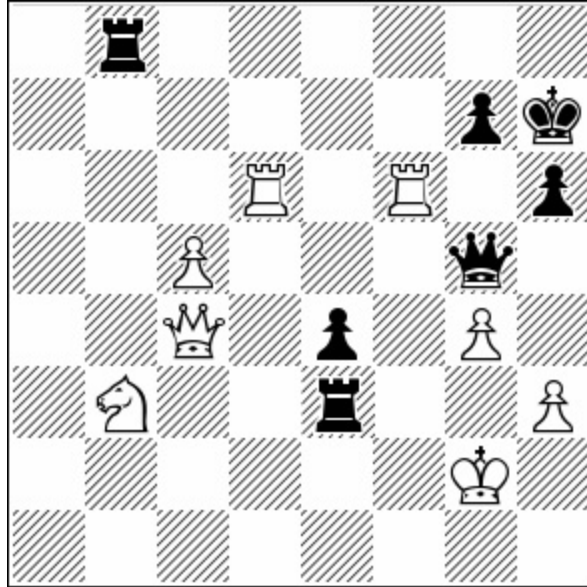
It certainly feels that Black's kingside breakthrough is inevitable. Black unpins the knight to prepare a crushing knight sacrifice on g4, but the queen was doing something important on g6.

Black had several good moves, but the killer was 35...Rhx3! 36.Kxh3 Qxg4+ 37.Kh2 Re5 and mate follows.

**36.Rxf6!**

Whoops. The rook can't be taken because of 37.Qf7+, so Tomashevsky pretends that nothing happened.

**36...Rb8**



### 37.Rb6??

I think that players of various levels unconsciously alter their approach when they win material. It seems that White will win with his extra piece if he simply defends, but with his exposed king, he should still have been in ‘Hill Street Blues’ mode – get to them before they get to us.

The possibility of winning by consolidation should not distract us from continuing to pursue offense. With the knight gone, Black is outnumbered on the kingside. 37.Qf7! was a killing move, setting up a deadly mating threat, e.g. 37...Rxb3 38.Rxh6+ Qxh6 39.Rxh6+ Kxh6 40.Qh5#. The desperate 37...Rxh3 can be handled by 38.Rg6, though even after 38.Kxh3 there is no perpetual. 37.Rxh6+ would also have been an effective move, removing Black’s queen because if 37...gxh6, 38.Rd7+ Kh8 39.Qf7 would mate.

### 37...Rxb6 38.Rxb6 Qf4

Suddenly White cannot stop checkmate.

### 39.Rxh6+ Kxh6 40.Qe6+ g6 0-1

## Wrong Castling

Castling is of course one of the best moves in chess. It can get your king out of danger and prepare to activate a rook in the center. Yet on rare occasions a ‘castling substitute’ will get the job done, while the real thing comes up short.

## Just the King

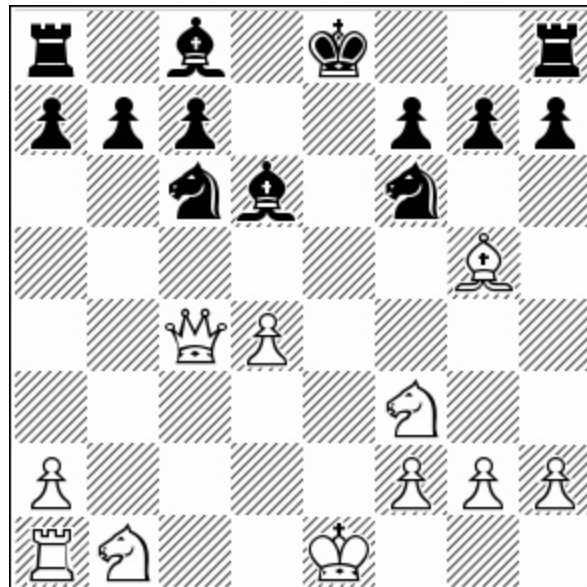
Game 113 – Evans Gambit

**RickMolland** 1032

**PillowfaceMNZ** 1076

Chess.com 2022

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.b4 Bxb4 5.c3 Bc5 6.Qb3 Qe7 7.d4 exd4  
8.Bg5 Qxe4+ 9.Kd1 d5 10.Re1 Qxe1+ 11.Kxe1 dxc4 12.Qxc4 Bd6 13.cxd4  
Nf6



This position occurred in an informal game between two low-rated players. Tactics are not just for GMs. White should probably focus on completing his development, keeping in mind that Black has more pieces.

**14.d5 Ne5!?**

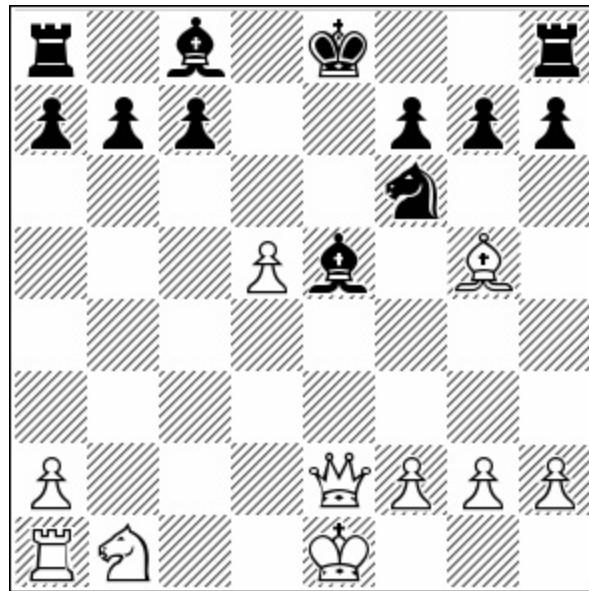
More active than 14...Ne7, but what about a pin on the e-file?

**15.Nxe5**

The pin doesn't produce results on this turn – Black would actually have had a fine game after 15.Qe2 0-0! 16.Nxe5 Re8 17.f4 Nxd5. Black would swiftly add to his compensation for the queen.

### 15...Bxe5 16.Qe2?

White goes all in on the pin, leaving him with no defense on the long diagonal if he doesn't snare the bishop. He should have been content with the simple 16.Nc3.



### 16...0-0?

Preparing to bring the rook to face off against the opposing queen is indeed the right idea, but this is the wrong execution. White could now have cashed his queen in for three units with 17.Qxe5 Re8 18.Bxf6! Rxe5+ 19.Bxe5.

The correct solution was the counter-intuitive 16...Kd8!! to bring extra protection to the imminent rook deployment (16...Kd7 would also suffice).

Then 17.Qxe5 (not much choice with the rook hanging on a1) 17...Re8 18.Bxf6+ gxf6 19.Qxe8+ Kxe8 leaves Black with a vastly superior endgame.

## You Had Me at Rf8

The next game is a rare example of making half a move too many!

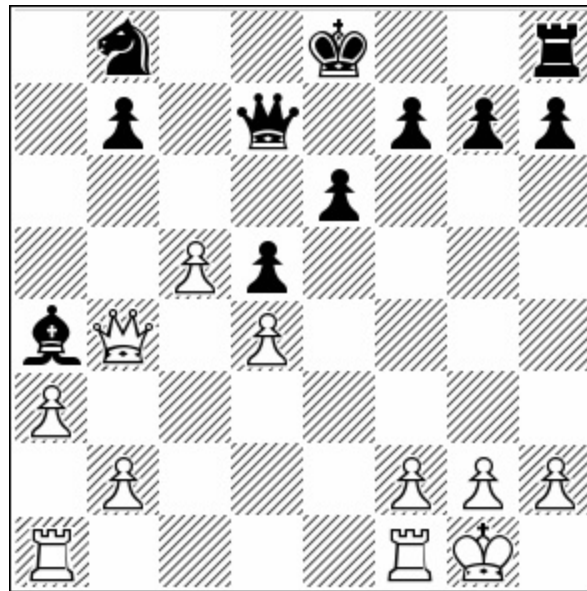
Game 114 – Nimzo-Indian Defense

**Chanda Sandipan 2579**

**Vasyl Ivanchuk 2726**

Gibraltar 2018

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e3 c5 5.Ne2 cxd4 6.exd4 d5 7.c5 Ne4 8.Bd2  
Nxd2 9.Qxd2 a5 10.a3 Bxc3 11.Nxc3 a4 12.Nxa4 Rxa4 13.Bb5+ Bd7  
14.Bxa4 Bxa4 15.Qb4 Qd7 16.0-0**

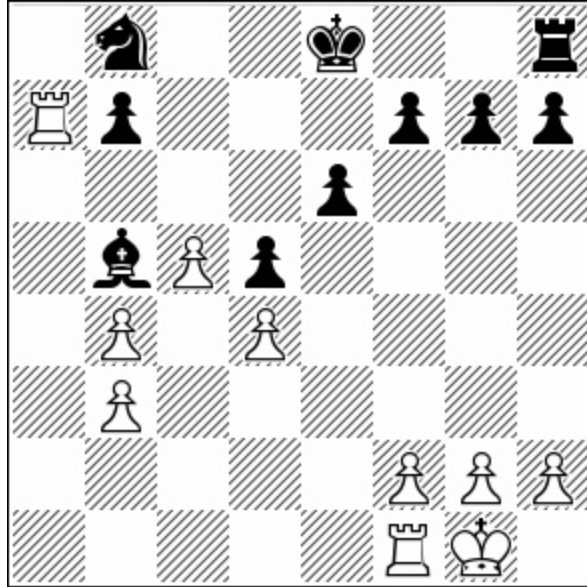


In the opening, White tried a speculative sacrifice of two pieces for a rook. His queenside majority may look imposing, but it's not easy to mobilize after 16...0-0 17.b3 Bb5 18.Rfc1 Ba6. Black has great counterplay in the center with ...e6-e5 as well.

**16...Qb5?!**

Ivanchuk is trying to make everything perfect, but there is a risk in trading queens, as the advantage of the minor pieces can diminish in the endgame.

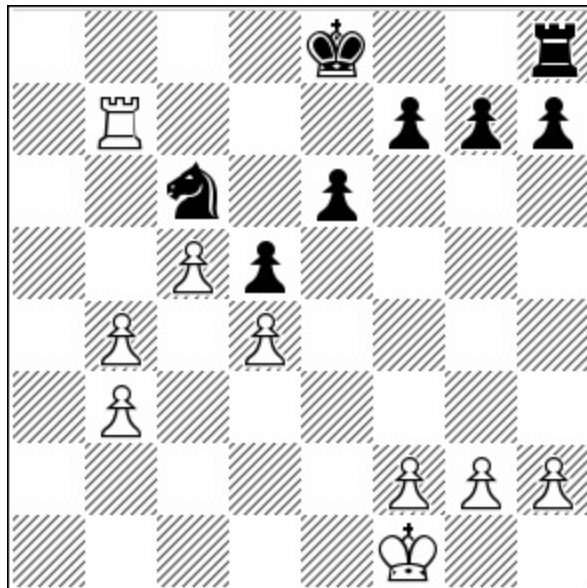
**17.b3! Qxb4 18.axb4 Bb5 19.Ra7!**



Ivanchuk may have made the very human assumption that the king's rook would flee from capture. But then Black would play 19...Kd7 and 20...Kc6 and the blockade would be complete.

Now, however, the pawns are unleashed.

**19...Bxf1 20.Rxb7 Nc6 21.Kxf1**



**21...0-0?**

The king is needed to help hold back White's pawn mass. 21...Rf8!! 22.b5

Nxd4 23.b6 (after 23.c6 Nxb5 24.Rxb5 Ke7, Black is actually better, as White can't maintain his queenside pawns) 23...Kd8! 24.Ra7 Nc6 and White can't manage more than a draw: 25.Rc7 (25.Ra8+ Ke7 26.Rxf8 Kxf8 27.b7 Ke7 28.b4 e5 29.b5 Nb8 with a standstill; Black cannot resolve the situation with the queenside pawn bubble, but White's king is kept at bay by the d-pawn) 25...Nd4 26.b4 Nb5 27.Rb7 Kc8 28.c6 Nd4 29.Rc7+ Kb8 and if White doesn't give the perpetual, Black will happily sacrifice for the c6-pawn.

## 22.b5 Na5

The pawns roll after 22...Nxd4 23.c6.

## 23.Rc7

**Black resigned** now. It's a bit of a 'rage quit' as there is still a trick or two left: 23...Nxb3 24.b6 Na5 25.b7? Nxb7 26.Rxb7 g5 would actually hold, but instead 25.Ke2 and a march to the knight would win cleanly.

## Wrong King Move

Foolish castling is rarer than the very common sin of misplacing the king in the midst of tactics. Now we examine a few examples of a bad choice of move for the king leading to misfortune.

As a coach, I often invoke the name of Ray Parker Jr., the singer of the theme from the movie *Ghostbusters*. Ray repeatedly tells the listeners, 'I ain't afraid of no ghosts'. Detecting the difference between genuine threats and ghosts is an important skill for chess tactics.

Now I don't have the data to say that the strong grandmaster avoided a ghost or miscalculated the move he played. But I think most of the readers would have made the same decision.

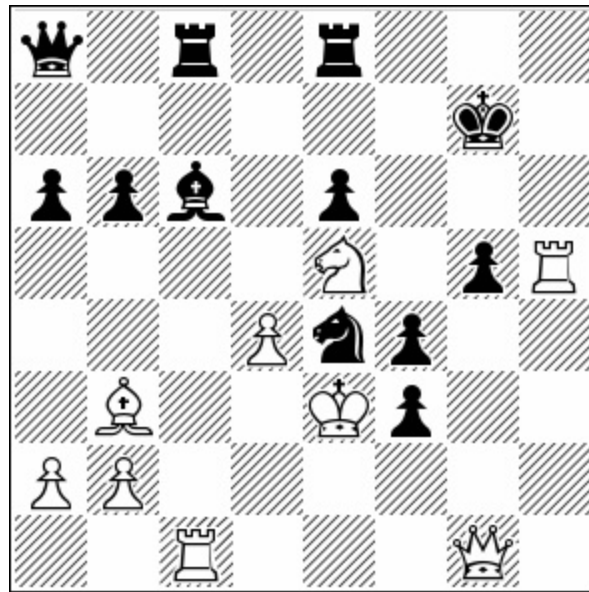
Game 115 – London System

**Tamir Nabaty** 2658

**Semen Lomasov** 2530

Moscow 2018

1.d4 e6 2.Bf4 c5 3.e3 d5 4.Nf3 Nf6 5.Nbd2 Nc6 6.c3 cxd4 7.exd4 Nh5  
 8.Bg5 f6 9.Be3 Bd6 10.g3 0-0 11.Bb5 g6 12.0-0 Ng7 13.Re1 Bd7 14.c4 a6  
 15.Ba4 Re8 16.Bb3 Ne7 17.cxd5 Nxd5 18.Ne4 Bc6 19.Rc1 Rc8 20.Bd2 b6  
 21.h4 Be7 22.Nh2 h5 23.g4 f5 24.Ng5 Bxg5 25.Bxg5 Qd6 26.Nf3 hxg4  
 27.Ne5 Kh7 28.Nf7 Qd7 29.Ne5 Qd6 30.Nf7 Qb8 31.Ne5 Qa8 32.f3 gxf3  
 33.h5 Nxh5 34.Kf2 Ndf6 35.Bxf6 Nxf6 36.Rh1+ Kg7 37.Qg1 Ne4+ 38.Ke3  
 g5 39.Rh5 f4+



White has to make a critical decision about which way to go with his king.

### 40.Kd3??

Nabaty shies away from a discovered check, but walking into harm's way was the safest course for his king. After 40.Kxf3! Black does not even have a threatening check at his disposal:

A) 40...Ng3+? 41.Kf2 goes nowhere, as 41...Nxh5 42.Qxg5+ gets crunched. But White has even stronger – 41.Rxc6 Rxc6 42.Rxg5+ Kf6 43.Rg6+ Kf5 44.Qb1+ Rc2+ 45.d5 Qc8 46.Bxc2+ Kxe5 47.Qe1+ with a winning attack. But the threat is stronger than the execution, as the saying goes, so Black can move the bishop and maintain the threat. White will be able to counter either bishop move:

B) 40...Bd5 41.Rxc8 (41.Ke2 Ng3+ 42.Kd2 Rxc1 43.Rxg5+ Kf6 44.Rg6+

Kf5 45.Qxc1 Ne4+ 46.Kd3 Rh8 47.Qc7 Qe8! and Black will either win with the counterattack or in a superior endgame) 41...Rxc8 42.Qh2! and White survives because Black cannot challenge the h-file and keep the long diagonal open: 42...Rh8 (after 42...Ng3+ 43.Kf2 Nxf5 44.Qxf5 the black king is too exposed for any winning attempt) 43.Bxd5 exd5 44.Qh3 Rxf5 45.Qxf5 Qb7 46.Qg6+ Kf8 47.Qh6+ and again White has enough play on the king for a draw;

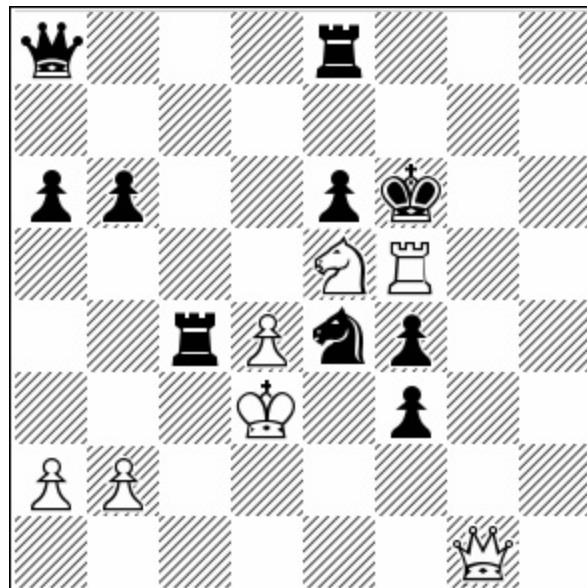
C) 40...Bb7 41.Ke2! (here, 41.Rxc8 Rxc8 42.Qh2? Rh8 kills White's counterplay) 41...Ng3+ 42.Kd2 Rxc1 43.Rxg5+ Kf8 (now 43...Kf6? 44.Rg6+ Kf5 45.Qxc1 Ne4+ 46.Ke1 is bad for Black because 46...Rh8 allows 47.Bxe6 mate!) 44.Ng6+! Kf7 45.Ne5+ Kf8=.

### 40...Bb5+ 41.Bc4 Rxc4!

It's logical to capture in the way that will maintain the pin, but it's worth noting that 41...Bxc4+ 42.Rxc4 Rxc4 43.Rxg5 mates because if 43...Kf6...

(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 68:*

...44.Rf5+!! works:



*analysis diagram*

44...exf5 45.Qg6+ Ke7 46.Qf7+ and mate on d7 next.

**42.Rxg5+**

42.Nxc4 Qd5 and White's position will soon collapse.

**42...Kf6 43.Rg6+**

Now, if 43.Rf5+ exf5 44.Qg6+ Ke7, Black escapes because the bishop covers d7.

**43...Ke7 44.Rg7+ Kd8 45.Nxc4 f2**

It's just a matter of time here. Black soon finds a nice mating sequence.

**46.Qf1 Qd5 47.b3 Qf5 48.Qg2 Bxc4+ 49.bxc4 Nc5+ 50.Kc3**

Or 50.Ke2 Qd3+ 51.Kxf2 Qe3+ 52.Kf1 Qxc1+.

**50...Qd3+ 51.Kb4 Qd2+ 52.Rc3 Qb2+ 53.Rb3 Nd3+ 54.Ka4 Qxa2+**

**White resigned** because 55.Ra3 Qxc4 is mate.

### **Buenos No Check**

There are few king moves more important than sidestepping perpetual check. The wrong square can waste all the good work done to win.

Game 116 – English Opening

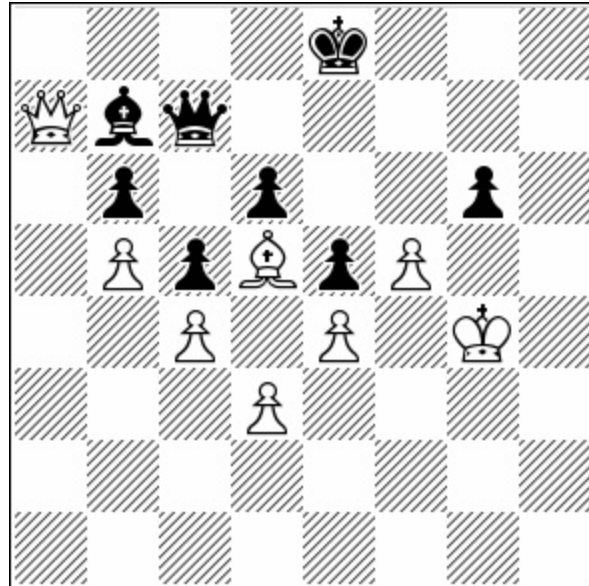
**Ding Liren 2778**

**Radoslaw Wojtaszek 2744**

Shamkir 2018

**1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 e5 3.Nf3 Nc6 4.g3 Bb4 5.Bg2 d6 6.0-0 0-0 7.d3 Re8 8.Bd2 Nd4 9.a3 Nxf3+ 10.Bxf3 Bxc3 11.Bxc3 c6 12.e4 Bh3 13.Re1 c5 14.b4 b6 15.a4 Nd7 16.a5 Be6 17.Ra3 Rb8 18.b5 Qc8 19.axb6 axb6 20.Re2 Ra8 21.Rea2 Rxa3 22.Rxa3 Qc7 23.Bg2 Nf8 24.f4 f6 25.f5 Bc8 26.Bd2 Bb7**

27.g4 h6 28.h4 Nh7 29.Bf3 Qe7 30.Kf2 Rb8 31.Qc1 Ra8 32.Rxa8+ Bxa8  
 33.Qa1 Bb7 34.Qa7 Qc7 35.g5 fxg5 36.hxg5 Nxc5 37.Bxc5 hxg5 38.Bh5  
 Kf8 39.Kg3 Ke7 40.Kg4 Kd8 41.Bg6 Ke7 42.Kxc5 Kf8 43.Kh5 Ke7  
 44.Kg4 Kd8 45.Bh7 Ke8 46.Bg8 g6 47.Bd5



White will have an extra piece in his pocket if he can escape the checks.

**47...gxf5+ 48.Kf3**

So far, so good. 48.Kg3 Qd8! forces perpetual check.

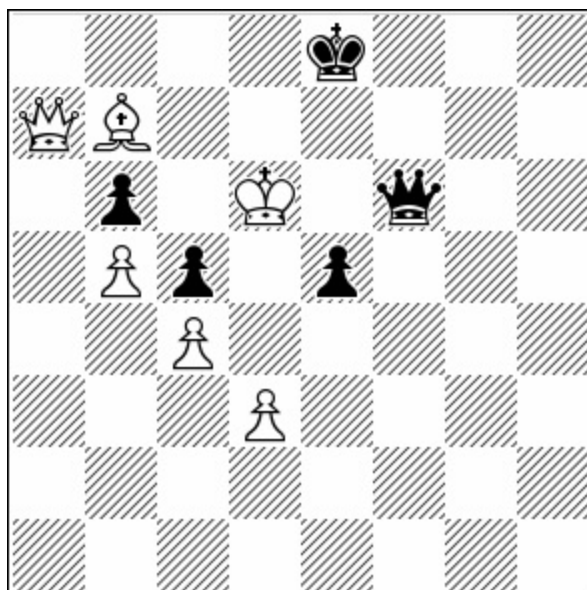
**48...fxe4+ 49.Ke3??**

Ding Liren finds the landmine! 49.dxe4? Qc8 is also a false lead, but 49.Ke2 does the job. The key is to not let the queen get the right checking angle.

49...exd3+ 50.Kd2 Qd8 51.Qxb7 Qg5+ 52.Kxd3 allows the king to escape.

49.Kf2 also wins, e.g. 49...Qd8 50.Qxb7 Qh4+ 51.Ke2! etc.

**49...Qd8 50.Bxb7 Qg5+ 51.Kxe4 Qf4+ 52.Kd5 Qf3+ 53.Kxd6 Qf6+**



**54.Kd5**

Probably Ding Liren missed that his king does not escape after 54.Kc7 Qd8+ 55.Kc6 Qf6+.

**54...Qf3+ 55.Kxe5 Qg3+**

Black just has to give checks that do not allow the bishop to block.

**56.Kf5 Qh3+ 57.Kf4 Qh4+ 58.Kf3 Qf6+ 59.Ke2 Qb2+ 60.Ke1 Qc1+ 61.Ke2 Qb2+ 62.Kf1 Qc1+ 63.Kg2 Qd2+ 64.Kg3 Qg5+ 65.Kf3 Qf6+ 66.Ke3 Qd4+ 67.Ke2**

Draw.

### **Stay Away**

Even in an endgame, the task for the king can be just to keep it from getting in the way.

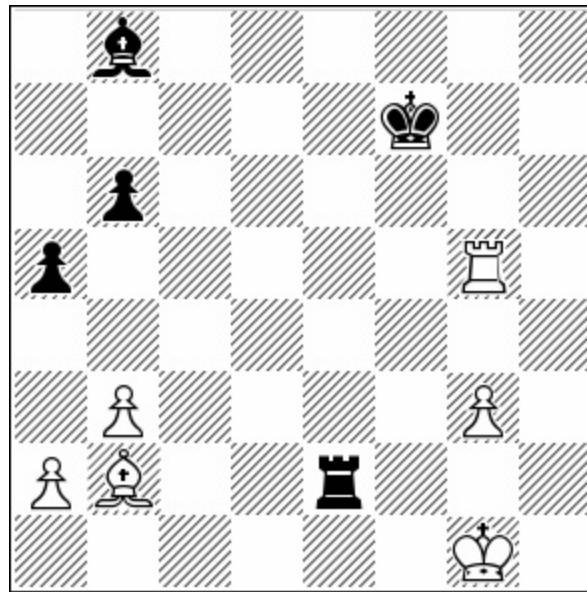
Game 117 – Queen’s Indian Defense

**Sam Sevian 2613**

**Benjamin Bok 2636**

St Louis 2018

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 Bb4+ 4.Bd2 Be7 5.Bg2 d5 6.Nf3 0-0 7.0-0 c6 8.Qc2 Nbd7 9.Rd1 b6 10.b3 a5 11.Bc3 Ne4 12.Bb2 f5 13.Nc3 Ba6 14.e3 Rc8 15.Rac1 Bd6 16.Ne2 Qe7 17.Nf4 Rfd8 18.Qb1 Bb7 19.Rc2 Nef6 20.Ne5 Bb8 21.Nxd7 Nxd7 22.Nd3 Bd6 23.Qc1 h5 24.Nf4 g5 25.Nd3 h4 26.Ne5 hxg3 27.hxg3 Nxe5 28.dxe5 Bb8 29.cxd5 exd5 30.e6 Qxe6 31.e4 f4 32.exd5 cxd5 33.Rxc8 Rxc8 34.Qd2 Re8 35.Bxd5 Qxd5 36.Qxd5+ Bxd5 37.Rxd5 fxg3 38.Rxg5+ Kf7 39.fxg3 Re2



It seems that Bok easily has enough to draw. There are few pawns left on the board and he clearly has strong counterplay. But he lets his guard down as Sevian strives to create some tricks:

**40.Rf5+ Kg6?**

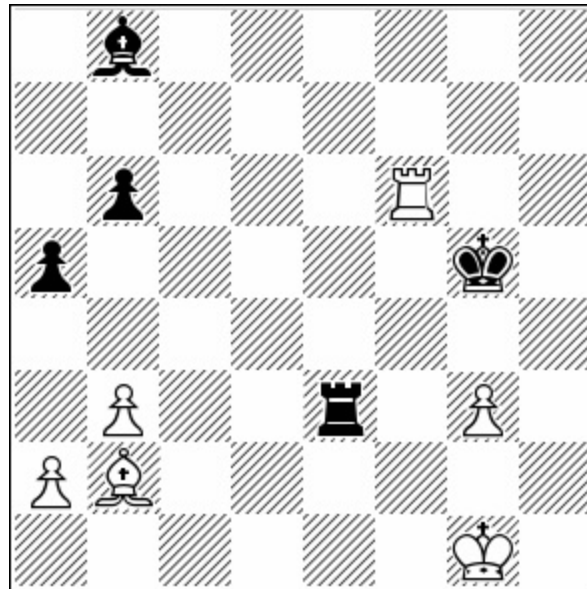
Black's future problems stem from the unfortunate placement of his king. It could have stayed off the third rank, or moved towards the queenside, but Black's choice is the worst of both worlds.

40...Ke8 is a good safe square, but Black can be active in the other direction as well: 40...Ke6 41.Rf6+ (41.Rf2 Re1+ 42.Kg2 Re3 43.Rf6+ Kd5 44.Rxb6 Bc7) 41...Kd5 42.Rf2 Re1+ 43.Kh2 Re3 44.Rg2 b5 and in both cases White's winning chances are minimal.

**41.Rf2 Re3 42.Rf6+ Kg5?**

This location is even more unfortunate, putting the king on the same diagonal as the rook.

42...Kh5 was stronger to avoid White's bishop, but 43.Kf2 Rd3 44.Bc1 gives White real hope for a win.



**43.Rf8!**

43.Rxb6 was even possible because if 43...Ba7...

(back to the exercises) ***Solution to Puzzle 69:***

...44.Bc1!! Bxb6 45.Kf2 wins. But Black can do better – 43...Rxc3+! 44.Kf2 Ba7 with a draw in sight.

**43...Re2!**

Bok starts to resist properly. 43...Rxc3+ 44.Kf2 Bd6 45.Rg8+ Kh4 46.Rxc3 Bxc3+ 47.Kf3 wins easily, as White will collect both queenside pawns with his king.

43...Bd6 44.Bc1! also neatly simplifies.

**44.Bf6+**

Another flaw of the king on g5.

**44...Kg4!**

Black has to complicate, as 44...Kg6 45.Rxb8 Kxf6 46.Rxb6+ wins easily in the rook ending.

**45.Rxb8 Kxg3 46.Bc3?**

46.Rg8+ Kf3 47.a3 was the way to secure the win, e.g. 47...Re3 48.Kh2!.

**46...Rxa2**

Black is suddenly close to the objective.

**47.Rxb6 Kf3 48.Rb5 a4 49.b4 Rg2+ 50.Kf1 Rc2 51.Rc5 Ke4 52.Be1 Ra2 53.b5 Rb2?**

After 53...a3, White cannot preserve his pawn. Of course, R & B vs R is not always a sure thing.

**54.Bc3 Rc2 55.b6 a3 56.b7 Rc1+ 57.Ke2 Rb1 58.Rc4+ Kd5 59.Rb4 1-0**

### **The Last Detail**

It may feel more natural to choose a certain square for the king, but the details are the most important thing.

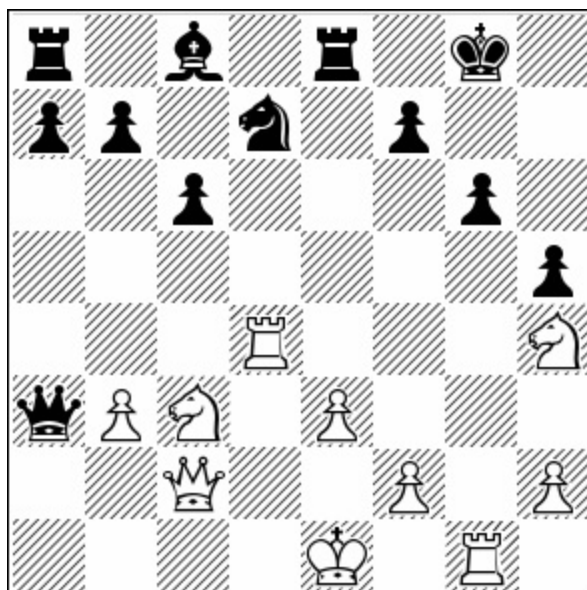
Game 118 – Réti Opening

**Diego Flores** 2604

**Alexei Shirov** 2698

Buenos Aires 2012

**1.c4 c6 2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 Nf6 4.Nc3 Nbd7 5.Qc2 e6 6.b3 Bd6 7.Bb2 0-0 8.Rg1 Qe7 9.g4 Ba3 10.Bxa3 Qxa3 11.d4 Re8 12.g5 Nh5 13.Be2 g6 14.Nh4 e5 15.Rd1 dxc4 16.Bxh5 exd4 17.Rxd4 cxb3 18.axb3 gxh5 19.g6 hxg6**



White is about to rip open the kingside, but how does he do it?

## 20.Nxg6

This move is easy to make, as the knight cannot be captured, leaving a gash in the king's shelter with nothing to show for it. The other capture is a real sacrifice, but forces acceptance, after which it's a matter of calculating tactics to the end: 20.Rxg6+ and now:

A) After 20...Kf8 21.Rh6, White hasn't sacrificed anything and his pieces stand ready for a final assault, e.g. 21...Ne5 22.Rh8+ Ke7 23.Nd5+! cxd5 24.Qc7+ Bd7 (24...Kf6 25.Rxe8; 24...Nd7 25.Nf5+ Ke6 26.Ng7+ Kf6 27.Qf4+ Kxg7 28.Qh6#) 25.Qxe5+ Kd8 26.Rxe8+ Bxe8 27.Rxd5+ Bd7 28.Qh8+ and White takes the rook in the corner;

B) 20...fxg6 21.Qxg6+ Kf8 and now the obvious 22.Rf4+ Ke7 23.Re4+ Kd8 24.Rxe8+ Kc7 is not over, as the king has reached relative safety. Instead, the quiet move 22.Nf5!! leaves Black defenseless. Then 22...Re7 23.Qh6+ Kg8 (23...Ke8 24.Qh8+ Kf7 25.Qxh5+ paves the way for a decisive rook check: 25...Kf8 26.Qh8+ Kf7 27.Nh6+ Kg6 28.Qg8+, forcing mate in a few moves) 24.Qg5+ Kf8 25.Nxe7 Qxe7 26.Rf4+ Ke8 27.Re4 Ne5 28.Rxe5 Be6 29.Ne4 and White wins.

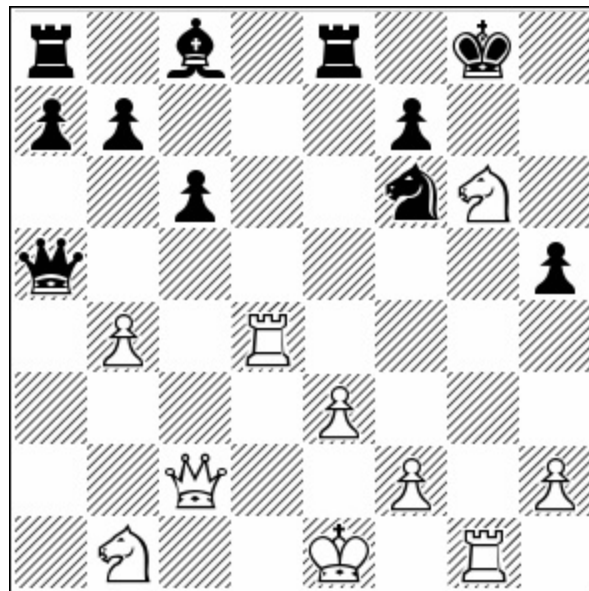
## 20...Nf6!

White is in great shape here, but the lack of a decisive blow must have been annoying.

### 21.Nb1!?

A clever attempt to introduce the queen to the long diagonal, though the strongest move was 21.Rg5! to make sure the rook would not be blocked off.

### 21...Qa5+ 22.b4



### 22...Qb6?

When I was just starting out, I remember reading how Bobby Fischer should have brought his queen back into the corner instead of retreating. The same is true here! Black could have kept his queen active while preventing White's queen from improving with 22...Qa1!. Again, White has to find 23.Rg5! Be6 and now the cool consolidating move 24.Rd1! tidies up the back rank, preparing to finally put the discovered check into play.

### 23.Qc3

For the record, 23.Rg5 was strong here, too, though Flores is headed for a

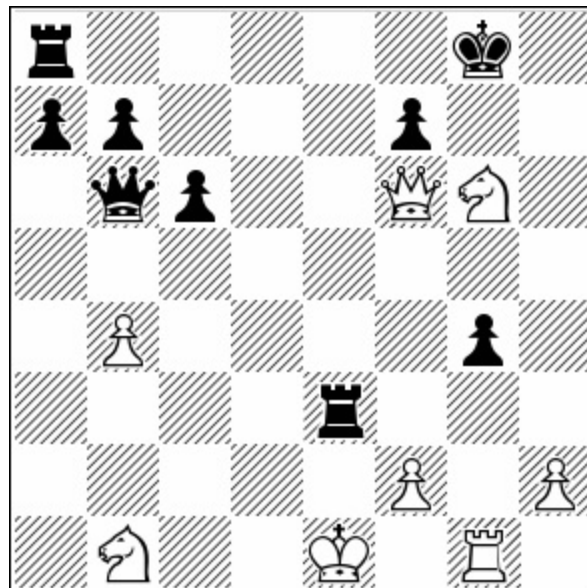
forced win.

### 23...Bg4

The best try. On 23...fxg6, 24.Rxg6+ Kf7 25.Rxf6+ Kxf6 26.Rd6+ forces mate, while if 23...Kh7 24.Rf4 fxg6 25.Rxf6 Rg8 26.Rf7+ Kh6 27.Qc4, White will break through shortly.

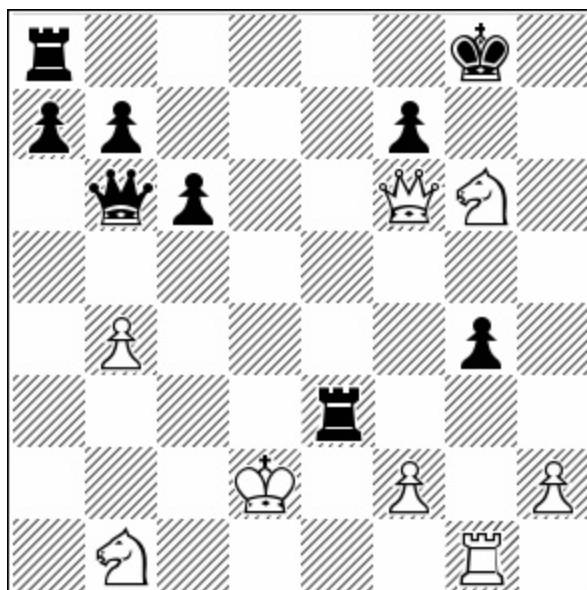
### 24.Rdxg4 hxg4 25.Qxf6 Rxe3+

Black is forced all in on the counterattack because 25...Qxb4+ 26.Nd2 fxg6 27.Qxg6+ Kf8 28.Rxg4 costs him his queen.



### 26.Kd1??

There is a certain logic here as White is poised to block checks with his knight, but Flores has overlooked an important detail. Instead 26.Kd2! would have won, though there are a few tricky points to navigate:



*analysis diagram*

A) 26...Rd8+ 27.Kc1! (not 27.Kc2? Re2+ 28.Kb3 Qd4 and Black wins)  
 27...Qd4 28.Qxd4 Rxd4 29.fxe3 Rc4+ 30.Kb2 fxg6 31.Kb3 Re4 32.Rg3 and  
 White should be able to consolidate and win with his extra piece;

B) 26...Qxb4+ 27.Kxe3 Re8+ (27...fxg6 28.Qxg6+ Kf8 29.Qf6+ Kg8  
 30.Qe6+ Kh8 31.Qe5+ Kg8 32.Nd2+–) 28.Ne5 Qc5+ and now most  
 convincing is 29.Ke4 Qc2+ (29...Qd5+ 30.Kf5!) 30.Kd4 c5+ 31.Kd5 and the  
 checks eventually end. Without a computer vibrating in my pocket I think  
 29.Kd3 may be more prudent, with 29...Qd5+ 30.Kc2 Qxe5 31.Rxg4+ Kf8  
 32.Qh6+ Ke7 33.Qh4+ Kd7 34.Nc3 likely to provide an eventual win.

(back to the exercises) ***Solution to Puzzle 70:***

**26...Qd8+!**

Black wouldn't profit from swapping queens with the king on d2 because the king could take the rook in the end.

**27.Qxd8+ Rxd8+ 28.Kc1 Re4**

White can save the knight on g6, but it is dominated, and Black's emerging

pawn mass on the queenside will be utterly unstoppable. White's cheapos are ultimately turned aside.

**29.Nh4 Rc4+ 30.Kb2 Rxb4+ 31.Kc3 a5 32.h3 Rd5 33.hxg4 Rc5+ 34.Kd3 Rb3+ 35.Kd4 Rc2 36.f4 a4 37.Re1 Rcb2 38.Re8+ Kh7 39.Re7 Rxb1 40.Rxf7+ Kg8 41.Rc7 a3 42.Ke5 a2 43.Kf6 a1=Q+ 44.Kg6 Kf8 45.Nf5 Re1**

And **White resigned.**

### Set-up Pitch

The right king move can be the prelude to a big 'strikeout' while the wrong one can let the opponent circle the bases.

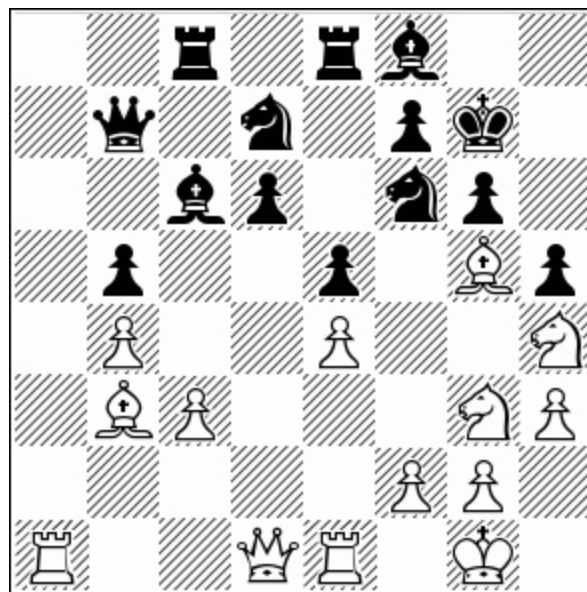
Game 119 – Ruy Lopez

Ni Hua 2710

Manuel Leon Hoyos 2535

Reggio Emilia 2008/09)

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 0-0 8.c3 d6 9.h3 Bb7 10.d4 Re8 11.Nbd2 Bf8 12.d5 Nb8 13.Nf1 Nbd7 14.N3h2 Rc8 15.Bg5 h5 16.a4 g6 17.Nf3 Nc5 18.axb5 axb5 19.Bc2 c6 20.b4 Ncd7 21.dxc6 Bxc6 22.Bb3 Qc7 23.Nh4 Kg7 24.Ng3 Qb7**



In *Better Thinking, Better Chess*, I gave a few examples of positions from my own games with multiple attractive candidates. But this position would really make me crazy!

A) Ni Hua rejected 25.Bh6+ Kxh6 (25...Kg8 26.Nxg6 Bxh6 27.Nf5+--)  
26.Bxf7 with a winning attack:

A1) 26...Kg7 27.Bxg6 Re6 28.Nxh5+ Nxh5 29.Qxh5 Nf6 30.Qg5 Kg8  
31.Bf5+ Kf7 32.f4;

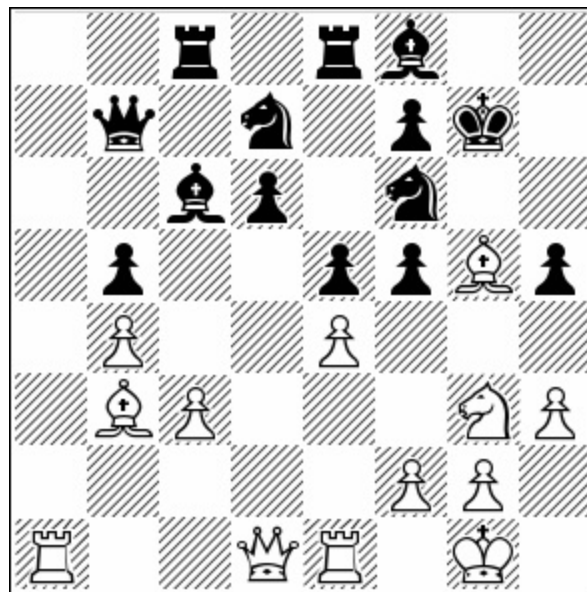
A2) 26...Nxe4 27.Ngf5+ Kh7 28.Bxg6+ Kg8 29.Bh7+ Kxh7 30.Qxh5+ Kg8  
31.Qg6+ Kh8 32.Qf7!;

A3) 26...g5 27.Ngf5+ Kh7 28.Nf3.

B) 25.Qd2 would threaten to win at least a pawn with 26.Bh6+. Now,  
25...Nxe4 26.Nxe4 Bxe4 27.Rxe4 Qxe4 28.Bd5 is a non-starter, and 25...Ng8  
26.f4 f6 27.f5! gives Black no chance to hold back the flood on the kingside.

Ni Hua's move is also dangerous, but the details are certainly more difficult.

**25.Nhf5+!? gxf5**

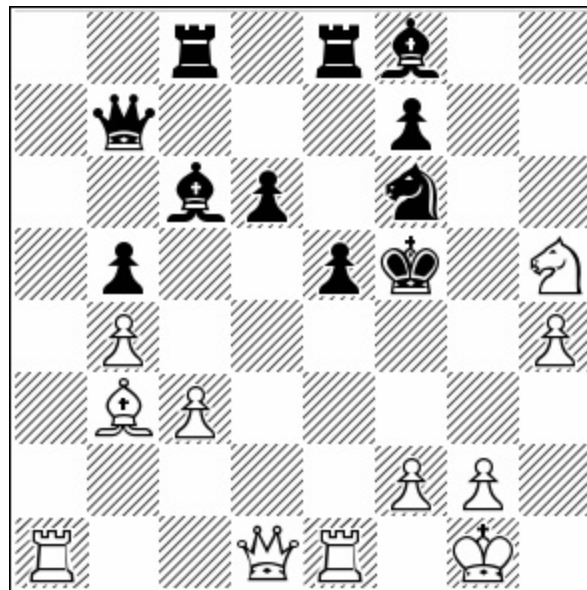


**26.exf5?**

The knee jerk recapture 26.Nxf5+? lead nowhere after 26...Kg6. The text

brings the pawn into the attack while confining the king, but it was stronger to strike with 26.Nxh5+!. Now, 26...Nxh5 looks a bit easier to crack – 27.Qxh5 d5 28.Re3 f4 29.exd5 Bxd5 30.Bxf4 exf4 31.Bxd5 – but a simpler move like 28.Bh6+ Kf6 (28...Kg8 29.exf5) 29.Qxf5+ Ke7 30.Bg5+ f6 31.exd5 Bxd5 32.Bxf6+ leads to a party, too.

26...Kg6 looks sturdier, but after 27.Bxf6 Nxf6 (27...Bxe4 28.Rxe4 Qxe4 29.Bd5 loses the queen) 28.exf5+ Kxf5 White has several winning moves, with 29.h4 being arguably the coolest.



*analysis diagram*

The idea is to restrict the king while creating a checking square on h3 and a hook for the queen to show up on g5. The game could end 29...Kg6 (if 29...Nd5 30.Bxd5 Bxd5 31.Qd3+ Ke6 32.Nf4+ recoups the knight and wins prosaically) 30.Qd3+ Kxh5 (30...Be4 31.Qg3+) 31.Qf5+ Kh6 32.Qxf6+ Kh7 33.Bxf7 and Black loses lots of material to avert checkmate.

### **26...Bxg2**

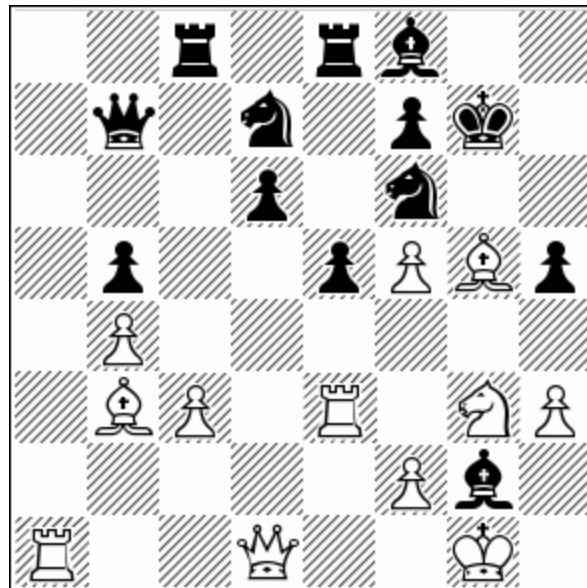
This is a problem with White's attacking decision, as counterplay against the white king confuses the issue.

## 27.Re3?

Ni Hua wants to control the critical f3-square, but the timing doesn't quite work. The stronger 27.Nxh5+ didn't produce a clear result: 27...Kh7 (27...Nxh5? 28.Qxh5 Bd5 29.Ra7 Qxa7 30.Bxd5+-) and now:

A) 28.Bxf6 Bf3! 29.Ra7 Qc6! 30.Bd5! (30.Qd3 Bxh5 31.Bd5 Nxf6 32.Bxc6 Rxc6 greatly favors Black) 30...Bxd5 31.Rxd7 Bh6 32.Re4! with a weird dynamic balance;

B) 28.Nxf6+ Nxf6 29.Ra7! (Black starts attacking after 29.Bxf6 Bf3) 29...Qxa7 30.Bxf6 Bh6 31.Qh5 Bf3! (31...Rg8? 32.Bxf7 Bf3+ 33.Bg6+) 32.Qxf3 Rg8+ 33.Kf1 with somewhat better chances for White.



## **27...Kh7?**

It makes sense to move the king off the g-file, where Black would much rather place a rook. But to which square? Is it better to be exposed to a check by the bishop, or to one by the knight?

27...Kh8! would have made all the difference, as Black would prepare an attack-killing counterstrike: 28.Nxh5 (after 28.Bxf7 Re7 29.Bg6 29...Bxh3 White has lost all the momentum)

(back to the exercises) ***Solution to Puzzle 71:***

28...Bh1! and suddenly White is fatally vulnerable to Black's counterthreats. After 29.Rg3 Rxc3! Black wins.

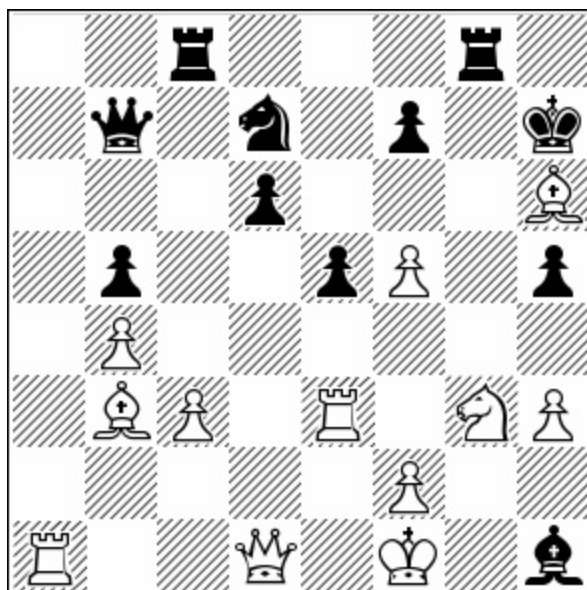
## **28.Bxf6! Bh6**

After 28...Nxf6 29.Nxh5 Black does not have time for the killer ...Bh1!! here because his knight is captured with check. With the king on h8 he would simply be winning! So he is unable to hold back the deluge: 29...Ng8 30.Rg3 Bc6 31.Rxg8 Kxg8 32.Qg4+ Kh8 33.Qh4 Bh6 34.Qf6+ Kh7 35.Bxf7 Rg8+ 36.Bg6+ finito.

## **29.Bg5!**

White is now clearly winning. 29...Bxg5 30.Qxh5+ Bh6 31.Qxf7+ Kh8 32.Qh5 is ruinous.

## **29...Rg8 30.Bxh6 Bh1 31.Kf1**



Black's counterattack disappoints after simple flight. Without a material advantage for Black, White wins rather routinely.

**31...Nf6 32.Qxd6 Bg2+ 33.Ke1 Rc6 34.Qxe5 Kxh6 35.Rd1 Bxh3 36.Rd6 Rxd6 37.Qxd6 Kg7 38.Re7**

38.Nxh5+ Nxh5 39.Re7 is a quicker and more brutal win, but there is no reason for the grandmaster to look further than a trivially won endgame.

**38...Qxe7+ 39.Qxe7 Re8 40.Nxh5+ Kh6 41.Qxe8 Nxe8 42.Bxf7 Nd6 43.Bg6 Bxf5 44.Bxf5 Nxf5 45.Ng3 1-0**

### Step on a Crack

In dynamic endgames, it can be so hard to parse all the competing king moves. In the following game, both players made major, yet quite subtle missteps with their kings.

Game 120 – King's Indian Defense

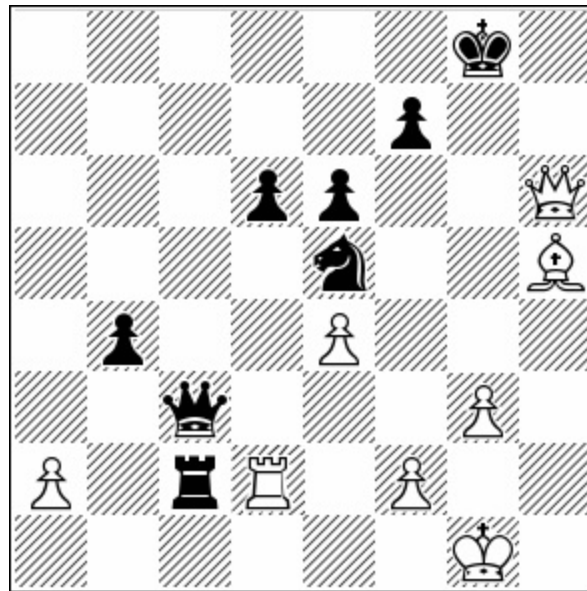
Maxim Matlakov 2704

Ilia Iljiushenok 2516

Sochi tt 2018

**1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 g6 3.c4 Bg7 4.g3 0-0 5.Bg2 d6 6.Nc3 Nc6 7.0-0 a6 8.b3 Rb8**

9.d5 Na5 10.Bg5 c5 11.dxc6 Nxc6 12.Rc1 Bd7 13.e4 b5 14.cxb5 axb5  
 15.Qe2 h6 16.Bd2 b4 17.Nd5 Ng4 18.Rfd1 e6 19.Ne3 Nge5 20.Nxe5 Nxe5  
 21.Nc4 Bb5 22.Be3 Qe7 23.Qd2 Bxc4 24.bxc4 Rfc8 25.Bxh6 Nxc4 26.Qf4  
 Bxh6 27.Qxh6 Rc5 28.Bf1 Rbc8 29.h4 Ne5 30.Be2 Rc2 31.Rxc2 Rxc2  
 32.Rd2 Qc7 33.h5 gxh5 34.Bxh5 Qc3



Black has kept pace with his higher-rated opponent. Matlakov doesn't want to admit it, and makes a bold, or more precisely foolhardy, winning attempt. 35.Rxc2 Qxc2 36.Qg5+ should have led to perpetual check, one way or another.

**35.Rd1? Rxa2 36.Kg2? Qc5! 37.Qf6 b3 38.Rh1 Qc2**

The more precise 38...Qe3! would have wrapped up the game. The annoying check on g5 is prevented, and 39.Rh4...

(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 72:*

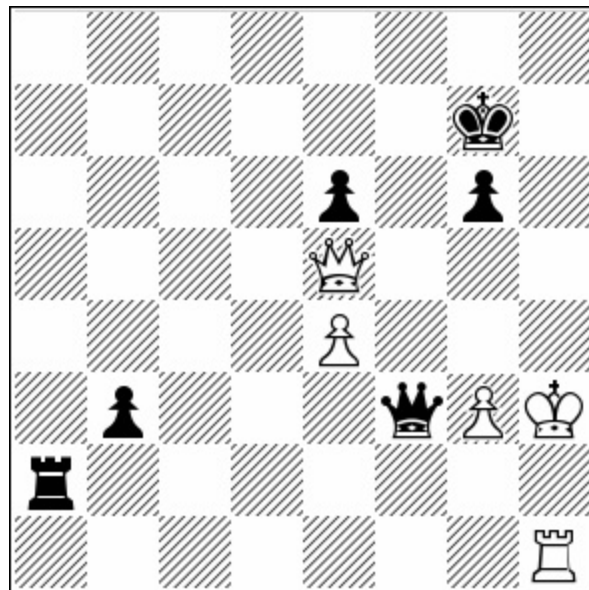
...39...Rxf2+! 40.Qxf2 Qxf2+ 41.Kxf2 b2 42.Rh1 Nd3+ 43.Ke3 Nc1  
 44.Bxf7+ Kg7 is a beautiful problem-like finish.

**39.Qg5+**

Who among us wouldn't play this in a flash? But surprisingly, 39.Bxf7+!

Nxf7 40.Rh4 offered excellent drawing chances: 40...b2 41.Rg4+ Kf8 42.Qg7+ Ke7 43.Rf4 actually takes over the advantage (another reason why the queen should have gone to e3; it would just take the rook here), so Black should be content with 40...Qb2 41.Qg6+ Kf8 42.Rf4 Ra7 43.Qxe6, though too many pawns have disappeared to win the game.

**39...Kf8 40.Qd8+ Kg7 41.Qg5+ Ng6 42.Bxg6 Qxf2+ 43.Kh3 fxg6 44.Qe7+ Qf7 45.Qxd6 Qf3 46.Qe5+**



**46...Kh7**

Bringing the king to safety is another move most of us would play automatically. But 46...Kf7! was the only move to assure victory. The key point is that the white queen is perfectly placed on e5, but the king on f7 makes a huge difference in the coming rook endgame after 47.Rc1 Qh5+ 48.Qxh5 gxh5 49.Rc5 (49.Rc7+ Kf6 50.Rb7 Rb2 51.Rb5 Rb1+) 49...Ra1!. Black wins because the h-pawn is not hanging with check. So the white queen has to abandon her perch, but after 47.Qc7+ Kg8 48.Qd8+ Kh7 49.Qh4+ Kg7 50.Qe7+ Kh6 51.Qh4+ Qh5 52.Qxh5+ Kxh5 53.Rc1 Ra5, Black wins easily.

**47.Rc1 Qg2+**

47...Rc2 is an interesting alternative, setting a little trap: 48.Rxc2? bxc2 49.Qc7+ Kh6 50.Qxc2 Qh1+ 51.Kg4 g5! and White is mated.

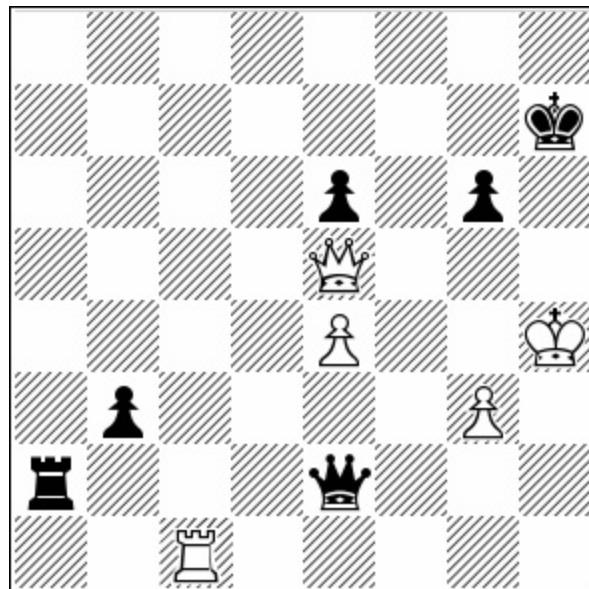
But White does better with 48.Ra1, e.g. 48...Qh5+ 49.Qxh5+ gxh5 50.Ra5 Kg6 51.Rb5 b2 52.g4! and White is in time to draw.

### 48.Kh4? Qh2+?

Both sides missed the knockout we see on move 50.

### 49.Kg4 Qe2+ 50.Kh4?

The devil that White knows is the dodgy endgame after 50.Kh3 Qh5+ 51.Qxh5+ gxh5 52.Rc5 Kg6 53.Rb5 Rb2. Now Black is one move away from setting everything up with 54...Rb1, but White has time to harass the black pawns with 54.Re5! Rf2! 55.Rb5 (55.Rxe6+? Rf6) 55...b2 56.Rb6 Kf6 57.g4 hxg4+ 58.Kg3 Rc2 (or 58...Re2 59.Rb5 Rxe4 60.Rxb2) 59.Rb5 Rc5 60.Rxb2 Kg5, and while Black has practical chances, the Tablebase indicates a draw with best play.



### 50...g5+!

A great move, and yet easy to miss if you aren't looking for it. White can

capture two ways, but they are both bad.

### **51.Qxg5**

51.Kxg5 Qd2+ 52.Qf4 Ra5+ leads to mate or loss of the queen.

### **51...Qxe4+ 52.Qf4 Rh2+**

52...Qxf4+ 53.gxf4 b2 54.Rc7+ Kg6 55.Rb7 Kf5 56.Rb4 e5 was more direct, but it is practical to keep options open.

### **53.Kg4 Qg6+ 54.Qg5**

Or 54.Kf3 Qh5+ 55.g4 Qh3+ 56.Qg3 b2 57.Re1 Kg7. Black gets his rook behind the pawn and wins as in the game.

### **54...Rc2**

54...Qxg5+ 55.Kxg5 b2 56.Rc7+ Kg8 57.Rb7 Rf2 is another way, steaming through with the e-pawn.

### **55.Qxg6+ Kxg6 56.Rb1 Rc4+ 57.Kf3 Rb4 58.Rb2 Kg5 59.g4 e5 0-1**

## **One Box, Two Boxes**

It may be easy to appreciate that every step of the king can be a critical error, but to be undone by the wrong placement of a pawn is shattering.

Game 121 – Sicilian Defense

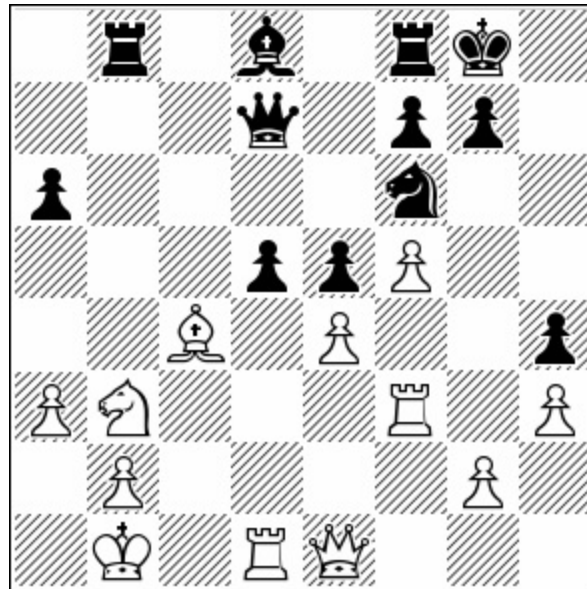
**Peter Svidler** 2756

**Alexandar Indjic** 2604

Porto Carras tt 2018

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Be3 e5 7.Nb3 Be6  
8.Qd2 Nbd7 9.f4 Rc8 10.0-0-0 h5 11.Kb1 Be7 12.Bd3 b5 13.h3 h4 14.Rhf1  
Qc7 15.a3 Nb6 16.Bxb6 Qxb6 17.Rde1 Nh5 18.f5 Bd7 19.Nd5 Qa7 20.Qa5**

**Nf6 21.Nb6 Rb8 22.Nxd7 Qxd7 23.c4 bxc4 24.Bxc4 0-0 25.Rf3 d5 26.Rd1 Bd8 27.Qe1**



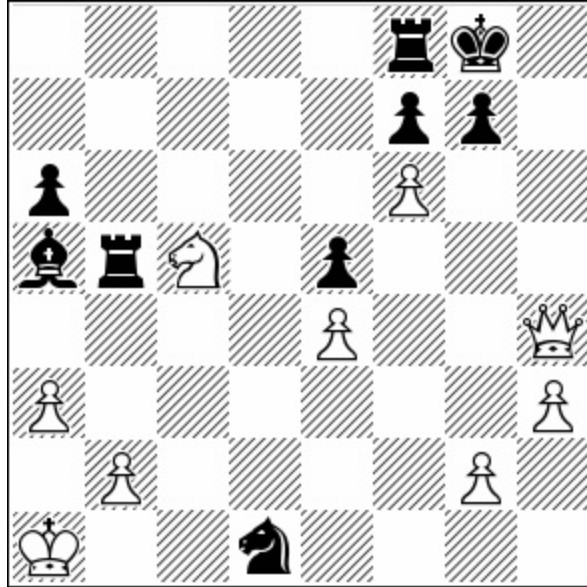
In an attempt to win a piece, the Black player sends the position into a chaotic spiral of attack and counterattack.

**27...Qa4! 28.Bxd5 Nxd5 29.Nc5 Qb5 30.Rb3 Ba5!**

This queen sac looks smart, as 30...Qxc5 31.Rxb8 Ba5 32.Rxf8+ Kxf8 33.Qxh4 seems favorable for White.

**31.Rxb5 Rxb5 32.Qxh4 Nc3+ 33.Ka1 Nxd1 34.f6!**

Svidler shows the strength of the queen, which can create big threats with minimal assistance.



**34...Bc3?!**

Again, a clever and combative choice, but objectively this is a mistake.

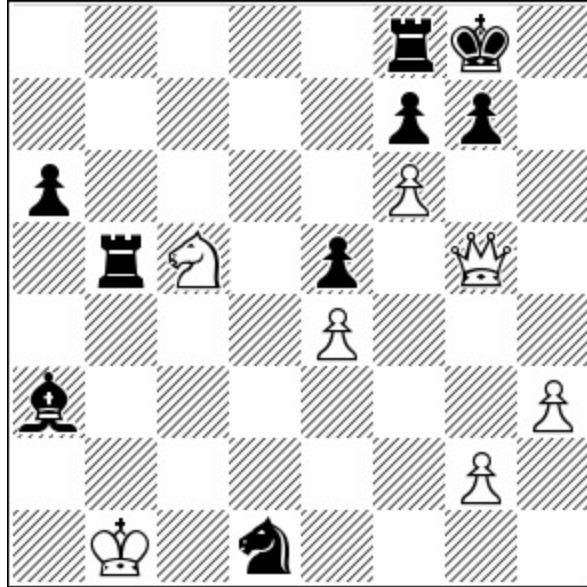
34...Bd8 35.Qg4 Bxf6 36.Nd7 Be7 37.Nxf8 Bxa3 (37...Ne3!? 38.Qe2 Bc5)

38.Qxd1 (38.bxa3? Nc3) 38...Bxf8 looks awfully close to a fortress.

(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 73:*

**35.Na4?**

White is still on top after this, but Svidler could have won more clearly with  
35.Qg5 Bxb2+ 36.Kb1 Bxa3+ (36...Bd4+ 37.Kc2)



*analysis diagram*

37.Nb3!! (37.Kc2?? Rb2+ 38.Kxd1 Rd8+ 39.Ke1 Bb4+ 40.Kf1 Rd1#;  
37.Ka2? Nc3+ 38.Kxa3 Nb1+=) 37...Rxb3+ 38.Ka2 and Black will have to  
give up most of his pieces to avoid mate.

**35...gxf6 36.bxc3 Rd8 37.Qxf6 Rd7 38.Qxa6?**

It was a good moment to go on the attack while disturbing Black's  
coordination: 38.c4 Rb3 (38...Ra5 39.Qf3) 39.Qg5+ Kf8 40.Nc5 with a  
winning initiative.

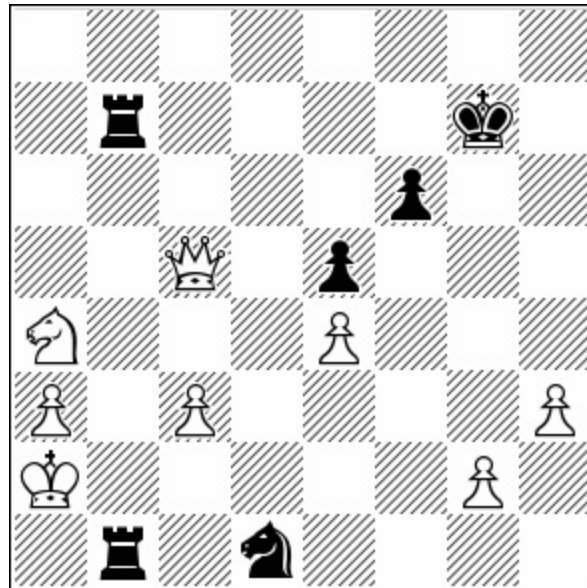
**38...Rdb7 39.Ka2 Kg7?**

Perhaps Black was ready to risk it to go for the win, but 39...Nb2 would have  
forced White to give up his queen, and 40.Qxb5 Rxb5 41.Nxb2 f5! would  
have provided a passed pawn and significant counterplay.

**40.Qc6?**

White isn't finding the best placement for the queen. 40.c4 Rb1 41.Qa5 is on  
the winning track again.

**40...Rb1 41.Qc5 f6**



The worm has turned. The awkward placement of the white queen creates a threat for Black, but it can't move because it is preventing 42...Ne3, circling in for mate. But what does White need in a pawn move?

**42.g4??**

This move is certainly instinctive, as it prepares g4-g5 with meaningful play against Black's king. But White holds by setting up a sneaky hidden perpetual check with 42.g3!! . The key line is 42...Nb2 43.Nb6 Nd3 44.Qd6 R7xb6 (44...R1xb6 45.Qxd3 is drawable) 45.Qe7+ Kg6 46.Qe8+ with a perpetual. The pawn on g3 conveniently prevents the black king from running up.

**42...Nb2 43.Kxb1**

Desperation, but 43.Nb6 Nd3 44.Qd6 R7xb6 wins for Black as his king escapes up the board.

**43...Nxa4+ 44.Qb4 Nxc3+ 45.Kc2 Rxb4 46.axb4 Nxe4 47.b5 Nd6 48.b6 Kf7 49.h4 Ke6 50.Kc3 Kd7 51.Kd3 Kc6 52.g5 Kxb6**

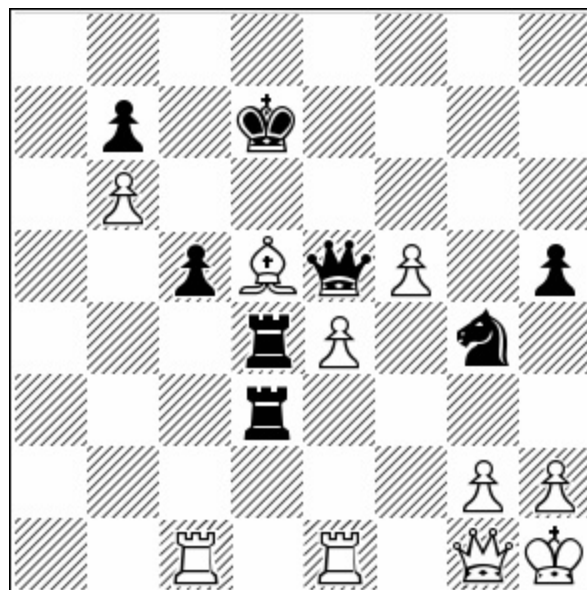
And White resigned.

### 'Rookie' Mistakes

What a pity it is to find a life-saving combination and follow it up incorrectly! The difference can often be a single square, 'j'adoubable' to the right one!

Game 122 – Ruy Lopez  
Fabiano Caruana 2822  
Wesley So 2778  
Stavanger 2018

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 Nf6 4.d3 Bc5 5.0-0 Nd4 6.Nxd4 Bxd4 7.Ba4 c6  
8.c3 Bb6 9.Na3 d6 10.Bc2 Be6 11.Qe2 h6 12.Kh1 g5 13.Nc4 Bc7 14.Ne3  
d5 15.Re1 Qe7 16.a4 0-0-0 17.Rb1 d4 18.Nf1 Bb6 19.Bd2 Bg4 20.f3 Be6  
21.Ng3 Rhg8 22.b4 g4 23.a5 dxc3 24.Bxc3 Bd4 25.Bxd4 Rxd4 26.b5 c5  
27.Bb3 h5 28.Nf5 Bxf5 29.exf5 Re8 30.Rbc1 gxf3 31.Qxf3 Red8 32.Bc4 e4  
33.dxe4 Qe5 34.Bxf7 Rd3 35.Qf2 R8d4 36.Bd5 Kd7 37.b6 axb6 38.axb6  
Ng4 39.Qg1



The value of White's passed pawns is clear enough, but the active black pieces suggest that an attack on the king is not completely off the table.

### 39...Kd8!?

So sets a clever trap that he didn't fully appreciate.

### 40.h3?

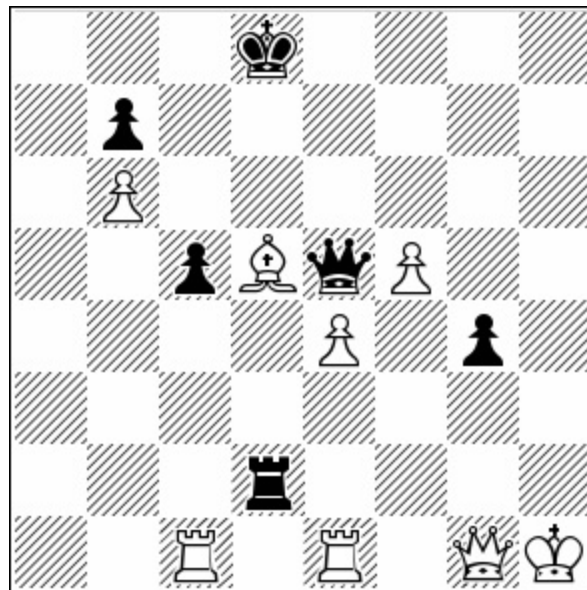
Caruana is tempted by an opportunity to clarify matters, but opens the door to the breaching of his defenses. Black's last move didn't change anything, so why not grab another pawn with 40.Bxb7, keeping everything defended?

(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 74:*

### 40...Rhx3+!! 41.gxh3 Rd3??

Such a tragedy to rush out this move after the time control! So's move is perhaps more natural as his knight can't be captured – 42.hxg4?? Rh3+ 43.Kg2 Qg3+ 44.Kf1 Qf3+ 45.Qf2 Rh1#. But White will give his queen for a triumphant liquidation.

Instead, Black could have saved the game with 41...Rd2!! 42.hxg4 hxg4!.



*analysis diagram*

White has surprisingly few answers to this loud quiet move. Forced is 43.Qg2

Qh8+! 44.Kg1 Rxc2+ 45.Kxc2 Qh3+ with perpetual check... which would have led to a five-man playoff!

**42.Qg2**

The only move here too, but it wins easily.

**42...Rg3 43.hxc4 Rxc2 44.Kxc2 h4 45.Kf3**

White's king runs free and enjoys a large material advantage.

**45...Qg3+ 46.Ke2 h3 47.Rg1 Qh4 48.e5**

And **Black resigned**.

### **First Things First**

The one-two punch is a basic staple of chess tactics. Sometimes the first blow to be delivered is obvious; other times, an incorrect move-order may lead to a surprise counterstrike.

Game 123 – Nimzo-Indian Defense

**Diego Flores 2614**

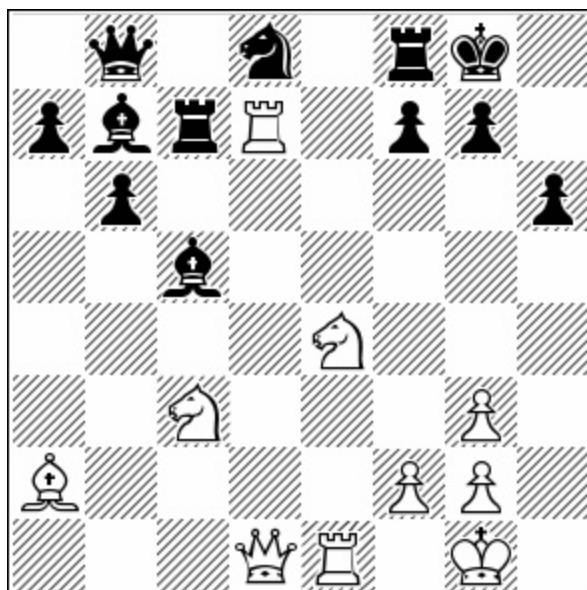
**Sam Shankland 2717**

Montevideo 2018

**1.c4 e6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e3 0-0 5.Bd3 d5 6.Nf3 dxc4 7.Bxc4 c5 8.0-0 cxd4 9.exd4 b6 10.Bg5 Bb7 11.Rc1 Nc6 12.a3 Be7 13.Ba2 Rc8 14.Re1 h6 15.Bh4 Nh5 16.Bg3 Nxc3 17.hxc3 Bf6 18.d5 exd5 19.Nxd5 Bxb2 20.Rc2 Bxa3 21.Rd2 Bc5 22.Nc3 Qc7 23.Rd7 Qb8 24.Ng5 Nd8 25.Nge4 Rc7?**

While it looks natural to challenge the invasive rook, White has a winning combo now.

Black could have avoided disaster with a more careful move like 25...Kh8.



(back to the exercises) ***Solution to Puzzle 75:***

**26.Qg4?**

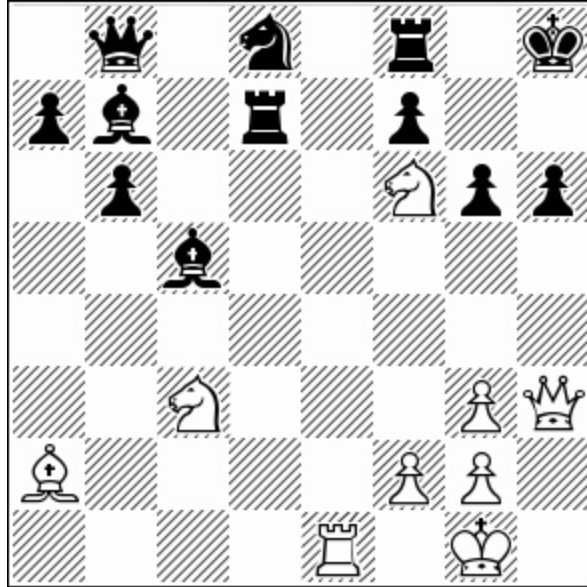
White has the right moves in the wrong order, a simpler but faulty execution. Instead, 26.Nf6+!! gxf6 (26...Kh8 27.Qd3 g6 28.Bxf7 and if mate can be avoided at all, it is only by catastrophic loss of material) 27.Qg4+ Kh8 28.Qf5 and there is no effective defense to the threat of Ba2-b1.

**26...Rxd7 27.Nf6+ Kh8 28.Qf5**

Flores missed either the idea 28.Nxd7 Bc8! or the ensuing combination.

**28...g6 29.Qh3**

29.Nxd7 gxf5 30.Nxb8 Bb4 leaves White two pawns down.



**29...Bxf2+! 30.Kxf2**

Or 30.Kh1 Kg7 31.Nxd7 Qxg3, and Black wins.

**30...Rd2+ 31.Ke3**

Otherwise Black will consolidate with ...Kh8-g7.

**31...Qe5+ 32.Nce4?!**

White falls on his sword. After 32.Kxd2 Qxf6 33.Qxh6+ Kg8 pieces are even but there's no compensation for the queenside pawns.

**32...Qd4+**

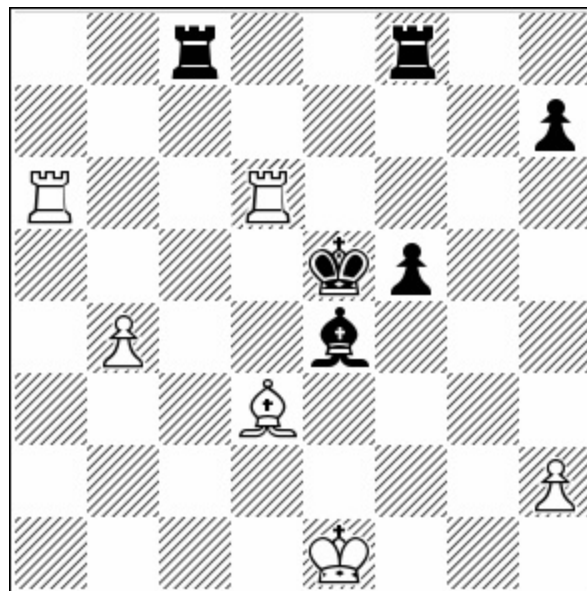
33.Kf4 Rf2+ wins the house so **White resigned**.

### **Greased Lightning**

Passed pawns can be faster than they appear to be. A pin, and its accompanying defensive responsibilities, can speed a pawn all the way through.

Alexander Morozevich 2665  
Santosh Vidit Gujrathi 2707  
Malmö 2018

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.Nf3 Bg7 5.Qb3 dxc4 6.Qxc4 Be6 7.Qd3 c5  
8.e4 cxd4 9.Nxd4 Bd7 10.f3 Nc6 11.Nxc6 Bxc6 12.Qxd8+ Rxd8 13.Be3 a6  
14.Be2 0-0 15.Kf2 Ne8 16.Rhd1 Nd6 17.a4 f5 18.exf5 gxf5 19.Ke1 Kf7  
20.Bd4 Bf6 21.b4 Rc8 22.Ra3 b5 23.axb5 axb5 24.Bxf6 Kxf6 25.Ra6 Bxf3  
26.Nxb5 Bxg2 27.Nxd6 exd6 28.Rxd6+ Ke5 29.Bd3 Be4



Black is a bit more comfortable with his more active king, but it shouldn't add up to much.

**30.Kd2?!**

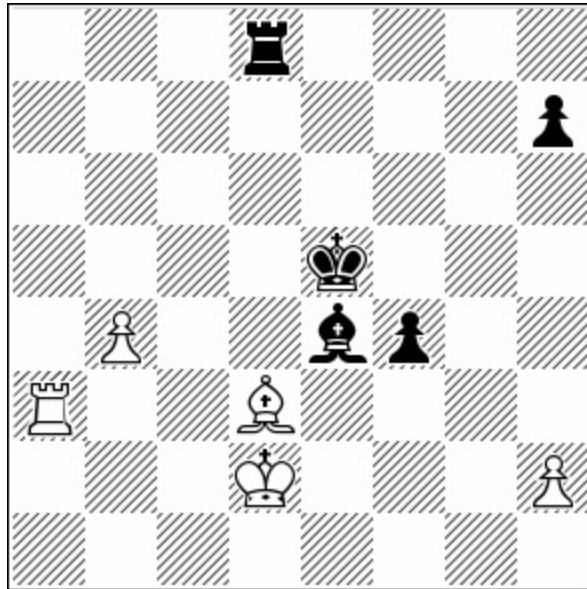
Stepping onto the d-file is asking for trouble. 30.Ke2 looks more sensible.

**30...Rcd8 31.Rxd8?**

White voluntarily walks into a pin, which should have got his Spidey-sense tingling. After 31.Re6+ Kf4 32.Rad6 White will hold easily without further mistakes.

**31...Rxd8 32.Ra3 f4**

This looks like a composed problem.



White's king sits in front of the pawn, yet he cannot stop it without losing material. After 33.Kc2 Black can win with the conventional 33...f3 or the combinative 33...Rxd3 34.Rxd3 f3 35.Kc3 f2 36.Rd1 Bg2.

**33.Ke2**

(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 76:*

**33...f3+ 34.Ke3 Bxd3 35.Rxd3 f2! 0-1**

### **Misdirection**

Sometimes we think we can handle our opponent's combination, only to find he has an entirely different idea in mind. This can even happen to grandmasters!

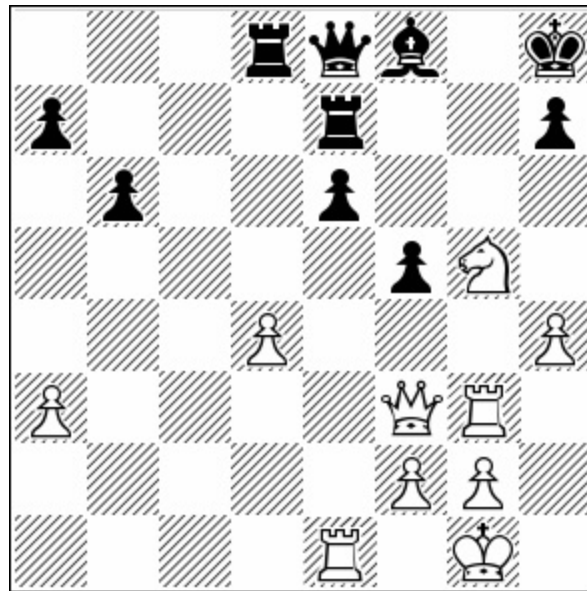
Game 125 – Queen's Indian Defense

**Abhijeet Gupta 2610**

**Vasyl Ivanchuk 2726**

Gibraltar 2018

1.d4 e6 2.c4 Nf6 3.Nf3 b6 4.a3 Bb7 5.Nc3 d5 6.cxd5 Nxd5 7.Qc2 Nxc3  
 8.bxc3 Be7 9.e4 0-0 10.Bd3 c5 11.0-0 Qc8 12.Qe2 Ba6 13.Rd1 Bxd3  
 14.Rxd3 Nd7 15.e5 cxd4 16.cxd4 Re8 17.h4 Qb7 18.Bg5 Bf8 19.Nd2 f6  
 20.exf6 Nxf6 21.Bxf6 gxf6 22.Ne4 Qf7 23.Rf3 f5 24.Rg3+ Kh8 25.Ng5  
 Qd7 26.Qh5 Re7 27.Re1 Qe8 28.Qf3 Rd8

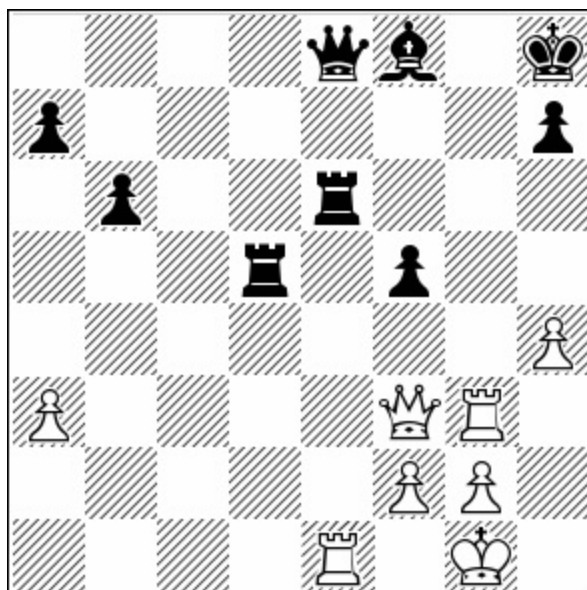


**29.d5 Rxd5 30.Nxe6!**

30.Rxe6!? is also effective, with the idea of 30...Rxe6 (30...Re5 is more resistant) 31.Qxd5 Re7 32.Nxh7!.

**30...Rxe6?**

If Ivanchuk saw what was coming, he would have tried 30...Qc6, though he would have faced long odds after 31.Qe2 Bg7 32.Re3. Now 31.Qc3+ Ree5! 32.f4 Bc5+ 33.Kh1 Bd4 34.Rxe5! Bxe5! 35.fxe5 Qe6! holds the position together. It's plausible that Gupta overestimated his chances here, but the next move tells a very different story!



(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 77:*

**31.Rg8+!**

As beautiful as it is well camouflaged! White nabs two rooks for the price of one.

**31...Kxg8 32.Qxd5 Qb5**

32...Kf7 33.Qxf5+ coughs up the rook anyway, and Chuky was not up for the hopeless endgame after 32...Qc6 33.Qxe6+ Qxe6 34.Rxe6 Bxa3 35.Re8+ Kf7 36.Rb8.

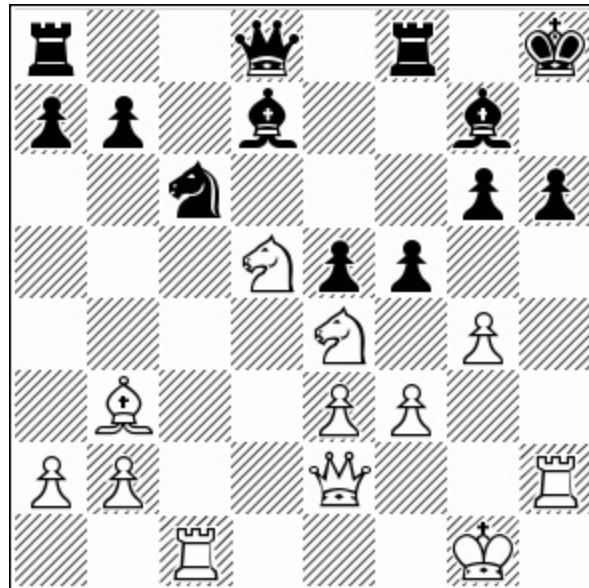
**33.Qxe6+ Kg7 34.Rd1 1-0**

### **Wrong Recapture**

How to take back a piece is a fundamental decision; the options may be neatly laid out but the right answer is not always found.

Game 126 – Grünfeld Indian Defense  
**Viktorija Cmilyte** 2503  
**Katerina Lagno** 2557  
 Wijk aan Zee B 2012

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.Bf4 Bg7 5.e3 c5 6.dxc5 Qa5 7.Rc1 dxc4  
 8.Bxc4 0-0 9.Nf3 Qxc5 10.Bb3 Nc6 11.0-0 Qa5 12.h3 Bf5 13.Qe2 Ne4  
 14.Nd5 e5 15.Bg5 Nxc5 16.Nxc5 Qd8 17.h4 h6 18.g4 Bd7 19.Ne4 Qxh4  
 20.f3 Kh8 21.Rf2 f5 22.Rh2 Qd8



**23.Rxh6+ Bxh6 24.Qh2 Kg7!**

24...Rf7 is hammered by 25.Ndf6! (much stronger than 25.Qxh6+) 25...Qf8  
 (if 25...Kg7, 26.g5 wins material in chunks) 26.Bxf7 fxe4 27.Nxd7 Qxf7  
 28.Qxh6+ Qh7 29.Qxh7+ Kxh7 30.Nf6+ Kg7 31.Nxe4 and White should  
 cruise in the endgame.

**25.Rxc6**

Black has her choice of pieces to capture, but ends up taking neither!

**25...Bf4?**

The white queen will only come to e5 with more force.

A) 25...bxc6? is wrong because after 26.Qxe5+ Kh7 27.Ndf6+ Kh8, the  
 bishop is hanging to a discovered check, but the other captures were okay:

B) 25...Bxc6 26.Qxe5+ Kh7 27.Ndf6+ Rxf6 28.Nxf6+ Kh8 gives White

perpetual check but no more;

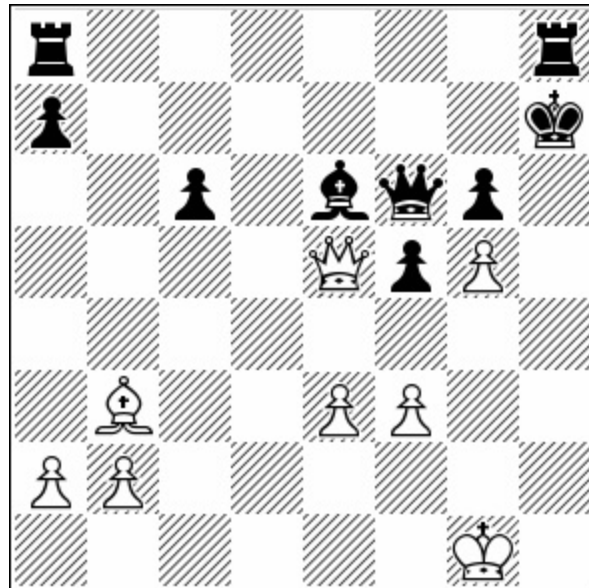
C) Black could also take the other knight – 25...fxe4 – which would also likely lead to a draw after 26.Qxe5+ Kh7 27.Nf6+ Rxf6 28.Rxf6 Be8 29.g5 Bxg5!? (or the more direct 29...Qd2 30.gxh6 Qxe3+) 30.Qxg5 Kg7 31.Rf5 Qxg5+ 32.Rxg5 exf3 33.Bd5 with an equal endgame.

### 26.Nxf4! bxc6

26...exf4 27.g5! Rh8 28.Qxf4 Qe7 29.Re6! Bxe6 30.Qe5+ and Black will have to part with her queen – 30...Kh7 (30...Kf7 31.Nd6+ is even worse) 31.Nf6+ with similar play to the game; 26...fxe4? 27.Rxg6# is of course not an option!

### 27.g5 Rh8 28.Ne6+ Bxe6 29.Qxe5+ Kh7 30.Nf6+ Qxf6

On 30...Kg7, 31.Nh5+ forces mate.

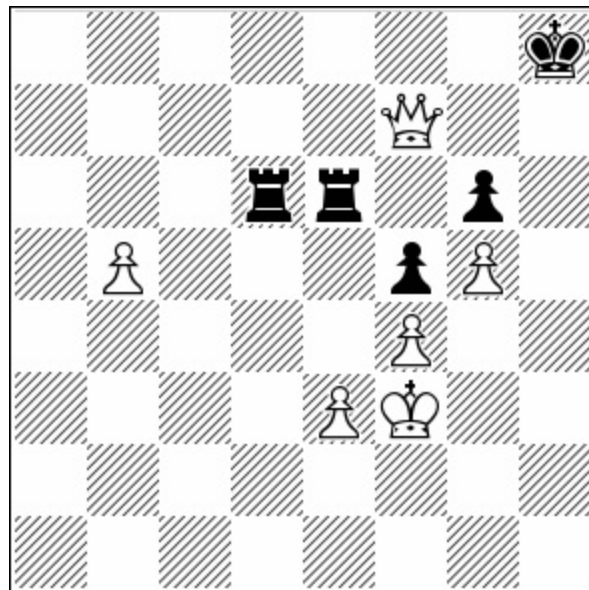


### 31.Qxf6?

White might be able to win after this recapture, which preserves the integrity of White's structure, but I'm not convinced there is a way to break down Black's fortress. It seems more logical to juice up the initiative with an

advanced, unrestrained passed pawn: 31.gxf6! Bxb3 32.axb3 Rad8 33.Qe7+ Kh6 34.Kf2 and Black looks completely helpless. The most fundamental problem is the creation of connected passed pawns after the imminent e3-e4.

**31...Bxb3 32.Qe7+ Kg8 33.Qb7 Rf8 34.Qxb3+ Rf7 35.Qe6 Kg7 36.Qxc6 Rh5 37.f4 Rh8 38.Qc3+ Kh7 39.Qd2 Re8 40.Kf2 Re6 41.b4 a6 42.Qd5 Rfe7 43.Qc5 Rd7 44.Qf8 Rdd6 45.Qf7+ Kh8 46.Kf3 Rc6 47.a4 Rcd6 48.Ke2 Rc6 49.b5 axb5 50.axb5 Rcd6 51.Kf3**



This leads to a cute finish, but I don't see any way to make progress.

**51...Rxe3+! 52.Kxe3 Rd3+ 53.Ke2 Rd2+ 54.Ke1 Rd1+ 55.Kf2 Rd2+ 56.Kg3 Rd3+ 57.Kh4 Rh3+ 58.Kxh3 1/2-1/2**

### The Wrong Defense

The most natural defense to a mate threat is not necessarily the right one.

Game 127 – Petroff Defense

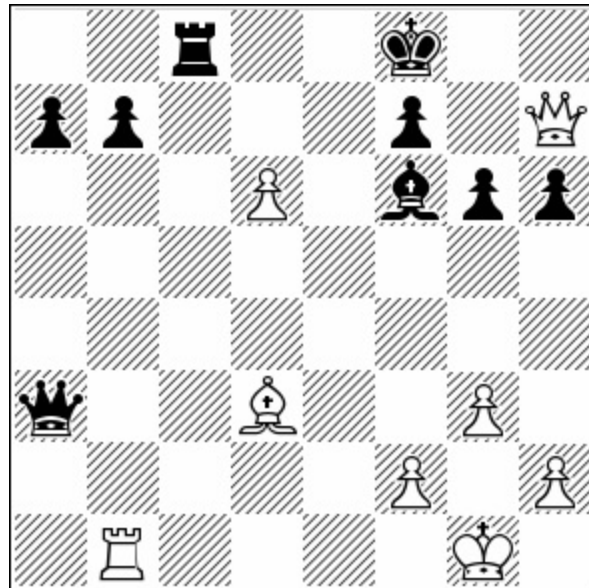
Vasyl Ivanchuk 2779

Boris Gelfand 2733

Monaco rapid 2011

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Nxe5 d6 4.Nf3 Nxe4 5.d4 d5 6.Bd3 Be7 7.c4 Nc6 8.0-0**

**Nb4 9.Be2 0-0 10.Nc3 Bf5 11.a3 Nxc3 12.bxc3 Nc6 13.Re1 Re8 14.cxd5 Qxd5 15.Bf4 Rac8 16.g3 Bf6 17.Rc1 h6 18.c4 Qa5 19.d5 Ne5 20.Bxe5 Bxe5 21.Bd3 Bg4 22.Re4 Bxf3 23.Qxf3 Bb2 24.Rb1 Qxa3 25.c5 Kf8 26.d6 cxd6 27.cxd6 Rxe4 28.Qxe4 Bf6 29.Qh7 g6**

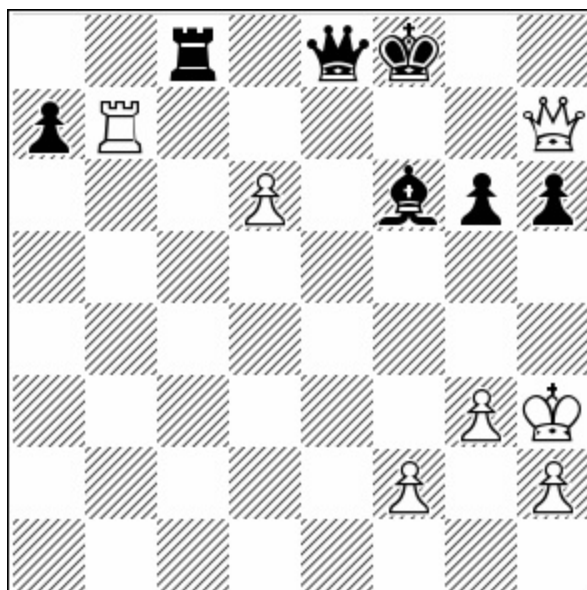


**30.Bxg6!?**

The other move-order is not challenging: 30.Rxb7 Qc1+ and White has to retreat with 31.Bf1 (31.Kg2? Qc6+ drops the rook), enabling Black to consolidate with 31...Bg7.

**30...fxg6 31.Rxb7 Qa1+?**

On the surface, this seems like the right way to coordinate. But the only way to hold was 31...Qc1+ 32.Kg2 Qc6+ 33.Kh3 Qe8!.



*analysis diagram*

Black covers key squares and takes advantage of White's awkward king placement. 34.Qxh6+ Kg8 35.Qh7+ Kf8 and now the perpetual alternative 36.Re7? falls flat: 36...Bxe7 37.dxe7+ Qxe7 38.Qh8+ Kf7 39.Qxc8 Qe6+ and by trading queens Black even wins, as the a-pawn is unstoppable.

**32.Kg2 Bg7 33.Qxg6 Qf6 34.Rxg7! 1-0**

The rook drops after 34...Qxg7 35.Qf5+.

### **Close but No Cigar**

It happens so often that a spirited game is marred by one miscalculation at the end.

Game 128 – Sicilian Defense

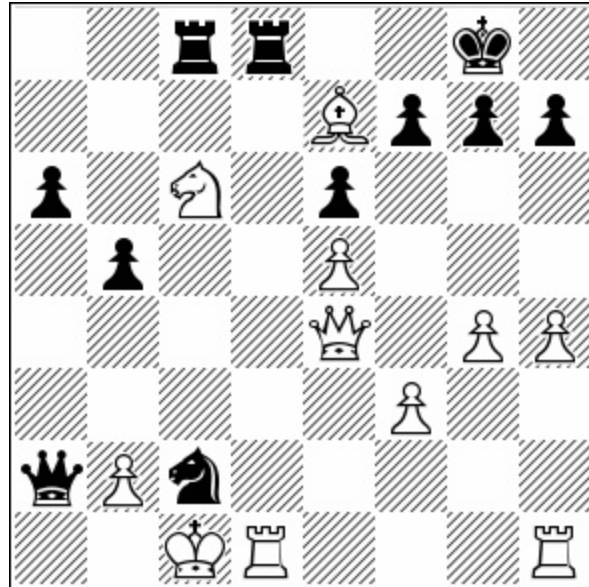
**Peter Svidler** 2723

**Peter Wells** 2513

Bunratty 2009

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 d6 6.Bg5 e6 7.Qd2 Be7 8.0-0 Nxd4 9.Qxd4 0-0 10.f3 a6 11.h4 b5 12.Kb1 Bb7 13.g4 Rc8 14.Bd3 Qc7**





(back to the exercises) *Solution to Puzzle 78:*

**24...Rd5?**

Not quite right. 24...Nd4! 25.Rxd4 (not 25.Bxd8 Rxc6+ 26.Kd2 Rc4!! and White is unable to save his queen, after which Black's queen will dominate) 25...Rxd4 26.Qxd4 Qa1+ 27.Kd2 Qxh1 with equality. White's king is too exposed to avoid perpetual check, but the rook is bottled up so Black will not do better than that.

**25.Rxd5 exd5 26.Qxc2 Qa1+ 27.Qb1!**

27.Kd2? Qxh1 would have given Black a far better version of the note to Black's 24th move.

**27...Rxc6+ 28.Kd2 Qa5+ 29.Ke2 Qc7**

Presenting three threats, but unfortunately, White has one move to parry all of them.

**30.Bd6 Qc8**

No time for 30...Rc2+ 31.Kd1 and White wins.

31.Kd2 1-0

## Picture This

Here is a tactical fail we can all relate to. A combination produces a threat that is seemingly indefensible. But the shifting pieces produce a killing counterstrike. That's why it is important to visualize elements of the position that might not seem to matter.

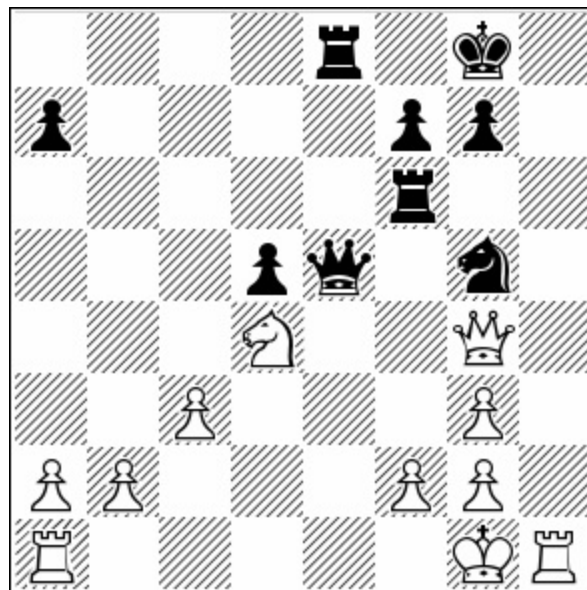
Game 129 – Caro-Kann Defense

Pavel Eljanov 2707

Jon-Ludvig Hammer 2629

Palma de Mallorca 2017

1.e4 c6 2.Nf3 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.d4 Nf6 5.Bf4 Bg4 6.Nbd2 Nc6 7.c3 e6  
8.Qb3 Bd6 9.Qxb7 0-0 10.Bg3 Rc8 11.Bd3 Bxg3 12.hxg3 Qd6 13.Qa6 Rb8  
14.Nb3 Rb6 15.Qa4 e5 16.dxe5 Nxe5 17.Nxe5 Qxe5+ 18.Kf1 Re8  
19.Bxh7+ Nxh7 20.Qxg4 Rf6 21.Nd4 Ng5 22.Kg1



It has not been Hammer time, as after a reasonable pawn sacrifice Black has dropped a second pawn and is running out of steam. Unless he can play a combination...

## **22...Rxf2?**

Technically a blunder, perhaps an oversight as well, but Black will soon be routed anyway after a normal continuation like 22...Ne4 23.Rh5 Qb8 24.Qh3.

## **23.Kxf2**

White has seen far enough to confidently grab the rook, but there is a humorous echo in the variation 23.Qh4 f6 24.Kxf2 Qe3+ 25.Kf1 Ne4 26.Qh8+ Kf7 27.Qxg7+!.

## **23...Qe3+ 24.Kf1 Ne4**

There is no defense, but...

## **25.Qxg7+!**

...and **Black resigned**, because 25...Kxg7 26.Nf5+ recoups the queen, with an extra rook.

## *Chapter 9*

# Tactical Tips

As I did in the book *Better Thinking, Better Chess*, I will present some guidance in this final chapter. Tactical success is not found simply by following rules, but I think readers will find these suggestions helpful in upping their tactical game. I have given specific examples from the book where applicable.

### Common Sense Calculation

1. Remember that tactics can happen in any position, for you or your opponent. Be alert to warning signs, like loose pieces, exposed kings, and weak back ranks. **Bologan-Naiditsch** (Game 98)
2. If a tactical possibility seems too easy, it might be. It won't disappear if you stop to think about it, but you might avoid a blunder if you stop to verify. **So-Melkumyan** (Game 18)
3. Don't trust your opponent. Sometimes the variation that looks clearest offers hidden possibilities. **Mamedyarov-Lenderman** (Game 34)
4. In combinations involving substantial sacrifices of material, the defender has extra latitude in giving material back to defend or counterattack. **Pichot-Cheparinov** (Game 4)
5. Sacrifices that put the king in a highly vulnerable position cannot be ignored, even if the investment seems too large at first glance. **Krasenkow-Nakamura** (Game 5)
6. Be careful about playing automatic moves, even captures with check. On rare occasions, they can backfire! **Khismatullin-Eljanov** (Game 36), **Babula-Kovacevic** (Game 37)
7. In a similar vein, be careful in assuming certain moves are forced. Recaptures can be delayed to counterattack another piece; attacks on the queen can be disregarded if a more powerful counterstrike is available. **Short-Nepomniachtchi** (Game 99), **Antipov-Schwartz** (Game 8)

8. In-between moves can turn tactics upside down. It may be as subtle as luring a piece to a vulnerable square. **Onischuk-Akobian** (Game 10), **Zherebukh-Durarbayli** (Game 9)

9. It is easy to misidentify your opponent's main threat or intention. Look around for more than one idea for your opponent. **Malakhov-Romanov** (Game 25), **Gupta-Ivanchuk** (Game 125)

### **Decision Making**

10. Combinations do not always have to be perfectly calculated. It is often enough to see a few lines and recognize that the opponent will have a greater burden in defending than you in attacking. **Benjamin-Shulman** (Game 43)

11. Club players like to see mate or gain of material at the end of sacrifices. When sacrificing moderate amounts of material (e.g. exchange sacrifices) it is often sufficient to see sufficient general compensation (e.g., pawn + better pawn structure and safer king) to proceed. Sometimes dominant piece placement is good enough by itself. **Nunn-Vökler** (Game 90), **Edouard-Degraeve** (Game 100)

12. You will sometimes face the choice between a simple and a complicated winning move that both appear to win. The decision comes down to these questions: Do you feel confident of winning the position after the simple move? Do you feel confident of your calculations of the complicated move, and will you follow it up correctly? **Serper-Shabalov** (Game 27), **Benjamin-Kamsky** (Game 28)

13. Too many combinations are missed because 'refutations' are accepted too readily. Sometimes you need to search a bit for later moves to demonstrate the soundness of a potentially high-reward move. **Parligras-Kruppa** (Game 38), **Thomas-Euwe** (Game 33)

14. On the flip side, if you are considering a move which allows a potentially high-reward answer, you have to make sure their move will not work. **Short-Nepomniachtchi** (Game 99)

15. Calculate beyond captures, as well as forcing moves which are not captures like checks or piece attacks. Don't stop to assess until the position

quiets down. **Rubinstein-Capablanca** (Game 2)

16. You may be able to calculate longer lines than you are used to if there are many forcing moves along the way. **Sulashvili-Guseinov** (Game 70), **Lebedev-Gonak** (Game 71)

### **Facing Adversity**

17. Triage can be applied in challenging situations. First deal with the biggest threat (often checkmate); lesser unpleasanties may have to be accepted.

**Naiditsch-Blübaum** (Game 79), **Benjamin-Xu Jun** (Game 68)

18. In a difficult position, you might find your way out by defining the main problem and eliminating paths that do not succeed at addressing that threat.

**Geller-Euwe** (Game 87)

19. Don't defend with an obviously unpleasant move before eliminating a more desirable one. **Euwe-Maroczy** (Game 86)

20. In a position with competing attacks, shifting the focus of the game to your attack can turn the game in your favor. If you are caught defending for too long, you may never get the chance to counterattack. **Praggnanandhaa-Mamedyarov** (Game 81)

21. In practice, complicating the game can favor the side with the worse position. Tactical options may be scary, but they can avoid a depressing position with no winning chances at all. Tactics also create uncertainty and a greater chance for mistakes. **Sargissian-Grischuk** (Game 24)

22. If your opponent is highly likely to win with his advantage, finding a tactical path may be the only hope, even if you don't see how the tactics will work for you. **Schroer-Benjamin** (Game 44)

23. Lower-rated players often want to play solidly because they fear their opponent's superior tactical skills. But creating uncertainty and potential danger for the opponent is often the best strategy to score. **Formento-Solodovnichenko** (Game 82)

24. Rapid/Sudden Death time controls can factor into decisions to complicate. If you think you are more likely to be pressured into a mistake

long-term, you may look for a decision of the game in short-term tactics.  
**Areshchenko-Shankland** (Game 88)

### **Tactical Details**

25. Chasing the king can be fun, but may be foolish without a plan to catch the king. Successful king pursuits involve a plan for trapping the king; sometimes the goal is reached by not chasing the king at all. **Hector-So** (Game 47)

26. Small details can matter a lot in tactics. Placement of the king, even when not responding to a check, can be critical. **Ni Hua-Leon Hoyos** (Game 119), **Spassky-Polugaevsky** (Game 46)

27. We all know to calculate captures in tactical lines, but we naturally notice standard trades and may overlook opportunities to profitably trade pieces of higher point value. **Piorun-Heberla** (Game 17)

28. Your opponent can have different motives for repeating moves. He may be gaining time on the clock, or tempting you to play a different, and perhaps inferior move. It could also be that he doesn't see a strong move. If you see it, you have to strongly consider avoiding the repetition. **Kotov-Bondarevsky** (Game 35), **Svidler-Vitiugov** (Game 96)

29. Queening pawns can sometimes overcome mating attacks or repetition. In endgames, mating nets and perpetual check motifs are frequent challenges to queening pawns. **Rohde-Shabalov** (Game 89), **Legky-Zhelesny** (Game 110)

30. Recognizing standard tactical patterns can bring you glory and avoid ignominious defeats. Make use of all those puzzles you worked on! **Filatov-Mayer** (Game 19)

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## Sources

The biggest source of games for this book is my ‘Game of the Week’ video series that ran for several years on the Internet Chess Club.

*New In Chess Magazine* was also especially fruitful. Their contributors are particularly good at highlighting key moments from games and often included insightful comments from the players

I found a few games in various issues of *Chess Life* magazine as well.

I didn’t want to take more than a couple of games from *Chess Traps, Pitfalls, and Swindles* by I.A. Horowitz and Fred Reinfeld (Simon and Schuster 1954) because the theme is so similar. Read that book after mine.

I took a handful of games each from the following books (mostly what was accessible from the shelves in my office):

*Best Games of 1970-1980*, Jon Speelman (Unwin 1982)

*Can You be a Tactical Chess Genius?*, James Plaskett (Everyman 2002)

*Chess College Strategy 1: Strategy*, Efstratios Grivas (Gambit 2004)

*Chess Exam and Training Guide*, Igor Khmel'nitsky (IamCoach Press 2004)

*How to Play Dynamic Chess*, Valeri Beim (Gambit 2004)

*The Russians Play Chess*, Irving Chernev (Dover 1947)

*Van Perlo’s Endgame Tactics*, G.C. van Perlo (New In Chess 2006)