

**MATTHEW SADLER
& STEVE GIDDINS**

RE-ENGINEERING THE CHESS CLASSICS

**A Silicon Reappraisal of
Thirty-Five Classic Games**



NEW IN CHESS

Matthew Sadler and Steve Giddins

Re-Engineering the Chess Classics

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Introduction

The starting point for this volume was the publication in 2021 of Matthew's book *The Silicon Road to Chess Improvement* (hereinafter referred to as *Silicon Road*). This dealt with the extremely valuable topic of how to use the modern chess engines for training purposes, to improve one's own play. Older chess engines, whilst fantastically useful for analysing tactics, were not much good for improving one's positional or technical understanding, but all this changed with the launch of AlphaZero in 2018, followed by the rest of the self-learning AI machines, such as Stockfish and Leela. These were far from being just monster tacticians, frightening though they were in that respect. The new machines understood chess much better, especially having a marvellous feel for piece activity and dynamism. Rather than only sacrificing when they could calculate a concrete justification, they frequently offered what seemed very speculative gambits and long-term material investments, relying on activity and dynamism to a far greater extent than previous machines. They were also able to demonstrate new strategic ideas and plans that human players had not previously thought of. Many of the standard middlegame pawn structures, which we thought we understood, have proved to be far richer than we imagined and a great many shibboleths about which positions are good or bad have been refuted.

Matthew's book showed how nowadays any chessplayer with a computer and an internet link can himself make use of AI engines and organise engine vs engine games, to test any position or opening one likes.

Thus it was that we had the idea of using a similar technique to analyse some of the great human games of chess history. Kasparov, in his *Great Predecessors* series, had re-analysed many famous games with an engine, but these were old, pre-AI machines, and whilst very good at finding unexpected tactical resources, they had little to say about positional and strategic aspects. In addition, Kasparov's books were written some 15-20 years ago, when the engines were much weaker. So we decided to select 40 grandmaster games, from the past 150 years, and see what the engines had to say about them and what lessons the human player could draw from the findings. By comparing the human decisions with those of the engines, particularly when the latter are critical of the former, we can learn a great deal about where even the best of us humans are going wrong.

The most instructive games are often those which are more strategic and technical. Any ordinary chess engine can find unexpected tactics (and no human can ever expect to be able to match them in that regard), but the AI machines can change our whole perception of the strategic and technical pattern. For that reason, we have included many strategic games and some technical endgame grinds, where it is often not obvious to the human player where the loser went wrong. The engines are really useful at pointing out the turning points in such games.

A word should be said about the detailed games and variations included in the annotations. At first sight, these may seem somewhat overwhelming at times – the late Gerald Abrahams was wont to refer to long pieces of analysis as 'exhausting rather than exhaustive'! Naturally, we do not expect readers necessarily to play over every note to its end, although there are some fantastic variations to see.

In effect, each game can be examined on two levels, firstly by concentrating on the main game itself and the relevant tactical variations, and secondly at a deeper level, by delving into the alternative approaches suggested by the engines. In order to assist readers, certain sections of the text are marked with a straight line down the lefthand side of the column. Those readers who wish to concentrate on

the main narrative of the game can do so by ignoring those marked sections and just going through the unmarked text. Those who wish to delve more deeply into the engine alternatives can do this by examining the text which has the line next to it.

The really important thing for self-improvement is to understand the basic ideas and strategies which underlie the variations, and this is what we have tried to elucidate in as much detail and with as much clarity as possible. The detailed variations are, in a sense, the supporting data – it is there as back-up and for reference, but what really matters is what those variations illustrate. In order to maximise the instructional value of the book, we have also added a Postscript, which sums up the main lessons from the book.

This has been a great project to work on and we have both enjoyed making so many interesting discoveries about these games, even if, at times, we have been left wondering whether we actually understand anything at all about chess! (Needless to say, one of your co-authors has experienced this feeling rather more often than the other...). We hope that readers will find it both enjoyable and instructive.

GM Matthew Sadler & FM Steve Giddins
Kent, England, March 2023

TECHNICAL NOTE

Some years ago, during a lovely team dinner after a game in the 4 Nations Chess League, I (Matthew) got to discussing a line of the 6.♗g5 Sicilian Najdorf with a young grandmaster. 'Of course,' I said, 'back in the pre-computer age, we could analyse such a line intensively for several weeks and not be much the wiser at the end of it!' His look of horror and slight disdain spoke volumes before he even uttered the words 'What a waste of time!'

We do indeed live in amazing chess times. In 2023, any player – amateur or professional – can learn the truth about 95% of chess positions within a few seconds by pointing their engine at it with a single click. However, quite often the truth turns out to be strangely uninteresting and unmemorable. If an engine points out a missed win of material, then you do sit up and take notice. If the engine offers a line that it evaluates as $+0.3$ and rates your choice as $+0.2$, you are quite likely to shrug your shoulders and move on.

In 2013-2015, I worked intensively on my opening repertoire, letting multiple engines analyse single opening positions exhaustively for hours and then sifting through the output they produced. It was exhausting! Looking through tens of lines suggested for a single position, most with very similar evaluations (one is 0.16, the other 0.18) and trying to work out the differences between them from long lines of analysis 20 moves deep was – at times – a frankly distressing experience, especially after a full day's work! Memorising the lines I distilled from this analysis was also very challenging, and I spent many tedious hours every day repeating and drilling them.

At some stage, I questioned the way that I was working with engines. Given this fantastic resource – a superhuman-strength player willing to work tirelessly on any chess position you throw at it at any time of night and day – it should surely be possible to devise ways of working that were fun and inspiring? I started to experiment with various innovative ways of working with engines (described in depth in *Silicon Road*) and one of these was engine matches. I would look through an opening line I wanted to play and select a number of key positions and put these into a pgn file. I would then let two engines play a match, each playing White and Black from the positions I had selected. At the end I would have a set of 30-40 games played at a superhuman level, exploring positions from an opening line I wanted to play. This approach had several notable benefits:

1. Gaps in existing (human) practice are filled with engine matches. Despite the wealth of information available to us in chess databases, we never seem to have enough games in the variations we want to play! A game between two strong players ends in an early draw, the remaining games are by low-ranked players who may have made serious mistakes, a natural possibility is ignored by all previous practitioners. Engine matches fill in these gaps: if you see something that interests you, you get the engines onto it and they won't complain! It's as if a private tournament was being run for you, only in the openings that interest you.

2. Seeing whole games in the opening gives you a better feel for the types of positions you encounter. A line of analysis with an evaluation of 0.17 tells you little about the subsequent course of the struggle. However seeing whole games played out from your suggestions gives you a powerful impression of the flow of the struggle afterwards. Was one side on the defensive? Would I have wanted the position White had in the game? Did the type of play that arose make me enthusiastic for the opening? The American grandmaster Yasser Seirawan recommended playing through the whole game – even if you were only interested in the opening – to develop a feel for the middlegames

and even endgames resulting from the opening. I've found this to be a very valuable piece of advice and this training method implements it to the letter.

3. Great games inspire you and help you remember your opening lines. Engines play amazing games! If I see an amazing game in a line I want to play, it not only inspires me, it helps me remember the line.

This was a really nice way of working but at that specific time, it wasn't perfect yet. The problem lay in the engines themselves. Essentially, from a chess-playing point of view, they were fairly similar and they chose fairly similar moves. Moreover, despite being much stronger than any human player could dream of becoming, they had weaknesses in two areas: their play and assessment of closed positions was sometimes poor and their opening play was often strangely lax. Human players have a huge sense of urgency during the opening phase: when playing critical lines, we strive for maximum efficiency and speed from the very first move. Engines of that period needed a fair amount of prodding in the right direction to show the same urge.

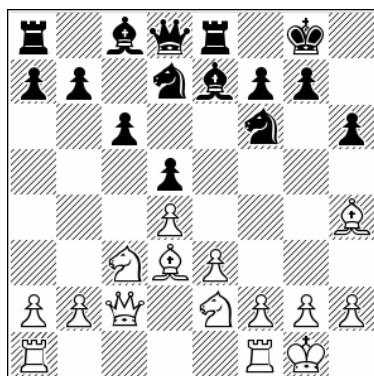
For me everything changed when AlphaZero burst onto the scene. When Natasha Regan and I worked together on the book *Game Changer*, we were fortunate enough to have a lot of interaction with the DeepMind team behind AlphaZero. When preparing the chapter on AlphaZero's openings, we asked them to run a series of games against the Stockfish version at that time from various openings to allow us to produce a complete overview of AlphaZero's preferences. The games produced were amazing in themselves, and provided enormous inspiration for playing openings. For example, I had never been particularly excited about playing the black side of the common Carlsbad structure in the Queen's Gambit Declined, but after this game...

Stockfish 8

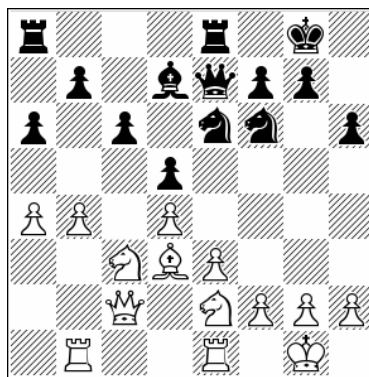
AlphaZero

g-OpeningsCarlsbad-001 London 2018

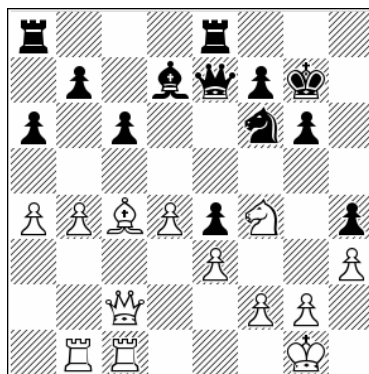
**1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.♙g5
♙e7 6.e3 0-0 7.♙d3 h6 8.♙h4 c6 9.♚c2 ♞e8
10.♘ge2 ♘bd7 11.0-0**



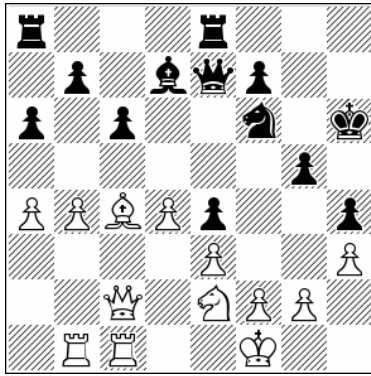
**11...♘h5 12.♙xe7 ♚xe7 13.♞ae1 ♘f8 14.a3 ♙d7
15.b4 ♘f6 16.♞b1 ♘e6 17.a4 a6 18.♞fe1**



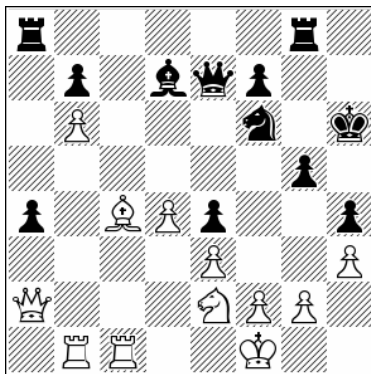
**18...h5 19.h3 g6 20.♞a1 ♘g5 21.♘f4 ♘ge4
22.♘xe4 dxe4 23.♙c4 ♙g7 24.♞ec1 h4 25.♞ab1**



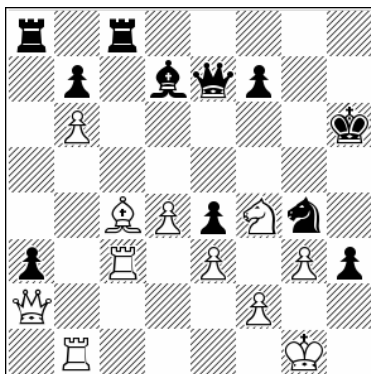
25...g5 26.♘e2 ♙h6 27.♙f1



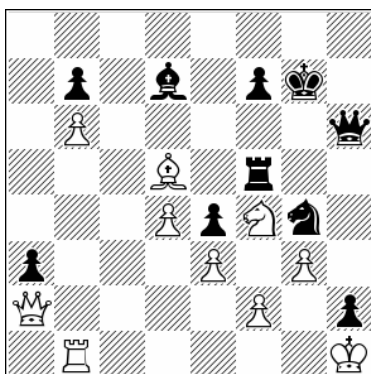
27...♖g8 28.b5 cxb5 29.axb5 a5 30.b6 a4
31.♗a2



31...a3 32.♖c3 g4 33.hxg4 ♗xg4 34.♗f4 h3
35.g3 ♖gc8 36.♗g1



36...h2+ 37.♗g2 ♗g7 38.♖cc1 ♖a5 39.♗e2 ♖xc1
40.♖xc1 ♗b4 41.♖b1 ♗d6 42.♗c4 ♗h6 43.♗h1
♖f5 44.♗d5



44...♖xf4 45.exf4 ♗f5 46.♖c1 ♗xb6 47.♗xa3
♗xf2+ 48.♗xh2 ♗g4+ 49.♗g2 ♗xd4 50.♗c3
♗e3+ 51.♗g1 ♗xc3 52.♖xc3 ♗xd5 0-1

This magnificent game which we entitled ‘The Rook’s Pawn Symphony’ is analysed in depth in *Game Changer* and in the associated Chessable course we also describe the lovely story of a Dutch amateur player who was so inspired by playing through this game that he produced his own ‘The Rook’s Pawn Symphony’ in a club game that same evening!

The key reason that the games were so exciting was the clash of styles. The jewel of AlphaZero’s game was its self-learned evaluation function which had been trained by 44 million lightning-fast games against itself. This evaluation was on a different level to Stockfish’s, pushing AlphaZero towards long-term material sacrifices and a relentless search for activity of its pieces; Stockfish was a calculating, searching monster and a superb defender. They approached positions in completely different ways and the resulting clash produced truly inspirational games.

Obviously, nobody had AlphaZero on their desktop, but using the scientific publications of the DeepMind team about AlphaZero, the open source Leela project set about reproducing and then surpassing AlphaZero. By early 2019, Leela had already become extremely strong and as long as your computer was equipped with a good graphics card, you could run an AlphaZero-like engine at home!

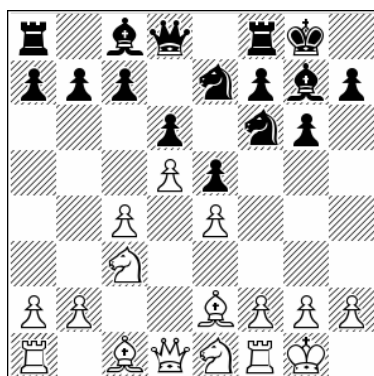
This was when my usage of engine matches as an analytical approach really took off. It started off with opening analysis. Leela – just like AlphaZero – was extremely strong in the opening phase, displaying the same (human) hunger for activity and efficiency that had been lacking in engines before then. However, soon I graduated to using engine matches also as a way of analysing whole games: opening, middlegame and endgame. Leela was extremely strong strategically and could find brilliant regrouping ideas in blocked positions, so you could give it

any type of position and it would find something interesting.

Of course, other engines weren't standing still either and the amazing open source Stockfish continued to show huge progress. When a different neural network technology (NNUE) allowed the Stockfish developers to build a self-learned evaluation function into Stockfish, it made an enormous jump in strength which to this day has not been bridged. The games which Stockfish, Leela and all the other engines now produce from any type of position are veritable masterclasses from which we can learn so much.

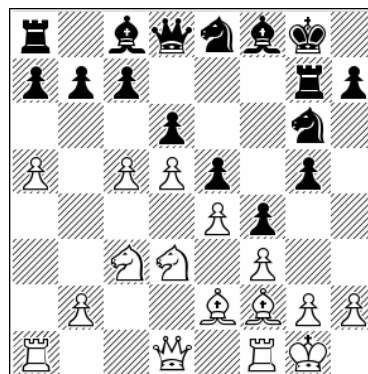
To give just one example, one of the most complex games to analyse in this book was Game 34, Korchnoi-Van Wely, featuring the fearsome Mar del Plata variation of the King's Indian.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♙g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0-0 6.♙e2 e5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.♘e1

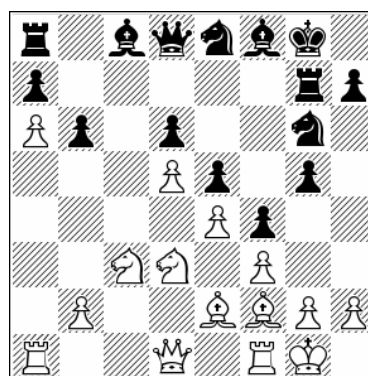


The position developed typically for this variation: White pounds the queenside hoping to create holes for its pieces to infiltrate; Black masses for a kingside pawn storm that may take some time to land but has the white king as its target!

9...♘b4 10.♙e3 f5 11.f3 f4 12.♙f2 g5 13.c5 ♘g6 14.a4 ♜f7 15.♘d3 ♙f8 16.a5 ♜g7



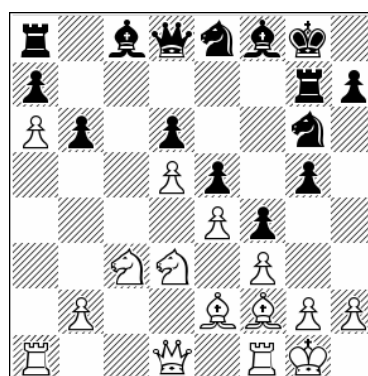
From the diagram, Korchnoi played 17.a6 and criticized Van Wely's 17...bxa6, recommending 17...b6 18.cxb6 cxb6.



Korchnoi explained that he had since analysed 19.♘b4 at home for many hours and had come to the conclusion that White's knight on c6 achieved nothing and Black's long-term kingside play was more dangerous.

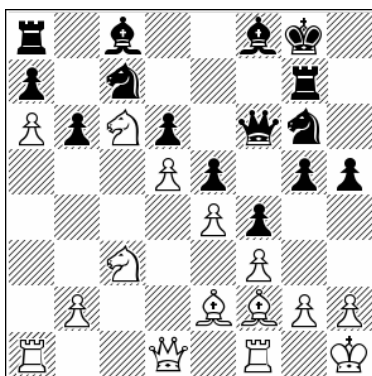
We let the engines loose on this position and they produced many interesting games that revealed a lot of unexpected ways of breaking through on the queenside and some deep assessments that belied Korchnoi's pessimistic conclusion. For example:

Dragon 3.2 Stockfish

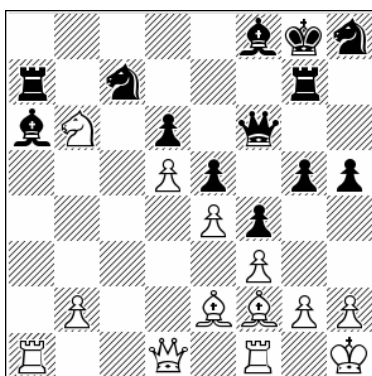


White to move

19.♖h1 h5 20.♘b4 ♘c7 21.♘c6 ♖f6

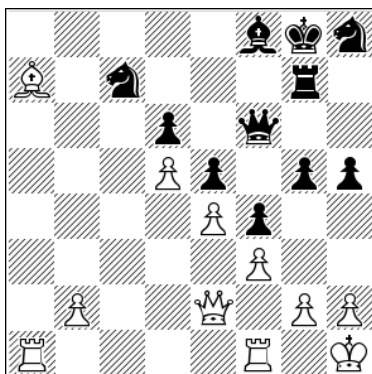


22.♘a4 ♘h8 23.♘xa7 ♖xa7 24.♘xb6 ♖xa6

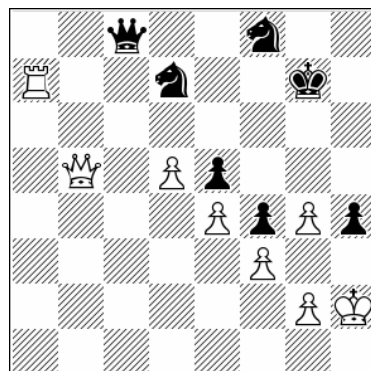


25.♘d7 ♖d8 26.♘xa7 ♖xe2 27.♘f6+ ♖xf6

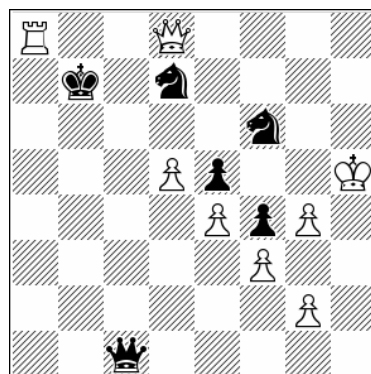
28.♖xe2



28...g4 29.b4 ♖g6 30.♘b6 ♘e8 31.♖a8 h4 32.b5
 ♖b7 33.♘a5 ♘f6 34.♘d8 ♘d7 35.♘e7 ♖f7
 36.♘xd6 ♘g6 37.h3 ♖g7 38.♘xf8+ ♘gxf8
 39.hxg4 ♖e7 40.♖h2 ♖b4 41.♖c1 ♖xb5 42.♖c4
 ♖d2 43.♖xb5 ♖xc1 44.♖a7 ♖c8



45.♖c6 ♖d8 46.♖d6 ♖f7 47.♖h3 ♖e8 48.♖c6
 ♖e7 49.♖h6 ♖c5 50.♖h5+ ♖d8 51.♖a8+ ♖c7
 52.♖e8 ♖b7 53.♖d8 ♖c1 54.♖xh4 ♘h7 55.♖h5
 ♘hf6+



56.♖g6

White's king was safe and Stockfish soon resigned: 1-0 (70).

So many things about this game were new, unexpected and instructive for me, and so many things are now memorable for me too. The breakthrough idea of ♘c6 followed by ♘a4, ♘xa7 and ♘xb6 was completely unknown to me but I will never forget it now. Moreover, if I had seen it in an engine line at move 19 and seen the evaluation for the position after move 25, I doubt I would have believed it. I would most likely have shrugged my shoulders and said, 'too difficult for me'. Seeing it in a game context, it makes real sense. Without a light-squared bishop to assist, the black kingside attack never really gets going (a well-known theme in the Mar del Plata, which is explained in the game annotations). And although Black has two knights for the rook and pawn, White's active major pieces and the passed b-pawn clearly give White a much easier position to play. I don't need to understand any of the tactical subtleties to have added a breakthrough idea and an evocative model game with a subtle evaluation to my positional arsenal.

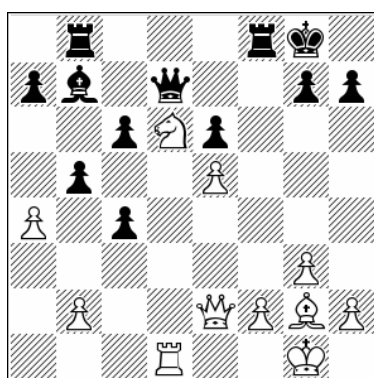
In the past four years, all my analytical efforts – both for books and Chessable courses and also for the hundreds of videos on the *Silicon Road* YouTube channel – have used this approach and I can't imagine going back to how it was before. On top of the advantages already mentioned above, analysing whole games by running engine games taken from multiple positions/variations from the game has other interesting benefits:

4. You can grasp the flow of a game very clearly from the trend of results in the engine match.

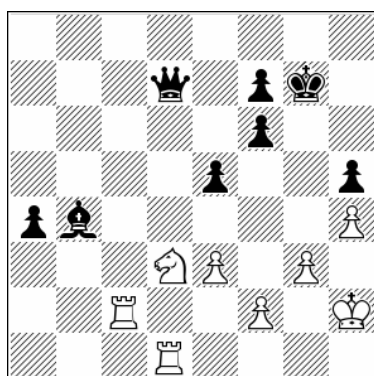
If I run a match using 50 different positions from a game, I can see very clearly from the trend of results when White was on top (more wins for White), when Black was on top (more wins for Black), when mutual blunders were made (alternating wins by White and Black) and when the game was completely decided (one colour wins until the end of the game). It's an amazingly powerful way of instantly getting an overview of a game, which is particularly helpful when you are analysing the games of others.

5. You have proof of whether an evaluation really was winning or not. Although the 2021 World Championship Match between Magnus Carlsen and Ian Nepomniachtchi was ultimately one-sided, the first six games were extraordinarily rich in content. There were points in several games where engines gave Ian a very favourable evaluation, but no clarity about whether the position was actually winning or not.

The most salient examples were Game 2 after Magnus Carlsen's (White) 23rd move:



And of course the unforgettable Game 6 if Ian had played the best move 36...♙xb4:



The TCEC engine competition ran a series of games between Stockfish, Leela and Komodo Dragon (currently viewable here: <https://tcec-chess.com/#div=wccb&game=1&season=21>), playing out these and other key positions

(selected by me) at long time controls on their exceptionally powerful hardware. Interested readers can read my summary of these games in New in Chess magazine.

These games showed that Game 2 was indeed a win, but the path to victory was exceptionally narrow and complicated. Game 6 was indeed still holdable for White after 36...♙xb4, though it helped somewhat if you were Stockfish! These insights – and the necessary attacking and defensive plans – were too complex to capture in single lines of analysis with a number at the end. However, once the engines played the games out, the dominant themes and most important tactics became much clearer.

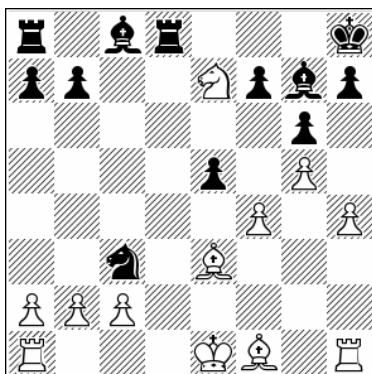
A similar example from this book is to be found in the tactical slugfest Lasker-Napier.

Emanuel Lasker

William Napier

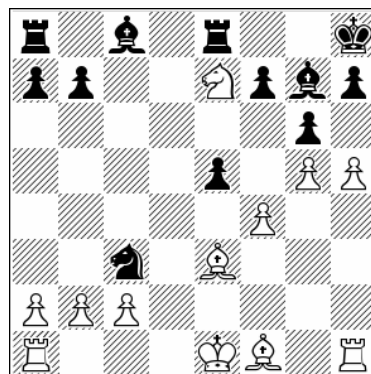
Cambridge Springs 1904

1.e4 c5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.♗f3 g6 4.d4 cxd4 5.♗xd4 ♙g7 6.♙e3 d6 7.h3 ♗f6 8.g4 0-0 9.g5 ♗e8 10.h4 ♗c7 11.f4 e5 12.♗de2 d5 13.exd5 ♗d4 14.♗xd4 ♗xd5 15.♗f5 ♗xc3 16.♙xd8 ♗xd8 17.♗e7+ ♔h8



The line 18.f5 has been recommended by many commentators and enjoys a high engine evaluation. However, the engines were able to steer the game into an ending that Black held in each of the twelve times it was reached. After Lasker's

18.h5 ♖e8



19.f5

at this moment enjoyed a similar evaluation to 18.f5 (a little lower in fact), but this time the engines scored overwhelmingly with White from the resulting positions. Playing out the games with engines helped us differentiate between two promising continuations with similar evaluations.

6. The positions are analysed by two engines instead of just one. Playing out games between two engines reduces the risk of missing an idea because one particular engine is blind to it. Although the top engines are outstanding in all areas of the game, they all have their own specific strengths. For example, Leela has some unique positional insights and is extremely strong in understanding fortress positions at a great distance while Komodo Dragon is an excellent attacking engine particularly good on exchange sacrifices for the initiative. These strengths often add something even to the almighty Stockfish's insights!

7. You can let the engines play out games for as long as you want. Many human games end at odd moments – draws in particular. Was a player in time trouble? Was there a specific tournament situation or was the weaker player happy with a draw? If anything confuses you, you can let the engines play out the game(s) to as much depth as necessary until you understand what was happening. I took this approach for this book in many (rook) endgames which were obvious to the engines but not to me!

Having explained the approach we used to analyse the games and its benefits, just a brief word about the hardware and software used.

Engines

I used three engines almost exclusively to analyse the games: two open source engines, Stockfish and Leela, and the commercial engine Komodo Dragon. These are clearly the top engines at the time of writing.

In the book, Stockfish is referred to as Stockfish without any version number. The amazingly industrious Stockfish team brings out updates extremely regularly on the <https://abrok.eu/stockfish/> site and I try to keep up-to-date as much as possible. I feared that a series of different version numbers might prove confusing to readers, but the Stockfish versions used in the book are right-up-to-date.

Leela is referred to in the book as both Lc0 (the abbreviation for Leela Chess Zero) and the more familiar Leela. I used the 29.0 binary and adopted new neural networks as promising ones became available. Once again, a version number was omitted in the book to avoid confusion.

Finally, I used Komodo Dragon versions 2.6, 3.1 and 3.2 (which was released in the middle of writing this book). Perhaps slightly inconsistently, I have included version numbers in the text. I found quite significant strength differences between the releases so I felt it was worth mentioning. I refer to Komodo Dragon mostly as Dragon.

Hardware

I used four different machines to generate engine games. I give the CPU, memory (and GPU where appropriate) specifications below for the technically-minded:

1. AMD EPYC 7642 48c/96t CPU with 256GB RAM

My biggest machine which I used for Stockfish vs Dragon engine matches.

2. AMD Ryzen 7 5800X 8c/16t CPU with 128GB RAM

A decent box which I used for Stockfish vs Dragon engine matches.

3. Intel Core i9-10900K 10c/20t CPU with 32GB RAM, nVidia GeForce RTX 2080 Super

A fairly powerful laptop that is dedicated to running Stockfish vs Leela games. With those specifications, it's clear that Stockfish has a definite hardware edge but of course I'm more interested in the ideas the engines find than the score in their matches.

4. Intel Core i9-10980HK 8c/16t with 32GB RAM, nVidia GeForce RTX 3080 Laptop GPU

My main laptop on which I occasionally run quicker engine games if I want to know something quickly!

Games

I always end up running multiple engine matches when analysing a single game. As I delve deeper into the position, I always have additional questions to which I need answers. They are most often moves that I consider strong, or the most likely human choice, but which the engine has steadfastly ignored! The initial run of games was always run at the time control of 30 minutes with a 3 second increment. This is a rather long time control – longer than I usually do – but in this way I wanted to ensure for the book that extremely difficult lines requiring a very deep search would not be overlooked (which might conceivably happen if I was running blitz games). For subsequent matches, I often reduced the time control to 10 or 15 minutes with a 3 second increment as I was desperate to know quickly what the answer was to my questions! Any games with the event 'Classics 2022' or 'Classics 2023' were run in this way.

You may notice that in some cases, the engines abandoned the game as an early draw. The program I use to run my engine matches adjudicates games early in which both engines are assessing the position as equal for a number of moves. When I felt more explanation was needed, I ran a new engine game from the final position to make the engines probe a little deeper.

The engine games used to illustrate the variations in the game represent a small fraction of the total games played. I have always tried to select the most evocative and human-understandable games possible.

Running your own games

If this has inspired you to want to run your own engine games, then look no further than the supplementary material download link for *Silicon Road*, which is available from the New in Chess website for that book (currently <https://www.newinchess.com/engine-training>). The material contains step-by-step instructions with screenshots and has been used successfully by many happy *Silicon Road* readers!

GM Matthew Sadler

Kent, England, March 2023

The games

Game 1 – Italian Game

Adolf Anderssen

Jean Dufresne

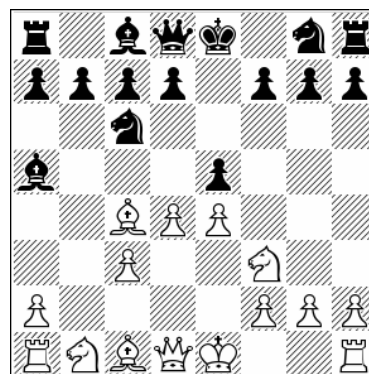
Berlin 1852

This is one of Anderssen's two most famous games, the 'Immortal' against Kieseritzky being the other. This one has attracted a great deal of analysis over the years, especially Black's 19th move. We hope we have now finally been able to answer the questions once and for all.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♗c6 3.♙c4 ♙c5 4.b4

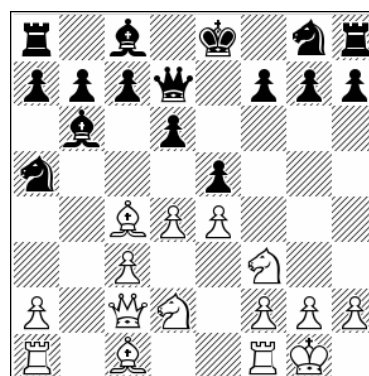
The Evans Gambit has proved one of the more enduring of the classical gambit openings, bringing Kasparov two devastating wins in his only two serious outings with it, and also proving a useful point-scorer for Nigel Short. But nowadays it is believed to have finally been pretty much 'solved' at top level. One might think that such gambits would be the first to be refuted in the modern engine age. However, it's turned out that piece activity and open lines and diagonals are the most valuable of all currencies for modern engines, and that a lost pawn in the opening is often just a minor inconvenience if dynamic chances are present. This was brought home to me (Matthew) most recently when I submitted the Evans-esque 1.e4 1...♗c6 2.b4?!? (the brainchild of English IM Richard Palliser) as an opening for the TCEC (the leading engine competition) Superfinal (a 100-game match played at long time controls from pre-specified opening positions) between top engines Stockfish and Leela. The games were played at classical time controls on extremely impressive hardware, but neither engine made any impression as Black. The tempo gained on the black knight after capturing on b4, and the open lines and diagonals created by the absence of a b-pawn were more than enough to balance the game with counterplay.

4...♙xb4 5.c3 ♙a5 6.d4



6...exd4

Subsequently, Black normally followed a solid plan of defence attributed to Lasker but which was first played by Salwe in 1908 against Rudolf Spielmann: 6...d6 7.♖b3 ♗d7 8.0-0 ♙b6. This is the linchpin of the plan, and Salwe also played this manoeuvre twice in 1906 when he faced the Evans Gambit (though White did not play 7.♖b3). The loose bishop on a5 is brought back to safety; by doing so the a5-square is freed which the knight on c6 can use profitably to exchange off a key white attacker: the bishop on c4. 9.♗bd2 ♗a5 10.♖c2 and now:



analysis diagram

A) 10...♗xc4 11.♗xc4 ♖c6 is an alternative way of returning the pawn to blunt the white initiative. It has been tried a few times in human games, mostly in rapid and blitz: 12.♗xb6 axb6 13.dxe5 dxe5 14.♗xe5 ♖a4 15.♖d3 ♗f6 16.♙e1 (16.♖g3 has been the human choice in blitz and obviously caused some worries and problems for the black player!: 16...0-0 17.♙h6 ♗h5 18.♖f3 and now the engine line is the lovely 18...f6 19.♖xh5 ♖e8

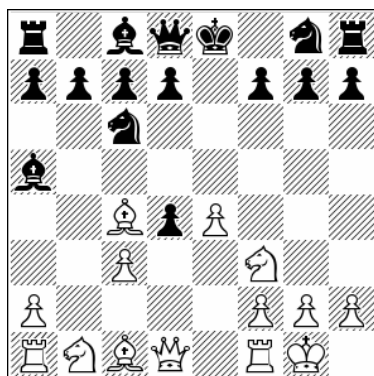
20. ♖xe8 ♜xe8 21. ♘d3 gxf6 with no problems for Black) 16... 0-0 17. ♕g5 ♘d7 18. ♘xd7 ♖xd7 19. ♖g3 ♜a4 20. ♕f4 ♜c4 21. f3 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022;

B) 10... ♖e7 11. ♕a3 ♖f6 12. ♕b5+ c6 13. ♕e2 ♘e7 14. ♕b4 ♕c7 15. ♜fd1 0-0 was a Stockfish attempt to keep the extra pawn. The offside knight on a5 gives Black a few headaches but Black's position is basically solid, ½-½ (25) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022;

C) 10... ♘e7. This line, returning the sacrificed pawn for easy development has been the most popular in the modern game. 11. dxe5 ♘g6 12. exd6 ♖xd6 13. e5 ♖c6 14. ♕e2 ♘f4 15. ♕d1 0-0 16. ♘e4 ♘g6 17. ♜e1 ♘c4 18. ♘ed2 ♘xd2 19. ♕xd2 ♕e6 20. a4 ♜ad8 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

7.0-0

7. ♖b3 is of course also typical and interesting, hitting f7 immediately to disrupt Black's development. 7... ♖e7 8.0-0 ♕b6 9. cxd4 ♘xd4 10. ♘xd4 ♕xd4 11. ♘c3 has been seen fairly frequently in human games with pretty good results for White.



7...d3

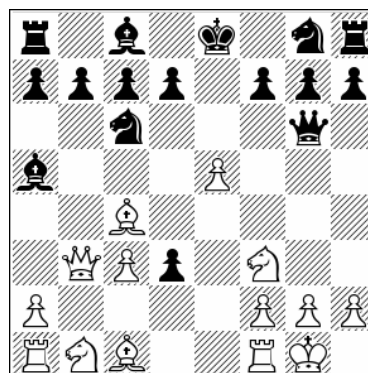
Not the engine choice, but a very reasonable idea to destroy any hope White might have of gaining a double pawn centre as compensation for the sacrificed pawn. On the downside, it is a non-developing pawn move in response to White's lead in development, so it obviously involves some risk. But the text, though not best, is certainly not so bad.

7... ♘ge7 is the main choice at top level these days.

7... ♘f6 was the engine preference, though it too is not without risk: 8. ♕a3 d6 9. e5 ♘e4 10. exd6

cx d6 11. ♖e2 d5 12. ♘xd4 ♘xd4 13. cxd4. Black is now unable to castle, but finds a good spot for the king on g6! 13... f5 14. ♕b3 ♘f7 15. ♖b5 ♘g6 16. ♕xd5 h6 17. ♕xe4 fxe4 18. ♕b4 ♕b6 19. ♘c3 a6 20. ♖d5 ♖xd5 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

8. ♖b3 ♖f6 9. e5 ♖g6



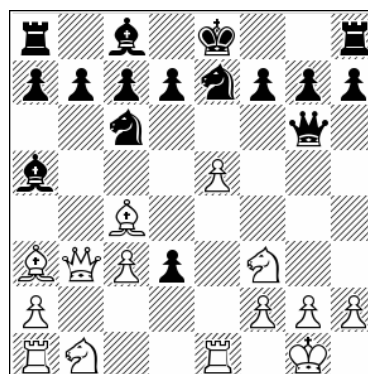
10. ♜e1?!

Very natural, but the engines much preferred 10. ♜d1. The point is that they consider ...d6 to be mandatory to free Black's position, even at the cost of a pawn. 10. ♜d1 already lines up against the isolated d-pawn that will be created after exd6 ...cxd6.

The engine assesses the position as equal after 10... ♘ge7 11. ♕xd3 ♖h5 12. ♘bd2 0-0 13. ♕a3 d6 14. exd6 cxd6 15. ♕xd6 ♜d8 16. ♘e4 ♕e6 17. ♖b2 ♘f5 18. ♕f4 ♖g4 19. ♖c1 h6 20. h3 ♖h5 21. ♜b1 ♕b6 22. ♘h2 ♘h4 23. ♘xh4 ½-½ Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023.

10... ♘ge7 11. ♕a3?!

Now White should be somewhat worse. The engine prefers to eliminate the d3-pawn by 11. ♖d1 or 11. ♜e3.



11...b5?

A creative and ingenious idea to free Black's queenside pieces with gain of tempo and give

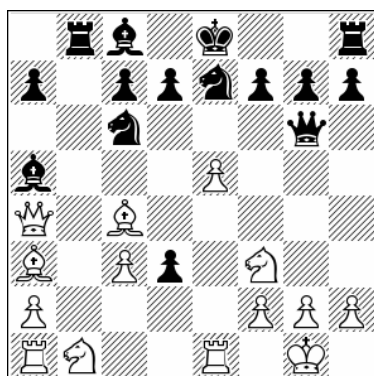
the light-squared bishop not just access to the c8-h3 diagonal, but to the a8-h1 diagonal. It doesn't work particularly well however, because until Anderssen very helpfully opens the g-file with 17.♘f6+, Black doesn't have much to combine with the light-squared bishop to create danger against the white position. And without the assistance of the light-squared bishop in covering the kingside light squares, Black's queen is extremely vulnerable to attack by White's minor pieces.

11...d5 was again the sensible engine choice to free the light-squared bishop and Black's queenside pieces. 12.exd6 cxd6 13.♖e3 0-0 14.♙xd3 ♖h6 15.♘bd2 ♙e6 is a very pleasant position for Black, ½-½ (40) Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023.

12.♙xb5

12.♙xb5 ♖b8 13.♙a4 was the engine favourite but it ends up very similar to the game. Not 13...0-0? 14.♙xe7, winning a piece.

12...♖b8 13.♙a4



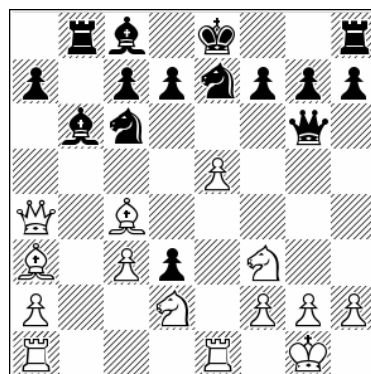
13...♙b6

Putting the bishop to safety, allowing Black to castle and also preventing ♖e3 and ♙xd3.

13...♙b6 was Dragon's favourite, leading to some crazy games after 14.♖e3 ♙b6 15.♙xd3 f5 16.exf6 ♙xf6 17.♖e2 ♘d8 18.♙e4 g5. A great idea, Dragon channelling its inner Basman to bring some new life into a 19th century game! 19.♘bd2 g4 20.♘d4 ♘xd4 21.cxd4 ♘c6 22.♖ael ♘xd4 23.♙xb7 ♘xe2+ 24.♖xe2 ♖e8 25.♙e4 ♙d4 26.♙c4 c6 27.♙xh7 ♘c7 28.♘f1 ♙f4 29.♙d3 ♖xe2 30.♙xe2 ♖e8 31.♘e3 ♙xe3 32.fxe3 ♙xe3+ 33.♙xe3 ♖xe3 and Black had enough play with the passed c- and d-pawns to keep the two bishops at bay! Super play! ½-½ (57) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

14.♘bd2

14.♙d1 0-0 15.♙xd3 ♙h6 16.♘bd2 was the calm engine preference, when Black needs to hurry to secure some control over some kingside squares or the queen will become a target for ♖e1-e4-h4 or ♘e4 and ♙c1: 16...d5 17.exd6 cxd6 18.♖b1 ♖d8 19.♙c2 ♙g4 20.h3 ♙h5 21.♙c1 ♙g6 22.♘e4 ♙h5 23.♙g5 ½-½ (75) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022. Black fought out of this but it was very uncomfortable.



14...♙b7?

This natural move is the one the engines really dislike! It's the logical continuation of Dufresne's concept but now it's open season for White's minor pieces on the black queen.

It is now essential to get the king out of trouble by means of 14...0-0. White still has a decent initiative after 15.♖e4!, intending ♙xd3, but at least 15...d5 was still just about holding with some very fraught tactics: 16.exd6 cxd6 17.♙xd3 ♙h3 18.g3 ♙f6 when his position looks rather shaky, but is not a complete calamity: 19.♖h4 h6 20.♙c2 (20.♖xh3? ♙xc3, forking the bishop on d3 and rook on a1, is the tactical point) 20...♘e5 21.♖xh3 ♘xf3+ 22.♘xf3 ♙xf3 23.♙xd6 ♖be8 24.♙h7+ ♘h8 25.♙e4 ♙xf2+ 26.♙xf2 ♙xe4 27.♖e1 ♙f5 28.♖h4 ♙d7 29.♖d4 ♘c6 30.♙xf8 ♘xd4 31.♖xe8 ♙xe8 32.♙xg7+ ♘xg7 33.♙xd4+ ♘g8 and Dragon had miraculously reached a holdable endgame! ½-½ (39) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022. If 34.♙xa7, 34...♙e1+ 35.♘g2 ♙e4+ 36.♘f2 ♙c2+ recovers the c-pawn with check and the resulting queen endgame is a trivial draw for these monsters.

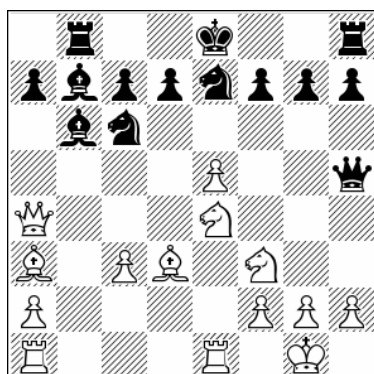
15.♘e4 ♙f5?!

A very odd move that doesn't help matters, but Black's position was in dire straits anyway.

15...d2, to distract the white knight with 16.♖exd2, was Black's best, but it's clear something has gone a bit wrong for Black: 16...0-0 17.♗e4 when the threat of ♕d3 leaves the black queen in severe trouble.

15...0-0 16.♕xd3 ♖h8 17.♗c5 wins the bishop pair and removes any danger against the white kingside with a great position to boot.

16.♕xd3 ♖h5

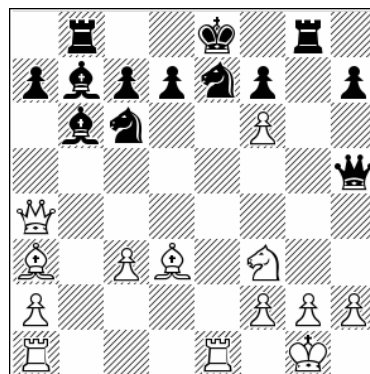


17.♗f6+?

An irresistible move: it might well be the first move one whacks out in a simultaneous display without a second thought! However, decisive as it looks, it is a serious mistake that throws away all of White's advantage! In one fell swoop it opens the g-file and adds a rook to Black's firepower against White's kingside and that's just what Black needs to make use of the activity Dufresne created with 11...b5. White could have obtained a much more crushing position after either of the two prosaic moves. Firstly, 17.♗g3; for example, 17...♖h6 18.♕c1 (Kasparov's choice; 18.♖ad1 and even 18.♗f5 ♗xf5 19.♕xf5 are at least equally overwhelming, but chasing the queen is very natural) 18...♖e6 19.♕c4 ♗d5 (19...♖g6 20.♗h4 wins the queen, in view of 20...♖g4 21.♕xf7+) 20.♗g5 ♖g4 21.♖e4 and again the queen perishes (Kasparov).

Secondly, 17.♖ad1 0-0 18.♗g3 ♖h6 19.♕c1 ♖e6 20.♗g5 with catastrophic material loss for Black in a variety of ways, 1-0 (25) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

17...gxf6 18.exf6 ♖g8!

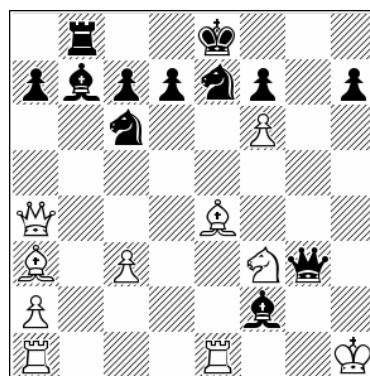


Dufresne finds the best move, setting up some counter-threats along the open g-file. Now we have reached the critical position, to which page after page of analysis has been devoted over the years.

19.♖ad1!

Anderssen chooses the sacrificial move, setting up a beautiful trap, which duly succeeds and is the reason this game acquired its nickname and its anthological popularity. But objectively, the position is only equal.

The alternative was 19.♕e4, which was White's best move objectively, still with a chance of a slight advantage in a crazy position. 19...♖h3 20.g3 ♖xg3+ 21.hxg3 ♖xg3+ 22.♖h1 ♕xf2 (if 22...♖h3+?, 23.♗h2 wins)

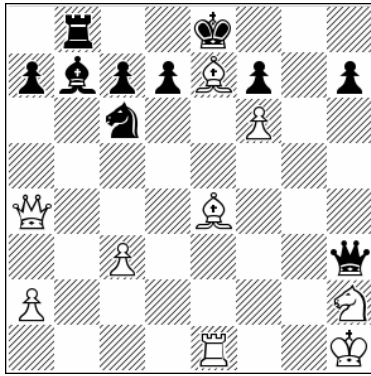


analysis diagram

A) If 23.♖e2??, 23...♗d4 wins;

B) 23.♕d5 ♕xe1 (23...♖h3+ 24.♗h2 ♕xe1 25.♖xe1 ♗e5 26.♕xb7 ♖xb7 27.♖a6 ♖b6 28.♖xa7 d6 29.fxe7 ½-½ Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023) 24.♖xe1 ♗e5! 25.♕xb7 ♖xb7 26.♖e4 ♖xf3+ 27.♖xf3 ♗xf3 28.♖xe7+ ♗d8 29.♖xf7 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023. The ending should be drawn, e.g. 29...d6 30.♖xh7 ♗g5 31.♖g7 ♖b5 followed by ...♖f5;

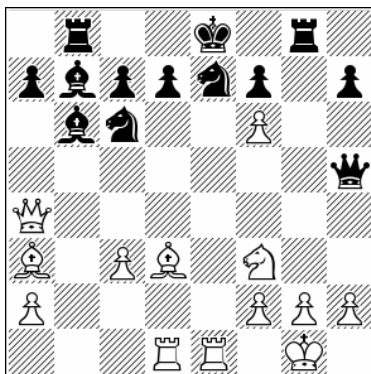
C) 23.♕xe7 ♖h3+ 24.♗h2 ♕xe1 25.♖xe1



analysis diagram

½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

A simple draw for the engines... let's carry on the game for a few more moves: 25...♖h4! (the only move: 25...♖xc3 26.♜f3 is winning for White) 26.♖d1 (also the only move to hold the balance against the threat of ...♜xe7) 26...♜xe7 27.♙xb7 ♖xf6! 28.♙g2 ♖b2 and Black has enough counterplay to hold the balance: 29.♖g4 ♜d8 30.♜f3 ♖g6 31.♖h3 ♖b1 32.♖h4 ♖xe1+ and the engines again called it a day here!



19...♖xf3?

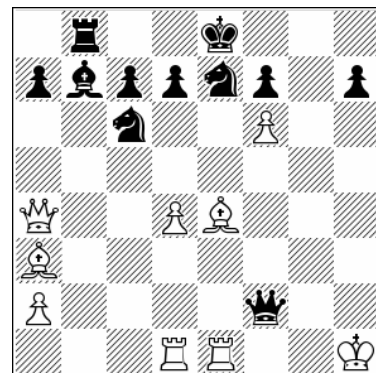
Grabbing material was almost seen as a moral duty in those days, but this allows Anderssen to show his genius idea.

A) Decades of analysis have been devoted to 19...♖g4 and it seems like a perfectly reasonable continuation for Black, though not in the engines' top choices. Now:

A1) 20.♖e4 ♖xe4 21.♖xe4 d6 22.♖e1 ♖g6 23.♖xe7+ ♜xe7 24.♖xe7+ ♜f8 25.♙xg6 hxg6 26.♙c1 ♙d5 27.h3 ♙xa2 28.♖e4 ♜g8 29.♙h6 ♙d5 30.♖h4 ♙xf3 31.gxf3 g5 (necessary to free the black king before ♙g7 happens) 32.♙xg5 ♙c5 33.♜g2 ♖b2 34.♖g4 ½-½ Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023. Equal for the engines, still a sharp, unbalanced endgame for humans;

A2) 20.♙c4 was punted by Stockfish and leads to some crazy tactics: 20...♖f5 21.♖xd7 ♜xd7 (21...♖xd7 22.♖xe7+ ♜xe7 23.♙xf7+ is the point: 23...♜xf7 24.♜e5+ ♜xf6 25.♜xd7+; 21...♖xg2+ 22.♜xg2 ♖g4+ 23.♜f1 ♖h3+ 24.♜e2 ♖xd7. (threatening ...♜d4+) 25.♖b5 ♜g6 26.♖g5 and the attack continues) 22.♜e5+ ♜c8 23.♜xg4 ♜d5 24.♖e8+ ♜d8 25.♙e7 c6 26.♙xd8 ♙xd8 27.♜e5 ♜c7 28.♖a5+ ♜b6 29.♖f8 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023. 29...♙xf6 30.♖xf7+ ♜c8 and all three results are possible! White can take a draw by repetition with 31.♖f8+ to start with.

B) Instead, the engine's first choice is 19...♙d4!, a desperado sacrifice to block the d-file. After 20.cxd4 (20.♙f1 ♙xf6 eliminates the f6-pawn and leaves White only fighting to hold the balance; 20.♙xe7 ♖xg2+ 21.♜xg2 ♜e5 is the amazing idea, finally revealing the genius behind 11...b5!) 20...♖xf3 21.♙e4 ♖xg2+ 22.♜h1 ♖xh2+ 23.♜xh2 ♖xf2+ 24.♜h1.

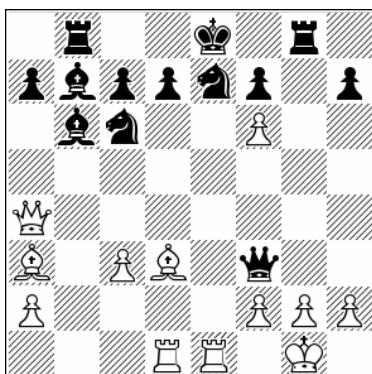


analysis diagram

Black can give perpetual check by 24...♖h4+ 25.♜g2 with a draw by perpetual, ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022, and can even do so more spectacularly with 24...♜f5 25.♙g2+ (25.♙xf5+ ♜e5+ 26.d5 ♖xf5 is also only a draw) 25...♜e3 26.♖xe3+ ♖xe3 27.d5 ♖h6+ 28.♜g1 ♖e3+ etc.;

C) 19...♖h3 is the engine's second choice, and also leads to some sort of equality after 20.♙f1 ♖f5 and now – amazingly for such a sharp position – there seem to be multiple ways White can play that do not affect the balance of the position, among which 21.♙d3, 21.♜h1 and even 21.h4! We'll show you the most outrageous: 21.c4 ♙a8 22.♜h1 ♖xf6 23.♙xe7 ♜xe7 24.♖xd7 ♜f8 25.♖xe7 ♖xf3 26.c5 ♖xg2+ 27.♙xg2 ½-½ Dragon

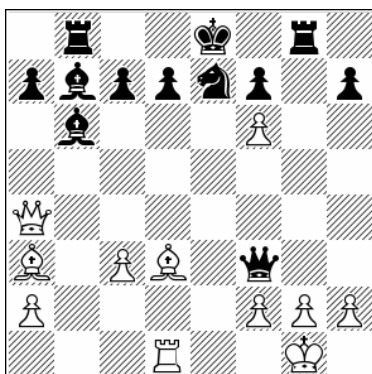
3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023. 27...♙xg2+ 28.♔g1 ♙h3+ 29.♔h1 ♙g2+ is a draw by perpetual.



20.♞xe7+! ♜xe7!?

Continuing the same ‘sporting tactics’. But Black is now lost anyway.

20...♔d8 was the only chance but fails to 21.♞xd7+! ♔c8 (21...♔xd7 22.♙f5+ ♔e8 23.♙d7+ ♔d8 24.♙xc6+ ♔c8 25.♙d7+ ♔d8 26.♙e7#) 22.♞d8+! ♔xd8 (22...♞xd8 23.gxf3, whilst 22...♔xd8 allows a beautiful echo of the game finish: 23.♞d7+!! ♔xd7 24.♙f5+ ♔c6 25.♙d7#) 23.♙e2+ (or 23.♙f5+ ♞xd1+ 24.♞xd1+ ♔d4 25.♙h3 and White wins) 23...♔d4 24.♙xf3 ♙xf3 25.g3 ♙xd1 26.♞xd1 and White wins prosaically in the endgame (Kasparov).



21.♞xd7+!!

Fantastic!!

21...♔xd7 22.♙f5+ ♔e8

22...♔c6 23.♙d7#.

23.♙d7+ ♔f8

23...♔d8 24.fxe7#.

24.♙xe7#

Game 2 – Vienna Game

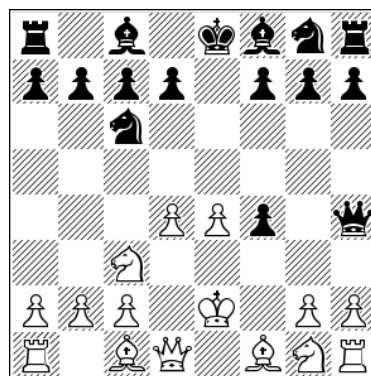
William Steinitz

Louis Paulsen

Baden-Baden 1870

This is one of the most famous games of the first World Champion and an illustration of his notorious gambit at its best. The gambit itself is an extraordinary idea, leaving the white king to fend for itself, in order to build up a powerful pawn centre. The idea that the king could look after itself was a key maxim of Steinitz, but one which has not been accepted very widely among other masters. We therefore thought it would be fascinating to see what the engines made of this striking idea.

1.e4 e5 2.♞c3 ♞c6 3.f4 exf4 4.d4 ♞h4+ 5.♔e2



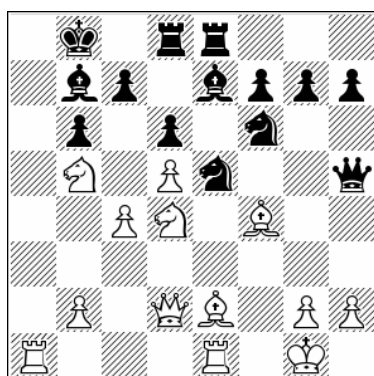
A favourite line of Steinitz’s throughout his career which we see in 26 of his games! Steinitz’s oft-quoted justification of this line, ‘the king can take care of itself’, obscures a little the modernity of the opening thinking (irrespective of the doubtful objective merits of the specific line). In the modern game, the opening is a phase of balance in which prospective gains and concessions are weighed against each other. The greater a player’s ambition for a specific gain, the greater the concession he must offer and the more concrete play becomes. Here Steinitz offers the king’s right to castle for occupation of the centre (and the possibility of future development tempi against the black queen) and is willing to navigate concrete lines (for example the crazy complications of 5...d5) to do so. As we shall see, Steinitz’s play is consistently forcing and it is in concrete play that Paulsen quickly loses his way, trying to exploit White’s exposed king in a way that runs into a lack of space caused by White’s double pawn centre. Amazingly, the game is essentially decided within the first 15 moves!

5...d6

Paulsen's move is a measured response, preparing a quick ...♔g4+ and ...0-0-0 followed by the opening of the centre to exploit the centralised white king.

The clever 5...b6, threatening to hit the white king from the opposite side with ...♔a6+, is the engine favourite but was also well-known at the inception of this system: Steinitz faced it eight times! 6.♖d2 ♔a6+ 7.♔d1 ♔xf1 8.♔f3 ♖h5 9.♖xf1 g5 10.♖d3 ♔ge7 11.♔e2 f6 12.♔d2 ♖g6 13.c4 ♔g7 14.♔c2 0-0 led to a tough fight which ended eventually in Black's favour 0-1 (85) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

Steinitz himself invariably replied 6.♔b5. Then 6...♔a6 7.a4 led to some wild engine games, but Black was clearly having all the fun! 7...0-0-0 8.♔f3 ♖e7 9.♔f2 ♔b7 10.a5 (10.♔xf4 ♔f6 (on a carbon level, the avaricious 10...♖xe4 resulted in a famous win for English IM Andrew Martin, against Michael Adams in a 1992 London League game: 11.♖d2 ♔f6 12.♔d3 ♖d5 13.♖he1 d6 14.a5 ♖h5 15.axb6 axb6 16.c4 ♔e7 17.♔g1 ♖he8 18.d5 ♔e5 19.♔fd4 ♔b8 20.♔e2



analysis diagram

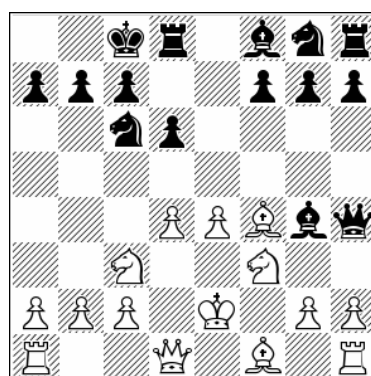
20...♔xc4 21.♔xh5 ♔xd2 22.♔xf7 ♔de4 23.♔xe8 ♖xe8 24.♔c6+ ♔c8 25.♖ac1 ♔f8 26.♔b4 ♔c5 27.♖xe8+ ♔xe8 28.♔g5 ♔f6 29.♔xf6 gxf6 30.♖e1 ♔d7 31.♔d4 ♔a4 32.♔bc6 ♔xb2 33.♔b8+ ♔d8 34.♔e6+ ♔c8 35.♔c6 ♔h6 36.♔c5 dxc5 37.♖e8+ 1-0 Martin-Adams London 1992) 11.♔d3 ♔xe4+ 12.♔xe4 ♖xe4 13.♔xc7 ♔xd4 14.♖xd4 ♔c5 15.♔d6+ ♔xc7 16.♔xe4 ♔xe4 17.♖a3 ♔xd4+ 18.♔xd4 ♖he8 with a clear extra pawn for Black, though Stockfish (who else?) survived! ½-½ (78) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 10...g5 11.a6 ♔a8 12.♔d3 ♔b8 13.h4 g4 14.♔xf4 d6 15.♔h2 ♔h6 16.♖d2 g3+ 17.♔xg3 ♔xf4+ 18.♖xf4 f5 19.exf5

♔b4 20.♔c3 ♔f6 21.♔h3 ♔h5, with a huge initiative for Black, 0-1 (74) Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

6.♔f3 ♔g4 7.♔xf4 0-0-0

A natural and good move, but you can trust the engines to tweak move-orders to maximum effect.

7...f5 was the engine choice, taking the first available opportunity to open the centre before getting the black king out of the way: 8.exf5 (8.♔e3, Steinitz's move in the game, doesn't work here: 8...♔xf3 9.♔xf3 g5 10.♔e3 f4 11.♔f2 g4+ 12.♔e2 g3 13.♔g1 0-0-0 with a powerful attacking position, ½-½ (165) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 8...0-0-0 9.♔d2 ♖h5 10.♔e2 ♖xf5 11.♔e3 ♔f6 12.h3 ♔xf3 13.♔xf3 ♔e5 14.♔e2 d5 15.♖f1 ♖xf1 16.♖axf1 ♔c4+ 17.♔xc4 dxc4 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.



8.♔e3

Not the top engine choice, but you can imagine the pleasure with which Steinitz must have made this move and the shock that Paulsen must have experienced! It also has the standard effect of concrete moves: it forces Black to react to a direct threat and stops him from navigating on autopilot.

8.♔e3 was the more cautious engine continuation, heading with the king towards the safety of the queenside. 8...g6 9.♔d2 ♔xf3 10.♖xf3 ♔h6 11.♖g3 ♖xg3 12.hxg3 ♔xe3+ 13.♔xe3 h5 14.♔e2 was a quick engine draw: ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

8...♖h5

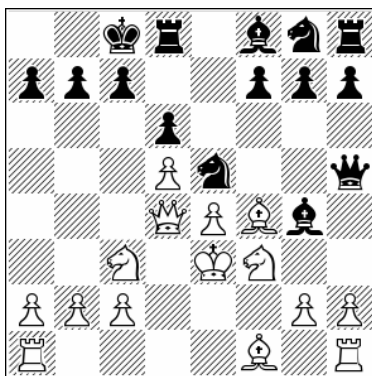
Again not the main engine choice though a very reasonable continuation.

8...♖e7 was my (Matthew) favourite, leading to a gorgeous little game! 9.d5 ♔f6 10.dxc6 d5

11.cxb7+ ♖b8 12.e5 d4+ 13.♟xd4 ♟xd1 14.♟c6+ was agreed drawn here by Dragon and Stockfish but we mortals need their main line to make sense of this! 14...♟xb7 15.♟xe7 ♟g4+ 16.♟e4 ♟f2+ 17.♟e3 (17.♟f5 ♟g4+ 18.♟g5 ♟xe7#) 17...♟g4+ with a beautiful draw by repetition!

9.♟e2

Steinitz stops halfway with this developing move and gives Black a chance of strong counterplay. It was important to continue the concrete play with 9.d5. Presumably Steinitz was more mindful of the strength of his central pawns standing side-by-side, but the disruptive potential of the d-pawn is still greater: 9...♟e5 10.♟d4.



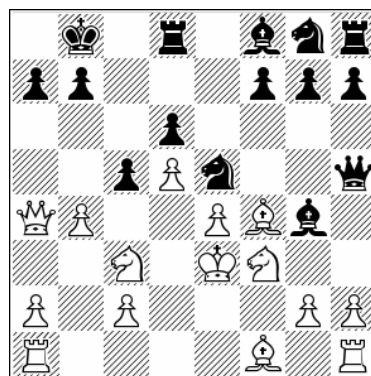
analysis diagram

The key point, hitting the black queenside which – bereft of the knight's protection – almost looks less well defended than White's king in the centre! It also simply threatens to win a pawn by capturing on e5.

A) 10...♟xf3 is the obvious reply and leads to some wild play. 11.♟xa7 ♟f6 12.♟xe5 ♟xg2 13.♟d4 (13.♟g3 ♟xh1 14.♟a8+ ♟d7 15.♟xb7 ♟h6+ 16.♟d4 ♟e7 17.♟xc7+ which is a pretty amazing position for the engines to conclude that the game is too boring to continue! ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 13...♟h6+ 14.♟d3 ♟xh1 15.♟c4 ♟xe4 16.♟b3 ♟xd5 17.♟xe4 ♟e7 18.♟a8+ was agreed drawn in Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022, though the position remains a total mess (for humans)! 18...♟d7 19.♟b5+ ♟c6 20.♟xb7 ♟e6+ 21.c4 ♟xe4 22.♟c3 ♟e7 23.♟e1 ♟b8 24.♟xb8 ♟xb8 25.♟xe4 ♟d8 was the expected line when White's activity and two bishops compensate for the pawn deficit;

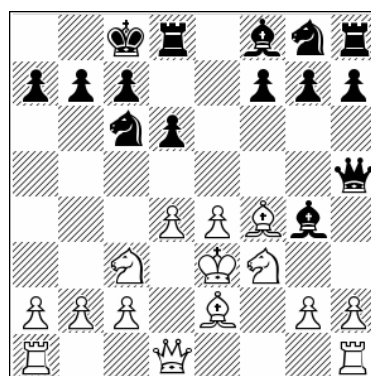
B) 10...♟b8 11.♟b5 is very dangerous for Black;

C) 10...c5 11.♟a4 ♟b8 (11...♟xf3 12.♟xa7 ♟xe4 13.♟xe5 ♟xe5 14.♟a8+ ♟c7 15.♟a5+ ♟c8 16.♟a8+ ♟c7 17.♟a5+ with a draw by repetition, ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 12.b4.



analysis diagram

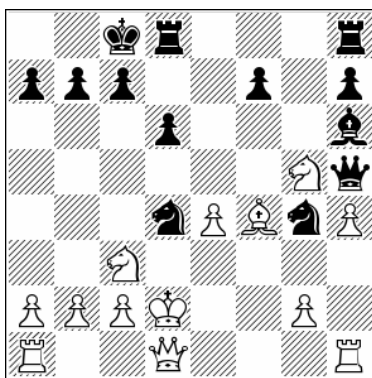
What a position! 12...c4 (keeping the queenside closed; 12...♟xf3 13.bxc5 ♟e7 14.♟b5 a6 15.c6 axb5 16.♟xb5 ♟d7 17.cxd7 ♟xe4 18.♟e2 ♟f5 19.g4 ♟xd7 20.♟xd7 ♟xd7 21.♟xe4 1-0 (60) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022). 13.♟d4 ♟e7 14.b5 (a far from obvious idea, preparing to open the b-file after ♟c6+ ...bxc6, bxc6) 14...g6 15.♟c6+ ♟7xc6 16.bxc6 ♟xc6 17.♟b1 (17.dxc6 ♟c5+ 18.♟d2 ♟f2+ 19.♟e2 ♟xf4+ 20.♟e1 d5 21.♟a5 ♟d6 22.♟xg4 ♟c7 23.♟b4 ♟b6 was agreed drawn, although most humans would rather be Black! ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 17...♟e5 18.♟f2 ♟h6 19.♟xb7+ ♟xb7 20.♟xe5 ♟xe5 (½-½ Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022) 21.♟c6+ ♟b8 22.♟b5+ is a draw by repetition!



9...♟a5

Unfortunate creativity from Paulsen. His idea is to capture on f3 without allowing a tempo on the queen with ♟xf3, thus enabling a quick follow-up with ...g5 and ...♟g7, hitting the d4-pawn. The queen might even join in the attack on d4 from b6. The problems are twofold and far

from obvious: firstly, the black queen can get short of squares on the queenside and secondly, White has more than one way to recapture on f3. 9...g5 has been known to be Black's best since the famous game Barle-Portisch: 10.♟xg5 ♟f6. White's position feels very stretched and only an engine can keep it together: 11.♞d2 (11.h3 ♟xe2 12.♞xe2 ♞g6 13.d5 ♟e5 14.♟f3 ♟h6 15.♟xh6 ♞xh6+ 16.♟f2 ♞hg8 17.♞hg1 ♟b8 18.♞d2 ♞g6 19.♞f4 ♟h5 20.♟xe5 dxe5 21.♞xe5 ♞de8 22.♞d4 ♟g3 23.♞ae1 ♟f5 24.♞d3 ♞b6+ 25.♟e2 ♞g3 26.♞c4 ♞e3+ 27.♟d1 ♞xg1 0-1 Barle-Portisch, Portoroz/Ljubljana 1975) 11...♟h6 12.h4 ♟xd4 13.♟xg4+ ♟xg4



analysis diagram

14.♟d5 ♞de8 15.g3 ♞hg8 16.♟c1 ♟e6 17.a4 ♟g7 18.♞a3 ♟f6 19.♞xh5 ♟xh5 20.♟d2 ♟c5 21.g4 ♟f6 22.♟xf6 ♟xf6 23.♞f3 ♟xg5 24.hxg5 ♞g7 25.e5 dxe5 26.♞hf1 ♟e4 27.♞xf7 ♟xd2 28.♟xd2 ♞xg5 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022. Beautiful defence by White!

10.a3

Steinitz's move is quite strong and logical, emphasising the restricted position of the black queen by looking to hit it with b4, but the engines have an even better move up their sleeve:

10.d5. This disruptive move again. Black gains the e5-square for the knight but the black queen is cut off from the kingside and that turns out to be rather tricky! 10...♟e5 (10...♞b6+ 11.♟d2 ♟d4 12.a4 ♟xe2 13.♞xe2 ♞e8 14.h3 ♟d7 15.♞he1 f5 16.a5 ♞b4 17.♞e3 ♟b8 18.e5 dxe5 19.♟xe5 ♟a8 20.a6 ♟f6 21.axb7+ ♞xb7 22.♞d4 was very powerful from Dragon! 1-0 (62) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 11.♟f2 ♟e7 12.♟e3 ♟d7 13.♟d4 ♟f6 14.♟b3 ♞b4 15.♟d4. Black's queen is a constant

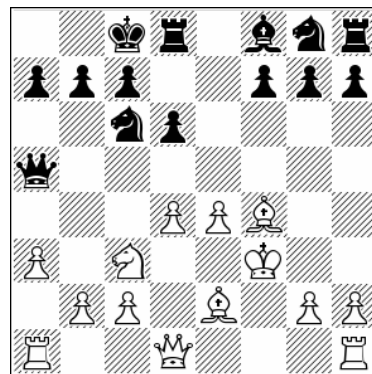
headache, outweighing the exposure of white's king.

15...♟g4 16.♞e1 ♟xe2 17.♞xe2 ♞c4 18.♞d1 c6 19.♟xa7 c5 20.a4 ♞a6 21.♟b5 ♟d7 22.♟g1 ♞he8 23.♞e2 ♞c8 24.c4 ♞a8 25.♟xc5 dxc5 26.d6 ♞c6 27.dxe7 ♟xe7 28.♞ad1 ♟f8 29.♞d6 ♞c8 30.a5 1-0 (159) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

10...♟xf3

Paulsen continues his idea consistently.

11.♟xf3!

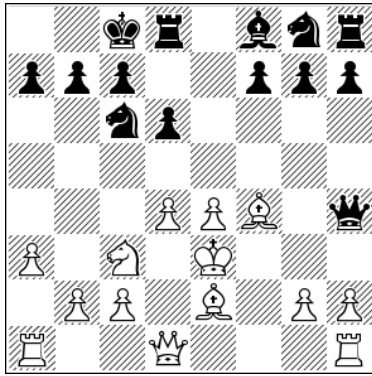


A fantastic move and more concrete play from Steinitz. Recapturing with the king looks odd because... well, because firstly you don't really expect three of the first eleven moves to be made by the king! Secondly, it doesn't cover the black queen's access to h5 which ♟xf3 would do. However, recapturing with the king does nullify the punch of Paulsen's ...g5 idea, which means that he needs to start from scratch to find a way of creating counterplay. It's actually getting rather urgent: give White a couple more moves and he will have built up a huge space advantage with the bishop pair to boot.

11...♞h5+

11...f5 (11...g5 12.b4 ♞b6 13.♟e3 with the threat of ♟d5 or ♟a4, trapping the queen) was Black's last chance to escape vaguely alive! 12.d5 ♟e5+ 13.♟f2 g6 14.♟e3 (threatening b4, trapping the queen!) 14...c5 (14...♟h6 15.♟d4 renewing the threat of b4) 15.dxc6 ♟xc6 16.♞d5 ♟h6 17.♞xa5 ♟xe3+ 18.♟xe3 ♟xa5 19.exf5 gxf5. Black's pawn weaknesses make this endgame unpleasant for him, and only Stockfish ever managed to hold it! 1-0 (91) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

12.♟e3 ♞h4



13.b4

This time Steinitz overdoes things a little. It's an extremely logical prophylactic idea – Steinitz guessed very well what Paulsen was aiming for. However, White has some more dangerous ideas. 13.g3 ♖e7 14.♔f3 ♔b8 15.♔g2 was the engine approach, when they considered that White had a huge, indeed decisive positional advantage: the two bishops, a strong invulnerable centre and a lovely target on the queenside for a pawn storm. 15...♟f6 16.♟f3 h6 17.♟d5 ♖e6 18.♟xf6 ♖xf6 19.♟e3 g6 20.h4 ♟g7 21.c3 ♖e7 22.♖d3 ♖d7 23.b4 ♟e7 24.♞ae1 h5 25.c4 ♟h6 26.♟f2 ♖c8 27.b5 f5 28.exf5 ♖xf5 29.♖xf5 ♟xf5 30.♞e6 ♟hg8 31.♟d5 ♞df8 32.♞f1 ♞e8 33.♞fe1 1-0 (76) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

13...g5

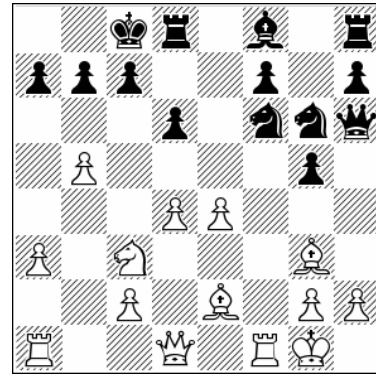
Paulsen finally implements his idea, intending ...♟g7, attacking d4, but Steinitz is more than ready for this.

13...f5 still gave Black a reasonable chance of emerging alive: 14.b5 ♟ce7 15.♖d3 ♟g6 (15...g5 16.♟g3 f4+ 17.♔d2 is the lovely point of 15.♖d3 as 17...fxg3 18.hxg3 costs Black his queen!) 16.g3 ♖h3 17.♔d2 ♟xf4 18.gxf4 ♖h6 19.♟d5 ♟f6 20.♟xf6 ♖xf6 21.exf5 d5 22.c3 ♟d6 23.♔c2 ♟xf4 24.♞he1 ♔b8 25.♟g4 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

14.♟g3 ♖h6 15.b5

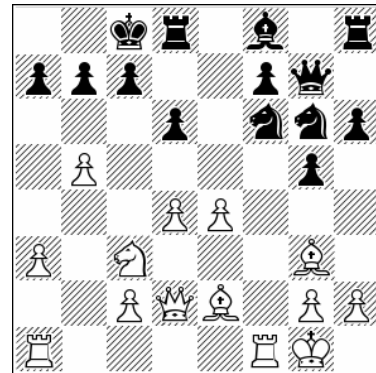
Chasing the knight away from c6 and removing all the black pressure on d4. All that remains now for Black is a series of weak squares and pieces in disarray.

15...♟ce7 16.♞f1 ♟f6 17.♔f2 ♟g6 18.♔g1



How can White have played six king moves in the first 18 moves and be so far ahead in development? The engines have already given up for Black and Steinitz finishes the game powerfully with a pawn storm against the unprotected black king.

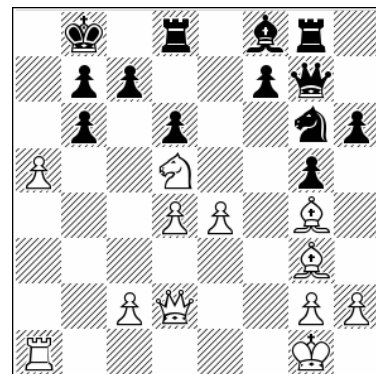
18...♖g7 19.♖d2 h6



20.a4

20.b6 axb6 21.a4 c6 22.a5 ♔d7 23.a6 bxa6 24.d5 c5 25.♞xa6 ♔e8 26.e5 was the engine way, but all paths lead to victory by now, 1-0 (40) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

20...♞g8 21.b6 axb6 22.♞xf6 ♖xf6 23.♟g4+ ♔b8 24.♟d5 ♖g7 25.a5



25...f5

The rest is carnage!

If 25...bxa5, 26.♙e5 blocks the attack of the black queen on d4: 26...♜xe5 27.♚xa5 ♜f3+ 28.♖h1 with unavoidable mate.

26.axb6 cxb6 27.♜xb6 ♜e7 28.exf5 ♚f7 29.f6 ♜c6 30.c4 ♜a7 31.♚a2 ♜b5 32.♜d5 ♚xd5 33.cxd5 ♜xd4 34.♚a7+ ♜c7 35.♚c1+ ♜c6 36.♚xc6#

A wonderful exhibition of concrete opening play and middlegame attacking power from Steinitz.

Game 3 – Ruy Lopez

Emanuel Lasker

William Steinitz

New York, Philadelphia & Montreal Wch m 1894

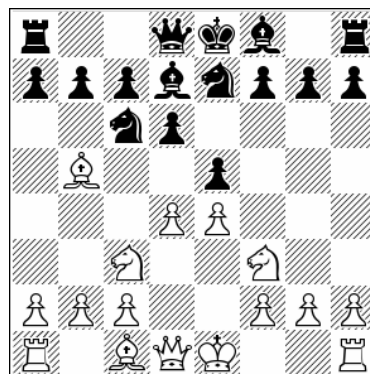
This is one of Lasker's most famous escapes from a lost position. It was also the crucial turning point in his successful World Championship match against Steinitz in 1894. After six games, the score stood at 3-3 and, as we shall see, after 20 moves here, Steinitz was two pawns up, with an objectively winning position. But he eventually lost, and, probably shattered by this blow, he went on to lose the next four games as well. He never recovered from the five-point deficit, eventually losing the match 10-5, with four draws. The game has been analysed extensively by many commentators in recent years, including Kasparov, Nunn and Dvoretsky. Despite this, the modern engines still have some additional things to say.

1.e4 e5 2.♜f3 ♜c6 3.♙b5 d6

Steinitz sticks faithfully to his eponymous defence, which he had already used earlier in the match. It is a solid but rather passive set-up that has attracted very few supporters in subsequent generations.

4.d4 ♙d7 5.♜c3 ♜ge7

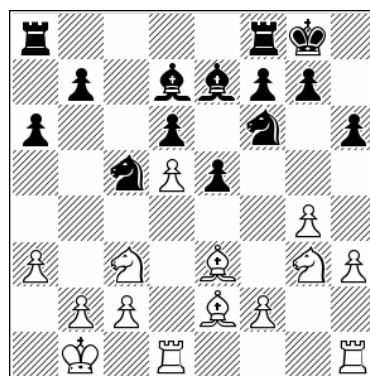
5...exd4 6.♜xd4 g6 is an attempt to give the game a livelier cast, and a line to which one of your co-authors and a clubmate devoted a quite unreasonable amount of attention in his youth. 5...♜f6 is the most common move, but Steinitz's choice was a favourite of his. Black intends to defend e5 with all his might.



6.♙e3

6.♙c4 had been Lasker's choice in Games 1, 3 and 5, but despite scoring 2½/3 in those games, he is the first to deviate.

But after 6.d5, the engines uniformly assess Steinitz's opening play as a disaster, which is somewhat confrontational for any older players (like us) who grew up with these games as models! And yet, play through engine games from this position – or if you're brave enough, play a few games against an engine as Black! – and you'll see how prospectless Black's position appears at this level: 6...♜b8 7.♙e2 h6 8.♙e3 ♜g8. A silent engine comment on the value of Steinitz's 5th move! All the engines want ...♜g8 at this point. 9.h3 ♜f6 10.♚d2 ♙e7 11.0-0-0 c6 12.g4 cxd5 13.exd5 ♜a6 14.♖b1 ♚a5 15.a3 ♚c8 16.♜b5 ♚xd2 17.♜xd2 ♚a8 18.♜f1 0-0 19.♜g3 ♜c5 20.♜c3 a6



analysis diagram

21.f3 ♚ac8 22.h4 ♜e8 23.♚dg1 ♖h8 24.♚g2 ♜c7 25.♙g5 ♙d8 26.♙d2 ♜e8 27.g5 f5 28.b4 ♜a4 29.♜xa4 ♙xa4 30.♙d3 f4 31.♜e4 ♙b5 32.gxh6 gxh6 33.♚g6 ♙xd3 34.cxd3 ♖h7 35.h5 and White was in complete control, even against the mighty Stockfish! 1-0 (75) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022. It would appear that perhaps the

good Dr Tarrasch had a point about cramped positions containing the seeds of defeat!

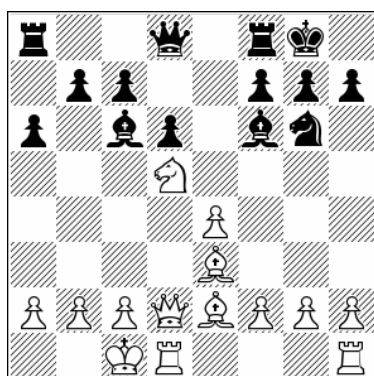
6...♘g6 7.♚d2

Again, the engines already claim an almost decisive advantage for White after 7.d5: 7...♘ce7 8.♚e2 ♘g8 9.0-0-0 ♘f6 10.♙xd7+ ♚xd7 11.♘e1 a6 12.♘d3 b5 13.f3 a5 14.b3 b4 15.♘a4 h5 16.♙b1 ♙e7 17.h4 ♚b5 18.♚f2 ♚a6 19.♘db2 0-0 20.g3 ♖d8 21.♙g5 c6 22.♙xf6 ♙xf6 23.♘c4 ♘e7 24.dxc6 ♘xc6 25.♖d5 ♚b8 26.g4 was another horror show for Black 1-0 (88) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

7...♙e7 8.0-0-0 a6 9.♙e2 exd4 10.♘xd4 ♘xd4 11.♚xd4

11.♙xd4 0-0 12.g3 was the engine favourite, dealing with Black's trick of ...♙g5 (which can now be met by f4) and supporting h2-h4-h5-h6. 12...♖e8 13.h4 ♘f8 14.h5 h6 (14...c6 15.h6 g6 16.f4 with another painful experience for Black in prospect, 1-0 (76) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 15.g4 ♘e6 16.♙e3 ♙f6 17.f4 ♙xc3 18.♚xc3 ♙b5 19.♙d3 f6 20.♙b1 ♚e7 21.♖dg1 ♙xd3 22.cxd3 ♙h7 23.g5 fxg5 24.f5 ♘f4 25.♙xf4 gxf4 26.♖g6 ♖f8 27.♚d2 f3 28.♚f4 ♖f7 29.♚xf3 ♖e8 30.a3 b5 31.♖f1 with an overwhelming position for White 1-0 (88) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

11...♙f6 12.♚d2 ♙c6 13.♘d5 0-0



Black's position is still somewhat passive, but has no organic weaknesses. Despite this, the engine thinks White is virtually winning. As those of us who read Keres and Kotov's *The Art of the Middlegame* have always known, in opposite-castling positions, speed is usually of the essence, as each side races his pawns down in front of the opposing king. Here Black faces the danger that his minor pieces on f6 and g6

will be targets for the enemy pawns, costing vital time.

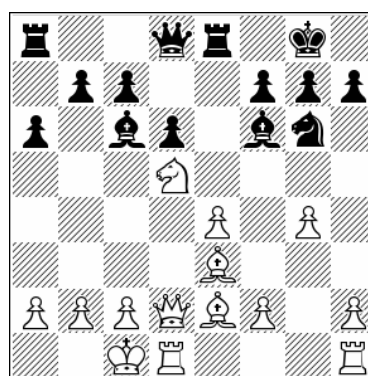
14.g4?

Definitely the wrong approach.

The modern engines' first choice is the immediate 14.h4, which they assess as an advantage of more than +2, effectively a winning position. Steinitz was an inveterate grabber of pawns, but even he would have found this one rather a mouthful, one fears: 14...♙xh4 15.f4 looks crushing, whilst against other moves, the pawn marches on.

White also has several other attractive continuations: Dvoretsky suggests 14.g3 intending h2-h4-h5, whilst Kasparov went for 14.♘xf6+ ♚xf6 15.f3, in both cases with a definite advantage for White.

14...♖e8



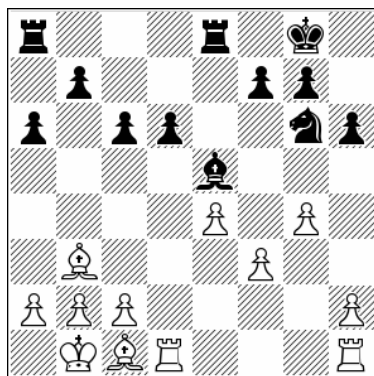
15.g5

It feels as if Lasker was trying to bluff Steinitz – or perhaps he simply missed or underestimated Black's venomous 16th move – but it wasn't yet necessary to play this aggressively.

15.h4 is a lovely idea from Stockfish, trying to keep the attacking momentum going. Black needs to be bold and precise to hold. After 15...♙xh4 (15...♖xe4 16.h5 ♘e5 17.g5 ♙xd5 18.♚xd5 ♖xe3 19.fxe3 is a much better version of the possible exchange sacrifice in the game: 19...c6 (19...♙xg5 20.♚xb7) 20.♚xd6 ♚xd6 21.♖xd6 ♙xg5 22.♖h3 is a slight edge for White, although Black is solid after 22...g6) 16.♖xh4 ♚xh4 (16...♘xh4 17.♙g5) 17.♘xc7 ♙xe4 18.♘xa8 ♖xa8 19.♚b4 ♖e8 20.♖xd6, White still has some initiative: Black's position would not be wholly pleasant in a human game due to White's two bishops, queenside majority and active pieces: 20...h6

21.b3 ♖h3 22.♗b6 ♜e5 23.♞d8 ♞xd8 24.♗xd8+ ♟h7 25.♗d4 ♗h1+ 26.♟b2 f6 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

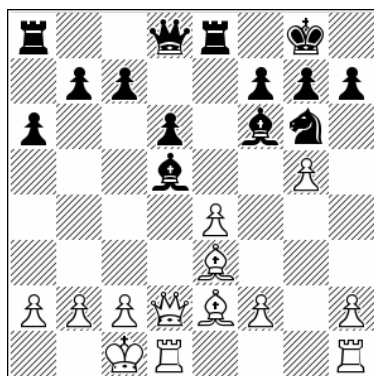
15.f3 is safer, though Black can achieve a safe position by holding back the white kingside pawns – a feat which looked impossible a couple of moves ago! 15...♙xd5 16.♗xd5 h6 17.♟b1 ♗e7 18.♙c1 ♗e5 19.♙c4 ♗xd5 20.♙xd5 c6 21.♙b3 ♙e5



analysis diagram

shows the problem with White's g4: Black can put a brake on White's kingside expansion, even defending weak points (d6) with an active bishop on e5, ½-½ (24) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

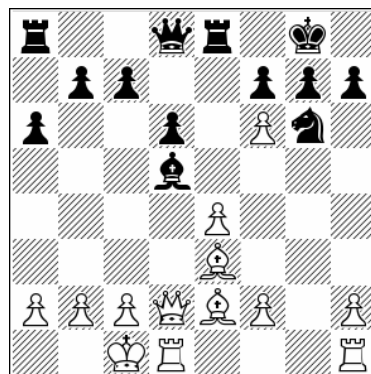
15...♙xd5!



16.♗xd5

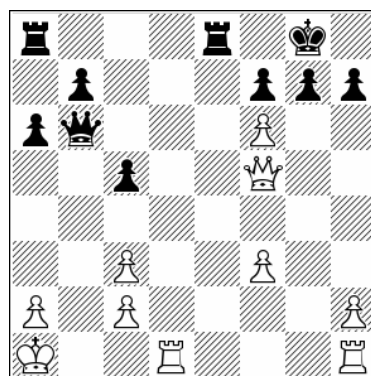
16.exd5 is met by the Petrosianic exchange sacrifice 16...♞xe3 17.fxe3 (17.gxf6 ♞h3 18.fxg7 ♗f6 also favours Black) 17...♙xg5 with splendid compensation. Lasker's move donates a pawn, in much worse circumstances than in the note to move 14.

Kasparov analysed 16.gxf6, but here the engine wants nothing to do with White's position:



analysis diagram

16...♙xe4 17.f3 ♙f5 18.♙d4 c5 19.♙c3 d5! 20.♗xd5 ♜f4 21.♗xf5 ♜xe2+ 22.♟b1 ♜xc3+ 23.bxc3 ♗b6+ 24.♟a1.



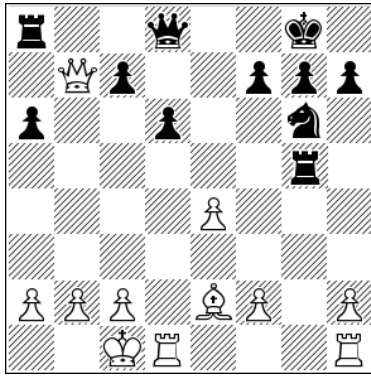
analysis diagram

Now Kasparov gave 24...♗xf6 25.♗xf6 gxf6 26.♞d5 with drawing chances in the rook ending, but Dvoretsky points out the much stronger 24...g6 25.♗f4 ♞e6 'with more of an advantage'; in fact, the engine considers Black's position overwhelming.

16...♞e5 17.♗d2?!

It is perhaps understandable that Lasker did not wish to open the b-file against his king, but he should nonetheless have gone for 17.♗xb7. After 17...♞b8, Dvoretsky gave 18.♗xb8 ♗xb8 19.gxf6 ♞xe4 20.fxg7 'unclear', but in this line, the engine prefers Black after 19...gxf6. More to the point, it believes the chances are equal after 18.♗xa6 ♙xg5 19.♙xg5 ♗xg5+ 20.♟b1 ♞xe4 21.♗a7 ♗d8 22.♙f3 ♞eb4 23.b3 ♜e5 24.♙g2 ♗f6 25.♙d5 c6 26.f4 cxd5 27.fxe5 dxe5 (½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) and now 28.♞xd5 is about equal.

Black's other try after 17.♗xb7 is 17...♙xg5 18.♙xg5 ♞xg5.



analysis diagram

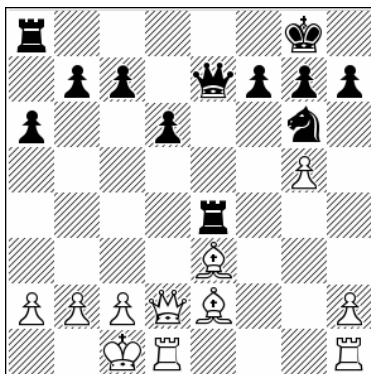
Now Kasparov gave 19.Rhg1! when both 19...Rc5 (Kasparov) and 19...Rg1 20.Rxg1 Rb8 21.Wa7 Rb6, threatening ...Wf6 (Dvoretsky), are possible. The engine agrees that Kasparov's line offers Black an edge, but thinks White is fine in Dvoretsky's variation after 22.Qc4! Wf6 23.Qb3. But 19...Rb8 is much stronger, mainly because of 20.Wxb8 Wxb8 21.Rxg5 h6 22.Rg3 Wb6 23.Re3 Qe5 and the dark-square control and effectiveness of the W+Q combination make the queen better than the two rooks.

However, all of this may be of peripheral relevance, since instead of 19.Rhg1!, the engine prefers 19.Qb1 which it assesses as equal. The white king looks a little vulnerable with the open b-file, but engines do not scare easily and the possibility of Rd5 or Rd1-d3-b3 seems to neutralise the potential threats.

17...Qxg5 18.f4

This invests another pawn, but is still relatively best.

18...Rxe4 19.fxg5 We7

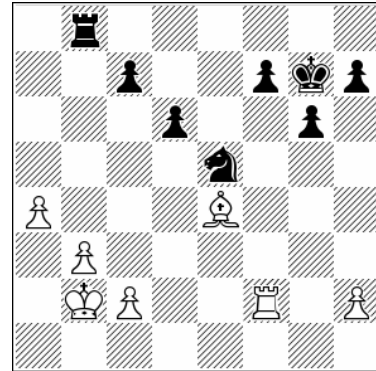


20.Rdf1?

A further mistake. After 20.Qf3 the game is definitely close to losing territory but the engines manage to salvage something by trading

most of the kingside for a passed a-pawn. Stockfish managed to win one game as Black but drew others.

20...Rxe3 21.Rhe1 Re5 22.Qxb7 Rb8 23.Qxa6 Wxg5 24.Wxg5 Rxg5. Black has an obvious advantage in the ending, but the asymmetrical pawn structure favours White's bishop: 25.a4 Rh5 26.b3 Qe5 27.Re2 g6 28.Rd4 Qg7 29.Qb2 Rf5 30.Qd3 Rg5 31.Qc3 Rg1 32.Rf2 Ra1 33.Qb2 Re1 34.Re4 Rxe4 35.Qxe4



analysis diagram

35...f5 36.Qg2 c6 37.Qa3 Ra8 38.Rd2 d5 39.Qf1 Qf7 40.Qb4 Qe6 41.a5 Qd6 42.a6 Re8 43.c4 c5+ 44.Qa4 d4 45.b4. White's queenside counterplay is just enough to neutralise Black's extra pawn, ½-½ (51) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

20...Rxe3 21.Qc4

The last few moves have been a disaster for White, who has shed two pawns for very little. The engine assessments at this point show an overwhelming advantage for Black. In his book on Lasker, John Nunn includes this example under the heading 'Making the most of your assets'. That side of the balance sheet looks pretty thin here, to be honest – there is some pressure against f7 and the possibility of running the h-pawn to create some attack against the black king, but that is about it. The way Lasker manages to create problems for Steinitz is tremendously instructive, as he does it without going berserk and, in Nunn's phrase, 'flinging himself on the opponent's barbed wire'. He just sets about posing small problems whenever he can and waiting for a mistake.

21...Qh8?!

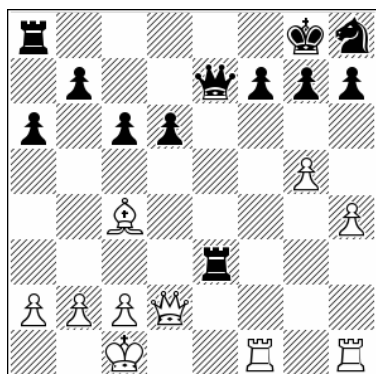
Already the first error. 21...♖f8 is a better way to defend f7, since 22.h4 b5 then gives the white bishop a dilemma – it cannot maintain the pressure on f7 without relinquishing control of e2. After 23.♗d5 ♖e2 24.♙d1 ♜e3+ 25.♗b1 ♘e5, even Lasker's ingenuity would scarcely have saved him. The text, on the other hand, condemns the knight to passivity for the long term, although Black retains a clear plus, of course.

22.h4 c6

Preparing to stifle the bishop with ...d5 is a logical plan, but first centralising the other rook with 22...♖e8 was also natural. It is noteworthy, though, that the engine evaluation has dropped by about 50% since the knight retreated to h8 – engines nowadays hate passive pieces!

22...♖d8 with a similar idea was preferred by the engines:

23.♖d1 d5 24.♖he1 ♖e6 25.h5 ♖e8 26.♖xe6 fxe6 27.♗d3 ♘f7 28.g6 ♘e5 29.gxh7+ ♗h8 30.♗e2 ♖f8 31.♙c3 ♖f5 32.h6 gxh6 33.♗b1 ♗xh7 0-1 (74) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, 2022.



23.g6

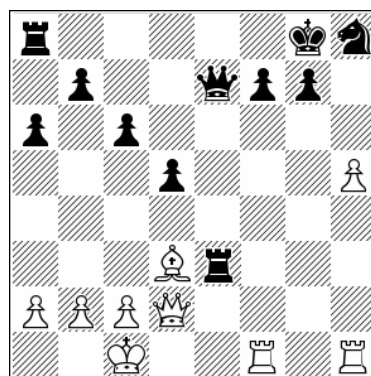
What was that we said about barbed wire? In this instance, White does fling a small unit against the enemy defences, a typical device to open lines on the kingside.

23...d5?

This is a really serious mistake, after which Black's advantage already shrinks to zero. He had to play 23...hxg6 24.h5 gxh5 (24...g5 25.h6 gxh6 was analysed by Kasparov, but then 26.♙h2! secures enough play for a draw: 26...♙f8 27.♖f6!, missed by Kasparov, but pointed out by Dvoretzky) 25.♖xh5. This does perhaps look a little scary, with White threatening to double

rooks on the h-file, but the point is that after 25...♖e8, the threat of ...♖e1+ does not give him time for this. After the virtually forced 26.♖hh1 ♙e5 (a nice combination of attack and defence, preventing ♙h2) 27.♙f2 d5 28.♗d3 (28.♙h4 ♘g6) 28...f6 29.♙h4 ♘f7, Black has largely neutralised the kingside threats and now has no fewer than three extra pawns.

24.gxh7+ ♗xh7 25.♗d3+ ♗g8 26.h5

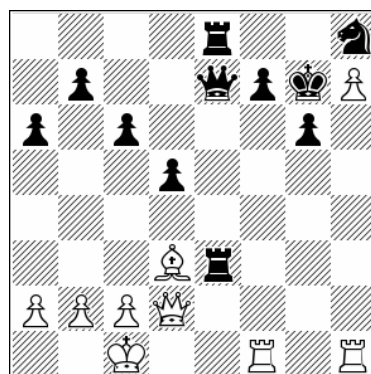


It is obvious that White's position has improved a good deal over the past three moves. He has opened the h-file, got his bishop on a good diagonal with a tempo and still leaves Black with the problem of activating the dreadful knight on h8. The engines agree that Black no longer has any advantage, despite his two extra pawns.

26...♖e8 27.h6?!

This exposes the h-pawn and also makes it easier for the knight to emerge on g6 later. The engine prefers the waiting move 27.a3. After all, the advance h5-h6 is not going to run away. 27...f6 28.h6 g5 29.♙f2 ♖f8 30.♗b1 ♖e6 31.♖hg1 ♖e5 32.♖g3 c5 led to a draw in Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022. Black is two pawns up, but activating the black pieces and creating something against the white king is extremely difficult.

27...g6 28.h7+ ♗g7



29.♖b1?!

Lasker adopts one of his favourite defensive ploys, one which was discussed in some detail in the New in Chess book, *The Lasker Method*. In brief, rather than thrash around in a desperate attempt to drum up counterplay in an inferior position, which often leads to further weaknesses and makes the opponent's task easier, Lasker would frequently just adopt waiting tactics. Effectively, he would say 'Okay, we both know I have a rotten position, but I've met all your threats and defended everything as best I can, now show me how you intend to improve your position.' This often confused opponents, who were not expecting to have the onus thrown upon them in this way, and, depending on how they proceeded, Lasker would seize the chances for counter-action, as appropriate. The classic example, quoted in many books, is his game against Nimzowitsch at St Petersburg 1914, whilst the aforementioned book *The Lasker Method* dissects another great example, Lasker-Janowski, New York 1924. That is effectively what he does here, and the engine approves wholeheartedly of the approach, as do both Nunn and Dvoretsky. However, here the precise execution is inaccurate and Lasker should have played 29.a3 instead. The point is seen in the next note. The immediate 29.♖h2 is met by 29...♗g5.

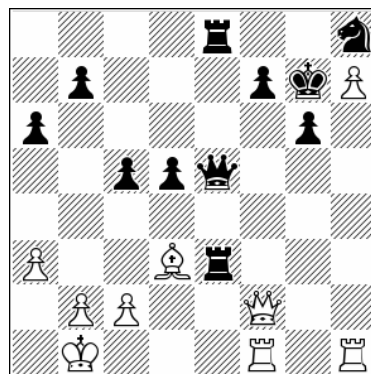
29...♗e5?!

Black should instead have seized the chance to re-route the knight with the move 29...f6! intending ...g5, ...♗e5 and ...♞f7. The tactical point is that 30.♖h2 is now impossible because of mate after 30...♞e1+. This is where the weakness of 29.♖b1?! is seen – had White played the engine's 29.a3 instead, the reply 29...f6 would have been impossible because of 30.♖h2 – Black no longer has the ...♗g5 defence, whilst 30...♞e1+ now just loses material.

30.a3

Continuing the partial waiting tactics, whilst also making *luft* for the king and thus renewing the possibility of ♖h2 at some moment.

30...c5 31.♖f2

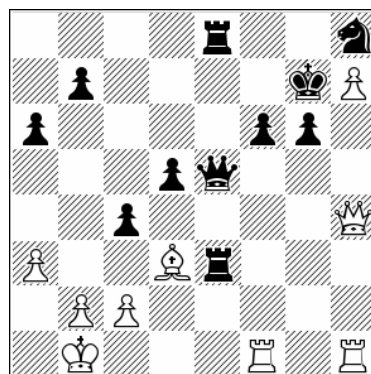


31...c4

31...f5 was more resolute. Nunn makes the point that the rather dogmatically-minded Steinitz was probably reluctant to break his precious positional rule of not making pawn moves on the side where one stands worse, but every rule has its exceptions.

32.♗g2 ♗g3 33.♗d2 ♞f7 (33...f4 34.♞xf4 ♗e3 35.♞f2 ♗xd2 36.♞xd2 ♞f7 37.♞f2 c4 38.♞xf7+ ♞xf7 39.♞xg6+ ♞xg6 40.h8=♗ ♞xh8 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 34.♞xf5 gxf5 35.♞e1 ♞e3 36.♗g2+ ♞f6 37.♞eg1 ♞e7 and now there seem to be multiple routes to convert White's initiative into drawing compensation: 38.♗g6 ♗e6 39.♗g7 (39.♗g8 d4 40.♞g7 ♞e1+ 41.♞xe1 ♗xe1+ 42.♞a2 ♗e6+ 43.♞a1 ♗e1+ 44.♞a2 ♗e6+ 45.♞a1 f4 46.h8=♗ ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish Classics 2022) 39...♞d8 40.h8=♗ ♞xh8 41.♞xh8+ ♞xh8 42.♗xh8+ ♞c7 43.♞g7+ ♞b6 44.♗b8 ♗c6 45.♗f4 d4 46.♗xf5 ♞e1+ 47.♞a2 ♞e6 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

32.♗h4 f6

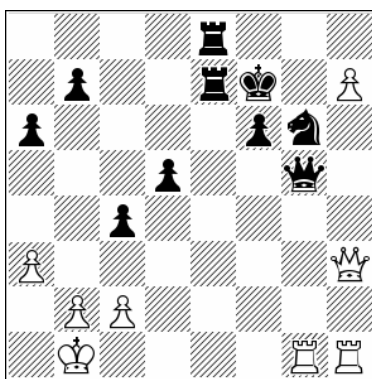


33.♞f5

A critical position.

33.♞xg6 is perhaps a clearer – and even more shocking – route to a draw: 33...♞xg6 (33...♞xg6 34.♗h6+ ♞f7 35.♞hg1 and now the engines hit

the panic button with 35...♖e1+ 36.♞xe1 ♞xe1+ 37.♞xe1 ♞xe1+ 38.♔a2 with an obviously winning position for White: 1-0 (63) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022. If Black instead were to do nothing, then White simply piles in on the cornered knight on h8: 35...-- 36.♞g7+ ♔e6 37.♞g8 ♔d6 38.♞g7 or 35...♔e7 36.♞g8 ♔f7 37.♞g7 ♞h3 38.♞xf6 ♞xf6 39.♞xe8+) 34.♞fg1 ♔f7 35.♞g4 ♞g5 (35...♞e4 36.h8=♞ ♞xh8 37.♞d7+ ♞e7 38.♞xd5+ ♞e6 39.♞xb7+ ♔e8 40.♞b8+ ♔f7 41.♞b7+ ♔e8 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 36.♞d7+ (36.♞d1 ♞f5 37.♞xg6 ♔xg6 38.h8=♞ ♞xh8 39.♞xh8 ♔g7 40.♞h4 ♔f7 41.♞d2 was agreed drawn in Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022! It is strangely reminiscent of the famous 5th game from the Schlechter-Lasker match in 1910, in which Lasker as Black was material up with an exposed king in a major-piece endgame!) 36...♞3e7 (36...♞8e7 37.h8=♞ ♔xh8 38.♞h7+) 37.♞h3



analysis diagram

37...♞e3 (37...♞h4 38.♞xh4 ♔xh4 39.♞xh4 ♞h8 40.♞gh1 ♔e6 41.a4 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022; 37...♞e3 38.♞g3 ♞f2 39.♞g4 ♞e1+ 40.♞xe1 ♞xe1+ 41.♔a2 ♞e4 42.♞d7+ ♞e7 43.♞c8 ♞e8 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022; 37...♞e5 (lest you underestimate the danger of an open king in a major-piece middlegame...!) 38.♞xg6 ♔xg6 39.h8=♞ ♞xh8 40.♞xh8 ♞e3 41.♞h5+ ♔g7 42.♞h7+ ♔f8 43.♞h8+ ♔f7 44.♞h7+ ♔g6 45.♞g8+ ♔f5 46.♞h5+ with a virulent attack 1-0 (64) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022. Now the engines thought 46...♞g5 was necessary as 46...♔f4 47.♞xd5 ♞e1+ 48.♔a2 ♞e4 49.♞f5+ ♔e3 50.♞xf6 is assessed as +13 for White! Black's exposed king prevents Black from organising any play against White's king) 38.♞d7+ ♞3e7 (½-

½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) concluded as a draw by repetition in a number of engine games.

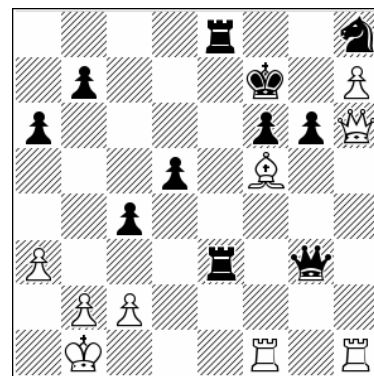
33...♔f7

Here there are a number of alternatives to be analysed.

A) Firstly, 33...gxf5 34.♞hg1+ ♔f7 35.♞h5+ transposes into the game;

B) The engine's first choice is 33...c3 34.b3 gxf5 (34...♞g3 35.♞h6+ ♔f7 36.♔a2 ♞e1 37.♞d7 ♞8e7 38.♞xf6+ ♔xf6 39.♞f8+ ♔g5 40.♞h6+ ♔f6 41.♞f8+ ♔g5 42.♞h6+ ♔f6 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 35.♞hg1+ ♔f7 36.♞h5+ ♔e7 37.♞xf5 ♞e1+ 38.♔a2 ♞e3 39.♞g7+ ♔d8 40.♞xd5+ ♔c8 41.♞f5+ ♔b8 42.♞xb7+ ♔a8 (42...♔xb7 43.♞d7+ ♔b8 44.♞d6+ is an immediate draw by repetition) 43.b4 ♞a1+ 44.♔b3 ♔xb7 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022. The repetition with 45.♞d7+ can no longer be avoided;

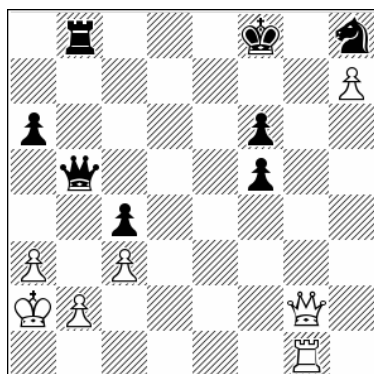
C) The Russian master Neishtadt, in his fine book on Steinitz, suggested Black could win here in two different ways. The first is 33...♞g3. However, the engine shows that it is White who wins here: 34.♞h6+ ♔f7



analysis diagram

35.♔a2! (the only winning move, threatening ♞hg1. Everybody, from Kasparov via Hübner to Dvoretsky, has analysed the fascinating complications from 35.♞d7, but simply 35...♞8e7 leaves White nothing better than a perpetual after 36.♞xf6+ ♔xf6 37.♞f8+ ♔g5 (37...♞f7?? 38.♞xh8+) 38.♞h6+ ♔f6 39.♞f8+ etc.) 35...♞e1 36.♞d2! (Dvoretsky only considered 36.♞d7 which is only equal after 36...♞8e7 37.♞xf6+ with the same perpetual) 36...♞1e5 (36...♞xf1 37.♞xd5+ ♔g7 38.♞xb7+ ♔f8 39.♞xf1 gxf5 and now the

fantastic diagonal retreat 40.♖h1! sets up the decisive threat of ♖g1, with a winning attack. 40...♗e5 41.♖g1 (threatening ♖g8+ followed by ♗b7+) 41...♗b8 42.c3 ♗b5 43.♗g2.



analysis diagram

It is amazing how White can afford such quiet moves, but the extra black piece on h8 is totally irrelevant, as it can never become active because the h-pawn will promote. We see this same pattern later in the game: 43...♗e8 44.♗b1! ♗e5 45.♗g7 ♗f7 46.♗g8+ ♗e7 47.h8=♗ wins) 37.♖h3 ♗g5 38.♗xg5 fxg5 39.♗d7+ ♗g7 40.♗xe8 ♖xe8 41.b3 and White has a winning endgame which was indeed proved in several engine games!;

D) Neishtadt's other suggested winning move was 33...♖g3, which is certainly better than 33...♗g3, but still favours White after 34.♗d7 (Dvoretsky recommended 34.♗a2 ♖g5 35.♗g4 ♗f7 36.♖e1 but now he only considered 36...♗xe1 37.♖xe1 ♖xg4 38.♗xg4 ♖xe1 when White is winning after 39.♗d7 (or 39.♗c8) – as he correctly observed, the queen is stronger than the rook and knight in such an open position. However, the engine analyses another nil-nil draw after 36...♗b8! 37.♗e6 ♖h5 38.♗xf7 ♖xe1 (38...♖xh4 39.♖xe8! ♗xe8 40.♖xh4 ♗h8 41.♗xd5) 39.♗xe1 ♗xf7 40.♖xh5 gxh5 41.♗d1 ♗d8 42.♗xh5+ ♗g7 with a drawn queen ending) 34...♖e7 35.♗g4, though the engines managed to draw this as Black without too much trouble.

35...c3 36.♗f3 ♖g5 37.♖d1 ♗d6 38.bxc3 ♗c5 39.♖d4 ♖e6 40.♖b4 ♖g1+ 41.♗b2 ♖xh1 42.♖xb7+ ♖e7 43.♖xe7+ ♗xe7 44.♗xh1 g5 45.♗a4 ♗a7 46.♗c6 ♗b8+ 47.♗a1 ♗xh7 48.♗xf6 ♗f4 49.♗xf4 gxf4 50.♗xd5 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

34.♖hg1 gxf5

34...c3 35.♗g4 gxf5 36.♗h5+ ♗e7 37.♖xf5 is a nil-nil draw, according to the engine, but Steinitz always loved to take material and his move is not actually a mistake.

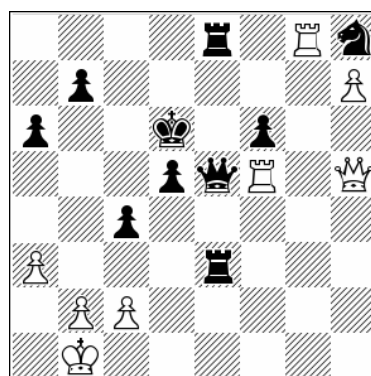
35.♗h5+ ♗e7 36.♖g8!?

36.♖xf5 ♖e1+ was played in a number of engine games, but was soon abandoned as a draw after 37.♗a2 ♖xg1 38.♖xe5+ fxe5 39.♗xe5+ ♗f7 40.♗xd5+ ♖e6 41.♗d4 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

36...♗d6

Dvoretsky considered this the decisive mistake, but as we shall see, he was quite wrong, although it is true that after 36...♗d7 37.♖xf5 both 37...♖e1+ and 37...♗e6 are now enough for equality.

37.♖xf5



37...♗e6??

Steinitz cracks under the pressure and loses at once. 37...♖e1+ 38.♗a2 ♗e2 39.♖xd5+ ♗c6 40.♖c5+ ♗b6 41.♗xe2 ♖1xe2 42.♖xc4 ♗a7 and the game should end in a draw. Indeed, after 43.♗b3 Stockfish and Dragon 3.1 agreed just that!

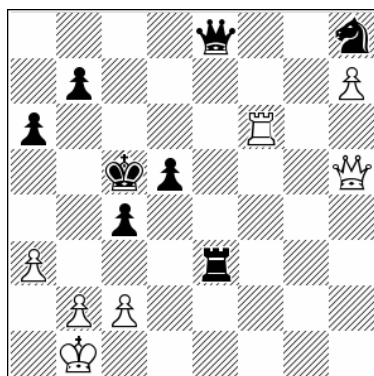
38.♖xe8

Good enough, although the engine shows the more forcing but much less human solution 38.♗h2+ ♖e5 39.♖xe8 ♗xe8 40.♖xf6+ ♗d7 (40...♗c7 41.♖f5 ♗d6 42.♗f4 and there is no defence to ♖f8: 42...♗g6 43.♖f6+ ♗c5 44.♖xg6) 41.♗h3+ ♗d8 42.♗h6 ♗c7 43.♗f4 ♗e7 44.♖f5 ♗g6 45.h8=♗ ♗xf4 46.♖xe5, winning.

38...♗xe8 39.♖xf6+ ♗c5

39...♗c7 40.♗xd5 is also hopeless: 40...♗d8 41.♗xc4+ ♗b8 42.♗f4+ ♗a8 43.♖d6 ♖e1+ 44.♗a2 ♗c8 45.♗d4 ♖e8 46.♗d5 ♗b8 47.♖d7 ♗a7 48.♖g7 ♖d8 49.♗e4 ♖d6 50.♖g8 ♖d8 51.♗e3+ ♗a8 52.♗g3 ♗c4+ 53.♗b3 ♗c7 54.♖xd8+ ♗xd8 55.♗g8 ♗b8 56.♗b3 b6 57.♗b4 ♗a7 58.♗xb8+ ♗xb8 59.a4

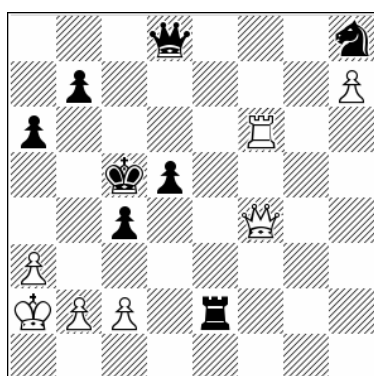
♙c7 60.c4 ♗d6 61.a5 ♙c7 62.♙a4 ♜f7 63.axb6+ ♜xb6 64.b4 ♜h8 65.c5+ ♙c7 66.♙a5 1-0 (78) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.



40. ♖h6

The combined threats to the king and the knight are too much for Black to cope with. The threat now is 41. ♖f8.

40. ♖f5 was the choice of the engines. Again, the first threat is ♖f8, while from f5 the white queen defends h7 and c2 (protecting the white king) whilst eyeing the attacking squares f2 and c8. It's a fantastic multi-purpose move! 40... ♗d8 41. ♖f4 (41. ♖f8 ♖e8) 41... ♖e1+ 42. ♙a2 ♖e2.



analysis diagram

43. ♖h6 is, however, a move any human player would struggle to find! The tactics behind it are quite extraordinary. The rook moves away from the attack of the black queen and gives the white queen access to f8 (forcing the black queen to keep guarding this square). 43... b6 (43... ♖xc2 44. ♖e3+ ♙b5 45.a4+ ♙xa4 46. ♙b1 is the beautiful point. 46... ♖g2 47. ♖b6 (threatening ♖a3#) 47... ♖f8 48. ♖xb7 and the threat of b3+ is decisive!) 44.a4 (another human-defying tactical idea!) 44... ♗d7 45. ♙a3, setting up an astonishing mating idea. 45... d4 (45... ♗d8 46.b4+ cxb3 47. ♖b4#. Thank you a4 and ♙a3!; 45... a5 46. ♖b8

with multiple threats of ♖xb6+, ♖xh8 and ♖f8+!) 46. ♖g5+ ♗d5 47. ♖f6 ♖e3+ 48.c3 1-0 (71) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

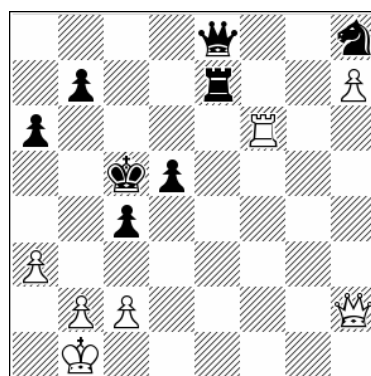
40... ♖e7

A) 40... ♖e7 41. ♖f8 ♖e6 was Dvoretsky's recommendation and is more tenacious, but now comes the nice switch 42. ♗d2! ♖xh7 (42... ♖xf8 43. ♖b4+ ♙c6 44. ♖c8+ ♖c7 (44... ♙d7 45. ♖xb7+) 45. ♖xc7+ ♙xc7 46. ♖c5+ and the knight will fall: 46... ♙d7 47. ♖xd5+ ♙e7 48. ♖xb7+ ♙f6 49. ♖c8 ♜f7 50. ♖xc4 and White wins;

B) Kasparov gave 40... ♖e2 as saving Black, but this is also not true: 41. ♖g7! (41. ♖h3 also wins) 41... ♖e7 42. ♖g1+ ♖e3 (42... d4 43. ♖g5+ ♖e5 44. ♖g8 wins) 43. ♖g8 ♖e7 and now the engine points out as the simplest win the nice move 44. ♙a2!, securing the white king and leaving Black almost in *zugzwang*: 44... a5 45. ♖g1+ ♖e3 46. ♖f3 d4 47. ♖g8 ♖e5 48. ♖f8 ♖e6 49. ♖c8+ ♙b6 50. ♗d8+ ♙b5 51.a4+ ♙xa4 52. ♖xh8, winning.

41. ♖h2

41. ♖f8?? ♖xh7 is Black's point.



41... ♗d7

A number of other defences have been analysed here, but all lose:

A) 41... ♗d8 42. ♖f2+ d4 (42... ♙b5 43.b3! is also decisive) 43.c3 wins for White;

B) 41... ♗d7 42. ♖g1+ d4 43. ♖g5+ ♖d5 44. ♗d2. Again this switch to the queenside is decisive. The engine politely points out that it is now mate in 22! 44... ♖b5 45. ♖e1! is the beautiful point, switching back to e7;

C) 41... ♖e6 42. ♖g1+ ♖e3 43. ♖g8 and the threat of 44. ♖f8 is decisive;

D) And finally 41... ♖e1+ was the engines' best suggestion, but to little avail!

42.♔a2 ♖e5 43.♗h6 ♖e7 44.♟f8 ♟e6 45.♗d2 ♗xh7
46.♟c8+ ♟c6 47.♗b4+ ♔d4 48.♗c3+ ♔c5 49.♟xh8
♗f7 50.♗b4+ ♔d4 51.♗c3+ ♔c5 52.♟f8 ♗h7
53.♗b4+ ♔d4 54.♗d2+ ♔c5 55.♗f2+ d4 56.♟f5+
♗xf5 57.♗xf5+ 1-0 (90) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1,
Classics 2022.

**42.♗g1+ d4 43.♗g5+ ♗d5 44.♟f5 ♗xf5
45.♗xf5+ ♔d6 46.♗f6+ 1-0**

Game 4

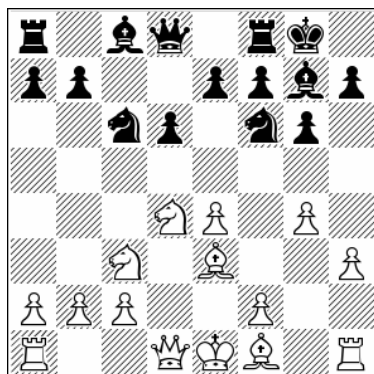
Emanuel Lasker

William Napier

Cambridge Springs 1904

In a very strong field, this is possibly Lasker's most famous and head-spinning game. It has been the subject of detailed analysis by many authors over the years, most notably by the great Russian trainer, Mark Dvoretsky, who used it over many years in lessons with his strong GM pupils. We have made use of Mark's annotations (notably in an article entitled 'Who is attacking who (sic)?' in the magazine *Chess* in May 1999), and he in turn quotes many other analysts.

**1.e4 c5 2.♖c3 ♖c6 3.♖f3 g6 4.d4 cxd4 5.♖xd4
♟g7 6.♟e3 d6 7.h3 ♖f6 8.g4 0-0**



9.g5

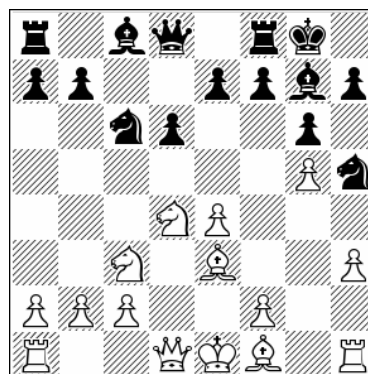
A natural push for a human player, giving Black a difficult early decision: commit the knight to h5 (where it can be targeted by ♟e2) or retreat to e8 or d7 and face the advance of White's rook's pawn with h3-h4-h5. The engines, however, are extremely unhappy with it and prefer the more sedate alternatives 9.♟g2, 9.♗d2 and 9.♗d3.

9...♖e8

Not the most intuitive retreat – 9...♖d7 is a more natural retreat in the Dragon – but Napier wants

to support the thematic Dragon break ...d5 with ...♖c7 and this works pretty well!

9...♖h5, targeting the weakly-defended f4-square, is what the engines want.



analysis diagram

Then we have:

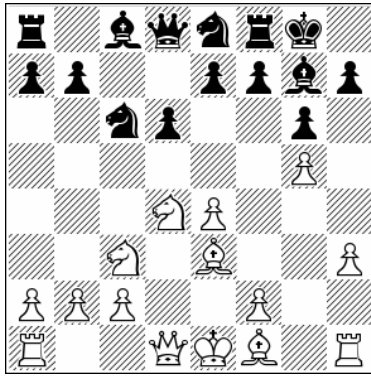
A) 10.♟e2 ♖f4 11.♖xc6 ♖g2+ is the key point;

B) 10.♗d2 is surprisingly and unpleasantly met by 10...♖xd4 11.♟xd4 ♟xd4 12.♗xd4 e5 13.♗d2 ♖f4 (hitting g5) 14.h4 ♟g4;

C) 10.♖b3 is another natural human choice and is met by a move few human Dragon players would countenance! 10...♟xc3+ 11.bxc3 ♗c7 12.♟e2 ♖e5. White's kingside advances have left a lot of holes on the kingside light and dark squares. Stockfish strains mightily to wrest back some control without worrying about pawns or king's safety.

13.♟xh5 gxf5 14.f4 ♗xc3+ 15.♔f2 f5 16.gxf6 ♟xf6 17.♖d4 ♟d7 18.♟b1 ♟af8 19.♟b3 ♗c7 20.♟g1+ ♔h8 21.♗e1 ♖c4 22.♗c3 e5 23.f5 ♟g6 (the whole position seems to be built on pins!) 24.♔e1 ♟xg1+ 25.♟xg1 ♟c8 26.♖b5 ♟xb5 27.♟xb5 b6 28.♗d3 ♗c6 29.♟d5 ♗a4 30.♗b3 ♗e8 31.♗g3. Stockfish survived, but few others would have done! ½-½ (36) Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023;

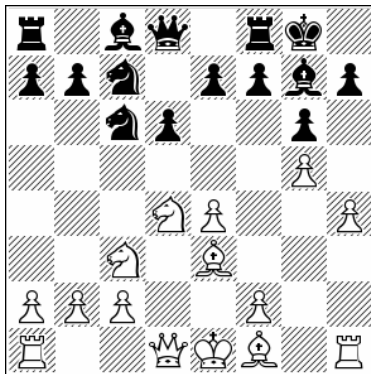
D) 10.♟g1 was the fraught engine choice. The rook covers the g2-square (against ...♖h5-f4-g2+ as seen against 10.♟e2) and protects the g5-pawn and g4-square (against Black's play as seen against 10.♗d2). 10...♗b6 11.♖cb5 ♗a5+ 12.♗d2 ♗xd2+ 13.♔xd2 a6 14.♖xc6 bxc6 15.♖c3 ♟b8 16.b3 f5 was very pleasant for Black, ½-½ (45) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.



10.h4?!

Again a consistent human move but one that the engines would rather not see played! 10.♖d2 was suggested by John Nunn and led to comfortable equality for Black after 10...♗a5 11.f4 ♘c7 12.♘b3 ♙xc3 13.♙xa5 ♙xd2+ 14.♙xd2 ♘xa5 15.♙xa5 b6 16.♙d2 ♙b7 17.♙d3 ♘e6 18.0-0 ♘c5 19.♞ae1 a5 20.f5 ♙a6 21.♞e3 ♞fc8 22.♙c3 ♙xd3 23.cxd3 b5, ½-½ (26) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023.

10...♘c7



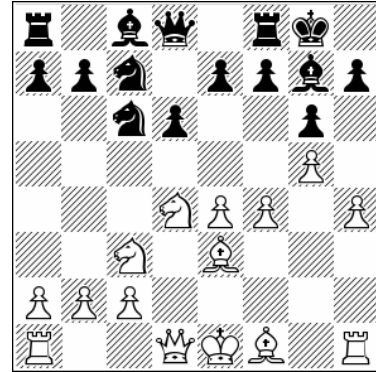
11.f4?!

This aggressive yet wild move also displeases the engines! Lasker presumably played it to dissuade Black from continuing with the planned ...d5 break by supporting e5 in reply.

A) 11.♖d2 was the engine choice but in all these lines, it seems that White has tipped over to the uncomfortable side of equality. 11...♙g4 12.♙e2 ♙xe2 13.♘dxe2 b5 14.0-0-0 b4 15.♘d5 ♘e5 16.♗xb4 ♘xd5 17.exd5 ♞b8 18.♗a4 ♗c7 19.♙d4 ♞fc8 20.♘c3 a5 looked more attractive for Black in Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022;

B) 11.♙g2 was met very actively with 11...♘e5 12.♗e2 b5 13.0-0-0 ♙g4 14.f3 ♙h5 15.♘b1 ♗c8 16.♘d5 ♘xd5 17.exd5 ♗b7 18.b3 ♞ab8 19.♙c1 a5 with excellent play for Black, ½-½ (28) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023;

C) 11.h5 gave White nothing more than a quick liquidation: 11...d5 12.hxg6 hxg6 13.♗d2 ♘xd4 14.♙xd4 dxe4 15.0-0-0 ♙g4 16.♙e2 ♗xd4 17.♗xd4 ♙xd4 18.♞xd4 ♙xe2 19.♘xe2 ♘e6 20.♞xe4 ♘xg5 21.♞xe7 ♞fe8 ½-½ (23) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023.



11...e5

A strong riposte, though the engines are also very keen on the immediate 11...d5. That looks wrong because of 12.e5, but this is not to be feared, due to 12...f6 13.exf6 exf6 14.♖d2 ♘e6 15.♘xc6 bxc6 16.0-0-0 ♞b8 and there is some really unpleasant tactical pressure brewing against the white position against b2, along the half-open b-file, the ...d4 fork and potential pressure along the f-file and h8-a1 diagonal after ...fxg5. Stockfish kept it together for White, but it wasn't pleasant.

17.♘a4 fxg5 18.fxg5 ♗e7 19.c3 d4 20.cxd4 ♞b4 21.♗c2 ♘h8 22.♙h3 ♘xd4 23.♙xd4 ♞xd4 24.♙xc8 ♞xc8 25.♘b1 ♞e4 26.♘c3 ♞b4 27.a3 ♞b7 28.h5 ♞cb8 29.hxg6 ♞xb2+ 30.♗xb2 ♞xb2+ ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

12.♘de2

This is White's most ambitious move, trying to prove that White's control over the centre is sufficient to prevent Black's counterplay. How wrong Lasker is!

White had a couple of bailout options, but both essentially admit that White's early aggression was unfounded:

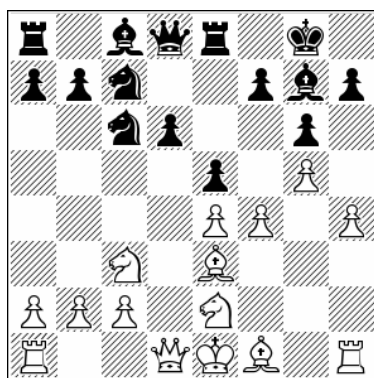
A) 12.♘xc6 bxc6 13.fxe5 ♙xe5 14.♗f3 ♘e6 15.♙c4 ♗a5 16.0-0-0 ♞b8 17.♙f2 f5 18.♞hf1 ♘g7 19.♗e3 c5 20.♙e1 f4 21.♗d3 ♘c7 22.♞f2 ♙g4 (really powerful play from Stockfish) 23.♙d2 ♗b6 24.b3 ♙xd1 25.♘xd1 ♗c6 26.♘e2 ♘b5 27.♘xf4 ♙xf4 28.a4 ♙xd2 29.♙xb5 ♗c8 30.♞xd2 ♗e6 31.♗c3+ ♗e5

32.♖xe5+ dxe5 33.♞d7+ ♜f7 34.♞d5 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022;

B) 12.fxe5 ♜xe5 13.♙e2 b5 (nice aggressive play from Dragon!) 14.♜dxb5 ♜xb5 15.♜xb5 a6 16.♜c3 ♜b8 17.♜b1 ♜e8 18.0-0 ♙e6 19.♞d2 ♞c7 with plenty of play for the pawn due to the pressure along the b- and c-files and White's exposed king, ½-½ (41) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

12...d5

Condemned by all books, but in fact, Black only goes wrong much later. It is definitely a reasonably promising continuation for Black (as you would expect from the classical perspective of meeting wing play with a break in the centre). The engine does suggest, however, preparing the break further with 12...♞e8.



analysis diagram

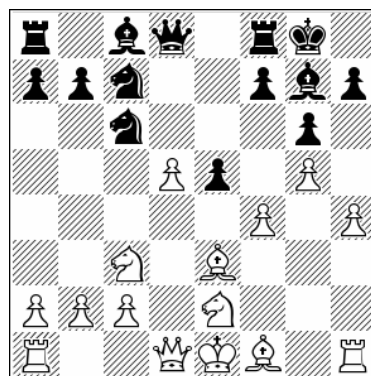
It's always difficult during a practical game to judge how much time you have to prepare freeing breaks. Miss your chance and you may be left rueing a passive position that just needed a pawn break a couple of moves earlier! Here the fact that central tension already exists (between the e5- and f4-pawns) reduces that risk.

A) 13.f5 is the move that might make Black regret waiting with the ...d5 break. However, in this case... it doesn't! 13...gxf5 14.exf5 d5 15.♜g3 e4 (15...d4 is – amazingly enough – less strong than 15...e4 – with the latent threat of ...d4 – according to the engines! It's still winning though) 16.f6 ♙f8 17.♞e2 ♙d6 18.0-0-0 ♙g3 19.♞g1 ♙d6 20.♜xd5 ♜e5 21.♜e7+ ♜xe7 22.g6 hxg6 23.fxe7 ♞xe7 24.h5 ♙f5 25.hxg6 ♙xg6 26.♙g2 ♜f3 27.♙xf3 exf3 28.♞xf3 ♜e6 and White's attack had exhausted itself, leaving Black with a material advantage and a powerful

bishop pair, 0-1 (86) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022;

B) 13.♙g2 feels like White's most reasonable try, completing development and giving White the option of kingside castling: 13...♙g4 14.♞d2 d5 15.exd5 ♜d4 16.0-0 ♜xe2+ 17.♜xe2 ♙xe2 18.♞xe2 exf4 19.♞xf4 ♜xd5 20.♙xd5 ♞xd5 21.♞f3 ♞xf3 22.♞xf3 ♙xb2 23.♞d1 ♞ad8, with an extra pawn in the ending. Even the engines couldn't save this for White! 0-1 (89) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

13.exd5



13...♜d4?!

Napier steers for an ingenious tactical resource... with a tactical flaw!

13...exf4 14.♙xf4 (14.♜xf4 ♜e8) 14...♜b4 is the engine way, when piece pressure is hitting White from all angles! 15.♙g2 ♙g4 16.0-0 (the pins and attacks make White's position somewhat fraught but Black is a tempo short of serious pressure) 16...♙xc3 (16...♙xe2 17.♞xe2 ♜cxd5 18.♞ad1 ♞b6+ 19.♞f2 ♜xf4 20.♞xb6 axb6 21.♞xf4 ♙xc3 22.bxc3 ♜xa2 23.c4 ♜c3 24.♞e1 ♞a2 25.♞f2 ♞a4 26.♙f1 ♞aa8 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 17.bxc3 ♜bxd5 18.♙xc7 ♜xc7 19.♞xd8 ♞axd8 feels a touch better for Black due to the doubled c-pawns but the engines were not at all excited! 20.♜f4 ♙c8 21.a4 b6 22.a5 ♙f5 23.♞fe1 ♞d2 24.♞e7 ♜e6 25.♜xe6 ♙xe6 26.♞xa7 bxa5 27.♙e4 ♞c8 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

14.♜xd4

14.fxe5? ♜f3+ 15.♜f2 ♜xe5.

14...♜xd5

A lovely idea, but flawed.

15.♜f5!

A powerful riposte from Lasker, with the key point that the knight on f5 defends the bishop on e3.

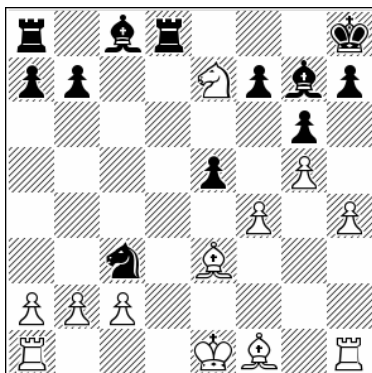
15. ♖xd5? exd4!

15... ♖xc3 16. ♗xd8 ♖xd8 17. ♖e7+

17. ♖xg7 ♖d5 saves the knight due to 18.0-0-0 ♖g4.

17... ♖h8

17... ♖f8 18. ♖c5.



What a position! The first thing that strikes you is that the black knight on c3 is hanging! However, the steed has a charmed life as 18.bxc3 is met by 18...exf4 when White cannot deal with all his hanging pieces. The second thing that strikes you is that the black king is cornered and that explains Lasker's next very natural move.

18.h5

A powerful attacking idea from Lasker, looking to bring the rook on h1 into the game with decisive effect after hxg6 and ♖xh7 mate.

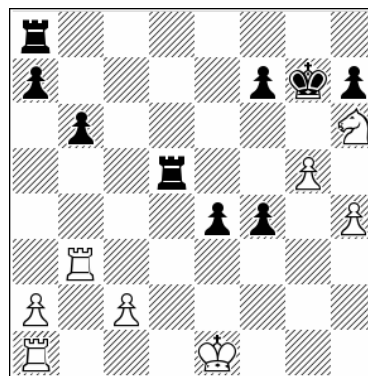
A) 18.bxc3? exf4 19. ♖d4 ♖e8 is better for Black, exploiting another positive to ...exf4: the ability to pin the knight on e7 to the king on e1: 20. ♖f6 ♖xe7+;

B) 18. ♖xc8? exf4 19. ♖xf4 ♖axc8 followed by ...♖a4 is assessed as clearly better for Black by John Nunn;

C) 18.f5 is another key idea in this position. Black's most important defence is ...exf4 which opens the diagonal of the dark-squared bishop, indirectly protecting the knight on c3 (bxc3 ...♖xc3+ wins the rook on a1) with gain of tempo. 18.f5 removes this option which means that White is now threatening to capture the knight on c3. It also intends f6, nailing the knight on e7 into its spot. It's the engines' favourite move in analysis and was also found by

French GM Joel Lautier, during a training session with Mark Dvoretsky. It's generally thought that this is where Lasker missed his best chance but a series of engine games starting from this position produced some intriguing results:

18...gxf5 19.bxc3 ♖e6 20. ♖h3 f4 21. ♖f2 (21. ♖xe6 was tried a few times by Dragon but without leading to a win: 21...fxe6 22. ♖c5 ♖f8 23. ♖e2 ♖e8 24. ♖d6 ♖xe7 25. ♖xe5+ ♖g8 26. ♖hd1 ♖f8 27. ♖f3 ♖f5 28. ♖e4 ♖af8 29. ♖d7 ♖8f7 30. ♖ad1 a6 31. a4 b5 32. ♖a7 ♖d6 33. ♖a8+ ♖f8 34. ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 35. axb5 axb5 36. c4 bxc4 37. ♖xf4 h6 38. gxh6 ♖h5 39. ♖h1 ♖h7 40. ♖d4 ♖xh6 41. ♖xh6 ♖xh6 42. ♖xc4 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 21...e4 22. ♖d4 ♖xd4 23. cxd4 ♖xd4 24. ♖f5 ♖d5 25. ♖h6 ♖xh3 26. ♖xh3 ♖g7 27. ♖b3 b6.



analysis diagram

Astonishingly this position was reached 12 times in the initial series of engine games (played at 30m+3s time control) and ended in a draw... 12 times! *Silicon Road* devotes a chapter to the defensive prowess of engines and spends quite some time on the engine technique of heading for endings a knight down (typically rook and knight versus rook, but also queen and knight versus queen) with chances of liquidating the remaining pawns. We see a good example here as White is unable to prevent Black from liquidating the kingside pawns while the split queenside pawns on a2 and c2 are difficult to shield from black's rooks.

28. ♖b4 f6 29. ♖xe4 fxg5 30. ♖g4 gxh4 31. ♖e2 ♖c8 32. c4 ♖f5 33. ♖g1 ♖g5 34. ♖e7+ ♖f8 35. ♖xh7 ♖xc4 36. ♖d1 ♖g7 37. ♖xh4 ♖c3 38. ♖d2 ♖e7 39. ♖f1 ♖a3 (39...♖c1+ 40. ♖f2 ♖e6 41. ♖h2 ♖cg1 42. ♖f3 ♖lg3+ 43. ♖xf4 ♖g2 also led to a draw in another engine

game, ½-½ (83) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 40.♘f2 ♖a4 41.♘d3 ♜g5 42.♞xf4 ♞xf4+ 43.♘xf4 ♞f5 44.♞f2 ♔d6 ½-½ (77) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

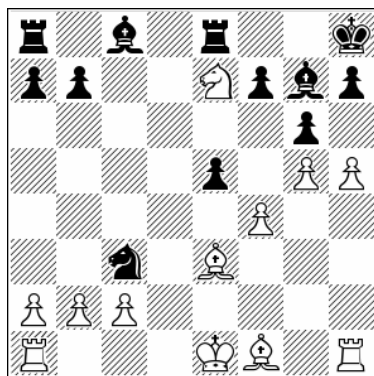
18...♞e8

Challenging the knight on e7 to secure an escape square for the black king on g8 after hxg6.

A) 18...exf4 19.hxg6 fxc6 20.♘xg6+ ♔g8 21.♙c4+ wins;

B) 18...gxh5 19.f5;

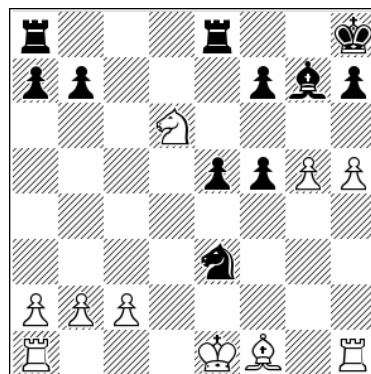
C) 18...♘d5 looks like an elegant way to remove the knight from attack and exchange off the strong knight on e7, but the resulting positions are awful for Black: 19.♘xd5 ♞xd5 20.♙c4 ♞d7 21.h6 ♙f8 22.fxe5 ♞c7 23.♙b3 ♔g8 24.♞f1 ♙g4 25.♞f4 ♙e6 26.0-0-0 1-0 (43) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023.



19.♙c5

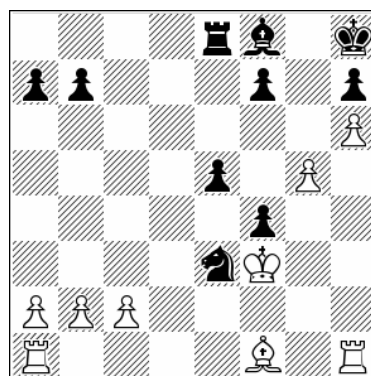
A clever move, sidestepping the tempo-gaining ...exf4 and maintaining the white knight on e7. White has two threats now: to capture the knight on c3, and to capture on g6 with the h-pawn introducing the threat of ♞xh7 mate.

A) The move 19.f5 – threatening to capture the knight on c3 and to reinforce the knight on e7 with f6 – was not highly regarded by analysts but it scored extremely heavily for White in our engine games: 19...gxf5 20.♘xc8 (since ...exf4 is no longer possible, White can safely capture the bishop on c8) 20...♘d5 21.♘d6 ♘xe3



analysis diagram

22.♔f2 (Zak gave only 22.♘xe8 ♞xe8 but this is the first engine subtlety: it isn't necessary for White to capture the rook yet! The knight on d6 can still perform the purpose of combining to attack the black king as well as winning material) 22...f4 (22...♞e6 23.♘xf7+ ♔g8 24.♔xe3 ♔xf7 25.♙c4 is the simple (with hindsight!) reason that the knight on d6 cannot be harassed; 22...♞ed8 23.♘xf7+; 22...♘xc2 23.♞c1 ♘d4 24.h6 is the brilliant point! It seemed that advancing the rook's pawn to h5 had been something of a waste after f5 ...gxf5 removed any possibility of opening the h-file. However, never forget the engine-patented march of the rook's pawn to h6! Suddenly the black king starts to feel uncomfortable and short of squares! 24...♙f8 25.♘xf7+ ♔g8 26.♙c4) 23.h6 ♙f8 24.♘xe8 ♞xe8 25.♔f3.

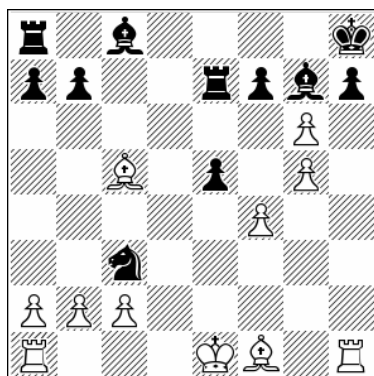


analysis diagram

22.♔f2 has forced Black to create holes in the central pawn structure which allows White to exert some control over Black's position. The conversion process remains extremely complicated, but the engines consistently managed it flawlessly!

25...♙e7 26.♙d3 ♙xg5 27.♞h5 f6 28.b3 ♞g8 29.♞g1 (preventing Black from activating the kingside pawns with ...f5) 29...b6 30.a4 a5 31.c4 ♞d8 32.♙e4 ♞g8 33.♙e2 ♞d8 34.♞b1 ♙g8 35.♞c1 ♙g4 36.♞g1 ♙e3 37.♙f3 ♞e8 38.♞c1 ♞c8 39.♙e2 ♙f7 40.♙xh7 ♙e6 41.♙e4 ♙f5 42.♙d5+ ♙d6 43.h7 ♙d4+ 44.♙f2 ♞h8 45.♞a1 ♙c7 46.b4 ♙c2 47.♞b1 ♙xb4 48.♙f3 ♙c2 49.c5 bxc5 50.♞b7+ ♙d6 51.♙e4 ♙d4+ 52.♙f2 c4 53.♞g7 ♙e6 54.♞g8 ♞xh7 55.♞xh7 1-0 (75) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022;

B) 19.hxg6 was suggested by John Nunn, with the confusing idea 19...♞xe7 20.♙c5.



analysis diagram

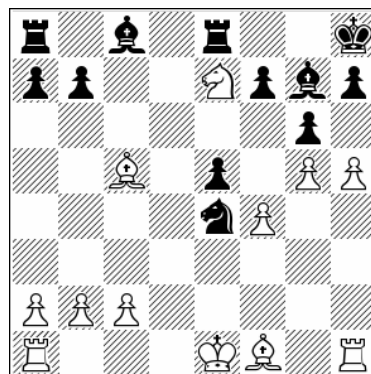
Escaping the tempo-gaining ...exf4 with tempo. Black must think carefully about where to place the rook. 20...♞d7 (20...♙d5 21.♙xe7 ♙xe7 – Nunn) 21.♞xh7+ ♙g8 22.bxc3 exf4 23.♙c4. This looks awful for Black – if one were analysing without an engine, one would be tempted to conclude the analysis here – but the engines know better: 23...b5 24.♙b3 ♙xc3+ 25.♙e2 ♞d2+ 26.♙f3 ♙b7+ 27.♙xf4 ♙d5 (the point. The pressure against f7 is broken and White's rook on a1 is still hanging) 28.♞e1 ♙xb3 29.axb3 fxg6 (as if by magic, material is equal) 30.♞c7 ♞g2 31.♞e7 b4 32.♞ed7 ♞e8 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023;

C) 19.h6 was another Nunn suggestion: 19...♙f8 20.bxc3 ♞xe7 21.♙c5 exf4+ 22.♙xe7 ♙xe7 23.♞d1 ♙xg5 24.♞d5 f5 25.♙c4 ½-½ Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023. After 25...b6 Black's king is rather constricted but White's rook on h1 is tied to the defence of the h6-pawn.

19...gxh5?!

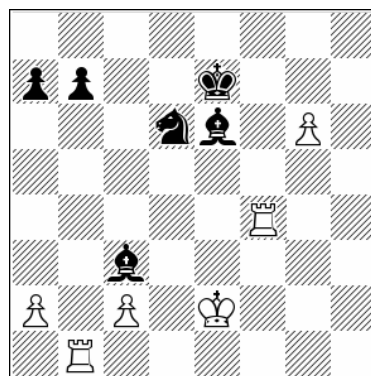
The only move previously considered by commentators, in view of the threat of hxg6. But there are other resources.

A) 19...♙e4.



analysis diagram

This is an idea we will also see in the coming moves. The knight skips away to safety and hits the exposed bishop on c5. Black's kingside is a problem however. 20.hxg6 fxg6 21.♙b5 ♙e6 22.♙xg6+ ♙g8 23.♙e7+ ♙f7 24.♙xe8+ ♞xe8 25.♙a3 ♞xe7 26.♙xe7 ♙xe7 27.♞xh7 ♙f7 28.♞h4 ♙e7 29.g6 exf4 30.♞xf4 ♙xb2 31.♞b1 ♙c3+ 32.♙e2 ♙d6.

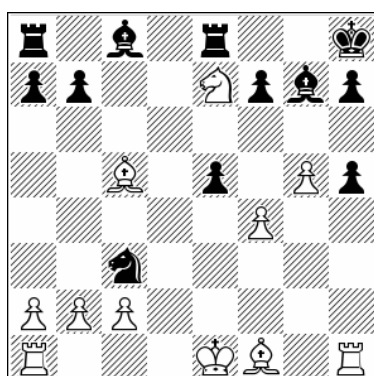


analysis diagram

One of those amazing positions where I would intuitively claim that Black is fine and the engine claims an easy win. 33.♞h1 ♙e8 34.♞h7+ ♙g7 35.a4 b6 36.a5 bxa5 37.♞h5 ♙c7 38.♞xa5 a6 39.♞e4 ♙d7 40.♙d2 ♙d6 41.♞h4 ♙e7 42.♞c5 ♙e8 43.♞h7 ♙d6 44.♞a5 ♙c8 45.♞a3 ♙f6 46.♞f7 ♙g5+ 47.♙e2 ♙c1 48.♞d3+ ♙e5 49.♞e7+ 1-0 (57) Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023;

B) 19...exf4! 20.hxg6 fxg6 21.♙c4 (threatening to capture on c3; 21.♙d3 led to a sharp little tactical interlude: 21...♙d5 22.♞xh7+ ♙xh7 23.♙xg6+ ♙h8 24.♙xe8 ♙g4 25.♙d7 ♙xd7 26.♙xd5 ½-½ Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023) 21...b6. A resource which was found by Sergey Dolmatov in a game against Lautier, at a Dvoretzky training session. It's Black's strongest move, though not the only resource in the position. The idea is to distract

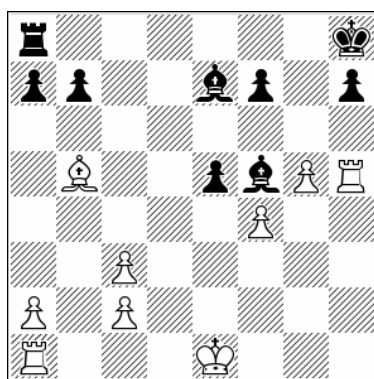
the dark-squared bishop from its ideal post and make possible ...♟f8, attacking the pinned knight (21...♟f8 22.♞d4+ ♟g7 23.♟f6 keeps White's attack going). 22.♞f1 (22.♞a3 ♟b7 23.♞h4 ♟f8 – possible now there is no ♞d4+; 22.♞b4 ♟b7 23.♞h4 ♞d5 equalises; 22.♞d6 ♟b7 23.♞h4 ♞ad8 wins for Black. The key point is that if 24.♞f1, 24...♞xd6 defends g6) 22...♟f5 (covering the g6-square against the threat of ♞xg6 mate) 23.♞xf5 gxf5 24.g6 h6 25.bxc3 bxc5 26.♞d1 ♞ad8 ½-½ Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023.



20.♟c4?

A flowing attacking move but a big tactical error from Lasker!

20.bxc3 is much stronger, although it was previously condemned because of 20...♟f8 21.♞b5 ♞xe7 (21...♟xe7 22.♟xe8 ♟xc5 23.♟xf7) 22.♟xe7 ♟xe7 23.♞xh5 ♟f5.



analysis diagram

In fact, the engines consider that White is winning after all three alternatives – 24.♞h2, 24.fxe5 and 24.♞d3 – but the win in all cases is far from easy due to White's damaged pawn structure, the activity of Black's bishop pair and the targets (f4, c3) for Black's unopposed bishop. A) 24.fxe5 ♟xc2 is still considered winning by the engines but the split pawns intuitively make

the winning process seem fraught to human eyes;

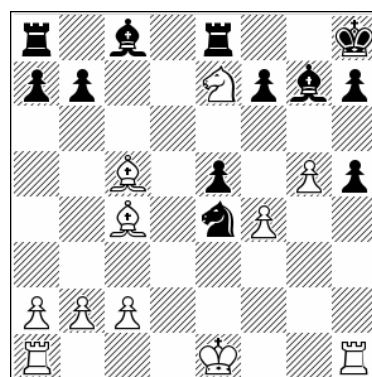
B) 24.♞h2 exf4 25.♞d3 ♟xd3 26.cxd3 ♟xg5 27.♞f2 also led to a (difficult) win, 1-0 (85) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022;

C) 24.♞d3! e4 25.♟f1 also gave Stockfish a win and Dragon just a draw! (25.♟e2 was Dragon's choice, but despite what should be a winning evaluation Dragon did not manage to convert this to the win even at long time controls, although Stockfish did! 25...♞c8 26.♞b1 b6 27.♞b5 ♟c5 28.♞h4 ♞g7 29.♟g4 ♟xg4 30.♞xg4 f5 31.♞h4 ♞c6 32.♞b3 h6 33.♞xh6 ♞xh6 34.gxh6+ ♞xh6 35.c4 ♞g6 36.♞g3+ ♞f6 37.♞h3 a5 38.♞h6+ ♞g7 39.♞c6 a4 40.♞c7+ ♞f6 41.♞c6+ ♞e7 42.♞c8 a3... and that seemed to be that! ½-½ (111) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 25...♟g6 26.♞h6 ♞g7 27.♞d1 ♞d8 28.♞xd8 ♟xd8 29.♞h2 b6 30.♞f2 f6 31.gxf6+ ♞xf6 32.♟a6 ♟c7 33.♞g3 h5 34.♞h4 ♞f5 35.♟c8+ ♞f6 36.♞h1 ♟d6 37.♞e1 a5 38.♟d7 ♟h7 39.♟c6 h4+ 40.♞xh4 ♟xf4 41.♟xe4 ♟g8 42.♟d3 1-0 (90) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

20...exf4?

The decisive mistake.

Black has the far stronger 20...♞e4!



analysis diagram

A shocking retreat from a knight that might have been assumed to be doomed a few moves ago! The engines consider the position to be completely winning for Black which is frankly very hard for a human player to grasp intuitively as the lines are intricate: 21.♟xf7 ♟g4

A) 22.f5 was an engine attempt to confuse! 22...♞xc5 23.f6 ♟f8 24.g6 ♞e6 25.g7+ ♞xg7 26.fxg7+ ♞xg7 27.♟xe8 ♞xe8 28.♞d5 e4 and with two pawns for the exchange, two bishops, two passed pawns (three if you count both doubled

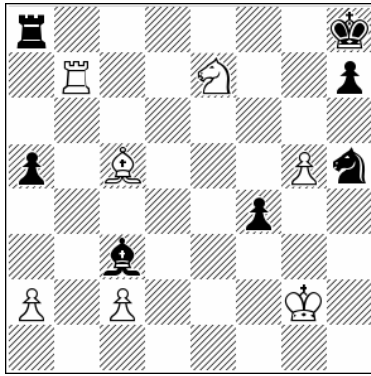
h-pawns!) and passive white major pieces the engines considered this position to be completely winning! 29.♖f1 ♔e5 30.♘e3 ♕f3 31.♗b1 ♕b4+ 32.c3 ♕e7 33.♗g1+ ♔f7 34.♗a1 h4 35.♘c4 ♗d5 36.♘d2 ♕h5 37.♖f1+ ♔g6 38.c4 ♗d4 39.a3 ♕g5 40.♗g1 ♗xd2 41.♗xg5+ ♔xg5 42.♔xd2 h3 43.♗h1 ♔h4 44.♔e3 ♕f3 0-1 (55) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022;

21. xf7

21...♘e4

22.♙xe8 ♖xb2 23.♖b1

Black's light-squared bishop is developing soon to g4, so this rook should not be placed on d1.



29. ♖b3 ♗g7

29... ♗e5 30. ♖h3 ♗g3 31. ♗g6+ ♖g8 32. ♗xe5 1-0 (41)
Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023.

30. ♖h3 ♗g3 31. ♗f3 ♖a6 32. ♗xf4 ♗e2+ 33. ♗f5
♗c3 34. a3 ♗a4 35. ♗e3 1-0

Game 5 – Italian Game

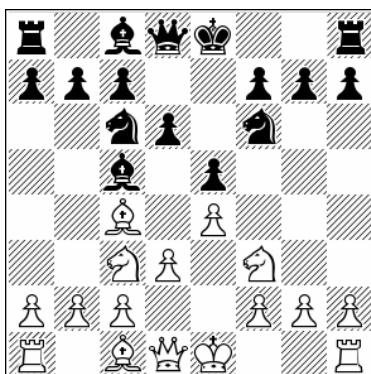
Georg Salwe

Akiba Rubinstein

Karlsbad 1907

We both felt that an Akiba Rubinstein game was something of a *sine qua non* of any book of chess classics, but in selecting a game, we preferred to avoid one that has been analysed by a strong GM within recent, computerised years. This effectively excluded most of his famous rook endings, which have been extensively covered by Mihai Marin in his wonderful book, *Learn from the Legends*. We have therefore gone for an example that is slightly less well-known, but still a positional masterpiece and also one about which the engines have some interesting things to say.

1.e4 e5 2. ♗f3 ♗c6 3. ♗c4 ♗c5 4. ♗c3 ♗f6 5.d3
d6



A symmetrical opening beloved of beginners and young children, although this ‘Pianissimo’

line, even with ♗c3, has recently become trendy again at top level, as part of the ‘anything but the Berlin’ movement. Salwe’s next move seeks to inject some imbalance by offering the exchange of bishops and giving Black a choice of structural options.

6. ♗e3

6. ♗a4, netting the bishop pair, has been the most popular choice in the modern game, and has been played by a series of elite players – including Magnus Carlsen – in rapid games. That in turn has resulted in many current GMs preferring 5...h6, keeping the bishop’s retreat to e7 open for a little longer.

6... ♗b6

Rubinstein keeps the tension between the bishops unresolved and is happy to accept doubled b-pawns in exchange for the activation of the black rook on the a-file.

6... ♗xe3 7.fxe3 ♗a5 was the engine favourite, going after both white bishops and the chance of gaining space on the queenside. The half-open f-file gives White an additional channel for counterplay, but the exchange of White’s light-squared bishop (reducing pressure against f7) limits the danger. The resulting positions are equal but with elements of imbalance. 8. ♗b3 0-0 9.0-0 c6 10.h3 ♖e8 11. ♗d2 b5 12. ♗e2 h6 13. ♗g3 ♗xb3 14.axb3 a5 15.b4 a4 16.b3 d5 17.bxa4 bxa4 18.exd5 cxd5 19.b5 ♗d7 20. ♖fb1 ♗c7 21. ♗e2 ♖ab8 22. ♖xa4 ♖xb5 23. ♖xb5 ♗xb5 liquidated to equality ½-½ (43) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

7. ♗d2

This early development of the queen feels a little strange, but it was pretty much main line theory at the time, having even been played by Lasker against Steinitz in the 1894 World Championship Match, and many times by Chigorin.

7.a4 was another example of the engines enjoying the use of the rook’s pawns! 7.a4 frees a retreat square a2 for the light-squared bishop, preventing Black from netting the bishop with ...♗a5, while dissuading a future ...♗d4, due to a5. The engines now looked to neutralise

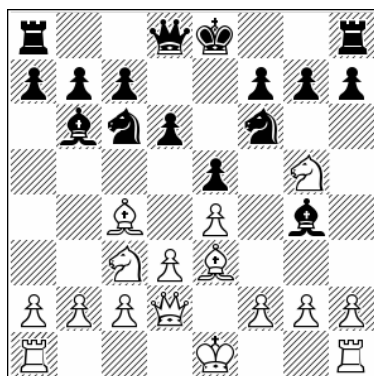
White's pieces with 7...♙e6 8.♙xb6 axb6 9.♙xe6 fxe6 10.d4 exd4 11.♘xd4 ♖d7 12.0-0 0-0 13.f4 e5 14.♘db5 exf4 15.♙xf4 h6 16.♙d2 ♘e5 17.♙af1 c6 18.♘d4 ♘g6 19.♙f2 ♙ae8 with an equal game, ½-½ (36) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

7...♙g4

This move was first played by Janowski and used by Rubinstein throughout his career. By delaying kingside castling and making a threat against the knight, Black pulls White out of a standard approach and forces his opponent to react concretely.

To 7...0-0, one imagines that White's intended response was either to castle queenside or to pin the knight on f6 with 8.♙g5, threatening ♘d5, though it is hard to be too convinced by White's chances of success... and nor are the engines: 8.0-0-0 ♘d4 9.a3 c6 10.♙xd4 exd4 11.♘e2 c5 12.♙g5 ♖d7 13.♙a2 ♙d8 14.♙f4 a5 15.h4 b5 16.h5 a4 17.h6 g6 18.♙g3 b4 19.♘f4 ♘g4 20.axb4 cxb4 21.♙c4 ♘h8 22.b3 axb3 23.♙xb3 ♙a7 and one would settle for Black's position from the Four Knights Opening! ½-½ (59) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

8.♘g5



The most principled continuation, evading the attack on the knight and introducing ideas of f3 or h3 to chase the bishop and gain kingside space with tempo.

8...♙h5

Maximum flexibility from Rubinstein once again, defending f7 by prophylactically moving the bishop out of the range of White's kingside pawns and keeping open the option of castling on either side. The drawback to 8...♙h5 is that the bishop is locked to the kingside, giving

White options of chasing the bishop with a kingside pawn storm. Typically in 1.e4 e5 openings, Black avoids putting the light-squared bishop on h5 or g6 when White's e4-pawn is supported by a pawn on d3.

9.f3?!

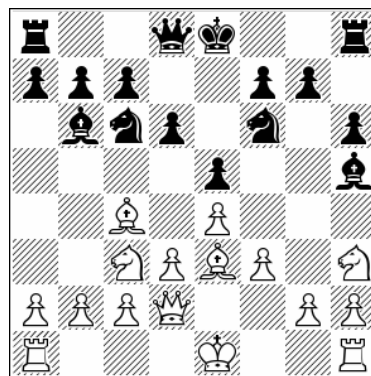
White's most humanly logical follow-up to 8.♘g5. 9.f3 blocks the h5-d1 diagonal, allowing White to castle queenside; it also prepares g4, chasing Black's light-squared bishop, seeking to entomb it on the kingside. Note however that the engines have already abandoned any hopes of aggression and are already looking to equalise the position by exchanging anything that comes close to White's position!

9...h6

The most logical moment to chase back the white knight is before White achieves h4, after which g4 and h5 would be a real threat.

10.♘h3

10.♙xb6 axb6 11.♘h3 ♘d4 12.♘e2 ♘xe2 13.♙xe2 0-0 14.♙b3 ♙e8 15.♘f2 b5 16.0-0 d5 17.a4 was Dragon's view of best play: swap everything off and head for the bar – or should that be the recharger? ½-½ (23) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.



10...♙d7

10...♙xe3 11.♙xe3 ♘d4 is the engine approach with ...c6 and ...d5 to follow, already with a slight advantage. 12.0-0-0 is the only consistent white move, but Black's queenside initiative flows freely after 12...c6 when it wants to castle short and advance the queenside pawns. It claims a significant advantage for Black, actually believing White's best move now is 13.a3 b5 14.♙a2 b4 15.♘e2 ♘xe2+ 16.♙xe2 bxa3, which was

again very pleasant for Black in Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022 (½-½ (36)). Rubinstein, as was his wont, adopts a slower plan, intending to take his king to the queenside.

11.♘f2

This feels a little cautious. If I (Matthew) were convinced of the potential of White's position (I'm not) then either 11.0-0-0 or 11.g4 (played by Tartakower 13 years later against Rubinstein) would be my choice. Even 11.♘g1 looks interesting as a good follow-up square for the knight after f2 is not trivial to find. 11.g4 ♕g6 (11...♘d4 12.♕xd4 ♕xd4 13.♘g1 ♕g6 14.♘ge2 ♖b6 15.0-0-0 0-0-0 16.d4 c6 17.♖b3 ♗e7 18.d5 ½-½ (51) turned out quite decently for White in Tartakower-Rubinstein, Gothenburg 1920) 12.♘f2 ♕xe3 13.♗xe3 ♘d4 14.♖c1 b5 was again very pleasant for Black, ½-½ (35) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

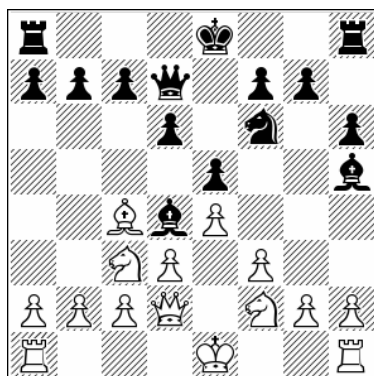
11...♘d4

A very natural move though the engines were still wanting ...♕xe3 followed by ...♘d4, ...c6 and then ...either ...d5 or ...b5.

12.♕xd4

A move that elicits an expression of disgust – how can White give up the two bishops just like that? – but it's definitely the move that best fits any aggressive intentions that White may still have. The knight on d4 prevents White from achieving any kingside expansion by attacking the f3-pawn. Freed of this pressure, White can start chasing the light-squared bishop.

12...♕xd4



13.♘cd1?!

This is a rather strange move however: it's obvious that Black is going to gain vast amounts

of central space now that ...d5 is possible without any preparation. However, it is probably not a planless move: it seems that Salwe was aiming consistently for a specific attacking structure, but perhaps without properly taking into account what Rubinstein was doing. Salwe's play makes one think back to the famous opening game of the Steinitz-Lasker, World Championship Match 1894, where Steinitz also achieved such a structure (d3/e4/f3) together with knights on f2 and e3, and won a glorious game. However, this game has many differences, not least the fact that Black's king isn't even castled on the kingside yet!

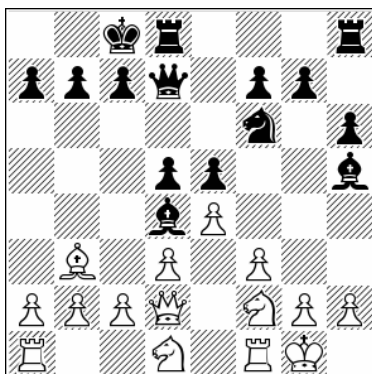
13.g4 ♕g6 14.h4 0-0-0 15.0-0-0 was the engine choice and looks logical: 15...♘e8 (a lovely regrouping from the engines, playing the knight to c7 to support central and queenside expansion with ...c6, ...d5, ...b5 and ...a5. It also allows Black to bring the light-squared bishop back into play with ...f6 and ...♕f7/...♕g8) 16.♘h3 c6 17.♘g1 (shows what the engines thought of 11.♘f2 !) 17...♘c7 18.♘ge2 b5 19.h5 ♕h7 20.♖b3 a5 21.a3 ♖b6 22.d4 a4 23.♖a2 f6 24.♖b1 with a balanced but very interesting struggle ahead, ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

13...d5 14.♖b3 0-0-0

The value of delaying castling becomes clear. The only place where White might be able to develop some play is on the kingside, so Black castles queenside... and White's development doesn't make much sense any more.

15.0-0?!

Ironically, after Black rejected an opposite-castling position in which he went short and White long, the exact reverse has now arisen. Stockfish is not impressed and prefers to retract White's 13th and go long: 15.♘c3 c6 16.0-0-0 was best play according to the engines, putting the king to the same area as Black's, but Black is obviously well on top.



15...g5

Though one understands Rubinstein's desire to clamp down on White's kingside and possibly achieve a future ...g4 break, it feels a little strange to offer up a weakness on f5 in this way. Quite possibly, Rubinstein agonised about whether to play in this way or not. I (Matthew) much prefer keeping the g-pawn on g7 and pushing the rook's pawn to create a white kingside weakness in that way. However, Rubinstein's choice is still very good for Black.

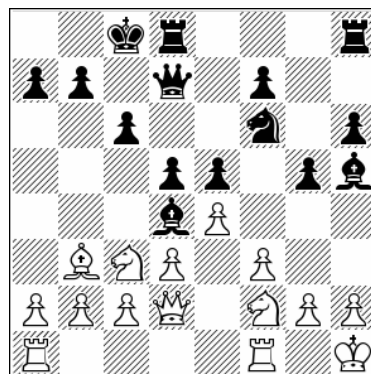
15...♟b8 16.♞b1 c6 17.♞e3 ♟g6 18.a4 ♞d6 19.♞fe1 h5 20.♟a2 h4 21.h3 ♞h5 gave Black very strong play on the kingside dark squares, ½-½ (45) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

16.♟h1 c6 17.♞c3?!

Sending the knight in the wrong direction and more or less totally accepting that everything White has done in the opening was wrong!

17.♞e3 was White's best way to play as 17...♟g6 (17...♟xb2 should be welcomed by White as it creates open lines for counterplay that White could never achieve in this position by normal means) 18.♞ae1 ♞he8 19.c3 ♟b6 20.exd5 ♞xd5 21.♞xd5 cxd5 22.♞g4 showed the engines finding surprising defensive resources to exploit the slight weaknesses left by 15...g5.

22...♞d6 23.d4 exd4 24.cxd4 ♟f5 25.♞e5 ♞e7 26.f4 g4 27.♟c2 ♟xc2 28.♞xc2+ ♟b8 29.♞e2 ♟a8 30.♞xg4 ♟xd4 31.♞d1 ♞b6 32.b3 and White had the draw within reach, ½-½ (46) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

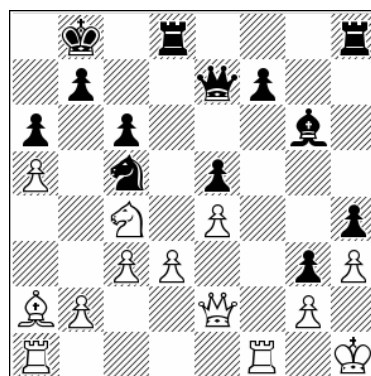


17...♟g6 18.a4

Most of the engine matches at this point are ending in Black wins as Black expands on the kingside, so it's hard to give good advice. 18.a4 seems as useful as any other move, trying to create a few openings on the queenside for White's pieces by launching the rook's pawn at Black's king's position.

18...♟b8 19.a5 a6 20.♞a4 ♞c7

Rubinstein continues his cautious approach, but 20...g4 21.c3 ♟a7 was more direct. 22.♞e2 dxe4 23.fxe4 h5 24.♞b6 ♞e7 25.♟a2 ♞d7 26.♞c4 ♟xf2 27.♞xf2 h4 28.♞ff1 g3 29.h3 ♞c5 was one of many pleasing exploitations of Black's advantages.



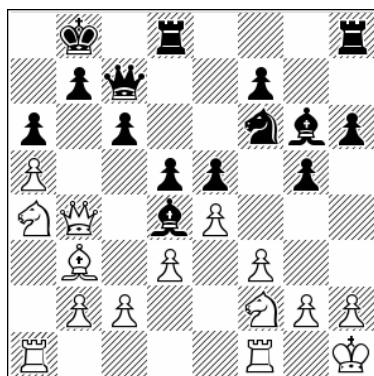
analysis diagram

The black kingside pawns pin the white king to the corner and secure a wonderful outpost on f4 for the knight to attack the backward pawn on d3.

30.♟b1 ♞g5 31.♟c2 f6 32.♞d2 ♞e6 33.♞f3 ♞h6 34.♞d2 ♞xd2 35.♞xd2 ♞f4 36.d4 c5 37.d5 ♞xd5 38.exd5 ♟xc2 39.c4 ♟d3 40.♞fe1 (40.♞xf6 ♞hf8 and White will regret taking that pawn and opening the f-file!) 40...e4 41.♞xe4 ♟xc4 42.d6 ♞he8 43.♟g1 ♟b5 44.♞d2 ♞xd6 and two pawns was more than enough! A really nice game by

Dragon! 0-1 (71) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

21. ♖b4



Really asking for it...

21... ♜d6

... but Rubinstein blinks! There's nothing wrong in principle with swapping off queens – it removes any tiny glimmer of hope that White might have of creating counterplay – but it's also pretty clear that Black is the one most likely to develop dangerous play against the opponent's king. It may have been a psychological decision – perhaps Rubinstein knew Salwe as a dangerous attacking player (though this isn't really one's impression of Salwe's play), or perhaps Rubinstein thought this position was so good it was already technically winning without queens? He may well have been right: the vast majority of engine games are still ending in Black wins. 21...c5 22. ♖e1 (22. ♖b6 ♖e7 threatens both ...♜d6 and ...c4) 22...c4 23.dxc4 dxc4 24. ♗a2 ♜d6 (preparing to double up behind the dark-squared bishop. When White plays c3, the queen on e1 is no longer defending the a5-pawn) 25.c3 ♗a7 26. ♗b6 (desperation) 26... ♗xb6 27.axb6 ♜xb6 28. ♖e2 ♜c6 29. ♜ad1 h5 30. ♜d2 g4 31.fxg4 hxg4 and Black was a clear pawn up and attacking too! 0-1 (75) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

22. ♖xd6+ ♜xd6

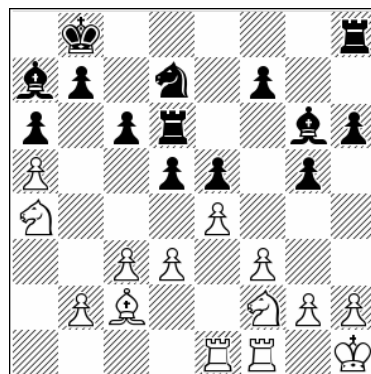
The exchange of queens has reduced, though not eliminated, the dangers facing White on the kingside, but his position remains highly unpleasant.

23.c3 ♗a7 24. ♗c2 ♗d7

24...h5 25.b4 h4 followed by ...♗f6-h5-f4/g3 was also a powerful way to play. It was enough to provoke some desperation from Stockfish!

26. ♗c5 ♜dd8 27. ♗b3 dxe4 28.dxe4 ♗xc5 29.bxc5 ♜d2 30. ♜ad1 ♜hd8 31. ♗g1 ♗c7 32. ♗c4 ♜xd1 33. ♗xd1 ♗d7 34. ♗f2 ♗xc5 with a clear extra pawn and an easy technical win, 0-1 (78) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

25. ♜ae1



25...h5

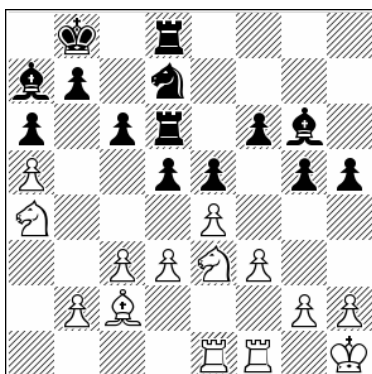
Now and on the next move, ...f5 was very powerful, further increasing Black's central and kingside space advantage. Rubinstein may have been a little nervous of weakening the e5-pawn but Black has more than enough firepower to deal with any pressure White can apply (temporarily): 25...f5 26.exf5 ♗xf5 27. ♗g4 ♜e6. The assessment has grown to over +2 for Black. The knight can be driven away with h5 and Black can slowly prepare a breakthrough. 28. ♗e3 ♗g6 29.h3 h5 30.b4 ♜f8 31. ♗h2 ♗c7 32.c4 dxc4 33. ♗xc4 ♗d4 34. ♗d2 ♜d6 35. ♜b1 h4 36. ♜fe1 ♜f4 37. ♜b3 ♗f6 38. ♜bb1 ♗f5 39. ♜b3 ♗d5 0-1 (81) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

26. ♗d1 f6

Still continuing his solid approach, but the case for 26...f5 is again very strong. It's clear that Rubinstein was not looking to improve his position at the current moment through transformation of the pawn structure, but via regrouping and optimising the placement of his pieces. 24...♗d7 and 26...f6 allows the light-squared bishop to join the struggle from a larger range of diagonals; 27...♜d8 intends to regroup the knight to the splendid e6-square (aiming at d4 or f4) via f8. Influenced by the engine, it's easy to be a little impatient of Rubinstein's methodical build-up, but in principle it's a safe and practical method that leaves White with a depressing defensive task! However, as the

engine will prove, Rubinstein didn't manage to avoid all the defensive tactics that engines find so effortlessly!

27.♖e3 ♜d8



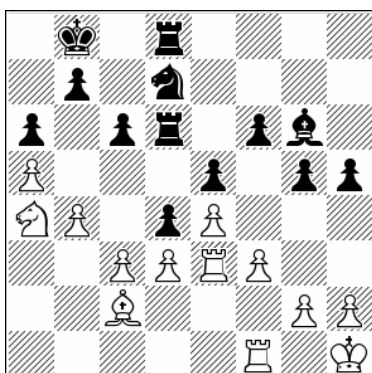
28.b4

28.exd5 was an unexpected resource as 28...cxd5 (28...♙xe3 29.♞xe3 cxd5 30.♞e2 is still better for Black, but back within drawing limits for the engines: 30...d4 31.c4 h4 32.♞d2 h3 33.g3 f5 34.♙g1 ♞e6 35.b4 ♙a7 36.♙d1 ♙h5 37.♞e1 ♞e8 38.♙b2 ♞e7 39.♙a4 ♞f8 and Black did not manage to make significant progress ½-½ (67) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 29.d4 is the unexpected tactic! 29...exd4 30.cxd4 ♙xc2 31.♙xc2 holds everything together for White.

28...♙xe3

Capturing on d5 followed by d4 was still in the position, so Rubinstein hurries to transform the pawn structure into a very favourable-looking situation.

29.♞xe3 d4



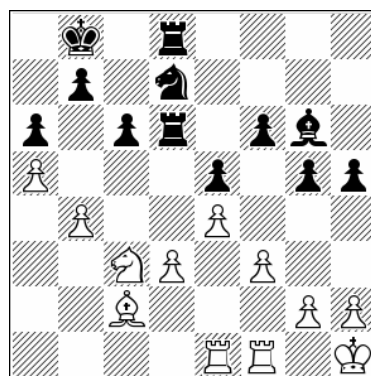
Black will gain a wonderful outpost on d4 for a rook or knight, a loose pawn on b4 to attack and a backward d3-pawn as a target.

30.♞ee1

30.cxd4 ♞xd4 31.♞b1 was the engine recommendation. Add up all Black's advantages

as we did the move before and you might expect a grandmasterly assessment of completely winning for Black. It might even have happened in the pre-computer age! However, the engines consider the position to be better for Black, but well outside the winning zone. Black's problem is quite simply that he doesn't have enough invasion channels to achieve victory and creating additional ones is extraordinarily difficult. The engines just ignore any push of the black kingside pawns while any threat to play ...c5 is met by ♖c5!. In the game, Salwe starts to take a sub-optimal path by drawing the knight back from a4. It's a natural reaction, as it feels that the knight has been offside for ever, but just at this moment the knight was performing the job of its life! 31...f5 32.h3 ♞f8 33.♙g1 h4 34.♞e1 ♞f6 35.♙c5 fxe4 36.fxe4 ♙f7 37.♞f1 ♞f4 38.♞fc1 ♙xc5 39.bxc5 ♙h5 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

30...dxc3 31.♙xc3



With his weak pawn and dreadful bishop, White's position looks terrible, but he only has one real weakness (b4 hardly counts, as it is easily defended) and for an engine, White's position counts as very tenable. Of course, for a human opponent, it is no fun at all.

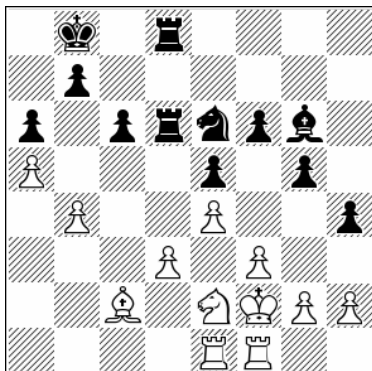
31...h4 32.♙g1 ♙f8 33.♙f2

Salwe has not discovered the best defensive posture and is heading for a set-up that – from the human point of view – looks very normal and reasonable. The white knight is drawn back to e2 to cover against an invasion on d4 or f4 by the black knight.

33...♙e6 34.♙e2

34.♙a4. It is too late now for this defensive set-up: 34...c5 35.bxc5 ♞d4 36.♞d1 ♙e8 37.♙c3 ♙xc5

38.♖d5 ♜d6 39.g3 ♙c6 40.♗e7 ♙a4 41.♙xa4 ♜xa4 42.♞a1 ♜xd3+ 43.♔g2 ♜c4 with an extra pawn that Black brought home to victory, 0-1 (95) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.



34...♙e8

Once again, Rubinstein eschews a transformation of the pawn structure to convert his advantage and reshuffles and re-optimises his position. One imagines that he was thinking of achieving ...c5 and following up by playing his bishop at once to b5. It's true that the bishop is not doing a great deal anymore on g6, but you can play your breaks without being fully prepared if the opponent is also unprepared to meet them!

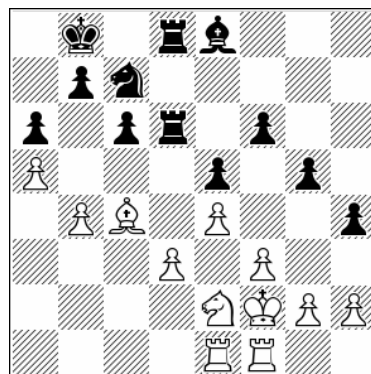
34...c5 was now extremely natural: 35.bxc5 (35.♞b1 c4 is a very evil tactic! (35...♙e8 would be a more Rubinsteinesque method of conversion, redeploying the bishop to b5 to attack d3) 36.dxc4 ♜d2 37.♙d1 ♜f4 38.g3 ♜d3+ 39.♔e3 (39.♔g1 h3 is total domination!) and 39...♜b2 wins) 35...♜xc5 36.♜c1 ♜c8 37.♞e2 ♜d4 38.g3 ♞b4 39.♞d2 ♞b5 and the a5-pawn falls, 0-1 (83) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

35.♙b3 ♜c7

Another cautious move.

35...♙f7 36.♜c1 (36.♙xe6 ♙xe6 37.♜c1 ♜d4) 36...c5 37.bxc5 ♜c6 38.♙c4 ♙g8 39.g3 h3 40.♙d5 ♜xc5 41.♜b3 ♜c3 42.♔e3 ♜c7 43.♙xg8 ♜xg8 44.♞b1 ♜d8 45.♞fd1 ♜b5 was very strong for Black, 0-1 (85) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

36.♙c4



White takes the opportunity to improve the defensive structure with a more active method of defending the d3-pawn. However, sticking the bishop's head above the parapet in this way gives Rubinstein a plan that fits his way of playing the position perfectly! He plays to exchange off his passive bishop on e8 for the strong defensive bishop on c4.

36...♙d7!

A nice manoeuvre. Rubinstein is preparing two of his favourite strategic devices: the exchange of a key defensive piece and the transformation of his advantage.

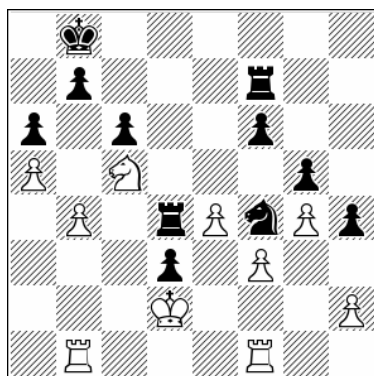
37.♞c1 ♙e6

Rubinstein is ready to exchange bishops on c4, transforming a static weakness (the backward pawn on d3) into a dynamic advantage (unchallengeable control of the d-file). Amazingly, the engines find a defence here! They don't assess it particularly highly to start with, but now the majority of engine games run from here end in a draw!

38.♞c2

Stockfish believes the most tenacious defence is to give up the pawn with 38.d4 exd4, transforming the backward d-pawn into a self-block of Black's dynamic advantage on the d-file at the cost of pawn (38...♔a7 was another engine attempt, but here White started blockading the d-pawn with the king! 39.♔e3 exd4+ 40.♔d3 f5 41.♙xe6 ♜xe6 42.♞fe1 fxe4+ 43.fxe4 ♞e7 44.♞c4 h3 45.gxh3 ♞h8 46.♜xd4 ♞xh3+ 47.♔c2 ♞xh2+ 48.♞e2 ♞h3 49.♞g2 ♜d7 50.♞c3 ♞h4 51.♞d2 ♞dh7 52.♞e3 ♞e7 53.♔d3 ♞e8 54.♞d1 ♞h7 55.♞de1 ♞e5 56.♔c4 ♞g7 57.♜f3 ♞e8 58.♜d4 g4 59.♞g3 ♞g5 60.e5 ♜d5 61.e6. We are not saying it's easy or that one would necessarily be confident of

holding the position after 38.d4, but it's clearly an excellent practical chance and White's only hope! ½-½ (75) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022). 39.♔d3 ♕f7 40.g3 ♖h8 41.♗e1 ♜e6 42.♗d2 ♜d7 43.g4 ♜g8 44.♞c2 ♞e8 45.♞cc1 ♞c8 46.♙c4 d3 47.♜c3 ♜f4 48.♙xf7 ♞xf7 49.♜a4 ♞d8 50.♜c5 ♞d4 51.♞b1.

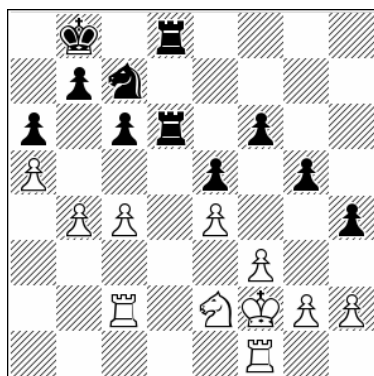


analysis diagram

White is back in the ideal defensive structure – with a pawn less it has to be admitted but somehow the engines managed to keep White's head above water!

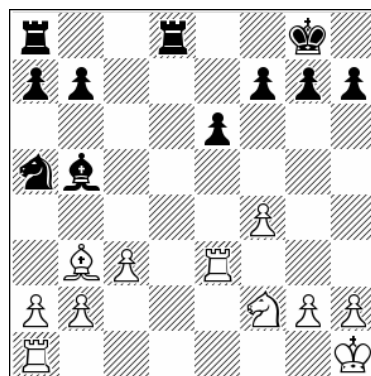
51...♞f8 52.♞b2 ♞e8 53.♗c3 ♞ed8 54.♞d2 ♞d6 55.h3 ♜e2+ 56.♗b3 ♜f4 57.♗c3 ♜e2+ 58.♗b3 ♗c7 59.♞a1 ♜f4 60.♗c3 ♜e2+ 61.♗b3 ♜f4 62.♗c3 ♞d8 63.♗b3 ♞d6 64.♞h1 ♜e2 65.♞b1 ♜f4 66.♞h1 ♜e2 67.♞b1 ♗b8 68.♞f1 ♜f4 69.♞h1 ♗c7 ½-½ (118) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

38...♙xc4! 39.dxc4

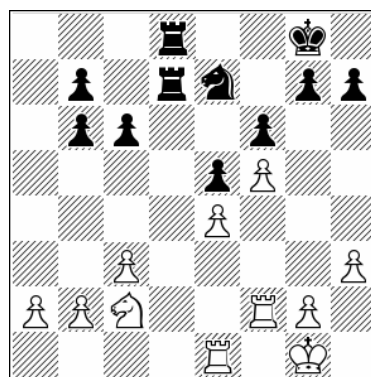


And now the engines only see wins for Black! It's quite typical of modern engines that they find all sorts of amazing defences against attacks on static weaknesses but dynamic advantages are often rated much higher.

It is interesting to compare this position with one from the game Plater-Botvinnik, Moscow 1947.



This was quoted in one of Kotov's old middlegame books, as was Botvinnik's comment that 'For Akiba Rubinstein, the unequalled master of such positions, the remainder would just have been a matter of technique'. Kotov comments approvingly that this shows how Botvinnik must have spent many hours studying Rubinstein's technique in such positions, but he does not give any examples. The present game is clearly one,

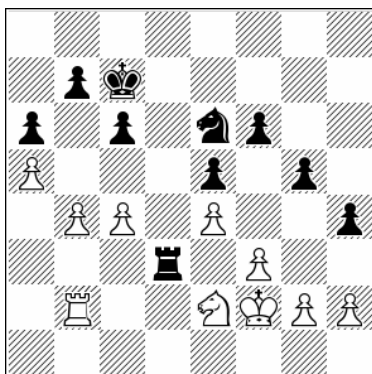


as is this position, from Alapin-Rubinstein, Prague 1908. The computer agrees that both positions are clearly better for Black and neither human opponent ever really looked like making half a point, despite resisting for a combined total of 72 moves from these diagrams!

39...♜e6 40.♞b1 ♞d2 41.♞bb2 ♞xc2 42.♞xc2 ♞d3

Threatening ...♞b3.

43.♞b2 ♗c7



Rubinstein is in his element in such positions. What will Black's next break be? Maybe ...b6, maybe ...c5 at the appropriate moment. White takes the safe route and blocks both.

44.c5 ♖d7

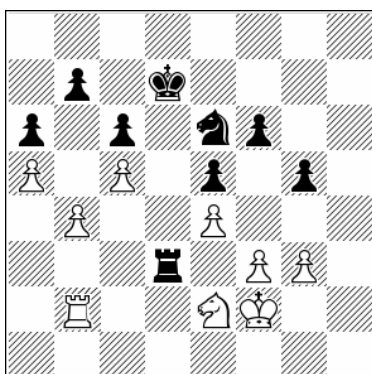
The black king is headed to the kingside to arrange a break there. Whatever White tries, it seems impossible to find a structure that will hold Black off forever. However, the play is not simple if an engine is defending as White.

45.g3

This allows a nice undermining blow on the kingside, but White had no attractive options:

A) 45.♖e1 h3 46.gxh3 ♜xf3 47.♘g3 ♜e3+ 48.♗f1 ♘d4 0-1 (82) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022;
B) 45.♘c1 led to a neat demonstration of Stockfish's squeezing skills: 45...♞d1 46.♘e2 ♗e7 47.g3 ♞d3 48.♘c1 ♞c3 49.♘b3 ♗f7 50.♗g2 ♗g6 51.♘d2 ♘d4 52.♗f2 ♗h5 53.g4+ ♗g6 54.♞a2 ♗f7 55.♞a1 ♞d3 56.♞a2 ♗g6 57.♞b2 ♞a3 58.♞b1 ♞a2 59.♗e3 ♗f7 60.♞f1 ♞a3+ 61.♗f2 ♞d3 62.♞d1 ♗e6 63.♗f1 ♞e3 64.h3 ♗e7 65.♗g1 ♞d3 66.♗f1 ♘b3 67.♗e2 ♞c3 68.♞f1 ♞c2 69.♞d1 ♘c1+ 70.♗e3 ♞c3+ 71.♗f2 ♘d3+ 72.♗g1 ♘f4 73.♞b1 ♘xh3+ 74.♗h1 ♘f4 75.♞a1 ♘e2 76.♘f1 ♞xf3 0-1 (108) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

45...hxg3+ 46.hxg3



46...g4!

It may have been a few years before Nimzowitsch wrote about undermining the base of the pawn chain, but Rubinstein already understood this!

47.♘g1

47.fxg4 ♘g5 48.♗g2 ♘xe4 gives Black splendid pieces and a new invasion channel for the king via e6-d5: 49.♞c2 ♗e6 50.♗h2 ♘d5 51.♗h3 ♞d2 52.♞xd2+ ♘xd2 53.♗h4 ♗e4 54.♘c1 ♗e3 55.♗h5 ♘e4 56.♘b3 ♘d3 57.♗h4 ♗c2 0-1 (74) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

47...♘g5 48.♗e2 ♞a3 49.f4

49.fxg4 ♞xg3 50.♗f1 ♞xg4 51.♞d2+ ♗e7 52.♘e2 ♘xe4 0-1 (76) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

49...♘xe4

Everything collapses!

50.fxe5 fxe5 51.♗f1 ♘xg3+ 52.♗g2 ♘h5 53.♞f2 ♘f4+ 54.♗h1 ♞a1 55.♞d2+ ♗e7 0-1

A fine technical performance from Rubinstein.

Game 6 – Sicilian Defence

Carl Schlechter

Emanuel Lasker

Vienna & Berlin Wch m 1910

This was the seventh game in the very short, ten-game World Championship Match between Schlechter and Lasker. In risking his title in a short encounter, Lasker had certainly tempted fate, because Schlechter, the famed 'drawing master', was one of the toughest players of his day to beat. After four draws, disaster had struck Lasker in Game 5, when he had outplayed his opponent as Black in a heavy piece ending, only to blunder into a mating attack. Suddenly, it was 'all hands on deck', as he fought like a lion to create winning chances and equalise the score. One result was this head-spinning battle, surely one of the most thrilling games ever played in a World Championship match. It was annotated at length (and with a certain degree of admiring hyperbole) by the late Wolfgang Heidenfeld, in a small publication called *Lasker and his Contemporaries*, published in 1979. He in turn

drew on past annotations, mainly by Tarrasch, Brinckmann and Reinfeld.

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 ♟c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♟xd4 ♟f6 5.♟c3 g6?!

This has never been a popular move-order, although it would be rather attractive if it worked. Basically, Black tries to get the Accelerated Dragon (where he has not committed his d-pawn and so retains the chance of playing ...d7-d5 in one move), whilst at the same time avoiding the Maroczy Bind, which is possible after 4...g6 5.c4. Unfortunately, White has other options to exploit the failure to secure the ♟f6 against the e4-e5 thrust. Of course, at the time the game was played, many of the theoretical subtleties were unknown, and anyway, Lasker needed to create complications and so was willing to fish in murky waters.

6.♟c4

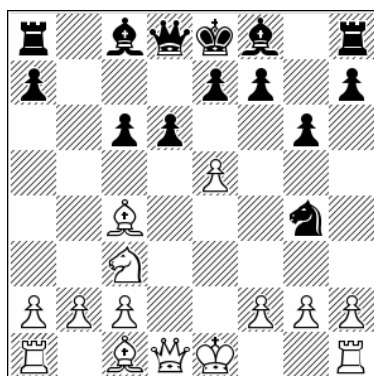
6.♟xc6 bxc6 7.e5 is the most critical line, generally regarded as better for White.

6...d6?!

Black tries to rectify his omission, but this transposes into another objectively very dodgy line for Black.

7.♟xc6 bxc6 8.e5! ♟g4

Forced, since 8...dxe5?? 9.♟xf7+ drops the black queen.



9.e6?!

A move that shows the effect of Lasker's approach to the opening: playing for the win as Black by giving the opponent a choice of tempting-looking continuations in an unbalanced structure. Some choices might actually be good, but others might flatter to deceive – and in an unbalanced structure, a poor

choice is likely to have more consequences than in a balanced position.

The engine prefers both 9.♟f4 and 9.exd6, in each case with some advantage to White. 9.exd6 ♟xd6 10.f3 ♟e5 11.♟b3 ♟g7 12.♟e3 ♟a6 13.♟xd6 exd6 14.0-0-0 d5 15.♟c5 ♟d7 16.♟he1+ ♟d8 17.♟d6 ♟c8 18.♟a4 was the course of one engine game we ran, ½-½ (30) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022. It was defensible for the engines, but would be rather uncomfortable for a human player.

9...f5

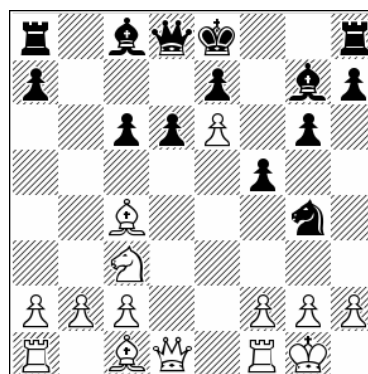
Already after this move, the engines give Black a slight advantage. The essential problem is that the e6-pawn restricts nothing: Black's light-squared bishop will stand excellently on a6, while the other bishop roams free on the h8-a1 diagonal.

10.0-0

Another engine encounter we ran went 10.♟b3 ♟g7 11.♟f4 0-0 12.f3 ♟e5 13.♟d2 ♟b8 14.0-0-0. Stockfish's plan of castling queenside looks very risky but White manages to generate enough menace on the kingside to stimulate Black to exchange queens. The resulting endgame is still pleasant for Black however: 14...♟b6 15.♟g5 ♟e8 16.♟h6 ♟f6 17.♟g5 ♟h8 18.h4 h5 19.♟a4 ♟b7 20.♟he1 ♟h7 21.♟f4 ♟b4 22.♟xb4 ♟xb4 23.♟g5 ♟a6 ½-½ (37) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

10...♟g7

10...d5? 11.♟xd5 cxd5 12.♟b5+.



11.♟f4

It is quite surprising that Schlechter never chased away the knight from g4, as one would have thought he'd want to release the pressure on h2 and f2 as soon as possible. Stockfish agreed, but Komodo Dragon was happy with

Schlechter's approach, via a better move-order. Maybe the reason was tactical: Schlechter was possibly already envisaging ♟xd6 and e7+ tricks and wanted to avoid the e8-square being covered by a black knight when it returns to f6 (which would allow ...♞f7 as an answer to e7+).

11. ♟b3 0-0 12. h3 (or 12. ♟f4 ♟a6 13. ♞e1 ♞b6 14. ♞f3 . In this way, White covers the f2-square without needing the decentralising ♞a4 . The position is still murky, but Dragon holds it together as White: 14... ♟d4 15. ♟g3 ♞ae8 16. ♞ad1 f4 17. ♟h4 ♞e5 18. ♞e4 ♟xc3 19. bxc3 f3 20. g4 ♟e2 21. ♞d4 c5 22. ♞d5 ♟b5 23. ♟g5 ♟c6 24. ♟a4 ♟xd5 25. ♞xd5 ♞b2 26. h3 ♞xc3 27. ♞d1 a5 Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022. After White regains the exchange on e8, it won't be easy for Black to activate the rook on e8. Obviously, this is still a murky position for a human though) 12... ♞f6 13. ♟f4 (looking for ♞d2 and ♟h6) 13... h6 14. ♞d3 ♞b6 15. ♞fe1 ♟a6 16. ♞f3 ♞h7 17. ♞ad1 , when one would much rather be Black, but at least the initial danger has passed. We see a nice echo of the main game in the subsequent moves: 17... ♞ac8 18. h4 ♞b4 19. a3 ♞b8 20. ♟xd6 (spoiler alert!) 20... exd6 21. e7 ♞fe8 22. ♟f7 ♞b7 23. ♞e3 ♟c4 (a surprising way to neutralise White's play) 24. ♟xc4 d5 25. ♟d3 ♞c7 26. ♞c5 ♞e4 27. ♞xe4 fxe4 28. ♟f1 ♞cx7 with a better position for Black, though holdable, $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ (44) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

11... ♞b6

Sidestepping the obvious trap 11... 0-0? 12. ♟xd6 , although even here the engines were not too despondent, holding a draw for Black after 12... ♞e5 (12... ♞xd6 13. ♞xd6 exd6 14. e7+ ♞f7 15. e8=♞+) 13. ♟xe5 (13. ♟b3 ♟a6 14. ♞e1 ♞xd6 is Black's idea as 15. ♞xd6 exd6 16. e7+ ♞f7 17. f4 d5 18. fxe5 ♟b7 followed by ...♞xe7 is very strong for Black) 13... ♟xe5 14. ♞f3 ♞b8 15. ♞ad1 ♞a5 16. ♟b3 ♞g7 17. ♞d2 ♞b4 18. ♞fd1 ♞f4 19. ♞xf4 ♟xf4 20. ♞d4 ♟e5 21. ♞a4 ♞b7 22. h4 ♞f6 $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ (36) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

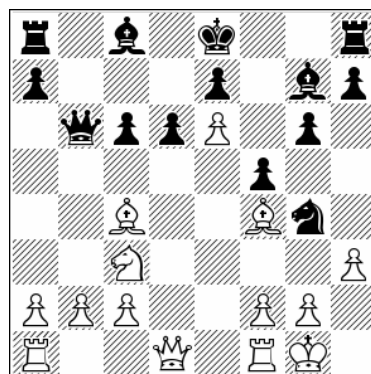
Lasker's idea is to create immediate counterplay against b2 and f2, although the computer prefers to execute the same plan in slightly different form: 11... ♞b8 12. ♟b3 ♟a6 13. ♞f3 (13. ♞e1 ♞b4 is

also better for Black) 13... 0-0 14. ♞fd1 ♞c7 when it slightly prefers Black.

12. ♟b3 ?!

A) 12. ♞a4 ♞a5 13. c3 looks a little clumsy, but relieves the pressure against f2 straightaway and holds the balance;

B) 12. h3 is the move you'd want to play considering what happens next in the game, and it led to a fantastic tactical exchange in engine games between Stockfish and Komodo Dragon!

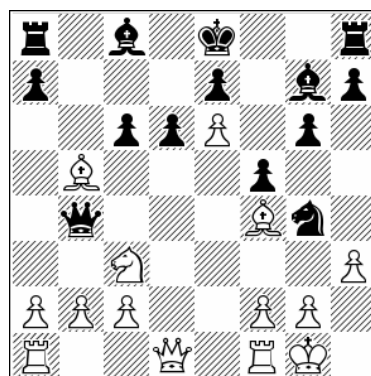


analysis diagram

B1) 12... ♞xb2 13. ♞b5 (an amazing idea) 13... cxb5 (13... ♞xa1 14. ♞f3 ♞e5 15. ♟xe5 ♞xe5 16. ♞xc6+ ♞f8 17. ♞xa8 ; 13... 0-0 14. ♞b1 ♞f6 15. ♞c7 (trapping the rook on a8) 15... ♞e5 16. ♞e2 ♞h4 17. ♟xe5 ♟xe5 18. ♞xa8 1-0 (57) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 14. ♞b1 ♞d4 15. ♟xb5+ ♞f8 16. ♞xd4 ♟xd4 17. ♟c6 (again traps the rook on a8!) 17... ♟xe6 18. ♟xa8 ♞f7 19. hgx4 ♞xa8 20. gxf5 gxf5 21. ♞fd1 ♟xa2 22. ♞b7 ♟c5 23. ♟xd6 ♞d8 24. ♞xe7+ ♞f6 25. ♟xc5 ♞xd1+ $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ (30) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022;

B2) 12... ♞e5 13. ♟b3 ♟a6 14. ♞e1 0-0 15. ♟g5 ♞fe8 16. ♞b1 ♞ab8 17. ♞c1 ♞c4 18. ♞a4 ♞b4 $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022;

B3) 12... ♞b4 13. ♟b5 and now there is a further divide:

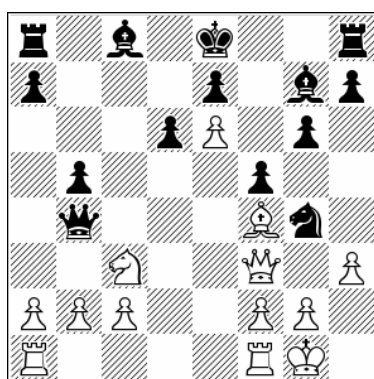


analysis diagram

B31) 13...♖xf4 14.♗xc6+ ♔f8 15.hxg4 ♖b8 16.gxf5 ♗e5 17.g3 ♗xf5 18.♗e4 ♗xe6 19.♘d5 ♖xb2 20.♗d3 ♗b7 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022;

B32) 13...0-0 seems tempting to the human, but only because he has reckoned without 14.♗xd6 exd6 (14...♗xb2 15.♗e7 ♗xe6 16.♗xc6 ♘xf2 17.♗d6 ♗f7 18.♘a4 ♘xh3+ 19.gxh3 ♗d4+ 20.♗xd4 ♗xd4+ 21.♔g2 ♗xa1 22.♗xa8 ♖xa8 23.♖xa1 was a nice tactical skirmish but no better for Black! 1-0 (73) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 15.e7 ♗b7 16.a3 ♗c5 17.exf8=♗+ ♖xf8 18.♗a4 with an extra exchange for White 1-0 (73) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022;

B33) 13...cxb5 14.♗f3.



analysis diagram

As always now, the sheer range of lines that lead to equality when the top engines are playing is astounding!

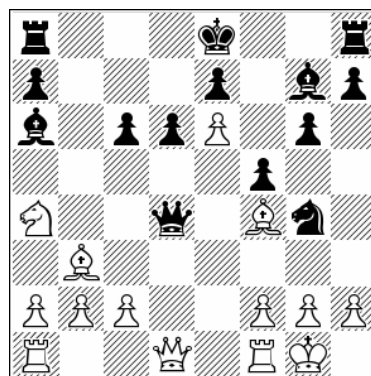
B331) 14...0-0 15.♘d5 ♗b7 16.♘xb4 ♗xf3 17.gxf3 ♘f6 18.a4 a5 19.♘c6 ♘d5 20.♗g5 bxa4 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022;

B332) 14...♖b8 15.♗c6+ ♔d8 16.♘d5 ♗c4 17.♘e7 ♖b6 18.♗xc4 bxc4 19.♘xc8 ♔xc8 20.hxg4 fxg4 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022;

B333) 14...♗xe6 15.♖ae1 ♘e5 (15...0-0 16.♖xe6 ♗xb2 17.♘d5 gives White good play: 17...♘e5 18.♘xe7+ ♔h8 19.♗b7 ♗xc2 20.♗xe5 ♗xe5 21.♘c6 ♖ae8 22.♘xe5 (½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 22...♖xe6 23.♘f7+ ♖xf7 24.♗xf7 ♗c8 25.♗xa7; 15...♔f7 16.♖xe6 ♗xc3 17.bxc3 ♗c4 18.♖e2 ♘f6 19.♗xd6 ♘e4 20.♗e5 ♖hf8 21.♖b1 ♔g8 22.♗d3 ♖ac8 23.♖xb5 a6 24.♘d5 ♔f7 25.g4 ♘xc3 26.♗xc3 ♗xc3 27.gxf5 ♗xd3 28.cxd3 ♖fd8 29.fxg6+ hxg6 30.♖de5 ♖d7 31.♖2e3 ♖c3 32.d4 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 16.♗xe5 dxe5 17.♗xa8+ ♔f7 18.♗b7 ♗c5 19.♗xb5 ♗xb5

20.♘xb5 ♗c4 21.♘xa7 e4 22.♖b1 ♖a8 23.♘c6 ♗xf1 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

12...♗a6 13.♘a4 ♗d4



This is certainly strong though it's not the engines' first preference.

14.♗xd4

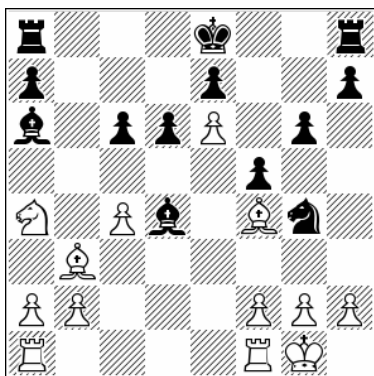
The queen exchange was condemned by Tarrasch, who instead gave the line 14.♗f3 ♗e4 15.♗xe4 (the engine's 15.♖fe1 is a better defence, not opening the f-file against the f2-square, but even so, after 15...♗xf3 16.gxf3 ♘f6 Black retains a definite advantage, getting a similar position to the game, but with doubled f-pawns, which is obviously a big blow for White! White's biggest problem is that the black pawns form an impenetrable barrier against which White's pieces have no entry points. And having already played e5-e6 very early, White doesn't have any tempting pawn levers to open up some holes in Black's position 0-1 (93) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 15...fxe4 16.♖fe1 d5 17.c3 0-0 18.♗g3 with equality. However, even in the pre-computer era, Heidenfeld pointed out the substantial improvement 16...♗d4! when after 17.♗g3, his 17...0-0 gives Black an edge, but the engine's 17...e3 yields a decisive advantage already: 18.fxe3 ♗xe3+ 19.♔h1 h5 20.h3 g5! etc.

Overall, there seems little to choose between the two alternatives; in both cases, White is struggling. Lasker could not have wished for a better outcome to the opening.

14...♗xd4 15.c4!?

This move blocks the a6-f1 diagonal but also turns the bishop on b3 into a big pawn. Moreover the e6-pawn is now lacking protection.

Although the move seems forced and was not commented on by previous annotators, it is not among the engine's top two choices. So bad is White's position that they prefer to surrender the exchange with 15.♖ad1 ♗xf1 16.♗xd4. It is not very tempting for White, although after 16...♗a6 17.f3 ♖f6 18.♗h6, Black clearly will have a little difficulty freeing his position.



15...0-0

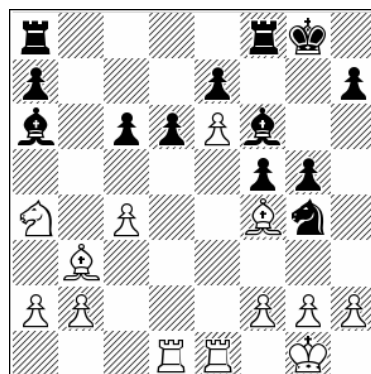
This keeps the advantage, but 15...♗e5! was the most accurate move, again making good use of the knight's position on g4. It proves impossible for White to hold his pawns while trying to regroup the wayward knight on a4: 16.♗xe5 ♖xe5 17.♖ac1 c5 and Black should win comfortably – the white minor pieces are terrible, and the pressure against c4 stops the knight from returning to the game via c3. One engine game continued 18.f4 ♖c6 19.♖c3 ♖d4 20.♗a4+ ♗d8 21.b3 ♖xe6 22.♖ce1 ♖d4 23.♖e3 ♗b7 24.♖d1 ♖c8 25.♗f2 a5 26.♖d5 e6 with a clear extra pawn for Black, 0-1 (70) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

16.♖ad1 ♗f6?!

Here again, Heidenfeld took issue with Tarrasch, who condemned the text and recommended instead 16...c5. This time the engines agree with the good Doctor. Heidenfeld claimed an advantage for White after 17.h3 ♖e5 18.♗xd4 cxd4 19.♗xe5 dxe5 20.♖c5 ♗c8 21.♖d7 ♖d8 (21...♗xd7 22.exd7 ♖fd8 23.c5+ is winning per Heidenfeld, but even in this line, 22...♗f7 is better for Black) 22.c5 'and the e-pawn will fall and Black can hardly move'. However, the engine remains unimpressed – after 22...♗a6 23.♖c1 e4 the e-pawn remains very much alive and Black seems to be simply winning.

The engines also prefer 16...♗e5 to the text, but Black's advantage is not of the type that readily disappears.

17.♗fe1 g5



18.♗xd6?!

Heidenfeld splashed around the exclamation marks to both players' moves throughout the game, and this earned Schlechter another. The move is not favoured by any engine, but is undoubtedly the best practical chance in a human game. 18.♗c1 looks like the best hope of getting the knight on a4 back into play. Komodo Dragon managed to hold the resulting position against Stockfish (no mean feat!) after 18...♖ab8 19.c5 d5 20.♗c2 ♖b4 21.♖c3 f4 22.♖e2 f3 23.♖g3 fxe2, but Black was very clearly on top, ½-½ (49) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

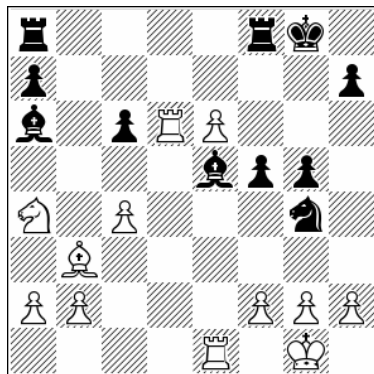
Alternatively, 18.♗d2 ♗d4 19.♖e2 f4 20.♖c3 ♖ab8 21.h3 ♖e5 22.♖e4 c5 23.♖d5 ♖g6 24.h4 gxe4 25.♗xf4 ♖xf4 26.♖xf4 ♗b7 left White in an awful mess, 0-1 (85) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

18...exd6 19.♗xd6 ♗e5?

Again praised by Heidenfeld, whose only alternative was the much weaker 19...♗e7, when 20.♖xc6 turns the tables completely and White is better. But the engines point out the much stronger 19...♖e5! which is the key line, defending the c6-pawn and keeping White's material and dynamic compensation to an absolute minimum. It's not an obvious move, however, as it seems to step into some nasty tactical danger: 20.c5 (20.e7 ♗xe7 21.♖e6 ♖g6 22.♖xc6 ♗b7 23.♖c7 ♗b4 24.♖d1 ♗c8 25.♖c3 ♗a5 26.♖c5 ♗xc3 27.bxc3 ♖g7 was the engine way and now it's clear that White's compensation is non-existent, 0-1 (82) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics

2022) 20...♔g7 21.♙c2 ♚ae8 22.♙xf5 ♚e7. Black seems tied up, but he has neutralised all the threats and the crucial e6-pawn will simply be rounded up by ...♙c8 and ...♚fe8. Black is just winning here.

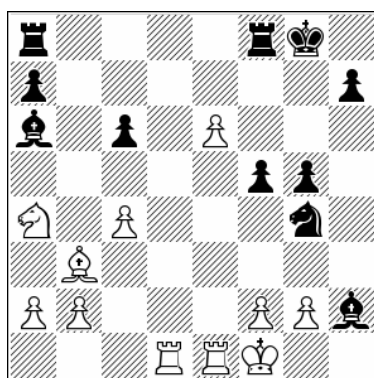
19...♚fe8 is also better for Black.



20.c5!?

This looks like the only chance to keep the initiative going. We would dare any human player not to play this! However, although it is also quite reasonable, both Stockfish and Komodo prefer another line.

20.♚xc6? ♙b7 21.♚c5 ♙d4 wins, but 20.♚dd1 was the engines' choice and enabled White to hold a series of draws. Then 20...♙xh2+ 21.♔f1



analysis diagram

and Black has a number of options:

A) 21...♔g7? 22.♙c5 ♙c8 23.♙a4 ♙e5 24.g3 f4 25.♚xe5 fxg3 26.♚e2 ♚xf2+ 27.♚xf2 gxf2 28.♙xc6 ♚b8 29.e7 ♙h3+ 30.♔xf2 ♙g4 31.♚d5 is winning for White, 1-0 (47) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022;

B) 21...♚fe8 22.♙c5 ♙c8 23.g3 f4 24.♔g2 ♙xf2 25.♔xh2 ♙xd1 26.♙xd1 ♔f8 27.gxf4 gxf4 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022;

C) 21...♙e5 22.♙c5 ♙xc4+ 23.♙xc4 ♙xc4 24.♙d7 ♚fc8 25.g3 ♔g7 26.♙c5 ♚e8 27.♚d7+ ♔g6 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022;

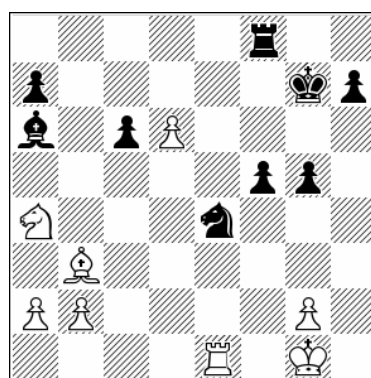
D) 21...♙c8 22.♙c5 (the idea of avoiding c5 is to allow the knight on a4 to activate itself via c5-d7!) 22...♚b8 23.♙d7 ♙xd7 24.exd7 ♚fd8 25.♚e6 ♔f8 26.♚xc6 ♙g3 27.♚c5 ♙xf2 28.♚xf5+ ♔e7 29.♔e2 ♚xd7 30.♚xd7+ ♔xd7 31.♚xg5 h5 32.♚xh5 ♙g1 33.c5 ♙f6 34.♚f5 ♙e4 35.♚f7+ ♔c6 36.♚xa7 ♙xc5 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

20...♚fe8!

Here the Heidenfeld punctuation is deserved.

A) 20...♙xd6? is obviously hopeless after 21.e7+ ♔g7 22.cxd6 ♚fe8 23.d7 ♚ad8 24.dxe8=♚ ♚xe8 25.f3 ♙f6 26.♚e6, winning;

B) 20...♙xh2+ is a much better try, however: 21.♔h1 ♙xd6 22.cxd6 ♙xf2+ 23.♔g1 ♙e4 24.e7+ ♔g7 (24...♔h8? 25.exf8=♚+ ♚xf8 26.d7 ♚d8 27.♙e6 wins according to Heidenfeld) 25.exf8=♚+ ♚xf8.



analysis diagram

B1) Now the usually reliable analyst Vukovic gave 26.♚xe4? fxe4 27.♙c5, but Heidenfeld rightly points out that this is the sort of sacrifice one only plays with somebody else's pieces; after 27...♚f1+! 28.♔h2 ♙c8 29.d7 (29.♙e6? e3 30.♙xc8 e2 wins; 29.♙xe4 ♚f5 wins) 29...♙xd7 30.♙xd7 e3 Black wins;

B2) Tarrasch tried to improve the sacrifice by interpolating 26.d7 ♚d8 and then 27.♚xe4 fxe4 28.♙c5, but this also fails, as Heidenfeld demonstrated: 28...♔f6! 29.♙xa6 ♚xd7 30.♙c5 ♚d4! 31.♔f2 ♚d2+ 32.♔e3 ♚xg2 33.♙xe4+ ♔e5 and Black wins;

B3) Instead, White should play 26.♚c1! which was again Heidenfeld's analysis, approved by the engine. After 26...♚d8 (both 26...♙b5 27.♙c5 ♙xc5

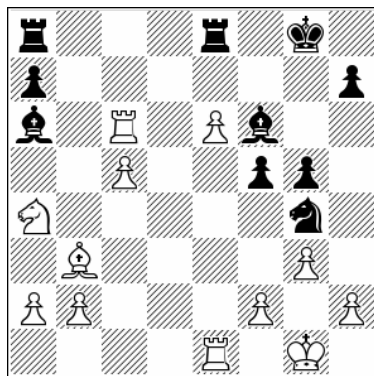
28.♖xc5 and 26...♙b7 27.♜c5 ♜xc5 28.♖xc5 ♜f6 are equal, whilst 26...♜f6 27.d7 ♙b5 (½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) and 26...♙c8 27.♖xc6 ♜d8 (½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) are additional paths to a draw) 27.♜c5! (Heidenfeld gave 27.♖xc6 ♖xd6 28.♖c7+ ♜g6 29.♖xa7 claiming ‘... and White seems to be able to escape mating dangers’, but this is not the case: 29...g4!. White is lost, e.g. 30.♖e7 (or 30.♜c3 ♜xc3 31.bxc3 ♙d3 32.♜f2 ♙e4 and the g-pawn falls) 30...♙c4! 31.♙xc4 ♜d1+ 32.♙f1 ♜g3) 27...♜xc5 28.♖xc5 ♖xd6 29.♖xf5 ♜g6 with a draw.

21.g3

The alternative 21.h3? ♙h2+ 22.♜h1 ♙xd6 23.cxd6 ♜xf2+ 24.♜g1 ♜d3 favours Black.

21.f3 also held the draw, but less convincingly: 21...♙xh2+ 22.♜h1 ♙xd6 23.cxd6 ♜f2+ 24.♜g1 (24.♜h2 ♜d3 25.♖e3 ♜g7 when Black is better but the position remains quite murky) 24...♜d3 25.e7+ ♜g7 26.♖e3 f4 27.♖e4 ♙c8 28.♙c2 ♜c1 29.♜c5 ♙f5 30.♖e1 ♙xc2 31.♜e6+ ♜f7 32.d7 ♖xe7 33.d8=♖ ♖xd8 34.♜xd8+ ♜e8 35.♖xc1 ♜xd8 36.♖xc2 and White managed to hold this rook ending in a couple of engine games, ½-½ (53) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

21...♙f6! 22.♖xc6



22...♙b7?!

Heidenfeld approved of this, but the engines' choice is 22...♙b5. However, as we will see, White's pieces are too active and Black's position has too many holes to allow Black to exert any sort of control over the position. All the engine games we ran after 22...♙b5 ended in draws.

For example, 23.♖d6, and now Heidenfeld only considered 23...♙e5 (23...♙xa4? 24.♙xa4 ♖e7 25.♙d7 and the c-pawn decides), but as at move

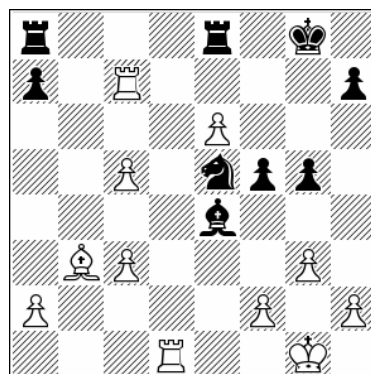
19, it is much stronger to bring the knight to e5, rather than the bishop: 23...♜e5 24.♖e3 f4 25.♖e4 ♙c6 26.♖xe5 ♙xa4 27.♖e4 ♙xb3 28.axb3 fxg3 29.hxg3 a5 30.c6 ♖ac8 31.♖c4 ♖c7 32.♜g2 ♖ec8 33.♜f3 h5 34.♜e4 h4 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

Another move the engines tried was 25...♜g6, which also ended in draws, e.g. 26.♖b4 ♙e2 27.♜c3 (27.♙d5 was another engine draw) 27...♙f3 28.♜d5 ♙xd5 29.♖xd5 ♖ac8 30.♜g2 ♜e7 31.♖d7 ♖xc5 32.♖xa7 ♜c6 33.♙a4 ♜xb4 34.♙xe8 ♜d5 35.♖f7 g4 36.gxf4 ♜xf4+ 37.♜g3 ♙e5 38.e7 ♜g6+ 39.♜xg4 ♖c8 40.♙d7 ♜xf7 41.♙xc8 ♜xe7 42.♙f5 h5+ 43.♜g5 ♙f6+ 44.♜f4 ♙xb2 45.a4 ♜f6 46.♙d7 ♜d5+ 47.♜e4 ♜c7 48.f4 ♙c3 49.♙b5 ♜e6 50.♜d3 ♙e1 51.♜e4 ♜c5+ 52.♜d5 ♜e6 53.♜e4 ♜g7 54.♜f3 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

23.♖c7 ♙e4

23...♙f3 was slightly more accurate: 24.h3 ♜e5 25.♖f7 (could be a very unpleasant shock in time-trouble!) 25...♙c6 26.♖xf6 ♜f3+ 27.♜f1 ♙b5+ 28.♖e2 ♜d2+ 29.♜e1 and now Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022, was a draw just a little bit before things become clear! 29...♜f3+ is a repetition since 30.♜d1? loses to 30...♖ad8+, or 29...♜xb3 30.axb3 ♙xe2 31.♜xe2 ♖f8 32.♖xf8+ ♜xf8 33.♜c3 ♖e8 34.♜d3 ♖xe6 35.♜b5 a6 36.♜d4 with an equal endgame.

24.♜c3 ♙xc3! 25.bxc3 ♜e5 26.♖d1



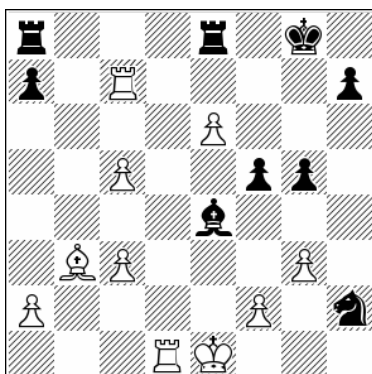
26...♜f3+

26...♖ac8? loses to the nice trick 27.♖xc8 ♖xc8 28.♖d8+! ♖xd8 29.e7+ (Heidenfeld).

26...f4 27.e7+ (27.♖d6 ♜h8 28.e7 ♖ab8 29.♖e6 ♜f3+ 30.♜f1 ♙d3+ 31.♜g2 ♜d2 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 27...♜h8 28.♙a4 ♖g8 29.c6 ♖ge8 (½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) was considered best by engines, although

for human players, a mess will continue long after the engines have abandoned the position as 0.00!

27.♟f1 ♞xh2+ 28.♟e1



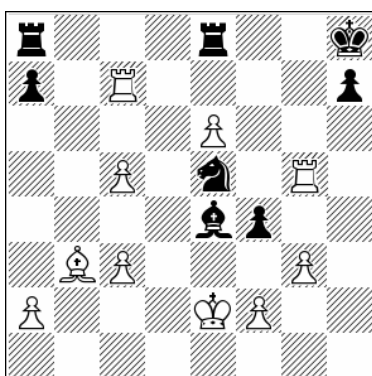
28...♞f3+

28...f4. The engines still want this move as early as possible to help defend Black's kingside by covering h7 with the bishop. Lasker's move is tremendously natural however, bringing the knight back into play with some gain of tempi. 29.♞dd7 ♟f5 30.gxf4 gxf4 31.♞g7+ ♟h8 32.♞gf7 ♟xe6 33.♞xh7+ ♟g8 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

29.♟e2 ♞e5 30.♞dd7! f4!

Again, the only moves by both sides. Black's last defends h7.

31.♞g7+ ♟h8 32.♞xg5



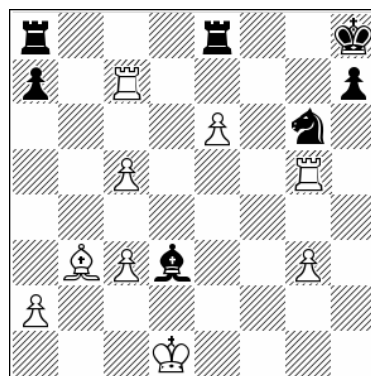
32...♟d3+?

This is a serious mistake, which could have cost Lasker the game (and with it, presumably, his world title). Instead, 32...♞g6 33.f3 ♟b1 34.g4 ♞f8 35.♞e5 ♞g6 (½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) was the 'safe' way to play though, to be honest, most humans would probably only be thinking of winning this position from the White side! 36.♞h5 ♞f8 37.♞e5 was the end of a few additional engine games.

33.♟d1 fxc3 34.fxc3

34.♞xe5? gxf2 and 34.f4? ♞g8! both win for Black.

34...♞g6



It's not easy at first glance to understand why throwing in the bishop check on d3 harmed Lasker's chances so much. However, from e4 the bishop covered both d5 (an invasion stepping point for the white rook) and c6 (holding back the advance of the c-pawn). On d3, the bishop performs no such useful function and chasing the white king to the back rank is of no value without any available pieces to exploit it.

35.♞d5?

Returning the compliment. White is winning, albeit in a line one can hardly expect any human to find over the board (especially in time-trouble, as was probably the case here) after 35.c6 ♟e4 36.♞f7 ♞e7 (36...♟xc6 37.♞h5 ♞f8 38.♞h4! when there is no defence to the threat of e7 and avoiding the trick 38.e7?? ♞xe7 39.♞xe7 ♟f3+) 37.c7 ♟g6 38.♞xg6 ♞xg6 (if 38...hxg6, 39.♟a4 wins) 39.♟d5 ♞ac8 40.♟b7 and wins.

35...♟e4 36.♞d6

36.♞dd7 ♞f8 forces the awkward 37.♞e7.

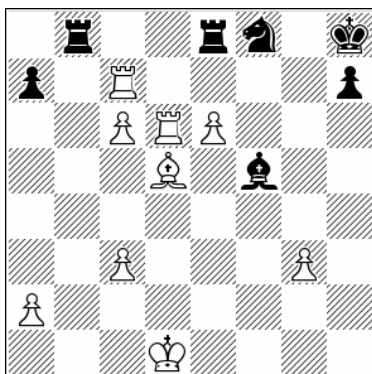
36...♟f5

36...♞e7 is the engine preference and it is indeed very natural to barricade the e-pawn: 37.♞dd7 ♞ae8 38.♞xa7 ♟g7 39.♞xe7+ ♞xe7 40.♞xe7+ ♞xe7 41.♟d2 ♟c6 42.a4 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

37.♟d5 ♞ab8?!

Simpler was 37...♞ac8 38.♞xc8 ♞xc8 for example 39.c6 ♟g7 40.♞d7+ ♟f6 41.♞xh7 ♞e7 42.♞f7+ ♟e5 43.♞xe7 ♟xd5 44.♞xa7 ♟xc6 with a draw.

38.c6 ♞f8



39.♖b7!

39.e7 ♘g6 40.♞xa7 (40.♙f7?? ♞xe7 41.♙xg6 ♙g4+! Tarrasch) 40...♞b1+ 41.♙d2 ♞b2+ 42.♙c1 ♞b1+ draws.

39...♞bc8 40.e7

40.♞f7 ♙g4+ 41.♙c2 ♘xe6 42.c4 ♘c7 43.♞dd7 ♘xd5 44.♞xh7+ ♙g8 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

40...♘g6 41.♙f7 ♞xe7 42.♙xg6 ♙g4+ 43.♙c1 ♞e1+ 44.♙b2 hxg6 45.♞xg6 ♙f5 46.♞f6 ♙e4 47.♞xa7 ♞b1+ 48.♙a3 ♙xc6 ½-½

Game 7 – Queen’s Gambit Declined

Jose Raul Capablanca

Savielly Tartakower

London 1922

Savielly Tartakower was one of the most colourful figures in chess during the first half of the 20th century, living a fascinating and turbulent life, which saw him displaced by pogroms, revolutions and two world wars. Indeed, if one were able to commission any chess book one liked, a detailed biography of him would surely be high on the list.

He was also a very strong and extremely interesting player, although unfortunately he tends to be seen in anthologies largely in the role of punchbag to the greats.

This was a fascinating battle with Capablanca, which has been almost totally ignored in the literature of the game. References to Tartakower’s notes are to his best games collection, originally published in two volumes, but now available in a single-volume Dover paperback edition. The only other place we have seen the game annotated was the tournament

book, but unfortunately the latter was a rather wretched affair, produced some years after the event, with very sketchy notes by the veteran Maroczy – he managed to cover this game in only just over one page!

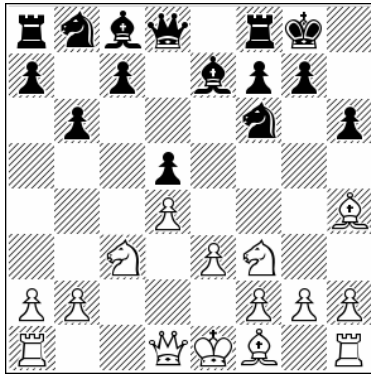
1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 d5 3.c4 e6 4.♘c3 ♙e7 5.♙g5 0-0 6.e3 h6 7.♙h4 b6

This now commonplace plan of development first appears in the database from the game Kostic-Showalter, Georgetown 1915, but Tartakower was the first to play the line regularly at the highest level, first of all meeting 8.cxd5 with 8...exd5 (as in this game) and then later with 8...♘xd5. 8...♘xd5 is particularly associated with the Russian player Igor Bondarevsky who both played and analysed it extensively, though Ilya Rabinovich and Vladimir Makogonov both played it before him in Soviet competitions.

Black’s eternal difficulty in queen’s pawn openings is to find active development for the light-squared bishop. The plan of ...b6 followed by ...♙b7 places it on the long diagonal, which might eventually be opened by ...dxc4. White’s next move crosses this by hammering a black pawn onto d5 to keep the long diagonal closed. 8.cxd5 also half-opens the c-file, revealing a potentially soft square on c6 (no longer defended by a pawn on b7) which might be exploited by ♞c1 and ♘e5. Black’s next opening goal is to cover the weakness on c6, by achieving the freeing central break ...c5. 7...b6 has the additional point of supporting this advance, allowing Black to recapture with a pawn on c5 after dxc5.

8.cxd5 exd5

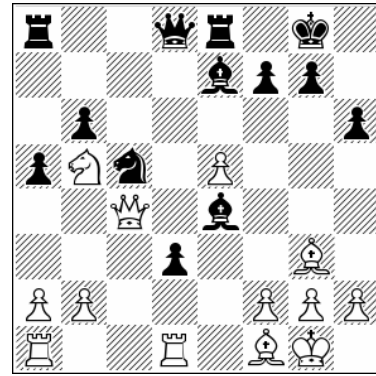
Tartakower later refined the 7...b6 system with 8...♘xd5 (first played by Vukovic against Sämisch in 1922), offering the exchange of a pair of minor pieces to ease Black’s position – a typical Queen’s Gambit stratagem also seen in the Lasker variation (7...♘e4 instead of 7...b6).



9. ♖b3

A subtle prophylactic idea from Capablanca to hinder the natural flow of Black's play starting with the typical ...c5; it is, however, slightly mistimed. The threat of capturing on f6 requires Black's light-squared bishop to defend the d5-pawn. If the bishop were to be developed to b7, then after ...c5, dxc5 Black would be unable to recapture with the b-pawn and Capablanca's 9. ♖b3 would have forced Black to recapture on c5 with a piece and accept an isolated queen's pawn. However, Tartakower exploits another development possibility to demonstrate the downsides of the early 9. ♖b3.

9. ♗e2 is the engines' favourite, delaying ♖b3 until Black has committed the light-squared bishop to b7: 9... ♖bd7 (9... ♗e6 10. ♖e5 (10.0-0 ♖bd7 11. ♗g3 ♖e4 12. ♗b5 was another logical suggestion from the engines, eyeing the sensitive c6-square left undefended by Black's light-squared bishop) 10... ♖fd7 11. ♗xe7 ♖xe7 12. ♖d3 was Matthew's favourite line for White, intending ♖f4 targeting the bishop on e6 and to which Stockfish gave a grudging assent!) 10.0-0 ♗b7 11. ♖b3 (here it is: the queen is only played to b3 once the light-squared bishop has been committed to b7!) 11...c5 12. ♖fd1 ♗e8 13. ♖e5 cxd4 14. exd4 ♖xe5 (concrete play from Black requiring a large amount of very precise calculation) 15. dxe5 ♖d7 16. ♗g3 ♖c5 17. ♖c2 d4 18. ♖b5 ♗e4 19. ♖c4 d3 20. ♗f1 a5



analysis diagram

21. ♖c7. One had to blink a few times before understanding this: it catches one completely by surprise! 21... ♖d7 (21... ♖xc7 22. e6) 22. h3 ♗f5 23. ♖xe8 ♖xe8 24. ♗f4 ♖d8 25. b3 ♖e6 26. ♗e3 b5 27. ♖c3 ♗b4 28. ♖b2 ♖d5 29. ♖ab1 ♖d4 30. ♗xd4 ♖xd4 31. ♖xd4 ♖xd4 32. g4 ♗e4 33. f3 ♗h7 34. ♖bc1 g5 35. ♖c8+ ♖g7 36. ♖c7 ♖g8 37. ♖c8+ ♖g7 38. ♖c7 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

9... ♗e6

A strong move from Tartakower that Capablanca perhaps had not expected. It enhances the freeing ...♖e4 (initiating the exchange of a couple of sets of minor pieces) by opposing the bishop and the white queen on the a2-g8 diagonal. It also negates one of the intentions of ♖b3: to hinder hanging pawns positions (after ...c5, dxc5 ...bxc5) by the pressure of a white queen against a bishop on b7.

After 9... ♗e6, the engines consider Black's position to be without problems.

10. ♖d1 c6

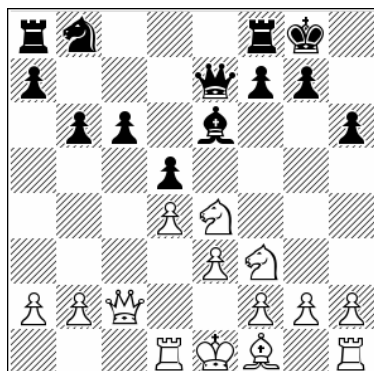
A slightly strange move from Tartakower, as ...♖e4 can be played without further support of the d5-pawn: 10... ♖e4 11. ♗xe7 ♖xe7 12. ♖e5 (12. ♖xd5 ♖d8 13. ♗c4 b5 is the typical, but still lovely, tactical refutation: 14. ♖xb5 c6) 12... ♖xc3 13. ♖xc3 c5 was Stockfish's simple choice leading to a quick draw against Dragon.

10...c5 11. ♗e2 c4 was Dragon's more adventurous preference. Releasing the central tension with ...c4 is always a double-edge decision but gaining some tempi to help along the queenside initiative is always handy! 12. ♖c2 ♖c6 13. 0-0 ♖c7 14. ♗xf6 ♗xf6 15. b3 cxb3 16. ♖xb3 with an equal but unbalanced game in Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

11. ♖c2

Capablanca retreats the queen to dissuade Black from venturing the freeing ...♗e4. However, Black has some small tactics to help him out.

11...♗e4 12. ♕xe7 ♖xe7 13. ♗xe4



13...dxe4

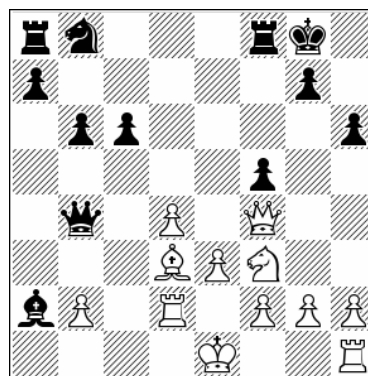
A risky choice from Tartakower when the clever 13...♕f5 – which he doesn't mention in his annotations – would have ensured him an equal game. It is conceivable, however, that Tartakower was focused on dragging Capablanca into a complicated struggle, instead of letting the game take a quiet positional path.

13...♕f5 14. ♗e5 ♕xe4 15. ♕d3 ♕xd3 16. ♗xd3 ♖c8 17. 0-0 ♗d7 18. ♖a4 ♖c7 19. ♗d2 ♗f6 20. ♖fd1 c5 21. dxc5 bxc5 22. ♗f4 ♖b8 23. ♖c2 d4 24. exd4 cxd4 25. ♖b1 ♗d7 26. h3 (26. ♖xd4 ♖xd4 27. ♖xd4 ♖xb2) 26...♖bd8 and Black held comfortably in Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

14. ♖xe4 ♖b4+ 15. ♗d2

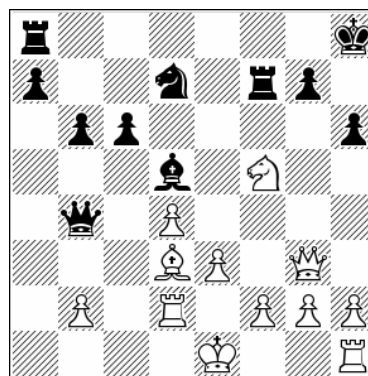
15. ♖d2 was much stronger. One feels sure that an attack-minded player like Alekhine would have played this, as Black is forced to denude the kingside of piece protection to restore the material balance, while White keeps the knight within striking distance of Black's kingside: 15...♕xa2 (15...♗d7 doesn't work as well as against 15. ♗d2 as it's trivial for White to get all the queenside pawns defended: 16. a3 ♗f6 17. ♖c2 ♖e7 18. ♕c4 1-0 (75) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 16. ♕d3 f5 (16...g6, as played in the game against 15. ♗d2, is much less effective. Black's kingside is bereft of piece cover and he has no response to a direct attack: 17. h4 ♕c4 18. ♕xc4 ♖xc4 19. ♖f4 f6 (19...♗h7 20. h5 g5 21. ♗xg5+ hxg5 22. ♖f5+ ♗h6 23. ♖f6+ ♗h7 24. h6 ♖g8 25. ♖f5+ ♖g6 26. d5 f6 27. ♖e6 and Black's useless

queenside pieces cannot prevent the decisive ♖f7) 20. ♖xh6 ♖f7 21. ♖h3 1-0 (66) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 17. ♖f4 and now:



analysis diagram

A) 17...♕d5 is recommended by Tartakower, claiming that 'the attack has passed into Black's hands'. Tartakower's reasoning is clearly based on the observation that 18. 0-0 is impossible due to 18...♕xf3 and one imagines that Capablanca's choice of 15. ♗d2 was influenced by the same consideration. The refutation is not easy to spot or visualise from afar. 18. ♗h4 is, however, already decisive according to the engines, although it requires some impressive whole board vision to demonstrate why (18. ♕xf5 ♗d7 completes Tartakower's analysis and is indeed assessed as good compensation for the pawn by the engines; 18. ♗e5 followed by ♖g1 and g4 was the move that popped into Matthew's head when reading Tartakower's annotations and it is indeed also strong, though not as powerful as Stockfish's and Dragon's choice)! 18...♗d7 19. ♗xf5 ♗h8 20. ♖g3 ♖f7



analysis diagram

21. ♖d6. A lovely manoeuvre! The attack on g7 makes sure that ...♖xd6, ♗xd6 attacks something by luring the rook to f7! 21...♖a5

22.♖h4 (threatening ♖g6+ and also defending g2) 22...♞e8 (22...♞xf2 23.b4 ♞a1+ (23...♞f6 24.♞xf6 ♞a1+ 25.♙e2 ♞xh1 26.♞f4 (threatens ♞d1, trapping the black queen) 26...♞a1 (26...♞f8 27.♖g6+) 27.b5 is very unpleasant for Black. For example, 27...cxb5 28.♖g6+ ♖g8 29.♗e7+ wins a piece... or indeed gives forced mate as Stockfish points out!) 24.♙xf2 ♞xh1 25.♞xd7) 23.♞a3. A fantastic final point, forcing the exchange of queens and thus allowing White to castle and remain an extra pawn up: 23...♞xa3 24.bxa3 ♞f6 25.♖g6+ ♖g8 26.0-0 ♗e4 27.♗c4+ ♖h7 28.♖f4 g5 29.♗e2 1-0 (83) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022;

B) 17...♗d7 18.0-0 ♗d5 19.♞c2 ♞b3 20.♞d1 ♞ae8 21.♖h4 ♞e4 22.♞g3 f4 23.exf4 ♞exf4 24.♖g6 ♞xf2 25.♗e7+ ♖h8 26.♞g6 ♞xg2+ 27.♞xg2 ♗xg2 28.♖g6+ ♖g8 29.♗c4+ ♞xc4 30.♞xc4 ♞f6 31.♗e7+ ♖f7 32.♞e1 ♗f3 33.♞c3 ♞f4 34.♗xc6 ♗xc6 35.♞xc6 ♞xd4 36.♞e3 1-0 (83) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022. A game which was mostly repeated multiple times by Stockfish, Leela and Dragon!

15...♞xb2

15...♗d7 is a lovely engine refinement, delaying recapturing material to bolster Black's kingside defences (15...♗xa2? 16.b3! is not good for Black and could be another reason Capablanca played 15.♗d2). White can try to defend his material advantage, but Black is relying on rapid central counterplay with ...c5. 15...♗d7

Now a number of White options were tested in our engine games:

A) 16.♗d3 ♖f6 (covers the kingside without the weakening ...g6) 17.♞xc6 ♞xb2 18.0-0 ♞fc8 19.♞d6 ♞xa2 with a double-edged game which led to draws between the engines. Black's queenside pawns are not easy to advance but if they get going...! 20.♗e4 ♞d5 21.♗xf6+ gxf6 22.♞f4 ♞g5 23.♞e4 f5 24.♞e5 ♞g7 25.♞b5 a5 26.d5 ♞c5 27.♞xb6 ♞xd5 28.e4 fxe4 29.♗xe4 ♞xd1 30.♞xd1 ♞f8 31.♞xa5 ♞g5 32.♞c3 ♞c8 33.♞d4 ♞c5 ½-½ (87) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022;

B) 16.♞b1 c5 17.dxc5 ♗xc5 18.a3 ♞a4 19.♗e2 g6 20.b4 ♗b3 21.♗xb3 ♗xb3 22.♞d4 ♞xa3 23.♞d3 ♗a2 24.♞xa3 ♗xb1 25.0-0 ♗e4 26.f3 ♗d5 27.♞d1 ♗e6

28.f4 a5 29.♗f3 ♞a6 30.bxa5 h5 31.♞da1 ♖g7 32.axb6 ♞xb6 ½-½ (41) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022;

C) 16.b3 ♗d5 17.♞f4 c5 18.♗e2 (18.♗d3 cxd4 19.0-0 ♗c5 20.♗f5 ♞ad8 21.♞xd4 ♞xd4 22.exd4 ♗e6 23.♗xe6 ♗xe6 was Leela's line, again with a slight disadvantage but a lovely target on d4 to pound away at!) 18...cxd4 19.0-0 ♗c5 20.♗c4 d3 21.♗xd3 ♗xd3 22.♞xd3 ♗xc4 23.♞xc4 ♞xc4 24.bxc4 ♞fc8 was Stockfish's route to a holdable disadvantage! 25.♞c1 ♞c5 26.♞d5 ♞c7 27.g3 ♞ac8 28.♞d4 b5;

D) 16.♞c2 c5 17.♞c3 ♞a4 18.♗c4 cxd4 19.♞xd4 ♗xc4 20.♞xc4 ♗c5 21.♞b1 ♞ac8 22.♞xa4 ♗xa4 23.♙e2 b5 24.♞hc1 ♞xc1 25.♞xc1 ♗xb2 26.♗b3 ♗c4 27.♞d1 ♞c8 28.♞d5 ♗b6 29.♞c5 ♞xc5 30.♗xc5 ♖f8 31.e4 ♖e7 32.♗d3 ♗d6 33.♗d4 ½-½ Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

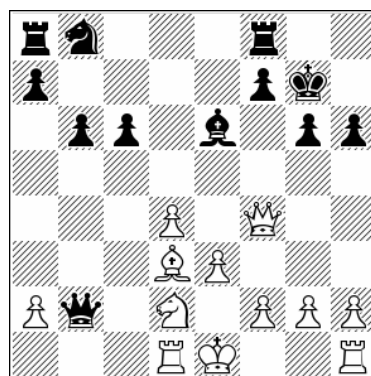
16.♗d3 g6

An irritating moment for White as ...♗f5 is threatened, winning a piece – one of the advantages of having the bishop a bit closer to the black kingside than after 15.♞d2!

17.♞f4

17.♞h4 ♖g7 18.0-0 ♗d7 19.f4 was a plan that really appealed (it was also chosen by Leela), but Dragon somehow seems to run out of steam! 19...♞a3 20.♗f3 f5 21.♞g3 ♞d6 22.h4 h5 23.♗e5 ♗d5 24.♞g5 ♞ae8 25.♞d2 ♞e6 26.♞fd1 ♞e7 and Black had everything covered, ½-½ (47) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

17...♖g7



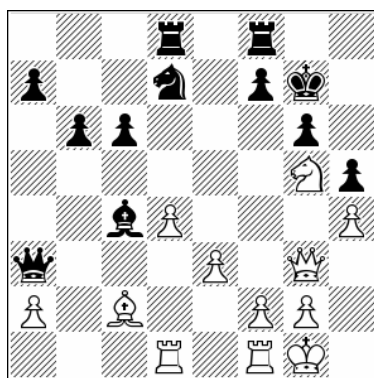
18.h4

Slightly ironically, one suspects that Capablanca rejected 15.♞d2 because he would be unable to castle easily, but after 15.♗d2, he ignores several opportunities to put the king to safety. One

suspects that – initially at least – Capablanca missed the tactical resource that Tartakower uses to keep the white pieces at bay without committing any additional forces to its defence. 18.♖e5+ ♔h7 19.h4 was the most successful attempt, poor Leela being on the receiving side of a pummelling from Stockfish!

(19.♖d6 ♘d7 20.0-0 ♖xa2 21.♖xc6 looks very similar to the line we showed after 15...♘d7, but with a slightly looser black kingside. The engines assess this as a pleasant white advantage but were unable to make any progress against strong defence: 21...♖a3 22.♘c4 ♖b4 23.♘d6 ♖ad8 24.♘e4 ♙f5 25.♖c7 ♙xe4 26.♙xe4 ♘f6 27.♖b1 ♖d6 28.♖xd6 ♖xd6 29.♙f3 h5 30.♖fc1 ♖fd8 31.g3 ♘g7 32.♙f1 ♖8d7 ½-½ (59) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022)

19...♘d7 20.♖g3 ♖a3 21.♙c2 h5 22.0-0 ♘g7 23.♘e4 ♖ad8 24.♘g5 ♙c4

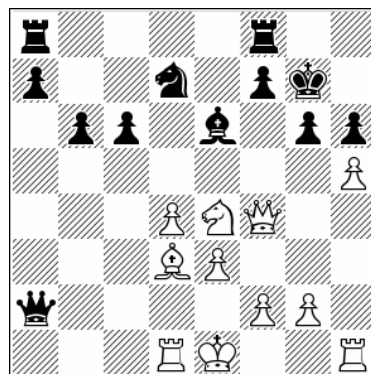


analysis diagram

25.♙d3. A move that stops one in one's tracks! What is White's idea? 25...♙xd3 26.e4. There it is! 26...♖xa2 27.♖xd3 ♘f6 28.f4 ♘h7 29.f5 ♘xg5 30.♖xg5 ♖c4 31.♖dd1 ♖e2 32.e5 ♖g4 33.♖e3 ♖xh4 34.♖f4 ♖g5 35.♖df1. Astonishingly, Stockfish is over +6 at this point (an astronomical advantage) whereas Leela still feels that Black is fine (though not wholly comfortable)!

35...f6 36.♖e4 ♖d7 37.fxg6 f5 38.♖xc6 ♖xd4 39.♖a1 (a gorgeous switch!) 39...♖a8 (39...a5 40.♖c7+ ♘xg6 41.♖xb6+ ♘h7 42.♖xd4 is the evil point! Quite astonishing tactics!; 39...♖xf4 40.♖xa7+ ♘h8 41.♖h7+ ♘g8 42.♖e6+) 40.♖c7+ ♘xg6 41.♖c6+ ♘f7 42.♖xa8 ♖xf4 43.♖xa7+ 1-0 (53) Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022.

18...♘d7 19.♘e4 ♖xa2 20.h5



At first sight, this looks very logical and promising for White, but a simple tactical point turns the position in Black's favour. The engines were begging for kingside castling on multiple occasions already and there's a reason for that!

20...g5 21.♖g3?

A huge mistake according to the engines.

21.♖d6 ♖d5 22.♖g3 is Stockfish's best shot, when it managed to save the white position after 22...f5 23.♘c3 ♖b3 24.♖c1 ♘f6 25.♖d6 ♙d7 26.0-0. One cannot say, however, that one would necessarily guess at a draw from the ensuing moves! 26...a5 27.♖c2 b5 28.d5 ♖b4 29.♖xb4 axb4 30.dxc6 bxc3 31.cxd7 b4 32.♙xf5 ♘f7 33.g4 ♘e7 34.♖d1 ♖a5 35.♖b1 ♖b5 36.♖xc3 ♖xf5 37.♖xb4 ♖d5 38.♖c6 ♘xd7 39.♖a6 and Black did not have enough to convert the extra piece, ½-½ (46) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

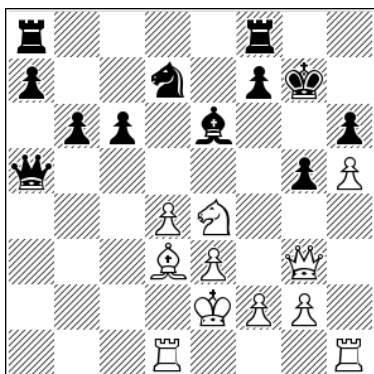
21.♘xg5 ♖a5+ is the venomous trick!

21...♖a5+

A nervous check. By a strange twist, Capablanca landed himself in trouble by avoiding kingside castling, but Tartakower ruins things by forcing White to lose castling rights!

21...f5 was really strong. Capablanca would probably have sacrificed on g5 but the engines prefer ignominious retreat! 22.♘xg5 (22.♘d2 ♖a3 23.♙e2 f4 24.exf4 ♖xg3 25.fxg3 gxf4 0-1 (56) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 22...hxg5 23.♖xg5+ ♘f7 24.h6 (24.♙xf5 once again fails to a nasty retreat check on the fifth rank: 24...♖a5+) 24...♖g8 25.♖h5+ ♖g6 26.h7 ♖h8 27.♖c1 ♖d5 28.♘e2 ♘f6 29.♖h2 ♘g7 30.♖c7+ ♙d7 31.♖xa7 ♖xh7 and all the danger is past, 0-1 (68) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

22.♘e2



22...f5?

A strong idea on the previous move turns into a blunder one move later!

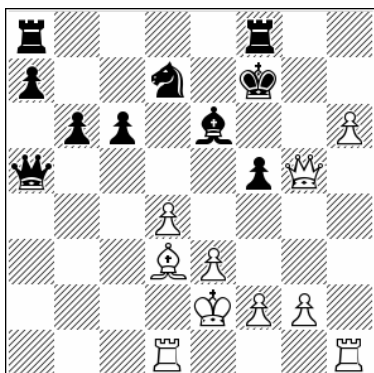
22...♖d5 was the engine preference, reconnecting the queen with the rest of Black's position. Black's extra pawn and passed queenside pawns give chances, but the weakened kingside and exposed queen keep the chances reasonably balanced.

23.♖c1 ♕f5 24.f3 b5 25.♖hd1 a5 26.♗d6 ♕xd3+ 27.♖xd3 ♖a6 28.e4 ♗e6 29.♖dc3 c5 30.♗xb5 ♗b6 31.♗c7 cxd4 32.♖3c2 ♗b8 33.f4 ♖f6 34.fxg5 hxg5 35.♗xg5+ ♗h8 36.♗b5 d3+ 37.♗xd3 ♖g8 38.g3 ♗e5 39.♗b5 ♗xb5+ ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

23.♗xg5 hxg5

23...♗h8 is recommended by the engines, which shows how bad things have got all of a sudden! 24.♗f3 (24.♗xe6 ♖a2+ 25.♗f1 ♗xe6 26.♖h4 followed by e4 is also very strong) 24...♖f7 25.♗f4 ♖f6 26.♗e5 ♖a3 27.♗g6+ ♗h7 28.♗c7 is horrific for Black! 1-0 (53) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

24.♗xg5+ ♗f7 25.h6



What is the difference with the inclusion of ...♗a5+ and ♗e2? Simply, the queen on a5 is disconnected from the rest of Black's position

(the bishop on e6 is now loose, for example, whereas it was protected when the black queen was on a2), with no way to get back with gain of tempo (...♗a2+ is met by the counter-hit ♖d2). The rapid threat of ♗g7+ and h6-h7-h8(♗) is very difficult for Black to meet actively.

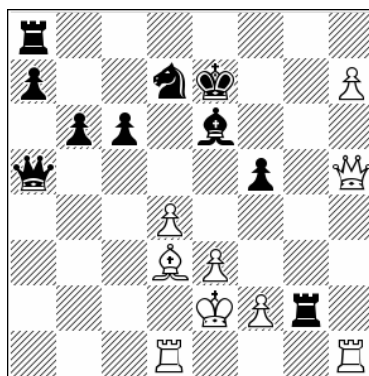
25...♖g8 26.♗h5+ ♗e7

26...♖g6 27.h7 ♖h8 (27...♗f6 28.h8=♗+ was the very cheeky point!) worked without ...♗a5+ and ♗e2 included. What's the difference now? 28.♖a1. This idea again: the latent possibility of ♖xa7 stops Black from involving the knight in the defence of Black's king: 28...♗d5 (28...♗c3 29.g4 ♗b2+ 30.♗f3 is again very powerful for White though you'd appreciate an engine at your side to work through all the complications) 29.g4 ♗f6 30.♖hg1 ♖g5 (30...♗f7 31.♗h4+ ♗g7 32.gxf5 ♖xg1 33.♖xg1+ ♗f8 34.♖g4 ♖a2+ 35.♗f3 ♗d5+ 36.♗e4 ♗d6 37.♗d8+ ♗e8 38.♗g5 ♖xh7 39.♗g8+ ♗e7 40.♗xh7+ 1-0 (61) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 31.♗h6+ ♖g6 32.♗h4+ ♗f7 33.♗h5 ♗f6 34.♖xa7+. Here it is! 34...♗d7 35.♗xf5 ♗xf5 36.♗xf5 ♖xh7 37.♗xd7 ♗g8 38.♖a8+ 1-0 (49) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

27.h7 ♖xg2

Tartakower stays consistent and chooses confusion... and Capablanca stumbles again.

27...♖h8 28.♗g5+ ♗d6 29.♗f4+ ♗e7 30.♖h6 and we can feel that Stockfish is teeing up some tactics! For example: 30...♖ae8 31.d5 ♗xd5 32.♖xe6+ ♗xe6 (32...♗xe6 33.♗c4) 33.♗xf5 ♖a2+ 34.♖d2 ♖a6+ 35.♗f3 and there is no way to deal with the ideas of ♖xd7+, ♗d6+ or ♗g5+ (to mention but a few!).



28.♗f1

A clever idea, stepping out of the threat of ...♗a2+ with tempo, but Tartakower finds a

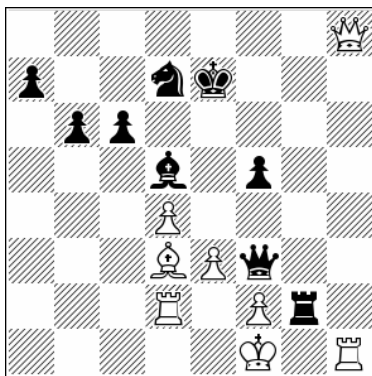
way to bring his pieces alarmingly close to the white king. The intermezzo 28.♖a1 was still cleverer, hitting Black's coordination. Only after 28...♖b4 (28...♖c3 29.♖ac1 ♖b2+ 30.♖c2 ♖b3 31.h8=♖ ♖xh8 32.♖xh8 ♖xf2+ 33.♔xf2 ♖xd3 34.♖g7+ ♔d8 35.♖g5+ ♔c7 36.♖b2 1-0 (50) Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022) should White fall back on Capablanca's 29.♔f1 when ...♖d5-f3 is impossible: 29...♔d5 30.h8=♖ ♖xh8 31.♖xh8 is terrible for Black. There is even ♖xa7+ in the position if Black's king flees to the queenside.

31...♖g8 32.♖h4+ (32.♖h7+ ♔d8 33.♖g1 ♖b3 34.♖xg8+ ♔xg8 35.♖xf5 ♔d5 36.♔e2 ♖c3 37.♖d1 ♔e7 38.e4 ♔c4 39.♖g5+ ♔d6 40.♖f4+ ♔e7 41.♔xc4 ♖xc4+ 42.♔g2 1-0 (67) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 32...♔e8 33.♖g1 ♖c3 34.♖d1 ♖xg1+ 35.♔xg1 ♖b3 36.♔e2 ♔c4 37.♔h5+ ♔f7 38.e4 1-0 (60) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

28...♖d5 29.h8=♖

We are back into drawing range for the engines, although both Komodo and Stockfish still award White an appreciable advantage.

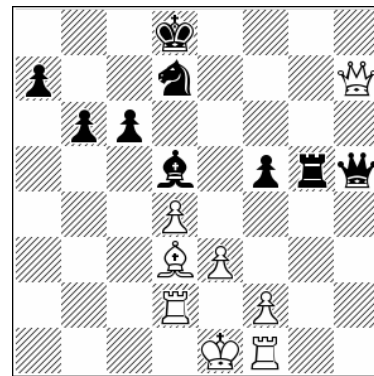
29...♖xh8 30.♖xh8 ♖f3 31.♖d2 ♔d5



One can imagine feeling a touch nervous as White, especially in the throes of time trouble! Capablanca does extremely well to keep his position safe:

32.♔e1 ♖g8

32...♖g5 33.♖h7+ ♔d8 34.♖f1 ♖h5



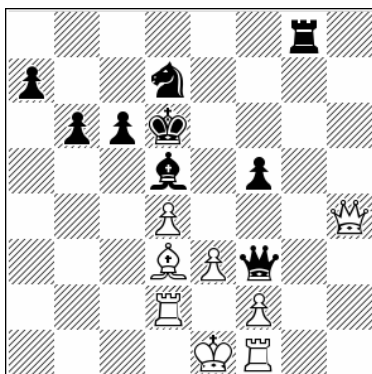
analysis diagram

was the first choice of both Stockfish and Komodo. It's not an obvious decision by any means, but it indicates that neither engine expects Black to achieve anything against White's king and that the best path is to head early for the queen exchange, making use of spare tempi at the start of the endgame to push the queenside pawns as far as possible. Such a decision is a source of agony in a practical game, requiring the Black player to weigh up many difficult practical factors: the likelihood of the white player blundering with the queens on, the danger of Black's position with queens on and the leeway required for an endgame to be acceptable for Black! It's the type of decision one takes well when in form, and that always goes wrong when not!

35.♖xh5 ♖xh5 36.♖c2 (36.f3 a5 37.♖g2 a4 38.♔d2 b5 39.♔c3 a3 40.♖gg1 ♔f6 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 36...a5 37.f3 ♔c7 38.e4 fxe4 39.fxe4 ♔b3 40.♖c3 a4 41.♖g1 b5 42.d5 ♔c4 43.♔e2 ♖h4 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022 (44.♔xc4 bxc4 45.♖xc4 ♔e5 liquidates).

33.♖h4+ ♔d6 34.♖f1

34.♖h2+ f4 35.♖g1 ♖xg1+ 36.♖xg1 a5 37.♔e2 ♖e4 38.♔d3 ♖f3 39.♖h2 a4 and Black's counterplay is strong while White's pieces are passive, ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.



34...♙e6

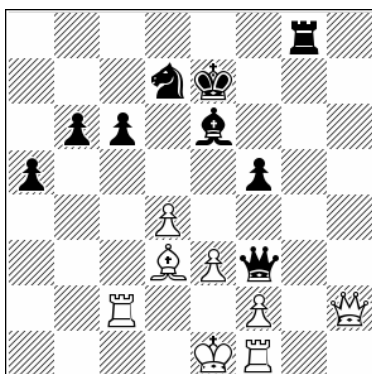
In his annotations, Tartakower made something of a virtue in leaving the king in the centre, but the engines – just as with Capablanca's king earlier – are screaming at him to put the king to relative safety on the queenside.

34...♙c7 35.♞c2 f4 36.♙d2 fxe3+ 37.fxe3 ♞g2+ 38.♙c3 ♞xc2+ 39.♙xc2 ♞xe3 40.♞e1 was agreed drawn in Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

35.♞c2

35.♙e2 ♞e4 36.♞h2+. The engines hurry to nudge Black's king away from queenside safety and force the exchange of rooks. Once the rooks are exchanged, Black has no way to stop the white queen from harassing the black king in perpetuity: 36...♙e7 (36...f4 37.f3 ♞f5 38.e4 ♞g5 39.♞h1 a5 40.♞h6 was also very strong for White, 1-0 (98) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 37.♞g1 ♞xg1+ 38.♞xg1 ♙f6 39.♞g7+ ♙f7 40.♙c4 ♞h1+ 41.♙e2 ♙d5 42.♞c2 ♙e8 43.♞e5+ 1-0 (80) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

35...a5 36.♞h2+ ♙e7



37.♙e2

A somewhat slow move, played to push the queen away from f3 and reduce the power of ...♞g2. However, while the queens are on the

board, Black's king will potentially suffer, no matter how slowly White plays.

37.♞c7 is the really nasty engine move, making Black regret not having headed for the sanctuary of the b7-square: 37...♙d5 38.♞b2 (threatening ♞xb6) 38...♙e8 39.♞e2 ♞g6 40.♙d2 ♙e7 41.♞fe1 (to force through e4!) 41...♙e4 42.♙a6 c5 43.♙c8 (Black's king is attacked from every angle!) 43...♙c6 44.♙c1 ♞d5 45.♙xd7 ♙xd7 46.♞c2 ♞d6 47.♞xd6+ ♙xd6 48.dxc5+ bxc5 49.♞d1+ ♙c6 50.♞cd2 with a position considered winning by the engines, 1-0 (92) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

37...♞e4 38.♙d2 c5

Tartakower rolls the dice again and plays to frighten Capablanca with unexpected pressure against the white king.

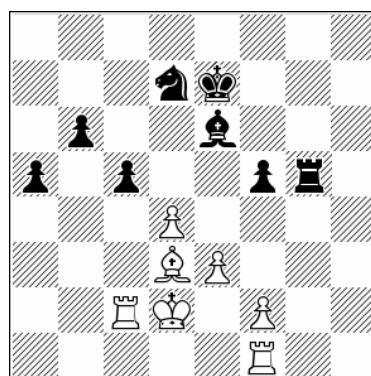
39.♙d3

39.♞h7+ ♙d8 40.♙c1 is a lovely idea from Stockfish. 40...♙b3 (40...cxd4 41.♞d1 is the point! It's Black's king that feels unsafe now) 41.♞c3 ♞d5 42.♞h4+ ♙c8 43.♙a6+ ♙b8 44.♞f4+ ♙a7 45.♙d3 c4 46.♞c7+ ♙a8 47.♙xc4 ♙xc4 48.♞xc4 ♞xc4 49.♞xc4 1-0 (72) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

39...♞g2 40.♞h4+ ♞g5

40...♙d6 41.dxc5+ ♙xc5 42.♞b1 is terrible for Black. The queens have to be exchanged.

41.♞xg5+ ♞xg5



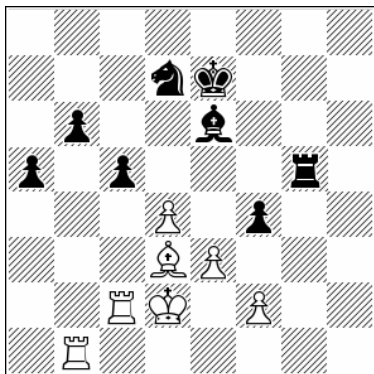
42.♞b1

Capablanca's sealed move.

42.♞h1 is the engine favourite, looking to harass the black king and the light-squared bishop from h7 and h6. It led to a number of victories: 42...♙b3 (42...♞g6 43.♙e2 cxd4 44.exd4 ♙f6 45.♞c6 ♙d5 46.♞h7+ ♙xh7 47.♞xg6 ♙f6 48.♙xf5 1-0 (86) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022)

43.♖h7+ ♔d8 44.♗h8+ ♕c7 45.♖c1 a4 46.♗h6 ♘g8
47.♗a1 c4 48.♙c2 b5 49.♗b1 a3 50.♗xb5 a2 51.♗a6
♗g1 52.♗a7+ ♔d6 53.♗ba5 ♙e6 54.♗5a6+ ♕e7 55.d5
a1=♗ 56.♗xa1 ♗xa1 57.♗xa1 ♙xd5 58.♙xf5 1-0 (76)
Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

42...f4 ½-½



... and after another aggressive reply from Tartakower, Capablanca offered a draw! That's slightly shocking in a couple of ways! First of all, one would expect the white player to analyse this move during an adjournment. Secondly, although it looks a touch scary, the engine is at +6 from the moment it is played.

43.exf4 ♖d5 was Tartakower's line, but 44.♗e1 (threatening ♗xe6+ and ♙c4) 44...♗xd4 45.f5 wins on the spot!

43...♗g4 went down to defeat in one engine game: 44.dxc5 ♖xc5 45.♙e2 ♗xf4 46.♗xb6 ♗f5 47.♗b5 ♖d5+ 48.♕e1 ♖d7 49.♗xd5 ♙xd5 50.♗c7 ♔d6 51.♗a7 a4 52.♗xa4 1-0 (83) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

43...♗h5 looks best, but after 44.dxc5 ♖xc5 45.♙c4 ♙f5 46.♗e1+ ♕f8 47.♗b2 ♖e4+ 48.♕e3 ♗h6 49.♕d4 ♖c5 50.♗e5 it is clear that the win is just a matter of time, 1-0 (72) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

One suspects that games like this must have encouraged a prospective challenger like Alekhine (who was also playing in the tournament and thus saw the game first-hand) to believe that Capablanca was far from faultless. White played some excellent moves, but played too safely at key moments and seemed flustered as Tartakower kept playing aggressively. A really fun game!

Game 8 – Ruy Lopez

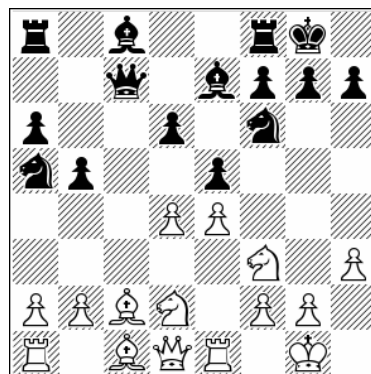
Emanuel Lasker

Edward Lasker

New York 1924 (6)

This monumental battle remains one of the most interesting ever played, which on the face of it is surprising. It should have been a mismatch – the 27-year World Champion, in one of his greatest-ever tournaments, with White against a minor master, who was one of the 'chopping blocks' of the event. But, as the game Lasker-Napier shows, lesser players sometimes found inspiration against the great man and here, Edward Lasker plays the game of his life and comes within an ace of a sensational victory.

1.e4 e5 2.♖f3 ♖c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♖f6 5.0-0 ♙e7 6.♗e1 b5 7.♙b3 0-0 8.c3 d6 9.h3 ♖a5 10.♙c2 c5 11.d4 ♗c7 12.♖bd2 cxd4 13.cxd4



13...♙d7

First played by Mikhail Chigorin in 1907, this line has never achieved great popularity although experienced Lopez experts like Nigel Short and Jeroen Piket have played it a number of times. For the engines, there are four reasonable moves in the position – 13...♖c6, 13...♙d7, 13...♗e8 and 13...exd4 – and 13...♙d7 is Stockfish's top option and Leela's second option (behind 13...♖c6) at the time of writing. 13...♙d7 is something of a halfway move. It completes the development of Black's minor pieces and connects the black rooks (allowing counterplay along the c-file with ...♗ac8 or ...♗fc8) but it's hard to identify any further intrinsic point to the move. Essentially, 13...♙d7 anticipates a future d5 from White; once that happens, the

bishop will be better-placed on the c8-h3 diagonal than biting against an e4/d5-pawn chain from b7. However, since the bishop doesn't put any pressure against White's centre from d7, White may be able to delay d5 and keep Black guessing about his intentions for longer.

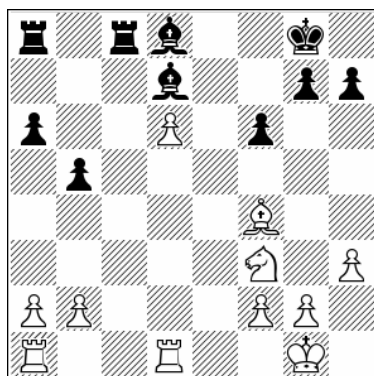
14.♟f1 ♞fc8

Black's idea of setting up quick pressure on the open c-file is a natural one and was much explored in later years, but usually with the queen's rook coming to c8. 14...♞fe8 15.b3 ♞ac8 is the engine's favourite set-up and it makes plenty of sense, using the queen's rook to pressure the c-file while the king's rook is poised for action if the centre were to be opened with ...exd4. 16.♟e3 ♟c6 17.♟b2 ♟f8 18.d5 ♟b4 19.♟b1 a5 20.a3 ♟a6 21.b4 ♞b7 22.♞b3 g6 23.♟c1 ♟c7 24.♟d2 a4 25.♞d1 ♟h5 26.♟h2 ♟g7 27.♞a2 ♟a8 28.g3 ♟b6 29.♟h4 ♟c4 30.♟xc4 ♞xc4 31.♟d3 ♞c7 32.♞f3 led to a typical Lopez structure with a slight white advantage, 1-0 (139) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

15.♞e2

A mysterious move in some ways. White could also protect the bishop on c2 with 15.♟e3 and what could be more natural than pointing the knight at the d5- and f5-squares? Lasker's plan however is to continue developing with ♟g3 and to support the centre with ♟e3 after ...♟c6.

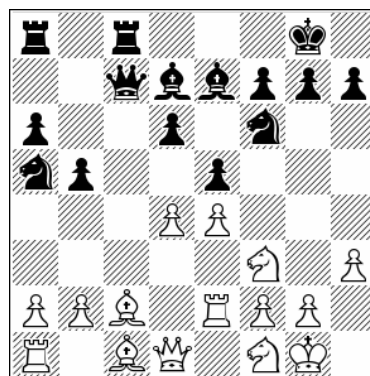
15.♟e3 ♟c6 16.♟d5 was assessed very optimistically at the start by Stockfish, but Dragon found a concrete path to a holdable position: 16...♟xd5 17.exd5 ♟b4 18.♟b1 ♟c2 19.♟xc2 ♞xc2 20.dxe5 ♞xd1 21.♞xd1 dxe5 22.♟xe5 ♟e8 23.♟f4 f6 24.♟f3 ♟d7 25.d6 ♟d8.



analysis diagram

White has an extra pawn but Black's two bishops provide sufficient compensation. The white knight is some way from posing any danger to the black position.

26.♟d4 ♟b6 27.♟e3 ♟xd4 28.♞xd4 ♞c4 29.♞xc4 bxc4 30.♞d1 ♞b8 31.♟d4 ♟f7 ½-½ (67) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.



15...♟h5?!

Edward Lasker shows the fighting spirit he will display all game! This sharp knight move dissuades ♟g3 and tries to exploit the white rook's unusual position on e2 with a future ...♟f4. 15...♟c6 was a more conventional approach, redeploying the offside knight on a5 and preparing to gain space on the queenside with an advance of the a- and b-pawns. 16.♟e3 a5 17.♟g3 ♞b7 18.♞d2 a4 19.♞c1 b4 20.♞e1 is another typical Ruy Lopez with a slight advantage for White 1-0 (150) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

16.dxe5

Emanuel Lasker accepts the challenge! 15...♟h5 has opened up some tactical possibilities for White based on the unprotected bishop on d7, but as we know from systems like the Marshall Gambit, winning a central pawn is sometimes the starting signal for increased black activity.

16...dxe5 17.♟xe5 ♟xh3

Black chooses the most violent, riposte. 17...♟e6 is the engine line and they barely see an advantage for White in the end:

18.♟f3 (18.♟d3 ♞d8 19.b3 ♟c4 20.♞e1 (hitting the knight on h5) 20...g6 21.♞f3 ♟f6 22.♞b1 ♟e5 23.♟xe5 ♟xe5 24.♟d3 ♟f4 25.♟e2 ♞ac8 (White's extra pawn counts for little in the face of Black's perfect mobilisation) 26.♟e3 ♟xe2+ 27.♞xe2 ♞c2 28.♟b6 ♞d7 29.♟a5 h5 30.♟h2 ♟f6 31.♟f3 g5

32.♔d2 ♖xa2 33.♙g5 ♜xe2 34.♞xe2 ♙c3 35.♞c2 b4 and Black had full compensation for the pawn. Actually, Black is slightly for preference, with the possibility of creating a passed pawn with ...a6-a5-a4 ½-½ (50) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 18...♞d8 19.♞e1 ♘c6 20.e5 (20.♔d2 ♘f4 21.♙xf4 ♜xf4 22.e5 ♘d4 23.♘xd4 ♜xd4 and once again Black has the two bishops and active pieces for the sacrificed pawn, ½-½ (30) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 20...♙b4 21.♔d2 ♘f4 (let the tactics commence!) 22.♞e4 ♙xd2 23.♘1xd2 ♘xe5 24.♘xe5 ♜xc2 25.♘df3 ♘d5 26.♞e2 ♜c7 27.♘g5 ♞e8 28.♞c1 ♜b7 29.♘xe6 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022. The game is dead equal after 29...♞xe6.

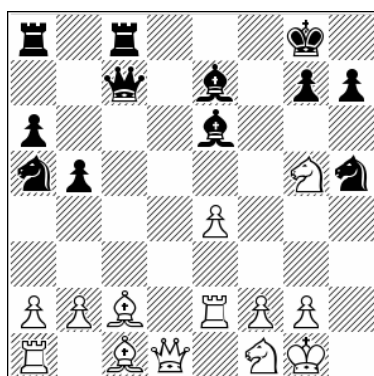
18.♘xf7

The desperados continue.

18...♙e6

18...♙g4 is what Black really wants to play, but 19.♞d5 is decisive. Don't dare capture that rook on e2! 19...♙xe2 20.♘h6+ ♔h8 21.♞g8+ ♞xg8 22.♘f7#.

19.♘g5



19...♙c4

Not the engines' favourite idea, but it's still a good move, harrying the white rook to stop White from consolidating his extra pawn.

Ed Lasker's choice continues the variation calculated at move 15, but he admitted that he had missed the reply and should have considered 19...♙xg5 20.♙xg5 ♞e5, which was the engine choice, hitting e5 and b2. The engines played out many games from this position, all of them ending in draws:

21.♙e3 ♘c4 22.♙b3 (22.b3 ♘xe3 23.♘xe3 ♘f4 is very good compensation for Black. ...♞g5 is coming, and the white kingside is missing an h-

pawn as protection) 22...♞d8 23.♞c2 ♞ac8 24.♞d1 ♞f8 25.♞d3 a5 (Black finds a fresh way to put pressure on White's position: ...a4 is coming) 26.♞d4 ♜xd4 27.♞xd4 a4 28.♙xc4 ♙xc4 29.♞e1 ♙xa2 30.♞a1 ♙f7 31.♞b4 ♞c4 32.♞xb5 ♞xe4 33.♞a5 ♞b8 34.♞1xa4 ♞xa4 35.♞xa4 ♙e8 36.♞a2 h6 was still an extra pawn for White, but little hope of converting it, ½-½ (52) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

20.♔d3

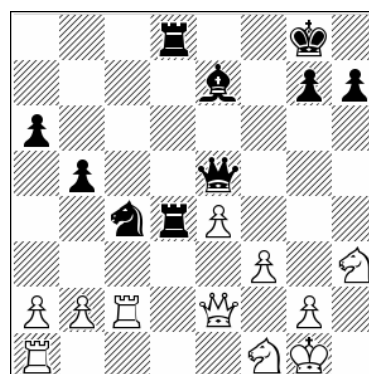
20.♞e1 is a clever idea as the knight on h5 is suddenly under attack from the queen on d1. The engines all headed for a forcing tactical line: 20...♘f4 (20...♙xf1?? 21.♞d5+) 21.b3 ♙e2 (uncovering the power of Black's major pieces against the bishop on c2) 22.♙xf4 ♙xd1 23.♙xc7 ♙xc2 24.♙xa5 ♙xg5. Once again, a position with an extra pawn for White but two bishops and active pieces for Black. The engines consider White to be a little better but it was never enough for more than a draw.

25.♘h2 ♙e7 26.♞e2 b4 27.♘f3 ♙d3 28.♞e3 ♙b5 29.♞ee1 ♞c2 30.♙b6 ♙e8 31.♘d4 ♞c3 32.♙a5 ♙f7 33.f3 ♞b8 34.♞ac1 ♙c5 35.♞xc3 ♙xd4+ 36.♞ce3 ♞b5 37.♙d8 ♞b8 38.♙a5 ♞b5 ½-½ (123) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

20...♞d8 21.♞c2

It's funny – and quite typical of analysing with engines – that such a sharp-looking position is actually balanced with multiple equivalent ways of playing: 21.♞e1 ♘f4 22.♙xc4+ ♞xc4 23.♙xf4 ♜xf4 24.♘h3 ♙xd1 25.♘xf4 ♞xa1 26.♞xa1 ♙f6 once again gives Black plenty for the pawn, ½-½ (37) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

21...♘f4 22.♙xf4 ♜xf4 23.♘h3 ♞e5 24.♙xc4+ ♘xc4 25.♞e2 ♞d4 26.f3 ♞ad8



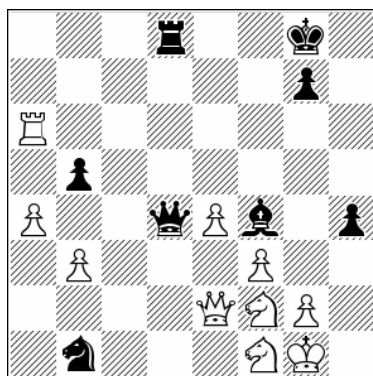
After a more or less forced sequence of moves, it's time to evaluate what both sides have achieved. White has been successful in grabbing a pawn and holding onto it. With the e4-pawn securely supported by the f3-pawn and the b2-pawn held by White's queen and rook, there is no obvious way for Black to regain the sacrificed material. However, on the positive side, Black can point to the activity of his pieces – doubled rooks on the d-file, a knight on c4 and the centralised black queen on e5 – and the plethora of dark square weaknesses in White's position, which Black is well-placed to exploit thanks to his unopposed dark-squared bishop. Perhaps Black's main worry is the instability of the active knight on c4 which White can chase back with b3 once the rook on a1 has been moved.

27.♖ac1

A logical idea, looking for b3 next move.

27.♗f2 was an alternative engine idea, preparing ♖d1 to exchange a pair of rooks and reduce one source of power in Black's position.

27...♔g5 28.♖d1 ♖xd1 29.♗xd1 ♗d4+ 30.♗f2 h5 31.a4 h4. Typical modern engine play, using the rook's pawn on one wing to secure a gain (pinning down White's dark squares on the kingside while taking away g3 from the white knight and creating it as an outpost for the black bishop) while the opponent is struggling to achieve something on the other wing. 32.b3 ♗a3. I (Matthew) didn't understand this one: e5 or d6 seemed the only logical places for the knight. What scope could the knight possibly have on a3? 33.♖c6 ♔f4 34.♖xa6 ♗b1.



analysis diagram

Aaah! There it is!

35.axb5 ♗c3 36.♗e1 ♔g3. Lovely use of 30...h5 and 31...h4. We saw many examples in AlphaZero's games of establishing a diagonal piece close to the opponent's king to restrict it, often providing sufficient compensation for multiple pawn sacrifices (three so far!). 37.♗e3 ♗d2 38.♗xd2 ♖xd2 39.♗fg4 ♗xb5 40.♖a8+ ♔h7 41.b4 ♖b2 42.♖a1 ♖xb4 43.♗f5 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

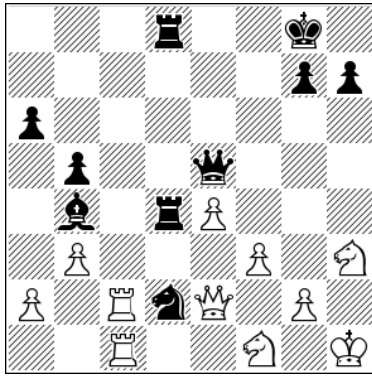
27...♔c5

It is hard to decide whether this is just a poor move or a clever idea! Intuitively, one always tends to keep the possibility of checks in the position: with the king on the g1-a7 diagonal, there is always the likelihood that a cunning white tactic can be countered by a well-timed check! However, pushing the king to h1 fits well with Black's estimation of his knight's natural trajectory in the coming moves – ...♗c4-d2xe4/f1-g3 – which ends in check with the king on h1. Furthermore, with the king on h1, a queen and bishop battery on the b8-h2 diagonal is more likely to end in mate.

27...♗e6. As always, the engines are able to resist the human desire to keep the possibility of mating the white king along the b8-h2 diagonal alive and opt for a small redeployment, freeing the central e5-square for the black knight when it gets chased away with b3: 28.b3 (28.♗f4 naturally aims for d5 but 28...♗b6 is rather unpleasant as ...♔g5 is also threatened) 28...♗e5 with only a small advantage to White.

29.♗e3 ♗d3 30.♖d1 ♗e5 31.♗d5 ♔c5 32.♔h1 ♗f4 33.♗hxf4 ♖8xd5 34.♖xd4 ♗xf4 35.♖xc5 ♖xd4 36.♖d5 (½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 36...♗h4+ 37.♔g1 ♖xd5 38.exd5 ♗d4+ 39.♔f1 ♔f8 and Black will finally regain the sacrificed pawn.

28.♔h1 ♔b4 29.b3 ♗d2



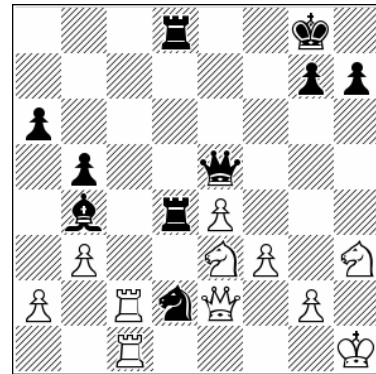
This looks a bit crazy at first and even at second sight! What on earth is the knight achieving on d2? White can simply sidestep the exchange of knights and leave the knight blocking the d-file without any further moves. Meanwhile, White has doubled rooks on the c-file and is ready to invade there. The logic isn't bad, but tactics and lunatic activity is enough to keep Black afloat!

30. ♖e3?!

Objectively inferior, but typical Lasker. With Black's flag hanging (the time control in this event was at move 30), he dangles before him the tempting knight sacrifice on e4.

Objectively, White should prefer 30. ♖h2 h5 (stopping ♜g4) 31. ♖c8 g5 (wow! Taking f4 away from the white knight and stopping f4 from ever happening. The airiness of the black king doesn't seem to matter!) 32. ♗e3 (32. g3 ♜f7 33. ♗g2 g4 (another point of ...h5 and ...g5: Black can undermine White's support of his centre and reactivate the knight on d2 by capturing on e4) 34. fxc4 ♖xc8 35. ♖xc8 ♖d3 36. gxf5 ♖xg3 37. ♗f2+ ♜g7 38. ♖e8 ♗xe8 39. ♗xg3+ ♜h8 40. ♖f3 ♜xe4. Here it is! 41. ♗h4 a5 42. ♖f4 ♖d6 43. ♜g2 a4 44. ♖g6+ ♜h7 ½-½ (44) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022. It still looks hairy but White's king is as exposed as Black's. Note that 45. ♗xe4 ♗xe4 46. ♖g5+ is impossible as the knight on f3 is pinned!) 32... ♖e7 33. ♖8c6 ♜f7 34. ♖e1 (34. ♖xa6 g4 35. ♗h6 gxf3 36. ♗h7+ ♜f8 37. ♖g6 ♜e8 38. gxf3 ♜d7 39. ♖b6 and the engines are happy with a draw: ½-½ (39) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 34... ♖d3 35. ♗e2 ♜g7 36. ♖f2 ♖c3 37. ♖xc3 ♗xc3 38. ♖h3 ♜h6. Black's set-up with the knight so far forward on d2 looks really odd, but Black controls so much space that White

cannot break free. Quite unexpected. ½-½ (41) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.



30... ♖a3??

The bluff succeeds. Black should have played 30... ♖xe4, which is an immediate equaliser: having pushed the king to h1 comes in very handy here! 31. ♖f1 is forced (31. fxe4? ♖xe4 32. ♖c8 ♖f8 is a very difficult resource to spot: 33. ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 34. ♗f1 ♖xe3 35. ♖c8 ♗e7 36. ♖g5 h6). After 31... ♖g3+ 32. ♖xg3 ♗xg3 33. ♖c8 ♖f8 34. ♖xd8 ♖xd8, chances are equal.

31. ♖d1

Now White is a pawn up and the knight on d2 is trapped.

31... ♖b4

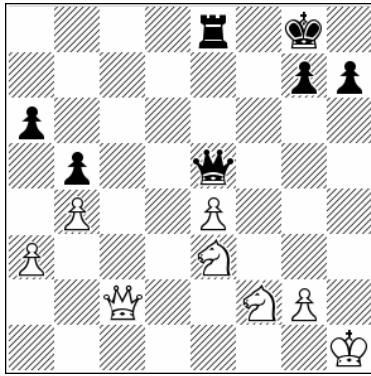
One feels that Black was starting to feel the pressure and run out of ideas here. The two extra tempi swing the battle decisively in White's favour.

32. a3

This is good enough, but simpler was 32. ♖f2 ♖4d7 33. ♖fg4 ♗e6 34. a3 and the knight is dropping off. This was played by Stockfish in one engine game and it compelled Black to sacrifice a piece with 34... ♖xe4 35. fxe4 ♖xd1+ 36. ♖xd1 ♖xa3. Such positions are tougher to convert than you might think, especially with knights as minor pieces and split pawns, but an engine manages easily, of course: 1-0 (74) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

32... ♖a5 33. b4 ♖c7

Giving White a lot of additional continuations. 33... ♖xe4 was Black's best way of forcing the type of material balance we see in the game: 34. fxe4 ♖c7 35. ♖xc7 ♖xd1+ 36. ♖xd1 ♗xc7 37. ♖e3 ♗e5 38. ♗c2 ♖e8 39. ♖f2.

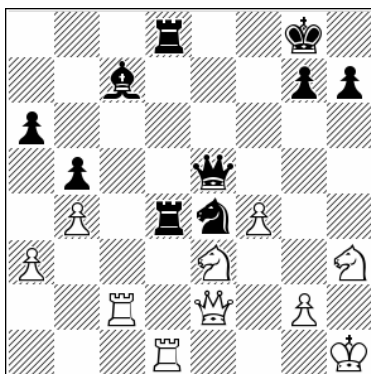


analysis diagram

The engine games uniformly ended in wins from here on, though the loose white structure and slightly open white king give Black some hope. Essentially, White needs to activate the knights and establish at least one of them on an advanced outpost like f5. This creates threats against the opponent's king and reins in Black's active major pieces.

39...xf8 40.g1 xa1+ 41.h2 xa3 42.d3 a1 43.c5 f6 44.f5 happened in a couple of games: 44...h8 (44...g6 45.d6) 45.g4 e8 (45...g6 46.g5) 46.e5 g5 47.g3 h5 48.d4 a5 49.bxa5 f8 50.e4 h4 51.h4 f1 52.f4 g1+ 53.f2 d1 54.e2 d8 55.e6 g8 56.e7 e8 57.e6+ h7 58.fg6 f6 59.f8+ xf8 60.e4+ g8 61.d5+ h7 62.exf8=xf8 63.f5+ xf5 64.fxf5 1-0 (76) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022. Didn't look that easy though, did it?

34.f4 dxe4



35.h2!

This refutes Black's tactical idea and should win easily, but there are more twists to come.

35...fxd1

35...d3 36.fxc3 xf4 37.fxf4 (37.fxc5 f2+ 38.fxe5 xe5+ 39.g1 xe2 40.fxd8+ f7 41.f3

is a more manageable result – if you can spot and calculate it! 1-0 (77) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 37...xf4+ 38.g3 xg3+ 39.h1 f8 40.a2+ h8 41.g2 h4+ 42.g1. It's an extra rook for White but I could easily imagine things going wrong in a quickplay finish with such an open king and potential pins along the a7-g1 diagonal. The engines are already yawning and thinking of the next game! 42...b6 43.f1 e8 44.f3 h5 45.g6 g4+ 46.xg4 hxg4 47.g3, 1-0 (66) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

36.dxd1

36.fxe5?? xe5+ 37.g3 d2 wins for Black.

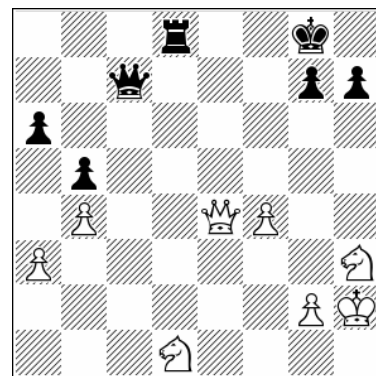
36...e7

36...d3 37.f3 wins.

37.fxc7?

As so often, after navigating his way through some complicated variations, the player relaxes when in sight of the winning post. Lasker apparently played this immediately, so it was obviously seen in advance, but here the great man should have remembered his own advice: when you see a good move, sit on your hands! Simply 37.fdf2 wins a whole piece: 37...xf4+ (37...e8 38.fxe4) 38.fxf4 h4+ 39.f4h3 g3+ 40.g1 f6 41.c8 (finishing any possible unpleasantness!) 41...xc8 42.e6+ f8 43.xc8+ e8 44.f5+ f6 45.fg5 1-0 (50) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

37...fxc7 38.fxe4



Two minor pieces for the rook should be a winning advantage for White in principle. The engines certainly think so, and every game from this position ends in a white win. However, the specific material balance – two knights for the rook with pawns on both wings – does add some complexity to White's task. In particular, since

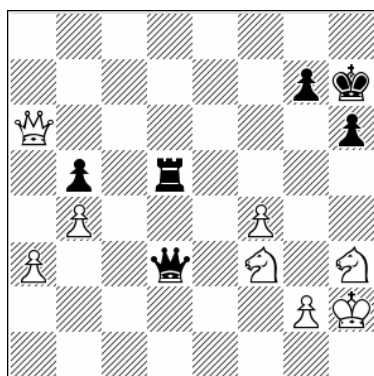
there are pawns on both wings, the exchange of queens is something that White should avoid: the short-range knights will be unable to cover the queenside pawns. This means that Black has some scope to disrupt a white set-up by offering the exchange of queens.

White's primary task, of course, is to establish a knight on the e5-outpost – most likely the knight on d1 since the knight on h3 performs the important task of defending f4 – which creates threats against the black king and helps restrain the activity of the black major pieces.

We now enter a phase of the game in which we ran hundreds of engine games. We do not propose to include them in the notes – even we can have too many engine games! We propose rather to focus on the basic struggle in the position: White's desire to activate the knights and Black's attempts to prevent this, mostly by offering a queen exchange.

38...♖c4

38...♖xd1 39.♖e8#, but 38...h6 produced an engine game that illustrated the struggle described above beautifully: 39.♔df2 (preparing ♔f2-g4-e5) 39...♖d7 40.♖e2 ♖e8 (offering the queen exchange) 41.♖f3 ♖d4 42.♔g4 (White aims for the e5-square with the knight) 42...♖e4 (and again!) 43.♖b3+ ♖d5 (and again!) 44.♖g3 ♔h7 45.♔e5 ♖e6 46.♖f3 ♖f5. White has achieved a lot by establishing a knight on e5, but the win is far from automatic. 47.♖e3 ♖e4 48.♖c1 ♖d8 49.♔f7 ♖d5 50.♖c6 ♖d4 51.♔e5 ♖e4 52.♔f3 ♖d3 53.♖xa6.



analysis diagram

Not quite sure how that happened, or why it had to happen, but White has won a pawn. The win still requires a lot of patience however, since

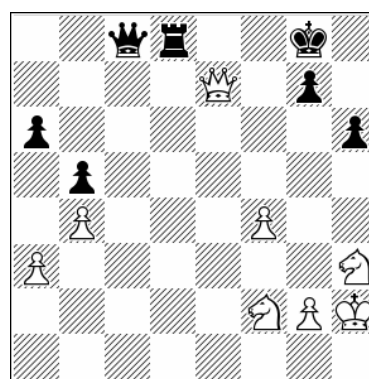
Black's position remains completely intact even without the a6-pawn.

53...♖h5 54.♖e6 ♖d5 55.♖e7 ♖c2 56.♖b7 ♖f5 57.♖a8 ♖e6 58.♔e5 ♖d4 59.♖b8 ♖d5 60.♖b7 ♖d6 61.♖f7 ♖d2 62.♖e8 ♖d5 63.♖h5 (the threat of ♔g5+ forces a weakening of Black's kingside which helps White a lot) 63...g6 64.♖g4 ♖f6 65.♖c8 ♖d2 66.♖b7+ ♔g8 67.♖xb5. Another pawn drops and it's curtains, 1-0 (85) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

39.♖e7 ♖c8 40.♔df2

40.♔e3 is the engine preference but should lead to the same thing.

40...h6

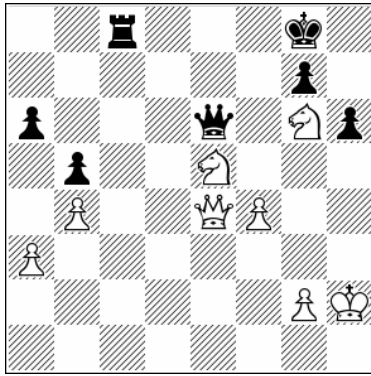


41.♖a7?!

White starts to play a little aimlessly around here – perhaps the fierce struggle had sapped his energy a little?

It is not clear why Lasker rejected 41.♔g4, consistently bringing the knights into attacking positions. Then a line such as 41...♖d2 (41...♖e8 42.♖h4) 42.♔e5 ♖c2 43.♖e6+ ♔h7 44.♖g4 followed by ♔h3-g1-f3 sees White achieve the piece coordination he needs.

44...♖e4 45.♔f3 ♖d5 46.♖c8 ♖g6 47.♖a8 ♖e6 48.♖b7 ♖d7 49.♖c8 ♖d6 50.♔e5 ♖d8 51.♖f5+ ♔g8 52.♖f7+ ♔h7 53.♖h5 ♔g8. Black resolutely refuses to weaken the kingside and manages to hold on to the a6-pawn as well. White needs more firepower and starts the regrouping of the h3-knight: 54.♔f2 ♖e6 55.♔e4 ♖f8 56.♖f3 ♖f5 57.♔g3 ♖e6 (57...♖xf4 58.♖d5+ ♔h7 59.♖d3+ ♔g8 60.♔g6) 58.♖e4 ♖c8 59.♔f5 ♖c7 60.♖a8+ ♔h7 61.♔h4 ♖c8 62.♖e4+ ♔g8 63.♔hg6.



analysis diagram

The noose is tightening, but still some work for White to do. 63...♖d8 64.♗c2 ♘e8 65.♗d3 ♗f6 66.♔g3 ♗b6 67.f5 ♗a7 68.♔h2 ♗c7 69.♗b3+ ♔h7 70.♗d5 ♖d8 71.♗e6 ♗d6 72.♔g3. The exchange of queens on White's terms is fine: the passed e-pawn will easily win the day. 72...♗d2 73.♔d7 ♗g5+ 74.♔f3 ♖xd7 75.♔f8+ ♔h8 76.♔xd7 1-0 (90) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

Ed Lasker recommends 41.♔e4, assuming that after 41...♖e8 42.♗c5 Black cannot now exchange queens because of the attack on a6, but 42...♗xc5 43.♔xc5 a5 44.bxa5 ♖c8 45.♔b3 ♖c3 is just a draw. **41...♗e6 42.♗b7 ♗d5?! 43.♗b6?!**

It's strange that White avoids the obvious capture of the a6-pawn. One imagines that he was worried about 43.♗xa6 ♖a8 44.♗g6 ♖xa3, but 45.♔g4 is strong for White, heading for e5 while threatening ♔f6+ or ♔xh6+. 45...♔f8 46.♔e5 yields a winning attack.

43...♖d6 44.♗e3 ♖e6 45.♗c3

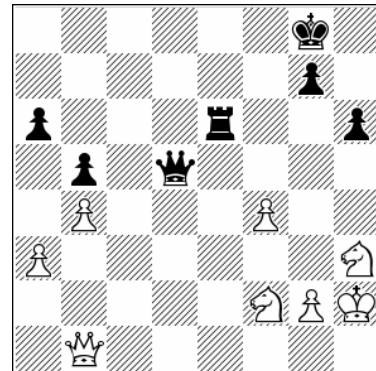
It's not getting any easier for White to develop his pieces due to the continuous need to avoid the exchange of queens. 45.♗g3 ♖c6 46.♔g1 ♗f5 47.♔fh3 ♖c4 48.♔f3 ♖e4 49.♔e5 was Dragon's clever regrouping to achieve the first step of getting a knight to e5.

49...♖e2 50.♗f3 ♗e4 51.♗g4 ♖d2 52.♔g1 ♖d6 53.♗c8+ ♔h7 54.♗c1 ♖f6 55.♔h3 ♗d5 56.♗e3 ♖d6 57.♔f2 ♖d8 58.♔e4 ♗d4 59.♗f3 ♗d5 60.g4 (this time Dragon uses the pawns to further loosen the black kingside and allow White to create threats against the black king) 60...♗d1 61.♗e3 ♔g8 62.♔g3 ♔f8 63.g5 ♗d4 64.♗f3 h5 65.♔c5 1-0 (84) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

45...♗c4

45...♖g6! 46.g4 ♖c6 is more tenacious, further exposing the white king.

46.♗f3 ♗c6 47.♗d3 ♖d6 48.♗b3+ ♗d5 49.♗b1 ♖e6

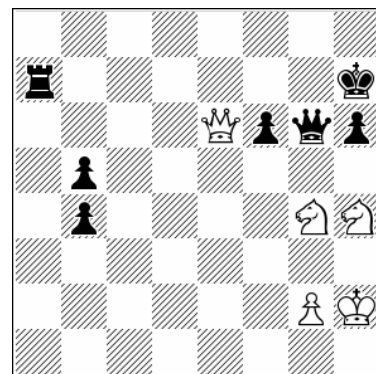


It's pretty clear that all these queen moves have not helped White one bit. In fact, Black has migrated into a pretty ideal set-up, with a beautifully centralised queen and the black rook ready to invade on the seventh rank with ...♖e2.

50.♔g4?

Finally White achieves what he wanted... and it's a mistake that costs all his advantage!

50.♔g1 was what the engines wanted, to keep the black rook out of e2. However, we start to see some draws now in the engine games, so White's advantage is clearly severely diminished: 50...♗c4 51.♔g3 ♖e3+ 52.♔f3 ♖xa3 53.♔g4. Finally achieved, but Black's counterplay on the queenside is already motoring along: 53...♗d3 54.♗b2 a5 55.♗e5 axb4 56.♗e6+ ♔h7 57.f5 ♖a7 58.f6 gxf6 59.♔h2 ♗g6 60.♔h4.



analysis diagram

Black is clearly still in a lot of danger, but the liquidation of so many pawns gives Black an extra defensive option of giving up a rook for a white knight. 60...♗f7 61.♗e3 ♖a6 62.♗xh6+ ♔g8 63.♗f4 ♔h7 64.♗f5+ ♔g7 65.♗xb5 ♗c7+ 66.g3

♖a2+ 67.♔h3 ♖a5 68.♗xb4 ♖g5 69.♗d4 ♗c6 70.♔f2 ♗e6+ 71.g4 ♔f7 and White did not manage to break this defensive structure, ½-½ (89) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

50...♖e2

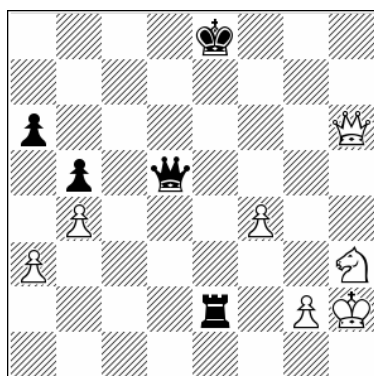
And the engines give 0.00!

51.♔xh6+

Desperation from White to force something from the position, sacrificing a knight for two pawns and the chance for evil checks against the open black king.

51.♗f1 (51.♔g2 ♗d2 ½-½ (56) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 51...♗e4 leaves White too passive to have any winning chances, but now he can also only hope to draw, since advancing the kingside pawns would expose his king too much. 52.♔e5 ♖a2 53.♔d3 ♗e2 forces the exchange of queens: ½-½ (57) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

51...gxf6 52.♗g6+ ♔f8 53.♗xh6+ ♔e8

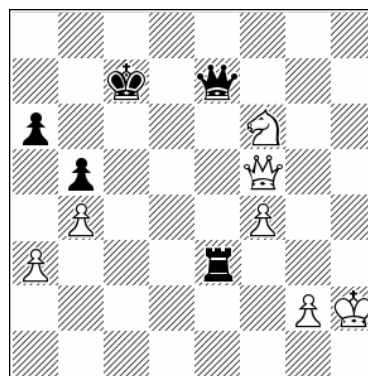


White's problem is that the black pieces are so active that there are no dangerous checks. The queen on d5 in particular dominates the board, preventing the ♗h5+ fork and attacking g2. Moreover, the white knight on h3 is hard to bring into the game, and considering the black king is running to the queenside, the knight will be miles away from creating any danger for Black.

54.♗g6+ ♔d8 55.♗g3 ♖e8 56.♗f2 ♖g8 57.♗b2 ♗d6 58.♗c3 ♔d7 59.♗f3 ♔c7 60.♗e4 ♖g7 61.♗f5 ♖e7 62.♔g5

After being stuck on h3 for some 39 moves, the knight finally breathes fresh air again, but this does not change the assessment of the position. g5 is still far from the king on c7 so Black has little fear in reactivating the rook.

62...♖e3 63.♔e4 ♗e7 64.♔f6



This is playing with fire. Lasker is eyeing the d5-square for the knight, but it's not a protected outpost so the risk of the knight being chased away is quite high. And meanwhile, Black will be munching queenside pawns.

64...♔b8!

Lasker must have underestimated or missed this move. Now the threat of ♔d5 is neutralised and a3 is dropping. Suddenly, it is White who must be careful.

65.g3

65.♔d5 ♗h4+ 66.♔g1 ♖e1#.

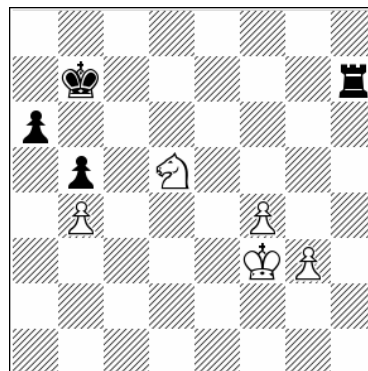
65...♖xa3 66.♔h3 ♖a1

66...♗xb4 was also possible when White has no better than perpetual check: 67.♗e5+ ♔b7 68.♗d5+ ♔c7 69.♗d7+ ♔b8 70.♗e8+ ♔a7 71.♗f7+ ♔b8 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

67.♔d5 ♖h1+ 68.♔g2 ♗h7 69.♗xh7

Strangely enough, I can imagine that White felt quite happy exchanging queens: with such an unusual situation on the board, the winning chances he has been desperately trying to generate are not unthinkable. However, Black keeps playing strongly and concretely and soon it is White who is in serious trouble.

69...♖xh7 70.♔f3 ♔b7



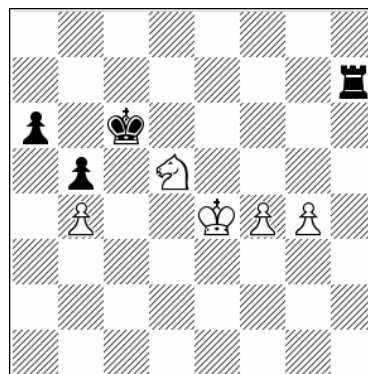
With the queens off, the two connected passed pawns are now free to advance, supported by the king, but Black's queenside counterplay must not be underestimated, especially with the short-stepping knight unable to operate on both flanks at once.

71.g4??

A losing move! It's clear that Black will try to chase away the unanchored white knight from d5 and then try to create a passed pawn on the queenside with ...a5. White cannot let the a-pawn push through, so after bxa5 ...b4, White needs to work out how to stop the b-pawn. The knight will most likely have to do the work so we need to find a good square. Some quiet reflection – not something you have after 70 moves of an exhausting game! – reveals that d3, supported by a king on e4 or e3 is ideal. To that end, 71.f5 was mandatory, enabling the knight to reach d3 via f4 (71.♔e4 ♖c6 72.f5 is also fine)! 71.f5 ♖c6 72.♘f4 ♖d6 (72...a5 73.bxa5 b4 74.♔e4 b3 75.♘d3 ♖e7+ ½-½ (75) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022 (75...♖b7 76.a6 is a typical disruptive idea) 76.♔d4 ♖e2 77.♔c3) 73.g4 a5 74.f6 axb4 75.g5 b3 76.g6 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

71...♔c6 72.♔e4

72.♘e3 aims to stop the b-pawn from c4 or d1, but these are much more exposed squares. That said, the win for Black is far from trivial: 72...a5 73.bxa5 b4 74.g5 b3 75.♘c4 ♖h3+ 76.♔e4 ♖c3 77.♘d2 (77.♘b2 ♖c2 78.♘d3 b2 79.♘xb2 ♖xb2) 77...b2 78.g6 ♖c2 79.♘b1 ♖c1 80.g7 ♖xb1 81.g8=♖ ♖e1+ 82.♔d4 b1=♖ and by a miracle, there is no perpetual. 83.♖d5+ ♔c7 84.♖c5+ ♔b8 85.♖d6+ ♔a7 86.♖c5+ ♔a8 87.♖c8+ ♖b8 88.♖a6+ ♖a7+ 89.♖xa7+ ♔xa7 90.f5 ♔b7 91.♔d5 ♔c7 92.f6 ♔d7 93.a6 ♖a1. The rook and king swap roles and each holds back one of the pawns... just not the one you might have expected! 0-1 (110) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.



72...♖h8?

Edward Lasker describes the excitement of the spectators in his wonderful book *Chess Secrets I Learned from the Masters*. A group of the other participants were watching the game and when he played this unexpected move, there was a stunned silence and then someone whispered (too loud) in German, "This may be very subtle!" In fact, this move does let the win slip.

72...♖d7, chasing the knight back immediately, was very unpleasant for White: 73.♘f6 (or 73.♘e3 a5 74.bxa5 b4 75.a6 ♔c5 with ...b3 to follow) 73...♖d8 74.g5 a5.

73.♘e3

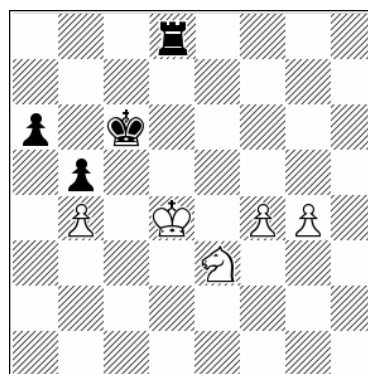
73.♘e7+ ♔c7 74.♔d5 ♖d8+ 75.♔c5 was an alternative draw, taking the fight to the black king!

73...♖e8+

73...a5 74.bxa5 b4 75.♘c2 (75.a6 b3 76.♘d1 ♖e8+ 77.♔d3 ♖d8+ 78.♔e2 ♖a8 79.♘b2 and the king comes to the b-pawn, ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 75...♖b8 (75...♔c5 76.♘xb4 ♔xb4 77.♔d5 draws) 76.♔d4 b3 77.♘a3 b2 78.♘b1 and draws.

74.♔d4 ♖d8+

74...♖b8 75.f5 a5 76.bxa5 b4 77.♘c4 ♖d8+ 78.♔e3 b3 79.a6 ♔d5 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.



75.♔e4??

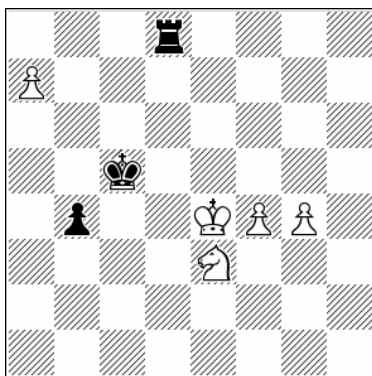
Another blunder. Correct is 75.♔c3. It does feel pretty sensible to keep the king on the queenside to monitor any passed pawn Black creates on that wing. However, presumably White was (understandably) nervous about straying too far away from the kingside pawns. A huge tactical drawback of putting the king on e4, however, is that Black's b-pawn will queen with check.

75.♔c3 a5 (75...♟f8 76.f5 ♔d6 77.♔d4 ♟g8 78.♔e4 ♟e8+ 79.♔d4 ♟g8 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 76.bxa5 ♔c5 77.g5 (77.♔c2=) 77...b4+ 78.♔c2 b3+ 79.♔c3 draws.

75...a5 76.bxa5 b4 77.a6 ♔c5

A strong move, stopping the knight from coming to c4. Ed Lasker suggests 77...b3 as more promising, but in fact, his move is correct.

78.a7



The a-pawn sows confusion and gives White the resource of ♔d1 to stop the b-pawn.

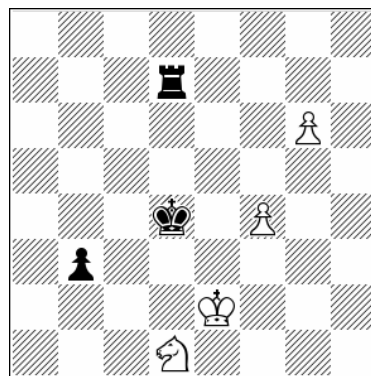
78...b3?

Back to a draw – passed pawns shouldn't be pushed after all! How can a move like this be wrong? The problem is that the pawn is harder for Black to defend against attack from the white king, so White gets a choice of destinations for his king according to Black's play: help the kingside pawns push through or run back to attack the b-pawn.

Ed Lasker makes the point that, had his rook gone to d7 at move 72, it could now simply have captured on a7, but even though 78...♟a8 entails the loss of a tempo, it still wins:

A) 79.♔f1. This rearrangement of the defensive structure, bringing the knight to d2, is a tough nut to crack. I (Matthew) don't know whether I

would manage with limited time on my clock. 79...♟xa7 80.♔d2 ♟a2 81.♔d3 ♔d5 82.f5 ♟a3+ 83.♔c2 (83.♔e2 ♟g3 84.♔f1 ♟g2+ 85.♔f3 ♟a2 86.♔e3 ♟a3+ 87.♔f4 b3 88.♔e3+ ♔c5 89.f6 b2 0-1 (89) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 83...♟g3 84.f6 ♟xg4 85.f7 ♟f4 86.♔b3 ♔c5 87.♔e4+ ♔b5 88.♔d6+ ♔c6 89.♔c4 ♔c5 90.♔e5 ♔b5 (zugzwang!) 91.♔c2 ♔a4 92.♔b2 ♟f2+ 93.♔c1 ♔a3 94.♔c4+ ♔a2 95.♔e5 b3 96.♔d1 b2 0-1 (108) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022; B) 79.g5 ♟xa7 80.g6 and now 80...♟d7 stops ♔d1. The white g-pawn isn't far enough advanced to restrict the mobility of the black rook; C) 79.♔d1 ♟xa7 80.g5 ♟e7+ 81.♔d3 ♟d7+ 82.♔e2 (82.♔c2 b3+ 83.♔c1 ♔b4 wins for Black) 82...b3 (82...♔d4 83.♔f3 b3 84.♔b2 ♟g7 85.♔g4 ♔c3 86.♔d1+ ♔c2 87.♔e3+ ♔c1 88.♔c4 ♟c7 89.♔e5 ♔c2 90.♔h5 b2 0-1 (94) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 83.g6 ♔d4.



analysis diagram

This is the difference from the game continuation – the white king has been forced back and the black monarch can come over and deal with the passed kingside pawns more easily: 84.♔f3 ♟d6 85.f5 ♔e5 and Black wins.

79.♔d1 ♟a8

Black has to eliminate the a-pawn before the rook can get active again.

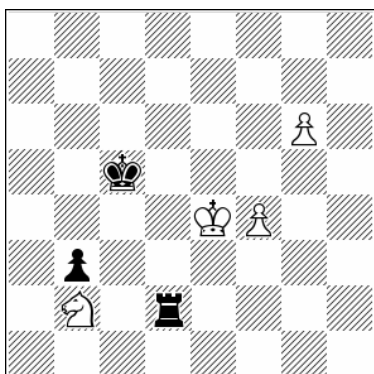
80.g5 ♟xa7 81.g6 ♟d7

81...♟a2 82.♔e5 ♟a1 83.♔b2 ♟g1 84.f5 ♔b4 85.f6 ♟g5+ 86.♔d4 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022. 86...♟xg6 87.♔d3+ ♔a3 (87...♔b5 88.♔c3) 88.♔e5. A nice example of how flexible White can be with the king in this situation.

82.♔b2 ♟d2

82...♔d6 83.♔d3 ♟c7 84.f5 ♔e7 85.♔a4 ♔f6 86.♔b2 ♟c1 87.♔a4 ♟c2 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-

Stockfish, Classics 2022. 88.♖c3 is fine as Black cannot play ...b2: 88...♞g2 89.♗c4 b2 90.♗b3.



83.♗f3!

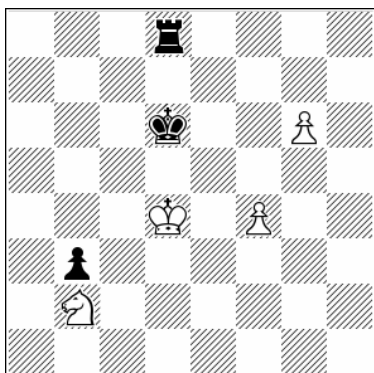
The subtle point – the g-pawn prevents Black winning the knight.

83.g7 ♞g2 84.f5 ♞xg7 85.f6 ♞b7 86.♗e5 was a more direct path to a draw as the king will push through the f-pawn: 86...♞a7 87.♗e6 ♞a8 88.f7 ♗d4 89.♗e7 ♞a7+ 90.♗e6 ½-½ (95) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

83...♞d8 84.♗e4 ♞d2

84...♗b4 85.f5 ♗c3 86.♖a4+ ♗b4 87.♖b2 ♞g8 88.♗f4 ♗c3 89.♗g5 ♗xb2 90.f6 ♗c3 91.f7 ♞b8 92.g7 b2 93.f8=♞ ♞xf8 94.gxf8=♞ b1=♞ ½-½ (102) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

85.♗f3 ♞d8 86.♗e4 ♗d6 87.♗d4

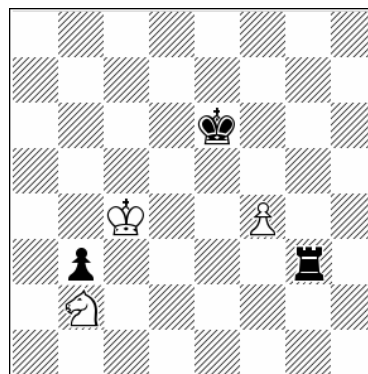


Compared with the note to move 78, here the black b-pawn is vulnerable and the white king immediately moves to attack it.

87...♞c8

Black cuts off the white king, but this can be broken at the cost of the g-pawn.

88.g7 ♗e6 89.g8=♞+! ♞xg8 90.♗c4 ♞g3

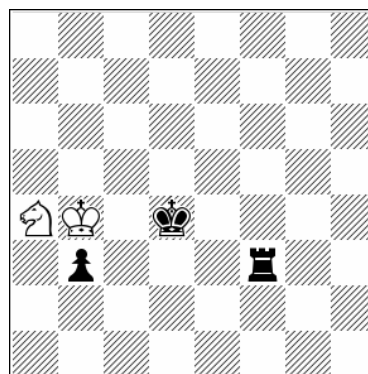


91.♖a4

A remarkable position. Although the f-pawn will fall, White turns out to have a fortress with just king and knight against king, rook and pawn.

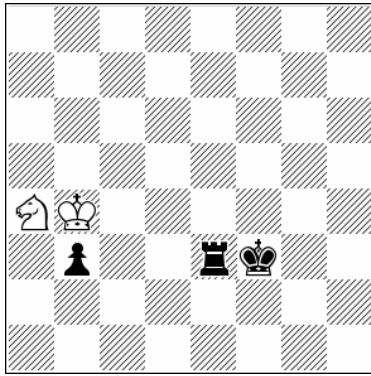
91.♖d3 was another perfect defensive formation, oddly enough! 91...♗f5 92.♗d4 ♞h3 93.♗c4 ♞g3 (93...♗e4 94.♖c5+) 94.♗d4 ♞h3 (94...♗g4 95.♗c4 ♗h3 96.f5) 95.♗c4 ♞g3 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

91...♗f5 92.♗b4 ♗xf4 93.♖b2 ♗e4 94.♖a4 ♗d4 95.♖b2 ♞f3 96.♖a4



Astonishing insight from Emanuel Lasker to understand that this position is drawn at the tail-end of such a tumultuous fight. Edward Lasker described beautifully his descent from the euphoria of expected victory to disbelief – a feeling known to all chess players! White doesn't need to try to capture the b3-pawn immediately: he can wait until the black king is far away!

96...♞e3 97.♖b2 ♗e4 98.♖a4 ♗f3



99.♖a3 ♕e4

99...♕e2 100.♖c5 ♕d2 101.♖b2 captures the b-pawn.

100.♖b4 ♕d4 101.♖b2 ♖h3 102.♖a4 ♕d3 103.♖xb3 ♕d4+

1/2-1/2

Game 9 – Ponziani Opening

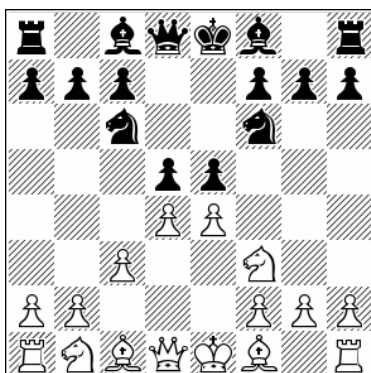
Savielly Tartakower

Efim Bogoljubow

London 1927

A fascinating battle between two of the ‘also-rans’ of the first half of the 20th century. Bogoljubow, in particular, was in his prime; he had brilliantly won the Moscow tournament of two years earlier and was to play the first of his two World Championship matches against Alekhine two years after this encounter. These two players played out some crazy games in the course of their careers but this one tops the lot!

1.e4 e5 2.♖f3 ♖c6 3.c3 ♖f6 4.d4 d5



5.exd5

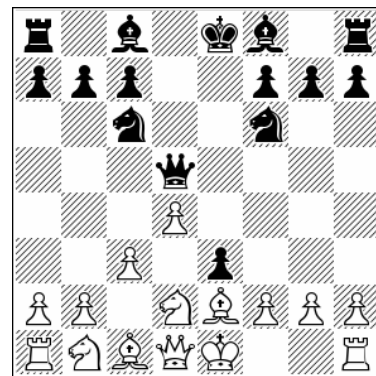
5.♗b5 is the engine preference and was Tartakower’s choice one year later at Berlin 1928 against the same opponent: 5...exd4 6.e5 (Tartakower played 6.♖xd4, but this promises little after 6...dxe4 7.♖a4 ♗d7 8.♖xc6 bxc6

9.♗xc6 ♗c5 10.0-0 0-0 11.♗xd7 ♖xd7 12.♖xd7 ♖xd7 13.♗f4 ♗e7 1/2-1/2 Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 6...♖e4 7.cxd4 ♗b4+. This position is normally reached from the Italian Game: 1.e4 e5 2.♖f3 ♖c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♖f6 5.d4 exd4 6.e5 d5 7.♗b5 ♖e4 8.cxd4 ♗b4+. The position is fairly balanced, for example 8.♗d2 0-0 9.0-0 a5 10.♗e3 f5 11.a3 ♗e7 12.♖c3 f4 13.♗c1 ♗g4 14.♗e2 ♖h8 15.♖e1 a4 16.h3 ♗h5 17.♖h2 ♗e8 18.♖f3 1/2-1/2 Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

5...♖xd5

Black has already equalised, and presses on to disrupt White’s position in the next few moves.

6.♗e2 e4 7.♖fd2 e3



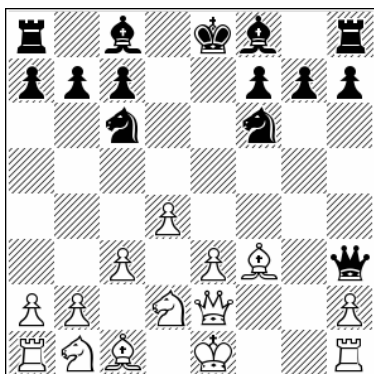
Opening an attack on the g2-pawn. White has a tricky choice to make, and Tartakower typically goes for the riskiest!

8.fxe3

8.♖f3 exf2+ 9.♖xf2 ♖e4+ 10.♗g1 was the engine choice, to keep White’s disadvantage to a minimum. The white king is displaced but White has a solid centre and once the knight on e4 has been exchanged, the immediate pressure on White’s position is alleviated.

10...♗f5 11.♖bd2 0-0-0 12.♖xe4 ♗xe4 13.♖f1 ♖e8 14.h4 ♗f5 15.♗c4 ♖d7 16.♗f4 f6 17.h5 ♖b8 18.♖h4 ♗d6 19.♗xd6 ♖xd6 20.♗d3 ♖d7 21.♗xf5 ♖xf5 22.♖d2 ♖c2 23.♖c4 ♖e7 24.♖f2 ♖a4 25.d5 ♖d7 26.♖d1 ♖f5 27.♖f4 g6 28.♖f3 ♖hg8 1/2-1/2 Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

8...♖xg2 9.♗f3 ♖h3 10.♖e2



What might have attracted Tartakower to this position? Probably the reinforced d4-pawn played a large role in his choice. White's development is awkward – the knight on d2 blocks the queenside pieces – and the white king will most likely have to flee to the queenside, but once those difficulties have been overcome, Black may struggle to create pressure against the solid white centre, as it's not trivial to organise a safe pawn break against it. White may look forward to achieving a central pawn roller and exerting some pressure against the black kingside along the half-open f- and g-files. There is a risk that Black might develop some unpleasant play while White's pieces are still in turmoil, but you don't win games without giving your opponent some chances!

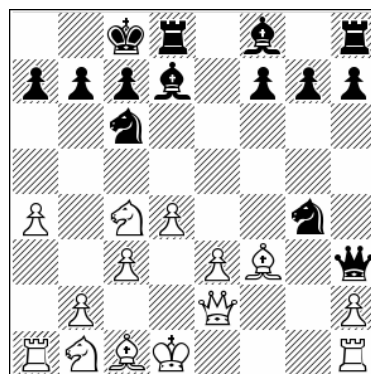
10...d4

10...d4 was the engine favourite, and it's also a good practical move. In the next few moves, Black will exert piece pressure against White's position. The danger of only playing with the pieces is that if nothing comes of it, you've simply wasted time. It's always reassuring to be achieving some positional goals as well – in this case, exchanging off an active white piece and defender of the light squares around the white centre. 11.g2 h4+ 12.f2 h5 13.h3 exf3 14.xf3 g6 15.h2 0-0-0 16.g2 d3 17.e2 c2 18.d1 f5 19.f3 e6 20.e4 g6 21.f2 h5 22.d1 d7 23.b3 e5 24.e3 f5 was a nice example of Black inhibiting White's development while exploiting entry squares weakened by the exchange of light-squared bishops. It remained a tough fight, but Black was clearly calling the shots, 0-1 (98) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

11.d4

A rather loose move – White should be wary of exposing his pieces to attack while his king is still open to checks. Dragon's 11.d1 is to be preferred, putting the king to safety as quickly as possible.

11.d1 d7 12.a4 (both suggesting a pawn storm against the soon-to-be-castled black king and also securing a good post for the knight on c4) 12...0-0-0 13.c4 and now:



analysis diagram

A) 13...e7 14.d2 e6 15.b3 he8 16.c2 b8 17.g1 f5 18.ba3. More or less the result White might envisage after playing fxe3. The centre is solid, the white king is safe on the queenside and White's pieces have plenty of scope, ½-½ (21) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022;

B) 13...g5 14.d2 f5 15.b4 e8 16.c1 f4 was very aggressive play from Dragon. It looks terrifying for White but both engines thought the position was still balanced! 17.g2 h4 18.b5 d8 19.e1 h6 20.e4 f6 with a position reminiscent of a mid-19th century King's Gambit! Equal for engines though! ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022;

C) 13...ce5 14.dxe5 dxe5 15.g2 (15.dxe5 c6+) 15...h4 16.h3 f5 17.d2 f7 18.e4 fxe4 19.xe4 xe4 20.dxe4 e7 21.h4 hf8 22.e3 and Dragon had almost neutralised Black's advantage, ½-½ (26) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

11...h4+

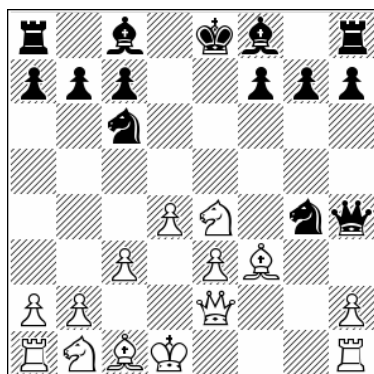
11...e7 was the engine preference, setting up ...h4+ tricks. 12.g2 xg2 13.xg2 f5 14.dg3 g5 15.0-0 0-0 16.f3 e7 17.h3 f6 18.c4 h5 19.d3 h4 20.dge2 c6 21.f1 d7 22.f4 ae8 23.a4 was pleasant for Black but not enough

advantage to beat an engine with: ½-½ (33) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

12.♟d1

A risky follow-up, almost as if Tartakower was daring Bogoljubow to resist playing ...f5!

12.♞f2 h5 13.h3 ♞xf2 14.♞xf2 ♟e7 15.♞d2 ♟d7 16.♟g2 ♞xf2+ 17.♞xf2 0-0-0 18.e4 ♞de8 19.♞f1 f6 20.♞g1 and White's position looked completely normal again! ½-½ (29) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.



12...♟d7

Bogoljubow resists the temptation... but he was wrong! 12...f5 13.♞g3. Tartakower ends his line here, but there's more to come: 13...♟d6 (the pressure against g3 and h2 is paralysing for White) 14.♟xg4 (not a move White wants to play, as the light squares around his pawn centre really need protection) 14...fxg4 15.♞g1 0-0 16.e4 ♟d7 17.♟e3 ♟f4 18.♞g2 ♟xe3 19.♞xe3 ♞f3 and Black was clearly on top, even if the escapologist Fish escaped once again! ½-½ (54) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

13.♟d2

Introducing 'a phase of mutual pin-pricks' as Tartakower delightfully puts it, but once again Bogoljubow passes by the obvious and dangerous ...f5.

13.h3 stimulated the engines to go for the dangerous piece sacrifice 13...♞ge5 14.dxe5 ♞xe5 15.♞f2 ♞xf3 16.♞xf3 ♟c5 17.♞g1 0-0-0 18.♞c2 g6 19.b4 ♟xb4 20.e4 ♟e7 21.a4 f5 22.♟e3 fxe4 23.♞e2 ♞he8 24.♞d2 ♞f6. The engines agreed a draw here, but you can certainly conclude that Black's challenge has been – and remains – more pleasant than White's! ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

13...0-0-0

13...f5 14.♟e1 ♞h6 15.♟xg4 fxg4 is again unattractive for White, due to his weak light squares.

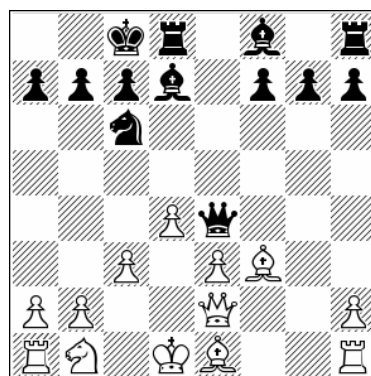
16.♞bd2 0-0-0 17.♞f2 g5 18.e4 ♟g7 19.♞c1 ♞g6 20.♞d3 h5 21.♞c5 ♟xd4 22.cxd4 ♞xd4 23.♞e3 ♟b5 was very powerful for Black in Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022 (0-1, 136).

14.♟e1 ♞e7 15.♟xg4

The engines preferred 15.♞bd2 slightly, but it makes perfect sense to remove the troublesome knight on g4 while establishing control over the e4-square with gain of tempo.

15.♞bd2 f5 16.♟xg4 fxg4 17.♞c5 ♞b8 18.♞xd7+ ♞xd7 19.e4 h5 20.♞c2 g5 21.♞d1 ♞e7 22.♞b1 ♞g6 23.♞b3 ♞e8 24.♟f2 ♟d6 25.e5 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

15...♞xe4 16.♟f3



16...♞g6

This feels like a slightly odd position for the black queen – after all, on the half-open g-file, it's bound to get chased and hit at some stage. However, Bogoljubow is trying to prevent White from getting the king off the back rank by hitting the c2-square. It's a noble endeavour, but it feels unlikely to succeed, particularly as White can shut the b1-h7 diagonal with the simple and desirable e4.

16...♞e6 was preferred by the engines, after which the position is now simply balanced. Black's pieces are not ideally-placed against White's strong centre and Stockfish invested a little time redeploying its knight on c6 while White completed development.

17.♞d2 ♞e7 18.♞g2 c6 19.♟f2 ♞d5 20.♞e1 h5 21.♞c2 h4 22.c4 ♞b4+ 23.♞c3 ♟e7 24.a3 ♞a6 25.e4 g5 26.d5 ♞g6 27.♞g1 g4 28.♟h1 c5 29.e5 g3 30.♟e3 ♞f5 31.♞b3 ♞xe5 32.♞f1 ♟f6 33.♞ab1 ♞f5 was

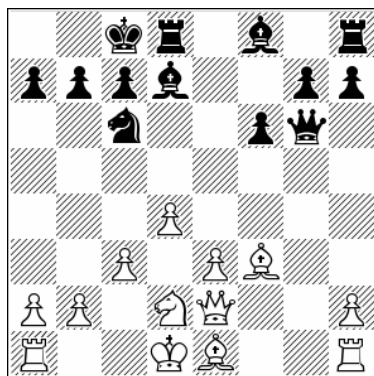
admittedly quite a wild position in which to agree a draw! ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

17.♟d2

Tartakower's opening gamble has paid off nicely. In some ways, this resulting position illustrates our comment about the risk of piece play. All Black's early activity has left little trace on the position, while the advantage White was playing for – a strong centre – still remains. White's next task is to get the king to a safe spot on the queenside and mobilise his rooks.

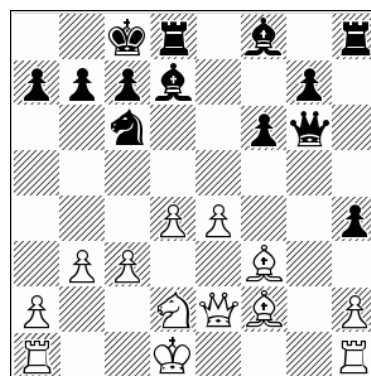
17...f6

Once again, a strange reluctance on Bogoljubow's part to play the natural ...f5 (which would at least have put a slight brake on White's future e3-e4), but it is still explainable by the desire to keep pressure along the b1-h7 diagonal. 17...f5 18.h4 ♟f6 19.♞c2 g6 20.♙g3 ♙d6 21.♙xd6 ♟xd6 22.a4 ♙e6 turned out fine (even if the engines give White a small advantage) after some tactics: 23.b4 f4 24.♙xc6 fxe3 25.♙xb7+ ♞xb7 26.♟xe3 ♞de8 27.♟f2 ♞hf8 28.♟h2 ♞f4 29.♞af1 ♙f5+ 30.♞b2 ♞xd4 31.♞b3 ♟xh2+ 32.♞xh2 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.



18.♙g3

18.e4, both occupying the centre and cutting out the black queen's influence along the h7-b1 diagonal, which allows White to move the king to the queenside and connect the rooks, looks more natural and was the engines' choice: 18...h5 19.♙f2 h4 20.b3.



analysis diagram

Both Stockfish and Dragon go for the rapid transfer of the king to the queenside, after which both engines were edging above a +1 evaluation, which normally indicates a serious advantage.

20...♟h7 21.♞c2 g5 22.♞hg1 ♙h6 23.♞b2 f5 24.♞c4 g4 25.♙h1 ♙f4 26.♙e3 ♙xe3 27.♞xe3 ♞he8 28.♞af1 ♞e7 29.♞c4 ♞b8 30.♞e5 ♞c6 31.♞xd7+ ♟xd7 32.♟d1 fxe4 33.♟xg4 ♟d6 34.♟xh4 ♞h8 35.♟xe4 ♞de8 36.♟c2 ♞xh2 37.♞g2 ♞xg2 38.♙xg2 and an extra pawn was not enough! ½-½ (49) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

18...h5

Bogoljubow finally gets the kingside pawns moving and the engines approve! ...h5-h4 knocks away the bishop from its active post on g3 with gain of tempo and starts to develop Black's positional advantage: a kingside pawn majority.

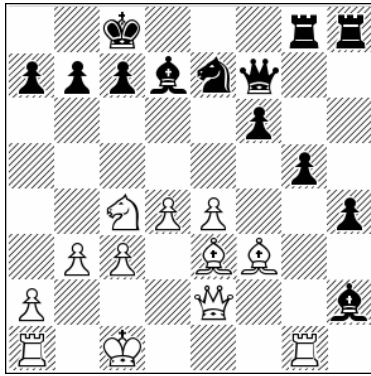
19.♞g1 h4 20.♙f2 ♟f7 21.e4 ♙d6

A decent move, though the engines are keener on getting the kingside pawns moving first with ...g5. The bishop on d6 is also exposed to attack by the natural ♞c4.

21...♞e7 22.♙e3 g5 23.b3 ♙h6 24.♞c2 ♞dg8 25.♞af1 ♟h7 26.♞b2 g4 27.♙h1 with a complicated position where Black at least has also mobilised his trumps, ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

22.♙e3 ♞a5

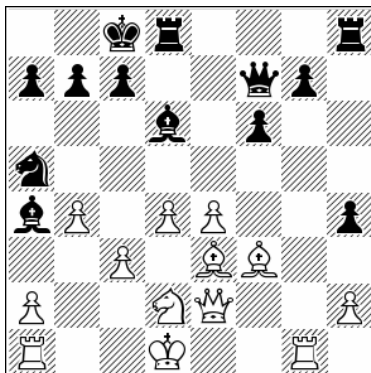
It's becoming a theme of this game, but once again Bogoljubow plays with his pieces rather than his pawns. 22...g5 is the engine move and led to some complicated play: 23.b3 ♞dg8 24.♞c1 ♞e7 25.♞c4 ♙xh2.



analysis diagram

A stunning sacrifice that needed some time for a human brain to process! 26. ♖xh2 g4 27. ♕h1 g3 28. ♖d2 h3. A beautiful example of the value of combining piece and pawn play wherever possible! 29. d5 h2 30. ♖g2 ♕h3 31. ♖b2 ♕xg2 32. ♕xg2 ♖g6 33. ♖h1 ♖e5 34. ♖xe5 fxe5 35. c4 ♖h7 36. c5 c6 37. a4 ♖e8 38. ♖a3 a6 39. b4 ♖b8 40. ♖c3. Still a crazy game in human terms but the engines had seen enough! ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

23.b4 ♕a4+

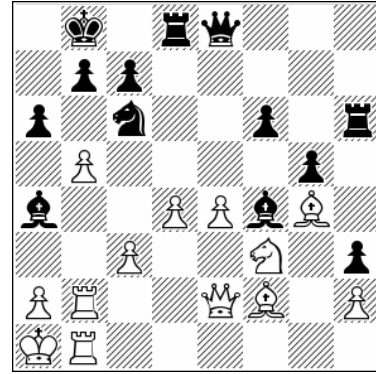


24. ♖e1

A move that strikes one as slightly odd. After all, the queenside had been earmarked at an early stage as the safe hiding place for White's king and now the king heads back to the centre. Tartakower was obviously thinking of throwing the queenside pawns forward and felt his king would be safer behind the two central pawns. In his annotations, Tartakower explained matters in a typically roundabout way: 'White's reasoning is as follows: his king is just as badly (but not more) placed on e1 as on d1; and on the other hand, the adverse pieces, which are compromised up to the hilt, fall over each other in their movements over this difficult country.'

24. ♖c1 was the engines' preference and they did a pretty good job of keeping the white king safe before launching an attack!

24... ♖c6 25. ♖b1 a6 26. ♖b2 g5 27. ♖b1 ♖b8 28. ♖a1 ♖d7 29. ♕g4 ♖e8 30. ♖gb1 h3 31. ♕g1 ♖h4 32. ♕f2 ♖h6 33. ♖f3 ♕f4 34. b5.



analysis diagram

Here it comes! Dragon finds some astonishing counters: 34...axb5 35. c4 f5 36. ♕xf5 ♖xd4 37. ♕xd4 ♖hd6 38. ♖f2 ♖xd4 39. ♖xd4 ♖e5 40. ♖e2 ♖d2 41. ♖e1 ♖xb2 42. ♖xb2 ♕xh2 43. ♖f2 ♖d6 44. ♖d4 g4 45. ♕xg4 ♖e7 46. ♖h8+ ♖a7 47. ♖d4+ ♖b8 48. ♖h8+ ♖a7 49. ♖xh3 ♕e5 50. ♖e3+ ♖b8 51. ♖d2 bxc4 52. ♖c3 ♕c6 53. ♕f5 ♖a3 54. ♖c2 ♖b4 55. ♖d8+ ♖a7 56. ♖d2 ♖b8 57. ♖c1 b5 58. ♖e3 ♖b7 59. ♖c2 ♖a3 60. ♖b1 b4 61. ♖c5 ♕xc3 62. ♖xc4 ♖a5 63. ♕c8+ ♖b6 64. ♖h2 ♖a3 65. ♕f5 ♖a7 66. ♕c8 ♖a3 67. ♖d3 ♕e5 68. ♖xa3 ♕xe4+ 69. ♖c1 bxa3 70. ♖h6+ ♖c5 71. ♖h5 ♖d6. ½-½ (71) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022. An insane game!

24... ♖c6 25. ♖c4

Tartakower is attracted by ♖b2, trapping the wayward bishop on a4, but leaves a tactic on.

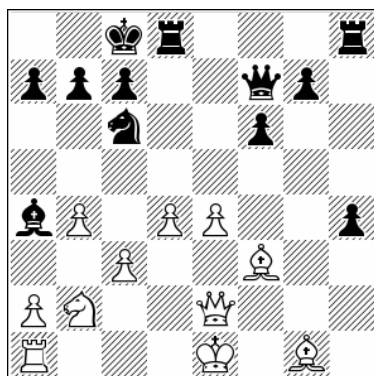
25. b5 ♖a5 26. c4 ♖b8 27. c5 ♕e7 28. ♖b1 f5 29. d5 was the engine way and goodness knows what is going on! For the engines, the game remains within the boundaries of a draw.

29... ♕f6 30. ♖d3 ♖he8 31. ♖a3 fxe4 32. ♕e2 ♖xd5 33. ♖xa4 ♕c3 34. ♖c2 ♖e5 35. ♖g2 ♖f8 36. ♖c1 ♕b4 37. ♖d1 b6 38. a3 ♕xc5 39. ♕xc5 bxc5 40. ♖xe4. Even the final position is still very messy; ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

25... ♕xh2 26. ♖b2

This clever counterstrike was probably foreseen by Tartakower. However, having seen Stockfish's ... ♕xh2 sacrifice earlier in the notes, it seems unwise to give Black's h-pawn a free run!

26...♙xg1 27.♙xg1



27...♗xd4

A natural counterblow to free the light-squared bishop on a4, but not the only one and not the best. There are better ways of desperado-wrecking White's position than 27...♗xd4, which leaves White's pawn structure still intact. A) One idea is 27...♗e5 28.dxe5 (28.♗xa4 ♖g6 29.♗d2 ♗xf3+ 30.♖xf3 h3 is awkward for White due to the offside knight on a4 and Black's dangerous h-pawn: 31.♙h2 ♖g2+ 32.♖xg2 hxg2 33.♙g1 ♗de8 34.♗e1 ♗h4 35.e5 fxe5 36.dxe5 ♗d8 37.♗b2 ♗f8 keeps the pressure on White) 28...♙d7 29.♗d3 ♙b5. The engines still find the position balanced, but I (Matthew) would much rather be Black in all this mess!

30.♙g4+ f5 31.♙xf5+ ♗b8 32.e6 ♖f6 33.♙d4 ♖g5 34.a4 ♙c4 35.♖f3 h3 36.♙xh3 ♙xd3 37.♖xd3 ♖h4+ 38.♗d2 ♖xh3 39.♖xh3 ♗xh3 40.♗g1 ♗h6 41.e7 ♗e8 42.♗xg7 ♗e6 43.♗d3 ♗6xe7 44.♗g4 and Stockfish managed to navigate to a position it could hold, ½-½ (48) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

B) Another try is 27...♖g6 28.♙h2 (28.♙f2 ♗e5 is a better version of 27...♗e5 above with the dark-squared bishop no longer able to halt the onrushing black h-pawn from h2) 28...♗xd4 29.♗xa4 (29.cxd4 ♗xd4 30.♖d3 ♗xf3+ 31.♖xf3 ♙c6 32.♖f5+ ♖xf5 33.exf5 ♗h5 is very good for Black, who will pick up four pawns – including three connected passed kingside pawns! – for a piece) 29...♗dd8. Here also, Black has managed to split the white central pawn structure which brings the white king back into the danger zone. 30.♗c5 ♗e5 31.♙xe5 ½-½ (33) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022. Black can already force a draw

by repetition after 31...♖g1+ 32.♖f1 ♖e3+ 33.♖e2 ♖g1+.

C) 27...b5 is of course suicidal: 28.♗xa4 bxa4 29.♖a6+ ♗d7 30.♙g4+.

28.cxd4 ♙c6

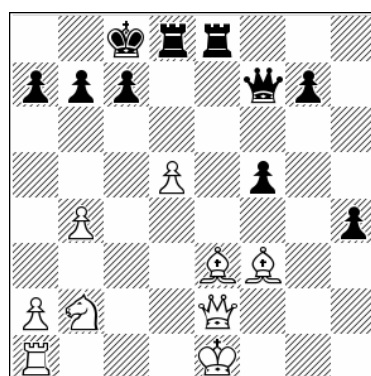
Although White's pawn structure is still intact, the position still holds plenty of danger. A moment's hesitation and moves like ...♖g6 and ...f5 will start to hit White's centre.

29.d5

Tartakower rolls the dice again with a hugely risky central thrust!

29.♗c1 is the more sober engine choice, leading to a draw by repetition after 29...♗he8 30.♗xc6. The engines feel the need to create weaknesses in Black's king's position to counterbalance the precariousness of White's king: 30...bxc6 31.♗a4 ♗d7 32.d5 cxd5 33.♖b5+ ♗e7 34.♖c5+ ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

29...♙xd5 30.exd5 ♗he8 31.♙e3 f5



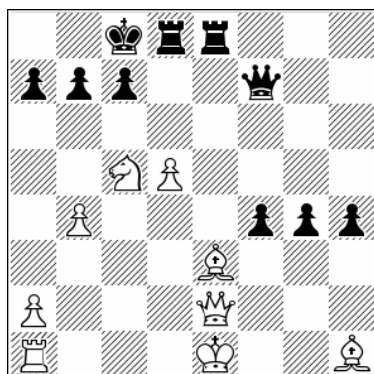
What a position! White has three pieces for a rook, but facing three connected kingside pawns and with his king still caught in the centre after 31 moves. The first impression is that Black is doing very well, but White has a number of incidental tactics to mitigate the strength of Black's threats.

32.♗f1

A slight misstep from Tartakower. This is no time for defence: counterattack is needed!

32.♗d3 g5 (32...♗xe3 33.♖xe3 ♗e8 34.♗e5 ♖f6 35.♗d2 ♗xe5 36.♖xa7 ♖g5+ 37.♗d3 ♖f4 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022. This looks fraught for White, but a draw by repetition, with a multitude of possible paths, is again the engine conclusion. 38.♗f1 ♗xd5+ 39.♙xd5 ♖xf1+ is one

such line) 33.♖c5 g4 34.♗h1 f4 is an incredible line!

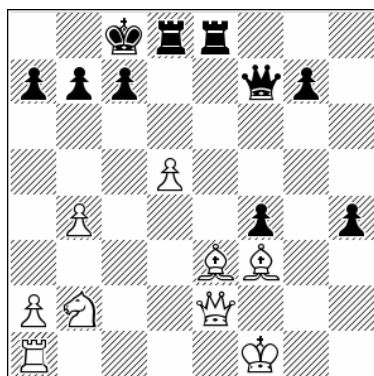


analysis diagram

35.♗b5. The counterattack arrives! 35...c6 36.dxc6 b6 37.♖d7 ♜xe3+ 38.♗f1 ♞a3 (stopping ♗a6+) 39.♞c1 ♞e8 40.c7 ♗xd7 41.♗b7+ ♜xb7 42.♗xd7 ♞f3+ 43.♗g2 ♞g3+ is one wonderful draw by repetition!

32...g5

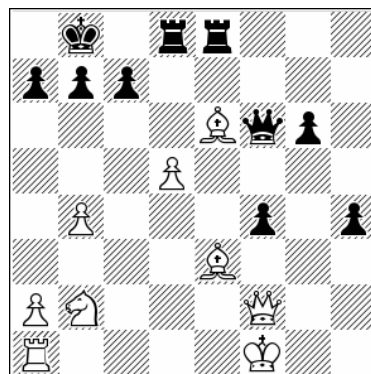
Another mistake from Bogoljubow.
32...f4 is most natural.



analysis diagram

One imagines that Bogoljubow was worried (very reasonably) about White's option of ♗g4+-e6 to block the e-file and decided to make the light-squared bishop passive before advancing the f-pawn. 33.♗h5 is an engine tactical refinement that makes a human player scratch his head in puzzlement for a few minutes (33.♗g4+ is – amazingly – simply losing for White: 33...♜b8 34.♗e6 ♗f6 (a perfect square for the queen, hitting the knight on b2 and threatening ...fxe3+) 35.♗f2 ♞xd5 36.♞e1 ♞d6 and in all simplicity, the bishop on e6 is lost! Not an easy line to spot at all!)

A) 33...g6 34.♗g4+ ♜b8 35.♗e6 ♗f6 36.♗f2



analysis diagram

is the lovely engine point behind 33.♗h5: ...g6 has unprotected the queen on f6 which makes ...fxe3 impossible!;

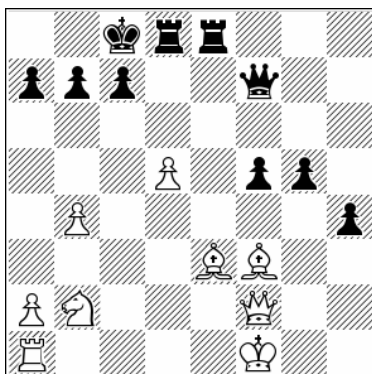
B) 33...♗xd5 34.♞d1 ♗h1+ 35.♗g1. Saving the bishop, and now there are again many paths to equality: 35...♞xe2 36.♗g4+ ♞d7 37.♗xd7+ ♜b8 38.♜xe2 ♗g2+ 39.♗f2 c5 40.bxc5 h3 41.♗f5 b6 42.♞d8+ ♜c7 43.♞d7+ ♜b8 44.♞d8+ was one nice perpetual;

C) 33...♗f6 34.♗d4 ♗xd4 35.♗xe8 ♗xd5 36.♗g4+ ♜b8 1/2-1/2 Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022. 37.♞e1 ♗h1+ 38.♗g1 ♗h3+ 39.♗g2 ♗xg2+ 40.♜xg2 ♞d2+ wins a piece back, with equality.

33.♗f2

Not the strongest, but still a very good human move. The queen sidesteps the pin on the e-file and gazes towards the a7-square.

33.♞c1. The engines still want counterattack! 33...f4 (33...g4 34.♗h1 ♞e7 (34...f4 35.♗xg4+) 35.♖c4 ♞xd5 36.♗c2 ♞ed7 37.♗xa7 and White's pieces have become fearsomely active: 37...♜d8 38.♞e1 f4 39.♗f2 ♞h5 40.♗xb7 g3 41.♖a5 ♞xa5 42.bxa5 h3 43.♗c3 g2+ 44.♗xg2 hxg2+ 45.♜g1 ♞d6 46.♗h8+ ♜d7 47.♗h3+ ♜c6 48.a6 1-0 (60) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 34.d6 c6 (34...♞xd6 35.♗b5 c6 36.♗xa7; 34...♞xe3 35.♞xc7+) 35.♗h5 (rather unfortunately after 32...g5, there is no ...g6 to block this skewer) 35...♞xe3 36.♗xf7 ♞xe2 37.♜xe2 ♞xd6 38.♖d3 a5 39.bxa5 ♞f6 40.♖e5 ♜c7 41.♜f3 h3 42.♜g4 1-0 (47) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.



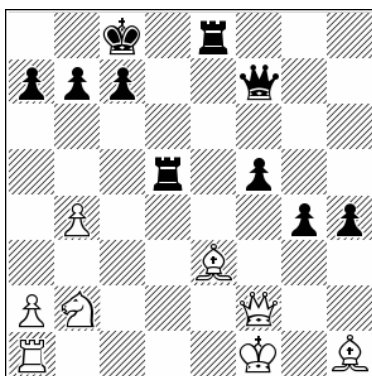
33...g4 34.♔f4

This is one careful move too many. 34.♔f4 is the key idea, both preparing ♖c1 and opening the attack of the queen on the a7-pawn: 34...gxf3 35.♖c1 ♖xd5 (35...♖d7 36.♗xa7) 36.♗xa7 ♖ed8 37.♗a3 (a refinement of the inevitable ♖xc7+ allowing White to capture f3) 37...♗g7 38.♖xc7+ ♗xc7 39.♔xc7 ♔xc7 40.♗xf3 1-0 (69) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

34...♖xd5

Bogoljubow misses another chance in this bewildering position.

34...g3 crucially knocks the queen off the g1-a7 diagonal, reducing the power of ♔f4. It isn't an easy move to play intuitively, however, as it creates holes in Black's kingside pawn advance. 35.♗f4 was Tartakower's planned riposte, but Black's next move is unpleasant to meet: 35...♗g7 (the queen hits the loose knight on b2 and protects the g3-pawn, supporting ...h3) 36.♗d4 ♗g4 is the lovely reply, with ...h3 to come and those holes in Black's kingside pawn advance will be filled.



35.♔f4

Tartakower finds the key idea, activating the white queen along the g1-a7 diagonal and preparing ♖c1. Once the pieces get coordinated

in this way, Black misses some minor pieces to cover his king's position.

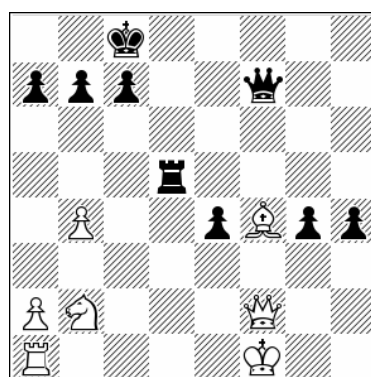
35.♔xd5 ♗xd5 36.♖d1 ♗e4 37.♔g5 ♗h1+ 38.♗g1 ♗f3+ 39.♗f2 ♗h1+ 40.♗g1 ♗f3+ 41.♗f2 1/2-1/2 Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

35...♖e4

An ingenious idea, stopping ♗xa7 by attacking the bishop on f4. After ♔xe4 ...fxe4, Black will have the possibility of ...♖f5, pinning the bishop on f4.

35...♗e6 36.♔xd5 ♗xd5 37.♔g1 g3 38.♗c5 ♗xc5+ 39.bxc5 ♔d7 40.♔d3 ♔c6 41.♔g2 ♖e2+ 42.♔f3 1-0 (59) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

36.♔xe4 fxe4



37.♔g1

A good human move. 37.♖c1 was even stronger, but required some engine-level tactical vision: 37...♖f5 (37...g3 38.♔xg3 ♗xf2+ (38...♖f5 39.♖xc7+) 39.♔xf2 ♖d2 40.♔c4 ♖xa2 41.♔xh4 1-0 (71) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 38.♔c4 (both unexpected, and unexpectedly strong!) 38...♔b8 (38...♖xf4 39.♔d6+) 39.♔d6. Anyway!

37...g3 38.♗e3

38.♔xg3 ♗g7.

38...♗f6

Another good practical move from Bogoljubow, stopping White from activating the rook by attacking the knight on b2.

39.♖b1 ♖f5 40.♗xa7

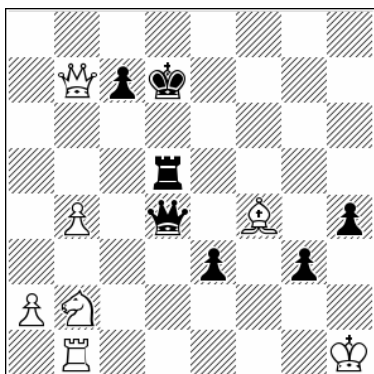
A brave move but virtually forced.

40.♔h6 ♖f3 41.♗xe4 ♗b6+ 42.♔h1 g2+ 43.♔h2 ♗d6+ 44.♔g1 ♗b6+ is a lovely draw by repetition.

40...♖d5

40...♖xf4 41.♗a8+ ♔d7 42.♖d1+ ♔e7 43.♗d8+ ♔f7 44.♖d7+ ♔g6 45.♗g8+ ♔h5 46.♖h7+ 1-0 (59) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

41.♗a8+ ♔d7 42.♗xb7 ♗d4+ 43.♔h1 e3



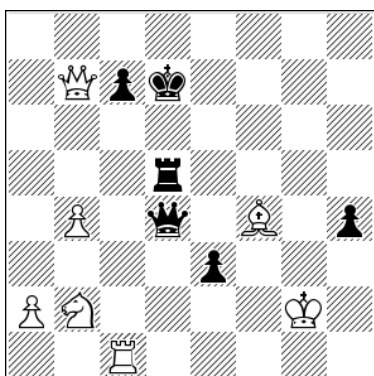
Attacking the bishop on f4, but also setting up something hidden and venomous.

44.♖c1?

A huge mistake, though finally activating the rook feels something like a heart's desire for White.

44.♖xc7+ ♕e8 45.♖c8+ ♕e7 46.♖c1 was a better way to achieve the goal 1-0 (48) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

44...g2+ 45.♔xg2



45...h3+?

Bogoljubow misses it!

45...♖e4+ 46.♔g1 ♖g5+ was Black's final chance of salvation. 47.♙xg5 is described as 'uncertain' by Tartakower and as 0.00 by the engines. Tartakower notes that between the 40 and 45th moves, both players were in severe time trouble. After 47...♖xb7 48.♘d3 ♖d5 49.♘c5+ ♔c6 50.♙xh4 (½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 50...♔b6, the active black queen and the annoying thorn on e3 make it impossible for White to coordinate the pieces properly.

46.♔f3

Now it really is finished.

46...♔e6 47.♖xc7 h2 48.♖c6+ ♖d6 49.♖e8+ 1-0

A truly sensational game, played with great imagination by both players!

Game 10 – King's Indian Defence

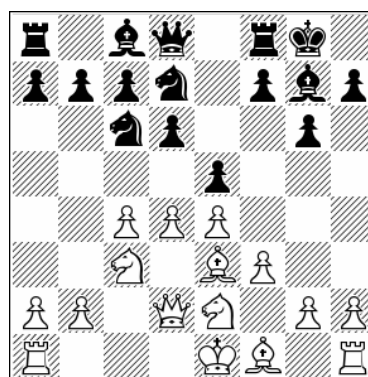
Max Euwe

Frederick Yates

Hastings 1931

Frederick Yates was the strongest English player of the 1920s and 1930s and one of the pioneers of the King's Indian Defence. His most impressive result with the opening was a fine victory over Alekhine at Carlsbad 1923. That game featured his own approach in the King's Indian – which we also see in this game – of playing his knight to c6 immediately, then, if allowed, following up quickly with ...♘d7 and ...e5. We entertain you here with a crazy draw against the future World Champion Max Euwe. It's amazing to think that this game was played in the early 1930s!

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♙g7 4.e4 d6 5.f3 0-0 6.♙e3 ♘c6 7.♘ge2 e5 8.♖d2 ♘d7



Yates' patented King's Indian strategy.

9.0-0-0

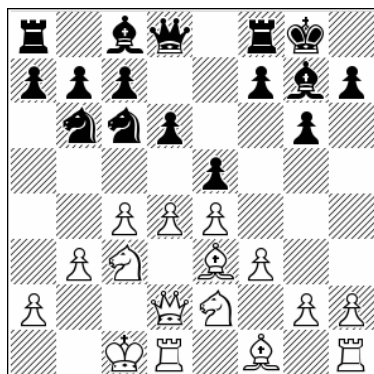
Euwe keeps the central tension and castles queenside, preparing to launch the rook's pawn against Black's kingside with h2-h4-h5. This plan should be quite effective in principle as 8...♘d7 weakens Black's defences on that flank. However, Yates exploits a weakness of White's typical Sämisch System development: the weakness of c4 which is not protected by the light-squared bishop. Nowadays, modern players (and engines) prefer 9.d5. Black is not able to play the knight to d4 and must retreat it to the passive e7-square, leading to typical structures which are (now!) known to be much better for White.

9...♠b6

A very nice concept. Modern Sämisch King's Indian theory is full of lines in which Black targets the c4-pawn with a knight, but this is usually via ...♠c6-a5.

10.b3

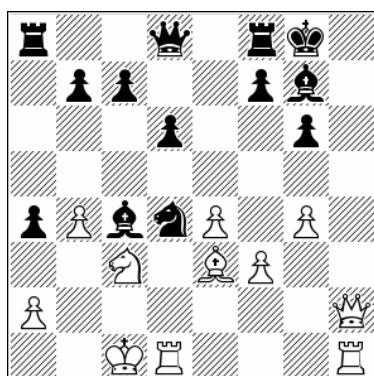
White is forced to weaken the dark squares around his king to defend the c4-pawn.



10...a5

A natural and aggressive reaction from Yates, but it is inaccurate as it gives White a fresh opportunity to close the centre and shut the bishop on g7 out of the attack.

10...exd4 11.♠xd4 ♕e6 was what the engines wanted, making sure Black's dark-squared bishop gets a chance to eye the loose knight on c3. The engines followed up by hammering away at each other's kings: 12.h4 a5 13.h5 a4 14.hxg6 hxg6 15.b4 ♖xc4 16.♗xc4 ♗xc4 17.g4 ♜xd4 18.♞h2



analysis diagram

18...♠e2+ 19.♠xe2 ♖e8 20.♗d4 ♜f8 21.♠c3 ♞g5+ 22.f4 ♞xg4 23.♗xg7+ ♜xg7 24.♞f2 c5 25.bxc5 dxc5 26.♞h4 ♞e6 27.♞dh1 ♞h8 28.f5 (1/2-1/2 Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023) 28...♞f6 29.e5 ♞g5+ 30.♜c2 ♞xh4 31.♞xh4 ♗b3+ 32.axb3 ♞xf5+ 33.♞xf5 axb3+ 34.♜xb3 gxf5 was the reason the

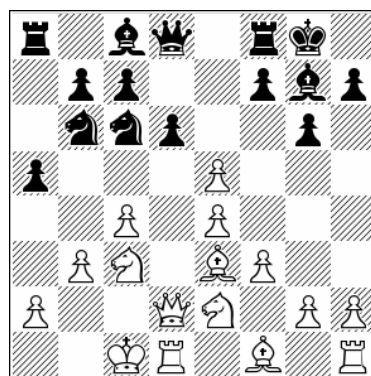
engines agreed a draw. Black will liquidate the remaining white pawn and head for the drawn rook and knight against rook endgame.

11.dxe5

Euwe looks for a concrete resolution to the position, but Yates hits him with some King's Indian inspiration that might have come from the games of King's Indian greats like Geller or Bronstein!

11.d5 ♠b4 12.g4 heads back to a pretty good Sämisch structure for White. The weakness of White's queenside dark squares matters less if Black cannot get the dark-squared bishop involved.

12...a4 13.♗xb6 cxb6 14.♠xa4 ♖xa4 15.bxa4 ♠a6 16.h4 ♠c5 17.♜b1 ♗d7 18.♠c1 ♗xa4 19.♞e1 was Stockfish's creative attempt to make something of Black's queenside activity. The black knight is nicely entrenched on c5, but Black doesn't have the open lines he needs to really cause White any problems, 1-0 (71) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023.



11...a4

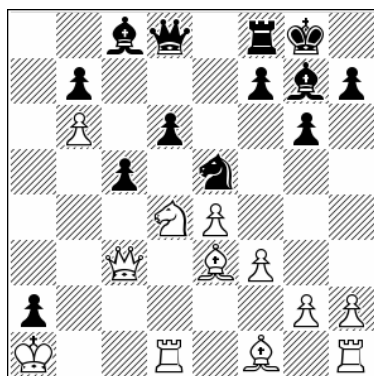
Powerful, and the engines' top choice!

12.♗xb6

The engines tried to fight their way out with the sharp 12.c5. Just like in the game, Black's solution is a piece sacrifice to lay bare the king's position.

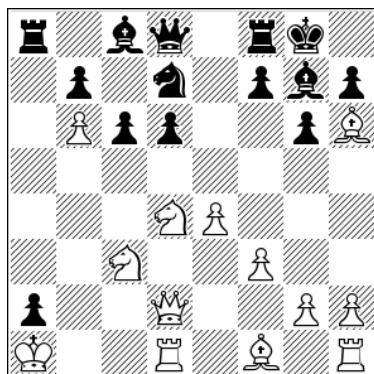
12...axb3 13.cxb6 bxa2 14.♜b2 ♠xe5 (threatening a fork on c4) 15.♠d4 c6 (leaving the b6-pawn for the black queen) 16.♜a1 (Black's a2-pawn provides a shelter for the white king but the open h8-a1 diagonal reduces the white king's comfort on a1) 16...♠d7 (16...♞a3 17.♞c1 ♞xc3 18.♞xc3 c5 is another dangerous idea, trying to clear away pieces from the h8-a1 diagonal.

Looking at the following moves, you emerge with the feeling that only an engine could defend this!



analysis diagram

19.♙xa2 ♙d7 20.♙b1 ♙xb6+ 21.♙b5 ♙xb5 22.♙b3 ♙a8 23.♙xb5 ♙c6 24.♙xd6 ♙b4 25.♙xb4 ♙xd6 26.♙xc5 ♙d8 27.♙c1 ♙g5 28.♙a4 b5 29.♙d6 (29.♙xb5 ♙e5, threatening ...♙a1 and ...♙b8; 29.♙xb5 ♙a1+) 29...bxa4 30.♙b7 ♙d8 ½-½ (30) Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023) 17.♙h6

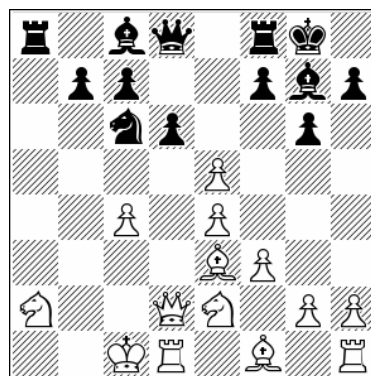


analysis diagram

17...♙h8. The engines show the proper King's Indian spirit by preferring to offer the exchange rather than exchange the beautiful dark-squared bishop! (17...♙f6 18.♙xf8 ♙xf8 19.♙c4 ♙xb6 was Stockfish's attempt. Just three pawns for the rook, but a monster dark-squared bishop! 20.♙he1 ♙b4 21.♙xa2 ♙c5 22.♙b2 ♙c4 23.♙b1 ♙xa2 24.♙xa2 ♙d3 25.♙b3 ♙xd4 26.e5 ♙xe5 27.♙xe5 ♙xe5 28.♙xd3 ♙f5 29.♙c1 b5 30.h3 ♙d4 ½-½ (30) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023) 18.h4. This led to a completely crazy slugfest! 18...d5 19.exd5 ♙xb6 20.h5 ♙e8 21.♙g5 ♙d6 22.hxg6 fxg6 23.♙h4 ♙xd5 24.♙c4 ♙e6 25.♙dh1 h5 26.♙d3 ♙f7 27.g4 ♙xc3 28.♙xf7+ ♙xf7 29.gxh5 ♙d5 30.♙c1 g5 31.♙h7+ ♙g7 32.♙xg7+ ♙xg7 33.♙f5+ ♙h7 34.♙xd6 gxh4 35.♙xe8 ♙xe8

36.♙xa2 ♙e2+ ½-½ (39) Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023.

12...axb3 13.♙e3 bxa2 14.♙xa2

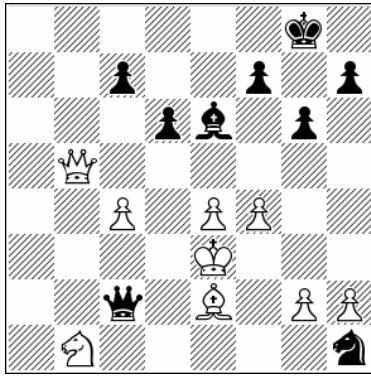


When I (Matthew) saw this position, I thought straightaway of the classic game I saw in an old Batsford book of Efim Geller's on the King's Indian Defence: Kotov-Geller, USSR Championship 1949. It features a similar piece sacrifice and also similarly marching queenside pawns! When I first saw this position, I expected Black to capture on e5 with the knight, play the bishop to e6 and then double up with the major pieces on the a-file, which looked frankly terrifying for White. This is one of the engines' favourite ideas, but Yates' idea of recapturing with the bishop to keep the knight on c6, probing the b4-square, is also appreciated.

14...♙xe5

14...♙e6. This super-accurate move order was preferred by the engines although 14...♙xe5 most often transposes. Black can decide how – or indeed whether – to capture on e5 at a later stage. Black was scoring lots of wins in the engine games.

A) 15.♙ac3 ♙a5. Black is turbo-charging the attack! The black queen is coming round to a8 and exd6 from White will just achieve Black's desire of opening the h8-a1 diagonal. 16.♙h6 ♙xe5 (the bishop is not for you!) 17.f4 ♙h8 18.♙xf8 ♙xf8 19.♙b1 ♙a8 20.♙ec3 ♙a1 21.♙b2 ♙a5 22.♙d2 b5 (great play by Dragon) 23.♙xb5 ♙xc3+ 24.♙d3 ♙b4+ 25.♙xc3 ♙d5+ 26.♙d3 ♙a3+ 27.♙c2 ♙e3+ 28.♙c1 ♙c3+ 29.♙d2 ♙a2+ 30.♙xc3 ♙xd1+ 31.♙d3 ♙f2+ 32.♙e3 ♙c2 33.♙e2 ♙xh1.



analysis diagram

The knight on h1 is trapped but White's pieces are in disarray. Eventually the knight will be saved in an unexpected way by Black's h-pawn: 34.c5 ♖c1+ 35.♗d2 ♖c3+ 36.♗d3 dxc5 37.f5 ♖d4+ 38.♗e2 ♗d7 39.♖b8+ ♔g7 40.f6+ ♖xf6 41.♗f3 ♗g4 42.♖b1 c4 43.♗c2 ♖c3 44.♖d1 h5 45.♗f1 ♗xf3 46.gxf3 h4 47.♖e2 ♖a1+ 48.♖d1 ♖a7 49.♖e1 h3 50.♗e2 ♖a2 51.♖c3+ ♔g8 52.f4 ♗g3+. Lovely! 53.♗d1 (53.hxg3 h2 wins) 53...♗h5 0-1 (64) Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023;

B) 15.exd6. It's no surprise that opening the h8-a1 diagonal in this way should prove disastrous, but it's nice to see how! 15...♗a5 16.♖b4 ♗xc4 17.♗d4 c5 18.♖xc5 ♗h6+ 19.♗b1 ♖a5 (0-1 (43) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023) 20.♖b4 ♖b5 21.♖xb5 ♗a3+;

C) 15.♗ec3 ♗xe5 16.♗d4 ♖a5 17.♗b1 ♖a8 18.♗ac3 b5 19.cxb5 c6 (classic King's Indian play: Black is willing to sacrifice any amounts of pawns to open attacking channels against the white king) 20.♖e3 cxb5 21.♗d2 b4 22.♗b5 ♖b8 23.♗e1 ♖xb5 24.♗xb5 ♖xb5 25.♗f2 ♖a8 26.h4 ♖a2+ 27.♗d2 b3 0-1 (63) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023.

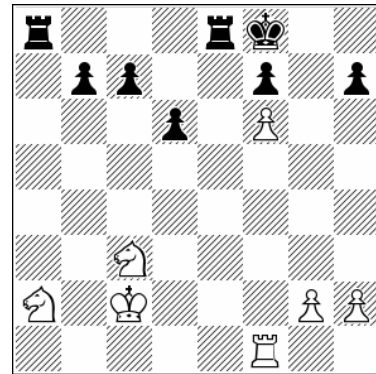
15.♗ec3 ♗e6 16.f4 ♗a5

Yates uses his intermezzo possibility (17.fxe5 allows 17...♗b3+, winning the queen) but it probably restricts Black's possibilities more than it inconveniences White.

The engines just wanted the retreat 16...♗g7, asking White how he will deal with Black's future queenside threats such as ...♖a3 followed by ...♖a8.

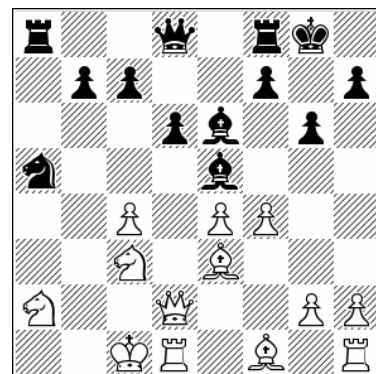
As White, the engines dashed for a forcing continuation to clarify the position: 17.f5 ♗a5 18.♗g5 ♗b3+ 19.♗c2 ♗xd2 20.♗xd8 ♗xf1 21.♗dxf1

gxf5 22.♗e7 ♖fe8 23.exf5 ♗xc4 24.f6 ♗xf1 25.♖xf1 ♗f8 26.♗xf8 ♗xf8.



analysis diagram

This looks nice for Black: three connected passed pawns on the queenside and just two knights to hold them back looks like a real challenge for White. The engines managed however: 27.♗c1 c6 28.♖f4 ♗e5 29.♖h4 ♖g5 30.g3 ♖g6 31.♖xh7 ♗g8 32.♖h4 ♖xf6 33.♗d3 ♗e6 34.♗d4 d5 35.♖b4 ♗e7 36.♗d2 ♗g7 37.h4 ♗f8 38.g4 ♖a1 39.♗c1 ♖a3 40.g5 ♖a6 41.♖f4 ♗g8 42.♗le2 b5 43.♗c1 ♗e6 44.♗d3 ♖a1 45.♗c1 ♖a8 46.♗d3 ½-½ (52) Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023.



17.♖c2

A natural move from Euwe, but the engines frown a little, preferring 17.♗c2. By keeping the queen on d2, White maintains a better connection with the dark squares. 16...♗a5 has freed White's access to d4 which White can use to exchange the dark-squared bishops and reduce the firepower pointing at his king.

17...♗f6 18.♗d4 ♗xc4 19.♗xc4 ♗xc4 20.♗xf6 ♖xf6 21.♖d4 ♖e6 22.♖d3 c6 23.♖he1 ♖fd8 24.♗b4 ♗a3+ 25.♗b2 ♗c4+ 26.♗c2 ♗a3+ 27.♗b2 ♗c4+ 28.♗c2 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023.

17...♗g7 18.♗d5

The engines prefer 18.♖b5, but this move – blocking Black’s pressure against the c4-pawn – would be the choice of most human players. 18.♖b5 puts pressure against the d6-pawn, hoping to prevent Black from playing ...c6.

18...♗e7 19.♙e2 c6 (played anyway!) 20.♜xd6 b5 (whatever the objective evaluation, this is terrifying for White!) 21.e5 f6 22.♙c5 fxe5 23.♜e4 ♗e8 24.♙xf8 ♗xf8 (once again, Black doesn’t mind falling a rook behind in order to loosen White’s grip on his own dark squares) 25.♞d6 ♙xc4 26.♞hd1 exf4 27.♙xc4+ ♜xc4 28.♗b3 ♖h8 29.♞d7 ♞a3 30.♗c2 ♜e3 31.♗d2 ♜c4 32.♗c2 ♜e3 33.♗d2 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023.

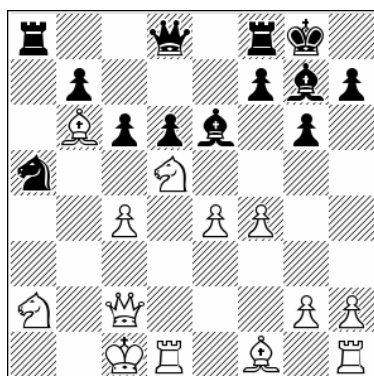
18...c6

An obvious move, but it starts to go wrong from here for Yates, as Euwe manages to entrench his pieces on the queenside and prevent Black from developing his counterplay any further. The engines want more radical alternatives.

A) 18...b5 19.cxb5 c6 20.bxc6 ♜xc6 21.♙b5 ♙xd5 22.♞xd5 ♜e7 23.♞d3 ♗b8 24.♙c4 ♞c8 25.♜d2 d5 26.exd5 ♜f5 27.♞b1 ♗c7 28.♞b4 ♜d6 29.♜e1 h5 30.♙b6 ♗d7. The attack goes on! ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023; or

B) 18...c5 19.♜ac3 ♜c6 20.♗b3 ♞e8 21.♙d3 b5 22.cxb5 ♜a5 23.♗b1 ♙xc3 24.♜xc3 ♜b3+ 25.♜c2 ♞a3, with very dangerous play for Black, ½-½ (32) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023.

19.♙b6



A very unpleasant idea. All of a sudden, the drawback to ...♜a5 is seen: the knight blocks up Black’s counterplay on the a-file and White’s knight and bishop do the same for the rest of Black’s queenside.

19...♗b8

Here Yates goes seriously wrong, creating a veritable logjam of pieces on the queenside!

19...♗e8 20.♜c7 ♗e7 was the best attempt, keeping the queen active and letting the rook on f8 come into the game after White captures the rook on a8.

21.♜xa8 ♞xa8 22.♜d2 d5 gives Black plenty of counterplay for the rook: 23.♜e1 ♙g4 24.cxd5 ♙xd1 25.♜xd1 cxd5 26.e5 ♜c4 27.♙xc4 dxc4 28.♜c1 ♗e6 29.♙e3 g5 and new threats continue to hit the white position, ½-½ (45) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023.

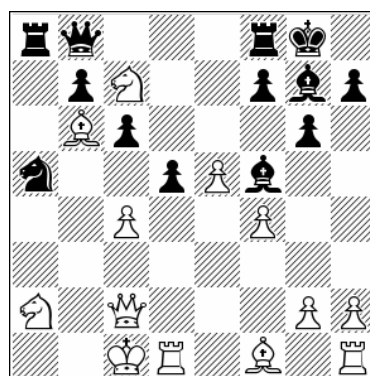
20.♜c7 d5

Yates tries to break free but he will need some help from White because his pieces have ended up in terrible positions.

21.e5

This is a good move in principle, blocking out both the h8-a1 and the b8-h2 diagonal, but White had an even stronger way of further squeezing Black’s position: 21.cxd5 cxd5 22.f5 gxf5 23.exd5 ♙d7 24.♞d3 ♗d8 25.♜xa8 ♗xa8 26.♞g3 ♞c8 27.♜c3. The extra rook, the threat of ♙d4 or ♙xg7+ and the passive black queen on a8 leave Black with few chances, 1-0 (52) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023.

21...♙f5

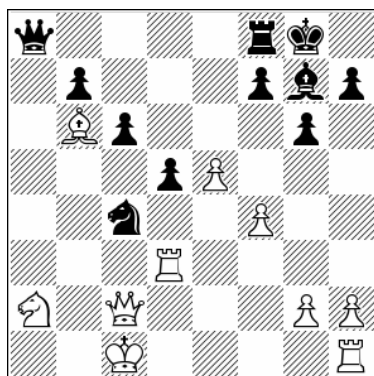


22.♙d3

One can understand Euwe’s relief at finally developing this piece, but it’s an odd move in a way as it gives the knight on a5 a new lease of life.

The engine move 22.♗c3 keeps the black queenside pieces blocked in: 22...♜xc4 23.♜xa8 ♗xa8 24.♙xc4 dxc4 25.♗a5, blocking the a-file by offering the exchange of queens; 1-0 (44) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023.

22...♙xd3 23.♖xd3 ♘xc4 24.♘xa8 ♜xa8



I (Matthew) annotated this game once before and described the position in these terms: ‘A dream position for Black now, even if the computer still thinks White is clearly better! His king is safe, White’s pieces are somewhat uncoordinated and he has a simple plan of pushing his queenside pawns. Let White worry about the rest!’ I’m slightly less optimistic now, although I understand the sentiments. White’s most sensible plan is to run his king to the kingside away from the onrushing black queenside pawns and slowly exploit his huge material advantage. In principle, this isn’t a difficult plan to find, but we see in the game how much difficulty Euwe finds in adjusting to the new circumstances. We can definitely see a parallel with the Botvinnik-Bronstein game analysed elsewhere in this book, where Botvinnik also struggled to formulate a new plan after winning a rook early in the opening.

25.♙d4

25.♙c5. A strong dual-purpose move, gaining a tempo on the rook and preventing Black from mobilising his queenside with ...c5 quickly. 25...♞e8 (the most potentially threatening spot for the black rook since the white king will cross the e-file *en route* to kingside safety) 26.♔d1 ♜a6 27.♘c1 ♜b5 28.♙f2 ♘b2+ 29.♔e2. Black wins the exchange back but White will be a piece up with a safe king (1-0 (81) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023): 29...f6 30.♔f3 ♘xd3 (30...fxe5 31.♞b3 e4+ 32.♔g3) 31.♘xd3 fxe5 32.♘xe5 ♙xe5 33.♞e1.

25...♞c8

Too slow! 25...c5 was possible immediately, as the c5-pawn is too dangerous to capture. Once

the queenside pawns start marching, the engines believe in Black’s compensation for the rook.

26.♙e3 b5 27.♔b1 ♞c8 28.♙c1 b4 29.♞e1 ♞b8 30.♞ed1 ♙h6 31.g3 ♙f8 32.♙b2 ♜c6 33.♞xd5 ♘e3 34.♜b3 ♘xd1 35.♜xd1 c4 36.♞d7 ♜e4+ 37.♜c2 ♜h1+ 38.♜d1 ♜e4+ 39.♜c2 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023.

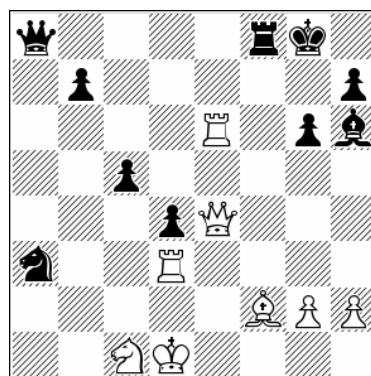
26.♞e1

A normal developing move but also the first hint of danger for Black’s king as e6 is threatened.

26...c5 27.♙a1

This doesn’t work out well at all as the bishop is now hanging when White plays e6. I imagine Euwe had f5 in mind, but this is rather slow.

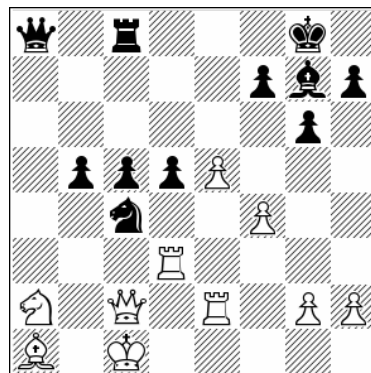
27.♙f2 was the engines’ main line, and then once again a forcing line dominated their games, where White’s ability to open up the black kingside position with e6 was the decisive factor: 27...♙h6 28.e6 fxe6 29.♞xe6 ♙xf4+ 30.♔d1 ♘a3 31.♜e2 d4 32.♘c1 ♞f8 33.♜e4 ♙h6



analysis diagram

34.♜d5 ♔h8 35.♞f3 ♜a4+ 36.♘b3 ♘b5 37.♔e1 ♜b4+ 38.♔f1 ♘c3 39.♜xc5 ♜xc5 40.♘xc5 1-0 (58) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023.

27...b5 28.♞e2



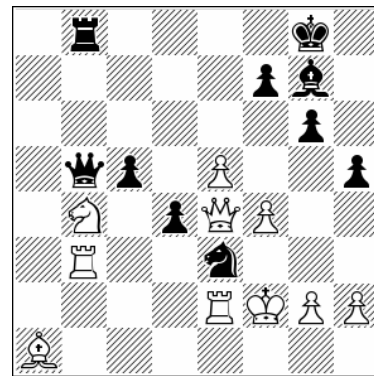
This position shows the difficulty of playing positions where the opponent's king is safe, even when the material situation is strongly in your favour. This is true enough in analysis and even truer in a practical game with limited time. White is a rook up for two pawns, but is struggling to find a clear plan. Black, on the other hand, just needs to work out how to get his knight out of the way in order to push his c- and d-pawns through. The engine games were ending mostly in draws here, which shows how much counterplay Yates has managed to create.

28...b4 29.♖b3

A critical moment. This is definitely NOT the best way to deal with Black's manifold threats! 29.e6 is a drastic way to get things started – the material investment doesn't justify the resulting attack: 29...♙xa1 30.exf7+ ♜xf7 31.♞h3 ♜g8 32.♞e7 ♞b8 33.♞exh7 ♞d6 34.♞f2 b3 35.♜d1 ♙d4 36.♞h4 bxa2 37.♞h8+ ♜f7 38.♞h7+ ♙g7 39.♞xg7+ ♜xg7 40.♞h6+ ♜f7 41.♞h7+ ♜f6 42.♞h4+ ♜f5 43.g4+ ♜e6 44.f5+ ♜d7 45.♞h7+ ♜c6 0-1 (53) Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2023.

29.♜d1 is the most sensible approach, abandoning any hope of getting at the black king and using the f4- and e5-pawns as shields to get the white king out of the way of the onrushing queenside pawns. It also makes sense of White's last move, which allows the king safe passage across the e-file behind the cover of the rook on e2. It really looks as if Euwe lost track of the position and couldn't keep hold of a consistent plan. White is definitely a little better after 29.♜d1, although the position remains gruesomely complicated.

29...♜a3 30.♞c1 d4 31.♜e1 ♞a6 32.♞d1 ♜c4 33.♜xb4 (another example of all the engines heading for a sharp line to fight back against the bind that Black is exerting) 33...♞a5 34.♞b1 ♞b8 35.♞b3 ♜e3 36.♜f2 ♞b5 37.♞e4 h5.



analysis diagram

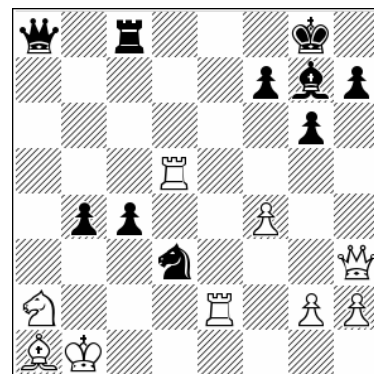
Quite astonishing how long the knight remains *en prise*! 38.♞b1 ♞c4 39.♜f3 ♞e6 40.h3 ♙f8 41.♞d2 h4 42.♙xd4 cxd4 43.♜d5 f5 44.♞xd4 ♞xb1 45.♜xe3 ♞b4 46.♞d8 ♞c6+ 47.♞d5+ ♞xd5+ 48.♜xd5 ♞b3+ 49.♜e2 ♜f7 ½-½ (83) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023.

29...♜xe5 30.♞xd5

A) 30.♞dd2 c4 31.♞e3 c3 32.♞c2 ♜c4 33.♞h3 ♞b8 34.♜d1 b3 0-1 (50) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023;

B) 30.♞xe5 c4 31.♞b2 cxd3+ 32.♜b1 ♙f6 (an elegant way of dealing with the threat of ♞e8+) 33.♜xb4 ♞b8 34.♜c1 ♞a4 35.♜xd3 ♞xb2 36.♙xb2 ♙xe5 0-1 (50) Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023.

30...c4 31.♞h3 ♜d3+ 32.♜b1



32...♜xf4

It's impossible to resist a three-way fork! The engines, however, thought that Black had something even stronger: 32...b3 33.♜c3 b2 34.♙xb2 ♙xc3 35.♞xc8+ (35.♙xc3 ♞b8+) 35...♞xc8 36.♙xc3 ♜xf4 37.♞c5 ♞xc5 38.♞e8+ ♞f8 39.♞xf8+ ♜xf8 with a winning endgame for Black, 0-1 (55) Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023.

33.♞a5

Ingenuous last-ditch defence from Euwe. The win isn't easy to spot (despite a huge computer evaluation for Black).

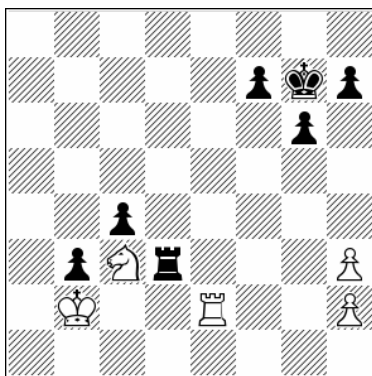
33...♟xh3

33...♞c6 34.♞e3 (34.♟xb4 ♞b8 35.♞f3 ♞d6. Everything is hanging! 0-1 (45) Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023) 34...♟xe2 35.♟xg7 c3 36.♞xe2 (36.♟h6 ♞c4 37.♟a1 ♟d4. The checks on c2 or b3 are unstoppable threats) 36...c2+ 37.♟c1 ♟xg7 38.♟xb4 ♞b6. There are too many threats: ...♞xa5, ...♞xb4 and ...♞g1+. Unfairly enough, the position is equal after Yates' move: White has just enough to round up Black's pawns and secure the draw.

34.♞xa8 ♞xa8 35.♟xg7 ♟xg7

35...♟g1 36.♞e1 traps the knight!

36.gxh3 b3 37.♟c3 ♞d8 38.♟b2 ♞d3



The engines suggest plenty of ways of playing this endgame, but none affect the result. White will win the queenside pawns and Black will liquidate the remaining white kingside pawn, leading to a drawn rook and knight against rook endgame.

39.♟a4 ♞xh3 40.♟b6 g5 41.♟xc4 f5 42.♟d2 ♟f6 43.♟xb3 h5 44.♟c2 f4 45.♟d4 h4 46.♟d2 ♞a3 47.♟e1 h3 48.♞e6+ ♟f7 49.♞e5 ♟g6 50.♟e2 ♞a2 51.♟f2 ♟f6 52.♞c5 g4 53.♞c4 f3 54.♞xg4 fxe2 55.♞h4 ½-½

Game 11 – Queen's Gambit Declined

Mir Sultan Khan

Vera Menchik

Hastings 1932

Although the British were not the foremost masters of the 1920s and 1930s, the English scene contained many strong players, all of

whom enjoyed a moment of glory in their careers. Most notably, F.D. Yates defeated Alekhine twice in excellent style, and Sir George Thomas came joint first in the 1934/5 Hastings Chess Congress, defeating Capablanca and Botvinnik along the way.

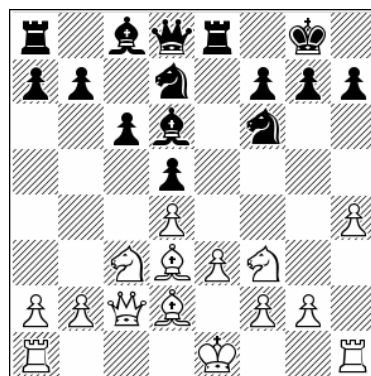
Vera Menchik – the world's strongest female player at the time – was a fixture in the British chess scene, scoring numerous wins against her colleagues; she also scored two wins against Max Euwe and came desperately close to a third in a game that should have been her best ever.

This game against the exceptionally gifted Sultan Khan was one of her best, showing purposeful and powerful play from beginning to end against the white player's creative opening schemes.

1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 e6 3.♟c3 d5 4.cxd5 exd5 5.♟f3 c6 6.♞c2 ♟d6 7.e3

A passive-looking move, shutting in the dark-squared bishop inside the pawn chain, but Sultan Khan has an innovative development scheme in mind.

7...♟bd7 8.♟d3 0-0 9.♟d2 ♞e8 10.h4



The sort of move that was probably harshly criticised by commentators of the time, but that in modern times – inspired by countless engine marches of the rook's pawn – seems almost plausible. Sultan Khan's plan is unusual, but not illogical. After castling queenside, he will break with e3-e4, combining this pressure along the b1-h7 diagonal with a knight on g5 supported by the h4-pawn. You could imagine White's activity increasing still further after ♟c3, d5 and ♞he1. The problem is that Black's structure and natural development (...♟f8) is perfect for nullifying the type of pressure that White

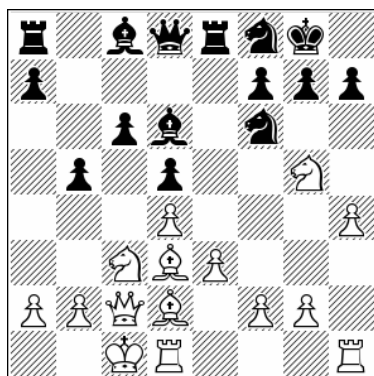
develops, while Black's onrushing a- and b-pawns pose far more threats to White's king. Sultan Khan's unusual and prescient use of the rook's pawn is well worth some mention. The Indian Grandmaster Surya Ganguly pointed out on Twitter the game Sultan Khan-Pokorny, Hamburg Olympiad 1930, which features the marching of a rook's pawn to h6 for positional reasons (the best earliest example we are aware of) while the game Takacs-Sultan Khan (at the same event) also demonstrated a very modern use of the rook's pawn against a fianchetto. Note also that the plan of ♖c2, ♕d2 and 0-0-0 is well known in the Semi-Slav, only White doesn't capture as early on d5. This early capture frees Black's position and is definitely in Black's favour.

10.0-0 is the normal move, but essentially Black is now playing the white side of an Exchange Caro-Kann. That explains why the engines are so bullish for Black: take a look at what Dragon did! 10...♖e7 11.h3 ♘e4 12.b4 g5. Wow! 13.b5 h5 14.♕e1 g4 with some powerful play already for Black. ½-½ (40) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

10...♘f8 11.0-0 b5

Two good moves from Menchik, consolidating the kingside and activating the light-squared bishop with 10...♘f8, and then starting the queenside pawn storm. ...b5 is a good pawn to start with as it inhibits White's plan of e4 due to ...b4.

12.♘g5



Sultan Khan continues with his concept: the knight on g5 eyes h7 and f7 while supporting e3-e4. White isn't afraid of ...h6, judging that ...hxg5, opening the h-file, would be too dangerous for

Black. Menchik continues naturally with the queenside pawn storm.

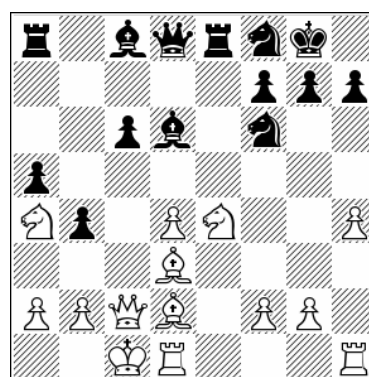
12...a5 13.e4

The logical conclusion of White's opening play. Before opening the centre, Menchik pushes the queen's knight to the side of the board, judging properly that White's threat of e5 is not to be feared.

13...b4 14.♘a4

14.e5 bxc3 15.♕xc3 h6 16.exf6 ♖xf6 is very good for Black, as ...hxg5 is even a threat in this specific position, e.g. 17.♘f3 ♕g4 followed by ...♘f8-e6-f4.

14...dxe4 15.♘xe4



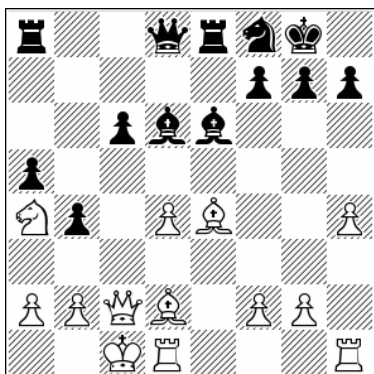
15...♘xe4

A natural and good move.

15...♕a6 16.♕g5 ♕xd3 17.♖xd3 ♕f4+ 18.♕xf4 ♘xe4 19.♖c2 ♘f6 was chosen by both Dragon and Stockfish. The exchange of the light-squared bishops is positionally desirable as it removes White's best defender of the squares around the isolated d-pawn. Exchanging off these two minor pieces also negates the counterplay that White aimed for from the early opening.

20.♘b1 ♘d5 21.♕g3 ♖d7 22.♖c1 ♖ad8 23.♘c5 ♖c8 24.♖hd1 h6 25.♘d3 ♘d7 26.♖e1 ♖xe1 27.♖xe1 ♖a6 with a pleasant position for Black ½-½ (40) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

16.♕xe4 ♕e6



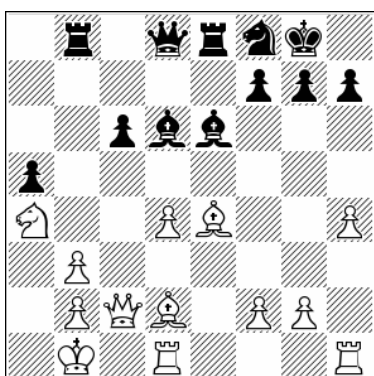
Time to assess the situation. Black's position looks compact and harmonious, while White's is a little messy. The h4-pawn is looking somewhat random, the queen's knight is offside on a4, and the d-pawn is isolated. White's pieces are not terrible – the bishop on e4 is centrally-placed and the knight on a4 will find a solid outpost on c5 – but they are not hurting Black in a dangerous area of the board. For example, it would be suicidal to capture the c6-pawn with the bishop and open the c-file towards White's queen and king. Black's pieces are harmoniously-placed and the bishop on e6 exerts annoying pressure towards the white queenside, while the rook on e8 eyes the e4-bishop.

White's first task is to defend the a2-pawn.

17.♟b1 b3

A natural move that hardly any human player could resist! It requires some strong play from White to survive.

18.axb3 ♞b8



19.♞c5

The most natural move, but a serious mistake. 19.♞d3 was the far from obvious only move and it requires some precise calculation and a material investment: 19...♞xb3 20.♞xc6 ♞xd1

21.♞xd1 ♞e6 (21...♞d7 22.♞f5 ♞e6 23.♞xa5; 21...♞e7 22.♞g5 f6 23.♞d2 gives White reasonable compensation: the a5-pawn is hard to hold and White will loosen up the black kingside with h4-h5-h6) 22.♞d5 ♞e8 (22...♞g6 23.h5; 22...♞f6 23.♞g5) 23.♞c6 ♞e6 24.♞d5 ♞xh4 25.♞xe6 ♞xe6 26.g3 ♞h5 27.♞e3 ♞d5 28.♞c3 ♞b7 29.♞d2 ½-½ (33) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

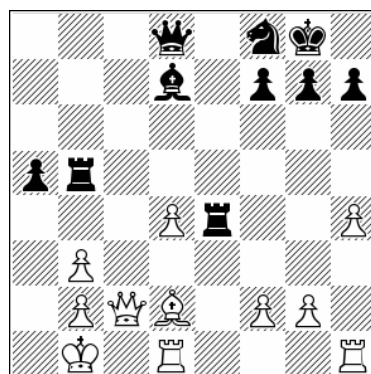
19...♞xc5 20.♞xc5

20.dxc5 loses to 20...♞xb3.

20...♞xb3

Again, Menchik goes for the natural human option. There was something even better, but you need to spot an unusual tactic to understand the point.

20...♞b5 looks like a waste of time, but the queen has some problems finding a spot to escape: 21.♞c1 (21.♞xc6 ♞d7 22.♞c2 ♞xe4 is the evil point!



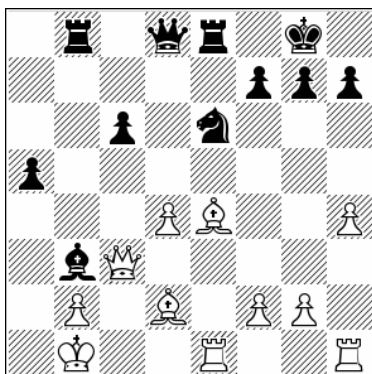
analysis diagram

23.♞xe4 ♞f5 and we suddenly understand the reason for ...♞b5!; Similarly, 21.♞c2 ♞xb3 or 21.♞c3 ♞xb3) 21...♞xd4 22.♞c2 ♞xb3 23.♞xb3 ♞xb3 24.♞xa5 ♞xf2 25.♞c2 ♞xc2+ 26.♞xc2 ♞g3 27.♞h2 ♞g4 28.♞b1 h5 29.♞d6 ♞e6 30.♞d8 f6 31.g3 ♞f7 32.♞d3 ♞g6 and with all White's activity parried, Black was free to convert the extra pawn, 0-1 (85) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

21.♞de1 ♞e6 22.♞c3

A) 22.♞xa5 was what the engines were preferring, but it looks rather helpful to open the a-file for Black's major pieces!;

B) 22.♞xc6 ♞xc5 23.♞xe8+ ♞xe8 24.♞xe8 ♞e4 wins a piece for Black 0-1 (56) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

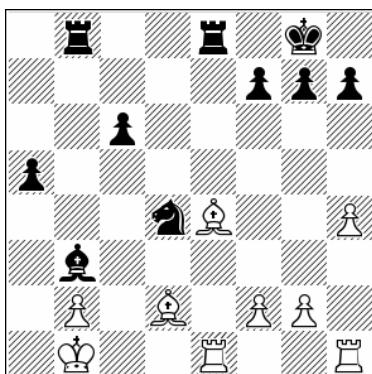


22...Qxd4

Menchik's only blemish in an otherwise well-played game. Looking through her games, one sometimes sees a tendency to settle for safety, rather than play for the maximum, and this is a good example. With the white king as vulnerable as it is, it makes more sense to keep the queens on.

22...a4 is the simplest and most powerful way, consolidating the nail on b3 and also giving Black the possibility of ...a3 to open the b-file, possibly after a prior ...Qb6.

23.Qxd4 Qxd4



In all fairness, although the danger has been reduced by the exchange of queens, White's situation is still quite difficult and a series of good moves are needed to escape to a tenable position. Sultan Khan goes wrong at once, after which Menchik finishes very efficiently.

24.f3

Dealing with the threat of ...Rxe4 and ...Qc2+ but not really challenging Black's position.

24.Qd3 deals with the threat of ...Rxe4, and offers the exchange of rooks, while hitting the a5-pawn.

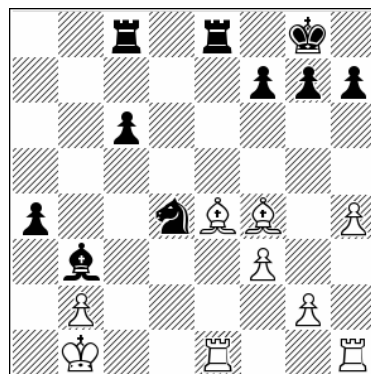
24...Qd5 (24...Qe6 was a tricky attempt from Dragon but Stockfish happily nabbed the a5-

pawn: 25.Qxa5 Rxa8 26.Qc3 Qb5 27.Qe5 f6 28.Qf4 Ra4 29.Qe3 Rb8 30.Qc2 Qc7 31.Ra1 Rxb4 32.Qc1 Rxb2 33.Qf4 Rb7 34.Qe1 and the two bishops compensated approximately for Black's extra c-pawn ½-½ (39) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 25.Rxe8+ Rxe8 26.Rg1 a4 27.Qe3 c5 28.Qc2 and White was well set for a long and obdurate defence, ½-½ (73) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

24...a4

Making the a-pawn safe and hammering the bishop on b3 into place, while also introducing the possibility of ...a3, opening the b-file. All remaining tactical problems are solved for Black, which makes her position impervious to anything Sultan Khan can throw at it.

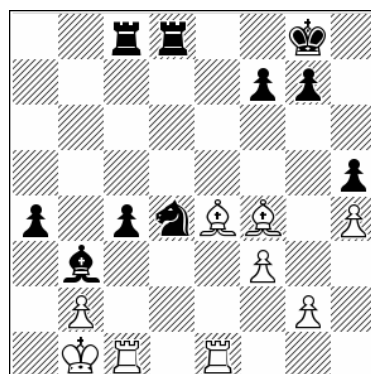
25.Qf4 Rbc8



26.Qd3

It's much of a muchness now what White does, as Black is thoroughly in control.

26.Qe3 was tried most often by the engines. After 26...c5 27.Rc1 h5 28.Rhe1 Rcd8 29.Qf4 the engines went for a set-up they really liked: 29...c4.

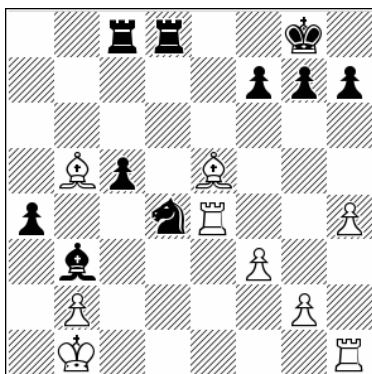


analysis diagram

The bishop on b3 is rock-solid and both tying down the white king and also preventing a white rook from coming to the d-file.

30.♙b7 ♜c5 31.♞e4 a3 32.♞xd4 a2+ 33.♜a1 ♞xd4 34.♙e3 ♞cd5 35.♙xd5 ♞xd5 with a dominating position for Black, 0-1 (82) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

26...♜e6 27.♙e5 c5 28.♙b5 ♞ed8 29.♞e4 ♜d4



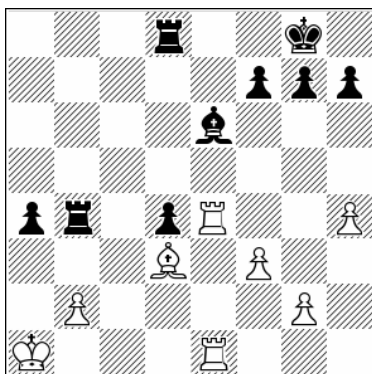
The knight has hopped to and fro, but it hasn't slowed down Black's initiative. White's pieces are again awkwardly-placed – the bishop on b5 is hanging and ...♙c2+ is threatened.

30.♙xd4 cxd4 31.♙d3 ♞b8

Black could have already struck with 31...a3, but Stockfish also chose 31...♞b8 in one of the engine games, so there's nothing wrong with Menchik's choice.

31...a3 32.bxa3 ♞c3 is the unexpected idea: the white bishop has to move from b3 and ...♙c2+ wins the exchange!

32.♜a1 ♞b4 33.♞he1 ♙e6



Menchik finds the correct idea: withdrawing the bishop from b3 makes ...a3 an unstoppable threat.

34.♞e5

34.♞e5 a3 35.bxa3 ♞a8 36.♞a2 ♙xa2 37.axb4 ♙c4+ 38.♜b2 ♙xd3 0-1 (57) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

34...a3 35.b3

Desperation. 35.♞b1 ♞a8 0-1 (57) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

35...♞xb3 36.♙c4

Or 36.♞d1 ♞b2, when both 37.♙b1 ♞xg2 and 37.♞e2 ♞xe2 38.♙xe2 g6 saw Black grind out wins in engine games.

36...♞b2 37.♙xe6 fxe6 38.♞a5 d3 39.♞xa3 d2 40.♞d1 ♞c2 0-1

41.♜b1 ♞dc8 and ...♞c1+ is decisive.

Game 12 – Ruy Lopez

Eugene Znosko-Borovsky

Alexander Alekhine

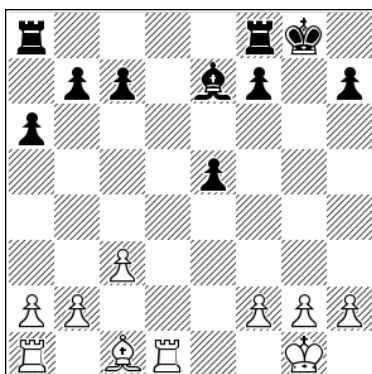
Paris 1933

This is very far from being one of Alekhine's greatest or best-known games and it may at first sight seem an odd choice for this book. But one of the things which computers have shown us is how extensive are the defensive resources in chess.

Ever since the days of Capablanca, there has been a tendency to assume that a small advantage somehow automatically leads to a win, in the hands of great technical masters such as Capablanca or Karpov. Often, we are unable to identify a clear mistake by the defender and, even if we can, these tend to be accepted as inevitable, on the lines of some such platitude as 'mistakes come easily in bad positions'. In reality, though, computers have shown that this is not so and that many inferior positions can be held, with tenacious and accurate defence.

This is one such example. Alekhine grinds down a lesser opponent from an endgame where he had only the barest of advantages. In his annotations, he does not clearly criticise any of White's moves and presents the game as the triumph of a multi-stage winning plan. We thought it would be interesting to subject this to engine tests, to see just how 'inevitable' White's defeat really was.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 d6
 6.c3 ♙d7 7.♞e1 ♙e7 8.d4 0-0 9.♘bd2 ♙e8
 10.♙xc6 ♙xc6 11.dxe5 dxe5 12.♘xe5 ♙xe4
 13.♘xe4 ♞xd1 14.♘xf6+ gxf6 15.♞xd1 fxe5



Alekhine – better-known for daring attacks and reckless sacrifices – outplayed his strong master opponent from this equal position, claiming that this win flowed out of a grand 6-point plan that he had conceived at this moment. The plan was formulated after the game by Alekhine thus: ‘Black’s plan, which will prove completely successful, consists of the following parts:

- 1) exchange one pair of rooks;
- 2) transfer the king to e6 where, being defended by the e-pawn, it can prevent the invasion at d7 by the remaining white rook;
- 3) operating with the rook on the open g-file and advancing the h-pawn, force the opening of the h-file;
- 4) after this White’s king, and possibly his bishop, will be tied to the defence of h1 and h2 against invasion by the rook;
- 5) Black meanwhile, by advancing his a- and b-pawns, will sooner or later also open one of the files on the Q-side;
- 6) since at this point his king will still be on the opposite wing, White will be unable to prevent the invasion of the first or second rank by the black rook.’

There are many interesting points to this. The first thing to make clear is that this grand conception does not guarantee a win. In fact, at the moment Black achieves point 6, the position is still completely equal, albeit with White on the less active side of equality. However, a number of the ‘stages’ identified by Alekhine are in fact typical and useful techniques for making

something out of such equal endgames. The exchange of a pair of rooks is usually a good way to flatten out the active chances of a defending side, allowing the pressing side to focus on improving his position without needing to be on the lookout for counterplay.

The second technique is Alekhine’s insistence on creating entry points (weaknesses) on opposite wings to stretch the defending side to breaking point. This technique doesn’t necessarily have to involve open lines on both sides (although this is how Alekhine interpreted it in this game) but it is a certain truth that with such limited material on the board, an assault on just one wing is unlikely to prove decisive. Perhaps the third instructive point is that pawn advances and pawn breaks are the key to achieving anything in endgames with limited material. We are often a little cautious of pawn pushes in middlegames, because empty space in your position can be exploited when there are many pieces on the board; in an endgame, however, space-gaining becomes much less risky and much more valuable.

The general course of the game is therefore – in our opinion – more realistically described as follows: from a completely equal position, White misses several concrete opportunities to drain the black position of any possibilities for improvement and ends up with what one might call ‘non-concrete equality’. By this we mean that the position is still equal, but there is no longer a clear path to resolve it into a dead position. From this situation, Alekhine plays with purpose to generate pressure on White’s position, even if this is more psychological than objectively significant. White defends adequately for about 20 moves, although missing several opportunities to play more actively to keep danger at bay. Eventually, White has to take the decision to submit to passive defence, but it’s at that moment that White cracks, essentially blundering a pawn with superficially active moves. It’s the type of game as Black that I (Matthew) have seen a superb

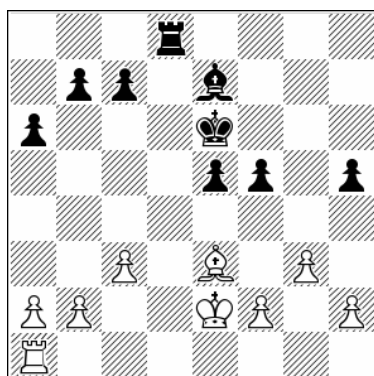
technical player like Michael Adams win many times!

16.♙h6 ♜fd8 17.♚f1

17.f4 has been pointed out by many commentators and would have been a good concrete path to dead equality. In the game, Black's pawn structure on e5 and f5 creates a space advantage that is part of Black's claim to be (slightly) better; 17.f4 breaks it up immediately: 17...exf4 18.♙xf4 ♜xd1+ 19.♜xd1 ♞d8 20.♜xd8+ ♙xd8 21.♚f2 f5 22.c4 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

17.g4 is less forcing but just as good, particularly if White wants to keep some positive chances for himself too: 17...♞d6 18.♜xd6 ♙xd6 19.♚g2 f6 20.♚f3 ♚f7 21.h3 ♚e6 22.♚e4 ♙f8 23.♙e3 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

17...f5 18.♜xd8+ ♜xd8 19.g3 ♚f7 20.♙e3 h5 21.♚e2 ♚e6

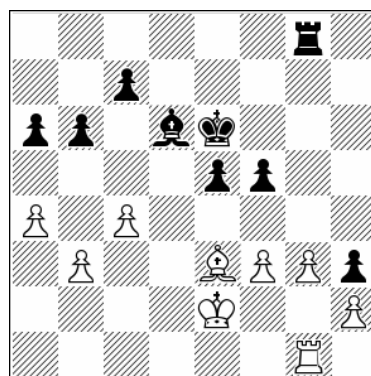


22.♞d1

The engines have made little comments about the accuracy of White's and Black's moves, but nothing major so far. There is still nothing wrong with White's move – 22.♞d1, looking to exchange off rooks – but it does give an inkling that Znosko-Borovsky was playing on a somewhat lower plane than Alekhine. Occupation of the d-file is irrelevant, as White is unable to make any use of it due to the exchange of one pair of rooks: as Alekhine pointed out, invasion squares on the d-file can easily be covered by the centralised king on e6, leaving the black rook free to roam.

The engines have two things to say about pawn structure in this endgame. They want White to set up the queenside pawns on light squares – following the Capablanca rule that you should

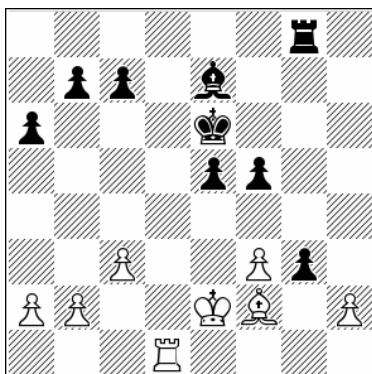
put your pawns on the colour opposite to your bishop – and play a4, c4 and b3, ensuring that a mass exchange of queenside pawns will take place if Black ever tries to open files there. They also think that Black should not exchange the h-pawn to create an open h-file – that h-file might just as well get used by White for counterplay – but play it to h3, creating a possible target on h2 for later in the endgame. Many games were played between the engines in this way of which this is a typical example: 22.a4 h4 23.f3 h3. Playing the pawn to h3 gives Black ideas of bishop sacrifices on g3 to let the h-pawn queen once the rooks get exchanged. It's a common set-up nowadays, thanks to the games of AlphaZero and all the leading engines since then also appreciate this structure greatly. 24.♞e1 b6 25.♞g1 ♞g8 26.b3 ♙d6 27.♙f2 ♜b8 28.♚d3 ♞d8 29.♚e2 ♜f8 30.♙e3 ♞g8 31.c4.



analysis diagram

Finishing the set-up on the queenside. Now all White needs to do is wait and react accordingly if Black punts the ...b5 break: 31...♙b4 32.♙f2 ♜b8 33.g4 f4 34.♞c1 ♙e7 35.♞d1 c6 36.♞a1 ♜b7 37.♞c1 ♙d6 38.♞a1 ♙e7 39.♞c1 ♜b8 40.♞a1 ♙g5 41.b4 (White takes the opportunity to fix a black queenside pawn on b6) 41...♙e7 42.b5 cxb5 43.cxb5 ½-½ (50) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

22...♞g8 23.f3 h4 24.♙f2 hxg3



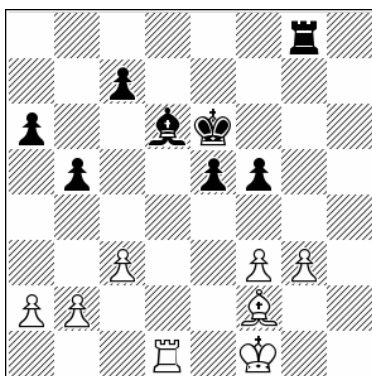
The engines dislike this move, considering any invasion on h2 to be harmless. From a psychological point of view, however, it gives White something to think about and plants the nagging worry in White's mind that the safety margin in the position is decreasing as he no longer controls the only invasion channel in the position.

25.hxg3 ♖h8 26.♙g1

The engine is supremely unconcerned and wants White to focus once more on realising a safe pawn structure: 26.a4 b5 (26...♖h2 27.♙f1 ♖h1+ 28.♙g1 ♖h8 (28...♙c5 29.♙g2 is not worrying at all for White) 29.a5 (even grabbing the opportunity to restrain the black queenside structure from a higher point) 29...♖g8 30.♙f2 ♙g5 31.♙e2 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 27.axb5 axb5 28.♖a1 ♙d6 (28...♖h2 29.♙f1) 29.♙f1 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

26...♙d6 27.♙f1 ♖g8 28.♙f2 b5

As you can imagine, the engines have been wanting ...b5 from Black and a4 from White at every occasion, but Alekhine finally plays it!



29.b3

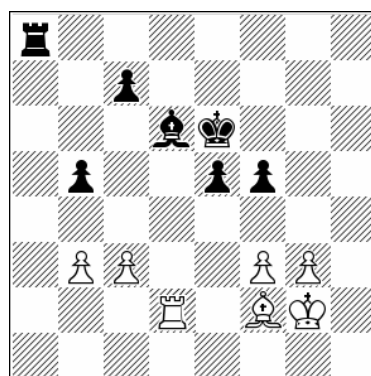
Passive defence is good enough for White although the engines prefer something a little more gung-ho. Kotov gives this move a question

mark in his two-volume Russian work on Alekhine, but does not suggest any alternative. 29.♙g2 a5 30.♖h1 is the favoured engine defence now, showing why they were reluctant to open the h-file so quickly: 30...a4 31.♖h6+ ♙d5 32.b3 ♖a8 33.♖f6 (using the h-file to launch counterplay against the f-pawn) 33...♖f8 34.♖h6 ♖g8 35.♖h5 ♙e6 36.♖h6+ ♙d5 37.♖h5 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

29...a5 30.♙g2 a4 31.♖d2

31.♖h1 is still the engine favourite, but the text is fine too, though it does commit White completely to passive resistance, something which – judging from subsequent moves – Znosko-Borovsky was not mentally prepared for.

31...axb3 32.axb3 ♖a8



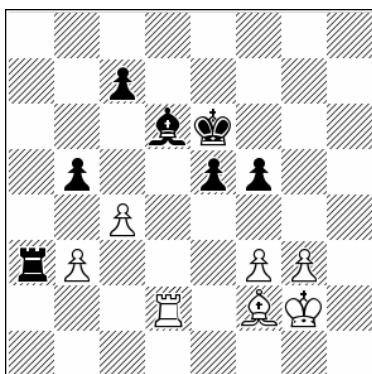
Note that this marks the completion of the sixth and final stage of Alekhine's grand plan, outlined earlier. But Stockfish assesses the position as just -0.28 (a touch better for Black) and all of the engine games between Dragon and Stockfish are still ending in quiet draws. It was essential now, however, to buckle down and ensure that Black's rook is not allowed to roam freely within White's position.

33.c4?

A terrible blunder. Instead, White should now have just stayed passive: 33.♙e1 (defending c3, blocking access to the full first rank and preparing to bring the king a little more to the centre) 33...♖a3 34.♖b2 was the way to do it, not giving away any more squares. Black is slightly better, of course, as he determines where play takes place, but White's compact and solid position should be easily strong enough to hold the draw: 34...♙c5 35.♙f1 ♖a1 36.♙e2 ♖a3 37.♙d3 ♙d5 38.♙e2 ♙e6 39.♙d3 ♙e7 40.g4 (not

necessary. White could also simply wait quietly) 40...f4 41.♔e4 ♖a1 42.♞e2 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

33...♞a3



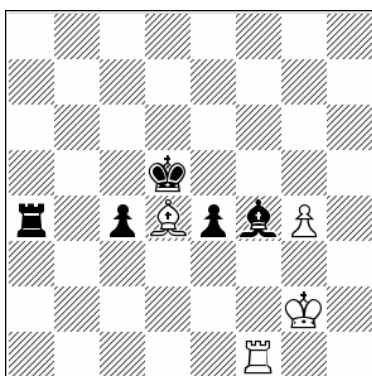
Just like that, White is completely lost! He either loses a pawn or is reduced to complete passivity, with the added 'bonus' that 33.c4 has created new entry channels for Black's dark-squared bishop.

34.c5

This is not going to improve matters! White brings another pawn within attacking range of Black's pieces. But it was now gone anyway, against fine technique from Black.

Two of our engine games from here:

A) 34.cxb5 ♞xb3 35.♞e2 ♞xb5. With the bishops off, the engines consider the drawing tendency to be high; with bishops on, it's a clear win. The bishop on d6 keeps the structure solid allowing Black to play more actively with king and rook without fearing checks or counterplay. 36.♔e3 ♞b4 37.♞c2 ♞b8 38.♞e2 c5 39.♞c2 ♔d5 40.♞d2+ ♔c6 41.♞c2 ♞b4 42.♔f2 ♞a4 43.♞c1 c4 44.g4 fxg4 45.fxg4 e4 46.♔d4 ♔f4 47.♞f1 ♔d5.

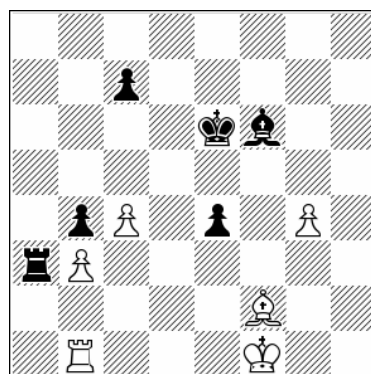


analysis diagram

Lovely play from Dragon: it's not just an extra pawn, also Black's pieces are better than White's.

48.♔g7 ♞a7 49.♔f6 ♞a2+ 50.♞f2 ♔d2 (a lovely idea, enabling the e-pawn to move forwards to a protected square) 51.♞e2 e3 52.g5 ♔e4 53.g6 ♞a8 54.♔h3 c3 55.♞g2 c2 56.♔b2 ♔d3 57.♞g3 ♞g8 58.g7 c1=♞. Great technique from Dragon 0-1 (64) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022;

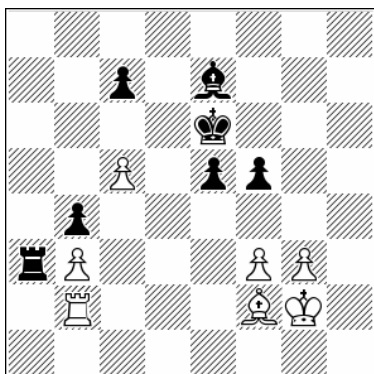
B) 34.♞b2 b4 is the key idea, tying down the rook to the defence of the b3-pawn (34...bxc4 35.bxc4 ♞c3 wins a pawn but the engines think White has good drawing chances after 36.c5 ♔xc5 37.♔xc5 ♞xc5 38.♔f2). 35.♔f1 ♔e7 36.♞b1 ♔f8 37.♞b2 ♔g7 38.♞b1 e4. Opening the h8-a1 diagonal and driving White's rook further into passivity. Now – thanks to a massive mistake from White – the truth of Alekhine's grand plan becomes visible: the black rook invades on the second rank and White's pieces cannot stop it: 39.fxe4 fxe4 40.g4 ♔f6



analysis diagram

41.♔e3 ♔c3 42.♔f2 ♞a2+ 43.♔g3 ♔e5+ 44.♔f4 ♞c2 45.g5 ♞c3+ (the black rook is crawling all over White's position now: the contrast between the black and white rooks is enormous) 46.♔g4 ♞f3 47.♔xe5 ♔xe5 48.♞d1 ♞f4+ 49.♔g3 c6 50.c5 ♔f5 51.♞d8 ♞g4+ 52.♔f2 ♔e5 53.♞b8 ♔d4 54.g6 e3+ 55.♔e2 ♞g2+ 56.♔f3 ♞xg6 57.♞xb4+ ♔d3 58.♞b7 ♞f6+ 59.♔g4 ♞e6 60.♔f5 ♞e8 61.♞d7+ ♔c2 62.♞g7 e2. As always, fantastic technique from the engines, 0-1 (71) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

34...♔e7 35.♞b2 b4



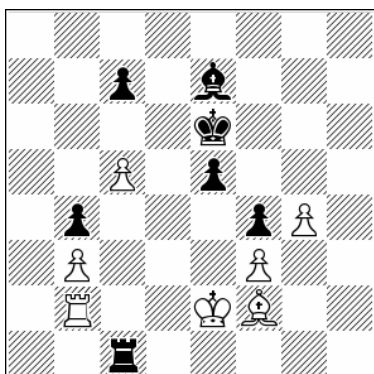
And in two moves, the game is completely finished. White's rook will come round to c3 and then White's pawns will start to fall.

36.g4

36.c6 ♖a1 37.♙e3 was the engine attempt, at least keeping the black rook out of c1, but it was all in vain.

37...♙d6 38.♙f2 ♙d5 39.♙e2 ♙xc6 40.♙f2 ♙d5 41.♙d2+ ♙e6 42.g4 f4 43.♙d3 ♙e7 44.♙e1 ♖a2+ 45.♙d2 ♖a3 46.♙b2 ♙c5 47.♙d3 ♙d5 48.♙b1 ♖a2 49.g5 ♙d4 50.g6 c5 51.♙d2 ♖a6 52.g7 ♙g6 0-1 (68) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

36...f4 37.♙f1 ♖a1+ 38.♙e2 ♖c1



39.♖a2

39.♙e1 ♙xc5 40.♙d2 ♖h1 41.♖a2 ♙d6 42.♙d3 ♖f1 43.♙e4 ♖b1. White just has too many weaknesses. Black finished off easily after 44.♖a8 ♖xb3 45.♖h8 ♖b2 46.♖h6+ ♙d7 47.♙c1 ♖c2 48.♖h7+ ♙e6 49.♖h6+ ♙f7 50.♖h1 ♙g6 51.♙d3 ♖f2 52.♖h8 ♖xf3+ 0-1 (65) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

39...♖c3 40.♖a7 ♙d7

40...♖c2+ was tempting too: 41.♙e1 (41.♙f1 ♖xf2+) 41...♙xc5 (41...♖xf2?? 42.♖a6+) 42.♙xc5 ♖xc5 43.♙e2 ♖c2+ 44.♙d1 ♖c3 45.♙e2 c5 46.♖c7 ♙d6 47.♖c8 ♖e3+ 48.♙f2 ♖xb3 0-1 (60) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

41.♖b7 ♖xb3 42.♖b8 ♖b2+ 43.♙f1 b3 44.♙g1 ♙c6 45.♙f1 ♙d5 46.♖b7 e4

There are many ways to win: Alekhine goes for mate!

47.fxe4+ ♙xe4 48.♖xc7 ♙f3 49.♖xe7 ♖xf2+ 50.♙e1 b2 51.♖b7 ♖c2 52.c6 ♙g3 53.c7 f3 54.♙d1 ♖xc7 55.♖xb2 f2 0-1

Game 13 – Nimzo-Indian Defence

Jose Raul Capablanca

Viacheslav Ragozin

Moscow 1936

The second half of this game is very well-known and has been quoted in many endgame textbooks. Most notably, it was the centrepiece of a famous article by Sergey Belavenets, which for many years was almost the only attempt in chess literature to deal with the subject of 'endgame technique' as a thing in itself, as opposed to concrete theoretical endgame positions. The Belavenets article was actually something of a Soviet secret, until used as the introduction to his famous book *Endgame Strategy* by Mikhail Shereshevsky. But the first half of the game has been largely neglected and it did not appear in most of the standard collections of Capablanca's games, such as the Golombek or Prins/Euwe volumes.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♙b3

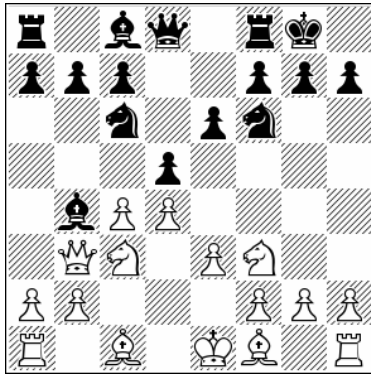
A line that strong players of this era just couldn't leave alone – without particular success, we would say. It's a rare guest in grandmaster play nowadays. Ragozin meets it with his patented ...♘c6 set-up and in fact the game transposes back to a main line of the Queen's Gambit Declined.

4...♘c6 5.e3 d5

Ragozin's favourite set-up.

6.♘f3 0-0

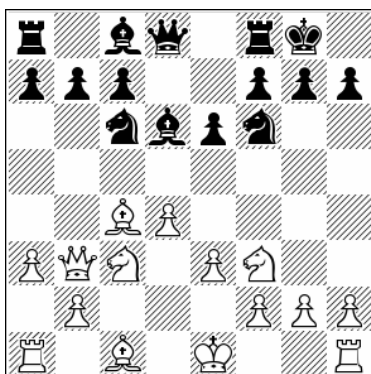
The game has transposed into a kind of Ragozin Variation, appropriately enough in view of the Black player's identity. The white queen is not especially well-placed on b3 and Black should have no problems equalising.



7.a3

7.♙c2 would transpose back to 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♙b4 5.♙a4+ ♘c6 6.e3 0-0 7.♙c2 which has been extensively tested at the elite level. White claims that the early queen move (5.♙a4+ in this line, 4.♙b3 in our game) has elicited ...♘c6 from Black, which prevents Black from striking at the centre with ...c5. White puts the queen back to a less exposed square and continues development. The modern treatment is to avoid a3, judging that Black's bishop will retreat of its own free will anyway. The engines' play was interesting from a theoretical viewpoint: (7.♙c2) 7...♞e8 8.♙d2 ♙f8 9.♙e2 ♘b4 10.♙b1 and now, instead of 10...dxc4 followed by ...b6 which has been played by many elite players, the engines wanted to maintain the central tension with 10...b6 11.a3 ♘c6 12.♙c2 ♘e7 13.c5 bxc5 14.dxc5 ♘g6 15.b4 and a draw was agreed in this complex position between Stockfish and Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

7...dxc4 8.♙xc4 ♕d6



9.♙b5

One imagines that this was a miscalculation from Capablanca – I (Matthew) have made the same one myself! 9.♙b5 seems to prevent Black's

freeing break 9...e5 but there is a small tactical point.

Black is threatening ...♘a5, so a tempo loss is inevitable for White, and 9.♙c2 was again the engine choice, transposing into a less popular option for White against the Queen's Gambit Declined Ragozin. 9...e5 poses no problems. 10.h3 ♙d7 11.0-0 exd4 12.exd4 ♙c8 13.♙g5 ♙xh3 was a line that Stockfish repeated six times in engine games. It's also a novelty (13...♙f5 was played earlier in a correspondence game)! 14.♙xf6 gxf6 15.♘e4 ♖h8 16.♘xf6 ♙f5 17.♙xf5 ♙xf5 and most of the excitement in the position had been neutralised by the exchange of queens. 18.♞ae1 ♔g7 19.♘e4 ♞fe8 20.♙d5 a5 21.♘xd6 cxd6 22.♞xe8 ♞xe8 23.♙xc6 and a draw was agreed in this balanced endgame between Dragon 3.1 and Stockfish, Classics 2022.

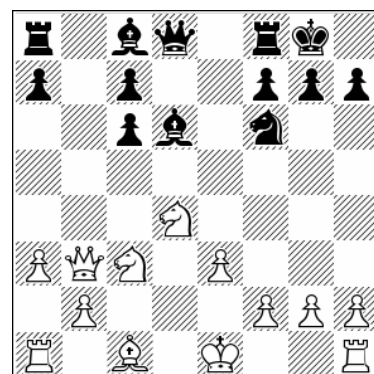
9...e5! 10.♙xc6 exd4

The point. This pawn sacrifice nets Black the bishop pair and excellent light-square play, which ensures adequate compensation. 11.exd4 is now White's best, but one suspects that Capablanca wanted to prove he hadn't miscalculated! The pawn grab, however, is not only risky: it's very bad indeed.

11.♘xd4?!

11.exd4 bxc6 12.0-0 h6 13.h3 a5 14.♞e1 ♙e6 15.♙a4 ♞a6 is balanced, ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

11...bxc6



12.♘xc6

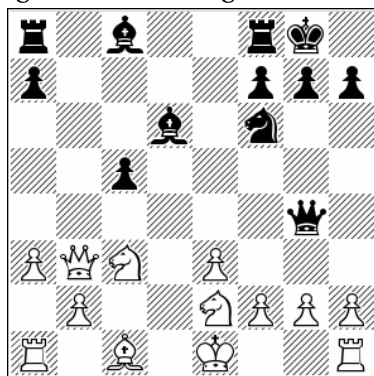
The engines hate this pawn grab, preferring something more solid like 12.f3 c5 13.♘de2.

12...♙d7 13.♘d4 ♙g4?!

Looking through Ragozin's next moves, one truly has the sensation of a player overcome by

nerves at the unexpected good fortune of such a good position against such a good player! This is still pretty much on the right track, though there is a simpler move-order.

Since Ragozin saw the theme of ...♖g4, it's a little strange that he didn't play 13...c5 immediately: 14.♗de2 (14.♗f3 ♕a6 is obviously strong) and now 14...♖g4 is even stronger:

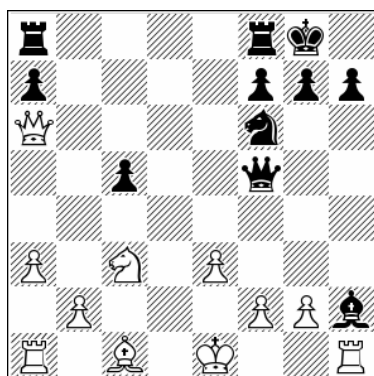


analysis diagram

A) 15.0-0? loses to 15...♕xh2+: 16.♗xh2 ♖h4+ 17.♗g1 ♗g4 18.♖d1 ♖xf2+ 19.♗h1 ♖h4+ 20.♗g1 ♕a6 is actually mate in 16!;

B) 15.♗f1 is a pleasant sight for Black: 15...♕e6 16.♖c2 ♕c4 17.f3 ♖e6 18.♗f2 ♕b3 19.♖b1 ♖ad8 was calm play from Dragon, looking to tie White up completely with ...c4 followed by ...♗f6-d7-c5/e5-d3: 20.e4 ♗d7 21.♕f4 c4 22.♕e3 ♕c5 23.♖c1 ♖d6 24.g4 ♗e5 25.♕xc5 ♗d3+ 26.♗g2 ♖xc5 27.♖g1 ♖e5 and Black maintained a strong initiative, 0-1 (69) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022;

C) 15.♗g3 ♕a6 also looks powerful. We just have to show you one fun line that could only be found by an engine! 16.♖a4 ♖c8 17.♗f5 ♖xf5 (17...♖d8 is also promising but Black's choice exploits an unusual tactical point) 18.♖xa6 and now the hammer blow 18...♕xh2!.



analysis diagram

Amazing! 19.♖xh2 (19.♖e2 ♕e5; if White doesn't capture the bishop, then a safe place for the white king is hard to find, 0-1 (70) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 19...♗g4 wins for Black: 20.♖e2 ♗xh2 21.f3 ♖ad8 22.e4 ♖h5 23.♕e3 f5. The knight on h2 is somewhat restricted but both engines agreed that Black has a decisive advantage, 0-1 (101) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

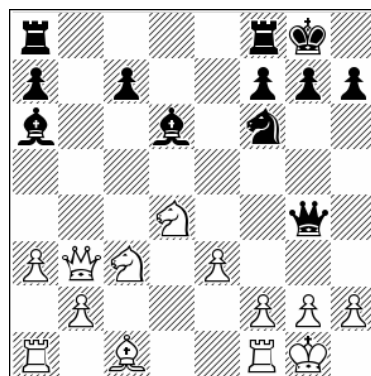
14.0-0

This is the difference from the previous note – with his knight still able to reach f3, White need not fear the sacrifice on h2. Even so, he is far from out of the woods yet.

14...♕a6?

This is a strange move once White has castled kingside. I imagine that Ragozin overlooked one of White's intermezzos on the 15th or 16th moves.

14...c5 would still have been unpleasant for White. 15.♗f3 (15.♗de2 ♕xh2+ is the same as above) 15...♖h5 16.♖d1 ♖d8 leaves White facing almost insoluble problems. The engines managed to hold a worse middlegame the exchange down but it wasn't much fun: 17.e4 (17.h3 naturally runs into 17...♕xh3!). White can just about stay on the board with 18.♖b7 ♖db8 19.♖c6 ♕f8 20.gxh3 ♖c8 21.♖b5 ♖xf3 22.♖f1 but it would have taken all of the legendary Cuban's *sangfroid* to save himself) 17...♕g4 18.♗d5 ♕xh2+ 19.♗xh2 ♕xd1 20.♗xf6+ gxf6 21.♖c3 ♖g6 22.♕d2 ♕g4 23.♖e1 h5 24.♗f1 ♖ab8 25.f3 followed by ♗e3, and White's solid pawn structure and strong knight and Black's weak pawns allowed White to hold on twice in engine games. Black was clearly on top, however; ½-½ (78) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.



15.h3!

The only move, and one Ragozin had presumably underestimated. The immediate 15.♞d1? again allows 15...♙xh2+ 16.♜xh2 ♞h4+ 17.♜g1 ♜g4, this time because of 18.♜f3 ♞xf2+ 19.♜h1 ♙f1.

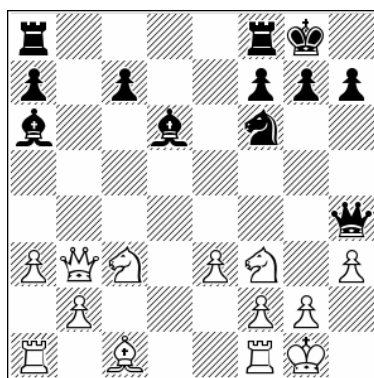
The line 15.♞e1 ♙xh2+ 16.♜xh2 ♞h4+ 17.♜g1 ♜g4 was surely part of Ragozin's thinking behind 14...♙a6.

15...♞h4?!

15...♞g6 was better, not giving White a tempo with ♜f3. Now White even begins to get on top.

16.♜f3

16.♞e1 ♙h2+ was surely another part of Ragozin's calculations after 14...♙a6. 17.♜xh2 ♜g4+ 18.♜h1 ♜xf2+ 19.♜g1 ♜xh3+. Unfortunately, 16.♜f3 makes everything safe with gain of tempo.



16...♞h5

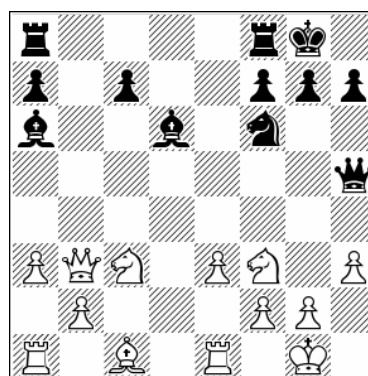
Black's position is still quite decent: two raking bishops for the pawn, a slight lead in development and an aggressively posted queen. However, you can't help feeling a little sad when you compare the situation a few moves earlier and see how well White has managed to normalize the situation on the kingside. Black's key desire is to get the light-squared bishop redeployed from the now-useless a6-f1 diagonal to the a8-h1 diagonal, where it attacks the white kingside and will fight against the white e-pawn when it is advanced to e4.

16...♞ab8 was the maximalist engine preference, looking to grab control of the b7-square and chase the white queen back. The engines were not shy to take up the challenge: 17.♞xb8 ♞c4 18.♞xf8+ ♙xf8 19.♞e1. The engines saw this as a slight advantage for White. The white pieces

look a little passive to me but it seems that Black can't stop White from unravelling.

19...h6 20.e4 ♞b3 21.e5 ♜h5 22.♙e3 ♙b7 (22...♞xb2 23.♞ec1 and the threat of g4 is rather awkward: 23...g6 (23...♙b7 24.♞ab1 wins the bishop on b7) 24.♞ab1 ♞xa3 25.♞a1 picks up the bishop on a6) 23.♜b1 would not have been one's first, second or thirty-second thought! 23...♙d5 (23...♙xf3 24.♜d2; 23...♞xb2 24.♜bd2 and again the threat of g4 is awkward) 24.♜bd2 ♞b7 25.b4 g5 26.♞ac1 ♜h7 27.♞ed1 ♜g7 28.♜e1 ♜e6 (Black has organised himself beautifully on the central light squares) 29.♜df3 ♙g7 30.♞d2 a6 31.h4 ♜g6 and a sort of equilibrium had been reached, ½-½ (37) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

17.♞e1



17...♞ab8

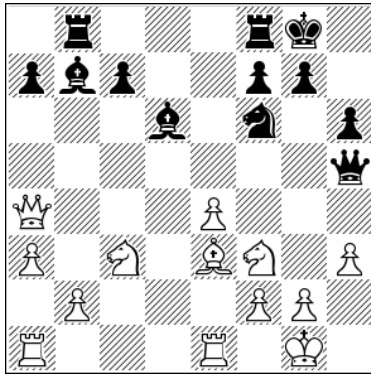
Natural, to secure b7 for the light-squared bishop, but the engine prefers to leave the rook on a8 to defend the a7-pawn. This will turn out to be quite important as you will see!

17...♞fb8 18.♞a4 ♙b7 19.e4 h6 20.♙e3 ♞e8 when we reach the same position as in the game but with the a-pawn protected! 21.♞b5 ♙xe4 22.♞xh5 ♜xh5 23.♜xe4 ♞xe4 24.♜d2 ♞a4 25.♞ac1 ♜f6 26.♞c4 ♞a6 27.♙d4 ♞d8 28.g3 ♜d5 29.♜f1. It's a slightly irritating position for Black to defend due to the weak queenside pawns and offside rook, but a Dragon is very patient! ½-½ (61) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

18.♞a4 ♙b7 19.e4

White has managed to stabilise and consolidate his extra pawn, and now has a clear advantage.

19...h6 20.♙e3



20...Rfe8

20...a6 is the engine move, placing the a-pawn on a protected square and stopping White's annoying resource ♖b5 which Capablanca uses later to great effect. It's getting a little more tricky for Black although the two bishops and open lines – in particular the combined pressure against e4 which restricts White's freedom of movement – keep Black in the game. 21.♙d4 (irritates the black knight and also protects b2 for the future) 21...♞h7 22.♞ad1 ♞fe8 23.♞d5 ♙xd5 24.exd5 ♞xe1+ 25.♞xe1 ♞g5. White has an extra pawn and has neutralised Black's bishop pair but the kingside is still vulnerable.

26.f3 ♖h4 27.♞f1 ♞d8 28.♞c2 ♖f4 29.♙c5 ♖h2 30.♙xd6 ♖xd6 31.♖a4 ♞h7 32.♞c2 ♞f6 33.♞e3 ♞h5 34.♖b4 ♖e5 and Black's counterplay continued, ½-½ (45) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

21.♙d4 ♞h7?!

The same idea Stockfish and Dragon used, but with a rather painful difference. By now the engines recommend some pretty ugly stuff to survive.

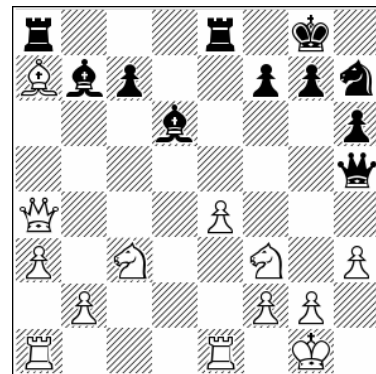
After 21...a5 22.♙xf6 gxf6, the pawn structure is not one any chessplayer dreams about, but two bishops, open lines and a slightly vulnerable white kingside give Black hope of drumming up saving counterplay. A series of engine games from this position still ended in draws.

23.♞ad1 ♞h8 24.♖d4 ♖g6 25.♞h1 ♖g7 26.♞h4 ♖g5 27.♞f3 ♖g7 28.♞b5 f5 29.♖xg7+ ♞xg7 30.♞fd4 ♙c8 31.exf5 ♞xe1+ 32.♞xe1 ♙f4 33.♞e4 ♙c1 34.b4 ♙d7 35.f6+ ♞g6 36.♞e2 ♞xb5 37.♞xc1 axb4 38.axb4 c5 39.bxc5 ♞xc5 40.♞d3 ♞b5 41.♞c4 ♞xf6. By some miracle, Black has managed to liquidate all of the queenside pawns and still had

100 moves of holding this endgame to look forward to! ½-½ (142) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

One always tends to think of Capablanca's strength in terms of intuition and positional feel, the implication being that he was weaker in tactics and concrete play. But in this game, the moment his rather optimistic opening play had brought him into trouble and the game became concrete, he found the best move at every point, whilst Ragozin, by contrast, probably played his excellent early pawn sacrifice largely on instinct and has been outplayed completely since the game became concrete. The same thing happened to Frank Marshall against Capablanca at New York 1918, when the latter sprung his eponymous gambit on the then World Champion.

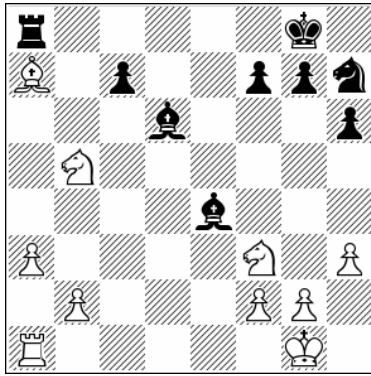
22.♙xa7! ♞a8



23.♖b5

The point. Once again, Capablanca follows the engines' first line, using a fairly evil tactic to force simplification to an endgame a pawn up. 21.♙d4 forced the knight away from f6, unprotected the queen, which allows White to unpin in this clever way. The e4-pawn drops, but since the queens are exchanged, all kingside danger is removed, leaving White with a winning middlegame.

23...♖xb5 24.♞xb5 ♞xe4 25.♞xe4 ♙xe4



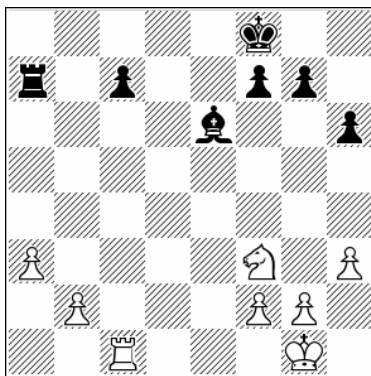
26. d2

The engines are not afraid of the ending after 26. dxd6 despite the opposite-coloured bishops! 26... cxd6 (26... e3 27. e3 e2 28. d5 d6 29. c1 b8 30. d4 e8 31. a4 h7 32. c5 b4 33. a5 d6 34. c3 b5 35. b5 d5 36. f3 d3 37. d7 c5 38. d6 c4 39. a6 d7 40. a7 d5 41. d7 b7 42. e5 d5 43. d5 b6 44. xg7 1-0 (76) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022 – a smooth performance from Stockfish) 27. e3 d6 28. d4 d5 29. a4 b8 30. b3 f8 31. d2 d3 32. f3 f6 33. e1 b7 34. d1 a6 35. g3 d7 36. b5 b7 37. dxd6 1-0 (75) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022

26... e3 27. dxd6 e7a7

27... cxd6 leads to endgames similar to those above.

28. d6e4 d8f8 29. d5c5 e5f5 30. d3f3 d6e6 31. c1c1 f8f8 32. dxe6+ e6e6



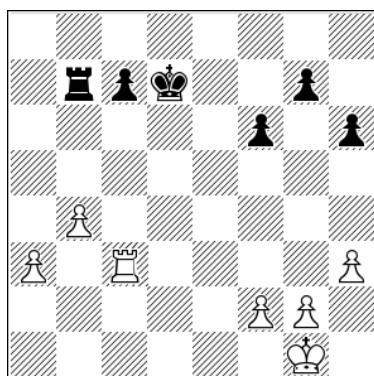
There is a famous story – possibly apocryphal – about Capablanca, that during one of his games, he walked past two strong players analysing an endgame and considering many complicated variations. Barely pausing, he remarked that ‘this piece should go here, and that piece should go there’ and walked on. In other words, navigating an endgame by formulating a desired

piece structure, rather than calculating long variations. Normally, this example of Capablanca’s is demonstrated, as it fits the principle of this story beautifully. In this position, Capablanca steered for the strong – more or less impregnable – centralised piece set-up e3, b4, d4, e3 and f4 as a first step to converting his extra pawn. This harmonious constellation of pieces protects and attacks an impressive number of central and wing squares: b5, c5, c6, e6, e5, f5. The result was a classic endgame, with, however, one rather startling moment that was pretty much unknown until it was pointed out by GM Karsten Müller in a recent endgame book.

One would not expect to learn much new from engine games from here, but, as often happens, they did reveal something surprising. You’ll note that Capablanca never offered a transposition into a pure rook endgame: throughout the endgame, he seemed to strive to keep the material balance of e+d vs e+f as it was, even when he had a clear chance – with damage to the black pawn structure to boot – to transpose into one. However, the engines weren’t at all bothered and offered transpositions to pure rook endgames all over the place. And not with an evaluation of +1 or +1.5 but with +4 or +5! It wasn’t clear why this pure rook endgame was so good. It is intriguing and also reminds one a little of the final game of the WCC between Magnus Carlsen and Ian Nepomniachtchi. In that game, Carlsen turned a winning attack into a winning rook endgame, which he proceeded to win with an ease that seemed frankly freakish! The idea of being able to repeat this flawless technique in one’s own games is very alluring, but clearly it is time to put some work into it. We’ll take a look at a couple of transpositions to a rook endgame suggested by the engines and try to understand what makes them so good for White.

33. d4 b7

33... d7 34. d6 b7 35. b4 e8 36. d5 b5 37. c5 f6 38. d6 xc6 39. bxc6 d7 40. c3.



analysis diagram

This was the position selected for the first series of engine matches. What makes this position such a clear win according to the engines? Three quality factors are involved here:

1) The rook's ability to anchor both the queenside and the kingside. In principle, endings are won by involving all of one's pieces – including the king – in the struggle. Obviously, the further the king leaves its 'home' of pawns to engage in the struggle, the more vulnerable those pawns become, and the more likely they are to become a target for counterplay. Ideally, there should be a way to defend those pawns efficiently to at least slow down the opponent's counterplay. White's rook on the third rank is fantastically-placed for such a job, defending the passed a3-pawn while able to either cement the kingside structure from f3 or g3 (often gaining a tempo against the black kingside) or to protect a pawn on the third rank that supports the rest of White's kingside pawn structure (such as the f3/g4/h5 structure);

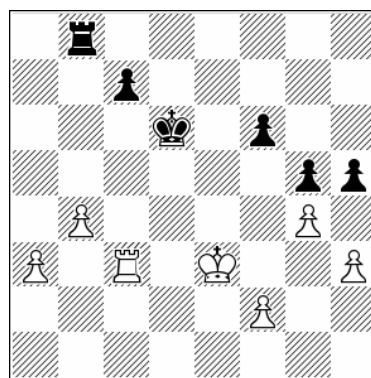
2) Secondly, the rook's ability to punch holes in the black kingside structure (by moves such as ♖g3 and ♖f3), forcing the black pawns to move forwards, closer to the white king, exposing entry paths that are easy for the white king to exploit;

3) White's great flexibility in choosing targets on either side of the board. This may not be apparent until one plays through some of the engine games. White has the ability with a check on the d-file to make Black take a decision as to where to place his king. If it goes to the c-file, then the kingside is an easier prey for an entering white king; if the king goes to the

kingside, then White may move the king all the way up to c6 to attack c7, or just simply support the advance of the kingside pawns from e.g. b3. In fact, many of the engine games – some of which we will see – involved the white king first going one side, and then when the black king scrambled back to defend, moving to the other side. In essence, there is no one winning side of the board for White: both sides are possible!

Thinking about it, you also saw Capablanca regularly giving checks with his rook on the d-file, simply asking Black to make a choice and choose a side!

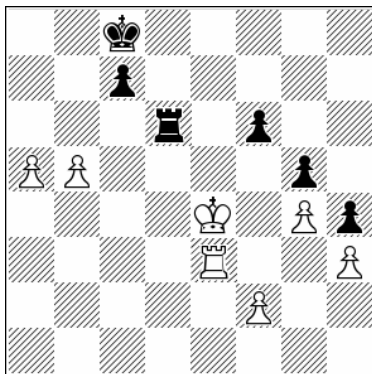
40...g5 (40...♖b5 41.♔f1 ♖b6 42.♔e2 ♖e6+ 43.♔d2 ♔c8 44.♖g3 ♖e7 45.h4 ♔b7 46.♔d3 ♔c6 47.♖e3 ♖f7 48.♔e4 f5+ 49.♔f4 – a nice example of the white king feinting first one way and then the other – 49...♔d7 50.h5 ♔d8 51.a4 c6 52.a5 ♔c8 53.♖e6 ♔b7 54.g3 ♔c7 55.♔e5 ♖d7 56.♔xf5 1-0 (73), Lc0-Dragon 2.6, Classics 2022) 41.g4 ♖b5 42.♖f3. See how beautifully anchored both the white kingside and queenside pawns are! The rook on f3 defends a3, f2 and h3 as well as attacking f6. The white king is now free to enter. The queenside will be its first port of call after Black's next move, bringing the king to the kingside: 42...♔e6 43.♔f1 ♖b8 44.♔e2 h5 45.♖c3 ♔d6 46.♔e3.



analysis diagram

A little shift from White: the c-pawn is attacked, dragging the black king to the queenside, and the white king advances, ready to target the f6-pawn and enter the black kingside via the path e4-f5: 46...h4 47.♔e4 ♖b5 (blocking entry to the f5-square, so White shifts the angle once more!) 48.♖f3 (hitting f6 and dragging the black king over to the kingside, freeing an invasion path

for the king on the queenside) 48...♔e6 49.♔d4 ♚b6 50.♔c5 ♔d7 51.a4. Black's rook has abandoned its brake on the a-pawn for a few moves so White takes the opportunity to advance it. The king's support from c5 means that this can go very quickly if Black does not react! 51...♚c6+ 52.♔d5 ♚e6 53.a5 ♚e5+ 54.♔d4 ♚e6 55.b5 ♔c8 56.♚e3 ♚d6+ 57.♔e4.

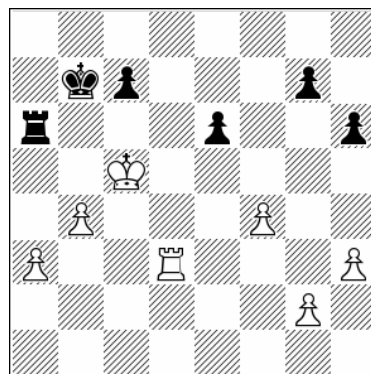


analysis diagram

The black king has returned to the queenside, so the white king heads back to the kingside. This time, Black's chances of stopping the white king entering into f5 are not good! 57...♚d2 58.♚f3. Again anchoring the kingside, protecting f2 and h3. The two queenside pawns – advanced past the protection of the rook – are vulnerable now, but on the other hand, so are Black's three kingside pawns! 58...♚b2 59.♚xf6 ♚xb5 60.♚f5 ♚b2 61.♔e5 ♔b7 62.♔f6 1-0, Lc0-Dragon 2.6, Classics 2022. A very neat exposition.

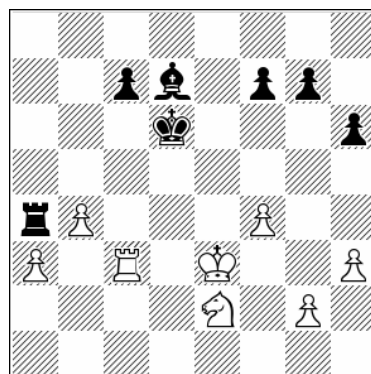
34.b4

Once again, Capablanca declines the chance of a rook ending: 34.♔xe6+ fxe6 35.b4 ♔e7 36.♔f1 ♔d7 37.♔e2 ♚b8 38.♔e3 ♚f8 39.f3 ♚a8 (Black's shuffle with ...♚f8, stimulating f3 from White, had the idea of denying access to the kingside along the third rank to the white rook) 40.♚c3 ♚a6 41.♔e4 ♔d6 42.♚d3+ ♔e7 43.♔d4 (this now common idea from White: a check and then the king heads in the opposite direction to the black king!) 43...♔d8 44.♔c5+ ♔c8 45.f4 ♔b7



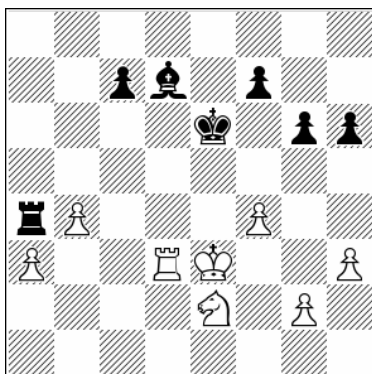
analysis diagram

46.♔d4. The black king has committed itself to the queenside now so the white king heads back to the kingside. f4 opens the third rank again, leaving the kingside an easy prey for the white rook. 46...♚d6+ 47.♔e4 ♚c6 48.♚g3 ♚c2 49.♚xg7 ♚e2+ 50.♔d4 h5 51.g3 ♔c6 52.♚g5 ♔d6 53.♚xh5 1-0, Koivisto 7.9-Stockfish, Classics 2022. Another really good example of great rook endgame play. **34...♔d7 35.f4 ♔e7 36.♔f2 ♚a7 37.♚c3 ♔d6 38.♚d3 ♔e7 39.♔e3 ♚a4 40.♚c3 ♔d6 41.♚d3 ♔e7 42.♚c3 ♔d6 43.♔e2**



I (Matthew) have often remarked on AlphaZero's tendency (which you now see in all the strong modern engines like Leela Zero and Stockfish) to secure a series of outposts/good squares for its pieces and then to (attempt to) make progress by shuffling its pieces on those outposts. One particularly beautiful example in the Caro-Kann is analysed in detail in *Silicon Road*, I hadn't realised until now that this is exactly the approach that Capablanca takes, aiming to replace ♚c3/♔d4/♔e3 with ♔c3/♔d4/♚e3!

43...g6 44.♚d3+ ♔e6



45.♔d4??

Completely consistent but actually an unexpectedly huge tactical error!

45...♖a6??

45...♙b5 46.♖e3+ ♔d6 (Müller) and the double threat of ...c5+ and ...♙xe2 (followed by ...♖xa3) equalises for Black!

46.♖e3+ ♔d6 47.♘c3

Now everything is as Capablanca intended. The knight and king are perfectly-placed to support an advance of the queenside pawns (first b5, then a4) while the rook on e3 both guards the e-file (preventing black counterplay there) while ready to harass the exposed black king, or invade itself on the sixth or seventh ranks if the opportunity arises.

47...f5 48.b5

... and now the queenside pawns start to advance:

48...♖a8 49.♔c4 ♙e6+ 50.♔b4 c5+ 51.bxc6 ♙g8 52.♘b5+ ♔xc6 53.♖d3 g5 54.♖d6+ ♔b7 55.fxg5 hxg5 56.♖g6 ♖f8 57.♖xg5 f4 58.♘d4 ♖c8 59.♖g7+ ♔b6 60.♖g6+ ♔b7 61.♘b5 ♖f8 62.♘d6+ ♔b8 63.h4 1-0

With that one exception, a very strong technical performance from Capablanca. His decision not to enter a rook ending was perfectly justified from a practical viewpoint. However, it is nonetheless hugely instructive to see how the engines win the rook endings (White scored 100% in the many rook endings we tested) and any player will learn a great deal from a careful study of the examples given in this game.

Game 14 – French Defence

Samuel Reshevsky

Mikhail Botvinnik

Moscow Match USSR-USA 1946

This game was obviously a favourite with Botvinnik, because as well as featuring in his three-volume Russian games collection, its course is also described in some detail in his autobiography *Achieving the Aim* and it was one of the games he included in a small book called *15 Games and their Stories*, published in the early 1980s. But despite this, the editor/translator of the English volume *Botvinnik's Best Games 1926-46* omitted it, so it is not so well-known in the West. It was played in the second USA-USSR match, an OTB match held in Moscow.

Botvinnik was one of several players who had only returned from the great Groningen tournament the previous day and was thus in need of rest and recuperation, rather than sitting down to play a top rival (Reshevsky had not played at Groningen). Botvinnik had struggled to draw the first game as White; this was the second.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♙a5

This bishop retreat has been in and out of fashion since it was first played in the 1930s, but recent engines give it a certain seal of approval. Indeed, 5...♙a5 is Stockfish's preferred choice in this position. In human chess, it was an Armenian speciality in the 1980s and 1990s, with both Vaganian and Lputian playing it extensively. It was still quite new in 1946, although White players had already discovered the most dangerous idea – 6.b4 – which is played almost exclusively today. This was the very first time Botvinnik played it. He records that he chose it partly because he wanted to avoid whatever Reshevsky (who hardly ever played 1.e4) had evidently prepared for Botvinnik's usual 5...♙xc3+, and also because his confidence in the latter had already been shaken by his defeat against England's C.H. O'D. Alexander in the USSR-GB radio match a few months earlier.



6. ♖g4

Reshevsky plumps for the second most-popular move which was known so far only from a game of Tartakower in 1939 where Black had played 6...g6. Botvinnik, however, invariably reacted to ♖g4 with a sacrifice of the g7-pawn – an approach known as the French Winawer Poisoned Pawn (analogous to the b2-pawn in the 6. ♗g5 Sicilian Najdorf). Over the years, he tried this sacrifice in many different forms, most notably in World Championship matches against Smyslov and Tal.

6.b4 rapidly became established as the main line and is still to this day considered best.

6... ♖e7 7.dxc5 ♗xc3+

7...0-0 is the engine recommendation, but this was never Botvinnik's style.

8.bxc3 ♖d7?!

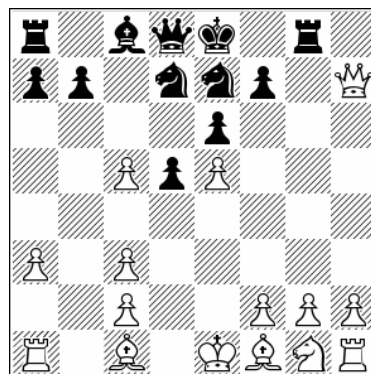
A) 8... ♖f5 9. ♖f3 0-0 10. ♗d3 ♖d7 is the engine's preference, but White retains a plus after 11.a4 ♖xc5 12. ♗a3;

B) 8... ♖g6 was favoured by Vaganian and Lputian, either immediately or after a preliminary 8... ♗a5. Botvinnik's sharp choice has never gained much of a following.

9. ♗xg7

Botvinnik criticised this move as 'stereotyped' and recommended 9. ♖f3 instead. But the engine is firmly on Reshevsky's side, believing that the capture on g7 gives White a large advantage.

9... ♗g8 10. ♗xh7



Such positions have become commonplace in French theory over the years but they weren't a common sight in 1946. It's wise not to underestimate the courage required to take on such a position as Black: Black is currently three (!) pawns down and his kingside is decimated. That means that his king will have to head for the queenside and that White already has a passed h-pawn. On top of that, White has the bishop pair and Black's remaining bishop is the one that doesn't cover his dark square weaknesses. Black's compensation is twofold:

1) White's queenside (pawn) weaknesses, which give Black both a target and cost White some time to defend;

2) Open lines created by giving away so many pawns! For example, the rook on g8 attacks g2 and prevents the bishop on f1 from developing easily. Moreover, in this specific position, Black can grab White's e5-pawn, potentially creating a strong pawn centre as extra compensation. The only drawback is that removing the e5-pawn also increases the scope of White's dark-squared bishop.

10... ♖xe5

Botvinnik logically removes the e5-pawn at once, keeping the needling ... ♗a5 in reserve, but the engines do not approve of the move-order.

10... ♗a5 first is preferred, although the engines still give White a huge advantage: most engine games from this position ended in a white win. 11. ♗d2 ♖xe5 12. ♖f3 (12. ♗h5 ♖g4 13. ♗d3 ♗xc5 14. ♗h4 e5 15.h3 was Dragon's preference and also led to White wins) 12... ♖xf3+ 13.gxf3 ♗xc5 14. ♗h4 e5 15. ♗b4 (15. ♗f6 was another engine favourite that scored very well) 15... ♗c7 16.h4 ♗f5 17. ♗g5 ♗xc2 18. ♖d2 ♗f5 19. ♗b5+ ♖c6 20. ♖he1

♖g6 21.♗f4 ♕e4 22.♗g4 ♖b6 23.a4 ♗xf2+ 24.♕e2 ♜xg5 25.♗xg5 ♕h7 26.♗e3 ♗xe3+ 27.♔xe3 ♔e7 28.h5 and with the complications over, White is left with the task of converting an extra exchange, 1-0 (69) Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022.

11.♕e2

Reshevsky cleverly exploits Black's last move to develop the light-squared bishop with impunity and prepare ♔f3 without doubling the f-pawns. It's not the engines' favourite move but it shows how alert Reshevsky is to the nuances of the position.

A) 11.♕d3 was Stockfish's top choice, so as to meet 11...♗a5 with 12.♔e2.

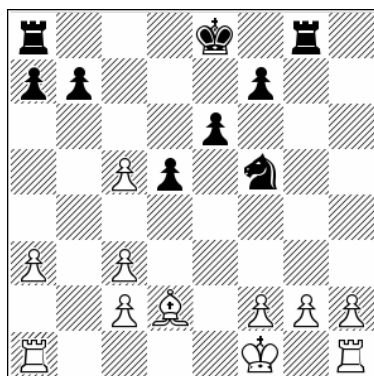
Other moves we tested after 11.♕d3 include 11...♗c7 and 11...♔xd3+:

A1) 11...♗c7 12.♔e2 ♕d7 (12...♔xd3+ 13.cxd3 ♜xg2 14.♔g3 ♗xc5 15.♗h8+ ♔d7 and now 16.♕e3 covers c3 from a distance and f2, and prepares ♔f1, trapping the rook) 13.♕f4 0-0-0 14.♕g3 ♔xd3+ 15.cxd3 ♗xc5 16.0-0 was a solid extra pawn for White, 1-0 (75) Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022;

A2) 11...♔xd3+ 12.cxd3 (12.♗xd3 ♜xg2 13.h4, threatening h5 and even ♕g5 followed by rounding up the rook on g2, also scored heavily) 12...♜xg2 13.♔f3, intending ♔e5, is horrific for Black: 13...♔c6 14.♕g5 ♜xg5 15.♗h8+ wins the exchange.

B) In addition, 11.♗h5 ♔f5 12.♔f3 is Leela's clever way of achieving ♔f3 without doubling the f-pawns.

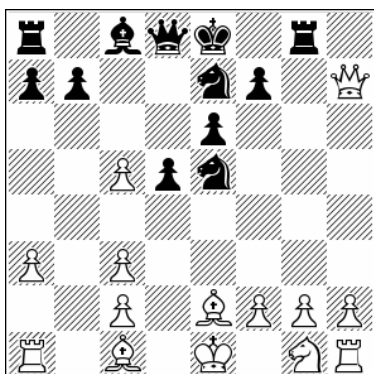
12...♗f6 13.♕d2 ♕d7 14.♔xe5 ♗xe5+ 15.♗e2 ♗xe2+ 16.♔xe2 (16.♕xe2 ♜xg2) 16...♕b5+ 17.♔e1 ♕xf1 18.♔xf1.



analysis diagram

The positions resulting from French Winawer Poisoned Pawn variations are extremely difficult to evaluate. They keep their 'messy' look long after the initial complications have subsided and this position is a case in point. The engines assess this position as +2.5, which is completely winning for White, and Leela proves this assessment convincingly even against the mighty defender Stockfish. It's tempting to start explaining this in terms of generalities: the long-term advantage of the passed h-pawn, supported by the bishop coming into its own after Black's dynamic potential has been neutralised (for example, by the exchange of queens). However, there is actually just one factor making the difference between +2.5 and the placid waters of a 0.00 evaluation: the sickly tripled c-pawn on c5! Remove the c5-pawn and the engine plays ...♔f5-d6-c4 followed by ...e5 and Black's central control compensates fully for the pawn deficit. The key point is that Black cannot capture the c5-pawn quickly without losing the b7-pawn in return. The longer Black takes to recapture the c5-pawn, the longer it takes for him to activate his pieces; if Black trades the b-pawn for the c-pawn (as Stockfish does in this game) then White remains two pawns up, which is a little too much wood for Black's positional compensation. A correct evaluation of this position depends on understanding this tactical point from a distance, and that is exceptionally difficult to do well consistently: 18...b6 (18...♜c8 19.♖b1 ♜c7 20.h4 f6 21.h5 ♔e7 22.h6 ♔c6 23.c4 dxc4 24.♖h4 ♜e7 25.♜xc4 and White had a passed rook's pawn to add to two extra pawns 1-0 (66) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022; 18...♖g4 seems fairly active but by regaining the c5-pawn, Black loses any remaining control of the kingside: 19.f3 ♜c4 20.g4 ♔h4 21.♔f2 ♜xc5 22.♕g5 ♔g6 23.♕f6 ♜c4 24.♖ae1 ♔f8 25.h4 ♔g8 26.h5 ♔f8 27.♕d4 ♔d7 28.g5 ♜e8 29.f4 1-0 (64) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 19.cxb6 axb6 20.h4 ♔d6 21.♕c1 ♔c4 22.h5 f6 23.♖b1 ♔f7 24.♖b3 ♖g7 25.g3 ♖g4 26.♖g1 ♖a7 27.f3 ♖g8 28.g4 ♜c7 29.f4 ♖h8 30.♖h1 ♔g7 31.♔g2 ♜e8 32.♔h3 ♖h8 33.♖e1 ♜c6 34.♔h4

♖a8 35.g5 fxg5+ 36.fxg5 and White went on to win 1-0 (56) Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022.



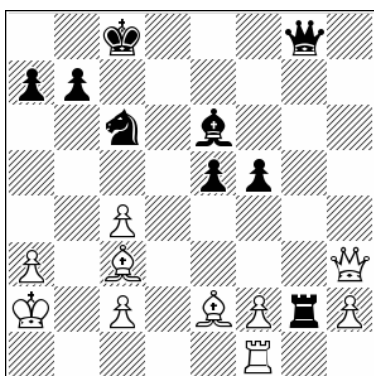
11...♞a5

11...♞d7 gave Black some chances of limiting White's advantage: quite a few engine games ended in draws, though some fancy black footwork was required at times!

12.♜f3 ♜xf3+ 13.♙xf3 ♞c7

A) 14.♙d2 0-0-0 15.♞h4 f6 16.g3 ♞e5+ 17.♜d1 ♙c6 18.♞d4 ♞f5 19.♞d3 ♞h3 20.♜c1 e5 21.♜b2 a6 22.♞f1 ♞f5 23.♙e2 d4 24.♞g1 ♜d5 and Black had done an excellent job of developing Black's central trumps. A two pawns deficit is still a bit much for Black's activity but Dragon managed to hold out for a draw ½-½ (108) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022;

B) 14.♙e3 0-0-0 15.♞h4 (Greedy pawn-grabbing is a bit risky for both sides in this line! 15.♞xf7 ♜f5 16.0-0-0 ♞df8 17.♞h5 ♞a5 18.♜b2 ♞b5+ 19.♜a1 ♞a4 20.♜b2 ♞b5+ 21.♜a1 ♞a4 ½-½ (25) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 15...♜c6 16.0-0-0 ♞a5 17.♜b2 f5 18.♙e2 ♞xg2 19.c4 d4 20.♙xd4 e5 21.♙c3 ♞xc5 22.♞hf1 ♞b6+ 23.♜a2 ♙e6 24.♞xd8+ ♞xd8 25.♞h3 ♞g8



analysis diagram

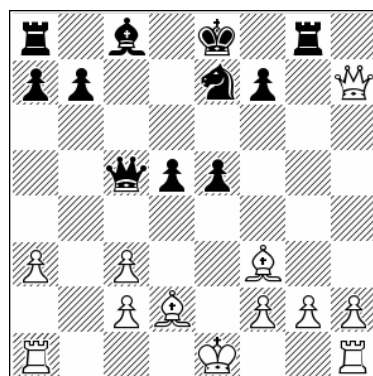
is another example of how to play this position successfully as Black: prioritise the black king's

safety above regaining pawns, mobilise the centre and wreck White's position as much as possible to reduce the value of the extra pawns; ½-½ (105) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

11...♞xg2 12.♞h8+, picking up the knight on e5, is the key drawback to 10...♜xe5.

12.♙d2 ♞xc5 13.♜f3 ♜xf3+ 14.♙xf3 e5

A natural human move, and consistent with Botvinnik's opening concept, but the engines see some tactical problems that make it quite risky. 14...♙d7 15.g3 0-0-0 16.♞h4 ♜f5 17.♞b4 ♞c7 18.0-0-0 a5 19.♞b2 ♙a4 20.c4 ♞xc4 21.♙xa5 ♞d7 22.h4 ♜b8 eventually led to a hard-fought Stockfish win. The two bishops and the passed h-pawn are big long-term advantages, but the open white king and potential for activity of the black major pieces gives Black some hope (though perhaps not against Stockfish!) 1-0 (55) Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022.



15.♙h5?

A huge mistake of timing from Reshevsky, presumably played to prevent Black's next move...which Black plays anyway. The text aims to force Black to develop the bishop more passively on e6, but it does not succeed and now White's advantage dwindles away.

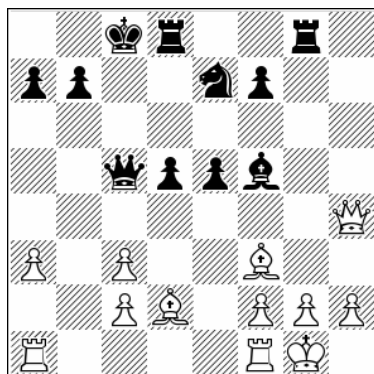
15.0-0 was very strong for White.

A) 15...♙e6 16.♙h5 and now:

A1) 16...0-0-0 17.♙xf7 ♙xf7 18.♞xf7 ♞d6 19.c4, threatening ♙b4, is winning for White, so Black is unable to get the king out of the centre quickly by castling queenside, 1-0 (61) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022;

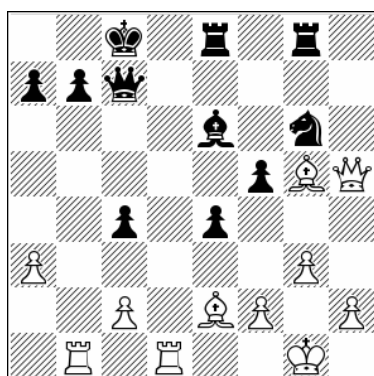
A2) 16...♜d7 17.♙xf7 ♙f5 18.♞h6 ♞h8 19.♞g5 ♞h7 20.♙e3 ♞c7 21.♙xd5 is no improvement, 1-0 (59) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022;

A3) 16...♖c7 17.♞ab1 e4 18.♞h6 0-0-0 19.♞f4 b6 20.♞xc7+ ♔xc7 21.♞fd1 ♜f5 22.a4 ♜d6 23.♙f4 ♜d7 24.a5 ♜c6 25.axb6 axb6 26.♞b4 and White's two bishops and extra pawn eventually told in a long struggle. 1-0 (101) Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022.
B) 15...♙f5 16.♞h4 0-0-0!



analysis diagram

looks very decent for Black, but White has some tactics to throw some confusion into Black's ranks: 17.c4!, with the venomous threat of ♙b4. Black seems to have nothing better than 17...e4, protecting the black centre with tempo, but now White starts to exert influence on the dark squares again: 18.♙e2 (18.♙b4 ♞c7 19.♙xe7 ♞de8 20.♙e2 is not the maximalist engine way to play but it leaves White nicely better after 20...♞xe7 21.♞xe7 ♞xe7 22.♞fd1 (22.cxd5?? ♙h3) 22...dxc4 23.♞d5 and White will emerge into an endgame with a solid extra pawn) 18...♜g6 19.♞h5 ♙e6 20.♞ab1 ♞c7 21.g3 dxc4 22.♞fd1 f5 23.♙g5 ♞de8.

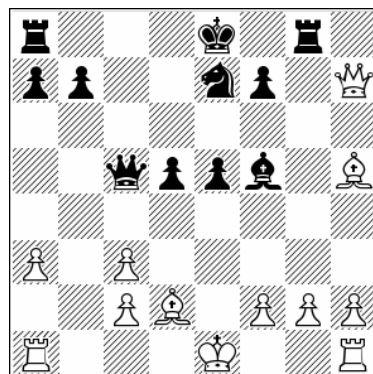


analysis diagram

The big engine evaluation is somewhat surprising but it's clear that White has drilled some holes through the centre into the black position. Some superhuman skill is the best way to prove it, of course! 24.♙h6 ♞e7 25.♞g5 f4 26.♙h5 fxg3 27.fxg3 ♜e5 28.♞e3 ♞h7 29.♞d4 ♙g4

30.♞xe4 ♜f3+ 31.♜f2 ♙xh5 32.♞xa7 ♞f7 33.♙f4 ♞xf4 34.♞xf4 ♜e5 35.♞a8+ ♞b8 36.♞a5 ♙e8 37.♞e1 ♜c6 38.♞c5 ♙d7 39.♞f8+ ♞xf8+ 40.♞xf8+ ♜d8 41.♞c5+ ♜c6 42.h4 ♞c7 43.♞e3 b6 44.♞xc4. The smoke has cleared and it's clear that White's kingside passed pawns will win the game! 1-0 (76) Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022.

15...♙f5!

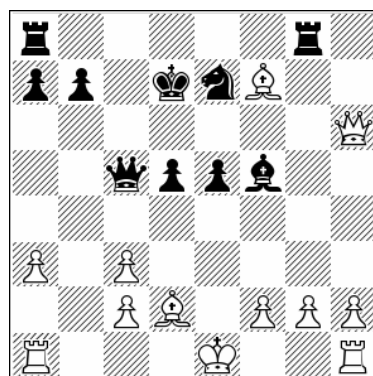


An active and concrete idea, typical of Botvinnik. The black king will be displaced but safe behind Black's central pawns. Meanwhile, the g2-pawn is now hanging.

16.♙xf7+?

Reshevsky reacts badly to this shock and puts his light-squared bishop in severe danger. Botvinnik said this was no worse than the queen capture, but in fact it should lose. Instead, 16.♞xf7+ ♜d7 17.♞f6 ♞xg2 18.♞f1 was the engines' best line, with a similar position to the game but with the light-squared bishop easily within reach of safety. 18...♞xh2 19.♙e2 ♞d6 20.♞xd6+ ♜xd6 is assessed as equal by the engines, although it is now White who must play accurately to maintain the balance.

16...♜d7 17.♞h6



17...♞xg2!

The position has turned around completely and the engines give Black a huge advantage.

Botvinnik admits that he did not even see that he could play to trap the white bishop with 17...♖h8 18.♟f6 ♟c6

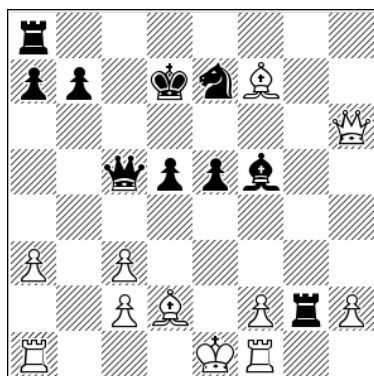
(18...♞h7 19.♙g5 ♟xc3+ 20.♚e2 ♟xc2+ 21.♙f1 ♟c5 22.♞c1 ♟xa3 23.♟xe5 ♞xf7 24.♞c7+ ♚e8 25.♙g1 ½-½ Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023; a still crazy position, White will start with h4 to remove back-rank threats)

but here the engine points out 19.♙g5! ♟xc3+ 20.♚e2 when Black has nothing better than perpetual check.

18.♞f1

The engines prefer 18.♟e3 but the basic problems remain: White's king is an issue and the bishop on f7 is a long way from home. It frankly feels more natural to keep the queen active on h6 where it might cause Black some anxiety and Reshevsky's judgement proves well-founded.

18.♟e3 ♟c6 19.c4 ♟xc4 20.♞b1 b6 21.♞b4 ♟xc2 22.♟f3 ♙e4 23.♟f6 ♙f5 24.♟xe5 ♞f8 25.♙h5 ♞fg8 26.♞d4 ♞g1+ 27.♞xg1 ♞xg1+ 28.♚e2 ♟d1+ 29.♚e3 ♟xh5 and eventually 0-1 (54) Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022.



18...♟b6?

There is definite logic to Botvinnik's move, but it doesn't quite hit the sweet spot. White's queen on h6 is irritating for Black, preventing the rook on a8 from attacking the light-squared bishop from f8 or activating itself via h8, so it makes sense to remove it.

Botvinnik was possibly also worried that White might play ♞b1 and activate the rook via ♞b4. ...♟b6 stops a rook from coming to the b-file, threatens to invade on b2 and frees the c-

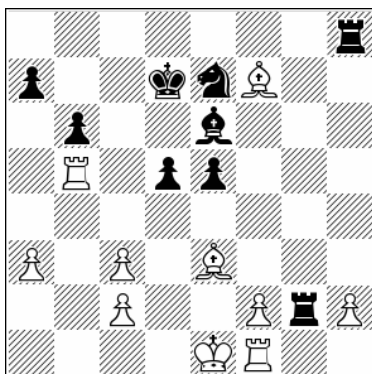
file, providing an activation channel for the black rook on a8 via c8-c4. Moreover, the rook on a8 attacks the a3-pawn after the exchange of queens on b6.

Crucially, however, the exchange of queens in this fashion gives the bishop on f7 a glimmer of light to escape by weakening Black's protection of the d5-pawn (the barrier to the bishop's escape along the g8-a2 diagonal) while the rook on a8's activity along the a-file is of little importance. Reshevsky typically is alert to the turn of events and takes his chance.

One is more tempted by Black's chances with the queens on as White's king feels less safe than Black's, while the white queen on h6 might simply become a target for attack. 18...♞c8 (to activate the rook via c6-b6 for example) and even 18...♟c4 (to create trouble for the white king with the black queen) are the first moves one looks at! However, Botvinnik's judgement does turn out to be spot on... it's just the execution that can be improved!

Botvinnik recommended 18...♟c4 19.♞b1 ♟e4+ 20.♟e3 b6 with a clear advantage, but in this line, there is the more tenacious defence 19.♙h5 ♟e4+ 20.♟e3 ♞xh2 21.♙f3 ♟xe3+ 22.♙xe3 when 22...♙xc2? 23.♚d2 ♙f5 24.♞h1 allows White to equalise the chances, thanks to the ♞a8 being tied to the defence of the a7-pawn. But the engine shows that Botvinnik had the right basic idea in wanting to exchange queens, but should have done it by means of 18...♟c6. Now, 19.♟xc6+ bxc6 is pretty much winning for Black. It seems to be a drawback of 18...♟c6 that the white king can castle queenside as a3 is no longer under attack, but this is mistaken: If 19.0-0, 19...♟a4 creates an unstoppable threat against c2.

19.♞b1 looks reasonable, but the engine's evaluation after the coming queen exchange is shockingly high!! 19...♟xh6 20.♙xh6 b6 21.♞b5 ♞h8 22.♙e3 ♙e6.



analysis diagram

Not even trying to catch the bishop. Black is just claiming a collection of overwhelming positional advantages!

23.♙xe6+ ♘xe6 24.♙e2 ♖h3 25.♖h1 ♜f5 26.♙d2 ♜d6 27.♖bb1 ♜e4. Astonishingly, White has been totally tied up. Now White's collection of weak pawns starts to fall: 28.♙e1 ♜xc3+ 29.♙xc3 ♖xc3 30.♖bc1 ♖g5 31.♙d2 ♖h3 32.a4 ♖f5 33.♙e2 ♖h4 34.♖hg1 ♖e4+ 35.♙f1 ♖xa4 36.♖g6+ ♖f6 37.♖g2 ♖c4 0-1 (70) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

19.♖xb6 axb6 20.0-0-0

This is the problem. ...♖xa3 is just a pin-prick while White gets the king to safety, mobilises the rooks and quickly generates pressure on the d5-pawn. Botvinnik was no doubt counting on the fact that White would be tied to the newly-exposed weakness on a3, but as the late Mark Dvoretzky pointed out, weak pawns have a tendency to get exchanged off for one another, and that is what happens here – the queenside pawns soon disappear from the board, leaving a position where White should be able to hold the draw.

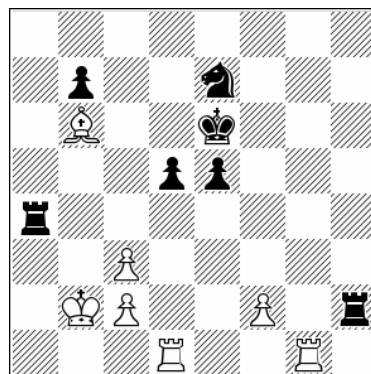
20...♖xa3

20...♖h8 followed by ...♖h7 attempts to catch the bishop but it's obviously too slow with such a fragile d5-pawn.

21.♙b2 ♖a4 22.♙e3

Hitting b6 and d5. It's clear that the position is becoming quite balanced. Engine games are now just a string of draws in a variety of ways. For the moment, it seems impossible to mess up the position with either colour.

22...♙e6 23.♙xe6+ ♘xe6 24.♙xb6 ♖xh2 25.♖g1



Botvinnik points out that Black would have good winning chances if he could exchange one pair of rooks, which would secure the safety of his king and free his knight. But as it is, the presence of four rooks on the board allows White to drum up much more counterplay.

25...♖h6 26.♖g7

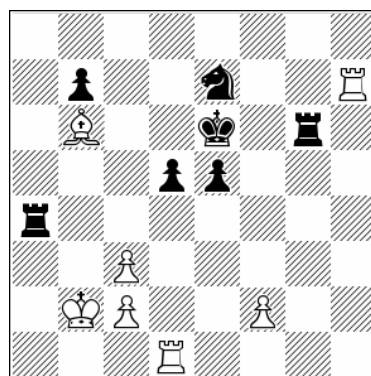
It's a curious feature of this game that Reshevsky is happy to leave his bishops in the danger zone. The light-squared bishop escaped... but the dark-squared bishop will not be so lucky!

26.♙c5 is a sensible move, ready to exchange off the black knight if it ever tries to reach c4 via d6: 26...♖g6 27.♖xg6+ ♜xg6 28.♙b4 ♖a6 29.♖h1 ♖c6 30.♖h7 b6 ½-½ Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022.

26...♖g6

26...♜f5 27.♖xb7 ♜d6 28.♖b8 ♜c4+ 29.♙b3 ♖a3+ feels a little fraught for White, but the danger is minimal! 30.♙b4 ♖a2 31.♙c5 ♖xc2 32.♙a5 ½-½ Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

27.♖h7



27...♜f5

Botvinnik criticised this pawn sacrifice and recommended instead 27...♖c4, stopping ♙c5 and planning ...b5 next move. However, the engine remains unimpressed; as well as 28.♙d8 ♜c6 29.♙b6, when it is not clear how Black gets

in the advance ...b5, there is also the nice line 28.♙e3 b5, which looks like a way to try to make progress, but then the machine recommends the exchange sacrifice 29.♞xe7+! ♔xe7 30.♞xd5 and Black loses another pawn, leaving him with zero winning chances.

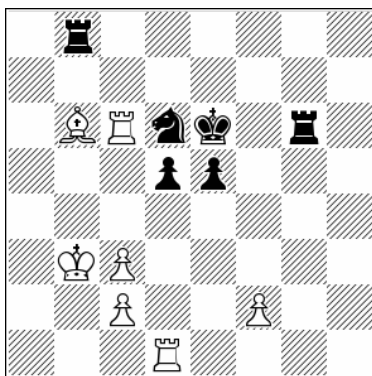
28.♞xb7

28.♙c5 is still the engine favourite, getting the bishop out of the danger zone: 28...♞a5 29.♙b4 ♞b5 30.♔a3 ♞f6 31.♞h8 ♜d6 32.♙xd6 ♔xd6 33.c4 ♞c5 ½-½ Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022.

28...♜d6 29.♔b3

A clever reaction from Reshevsky, counter-hitting the rook on a4.

29...♞a8 30.♞c7 ♞b8 31.♞c6

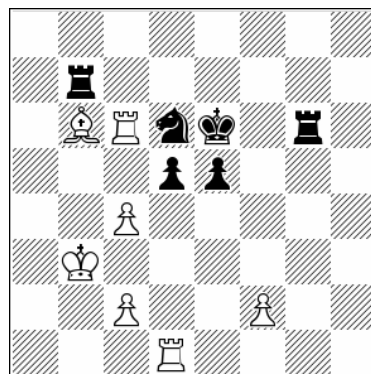


White is still absolutely fine, but most people's heart rate would be racing if they were playing this in raging time-trouble (as Reshevsky was). The capture of the b7-pawn has freed another channel of attack on the wayward dark-squared bishop and White needs to show quite a bit of reckless bravery (or magnificent *sangfroid*, depending how you frame it) to stay afloat.

31...♔d7

31...♞g8 32.♔a2 ♞gc8 33.♙c7 ♞b5 34.♞xd6+ ♔f5 35.♞a6 ♞xc7 36.♞a3 d4 37.cxd4 ♞xc2+ ½-½ Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022.

32.♞c7+ ♔e6 33.♞c6 ♞b7 34.c4



Wonderful Reshevsky opportunism! This must have come as a shock to Botvinnik, who suddenly has to start calculating some awkward pins against his own position.

34...dxc4+?!

Botvinnik criticised this opening of the d-file, and 34...d4 was definitely to be recommended. After 35.c5, 35...♔d5 is the key move to unpin: 36.♞c7 ♞xc7 37.♙xc7 ♔xc5 ½-½ (40) Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

35.♔b4 ♔e7

35...♔d7 36.♔c5.

36.♔a5

But at this point, Botvinnik records that Reshevsky, who was in his habitual serious time-trouble, forgot to press his clock. Botvinnik says that in an individual game, he would have pointed this out to his opponent, but he hesitated to do so in a team match. Reshevsky noticed in time to avoid a forfeit, but was left with his flag hanging and this had its consequences.

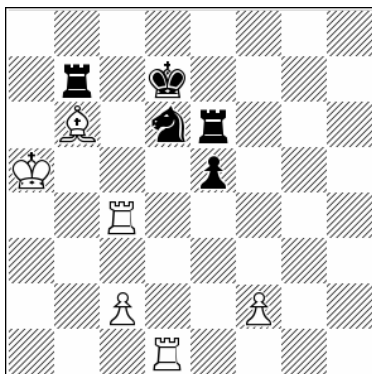
Botvinnik claims that after 36.♞d5, Black would have had a difficult position, but the engine sees no problems after 36...♞f6 (protecting the rook and attacking f2) 37.♞xe5+ ♔d7 38.♞ec5 ♞b8 39.♞c7+ ♔e6 40.♞7c6 ♞xf2 41.♞h5 ♔d7 42.♞c7+ ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023.

36.♞c7+ was obviously enough for the slightly better of the draw, but it seems Reshevsky was playing all-out for the win. 36...♞xc7 37.♙xc7 ♜f7 38.♞e1 ♞e6 39.♔c5 ♔d7 40.♙a5 ♞f6 41.♞e2 ♔e6 42.♙d2 ½-½ Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

36...♔d7 37.♞xc4 ♞e6??

A horrific blunder from Botvinnik! What was he thinking?

37...♖g8 was the only idea, when the threat of ...♗a8+ forces White to give up the exchange 38.♗xd6+ ♔xd6 39.f4. Black's last pawn is exchanged and the position is just a draw: 39...e4 40.♗d4+ (40.♗xe4 ♗a8+ 41.♔b5 ♗ab8) 40...♔c6 41.♗c4+ ♔d6 42.♗d4+ ♔c6 43.♗c4+ ½-½ Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022.



38.♔a6?

Again, it's hard to imagine why Reshevsky didn't play the obvious pinning move 38.♙c5 which clearly leaves White on top with a clear extra pawn. Perhaps Reshevsky thought he could play for even more, but in fact the engines consider it technically winning! 38...♗c7 39.♔b4 ♗c6 40.♗h4 ♗c8 41.c4 ♔c6 42.♙e3 and White will combine threats against the enemy king with the advance of the c-pawn. His advantage appears to be decisive.

42...♔f5 43.♗e4 ♔e7 44.♗a1 ♔d7 45.♗a7+ ♔d6 46.♗b7 ♔c6 47.♗b5 ♔d7 48.♔c3 ♔g6 49.♗g4 ♔e7 50.♗g5 ♔f7 51.♗h5 ♔f6 52.♔b3 ♔h8 53.♗hx5 ♔f7 54.♗f5+ ♔g6 55.♗f4 1-0 (70) Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

38...♗b8 39.♗c7+

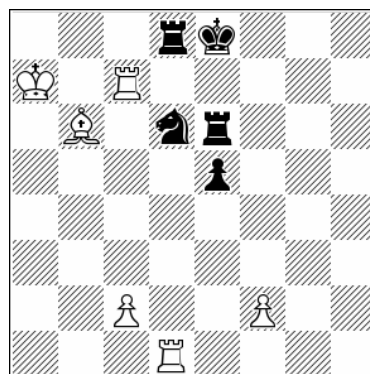
39.♔a5 is Stockfish's recommendation, and if the Fish says retreat, it's wise to listen! Reshevsky keeps attacking, but he is unwittingly building a cage for his king.

39...♔e8 40.♗c6 ♔c4+ 41.♗xc4 ♗exb6 42.♗c8+ ♗xc8 43.♔xb6 ♗xc2 44.♗e1 ½-½ (55) Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022.

39...♔e8 40.♔a7 ♗d8

The 40th move had been reached, but Reshevsky blitzed out the tricky 41st move and produced a blunder. Faced with the multiple threats of ...♔b5+ and ...♔c8+, White might have

to give up an exchange but there are better and worse ways.



41.♗h1??

A) 41.♔a6 looks awkward but still works (just): 41...♗a8+ 42.♗a7 ♗b8 43.♗g1 ♗xb6+ 44.♔xb6 ♔c8+ 45.♔b7 ♔xa7 46.♔xa7 ♗c6 ½-½ Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022;

B) But definitely simplest is 41.♗b1, preventing ...♔b5+ and protecting the bishop on b6 from ...♔c8+: 41...♗d7 42.♗xd7 ♔xd7 43.♙c5 ♔e4 44.♗b7+ ♔c8 45.♙b6 ♗c6 ½-½ Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022;

C) Finally, if White wishes to give up the exchange, then 41.c4 is the simplest way: 41...♔c8+ 42.♗xc8 ♗xc8 43.c5 and the passed c-pawn gives plenty of counterplay: 43...♗e7+ 44.♔a6 ♗a8+ 45.♔b5 ♗a2 46.c6 ½-½ Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

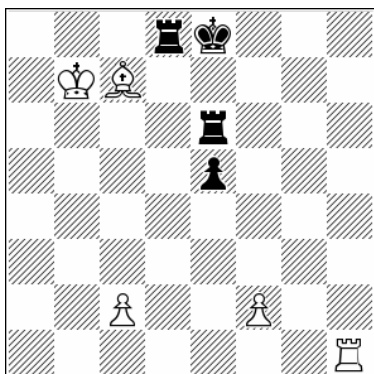
41...♔b5+

Another strange mistake from Botvinnik, as the alternative fork is much more intuitive. 41...♔c8+ 42.♗xc8 ♗xc8 hits c2 which is virtually impossible to defend sensibly.

42.♔b7 ♔xc7 43.♙xc7??

Perhaps played automatically, but this turns a 0.00 engine evaluation into -6!

43.♗h8+ neatly forces the exchange of most pieces and pawns: 43...♔d7 44.♗h7+ ♗e7 45.♗xe7+ ♔xe7 46.♙xc7 ♗d7 (46...♗d5 47.c4 ♗c5 48.♔b6 ♗xc4 49.♙xe5) 47.♔c6 ♔e6 48.♙xe5.



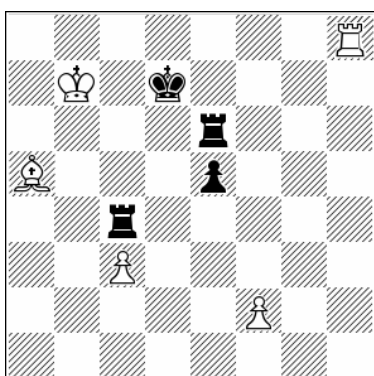
43...Rd4!

This was the sealed move and Botvinnik awarded himself two exclamation marks for it, claiming it was the only winning move. He also says that nobody anticipated this move and Reshevsky was surprised when the envelope was opened at resumption. Instead, Botvinnik says all attention had been devoted to 43...Rd2 which is also the engines' preferred line. Botvinnik then gave 44.f4 'with a draw', but the engine rejects this utterly: 44...e4 45.f5 Rxe7 46.Qb6 Qf7 47.c4 e3 48.Qg3 e2 0-1 (82) Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023. However, although Botvinnik doesn't play the rest of the game perfectly, he plays it well enough, and all of our engine games from here were wins for Black. Botvinnik's sealed move aims to prevent either white pawn reaching the fourth rank and this is indeed a more human approach to the position, although that makes it all the more surprising that nobody else anticipated it at the time.

44.c3

44...Rb4+ was the threat.

44...Rc4 45.Qa5 Qd7 46.Rh8



46...Rf6

Botvinnik describes this as 'a cunning manoeuvre', found during his adjournment

analysis, but the engine points out the equally good 46...Rd6 47.Rf8 Rd5 48.Qb4 Rf4.

47.Rd8+ Qe7 48.Rd2 Rd6 49.Qa2

49.Qb4? Rxb4+.

49...Qd7 50.Rb2 Rc5

The white king is badly boxed-in and the dark-squared bishop is still proving a problem child.

51.Qb6

Sadly forced, since 51.Qb4 Rc7+ forces mate in 5: 52.Qa8 Ra6+ 53.Qb8 Rb6+ 54.Qa8 Qc8 etc.

51...Rxc3 52.Rb4 Qe6 53.Rb2 Rdd3 54.Qa2

Rd7+ 55.Qa6 Rb3 56.Qe3 Rd6+ 57.Qa5 Rd8

58.Qa6 Rxe3 0-1

Game 15 – Catalan Opening

Gedeon Barcza

Bertil Wikström

cr 1949

Gedeon Barcza is largely forgotten these days, but in the 1950s and 60s, he was a well-known name and a strong GM, who won no fewer than eight Hungarian Championships. He was famous as an 'early Ulf', a legendary endgame grinder, who liked nothing better than to settle down to a simplified position, (metaphorical) pipe in his mouth, and wear the opponent down over several sessions. This is one of his deceptively simple endgame wins, played in a postal game.

1.Qf3 d5 2.g3

Barcza was also famous for his love of such openings, and in the 1960s, Qf3/g3 systems were often lumped together under the nomenclature 'Barcza System'. He was said to treasure a remark once made by the English writer Harry Golombek, that 'Barcza has the most varied opening repertoire of any grandmaster. He sometimes plays g3 on the first move, sometimes the second, sometimes the third and sometimes not until the fourth move!'

2...c5 3.Qg2 Qf6 4.0-0 Qc6

This gives White the opportunity to transpose back into a main line Catalan, having avoided many of Black's most challenging options. Nowadays, Black avoids ...Qc6 to ensure that

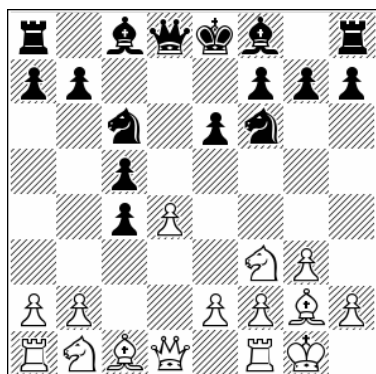
after d4 ...cxd4, ♖xd4 there is no ♖xc6 in reply to ...e5.

4...e6 has been my (Matthew's) choice, often leading to a reversed Modern Benoni after 5.c4 (5.d4 cxd4 6.♖xd4 e5 7.♖b3 ♗e6 is Black's idea. Despite being Black and having wasted a tempo with ...e6-e5, Black claims that the double centre is invulnerable. It certainly worked for me! 8.♖c3 ♗e7 9.e3 ♖d7 10.f4 e4 11.♖d4 ♗g4 12.♖d2 ♖c6 13.♖ce2 h5 with a burgeoning kingside attack 0-1 (37) Haria-Sadler England 4NCL 2015/16; 5.d3 ♖c6 (played now that White has committed to d2-d3) 6.♖bd2 leads to a King's Indian Attack) 5...d4 6.e3 ♖c6 7.d3 ♗d6 8.exd4 cxd4 9.♖bd2 0-0 10.♖g5 ♗d7 11.f4 h6 12.♖ge4 ♖xe4 13.♖xe4 ♗e7 14.♖e1 a5 15.♗d2 f5 16.♖f2 a4 with a balanced position, ½-½ (27) Rapport-Sadler, England 4NCL 2018/19.

5.d4 e6

5...cxd4 6.♖xd4 e5 7.♖xc6 bxc6 8.c4 is tricky for Black: a Grünfeld a tempo up is very pleasant for White!

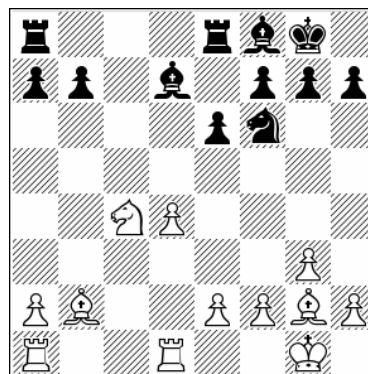
6.c4 dxc4



7.♖e5

7.♖a4, 7.♖a3 and 7.dxc5 are the alternatives, with the engines generally plumping for the latter:

7.dxc5 ♖xd1 8.♖xd1 ♗xc5 9.♖bd2 c3 10.bxc3 0-0 11.♗b2 ♖e8 12.♖d4 ♖xd4 13.cxd4 ♗f8 14.♖c4 ♗d7



analysis diagram

15.a4 (15.♗xb7 ♖ab8 16.♗a6 ♗c8 17.♗xc8 ♖exc8 is the point: 18.♖dc1 ♖xc4 19.♖xc4 ♖xb2) 15...♖ed8 16.♖a5 ♖ab8 17.d5 ♖xd5 18.♗e5 ♖bc8 19.♖xb7 ♖e8 20.e4 ♖b6 21.a5 ♖c4 22.♗f4 ♗c6 23.e5 f6 24.♖d6 ♗xg2 25.♖xc8 ♗f3 26.♖xa7 was a typically bewildering engine way to reach an equal endgame! ½-½ Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022. 26...♗xd1 27.♖xd1 ♖xa5 is dead equal.

7...♗d7 8.♖xc6

We have transposed into what became a main line of the Catalan. 8.♖a3 is the move which was principally played here in later years, but Barcza is happy to employ his trusty Hoover. 8...cxd4 9.♖axc4 leads to a line that has been played extensively at the elite level and which is generally thought to be level.

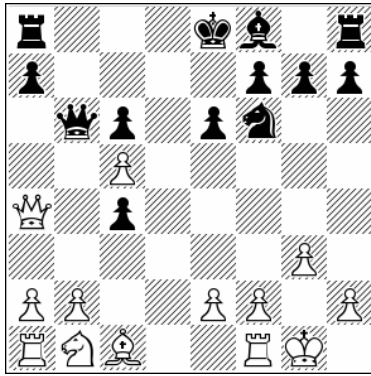
The engines came up with this: 9...♗c5 10.♗f4 0-0 11.♖b3 ♖c8 12.♖fc1 ♖d5 13.♖xd7 ♖xd7 14.♖e5 ♖e7 15.♗xd5 exd5 16.♖xd5 ♗b6 17.♖d7 ♖xd7 18.♖xd7 ♖fd8 19.♖xb6 axb6 20.♗c7 ♖d5 ½-½ (26) Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022.

8...♗xc6 9.♗xc6+ bxc6 10.♖a4 ♖b6

10...cxd4 is the strong engine preference and this has also been thoroughly tested at the human level.

11.♖xc6+ ♖d7 12.♖xc4 ♗c5 13.♖d2 0-0 14.♖e4 ♖c8 15.♗g5 ♖b6 16.♖xc5 ♖xc5 ½-½ Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022 17.♖xd4 ♖xg5 18.♖xd7 ♖d5 19.♖a4 ♖d2 is completely equal.

11.dxc5



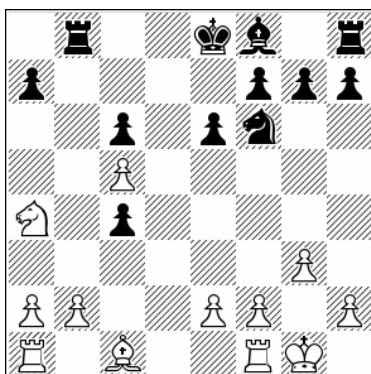
11...Qb5?!

Provoking the queen exchange seems illogical here, both objectively and subjectively. With slightly damaged pawns, but White having surrendered his fianchettoed bishop, it seems more sensible for Black to keep the queens on, so as to facilitate counterplay, whilst from a subjective viewpoint, Barcza was rarely averse to an exchange of queens.

11...Qxc5 12.Qxc4 (12.Qd2 c3 13.bxc3 Qb5 14.Qd1 Qe7 15.Bb1 Qa6 16.Qb3 0-0 is fine for Black ½-½ (77) Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022) 12...0-0 13.Qc3 Qe7 14.Bb1 c5 15.b3 Bfd8 16.Qa4 Qa5 17.Qb2 Qd5 18.Bbc1 Bbc8 is again perfectly fine for Black. The isolated c5-pawn gives White a nominal advantage but Black's activity is plenty enough to maintain the balance, ½-½ (23) Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

However, although Black's opening play is somewhat unnatural, it is still completely within comfortable drawing parameters.

12.Qc3 Qxa4 13.Qxa4 Bb8

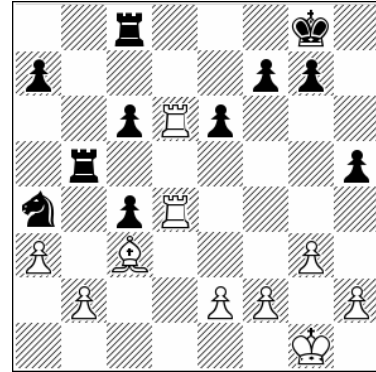


Threatening ...Bb4, chasing the knight away from the defence of the c5-pawn.

14.Qd2

The simplest way of preventing ...Bb4 though it should not give White any advantage at all.

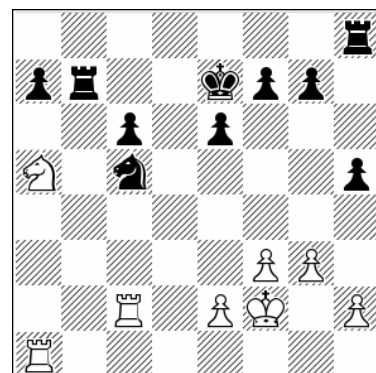
A) 14.a3 Bb5 15.Qd2 Qe4 16.Qb4 Qxc5 17.Qxc5 Qxc5 18.Bac1 looks as if White might get something, but the clever 18...Qa6 highlights the weakness of b2: 19.Qc3 0-0 20.Bfd1 Qc5 21.Bd6 Bc8 22.Qcd1 h5 23.B1d4 Qa4 and this liquidation neutralised any hopes for a white advantage.



analysis diagram

24.Bxc4 Qxc3 25.bxc3 Bc7 26.Bd8+ Qh7 27.f3 ½-½ Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022;

B) 14.Qf4 Bb4 15.b3 was another engine attempt: 15...Qe4 (15...cxb3 16.axb3 Bxb3 17.Bfb1 Bb5 18.Qc3 Bxb1+ 19.Bxb1 is White's idea when the invasion of the rook to Black's seventh or eighth rank will give White some initiative) 16.Bfc1 cxb3 17.axb3 Bxb3 (the inclusion of ...Qe4 puts unwelcome pressure on the c5-pawn) 18.f3 Qf6 19.Qd6 (19.Bab1 Bb5 as Qc3 will now allow ...Qxc5 with check; the drawback to playing f3 to chase away the knight on e4) 19...h5 20.Qf2 Bb7 21.Bc2 Qd7 22.Qb2 Qxc5 23.Qc4 Qe7 24.Qxe7 Qxe7 25.Qa5 was agreed drawn in a tantalisingly tactical position! ½-½ Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022.



analysis diagram

25...Qb3 26.Qxb7 Qxa1 27.Bxc6 Bb8 28.Bc7+ Qf8 29.Qd6 f6 30.Bxa7 Qc2 should survive for Black.

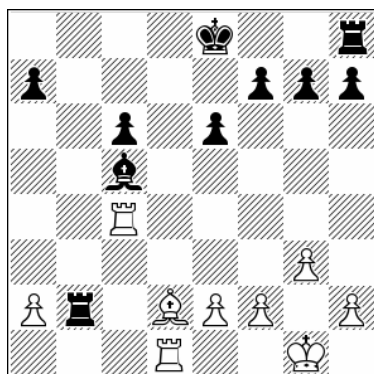
14...Qe4

Hitting both d2 and c5.

15. ♖fd1 ♜xc5

15... ♜xd2 16. ♖xd2 ♖b4 17. ♜c3 ♜xc5 18. ♖c1 0-0 19. a3 leaves White somewhat better and is the kind of ending that Ulf Andersson enjoyed greatly, with the knight frequently proving superior to the bishop, despite the open position. Another of Barcza's foibles was a great love of, and ability to handle, knights.

16. ♜xc5 ♜xc5 17. ♖ac1 ♖xb2 18. ♖xc4



This is where this game really begins for us as annotators and you suspect for Barcza too! Black is a pawn up (albeit just the sickly c6-pawn) and with a rook on the second, attacking White's a2-pawn, you might feel that if anyone is better, Black should be! The balancing factor is Black's missing tempo: kingside castling. The need to spend a tempo to get the black king safe from White's rooks and activate the king's rook gives White a little initiative to counterbalance Black's extra pawn and rook on b2.

18... ♜e7

18... ♜b6 is natural to anchor the black bishop and secure Black's a7-pawn against White's rooks. It's perfectly playable, but White can set a few tests in Black's path.

19. ♜b4 (highlighting Black's problems with the king; 19. a4 0-0 20. a5 is a nice idea, putting the a-pawn safe and destabilising the black bishop. However, Black has a tactical solution: 20... ♞d8 21. axb6 axb6 22. ♖xc6 h5 and Black will regain the piece with equality ½-½ (24) Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022) 19... c5 (Black is forced to return the pawn immediately to exchange off bishops and get his king to safety; 19... ♖xe2 20. ♖xc6 is of course catastrophic) 20. ♜xc5 ♜xc5 21. ♖xc5 0-0 22. ♖a5 ♖xe2 23. ♜f1 ♖c2 24. ♖xa7 g5 25. ♞dd7 ♜g7

26. a4 g4 27. ♜g2 ♖a2 28. ♖e7 ♜f6 29. a5 ♜g6 30. ♞ed7 h5 31. ♖e7 and White has got as far as he is ever going to get! ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

19. ♖a4

Barcza wants rather to win the a-pawn to create a passed pawn of his own and leave Black with the c-pawn. Black, of course, does not allow this.

19... ♜b7

19... ♜c5 was also possible, cheekily pointing out that 19. ♖a4 no longer covers c5!

20. ♜f1 ♖c2 is the nice follow-up, shielding the bishop against attack by ♖c1: 21. ♖a6 ♜b6 22. a4 ♜e7 23. a5 ♖a2. The engines agreed a draw here: ½-½ Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022. A little more explanation is handy, of course! Black is threatening ... ♞d8 so White needs to move fast. 24. ♜b4+ c5 25. axb6 ♖xa6 26. ♜xc5+ ♜f6 27. bxa7 ♖c8 28. ♜e3 ♖c7 followed by ... ♖xa7 equalises.

20. ♜e3 c5 21. ♖a5 f6

21... ♖c7 was the engine's response, making White work to win the c5-pawn.

22. ♖b5 (22. ♜f4 ♖b7 repeats) 22... 0-0 23. ♜f4 a6 24. ♖b6 ♖cc8 25. ♖xa6 c4 26. ♞d7 ♜f6 27. ♜g2 c3 28. a4 h6 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022. Black's c-pawn is now at least the equal of White's a-pawn.

22. ♜xc5 ♜xc5 23. ♖xc5 ♜e7

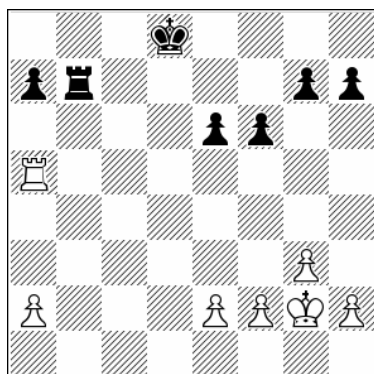
23... ♜f7. It's nothing remotely crucial yet, but you will notice that at every step, the engines want to keep the black king protecting Black's kingside pawns. Remember that later in the game!

24. a4 e5 25. ♞dc1 ♞d8 26. ♖c7+ ♞d7 27. ♖xd7+ ♖xd7 28. ♜g2 g5 29. ♖c5 ♜g6 30. f3 h5 31. ♖a5 g4 32. fxf4 hxf4 33. ♜f2 ♜f5 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022, was Stockfish's aggressive path to a draw.

24. ♜g2 ♞d8 25. ♖xd8 ♜xd8 26. ♖a5

26. ♖h5 h6 27. ♖a5 f5 was an unexpected pawn structure choice from Leela. It works pretty well though: 28. ♜f3 ♜e7 29. e4 fxe4+ 30. ♜xe4 g5 31. g4 ♜f6. The e6-pawn provides a barrier along the sixth rank for the black king to establish itself on f6. 32. ♜f3 (32. ♜d3 h5 33. gxh5 ♖h7 is an unexpected way for Black to exploit the absence

of the white king from the defence of the kingside) 32...♖d7 and the white king is cut off from the queenside, ½-½ (35) Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022.



26...♔c8

A very important conceptual moment. It makes no difference at all to the engine evaluation of the position but it's definitely something worth discussing: should the black king be defending the kingside pawn structure or the a7-pawn on the queenside? In general terms, the kingside structure is clearly the biggest prize in Black's position. Losing a few of those four pawns is more likely to be catastrophic than the loss of the single a-pawn – after all, we have seen enough examples where Black draws endings a passed a- or b-pawn down. Obviously Black envisages that the king's presence on the queenside will relieve the black rook, but the black rook is actually doing very well on its own. The white rook cannot force a decision on the queenside on its own and the black rook is well-placed to combine defending the a7-pawn and also prevent the white king from crossing the d-file to move towards the queenside, or launch a counterattack against White's pawns when the white king abandons them. In essence, by moving the king towards the queenside, Black gifts White an extra plan: to invade on the kingside with the king. The engines don't think this plan is decisive yet by any means. However, I was very much aware how much more difficult it was to evaluate resulting positions once the black king had moved to the queenside. Instead of simply holding a static position on the kingside and reacting to small white attempts at progress, Black is forced to evaluate a series of

pawn race scenarios and multiple positions where Black is a pawn down. Actually forget 'difficult to evaluate' – I (Matthew) simply didn't have a clue for many positions!

26...♔e7 (the kingside is where all the engines are headed!) 27.g4 f5 (a sacrifice to realise pawn exchanges and activate the black rook) 28.gxf5 exf5 29.♖xf5 ♖b2 30.♖a5 ♖xe2 31.♖xa7+ ♔f6 32.a3 h6 33.♖a6+ ♔f5 34.♖a5+ ♔f6 35.♖a4 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

27.♖a6

27.h4 was of course what Leela wanted: 27...♔b8 28.h5 ♖b2 29.♔f3 ♔b7 30.♖a4 (Leela is looking for ♖g4 when g7 cannot be defended) 30...g6 31.h6. This feels quite risky for Black: ♖xg6 ideas will always be in the air, sacrificing a rook to queen the h-pawn while disaster looms if the white rook makes it to the seventh or eighth ranks. However, the engines thought that Black was safe and active enough.

31...e5 32.♖a3 ♖c2 33.g4 ♔b6 34.♔e3 ♖c4 35.f3 a6 36.♔d2 a5 37.♔e3 f5 38.g5 f4+ 39.♔f2 ♔b5 40.e3 ♖c2+ 41.♔g1 a4 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

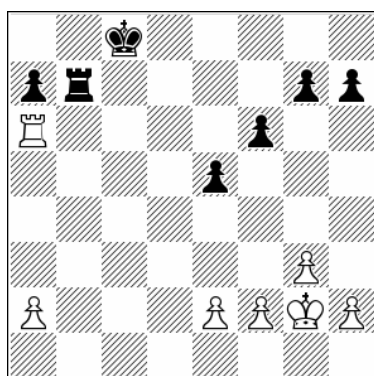
27...e5

This position was used in Ray Keene's 1960s book *Flank Openings*, where it was given as an 'Illustrative Extract' to show a typical endgame arising from the Réti System. White has a microscopic edge, in the shape of the more active rook and also (an important point that Keene emphasised) an undetermined pawn structure. By the latter, we mean that he has held his pawns back, which allows flexibility and the possibility of using them to undermine the black structure, for example by f4 or h2-h4-h5-h6, undermining f6. Keene presents the rest of the game only briefly and with an emphasis on the general plans, but he does not actually criticise any of Black's moves, leaving the reader with the impression that White may already be winning, which is certainly not the case.

However, Black's last is a decision that the engines really dislike. For the first time in the game, they start to evaluate the position as a small advantage for White. The problems are

two-fold. Firstly, the scope of the white rook on the sixth rank is extended. White gets the additional possibility of ♖a6-e6-e8 to reach the eighth rank while h2-h4-h5-h6 gains in strength as it undermines the f6-pawn which is now attacked by the white rook. Secondly, the white king gains an entry channel into the black kingside structure via e4-d5/f5-e6.

27...♞e7 was the engines' cautious choice: 28.h4 ♜b7 (the rook can be chased away from the sixth rank so the passivity of Black's rook is only temporary) 29.♞a4 h5 30.e3 ♞c7 31.♞d4 a5 32.♜f3 ♜b6 33.♞d6+ ♜b5 34.♞xe6 ♜b4 35.♞d6 ♞c2 36.♞d5 ♞xa2 37.♞xh5 a4 38.♞h8 a3 39.♞b8+ ♜a4 40.♞a8+ ♜b4 41.♞b8+ ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.



28.♜f3

The engines start moving above 0.00 now!

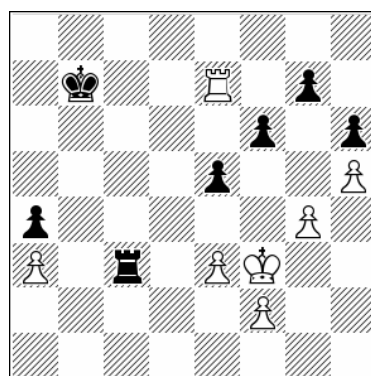
28...♞d7

28...h5. Getting the h-pawn off the seventh rank is a prelude to sacrificing the g-pawn to gain activity and launch a counterattack against the a-pawn, so as to create a passed black pawn on the queenside. The idea is that once White captures the g7-pawn, he needs four more moves to capture the f- and h-pawns since they are all on different ranks. It's getting sharper! 29.a4 (29.♜e4 ♞b2 30.♞xa7 ♞xe2+ 31.♜f3 ♞c2 32.♞xg7 ♞xa2 33.♞f7 ♞a6 34.h3 ♜d8 ½-½ Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022) 29...♞c7 30.e3 ♜b7 31.♞d6 a5 32.h4 ♞c4 33.♞d7+ ♜a6 34.♞xg7. The engines agree a draw here as equality is obvious. Personally, I simply don't have a clue! Which probably explains why it's now so easy for Black to go wrong. 34...♞xa4 35.♞h7 e4+ 36.♜f4 ♞a2 37.♜xe4 ♞xf2 38.♞xh5 f5+ 39.♜e5 ♞f3 40.♞h6+ ½-½ (40) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

29.h4

The start of a typical plan in such positions. White threatens to push the pawn all the way to h6, which would undermine the base of Black's e5/f6 chain, whilst if Black stops it by playing ...h6 himself, then he gives the enemy king a potential entry route via the light squares f5 and g6. This is the typical 'Hobson's choice' that the defender often faces in such positions, and it is interesting to see how the engines deal with it.

29.g4 was tried by Leela. It's too late now for Black to play ...h5: 29...♜b7 30.♞e6 a5 31.h4 a4 32.h5 h6 (the white king now has a path to g6 to hit the g7-pawn via e4-f5) 33.a3 ♞c7 34.e3 ♞c3 35.♞e7+ ½-½ Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022.



analysis diagram

Again, the engines agreed a draw here, and once again it is impossible to give you a well-founded evaluation without a great deal of calculation. Can Black agree to the exchange of rooks with 35...♞c7 or does Black need to dash for counterplay with 35...♜b6 ?

35...♜c6 36.♞xg7 ♞xa3 37.♞g6 ♞d3 38.g5 hxg5 39.♞xf6+ ♜b5 40.♞f8 ♞d7 41.♞b8+ ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

29...♜b7?!

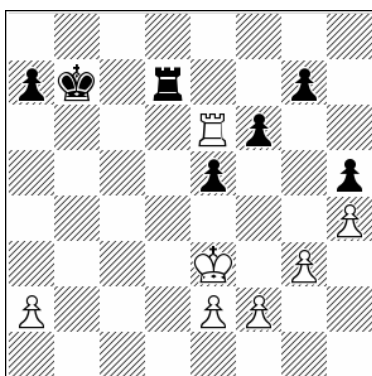
The engines are firmly in favour of 29...h5, stopping 'Harry' in his tracks. Then the immediate king raid 30.♜e4 ♞d4+ 31.♜f5 is met by the counterattack 31...♞d2, initiating a massacre of the innocents: 32.♞xa7 ♞xe2 33.f4 exf4 34.♜xf4 g6 35.a4 ♞f2+ 36.♜e3 ♞a2 37.♞g7 g5 38.hxg5 fxg5 39.♞xg5 h4! 40.g4 ♞xa4 41.♞g7 ♜d8 and Black draws.

Wikström (with virtually unlimited time for analysis, given that this was a postal game)

continues on his chosen route. However, given the white rook can now target the kingside pawns from e6, protecting the a7-pawn has done little to free the black rook from defensive duties.

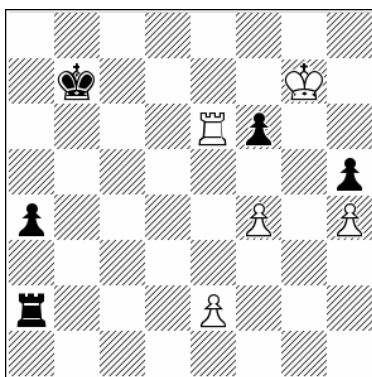
30.♖e6 h5 31.♙e3

31.e3 a5 32.a4 ♖c7 33.♙e4 ♖c4+ 34.♙f5 (wouldn't it be nice for Black if his king were on f7?) 34...♖xa4 35.♖e7+ ♙b6 36.♖xg7. Another murky position where the engines agreed a draw: 36...♖a2 37.f4 a4 38.♙xf6 a3 39.♖g8 exf4 40.exf4 ♖g2 41.f5 ♙b7 42.♖g7+ ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.



31...♙c7

A) Barcza analysed instead 31...a5 32.f4 exf4+ 33.gxf4. Now White has a potential passed pawn on the e-file. 33...♖c7 34.♙e4! ♖c2 35.♙f5 ♖xa2 36.♙g6 a4 37.♙xg7



analysis diagram

and now 37...f5 is the engine preference (37...a3 was Barcza's line: 38.♖e3! ♙b6 (38...f5 also holds here) 39.♙xf6 ♙b5 40.f5 ♙b4 41.♖e8 ♖d2 42.♖b8+ ♙c3 43.♖a8 ♙b2 44.e4 wins) 38.♙g6 a3 (the risky approach!; 38...♖b2 39.♙xh5 a3 40.♖e3 a2 41.♖a3 ♖xe2 42.♙g5 ♖g2+ 43.♙xf5 ♖h2 44.♙g4 ♖g2+ 45.♙f5 ♖h2 ½-½ (64) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023) 39.♙xh5 ♖a1 40.♖e5 ♙b6 41.♖e3 a2

42.♖a3 ♙b5 43.♖a8 ♙c4 44.♙h6 ♙b3 45.♖b8+ ♙a3 46.♖a8+ ♙b3 47.♙g5 ♖f1 48.♙xf5 a1=♖ 49.♖xa1 ♖xa1 50.h5 ♖h1 51.♙g6 ♖g1+ 52.♙f6 ♖h1 53.♙g6 ♖g1+ 54.♙f6 ♖h1 55.♙g6 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023;

B) 31...♙c8 (the engines try to sneak the king back towards the kingside via d8!) 32.♖e8+ ♙c7 33.♖h8 ♙d6 (and now the engines sacrifice the h-pawn to achieve this via d6) 34.♖xh5 ♙e6 (it's striking that the engines consider it worthwhile sacrificing a pawn to get the black king back protecting the kingside!) 35.♖h8 ♖d4 36.♖e8+ ♙f7 37.♖b8 ♖a4 38.♖b7+ ♙g6 39.♖b2 ♙h5 40.♙f3 g5. Now it's Black with the active rook! 41.hxg5 ♙xg5 42.♙g2 ♖a3 43.f3 f5 44.♙f2 ♙f6 45.♖c2 ♙g6 46.♙g2 ♙g5 ½-½ Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022.

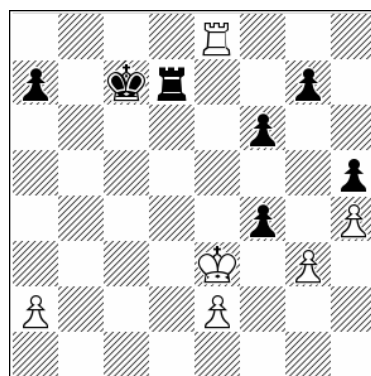
32.f4

Barcza breaks at Black's kingside pawn structure to create an entry channel for the white king. Removing the e5-pawn allows White's rook on e6 to defend the e2-pawn against attacks from the black rook.

32...♖d6 33.♖e7+ ♖d7 34.♖e8!

34.♖xd7+ ♙xd7 35.fxe5 fxe5 36.♙f3 ♙d6 37.g4 g6 38.gxh5 gxh5 39.♙e4 ♙e6 40.a3 a6 41.e3 a5 42.a4 ♙f6 43.♙d5 ♙f5 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

34...exf4+



35.♙xf4

35.gxf4 ♖d5 (35...♙d6 36.♙e4 ♖e7+ 37.♖xe7 ♙xe7 38.f5 ♙d6 39.♙d4 ♙c6 40.e3 ♙d6 is a drawn pawn endgame, ½-½ Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022) 36.♖e7+ ♙d6 (36...♖d7 needs a bit of careful consideration, but the pawn endgame is drawn: 37.♖xd7+ ♙xd7 38.♙d4 g6 39.♙d3 ♙e7 40.e4 ♙f7 41.♙e2 g5 42.hxg5 fxg5 43.fxg5 ♙g6 44.♙f3 ♙xg5 45.♙g3 ♙f6 46.♙h4 ♙e5 47.♙xh5 ♙xe4 48.♙g4

½-½ (61) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) was another possibility, once again sacrificing a pawn for activity. Some of the black kingside will be destroyed but the black king protects the remnants: 37.♖xg7 (37.♖xa7 g5 38.hxg5 fxg5 39.fxg5 ♖xg5 40.♔f4 ♖d5 41.♖a6+ ♔e7 42.a3 ♔d7 43.e4 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 37...♖a5 is just a draw: 38.♖h7 ♔e6 39.♔f3 ♖a3+ 40.e3 ♖xa2 41.♖xh5 f5 42.♖h6+ ♔f7 43.♖h7+ ♔g6 44.♖c7 ♖a1 45.♖c6+ ♔f7 46.♖c7+ ♔g6 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

35...♔b6

The black king moves away to the queenside... but to what end?

35...♖d2 36.a3 ♔d7 37.♖g8 ♖xe2 38.♖xg7+ ♔e6 39.♖xa7 ♖f2+ 40.♔e4 ♖e2+ 41.♔f3 ♖c2 (½-½ Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022) was Leela's preferred defence, when a rook on the third rank will tie down White's king to the defence of the g3-pawn.

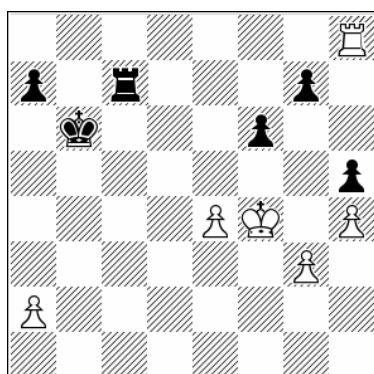
36.e4!

36.♔f5? ♖d4! 37.♖e4 g6+!.

36...♖c7?!

A very slow move once again. Starting counterplay with 36...a5 was the engine choice, getting the a-pawn as far forwards as possible, ready for a future counterattack against a2 when Black's kingside collapses: 37.♖b8+ ♔a6 38.♖g8 a4 39.♔f5 ♖d2 40.♖xg7 ♖xa2 41.♔xf6 a3 42.♖d7 ♖f2+ 43.♔g5 a2 44.♖d1 ♖g2 45.♔xh5 ♖xg3 and the black king will move to the kingside to deal with the e-pawn: 46.♖a1 (46.♖e1 ♔b5 47.e5 ♖e3 ½-½ (70) Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023) 46...♖g2 47.♔h6 ♔b5 48.e5 ♖e2 49.♔g7 ♔b4 ½-½ (51) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023.

37.♖h8



37...♖c5?

This is too much, however. After this move, the engines see Black's position as completely lost. He should play 37...♖c2 when he can still draw with 38.a4 (38.♖xh5 ♖xa2 39.♖h7 g5+ 40.hxg5 fxg5+ 41.♔xg5 a5 (a scary endgame to evaluate, but the engines have it all covered) 42.e5 ♖e2 43.♔f5 ♖f2+ 44.♔g5 ♖e2 45.♔f6 ♖f2+ 46.♔e7 ♖g2 47.♖h3 a4 48.e6 ♖g1 49.♔f6 ♖f1+ 50.♔e5 a3 51.♖h2 ♖e1+ 52.♔f6 ♖f1+ 53.♔g5 ♔c7 54.♖d2 ♖e1 55.♔f6 ♖f1+ 56.♔g5 ♖e1 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023) 38...♔a5 (finally a use for the king!) 39.♖xh5+ ♔xa4 40.♖h7 ♖c7 41.h5 ♔b5 (41...g5+ 42.hxg6 is pretty cool!) 42.♔f5 (42.h6?? g5+ is pretty evil!) 42...♖c5+ 43.♔g6 ♖g5+ 44.♔f7 a5 45.♖xg7 ♖xh5 46.♔xf6 a4 47.♖b7+ (47.e5 ♖h1 48.e6 ♖f1+ 49.♔g5 ♖e1) 47...♔c4 48.g4 ♖h1 49.♖a7 ♔b3 50.♖b7+ ♔c3 51.e5 a3 52.♖a7 ♔b2 53.e6 a2 54.e7 ♖f1+ 55.♔e5 ♖e1+ ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023.

38.♖g8! ♖c7

38...♖a5 39.♖xg7 ♖xa2 40.♖g6 ♖f2+ 41.♔e3 ♖f1 42.♔e2 ♖b1 43.e5 ♔c7 44.exf6 ♖b8 45.f7 ♖f8 46.♖a6 ♔b8 47.♖f6 1-0 (69) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

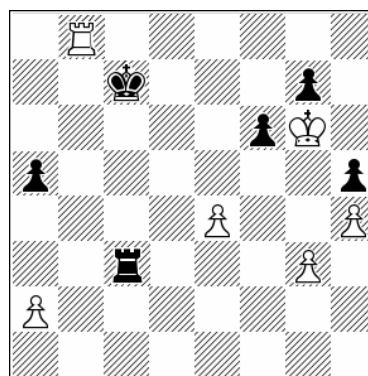
39.♔f5

White has been gifted two huge tempi and now the black kingside is doomed.

39...a5

Now this is too slow.

40.♔g6 ♖c3 41.♖b8+ ♔c7



42.♖b3!

A lovely and evil idea, stopping Black from capturing the g3-pawn... or indeed any other white pawn!

42...♖c5

42...♖c4 43.♖e3 ♔d6 44.♔xg7 ♔e5 was Black's best defence according to the engines but

45.♔g6 followed by ♔xh5 is simply terminal, 1-0 (75) Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

43.♔xg7 f5

43...♞e5 44.♔xf6 ♞xe4 45.♔g6.

44.exf5 ♞xf5 45.♔g6 ♞d5 46.♞f3

46.a4 ♔d7 47.♞f3 ♔e6 48.♞f6+ ♔e7 49.♞f5 ♞d3 50.♔xh5 was perhaps even more accurate, fixing the a5-pawn on a square where it can be easily captured, 1-0 (67) Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022.

46...a4 47.♞f5

47.♞f4 a3 48.♞f3 ♞a5 49.♞f5 was an evil way to ensure Black doesn't even get at the a2-pawn! Barcza's choice is of course also good enough: everything wins by now: 49...♞a8 50.♔xh5 1-0 (69) Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022.

47...♞d3 48.♞g5

A final clever touch: White will have two connected passed pawns on the kingside.

48...♞a3 49.♔xh5 ♞xa2 50.g4 1-0

Game 16 – Dutch Defence

Mikhail Botvinnik

David Bronstein

Moscow Wch m 1951

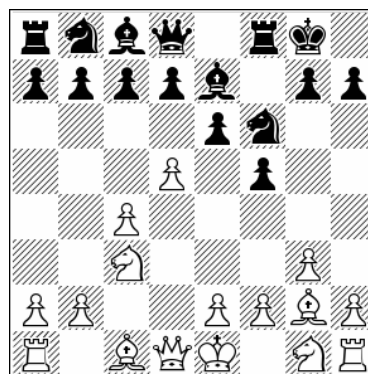
This, the ninth game of the Botvinnik-Bronstein World Championship Match, has claims to be one of the more remarkable games ever played in such an event. After all, how many others saw the World Champion a whole rook up after 18 moves, and yet he failed to win? The game was annotated by Botvinnik in his posthumously-published book on the match (actually, the book was constructed from Botvinnik's notebooks and papers, after his death, by his nephew Igor) and by Bronstein and Vainshtain in the old book *David Bronstein – Chess Improviser*. But, as far as we know, it has never been analysed with engine help (Kasparov did not include it in *Predecessors*, for example), so this may be the first time it has been presented with something approaching the truth.

1.d4 e6 2.c4 f5

The Dutch Defence was played frequently by both players in this match, a unique occurrence

in the World Championship. Botvinnik had always had a fondness for the Stonewall, but Bronstein was much better-known as a King's Indian player. He avoided the latter throughout most of the match, doubtless fearing Botvinnik's preparation, although ironically, in the one game in which he did play it, Game 18, he outplayed his opponent convincingly and won.

3.g3 ♔f6 4.♞g2 ♞e7 5.♔c3 0-0 6.d5



Throw the engines a position with ...f5 in it and they'll try and try and turn it into a Stonewall. It's not that they particularly like the Stonewall, more that they see it as the 'least bad' Dutch structure. They certainly don't think it's worth preventing with d5, as Botvinnik does here. This avoids known lines and prevents a Stonewall set-up, but otherwise has nothing in particular to recommend it.

6...♞b4

A second move of the dark-squared bishop in the opening but it makes perfect sense in the changed circumstances: Black's central pawn structure will be set up on dark squares (d6/e5) so swapping off the dark-squared bishop is standard strategy. It's a little odd in a way that Black should stand well in the opening after wasting two tempi (...♞e7-b4 and later ...e6-e5), but look at the position and it doesn't feel as if White has any lead in development! It's due to the early placement of the pawn on f5 which accelerates Black's natural play on the kingside.

7.♞d2

Quite a passive move. Allowing Black to achieve ...e5 and ...d6 without effort gives Black easy play. The engines came up with two ideas to at least challenge Black a little:

A) 7.♘f3 (preventing ...e5) 7...♗e4 8.0-0 was an enterprising pawn sacrifice from Dragon, but despite the tempo loss ...♗e7-b4, the engines saw no particular problem for Black: 8...♗xc3 9.bxc3 d6 10.dxe6 ♗xe6 11.♗d4 ♖f6 12.♗xe6 ♖xe6 13.♖b3 ♗c5 14.♗d5 ♖xd5 15.cxd5 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022;

B) 7.♖c2 (stops ...e5 by attacking the f5-pawn) 7...♗e4 8.♗xe4 ♗xc3+ 9.♖xc3 fxe4 was an original twist to the game, but one that simply led to equality after 10.♖e5 ♖f6 11.♖xf6 ♖xf6 12.♗h3 d6 13.♗f4 e5 14.♗g2 ♗h3 15.♗e3 ♗d7 16.♖g1 h5 17.♗d1 ♖ff8 ½-½ (36) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

7...e5 8.e3?!

Very slow play again. It seems more natural to hurry to capture the dark-squared bishop with 8.a3, to at least secure the two bishops in this position. This weakening of the light squares does not look especially good and the engine dislikes it. Botvinnik explains it by a desire to reach a closed position, in which he hoped to be able to outplay his more tactically-inclined opponent.

8...d6 9.♗ge2 a6

A move with some human psychology at its heart. The engines are happy exchanging off the dark-squared bishop for the knight anyway but Bronstein lets Botvinnik know that he's missed his chance and that the bishop can hide on a7 now too. Bronstein was also thinking of the unusual idea ...b5, striking at the white queenside.

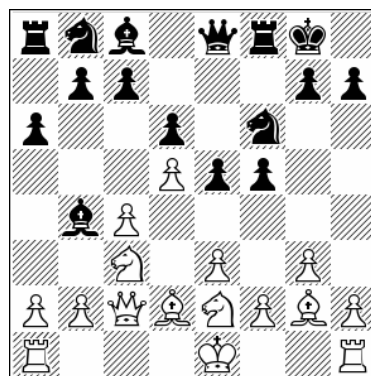
9...♗bd7 10.0-0 a5 11.a3 ♗xc3 12.♗xc3 e4 is quite annoying with ...♗e5 to follow, while the white knight can no longer get to d4 quickly.

13.f4 exf3 14.♖xf3 ♗c5 15.♖e2 ♗d7 16.♖ae1 ♖e8 17.b4 axb4 18.axb4 ♗ce4 19.♗xe4 ♗xe4 20.♗c1 ♖g5 21.♗b2 ♖a4 22.b5 h5 23.♖f4 b6 24.♗d4 ♗c5 25.♖ef1 ♖a3 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

10.♖c2

Trying to prove a downside to 9...a6, by preventing ...♗bd7 due to the hanging f5-pawn while 9...a6 has taken away the knight's other development path.

10...♖e8



11.f3?

A really horrible move – what was Botvinnik thinking? It entombs the bishop on g2 and weakens the e3-pawn, while Black still has the possibility to transfer the dark-squared bishop to the a7-g1 diagonal. It feels a little as if Botvinnik was trying to play in an anti-Bronstein style, but merely ending up playing bad chess moves.

11.a3 ♗c5 (even the engines think it's too late to let White claim the bishop pair) 12.0-0 (12.h3 b5; the engines adopt Bronstein's unusual ...b5 idea (it's a little strange to play on the queenside when White normally tries to open lines there) and seem fairly content: 13.b4 ♗b6 14.cxb5 axb5 15.♗c1 (redeploying the bishop to a better diagonal) 15...♗h8 16.♗b2 ♗b7 17.g4 c5 18.gxf5 cxb4 19.axb4 ♖xa1+ 20.♗xa1 ♗a6 21.♖b2 ♗c7 22.♖d2 ♖h5 23.♗g3 ♖h4 with a really messy position that would have delighted Bronstein! ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 12...♖h5 13.b4 ♗a7 14.♖ad1 ♗bd7 with pleasant attacking prospects on the kingside.

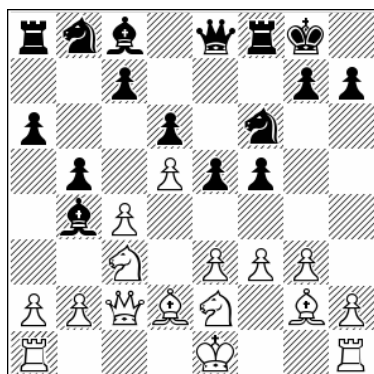
11...b5

Consistent, but it distracts Black from building up kingside play, which is really tempting after a move like 11.f3. Another good plan was simply 11...a5 or immediately 11...♗c5. We already start seeing black wins in the engine matches, which shows how badly Botvinnik has handled this. The engines switch plans at this point, trying to get a grip on the queenside dark squares at a minimum, hopefully also holding on to the dark-squared bishop as well: 11...a5 12.0-0 ♗c5 (12...♗d7 13.♖ae1 ♗c5 14.♗h1 ♗b6 15.b3 ♗a6 16.a3 ♗c5 17.♗c1 ♖h5 18.♖b2 ♖ab8 19.♖d2 ♖h6 20.♗b5

13.♖b6 21.b4 ♖be8 22.bxa5 ♙c5 23.♚a2 g5 24.♚b2 ♖e7 25.♜g1 ♜h5 0-1 (103) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022)

13.♜h1 ♙d7 and ...♜a6 when Black is somewhat better.

However, Bronstein explained in his book that, when playing his move, he had calculated the variation that occurred in the game, believing he was winning. We shall shortly see what he had missed.



12.♚b3?

Another move the engines hate! In principle, the best White can achieve is to win a pawn on the queenside which will give Black plenty of Benko-style counterplay on the a- and b-files, quite apart from the weakness of the d5-pawn (no longer covered by the bishop on g2 after 11.f3).

The World Champion's idea, as he explains, was to delay the exchange on b5 and attack the bishop first, so as to avoid 12.cxb5 axb5 13.♚b3 (13.0-0 ♜a6 14.a3 was the engine choice, trying to achieve some stability in the centre and on the queenside. 14...♙xc3 (14...♙c5 15.b4 ♙b6 16.♜h1 ♙d7 17.♖ad1 ♜h8 18.♚d3 c5 19.dxc6 ♙xc6 20.♙c1 ♖c8 21.e4 fxe4 22.♜xe4 ♜xe4 23.fxe4 ♖xf1+ 24.♖xf1 ♜c7 25.♜c3 ♙d4 26.♜e2 ♙b6 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 15.♜xc3 b4 16.axb4 ♜xb4 17.♚b3 ♖b8 18.♚c4 c5 19.dxc6+ ♙e6 20.♚e2 ♚xc6 21.♖fc1 ♙c4. It's still looking nasty for White but the engines had planned a liquidating manoeuvre from afar: 22.♜d5 ♙xe2 23.♜e7+ ♜f7 24.♜xc6 ♜xc6 25.♖xc6 ♜e6 26.e4 fxe4 27.f4 exf4 28.♙xf4 ♖fd8 29.♙h3+ ♜d5 30.♖c7 ♖xb2 31.♖xg7 ♖db8 32.♖f7 ♜g4 33.♙xg4 ♙xg4 34.♖a5+ ♜d4 35.♙xd6 ♖b1+ ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022)

13...♜a6. This position is indeed also assessed by the engine as winning for Black: 14.0-0 ♙d7 15.a3 ♙c5 16.h3 ♖b8 17.f4 b4 18.axb4 ♜xb4 19.fxe5 ♚xe5 20.♜h2 ♜h8 21.♚d1 ♜bxd5 and White is getting overrun, 0-1 (65) Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2023.

12...♙c5!

The engines are now showing evaluations between -2 and -4! Botvinnik gives 12...♙xc3 13.♜xc3 bxc4 14.♚xc4 ♚f7 as 'simpler', but this seems to squander a lot of Black's advantage.

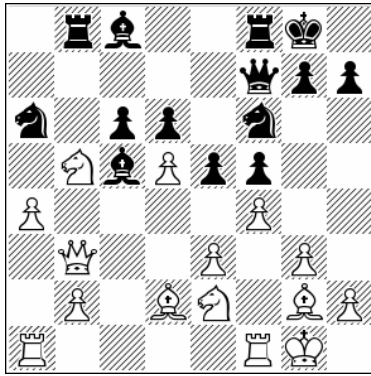
13.cxb5

13.0-0 was better than taking on b5, but still after 13...bxc4 14.♚xc4 ♚f7 as 'simpler', but this seems to squander a lot of Black's advantage.



13...♙d7?!

Bronstein is incapable of doing anything straightforwardly! 13...axb5 14.♜xb5 (14.♚xb5 ♚xb5 15.♜xb5 ♜xd5 (Botvinnik) is very little for Black, but the engine's 14...♜bd7 is much stronger, when White is defenceless against the threat of ...♙a6, etc.: 15.♚b3 ♜b6 16.0-0 ♙a6 17.♖fe1 ♖b8 18.♚c2 ♜c4 19.b3 ♜xe3 20.♙xe3 ♙xe3+ 21.♜h1 ♚h5 Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2023 0-1 (63)) 14...♜a6 was another simple engine plan (14...♚f7! – Botvinnik, is also strong, but the text is even better). The justification of why this is the best move-order is quite difficult to spot, though the individual tactics are not too complicated: 15.0-0 ♖b8 16.a4 ♚f7 17.f4 (17.♚d1 ♜xd5 18.♜h1 ♜xe3 19.♙xe3 ♙xe3 20.f4 ♜b4 21.g4 e4 22.gxf5 d5 is just as horrible for White, 0-1 (27) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 17...c6.



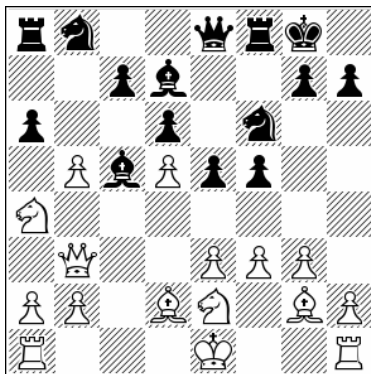
analysis diagram

This is the horrible point – pins along the b-file and the a2-g8 diagonal cost White a piece or his position: 18.fxe5 dxe5 19.♖c4 (the only way to avoid loss of a piece) 19...♗xd5 20.♙xd5 (20.♗h1 ♙e6 21.♗d6 ♙xd6 22.♖xa6 ♖xb2 23.♖ad1 ♗b6 24.♙c3 ♙c4 0-1 (38) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 20...cxd5 21.♖c3 d4 22.exd4 exd4 23.♗bxd4 ♖b3! 24.♖c2 ♖d5 and White is being annihilated on the light squares.

14.♗a4

Bronstein was hoping to force 14.bxa6 ♗xa6 with a winning initiative again, but Botvinnik finds the best chance.

15.0-0 f4 16.gxf4 exf4 17.♖c4 fxe3 18.♙e1 ♗b4 19.a3 ♗c2 20.♖c1 ♗xe1 21.♖cxel ♖g6 is terrible for White, 0-1 (67) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.



14...♙a7??

Now it is Bronstein's turn to blunder, although he was still rattling out the 'combination' he had seen when playing his 13th move.

As Botvinnik noted, he had to play 14...axb5 15.♗xc5 dxc5, when he is still better. Botvinnik now gave 16.f4 with a '!', but this again gives Black a decisive advantage after 16...e4 17.♙c3 and now 17...♗g4! is even stronger than

Botvinnik's 17...c4 18.♖d1, although the latter is also much better for Black after 18...♗a6. White does better to play 16.0-0 ♗a6 17.♖c2 ♗xd5, which nets Black a pawn at the cost of some looseness of his position. Black has quite a big territory to cover, two pawns at the front of his position lack the protection of a dark-squared bishop and the knight on a6 is a little offside.

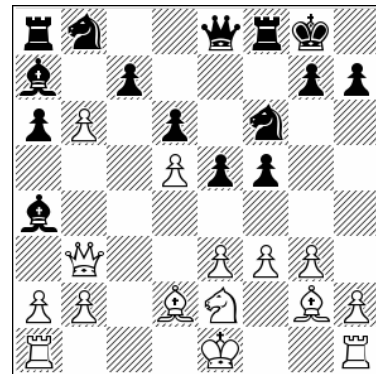
The engines were managing to hold a number of these in our engine games although White is clearly worse: 18.f4 e4 19.g4 g6 20.a3 c6 21.b3 ♖e7 22.♗h1 ♗f7 23.♗c3 ♖g8 24.♖fd1 ♗ac7 25.♗xd5 cxd5 26.♙c3 fxg4 27.♙e5 ♙e6 28.♙f1 ♖gc8 29.♖b2 h5 30.♖ac1 ♗g8 31.a4 and Stockfish kept on randomising the position, generating enough counterplay for a draw, ½-½ (47) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

15.b6!

And just like that, White is winning!

15...♙xa4

Still following his intended line. Objectively, he should have played 15...♙xb6 16.♗xb6 cxb6 17.♖xb6 ♗xd5 18.♖xd6, but here White has an extra pawn and two bishops in a fairly 'normal' position, and Botvinnik could certainly be expected to convert such an advantage.



16.b7!

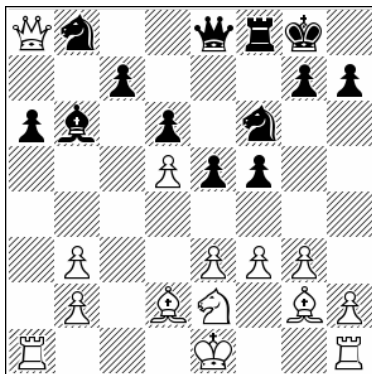
The evil tactical point that one imagines Bronstein simply missed (whatever his explanations after the game!).

16...♙xb3 17.bxa8=♖

Black has a piece for the lost rook on a8, but two hanging pieces! Black will be a rook down with precious little to show for it. When playing his 13th move, Bronstein had apparently seen this position, but in his mind's eye he had the black bishop on b6 instead of a7, so that 17...♙xd5

would now win the newly-born white queen and with it the game. But on arriving at this position, he realised to his horror that the bishop is on a7 and is hanging. Bronstein recalls that he became terribly angry with himself and it was only this which resulted in his playing on, rather than resigning.

17...♙b6 18.axb3



Thus, Black is a whole rook down and the engine assesses White's advantage at almost +7. But the position is not entirely 'rational', in that the white queen is buried on a8 and unable immediately to emerge. In addition, the ♙g2 is passive and Black's next keeps the white king from castling and picks up a pawn. Of course, White is completely winning, but it is not absolutely straightforward and Bronstein now began moving quickly, as if nothing had happened. Botvinnik, on the other hand, expecting his opponent to resign, relaxed a little and soon found that things were not so straightforward as they seemed.

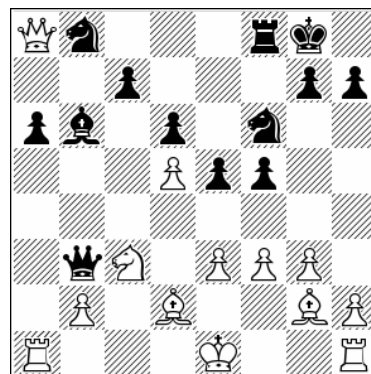
18...♙b5

Bronstein chooses perhaps the most humanly intimidating idea, bringing his own queen into play while temporarily caging in the white queen. It's not easy to envisage ever being able to capture it, but it's something that can make White a little edgy.

19.♘c3

19.♙f1 with the clever point that 19...♙xb3 20.♘c1! traps the queen: 20...♙xb2 (or 20...♙c2 21.♙d3 ♙xb2 22.♙a2) 21.♙a2 ♙b1 22.♙d3.

19...♙xb3



20.♙xa6

Perhaps a little panicky but a very human move to clarify the position by freeing the queen as soon as possible.

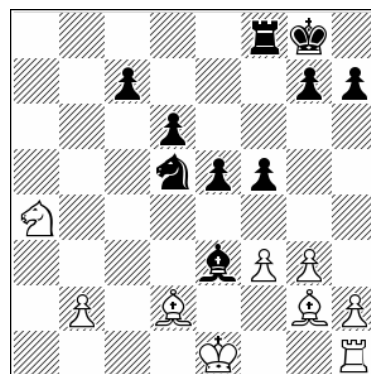
Botvinnik wrote that he should have played simply 20.0-0 f4 (20...♙xb2 21.♙a2 ♙b3 22.♙b1 ♙c4 23.♙f1 and Botvinnik stops here. Black can save the queen by 23...♙xe3+ 24.♙h1 ♙c5 but 25.♙xb8 wins, of course) 21.♙h1 fxe3 22.♙c1 ♙d4 23.♙e1.

20.♘d1 f4 21.♙a3 ♙b5 22.e4 g5 23.♙f1 ♙e8 24.g4 was a pretty concrete way of solidifying White's position without giving up material, 1-0 (44) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

20...♘xa6 21.♙xa6 ♘xd5 22.♙a4

This is an amazingly poor move, however, giving away a pawn for no reason. Botvinnik correctly pointed out that both 22.♙e2 and 22.♘xd5 ♙xd5 23.♙e2 (1-0 (43) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) win without difficulty. It's hard to think what Botvinnik might have disliked in this position: two bishops, a piece for a pawn up and no threats from Black worth mentioning.

22...♙xa4 23.♘xa4 ♙xe3



The position is still winning, of course, but it's now a position that White will only win in 60 or 70 moves, demonstrating patience to first activate his passive and misplaced minor pieces

(bishop on g2, knight on a4) and cover his isolated b2-pawn, before gradually squeezing Black. As we shall see in the rest of the game, Botvinnik is not equal to the task – perhaps not too surprisingly after his very nervous play in the early stages. It is true that White's advantage has shrunk to below +3 on the engine scale, but this should still be quite sufficient to win. But time-trouble was also now becoming a factor.

24.♙f1 ♖a8 25.b3

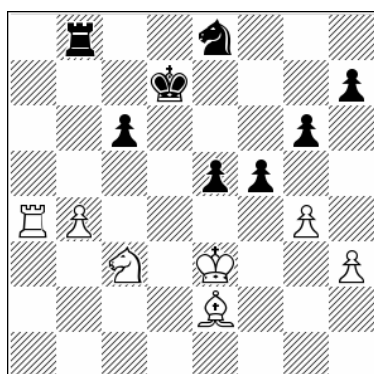
25.♙b5! is more convincing, when the threat of ♙c6 causes further simplification.

For example, 25...♙xd2+ 26.♙xd2 ♖e7 27.♙c4+ ♙f8 28.♖a1 (not an obvious move, but there is a deep point behind it) 28...♖b8 29.♖a3 ♙e8 30.♖b3 (activating the rook that a few moves ago was languishing on h1) 30...♖xb3 (30...♖a8 31.f4 is the idea, opening the third rank for the rook on both wings after 31...exf4 32.gxf4) 31.♙xb3 ♙d7 32.f4 ♙c6 33.♙f7 ♙b5 34.♖c3+ ♙c5 35.fxe5 dxe5 36.g4 fxg4 37.♙h5 g3 38.♖e4+ ♙c4 39.♖xg3 ♙b3 40.♙c1 ♙c4 41.♙e2+ ♙d4 42.♙d2 e4 43.♙d1 e3+ 44.♙e2 g6 45.♙c2 ♖d5 46.♙f3 ♙e5 47.♖e2 ♖b6 48.♙b3 ♖d7 49.♙xe3 (1-0 (71) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) and the encircling continued. You can see, however, the care and accuracy required from White: Botvinnik's task is not easy at all.

25...♙xd2+ 26.♙xd2 ♙f8 27.♙d3

27.♙e2 g6 28.♖c1 ♙e7 29.♖c4 ♙d7 30.f4 was another brilliant engine plan to activate the rook as much as possible, this time on the fourth rank.

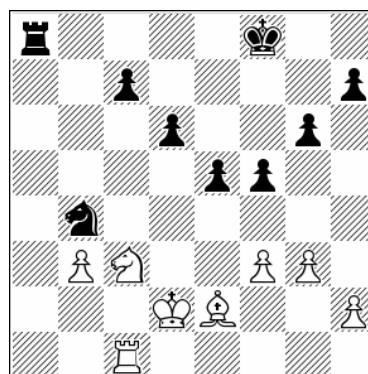
30...c6 31.fxe5 dxe5 32.♖c3 ♖b6 33.♖c5 ♙d6 34.b4 ♖b8 35.♖a5 ♖d7 36.♖a4 ♖f6 37.♙d3 ♖d7 38.♙e3 ♖f6 39.h3 ♖e8 40.g4 ♙d7



analysis diagram

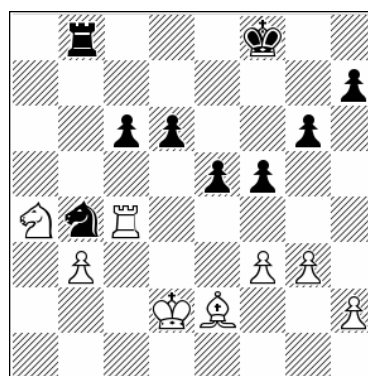
41.♙d3 ♖d6 42.♙c2 e4 43.gxf5 gxf5 44.♙b3 ♙e6 45.♖a6 ♖c8 46.♖a5 ♙d7 47.♙c4 f4 48.♖a7+ ♖c7 49.♖a8 ♙e7 50.♙d5 e3 51.♙f3 ♖f5 52.♙g4 ♖g3 53.♙c4 ♙f7 54.♙c5 ♙g7 55.♖e8 ♙f7 56.♖d8 ♙g7 57.♙d6 h5 58.♙d1 ♖f7 59.♖d7 ♖f5+ 60.♙xc6. Finally White has control, but it has again been a struggle: 1-0 (82) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

27...g6 28.♖c1 ♖b8 29.♖c3 ♖b4 30.♙e2 ♖a8



Bronstein continues to wriggle and White's advantage is now down to 1.5. Imperceptibly, the win is slipping away and one can imagine that the psychological side of the game must by now have been affecting Botvinnik – the thought 'I was a whole rook up!' and the fear of not winning is often very difficult for the human to deal with in such situations.

31.♖a4 c6 32.♖c4 ♖b8



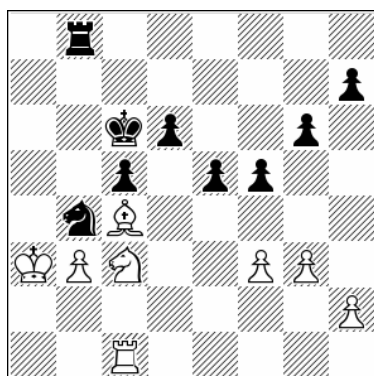
33.♙d1?!

It's not completely clear why, but from now on, after 33.♙d1, all the engine games ended in draws! 33.♙c3 was still leading to an overwhelming number of wins, although far from easy. The main difference is that 33.♙c3 forces Black to play ...c5 to cover the c-pawn which has the knock-on effect of making it more difficult for Black to achieve ...d5.

Without ...d5, Black cannot make life difficult for the white rook on the fourth rank as he does in the game.

33.♔c3 ♖d5+ (33...c5 34.♔d2 ♖d5 35.♙d1 ♖b4 36.♖b2 ♔f7 37.♖d3 ♖c6 38.♙a4 ♔e7 39.♔c3 ♔d7 40.h4 ♔e7 41.♙a6 ♔d7 42.♔c4 ♙b7 43.g4 ♙c7 44.♙a8 ♖a7 45.g5 ♖c8 46.♙a6 ♖e7 47.♖b2 ♖c6 48.♔c3 ♔e7 49.♙a8 ♔e6 50.♖a4 ♙a7 51.♙f8 ♙f7 52.♙c8 ♖d4 53.♔c4 ♙a7 54.♙f8 d5+ 55.♔c3 ♔e7 56.♙f6 ♙a8 57.f4 exf4 58.♖xc5 and once again Dragon's technique brought home the point, 1-0 (85) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022)

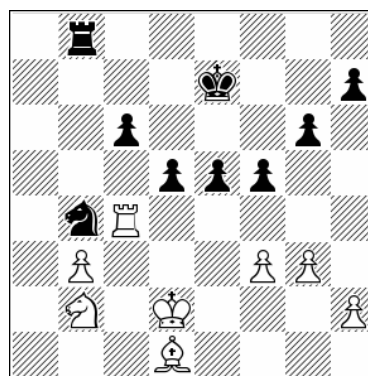
34.♔b2 c5 (34...♖b4 35.♔a3) 35.♙c1 ♖e3 36.♔a3 ♔e7 37.♖c3 ♔d7 38.♖d1 ♖d5 39.♙c4 ♖b4 40.♖c3 ♔c6



analysis diagram

41.f4 ♙a8+ 42.♔b2 d5 43.♙b5+ ♔d6 44.♙d1 ♙d8 45.fxe5+ ♔xe5 46.♙f1 h5 47.♙g2 g5 48.♙d2 d4 49.♙e2+ ♔d6 50.♖b5+ ♔d7 51.♖a3 f4 52.♖c4 ♙f8 53.♔a3 fxf3 54.hxf3 d3 55.♙d2 h4 56.g4 ♔e7 57.♔a4 ♙f4 58.♔b5 ♙xf4 59.♔xc5 ♖a6+ 60.♔b6 ♖b4 61.♙b7 ♙d4 62.♔c5 ♙d7 63.♙g2 ♖a6+ 64.♔b6 ♖b4 65.♖e3 ♙d8 66.♔c5 ♙b8 67.♙h3 ♔f7 68.♙f2+ ♔g7 69.♔c4 ♔h8 70.♙f5 ♔g7 71.♔c3 ♙b6 72.♙g4 ♔h6 73.♙f7 ♖a2+ 74.♔d2 h3 75.♙f5 1-0 (109) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022. Wonderful technique from Dragon.

33...♔e7 34.♖b2 d5



Now the engines no longer believe Black is even worse!

35.♙h4

35.♙c1 ♙a8 36.♖a4 (the knight has to be diverted once again to the offside a4-square to restrain the black rook's activity while the white rook has lost all its scope) 36...e4 37.♙e2 ♔d6 38.♙d1 ♔e5 39.♔c3 ♖a2+ 40.♔b2 ♖b4 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

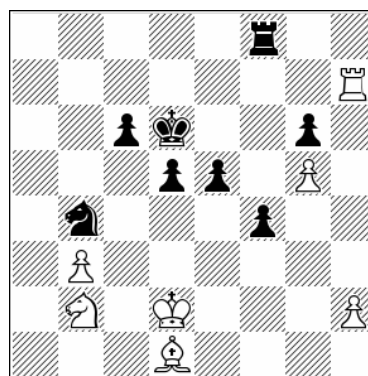
35...h5 36.g4

36.♖d3 ♖xd3 37.♔xd3 d4 38.♔c2 (38.g4 hxg4 39.fxf4 e4+ 40.♔xd4 ♙d8+ 41.♔e5 ♙xd1 ½-½ (41) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 38...♔f6 39.♙e2 ♙a8 40.♔b1 c5 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

36...hxf4 37.fxf4 f4 38.g5 ♙f8

38...♔d6 39.♙h6 e4 40.♙xf6+ ♔e5 was slightly more accurate.

39.♙h7+ ♔d6



40.♙g7

40.♙b7! would still have exerted some pressure: 40...f3 41.♙xb4 f2 42.♙e2 f1=♙ 43.♙xf1 ♙xf1 44.♖d1 ♙h1 45.♙h4 ♙g1 46.♔e2 ♙xf5 and Black is holding.

40...e4 41.♙xf6+ ♔e5

The game was agreed drawn here. To be honest, an adjournment was probably very welcome for

Botvinnik: one could see White losing this quite easily, if he keeps on playing for a win. The engines confirm a draw everywhere.

1/2-1/2

Game 17 – Dutch Defence

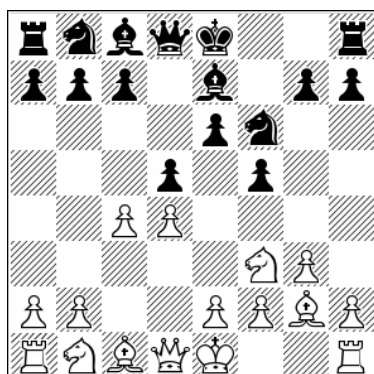
Laszlo Szabo

Mikhail Botvinnik

Budapest 1952

This fascinating battle is soaked in interesting play in every phase. The early stages are a textbook example of how Black should handle the Dutch Stonewall. Later, a serious mistake by Botvinnik led him into desperate straits, but tenacious defence made things difficult for his opponent and finally, superior knowledge of some 18th century endgame analyses enabled the World Champion to rescue half a point.

1.d4 e6 2.c4 f5 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 ♙e7 5.♘f3 d5



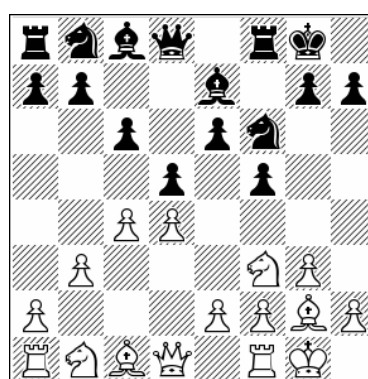
The Dutch Stonewall has never enjoyed a great press, but it was an early love of Botvinnik's and over the earlier part of his career he won many impressive games with it, including victories over players as strong as Flohr and Keres, plus draws with Capablanca and Reshevsky. Despite this, numerous dark-square horror shows perpetrated by lesser exponents have ensured that the opening has remained firmly in the 'dubious' basket of openings. Nonetheless, it was revived successfully in the 1980s by Artur Yusupov, although he usually preferred to develop the bishop to d6, rather than e7. The opening has also had a rather strange place in engine chess. Throw an engine a Dutch Defence to play and they will turn it into a Stonewall if they get the chance! Traditionally, the top

engines have evaluated Dutch (Stonewall) positions rather negatively but have held the resulting positions rather well.

6.0-0 0-0 7.b3

This plan, which aims to exchange dark-squared bishops, is always regarded as the obvious positional plan against the Stonewall, but Botvinnik's handling here shows that it is far from a guaranteed path to advantage. The point is that Black's position is a little cramped, so the exchange of a pair of bishops helps him in that respect, whilst the dark squares can be protected by pawns.

7...c6



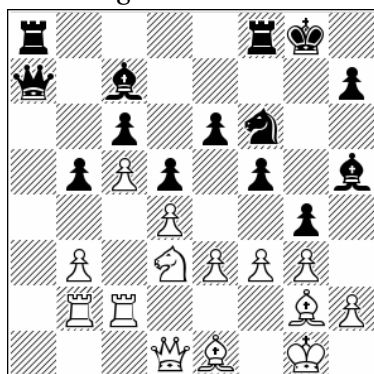
8.♙a3

This exchange is eminently reasonable but only carries a bite as long as Black's structure stays as it is. Botvinnik demonstrates a strategy of gaining queenside space with ...a5 and ...b6 to secure future employment for the bishop from a6 or b7. I (Matthew) was extremely impressed with Botvinnik's strategy when I first came across this game and it proved the inspiration for adopting the Stonewall Dutch myself (with excellent results). Playing out engine games from various points in the opening, I was struck by how actively the engines sought to generate play and gain space on the queenside, which both fits Botvinnik's strategy and takes it a step further.

8.♞c2. Interestingly, the engines aren't keen to exchange off the dark-squared bishops early, preferring perhaps to keep Black's position as congested with pieces as possible. The plan they choose as Black is one I (Matthew) was never keen on: to play ...a7-a5-a4. This always seemed to help White by opening an invasion channel

on the queenside, but the engines manage to make it work.

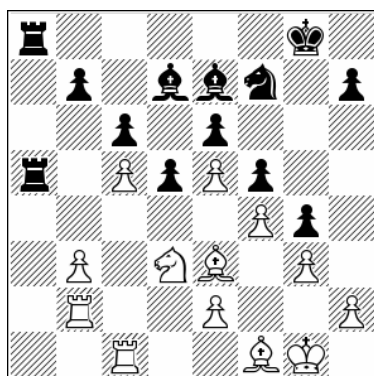
A) 8...♟e4 9.♟e5 a5 10.♟d2 a4 11.♞b1 axb3 12.axb3 ♟a6 13.♟d3 ♞a5 14.e3 ♟b4 15.♟xb4 ♟xb4 16.♟f3 ♞a2 17.♞b2 ♞a7 18.♟d2 ♟d6 19.♞c1 b5 20.♟e1 ♟d7 21.c5 ♟c7 22.♟e5 ♟f6 23.f3 ♟e8 24.♟d3 ♟h5 25.♞d1 g5 26.♞cc2 g4.



analysis diagram

Played like a Dutch Stonewall expert! White will have no breakthrough once the kingside gets closed in this way. 27.f4 ♟f7 28.♟f1 ♟e7 29.♞a2 ♞xa2 30.♞xa2 ♞xa2 31.♟b4 ♞fa8 32.♟xa2 ♞xa2 33.♞b1 ♞a7 ½-½ (56) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022;

B) 8...a5 9.♟e5 ♟bd7 10.♟d3 ♟e4 11.♟d2 a4 12.♞b1 axb3 13.axb3 ♞a5 14.♞b2 ♞c3 15.♞xc3 ♟xc3 16.♟f3 ♟e4 17.♟e3 g5 18.♞c1 g4 19.♟fe5 ♟xe5 20.dxe5 ♟d7 21.c5 ♞a5 22.f3 ♟g5 23.f4 ♟f7 24.♟f1 ♞fa8.



analysis diagram

These types of positions always tend to be slightly worrying as Black – doesn't White have more opportunities to improve his position than Black? – but the engines are supremely unconcerned! 25.♟d4 ♟h8 26.♟e1 ♟e8 27.b4 ♞a4 28.♟c2 h5 29.♟f2 ♟g6 30.e3 ♟f7 31.h3 ♟d8 32.♟g2 ♞a2 33.♞xa2 ♞xa2 34.hxg4 hxg4 35.♟g1 ♟d7 36.♟e2 b6 37.♟f1 bxc5 38.bxc5 ♟e7 39.♟d4 ♞a3

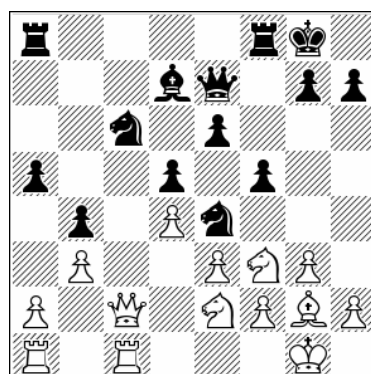
40.♟d1 ♟e8 41.♟e1 ♟f8 42.♟d2 ♟g8 ½-½ (64) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

8...♟bd7 9.♞c1

A little refinement: after exchanging on e7, White can follow up to offer the exchange of queens via ♞a3. This makes positional sense as the black queen is the best remaining defender of Black's weakness on the dark squares after the exchange of the dark-squared bishops. However, Black can either sidestep the exchange or – as the engines show – play the resulting endgame. White's grip on the dark squares is not yet strong enough to assure a lasting endgame advantage.

9.♞c2 is the engines' preference against which both Dragon and Stockfish play very aggressively on the queenside:

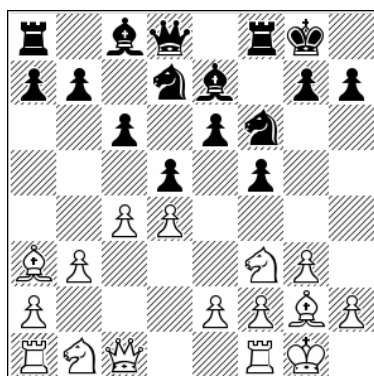
A) 9...b5 is a known idea, though it feels extremely loose in this specific position. However, if Dragon wants it and Stockfish cannot refute it then it most likely holds together! 10.cxb5 cxb5 11.♟g5 (11.♞c6, hitting a8 and e6, looks terminal for Black, but Black has unexpected resources! 11...b4 12.♞xe6+ (if 12.♞xa8, 12...♞b6 traps the queen; 12.♟b2 ♟b6 covers e6 and a8) 12...♟h8 13.♟b2 ♟c5 14.♞e3 ♟g4 15.♞c1 ♟e4 16.h3 f4 17.hxg4 fxg3 18.fxg3 ♟xg3 19.♞f2 ♟e4 20.♞f1 ♟xg4 (20...♟g3 led to a draw by repetition in another engine game) 21.♟bd2 ♞c8 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022; great play for the piece!) 11...♟b8 is necessary to defend e6, but also desirable. The knight will be better placed on c6 now that cxd5 ...cxd5 has been included! 12.♟xe7 ♞xe7 13.♟c3 ♟d7 14.♞fc1 ♟c6 15.e3 ♟e4 16.♟f3 b4 17.♟e2 a5.



analysis diagram

Black grabs territory aggressively on the queenside: the $\Delta b4$ creates an outpost on c3 while the a-pawn is arriving to soften up the white queenside a little more: 18.h4 $\Sigma fc8$ 19. $\Psi d1$ $\Delta e8$ 20. $\Delta f4$ h6 21.h5 $\Psi d6$ 22. $\Delta f1$ a4 23.bxa4 $\Delta c3$ 24. $\Psi e1$ $\Delta xa4$ 25. $\Delta b5$ $\Delta c3$ 26. $\Delta xc6$ $\Psi xc6$ 27. $\Delta e5$ $\Psi b6$ 28. $\Delta ed3$ $\Sigma a3$ with plenty of play for Black, $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ (50) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022;

B) 9... $\Delta e4$ 10.e3 $\Delta xa3$ 11. $\Delta xa3$ $\Psi e7$ 12. $\Psi b2$ b6 13. $\Sigma fc1$ $\Delta b7$ 14.cxd5 exd5 15. $\Delta c2$ a5 (Botvinnik's plan on the board from Stockfish!) 16. $\Delta ce1$ a4... and Stockfish keeps on running with the queenside play as Dragon was a little more careful to play e3 to prevent Black's kingside play with ...f4: 17. $\Delta d3$ a3 18. $\Psi c2$ c5 19. $\Psi d1$ $\Sigma fc8$ 20.h4 c4 21. $\Delta f4$ b5. Bold queenside play from Stockfish. White has to be careful not to get completely squeezed on that wing. 22.h5 $\Delta c6$ 23. $\Delta h4$ $\Sigma f8$ 24.bxc4 bxc4 25. $\Psi c2$ $\Delta b6$ 26. $\Sigma ab1$ $\Delta a4$ 27. $\Delta f3$ $\Delta b2$ and Black had no problems, $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ (29) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.



9... $\Delta e4!$

Playing in the centre is one of the keys to making the Stonewall playable. The standard plan, beloved of Stonewall suicide merchants, is ... $\Psi d8$ -e8-h5, trying to deliver mate. It is true that Botvinnik himself frequently handled the opening this way in the 1930s, but as White's play has become more refined, such a Route One approach tends to fail and to lead to the sort of dark square massacres that have so discredited the opening. Instead, Black should aim to keep his queen centralised on e7, and play moves such as ...b6, ... $\Delta b7$, etc.

9...b5 is also possible here, of course: 10. $\Delta xe7$ $\Psi xe7$ 11.cxd5 cxd5 12. $\Psi c7$ a5 13. $\Delta e5$ b4 14. $\Sigma c1$ $\Delta a6$ 15. $\Delta d2$ $\Delta b5$ 16.e3 $\Delta e8$ 17. $\Psi c2$ $\Delta d6$ 18. $\Delta df3$ $\Sigma fc8$

19. $\Psi b2$ $\Delta f6$ 20. $\Sigma xc8+$ $\Sigma xc8$ 21.a4 $\Delta e8$ 22. $\Sigma c1$ $\Psi d8$ 23. $\Delta g5$ $\Delta d7$ 24. $\Delta f1$ h6 25. $\Delta gf3$ $\Delta fe4$ 26. $\Delta e1$ $\Delta c3$ $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ (37) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

10. $\Delta bd2$

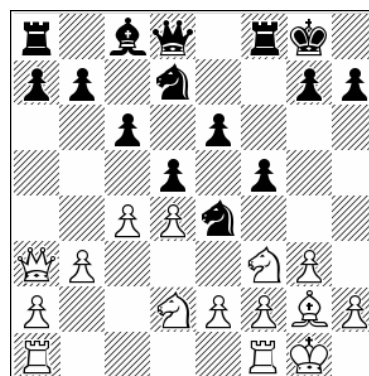
White aims at arranging his knights on f3 and d3, dominating the e5-square.

10. $\Delta xe7$ $\Psi xe7$ 11. $\Psi a3$ $\Psi f6$ would be a natural human choice: the black queen is well-placed on f6 so little is lost by avoiding the exchange. (11... $\Psi xa3$ 12. $\Delta xa3$ b6 13. $\Sigma ac1$ $\Delta a6$ 14. $\Sigma fd1$ $\Sigma ac8$ 15. $\Delta e5$ $\Sigma fd8$ 16.f3 $\Delta ef6$ 17.e3 c5 18. $\Delta f1$ dxc4 19. $\Delta axc4$ cxd4 20.exd4 $\Delta b7$ 21. $\Delta f2$ $\Delta e8$ 22.h4 $\Delta df6$ 23.a4 $\Delta f8$ 24.a5 $\Delta d5$, with a small but defensible disadvantage for Black, $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ (36) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 12. $\Psi b2$ b6 13. $\Delta c3$ $\Delta b7$ 14. $\Sigma ac1$ $\Sigma ac8$ 15.cxd5 exd5 16.e3 a5 17. $\Sigma c2$ $\Delta a6$ 18. $\Sigma d1$ $\Psi e6$ 19. $\Delta a4$ $\Delta b5$ 20. $\Delta e5$ $\Delta xe5$ 21.dxe5 $\Delta xa4$ 22.bxa4 $\Sigma b8$ 23. $\Psi d4$ $\Sigma fd8$ 24.f3 $\Delta c5$ $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ (47) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

10... $\Delta xa3!$?

It is not clear why this exchange is necessary at this stage. Botvinnik justifies it on the basis that the white knight has left b1 and so cannot recapture (intending $\Delta a3$ -c2-e1-d3), but it could still have waited. The engine prefers the immediate 10...b6 after which it believes chances are equal.

11. $\Psi xa3$



Now the white queen is active on the dark squares and her opposite number is unable to take up her ideal position on e7.

11...b6

The key to Botvinnik's plan: Black will play ...b6 and ...a5 to gain queenside space and prevent White from expanding there or developing a grip on the queenside dark squares. The light-squared bishop will be activated either on b7 or

a6 and eventually Black may play the typical freeing break ...c5. Actually, one thing that is impressive in this game was how long Botvinnik waited with the ...c5 break, first completing development and then building strengths in other areas of the board. Without ...c5 on the board, White struggles to find targets for play and we get a sense during the game that Szabo was struggling to find an appropriate plan.

11...a5 12.e3 b5. As we saw earlier, Dragon is keen to push the queenside pawns quickly and it also worked quite well here: 13.♖b2 ♘b7 14.♞fc1 b4 15.a3 c5 16.axb4 axb4 17.♞xa8 ♞xa8 18.cxd5 ♙xd5 19.♙xe4 ♙xe4 20.♙e1 ♞a3 21.♞xa3 bxa3 22.dxc5 a2 23.♙xe4 fxe4 24.♞a1 ♙xc5 25.b4 ♙a6 26.♙c2 ♞b8 27.♞xa2 ♙xb4 28.♙xb4 ♞xb4 ½-½ (49) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

12.♞ac1

The engines slightly prefer the other rook: 12.♞fc1.

12.♞b2 a5 13.♞fd1 ♙a6 14.♙e1 b5 was another demonstration of the ...b5 plan, this time supported by a bishop on a6.

15.cxd5 cxd5 (15...exd5. It is hard to imagine oneself ever choosing this in a practical game – look at that c5-square and the backward pawn on c6! – but Komodo makes a good case for simply ignoring the optics and asking White what he is going to do! 16.a3 ♞e7 17.♞c2 ♙b7 18.♙d3 a4 19.b4 ♙d6 20.e3 ♞ae8 21.♞e1 g5 22.f4 g4 23.♙e5 ♙g7 24.h3 h5 25.♙f2 ♞h8 26.♞h1 ♙f6 27.♞ac1 ♞e6 28.♞ce1 ♞eg8 29.♙g1 ♞e8 30.♞h2 ♞eg8 31.♙f1 ♙f8 ½-½ (46) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 16.♙xe4 fxe4 17.♞d2 ♙f6 18.♙h3 ♞b6 19.♙g2 b4 20.a3 bxa3 21.♞xa3 ♙c8 22.♙e3 ♙d7 23.♞da1 h5 24.♙f1 ♞ab8 25.h4 ♞b4 26.♞xb4 ♞xb4 27.♙c2 ♞b5 28.♞xa5 ♞xb3 29.♙h3 ♞fb8 30.♙e3 ♞b1+ 31.♞xb1 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

12...♙b7 13.♞fd1 ♞f6

13...a5 is an alternative way of playing, once again fearless of pushing the queenside pawns!

14.♞b2 c5 15.cxd5 exd5 16.e3 a4 17.♙b1 ♞e7 18.♞c2 ♞fc8 19.♙c3 a3 20.♞c1 ♙xc3 21.♞xc3 ♙f6 22.dxc5 ♙e4 23.♞c2 bxc5 24.♙d2 h6 25.♙xe4 fxe4 26.h4 ♙h8 27.♞dd2 d4 28.exd4 cxd4 29.♞xd4 e3 30.fxe3

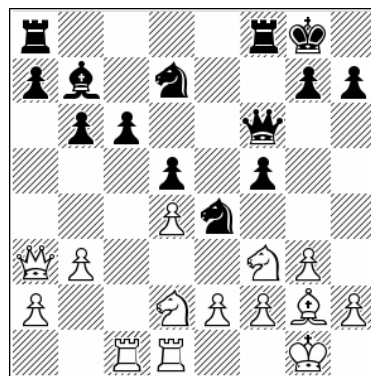
(½-½ (30) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 30...♞xc2 31.♞xc2 ♞xe3+ 32.♞f2 ♞c1+ 33.♙h2 ♙xg2 34.♙xg2 ♞c8 35.♞d2 ♞b1 and White will not make much progress despite the extra pawn!

14.cxd5

Perhaps a little early, but White always ends up clarifying the centre in order to focus on surrounding the outpost on e5.

The engines were very careful – as I (Matthew) always was when playing the White side of these positions – to play e3, protecting d4 and holding back ...f4: 14.e3 a5 15.♞b2 c5 16.cxd5 exd5 17.♙b1 h6 18.♞c2 ♞ac8 19.♙c3 ♞e6 20.♙f1 ♞f7 21.a3 g5 22.♙g2 ♞e8 23.♙b5 ♞c6 24.♙c3 ♞e6 25.dxc5 bxc5 26.b4 axb4 27.axb4 c4 28.♞b1 ♙xc3 29.♞xc3 ♞f6 30.♞c2 f4 with decent counterplay for Black in a complex middlegame, ½-½ (37) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

14...exd5



Now we have a Carlsbad structure, of the sort that arises most often from the QGD, but with Black's pawn already on f5. In his old middlegame textbook, co-written with Kramer, Max Euwe criticised this form of the Carlsbad for White, on the basis that whilst White's minority attack with b4 on the queenside has not yet started, Black's minority attack on the other wing, with ...f4, is already under way. This seems logical enough, although Larsen once claimed that when a player reaches a certain strength, he realises that 'everything Euwe writes is a lie!' The engine does not change its assessment of the position after the exchange on d5 – it remains almost completely equal, with maybe the tiniest of edges to White.

15.♙e1

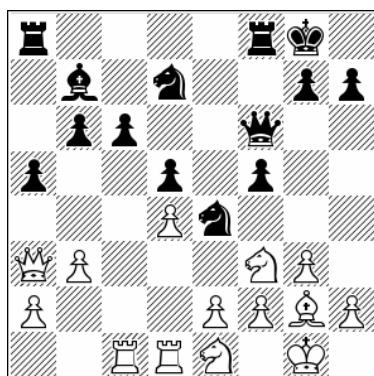
White starts the typical encircling manoeuvre of the e5-square where the knights are brought to f3 and d3.

15...a5

Another key part of Black's strategy of using his pawns to cover the dark squares. In addition, the rook is freed from the defence of a7 and ...a6 becomes an idea for Black. Botvinnik consistently carries out his strategy. Black did, however, have an extra opportunity to sharpen the game already.

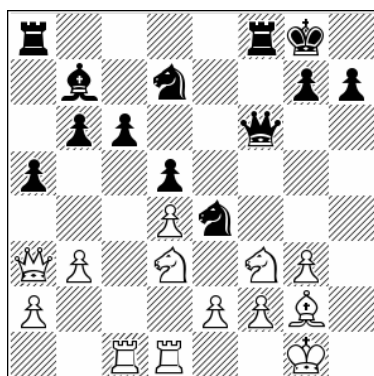
Botvinnik recommended first 15...dxd2 16.♖xd2 f4. But here the engine claims a slight edge for White after 17.♘f3. However, 15...f4 can in fact be played without exchanging off the strong black knight on e4: 16.♘xe4 dxe4 17.b4 (17.♙xe4 loses to 17...fxg3) 17...♖ae8 with good play for Black, ½-½ (21) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022. 18.♙xa7 fxg3 19.fxg3 ♖f2+ 20.♔h1 ♕c8 21.♘c2 ♘f6 is exceptionally dangerous for White.

16.♘df3



Szabo consistently avoids e3 but Botvinnik now jumps at the chance to play ...f4. Botvinnik recommended 16.e3 to hold up the ...f4 advance.

16...f4 17.♘d3 fxg3 18.hxg3



The exchange of Black's f-pawn has somewhat changed the situation. Firstly, the integrity of

White's kingside pawn structure has been 'diluted' by the exchange. It means for example that the black knight on e4 can no longer be chased away by f3 due to the hanging g3-pawn. Moreover, as the engines avidly demonstrate, White's kingside is now vulnerable to further attack with ...h7-h5-h4 ! This means that Black doesn't necessarily need to play ...c5 anymore to exert influence on White's position: kingside play may well be enough, which means there is no need to give White any targets in the centre. Secondly, both Black's major pieces – with a fresh channel of attack along the f-file – and Black's light-squared bishop – which has gained the c8-h3 diagonal – have increased in activity. The engines now favour Black slightly though the position remains tense.

18...♖ae8

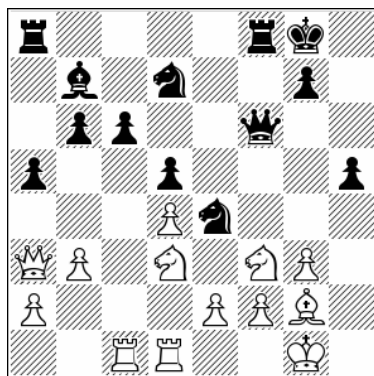
Consistent play from Botvinnik, taking advantage of 15...a5 to bring the queen's rook to the party. Oddly, the engines do not like this move and indicate that the balance of play shifts back to White.

It's perhaps not a bad moment to reflect a little on what you can learn from classic games and what you can learn from engines! I (Matthew) first noticed this game some 10-11 years ago and found Botvinnik's strategy inspiring. I didn't actually feel the need to analyse it with an engine as the general ideas were enough to get me going in the opening. In general, it's important not to draw the wrong conclusion when moves are criticised by engines. You should never get it into your head that a move that develops a hitherto dormant rook to a central file, that fits consistently with a facet of Botvinnik's strategy (15...a5 took control of some queenside dark squares and placed the a-pawn on a protected square, allowing the rook on a8 to be activated without material loss), as well as clearly being tactically safe, might be bad. Playing such moves naturally is the basis of any strong human player's game.

However, what is useful to understand is what the engine recommends in its place. Normally in such cases where a 'natural and good' move is

criticised, it's typically a case of concreteness: the engines have homed in on a specific weakness of the opponent's position and want to exploit it immediately with direct action rather than sensible development. Here the engines are fixated on the softness of White's kingside after ...fxg3, hxg3 and want to continue chipping away at it immediately with a quick ...h7-h5-h4 (even as a pawn sacrifice). A subtle point is that the engines consider that b4 is desirable for White to create some queenside play so keeping the black rook on a8 dissuades that (because a2 will be hanging after b4 ...axb4, ♖xb4!).

18...h5.



analysis diagram

The engines don't want to hang around and throw this one in as quickly as possible! The resulting positions were mostly evaluated as even but Black seemed to be having the most fun!

19.♖c2 ♜ae8 20.b4 h4 21.gxh4 axb4 22.♗xb4 ♗f5 23.♞dc1 ♞e6 24.e3 ♙g6 25.♘fe1 ♞h6 26.♗e7 ♞f7 27.♗d8+ ♞f8 28.♗e7 ♞f7 29.♗d8+ ♞f8 30.♗e7 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

19.♞c2

A solid move from Szabo, protecting e2 and allowing the white queen to re-enter the game via c1.

19.b4 axb4 20.♗xb4 was the engines' favourite (along with the solid 19.♞f1, covering f2) but after a burst of optimism, they settled for the reassuring 0.00 evaluation! 20...♟a6 21.♞c2 c5 22.♗a4 ♟c8 23.♘f4 ♗f5 24.♟h3 ♗f7 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

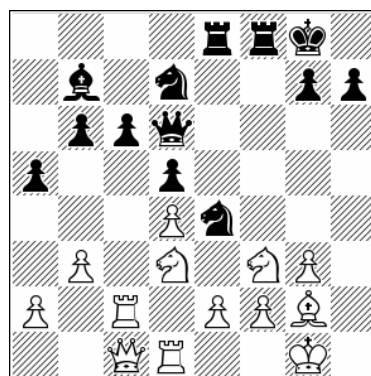
19...♗h6

The engine prefers 19...h5 with the possible continuation 20.b4 axb4 21.♗xb4 h4 22.gxh4 ♗g6 23.♞dc1 ♞e6 and ...♟a6 to follow.

20.♗c1

20.♞f1 is the engines' favourite move, against which Dragon played an active pawn sacrifice: 20...c5 21.dxc5 bxc5 22.♗xa5 ♟c6 23.♗e1 d4 24.♗c1 ♗f6 25.♗f4 ♗g6 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022. The engines were aiming for a draw by repetition after 26.♗c1 ♗f6 27.♗f4.

20...♗d6



We have reached a point where engines start suggesting repetitions such as 21.♘d2 ♗f6 22.♘f3 ♗d6 and where all lines end in 0.00. Just at this moment, Szabo comes up with a risky and very ambitious idea. The idea is to strengthen White's grip on the central dark squares by entrenching a knight on e5 and also to clamp down on the ...c5 break. Szabo plans to achieve this by exchanging the light-squared bishop for Black's knight on d7. The idea itself is quite nice – after all, what is the bishop on g2 doing? However, it proves to be disastrously over-optimistic as the bishop on g2 turns out to have a very important function in defending the white king. Without it, the king is extremely vulnerable.

21.♟h3 ♞f6

21...c5 is also fine here, since the attempted pawn-grab 22.♟xd7

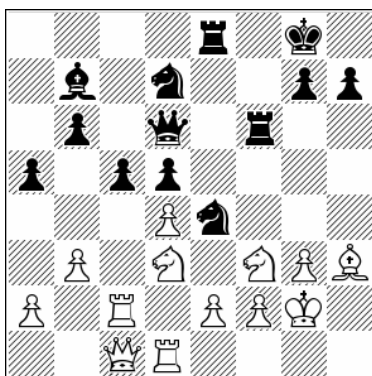
(22.♟g2 (we can deduce that Dragon wasn't a fan of 21.♟h3 !)) 22...h5 23.a3 h4 was one very aggressive engine response: 24.♘h4 c4 25.bxc4 dxc4 26.♟xe4 (26.♞xc4 ♘xf2 27.♘xf2 ♗xg3) 26...♞xe4 27.♞xc4 ♞xe2 28.♗g5 ♟a6 29.♞cc1 ♟xd3 30.♞xd3 ♞xf2 31.♞c8+ ♘f8 32.♞f3 ♞xf3 33.♘xf3 ♗e6 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022)

22...♖xd7 23.dxc5 bxc5 24.♟xc5 ♟xc5 25.♞xc5 allows 25...♞xe2.

22.♟g2

The engines dislike this arrangement of White's pieces (♟h3, ♟g2) and indeed it does feel counter-intuitive to move the light-squared bishop off the long diagonal and place the king on it when ...c5 from Black is easy to achieve. However, Szabo needs to defend the h3-square before exchanging off the light-squared bishop to execute his plan.

22...c5



Nothing is more logical than to open the long diagonal in these circumstances, so you can be sure Botvinnik did it! The Dutch 'bad' bishop is suddenly looking very strong.

23.♟xd7?!

The engines shriek in horror, but it's completely consistent with Szabo's previous moves. In fact, after analysing to greater depth, the engines settle on a slight black advantage but it's clear that White requires some luck to navigate this line.

23...♖xd7 24.♟fe5 ♖d6

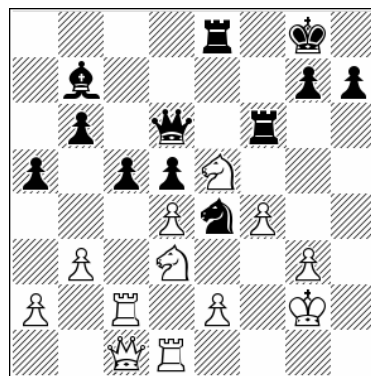
The exchange sacrifice 24...♞xe5 is not mentioned by Botvinnik, but is interesting. It is a move with which the engines are enormously happy in the beginning, but the line leads to no more than a perpetual.

25.dxe5 d4 26.f3 (now 26.exf6? loses to 26...♟g5+ 27.♟g1 ♖h3 28.f3 ♖xg3+ 29.♟f1 ♟c8 30.♟f2 ♟h3 31.♟e1 ♖xf2+ 32.♟d2 ♖e3+ 33.♟e1 ♖g1+ 34.♟d2 ♖g5+ 35.♟e1 ♟f4 with a winning attack, despite the two minus exchanges) 26...♞g6 27.fxe4 ♟xe4+ 28.♟f2 ♖h3 29.♞g1 ♖h2+ 30.♟f1 ♞xg3 31.♞xg3 ♖xg3 32.♟e1 and there is nothing more

than perpetual: 32...♖h3+ 33.♟f2 ♖h2+ 34.♟f1 ♖h1+ ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

25.f4??

This is a consistent implementation of White's strategy to establish a grip on the central dark squares...and it is a huge mistake with a massive tactical hole... which Botvinnik misses! He does criticise the move as overlooking the loss of the exchange, but in fact it is far worse than that. White should play 25.e3 (25.f3 cxd4), which is the only way to implement Szabo's plan, when White's position sort of hangs together: 25...♟c8 26.♞h1 with equality: 26...♞ef8 27.f4 ♞g6 28.♟xg6 ♖xg6 29.♖e1 ♟xg3 30.♖xg3 ♖xd3 31.♞hc1 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.



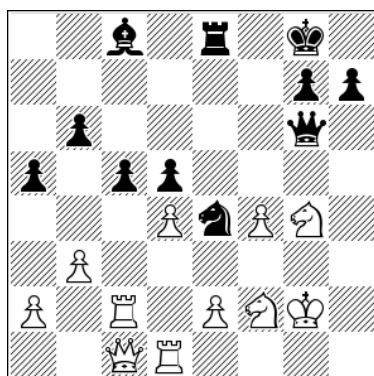
25...cxd4?!

This is still very strong for Black in principle: the c3-square is secured for the black knight while the threats to White's kingside have not gone away.

However, 25...♞g6! wins at once, a move completely missed by Botvinnik in both the game and his annotations:

A) 26.♟xg6 ♖xg6 and g3 is impossible to defend normally: 27.♖e3 ♟c3 28.♖d2 ♟xd1 29.♖xd1 ♞e3 30.♖e1 and now the cruellest is 30...c4 – the surprising point, when White loses a piece, since the knight cannot move without dropping the rook on c2!;

B) 26.g4 is relatively best, but then 26...♞xg4+ (26...♟c8 (activating the 'bad' Dutch bishop) 27.g5 h6 is also very dangerous for White) 27.♟xg4 ♖g6 28.♟df2 (28.♟f3 h5 and the knight is lost due to the mate on g3; 28.♟de5 ♞xe5) 28...♟c8.



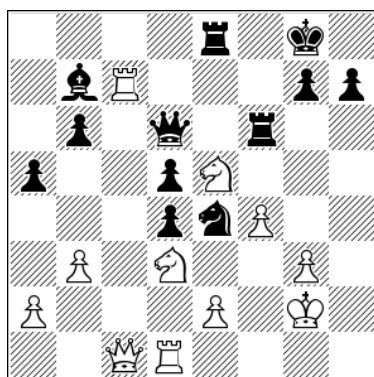
analysis diagram

There are other routes to a decisive advantage but this is the main engine line:

29.♖xe4

(29.dxc5 ♗xg4 30.♘xe4 ♕f5+ 31.♘g3 ♕xc2 32.cxb6 h5 33.f5 ♕xf5 34.b7 h4 35.♖c7 ♕e4+ 36.♔g1 ♖xg3+ 37.♖xg3 hxg3 38.♖c1 ♕f5 39.♔g2 ♔f7 40.♔xg3 ♖b8 41.♔f4 ♕e6 42.♖c7+ ♔f6 43.♔f3 g5 44.♔g3 d4 45.♔f2 ♔e5 46.♖e7 ♔f5 47.♔g3 a4 48.♔f2 axb3 49.axb3 ♕xb3 50.♖d7 ♕e6 51.♖xd4 ♖xb7 0-1 (73) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 29...♖xg4+ 30.♘g3 ♖h3+ 31.♔f2 ♖h2+ 32.♔f3 h5 (threatening ...♕g4) 33.f5 h4 34.♘h5 ♕xf5 35.♖g5 ♕e4+ 36.♔g4 g6 37.♘f6+ ♔f7 38.♖xh4 ♕f5+ 39.♔g5 ♖xh4+ 40.♔xh4 ♔xf6 41.♖cc1 ♖e3 with mate to follow!

26.♖c7?



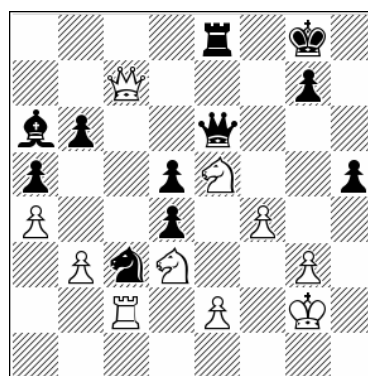
This is the type of winning position that can easily be misplayed by human players because it 'looks' messy. Doubled d-pawns, White with control of the c-file and entrenched knights and threats like ♖d7 in the offing. It's not even intuitively obvious that White is worse! Botvinnik's next move, which clarifies and resolves the situation and seemingly catches White in a trap, would probably be the reaction of most chess players. Only engines can leave

the situation unresolved and feel confident that the opponent has no chances.

26...♘c5?!

It's quite amazing that at the very moment you catch White in a trap and win the exchange... the resulting position turns out to be almost equal! This does indeed win the exchange, but a more decisive continuation pointed out by the engines is 26...♕a6!, threatening ...♖g6 or ...♘c3. Then 27.♖c6

(27.♖d7 ♖f8 28.♖e1 ♘c3 29.♖a7 ♕c8. It's actually very hard to coordinate the white pieces, and there's another horrific tactical point for White to contend with: 30.e3 ♖d6 (the white rook is very short of squares; ...♖b8 or ...♘b5 are the threats) 31.g4 (31.exd4 ♘b5 32.♖f7 (32.♖a8 ♕h3+) 32...♕f5 33.♖xf6 gxf6 is very neat) 31...♖b8 (31...♘b5 32.♖a8 and there is no ...♕h3+ now!) 32.exd4 ♖xa7 33.♖xc3 ♕a6 with a clear extra exchange: 34.♖h1 ♖c8 35.♖d2 ♖e7 36.♔g3 ♖ff8 37.♖e1 ♕xd3 38.♖xd3 ♖c7 39.♖b5 ♖d6 40.♖d7 ♖c3+ 41.♔g2 ♖xd7 42.♘d7 ♖d8 0-1 (59) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 27...♖d8 28.♖xf6 ♖xf6 29.♖c7 ♘c3 30.♖d2 (30.♖e1 ♘xe2 31.♖xe2 ♕xd3) 30...♖e6 (30...♘xe2 is still possible) 31.a4 h5 32.♖c2

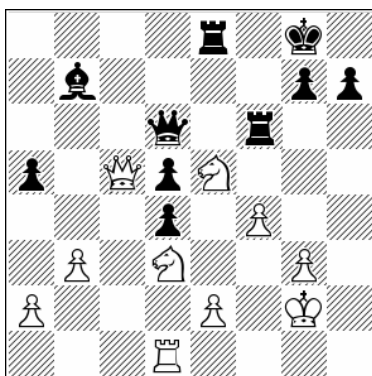


analysis diagram

32...♕c8. A lovely regrouping, aiming at the kingside light squares weakened by Szabo's ill-fated plan to exchange off the light-squared bishop. 33.♘f2 ♖f6 34.♖d2 h4 and now the kingside is undermined. The combination of ♖c7 and ♘e5 is insufficient to interfere with the development of Black's play. 35.gxh4 ♖xf4 36.♖xd4 ♖xe5 37.♖xc3 ♖xe2 38.♖f4 ♖e6 39.♖d4

♖g6+ 40.♗f3 ♕e6 0-1 (93) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

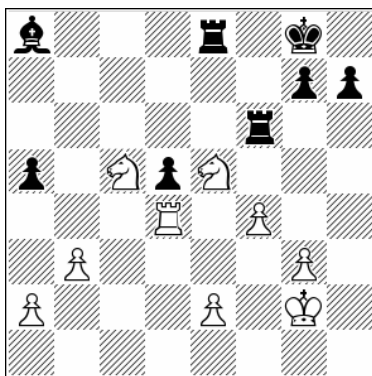
27.♞xc5 bxc5 28.♞xc5



28...♞xc5

28...♞b6 29.♞xb6 ♞xb6 30.♖c5 ♕c8 31.♗f2 ♞b5 32.♖cd3 ♕f5 (activating the light-squared bishop immediately instead of leaving it on a8) 33.♖f3 ♕xd3 34.♞xd3 ♞c5 35.♖e5 h6 36.♞xd4 ½-½ (43) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

29.♖xc5 ♕a8 30.♞xd4



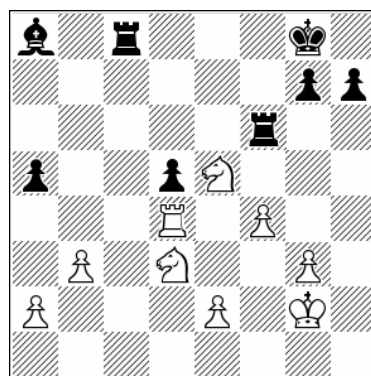
Black has won the exchange, but White has an extra pawn and strongly-posted knights, and Black's bishop is restricted behind the isolated d5-pawn. With the target on a5 thrown in, this should be enough for equality. But White still has one tactical problem in the position – both the e2- and a2-pawns are undefended – that Botvinnik alertly tries to exploit:

30...♞c8 31.♖cd3?

Botvinnik passes by this move without comment, but it is a serious mistake that puts White back into severe difficulties. White needed to spot a clever little tactic to maintain the balance: 31.b4!. This evil little engine move was absolutely necessary for White to keep his head above water. 31...axb4 32.♞xb4 with the

point that 32...♞xc5? loses to 33.♞b8+ ♞f8 34.♞xf8+ ♗xf8 35.♖d7+.

Instead, 32...h6 33.♗f2 ♗h7 34.♖b3 ♞e8 (cunningly threatening ...♞e5!) 35.♖d3 ♞f7 36.♖d4 – White is very solid and there are multiple ways of holding this position: 36...♕b7 37.a4 ♕c8 38.♞b5 ♕a6 39.♞xd5 ♕c4 40.♞e5 ♞fe7 41.♖c6 ♞xe5 42.♖cxe5 ♕xd3 43.♖xd3 g6 44.a5 ½-½ Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2023.

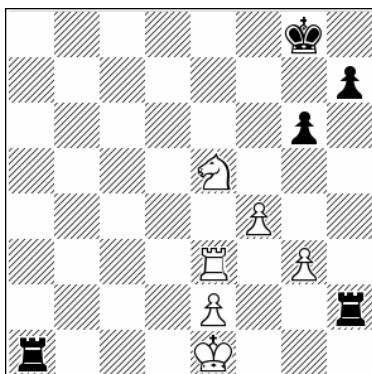


31...♞c2!

Botvinnik criticises the text as ‘extremely risky’ and says that after 31...♞b6 32.♞a4 ♞b5 ‘Black would probably be able gradually to realise his material advantage’. But the engine does not believe this at all, claiming complete equality after 33.♗f2 ♕c6 34.g4 ♕e8 35.f5. It is not apparent how Black can make any progress here, since breaks with ...g6 or ...h5 will just exchange off all the pawns and leave no winning chances: 35...g6 36.♞f4 g5 37.♞d4 ♞cb8 ½-½ Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2023.

32.♞a4?!

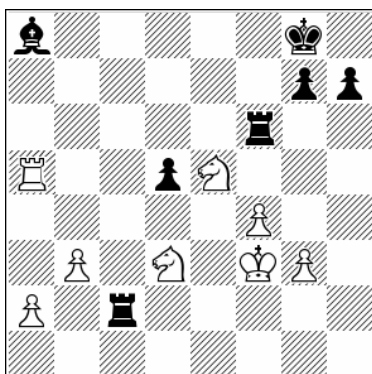
By now, the position is probably winning for Black anyway, but the engine believes 32.♗f2 ♞xa2 33.b4 a4 34.b5 is a more tenacious defence. 34...♞h6 35.♖f3 ♞e6 36.♖fe5 ♞e8 37.b6 a3 38.♞a4 d4 39.♖b4 ♞b2 40.♖bd3 ♞xb6 41.♞xa3 ♞h6 gives Black a familiar position but with the d4-pawn still on the board. White's position is still very solid, however, and Stockfish's realisation is quite something: 42.♞a4 ♞h2+ 43.♗f1 ♞h1+ 44.♗f2 ♞h2+ 45.♗f1 ♕e4 46.♞xd4 ♕xd3 47.♞xd3 ♞a8 48.♗e1 g6 49.♞b3 ♞a2 50.♞e3 ♞a1+



analysis diagram

51.♔d2 ♖g2 52.g4 ♖a4 53.f5 ♗g7 54.fxg6 hxg6 55.♖f3 ♖a2+ 56.♔d3 ♖gxe2 57.♖f7+ ♗g8 58.♖e7 g5 59.♔c4 ♖a5 60.♔d4 ♖e1 61.♖e6 ♖a4+ 62.♔d5 ♖d1+ 63.♔c5 ♖a5+ 64.♔b4 ♖dd5 65.♜f3 ♖ab5+ 66.♔c4 ♖bc5+ 67.♔b4 ♔f7 68.♖a6 ♖c7 69.♖h6 ♔g7 70.♖b6 ♖d1 71.♔a5 ♖a1+ 72.♔b5 ♖b1+ 0-1 (76) Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2023.

32...♖xe2+ 33.♔f3 ♖c2 34.♖xa5



It isn't obvious at first glance that the situation has improved for Black by exchanging the a5-pawn for the e2-pawn. After all, White has gained two connected passed pawns on the queenside and an easy plan of simply advancing them. However, Black has made several important gains:

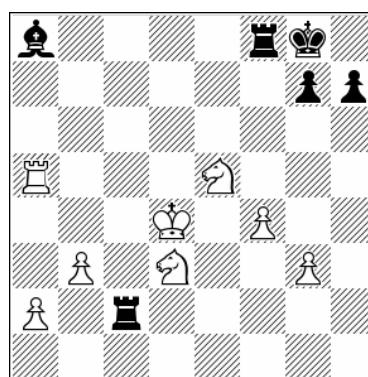
- 1) White's linked knights are less stable without the e2-pawn to support the knight on d3;
- 2) Black's light-squared bishop can be activated on the powerful a8-h1 diagonal;
- 3) Black's chances of attacking the g3-pawn and winning it have improved significantly with access to the second rank. This is extremely important as Black's h-pawn – supported by the light-squared bishop – has a fast track to the queening square once the g-pawn disappears. Note also that with a bishop, Black can easily

perform the task of supporting his own pawn while covering the advance of the white queenside pawns from a distance.

34...♖f8 35.♔e3 d4+

Not absolutely necessary, but the engines' number one move, although Botvinnik severely criticizes it and recommends 35...h5, which should also be good enough for the win according to the engines. The text draws the white king away from the defence of the g3-pawn and the light-squared bishop is activated, which should in turn free the f8-rook to become active once it no longer needs to defend it.

36.♔xd4



36...♖d8+?

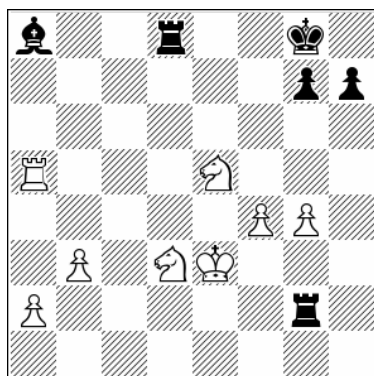
This is the real mistake. The correct execution of Botvinnik's idea was 36...h5 now, fixing the g-pawn and preparing ...♖g2. Compared with the variation in the last note, here Black has his bishop playing. 37.♜c4 ♔f3 38.♔e3 ♔d1 is a lovely idea, cutting the white king off from the g3-pawn while defending the important (and future passed) h5-pawn. 39.♖d5

(39.♜de5 ♖g2 40.♖d5 ♔g4 41.♜xg4 ♖xg3+ 42.♔e4 ♖xg4 43.♖xh5 ♖xf4+ 44.♔e3 ♖d4 45.♖e5 ♖d8 46.♖e6 ♖a8 47.♜e5 ♖h4 48.♜f3 ♖h3 49.♔e4 ♖xa2 50.♖e8+ ♔h7 51.♔f4 ♖f2 52.♖e3 ♖h5 53.♔e4 ♖g2 54.♜e5 ♖d2 0-1 (83) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022)

39...♖e2+ 40.♔d4 ♖xa2 41.b4 ♔f3 42.♖a5 ♖g2 43.♖g5 ♖d8+ 44.♔e3 ♔g4. Another lovely bishop move, cutting the white rook's protection of g3! As you can see, this is anything but an easy win for Black!

45.♔e4 ♖xg3 46.♜ce5 ♖g1 47.b5 ♖e8 48.♔d4 ♖d1 49.b6 ♖b1 50.♜xg4 hxg4 51.♖g6 ♔h7 52.♖xg4 ♖xb6 0-1 (85) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

37.♙e3 ♜g2 38.g4



The difference. With his pawns secured and his knights still so dominant, White is no longer even worse and it is Black who must be careful. It's now much more difficult for Black to create a passed pawn on the kingside. In fact, although the balance – from an engine perspective – does not get disturbed, it's pretty clear that from a human point of view, Botvinnik starts to struggle and lapse closer to the losing side of the balance.

38...♜c2

38...♜g1 39.b4 ♜g3+ 40.♙f2 ♜g2+ 41.♙e3 ♜g3+ (½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) reflects the engines' feelings about these positions!

39.b4 ♙d5 40.a4 ♙h1

In time-trouble, Botvinnik has lost some tempi and this rather odd 40th move, leaving the bishop with limited mobility, makes a strange impression. The engines are definitely not impressed, but they don't consider the position losing yet by any means. The key to White's position is obviously the strong linked knights on d3 and e5 and the engines want to fight this set-up, either with the immediate 40...♙c4 or via 40...♙g2 intending ...♙f1.

A) 40...♙c4 41.♘xc4 ♜xc4 42.♜c5 ♜cd4 43.♜c3 g5 44.fxg5 ♜xg4 45.b5 ♜xa4 46.b6 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022;

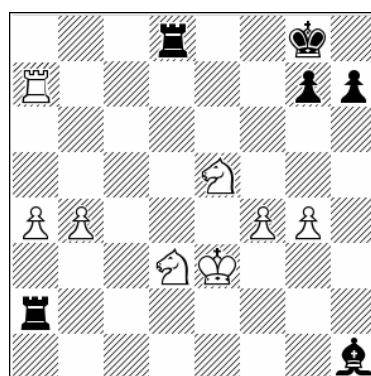
B) 40...♙g2 was Botvinnik's recommendation: 41.♜a7 ♙f1 42.♜d7 ♜xd7 43.♘xd7 ♜a2 44.♘3c5 ♜b2 45.b5 ♙xb5 46.axb5 ♜xb5 ½-½ Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2023. Leela knows its fortresses!

41.♜a7 ♜a2

Botvinnik comments that White only needs to play ♜d7 to win, but the engine is unconvinced by that. For example, after a 'pass' by Black, 41...-

- 42.♜d7?! ♜xd7 43.♘xd7 ♙f7 44.a5 ♙e7 and Black is holding. A much more serious threat, rather than ♜d7, is just to push the queenside pawns.

41...h5 is not Black's only way to create counterplay but the relentless liquidation of the kingside pawns really impresses! 42.gxh5 ♜h2 43.♘f2 ♜xh5 44.b5 g5 45.f5 ♜f8 46.♘g6 ♜f7 47.♜xf7 ♙xf7 48.b6 ♙b7 (½-½ Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2023) 49.♘e4 ♜h3+ 50.♙d4 ♜b3 51.♘d6+ ♙f6 and Black will manage to win White's three pawns for his two pieces.



42.b5

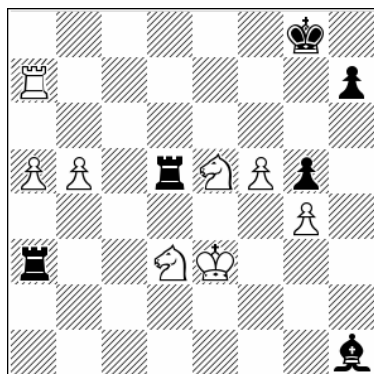
Botvinnik condemned the text and suggested instead that 42.a5 might even win. The point is to free the white rook from the defence of the a-pawn so that ♜d7 becomes possible. We can understand that it might feel that way when analysing without an engine! 42...♙g2 is again the essential move, teeing up counterplay with ...♙f1 or ...♙h3 – a move later than necessary, but not too late.

43.b5 (43.f5 h6; 43.♜d7 ♜xd7 44.♘xd7 ♙f7 45.♙d4 ♙e6 46.♘7e5 ♙d6 and Black's pieces are well-placed to cope with White's passed pawns. The exchange of rooks frees the black king which was quite awkwardly-placed on g8) 43...g5! (loosening the knight and removing any back rank mate threats before tackling the white knight with ...♙f1; if 43...♙f1?, 44.b6 ♙xd3 45.b7! wins) 44.b6 (44.fxg5 ♙f1 45.b6 ♙xd3 46.♘xd3 (46.b7 ♜e2+ 47.♙f4 ♜f8+) 46...♜a3 47.b7 ♜axd3+ draws) 44...♜a8 45.b7 gxf4+ 46.♙xf4 ♙xb7 47.♜xb7 ♜2xa5 and Black should hold: 48.♜e7 ♜f8+ 49.♙g5 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022. This might still cause one some worries as Black in a blitz finish!

42...♜a3 43.a5 g5!

An excellent defensive move. Black gives his opponent another passed pawn, to undermine the support of the e5-knight. It's similar to the variation we saw above with the difference that the light-squared bishop is still buried on h1.

44.f5 ♖d5



The point, forking e5 and b5. White must give up one of his passed pawns.

45.♖e7 ♖xb5 46.f6 ♖xe5+

Forced.

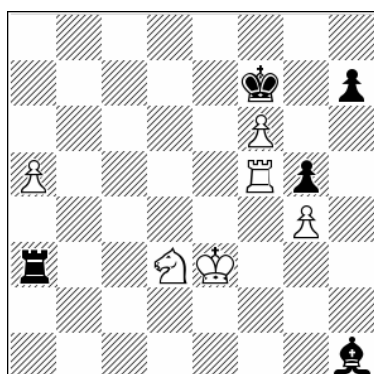
47.♖xe5 ♔f7

Other moves such as 47...♗g2 are possible, but the engines approve of Botvinnik's rigorous choice.

48.♖f5

Botvinnik writes that he had reached this position in his adjournment analysis and assumed it drawn, but over the board, he suddenly began to worry over how Black could defend against the threat of ♔d2 and ♖e5+. He found what he described as 'one of the most beautiful combinations of my career'.

48.♖xg5 ♔xf6 49.♖h5 ♗c6 is funny! 50.♖h6+ ♔g5 51.♖xc6 ♖xa5 52.♖f2 h5 and Black achieves the drawn ♖+♗ vs ♖ ending ½-½ (61) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.



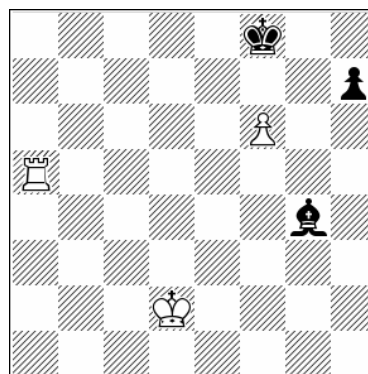
48...♗b7! 49.♔d2 ♗c8

It is essential to remove the pawn on g4.

50.♖e5+ ♔f8 51.♖xg5 ♖xa5!!

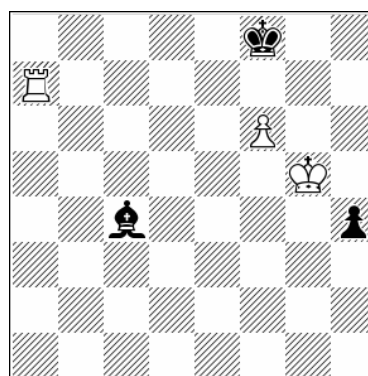
The point of Botvinnik's idea.

52.♖d7+ ♗xd7 53.♖xa5 ♔xg4



The culmination of Black's defensive combination. Botvinnik knew that the position without the black h-pawn (which is irrelevant) had been analysed by Del Rio in the middle of the 18th century as a draw. The point is that the white f-pawn is too far forward; if it were any further back on the f-file, White would be winning easily, because he would be able to get his king to the sixth rank. But here, he is unable to, because the squares e6 and g6 can be attacked by the bishop, whilst f6 is taken by the pawn. Nowadays, the 6-man tablebases confirm that the position on the board is a draw.

54.♔e3 ♗e6 55.♔f4 ♗c4 56.♖a7 h5 57.♔g5 h4



The pawn is unnecessary.

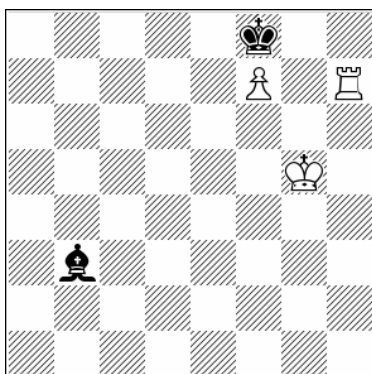
58.♔xh4 ♗b3 59.♔g5 ♗c4 60.♖c7

60.♔g6 ♗d3+.

60...♗a2 61.♖c1 ♗d5 62.♔f5 ♔f7 63.♔e5 ♗b3 64.♖c7+ ♔f8 65.♖b7 ♗c4 66.♖b4 ♗a2 67.♔f5 ♗d5 68.♔g6 ♗f7+

White's rook stops the check from e4, but now there is the one on f7 instead.

69.♔g5 ♕d5 70.♖h4 ♕b3 71.♖h8+ ♔f7 72.♖h7+ ♔f8 73.f7



White's last try.

73...♔e7!

The only thing Black needs to remember in this ending – he must not allow the white king into f6. Taking the pawn loses: 73...♕xf7 74.♔f6 ♕c4 75.♖c7 ♕a6 76.♖a7. Even after this game was played, many GMs and masters did not know the endgame. In a position with colours reversed and Black having a c-pawn, the strong Soviet master, Doroshkevich, who played in several USSR Championship finals, once resigned the position after the analogous pawn advanced 81...c3-c2 in a game against Taimanov (USSR Team Championship, 1971) – he saw that taking the pawn lost, but did not realise that ♔d2 would have drawn!

74.♔g6 ♕c4 75.♖g7 ♕b3 76.f8=♖+ ♔xf8 77.♔f6 ♔e8 78.♖e7+ ♔d8 ½-½

Game 18 – Nimzo-Indian Defence

Efim Geller

Max Euwe

Zürich ct 1953

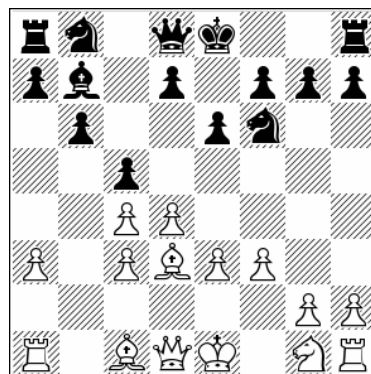
This short but dramatic game was Euwe's last victory of note against a world-class player and his 22...♖h8 move has made it into many anthologies. It is one of several examples in his games of sacrifices made on empty squares – his ♔f7 vs Alekhine at Zürich 1934 is another case.

1.d4 ♔f6 2.c4 e6 3.♔c3 ♕b4 4.e3 c5 5.a3

Transposing to the Sämisch Variation, which usually begins 4.a3. This is the most radical challenge to the Nimzo-Indian, as White forces Black to make an exchange that he will often

make anyway. In return for his severe queenside pawn weaknesses, White gets a strengthened pawn centre and the two bishops. Geller was fond of it early in his career, but this defeat and two successive losses against Smyslov (one in this same event, the other three years later at the Amsterdam Candidates) put him off.

5...♕xc3+ 6.bxc3 b6 7.♕d3 ♕b7 8.f3



This is the first problem. Black's move-order forces White to play this move, which he would often prefer to do without.

8...♔c6 9.♔e2

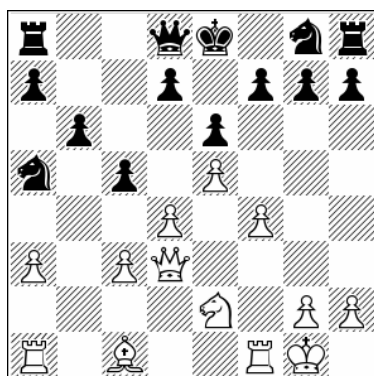
The Sämisch exerts a fascination on many lifetime 1.d4 players. I (Matthew) am no exception: in my youth I played it for several years and I have dedicated many (mostly fruitless) periods of effort during my subsequent chess career trying to make it work to my satisfaction. Recent attempts together with the engines have been quite joyless, it must be admitted. Part of the magic of the opening lies in its intimidating appearance for the opponent: Black faces a big white pawn centre, two bishops and an opponent ignoring the loss of the c4-pawn to point pieces at your king... however, engines are not very impressed by such bluff and I've grown tired of looking at the ruins of my position after 25 moves in practice games against them!

In truth, if you let the engines play the white side, you understand that a nuanced approach is required: not every variation has to lead to a kingside attack and the c4-pawn needs to be protected sometimes, in preparation for a positional middlegame. Perhaps at the end of the day, though, the most irritating thing for white players is how quickly the correct plan of

defence (...♖e8 to avoid the pin with ♗g5 when White plays e4) was found by Capablanca! The game Johner-Capablanca, Carlsbad 1929, demonstrated the plan that has become the cornerstone of Black's best implementation of defence on the kingside and attack against the c4-pawn on the queenside.

9...0-0

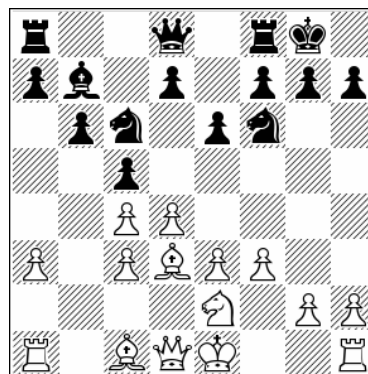
Euwe chooses sensible development, as you would expect. In one engine game, Stockfish punted the immediate attack against the c4-pawn, allowing White to disrupt its development in return: 9...♗a6. It may seem strange to play first ...♗b7 and then ...♗a6 but since White mostly plays f3-f4 anyway, the tempo losses usually cancel each other out. Moreover, having the pawn on f3 blocks the immediate development of the white queen to the kingside in some lines after e5 followed by ♖g3 and ♗g4 or ♗h5. 10.e4 ♖a5 11.e5 ♖g8 12.0-0 ♗xc4 13.♗xc4 ♖xc4 14.♗d3 ♖a5 15.f4.



analysis diagram

To be honest, if one could get something like this all the time, many of us would be happy to play the Sämisch quite regularly... at least knowing we weren't facing an engine.

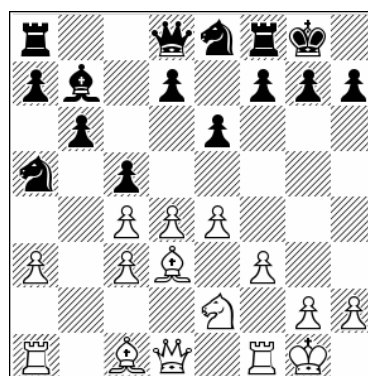
15...f5 16.a4 ♖e7 17.♗a3 ♖c8 18.♗fd1 ♖d5 19.c4 ♖b4 20.♗c3 h6 21.♗d2 0-0 22.♗b1 ♖c7 23.d5 ♗h4 24.♗f1 ♖cc8 with a murky position but clearly sufficient compensation for White's sacrificed pawn, ½-½ (30) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.



10.0-0

10.e4 ♖e8 11.0-0 is an alternative move-order when instead of Euwe's 11...♖a5, the engines preferred the perhaps slightly more logical 11...♗a6. After all, the knight might still perform some useful work on c6 whereas the bishop on b7 seems less likely to do so. 11...♗a6 is the modern main line: 12.f4 f5 (this is the second point of ...♖e8: the white f-pawn can be stopped in its tracks by ...f5) 13.exf5 exf5 14.dxc5 bxc5 15.♗e3 d6 16.♗f2 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022. Agreed drawn by the engines, but in all my (Matthew) practice attempts, I have never managed to find any proper active play for White! A 2020 rapid game between Magnus Carlsen and Hikaru Nakamura, which White lost, only reinforced the opinion that these positions are much harder to handle for White than for Black.

10...♖a5 11.e4 ♖e8



An important move in such positions, and a manoeuvre introduced by Capablanca, as we said earlier. Black avoids the pin with ♗g5, which would be very dangerous in this position. He also prepares a possible ...♖d6, attacking the c4-pawn yet again.

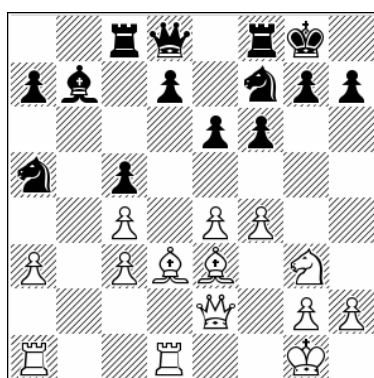
12.♖g3

Geller tries to exploit the lack of pressure on d4 after 10...♘a5, by moving the knight to g3 to cover f5. Now Black will be unable to meet f4 with ...f5.

12.dxc5 was the universal engine choice. They are not playing for an all-out kingside attack, but for a more positional middlegame struggle. The engines consider that they can defend c4 satisfactorily once the c-file is closed and that they should seek to exploit the dark squares in the black camp (particularly the central ones such as d6) weakened by Black's early exchange of the dark-squared bishop.

12...bxc5

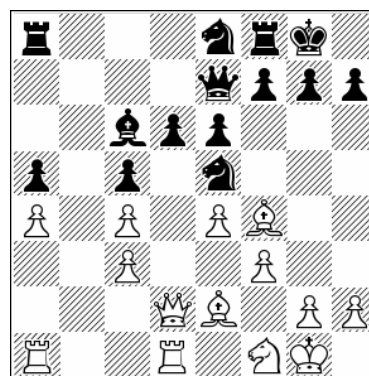
A) 13.♕e3 ♖c8 14.♘g3 ♘d6 shows yet another point of Capablanca's 9...♘e8: the knight can join in the attack on c4 from d6 as well as supporting ...f5. 15.♗e2 f6 16.♗fd1 (16.f4 f5 is just what Black wants: 17.e5 ♘f7 18.♗ad1 g6 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 16...♘f7 17.f4



analysis diagram

17...♘h8 18.♕f2 e5 with a complex middlegame after 19.f5 ♗c7 20.♘f1 ♘d6 21.♗db1 ♕a6 22.♘d2 ♗c6 23.a4 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022;

B) 13.♕f4 is an alternative idea, particularly favoured by Dragon: 13...d6 14.♘g3 (or 14.e5, to open the position more to exploit White's two bishops: 14...dxe5 15.♕xe5 ♕a6 16.♗c2 ♘xc4 17.♗fd1 ♗e7 18.♕xh7+ ♘h8 19.♕e4 ♗d8 20.♗xd8 ♗xd8 21.♕f4 ♘ed6 22.♕d3 was agreed drawn but still promises interesting play for both sides, ½-½ (22) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 14...♘c6 15.♗d2 ♘e5 16.♗fd1 (lining up against the backward d6-pawn) 16...♗e7 17.♕e2 ♕c6 18.a4 a5 19.♘f1.



analysis diagram

The knight comes round to e3 to protect the c4-pawn and clamp down on ...d5 and ...f5 breaks. 19...♗a7 20.h3 ♗d7 21.♗db1 ♘f6 22.♕h2 ♖c8 23.♘e3 h6 24.♗b6 ♗d8 25.♗b2 ♗a8 26.♗e1 ♗b8 27.♗b5 ♗a8 28.♗b2 ♗b8 and the position was balanced, ½-½ (37) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

12...cxd4

Euwe's move prevents such ideas as dxc5 or d5, and ensures the win of the c4-pawn, but opens up the dark squares, allowing White's unopposed bishop greater freedom. Given that the engines are already looking at exploiting the dark squares, it is not surprising that they are suspicious of this move.

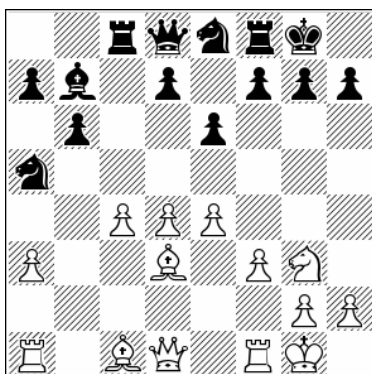
12...♕a6 was the engine preference, as their favourite plan of dxc5 no longer works as well: 13.dxc5 ♕xc4 14.♕xc4 ♘xc4 15.♗e2 b5 16.♕e3 ♘xe3 17.♗xe3 ♗c7 18.a4 bxa4 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

13.cxd4 ♖c8

Euwe is steadfast in refusing to divert the bishop from the long a8-h1 diagonal... and who would criticise him after the course of the game? Still, the engines preferred 13...♕a6. The nice point of capturing on c4 with the bishop, of course, is that Black also gets to exchange off one of White's main attacking pieces: the bishop on d3. By capturing with the knight on c4, Black merely gains a pawn on the queenside but doesn't materially affect the strength of White's kingside attack.

13...♕a6 14.c5 ♕xd3 15.♗xd3 d5 16.cxd6 ♘xd6 17.a4 is a fairly typical Nimzo-Indian/Queen's Indian structure where White has a centre but Black has a queenside pawn majority and some scope for the pieces on that wing (for example,

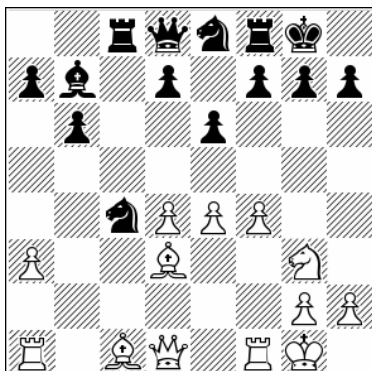
the c4-square): 17...♖dc4 18.h3 ♗e7 19.♕h2 ♜ad8 20.♞d1 ♞d7 21.♝c3 ♞fd8 22.♞a2 f6 23.f4 h6 24.♞c2 when Black was clearly very comfortable, ½-½ (31) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.



14.f4?

This is typical of how Geller and most other Sämisch players handle the variation – the c-pawn is thrown to the wind, whilst White gets on with his kingside attack. But the engines strongly disapprove. Instead, 14.c5 was the engine thought, looking to reach a relatively open position where White's two bishops would give White a slight advantage: 14...bxc5 15.dxc5 ♞xc5 16.♗d2 (16.♗e3, followed by capturing the a7-pawn, is slightly more pleasant for White. In fact the engines consider that moves such as 16.♞b1 or 16.♗d2 are more precise, estimating that White's pressure along the b-file, the loose knight on a5 and the vulnerable a3-f8 diagonal will deliver the a7-pawn in due course) 16...d6 17.♞b1 ♗a8 18.♗e3 ♞c7 19.♝a4 ♖c6 20.♗b5 h6 21.♞fd1 ♝b8 22.♗f1 ♝d8 23.♞bc1 ♖f6 24.♗f4 e5 25.♗d2 h5 26.♗e3 with continuing positional pressure. It looks a little bit like the white side of a Morra Gambit! 1-0 (88) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

14...♖xc4



15.f5

Geller keeps on taking the direct route to the black king. The engines suggest a restraining move on the queenside and universally propose a forcing exchange sacrifice line which leads to a slight advantage for Black, though manageable by White:

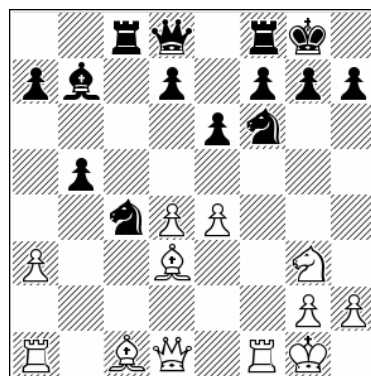
15.a4. Why a4? Well there are two reasons. First of all, there is the active side: White introduces the threat of ♗xc4 and ♗a3 causing Black some inconvenience along the a3-f8 diagonal (the main drawback to Capablanca's ...♖e8 idea is that the rook on f8 is squashed). Secondly, White understands that Black's best follow-up to his early queenside play is to play ...b5 and attack the d4-pawn with ...♝b6 which is surprisingly awkward for White to defend (as we see in the game).

15...d5 16.♗xc4 ♞xc4 17.f5 dxe4 18.fxe6 ♞xd4 19.e7 ♞xd1 20.exd8=♝ ♞xd8 21.♗a3 ♞d3 22.♞fd1 ♖f6 23.♗xf8 ♖xf8 24.a5 bxa5 25.♞db1 ♗d5 26.♞xa5 g6 27.♖e2 e3 28.♖f4 ♞d2 29.♖xd5 ♖xd5 30.g3 a6 31.♞xa6 ♖g7 32.♞a7 ♖f6 33.♞f1+ ♖e6 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

15...f6?!

A logical and typical black idea to half the white f-pawn in its tracks. I'm sure Euwe was mindful of the game Bronstein-Najdorf, Budapest 1950, where Bronstein followed up f5 with ...f6! and a quick kingside crush.

In fact, the text has generally been considered almost forced, but 15...b5 is tactically possible according to the engines. Then 16.f6 ♖xf6



analysis diagram

17.♗g5

(17.e5 ♖d5 18.♝h5 also looks dangerous for Black but it turns out that he should defend like

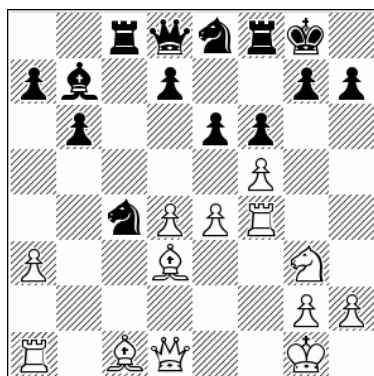
Gordon Gecko – ‘greed is good’: 18...g6 19.♖h6 ♗b6 20.♟h5 ♗xd4+ 21.♙h1 ♗xe5 22.♙g5 f5 23.♙f6 ♗xf6 24.♟xf6+ ♟xf6 25.♖ac1 ♟g4 26.♗f4 ♟ce3 27.♙g1 ♟xf1 28.♖xc8 ♖xc8 29.♙xf1 ♙f7 30.♙xb5 ♟f6 0-1 (68) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022)

is brushed contemptuously aside with 17...♗b6 18.♙xf6 (18.♖xf6 ♗xd4+ 19.♖f2 ♟b2 is the key resource!) 18...gxf6 (this again looks fraught but the defence with ...♗xd4 is really strong) 19.♗g4+ ♙h8 20.♟e2 ♖g8 21.♗h4 f5 22.♗f6+ ♖g7 and White is busted.

After 15...b5, the engines believe instead that White must temper his ambitions and settle for 16.♖b1, which leads to some liquidation and a position that seems holdable for White despite the pawn deficit: 16...♗b6 17.♙h1 a6 18.a4 ♗xd4 19.axb5 ♟f6 20.bxa6 ♙xa6 21.♗e2 ½-½ (57) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

16.♖f4?!

Geller keeps on going! Once again, the engines advise caution and prophylaxis: 16.a4 ♗c7 17.♖f2 ♟ed6 18.♗g4 exf5 19.exf5 ♖f7 20.♟h5 ♟e8 21.♙f4 ♗c6 22.♖e1 looks like pretty decent compensation for the pawn for White, ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.



16...b5!!

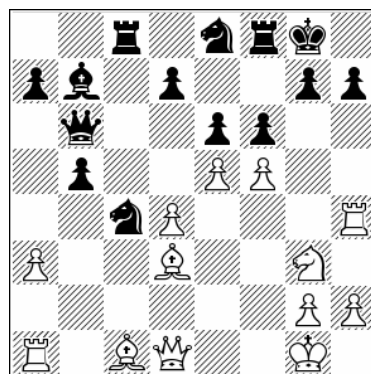
An excellent and far from obvious defensive idea. Black will leave the kingside as it is to defend itself and put all his effort into a piece counterattack against White's centre. We saw the idea above – Black sets up ...♗b6, hitting White's position at its most vulnerable point, namely the d4-pawn.

17.♖h4 ♗b6 18.e5

A very efficient attacking move! The rook on h4 defends d4 laterally while the b1-h7 diagonal is

opened for the light-squared bishop against h7. The big downside, however, is that the a8-h1 diagonal is opened, which will surely have made Euwe feel correct for not diverting the bishop to a6 to attack the c4-pawn.

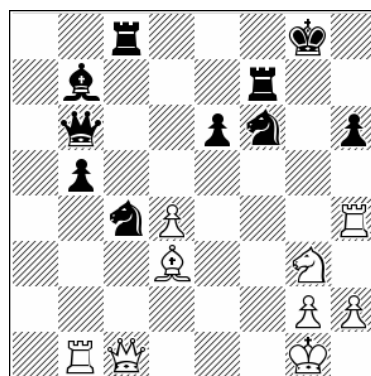
18.♗h5 is obvious, but it does not actually threaten anything and Black can calmly help himself to a rook: 18...♗xd4+ 19.♙h1 ♗xa1 20.♗xh7+ ♙f7 21.♗g6+ ♙e7 and White can resign.



18...♟xe5?!

Black captures a white attacking unit and prepares to destroy a white attacker with ...♟xd3. What could be better than that? But in fact, 18...h6 was more accurate, since the sacrifice 19.♙xh6 is now met by 19...♟xe5! when Black has the very useful extra defensive resource ...♟f7. None of White's attempts come to anything, e.g. 20.♙b1 (20.♙f1 gxf6 21.♗h5 ♟g7 22.♗xh6 ♙f7; 20.♙e3 ♖c3 21.♗h5 ♖xd3 and once again, White simply has no threats) 20...gxf6 21.♗d2 ♟f7.

Alternatively, White can meet 18...h6 with 19.♖b1 ♖f7 20.a4 a6 21.fxe6 dxe6 22.axb5 axb5 23.exf6 ♟xf6 24.♙xh6 gxf6 25.♗c1.



analysis diagram

There's a lot of firepower heading towards the black king. However, now the tactical defensive

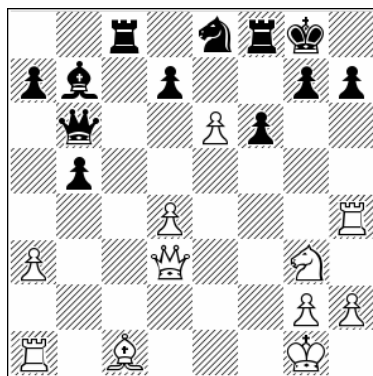
genius starts: 25...♖c6 (threatening mate on g2, once again thanks to Euwe's bishop on b7) 26.♗e4 ♘f8 27.♖xh6+ ♗e7 28.♖f4 ♖cf8 29.♖g5 ♖g8 30.♖h4 ♖g6 31.♖xf6 ♖gxf6 32.♖f1 ♖xe4 (ooh, what a tactic!) 33.♗xe4 ♗xe4 34.♖xf6 ♖xf6 35.♖g3 (35.♖xe4 ♖f1+ is the point: 36.♗xf1 ♗d2+) 35...♗d6, leading to a position that Stockfish was managing to hold as White but win with Black against Dragon. It's clear in any case that Black is well on top: 36.♖c3 ♗d8 37.d5 ♖g6 38.♖h8+ ♗e8 39.dxe6 ♖xg2+ 40.♗f1 ♗e7 0-1 (106) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

19.fxe6

19.♖h5 ♗xd3 20.♖xh7+ ♗f7 21.fxe6+ ♖xe6 22.♖xd3 ♖e1+ is good for Black.

19...♗xd3 20.♖xd3

20.exd7 ♖c6.



20...♖xe6!

Kasparov points out that 20...g6? runs into 21.♗h6! (21.exd7? ♖c6 is again Black's point) and the tables are turned: 21...♖c6 (21...♗g7 22.♗xg7 ♗xg7 23.♗f5+! gxf5 (23...♗h8 24.♖h3 h5 25.♖xh5+! mating) 24.♖xf5 ♖h8 25.♖g4+ with mate – Kasparov) 22.d5 ♖c5+ 23.♗h1 dxe6 24.♗xf8 ♗xf8 25.dxe6, with a clear advantage to White.

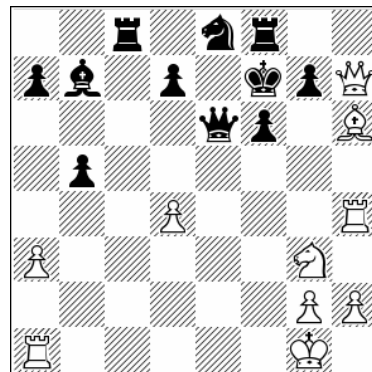
21.♖xh7+ ♗f7

White has made the breakthrough on h7, but the next barrier to rip away – the g7-pawn – is pretty solid, not least due to Capablanca's knight on e8. The scary thing for Black is that to flee the kingside, his king has to cross the open e-file behind his queen. However, Black has a number of powerful trumps, not least his firm control of the a8-h1 diagonal and the possibility of setting up a queen and bishop battery against g2 with ...♖d5.

22.♗h6

The critical position.

22.♖h5+? g6 23.♖h7+ (23.♖xb5? ♖xc1+! 24.♖xc1 ♖e3+) 23...♗g7 24.♗h6 ♖g8 comes to nothing (Kasparov).



22...♖h8?

One of the most famous moves ever played! What a defence! In response to 22.♗h6, Black gives away a rook to distract the queen from its defence of c2, allowing ...♖c2, attacking g2. The text is the move that has made the game famous and it is a pity to have to punctuate it thus, but as that well-known Ancient Greek grandmaster Aristotle once said, 'Euwe is dear to me, but the truth is dearer'... in reality, Euwe's move throws away his advantage and he had several stronger alternatives.

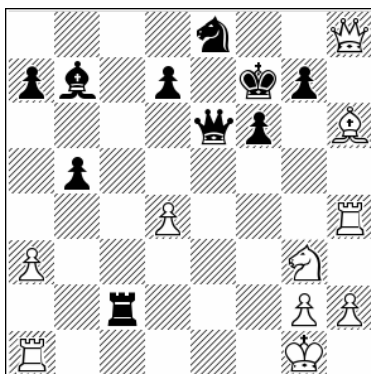
Chessbase attributes the line 22...♖d5 23.♖e4 ♖c4 to Kasparov as 'objectively the best option, although White's resources were far from being exhausted'. But in fact, this is a quote from Euwe and the line ends after 23.♖e4. The continuation with 23...♖c4 loses by force: 24.♖g4 ♖g8 25.♖e1 with ♗f5 to follow. Instead, in this line Black can improve with 23...♖c6 (the only move, in fact) 24.♖ae1 (24.♖g4?? ♖c1+ is the point – the problem with 23...♖c4 is that it abandons the mating battery of ♖+♗ down the long diagonal which had been set up only the move before) 24...♖e6 and Black retains a plus, as Kasparov correctly points out.

But 22...♖d5 is only Black's second-best move in the above diagram. Strongest is 22...♖c3!. Black keeps control of the e-file, preventing either white rook coming there and sets up ideas like ...♖xg3 and ...♖d5, when g2 is a very sore spot. White seems to have enough to hold, but better

get your superhuman-strength defending boots on! 23.♖f1 (23.♙d2 ♖d5 24.♜e4 ♜xe4 25.♘xe4 ♞c2 26.♙b4 ♞g8 27.♞e1 d6 required superhuman defence to survive, ½-½ (42) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 23...♜d5 24.♘e4 ♘e7 and Black has successfully bought time to evacuate his king across the ‘equator’, i.e. the open e-file. He is clearly better here, although Kasparov’s comment about White’s resources not being completely exhausted is appropriate here, especially at the human level, of course.

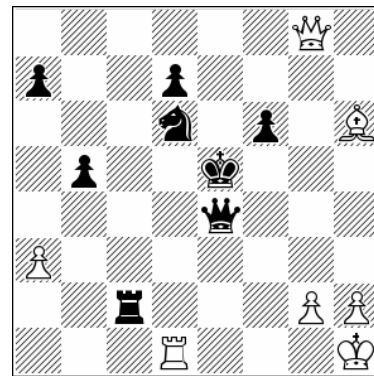
25.♞g4 ♞c2 26.♘d2 ♞b2 (26...♞a2 27.♙xg7 ♞f7 28.♞e1+ ♘d8 29.♘f3 ♘xg7 30.♞xg7 ♞xg2+ 31.♘xg2 ♜xf3+ 32.♘g1 ♞xg7+ 33.♜xg7 ♜h1+ 34.♘f2 ♜xh2+ 35.♘e3 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 27.♙xg7 ♞f7 28.♞e1+ ♘d8 29.♜g8 ♞xd2 30.♙h6 ♜xg2+ 31.♞xg2 ♞xg2+ 32.♜xg2 ♙xg2 33.♘xg2 and both Stockfish and Dragon managed to hold this pawn-down endgame, ½-½ (53) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

23.♜xh8 ♞c2



24.♞c1??

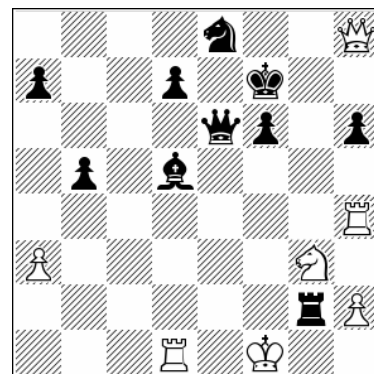
Geller panics and collapses completely. White’s only chance was 24.d5!!.. This was pointed out later by several analysts. This clever move disrupts the access of the black queen to certain light squares by dragging the light-squared bishop to d5. It’s just enough to save the game! Now Kasparov correctly analyses 24...♜b6+ as losing: 25.♘h1 ♜f2 26.♞g1 ♙xd5 27.♞e4! ♙xe4 28.♘xe4 ♜h4 29.♘d6+! (29.♙xg7?? ♜xe4 30.♜f8+ ♘g6 31.♙h6 d5 ‘with a much better game’ – Kasparov) 29...♘xd6 30.♜xg7+ ♘e6 31.♜g8+ ♘e5 and the black king is far too exposed. White is now winning: 32.♞d1! ♜e4



analysis diagram

and now 33.♙e3!! (the immediate 33.♜g3+ ♘f5 34.♞xd6 (the engine’s 34.h3!! wins immediately here, as the perpetual check on e1 and h4 is eliminated: 34...♘f7 35.♜g8 intending ♞f1+) 34...♞xg2! is slightly less clear, although it should be winning for White). The threat is 34.♜g3+ and taking on d6, and 33...♘f5 34.♜e8+ or 33...♘c4 34.♜e8+ ♘f5 35.♞f1 mates.

Instead, Black must reply 24...♙xd5! 25.♞d1! (again the only move – as Kasparov says, it keeps an eye on the dangerous bishop) 25...♞xg2+ 26.♘f1 gxf6 (26...♞a2 is less of a test of the black king’s nerves: 27.♙d2 ♙c4+ 28.♞xc4 ♜xc4+ 29.♘e1 ♜e6+ 30.♘f1 ♜c4+ 31.♘e1 ♜e6+ 32.♘f1 ½-½ (37) Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022)



analysis diagram

and now 27.♞xh6? loses after 27...♞xg3! 28.hxg3 (28.♞h7+ ♞g7) 28...♙c4+ 29.♘g2 (29.♘g1 ♜e3+ 30.♘h1 ♜f3+ 31.♘h2 ♜e2+ wins for Black) 29...♜e2+ 30.♘h3 ♙e6+ 31.g4 ♜xg4+ 32.♘h2 ♜xd1 33.♞h7+ ♘g6 34.♞h6+ ♘g5.

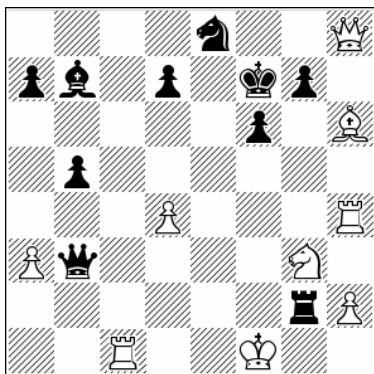
But 27.♜xh6 holds: 27...♙f3! (27...♘g7? 28.♞hd4! shows one of the points of 25.♞d1! – the ♙d5 is attacked: 28...♙c6 29.♞xd7+ ♙xd7 30.♘xg2 ♜c6+ 31.♘g1 ♜c5+ 32.♘f1 and White is better) 28.♞d2. Kasparov stopped here, with the assessment

that 'Black shouldn't be in danger of losing', and the engine confirms this: 28...♖xd2 29.♔xd2 ♜g7 (Black has two pawns for the exchange, with the white king exposed) 30.♔d3 ♕c6 31.♜e2 ♕d5 32.♔h3 ♖c6 33.♜e1 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023.

24...♖xg2+

The engine confirms that this position is actually mate in 11!

25.♜f1 ♖b3!



Threatening ...♔f3 or ...♔d3+ with mate in a few moves.

26.♜e1 ♖f3 0-1

Mate cannot be stopped, while that great knight on e8 keeps Black's king completely safe.

Game 19 – Nimzo-Indian Defence

Samuel Reshevsky

Tigran Petrosian

Zürich ct 1953

The ninth World Champion was one with a unique style, famous for his remarkable sense of danger and prophylactic play, his ability to sniff out danger and eliminate it long before it had even occurred to most of his opponents. This makes it especially interesting to analyse his games with modern engines.

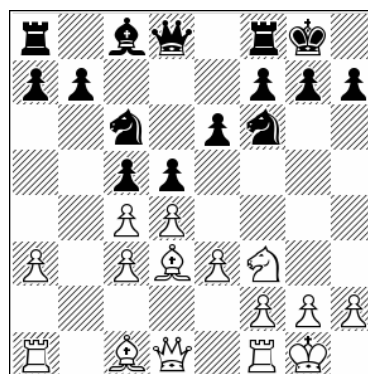
A few years ago, the opposite would have been the case, because early chess computers were almost exclusively tactical and were often hopelessly at sea in closed positions or other situations where positional manoeuvring was the order of the day. But the modern engines have revolutionised our understanding of many aspects of positional play, and are now much

more capable of shedding light on Petrosian's games.

One of his favourite devices was the positional exchange sacrifice, and this is perhaps the single most famous example and certainly the most Nimzowitschean. Petrosian sacrifices an exchange to establish a blockade on the advancing white pawns.

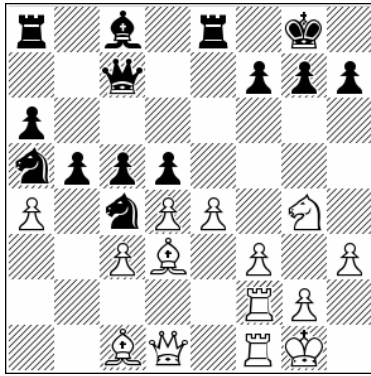
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 d5 6.♘f3 c5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.a3 ♙xc3 9.bxc3

In some ways, engines have broadened the game of chess enormously, making us aware of tactical and positional possibilities that we had not even dreamed existed. Strangely, this sometimes has the effect of flattening the game out and making everything look the same! One gets this latter feeling when looking at the engines playing out the position after move 8. In the pre-computer age, we used to say that 9...♖c7 was essential, to prevent the plan of cxd5 followed by ♘e5, and that other Black moves (apart from the main line 9...dxc4) gave White a clear opening advantage. From this position, Leela and Stockfish chose 9...h6 and 9...♖e8 as well as 9...♖c7 and didn't even look too upset with Petrosian's 9...b6. It makes you realise that we greatly exaggerated opening differences in the pre-computer age. Many moments in the early stages of the opening that we identified as critical with single solutions were often simply alternative and often equivalent paths.



9...b6

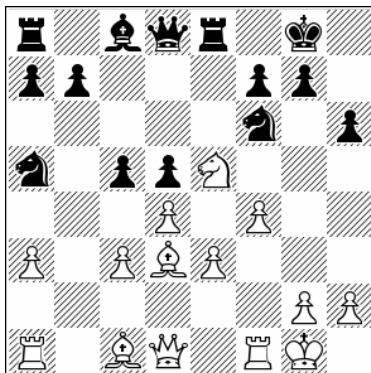
A) 9...♖e8 is not a common move at all (just 56 games OTB) but a Leela and Stockfish favourite: 10.a4 ♘a5 11.cxd5 exd5 12.♘e5 ♖c7 13.f3 ♘d7 14.♘g4 ♘b6 15.♖a2 ♘bc4 16.♖af2 a6 17.h3 b5 18.e4.



analysis diagram

White has achieved pretty much the ideal, but neither engine is too excited. 18...cxd4 19.cxd4 ♙xg4 20.hxg4 ♘c6 21.exd5 ♘b4 22.♙e4 ♚d6 23.♞e2 ♘xd5 24.♞fe1 ½-½ Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022;

B) 9...h6 was a choice of both Leela and Stockfish. This is actually slightly outrageous as just 5 OTB games have been played, with no high-level games between them. 10.cxd5 exd5 11.♘e5 ♞e8 is possible now, as 9...h6 has not unprotected the knight on c6, unlike 9...b6: 12.f4 ♘a5.



analysis diagram

The engines are already claiming an advantage for Black. 13.♞b1 ♘e4 14.c4 ♘xc4 15.♙xe4 ♘xe5 16.♙c2 ♘d7 17.♚d3 ♞e4 18.♚d2 ♘f6 19.dxc5 ♞c4 20.♙b2 ♞xc5 21.♞fc1 b6 22.♙d4 ♞a5 23.♞b3 ♙d7 24.♞c3 ♞c8 25.h3 ♞xc3 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022. Black's extra pawn is compensated by White's two bishops.

10.cxd5 exd5 11.♙b2

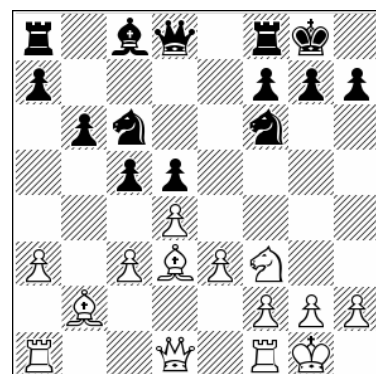
11.♘e5 has traditionally been thought to be the reason why 9...b6 is inaccurate (9...♚c7 prevents this). Exchanging the knights frees White to follow up with f3 and (hopefully) e4, following the strategy first famously implemented by Botvinnik against Capablanca. The engines agree

that 11.♘e5 is the correct way to play, but are not particularly impressed with White's objective chances – a conclusion, to be fair, that applies to virtually the entire Nimzo-Indian complex.

Reshevsky's idea, by contrast, is to achieve a transformation that the engines also appreciate and often aim for: dxc5 followed by c4, activating White's dark-squared bishop. However, Black also has a say in the matter.

A) 11...♘e7 was one interesting try from Stockfish. 12.f3 ♘g6 13.a4 (13.♘xg6 hxg6 consolidates the black kingside and introduces the idea of ...♙f5 to exchange off the light-squared bishops) 13...♞e8 14.f4 ♘e4 15.♙b2 ♙f5 16.c4 (sharpening the play considerably) 16...cxd4 17.cxd5 ♘xe5 18.fxe5 ♘c3 19.♚c2 ♙xd3 20.♚xd3 ♞xe5 21.e4 f5 22.♞xf5 (½-½ Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 22...♞e8 23.a5 ♞xe4 24.♙xc3 dxc3 25.♚xc3 ♞c8 resolves to equality;

B) 11...♙b7 was also played a number of times by both Leela and Stockfish: 12.f3 (12.♙b2 ♞c8 13.♚e2 ♞e8 14.c4 ♙a6 15.♞ad1 cxd4 16.♘xc6 ♞xc6 17.cxd5 ♙xd3 18.♞xd3 ♚xd5 19.♞xd4 ♚f5 20.♚f3 ♚xf3 21.gxf3 ♞c2 ½-½ (28) Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022) 12...♞e8 13.♘xc6 ♙xc6 14.a4 ♚c8 15.dxc5 bxc5 16.c4 (a transformation that the engines are always keen on in Rubinstein Nimzo-Indians) 16...♚e6 17.♚c2 ♚e5 18.♙d2 ♞ad8 19.a5 h5 20.♞a3 a6 21.cxd5 ♚xd5 22.e4 ♚d6 23.♚c1 ♙b5 and Black had reached near equality, ½-½ (121) Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022.



11...c4

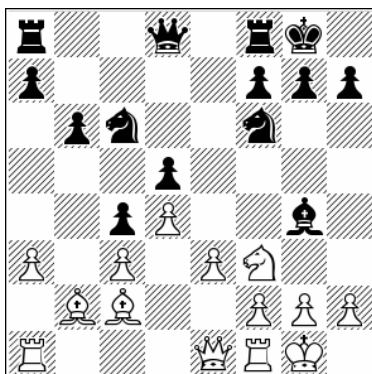
Releasing the central tension in this way gained a bad press after the immortal Botvinnik-Capablanca game at AVRO 1938, but as always, the situation is more nuanced. The negative side is two-fold:

1) By playing ...c4, Black fixes the central pawn structure and relinquishes the opportunity to change it at a future moment. That privilege passes to White who can prepare f3 and e4;
 2) By releasing pressure on the centre, Black frees the white pieces to redeploy from supporting the centre to pursue other goals. The positive side is that Black gains space with gain of tempo and boxes in the white minor pieces (such as the dark-squared bishop on b2) behind White's pawn chain. Black's task in the next few moves is to set up his pieces such that White is either prevented from gaining space back (by preventing central expansion with f3 and e4, and kingside expansion with f3 and g4) or that any White expansion in the centre can be absorbed safely. Of course, the first implies the greatest degree of control and is the most desirable. The worry about such space-oriented strategy as a practical player is always that one would run out of things to do and that the best one would achieve was a standoff with neither side able to do anything. However, in this structure, Black does have a possibility of generating queenside play with ...b5, ...a5 and ...b4, so that risk is mitigated.

12.♟c2 ♟g4

A double-purpose move, pinning the knight to inhibit ♞d2 and f3 followed by ...e4 while also preparing the exchange of light-squared bishops with the typical manoeuvre ...♟g4-h5-g6.

13.♞e1



13...♞e4

13...♟xf3 14.gxf3 is a radical decision but one favoured by the engines, which consider that Black now enjoys a slight advantage. Again it's the type of continuation that one would hesitate

to play during a practical game, even if it was part of one's preparation! The difficulty is that after 13...♟xf3, Black is playing full out for the goal of restraining White's position in a specific way (two knights against two bishops with a damaged structure), with no possibility to alter course. It means that the level of accuracy required from Black over the next few moves is extremely high, because if you don't get it right, then nothing makes sense and your position collapses.

How does 13...♟xf3 help Black? In some ways it seems counter-productive: Black loses access to the e4-square, and White gains support for e3-e4 and a new channel – the half-open g-file – for counterplay. Black's calculation is that e4 from White requires preparation and that by targeting White's weakened structure, Black gains enough time to establish the desired bind, which has to include not only the e3-e4 break but now also White's potential counterplay along the g-file.

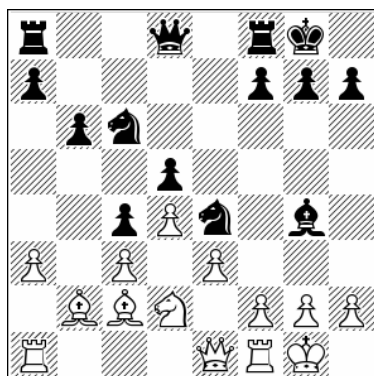
Let us see how the engines handle it: 14...♞d7 15.a4 ♞h3 16.♞d1 ♞h5 17.♟a3. It's clear that Black's plan is to follow up with ...f5 to clamp down on White's e4 break, so White knocks the black rook off the f-file to make things a little more tricky. a4 also holds back any Black queenside expansion with ...b5. 17...♞fe8 18.♞h1 ♞e7 19.♟xe7 ♞xe7 20.♞g1 f5 21.f4 g6 22.♞g5 (threatening ♟xf5) 22...♞f8 23.♞g1 ♞f3+ 24.♞g2 ♞xg2+ 25.♞xg2 ♞g7 26.♞f3 and there will soon not be much for either side to do, ½-½ (44) Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

In conclusion, after exchanging on f3, the engines execute Black's strategy perfectly (of course) but for all that, it still leads to exactly the result one feared: stalemate. From that perspective, most GMs would much prefer Petrosian's approach.

Another way of implementing the latter is 13...♟h5. This is another sensible move, intending ...♟g6 to swap off the light-squared bishops, but it gives White the chance to chalk up a small gain by snaffling the bishop pair: 14.♞h4 ♞e8 15.f3 ♞e7 16.♟c1 ♟g6 17.♞xg6 hxg6 18.♞b1 ♞a5 19.a4, although the engines equalise

the position nicely with a positional pawn sacrifice. 19...♖b3 20.♙xb3 cxb3 21.♚d1 ♘d7 22.♚xb3 ♜e6 23.♙d2 f5 24.♚b5 a6 25.♚e2 ♞ec8 26.♞b4 a5 27.♞b5 ♞c4 and Black's pieces are beautifully entrenched against which White can do little ½-½ (51) Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

14.♘d2



14...♘xd2

Petrosian aims for the absorption approach, as after this move, White is more or less certain to achieve e4.

14...♙f5 was the engine preference and looks like a very good move. It was tested twice in 1957 by a little-known Russian player called Abakarov and scored two wins! 15.♘xe4 ♙xe4 16.♙xe4 dxe4 17.a4 ♞e8 18.♙a3 ♞c8 19.f3 ♘b8. A knight regrouping with which one imagines Petrosian would have been very happy! The knight is heading to f6 to support e4 and reach the excellent outpost on d5. 20.♚g3 ♘d7 21.♙d6 exf3 22.♞xf3 ♞e6 23.♙f4 ♜e8 24.a5 ½-½ Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

15.♚xd2 ♙h5

Threatening ...♙g6 exchanging the light-squared bishops.

16.f3

Hurrying to support e4 to block the b1-h7 diagonal and avoid the exchange.

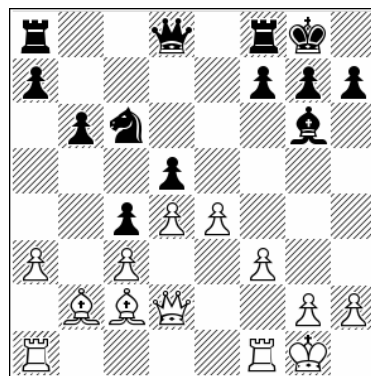
16.e4 looks worth a try but the engines are not excited. 16...dxe4 17.♙xe4 ♞c8 18.♙f5 ♞c7 19.a4 ♞e8 20.♞ae1 ♞ce7 21.♙a3 ♞xe1 22.♞xe1 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

16...♙g6

16...f5 looked a reasonable try for Black, but the opening of lines favours White a little more than Black.

17.e4 fxe4 18.fxe4 ♙g6 19.♞xf8+ ♜xf8 20.exd5 ♘e7 21.♙xg6 hxg6 22.♞f1 ♜e8 23.♞e1 ♚d7 24.d6 ♘f5 25.♚e2 ♘xd6 26.♚e6+ ♜xe6 27.♞xe6 ♞d8 28.♞xg6 ♘f7 29.♞g3 ♘e4 30.♞e3 ♘f6 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022. Black's superior minor piece compensates for the pawn deficit.

17.e4



White has achieved the goal of gaining central space with e4 – unfettered by any Black pressure on d4 – and with the realisation of that goal, there comes the threat and promise of more central and kingside expansion. However, it isn't all doom and gloom for Black. The exchange of two sets of minor pieces means that Black barely feels White's gain in space: White will have to gain a lot more before Black's pieces feel the pinch. Moreover, the white pieces are not placed particularly actively – take a look at that bishop on b2! – so it will take a while before White is able to prepare the next spatial gains.

17...♚d7

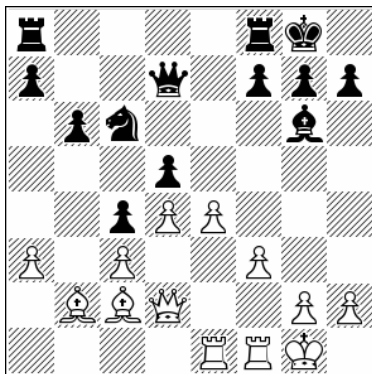
17...♞e8 18.♞fe1. This slightly unnatural-looking move keeps a rook on the a-file to challenge any black queenside expansion with a4. Stockfish has one of its concrete equalisers planned! 18...dxe4 19.fxe4 ♘e5 20.♞e2 ♘d3 21.♙xd3 cxd3 22.♚xd3 ♚h4 23.g3 ♜e7 24.♞ae1 ♞ac8 25.d5 f6 26.♚d4 b5. Threatening ...♞c4 winning the e4-pawn. White's next move looks dangerous but Stockfish (of course) has it all covered: 27.e5 ♞c4 28.d6 ♞xd4 29.dxe7 ♞c4 30.exf6 gxf6 31.♞e6 ♘f7. Black wins the e-pawn easily, ½-½ Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

Instead, 18.♞ae1 b5

(18...dxe4 19.fxe4 ♘e5 is still not bad, although White's rook on the f-file helps him a little in

comparison to 18.♞fe1: 20.♞f4 ♞c8 21.h3 b5 22.♙c1 ♘d3 23.♙xd3 cxd3 24.♞xd3 ♞c4 25.♞g3 a5 26.e5 b4 27.♙b2 b3 28.♞e3 a4 29.♞f2 ♞d5 30.h4 ♞c6 31.♞g3 ♞c4 32.♞e3 ♞c6 33.♞f3 ♞xf3 34.♞exf3 ♞c4 35.♙f2 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 19.a4 a6 20.♞e3 ♞b8 21.♞fe1 dxe4 (a concrete solution to the position. 21...dxe4 opens the risk of a mobile white pawn centre but also speeds up Black's play with ...b4 by removing any responsibility to defend the d5-pawn; if 21...b4, 22.exd5 ♞xe3 23.♞xe3 exploits Black's back-rank weakness) 22.fxe4 ♞b6 23.h3 b4 24.cxb4 ♘xb4 25.♙c3 ♘xc2 26.♞xc2 f5 (punching holes in White's pristine double-pawn centre!) 27.a5 (27.exf5 ♞xe3 28.♞xe3 ♞b1+; 27.e5 f4 is an unexpected bonus!) 27...♞b5 28.exf5 ♞xe3 29.♞xe3 ♞xf5 30.♞e2 ♙f7 31.d5 ♞f4 32.♙e1 ♞b2 ½-½ (32) Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022.

18.♞ae1



18...dxe4!?

18...b5 was the engine preference and feels very logical. Petrosian's 18...dxe4 is only reasonable if Black has a concrete follow-up; otherwise he is simply freeing White's position and opening new channels of attack for him.

The following game was an example of typical play: 19.♞g5 ♞ac8 20.♞f2 ♘e7 21.h4 ♞fe8 (the advance h5 can always be met by ...h6, so Black doesn't need to rush) 22.♙c1 a5 23.h5 h6 24.♞h4 ♙h7 25.♙f4 b4 (Black's counterplay arrives quickly to destabilise the white centre) 26.axb4 axb4 27.cxb4 ♘c6 28.♙a4 ♞a7 29.♙xc6 ♞xc6 30.♙h2 ♞ce6 31.♞d1 ½-½ (31) Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

19.fxe4 ♞fe8

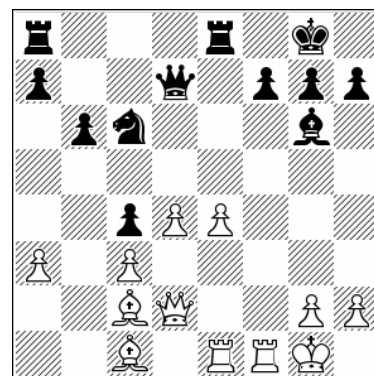
Petrosian follows up the very committal 18...dxe4 with a nothing move and suddenly the engines think White is on the way to winning! 19...♘e5 was the best choice, executing this positional pawn sacrifice in worse, but still defensible circumstances.

20.♙c1 ♞ad8 21.♞e2 ♘d3 22.♙xd3 cxd3 23.♞xd3 ♞fe8 24.♞f2 ♞c8 25.♞fe2 ♙h5 26.♞e3 f6 27.♞g3 ♞d6 28.♞ge3 ♙g6 29.♞e2 ♞d7 30.♞f3 b5 31.h4 h5 ½-½ (39) Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

20.♞f4

A good move, sidestepping the ...♘e5 trick and bringing the queen closer to the kingside, although the engines preferred something just a touch more precise and flexible. One's intuitive impression of Reshevsky's play in the next few moves – based purely on reading through Bronstein's tournament book on Zürich 1953 many, many(!) times, but not on any serious analysis – has always been that Reshevsky played a little strangely and misplaced his pieces, but the engines do not agree. Until a certain point, Reshevsky's moves are typically the engine's second choice... which against a human opponent is way over what is required. It looks odd that Reshevsky left his bishop on b2 like a big pawn instead of redeploying it; it also felt strange to spend a couple of tempi redeploying the other bishop to g4, seemingly just to nudge the queen from d7. However, Reshevsky's play is actually extremely consistent and, until a certain moment, extremely powerful.

20.♙c1 was the engine choice and it led to a string of white wins.

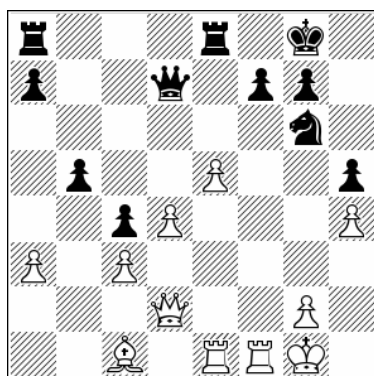


analysis diagram

The bishop defends the queen against ...♘e5, leaving the option open of ♞g5 rather than ♞f4,

and prepares to redeploy along the c1-h6 diagonal. That lack of pawn pressure against d4 – the downside to 11...c4 – prevents Black from hindering this plan. Whenever piece play is the dominant part of a game phase, then it always feels comforting to achieve a positional goal at the same time, in case all that shuffling comes to naught! Bringing the dark-squared bishop back into the game meets that criterium.

20...b5 21.h4 (of course we have to have this one in our attack!) 21...h5 (21...h6 22.♖e3 ♘a5 23.h5 ♙xh5 24.♖g3 ♖e6 25.♗f2 ♞d8 26.e5 with a huge initiative, 1-0 (85) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 22.e5 (22.♗g5 a6 23.♖e3 ♗e7 24.♗f4 ♖ab8 25.♖f2 ♞bd8 26.♖g3 was also very threatening; 1-0 (65) Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022) 22...♞e7 (22...♗d5 23.e6 ♖xe6 24.♖xe6 ♗xe6 25.d5 ♗d6 26.♙xg6 ♗xg6 27.dxc6 1-0 (55) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 23.♙xg6 ♞xg6



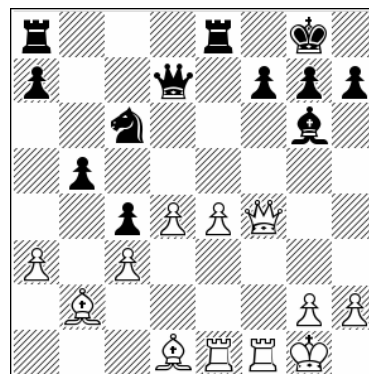
analysis diagram

24.♗e2 ♗g4 25.♗f2 ♗d7 26.♗f3 a5 27.♗xh5 b4 28.♗f3 ♞f8 29.h5 b3 30.♖e4 ♞h7 31.♖g4 ♖a6 32.a4 ♖ae6 33.♗g3 f6 34.h6 g5 35.exf6 ♖xf6 36.♖xf6 ♞xf6 37.♖xg5+ ♞h8 38.♙f4 b2 39.♖b5 ♗g4 40.♗xg4 ♞xg4 41.♞f1 ♖f8 42.g3 ♞xh6 43.♖xb2 1-0 (71) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

20...b5 21.♙d1

Fighting for the central light squares from a different angle. It seems a strange move but it's second on the engines' list.

21.h4 was again the engine favourite.



21...♖e7

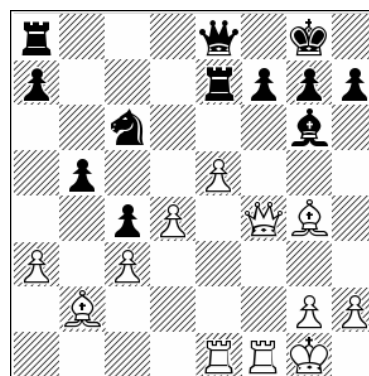
Not the engines' choice but an elegant regrouping to human eyes! The rook on e7 defends f7, allowing the queen to slip behind it to combine against e4, which has lost protection after Reshevsky's 21.♙d1.

22.♙g4

Of course, we still want 22.h4!: 22...♖ae8 23.♙g4 ♗b7 24.♙f3 h5 25.g4 hxg4 26.♗xg4 ♞d8 27.e5 ♗d7 28.♗g3 ♙d3 29.♖f2 ♞h8 30.a4 b4 31.d5 a5 32.♞h2 ♗f5 33.d6 ♖e6 34.♙c6 ♗h5 35.♙xe8 ♖xe8 36.cxb4 1-0 (56) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

22...♗e8 23.e5

Forced by Black's pressure against e4, but also a strong idea.



23...a5

For those wondering why Petrosian's exchange sacrifice idea doesn't work yet, the answer is a venomous little tactic: 23...♖e6 24.d5 ♖xe5 25.♗g3, winning a piece!

24.♖e3

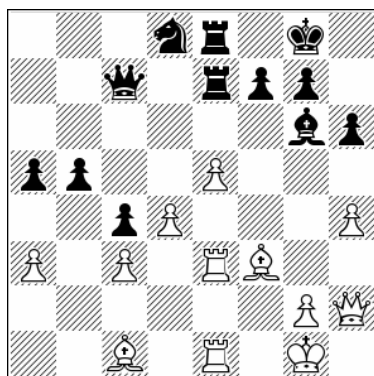
Not the engine's best move, but second-best is more than enough. It also demonstrates Reshevsky's consistency of purpose: after ♙d1-g4 and e4-e5, the rooks are to be doubled on the e-file to force through e5-e6.

24.a4 was the evil change of attacking angle favoured by the engines.

24...b4 25.♙e2 (hitting the loose c4-pawn) 25...bxc3 (25...♙d3 26.♙xd3 cxd3 27.c4 followed by d5 is catastrophic for Black) 26.♙xc3 ♙d3 27.d5 ♘b4 28.d6 ♖e6 29.♖g3 h6 30.♙h5 ♙xf1 31.♖xf1 ♖a7 32.♗f4 ♘c6 33.♙g4 ♖xe5 34.d7 ♗e7 35.♙xe5 ♘xe5 36.d8=♖+ ♗xd8 37.♗xe5 1-0 (68) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

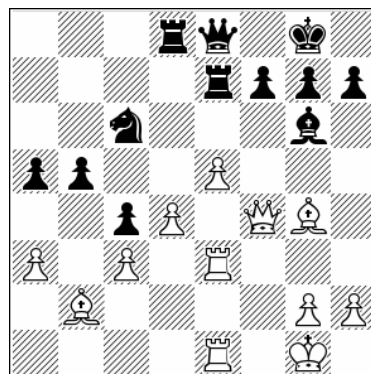
24...♖d8 25.♗fe1

Amazingly, this move is where it all goes wrong for White. After this move, a whole series of engine games ended in draws despite engine evaluations of +1 and above. Essentially, Petrosian's next astonishing move makes sense of Black's pieces suddenly – seemingly out of nowhere –, achieving a wonderful harmony at the mere cost of the exchange! 25.♙f3 looks wrong – why is White weakening his control of e6 after playing to push the e5-pawn? However, it is crucial for White to stop Black from transferring the knight to d5, and this is the only way to do it: 25...♗d7 (25...♖e6 26.d5 ♖xe5 27.♗fe1 wins; 25...b4 26.♗fe1 and d5 is unstoppable) 26.h4 h6 27.♗fe1 ♗c7 28.♙c1 ♖de8 29.♗h2 ♘d8 (29...b4 30.e6)



analysis diagram

30.d5 ♗c5 31.♘h1 ♙d3 32.♗f4 b4 33.axb4 axb4 34.cxb4 ♗xb4 35.♘h2 ♖a7 36.e6 fxe6 37.dxe6 ♖ae7 38.♗d4 ♗b8+ 39.♘g1 ♘h8 40.♙b2 ♗c7 41.♙d5 1-0 (85) Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022. White is in total control... even against Stockfish!



25...♖e6!!

A stunning move which has contributed in no small part to Petrosian's reputation as a master exchange-sacrificer! In some ways, it is forced, as Black has no other way to prevent the unpleasant e6 which White is trying to force through with brute power, but that in no way detracts from its beauty and strength. By moving to e6, the rook blocks the advance of the e-pawn and frees e7 for the black knight to reach the key outpost on d5. Unfortunately for White, the knight's arrival on d5 will hit both the queen on f4 and the rook on e3, which means that White must spend a couple of tempi moving his pieces out of the way. Why does such a resource even exist in this position? In fact, though White's play has been strong objectively, it has involved certain positional risks: the bishop on b2 was left to live its life as a big pawn (note how the engines have consistently wanted to redeploy it via c1 over recent moves) and White advanced the e-pawn to e5, creating a fantastic outpost for a black knight on d5. Black's central control of the light squares has seemed too weak to let this matter, but where there are possibilities, miracles can sometimes happen! The subtle, seemingly inconsistent and prophylactic 25.♙f3 was necessary to stop Black's plan and justify White's play.

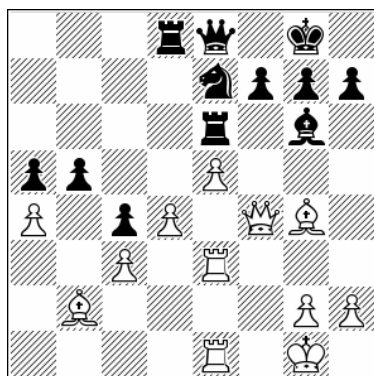
26.a4

Reshevsky's reaction is well-intended, but falls just short: the goal is to undermine Black's queenside pawn structure, so that Petrosian's knight is unstable when it lands on d5. However, White is a tempo too slow to make it all work. 26.♖g3 ♘e7 forces White to take on e6 anyway, as a solid move like 27.♙c1 is met by 27...f5. This

gains kingside space and Black will occupy d5 with the knight next. What a transformation! 26.♙f3 is too late now: 26...♘e7 and the engines already consider Black to be slightly better.

26...♘e7

26...b4? 27.d5! ♜xd5 28.♙xe6 fxe6 29.♚xc4 is the point of White's last move.



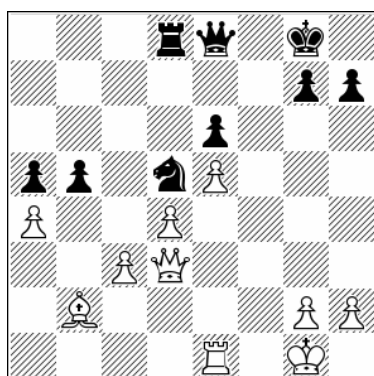
27.♙xe6

We wondered whether it might have been worth keeping the light-squared bishop to fight for the central light squares, but the engines merely shrug their shoulders! 27.♚f1 ♙d3 28.♜xd3 cxd3 29.♚xd3 ♜b6 30.axb5 ♚xb5 31.♚xb5 ♜xb5 32.♙a3 ♘d5 33.c4 ½-½ Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

27...fxe6 28.♚f1

28.♜f3 b4 29.d5 exd5 30.e6 d4 31.cxd4 c3 32.♙c1 h6 33.♚c7 ♜d5 34.♜ef1 ½-½ Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022.

28...♘d5 29.♜f3 ♙d3 30.♜xd3 cxd3 31.♚xd3



31...b4

Actually Black can choose pretty much any way he fancies to deal with White's plan: 31...bxa4 32.c4 ♘b4 33.♚e4 ♚d7 34.♜c1 a3 35.♙xa3 ♚xd4+ 36.♚xd4 ♜xd4 37.♙xb4 axb4 38.c5 b3 39.c6 b2 ½-½ Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

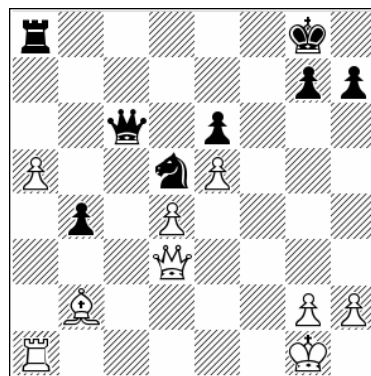
32.cxb4

32.c4 ♘b6 33.d5 exd5 34.c5 ♘c4 35.♙d4 ♚e6 36.h4 h5 37.♚g3 ♜b8 38.♚g5 ½-½ Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

32...axb4

32...♘xb4 33.♚b3 ♜b8 34.♙a3 ♚d7 35.♜d1 ♚d5 36.♚c3 ♚d7 37.♚h3 ♚d5 ½-½ Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022.

33.a5 ♜a8 34.♜a1 ♚c6



Petrosian's choice is very good too, with a passed b-pawn, an entrenched knight on d5 and the passed white a-pawn under close surveillance.

35.♙c1

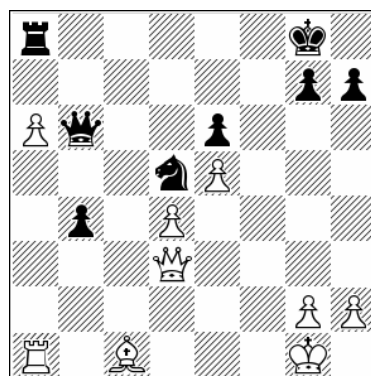
35.a6 ♘c7 keeps the a-pawn under observation ½-½ (41) Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

35...♚c7

35...b3 36.a6 ♚c2 is an alternative way. As we can see, however, Black's position is so solid and entrenched that it's hard to find a move that makes his position worse.

37.♚xc2 bxc2 38.g3 ♘c7 39.♙f2 ♜xa6 40.♜xa6 ♘xa6 41.♙e2 ♘b4 42.♙d2 ♙f7 ½-½ Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022.

36.a6 ♚b6



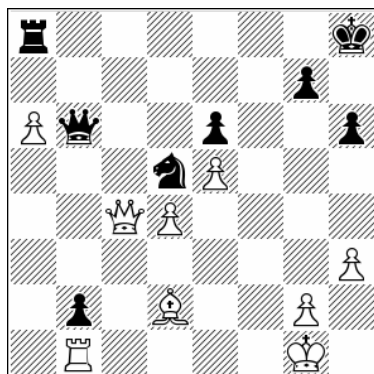
37.♙d2

37.h3 h6 38.♙xh6 (made us smile!) 38...b3 39.♙h2 b2 40.♜b1 gxh6 41.♚g6+ ♙h8 42.♚xh6+ ♙g8

43.♖g6+ ♔h8 44.♗h6+ ♔g8 45.♗g6+ ♔h8 ½-½ Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022.

37...b3 38.♖c4 h6 39.h3 b2 40.♞b1 ♔h8

40...♗xa6 41.♗b3 ♗a1 42.♗xb2 ♗xb2 43.♞xb2 ♞a4 44.♔f2 ♞xd4 45.g4 ½-½ Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022.



41.♞e1 ½-½

41...♞xa6 42.♗c8+ ♔h7 43.♗c2+ ♔g8 44.♗xb2 ♗xb2 45.♞xb2 ♞a1 46.♔f1 g5 47.♞b7 ♔f4 and the engines saw no problems for Black! ½-½ Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022.

A really interesting fight where Reshevsky was somewhat unlucky to encounter a unique defensive idea after some very strong play.

Game 20 – Nimzo-Indian Defence

Boris Spassky

Mikhail Tal

Riga ch-URS 1958

This dramatic game was one of the most influential in the history of chess in the period. Played in the final round of the Soviet Championship, which that year also counted as a Zonal tournament, Spassky needed to win to guarantee qualification for the Interzonal. Having achieved what appeared to be a winning position by the adjournment, he failed to find a clear win during a long night of analysis and next day tragically lost his way and was defeated. As a result, Spassky was eliminated from the World Championship cycle for some five years, whilst Tal, over the next two, went on to win the Interzonal and the Candidates and wrest the world title from Botvinnik.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♞b4 4.a3

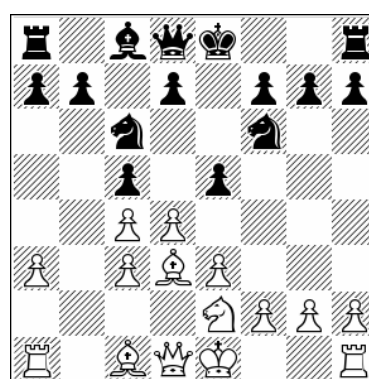
The Sämisch is certainly the most radical and aggressive response to the Nimzo-Indian, but the engines tend to hate it and give the white player a torrid time, as Matthew demonstrates in *Silicon Road*!

4...♞xc3+ 5.bxc3 c5 6.e3 ♘c6 7.♞d3 e5!?

Not Black's most common way of meeting the Sämisch System, but full of interesting points and it's not surprising that a number of strong players – even Vishy Anand – have tried it. 7...0-0 8.♘e2 b6 9.e4 ♘e8 is the usual line, considered fine for Black.

8.♘e2

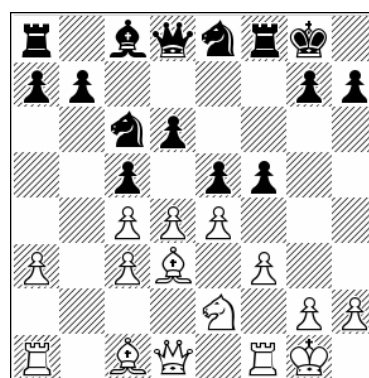
8.d5 e4 is Black's idea, with good play.



8...e4

The sharpest plan, targeting White's weak queenside and central light squares before White gets a grip on them with ♘g3 or f3.

8...0-0 9.0-0 d6 has been Black's most common choice (often transposing from 7...d6 8.♘e2 e5) with decent results. I (Matthew) was struck by Stockfish's approach in one game, which echoed a development concept of Tony Miles that I faced in Ostend 1992 and which still impresses me to this day! 10.f3 ♘e8 11.e4 f5.



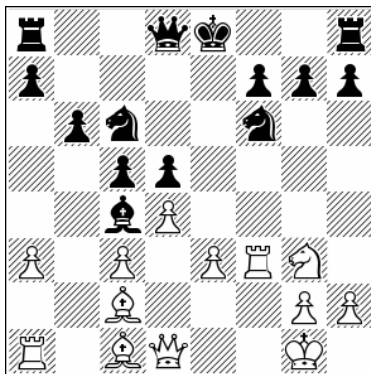
analysis diagram

Tony played a similar strategy of holding the centre with a c5/d6/e5 structure and then striking with ...f5 through a typically unusual and hard-to-meet move-order: 1.d4 1...e6 2.c4 ♟b4+ 3.♟c3 c5 4.e3 ♟xc3+ 5.bxc3 d6 6.♟d3 e5 7.e4 ♟c6 8.♟e2 ♟ge7 9.♟e3 0-0 10.0-0 f5 with good play for Black.

12.exf5 ♟xf5 13.♟e3 ♟xd3 14.♟xd3 ♟f6 15.♟ad1 b6 16.♟g3 cxd4 17.cxd4 ♟d7 18.dxe5 ♟xe5 19.♟b3 ♟e6 with a pleasant position for Black, ½-½ (25) Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

9.♟b1

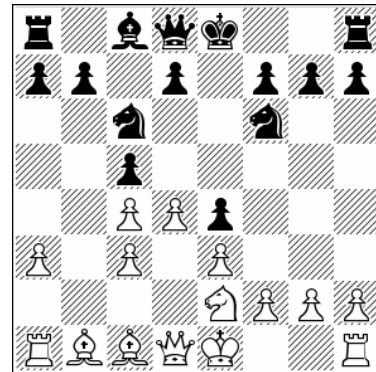
The retreat 9.♟c2 is the engine's preference, which makes you wonder what subtle differences it has discovered between the two. This isn't an opening book so we won't delve too deeply into this, but there is one very striking difference: 9...b6 10.0-0 ♟a6 11.f3 exf3 12.♟xf3 ♟xc4 13.♟g3 d5



analysis diagram

14.♟xf6. The engines are extremely keen on this shocking idea to start with, though they gradually end up preferring 14.♟e1 followed by e4. This line works much better with the bishop on c2 rather than b1 as it enables the queen's rook on a1 to come into the game much quicker (with the black bishop on c4, White is unable to bring the rook into play with ♟a2; 14.♟e1 0-0 15.e4 ♟xe4 16.♟xe4 dxe4 17.♟xe4 f5 18.♟xf5 ♟xf5 19.♟xf5 g6 20.♟e4 ♟d5 21.♟g4 ♟f8 22.♟e3 cxd4 23.cxd4 ♟d6 24.h3 with just a small edge for White ½-½ (31) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023): 14...gxf6 (14...♟xf6 15.♟h5 ♟h4 16.♟xg7+ ♟d7 17.♟f5 ♟f6 18.dxc5 ♟ad8 19.e4 ♟c8 20.♟f4 dxe4 21.♟g4 ♟b7 22.♟d6+ ♟xd6 23.cxd6 ♟xc3 24.♟c1 ♟d8 25.♟d1 ♟f6 also produced a sharp, balanced game, ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.2,

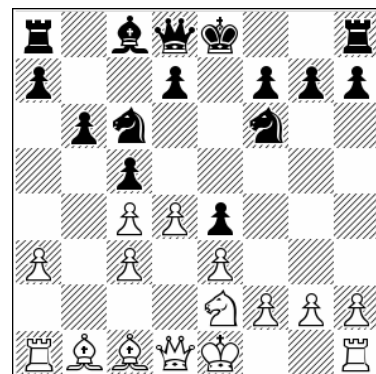
Classics 2023) 15.♟f3 ♟e7 16.♟f5 ♟d7 17.♟g7+ ♟d8 18.♟h5 ♟c7 19.♟xf6 ♟e6 20.e4 ♟ad8 21.♟f4+ ♟b7 22.e5. White has reasonable compensation for the exchange, ½-½ (31) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023.



9...b6

Black cannot defend the e4-pawn against moves like ♟g3, ♟c2 and f3, so he has to go after the c4-pawn instead.

9...♟a5 was a new try from Stockfish which led to some craziness: 10.0-0 0-0 11.f3 exf3 12.♟xf3 d5 (rather than targeting White's pawns, Black is trying to free access to the central and queenside light squares for his pieces) 13.cxd5 ♟g4 14.e4 cxd4 15.cxd4 ♟e8 16.♟g5 ♟b6 17.♟xf6 ♟xf3 18.gxf3 ♟xf6 19.f4 ♟h4 20.e5 ♟g4+ 21.♟f2 ♟h4+ 22.♟g1 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023. A murky position, but the engines say equal!



10.♟g3

10.0-0 is the engine preference, and there were many interesting ideas once again: 10...♟a6 11.f3 exf3 12.♟xf3 ♟xc4 13.♟g3 d5 14.e4 ♟xe4 (14...cxd4 was played in one high-level human game: 15.♟e1 (15.♟g5 dxc3 16.♟h5 dxe4 17.♟xf6+ gxf6 18.♟xe4 ♟e5 (18...♟d4+ 19.♟e3 0-0-0 20.♟xd4 ♟xd4 21.♟xf6 turned out a little better for White ½-½ (98) Yu Yangyi-Wei Yi, Xinghua 2013) 19.♟xc3 fvg5 20.♟xa8 b5 21.♟e4 ♟b6+ 22.♟h1 0-

0. Another sharp, but balanced position ½-½ (28) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023) 15...0-0 16.♔g5 ♖e5 17.♞f5 ♞e8 18.♜h5 ♞e6 19.♙xf6 gxf6 20.♙a2 ♜g6 21.cxd4 ♙xa2 22.♞xa2 ♜h8 23.♞af2 dxe4 24.♞e3 ♜e7 25.♞xf6 ♞xf6 26.♞xf6 ♜g8 27.♞f4 ♞d5 28.♞xe4 ♞xe4 29.♞xe4 and the engines had neutralised White's dangerous initiative ½-½ (39) Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023) 15.♜xe4 dxe4 16.♙xe4 ♞d7 17.♞c2. Stopping Black from castling kingside by attacking h7. The engines found several routes to equality but none of them were particularly intuitive. 17...♞d8 18.♙e3 cxd4 19.cxd4 ♙d5 20.♞e1 ♙xe4 21.♞xe4+ ♜f8. This position had already been reached in an old TCEC game from 2020! 22.d5 ♞xd5 23.♞xd5 ♞xd5 24.♞c1 ♜e7 25.♞c7 f6 26.♞xa7 ♜f7 27.♙xb6 ♜e6 ½-½ (44) DefenChess-Andscacs, TCEC 2020.

10...♙a6 11.f3

11.♜xe4 ♜xe4 12.♙xe4 ♙xc4 is fine for Black.

11...♙xc4

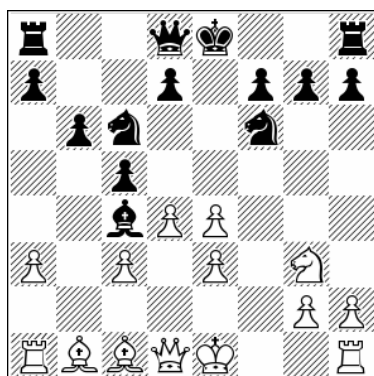
11...exf3 12.0-0 transposes back to 10.0-0.

11...cxd4 12.exd4 e3 was Stockfish's ingenious approach, avoiding a white double pawn centre and entrenching its minor pieces on the queenside and central light squares: 13.0-0 ♙xc4 14.♞e1 0-0 15.♙xe3 ♞e8 16.♜f5 ♜d5 17.♙e4 ♞f6 18.♞d2 h6 with a balanced position, ½-½ (24) Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

12.♜f5

The engines dislike this move intensely, seeing an almost decisive advantage for Black! The problem is that ♜xg7+ is not a real threat while White's other threats of ♜d6+ and fxe4 can be dealt with in one stroke.

12.fxe4



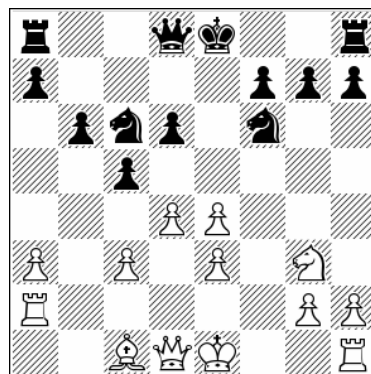
analysis diagram

A) 12...0-0 13.♙a2 ♙a6 14.c4. This is not obvious, but it's a sensible way to ensure White can castle kingside and open the long diagonal. Stockfish and Leela produced an amazing sharp game:

14...cxd4 15.0-0 ♞e8 16.exd4 ♜xe4 17.♜f5 ♜e7 18.♜xg7 ♜xg7 19.♞h5 f5 20.d5 ♜g6 21.♙b2+ ♜g8 22.d6 ♞g5 23.c5+ ♞e6 24.♙xe6+ dxe6 25.♞xg5 ♜xg5 26.c6 ♙xf1 27.♞xf1 e5 28.d7 ♜e6 29.♞xf5 ♜ef8 30.h4 ♜xd7 31.cxd7 ♞d8 ½-½ Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022;

B) Tal's 12...d6 was played in a famous (in English circles!) game in which an extremely strong Russian grandmaster was dispatched in ruthless style: 13.♞f3 0-0 (13...♞c8 14.♜f5 0-0 15.♞g3 ♜e8 16.e5) 14.e5 dxe5 15.♞xc6 exd4 16.cxd4 ♞e8 17.♜f5 g6 18.♙a2 gxf5 19.♙xc4 ♞xd4 20.0-0 ♞xa1 21.g4 ♜xg4 22.h3 ♞c3 23.♙xf7+ ♜xf7 24.hxg4 ♞ad8 25.♞h6 ♜g8 26.gxf5 ♞g7+ 0-1 (26) Psakhis-Plaskett, Bor 1985.

But better is 13.♙a2! ♙xa2 14.♞xa2 with a large plus for White.

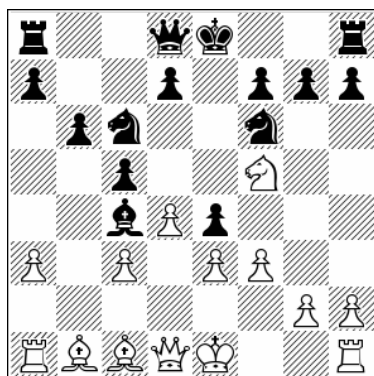


analysis diagram

This is a little hard to understand at first sight, because his ♙c1 is dreadful, but the pawn centre and open f-file count for more.

For example, 14...0-0 15.♞f2 ♞e8?, going after White's only weakness on e4, loses immediately to 16.0-0! ♜xe4 17.♞xf7 with a crushing attack, whilst against quieter moves, such as 15...♞c8, White just builds up: 16.0-0 ♜e8 17.♞e2 ♞d7 18.♞a2! (a very nice engine idea to increase the pressure against f7) 18...♞c7 with moves such as ♙b2, c4, ♜f5 to follow. Black has no counterplay. Or 15...♜e8 16.h4 ♞c8 17.h5 h6 18.0-0 ♞c7 19.♙b2, looking for c4 and d5, with a good attacking structure for White ½-½ (81) Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023.

C) 12...♖a5 13.e5 is very strong for White.



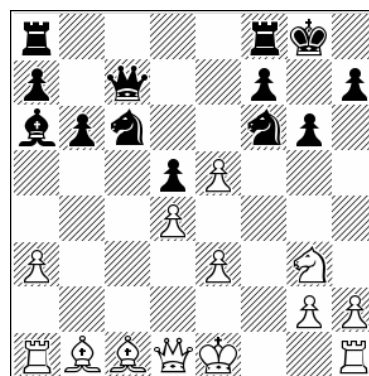
12...0-0?!

Solid, but Black could have called White's bluff with 12...d5, which protects e4 and defends against ♖d6+. Tal described it as 'very risky' in view of 13.♖xg7+ (13.fxe4 g6 14.e5 gxf5 15.exf6 ♖xf6 16.♖f3 ♖e7 17.a4 ♖g8 18.g3 h5 19.♖c2 ♖g4 20.♖a3 ♖c8 with a clear advantage for Black, 0-1 (62) Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 13...♗f8 14.♖f5 ♖g8 15.♖g3 (15.♗f2 ♖d7 16.♖g3 ♖e8 followed by ...h7-h5-h4 is horrible for White), but the engine assesses the resulting position as winning for Black. On closer inspection, one can understand why – White has all but one of his pieces on the back rank, his king unable to castle, and is hardly able to do anything. In fact, after 15...♖c7 the engine actually thinks White's best move is 16.♖a2!.

13.♖d6 ♖d3

Tal was obviously focused on solidity in the opening stages as he might otherwise have tried to exploit the fact that White's king is unable to castle while the white knight is a target for tempi-gaining developing moves.

13...♖a6 14.fxe4 ♖c7 (hitting the knight on d6 and also lining up a future check on c3 forking the king on e1 and rook on a1) 15.♖f5 (15.e5 cxd4 16.cxd4 ♖xe5 17.dxe5 ♖c3+ 18.♗f2 ♖xa1 19.exf6 ♖xb1 with a clear black advantage, 0-1 (76) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023) 15...cxd4 16.cxd4 g6 17.♖g3 d5 18.e5



analysis diagram

and now 18...♖xe5! (the same trick!) 19.dxe5 ♖c3+ 20.♖d2 ♖xa1 21.exf6 ♖xf6. Black has a rook and two pawns for two pieces, but the white king is terrible and it is extremely hard to activate his pieces.

After 21...♖fe8 22.♗f2 ♖e6 23.♖e1 ♖xa3 24.♗g1 ♖ae8 Leela managed to shake things up and scrape a draw, but it's clear Black is well on top: 25.♖h5 d4 26.e4 gxf5 27.♖xf5 ♖xf6 28.e5 ♖g6 29.♖xg6 hxf6 30.♖h4 ♖c5 31.e6 ♖xe6 32.♖xe6 fxe6 33.h3 ♖c4 34.♖f6 ♖f5 35.♖d8+ ½-½ (61) Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022. The open king and opposite-coloured bishops just about allow White to hold.

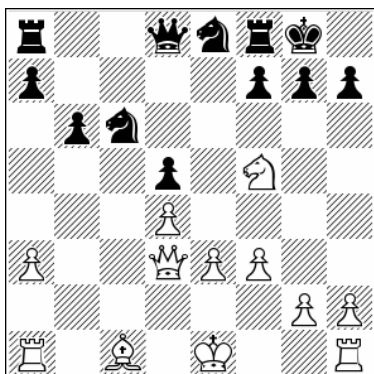
14.♖xd3

Spassky also switches to solidity. The engines wanted the more ambitious 14.fxe4 ♖xb1 15.♖xb1 ♖e8 16.♖f5 ♖e7 17.♖g3, which is around equal but offers chances for a complicated game: 17...d5 18.e5 f6 19.0-0 fxe5 20.♖xf8+ ♗xf8 21.dxc5 ♖f6 22.♖h5 bxc5 23.♖xf6 gxf6 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023.

14...exd3 15.♖xd3 cxd4 16.cxd4 ♖e8!

Once the white knight is ejected from d6, the remains of White's energetic early opening play are neutralised. However, the resulting position is still very interesting.

17.♖f5 d5



The structure we have reached is now reminiscent of the most famous Sämisch game of them all: Botvinnik-Capablanca, AVRO 1938. For many years – influenced by the marvellous energy and power Botvinnik displayed in that game – this type of structure was considered to be automatically better for White. His ideal scenario is to gain central space with e3-e4 in the centre and, if Black does not react, to target Black's kingside dark squares (lacking the protection of the dark-squared bishop) by expanding on the kingside with e4-e5 and the march of the f-pawn to f6. Attitudes gradually became more nuanced and the scepticism of the engines has led to the rehabilitation of these structures for Black. Despite that, the practical difficulties Black faces should not be underestimated. Any white system that targets the black king is worrying in practical play, whatever the objective merits. Black's early advantage has dissipated and the position is now equal.

18.a4

Spassky maintains his newly solid course and is happy to head for exchanges. 18.0-0 ♖d6 19.♗g3 (if White wants to exchange knights, 19.♗xd6 ♜xd6 20.♙d2 is a better way to play than the game. From d2, the bishop protects e3 and supports a3-a4-a5, liquidating White's isolated a-pawn and saddling Black with an isolated pawn on the queenside: 20...h6 21.a4 ♜ac8 22.a5 ♗e7 23.♜fb1 ♜c6 24.axb6 axb6 gives White a small edge ½-½ (54) Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022) was the most ambitious idea: 19...b5 20.e4 ♗c4 21.♗f5 ♜d7 22.h3 a5 23.♙f4 ♜ae8 with a sharp game in prospect. White has the central majority but Black has a strong knight on c4 and a mobile

queenside majority, ½-½ (35) Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022.

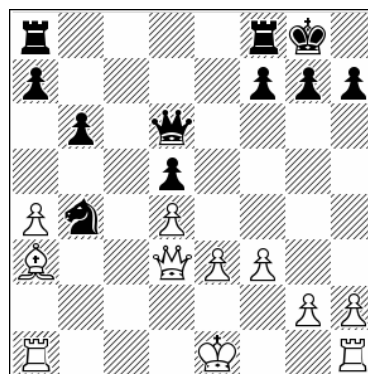
18...♗d6

18...♗b4 19.♜b3 ♗d6 was the elegant move-order favoured by the engines.

19.♗xd6

19.♙a3? ♗xf5 20.♙xf8?! ♜g5 'with a very powerful initiative' – Tal. The engine thinks Black is just winning.

19...♜xd6 20.♙a3 ♗b4



Astonishingly, we are apparently still following a 1957 USSR correspondence game Shaposhnikov-Maseev. One imagines that neither Tal nor Spassky knew about it.

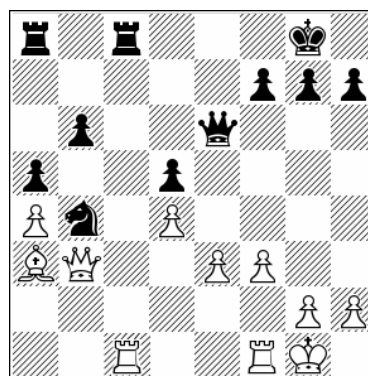
21.♜b3

21.♜d2 a5 22.0-0 ♜fc8 23.♜fc1 ♜e6 24.♙f2 ♜d6 25.h3 was the continuation of the stem game. 25...h5 26.♜ab1 ♜c6 27.♜b2? ♜xc1 did not work out well for White! 28.♙xb4 ♜c6 29.♙c5 ♜a1 30.♙xb6 ♜xa4 0-1.

21...a5 22.0-0 ♜fc8 23.♜ac1

Tal offered a draw at this point (without making his move!), but Spassky needed to win to guarantee Candidates qualification.

23...♜e6



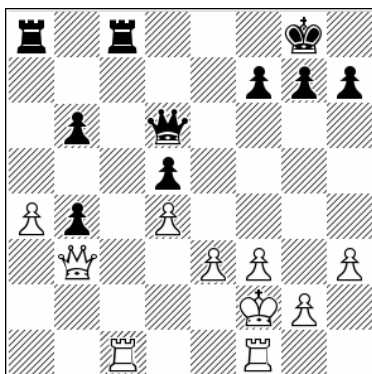
An elegant way of unpinning as White cannot win the b4-pawn without dropping the e3-pawn.

24.♙xb4?!

The engines get a little excited for Black when they see this, although to be honest the lines did not seem that likely to lead to much advantage. 24.e4 was the engine preference and soon got completely crazy: 24...♖f6 25.e5 ♗f4 26.♗fd1 ♙c4 27.♗xc4 dxc4 28.♗c3 ♘a2 29.♗d2 ♗xd2 30.♗xd2 ♘c3 31.d5 b5 32.axb5 ♘xb5 33.♙c5 c3 34.♖a2 f6 35.e6 ♘c7 36.e7 ♘xd5 37.♗xa5. The e7-pawn will be traded for the c3-pawn, ½-½ Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

24...axb4 25.♙f2 ♗d6 26.h3

Again avoiding the possible draw after 26.♙g1 ♗e6 (although the engine actually thinks Black is better after 26...g6).



26...♙f8?

Tal himself criticised this. He wanted to bring the king nearer the centre for the endgame, but with so many heavy pieces on the board, normal endgame considerations come a poor second to king safety, and the text both exposes the king and leaves h7 unprotected.

26...g6 was the engine preference – avoiding Spassky's trick in the game – when the engines slightly prefer Black's position. As long as White isn't given a concrete way to force dry equality, then nerves can play a role.

27.♗c2

Threatening to double on the c-file.

27...♗xc2+ 28.♗xc2

The downside to 26...♙f8 is revealed: the white queen hits h7 and gains a tempo.

28...g6

The consequence of his 26th move.

29.♗c1

White has managed to seize firm control of the c-file, although he can do only a limited amount with it.

29...♗d7

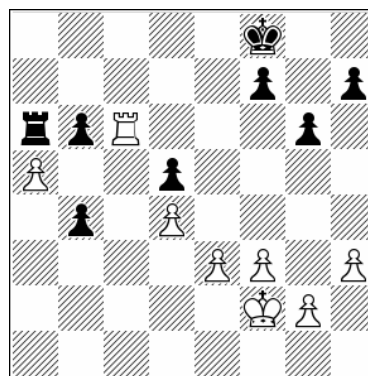
Perhaps a little over-anxious. After 29...h5, the engines see nothing better than 30.♗c6, leading to a similar position to the game but with a useful extra tempo.

30.♗c6 ♗xc6 31.♗xc6 ♖a6

The engine preference 31...b5 does look less stressful for Black than the game. Black gets a passed pawn with a rook behind it!

32.axb5 ♖a2+ 33.♙g3 ♖a5 34.b6 ♖b5 35.♗c2 ♙e7 36.♙f2 (36.♙f4 ♙d6 37.♙g5 b3 38.♖b2 ♙c6 39.♙f6 ♙xb6 40.e4 ♙a5 41.exd5 ♙b4 42.d6 ♖b7 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023. Equal for an engine, crazy and unclear for a human player!) 36...♗xb6 37.♙e2 ♙d6 38.♙d2. Black has several ways to keep the balance: 38...♗c6 (38...h5 39.♖b2 h4 40.♙c2 ♗c6+ 41.♙b3 ♗c3+ ½-½ Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023) 39.g4 f5 40.♖a2 fxg4 41.fxg4 ♗c3 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023.

32.a5!



32...b3

The game seemed to be meandering to some sort of equal rook endgame, but suddenly the tempo picks up again. Objectively, there is nothing wrong with Tal's choice, but precision is required to nail the draw. A slight misstep, and Black is facing a difficult defence.

32...♗xa5 33.♗xb6 drops a pawn, so Black goes into a queen and rook ending instead. But in fact, the rook ending is a simple draw: 33...♖a2+ 34.♙g3 h5 (34...♗e2 forces Black to play a rook endgame a pawn down though the draw should be relatively easy for a player of Tal's strength:

35.♟xb4 (35.♞f4 ♞xg2 36.♟xb4 g5+ 37.♞f5 ♞g3 ½-½ Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 35...♟xe3 36.♟b5 ♞e2 37.♟xd5 ♞d2) 35.h4 (35.♟xb4 h4+ 36.♞xh4 ♞xg2 37.e4 dxe4 38.fxe4 ♞g7 39.d5 ♞f6 and Black draws comfortably with the white king so badly placed; 35.f4 ♟b2) 35...♞e2 36.♞f4 ♞xg2 37.♟xb4 f6 38.♟b5 ♞h2 39.♞g3 ♞e2 40.♞f4 ♞h2 etc.

33.axb6

33.♟c3 b2 34.♟b3 bxa5 35.♟xb2 a4 36.♟a2 a3 is also a draw.

33...b2 34.b7 b1=♞ 35.♟c8+ ♞g7 36.b8=♞ ♟a2+

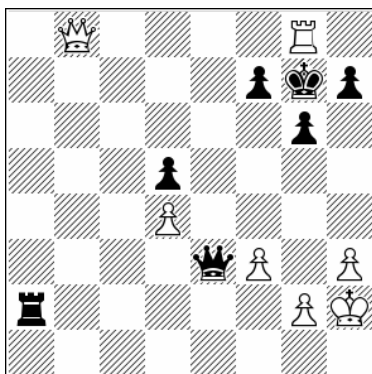
Now the rook ending is much worse than at move 32, because after 36...♟xb8 37.♟xb8 ♟a2+ 38.♞g3 h5 39.f4 Black has no pawn on b4 and White wins easily.

37.♞g3 ♟e1+ 38.♞h2

38.♞f4?? ♟xg2! and it is Black who wins, since the checks run out after 39.♟g8+ ♞h6 40.♟f8+ ♞h5.

38...♟xe3 39.♟g8+

The engines are so unimpressed with White's chances they even play 39.♟e5+, exchanging off queens, in a few games, but a human player would never do that.



39...♞f6?!

Barely an objective mistake – the evaluation remains very close to 0.00 – but Tal could have saved himself a lot of stress with 39...♞h6. The key line to see is 40.♟f8+ ♞h5 41.♟xf7 ♞xg2+!, forcing perpetual check: 42.♞xg2 ♟d2+ 43.♞g3 ♟g5+ 44.♞f2 ♟d2+ ½-½ Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022. On the other hand, without that stress, Tal would never have won the game!

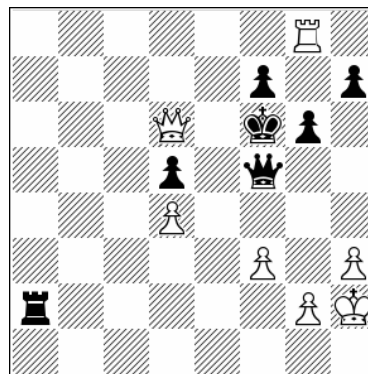
40.♟d6+

40.♞e8 ♟xd4 41.♞e2, threatening ♟h8+, is mentioned by Tal, but correctly analysed by him

as adequately answered by 41...♞d2! when 42.♟d6+ ♞g7 43.♞e8 g5 44.♟g8+ ♞xg8 45.♟d8+ ♞g7 46.♟xg5+ is one neat perpetual suggested by the engines.

40...♟e6 41.♟f4+ ♟f5 42.♟d6+

The engines suggest many alternatives, but for now, all paths lead to draws.



42...♟e6

42...♞g5 43.♟g3+ ♞h5 is an engine suggestion which looks dreadfully risky. However, if it works, it keeps the king away from constant checks by the white queen, which limits White's chances to use a series of forcing moves to create an advantage: 44.f4 (44.♞e8 ♞h6 45.♞e5 ♟d7 46.♟g5+ ♞g7. The black king is safe again, and losing the d-pawn doesn't matter for Black's drawing chances, ½-½ Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2023. 47.♟xd5 ♟c7+ 48.♟e5+ ♟xe5+ 49.dxe5 h5 is drawn) 44...♞h6 45.♟h4+ ♟h5 46.♟e7. This looks very squeezed for Black, but 46...♟f5 hits the f4-pawn, giving White no time to develop an attack against the black king, ½-½ Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022.

43.♟g3 ♟e3 44.h4

The one pawn move Spassky allows himself, giving the white king an escape square on h3, taking away g5 from the black king and saving up ♟g5+ ideas for the future.

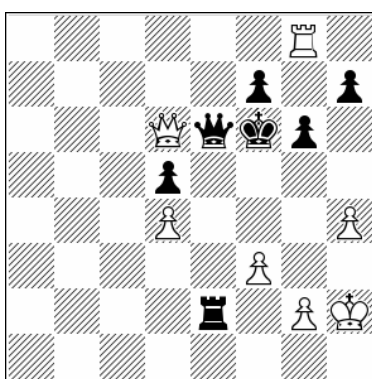
44...♟e2

Again, not an objective mistake, but maybe a slight error in conception. The black king is suddenly the more exposed and the dangers this leads to are illustrated by the fact that 44...♟a1? loses to 45.♟d6+ ♟e6 46.♟f4+ ♟f5 47.♟h6 and White has a winning attack. The threat is 47...-- 48.♟g7+ ♞e6 49.♞g3!, taking away the check on f4 and so threatening 50.♟f8 and a quick mate.

The engines prefer to use the rook to block checks from White's queen and keep the queen next to White's king to threaten perpetual checks: 44...♖a6 45.♚b8 h5 46.♚c7 ♜e6 47.♚d8+ ♜e7 48.♚xd5 (48.♚d6+ ♜e6 ½-½ Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2023) 48...♚f4+ 49.♔h3 ♚f5+ 50.♚xf5+ ½-½ Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2023. A human player would of course ask to see Black defend this, but in principle the draw should not be difficult for a player of Tal's strength.

Tal uses his queen to defend the checks, which is effective, but thereby lessens the danger against White's king.

45.♚d6+ ♜e6



46.♚f4+

The sealed move. It's a strange experience to play through this phase of the game with the benefit of engine analysis and to compare it with the drama described in contemporary reports. It can be hard to imagine for young players that Spassky analysed this endgame for hours during the adjournment and could be none the wiser as to whether it was objectively winning or drawn when he turned up for resumption! No engines, no certainty! However, it was certainly no fun either from the Black side. Alexander Koblenz – Tal's second – described it as 'the most gloomy analysis we had ever carried out'. 'The more we studied the position, the worse the problems that we saw.' Looking at Spassky's play, one suspects that he feared the position was perhaps objectively drawn and acted according to the general guideline that he would manoeuvre with his pieces (queen, rook and king), hoping for a mistake from Black, but delay pawn moves (which might expose the white king and give Black chances for perpetual).

In fact, this approach worked brilliantly for him... until he needed a pawn move to seal the win!

46.♚d8+ ♜e7 47.♜e8 (47.♚xd5 ♜xg2+ 48.♔xg2 ♜e2+ is perpetual) 47...♚xd8 48.♜xd8 is again a drawn rook ending, e.g. 48...h5 49.♜xd5 ♜d2 50.♔g3 ♔e6 51.♜d8 ♔e7 52.♜d5 ♔e6.

46...♚f5

Tal gives 46...♔e7 47.h5 (47.♚g3 ♜e3 48.♜a8 h5 49.♚b8 ♔f6 50.♚d6+ ♜e6 51.♚f4+ was the engine's best line. One can appreciate how difficult and confusing Tal's task was. So many checks and White is able to switch flanks for a fresh angle of attack; a blunder is definitely always on the cards, ½-½ Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2023), gaining access to h4, as making it 'very hard for Black to defend', which is probably true in practice, even though the engine confidently asserts that 47...♚f5! (the only move) 48.♚h4+ f6 49.hxg6 hxg6 50.♚h7+ ♔d6 is a draw.

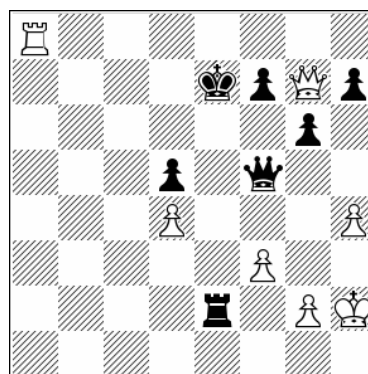
47.♚h6

A very nice move from Spassky. Now Black's king seems permanently ejected from the safety of the kingside pawn structure. White will check from g7 and may switch the rook to the queenside to check on the seventh rank.

47...♔e7

If 47...♚xf3, 48.♚g5+ is the slightly unexpected refutation, retracing the white queen's steps: 48...♔e6 49.♜e8+ ♔d6 50.♚d8+ ♔c6 51.♚c8+.

48.♚f8+ ♔f6 49.♚g7+ ♔e7 50.♜a8!

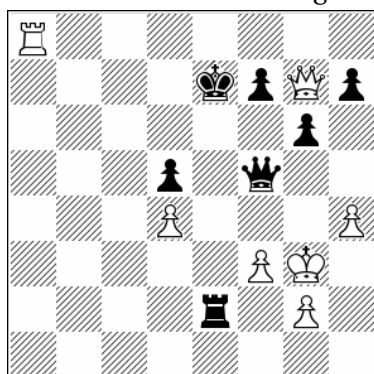


White also needs nerves of steel to move the queen away from the white king and leave it exposed to checks. However, Black's chances on that score are quite disappointing: 50...♚f4+ 51.♔h3 ♚f5+ 52.♔g3 and there are no more checks.

This switch of direction is the most testing.

50...♖d7?

Tal does not comment on this, but this natural move should have lost. Instead, 50...♖f4+ was the only move: 51.♔h3 ♖f5+ 52.♔g3

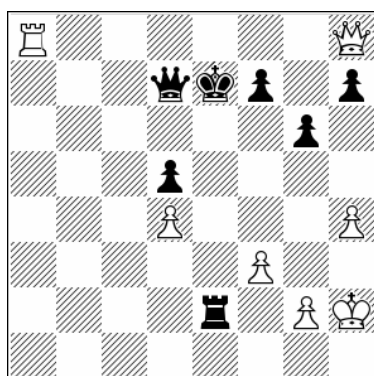


analysis diagram

and only now 52...♖d7 holds. It is very hard without the engine to appreciate the difference made by the position of the white king. 53.♖h8 ♖d6+ 54.♔h3 ♖e6+ 55.♔g3 ♖xg2+ secures a draw by perpetual, though you have to follow the white king across the whole board and be very precise: 56.♔xg2 ♖e2+ 57.♔g3 ♖e1+ 58.♔g4 ♖g1+ (58...h5+ 59.♔g5 ♖e3+ 60.f4 ♖g3+ 61.♔h6 is not the way to go) 59.♔f4 ♖c1+ 60.♔e5 ♖e3+ 61.♔xd5 ♖xf3+ 62.♔c4 ♖e2+ 63.♔b3 ♖d3+ and the white king cannot escape.

51.♖f8+?

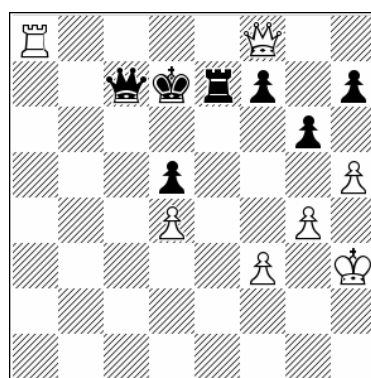
51.♖h8! (+9.4 according to Stockfish!) is the only winning move. Now:



analysis diagram

A) 51...♖e6. Now the rook is protected, the black queen is free to move to c7 and b6, looking to generate some counterplay against the white king. However, White can find a new safe spot for the king on the so-called 'Leela-castle' square: h3. 52.g4. Spassky could have played this move on many occasions to great effect, but it

seems the plan either escaped him during the adjournment, or – more likely, one suspects – he'd decided to fully milk the possibilities available to him by shuffling his pieces before trying this riskier plan. It was, however, here also the winning idea, though it is very difficult to see in this incarnation. White's idea is to play h5 and force Black to play ...gxh5, opening the sixth rank as a channel of attack against the black king: 52...♖c7+ 53.♔h3 ♔d7 (53...♖b6 54.♖f8+ ♔f6 55.g5+. f6 is no longer a safe square for the black king once White plays g4) 54.♖f8 ♖e7 55.h5.

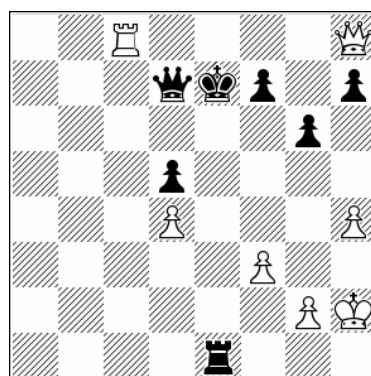


analysis diagram

h6 will follow if Black just waits, after which the h7-pawn becomes a critical weakness. 55...gxh5 56.gxh5 ♔e6 57.♖h6+ ♔d7 58.♖f6 ♖b7 59.♖a6 ♔e8 60.♔h4 (the king will invade via g5-h6-g7 if Black does nothing!) 60...♖e1 61.♖a8+ ♖xa8 62.♖h8+ ♔e7 63.♖xa8 1-0 (84) Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2023;

B) 51...♖d6+ 52.♔g1. The white king escapes and Black's king is in trouble again: 52...♖d7 53.♖b8. This is similar to what could have happened in the game;

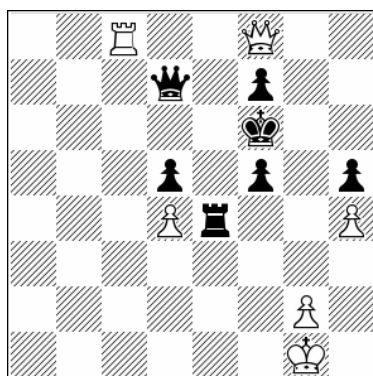
C) 51...♖e1 52.♖c8.



analysis diagram

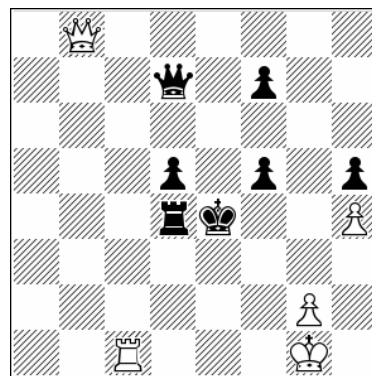
A major idea for White but far from obvious. The ♖c8 more or less immobilises Black's queen by taking away her access to c7. With the black queen paralysed, counterplay against white's king is less likely and White can start squeezing with the kingside pawns. For example, g2-g4-g5 would take away f6 from the black king and h4-h5-h6 would create a terrible weakness on h7.

C1) 52...h5 53.f4. Another win involving a pawn move on the kingside. The idea is similar to the line 51.♞h8 ♜e6 52.g4 followed by a later h4-h5. This time White will use the f-pawn to lure the g-pawn away from g6 and open full access to the sixth rank which will put the black king in (even) greater danger. The realisation is staggeringly complex, however, and I (Matthew) am not being modest when I say I would not be capable of winning this in a practical game. 53...♜e4 54.f5 gxf5 55.♞f8+ ♔f6 56.♞h8+ ♔e7 57.♞f8+ ♔f6 58.♔g1.



analysis diagram

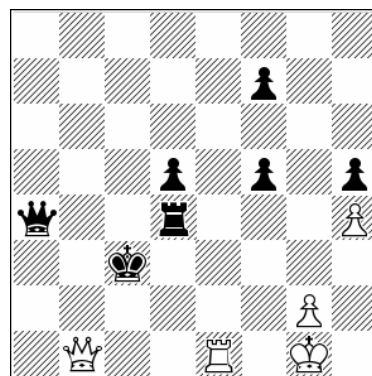
Just like that, a quiet move in the middle of a king hunt! White has to get the king off the b8-h2 diagonal to be able to encircle the black king. I (Matthew) confess, I can follow the (sub)variations only with great difficulty: at times it seems impossible that the black king is getting trapped but a +13 evaluation from the engine is a pretty good indication that it truly is! 58...♜xd4 59.♜c6+ ♔e5 60.♞b8+ ♔e4 61.♜c1.



analysis diagram

Now, ♜e1+ followed by ♞b3+ is a surprisingly calamitous threat. Black needs to give the king some air:

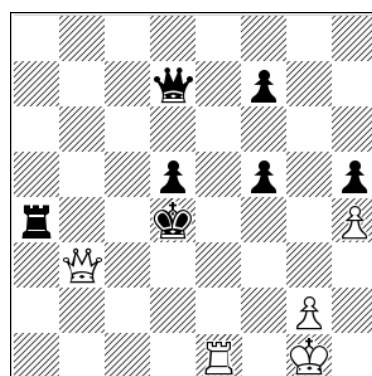
C11) 61...♞a4 62.♜e1+ ♔d3 63.♞b1+ ♔c3 and now a sequence that would take one several minutes to work out on a good day!



analysis diagram

64.♜c1+ ♔d2 65.♞b2+ ♔e3 66.♞f2+ ♔e4 67.♞e2+ ♔f4 68.♜f1+ ♔g3 69.♞f2+ ♔g4 70.♞xf5+ ♔xh4 71.g3+ ♔xg3 72.♜f3+ ♔h4 73.♜h3#;

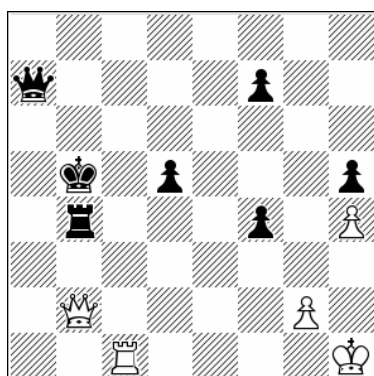
C12) 61...♜a4 62.♜e1+ ♔d4 63.♞b6+ ♔d3 64.♞b3+ ♔d4



analysis diagram

65.♞c2. The only winning move! What is White's threat? Amazingly, another quiet move: 66.♔h1 (avoiding any checks to force a queen exchange along the g1-a7 diagonal) followed by a king

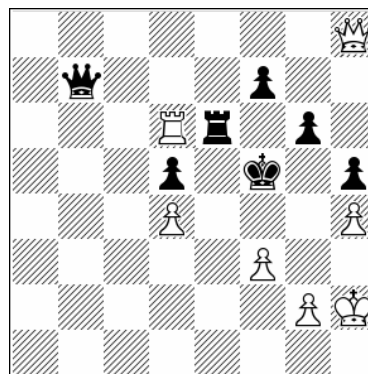
hunt! Simply astonishing. 65...♔a7 66.♕h1 f4 67.♖f2+ ♕c4 68.♞c1+ ♕b5 69.♗b2+ ♞b4



analysis diagram

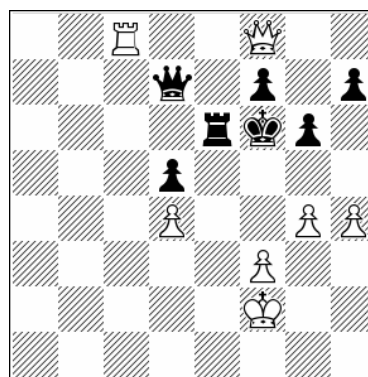
70.♗e5. Again, this quiet move is the only winning one. Black is getting imperceptibly squeezed: the black king has been pushed to the b-file, the white queen is hitting mainly painful squares from e5 and the white king is safe for now. However, Black has so many possible queen and rook moves, it's a human nightmare to calculate. 70...♗d4 71.♗e8+ (we're still in only move territory; this queen check is necessary to prevent the black king from escaping with ...♕b5-a4-b3) 71...♕b6 72.♗b8+ ♕a5 73.♗a8+ (the black king has been dragged back to a5 and now the check along the a-file is decisive) 73...♕b5 74.♗c6+ ♕a5 75.♞c5+ ♗xc5 76.♗xc5+. Simply awe-inspiring calculation from Stockfish and perhaps an example of beautiful play that would have remained a secret forever without engine assistance. I can't imagine any human players able to analyse to this accuracy even with months of time; 1-0 (96) Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2023;

C2) 52...♞e2 53.♕g1 ♞e3 (53...h5 54.♗f8+ ♕f6 55.♞d8 ♗b7 56.♞d6+ ♕f5 57.♗h8 (the black king has been winkled out, to lethal effect) 57...♞e1+ 58.♕h2 ♞e6



analysis diagram

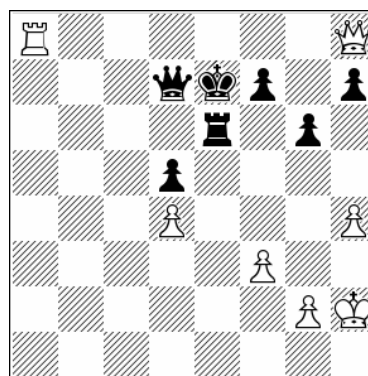
59.♕h3!! (stepping off the h2-b8 diagonal and thus threatening 60.♗g7. The immediate 59.♗g7?? ♗c7 wins for Black) 59...♗b5 60.♗g7 ♗b7 61.♞xd5+! ♗xd5 62.♗xf7+ being the main point) 54.♕f2 ♞e6 55.♗f8+ ♕f6 56.g4!



analysis diagram

and White has built a mating net. This line explains why the white king is worse on g3 than h2.

51...♕f6 52.♞a6+ ♞e6 53.♗h8+ ♕e7 54.♞a8



It's not as good as it was, but it's still very worrying.

54...♞e1?

Again a blunder.

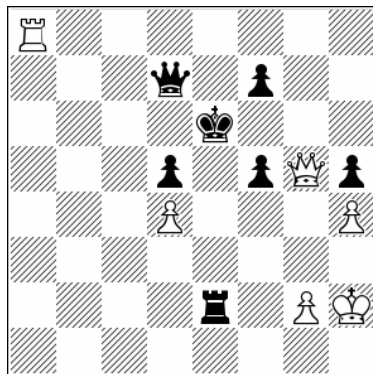
Now 54...h5! is a drawing move, a move later it's losing! In principle, it's a good idea for Black. It makes kingside expansion with g4 a little more

risky for White and also gives the black king a possible safe(ish) square on f5 (as we see in the game). 55.♖c8 (Karolyi claimed a difficult defence for Black after 55.g3. 55...♖c6 56.♜f8+ ♔f6 57.♜h8+ ♔e7 58.♜e5+ ♖e6 59.♜g5+ ♖f6 (½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023) 60.♖a6 ♜f5 61.♖xf6 ♜xf6 62.♜xd5 was Karolyi's idea but after 62...♜a6 the engines see no problem holding for Black. We'd all rather be White, of course!) 55...♜d6+ 56.♔h3 ♜d7 57.♜f8+ ♔f6 58.♜h8+ ♔e7 59.♔g3 ♜d6+ 60.♔f2 ♜b6 ½-½ Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2023. The queen on b6 is excellently-placed, covering c7 and d8 while attacking d4. Black is over the worst.

55.♔g3?

55.♖c8! transposes to the lines given at move 51 after 51.♜h8 ♖e1 52.♖c8!.

55.f4 ♖e2 (Karolyi's 55...h5 transposes after the squeezing 56.♖c8; White's idea is once again to open the sixth rank with f5) 56.♖c8 h5 57.f5 gxf5 58.♜f8+ ♔f6 59.♜h6+ ♔e7 60.♜g5+ ♔e6 61.♖a8.



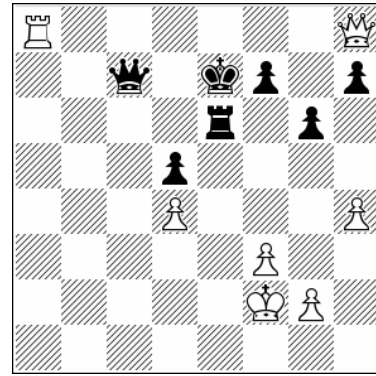
analysis diagram

Again this typical plan of clearing the sixth rank of black pawns as a prelude to a combined attack from both flanks. The concept is easy to grasp once you see it, the execution... isn't! 61...♜c6 62.♖a7 ♜d6+ 63.♔h3 ♜f8 64.g3 f4 65.gxf4 ♖e3+ 66.♔g2 ♔d6 67.f5. With a variety of terrible threats: ♜xe3, ♜f6+ and ♜f4+ 1-0 (88) Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2023.

55...h5?

A move Black has been wanting to play for ages, but it comes at a terribly bad moment!

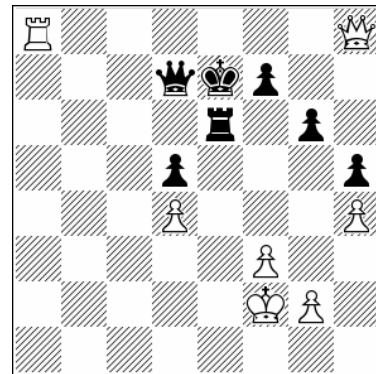
55...♜c7+ 56.♔f2 ♖e6! was the key idea.



analysis diagram

The queen defends the key b8- and d8-squares while stopping the white king from returning to safety on h3. Depending on where White moves the major pieces, Black might be able to counterattack against the white king. This was the drawing line, e.g. 57.♖e8+ ♔d7 58.♖xe6 ♔xe6 59.♜xh7 ♜c2+ 60.♔g3 ♜c7+ 61.♔h3 ♜f4 ½-½ Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2023.

56.♔f2 ♖e6

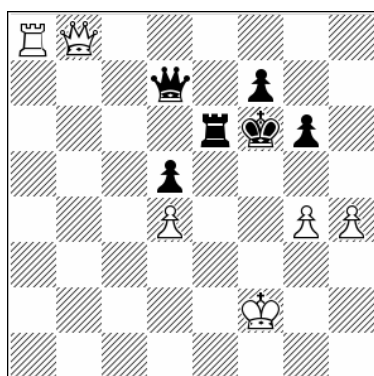


57.♖c8

A first misstep from Spassky that eventually leads to a tragic outcome. This is a thematic move in this position, creeping closer to the black queen and taking away the useful defensive square c7. However, there was a far better way of achieving this, and this was relatively the easiest chance Spassky got in the game to seal the win.

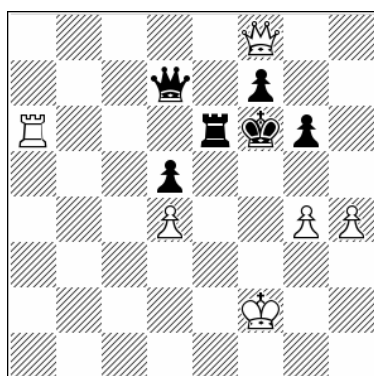
57.♜b8! switches the angle of attack and threatens ♖a7, winning the queen: 57...♔f6 (57...♜d6 58.♖a7+ ♔f6 59.♜h8+). Now, however, White needs to do something that Spassky had steadfastly avoided until now: 58.g4!. This move was found by D. Eschbach. It certainly doesn't surprise you that this is dangerous for Black, but the variations require a calm head to calculate

and that was far from easy given the tournament situation: 58...hxf4 59.fxf4



analysis diagram

59...Re4 (or 59...Wd6 60.Wh8+ Ke7 61.Re7+) 60.Wh8+ Ke7 61.Wf8+ Kf6 62.Re6+ Re6.



analysis diagram

Now there are two ideas, both with the idea of switching the angle of attack towards the black king. Neither is impossible for a strong player to see, but neither is easy:

A) 63.Re3 Re4 64.Rf3+ Ke6 65.g5 (threatening Rf6+) 65...We7 66.Wc8+ (the 'simple' 66.Rf6+ Ke7 67.Rxf7 only draws after 67...Re2+ 68.Kg3 Re3+ with perpetual) 66...Kd6 67.Wc5+ Kd7 68.Wxd5+ Ke8 69.Wxe4 Wxe4 70.Re3 with a winning king and pawn endgame, 1-0 (77) Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2023;

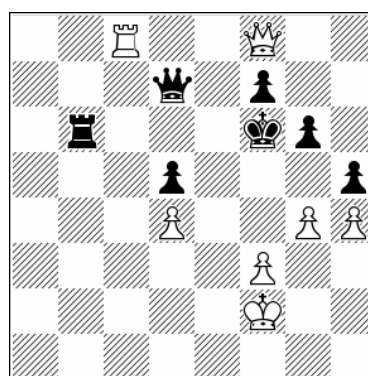
B) 63.g5+ Kf5 64.Wa3 is a dramatic queen retreat and this lethal switch of direction by the queen mates quickly: 64...Kc7 (64...Kg4 65.Wf3+ Kxh4 66.Wf4+ Kh5 67.Re1 and Rh1+ is terminal, 1-0 (100) Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2023) 65.Wh3+ Ke4 66.Rxe6+ fxe6 67.Wf3+ Kxd4 68.We3+ Kc4 69.Wc1+. Amazing! White picks up the queen and the game, 1-0 (73) Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2023.

57...Wd6

A) 57...Wd6?? 58.Re8+ Kd7 59.Rd8+;

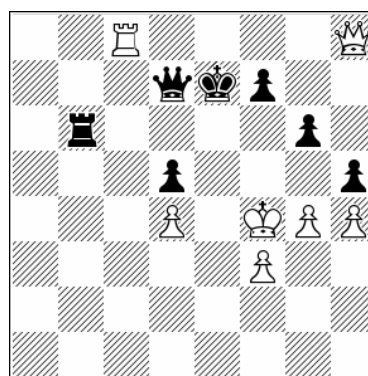
B) 57...Rc6? is refuted by the surprising 58.We5+ Re6 59.Wg5+ Rf6 60.Wc1 (another wonderful switchback, threatening Rc7 winning the queen) 60...Wd6 61.Rc7+ Kd8 62.Rb7 (the threat is Wa1) 62...Re6 63.Wd2 (threatening Wa5+) 63...Kc8 64.Rxf7. The first pawn goes and the black king is still in danger; 1-0 (90) Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2023;

C) The toughest defence was 57...Rb6! but even this loses after 58.Wf8+ Kf6 59.g4.



analysis diagram

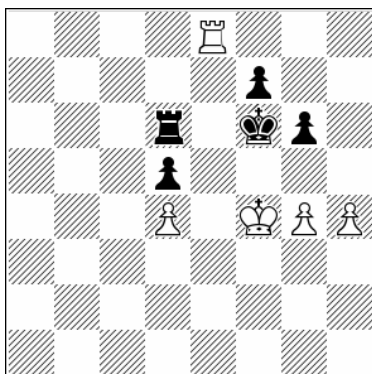
Once again, the win only comes when White advances the kingside pawns. 59...Rb2+ (59...hxf4 60.fxf4 Wxf4 61.Wh8+ Ke7 62.We8+ Kd6 63.We5+) 60.Kg3 Rb6 61.Wh8+ Ke7 62.Kf4!.



analysis diagram

I (Matthew) did a slight double-take when I saw this one! A remarkable king raid which threatens 63.Wf8+ Kf6 64.g5, when the white king controls the flight at f5.

C1) 62...hxf4 63.Wf8+ Kf6 64.fxf4 Wd6+ 65.Wxd6+ Rxd6 66.Re8.



analysis diagram

Astonishingly, this endgame is winning for White: 66...♔g7 (66...g5+ 67.hxg5+ ♔g7 68.♔f5 ♖a6 69.♖d8 ♖a1 70.♖xd5 1-0 (95) Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2023) 67.♔e5 ♖a6 (67...♖d7 68.g5 is *zugzwang*) 68.g5 ♖a1 69.♔xd5

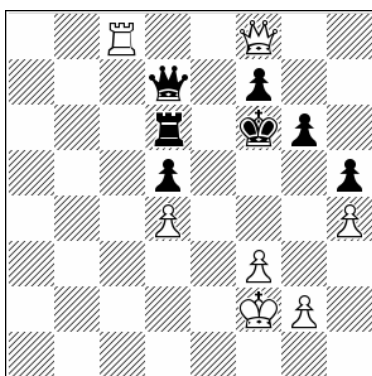
69...f5 70.♖c8 ♖e1 71.♖a8 ♖e2 72.♖a3 ♔f7 73.♔d6 ♖e4 74.d5 f4 75.♔d7 ♔g7 76.d6 ♖e3 77.♖a4 f3 78.♖f4 ♖d3 79.♖f6 ♖a3 80.♔d8 ♖c3 81.d7 ♖e3 82.♔c7 ♖c3+ 83.♔d6 ♖d3+ 84.♔e7 ♖e3+ 85.♖e6. Rook endgame technique always looks so easy for the engines... 1-0 (93) Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023;

C2) 62...♖d6+ 63.♔g5. The white king squeezes the escape squares of the black king! 63...♖d7 64.♖f8+ ♔e6 65.♖e8+ 1-0 (71) Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023.

58.♖f8+

58.g4 immediately transposes to 59.g4 below after 58...hxg4 59.♖f8+.

58...♔f6



59.♖e8?

This throws the win away and Spassky will never get another chance. Once again, the thrust 59.g4!, advocated by Kasparov, was required, but the black pieces are a little freer so the calculation feels a little fraught. But in fact it's less

complicated this time, as long as you spot the key move: 59...hxg4 60.fxg4 ♖a6 61.♖c3 (once again, a switchback wins the game; ♖f3+ is an unstoppable threat) 61...♖xg4 62.♖f3+ ♖xf3+ 63.♔xf3 1-0 (106) Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2023.

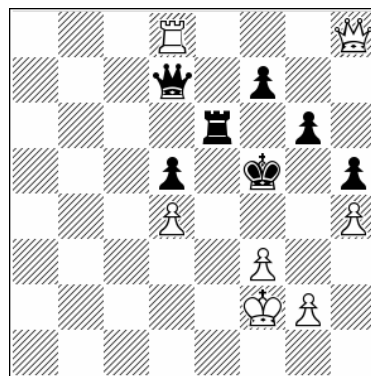
59...♖e6 60.♖h8+ ♔f5 61.♖h6 ♔f6

Both captures on e8 allow mate.

62.♖h8+

Kasparov's move 62.♖g8 was the best way to keep Black's position under pressure, but the tricky engine always escapes: 62...♔e7 63.♖f8+ ♔f6 64.♖g7+ ♔e7 65.♖f8+ ♔f6 66.♖g7+ ♔e7 67.♖f8 ♖f6 68.♖b8 ♖e6 69.♖f8 ♖f6 70.♖a8 ♖e6 71.♖h6 ♖c7 72.♖g5+ ♖f6 73.♖xd5 ♖c2+ 74.♔g3 ♖c7+ 75.♔f2 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023.

62...♔f5 63.♖d8



It was time now to take a deep breath and tie off the draw, for example by repeating moves. Tragically for Spassky, he keeps on probing in the same patient way but his pieces – particularly his queen – have imperceptibly moved slightly offside. In particular, the black king is currently safe from checks.

63...♖c6!

63...♖b5 was also sufficient to hold: 64.♔g3 ♖a5.

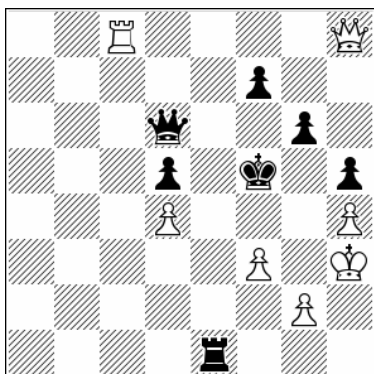
64.♖c8 ♖a6 65.♔g3 ♖d6+

White suddenly has to be very careful.

66.♔h3

66.♔f2? loses to 66...♖b4! 67.♔g3 ♖e1+ 68.♔h3 ♖h1+ 69.♔g3 ♖e2. No checks against the black king!

66...♖e1



67.g3??

Now it's just lost. Spassky still had a saving resource, but it was probably impossible for him to play the move he's avoided several times when it was winning! It should also be said that the resulting queen endgame a pawn down is not as obviously drawn for humans as it is for the engines!

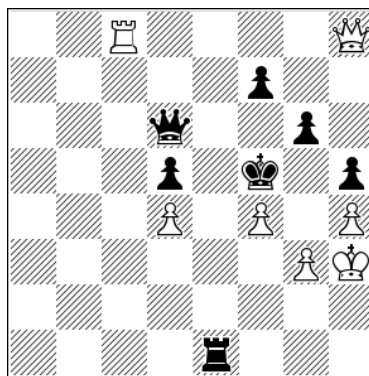
The correct move is 67.g4+, which Tal rejected in his annotations, on account of 67...hxc4+ 68.fxc4+ ♖f4 (68...♗e4 69.♖e8+ ♖e6 70.♖xe6+ fxe6 71.♖g8 ♗xd4 72.♖xg6 looks sharp, but is equal according to the engines, ½-½ Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2023) 69.♖h6+ ♗xf3 70.♖c3+ ♗e4 71.♗g3 ♖f1 0-1 (83) Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2023. 72.♖d2 ♖g1+, winning.

life on holding a draw in a blitz finish, but it's clear White has a lot of play with the passed h-pawn: 78.♖f4 ♖d1+ 79.♗g5 ♖g1+ 80.♗h4 ♖h1+ 81.♗g3 ♖g1+ 82.♗h3 ♖h1+ 83.♗g3 ♖g1+ ½-½ Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023.

67...♖g1

More convincing is 67...♖a6! but Tal's move keeps everything under control very nicely. 68.g4+ ♗f4! (but not 68...hxc4+ 69.fxc4+ ♗f4 70.♖h6+ ♗f3 71.♖c3+ ♗e4 72.♗g3! ♖f1 73.♖d2 and White holds by the skin of his teeth) 69.♖h6+ ♗xf3 70.♖c3+ ♗e4 71.♗g3 ♖f1 0-1 (83) Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2023. 72.♖d2 ♖g1+, winning.

68.f4 ♖e1



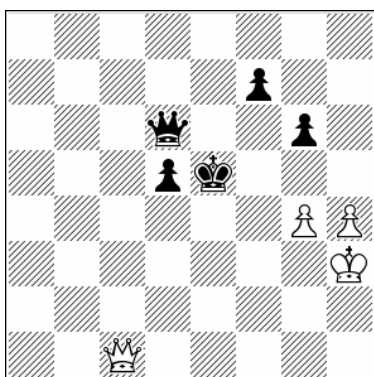
A really strong manoeuvre. Forcing f4 has removed any danger against the black king and Black intends ...♖e6 followed by ...♗e4 with discovered check.

69.♖c2?

69.♖e8 was the last chance to fight on, although 69...♖xe8 70.♖xe8 ♖e6 should still win for Black. The realisation is not exactly obvious but Black's king is essentially too active and White's king is too open.

71.♖f8 ♗f6+ 72.♗h2 ♖e2+ 73.♗h3 ♖e7 74.♖h8+ ♗f5 75.♖c8+ ♗e4 76.♖c3 ♖d7+ 77.♗g2 ♖b5 78.♖e1+ ♗xd4 79.♖f2+ ♗c3 80.♖e1+ ♗b2 81.♖f2+ ♗a3 82.♖a7+ ♗b4 83.♖e7+ ♖c5 84.♖b7+ ♗c3 85.f5 d4 86.♖b1 ♖d5+ 87.♗h2 ♖b3 88.♖e1+ ♗b2 89.♖e5 ♖c3 90.♖b5+ ♗c1 91.♖e5 gxf5 92.♗g2 ♖c2+ 93.♗f3 ♖d2 94.♖f6 ♗d1 95.♖e5 f6 96.♖e6 ♖e3+ 97.♖xe3 dxe3 98.♗xe3 ♗e1 99.♗f3 ♗f1 100.♗e3 ♗g2 101.♗f4 ♗f2 0-1 (111) Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2023.

69...♖e6 70.♖f2

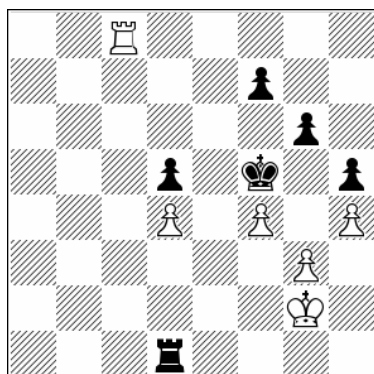


analysis diagram

Several engine games ended in draws in this position, which certainly isn't a given for the human player, as it is not easy to see a clear path to a perpetual. Actually there is not one, but it's not only about giving perpetual: White also needs to create a passed h-pawn to create counterplay.

73.h5 gxh5 74.gxh5 d4 75.♖g5+ ♗e6 76.h6 ♖a3+ 77.♗g4 ♖d3. One would not wish to stake one's

70.♖c8 ♖h1+ 71.♔g2 ♖xc8 72.♞xc8 ♞d1 is a very ugly rook ending for White.

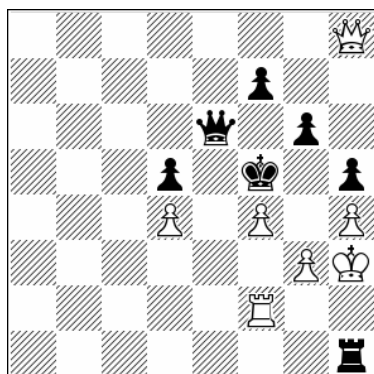


analysis diagram

Not only is Black winning a pawn, but his king is powering into the white position too.

73.♔f2 ♔g4 74.♞c7 ♞d2+ 75.♔e3 ♞g2 76.♞xf7 ♞xg3+ 77.♔e2 ♔xh4 78.♞d7 ♔g4 79.♞xd5 ♔xf4 80.♞d8 g5 81.d5 h4 82.d6 ♔e5 83.♔f2 ♔e6 84.♔f1 h3 85.♔f2 ♞g2+ 86.♔e3 g4 87.♔e4 h2 0-1 (95) Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2023.

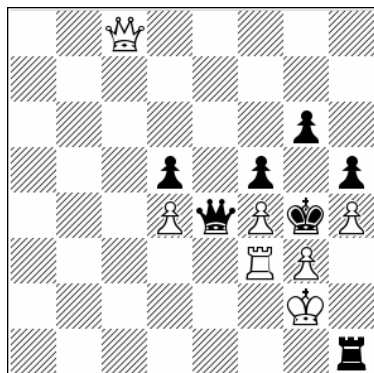
70...♞h1+



71.♔g2

71.♞h2 ♔e4+ 72.♔g2 ♞xh2+ 73.♔xh2 ♔f3 74.♞e5 ♞c6 and mate cannot be stopped 0-1 (78) Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2023.

71...♞e4+ 72.♞f3 ♔g4 73.♞c8+ f5 0-1



74.♞c3 ♞f1! is the final neat blow (74...♞h3 and ...♞xg3+ will also finish the game, 0-1 (80) Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2023). A tragedy for Spassky but an amazing display of character from Tal.

Game 21 – King’s Indian Defence

Mikhail Botvinnik

Mikhail Tal

Moscow Wch m 1960

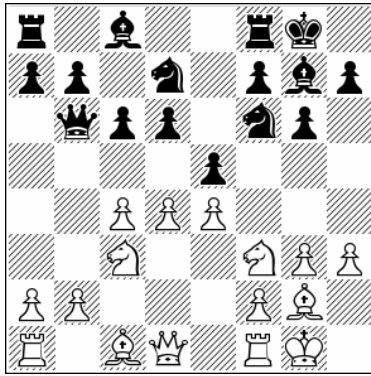
This was the sixth game of the first World Championship match between Botvinnik and Tal, and was in many ways a turning point. Tal’s meteoric rise through the ranks, including his victories in the Interzonal and Candidates tournaments, had astonished many people, especially with the manner in which he played, with his speculative sacrifices and attacks. But many sober voices remained convinced that such ‘wild’ methods could not succeed against the iron logic and imperturbable discipline of Botvinnik. At the start of this game, Tal led by a point, but had not yet done anything particularly outrageous. His 21st move in this game changed all that, and showed that his brazen sacrificial play could even succeed against Botvinnik.

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.g3

The g3 King’s Indian was probably the most solid choice that Botvinnik could think of – useful against the young Tal!

3...♙g7 4.♙g2 0-0 5.d4 d6 6.♘c3 ♘bd7 7.0-0 e5 8.e4 c6 9.h3 ♞b6

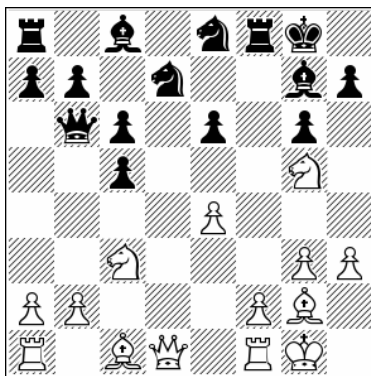
First played in the 1950s, this is still Black’s most popular move, although this classical system with ...♘bd7, ...e5 and ...c6 is less popular than it was. 9...♞b6 nudges White to release the central tension by adding pressure on d4 while preventing ♙e3 by attacking the b2-pawn. Any early queen move carries some risk, however, and 9...♞b6 gives White the opportunity to dramatically change the nature of the position.



10.d5

Botvinnik chooses the most solid option, blocking the centre and thus (hopefully) reducing Tal's opportunities for tactical play. It puts some onus on Black to find an active follow-up as White will gain a useful development tempo on the queen with ♕e3 once b2 is defended, for example after ♖e2.

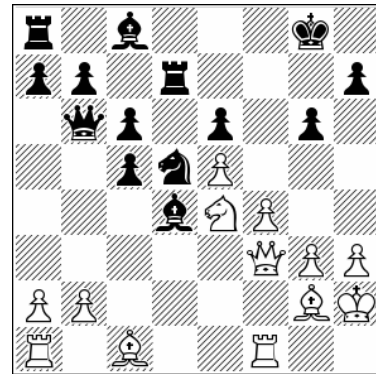
But the modern engines are very fond of the sharp 10.c5. This was known long ago, but not really taken very seriously until it was revived by Yusupov against Kasparov at Linares 1990. Black eventually won that game, but was in difficulties out of the opening. More recently, the line has undergone significant engine tests, most notably between Stockfish and Leela Zero, and Black has been suffering: 10...dxc5 11.dxe5 ♗e8 12.e6! (even stronger than Yusupov's 12.♗a4) 12...fxe6 13.♗g5.



analysis diagram

White's idea is to entomb Black's dark-squared bishop with f4 and e5. With a wrecked pawn structure, Black will be unable to challenge the e5-pawn with ...f6 while the c5-pawn blocks another possible diagonal for the bishop: 13...♗e5 14.f4 ♗f7 15.♗xf7 ♕d4+ (15...♖xf7 16.e5 kills the ♕g7 for the long term) 16.♖h2 ♖xf7 17.e5

(the dark-squared bishop has got in front of White's pawn structure, but it has left behind a lot of weak dark squares on Black's kingside) 17...♗d7 18.♖f3 ♗c7 19.♗e4 ♗d5.

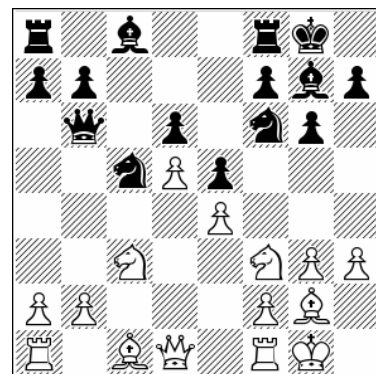


analysis diagram

Stockfish Classical chooses a plan of development similar to that chosen by Kasparov against Shirov (a somewhat uncomfortable draw for Garry). However, Leela simply absorbs the temporary black activity and then starts squeezing on the weak dark squares. It turns out that this is as good as it gets for Black.

20.♖b1 ♗h8 21.♗d2 ♖a6 22.a3 ♖a4 23.h4 b6 24.♗c3 ♗xc3 25.bxc3 (one of Black's active pieces is exchanged) 25...♗a6 26.♖f2 ♖g7 27.♗h3 ♗c8 28.♖bb2 c4 29.♖a2 b5 30.h5 ♖a5 31.h6 (tightening Leela's grip on the kingside dark squares) 31...♖e7 32.♖g4 ♖d8 33.♖g5 a5 34.♗d6, with a wonderful position for White, 1-0 (93) LCZero-Stockfish Classical, TCEC 2020.

10...cxd5 11.cxd5 ♗c5



12.♗e1

Botvinnik has clearly decided that this is to be a game where Tal's active intentions will be stifled, either by closing lines and diagonals (10.d5) or by exchanging active pieces (12.♗e1). I (Matthew) have an ingrained mistrust of any white plan

that involves spending several tempi to exchange the opponent's active pieces. My intuition is that if White's system is any good, you should be able to fight effectively against the opponent's active pieces, not meekly seek to exchange them. In principle, the engine agrees with me, but Botvinnik's idea also gains some appreciation.

In fact, if the engines didn't think there was a good concrete way to deal with 12.♖e1, it would be as highly-regarded as the top moves 12.♖e1 and 12.♔e2. One must admit then that Botvinnik's approach is justified; after all, reaching a slight advantage with fewer pieces on the board is a pretty worthwhile goal to strive for against Tal!

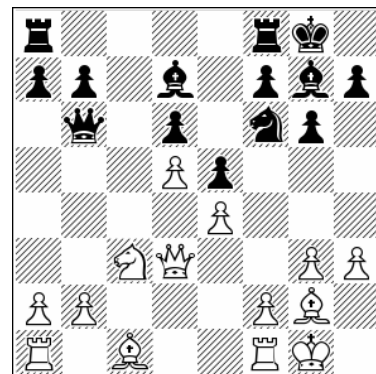
12.♖e1 ♕d7 13.♙f1 still appeals much more, fighting for control of queenside squares and looking to turn the black queen on b6 and knight on c5 into targets. One idea for White is ♖f3-d2-c4, hitting the queen on b6 and the d6 pawn. However, the engines found enough play for Black to keep any disadvantage manageable. The typical move 13...a5 gives White a resource as the queen loses a useful escape square on the queenside: 14.♙e3. White intends ♖b1, ♖f3-d2-c4, etc. The old game Keene-Penrose, England 1970, remains a textbook example of how to handle the white position in such structures: 14...♖fc8 (14...♗xb2 is too greedy and doesn't even win a pawn! 15.♙xc5 dxc5 16.♖e3 ♗b6 17.♖xe5 ♖ae8 18.♖f3 c4 19.e5 1-0 (61) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023) 15.♖b1 ♗d8 16.♖d2 a4 17.♗f3 ♖e8 18.♖bc1 ♙f6 (looking for ...♙g5 to exchange off the dark-squared bishops) 19.h4 ♙e7 20.♙e2 ♖f6 21.♙g5 h5 22.♙b5 ♖e8 23.♙xe7 ♗xe7 24.♗e2 ♙xb5 25.♖xb5 ♗d7 26.♖c3 ♖cb8 27.♖ec1 b6. White looks a little better but the engines don't believe in White's chances: 28.♖g2 ♖g7 29.♖a1 ♖f6 30.f3 ♖e8 31.♖c2 ♖a5 32.♖c3 ♖a7 33.♖cc1 ½-½ Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023.

12...♗d7

12...♖fd7 is the engine approach, after which they find nothing better than hoping for a repetition with 13.♘f3 ♗f6.

13.♔f3 (13.♔d3 ♕xd3 14.♖xd3 f5. Black uses the time White has spent on exchanging the knight on c5 to start kingside operations. The engines quickly see the position as completely equal: 15.♙e3 ♕c5 16.♖d2 ♙d7 17.exf5 gxf5 18.♖h2 ♜ac8 19.♜ac1 a5 20.♙g1 ♖h8 21.f4 ♖d8 22.fxe5 ♙xe5 23.♕e2 ♖f6 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023) 13...a5 (the engines think that Black can exploit the extra tempi!) 14.♖c2 ♕b8 15.♙e3 ♙d7 16.♖e2 ♕ba6 17.♕d2 f5 18.exf5 gxf5 ½-½ (25) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

13.♘d3 ♘xd3 14.♔xd3



14...♖fc8?!

Tal described this as something of a feint, to convince Botvinnik that Black was playing exclusively on the queenside so that he would be shocked when Tal played on the kingside after all with ...f5 !

As Tal explains in his classic book on the match, Black would like to carry out the break ...f5. He rejected the direct 14...♘h5 because of 15.♙e3 ♖d8 16.♗e2

(16. ♖b5 is the engine preference, netting Black's light-squared bishop. Even without this normally important piece, Stockfish managed to drum up plenty of counterplay: 16... ♗xb5 17. ♖xb5 f5 18. ♖b3 f4 19. ♙d2 a5 20. ♖ac1 ♖f6 21. ♖c2 ♖d7 22. ♖xb7 ♖c5 23. ♖b5 f3 24. ♙h1 h5 25. ♖xc5 dxc5 26. ♖xc5 g5 27. ♖c6 ♙h7 ½-½ (38) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023).

Now 16...f5? is bad because of 17.exf5, but the engines continue 16...♖e8, defending the ♖h5 and again preparing ...f5 and ...gxf5: 17.♙f3 ♕xh3 18.♗fc1. The line continues 18...f5 19.♕h2 (19.exf5 ♖f6! is Black's idea: now 20.fxg6? ♗xg6 is assessed as a decisive advantage for Black, whose kingside pressure after moves such as ...h7-h5-

h4, etc. seems irresistible) 19...f4 20.♔xh3 fxe3 21.fxe3 ♖f6, which they assess as equal.

But the main silicon choice is 14...♗e8. No feints! The engines want to start counterplay with ...f5 at once.

15.a4 f5 16.♙e3 ♗d8 17.exf5 gxf5 18.♞a3 f4 19.♙d2 fxf3 20.♞xg3 ♖f6 21.♞h4 ♙f5 22.a5 ♞c8 23.♗e2 ♗d7 24.♗g3 ♙g6 25.♙e3 a6. White has some pleasant potential outposts for his pieces but Black's activity stops anything terrible happening, ½-½ (28) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

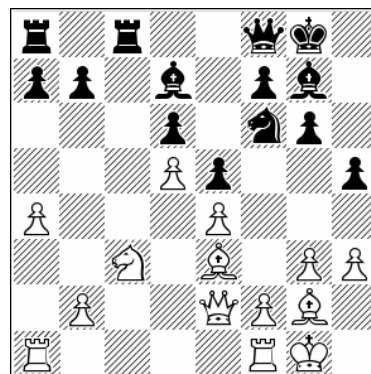
15.♞b1

This is a strange and somewhat inefficient way of defending the b2-pawn, as the white queen is likely to move back to e2 anyway (d3 is a slightly exposed square). It looks like a case of excessive caution, but one imagines that Botvinnik felt that ♞b1 gave him a better chance of stopping the black queen from hanging around on the queenside and causing confusion. In fact, we can guess that this safe move had a certain provocative effect on Tal. The fact that a black bishop on f5 will now attack the rook on b1 after ...f5, exf5 ...♙xf5 caused him to look immediately for risky kingside counterplay.

The engines like 15.a4 h5. Without the rook on f8, the engines don't seem keen on a quick ...f5 anymore. The engine-favourite march of the rook's pawn is thrown in to loosen up the white kingside structure at low cost before anything is attempted: 16.♞e2 ♗d8

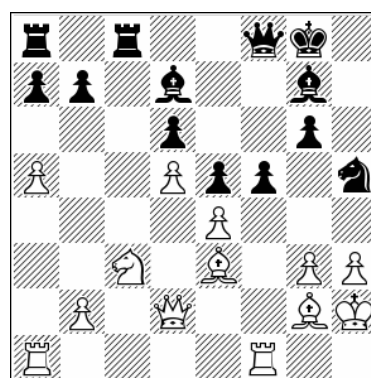
(16...♞b4 would be the move one would worry about most as White: how disruptive can the black queen become? However, the engines see no problem in neutralising and then driving away the black queen: 17.♙e3 ♖h7 18.♞a3 ♙f6 19.♞d1 ♞c4 20.h4 ♙d8 21.♞b3 ♖f6 22.f3 ♙a5 23.♞c1 ♞c7 24.♙f1 ♗d8 25.♗g2 with a pleasant white edge, ½-½ (39) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023)

17.♙e3 ♞f8.



analysis diagram

Black refines his eventual plan of kingside counterplay with ...f5 by looking for additional positional achievements. 17...♞f8 looks to exchange dark-squared bishops with ...♙h6: 18.♞d2 (18.f4 appealed to me (Matthew). I like the positions that result even if the engines think that Black is fine: 18...exf4 19.gxf4 h4 20.♞f2 ♞e7 21.e5 (21.♞xh4 ♖xd5) 21...♖h5 22.♗e4 dxe5 23.fxe5 ♙xe5 24.d6 ♞e8 25.♙g5 ♙f5 26.♞ad1 ♗g3 with a complex struggle ahead ½-½ (30) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023) 18...h4 (...♙h6 has been prevented so Black looks to weaken White's hold on the kingside dark squares) 19.a5 (19.g4 ♖h7 20.♖h1 ♞e7 (looking for ...♙g7-f6-g5) 21.g5 f6 22.gxf6 ♙xf6 23.♗e2 ♞f8 24.♞g1 ♖g5. The white kingside is a little sensitive too: ½-½ (31) Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023) 19...hxc3 20.fxc3 ♖h5 21.♖h2 f5.

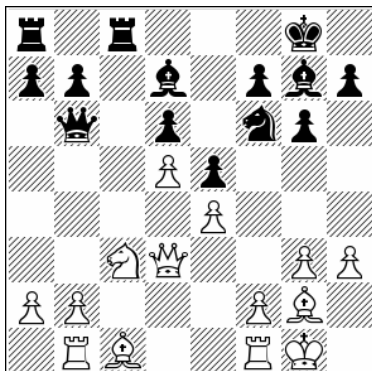


analysis diagram

This looks really risky with the rook on f1 and queen on f8 opposing each other, but the loosening of White's kingside gives Black additional ways of holding his kingside together tactically.

22.exf5 gxf5 23.♙e4 f4 24.gxf4 exf4 25.♙d4 ♙xd4 26.♞xd4 ♞g7 27.♞xg7+ ♖xg7 28.♞g1+ ♖g3 29.♞af1

♖h8 30.♙xf4 ♖xh3+ 31.♔g2 ♖g8 32.♔f2 ♔h8 (this looks terribly risky but Black is safe!) 33.♖g2 ♜xe4+ 34.♖xe4 ♖h7 35.♖xg8+ ♔xg8 36.♖b4 ♕f5 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.



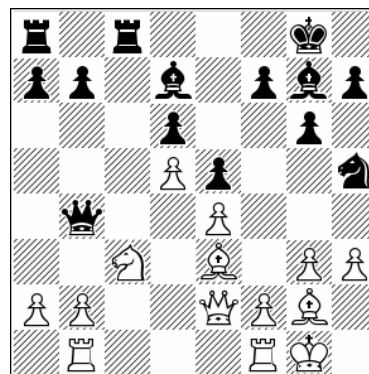
15...♜h5

15...a6 16.♙f3 h5 was the engine approach, looking to make little space gains on both the queenside and the kingside. The engine recommendations are very interesting and instructive. When the pieces are placed properly (the black king's rook still on f8) then the engines aim for quick counterplay with ...f5. When the pieces are improperly placed, they find restrained ways to create additional gains (for example with a march of the rook's pawn) to keep the position in balance.

17.♕e3 ♖a5 18.♖fc1 ♜h7 19.♕d2 ♕f6 (looking for either ...♕g5 or ...h4) 20.h4 b5 21.♕f1 ♕d8. The bishop will be activated along the a7-g1 diagonal. This manoeuvre is very common in the Old Indian where the black bishop is developed to e7 in the opening, and even in the Ruy Lopez. It's also very effective here: 22.♔g2 ♖b6 23.♜d1 ♜f6 24.♕d3 ♖xc1 25.♖xc1 ♖b7 26.♙e2 ♕b6 27.♖a1 ♔g7 28.f3 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

16.♕e3 ♖b4 17.♙e2

The queen drops back to e2, eyeing the knight on h5 in case Tal wants to break on the kingside with ...f5 (hint: he does!).



17...♖c4?

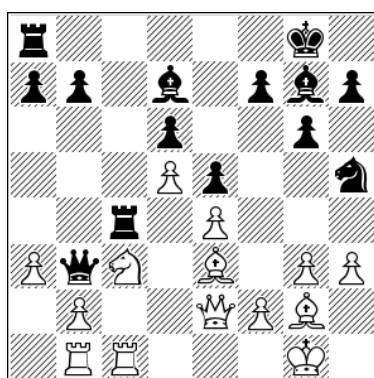
This looks fairly normal to human eyes: Black is intending to double rooks on the c-file. However, effective wing attacks against a solid target are normally realised by a combination of pawns and pieces: the pawns drive pieces away or create holes in the structure and then a combination of major pieces and minor pieces drives in behind. It isn't immediately obvious, but the queen on b4 and rook on c4 are hanging in the air somewhat. It didn't matter when the queen was on b4: she had a choice of squares to run to if it was attacked. However, in the new situation, not only does the rook on c4 take away an escape square from the black queen, the need to defend the rook also stops the black queen from escaping out of danger.

17...a6 starts to involve Black's queenside pawns in his queenside pressure: 18.♔h2 b5 (establishing a foothold on the queenside) 19.a3 ♖c4 20.♙d1 ♖c7 (the queen is safe!) 21.♜a2 a5 22.♖c1 ♙d8 23.♙e2 ♜f6 24.♖xc8 ♖xc8 25.♖c1 ♖b7 26.♙e1 ♜e8 27.♕d2 ♖b6 28.♙e2 h5 29.♖c2. White has a slight edge but Black's defences are harmoniously-placed, ½-½ (75) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

Instead, 17...f5 seemed natural, especially as – like in the game – Black wins a tempo against the rook on b1 after exf5 ...♕xf5. 18.exf5 ♕xf5 19.♖bc1. The tempo has been won... but now Black has the serious threat of g4 to deal with: 19...♜f6 20.♜b5 ♜e8 21.♜xa7 ♖cb8 22.a3 ♖a5 23.♜b5 ♕d7 24.♜c3 and White had won a clear pawn, 1-0 (78) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023.

18.♖fc1

It's quite ironic that the little move 18.a3 could have helped Botvinnik so many times to a decisive advantage, but he avoided it every time. One suspects that this arises from his determination – seen in the opening phase – to avoid giving Tal any entry point into his position and to restrict the activity of Tal's pieces. However, a3 continually disrupts the coordination of Black's major pieces: it emerges that on b3, the queen can't do any more damage than on b4; in fact, the queen is dragged away from connecting with key squares and becomes much more vulnerable to attack: 18...♞b3 19.♞fc1.



analysis diagram

White's idea is to play the light-squared bishop to d1 via f3 after which... the black queen is trapped. The engines think that Black needs to perform a quick about-turn to stand any chance of surviving: 19...♞cc8 20.♞f3 ♞f6

(20...f5 is all too late: 21.exf5 ♞xf5 22.♞e4 ♞f8 (22...♞f6 23.♞xf5 gxf5 24.♞f3 wins the f-pawn as Black's queen is too far away to defend it: 24...f4 25.gxf4 exf4 26.♞xf4 ♞c7 27.♞h1 ♞f7 28.♞g1 ♞af8 29.♞e3 ♞e8 30.♞e2 ♞h8 31.♞g4 a5 32.♞bg1 1-0 (65) Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023) 23.♞xf5 ♞xf5 24.♞b5 gives Black a horrible King's Indian ending to defend: 24...♞xb5 25.♞xb5 ♞f7 26.♞xa7 ♞f6 27.♞d1 h5 28.♞b5 1-0 (66) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023)

21.g4 ♞f8

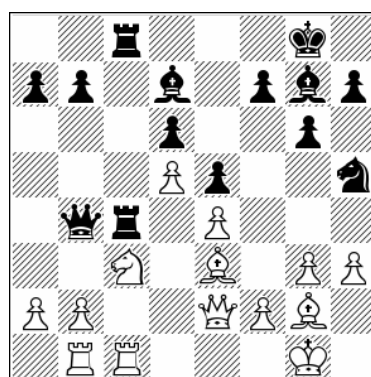
(21...♞c4 22.♞xc4 ♞xc4 23.♞e2 ♞cc8 24.a4 h6 25.f3 ♞f8 26.a5 a6 27.b3 ♞c7 28.♞a4 ♞ac8 29.♞b6 ♞xc1+ 30.♞xc1 ♞xc1+ 31.♞xc1 g5 32.♞a3 ♞h7 33.♞d3 gives White a significant advantage: d6 is weak, Black has no counterplay and White can engineer a breakthrough on the queenside with

b3-b4-b5, 1-0 (110) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022)

22.♞g2 ♞e7 23.♞d2 ♞d8 24.♞d1 ♞c4 25.♞e2 ♞b3 26.f3 ♞e8 27.♞d1 ♞c4 28.♞f2 ♞c7 29.♞e2. Once again, Black is driven back and has nothing to show for all the moves he has made with his queen and rook. White is in control on both sides of the board, 1-0 (86) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

18...♞ac8

The engines think the humiliating retreat with 18...♞cc8 was best, but no human player would do this, of course! Tal keeps on pumping up the pressure, but it gives Botvinnik a huge chance.

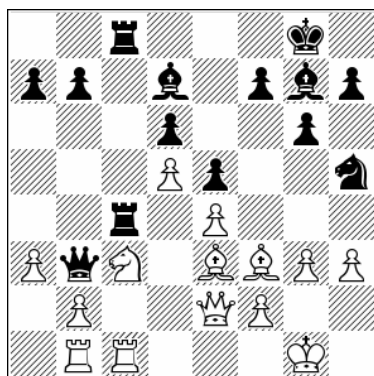


19.♞h2

Sensible, removing the king from the back rank and protecting h3 and g3, but completely missing the dynamics of the position. Having analysed a game between Botvinnik and Bronstein elsewhere in this book (see Game 16), one is struck by some similarities in the approach that Botvinnik took as White against his dangerous and creative foes. It seems that he had programmed himself in both cases to set up an unbreakable structure against which the waves of his opponents' creativity and attacking talent would exhaust themselves. Against Bronstein, he got himself completely confused: Botvinnik's 11.f3 in that game was, one suspects, intended as a prophylactic measure against a future ...e4 by Bronstein, which could be met by f4. However, it created severe weaknesses in his own position, which landed him in a horrible position. Against Tal, he did much better. We have been unenthusiastic about a number of Botvinnik's moves in this game – most notably 12.♞e1, 15.♞b1 and 19.♞h2 – but he got into a very

strong position with them. One could almost claim that Botvinnik played a little like Petrosian with these exaggeratedly cautious moves! However, we would also argue that Botvinnik had programmed himself too thoroughly in a reactive mode. His plan was to let Tal launch his ‘unfounded’ attack and watch it fail miserably. In fact, by the time Tal’s storm hit him, it had gathered so much pace that it was extremely difficult to deal with, whatever the objective merits. Looking at the position with the engine, it is clear that Tal was at his most vulnerable not during the execution phase of his counterplay, but during the build-up play. If Botvinnik had noticed a3 on either move 18 or 19, then Tal would most likely have been forced back in disarray and we would have been praising Botvinnik’s skill in manoeuvring, against which a wild attacker was no match. Instead...

19.a3 ♖b3 (19...♖a5 20.♙f1 followed by ♖e1 or ♖d2, and Black will most likely have to give up the exchange) 20.♙f3 was very strong, intending ♖d2 and ♙d1, winning the black queen.



analysis diagram

A) 20...♖f8 21.♙xa7 (always this move, it seems – see later in the game!) 21...f5 (looks like a Tal-like way to play, but the black queen simply cannot escape its cage) 22.♖e3 f4 23.♖d3 fxf3 24.♙d1 (winning the queen) 24...gxf2+ 25.♙xf2 ♘f4 26.♖f1 ♖xc3 27.♖xc3 ♖b5 28.♖xb5 ♙xb5 29.♙h4 1-0 (75) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022;

B) 20...f5 21.♖d2 (threatening ♙d1) 21...♖4c7 22.♙d1 ♖c4 23.♙e2 ♖b3 24.♙xa7 ♘f6 25.♙d1 ♖c4 26.♙b6 wins: 1-0 (69) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023;

C) 20...♙xh3 21.♙xh5 gxh5 22.♖xh5 ♙d7 23.♘g2 followed by ♖h1 and it’s curtains for Black on the kingside!;

D) 20...b5 21.♖e1 ♖4c7 22.♙d1 ♖c4 23.b3 ♖d3 24.♙e2 traps the queen. 1-0 (27) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023;

E) 20...♖4c7 21.♙h2. Having pushed back the black rook, Stockfish goes back into the Botvinnik mode of protecting everything against attack! 21...♘f6 22.♖d2 h5 23.♙d1 ♖c4 24.♙e2 ♖b3 25.♙d1 ♖c4 26.♙e2 ♖b3 27.f3 (e4 is completely protected and Black’s queen is still very short of squares while the a7-pawn is a worry too) 27...a5 28.♙d1 ♖c4 29.♙e2 ♖b3 30.♘g2 ♘e8 31.♙d1 ♖c4 32.♙b6 ♘h7 33.♙e2 ♖b3 34.♙xc7 ♖xc7 1-0 (65) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022. 19.♙f1 is another possibility. Tal mentions this and says that ‘of course, Black’s reply would be 19...f5’, but the engine gives White a decisive advantage after 20.exf5 ♙xf5 21.a3 ♖b3 22.♖a1. Now the threat of 23.g4 forces Black to retreat: 22...♘f6 23.g4 ♙d7 and now 24.♖d1 ♖xd1 25.♖xd1 ♖4c7 26.♙xa7 simply nets a pawn for nothing. One suspects that Tal would not have acquiesced in such a scenario and would again have put his knight on f4 somewhere along the way, but objectively White is much better.

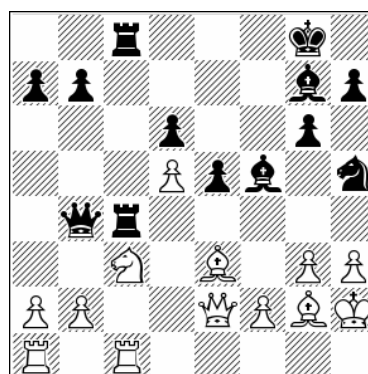
19...f5

Tal rolls the dice! In all fairness, it’s now or never and the engines want it too. We have seen how fragile Black’s queenside set-up is: Black will be pushed back if his activity doesn’t lead anywhere soon.

20.exf5 ♙xf5

Hitting the rook on b1.

21.♖a1

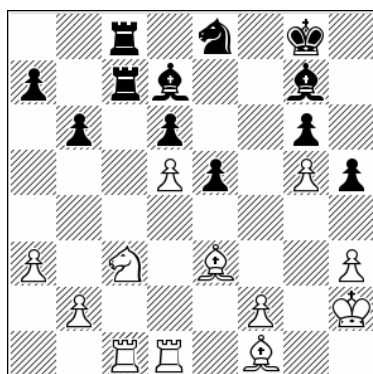


I (Matthew) freely confess that when I first saw this game many years ago, and even much later after that, I was so impressed by White having to waste a tempo with Bb1-a1 that I automatically believed in Black's position. If you're increasing your activity while gaining tempi, how can your position be bad? But Black's essential dilemma is that his activity is not particularly well-focused. His queen and two rooks are pummeling a knight defended securely by a pawn on b2; his light-squared bishop attacked a rook but it simply moved away and now it has no target left, while it is threatened with g4.

21...♘f4!?

Tal's comment on this move was actually spot on, in that he said that arguments over whether the move itself is sound or not are beside the point – all other moves are bad and if this doesn't work, then it is Black's 17th move that deserves the question mark. That is precisely the view of the engines. Admittedly, none of them want this move, preferring 21...♘f6. However, after that move, most of the engine games end in white wins and it would have been precisely the game Botvinnik was aiming for. Tal's choice unleashes a storm that Botvinnik had thought he could avoid.

21...♘f6 22.g4 ♕d7 23.♖d2 h5 24.g5 ♘e8 25.a3 ♗b3 26.♙f1 ♜4c7 27.♗d1 (forcing the exchange of queens) 27...♗xd1 28.♞xd1 b6 29.♞ac1.



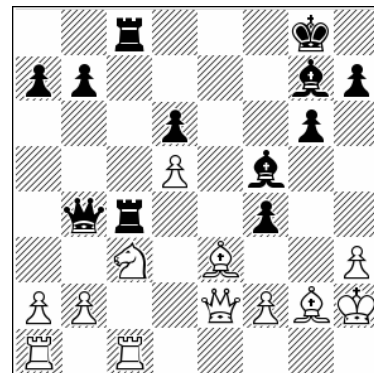
analysis diagram

It doesn't look so bad for Black, but this is as good as it gets for him! White has lots of weak points to attack and plenty of time.

29...♙f7 30.♙a6 ♞a8 31.b4 ♙f5 32.♘b5 ♞e7 33.a4 ♙f8 34.a5 e4 35.♙g2 ♙d7 36.♞c4 ♙b2 37.♞d2 ♙e5

38.♞xe4 ♙f5 39.♞c4 ♞f7 40.f3 bxa5 41.f4 ♙g7 42.bxa5 was uninterrupted horror for Black, 1-0 (80) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

22.gxf4 exf4



23.♙d2?

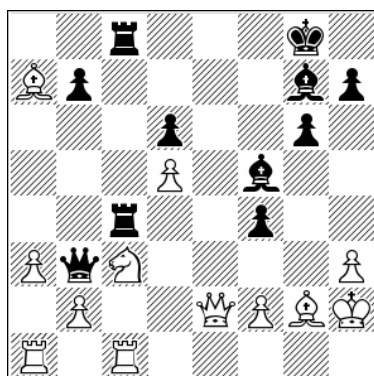
Many human analysts have broken their heads over this position and the results have been frankly very impressive.

23.♙xa7? is met by a single-move tactic that is, however, deceptively difficult to spot: 23...♗a5 and Black regains the piece.

24.♙f1 ♙e5 25.♙g1 ♞4c7 26.♞e1 ♙xc3 27.bxc3 ♗xa7 led to a fine position for Black: 28.♗f3 ♞f8 29.♗xf4 ♙xh3 30.♗e3 ♗xe3 31.♞xe3 ♙f5 32.a4 ♙g7 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

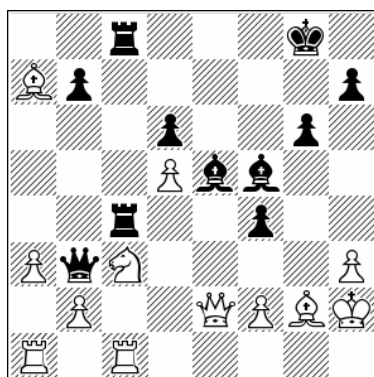
Grisha Goldberg, Botvinnik's second for the match, said White could have won with simply 23.a3, disrupting the connection between Black's queen and the rest of the position. However, it's not really surprising that Botvinnik didn't play it: he had passed it by several times earlier in the game and one suspects by now it was clearly ruled out in his thoughts as too weakening.

Why is 23.a3 necessary? Once you get past the visual impression of total chaos, it starts off with fairly basic tactics. It forces a concession from the black queen. 23...♗a5 no longer attacks the b2-pawn so White can retreat the bishop to d2 without worry. 23...♗b3 loses contact with a5 so after 24.♙xa7,



Black no longer has an easy way to trap the bishop on a7. That isn't the end of the story, of course. Black can try and trap the bishop with 24...b6 and White will have to show a lot of ingenuity to extract the bishop and stay material ahead. But equally, Black will have to show a lot of ingenuity too: it's no longer a case of re-establishing material parity with one move. There follows 25.a4, with variations similar to those below. One important point is that although Black seems to have gained a tempo by saving on ...♙e5, this means that d6 is hanging after 25...♖8c7 26.♙b8 ♖b7 27.♙xd6.

After 23...♖b3 24.♙xa7, Tal, who describes 21...♗f4 as ‘a purely positional sacrifice’, says he intended (instead of 24...b6) to continue 24...♙e5

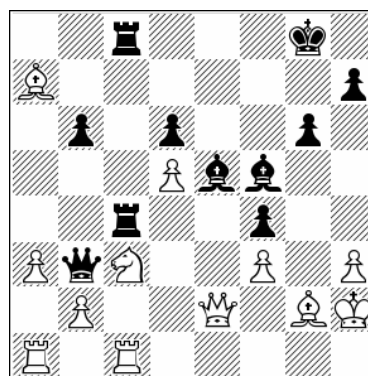


with the large threat of 25...f3+. He then analyses three defences for White:

A) Tal describes as the most interesting continuation 25.♗f3? which was the basis of Goldberg's criticism of Black's play. All analysts, Tal included, now considered only 25...b6, but the engine points out that simply 25...♖a8 traps the bishop and Black is clearly better;

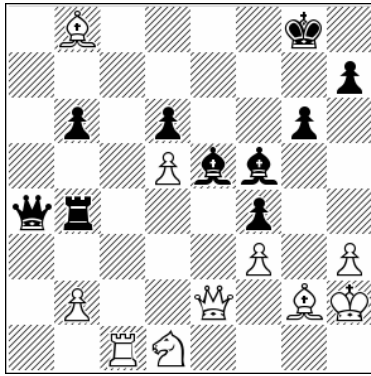
B) 25.♔g1 b6 (note that against 25.♔g1, the same idea as above fails, because of 25...♖a8 26.♕f1! ♖cc8 27.♘b5) 26.♖d1 ♖xb2 27.♖a2? ♖xc3!, winning for Black, was given by various analysts. The engine shows the improvement 26.a4 ♖8c7 (26...♖4c7? now loses to 27.♖b5) 27.♕b8 (27.♕f1 f3! 28.♖xf3 ♖4c5 and the bishop on a7 falls) 27...♖c8 28.♕a7 ♖8c7 with a draw by repetition;

C) But best is 25.f3. There are more than a few aesthetic considerations that White has to ignore in order to decipher this position! It looks disgusting to play f3, but this actually opens up two retreat squares for the dark-squared bishop once White achieves a3-a4-a5. After 25...b6.



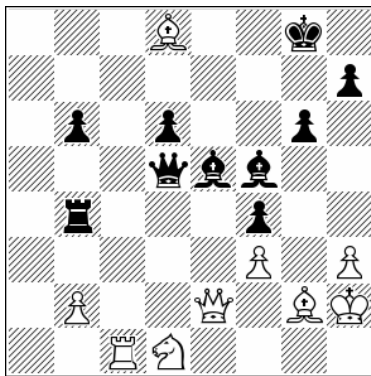
Tal gave the line 26.♔d1 ♖xb2 27.♖a2 ♙xc3 28.♙xb2 ♙xc1 29.♔d2 ♙xb2 30.♖xb2 ♖1c2 31.♔d4 ♖e8 32.♖xf4 ♖ee2 33.♔g3 ♙xg2+ 34.♖xg2 ♙xg2+ 35.♙xg2 b5 with a drawn opposite-coloured bishops ending.

But here again there is the move 26.a4, covering the b5-square, so as to allow ♖b5 or ♗b5, and also teeing up ♗a3. This time it yields a winning advantage, e.g. 26...♗b4 (26...♗b4 27.a5 bxa5 28.♕f2 is another point of 26.a4, whilst the direct bishop hunt 26...♗c7 runs into the thoroughly evil 27.♗a3 ♗b4 28.♕b8 ♗c8 (28...♗b7 29.♖a2) 29.♖a2! when the forced exchanges 29...♗xb2 30.♗xb2 ♕xb2 31.♗xc4 ♗xc4 32.♗b3 ♕e5 33.♖b4 leave White still a piece up in the ending) 27.♖d1 ♗xc1 28.♗xc1 ♗xa4 29.♕b8.



analysis diagram

Black has managed to stop White from reopening the g1-a7 diagonal, but the bishop proves incredibly slippery! 29...Qa8 30.Ke7 Qxd5 31.Ke8

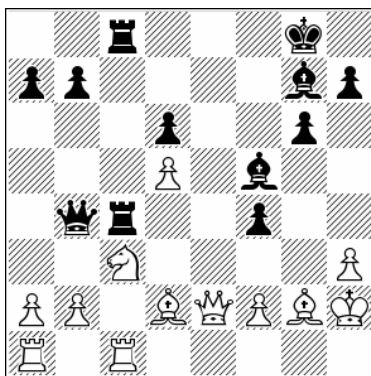


analysis diagram

and the bishop's rather nifty footwork will see it emerge alive via h4.

31...Rd4 32.Nc3 Qc6 33.Rd1 Rxd1 34.Qxd1 Ng7 35.Qf1 Qd7 36.Qh4 Qc5 37.Qd2 Qc6 38.Ng2 Qb4 39.Qf2 and White gradually reeled the point in, 1-0 (63) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

The conclusion is therefore that Tal's sacrifice should have lost, but White had to find 23.a3 Qb3 24.Qxa7 Qe5 25.f3! b6 26.a4!

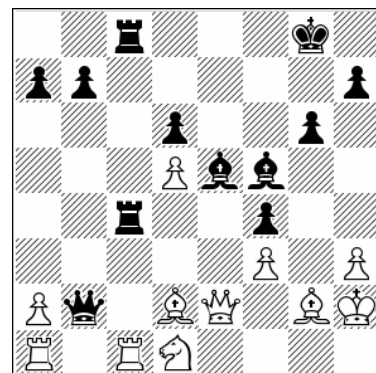


23...Qxb2?

Played after 15 minutes' thought. It's hard to believe, but this move – that seems to

accomplish everything Black could have dreamed of – is a serious mistake. It's worth considering what compensation Black actually has for the sacrificed knight on f4. Although the white king has been a little exposed by losing the g-pawn from its structure, it is clearly not threatened by any concerted danger. Incidental tricks have arisen – ...Qe5, threatening ...f3+ or ...f3, as a disruptive intermezzo – but nothing is going to be fatal to the white king. Black's key achievement after ...Nf4 is to open the diagonal of Black's dark-squared bishop (which Botvinnik had sought to close with 10.d5), increasing the pressure against White's knight on c3, and the achievement becomes even greater once White plays 23.Qd2, allowing Black to capture the b2-pawn when all of a sudden the white knight on c3 is under fire from most of Black's army. And yet, a hidden downside of playing ...exf4 is that White's queen suddenly becomes active along the e-file and this gives White a tactical way to deal with the pressure against his queenside.

Tal says he had even written down the correct move 23...Qe5 (this game was played back in the days when writing one's move down before playing it was not only legal, but recommended practice by writers such as Kotov!) but rejected it because of 24.f3 (24.Qf3 looks more active, but the bishop on f3 is just as restricted for now as on g2, due to the discovered check threat with ...f3+; 24...Qxb2 25.Qab1 Qxb1 26.Qxb1 Qc2 27.Qc1 Qf5 is fantastic for Black, 0-1 (80) Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023) 24...Qxb2 25.Nd1 (25.Qab1 Qxb1 26.Qxb1 Qc2 27.Qc1 Qf5 doesn't achieve anything for White).

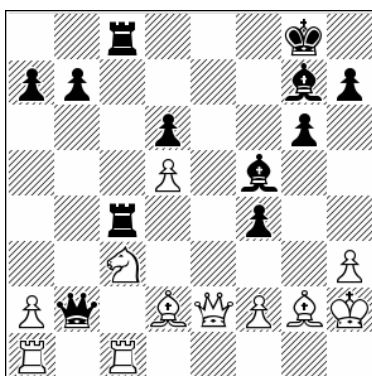


analysis diagram

Now there are two lines:

A) 25...♖d4 26.♞xc4 ♞xc4 27.♞c1 ♞xc1 28.♙xc1 ♞xd5 29.♙f1 which he assesses as approximately equal. The engine thinks White is rather better;
 B) 25...♞xa1 26.♞xa1 ♙xa1 is the engines' top choice when despite the favourable material balance, White has to look for perpetual check. The logjam of pieces on White's second rank is easy prey for Black's rooks once they double!

27.♘f2 ♞c2 28.♘g4 ♞xa2 (28...♙xg4 29.hxg4 ♙e5 30.♙h3 ♞xa2 31.♞e1 ♞cc2 32.♞h4 h6 33.♞d8+ ♙f7 34.♞d7+ ♙f8 with perpetual check, ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023) 29.♘h6+ ♙f8 30.♘xf5 gxf5 31.♞e6 ♞cc2. The engines try many things but everything ends in perpetual check. Black's pressure along the second rank is too powerful: 32.♙xf4 ♞xg2+ 33.♙h1 ♞ge2 34.♙h6+ ♙g7 35.♞c8+ ♙f7 36.♞d7+ ♞e7 37.♞xf5+ ♙e8 38.♞h5+ ♙f8 ½-½ Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023.



24.♞ab1

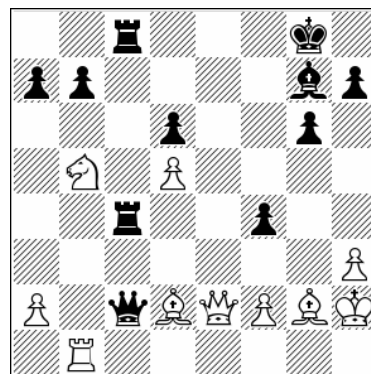
Now 24.♘d1? loses to 24...♞e5! as Tal correctly notes, exploiting the fact that the discovered check with ...f3+ is still open.

25.♞f3 ♙e4 26.♞xe4 ♞xe4 27.♙xe4 ♙xa1 28.♞xa1 ♞xe4 29.♘c3 ♞d4 30.♙e1 ♞d3 31.♘e4 ♞c2 32.♙g2 ♙g7 33.♞b1 b6 34.♘d6 ♞xd5 35.♘b5 ♞xa2 0-1 (46) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023.

24...f3

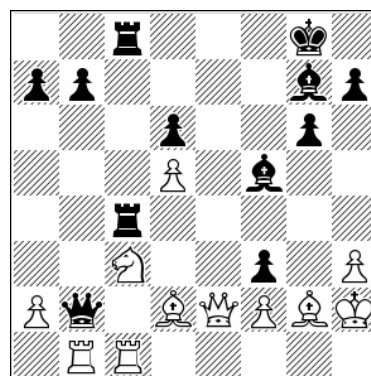
This was the move on which Tal had been relying. It is not the best move by any stretch, but this shocking intermezzo finally sent Botvinnik into a tail-spin!

On the other hand, Black is now losing anyway, the only alternative being 24...♙xb1 25.♞xb1 ♞c2 26.♘b5!.



analysis diagram

This is the gorgeous point. 26...♙e5 (hoping to block the e-file due to the threat of ...f3+; 26...♞xb1 27.♘xd6 and the threat of ♞e6+ is terminal, quite apart from the fact that White is simply threatening ♘xc4, winning back the sacrificed rook with a big material advantage). 27.♘xd6! (too late!) 27...♙xd6 28.♞e6+ ♙g7 (if 28...♙h8, 29.♞xd6 ♞xd2 30.♞f6+ ♙g8 31.♞xb7 wins) 29.♞xb7+ ♞8c7 30.♞xc7+ ♙xc7 31.♞e7+ ♙g8 32.d6 (bringing the light-squared bishop into the action too) 32...♞xd2 33.dxc7 ♞xc7 34.♞xc7 ♞xf2 35.♞c4+ ♙g7 36.♞c3+ with an extra piece for White. The win isn't trivial, but the engines scored 100% as White from here! 1-0 (82) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

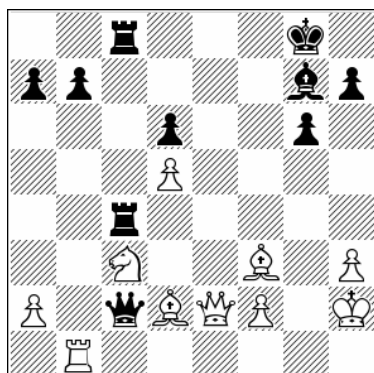


25.♞f3??

An astonishingly panicky reaction from the Patriarch! You can't help thinking back once again to his game against Bronstein where he sacrificed most of his advantage (worth a whole rook when he started!) just for the relief of exchanging queens. Perhaps aiming for the exchange of queens was also part of his programming for these games? In this case, you really feel that Botvinnik took the queen on b2 as an emotional decision and only looked

afterwards at what he was threatened with. And that is quite a lot! Two huge pins along the c-file and the long diagonal and a pawn on e2 just one move from queening. It's no longer surprising that White is losing something serious back.

During the game, both players calculated 25.♙xf3 ♜xb1 26.♞xb1 ♞c2



analysis diagram

27.♞c1 ♞b2 (Botvinnik had also been worried by 27...♞f5 but this loses to 28.♙g4 ♞e5+ 29.♞xe5 ♙xe5+ 30.f4 ♞xc3 (30...♞xf4 31.♙xc8 ♞d4+ 32.♙g1 ♞xd2 33.♙e4 was Leela's favourite path to victory) 31.♙xc8 when White wins. This was shown to Botvinnik after the game by his opponent, and the engine confirms it) 28.♞b1 and assumed White had no more than a repetition.

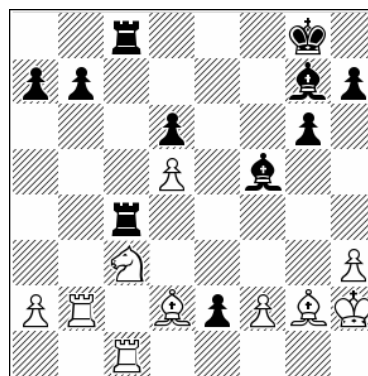
But back at the diagram, there are several ways to win and different engines choose their own favourites. A few days later, Salo Flohr pointed out 27.♙e4!! ♞xe4 (27...♞e8 28.♞xc4 ♞xd2 29.♙e2 b5 30.♞d3 ♞xd3 31.♙xd3 1-0 (67) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 28.♙xe4 which wins after both

A) 28...♞xb1 29.♙xd6 ♞f8 30.♞e6+ ♙h8 31.♙f7+ ♞xf7 32.♞xf7; and

B) 28...♙e5+ 29.♙g2 ♞xb1 30.♙xd6! ♙xd6 31.♞e6+ ♙g7 32.♞d7+! ♙g8 33.♞xc8+ ♙f8 34.♞e6+ ♙g7 35.d6.

The engine demonstrates another win for White in the line 27.♞c1 ♞b2, this time with 28.♙g4, e.g. 28...♞f8 (or 28...♙e5+ 29.♙g2 ♞8c7 30.♙e6+ ♙h8 (30...♙g7 31.♙h6+) 31.♙d1 ♞d4 32.♞xc4 ♞xc4 33.♞f3 ♙g7 34.♙g5 and the attack is too strong) 29.♞b1 ♞c2 30.♞xc4 ♞xf2+ 31.♙g1 ♞xd2 32.♙e6+ ♙h8 33.♙e4 ♞g2+ 34.♙f1 and there are no more checks.

25...fxe2



26.♞b3

26.♞e1 ♙d3 27.♙f3 ♙xc3 28.♙xc3 ♞xc3 29.♙xe2 ♞e8 is Dragon's best line for White... which says something! 0-1 (48) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

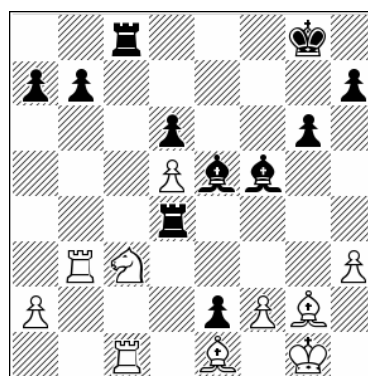
26...♞d4

Disrupting White's defensive structure. The bishop cannot remain on the only square from which it shores up both the knight on c3 and the rook on c1.

27.♙e1

27.♙xe2 ♞xd2 28.♞xc8+ ♙xc8; 27.♙g5 ♙e5+ 28.f4 ♞xf4 29.♙xf4 ♙xf4+ 30.♙h1 ♙xc1 31.♙xe2 ♞c2 0-1 (65) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

27...♙e5+ 28.♙g1



28...♙f4

Tal doesn't always choose the most efficient way of finishing the game, but it is more than enough.

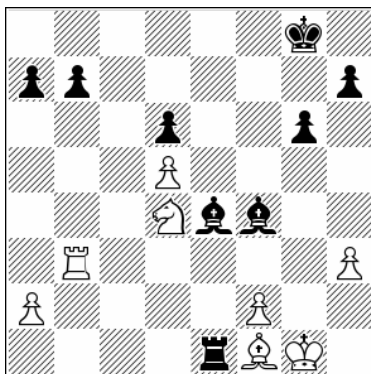
28...♞xc3! 29.♞bxc3 (29.♞cxc3 ♞d1 30.f4 ♙d4+ 31.♞e3 ♞xe1+ 32.♙f2 ♞g1 33.♙xe2 ♙xe3 was one cute win in Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022 0-1 (42)) 29...♞d1 30.♞c7 ♙b2 (or 30...♙f4, chasing the white rook off the first rank: 31.♞e7 ♞xc1 32.♞xe2 ♙d3 33.♞e7 ♙f8 34.♞e6 ♙f7 0-1 (40) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) wins at once,

but Tal's line is also completely winning. He mentions that his concentration was interrupted when the arbiters insisted on moving the game to a closed room, because of the noise in the auditorium! Fearful that the interruption might cause a miscalculation, he says he deliberately eschewed the quicker line in favour of the safety-first text.

29. ♖xe2 ♜xc1 30. ♖xd4

30. ♖xc1 ♜d1 wins back the piece with a huge advantage.

30... ♜xe1+ 31. ♕f1 ♕e4



The dust clears to reveal an ending where Black has an extra pawn, two powerful bishops, the more active rook and a target on d5. The rest is easy for Tal.

32. ♖e2 ♕e5 33. f4 ♕f6 34. ♜xb7 ♕xd5

Now he has a passed pawn as well.

35. ♜c7

35. ♜d7 ♕c4.

35... ♕xa2 36. ♜xa7 ♕c4 37. ♜a8+ ♖f7 38. ♜a7+ ♖e6 39. ♜a3 d5 40. ♖f2 ♕h4+ 41. ♖g2 ♖d6 42. ♖g3 ♕xg3 43. ♕xc4 dxc4 44. ♖xg3 ♖d5 45. ♜a7 c3 46. ♜c7 ♖d4

Now Botvinnik sealed

47. ♜d7+

but resigned without resuming.

0-1

Game 22 – Queen's Indian Defence

Boris Spassky

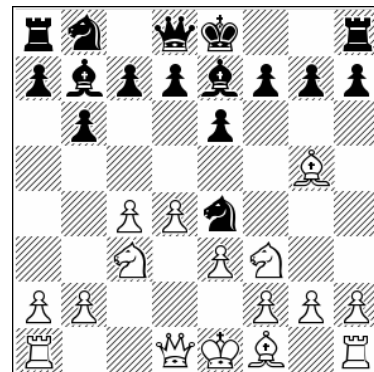
Lev Polugaevsky

Moscow ch-URS 1961

This was a truly extraordinary battle between two players who were to emerge among the world's elite over the next couple of decades.

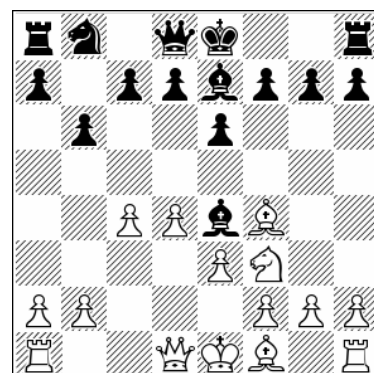
Spassky, in particular, showed remarkable creativity in the middlegame, although in the end, he lost his way and went down to defeat.

1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 e6 3. ♖f3 b6 4. ♖c3 ♕b7 5. ♕g5 ♕e7 6.e3 ♖e4



Not the engine's top move, but a standard manoeuvre in Queen's Gambit and Queen's Indian positions. Black's position is too cramped for a full complement of minor pieces, so the exchange of one (or preferably two) sets of minor pieces alleviates this problem. Freeing the position wins Black some time and flexibility in the opening: for example, the need to establish a central footing to secure space is much less urgent. The downside is that exchanging pieces reduces Black's capacity to generate counterplay. The resulting positions are thus a little flat. White has a small but stable advantage and Black is essentially playing only for a safe draw.

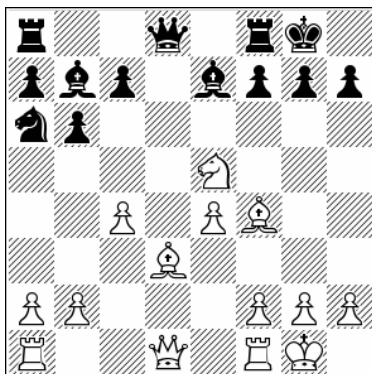
7. ♖xe4 ♕xe4 8. ♕f4



8...0-0

8...d6 was the engine choice and Dragon in particular unearths some stunning dynamic possibilities in this sleepy-looking position: 9. ♕d3 ♕b7 (9... ♕xd3 10. ♖xd3 led to reasonable but not very exciting positions for Black). Now

after 10.e4, 10...e5 was a very interesting attempt from Dragon to spice up the position with a pawn sacrifice: 11.dxe5 dxe5 12.♖xe5 (12.♗xe5 was my (Matthew's) first thought, but the engines are happy with Black's activity for the pawn yet again: 12...♜d7 (or 12...♙b4+ 13.♕f1 ♜c6 14.♙xg7 ♜g8 15.♙c3 ♙xc3 16.bxc3 ♖f6 17.♙e2 ♖xc3 18.h4 ♜d8 19.♖e1 ½-½ (19) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 13.♙xg7 ♜g8 14.♙d4 ♜xg2 15.♙c2 ♙b4+ 16.♕f1 ♜g8 17.♜g1 ♜xg1+ 18.♜xg1 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 12...0-0 13.0-0 ♜a6.



analysis diagram

Black has easy development, White's central dark squares are porous, the e4-pawn is a little awkward to defend safely, while the knight on e5 and bishop on d3 are awkwardly placed and open to attack by Black's pieces. The engines were unable to demonstrate any lasting advantage for White in a series of games: 14.♙c2 ♜c5 15.♜f3 ♜xe4 16.♜e1 (16.♖e2 ♜g5 17.♜xg5 ♙xg5 18.♜ad1 ♖f6 19.♙xc7 ♜fe8 20.♖g4 g6 21.♜d6 ♖e7 22.♜d7 ♖f6 23.f4 ♖xb2 24.fxg5 ♖xc2 25.♜dxf7 ♜e2 26.♜f7 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022 was a rather spicy alternative! 26...♜ae8 keeps everything covered for Black. White doubled extra pawn is worth nothing) 16...♜c5 17.♖xd8 ♙xd8 18.♜g5 ♙xg5 19.♙xg5 ♜e6 20.♙e3 c5 21.♜ad1 ♜ad8 22.a3 ♙a6 23.b3 ♜xd1 24.♜xd1 ♜d8 25.♜xd8+ ♜xd8 26.♕f1 f6 27.♕e2 ♕f7 28.♜d2 ♙b7 29.g3 g6 30.b4 ♜e6 ½-½ (47) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

When you see the pawn sacrifice that Dragon had planned after 10.e4, you naturally assume that White might do better to wait a move and put the king to safety first. However, Dragon had also planned something sharp against

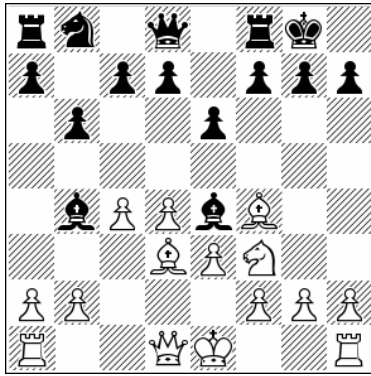
castling! 10.0-0 g5 11.♙g3 h5 12.h3 g4 13.hxg4 hxg4 14.♜h2 ♜d7 15.♖xg4 ♜f6 16.♖e2 ♖d7 was agreed drawn in a very murky position. Black's attacking chances on the kingside look rather tempting! ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

10.h3 is the safest way for White, but the engines were perfectly happy with Black's position and handled it in a variety of ways: 10...0-0 (10...♜d7 11.0-0 0-0 12.♙h2 f5 13.♜d2 ♜h8 14.b4 a5 15.a3 axb4 16.axb4 ♜xa1 17.♖xa1 ♖a8 18.♙g3 ♖xa1 19.♜xa1 ♜a8 ½-½ (29) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 11.♜c1 ♜d7 12.0-0 f5 13.♙c2 a5 14.a3 ♜h8 15.♜e1 g5. Stockfish livens things up... and Dragon responds! 16.♙g3 ♜f7 17.c5 bxc5 18.♙b3 ♙xf3 19.♖xf3 d5 20.e4 dxe4 21.♜xe4 ♜g7 22.♜xe6 f4 23.♙h2 cxd4 24.♜d1 ♜c5 25.♜xd4 ♖f8 26.♜e1 ♙f6 27.♜d5 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022. White's activity and better pawn structure are compensated by the entombed bishop on h2.

9.♙d3 ♙b4+

One of those moves that is very hard to resist in a practical game as a Black player, even if you suspect it isn't the best! After 9.♙d3, you look at White and try and gauge: 'Did he miss 9...♙b4+, forcing the white king to move, or did he plan it? If he missed it, he'll be relieved if I don't play it... but I'm not sure it's a good move objectively!' You can truly spend minutes debating this. In this position, it's clear that there's no risk of the white king becoming exposed, even if it has to castle artificially. Ironically, forcing the king to f1 probably stimulates White to look at the very strong plan of advancing the kingside pawns!

A few years later, the strange game Antoshin-Golombek, Vienna 1966, continued with the straightforward 9...♙xd3 10.♖xd3 f5 11.h4 ♙f6 12.g4 ♜c6 13.gxf5 exf5, whereupon the Soviet GM (and rumoured KGB goon!) played the appalling 14.♖xf5?? and was a piece down for very little after 14...♙e5 15.♖e4 ♙xf4 16.0-0-0 ♙h6 17.♜g5 g6 0-1 (36).



10.♔f1

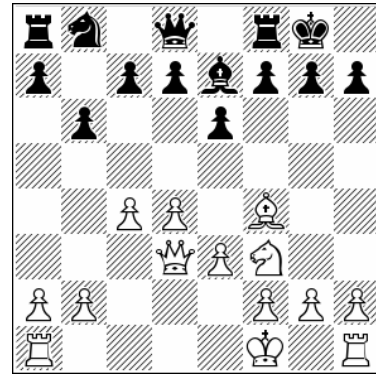
10.♔e2 jumps out at you after seeing the game continuation (why play ♔f1 first and later ♔e2?). The engines take the opportunity to realise a few more exchanges to reduce White's attacking potential still further: 10...♙xf3+ 11.gxf3 ♙d6 12.♙xd6 cxd6 13.h4 ♘c6 14.♚b3 f5 15.♚a3 ♚e7 ½-½ (27) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

10...♙xd3+ 11.♚xd3 ♙e7

Polugaevsky wants to develop the queenside with ...d6 and ...♘d7 and has to bring the bishop back to safety beforehand, but Black has already wasted a lot of time with the dark-squared bishop (...♙e7-b4-e7). Such wasteful expenditure of tempi is often not immediately visible to the naked eye: you truly notice it only when trying to complete your development and finding that you always seem to be a move too late with everything! Spassky invests this extra time in kingside expansion, which at the same time causes Polugaevsky to second guess his chosen method of development.

...♙d6, either immediately or after a preliminary 11...h6 to prevent ♘g5, was the engine choice, extracting virtue from Black's third move of the dark-squared bishop in the opening by offering the exchange of yet another set of minor pieces and thus reducing White's attacking force. For example, 11...♙d6 12.♘g5 f5 13.h4 a5 14.g3 ♘c6. Note that the engines are keen to keep Black's central structure d7/e6 intact and not weaken it with ...d6. For that reason, they choose to develop the knight to c6. It's not completely comfortable for Black, as the knight often lacks good follow-up squares, but the engines manage to find unusual ways to get the remaining black pieces active.

15.♙g2 a4 (gaining some space on the queenside and preparing to activate the rook in a creative way) 16.♘h3 ♙a5 17.♙hd1 e5 18.dxe5 ♘xe5 19.♙xe5 ♙xe5 20.♘f4 d6 21.♘e6 ♚a8+ 22.♔g1 ♙c8 23.♙ac1 ♚e4 24.♚e2 ♚g4 25.♙c2 h6 26.♘d4 ♙xd4 27.exd4 ♙f8 28.♚xg4 fxg4 29.♙e1 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.



12.h4 f5

Polugaevsky wants to develop his queenside with ...d6 and ...♘d7, but 12...d6 would be met by 13.♘g5, forcing 13...g6, creating a 'hook' for White to attack later with h4-h5. Unnerved by this, Polugaevsky blocks the b1-h7 diagonal immediately with 12...f5, preparing to follow up later with ...d6 and ...♘d7.

12...d6 was still the engine choice, unafraid of weakening the kingside after 13.♘g5 g6. An immediate attack does not seem to be on the cards so the engines focused instead on gaining space. Black was slightly uncomfortable but nothing more serious than that.

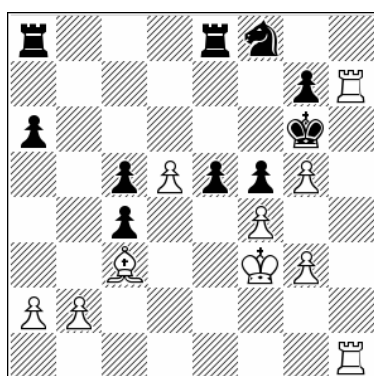
14.♙d1 ♙f6 15.g4 ♘d7 16.♘e4 ♚e7 17.g5 ♙g7 18.h5 e5 19.dxe5 ♘xe5 20.♙xe5 ♚xe5 21.b3 ♙ae8 22.♙h4 f6 23.♚d5+ ♚xd5 24.♙xd5 fxg5 25.♙xg5 ♙f6 26.♘xf6+ ♙xf6 27.♙g3 ½-½ (38) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

13.♔e2

Spassky starts on an attacking scheme that most human players would admire, and yet the engines see a bigger advantage in something more sober. In fact, the current position resembles an episode from the no-castling chess variant, which has even been tried out in elite level matches. Tucking the king away on f1 and then developing the king's rook on the third rank behind a march of the rook's pawn is a common technique in no-castling chess, and

that's exactly what the engines want here. However, we shouldn't criticise Spassky's plan, which still guarantees White a sizeable advantage and looks very intimidating from the Black side... unless you're an engine!

13.♖h3 (both 13.h5 and 13.♖e1 are also reasonable, with similar ideas) 13.♖h3 ♘c6. Black is forced to develop the queen's knight to an inferior square. (13...d6 14.e4 is the riposte the engines wish to have available in response to ...d6. Obviously, Spassky's 13.♕e2 interferes with this. 14...e5 15.♗d2 c5 16.♘g5 ♗d7 17.dxe5 dxe5 18.♗d5+ ♗xd5 19.exd5 was tried multiple times in the engine games and only led to white wins, though some of the technique displayed was other-worldly! 19...♗xg5 20.hxg5 ♘d7 21.♕e2 a6 22.♖ah1 ♔f7 23.♖xh7 ♔g6 24.g3 b5 25.f4 ♖fe8 26.♕f3 bxc4 27.♗c3 ♘f8

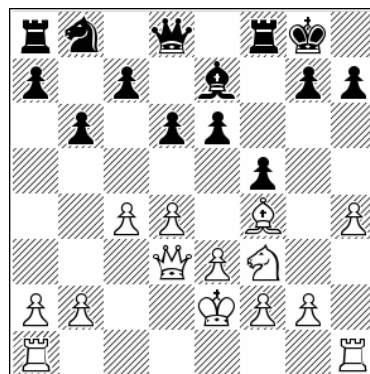


analysis diagram

28.♖xg7+!! Other moves were very strong, but this one is quite something! 28...♔xg7 29.fxe5 ♔f7 30.♕f4 ♖ed8 31.e6+ ♘xe6+ 32.dxe6+ ♕xe6 33.♖h6+ ♔f7 34.♖c6 ♖ac8 35.♖xa6 ♖d4+ 36.♕xf5 ♖d5+ 37.♕f4 ♖d4+ 38.♕e5 ♖cd8 39.g6+ ♔g8 40.♕f5 ♖d4d6 41.♖a7 ♖d5+ 42.♕f6 1-0 (68) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022)

14.h5 ♘a5 15.♖d1 ♘b7 16.h6 g6 17.c5 (stopping ...♘b7-d6-e4) 17...♗e8 (17...bxc5 18.dxc5 ♘xc5 19.♗d4 ♖f6 20.b4 ♘e4 21.♗xd7 is a big advantage for White) 18.♗b3 ♗c8 19.♖c1 bxc5 20.dxc5 ♖f7 (20...♘xc5 21.♖xc5 ♗xc5 22.♗c3) 21.♗a3 ♗b8 22.♗g5 ♘d8 23.♖h4 ♘c6 24.♗xe7 ♖xe7 25.e4 ♗f8 26.exf5 ♗xf5 27.♗c3 ♖f7 28.♔g1 with a pleasant position for White which Dragon converted, 1-0 (85) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

13...d6



Using the opportunity to develop the knight to d7 (from where it can potentially land on e4 via f6).

14.g4

This feels like the start of a huge assault by White: opening the g-file towards the black king seems like a much bigger achievement than opening the e-file with e3-e4. However, the engines see it differently. Reflecting on why this might be, you might think back to some games of AlphaZero in *Game Changer*. There it was noticeable that AlphaZero's best attacks often combined three factors: pressure along a file (such as the g-file) with a diagonal (for example a bishop on the a1-h8 diagonal) and a knight hovering close to the kingside. Here we are lacking diagonal pressure, which might explain why Black is able to keep his head above water, even though the dangers are manifold.

14...♘d7

14...♗e8 15.gxf5 exf5 16.♖ag1 ♘d7 17.♖h3 ♔h8 18.b3 ♖f7 19.♘g5 ♗xg5 20.hxg5 g6 21.f3 ♗e7 22.♔d2 ♔g8 23.♔c2 ♖b8 24.♖gh1 ♘f8 25.d5 ½-½ (53) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022. One assumes this would be grim for Black – after all, the game looks over if White manages to redirect the queen and bishop to the a1-h8 diagonal, but Dragon somehow never managed this and Stockfish drew by staying more or less still!

15.♖ag1

Spassky keeps the tension, which seems more natural than exchanging rapidly on f5, as the engines were wont to do.

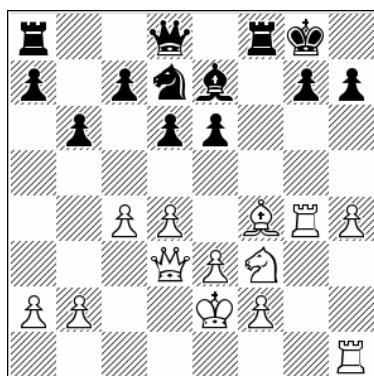
15.gxf5 exf5 16.♖ag1 ♖f7 17.h5 ♔h8 18.h6 g6 19.a3 a5 20.♔d1 ♗c8 21.♔c2 ♗b7 22.♗e2 ♔g8 23.♔b1 ♗f6 24.♘g5 ♗xg5 25.♗xg5 ♗e4+ 26.♔a1 ♖e8

27.♖h4 ♖c6 ½-½ (65) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022. Once again we have landed in a situation where White needs to redeploy the queen and dark-squared bishop along the long diagonal but never manages to.

15...fxg4

15...♖e8. The engines always want the queen on e8 to help shore up the g-pawn on g6 after h6, ...g6. 16.h5 fxg4 (now the engines exchange on g4, perhaps as a result of White's 16.h5, as White can no longer force open the h-file with ♔g5 ...♙xg5, hxg5) 17.♖xg4 ♖h8 18.♙g5 ♖f5 19.h6 g6 20.♖e4 ♙xg5 21.♖xg5 ♖f8 22.♖g3 ♖f7 23.♖f1 ♔f6 24.♖c6 ♔h5 25.♖g2 ♖f5 26.♖c1 ♖ae8 ½-½ (37) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022. Black manages to keep pressure points against the white position (the f-file, the knight on f3, threats to invade on the queenside with the queen) to keep White at bay.

16.♖xg4



16...♔f6

This defensive manoeuvre is poorly timed from Polugaevsky, but any practical player will sympathise with his defensive predicaments. Analysing with the engines, we understand that Black should keep a barrier on the b1-h7 diagonal and only consider weakening that once White has played h5 and can no longer open the h-file with ♔g5 ...♙xg5, hg. We also understand that Black should expect to find White's rook's pawn thrown against the black kingside barricades and that Black should try to meet h6 with ...g6. For that to work, the black queen should be on e8. Polugaevsky gets things a little wrong, taking too early on g4 and placing the queen on d7, electing to defend g7 with ...♔e8, which brings his position into great danger.

However, 16...♖e8 was too late now: 17.♙h6 ♖f7 18.♖hg1 ♙f8 19.♔g5 ♖f5 20.♖e1 ♖h8 21.♖4g3 c6 22.♙xg7+ ♙xg7 23.♔e4 ♙h6 24.♔xd6 ♖e7 25.♔xf5 exf5 26.♖xf5 ♖f8 27.♖d1 with a clear white advantage: rook and three pawns for two pieces and a wide-open black king, 1-0 (69) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

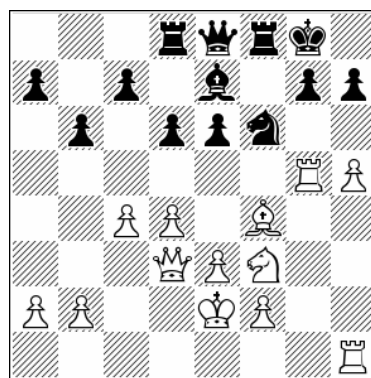
17.♖g5

17.♔g5 is a very dangerous intermediate move, after which Black needs total accuracy to survive: 17...♖e8 (17...♖d7 18.♖g2 ♖ae8 19.♖hg1 ♙d8 20.d5 exd5 21.cxd5 g6 22.♔e6 ♖f7 23.♙g5 1-0 (68) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 18.f3 ♙d8 19.♙e5. The engines were showing a clear advantage for White (over +1) but managed to hold as Black!

19...dxe5 20.dxe5 g6 21.exf6 ♙xf6 22.♖e4 ♙xg5 23.hxg5 ♖f7 24.♖d1 a5 25.♖f4 ♖xf4 26.exf4 ♖b8 27.b3 ♖f7 28.♖f2 ♖f8 29.♖g3 ♖e8 30.♖e5 ♖e7 31.♖d4 ½-½ (61) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022. Passive defence held the day for Dragon!

17...♖d7

17...♖e8 is the engine choice, when they consider that Black is back on the correct track: 18.h5 (18.♖hg1 ♔h5 is the engine point. It's hard to believe, but the engines already prefer Black slightly, estimating that Black's king is in no danger! 19.♖5g4 ♖h8 20.♔g5 ♙xg5 21.hxg5 g6 22.f3 ♖f7 23.♙h2 ♖g8 24.b3 ♖d8 ½-½ (37) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 18...♖d8



analysis diagram

19.h6 (19.♖c2 c5 20.b3 ♖d7 21.dxc5 bxc5 22.h6 g6 23.♖g2 ♙d8 24.♙g3 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 19...g6 20.♔h4 e5 21.♔xg6 hxg6 22.dxe5 dxe5 23.♖xg6+ ♖xg6 24.♖xg6+ ♖f7 25.♖g7+ ♖e6 26.♙xe5 ♔e4 27.f4 ♙f6 28.♙xf6 ♖xf6 29.♖f3 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

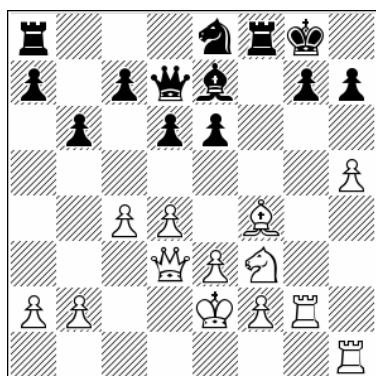
18.h5 ♖e8

With this defensive set-up, we are into the territory where the engines are both winning and drawing games as White. This normally means that the evaluation is right on the edge.

19.♖g2

19.♖g3 was slightly preferred by the engines, although the moves are very similar: 19...♙f6 20.♙g5 ♖f7 21.♙xf6 ♖xf6 22.♖g5 ♖e7 23.h6 g6 24.f4 was Stockfish's preference and brought some wins (as well as some draws) for Stockfish against Dragon, but not without some huge fights!

24...♖ac8 25.♖d1 b5 26.cxb5 c5 27.♖c1 c4 28.♖c2 c3 29.bxc3 ♖d5 30.♖e4 a6 31.bxa6 ♖c6 32.♖d2 ♖xa6 33.a4 ♖fa8 34.♖a1 ♖h4 35.♖b1 ♖xh6 36.♖h1 ♖xh1 37.♖xh1 ♖c6 38.♖gh3 h5 ½-½ (61) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022. Dragon held things together in the end by a miracle!



19...b5

A spot of human desperation... where engines still see chances to marshall Black's defensive forces. The move has a very human purpose: to open lines even at the cost of material and generate some counterplay to distract White. Ironically, it cuts off the very channel of counterplay that is keeping Black alive at this precise moment.

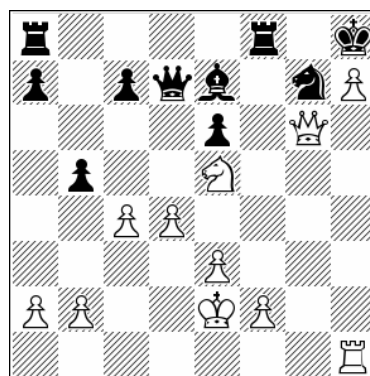
19...♙f6 once again, looking for counterplay with ...c5, was the engine defensive approach.

20.b3 c5 21.d5 e5 22.♙g5 a6 23.♖hg1 ♖a7 24.♖c2 ♖h8 25.h6 g6 26.♙xf6+ ♖xf6 27.♖g5 ♖e7 28.♖d1 ♖f5 29.♖c1 ♖f8 30.f4 ♖f6 31.♖b1 ♖e7 32.♖e2 ♖g8 33.♖f2 exf4 34.exf4 b5 35.a3 ♖d4 36.♖e6 ♖f6 37.♖a2 ♖c7 38.♖g7 was unpleasant for Black and even Stockfish did not manage to defend it, 1-0 (79) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

20.c5

Quite strong but not the best.

20.h6 was completely winning for White with some delightful tactics! 20...g6 (20...bxc4 21.♖xh7+ ♖xh7 22.hxg7+ ♖g8 23.gxf8=♖+ ♖xf8 24.♖h8+ ♖f7 25.♖h7+) 21.♖xg6+ hxg6 22.h7+ ♖h8 23.♙e5+ (the beautiful touch!) 23...♖g7 (23...dxe5 24.♖xe5 followed by ♖xg6+ and ♖xf8) 24.♖xg6 dxe5 25.♖xe5.



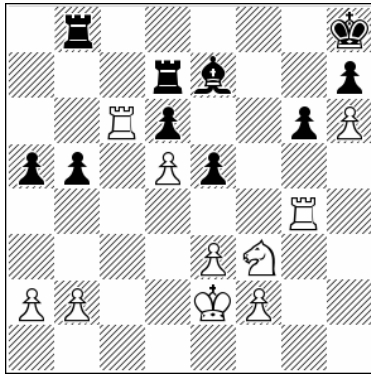
analysis diagram

Bizarrely, this is the point where you notice that 19...b5 blocked off a crucial avenue of counterplay. If Black hadn't played 19...b5, then 19...♖a4 would have saved a draw for him, keeping the white queen restricted by threatening to invade on c2! 25...♖d6 (25...♖e8 26.♖xe8 followed by ♖g6 mate!) 26.♖g2 ♖xe5 27.dxe5 ♖ad8 28.♖g1 ♖f7 29.♖g6 ♖df8 30.f4 ♖d8 31.cxb5 and with Black completely tied up, Stockfish had no problem converting, 1-0 (61) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

20...dxc5

Black's problem is that 19...b5 blocked off the most likely channel of last-gasp counterplay that he possessed, and it's extremely hard to reopen it! 20...dxc5 looks awful, conceding the e5-square to White's minor pieces, but it's driven by a desire to reactivate the black queen by giving it access to the central light squares.

20...♙f6. By now, all the engine games end in wins for White, who is in total control: 21.♖hg1 ♖h8 22.♖g4 ♖c8 23.♖e4 a5 24.h6 g6 25.♖b7 ♖d8 26.cxd6 ♖xd6 27.♙xd6 cxd6 28.♖xd7 ♖xd7 29.♖e4 ♖e8 30.d5 e5 31.♖c1 ♖b8 32.♖g4 ♙e7 33.♖c6.

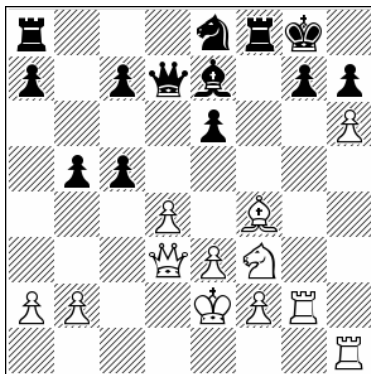


analysis diagram

A pretty typical scenario for modern engines, transforming an advantage into an endgame where the opponent is restricted and essentially powerless. To human eyes, this may just look intuitively like a slight to clear advantage for White; for an engine, this is already stratospherically winning.

33...♙f8 34.♖h4 ♘g8 35.♖h1 ♖dd8 36.♙d2 ♖bc8 37.♖hc1 ♖xc6 38.♖xc6 ♙xh6 39.♙e4 ♙g7 40.♖b6 b4 41.♖a6 h5 42.♖xa5 ♙f8 43.♖a7 ♙g7 44.♖b7 ♖a8 45.♖xb4 ♖xa2 46.♖b8+ ♘h7 47.♙g5+ ♘h6 48.♙f7+ ♘h7 49.♙g5+ ♘h6 50.♙f7+ ♘h7 51.♙xd6 1-0 (74) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

21.h6



Now, though, the engines – just like Spassky – are smelling mate.

21...♖f5 22.♙e5

Spassky's move is very strong, although the engines preferred occupying the juicy e5-square with the other minor piece.

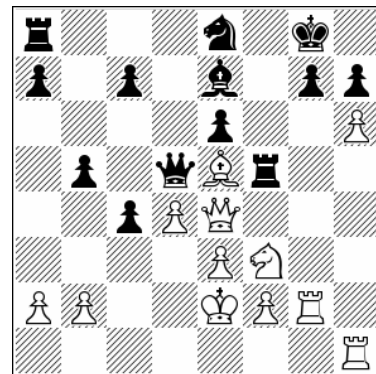
22.♙e5 ♖d8 23.hxg7 (23.♙c6 ♖d7 24.♖e4 ♙d8 25.dxc5 ♖d5 26.♖xd5 ♖xd5 27.hxg7 ♙f6 28.♖xh7 ♙xg7 29.♙e7+ ♘xh7 30.♖h2+ ♙h6 31.♖xh6+ ♘g7 32.♙xd5 exd5 33.♖a6 ♘f7 34.♙e5 was Stockfish's chosen win, 1-0 (62) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1,

Classics 2022) 23...♙f6 24.♙g4 ♙xg4 25.♖xg4 b4 26.♙xc7 c4 (26...♖xc7 27.♖e4 (hits e6 and a8) 27...♖c8 28.♖xh7 ♘xh7 29.g8=♖+ ♖xg8 30.♖h1+ is the beautiful point!) 27.♖xf5 exf5 28.♙xd8 ♖xd8 29.♖f4 1-0 (57) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

22...c4 23.♖e4

Very strong again, though the engines prefer just to retreat the queen calmly and await with interest what on earth Black is going to do: 23.♖c2 c3 (23...g6 24.♖xg6+ is the standard trick: 24...hxg6 25.h7+) 24.♙xg7 ♖c6 25.e4 ♖c4+ 26.♙e3 cxb2 27.♖xc4 ♖xf3+ 28.♙xf3 bxc4 29.d5 ♙f7 30.♙xb2 1-0 (49) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

23...♖d5



24.♖g4

Still very good, though simpler ways were also available: 24.♖xd5 exd5 25.hxg7 ♙f6 26.♙g5 b4 27.♙xh7 ♙xh7 28.♖gh2 ♙f7 29.♖xh7 ♖g8 30.f4 was awesomely good for White. Black's rook on f5 is completely paralysed and the black king can't leave f7 due to ♖h8, 1-0 (48) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

24...c3 25.b3 b4 26.e4 ♖b5+

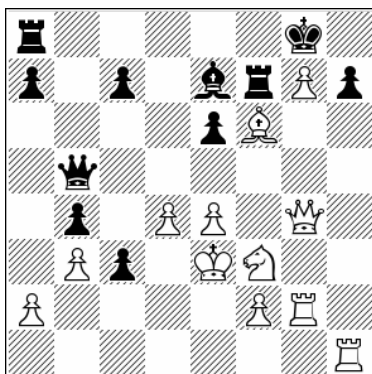
With Spassky's queen having wandered over to the kingside and having thrown forward the queenside pawns blocking the black queen, Polugaevsky has managed to give a check! However, the white king is not troubled yet.

27.♙e3 ♖f7 28.hxg7

Threatening ♖xh7 amongst a million other things.

28...♙f6 29.♙xf6

Mate in 25 now being announced by the engines! 29.♖h3 was also a very sensible way of winning.

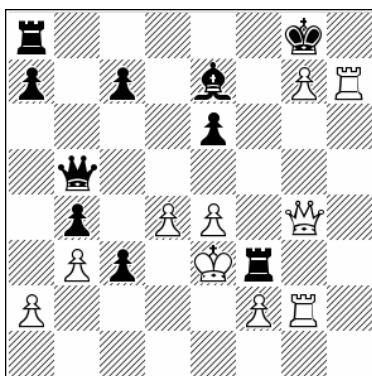


29...Rxf6 30.Rxh7

And now mate in 12.

30.e5 is another strong idea, simply cutting the black queen's access to the fifth rank. 30...Rg6 31.Qh5 is more or less the only line that has to be seen.

30...Rxf3+



31.Qxf3

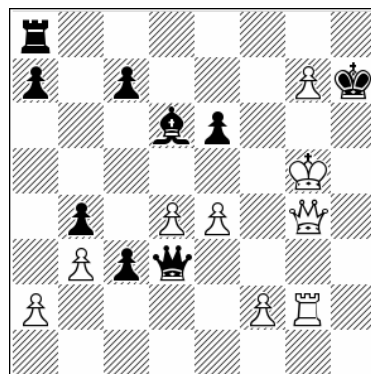
The odd thing about this position is that although White is completely winning, he frequently just has one good move and that move is often, visually at least, not without risk. It's due mainly to Spassky's forcing play: 23.Qe4 rather than 23.Qc2, 24.Qg4 rather than 24.Qxd5, 29.Qxf6 and 30.Rxh7. Forcing play isn't a bad thing, but it can add to the stress of the winning player, by requiring accuracy until the end.

31.Qxf3 Qg5+ would have been winning for Black.

31...Qd3+ 32.Qf4 Qd6+

32...Qd2+ 33.Qe5 1-0 (41) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

33.Qg5 Qxh7



34.Qh5?

A terrible mistake from Spassky, but it was again an only-one-move-is-right situation and it wasn't a comfortable one for a human player to make. 34.Qf6 Qxd4+ 35.Qf7 wins on the spot, 1-0 (40) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

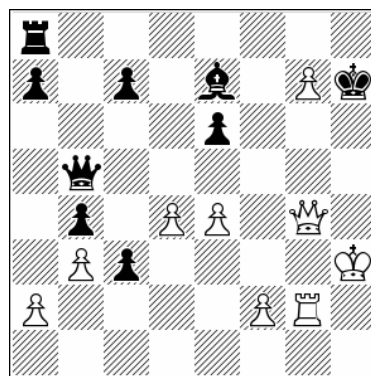
34...Qb5+

Amazingly we are back to equality and 0.00.

35.Qh4

35.e5 Qe8+ (protects e6 with tempo and prevents the white queen or rook from reaching the h-file) 36.Qh4 Qe7+ 37.Qh3 Qf7 38.Qh2 Qg8 39.Qh3 Qf4+ 40.Qg1 (½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 40...Qc1+ and a draw by perpetual.

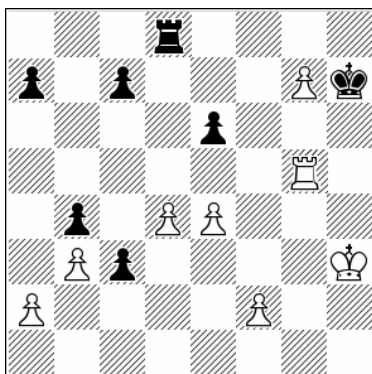
35...Qe7+ 36.Qh3



36...Qg5

An amazing resource, and you think back in longing to move 30, when 30.e5 would have blocked desperados like this.

37.Qxg5 Qxg5 38.Rxg5 Rxd8

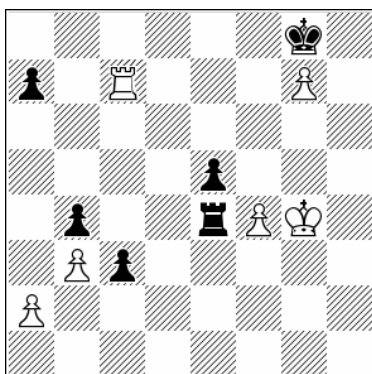


The position is now drawn but it must have been torture for Spassky to readjust and try to understand what was happening in this chaotic-looking rook endgame.

39.f4?

Now it's lost! Correct was 39.♔g4 ♔g8 40.♞c5 ♞xd4 41.♞xc7 ♞xe4+ 42.♔g5 ♔h7 43.♞xa7 ♞e5+ 44.♔f6 ♞f5+ (½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 45.♔xe6 ♞xf2 46.♞b7 ♞xa2 47.♞xb4 ♔xg7 and everything gets hoovered off.

39...♔g8 40.♞c5 ♞xd4 41.♞xc7 ♞xe4 42.♔g5 e5

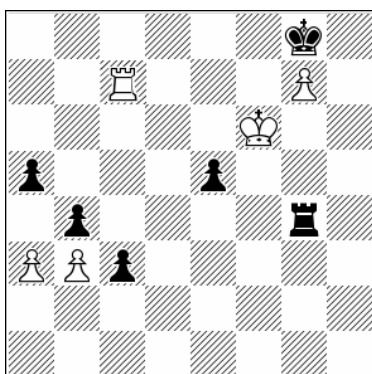


Fearlessly played by Polugaevsky.

43.a3

43.♔f5 ♞xf4+ 44.♔g6 ♞g4+ 45.♔f6 ♔h7 is the key resource, sidestepping the threat of ♞c8+. Now the black e-pawn is ready to run, 0-1 (73) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

43...♞xf4+ 44.♔g5 a5 45.♔g6 ♞g4+ 46.♔f6



46...♔h7 47.g8=♞+ ♔xg8 48.♔xe5 ♞g1 49.♔f6 ♞f1+ 50.♔e5 ♞b1 0-1

The b3-pawn falls and Black has two unstoppable passed pawns.

Game 23 – Ruy Lopez

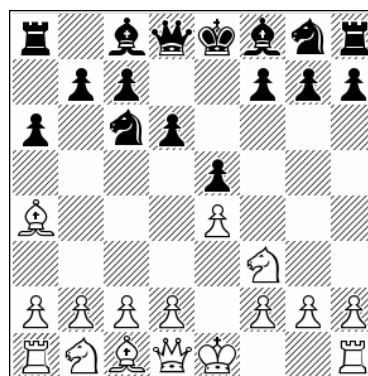
Vlastimil Hort

Paul Keres

Oberhausen Ech tt 1961

Paul Keres was one of the great 'nearly men' of world chess. Co-winner of the AVRO 1938 tournament, he never did get a World Championship match. Conspiracy theories persist to this day about his disastrous performance against Botvinnik in the 1948 World Championship tournament, losing four in a row. In the 1950s, he was runner-up four times in Candidates tournaments, but never quite made it through to a match for the title. He remained one of the world's best players right up to his untimely death from a heart attack in 1975, still short of his 60th birthday. His three-volume best games collection is one of the finest by any GM, and this game is one of the less-known, but most spectacular, examples from that collection.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 d6

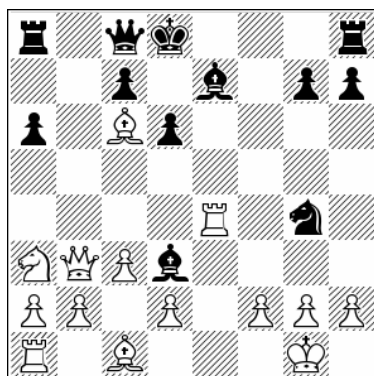


Keres was one of the greatest of 1.e4 e5 defenders and the Deferred Steinitz was a lifelong favourite of his (as it was of Alekhine, too). Nowadays, it is rarely seen, being regarded as slightly passive, but it remains a perfectly sound alternative for Black.

5.d4!?

Probably the least challenging response. Of the alternatives, 5.c3 f5 (Keres himself generally

preferred 5...♖ge7 here) 6.exf5 ♗xf5 7.0-0 ♗d3 8.♖e1 ♗e7 9.♖e3 e4 10.♖a3 ♖h6 11.♖b3 ♖c8 12.♖d4 ♖g4 13.♖xc6 bxc6 14.♗xc6+ ♖d8 15.♖xe4



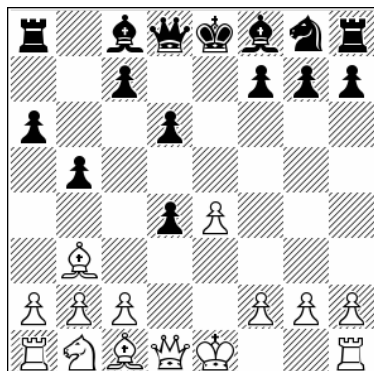
analysis diagram

15...♖f8 16.f3 ♖b8 17.♖d5 ♗xe4 18.♖xe4 ♖f6 19.♖d3 ♖e6 20.♖e3 ♖f5 21.♖c4 d5 22.♖a5 ♖c2 23.♖e2 ♖b6 24.b4 ♖h5 25.g3 ♖g6 26.♗xd5 was a crazy effort in the definitely misnamed Siesta Variation! ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

5.0-0 ♖f6 6.c3 ♖xe4 7.d4 ♗d7 8.♖e1 ♖f6 9.♗xc6 ♗xc6 10.dxe5 dxe5 11.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 12.♖xe5 ♗d5 13.♗g5 c6 14.♖d2 ♖c7 15.♗f4 ♖h5 16.♗e3 ♖f6 17.a4 a5 18.♖dc4 ♖a6 19.h4 ♗e6 20.♗f4 ♖c8 21.♗g3 ♖d7 22.♖f3 ♗c5 23.♖d6+ ♗xd6 24.♗xd6 c5 25.♗f4 h6 26.b4 cxb4 27.cxb4 axb4 28.♖d4 b3 29.♖ac1+ ♖d8 30.a5 ♖e7 31.♗d2 ♖ha8 32.♗b4+ ♖d8 33.♖c3 b6 34.♖xe6+ fxe6 35.♖xe6 ♖c5 36.♖d6+ ♖c7 37.♖d1 ♖xa5 38.♗xa5 ♖xa5 39.♖b1 was the impressive way in which Dragon reached a draw. Even though the evaluation never went above 0.4, it looked quite a tough task for Black, ½-½ (39) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

And even Keres' 5.c4 offers more chances of an advantage, as does 5.♗xc6+.

5...b5 6.♗b3 ♖xd4 7.♖xd4 exd4



8.♗d5

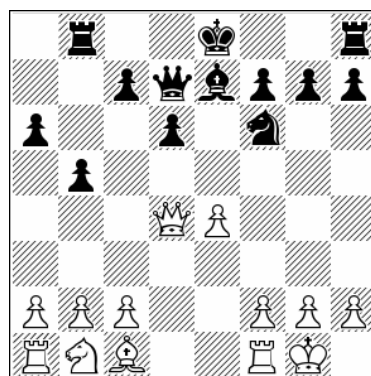
8.♖xd4?? c5 9.♖d5 ♗e6 10.♖c6+ ♗d7 11.♖d5 c4 is the famous Noah's Ark trap, overlooked by Alekhine in his book of the New York 1924 tournament!

8.c3 dxc3 9.♖d5 ♗e6 10.♖c6+ ♗d7 11.♖d5 (½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) is a well-known draw and an engine preference in this position... which makes you understand what they thought about 5.d4...

8...♖b8

Interestingly, the engines already slightly prefer Black in this position! Indeed, why not? The light-squared bishop on d5 will be exchanged, Black has freed his position by trading two pairs of minor pieces and has gained a little queenside space.

9.♗c6+ ♗d7 10.♗xd7+ ♖xd7 11.♖xd4 ♖f6 12.0-0 ♗e7



13.♖c3

13.♖d1 ♖e6 (sidestepping White's idea of e5; 13...0-0 14.e5) 14.♖c3 0-0 15.♖d5 was Stockfish's direct plan to assure equality, moving the e4-pawn to d5 to tie down the black queenside and following up by attacking the queenside with a4. Having nudged the black queen from d7 to e6, ♖d5 attacks c7 and forces an immediate reaction from Black. It's basically a souped-up version of the plan Hort played in the game.

15...♖xd5 16.exd5 ♖g6 17.♖d3 ♖fe8 18.a4 ♗f6 19.♖f1 ♖h5 20.h3 ♖e4 21.c3 ♖xa4 22.♖xa4 bxa4 23.♖e1 h6 24.♖xa6 a3 25.♖xa3 ♖xd5 26.♖a4 ♖a8 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

13...0-0

This was a well-known position even back in the 1920s, being reached as Black by both

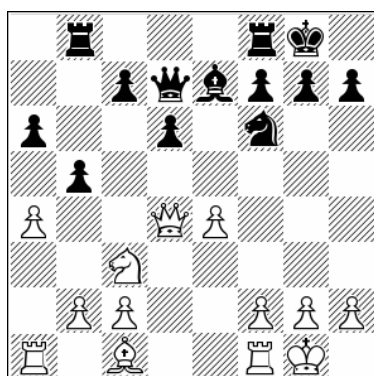
Capablanca and Alekhine. Black has no problems.

14.a4?

This move is much less well-timed than Stockfish's implementation. Strangely enough, White has some problems to develop his queenside and activate his queen's rook.

Another ineffective move is 14.♔g5, after which 14...b4 sets the nasty trap 15.♘d5?? ♘xd5 16.♙xd5 ♜b5. That claimed no less a player than Ossip Bernstein, in an exhibition game against Alekhine.

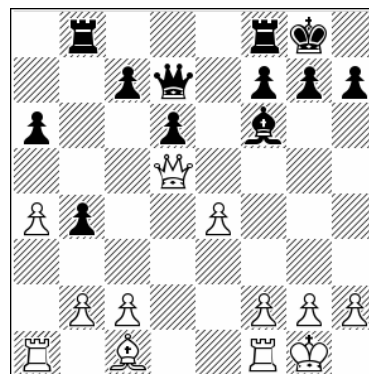
14.♔d2 was Stoltz-Alekhine, Bled 1931, when Black had an excellent game after 14...♜fe8 15.♙d3 b4 16.♘e2 ♙c6. The World Champion went on to win with a trademark kingside attack. Stockfish prefers the modest 14.a3, although White has no advantage at all, whilst 14.♞e1 ♜fe8 15.a3 a5 16.♙d3 ♔f8 17.♔e3 c6 18.f3 ♙c7 19.♔f2 (½-½ (26) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) was an alternative approach from Dragon, consolidating (f3), developing (♔e3) and awaiting developments (♔f2). Black's position feels as if it has a touch more potential, with disruptive ideas like ...b4 or a manoeuvre such as ...♘f6-d7-e5-c4, but White is solid and the position should be essentially balanced.



14...♜fe8?!

A decent move, but a more incisive continuation existed – similar to what Keres did in the game, only the effect is greater when you play it at a quicker pace.

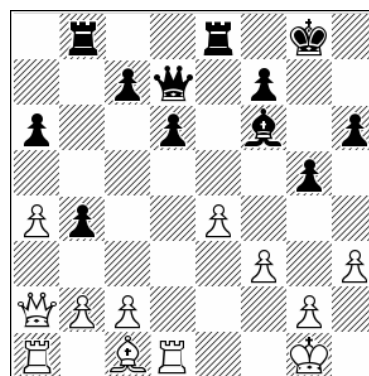
14...b4! is stronger, when 15.♘d5 (15.♘e2? ♙c6 (attacking two pawns) 16.e5 dxe5 17.♙xe5 ♔c5 with a large advantage) 15...♘xd5 16.♙xd5 (16.exd5 c5) 16...♔f6



analysis diagram

leaves Black with serious pressure against the white queenside.

17.♞d1 ♜fe8 18.f3 h6 (18...h5 19.h3 a5 20.♔h1 h4 was an alternative approach, when 21.♙xa5 ♙c6 hits the c2-pawn. Once again Dragon manages to extricate itself from this mess but it's clear that Black is bossing the position already, ½-½ (33) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 19.h3 g5 20.♙a2



analysis diagram

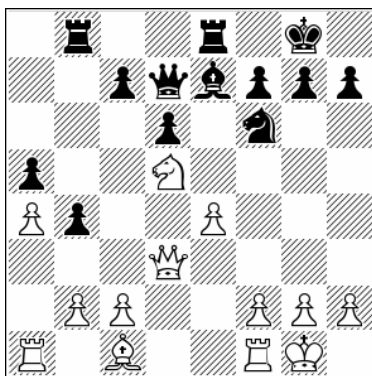
is Stockfish's genius idea to defend both a4 and b2 and allow ♔e3. Not sure I (Matthew) would have thought of it... or dared to play it if I did! 20...♙e6 21.♙d5 ♙xd5 22.♞xd5 ♔e5 23.♔d2 ♔xb2 24.♞b1 ♔e5 25.♞xb4 ♞xb4 26.♔xb4 ♞b8 27.♔a5 ♔g3 28.♔f1 c6 29.♞d1 ♞b2 30.♔c7. Somehow Stockfish held the position together but it was clearly extremely uncomfortable. It's quite shocking how difficult White's position could become after 16 fairly normal moves in a solid Lopez, ½-½ (39) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

15.♙d3 b4 16.♘d5 a5

A sensible move, removing the a-pawn from the attack of the queen on d3 and protecting the b4-

pawn, but the engines prefer to inject some more urgency into the position.

16...♔d8 was the engine preference, uncovering the attack of the rook on the e4-pawn: 17.♖xf6+ (17.♖xa6 ♗xe4 18.♙e3 c6 19.♗b6 ♖c7 20.a5 ♙f6 21.♖ab1 d5. Dragon kept things together but once again White is clearly in more danger than Black, ½-½ (42) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022; 17.f3 ♗xd5 18.exd5 a5 is slightly improved compared to the game as the kingside dark squares are a little weakened: 19.♙d2 ♙f6 20.c3 h5, looking for ...h5-h4-h3 to soften up the white kingside still further, ½-½ (35) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 17...♙xf6 18.♖xa6 ♖xe4 19.a5 h5 20.♖a2 c5 21.♖d3 ♖c6 22.a6 ♖a8 23.♙e3 c4 24.♖d2 ♖xa6 25.♖xa6 ♖xa6 26.♖xb4 ♖c6 27.c3 ♖e5 28.h3 ♖b5 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022 was again the slightly better side of a draw for Black.



17.b3?!

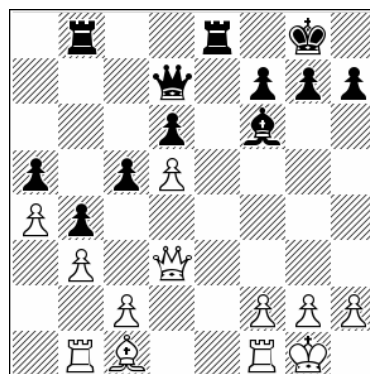
This protects the a4-pawn, freeing the rook on a1 from having to defend it while also freeing the dark-squared bishop from defending the b2-pawn. It's a little slower than 17.♙d2 as Black gains a tempo with ...♙f6 but the position is still easily within drawing boundaries.

17.♙d2 would have held the balance: 17...♙d8 (17...♗xd5 18.exd5 ♙f6 19.c3 is also equal) 18.♖fe1 c6 19.♗xf6+ ♙xf6 20.♖ab1 ♖e6 21.b3 ♖be8 22.♖e2 ♖c7 23.♖be1 is about the best White can aim for. The position is equal, ½-½ (27) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

17.♙f4 was Keres' suggestion, although he admitted that 17...♗xd5 18.♖xd5 ♙f6 'might perhaps have a rather disturbing effect'; the engine thinks Black has a large advantage and that giving up a pawn with 19.c3 is already

White's only hope. 19.♖xa5 ♙xb2 20.♖ab1 ♙c3 with ...♖a8 to follow, gives Black a decisive advantage.

17...♗xd5 18.exd5 ♙f6 19.♖b1 c5



Black has a very comfortable position, and White needs to play accurately in order not to fall into serious trouble.

20.♙f4?!

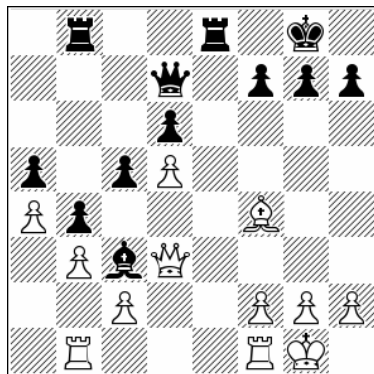
Keres dismisses 20.dxc6 ♖xc6 on the grounds that c2 is weaker than d6, but this was the universal reaction of the engines, which is interesting. Opening the c-file gives Black easy play against the c2-pawn; keeping the position closed emphasises the difference in scope between Black's and White's dark-squared bishop, but it isn't clear which factor is the most important. Well... not clear to human players. For engines, it's a big difference in evaluation! Not enough for a win yet, to be fair, but definitely requiring some accuracy from White: 21.♙e3 d5 22.♙d4 ♙xd4 23.♖xd4 ♖e4 24.♖d2 h6 25.♖bd1 ♖be8 26.♖xd5 ♖xc2 27.♖d2 ♖c3 28.♖d3 ♖c5 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish 161022-Roim, Classics 2022.

20.♙d2 ♙d4 21.♖be1 would have been my (Matthew's) natural inclination, though I had missed the engines' neat attempt to win the d5-pawn! 21...♖e5 22.♖xe5 dxe5 23.♖c4 h6 24.h3 ♖d8 25.c3 bxc3 26.♙xc3 ♖xd5 27.♖xd5 ♖xd5 28.♙xa5 c4 29.b4 ♙b2 30.b5 c3 31.b6 ♖d7 32.♙xc3 ♙xc3 33.♖b1 ♖b7 34.♖b5 ♙d4 35.a5 g6 36.h4 ♗f8 37.a6 ♖xb6 38.a7 ♖xb5 39.a8=♖+ ♗g7 40.h5 g5 41.♗h2 ♙xf2 42.♖e4 (½-½ (85) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) was a hard-earned white draw.

20...♙e5

Keres plays very directly, looking to use an exchange of the bishops on e5 to attack the d5-

pawn with a rook and seize control of the e-file with a doubling of the rooks. Keres also removes the pressure of White's bishop on the d6-pawn. The engines prefer a more roundabout plan this time but Keres' idea is also difficult to deal with. 20...♙c3 was probably even stronger, for example:



analysis diagram

A) 21.h3 h6 22.♖bd1 ♖bd8 23.♙d2 ♙xd2 24.♙xd2 ♖e4 25.♗fe1 ♗de8 26.c4 was Stockfish's cautious approach which eventually held a draw. c4 is a key achievement for White, protecting the d5-pawn and preventing Black's ...c4 break. The remaining weakness on b3 can be easily defended along the third rank by a white major piece: 26...♙f5 27.♗xe4 ♗xe4 28.♗e1 ♗d4 29.♙c1 ♙d3 30.♗e3 ♙d1+ 31.♙xd1 ♗xd1+ 32.♙h2 ♙f8 33.g4 ½-½ (43) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022;

B) 21.♙d2 gives Black a clever opportunity to corral the d5-pawn after 21...♙xd2 22.♙xd2 ♖e4 23.♗fe1. We see this idea in a later variation as well. Rather than try and hang on to the d5-pawn and concede control of the e-file, the engines prefer to jettison a pawn and maintain activity: 23...♗d4 24.♙e2 ♗xd5 25.♙f3 ♗f5 26.♙d3 g6 27.♗e2 ♙c6 28.♗be1 ♗c8 29.♗e7 ♗c7 30.♗e8+ ♙g7 31.h3 ♗d5 32.♙e4 c4 33.♙h4 g5 34.♙g4 cxb3 35.cxb3 ♙c3 36.♗e3 ♙d4. Stockfish eventually converted its extra pawn but it was far from easy against White's active major pieces, 0-1 (77) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022;

C) 21.♙a6 was my (Matthew's) initial thought, but the engines place domination far above the hunt for pawns! 21...♙f5 22.♙g3 ♙xd5 (22...h5 23.♙xa5 ♙xd5 24.♙a6 ♙e4 25.h4 ♖bd8 26.♙b5 d5 27.♖bd1 ♗c8 28.♗d3 d4 29.♗c1 g6 and Black was in complete control, 0-1 (89) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1,

Classics 2022) 23.♖bd1 ♙e4 24.♙xd6 ♖bc8 25.♙xa5 ♙d4 26.♙b5 ♗e6 27.♙g3 h5 28.h4 ♙xc2 29.♗d3 ♗f6 30.a5 ♙h7 31.a6 ♗a8 32.♗xd4 cxd4 33.♙xb4 ♗fxa6 34.♙xd4 ♙xb3 0-1 (108) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

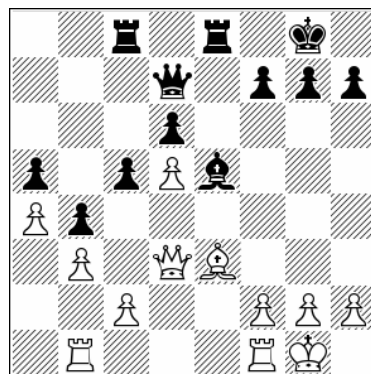
21.♙e3?!

21.♙xe5 ♗xe5 is a better try, as Keres notes: 22.♙a6 ♙c7 23.♗fe1. The engines typically look to deal with Keres' plan as actively as possible. Rather than defend the d5-pawn passively, both Stockfish and Komodo sacrifice it to open the line of attack against Black's d6-pawn behind it: 23...♙xd5 24.♖bd1 ♗xd1 25.♗xd1 ♗d8 26.♗d5 g6 27.g3 h5 28.h4 ♙g7 29.♙d3 ♙c6 30.♙h2 and progress was more or less impossible ½-½ (38) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

21...♗bc8

Keres plays very directly again, aiming to force through the desirable ...c4 break.

21...♙c3 22.♖bd1 ♙e7 23.g3 h6 24.♙f4 ♖bc8 25.♙d2 ♙xd2 26.♗xd2 g6 27.♙b5 ♙d8 28.♗e2 ♗xe2 29.♙xe2 c4 30.♗e1 cxb3 31.cxb3 h5 32.h4 ♗c5 was the engine approach – similar in intent, just with a different execution, ½-½ (125) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.



22.♙c4

Keres did not comment on this natural attempt to stop ...c4, but the engines think the cure worse than the disease. 22.♙d2 ♙g4 23.h3 ♙h4 24.♗fe1 c4 was powerful for Black but still better than the game continuation, which starts to place the white queen offside, ½-½ (53) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

22...♙f5

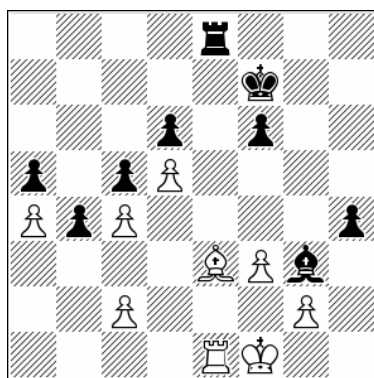
And now the engines think White is totally lost! The white queen is pinned to the c4-square to

defend c2 and prevent ...c4; meanwhile, Black can start to create threats on the kingside.

23. ♖b5

Hort loses patience at once and aims for a trade that the engines are dreaming of. After a move such as Keres' suggestion 23. ♖bd1, Black retains a large, almost decisive advantage with 23...h5, but the game continues.

24. ♖d3 ♖g4 25. ♕d2 ♖xc4 26. bxc4 ♕d4 27. ♖e1 ♖xe1+ 28. ♕xe1 g5 29. ♕d2 f6 30. ♖h3 h4 31. ♔f1 ♔f7 32. ♖d3 ♖g8 33. h3 g4 34. hxc4 ♖xg4 35. f3 ♖g8 36. ♕e3 ♕e5 37. ♖d1 ♕g3 38. ♔e2 ♕h2 39. ♔f1 ♖e8 40. ♖e1 ♕g3



analysis diagram

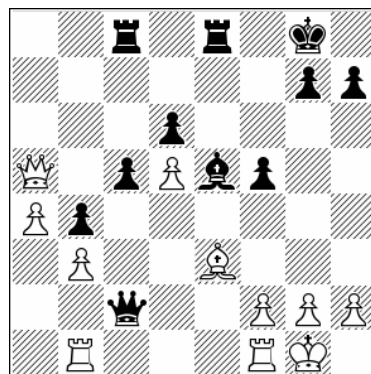
41. ♖e2 ♖h8 42. ♖d2 ♖b8 43. ♔e2 ♔g6 44. ♖d1 ♔f5 45. ♖d3 ♖e8 46. ♔f1 ♔g6 47. ♕f2 ♕xf2 48. ♔xf2 ♔g5 49. ♖d1 f5 50. c3 b3 51. ♖b1 ♖b8 52. g3 h3 53. ♔g1 f4 54. g4 ♔h4 55. ♔h2 ♖e8 56. ♖b2 ♖e3 57. g5 ♖xc3 58. g6 ♖c2+ 59. ♖xc2 bxc2 60. g7 c1=♖ 61. g8=♖ ♖d2+ 62. ♔h1 ♖d1+ 63. ♔h2 ♖e2+ 64. ♔g1 ♖e1+ 65. ♔h2 ♖g3+ was a beautiful grind from Dragon! 0-1 (75) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

23. h3 h5 24. ♖bc1 ♕b2 25. ♖cd1 ♕c3 26. ♖d3 ♖e4 27. ♖b5 c4 28. bxc4 ♖xc4 29. ♖xa5 b3 30. ♖xc3 ♖xc3 31. ♖xc3 ♖xc3 32. cxb3 ♖xb3 33. ♖c1 ♖d3 34. a5 ♖a8 35. ♖a1 ♖a6 36. ♕b6 ♖xd5 was just as effective from Stockfish! 0-1 (84) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

23... ♖xc2

The engines see this as a complete disaster for White, jumping to a -6 evaluation.

24. ♖xa5 f5!



Suddenly, the predicament of the ♕e3 renders White's game hopeless. Beautiful play from Keres, not trying to force anything on the queenside but exploiting the greater mobility of his pieces to create gains on the opposite wing.

25. f3

25. g3 f4 26. gxf4 ♖g6+ 27. ♔h1 ♕xf4 28. ♕xf4 ♖e4+ 29. f3 ♖xf4 30. ♖a6 c4 31. ♖bc1 c3 32. ♖c2 ♖f5 33. ♖cc1 ♖e3 34. ♖f2 c2 35. ♖b5 h6 36. ♔g2 ♖xb3 37. ♖e2 ♖g5+ 38. ♔h3 ♖bc3 was again beautiful play from Dragon, picking White's position apart, 0-1 (52) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

25... ♕b2

A materialistic approach from Keres, targeting the b3-pawn, but none the worse for it. The engines are already losing patience and looking to force a win, using threats against the white kingside along the second rank.

As Keres notes, Black has a wide and attractive choice here.

A) 25... ♕xh2+? 26. ♔xh2 ♖xe3 loses most of the advantage after 27. ♖a6 ♖d8 28. ♖b6 ♖ee8 29. ♖fe1 and White's activity and the passed a-pawn offer serious compensation;

B) 25... ♕d4 immediately is another engine win: 26. ♕xd4 cxd4 is completely winning, as is the text: 27. ♖fc1 ♖d2 28. ♖d1 ♖e3+ 29. ♔h1 d3 30. ♖xb4 ♖c2 31. ♖g1 d2 32. ♖bd1 ♖c1 33. ♖xd2 ♖xd2 34. ♖xc1 ♖b4 0-1 (64) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022;

C) But perhaps the most precise of all is 25...f4 26. ♕f2 ♕d4, when the engine evaluation is completely overwhelming. 27. ♕xd4 cxd4 28. ♖a6 d3 (28... ♖e2 – which is what I (Matthew) typed in automatically – fails to 29. ♖b2 ♖xg2+ 30. ♔h1 ♖xh2+ 31. ♔g1 with nothing better than a draw by repetition).

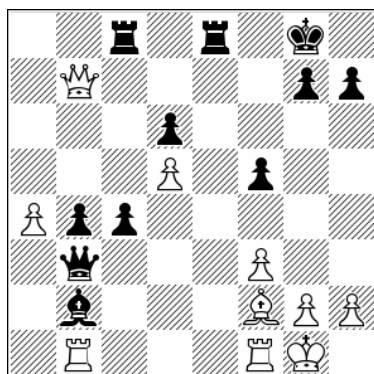
26. ♖a6

A good practical try, using the queen as actively as possible, although it should not change anything.

26... ♜xb3 27. ♕f2

27. ♖fe1 ♖a2 28. ♕f2 ♕c3 29. ♖f1 ♕e5 30. a5 ♖a8 31. ♜d3 f4 32. ♖fe1 ♜xa5 and little bits of White's position kept dropping off! 0-1 (56) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

27... c4 28. ♜b7



A sneaky move from Hort.

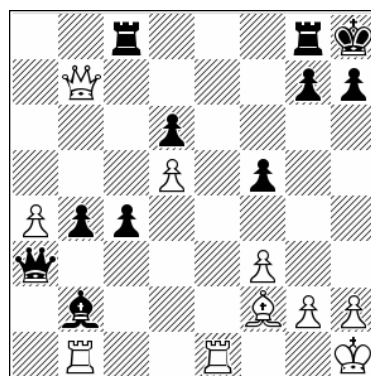
28... ♖b8?!

Keres starts to play a little nervously from this moment, after a tremendously smooth performance until now.

That's why you should never lose heart when playing over-the-board human chess – even the strongest players show cracks in their armoury at the most unexpected moments.

28... c3 29. ♕d4 was the horrifying idea, when White is winning as mate on g7 cannot be stopped! Keres avoids that, but the most precise was 28... ♖a3, just unpinning the bishop and freeing the path for the pawns, e.g. 29. ♖fe1 ♖f8! 30. ♖e2 ♕c3 31. ♜d7 (31. ♖c2 ♜xa4 32. ♖cc1 ♖a5 33. ♜d7 ♜xd5 shows that greed is often the simplest way in a better position! 0-1 (57) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 31... b3. Revealing another point of 28... ♖a3 – the d6-pawn is defended!

Another, similar engine approach was 28... ♔h8 29. ♔h1 ♖a3 30. ♖fe1 ♖g8.



analysis diagram

Very nice play! Black says 'Well, your one threat is to hit the g7-pawn. I'll deal with that in exaggerated fashion, and then you have nothing.' 31. h4 b3 32. ♜b6 ♕e5 33. ♔g1 ♖b8 34. ♖a5 ♖a2 35. ♕a7 ♖a8 36. ♔h1 b2 and that was pretty much it! 0-1 (43) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

29. ♖a7 ♖a8

29... ♜c2! is more accurate. Keres admitted that he rejected this because of 30. ♖xb2 ♜xb2 31. ♕d4, overlooking 31... ♖b7 which wins at once.

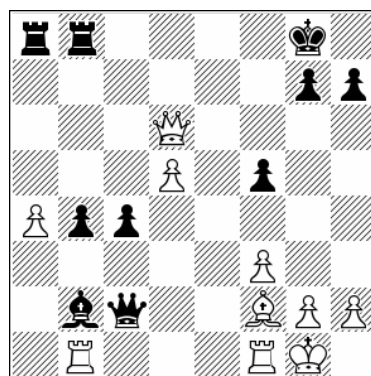
30. ♜b7 ♖eb8 31. ♜d7 ♜c2?

But this really does give away a large part of the advantage.

Instead, 31... ♖d8 is the engine choice, although 32. ♜xf5 ♖f8 33. ♖e6+ ♖f7 (33... ♔h8 34. ♜xd6 is also murky-looking, even though Black is still +2.5) 34. ♜xd6 c3 is perhaps a lot less clear to the human player than the engine (the latter gives it as almost +5 for Black).

There is also 31... ♔h8, which is again a favourite engine manoeuvre: 32. g3 c3 33. ♕d4 ♖g8 (perfectly safe!) 34. ♜xf5 ♖xa4 35. ♔g2 b3 0-1 (55) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

32. ♜xd6



White is still losing, but has gained a passed d-pawn with which to distract Black.

32...b3?!

Keres passes by this in silence, but it is another mistake.

32...♙c3 was clearer. The point is to free the black queen from having to defend the bishop, so that if White continues as in the game with 33.♖e6+ ♜h8 34.d6, Black now has 34...♙d3 (34...♙d2 35.♙d4 and White draws by perpetual after the sacrifice on g7). Even so, things are not so easy – in our engine game.

35.d7 ♙d2 36.♙e1 ♜xb1 37.♙xd2 ♙d3 38.♖e1 ♖g8 39.♙g5 c3 40.♜c6 ♙d4+ 41.♙e3 ♜e5 42.♙f2 ♜f6 43.♜d5 c2 44.♙d4 ♜f8 45.♙b2 b3 46.♜f1 ♖d8 47.h4 ♜b4 48.♜f7 ♖df8 49.♜e6 ♜xh4 50.♜xb3 ♙d8 51.♜e6 was quite a slog for Black. Dragon prevailed in the end, but in a human game, we could imagine all three results as possible, 0-1 (130) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

33.♜e6+ ♜h8 34.d6 ♙f6 35.♖fc1

Out of nowhere, White is winning the c4-pawn. Keres takes the best practical decision, gives up his queen and presses ahead with his monstrous queenside pawns. All the same, one suspects that Hort must have known he was fully back in the game as White's own passed d-pawn restricts Black's movements severely.

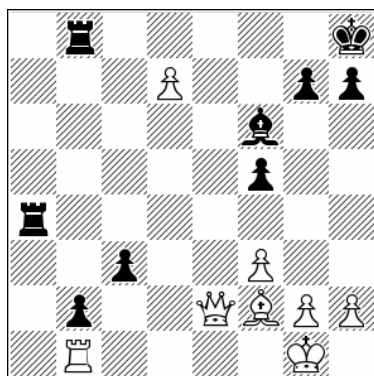
35...♜xc1+!

The move that made the game famous, but it is in fact the only way to preserve any advantage.

36.♖xc1 b2 37.♖b1 c3 38.♜e2!

38.♜xf5 ♖xa4 is worse, as Keres points out, since there is no good defence to the threat of ...♖a1.

38...♖xa4 39.d7



39...h6?!

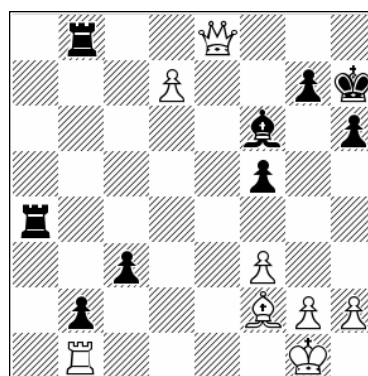
Keres is correct that the best move was 39...♖g8! but he was wrong to conclude that White has no good defence to ...♖a1. The engine shows that

White is holding after 40.h4 ♖a1 41.♜d3 ♖b8 (41...♖d8 42.♖e1!) 42.♜h2 h6 43.♜d6 ♖g8 44.♜d3 and there is no way for Black to make progress. The only try is 44...♖d8 45.♖e1 (45.♙b6 also holds) 45...♖xe1 46.♙xe1 ♖xd7 47.♜xd7 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

40.♜e8+

40.g4 is a nice idea, looking to set up a perpetual on g6 and e8: 40...♖a1 (40...fxg4 41.♜e8+ ♜h7 42.d8=♜ ♖xd8 43.♜xa4 gxf3 44.♙e1 is completely winning... well, White IS a queen up!) 41.♜e8+ ♜h7 42.gxf5 ♖xb1+ 43.♜g2 ♖xe8 (½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 44.dxe8=♜ ♖g1+ 45.♙xg1 b1=♜ 46.♜g6+ ♜h8 47.♜e8+ is a perpetual.

40...♜h7

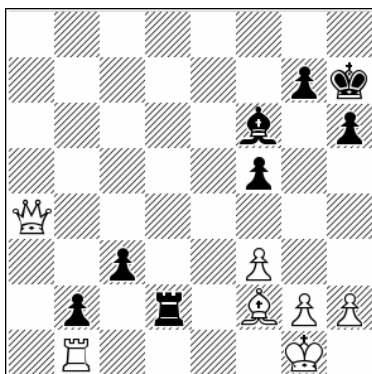


41.d8=♜??

Looks clever, but amazingly it loses on the spot! Keres correctly identified this as the losing move, and indicated 41.♜xb8! as correct. Now he pointed out that 41...♖a1? 42.♖f1 'draws', but in fact 42.♖e1! turns the tables completely and wins for White: 42...c2 43.d8=♜ ♙xd8 44.♜xb2.

Keres' main line was instead 41...c2 42.♜xb2! ♙xb2 43.♖f1, a clever but slightly odd way to achieve easy equality! 43...♖a8 44.♙b6 ♖a1 45.d8=♜ (45.♖xa1 ♙xa1 46.♜f2 c1=♜ ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 45...♖xf1+ 46.♜xf1 c1=♜+ 47.♜f2 ♙c3. This was all analysis by Keres, who thought Black had good winning chances, but the engine thinks it is just a draw after 48.g4 (or even 48.g3).

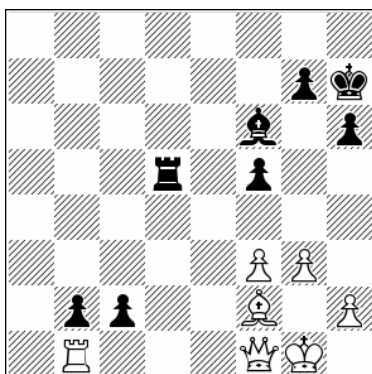
41...♖xd8 42.♜xa4 ♖d2!



The only move that does not actually lose, but it also wins. Black has only two pawns for the queen, but they are such pawns that there is no defence to 43...c2.

43.♖xb2

Keres analyses 43.♖b5 c2 44.♖f1 (44.♖xf5+ g6) 44...♞d5! which the engine confirms as the only winning move here. The point is to have ...♞d5-a5-a1. 45.g3.



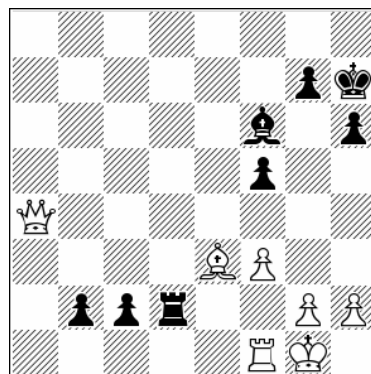
analysis diagram

Now Keres gave only 45...cxb1=♖ 46.♖xb1 g6 47.♔g2 ♙g7 and assumed the threat of ...♞d5-a5-a1 wins, but 48.♙e1 ♞c5 49.♙d2 stops everything and holds, as also does 48.g4 ♞a5 49.gxf5 ♞xf5 (49...♞a1?? 50.fxg6+ ♔h8 51.♖e4 leads to mate) 50.h4 ♞a5 51.♖e4 h5 (51...♞a1? 52.h5 again turns the tables) 52.♖b7 and the rook cannot leave the fifth rank because of ♙d4.

Instead, Black should play 45...♞a5! 46.♞xb2 ♙xb2 47.♙e3 ♞a1 48.♖xa1 ♙xa1 49.♙c1 f4! 50.gxf4 ♔g6 and Black wins the bishop ending.

The engine also gives some other tries for White, but all lose:

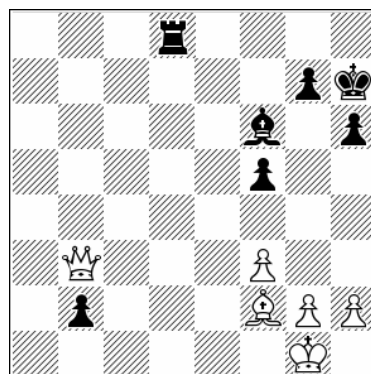
A) 43.♙e3 c2 44.♞f1



analysis diagram

44...♙d4! (spectacular, although 44...c1=♖ 45.♙xd2 ♖xd2 also wins) 45.♙xd4 b1=♖ 46.♖c4 ♖xf1+! 47.♔xf1 ♞d1+ 48.♔f2 c1=♖ and Black wins;
B) 43.♖c4 c2 44.♖f1 transposes to 43.♖b5;
C) 43.♞f1 c2 44.♖b5 c1=♖ 45.♖xf5+ g6 46.♖b1 ♞c2 47.♖a2 ♖d2 wins;
D) 43.♖e8 c2 44.♖e1 ♞d3 45.h4 ♞a3 46.♔h2 ♞a1 47.♞xb2 ♙xb2 48.♖e6 c1=♖ 49.♖xf5+ ♔g8 50.♖e6+ ♔h8 (0-1 (74) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 51.♖e8+ ♔h7 52.♖e4+ g6 53.♖e7+ ♙g7 54.♙d4 ♖f4+.

43...cxb2 44.♖b3 ♞d8



The rook is coming round to c8 or a8.

45.♖c2 ♞b8 46.♖b1

46.♖xf5+ g6 47.♖b1 ♞a8 makes no difference.

46...g6 47.g4 ♞a8 48.♔g2 ♞a1 49.♖c2 b1=♖ 50.♖c7+ ♙g7 51.♙d4 ♖f1+ 52.♔g3 f4+ 53.♔xf4 ♖c1+

Swapping off the queens! End of game.

0-1

Game 24 – Grünfeld Indian Defence

Tigran Petrosian

Mikhail Botvinnik

Moscow Wch m 1963

This was a crucial game in the 1963 World Championship Match. After a very nervous start, which saw him crushed as White in the opening game, Petrosian had drawn the next three and was still trailing at this stage. This model win did much to restore his confidence. As in Capablanca-Ragozin, engine investigation of the possible rook endgame sheds a new light on the game.

1.c4 g6 2.d4

This slightly unusual move-order is explained by the fact that in Game 1, Botvinnik had played the Nimzo-Indian and in Game 3, the Queen's Indian. 1.c4 aims to avoid both and now Petrosian offers a Grünfeld.

2...♢f6 3.♢c3 d5 4.♢f3 ♙g7 5.e3 0-0 6.♙e2

A very modest set-up, which has never been very popular.

6...dxc4!?

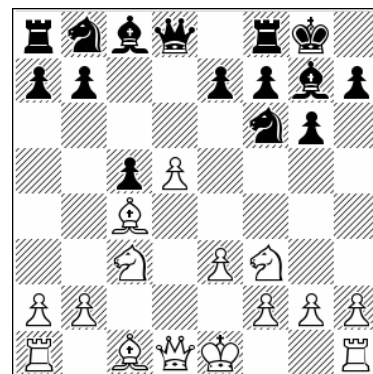
Objectively, this is not bad, but it does give Petrosian a slight 'nibble', which could have been avoided.

The best move is considered to be 6...c5.

This can lead to a reversed Tarrasch QGD position after 7.0-0 (7.dxc5 dxc4 8.0-0 ♢a6 9.c6 ♜c7 10.♙xc4 ♜xc6 11.♜e2 ♢c5 led to easy equality for Black, ½-½ (17) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 7...cxd4 8.exd4 (8...dxc4 9.♙xc4 ♜c7 (9...♙g4 10.d5 ♢bd7 11.♞e1 ♞c8 12.♙b3 ♢c5 13.h3 ♙xf3 14.♜xf3 b5 (½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 15.♢xb5 ♜a5 is the evil trap Black has in mind, hitting b5 and e1! After 16.♢c3 ♢xb3 White is unable to capture on b3 as a1 is hanging!) 10.♙b3 ♢c6 11.♞e1 ♢a5 12.♙g5 h6 13.♙h4 ♙g4 was also fine for Black, ½-½ (17) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 8...♢c6 9.c5 ♢e4 10.h3 b6 11.cxb6 ♢xc3 12.bxc3 axb6 and White's extra tempo in this position didn't impress the engines: they agreed a draw! ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

7.♙xc4 c5 8.d5

Black's move-order gives White this extra possibility.



8...e6

A strange choice from a practical point of view when facing an opponent both skilled in queenless positions and known for rejoicing in safety and the elimination of losing chances.

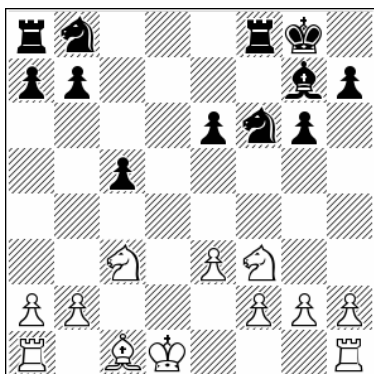
8...a6 9.a4 ♙g4 is the archetypal Grünfeld option and would lead to the complicated type of game that you would expect Botvinnik to enjoy.

10.e4 (10.0-0 ♢e8. A typical Grünfeld manoeuvre, opening the dark-squared bishop's diagonal, blockading the d5-pawn and supporting the advance of Black's queenside pawns with ...b5 and ...c4. 11.♜c2 ♙xf3 12.gxf3 ♢d6 13.♙e2 ♢d7 14.f4 f5 15.a5 b5 16.axb6 with a complicated game, ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 10...♢bd7 11.0-0 (11.h3 ♙xf3 12.♜xf3 ♢e8 13.0-0 ♢d6 14.♙e2 ♜a5 15.♙g5 ♞ae8. The position is balanced, but maybe slightly easier for Black to play: his forthcoming counterplay with ...♜b4 and ...♢e5 is easier to judge than White's follow-up, ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 11...♢e8 12.♙e2 ♢d6 13.♢g5 ♙xe2 14.♜xe2 b5 15.f4 b4 16.♢d1 ♞c8 17.e5. The engines agreed a draw here but there's clearly a sharp and exciting fight ahead (for human players!), ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

9.dxe6 ♜xd1+

9...♙xe6. Strangely enough, after 10.♙xe6 fxe6, the engines generally prefer to keep the queens on with 11.♙d2, although Black looked very comfortable after 11...a6 12.0-0 b5 13.♜c2 ♢bd7 14.♢e2 c4 which has the feel somewhat of a Semi-Slav Meran! ½-½ (33) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022. Botvinnik once again surprises by forcing the exchange of queens.

10.♢xd1 ♙xe6 11.♙xe6 fxe6



After the game, a story was circulated in the Soviet press, claiming that when this position arose during his pre-match preparation, Petrosian predicted that he would win it. Probably embarrassed by the implied *èse-majesté*, Petrosian himself hastened to correct this, claiming that he had merely said that the prospect of this position arising would not put him off playing the 5.e3/6.♟e2 system. White has a very small edge, not so much because the e6-pawn is exposed in itself, but because it gives White a splendid outpost on e4 for his pieces. Certainly, it is a very comfortable, risk-free edge for White, the sort of position where he can play ‘for two results’, and was possibly not a very wise choice by Botvinnik. He had been tortured for almost 90 moves in a similarly prospectless queenless middlegame in Game 3, and repeated suffering like this must have contributed to exhausting the 52-year-old World Champion.

12.♟e2

However, whilst Botvinnik’s choice of opening against Petrosian is surprising from a practical point of view, that’s not to say that he is objectively wrong with his assessment of the position as essentially fine for Black. The latter doesn’t have any particular compensation for the static weakness on e6, however, since the weakness is in the centre, it can be defended with a reasonably active king, which means that no black pieces should be tied to its defence for any prolonged period. For the rest, Black has perfectly reasonable chances to develop typical Grünfeld counterplay on the queenside supported by the dark-squared bishop on g7.

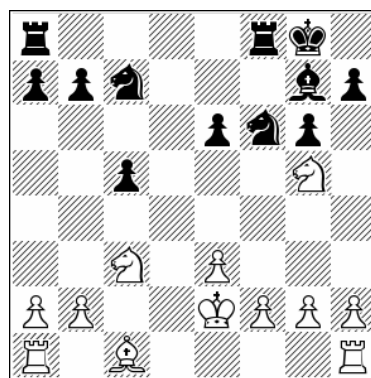
If one might make a criticism of Botvinnik’s play, it’s that he doesn’t follow up his opening

idea concretely. He aims for a static set-up and structure and essentially intends to wait for Petrosian to take action. Even this is perfectly playable, but it’s not a particularly inspiring outlook for human players. You may feel a little puzzled and ask, ‘How can you play this dull queenless middlegame position concretely?’ Well, that is one of the many things we can learn from engines. In this position, Black’s natural area of expansion is the queenside, where he enjoys a majority, so achieving ...b5 is definitely a goal. At the same time, Black needs to watch out for ♖g5 from White: the attack on e6 is irritating, and if you chase the knight away it simply retreats to a good square e4. The engines’ choice of next move does a super job of addressing both of these key positional points.

12...♟c6

12...♟d5 was recommended in various sources, aiming to exchange knights. Then after 13.♟e4 ♟d7 14.♟d1 Petrosian claimed a slight initiative, but the engine prefers 13.♟d2! ♟xc3+ 14.♟xc3 ♟xc3 15.bxc3, which it assesses as clearly better for White, thanks to the open b-file and the prospect of undermining the black queenside by provoking ...b6 and then running ‘Alfred’ (or should that be ‘Arry’?) down the board with a2-a4-a5.

Instead, 12...♟a6 13.♟g5 ♟c7 is the concrete engine idea.

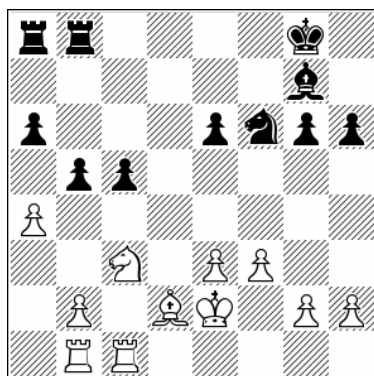


analysis diagram

The knight on c7 defends e6, leaving the black rooks free, while supporting ...b7-b5.

14.a4 (14.♟d2 b5 15.♟ab1 c4 16.♟hc1 ♟fb8 17.♟ce4 ♟xe4 18.♟xe4 a5 19.a4 ♟d5 20.♟c5 ♟b6 21.axb5 ♟xb5 22.♟xc4 ♟c8 23.♟bc1 ♟b6 24.♟4c2 ♟xb2 25.♟xb2 ♟xb2 26.♟b1 ♟c4 27.♟a4 ♟xd2 28.♟xb2

♖e4 29.♗d3 ♖c5+ 30.♖xc5 ♖xc5 31.♖b8+ ♗g7
 32.♖b7+ ♗g8 33.♖b8+ showed the activity that
 Black generates if White leaves Black's
 queenside expansion unchecked ½-½ Stockfish-
 Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 14...b6 15.♖b1 a6
 (preparing ...b5) 16.♙d2 h6 17.♗ge4 ♖cd5
 18.♗xf6+ ♗xf6 19.f3 ♖fb8 20.♖hc1 b5



analysis diagram

and Black is again very active. The weakness on
 e6 is completely irrelevant: 21.♗d1 ♖c8 22.b3 g5
 23.♖a1 ♗d7 24.♖a2 ♖ab8 25.axb5 axb5 26.♖a7 ♗b6
 27.♖a5 ♗d5 28.g3 c4 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1,
 Classics 2022.

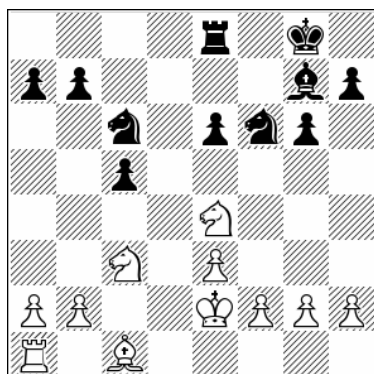
13.♖d1

13.♗g5 is most accurate and would probably
 transpose into the game.

13...♖ad8 14.♖xd8 ♖xd8 15.♗g5 ♖e8

Petrosian correctly observes that 15...e5? is
 positionally repulsive, but, strangely, he fails to
 notice that it just drops a pawn at once after
 16.♗e6.

16.♗ge4



16...♗xe4

Even if it's only a little inaccuracy, you do
 wonder why Black needs to make this exchange
 right now.

16...b6 17.♖b1 ♗f8 18.♙d2 ♗e7 was the engine line
 and seems very logical. At various times during
 the opening phase, it feels as if Botvinnik is
 aiming directly for a certain type of static
 structure he expects to hold, without paying too
 much attention to nuances.

19.♗g5 h6 20.♗ge4 ♗d5 21.♖c1 ♖xc3+ 22.♙xc3
 ♙xc3 23.bxc3 ♗e5 24.h4 ♗c4 25.h5 gxh5 26.♖h1
 ♖g8 27.♖xh5 ♗d6 28.♗xd6 ♗xd6 29.♖xh6 ½-½
 Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

17.♗xe4 b6 18.♖b1 ♗b4

18...♖c8 19.♙d2 ♗e7 20.g3 c4 was a plan I
 (Matthew) liked for Black, not giving up on the
 goal of gaining queenside space: 21.♗g5 ♖c6 22.f4
 h6 23.♗f3 c3 24.bxc3 ♙xc3 25.♖b3 ♙xd2 26.♗xd2
 ♖c5 27.♖d3 ♗d5 28.a3 ♗g7 29.h3 ♗f6 30.♗e5 g5
 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

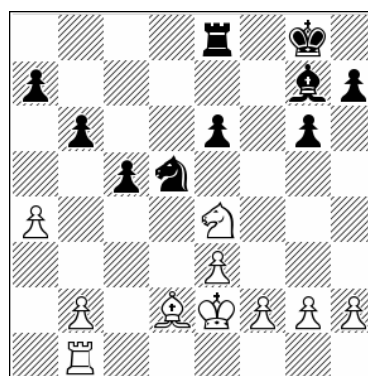
19.♙d2

As Petrosian mentions, 19.a4 would probably
 just have transposed to the game.

19...♗d5

19...♗xa2? 20.♖a1 ♗b4 21.♙xb4 cxb4 22.♖xa7 ♙xb2
 23.♖b7 is very pleasant for White: 23...♙c3
 24.♖xb6 h6 (trying to fight against the kingside
 squeeze with 24...h5 loses a pawn after 25.♗g5)
 25.h4 ♗g7 26.g4 etc.

20.a4



Petrosian starts to apply some restraint to
 Black's queenside expansion, first by holding
 back ...b5 and then by dissuading ...c4.

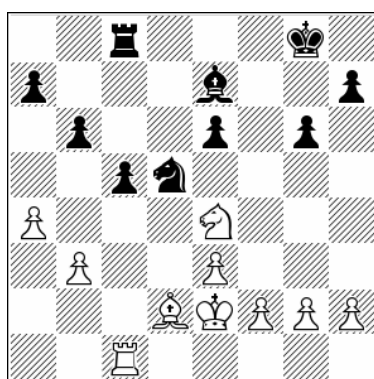
20...♖c8 21.b3 ♙f8

Botvinnik sets up for a long siege, transferring
 the bishop away from the long diagonal to the
 f8-a3 diagonal. In all fairness, from e7 the bishop
 both defends against ♗g5 and supports a
 future ...a6 and ...b5, by protecting c5. One would
 have liked a more active approach at times, but

there's nothing really wrong with Black's position. So far, White has just managed to swap off a rook and knight, get the queenside developed and put a little hold on Black's queenside pawn majority – essentially nothing to scare Black at all yet.

22.♖c1 ♗e7

Petrosian notes that this move was almost unanimously criticised by the commentators, but after 22...♖c7 23.♗g5 'it is difficult for Black to defend'. In fact, the engine sees nothing particularly decisive after 23...♖e7, e.g. 24.h4 h6 25.♗e4 and White retains a small edge, although Black has managed to prevent the break b4.



23.b4!?

Petrosian sharpens up the position considerably. Quiet play didn't bring the engines any joy: 23.♗c3 ♗f7 24.h4 h5 25.g3 ♖d8 26.♗d2 ♗f6 27.♗xf6 ♗xf6 (the engines were always keen to exchange off the dark-squared bishops as Black) 28.f3 ♗e7 29.a5 ♖c8 30.axb6 axb6 31.♖a1 ♖c7 32.♖a8 ♗d7 33.♖a3 b5 34.♖a5 c4 (a precisely-calculated liquidating manoeuvre) 35.♖xb5 c3 36.♗c4 ♗c5 37.♗a3 ♗xb3 38.♖xb3 c2 39.♗xc2 ♖xc2+ 40.♗f1 ♖c1+ 41.♗g2 and the rook and four pawns against rook and three pawns ending is a draw, 1/2-1/2 Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

23...c4!?

Not a bad move but definitely risky: the c4-pawn will be cut off from the rest of Black's structure, which means Black will need to handle his pieces properly to keep things under control. That's not necessarily a bad thing, but the chance of a mistake is certainly higher now. 23...♗f8 was the engine move. It seems counter-intuitive to accept an isolated c-pawn, but in fact the additional open b-file, the extra freedom of

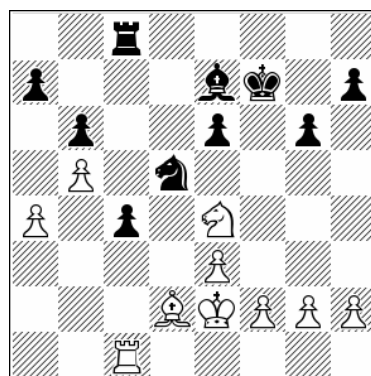
the c-pawn (no longer restricted by a pawn on b3) and the weakness of White's a-pawn give Black plenty of activity in return: 24.bxc5 bxc5 25.♖b1 c4 26.♗c3 ♗b4 27.♖b2 a5 (plenty of active squares now available for the black pieces) 28.♗e4 g5 29.♗c3 ♗f7 30.♗d1 ♗g6 31.♖d2 ♗d3 32.♗xa5 1/2-1/2 Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022. 32...♖a8 will regain the pawn with equality.

24.b5

Now the battle revolves around whether the passed pawn on c4 can be held.

24...♗f7

24...c3 was mentioned by Petrosian as satisfactory, but instead of his 25.♗xc3 ♖c4 26.♗d3 ♖xa4 27.♗e5, with only a small plus, 25.♗xc3! is a complete refutation: 25...♗xc3+ (if 25...♗f6, 26.♗e4 ♖xc1 27.♗xf6+ ♗xf6 28.♗xc1 wins) 26.♖xc3 ♗c5 27.e4 and White wins comfortably.



25.♗c3!

The start of Petrosian's intended regrouping. The bishop blockades the pawn, the knight will come to d2 and then White will play g3 (to take the f4-square) and then kick away the enemy knight with e4.

25...♗a3

Now the engines consider this ineffective and want instead to gain space on the kingside with 25...g5. For example, 26.♗d2 ♗f6 (using tactics once again to trade the c-pawn for White's a-pawn) 27.♗xf6 ♗xf6 28.♖xc4 ♖xc4 29.♗xc4 ♗c3+ 30.♗f3 ♗xa4 31.♗d6 h5 (1/2-1/2 Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 32.♗c8 ♗c3 33.♗xa7 e5 34.e4 ♗e6 and the black king moves to the b5-pawn while Black's kingside advances prevent the white king from entering there.

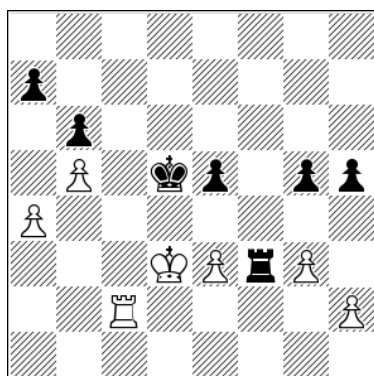
26.♖c2 ♗xc3+

Not the engines' favourite move, but still quite acceptable for Black. The main drawback to the move is that Black is now absolutely committed to active play: he must achieve some tactical goal with the c-pawn or he runs the risk of ending up in an endgame with a much inferior minor piece... as happens in the game. The higher the need for activity and accuracy, the more likely is a mistake.

26...♙e7 27.♘d2 ♜f6 would be similar to 25...g5, ½-½ (40) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

27.♞xc3 ♟b4 28.♞c2 ♙e7

A little cautious. 28...e5 is the engines' first choice and was also recommended by Petrosian. Black frees a route for his king to reach d5: 29.♘d2 (29.♘g5+ ♙f6 30.♘h7+ ♙f5 is a bit of an adventure for the white knight) 29...♙xd2 30.♙xd2 g5 31.♙c3 ♙e6 32.f3 h5 33.g3 ♞f8 34.♙xc4 ♞xf3 35.♙d3 ♙d5 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022. Black is active enough to be able to deal with the loss of the a7-pawn.



analysis diagram

For example: 36.♞c7 h4 37.♞d7+ ♙c5 38.gxh4 gxh4 39.♞xa7 ♞h3 40.♞c7+ ♙d5 41.a5 e4+ 42.♙d2 ♞xh2+ 43.♙c3 bxa5 44.b6 ♞h1 45.♙b2 ♞h2+ 46.♙a3 ♞h1 with a draw by repetition.

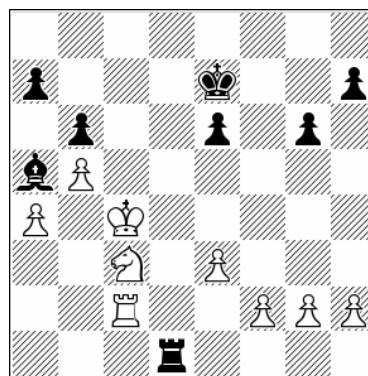
29.♘d2 c3

Petrosian recommended going into the rook ending here with 29...♙xd2 30.♙xd2 ♞d8+, but instead of 31.♙c3 ♞d1, which transposes to the position considered below, there is 31.♙c1 ♞c8 32.♙b2 followed by ♙c3, with excellent winning chances.

30.♙e4 ♟a5 31.♙d3 ♞d8+ 32.♙c4 ♞d1

32...♞d2 is now met by 33.♙b3 when the pawn still being on f2 means that 33...♞d3? does not attack e3.

33.♙xc3



33...♞h1

33...♙xc3 34.♙xc3, transposing to a rook endgame a pawn down, is uniformly recommended by commentators as the best option. Indeed it isn't hard to understand that this is more or less Black's only chance. Once the white knight leaves c3 and moves to e4, the disparity in strength between the centralised knight on e4 – which protects f2, restricts the black king by covering f6 and d6 and is ever ready to attack Black's kingside or queenside pawns from g5 (hitting e6 and h7), f6 or d6-c8 – and the bishop on a5 which does absolutely nothing, is enormous. In fact, after Botvinnik misses this chance with 33...♞h1, the engine evaluation moves from +0.33 to +7! It's a huge lapse of judgement from Botvinnik, but perhaps shows the difficulty human players often experience in assessing transitions to pure rook and pawn endgames.

At first sight, the rook endgame doesn't look too attractive for Black. His pawn structure is broken (three pawn islands to White's two and an isolated pawn on e6; White also has the open c-file as an invasion point into the seventh rank to attack and an outpost on c6 for the rook, thanks to the queenside space advantage conferred by the pawns on a4 and b5. However, endings are more often than not about combined piece attacks and the creation of passed pawns, and White has significant difficulties in both. You'll see in the game how White was able to involve the king, knight and rook in attacking the e6-pawn and the black king. Here White is struggling both to involve the king in the struggle and to find entry paths.

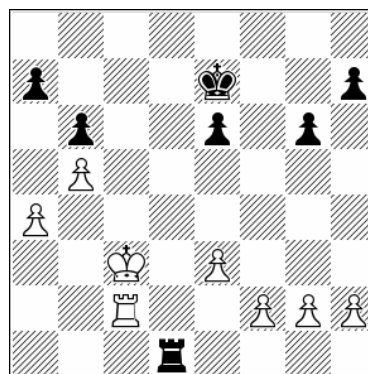
The black rook is covering the d-file for the moment (preventing ♔c3-d4-e5) while even once the king reaches d4, it has to find a way past the shouldering black king ...♔d6/...♔f6.

A passed pawn is a similarly problematic story: in the Capablanca-Ragozin ending we have looked at previously, White already had a passed pawn. Here, White's pawn advantage is on the kingside but it looks very unlikely that White will manage to create a passed pawn there... at the very least, it looks some way away. To create a passed pawn, White is likely to have to 'generate' one by reaching deep into Black's position with his rook and capturing pawns; however, this leaves White's own pawns open to attack by the black rook.

Looking at White's pawns, we might think of the game Capablanca-Ragozin and look for a way to anchor White's rook and protect White's kingside and queenside pawns in order to allow the king to roam free. Once again, however, there are a few problems: the white queenside pawn chain starts at a4, which means White's rook must be on the fourth rank to anchor itself (e.g. f4/g4 or e4). However, the rook is quite vulnerable to pawn attack on the fourth rank (...g5/...h5/...e5), while even after anchoring the rook it isn't easy to see how the 'free' white king is going to profitably exploit its freedom, as the invasion paths into the black position are not obvious. In other words, White's most likely course of action is to invade with the rook, capture a pawn on the seventh rank (preferably on the queenside) and try to turn the advanced queenside pawns on a4 and b5 into one or more passed pawns. Meanwhile, Black is going to harry both White's kingside pawns and the a4-pawn.

We ran a great many engine games from this position and only have space to present a few, but the general factors discussed above can be seen clearly. (We also ran numerous engine games with 34.♖xc3, but the results were basically the same – Black draws with reasonably accurate play, in every line. Because of space constraints and the fact that the themes and

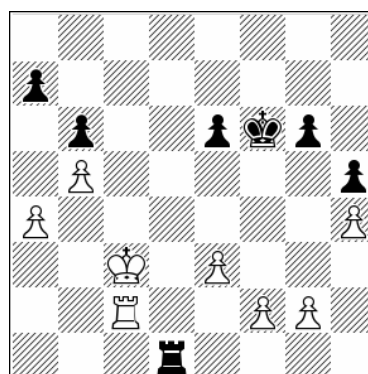
ideas are the same as after 34.♔xc3, we have not reproduced any of those examples here, although interested readers can of course run their own engine games from the position.)



analysis diagram

A) 34...h5 35.h4

(the more direct 35.a5?! did not bring White success: 35...g5 36.♔c4 ♔f6. Black is able to bring the king over to the kingside as the white king has no entry path on the queenside. The rook stays on d1 to bar the use of the d-file, which would also free the c-file for the white rook: 37.a6 ♔e5 38.f3 h4 39.♔b4 (hoping to play ♖c7) 39...♖b1+ (39...♔d6 is another way to stop the threat: 40.♔c4 e5 41.e4 ♔e6 42.♔c3 ♖b1 43.♔d3 ♖b3+ 44.♔c4 ♖b1 45.h3 ♖d1. White is getting nowhere, because he cannot penetrate with either king or rook ½-½ (49) Dragon 2.6-Lc0, Classics 2022) 40.♔c4 ♖h1 41.g3 h3 (note the point made above: advancing the pawns as close to queening as possible. Now White is always in danger of losing a passed pawn race if he abandons h2, and Black also has possible ...♖h1-g1-♖g2 ideas) 42.♖d2 ♖c1+ 43.♔d3 ♖b1 ½-½ (45) Lc0-Dragon 2.6, Classics 2022) 35...♔f6

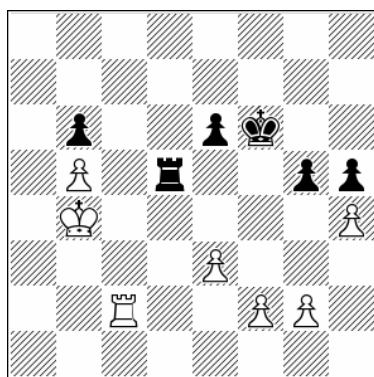


analysis diagram

36.a5

(another idea is 36.♖d2, chasing Black's rook off the d-file, and preparing either entry to d7 or transfer to f4: 36...♖c1+ 37.♔b2 (37.♔d4 ♖a1) 37...♖f1 (chasing the white king to the second rank means that ...♖xf2+ will come with tempo) 38.♔b3 ♖b1+ 39.♔a2 ♖f1 40.♔a3 ♖a1+ 41.♔b4 ♖b1+ 42.♔c3 ♖c1+ 43.♔b2 ♖f1. Once again, White cannot free his king or rook. 44.f3 ♖g1 (once the f-pawn is secured, Black immediately fastens onto the g-pawn) 45.♖c2 g5 (Black continues with his counterplay; now, if the g2-pawn falls, h5 will be passed) 46.hxg5+ ♔xg5 47.♖c7 ♖xg2+ 48.♔c3 ♖f2 49.f4+ ♔g4 50.♖xa7 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 2.6, Classics 2022)

36...♖d5 37.axb6 (37.♔b4 a6! is a nice touch) 37...axb6 (37...♖xb5 38.bxa7 ♖a5 feels like a draw too) 38.♔b4 g5



analysis diagram

and now:

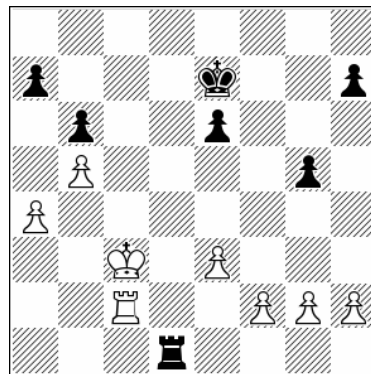
A1) 39.g3 gxh4 40.gxh4 ♖d1 (White is now ready to play ♖c6, so Black must counterattack) 41.♖c6 ♖h1 42.♖xb6 ♖xh4+ 43.♔b3 ♖h1 44.♖b8 ♖b1+ 45.♔c2 ♖b4 46.♔c3 ♖b1 47.♔d4 h4 48.♔c5 (the other plan of bringing the king to the kingside also did nothing: 48.♔e4 h3 49.♖h8 ♖xb5 50.♖h6+ ♔g7 ½-½ Dragon 2.6-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 48...♔g7! (stopping ♖h8) 49.♖b7+ ♔g6 50.♖b8 ♔g7 51.♖b7+ ♔g6 52.♖e7 h3 53.♖xe6+ ♔g7 54.♖e7+ and White has to take the draw;

A2) 39.hxg5+ ♖xg5 40.g3 ♖g4+ 41.♔b3 ♖g5 42.♔b4 ♖g4+ 43.♔c3 ♖g5 44.♔b2 ♖d5 is again quite illustrative – the advance a5 always leaves the b5-pawn potentially vulnerable: 45.♔b4 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 2.6, Classics 2022;

A3) 39.♖c6 gxh4 40.♖xb6 ♖g5 41.♖b8 ♖xg2 42.♖h8 ♖g1 43.♖xh5 ♖h1 44.b6 h3 45.♔c5 h2 46.b7 ♖b1

47.♖xh2 ♖xb7 48.♔d4 ♖b2 49.♔e4 ♖b4+ ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 2.6, Classics 2022.

B) The second try is 34...g5. This feels more natural than 34...h5, as that gives White the opportunity of anchoring with h4 and ♖f4. The engines consider both lines interchangeable.



analysis diagram

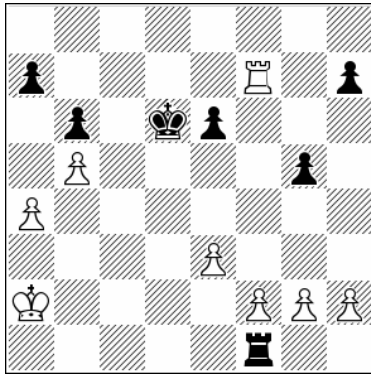
Now we tested various moves:

B1) 35.g4 tries to hold up Black's kingside pawns: 35...♔f6 36.a5 ♖d5 (once again the theme of answering a5 by fastening onto the freshly-weakened b5-pawn) 37.axb6 (37.♔b4 a6! 38.bxa6 ♖xa5 39.♖c7 ♖xa6 40.f3 h5 41.gxh5 ♖a2 ½-½ (43) Crystal-Dragon 2.6, Classics 2022) 37...♖xb5 38.bxa7 ♖a5 39.♔d2 ♖xa7 and with the pawns all on one side, the ending is a draw;

B2) 35.a5 has the same problem as in the 34...h5 line – White has no way to enter with his king or rook: 35...♔d6 36.f4 gxf4 37.exf4 bxa5 38.♖a2 ♖h1 39.g3 ♔c5 40.♖xa5 ♖xh2 41.♖xa7 ♖g2 42.♖g7 ♔xb5 ½-½ (52) Dragon 2.6-Lc0, Classics 2022;

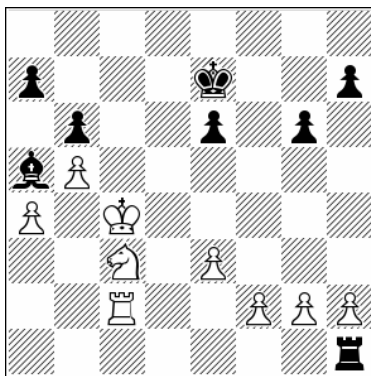
B3) 35.♖d2 is another idea we saw after 34...h5 – White tries to seize the d-file. Once again, though, it leads nowhere after 35...♖g1 36.g3 ♖a1 37.♖d4 ♖a2 38.f3 ♖xh2 39.♖c4 ♔d6 40.♔d3 h5 and Black has enough counterplay, ½-½ Crystal-Dragon 2.6, Classics 2022;

B4) 35.♔b3 ♖b1+ (again, 35...♔d6 is also adequate) 36.♔a2 ♖g1 draws in similar fashion to the variations above. 36...♖f1? is an instructive mistake: 37.♖c7+ ♔d6 38.♖f7!.



analysis diagram

Anchoring nicely, defending the kingside while attacking a7 and h7. White went on to win from here: 38...h5 39.h3 g4 40.hxg4 hxg4 41.g3 d5 42.ea3 Ra1+ 43.b4 Bb1+ 44.c3 Rc1+ 45.d3 Rd1+ 46.e2 Ra1 47.Rd7+ c5 48.Rd4 (anchoring again) 48...Ra2+ 49.f1 e5 50.Rxg4 Ra3 51.Rc4 d5 52.f3 Ra1+ 53.g2 Ra2+ 54.h3 Rf2 55.g4 1-0, Lc0-Dragon 2.6, Classics 2022.



34. d4

34.d4 is the engine move, not even bothering about 34.e4 yet. Now after 34...xc3+ 35.Rxc3 the rook ending is winning for White, because the black rook is out of play and White's king is more active.

35...d7 (35...Rxh2 36.Rc7+ d6 37.Rxa7 Rh4+ 38.c3 g5 39.f3 g4 40.e4 Rh1 41.Rb7 c5 42.Rc7+ d6 43.Rc6+ e5 44.Rxb6 Rc1+ 45.b2 Rg1 46.fxg4 Rxg2+ 47.c3 1-0 Crystal-Dragon 2.6, Classics 2022) 36.h3 Rh2 37.f4 Rxg2 38.e5 g5 39.f6 gxf4 40.Rd3+ e8 41.exf4 Rg6+ 42.e5 h5 43.Rd6 Rg3 44.Rxe6+ f7 45.Rc6 h4 46.Rc7+ g6 47.f5+ h6 48.Rxa7 Rxh3 49.Ra6 Re3+ 50.d5 Rf3 51.Rxb6+ h5 52.Rb8 g5 53.Rh8 Rd3+ 54.c5 1-0 Crystal-Dragon 2.6, Classics 2022.

34... Rxh2

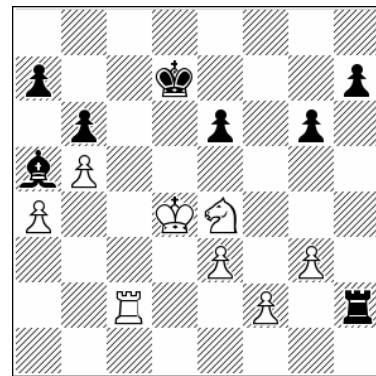
We also tested lines where Black avoids putting the rook offside on h2, but White won every time: 34...Rd1 35.dg5 h5 36.d3 f3 37.d4 f6 38.e4 Rxa4+ 39.d4 e1 40.f4 Ra3 41.Rc6 1-0 (69), Stockfish- Dragon 2.6, Classics 2022.

35. d4 d7

35...h5 36.Rc7+ d8 37.Rxa7 c8 (37...Rxg2 38.e5 c8 39.Rh7 1-0 Dragon 2.6-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 38.g3 b8 39.Rg7 1-0 Stockfish-Dragon 2.6, Classics 2022.

36. g3

The most natural human move, solidly defending the kingside pawns, as Black cannot stop further progress by White in the centre. The engines also won with the alternative 36.f6+ d8 37.f4 b4 38.e5 c5 39.xe6 Rh4 40.g3 1-0 Dragon 2.6-Stockfish, Classics 2022.



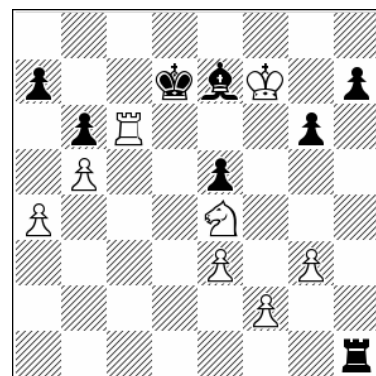
36... b4 37. e5 Rh5+

On 37...e7, 38.Rd2+ wins the e6-pawn, so Black cannot keep the white king out.

38. f6 e7+ 39. g7

39.f7 Rf5+ 40.g7 was also very strong.

39... e5 40. Rc6 Rh1 41. f7



The sealed move, preparing Re6, which will drive the enemy bishop from its ideal defensive position and force it to yield control of either f6/g5 or d6.

Not many moves were needed the following day:

41...♖a1 42.♞e6 ♕d8 43.♞d6+ ♔c8 44.♔e8 ♕c7 45.♞c6 ♞d1

45...♞xa4 46.♔c3.

46.♔g5 ♞d8+ 47.♔f7 ♞d7+ 48.♔g8 1-0

Game 25 – French Defence

Milan Matulovic

Mark Taimanov

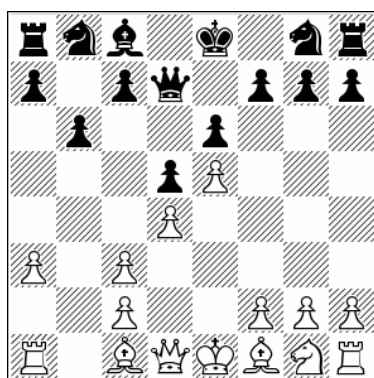
Leningrad-Belgrade m 1964

In opening terms, Mark Taimanov is most famous as a Sicilian specialist and this is one of few games from his mature years in which he plays any other defence to 1.e4. In the absence of his own notes to the game (it is not in his best game collection), one can only speculate about what made him forsake his usual weapon, but a certain English WIM and former co-author of Matthew's would doubtless wish to point out that Matulovic was pretty much the only strong GM to have regularly played the Morra Gambit...

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♔c3 ♕b4 4.e5 ♞d7 5.a3 ♕xc3+

5...♕f8 is the alternative approach for Black, so as to avoid donating large numbers of dark squares, but then Black's position suffers more from cramp.

6.bxc3 b6



'Slow' Frenches – where Black delays central play with ...c5 in favour of quiet development – have attracted every French player at some moment in their career. Faced with a series of complex and memory-intensive lines such as the Winawer Poisoned Pawn (1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♔c3 ♕b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♕xc3+ 6.bxc3 ♔e7 7.♞g4 cxd4 8.♞xg7 ♞g8 9.♞xh7 ♞c7), it remains the

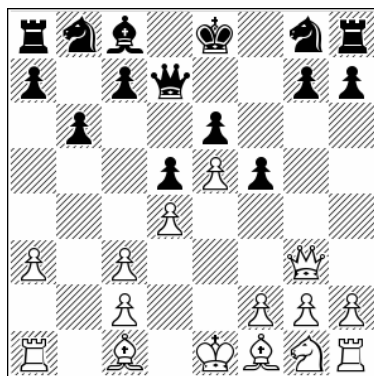
holy grail to find a safer line that might curb the attacking intent of a White 3.♔c3 player. Unfortunately, despite a couple of model games by Petrosian, Black players have generally scored quite disappointingly in such systems (Petrosian included!). Until a few years ago, chess engines might struggle as White in these slow-moving and strategical positions, but since the advent of neural net engines (AlphaZero and Leela, of course, but also the modern series of NNUE engines led by Stockfish and Komodo), this type of approach in the French has started to have the smell of a forced win for White! Ideally, White should combine quick gains right out of the opening (achieved while Black is papering over the dark square weaknesses caused by the early 5...♕xc3+) with a patient approach in the middlegame to build methodically on the spoils of the opening phase. Black is playing to drain the life from White's position, primarily by slowly tightening his grip on the queenside light squares. For example, exchanging off the light-squared bishops and installing a knight on the invulnerable c4-outpost are typical achievements in which Black players rejoice.

7.a4

A typical and strong idea from Matulovic: it was also one of Dragon's chosen moves. 7.a4 takes control of some queenside light squares (for example, it prevents the typical French blockading move ...♞a4) and frees a3 for the dark-squared bishop. From a3, the bishop cuts across the black position, causing the black king a little anxiety. Furthermore, 7.a4 is directed against Black's principal plan of ...♕a6, exchanging off light-squared bishops. After ♕xa6 ...♔xa6, White is ready to place a pressure point on Black's queenside with a5. It's not enough for the win, but combined with White's coming kingside play (starting with ♞g4) it can prove difficult for Black to deal with simultaneous attacks from opposite wings.

7.♞g4 is the main alternative and Stockfish's favourite move. 7...f5 (7...f6 was tried once by Stockfish in our engine matches. It survived, but

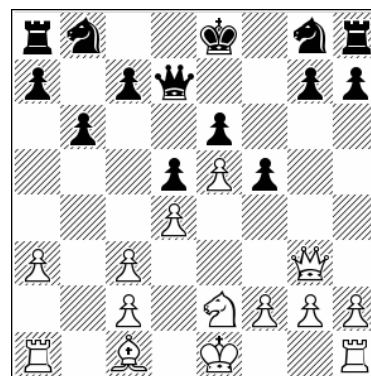
the black position was not a good advertisement for the joy of the French Defence! 8.♔d3 ♖f7 9.♗e2 fxe5 10.♗xe5 ♜f6 11.♞f3 0-0 12.0-0 c5 13.dxc5 ♜bd7 14.♗e2 ♜xc5 15.♙e3 ♗c7 16.♙d4 ♞fe4 17.♞e5 ♙d7 18.♞ac1 with wonderful dark square control for White and f3 planned to chase away the active knight on e4 ½-½ (58) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 8.♗g3.



analysis diagram

Now Black has two plans. The first is exchange his bad bishop with 8...♙a6 9.♙xa6 ♞xa6 10.♞e2. Now 10...0-0-0 was played in one of my (Matthew's) games against my English colleague Jon Speelman. I'm not necessarily a main line 1.e4 player, but I still enjoyed my time on the white side of this opening... 11.a4 ♜b7 12.0-0 ♞b8 13.a5 ♞c6 14.axb6 axb6 15.c4 (Black is consistently too slow to achieve his consolidation goals after taking several tempi to exchange light-squared bishops and redeploy the offside knight on a6: a5 arrived before ...♞c6 and now c4 arrives before ...♞a5) 15...dxc4 16.♗a3 ♞b8 17.♙g5 ♞e8 18.d5 (another typical break: White wants the d-file to be open as Black is going to run with his king across there!) 18...♗xd5 19.♞fd1 ♗e4 20.♞c3 ♗c6 21.♗a8+ ♜c8 22.♗xc6 ♞xc6 23.♞a8+ ♞b8 24.♞b5 ♞e7 25.♞xb8+ 1-0 Sadler-Speelman, England 4NCL 2016/17. 25...♜xb8 26.♞d8+ ♜b7 27.♙xe7 wins.

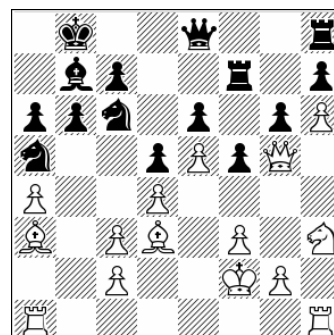
Instead of Speelman's long castling, Black can also re-route the errant knight at once with 10...♞b8.



analysis diagram

11.c4 (an unusual move – 11.♞f4 has been much more common) 11...dxc4 12.d5 ♞e7 13.dxe6 ♗xe6 14.♗xg7 ♗g8 15.♗h6 ♗g6 16.♗xg6+ ♞xg6 17.♞d4 ♞xe5 18.f4 ♞ec6 19.♞xf5 ♞f8 20.g4 ♞d7 21.♙b2 0-0-0 22.0-0-0 led to a difficult endgame for Black: the combination of bishop raking across the long diagonal, an active knight and a 3 vs 1 majority on the kingside are powerful trumps indeed. Dragon did a great job of mixing things up, but Stockfish was resolutely unimpressed! 22...♞de8 23.♞hf1 b5 24.♞g3 a5 25.♜b1 b4 26.g5 ♞b6 27.f5 c3 28.♙c1 ♞c4 29.♜a2 bxa3 30.♜b3 ♞d2+ 31.♙xd2 cxd2 32.♞xd2 ♞e3+ 33.c3 a4+ 34.♜c2 a2 35.♜b2 ♞e5 36.♞c2 ♞f3 37.g6 ♞g8 38.gxh7 ♞h8 39.♜xa2 ♞xh7 40.f6 ♞e5 41.♞f4 ♞f7 42.♜a3 ♞h8 43.♞f5 ♞d3 44.♜xa4 and somehow Stockfish had emerged two pawns up! 1-0 (86) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

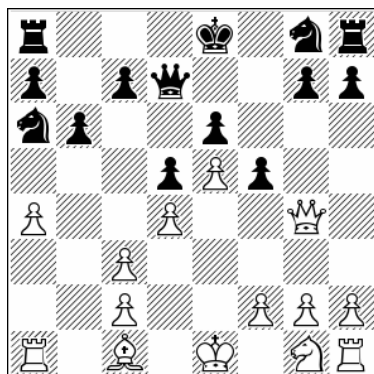
The other black plan starts with 8...♙b7. Black develops cautiously to be able to meet a4 with ...♞c6, preventing a5. 9.a4 ♞c6 10.♞h3 0-0-0 11.♙a3 ♗f7 and now Stockfish won games from here with two different approaches – we'll take a look at this one, which we particularly liked: 12.♞f4 ♞ge7 13.h4 ♞a5 14.♗g5 ♞ec6 15.h5 ♞d7 16.f3 ♗e8 17.♙b5 a6 18.♙d3 ♜b8 19.♜f2 ♞f7 20.h6 g6 21.♞h3.



analysis diagram

Having stymied Black's kingside, Stockfish redeploys its pieces to occupy all the resulting weaknesses: 21...♖c4 22.♗c1 ♜d7 23.♞h4 ♘d8 24.♙g5 ♘f7 25.♙f6 ♞g8 26.♙g7 ♞e7 27.g4 (this typical break cannot be answered in any good way) 27...fxg4 28.♞xg4 ♘b2 29.a5 ♞c6 30.♞a3 b5 31.♘f4 ♘c4 32.♞aa1 ♘b2 33.♘e2 ♞c8 34.♞f4 ♞d7 35.♞ag1 ♘d3+ 36.cxd3 ♘d8 37.♙f6 ♞e8 38.♞c1. If Black spends too long waiting, White will play ♞a3 and route the e2-knight to c5 via c1-b3. However, opening up the position also makes Stockfish happy! 38...c5 39.♞a3 ♘f7 40.dxc5 d4 41.c4 bxc4 42.dxc4 ♞c7 43.c6 ♞xc6 44.♞b1 d3 45.♞xd3 ♞xc4 46.♞d2 ♞c5+ 47.♙g3 ♞c7 48.♞b6 ♘xe5 49.♞xb7+ ♙xb7 50.♞b2+ ♙a8 51.♙xe5. A really wonderful strategical game against the French, 1-0 (79) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

7...♙a6 8.♙xa6 ♘xa6 9.♞g4 f5



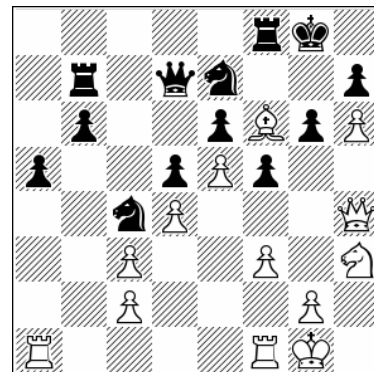
10.♞h5+

A slightly strange move with a concrete tactical idea. It's perhaps not the strongest, but it is certainly challenging for Black.

10.♞g3 was the engine choice, with similar play to 7.♞g4. Once again we had some wonderful demonstrations of strategy from the engines to marvel at:

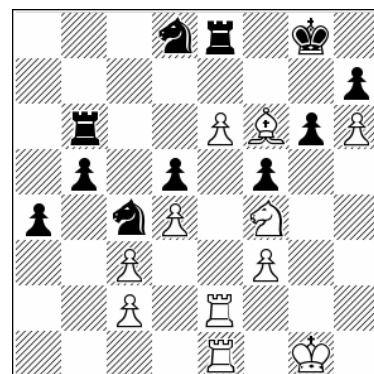
A) 10...♘b8 11.a5 ♘c6 12.axb6 cxb6. Taking on b6 and forcing ...cxb6 can seem a little odd. After all, Black gets a passed a-pawn and the half-open c-file to attack the doubled c-pawns while the knight still has a path to the c4-square. However, these are typically endgame advantages, and Black has to survive the middlegame. The c3-pawn is not difficult for White to defend and without the ...c5 break, Black has no way to challenge the solidity of White's centre.

Meanwhile, White is free to exploit his advantages on the kingside, starting with the creation of dark square weaknesses. 13.h4 ♘a5 14.♘h3 ♞b8 15.h5 ♞b7 16.h6 g6 17.♙g5 ♘c4 18.♞h4 a5 19.0-0 ♘e7 20.♙f6 0-0 21.f3.



analysis diagram

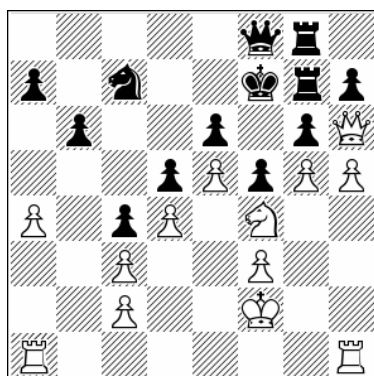
Preparing g4. Black's knight is great on c4 and the a-pawn will be useful later, but White is able to gather a lot of firepower against the black kingside: 21...b5 22.♙g7 ♞e8 23.♞f2 a4 24.g4 ♞c7 25.♞f6 ♘c6 26.gxf5 (this exchange is extremely unpleasant for Black; Black keeps the protection in front of the king but weakens the d5-pawn) 26...exf5 27.♘f4 ♘d8 28.♞e1 ♞f7 29.e6 ♞xf6 30.♙xf6 ♞b6 31.♞fe2.



analysis diagram

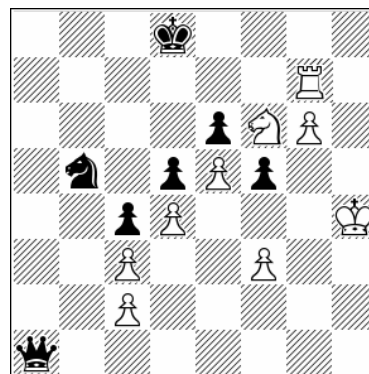
It's clear that White has a huge amount of control but a human player would certainly be glancing nervously at the a-pawn and wondering how Black would use it to distract one's pieces! It also isn't clear how White should make further progress... well, not to us anyway! 31...♞d6 32.♙f2 a3 33.e7 ♘f7 (33...♞xf6 34.♘xd5 ♞f7 35.♘c7 is the lovely point!) 34.♘e6 ♞d7 35.♘g7 (beautiful!) 35...♘fd6 36.♙g5 a2 37.♞e6 ♞a7 38.♞a1 f4 39.♘xe8 ♘xe8 40.♙xf4 1-0 (66) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022;

B) 10...c5 11.♟e2 ♟f7 12.♞d3 ♞c8 (12...♜b8 13.a5 bxa5 14.g4 was a typically hyper-sharp attempt from Dragon, which is why it is such fun using it to analyse! Stockfish found a way to defend (of course) but not every opponent would: 14...♜e7 15.♙a3 fxg4 16.♙xc5 ♜bc6 17.h3 h5 18.hxg4 hxg4 19.0-0-0 ♜f5 20.♜f4 ♜ce7 21.♞e2 ♜h6 22.♞dg1 ♞ac8 23.♞a6 ♞c6 24.♞xa5 ♜ef5 25.♞h5 a6 26.♞g5 ♞b5 27.♞xb5 axb5 28.♜g6 ♞he8 29.♜d2 ♞a8 30.♞b1 ♞a5 31.c4 dxc4 32.♜f4 ♜h4 33.♜c3 ♜f3 34.♞h5 ½-½ (34) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 13.0-0 ♜e7 14.♙g5 c4 15.♞h3 ♞f8 16.♜f4 ♜c7 17.♞h5+ ♜g8 18.f3 (once again preparing the g4 break against Black's exposed f5-pawn) 18...♞f7 19.♙xe7 ♞xe7 20.g4 g6 21.♞h6 ♞f8 22.g5 (an amazing idea!) 22...♞d8 (22...♞xh6 23.gxh6 ♜f7 24.h4 White will transfer the knight to g5 and then break with h5) 23.h4 ♞d7 24.♜f2 ♞g7 25.h5 ♜f7 26.♞h1 ♞hg8



analysis diagram

27.♞xh7. A fantastic combination that lasts more than 25 moves! 27...♞xh7 28.hxg6+ ♞xg6 29.♞xh7+ ♞g7 30.g6+ ♜e8 31.♞ah1 (Black is paralysed on the kingside and White has various ways to try and increase the pressure, but Black has some play too!) 31...a5 32.♜g3 b5 33.axb5 ♜xb5 34.♞h8 ♞g8 35.♞xg8 ♞xg8 36.♞h7 ♜d8 37.♞g7 ♞e8 (37...♞xg7 38.♜xe6+) 38.♜h4 a4 39.♜h5 a3 40.♜f6 (amazing play!) 40...a2 (40...♞f8 41.♞d7+ ♜c8 42.g7 traps the queen!) 41.♜xe8 a1=♞ 42.♜f6.



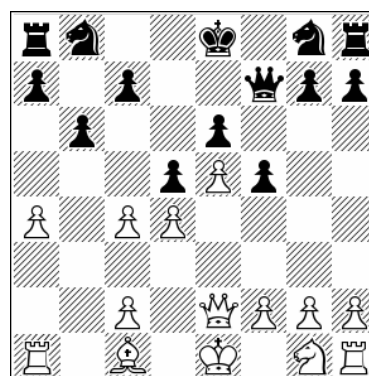
analysis diagram

White still has the massive g-pawn and a black king pinned to the back rank. 42...♞g1 43.♞g8+ ♜c7 44.g7 ♜b7 45.♜h5 ♜xc3 46.♜h6. Progress looks painfully slow for White but Black can do very little with all those tempi! 46...♞xd4 47.♞f8 ♞f4+ 48.♜g6 ♞g3+ 49.♜f7. The king hides from all the checks. Black has to give up the queen for the pawn, leaving White with a winning position a rook up, 1-0 (58) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

10...♞f7

Black avoids 10...g6, which would expose the dark squares on the kingside (White's hope when playing 10.♞h5+). In principle, the black queen is well-placed on f7, so it's strange to bring Black's queen there with tempo. However, White's plan concretely attempts to exploit the queen's absence from the centre and queenside.

11.♞e2 ♜b8 12.c4



12...♜e7

Not the engines' favourite move, but one that scored well in the engine games – the machines don't know everything! They dislike that White can capture on d5 and then follow up with c4 and prefer less compliant alternatives.

A) 12...dxc4 13.♖xc4 ♗d7 14.♜e2 ♜c6 15.♙a3 ♜ge7 16.0-0 0-0 17.♜f4. It looks desperately difficult to defend the e6-pawn but Dragon has something planned: 17...♜d5 (this exchange sacrifice was a favourite of Dragon's, which fought out many tussles with Stockfish, mostly holding the black position successfully) 18.♙xf8 ♜xf4 19.♙b4 ♜xd4 20.♙c3 c5 21.♜h1 ♗d5 22.♗xd5 ♜xd5 23.♙xd4 cxd4 24.♞fd1 ♞c8 25.♞xd4 ♞xc2 26.♜g1 ♜f7 27.♞dd1 a5 28.♞ac1 ♞e2 29.♞e1 ♞a2 30.♞c4 f4 31.h4 h5 32.g3 fxg3 33.fxg3 ♞a3 34.♜h2 ♜g6 35.♜h3 ♜e7 36.♞ec1 ♜d5 37.♞b1 ♜f5 and Black had enough activity and white weaknesses to attack to maintain the balance ½-½ (53) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022;

B) 12...♗d7 feels like it justifies the disruptive ♗h5+, but it was Stockfish's preference: 13.cxd5 ♗xd5 14.♗b5+ c6 15.♗xd5 cxd5 16.h4 ♜c6 17.c3 ♜a5 18.h5 ♜h6 (a neat move from Stockfish, preventing h6 and retaining some semblance of control over the kingside dark squares) 19.♙xh6 gxf6 20.f3 ♞g8 21.♜f2 ♞c8 22.♜e2 ♜d7 23.♞a2 ♞c4 and Stockfish held the Black side without much effort. The broken kingside pawn structure makes it oddly difficult for White to make progress, ½-½ (58) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

13.♜f3

13.cxd5 ♜xd5 14.c4 ♜b4 15.♜f3 c5 16.0-0 cxd4 17.♜xd4 0-0 18.♙f4 was assessed very optimistically by the engines to start with, but Black's dogged defence held in all cases.

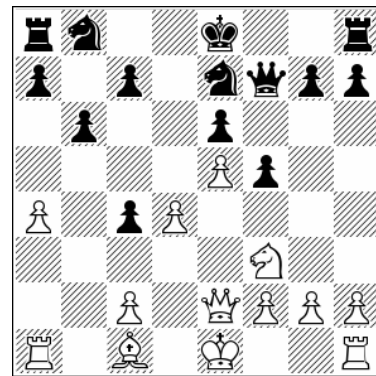
18...♜8a6 19.♞a3 ♜c5 20.♜b5 ♞ad8 21.♜d6 ♗c7 22.♞h3 ♞d7 23.♗h5 g6 24.♗e2 ♜xa4 25.♞a3 ♜c5 26.h4 h5 27.♙h6 ♞fd8 28.♞g3 ♜h7 29.♙c1 ♜c6 30.♗e3 ♞g7 31.♞e1 ♞h8. It wasn't pretty by any means, but Black survived! ½-½ (48) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

13...dxc4

Taimanov switches back to the plan with ...dxc4. The idea of Taimanov's move-order was to meet ♗xc4 with ...♜d5, covering the a2-g8 diagonal and the threat of ♜g5.

13...♜bc6 was the engine's favourite now. 14.cxd5 ♜xd5 15.♙d2 0-0 16.c4 ♜de7 17.♙c3 ♞fd8 18.0-0 a5 19.♗b2 h6 is very pleasant for White but it

isn't easy to break through, ½-½ (55) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.



14.♜g5

Matulovic mixes up the play and it gets very sharp!

14...♗g6 15.h4

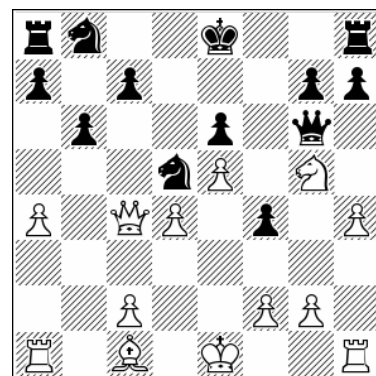
15.♗xc4 ♜d5 16.h4 should transpose to 15.h4 f4 16.♗xc4.

15...f4

An unexpected and typically ingenious move. The f-pawn cuts the defence of the knight on g5 by the dark-squared bishop and frees some light squares for Black's queen.

16.♙xf4

Too timid! 16.♗xc4 ♜d5



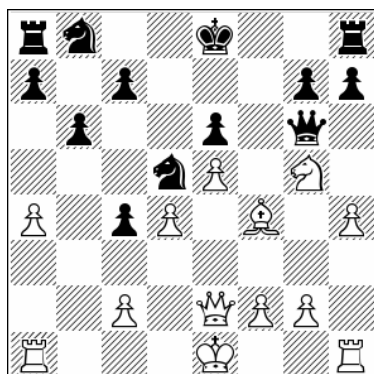
analysis diagram

17.♙a3 was Stockfish's plan, essentially paralysing the black position. Black has to play riskily before White consolidates: 17...h6 18.♜f3 ♗xg2 19.♜e2 ♗g6 20.♗d3 (an unexpected but very strong exchange) 20...♗xd3+ 21.♜xd3. Black has some pretty serious positional problems to deal with and an extra pawn is a meagre salve for its ills. The g2-pawn was a tasty snack but the backward g-pawn is now a big worry for Black. Moreover, Black's best piece – the knight on d5 – is unstable as c4 is coming: 21...c5 22.c4 ♜e7

23.♔e4 ♖bc6 24.d5 ♖a5 25.d6 ♖f5 26.♔d3 g6 27.♙b2 0-0-0 28.♙c3 ♖c6 29.a5 ♗b7 30.♙a3 ♖b8 31.♙ha1 ♖d7 32.axb6 axb6 33.♙a7+ ♔c8 34.♙d2 ♙g8 35.♙xf4 and White regained the material with a huge advantage, 1-0 (81) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

16...♗d5

A natural move, but not the most accurate move-order. 16...h6 17.♗f3 (17.h5 hxg5 18.hxg6 ♙xh1+ 19.♔d2 ♙xa1 wins very easily for Black) 17...♗d5 18.g3 ♖c6 is a lovely position for Black, ½-½ (32) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

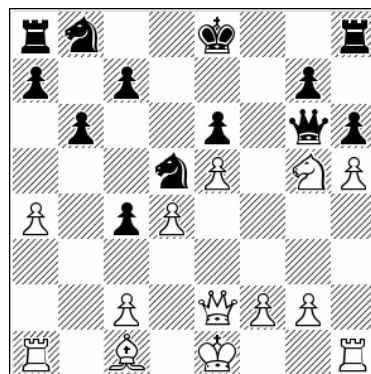


17.♙c1

The intermediate move 17.h5 was possible, gaining White some foothold on the kingside light squares: 17...♙f5 18.♙c1 h6 19.g4 ♙f8 20.♙a3 (20.♗xe6 ♙f7 traps the knight amazingly enough!) 20...♙f4 21.♗xe6 ♙f7 (another knight trap!) 22.♗xg7+ ♙xg7 23.♙xc4 ♙d7 24.♙h3. With three pawns for the piece, and huge potential for a kingside and central pawn roller, White definitely stands better, but the engines managed to keep it together for Black: 24...♙e6 25.♙f3 ♖d7 26.♙f5 0-0-0 27.f3 c5 28.♔f2 ♗b8 29.♙e1 ♙c8 30.dxc5 ♖xc5 31.a5 ♖b7 32.♙e4 ♖c3 33.♙d3 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

17...h6 18.h5

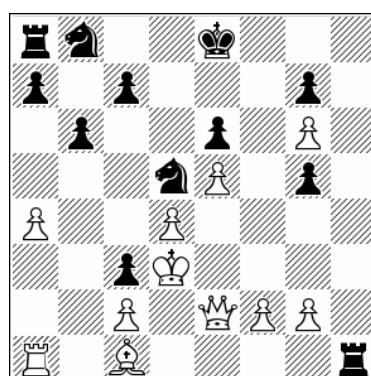
Aaagh! Too late! 18.♙e4 was White's only chance now, with an approximately equal endgame after 18...♙f5 (18...♙xe4+ 19.♗xe4 ♖c6 20.♙e3 0-0 21.♔e2 ♙ad8 22.g3 c3 23.♙hd1 ½-½ Dragon 3.1 - Stockfish, Classics 2022) 19.♙xf5 exf5 20.♗f3 ♖c6 21.♙a3 0-0-0 22.♔d2 ½-½ (25) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.



18...hxg5

The dark-squared bishop on c1 blocks ...♙h1+xa1 but this is still a disaster.

19.hxg6 ♙xh1+ 20.♔d2 c3+ 21.♔d3



21...♗c6

An amazing oversight from Taimanov. 21...♙xc1 won on the spot: 22.♙g4 (22.♙xc1 ♖f4+; 22.♙f3 ♙xa1 23.♙f7+ ♖d8 24.♙xg7 ♖c8 25.♙f7 ♗b7 26.g7 ♖c6; Black has so much material, he can afford to return a whole rook!) 22...♙xa1 23.♙xe6+ ♖e7 24.♔xc3 ♖bc6 25.♙f7+ ♖d7. The engines were resigning here already. We made them play on for a bit: 26.d5 ♖d8 27.♙xg7 ♖b7 28.♔b2 ♙xa4 29.♙h6 ♖xd5 30.g7 ♙g8 0-1 (34) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

22.♙f3

A mistake in return.

22.♙g4, attacking e6, was still fairly obvious. Black should reply with 22...♖xd4 (22...♔d7 23.♙f3; 22...0-0-0 23.♙xe6+ ♗b7 24.♙f7 is a total mess!) 23.♔xd4 (23.♙xd4 ♖d1+) 23...♙h4 24.♙xh4 gxh4 25.♙g5 ♖e7 26.♙h1 ♖xg6 27.♙xh4 c5+ with approximate equality, ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022

22...0-0-0 23.g3

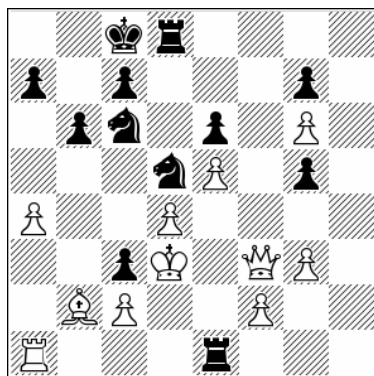
Hitting the rook on h1.

23...♙e1

A very unpleasant situation for White.

24.♙b2

24.♙b1 ♖b7 25.♜f7 was the engines' best shot, when Black has to find the lovely 25...♜f6, threatening ...♜xd4+, with a winning attack, and... 26.exf6 ♜e5+, forking king and queen: 27.♙xc3 ♜xf7 28.gxf7 gxf6 29.♙d2 ♜h1 30.c3 ♜h7 0-1 (65) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.



24...♜xe5

Such a tempting and clever idea, but this ingenuity brings the game back to equality. 24...♜cb4+ 25.♙c4 ♜xc2 was the best idea, but after 26.♙xc3 Black has to spot the devious 26...b5+ 27.axb5 ♜b6+ 28.♙b3 (28.♙d3 ♜xd4) 28...♜xa1+, capturing the a1-rook with check and thus safeguarding the hanging rook on e1.

29.♙a2 ♜c1 30.♙b2 ♜c2 31.♙xa1 ♜d5 32.♜d3 ♜xf2 33.♙a3 ♜d8 34.♙c1 ♜h8 35.♜b3 ♜h1 36.♜xe6+ ♙b8 37.♙b1 ♜ff1 38.♜e8+ ♜c8 0-1 (49) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

25.♙xc3 ♜f5 26.♜e2

The game is now balanced, but easy equality is not in the vocabulary of this position! The exposed position of the white king and Black's potential pressure along the f-file makes the position much easier for him to play.

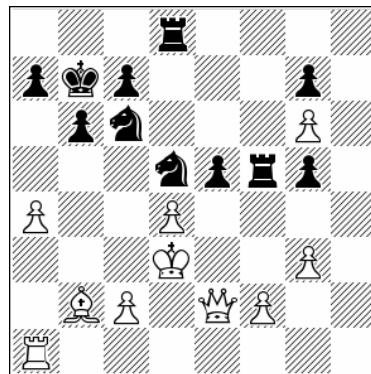
26...♙b7

Avoiding ♜xe6+ to allow doubling on the f-file. 26...e5 was probably rejected by Taimanov due to 27.♜g4, though the pin is dealt with easily after 27...♜df8 28.♜f1 ♙b7. After 29.♙a1 ♜f3+ 30.♙e2 ♜c3+ 31.♙xc3 ♜xc3 32.♜e4 exd4 33.♜d1 ♜f6 34.♙f1 ♜xg3 35.♜d3 ♜xd3 the position was approximately equal, ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

27.♙b2 e5

Amazingly, this is a severe mistake. Just try and spot White's best reply though!

27...♜df8 28.♜f1 ♜f3+ 29.♙d2 ♜e3 30.♜h1 ♜xf2 31.♙xe3 ♜xe2+ 32.♙xe2 ♙c8 was still approximately equal, ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.



28.c3

It isn't this passive move for sure!

28.♙e4!! Amazing! I (Matthew) don't think I've seen a best move like this before! The king moves out of all the discovered attacks on the d-file and prepares to capture the e5-pawn and set up a much better barrier in front of it. By attacking the d5-knight, White also restricts the mobility of the rook on d8. 28...♜de7 29.dxe5 ♜df8 30.a5 (the counterattack starts) 30...♜xf2 31.a6+ ♙c8 32.♜c4. The complications are still horrific, but White will emerge ahead.

32...♜b4 (32...♜8f4+ 33.gxf4 ♜xf4+ 34.♙d3 ♜b4+ 35.♙c3 ♜bd5+ 36.♙b3 ♜xc4 37.♙xc4 and White has good winning chances though the silicon escapologist managed to escape once more, ½-½ (133) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 33.♜e6+ ♙b8 34.♙c3 ♜e2+ 35.♙d4 ♜bc6+ 36.♙d3 ♜g2 37.♜e1 ♜xg3+ 38.♜e3 ♜g1 39.♙d2 g4 40.♜e1 ♜g3 41.♙b4 ♜g2+ 42.♙d1 ♜d8+ 43.♙c1 ♜xc2+ 44.♙b1 ♜c8 45.♜xg4 ♜xb4 46.♜xb4 ♜c5 47.♜e2 ♜d1+ 48.♙b2 ♜dd5 49.♜e4 ♜e7 50.♜f3 ♜b5+ 51.♙c1 ♜bc5+ 52.♜c2 ♙c8 53.e6. Somehow White has survived and Black's attacking trumps are spent, 1-0 (79) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

28...♜df8

28...exd4 29.cxd4 ♜cb4+ 30.♙d2 ♜df8 31.♜f1 ♜f3 was the most controlled way to play but there's nothing wrong with Taimanov's approach.

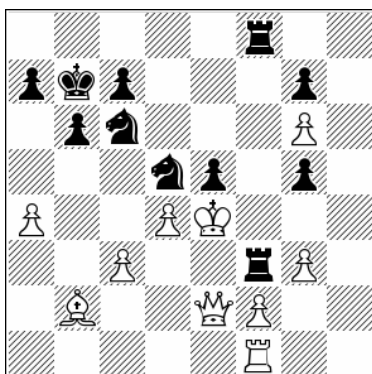
32.♙c1 a5 33.♚e4 ♗a7 34.♗e1 ♖d3+ 35.♗d2 ♖3b4
36.♗e1 ♜d3 37.♙d2 ♞xd4 38.♚e6 ♖d3+ 39.♗e2
♖c5 40.♚f7 ♞e4+ 41.♗f3 ♞ee8 42.♗g4 ♖f6+
43.♗h3 g4+ 44.♗g2 ♞xf7 45.gxf7 ♞f8 0-1 (51)
Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

29.♞f1 ♞f3+

A slightly hurried move. 29...exd4 first was clearer.

30.♗e4

30.♗c2 ♖e3+ is very nasty: 31.fxe3 ♞xf1 32.♚b5
♞8f2+ 33.♗d3 a6 34.♚b3 ♞b1 0-1 (43) Dragon 3.1-
Stockfish, Classics 2022.



30...exd4

One wonders whether the game score in ChessBase is correct and whether Matulovic didn't play 30.♗c4 instead, because here White would have the very obvious 31.♚xf3 with a winning position.

30...♖xc3+ 31.♙xc3 ♞xc3 was the best way to play, though it's got a little more tricky: 32.dxe5 g4 (a nice move preventing f4) 33.♞b1 (33.♚xg4 ♞c4+) 33...a6 34.♞d1 ♖xe5 35.♚b2 ♞c5 36.♞d5 ♞e8 37.♚b3 ♖c4+ 38.♗f4 ♞xd5 39.♚xc4 ♞ed8 0-1 (69) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

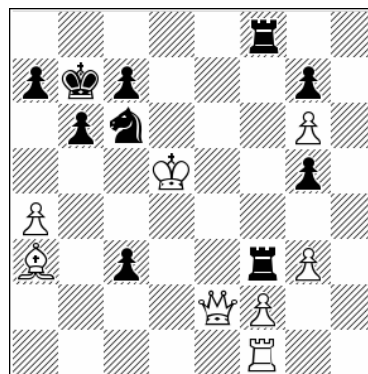
31.♗xd5

31.♚xf3 ♞xf3 32.♗xf3 dxc3 33.♙a1 is simply winning for White, so it seems unlikely that Black would have given White this chance.

31...dxc3

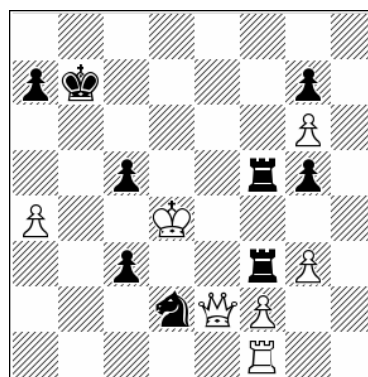
White is a queen for a rook up, but his king is in no end of trouble.

32.♙a3



32...♞d8+

32...♞8f5+ was even clearer according to the engines. 33.♗e4 (33.♗e6 ♖d4+, or 33.♗c4 ♖a5+ 34.♗d4 (34.♗b4 c5+ 35.♗b5 a6# is a beautiful mate) 34...♖b3+ 35.♗c4 ♖d2+ 36.♗d4 (36.♗b4 a5#) 36...c5+ 37.♙xc5 bxc5#

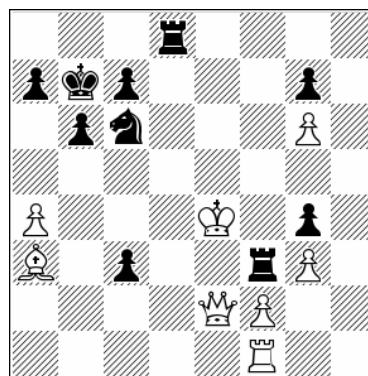


analysis diagram

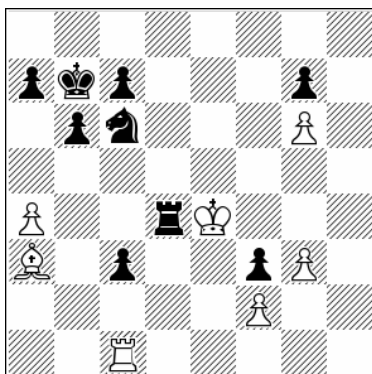
is another beautiful mate) 33...g4 and the enormous threat of ...♞e5, mating the white king in the middle of the board, forces White to give up the queen: 34.♚xf3 ♞xf3 35.♙c1 c2 36.♙b2 ♞b3 37.♙c1 ♖b4 0-1 (42) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

33.♗e4 g4

With the threat of ...♞d4 mate. 33...♞e8+ 34.♗xf3 ♖d4+ 35.♗g4 ♞xe2 was also very strong.



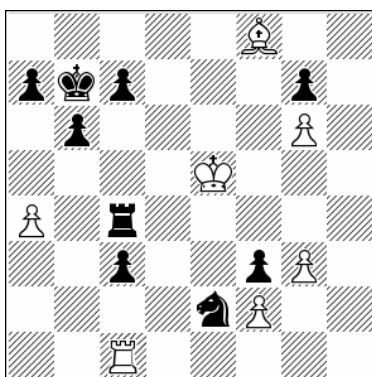
34.♚xf3 gxf3 35.♙c1 ♞d4+



36. ♖f5

36. ♖e3 ♜xa4 37. ♙f8 ♜d4. Tactics prevent White from capturing g7: 38. ♜xc3 (38. ♙xg7 ♜f5+) 38... ♜e6 39. ♙e7 ♜g4 40. ♖xf3 ♜xg6 0-1 (54) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

36... ♜c4 37. ♙f8 ♜d4+ 38. ♖e5 ♜e2

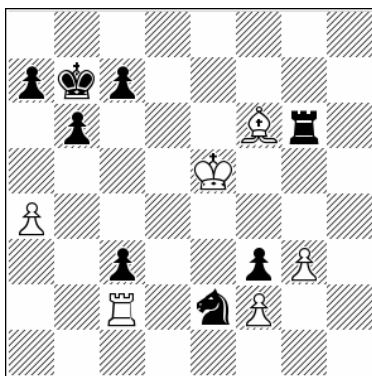


Taimanov finds an exceptionally nice way to deal with all White's confusing counterplay.

39. ♜c2 ♜c6 40. ♙xg7

40. ♖f5 ♜d4+.

40... ♜xg6 41. ♙f6



41... ♜xg3

A lovely move!

42. ♖e4

42. fxg3 f2.

42... ♜g6 43. ♙e5 ♜e6 0-1

A great game!

Game 26 – Philidor's Defence

Dragoljub Velimirovic

Lubomir Kavalek

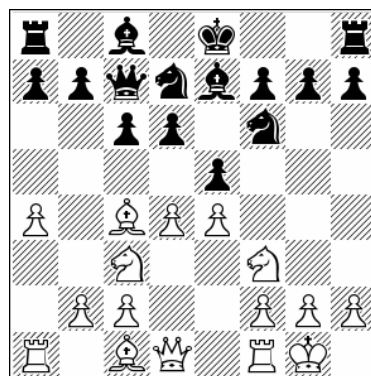
Belgrade 1965 (11)

Dragolyub Velimirovic (1942-2014) was a Yugoslav GM whose name was a byword for attacking play. Indeed, one of his many aggressive anti-Sicilian ideas bears his name as the Velimirovic Attack (1.e4 c5 2. ♜f3 ♜c6 3. d4 cxd4 4. ♜xd4 ♜f6 5. ♜c3 d6 6. ♙c4 e6 7. ♙e3, followed by ♜e2 and 0-0-0) and he made many other contributions to lines such as the Najdorf Sicilian. The present game for a long time enjoyed the reputation of being 'the best game ever played in Yugoslavia', which, given the strength of the chess tradition in that country, is quite a compliment. We are grateful to Dutch IM Gerard Welling for drawing it to our attention.

1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♜f6 3. ♜c3 e5

This move-order to reach the Philidor avoids some theoretical problems associated with the normal 1...e5 and 2...d6 order and is the basis of the Giddins/Welling repertoire book *Side-Stepping Mainline Theory*, published by New in Chess in 2019. Black has no objective reason to fear the queenless middlegame after the exchanges on e5 and d8, and there was very little chance of Velimirovic playing such a line anyway.

4. ♜f3 ♜bd7 5. ♙c4 ♙e7 6.0-0 c6 7.a4 ♜c7



A flexible move-order that Simon Williams examines in his opening book on the Black Lion. Delaying castling keeps the option open of aggressive kingside play with ...h6 and ...g5.

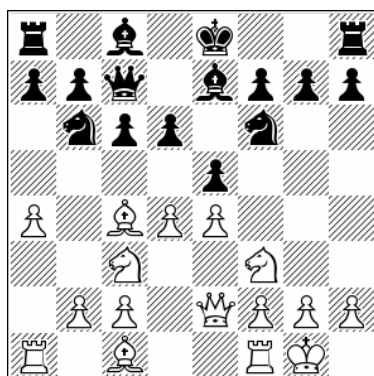
Kavalek uses 7...♚c7 for another pre-castling manoeuvre. One can imagine his shock at what hit him!

8.♚e2

One of White's main moves. The engines also tried 8.♖e1 and 8.♙e3.

8...♗b6?

This was Kavalek's idea: the queen on c7 defends the e5-pawn which allows the knight to move to b6, gaining a tempo by hitting the bishop on c4. One imagines that the plan was to follow up with ...♙g4, developing the light-squared bishop and allowing the knight to drop back to d7 if necessary. b6 isn't the most common square for the knight in the Philidor, but a few systems do exploit the possibility. This idea was first played successfully by the creative Dutch IM Johan Barendregt against the strong attacking player John Littlewood. It's been played nine times since (including this game) but nobody else thought of Velimirovic's approach! 8...0-0 was still possible and, indeed, necessary.



9.dxe5

It's not only human players – the engines don't want to play like Velimirovic either, ranking his idea as the third or fourth best move even at long time controls. From a human perspective, however, it's an absolute killer! Combine the shock effect with the difficulty of the line that Black has to find and you have a destructive opening weapon.

9.♙a2 is Leela's favourite move: 9...♙g4 and now Leela has three equivalent options, all of which lead to a clear advantage (9...0-0 10.h3 ♗bd7 is Leela's main line, which makes you understand what it really thinks of 8...♗b6!):

A) 10.dxe5. This simple approach is the human choice. 10...dxe5 11.h3 ♙xf3 (11...♙h5 12.g4 ♙g6 13.♗h4 is very pleasant for White) 12.♚xf3 0-0 13.♙e3 ♖h8 14.♖fd1 ♗bd7 15.g4 and White is several tempi up compared to a normal Philidor (...♗b6-d7);

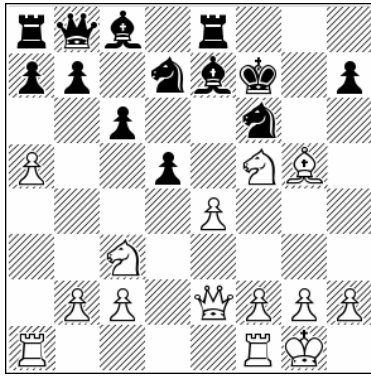
B) 10.♙e3 exd4 11.♙xd4 0-0 12.h3 ♙xf3 13.♚xf3 ♖ae8 14.♖fe1 ♗fd7 15.a5 was another Leela suggestion that Dragon also espoused. White has the two bishops and a space advantage over the whole board, ½-½ (52) Dragon 3.1-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2022;

C) 10.a5 ♗bd7 11.d5 cxd5 12.♗xd5 ♗xd5 13.♙xd5 (threatening a6) 13...♖c8 14.♙e3 a6 15.h3 ♙e6 16.c4 was Leela's top line, which is a little surprising: it looks like something you might get from a Kalashnikov Sicilian (1.e4 1...c5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 e5 5.♗b5 d6 6.c4) which doesn't seem so bad. It's clearly more pleasant for White, however.

Alternatively, 9.♙b3 ♙g4 10.a5 ♗bd7 11.♚c4 0-0 12.♗g5 was John's aggressive response in the stem game. However, Black is well-developed and easily contains White's threats: 12...♙h5 13.a6 h6 14.♗h3 ♙g4 15.f4 ♙xh3 16.gxh3 exd4 17.♗b5 ♚b6 18.♗xd4 d5 and White's position was a wreck, 0-1 (52) Littlewood-Barendregt, Birmingham 1963.

Finally, 9.♙xf7+ is preferred as a move-order for this sacrificial idea by the engines though it often transposes back to 9.dxe5 by move 14. There is, however, one original and dangerous idea for White: 9...♙xf7 10.a5 ♗bd7 11.♗g5+ ♙e8 12.♗e6 ♚b8 13.♗xg7+ ♙f7 14.♗f5, just grabbing one pawn back and looking to play the middlegame with an exposed black king and offside white queen. Black's defensive task is very difficult.

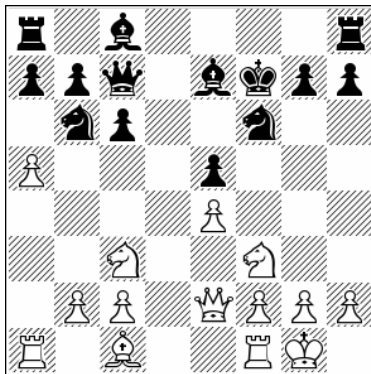
14...exd4 15.♗xd4 ♖e8 16.♙g5 d5 17.♗f5



analysis diagram

17...♙f8 (17...♙c5 18.♞ae1 h6 19.♜xh6+ ♔g6 20.♙c1 ♞e5 21.♜f5 ♜f8 22.♜g3 ♔f7 23.♔h1 ♙g4 24.♞d2 ♜8d7 25.exd5 ♞d4 26.f3 ♞xd2 27.♙xd2 ♞xe1 28.♞xe1 ♙f2 29.♞a1 ♙xg3 30.hxg3 ♙f5 31.a6 bxa6 32.dxc6 ♜b6 33.♞xa6 ♙xc2 34.♙f4 was less successful for Black: Stockfish's pawns came through in the end, 1-0 (86) Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023) 18.f4 b5 19.e5 b4 20.♜d1 ♜xe5 21.♜h6+ ♙xh6 22.fxe5 ♞xe5 23.♞xe5 ♞xe5 24.♞xf6+ ♔g7 25.♞xh6 ♞xg5 26.♞xc6 ♙h3 27.♞c7+ ♔h6 28.g3 ♞g7 29.♞c6+ ♞g6 30.♞c5 ♞c8 31.♞xc8 ♙xc8 32.♞a4 ♞c6 33.c3 bxc3 34.♜xc3 ♞c5 35.♔f2 ♙d7 36.♞f4 ♞xa5. Somehow Stockfish kept this together! ½-½ (52) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023.

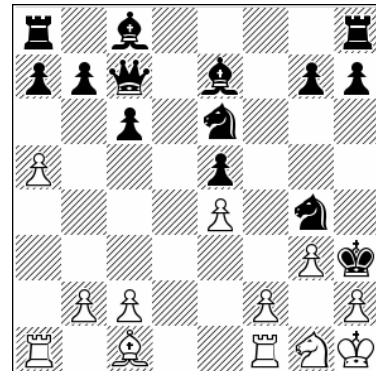
9...dxe5 10.♙xf7+ ♔xf7 11.a5



Velimirovic's sacrifice sets Black an unpleasant dilemma. It feels so wrong to retreat the knight to d7, blocking the light-squared bishop once again and giving free rein to White's queen and knight to target the king, but it's simply impossible to find a way of giving the piece back safely. It means that Black has to keep the material and suffer. In a practical game, you can't just be sure that you're not simply completely lost already.

11...♜bd7 12.♞c4+ ♔e8

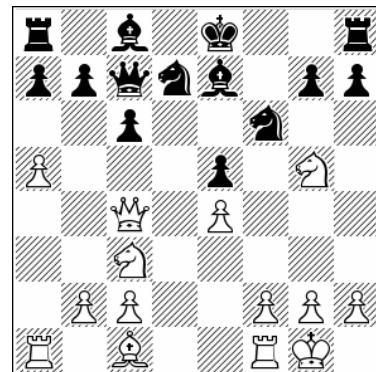
12...♔g6 13.♜h4+ ♔h5 14.♞f7+ g6 (14...♔xh4 15.g3+ ♔h3 16.♞e6+ ♜g4 allows an absolutely gorgeous mate: 17.♜e2 ♜c5 18.♔h1 ♜xe6 19.♜g1#.



analysis diagram

Worth a diagram!) 15.♜f5 and mate is not far away.

13.♜g5



Threatening ♞f7+ and ♜e6 mate.

13...♜f8

Kavalek finds the only defence for Black. The knight on f8 crucially defends e6 from a stable square.

13...♞f8 14.♜e6 ♞b8 15.♜xg7+ ♔d8 16.♞d1 is utterly hopeless, so Black has to allow the enemy queen into f7.

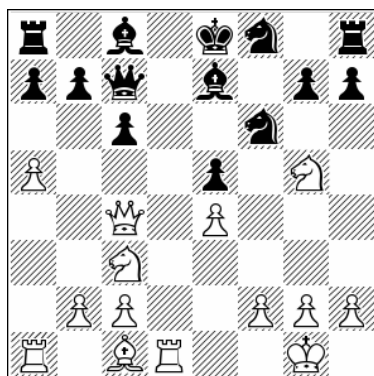
13...♜c5 looks more natural, but the knight can't settle on c5. 14.♞f7+ ♔d8 15.b4 ♞f8 16.♞d1+ ♙d7 17.♞xg7 is horrific for Black.

14.♞d1

A clever move, cutting the black king's access to the d-file and threatening ♞f7 mate.

14.♜b5 is interesting, but 14...♞d7 is a good defence, stopping a rook from coming to d1: 15.♜xa7 (wow!) 15...♙d6 (15...♞xa7 16.♞f7+ ♔d8 17.♙e3 is the idea, with threats of ♙xa7, ♙b6+ and ♞fd1; Black is still OK apparently after 17...♞a6

18.♖fd1 ♔d6) 16.♗xc8 ♖xc8 17.♖d1 h6 18.♗f3 ♖d8 and Black is over the worst, ½-½ (20) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023.



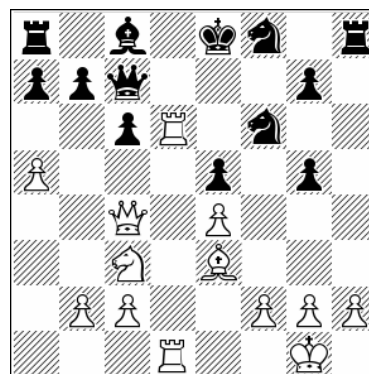
14...♔d7?!

A terrible blunder which covers the biggest threat, but misses a second.

14...♔d8 allows the immediate 15.♖xd8+ ♗xd8 16.♔e3! (even stronger than 16.♗f7+) 16...♗e8 17.♖d1 and Black is defenceless. Instead, 14...♔d6 was the best chance. It looks like an awful way to block the d-file. True, the black queen on c7 now defends the f7-square, but the queen is overloaded as it also has to defend the bishop on d6. It looks like anything but a solid blockade. Crucially, however, the bishop on d6 also protects the queen on c7, thus neutralising the ♗b5 ideas that Velimirovic could have used in the game. And Black has a threat: ...h6, chasing away the white knight from g5. Black has a chance therefore of chasing away the advanced white pieces before fresh ones arrive.

Does it really all hang together though? The obvious reply is 15.♖xd6 ♖xd6 16.♖f7+ ♗d8 17.♔e3 (17.♖xg7 ♖g8 18.♗f7+ ♗e7 19.♖xg8 ♗xg8 20.♗xd6 ♗xd6 is just an extra piece for Black). At first, it is not obvious why this shouldn't be very strong despite being a rook down, but the engines batten down the hatches very effectively: 17...♖e7 18.♖d1+ ♗d6d7 19.♖c4 (threatening ♗f7+; 19.a6 ♖xf7 20.♗xf7+ ♗e7 21.axb7 ♔xb7 is apparently equal, though one would be pretty nervous about the knight on h8! ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023) and now 19...♗e8 is the move that is easy to miss! Black simply protects f7 and prepares to chase away the knight on g5 with ..h6 with a winning position.

Instead, after 14...♔d6, 15.♔e3 is the engine main line: 15...h6 (White needs to be ready with a powerful follow-up as retreat is not an option) 16.♖xd6 hxg5 17.♖ad1 and now:



analysis diagram

A) 17...♖e7 (hoping to achieve ...♔e6 and escape back to f7 with the king) 18.♖d8+ ♖xd8 19.♖xd8+ ♗xd8. Black has a big material advantage (two rooks and a knight for queen and pawn) but his position is in disarray. White needs to create more openings to extract maximum value from his extra queen. However difficult the position looks for Black, the engines only saw a slight advantage and draws were the most common result. Try not to get into this sort of position in a practical game all the same!

20.a6 (loosening up the black queenside some more using a rook's pawn; 20.♔xg5 ♗e6 21.♔e3 ♗e7 22.f3 ♗f7 23.♗e2 ♖e8 24.♗c1 ♗g6 25.♗d3 ♗d8 26.h4 b6 27.♖c3 ♗f7 28.axb6 axb6 29.♔xb6 ♔a6, and at the cost of a couple of pawns, Black has managed to mobilise his pieces once more, ½-½ (37) Dragon 3.2-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022).

20...g4 21.♔c5 ♗8d7 22.♔b4 ♗e8 23.♖f7 ♗c7 24.♗d1 b6 25.♔c3 ♗d8 26.♗e3 ♖f8 27.♖e6 ♖f6 28.♖xg4 ♔xa6 29.♖g5 ♗c8 30.♔xe5 ♗xe5 31.♖xe5 ♗d7 32.h4 ♖d8 33.h5 ♖f7 and Black's successful development helped him maintain the balance, ½-½ (47) Dragon 3.1-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2022;

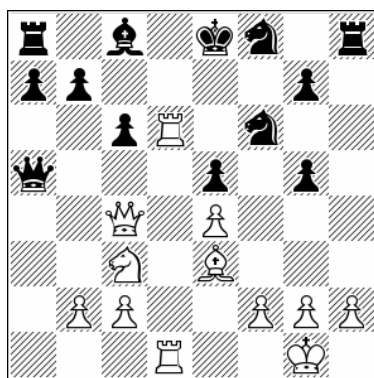
B) 17...♔d7 18.♗b5 ♖b8 (18...♖d8 19.♖xd7 ♖xd7 20.♖xd7 ♗8xd7 21.♗c7+ 1-0 (28) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023) 19.♖xf6 gxf6 20.♗d6+ ♗d8 21.♖f7 ♗c7 22.♖xf6 ♖d8 23.♖xh8 1-0 (29) Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023;

C) 17...♔e6. One imagines that this would be the human's go-to reaction in a practical game. White gets two pawns for the exchange, but

Black's position looks easier to handle than after 17...♖e7 or 17...♗xa5. Nonetheless, the engines managed to score some wins as White.

18.♖xe6+ ♜xe6 19.♗xe6+ ♖e7 20.♗xe7+ ♜xe7 21.♙g5 b5 22.b3 ♖ad8 23.♖a1 ♖d7 24.f3 ♜f7 25.♙e3 ♖c7 26.g3 ♜d7 27.♜d1 ♜b8 28.h4 c5 29.♜c3 b4 30.♜d5 ♖d7 31.♜g2 ♜a6 32.♙f2 ♖hd8 33.♜e3 ♜e8 34.♜f1 ♜c7 35.♜c4 ♜b5 36.♜g2 ♖d1 37.♖xd1 ♖xd1 38.♙xc5 ♖c1 39.♜e3 ♜d4 40.♙xa7 ♜xc2 41.a6 ♜d4 42.♙b8 ♖a1 43.a7 ♜c6 44.g4 ♖a2+ 45.♜g3 ♜xa7 46.♙xe5. White gradually removed Black's pawns one by one! 1-0 (68) Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023;

D) 17...♗xa5 was Leela's daring idea and it was also Stockfish's choice in a game against Dragon.



analysis diagram

18.h4. If anyone asks me (Matthew) to show them an engine move that no human would ever play, this is the type of move I would point to. White is actually only interested in playing ♙g5 to attack Black's kingside structure: winning a pawn is incidental and not a core goal. 18.h4 is played prophylactically to block the h-file with Black's own pawn and sidestep the counterplay Black generates on the h-file after 18.♙g5 ! Since 18.h4 is pretty forcing (Black basically has to respond with 18...gxh4), Black can't use the tempo for anything defensively useful.

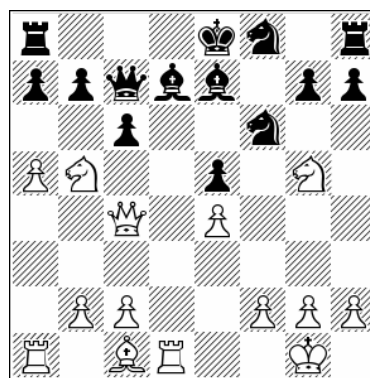
(18.♙g5 ♙g4 19.♙xf6 gxf6 20.♖xf6 ♖c7 21.♜b5 ♖h7 (barely credible, but yes, Black does have counterplay on the h-file!) 22.♜d6+ ♜d8 23.♖h6 ♖xh6 24.♜f7+ ♜c7 25.♜xh6 ♙xd1 26.♜f5 ♖d8 27.♖f7+ ♜d7 28.♖e7 ♙g4 29.♖d6+ ♜b6 30.♜e3 ♜c5 31.♖xe5 ♖he8 32.♖g5 ♖g8 33.♖f4 a5 with a very confusing material balance! The game eventually ended in a draw, ½-½ (50) Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023)

18...gxh4 19.♙g5 ♜h7 (19...♙g4 20.♙xf6 gxf6 21.♖xf6 ♙xd1 (21...♖h7 22.♖g8 ♖b4 23.♖xg4 1-0 (47) Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023; 21...♖c7 22.♜b5 ♖h7 23.♜d6+ ♜d8 24.♖f7 looks a lot better for White when the h-file has been closed! 1-0 (53) Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023) 22.♖f7+ ♜d8 23.♖d6+ ♜c8 24.♖e8+ ♜c7 25.♖e7+ ♜d7 26.♖xd7+ ♜c8 27.b4 1-0 (48) Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023) 20.♙xh4 and the attack continues. Black still has his extra piece, but further development is problematic: 20...♙g4 21.f3 ♜f8 22.♙xf6 ♖b6+ 23.♜f1 ♖h1+ 24.♜e2 ♖xd1 25.♜xd1 gxf6 26.fxg4 ♜e7 27.♖d3 with just a slight white edge. It still looks very scary to me! 27...♖d8 28.♜e3 ♖xd6 29.♜f5+ ♜d8 30.♖xd6+ ♜d7 31.♖e7+ ♜c7 32.♜g7 c5 33.♜e8+ ♜c8 34.♜d6+ ♜c7 35.♜c4 ♖a6 36.b3 ♖c6 ½-½ (41) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023.

15.♙e3

By no means the strongest move, but still way too powerful for Black's position. The problem with 14...♙d7 is that it hasn't helped Black to prevent ♖f7+ in the future. That threat is still very much there whenever White cares to use it. 15.♙e3 is a strong developing move that points the bishop towards the queenside where Black's king will try to escape.

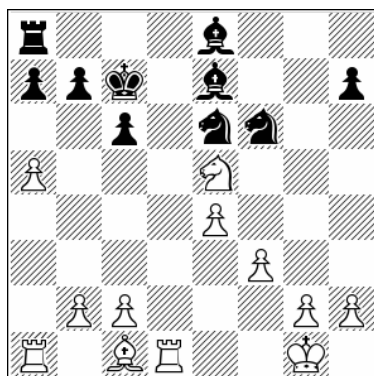
Even stronger is 15.♜b5,



analysis diagram

exploiting the unprotected black queen on c7 to bring the queen's knight into the attacking fun. Dragon already assesses the position as +2.5, which is a huge advantage: 15...♖b8 16.♖f7+ ♜d8 17.♜d6! (the key idea) 17...♙xd6 18.♖xg7 (Black is currently two pieces up, but has half the chess set hanging; White threatens ♖xf6, ♖xh8 and ♜f7+) 18...♙e7 19.♜f7+ ♜c7 20.♜xe5! (hitting e7

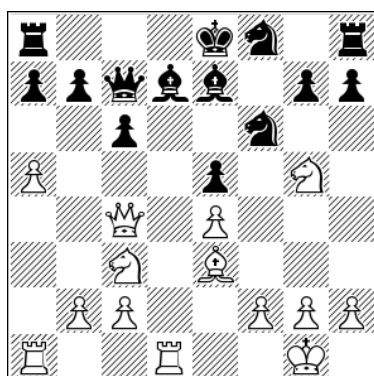
as well as h8; 20.♖xh8? ♜g6 lets Black off the hook) 20...♗e8 21.♖xh8 ♜e6 and now simply 22.♗xe8 ♙xe8 23.f3!



analysis diagram

and White has a winning endgame, with rook and three connected pawns against the two minor pieces.

The following game is a good example of what happens. White exchanges off minor pieces to leave Black with two knights without outposts and then just pushes Black off the board: 23...♙c5+ 24.♖h1 ♜d7 25.♜d3 ♙e7 26.♜f4 ♜ef8 27.♜e2 ♜g6 28.♙e3 ♙f7 29.♙f2 c5 30.♜c3 ♖c6 31.♜d5 ♙d6 32.♙g3 ♙e5 33.♞d2 ♙xd5 34.♞xd5 ♞g8 35.♞ad1 ♞g7 36.b3 b6 37.axb6 axb6 38.♖g1 ♞e7 39.♖f2 ♙d4+ 40.♖f1 ♙e5 41.♖e2 ♖c7 42.♖e3 ♙xg3 43.hxg3 ♜ge5 44.g4 ♜c6 45.c3 ♜a7 46.♞h5 ♜b5 47.♞dh1 ♜f8 48.♞c1 ♞g7 49.g3 ♜d6 50.e5 ♜b5 51.♞h6 1-0 (81) Dragon 3.1-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2022.

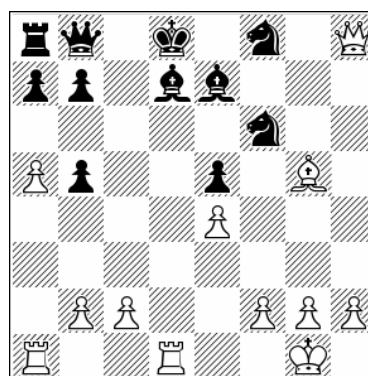


15...♗c8

Kavalek makes a desperate attempt to stop ♗f7+ by putting something on e6, but he's a move too late.

15...h6 was Black's best chance, inviting the storm to hit at once: 16.♜b5 ♗b8 17.♗f7+ ♖d8 18.♗xg7 hxg5 (if 18...♞g8, 19.♞xd7+ is very strong,

making use of the developing move 15.♙e3 – the other white rook can assist the attack from d1: 19...♜8xd7 20.♜e6+ ♖c8 (20...♖e8 21.♜bc7+) 21.♗xe7 cxb5 22.♞d1 and the end is nigh. ♞d1-d3-c3+ is one major threat; also, 18...cxb5 19.♙c5 with a similar idea to 17.♜d6 in the 15.♜b5 line: the bishop on e7 holds everything together and must be distracted: 19...♙xc5 20.♗xf6+ ♖c7 21.♞d5 b6 22.♗xe5+ ♖c8 23.♗xh8 hxg5 24.♞xc5+ bxc5 25.♗xf8+ ♖b7 26.♗xc5 a6 27.♗xg5. It's disappointing that it's not mate, but five pawns for the piece and an open black king sounds pretty good. The engines assess this as completely winning 1-0 (63) Dragon 3.1-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2022) 19.♗xh8 cxb5 20.♙xg5 is decisive.



analysis diagram

Black has three pieces for the rook but he cannot anchor his knights to solid posts: 20...♜6h7 21.♙xe7+ ♖xe7 22.♗g7+ ♖e8 23.♞d5 ♙e6 24.♞ad1 ♗c8 25.♗xe5 ♗xc2 26.♞d2 ♗c4 27.♞d4 ♗c2 28.f4. Black has survived the first onslaught again, but now the extra pawns play their role. f5 will win a piece and leave Black with a terribly exposed king. 28...♞c8 29.f5 ♗c7 30.♞d6 ♗c5+ 31.♗xc5 ♞xc5 32.fxe6 ♞c7 33.♞d5 ♜xe6 34.♞xb5 a6 35.♞b6. Once again, the knights were no match for the rook and pawns, 1-0 (76) Dragon 3.2-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

16.♗f7+

Over +6 now – that's enough to win three games!

16...♖d8 17.♜a4!

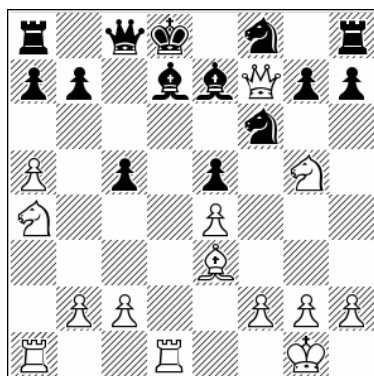
What Nimzowitsch might have called 'an instructive decentralisation'! Here, the motive is purely tactical, rather than strategic – ♜b6 is now a major threat, as is ♜c5/♙c5. White is still

attacking with all of his pieces, whilst Black has half his army inactive.

17...c5

Blocking the g1-a7 diagonal, but allowing something just as bad. It's already way too late, of course, for Black to defend.

17...h6 18.♖b6.



18.♖xc5!?

Not the top engine move, but logically pursuing the goal of drawing Black's bishop away from e7 after which his kingside collapses.

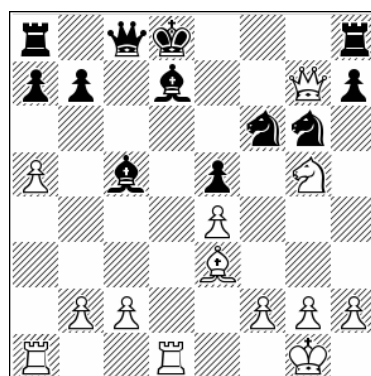
18.b4! would have been pretty cool, threatening ♖xc5, removing the bishop on e7 without sacrificing material! 18...h6 (18...cxb4 allows 19.♖b6 ♖c6 (19...axb6 20.♖xb6+) 20.♖xa8 1-0 (32) Dragon 3.1-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2022) 19.♖xc5! ♖xc5 20.♖xc5 hxg5 and now, as well as 21.♖xg7 ♖e8 22.♖xf6 ♖h7 23.♖d5 ♖e7 24.♖ad1 ♖c7 25.♖xd7 ♖xd7 26.♖g6+ ♖f8 27.♖d6 ♖xc2 28.♖h6+ ♖e8 29.♖h5+ ♖d8 30.♖h8+ ♖c7 31.♖xa8 1-0 (43) Dragon 3.2-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022, the engines like best of all the splendid 21.a6! b6 22.♖xg7 (even better than the check on b7, which one might have thought was the point of White's last!) 22...bxc5 23.♖xf6+ ♖e8. Now we see the point – 23...♖c7 24.♖d5! and mate soon follows, the a6-pawn playing a full part! 24.♖xh8 and wins.

18...♖xc5 19.♖xg7 ♖g6

A) 19...♖xe3 20.♖xf6+ ♖e8 21.fxe3 ♖g8 22.♖f7+ ♖d8 23.♖xg8;

B) 19...♖e7 is fractionally better, but after 20.♖f7+ ♖e8 21.♖xe5! (even stronger than winning the queen with 21.♖d6+) 21...♖g8 (21...♖e6 22.♖xh8 1-0 (72) Dragon 3.1-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2022) 22.♖f7+ ♖d8 and now simply 23.♖d3, doubling rooks, Black still has two extra

pieces, but is helpless: 23...♖xc2 24.♖ad1 and Black is paralysed.



20.♖xc5

20.♖xf6+ was even more crushing, but by now we are talking about an advantage of +17, as opposed to +10, so the difference is rather academic!

20...♖h5

20...♖xc5 21.♖e6+.

21.♖e7+

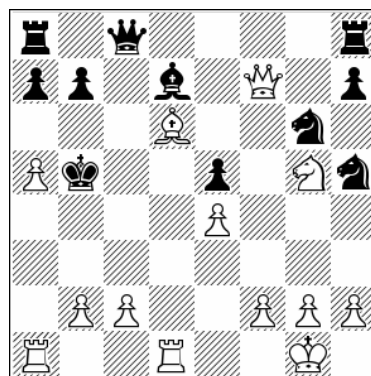
21.♖f7 and 21.♖f7+ were also both winning.

21...♖c7 22.♖d6+ ♖c6 23.♖f7

The engine may suggest alternative moves here and there, but it's clear that Velimirovic is doing a pretty good job!

23...♖b5

23...♖g8 stops the mate on d5, but then 24.♖f3 (inter alia) incidentally hits the knight on h5: 24...♖hf4 25.♖c3+ ♖b5 26.♖c5+ ♖a6 27.♖c7 (threatening ♖d6+) 27...♖e2+ 28.♖h1 ♖d4 29.c4 with the beautiful threat of ♖b6+, forcing mate, against which Black has no reasonable defence, 1-0 (41) Dragon 3.1-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2022.



24.a6

Nice. The engine confirms that this is best, actually forcing mate in 9!

24...bxa6 25.♖d5+

25.♖b3+ was quicker: 25...♙c6 26.♞a5 ♕e6 27.♞c5+ ♙d7 28.♞xe6+ ♙d8 29.♜f7#.

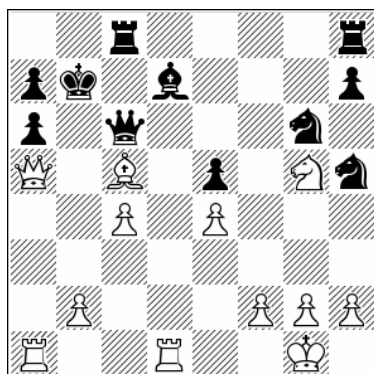
25...♙b6 26.c4?!

Mate in five follows 26.♞a5+ ♙c6 27.♞d3!, e.g. 27...♕e8 28.♞c3+ ♙xd6 29.♞a3+ etc.

26...♞c6 27.♞a5+ ♙b7 28.♕c5

Despite Velimirovic's small lapse, the position remains crushing, of course. ♞d6 is landing next, or, failing that, ♜g5-f7-d6+.

28...♞ac8



29.b4

29.♞xd7+ ♞xd7 30.♞xa6+ ♙a8 31.♕xa7 ♞b7 32.♞d6 ♞xa7 33.♞d5+ ♙b8 34.♞xa7 ♙xa7 35.♜f7 was the engine approach, but it costs a little too much effort of assessment for a human player! 35...♜hf4 36.♞a5+ ♙b7 37.c5 ♞c6 38.♜d6+ ♞xd6 39.cxd6 ♞c8 40.♞b5+ ♙a7 41.h4 ♜f8 42.d7 ♞c1+ 43.♙h2 ♜8e6 44.g3 and everything collapses, 1-0 (59) Dragon 3.1-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2022.

29...♞hd8 30.♜f7

All of White's pieces are attacking now.

30...♞g8 31.♞d6 ♜gf4

The last-gasp attack is much too late.

31...♞c7 32.♞xa6+ ♙a8 33.♞xa7+ soon mates.

32.♞xc6 ♞xg2+ 33.♙f1 ♞xc6 34.♜d8+ ♙c8 35.♜xc6 ♕xc6 36.♕d6 1-0

Fantastic play by Velimirovic!

Game 27 – King's Fianchetto

Nona Gaprindashvili

Maximilian Ujtelly

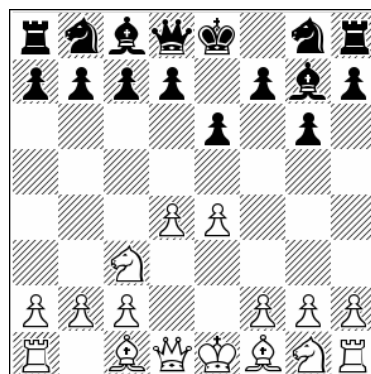
Wijk aan Zee Hoogovens-B 1969

The women's game in the 1960s and 1970s was dominated by Nona Gaprindashvili, who held the World Championship from 1962 until 1978, when she was defeated by Maia Chiburdanidze.

Her play was notable for a sharp style and an indomitable will to win – qualities that are still much in evidence in her successes at the senior level, in which she is a multiple World and European Champion.

Maximilian Ujtelly was a Slovakian master, who was apparently a direct descendant of the composer Franz Liszt. However, as we shall see, his approach to chess openings was rather more reminiscent of the Hindemith-Schönberg, 'atonal' school of music!

1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♕g7 3.♜c3 e6

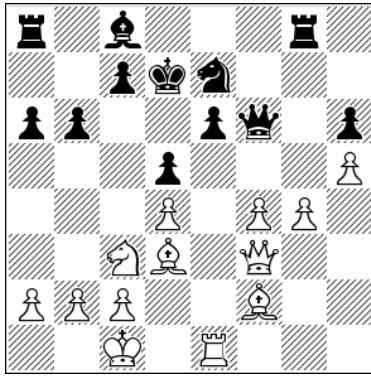


A very offbeat opening from Black, mixing a dark-square strategy on the kingside (...g6 and ...♕g7) with a light-square central strategy (...e6 and ...d5). Ujtelly spent his entire life trying to make such Hippo-related systems work, but modern engines are horrified by Black's approach, advocating an immediate storm of Black's position with the rook's pawn.

4.♕e3

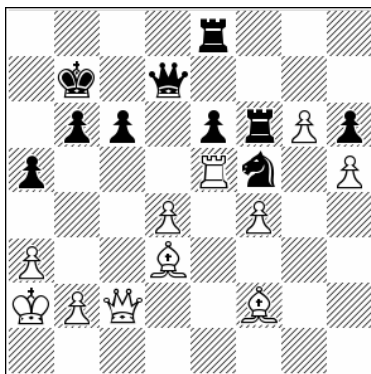
4.h4 already elicits an evaluation of +2.42 from Stockfish!

4...h6 5.h5 g5 6.f4 (no respite!) 6...d6 7.♜f3 g4 8.♜h4 ♕f6 9.g3 ♜c6 10.♕e3 d5 11.e5 ♕xh4 12.♞xh4 f5 13.exf6 ♜xf6 14.♕d3 ♜e7 15.♞xg4 (and an exchange sacrifice to boot) 15...♜xg4 16.♞xg4 ♞g8 17.♞f3 ♜f5 18.♕f2 ♞f6 19.g4 ♜e7 20.♜b5 ♙d7 21.0-0-0 b6 22.♞e1 a6 23.♜c3.



analysis diagram

The engines consider White's position winning in the long term, which is quite striking – one would imagine White has excellent compensation for the exchange, but still a lot of work to do. 23...♙b7 24.♞d1 ♞af8 25.♙e3 ♜c8 26.♞h3 ♜b8 27.♜b1 ♙c8 28.♞f2 ♞g7 29.♞h1 ♙b7 30.♞h2 ♙c8 31.a3 a5 32.c3 ♞c6 33.♞g1 ♞e7 34.♙c2 ♜b7 35.♜a1 ♙d7 36.♙d1 ♙c8 37.♞d3 ♜b8 38.g5. The pieces have been optimised and White proceeds to exploit its kingside pawn majority: 38...♙a6 39.♙c2 ♙xd3 40.♙xd3 ♞d6 41.g6 ♞e7 42.♞e1 ♞f5 43.♙d2 ♞d7 44.♞e5 ♞e8 45.♞e2 ♜b7 46.♙e3 c6 47.c4 ♞g7 48.♜a2 dxc4 49.♙xc4 ♞d6 50.♙a6+ ♜a7 51.♙d3 ♜b7 52.♙f2 ♞f6 53.♞c2 ♞f5



analysis diagram

54.d5. A lovely break, opening the g1-a7 diagonal for the dark-squared bishop. 54...cxd5 55.♞b3 ♞d6 56.♞e2 ♞ff8 57.♞b5 ♞a8 58.♞c2 ♞fd8 59.g7 (another lovely idea, dragging the black knight to a dark square!) 59...♞xg7 60.♙c5 ♞c6 61.♞xc6+ ♜xc6 62.♙f8+ ♜b7 63.♙xg7 ♞ac8 64.♞g2 ♞c1 65.♙e5. 1-0 (80) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

An amazing game!

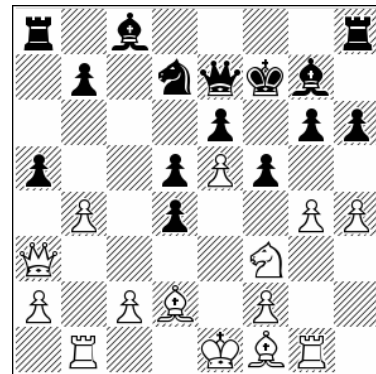
4...d5 5.e5

5.h4 is still the favourite engine idea.

5...♞e7

5...c5. Modern engines never want to stay passive: if activity is possible in such an opening, then it must be attempted, however risky the resulting positions.

6.♞b5 cxd4 7.♞d6+ ♜f8 8.♞f3 f5 9.♙f4 ♞h6 10.♞a3 ♜g8 11.♞f3 ♞f7 12.♞xf7 ♜xf7 13.h4 h6 14.♞g1 ♞d7. Black is aiming for ...♙f8 and ...♞d7-c5-e4, activating the knight while gaining tempi against the white queen. So White steps up the tempo! 15.g4 ♙f8 16.b4 (stopping ...♞c5) 16...a5 17.♞b1 ♞e7 18.♙d2 ♙g7 19.♙f4 ♙f8 20.♙d2 ♙g7



analysis diagram

21.gxf5 exf5 22.♞b3 ♞xe5 23.♞xd5+ ♞e6 24.♞xe5+ ♙xe5 25.♙c4 ♙c7+ 26.♞d1 ♞xd5 27.♙xd5+ ♜g7 28.♞e1 ♙d8 29.bxa5 ♙xh4 30.♞b5 ♞f8 31.♞e2 h5 32.♙b4 ♞d8 33.♙xb7 ♞a7 34.♙xc8 ♞xc8 35.♙c5 ♞a6 36.♙xd4+ ♙f6 37.♙b6 h4 38.♜e1 ♙c3+ 39.♜f1 ♞ca8 40.♞e7+ ♜f6 41.♞h7 ♙xa5 42.♙d4+ ♜g5 43.♙e3+ ♜f6 44.♞xh4 ♙c7 45.♞c4 ♙d6 46.♞d5 ♜e6 47.♞d1 ♞h8 48.♜e2 f4 49.♙xf4. A truly heroic defensive effort! ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

6.♞d2

6.f4 is the engine favourite now and on the next few moves, solidifying the white centre to make ...c5 unattractive.

6...h6

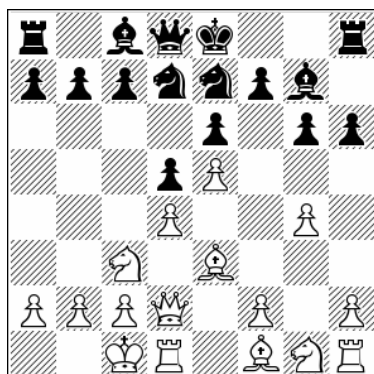
Preventing ♙h6 and keeping all Black's options open, but the engines still want a quick ...c5.

6...c5 7.dxc5 ♞bc6 8.♞f3 ♞xe5 9.♞xe5 ♙xe5 10.♙b5+ ♙d7 11.♙d4 ♙xd4 12.♞xd4 ♞f8 13.0-0 f6 14.♞fe1 ♜f7 15.♞ad1 ♙c6 16.f4 ♞f5 17.♞f2 ♞a5 18.♙d3 b6 19.cxb6 ♞xb6 20.♙xf5 ♞xf2+ 21.♜xf2 gxf5 was perfectly fine for Black, ½-½ (32) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

7.g4

Stopping ... f5 , but 7...c5 should now be even more tempting for Black! Black, however, keeps on playing flexibly.

7... d7 8.0-0-0



8...a6

8...c5. Now, however, the engines don't believe in this break anymore.

9.f4 cxd4 10. exd4 c6 11. d3 dxd4 12. dxd4 c5 (12...h5 13.gxh5 dxe5 is a neat trick from Stockfish. 14. b5+ (14.fxe5 sh6 nabs the queen) 14... d7 15. we1 c6 16. exc6 bxc6 17.hxg6 wh4 18.gxf7+ xf7 19. we2 wxf4+ 20. cb1 we5 21. wf2+ wf6 22. wg2 cg8 23. whf1 wh6 24. da4 e5 25. df5 xf5 26. xf5 h7 27. eg5 e4 28. eg1 was pretty tough for Black and not even Stockfish could survive, 1-0 (74) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 13. b5+ d7 14.f5 wg5 15.b4 (all-out assault!) 15...a6 16. wfg5 hxg5 17. exd7+ dxd7 18.fxe6 dxe5 19. whf1 0-0-0 20.exf7 ed6 21. df3 dxf7 22. dxd5 hd8 23.c4 b5 24. de7+ c7 25.c5 e6 26. exd8 dxd8 27. dd5+ 1-0 (69) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

9.f4

9.h4 is the engine favourite, looking for f4 followed by h5. 9...h5 10.gxh5 hxh5 11. e2 h8 12.h5 is much quicker than in the game.

9...h5

A typical idea from Black, hitting the g4-pawn when it cannot be adequately defended by h3. However, Black has wasted a tempo on ...h6-h5 so it's a very risky proposition!

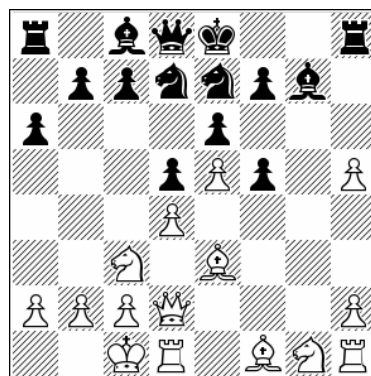
10.f5

A bold and risky idea. White drags a black pawn to f5, preventing the knight on e7 from finding a fine outpost there. However, 10.f5 also weakens White's support of the e5-pawn, which brings ...c5 back into the equation as a bid for

counterplay against White's position. Moreover, the pawn structure f7/e6/f5/d5 provides a mighty barrier in front of the black king which can now stay in relative safety on e8.

10.gxh5 hxh5 11. e2 h8 12.h4 was still very powerful for White. Black has no time for ...c5, which means the only action taking place is dictated completely by White: 12... df5 13.h5 df8 14. d3 c6 15. exf5 exf5 16. wg2 h6 17. df3 e6 18.hxg6 hxg6 19. wf2 wc7 20. dh4 h6 21. edg1 1-0 (65) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

10...gxf5 11.gxh5



11... hxh5

One can imagine that Black didn't even consider the move 11...c5, because of 12.h6, saving the h-pawn and forcing the bishop off the h8-a1 diagonal. However, the engines think that 12... df8 13. df3 cxd4 14. wxd4 c6 15. wd2 dxe5 is quite strong for Black, who will play ... wf6 and ... sh6 to recover the h-pawn!

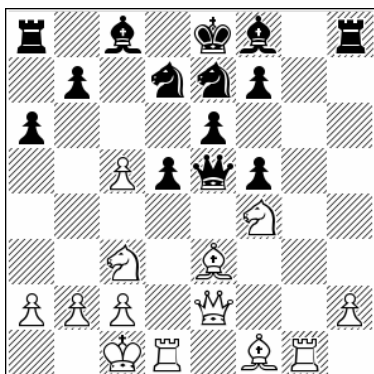
12.dh3

A neat move, aiming for f4, hitting the black rook and eyeing the d5- and e6-pawns for possible line-clearing sacrifices. It's clear that Gaprindashvili is not unduly worried about the fate of her d4-and e5-pawns: those will be abandoned to open lines against the black king.

12...c5 13. eg1 df8

The most human choice, tightly packing the black king's position. 13... sh8 was a popular engine choice but feels a little loose as a check on g8 doesn't seem far away.

14. we2 h8 15.dxc5 wc7 16. df4 wxe5

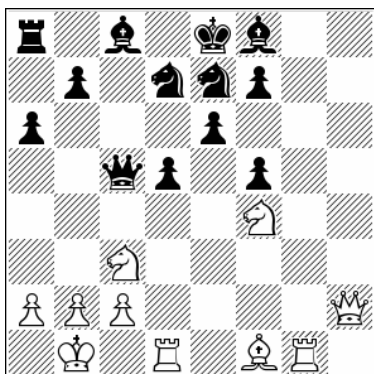


The battle lines are drawn. Black has destroyed the white centre but now has to cope with the lines and diagonals opened by this victory: the e-file towards the king on e8 is now open, while the a1-h8 diagonal is now tempting for White's dark-squared bishop. White's next move tees up ♖d4, skewering the black queen.

17. ♖f2 ♜xh2

Such a nice move to play, though the engines show iron restraint, preferring 17...♙h6 18. ♘fxd5 ♙xe3+ 19. ♘xe3 ♜xh2 20. ♙g2 ♜xc5 21. ♜ge1 ♙f8 22. ♖f4 ♜e5 23. ♖b4 with a balanced position, ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

18. ♖xh2 ♜xe3+ 19. ♙b1 ♜xc5



A fascinating position has arisen. It's the type of position that would gladden the heart of any Sicilian Najdorf player, let alone a Modern player! With three pawns for the exchange, the two bishops and a central pawn mass, Black seems set for a bright future. However, not everything is rosy in Black's garden. Winning so many pawns has opened multiple attack channels for White – the g- and h-files, for example – while the protection around Black's king is not as solid as it appears at first glance: the black king could be exposed by sacrifices, most obviously by that of a white knight on e6

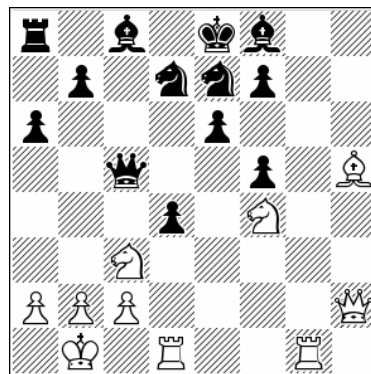
or d5. Gaprindashvili spots yet another sacrificial idea and hastens to transfer her bishop to h5, introducing the venomous idea of ♙xf7+.

20. ♙e2 d4

Black is in no mood to back down and seeks to disrupt White's position before the minor pieces reach their dangerous destinations.

21. ♙h5

No retreat either from Gaprindashvili!



21... ♘f6

Natural, but unexpectedly disastrous!

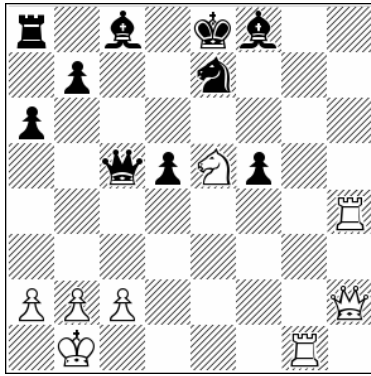
21...dxc3 22. ♙xf7+ ♙xf7 23. ♖h7+ ♙e8 24. ♖h5+ is terminal, as 24...♙d8 25. ♘xe6# is mate.

But 21...♙e5 feels natural, to provide some support to f7, and it was the engines' recommendation too. The engines universally followed a very complex path to a better but seemingly drawn endgame.

22. ♘a4 ♖b4 23. ♜ge1 ♙g7 24. ♖g1 ♙f6 25. ♜xe5 ♖xa4 26. ♜e2 ♖c6 27. ♜de1 ♙f8 28. ♘d3 ♙d7 29. ♖h2 ♜c8 30. ♙e5 ♖c7 31. ♘xd7+ ♖xd7 32. ♙xf7 ♙xf7 33. ♜xe6 ♖xe6 34. ♖h5+ ♙g6 35. ♖h7+ ♙g7 36. ♜xe6 ♙xe6 37. ♖xg6+ ♙f6 38. ♖h7 ♙e7 39. ♖g6+ ♙f6 40. ♖h7 ♙e7 41. ♖h1 ♜c7 ½-½ (237) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022. (No, that's not a misprint – the engine game lasted 237 moves, before Black got his draw!)

22. ♘ce2

22. ♘d3 is a fantastic idea, bringing the knight to e5 with gain of tempo: 22...♖a5 23. ♙e5 ♘xh5 24. ♘xf7 (24. ♖xh5 ♖xe5) 24...♙f6 25. ♘d6+ ♙d7 26. ♜xd4 ♘fd5 27. ♘c4 ♖c5 28. ♙e5+ ♙e8 29. ♘xd5 exd5 30. ♜h4.



analysis diagram

Black has two pieces for the rook, but the knight on e5 dominates the black king, preventing it from escaping: 30...♙e6 31.♖h8 ♖e3 32.♗h5+ ♔d8 33.♗xf8+ ♔c7 34.♗h2 f4 35.♗xa8 1-0 (69) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

22...♖c6 23.♗h4

Bringing the queen closer to the black king.

23...♙e7

Black is too careless about the threat to f7. 23...♗e7 still holds Black's position together: 24.♖xd4 ♖xd4 25.♗xd4 ♙d7 26.♗gd1 e5 27.♖g6 fxg6 28.♙xg6+ ♔d8 29.♖d6 ♗xd6 30.♗xd6 ♙xd6 (½-½ (30) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 31.♗xf6+ ♔c7 when Black has easily enough material for the queen.

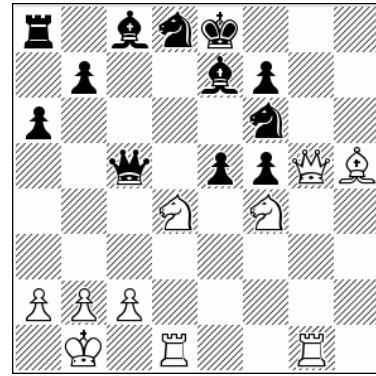
24.♗g5

Dangerous, but there was something even better: 24.♙xf7+ ♔xf7 25.♗h8 (threatening ♗g7 mate) 25...♙f8 26.♗g6 ♗e7 27.♗dg1 ♗d8 28.♗g7+ ♔e8 29.♖g6 ♗d6 30.♖ef4. What a position for White! 1-0 (53) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

24...♖d8

It was time for Black to jettison the f7-pawn and make a run for it behind the cover of a strong centre: 24...e5 25.♙xf7+ ♔d8 26.♖d3 ♗d6 27.c3 ♔c7 28.cxd4 exd4 29.♗f4 ♙d7 30.♗g6 ♗f8 31.♙b3 ♔b6 32.♗h6 ♔a7 and Black was in reasonable shape though obviously under pressure ½-½ (62) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

25.♖xd4 e5



A fork, but not an effective one.

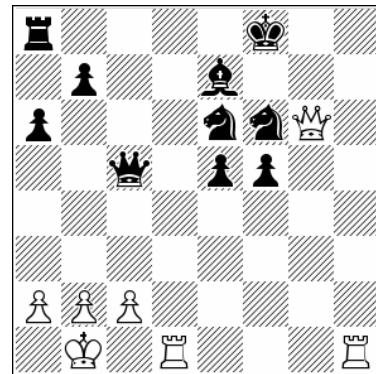
26.♖de6

I'm sure Gaprindashvili thought she was winning after this, and to be honest, it's a miracle that she isn't!

26.♗ge1 was simplest, when ♗xf6 meets any of the knight captures: 26...a5 27.♖b3 ♗c7 28.♗g7 ♗a6 29.♖g6 ♖e6 30.♗h8+ ♙f8 31.♖d4 was quite a special set-up from Stockfish! 31...fxg6 32.♙xg6+ ♔d7 33.♖b5+ ♔e7 34.♖xc7 ♖xc7 1-0 (42) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

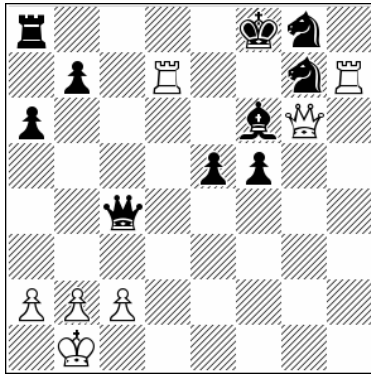
26.♖b3 is another fairly straightforward line, with a very strong position for White: 26...♗e3 27.♗xf6 is the wonderful idea! 27...♙xf6 28.♗g8+ ♔e7 29.♖d5+.

26...♙xe6 27.♖xe6 ♖xe6 28.♙xf7+ ♔xf7 29.♗g6+ ♔f8 30.♗h1



This looks completely winning, but by some miracle, Black's knights are able to keep a queen and two rooks at bay!

30...♖g7 31.♗h8+ ♖g8 32.♗h7 ♙f6 33.♖d7 ♗c4

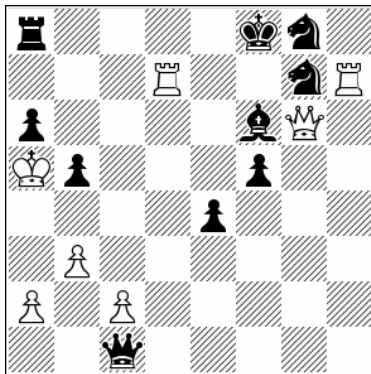


The miracle touch: the queen defends mate on f7 and threatens back rank mate starting with ...♔f1+.

34.b3

100% a winning attempt, but way too much! 34.a3 ♔f1+ 35.♔a2 ♔c4+ 36.♔a1 with a perpetual would have been the natural end to the game, ½-½ (36) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

34...♔f1+ 35.♔b2 e4+ 36.♔a3 ♔c1+ 37.♔a4 b5+ 38.♔a5



Should Black be winning, drawing or losing? It is very hard for any human player, in raging time-trouble, to guess! The engines show that Black is winning, however.

38...♔c3+

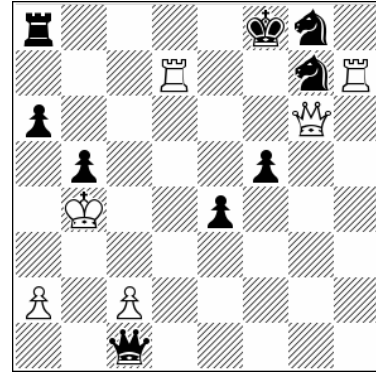
Not best but still plenty good enough. 38...♔a3+ 39.♔b6 ♔d4+ was the strongest. 40.♔xd4 ♔b8+ 41.♔a7 ♔c5+ 42.♔xb8 ♔xd4 cleans up part of White's attacking force while miraculously ending up defending the knight on g7: 43.♔h1 e3 44.♔b7 e2 0-1 (58) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

39.b4

39.♔b6 ♔e3+ 40.♔c6 ♔e7+ 41.♔xe7 ♔c8+ (41...♔xe7 42.♔xg7+ ♔xg7 43.♔xg7+ ♔e6 44.♔g6+ ♔e5 45.♔d6# is not the way to go!) 42.♔d7 (42.♔b7 ♔xe7 43.♔xg7+ ♔xg7 44.♔xg7+ ♔e6

45.♔g6+ ♔e5 0-1 (45) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 42...♔c7+ 43.♔xc7 ♔c5+ 44.♔b7 ♔xe7+ again neutralises the white attack with tempo: 45.♔c6 ♔e6+ 0-1 (58) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

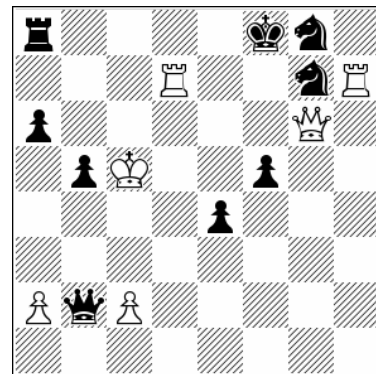
39...♔xb4+ 40.♔xb4



40...♔b2+

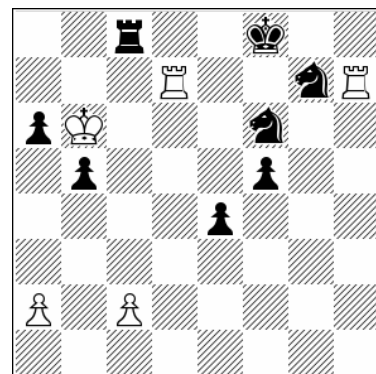
40...a5+ 41.♔c5 ♔xc2+ still wins: 42.♔d4 (42.♔b6 ♔f2+ 43.♔xb5 ♔b2+ 44.♔c6 ♔c8+) 42...♔d2+ 43.♔e5 ♔xd7 0-1 (46) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

41.♔c5



41...♔xc2+

The final mistake! The position was still winning after 41...♔c8+ 42.♔b6 ♔f6+ 43.♔xf6+ ♔xf6.



analysis diagram

The fork of the rooks prevents White from capturing on g7. 44.♖h8+ ♜g8 45.♖h7 ♜e6 46.♖df7+ ♜e8 47.♖xf5 ♜d8 48.♜xa6 ♜d6+ 49.♜a5 ♜e7 50.♖fh5 ♜f8 51.♖h8 ♜eg6 52.♖8h6 ♖e6 53.♖xb5 e3 – Black has lost a lot of pawns but the e-pawn is worth all of them, 0-1 (88) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

42.♜b6

And a draw was agreed here! 42...♞f2+ 43.♜c6 ♞c2+ is perpetual check (43...♜e7+ 44.♖xe7).

1/2-1/2

Game 28 – Grünfeld Indian Defence

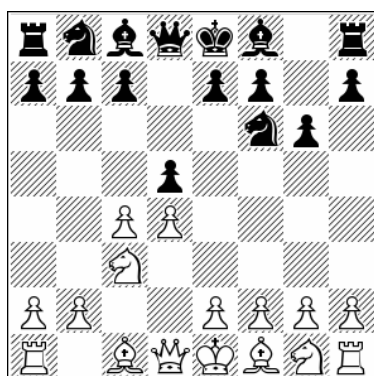
Boris Spassky

Bobby Fischer

Siegen ol 1970 (6)

This was the fifth and final game between Spassky and Fischer prior to their World Championship Match in 1972. By winning it, Spassky established a highly impressive score of +3 =2 including 3/3 with the white pieces. To many people, it seemed clear that he had the measure of the American.

1.d4 ♜f6 2.c4 g6 3.♜c3 d5

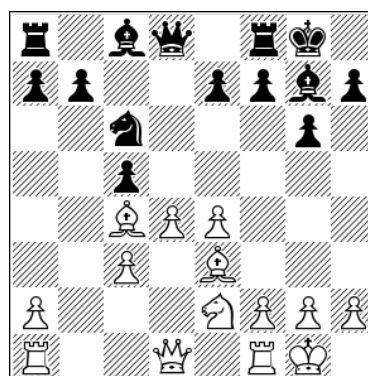


Fischer most often preferred the King's Indian against 1.d4, but Spassky had scored formidably with the Sämisch System for White, whilst Fischer himself had experienced problems against that line. For that reason, he had used the Grünfeld against Spassky at Santa Monica 1966, and sticks to it here, despite losing the first game. After this second defeat, he avoided 2...g6 altogether in the Reykjavik match.

4.cxd5

Spassky is again faithful to his favourite system.

4...♜xd5 5.e4 ♜xc3 6.bxc3 ♙g7 7.♙c4 c5 8.♜e2 ♜c6 9.♙e3 0-0 10.0-0



The theory of this line has changed significantly in the computer age. Investigations in the 1980s and 90s focused on the various pawn and exchange sacrifices after 10...♙g4 11.f3 ♜a5 while 10...♞c7 – hitherto the main line – was viewed as the escape route for black players looking for a quieter life and happy to accept a slight disadvantage in return.

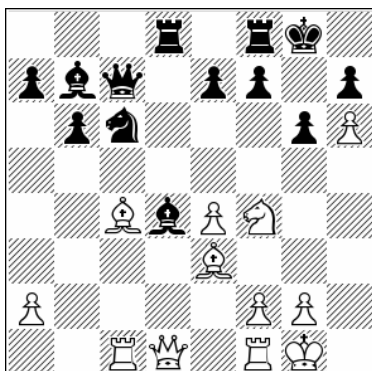
10...b6 – the engine preference and by far the main move nowadays – barely scratched the surface of our consciousness. At the time of this game, 10...♞c7, freeing the d8-square for the rook to pressure d4 while eyeing White's loose bishop on c4, was the most popular choice by far.

10...♞c7 11.♖c1 ♜d8

11...b6 is another implementation of the ...b6 plan that took off in the computer age. Our engine matches featured a thrilling game between Leela and Stockfish in this line: 12.h4 ♙b7 13.h5 ♖ad8 14.h6. Advancing the rook's pawn to h6 against a Grünfeld fianchettoed kingside is a theme known and used in human chess for 30 years or more – a good example is the lovely game Knaak-Hartston, Tallinn 1979 – but modern engines have transformed this idea from an occasionally useful strategical idea into a template for all manner of Grünfeld variations. This line is a good example: the idea of advancing the rook's pawn directly to h6 from move 12 before completing the rest of White's development would not have occurred to a grandmaster in the pre-computer age... whereas now it's commonplace!

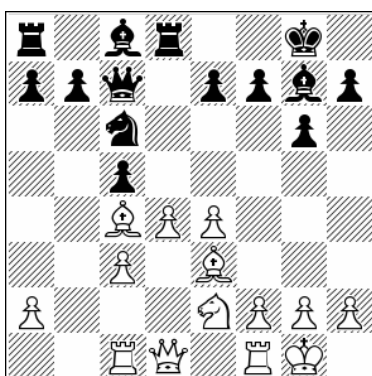
14...♙f6 15.♜f4 cxd4 (Stockfish's improvement over a previous game in this line; 15...♜a5 16.♙d5

♙a6 17.♞e1 ♘c4 18.♙xc4 ♙xc4 19.d5 ♙e5 20.♘d3 e6 21.♘xe5 ♞xe5 22.♞a4 exd5 23.♞xa7 ♞d6 24.♞b1 dxe4 25.♞xb6 ♞e5 26.♞c6 ♞xc3 27.♞c1 ♞e5 28.♞xc5 ♙d5 29.♞a5 ♞e6 30.♞d1 1-0 Miljkovic-Krstulovic, Serbia tt 2021) 16.cxd4 ♙xd4.



analysis diagram

Stockfish kicks off some quite bewildering tactics! 17.♘e6 ♙xe3 18.♘xc7 ♞xd1 19.♞cxd1 ♙xh6 20.f4. This still looks extremely unpleasant for Black, but Stockfish gradually whittles down the white advantage to manageable proportions: 20...g5 21.g3 gxf4 22.gxf4 ♘h8 23.♞d7 ♞g8+ 24.♘h1 ♙c8 25.♞d3 ♘b4 26.♞b3 ♞g4 27.♙e2 ♞h4+ 28.♘g2 ♘c6 29.♞c3 ♙xf4 30.♞xc6 ♙h3+ 31.♘f2 ♙xf1 32.♘xf1 h5 33.♘b5 ♞h1+ 34.♘g2 ♞h2+ 35.♘f3 ♙e5 36.♘xa7 ♞h3+ 37.♘f2 h4 38.♞c2 ½-½ Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022.



12.h3

Spassky prepares the natural plan of f4 (gaining space, preventing ...e5 and threatening f5) by preventing ...♙g4. 12.♙f4 was the main line in the 80s and 90s and was thought to give White a pleasant advantage. Recently, White players have switched to another move... you may be able to guess which one!

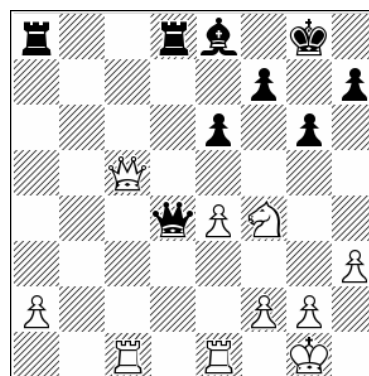
In the Santa Monica game, Spassky had played 12.♞e1, which worked out well for him after

12...e6!?, but the improvement 12...♞a5, threatening a favourable exchange of queens after ...cxd4, effectively draws the sting from that move.

12...b6

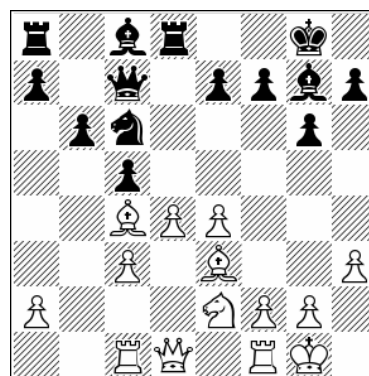
A logical and popular move, preparing to develop the light-squared bishop to the long diagonal now that its prospects along the a8-h1 diagonal have been restricted by 12.h3.

The engines preferred the more ambitious 12...a6, however, looking to grab all the queenside space they could: 12...a6 13.♙b3 b5 14.♘f4 e6 15.♞e2 a5 (both Stockfish and Leela were very keen to push the queenside pawns forward as quickly as possible) 16.♞xb5 a4 17.♙xa4 ♙d7 18.♞b3 ♘xd4 19.cxd4 ♙xa4 20.♞c4 ♞d7 21.♞xc5 ♙xd4 22.♙xd4 ♞xd4 23.♞fel ♙e8



analysis diagram

and Leela assessed correctly that White's extra pawn on a2 would go nowhere with two black rooks pointing at it! 24.♞e2 h6 25.♘h2 ♞d7 26.♞xd4 ♞xd4 27.f3 ♞da4 28.♞cc2 ♙b5 29.♞ed2 ♙c4 30.♞d7 e5 31.♘d5 ♙xd5 32.♞xd5 ♞xa2 33.♞xa2 ♞xa2 34.♞xe5 h5 ½-½ (40) Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022.



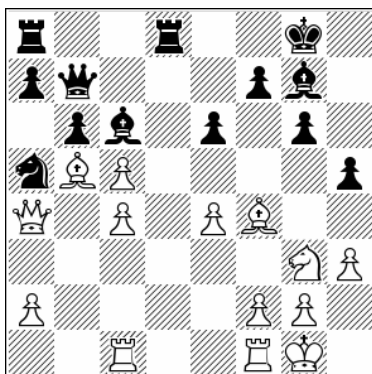
13.f4

Spassky follows through logically with his plan.

13.♙b5 was the engine preference and sets a positional trap in case Black is too eager to complete his development: 13...e6 (the natural 13...♙b7 is met by 14.d5 ♘e5 (14...e6 15.c4 exd5 16.cxd5, intending further central expansion with f4, is very powerful for White) 15.c4 with a strong central wedge). Now several white ideas were tested by the engines:

A) 14.d5 exd5 15.♘f4 is an intriguing engine idea, though it only seems to lead to equality: 15...dxe4 16.♘d5 ♖xd5 17.♗xd5 ♙b7 18.♗xe4 ♘b4 19.♗b1 ♘d5 20.♗d3 ♖c8 21.♙c4 ♗c6 22.♗xd5 ♗xd5 23.♙xd5 ♙xd5 24.c4 ♙e6 ½-½ (35) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022;

B) 14.♙f4 ♗b7 (14...e5 15.♙g5 f6 16.♙d2 is riskier for Black. White manages to attack the kingside with f4 with a pleasant initiative: 16...♘a5 17.f4 ♙d7 18.♙d3 ♗d6 19.♘h1 ♖ac8 20.d5 c4 21.♙c2 ♘b7 22.♙e3 ♗a3 23.♗e1 ♖f8 24.f5 ½-½ (37) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 15.♗a4 is another dangerous idea. Black needs the Grünfeld player's typical accuracy to navigate, but White's initiative wears itself out and, as usual, an extra pawn means little with a broken queenside structure: 15...♘a5 16.dxc5 ♙d7 17.c4 ♙c6 18.♘g3 h5 (18...♙d4 19.♙g5 ♖dc8 20.cxb6 axb6 21.♗d1 ♙b2 22.♖c2 ♙g7 23.♗e2 ♗c7 24.♖fc1 h6 25.♙e3 ♘b7 26.h4 h5 27.♙g5 ♖a5 28.♘h1 ♖a3 29.♙xc6 ♗xc6 30.e5 ♗c5 31.♖e1 ♗d4 32.♘h2 ♖d3 33.f4 ♘a5 34.♘e4 ♘xc4 35.♖ec1 ♖e3 36.♗xc4 ♖xc4 37.♖xc4 ♗d3 38.♖l c3 ♗xe4 39.♖xe4 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022)

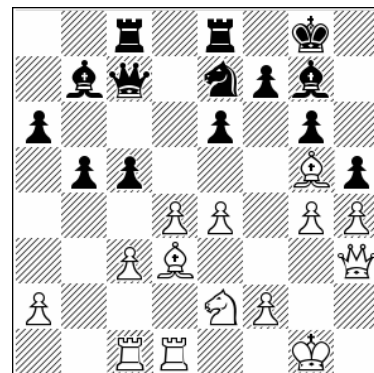


analysis diagram

19.♖fd1 ♙f8 20.cxb6 axb6 21.♙g5 ♖xd1+ 22.♖xd1 ♖c8 23.♖d3 ♗c7 24.♗d1 ♙e7 25.♙e3 ♙f6 26.a4 ♙e8 27.♙xe8 ♖xe8 28.♖d7 ♗c6 29.♙f4 ♗xc4 30.♘hx5

gxh5 31.♗xh5 e5 32.♗g4+ ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022;

C) 14.♙g5 is a typical idea from White in the Grünfeld, harassing Black's pieces with his bishops through the gaps in Black's pawn structure: 14...♘e7 15.♗d2 ♙b7 16.♗e3 a6 17.♙d3 (White has achieved a pretty good set-up to cover Black's pressure against d4 and e4. Next on the agenda is to probe the black kingside with h3-h4-h5) 17...b5 18.h4 h5 19.♗h3 ♖ac8 20.♖fd1 ♖e8 21.g4.



analysis diagram

This looks really dangerous for Black. Leela defends exceptionally well but it would not be easy in a practical game. 21...hxg4 22.♗xg4 f5 23.♗h3 fxe4 24.♗xe6+ ♘h7 25.h5 exd3 26.♖xd3 gxh5 27.♖h3 ♘f5 28.♖xh5+ ♘h6 29.♗f5+ ♘g8 30.♙xh6 ♗f7 31.♘g3 ♙xh6 32.♖xh6 ♗xf5 (if an engine could breathe a sigh of relief, Leela would do it here after the exchange of queens!) 33.♘xf5 ♖c6 34.♖xc6 ♙xc6 35.♘e3 ♙e4 36.dxc5 ♖c8 37.♘f1 ♖xc5 ½-½ Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022.

13...e6

Necessary to halt the advance of the f-pawn. f7 is particularly sensitive for Black without the king's rook to defend it. 13...♙b7 14.f5 ♘e5 15.♙f4 ♗c6 16.♙xe5 ♙xe5 17.fxg6 ♗xe4 18.gxf7+ ♘f8 19.♖f3 was clearly better for White. 1-0 (97) Stockfish-Dragon, Classics 2022.

14.♗e1

Unpinning and pointing the queen towards the black kingside, the same basic strategy as in the Santa Monica game. White exploits his central preponderance to attack the rather scantily-defended black king.

14.f5, in the spirit of a Grand Prix Attack, looked interesting, but Dragon finds an astonishing counter!

14...exf5 15.♔g5 ♖e8 16.exf5 ♙xf5 17.g4 ♜xd4 (a totally unexpected blow) 18.♙xf7+ (18.cxd4 ♙xd4+ 19.♜xd4 ♖g3+ is at least a draw... and more! 20.♜h1 ♖xh3+ 21.♜g1 ♖g3+ 22.♜h1 ♙e4+ 23.♜f3 ♖e5) 18...♖xf7 19.cxd4 h6 20.♙d2 (½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 20...♖xe2 21.♖xe2 ♙xd4+ 22.♜h2 ♖e6 23.♖xe6+ ♙e6 is equal according to the engines.

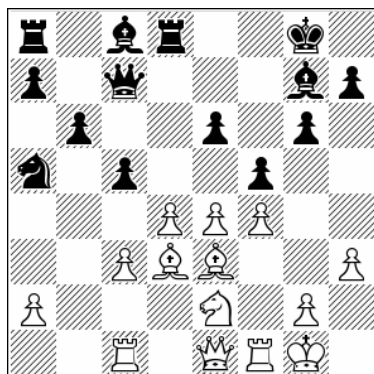
14...♜a5

14...♙b7 was played by Smyslov against Gligoric in a famous game played in 1959 and is also perfectly fine for Black. 15.♖f2 was Gligoric's choice, when after 15...♜a5 16.♙d3 f5 17.e5 c4 18.♙c2 ♜c6, the knight was headed to d5 via e7 and Smyslov went on to win a model game. Instead, 15.f5 is tempting for White but Black seems to have it all covered.

15...exf5 16.exf5 ♜a5 17.♙d3 ♖e8 18.♙g5 ♙e4 19.♙xe4 ♖xe4 20.♖f2 ♜c4 21.♖f3 ♖ee8 22.♖cd1 cxd4 23.cxd4 ♖d7 24.♜g3 ♖ac8 25.h4 ♜b2 26.♖d2 h6 27.♙f4 ♜c4 28.♖d3 ♖cd8 29.d5 ♜b2 30.♖d2 ♜c4 31.♖d3 ♜b2 32.♖d2 ½-½ Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022.

Fischer's move follows Weinstein-Benko, New York ch-USA 1961, which implemented Smyslov's model plan from his game against Gligoric in a more direct fashion than the original game.

15.♙d3 f5



A lovely plan cooked up in Smyslov's peerless strategical brain! Blocking the advance of White's f-pawn hampers the further deployment of White's dark-squared bishop and knight, while Black threatens to tighten the vice

around White's light squares with ...c4 and ...♙b7. If White is forced to play e5, then the black knight can be redeployed via c6-e7 to the fabulous d5-square. This is the standard reaction to the f4-push in such positions. Black can rarely afford to allow the enemy pawn to come to f5 and instead seeks to block up the position.

16.g4

Spassky is not going to acquiesce as easily to positional domination as Gligoric and Weinstein did! 16.g4 is a great move, ready to intensify the fight against Black's light square blockader still further with ♜g3.

Interestingly, although 16.e5 looks as if White is simply acquiescing in Black's plan, the engines didn't think it is so bad, as long as White develops kingside play with g4 as quickly as possible: 16...♙b7 17.g4 (17.♖f2 c4 18.♙b1 ♜c6 19.♜h2 ♜e7 20.♖g1 ♖c6 was excellent for Black in Weinstein-Benko, 1961) 17...♜h8 18.♜h2 c4 19.♙c2 ♜c6 20.gxf5 gxf5 21.♖g1 ♜e7 22.♜g3 ♖g8 23.♜h5 ♜d5 24.♙d1 ♙h6 25.♙f3 ♖xg1 26.♖xg1 ♖g8 27.♖f2 ♖d8 28.♖g1 ♖xg1 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022;

16.♜g3 is the engines' favourite move, but it doesn't seem any better than Spassky's choice. 16...♙b7 17.♖e2 ♖d7 18.h4 ♖d8 was a neat regrouping from Leela and led to a quick draw after 19.h5 cxd4 20.cxd4 ♖xd4 21.♖cd1 ♖e7 22.♙f2 ♖d7 ½-½ Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022.

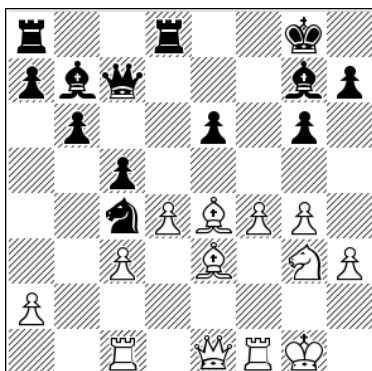
16...fxe4

The most consistent idea, diverting the white bishop from the protection of c4 and looking to exchange White's best light square defender.

A year later, Spassky reached the same position against Leonid Stein. That game went 16...♙b7 17.♜g3 ♖d7 (17...cxd4 18.cxd4 ♖e7 19.gxf5 exf5 20.d5 fxe4 21.♙xe4 ♙a6 22.♖f3 ♜c4 was balanced in Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022) 18.gxf5 cxd4 (widely praised at the time, but disliked by the engine) 19.fxe6 ♖xe6 and now, instead of Spassky's 20.f5, when 20...♖d6 would have been fine for Black, the engine likes White after 20.cxd4 ♙xd4 21.♙xd4 ♖xd4 22.♖e3 ♖ad8 23.f5 ♖e5 (23...♖xd3? 24.♖xd3 ♖xd3 25.fxe6 ♖xg3+ 26.♜h2 ♖e3 27.e7) 24.♙e2. It is perhaps not

immediately obvious why this should favour White, but the offside knight on a5 is a clue and 24...♙xe4? is unplayable because of 25.f6 with ♖f4 to follow.

17.♙xe4 ♗b7 18.♘g3 ♘c4



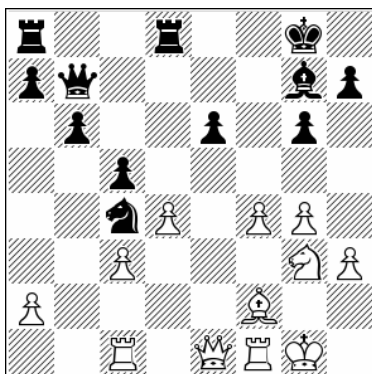
Both sides pursue their strategy logically. Black has broken up the white pawn centre and activated his knight, but at the cost of a weakening of his kingside and the appearance of a sickly pawn on e6. Chances remain balanced.

19.♙xb7

Spassky finds a decent way of activating his knight on g3; the engines focused on bringing the queen's rook into the game. Both ideas are plausible.

19.dxc5 bxc5 20.♖c2 ♙d5 21.♙c1 ♖e8 22.♖e2 looks very nice but neither engine was particularly excited by the result, agreeing a draw after 22...♘d6 23.♙xd5 exd5 24.f5 ♖c6 25.♖e6 ½-½ Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

19...♖xb7 20.♙f2



The bishop opens the attack by the queen against the e6-pawn and supports the knight's foray into e4 and beyond.

20...♖c6

Fischer continues logically, protecting the e6-pawn with the queen, leaving the rook to attack

the d4-pawn. The engines preferred an equivalent move.

20...♖d5 is also equal: 21.♖d1 ♘b2 (after 21...cxd4 White needs some accuracy here to avoid falling into a worse position: 22.♙xd4 (22.cxd4 led to a concerted attack on the d-pawn! 22...♘d6 23.♖e3 ♘b5 24.♖d3 ♖ac8 25.♖fd1 ♖c4 26.♘e2 ♖f8 27.♖1d2 a6 with a pleasantly better and safe position for Black ½-½ (56) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 22...e5 23.♙xe5 ♖xd1 24.♖xd1 ♖xd1 25.♖xd1 ♘xe5 ½-½ Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022) 22.♖d2 ♘c4 was a common insertion in our engine games, which indicates that Black has equalised and is able to dictate whether the game ends in a draw or not, though most likely there isn't much more in the position than this moral victory.

21.♖e2

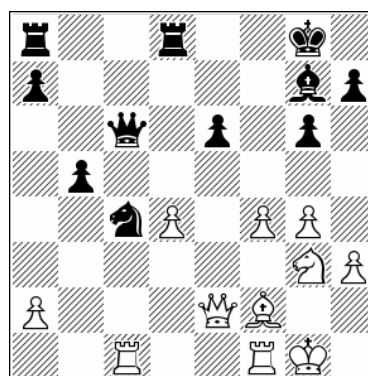
Just like Fischer, Spassky keeps the tension.

21.♖e4 was a reasonable line to clarify the position: 21...♖xe4 22.♘xe4 cxd4 23.cxd4 ♘b2 24.♖c6 ♘d3 25.♙e3 ♙xd4 26.♙xd4 ♖xd4 27.♖xe6 ½-½ Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

21...cxd4

The immediate 21...b5 is an equally valid approach and will probably transpose.

22.cxd4 b5



23.♘e4

Another fighting move from Spassky, as 23.♖fe1 was an obvious way to liquidate into an equal endgame.

23.♖fe1 ♙xd4 24.♖xe6+ ♖xe6 25.♖xe6 ♙xf2+ 26.♘xf2 ♖d2+ 27.♘g1 ♖xa2 28.♘e4 ♘d2 leads to a drawish endgame. Spassky's move strives for a more dynamic position, but objectively does not change the assessment of equality.

23...♙xd4

23...♖f8 is a move that appeals after playing through the main game, bringing both rooks to the defence of the black kingside. The engines were liquidating quickly after 24.♘c5 ♖ae8 25.a4 a6 26.♘xa6 ♗xa6 27.axb5 ♗xb5 28.♗xc4 ♗xc4 29.♗xc4 ♗xf4 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

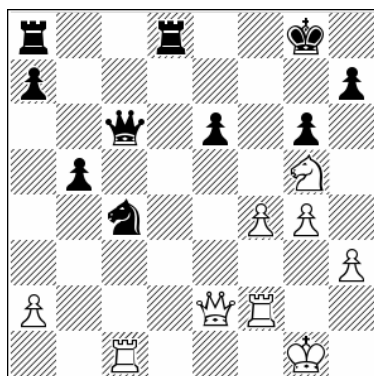
On the other hand, 23...a5 24.a4 should be avoided!

24.♘g5 ♗xf2+

This is condemned as the decisive mistake in Mednis' collection of Fischer's losses *How to Beat Bobby Fischer*, but in fact it is the engine's first choice and perfectly satisfactory. Kasparov quotes Spassky in not condemning it, but attributing the choice to Fischer's desire to play for a win.

Mednis recommends 24...♗b6, which is indeed a good way to maintain the balance: 25.♗xe6+ (Kasparov dislikes Black's last because of 25.♘xe6 ♖e8 26.f5 but the engine does not see any issue after 26...♗d6, for example) 25...♗xe6 26.♘xe6 ♖d2 27.a4 is Mednis' line (the engine's 27.f5 ♗xf2 28.♗xf2 gxf5 29.gxf5 ♘f7 30.♘g2 ♖g8+ 31.♘f3 ♗xf2 32.♘xf2 ♘f6 is also equal/drawn), when the engine confirms equality after 27...♘e3 (or 27...♗xf2 28.♗xf2 ♖e8 29.f5 gxf5 30.gxf5 ♘e5 31.♖d1 bxa4 32.♘f1 ♗xf2 33.♘xf2 etc.) 28.a5 ♘xf1 29.axb6 axb6 30.♗xf1 b4. Spassky's own recommendation, if Black is happy to draw, was 24...♗f6 which is also equal after 25.♗xe6+ ♗xe6 26.♘xe6 ♖d3.

25.♗xf2



We have reached a critical point. Both players have played at a high level but it feels as if Fischer has made more progress. After all, with the black pieces, he has won a pawn (albeit a

sickly one on e6), created a queenside pawn majority protected by an invulnerable knight on c4 and occupies the a8-h1 diagonal with the queen and the d-file with his rook. However, as things progress, you sense strongly that Spassky's position was much easier to play than Fischer's and that a blunder was more likely to come from Black's side than from White's. The discomfort in Black's position is actually inherent to his strategy from the opening, which has entailed favouring counterplay above kingside defensive pieces. The king's knight was exchanged on move 5 to speed up Black's central play; the king's rook was placed on d8 on move 11 to attack d4 and restrict White's pieces, and the dark-squared bishop was exchanged on move 23 to grab a pawn and open the d-file. Moreover, instead of transferring the queen's knight to bolster the kingside, Black has established it on a strong queenside post.

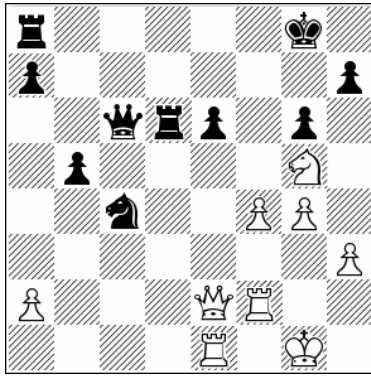
Although White doesn't have any terrifying threats yet, the general airiness of Black's king is a little irritating. He doesn't really have any way to consolidate the kingside, so has to keep on playing actively, but at every move, there's quite a bit of verification required to make sure an accident isn't happening. In general, Black has a higher cognitive load in this period than White, especially as Spassky consistently finds with which moves to irritate Fischer!

25...♖d6

The most logical move, combining defence and attack while allowing the queen's rook to slip behind to d8, e8 or f8.

25...♖e8 26.♘e4 (26.♗b2 ♖e7 27.♗f6 ♗d7 28.♘e4 ♖f8 29.♗c3 e5 30.f5 ♗d4 31.♗f3 gxf5 32.gxf5 ♘d6 33.♘xd6 ♗xd6 34.♗c6 was agreed drawn in Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022, although it wasn't intuitively obvious that Black's position was safe during that passage of play!) is mentioned as unsatisfactory by Mednis, but here the engine thinks Black has no problems after 26...♖f8 (or even 26...♘h8).

26.♖e1



26...Qb6

It feels intuitively wrong to move the queen from a great diagonal to one where she is temporarily pinning a piece, but one can see that Fischer was straining to find a concrete way to clarify the position without falling into a slightly worse endgame.

Black has at least two other perfectly reasonable moves:

A) 26...a5 27.♟e4 ♞d4 28.♟f6+ ♔h8 29.g5 (29.f5 e5) 29...♞a6; and

B) 26...♞f8, which is the safest move for Black, covering the f6-square against ♟g5-e4-f6 while holding back f4-f5. Re-establishing material equality with 27.♟xe6 is met by the neat idea 27...♞d2, forcing the exchange of queens: 28.♞e4 ♞xe4 29.♞xe4 ♞e8. White's pieces are much less threatening with the knight on e6 in a pin. Now, 30.f5 ♞xf2 31.♟xf2 gxf5 32.gxf5 ½-½ Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022, or 30.♟g2 ♞xf2+ 31.♟xf2 ♟d6 32.♞e2 a5, in both cases with equal/drawish positions;

C) Even 26...♞d2 27.♞xe6+ ♞xe6 28.♞xe6 feels intuitively awkward for Black due to the restricted black king and the active white pieces, though the engines are happy to throw forward the a- and b-pawns and let White do his worst.

27.♟e4

A clever move from Spassky, removing the exchanging ...♞d2 from the position and looking at the f6-square!

27.f5 also looks a little dangerous for Black; however, 27...♞f8 is again the engine resource (27...exf5 28.♞e7 is an instant win!; 27...♞d2 28.♞xe6+ ♞xe6 29.fxe6 offers White some grounds for optimism though once again the engines are confident Black can hold): 28.♟xe6

♞d2 29.♞f3 ♞xf2 30.♞xf2 ♞e8 31.♞xb6 axb6 32.fxc6 hxc6 ½-½ Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022.

27...♞d4

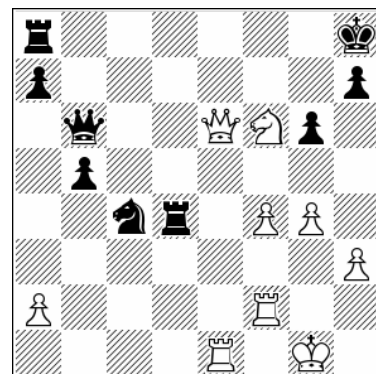
27...♞c6 feels more consistent with Fischer's play so far, keeping hold of the e6-pawn and trusting that White has no killing blow! 28.♟g2 ♞d8 29.h4 ♟a3 30.♞b2 ♟c4 31.♞e2 ♟a3 32.♞b2 ♟c4 33.♞f6 ♞f8 ended in a draw in Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022, but it felt a little fraught!

28.♟f6+ ♔h8

A somewhat unnatural move. This move is another indication that Fischer was looking to keep life in the game by keeping the queens on – or simply mis-assessed something in the resulting positions. Even so, the text is also fine for Black.

Mednis rejects 28...♟g7 on the basis of the line 29.♞xe6 ♞xe6 30.♞xe6 ♞d6 31.♟e8+ ♟f7 32.♟xd6+ ♟xe6 33.♟xb5 'with a very unpleasant ending for Black'. That is fair enough, but in this line, 32.♞xd6 instead of 32.♟xd6+ wins a piece and is much more convincing, whilst back at move 30, the engine's 30...♟d6 is fine for Black, e.g. 31.f5 (31.h4 ♞d8 32.a3 a5 33.g5 ♟f5 34.♞b6 ♞d1+ (½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 35.♟h2 ♞8d2) 31...gxf5 32.gxf5 ♞f8 33.♟h5+ ♟h8 34.♟h2 ♞d5 35.f6 ♟e8 36.♟g3 ♞d6.

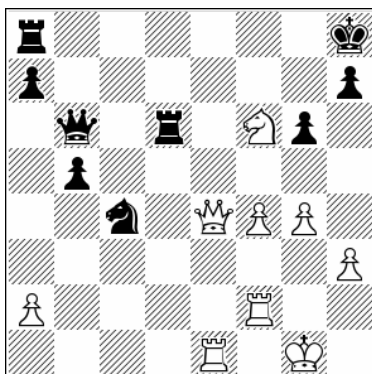
29.♞xe6



29...♞d6

Much attention at the time was focussed on the very nice line 29...♞d1 30.♞f7!! ♞xe1+ 31.♟g2 ♟e3+ 32.♟f3 ♞c6+ 33.♟g3 ♞g1+ 34.♟h4, which of course Spassky had to have seen. However, whereas most commentators have assumed that 29...♞d1 was Black's last hope and its failure condemns him to defeat, in fact he is still fine.

30.♞e4

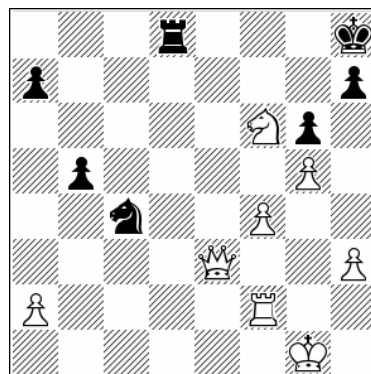


A neat counterblow, hitting the rook on a8 in response to Black's attempted skewer. Black's last few moves have felt somewhat uncoordinated (...♖d6-d4-d6 leaves a bad impression) but the engines are still unconcerned by White's play. However, for a human player on the black side, the stress on each move has grown, as a mating threat with ♖e7 is a constant danger.

30...♖f8?

As Timman points out, this is something of a wasted move from Black as White will play g5 next move anyway.

30...♖ad8 looks much more natural, when Mednis, despite claiming 24...♙xf2 was the decisive mistake, somewhat inconsistently says Black has chances of saving half a point after 31.g5 ♖d2 32.♖ee2 (32.♖f3 ♖c5 was the accurate engine way, keeping the pressure and guarding e7 against ♖e7: 33.♙e4 ♖xf2 34.♖xf2 ♖xf2+ 35.♙xf2 (the position feels much better with the knight on f2, as Black's king wins vital time to run to freedom) 35...♖d4 36.♙g4 ♙g7 37.♖e7+ ♙f8 38.♖xa7 ♖xf4 39.♙f6 ♙d2 40.♙xh7+ ♙g8 ½-½ Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022. With the black king out of its cage, the extra pawn is worth nothing against Black's active pieces; 32.♖ef1 as in the game is met by 32...♖e3) 32...♖xe2 33.♖xe2 ♖e3 34.♖xe3.



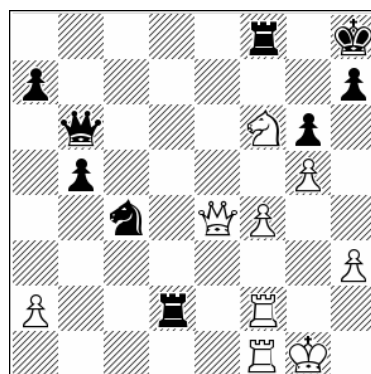
analysis diagram

Now Mednis gives 34...♙xe3, attaching a ♗, in view of the line 35.♖e2 ♙f5 (35...♖d3 36.♙f2 ♙d1+ 37.♙e1 ♙e3 38.♖b2 ♙d5 39.♖xb5 ♙xf6 40.gxf6 ♙g8 is another route to the draw, as shown by the engine) 36.♖c2! ♖a8 37.♖c7 ♙g7 38.♖b7 a6 39.♙f2, but in this line, Black draws by remembering the golden rule of using the rook actively in endings and finding the very nice tactic: 36...♖d1+ 37.♙f2 ♖f1+! (so obvious when you see it, isn't it?) 38.♙xf1 ♙e3+ 39.♙e2 ♙xc2 and with the rooks off, Black draws easily: 40.♙d2 ♙b4 41.a3 ♙c6 42.♙d3 ♙g7 43.h4 h5 44.f5 a5 and White has no way to make progress. Instead, he recommends 34...♖d1+! 35.♙g2 ♙xe3+ 36.♙f3 ♙f5 'with good chances of a draw'. In fact, the engine assesses this as completely equal.

31.g5 ♖d2 32.♖ef1

Another clever reply from Spassky, maintaining the tension and keeping his most important attacking pieces active.

32.♖ee2 preserves some advantage: 32...♖xe2 33.♖xe2 ♖e3 34.♖xe3 ♙xe3 35.♖d2 ♙g7 36.♙f2 ♙f5 37.♖d5 a6 38.♖d7+ ♖f7 39.♙e8+ ♙f8 40.♖xf7+ ♙xf7 41.♙c7 and White wins a pawn, although the kingside blockade still gives Black good drawing chances.



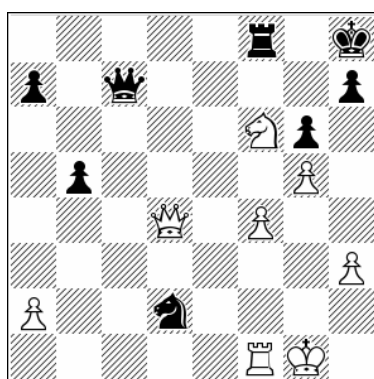
32...♔c7?

A blunder from Fischer finally disturbs the balance of the game which has been poised until now. However, by this stage maintaining the balance required some strong and nerveless calculation.

Black could have held with 32...♔g7: 33.f5 (33.♖e7+ ♜f7 34.♖e8 ♜f8) 33...♜xf2 34.♜xf2 ♖e3 35.♖h4 (35.♖xe3 ♜xe3 36.fxg6 ♔xg6 and with his king free, Black is fine) 35...h5 36.fxg6 ♖e1+ is the main line. 37.♔h2 ♖e5+ 38.♖g3 ♔xg6.

32...♜xf2 33.♜xf2 ♖e3 would also hold easily if an engine is playing Black!

33.♜xd2 ♜xd2 34.♖d4



34...♜d8

Now the ending is hopeless: 34...♖b6 35.♖xb6 axb6 36.♜d1 is a horrific version of earlier endgames (strangely, Mednis gives instead 36.♜c1 '!' 36...♜c4 37.a4 'with an easy win', but after 37...♔g7 38.axb5 ♜d6 it is anything but – White's greater activity gives him a small plus, but with only three vs two pawns on the kingside, it is obviously just a draw, barring a blunder by Black). 36...♜d8 37.♜c1 ♜c4 38.♜e1 and the rook breaks into the black camp decisively: 38...♔g7 39.♜e7+ ♔f8 40.♜xh7 ♜d4 41.f5 was won with consummate ease by the engines! 1-0 (77) Lc0-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

35.♜d5+ ♔g8 36.♜f2 ♜c4 37.♜e2

And in the blink of an eye, Black's counterplay has evaporated and White's pieces rule the centre!

37...♜d6

37...♖d6 38.♜e7 ♖b6 39.♜e8+ ♜xe8 40.♜xb6 1-0 (64) Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2022.

38.♜e8+ ♔f7 39.♜f8+

A lovely finishing touch!

39...♔xf8 40.♖h8+ 1-0

Game 29 – Various Openings

Bent Larsen

Svetozar Gligoric

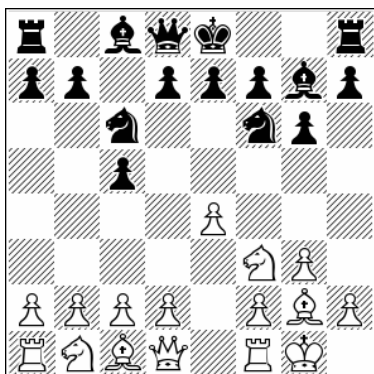
Vinkovci 1970

One of the main characteristics of engine middlegame play is their fondness for marches of the rook's pawns. This was also a trait of the great Danish GM, Bent Larsen, whose play was regarded as quite eccentric in its day, partly for precisely this fondness for pushing rook's pawns. Larsen himself explained his liking for it largely in terms of avoiding simplification – an attack in the centre, if repulsed, usually leads to drawish exchanges, whereas a flank attack, if it does not immediately succeed, still keeps plenty of play in the position, which suited the great Viking fighter. Modern engines, of course, have a more objective reason for liking marches by the rook's pawns and we thought it would be instructive to set them to work, analysing one of Larsen's characteristic examples.

1.g3 g6

It isn't easy playing for a win, even with White! In the modern game, the likelihood of falling on a deeply-prepared drawing line when playing 1.d4 or 1.e4 as White is extremely high. I (Matthew) was discussing this with an engine programmer and he said that when he forced his engine to look for opening lines with the best winning chances – as opposed to the best objective lines – the engine always wanted to play fianchettoes! Larsen was ahead of his time and the opening line he plays in this game – and his style of play in general – would fit seamlessly into the modern game, which is obsessed with reaching unexplored paths to force the opponent to think for himself, rather than relying on memory.

2.♟g2 ♟g7 3.e4 c5 4.♜f3 ♜c6 5.0-0 ♜f6



We have transposed into an offbeat Sicilian (or a reversed English Opening) and this position has been seen fairly often in the modern game. The engines suggest the sharp pawn sacrifice 6.d4, that hasn't received any high-level tests, but most players have followed something akin to Larsen's approach.

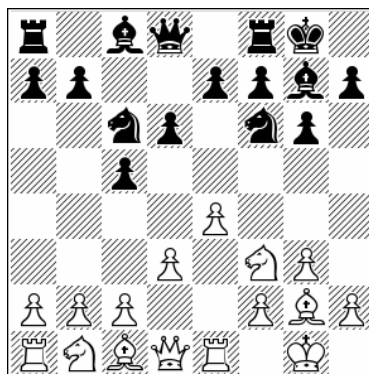
6.d3

6.d4 ♖xe4 7.d5 ♖a5 8.♞e1 ♜f6 9.d6 e6 10.♜e5 was suggested by both Stockfish and Komodo and certainly seems worth a try, as the resulting positions would be difficult to navigate without preparation: 10...♞b8 11.a3 0-0 12.b4 ♜c6 13.♙xc6 bxc6 14.c4 ♜e8 15.♜c3 cxb4 16.axb4 ♞xb4 17.c5. White has sacrificed two pawns but the central and queenside bind is impressive! Both engine games ended in a draw, but the positions were very murky and definitely 'human-losable', ½-½ (27) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

6...0-0

6...d5 7.♜bd2 0-0 8.♞e1 dxe4 9.dxe4 e5 turns the position into a reversed g3-King's Indian. It looks a little unnatural to weaken the d5-square so quickly with ...dxe4 and ...e5 but Stockfish has seen it is in time to cover it: 10.c3 ♜c7 11.♜f1 ♞d8 12.♜c2 h6 13.♜e3 ♙e6 with a pleasant position for Black, ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

7.♞e1 d6



8.♜bd2

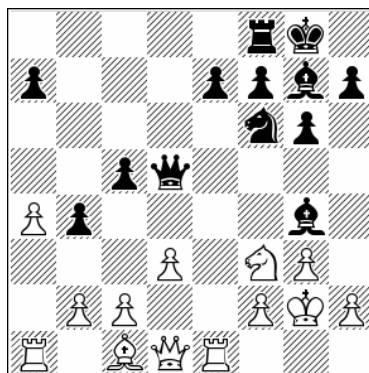
The opening has transposed into a kind of Closed Sicilian position, but with the white knight on d2, rather than c3.

8.a3 ♞b8 9.c3 is another common white plan, hinting either at queenside expansion with b4 or at central expansion with d4, if Black plays passively. 9...e5. This structure is a firm engine favourite against such slow white systems and we will see it recommended frequently in the next few moves. White's central expansion with d4 is resisted and Black has the possibility of playing ...d5 to gain more central space if desired. 10.h3 ♞e8 11.b4 b5 12.♙e3 ♜d7 13.♜bd2 a5 14.♞b1 axb4 15.axb4 cxb4 16.cxb4 ♜b6 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

8...♞b8

A natural human move, getting the rook off the long diagonal before gaining queenside space with ...b5, but oddly enough, it wasn't an absolute tactical necessity.

8...b5 9.e5 dxe5 10.a4 b4 11.♜xe5 ♜xe5 12.♞xe5 (safe and necessary! – 12.♙xa8 ♙g4 13.f3 (13.♙f3 ♜xf3+ 14.♜xf3 ♜d5 15.♙g2



analysis diagram

looks very awkward for White, but few of us would feel confident about the objective

assessment without the engine, which is at -2.43! 15...♖h5 16.h4 ♜d8 17.♞xe7 ♜d5. An amazing idea: the rook is headed to f5 but I (Matthew) couldn't think of a convincing follow-up after 18.♙f4: 18...♞f5 19.♞e2 g5 20.hxg5 ♞xf4 21.gxf4 ♙h3+ wins as 22.♙h1 ♙f1+ picks up the queen) 13...♙h3 14.♙e4 ♞d4+ 15.♙h1 ♞f2 16.♞g1 b3 is an amazing idea to soften up the d3-square so that Black can attack it with ...♞d8. 17.cxb3 (17.♞e1 ♙g2+) 17...♞d8 and White is in an awful state with ...♙xd3 to come) 12...♙d7 13.♞e1 ♞b8 14.♙c4 ♞e8 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

9.a4

The first advance of a rook's pawn does not raise any particular eyebrows, being a fairly standard prophylactic move against Black's planned queenside expansion with ...b5.

9...b6

9...a6 would perhaps have been more consistent, but Gligoric keeps the pawn structure flexible, retaining a multitude of plans and structures for the moment.

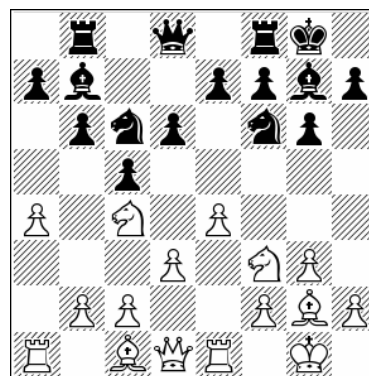
9...e5 was once again the engine choice, when Black is essentially playing the White side of an English Opening: 10.♙c4 ♙e6 11.♙e3 h6 12.c4. Stopping ...d5 for good and thus stabilising the position, but also making either d4 or b4 for White very unlikely. It's sometimes difficult to get the engines into the mood of accepting an objectively worse position for counterplay and winning chances: they keep on trying to equalise the position for you!

12...b6 13.♙d2 ♙h7 14.♞b1 a5 15.♞f1 ♞d7 16.♙h1 ♙g8 17.♙h4 ♙f6 18.♙f3 ♙ge7 ½-½ (27) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

10.♙c4

10.c3, looking for a double-pawn centre with d4, is something Black must continually watch out for. Rather than 10...e5 immediately, the engines this time entered into the spirit of a flexible pawn structure with the typical manoeuvre ...♙f6-d7-e5, weakening White's support of d4 and freeing Black's position with exchanges: 10...♙d7 11.♙b3 ♙de5 12.d4 ♙xf3+ 13.♙xf3 e5 14.d5 ♙a5 15.♙d2 c4 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

10...♙b7



11.h4

A move typical of modern engines with their obsession for rook's pawn marches... yet not recommended by any of them in this position! 11.h4 is clever and psychological. Black may be tempted to play ...d5 at some moment, but now after exd5 ...♙xd5, he has to watch out for the sneaky wing attack h5! The presence of the rook's pawn adds an unusual element of randomness to the position. Black may consider at each move whether to stop any future advance with ...h5, or play ...h6 to meet h5 with ...g5, or just leave the structure as it is, which definitely adds to the load of calculation on each move. It is safe to say that, at the time this game was played, no other top GM would have played this way as White.

11.♙e3 a6 12.c3 e6 13.♙c2 ♙e7 14.♙e3 ♞c7 15.♙d2 h6 16.b4 ♞fd8 17.♞b1 ♙c6 18.♙a3 cxb4 19.cxb4 b5 20.axb5 ♙xb5 21.♞c1 ♞d7 22.♙dc4 was a more sedate course chosen by the engines, ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

11...♞c7

11...a6 followed by ...b5 is the engines' favourite course now and on the next few moves, hitting the exposed knight on c4. However, Gligoric's choice is also very reasonable and gives Black plenty of chances.

12.♙d2

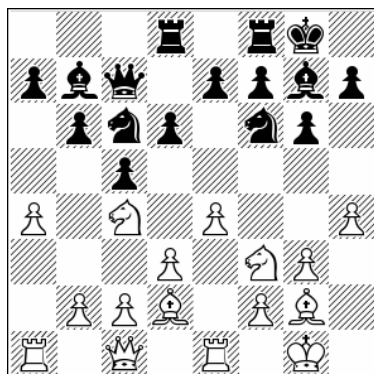
One might have expected the bishop to come to f4, but from d2, it also supports the move a4-a5.

12...♞bd8

Settling for central play, in accordance with the classical advice to meet a wing attack with a counter in the centre. He could also have gone for 12...a6, since 13.a5?! (13.♙e3 b5 14.c3 e6 was

the engine preference and looks very pleasant for Black: 15.b4 h5 16.♖e2 ♘d7 17.♙a1 bxa4 18.d4 ♜fe8 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 13...b5 14.♘b6 e6 leaves the knight on b6 rather stranded.

13.♞c1



A typical mini-plan in such positions, looking to exchange off the dark-squared bishops and weaken both Black's defence of the kingside and the pressure along the h8-a1 diagonal.

13...d5

A natural reaction, but the clever engines come up with some much more devious options to prevent White's plan.

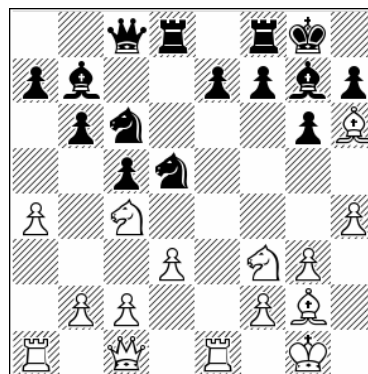
13...♘b4 is an obvious one, preventing ♕h6 due to the threat against c2. The knight is difficult to remove because c3 allows ...♘xd3: 14.♘e3 e6 15.♞b1 ♘c6 16.c3 ♞d7 and White's plan has been thwarted! ½-½ (25) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

13...♙a6 is a less obvious way of preventing ♕h6: 14.e5 (14.♕h6 ♘xe4 (exploiting the fact that 15.dxe4 is met by 15...♙xc4) 15.♞xe4 d5, winning back the piece with advantage. Neat trick!) 14...dxe5 15.♘fxe5 ♘d4 16.♞d1 ♙b7 17.c3 ♘f5 with a balanced position, but once again White has been prevented from executing the plan of ♕h6, ½-½ (21) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

14.♙f4 ♞c8 15.exd5 ♘xd5

15...♞xd5 looks risky due to a potential discovered attack on the rook by the bishop on g2, but it was the engines' favourite choice. Keeping the knight on f6 makes sure that h5 remains impossible to achieve: 16.♕h6 ♞e8 17.♙xg7 ♙xg7 18.♞d2 ♞c7 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

16.♕h6

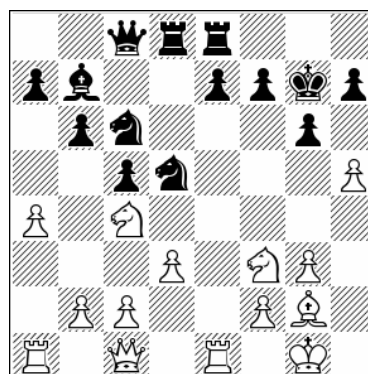


16...♞fe8

In the next few moves, Gligoric plays in restrained fashion – presumably to avoid leaving himself open to attack – but ironically ends up exposing himself to attack by putting insufficient pressure on White's position.

16...♘db4 was the engine favourite and a typical idea in King's Indian structures. The knight on b4 hits c2, tying the white queen to its defence, and the weakness of d3 makes it impossible to shift with c3 in the short term. Keeping the queen – or another major piece – tied to the defence of c2 limits the hardware that White can throw at Black's king: 17.♙xg7 ♙xg7 18.♞e3 (defending d3 to play c3 and drive away the annoying knight, but blocking the route of the white queen to Black's kingside) 18...h5 (taking the opportunity to block the advance of the h-pawn, though other moves such as 18...♞c7 and 18...f6, supporting ...e5, are also reasonable) 19.c3 ♘d5 (19...♘xd3 20.♞c2 followed by ♙f1 will win the knight! An unusual tactic) 20.♞e1 ♘f6 21.♞d2 ♞fe8. Black is perfectly organised and the weakness of d3 will tie a white piece to its defence throughout the middlegame, ½-½ (24) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

17.♙xg7 ♙xg7 18.h5



The engines shrug their shoulders as this lands, but a human player starts to feel tension and irritation! How has White made what feels like progress with such innocuous means? As predicted at move 11, the knight has left f6 and the h-pawn is free to roll.

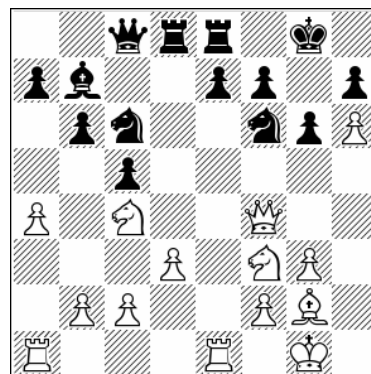
18...♟f6?

Another conservative move, meant to reduce any possible danger on the kingside, but it's a move that causes the engine evaluations to jump. Instead, they prefer the active 18...♟db4 19.♞e3 (19.h6+ ♔g8 is much less effective, as the white queen is tied down to the c2-pawn and it is not clear how he can follow up) 19...♙a6 20.b3 (20.c3 ♟xd3) 20...f6 21.h6+ ♔f8 22.♚b2 ♟d4 23.c3 ♟xf3+ 24.♞xf3 ♟d5. The black position is still safe, but it's clear that White can be heartened by the practical results so far: the position is quite unbalanced and chances (in a human game) will be forthcoming, ½-½ (26) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

19.h6+

White establishes his bone in the enemy throat on h6 and the engine already considers him to have a clear advantage. In the late 19th century, the debate over such pawns was between Steinitz and Tarrasch. The former thought the pawn a weakness that would drop off in the endgame, whereas the good Doctor, fully aware of the chronological order in which the gods have placed middlegame and endgame, thought Black would usually be mated well before any ending. One of the things modern practice has shown is that even in the endgame, the pawn on h6 can be a strength rather than a weakness. Anyone in doubt about this should consult the poor French GM, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, who has lost a whole series of Exchange Grünfeld endgames against Carlsen, precisely because of the strength of the h6-pawn.

19...♔g8 20.♚f4

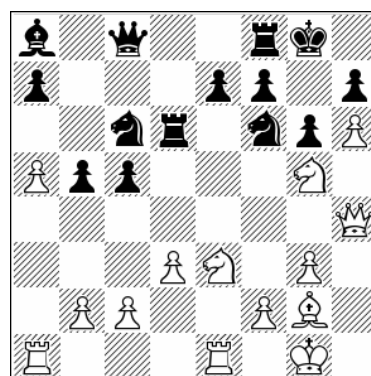


This is the big problem. Without ...♟b4, the white queen is free to move towards the kingside and the kingside dark squares – weakened by the exchange of dark-squared bishops and the presence of the rook's pawn on h6 – are suddenly a real problem. Black can't counterattack with ...♟b4 anymore so grim defence is required.

20...♟h5

Deciding to dislodge the queen before White can play ♟g5, after which the pressure against f7 is annoying.

20...♙a8 (20...♟b4 21.♞xe7) 20...♙a8 21.♟g5 (21.♞xe7 ♟xe7 22.♚xf6 ♟f5 23.♟g5 ♟xh6 holds (just!) for Black) 21...♞f8 was the engines' favourite defence, retracing a few steps and freeing the knight on f6: 22.a5 ♟d5 23.♚e4 ♟f6 24.♚h4 b5 (playing the bishop back to a8 avoids the intermezzo a6! which is a theme we will see well demonstrated in the game!) 25.♟e3 ♞d6.



analysis diagram

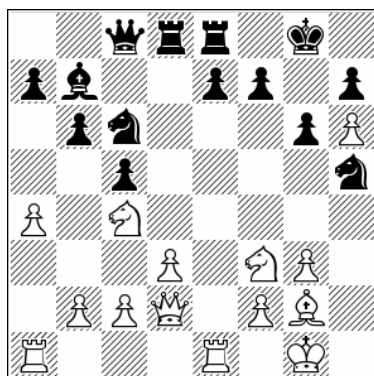
The black position is quite uncomfortable but a top engine is able to hold it together. Still, White can be very happy with the progress made from such a quiet opening!

26.a6 ♞e8 27.c3 ♟e5 28.♙xa8 ♚xa8 29.♟c4 bxc4 30.♞xe5 ♟d7 31.♞e3 cxd3 32.♚f4 ♞f6 33.♚e4 ♚xe4

34.♟xe4 ♜b6 35.♞xd3 ♞f8 36.♞d2 c4 37.♞c5 g5
38.♞d7 ♞xh6 39.♞a5 ♞e6 40.♞xg5+ ♞g6 41.♞a5
♞g7 ½-½ (51) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

21.♞d2

21.♞h4 was the engine preference and leads to a manoeuvre reminiscent of an AlphaZero game in which ♞h1! was played, e.g.: 21...♞d4 22.♞xd4 ♞xd4 23.♞h1 ♞xg2 24.♞xg2 ♞f6 25.♞e5 ♞d6 26.♞e2 ♞d7 27.♞c4 ♞f6 28.♞ae1 ♞f8 29.f4 with a pleasant advantage for White though Stockfish (of course) managed to hold things together, ½-½ (48) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.



21...f6?

Neither unnatural nor illogical: Black wants to keep White's pieces at bay by taking control of the e5-square and then clamping down with ...e5 on any breaks with d4 or f4. However, the move is actually catastrophic! It is very cruel to Black's knight on h5 which is never going to get back into play as ...f5 (freeing f6) weakens too many squares. Moreover, Larsen is not aiming for a frontal attack with a central or kingside pawn break: he's going to go around the edges.

21...♞b4, again attacking the soft point at c2, holds White to only a small edge: 22.♞ac1 ♞d5 23.♞e3 ♞b7 24.a5 e5 was the engine approach. It feels a little loose with empty squares like f6 attracting the eye of any White player, but it seems that everything hangs together. And the knight to h5 can always return to base some time in the future!

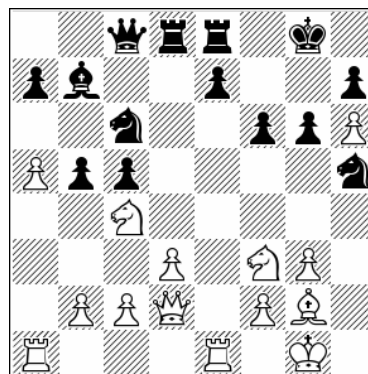
25.♞f1 ♞c7 26.axb6 axb6 27.♞a1 e4 28.♞g5 exd3 29.♞xb7 ♞xe1 30.♞xe1 ♞xb7 31.cxd3 ♞d7 32.d4 ♞f6 33.♞f4 ♞bd5 34.♞h4 c4 35.♞e4 ½-½ Dragon 3.1 -Stockfish, Classics 2022.

22.a5!

Already, all the engine games are ending in wins from now on: the knight on h5 is too great a handicap.

22...b5?!

22...♞c7 23.axb6 axb6 24.♞c3 is a lovely engine idea, aiming for ♞b3 hitting the b6-pawn. If you can play it, then 22...b5 is the move you want. Unfortunately, you can't!



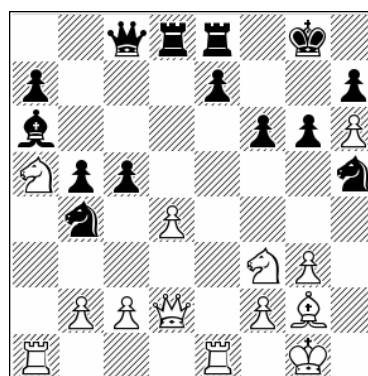
23.a6!

A gorgeous intermezzo that makes sense of all White's play.

23...♞a8

23...bxc4 24.axb7 ♞xb7 25.g4, winning the knight on h5, is the main point, of course.

23...♞xa6 looks obvious, but strands the bishop on the side of the board. 24.♞a5 ♞b4 runs into 25.d4!.



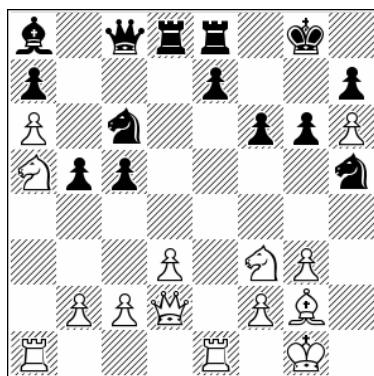
analysis diagram

It perhaps isn't obvious why this position, in which White is a pawn down, should be considered completely winning by the engines. First and foremost, the knight on h5 is a permanent problem: it performs no active duty and requires the assistance of another black piece to prevent it being lost after g4. Secondly, Black's queenside minor pieces are unstable and passive: the knight on b4 can be easily driven

away while the bishop on a6 is held captive by the knight on a5 on a square without prospects. Any opening of the position is bound to favour White rather than Black. Finally, there are holes in Black's position, most notably on c6 and e6, which also creates tactical problems if the position opens.

25...e5 (25...f5 (trying to give the ♖h5 an escape) 26.c3 ♖d5 27.♗e5 is crushing) 26.♙c3! e4 (26...exd4 27.♙xe8+ ♙xe8 28.♗xd4 cxd4 29.♙xb4 ♙xc2 30.♙xd4 is horrible for Black. On top of everything else, g4 is now threatened!) 27.dxc5 exf3 (27...♗d5 28.♙b3 f5 29.♗d4 ♖h8 30.♗ac6 ♙d7 31.♙a3 ♗c7 32.b4 ♙f7 33.♙ad1 ♗f6 34.♗xa7 ♙b7 35.♗dc6 ♗cd5 36.♙a1 and Black's horrors mercifully ended very soon, 1-0 (41) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 28.♙xf3 is a rather remarkable variation, where Black is dead lost, despite his temporary extra piece: 28...♙xe1+ 29.♙xe1 ♗d5 30.♙b3 and the lack of coordination in Black's offside pieces makes him unable to defend the knight on d5.

24.♗a5

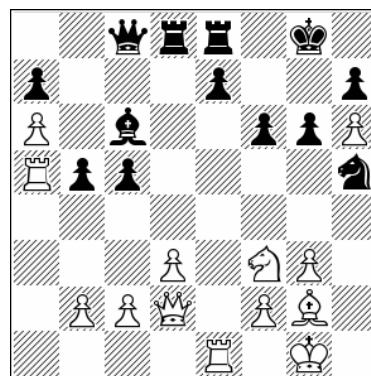


Threatening a far-from obvious follow-up which Gligoric may have missed – I (Matthew) certainly did! But alternatives to 24...e5 are no better in principle. Imperceptibly, not only have Black's kingside dark squares been weakened by the exchange of bishops and the march of the rook's pawn to h6, the same has happened on the queenside, with the march of the rook's pawn to a6. Luring the black pawn to b5 has knocked away its support for the c5-pawn and also exposed the a7-pawn along the g1-a7 diagonal.

24...e5

A logical follow-up to Gligoric's 21...f6. As well as gaining central space, it makes the knight on h5 safe as g4 can now be met by ...♗f4. However, it doesn't actually achieve any activation of the knight. Moreover, advancing the e-pawn in this way leaves a lot of draughty squares behind it: in particular the a2-g8 diagonal looks rather open with Black's king on it. Larsen starts at once to target the queenside dark square weaknesses in Black's position and to move the queen towards that tempting diagonal.

24...♗xa5 25.♙xa5 ♙c6



analysis diagram

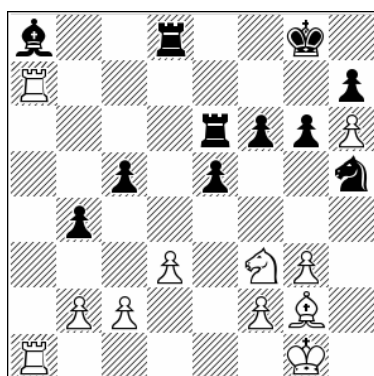
26.c4! (26.♙e3, when it's very difficult for Black to defend the queenside pawns and keep the knight on h5 safe, is also good enough and much more human – Black simply cannot withstand the pressure on his queenside pawns, the e7-pawn and the constant threats against the ♗h5: 26...♙c7 27.♙ea1 ♙d7 28.c4 bxc4 29.dxc4 ♙c8 30.♗e1 with ♗d3 and the doom of the c5-pawn to follow) 26...bxc4 27.♙c3! ♙d5 28.dxc4 ♙f7 29.♗d2! with ♗e4 to follow, when c5 drops off.

25.♙c3 ♗d4

This is a logical and normal attempt to occupy the d4-outpost created by ...c5 and ...e5 and to activate the light-squared bishop on a8. However, this is far from a normal position, and Larsen has manufactured an astonishing and quite unique way of adding the bishop on a8 to the list of minor piece victims in this game (the knight on h5 is the other, of course).

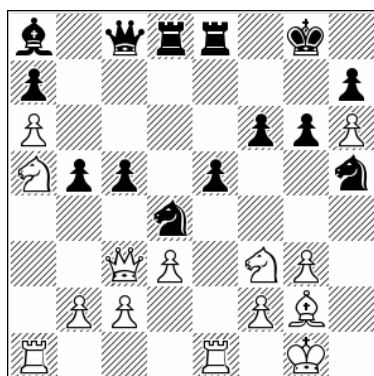
25...♙xa6 attempts to relieve some of the pressure through exchanges, but Black is poorly-placed to stem the tide of white pieces invading through the queenside: 26.♗xc6 ♙xc6

27.♖xa7 b4 28.♞c4+ ♞d5 29.♞a6 ♞e6 30.♞xe6+ ♞xe6 31.♞eal.



analysis diagram

Complete domination from White. Thanks to 24...e5, the seventh rank is free of obstacles and the h6-pawn is a nasty thorn in Black's kingside. 31...♞xf3 32.♞xf3 f5. Desperately trying to reactivate the knight on h5, but Black's advanced space-gaining pawns are now easy pickings for the white pieces: 33.♞la5 ♞f6 34.♞xc5 ♞b6 35.♞g7+ ♞h8 36.♞xe5 1-0 (56) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.



26.♞b7!

A brilliant idea, attacking the rook on d8 and the weak pawn on c5 and entombing the bishop on a8. Again, the advanced rook's pawn justifies itself.

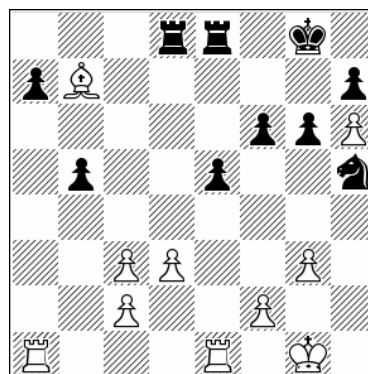
26...♞xb7 27.axb7 ♞xb7 28.♞xd4 cxd4 29.♞xb7

Not the engine choice for conversion but a sensible and powerful option nonetheless. The white rook is guaranteed access to a7 while the b-file becomes open, exposing the b5-pawn to attack.

29.♞b3+ ♞f7 30.♞xb5 ♞b8 31.♞d5 ♞e7 32.♞d6 ♞f8 33.♞a6 ♞d8 34.♞d5+ ♞h8 35.♞c5 ♞c8 36.♞a3 ♞d8 37.c4 dxc3 38.bxc3 ♞e8 39.c4 was a more complicated but equally decisive engine choice

for conversion. White's pieces dominate the board completely, 1-0 (63) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

29...dxc3 30.bxc3



The forced exchanges have led to an endgame, where White has an overwhelming advantage. The bishop is much stronger than the knight, a7 is dropping, and b5 is likely to follow soon after. It is remarkable how the black position has disintegrated over the past dozen or so moves.

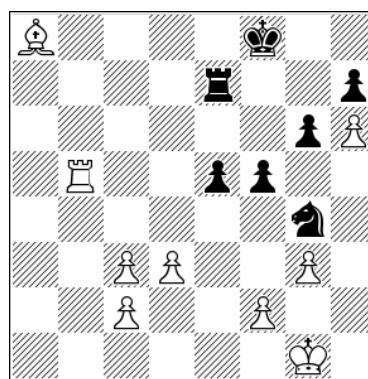
30...♞e7 31.♞xa7 ♞f8 32.♞b1 f5 33.♞xb5

Already it is two extra pawns and it is perhaps surprising that Black lasted as long as he did.

33...♞f6

The knight returns to the fold, but much bad has happened since it wandered off to the side of the board on move 20!

34.♞a8 ♞xa8 35.♞xa8 ♞g4



In the Elysian Fields, one can picture Steinitz saying to Tarrasch, 'See, I told you the h6-pawn would drop off in the ending!', and Tarrasch retorting 'Yes, but I told you Black would be lost long before then!'

36.♞b8+ ♞f7 37.♞d5+ ♞f6 38.c4

A common scenario in games where a rook's pawn has been thrust into the opponent's territory. It can often be removed only at the

cost of multiple tempi. While that's happening, something else is collapsing on another area of the board. Here, the passed c-pawn is very quick!

38...e4

38...♠d7 39.♠e8 ♘xh6 40.♠e6+ ♔g7 41.♠xe5 ♘g4 42.♠e2 1-0 (71) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

39.♠f8+ ♔e5 40.dxe4 fxe4 41.♙xe4 ♘xh6 42.♙d3 ♘f7 43.♠g8 ♘d6 44.♠a8

The rest, as they say, is a matter of technique! Larsen manages to force the exchange of rooks and then activate his king to support his passed c-pawn.

44...♘b7 45.♠a7 ♔d6

The remainder could perhaps have been dispensed with, but Gligoric was nothing if not a fighter.

46.f3 ♘c5 47.♠xe7 ♔xe7 48.♔f2 ♔f6 49.♔e3 h5 50.♔d4 ♘e6+ 51.♔d5 g5 52.♔d6 h4 53.gxh4 gxh4 54.♙f1 ♘g5 55.c5 ♘f7+ 56.♔d5 ♔e7 57.f4 ♘h6 58.♙h3 ♘g8 59.c6 ♘f6+ 60.♔e5 ♘e8 61.f5 1-0

Game 30 – King's Indian Defence

Mark Taimanov

Bobby Fischer

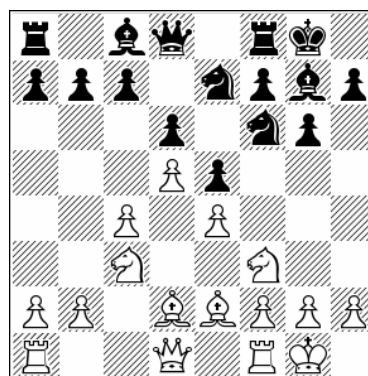
Vancouver ct 1971

This game was probably the most crucial in Fischer's 6-0 rout of Taimanov in their 1971 Candidates Match. Fischer won a hard-fought opening game and then Game 2 was adjourned for a second time in an ending that seemed clearly drawn. Game 3 was then played before Game 2 was finished, so at this point, Taimanov only trailed by one point. A win here would have put him right back in the match, and he had a significant opening improvement up his sleeve... Taimanov annotated the game extensively in his book *I Was a Victim of Bobby Fischer*. This was published in English in 2021, but without any re-checking of Taimanov's analysis by engines, in accordance with Taimanov's express wish before he died. However, chess fans will want to know the truth about this crucial game and so we

decided to check everything with the latest engines.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♙g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0-0 6.♙e2 e5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.♙d2

Not a common move, 9.♘e1, 9.♘d2 and 9.b4 all eclipsing it in popularity. Taimanov had prepared the less well-known text as a surprise for Fischer in the match. The first recorded instance of an elite player trying this line is the great Efim Geller... who played it three times in a simul in 1959! The flexible 9.♙d2 can also transpose to 9.♘e1 lines if White follows up with ♘e1 on the next move, but Geller's sharp idea was to follow up with ♠c1 and a quick c5 and even b4 (as pawn sacrifices) to open files quickly on the queenside. In this game, Taimanov follows Geller's example and adds a tweak of his own. The advantage of keeping the knight on f3 longer is that White maintains the possibility of jumping to g5 (targeting e6) in response to the typical King's Indian break ...f5.



9...♘e8

A logical yet slightly restrained choice from Fischer.

A) 9...♘h5 is Black's most aggressive method of achieving ...f5, and is not possible when White plays 9.♘e1 or 9.♘d2. It isn't necessarily better than 9...♘e8 however.

10.♠e1 (to allow the light-squared bishop to sidestep 10...♘f4 with 11.♙f1) 10...f5 11.exf5 ♘xf5 (11...gxf5 12.♘xe5 is the drawback to putting the knight to h5. Black must recapture on f5 with a piece) 12.♘e4 ♘f6 13.♙g5 b6 14.g4 ♘e7 15.♘fd2 ♔h8 16.h3 ♘fg8 17.♠c1 a5 18.♘f3 ♗e8 19.♠c3 ♙d7 20.♙d3 ♙h6 21.♙xh6 ♘xh6 22.♙c2 ♗d8 was a pleasant edge for White, ½-½ (38) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

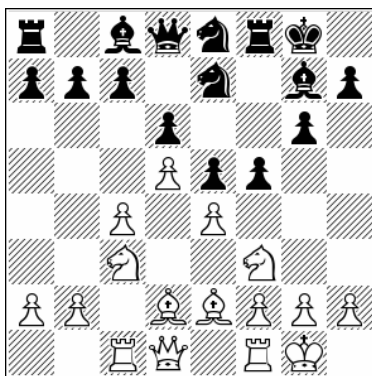
B) 9...♘d7 10.♞c1 f5 11.♘g5 ♘f6 12.c5 is a good example of the inspiration that can strike you on the spur of the moment during a simultaneous display (and which you often end up regretting for the rest of it!). 12...dxc5 13.b4 was Geller's active idea, with the key point 13...cxb4 14.♘b5 (hitting both the c7-pawn and the b4-pawn) 14...c6 15.d6 cxb5 16.dxe7 ♞xe7 17.♞b3+ ♚h8 18.♙xb4, and all of White's opening piece placements have turned out perfectly!

10.♞c1

10.b4 f5 11.a4 ♘f6 12.a5 was the engines' favourite line: it now looks quite similar to the Bayonet System 9.b4, which shows how flexible 9.♙d2 is for White.

12...c6 13.♞c1 fxe4 14.♘g5 cxd5 15.♘xd5 ♘exd5 16.cxd5 h6 17.♘e6 ♙xe6 18.dxe6 ♚h7 19.a6 bxa6 20.♞c6 d5 21.♙xa6 ♞e8 22.♞a1 ♘h5 23.g3 ♞f6 24.♙b7 ♞ad8 25.b5 ♞e7 26.♙b4 ♘f4 27.♞d1 ♘xe6 28.♙xe7 ♞xe7 29.♞g4 ♞d6 30.♞xd6 ♞xd6 31.♞a1 h5 32.♞e2 (½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) was a typically sharp and balanced engine encounter.

10...f5



Concrete play from Fischer, not fearing ♘g5 and thus not wasting any time on ...h6 to prevent it.

11.♞b3

Taimanov's addition to Geller's idea, which has not found many supporters in subsequent years. Game 1 had continued 11.exf5 gxf5 12.♘g5 with a sharp game, where both sides had their chances. Taimanov's team had prepared the text as an improvement for this game. Geller tried both 11.b4 followed by 12.c5 during his 1959 simul (unsuccessfully) and 11.♘g5 against Minic in 1969 (successfully). 11.♞b3 is a move you feel

might achieve something, but you're not entirely sure what! The queen hits the b7-pawn (tying down Black's light-squared bishop), eyes the king along the a2-g8 diagonal (introducing ideas of c4-c5) and also x-rays the e6-square to provide potential support to ♘f3-g5-e6. On the negative side, the queen blocks the advance of the b2-pawn to b4 which is the most likely way of achieving the c5-break and making sense of 10.♞c1. Perhaps its objective strength is best gauged by the fact that after 11...♚h8 (sidestepping the queen's pressure along the a2-g8 diagonal) the engines want to play 12.♞c2!. However, it has enough general menace to pose interesting problems for the first person to face it.

Another idea is 11.♘g5. The engines meet this move of Geller's with 11...f4, cutting the protection of the bishop on d2 for the knight on g5 and thus threatening ...♘xd5: 12.♘e6 ♙xe6 13.dxe6 ♚h8 14.♚h1 c6 (another advantage of 9...♘e8: any invasion on e6 can be met by ...♘e8-c7xe6 followed by occupying the strong outpost on d4) 15.♙g4 ♘c7 16.♞b3 b6 17.f3 ♞f6 18.♞fd1 h5 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

11...b6

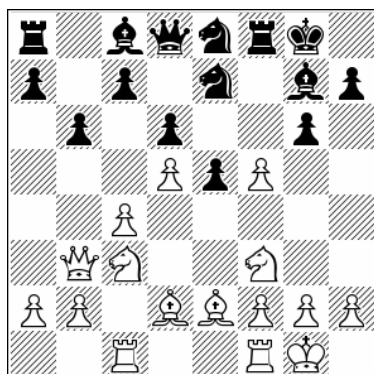
One of the two most logical moves in the position (11...♚h8 is the other), stopping c5 and asking White to demonstrate the other facets of his opening strategy.

Tal's suggestion 11...♚h8 is the main alternative, but both that and the text are adequate according to the engine: 12.♘g5 (as mentioned, 12.♞c2 is the engines' favourite move but there is no chance this was Taimanov's intention! 12.♘g5 is one logical continuation, targeting the e6-square) 12...f4 (threatening ...♘xd5 and thus stimulating White to enter into e6 immediately) 13.♘e6 ♙xe6 14.dxe6 b6 15.♞fd1 h5 (preventing ♙g4, protecting e6) 16.♞a3 ♞c8 17.♘d5 ♞xe6 18.b4 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022. White has some compensation for the pawn (two bishops, c5 break incoming) in a balanced position.

12.exf5

Taimanov opens the position before playing $\text{d}5(-\text{e}6)$, hoping to give White more tactical chances.

12. $\text{d}5 \text{ f}4$ is similar to what we have already seen.



12...gxf5

Fischer chooses the most natural and ambitious recapture, fighting for the central occupation that White has abandoned with his 12th move. 12... $\text{d}5 \text{ f}4$ is also possible, but piece recaptures are generally frowned upon in such positions (especially by Russian schoolboys, as Botvinnik once pointed out...), on the grounds that they cede the e4-square to White's cavalry. Nonetheless, Fischer had played that recapture in similar positions – see Gligoric-Fischer, Bled 1961 (Game 30 in *My 60 Memorable Games*), for example. The move targets the d4 outpost via f5. Here in particular, the white queen is badly-placed on b3 – vulnerable to ... $\text{d}4$ and in the way of White's queenside counterplay with b4 and c5 – and White will waste a couple of tempo setting things right.

13. $\text{c}2 \text{ h}6$ 14. a3 a5 15. b4 $\text{d}5 \text{ e}7$ 16. c5 axb4 17. axb4 $\text{d}5 \text{ f}4$ 18. $\text{d}5 \text{ f}4$ bxc5 19. bxc5 $\text{d}5 \text{ h}5$ (a neat and typical regrouping of the knights in the King's Indian) 20. cxd6 cxd6 21. $\text{a}1 \text{ b}7$ 22. $\text{a}1 \text{ b}7$ $\text{a}6$ 23. $\text{a}6 \text{ a}6$ 24. $\text{h}1 \text{ a}3$ 25. $\text{c}1$ 1/2-1/2 Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

13. $\text{d}5 \text{ g}5$

The engines don't see any particular merit to Taimanov's active plan above a more cautious waiting game, but they don't see any particular problem either. We are in that twilight zone of engine evaluations where humans might feel they are playing a fraught game hanging on a knife edge while engines see a scale of equivalent equal possibilities for both sides!

From the human point of view, Taimanov's next few moves are completely logical and natural.

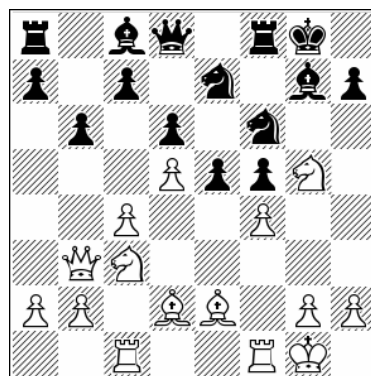
13... $\text{d}5 \text{ f}6$!

13... $\text{d}5 \text{ g}6$ was preferred by the engines to prevent White's next active move and it is surprising that Fischer didn't play it: it would fit his concrete style perfectly to prevent Taimanov from executing his plan.

14. $\text{d}5 \text{ e}6$ $\text{d}5 \text{ e}6$ 15. dxe6 $\text{c}8 \text{ h}8$ 16. $\text{f}3 \text{ e}4$ 17. $\text{h}5 \text{ f}6$ 18. $\text{d}5 \text{ e}6$ $\text{d}5 \text{ e}6$ 19. $\text{d}5 \text{ g}6$ $\text{d}5 \text{ g}6$ 20. f3 $\text{d}4$ 21. $\text{h}1$ 1/2-1/2 Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022. White again has enough compensation for the pawn, but Black is not in much danger.

Taimanov mentions 13...h6, which was played against him some years later by Tseitlin. After 14. $\text{d}5 \text{ e}6$ $\text{d}5 \text{ e}6$ 15. dxe6 $\text{c}8$ 16. $\text{d}5 \text{ e}6$ $\text{d}5 \text{ e}6$ 17. $\text{d}5 \text{ e}7$ $\text{d}5 \text{ e}7$ 18. c5+ $\text{c}8 \text{ h}8$ 19. cxd6 cxd6 (19... $\text{d}5 \text{ d}6$ 20. $\text{c}6$ gave White compensation for the pawn, though not enough for the win 1/2-1/2 (40) Taimanov-Tseitlin, Soviet Union 1973) 20. $\text{c}6$, he assessed the position as 'highly promising for White', but the computer thinks it is only a very small edge after 20...f4 21. $\text{h}3 \text{ d}8$.

14.f4



The disparate pieces of Taimanov's concept start to come together. f4 threatens fxe5, dragging the d-pawn from d6 and giving White fresh chances to exploit the queen's position on b3 opposite the king on g8 with d6 and c5.

14...h6

14...e4 is always a controversial move in King's Indian structures. On the positive side, Black sets up a strong central wedge, opens the h8-a1 diagonal for the g7-bishop, creates a potential outpost on d3 for a knight and takes away f3 from the white pieces. On the negative side, the central pawns block a lot of natural squares from

the black pieces. e4 and f5 would be great squares for a knight, while the light-squared bishop on c8 is reduced to passivity. White also has excellent chances of using the dark squares around the centre for minor piece outposts: e3 and d4 are great squares for the white knights, for example. White also has the possibility of breaks on the queenside (b4, c5) and most thematically on the kingside with g4. In this case, none of White's minor pieces are yet ideally-placed for this scenario, so Black's chances should be reasonable. But one can easily understand Fischer's more fluid choice, and in fact it works beautifully, as Taimanov keeps straining to extract the maximum dynamism from his position.

15.fxe5

Taimanov awarded this an exclamation mark, as the start of what he regarded as a very dangerous plan, but the engine is unimpressed. It is certainly the consistent choice, continuing Taimanov's attempt to link up all of his pieces all over the board. Dragging the black d-pawn from d6 allows White to open the a2-g8 diagonal with c5 and d6 and make sense of Taimanov's novelty 11.♖b3; the knight on g5 links from the kingside, targeting the e6- and f7- squares along the same diagonal and giving Black another angle of attack to deal with. Finally, c5xb6 will open the c-file, activating the rook and making sense of 10.♞c1.

It's a grand conception in the style of Botvinnik (of whom the youthful Taimanov was a pupil, of course) and as a classically-schooled player, I (Matthew) intuitively want it to succeed! However, although such bold play carries great power, it doesn't automatically follow that it can sweep away a solid structure. For all Taimanov's ingenuity, Fischer's is able to withstand this pressure by picking off targets that Taimanov leaves unprotected. Fischer also manages exceptionally well to avoid resolving the position: the tension keeps on building.

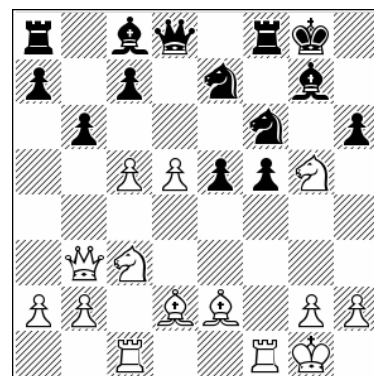
15.♘e6 is the engines' favourite, though Black has plenty of resources: 15...♙xe6 16.dxe6 c6 17.♞cd1 with a small advantage for White.

17...♞c8 18.♙c1 ♞d8 19.fxe5 dxe5 20.♞xd8+ ♞xd8 21.♞a3 ♞c7 22.♙d3 ♞e8 ½-½ (36) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

15...dxe5 16.c5

Here it comes! The knight on g5 is hanging but 16.c5 has introduced the threat of d6+, picking up the knight on e7. Fischer now takes an extraordinary decision – one that shows how well he grasped the essence of the struggle with Taimanov.

Taimanov also claims 'undoubted positional pluses' after the quiet 16.♘f3 but the engine again thinks White has nothing at all after 16...♘g6.



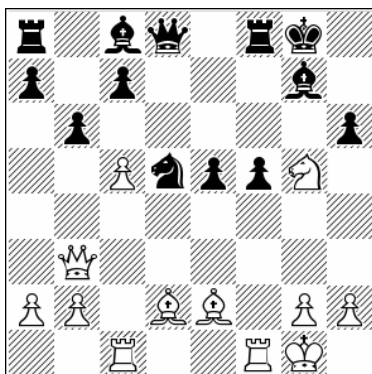
16...♘fxd5

A very sharp move, leaving a black position of extreme – but crucially temporary – looseness after the exchange of knights.

16...hxg5 was completely acceptable for Black, but would also have removed the fog from the position, giving White a clearer view of what he should be aiming for and what the evaluation of the position might be.

17.d6+ ♔h8 18.dxe7 ♞xe7 19.♙xg5 ♙e6 20.♞d1 ♞xc5+ 21.♔h1 ♞ad8 22.♞e1 ♞b4 23.♞g3 ♞xb2 24.♞h4+ ♔g8 25.♙c4 ♙xc4 26.♞xc4+ ♔h8 27.♞h4+ (½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) was one of many ways that the engine games ended in draws.

17.♘xd5 ♘xd5



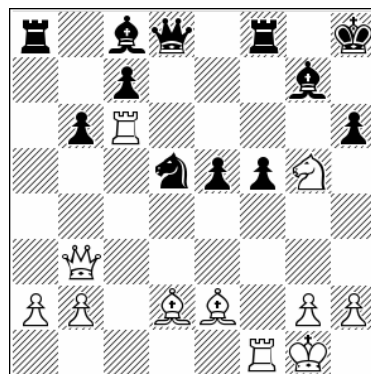
Knowing after the fact that Fischer was correct in assessing Black's position as tactically safe, it's easy to step past how fraught this position looks and feels! The knight on d5 is defended by a single piece – the black queen – and pinned to the black king. If the knight is captured by a diagonal piece – bishop or queen – then the king and rook on a8 will be forked, which means the risk of a mis-assessment is very high. Moreover, the knight on g5 prevents a bishop from blocking the pin with ...♗e6 and a bishop on b7 could be blocked by c6. It's the type of position on which you spend ages when visualising it at a distance, trying to reassure yourself that you haven't missed anything simple. However, Fischer is absolutely correct: there is nothing. ...c6 is always available to support the knight on d5, and meanwhile, the knight on g5 – which Fischer avoided taking on the 16th move – is now hanging and is a headache for White. Taimanov strains once more and discovers a brilliant tactical resource:

18.cxb6 axb6 19.♖c6

A fantastic idea, cutting the support of the knight on d5 either by ...c6 or ...♗b7, and linking with the knight on g5 to attack e6. ♗c4 is now threatened and one could easily imagine in such a situation that White is winning. Fischer plays cold-bloodedly and asks White once again to deal with the threat against his knight on g5.

19...♗h8

The only good move, since 19...hxg5 20.♗c4 is indeed completely lost: 20...♗h7 21.♖h3+ ♗g8 22.♗xg5 f4 23.♗xd8 ♗xh3 24.♗xd5+ ♗h8 25.♗xc7 ♗a5 26.♗d1 ♗f5 27.b4 ♗a4 28.♖xb6 1-0 (38) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

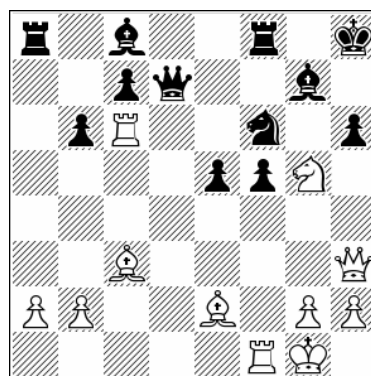


20.♗f3?!

Taimanov gave this a '?' and described it as 'capitulation', but he seems to have been unduly pessimistic this time, the real mistake coming on the next move. Even so, the move feels probably wrong (after all that sweeping play, surely the aim cannot be to retreat like this?) but on the other hand a number of threats are created, such as ♗xh6 or ♖xh6, so it's not easy to dismiss this move out of hand as an alternative if you start to doubt other lines!

In his book, Taimanov devotes some four pages to the move 20.♖h3, concluding that it would have yielded a substantial advantage. However, the engines disagree and even believe that Black has two defences to maintain the balance.

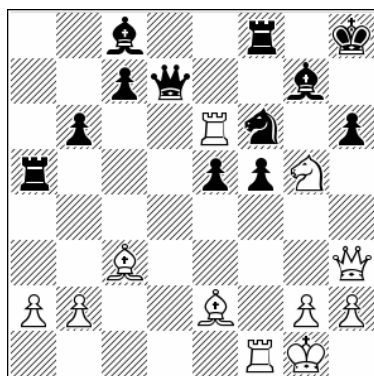
A) 20...♗f6 was the defence Taimanov claimed 'could not shake my optimism'. It is also a good way of blocking White's pressure along the sixth rank and uncovering an attack on the bishop on d2, but after 21.♗c3, Black needs to find the excellent move 21...♖d7 (21...♖e7 22.♗f3 f4 23.♖h4 is unpleasant for Black as the threat of ♗e5 is hard to meet, 1-0 (65) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022),



analysis diagram

which Taimanov had missed, to challenge the powerful white rook. 22.♖e6

(22.♙b5 ♖d5 23.a4 f4 is winning for Black though the refutation takes many moves before it has crystallised! 24.♘e6 ♜f7 25.♗f3 e4 26.♗h3 f3 27.gxf3 e3 28.♞e1 ♘g8 29.♞xe3 ♙xc3 30.♞cxc3 ♞g7+ 31.♙f1 ♗d1+ 32.♞e1 ♞g1+ 33.♙xg1 ♗xe1+ 34.♗f1 ♗xe6 35.♞xc7 ♗e5 36.♗c1 ♗d4+ 37.♙g2 ♙e6. Phew! Arrived, but not an easy path! 0-1 (71) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022; 22.♞c4 ♙a6 0-1 (74) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 22...♞a5!.



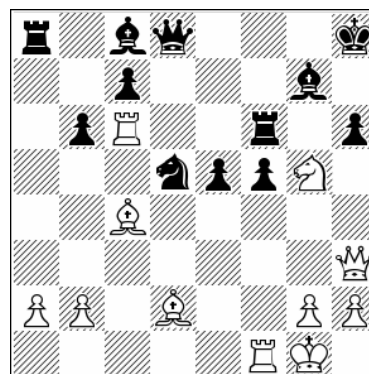
analysis diagram

Another stunner, defending the e5-pawn and preventing ♙xe5. 23.♙xa5 ♗d4+ 24.♙h1 bxa5 leaves various white pieces hanging, and after the forced 25.♗xf5 (25.♞e7 loses to 25...♗d2) 25...hxc5 (25...♗xb2 26.♗xe5 ♗xe5 27.♞xe5 hxc5 is balanced, ½-½ (37) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 26.♗xe5 ♗xe5 27.♞xe5 a4 28.♞xg5 ♙e6 a draw is the most likely outcome.

Back at move 23, if White declines the exchange with 23.♙c4, Black insists: 23...♞c5 24.♙b3 ♞xc3! 25.bxc3 ♗b5 26.♞xf5 (26.♞e7 ♗c5+ is evil!) 26...♗c5+ 27.♙h1 ♗a3, when a strange repetition can occur after 28.♞f1 ♗c5 (28...♙xe6 29.♙xe6 ♙e4 30.♞xf8+ and although the resulting position looks a little messy, White's weak back rank stops White from attacking the black king, ½-½ (30) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 29.♞f5 (White has no good way to untangle his numerous vulnerable pieces, since 29.♗h4 ♗e3 30.♙h3 ♙xe6 31.♙xe6 ♗d3 is fine for Black) 29...♗a3.

Likewise, 23.♙xe5 ♞xe5 24.♞xe5 ♗d4+, whilst 23.♞xe5 ♞xe5 24.♙xe5 ♗d2 forks g5 and e2!;

B) The other defence after 20.♗h3 is 20...♞f6, which is the move that put Taimanov off 20.♗h3. As he details in his book, he found the move 21.♙c4,

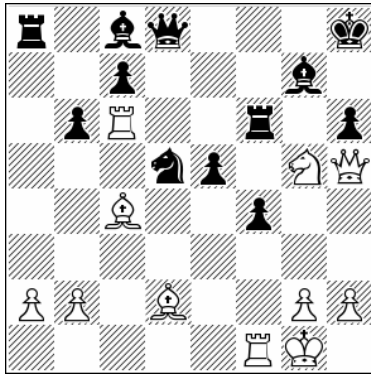


analysis diagram

when he assumed the threats of ♞xf6 and ♙xd5 forced the reply 21...f4 which he was unable to refute at the board, despite thinking for 72 minutes over his 20th move. Some time after the game, he eventually found 22.♞xf6 ♙xh3 23.♙f7+ ♙h7 24.♙xd8 ♙xf6 25.♙c6 ♙f5 (25...♙e4 26.♙d3 ♙f5 27.♙c3!) 26.♙xe5 and claimed 'here, there was every basis for counting on success'.

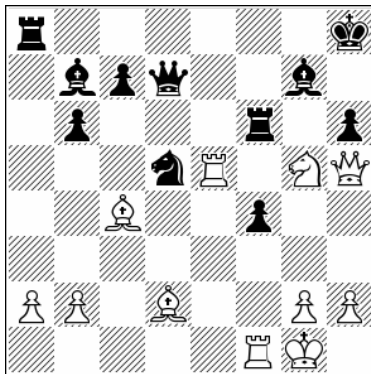
There are three observations to be made about this line. Firstly, in the final position after 26.♙xe5, the engines believe it is only equal after 26...b5 27.♞xf4 (27.♙b3 c5) 27...bxc4 28.♞xf5 ♙e4 29.♙xc4 ♞xa2 30.♙e1 ♞a1 31.♙f1 ♞c1 and the knight must move and surrender the b2-pawn, in view of 32.b3?? ♙c3, winning for Black. Secondly, in the line with 25...♙e4 26.♙d3 ♙f5 27.♙c3!, Black is fine after 27...♙d6 28.♙xf5+ ♙xf5. Indeed, White should now simplify to a draw with 29.♙xe5 ♞xa2 30.♞xf4 ♙e3 etc., since after 29.a3? ♞e8 it is Black who is winning. Finally, further back still, at move 24, the bishop recapture 24...♙xf6 is also completely OK for Black: 25.♙c6 ♙e6 26.♞e1 and now 26...♙g8 (26...b5 and 26...♙g7 are also fine) 27.♙xe5 ♙e3 28.♙xe3 fxe3 29.♙xg8+ ♙xg8 30.♞xe3 ♞xa2 and again we just have a draw on the board.

White has another dangerous try after 21...f4, which is 22.♗h5,



analysis diagram

continuing to pour pressure onto the black position: 22...♙b7 23.♞e6 (23.♞e6 ♞d7 is not what White wants: that rook on c6 will finally perish! 0-1 (33) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022). A very delicate move from White. It's proving so difficult for Black to push back the white pieces from their attacking posts! 23...♞d7 24.♞xe5 (24.♞xf6 ♞xf6 25.♞f7+ ♔h7 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022).



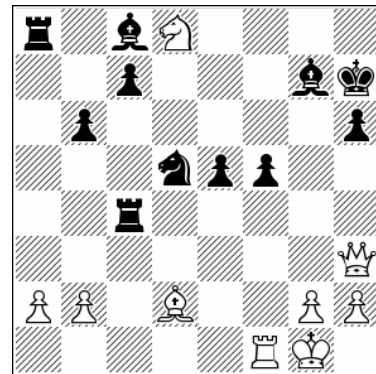
analysis diagram

The next threat Black has to parry will come along the a1-h8 diagonal: White is intending ♙xd5 followed by ♙c3, teeing up that Taimanov 9.♙d2-bishop at the black king, and then ♞fe1 to invade on e7. It's once again worth reiterating what a difficult challenge something like this would have been for Fischer: 24...♞af8 25.♙xd5 ♙xd5 26.♙c3 ♞c6 27.♞h7 (one of the more surprising moves I have seen!) 27...♞d8 (27...♔xh7 28.♞xd5 is the simple point, with a slight edge for White) 28.♞d1 (28.♞f6 continues the knight's surprising journey! 28...♙f7 (28...♞xf6 is also fine for Black: ♞f6 is more for show than for actual strength! 29.♞d1 ♞f7 (29...c6 30.♞exd5 cxd5 31.♙xf6 ♙xf6 32.♞xh6+) 30.♞xf7 ♞xf7 31.♞exd5 is just equal)

29.♞xd7 ♙xh5 30.♞xh5 ½-½ (30) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022)

28...♞d6 29.♞f8 (and another one!) 29...♞f7 30.♞g6+ ♞xg6 31.♞xg6 ♞xg6 32.♞exd5 ♞xd5 33.♙xg7+ ♔xg7 34.♞xd5 ♞c6 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

Finally, there are a couple of other things to add, even further back. Firstly, Taimanov explains how, many years later, a 13-year old pupil of his, Sergey Klimov, pointed out that, instead of 21...f4, Black could play 21...♞xc6 22.♞f7+ ♔h7 23.♞xd8 ♞xc4.



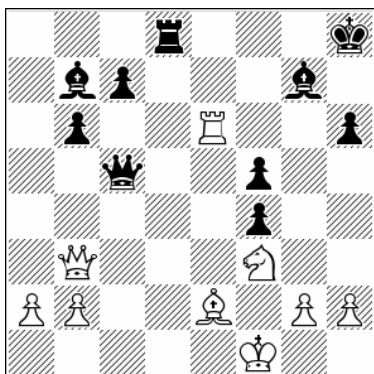
analysis diagram

Black is slightly down on material, but has active pieces and the knight on d8 is vulnerable. However, Taimanov himself eventually found the line 24.♞f7 ♔g6 25.♞xh6! ♞f4 26.♞f3! which he thought was the refutation of 21...♞xc6. The engines agree with him on this.

Finally, the failure of 21...♞xc6 to stand up to scrutiny suggests that 21...f4 was indeed the only move for Black, but in fact the engines show that 21...♞e7 is also enough for equality! The tactical point is that 22.♙xd5 does not win a piece because of 22...♞xc6 23.♙xc6 ♞c5+, whilst 22.♞xf6 ♞xf6 23.♞f7+ ♔h7 24.♞g5+ ♔h8 is a draw by repetition. The attempt to avoid this with 25.♙b3 yields nothing after 25...♞g4 or 25...f4.

The net result of this long analytical diversion seems to be that Taimanov's optimism about his chances after 20.♞h3 was misplaced and it seems that White only has equality in this critical position.

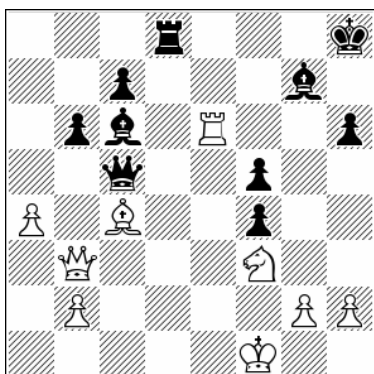
20...♙b7



White's chances of salvation lie in Black's lack of disruptive pawn moves on the kingside. The knight on f3 is completely entrenched, which helps protect White's king while the black king is somewhat open due to the shattered pawns. Taimanov's move is very natural, to attempt to exchange rooks and create space for the white queen to give a perpetual, but runs into Fischer's machine-like accuracy.

27. ♖a4?

A big mistake according to the engines. After 27. ♖c4 it is still not so easy for Black to make progress, e.g. 27... ♖c6 (planning ...b5; 27... ♖h7 was one of my (Matthew's) suggestions, so that a future ♖e8 does not arrive with check. However, it runs blindly into White's main point! 28. ♗g5+ ♖h8 (28... ♗xg5 29. ♖h3+) 29. ♗f7+ ♖h7 30. ♗xd8 1-0 (44) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 28.a4 (28. ♗g5 ♖d1+ 29. ♖e2 ♖d4 wins for Black as the bishop on c6 covers e8! 30. ♗f7+ ♖g8 31. ♗xh6+ ♖h7 32. ♖c3 ♖d2+ 33. ♖xd2 ♖xc4+)



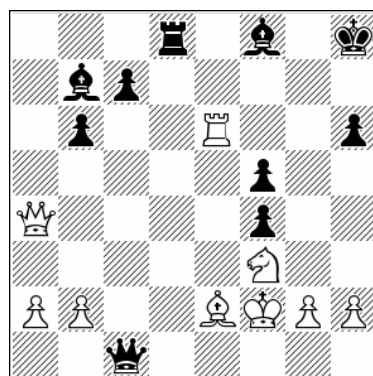
analysis diagram

28... ♖d6

(28... ♖b7 seemed really odd when it appeared in an engine game – isn't ♗g5 a threat? 29. ♗h4 (29. ♗g5 ♖d1+ 30. ♖e2 ♖c1 is the key idea,

attacking c4 and stopping ♖c3+ ideas: 31. ♖e8+ ♖f8 32. ♖d3 and now 32... ♖e4 is Black's best (threatening ...♖e3+) when 33. ♖xe4 ♖xe4 34. ♗e6 fails to the amazing geometrical motif 34... ♖h5+, forking king and rook!) 29... ♖c8 30. ♖e1 ♖h7 31. ♖e2 ♖d5 32. ♖f3 ♖e5 33. ♖h5 ♖d7 34.b3. White is very solid and Black lacks pawn breaks. Engine games from here on were ending in draws though White clearly has the worst of it, ½-½ (54) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 29. ♖e7 ♖d2 30. ♗xd2 ♖xe7 and White is still holding.

27... ♖c1+ 28. ♖f2 ♖f8!



A wonderfully accurate move, typical of Fischer's strength and concentration in better positions. The bishop switches to the a7-g1 diagonal, with lethal effect.

29.b4

The venomous small tactic 29. ♖e8? ♖c6 is the other point of Black's last.

29... ♖e4

29... ♖d5 30. ♖e5 c6 31. ♖d1 ♖xd1 32. ♖xd1 ♖e4 33. ♖e2 ♖xb4 was the engine way, but Fischer's path is fine, too; 0-1 (51) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

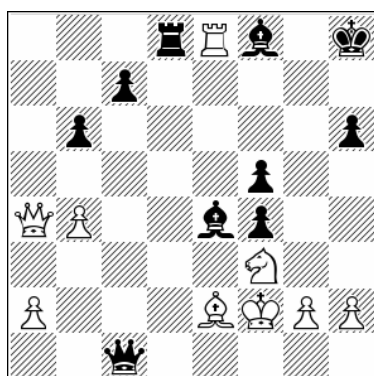
30. ♖e8?

Blundering into Fischer's trap at the second attempt!

As Taimanov admits, he was no longer in control of his nerves. 30. ♖b5 is slightly tougher, but the engines were consistently winning all the games from here.

30... ♖d5 (30... ♖e3+ 31. ♖f1 ♖d1+ 32. ♗e1 keeps White alive, just) 31. ♖e5 (31. ♖d3 ♖g7 32. ♖xf5 ♖xe6 33. ♖xe6 ♖e3+ 34. ♖xe3 ♖xe3+ 35. ♖xe3 ♖e8+ 36. ♖f2 ♖a8 0-1 (63) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish,

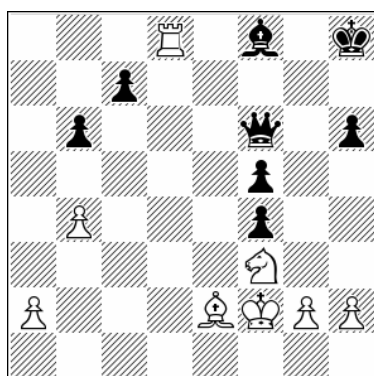
Classics 2022) 31...♙xa2 32.♞e8 ♞xe8 33.♞xe8 ♞e3+ 34.♞xe3 fxe3+ 35.♙xe3 ♙xb4 does the job.



30...♙c6 31.♞xc6 ♞xc6 32.♞xd8 ♞f6

32...♙g7 is the engine idea, and funnily enough a move that Fischer avoided like the plague throughout the technical phase of this game!

33.a3 ♙d6 34.♙h4 ♞e4 35.♙f1 ♞e5 36.♙f2 ♞d4+ 37.♙f1 ♞f6 38.♙d7+ ♙f8 39.♙f3 ♞a1+ 40.♙e1 ♞xa3 0-1 (75) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

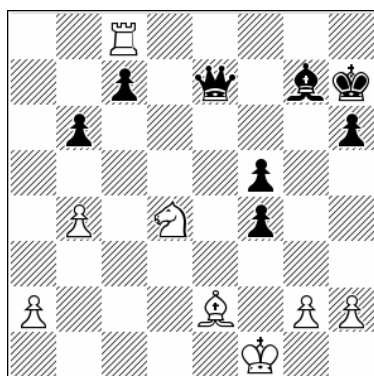


33.♞c8 ♞e7 34.♙f1 ♙h7

No 34...♙g7 again, although this was the engines' favourite move. In this case, one can understand it, because after 35.♙d4, White is threatening 36.♞xc7!.

34...♙g7 35.♙d4 ♙g6 36.♙c2 ♙g7 37.♙e1 ♙c3 38.♙d3 ♞d6 0-1 (65) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

35.♙d4 ♙g7



This was presumably Fischer's (very astute) reasoning: playing the king to h7 allows ...♙g7 and allows Black to protect the c7-pawn with ...♙e5.

36.♙b5 ♙e5 37.a3 ♞d7 38.♞a8 f3 39.gxf3 ♙xh2 40.♙g2 ♞g7+ 41.♙xh2 ♞e5+ 42.♙g1 0-1

A shattering loss for Taimanov, because even though the computer shows that he was not actually winning after 20.♞h3, he certainly thought at the time that he had probably missed a win somewhere. Just 24 hours later, an incredible blunder in a dead-drawn minor piece endgame in the doubly-adjourned second game meant that, just hours after glimpsing a possible 1.5-1.5 scoreline, he was actually trailing 0-3. His collapse in the remaining three games is not so surprising, in the circumstances.

Game 31 – French Defence

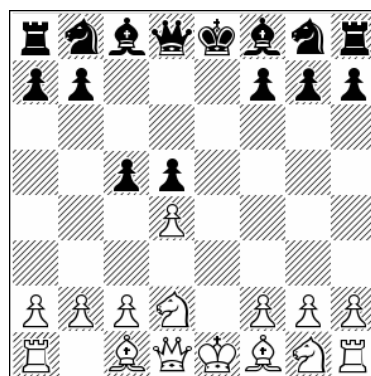
Anatoly Karpov

Gennadi Kuzmin

Leningrad Iz 1973

IQP structures are one of the most important middlegame motifs, and when it comes to playing against the IQP, there is nobody better than Anatoly Karpov. In his younger days, when he opened 1.e4, he won a number of striking games in the Tarrasch French, this being one of them.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♙d2 c5 4.exd5 exd5



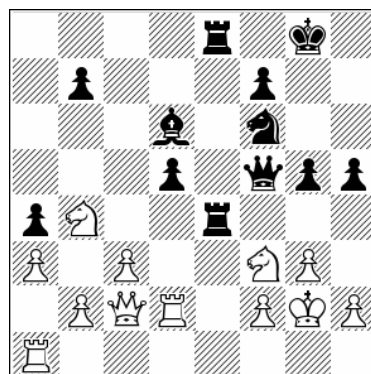
This venerable system is the favourite engine antidote to the French Tarrasch, specifically the lines with 5...♙f6. Oddly enough, it's one of the few lines I (Matthew) haven't tried against 3.♙d2. I've prepared it several times but was secretly relieved when my opponent chose

something else! The resulting isolated queen's pawn positions after dxc5 perfectly suit modern engines, which are superhumanly skilled in maintaining dynamic compensation with accurate play over long periods of play. Human players tend to struggle with this: a few inaccurate moves, Black's activity evaporates, and all you have to look forward to is a long endgame mourning your isolated queen's pawn.

5. ♖gf3 ♜c6

5...♖f6 was a favourite of Bareev and Mikhail Gurevich in the 1980s and 90s, and is also the engines' main choice: 6. ♖b5+ ♜d7 7. ♖xd7+ ♜bxd7 8. 0-0 ♜e7 9. dxc5 ♜xc5. AlphaZero won a few beautiful games against Stockfish 8 in this line, of which the following is perhaps favourite: you can certainly see why you might be inspired to play this line! 10. ♜b3 ♜ce4 11. ♖f4 0-0 12. c3 ♜e8 13. ♜e1 a5. Rook's pawns play a major role, of course. Black's initial goal is to increase the power of the knight on e4 by undermining White's queenside structure with ...a5-a4-a3. 14. ♜c1 a4 15. a3 ♜d6. AlphaZero was always keen to make full use of both outposts provided by the isolated queen's pawn: c4 and e4. When it had such multiple outposts, it was an AlphaZero mannerism to regularly swap its pieces around on those outposts to make progress. There are many games where AlphaZero first placed a knight on e4 and then followed up with a rook. The march of the rook's pawn has had a positive effect by extracting a3 from White, after which c4 is an excellent post for the knight. For that reason, White removes the black knight before it lands there. 16. ♖xd6 ♜xd6. One of the positional lessons we (thought we had) learnt from Karpov's games is that it was advantageous for White to swap the dark-squared bishop for a black knight. Black has one piece fewer to defend the d5-pawn, as the dark-squared bishop can play no role in this. However, the engines are completely unconcerned by such subtleties: the dark-squared bishop helps to generate active counterplay and they are perfectly equipped to use this to disrupt any white attempts to win the d5-pawn. In fact, in many games, AlphaZero just

jettisoned the d5-pawn anyway! 17. g3 ♜d7 18. ♜d3 ♜d6 19. ♖g2 ♜e4 (just as excellent an outpost for the rook as for the knight) 20. ♜e2 ♜ae8 21. ♜d2 ♜f5 22. ♜c2 h5 23. ♜b4 g5.

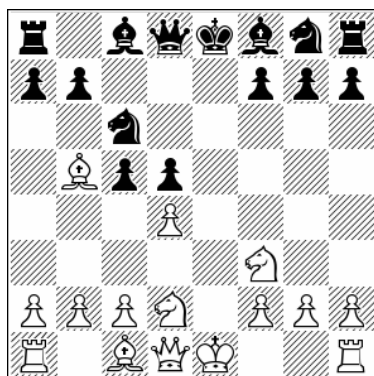


analysis diagram

I (Matthew) loved this particularly about AlphaZero's treatment of such positions. No hanging around meekly, waiting for White to target the d5-pawn: start hitting White with everything you've got as soon as possible. a4 is hanging, but that sort of detail never interests AlphaZero! 24. ♜f1 h4 25. ♜d4 ♜h7 26. ♖g1 g4 27. ♜d3 ♜d7 28. ♜d1 ♖f8 29. ♜b5 ♜e5 30. ♜d4 ♖g7 31. ♜e2 ♖b8 32. ♜ef4 ♜f6 33. ♜g2 h3. The rook's pawn is installed on h3, restricting the white king and creating potential of back rank mates. The next step is to brush away any white barriers and target f2 and the open e-file: 34. ♜h4 ♜h5 35. ♜b4 ♜e5 36. ♜d3 ♜g5 37. ♜b4 ♜a7 (a perfect spot for the dark-squared bishop against which White has no opposition) 38. ♖h1 ♜e6 (freeing the e4-outpost for the knight again) 39. ♜d3 ♜e4 40. ♜c2 ♜d6 41. ♜c1 b5 42. f4 (desperation. With the opening of the g1-a7 diagonal, White's king is pinned to the corner for eternity) 42... ♜h5 43. ♜e5 ♜f5 44. ♜xg4+ ♜xg4 45. ♜xg4 ♜xh4 46. gxh4 ♜e2. White has won a kingside pawn, but the critical one – the h3-pawn – remains. The exchange of pieces has only magnified the disparity in activity between the black and white pieces remaining on the board. 'Exchange off the opponent's active pieces and leave him with passive pieces' was a theme Natasha Regan and I treated in *Game Changer* and this is another good example. 47. ♜e5 f6 48. ♜c6 ♜c5 49. ♜f3 ♜e1+ 50. ♜f1 ♜xc1 51. ♜xc1 ♜e2 52. ♜b1 ♖h6 53. ♜b4 ♜d2 54. ♜c6 ♖h5 55. ♜d8 ♖xh4 56. ♜e6 ♜e3.

Complete domination! 0-1 Stockfish 8-AlphaZero, 2018.

6.♟b5



6...♟d6

The old main line. The disruptive move 6...♞e7+ is another engine favourite and has become Black's main attempt in this position. The queen exchange with 7.♞e2 is fine for Black in principle, though aiming for a queenless middlegame with an isolated queen's pawn from move 7 is not to every Black player's taste.

7.♟e2 ♞f6 8.0-0 ♞c7 (Black has lost a tempo with ...♞e7-c7, but White has also played ♟e2 in two moves, so the result is equal) 9.♞e1 cxd4 (there is a discovered check, but no profit to be gained from it) 10.h3 ♟e7 11.♞b3 ♟f5 12.♞fxd4 ♟e4 13.f3 ♟g6 14.♟b5 0-0 15.♟xc6 bxc6 16.♞xc6 ♟d6 was another Stockfish 8-AlphaZero game. White's extra pawn is compensated by the open lines available to Black's pieces and the airiness of White's kingside dark squares: 17.♞bd4 a5 18.♞e3 ♞h5 19.♟d2 h6 20.♟e1 ♞fc8 21.♞c3 ♞d7 22.a4 ♞h7 23.♞e2 ♞f4 24.♞b5 ♞c7 25.♞xa5 ♞e7 (another pawn sacrificed for the prospect of bringing the black queen towards the white kingside) 26.♞xc7 ♟xc7 27.♞ac6 ♞g5 28.♞f1 ♞xh3+ 29.♞h1 ♞f4 30.g3 ♞h5 31.g4 ♞g3+ 32.♟xg3 ♟xg3 33.♞h3 ♟f4 34.a5 ♟c1 35.b4 ♞e8 36.♞f1 ♟e3 37.♞g2 ♞h4+ 38.♞h2 ♞f6 39.c3 ♟d3 and Black's initiative continued, 0-1 (67) Stockfish 8-AlphaZero, 2018.

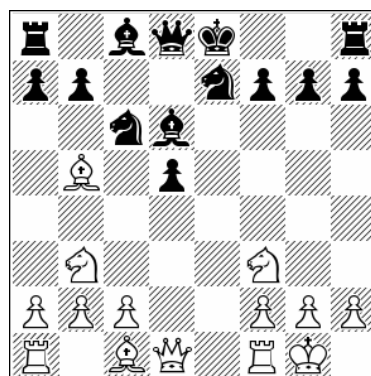
7.dxc5 ♟xc5 8.0-0 ♞ge7

It's prudent for Black to avoid ...♞f6 now that the e-file has been opened and Black has wasted a tempo with ...♟d6xc5.

9.♞b3 ♟d6

Another decision at which human grandmasters arrived after a great deal of experimentation. The bishop has more scope in the early middlegame on the b8-h2 diagonal than on the a7-g1 diagonal.

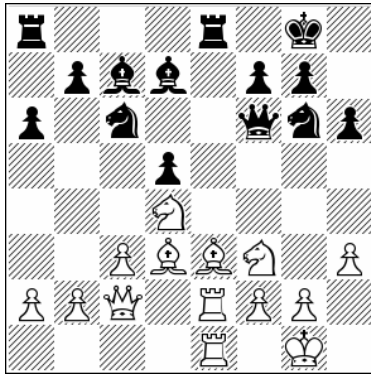
The older choice was 9...♟b6, but then White gets an edge with 10.♞e1 (Botvinnik twice beat Boleslavsky with the slightly odd-looking 10.♟e3 but this was later shorn of its dangers) 10...0-0 11.♟e3. The retreat to d6 aims to make it harder for White to exchange dark-squared bishops, although, as we will see, Karpov had a plan to achieve just that.



10.♟g5

Karpov's plan isn't chosen by any of the engines, but they still see it as a slight advantage for White. The intention is to achieve ♟c1-g5-h4-g3 as soon as possible, swapping off the dark-squared bishops. In principle, swapping off the dark-squared bishops is a positive development for White as it weakens Black's control of the squares around the isolated queen's pawn. The engines plump for more conventional plans with ♞e1, c3 and h3, all being played in various move-orders.

For example: 10.♟d3 0-0 11.♞e1 h6 12.h3 ♞e8 13.c3 ♟c7 14.♞c2 ♞d6 15.♟e3 ♞f6 16.♞bd4 ♟d7 17.♞ad1 a6 18.♟h7+ ♞h8 19.♟d3 ♟g8 20.♞d2 ♞g6 21.♞de2.

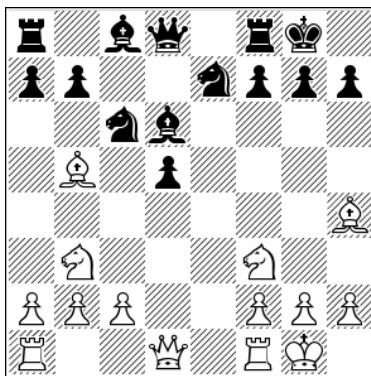


analysis diagram

It's striking that modern engines produce this line that also featured in some games by Stockfish 8 and AlphaZero in 2018! 21...d4 (21...Bd8 22.dxc6 Bxc6 23.g4 Bxe2 24.Bxe2 d4 25.hh7+ f8 26.Be3 Be8 27.Bd2 g6 28.Bxe8+ Be8 29.Be3 b6 30.h4 Be6 31.g3 g7 32.Bxe6 Be6 33.gxg6 fxg6 34.f1 b5 is about equal, ½-½ (97) Stockfish 8-AlphaZero 2018) 22.gxf4 Bxf4 23.g3 Bxe2 24.Bxe2 Bd6 25.hh7+ f8 26.gf5 Be8 27.Bd2 dxd4 28.dxd4 c6 29.g4 g6 offers little for White, ½-½ (39) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

10...0-0 11.g4

Not even waiting to be driven away! Karpov's next move will be g3. The engines consider this a little rushed, preferring to insert 11.Be1 beforehand, awaiting further black development before committing to a plan.



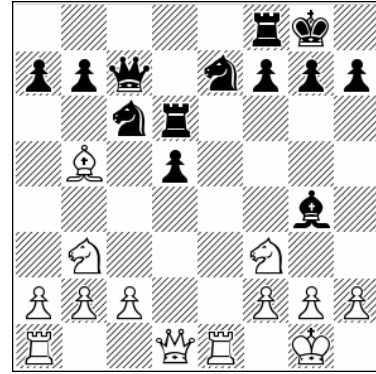
11...Bc7?!

The engines felt that Black could get a little more out of White's quick 11.g4 by means of 11...Bb6, which hits the bishop on b5 gaining a tempo for ...d5. Black will be able to exchange off the knight for White's dark-squared bishop. 12.a4 a6 13.gd3 d5 14.a5 Bc7 15.g3 dxc3 16.hxc3 g6 17.Be1 Be7 18.Bd2 g6 19.c3 g7 is

comfortable for Black, ½-½ (27) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

12.g3 Bxg3?!

The engines are not particular fans of this pawn structure change. 12...g4 13.Be1 Bd8 14.gxd6 Bxd6.



analysis diagram

These are the types of positions that always make me (Matthew) nervous as Black. Black's pieces are actively-placed, so there's nothing wrong at the moment, but White has achieved a useful positional goal already – the exchange of dark-squared bishops – and it isn't particularly clear in which direction Black should be pointing the dynamic potential in his position. After all, White's position doesn't have any obvious weaknesses to target. The engines essentially decide to convert this energy into advancing the d5-pawn to d4 and hopefully on to d3. This explains a little why the engines were not that keen on Karpov's 10.g5 – they were looking at plans that really put the d5-pawn under lock and key and stopped it from advancing.

15.g2 (15.h3 g5 16.g2 gxf3 17.gxf3 Bfd8 18.Bd2 g6 19.Bad1 dge5 20.g2 d4 21.gf1 h6 22.d1 a5 23.a3 Bd5 24.Be4 b5 25.d3 dxd3 26.cxd3 b4 27.g3 Bc5 28.g2 Bd6 29.Bde1. White still seems slightly better in such positions but the engines were not impressed at all, ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 15...gxf3 16.gxf3 Bfd8 (16...d6 17.g3 dge5 18.g1 d4 19.d1 Bb6 20.gxc6 dxc6 21.d3 d8 22.Be7 g6 23.Bd2 d6 24.Be2 Bc6 25.Be1 Bc7 26.Bxc7. The white knight on d3 is well-placed in front of the d-pawn but Black has easy counterplay with ...Bc8, targeting c2, ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon

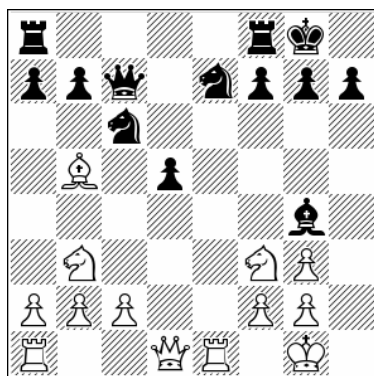
3.1, Classics 2022) 17.g3 ♖b6 18.a4 d4 19.a5 ♖b4 20.♗d2 ♗b5 21.♗e2 ♗xe2 22.♞xe2 d3 (achieved!) 23.cxd3 ♞xd3 24.♙xc6 ♜xc6 25.♞c5 ♞d2 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

13.hxg3 ♙g4

Why don't the engines like the capture on g3? I guess there are two reasons. Firstly, the doubled g-pawn covers the f4-square, which robs Black of a useful square for either a knight or the queen. Secondly, ...♙xf3 now has little impact on the integrity of White's kingside structure which means that's White's queen is now free to move without restrictions. Thirdly, after ...♙xf3, White gains an additional channel of attack along the h-file after ♙g2 and ♞h1. The last point seems perhaps a little far-fetched, but this is exactly what Karpov uses in the game, and the engines also make grateful use of it.

14.♞e1

14.♗d2, immediately making use of the queen's freedom. The specific reason for doing it right now is quite extraordinary however: we'll understand why on the next move.



14...♞ad8

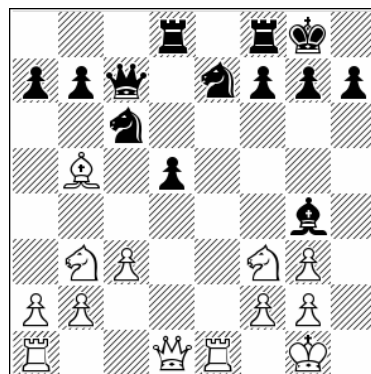
14...h5. Even now, having seen so many moves of the rook's pawn in engine games, one is still floored by this one! It truly is one of the last moves a GM would consider in this position. How do you even start understanding what the engines want with this move? Well, let's start with 15.♗d2: the engines considered 14.♞e1 to be inaccurate and wanted 14.♗d2 instead. So how does 14...h5 dissuade 15.♗d2? There is only one thing, and indeed... 15.♗d2 ♙xf3 16.gxf3 h4 is the idea, chipping away at White's weakened kingside to create more dark-square weaknesses. The engines thought that 14.♗d2 was stronger as

14...h5 can be met by 15.♗g5, preventing this idea while attacking the kingside with the queen. Even that, however, is not too bad for Black.

17.♙g2 (17.gxh4 ♜g6 18.♗g5 ♜f4 ½-½ (22) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 17...♞ae8 (17...hxg3 18.fxg3 ♞ae8 19.c3 ♜f5 20.♗f2 ♜d6 21.♙d3 ♞e5 22.♞xe5 ♜xe5 23.♙f1 ♞e8 24.♞e1 ♗d8 25.♞d4 a6 26.♞e2 with a balanced position, ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 18.♞h1 hxg3 19.♙d3 ♜g6 20.fxg3 ♜ce5 (Black's king is vulnerable along the h-file, but White's king is quite airy too) 21.♙xg6 fxg6 22.♗xd5+ ♜f7 23.♞d4 ♞d8 24.♗e4 (½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 24...♞fe8 25.♗d3 ♖b6 26.♞ad1 ♖xb2 27.♖b3 ♖xb3 28.axb3 is the engine's expectation with an approximately equal endgame.

15.c3

Another very natural move from White, taking some control of the d4-square to prevent Black from advancing the isolated queen's pawn. The engines consider it to be inaccurate, however (15.♗d2 or 15.♗d3 unpinning the knight on f3 was their recommendation), and once again their riposte is stunning!



15...♖b6

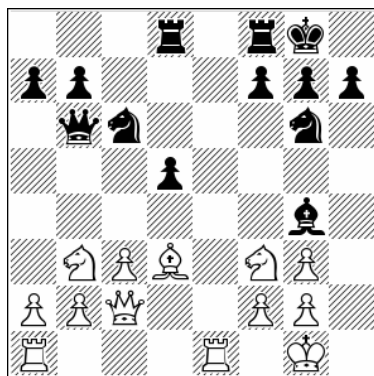
15...f5. Amazing activity! ...f4 is coming in quickly and this time Black is happy that he doubled the g-pawns with ...♙xg3! The pawn push exploits the fact that the knight on f3 cannot move away from f3 to d4 or g5 to target the newly-created weakness on e6: 16.♗d2 f4 17.♞h2 fxg3 18.♞xg4 h5 (fantastic play!) 19.♞h6+ gxh6 20.fxg3 ♖b6+ 21.♞d4 ♜xd4 22.♗xd4 ♗xd4+ 23.cxd4 ♜f5 24.♙d3 ♜xd4 25.♞e5 ♞fe8 26.♞xh5 ♞d6 27.♞d1 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

16.♙d3 ♘g6

16...g6 is the engine choice, unhampered as it is by shibboleths like not putting pawns on the same colour squares as one's bishop. Black has ideas of ...♗g7 and ...h5, setting up counterplay on the kingside (and also trying to justify the exchange on g3), as well as ...♙f5, exchanging off the inferior bishop. White has only a small edge here: 17.♖c1 ♗g7. ...♗g7 has a lovely double point (not just preventing ♖h6): 18.♗f4 ♙xf3 19.gxf3 ♘g8. That's it! The knight is coming to f6 freeing the e-file for Black's rooks.

20.♗g2 ♘f6 21.♖h1 h5 22.♖h4 d4 23.cxd4 ♗fe8 24.♗d1 ♘b4 25.♙c4 ♖c6 26.♖c1 ♘xa2 27.♘a5 ♖b6 28.♘xb7 ♘xc1 29.♘xd8 ♗xd8 30.♖xc1 ♗xd4 31.♖h1 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

17.♖c2

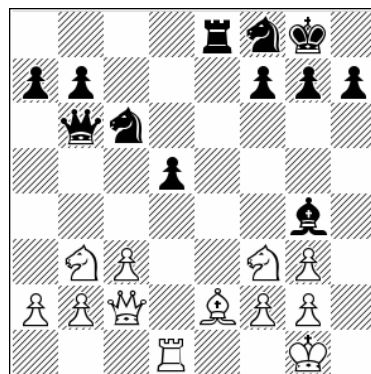


17...♙xf3?!

This is again not a favourite move of the engines. It's nothing like a losing move, but the engines seem to feel that the time for active play has passed. It's time for Black to settle down, accept he has an isolated queen's pawn and nothing particular to show for it, and buckle down to neutralise White's advantage.

17...♗fe8 holds White to a small edge.

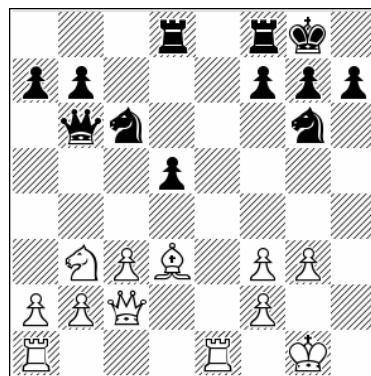
18.♗xe8+ (18.♘bd4 ♘f8 19.♘xc6 bxc6 20.♘e5 ♙h5 21.♖a4 ♗e6 22.♙f5 ♗f6 23.♖b3 ♖c7 24.♖c2 c5 25.b3 ♙g6 26.♘xg6 hxg6 27.♙g4 ♗fd6 28.♗ad1 ♖b6 was decent enough for Black, ½-½ (34) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 18...♗xe8 19.♘h2 ♙e6 20.♗d1 ♘f8 21.♘f3 ♙g4 22.♙e2



analysis diagram

22...♙f5 (22...h5. Dragon clearly hadn't got the memo about playing solidly and once again lands the ...h5-h4 idea we examined earlier! 23.♗xd5 h4 24.gxh4 ♙xf3 25.gxf3 (25.♙xf3 ♗e1+ 26.♗h2 ♘e5, freeing the path of the black queen to f6, is dangerous for White) 25...♘g6 26.♖d2 ♘xh4 27.♖g5 ♗xe2 28.♖xh4 ♘e7 29.♗d7 ♘g6 30.♖d8+ ♖xd8 31.♗xd8+ ♗h7 32.♗d2 ♗e1+ 33.♗h2 ♘f4 ½-½ (37) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 23.♖d2 h6 24.♘fd4 ♙e4 25.♗e1 ♘e5 26.♖c1 a6 27.♘f3 ♘g4 28.♘fd4 ♘e5 29.♘d2 ♘h7 30.♘2f3 ♘d7 31.♘h2 ♙g6 32.♘g4 h5 33.♘e3 ♘hf6 34.♙f1 ♗d8 35.♗d1 ♘e5 36.♘f3 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

18.gxf3



18...♗d6

Black is trying to stay flexible and keep ...d4 in reserve – once his rooks are doubled on the d-file, White can hardly prevent it – but it isn't particularly easy to see what this flexibility will give him. White, on the other hand, has a huge scope to improve his position, and Karpov starts on this path immediately.

18...d4 was the consistent follow-up, when White has a small advantage after 19.♙e4 dxc3 20.bxc3. The problem is that White has a fair

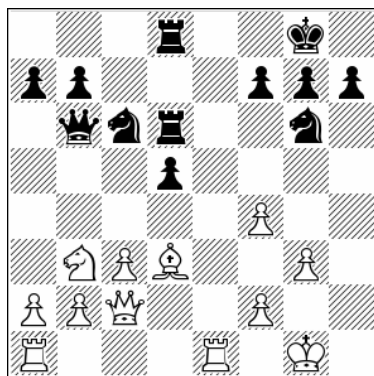
amount of activity all over the board. White will develop some pressure along the b- and h-files, neither of which Black can oppose in any meaningful way. The engines survived in this line, but some of the judgements they made were quite difficult to understand intuitively.

20...♖c7 21.♞ab1 ♞fe8 22.♔g2 ♜f8 23.c4 ♜e7 24.c5 h5 25.♜c1 ♜c6 26.♞h1 g6 27.♜e2 ♜e6 28.♙xg6 fxg6 29.♞xg6+ ♞g7 30.♞xh5 ♞e7 31.♞h4 ♞h7 32.♞g4+ ♞g7 33.♞xb7 (33.♞a4 ♜e5 34.♞bh1 ♜g6 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 33...♞xg4 34.♞xg4+ ♜f7 35.♞xe7+ ♜xe7 36.♞e4 ♜f7 37.♜f4 ♜g5 38.♞e3 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

19.f4

Taking away e5 from the black knights.

19...♞fd8



20.a3

A typical Karpov move, guarding the b4-square, so that a subsequent ...d4 can always be met by c4. White simply emphasises to Black that his chance for this break has passed and will never return.

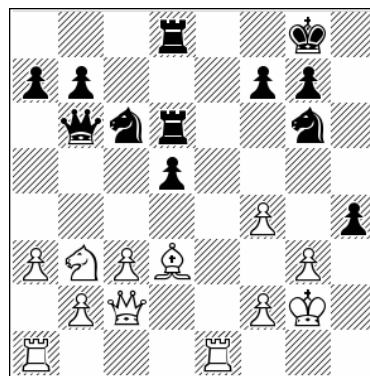
White envisages redeploying the b3-knight to f3, and then putting the rooks on the e- and h-files with ♔g2, ♞e2 and ♞h1. Kuzmin's reaction with 20...h5 looks like desperation and self-destruction – after all, opening lines on the kingside can only help White? – but the engines see a precise (often tactical) path to exploit the temporary weaknesses that ...h7-h5-h4xg3 will expose in the white kingside.

20.♜d2 was Stockfish's more efficient way of redeploying while preventing ...d4.

20...♜f8 (20...d4 21.♜c4) 21.b4 a6 22.a4 h6 23.♔g2 ♜d7 24.♞ad1 ♜f6 25.♜f3 ♞f8 26.♞b1 ♞d7 27.♞e2 ♞dd8 28.♞b2 ♞d7 29.b5 axb5 30.♞xb5 ♞c7 31.♞e1

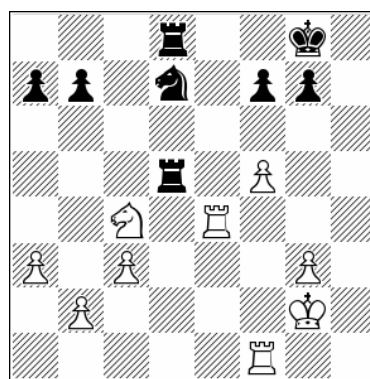
♞b8 32.♞c1 ♞a8 33.c4 dxc4 34.♞xc4 ♞e7 35.♙c2 ♞ae8 36.♙b3 ♞d8 37.♞c1 ♜e4 38.♞d1 ♞c8 39.♞c2 ♜f6 40.a5. Without there being any concrete threats, Black is clearly under pressure and Dragon did not manage to hold out against Stockfish, 1-0 (96) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

20...h5 21.♔g2 h4



22.♞e2

Karpov first prepares to double on the e-file. The engine very much likes the immediate 22.♜d2: 22...hxg3 23.fxg3 ♜a5 (the knight exploits the white knight's inability to jump to d4 to target e3 from c4) 24.f5 ♜f8 25.♞e2 ♜c4 26.♙xc4 (26.♜xc4 dxc4 27.♙xc4 ♜h7 was the surprising idea. Once the knight comes to g5, White's king will feel rather draughty) 26...dxc4 27.♜xc4 ♞c6+ 28.♞e4 ♞xe4+ 29.♞xe4 ♞d5 30.♞f1 ♜d7.



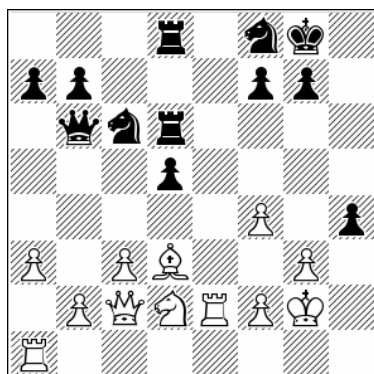
analysis diagram

It looks like a clear extra pawn at first sight, but the engines held this with consummate ease as Black. The exposed pawn on f5 and the unstable position of the knight on c4 give Black's active pieces enough to play with.

31.♞f2 (31.♞h4 ♜c5 32.♞fh1, looking to deliver mate on the h-file that Black opened! 32...f6 33.♞h8+ ♜f7 34.♞xd8 ♞xd8 35.♞h4 ♜b3 36.a4 ♞d5

37.♖h8 ♖d2 38.♗e3 ♜d3 39.♙f2 ♗e4+ 40.♙f3 ♗xg3 41.♙f4 ♗e2+ 42.♙f3 ♗g3 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 31...♗c5 32.♞e7 ♖d3 33.♞fe2 b5 34.♗e3 ♞e5 35.♞xe5 ♗xe5 36.♗c2 f6 37.♗d4 a6 38.♙f2 ♙f7 39.♙e3 g6 40.fxg6+ ♙xg6 41.♙e4 ♗c4 42.♙f4 ♜d7 43.g4 ♗e5 44.♙e4 ♗c4 45.♙f4 ♗e5 46.♞h2 ♗d3+ 47.♙e3 ♗e5 48.♙f4 ♗d3+ 49.♙e4 ♗c5+ 50.♙f3 ♗d3 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

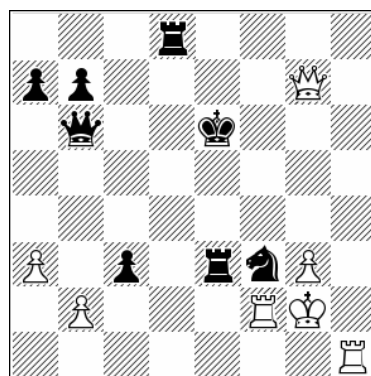
22...♗f8 23.♗d2



23...♞h6?

After this, things go rapidly downhill for Black. White has two potential invasion channels – the e-file and the h-file – and Black focuses on plugging the one closest to the black king by transferring a rook there. However, invasion along the e-file is extremely dangerous and Black can ill afford to dedicate a whole rook to anticipating a potential threat while real threats are growing elsewhere. The engines instead focused on exchanging a pair of rooks (preventing White from attacking along the e- and h-files simultaneously) and generating enough irritating play along the e-file to stop White from committing fully to an attack along the h-file.

23...hxg3 24.fxg3 ♞e6 (either forcing an exchange of rooks or gaining control of the e-file) 25.♗f3 (25.♞f2 is a natural choice, reasoning that Black can only extract a limited amount of value from control of the e-file and the ability to occupy the e3-square: 25...d4 26.♗e4 dxc3 27.♗g5 ♞e3 28.♙h7+ ♗xh7 29.♞xh7+ ♙f8 30.f5 ♗e5 31.♗e6+ fxe6 32.fxe6+ ♗f3 33.♞h8+ ♙e7 34.♞xg7+ ♙xe6 35.♞h1



analysis diagram

was agreed drawn here! Oh my goodness! ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022. 35...♗d5 36.♞xf3 ♞xf3 37.♙xf3 ♞c6 38.♞xc3 ♞xc3+ 39.bxc3 ♙c4 was one of the engines' main lines leading to a draw!)

25...♞xe2+ 26.♞xe2 ♜d7 (to fight once again for the e-file with ...♞e7) 27.♞h1 ♞e7 28.♞c2 g6. This looks a little flimsy, but the threat of invading on e3 with the queen or rook makes it hard for White to transfer the queen to the kingside: 29.b4 ♞e3 30.♞e1 ♞b6 31.♞h1 ♞e3 32.♞e1 ♞b6 33.♞e2 ♞xe2+ 34.♞xe2 ♜d8 35.♞e3 ♞f6 with a holdable position for Black, ½-½ (42) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

24.♗f3 hxg3 25.fxg3 ♗d7?!

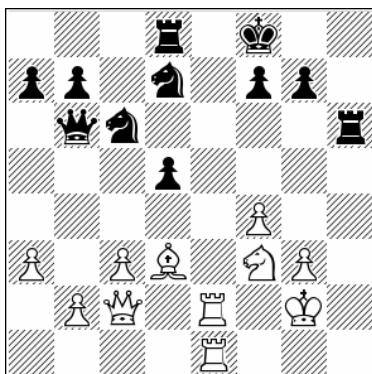
Black changes his defensive formation but just ends up making matters much worse. The engine games were getting pretty tough for the Black side already though!

25...♞c7 26.♞ae1 a6 is the engine's choice, but it now believes White has a winning advantage after 27.b4, planning a4 and b5 and a penetration to e7. The misplaced rook on h6 is suddenly a terrible handicap for Black, an illustration of Tarrasch's aphorism that if one piece stands badly, the whole position is bad.

25...♗a5 26.♞ae1 ♗c4 27.f5 a6 28.♞c1 ♗d6 29.♞g5 b5 30.♙b1 ♞b8 31.♞g4 ♜d8 32.♞d4 ♗a5 33.g4 ♗c6 34.♞d2 d4 35.♞e4 dxc3 36.♞xc3 ♞f6 37.♞e3 b4 38.axb4 ♗xb4 39.g5 (winning a piece) 39...♗d5 40.♞c1 ♗xe3+ 41.♞xe3 ♞b8 42.b3 ♞xf5 43.♙xf5 1-0 (70) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

26.♞ae1 ♙f8

The threat of 26...-- 27.♞e8+ ♗f8 28.♗g5 was deeply unpleasant.



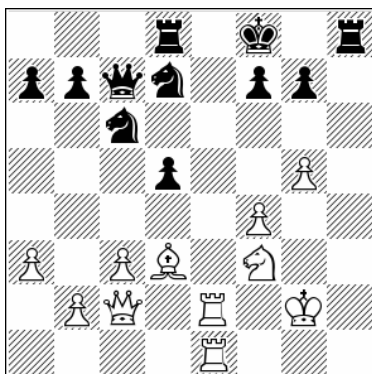
27.g4!

White starts gaining space. 27.b4 ♖f6 28.b5 was Stockfish's preference, gaining space on the other side. It was also very effective, but Karpov's move is good enough.

28...♗b8 29.♗g5 ♖d6 30.♙f5 a6 31.♖b3 axb5 32.♖xb5 ♗bd7 33.♗e7 ♖xe7 34.♗xe7 ♗xe7 35.♖b4+ ♗e8 36.♖xb7 1-0 (63) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

27...♖c7 28.g5 ♗h8

The situation reminds one somewhat of several AlphaZero-Stockfish games in which Black committed a rook to defend against a potential invasion on the h-file, only to see it reduced to uselessness as the invasion occurred elsewhere! 28...♗e6 was probably more tenacious, although 29.♗xe6 fxe6 30.♖d2 ♗c5 31.♙c2, intending ♖d2-f2-h4, is also hopeless.



29.♗g3!

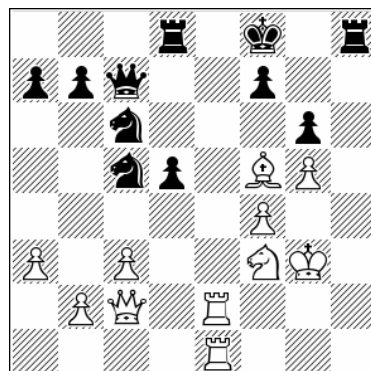
Another very nice Karpov move. The king steps up to defend f4, whilst at the same time freeing the second rank, so the rooks and queen can come to the h-file.

29...♗c5 30.♙f5

Simple play. White's position is so good that he can even try and finish off the game on the h-file.

30.♗h2 ♖xh2 31.♖xh2 ♗e6 32.♗g4 and the best the engines could come up with was to give up a piece with 32...♖xf4+ 33.♖xf4 ♗xf4 34.♗xf4 1-0 (52) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

30...g6



31.b4

A lovely intermezzo!

31...♗e4+

On 31...♗d7, 32.♙xg6 fxg6 33.♖xg6 wins easily.

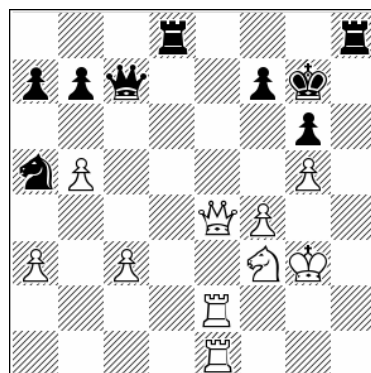
31...gxf5 32.bxc5 is also hopeless.

32.♙xe4 dxe4 33.♖xe4 ♗g7

33...a6 was a better try to prevent b5. The engines manage to put up tough resistance, but some stellar play lets White power through.

34.a4 b5 35.axb5 axb5 36.♗g2 ♖c8 (aiming for h3) 37.f5 gxf5 38.♖f4 ♗h5 39.g6 (a lovely move, freeing e6 for the white rook) 39...♖b8 40.♖xb8 ♗xb8 41.gxf7 ♗xf7 42.♗e6 ♗g8+ 43.♗f2 ♗d8 44.♗e5 ♗gh8 45.♗xb5 f4 46.♗xh5 ♗xh5 47.♗e4 ♗e6 48.c4 ♗h1 49.♗d4 ♗c7 50.♗xf4+ and even human technique would get this job done! 1-0 (82) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

34.b5 ♗a5



35.♖e7!

Finding the crispest tactical way to finish the game.

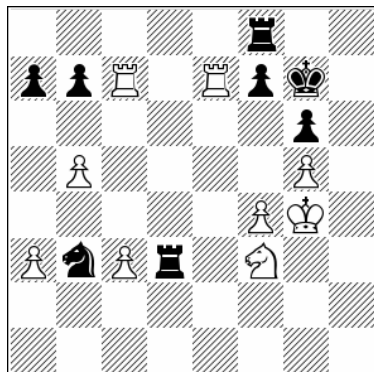
35...♖xe7

35...♖xc3 36.♞e3! is the point, when 36...♖b2 37.♞b1! is very nice: 37...♖xb1 38.♞f6+ ♔g8 39.♞xd8+ ♕h7 40.♞xa5.

36.♞xe7 ♞d3 37.♞c7 ♖b3 38.♕g4

38.♞ee7 ♖d2 39.♞xf7+ ♕g8 40.♞fd7 also wins.

38...♞f8 39.♞ee7 1-0



♖e5 is coming! Total domination!

Game 32 – Benoni Defence

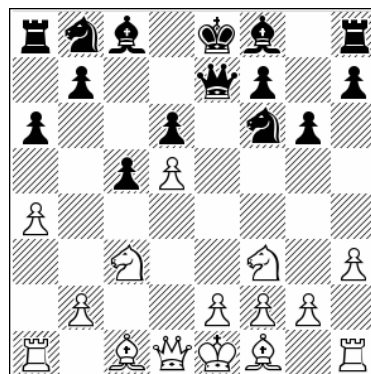
Pia Cramling 2525

Mihai Suba 2500

Spain tt 1993

Pia Cramling has been one of the strongest female players in the world for most of her career. Rated world no.1 in 1984, some 26 years later she was still at the peak of her game, winning her second European Women's Championship, and she continues to grace the top of the women's game. I (Matthew) have followed her games for many years as she is primarily a 1.d4 player (like me!) and has played many interesting opening ideas and systems. Here she takes on Romanian grandmaster Mihai Suba in a fascinating Modern Benoni battle. The latter is an opening which few strong players trust anymore, one in which Black relies on tactical resources (or trickery, if you are of the more classical persuasion!) to offset his obvious strategic concessions in the centre.

1.d4 ♖f6 2.♖f3 e6 3.c4 c5 4.d5 d6 5.♖c3 exd5 6.cxd5 g6 7.h3 a6 8.a4 ♞e7



A life spent playing the Modern Benoni cannot be a happy one without possessing cunning and subterfuge! The Romanian grandmaster Mihai Suba is a master of the opening and uses a clever move-order to nudge White away from the strong set-up with e4 and ♖d3. 7...♞e7 would not deter 8.e4 as 8...♖xe4 loses to 9.♞a4+. This resource disappears, however, after the inclusion of 7...a6 8.a4. The black queen is committed somewhat early to the sub-optimal e7-square (the queen is often useful supporting queenside expansion from squares such as c7, b6 and a5), but forcing or tricking White into a different set-up has definite psychological value, and the Modern Benoni is all about unbalancing the struggle.

9.♖g5

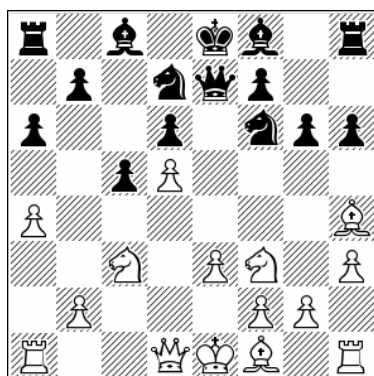
One of the two strong moves for White in this position, 9.♖f4 – the engine favourite – being the other. Both moves develop the dark-squared bishop to allow the f3-knight to retreat to d2 and either support central occupation with e4 or just cover the e4-square to prevent freeing exchanges with ...♖e4.

9.♖f4 was exclusively played by the engines: 9...♖bd7 10.♖d2 ♖e5 11.e4 (11.e3 is another common approach. By keeping the e-pawn on e3, White avoids giving Black a central target to attack and keeps additional control of the central dark squares (e.g. d4). 11...♖g7 12.♖e2 0-0 13.0-0 ♖fd7 14.♖g3 ♖b8 15.♖e1 f5 16.♖a3 ♖d8 17.f4 ♖f7 18.a5 b6 19.axb6 ♖xb6 20.♖c1 ♖f6 21.♖c4 gave White a pleasant and stable advantage in Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022, 1-0 (107)) 11...♖g7 12.♖e2 ♖fd7 13.♖g3 g5 14.0-0 0-0 15.a5 b5 16.axb6 ♖xb6 17.♖a3 h6 18.♖b3 ♖b8 19.♖a2 ♖g6 20.♖xa6 ♖d7 21.♖e2 ♖f4 22.♖e1 ♖xe2+ 23.♖xe2

♖c8 24.♜b3 ♜xb3 25.♝xb3 f5 26.exf5 ♙xf5 and Black managed to create enough counterplay to hold the draw, ½-½ (92) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

9...h6 10.♙h4 ♜bd7 11.e3

Cramling opts for the restrained approach. Note that despite playing 11.e3 now, nothing is stopping White from playing e4 later when convenient.



11...♙g7 12.♜d2 0-0 13.♙d3

A sharp and provocative move from White. 13.♙e2 was more natural, keeping the bishop out of range of a black knight on e5, but Cramling intends to provoke a crisis and force Black down a narrow and risky path.

13.♙e2 ♜b8 14.0-0 g5 15.♙g3 ♜e8 16.♜a3 f5 17.♜e1 b6 18.♜b3 f4 19.exf4 gxf4 20.♙h2 ♜e5 21.♙f1 ♝f7 22.♜e4 ♜g6 23.♝c1 ♙d7 24.♙xa6 ♜f6 25.♜e1 ♜h4 was a relatively respectable result for the Black side of a Modern Benoni! White is a pawn up but Black is circling around the kingside, ½-½ (66) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

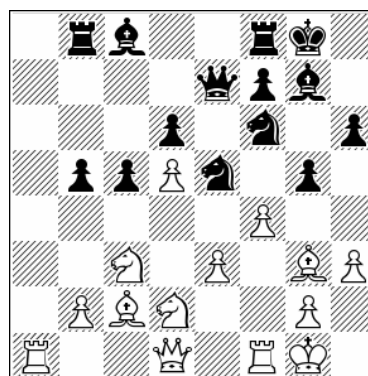
13...♜b8 14.0-0 ♜e5 15.♙c2

This was Cramling's idea. White abandons any restraining influence on the ...b7-b5 break, instead pointing the light-squared bishop at the kingside and supporting central expansion with e3-e4-e5. The engines don't approve, but Black's position hangs on a knife-edge.

15...g5

15...b5 immediately was also possible, though it feels most natural to break the pin on the f6-knight.

16.♙g3 b5 17.axb5 axb5 18.f4

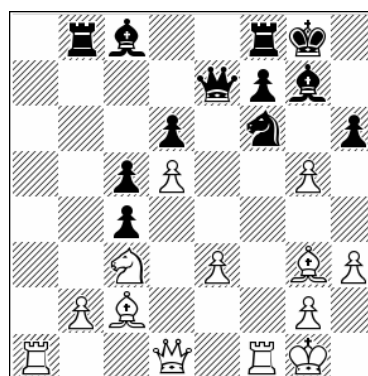


18...♜c4

The decision of a good Benoni player. Converting our beautiful b5- and c5-pawns into a wreck of doubled c-pawns is a decision that would cost most of us some thought, but open lines and momentum are the most important.

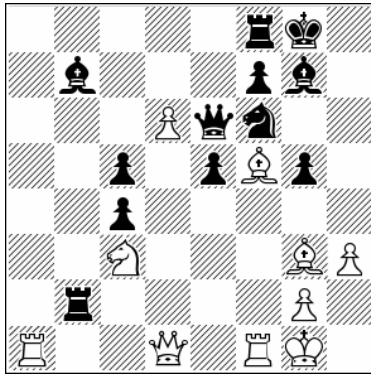
18...♜ed7 19.fxc5 hxc5 20.♜ce4 reveals the power of Cramling's idea: the bishop on c2 supports the knight on e4, which attacks d6 and g5, while an exchange of the knight on f6 allows the white queen to come to h5, eyeing mate on h7.

19.♜xc4 bxc4 20.fxc5



20...♝xe3+

The sort of nervous move that human players are often unable to resist. Taking a pawn with check and attacking a loose bishop on g3 makes perfect sense until you see Cramling's response. 20...hxc5 held for Black in our engine games: 21.♜xf6 (White has to continue aggressively as Black's pieces are eyeing weaknesses on e3 and b2; 21.e4 ♜xb2 22.e5 was another way to torch the board: 22...dxe5 23.d6 ♝e6 24.♙f5 and now 24...♙b7 was the lovely riposte!



analysis diagram

25.♙xe6 ♜xg2+ 26.♖h1 ♜xg3+ 27.♙d5 and a draw was agreed in Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022! For us mere mortals, the game might have continued 27...♜xd5 28.♜xd5 ♜d3 29.♙g4 ♙xd5+ 30.♖g1 ♙e6 31.♙xg5 ♜xd6 with approximate equality!) 21...♙xf6 22.♜e4 ♙h6 23.♙xd6 ♜xb2 24.♙xf8 ♙xf8 25.♞a8 ♙f5 26.d6 g4 (a Modern Benoni player should never stop attacking! Black opens up the white kingside and threatens ...♙xe3+) 27.d7 ♙xd7 28.♙xd7 ♜xc2 29.♙xg4+ ♙g6 30.♜f6+ ♖g7 31.♜h5+ and the game ended in a draw by repetition, ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

21.♖h1!

A fantastic response! White leaves the g3-bishop hanging! Once you see it, it's quite obvious, but it's very easy to miss from afar.

21.♖h2 ♙xg5 22.♙xd6 ♜xb2 23.♙xf8 ♙xf8 is playable for Black as White's exposed king puts tactical obstacles in his desired path: 24.♙c1 (24.♙f3 ♜xc2 25.♜e4 fails to 25...♙e5+ 26.♖h1 ♙xe4) 24...♙d6+ 25.♖g1 ♙e5 26.♙xb2 ♙g3 27.♞f2 was agreed drawn in a scary position in Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022! 27...♙xh3 28.♖f1 ♙g4 is the beautiful quiet idea from Stockfish, intending ...♙h4. 29.♞a8+ ♖g7 30.♞xf6 ♙xf6 31.♙b8 ♙xb8 32.♞xb8 ♙xc3 33.♙a4 ♙e5 is a (still complicated) draw according to the engines.

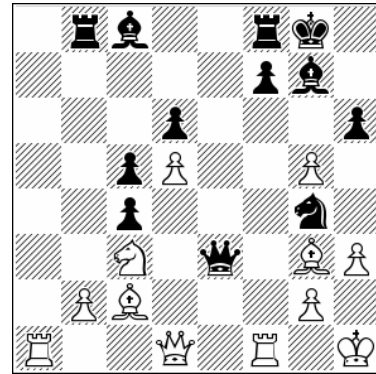
21...♜g4

Suba goes for full confusion! Pieces are hanging everywhere.

A) 21...♙xg5 22.♙xd6 ♜xb2 23.♙xf8 ♙xf8 24.♙f3 ♜xc2 25.♜e4 wins for White as 25...♙e5 is not check with the king on h1!;

B) 21...♙xg3 22.gxf6 is curtains;

C) 21...♙g4 was the engine choice, but 22.♙e1 ♙xe1 23.♞axel hxc5 24.hxc4 ♜xb2 25.♙f5 was very strong for White. The problem is that Black's central structure (the d6-pawn) is extremely easy to attack, giving White a simple way to make progress, 1-0 (59) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

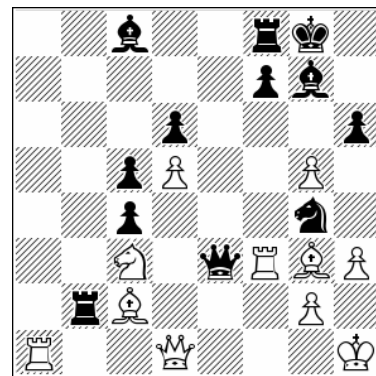


22.♞f3

A strong riposte, putting another piece – a big one – under attack though also increasing the complexity and tension.

22.♜e4 was another engine choice which perhaps was more successful in liquidating the position to clarity: 22...f5 23.gxf6 ♜xf6 24.♞e1 ♙d4 25.♙xd6 ♙xd1 26.♞axd1 ♜xe4 27.♞xe4 ♙d7 28.♙xb8 ♜xb8 29.♞xc4 ♙e5 30.d6 ♙xb2 31.♞xc5 was a simple win for White, 1-0 (42) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

22...♞xb2

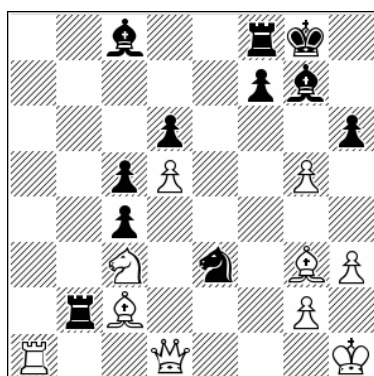


Another great Modern Benoni move! After 23.♞xe3 ♜xe3, forking queen and light-squared bishop, White runs the risk of losing all the queenside pieces.

23.hxc4

Cramling finds a sensible path to a winning advantage.

23.♖xe3 was the very best move nonetheless:
23...♗xe3

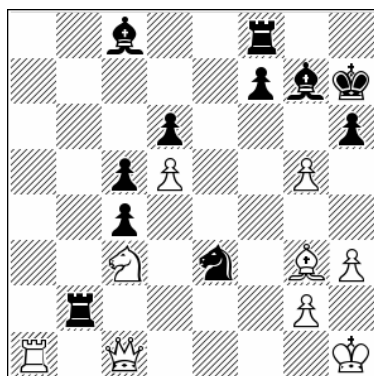


analysis diagram

24.♗h7+. If you can spot this beautiful idea, then the rest makes a lot of sense!

(24.♖f3 is also winning, but the lines are much messier to human eyes: 24...♗xc2 (24...♖xc2 25.gxh6 ♗xc3 26.♖xe3 ♗xa1 27.♗xd6 ♗f5 28.♗xf8 (28.♖g5+ ♗g6) 28...♗xf8 29.d6 ♗f6 30.♖f4 wins for White, but these variations would be very difficult to play over the board) 25.gxh6 ♗xh6 26.♗xd6 ♗xa1 27.♗e4 ♖b3 28.♖h5 ♗g7 29.♗xf8 ♗xf8 30.♗d6 (forks c8 and f7!) 30...♖b1+ 31.♗h2 ♖b7 32.♗xb7 ♗xb7 33.d6 ♗b3 34.♖g5 f6 35.♖e3 ♗c6 36.♖e7+ ♗g8 37.♖e6+ ♗h7 38.♖f5+ ♗h6 39.g4 (threatening ♖h5 mate!) 39...♗h8 40.♖c8 (forks both bishops!) 1-0 (54) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022)

24...♗xh7 25.♖c1.

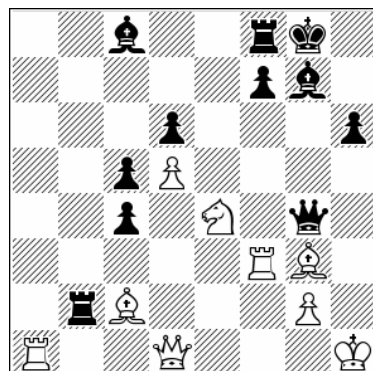


analysis diagram

This is a lovely little idea, drawing the king to the b1-h7 diagonal, giving the white queen an escape check in the ensuing tactics! 25...♗f5 (25...♖c2 loses to 26.♖xe3 ♖xc3 27.♖e4+ ♗g8 28.♗xd6) 26.♗xd6 ♗xd6 27.♖xb2 hxg5 (27...♗e4 28.♖b1 again shows the value of drawing the black king to the b1-h7 diagonal) 28.♖b6 ♗f5

29.♖xc5 ♗b7 (29...♗xc3 30.♖xf8) 30.♖xc4 ♗g3+ 31.♗h2 ♗e5 32.♖e1 ♗d6 33.♗b5 ♗f4 34.d6 and Black has no dangerous discovered checks! 1-0 (49) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

23...♖xg5 24.♗e4 ♖xg4



Black has scraped together three pawns for the piece, but the d6-pawn is easy prey for White's minor pieces. White just needs to find a good way to deal with Black's remaining tactical threats, the foremost of which is ...♖xc2 followed by ...♗xa1.

25.♗xd6?

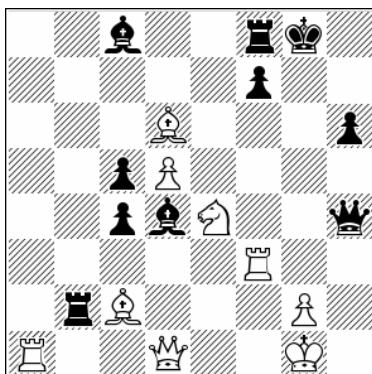
A misstep, although based on an absolutely brilliant idea.

25.♖f4 ♖xd1+ 26.♗xd1 intuitively looks completely wrong for White: the bishop is on the back rank, a discovered attack by the rook on b2 still exists and the rook on f4 blocks the bishop on g3's attack on the d6-pawn. However, the engine sees no immediate tactical danger for White and after a few moves of consolidation Black's structural weaknesses will come to the fore once again.

26...c3 27.♖c1 ♗e5 28.♖f3 ♗g4 29.♖fxc3 ♗xc3 30.♗xg4 ♗d2 31.♖f1 ♗g5 32.♗xd6 ♖d8 33.♗h5 f6 34.♗xg5 hxg5 35.♖xf6 ♖b6 36.♖g6+ ♗h7 37.♗e7 ♖b1+ 38.♗h2 ♖xd5 39.♖e6 is still not trivial but the engines made it look easy, 1-0 (85) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

25...♖h4+ 26.♗g1 ♗d4+

26...♖xc2 27.♖xc2 ♗xa1 would have been Black's safest choice here: 28.♗g3 (28.♗xf8 ♗d4+ 29.♗f2 ♗xf8 is better for Black with two powerful bishops and a passed pawn to play with) 28...♖g4 29.♖xc4 ♖e8 30.♗f6+ ♗xf6 31.♖xg4+ ♗xg4 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.



27. ♖xd4

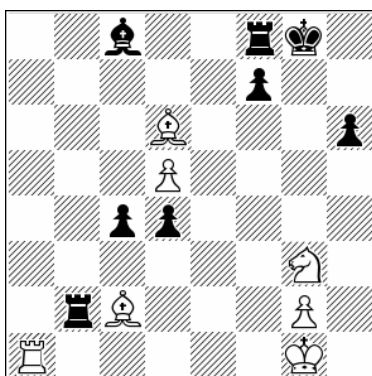
A thunderbolt, but despite the danger to Black's king, the position is extremely tense and all three results are possible.

27...cxd4 28. ♖g3+ ♜xg3

Forced!

A) 28...♗h8 29. ♗xf8 threatens ♗g7+ and ♖f6+;
B) 28...♗g4 29. ♖xg4+ ♜xg4 30. ♖f6+ ♗g7 31. ♖xg4 ♗d8 32. ♗e5+ also wins for White.

29. ♖xg3



29...d3

Unbowed by facing a queen sacrifice, Suba keeps on upping the tension to maximum levels! There were various engine paths to tense equality:

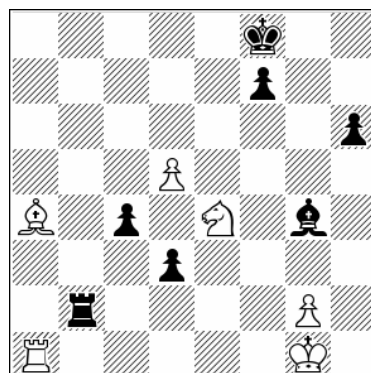
A) 29...♗d8 30. ♗c7 ♖xd5 31. ♗e4 ♗d7 32. ♗e5 f6 33. ♖a8 fxe5 34. ♖xc8+ ♗f7 35. ♖xc4 d3 (½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) and now 36. ♖c1 d2 37. ♗d1 followed by ♗g1-f1-e2 will hold for White;

B) 29...♖xc2 30. ♗xf8 ♗xf8 31. ♖a8 ♗e7 32. ♖xc8 ♗d6 33. ♗d8+ ♗e5 34. d6 d3 35. ♗f1 f5 (½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) should lead inexorably to a rook and knight against rook ending.

30. ♗a4 ♗g4

30...♗d8 was safer again, though the position has become mightily confusing to human eyes once again: 31. ♗e5 ♖b6 32. ♗c7 ♖a6 33. ♗xd8 c3 (two pieces down but the passed pawns are scary!) 34. ♖f1 d2 35. ♖xd2 cxd2 36. ♗d1 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

31. ♗xf8 ♗xf8 32. ♖e4



32...f5?

A huge mistake after so much inspired play! The problem is that the f5-pawn blocks the light-squared bishop's access to the c8-h3 diagonal, which makes White's passed d-pawn very hard to stop. The variations are still very difficult to find, however.

32...h5, protecting the bishop while still covering the d7-square, was Black's best, after which the position is still balanced! 33. d6 ♖e2 34. ♖c3 ♖e6 35. d7 ♖d6 36. ♗f2 ♗xd7 37. ♗xd7 ♖xd7 was one possible conclusion from our engine games, ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

33. ♖c3 ♗e7

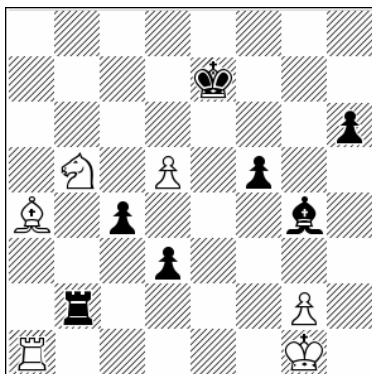
33...d2 34. d6 ♗f7 35. ♖d5 (threatening d7!) 35...♖b8 36. d7 f4 37. ♖f1 ♗e6 38. ♖b6 (threatening ♖c8 when d8(♖) cannot be prevented) 38...♗e7 39. ♖xc4 ♗e2 40. ♖e5 ♖a8 41. ♖c6+ ♗xd7 42. ♖d4+ ♖xa4 43. ♖xe2 f3 44. gxf3 ♗e6 45. ♗d1 ♖a2 46. ♗f2 and White picked up the d-pawn and the game, 1-0 (72) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

34. ♖b5

A mistake, giving Black another lifeline, although I'm not sure how much time would be required to find it! 34. ♖b5 sets up a delicious tactical idea which works beautifully in the game.

The simple 34. ♖e1+ was very strong: 34...♗e2 (34...♗d6 35. ♖e6+ ♗c5 36. d6 queens the pawn; 34...♗d8 35. d6 threatens ♖e8 mate) 35. ♗d1 ♖d6

36.♙xe2 dxe2 37.♖f2 ♖b3 38.♜xe2 ♜xd5 39.♜f4+ led to a win for White after patient play, 1-0 (76) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.



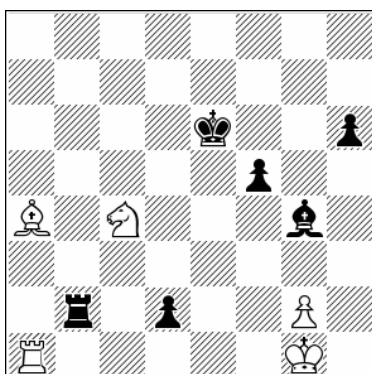
34...d2

Falling into White's devilish idea! 34...♖b4 was Black's saving idea, hanging on to the bishop on a4 to prevent White from activating the rook to support the advance of the d-pawn. 35.d6+ ♜d7 36.g3 ♙f3 37.♖f2 ♙c6 38.♜c3 ♙xa4 39.♖xa4 ♖xa4 40.♜xa4 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

35.d6+ ♜e6 36.d7 ♜xd7 37.♜a3+

A really beautiful idea!

37...♜e6 38.♜xc4



Black's rook cannot defend the d2-pawn! In two moves, White has eliminated both of Black's mighty passed queenside pawns.

38...♖b4 39.♜xd2 f4 40.♜f3 h5 41.♖e1+ ♜f6 42.♙c6 ♖b6 43.♖c1 ♖b3 44.♙d5 ♖b5 45.♖c6+ ♜e7 46.♙e4

Cramling has no problems at all converting the extra piece. The white pieces are activated one by one and Black's isolated pawns start to fall.

46...♖b4 47.♙c2 ♖b2 48.♜e5 ♖b4 49.♖a6 ♖b2 50.♙d3 ♙c8 51.♖a4 ♙b7 52.♜g6+ ♜d6 53.♜xf4 h4 54.♙f5 ♙c6 55.♖a6 ♖b4 56.♜d3 ♖d4 57.♜f2 ♖a4 58.♖b6 ♜c5 59.♖b2 ♜d4 60.♙h3 ♜e3

61.♜d1+ ♜f4 62.♖f2 ♖c4 63.♜e3 ♖a4 64.♜f1 ♙d5 65.♜d2 1-0

Game 33 – King's Indian Defence

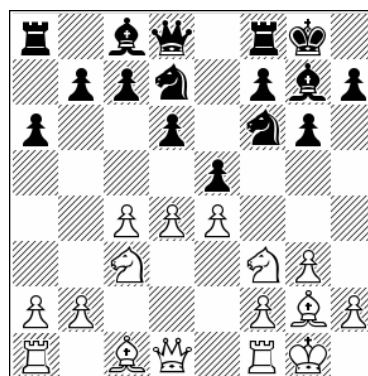
Maia Chiburdanidze 2520

Zsuzsa Polgar 2545

St Petersburg ct W final 1995

The eldest of the Polgar sisters, Zsuzsa, enjoyed a fantastic career as Women's World Champion (defeating Xie Jun in 1996) and as a very strong grandmaster. This game made a big impression on me (Matthew) when I saw it: I resolved never to even think of touching the g3 King's Indian as White! It's a wonderful power game in which the dynamic possibilities of Black's position are exploited to the utmost.

1.d4 ♜f6 2.♜f3 g6 3.c4 ♙g7 4.g3 0-0 5.♙g2 d6 6.0-0 ♜bd7 7.♜c3 e5 8.e4 a6



A flexible response to the solid g3 King's Indian which was associated in the late 1970s with the German grandmaster Rainer Knaak and in the 1980s with the Russian grandmaster Alexander Kochiev. The beauty of Black's system is the variety of options for queenside play that Black keeps open. Black can switch to the traditional ...c6 and ...b5, launch some Benko-style activity (as Knaak demonstrated) with ...exd4, ...c5 and ...b5, or even play the immediate ...b5 as Polgar did when Chiburdanidze tried 9.♖b1 in a later game in the match.

9.♖e1

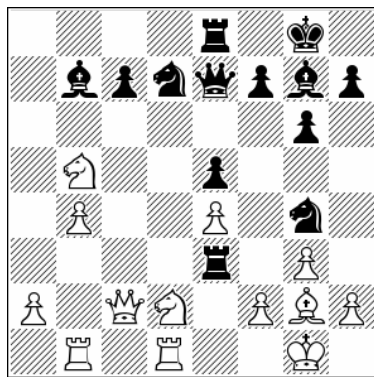
A normal and natural move for the g3 King's Indian. The rook supports the e4-pawn against future pressure (after ...exd4) from a black rook on e8 and a knight on c5, and also steps out of a

possible pin on the a6-f1 diagonal, if Black offers a pawn with ...b5, intending ...♙a6 if White takes twice. However, 9.♖e1 also imperceptibly weakens the f2-pawn and Black has developed many tricky ideas involving ...♘g4 to exploit this tactically. With an engine assisting you, these are not too worrying; caught by surprise at the board it's a different matter.

9.♞c2 was the engine preference, when a number of games were fought out after 9...exd4 10.♘xd4 c5 (very unusual at this early stage, but it transposes to known lines after a couple of moves) 11.♘de2 ♘e5 12.b3 ♖b8 13.a4 ♘e8 14.♙b2 ♘c7 15.♞fd1 (a new move in the databases) 15...♘c6 16.♘d5 ♙xb2 17.♞xb2 ♘xd5 18.cxd5 ♘b4 19.♞d2 f5 20.♖e1 ♞f6 gave Black some Benoni-style play from this King's Indian. As befits a Benoni, Black was under some pressure but managed to hold the balance.

21.♞ad1 fxe4 22.♘c3 e3 23.♞xe3 ♙g4 24.♘e4 ♞d4 25.f3 ♘xd5 26.♞xd4 cxd4 27.♞ed3 ♙d7 28.♞xd4 ♘e3 29.♞1d2 ♙c6 30.♞e2 ♘f5 31.♞d3 ♖be8 32.♘c3 ♞e5 33.♙f2 g5 ½-½ (40) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

9.♞b1 was tried in the 6th match game, and again Chiburdanidze was overwhelmed by the activity unleashed by Polgar with the black pieces. However, there was one moment in the game where White might have turned the tables completely. 9...b5 10.cxb5 axb5 11.b4 ♙b7 12.♞c2 ♞e8 13.♞d1 ♞e7 14.dxe5 dxe5 15.♙e3 ♞a3 16.♘d2 ♘g4 17.♘xb5 ♞xe3 0-1 (42) Chiburdanidze-Z.Polgar, St Petersburg 1995.



analysis diagram

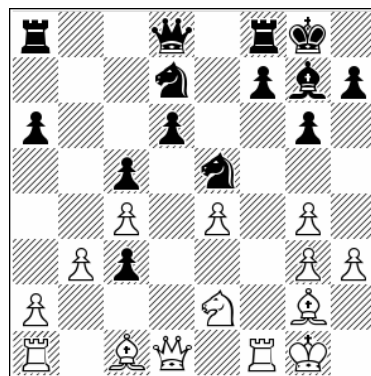
So far White has played perfectly in a complex situation, but here, instead of 18.fxe3 c6! (presumably the intermediate move that White

missed), the stunning 18.♘c4 (or even 18.♘f1 with the same idea) would allow White to capture the trapped(!) rook on e3 at her leisure!

9...exd4 10.♘xd4 ♘g4

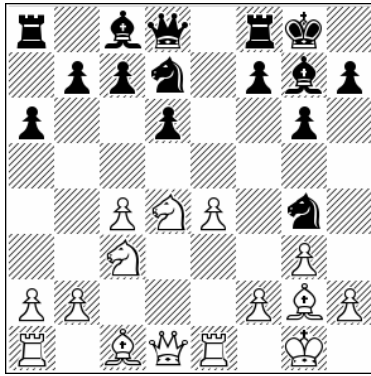
A very aggressive idea that was Kochiev's most important contribution to this system. The knight on g4 hangs, but White's knight on d4 is also loose.

10...♘e5 11.b3 c5 was the way Knaak used to play it, and this is also the engines' preference: 12.♘de2 (the engines once again choose an unusual path: 12.♘c2 has been played almost exclusively in human games) 12...♙g4 13.♞f1 (you have to be an engine to be sure this works!) 13...b5 (13...♘f3+ is an alternative path: 14.♙h1 ♘d4 15.f3 ♙e6 16.♙e3 ♘xe2 17.♘xe2 b5 18.♘f4 ♞e7 19.♘xe6 ♞xe6 20.♞c1 felt like it should lead to a pleasant advantage for White but the engines drew it with ease, ½-½ (36) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 14.f3 b4 15.fxg4 bxc3 16.h3 ♘fd7 with a very messy position!



analysis diagram

17.♙e3 a5. A positional approach from Black, exchanging the isolated a-pawn to create a target on b3 for Black's major pieces. Black also expects to occupy the d4-square with its knights to generate additional pressure on White's structure (17...♞a5 18.♙f2 ♞a3 19.♘xc3 ♘xc4 20.♞c1 ♘ce5 21.♞xd6 ♞fc8 22.♙h1 ♙f8 23.♞d1 ♞ab8 followed by ...c4 to generate queenside counterplay also worked out fine for Black in the end, ½-½ (40) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022). 18.♞c1 a4 19.♘xc3 axb3 20.axb3 ♞b6 21.♞b1 ♞fb8 22.♘b5 ♘f8 23.♞f2 ♘e6 24.♞d2 ♞d8 25.g5 ♘c6 and the entry into d4 was inevitable, ½-½ (36) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.



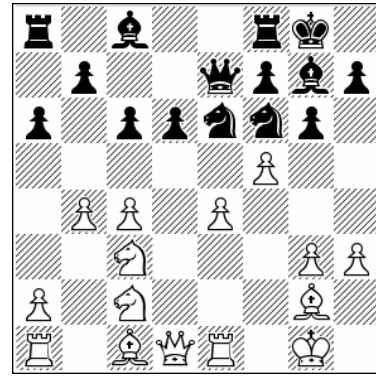
11.f1

A cautious move from Chiburidanidze, trying to eliminate any danger to her king. This had already been played twice against Kochiev, who had replied both times with 11...♟f6, which, to be honest, looks a little odd: it's unlikely that Black can achieve much on the kingside dark squares now that White's rook has returned to f1. Polgar's plan is much more aggressive and fits the King's Indian spirit brilliantly.

11.f4 is the engine's recommendation, with a clear advantage for White. To human eyes, it looks very risky to open the g1-a7 diagonal, but it seems impossible to exploit. The key point to 11.f4 is that the knight on g4 cannot hop to e5 as in the game and must simply return to base having wasted a couple of tempi: 11...c6 12.h3 ♟b6 13.♞ce2 ♞gf6 14.♟c2 ♟c7 15.♞e3 ♟e8 16.♞c3 b6 17.♞ad1 ♞b7 18.♞f3 and White had the space advantage a g3 King's Indian player dreams of, ½-½ (67) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

11...♞ge5!?

A new move at the time. Kochiev's 11...♟f6 encountered powerful play from the engines in our matches: 12.♞c2 ♞c5 13.f4 ♟e7 14.♞e1 c6 15.h3 ♞f6 16.b4 ♞e6 (16...♞cd7 17.♞b1 ♞b6 18.c5 dxc5 19.♞e3 ♞fd7 20.e5 ♞c4 21.♞f2 ♞d8 22.♟e2 cxb4 23.♞xb4 ♞a3 24.♞b3 ♞b5 25.♞e4 was also very unpleasant for Black, ½-½ (128) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 17.f5.

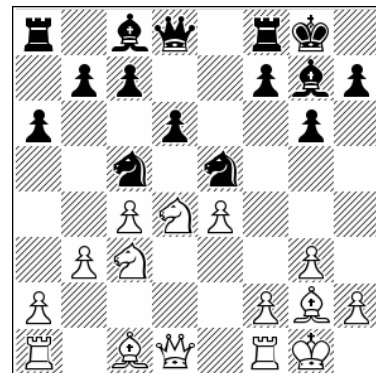


analysis diagram

This type of space-gaining but loosening play always makes one nervous – what might go wrong along the h8-a1 diagonal? – but engines have no fear!

17...♞c7 18.♞f4 ♞ce8 19.e5 dxe5 20.♞xe5 ♟d7 21.g4 ♟xd1+ 22.♞xd1 gxf5 23.♞a4 fxe4 24.♞b6 gxf3 25.♞f3 ♞c7 26.♞xa8 ♞xa8 27.♞e3 with an excellent game for White though it took nearly 150 moves to prove it! 1-0 (144) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

12.b3 ♞c5



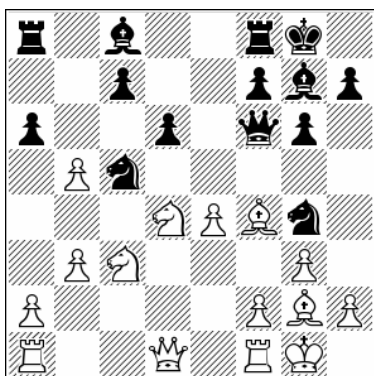
This type of position always scared me (Matthew) off playing the g3 King's Indian as White. The black knights gaze hungrily at the d3-square (how I'd want that light-squared bishop on e2!), the knight on d4 feels loose and White has to watch out for ...♞g4 ideas, picking at the kingside light squares.

13.h3

A typical idea in the g3 King's Indian, covering the g4-square to prevent ...♞g4 and allow ♞e3 without fear of harassment from ...♞g4.

A) 13.♞e3 was the main engine choice, consolidating White's central piece structure without fearing ...♞g4: 13...b5. Just like in the game, Black gets in ...b5 without any preparation.

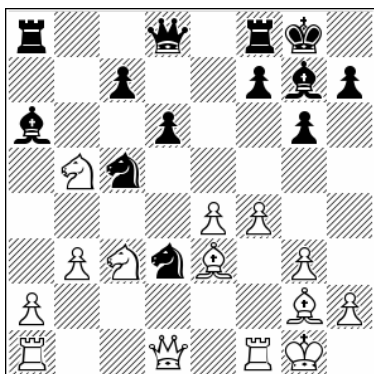
(13...♘g4 14.♙f4 b5 (14...♞e8 15.h3 g5 16.♙c1 ♜f6 17.♘de2 ♘e5 18.♞b1 ♘f3+ looked very frightening for White but Dragon kept its position afloat! 19.♘h1 c6 20.♙b2 g4 21.♘d5 ♜d8 22.♙xg7 ♘xg7 23.♘e3 ♜f6 24.♘f4 ♘f8 25.♘xg4 ♙xg4 26.♙xf3 ♙xf3+ 27.♜xf3 ♘xe4 28.♞bd1 ♜b2 with a slight advantage that Stockfish had no problem defending, ½-½ (42) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 15.cxb5 ♜f6 was a sharp and thematic line that looks appealing, but the engines kept White afloat with some minor piece acrobatics, with a slight advantage.



analysis diagram

16.♘de2 axb5 17.h3 ♘e5 18.♘xb5 c6 19.♘bd4 ♙a6 20.♙e3 ♜e7 21.♜d2 ♙d3 22.f4 ♘xe4 23.♙xe4 ♙xe4 24.fxe5 dxe5 25.♘c2 ♞fd8 26.♜b4 ♜xb4 27.♘xb4 ♙f8 28.a3 c5 29.♘a2 ♞d3 30.♙f2 ♞xb3 31.a4 c4 and Black had enough compensation for the piece! Cool game! ½-½ (43) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022)

14.cxb5 axb5 15.♘dxb5 ♙a6 16.f4 ♘ed3.



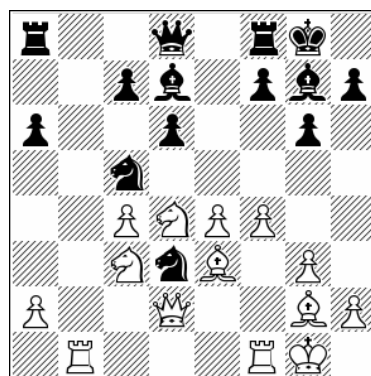
analysis diagram

To be honest, with White's knights so loose and the pressure along the a6-f1 diagonal, one wouldn't be too surprised to be losing the exchange as White. It needs engine calculation to keep the position together: 17.e5 ♞b8 18.♘a7

(a great move! 17.e5 closed the h8-a1 diagonal, to block the pressure on White's c3-knight, freeing the knight to jump to a7, from where it threatens ♘c6, forking queen and rook!) 18...♜d7 19.♙c6 ♜e6 20.♙d5 ♜e8 21.♙c6 ♜e6 22.♙d5 ♜e8 is a fantastic draw by repetition! ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

B) 13.♞b1, removing the rook from the h8-a1 diagonal, was another attempt and looked much safer.

13...♙g4 (13...b5 feels as if it should be even more effective now White's rook on b1 is no longer defending a2, but in fact White can simply ignore it: 14.f4 (if White had played ♙e3, then this would be met by ...♘g4!. Sometimes delaying development helps!) 14...♘ed3 (14...♙g4 15.♜c2 ♘xc4 16.♘c6 ♜d7 17.♘d5 ♞fe8 18.bxc4 ♜xc6 19.f5 is catastrophic for Black: how does the light-squared bishop escape?) 15.♙e3 bxc4 16.bxc4 ♙d7 17.♜d2



analysis diagram

with a pleasant advantage for White. In a human game, one would be pretty sure that Black would not be able to keep that knight on d3 alive ½-½ (37) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 14.f3 ♙d7 15.f4 ♙g4 16.♘de2 ♘ed7 17.♜d2 ♙xe2 18.♘xe2 ♜e7 19.♘c3 ♙xc3 20.♜xc3 ♘xe4 21.♜d4 f5 22.♜d5+ ♜f7 23.♜xb7 ♘dc5 24.♜b4 a5 25.♜a3 ♘c3 26.♞b2 ♜f6 27.♙e3 ♞ae8 with plenty of play for Black despite White's two bishops, ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

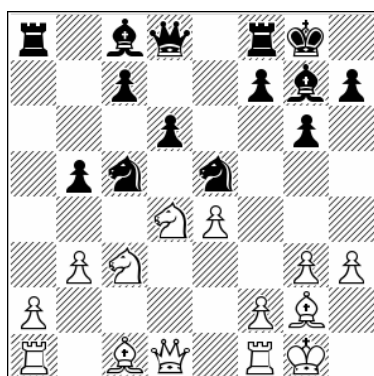
13...b5

Polgar keeps pouring on the activity.

14.cxb5 axb5

For a King's Indian player, this is a fantastic opening result against the solid g3 system. Pressure is hitting the white position from all

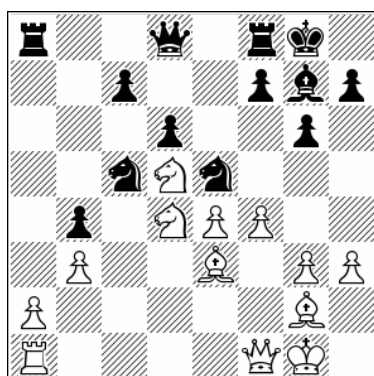
angles and the tempi wasted on ♖f1-e1-f1 are definitely missed.



15.f4

15.♗e3 (15.♖cxb5 or 15.♖dxb5, 15...♗a6 followed by ...c6 nets the exchange) 15.♗e3 was again the preferred engine move, but already White needs to evaluate some complex decisions to maintain the balance.

15...b4 16.♖d5 ♖e6 (16...♗a6 17.f4 (17.♗e1 ♖cd3 followed by ...c6 again costs White material) 17...♗xf1 18.♗xf1

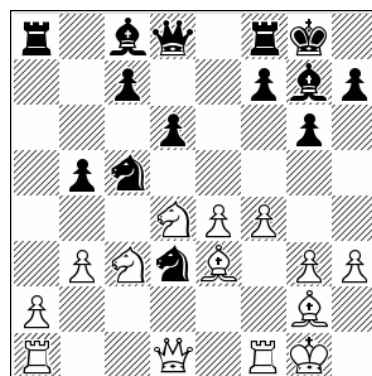


analysis diagram

18...c6 (18...♖ed3 leads to more difficult complications, where one always has the feeling that White needs much more ingenuity than Black: 19.♖c6 ♗d7 20.e5 ♗a3 21.♖cxb4 ♖xb4 22.♖xb4 ♗b8 23.♖c2 ♖xb3 24.axb3 ♗xa1 25.♗xa1 dxe5 26.fxe5 ♗d3 27.♗a7 ♗xb3 28.e6 fxe6 29.♗xc7 ♗f8 30.♗f1 ♗c3 31.♗xc3 ♗xc3 32.♖g2 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 19.♖xb4 ♖e6 20.fxe5 ♖xd4 21.♗xd4 c5 22.♖c6 ♗e8 23.exd6 ♗xd4+ 24.♖xd4 cxd4 25.♗f6 d3 26.♖h2 ♗e6 27.♗d4 h5 still looks messy to human eyes, but totally equal to the engines! ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 17.f4 ♖xd4 18.♗xd4 c5 19.fxe5 (19.♗b2 ♖f3+ 20.♗xf3 ♗xb2 is strong for Black; 19.♗e3 ♖d7 did not make the white

engine happy! 20.e5 dxe5 21.fxe5 ♗xe5 22.♗f4 ♗d4+ 23.♖h2 ♖e5 24.♗h6 ♗a6 25.♗xf8 ♖xf8 26.♗f4 ♗xa1 27.♗xa1 ♗d6 0-1 (57) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 19...cxd4 20.♖f6+ ♖h8 21.♗xd4 dxe5 22.♗xd8 ♗xd8 23.♖d5 ♖g8 24.♗fd1 ♗e6 25.♖c7 ♗h6 26.♖xa8 ♗e3+ 27.♖h2 ♗xa8 28.♗d6 ♗d4 29.♗d1 ♗xa2 30.♗1xd4 exd4 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

15...♖ed3 16.♗e3



16...b4

Not the engines' first choice, but absolutely the best in the human context. White is being drawn into taking ever greater risks to hold the position together. This isn't difficult for an engine, but for a human player in a World Championship, the correct decision is extremely difficult to find.

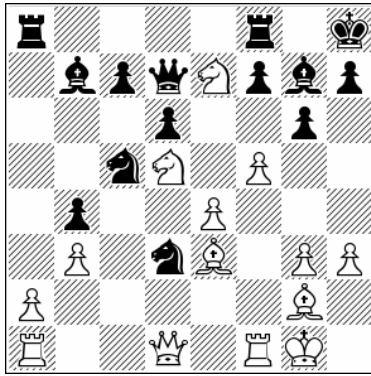
16...♗d7, preventing ♖c6, was what the engines wanted, securing a slight advantage for Black.

17.a3 b4 18.axb4 ♗xa1 19.♗xa1 ♖xb4 20.♗d1 ♗e8 21.♗c1 ♗e7 22.♗d2 h5 23.♗f2 h4 24.gxh4 ♖cd3 25.h5 ♖xf2 26.♗xf2 g5 27.♖ce2 gxf4 28.♖xf4 ♗f6 29.♖h1 ♖h7 30.♗g3 ♗g8 31.♖fe2 ♗h8 32.♗f3 ♗xf3 33.♖xf3 ♗b5 34.♖f4 ♖h6 35.♗c1 c6. Creative play from Black, but the game stayed within fairly normal paths; ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

17.♖d5?

Such a natural move, but a catastrophic mistake according to the engines. The knight looks excellently-placed on d5, but it is actually very short of squares. After Black's next move 17...♗b7, the threat of ...c6, trapping the knight on d5, will force White to weaken her position to provide escape routes.

17.♖c6 ♗d7 18.♖d5 ♗b7 19.♖ce7+ ♖h8 20.f5 was the only way to do things.



analysis diagram

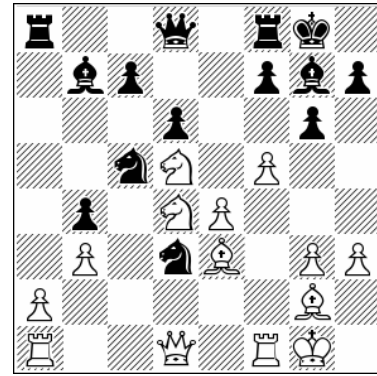
It feels like White is overstretching terribly: the knight on e7 is easily attacked, the d5-knight is still vulnerable to ...c6 and even the rook on a1 is hanging now. However, the disruption that White has caused in the black position – pushing the black king to h8 and nudging the black queen to d7 – has transformed White's push f5 into a dangerous attacking idea with a huge threat of f6. White's pieces are very riskily-placed but they are also causing problems for Black too.

20...♙e5 (getting in front of the f6-push) 21.♙h6 (with the huge threat of f6 or fxg6!; 21.f6 immediately is attractive, but the engines have a small tactic prepared: 21...♙xd5 22.exd5 ♙xf6 23.♙xf6 ♙xe7 24.♙d4 ♙g8 25.♙f3 ♙e5 26.♙e3 ♙cd7 27.♙d2 f5 28.♙xb4 f4 29.gxf4 ♙xf4 30.♙c3 ♙h4 31.♙xe5 ♙xe5 32.♙e1 ♙xe1+ 33.♙exel ♙b4 34.♙ec1 ♙a3 35.♙xc7 ♙bxb3 36.axb3 ♙xa1+ and all that sharp play leads to an equal endgame, ½-½ (Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 21...♙xd5 22.♙xd5 ♙fb8 23.fxg6 fxg6 24.♙f3 ♙g7 25.♙f6 ♙e5 26.♙xd7 ♙xf3+ 27.♙xf3 ♙d4+ 28.♙h1 ♙xd7 29.♙ad1 ♙e5 30.♙d2 and White had escaped to something inferior but holdable, ½-½ (37) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

17...♙b7

Threatening ...c6, trapping the knight and stopping ♙c6. The engines' evaluations dive to -5 for White!

18.f5



Freeing f4 for the knight.

18...♙xd5

Not the engine choice, but the most natural human choice and a very strong move too.

18...♙e8 19.f6 ♙xd5 20.fxg7 ♙xe4 21.♙f3 d5 22.♙h2 ♙d6 was the engine choice, with a very impressive central bind. It does, however, feel a little unnatural to weaken Black's kingside dark squares in this fashion and also a real shame to give up that towering King's Indian dark-squared bishop; 0-1 (56) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

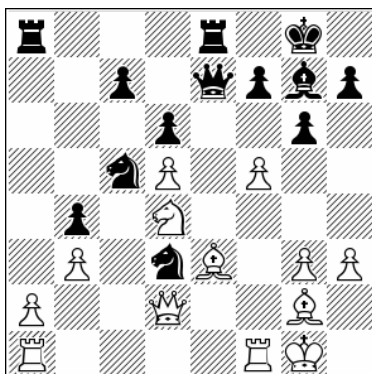
19.exd5 ♙e7

Black puts her finger on the most painful spot in White's position. The bishop on e3 holds up the knight on d4, but it has no pawn support and can't even be defended easily by the white pieces, due to the enormous octopus on d3.

20.♙d2

20.♙f2 (20.♙f3 ♙fe8) 20...♙xf2 21.♙xf2 and for the engines it was a case of picking whichever win they fancied: 21...♙e3 22.♙c2 ♙xg3 23.f6 ♙h6 24.♙f3 ♙h4 25.♙e1 ♙xe1+ 26.♙xe1 ♙xa2 27.♙xb4 ♙d2 28.♙xa2 ♙xe1 was one good way when White's f6-pawn will fall, leaving Black two pawns up with plenty of isolated white pawns to target, 0-1 (73) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

20...♙fe8

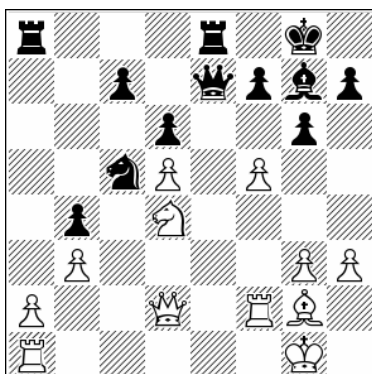


21.♙f2

It is quite unusual to see a white position fall apart so quickly, particularly from a solid opening like the g3 King's Indian. However, with sharp ideas like 10...♘g4 and 13...b5, Black has lured White into a situation where sharp and concrete play was essential to survive – and perhaps the safe move 10.♞f1 shows that White was not in that mood on this day.

21.f6 ♜xe3+ 22.♜xe3 ♞xe3 23.fxg7 ♞xg3 0-1 (52) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

21...♘xf2 22.♞xf2



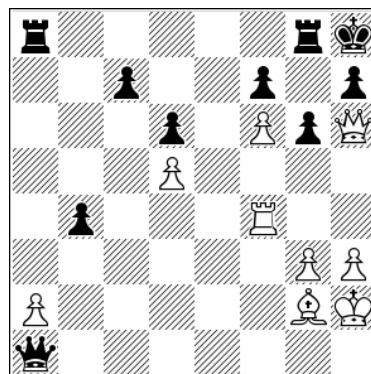
22...♘xb3

A really nice sacrifice, exploiting all sorts of tactical features in the position.

23.♘xb3 ♙xa1 24.♘xa1 ♜e1+ 25.♙h2

25.♜xe1 ♞xe1+ 26.♞f1 ♞xf1+ 27.♙xf1 ♞xa2 wins easily for Black.

25...♜xa1 26.f6 ♙h8 27.♜h6 ♞g8 28.♞f4



Just ♞h4 to play for checkmate, but...

28...g5 29.♞xb4

29.♙e4 ♞xa2+.

29...♞g6 30.♜h5 ♜xa2 31.♜f3 ♜a1

Simple play, picking up the dangerous but loose f6-pawn and ensuring an enormous material advantage.

32.♞b7 ♞xf6 0-1

Game 34 – King's Indian Defence

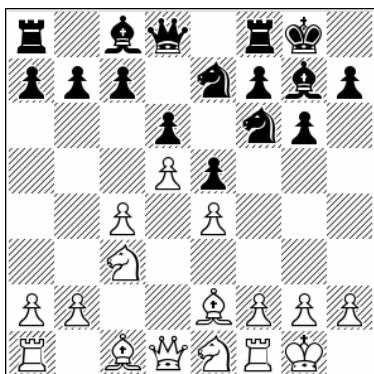
Viktor Korchnoi 2610

Loek van Wely 2655

Antwerp 1997 (6)

In among all the other titles Viktor Korchnoi accumulated in his stellar career, 'the best ever anti-King's Indian player' is probably another, albeit unofficial. He had unbounded contempt for the opening and saw it as a personal moral obligation to clobber anyone who played it against him. Over the years, he used many different systems against it, but in his final few decades, he settled on the main line Mar del Plata Variation, which he greatly enriched with new ideas. The modern engines also like this line with White, so we thought it would be interesting to subject some of Viktor's games in the line to engine scrutiny.

1.c4 ♘f6 2.d4 g6 3.♘c3 ♙g7 4.e4 d6 5.♙e2 0-0 6.♘f3 e5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.♘e1



This is the introduction to the most complex line of the King's Indian, the so-called Mar del Plata Variation. Effectively, it is a battle between the two opposing attacks – White intends to destroy Black on the queenside, while Black attempts to do the same to White's king. Of course, quite apart from the objective consideration of whose attack is quicker, there are obvious practical advantages in attacking the king – if Black makes an error, he loses a pawn or two on the queenside, whereas if White makes one, he is liable to get mated. This means also that Black's attack can even afford to be slower than White's, providing it eventually arrives. Such a situation, where the price of a mistake is rather higher for White than Black, is far from everyone's cup of tea, but Korchnoi revelled in such positions, firmly believing that he could fend off the attack, after which Black's own king, bereft of pawn cover, will come under attack. Over numerous games, few players ever beat him as Black – Kasparov, Nunn and a small handful of others. Meanwhile, the great Viktor won umpteen games, even against such fearsome attackers as Shirov, Judit Polgar and others.

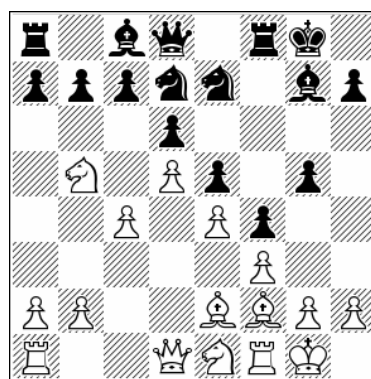
9...♖e8

9...♖e8 is an infrequent guest at the elite level nowadays. It was particularly popular in the 1980s and has an excellent pedigree, having been championed by Kasparov in two games in 1992. 9...♖d7 is the engine top move, but 9...♖e8 doesn't squeeze into the top-3, however long you let the engines analyse. The recent series by King's Indian expert Gawain Jones also recommended the more popular 9...♖d7, which is another good indication. White's play in the

Mar del Plata relies heavily on queenside expansion and the advance c4-c5 is an integral part of that. 9...♖d7 combines freeing Black's f-pawn to start Black's own kingside counterplay and pawn storm with extra protection of the c5-square. The only drawback is that the knight will most likely have to move at some stage to release the support of the light-squared bishop for the ...g6-g5-g4 push.

9...♖e8 doesn't place any obstacles in White's path but already protects the sensitive c7- and d6-squares in anticipation of cxd6 by White. There is a chance that Black could save a move in his attack as the c8-g4 diagonal is kept open – we see Van Wely attempting to exploit this by keeping the knight on e8 up to move 18 – but the downside is that White's c4-c5 push might require one move fewer preparation. Finally, 9...♖d7 and 9...♖e8 might transpose to each other if Black pursues lines with a quick ...♖f6. Korchnoi also met the main line 9...♖d7 on multiple occasions: 10.♕e3 (here too, this bishop move was his invariable choice) 10...f5 11.f3 f4 12.♕f2 g5.

A) Now 13.♖b5 was a creative Korchnoi idea,



analysis diagram

which brought him a convincing win against Hulak at the 1987 Interzonal: 13...a6 14.♖a7 (hoping to exchange off Black's light-squared bishop after which Black's kingside attack will falter) 14...♖xa7 15.♕xa7 b6 16.b4. An amazing concept from Viktor! White strains to break up Black's queenside and save the trapped bishop on a7. 16...♕b7 17.c5 dxc5 (17...bxc5 18.bxc5 ♖a8 19.♕b6 cxb6 20.c6) 18.♖c1 ♖c8 19.bxc5 ♕a8 (19...♖xc5 20.♖xc5) 20.c6 ♖f6 21.♕xb6 ♖xb6

22.♙xa6 and White soon won, 1-0 (35) Korchnoi-Hulak, Zagreb 1987;

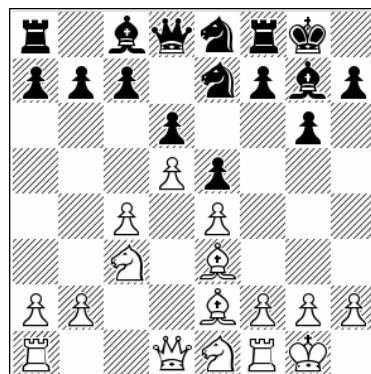
B) But he also tried other 13th moves. In a 2008 game against Cheparinov, Korchnoi tried the creative pawn sacrifice 13.♞c1 ♞f6 14.c5 ♜xc5 15.b4 ♜a6 16.♜b5. White's pawn sacrifice has opened the c-file, highlighting the sensitivity of the c7-square, and sidelined Black's knight on a6, removing one black piece from any future attack on White's king. This sacrifice is known in chess engine circles from game 98 of the Season 17 TCEC SuperFinal where Leela beat Stockfish in great style;

C) 13.a4 was another Korchnoi idea: 13...♜g6 and now:

C1) 14.♜d3 ♜f6 15.c5 h5 16.h3 ♞f7 17.c6 a5. An unexpected reaction that has entered into the lexicon of every Black Mar del Plata player. The a5-pawn takes away b4 from the white knight and seems to slow White's queenside counterplay significantly. However, the engines are not impressed! Not with White's h3 which increases the power of a subsequent ...g4 break, and not with 17...a5 which allows the light-squared bishop to be dragged away from the c8-h3 diagonal: 18.cxb7 ♙xb7 19.♙e1 is the strong engine preference, preparing ♜f2, restraining the ...g4 break (19.b4 ♙c8 20.bxa5 ♙h6 21.♜b4 g4 22.♜c6 ♞f8 23.fxg4 hxg4 24.hxg4 ♙g5 25.♙f3 ♞h6 26.♞e1 ♜h4 27.♙xh4 ♙xh4 28.g5 ♞xg5 29.♞e2 ♜g4 30.♞b1 ♙g3 31.♞d3 ♞h4 0-1, Korchnoi-Kasparov, Amsterdam 1991, was a rare Korchnoi defeat in this line) 19...♜h8 20.♜f2 c6 21.dxc6 ♙xc6 22.♙c4 with a pleasant advantage for White, ½-½ (67) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023;

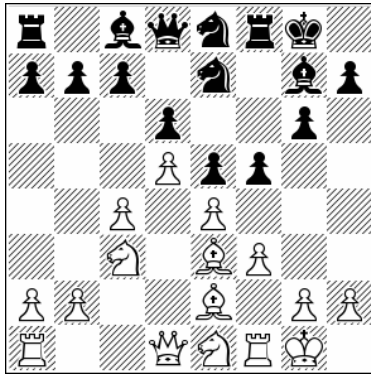
C2) 14.a5 (no doubt played with Kasparov's ...a5 (below) in mind!) 14...♞f7 15.b4 ♜f6 16.c5 h5 17.cxd6 cxd6 18.♜b5 g4 19.♜xa7 g3 20.♙b6. A valuable benefit to ♜xa7: an escape square for the dark-squared bishop is freed! 20...gxh2+ 21.♜h1 ♞e7 22.♜xc8 ♞xc8 23.♞c1 and White won easily in Korchnoi -Stanec, Ptuj 1995.

10.♙e3



The alternative plan is 10.♜d3 (looking to play f3 and ♜f2, holding back a future ...g6-g5-g4 from Black) but Korchnoi always preferred to ensure the bishop's development to the g1-a7 diagonal in the Mar del Plata. It's a very aggressive move. White's bishop will lose a tempo when attacked by ...f7-f5-f4, does little to hold back Black's ...g6-g5-g4 push (unlike a knight on f2) and is somewhat in the firing line from a future ...g4-g3 push. However, the bishop targets Black's queenside squares – supporting the c4-c5 break and the ♜b5 jump (as we saw in Korchnoi's games against 9...♜d7) – and is an integral part of White's attempts to storm the queenside. The Mar del Plata requires an ability to play on both sides of the board at once, judging when to prosecute the attack on your chosen wing, and when to make a defensive move to slow down the opponent's attack. Sometimes these two approaches collide, and we see an example in White's positional goal of exchanging off Black's light-squared bishop on c8. The exchange of a minor piece still on its original square can seem a modest reward for White's storming of the queenside, but without the light-squared bishop, Black's own attack falters. The advance ...g6-g5-g4 is harder to achieve and typical bishop sacrifices against White's h3-pawn are no longer possible. Note that the ♜c3-b5xa7 plan used extensively by Korchnoi against 9...♜d7 is less effective against 9...♜e8 as the light-squared bishop has a free square on d7 with which to sidestep the attack of the knight.

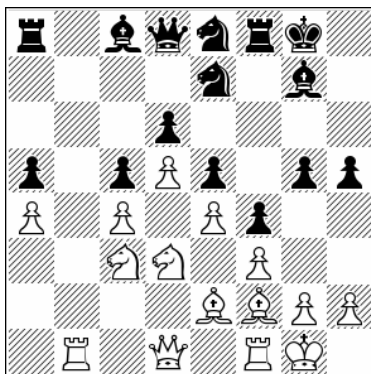
10...f5 11.f3



11...f4

This isn't the engines' favourite approach in the 9...♘e8 line; they prefer to hold back White's queenside play with ...a5 and ...b6 and keep the centre fluid, but it's the reason why we play the King's Indian as Black!

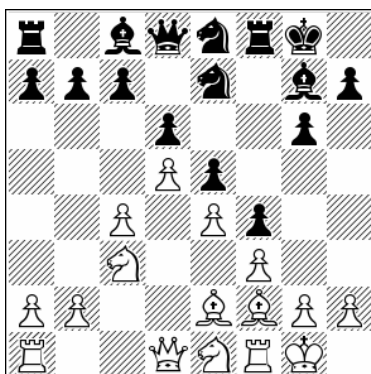
11...c5 attempts to slow down the white queenside play radically, and was a favourite treatment of Fischer's in such structures: 12.♘d3 f4 13.♙f2 h5 14.b4 b6 15.a4 a5 16.bxc5 bxc5 17.♞b1 g5



analysis diagram

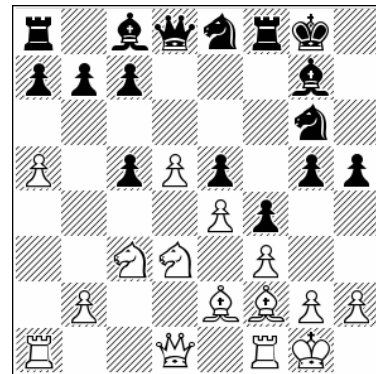
and now the thematic piece sacrifice 18.♘xc5! dxc5 19.♙xc5 already yields what the engine considers a decisive advantage: 1-0 (33) Korchnoi-Nijboer, Netherlands tt 1993.

12...g5



12...g5

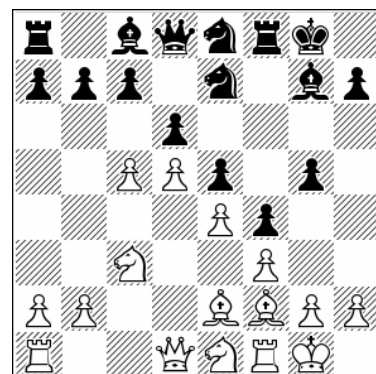
12...h5 is a move-order motivated by the fear that the text might permit 13.g4, trying to close the kingside: 13.c5 g5 14.a4 ♘g6 15.a5 (Korchnoi follows a similar strategy to that against Van Wely) 15...dxc5 was played in Korchnoi-Nemet, Switzerland tt 1994 (15...♙h6 16.♘b5 a6 17.♘a3 ♙h8 18.♘c4 was a typical manoeuvre played in Korchnoi-Shirov, Buenos Aires 1993) and now 16.♘d3



analysis diagram

is a neat idea, looking to recapture with the strongest piece on c5 (the knight attacks the sensitive e6-square) 16...b6 17.b4 cxb4 18.♘xb4 bxa5 19.♞xa5 ♘d6 20.♙h1 ♞f7 21.♘a4 ♞f6 22.♘c5 ♙f8. White has some initiative, but Black is solid, ½-½ (34) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023.

13.c5



Both sides have a lot of different set-ups and move-orders available while building their forces on their respective wings. Korchnoi's plan is to play the a- and c-pawns to a5 and c5 and then break open the black queenside with either a6 or c6. It's notable that he is saving a move on b4 which is not needed to achieve c4-c5 after 9...♘e8. Black often plays the rook to the g-file to support the ...g6-g5-g4 push, of which ...♞f8-f6-g6 is the most common option

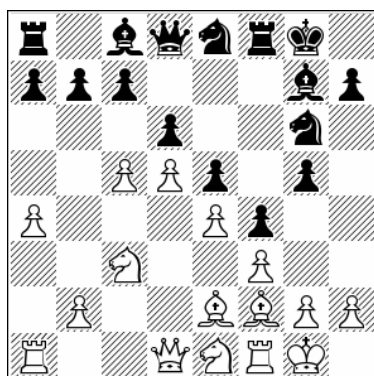
nowadays. Van Wely chooses instead ... Rf7 , ... Qf8 (to shore up d6) and ... Bg7 Bg6 is played to reinforce the protection of the e5-pawn which is no longer covered after ... Qf8 . At this stage, it's still a game of swings and roundabouts: every choice has plusses and minuses.

13... Bg6

Protects the e5-pawn and frees the black queen, but abandons control of the c6-square after which White is able to play c6, which is the engines' favourite approach to opening the queenside. c6 is a move that Korchnoi rarely played in this line (mostly preferring cxd6), the most famous example being a rare loss (against Kasparov in 1991).

14.a4

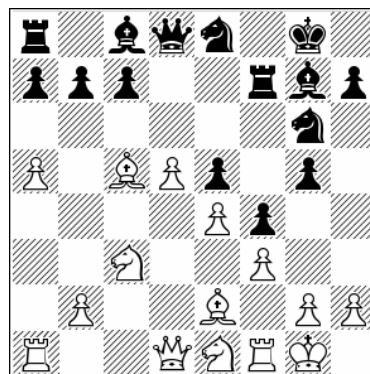
A few weeks earlier, the game Ivanchuk-Van Wely, Melody Amber 1997, had seen the less effective 14.cxd6, although in his notes to the present game, Korchnoi said that he was unaware of that game.



14... Rf7

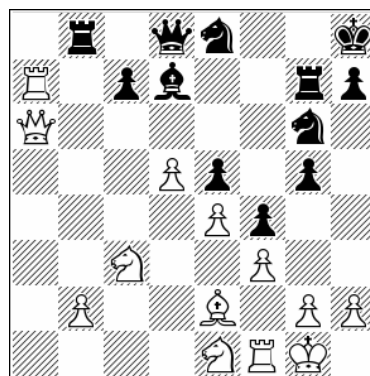
Van Wely has a specific set-up in mind and will pursue this consistently over the next 4-5 moves. The engines point out a number of interesting alternatives along the way.

14...dxc5 was the universal engine choice, breaking the barrier of white pawns before it hits the most sensitive points of Black's queenside (b7). Capturing on c5 weakens the e5-pawn and opens the c-file (creating a potential target on c7) but it frees a good blockading square for the black knight (making use of 9... De8): 15. Qxc5 (15. Dd3 is not the top engine move, but it's an ambitious attempt to capture with a better piece on c5 – a knight on c5 eyes the weak e6-square: 15...b6 16.b4) 15... Rf7 16.a5.



This position already received a high-level engine test at the TCEC between Leela and Stockfish.

A) 16... Qf6 (the bishop is transferred to the f8-a3 diagonal) 17. Wb3 Qe7 18. Qxe7 Wxe7 19.a6 bxa6 20. Qxa6 Qd7 21. Qe2 Ch8 22. Wb7 Wd8 23. Rxa7 Rb8 24. Wa6 Bg7 .



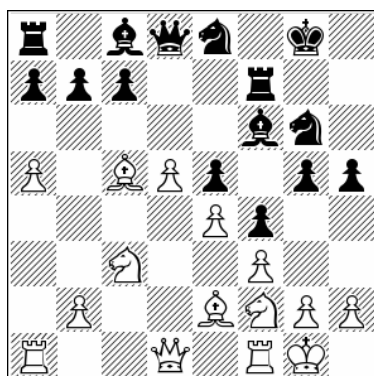
analysis diagram

I remember watching this game and feeling rather confused at how slow Black's play was. However, despite the won a7-pawn, the next breakthrough for White is not obvious. Black's counterplay with ...h5 and ...g4 is imminent and the exchange of dark-squared bishops is a definite achievement for Black.

Even the most modern Stockfish version kicks off optimistically but gradually subsides to just a slight advantage as it searches deeper: the Mar del Plata is tricky even for the engines! 25.b4 h5 26. Da4 Qc8 27. Wc6 Dd6 28. Wc2 g4 29. Dc5 We7 30. Qa6 Rxb4 31. Ra8 Bg8 32. Ded3 Qxa6 33. Rxcg8+ Cxcg8 34. Dxa6 Rc4 35. Wa2 h4 36. Dac5 h3 (that's a pretty successful kingside pawn storm!) 37.g3 gxf3 38. Rxf3 Rc3 39. Wb2 Rc4 40. Wa2 Rc3 41. Wb2 Rc4 42. Wa2 1/2-1/2 Stockfish-Lc0 TCEC 2020;

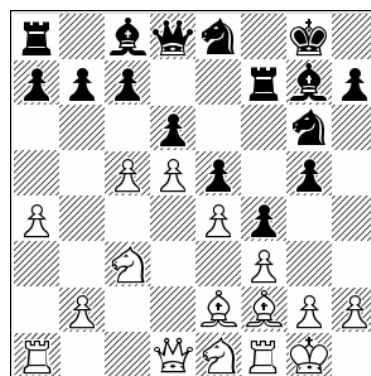
B) 16...h5 17. Dd3 (17.a6 was Leela's attempt in the reverse game at the TCEC. It wasn't particularly

successful: Black's queenside structure seemed more solid after the inclusion of a6 and ...b6 than before: 17...b6 18.♟b4 ♟d7 19.♟b5 g4 20.♞c1 ♟f8 21.♟xd7 ♞xd7 22.♟xf8 ♟xf8 23.♞d3 ♟g6 24.♞a4 ♞d8 25.♞c6 ♟d6 26.♞b5 ♞f8 27.♟h1 ♟e7 28.♞d7 ♟ef5 29.♞e6 ♞e8 30.♞xd6 ♟xd6 31.♞g6+ ♞g7 32.♞xh5 g3 33.♟g1 ♞h7 34.♞g5+ ♞g7 35.♞h4 ½-½ (46) Lc0-Stockfish TCEC 2020) 17...♟f6 18.♞f2.



analysis diagram

A typical manoeuvre, putting a brake on Black's counterplay with ...g4 while White prepares action on the queenside. This element of needing to act on both the attacking and the defensive wings at different times is what makes the Mar del Plata extremely difficult to handle. 18...♞g7 19.♞b3 ♟h8 20.h3 ♞d6 (occupying the blockading square freed by 14...dxc5) 21.♞fc1 g4 (Black launches its kingside play) 22.fxc4 ♟h4 23.♟f3 ♟d7 24.♟f1 ♟xf2 25.♟xf2 ♟g8 26.♟e2 hxc4 27.hxc4 ♟h8. Again something very typical of the Mar del Plata rhythm: a frenetic period of activity – often involving pawn sacrifices – followed by a period of manoeuvring to optimise the pieces for the new situation. The position remains in balance until the end: 28.♟d2 ♟hf7 29.♟c2 b6 30.♟xd6 ♟xd6 31.a6 ♟xg4 32.♞h1 ♟xf3 33.gxf3 ♞g2+ 34.♟b1 b5 35.♞d1 ♞g5 36.b3 b4 37.♟e2 ♞g6 38.♞d3 ♞f8 39.♞a2 ♞f7 40.♟c1 ♞g3 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

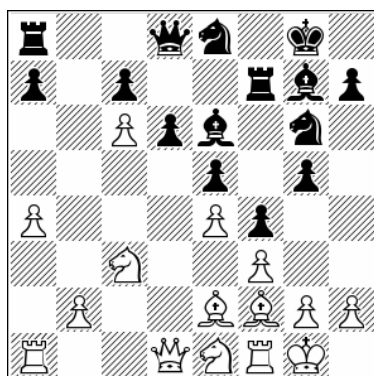


15.♞d3

Not the engines' favourite move but one of their top ones. Capturing on c5 is much less attractive for Black if the white knight recaptures rather than the dark-squared bishop.

Again, the engine likes the move 15.c6 best, assessing the position as much better for White. It is a slightly strange-looking idea at first, as we are used to seeing White aiming to open the c-file with cxd6 and then trying to break through to c7. But with the black knight on e8, this is less easy to achieve, whilst meeting c6 with b6, which appears to close the queenside to Black's advantage, actually just provides a ready target for a4-a5. Meanwhile, White keeps the knight on e1 for the defence of the kingside. A nice touch is that if Black allows cxb7, the light-squared bishop is distracted from its support of ...g4.

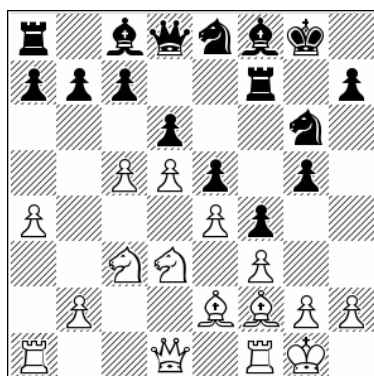
15...bxc6 (15...a5 is similar to Kasparov's idea against Korchnoi, but the engines are even less impressed with it here! 16.cxb7 ♟xb7 (the bishop is dragged to a poor diagonal, away from the support of ...g4) 17.♞d3 g4 (the engines are really desperate to get Black's counterplay going) 18.fxc4 ♟c8 19.b4 ♞g5 20.♟e1 axb4 21.♟f3 ♞xg4 22.♞b5 ♞h5 23.♞c2 ♟g4 24.a5 ♟f6 25.a6 (the a-pawn is a runner!) 25...b3 26.♞c6 ♞xa6 27.♞xa6 ♟xe4 28.♞a8+ ♟f8 29.♟xc7 ♟xf2 30.♞xf2 e4 31.♟e6 b2 32.♞b8 exf3 33.gxf3 ♟h3 34.♟f1 1-0 (52) Stockfish-Lc0, Classics 2023) 16.dxc6 ♟e6.



analysis diagram

The TCEC engines have fought out quite a few games in such structures where Black answers a quick c6 from White with ...bxc6. They always give White a high evaluation, but Black's results have been quite reasonable. For example, it's worth taking a look at game 32 of the Stockfish-Komodo Dragon matchup at the Season 22 TCEC SuperFinal. 17.a5 ♖f6 18.b4 h5 19.♗a6 g4 20.♗b7 g3 21.♗xa8 gxf2+ 22.♖xf2 ♔xa8 23.b5. Black has two bishops for rook and pawn but there is a storm brewing on the queenside while it isn't easy for Black to prosecute a kingside attack without a g-pawn! 23...♗f8 24.♖b2 ♔e8 25.♕h1 ♖e7 26.♖d3 h4 27.h3 ♖g7 28.♖b4 ♖c8 29.♖c1 ♔f7 30.♖bd5 ♖xd5 31.♖xd5 ♗xd5 32.♔xd5 ♔xd5 33.exd5 ♖e7 34.b6 axb6 35.axb6 cxb6 36.♖a2 ♖c7 37.♖b1 ♖f7 38.♖a8 ♖e7 39.♖xb6 ♖xd5 40.♖b7 ♗e7 41.♖a5 ♖e6 42.♖xd5 ♖xc6 43.♖db5 d5 ½-½ (76) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

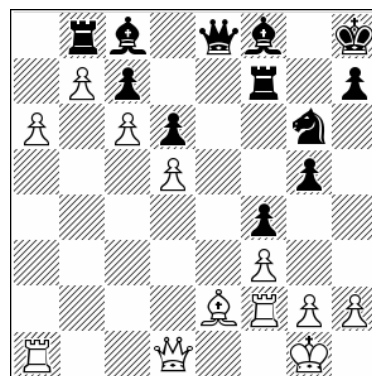
15...♗f8



16.a5

This sheds some of White's advantage. 16.c6 was once again the engine preference and I witnessed one amazing engine game that I have to share with you! 16...♖f6 (16...b6 17.a5 just gives White a target) 17.a5 bxc6 18.dxc6 ♕h8 19.b4 a6

20.♖c5 (a first surprise, exploiting the unprotected queen on d8) 20...♔e8 21.♖xa6 (a cool piece sacrifice, allowing the queenside pawns to advance unchecked with gain of tempi) 21...♗xa6 22.b5 ♗c8 23.♖d5 ♖xd5 24.exd5 e4 25.b6 e3 26.b7 (pieces don't matter when you've got pawns like this!) 26...exf2+ 27.♖xf2 ♖b8 28.a6



analysis diagram

28...♗g7 29.a7 ♖xb7 30.a8=♔ ♖b2 31.♖a4 and White finished off efficiently, 1-0 (52) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

16...♖g7

You can probably guess what the engines preferred as Black in this position! It's pretty clear that they really fear the structures after c6 and are looking to break the front of white pawns at every opportunity:

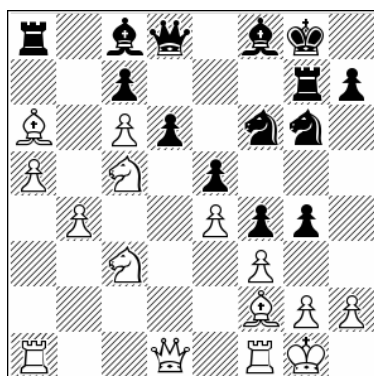
16...dxc5 17.♖xc5 ♗xc5 18.♗xc5 g4 (or 18...♖d6 with better chances of defending). Exchanging off the precious King's Indian dark-squared bishop makes any King's Indian player rather sad, but it's clear that White's queenside initiative is much less scary once the c5-pawn has been exchanged. Black's kingside pawn storm also doesn't particularly need the dark-squared bishop to succeed (the light-squared bishop is a different matter!). 19.fxg4 ♔g5 20.♔b3 (hitting b7 to dissuade Black from ...♗xg4) 20...b6 21.axb6 cxb6 22.♗b4 ♖g7 23.d6+ ♕h8 24.h3 h5 25.♖d5 hxg4 26.♗xg4 ♗xg4 27.hxg4 ♔xg4 28.♔f3 ♔xf3 29.gxf3 ♖e7+ 30.♕f2 ♖xd5 31.exd5 ♖f6 32.♗c3 ♖d7 ½-½ (35) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

17.a6?!

Again 17.c6 is the move the engines still want, to break the queenside open and once again it led to some spectacular piece sacrifices: 17...bxc6

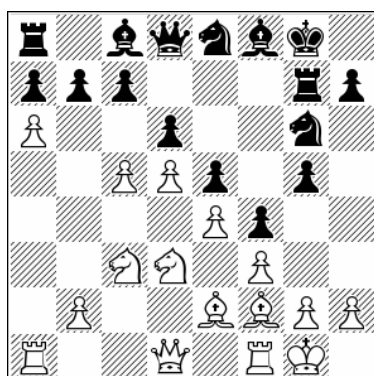
(17...♟f6 18.cxb7 ♙xb7 19.a6 ♙c8 20.♞b4 (targeting the a7-pawn with ♞c6 and ♞b5: Korchnoi would be proud!) 20...♞e7 21.♞b5 ♙d7 22.♞xa7 g4 23.♙h4 (hitting the loose knight on f6 to undermine the ...g4 push and sidestep ...g3) 23...gxf3 24.♙xf3 ♞g4 25.♞ac6 ♜e8 26.♙xg4 ♙xg4 27.♜c2 ♞c8 28.♞f2 1-0 (72) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022)

18.dxc6 ♟f6 19.b4 a6 20.♞c5 g4 21.♙xa6



analysis diagram

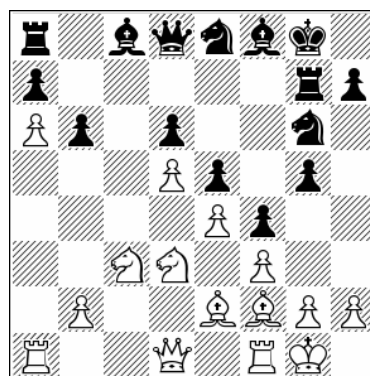
This is turning into a known theme for us by now! 21...♙xa6 22.♞xa6 ♜xa6 23.b5 gxf3 24.♜xf3 ♜a8 25.b6 cxb6 26.axb6 ♜c8 27.♞d5 ♜xc6 28.♜b3 ♟h8 29.♞xf6 ♜xf6 30.b7 1-0 (64) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.



17...bxa6

This looks very ugly, but it's important to remove any 'nails' that White tries to implant in Black's queenside structure. Capturing leaves holes, but Black's counterplay on the kingside is imminent so White won't have all the time in the world to exploit them.

Korchnoi himself was scathing about this move and Black's failure to play 17...b6. We asked the engines to take a look at this one: none of them wanted to! 18.cxb6 cxb6.



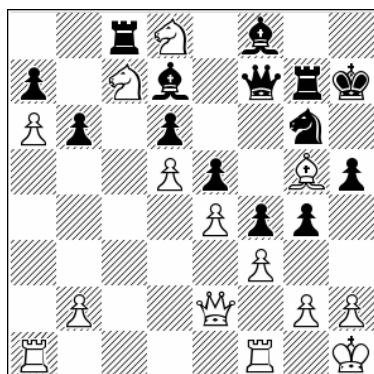
analysis diagram

This doesn't look so bad for Black at first sight. White has excellent entry points for the knights – c6 and b5 in particular – after which breakthrough sacrifices on the queenside are likely, but it also feels as if Black will (finally!) manage to get some kingside counterplay going too. The engine's first choice is 19.♟h1, making a useful defensive move on the kingside and keeping the knight within defensive range of the kingside for a little longer. After the immediate 19.♞b4, Korchnoi said that after many hours' analysis, he could not solve White's problems on the kingside and the lone knight on c6 lacks support. The engines' evaluation of 19.♞b4 doesn't particularly differ from 19.♟h1 and they find many interesting ways to break through on the queenside. Korchnoi's comment is a good reflection, however, of how complex these positions are and how difficult they were to analyse in the pre-computer age! It makes Korchnoi's successes and barrage of ideas and schemes in this line all the more impressive.

A) 19.♞b4 g4 (the engines think that Black can punt this sacrifice now though it still looks promising for White) 20.fxg4 ♜g5 21.♜e1 ♙xg4 22.♙xg4 ♜xg4 23.♜e2 ♜d7 24.♞c6 ♞e7 25.♟h1 ♞c7 26.♞fc1 ♟h8 27.♞c2 ♜e8 28.♞xa7 (this typical sacrifice once again) 28...♜xa7 29.♙xb6 ♜xa6 30.♜xa6 ♞xa6 31.♜xa6 ♜f7 32.♜d3 ♞g6 33.b4 ♜b7 34.♙a5 ♞h4 35.b5 1-0 (76) Dragon 3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023;

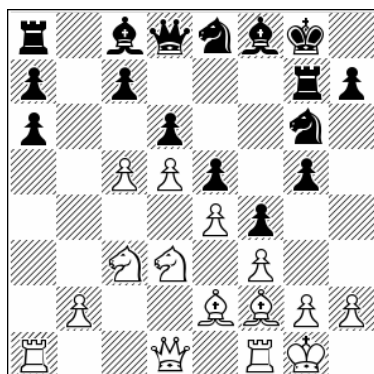
B) 19.♟h1 h5 (19...g4 20.fxg4 ♜g5 21.g3 (the knight's pressure on f4 and the king's safety on h1 turn this line into a clear white advantage) 21...fxg3 22.♙xg3 is winning for White) 20.♞b4 ♞c7 (20...♞h8 21.♙b5 g4 22.♙c6 ♜b8 23.♙xe8

♖xe8 24.♜c6 ♖a8 25.♙h4 ♜f7 26.♜b5 ♙h7 27.♜e2
♜g6 28.♙g5 ♙d7 29.♜c7 ♖c8 30.♜d8.



analysis diagram

Wonderful knight play! 30...♖xd8 31.♙xd8 ♙e7
32.♙xe7 ♜xe7 33.♖ac1 ♜f8 34.fxg4 hxg4 35.g3 ♜f7
36.♜d2 f3 37.h4 (excellent play from Stockfish to
create a safe kingside structure) 37...♙g7 38.♖f2
♙h7 39.♙g1 ♙g7 40.♜e3 ♙h7 41.♖fc2 ♜f6 42.♙f2.
The win is just a matter of time 1-0 (68)
Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 21.♜c6 ♜f6
22.♜a4! (a striking idea, intending ♜xa7)
22...♜h8 23.♜xa7 ♖xa7 24.♜xb6 ♙xa6 25.♜d7 ♜d8
26.♙xa7 ♙xe2 27.♜f6+ ♜xf6 28.♜xe2 g4 29.b4
♜g6 30.♙b6 ♜e8 31.♖a8 h4 32.b5 1-0 (70) Dragon
3.2-Stockfish, Classics 2023. The passed b-pawn
and White's active major pieces are worth much
more than Black's kingside attack.



18.♜b4

A really interesting moment. The engines
consider that enough damage has been caused
on the queenside so there is no point hitting
this damage with multiple pieces. The engines
want to seal the queenside and bring the knight
on d3 back to the defence of the kingside before
picking off the a-pawn with minimal effort. It's
once again one of those complex moments

where you need to balance the situation on both
flanks.

18.c6 ♙e7 19.♙h1 h5 20.♜e1 (protecting f3 and g2
and opening the attack of the bishop on the a6-
pawn) 20...g4 21.fxg4 hxg4 22.♙xg4 ♙h4 23.♙xc8
♜xc8 24.♙xh4 ♜xh4 (thanks to the knight on e1,
g2 is protected!) 25.♜e2 ♖b8 (the pressure against
b2 is quite irritating for White) 26.♖a3 ♜f6
27.♜d1 ♜g4 28.♜xg4 ♜xg4 29.g3 ♜g6 1/2-1/2 (38)
Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

18...♜f6

Not a bad move, though on the slow side.

18...g4 is what the engines want, hitting the
kingside while the white knight is away, chasing
doubled pawns on the other wing! We even saw
a win for Black in the engine games, which is
extremely unusual: 19.fxg4 ♜g5 20.♙h1 ♜f6
21.h3 ♖b8 (Stockfish doesn't forget to irritate
Dragon along the b-file before blowing up the
kingside) 22.♜d3 dxc5 23.b3 ♙h8 24.♖a2 h5
25.gxh5 ♖h7 26.♙f3 ♜xh5 27.♜e2 ♙d6 28.♜c2
♜g3+ 29.♙xg3 fxg3 30.♜g1 ♜f4 31.♜xf4 exf4
32.♖e1 ♙e5. Black is clearly on top and Dragon
didn't manage to hold out, 0-1 (93) Dragon 3.1-
Stockfish, Classics 2022.

19.♜c6 ♜d7

The engine second-guesses a few of both players'
moves in the next period of play but it doesn't
seem to make a great deal of difference to the
evaluation.

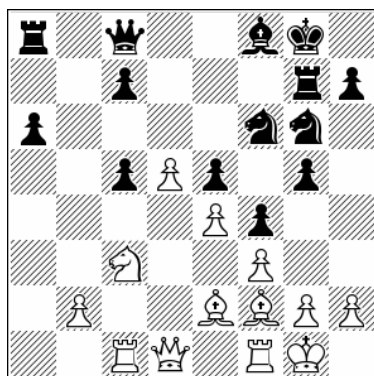
We have reached one of those positions where
the contours are fixed for a little while, and
inaccuracies are not immediately critical. Once
Black plays ...dxc5, the white queenside pawn
storm has been broken and White will need to
use pieces to press through the next wave of
attack. However, White's pieces are not yet in
prime attacking positions, so that will take some
time. In the meantime, Black is still brewing up
his kingside pawn storm.

20.♜xa7 dxc5 21.♜xc8

Korchnoi himself criticised this at the time and
recommended 21.♙xa6 instead, but 21...♙xa6
22.♖xa6 g4 gives Black counterplay: 23.♖xf6 gxf3
24.♜xf3 ♖xa7 25.♙h1 ♖a8 26.♜e2 ♙d6 27.♖f5 ♜e7

28.♖h5 ♖g4 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023.

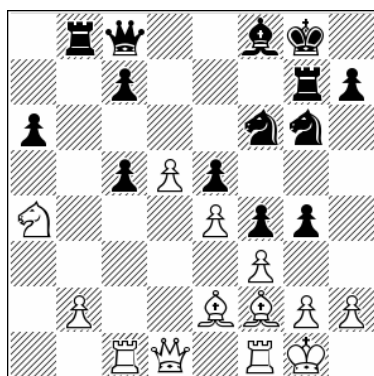
21...♖xc8 22.♖c1



22...h5?

This is where it starts to go wrong for Van Wely. In a way, the mistake is not surprising as his play up till now has been extremely measured. He devised a set-up to aim for from the beginning and aimed for it without getting distracted by other possible options (14...dxc5, for example). He might have opportunistically hit out with 18...g4 but once again chose a slow build-up, and he does the same again here. This time, however, speed is of the essence, because after several preparatory moves, White is finally just a few moves from landing a strong threat! In fact, 22...h5 is not only slow, it also gets severely in the way of some natural black kingside play: the h-file is blocked and the h5-square is no longer available to the black knight.

Once again the pressure against b2 is inconvenient for White: 22...♖b8 23.♖a4 g4 (...h5 is not necessary to force through ...g4 as e4 hangs once White plays ♖a4)

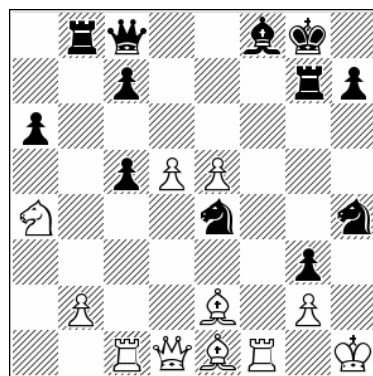


analysis diagram

A) 24.♖xc5 g3 25.♗e1 ♗xc5+ 26.♖xc5 ♖f8 (gaining a tempo on the rook on c5 en route to h6. Note

that the queen has access to the h-file because the black h-pawn is still on h7) 27.♖c2 gxh2+ 28.♗xh2 ♖h5 (bringing the knight to g3 – once again this would be impossible if the black h-pawn were on h5) 29.♖xc7 ♖xc7 30.♖xc7 ♖xb2 31.♗c4 ♖g3 32.♗g1 ♖h6 33.♖c8+ ♗g7 34.♖d7+ ♗h8 35.♖e8+ ♗g7 36.♖d7+ ½-½ (36) Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023;

B) 24.♗h1 led to some fireworks: 24...g3 25.♗e1 ♖h4 26.hxg3 fxg3 27.f4 ♖xe4 28.fxe5.

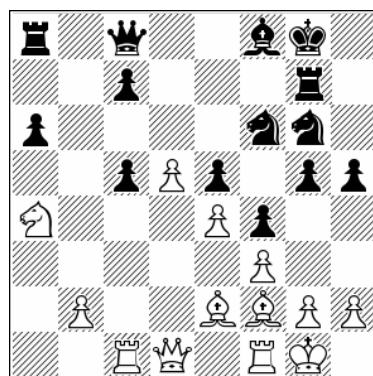


analysis diagram

It would be nice if 28...♖h3+ might work, but that only happens in a better world than this one! 28...♖xg2 29.♗xg2 ♖f2 (a lovely tactic, hitting the queen and threatening ...♖h3+) 30.♗xf2 gxf2+ 31.♗xf2 ♖h3 32.♗e1 ♖h4+ 33.♗d2 ♖d4+ 34.♗e1 ♖h4+ 35.♗d2 ♖d4+ 36.♗e1 ♖h4+ ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.2, Classics 2023;

C 24.fxg4 is the engines' favourite move: 24...♖xe4 25.♗e1 ♗h8 26.♖c4 ♖d6 27.♖xc5 ♖b5 28.♖c4 ♖d4 29.♗f2 ♖xe2+ 30.♖xe2 ♗d6 31.♖c5 ♖e7 32.h3 ♖xd5 33.♖e4 ♖b7 ½-½ (44) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

23.♖a4



23...g4

Now this attack is too slow – mainly because the h5-pawn interferes with Black's most dangerous

attacking scheme – and that means that Black is suddenly in huge trouble. He had to batten down the hatches with, for example, 23...♙d6 24.♜xc5 ♜f8. This covers the e6-square to prevent the white knight from entering while keeping the dark-squared bishop as an anchor for the crucial c7- and e5-pawns. White is clearly better but the engines still managed to struggle to a draw.

25.♞h1 a5 26.♙e1 ♜d6d7 27.♜d3 ♞e8 28.♞a1 g4 29.♞xa5 ♞xa5 30.♙xa5 ♞g6 31.♙e1 ♜h7 32.♙h4 ♜g5 33.♞g1 ♜c5 34.♜e1 ♙e7 35.♞c2 ♞b6 36.♞c4 ♜h8 37.♙xg5 ♞xg5 38.b4 ♜d7 39.♜d3 ♞g6 40.♞c1 ♞e3 41.fxg4 f3 42.♙xf3 hxg4 43.♞e1 ♞h6 44.d6 ♙xd6 45.♙d1 ♞d2. Consistent awkwardness from Black secured a draw in 255(!) moves, ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

24.♜xc5 g3

Korchnoi castigated this as the decisive mistake, although the engine thinks Black has been busted for some time. 24...♙xc5 25.♞xc5 h4 (if instead 25...g3, then simply 26.♙e1 is winning for White) 26.♞c6 was his recommendation, ‘and White is, of course, on top’ and the engine most certainly agrees.

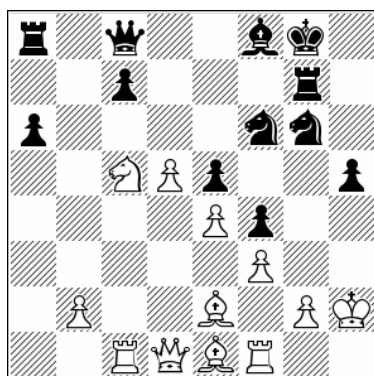
25.♙e1

25.hxg3 fxg3 26.♙xg3 was also possible but this is a safe way to play for White.

25...gxh2+

25...♜h4 26.hxg3 fxg3 (26...♙xc5+ 27.♞xc5 fxg3 28.d6 wins) 27.♜e6 wins.

26.♞xh2

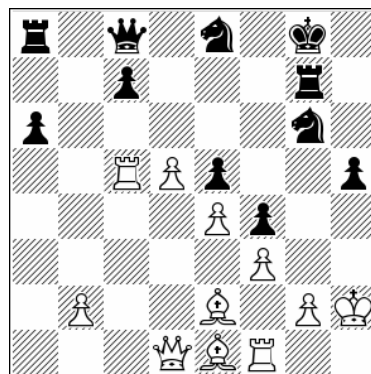


Again, the black position is a wreck. With his light-squared bishop gone, the squares e6 and c6 are gaping wounds and his attack on the white king has run out of steam. The rest is a mopping-up exercise for White.

26...♙xc5

Necessary to stop the knight entering into e6, but this exchange leaves a lot of weak dark squares in Black's position, not least the c7-pawn.

27.♞xc5 ♜e8



28.♞h1!

Targeting the weakness on h5 and underlining who is now going to be attacking whom on the kingside. I (Steve) was present at the tournament and saw the game being played, and I can testify to the relish with which Korchnoi played the rest of the game!

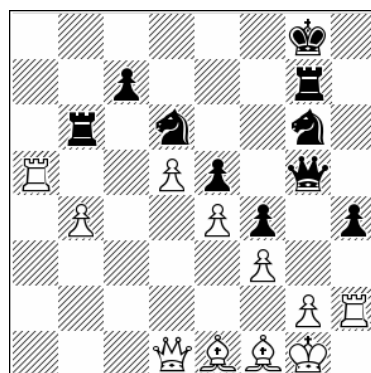
28...♞d8 29.♞g1

A very elegant redeployment by Viktor. Now it's White attacking along the h-file!

29...♞g5 30.♞h2 ♞b8 31.b4

Everything is safe in White's position and it's time to start harvesting loose and isolated pawns.

31...♞b6 32.♞a5 h4 33.♙xa6 ♜d6 34.♙f1

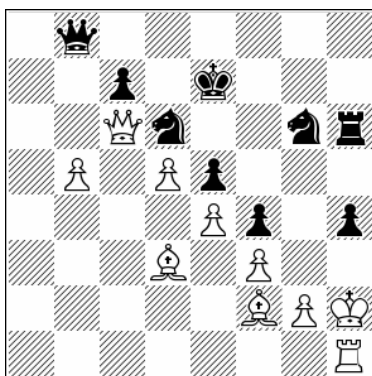


Van Wely struggles on, rather in the manner of the Monty Python knight in *The Holy Grail*, defiantly shouting ‘Tis but a flesh wound!’ every time another limb is hacked off, but he could have resigned with a clear conscience.

**34...♖b8 35.♔c2 ♕e7 36.♔c6 ♜h7 37.♜a7 ♕d8
38.b5**

The position seems to play itself. ♖a5 or ♖f2 is coming next.

38...♖b6 39.♞a8 ♜b8 40.♞xb8 ♞xb8 41.♙f2 ♙f8
42.♞h1 ♙e7 43.♙c5 ♜f8 44.♙d3 ♜h6 45.♙f2
♜g6 46.♙h2



The attack along the h-file is not needed any more: the rook will invade along the a-file.

46...♔d8

46...h3 47.♖c1 hxg2+ 48.♔xg2 ♕d8 49.b6 finishes the job.

47.b6 e7 48.c3 1-0

Van Wely had seen enough: his position is collapsing.

48...♞f7 49.bxc7+ ♔xc7 50.♔a3.

Game 35 – Queen’s Indian Defence

Lajos Portisch 2595

Maia Chiburdanidze 2525

Roquebrune Cancan Veterans-Women 1998

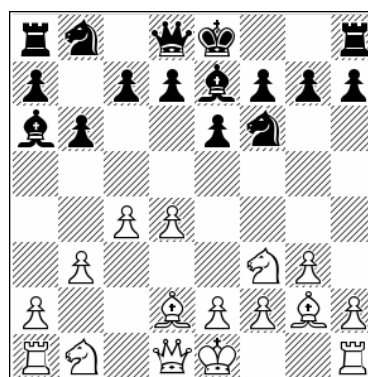
I (Matthew) have a vivid memory of Maia Chiburdanidze from the 1985 Lloyds Bank Masters where I was playing my first ever international tournament at the age of 11. My own games were not going well, so I sought distraction in the games of the top players. Chiburdanidze was winning lots of games and she had a real aura about her. I was told that she had needed dental surgery during the tournament and simply kept on playing through the pain! Women's World Champion already at the age of 17, she has been an extremely strong grandmaster throughout her career. There were many fine games to choose from, but this complicated Queen's Indian win against Lajos

Portisch was especially impressive. I have always found the Queen's Indian structures with hanging pawns attacked by a fianchettoed white bishop on g2 to be problematic to handle, and this comes close to being a model game for the Black side.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.g3 ♕a6 5.b3 ♖b4+ 6.♔d2 ♗e7

This strange manoeuvre has become commonplace black strategy in Queen's Indians and Catalans. Having played b3, White's most harmonious queenside development is to place the dark-squared bishop on b2 with the white knight on d2. 5...♗b4+ drags White's bishop to d2 – away from b2 –, letting the bishop block the knight's development to d2. Black reasons that the white bishop doesn't have a long-term future on d2 and that White will move it once more to place it on a more active square, such as f4 or g5. White's bishop will therefore have reached f4 (or g5) in two moves, counterbalancing Black's lost tempo with ...♗b4+–e7! Along the way, White has been prevented from playing the bishop to b2.

7. ♘g2

7...b7

7...c6 is the modern treatment, intending ...d5, hitting the c4-pawn, followed by ...♘bd7, ...♞c8 and eventually ...c5. This has proved very resilient for Black.

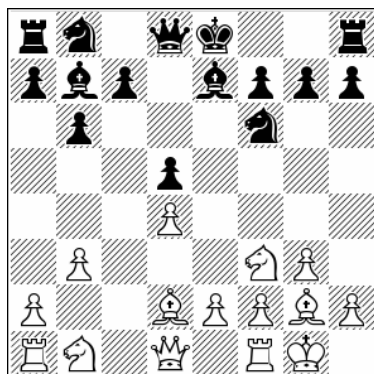
7...♗b7 is a more traditional approach, redeploying the bishop to the long diagonal after first teasing out a slight queenside weakness with b3. Apart from weakening White's queenside dark squares, 5.b3 also stops White from playing the queen to b3 or a4 which

sometimes generates annoying pressure against the black queenside.

8.0-0 d5

The engines preferred to castle and wait one move with ...d5. Chiburidanidze's inaccurate move-order gives White an opportunity to make something of the free bishop on d2!

9.cxd5 exd5



10.♖c3

10.b4 was the engine choice, using the bishop on d2 to support b4, clamping down on both Black's typical central break ...c5 and his queenside expansion with ...a5. It wasn't a winning advantage by any means, but it was definitely a bigger struggle for Black than the game!

10...c6 11.♖b3 0-0 12.♞d1 ♖bd7 13.a4 ♞e8 14.♗c3 h6 15.a5 bxa5 16.♞xa5 ♗c8 17.♗f4 ♗f8 18.♞a2 g5 19.♗d2 ♞b8 20.♞xa7 ♞xb4 21.♞c2 ♞b6 22.♞a8 ♞b2 23.♞d3 c5 24.♞xc8 ♞xc8 25.♗a4 ♞xd2 26.♗xd2 ♞e6 27.♗xc5 ♗xc5 28.♞c1 ♞c7 29.dxc5 ♞xc5 30.♞e1 ♗e5 31.♞d4 ♞c2 32.♗f1 ♗c4 33.h3 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022. The engines brought the position back to equality, but it wasn't easy.

10...0-0 11.♞c2

Portisch has in mind a slower plan to regroup the dark-squared bishop to b2 and make Black regret giving White 5.b3 for free. The engines generally preferred more aggressive plans where the bishop moves to f4. Dragon's idea of ♗f3-h4-f5 together with f3 and e4 is particularly attractive.

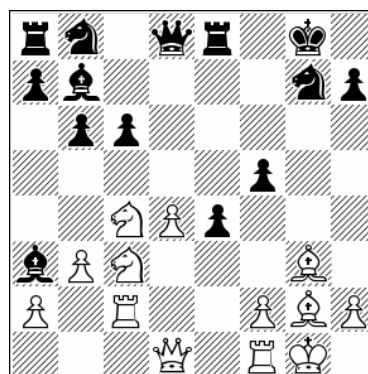
11.♞c1 ♗bd7

(11...♞e8 12.♗f4 ♗h5 13.e3 and now:

A) 13...♗xf4 14.exf4 c6 15.h4 ♗d7 16.♗e5 ♗f6 17.♞c2 ♗d6 18.♞d3 ♞c8 19.♞fc1 ♗a3 20.♞b1 ♞e7 led

to a slightly better position where White had great difficulties making progress! The weakness of the queenside dark squares (caused by tempting out 5.b3 with 4...♗a6) hampers White's desire to put pressure on c6 or advance the queenside pawns ½-½ (36) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022;

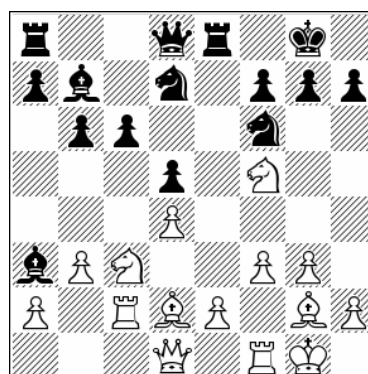
B) 13...c6 14.♗e5 g6 15.e4 f6 16.g4 ♗g7 17.♗g3 ♗a3 18.♞c2 dxe4 19.♗d2 f5 20.gxf5 gxf5 21.♗c4



analysis diagram

was a sharp irrational struggle. One would expect White to be doing very well, but Dragon managed to prevent the position from opening up too much, while completing development. 21...♗f8 22.f3 e3 23.f4 ♗d7 24.♞f3 b5 25.♗xe3 ♗h8 26.♗f2 ♗f6 27.♞h3 ♞d7 28.d5 ♞ac8 29.dxc6 ♗xc6 30.♗cd5 ♗xd5 31.♞xc8 ♞xc8 32.♗xd5 ♗g4 33.♗d4 ♗c5 34.♞c3 ♞e1+ 35.♞xe1 ♗xd4+ 36.♗h1 ♗f2+ 37.♞xf2 (½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 37...♞xc3 38.♗xc3 ♗xf2 39.♗xb5 ♗e6 will hold for Black!)

12.♗h4 ♞e8 13.♗f5 ♗a3 14.♞c2 c6 15.f3.



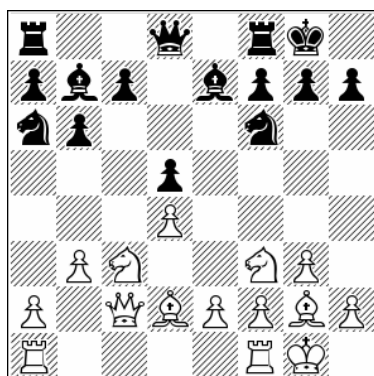
analysis diagram

An unusual but interesting and aggressive plan. A couple of sleepy moves and e2-e4-e5 will set Black real problems.

(15.♖e1 ♗f8 16.e4 was another sharp Dragon idea but one that Stockfish dealt with quite easily: 16...♟xe4 17.♟xe4 dxe4 18.♞xe4 ♟f6 19.♗g5 ♞xe4 20.♗xe4 h6 21.♗xf6 ♞xf6 22.♞f3 ♞d8 23.♝g2 ♞e6 24.♗xc6 ♗c8 25.♗e4 g6 26.d5 ♞e5 27.♟e3 ♞e8 28.♗d3 ♗d7 29.♞e2 ♞d4 ½-½ (31) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022. White's extra pawn is worth little against Black's two bishops)

15...♗c8. Stockfish looks to fight at once against the advanced knight on f5, and the complications become unfathomable: 16.♟b1 (hitting the bishop on a3 and uncovering an attack against the loose c6-pawn!) 16...♗f8 17.♞xc6 ♟c5 18.g4 ♟e6 19.♞c1 b5. It looks like a clear extra pawn, but Dragon feels it has to take action to free its position. Black survives the complications... just! 20.e4 dxe4 21.fxe4 ♟xd4 22.♗e3 ♟xf5 23.♞xd8 ♞xd8 24.exf5 ♟d5 25.♗f2 ♗b7 26.♞fd1 ♗e7 27.h4 h6 28.♞d2 ♞d7 and Stockfish managed to equalise, ½-½ (31) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

11...♟a6



In the ensuing period, the engines don't necessarily choose the game move-order but nor do they criticise it. In fact, Chiburdanidze navigates to a piece configuration which enjoys the full approval of the engines. The knight looks offside on a6, but as well as threatening an incidentally annoying ...♟b4, the knight will most probably end up on the strong central square e6 after ...c6 or ...c5 and ...♟c7. This is in fact a typical knight manoeuvre in such structures.

12.♞ad1

Not the most intuitive spot for the queen's rook with a half-open c-file to play with, but Portisch has his regrouping in mind.

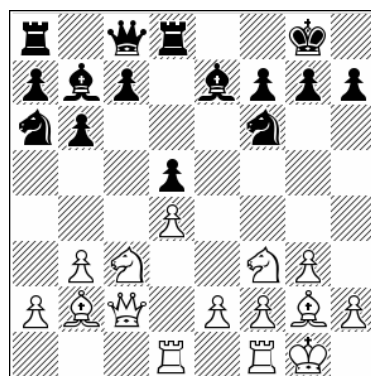
12...♞c8

Since White's queen's rook has moved opposite to the black queen, the black queen moves opposite to the white queen. This is another standard idea in such structures and can be seen in some Botvinnik games from the 1930s. Often, it is the queen, rather than the knight, which ends up on e6.

13.♗c1

And here we have the reason for 12.♞ad1: Portisch slips the bishop behind the queen round to b2.

13...♞d8 14.♗b2



14...h6

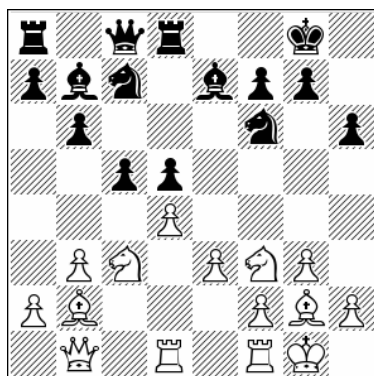
Throughout the game, Chiburdanidze finds an excellent blend of pawn structure and piece set-up, of which the engines thoroughly approve. 14...h6 forestalls an attack against the h7-pawn with ♟g5 which may prove dangerous once Black plays ...c5 as the queen on c2 and bishop on b2 are pointing towards the black kingside. Playing ...h6 always makes one nervous of ♟f3-h4-f5 and for that reason I (Matthew) intuitively prefer 14...g6 in such situations but the engines dislike that intensely!

14...g6 15.e3 c5 16.♞b1 ♗f8 17.h4 ♗g7 18.♟e2 c4 19.♟e5 b5 20.bxc4 dxc4 21.e4 ♞b8 22.♗a1 ♞e8 23.f3 looked promising for White although Stockfish was unable to make much progress from here, ½-½ (42) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

15.♞b1

15.♟h4 ♞e6 16.♟f5 ♗f8 17.♗h3 ♟h8. Black sidesteps all of the tactics and White is left with nothing better than retreat: 18.♗g2 c5 19.♞b1 ♟g8 20.♗h3 ♞c6 21.♗g2 ♞e6 22.♗h3 ♟h8 23.♞fe1 ♟c7 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

15...c5 16.e3 ♖c7

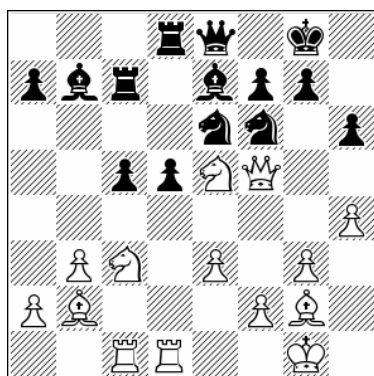


Chiburdanidze redeploys the knight from a6 to e6 from where it supports the c5-pawn, puts pressure on White's d4-pawn and also idly thinks of targeting White's kingside light squares with ...♗g5.

17.♞c1 ♜d7

The queen continues to weave and dodge the attentions of White's rooks! This time, Black's queen is heading to e8, which is a surprisingly good square, away from the c- and d-files where White's rooks are lurking, giving some protection to the black kingside (for example protecting f7) and flexible enough to be activated in various directions. Once again, Chiburdanidze is redeploying her pieces brilliantly.

Here, 17...♗e6 was the engines' preferred move-order, but it would probably have transposed to the game: 18.♞fd1 ♜d7 19.h4 ♜e8 20.♜f5 ♞ac8 21.dxc5 bxc5 22.♗e5 ♞c7.



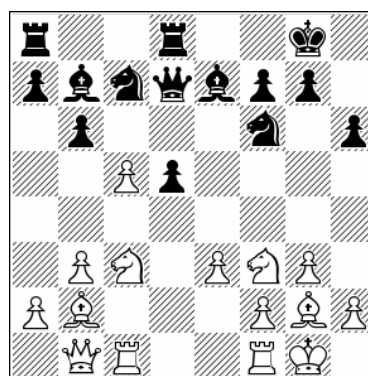
analysis diagram

Black's position looks under a fair amount of pressure, which is why I (Matthew) always have severe reservations about playing such positions. In particular, not being able to drive the white queen away from f5 with ...g6 (due to ♗xg6,

when the knight on e6 hangs) is the type of thing that raises my irritation level! However, all of Black's key points are protected and after defending the bishop on b7, Black is ready to break in the centre with ...d4.

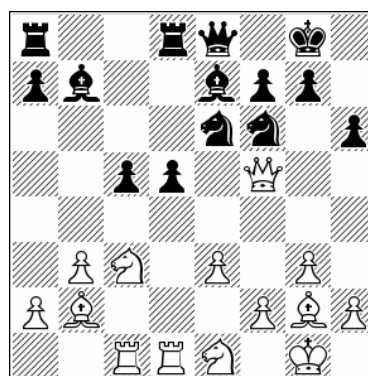
23.♙a1 ♙f8 24.♞d3 d4 25.♙xb7 ♞xb7 26.♗e4 ♗xe4 27.♜xe4 was agreed drawn in Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022. It's clear that Black has counterplay, but as always, the specific tactical reasons why it works need some explanation for us mortals: 27...♞b6 28.exd4 cxd4 29.♙xd4 ♞bd6 30.♞cd1 f5 31.♜e3 f4 32.gxf4 ♞xd4 33.♞xd4 ♞xd4 34.♞xd4 ♙c5 35.♗f3 ♜g6+ makes good use of the opened white kingside! 36.♙f1 ♜b1+ 37.♗g2 ♜g6+ with a perpetual likely.

18.dxc5



White needs to play this move at some stage to make progress. It relinquishes the e5-outpost for the white knight but opens a number of new channels of attack, which may prove promising for White. The long diagonal is opened, finally activating White's dark-squared bishop on b2, while Black's c5- and d5-pawns now have to rely entirely on the support of the black pieces and can be attacked by white rooks on c1 and d1.

18...bxc5 19.♞fd1 ♗e6 20.♜f5 ♜e8 21.♗e1



Portisch eschews the more aggressive ♖e5, perhaps wanting to leave the a1-h8 diagonal open for the bishop on b2 after ♖e2. Chiburdanidze takes the opportunity (impossible after ♖e5) to chase away the queen with ...g6. However, I imagine that Portisch was not unhappy to see this as he redeployed his queen to a1, looking to exploit Black's softer a1-h8 diagonal!

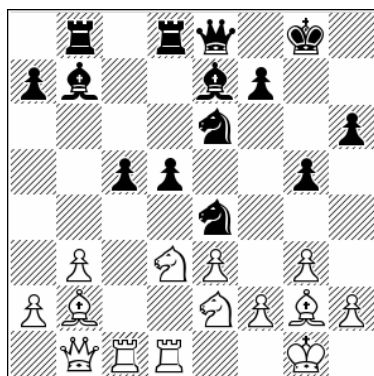
21...g6 22.♖b1 ♖ab8

Protecting the bishop on b7 to prepare the central break ...d4, against which Portisch takes immediate measures.

23.♗e2 ♗e4

At the cost of several tempi and his central occupation, Portisch is teasing out small weaknesses from Black's position, hoping to create a new entry channel to exploit. One has to love Chiburdanidze's play from now on – she calls White's bluff and starts grabbing vast amounts of territory. It may not be the very best objectively, but it puts enormous pressure on her opponent. From a patient, probing game, Portisch is soon forced to take concrete measures to deal with a gathering storm.

24.♗d3 g5

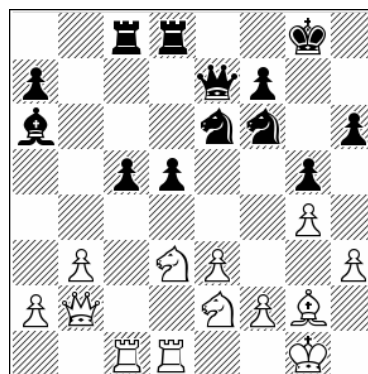


A really bold move, taking away f4 from the white knights while also dropping in the future threat of ...g4 followed by ...♗e6-g5-f3.

25.♖a1

It feels thematic – very Hypermodern! – to take control of a diagonal you have spent quite some effort weakening, but the engines hate it! As soon as 24...g5 is played, the engines want to fight for control of the kingside light squares and the f5-square in particular and the white queen needs to stay on a light square to help.

A) 25.♗e5 ♖bc8 26.♗a1 ♗a6 27.h3 ♗f6 28.♗xf6 ♗xf6 29.♖b2 ♖e7 30.g4



analysis diagram

was Stockfish's approach. Stockfish got pretty far with its knights but Dragon survived by creating its own dangerous outposts.

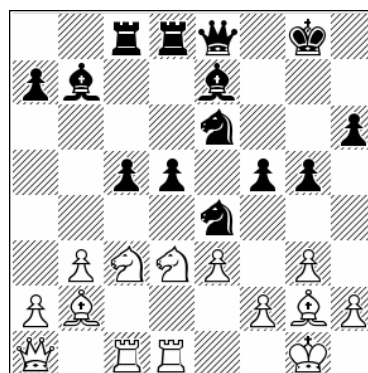
30...d4 31.♗g3 ♗d5 32.♗e5 ♖d6 33.♗c4 ♖c7 34.♗f5 ♗c3 35.♖e1 ♗xc4 36.bxc4 ♗g7 37.♗xh6+ ♗h7 38.♗f5 ♗xf5 39.♖c2 ♖b6 40.♖xf5+ ♖g6 41.♖xg6+ ♗xg6 and Black's strong knight compensated for White's extra pawn ½-½ (45) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

B) Instead, 25.♖c2 h5 26.h3 ♖bc8 27.♗e5 ♗f8 28.g4 was Dragon's approach.

Black needs some care to keep the kingside together as f3 and ♗g3 is a nasty threat.

28...h4 (keeping control of g3!) 29.♗c3 ♗xc3 30.♗xc3 ♖d6 31.♖f5 ♗g7 32.♖b1 ♗e6 33.♗a1 ♗g7 34.♖f5 ♖e7 35.♗c3 ♖b8 36.b4 c4 37.♗f1 ♖bd8 ½-½ (42) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

25...♖bc8 26.♗c3 f5



Black continues to swallow territory in the centre and on the kingside. The more space Black gains, the more dangerous the effect of a central break such as ...d4 or ...c4, as White's knights may end up with nowhere to run.

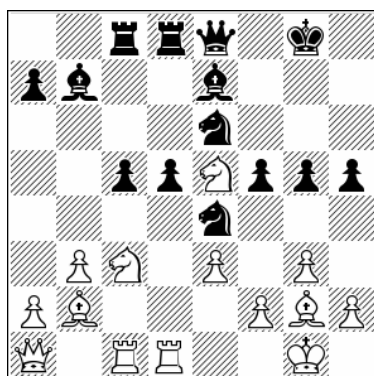
27.♗e5

This is not bad, but the engines were looking for bolder measures to break Black's attacking front. Anticipation of passivity is really a tremendous strength of the top modern engines and they are expert in identifying measures to create counterplay before it is too late.

A) 27.♟b1 ♕f8 28.g4 was Stockfish's favourite, changing the plan back to exploiting Black's loose kingside light squares. 28...♘g7 29.♞e2 fxe4 30.♞g3 ♘xg3 31.hxg3 ♖g6 32.♞e5 ♟xb1 led to an approximately equal endgame which was agreed drawn in this position Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022. White can pile up against the d5-pawn to prevent Black from generating any activity;

B) 27.b4 cxb4 28.♞xe4 dxe4 29.♞xc8 ♕xc8 30.♞e5 ♞c5 31.♞xd8 ♟xd8 32.♞c6 was Dragon's idea, sacrificing a pawn to gain the two bishops in a more open position. The engines agreed to a draw in this position Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

27...h5



Another lovely move, clamping down on White's g4-break. Soon the knight on e5 may be targeted by ...♕f6 or ...♕d6. The growing kingside storm elicits a panicky reaction from Portisch, after which White is fighting for his life.

28.f3

The engines' evaluations drop significantly when this is played. Strangely enough, the position is not as winning for Black as those early evaluations might make you suspect: the calculating monsters start to get to grips on tenuous saving resources and just about manage to keep things afloat. However, it's clear that we're heading to a 'don't try this at home' part of the game! 28.f3 rids White of the strong black

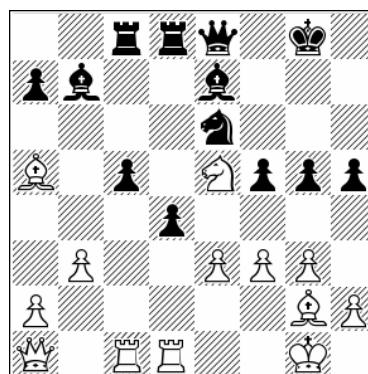
knight on e4 but blocks the light-squared bishop on g2 and weakens the kingside dark squares – the a7-g1 diagonal and the e3-pawn and in particular – at a moment when the white knight on e5 is hanging somewhat loose and exposed. It's no surprise that the ...d4 central break poses enormous problems for White.

28.g4 anyway(!) was very nice Dragon idea. Again the idea is to destabilise Black's position and prise away some of Black's central control without rendering its own pieces passive. 28...♞xc3 (28...hxe4 29.♞xe4 dxe4 30.♕f1! is the idea, redeploying the bishop to the a2-g8 diagonal) 29.♕xc3 hxe4 30.♟b1 ♞g7 31.b4 cxb4 32.♕xb4 ♞xc1 33.♞xc1. Black's attacking front has been broken at the cost of a pawn and it will be hard for Black to achieve much with a series of weak squares to cover ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

28...♞xc3 29.♕xc3

29.♞xc3 ♕f6 30.♞c2 d4 31.♞c4 h4 exploited the looseness of the knight on e5, the ability to play ...d4 (thanks to the blocked-in light-squared bishop on g2) and the attacking potential of Black's space-gaining kingside pawns. 32.♞e1 ♟g6 33.♟b1 hxe4 34.hxe4 ♞c7 35.e4 fxe4 36.♞f2 ♟h6 37.fxe4 ♞h7 38.♞f1 g4, preparing ...♞e6-g5-h3/f3, was very powerful for Black, 0-1 (81) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

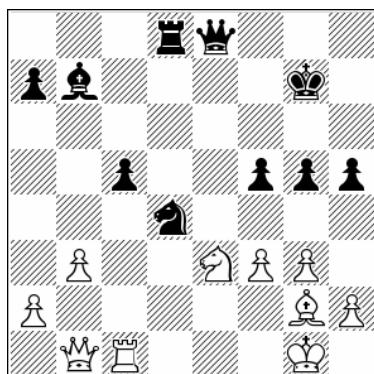
29...d4 30.♕a5



30...♞d5

A powerful-looking riposte, but the engines want something even more evil, which was the reason their evaluations were so high in the beginning!

A) 30...♙f6 31.♙xd8 ♖xd8 (with White's dark-squared bishop gone, the white queen rather regrets its spot on the a1-h8 diagonal!) 32.♘c4 ♘g7 33.♚b1 dxe3 34.♘xe3 ♙d4 35.♖xd4 ♘xd4.



analysis diagram

Black's pieces are combining beautifully: the queen on e8 finds targets on the open e-file, the black rook controls the d-file and the black knight and light-squared bishop combine against the f3-pawn. Despite that, the engines manage to keep White's game going.

36.♖e1 ♚f8 37.f4 ♙xg2 38.♘xg2 h4 was one way the engines tried to find a way through. 39.♚d1 h3+ (sacrificing the h-pawn to open the file and create additional entry channels towards the white king) 40.♘xh3 ♚f7 41.♘g2 gxf4 42.gxf4 ♖h8 43.♖g1 ♚b7+ 44.♘f2+ ♘f7 45.♖g3 ♖xh2+ 46.♘g2 ♚e4 and despite the threatening appearance of Black's position, the engines agreed a draw here Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022. 47.♘g1 ♖h7 48.♖e3 chases back the black pieces with approximate equality though a human player would probably need to sweat a bit more to hold the white pieces.

B) 30...♙d6 31.♙xd8 ♙xe5 32.♙a5 g4 was another fun option tried by the engines and it is also very fraught for White.

33.f4 ♙xg2 34.♘xg2 h4 35.♘g1 (35.fxe5 ♚c6+ 36.♘g1 ♘g5 is carnage on the light squares) 35...♙f6 36.gxh4 ♘f7 37.♚b2 ♚c6 38.♚c2 ♚f3 39.♖f1 ♚xe3+ 40.♘h1 ♚e4+ 41.♚xe4 fxe4 42.f5 ♘d8 43.♖f4 e3 and in this total mess, the engines agreed a draw! ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

Whatever the objective final evaluation of 28.f3, it's clear that it was very unwise to give Black so many chances.

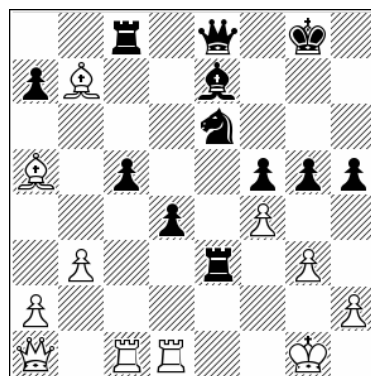
31.f4

31.♘c4 f4 is a great idea to entomb the white pieces behind a wall of black pawns: 32.exf4 gxf4 33.♖e1 ♚f7 34.♚b2 fxg3 35.hxg3 ♖g5 36.♚f2 h4 37.g4 ♘f4 with a big attacking position for Black, ½-½ (77) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

31...♖xe5 32.♙xb7

The light-squared bishop must be kept alive to keep White's king safe(ish). 32.fxe5 ♙xg2 33.♘xg2 dxe3 with ...♚c6+ to follow is very bad for White.

32...♖xe3



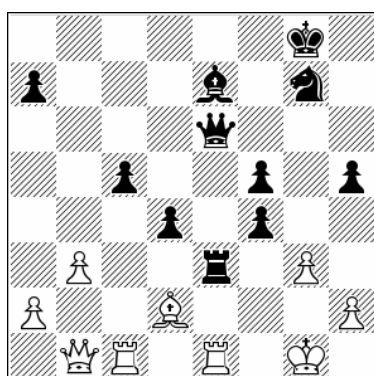
The position is a total mess! White has two worries: firstly, Black can munch away at the white kingside with ...gxf4; secondly, the white major pieces are shut out of the game by the central structure c5/d4. White has a few factors to give him courage, however. First of all, Black's kingside threats are not that dangerous as long as White keeps control of the long diagonal, ensuring the white king has a safe haven on h1. For that reason, White should avoid winning the exchange for the light-squared bishop. Secondly, Black's territory is stretched over a large part of the board, which means there are some loose elements to attack. In particular, the kingside light squares are susceptible to attack – for example, the f5-pawn or the knight on e6. White seems to be able to cause Black enough inconvenience to slow down her attack. Strangely enough for such a sharp position, the engines find multiple ways for White to hold the balance! The position remains crazy to human eyes, however!

33.♙d2

Not a bad move, though the engines preferred to mobilise the white major pieces before

running after more material. I imagine that Portisch's original idea was maybe to grab both exchanges and try and survive with the extra material.

A) 33.♖e1 gxf4 34.♚b1. The engines are keen to activate the major pieces as quickly as possible, while targeting Black's light squares (the pawn on f5 is now attacked). 34...♗g7 (the knight holds the f5-pawn, but moves away from the g5-square which is Black's most dangerous way to exploit the kingside light squares. 34...♙d8 was another interesting line: 35.♙d2 ♖c7 36.♙xe3 fxe3 37.♙d5 ♗g6 38.♖f1 ♖f7 39.b4 h4 40.g4 with another crazy position that the engines considered too equal to be worth continuing, ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) The engines now dare to capture some material! 35.♙xc8 ♗xc8 36.♙d2 ♚e6.

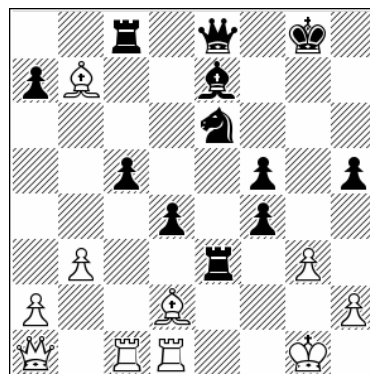


analysis diagram

Several games were agreed drawn by the engines! For our benefit, we ran some more games from this point. 37.♚c2 (37.♙xe3 is not White's best, but still enough to keep the balance, although the draw in the final position is not immediately obvious! 37...fxe3 38.♚d3 ♚e4 39.♚xe4 fxe4 40.b4 cxb4 41.♖c6 ♗f5 42.♖e6 b3 43.axb3 ♙b4 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022) 37...h4 38.gxf4 ♗g6+ 39.♗h1 ♚c6+ ended in a draw by repetition: 40.♗g1 ♗g6+ 41.♗h1 ♚c6+ 42.♗g1 ♗g6+ ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022; B) 33.♖f1 gxf4 34.♖ce1 was another engine solution, getting both rooks active before activating the queen: 34...h4 35.♖xe3 fxe3 36.♚b1 ♗g7 37.♖xf5 (sacrificing the exchange to bludgeon a path into Black's position through the light squares) 37...♖c6 38.♙xc6 ♗xc6 and draws were being agreed in this wild position!

Once again, we ran some more games to better see what the engines had in mind: 39.♖f4 h3 40.♚e4 ♚xe4 41.♖xe4 ♙d6 42.♗f1 ♗f5 43.♖g4+ ♗f7 44.♗e2 ♙xg3 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022. White needs to find 45.♖g5 ♗e6 46.♖h5 ♙xh2 47.♖xh3, eliminating Black's h-pawn, to be sure of the draw.

33...gxf4



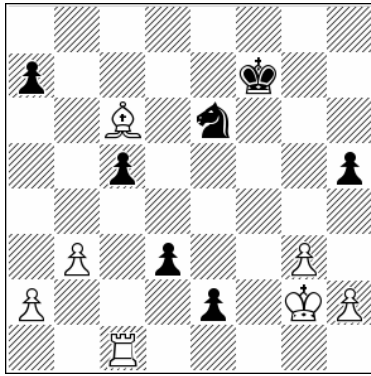
No fear from Chiburdanidze! Black offers both exchanges.

34.gxf4?

A big mistake after which the engines think that Black is completely winning, though, to be honest, it's not easy to understand how the engine achieves it. In general, however, opening the g-file and giving the black knight a direct path towards the white king by capturing on f4 feels like a bad idea. Now more than ever, it's White's light-squared bishop that is holding his kingside together.

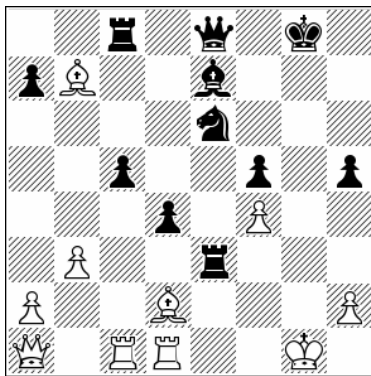
A) 34.♚b1 was the engine's favourite idea, again taking the time to bring the white queen back into the game: 34...♙d8 35.♚xf5 ♖f7 36.♚xf7+ ♗xf7 37.♙xe3 fxe3 (trivial for the engines, still completely uncertain for human players!) 38.♙a6 h4 39.♖f1+ ♗g7 40.♖cd1 (40.♖ce1 hxg3 41.hxg3 c4 42.♙xc4 d3 43.♙xe6 d2 44.♖e2 d1=♖ 45.♖xd1 ♖xd1+ 46.♗g2 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 40...♗g5 41.gxh4 ♗e4 42.♖f4 ♗f2 43.♖xf2 exf2+ 44.♗xf2 ½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022;

B) 34.♙xe3 fxe3 35.♚b1 is similar and often transposed into the above line. 35...♙g5 followed a slightly different path: 36.♚xf5 e2 37.♙d5 ♙e3+ 38.♗g2 ♖c6 39.♖h1 ♙xc1 40.♖xc1 (½-½ Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022) 40...♖f7 41.♚xf7+ ♗xf7 42.♙xc6 d3



analysis diagram

43.♞f1+. This great move was what White needed to see to hold the draw!

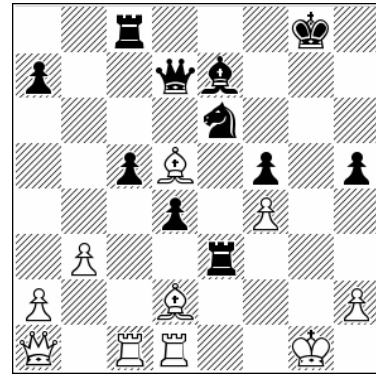


34...♞e2

Looks fantastically strong but brings the position back to equal according to the engines. There are two big downsides to 34...♞e2: the f4-pawn is once again protected, preventing the black knight from entering into f4, and the light-squared bishop gains the useful escape square f3 if chased by the black queen.

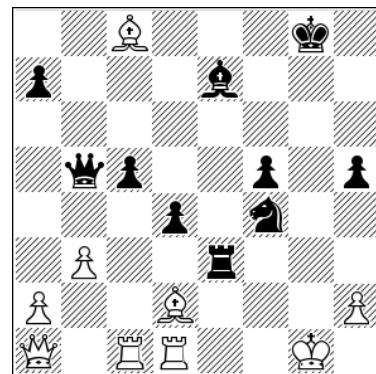
34...♞b5 was completely winning, according to the engines. If taking the rook on c8 is impossible for White, then the light-squared bishop will run out of places to hide on the h1-a8 diagonal. h1 is not a good option as it stops the white king from hiding there, while on g2 it gets hit by ...♞xf4.

A) 35.♙d5 ♞d7.



analysis diagram

Harassing the light-squared bishop and not giving it any place to hide! 36.♙xe3 (36.♙c4 ♖h7 (followed by ...♞g8+ and ...♞c6) 37.♙xe3 ♞g8+ 38.♖f1 ♞c6 39.♙f2 ♙h4 (the beautiful point!) 40.♙xh4 ♞h1+ 41.♖f2 ♞g2+ with quick mate to follow) 36...♞xd5 37.♞c2 ♖f7 was similar to the game: Black has a fearsome initiative once the light-squared bishop has been removed. 38.♞g2 h4 39.♞d3 ♞e4 40.♞d1 ♞g8 41.♞h5+ ♖f8 42.♞xg8+ ♖xg8 43.♞e8+ ♙f8 44.♙f2 ♞xf4 45.♞xe4 fxe4 46.♞d1 e3 47.♙e1 ♙h6 48.♙xh4 d3 0-1 (68) Stockfish 051022-vanVondele-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022;
B) 35.♙xc8 ♞xf4.



analysis diagram

The engines are over -10 at this point but one has to say that the human is still scratching his head a little, trying to work out why it is so winning! 36.♙xe3 ♞h3+ is the beautiful but very hard tactic to spot! Out of nowhere, White's king only has two legal moves! 37.♖g2 (37.♖h1 ♞c6#) 37...♞e2+ 38.♖xh3 ♞f3#. 34...♞d7, with the same idea as 34...♞b5, actually loses because White can capture all the material and activate the queen: 35.♙xc8 ♞xc8 36.♙xe3 dxe3 37.♞e5.

34...♖c7 was a simpler choice and also very strong. The aim is once again to keep on hitting the light-squared bishop until it runs out of safe squares: 35.♗d5 ♖d8 36.♙g2 ♗e2 37.♕f1 d3 38.♗c3 ♙f6 39.♗c4 ♗g7 40.♙a5 ♖d4 41.♗xd4 ♙xd4 0-1 (48) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

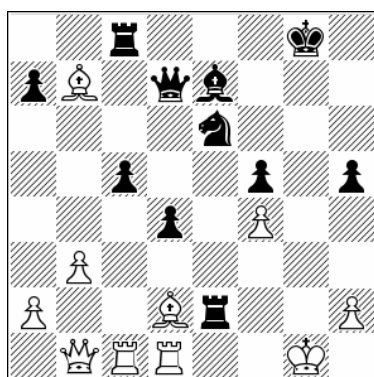
35.♗b1

Portisch finds the right idea, bringing the white queen back into play and targeting Black's light squares. The situation is much more fraught for White now that the g-file has been opened, but still defensible.

35.♗e1 was another way to equalise with the use of some sharp tactics: 35...♗g6+ 36.♕h1 ♗xd2 37.♙d5 (an unexpected retreat, eschewing the hanging rook (which would allow mate on g2) to regain the knight on e6) 37...♕h7 38.♗xe6 ♗g4 39.♗g1 ♗h4 40.♗g2 ♗xg2 ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

35...♗d7

35...♗b5 36.♙d5 (if 36.♙xc8, 36...♗c6 37.♙xe6+ ♕g7 wins) 36...♗f8 37.♗c2 ♗f6 38.♗c4 ♗g6+ 39.♕h1 ♗xc4 40.♙xc4 ♗f2 41.♗g1 just about covers everything! ½-½ Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.



36.♙f3

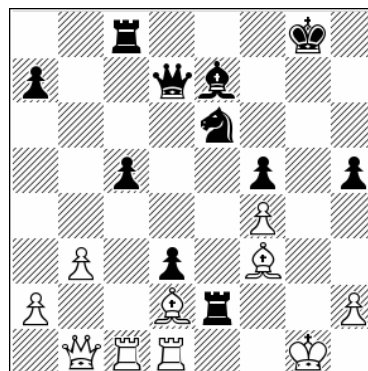
A natural move, making use of the f3-square freed by 34...♗e2, but it's a disaster. White had a clever intermediate move that human players easily miss but engines never do:

36.♗d3!. Counterattacking the rook on e2. 36...♗xd2 37.♙xc8 (the clever idea, but there is even more to it!) 37...♗xd1+ 38.♗xd1 ♗xc8 39.♗xf5 ♗c6 40.♗g6+ ♕f8 41.♗e1 ♕d8 42.♗xh5 ♗f6 43.♗e5 ♕f7 44.♗f5 ♗g7+ 45.♕f2 and White found enough activity to hold the draw despite

the slight material disadvantage, ½-½ (72) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

36...d3

Chiburidanidze has no fear of leaving her rooks *en prise* in this game!



37.♙c3

At first glance, 37.♙c3 seems to open up a wealth of tactics, pointing towards the black king, opening the attack of the rook on d1 against the d3-pawn while threatening ♙xe2. However, it turns out that Black has several ways to counter these tactical threats while creating dangerous threats of her own!

The natural 37.♕h1 (37.♙xe2 dxe2 wins material), putting the king out of harm's way, was White's best chance, though Black is well on top. 37...♗f2 (harassing the light-squared bishop which is even more crucial in defence now the white king has moved to the h1-a8 diagonal) 38.♗g1+ ♕f8 39.♗cf1 ♗xd2 (39...♗xf3 40.♗xf3 ♗c6 41.♗xd3 ♕d4 42.♗gf1, followed by ♕g1 just about holds things together) 40.♗e1 ♗e2 41.♙xe2 dxe2 42.♗xe2 ♗c6+ 43.♗g2 ♕g7 44.♗f3 ♗xf3 45.♗xf3 ♙f6 and Black slowly converted its material advantage, 0-1 (78) Stockfish-Dragon 3.1, Classics 2022.

37...♗e3

A sensible and strong riposte, defending d3 and giving White a headache with the bishop on f3. 37...♕xf4, still leaving the rook *en prise*, was perhaps even more thematic for this game. However, although this line is clearer for the engines, Chiburidanidze's controlled play is much to be preferred from a human point of view. 38.♕h1 ♕h7 39.♗g1 ♙f8 (covering the g7-square) 40.♗cd1 ♗ce8 41.♗d2 ♗e3 42.♗f1 ♙h6. Lovely piece coordination from Stockfish.

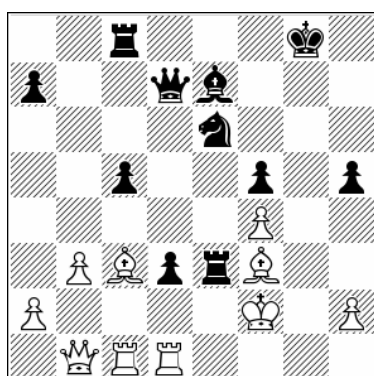
White is paralysed! 0-1 (58) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

38.♟f2

Panic! Or perhaps a gamble, opening the g-file for White's rooks and hoping for a miracle in time trouble?

38.♞f1 was White's best, but after the simple 38...♘d4 39.♙xd4 ♜xd4 40.♞a1 ♙f6 41.♞xd4 ♙xd4 42.♟g2 ♟h7 Black has a massive advantage. It's impossible for White to stop Black from tying it up with ...d2, ...♙c3 and ...♞e1 while the white king gets shunted back to the h-file.

43.♙xh5 ♞g8+ 44.♟h1 d2 45.♞cd1 ♙c3 46.♙f7 ♞g4 47.♙h5 ♞g8 48.♙f3 ♟h6 49.♞f2 ♞e1+ 50.♞f1 ♞g6 51.a3 ♞g8 52.♙d5 ♞g4 53.♙f3 ♞g6 54.♙d5 ♞a6 55.a4 ♞d6 56.♙f3 ♞g6 57.♙d5 ♙a5 58.♙f3 ♞b6 59.♙d5 ♞d6 60.♙c4 ♞xf1+ and after some shuffling to show who was boss, Black finished his opponent off: 61.♞xf1 (61.♙xf1 ♞e6) 61...d1=♞ 62.♞xd1 ♞xd1+ 0-1 (80) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.



38...♞xf3+

Black's goal throughout the late middlegame has been to destroy this light-squared bishop whatever the material cost. Now is the moment.

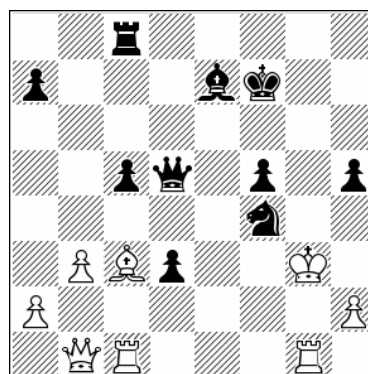
39.♟xf3 ♞d5+ 40.♟g3 ♘xf4

40...♞e4 was also very strong: 41.♙e5 h4+ 42.♟f2 ♞e2+ 43.♟g1 ♞e3+ 44.♟f1 ♞f3+ 45.♟g1 ♟f7 0-1 (51) Dragon 3.1-Stockfish, Classics 2022.

41.♞g1

41.♟xf4 ♞e4+ 42.♟g3 ♙h4+ 43.♟h3 ♞g4#.

41...♟f7



Lovely play, freeing the g-file for the black rook.

42.♞ce1 ♞g8+ 43.♟xf4 ♙d6+ 44.♙e5 ♙xe5+

And Portisch resigned. A wonderful game, full of instructive ideas for handling the black side of these typical Queen's Indian structures.

Postscript - What can we learn?

In this final section, we attempt to summarise the most important themes which emerge from the engine analysis of the games in this book.

1. Avoid passive pieces!

Possibly the most important single lesson from the modern engines is that one should avoid being saddled with passive pieces. Older engines were much more materialistic and tended to play a lot like Steinitz, being willing to undergo great contortions in order to win material, so long as they could not see a forced variation to demonstrate why they shouldn't. Essentially, it was all about the 'horizon' effect – they would analyse x moves ahead (the value of x depending on time and machine quality), and any threats emerging beyond that horizon would not be taken into account. What they lacked was a general 'feel' for the position – a human would often sense intuitively that a certain line was dangerous, because of lack of development, king exposure, etc., but the computers tended to disregard this and look only at concrete variations.

The modern engines have overcome this weakness and now have a great feel for dynamism, well beyond any specific analytical horizon, and they greatly distrust passive pieces. A very good example is Game 3, Lasker-Steinitz. The latter defended in his trademark style, avoiding moving pawns in front of his king and being willing instead to retreat pieces to the back rank, in order to hang onto extra material. But within a few moves of the knight retreating to h8, the engines no longer believe Black has any advantage, despite his two extra pawns.

2. Grab space!

Engines love space! The latter is something to which attitudes have changed over the years. Steinitz was always prepared to accept a cramped position, rather than create weaknesses. Tarrasch, although in many ways a disciple of the first World Champion, disagreed sharply with him on that point, always being ready to accept pawn weaknesses, in order to achieve piece freedom. His eponymous defences to both the Queen's Gambit and the Spanish embody that principle. With the rise of Capablanca and the Hypermoderns, the pendulum swung back again, with weak pawns being generally frowned upon and preference given to cramped, but solid positions. Finally, a post-war Hegelian synthesis emerged, when 'cramped but passive' was understood to be undesirable, but 'cramped with dynamic chances' (e.g. King's Indian, Scheveningen Sicilian, Hedgehog, etc.) was OK.

The modern engines are more heavily in favour of space. Their attitude to defences like the King's Indian is veritably Korchnoian at times – see Game 34. But the most striking case in this book is again Game 3. I (Steve) was really shocked at the engines' assessment of the opening: 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 d6 4.d4 ♙d7 5.♘c3 ♘ge7. I think all strong players would have recognised that this is pretty passive for Black, and not something one would be keen to play oneself, but even so, Black has no real weaknesses and so he should not be more than just worse. But the engine assessment after 6.d5 is over +2.5 for White, a decisive advantage, and in our engine games, Black never even got close to making half a point.

3. Use your rook's pawns!

Right from AlphaZero's first appearance, the use of rook's pawns in the middlegame was a striking feature of engine play and this is nowadays reflected at GM level, with 'Harry' being thrown down the board in practically any position, and not just by Ginger GM Simon Williams! In our engine

games in this book, you will see this theme appearing again and again. It is a great tribute to Bent Larsen, who was playing such moves regularly more than half a century ago, when it was regarded as little more than an eccentricity. We were pleased to be able to include in this book a splendid example from his practice, Game 29.

4. Small advantages don't always win!

Even in the pre-AI days, the defensive stubbornness of computers was notable, but this is even more so with modern engines. You will find numerous examples in this book of the engines holding positions which humans would find near-impossible. The really important thing here is that the engines show that many small advantages do not automatically turn into wins. 'Worse' is not the same as 'lost'! Ever since Capablanca's heyday in the 1920s, there has tended to be an assumption that small, clear positional advantages, in the hands of a leading master, will almost inevitably be converted. Few annotators have tended to look very hard for the defender's mistake, and even if they have identified an obvious error, it tends to be excused on the basis of some such platitude as 'mistakes come easily in bad positions'.

But in reality, it is not usually inevitable that such positions should be lost – by really tenacious defence, they can be held more often than not. Game 13 is a good example – the engines demonstrate that, even after completing all six stages of his grand winning plan, Alekhine had no advantage at all, until his opponent blundered the game away in one move. Modern defensive technique amongst top GMs is much greater than used to be the case, thanks partly to this lesson. It is also a tribute to Emanuel Lasker, who was just about the only voice in his day who spoke out against this myth of the 'flawless modern technique' – see the section entitled 'The Principle of Proportion' in his *Manual of Chess*, in which he demolishes Réti's attempt to foist one of these 'inevitability' scenarios on the public.

But we should also sound one note of caution here. The engines' defensive capabilities can also affect one's assessment of certain openings. A good example is Game 17, a Dutch Stonewall. As you will see, the engines really have considerable faith in this opening and will turn practically any Dutch line into a Stonewall at the first opportunity. One could easily conclude that this is an excellent opening for Black. However, do not be fooled – they only do this because they think the Stonewall is merely the lesser evil, compared to other Dutch variations. And they get away with it because of their ability to hold the kind of lifeless, bad bishop endgames that Black often finds himself in – a good example is the note to Black's 9th move in Game 17. Whether a human player would feel confident of holding such positions on a regular basis (or, indeed, would wish to spend a large chunk of his chess-playing life doing so, even if he was so confident!) is another matter.

5. Use the whole board!

Another characteristic of engines is their ability to play over the whole board. Humans tend to concentrate on one area of the board and devote all their efforts to breaking through on that side, whereas engines are masters at switching play and creating threats over the whole board. Again, there are many examples in this book, Game 21 being one, especially the note to Black's 15th.

And finally, there is one other lesson from the engine games, that we have to mention, but which is somewhat tricky to implement:

6. Be an absolute tactical genius, who never misses anything!!

If you can do all of these things, then, in the words of Rudyard Kipling, 'Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it' – at least, everything contained within the 64 squares. We wish you every success in your endeavours.

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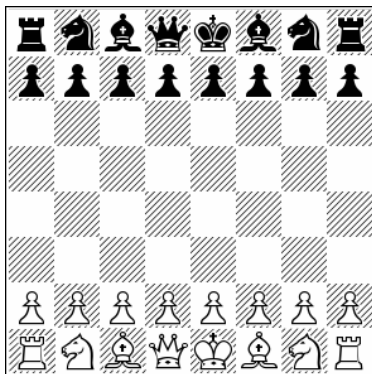
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Explanation of symbols

The chessboard
with its coordinates:



	King
	Queen
	Rook
	Bishop
	Knight

±	White stands slightly better
∓	Black stands slightly better
±	White stands better
∓	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
W	women

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