

opening repertoire

the Petroff defence

Cyrus Lakdawala

EVERYMAN CHESS

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www.everymanchess.com

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About the Author

Cyrus Lakdawala is an International Master, a former National Open and American Open Champion, and a six-time State Champion. He has been teaching chess for over 30 years, and coaches some of the top junior players in the U.S.

Also by the Author:

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First Steps: the Modern

Caruana: Move by Move

Contents

[About the Author](#)

[Bibliography](#)

[Introduction](#)

[1\) The Cochrane Gambit](#)

[2\) The Scotch Petroff](#)

[3\) The Main Line Petroff](#)

[4\) The Main Line Sidelines](#)

[5\) The New Main Line](#)

[6\) The Three Knights Petroff](#)

[Index of Complete Games](#)

Bibliography

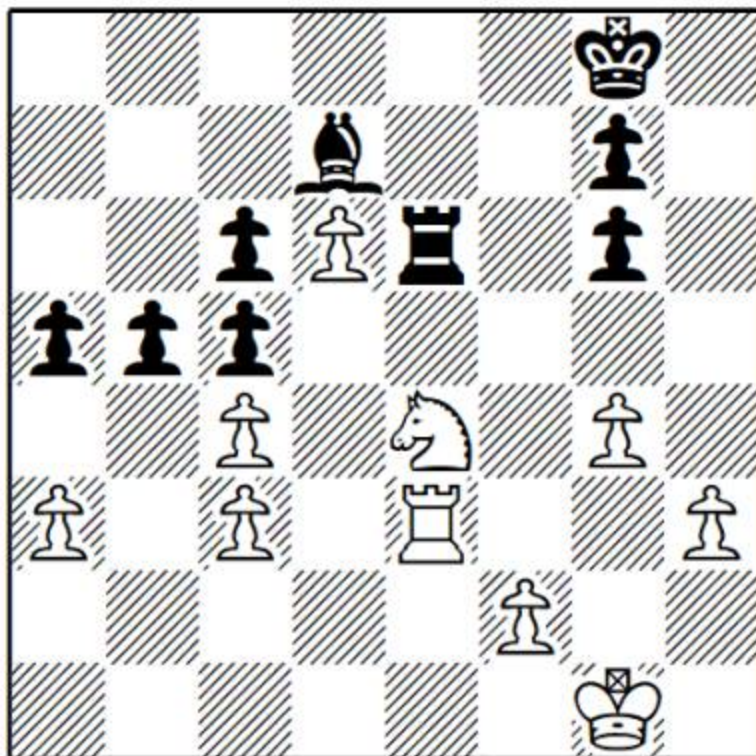
Petroff Defence, *Alexander Raetsky & Maxim Chetverik*, (Everyman Chess 2005)

Starting Out: Open Games, Glenn Flear, (Everyman Chess 2010)

Starting Out: 1 e4, Neil McDonald, (Everyman Chess 2006)

The Petroff: Move by Move, Cyrus Lakdawala (Everyman Chess 2015)

Introduction



What is Your Opening Utopia?

In the foolishness of youth I took a vast dislike to the Petroff, a hateful creature with no perceivable reason to exist, other than to annoy 1 e4 players. I tended to sneer at the opening, a nondescript, faceless line for snivellers whose only goal in life was to draw a chess game. However, with old age comes wisdom, and today I understand the strength of the Petroff. The Petroff is not an opening for wild expectations; a draw is just fine. And if our opponent gets overly ambitious, overstretches and loses, then even better. If 1 e4 is the chessboard's Count Dracula, then the Petroff Defence is our Dr. Van Helsing, since the Petroff has the ability to drain the life out of White's aggressive intentions.

There is a faint sense of taunting with 2 ... Nf6: "I'm here in my fortress. Come after me if you wish." The Petroff has no pretensions of

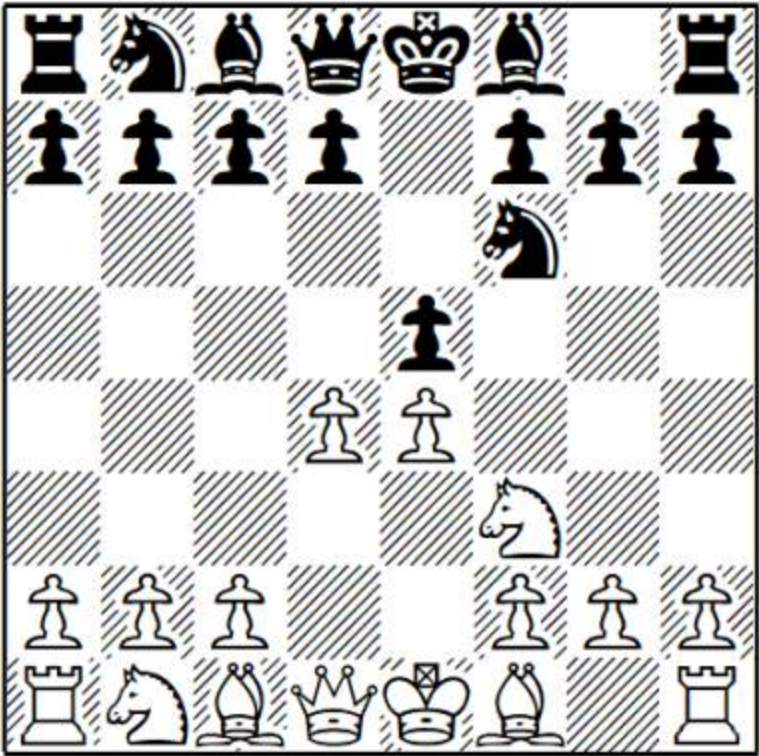
trying to complicate and gain an advantage with Black, as in sharper openings such as the Sicilian lines the Najdorf, Sveshnikov and Dragon. With the Petroff Black seeks equality or even near-equality and works from there for either the half point, or the full point if the opponent gets carried away (and they often do).

The Petroff is the perfect opening for those who wish to postpone the major battle to the middlegame. It is also close to being impervious to computer analysis. Petroff players can be confident of keeping their opponents' computer analysis at bay, since the Petroff's inherent solidity protects from the unpleasant (computer-aided) shocking new moves in the opening.

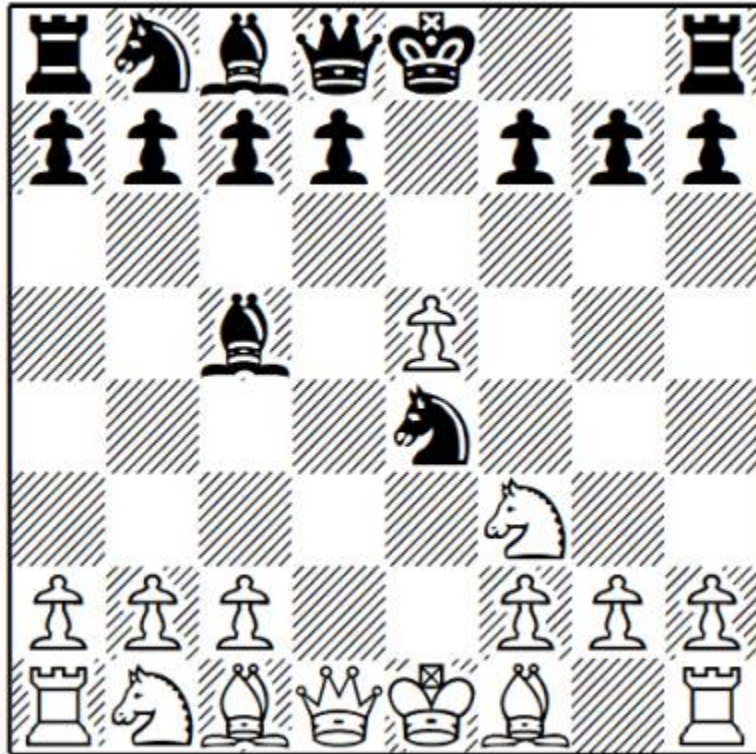
The Caruana Connection

When we embrace the chess games of a great player whose style is similar to ours, the great player is a mirror of what we could have been, had we been gifted with vastly greater potential. Petroff devotees play over Fabiano Caruana's Petroff games the way a person of faith touches the hand of a saint. He has almost single-handedly brought the opening back to the forefront of popularity. Caruana, the modern day Botvinnik, is proof that greatness arises via hard work, rather than innate talent (although I have a feeling Caruana's innate talent level is also pretty high). Caruana revived the Petroff through his success with the line, coupled with his uncanny ability to produce an endless stream of new ideas within the opening. Carlsen tried taking on a pair of Petroffs in their 2018 World Championship match and essentially wasted two Whites, since Caruana was never in danger in either game. In fact, Carlsen came rather close to losing one of them. Both of these games are in the book. The goal with the Petroff is that we don't want to lose. All other results are acceptable. Here are some typical positions we encounter.

The Scotch Petroff



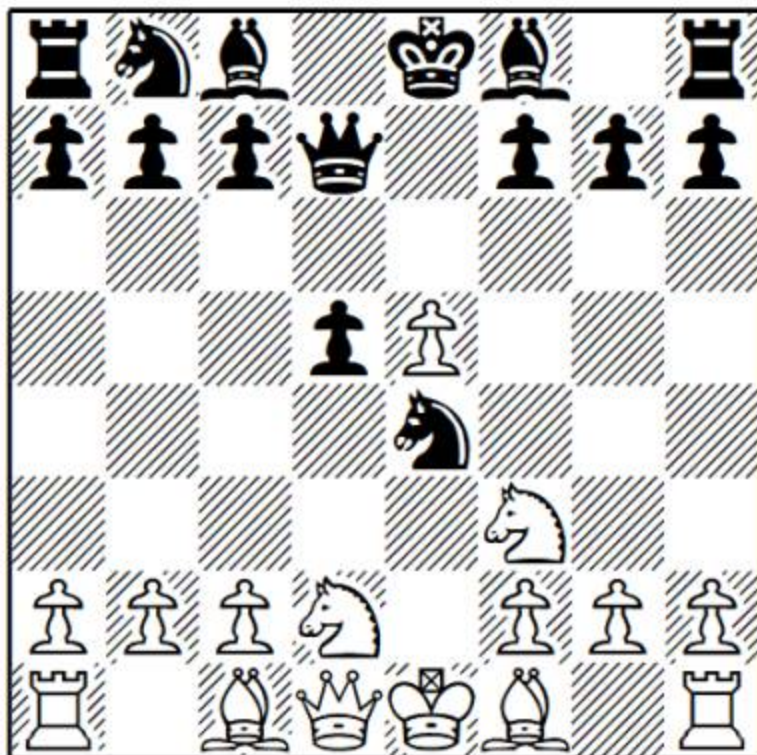
With 3 d4 we enter into the Scotch Petroff, which generates the most open positions seen in this book. We can reach the following positions:



The Petroff is solid and therefore sometimes unfairly accused of being dull. Petroff players often choose the opening with the sole ambition of being able to secure a draw with the black pieces. But be warned. If you go after them with a sharp line such as this one, you are just as likely as they are to lose a few teeth in the fight. White has three ways to deal with the attack on f2:

- a) 5 Bc4 – ignore it and go for a counterattack on f7.
- b) 5 Qd5 – ignore it and attack the loose e4-knight, which supports the c5-bishop.
- c) 5 Be3 – after which Black exchanges and damage White's structure, at the cost of creating an open f-file for a White attack.

In the diagram below, Black responds with a far safer version of the Scotch Petroff by playing 4 ... d5 5 Nbd2, and now Caruana recently uncorked 5 ... Qd7!.

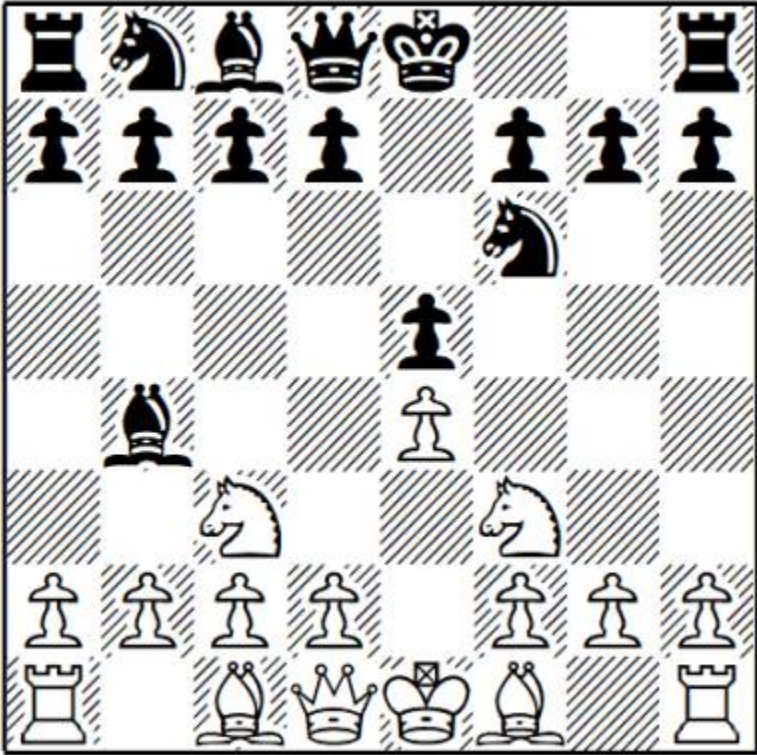


“Main line” usually translates to “played by a majority”, which is in turn based on the false belief that the majority is always right. Caruana’s shocking last move, 5 ... Qd7!, is another way to play against the Scotch Petroff. The idea is that it negates White’s strategic threat of Nxe4 and Qxd8+. We grope our way through our openings, until they finally become routine and that is where the thinking process stops. We live our lives in comfortable patterns. Remove the routine and our opponent instantly gets disoriented.

In one respect it is a monumental act of ego to think that we alone can find a new move which improves upon generations of precedent, yet Caruana did just that when he banged out a completely original idea with his 5 ... Qd7!. This move completely unsettled his grandmaster opponent and Caruana won rather easily. There is no such thing as classified

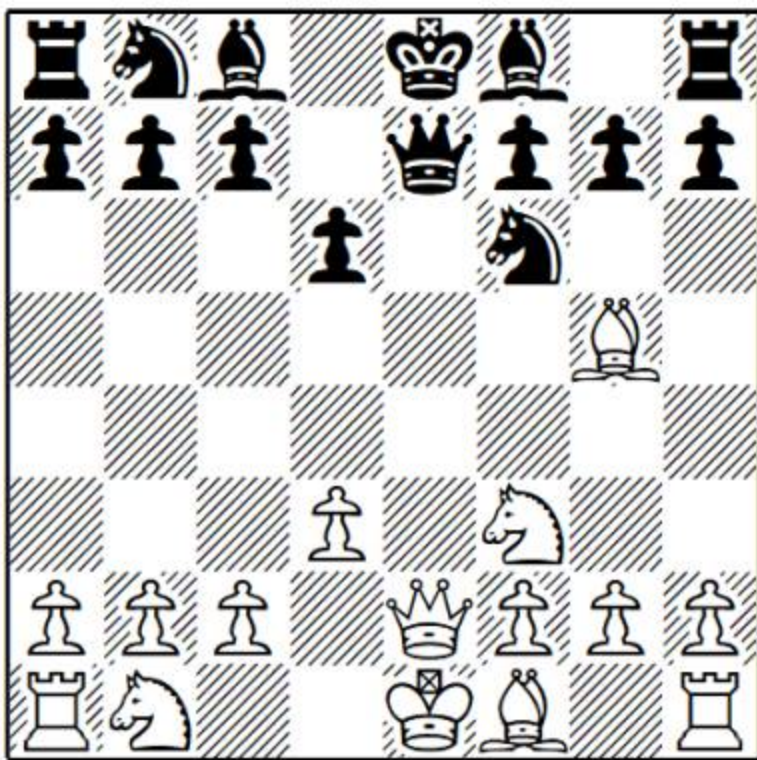
information in chess. Eventually, everyone gets to view everything. But for now, Caruana's new idea is a bit under the radar, at least at club level, so I have a feeling you will surprise others and win games with Caruana's move.

The Three Knights Petroff



In the diagrammed position above, White wanted to dodge the Petroff and enter a Four Knights Game. With 3 ... Bb4 Black sidesteps this, entering the Three Knights Petroff.

The Dullness Factor



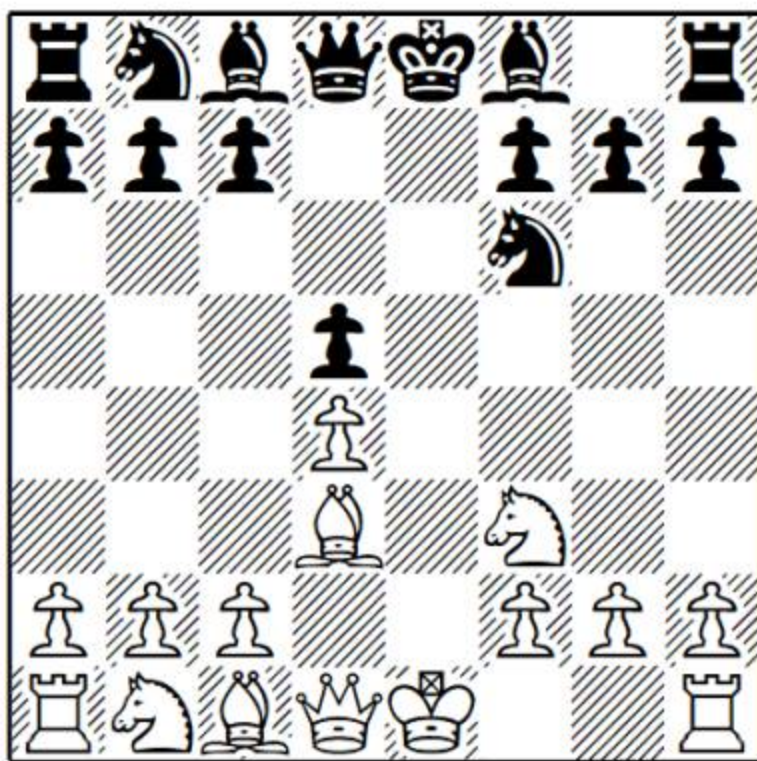
The diagram above, as well as the next one, feature two positions where all is calm. Yes, these positions are rather dull, but does every opening, especially when we are playing the black pieces, have to be full of flavour and excitement? If the main goal is to achieve equality, then the answer is clearly “no”. I assure you that the Petroff is the big, meek kid, once afraid of his own shadow, who suddenly decides to assert himself by approaching the school bully with the intent on giving him an unexpected bruising. Why does the big, meek kid win the fight? Because the bully never sees it coming and, when the challenge arises, the bully is completely unprepared for a counterattack.

I played Petroff in online blitz games while I was writing this book and was stunned to discover that I hadn't lost a single Petroff – even to titled players – in a full month of online play. I can't even come close to making such a claim with any other opening, as Black or White. One curious trait was that I drew many, many games to players far lower-rated, often by as much as 300 points. The people who I tended to beat were titled players,

who were not interested in a draw. So the Petroff is the opening which can beat the big kid. It's the little guy who often holds the draw.

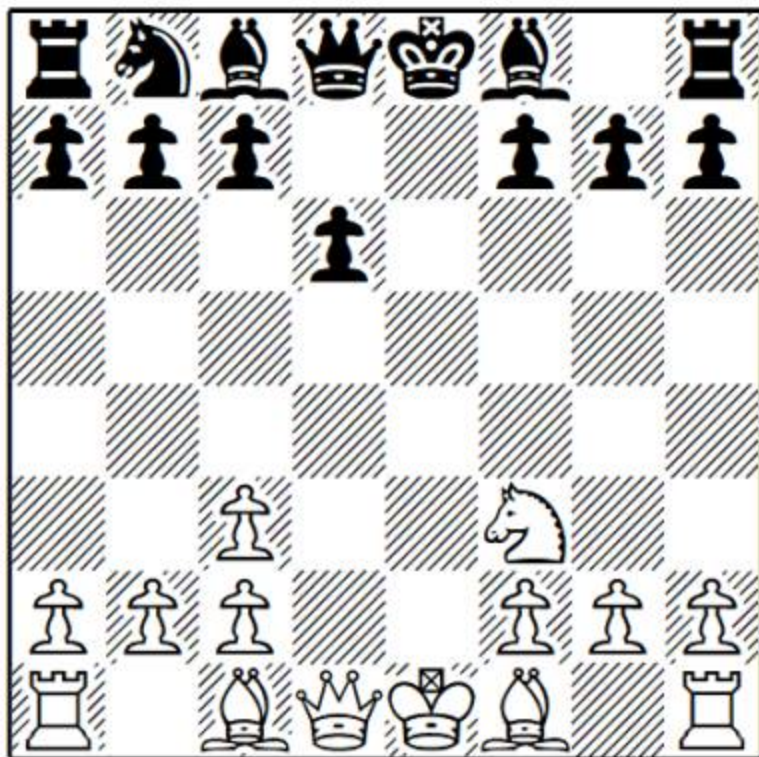
Although the Petroff is one of the most – if not *the* most – solid opening system against 1 e4, is it really suitable for the higher-rated player? The answer is “no”, but only if you are desperate for a win with the black pieces. It isn't all that hard to hold a draw as White, if a lower-rated opponent wants one. So my suggestion is that the Petroff shouldn't be your only opening against 1 e4. Have an alternative ready for situations where you are the higher-rated player, or are in a must-win situation.

In the diagram below, the physical characteristics are not quite identical, since White has one extra move. Is it enough for an edge? I doubt it.



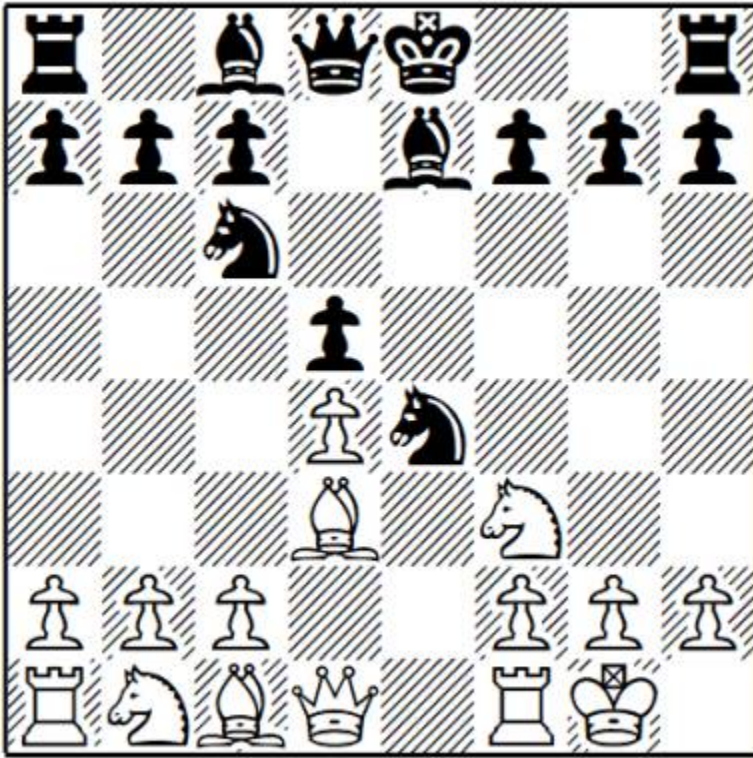
It is because of lines such as this that the Petroff is regarded as an opening for players who prefer dull chess. Anyone as White who chooses to play in this tedious way against the Petroff is obviously in love with the colour grey. This deadly dull line can also arise from the Exchange French. Is it really so terrible to be handed equality so early in the game if you play the black pieces?

The New Main Line



By recapturing away from the centre with 6 dxc3, White attempts to balance structural responsibility with enhanced activity. A position may be terribly complicated, yet its rules may be very simple. In this case, opposite side castling often occurs and the plan is usually to mate the opponent before you get mated yourself. I call this the New Main Line. White duly hopes for a position of opposite castling. Black will usually castle kingside (though not always), while White castles long. Black's chances are fully equal in this more exciting version of the Petroff.

The Main Line



This is the starting position of the main line where White's main choices are:

- a) 8 c4 – undermining the e4-knight.
- b) 8 Re1 – which directly threatens the e4-knight.
- c) 8 Nc3 – and after the exchange, White is willing to accept structural damage, in return for an open b-file and a strengthened centre.

The Exchange French-like position may look simple, but I assure you that it isn't. Theory, especially in the 8 c4 line, runs deep and can be dangerous unless you thoroughly master the line's subtleties. The structure of the Main Line tends to resemble that of the Exchange French, yet the Petroff is a clever forgery. Why? Because of a single factor: the e4-knight, which is both a strength and a weakness. It's a strength since one of Black's pieces is ensconced in the opponent's territory and may even later be backed up with ... f7-f5. It's also a weakness since, with c4 – White's most principled line – the knight is in danger of being undermined.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Byron for the edit and to Nancy for proofreading. There are two kinds of chess players:

1) Those who make things happen.

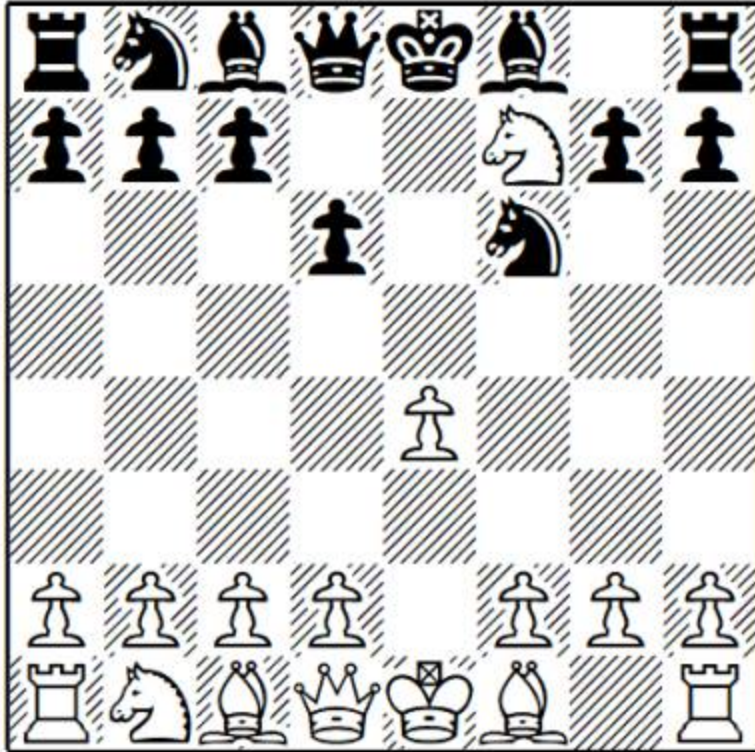
2) Those who allow things to happen and then ride the flow.

May we Petroff folk, who live in category number two, learn to ride the flow to wins and draws, but never losses.

Cyrus Lakdawala,
San Diego,
May 2019.

Chapter One

The Cochrane Gambit



Moloch was the biblical Canaanite god/idol to which small children were regularly sacrificed as an appeasement offering. The sacrifice of material in order to go after our opponent's king is the chess world's Moloch. The heart, combined with dubious faith, has the power to overcome common sense which is why some of your opponents are going to sacrifice a piece on the fourth move.

Just know that the Cochrane Gambit is somewhat dubious and you have excellent chances of reeling in the full point, as long as you do your homework. Be warned though: unprepared Petroff players routinely get mugged, shot and knifed in the Cochrane Heights neighbourhood. Don't underestimate the gambit, since we don't get it all that often (except in blitz, where we get hit with it all the time). This factor means that, when someone actually does play the line, we may forget the theory. Also remember: there is the study of a line and then there is the actual act of playing it, which is vastly different. So, go through this chapter as a regular rotation of your Petroff theory. I don't believe the gambit is fully sound, yet I'm not at the point where I'm willing to mock it, either.

Game 1

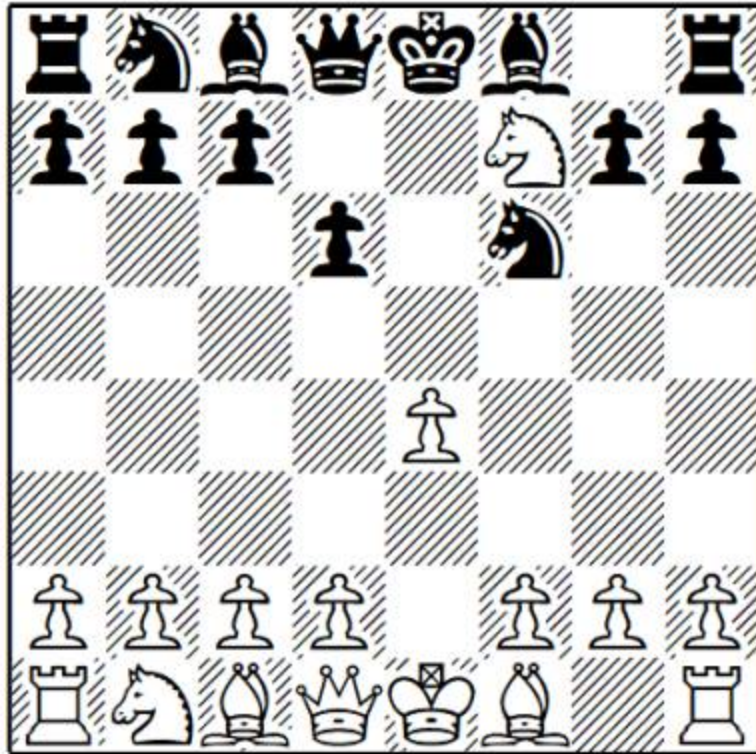
P.Spitz-A.Copar

ICCF email 2011

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6

Welcome to the cold-hearted world of the Petroff Defence.

3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nxf7!?



You can't see me now, sitting serenely, legs crossed in the lotus posture, in the attitude of a Zen master. That is how *unworried* I am about White's sacrifice. Our opening has been forged in the fire of centuries of practice, so it isn't about to be magically refuted on the fourth move. There are two directions we can run:

- 1) Away from something.
- 2) Towards something.

With 4 Nxf7!?, White is clearly choosing number two on the list. On a scale from 1 to 10, White dials it up to an 11 with an immediate piece sacrifice. Forget about respectable convention and welcome to the slightly shady, yet dangerous, Cochrane Gambit. For the piece White gains the following compensation:

- 1) Two strong central pawns.
- 2) Black's king loses the right to castle and may later come under attack.

Is it sound? I doubt it since not only is Black up a piece for two pawns, we also have the following in our favour.

1) We are not behind in development. This factor keeps our king safer than appearances suggest.

2) Our king may be out and about but our position is solid and weakness free.

However, remember that over-the-board play is always messier than controlled study at home. If you know your stuff, you should emerge with an advantage against Cochrane Gambit.

4 ... Kxf7

Our opponent's faith in their sacrifice is as strong as our lack of it. Since declining is not an option, we are forced to enter the creature's lair. Be certain you enter it well armed.

5 d4

Later in the chapter we analyse 5 Bc4+ and 5 Nc3.

5 ... c5

Our cold, controlled malice can be more effective than our opponent's flaming rage. This move, which I advocated in *The Petroff: Move by Move*, follows the principle: *meet a (future) wing attack with a central counter*. As a child of Indian parents, it was ingrained in me early on not to waste anything of value. The downside of this move is that we must be willing to give White a third pawn for the piece. In return, we get the following:

1) We break up White's once impressive centre.

2) *We* actually seize a development lead.

In the next game we consider 5 ... Be6!?.

6 dxc5

Others:

a) 6 Bc4+ is met by another central counter 6 ... d5! and after 7 exd5 Bd6 8 0-0 (if 8 dxc5?! Qa5+ 9 Nc3 Qxc5, the queen attacks Black's bishop, while the annoying ... Re8+ is also coming and Black already stands clearly better) 8 ... cxd4 9 Qxd4 Re8 is Z.Mestrovic-J.Howell, Cannes 1995. White scores a less-than-impressive 7% from this position. Black leads in development and White's three pawns don't make up for this.

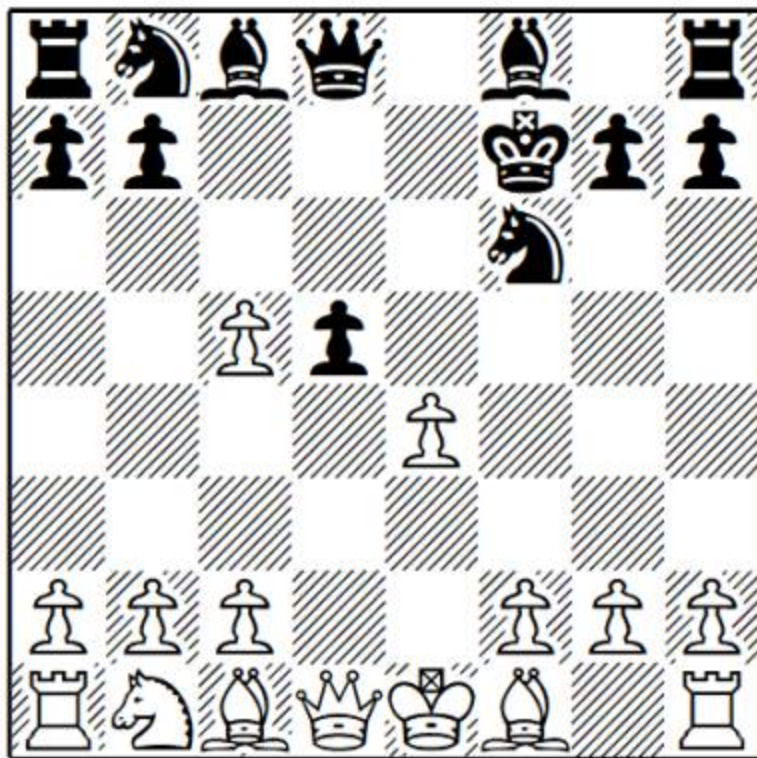
b) 6 Nc3 cxd4 7 Bc4+ Be6 8 Bxe6+ Kxe6 9 Qxd4 Kf7 10 Bf4 (White is probably better off playing 10 Qc4+ d5 11 Nxd5 Nxd5 12 0-0 Na6 13 Rd1 Rc8 14 Qe2 Qe8 15 Rxd5 Nc7 16 Rd3 Ne6, when Black is only slightly

better) 10 ... Qc8 (covering against queen checks on c4) 11 Bxd6? (White can't afford this waste of time and should play 11 0-0-0 Nc6) 11 ... Bxd6 12 Qxd6 Rd8 13 Qg3 Nc6 14 0-0, S.Sulskis-S.Erenburg, Port Erin 2005. Black stands clearly better after 14 ... Nd4.

6 ... d5!

Following the principle: *open the game when leading in development.* (Yes, we actually lead in development, despite the fact that White is the one who sacrificed the piece.)

Here is where we deviate from my first Petroff book. In *The Petroff: Move by Move* I concentrated on the line 6 ... Nc6, where Black simply continued developing after 7 Bc4+ Be6 8 Bxe6+ Kxe6. Should we be worried? No. Our now considerable development lead is guaranteed to keep our king safe.



7 e5 Ng4

After 7 ... Qe8 8 f4 Bxc5 9 Be2 Nbd7! Black returns the piece for a wicked initiative. Play can continue 10 exf6 Nxf6 11 Nd2 Bg4 12 Rf1 (12 Nf3 Bxf3 13 gxf3 Qe6 also looks grim for White) 12 ... Bxe2 (12 ... Qc6!

looks like a killing idea after 13 Bxg4 Rae8+ 14 Be2 Rxe2+! 15 Qxe2 Re8 with a winning position for Black) 13 Qxe2 Qa4 14 Nf3 Rhe8 15 Ne5+ Kg8 16 c3 Bd6 17 Kf2 Bxe5 18 fxe5 Rxe5! and Black had an enduring initiative, V.Chovanec-C.Engelhard, email 2009.

8 Bc4!

This clever tactic is White's best move, although it's somewhat dampened by the fact that White scores a measly 10% from this position.

However, even worse is 8 h3 Nxe5 9 Qh5+ Ng6 10 Be3 Be6 11 Nc3 Qh4! 12 Qxh4 (nor does White have compensation after 12 Qe2 Nd7) 12 ... Nxe4 13 0-0-0 Nc6 14 Nxd5 Rd8 15 c4 Nf5 16 Bg5 Be7, when White's three pawns are not enough for the sacrificed piece, since he suffers from a crippled queenside pawn majority, H.Koch-T.Lins, email 2012.

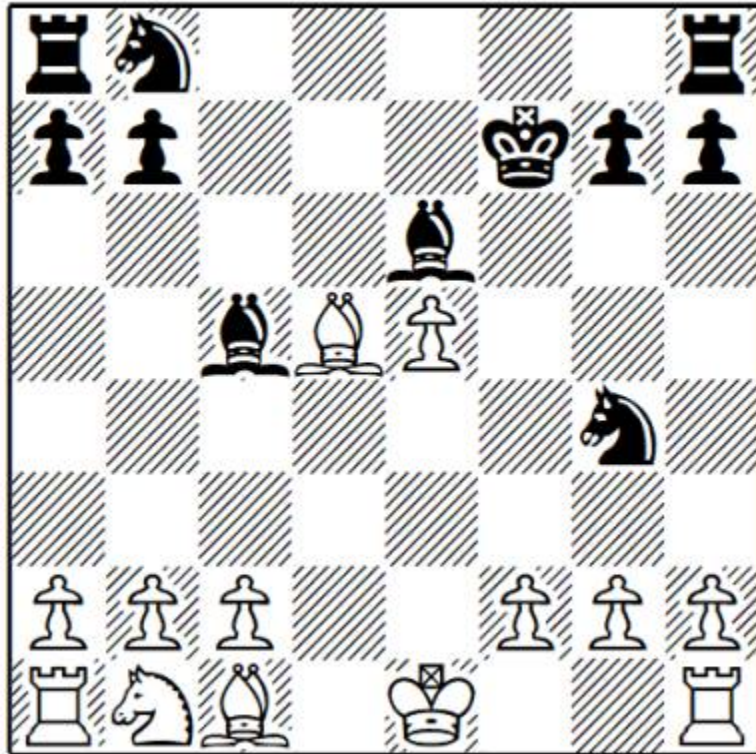
8 ... Bxc5!

It's best to just hand over the pawn now and increase the development lead. 8 ... Be6 is met by 9 Nc3 Nc6 10 Bxd5.

9 Qxd5+

There is no choice but to exchange queens. If 9 Bxd5+? Ke8, White's problem is that 10 0-0?? is crushed by 10 ... Qh4 11 h3 Bxf2+ 12 Kh1 Qg3! and White can resign.

9 ... Qxd5 10 Bxd5+ Be6!



Who cares about the b7-pawn and a8-rook? Black's development lead now grows out of control.

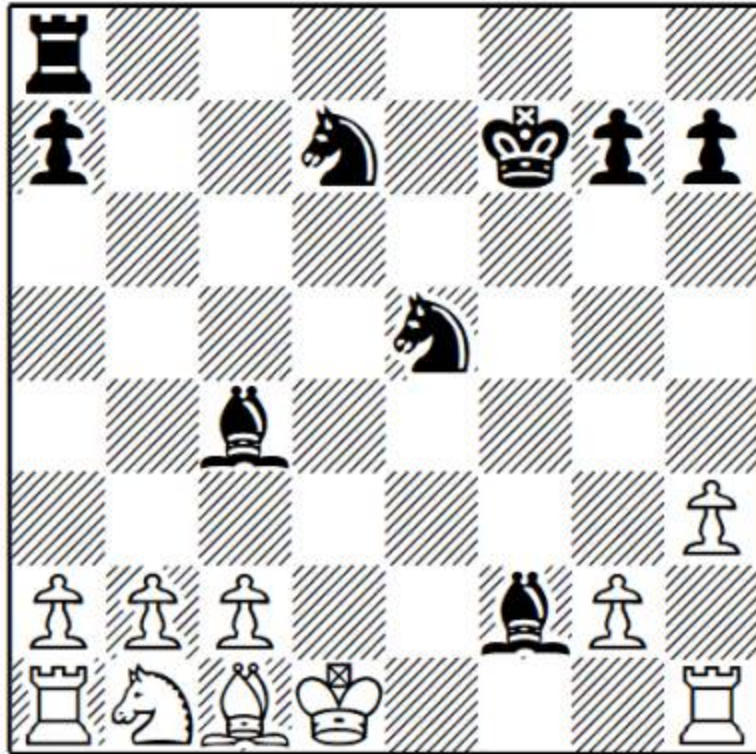
11 Bxb7

There is not much choice. 11 Bxe6+ Kxe6 12 f3 Nxe5 is just a lost ending for White, who only has two pawns for the piece and continues to lag in development.

11 ... Bxf2+ 12 Ke2 Nd7 13 Bxa8 Bc4+!

This zwischenzug covers against a future Rf1, while making White's king awfully nervous.

14 Kd1 Rxa8 15 h3 Ngxe5



Let's assess:

- 1) The material count is Black's two minor pieces versus White's rook and two pawns which, on paper, should slightly favour White.
- 2) Black holds a massive lead in development.
- 3) Black's piece activity is overwhelming.
- 4) Numbers two and three on the list mean that White's king is unsafe, despite the fact that queens have been exchanged.

In conclusion White is borderline busted and fighting for his life.

16 Nd2 Ba6 17 Ne4 Bd4!

Black targets b2 to provoke c2-c3, which would weaken d3.

18 Bf4

After 18 c3?! Bb6 White can barely move.

18 ... Kg8

A less noble player would have been sorely tempted to play 18 ... Bxb2!, based on the principle: *pawns take on greater value in endings*. After 19 Rb1 Ba3 20 Rb3 Nc4 White remains busted.

19 Kc1 Rf8

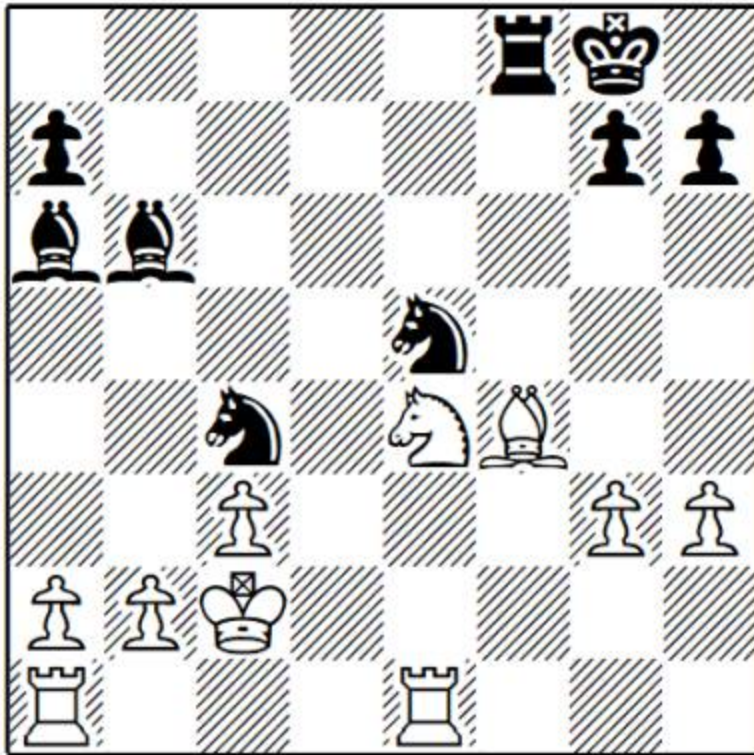
Also strong is 19 ... Bb7 20 Re1 Re8.

20 g3 Nc4 21 c3

Now it's safe to play c2-c3, since Black's grip on d3 has slightly weakened.

21 ... Bb6 22 Kc2 Nde5 23 Rhe1

After 23 a4 Bb7 24 Rhe1 Nf3 25 Re2 Ba6 26 a5 Nxa5 27 Re3 Bxe3 28 Bxe3 Rd8 29 Rxa5 Bd3+ 30 Kb3 Bxe4 31 Bxa7, White doesn't have enough for the piece.



Exercise (combination alert): White's position feels the invasive tug of the whirlpool, which attempts to suck him under. How did Black force the win of material?

23 ... Nf3!

Answer: Simply attack the e1-rook, which lacks safe squares.

24 b3!

The best move. Others:

a) 24 Re2? loses to 24 ... Nxb2.

b) 24 Rh1 Re8 25 Nd2 Re2 26 Rad1 g5! wins.

c) 24 Rf1 Rxf4! (removal of the guard) 25 gxf4 Ne3+ 26 Kb3 Bxf1 and the three pieces are too much for White's rook and two extra pawns.

24 ... Nxe1+ 25 Rxe1

Black is up a piece for two pawns but must be careful that White doesn't get the time to push the queenside pawn majority up the board.

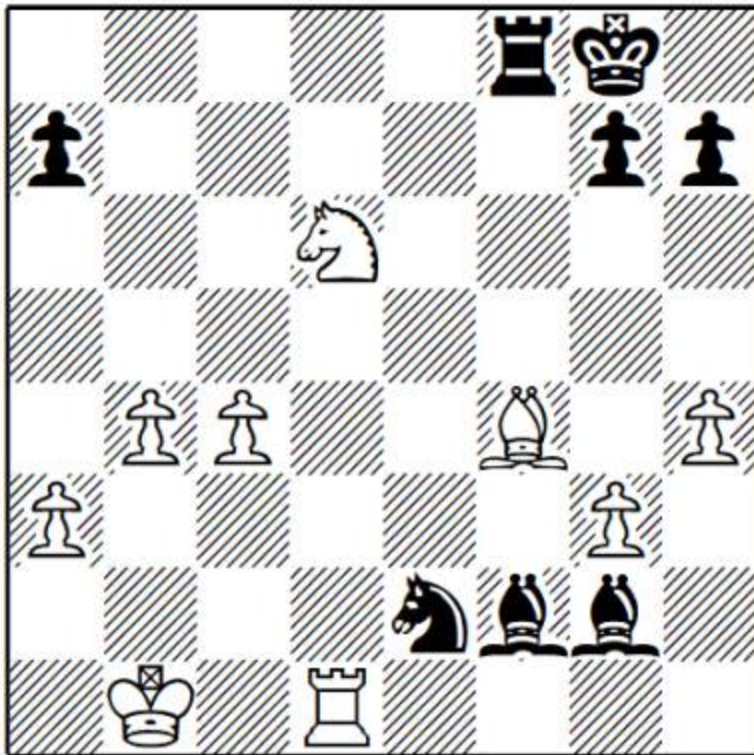
25 ... Na5 26 h4 Bb7 27 Nd6 Bd5

Black shouldn't give White the useful c3-c4 move for free. 27 ... Bf3 looks a touch more accurate.

28 c4 Bg2 29 b4 Nc6 30 a3 Bf2 31 Rd1

31 Re2?? is weapons-grade stupidity and gets forked by 31 ... Nd4+.

31 ... Nd4+ 32 Kb1 Ne2!



Threatening a fork on c3.

33 Rd2 Bf3 34 c5

White's queenside pawn majority starts to look rather scary, but Black has everything under control.

34 ... Be1! 35 Rd3

35 Rd1?? fails to 35 ... Nc3+.

35 ... Bh5!

With the dual threats of ... Bg6 and ... Nxf4.

36 Re3 Bf2!

The black bishops are harassing the white rook.

37 Re7

The rook is finally away from protection of f4. However, 37 Rb3 Bg6+ 38 Ka2 Bd4 39 a4 Nxf4 40 gxf4 Rxf4 41 c6 Rf2+ 42 Ka3 Rf1! (threatening mate on a1) 43 b5 Bc5+ 44 Ka2 Bxd6 wins.

37 ... Nxf4 38 gxf4 Bxh4 39 Rxa7 Bf3! 0-1

White is too slow in the mutual promotion race: 40 b5 Bf2 41 Rc7 h5 42 b6 h4 43 b7 h3 44 c6 h2 wins.

Game 2

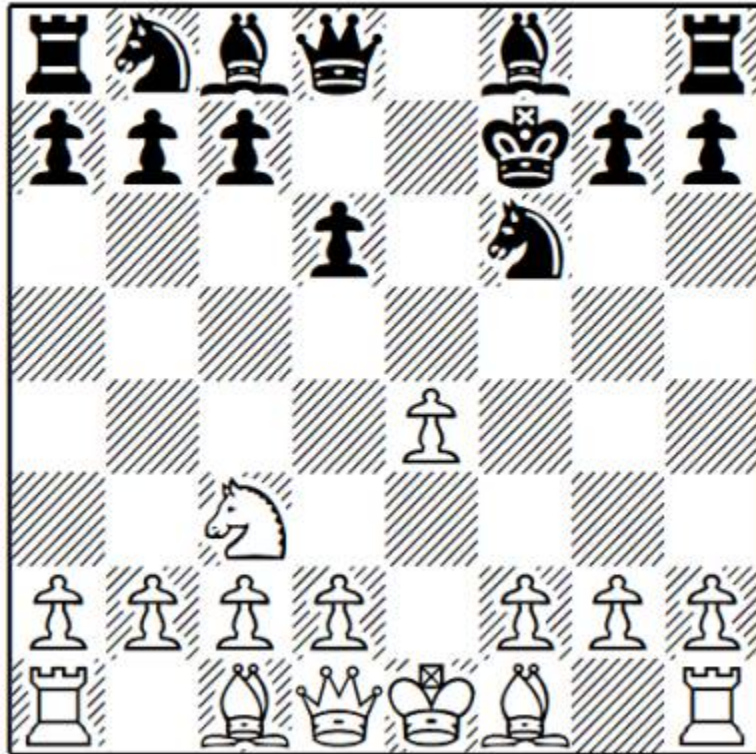
V.Ivanchuk-Li Chao

Huaian (rapid) 2016

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nxf7!?

Now you know – even world-class players are occasionally attracted to the sleazy/dangerous Cochrane Gambit.

4 ... Kxf7 5 Nc3



With this move White protects e4, catches up slightly in development and plans Bc4+, when Black's ... d6-d5 counter isn't as effective.

5 ... g6

This defensive move, which allows Black's king room to hide on g7, is currently Black's highest-scoring idea. Also possible are:

a) 5 ... c5 as suggested in *The Petroff: Move by Move*.

b) 5 ... Be6 also looks promising. After 6 d4 Kg8! Black's bishop is given a square on f7 and play can continue 7 f4 Nbd7 8 Be2 c5 9 Be3 Rc8 10 0-0 h5! (White must now watch out for ... Ng4) 11 h3 cxd4 12 Bxd4, A.Krzyzanowski-P.Jorgensen, ICCF email 2010. I prefer Black's chances after 12 ... Rh6.

6 d4

6 Bc4+ is also met by 6 ... Kg7 7 d4 c5!, affirming the Cochrane Gambit mantra for Black: "chip away at White's powerful centre, even if doing so costs us a third pawn for the piece". After 8 dxc5 Nc6 9 Be3 (White gets a third pawn with 9 cxd6?! at the cost of losing the initiative after 9 ... Bxd6 10 0-0 Be5, when Black stands substantially better) 9 ... dxc5 10 Qxd8

Nxd8 11 0-0-0 Be7, the two pawns aren't enough for White's piece, mainly since it's now an ending and Black's king remains relatively safe, E.Saglione-G.Glinz, ICCF email 2008.

6 ... Kg7!

Remember this idea. Black decides to fianchetto the king, rather than the bishop. The goal is to complete kingside development with ... Be7 and ... Rf8. Others:

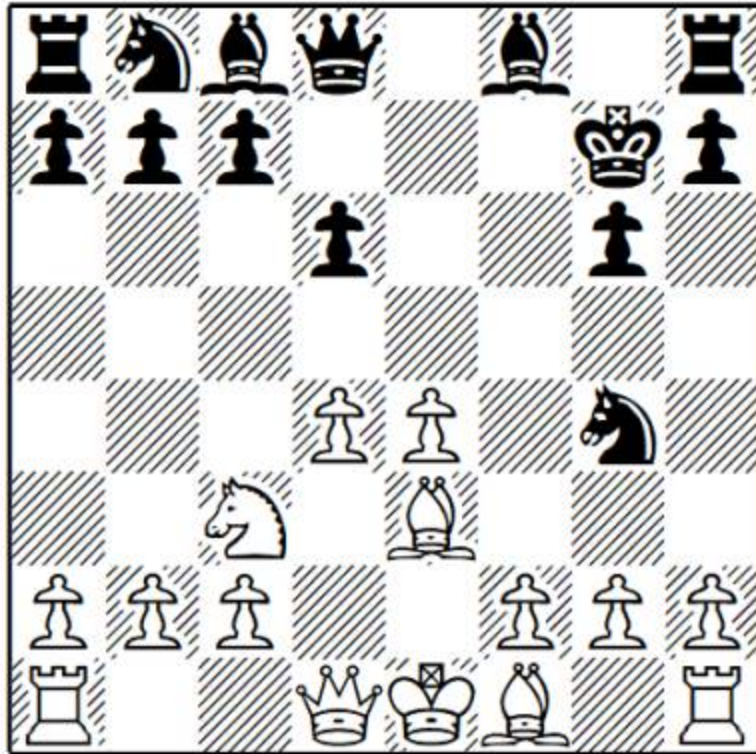
a) 6 ... Bg7 is Black's most popular response, although it costs Black time when White's bishop delivers a check on c4. White doesn't stand so badly after 7 Bc4+ Be6 8 Bxe6+ Kxe6 9 0-0 Kf7 10 f4. Here the central pawns look formidable and it feels like full compensation for the piece, M.Galyas-F.Pasztor, Hungary 1999.

b) 6 ... Be6 is interesting. Black is willing to hand White a tempo to shut down the a2-g8 diagonal: 7 Bd3 (after 7 d5 Bc8! 8 Bc4 Bg7 9 e5 dxe5 10 Bg5 Kf8 White lacks full compensation for the missing piece) 7 ... Bg7 8 0-0 Rf8 9 Bg5 (threatening e4-e5) 9 ... h6 10 Bd2 (after 10 Bh4 g5 11 Bg3 Kg8 Black has good chances) 10 ... Kg8 and Black stands well, since the king is well protected, H.Hoexter-F.Fritsche, email 2011.

7 Be3

This move is rare, with 7 Be2 being the main line. White covers the g4-square before playing Be3. After 7 ... Be7 8 Be3 the unplayed, yet thematic, 8 ... c5! either breaks up White's centre or forces the push to d5.

7 ... Ng4



This natural move which chases the e3-bishop is new. Previously seen was 7 ... Be7 8 f3, C.Skoulakis-K.Ballas, Ermioni Argolidas 2006, and now I prefer Black's chances after 8 ... Be6 9 Qd2 h6.

8 Bf4 Be7 9 Qd2 Rf8!?

A move made with the thought that timidity can only embolden an opponent who has already taken liberties. At first glance it appears as if Li Chao is willing to hand back an exchange to remove White's dark-squared bishop. However, this is not the case since Black has access to tactics on f2.

Far less creative (and safer) is 9 ... h6 10 h3 Nf6, when Black stands well.

10 Be2!

This threatens Bxg4 and Bh6+.

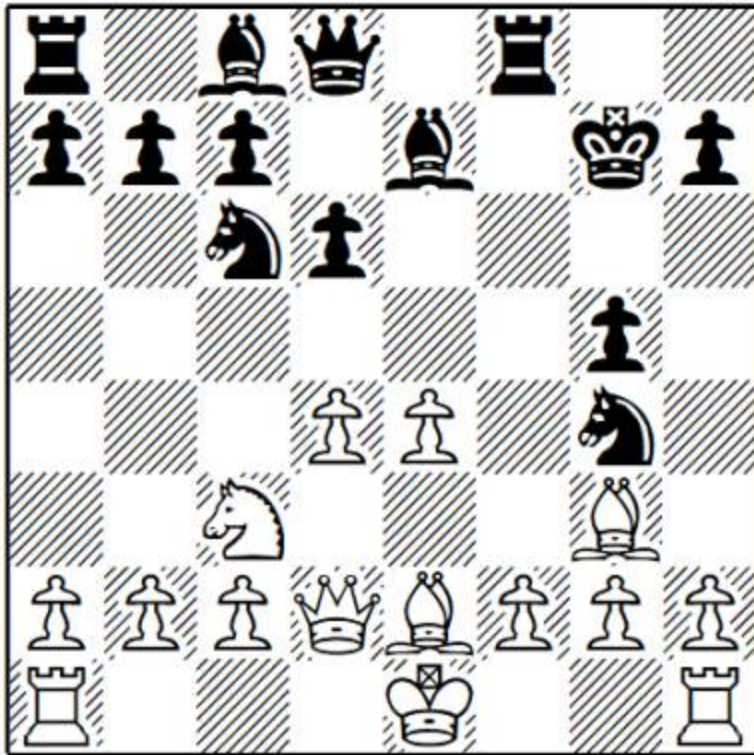
Ivanchuk avoids Black's trap. The complications favour Black if White bites with 10 h3?! Nxf2! 11 Rg1 (11 Bh6+ fails to win the exchange after 11 ... Kh8 since White's rook is also hanging) 11 ... Kh8 12 Be3 Bh4 13 g3 Nxh3 14 Bxh3 Bxh3 15 gxh4 Qxh4+ 16 Kd1 Nc6, when White's rooks remain disconnected and Black remains a pawn up, with the better chances.

10 ... g5!?

This move protects against a coming Bh6+ at the cost of loosening the cover around Black's slightly under-protected king. 10 ... Kh8 is a safer alternative.

11 Bg3 Nc6?

Correct is 11 ... Kh8! 12 f3 Nf6! and Black's g5-pawn is covered due to the discovered attack on White's e4-pawn.



The move played should drop an important pawn, and here lies the danger of the Cochrane Gambit. Despite an intrinsically inferior position at the start, White's game is easier to play and certainly generates practical chances. If Li Chao, a 2751-rated player, can mess up the defence, then anyone can. So be booked up on this chapter, even though you won't face the Cochrane Gambit very often.

Exercise (planning): How can White seize a clear advantage?

12 Nd5?!

Ivanchuk incorrectly rejects his opportunity.

Answer: After 12 f3! Nf6 (12 ... Nh6?! is even worse: 13 Nd5! and Black's dark-squared bishop is removed from the board and White has a winning attack) 13 Qxg5+ Kh8 14 Qe3, White picked up a third solid pawn for the piece and stands slightly better.

12 ... h6?!

Nobody said it was easy to navigate the Black side of the Cochrane Gambit. Correct was 12 ... Nf6!, when White doesn't have time for 13 Qxg5+? Kh8 14 Nxe7 Qxe7 15 Bd3 Nxd4 16 0-0-0 Rg8 17 Qd2 Nc6 18 f4 Be6. Black has the superior chances since his extra piece is worth more than White's potential to attack.

13 Bxg4?!

Better is 13 h4!, giving White an attack after 13 ... Nf6! (not 13 ... gxh4? 14 Nxe7 Qxe7 15 Rxh4 Qxe4 16 0-0-0 and Black is busted) 14 f3 Nh5 15 Bf2 Nf4 16 0-0-0 and Black's king is in deep trouble.

13 ... Bxg4 14 f3?!

White only stands a shade worse after 14 0-0 Bd7 15 f4!.

14 ... Be6! 15 0-0-0

15 c4 Bf7 16 h4 Bf6! 17 hxg5 hxg5 favours Black.

15 ... Bxd5!

A smart decision for the following reasons:

- 1) White's potential attacking force is reduced.
- 2) White's queenside majority becomes crippled, so in effect White only gets one pawn, rather than two, for the sacrificed piece.
- 3) The exchange weakens e6 and Black's light squares in general, yet numbers one and two more than compensate for these drawbacks.

16 exd5 Nb8 17 Rde1 Nd7 18 Re6 Rf6

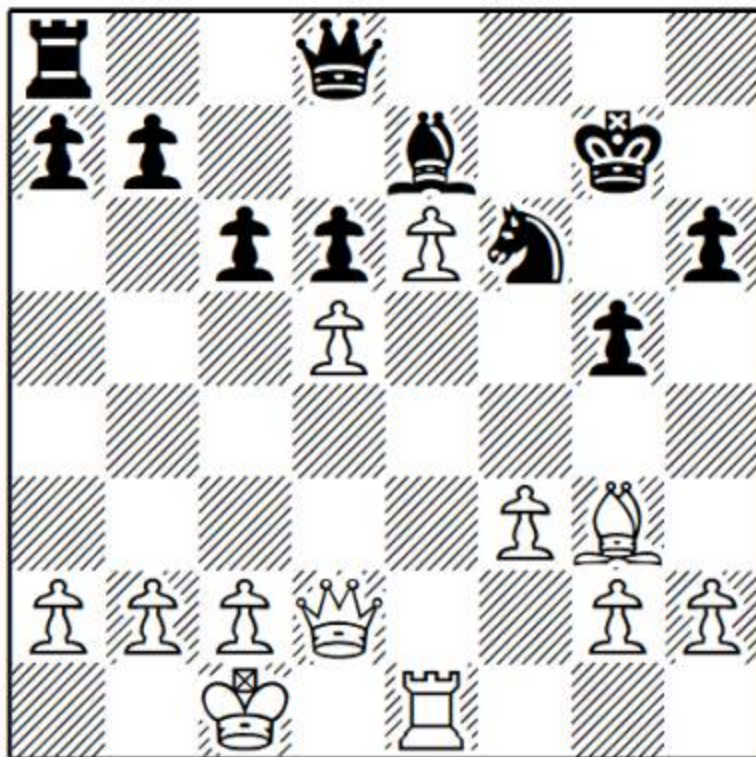
Perhaps Black should reserve the rook for h8 with 18 ... Bf6! 19 h4 Rh8 20 hxg5 hxg5 21 Rhe1 Nf8 22 R6e4 Qd7 23 Kb1 Ng6 24 c4 Qf7, when Black has unravelled and should convert.

19 Rhe1 Rxe6!?

While the exchange continues to reduce White's attacking force, it also allows White a deeply passed e6-pawn, while also "uncrippling" White's queenside majority. The calmer 19 ... Rf7 20 Qd3 Nf8 was also to be considered.

20 dxe6 Nf6

The human move, which keeps Black's king safe. The fearless computer insists that Black send the knight in the opposite direction with 20 ... Nb6!?.
21 d5 c6!



Principle: *chip away at the base of your opponent's pawn chain.* This move:

- 1) Breaks up White's bind.
- 2) Activates Black's central pawns.
- 3) May open the b-file for Black's rook.

22 dxc6

22 Qc3 is met by 22 ... Qb6 23 h4 Qb5! (now White is forced to resolve the central pawn tension) 24 dxc6 Qxc6 with advantage to Black.

22 ... bxc6 23 h4

White's best chance is to go after Black's scantily protected king. The problem is that White doesn't have a lot of raw material left with which to attack.

23 ... Nh5

23 ... Nd5 24 c4 gxh4 25 Qd4+ Nf6 26 Qxh4 Qe8! also favours Black.

24 Bf2 c5

Preventing White's bishop from transferring to d4.

25 Kb1 Rb8

At long last, Black makes an aggressive gesture. Delayed payback is the lot in life for the Petroff enthusiast.

26 b3 a5!?

Black switches to full aggression mode, intending ... a5-a4, loosening the pawn cover around White's king. The move is rather huffy and should actually just hang the a-pawn. 26 ... Qf8! safely retains Black's advantage.

27 hxg5 hxg5 28 Be3!?

Ivanchuk fails to grab Black's a5-pawn, not because he is unable but because he doesn't want it. White can also pick up a third pawn, at the steep cost of losing the initiative, with 28 Rh1 Qe8 29 Be3 Qg6 30 Qxa5 Ng3 31 Re1 Nf5 32 Qc7 Re8 33 a4. Here White's a-pawn is a source of dangerous counterplay, but Black's chances are to be preferred after 33 ... Nxe3 34 Rxe3 Qf6! with a coming dark-square attack.

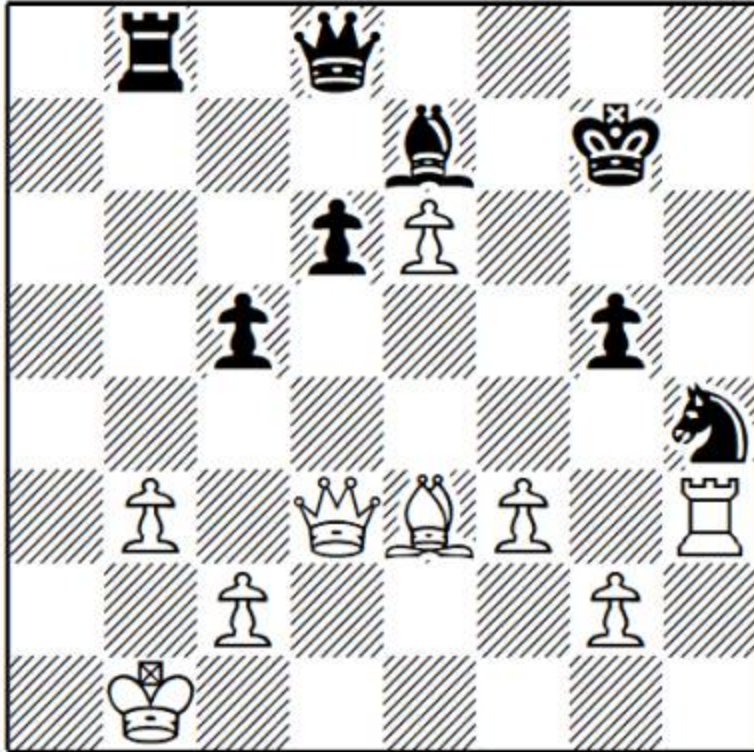
28 ... a4 29 Rh1 axb3! 30 axb3

30 Rxh5?? is out of the question. After 30 ... bxa2+ 31 Ka1 Bf6+ 32 c3 Qa5, White can resign.

30 ... Ng3 31 Rh3 Nf5 32 Qd3?!

White only looks slightly worse after 32 Rh5!.

32 ... Nh4!



Now White is in deep trouble, no matter how he responds.

33 f4

Or:

a) 33 g3 Bf6! 34 Bd2! (34 gxh4?? Qa5 is a winning attack for Black, since 35 Kc1 is met by 35 ... Qe1+ 36 Qd1 Qxe3+) 34 ... Ng6 35 Bc3 Qe7 36 Rh5 Qxe6 37 Rxc3 Bxc3 38 Qxc3+ Qf6 and White is busted.

b) 33 Rg3 Ra8 34 Bd2 Bf6 35 Bc3 Bxc3 36 Qxc3+ Qf6 37 Rxc3 Ng6 38 Qb2 Qxb2+ 39 Kxb2 Kf6 40 Rg4 Ne5 41 Rh4 Rg8 42 Rh2 Kxe6 and Black should be able to convert the ending with good technique.

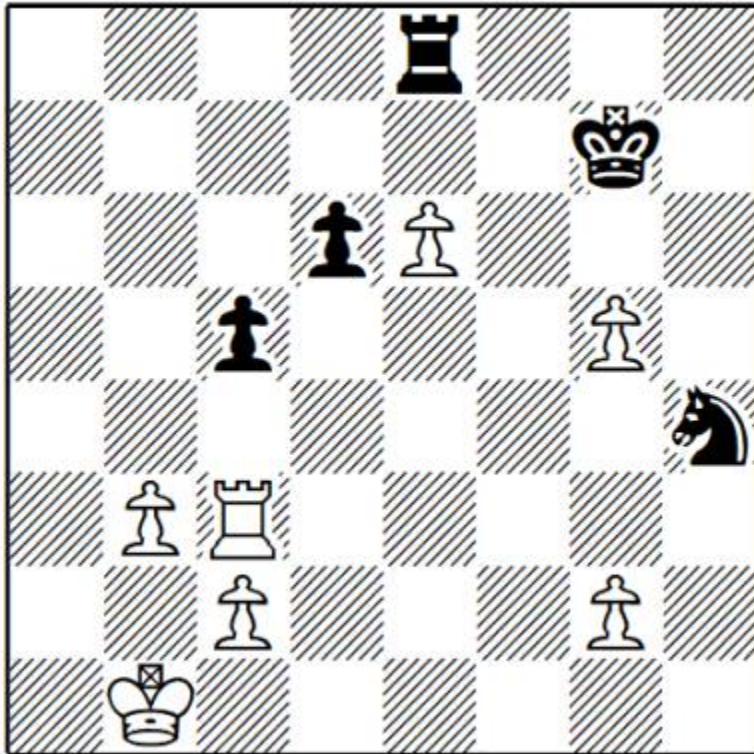
33 ... Ra8! 34 Bd2

34 fxg5?? loses to 34 ... Qa5 35 Kc1 Qe1+ 36 Qd1 Ra1+.

34 ... Bf6 35 Bc3 Bxc3 36 Qxc3+

Ivanchuk's urge to attack is finally laid to rest. Queens are soon to be removed.

36 ... Qf6 37 fxg5 Qxc3 38 Rxc3 Re8



White's three isolanis are chronically weak and the ending is hopeless.

39 Re3 Nxc2 40 Re4 Kg6 41 b4!

Principle: *the piece down side in an ending optimizes drawing chances by reducing the number of pawns.*

41 ... Kf5 42 Re2

42 Rc4 is met by 42 ... cxb4.

42 ... Nf4 43 Rd2 Rxe6 44 bxc5 dxc5 45 Kb2

If White can remove Black's c-pawn from the board, the game is drawn. Unfortunately for Ivanchuk, there is no way to achieve this goal.

45 ... Re3

Cutting off White's king.

46 Rd8 Kxg5 47 Rf8

This attempt to keep Black's king out is only temporary.

47 ... Ne6 48 Rf1 Nd4

Intending ... Re2. Also winning is 48 ... Nf4 49 Ra1 Kf5 50 Ra5 Ne6 51 Ra8 Ke5.

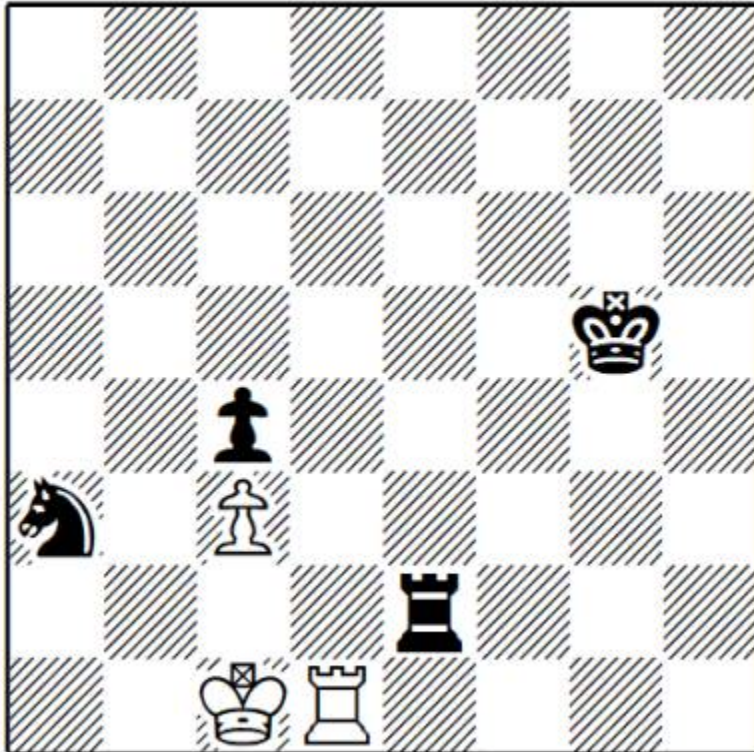
49 c3

If 49 Rf7 Re2 50 Kc3 Rxc2+ 51 Kd3 Rc1 52 Ke4 Nb3, Black will convert, even without the help of his king.

49 ... Nb5 50 Rc1 c4!

The b2-pariah is kept out of the fold, since Black's last move denies White's now sealed-in king access to b3.

51 Rd1 Re2+ 52 Kc1 Na3!



Threatening mate on c2.

53 Rd5+ Kf4 0-1

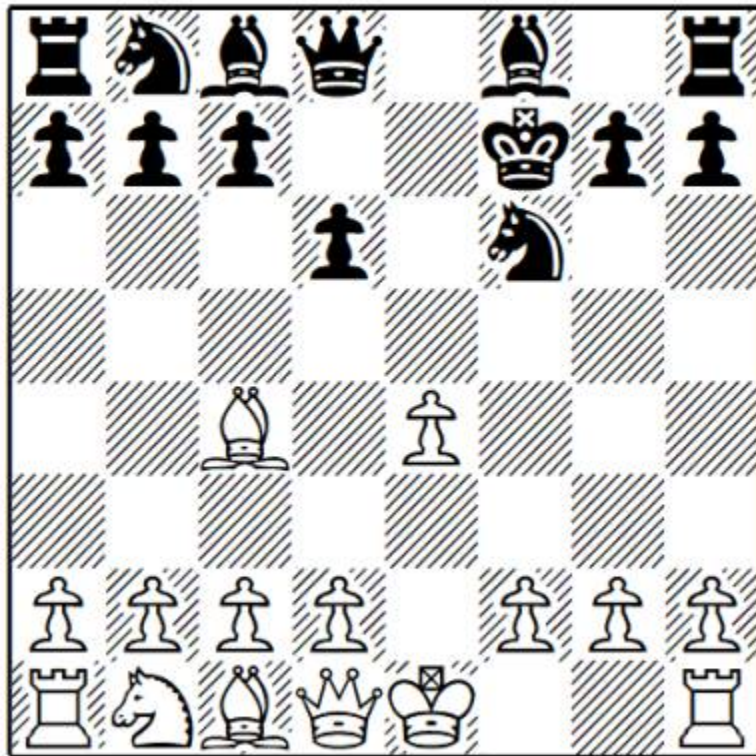
Since 54 Ra5 Rc2+ 55 Kd1 Rxc3 56 Kd2 Rb3 secures the win.

Game 3

M.Albrecht-P.Tropf

Email 2013

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nxf7 Kxf7 5 Bc4+?



A move in violation of the ancient (pseudo-) principle: *develop your knights before your bishops*. If this principle were actually true, then openings like 1 b3, 1 g3, the Modern Defence and Owen's Defence would all be unplayable. In *The Petroff: Move by Move* I gave White's last move – a self-defeating scheme – a dubious mark. Here I'm downgrading it to a full question mark, since White is essentially busted after playing it. The bishop check is by far the worst of White's fifth move responses, since it allows Black to break up the flexibility of White's centre with a pawn sacrifice.

5 ... d5!

Offering a third pawn is stronger than 5 ... Be6 6 Bxe6+ Kxe6 7 0-0. The computer likes Black here, whereas in real life White scores heavily from this position.

6 exd5

6 Bb3 can be met by the strong 6 ... c5! (which is actually a theoretical novelty, threatening ... c5-c4 and forcing White's next move) 7 exd5 Qe8+! (White either loses castling rights or must exchange queens, the lesser evil) 8 Qe2 Qxe2+ 9 Kxe2 b5! (threatening to smother Black's bishop) 10 d3

Ba6! (intending to push the c5-pawn one square further) 11 a4 (11 c4? fails to 11 ... bxc4 12 dxc4 Nxd5) 11 ... c4! 12 axb5 cxb3 13 bxa6 bxc2 and White is saddled with weak pawns all over the place and lacks compensation for the piece.

6 ... Bd6!

This is even stronger than exchanging queens with a check on e8. It is White's king, not Black's, who is in danger due to Black's development lead and open f-file.

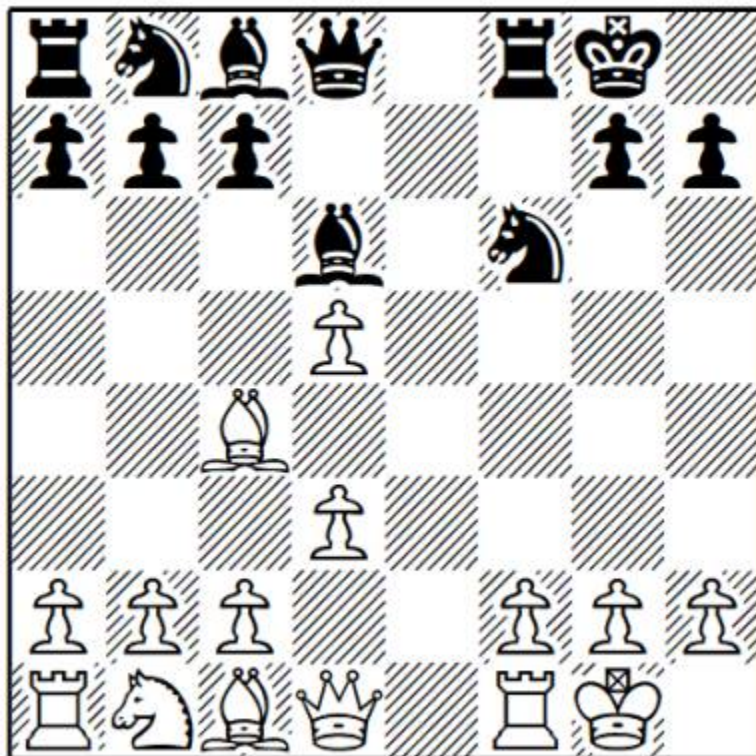
7 0-0 Rf8!

White scores a rather sorry 13.6% from this position.

8 d3

8 d4 is White's main move. After 8 ... Kg8 9 h3 Bf5 10 Bb3 b5 11 a4 bxa4 12 Rxa4 Qe8 13 Nd2 Qg6 14 Kh1 Bg4! 15 Nf3 (White is also busted after 15 f3 Bd7) 15 ... Qh5 16 Kg1 Nbd7!, Black achieved a winning attack in D.Reinderman-M.Bosboom, Groningen 1995. This game is annotated in *The Petroff: Move by Move*.

8 ... Kg8



Once glance at White's position and we find it wanting:

- 1) Black has "castled" after all and plans to exploit the open f-file against White's king.
- 2) Black's pieces are all conveniently aimed at said king.
- 3) Black leads in development.
- 4) White's three pawns for the piece are not enough, especially when we factor in that the queenside majority is crippled with doubled d-pawns.

9 Bg5 Qe8!

The queen wants to slide over to g6 and go after White's king. The move is more accurate than 9 ... Nbd7, when 10 Re1 temporarily cuts off ... Qe8.

10 Re1?

After this White is unable to keep even a single one of his previous defensive promises. When your stocks are quoted at ten times their actual worth, then every good broker will tell you not to delay and sell, since a market crash is coming and you may find yourself selling pencils on the street corner. White therefore had to try 10 Bxf6 Rxf6 11 Nc3, when he stands considerably worse but at least can keep fighting.

10 ... Qg6 11 Bxf6

11 Bh4 is slaughtered by 11 ... Ng4 12 Bg3 Qh6 13 h3 Nxf2! 14 Bxf2 Qf4 (invasion on h2 can't be prevented) 15 Qd2 Qh2+ 16 Kf1 Bxh3! 17 gxh3 Nd7 18 Nc3 Qxh3+ 19 Ke2 Rxf2+! 20 Kxf2 Qh2+ 21 Ke3 Bf4+, which wins the queen while forcing mate.

11 ... Qxf6

Now Black can recapture with the queen, with a double attack on f2 and b2.

12 Rf1 Qe5

Black isn't even interested in White's free b2-pawn and, instead, goes directly after White's vulnerable king.

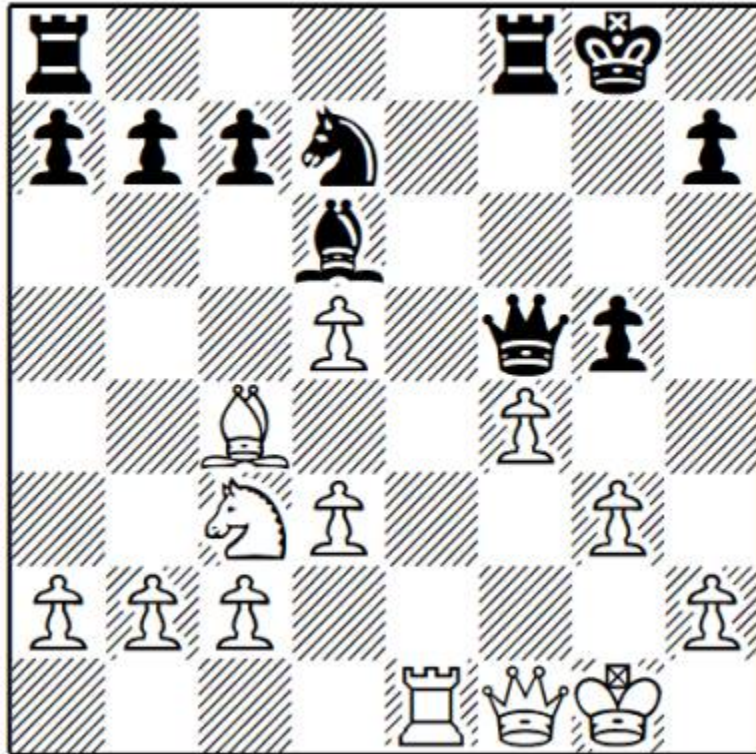
13 g3 Bh3 14 Nc3

He must hand over the exchange since allowing 14 Re1 Qf6 15 Qe2 Bc5 is even worse.

14 ... Bxf1 15 Qxf1

Three pawns for the rook aren't nearly enough.

15 ... Nd7 16 Re1 Qf5 17 f4 g5!



Black isn't satisfied with just exchanging and converting his overwhelming material advantage.

18 Nb5

18 fxg5 loses the queen to 18 ... Bc5+ 19 Kg2 Qxg5 20 Qe2 Rf2+.

18 ... gxf4 19 Nxc7!

A clever trick. The problem is that Black can simply ignore it and proceed with his attack.

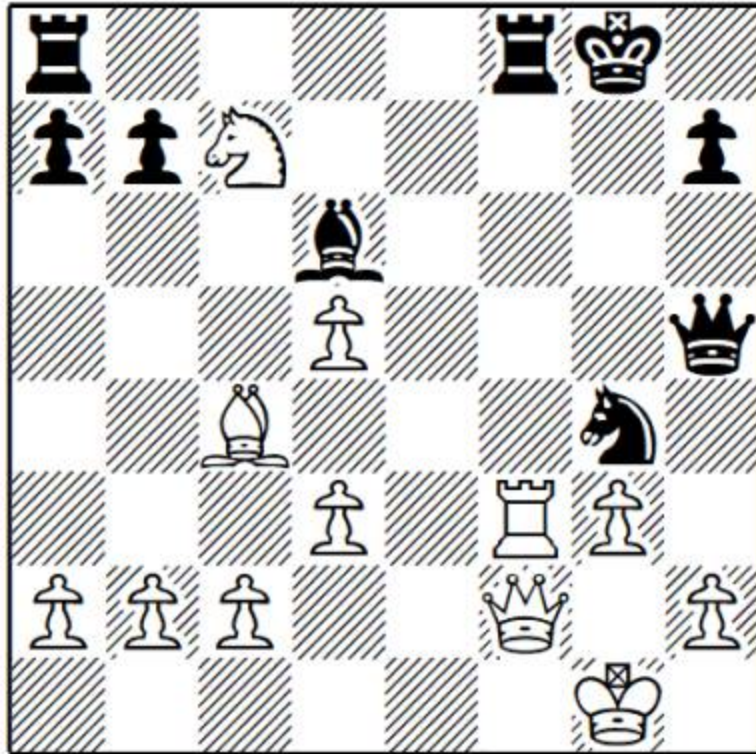
19 ... f3!

Threatening ... f3-f2+, so White doesn't have the time to chop the a8-rook.

20 Qf2 Nf6! 21 Re3

Black obviously isn't about to give White the time to chop the f3-pawn. 21 Re4 Rac8 is also hopeless for White.

21 ... Ng4 22 Rxf3 Qh5!



Now the white defenders stumble forth in imitation of distressed wasps from a burning hive. 22 ... Qxf3 also wins easily after 23 Qxf3 Rxf3 24 Nxa8 Ne3!.

23 Nxa8 Nxf2 24 Rxf8+ Kxf8 25 Kxf2

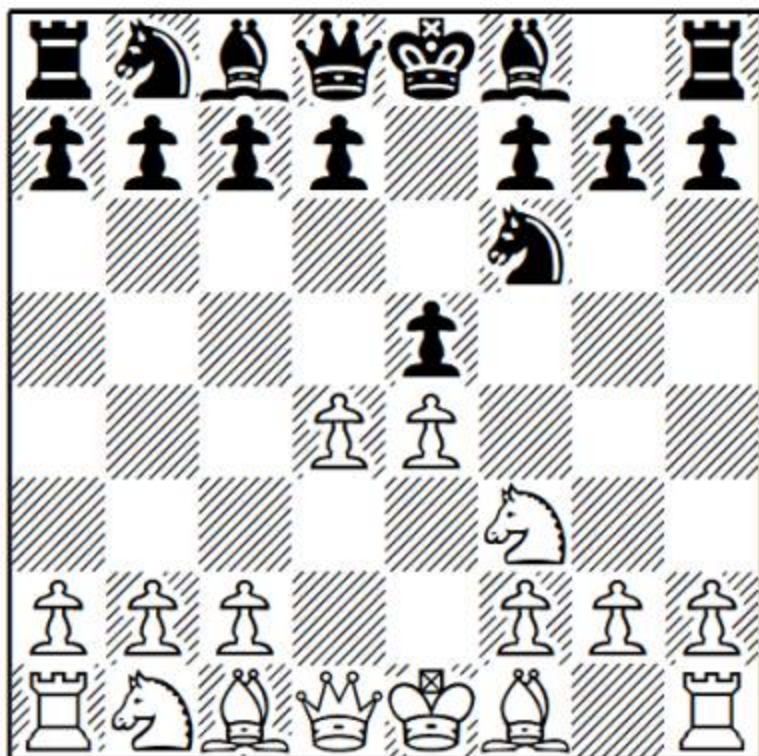
As you may have surmised, one piece and a few pawns aren't enough for a queen in an ending.

25 ... Qxh2+ 0-1

This forces mate in seven. If Black were sadistic he could even win the wayward a8-knight with 25 ... Qe8.

Chapter Two

The Scotch Petroff



With 3 d4, the position resembles a Scotch Game more than an actual Petroff. When we say “I like the Petroff and hate the Dragon Sicilian”, where do we get these likes and dislikes? Most players who opt for the Petroff as Black like stable, strategic positions. In this chapter I’m offering you the option for stable or wild, depending on your fourth move choice.

Game 4

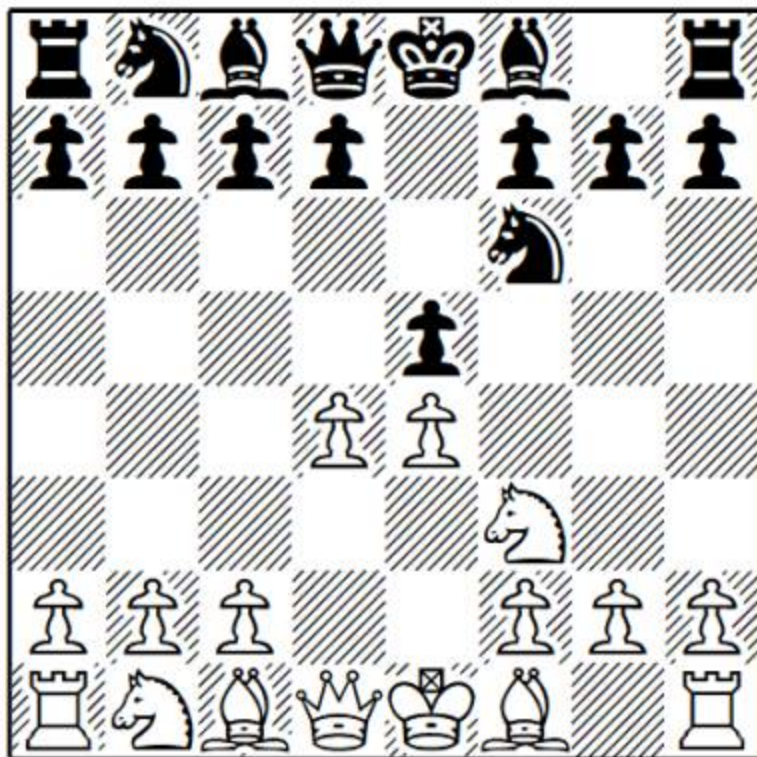
G.Palchun-I.Bocharov

Russian Team Championship 2018

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6

This game begins with the peaceful Petroff and ends up turning into something so scary that perhaps the invention of a new word is needed to properly describe it.

3 d4



This is the Scotch Petroff. In the next chapter we examine 3 Nxe5, which leads to the main lines of the Petroff.

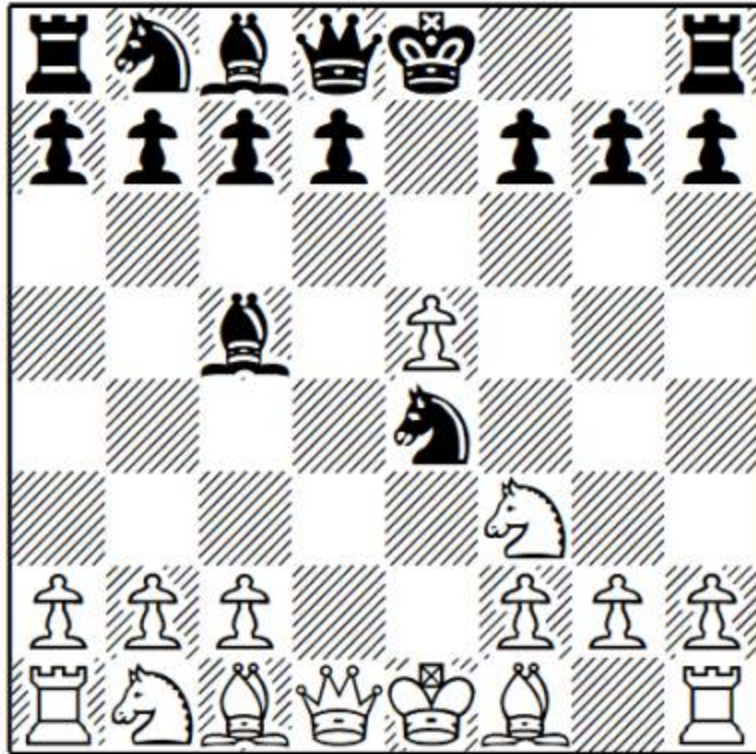
3 ... Nxe4

This is Black's main response.

4 dxe5!?

This move permits Black to play ... Bc5, taking aim at f2. Be warned that certain lines in this chapter and the next can sometimes merge. For example, 4 Nxe5 d6 (4 ... d5 5 Bd3 Nd7 is another line covered later on in the book) 5 Nf3 d5 6 Bd3 leads to a position we cover heavily in the next chapter.

4 ... Bc5!?



Is there such a thing as a violent Petroff player? Yes.

4 ... Bc5 invites incredible complications. Keep in mind this crazy version is completely voluntary for Black. If the complications don't appeal to you, then go for the more stable 4 ... d5, which we cover at the end of the chapter and is more heavily covered in *The Petroff: Move by Move*. Usually, entry into such a testing line is the choice of chess aristocracy, rather than us common folk.

If you decide to play 4 ... Bc5!?, then be sure to study the hell out of it. These are *not* wing-it lines for either side. This is a line scaled for the mathematically inclined, so know it well before you attempt to weave its maze. This line is exceedingly sharp and the positions which arise are more suited for players living in the 19th century than in our present day. As previously mentioned, if you don't like this line then you can go for 4 ... d5 which is the more sober option we will examine later.

5 Qd5!?

When we try and remember mainstream theory, it's as hopeless as attempting to remember your high school locker combinations, from 9th

through 12th grades. Palchun plays with his heart, instead of his head. White decides to weird it up with a secondary move in a secondary variation. This isn't much of a double attack when one of the attacked pieces can take a pawn with check.

In the next game we look at the alternatives 5 Bc4 and 5 Be3.

Note that 5 Nd4?? fails miserably to 5 ... Nxf2! 6 Kxf2 Qh4+ 7 Ke3 d6! (threatening ... d6xe5). If 8 exd6 then 8 ... Nc6 9 c3 Bf5! cuts off the white king's escape route via d3 and Black has a crushing attack.

5 ... Bxf2+ 6 Kd1

There is no point in trying to win a piece with 6 Ke2?!, as after 6 ... f5 7 exf6 Nxf6 8 Qe5+ Kf7 9 Ng5+ (9 Kxf2?? gets forked with 9 ... Ng4+) 9 ... Kg8, irritatingly, White's king still can't touch Black's tactically defended bishop on f2.

6 ... f5 7 Bc4 Rf8!?

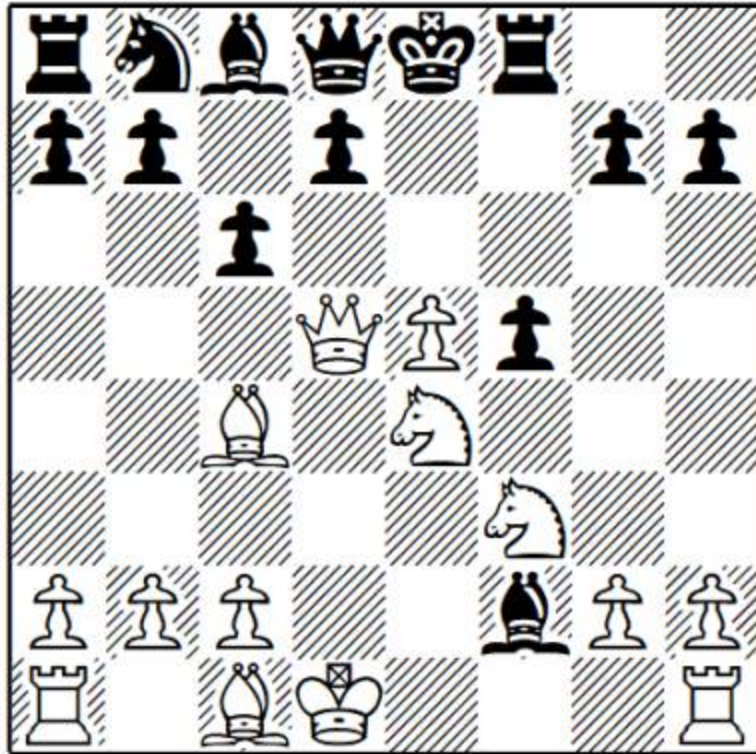
Sometimes newer isn't necessarily better. This is an attempt at an improvement, and ends up being no improvement. I chose this game for the book, mainly because I wanted to demonstrate to the reader that playing the Petroff isn't automatically a snoozefest. This game is perhaps the wildest in the entire book.

Stronger is the older line 7 ... Qe7! 8 Nc3 c6 9 Qd3 b5! 10 Bb3 a5 11 a4 b4 12 Nxe4 fxe4 13 Qe2 (13 Qxe4 d5 14 Qe2 Bc5 15 Bg5 Qe6 looks rather awful for White) 13 ... d5!, as in L.Bruzon Batista-V.Ivanchuk, Merida 2007. Ivanchuk stood clearly better and went on to win. This game is annotated in *The Petroff: Move by Move*.

8 Nc3 c6

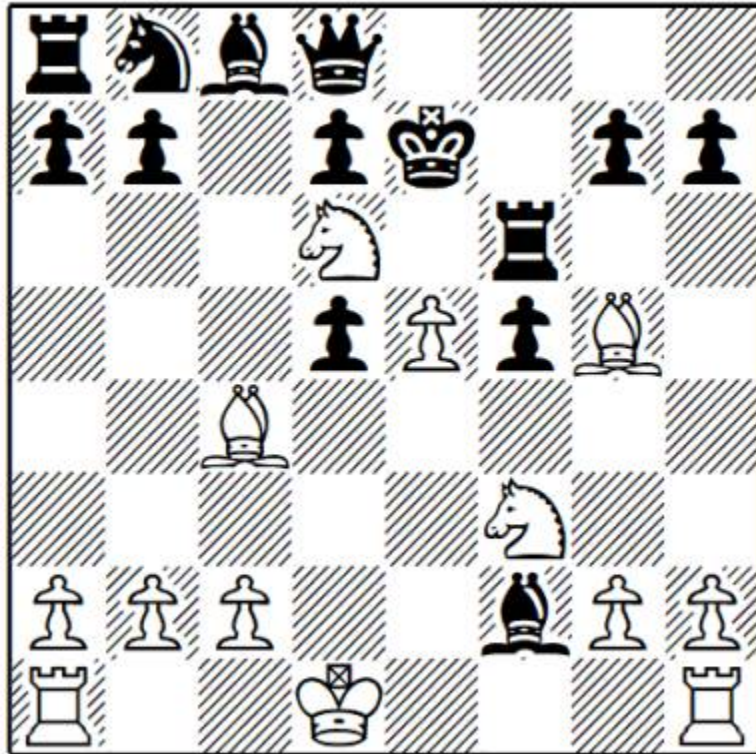
8 ... Nxc3+? 9 bxc3 Qe7 10 Rf1 Bb6 11 a4! is clearly in White's favour, who threatens both a4-a5 and Be3.

9 Nxe4!



So you thought the Petroff was a dull opening? The players' interests overlap on d6 and White strikes with a sharpshooter's eye for timing. After White's queen sacrifice the computer may call it dead even, yet we wiser humans understand that, from a practical perspective, it is harder navigating the defence since Black's king will bounce around in mid-board for some time to come.

9 ... cxd5 10 Nd6+ Ke7 11 Bg5+ Rf6!



Black must add to the already mounting death toll. “Who stands better?” you ask? Unfortunately, your writer is unskilled in the art of divination, so I’m as confused as you are. The position devolves into utter chaos and the computer unhelpfully calls it dead even at 0.00, which translated to human speech is, “Huh?!”.

11 ... Ke6? 12 Bxd8 dxc4 13 Rf1 is better for White.

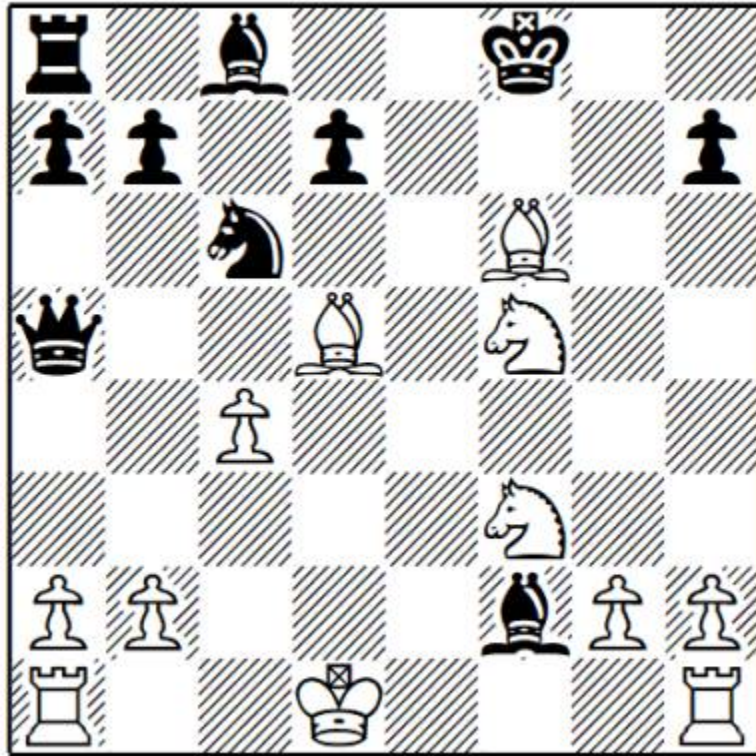
12 Bxd5 Qa5?!

Black wants to punish his opponent for his earlier queen sacrifice and may be overplaying his hand. He refuses a draw and now stands worse. Objectively stronger was 12 ... Nc6!, which allows White a draw after 13 Nxf5+, following a spider’s web of tactical connections: 13 ... Kf8 14 exf6 gxf6 15 Bh6+ Ke8 16 Nd6+ Ke7 17 Nf5+ Ke8 18 Nd6+ results in perpetual check.

13 c4!

White has the superior chances in the head-spinning complications. He correctly avoided the tempting but inaccurate line 13 Nxc8+?! Kf8 14 Bxb7 Rc6! 15 Nd6 Qa4!, when Black stands at least equal.

13 ... Nc6 14 Nxf5+ Kf8 15 exf6 gxf6 16 Bxf6



Let's take a look at the scorecard. For the queen, White has:

- 1) Rook, piece and a pawn, which is virtually even materially.
- 2) An open f-file for the rook.
- 3) Black's king is dangerously exposed.
- 4) Black's queenside is grossly underdeveloped.

In conclusion, White has the better chances.

16 ... Nb4

White's powerfully centralized d5-bishop must be challenged.

17 Bc3

More accurate was 17 Bg7+! Ke8 18 Rf1 Bc5 19 Bc3.

17 ... Qb6?!

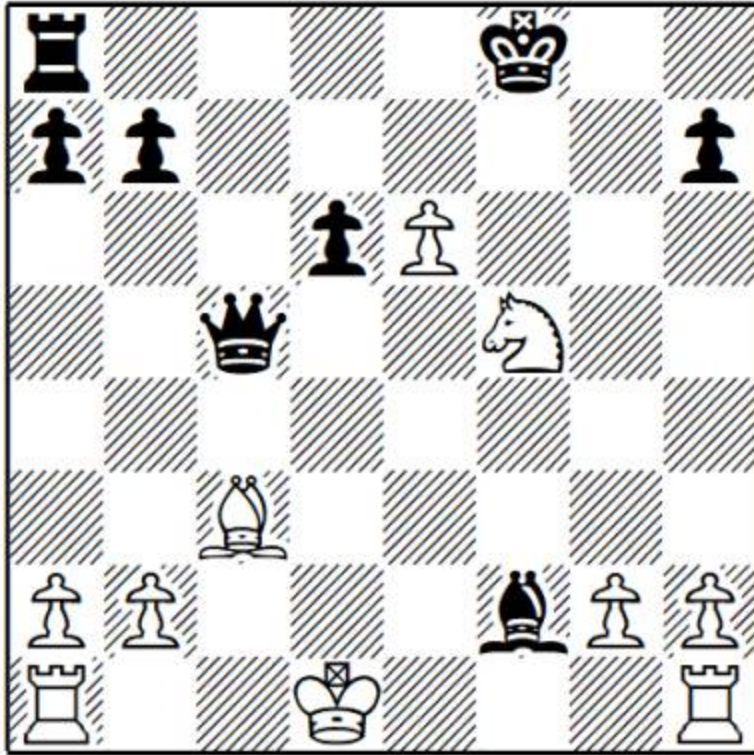
Black desperately needed to develop his queenside pieces with 17 ... d6!.

18 Ng5?

The wrong track. Black is in trouble if White finds 18 Bxb4+! Qxb4 19 Kc2 d6 20 N5d4 Kg7 21 Rhf1 Bxd4 22 Nxd4 Bd7 23 a3! (23 Rf7+ Kh8 24

Rxd7?? Qa4+ pops the loose d7-rook) 23 ... Qc5 24 Rf7+ Kh8 25 Rxd7 Qxd4 26 Rxb7 Re8 27 Rd1 and Black is busted.

18 ... Nxd5 19 cxd5 d6 20 Ne6+ Bxe6 21 dxe6 Qc5?!



Black missed 21 ... Bg1!, threatening ... Qf2 and ... Qxg2.

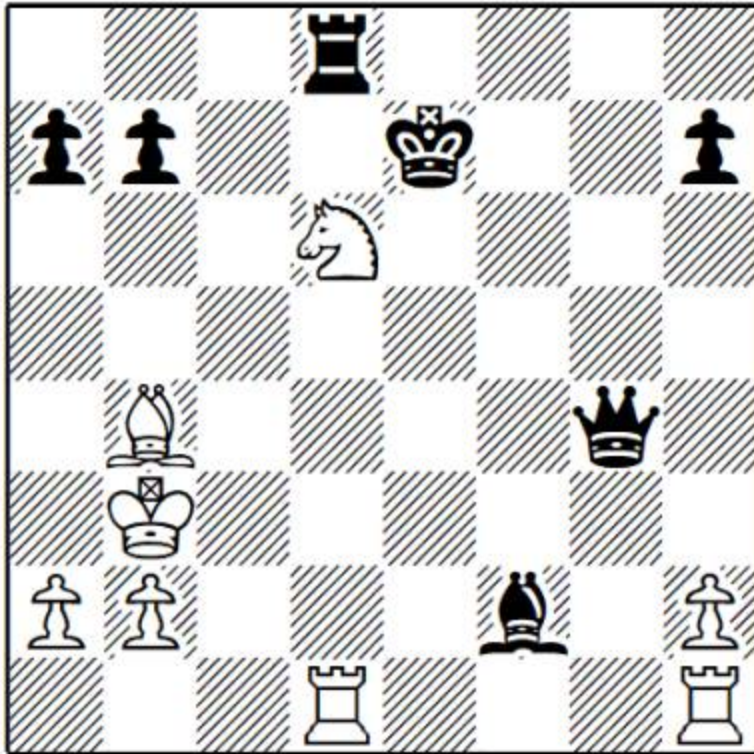
22 e7+?

22 g4! Qd5+ 23 Ke2 Bc5 24 Rhf1 Qxe6+ 25 Kf3 isn't so clear.

22 ... Ke8 23 g4 Qd5+ 24 Kc2 Qe4+ 25 Kb3 Qxg4 26 Nxd6+ Kxe7

White has lost the initiative.

27 Rad1 Rd8 28 Bb4



Exercise (planning): What is Black's winning plan?

28 ... Ke6?

Answer: Black misses 28 ... a5! 29 Ba3 (29 Nf5+ Ke6 30 Rxd8 Qxb4+ 31 Kc2 Qe4+ picks off the rook in the corner pocket) 29 ... Ke6 30 Kc2 b5!, winning material, no matter how White continues.

29 Rhf1?

29 a4! is White's best practical chance.

29 ... a5!

Now he sees it.

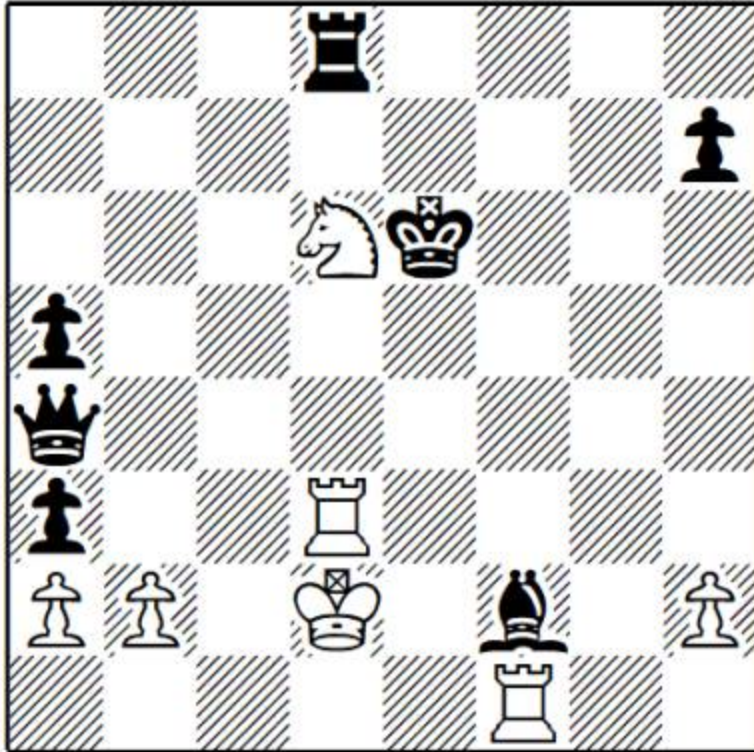
30 Ba3 b5!

There is no remedy for the coming ... b5-b4.

31 Rd3 Qa4+ 32 Kc3 b4+

White's poor bishop is the rejected sinner, locked outside heaven's gate, with no option but to take the escalator down to hell.

33 Kd2 bxa3 0-1



Unless White has the power to revive the dead, he is hopelessly busted:
 34 Rxf2 Qb4+ 35 Kd1 Rxd6 and it's game over.

Game 5

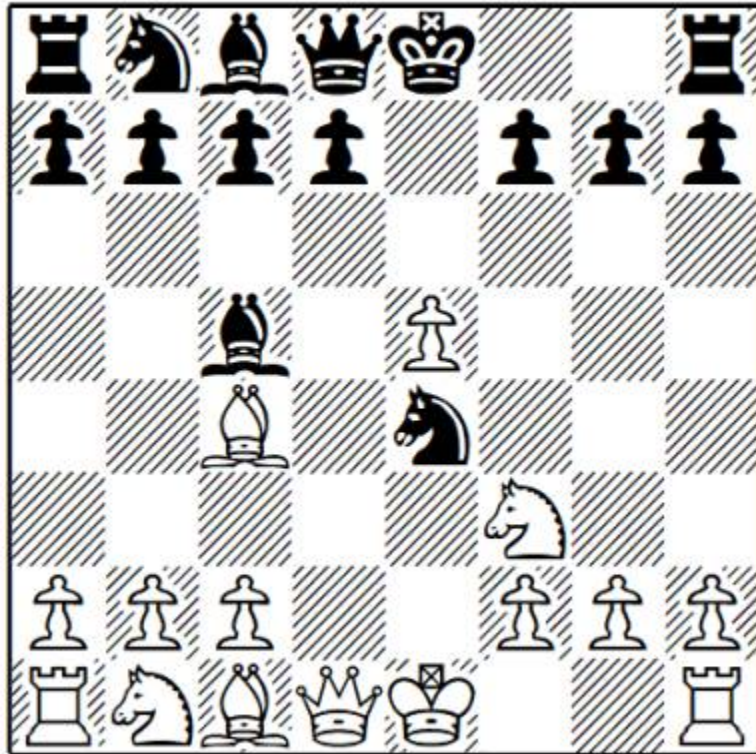
T.Turgut-R.Moll

ICCF email 2013

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 d4 Nxe4 4 dxe5 Bc5!?

The wearing of disguises is subterfuge at its highest level. The game with the meek Petroff, and then Black accepts the invitation to enter a drunken fist fight in the bar. So if your style allows for it, do not miss the opportunity to inject a dose of drama into an otherwise sober opening.

5 Bc4



White ignores both ... Nxf2 and ... Bxf2 threats and calmly develops. In the next game we consider 5 Be3.

5 ... Nxf2!

Black remains equal only after this capture. Others:

a) 5 ... d5?! is better for White after 6 Qxd5 Qxd5 7 Bxd5 Nxf2 8 Rf1 Ng4 9 Nc3, J.Hector-A.Moen, Oslo 2016. Black found himself dangerously lagging in development, in an already open position.

b) 5 ... Bxf2+?! 6 Kf1 (threatening Qd5) 6 ... d5 (not 6 ... f5?? 7 exf6 Qxf6 8 Qd3 Qg6 9 Bf7+!, when White wins a piece) 7 Qxd5 Qxd5 8 Bxd5 f5 9 exf6 Nxf6 10 Kxf2 Nxd5 11 Re1+ with a serious development lead for White in the ending.

6 Bxf7+

6 Qd5? makes no sense since Black has the simple 6 ... Qe7 which covers both f7 and c5. After 7 Rf1 c6 8 Qd2 d5 9 Be2 Ne4, White found himself a pawn down with a bad position in P.Kurumanov-G.Nagibin, Moscow 2009.

6 ... Kxf7 7 Qd5+

The double attack regains the piece.

7 ... Kg6!

The only move. Black plans to “castle” via ... h7-h6, ... Kh7 and ... Rf8.

After 7 ... Ke8? 8 Bg5! Be7 9 Bxe7 Qxe7 10 Kxf2 White has a clear advantage due to the dangerous lead in development, I.Kurnosov-B.Lalic, Hinckley Island 2009.

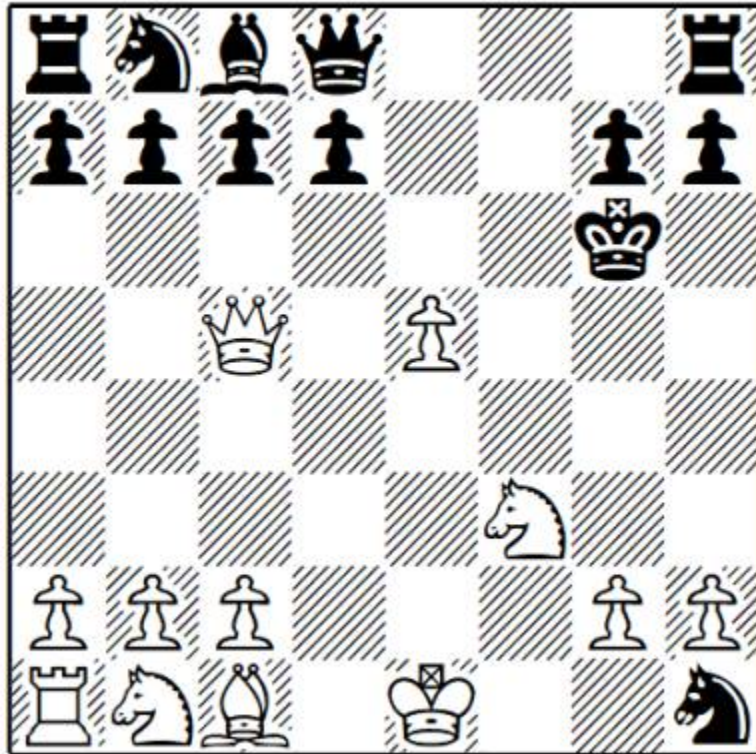
8 Qxc5

Others:

a) 8 Bg5?! (a new idea which shouldn't work) 8 ... Qe8! 9 Nh4+? (this should lose outright; White had to try the surprisingly legal 9 0-0! and after 9 ... Na6! 10 b4! Qe6! 11 Qxe6+ dxe6 12 bxc5 Ne4 13 Be3 Naxc5, Black's extra pawn is worth more than White's development lead in the ending) 9 ... Kxg5 10 Nd2 (10 Qxc5 Nxe1 is also lost for White) 10 ... Kh6? (correct is 10 ... d6! 11 e6+ Kh6 12 Nf5+ Kg6 13 Nh4+ Kf6! 14 0-0 Qxe6 15 Ne4+ Ke7, when Black's king has survived the hurricane and he is up too much material) 11 Nf5+ Kg6 12 Nh4+ Kh6 13 Nf5+ Kg6 14 Nh4+ ½-½ N.Short-J.Smeets, Wijk aan Zee 2010. This game is not your run-of-the-mill 14-move draw.

b) 8 Rf1 d6 9 Rxf2 Bxf2+ 10 Kxf2 h6 11 Qe4+ Kf7 12 Nc3 Nc6 13 Bf4 is M.Stankovic-R.Hovhannisyann, Kemer 2009. White doesn't have quite enough for the exchange after 13 ... Rf8! 14 Rd1 Kg8 15 exd6 cxd6 16 Bxh6 Bf5!. The computer clearly prefers Black's position, which for us humans isn't all that easy to play, so White certainly does get practical chances for the sacrificed exchange.

8 ... Nxe1



When one side is a lot of material up but under heavy attack, then focus on the assets you still own, rather than what you lost. Let's assess:

1) White has achieved his attacking desires at a staggering cost. Black is, for now, up a full rook.

2) It's not really a full rook, since Black's knight is trapped on h1. So when White gets around to winning it, he will only be the exchange down. Keep in mind, though, that White must expend energy in picking up Black's knight, which in turn may reduce the force of his attack.

3) Black seriously lags in development in an open position.

4) Black's king is obviously still unsafe.

According to the computers the game is, remarkably, dead even. In human terms this means it's anybody's game.

9 Nc3 h6!

The late grandmaster Eduard Gufeld, a bottomless treasure chest of folksy Russian advice, once revealed in one of his videos to an astonished chess world, "In opening, king is baby. You must protect baby!" Black plans to castle by hand with ... Kh7 and ... Rf8.

10 Qc4 Kh7!

Black's most reliable equalizer.

10 ... Nc6 is dangerous for Black: 11 Nd5 Re8? (after the correct 11 ... d6 12 e6! Kh7! 13 Qe4+ Kg8 14 e7 Qe8 15 Be3, Black stands only slightly worse) 12 Qe4+ Kf7 13 Bxh6! and White generated a winning attack in K.Piorun-B.Socko, Poznan 2015.

11 Qe4+ Kg8 12 Qd5+ Kh7 13 Qd3+ Kg8

Black is satisfied with a draw. If you are desperate for the win (well, if you are desperate to win, then don't play the Petroff in that particular game!), you can go for the untried 13 ... g6!? which the computer says is perfectly fine for Black after 14 Qe3 Qf8 15 Nd5 d6 (Black isn't planning some long defence to hang on to the material; instead, he hands it back to try and seize the initiative) 16 Nxc7 Nc6 17 Nxa8 Nxe5 18 Nxe5 dxe5 19 Bd2 Qf7 20 0-0-0 Nf2 21 Rf1 Bf5 22 Qxa7 Rc8 23 Rxf2 Rxc2+ 24 Kd1 Rxb2. Here White's one-time initiative is clearly past its prime and Black has full compensation for the piece. Nevertheless, the game is likely to end in a draw after 25 Qc5 Qxa2 26 Qc7+ Kg8 27 Qd8+ Kh7 28 Qe7+ with perpetual check.

14 Qd5+ Kh7 15 Ne4!?

No draw. White hopes his development lead and attacking chances will compensate for his material deficit.

15 ... Qf8!

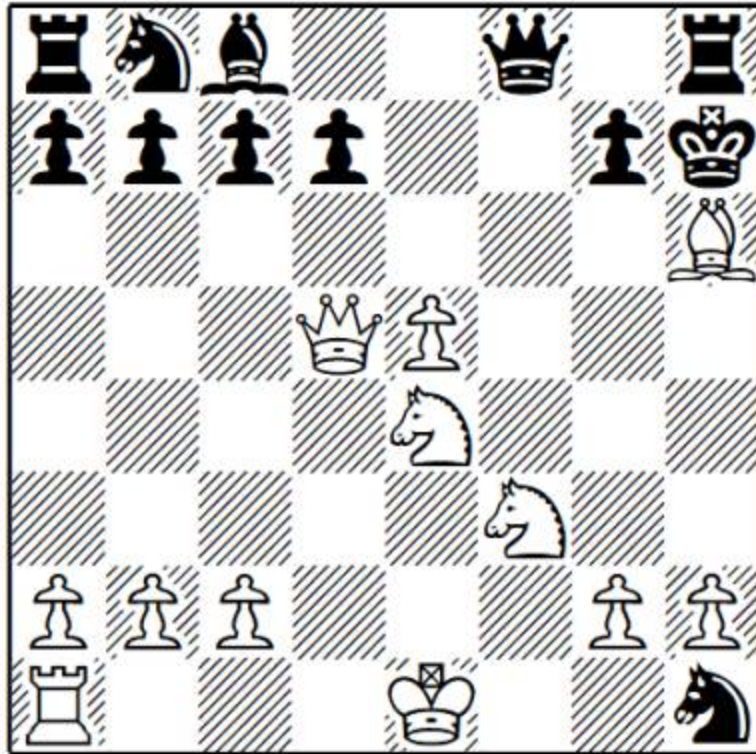
This gives Black the advantage, according to the computer. This alert move dodges two traps, while also avoiding a forced draw:

a) 15 ... Nc6?? 16 Nf6+! gxf6 (sacrificing the queen also obviously loses) 17 Qf7 mate. In opening, king is baby. You must pro ... Oh wait, Gufeld already covered this earlier.

b) 15 ... Rf8? 16 Neg5+! hxg5 17 Nxc5+ Kg6 18 Qe4+ Rf5 (the only move) 19 g4 d6 20 Nf3! and Black is busted.

c) 15 ... Qe8 leads to perpetual check after 16 Neg5+ hxg5 17 Nxc5+ Kh6 18 e6! Kg6! 19 Qe4+ Kf6 20 Qd4+ Kg6 21 Qe4+.

16 Bxh6!



Flashy, yet Black has matters under control even after this shot.

16 ... Kxh6!?

Black bravely plays for the full point. He has a draw with 16 ... gxf6 17 Nf6+ Kg7 18 Nh5+ Kg6 19 Qe4+! Kf7! (19 ... Kxh5?? is a move that can only be played by a person who didn't listen to Gufeld's advice: 20 g4 is mate) 20 Qh4 d6 21 Qf6+ Ke8 22 Ng7+ Kd7 23 e6+ Kc6 24 Qc3+ Kb6 25 Qb4+ Ka6 26 Qa4+ with perpetual check.

17 Qd2+ Kg6 18 0-0-0 Nf2!

This interference trick slows White's attack. After 18 ... Kf7 19 Nh4! Ke8 20 Qg5 Rxf4 21 Qxf4 Nc6 22 Rxf1 b6 23 Re1 Qf5, the computer calls it dead even.

19 Qxf2 Qf4+ 20 Kb1! Nc6!

The e4-knight is poison. After 20 ... Qxe4?? 21 Qg3+ Kh6 22 Qh3+ Kg6 23 Qxh8 Nc6 24 h4 Qg4 25 h5+!! Kf7 (while 25 ... Qxh5 26 Nh4+ Kg5 27 Qxg7+ Kf4 28 Re1 Qxh4 29 Qf7+ Kg5 30 Qf6+ Kh5 31 g4+! Kxg4 32 Re4+ forces mate) 26 Rf1 White has a winning attack.

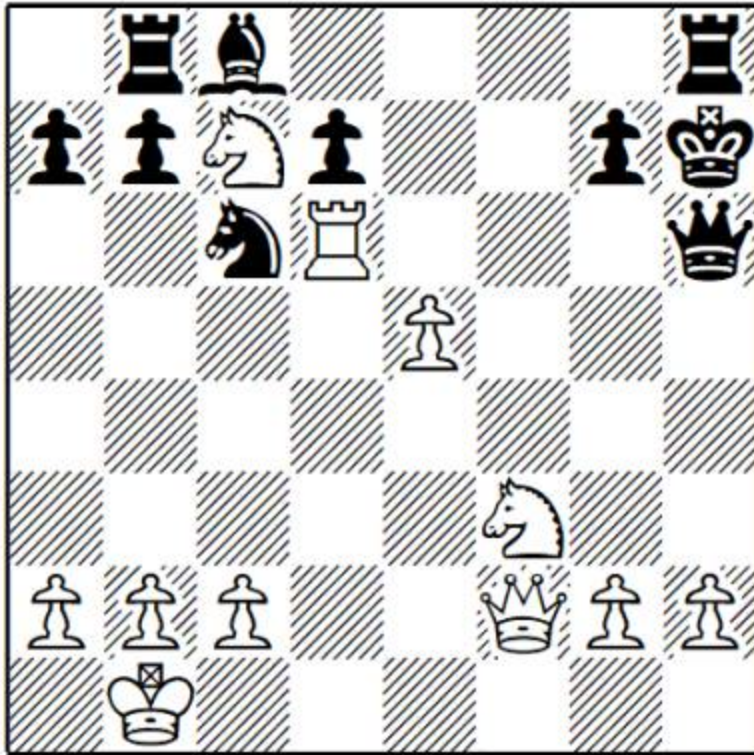
21 Nc3

Intending Nd5 and Nxc7.

21 ... Kh7! 22 Nd5 Qh6 23 Nxc7

This pawn grab isn't motivated by greed. Instead, the move enables Rd6, which increases the force of White's attack.

23 ... Rb8 24 Rd6



Black is up a rook for two pawns, yet the computer still calls it dead even.

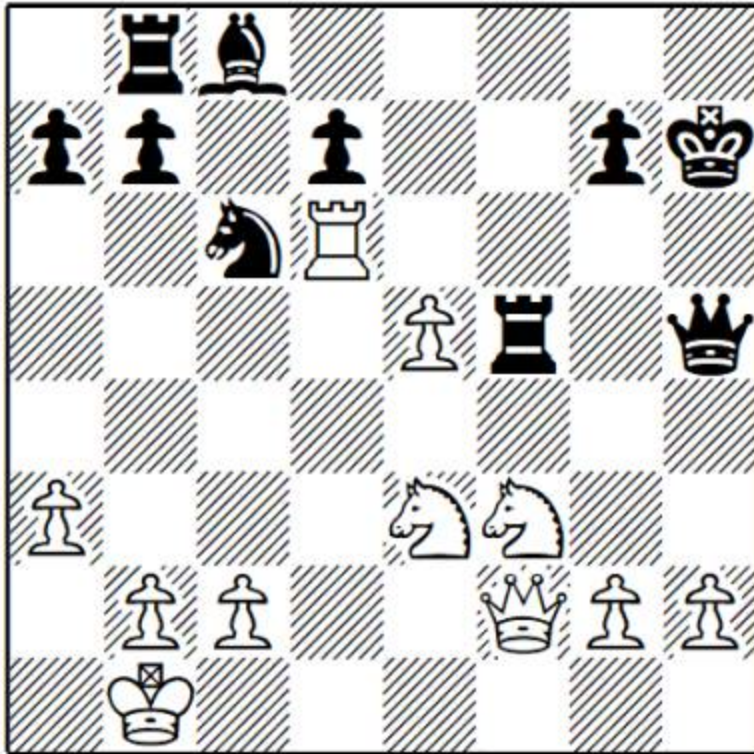
24 ... Qh5 25 Nd5 Rf8 26 a3

Weirdly enough, neither side seems to have a method of improving their respective positions and the game remains in an uneasy stasis.

26 ... Rf5

If 26 ... Nxe5 then 27 Ng5+ Qxg5 (not 27 ... Kg8?? 28 Ne7+ Kh8 29 Qxf8 mate) 28 Qxf8 b5 29 h4 Qh5 30 Qe7 Kg8 31 Qd8+ Kh7 32 Qe7 and the computer suggests a draw by repetition here.

27 Ne3



Exercise (critical decision): At first glance it appears as if White's attack is

overwhelming. This is not the case if you can find the correct defence.

Black needs to reduce White's attacking strength and has a choice of two paths.

Should he sacrifice an exchange on f3 or on e5? Only one line secures equality.

27 ... Rxf3!

Answer: f3 is the correct square for the sacrifice. 27 ... Rxe5? loses to 28 g4 Qe8 29 Nxe5 Nxe5 30 Nf5 b5 31 Qh4+ Kg8 32 Qg5 Qf8 33 Ne7+ Kf7 34 Nxc8 Rxc8 35 Qxe5.

28 gxf3 Qxe5 29 Rd5 Qe6 30 Rh5+ Kg8 31 Nd5 d6

31 ... Ne7 is another way to draw: 32 Nxe7+ Qxe7 33 Qxa7 Qe1+ 34 Ka2 Qe6+ 35 Kb1 Qe1+ 36 Ka2 Qe6+ etc.

32 Qh4 Kf7 33 Rg5 Kg8 34 Rh5 Kf7

Or 34 ... Qg6 35 Nf4 Qg1+ 36 Ka2 Kf7 37 Rg5 Qe3 38 Qh5+ Kg8 39 Rxg7+! Kxg7 40 Qg5+ Kh7 41 Qh4+ Kg7 42 Qg5+ Kf7 43 Qh5+ Kf8 (Black's king is unable to cross to e7, since it allows a knight fork on d5) 44 Qh8+ Kf7 45 Qh5+ with perpetual check.

35 Rg5 ½-½

When we feel we should have won, yet our opponent holds the game via tenacious defence, as White did here, we resent it since our opponent got half the credit in a game where we (believe) we should have 100% ownership.

Game 6

M.Pirs-F.Kunzelmann

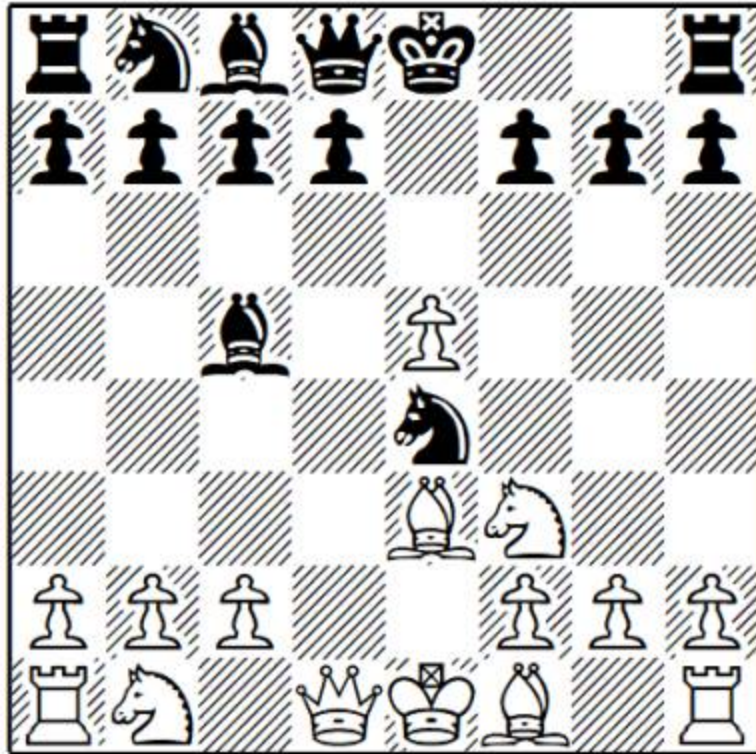
ICCF email 2012

If our last two games were crazy fights, this one is the complete opposite.

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 d4 Nxe4 4 dxe5 Bc5!?

If you find the first games of this chapter a bit too un-Petroffish for your taste, then in the next game we look at the more calm and strategic 4 ... d5.

5 Be3



The word “safe” means different things to different people. White reshapes the once-wild line to a new perspective. This is White’s safe option, yet it’s also boring and, in my opinion, it is White, not Black, who must fight for equality. In this milquetoast version White isn’t willing to allow the bishop or knight into f2. The cost of this security is doubled, isolated e-pawns. White hopes the extra space and open f-file make up for the self-inflicted structural damage. This is the least scary of White’s options and Black either equalizes easily, or even emerges with a slight edge, in every line.

5 ... Bxe3 6 fxe3 d5!

We normally associate greed in chess with the grabbing of material. However, there is another kind of greed. This is structural greed, where we misguidedly refuse to make even the slightest structural concession, even when our position demands it. To not play 6 ... d5! would be just such a case. With the last move Black allows White to eliminate a potentially weak e5-pawn. In return:

- 1) The c8-bishop and queenside pieces are freed.

2) Even when White captures en passant on d6, Black *still* maintains the superior structure since White is stuck with a remaining isolani on e3 and a hole on e4. So Black didn't give all that much away on the last move.

After 6 ... 0-0 7 Qd5 Ng5 8 Nbd2 Nxf3+ 9 Nxf3 Nc6 (F.Lovakovic-J.Riha, ICCF email 2000), and now 10 0-0-0, I prefer White's attacking chances and piece activity over Black's structural superiority.

7 exd6

Now White's territorial edge vanishes. However, 7 Bd3?! 0-0 gives Black the best of both worlds as he can develop smoothly and White's weak e5-pawn remains on the board.

7 ... Nc6 8 Qd5

This was played in all four games in the database. Others:

a) 8 dxc7?? is, of course, ridiculous due to the simple 8 ... Qxd1+ 9 Kxd1 Nf2+, forking king and h1-rook.

b) 8 Bb5 (a student tried this on me in a training game) 8 ... 0-0 9 0-0 cxd6! (9 ... Nxd6 10 Bxc6 bxc6 11 Qd4 looks okay for White) 10 Qd3 d5 and Black stands at least even and probably slightly better.

c) 8 Bd3 is unplayed but is the computer's first choice. After 8 ... Nxd6 Black stands well, as White doesn't really have any compensation to justify the e3-isolani and the e5-hole which may later be occupied by a black piece.

8 ... Nxd6 9 Nc3 Be6 10 Qc5 Qe7 11 Bd3 0-0-0 12 0-0-0

After 12 0-0 Nc4! 13 Qxe7 Nxe7 14 Ng5 Ne5 15 Rad1 (15 Bxh7!? is awfully risky for White, who may later lose material after 15 ... g6) 15 ... Rd6 16 Nf3 Nxf3+ 17 gxf3 Nd5, Black stood at least equal in the ending in A.Kazoks-B.Lenz, ICCF email 2011.

12 ... Kb8 13 e4 Nc8!

A queen exchange favours Black, who has fewer weaknesses.

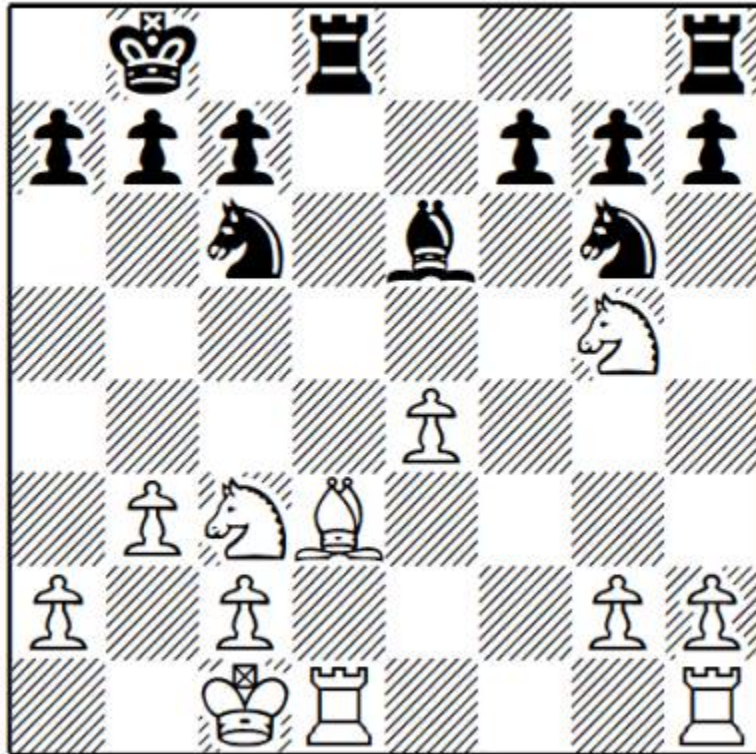
14 Qxe7

White agrees to enter a slightly inferior ending. Black also stands at least equal after 14 Qf2 a6.

14 ... N8xe7 15 b3

15 Ng5 Ne5 is pleasant for Black.

15 ... Ng6 16 Ng5



16 Be2 f6 17 Nd5 Bc8 18 Rhe1 a6 is good for Black, since White is stuck with an isolani on e4, a hole on e5 and a bad remaining bishop, M.Pirs-P.Schuster, ICCF email 2012.

16 ... Nge5 17 Be2

17 Nxe6?! fxe6 only accentuates White's remaining bad bishop.

17 ... Nd4

Possible is 17 ... h6 18 Nf3 f6 with a slight yet enduring edge for Black in the ending.

18 Nf3 Nexf3 19 Bxf3

White, who seems to love his bad bishop, plays as if he is waiting for something. His position isn't drowning in sorrows, but neither is it pleasant. His move is in (perhaps correct) violation of the principle that if you are stuck with a weakness, do one of the following:

- 1) Downplay it.
- 2) Hide it.
- 3) Distract the opponent from it.
- 4) Trade it away for something of value.

5) Don't get sucked into its passive defence, so that it drains resources and energy from the remainder of your position.

White chooses number five on the list and holds the draw comfortably, so it's hard to criticize his decision. White could try to add a touch of dynamism into the mix by accepting hanging pawns with 19 gxf3!? g6 20 f4 c6. Even here such pawns, which can be so dynamic with queens on the board, may turn out to be a burden with queens removed.

19 ... Rhe8 20 Rd2 c5!?

Black wants to entrench his knight on d4 and isn't afraid of Nd5 since Black's bishop can chop it.

21 Rhd1 Kc7 22 e5 Rd7 23 Rf2 Red8 24 Re1 ½-½

The players agreed to a premature draw here. Black, who stands at least even and maybe a shade better, could play on. I apologize for the boredom level of this game, yet this is what we inevitably get occasionally when we choose to play the Petroff.

Game 7

N.Vitiugov-F.Caruana

Karlsruhe/Baden-Baden 2018

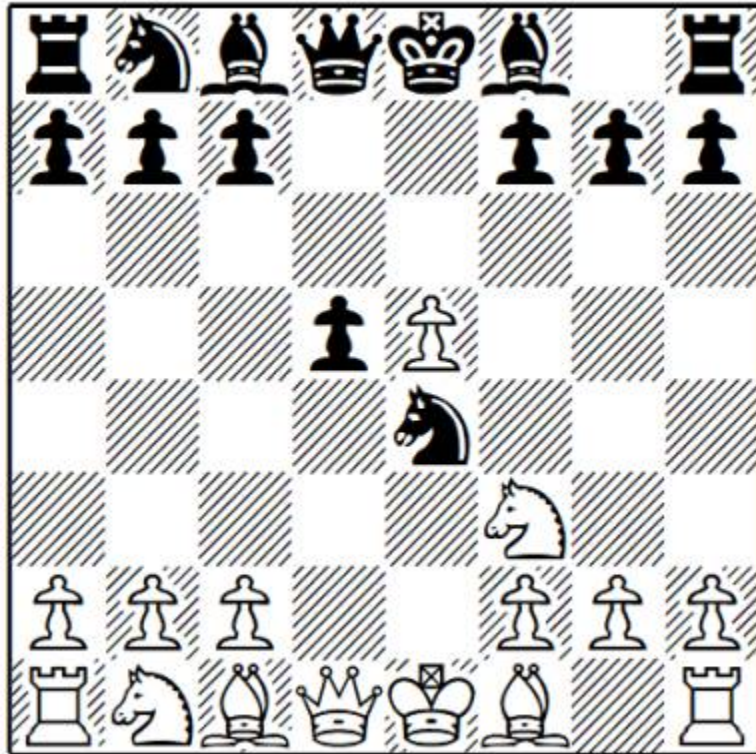
1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6

In the past, Petroff players were a society based on self-loathing. That all changed when the opening rocketed to popularity in the present, via our national hero, Fabiano Caruana, who has infused life into a line once thought rather dull.

3 d4 Nxe4 4 dxe5

It's important to note that the coming position can also be reached via the move order 4 Bd3 d5 5 dxe5.

4 ... d5



There will be no risky ventures this time. Caruana's treatment is far more solid and less adventurous than the 4 ... Bc5 examined in the previous three games.

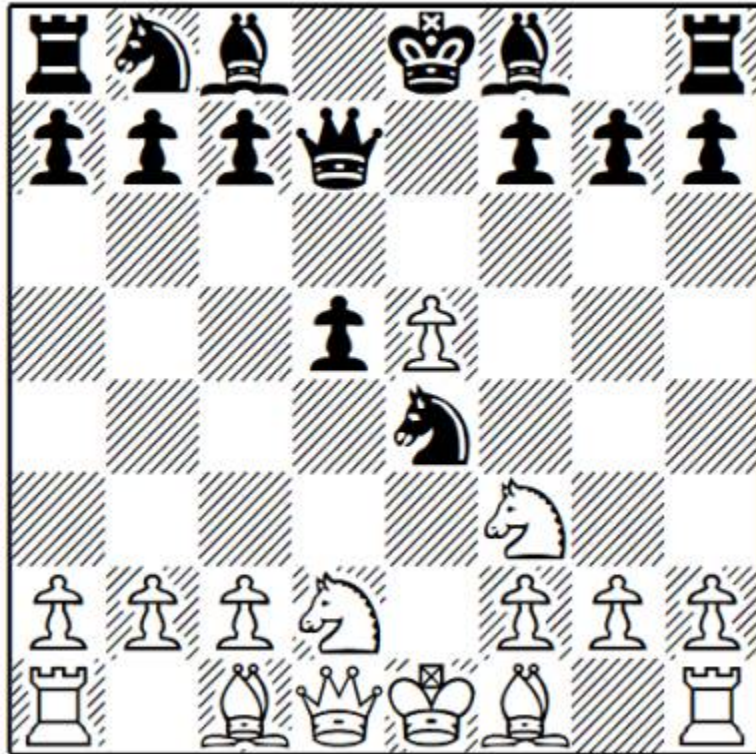
5 Nbd2

It almost appears as if this structure arose from an Open Ruy Lopez, except for the fact that White's bishop isn't on b5 and Black's knight isn't on c6.

Later on we look at 5 Bd3.

Capturing en passant with 5 exd6?! is feeble, since White hands over his extra space and gives Black a free developing move after 5 ... Bxd6.

5 ... Qd7!



A single original idea has the power to nullify a century-long myth. This novelty possibly deserves two exclaims rather than one. Confront an unsuspecting opponent with a completely new concept in the opening and the effect can be the same as hitting them with a combination. The lesson Caruana teaches us here is that we shouldn't play our openings as if they were rituals, whose meanings were lost to generations past. Instead, we should always keep an open mind and search for the new. Caruana finds an effective new move, which has been repeated several times since. It may be the most important novelty of 2018 (at least for us Petroff folk). Outwardly, this geometrically anomalous move violates the following principles:

1) Don't move your queen out early in the game, especially in an open position.

2) Don't deliberately clog your development routes.

3) Don't fall behind in development in the opening.

Shockingly, White is unable to exploit all three violations of principle. The idea behind the jarringly atonal move is that it negates White's threat to

take on e4 and then play Qxd8+. I can't find a way for White to even reach a small edge after Caruana's idea.

You may wonder whether Black's queen effectively clogs Black's queenside. It doesn't. Black plays to unravel as follows with ... c7-c5, ... Nc6, ... b7-b6 and ... Bb7, with harmonious queenside development.

In the next game we look at the older move 5 ... Nc5, which was more heavily covered in *The Petroff: Move by Move*.

6 Bd3

Others:

a) 6 c3 Bc5 7 Nxe4 dxe4 8 Qxd7+ Nxd7 9 Ng5 Nxe5 10 Nxe4 Bb6 11 Bb5+ Bd7 12 Bxd7+ ½-½ was P.Simacek-M.Pacher, Vienna 2018. Black looks better in the ending after 12 ... Kxd7! 13 0-0 Kc6! since his king is active.

b) 6 Nxe4 is untried. Black looks fine after 6 ... dxe4 7 Nd4 Nc6 8 Bb5 Bc5 9 Be3 Bxd4! 10 Bxd4 Qd5 11 c4 Qe6 12 0-0 Qg6 (threatening ... Bh3) 13 Bxc6+ Qxc6.

c) 6 Nd4 Nxd2 7 Qxd2 (7 Bxd2 c5 8 Nf3 Nc6 9 c3 Qe6 is also equal) 7 ... c5 8 Nb5 a6 9 Qa5 Nc6! 10 Nc7+ Kd8 11 Ne6+ Ke8 12 Nc7+ Kd8 13 Ne6+ Ke8 14 Nxf8 was seen in P.Ponkratov-O.Bykov, St Petersburg 2018. The ending would have been equal if Black had played 14 ... Nxa5 15 Nxd7 Bxd7, since White's bishop pair is negated by Black's superior central control.

d) 6 Nb3 Be7 7 Bd3 0-0 8 0-0, as in R.Degraeve-Y.Gatineau, Riga 2018, may be White's best chance for a tiny edge. Here Black should go for 8 ... Nc6! (intending ... Nb4), when play might continue 9 c3 a5 10 a4 Qe6 11 Bf4 Qg4 12 Bg3 Bf5 13 Qc2 Nxc3 14 hxc3 Bxd3 15 Qxd3 Ra6! and Black is fine. Now 16 Qxd5?! isn't so great for White after 16 ... Rd8 17 Nh2 Qh5 18 Qf3 Qxf3 19 Nxf3 Rb6 20 Nbd4 Nxd4 21 Nxd4 Rd5, when Black stands at least equal.

6 ... Nc5

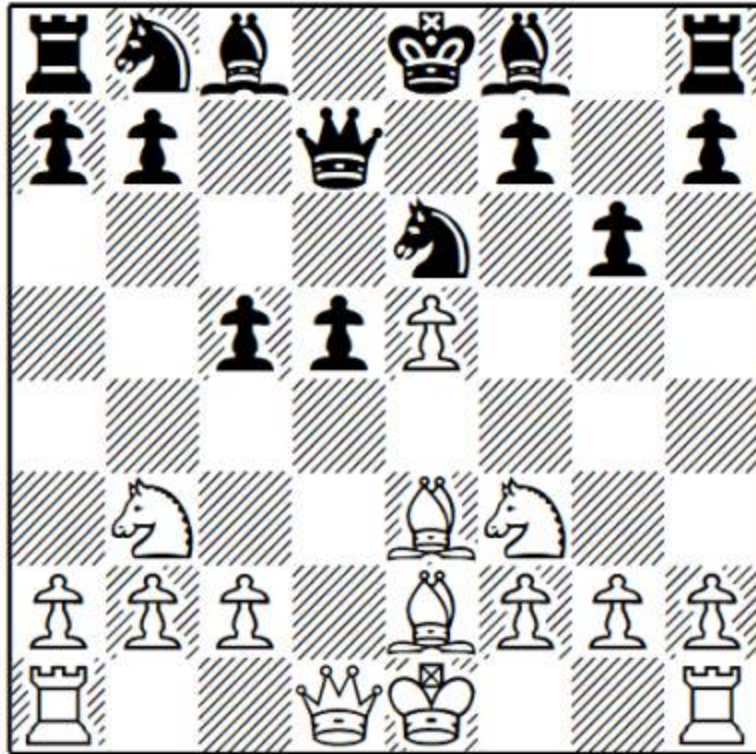
Gaining a tempo on White's valuable bishop.

7 Be2 g6!?

Wow, this is rather eccentric. Caruana intuits that his king will be safer with a fianchetto.

There is absolutely nothing wrong with 7 ... Ne6 8 0-0 Be7 9 Nb3 c5 10 c4 dxc4! 11 Bxc4 Qxd1 12 Rxd1 Nc6 13 Bd5 Bd7 14 Be3 0-0-0 with a dynamically balanced ending.

8 Nb3 Ne6 9 Be3 c5!



A multi-purpose move:

1) It follows the principle: *push your pawn majority* (although there is nothing in the principle which advises to do it before completing your development).

2) Black is now the one with more central space.

3) Black denies White's pieces use of the d4-square.

In conclusion: although it is only move 10, Black already stands well.

10 Ng5!

Threatening Nxe6 and Nxc5. Why does White violate the principle: *don't make numerous moves with one piece in the opening* - ?

1) First of all, Black did the same thing with *his* knight, which went to f6, e4, c5 and then e6. So White isn't exactly falling behind in development with his move.

2) Black's queenside pawn majority is rolling. White's wasn't, until now. White's move made way for f2-f4.

10 ... b6 11 Nxe6 fxe6

Now Caruana's earlier 7 ... g6 looks like a double exclamation. White's *only* real break for his kingside pawn majority lies on f5, a square Black has heavily reinforced.

12 a4 Bb7 13 0-0

Alternatives:

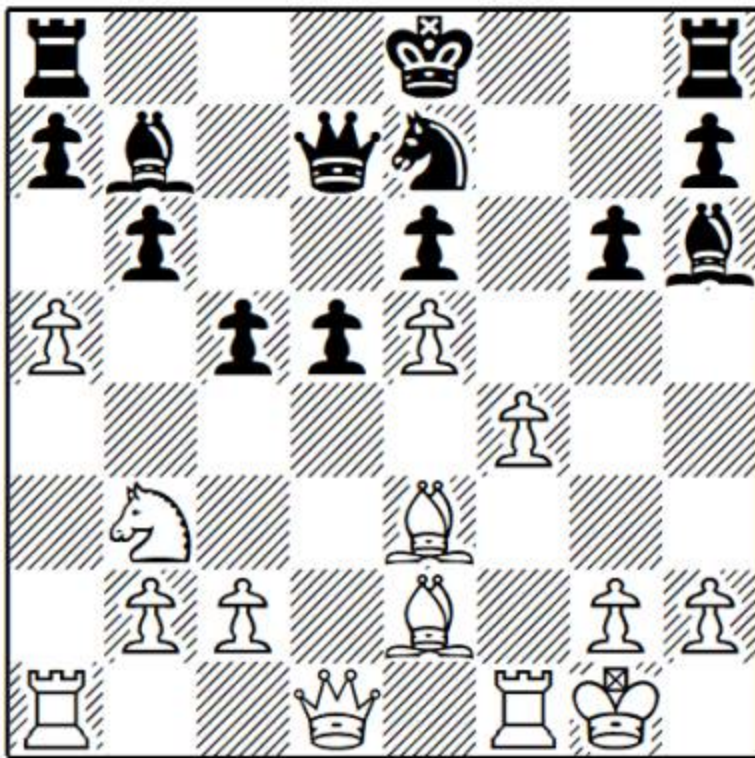
a) 13 a5 can be ignored with 13 ... Nc6 14 a6 Bc8 15 f4 Bh6 16 0-0 0-0, when Black stands slightly better due to his central/queenside pawn majority.

b) 13 Bb5?! Nc6 14 a5 a6 15 Be2 d4 16 Bg5 c4! 17 Nd2 Nxa5 18 0-0 (18 Nxc4? Nxc4 19 Bxc4 b5 20 Bd3 (retreat to f1 is suicidal in an open position) 20 ... Bxg2 21 Rg1 Bb4+ 22 Bd2 Bxd2+ 23 Qxd2 Bb7 (White has little compensation for the missing pawn) 18 ... Bg7 19 Nf3 Bxf3 20 Bxf3 Rc8 and Black's extra pawn is worth more than the bishop pair.

13 ... Nc6 14 f4 Bh6!

Now ... Nxe5 is in the air.

15 a5! Ne7!



This move would warm Nimzowitsch's heart. Black erects a strong blockade on f5 and it becomes clear that his pawn majority is more valuable than White's. Caruana avoids Vitiugov's trap 15 ... Nxe5? 16 Bd4! cxd4 17 fxe5 Be3+ 18 Kh1 Rf8 19 Nxd4, when the game has taken on a French Defence structure which has gone wrong for Black.

16 Bg4

16 c3 only temporarily constrains Black's coming ... d5-d4. Then 16 ... 0-0 17 Qd2 Nf5 is also in Black's favour, since if White tries to preserve his bishop pair with 18 Bf2?!, Black can reply 18 ... d4 and now 19 cxd4?? is met by 19 ... Bxf4!, when White is busted.

16 ... d4!

Black's piece activity is gradually increasing.

17 Bc1 0-0 18 Qd3

Threatening Qh3, with simultaneous attacks against e6 and h6.

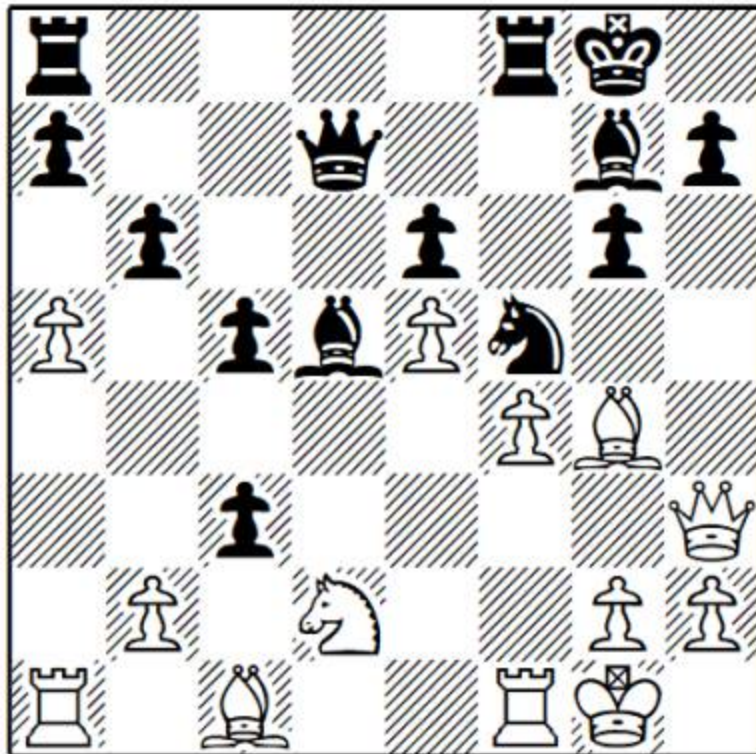
18 ... Bd5

Covering e6 while threatening ... c5-c4.

19 Qh3 Bg7 20 Nd2 Nf5

I have been a French Defence player for half a century, which is long enough to recognize a favourable version for Black, as Caruana managed to achieve here.

21 c4 dxc3!



Caruana is the modern day Botvinnik and, along with Magnus Carlsen, is the strongest strategic player in the world at the time of this writing. He possesses the rare gift of being able to see a position's inner and hidden harmony. His mind assembles fragmented bits of data and somehow processes them into (seemingly) simple, logical conclusions. The computer (mistakenly, I believe) prefers not to capture en passant. Opening the centre is superior for the following reasons:

1) If Black doesn't take en passant, his passed d4-pawn can easily be blockaded.

2) By opening the middle, Caruana enables play down the newly opened d-file.

3) By capturing, Black can create a fluid queenside majority with ... b6-b5.

22 bxc3 Rad8

Here 22 ... b5!, securing control over c4, looks best.

23 axb6 axb6 24 Re1

White can try sacrificing a pawn with 24 c4!? Bxc4 25 Nxc4 Qd4+ 26 Be3 Qxc4 27 Rab1 Qe4 28 Bxf5 exf5 29 Rxb6 Rd3 30 Re1 c4 31 Qf3 Rc8. However, Black has all the winning chances due to his dangerous passed c-pawn.

24 ... b5!

Black will create a passed pawn on the queenside.

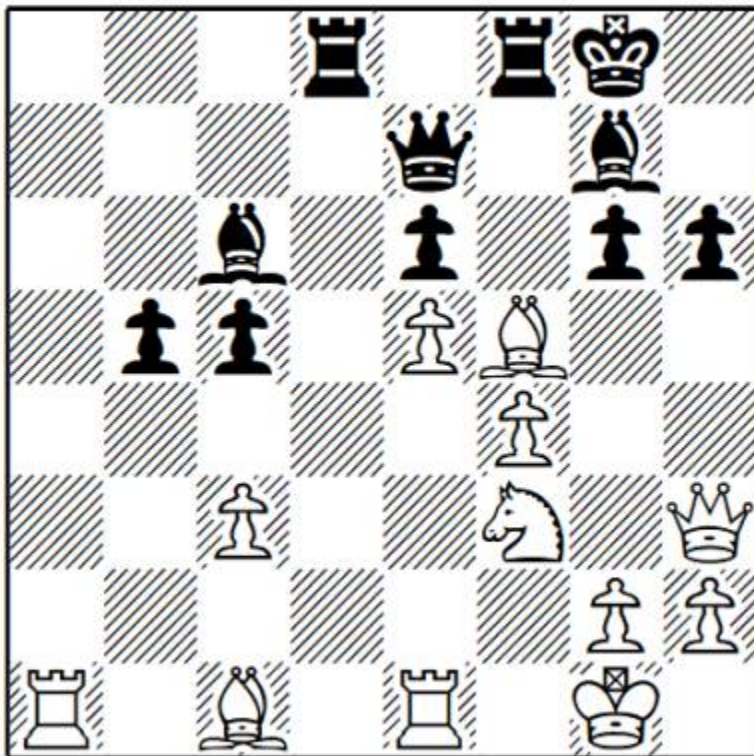
25 Ne4 Qe7 26 Ng5

Threatening mate on h7. If 26 Bxf5 exf5 27 Ng5 (not 27 Nd6?? Rxd6, when White is unable to recapture) 27 ... h6 28 Nf3 Ra8, Black stands clearly better.

26 ... h6 27 Nf3 Bc6

Now ... Rd3 is in the air.

28 Bxf5!?



This desperate decision leaves Black with the bishop pair and domination of the light squares. However, 28 Nd2 is no better due to 28 ... c4! with the deadly threat of ... Rd3.

28 ... gxf5

There is no reason to hand White a passed e-pawn.

29 Be3

If 29 Nh4 Ra8! and now 30 Ng6?! fails to 30 ... Qf7 31 Rxa8 Rxa8 32 Nh4 b4 and White is busted.

29 ... Rd3 30 Rac1 Ra8 31 Qh4

White's urge to attack is laid to rest and the ending is lost. The wild attempt 31 g4!? can be ignored with 31 ... Ra2 32 gxf5 exf5 33 Nh4 Ba8! (threatening ... Qb7) 34 Ra1 Rxa1 35 Rxa1 Be4 36 Rc1 Rxe3! 37 Qxe3 Qxh4 and White can resign.

31 ... Qxh4 32 Nxh4 c4

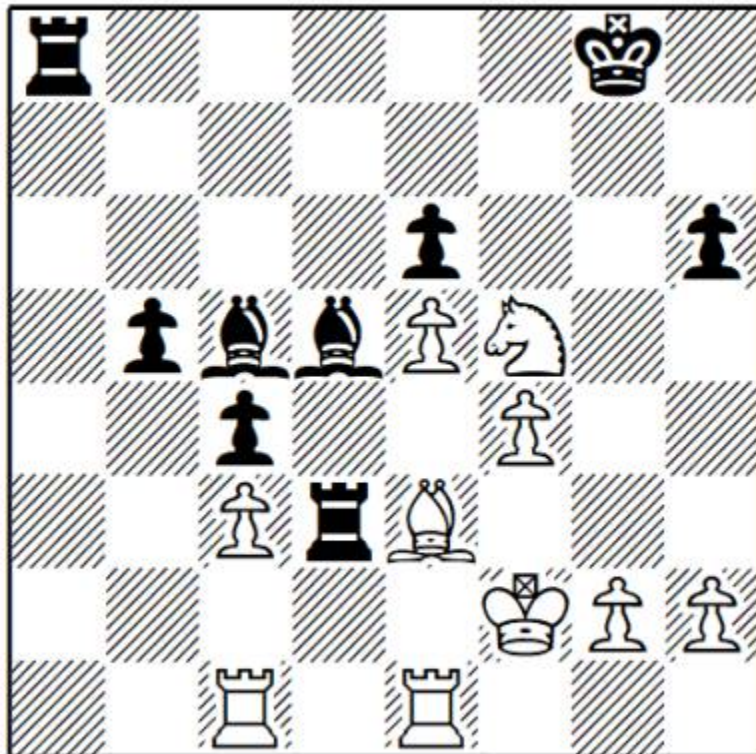
32 ... Bf8, intending ... b5-b4 to create a passed b-pawn, is also good.

33 Kf2 Bf8 34 Nf3 Bd5 35 Nd4 Bc5! 36 Nxf5!?

Or:

a) 36 Nxb5?? loses instantly to 36 ... Ra2+.

b) 36 Nc2 should fail to 36 ... Ba3! 37 Nxa3 Rxa3 38 Bd4 b4 39 Re2 bxc3 40 Bc5 Rb3. White will eventually lose due to being tied down to Black's two passed c-pawns.



Exercise (combination alert): White, whose last move was for show more than actual effectiveness, attempts to confuse the issue. How did Caruana gain a decisive material advantage?

36 ... Ba3!

Answer: Double attack. White's c1-rook and knight hang simultaneously.

37 Nxh6+ Kg7

The same two white pieces continue to hang.

38 f5

38 Ng4 Bxc1 39 Bxc1 Rxc3 is also completely hopeless for White.

38 ... Bxc1!

This simple game-ender is far stronger than entry into the false combination 38 ... Rxe3?! 39 Kxe3 Bxc1+ 40 Rxc1 Kxh6 41 g4 Kg5 42 f6 Kxg4 43 Rf1, when White can keep fighting.

39 Bxc1 Rxc3 40 f6+ Kg6 0-1

White's hoped-for counterplay dwindles to low tide and Black's queenside passed pawns win easily.

Game 8

R.Cooper-G.Pecis

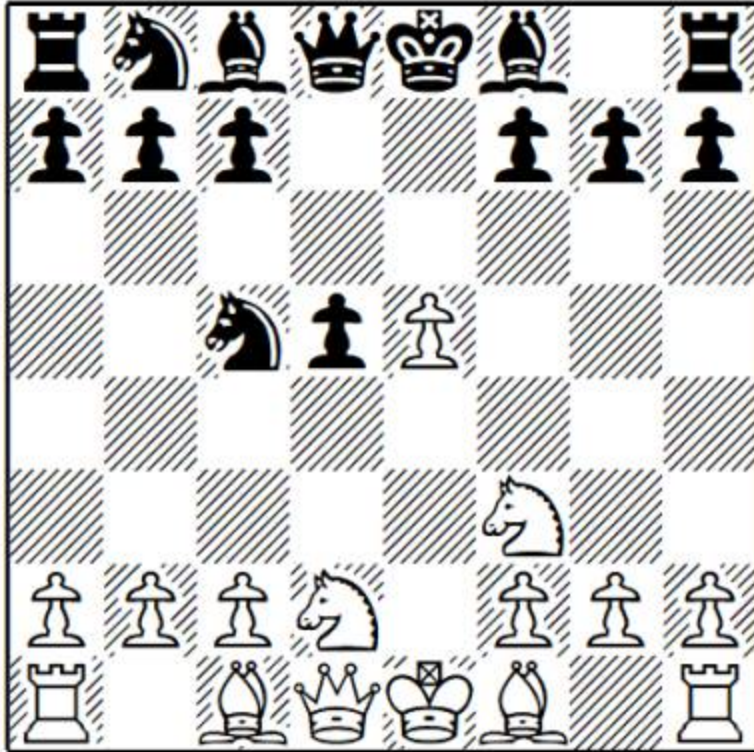
ICCF email 2013

Contrary to popular belief, the Petroff isn't an automatic draw for White. This game is a good example of how a higher-rated player can still defeat a lower-rated opponent with the Petroff.

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 d4 Nxe4 4 dxe5

In the next game we consider 4 Bd3 Nc6!?

4 ... d5 5 Nbd2 Nc5



Just in case Caruana's 5 ... Qd7! is a bit too weird for your tastes, let's look at a more normal move, which is heavily covered in *The Petroff: Move by Move*.

6 Nb3 Ne6

It doesn't make sense to me to allow White an open a-file with 6 ... Nxb3, so this move won't be considered here.

7 Nbd4 Nxd4

Others:

a) 7 ... Be7?! 8 Nf5 is a bit annoying for Black who may now lose the bishop pair at some point.

b) 7 ... c5 is rarely played, yet looks reasonable. V.Gashimov-A.Kosteniuk, Moscow 2009, continued 8 Nxe6 Bxe6 9 Ng5 Nc6 10 Bf4 (10 Nxe6 fxe6 11 Qg4 Qd7 is also okay for Black) 10 ... Qb6 11 Bd3 and now Black looks just fine after 11 ... Be7 12 Nxe6 fxe6. White should avoid 13 Qh5+? Kd7!, when Black's king looks perfectly safe whereas White's game is rather loose.

8 Qxd4

After the alternative 8 Nxd4 Be7 9 Bf4 c5 10 Nf3 Nc6 11 c3 Be6, Black's game is already preferable since his pawn majority looks more effective than White's, blocked by his pieces on f3 and f4. After 12 Bd3?! (12 h4 is necessary) 12 ... h6 (missing 12 ... g5! 13 Bg3 g4 14 Nd2 Qb6 15 Rb1 0-0-0 16 0-0 h5, when Black looks clearly better) 13 h3 Qd7 14 Qd2 0-0-0 15 0-0-0 d4! 16 c4? (16 Qc2 is better) Black, the lower-rated grandmaster, took the draw in V.Gashimov-Li Chao, Khanty-Mansiysk 2009 – in an almost winning position. If he continues 16 ... Nb4 17 b3 Nxd3+ 18 Qxd3 Bf5 19 Qd2 g5 Black has a huge advantage. He dominates strategically, with the bishop pair, the safer king and the superior pawn majority.

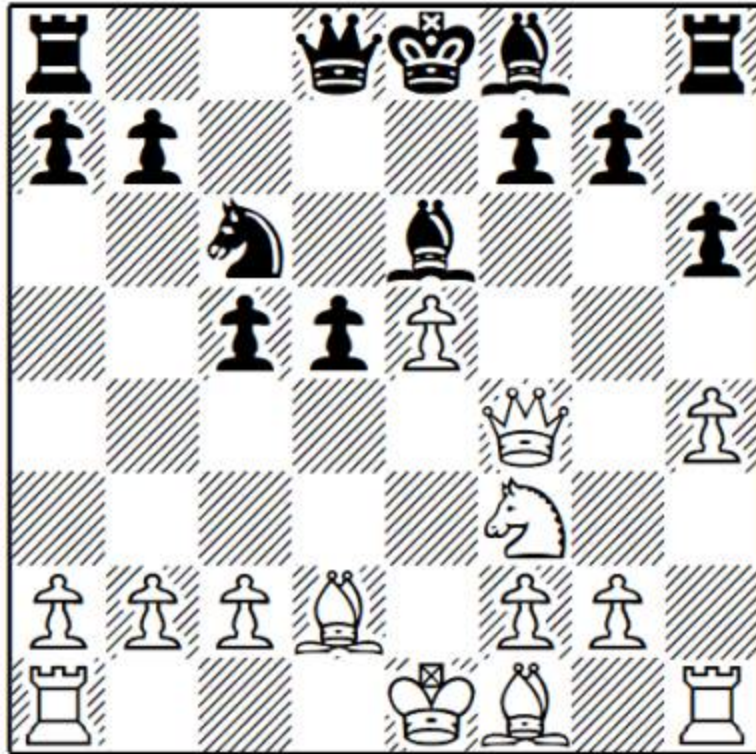
8 ... h6

After 8 ... Be7 9 Bf4 c5 10 Qd2 Be6 11 Bb5+ Nc6 12 0-0 0-0 (D.Villing-T.Bürger, Velden 2009), Black's game is slightly preferable, due to the superior pawn majority.

9 Qf4 c5 10 Bd2 Nc6 11 h4

This move seeks to discourage any future ... g7-g5 ideas, while making Black nervous about castling on the kingside.

11 ... Be6



The alternative is 11 ... Qd7!? 12 0-0-0 Qg4 13 Qh2?! (White should develop and allow the exchange of queens) 13 ... Qa4 14 Kb1 Bf5 and Black already looks slightly better, O.Badmatsyrenov-S.Dondukov, Ulan Ude 2013.

12 h5 Qb6!

Gaining a tempo on White's b2-pawn, while clearing the way to castle queenside.

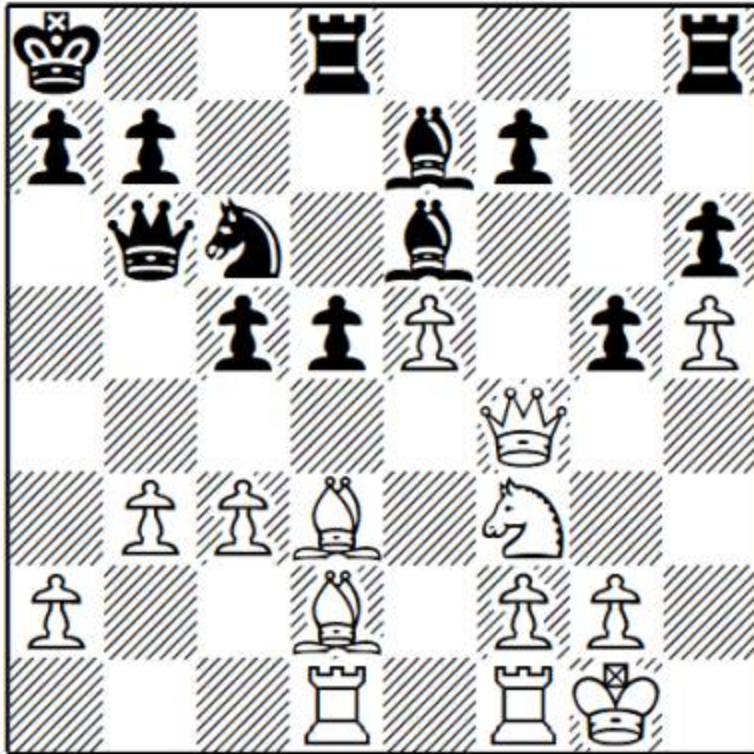
13 b3!

13 0-0-0? walks into a ready-made attack for Black after 13 ... d4.

13 ... Be7 14 Rd1 0-0-0 15 Bd3 Kb8 16 c3 Ka8 17 0-0

The battle lines are drawn and it's a case of opposing wing attacks.

17 ... g5!



The principle here is: *in opposing wing attacks, speed is the factor which matters most.* It is not the time to be a miser and count pawns.

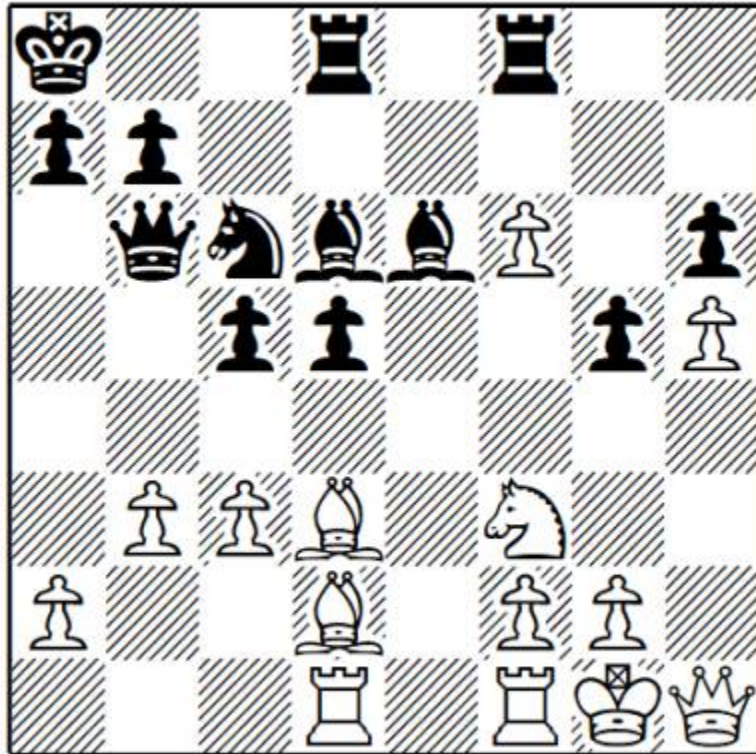
18 Qh2?!

While Steinitz, Réti and Nimzowitsch may approve of this introversion, nobody else does, since the queen is destined to suffocate later on h1. White should probably take the plunge and try 18 hxg6 fxg6 19 b4! (19 Bxg6?! is too risky after 19 ... Rdf8 20 Qh2 Rxf3! 21 gxf3 Rg8 22 Kh1 Rxd6 23 Rg1 Rxd6+ 24 Rxd6 d4, when Black's chances look good) 19 ... g5 20 bxc5 Bxc5 21 Qg3 Rhf8 22 Rfe1 g4 23 Nd4 Nxd4 24 cxd4 Bxd4 25 Re2 h5. Black's is a pawn up and his chances are clearly superior.

18 ... Rhg8 19 Bh7 Rgf8 20 Bd3

This waste of time is a tacit draw offer which is, of course, declined. Black is both higher rated and has the better position.

20 ... f6! 21 exf6 Bd6! 22 Qh1



White's ridiculously posted queen has achieved the Steinitzian-Rétian-Nimzowitschian dream square. For the rest of us, she looks pretty dismal on h1.

22 ... Bg4 23 Rde1?

Now there is no way to contain the damage and those who mourn White's position can no longer be consoled. He had to try 23 Be2 Rxf6 24 Rde1 with a less rotten position than he got in the game.

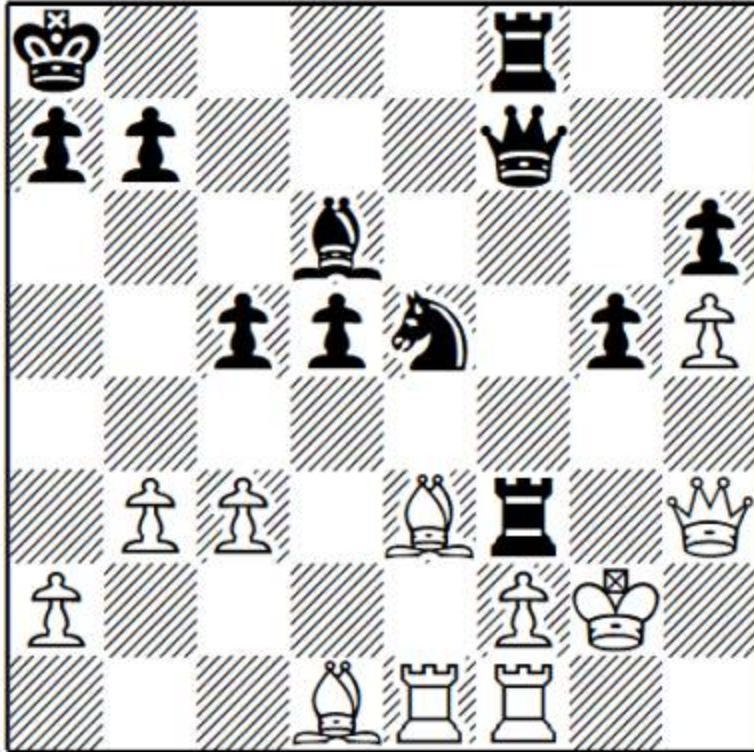
23 ... Bxf3 24 gxf3 Rxf6 25 Qh3 Ne5 26 Be2 Qc7!

Intending ... Qf7, going after f3. White is not only strategically lost, his king is also in grave danger.

27 Bd1 Qf7 28 Kg2 Rf8 29 Be3

29 Re3 is crushed by 29 ... g4!.

29 ... Rxf3!

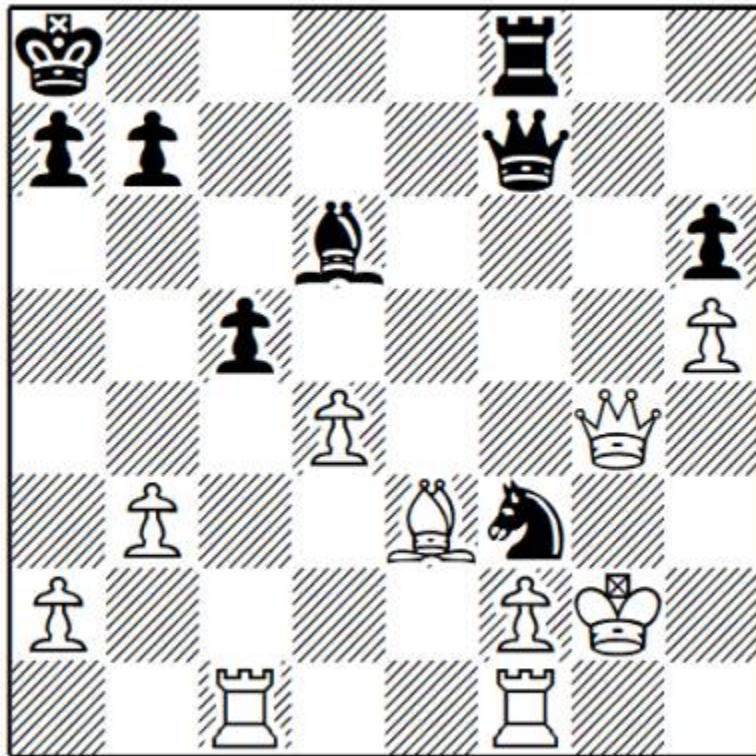


The exchange sacrifice is even stronger than chopping on f3 with the knight.

30 Bxf3 Nxf3 31 Rc1 d4!

Gaining a tempo, while clearing a path to White's king.

32 cxd4 g4 33 Qxg4



Exercise (planning): Although I don't want to sound like one of those alarmist, derelict street-corner prophets who declare that Armageddon is just around the corner, in this case it actually is. Find Black's destructive continuation.

33 ... Qd5!

Answer: The h1-a8 diagonal is the key. Black threatens ... Ne5+, winning the white queen. White is helpless when the queen is transferred to d5, after which the white king is caught in a crossfire.

Far weaker is 33 ... Rg8? 34 Qxg8+ Qxg8+ 35 Kxf3 Qd5+ 36 Ke2 cxd4, when White, although standing worse, can at least can keep fighting.

34 Rxc5

Desperation, but nothing else is any better:

a) 34 dxc5?? Nh2+ wins the white queen.

b) 34 Kh1 fails to 34 ... Rf5! and there is no reasonable defence to the coming ... Rxh5+.

34 ... Bxc5 35 Kh1 Rg8 36 Bg5

A soothing ointment isn't going to get the job done on a gaping wound which continues to spurt blood. Others don't help: 36 Qh3 Ng1+ wins the queen, while 36 Qf4 Qxh5+ mates next move.

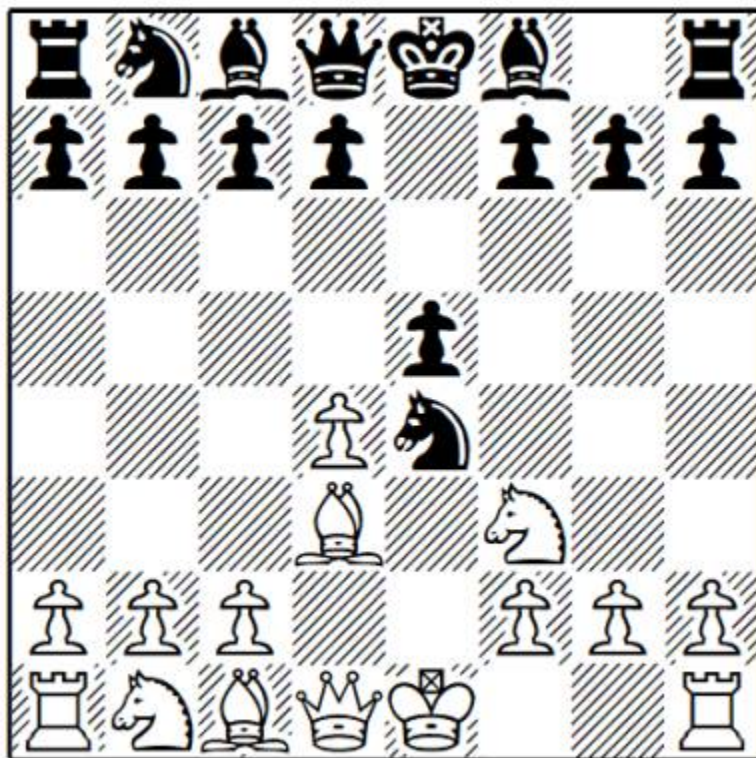
36 ... Bd6! 0-1

Game 9

A.Predke-VI.Fedoseev

Moscow 2017

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 d4 Nxe4 4 Bd3



With this move order White may seek to enter the 5 dxe5 lines, while eliminating Black's option to play ... Bc5, since in this version the f2-pawn is completely safe.

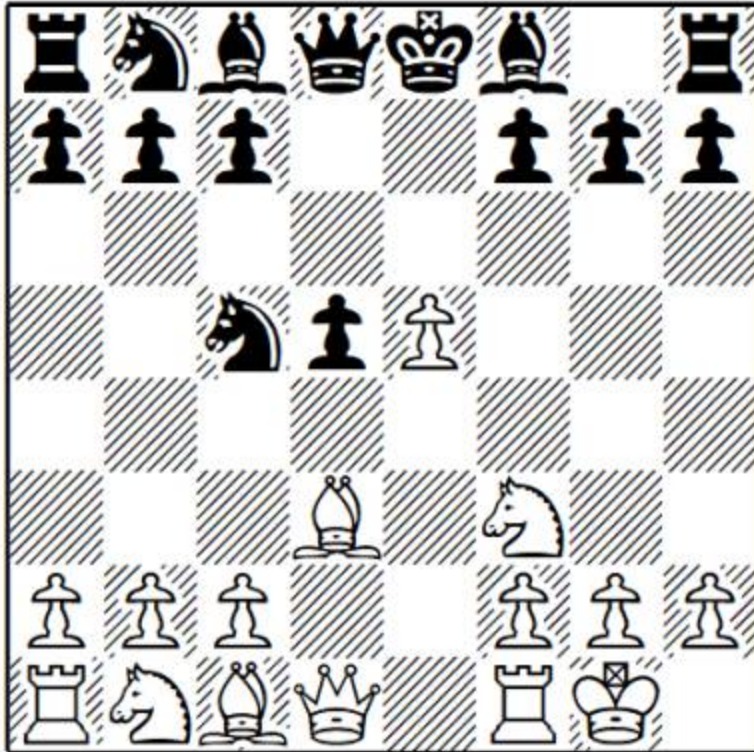
4 ... d5 5 dxe5

Later on we will look at 5 Nxe5.

5 ... Nc5

Here we see one of White's issues with this move order. White now either loses a tempo with the light-squared bishop, or allows ... Nxd3, which hands Black both the bishop pair and light-square control.

6 0-0



With this move White values time over strategic considerations and allows Black's knight to exchange off the light-squared bishop.

6 ... c6

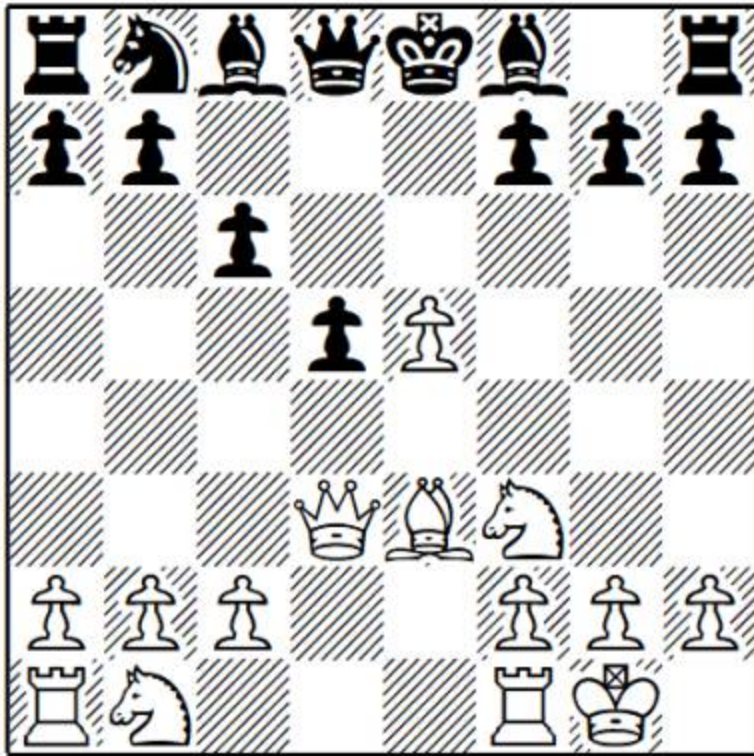
The alternative is 6 ... Be7 7 Nc3 (7 Be2 loses a tempo and Black looks just fine after 7 ... 0-0 8 Be3 c6 9 Nd4 Qc7 10 f4 f6 11 exf6 Bxf6, as in M.Bartel-B.Socko, Karpacz 2008) 7 ... c6 (there is no rush to chop the d3-bishop, since if it moves to e2, White loses a precious tempo) 8 Nd4 (clearing the way for a future f2-f4, which activates White's kingside pawn majority) 8 ... 0-0 9 f4 (White's majority begins to roll forward; instead, 9 Bf5 Bxf5 10 Nxf5 Ne6 11 Qg4 Kh8 12 f4 Nd7 13 Rf3? – 13 Ne2 is correct – was M.Larrea-C.Coppola, San Jose de Mayo 2015, and now Black could

have seized a clear advantage with 13 ... Bc5+ 14 Kh1 f6!, as 15 Rg3? can be successfully ignored with 15 ... fxe5! 16 Nxg7 Nxf4 17 Nf5 Qf6 and White is busted) 9 ... Nxd3 10 Qxd3 f5! (this allows White a protected passed pawn on e5, the effect of which is negated by the fact that Black's queenside pawn majority is fluid, while White's isn't) 11 Nb3 Na6! (the knight may be headed for e6) 12 Be3 Nc7 13 Ne2 b6! (both ... Ba6 and ... c6-c5 are in the air) 14 Nbd4 Ba6 15 Qd2 was D.Navara-V.Kramnik, Prague 2008. Here Black stands clearly better after 15 ... c5! 16 Nc6 Qd7 17 Nxe7+ Qxe7 18 c3 Ne6. This game is annotated in *The Petroff: Move by Move*.

7 Be3 Nxd3

At last Black is induced into the exchange on d3.

8 Qxd3



Let's assess:

1) White holds a considerable lead in development, the effect of which is greatly dampened by the fact that the position isn't all that open.

2) Black has the bishop pair.

3) Black has extra fire power on the light squares.

4) It isn't clear right now whose pawn majority is superior. Black's at least isn't blocked by a piece, as White's is on f3.

In conclusion: the chances look dynamically balanced.

If instead 8 cxd3 Be7 9 d4 0-0, White feels the loss of the light-squared bishop since the e5- and d4-pawns are fixed on the same colour as his remaining bishop.

8 ... Be7

Played in every game in the database to date. However, the computer prefers 8 ... Be6, which suppresses White's coming c2-c4 break at the cost of handing back the bishop pair. After 9 Ng5 Be7 10 Nxe6 fxe6 11 c4 Nd7 12 f4 Nb6, Black stands no worse since 13 c5 can be met by 13 ... d4! 14 Qxd4 Qxd4 15 Bxd4 Na4 16 b4 0-0-0 17 Bf2 Rd3. Here Black's bind is probably worth more than White's extra pawn.

9 c4!

This is based on the principle: *in cases of a development lead over the opponent's bishop pair, development usually takes precedence, so open the position.*

Instead, 9 Nbd2 can be met by 9 ... c5! and if 10 c4 d4 11 Bf4 Nc6 12 Ne4 0-0 13 Neg5 g6! then ... Bf5 is coming and Black stands slightly better.

9 ... dxc4!?

Opening the position when *lagging* in development is dangerous. Better was 9 ... Na6!, planning to meet c4xd5 with ... Nb4 and ... Nxd5. After 10 Rd1 Nc7 11 Nc3 Be6 12 Qe2 0-0 13 Nd4 Qc8 14 Nxe6 fxe6 Black looks fine and the queenside majority may eventually prove to be more potent than White's currently stifled one.

10 Qxc4 0-0 11 Nc3 Be6 12 Qf4

White's lead in development, central space and potential to attack are worth slightly more than Black's bishop pair, superior pawn majority and light square control.

12 ... Nd7

Black can emphasize his superiority on the light squares with the superior line 12 ... Qd3! 13 Ne4 Bd5 14 Nf6+! gxf6 15 exf6 Bxf6 16 Qxf6 Nd7 17 Qf4 Qe4 18 Qc7 Qg6 19 Nh4 Qg4 20 f3 Qxh4 21 Qxd7 Qf6, when White's potential on the kingside dark squares offers him only a minimal edge.

13 Qg3!

Threatening Bh6.

13 ... Kh8 14 Rad1 Qe8?!

The queen turns out to be uncomfortable on e8. The idea behind this move is that Black is naturally worried about his king and believes that his queen may assist in the defence, via a future ... f7-f6 and ... Qg6. However, this is convoluted and 14 ... Qa5 is more natural.

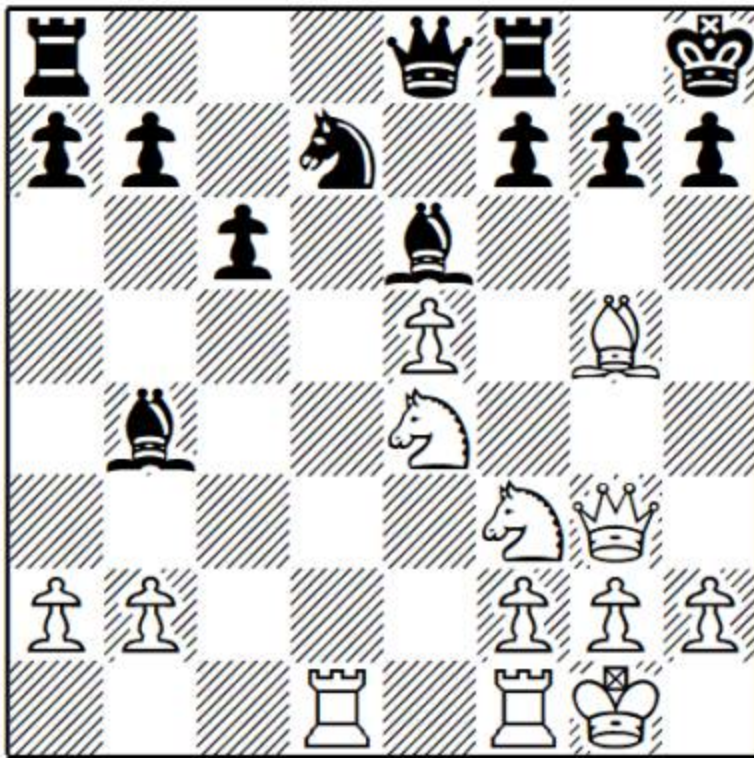
15 Bg5

The principle here is: *when your opponent has the bishop pair, eliminate one of them.* Perhaps stronger was 15 Nd4, clearing the way for White's f-pawn to move forward.

15 ... Bb4

Or 15 ... f6!? 16 exf6 Bxf6 17 Rfe1 Bxc3 18 bxc3 Qf7 19 Qd6 Rae8 20 Bh4! (intending Ng5) 20 ... Bg4 21 Be7 Bxf3 22 gxf3 Qxf3 23 Bxf8 Rxf8 24 Rd2 (chopping d7 allows Black perpetual check) 24 ... Rf6 25 Re8+ Nf8 26 Re3! Qf5 27 Qd3 and White stands better.

16 Ne4?!



This unnecessary pawn sacrifice allows Black play. Black remains under pressure after the more accurate 16 Rfe1!.

16 ... Bd5!?

Fedoseev prefers to counter in the centre. Material matters. Black may be better off playing 16 ... Bxa2! 17 Qh4 Bd5 18 Rd4 Bxe4 19 Rxe4 a5 20 Be3 Be7 21 Bg5 Bb4 22 Be3 with a draw by repetition.

17 Qh4?!

This attempt to go directly after Black's king is doomed to failure due to White's inability to control the light squares, coupled with his overestimation of his power on the dark ones. White can still retain a miniscule edge with 17 Rd4! Be7 18 Bxe7 Qxe7 19 Nd6.

17 ... Qe6!

Black's king is now safe due to his control over the kingside light squares. Not 17 ... Nxe5?!, which walks into 18 Nf6! and Black can resign.

18 a3 Ba5 19 Be7?!

After this move White's would-be attack experiences a number of obstacles. The game has turned into a battle between White's dark squares against Black's light squares. In this fight Black stands better. Correct was 19 b4, after which White remains equal.

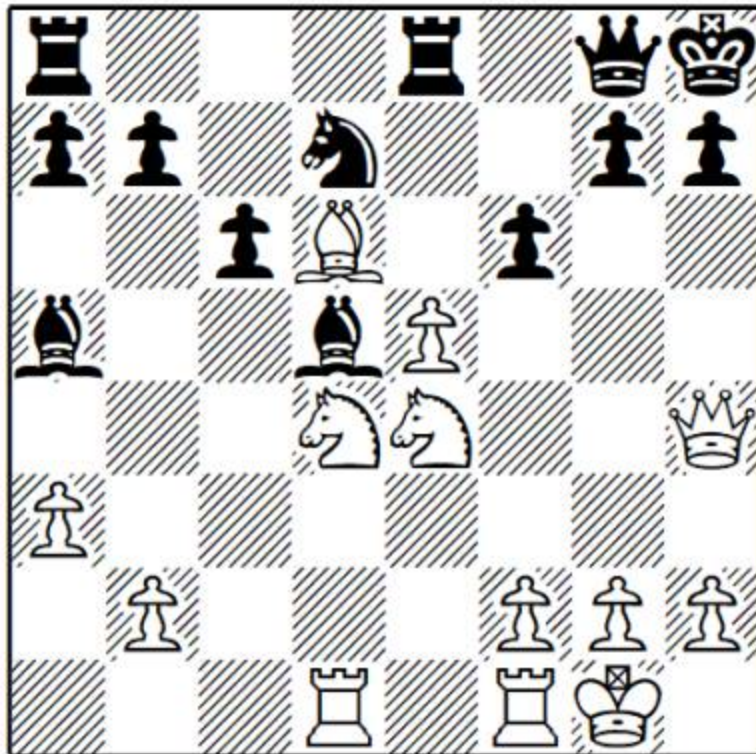
19 ... Rfe8 20 Bd6

White's d6-bishop doesn't bother Black at all, who can easily work around it.

20 ... f6!

This central counter effectively dismantles White's attacking hopes.

21 Nd4 Qg8!



Réti and Nimzowitsch gaze lovingly at Black's last move and exchange high-fives in chess heaven. Black's move avoids future Nd6 fork tricks and now White's attempts to play e5xf6 are frustrated by the fact that his e4-knight hangs.

If 21 ... Qf7 22 e6 Bxe6?! (Black should actually sacrifice the exchange on e6) 23 Bg3!, the coming Nd6 is a problem.

22 e6

White can also try to complicate with 22 Nf5 Bd8! 23 exf6 Rxe4 24 fxg7+ Qxg7 25 Qxe4 Bxe4 26 Nxg7 Kxg7 27 Rfe1 Bd5 28 Re8 Nb6 29 Be5+ Kg6 30 Rd3 (threatening to give a nasty check on g3) 30 ... Bh4! 31 Rxa8 Nxa8 and even here it is White who is fighting for his life in the ending.

22 ... Bxe6

Worthy of consideration is the temporary exchange sacrifice 22 ... Rxe6 23 Nxe6 Qxe6 24 f3 Bc4 25 Rfe1 Bxe1 26 Rxe1 Qd5, when White lacks full compensation for the missing pawn.

23 Nxe6 Qxe6 24 Bg3

Now Nd6 and Nc5 are threatened.

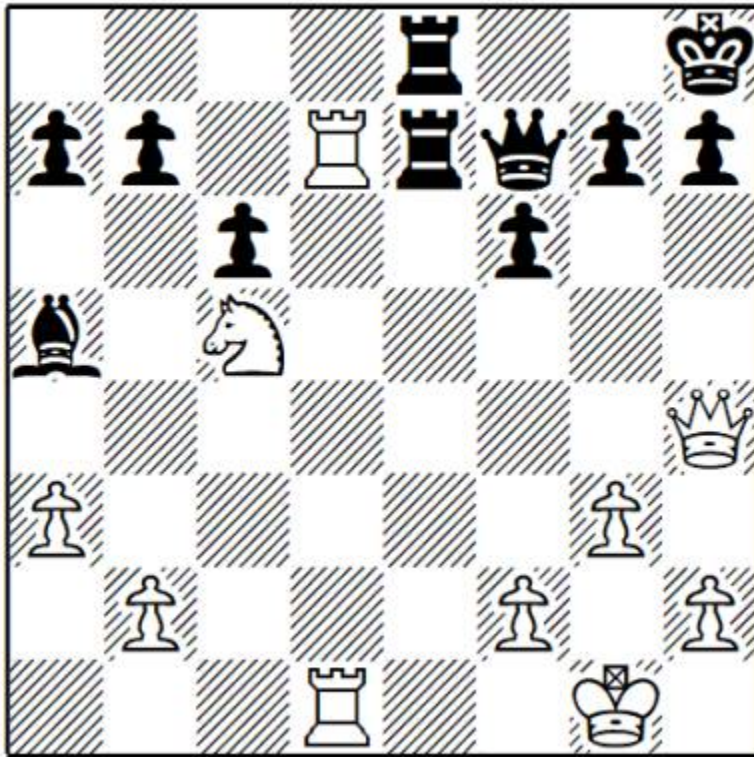
24 ... Ne5 25 Nc5 Qf7 26 Bxe5

This helps Black, but at this stage White's initiative has gone dead.

26 ... Rxe5 27 Rd7 Re7 28 Rfd1 Rae8

Threatening a back rank mate on e1. Black has everything and everyone covered and remains a healthy pawn up with a good position.

29 g3



Exercise (combination alert): Black to play and force the win of a second pawn.

29 ... Bb6!

Answer: Transfer the bishop to b6, after which White must hand over another pawn.

30 Rxe7 Qxe7 31 b4

Not:

a) 31 Nb3?? which loses on the spot to 31 ... Bxf2+! 32 Kg2 Bxg3!. The problem is that Black also threatens a devastating queen check on e2.

b) 31 Nd3?? Qe2 (double attack) 32 Qa4 (32 Re1?? fails to 32 ... Bxf2+) 32 ... Rd8 33 Qb3 h6 (White is hopelessly tangled up with no way to unravel) 34 Kg2 Kh7 35 h3 c5! and there is no defence to the coming ... c5-c4.

31 ... Bxc5 32 bxc5 Qxc5 33 Rd7 h5

There is nothing wrong with 33 ... Qxa3.

34 g4?

Our obsession tends to repeat itself, until it is either fulfilled or it destroys us. This is that point in our desperation where we say to ourselves, “everything is going to work out all right”, and yet in our hearts we realize it will be nothing of the kind.

In this case curiosity about the dubious idea overcomes White’s dread of actually executing it. This attempt to get at Black’s king only serves to fatally weaken White’s.

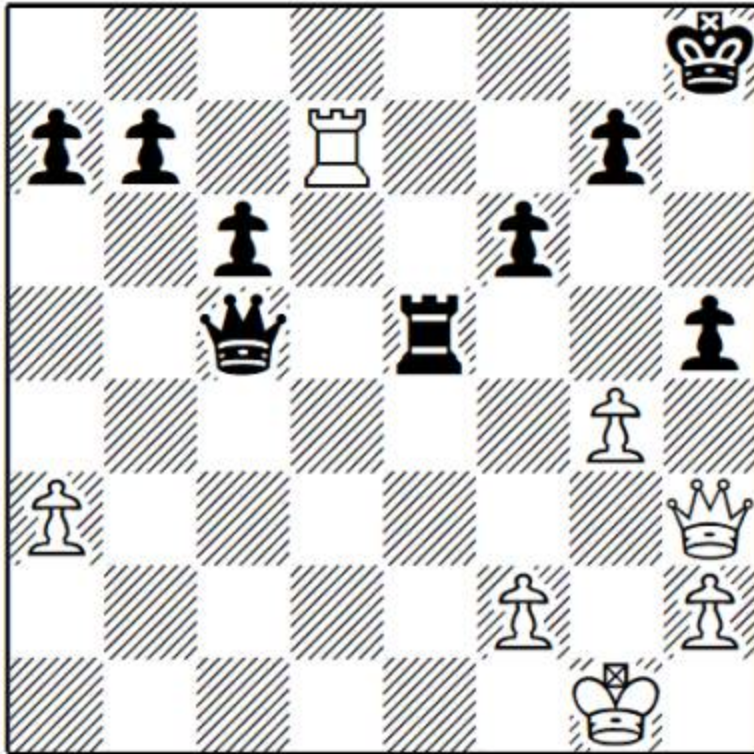
Note that 34 Rxb7?? is mated by 34 ... Re1+ 35 Kg2 Qd5+ 36 Kh3 Rg1!.

The try 34 Qb4! was White’s only hope for playing on.

34 ... Re5!

After this powerful move it becomes clear that it is Black, not White, who is in control.

35 Qh3



Exercise (combination alert): Find Black's knockout punch.

35 ... Qc4! 0-1

Answer: Weak back rank/queen trap/mating net. The key is to transfer the queen to c4, after which there is no defence to a rook check on e1. White must hand over his queen to evade mate. 36 Rxb7 is met by 36 ... Re1+ 37 Kg2 Qe4+! 38 f3 (or 38 Qf3 Rg1+, winning the queen) 38 ... Qe2+ 39 Kg3 Rg1+ 40 Kh4 Qe1+ 41 Kxh5 Qe8+! 42 Kh4 g5 mate.

Game 10

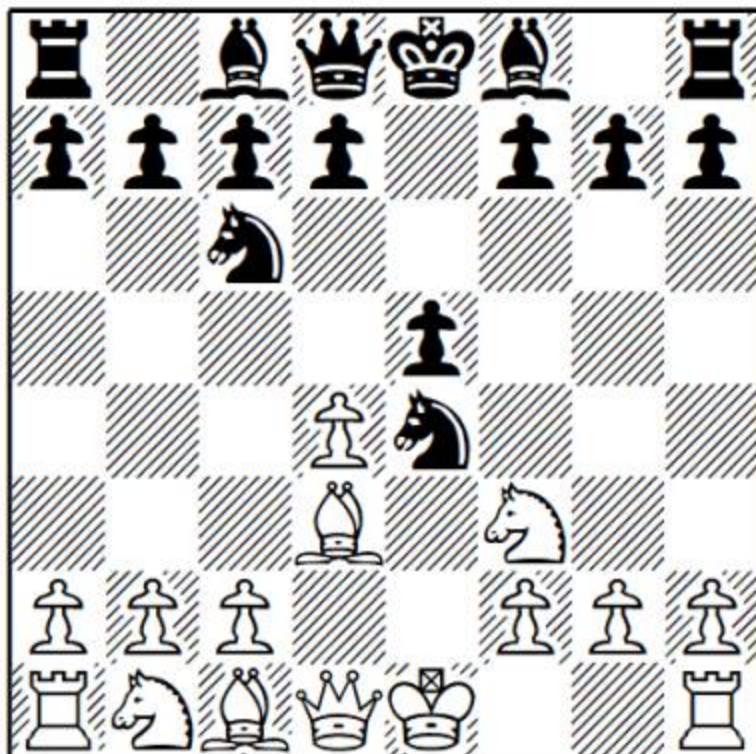
A.Kharlov-L.Kritz

European Championship, Warsaw 2005

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 d4 Nxe4 4 Bd3 Nc6!?

Something tells us that the grandmaster playing Black is not an honest man. Keep in mind that a single outwardly crazy/internally sound idea has

the power to nullify a century-long myth. No, this not a piece hang. This is a computer-checked line, so there is no reason for concern. I wanted to include a perfectly playable idea which one of my students has used with success, mainly because it usually confuses his opponents. The e4-knight is left hanging/not hanging, since if White chops, Black immediately regains the piece.



5 Bxe4

White calls Black's bluff, which isn't a bluff. Others:

a) 5 dxe5 Nc5 6 Bc4 (otherwise White loses the bishop pair and, with it, any hope for an edge) 6 ... d6 7 0-0 dxe5 8 Qxd8+ Nxd8 9 Nxe5 Bd6 10 Re1 0-0 with complete equality, A.Naiditsch-D.Frolyanov, Moscow 2008.

b) 5 d5 Nf6 (I prefer this move to the more often played 5 ... Nc5 6 0-0 when White's development lead offers an edge) 6 Nc3 Bb4 7 dxc6 e4 and Black regains the piece with equality.

5 ... d5

This is the point: White has no way to avoid the return of the extra piece.

6 Bg5

This disruptive move is White's best chance to squeak an edge from the position. Everything else allows very comfortable equality:

a) 6 Nxe5 dxe4!? (this move allows Black to play for the full point) 7 Nxc6 bxc6 8 0-0 Bd6 (I like this aggressive placement more than safely developing to e7) 9 Nc3 f5 10 f4?! (10 Qh5+ g6 11 Qh6 Bf8 12 Qe3 Bd6 13 f3 Qh4 14 g3 Bxg3 15 hxg3 Qxg3+ is perpetual check) 10 ... Ba6 11 Rf2 0-0 12 Be3 and Black already stood better with the bishop pair and a protected passed e-pawn, R.Ziatdinov-D.Frolyanov, Voronezh 2004.

b) 6 Bd3 e4 7 Be2 exf3 8 Bxf3 (reaching a dull Exchange French structure where White has absolutely nothing) 8 ... Bd6! 9 Nc3 (not 9 Bxd5?? Bb4+ 10 c3 Qxd5 11 cxb4 Qxg2 and it's time for White to resign) 9 ... Ne7 10 Nb5 ½-½ (J.Baron Isanta-J.Mellado Trivino, Catalunya 2012). The game is dead even after 10 ... Bb4+ 11 c3 Ba5 12 a4 c6.

6 ... Qd7!

Channelling Caruana's ... Qd7 concept. In this way Black avoids structural weaknesses. The queen soon emerges on f5, clearing the way for queenside development.

7 Bd3

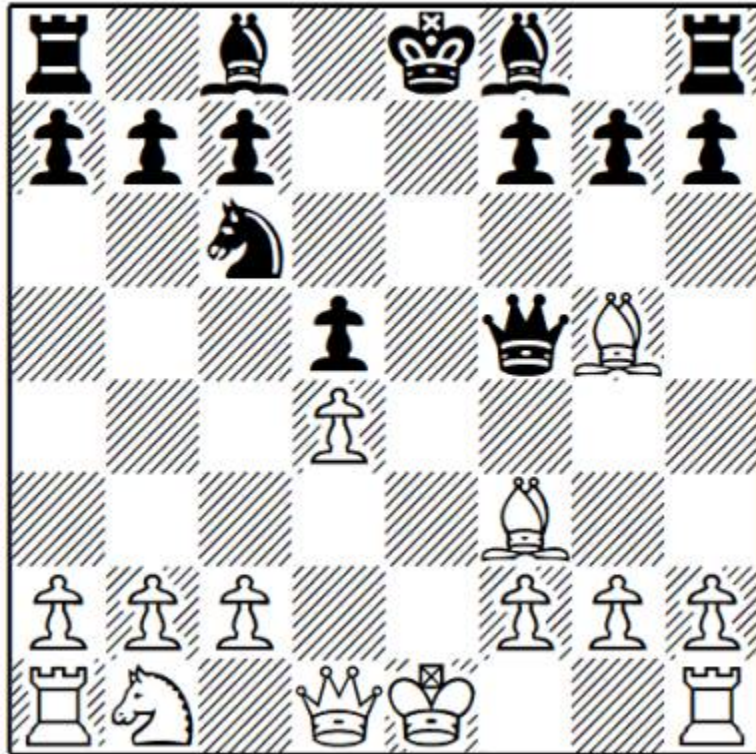
After 7 Nxe5 Nxe5 8 dxe5 dxe4 Black stands at least equal due to the bishop pair and future control over the light squares.

7 ... e4 8 Be2

This turns it into a snoozer version of an Exchange French structure, which suits peaceful Petroff folk just fine.

8 0-0 is critical and after 8 ... f6 three white pieces hang simultaneously. Play can continue 9 Re1 Be7 10 Bf4 exd3 (by chopping on d3 Black picks up the bishop pair and increases potential on the light squares) 11 Qxd3 0-0 when Black should be well satisfied with the result of the opening, since he stands dynamically even and can even try for a win later on due to the bishop pair imbalance, J.Timman-J.Murey, France 1993.

8 ... exf3 9 Bxf3 Qf5!



Black unravels the queenside while gaining a tempo. Black stands no worse and the position resembles another Exchange French where White got nothing.

10 Bh4?!

A single inaccuracy has a way of dismissing a position's potential. When we are confronted with a choice of a pair of not-so-great options, we must ask ourselves: "Which one would I rather live with?" White may now even stand worse. He should have gone passive by admitting he has got nothing with 10 Be3 Nb4 11 Na3 c6 with equal chances.

10 ... Qe6+!

This annoying check disrupts White's castling.

11 Kf1

White is unable to block with either bishop or queen:

a) 11 Be2? hangs a pawn to the double attack 11 ... Qe4 12 Bg3 Qxg2 13 Bf3 Qh3, and if 14 Bxd5 Be6 15 Bxc6+ bxc6, White regained the lost pawn but at the cost of greatly weakened light squares.

b) 11 Qe2?? is even worse, since White just hangs the d-pawn for nothing after 11 ... Nxd4 12 Qxe6+ Bxe6 with a winning ending for Black.

11 ... Bd6 12 Qd2!

Intending Nc3 with dual threats against d5 and also with Re1.

12 ... Qf5 13 Bg3

If 13 Nc3 0-0! (13 ... Be6 14 Nb5 Bf4? is short-circuited by 15 g4! with advantage for White no matter how Black plays it) 14 Nxd5 Be6 15 Nc3 Bc4+ 16 Kg1 Rfe8 with full compensation for the missing pawn, due to the fact that White's h1-rook will be out of play for ages.

13 ... Qf6?!

Now the advantage should swing back to White. The position remains dynamically balanced if Black permits damage to his structure with 13 ... Be6! 14 Bxd6 cxd6.

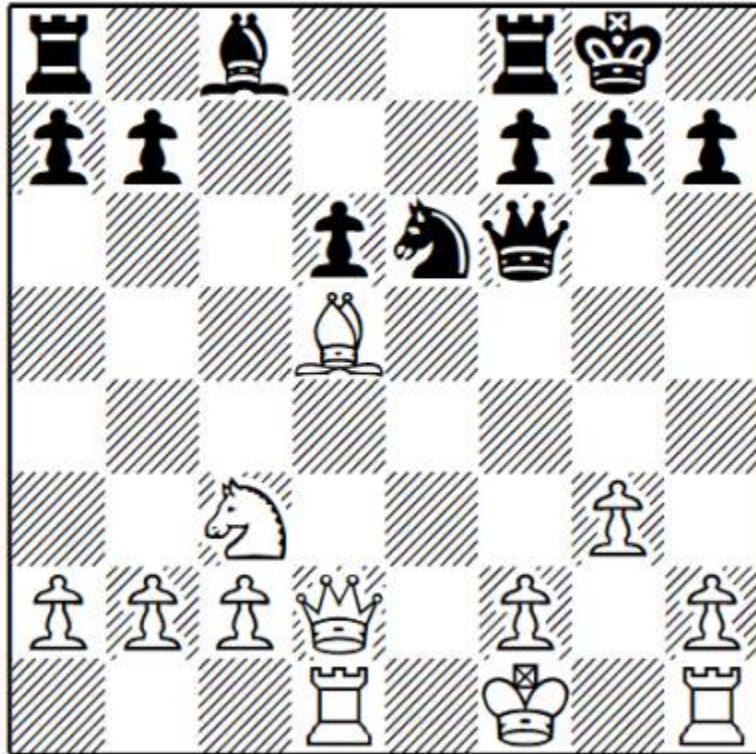
14 Bxd5

Or 14 Nc3! 0-0 15 Nxd5 Qxd4 16 Qxd4 Nxd4 17 Bxd6 cxd6 18 Be4, when White's superior structure offers an edge in the ending.

14 ... Nxd4

Now Black is worse again. 14 ... 0-0! is a sound investment of a pawn. After 15 c3, the reply 15 ... Re8 leaves White's pieces tangled.

15 Bxd6 cxd6 16 Nc3 0-0 17 Rd1 Ne6 18 g3



White should first toss in 18 h4! and then play g2-g3, so that Black's bishop doesn't gain access to h3.

18 ... Nc7! 19 Kg2

Kharlov decides that connecting his rooks takes priority over creating the potential for weakness on the light squares. 19 Bg2 preserves the bishop at the cost of keeping his h1-rook disconnected from the rest of his army.

19 ... Nxd5 20 Qxd5 Be6

After 20 ... Bd7 21 Qxb7 Qf5 22 Rhe1 Rab8 23 Qc7 Rxb2 Black is no worse.

21 Qd3

Or 21 Qxd6 Qf5 22 Rhe1 Qxc2 23 Nd5 Bxd5+ 24 Qxd5 Qxb2 25 Re7 b6 26 Rxf7!, when the ending is even.

21 ... Rac8

Black is still happy to offer the sickly d6-pawn.

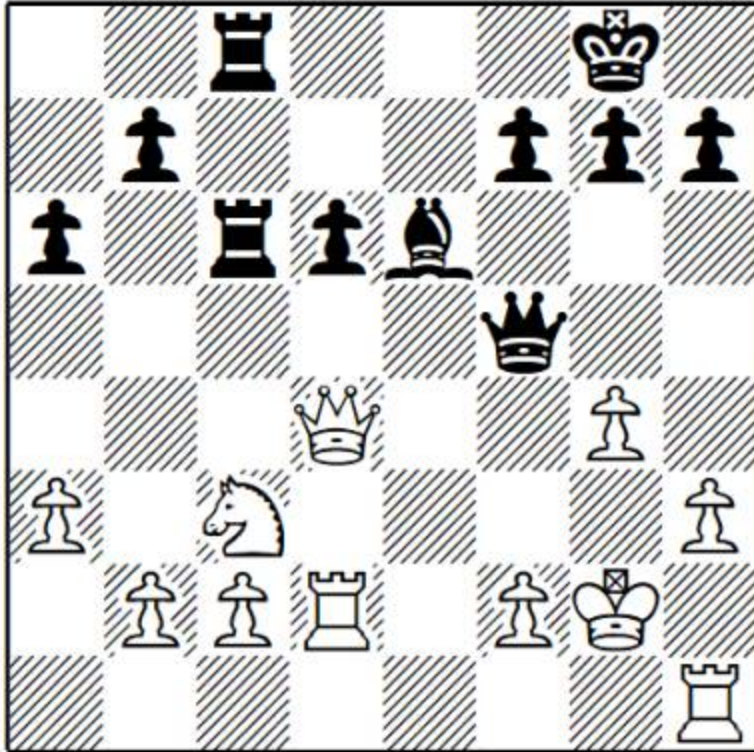
22 h3 Rc6 23 Qd4 Qf5!? 24 Rd2

After 24 Qxa7 Rxc3! 25 bxc3 Bd5+ 26 Rxd5 Qxd5+ 27 Kh2 h5 Black stands no worse.

24 ... Rfc8 25 a3

Again, after 25 Qxa7 Rxc3! 26 bxc3 Bd5+ 27 Kh2 Bxh1 28 Kxh1 Qxh3+ 29 Kg1 Qd7, only Black has chances to win.

25 ... a6 26 g4!



With this move h3 is defended and White can finally develop his h1-rook. The game remains balanced.

26 ... Qg6 27 Qd3 Qg5

Black recognizes that the insecure white king is his main source of counterplay, so he retains queens.

28 Ne4 Qf4 29 f3 h5!

Ensuring White's king remains nervous.

30 Rh2?

The correct way to protect g3 is via 30 Nc3! h4 31 Ne2!.

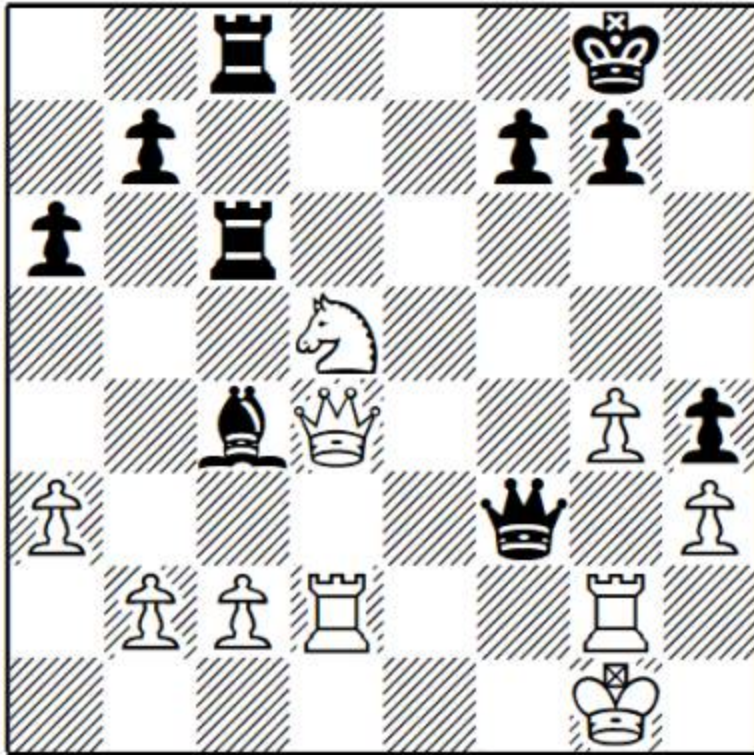
30 ... h4! 31 Kg1 Bc4! 32 Qd4 d5!

That which was once a wound now heals into a harmless scar. Black's once weak d-pawn is now somewhat useful, in that it ejects White's knight from its strong post.

Also strong is 32 ... Re8! 33 b3 Qxf3 34 Rhf2 Qxe4 35 bxc4 f6 and White is busted in the major piece ending.

33 Nc3 Qg3+ 34 Rhg2 Qxf3 35 Nxd5?

White has better chances of fighting back after 35 Kh2 Bf1 36 Rdf2 Bxg2 37 Rxf3 Bxf3.



Threatening Ne7+, winning the exchange.

Exercise (planning): What is Black's best attacking continuation?

35 ... Qf1+

Now White's position remains afloat, yet in a decaying orbit. This move is still winning but not Black's best.

Answer: Swinging the c6-rook into the attack is crushing: 35 ... Re6!, which also conveniently protects e7 and White has no adequate defence.

For example:

a) 36 Kh2 Bxd5 37 Qxd5 Qf4+ 38 Kh1 Re5! 39 Qd3 Re1+ 40 Rg1 Re3! 41 Qf1 (covering h3) 41 ... Qe4+ 42 Kh2 Rxc2 and White collapses.

b) 36 Nf4 Re4 (double attack) 37 Qd7 Re1+ 38 Kh2 Qxf4+ mates next move.

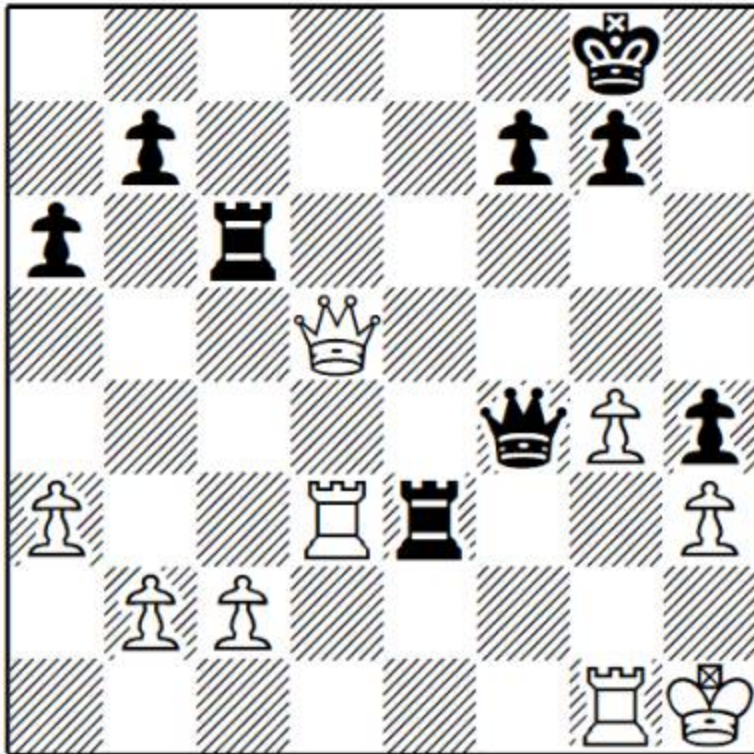
Note that 35 ... Qxh3?? walks into White's devilish trap. After 36 Nf4 Qf3 37 Rdf2 Black's queen is unexpectedly trapped and it costs Black a full rook to extricate it.

36 Kh2 Bxd5 37 Qxd5 Qf4+ 38 Kh1 Re8

Black's attack continues to rage, despite the fact that he missed a knockout punch.

39 Rg1 Re3 40 Rd3

If 40 Qg2 Rg3 41 Rf1 Qg5 42 Qh2 Qe3! then h3 falls and it's all over. If 43 Rd3 Qe4+ wins.



Exercise critical decision/calculation: Calculate 40 ... Rxc2 41 Qd8+. Should Black enter this line?

40 ... Rxd3?!

Answer: 40 ... Rxc2! works if you see the startling second move of the sequence: 41 Qd8+ must be met by 41 ... Re8!!. This attraction theme is the difficult part of the combination. It disconnects White's queen from her defensive posture. After 42 Qxe8+ Kh7 43 Rg2 Qf1+ 44 Rg1 Qxd3, it's forced mate in three moves, since h3 can't be defended.

Kritz probably only analyzed the faulty 41 ... Kh7? 42 Qxh4+ Kg6 43 Qh5+ Kf6 44 g5+ Ke7 45 Rxe3+ Qxe3 46 Rf1 Qe4+ 47 Qf3 Qxf3+ 48 Rxf3 Rxb2, when White retains chances to save the rook ending.

41 Qxd3 Rd6 42 Qf5 Qc4

With White's king still exposed Black will naturally evade a queen exchange, even with only four major pieces remaining on the board.

43 Qf2 Qe4+ 44 Qg2 Qe3!

Still no queen exchange for you. Now Black threatens ... Rd2.

45 Rf1 Rd2 46 Qf3 Qxf3+

A pawn up ending is the best Black can now achieve.

47 Rxf3 Rxc2 48 b4 Ra2 49 Kg1 f6 50 Rc3 Kh7

Not only is White a pawn down in the rook ending, his king is also cut off, trapped on the first rank. Black's active king is the decisive factor. In fact 50 ... b5! seals Black's win since it disables White's b4-b5 liquidation tricks.

51 Rf3

51 b5! is White's chance for resistance.

51 ... Kg6 52 Kf1 b5 53 Kg1 Kg5 54 Rf5+ Kg6

Okay, that didn't work. The king must emerge from the other side.

55 Rf3 Kf7 56 Re3

Preventing the black king's entry via the e-file.

56 ... g6

Black begins to mobilize his kingside pawn majority.

57 Rc3 Kg7! 58 Rf3 Kh6! 59 Rxf6

59 Re3 Kg5 60 Rf3 f5 61 gxf5 gxf5 62 Kh1 f4 63 Kg1 Kf5 64 Rc3 Ke4 is an easy win for Black.

59 ... Rxa3 60 Kg2 Rg3+

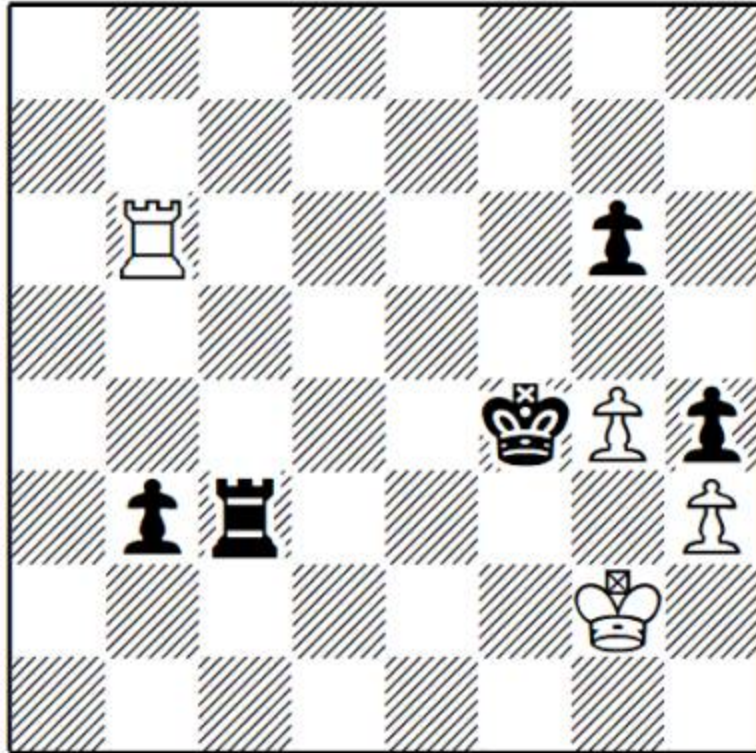
This check gains a tempo by decentralizing White's king.

61 Kh2 Rb3 62 Rxa6 Rxb4 63 Kg2 Kg5 64 Rb6 Rb2+ 65 Kf3 Rb3+ 66 Kg2 b4 67 Rd6 Rg3+ 68 Kh2 Re3 69 Kg2 b3 70 Rb6 Rg3+ 71 Kh2

A ghost is bound to the location of its death when it was still human. White's king is trapped between h2 and g2, since it must protect the h3-

pawn.

71 ... Rc3 72 Kg2 Kf4!



The g6-pawn is meaningless. Black's king will assist his b-pawn to the promotion square.

73 Rf6+

Or 73 Rxc6 Rc2+ 74 Kf1 b2 75 Rb6 Rc1+ and the b-pawn wins White's rook.

73 ... Ke3 74 Re6+ Kd2 0-1

The b-pawn again costs White his rook.

Game 11

V.Laznicka-A.Shirov

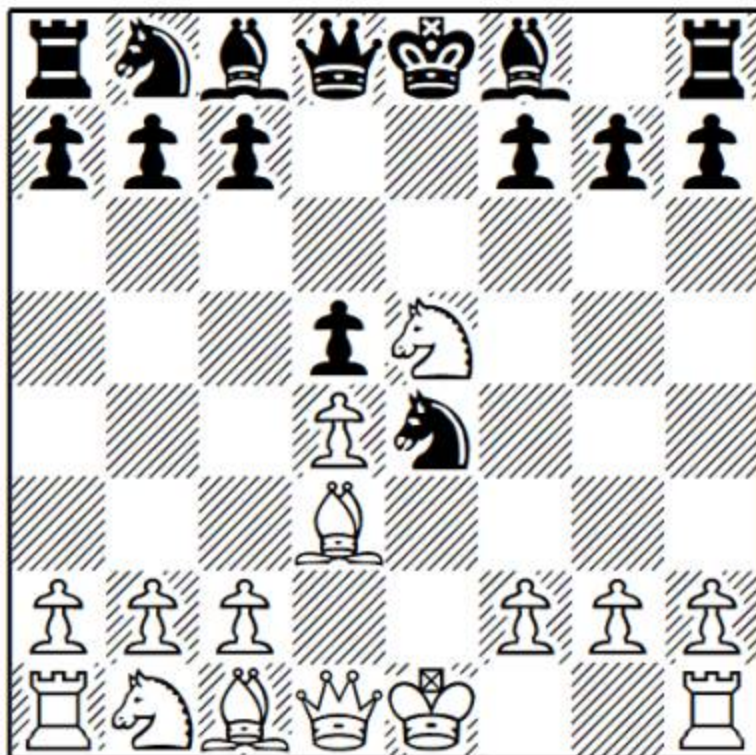
Pamplona 2006

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6

What I learned from Facebook is that everyone wants to be somebody else. So we are tempted to put out a kind of social media avatar of the

person we want to be, but aren't. I find it totally mystifying that a player as confrontational as Alexei Shirov has the Petroff in his repertoire, since I can't think of another player less suited to this opening.

3 d4 Nxe4 4 Bd3 d5 5 Nxe5



In this version Black's pieces are denied access to c5. The downside is that it will be tough to demonstrate an advantage in a timid Exchange French structure. Rest assured that Black has sufficient resources to hold the balance in this position, despite White's slight development lead.

5 ... Nd7

This is Black's most reliable move, seeking to eliminate White's troublesome e5-knight.

6 Nxd7

Believe it or not, this lame-looking exchange is White's best shot at extracting an edge. Other options lead to nothing, or worse:

a) 6 0-0 Nxe5 7 dxe5 Nc5 8 Nc3 c6 9 Ne2 Be7 10 f4 f6! (White's rolling central/kingside majority must be challenged early, before it gets out of control) 11 Be3 Nxd3 (Black should hold off on this exchange and play

11 ... 0-0! with complete equality) 12 Qxd3 0-0 13 c4 fxe5 14 fxe5 Be6 15 Nf4 Bf5 16 Qd4 Bg5 17 cxd5 Bxf4 18 Rxf4 Qxd5 19 Qxd5+ cxd5 and the bishops of opposite colours virtually assure Black of the draw, S.Mamedyarov-V.Kramnik, Wijk aan Zee 2008.

b) V.Gashimov-V.Kramnik, Baku 2009, went 6 Nc3 Nxe5 7 dxe5 Nxc3 8 bxc3 Bc5 9 0-0 0-0 10 Qh5 g6 11 Qh6 Qe7 12 Bf4 f5! 13 Rab1 b6 14 Rfe1 Be6 15 Bg5 Qf7 16 Qh4 c6 17 a4 Rfe8 18 Qf4 Be7 19 Bh6 c5 with a dynamically balanced position. This game is annotated in *The Petroff: Move by Move*.

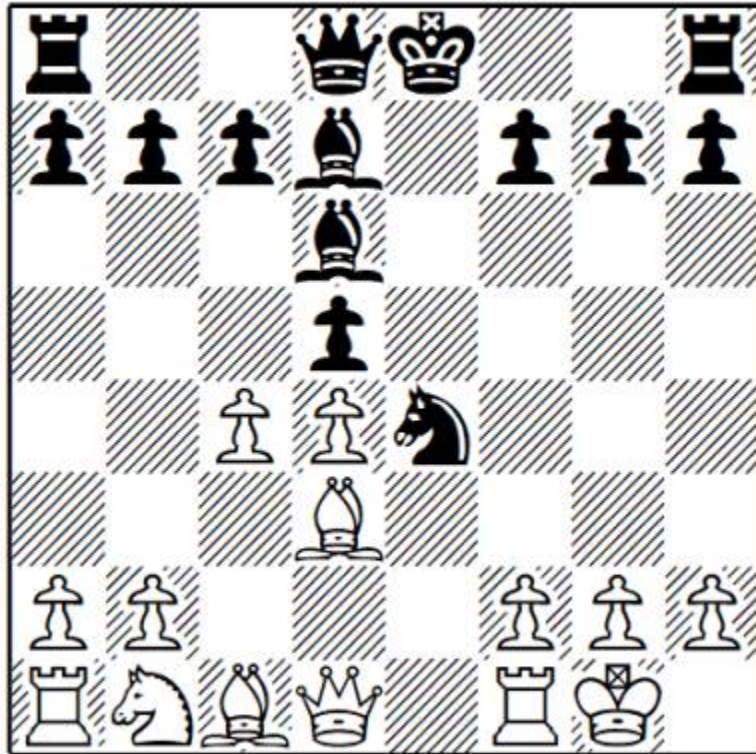
c) 6 Qe2 Nxe5 7 Bxe4 (7 dxe5 Nc5 is probably already slightly in Black's favour since White essentially wasted a tempo on Qe2) 7 ... dxe4 8 Qxe4 Be6 9 Qxe5 (in case you are worried that White has won a pawn, don't be: in return Black has both a development lead and the bishop pair in a rather open position) 9 ... Qd7 10 Nc3 0-0-0 11 Be3 Bb4 12 0-0 f6 13 Qg3 Bxc3! (White's blockaded d5- and c4-squares mean that Black's king will be in no danger; meanwhile, White's king is facing a dangerous attack and his bishop stinks) 14 bxc3 h5 15 Rfd1 g5 16 Qf3 Rh6 17 Qe2 Qc6 and White may already be strategically busted, R.Zelcic-R.Kasimdzhanov, Jahorina 2003.

d) 6 Nxf7 (this wannabe Cochrane Gambit allows Black an instant forced draw) 6 ... Kxf7 7 Qh5+ Ke6 (7 ... Ke7!? is still a draw after 8 Qe2 Kf7 9 Qh5+ etc) 8 Qg4+ Kf7 9 Qh5+ Ke6 and so on. So this line is a forced draw and is one of the reasons you shouldn't play Petroff when you are in desperate need of a win with the black pieces!

6 ... Bxd7 7 0-0 Bd6

This is Black's main move. Be warned, in some lines Black must sacrifice a pawn.

8 c4



White thematically attempts to undermine Black's knight. Later in the chapter we will consider 8 Nc3 and 8 Qh5.

a) 8 Nd2 is feeble and can be ignored with 8 ... 0-0! 9 Bxe4 dxe4 10 Nxe4 Bxh2+. Black gets the pawn right back and 11 Kxh2 Qh4+ 12 Kg1 Qxe4 is equal.

b) 8 Re1 0-0! (Black is happy to offer a pawn for the bishop pair, a development lead and a Ruy-Lopez Marshall Gambit-like attack on White's king after 9 Bxe4 dxe4 10 Rxe4 f5; White scores an unimpressive 25% here from four games in the database) 11 Re1 Qh4 12 g3 Qh3. This position is Frank Marshall's dream and Black's many plusses clearly outweigh White's extra pawn, Z.Aminov-G.Faizrahmanov, Belgorod 2009.

e) 8 Bxe4 dxe4 9 Re1 0-0! 10 Rxe4 f5 transposes to 9 Bxe4 etc in line 'b'.

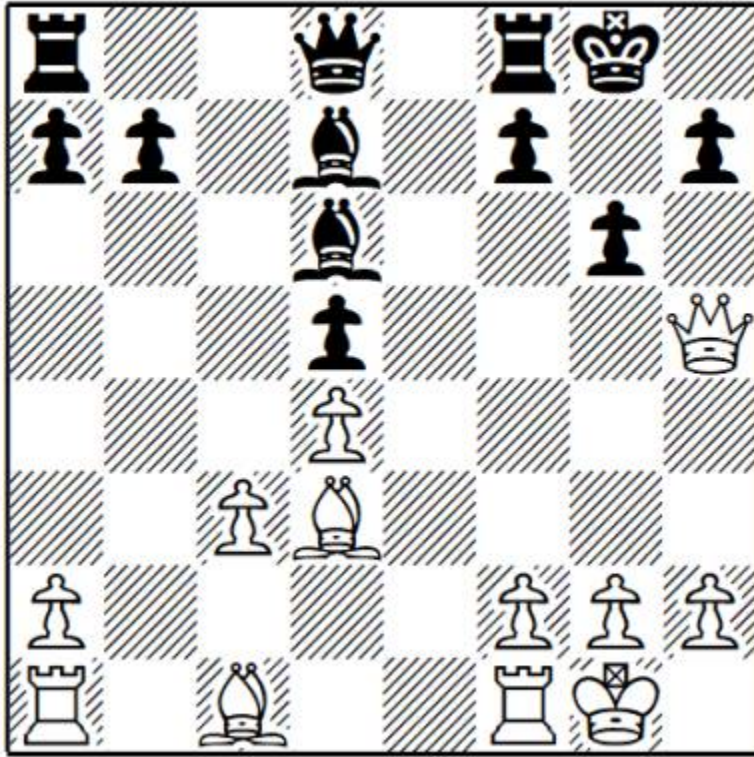
8 ... c6

After 8 ... 0-0 9 cxd5 f5 10 Nc3 Qf6 Black got decent compensation and the computer calls it pretty much even here, J.Rogos-Z.Straka, ICCF email 2016.

9 cxd5 cxd5 10 Nc3

10 Qh5 is examined later in this chapter.

10 ... Nxc3 11 bxc3 0-0 12 Qh5 g6!



We Petroff folk come with a passive outer image. But watch out – push us around and we will fight back. This temporary pawn offer is much better than the grovelling line 12 ... f5 13 Qf3 Kh8 14 Bd2 Qc7 15 h3 Bc6 16 Rfe1 g6 17 h4, when Black has nothing to attack and must contend with a slightly aired-out king, M.Pirs-E.Gilabert, ICCF email 2010.

13 Qxd5 Qc7

Played with a dual purpose:

1) Black's queen covers the d6-bishop, while taking aim at White's king.

2) Both h2- and c3-pawns are attacked.

14 Qf3

Next game we look at 14 Bh6. Others:

a) 14 g3 Be6 15 Qf3 Qxc3 16 Rb1 Qxd4 17 Be4 Qc4 18 Rxb7 Rab8 19 Qf6 (threatening Bh6) 19 ... Bh3 (countering with a threat of mate) 20 Re1

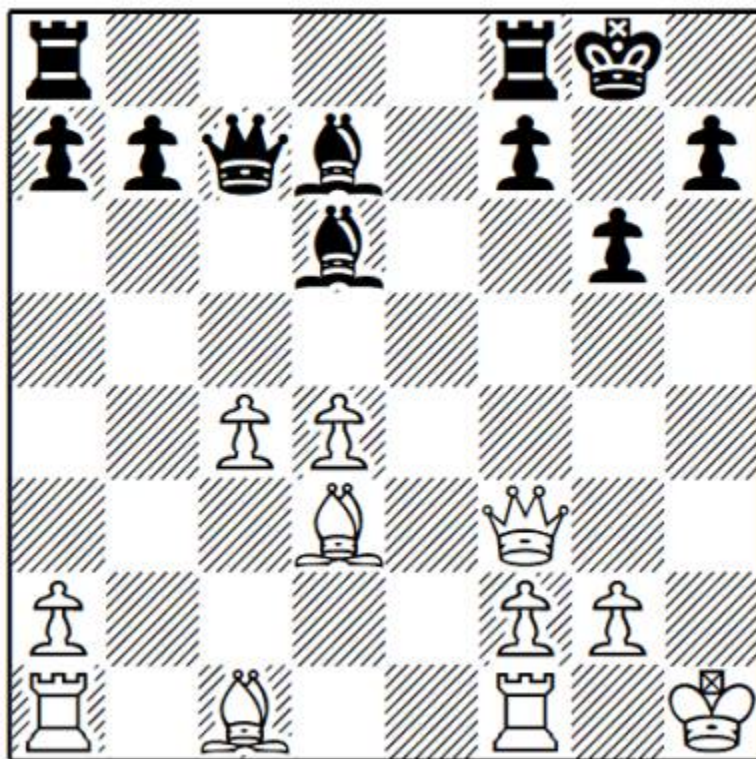
Qe6 21 Qxe6 fxe6! 22 Be3 (22 Rxa7? hangs the exchange to 22 ... Bc5 23 Be3 Bxa7) 22 ... Rxb7 23 Bxb7 a5 with an even ending, F.Vallejo Pons-B.Gelfand, Leon 2010.

b) 14 c4 Bc6 15 Qg5 Bxh2+ 16 Kh1 Bd6 17 d5 Rae8! 18 f4 (not 18 dxc6?? Re5 White must give up his queen to evade mate) 18 ... f6 19 Qg3 Bd7 20 Bxg6 (White wants the draw; after 20 Be3 Bc5 Black stands no worse) 20 ... hxg6 21 Qxg6+ Kh8 22 Qh6+ ½-½ A.Motylev-V.Kramnik, Moscow 2005.

14 ... Bxh2+

Regaining the pawn.

15 Kh1 Bd6 16 c4



Now the question arises: is White's centre a strength or a potential future weakness? The answer is – it depends.

If Black can force one pawn forward and establish a blockade, then Black will stand better. If White's pawn remains unblocked, then White's game is to be preferred. The consensus is that the position is dynamically balanced.

16 ... Rfe8

Or 16 ... Qd8 17 g3 Re8 18 Rb1 Bc5! 19 d5 (19 dxc5?? runs into the pin 19 ... Bc6, winning White's queen) 19 ... Qe7 20 Bb2 (20 Rxb7!? loses the exchange to 20 ... Bg4! 21 Qxg4 Qxb7 22 Kg2 although White may have sufficient attacking compensation) 20 ... Bh3 21 Bf6 Qd7 22 Rfe1 Bg4 23 Qf4 Bd6 24 Qg5 Bf3+ 25 Kh2 b6 ½-½ C.Blanco Gramajo-M.Bulgarini Torres, CADAP corr. 2000.

17 c5!

What is the good of owning a central cluster of pawns if we don't use them to bully our opponent's pieces?

17 ... Bf8 18 Be4

The computer suggests 18 Rb1! which may be an improvement. Nevertheless, after 18 ... Qc6! (if 18 ... b6 19 Be4 Rac8 20 Bf4 Qd8 21 Bb7 bxc5 22 Bxc8 Qxc8 23 d5 Qa6, White's exchange is worth more than Black's bishop pair and extra pawn) 19 Rxb7 Qxf3 20 gxf3 Bc6 21 Rc7 Bxf3+ 22 Kg1 Rad8 23 Be3 Bg7 24 Bc4 Rf8 25 Rxa7 Bxd4, Black should hold the draw.

18 ... Bc6?

This is one of those familiar cases of monkey-see-monkey-do. A bad move is repeated because it is a book move and is therefore sacrosanct. This weak move, which was played in all six database games from this position, is actually incorrect.

Black has a big improvement with the unplayed 18 ... Bb5! as found by the computers. After 19 Bf4 Qe7 20 Bxb7 Be2! (Black is fine) 21 Rae1! (forced, as 21 Qc6? Rad8 22 Rfe1 Qh4+ 23 Bh2 Qxd4 leaves White busted) 21 ... Qh4+ 22 Qh3 Qxf4 23 Bxa8 Bg4! 24 Qxg4 Qxg4 25 Rxe8 Qxd4, the position is equal and the game should end in a draw: 26 c6 Kg7 27 c7 Qh4+ 28 Kg1 Bd6 29 g3 Bxg3 with perpetual check.

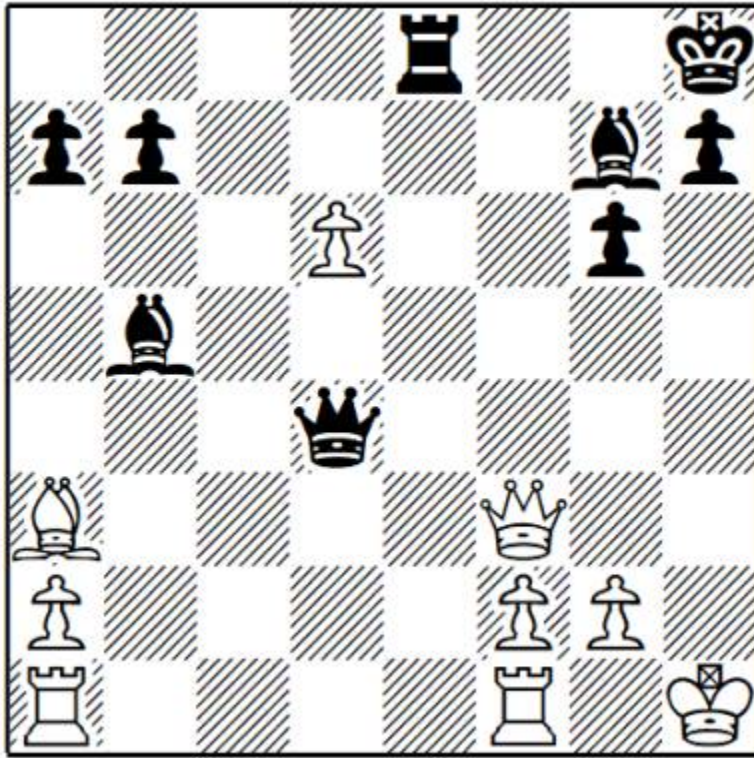
19 d5

Now Black is crowded out in the middle.

19 ... Bb5 20 d6 Qxc5 21 Bd5 Bg7 22 Ba3! Qd4

After 22 ... Qc3 23 Bxf7+ Kh8 24 Qxc3 Bxc3 25 Bxe8 Bxf1 26 Rc1?! (White has better winning chances with 26 Rxf1 Rxe8 27 Rc1 Bf6 28 Rc7) 26 ... Rxe8 27 Rxc3 Rd8 28 Rc7 Kg8 29 Rxb7 Bc4 30 Re7 a6 31 Bb4 Bb5 (31 ... Bxa2?? loses to 32 d7 with the dual threats of Re8+ and Ba5) 32 Kh2 Rd7, White was unable to convert his extra pawn due to the presence of opposite-coloured bishops, S.Rublevsky-F.Vallejo Pons, Ohrid 2001.

23 Bxf7+ Kh8 24 Bxe8 Rxe8!?



Shirov feels a sense of urgency. He probably assessed that his drawing chances were minimal in the line 24 ... Bxf1 25 Rxf1 Rxe8 26 Kg1, when it's an uphill climb for Black due to White's deeply passed d-pawn.

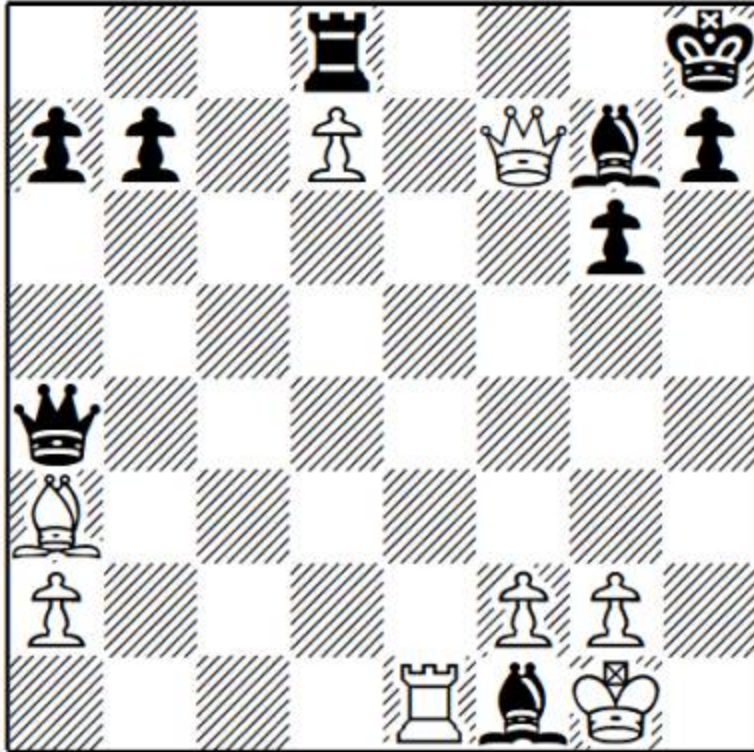
25 Rad1! Qh4+ 26 Kg1 Bxf1 27 d7?!

Black would be unlikely to have held the game if White played 27 Rxf1!.

27 ... Rd8 28 Re1?

After this mistake Black no longer stands worse. White has chances to convert with 28 Kxf1!. For example, 28 ... Qa4 29 Qd3 Bf6 30 Bc5! Qxa2 31 Bd4! Bxd4 32 Qxd4+ Kg8 33 Qe4 (threatening Qe8+) 33 ... Qb3 34 Rd5 Kf8 35 g4! b5 36 Kg2 a5 37 Qf4+ Kg8 38 Qd6 a4 39 Qe6+ Kg7 40 Qe7+ Kh6 (40 ... Kg8 41 Qxd8+ is mate in three) 41 Rh5+! gxh5 42 Qf6 mate.

28 ... Qa4! 29 Qf7



Exercise (defensive move): What is Black's only move to save the game?

29 ... Be2!

Answer: Interference. And not 29 ... Bb5?? which fails miserably to 30 Re8+ Rxe8 31 Qxe8+ Bf8 32 Qxf8 mate.

30 Rxe2

30 Bf8!?! is scary but everything is under control for Black after 30 ... Bd4! 31 Rxe2 Qd1+ 32 Kh2 Qxe2 33 Be7 Qh5+ 34 Kg1 Qd1+ with perpetual check.

30 ... Qd1+ 31 Kh2 Qxe2 32 Be7 Qh5+ 33 Kg3!

33 Kg1?? loses instantly to 33 ... Qd1+ 34 Kh2 Qxd7.

33 ... Qe5+ 34 f4 Qe3+ 35 Kh2 Rg8 36 Qxg8+

36 d8Q is also equal.

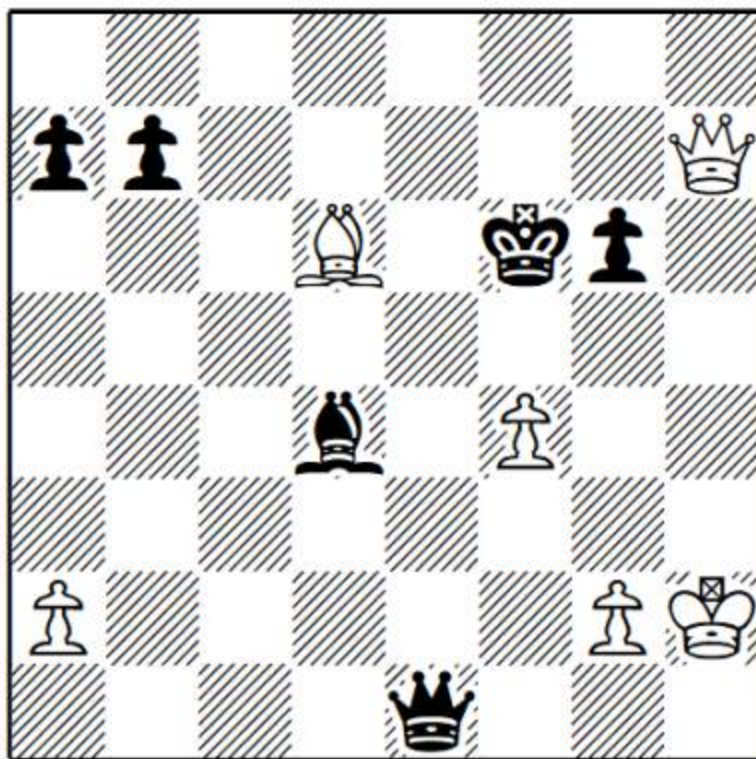
36 ... Kxg8 37 d8Q+ Kf7 38 Bd6 Bd4 39 Qd7+ Kf6

Having played Alexei Shirov in online blitz, I can tell you he is a polished actor who assumes a pose of innocence, when in reality, just as he does here, he is always setting a trap. Black's h-pawn is poisoned. If you go over enough of his games, you eventually lose the capacity to be surprised. 39 ... Kg8 is also drawn.

40 Qxh7??

This is the answer to Shirov's prayers. White's intent falls horribly out of context with the position's requirements. The logical end of the game would have been 40 Qd8+ Ke6 41 Bb8 Kf7 42 Qd7+ Kf6 43 Qxh7 Qg1+ 44 Kg3 Qe1+ 45 Kh2 Qg1+ and 1/2-1/2.

40 ... Qg1+ 41 Kg3 Qe1+ 42 Kh2



Exercise (combination alert): White's position is less sturdy than outer appearances indicate. White mistakenly thought the game would end in perpetual check. What did he overlook?

42 ... Bg1+!

Answer: Attraction/double attack. The white king is lured to h3.

43 Kh3

White's world begins to tilt around him and his former sense of stability is suddenly unanchored. Note that 43 Kh1 walks into mate after 43 ... Bf2+ 44 Kh2 Qg1+ 45 Kh3 Qh1+ 46 Kg4 Qxg2.

43 ... Qe6+!

A decisive double attack. White hangs his bishop and there is no salvaging anything from the wreckage, since perpetual check is non-existent.

44 g4 Qxd6 0-1

Game 12

Em.Berg-An.Karpov

Tallinn (rapid) 2006

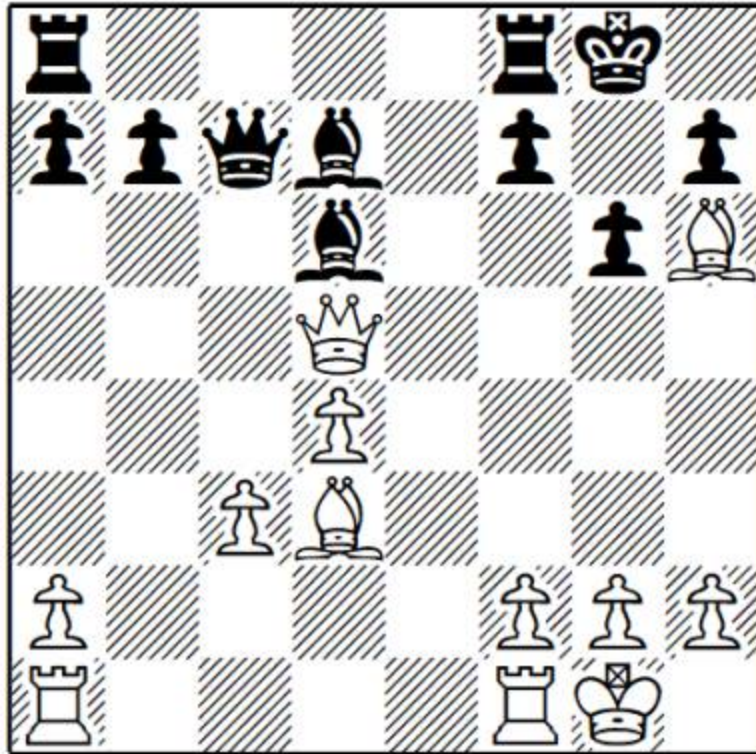
1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 d4 Nxe4 4 Bd3 d5 5 Nxe5 Nd7 6 Nxd7 Bxd7 7 0-0 Bd6 8 c4 c6 9 cxd5 cxd5 10 Nc3

10 Qh5 is seen in the next game.

10 ... Nxc3 11 bxc3 0-0 12 Qh5 g6 13 Qxd5

White's extra pawn will prove to be a temporary asset.

13 ... Qc7 14 Bh6



The idea behind this move is two-fold:

- 1) White gains a tempo on the f8-rook.
- 2) By forcing Black's rook away from f8, White weakens the defence of f7.

14 ... Rfe8

Instead, 14 ... Rfd8 is Black's main line. Play can continue 15 Qg5 Bxh2+! (a new move at the time and a possible improvement over 15 ... Qxc3 16 Rfd1) 16 Kh1 Bd6 17 c4 Bf8 18 Bxf8 Rxf8 19 c5 (White may be better off keeping his pawns fluid with 19 a4) 19 ... Rad8 20 Be4? (20 Bc4 is the correct location for the bishop) 20 ... Bc6 21 d5 f6! 22 d6 fxg5 (22 ... Qxd6! is stronger) 23 dxc7 Rc8 24 Bxc6 bxc6 25 f3 Rxc7 and Kramnik managed to convert his extra pawn in G.Guseinov-V.Kramnik, Baku 2009. This game is annotated in *The Petroff: Move by Move*.

15 h4

This is more vigorous than pushing the h-pawn one square. White hopes to loosen the pawn front around Black's king with h4-h5.

15 h3 Be6 16 Qg5 Qxc3 17 Rfd1 Rad8 18 Rac1 Qa3 19 Bb5 Bd7 20 Bc4 Bf8 21 Bxf8 Qxf8 ½-½ was C.Costa-J.Helbich, ICCF email 2008. White only has a microbe of an edge after 22 Qa5 a6, since the isolated/passed d-pawn looks like more of an asset than a burden for White.

15 ... Be6 16 Qf3 Qxc3

Karpov has regained his sacrificed pawn with approximately even chances.

17 Qf6

The mate threat is easy to block.

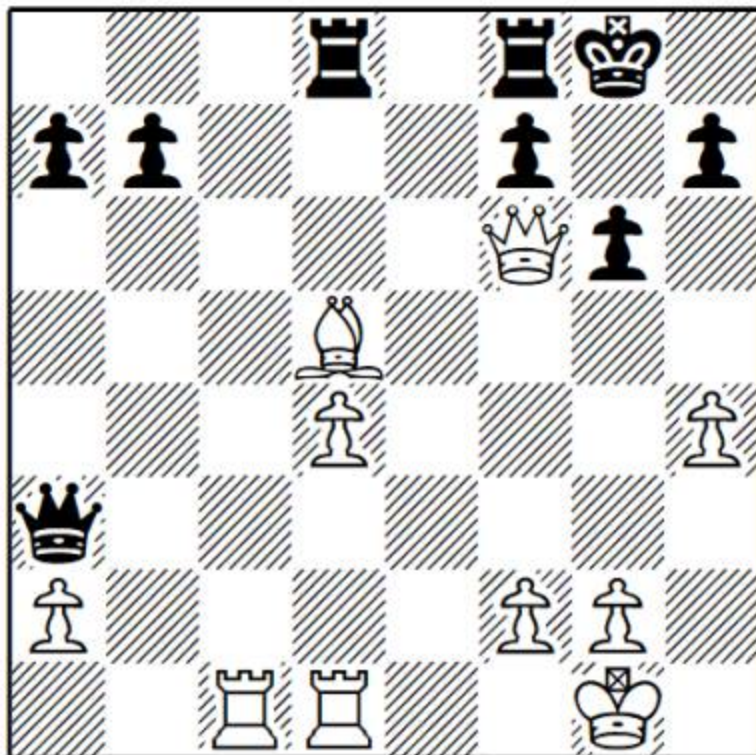
17 ... Bf8 18 Bxf8 Rxf8 19 Be4

After 19 h5 Rfd8! 20 Bxg6 Qxd4 21 Qxd4 Rxd4 22 Bc2 b5 Black stands slightly better due to his superior pawn majority.

19 ... Rad8 20 Rfd1 Bd5

Now the b7-square is covered and d5 blockaded.

21 Rac1 Qa3 22 Bxd5?!



This move may well be the seed of White's future capitulation. It's new and not particularly good. Due to his two isolanis it is White who is

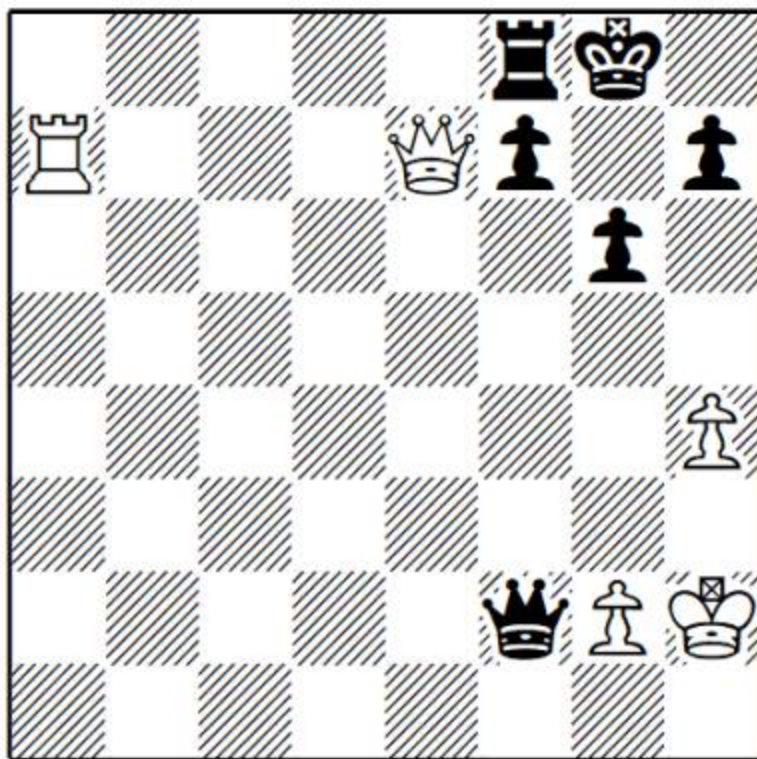
struggling to equalize.

22 h5 is White's main and best move. All the same, Black equalizes with 22 ... Qd6 23 Qxd6 Rxd6 24 Bxd5 Rxd5 (both sides' respective fortresses are impervious to the other's attempts to enter) 25 hxg6 hxg6 26 Rc7 b5 27 Rxa7 Rfd8 28 a4 b4 29 Rb7 Rxd4 30 Rb1 Ra8 31 R1xb4 Rxa4 and in G.Guseinov-E.Safarli, Porticcio 2017, the players agreed to a draw in a few moves.

22 ... Rxd5 23 Rc7 Qxa2 24 Qe7

24 Rxb7?? walks into Karpov's trap: 24 ... Rf5! with a fatal double attack on f6 and f2.

24 ... Rxd4! 25 Rxd4 Qa1+ 26 Kh2 Qxd4 27 Rxb7 Qxf2 28 Rxa7



Any position where one side is a pawn down but with the remainder of the pawns all on the same flank offers decent drawing chances for the defender. Here Grandmaster Berg has two defensive issues to overcome:

1) His h-pawn has advanced to h4, which means that his king's safety is slightly compromised.

2) He is playing Anatoly Karpov, one of the greatest ending technicians in the history of the game.

28 ... Qf4+ 29 Kh3 Rc8

White is now thrown on the defensive since Black's queen covers f7 while simultaneously retaining an attacking stance against White's king. Black threatens a deadly rook check, which forces White's rook into passivity.

30 Ra3 Qf5+ 31 Kh2 h5 32 Rf3 Qd5

Defence of the f7-square is never an issue, since White can only threaten it twice.

33 Re3 Rc2

Threatening mate.

34 Qe4 Qd6+

Black's winning chances plummet with 34 ... Qxe4? since a queen exchange dramatically increases White's drawing prospects.

35 Qe5 Qd2 36 Rg3 Qf2 37 Qe4 Re2 38 Qf3

After 38 Rxc6?? fxc6 39 Qxc6+ Kf8 there is no perpetual check.

38 ... Qe1 39 Qc3 Qf1 40 Qf3 Rf2 41 Qd5

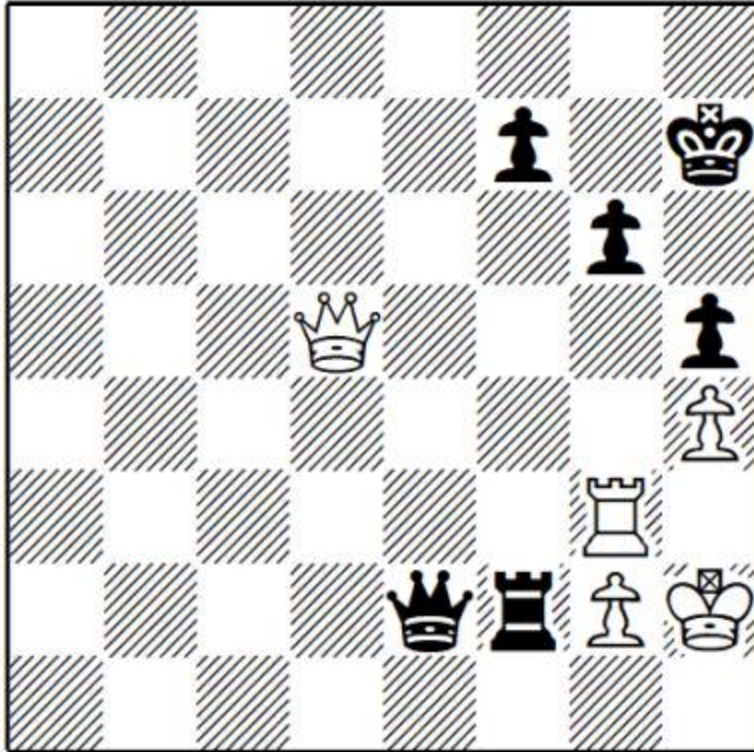
Threatening Rxc6+.

41 ... Kh7 42 Rg5 Qe2

The position refuses to clarify. Karpov should target White's h-pawn as follows: 42 ... Re2! 43 Qd4 Qb1 44 Qf4 Qb7 45 Qg3 Qb4! (threatening ... Re4) 46 Kh3 Qd4 (threatening ... Re3, pinning White's queen) 47 Kh2 Re4 and Black wins a second pawn.

43 Rg3??

White can still fight with 43 Qd4!, after which White's damage is at the level of a broken tail light and not a fatal freeway collision.



Exercise (planning): White's last move was a losing blunder. Find Karpov's plan to prove why.

43 ... Qe1!

Answer #1: Line up queen and rook on White's first rank.

Answer #2: 43 ... Rf1! is also winning.

44 Rg5 Rf1

Threatening ... Rh1 mate.

45 Rxe5+

There is no perpetual check. 45 g3 also fails to 45 ... Rf2+, winning the queen.

45 ... gxe5 46 Qxe5+ Kg7 47 Qg5+ Kf8 48 Qh6+

Or 48 Qd8+ Qe8 49 Qd6+ Qe7 50 Qh6+ Kg8 and there is no perpetual.

48 ... Ke7 49 Qg5+ 0-1

It's just a matter of time before the checks run out.

Game 13

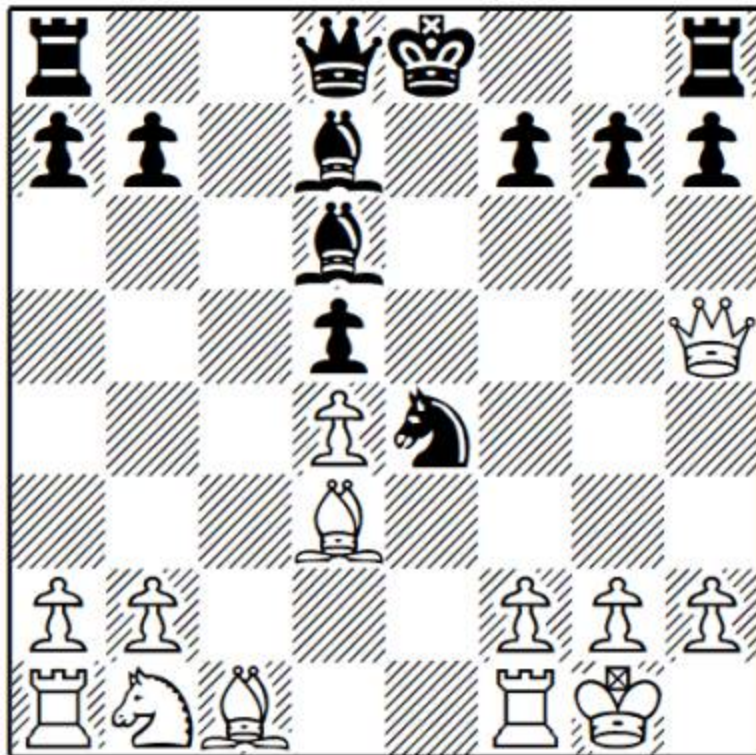
J.Lautier-B.Gelfand

FIDE World Championship, Las Vegas 1999

**1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 d4 Nxe4 4 Bd3 d5 5 Nxe5 Nd7 6 Nxd7 Bxd7 7 0-0
Bd6 8 c4**

8 Nc3 is seen in the next game.

8 ... c6 9 cxd5 cxd5 10 Qh5



In this version White reasons as follows: if Nc3 is played then, after ... Nxc3 and a future ... Qc7, Black regains the pawn with a double attack on c3 and h2. White therefore holds back on Nc3 and turns the game into a true gambit for Black.

10 ... 0-0!

Black has faith in the Marshall Gambit-like compensation generated by sacrificing the d5-pawn.

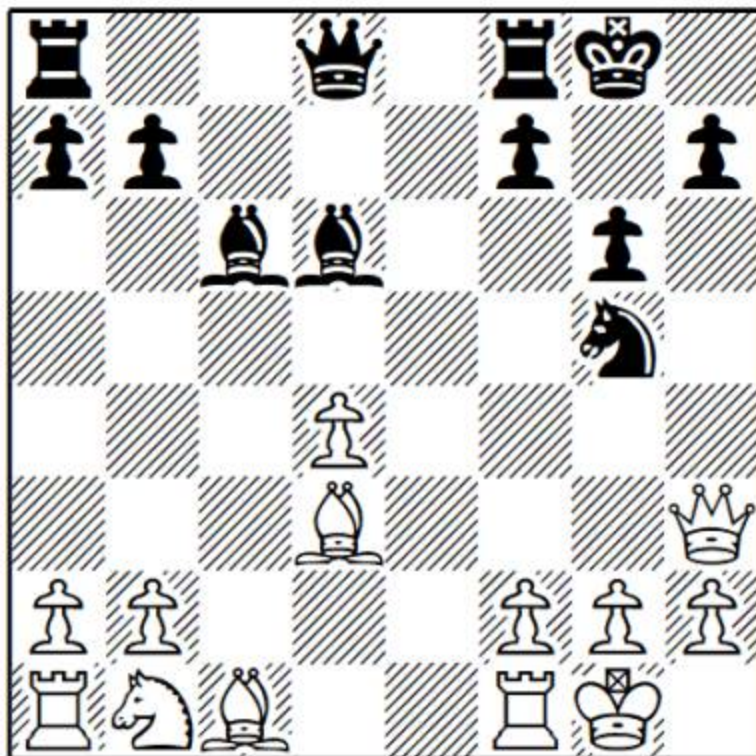
Instead, 10 ... Nf6!? is a passive retreat, which is actually playable if you don't fear grovelling for a draw. Play can continue 11 Re1+ Kf8 (even

worse is to contort with 11 ... Be7?! 12 Qe2 Be6 13 Bb5+ Nd7 14 Nc3 with enduring pressure for White) 12 Qh4 Ng4! (with this trick Black forces queens off the board) 13 Qxd8+ Rxd8 14 h3 Nf6 15 Bg5 h6 16 Bxf6 gxf6 17 Nc3 Be6, as in S.Peng-M.Grabarczyk, Budapest 2018. Black's ending is admittedly inferior, yet well within the parameters of the draw.

11 Qxd5 Bc6 12 Qh5 g6 13 Qh3

13 Qh6 scores poorly for White. After 13 ... Re8 14 Be3 Nf6! (threatening ... Ng4) 15 Qh4 (after 15 Bg5 Be7 White will drop the d4-pawn or repeat moves) 15 ... Nd5 16 Bg5 Be7 17 Bxe7 Rxe7 18 Nc3 Rd7 19 Qg3 Qf6 20 Rae1 Qxd4 Black has regained the sacrificed pawn with the slightly more active pieces, E.Ramos-M.Pilarte, ICCF email 2008.

13 ... Ng5!



White's queen is continually harried.

14 Qg4

14 Qh6 Ne6 15 Be3 Be7 16 Nc3 Bf6 17 Rad1 was seen in M.Kazakov-A.Mikhalchishin, Varazdin 2003. Black equalizes with 17 ... Bg7! 18 Qh3 Nxd4 19 Bc4 Qb6 20 Rd2 Qb4 (breaking the pin) 21 Bxd4 Qxc4.

14 ... Ne6 15 Be3!?

This move is rare. White does his best to hang on to his d-pawn.

15 Bh6 can be met by the startling computer shot 15 ... Bf4!! 16 Bxf4 (16 Bxf8?! Qxd4 creates numerous threats and, according to the computer, White is already busted) 16 ... Qxd4 17 Nc3 h5 18 Qh4 Nxf4 19 Be4 Nxf4 20 Kxf4 f5 21 Rad1 Bxe4+ 22 Qxe4 Qxe4+ 23 Nxe4 fxe4 24 Rd7 Rf7 25 Rfd1 Rc8 26 Rxf7 Kxf7 ½-½ D.Conterno-P.Morley, ICCF email 2014.

15 ... h5! 16 Qh3

The queen is forced to enter the danger zone on h3.

16 ... Bd7

This move regains the sacrificed pawn with a slightly superior position.

However, nobody has tried the possible improvement 16 ... Nf4!, picking up the bishop pair as well as regaining the sacrificed pawn. Opening lines are not scripture, which can become corrupted with any alteration. Experiment with a new idea when you (or, far more likely, the computer) get one. After 17 Bxf4 Bxf4 18 Nc3 Qxd4 19 Ne2 Qe5 20 Nxf4 Qxf4 Black stands slightly better due to the more active queen and bishop.

17 Qf3 Bc6 18 Qd1??

Grandmaster Lautier plays for the win with the righteous, yet misguided, zeal of a fanatic who is convinced his false cause is just. This particular screw-up was made even more potent by the fact that the players were engaged in a 15 minute game with a 10 second increment, which is somewhere between a long blitz game and a rapid game. White's queen should play possum, repeat moves and go back to h3.

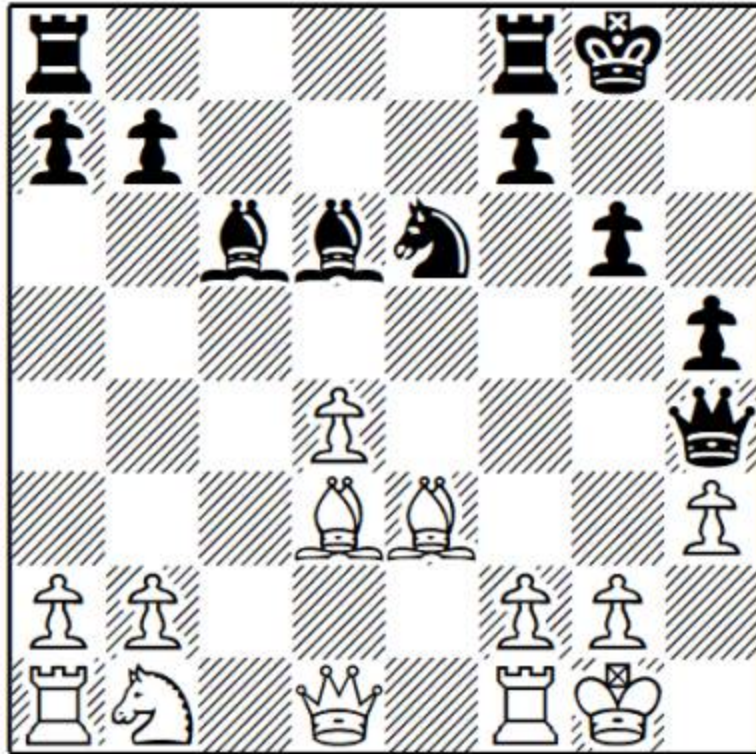
18 d5? allows 18 ... Bxd5 Black can capture with impunity since the bishop is untouchable due to the discovered check on h2.

18 ... Qh4

Frank Marshall would have approved. After this obvious move Black has a decisive attack.

19 h3?

A further mistake; though after 19 g3 Qh3 20 f3 h4 21 Qe2 hxg3 22 Qg2 gxh2+ 23 Kh1 Qxg2+! (simplest) 24 Kxf4 Bf4 Black has a completely won ending.



Lautier is still reeling from his blunder and violates the bottom line of all bottom lines: don't allow checkmate.

Exercise (planning): It's getting harder and harder for White to maintain the facade that all is still well in his position. What is Black's strongest attacking continuation?

19 ... Ng5!

Answer: Transfer the knight to g5, after which White either allows a fatal sacrifice on h3, or takes the knight; either way it leads to a winning attack for Black.

20 d5

After 20 Bxg5 Qxg5 21 f3 Qf4 22 Nc3 Qxd4+ 23 Kh1 Qf4 24 Kg1 Qh2+ 25 Kf2 Bg3+ 26 Ke3 Rad8 White's king will not survive.

20 ... Nxh3+

So obviously strong that it isn't worthy of a even single exclam.

21 gxh3 Qxh3 22 Re1 Bh2+ 23 Kh1

White's king's position does not have the look of a happy home. And the king himself, like a vampire on a sunny beach, looks rather uncomfortable.

23 ... Bxd5+ 24 f3 Bf4+

24 ... Bg3+! leads to mate after 25 Kg1 Qh2+ 26 Kf1 Qh1+ 27 Bg1 Bxf3 28 Re2 Qh3+ 29 Rg2 Qxg2.

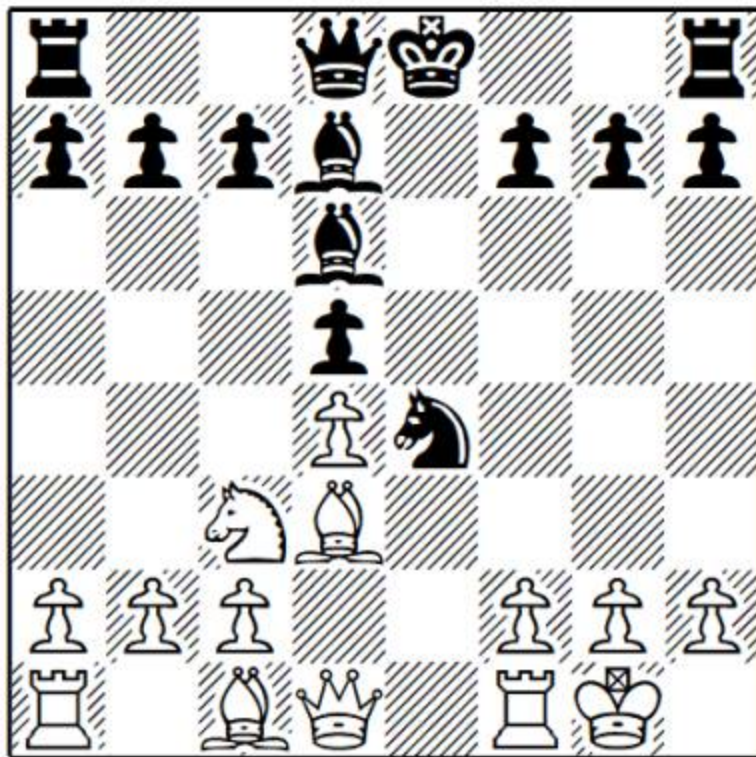
25 Kg1 Bxf3 0-1

Game 14

M.Kanarek-Y.Kuzubov

European Championship, Minsk 2017

**1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 d4 Nxe4 4 Bd3 d5 5 Nxe5 Nd7 6 Nxd7 Bxd7 7 0-0
Bd6 8 Nc3**



White senses that Black's most potent asset is his e4-knight, so he allows a chop on c3 at the cost of slight damage to his queenside structure.

8 ... Nxc3 9 bxc3

White has strengthened his d4-pawn and opened the b-file for his rook. The cost is that he doubled his c-pawns and isolated his a-pawn.

9 ... 0-0

Another option is 9 ... Qh4!? 10 g3 Qh3 11 Re1+ Be6 (11 ... Kf8? 12 Rb1 b6 13 Qf3 Be6 14 c4 c6 15 Bf4 is heavily in White's favour) 12 c4 dxc4 13 Bxc4 0-0 14 Bxe6 fxe6 15 Qe2 Rf6 and Black is only slightly worse since the e6-pawn isn't as weak as it looks, M.Dorer-F.Trani, email 2010.

10 Qh5 f5

This time Black has no choice but to play this move.

The pawn sacrifice 10 ... g6?! looks slightly unsound with Black's knight off the board, since without it generating threats against the white king becomes problematic. After 11 Qxd5 Be6 12 Qg5 Black has insufficient compensation.

11 c4

Others:

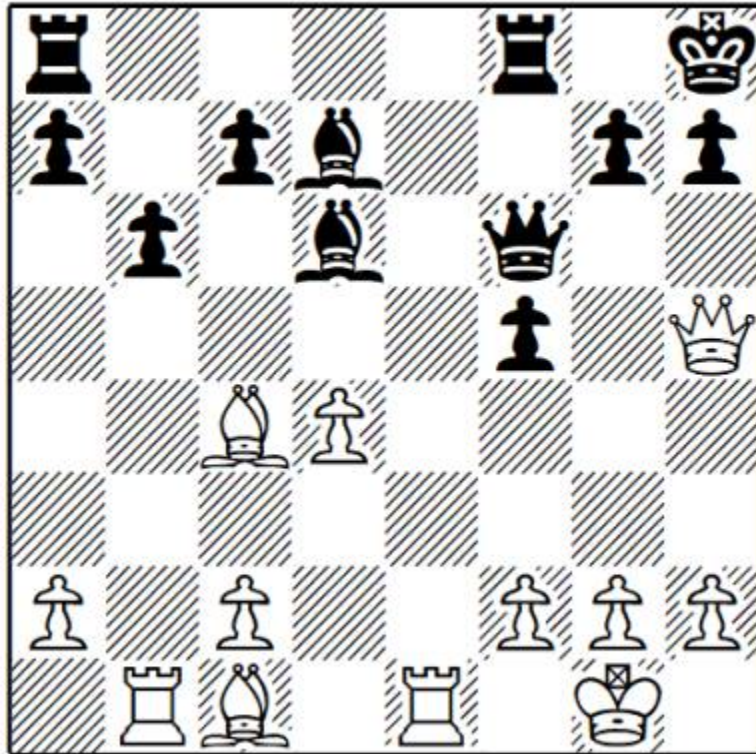
a) 11 Rb1 fails to lead to anything after 11 ... b6 12 Re1 c6 13 Bg5 Qc7 14 c4 Be8 15 Qh3 dxc4 16 Bxc4+ Bf7 17 Be6 Bxe6 18 Rxe6 Rae8 19 Qb3 Rxe6 20 Qxe6+ Rf7 21 Qe8+ Rf8 22 Qe6+ Rf7 23 Qe8+ Rf8 ½-½ A.Shirov-V.Kramnik, Cazorla 1998.

b) 11 Re1 g6 12 Qf3 c6 and Black looks fine since 13 c4?! is met by 13 ... Qh4 14 g3 Qxd4 15 Be3 Qc3 16 cxd5 Rae8, when Black is even slightly better.

11 ... dxc4!

From the seven games in my database from this position, Black won three and drew the remainder. White's central pawns are not so scary with two pairs of minor pieces removed from the board and, in fact, may prove to be a weakness later since White is saddled with more pawn islands.

12 Bxc4+ Kh8 13 Rb1 b6 14 Re1 Qf6



This is new. Black has achieved easy equality and can even play for a win against White's slightly inferior structure.

An alternative is 14 ... Be8 15 Qf3 (J.Boudy Bueno-M.Dvoretzky, Varna 1980), when Black stands no worse after 15 ... Ba4 16 c3 Bc2 17 Rb2 Be4.

15 Bb2 Rae8 16 Ba1

White hopes to achieve a future d4-d5, which isn't so scary for Black's well-protected king.

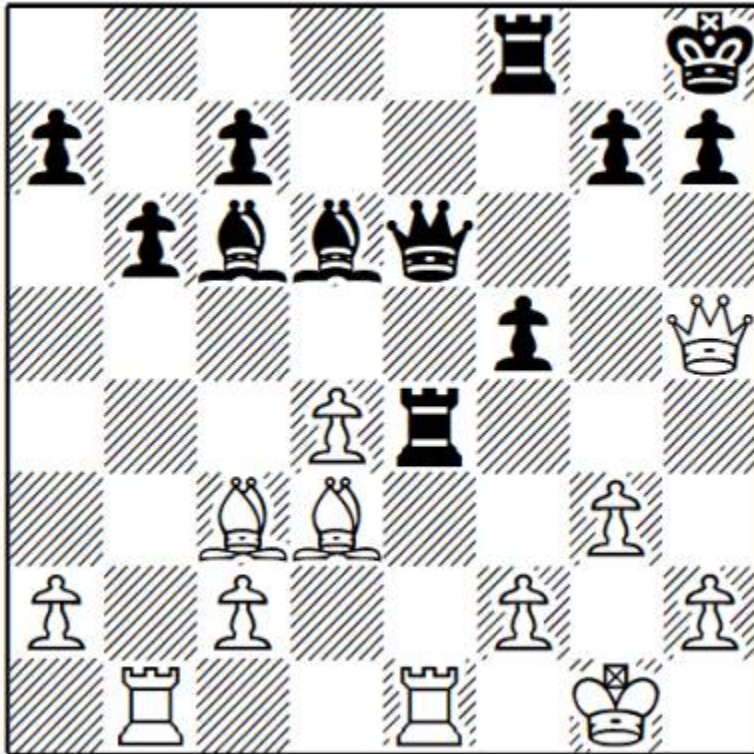
16 ... Re4!

Black would love to open the f-file for his rook.

17 g3 Qe7 18 Bc3 Bc6 19 Bd3

At last, White forces Black's powerfully posted rook to back off.

19 ... Qe6!



Or maybe not! Black follows his course with missionary zeal. Black offers the exchange for an open f-file and a long term light-square initiative.

Have you noticed that I am all for it when *other* people sacrifice in speculation. When it comes to my own games, that is where I put my foot down and decline to do it. Anyway, I like Black's sacrifice better than playing it safe with 19 ... Rxe1+ 20 Rxe1 Qd7 which also looks balanced.

20 Bxe4

White bites.

20 ... fxe4 21 d5!?

With this move White hopes to expel some of the demonic influences from his position. The problem with his decision is that the pawns are worth something. It is not clear that it was worth a full pawn just to open the c3-bishop's diagonal. Safer was 21 a3 Qf6 22 Rf1 a5! 23 Bb2 Qe6 which is unclear.

21 ... Bxd5 22 Qg5 Rg8!?

Black didn't want a draw after 22 ... Rf7 23 Qd8+ Rf8 24 Qg5.

23 Rbd1 Bb7

I prefer 23 ... Bc6, when e8 is covered, just in case, and White must also be on alert for ... Ba4.

24 a4 h6 25 Qe3 Qg6

Playing 25 ... a5, to fix the a4-pawn as a permanent weakness, would allow White to push 26 f4!, when his f2-pawn is no longer a target and Black's rook also no longer has access to f3.

26 Qd2 Re8

26 ... a5?! destabilizes the d6-bishop since it allows 27 Bd4 intending Bxb6.

27 Bd4 Kh7 28 c4

Now the c4-c5 advance is in the air.

28 ... Qh5 29 Qe2 Qh3 30 Qf1 Qf5

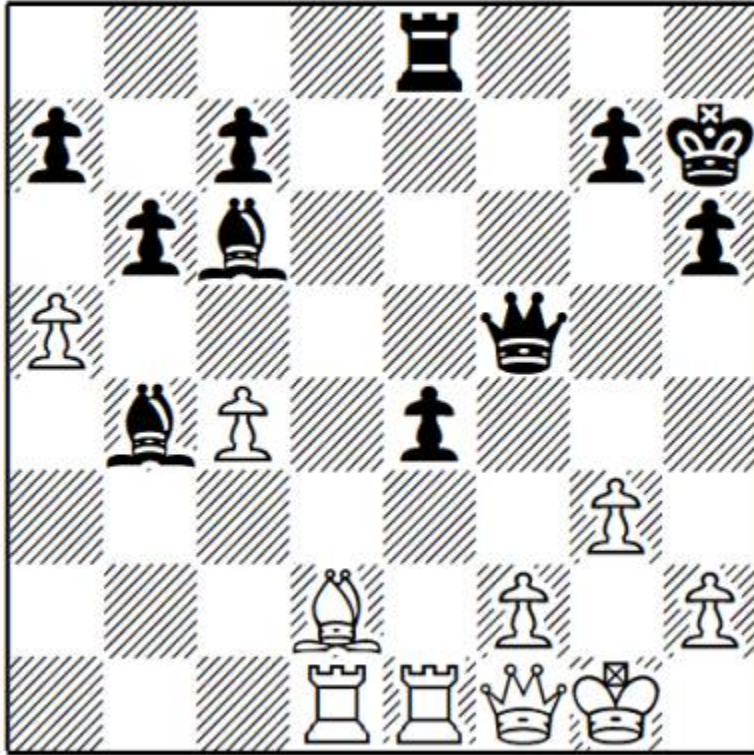
Black still doesn't want a draw.

31 Be3 Bc6 32 a5?!

It looks as if White is low on time since he may have overlooked Black's next move.

Instead, 32 Qe2! neutralizes Black's coming sequence and the position remains unclear.

32 ... Bb4! 33 Bd2



Exercise (planning): Black has access to two strong continuations. Find one of them.

33 ... e3!

Answer #1: Clearance sacrifice. Opening the h1-a8 diagonal creates a difficult defensive task for White. Now follows a hailstorm of threats.

Answer #2: However, the computer prefers the greedy 33 ... bxa5!, after which Black has two pawns for the exchange and dangerous attacking chances on the kingside light squares and on the f-file.

34 Rxe3

34 fxe3?? allows 34 ... Qe4! 35 Bxb4 Qh1+ 36 Kf2 Qxh2+ 37 Qg2 Qxg2 mate.

34 ... Bc5!

Black targets the e3-rook. With this trick Black wins the exchange back with interest.

35 Qd3

White must give up material since 35 Rxe8?? Qf3 is terminal.

35 ... Be4!

White's position has the feel of a person who is pelted with stones by a relentless mob. After this double attack White must hand over the exchange under unfavourable circumstances.

36 Rxe4 Rxe4 37 Be3!

Playing according to the principle: *major piece endings are tough to win for the side with the advantage.*

This move, which hands White weak pawns in the major piece ending, may yet be the best defensive try. 37 Rf1 Kg6! 38 Bc3 Re7 39 Qxf5+ Kxf5 40 Rd1 g5 41 Rd5+ Ke4 leads to a miserable ending for White.

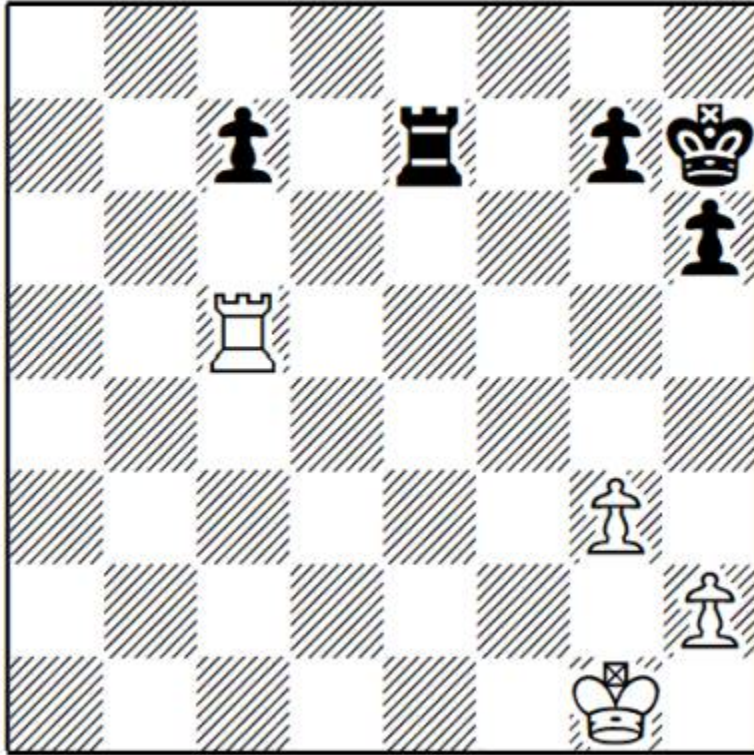
37 ... Bxe3 38 fxe3 Qf3 39 axb6 axb6 40 c5!

After 40 Re1 h5 41 Re2 Kg6 42 Re1 h4 White's king is fatally exposed unless he goes into a pawn down rook ending with 43 Rf1 Qxe3+ 44 Qxe3 Rxe3 45 gxh4 Re4.

40 ... bxc5

Creating a passed pawn with 40 ... b5!? is worth a thought.

41 Rc1! Qxe3+ 42 Qxe3 Rxe3 43 Rxc5 Re7



The pawn-up ending isn't so easy for Black to convert since his rook has a passive lateral defensive stance covering c7.

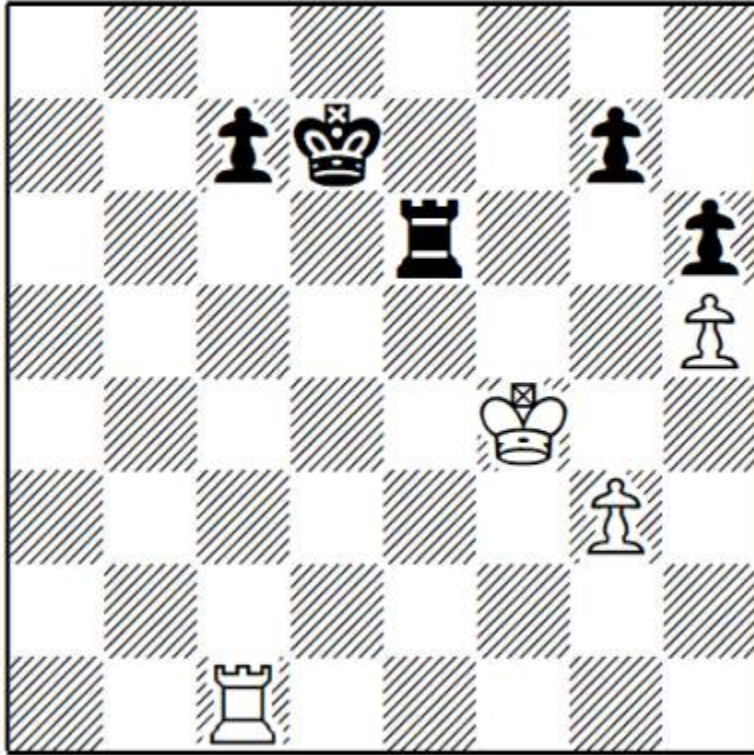
44 Kf2 Kg6 45 h4 Kf6 46 Kf3 Ke6

The only way to make progress is for Black's king to move to the queenside to assist the c-pawn up the board.

47 Rc1 Kd7 48 Rd1+ Kc8 49 Rc1 Re6!

Baby steps. Now Black's king can once more return to the second rank.

50 Kf4 Kd7 51 h5?



This pawn push is a mistake since it allows Black to freeze the fluidity of White's kingside, allowing Black to move his rook to g5, which will then serve two functions:

- 1) One of White's pieces must babysit the g4-pawn.
- 2) Black is able to play ... c7-c5, advancing the passed c-pawn.

White retains decent chances to hold the draw with 51 g4!.

51 ... Ra6 52 g4 Ra5!

Also strong is 52 ... Ra4+ 53 Kf5 Ra5+ 54 Kf4 Rg5!.

53 Ke3 Re5+ 54 Kd3 Rd5+ 55 Ke3

White's king is cut off from helping stop Black's passed c-pawn.

Others:

a) 55 Ke4 Rg5 56 Kf4 c5 and Black is winning.

b) 55 Kc4 (so that White's king isn't cut off from blockading Black's passed c-pawn) 55 ... Rg5 56 Rd1+ Ke6 57 Rd4 c5 58 Rf4 Ke5 59 Rf1 Rxc4+ 60 Kxc5 Rh4 and Black wins. If 61 Rf7 Rxh5! the g7-pawn is tactically covered since 62 Rxc7?? runs into 62 ... Kf6+, picking up the rook with a discovered attack.

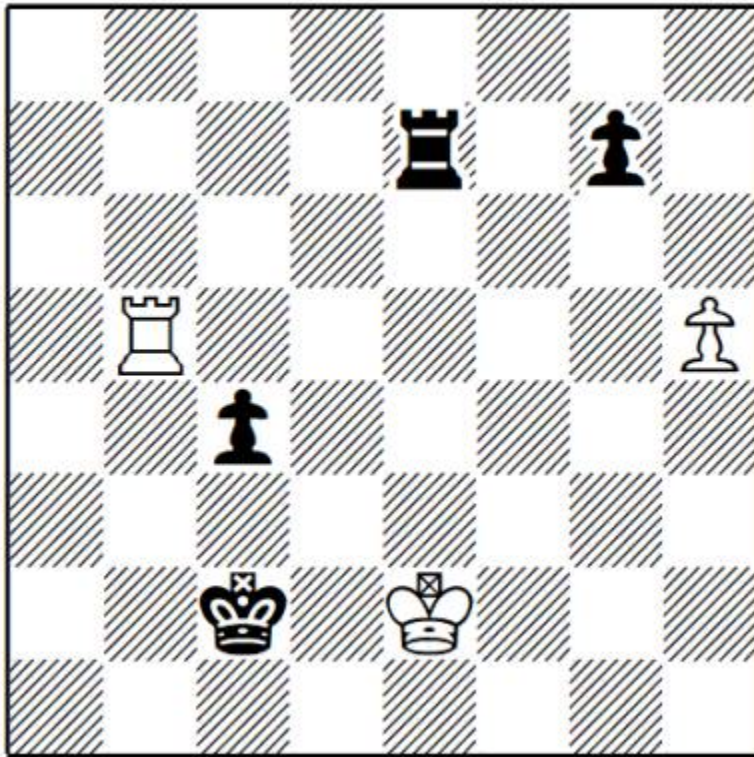
55 ... c5

At last, Black begins to unravel.

56 Rf1 Kc6 57 Rf7

This is a waste of time, but everything else fails too. For instance, 57 Ke2 Rd4 58 Kf3 c4 is also losing for White.

57 ... Rd7 58 Rf5 Kb5 59 g5 hxg5 60 Rxc5 Kb4 61 Rg1 c4 62 Rb1+ Kc3 63 Rb5 Kc2 64 Ke2 Re7+!



This nudges White's king across a file, allowing Black's king to emerge.

65 Kf2 c3 66 Rb8 Kc1 67 Kf3 c2 68 Kf4 Rd7! 0-1

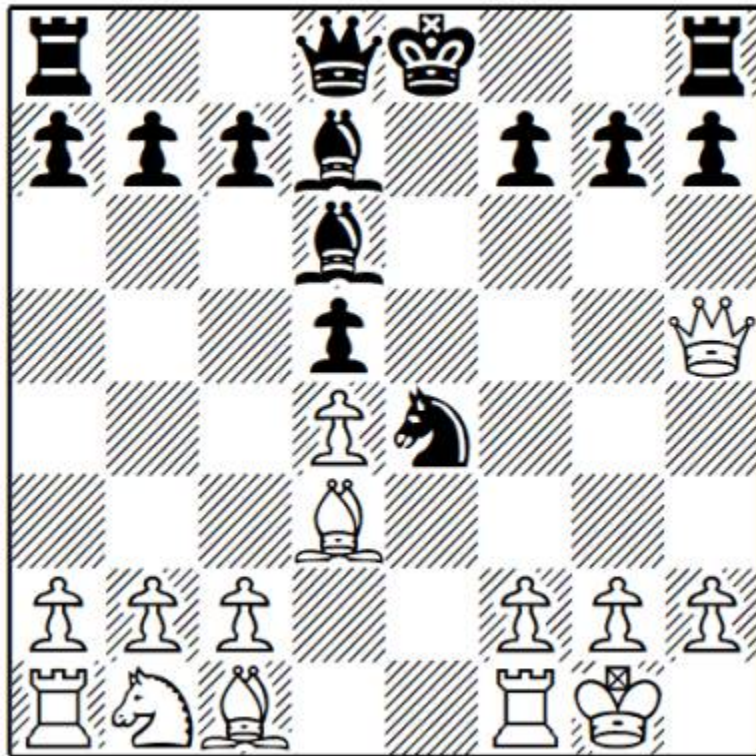
The c-pawn promotes, since either ... Kd2 or ... Kd1 follows.

Game 15

R.Hofer-I.Cipka

ICCF email 2007

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 d4 Nxe4 4 Bd3 d5 5 Nxe5 Nd7 6 Nxd7 Bxd7 7 0-0 Bd6 8 Qh5



In this version White goes after the d5-pawn without the inclusion of c2-c4 and ... c7-c6.

8 ... 0-0!

Remember the Scotch Petroff rule. Black can sacrifice the d5-pawn *only* when the e4-knight remains on the board, since it is needed to generate threats against White's king.

Instead:

a) 8 ... Nf6 costs Black castling privileges, yet is playable if you don't mind going passive after 9 Re1+ Kf8 10 Qh4 h6 11 Bg5 Kg8 12 Bxf6 Qxf6 13 Qxf6 gxf6. White has a clean structure but Black has the bishop pair, J.Moreira-B.Babio Perez, Spain 2004.

b) 8 ... Qf6 is also playable. After 9 Nc3 (if 9 Qxd5 Bc6 10 Qc4 0-0-0 11 Be3 Bf4 Black has enough development and piece activity for the pawn) 9 ... Qxd4 10 Be3 Qe5 11 Qxe5+ Bxe5 12 Nxd5 Nf6 13 Rae1 Nxd5 14 Bd4 0-0-0 15 Bxe5 Nb4 16 Bxg7 Nxd3 17 cxd3 Rhg8 18 Be5 Bc6 19 f3 Rxd3, the opposite-coloured bishops virtually ensure the coming draw, S.Shankland-Yu Yangyi, Danzhou 2018.

9 Qxd5 Bc6 10 Qh5 g6 11 Qh3

Alternatives are:

a) 11 Qh6 Re8 12 Be3 Bf8 13 Qh3 h5! (threatening ... Bd7, followed by ... Bg4 and ... g6-g5, trapping White's queen) 14 Bc4 as in M.Blushtein-S.Milliet, Zürich 2005. Black generates full compensation for the pawn after 14 ... Nd6 15 Bd3 Bd7 16 Qf3 Bg4 17 Qd5 c6 18 Qb3 Be6 19 Qc3 Nf5 20 Nd2 Bg7.

b) After 11 Qd1 White's queen is safe but at the cost of allowing Black's queen to swoop into h4. Play can continue 11 ... Qh4 12 f4 Nf6 13 Qe1 Qxe1 14 Rxe1 Nd5 15 Nc3 (if 15 g3 Nb4!, Black may even stand slightly better since he will pick up the bishop pair and damage White's structure, which may be more consequential than White's unimpressive extra pawn) 15 ... Nxf4, when Black equalized and went on to score an upset draw against an opponent almost 400 points higher rated, D.Tauscher-W.Class, email 2011.

11 ... Ng5

No rest for the weary. Black continues to bully White's queen.

12 Bxg5

White must concede the bishop pair since hanging on to it also delivers nothing.

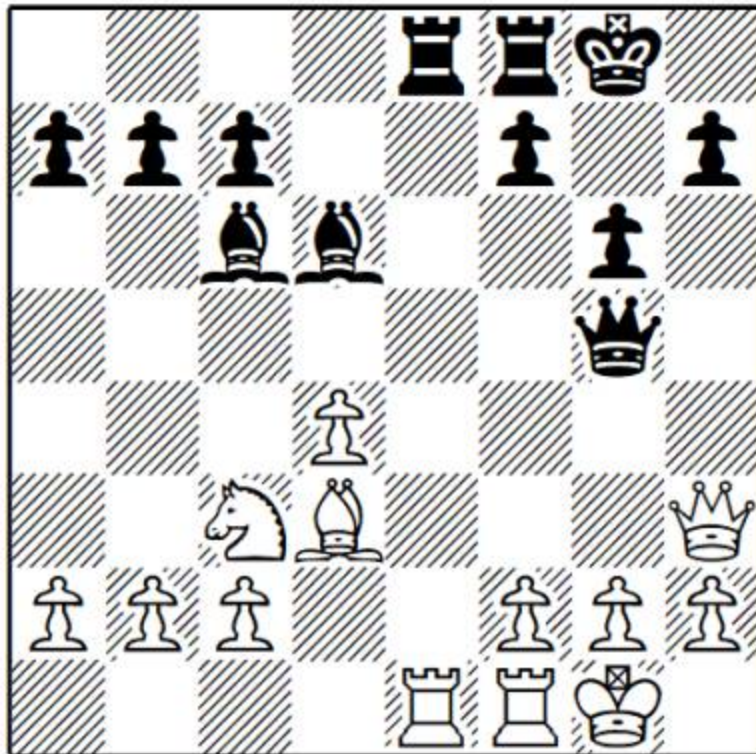
After 12 Qg4 Ne6 13 Bh6 Re8 14 Nd2 (if 14 c3?! Qf6 – threatening ... g6-g5! – 15 Be3 h5 16 Qh3 Bd7 17 Qf3 Qxf3 18 gxf3 Nf4 19 Bxf4 Bxf4, White is the one struggling to equalize) 14 ... Nxd4 15 Nc4 Bf8 16 Bxf8 Kxf8 and Black has equalized, H.Gromotka-J.Mulder, ICCF email 2016.

12 ... Qxg5 13 Nc3 Rae8

This looks like the right rook since it leaves open options of ... f7-f5.

14 Rael

After 14 d5 Bxd5 15 f4 Qd8 16 Nxd5 Bc5+ 17 Kh1 Qxd5 18 f5 Bd4 Black's king is in no danger and the game is even, A.Osipov-C.Malisevski, ICCF email 2013.



14 ... Rxe1

A new move. Also reliable is 14 ... Qf4 15 Ne2 Qf6 16 c3 Kg7 17 f4 Qe7 18 f5 Qg5 19 Ng3 Rxe1 20 Rxe1 Re8 21 Rxe8 Bxe8 22 Nf1 Bc6, M.Mujunen-E.Abdulmanov, ICCF email 2016. Black's bishop pair, more active pieces, potential to invade White's queenside via c1, and power on the dark squares are worth more than White's extra pawn

15 Rxe1 Kg7 16 Bf1!?

With this temporary pawn sacrifice White attempts to ease Black's pressure. After 16 g3 Rd8 17 Qf1 Qf6 18 d5 Bd7 White stands no better in view of his weakened dark squares.

16 ... Qd2 17 Qe3 Qxc2 18 Re2 Qf5 19 d5

With a double attack on c6 and a7.

19 ... Bd7

19 ... Bxd5?? hangs a piece to 20 Qd4+.

20 Qxa7 b6

So White remains a pawn up but with no advantage due to Black's bishop pair and dark square potential.

21 Qa6 Bc5

The f2-square is a tender one for White.

22 Qc4 Re8 23 Ne4 Bb5!

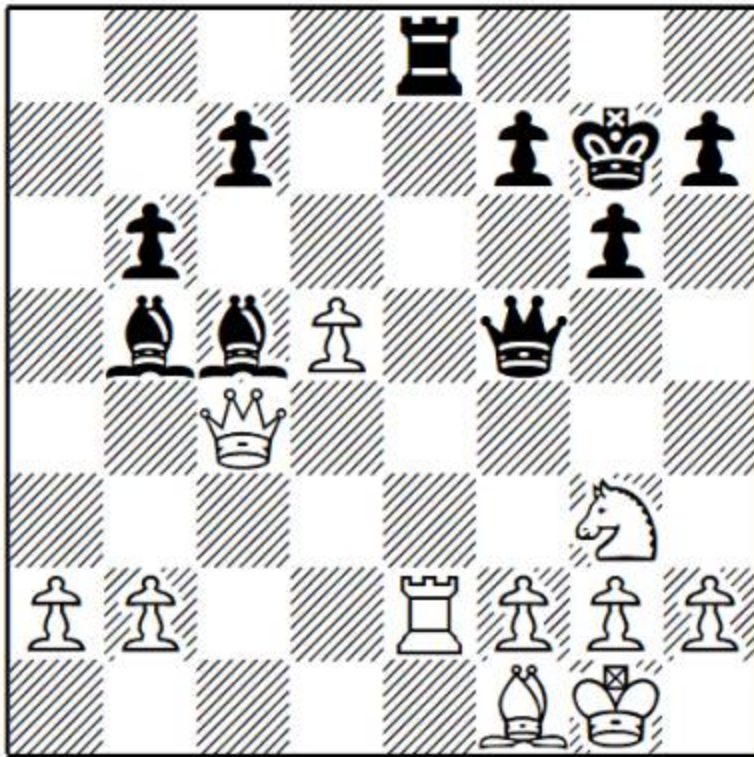
Attraction/overloaded defender.

24 Ng3

Others:

a) 24 Qxb5 Rxe4 25 Qd3 Re5 26 Qxf5 Rxf5 27 Rd2 Bb4 28 Rd1 Bc5 29 Rd2 Bb4 with a draw by repetition.

b) 24 Qc3+? f6 and Black stands better since 25 Nxc5?? fails miserably to 25 ... Rxe2 26 Nd3 Qxd3, winning material.



Exercise (critical decision): Assess the consequences of the kamikaze line 24 ... Qxf2+. Should Black play it? And if not, what is Black's best move?

24 ... Qxf2+!

Have you ever lied to someone and realized that the person you just lied to knows you are lying? Well, it's the same feeling we get when we challenge the opponent with a dare and then they impolitely call our bluff, as Black does here.

Answer: White's last move was a case of misjudgment and Black should indeed enter the line, since Black's remaining rook and extra pawns are superior to White's two minor pieces in the coming ending.

25 Rxf2 Bxc4 26 Bxc4 Re1+ 27 Bf1 Rb1 28 Ne4 Bxf2+ 29 Kxf2 Rxb2+ 30 Ke3 Rxa2

It is now White who must fight for the draw.

31 Be2 Ra3+ 32 Kd4 Ra4+ 33 Ke3 Rb4

At some point Black will push his passed b-pawn.

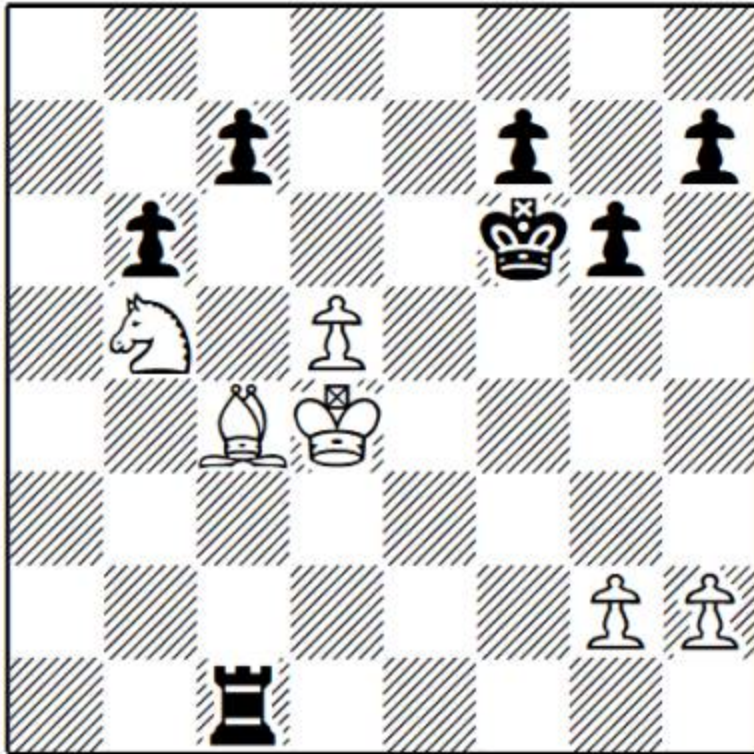
34 Nc3 Rb3 35 Kd2 Kf6 36 Nb5 Rb2+ 37 Ke3 Rc2

Safer is 37 ... Ke5! 38 Nxc7 Rb3+ 39 Bd3 h5 40 g3 Kd6 41 Nb5+ Kxd5 and only Black can win.

38 Kd3 Rc5 39 Kd4 Rc1!?

And here 39 ... Rc2 40 Kd3 Rc1 41 d6 cxd6 42 Nxd6 is safer.

40 Bc4!?



Disorder is White's ally. When we are losing, our invisibility comes only if we manage to generate great complications, just as White does here. The price we pay is that we, along with our opponent, grope about as if blind. White is willing to gamble. He hands over kingside pawns to secure a passed d-pawn. The passive alternative is 40 d6 cxd6 41 Nxd6 Ke7 42 Nc4 Rb1, when only Black has winning chances.

40 ... Ke7 41 Nxc7

With the emergence of a passed d-pawn, White's counterplay revives. The question is who will be faster in the promotion race? The answer is Black, since he can generate at least two passed pawns. Still, Black must play with a high degree of accuracy to convert.

41 ... Rc2 42 Na8 Rb2! 43 h3

43 Kc3 costs White a tempo after 43 ... Rxc2.

43 ... b5 44 Bd3 b4 45 Nb6

Not 45 g4 Rh2 46 Bf1?? b3 and wins.

45 ... Rxc2 46 Bc4 Rc2 47 h4 h5 48 Bb3 Rh2 49 Kc5 Rxc4 50 d6+ Kd8 51 Bxf7 Rf4! 52 Bxc6 b3

White is busted since he is unable to coordinate his pieces well enough to break the blockade of d8. Black's passed pawns distract him from the goal.

53 Nd5

Not 53 Bxh5??, which hangs the bishop to the simple 53 ... Rf5+.

53 ... Rf2! 54 Ne7

Still not 54 Bxh5?? due to 54 ... Rc2+! (interference) 55 Kd4 b2 and White is unable to prevent promotion.

54 ... b2

The battle takes place on the outskirts.

55 Nc6+ Kc8

How annoying. White's bishop is unable to deliver a check on f5, so Black's blockade holds.

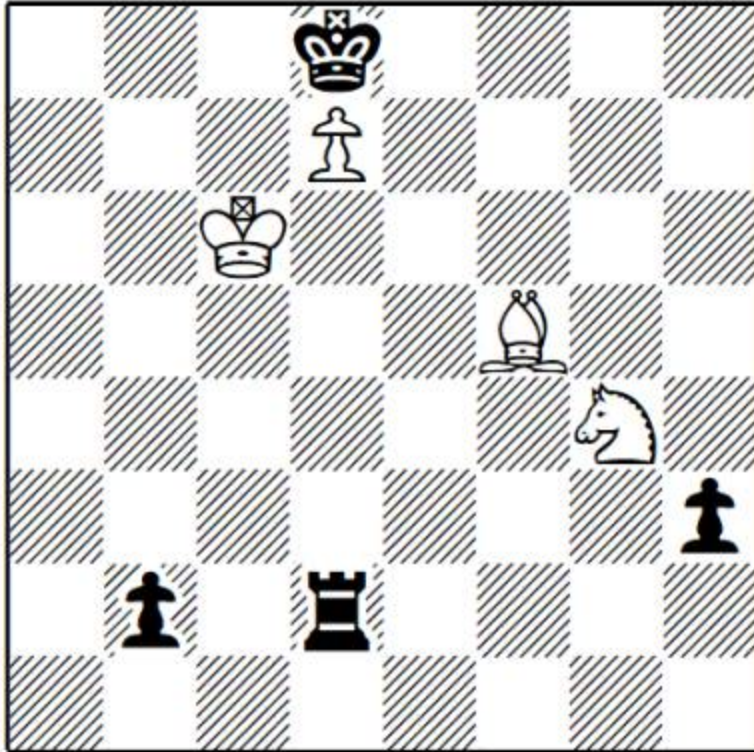
56 Ne7+ Kd7 57 Bd3 h4 58 Bb5+ Kd8 59 Nc6+ Ke8!

There is no terrifying discovery on Black's king.

60 Ne5+ Kf8 61 d7 Ke7 62 Bd3 h3 63 Kc6 Kd8!

Halting White's threat to enter c7 and then promote.

64 Ng4 Rd2 65 Bf5



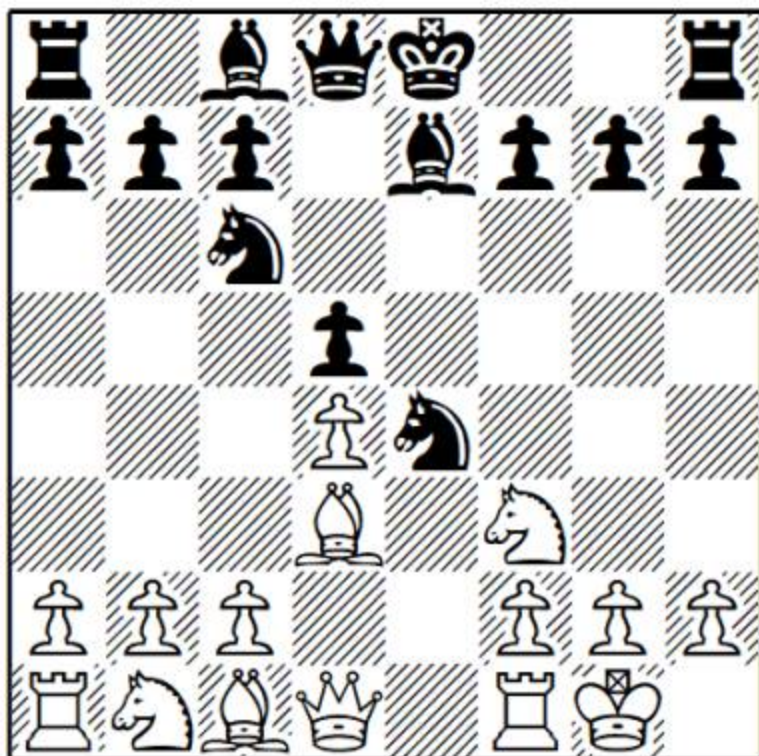
Exercise (combination alert): Find one simple tactic and you end White's hopes.

65 ... Rxd7! 0-1

Answer: Overloaded defender. White's bishop is unable to capture on d7, since it must watch over the b1-promotion square. The finish would be 66 Kc5 Rg7 (threatening ... Rxd4) 67 Ne5 h2 68 Be4 h1Q 69 Bxh1 b1Q.

Chapter Three

The Main Line Petroff



Study can be tedious, yet we get through it with the thought that we will one day wield it as a weapon in our tournament games. In this chapter – by far the biggest in the book – you may be facing your most daunting theoretical test, since the lines all look similar, but there are always subtle differences and it is not at all easy to make out their individuality.

When White faces the Petroff, there are many ways to chicken out of a theoretical fight and simply opt for a safe and easy-to-learn line. Not so in the main line, where theory spirals deeply. From my observation very few of my Petroff students face the main line at club level, since their club-level opponents are nervous about entry into the theoretical maze, even though it is the main choice of titled players. So, somewhat annoyingly, you must

study the living daylights out of this taxing chapter in order to be ready for those few times you actually do face it.

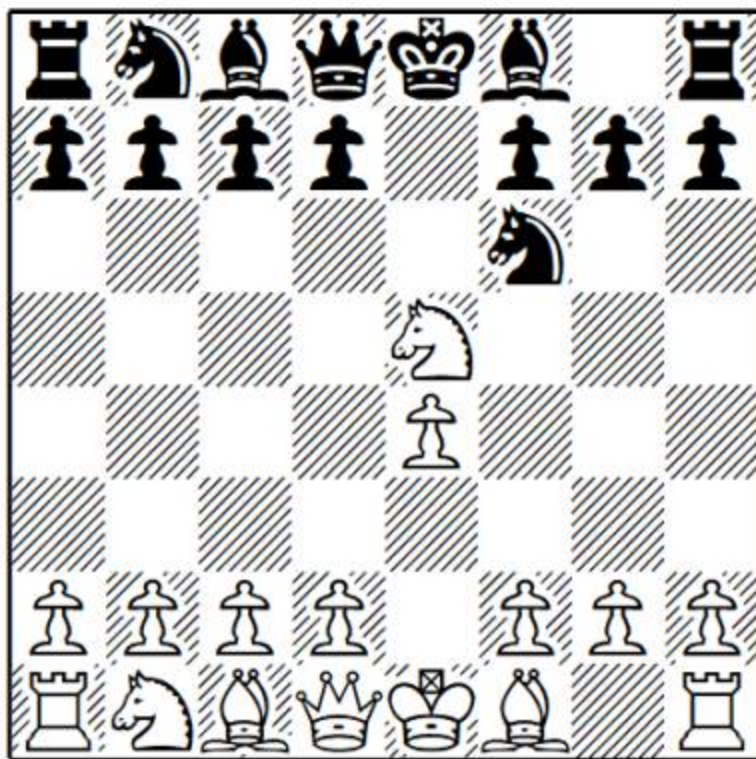
On the plus side, the best White gets is something between equal and a slight edge, which means the Petroff wall should hold against whatever White throws at you.

Game 16

S.Movsesian-Bu Xiangzhi

World Team Championship, Tsaghkadzor 2015

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5



This is the gateway to the Main Line.

3 ... d6 4 Nf3

The logical retreat square for the knight. We studied 4 Nxf7! in Chapter One. We'll look at a game with the baroque 4 Nc4 in the next chapter.

4 ... Nxe4 5 d4

We will other moves in the next chapter as well.

5 ... d5

Supporting the e4-knight, while staking out our fair share of the centre. We won't cover the ultra-passive (yet playable) line 5 ... Be7 6 Bd3 Nf6 7 h3 0-0 8 0-0 Re8 9 c4.

6 Bd3

The only move which even remotely gives Black any trouble. White's main idea is to undermine support for the e4-knight.

6 ... Be7 7 0-0 Nc6

By far the most popular line.

8 c4

Immediately undermining the e4-knight. We will consider 8 Re1 and 8 Nc3 later in the chapter.

8 ... Nb4

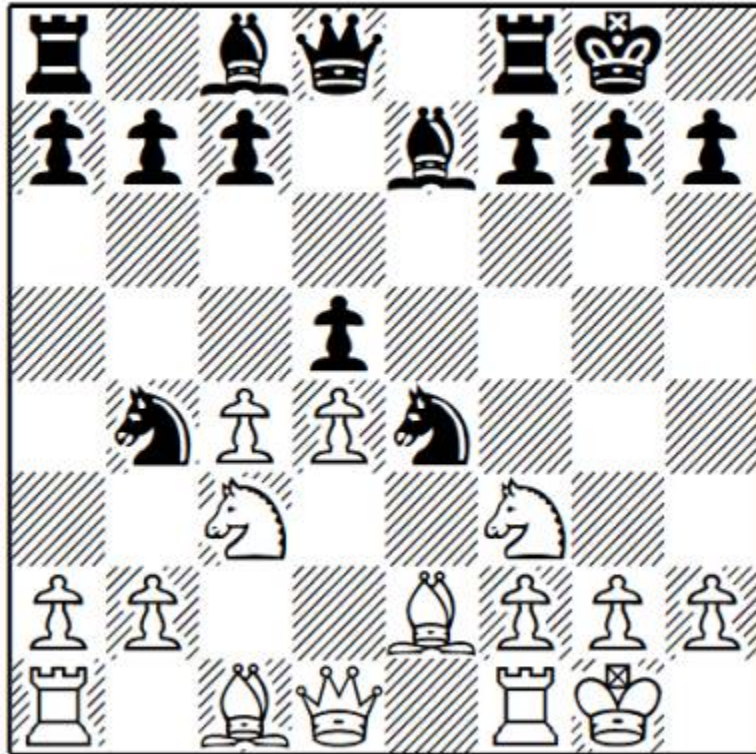
An aggressive move and probably better than 8 ... Nf6.

9 Be2

White preserves the precious light-squared bishop. We will look at the less usual 9 cxd5 Nxd3 10 Qxd3 Qxd5 in Game 25.

9 ... 0-0 10 Nc3

The immediate 10 a3 is covered in Games 21-24



10 ... Bf5

Black's main move and the only one we'll concentrate on here.

It is perhaps worth noting that 10 ... Be6!? is also playable, when 11 Ne5 f6 12 Bg4 (12 Nf3 is also played) 12 ... Bc8!? 13 Bxc8 Rxc8 14 Nf3 c5! created massive complications, not unfavourable to Black, in V.Ivanchuk-V.Kramnik, Frankfurt (rapid) 1998.

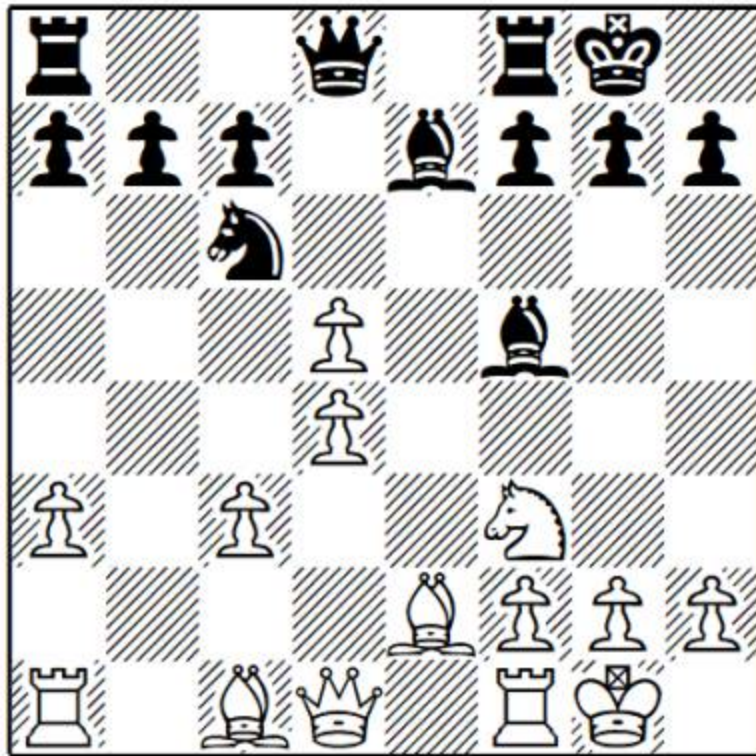
11 a3

Gaining time on the b4-knight while forcing Black to strengthen White's centre.

11 ... Nxc3

I was stunned to find six games in the database where Black, who I surmise had to have been ingesting some kind of narcotic, played the inexplicable 11 ... Nc6?!, simply allowing White to win a clean, free and important pawn with 12 Nxd5 and reaching a winning position.

12 bxc3 Nc6 13 cxd5



The queen is lured into mid-board, where it can be chased by White's pieces and pawns. In subsequent games we look at 13 Re1. The two lines generally transpose after 13 ... Re8 14 cxd5 Qxd5, but delaying the capture on d5 also gives Black the option of playing 13 ... dxc4, as we'll see in Games 17 and 18.

13 ... Qxd5 14 Re1

Others:

a) 14 Bf4 Rac8 (perhaps more accurate than 14 ... Bd6 15 c4 Qe4! 16 Be3, since Black's d6-bishop is vulnerable to tempo loss with White's future c4-c5) 15 Re1 Rfe8 transposes to the main game.

b) 14 c4 Qd6 15 d5 Ne5 16 Nd4 Bd7 17 a4 Rfe8 18 Be3 Qg6 19 Nb5 Bh3 20 Bf3 Bd6 21 Bd4 Nxf3+ 22 Qxf3 Bg4 and Black already stood slightly better in V.Ivanchuk-V.Kramnik, Nice (blindfold rapid) 2008.

14 ... Rfe8 15 Bf4 Rac8 16 Qc1

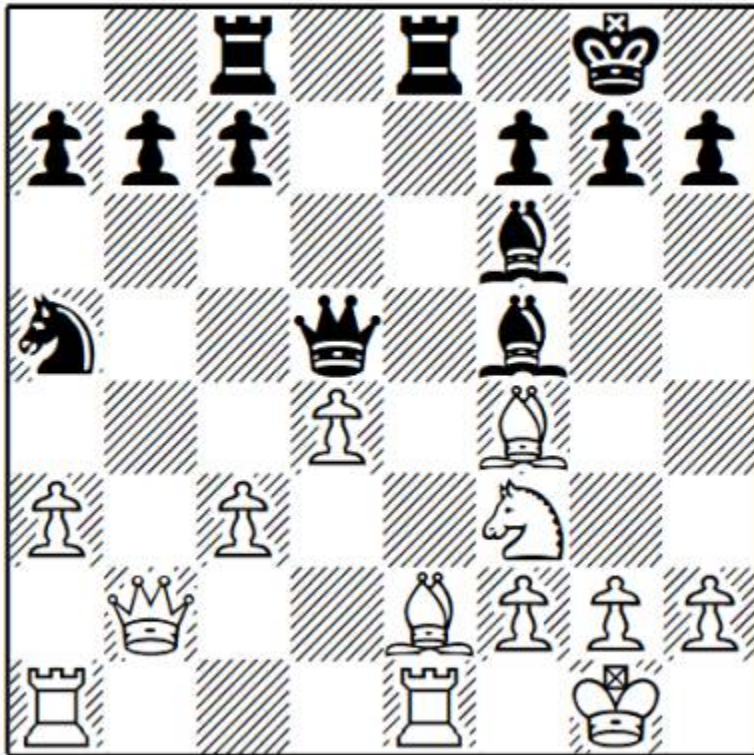
16 Bd3 is White's main move. We'll look at this in more detail later on. For the moment, note that after 16 ... Qd7 (16 ... b5 is also possible, holding back White's c2-c4 at the cost of creating a pawn target on b5) 17 Rb1 b6

18 d5 (18 Bb5 is played in Game 20) 18 ... Bxd3 19 Qxd3 Bxa3 20 Ng5 g6 21 Ne4 (threatening a monster fork on f6) 21 ... Qf5 22 Bxc7 Rxc7 23 Nf6+! Qxf6 24 Rxe8+ Kg7 25 dxc6 Bc5 26 Rb2 Rxc6 (P.Leko-B.Gelfand, Moscow 2009) Black had a passed a-pawn, a powerfully posted bishop and dark square pressure in return for the exchange, and he stood no worse.

16 ... Bf6

Bu fights for control of e5.

17 Qb2 Na5



18 Qb4

A new move. The idea may suppress Black's future ... c7-c5, since this would now hang the a5-knight. 18 Rad1 is also possible and all ten games in the database were drawn from this position, a typical example being F.Serban-R.Leitao, ICCF email 2010, which continued 18 ... Qb3 19 Qxb3 Nxb3 20 Bc4 Na5 21 Ba2 c6 22 h3 and the players agreed to a draw in this dynamically balanced ending.

18 ... Be7 19 Qa4 Bd7!

Black chases White's queen with tempo, with the idea of re-routing the bishop to a superior diagonal via the c6-square.

20 Qd1 Bc6!

This move inhibits movement of White's knight, due to the mate threat on g2.

21 Bf1 Qf5

The queen is well placed on d5 as it retains control over c4. Therefore, also to be considered is 21 ... Bd6 22 Ne5 Nc4! 23 Qg4 Nxe5 24 Bxe5 Bxe5 25 Rxe5 Qd7 26 Qxd7 Bxd7, when Black's chances in the ending are fine, since White's extra space and slightly weaker structure are features that are geared for an attack, not a simplified position.

22 Bg3 Bxf3

Both sides get a fair deal. Black damages White's structure at the cost of the bishop pair and enhanced light square control.

23 gxf3!?

Movsesian gambles that he will benefit more than Black by retaining queens, even though the structure is damaged around his own king. After 23 Qxf3 Qxf3 24 gxf3 Bd6 25 Re3 Kf8 the ending looks dynamically balanced.

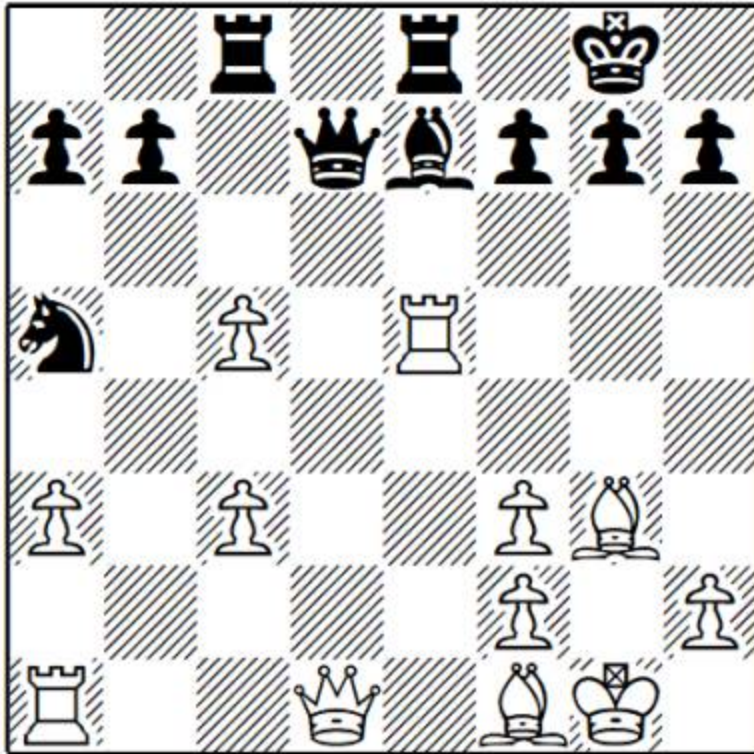
23 ... Qd7

This way c7 is protected and Black can play ... Bd6.

24 Re5 c5!?

There is nothing wrong with 24 ... b6, intending ... Bd6 again.

25 dxc5!?



Only a person with a deep love of freedom is capable of such a structurally consequential move. The computer actually likes White after it – but I don't!

White plays according to the principle: *open the position when you have the bishop pair*. From my perspective the decision is a self-inflicted desecration in the name of piece activity, especially since queens are coming off the board. Those six isolanis and two pairs of doubled isolanis make White's choice appear decidedly suspicious. However, the computer is just fine with White's decision, so I am unable to punish the move with the "??" my fingers itch to type. I would be more inclined to play 25 Rb1.

25 ... Qxd1 26 Rxd1 Bxc5 27 Rxe8+

27 Bh3 is well met by 27 ... Rxe5 28 Bxe5 Re8.

27 ... Rxe8 28 Bb5 Ra8

White's bishops exert tremendous influence, since they effectively send Black's rook into the corner, as if a naughty six-year-old on a time-out to his room. They fully compensate for his all-isolani structure. Note that if 28 ... Rc8 29 Bd7 Ra8, the rook ends up on a8 anyway.

29 a4

At last he protects his loose a3-pawn. The computer calls it dead even here.

29 ... Bb6 30 Rd7

White's rook seizes the seventh rank. I'm sorry lovers of dynamism, but I still prefer Black, since I can't stop looking with deep pity at Les Miserables on a4, c3, c5, f2, f3 and h2!

30 ... a6

Finally, an aggressive gesture on Black's part.

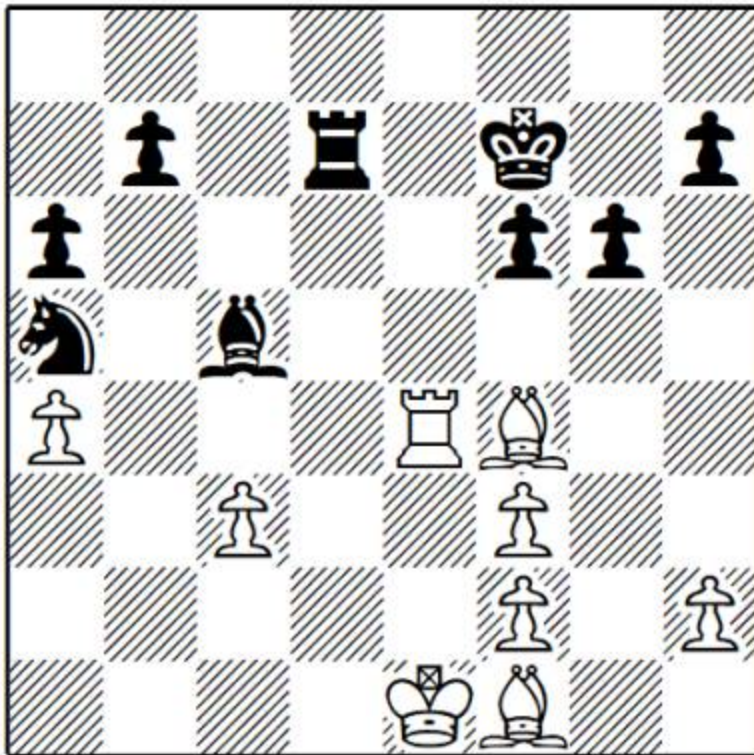
31 Be2 Rd8 32 Re7 Kf8

The invaders are slowly repelled.

33 Re4 Rd7 34 Bf4 f6 35 Kf1

35 Be3? Bxe3 36 fxe3 Rc7 is a miserable ending for White.

35 ... Bc5 36 Ke1 Kf7 37 Bf1 g6!



This removes the sting from Bh3 ideas, since Black can respond with ... f6-f5.

38 Re2 Bd6!

According to the principle: *when your opponent has the bishop pair, remove one of them.*

39 Be3!?

White may be taking his hooray-for-activity stance a bit too far. He hands over a full pawn to retain his bishop pair. He is probably better off attempting to defend with 39 Bg3 f5! 40 Bxd6 Rxd6 41 f4.

39 ... Bxh2!

Well calculated. Bu isn't afraid of being shut in.

40 f4 Nc4 41 Bc1!?

White may do better going for opposite-coloured bishops with 41 Bh3 Rd3 42 Bc8 Rxc3 43 Bxb7 a5 44 Kf1 Nxe3+ 45 fxe3 Rc1+ 46 Kg2 Bg1.

41 ... f5

Fixing f4 as a target. The computer wants the line 41 ... Nb6! 42 Re4 Re7 43 Rxe7+ Kxe7 44 a5 Nd5 45 Bg2 Bxf4 46 Bxd5 Bxc1 47 Bxb7 Bf4 48 Bxa6 Bc7 49 Ke2 Bxa5 50 c4. Maybe Black can win this since he will eventually create two passed pawns on the kingside, while White's passed c-pawn is easily blockaded.

42 Ra2?!

After 42 Rc2! Rc7 43 Be2 (threatening to transfer the king to g2) 43 ... h6 44 Kf1 g5 45 fxg5 hxg5 46 Bxg5 Be5, White should save the game.

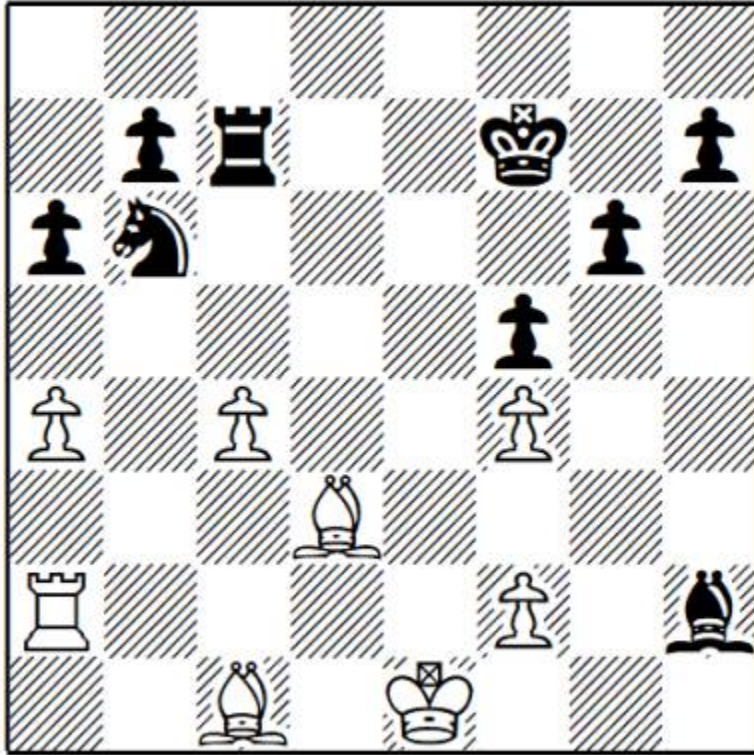
42 ... Rc7 43 Bd3?

Black has a much harder time converting after 43 Bg2.

43 ... Nb6!

Threatening ... Nd5.

44 c4



Exercise (critical decision): Should Black play 44 ... Nxc4 - ? If not, then do you see a better move?

44 ... Nd5!

Answer: Pin/double attack. Ignore the c4 red herring and play the knight to d5, since the c4-pawn is pinned. White was banking on 44 ... Nxc4? 45 Rc2 b5 46 Kf1! (threatening Kg2) 46 ... g5 47 fxg5 and White stands no worse.

45 Ba3

Not 45 cxd5? Rxc1+ 46 Ke2 Bxf4 47 Rb2 Rc7 and Black should convert.

45 ... Nxf4 46 Bf1 Ne6

Blockading White's c-pawn.

47 Rd2 Be5 48 Bb4 Bd4!

Blockade complete.

49 Kd1 h5

Principle: *passed pawns should be pushed.*

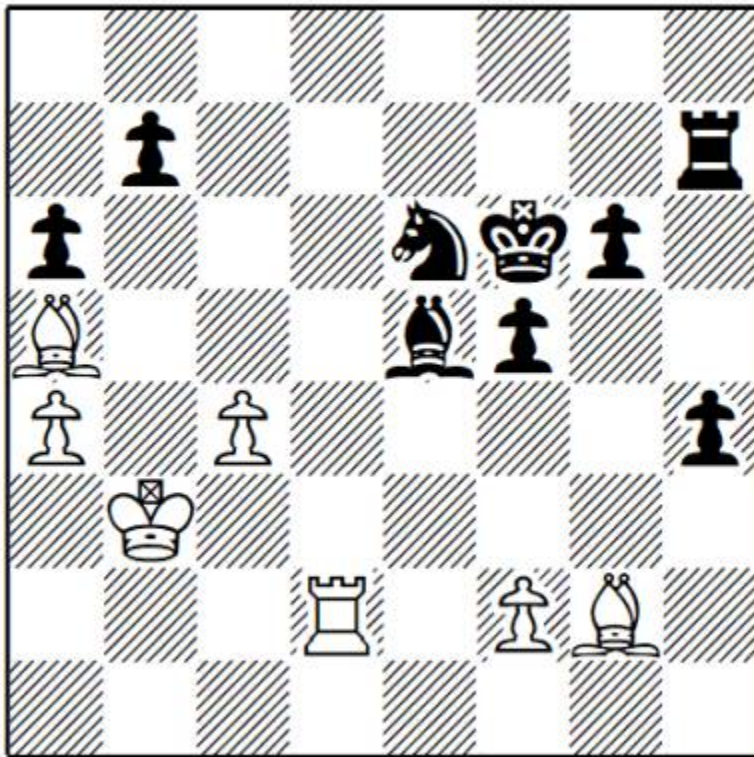
50 Kc2 h4 51 Bg2 Be5

Others:

a) 51 ... Kf6 is possible.

b) 51 ... Rxc4+!? (from a practical point of view, there is no reason for Black to enter such complications) 52 Kb3 Rc1 53 Bd5 (with the dual threats of Rxd4 and Re2) 53 ... Bc5! 54 Bc3 Re1 and everyone in Black's position is covered. Note that 55 Bxb7?? loses to 55 ... Rb1+ 56 Bb2 Bd4 57 Bxa6 Bxb2 58 Kc2 Ra1 59 Kxb2 Rxa4.

52 Kb3 Kf6 53 Ba5 Rh7!



Principle: *place your rook behind your passed pawn.*

54 Bb6 h3 55 Bh1 h2 56 a5 Rh3+

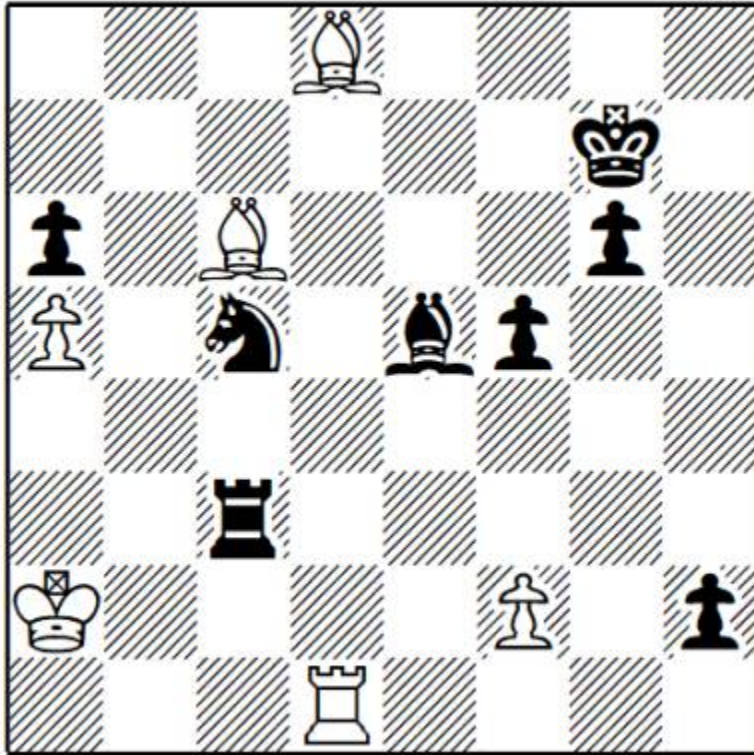
56 ... g5 is also winning easily.

57 Ka2 Rc3 58 Rd1

After 58 Bxb7 Rxc4, the a6-pawn isn't really hanging since the bishop must cover the h1-promotion square.

58 ... Rxc4 59 Bxb7 Nc5! 60 Bd8+ Kg7 61 Bc6 Rc2+ 62 Ka3

62 Kb1 Rb2+ 63 Kc1 Nb3 mate is an abrupt conclusion.
62 ... Rc3+ 63 Ka2



Exercise (combination alert): How did Black end the game?

63 ... Nd3! 0-1

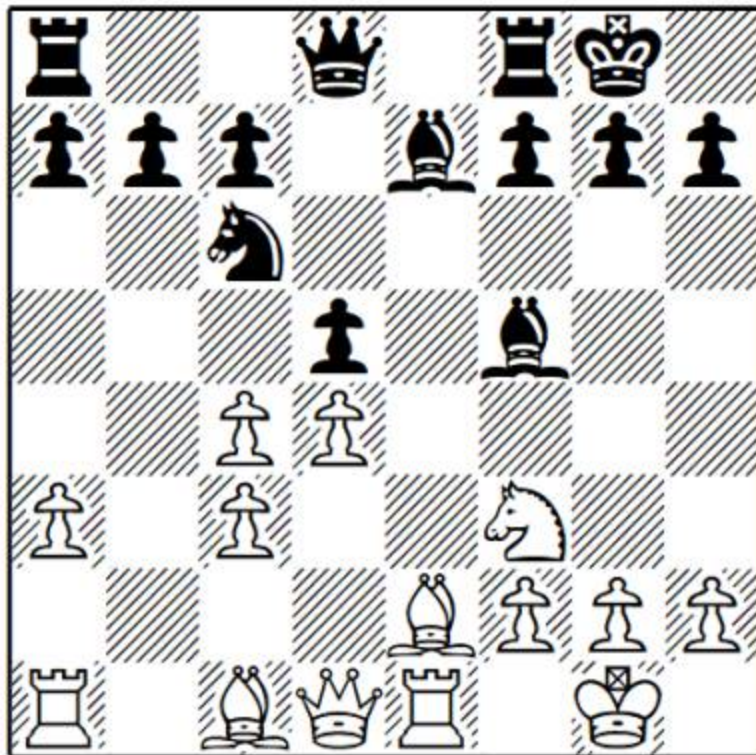
Answer: Triple attack. White is unable to defend against the simultaneous threats on f2, c6 and a knight check on b4. For example, 64 Bb6 (or 64 Bg2 Nb4+ 65 Kb1 Rb3+ 66 Kc1 Bf4+ and White must block with his rook, giving up more material) 64 ... Rc2+ 65 Ka3 Rxc6 and Black's knight is immune from capture.

Game 17

P.Leko-V.Anand

Monte Carlo (rapid) 2005

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 d4 d5 6 Bd3 Nc6 7 0-0 Be7 8 c4 Nb4 9 Be2 0-0 10 Nc3 Bf5 11 a3 Nxc3 12 bxc3 Nc6 13 Re1



Retaining central tension is the main line.

13 ... dxc4

It may seem illogical for Black to break the tension, while simultaneously activating White's light-squared bishop, yet there are reasons why this move isn't so bad:

1) With White's bishop on c4, Black can gain a tempo with a future ... Na5.

2) The bishop on c4 blocks the fluidity of White's c-pawn.

3) With White's bishop on c4, if Black plays a future ... Bg4, the f3-knight is pinned.

4) By taking on c4, Black's queen stays safely on her home square, rather than bouncing around dangerously in mid-board on d5.

Later on we look at 13 ... Re8.

14 Bxc4 Bd6

In this way Black pre-empts White's potential Bf4, while improving the activity level of the dark-squared bishop since it now fights for control of the crucial e5-square.

15 Ra2

This way White can transfer the rook to the e-file.

15 ... Qd7

Connecting rooks.

16 Ng5

On the surface this move may appear unnatural, yet it has its points:

- 1) Black must now watch out for tricks on f7.
- 2) Black must be on the lookout for Ne4.
- 3) With the knight on g5, Black must factor in White's potential Qf3 or Qh5.

Instead, after 16 Rae2 h6 17 Nd2 Na5 18 Ba2 Rfe8 19 Ne4 b5! (played to reduce the fluidity of White's central pawns) 20 Qd3 Re7 21 g4 Bxe4 22 Rxe4 Rae8 (A.Gueci-B.Lindstrom, ICCF email 2009), White's bishop pair is counterbalanced by the looseness of his structure.

16 ... Na5

With White's rook on a2, this is a favourable moment to play ... Na5, since the bishop must vacate the a2-g8 diagonal. The naïve 16 ... h6 merely weakens Black's king position and sends the knight where it wants to go after 17 Ne4.

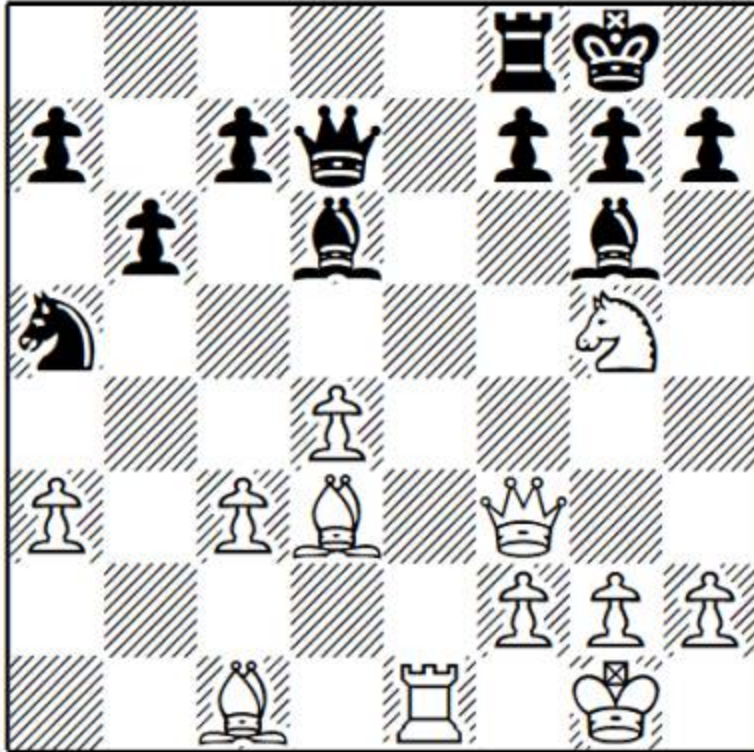
17 Bd3 Rae8

Black immediately challenges the e-file. In the next game we look at 17 ... b5.

18 Rae2

Threatening Bxf5, overloading Black's queen.

18 ... Rxe2 19 Qxe2 b6 20 Qf3 Bg6



In a later game Black exchanged bishops himself: 20 ... Bxd3 21 Qxd3 g6 22 Ne4 f5 23 Nxd6 cxd6, F.Varlamov-S.Salzmman, ICCF email 2012, when White might stand just a shade better due to the bishop over knight. However, this “advantage” may reverse itself if White’s bishop turns into a bad one later on.

21 Bxg6 fxg6!?

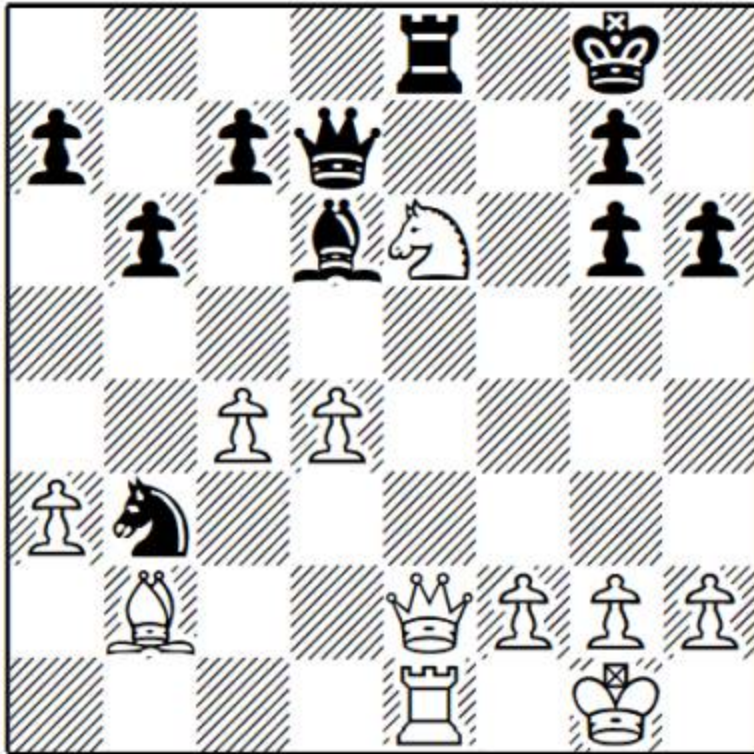
The principle here is: *capture away from the centre if you feel that your king is in danger*. In this case it is not clear if capturing away from the centre is necessary and Black’s position looks fine after 21 ... hxg6 22 Qe4 f6 23 Nf3 g5.

22 Qe2 h6

It is probably better to fix White’s pawns on dark squares with 22 ... b5!.

23 Ne6 Re8 24 c4 Nb3 25 Bb2?

After 25 d5 Nc5 26 g3 c6 the position is balanced.



Exercise (combination alert): Do you sense a diverting blockade in the current of White's intent? Leko's last move was a blunder. What did he overlook?

25 ... Bxa3!

Answer: Deflection/pin. White's bishop is deflected from covering d4.

26 Bxa3

Others:

a) 26 d5 Bb4 27 Rb1 Nc5 28 Bxg7 Qxg7 29 Rxb4 Qa1+ 30 Qf1 Qxf1+ 31 Kxf1 Nxe6 32 dxe6 Rxe6 is a lost rook ending for White.

b) 26 Bc3? makes matters even worse after 26 ... Nxd4! 27 Bxd4 Bb4, when White can resign.

26 ... Nxd4 27 Nxd4 Rxe2 28 Nxe2 Qd3! 29 Bb2 Qxc4

Black's queen and three connected passed pawns are overwhelmingly superior to White's rook and two minor pieces. White's only chance is to

try and generate some kind of attack against Black's king.

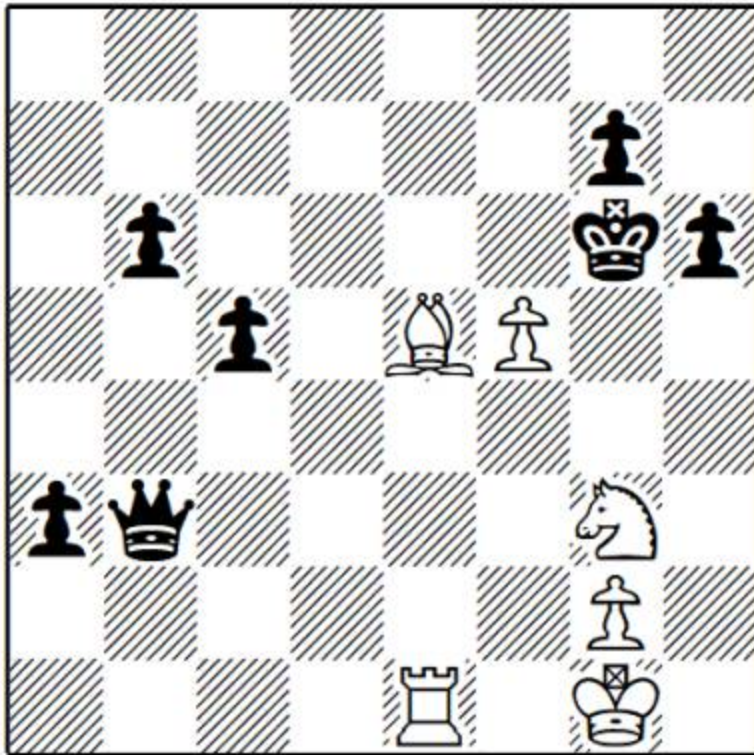
30 h3 c5 31 Ng3 Qb3 32 Be5 a5

Here they come.

33 h4 a4 34 h5 Kh7

The fearless computer prefers 34 ... gxh5! 35 Nxf5 g6 36 Nf6+ Kf7 37 Ne4 a3 38 Nd6+ Ke6!. All discovered checks are useless and Black's queenside passers are decisive.

35 hxg6+ Kxg6 36 f4! a3 37 f5+



Leko does his best to tease out as much play as he can from his meagre resources to generate threats against Anand's king but they just aren't enough.

37 ... Kf7 38 Ne4 a2! 39 Ba1

After 39 Nd6+ Kg8 40 f6 gxf6 41 Bxf6 Qd3 42 Ne4 b5!, White's intended attack goes nowhere as 43 Nxc5?? is met by 43 ... Qd2 44 Re4 Qc1+ and the knight falls.

39 ... Qd3

Covering against knight checks on d6.

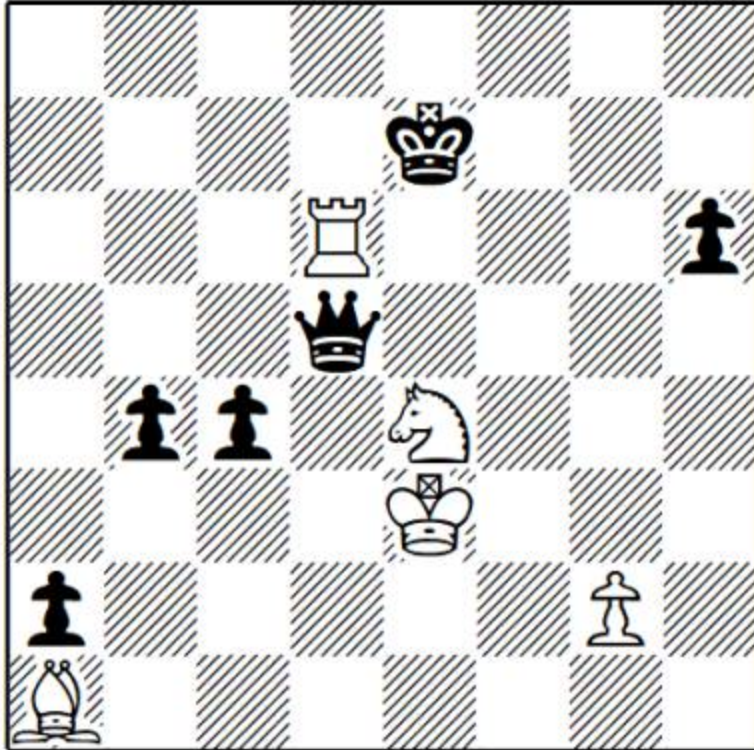
40 f6 gxf6 41 Nxf6 Qd2! 42 Kf1

If 42 Rf1 Ke6, Black's king escapes to the safety of the queenside.

42 ... b5 43 Ne4 Qd5 44 Kf2 b4 45 Ke3 c4 46 Rf1+ Ke6

A person can dream, can't he? However, a world champion isn't all that likely to fall for 46 ... Ke8?? 47 Nf6+ or 46 ... Kg8 47 Nf6+.

47 Rf6+ Ke7 48 Rd6



Exercise (combination alert): Dishearteningly, Leko's heroic effort to get at Black's king has amounted to nothing and White's position has not aged gracefully. What is Black's easiest path to victory?

48 ... Qxe4+!

Answer: Simplification. White's initiative is finally killed off. Black's extra three pawns dominate White's lone bishop.

49 Kxe4 Kxd6 50 g4 c3

Threatening ... c3-c2, forcing promotion. White's bishop activity level is decidedly unimpressive on a1.

51 Kd3 Kd5 0-1

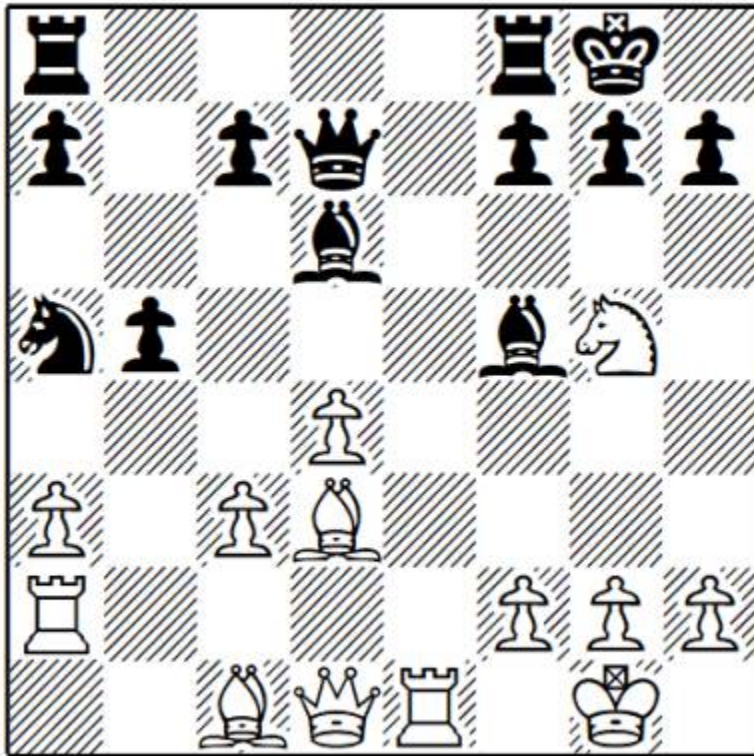
Zugzwang. White's king must give ground. After 52 Kc2 Kc4 53 Kd1 b3 54 Kc1 Kd3!, there is a further zugzwang.

Game 18

A. Shirov-An. Karpov

Prague (rapid) 2002

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 d4 d5 6 Bd3 Be7 7 0-0 Nc6 8 c4 Nb4 9 Be2 0-0 10 Nc3 Bf5 11 a3 Nxc3 12 bxc3 Nc6 13 Re1 dxc4 14 Bxc4 Bd6 15 Ra2 Qd7 16 Ng5 Na5 17 Bd3 b5



Karpov's logical move does the following:

- 1) It clamps down on White's future c2-c4.
- 2) The c4-square may later be a useful blockading outpost for the a5-knight, which now no longer looks out of play.
- 3) If light-squared bishops are exchanged, then White has three pawns fixed on the same colour as his remaining bishop.

18 Qf3 Bg6

White stands slightly better after this move. A slight improvement was later found in N.Den Heijer-M.Monteban, ICCF email 2005, with 18 ... Rae8!, playing upon White's back rank. The game continued 19 Rae2 (this isn't a mistake) 19 ... Bg4! 20 Qxg4! (forced) 20 ... Qxg4 21 Bxh7+ Kh8 22 Rxe8 f6 23 h3 Qh5 24 Rxf8+ Bxf8 25 g4 Qh4 26 Re8 fxg5 27 Be4 (White has full compensation for the queen and a draw is the most likely result) 27 ... Kg8 28 Bd5+ Kh7 29 Be4+ g6 30 Rxf8 Qxh3 31 f3 Qg3+ (or 31 ... Kg7 32 Rd8 Qg3+ 33 Kf1 Nc4 34 Bxg5 and Black should probably just take perpetual check here since he risks loss by playing for the full point) 32 Kf1 Qh3+ 33 Kg1 Qg3+ ½-½.

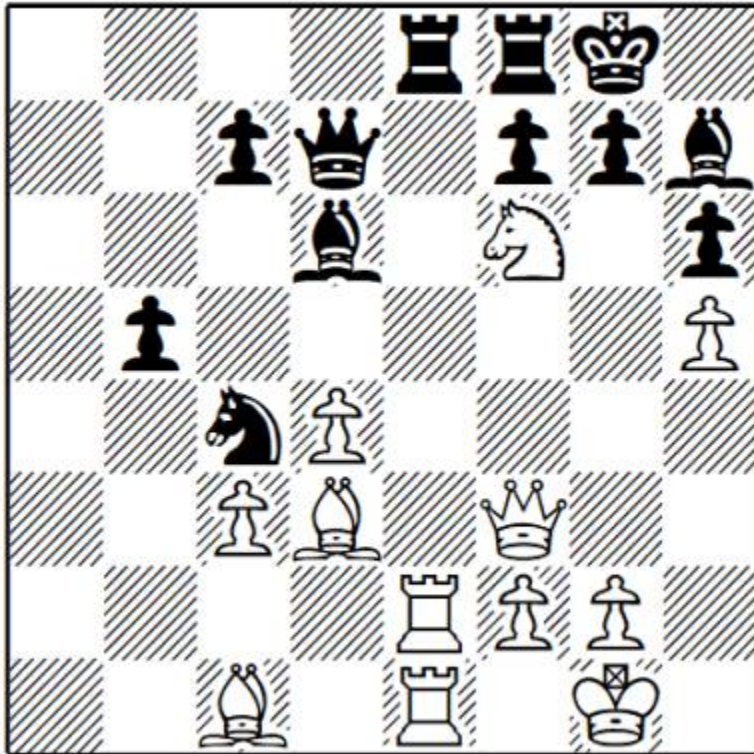
19 Rae2 Nc4 20 a4

This way White solves the problem of the once-weak a-pawn.

20 ... a6 21 h4

Intending to prod Black's light-squared bishop by pushing the h-pawn to the fifth rank.

21 ... h6 22 Ne4 Rae8 23 h5 Bh7 24 axb5 axb5 25 Nf6+!?



Having faced Shirov multiple times in online blitz, I can tell you from experience that his moves are the product of an impressive imagination. Here he doesn't disappoint, banging out a flashy – but not terribly effective – piece sacrifice, the result of which should be a draw.

The immediate 25 Bxh6 is neutralized by 25 ... Bxe4 26 Rxe4 Rxe4! (not 26 ... gxh6?? 27 Rg4+ and Black must hand over his queen to evade mate) 27 Qxe4 (it looks as though White has won a pawn; he hasn't) 27 ... f5 28 Qd5+ Rf7! (with dual threats of ... Bh2+ and ... g7xh6; White's response is forced) 29 Qa8+ Rf8 30 Bxc4+ bxc4 31 Qd5+ Rf7 32 Qa8+ Rf8 with a draw by repetition.

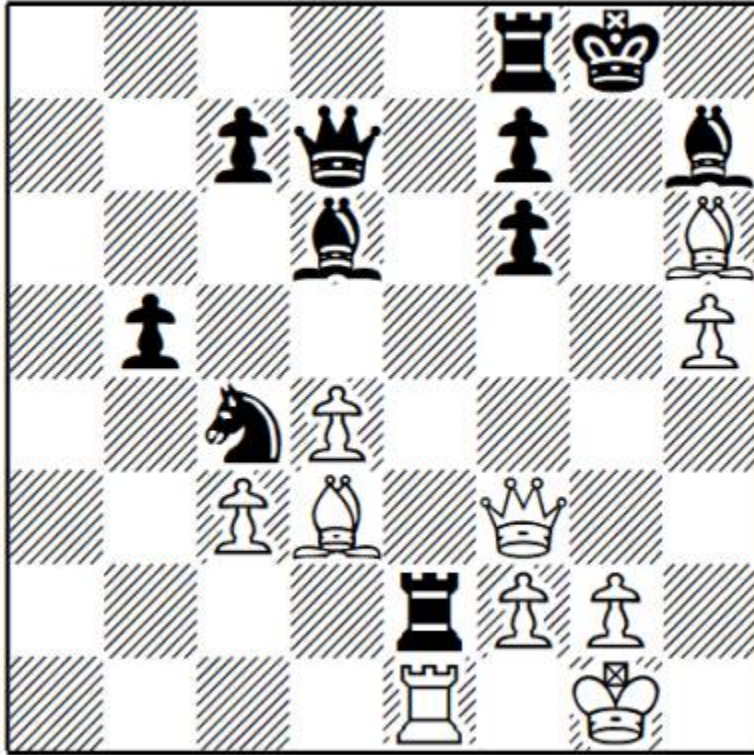
25 ... gxf6

Karpov is not the kind of defender who swoons from an opponent's tactical shot. He worked everything out to a draw and was wrong, since he actually won the game.

26 Bxh6?

With this move comes Shirov's fall from grace and all his previous labour comes to nothing. Shirov seriously overestimates his attacking chances and should have been satisfied with a draw after 26 Bxh7+! Kxh7 27 Qxf6 Rxe2 28 Qxh6+ Kg8 29 Qg5+ Kh8 30 Qh6+ with perpetual check.

26 ... Rxe2



27 Rxe2?

It's bad enough when our opponent wreaks catastrophe upon our position, and so much worse when we do it ourselves. After this hallucination White gets zip attacking compensation for the sacrificed piece. He had to agree to a difficult ending after 27 Bxe2 Qe6! 28 Bf1 Qf5 29 Qxf5 Bxf5 30 Bxf8 Kxf8. Although this is not such a great position to defend as White against one of the greatest technical players of all time, it is far better than what Shirov got in the game.

27 ... Bxd3!

It's psychologically tempting to go dumbstruck after our opponent's shot. Unfortunately we don't have the luxury. Bluff called. Karpov correctly ignores White's "threat" Qxf6. Perhaps White expected 27 ... Be7?? 28 Qg3+ Bg6 29 Bxg6! and Black is mated.

28 Qxd3

I have a feeling that Shirov hallucinated horribly and thought he could checkmate Black with 28 Qxf6??, but then he saw the simple 28 ... Qg4,

when White has no mate. After 29 Bxf8 Bxe2 30 Bxd6 cxd6 White is two pieces down for nothing.

28 ... Re8

It's understandable that Karpov wants to remove pieces. However, it was stronger to treat White's attacking chances with contempt and play 28 ... Ra8! 29 Re1 Qg4!, when White can resign.

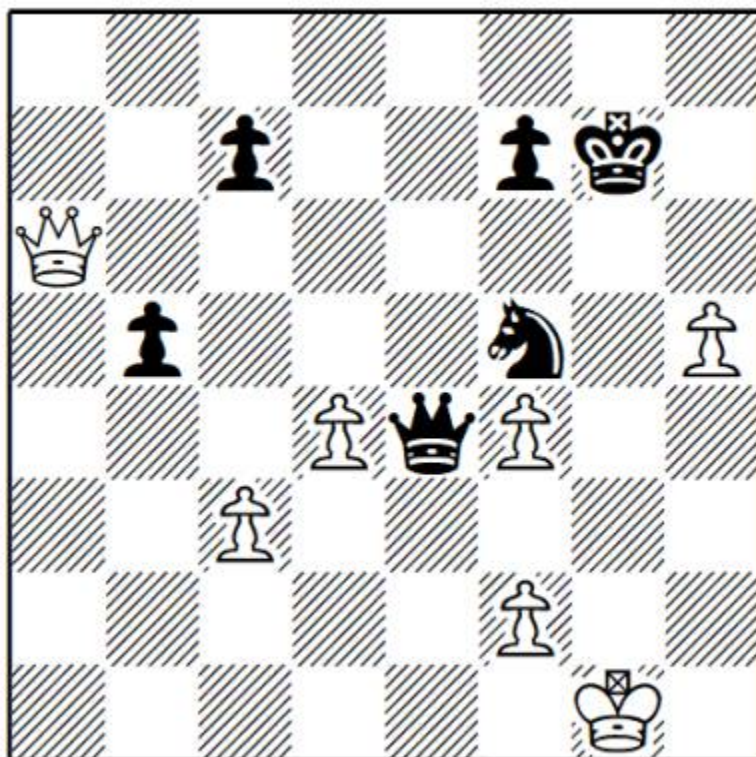
29 g3 Rxe2 30 Qxe2 Qe6 31 Qf3 Kh7 32 Bf4 f5

Here 32 ... Qf5! wrecks White's kingside pawn and pretty much ends the game immediately.

33 Bxd6 Nxd6 34 Qd1 Qe4 35 Qd2

Really? You believe Karpov is going to give you time for Qg5, h5-h6 and Qg7 mate? I'm wondering just what was Shirov's justification for playing on in this absolutely hopeless position. Perhaps Karpov's clock was hanging by a thread, since it was a rapid game.

35 ... f4 36 gxf4 Nf5 37 Qa2 Kg7 38 Qa6



Exercise (calculation): How did Karpov force mate?

38 ... Nh4!

Answer: Play the knight to h4, after which White's king isn't going anywhere.

39 Kf1 Qd3+! 40 Kg1

Or 40 Ke1 Ng2 mate.

40 ... Qf3! 0-1

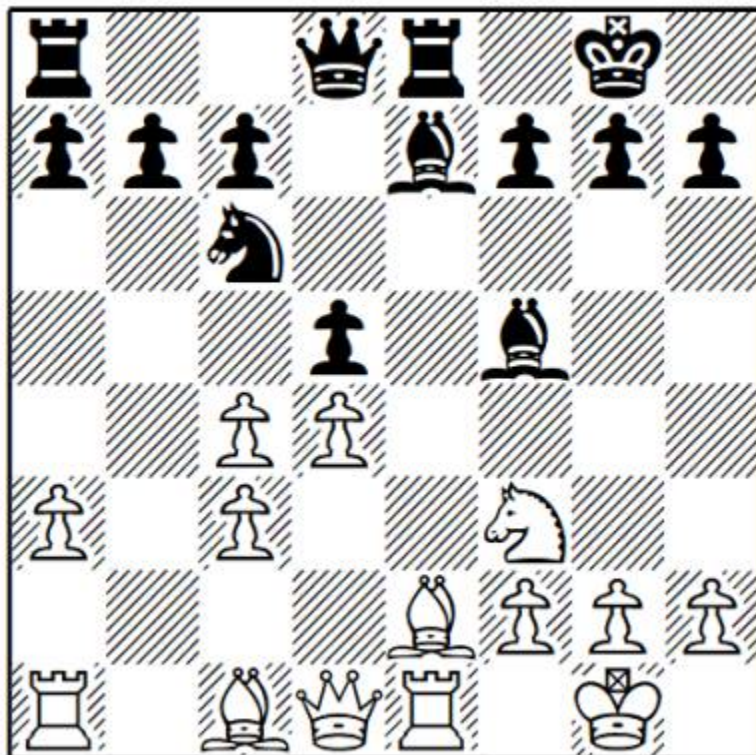
And now 41 Kf1 Qd1 is mate.

Game 19

Mi.Adams-V.Anand

Sofia 2005

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 d4 d5 6 Bd3 Nc6 7 0-0 Be7 8 c4 Nb4 9 Be2 0-0 10 Nc3 Bf5 11 a3 Nxc3 12 bxc3 Nc6 13 Re1 Re8



This simple developing move is the main line, over the somewhat committal 13 ... dxc4, which we examined in the previous two games.

14 cxd5

Luring Black's queen into the middle, where White hopes she will be vulnerable. Later on we examine 14 Bf4.

14 ... Qxd5 15 Bf4 Rac8

This move is favoured over 15 ... Bd6, mainly based on the game G.Kasparov-An.Karpov, New York (rapid match) 2002, which continued 16 c4 Qe4 17 Be3 Rad8 18 Ra2 Bg6 19 Qc1 Na5 20 c5 Be7 21 Bb5! Qd5. Here Kasparov could have gained a large advantage with 22 Bxe8! Qxa2 23 Ba4 Qc4 24 Qxc4 Nxc4 25 Bf4 Kf8 26 Bxc7 Rc8 27 Ne5 Nxe5 28 Bxe5.

16 Bg3

This stabilizes the bishop and covers against Black's tempo gains in case of ... Qe4 later on. In the next two games we look at 16 Bd3 and 16 h3.

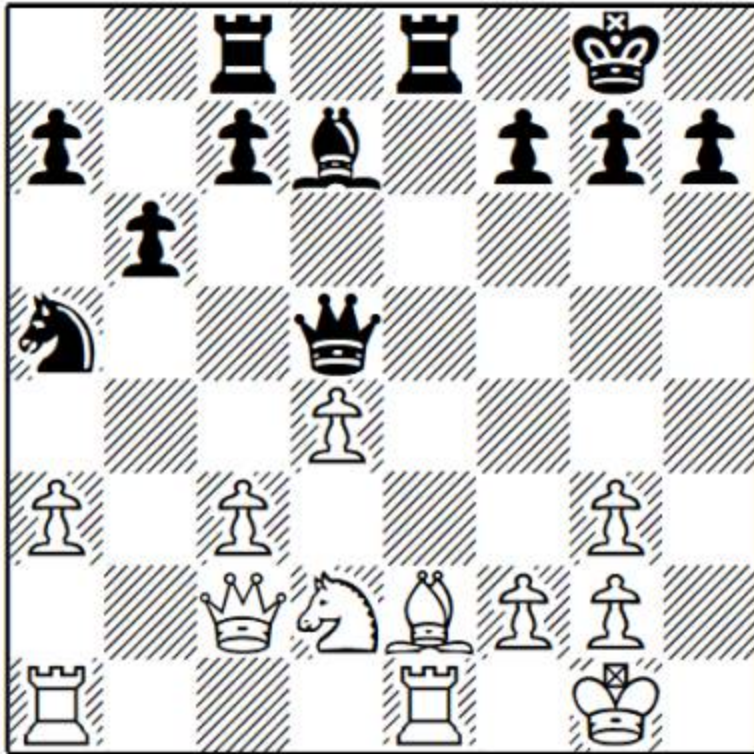
16 ... Bd6 17 Nd2

Reinforcing c4 and e4, while preparing Bf3. Instead Ma.Carlsen-P.Nielsen, Faaborg 2007, continued 17 Qa4 Bd7 18 Qc2 Bf5 19 Qb2 Na5 20 Nd2 Bxg3 21 hxg3 c5 22 Qb5 b6 23 Bg4, when Black stands no worse after 23 ... Red8.

17 ... Bxg3 18 hxg3 Na5 19 Qa4

19 Nf1 Qc6 20 Ne3 Be4 also looks okay for Black.

19 ... Bd7 20 Qc2 b6



Anand plays for the full point by preparing ... c7-c5. Instead, 20 ... Bf5 21 Qa4 Bd7 22 Qc2 Qf5 is a draw by repetition.

21 Bd3

After 21 Nf1 c5 22 Ba6 Rcd8 23 Rxe8+ Rxe8 24 Ne3 Qb3 the game is even.

21 ... h6 22 Bh7+ Kf8!?

Anand plays his king to the slightly more risky f8-square. The idea is that if queens come off his king can be used in the centre.

23 Be4 Qd6 24 Nf3

Preparing c3-c4.

24 ... Be6 25 Ne5 Bb3!

Seizing control over d1 before playing ... c7-c5. In this way White is unable to post a rook on the d-file.

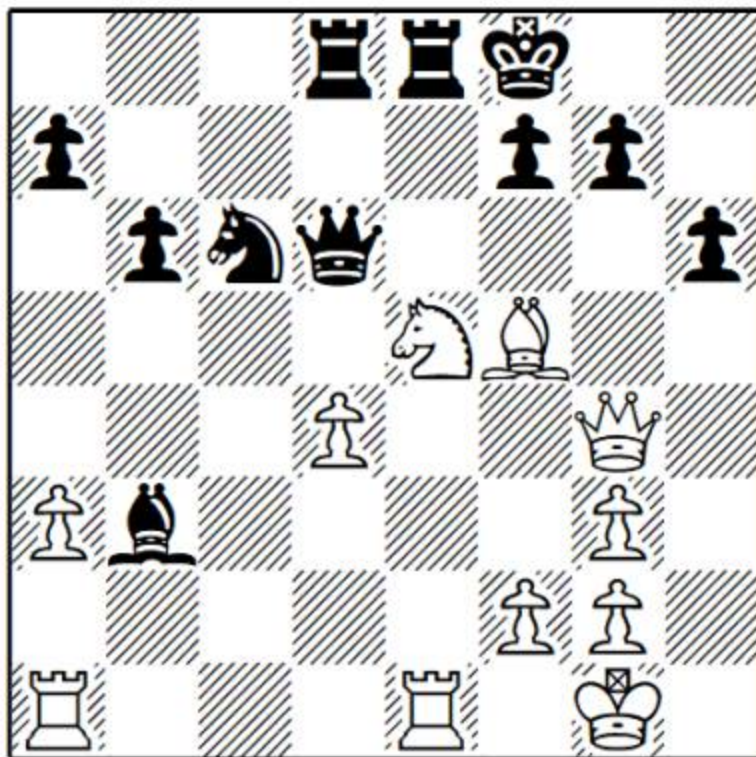
26 Qe2 c5

Patiently prepared.

27 Qg4

White has a tricky yet ineffective sequence here with 27 Qf3!? cxd4 28 Ng6+ Kg8 29 Ne7+. The effect of this startling shot is more ornamental than effective. After 29 ... Rxe7 30 Qf5 Ree8 31 Qh7+ Kf8 32 Bd5 (threatening Qh8 mate) 32 ... Re5 33 Qh8+ Ke7 34 Qxg7 (not 34 Qxc8?? Bxd5 and White is busted) 34 ... Bxd5 35 Rxe5+ Kd7 36 cxd4 Rc4 Black's king is safe and his two pieces are worth more than White's rook and pawn.

27 ... Rcd8 28 Bf5 cxd4 29 cxd4 Nc6!



Anand isn't about to fall for the cheap trick 29 ... Qxd4?? 30 Nd7+! (interference) 30 ... Rxd7 31 Bxd7, when Black loses heavy material due to the simultaneous mate threat on e8 and his hanging queen.

30 Nxc6 Rxe1+ 31 Rxe1 Qxc6 32 Qe2

Threatening Qe7+ and Qxd8.

32 ... Qd6 33 Qf3 Bc4

Black stands slightly better since his queenside majority is worth more than White's passed but potentially weak isolated d-pawn.

34 Qe3 Bb5!

Intending ... Re8.

35 Rd1 Ba4 36 Rd2 Re8 37 Qc3 h5 38 Qc1?!

Such a move is the chess equivalent of low blood sugar. Why go passive? White should try and turn his isolani into a strength with 38 d5!, which follows the principle: *passed pawns should be pushed*.

38 ... Qe7?!

This allows White to equalize. White will struggle after 38 ... g6!, which is objectively Black's best continuation. Following 39 Bd3 Qc6 40 Qxc6 Bxc6 41 Rc2 Be4 42 Bxe4 Rxe4 43 Rc8+ Kg7 44 Rc7 a5 45 Rd7 Re1+ 46 Kh2 a4 47 Rb7 Rb1, Black has winning chances.

39 Qc3 Qg5 40 Bh3 Kg8 41 d5

Now White is fine.

41 ... f5!?

White must now watch out for future ... g7-g5-g4 tricks, which smother the h3-bishop. Anand is willing to weaken his king's front in order to suppress the white bishop's influence. Instead, 41 ... h4 42 gxh4 Re1+ 43 Kh2 Qxh4 44 Qc8+ Be8 45 Qg4 is even.

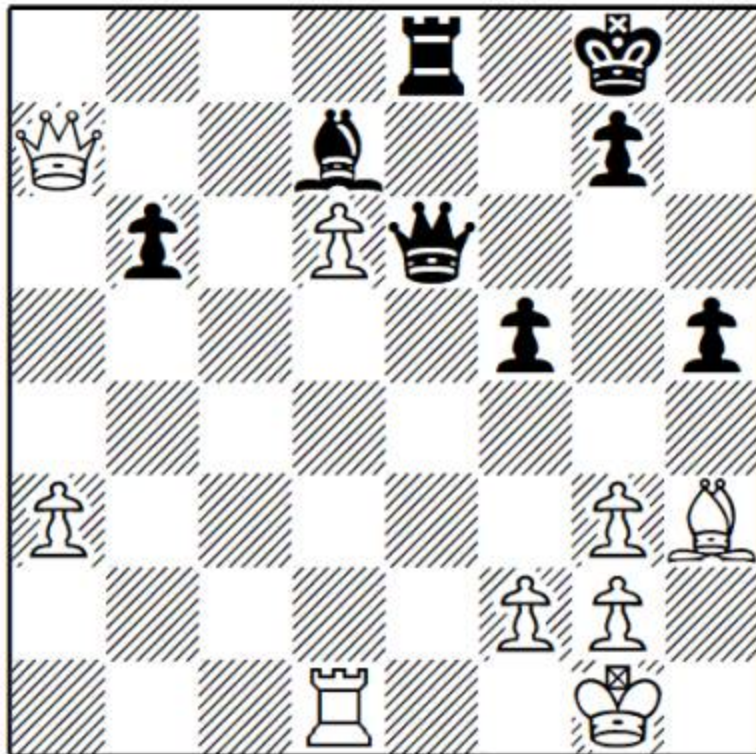
42 d6

Black must take care to keep White's passed d-pawn under control.

42 ... Bd7 43 Rd1 Qg6 44 Qc7

This move is not in itself bad but is nevertheless a harbinger of Adams' fall from grace. His position remains fine if he respects Anand's ... g7-g5 and ... g5-g4 threat and prevents it with 44 Kh2 Qf7 45 f4!.

44 ... Qe6 45 Qxa7?



Adams completely ignores the threat to his h3-bishop in pursuit of pawns. He is mysteriously willing to hand over a piece in return for Black's queenside pawns, but this sacrifice is clearly unsound. 45 Qc1! (preventing ... g7-g5) 45 ... Qf6 46 f4 is equal.

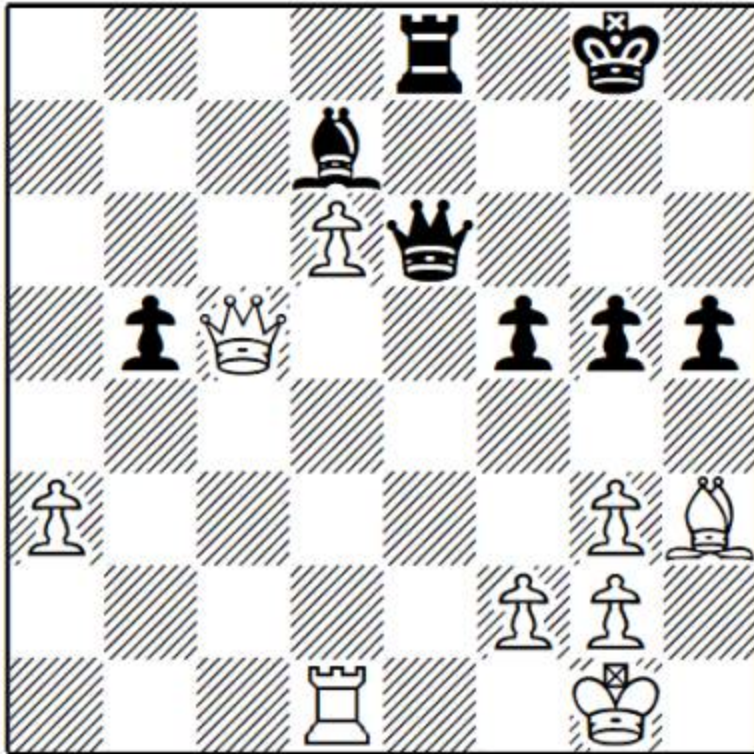
45 ... b5?

Anand violates the principle: *don't begin a debate and then refuse to finish it*. His disinclination to win a piece with 45 ... g5!, followed by ... g5-g4, is like tipping your waiter or waitress with words of kindness, rather than actual money. I am slightly at a loss to explain why Adams made this unsound piece sacrifice and why Anand cautiously declined. White doesn't have enough compensation for the piece after 45 ... g5! 46 Qxb6 g4.

46 Qc5?

Adams should force a draw with 46 f4! Qe3+ 47 Qxe3 Rxe3 48 Bxf5! Bxf5 49 d7 Bxd7 50 Rxd7 Rxd7 51 Rb7 Rxa3 52 Rxb5 g6.

46 ... g5!



Not waiting to be asked again. There is no defence to the coming ... g5-g4.

47 g4 hxg4 48 Bxg4 fxg4 49 Qxg5+ Kh7

49 ... Kf7 saves a bit of time. After 50 Qh5+ Kg7 51 Qg5+ Qg6 52 Qd2 Qf5 White doesn't have enough for the piece.

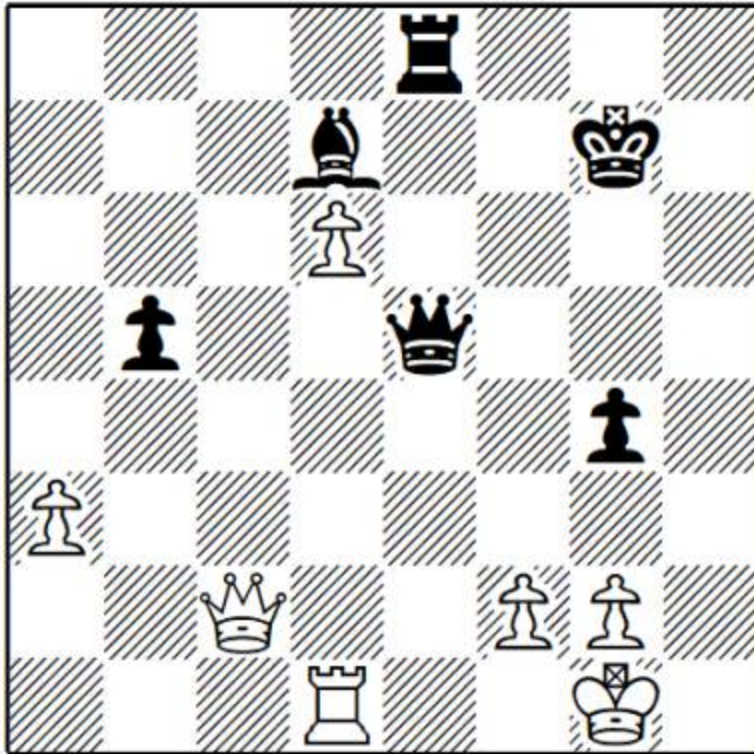
50 Qh5+ Kg7 51 Qg5+ Qg6 52 Qc5 Qf6 53 Qa7 Qf5 54 Qd4+ Kg6

There is no perpetual check.

55 Qc3 Qe5 56 Qd3+

56 Qxe5 Rxe5 is also completely lost for White since the d6-pawn eventually falls.

56 ... Kg7 57 Qc2



Exercise (planning): Come up with a conversion plan for Black.

57 ... Rh8!

Answer: Transfer the rook to the h-file and go for a direct attack on White's king.

58 Qc7 Qh2+ 59 Kf1 Qh1+ 60 Ke2 Re8+ 0-1

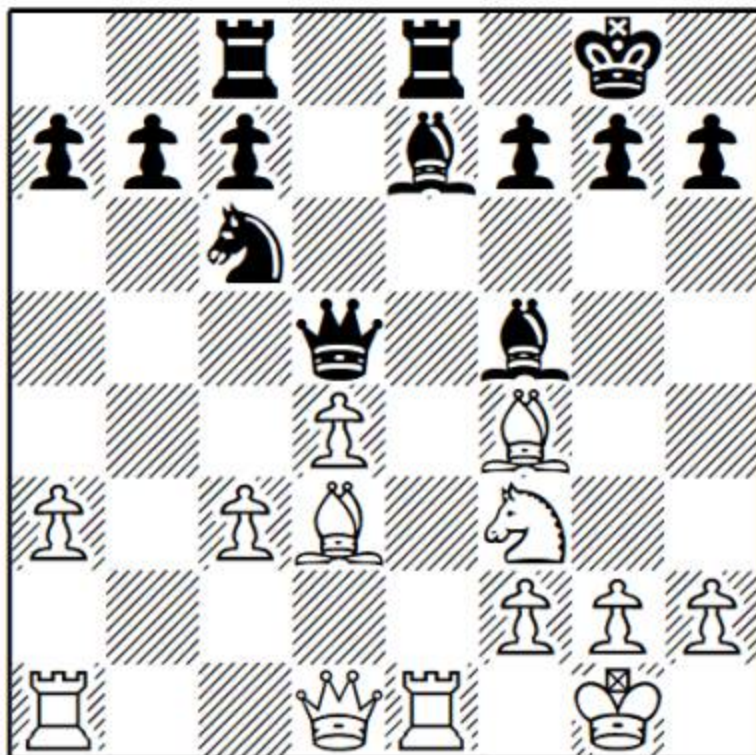
One by one, the white king loses his comforts and is forced out into the wilderness. For example, 61 Kd2 Qh6+ 62 Kd3 Qe6 (now ... Qe2+ followed by ... Rc8 is an unstoppable threat) 63 Qc3+ (63 f3 Qe2+ 64 Kc3 Rc8 is game over) 63 ... Kf7 64 Kd2 Qh6+! (White's king is forced on the c-file) 65 Kc2 (65 Kd3 saves the queen at the cost of his king: 65 ... Bf5+ 66 Kd4 Qxd6 mate) 65 ... Rc8 wins.

Game 20

A. Timofeev-Wang Yue

China-Russia match, Ningbo (rapid) 2010

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 d4 d5 6 Bd3 Nc6 7 0-0 Be7 8 c4 Nb4 9 Be2 0-0 10 Nc3 Bf5 11 a3 Nxc3 12 bxc3 Nc6 13 Re1 Re8 14 cxd5 Qxd5 15 Bf4 Rac8 16 Bd3



This is White's most frequent try. It offers to exchange one of Black's best posted pieces. The move comes at a cost for White since exchanges generally benefit Black in this line, mainly because White has three pawn islands to Black's two. So, the closer play is to an ending, the more it helps Black.

16 ... Qd7

Black's queen gets out of the way of White's potential c3-c4 push.

17 Rb1

This move is possible only due to White's 16 Bd3. Normally Black's f5-bishop covers the b1-square.

17 ... b6 18 Bb5

This isn't really an exchange sacrifice since White soon wins it back. Nor is it effective, since it leads to multiple exchanges that allow Black to

equalize.

18 d5 is played more often, when 18 ... Bxd3 (not 18 ... Qxd5?! 19 Bb5! Qc5 20 Be3 Qd6 21 Qa4 Bxb1 22 Rxb1 and White wins material) 19 Qxd3 Bxa3 20 Ng5 g6 21 Ne4 Qf5 22 Bxc7 Rxc7 23 Nf6+ Qxf6 24 Rxe8+ Kg7 25 dxc6 Bc5 26 Rb2 Rxc6 led to a draw in P.Leko-B.Gelfand, Moscow 2009. The position is dynamically equal. I have no nits to pick about the soundness of the sacrifice since Black has an extra passed a-pawn for the exchange and, consequently, full compensation.

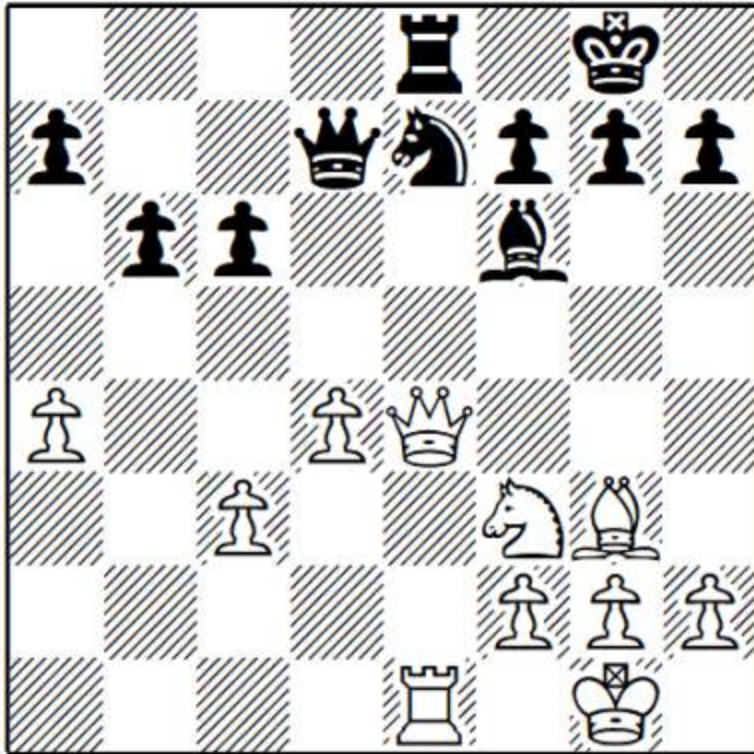
18 ... Bxb1 19 Qxb1

Or 19 Ne5 Qf5 20 Bxc6 Qxf4 21 g3 Qf5 22 Bxe8 Rxe8 23 Qxb1 Qxb1 24 Rxb1 Bd6 25 Nc4 Re2 (A.Wosch-M.Deghose, email 2011). If anyone is going to win, it will be Black, whose rook is far more active than White's.

19 ... Bf6 20 Rd1 Qg4

An alternative is 20 ... Qd5 21 Bg3 Na5 22 Bxe8 Rxe8 23 Bxc7 Nc4, when Black's c4-blockade and superior structure offered full compensation for the missing pawn in Ni Hua-Bu Xiangzhi, Chinese Team Championship 2012.

21 Bg3 Ne7 22 Bxe8 Rxe8 23 Re1 Qd7 24 Qe4 c6 25 a4



25 ... h6

The position is dynamically equal. 25 ... b5 26 axb5 cxb5 27 Ne5 Qe6 28 h3 a6 29 Qd3 ½-½ was the conclusion of A.Wosch-D.Perez, email 2010. In fact I slightly prefer Black's chances after 29 ... Rc8.

26 h3 a6

Contemplating a future ... b6-b5.

27 Ne5 Qe6

Black can play for an imbalance with 27 ... Bxe5! 28 Qxe5 f6 29 Qh5 b5.

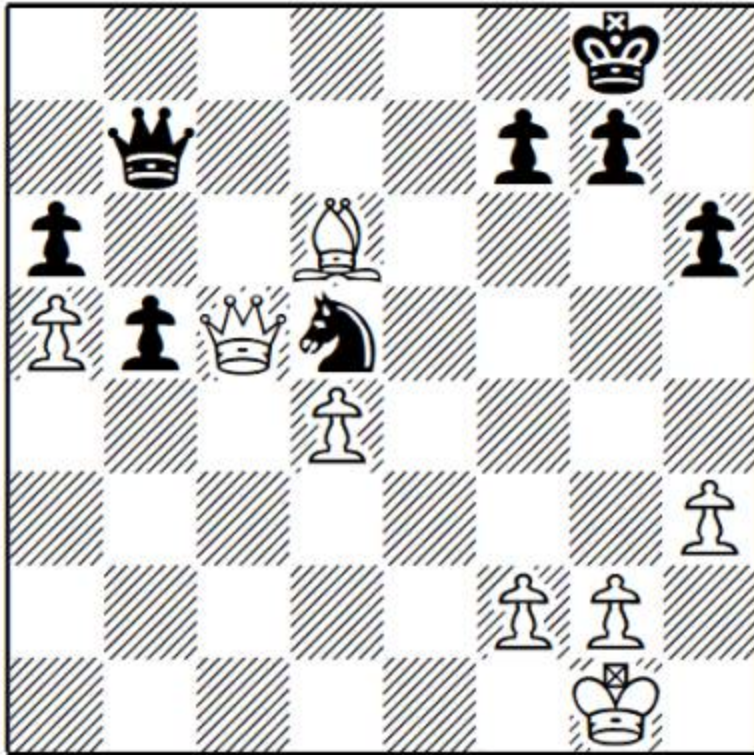
28 Qb1 Nc8 29 c4 Bxe5 30 Rxe5 Qd7 31 Qe4 Rxe5 32 Qxe5 b5 33 cxb5 cxb5 34 a5?

White's position lacks the resources to contain his ambition. This move is in violation of the principle: *don't allow your pawns to be fixed on the same colour as your remaining bishop*. Now Black is gifted winning chances due to his superior minor piece. Rather than his expansive gesture, White should play 34 axb5 Qxb5 35 d5 Nb6 36 Qb8+ Kh7 37 d6 Nd7 with a likely draw.

34 ... Ne7

Even the hardest of isolanis becomes a sickly thing if it is blockaded. White's d-pawn isn't going anywhere. With his last move Black reminds his opponent that his position seriously lacks light-square control.

35 Qc5 Nd5 36 Bd6 Qb7



Black's winning chances are based on the following:

1) Black has the superior minor piece, since White's bishop hits thin air and the a5- and d4-pawns are fixed on the same, and therefore inferior, colour for the remaining bishop.

2) Black has a protected, passed b-pawn.

3) In general, in the ending a queen and knight co-ordinate more effectively than a queen and bishop.

4) White's light squares are vulnerable.

37 Qc2 b4!

Adhering to the principle: *passed pawns should be pushed.*

38 Qe4 Qc6 39 Bc5 b3!

Same principle.

40 Ba3 Qe6 41 Qf3 Nc7?

Black has excellent chances to win with 41 ... Nb4! 42 Bb2 Qd5.

42 Bb2?

White's position, much like a serial adulterer's spouse, will only tolerate so many lapses. 42 Qb7! should hold the draw after 42 ... Qe1+ 43 Kh2 Qxa5 44 Qxb3.

42 ... Qd5

Now Black is again in control. 42 ... Qc4 looks even stronger.

43 Qc3 Ne6

Now ... Nf4 is in the air.

44 Qc8+

Inadvisable. White either ignores or underestimates the power of Black's queen and knight attacking team.

44 ... Kh7 45 Qxa6 Nf4 46 Qf1

The queen returns home, empty-handed after a pointless expedition.

46 ... Qxa5

White is paralyzed by Black's passed b-pawn.

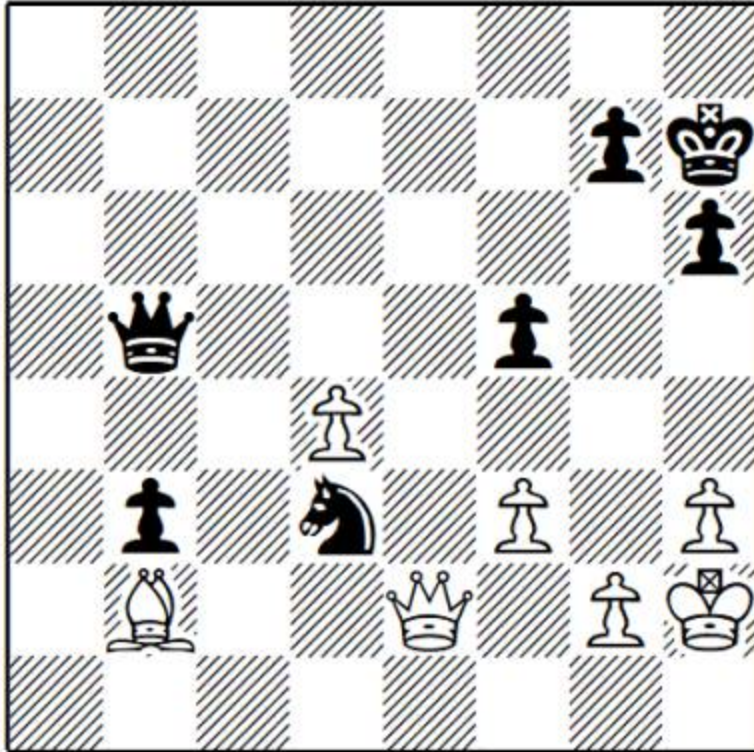
47 Qb1+ f5 48 Kh2 Qd5 49 f3

Or 49 Qf1 Qc6 50 Ba1 Qe4, when ... Nd3 is coming and White is busted.

49 ... Qb5

Threatening ... Qe2.

50 Qd1 Nd3 51 Qe2



Exercise (planning): White's position is the hard-boiled egg, just before the tapping of the knife begins its de-shelling. How did Black force the win?

51 ... Qc4! 0-1

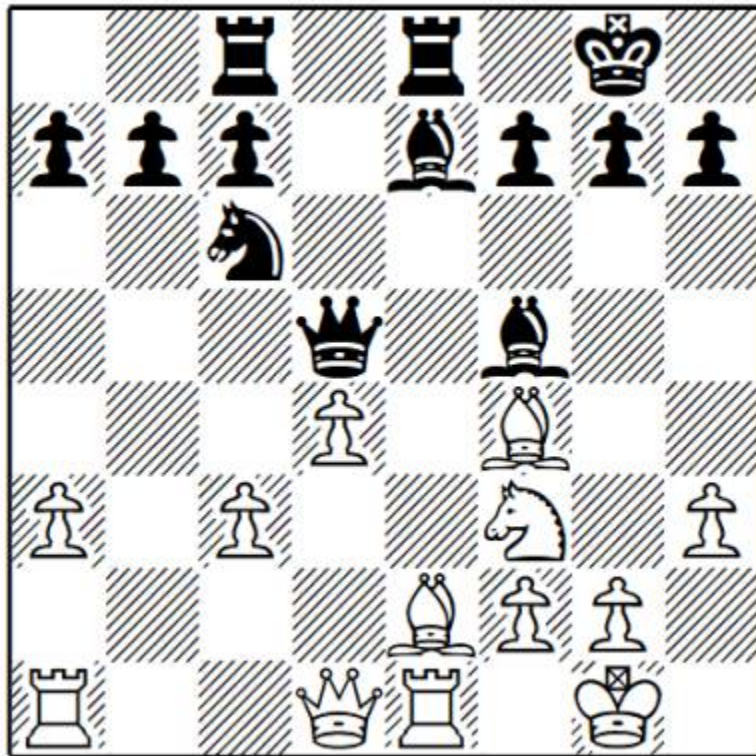
Answer: Just slide the queen to c4, after which ... Qc2 is decisive, since the b2-sightseer is clearly lost in a dangerous part of the city.

Game 21

P.Leko-V.Anand

FIDE World Championship, San Luis 2005

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 d4 d5 6 Bd3 Nc6 7 0-0 Be7 8 c4 Nb4 9 Be2 0-0 10 a3 Nc6 11 cxd5 Qxd5 12 Nc3 Nxc3 13 bxc3 Bf5 14 Re1 Rfe8 15 Bf4 Rac8 16 h3



This move serves the following functions:

- 1) It makes luft for White's king.
- 2) The f4-bishop has a spot to rest on h2 in case it is harassed by Black's queen.
- 3) White may later get ambitious and expand with g2-g4.
- 4) White can play moves such as Bd3 or Bf1, without worrying about Black responding with ... Bg4.

16 ... Be4

Discouraging Nd2. Instead, 16 ... h6 17 g4! (after 17 Qc1 Qd7 18 Qb2 Bd6 19 Bxd6 cxd6 20 Nh4 Be6 21 Rad1 d5 22 Bd3 b6 23 Bb1 Qd8 24 Nf3 Qf6 25 Qb5 g6 26 Re3 Bxh3! 27 Rxe8+ Rxe8 28 Qxd5 Bg4 29 Re1?! Rd8 30 Qe4 Bxf3 31 Qxf3 Qxf3 32 gxf3 Kf8 Black stood better in the ending, V.Akopian-Wang Yue, FIDE Grand Prix, Astrakhan 2010; 29 Be4 Re6 30 Rd3 Bxf3 31 Rxf3 Qe7 would minimize White's disadvantage) 17 ... Bg6 18 Bd3 Bxd3 19 Qxd3 Qd7 20 d5 Bf6 21 Rxe8+ Rxe8 22 Rb1 Ne7 23 c4 Ng6 24 Bg3 b6 25 Qf5 Qd8 26 a4 Nh4! (piece exchanges invariably benefit Black since his structure is inherently superior) 27 Qd3 Nxf3+ 28 Qxf3 Be5

29 Re1 Bxg3 30 Rxe8+ Qxe8 31 Qxg3 reached an even ending, D.Howell-B.Gelfand, Amsterdam 2010.

17 Nd2!?

The computers assure us White's offer of the g2-pawn is quite sound. Others:

a) 17 Be3 (intending c3-c4) 17 ... Na5 18 Nd2 Bf5! (not 18 ... Bxg2? 19 c4 Qc6 20 d5 Bxd5 21 cxd5 Qxd5, as White's piece is worth more than Black's three pawns) 19 c4 (for 19 Bf3 see Game 23) 19 ... Qd7 20 Nf3 Bf6 21 Rc1 c5! was V.Ivanchuk-V.Kramnik, Wijk aan Zee 2008, where Black has equalized by breaking up White's centre, since pushing the d-pawn to the fifth rank loses the exchange to ... Bb2.

b) 17 Qa4 a6 18 Bg3 Bf6 19 Bc4 Qd7 20 Qd1 h6 21 a4 (preventing ... b7-b5, followed by ... Na5) 21 ... Bf5 22 Rxe8+ Rxe8 23 a5 Na7 24 Be5 Bd8 25 Qb3 Nb5 26 Bf4 Nd6 27 Ne5 Qe7 and the game is even, A.Miletic-G.Buzas, email 2008.

17 ... Bxg2

Played in all seven database games from this position. Anand accepts the challenge of the coming battle of calculation.

17 ... Bg6?! is weaker as this is not the time to chicken out and go passive. 18 Nc4 in reply gives White the initiative for free.

18 Bg4

The point of White's sacrifice. Not only does White threaten the c8-rook, he also menaces f2-f3, trapping Black's errant g2-bishop. The computer assesses this position at even, which for us humans translates to unclear.

Nobody has tried 18 c4 Qf5 19 Bg4 Qxf4 20 Bxc8 Rxc8 21 Kxg2 Qxd4 22 Qg4 Qxg4+ 23 hxg4 Kf8, when Black has more than enough compensation for the exchange, with two extra pawns and two white queenside isolanis to work on.

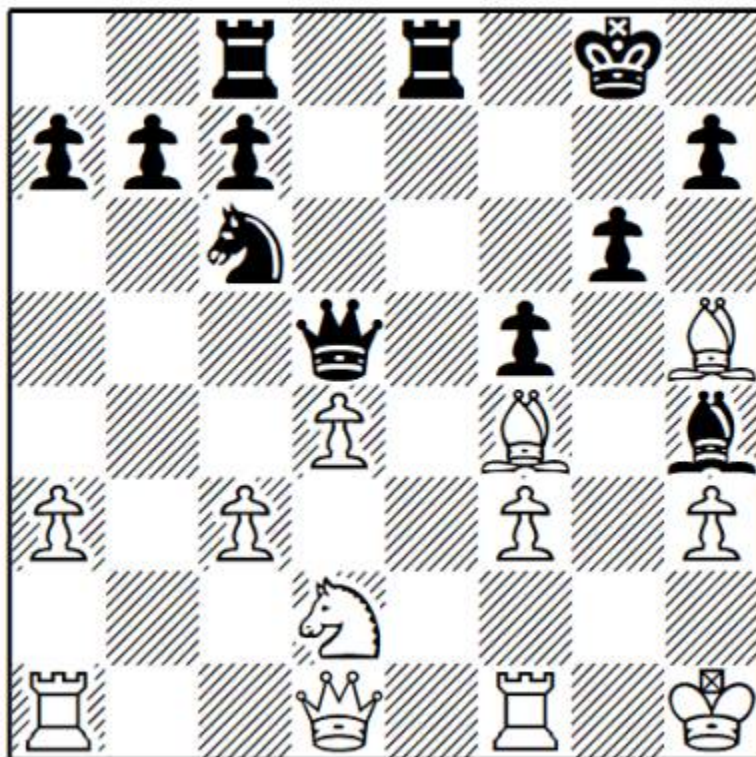
18 ... Bh1

The interesting 18 ... f5!? has not been tried. Sometimes, when it winds on and on, it feels as if Petroff theory is limitless. After 19 Be2 (threatening Bc4) 19 ... Na5 20 Qa4 c6 21 c4 Qd8 22 Kxg2 Bg5! 23 Bd3 Rxe1 24 Rxe1 Bxf4 25 Nf3 g6 26 c5, White has adequate compensation for the missing pawn, but no more than that.

19 f3 Bh4 20 Rf1

20 Re4 f5 21 Kxh1 fxe4 22 hxe4 was seen in A.Shirov-V.Kramnik, Wijk aan Zee 2010. White's central control is counterbalanced by his slightly airy king. Chances look balanced after 22 ... Ne7 23 c4 Qf7.

20 ... f5 21 Bh5 g6 22 Kxh1!



More accurate than the greedy 22 Bxg6?! hxe6 23 Kxh1 Kf7!, K.Muzas-A.Herrera, ICCF email 2007, when White subsequently regretted the opening of the h-file.

22 ... gxh5

Officially, Black is now a pawn up. However, at least for now, it is a rather unimpressive one on h5.

23 Rg1+ Kh8 24 Qf1?!

Such concessions are always made with some degree of resentment. But why make a concession when there is no need? It is hard to understand the point of moving the queen to the passive f1-square. After 24 Qb1! b6 25 Qd3 b5! 26 Rg2 Rg8, chances look even.

24 ... Bf6 25 Rb1 Ne7!

The e5-square is sufficiently covered and the knight will be well placed on either g6 or d5. Black stands comfortably better.

26 Bg5

After 26 Qc4 b6 27 Bg5 Bxg5 28 Rxc5 h4 Black retains his advantage.

26 ... Bxg5 27 Rxc5 Rg8! 28 Rxc8+

Leko surveys his position with worry and distaste. White can't afford the time to chop on h5, as his rook is completely out of play after 28 Rxc8?. Following 28 ... Qf7 29 Rh6 Qg7 30 Re6 Nd5 White is in a bad way, since c3 hangs and ... Nf4 is in the air. It is difficult to find a move for White; for example, 31 Rxb7? (31 Re5? is met by 31 ... Qh6! 32 f4 Nxf4 33 Re3 Rce8 and White is completely busted) 31 ... Nf4 32 Re3 Qh6 is decisive.

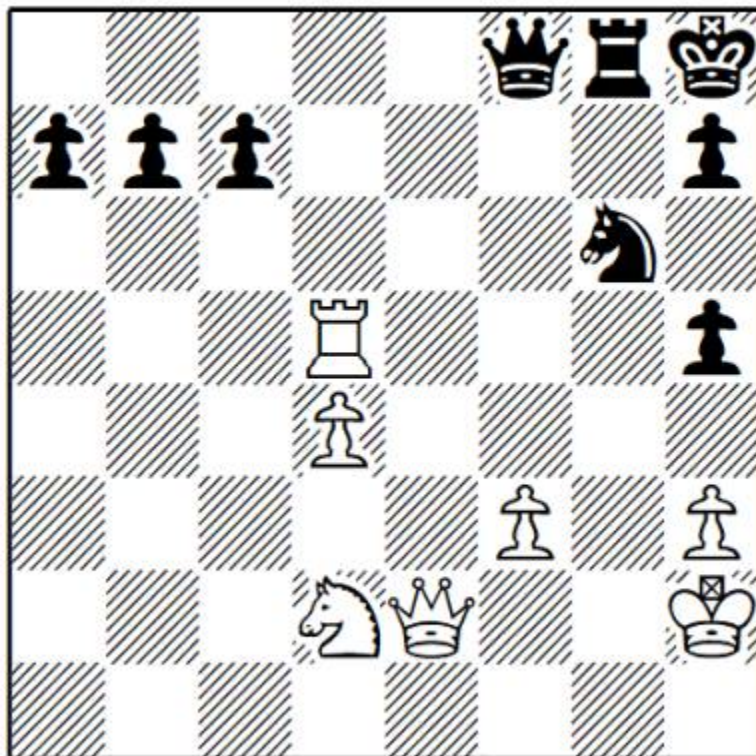
28 ... Rxc8 29 Qe2 Ng6

The knight conveniently covers against white queen checks on e5.

30 Rb5 Qc6 31 Rxf5 Qxc3 32 Rd5 Qxa3

The pawns continue to fall. Now if White is unable to get anything going against Black's king, then Black's passed a- and b-pawns will win.

33 Kh2 Qf8!



Nasty. The queen intends to give check on f4. It becomes clear that White's king is in far greater danger than Black's.

34 Qe6

After 34 Rxh5 Qf4+ 35 Kh1 Qxd4, Black's three connected and passed queenside pawns will win the game.

34 ... Qf4+ 35 Kh1 Rf8

World champions don't fall for traps such as 35 ... Qxd2?? 36 Qf6+ Rg7 37 Rd8+ Nf8 38 Rxf8 mate.

36 Qe2 h4

36 ... Qh4! is immediately decisive as White is unable to hang on to his h-pawn.

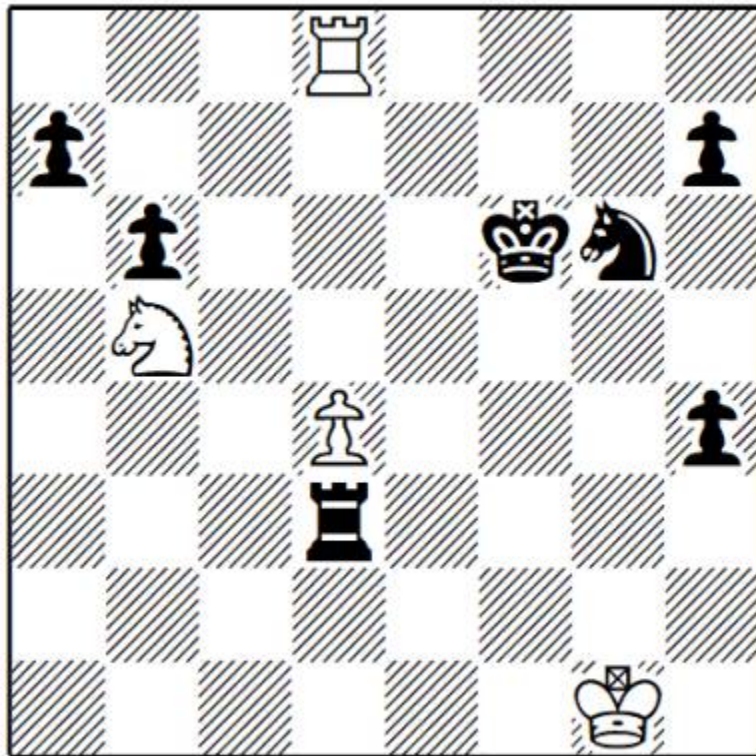
37 Rd7 Rf7 38 Rd8+ Kg7 39 Ne4

Complete desperation. 39 d5 a5 40 Ra8 b6 41 Re8 Qf5 wins easily for Black.

39 ... Qxf3+ 40 Qxf3 Rxf3 41 Nc5 b6 42 Ne6+ Kf6 43 Nxc7 Rxh3+ 44 Kg1 Rd3

Three extra pawns are overwhelming.

45 Nb5



Exercise (planning): Black wins if he simply pushes his a-pawn. Do you see an even more effective winning plan?

45 ... Kg5!

Answer: Principle: *don't hide your king in the ending – use him as an asset.* Anand plays directly for mate against the totally unprotected white king and couples this with the threat to promote his advanced h-pawn.

46 Nxa7 h3 47 Nc6 Kg4 48 Ra8 Kg3

Threatening a back rank mate.

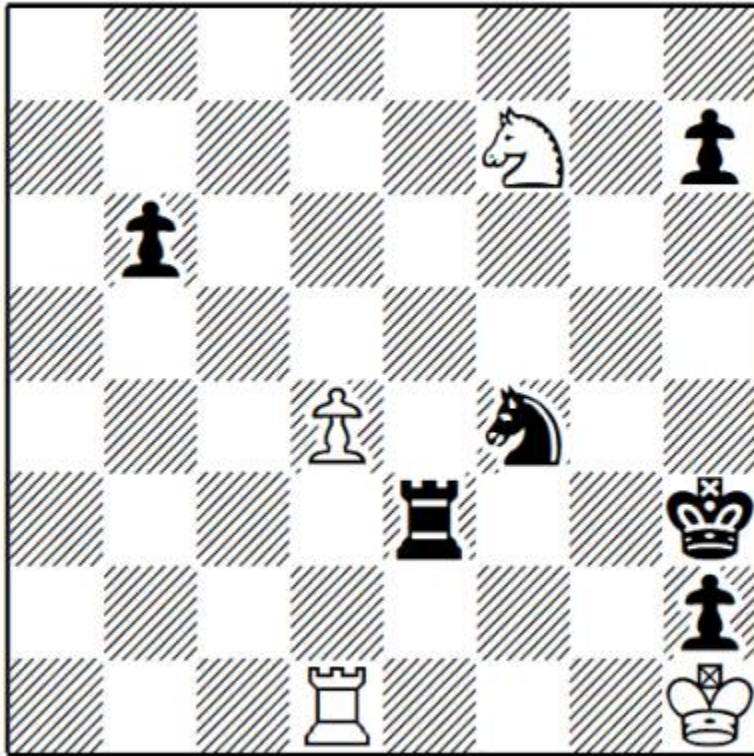
49 Ra1 h2+ 50 Kh1

It's not possible to sneak away when there is no place to sneak away to. The h1-square is the only one available for the king, if it can actually be called a "square".

50 ... Nf4

Threatening to swing the knight to f2.

51 Ne5 Re3 52 Rd1 Kh3! 53 Nf7



Exercise (planning): Weave Black's mating net.

53 ... Rg3! 0-1

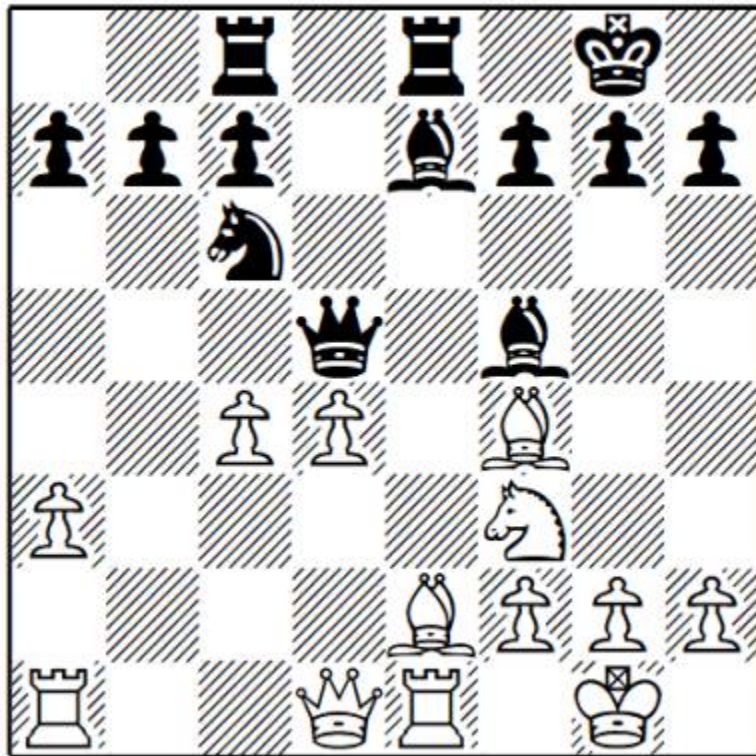
Answer: Cover against a knight check on g5. Now after 54 d5 Ne2! there is no reasonable defence to the coming rook check on g1.

Game 22

M.Palac-O.Jovanic

Croatian Championship, Zagreb 2004

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 d4 d5 6 Bd3 Nc6 7 0-0 Be7 8 c4 Nb4 9 Be2 0-0 10 a3 Nc6 11 cxd5 Qxd5 12 Nc3 Nxc3 13 bxc3 Bf5 14 Re1 Rfe8 15 Bf4 Rac8 16 c4



In my experience this is the line the majority of club level players prefer. White doesn't hold back and pushes the c-pawn to c4 immediately, albeit at the cost of weakening d4. Four of my students – rated between 1000 and 2260 – play the Petroff. When I set up this position for them and had them play White, all four immediately banged out c3-c4. So be prepared for this one, since it seems to be a favourite of club-level to master-strength players.

16 ... Qe4!

As a Scandinavian player, I always rejoice in taunting opponents by playing my queen to dangerous (yet unexploitable) squares.

17 Be3

White backs his bishop to e3 in order to add further coverage to the d4-pawn.

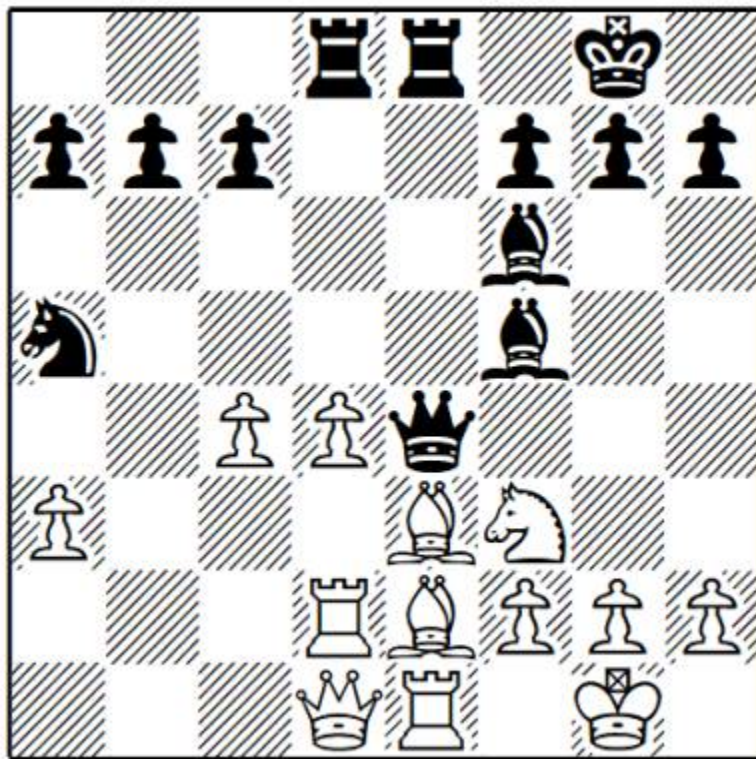
17 ... Bf6 18 Ra2

This way White unpins the d-pawn, while enabling Rd2 adding further support to d4.

18 ... Rcd8

We'll look at the alternative 18 ... Na5 in Game 24. A similar idea is 18 ... b6 19 h3 Na5 20 g4! (Petroff players should be happy when White plays g2-g4, since White's chances of overextending rise in direct proportion to the danger of Black being pushed off the board; 20 Bf1 Qa8! looks about equal) 20 ... Bg6 21 g5 Be7 22 Ne5 Bd6 23 Nxc6 hxc6 24 c5 Bf8 25 Bg4 Rcd8 26 Rae2 Qc6 27 cxb6 ½-½ V.Anand-Mi.Adams, Linares 2002. Adams could have kept playing as White looks overextended after 27 ... cxb6.

19 Rd2 Na5



This move serves the following purposes:

1) By playing ... Na5 Black negates Qa4, which can be simply met by ... b7-b6.

2) The knight pressures c4.

3) Black clears the way for a future ... c7-c5.

An alternative is 19 ... Qe7. After 20 c5 Na5 21 Qa4 b6 22 Bb5 Bd7 23 Rde2 a6 24 Bxd7 Qxd7 25 Qxd7 Rxd7 26 Bd2 a draw was agreed in M.Buscher-C.Ernst, email 2010, though Black stands at least equal in the final position.

20 h3 Qe7!

Black removes his queen from the danger zone and attacks a3. At first sight Black's last move looks like an oversight, since White can now win a piece with g2-g4-g5. The trouble is that White pays too high a price.

21 g4?!

As mentioned before, my feeling about g2-g4 is that White risks overextension more than benefits from the gained space. Instead, 21 Qa4 b6 22 Bf1 Qd7 looks about even.

21 ... Be4! 22 g5?!

This is a line in the sand that White should not have crossed. He follows the principle: *don't draw your gun unless you intend to use it*. The trouble is he overextends in his quest to win material. White is better off backing down with 22 c5 h6.

22 ... Qe6!

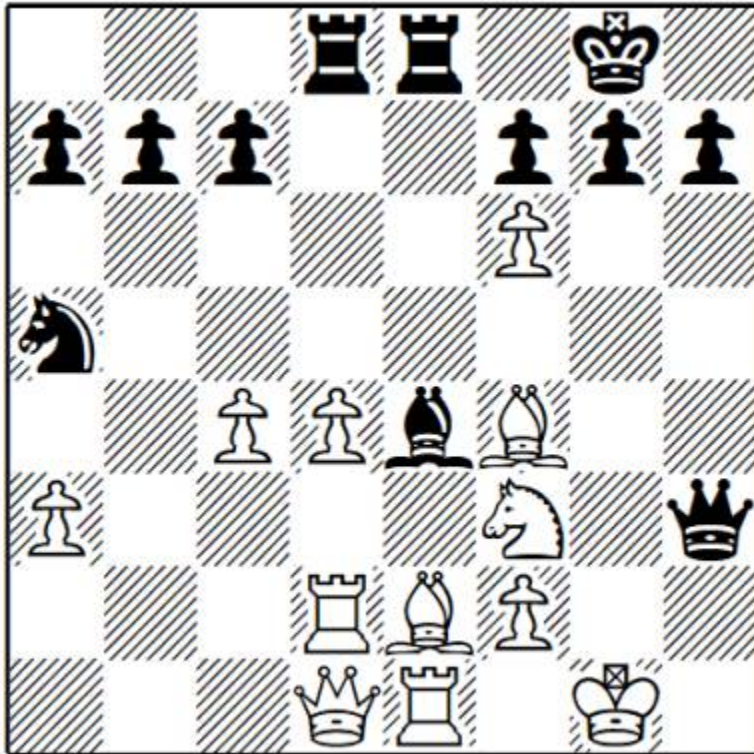
Targeting h3. 22 ... Bxf3? loses material to 23 gxf6 and Black's queen must take on f6, handing over a piece, since 23 ... Bxe2?? loses even more material after 24 fxe7 Bxd1 25 exd8Q Rxd8 26 Rdx1 Nxc4 and Black can resign.

23 gxf6 Qxh3

White has misassessed this position. Black's attack is worth more than White's extra piece.

24 Bf4

After 24 fxg7?? Re6 25 Bf4 Rg6+ 26 Bg3 Rh6! 27 Bh2 Rdd6!, White is mated.



Exercise (combination alert): What shot did White miss in his calculations?

24 ... Nxc4!

Answer: Overloaded defender. Not only does White lose another pawn, Black's offside knight also forces the loss of the exchange.

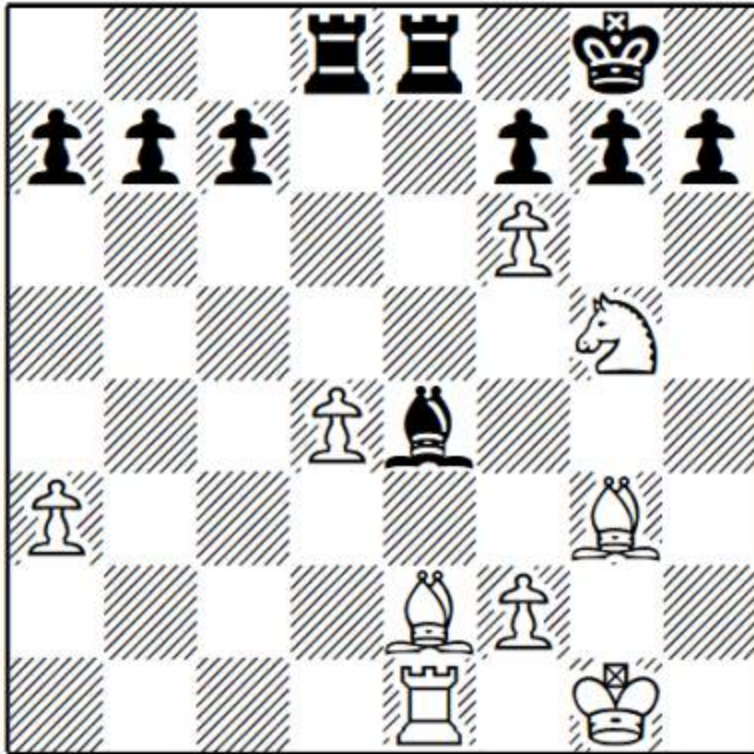
25 Bg3

White has no choice but to hand over the exchange. After 25 Ra2?? gxf6!! 26 Bg3 (or 26 Bf1 Qg4+ 27 Bg2 Qxf4) 26 ... Rxd4! White again suffers from overloaded defender issues and can resign.

25 ... Nxd2 26 Qxd2 Qf5 27 Qg5

27 Ne5 Qxf6 is also lost for White, only slightly less so.

27 ... Qxg5! 28 Nxc4



Exercise (combination alert): Black missed a win here. What would you play?

28 ... gxf6?

After this missed opportunity White gets serious chances to hold the game.

Answer: Black missed 28 ... Bd3! (pinned piece) and White is busted after 29 Be5 (29 Kf1? loses on the spot to 29 ... Rxe2 30 Rxe2 Re8) 29 ... Bxe2 30 Rxe2 Rxd4 31 Bxd4 Rxe2 32 fxc7 Ra2 33 Bc5 Kxg7. A rook and three pawns is too much for just two minor pieces.

29 Nxe4 Rxe4 30 Bxc7

White's bishops are hungry carrion crows, living from meal to meal. White will lose too many pawns to save the game.

30 ... Rdx4 31 Kf1

While Black won a rook and three pawns for two minor pieces, he faces great obstacles in the attempt to convert to the full point:

- 1) White's bishops will be formidable defenders in the open position.
- 2) Black's kingside pawns are broken and devalued.

31 ... Rd2 32 Bb8 a6 33 Ba7 Ra2 34 Bc5?!

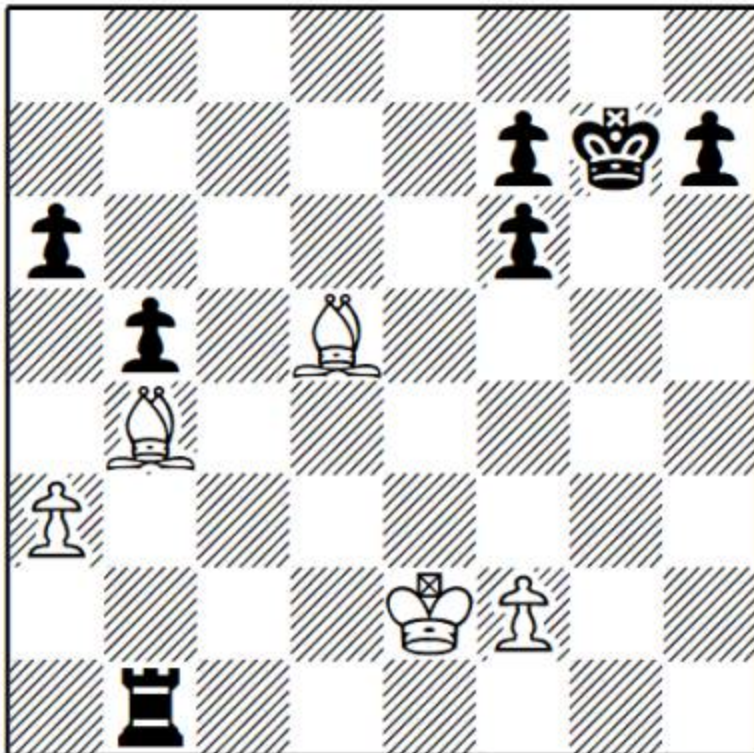
This natural move returns the advantage to Black.

White may hold the game if he gives up yet another pawn in order to activate his rook with 34 Be3! Rxa3 35 Rd1 Raxe3 (35 ... Kg7 36 Bf3 wins the b7-pawn since playing the rook to e7 allows a bishop skewer on c5) 36 fxe3 Rxe3 37 Kf2 Re7 38 Rg1+ Kf8 39 Rh1 Kg7 40 Bd3 h6 41 Rg1+ Kf8 42 Rh1. White wins the h6-pawn and gets decent chances to hold the draw.

34 ... Kg7 35 Bf3?!

This move is in violation of the endgame principle: *if you have two pieces for your opponent's rook, then try and make sure you don't exchange your remaining rook*. White has better chances to hold the game if he once again offers his a-pawn to activate his rook with 35 Be3! Rxa3 36 Rd1.

35 ... Rxe1+ 36 Kxe1 b6 37 Be7 b5 38 Bd5 Rb2 39 Bb4 Rb1+ 40 Ke2



Exercise (planning): Come up with a clear plan for Black to create a passed pawn on the queenside.

40 ... Ra1!

Step 1: Play the rook to a1, after which White's dark-squared bishop is tied to its defence. Also, ... a6-a5 is now in the air.

41 Bc6

He wants to discourage ... a6-a5. Instead, 41 Bb7 Ra2+ 42 Kf3 a5! is similar to the game continuation.

41 ... h5

Step 2: Black utilizes his trump on the other side of the board: his passed h-pawn. This in turn obliges White's king to move to f3.

42 Kf3 a5!

Step 3: Push the a-pawn to the fifth, dislodging White's bishop from b4. Now ... Rxa3 will come with check.

43 Bd6 Rd1! 44 Be7 Re1!

Step 4: Keep attacking White's dark-squared bishop until it becomes disconnected from a3.

45 Bd8

It is critical for Black to force the dark-squared bishop off the a3-f8 diagonal since now he can play his final step of the plan. Other moves don't help:

a) 45 Bd6? hangs a piece to 45 ... Re6.

b) 45 Bc5? Rc1 finishes off.

45 ... b4!

Step 5: Push the b-pawn to b4 and create a passed pawn, which in turn costs White one of his bishops.

46 axb4 axb4 47 Ba5 Rc1! 48 Be4 b3 0-1

After 49 Bd2 b2 Black's b-pawn picks up the bishop with an easy win.

Game 23

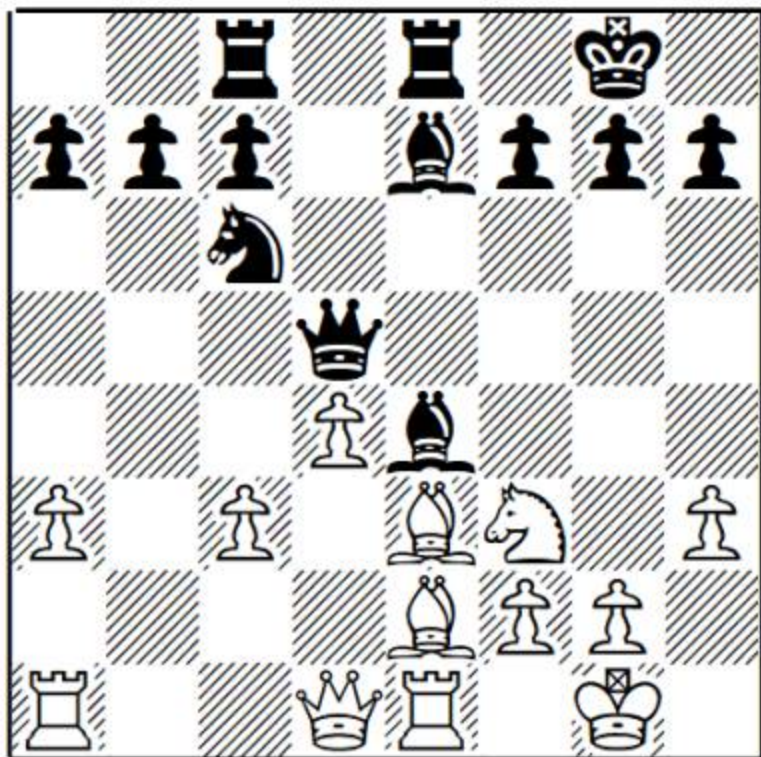
Y.Yaroshenko-S.Kovac

ICCF email 2013

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 d4 d5 6 Bd3 Nc6 7 0-0 Be7 8 c4 Nb4 9 Be2 0-0 10 Nc3

Don't get confused by the move order. 10 a3 Nc6 11 cxd5 Qxd5 12 Nc3 Nxc3 13 bxc3 Bf5 14 Re1 Rfe8 transposes to our game.

10 ... Bf5 11 a3 Nxc3 12 bxc3 Nc6 13 Re1 Re8 14 cxd5 Qxd5 15 Bf4 Rac8 16 h3 Be4 17 Be3



In this version White develops the bishop to e3 before playing Nd2. This insertion makes a big difference to how Black will react.

17 ... Na5

Fighting for control over c4.

18 Nd2

This time it's not a real pawn offer, since we are unable to capture on g2.

18 c4 is also playable. V.Semenov-V.Yartsev, ICCF email 2010, continued 18 ... Qd6! (18 ... Nxc4!? is a sound queen sacrifice and if your ultimate goal is to draw the game, then it may be your best move; after 19 Bxc4 Qxc4 20 Nd2 Qd5 21 Nxe4 Qxe4 22 Bg5 Qxe1+ 23 Qxe1 Bxg5 24 Qa5 Bf6 25 Rd1 a6 White stands slightly better, though Black's chances to hold the game look far higher than White's to win) 19 Nd2 Bf5 (covering

against Bg4 tricks) 20 c5 ... Qd7 21 Nb3 Nc6 22 d5 Ne5 23 Qd2 Rcd8 24 Rad1 Be4. Is White controlling the board, or is White overextended? Difficult to say. The computer slightly favours White, whereas Petroff players would probably be happy to take Black.

18 ... Bf5!

If you think the Petroff is an easy opening to learn then you are misinformed. In the previous game Anand took the g2-pawn and it was fine for Black. In this game, in a near-identical position, taking on g2 is a mistake. The word "near" is the key. With the inclusion of Be3 and ... Na5, the g2-pawn is suddenly poisoned. For example, 18 ... Bxg2? 19 c4 Qc6 20 d5 Bxd5 (20 ... Qg6 21 Bh5 Bf3+ 22 Bxg6 Bxd1 23 Bf5 and White wins material) 21 cxd5 Qxd5 22 Nc4 Qxd1 23 Rxd1 Nxc4 24 Bxc4 and White's extra piece is worth much more than Black's three pawns.

19 Bf3

Or 19 c4 Qd7 20 Nf3 Bf6 21 Rc1 c5! 22 dxc5 (22 d5?! loses the exchange to 22 ... Bb2) 22 ... Qxd1 23 Rxd1 Nb3 24 c6 Rxc6 25 Bxa7 Bc3 26 Rf1 Ra6 27 Be3 h6 28 c5 Rxa3 and Black stands no worse in the ending, V.Ivanchuk-V.Kramnik, Wijk aan Zee 2008.

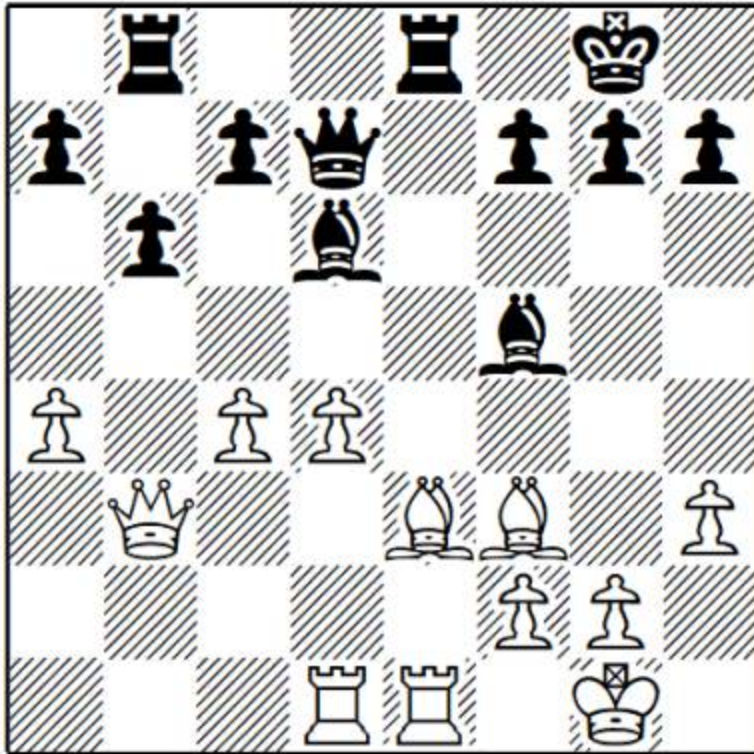
19 ... Qd7 20 Nb3

This move eliminates the black blockader on c4.

20 ... Nxb3 21 Qxb3 b6 22 Rad1 Bd6 23 c4

If you play the Petroff, you must be comfortable playing against White's hanging pawns. You have to perceive the game as a marathon and not a sprint. The hanging pawns offer White an initiative, but only for the moment. 30 moves later White may be rather overextended.

23 ... Rb8 24 a4



Once again White's central control is counterbalanced by Black's chances to overextend his opponent and the game looks dynamically balanced.

Another line is 24 Qc3 Be4 25 Bxe4 Rxe4 26 Bg5 Rbe8 27 Rxe4 ½-½ A.Karpenko-V.Yartsev, ICCF email 2011.

24 ... a5 25 Bd2

Covering against ... Bb4.

After 25 Qb5 Qxb5 26 axb5 Bb4 Black stands no worse in the ending since his passed a-pawn compensates White's central control.

25 ... Rxe1+ 26 Rxe1 Rd8 27 g4!?

You don't have to be an expert fencer to understand that a stab wound is an undesirable thing. As mentioned previously in this book, Black should not be afraid when White gets ambitious and invariably pushes this pawn to g4, since it increases White's chances of becoming overextended later on. Yaroshenko decides that the space gained from the move justifies it.

27 ... Bg6 28 Rd1 Qe6 29 Qb5 h5

Black wants to loosen the pawn front around the white king. This move also provides luft to Black's king.

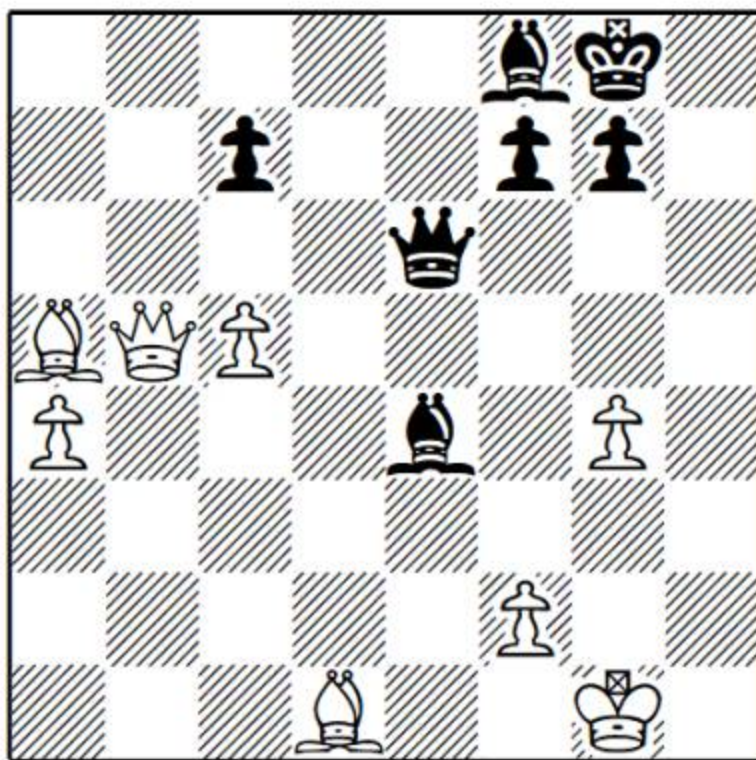
30 c5!

This essentially wins a pawn by destabilizing a5 but does not gain the advantage.

30 ... bxc5 31 dxc5 Bf8 32 Bxa5

Rarely do we receive a gift without a string attached. White carts away what plunder he can carry, which in this case isn't enough to win the game.

32 ... Rxd1+ 33 Bxd1 hxg4 34 hxg4 Be4!



The worm burrows into the apple's centre. As so often happens in the Petroff (as well as the Black side of the Marshall Gambit in the Ruy Lopez), Black is a pawn down, yet retains full compensation, in this case due to White's partially exposed king.

35 Qe2

Others:

a) 35 Be2? Bc6 36 Qd3 Qh6! 37 f3 Bxc5+ 38 Kg2 Qh4! 39 Bxc7 Qxg4+ 40 Bg3 Qxa4 and Black has all the winning chances.

b) 35 Bxc7 Bc6 36 Qd3 Qe1+ 37 Qf1 Qe4 38 f3 Bxc5+ 39 Kh2 Qe6 and Black stands no worse since White's king is seriously exposed.

35 ... Bxc5 36 Bxc7 Qf6 37 Bg3 Qd4 38 Bc2 Bc6

Intending ... Qd5.

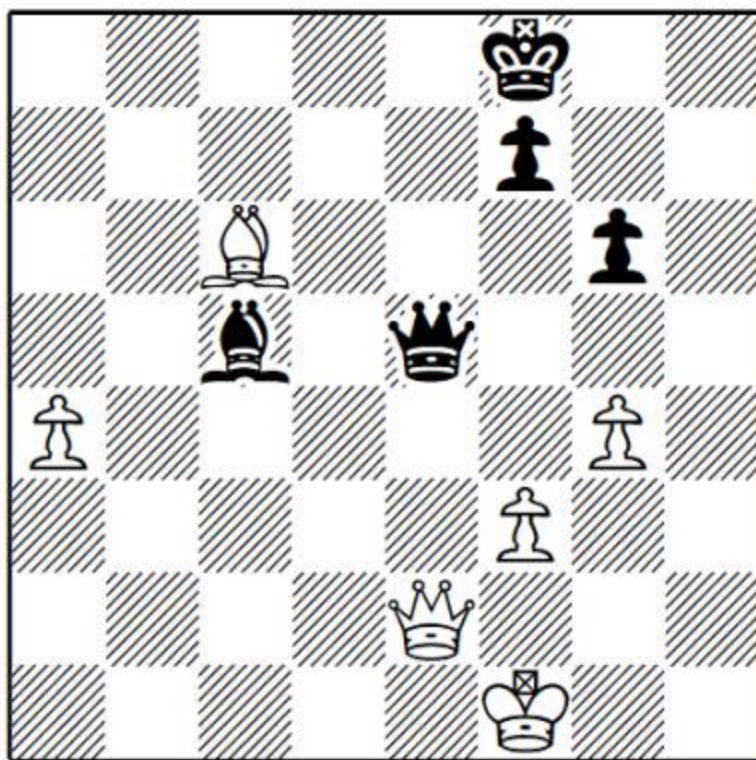
39 Kf1 g6 40 Be5 Qd5 41 f3 Kf8

Black avoids 41 ... Qxf3+ 42 Qxf3 Bxf3 43 g5, when only White has chances to win, although it's a very likely a draw due to the reduced material.

42 Be4

White, worried that his defensive issues might proliferate to an unmanageable point, decides to force the draw. 42 Bg3 Qxf3+ 43 Qxf3 Bxf3 44 g5 Be3 45 Bh4 Bd2 is also drawn.

42 ... Qxe5 43 Bxc6



The bishops of opposing colours assure a drawn result.

43 ... Qa1+ 44 Qe1 Qd4 45 Kg2 Qb2+ 46 Kf1 Qd4 47 Kg2 Bb4 48 Qf2 Qc3 ½-½

Game 24

T.Nedev-J.Gustafsson

European Cup, Kallithea 2002

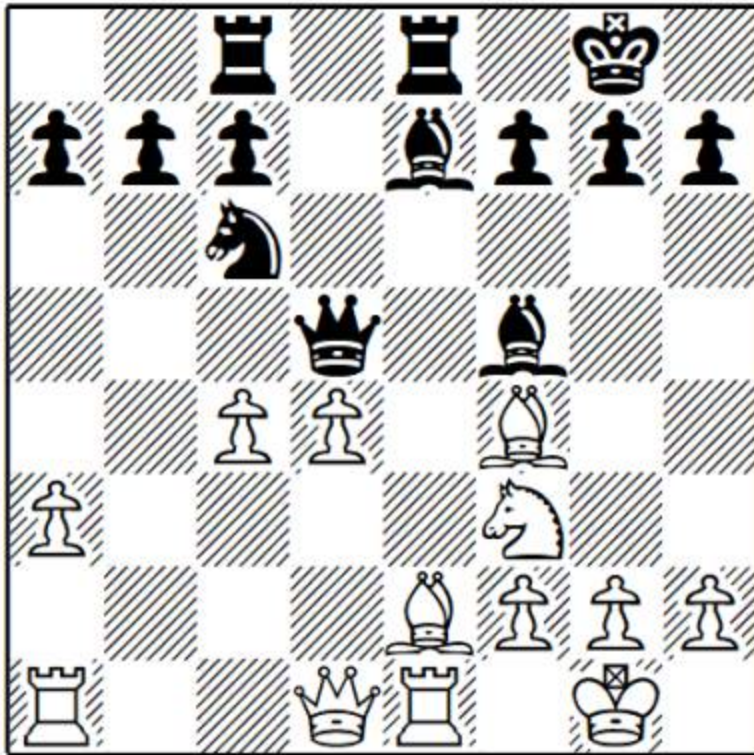
1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 d4 d5 6 Bd3 Nc6 7 0-0 Be7 8 c4 Nb4 9 Be2 0-0 10 a3

As mentioned in the previous game: don't get fooled by this move order. We reach our familiar position within a few moves.

10 ... Nc6 11 cxd5 Qxd5 12 Nc3 Nxc3 13 bxc3 Bf5 14 Re1 Rfe8 15 Bf4 Rac8

There we go. Back to normal.

16 c4



White doesn't intend to stall and, instead, activates the central pawns at once.

16 ... Qe4

It may seem odd to place the queen the same file as White's e1-rook, yet the move has several strong points:

- 1) The queen gains a tempo on White's f4-bishop.
- 2) The queen isn't in much danger (at least yet!), since she has the c2-square as a bailout option, with the added benefit of provoking a queen exchange which helps Black.
- 3) By playing the queen to e4, Black denies White Bd3 ideas.

17 Be3

The bishop retreats to shore up d4. After 17 Qd2 Bf6 18 Bf1 Qc2 19 Rxe8+ Rxe8 20 Re1 Rxe1 21 Qxe1 Qe4 22 Qxe4 Bxe4 23 Nd2 Bc2 24 d5 Ne5, Black stood no worse in the ending, S.Ohtake-F.Piccoli, ICCF email 2007.

17 ... Bf6

This keeps the game a bit more complicated. Instead, 17 ... Qc2 equalizes; e.g. 18 d5 Na5 19 Nd4 Qxd1 20 Raxd1 Bd7 21 Nb5 Bxb5 22 cxb5 b6! (avoiding the trap 22 ... Bxa3? 23 Ra1 Bb4 24 Reb1 and Black must hand over the exchange on e3, since 24 ... Bc3?? loses a full piece to 25 Ra3) 23 Bg4 Rcd8 24 Bf4 Bd6 25 Bxd6 cxd6 26 Bd7 Rxe1+ 27 Rxe1 Kf8 28 Bc6 Nb3 29 Re3 ½-½ E.Viviani-V.Gagliardi, ICCF email 2016.

18 Ra2

White unpins, while preparing Rd2.

Instead, 18 Rc1 h6 (preventing Ng5 and Bg5 tricks) 19 d5 Ne5 20 Nd2 Qh4 (one safe square is all the queen needs when she is brought out early in the game) 21 g3 Qh3 22 Bf1 Qg4 23 Bxa7 Qxd1 24 Rcxd1 Nd7 (24 ... b6 is met by 25 c5) 25 Rxe8+ Rxe8 26 Be3 Bb2 27 Nf3 (27 a4 Ne5 28 c5 Ra8 regains the sacrificed pawn) 27 ... Be4 28 Nd4 Ne5 29 Be2 Bxa3 30 Nb5 Nf3+ 31 Bxf3 Bxf3 32 Rb1 Bd6 33 Nxd6 cxd6 34 Rxb7 Rc8 35 Rb4 Be2 36 Rb6 was agreed drawn in Y.Yefremov-L.Lamarche Rodriguez, ICCF email 2003. White's extra pawn is meaningless after 36 ... Bf3 37 h3 Rxc4 38 Rxd6 Kf8.

18 ... Na5

Rather than 18 ... Rcd8 19 Rd2 Na5, which we examined in Game 22, this time Black puts the knight on the edge straight away.

19 h3 b6

Reinforcing the a5-knight, while offering Black's queen added escape squares along the a8-h1 diagonal.

20 Bf1

Now Black must watch out for discovered attacks on the queen.

After 20 g4!? (White gains space while, as usual, risking future overextension) 20 ... Bg6 21 g5!? (this is rather huffy; I already prefer Black's position) 21 ... Be7 22 Ne5 Bd6 23 Nxc6 hxc6 24 c5 Bf8 25 Bg4 Rcd8 26 Rae2 Qc6 27 cxb6?! (27 Qc2 looks correct), the players agreed a draw in V.Anand-Mi.Adams, Linares 2002. Adams should have kept playing. The computer has Black ahead by more than half a point after 27 ... cxb6 and White looks overextended on the kingside, while nursing a pair of isolanis on the a and d-files.

20 ... Qc6 21 d5 Qd6 22 Nd4

In J.Torrijos Alhambra-J.Ribes Colom, ICCF email 2011, White attempted an improvement with 22 Rae2, threatening Bf4!, but after 22 ... Rf8! 23 Bd4 Nxc4 24 Qa4 Na5 25 Bxf6 Qxf6 26 Nd4 Bd3 27 Re7 Bxf1 28 Kxf1 a6 29 Kg1 g6, the extra pawn is surely more relevant than Black being slightly tied down.

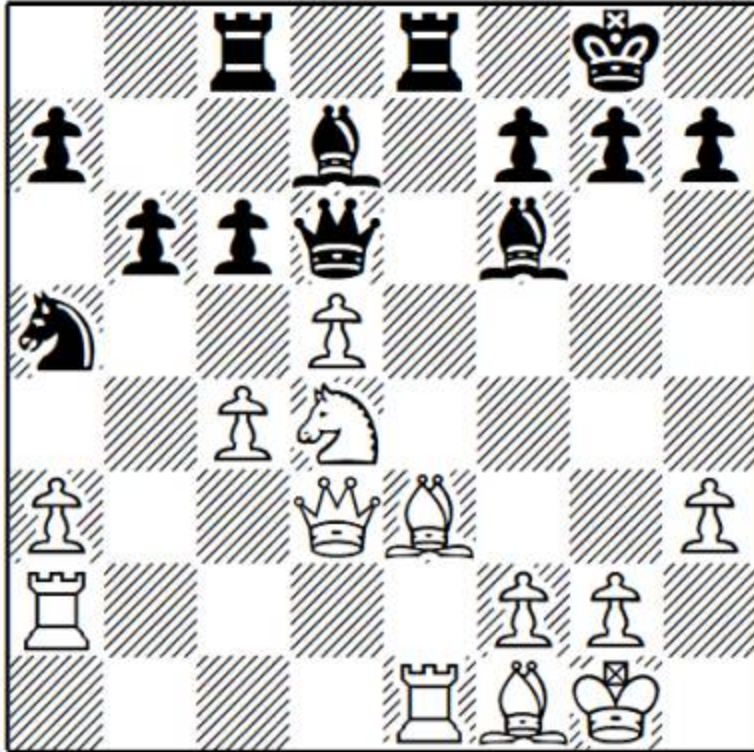
22 ... Bd7

Black must cover against Nb5.

23 Qd3

23 Nb5 Bxb5 24 cxb5 Bc3 25 Ree2 Be5 26 Bc1 Bh2+ 27 Kh1 Bf4 looks fine for Black. The pressure against c7 is counterbalanced by the fact that White's light-squared bishop may become bad.

23 ... c6!



With the following ideas:

1) Black chips away at White's central space.

2) When White plays d5xc6, it will create two queenside isolanis.

Black already stands better.

24 dxc6

24 Nf3 cxd5 25 cxd5 Nc4 26 Bd2 Nxd2 doesn't help. Black has the bishop pair, as well as the superior structure.

24 ... Nxc6

Gustafsson may be playing for a win. 24 ... Bxc6 25 Nxc6 Qxd3 26 Bxd3 Nxc6 27 Rae2 g6 28 c5 Nd4 29 Bxd4 Rxe2 30 Rxe2 Bxd4 is a near certain draw.

25 Nb5 Qxd3 26 Bxd3 Be5

Covering the soft spot on d6.

27 Rc2 Bb8 28 Be2 Na5 29 Nd4

29 c5?! Nb3! favours Black.

29 ... Bd6 30 Rd2 Bc5

Not 30 ... Bxa3?? which hangs material to 31 Nc2.

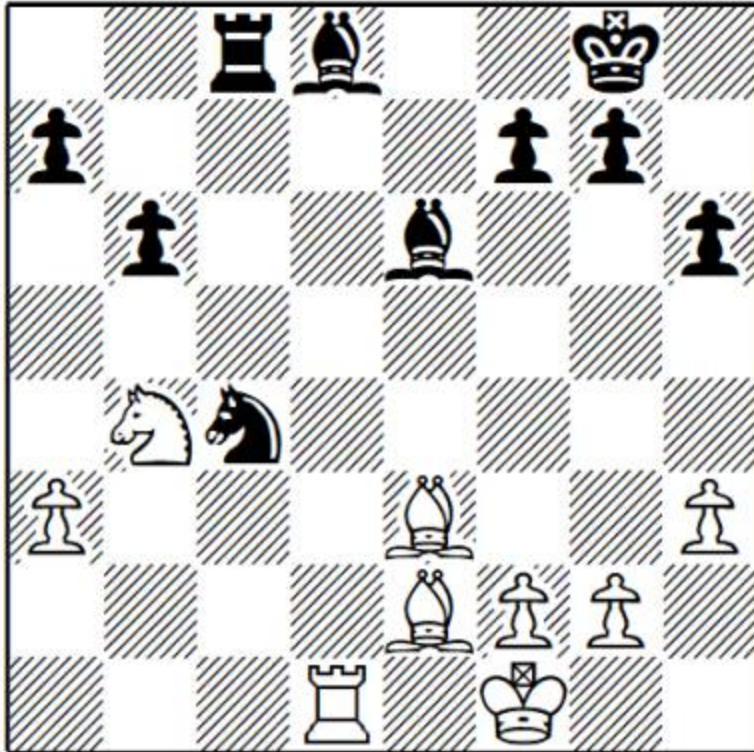
31 Rb1?!

The rook is misplaced on b1. 31 Bf1 Ba4 32 Nb5 Re7 is only slightly in Black's favour.

31 ... h6 32 Kf1 Red8 33 Nc2 Be7!

33 ... Bxe3 only helps White coordinate after 34 Nxe3.

34 Nb4 Be6 35 Rxd8+ Bxd8 36 Rd1 Nxc4



One lesson we learn in life is that when you own something of value, people sometimes try and take it from you. Black managed to pick off the c4-isolani and is now clearly winning. On the other hand for White, losing a weak isolani sometimes gives us the mixed feeling of walking away from a doomed relationship – perhaps wretched but at least free.

37 Nc6!?

Clever but ineffective.

37 ... Nxe3+ 38 fxe3 Rxc6 39 Rxd8+ Kh7 40 Ra8 Rc7

Not only is Black a pawn up, White has two remaining isolated pawns to cover. The winning process takes time but the result is not in doubt.

41 Bf3 Kg6! 42 h4 Kf6 43 Ke2 Ke5

Black can now add superior king position to his list of advantages.

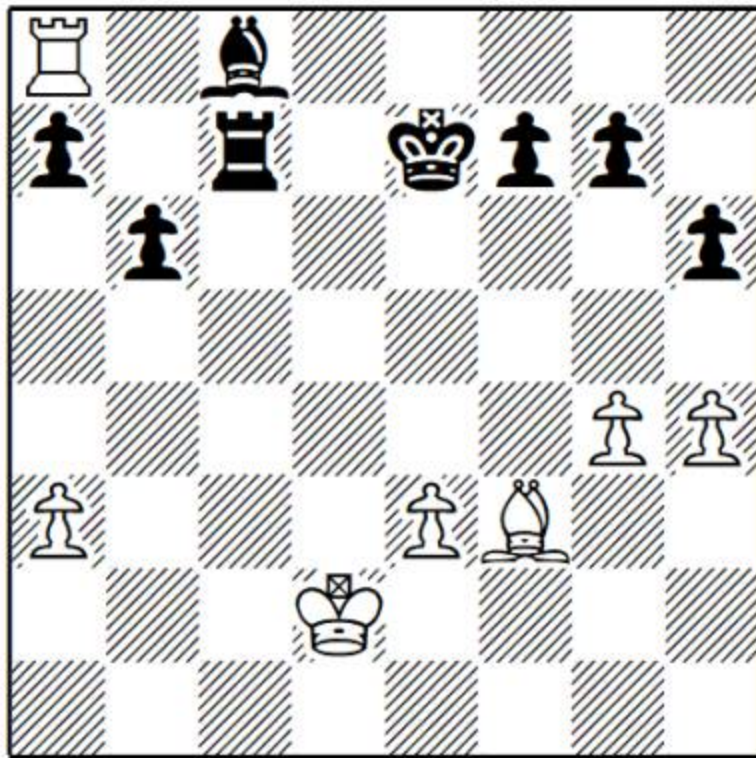
44 Kd2 Bb3 45 Re8+ Kf6 46 Ra8

Nedev does a good job of not allowing Black's queenside to move forward easily.

46 ... Ba4

This way e8 is covered and White is unable to harass Black's king when it reaches e5.

47 g3 Ke5 48 Kd3 Bc2+ 49 Kd2 Bf5 50 Re8+ Kf6 51 Ra8 Ke7 52 g4 Bc8!



Black's position gradually improves. It isn't easy to beat a grandmaster without any bloodshed, yet Gustafsson is doing just that. His play reminds us of the song *Killing Me Softly*. This move effectively shuts in White's rook so it is unable to cause trouble to Black's kingside pawns.

53 g5

The more pawns off the board, the greater White's drawing chances. The problem with this move is that now all of White's remaining pawns are isolated.

53 ... hxg5 54 hxg5 Kd6 55 Bd1 Ke5

Threatening ... Kf5, going after White's g5-pawn.

56 Bc2 g6 57 Bb1 f6!

Black creates a passed g-pawn.

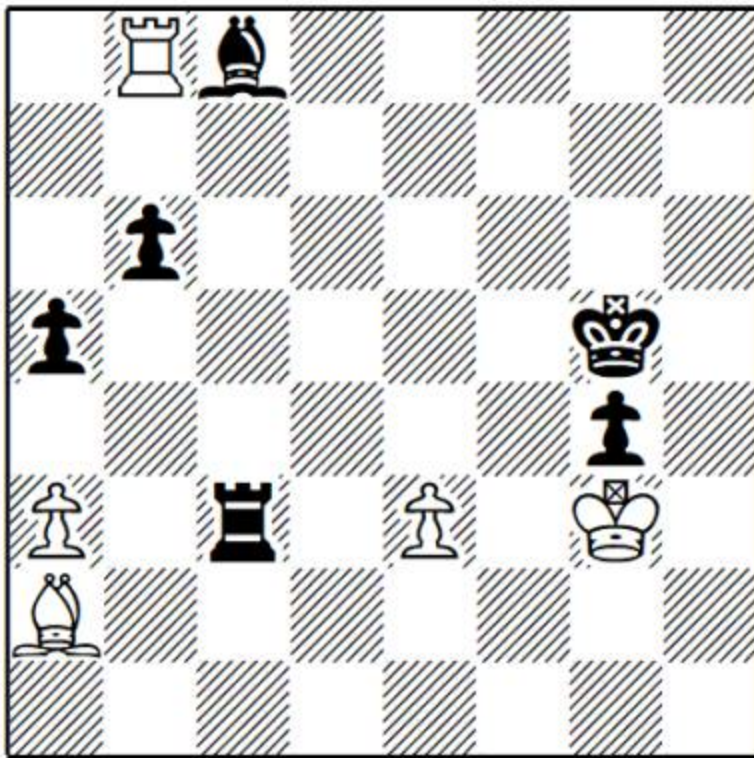
58 gxf6 Kxf6 59 Ke2 g5 60 Kf2 g4 61 Kg3 Kg5 62 Ba2 a5

At long last, Black begins to push his queenside majority.

63 Rb8

After 63 Bd5 Rc3 64 Kf2 Kh4 White won't save the game.

63 ... Rc3!



The black rook treats White's pawns like his personal ATMs, from which he makes regular withdrawals.

64 Rxb6 Rxe3+ 65 Kf2 Rxa3 66 Be6 Bxe6 67 Rxe6 a4 68 Ra6 Rf3+ 69 Kg2 Rf4

There is nothing wrong with 69 ... a3!.

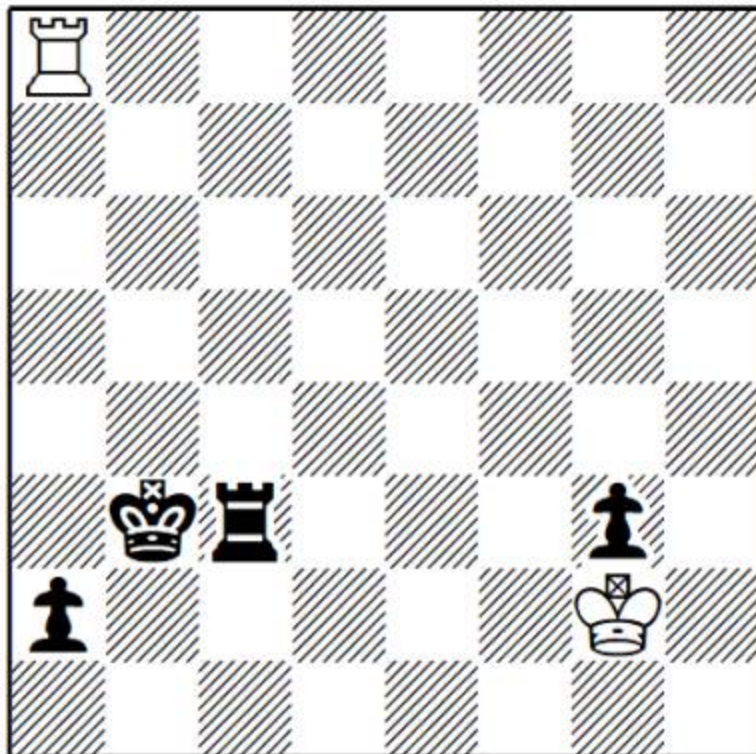
70 Kg3 Re4 71 Ra5+ Kf6 72 Rd5 Ke6

Black's plan is to shift his king to the queenside to assist his passed a-pawn. White has no effective response.

73 Rd8 Ke5 74 Kf2 Rd4 75 Re8+ Kd5 76 Ke3 Rb4 77 Rg8 Rb3+ 78 Kf2 g3+ 79 Kg2

After 79 Rxc3 Rxc3 80 Kxc3, we don't need to excel in math to see that White's king is out of the square of Black's promoting a-pawn.

79 ... Kc4 80 Rg4+ Kb5 81 Re4 Rc3 82 Rf4 a3 83 Rf8 Kc4 84 Rb8 a2 85 Ra8 Kb3 0-1

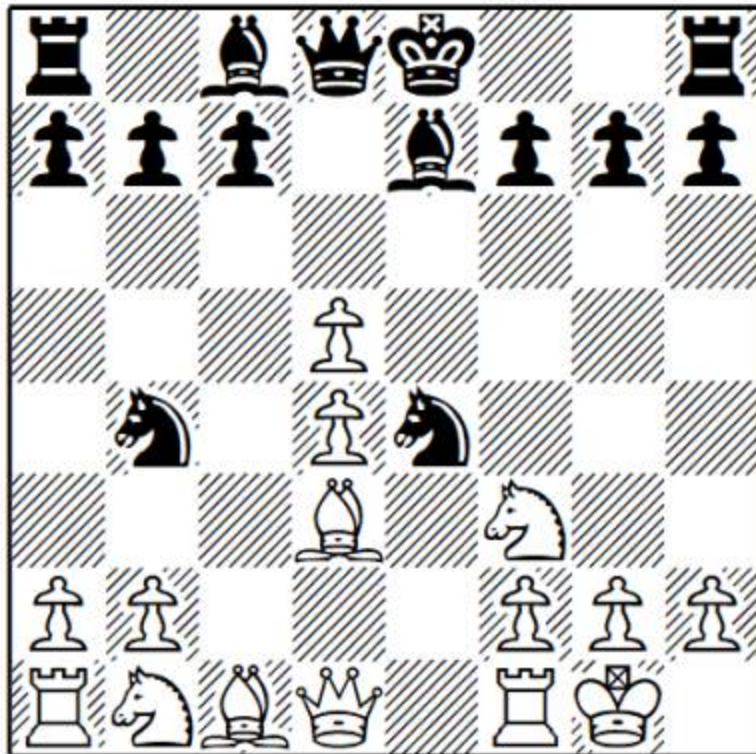


Game 25

D.Fischer-P.Röckendorf

Email 2011

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 d4 d5 6 Bd3 Nc6 7 0-0 Be7 8 c4 Nb4 9 cxd5



This slightly offbeat (yet dangerous) line is a lonely voice, unheard by most. In this version White skips the opening formalities and heads straight into a fight. With this radical move White hands Black the bishop pair as well as future light-square control, in exchange for a dangerous development lead in an open position. However, with knowledge of the theory, Black will be fine.

9 ... Nxd3

In a training game one of my students tried 9 ... Qxd5? and fell dangerously behind in development after 10 Bxe4! Qxe4 11 Re1 Qc2 12 Rxe7+! Kxe7 13 Qe1+ Kd8 14 Na3! Qa4? (Black is better off playing 14 ... Nd3 15 Nxc2 Nxe1 16 Ncxe1, although White has picked up two pieces for a rook and should win) 15 Ne5 Be6 16 b3 Qa5 17 Nc2. Black's pinned knight falls and he is busted.

10 Qxd3 Qxd5 11 Re1

The alternative 11 Nc3 Nxc3 12 bxc3 0-0 13 c4 Bf5 14 Qb3 Qd7 is just fine for Black, since 15 Qxb7?! is met by 15 ... Rfb8 16 Qd5 (16 Qa6?? loses the exchange to 16 ... Rb6 17 Qa5 Bb4 18 Qe5 Re8 19 Qg3 Bc3) 16 ...

Qxd5 17 cxd5 Bd6, when Black has the better chances in the ending since he regains the sacrificed pawn and has the bishop pair.

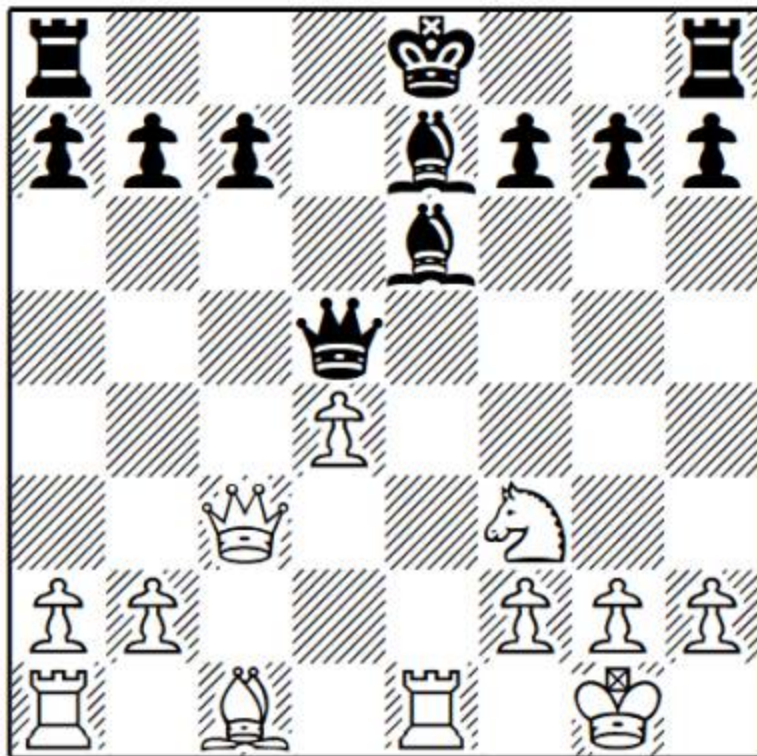
11 ... Bf5 12 Nc3

Others:

a) 12 g4 Bg6 13 Nc3 Nxc3 14 Qxc3 f6!? 15 Bf4 (15 Qxc7 Qd7 is at least even for Black) 15 ... Kf7 16 h4 (after 16 Qxc7 Rhe8 Black's light square control and the weakened white king easily compensate the missing pawn) 16 ... h5 17 Qxc7 Rhe8 18 Ng5+ fxg5 19 Bxg5 was T.Radjabov-V.Kramnik, Nice (rapid) 2009. The game may now end in perpetual check after 19 ... Qf3 20 Rxe7+ Rxe7 21 Qxe7+ Kg8 22 Qe6+ Kh7 23 Re1 Re8 24 Be7 Rxe7 25 Qxe7 Qxg4+ 26 Kh1 Qh3+.

b) 12 Ne5 0-0-0! 13 Qf3 g6 14 g4 Bb4 15 Re2 Bxg4! 16 Nxg4 (16 Qxg4+? f5 17 Qf3 Qxd4 is awful for White) 16 ... Nc3! 17 Qxd5 Nxe2+ 18 Kf1 Rxd5 19 Kxe2 Rxd4 was Mi.Adams-J.Smeets, London 2009. Black's rook and two extra pawns were worth more than White's two extra minor pieces.

12 ... Nxc3 13 Qxc3 Be6!



The c7-pawn is meaningless. Black's top priority is to castle, or at least get the king to safety out of the scary middle.

14 Re5

Following the principle: *create confrontation when ahead in development*. After 14 Qxc7 Bd6 15 Qc3 0-0, the bishop pair, light-square control and seizure of d5 offer Black more than enough compensation for the pawn.

14 ... Qc6! 15 Qa5

Threatening d4-d5. This is White's only testing move. Others:

a) 15 Qxc6+ bxc6 and Black stands no worse in the ending.

b) 15 Qe1 0-0-0 16 Bg5 Bxg5 17 Nxc5 Rhe8 18 Rc1 Qd7 19 Qa5 Kb8 20 Nxe6 Rxe6 21 Rxe6 fxe6 22 Qe5 g6 with an equal position, G.Milos-P.Zarnicki, Villa Martelli 1998.

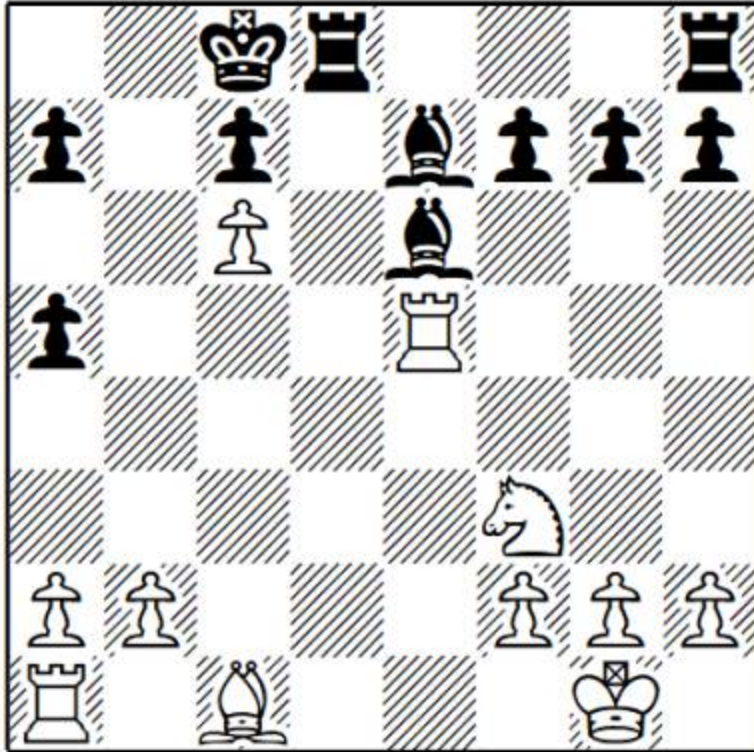
15 ... b6!

This is more bravery than impetuosity. This move allows White to decimate Black's structure but Black scores 60% in my database with it.

16 d5

Pretty much forced. After 16 Qe1?! 0-0-0 Black already stands better due to the bishop pair, light-square control and superior structure.

16 ... bxa5 17 dxc6 0-0-0!



Black's lead in development fully makes up for the ugly structure.

18 Bg5!

Following the principle: *strip your opponent of the bishop pair by exchanging one of them.*

18 ... Bxg5 19 Rxg5

White threatens both the g7- and a5-pawns, but Black has everything under control.

19 Nxg5?! Bd5 favours Black, who threatens ... f7-f6, while White's c6-pawn also hangs.

19 ... Bd5! 20 Rxg7 Rhg8

Nobody can truthfully claim that Black's position is a testament to structural hygiene. He is saddled with five isolanis, two of them doubled, yet stands no worse due to the lead in development and superior minor piece.

21 Rxg8

21 Rg3 Bxc6 22 Ne5 Bd5 23 Rxg8 Rxc8 24 f3 was A.Kovacevic-V.Iordachescu, Subotica 2008. The ending remains balanced after 24 ... Rg5

25 Ng4 a4.

21 ... Rxc6 22 Ne1

After 22 Nh4 Bxc6 23 Rc1 Kb7 24 f4 Rd8 25 Rc2 Rd4, D.Dimitrov-L.Sorbi, ICCF email 2016, I slightly prefer Black in the ending, while the computer calls it dead even.

22 ... Rg6

Black has regained the missing pawn and achieved at least even chances in the ending.

23 a3 Bxc6 24 Rc1 Kb7 25 Rc3 Rd6 26 Re3?!

Now his knight is relegated to passivity. White should sacrifice a pawn with 26 Nd3! Bb5 27 Nc5+ Kb6 28 g4 Rd4 29 h3 a4 30 Kg2 Rd2 31 Kg3 Rxb2. A promotion race is coming where Black's chances are slightly preferable.

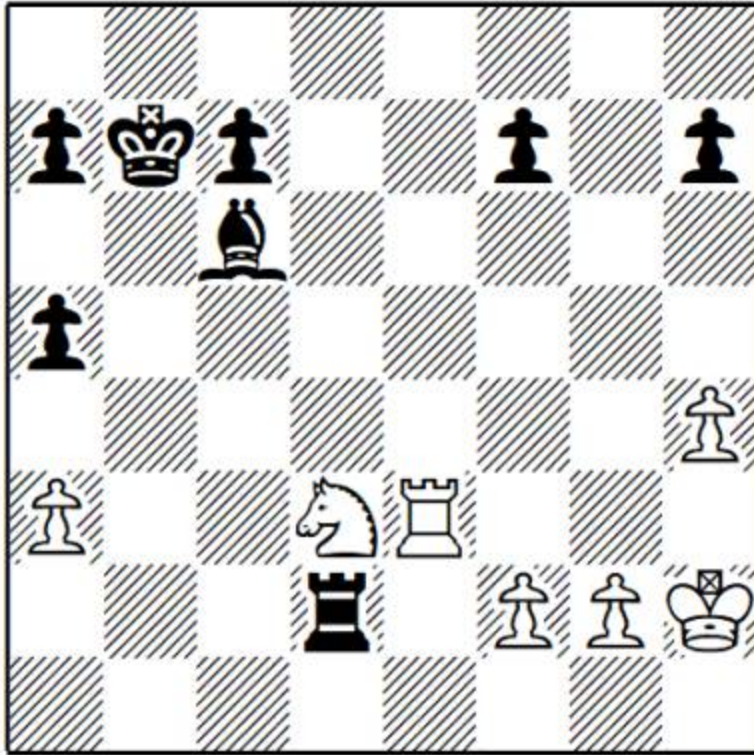
26 ... Rd1! 27 h4 Rb1!

Black's rook is the happy waiter or waitress who hears those blessed words: "Keep the change". White gives away his b-pawn, no matter how he plays.

28 Kh2

28 b3? only makes matters worse after 28 ... Bd5.

28 ... Rxb2 29 Nd3 Rd2



Black has won a pawn and his passed c-pawn will be more potent than White's kingside majority since Black has the superior minor piece, which can simultaneously defend and attack in such promotion races.

30 Kg3!

White's king races for Black's h7-pawn.

30 ... Bd5 31 h5 Rd1?!

This inaccuracy allows White chances to hold the game. The more active 31 ... Kb6! was correct.

32 Kh4! Kb6

The immediate 32 ... Bxg2 looks better.

33 Kg5!

33 g4 f6! favours Black.

33 ... Bxg2 34 Kh6 Rh1 35 Nf4 Ba8! 36 Ne2

36 Kxh7? allows 36 ... Rh4!.

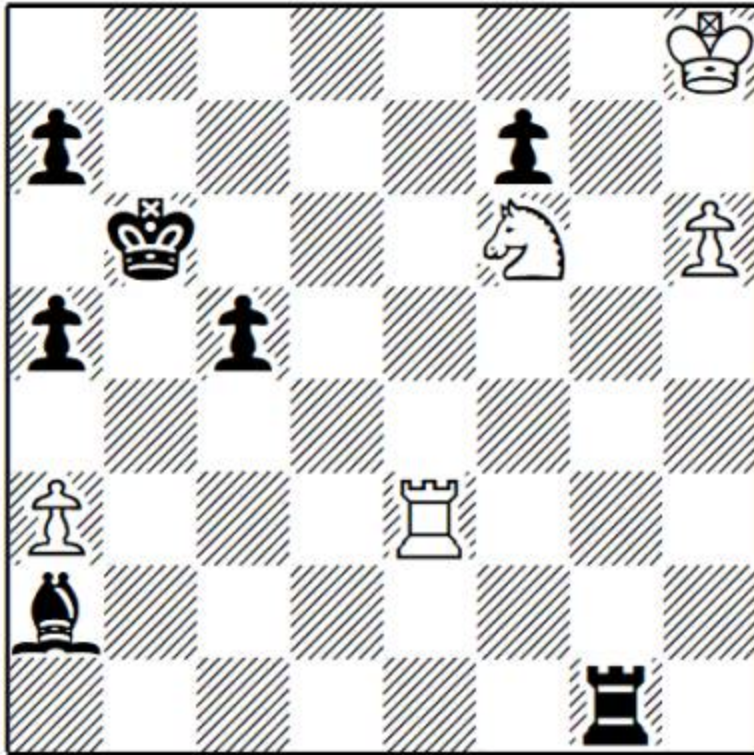
36 ... Rh2 37 f4 Rh4 38 Ng3 Rxf4 39 Kxh7

White should now hold the game, despite Black's extra pawn.

39 ... Bd5 40 h6 Rg4!

Cutting off White's king, which is now stuck in front of his h-pawn.

41 Nh5 Ba2 42 Nf6 Rg1 43 Kh8 c5



At last, Black's c-pawn advances.

44 Rf3 Bb1

So that Black can sacrifice his bishop for White's h-pawn at the appropriate time.

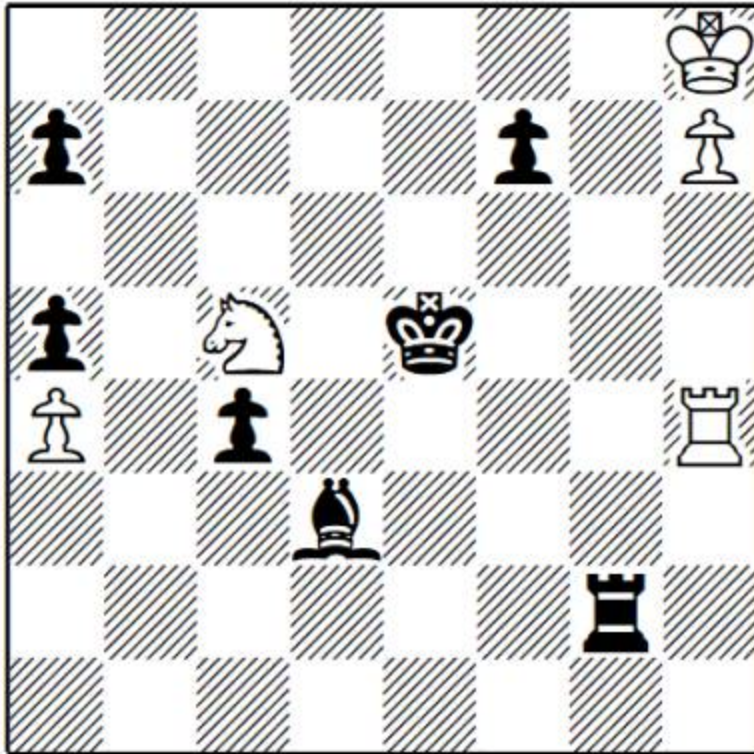
45 Nd5+ Kc6 46 Nc3 Bg6 47 Ne2?

White should hold the draw with 47 Rf6+! Kd7 48 a4 c4 49 Ra6.

47 ... Rg4 48 Rf4 Rg2 49 Nc3 Kd6!

This way Black's king can't be constrained to the second rank.

50 Rh4 Bd3 51 Ne4+ Kc6 52 h7 c4 53 a4 Kd5 54 Nc3+ Ke6 55 Ne4 Ke5 56 Nc5



Exercise (critical decision): Should Black sacrifice his bishop on h7, or should he hold off for a while?

56 ... Bxh7?

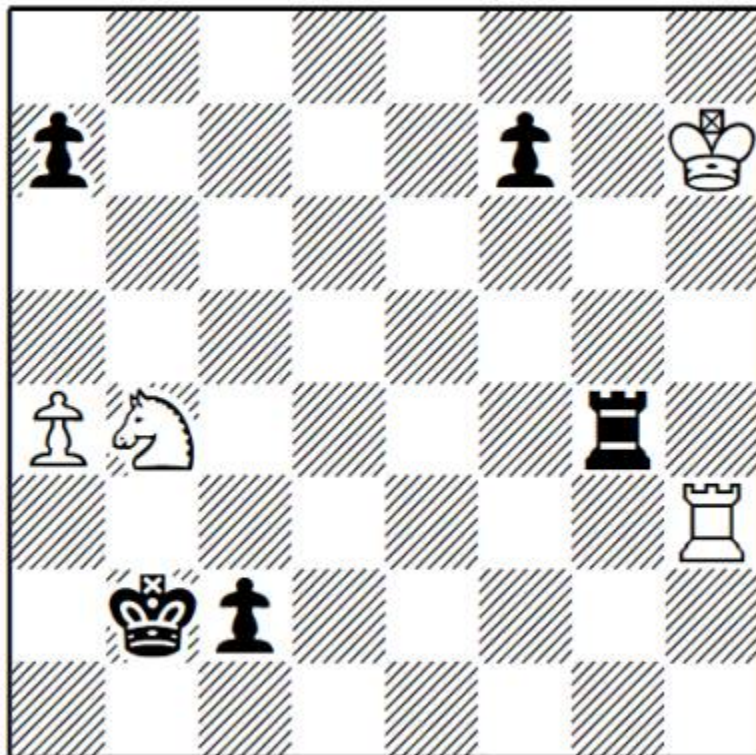
In the 1960s the hippies among us preached: “If it feels good, then do it!” In this case it is bad advice, since the bishop sacrifice is mistimed, so White should hold the game.

Answer: 56 ... Bf5!, when Black’s argument is the more compelling of the two and he has serious winning chances after 57 Rxc4 Kd5 58 Rc3 Rh2 as White’s precious h-pawn falls.

57 Kxh7 Kd5 58 Rh5+?

White misses his chance to hang on with 58 Ne4! Rc2 59 Nf6+ Ke6 60 Ne4, when 60 ... Ke5 61 Ng5 Kd5 62 Nxf7 c3 63 Rh5+ Kc4 64 Rxa5 Rc1 65 Ne5+ Kb3 66 Rxa7 c2 67 Rb7+ Ka3 68 Rc7 Rh1+ 69 Kg6 c1Q 70 Rxc1 Rxc1 is a theoretical draw.

58 ... Kd4 59 Nb7 c3 60 Nxa5 c2 61 Nc6+ Kc3 62 Rh3+ Kb2 63 Nb4 Rg4!



White's attempted defence is breached and the coming rook ending is won for Black.

64 Nxc2

Or 64 Nd3+ Ka2 65 Rh2 Kb3 66 Rh3 Rxa4 and Black's pawns are too numerous for White's knight and rook to cope.

64 ... Kxc2 65 a5 Rg5 66 a6 Rg6 0-1

After 67 Ra3 Kb2 68 Ra5 Kb3 69 Rb5+ Kc4 70 Rb7 Rxa6 71 Rxf7 Ra1 72 Kg7 a5 73 Ra7 a4 74 Kf6 a3 75 Ke5 a2, there is no defence to a black rook check, followed by promotion.

Game 26

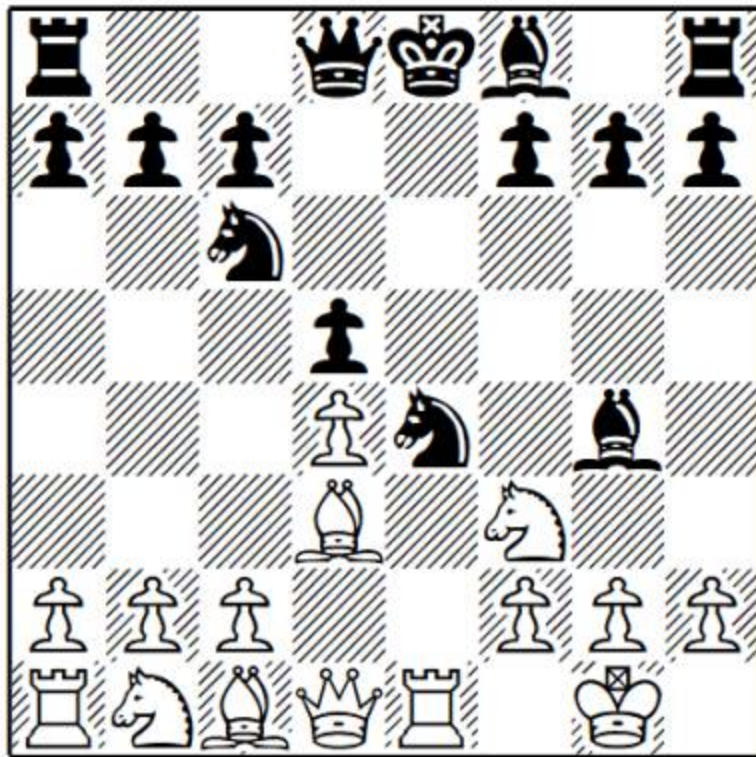
V.Kovalev-Yu Yangyi

World Team Championship, Khanty-Mansiysk 2017

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 d4 d5 6 Bd3 Nc6 7 0-0 Bg4

The normal move order into this position would be 7 ... Be7 8 Re1 Bg4!.

8 Re1



In this version White holds back c2-c4, preferring to threaten Black's e4-knight.

8 ... Be7

Black should be willing to sacrifice a pawn for the bishop pair and development.

9 c4

Later we will look at 9 c3 f5 10 Qb3.

The alternative 9 Bxe4 is considered ineffective for White; e.g. 9 ... dxe4 10 Rxe4 Bxf3 11 Qxf3 Nxd4 12 Qd3 Ne6 13 Qe2 0-0 and if anyone stands better it is Black, who leads slightly in development.

9 ... Nf6!

Black removes the knight from the danger zone, while reinforcing d5. Now Black threatens ... Nxd4. Do not get greedy and play 9 ... Bxf3 10

Qxf3 Nxd4?!, as after 11 Qe3 c5 12 cxd5 Nf6 13 Nc3, Black has a hard time castling.

10 Nc3

White ignores the threat to the d4-pawn and relies on the lead in development. In the next game we look at 10 cxd5.

10 ... 0-0

Black has other decent options:

a) 10 ... Nxd4 11 cxd5 Bxf3 12 gxf3 c5! 13 dxc6 Nxc6 14 Bb5 0-0 15 Qxd8 Bxd8 16 Bxc6 bxc6 17 Be3 Bb6 and Black completely equalized in J.Polgar-An.Karpov, Hoogeveen 1999.

b) 10 ... Bxf3 11 Qxf3 Nxd4 12 Qd1 dxc4 13 Bxc4 c5 14 Qa4+ Qd7 15 Qxd7+ Kxd7 16 Be3 (or 16 Bxf7 Nc2 17 Rd1+ Kc6 18 Rb1 Rad8 19 Bd2 b5! 20 Rbc1 Nb4 and Black's active king and superior pawn majority make up for White's bishop pair) 16 ... Rhd8 17 Bxd4 cxd4 18 Bb5+ Kd6! 19 Rad1 Kc5! 20 Re5+ Kd6 21 Reel Kc5 22 Re5+ ½-½ was V.Ivanchuk-Wang Yue, Danzhou 2016.

11 cxd5 Nxd5

We reach a classical isolani position which is quite acceptable for Black.

12 h3

After 12 Be4 Be6 13 a3 Bf6 14 Qd3 h6 15 Na4 b6 16 Nc3 Rc8 17 Bd2 Nce7 18 Rad1 c6 19 h3 Qd6 20 Bc1 Rfd8 21 Qb1 Qc7 22 Nxd5, if anyone stands better it's Black, and the higher-rated Ljubojevic now offered a draw in L.Ljubojevic-R.Henley, Jakarta 1983.

12 ... Be6 13 Ne4

According to the principle: *the side taking on the isolani should avoid exchanges.*

13 a3 is another try; e.g. 13 ... Bf6 14 Ne4 h6 (preventing Ng5 tricks) 15 Bc2 (White intends to set up a queen/bishop battery to h7, with Qd3 next) 15 ... Bf5 16 Qd3 Be7 17 Nf6+ Bxf6 18 Qxf5 g6 19 Qd3 Bg7 and the computer gives White an edge, whereas I would be happy to take on Black's position, R.Oprisor-S.Vinchev, ICCF email 2008.

13 ... h6

As mentioned previously, it's important to cover against White's Ng5 tricks.

14 a3

14 Nc5 can be met by 14 ... Bxc5 (a more complex option is possible too, with the undermining trick 14 ... Nxd4!? 15 Nxb7 Nxf3+ 16 Qxf3 Qd7

17 Rd1 c5 18 Na5 Rfd8, when Black doesn't look worse since the enhanced piece activity makes up for the hole on c4) 15 dxc5 Ndb4 16 Be4 Bd5 with full equality for Black.

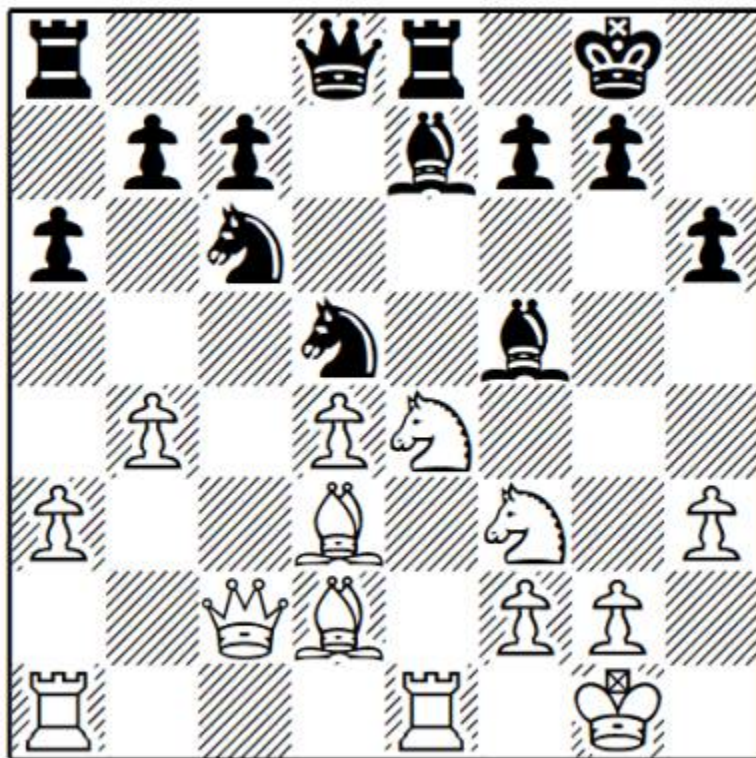
14 ... Re8 15 b4 a6

Or 15 ... Nf6 16 Bb2 (16 Nc5 Bd5 17 Nxb7 Qb8 18 Nc5 Bxf3 19 Qxf3 Nxd4 20 Qg3 Bd6 21 Rxe8+ Qxe8 also looks fine for Black) 16 ... Bd5 17 Ng3 Bf8 18 Ne5 Nd7 19 Qc2 a5 20 b5 Nxe5 21 dxe5 Nc5 and Black has generated even chances, J.Polgar-V.Hort, Monte Carlo 1994.

16 Qc2

After 16 Nc5 Bxc5 17 dxc5 Qf6 18 Rb1 Nc3 19 Bb2 Nxd1 20 Bxf6 Nxf2! 21 Kxf2 gxf6 Black's extra pawn makes up for the fact that his kingside structure has been compromised and chances look balanced.

16 ... Bf5 17 Bd2



A new move but no improvement, since Black looks fine here. Others:

a) 17 Nf6+? just loses a pawn to 17 ... Bxf6 18 Rxe8+ Qxe8 19 Bxf5 Nxd4.

b) 17 Bb2 Bd6 (or 17 ... Bxb4!? 18 axb4 Ncxb4 19 Qd2 Nxd3 20 Qxd3 Nf4 21 Qc2 Qd5 22 Nfd2 Re6 and Black may well have full compensation for the sacrificed piece, since White is pinned on e4 and g2 is weak and consequently his king is exposed) 18 Qb3 was S.Khlopov-A.Korchut, email 2011. Black looks no worse after 18 ... Nce7.

17 ... Bd6

Black fights for control over e5. 17 ... Qd7 is also good enough for dynamic equality.

18 Rad1

Or 18 Nc5?! Rxe1+ 19 Rxe1 Bxc5. Now White is unable to play 20 dxc5? due to the shot 20 ... Ndx4! 21 axb4 Qxd3 with an extra pawn.

18 ... Bf4

The player who opposes an isolani seeks exchanges. 18 ... Bg6 also looks about even.

19 Nc5

The knight is here only for a short visit, since Black will boot it with ... b7-b6 in a few moves.

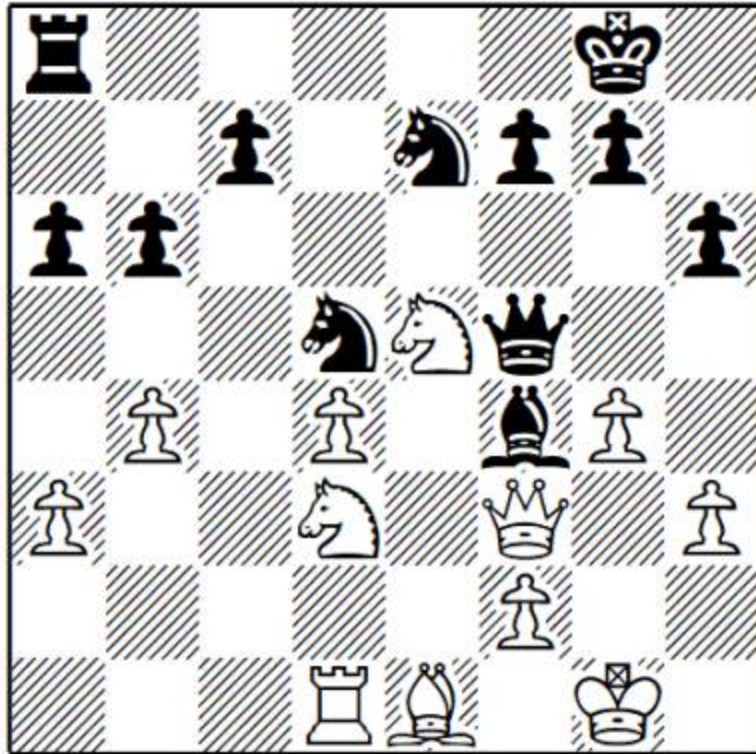
19 ... Rxe1+ 20 Bxe1 Bxd3

With every exchange White's initiative dwindles. Black gets closer and closer to an ending against an isolated d-pawn.

21 Qxd3 Qc8 22 Ne5 Nce7

Black unravels easily while reinforcing the d5-blockade.

23 Qf3 b6 24 Ncd3 Qf5 25 g4?!



Weakening the f4-square for no obvious benefit, but Black stands well anyway. For instance:

a) 25 g3 Bg5 doesn't bother Black at all.

b) 25 Nxf4 Qxf4 and White has no compensation for the d4-isolani.

25 ... Qf6 26 Qe4 Rd8 27 a4 Ng6 28 b5 axb5 29 axb5

White won't be able to make much use of the hole on c6.

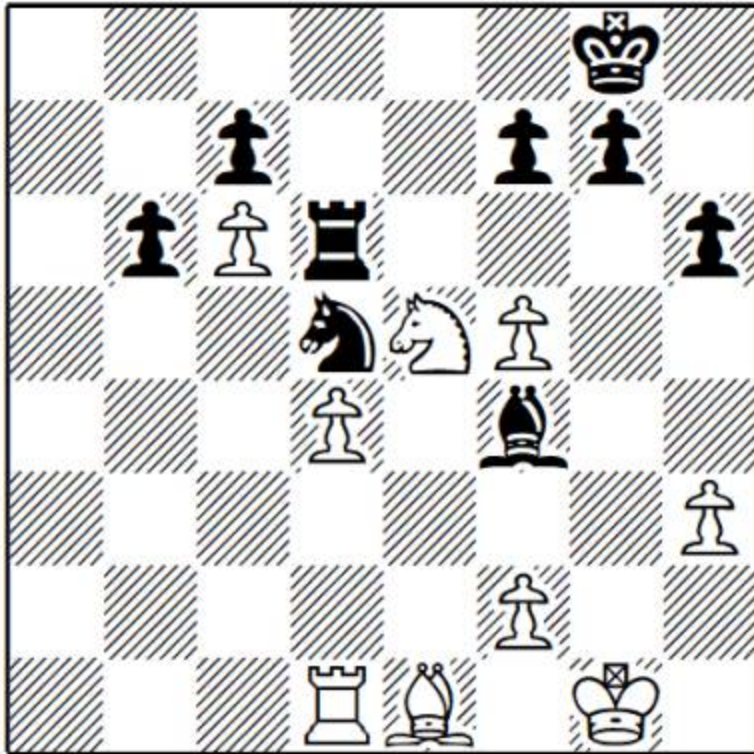
29 ... Qe6 30 Qf5?

White's wildly overambitious move is in violation of the principle: *it's better to leave the choice open and refuse to make a decision than commit to a bad one*. He unnecessarily takes on five isolanis, two of them doubled, all in the holy name of piece activity, which he never actually achieves. White should just make a neutral move and admit that he has a slightly worse position.

30 ... Qxf5 31 gxf5 Nge7 32 Nc6 Nxc6

This exchange conveniently plugs the c6-hole.

33 bxc6 Rd6 34 Ne5



Exercise (planning): Find one simple move and White's position falls apart.

34 ... Ne7!

Answer #1: Simply retreat the knight to e7, after which the magnitude of White's defensive issues completely engulf him. The threats include ... Bxe5, ... Nxf5 and ... Nxc6.

Answer #2: 34 ... Rf6! is also totally hopeless for White.

35 Ra1

Everything else loses too.

35 ... Bxe5 36 dxe5 Rxc6 37 Ra8+ Kh7 38 Rf8 Rc1 39 Rxf7

Prolonged suffering has a way of stripping us of dignity and we will do anything to survive. This desperate piece sacrifice fails miserably. However, after 39 Kf1 Nxf5 40 Rxf7 Kg6 41 Rd7 c5 Black also wins easily.

39 ... Rxe1+ 0-1

I have a feeling that Kovalev's head was not full of kind thoughts at this moment. The previously unimaginable just happened: a strong grandmaster has lost against the Petroff without even putting up much of a fight.

After 40 Kg2 Rxe5 41 f6 Kg6 42 Rxg7+ Kxf6, White is down a piece and a pawn for absolutely nothing.

Game 27

U.Andersson-E.Bang

NBC Millennium email 1999

My chess hero, Ulf Andersson, is one of the few players on earth who has achieved grandmaster titles in classical chess as well as correspondence chess. Yet in this game even he was unable to break down the Petroff wall.

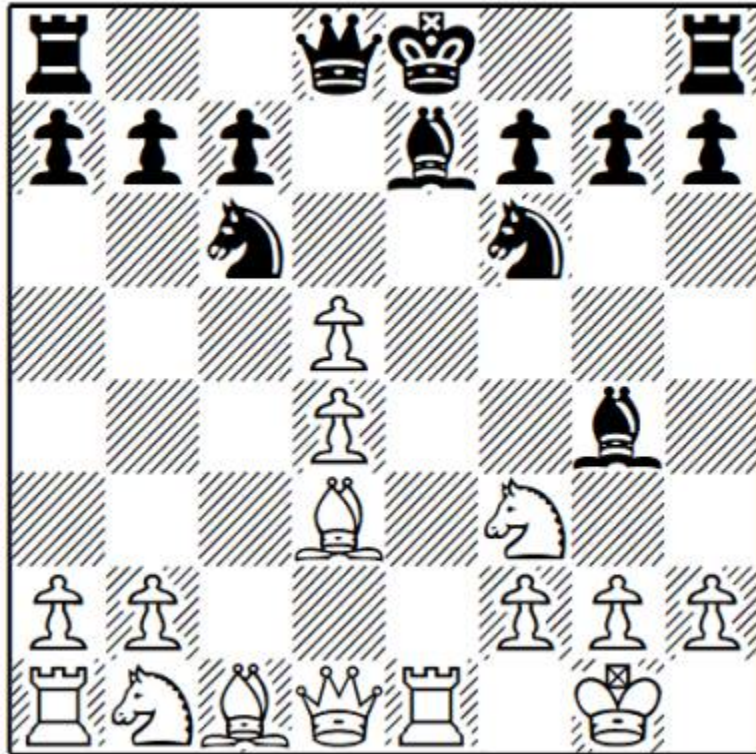
1 e4

Et tu Ulfie? When I play 1 e2-e4?! I come off as the straw man from Wizard of Oz, who gets it into his head to apply for a job as a firefighter. In the earlier 1990s Ulf, the high priest of 1 Nf3!, went through some kind of mid-life chess crisis, as he then switched to playing 1 e4.

1 ... e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 d4 d5 6 Bd3 Nc6 7 0-0 Be7 8 Re1 Bg4

8 ... Bf5 usually transposes to positions we have already examined. For example, 9 c4 (9 Nbd2 Nxd2 10 Qxd2 Bxd3 11 Qxd3 0-0 is dull and even; but not 10 Bxf5? Nxf3+, when White must recapture with the g-pawn, ruining their structure) 9 ... Nb4 10 Bf1 0-0 11 a3 Nc6 12 Nc3 Nxc3 13 bxc3 dxc4 14 Bxc4 returns to Games 17 and 18.

9 c4 Nf6 10 cxd5!?



The normal opening pleasantries are abandoned and White immediately picks a fight. This is a pawn sacrifice by White, who is willing to allow the d4-isolani to fall, in exchange for a development lead.

10 ... Bxf3

Alternatively, 10 ... Nxd5 11 Nc3 0-0 transposes to the previous game.

11 Qxf3 Qxd5 12 Qg3

Of course White isn't interested in a queen exchange, which would instantly give Black the more favourable ending, due to the d4-isolani.

12 ... Qxd4!

To my mind it is White who struggles for equality in this line. Black should boldly grab the d4-pawn and dare White to do their worst.

13 Nc3

Instead:

a) 13 Qxg7?? loses a piece to 13 ... Rg8 14 Qh6 Qxd3.

b) 13 Qxc7 0-0! 14 Rd1 (threatening Bxh7+ and Rxd3) was reached four times in my database and Black has a big improvement with the computer-generated idea 14 ... Rfe8!!, playing on White's weak back rank.

Black threatens ... Bd6, followed by ... Qxd3!. For example, 15 Qxc6! (15 Bxh7+?? runs into 15 ... Kxh7 16 Rxd4 Bd6! and White loses a piece without compensation) 15 ... bxc6 16 Bxh7+ Kxh7 17 Rxd4 Bc5 18 Rh4+ Kg8 19 Kf1 Ne4 (Black's huge development lead offers full compensation for the missing pawn) 20 Be3! (20 Rf4?? Rad8 is decisive, since White can't avoid Black's rook invasion on d1; e.g. 21 Be3 Bxe3 22 fxe3 g5 23 Rf5 Rd1+ 24 Ke2 Rg1 and White can resign since the queenside will never unravel) 20 ... Bxe3 21 fxe3 Rab8 22 b3 c5 23 Na3 a5! 24 Nc4 a4! 25 Rb1 Nc3 26 Rb2 Nd1 27 Rb1 axb3! 28 Rxb3 Rxb3 29 axb3 Nxe3+ 30 Nxe3 Rxe3 with a certain draw.

13 ... 0-0 14 Nb5 Qg4

Black remains at least even after this, effectively dampening White's attacking ardour.

Also strong is 14 ... Qb4 15 Bg5 (15 Bh6 Nh5 16 Qf3 Rad8! 17 Bf1 a6 18 Qxh5 axb5 is clearly in Black's favour) 15 ... Nh5 16 Bxe7 Nxc3 17 Bxb4 Nxb4 18 Rad1 Nh5 19 Nxc7 Rac8 20 Nb5 as in A.Shaplyko-T.Balogh, Zagan 1995, since White has nothing after 20 ... Nxd3 21 Rxd3 Rc2.

15 Bf4?!

White is the one fighting for a draw after this inaccuracy. Others:

a) 15 Qxg4! Nxc3 16 Be2 Nge5 17 Nxc7 Rad8 18 Be3 Nd4 19 Bxd4 Rxd4 20 Rad1 Rfd8 21 Rxd4 Rxd4 22 Nb5 Rd2 23 Bf1 f6 24 Re2 Rxe2 25 Bxe2 with a very likely drawn position due to the opposite-coloured bishops.

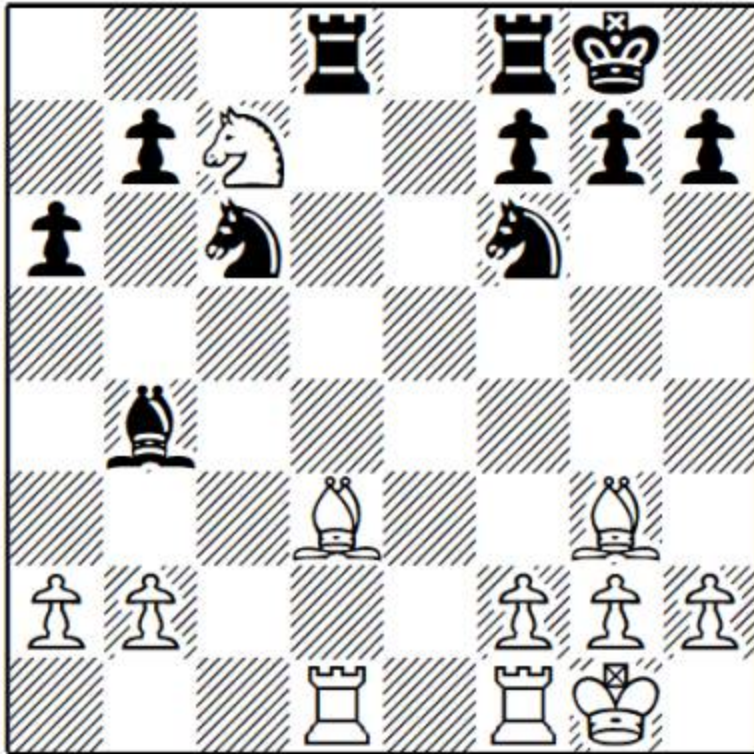
b) 15 Qxc7?! again leaves White fighting for equality. For example, 15 ... Bc5! 16 Be3 Bxe3 17 Rxe3 Nd5 18 Rg3 Nxc7 19 Rxc7 Rad8! 20 Bxh7+ Kxh7 21 Nxc7 Rd2 offers Black loads of compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

c) 15 Nxc7?! Qxg3 16 hxc3 Rad8 17 Bc4 Bb4 18 Rf1 Rd7 19 Nb5 a6 20 Nc3 Nd4 and Black has the initiative.

15 ... Qxg3 16 Bxc3 Rad8 17 Rad1 Bb4 18 Rf1 a6! 19 Nxc7?!

The knight makes a promise it is unable to fulfil.

Perhaps wiser was 19 Nc3! Rd7 20 Bf5 Re7, even if White's bishop pair fails to fully compensate for the pawn. Nevertheless, after 21 Bh4 Bxc3 22 bxc3 Re5 23 Bc2 Rc5 24 Bxf6 gxf6 25 Rfe1 Rxc3 26 Rc1 (threatening Bxh7+) 26 ... Kg7 27 Be4 Rxc1 28 Rxc1 Rd8 29 Bxc6 bxc6 30 Kf1, White may well hold the draw two pawns down, due to Black's broken structure.



Exercise (planning): Black found an effective plan, exposing the problem with White's last move. How?

19 ... Ba5!

Answer: Trapped piece.

Step 1: Play ... Ba5.

20 a3 Rd7

Step 2: Attack the c7-knight with ... Rd7, after which White must hand over two minor pieces for a rook, emerging with a lost position.

21 Bf5 Rxc7

Now White labours to pay off a substantial material debt.

22 b4 Bb6 23 Bxc7 Bxc7

The fact that Andersson saved this wretched position – against a legendary correspondence opponent – is testimony to his prowess in

technical endings. He played them with a level of precision few in his era could match.

24 g3 Bb6 25 Bh3 Rd8?

This is where Bang may have blown it. His move is in violation of the principle: *when you have two pieces for your opponent's rook, don't exchange away your remaining rook.*

Black should have played 25 ... Rb8! 26 Bg2 Nd4 27 Rfe1 Kf8, with a technically won ending.

26 Bg2 Rxd1

26 ... Rc8 no longer helps; e.g. 27 Rc1 Rc7 28 Bxc6 bxc6 29 Rfd1 Kf8 30 Rd6 Bxf2+! 31 Kg2 c5 32 Rxa6 (or 32 Kf3 Rb7 33 bxc5 Rb2 34 g4) 32 ... Bd4 33 bxc5 Bxc5 34 Kf3 and White has good chances to hold the game.

27 Rxd1

Threatening Bxc6, followed by Rc1.

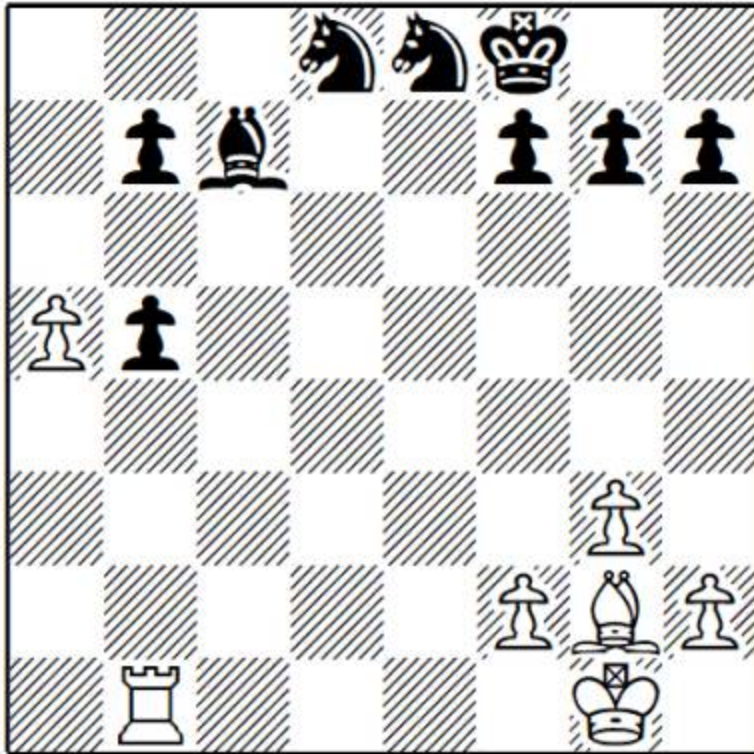
27 ... Nd8 28 a4

Ulf misses a strong plan with 28 Bh3! Kf8 29 Bc8!, when Black will have a difficult time unravelling, since his d8-knight is in indentured servitude to the b7-pawn.

28 ... Kf8 29 a5 Bc7 30 Rb1 Ne8! 31 b5

This is White's only available plan since he couldn't allow ... Nd6.

31 ... axb5



If 31 ... Bxa5 32 bxa6 bxa6 33 Ra1 Bb4 34 Rxa6, White has excellent drawing chances due to the fact that so few pawns remain, and the ones that do are all on the same side of the board.

Exercise (combination alert): Grandmaster Bang has had many laughs at

Ulf's expense – up until now when Ulf found a brilliant idea to save the game.

What would you play as White?

32 Bxb7!!

Answer: Piece sacrifice. The idea of Ulf's dazzling endgame treachery is to remove all of Black's queenside pawns and force Black to try to win with two minor pieces versus rook, with pawns all on the same side of the board. Ulf's shot is far stronger than the computer's initial suggestion 32 Rxb5?! Nd6 33 Rc5 Ne6 34 Rd5 Ke7. As long as a pair of pawns remain on the queenside, Black has chances to convert.

32 ... Bxa5

Or 32 ... Nxb7 33 a6! Bb8 34 axb7 Ke7 35 Rc1! Nf6 36 Rc8 Nd7 37 Kf1 b4 38 Ke2 Kd6 39 Kd3 Bc7 40 Kc4 b3 41 Kxb3 Nc5+ 42 Kc4 Nxb7 43 Rh8! Ke6 44 Rxh7 and White holds the draw.

33 Rxb5 Nd6?!

Black's winning chances continue to haemorrhage away. When, as in this case, all the remaining pawns are on one side of the board, two knights tend to be the worst possible match against a rook. Black had to try 33 ... Nxb7! 34 Rxb7 Bc7. Admittedly, it would require the combined talents of Capablanca, Fischer and Carlsen to convert this one.

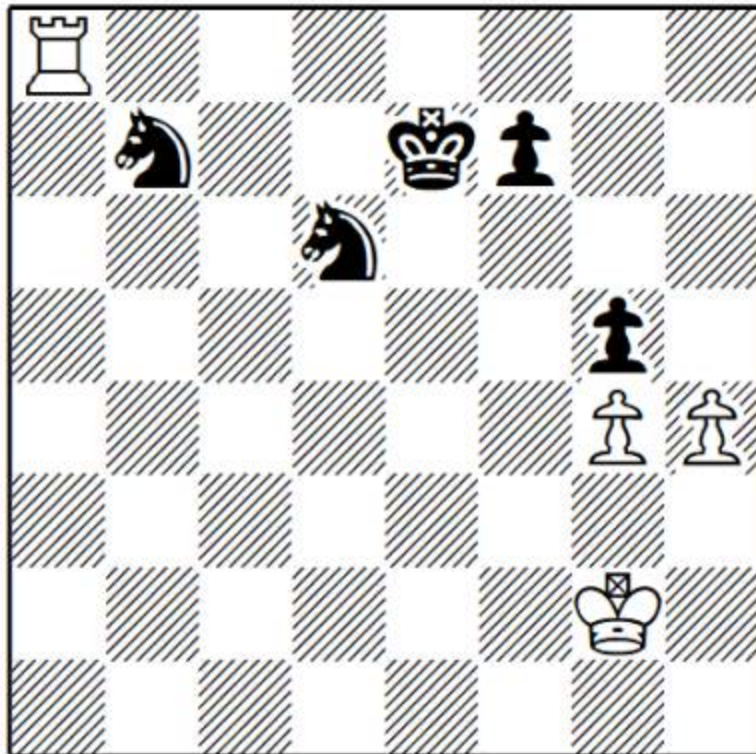
34 Rxa5 N8xb7 35 Ra8+ Ke7 36 f3 h5

This is not a great idea since the contact point allows White future pawn exchanges.

37 Kg2 g6 38 g4! hxg4 39 fxg4 g5

And this allows White an instant draw. The only way to play on was 39 ... Kf6 40 h4 Nc4 41 Kg3 Nc5.

40 h4!



40 ... gxh4 ½-½

The power of attrition works its will on Black's winning hopes. 41 Kh3 Kf6 42 Kxh4 is a drawn ending. White can even sacrifice his rook for Black's f-pawn and it's still a draw, since two knights are unable to force checkmate on a lone king. If you didn't know this, then it's time to order that outstanding book, *First Steps: Fundamental Endings*.

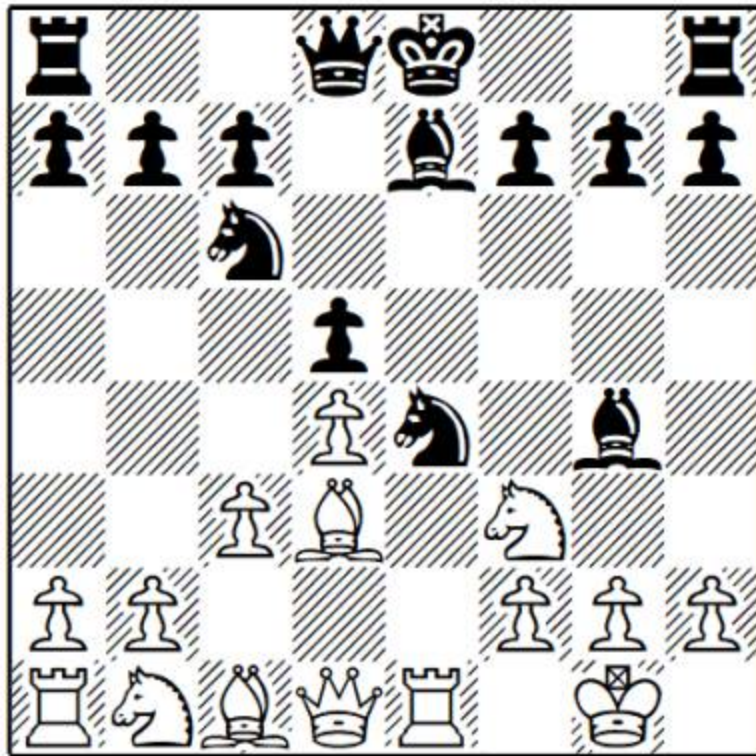
Game 28

V.Anand-P.Leko

Man + Computer, Leon (rapid) 2001

When compared to the computers' clear view, these days it feels as if the human brain is a clearly outmoded technology whose vision is clouded with cataracts. In this game the humans got a boost since both were allowed help from a machine. The errors only arose when the time pressure occurred and the humans were once again forced to fall back on their own fallible brains.

**1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 d4 d5 6 Bd3 Nc6 7 0-0 Be7
8 Re1 Bg4 9 c3**



This quiet move comes with a drop of poison. White's ideas are:

1) The d4-pawn is secured.

2) Black must watch out for Qb3 ideas, which in some cases may simultaneously attack b7 and d5. This is especially the case when Black blocks coverage of the d5-pawn with a future ... Bd6.

9 ... f5

Black attempts some genetic engineering, crossbreeding the Petroff with a Stonewall Dutch formation. This committal move is also Black's most principled one. It reinforces e4, albeit at the cost of weakening e5. In this line Black must be willing to hand over both structure and possibly pawns to pursue the kingside attack.

We'll look at the safer/duller 9 ... Nf6 in Game 31.

10 Qb3

The transition from peaceful to violent can come in a finger snap. With this move White unpins the f3-knight, while attacking the now loose b7-pawn. 10 Nbd2 is examined in the next game.

10 ... 0-0!

Continuing to develop, daring White to chop on b7. In the opening partial knowledge is often more dangerous than no knowledge. This is the “Hey-reader-listen-up” moment. Whatever you do, don’t chicken out with the meek:

a) 10 ... Rb8?! (cowardly and losing the initiative) 11 Nfd2! Bh5 12 f3 with a comfortable strategic advantage for White.

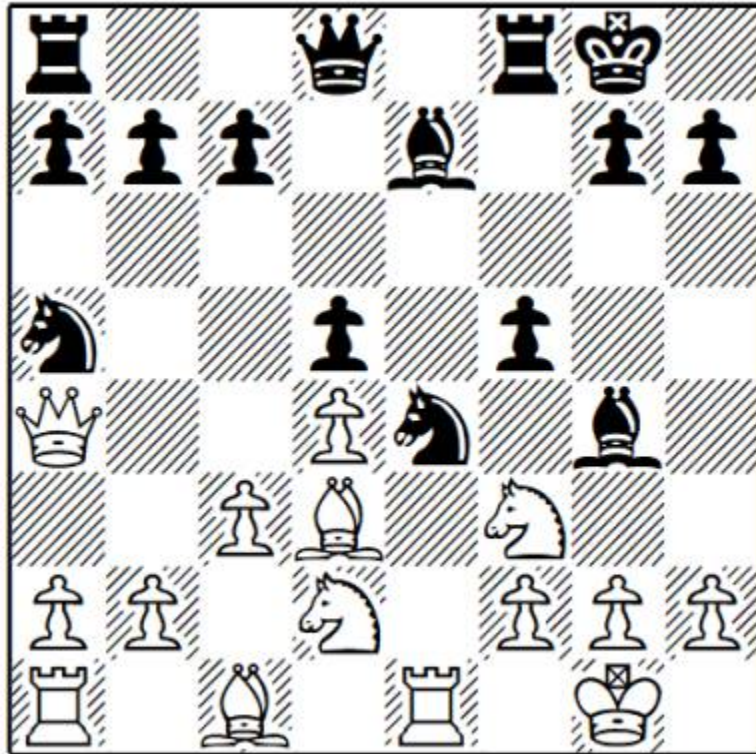
b) 10 ... Bxf3? is premature. After 11 gxf3 Na5 (forced, as all knight retreats from e4 are awful for Black) 12 Qa4+ c6 13 fxe4 fxe4 14 Bf1 Bd6 15 Re3! 0-0 16 Qc2 Black doesn’t have enough for the sacrificed piece.

11 Nbd2

Don’t be afraid of 11 Qxb7?. White’s pawn grab is too greedy and allows Black to generate a decisive attack. For example, 11 ... Rf6! (threatening ... Rb8 and then ... Nb4! with a discovered/double attack on White’s queen on a6, as well as the bishop on d3) 12 Qb3 (after 12 Bf4 Bxf3 13 Bxc7 Rg6! Black threatens mate in three moves and has a winning attack; e.g. 14 Rxe4 was M.Sanchez-C.Villares, ICCF email 2005, and White is busted after 14 ... fxe4! 15 Bxd8 Rb8 16 Qa6 Rxc2+ 17 Kf1 Rxc2 18 Ke1 Nxd8 19 Bf1 Bh4) 12 ... Bxf3 13 gxf3 Rg6+ 14 Kf1 Rb8 15 Qd1 Qd6! 16 fxe4 fxe4 17 Qh5 (or 17 Bc2 Qxh2 18 Be3 Rf8 19 Ke2 Bg5 20 Rf1 Rgf6 21 Qe1 Bxe3 22 Kxe3 Qh3+ 23 Kd2 e3+! and wins) 17 ... exd3 18 Rd1 d2 19 Nxd2 Nb4! 0-1 S.Somani-P.Le Bled, ICCF email 2006. If the knight is taken, then ... Qa6+! is crushing.

11 ... Na5 12 Qa4

12 Qc2 invites Black to repeat moves by returning the knight to c6, though Black can play for more with 12 ... Bd6 as we’ll see in the next note.



12 ... Nc6 13 Qb3 Na5 14 Qc2 Nc6

A forced repetition isn't obligatory. Black can keep the game going with 14 ... Bd6 15 Ne5 Bh5 16 b4 Nc6 17 Ndf3, as in P.Leko-V.Anand, Linares 2005. Chances look balanced after 17 ... Qe8 18 Bb2 Bxf3 19 Nxf3 Qh5.

15 b4

Intending b4-b5, followed by Ne5. This move is pretty much the only way for White to play for the full point and evade the repetition draw.

15 ... a6 16 a4 Bd6

Reinforcing the hole on e5.

17 Rb1

Now White's intent to push forward with the b-pawn can't be stopped.

Alternatively, White can play 17 Ba3, reaching the same position as after 15 Ba3 in Game 30. Via the current move order, W.So-A.Giri, Wijk aan Zee 2010, continued 17 ... Kh8 18 Qb2 Ne7 19 Ne5 Bxe5 20 dxe5 Ng6 21 f3 Nxe5! 22 Bf1 Qf6 23 fxe4 fxe4 24 Kh1 b5 25 Nb3 Qh4 26 Qd2 Rf5! and Giri went on to win with a dazzling attack. This game is annotated in *The Petroff: Move by Move*.

17 ... Qf6

This logical move connects the rooks, while adding more coverage to the e5-square.

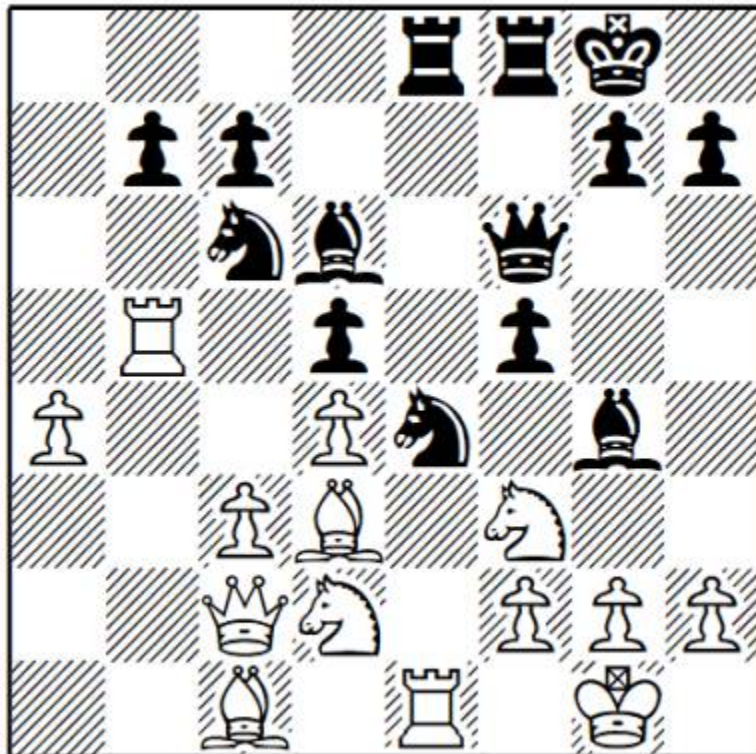
Instead, 17 ... Nxd2 18 Nxd2 Qh4 19 Nf1 Ne7 20 Bd2 f4 21 f3 Bd7 ½-½ was A.Shirov-V.Kramnik, Port Barcares 2005. Black's chances are at least even.

18 b5 axb5 19 Rxb5

With a simultaneous attack on the b7- and d5-pawns.

Another option is 19 axb5 Ne7 20 Ne5 Bh5 21 Nf1 (P.Golubka-A.Podolsky, Lvov 2008). Here Black can play 21 ... Bxe5! 22 dxe5 Qxe5 23 c4! (23 f3 Qf6! works for Black) 23 ... Qc3 24 Qxc3 Nxc3 25 Rxe7 Nxb1 26 Bb2! (if 26 Bxb1 Rfe8 27 Rxe8+ Rxe8 28 Bd3 Be2! 29 Bxe2 Rxe2 30 cxd5 Rc2 31 Bf4 Rc5 32 b6 cxb6 33 d6 Kf7, Black has at least even chances in the ending and may well stand better due to those outside passed b-pawns) 26 ... Rf7 27 Re1 Na3 28 cxd5 Ra4 29 Re8+ Rf8 30 Re7 Rf7 31 Re8+ with a draw by repetition.

19 ... Rae8!



Leko ignores both threats.

20 Be2

This meek concession is necessary since both pawn grabs are poisonous for White:

a) 20 Rxb7?? Nxd2 21 Bxd2 Bxf3 22 gxf3 Rxe1+ 23 Bxe1 Qh4 with a winning attack.

b) 20 Rxd5? Nxd2 21 Ne5 Nxe5 22 dxe5 Qf7! 23 Rxd6 (or 23 Rd4 Bxe5) 23 ... cxd6 24 Bxd2 Rxe5 and White doesn't have enough compensation for the lost exchange.

20 ... Ng5

Threatening damage on f3.

If 20 ... Bxf3!? 21 Nxf3 g5! 22 Rxd5 g4 23 Ne5! (23 Nd2?? is crushed by 23 ... Bxh2+!) 23 ... Nxe5 24 dxe5 Bxe5 25 g3 Qc6 26 c4, chances look close to even, with the computer giving White the edge.

21 Qd3

Forced. 21 Rxd5? Nxf3+ 22 Nxf3 Bxf3 23 gxf3 Ne7 24 Rb5 Ng6 gives Black a strong and probably winning attack.

21 ... Qh6 22 h4!

The only move to retain the balance. 22 h3? Bxh3! is a winning attack for Black.

22 ... Ne6?!

The wrong location for the knight. Correct was 22 ... Ne4! 23 Rxd5 Bf4! 24 Nb3 Bxc1 25 Nxc1 Bxf3 26 Qxf3 Qd2! 27 Rd1 Qxc3 28 Rxf5 Qxf3 29 Rxf3 Rxf3 30 Bxf3 Nc3 31 Rf1 Nxd4 32 Bxb7 Rb8 33 Ba6 Ra8 34 Bc4+ Kf8 35 Nd3 Rxa4, when Black's chances are slightly better due to the passed c-pawn.

23 Nf1 Bf4

White is on top after 23 ... Qf6 24 Rxd5 Ne7 25 Rb5 Ng6 26 Bd1 Nxf4 27 Nxf4 Qxf4 28 Bxg4 Qxg4 29 Qc4 Qg6 30 Rxb7 Kh8.

24 Ba3 Bd6 25 Bxd6 cxd6

Black must be prepared to give away pawns and structure in this line to go after the opponent's king.

26 Qd2 Nf4 27 Bd1 Re4?!

Better is 27 ... Nh3+! 28 gxh3 Qxd2 29 N1xd2 Rxe1+ 30 Nxe1 Bxd1 31 Rxd5 Rd8 32 Rb5 Rd7 33 Rxf5 Bxa4 34 Rd5 Ne7 35 Ra5 Bc6 36 Nc2, when it may be tough for White to convert the extra pawn, since his h-pawns are both doubled and isolated.

28 Re3?!

This inaccuracy allows Black back into the game. 28 Ne3! is winning.

28 ... Nd8

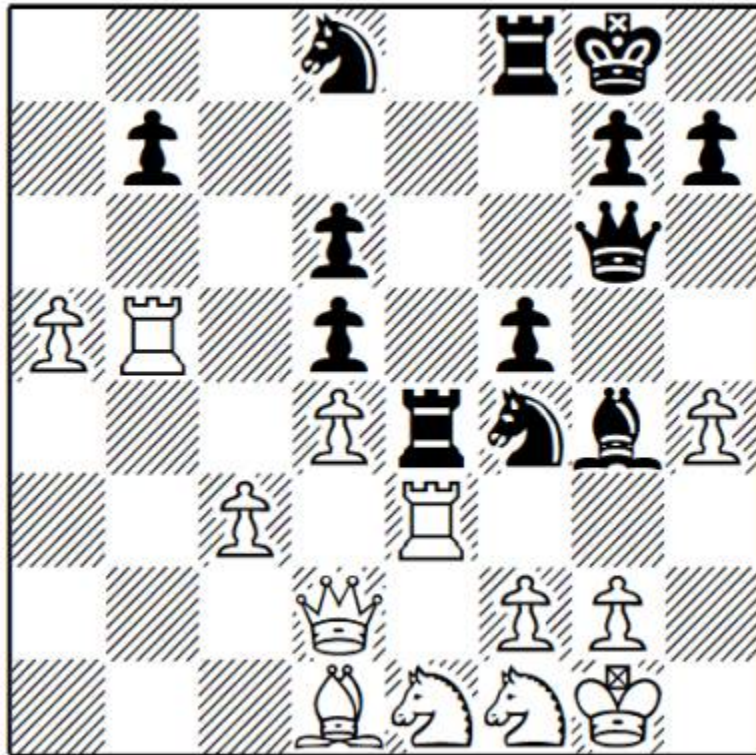
Leko wants to transfer the c6-knight into the attack, while at least temporarily defending b7. More accurate was 28 ... Qg6! 29 Ng3 Rxe3 30 fxe3 Ne6.

29 a5?!

White remains clearly better after the correct 29 Ng3.

29 ... Qg6! 30 Ne1?!

After 30 Ng3 Nxg2! 31 Kxg2 f4 32 Rxe4 dxe4 33 Nxe4 Bd7+ 34 Rg5 Qxe4 35 Bb3+ Kh8 36 Qe1 Qxe1 37 Nxe1 Nc6, the ending is approximately equal.



Exercise (combination alert): All is not well in the white king's underground bunker. How did Black seize the advantage?

30 ... Nh3+!

Answer: Line opening.

31 Rxh3!

Offering the exchange is White's best chance since Black's remaining pawns are weak.

Others:

a) 31 gxh3? Bxd1+ 32 Kh2 Ba4 is in Black's favour.

b) 31 Kh2?! Bxd1 32 Rxe4 fxe4 33 gxh3 Ba4 is again better for Black.

31 ... Bxh3 32 Bf3 Rxh4 33 Bxd5+ Kh8 34 Qd3?!

White could minimize his disadvantage with 34 f4!.

34 ... Re8 35 Nc2?

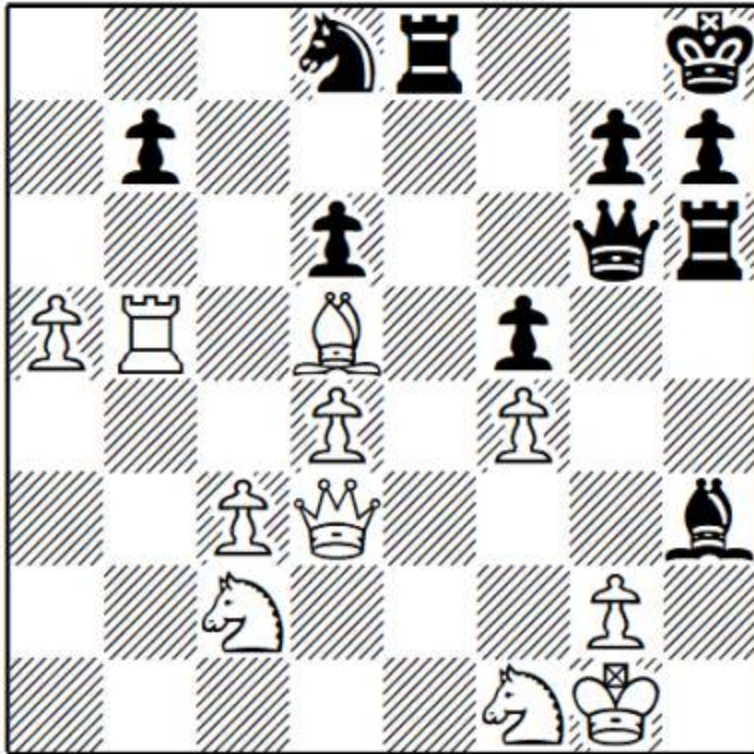
White can still fight after 35 Qb1 Bg4 36 g3 Be2 37 Ng2 Rg4 38 Rb2 Bxf1 39 Kxf1.

35 ... Rh6?!

The rook is out of play here. The players must have been seriously low on time in this computer-assisted rapid game. 35 ... Ne6! is immediately decisive; e.g. 36 Qg3 Qh6! 37 Bxe6 Rg4 wins.

36 f4?!

Better 36 Qg3 f4 37 Qxg6 Rxg6 38 Nb4 Bxg2 39 Bxg2 f3 40 Ng3 fxg2 41 Kxg2 Rf8 42 Nd3, when White can keep fighting.



Exercise (combination alert): How does Black force the win of a second exchange?

36 ... Ne6!

Answer: Step 1: Attack f4.

37 Qg3

37 Bxe6?? isn't much of a consideration due to 37 ... Qxg2 mate.

37 ... Nc7!

Step 2: Double attack. White drops a second exchange.

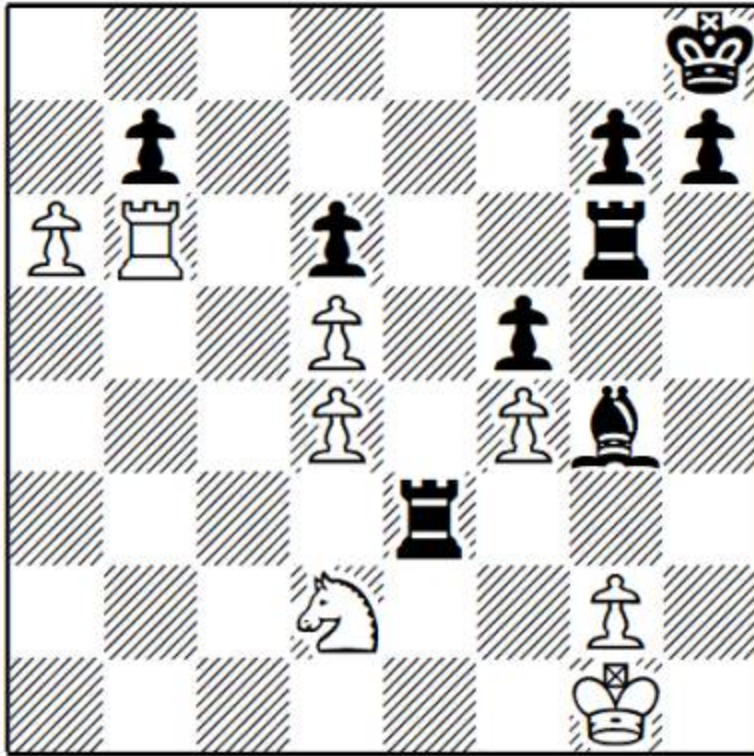
38 c4 Nxd5 39 cxd5 Qf7

Or 39 ... Re2! 40 gxh3 Rxc2 41 Rxb7 Qxg3+ 42 Nxc3 g6 43 a6 Rxh3 44 a7 Rxc3+ 45 Kh1 Ra3 46 Rb8+ Kg7 47 a8Q Rxa8 48 Rxa8 Rf2, which is a dead lost rook ending for White.

40 Nce3 Bg4 41 Rb2 Rg6 42 Qf2 Qc7 43 Rb6 Qc3! 44 Qd2

The ending is hopeless for White, especially when he hands over another piece. 44 Rxb7 Qxa5 is also lost.

44 ... Qxd2 45 Nxd2 Rxe3 46 a6



White's threat to promote turns out to be harmless.

Exercise (calculation): Can Black get away with 46 ... Bh3, or should he play the defensive move 46 ... Re8 - ? Both responses win for Black but one is more efficient than the other.

46 ... Re8

Good enough, but the alternative was more efficient.

Answer: 46 ... Bh3! 47 Kf2 Ra3 48 axb7 Rxg2+ 49 Ke1 Ra1+ 50 Nb1 Rxb1+! (this is the shot Leko probably missed) 51 Rxb1 Rg1+ and wins.

47 axb7 Rb8 48 Kf2 Rf6 49 Nc4 Kg8 0-1

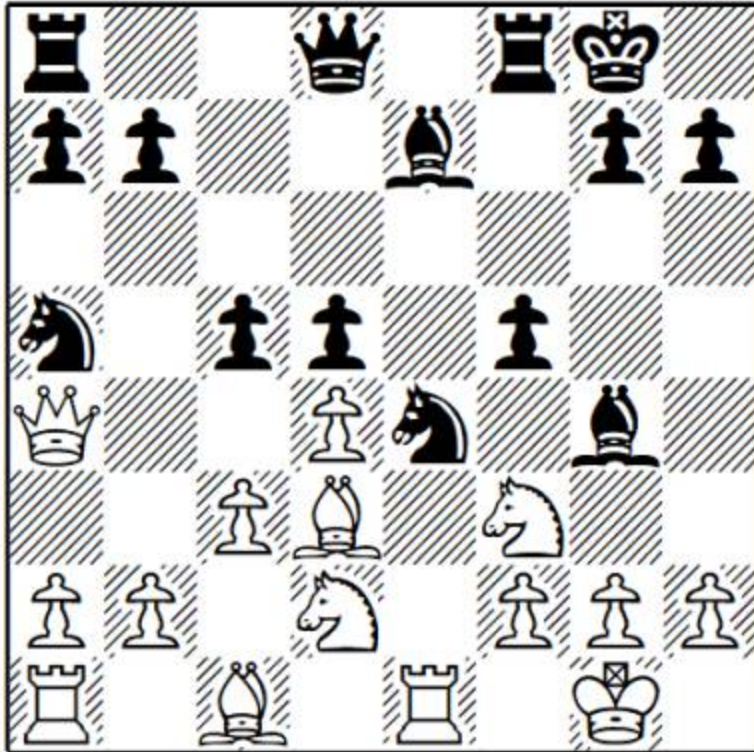
White's three-person improv troop is unable to make progress with the passed b-pawn. 50 Na5 Rf7 wins.

Game 29

D.De Silva-E.Noire

IECG email 2007

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 d4 d5 6 Bd3 Nc6 7 0-0 Be7 8 Re1 Bg4 9 c3 f5 10 Qb3 0-0 11 Nbd2 Na5 12 Qa4 c5!?



Our opening choices are often mirrors of who we are. This is an aggressive option for when you aren't interested in a draw.

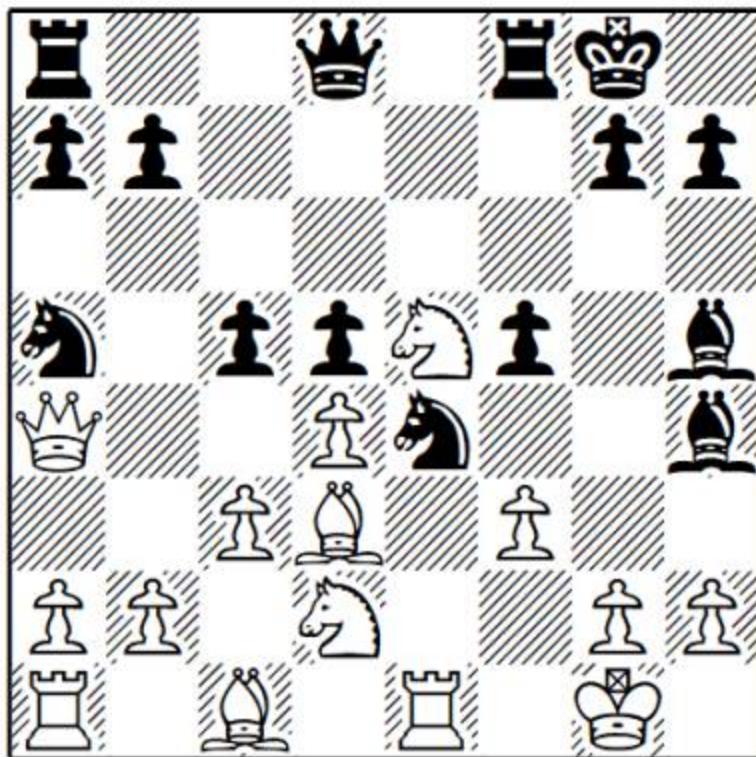
13 Ne5

The centre is a hive of activity. The knight jumps into the e5-hole, while threatening Nxe4. Others:

a) 13 c4 Bxf3 14 Nxf3 Nxc4 15 Bxc4 dxc4 16 Qxc4+ Kh8 17 Be3 Rc8 18 Rad1 (18 Ne5 is met by 18 ... cxd4, when a knight check to f7 is a blunder, since Black just takes it and then the e3-bishop) 18 ... cxd4 19 Qxd4 Bc5 20 Qxd8 Rfxd8 21 Bxc5 Nxc5 with an even ending, M.Hansen-S.Bogdanov, ICCF email 2015.

b) 13 dxc5?! has never been played, and for good reason. Black already stands better after 13 ... Bxc5 14 Nd4 Bb6.

13 ... Bh5 14 f3 Bh4!?



Black offers a piece for the attack.

14 ... cxd4 is Black's main line, when play can continue 15 cxd4 Be8 16 Qd1 Ng5 17 Nb1 Ne6 18 Nc3 f4 19 Kh1 Bh4 20 Re2 Rc8 with a dynamically balanced game, D.Krivic-B.Toth, ICCF email 2009.

15 g3!?

When we begin a wrong idea, it has a way of remaining wrong. The computer is okay with this move. However, it allows Black a promising sacrifice on g3 which gets dangerous attacking chances. Instead:

a) 15 Rf1! may produce a small edge for White after 15 ... Nxd2 16 Bxd2 c4 17 Bb1 Be8 18 Qc2 Bd7, when White is better due to control over e5.

b) 15 fxe4! is untried. After 15 ... Bxe1 16 exd5 Bh4 17 Ndf3 Bf6 18 Bxf5 Qxd5 White has compensation for the exchange, but no more. Black should be at least fine.

15 ... Nxc3

This sacrifice is the equivalent of one of those all caps Facebook rants, where we let everyone know we really mean it. Not only is it temptingly plausible, it is absolutely sound, since White's king is deprived of shelter for the remainder of the game.

16 hxc3 Bxc3 17 Re2 c4 18 Bb1?

White clogs his queenside development simply to allow his queen a retreat back to d1, but this is too large a concession. Now White's would-be defenders sit together in a useless clump on the wrong side of the board.

18 Bc2 is a better try, when play can go 18 ... Re8 19 Nf1 (necessary, in view of 19 Bxf5?! Bxe5 20 dxe5 Nc6 21 Qc2 Nxe5 22 Bxh7+ Kh8 23 Bf5 Qg5+ 24 Rg2 Qe3+ 25 Rf2 Rf8 26 Nxc4 Nxf3+ 27 Kg2 Qe7! 0-1 F.Sharpell-E.Noire, email 2007, since 28 Rxf3 is met by 28 ... Bxf3+ 29 Kxf3 Rxf5+! 30 Qxf5 Rf8, winning) 19 ... Bxe5 20 dxe5 Nc6 21 Rh2 Bxf3 22 Bf4 and White has chances to defend.

18 ... Nc6!

A multi-purpose move:

- 1) Black eliminates White's best-placed piece, the e5-knight.
- 2) Black re-energizes his out-of-play piece from a5.
- 3) Black's queen is now free to travel to the kingside, since the a5-knight no longer needs protection.

19 Nxc6 bxc6 20 Rg2

20 Qxc6 Qg5 gives Black a winning attack.

20 ... Qh4 21 Nf1

White's kingside defenders are wrapped as tightly as sausage casing, yet they are not enough to protect their king.

21 ... f4

Missing 21 ... Rae8!! 22 Rxc3 Re1 23 Rg2 Bxf3 24 Qc2 Bxc2 25 Kxc2 Rf6 with a decisive attack for Black.

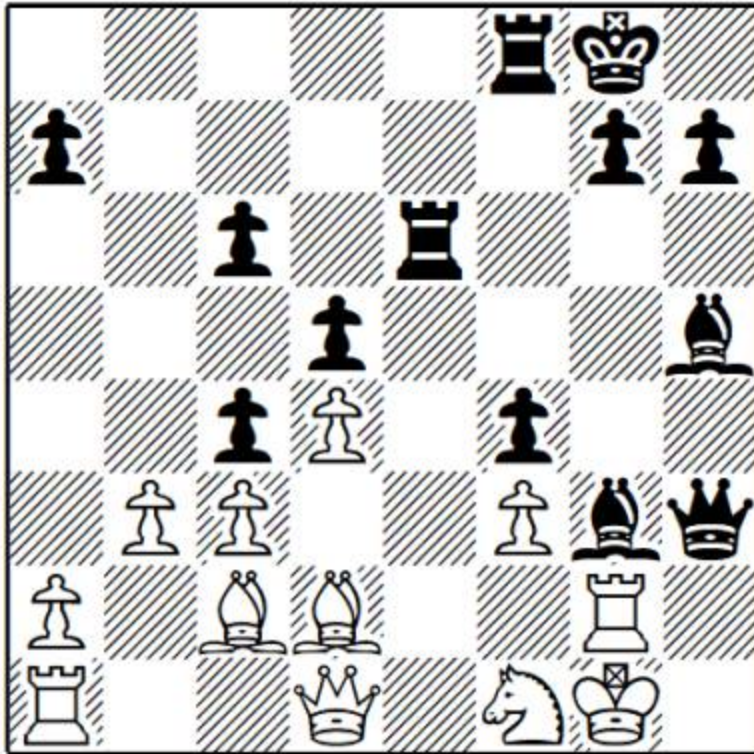
22 Qd1

Played to cover f3.

22 ... Rae8 23 Bd2 Re6 24 Bc2 Qh3

Stronger is 24 ... Rff6! 25 b3 Bg6! 26 Nxc3 Bxc2 27 Qxc2 fxc3 28 bxc4 Rh6.

25 b3



Exercise (combination alert): White's picture is not one of glowing health.

What is Black's strongest attacking continuation?

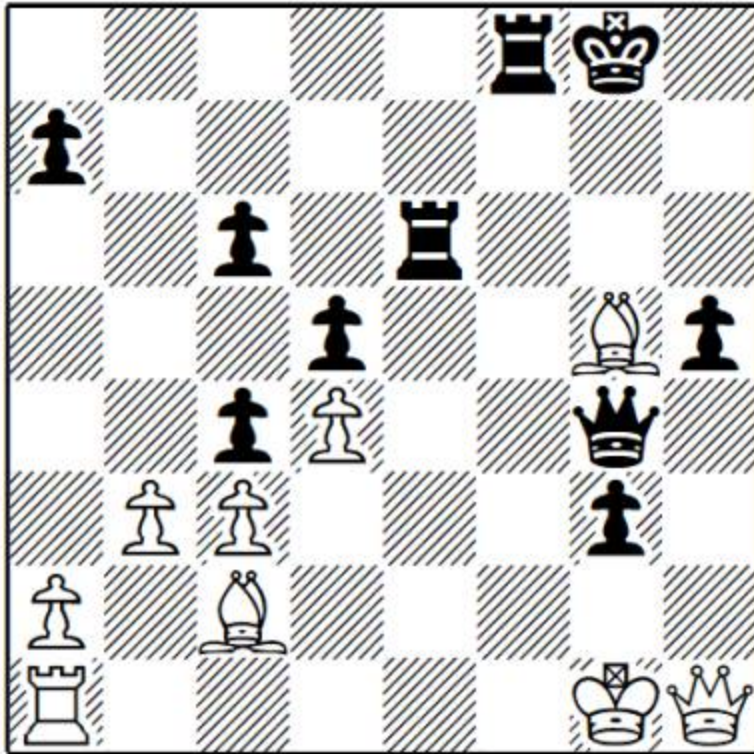
Answer: 25 ... g5!

Intending ... Rh6 and ... Bxf3, uncovering a mate threat on h1. There is no reasonable defence. The immediate 25 ... Rh6?? walks into the trap after 26 Nxf3 fxf3 27 Bxh6 Bxf3 28 Qd2 Bxg2 29 Qxg2 Qxh6 30 Qe2! and White is right back in the game.

26 Nxf3 fxf3 27 Bxg5 Bxf3 28 Qf1 Bxg2 29 Qxg2 Qg4

Threatening ... Qxg5 and ... Rf2.

30 Qh1 h5 0-1



After 31 Qh4 Qf3 Black forces mate. This was a correspondence game, with days to think for each move. Was White really hoping for 30 ... Qxg5?? 31 Qxh7 mate?

Game 30

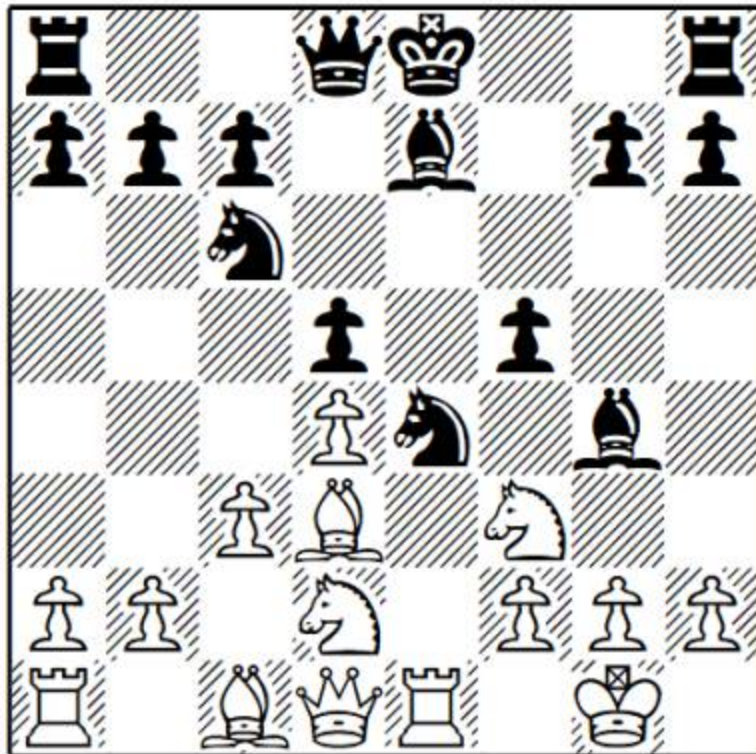
A.Morozevich-An.Karpov

Prague (rapid) 2002

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6

By using the Petroff, Karpov attempts to force Morozevich into a strategic battle, which won't happen without a fight.

3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 d4 d5 6 Bd3 Be7 7 0-0 Nc6 8 Re1 Bg4 9 c3 f5 10 Nbd2



White sensibly protects the pinned f3-knight, before allowing his queen to go off on an adventure via b3.

10 ... 0-0 11 Qb3

Here we go again: White menaces b7. Black counters as in the previous game.

11 ... Na5

If you want to speculate, you can try the slightly shady sacrifice 11 ... Kh8!?, although it is probably best to avoid it. White has the better chances after 12 Qxb7 Rf6 13 Qb3 Rg6 14 Bb5 Nxd2 15 Nxd2 Bd6 16 g3 (16 Nf1! Ne7 17 Bd3 Bf3 18 Ng3 Be4 19 Be2 Rb8 20 Qd1 is also good) 16 ... Ne7 17 Bf1, as in J.Smeets-Y.Bayram, Antalya 2004. The position resembles a Ruy Lopez Marshall Gambit, where Black does generate some attacking compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

12 Qc2

Instead, 12 Qa4 Nc6 13 Bb5 Bh4 14 g3 Bf6 15 Bxc6 bxc6 16 Qxc6 Re8 1/2-1/2 was V.Anand-V.Kramnik, Wijk aan Zee 1999. Black has full

compensation for the pawn, with light square control and a weakened white king.

12 ... Nc6

12 ... Bd6 is a way to dodge a possible repetition draw. For example, 13 Ne5 Bh5 14 b4 Nc6 15 Ndf3 Re8 16 Bb2 Qf6 17 Qb3 Kh8 18 Be2?! (White should prefer 18 Qxd5 Rad8 19 Bxe4 Bxe5 20 dxe5 Qh6 21 e6! Rxd5 22 Bxd5 Bxf3 23 Bxf3 Rxe6 and doesn't stand worse) 18 ... Rxe5?! (missing 18 ... Bxf3! 19 Nxf3 g5!, which gives Black a strong attack) 19 dxe5 Nxe5 20 Nxe5 Bxe5 21 Bxh5 Bxh2+! 22 Kxh2 (not 22 Kf1?? Nd2+, forking king and queen, while 22 Kh1?? allows 22 ... Qh4 23 Rxe4 Bf4+ and wins) 22 ... Qh4+ 23 Kg1 Qxf2+ 24 Kh2, when the game P.Leko-V.Anand, Linares 2005, ended peacefully after all due to perpetual check.

13 b4

White goes for the win. The idea is to play b4-b5, followed by Ne5.

13 ... a6 14 a4

14 Rb1 can be met by 14 ... b5 15 a4 Rb8 with a decent position for Black.

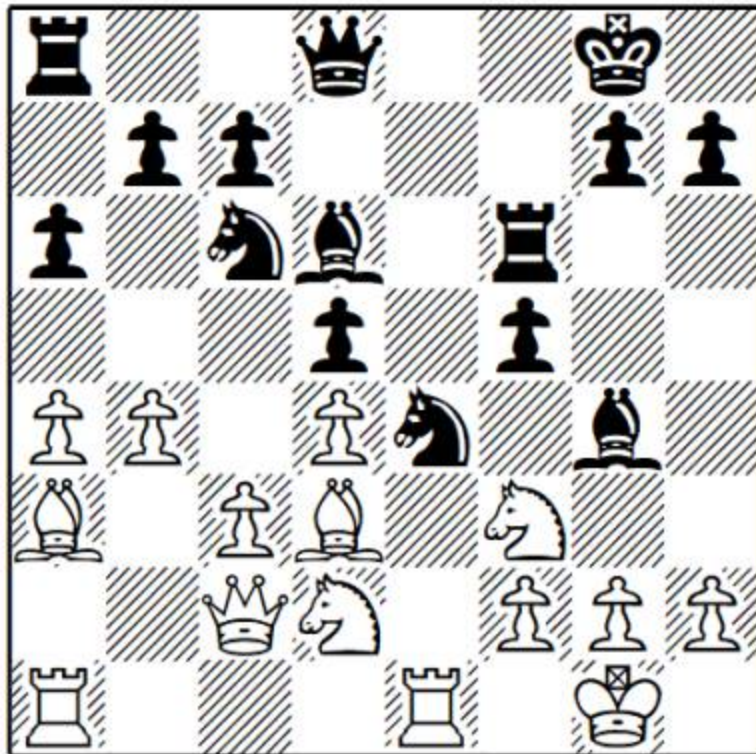
14 ... Bd6

Reinforcing e5, while creating a square for the c6-knight if it later gets kicked from its c6-post.

15 Ba3

White finds a way to develop his dark-squared bishop, and b4-b5 is coming.

15 ... Rf6



Karpov goes directly for his opponent's king by lifting his rook to the third rank.

Also possible is 15 ... Kh8 16 b5 axb5 17 Bxd6 and now 17 ... cxd6!, a move that serves two purposes:

- 1) White's knight loses access to e5.
- 2) The c-file is open and White's c3-pawn is now backward on an open file.

After 18 axb5 Na5 Black equalized in R.Ponomariov-Mi.Adams, Wijk aan Zee 2005.

16 b5 Nxd2 17 Qxd2!

The only way to play for the win as 17 Nxd2 allows 17 ... Bxh2+!, when the position has pretty much been worked out to a draw. For example, 18 Kf1 (18 Kxh2 Rh6+ 19 Kg1 Qh4 20 f3 Qh1+ 21 Kf2 Qh4+ 22 Ke2 Re6+ 23 Kf1 Qh1+ 24 Kf2 Qh4+ is perpetual check) 18 ... axb5 19 axb5 Rh6! 20 Bxf5 (20 bxc6 Bd6 21 g3 Rxa3 is slightly better for Black) 20 ... Bd6 21 Bxg4 Rh1+ 22 Ke2 Qe8+ 23 Ne4 Nxd4+ 24 cxd4 Rxe1+ 25 Kxe1 Bxa3 26 Kf1 Qxe4 27 Qxe4 dxe4 and the ending is even and probably drawn.

17 ... Bxf3 18 bxc6 Rg6 19 g3 bxc6 20 Bxd6 cxd6

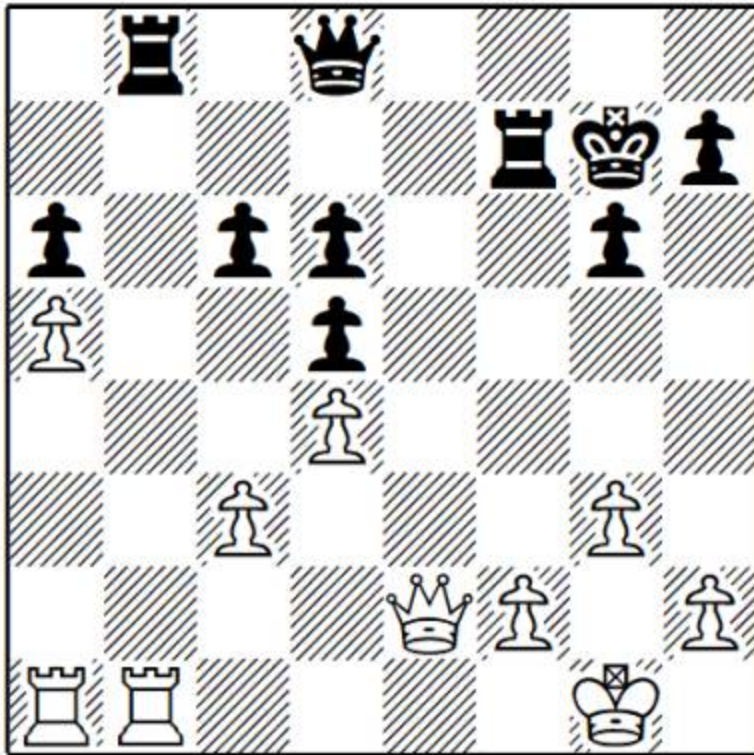
This way White's pieces are denied access to e5.

21 Bxf5 Rf6 22 Qd3 g6! 23 Qxf3 Rxf5 24 Qe2 Rf7 25 a5! Kg7 26 Reb1!

Both sides have played computer-perfect chess and White has emerged with a dangerous threat to tie Black down with Rb6. It now becomes clear that Black must give up a pawn in search of counterplay. The question is, how to hand over the pawn?

Karpov understands that Rb6 is coming. Should he play 26 ... Qf6 and continue play on the kingside, or should he play 26 ... Rb8 - ? As it turns out, Black may be drawing with either line.

26 ... Rb8!



Karpov's sublimely profound idea challenges the computer's assessment and reminds us of his past days of domination as world champion.

The alternative 26 ... Qf6! should also hold the draw as 27 Rb6 is then met by the shot 27 ... Re8! 28 Qf1 (taking the e8-rook allows perpetual

check) 28 ... Qf3 (threatening ... Re2) 29 Re1 Rfe7 30 Rxe7+ Rxe7 31 Rxc6 Re2 32 Rc7+ Kf8 33 Rb7 Qe4 34 Rb1 Ke7 and I don't see how White makes progress. Going back, White might try 27 Ra2!? c5 28 Rb6 Re7 29 Qd1 Rae8 30 Kg2 Re1 31 Rb7+ R8e7 32 Qxe1 Rxb7 and remains a little better, but I don't believe it's enough for a win.

27 Qxa6

Miraculously, Black seems to have enough play to hold the game.

27 ... Qf6! 28 Qf1

Instead:

a) 28 Rxb8 Qxf2+ allows Black perpetual check.

b) 28 Rf1 Qf3 29 Qxc6 Rb2 30 Qxd6 Rxf2 31 Qe5+ Kh6 32 Rxf2 Qxf2+ and, again, it's perpetual check.

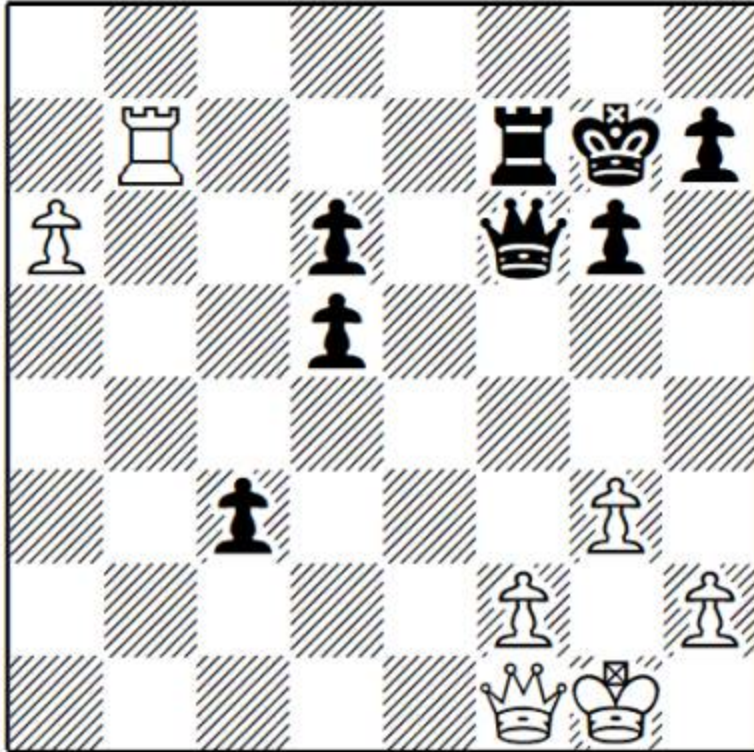
28 ... Rxb1 29 Rxb1 c5! 30 a6

If 30 dxc5 dxc5 31 Qe1 d4 32 cxd4 cxd4, Black should manage to draw.

30 ... cxd4 31 Rb7!

White's a-pawn looks far more dangerous than any of Black's passed pawns. Karpov, however, has seen deeply into the position and, despite the computer's completely winning assessment for White, saw that he can hold the game here.

31 ... dxc3

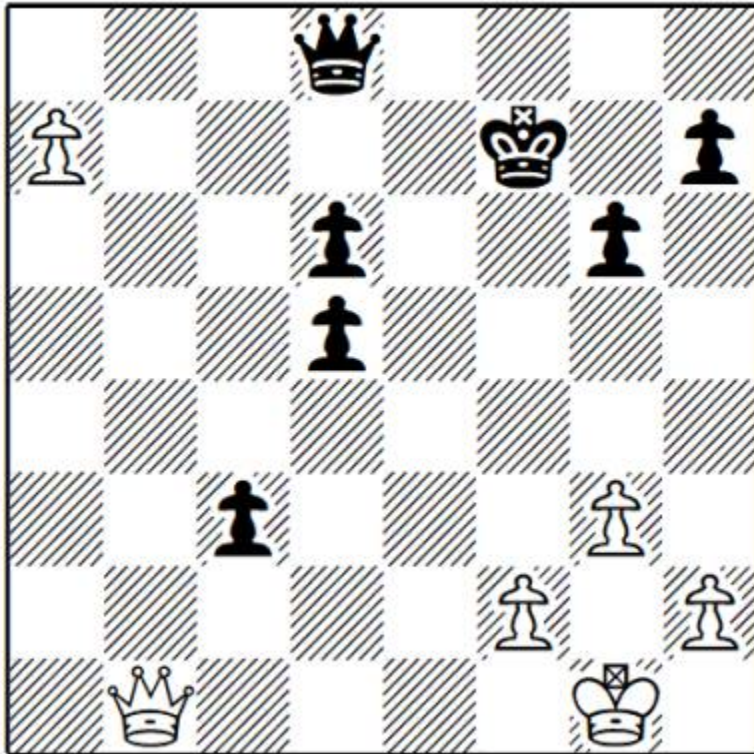


Moro must now choose between 32 a7 and 32 Rxf7+.

32 Rxf7+!?

This decision allows Black back into the game. It's difficult to say if White can make progress in the line where he promotes with 32 a7 Rxb7 33 a8Q Rc7 34 Qxd5 c2 35 Qc1 h6 36 h4 h5. This position is Karpov's remarkable idea when he played 26 ... Rb8!. White is so badly tied down by Black's passed c2-pawn that he is unable to win, despite the computer's optimistic "+3" assessment and White's extra queen.

32 ... Kxf7 33 a7 Qd8 34 Qb1



Exercise (combination alert): White threatens Qb7+, followed by a8Q. How does Black hold the draw?

34 ... c2!

Answer: Deflection. Karpov's lengthy convalescence has come to an end and his position gets a clean bill of health.

35 Qb7+!?

After this overly ambitious move, only Black can win. More circumspect is 35 Qxc2 Qa5! 36 Qd1 Qxa7 37 Qxd5+ Ke7 38 Qg8 Kf6, when the game should end in a draw.

35 ... Ke6 36 Qc6

Once again, White should go for the draw with 36 a8Q c1Q+ 37 Kg2 Qxa8 38 Qxa8 Qc4 39 Qe8+ Kf6 40 Qf8+ Ke6 41 Qe8+.

36 ... Qa5! 37 a8Q Qxa8! 38 Qxa8 c1Q+ 39 Kg2 Qc7

So now Black is a pawn up and it is White who must fight for the draw.

40 h4!?

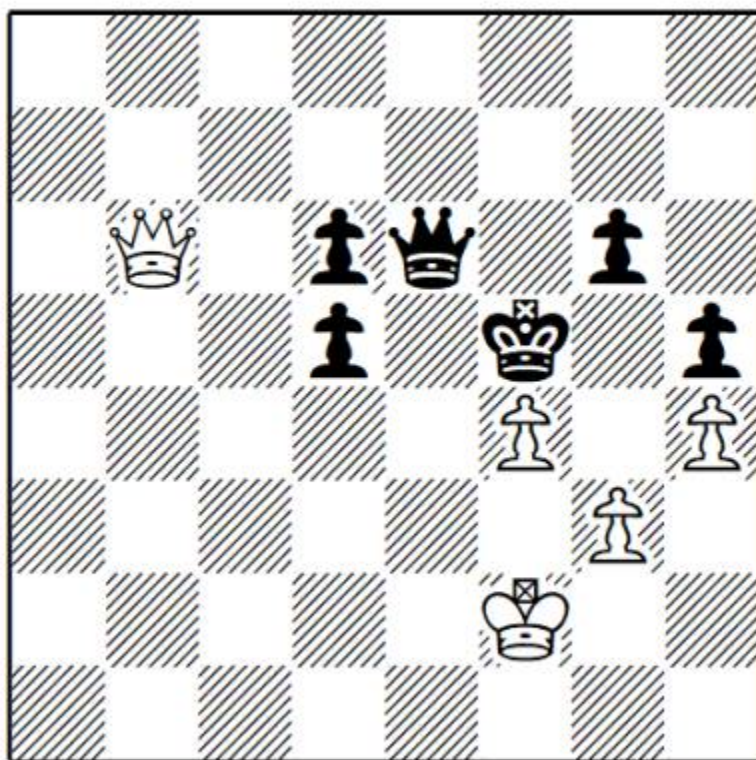
Morozevich acts as if he can draw any time he pleases and pursues his non-existent win with evangelical fervour. It was more sensible to take the immediate draw with 40 Qg8+ Ke5 41 Qh8+ Kf5 42 Qf8+ with perpetual check via 42 ... Ke4 43 Qf4+ Kd3 44 Qf3+ Kc4 45 Qe2+ Kc5 46 Qc2+ Kb6 47 Qb2+ Kc6 48 Qc3+ Kd7 49 Qg7+ etc, since Black must avoid 42 ... Kg5?? 43 Qf4+ Kh5 44 Qh4 mate.

40 ... Qf7 41 f4!?

Moro will later regret his decision to create a hole on g4. 41 Qc8+ Ke7 42 Qc3 is a clearer path to the draw.

41 ... h5 42 Kf3 Qe7 43 Qc8+ Kf7 44 Kf2 Qe6 45 Qb7+ Kf6 46 Qb2+ Kf5 47 Qb6??

And here correct is 47 Qc2+! Qe4 (or 47 ... Kf6 48 Qb2+ Kf5 49 Qc2+) 48 Qc8+ Kf6 49 Qf8+ Ke6 50 Qe8+ with perpetual check again.



Exercise (planning): White has declined the draw one time too many. Find Black's winning plan.

47 ... Kg4!

Answer: Infiltrate with the king. White no longer can deliver a perpetual check and he is dead lost.

48 Qd4 Qe4 49 Qd1+ Kf5

The white queen's checks have run out.

50 Qb3 Qd4+

Also strong is 50 ... d4 51 Qf7+ Kg4 52 Qd7+ Qf5 53 Qxd6 Qc2+ 54 Kf1 Kf3 and Black wins.

51 Kf3 Qc4 52 Qb8 Qf1+ 53 Ke3 Kg4

More efficient is 53 ... Qe1+ 54 Kf3 Qc3+ 55 Ke2 d4.

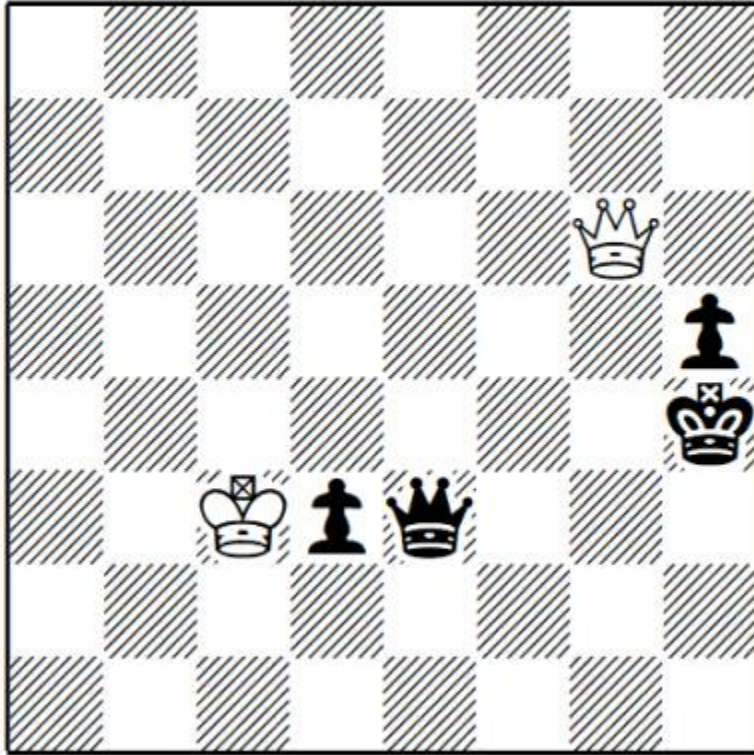
54 Qxd6 Qe1+ 55 Kd4 Qe4+ 56 Kc5 Qf5!

The hasty 56 ... Kxg3?? allows 57 f5+ Kg2 58 fxc6, when it is White's past pawn which is faster.

57 Qe7 Kxg3 58 Qe1+ Kxf4 59 Qg1 Qe4 60 Qg5+ Kf3 61 Qf6+ Ke2 62 Qb2+ Ke3 63 Qf6

Black's winning process is lengthy but not in doubt.

63 ... d4 64 Qg5+ Ke2 65 Kb4 d3+ 66 Kc3 Qf5 67 Qg2+ Ke3 68 Qg3+ Ke2 69 Qg2+ Qf2 70 Qe4+ Qe3 71 Qg2+ Ke1 72 Qh1+ Kf2 73 Qh2+ Kf3 74 Qh3+ Kf4 75 Qh2+ Kg4 76 Qg2+ Kxh4 77 Qxg6

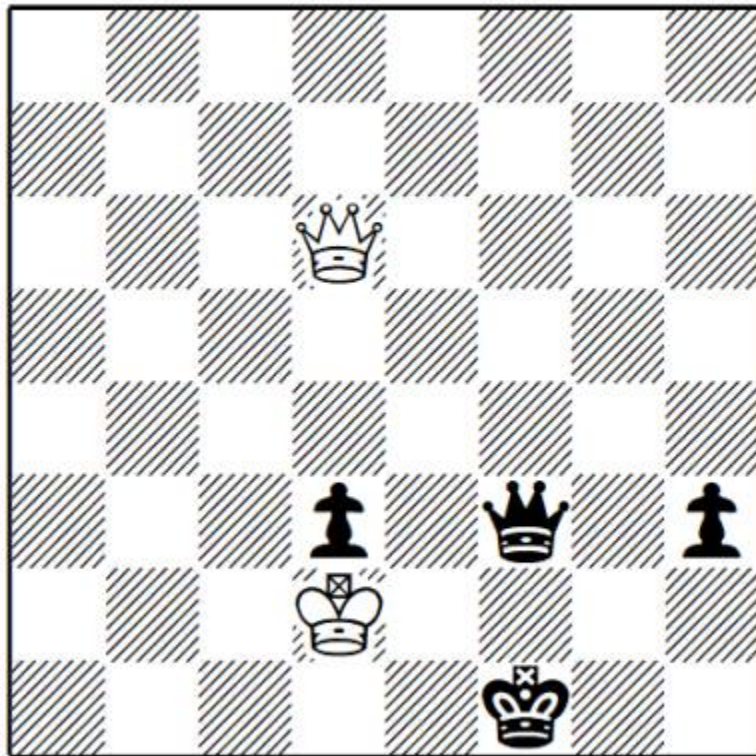


Exercise (planning): Karpov missed an immediate winning idea.
What should he play?

77 ... Qf3

Answer: There was a clever simplification idea with 77 ... d2+! 78 Kc2 Qd4! (now White is deprived of checks and Black threatens to promote) 79 Kd1 Qg4+!, when the king and pawn ending is won for Black after 80 Qxg4+ h4 81 Kxd2 g3 82 Ke2 Kh3 83 Kf1 Kh2 and the g-pawn goes through.

78 Qd6 Kh3 79 Qe6+ Kg2 80 Qg6+ Kf1 81 Qg5 Kf2 82 Qh4+ Kg2 83 Qg5+ Kh3 84 Qg6 h4 85 Qg1 Qe2 86 Qh1+ Kg3 87 Qg1+ Qg2 88 Qe3+ Qf3 89 Qg1+ Kh3 90 Qg5 Qg3 91 Qf5+ Kh2 92 Kd2 h3 93 Qe6 Kg2 94 Qe4+ Qf3 95 Qg6+ Kf1 96 Qd6



Exercise (combination alert): The feel of impending death caresses White's position. How did Karpov force the win?

96 ... h2!

Answer: Step 1: Attraction.

97 Qxh2 Qe2+! 0-1

Step 2: Simplification.

Game 31

M.Savic-B.Ivanovic

Sozina 2004

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 d4 d5 6 Bd3 Nc6 7 0-0 Be7 8 Re1 Bg4 9 c3 Nf6

This is a sturdy line, built for those who have the strength to work the field toward a draw or a win but never a loss. This admittedly quiet move is playable for those of us with the extra safety-first gene, who don't want to weaken with ... f7-f5, sacrifice the b7-pawn and then go after White's king. By retreating the knight, Black reaches an excruciatingly dull Exchange French pawn structure where the c6-knight is perhaps slightly misplaced. Yet the inherent dullness of the position should allow Black to equalize.

10 Nbd2

After 10 Bg5 0-0 11 Nbd2 h6 12 Bh4 Nh5! Black equalizes. White is given a choice between the exchange on e7 which allows the misplaced c6-knight back into play, or playing the bishop to g3, which hands Black the bishop pair as in M.Lavrov-S.Bogdanovich, Kharkov 2003.

10 ... 0-0 11 h3

11 Nf1 Re8 12 h3 Bh5 13 Ng3 Bg6 transposes.

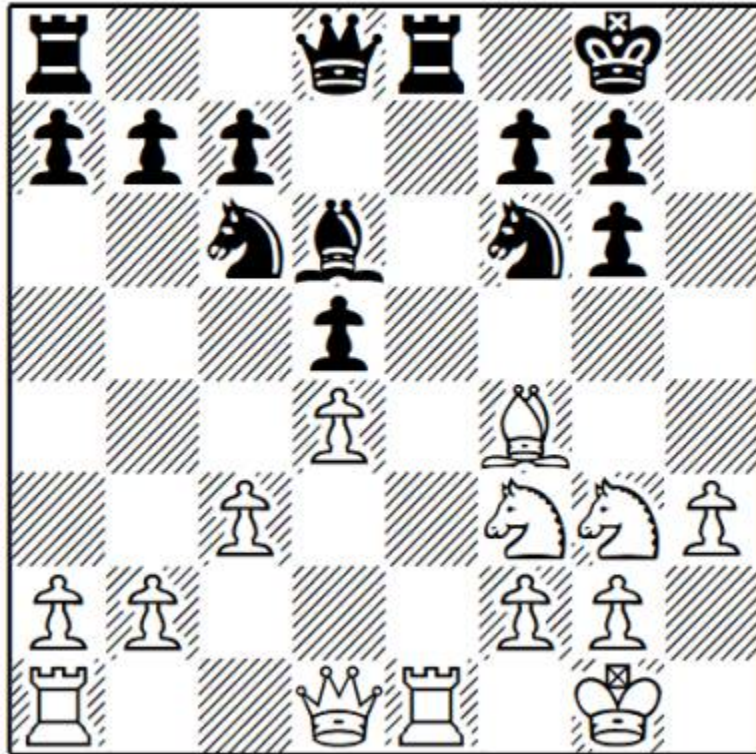
11 ... Bh5 12 Nf1 Bg6 13 Ng3 Re8

13 ... Bd6 14 Nf5 Ne7 is also equal.

14 Bxg6

White has absolutely nothing from the opening. If he has any serious desire to win, he should go for 14 Nf5 Ne4 15 Nxe7+ Nxe7 16 Ne5 Nd6 17 Nxc6 Nxc6, when White can try to make something from the bishop pair, although even here the bishops are not so impressive given the completely symmetrical structure.

14 ... hxg6 15 Bf4 Bd6



If a draw with the black pieces is your goal, this is not such a bad place to be.

16 Rxe8+ Nxe8 17 Bxd6 Qxd6

17 ... Nxd6 looks more natural.

18 Qb3 Nf6 19 Re1

19 Qxb7 Rb8 20 Qa6 Rxb2 21 Qc8+ Qd8 22 Qa6 Qd6 23 Qc8+ is a draw by repetition.

19 ... b6 20 Qa4 a6

Also possible is 20 ... a5 to free the a8-rook.

21 Ne5 b5!?

Black allows the creation of a hole on c5, in exchange for some queenside space.

Simpler is 21 ... Nxe5! 22 dxe5 (22 Rxe5 Nd7 23 Re3 Nf8 is equal) 22 ... Qe6 23 Re3 Nd7, when Black's majority looks slightly more useful than White's.

22 Qd1 Re8

Here 22 ... a5!, intending ... b5-b4, is more consistent with the earlier ... b7-b5.

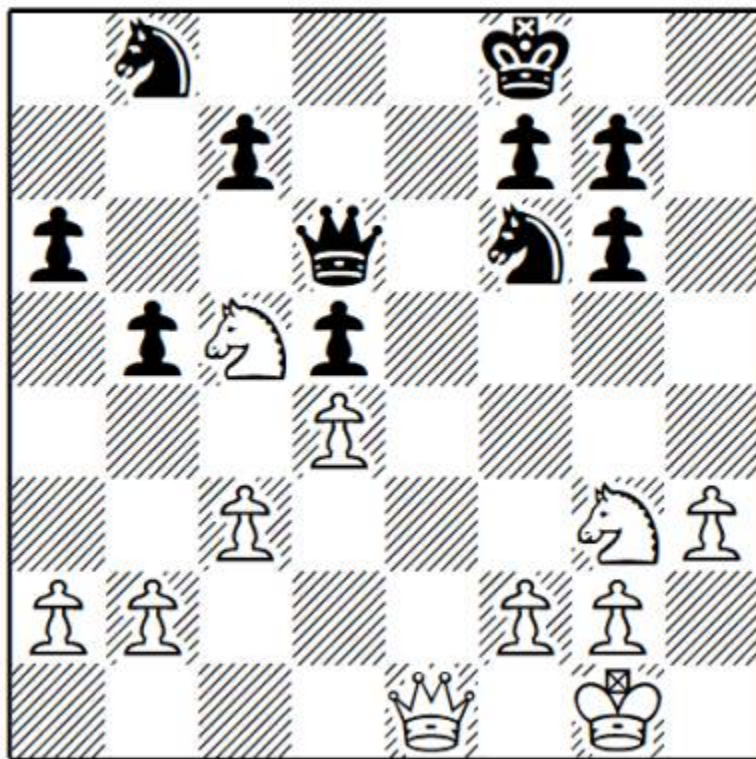
23 Nd3

White eyes the c5-hole.

23 ... Rxe1+ 24 Qxe1 Kf8 25 Nc5

Black pays the temporary price for weakening c5.

25 ... Nb8!



The c5-invader will be swiftly challenged via the d7-square.

26 Nf1 Nbd7 27 Nd3 a5

It is unlikely White has anything after 27 ... c5!? 28 Nxc5 Nxc5 29 dxc5 Qxc5 30 Qe5 Qe7 31 Qb8+ Qe8 32 Qxe8+ Kxe8 33 Ne3 Ke7 34 Kf1 Kd6 35 Ke2.

28 Nd2 a4 29 Nf3 Ne4 30 a3

Now that Black can get a knight to c4 he is certainly not worse. For White, 30 Nd2 is more accurate, when 30 ... Qe7 31 Nf1 Nd6 32 Qd2 looks even.

30 ... c6 31 Nfe5 Nxe5!?

31 ... Qc7 is again even.

32 Nxe5

After 32 dxe5!? Qd7 33 g4 f6, chances are balanced. How many ways are there to say the same thing?

32 ... Nf6 33 Qe3 Kg8 34 f3 Nd7 35 Nd3 Kf8 36 Kf2 f6 37 g3 Kf7 38 h4 Nf8

38 ... Nb6, heading for c4, is also possible.

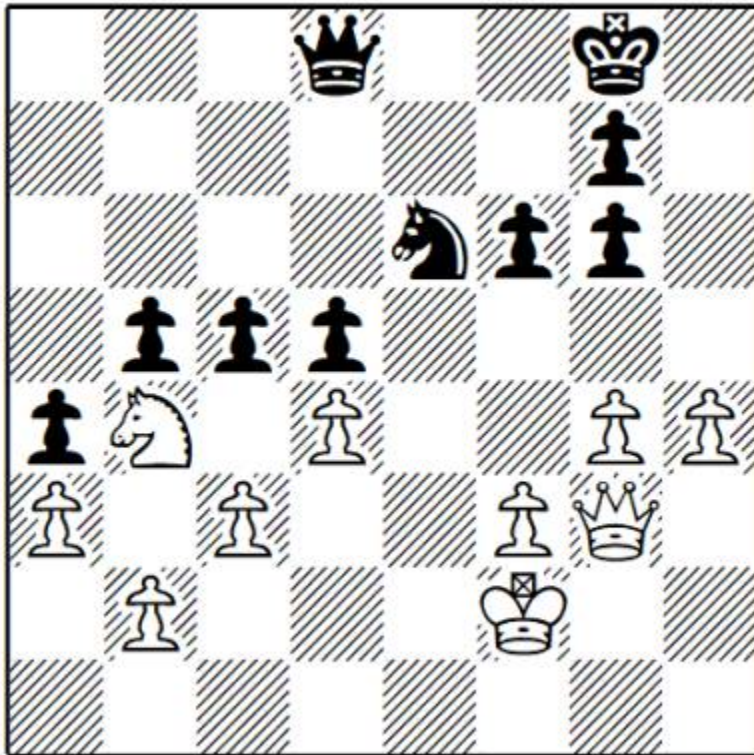
39 Nf4 Qd7

It is difficult to figure out who is playing for the win. 39 ... Ne6 40 Qxe6+ Qxe6 41 Nxe6 Kxe6 is a dead draw.

40 Kg2 Qf5 41 Nd3 Ne6 42 Nb4 Nd8 43 g4 Qd7 44 Qf4 Kg8 45 Qb8 Kh7 46 Kf2 Qe7 47 Qh2 47 ... Kg8 48 Qf4 Kh7 49 Nd3 Ne6 50 Qb8 Qd7 51 Qh2 Kg8 52 Qb8+

Neither side can do anything here without taking on serious risk.

52 ... Kh7 53 Nb4 Nd8 54 Qh2 Kg8 55 Nd3 Ne6 56 Qg3 Qd8 57 Nb4 c5!?



Is Black fighting back, or is he drinking the hemlock? By taking on an isolated d-pawn, Black perhaps applies logic in reverse in order to provoke his opponent. Waiting can feel like a form of suffocation of spirit. However, in some positions, rather than force matters, the optimal strategy is to do nothing, conserve strength and wait for an opportunity to arrive. As it turns out, Black was successful with his idea, since it encouraged White to overextend later on. Nevertheless, Black's move is risky since it weakens his queenside pawn chain.

58 dxc5 Nxc5

Isolans have a way of being 50% asset, 50% liability. From this point on White over-estimates his own position, while underestimating his opponent's. The computer calls it dead even here.

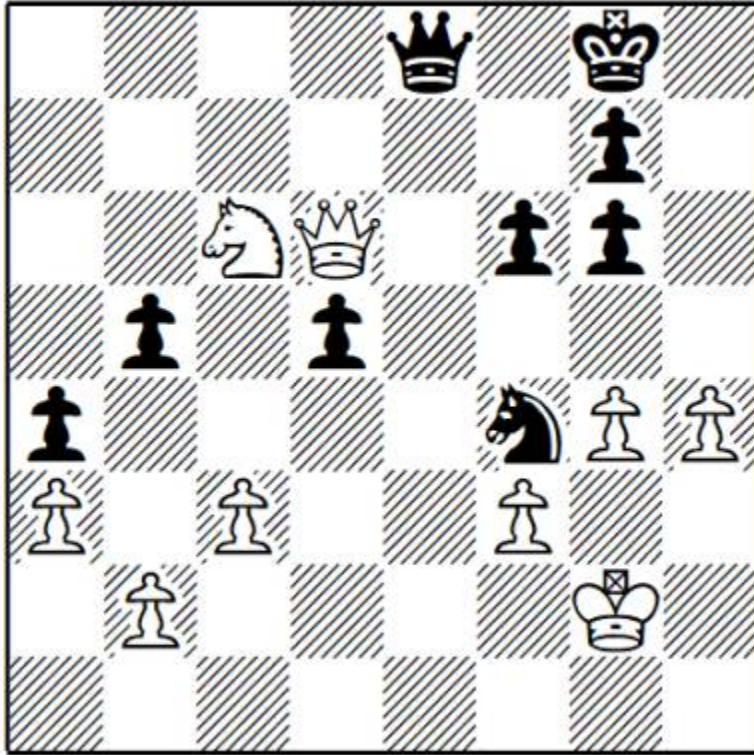
59 Kg2 Ne6 60 Nc6 Qe8

Or 60 ... Qd7 61 Qb8+ Kh7 62 Qxb5 Nf4+ 63 Kf2 Qe8 64 Nd4 Nh3+ 65 Kg3 (not 65 Kf1?? Qe3 66 Kg2 Nf4+ 67 Kf1 Nd3 and White must hand over his queen to evade mate) 65 ... Qe1+! 66 Kxh3 Qh1+ 67 Kg3 Qg1+ 68 Kf4 Qc1+ with perpetual check.

61 Qd6

White's options appear full of promise but short on actual delivery or substance, as demonstrated after Black's next move.

61 ... Nf4+!



62 Qxf4 Qxc6 63 Kf2 Kh7

Another super-drawish position, yet with neither side willing to offer or accept a draw.

64 Ke3 Qe6+ 65 Kd2 Qb6 66 Qe3 Qd6

66 ... Qxe3+?? is suicidal since White's king mops up Black's pawns.

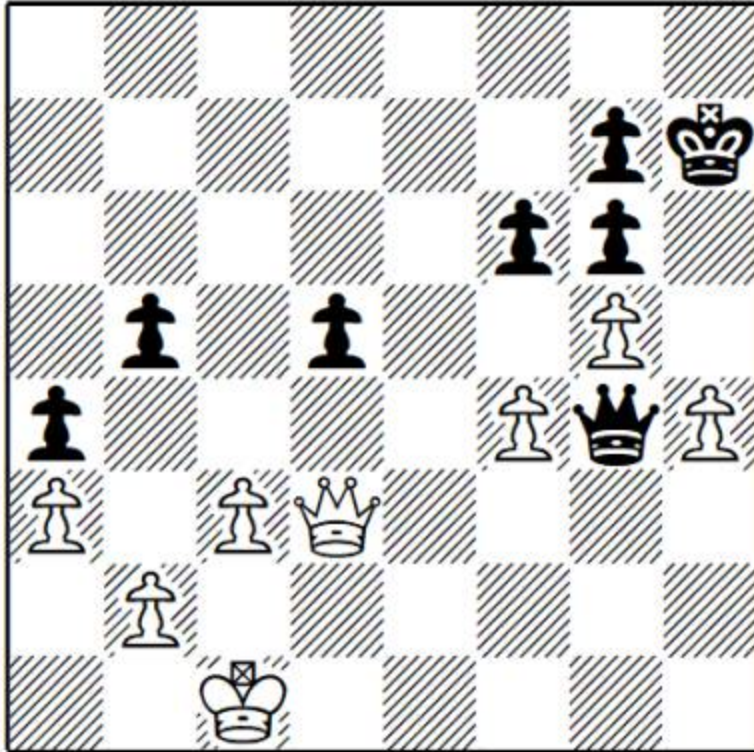
67 f4

This isn't a mistake just yet; it's more the start of White's future overextension.

67 ... Qd7 68 g5 Qf5 69 Kc1 Qd7 70 Qd3?!

With 70 Qd4 White remains even.

70 ... Qg4!



Suddenly Black has the better chances.

71 gxf6 Qxf4+ 72 Kb1 gxf6 73 Qxb5 Qe4+ 74 Ka1 g5!

Before White is evidence of the decay of his position. Black creates a passed pawn and it's not so easy for White to do so on the other wing. 74 ... Kh6 is strong too.

75 Qd7+ Kg6 76 hxg5 fxe5 77 Qd6+ Kf5 78 Qd7+?

White is better off trying 78 Qf8+! Kg4 79 Qg7.

78 ... Kf4 79 Qd6+ Kf3 80 Qf6+ Qf4 81 Qe6 Qe4 82 Qh3+

After 82 Qf6+ Qf4 83 Qe6 g4! 84 Qxd5+ Kf2 85 Qc5+ Kf1 the passed g-pawn will be decisive.

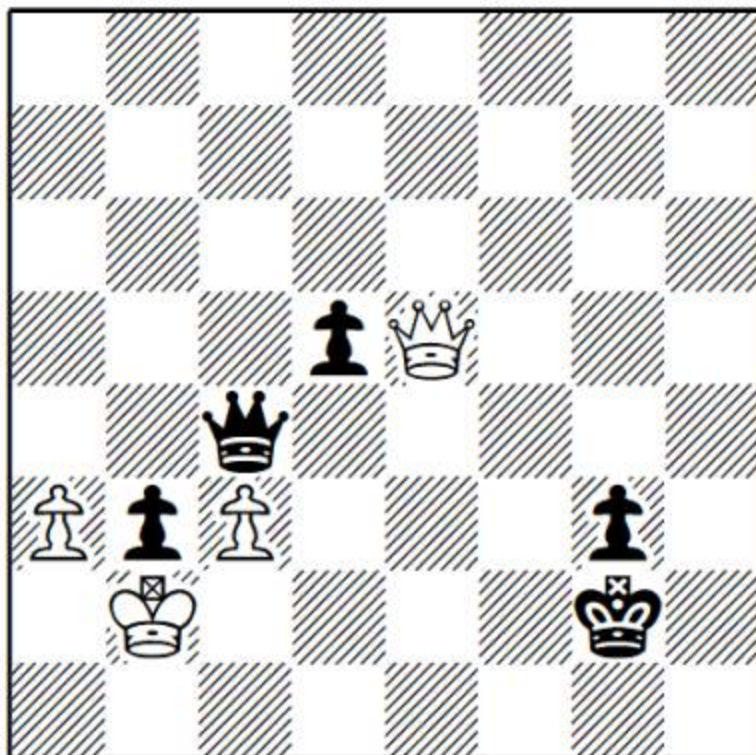
82 ... Kf2 83 Qh2+ Kf3 84 Qh3+ Kf4 85 Qh2+ Kg4 86 Qg1+ Kf5 87 Qf2+ Qf4 88 Qa7 Qf1+! 89 Ka2 Qc4+ 90 Ka1 g4

White is completely lost since he is unable either to deliver perpetual check, or halt Black's passed g-pawn.

91 Qb8 Ke4! 92 Qh2 Qf1+ 93 Ka2 Kf3! 94 Qh5 Qc4+ 95 Ka1 Kg2! 96 Qe5 g3 97 b3

Desperation. However, after 97 Qg5 Qd3 98 Qh6 Kf2 99 Qf6+ Qf3 100 Qh4 Qe4 101 Qf6+ Ke2 102 Qg5 g2 103 Ka2 Kf2 104 Qf6+ Ke1 105 Qg5 Qc4+ 106 Kb1 Qf1, it's game over.

97 ... axb3 98 Kb2



Exercise (combination alert): How did Black end the game?

98 ... Qe4! 0-1

Answer: Simplification/double attack. Black simultaneously threatens to exchange queens and also force mate with ... Qc2+.

Game 32

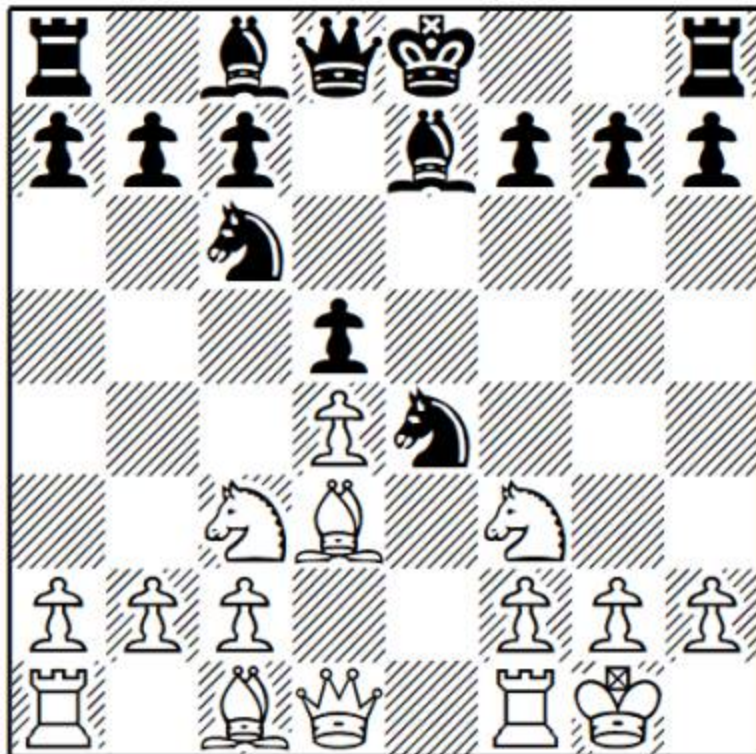
Y.Quesada Perez-L.Dominguez Perez

Cuban Championship, Matanzas 2016

1 e4 e5

The structure reached in this game resembles the following line of the French Winawer: 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 exd5 exd5 5 Bd3 Nc6 6 a3 Bxc3+ 7 bxc3. The major difference in the Petroff is that Black retains the dark-squared bishop, so maybe we get a slightly superior version of the position reached in the French Defence.

2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 d4 d5 6 Bd3 Nc6 7 0-0 Be7 8 Nc3



With this move White is willing to accept some structural damage in order to remove Black's e4-knight.

8 ... Nxc3

The most principled move. 8 ... Bf5 and 8 ... f5 are possible too but won't be considered in this book.

9 bxc3

Suddenly the game is not so drawish anymore. Here are the imbalances:

1) White's structure has been potentially weakened, since if he plays c3-c4, a hanging pawn position will arise. If White declines to play c3-c4, then Black may later blockade c4 with ... Na5. White's a-pawn is also isolated. It

doesn't feel weak right now, yet perhaps much later Black can slip a queen to a3, if White's dark-squared bishop has moved or been exchanged away.

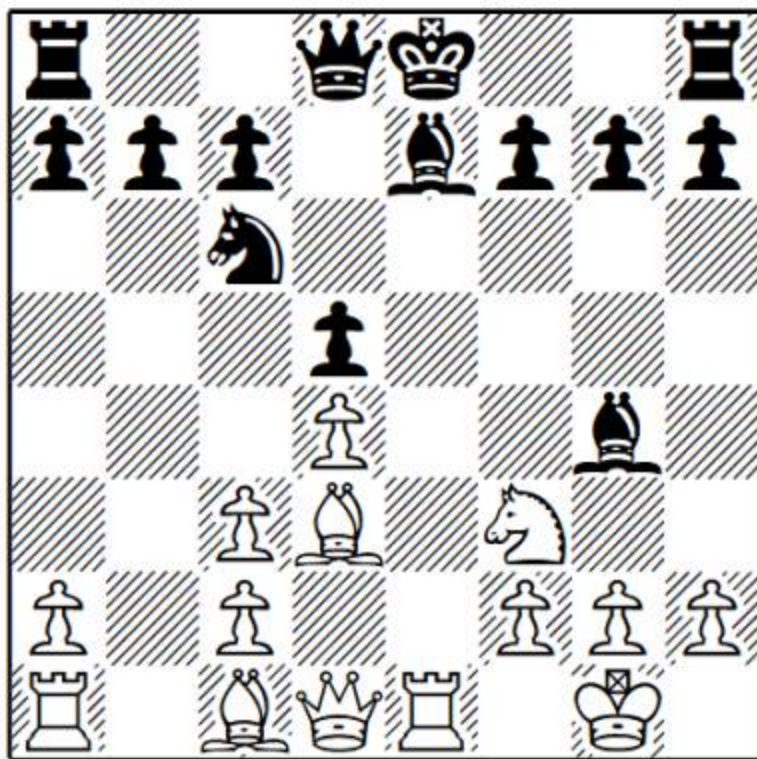
2) White's centre has been strengthened, since the b-pawn is now a more central doubled c3-pawn, which reinforces d4.

3) The b-file has opened for White's rook. This usually doesn't mean much here, since Black rarely castles queenside in this line and the file pressure can be easily met with a future ... b7-b6.

9 ... Bg4

Pinning the f3-knight and developing the bishop, before White is able to play h2-h3.

10 Re1



In the next game we look at 10 Rb1.

10 ... 0-0 11 Rb1

Instead, 11 Bf4 Bd6 12 Bxd6 Bxf3! 13 Qxf3 Qxd6 14 Re3 Rae8 15 Rae1 Re7 16 Rxe7 Nxe7 17 h4 Rd8 18 c4 b6 (preventing c4-c5) 19 c3 h6 20 cxd5 Nxd5 21 Bc4 c6 22 Re5 Nf6 23 Qf4 Qd7 (23 ... Qa3! 24 Qf3 b5 25 Bf1 b4 Black stands no worse) 24 g3 Kf8 25 Bb3 was 1/2-1/2 A.Grischuk-

V.Kramnik, Kazan 2011. White looks maybe a smidgeon better due to his superior minor piece.

11 ... Rb8 12 h3

12 Bf4 Bd6 is equal.

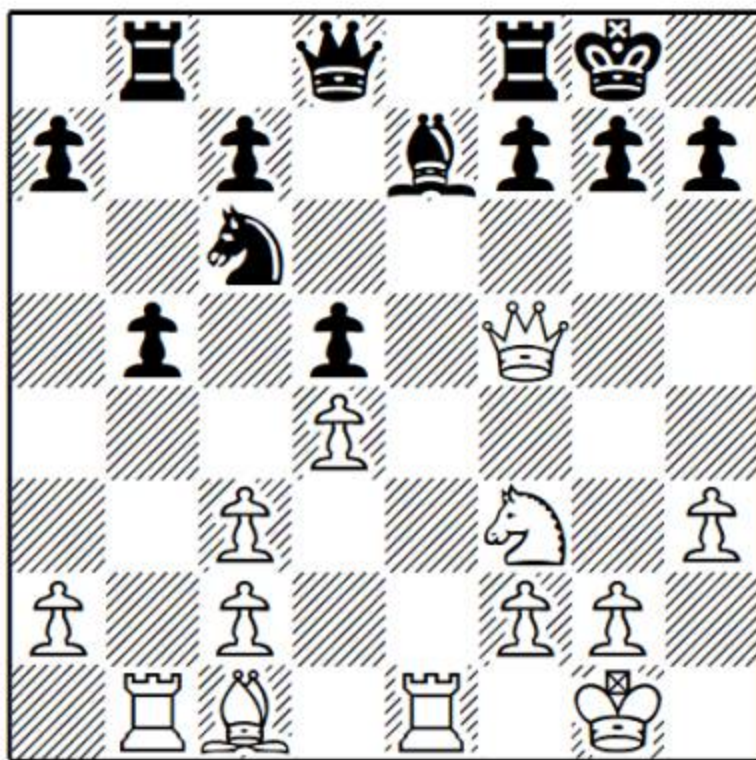
12 ... Bh5 13 Bf5

White plans to unpin with Qd3.

13 ... Bg6

13 ... Na5 is untried but looks like a good option for Black.

14 Qd3 Bxf5 15 Qxf5 b5!



This achieves two things:

1) Black fixes the c3- and d4-pawns on the same colour squares as White's remaining bishop.

2) Black clamps down on the c4-square and now White must be on the alert for ... Na5 and ... Nc4, occupying the hole.

16 Bf4 g6 17 Qd3 a6 18 Re2

This move was a novelty. Previous games had seen 18 a4 bxa4 19 Rxb8 (but not 19 Qxa6? Rxb1 20 Rxb1 Qa8!, which is heavily in Black's favour,

since the passed a-pawn will soon tie White down) 19 ... Nxb8 with a balanced position.

18 ... Bd6

Black achieved complete equality.

19 Qd2 Bxf4 20 Qxf4 Kg7 21 Rbe1 Qd6! 22 Qc1

After 22 Qxd6? cxd6 23 Nd2 Rfc8 24 Nf1 b4, White's central structure is dissolving.

22 ... a5!

Black plans to generate counterplay by pushing the b-pawn which in turn undermines White's c3/d4 complex.

23 h4!

White hopes to generate play on the other wing.

23 ... b4

23 ... h5! looks better, shutting down White's options to push his h-pawn.

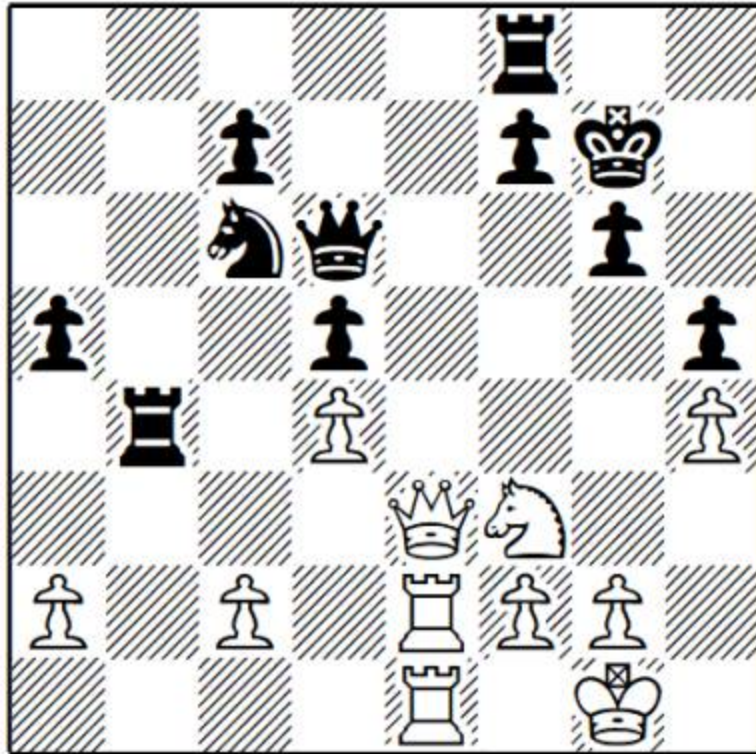
24 Qd2

After 24 h5! bxc3 25 a3 a4 26 Re3 the computer slightly prefers White's chances.

24 ... bxc3 25 Qxc3 Rb4 26 Qe3

White should play 26 h5! while he still has the chance.

26 ... h5!



27 c3 Rb6 28 Ng5 a4

Now White must watch out for Black's knight entering c4.

29 Qd3 Qf6 30 Qc2 a3 31 Qa4 Qd6 32 g3 Rb2 33 Kg2

After 33 Rxb2? axb2 34 Rb1 Rb8 White has no way to win the b2-pawn, which clearly ties him down.

33 ... Rxe2 34 Rxe2 Rb8 35 Nh3

35 Qa6 Rb6 36 Qa4 Rb8 37 Qa6 Rb6 is a draw by repetition.

35 ... Ne7 36 Nf4

White hopes that the overgrown, overfed a3-pawn has pushed too far up the board and is about to fall. He wants to play Nd4, Nb4 and Qxa3.

36 ... Nf5!

Black's knight eyes White's h4-pawn.

37 Nd3

37 Re5 is tempting but only leads to a draw after 37 ... Qf6! 38 Nxd5 Nxe4+! 39 gxh4 Qxh4 (threatening ... Rb1 with a winning attack) 40 Nb4 Qg4+ 41 Kf1 h4! 42 Qc6 h3 43 Re7 h2 (threatening ... Qg1+) 44 Rxf7+! (not 44 Qh1? Qh3+ 45 Ke2 c5! 46 dxc5 Rd8 47 Re4 Qh5+ 48 f3 Qg5! 49

Nd3 Qg1 50 Nf2 Rd1! and Black wins due to the overloaded defender) 44 ... Kxf7 45 Qxc7+ Ke6 46 Qe5+ Kf7 47 Qc7+ with perpetual check.

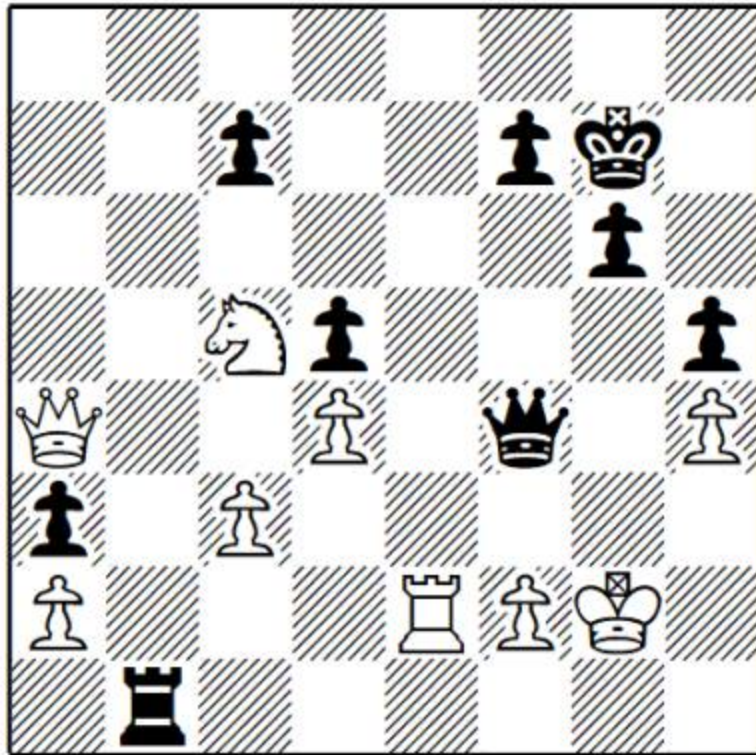
37 ... Rb1! 38 Nc5

White is unable to play 38 Nb4?? as it is crushed by 38 ... Nxe4+! 39 gxe4 (39 Kh2 Nf3+ 40 Kg2 Qf6 forces mate) 39 ... Qf4 40 Qd7 Qxe4 41 Kf3 Rb2! 42 Nxd5 Qh1+ 43 Ke3 Qc1+ 44 Kf3 Qd1 45 Qe7 Qh1+ 46 Kg3 h4+ 47 Kg4 Qg2+ 48 Kf4 Qxd5. White is busted since the a2-pawn will fall.

38 ... Nxe4+!

Annihilation of the defensive barrier. This shot guarantees Black the draw – or, should White mishandle the defence, a win.

39 gxe4 Qf4



Exercise (critical decision): The choice is between 40 Re3, intending a third

rank defence, or 40 Qd7, returning the queen into play. One line is correct,

while the other loses. Which one would you play?

40 Re3??

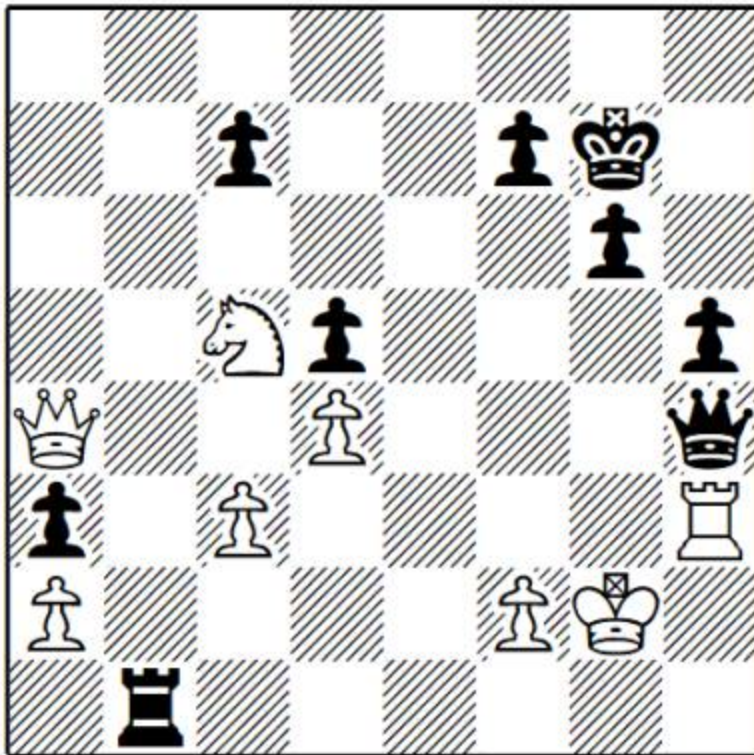
From this moment on, White's king will never know peace.

Answer: It is critical for White to bring his queen to the defence with 40 Qd7! Qxh4 41 Ne6+! Kh6 42 Qxf7, when Black's king is caught in a mating net, so he is forced to bail out with perpetual check: 42 ... Qh1+ (or 42 ... Qg4+ 43 Kh2 Qh4+ 44 Kg2 Qg4+) 43 Kg3 Rg1+ 44 Kf4 Rg4+ 45 Ke5 Re4+ 46 Rxe4 Qxe4+ 47 Kf6 Qh4+! 48 Ke5 Qe4+ etc.

40 ... Qg4+ 41 Rg3 Qxh4

Warning: The Petroff isn't one of those instant gratification lines. Our reward often comes after long plodding and toil. So don't expect the joyous surge of an attack by move 15. In this case Black's decisive attack arrives late in the game.

42 Rh3 Qg4+ 43 Rg3 Qh4 44 Rh3



Exercise (planning): What is the path to Black's winning attack?

44 ... Qg5+!

Answer: Transfer the queen to c1, via g5.

45 Rg3 Qc1

Threatening ... Qh1 mate.

46 Kf3

The perpetual check attempt 46 Rxc6 fxc6 47 Qd7+ fails after 47 ... Kh6 48 Qh3 Qg1+ 49 Kf3 Rc1! and Black wins.

46 ... Qxc3+ 47 Kg2 Qe1! 48 Kf3

There is no way to cover the king. 48 Rxc6+ fails (just as it did in the previous note) after 48 ... fxc6 49 Qd7+ Kh6 and the checks run out.

48 ... Rb2! 0-1

Since 49 Rg2 Qc3+ 50 Kf4 Qh3 51 Rg1 Rxf2+ 52 Ke5 Rf5 is mate.

Game 33

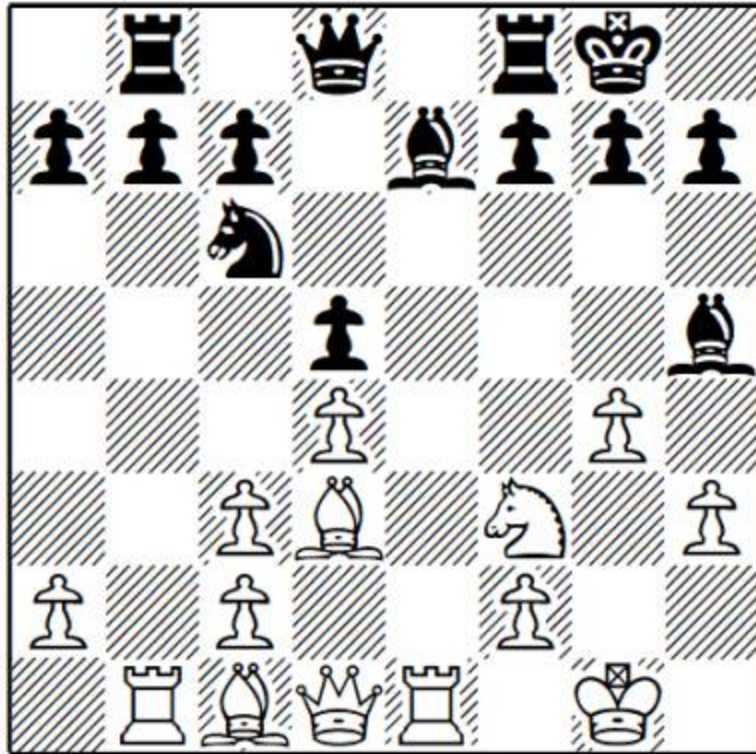
V.Gashimov-M.Illescas Cordoba

Barcelona 2007

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 d4 d5 6 Bd3 Be7 7 0-0 Nc6 8 Nc3 Nxc3 9 bxc3 Bg4 10 Rb1

As we saw last game, there isn't much difference between playing 10 Rb1 and 10 Re1, since the lines usually merge and transpose.

10 ... Rb8 11 h3 Bh5 12 Re1 0-0 13 g4!?



Gashimov is willing to weaken his pawn cover around his king to seize more space and maybe go after Black's rather well-defended king.

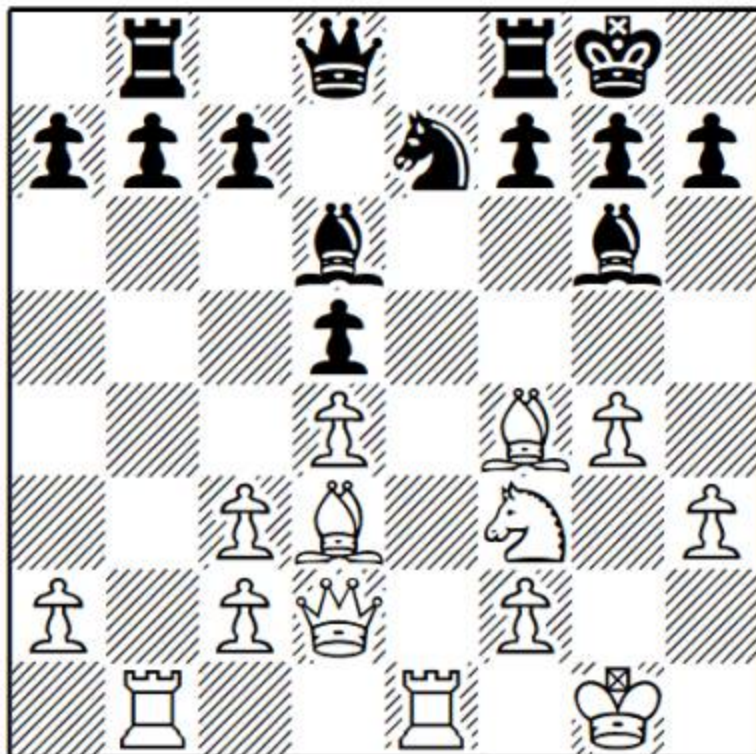
13 ... Bg6 14 Bf4

Here 14 Ne5 (this move alters the pawn structure into kingside versus queenside pawn majorities) 14 ... Nxe5 15 dxe5 was M.Bortnyk-Y.Kuzubov, Lvov 2017. Play remains balanced after 15 ... Qd7 16 f4 Bxd3 17 cxd3 b5.

14 ... Bd6 15 Qd2

Chances were also balanced in D.Rook-S.Shcherbatyuk, ICCF email 2011, after 15 Ne5 Bxd3 16 cxd3 Bxe5 17 dxe5 Re8 18 Bg3 Qe7 19 Qc2.

15 ... Ne7



Black creates the possibility of playing ... c7-c5, followed by ... c5-c4, which in turn would force Bxg6.

A later game deviated here with 15 ... a6 16 Bg5 f6 17 Bf4 Qd7 18 Bxd6 Qxd6 19 Nh4 Bxd3 20 Qxd3 Qd7 21 Nf5 g6 22 Ne3 b5!, which was fine for Black in A.Kargin-E.Kislik, Budapest 2011.

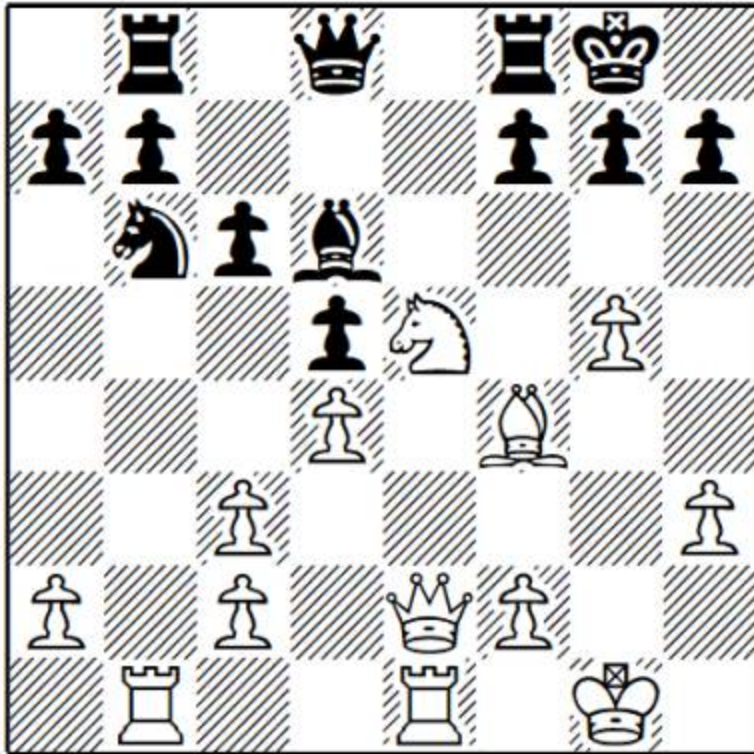
16 Ne5 Bxd3 17 Nxd3

After 17 cxd3?! f6 18 Nf3 Ng6, Black stands slightly better due to White's weakened king's cover.

17 ... Nc8!

Black eyes the c4-hole for his knight and already stands well. This seems even better than 17 ... Ng6 18 Bxd6 cxd6!?, which is at least equal for Black since White's c-pawns are easily as weak as Black's d5-pawn.

18 Ne5 Nb6 19 Qe2 c6 20 g5!?



I sometimes wonder if natural attackers actually know the difference between right and wrong, or do they simply flaunt the fact that they believe they are above the law? My theory is that some of us love the feeling of rage that flows through us when we launch an ultra-aggressive attack, since we feel more alive, and experience heightened sensations compared to our normal neutral mode.

This weakening move at least fuels White's "I'm attacking" narrative. Is this last move premeditated or an action of impulse and opportunity? To my mind White's chances of going off the cliff feel a lot higher than his chances of a successful kingside assault upon Black's king.

20 ... Qc7 21 Qg4 Rbe8 22 Bg3 Re7 23 Re2 Rfe8 24 Rbe1 Qc8!

Threatening ... Qxg4, followed by ... f7-f6, winning a piece.

25 Qxc8

This is certainly not reciprocal love. When our house is on fire we tend to drop ideology and reach for the hose. This exchange is an admission that everything has gone wrong and White's resources are severely restricted.

After 25 Qh4? Qf5 Black seizes the initiative.

25 ... Nxc8 26 Bh4?

26 Kf1 was White's best shot.

26 ... Re6

Now White must factor in ... f7-f6.

However, Black could have played more strongly: 26 ... Bc7! 27 Re3 Nd6 28 g6 f6 29 gxh7+ Kxh7 30 Ng4 Rxe3 31 Rxe3 Rxe3 32 Nxe3 Ba5 and White is busted.

27 Kf1 Ne7 28 f3

28 f4 Nf5 29 Bf2 f6 30 gxf6 gxf6 31 Ng4 Kf7 is an awful ending for White.

28 ... Nf5 29 Bf2 h6

It was better to leave the structure intact and exchange pieces with 29 ... R6e7! (zugzwang; White must move his knight) 30 Nd3 Rxe2 31 Rxe2 Kf8.

30 h4 h5

This way White's bishop must babysit the h4-pawn.

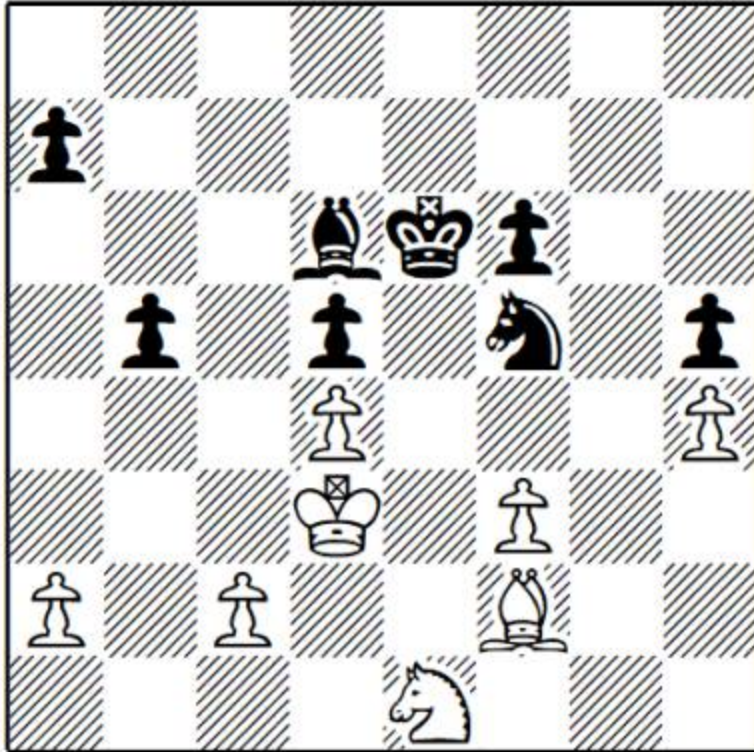
31 c4 f6

Not the best continuation. 31 ... Bxe5! is heavily in Black's favour after 32 cxd5 cxd5 33 Rxe5 Rxe5 34 dxe5 b6.

32 cxd5 cxd5 33 gxf6 gxf6 34 Nd3 Rxe2 35 Rxe2 Rxe2 36 Kxe2 Kf7

White suffers from an inferior bishop, yet the fact that all the rooks have been removed from the board increases his drawing chances.

37 Ne1 Ke6 38 Kd3 b5!



This move fulfils two functions:

1) Black prevents White from liquidating with c2-c4.

2) Black puts his pawns on the opposite colour to his remaining bishop.

39 Ng2 Ne7 40 Be1 Kd7!

The king hopes to try and infiltrate the queenside.

41 Kc3 Nf5

Here 41 ... a5! 42 Kb3 a4+ may be slightly more accurate.

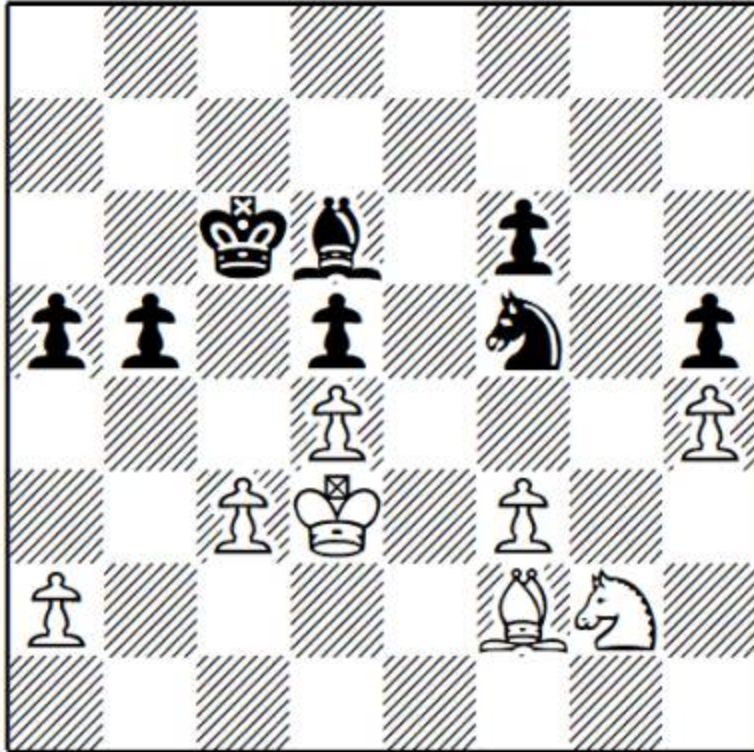
42 Kd3 Kc6

Intending ... b5-b4!, followed by ... Kb5. This induces White's next move.

43 c3

Another white pawn is placed on the same – and therefore wrong – colour as White's remaining bishop.

43 ... a5 44 Bf2



Exercise (planning): Come up with a plan for Black to make progress.

44 ... b4!

Answer: Push the b-pawn. This allows Black's king to infiltrate via b5.

45 cxb4

Or 45 c4 Bc7 46 Ne1 Bf4 47 Ng2 Bh2 48 Ne1 Nd6 49 c5 Nf5 50 Ng2 Bb8 51 Ne1 Bg3! 52 Bxg3 Nxc3 53 Ng2 Nf5 (White's knight is rooted to g2 to defend h4, almost turning the game into pawn ending) 54 Nf4 a4! 55 Nxc3 a3! (threatening ... b4-b3) 56 Kc2 Nxd4+ 57 Kc1 Nxf3 58 Nxf6 Nxc4 and White can resign.

45 ... axb4 46 Kc2 Kb5 47 Kb3 Ne7!

Intending ... Nc6 and ... Na5+, followed by ... Kc4.

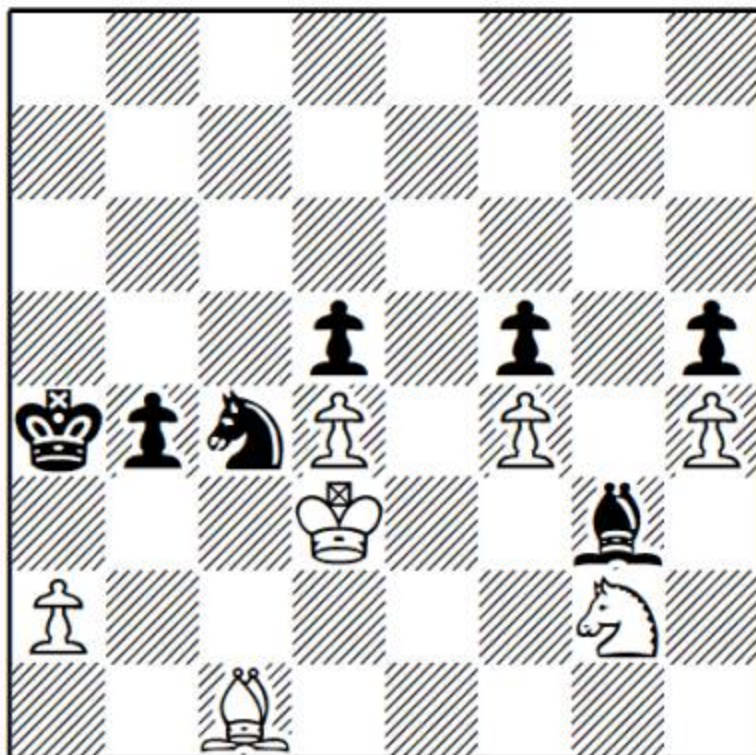
48 Ne3 f5 49 Ng2 Nc6 50 Be3 Bg3!

Zugzwang.

51 f4

Another pawn is induced on to the wrong colour for its remaining bishop. However, 51 Bg1?? allows 51 ... f4!, when White's two minor pieces are deprived of even a single playable move.

51 ... Na5+ 52 Kc2 Ka4 53 Bc1 Nc4 54 Kd3



Exercise (planning): Find one strong move and White is in zugzwang.

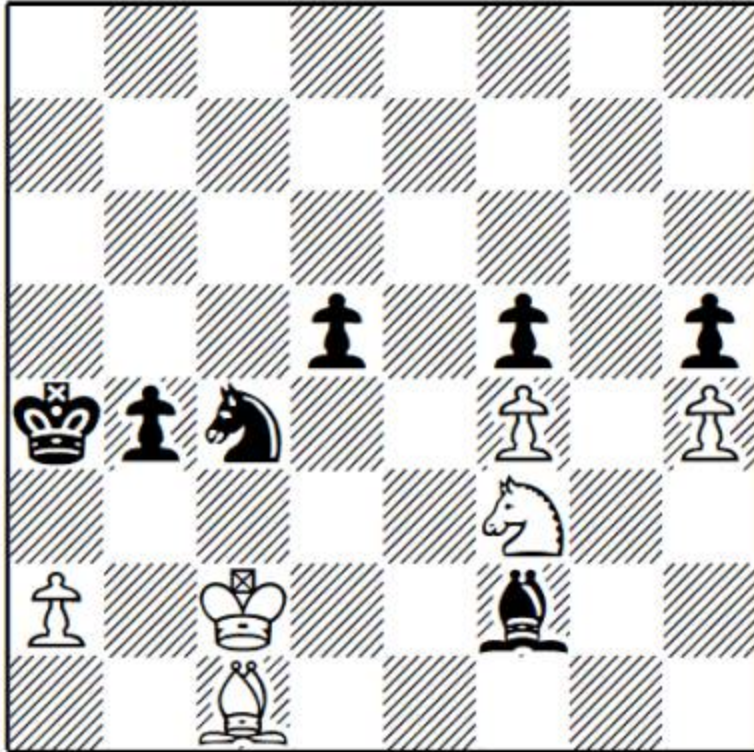
54 ... Bf2!

Answer: Slide the bishop into f2.

55 Kc2

Or 55 Bd2 Nxd2 56 Kxd2 Ka3 and it's game over.

55 ... Bxd4 56 Ne1 Bf2 57 Nf3



Exercise (planning): How did Black pick off another pawn?

57 ... Ne3+!

Answer: Transfer the knight to g2, after which White's h-pawn falls.

58 Kd3 Ng2! 59 Ke2

Or 59 Nd4 Ne1+! 60 Ke2 Bxd4 61 Kxe1 Bf6 and wins.

59 ... Bg3 60 Nd4 Bxf4! 0-1

After 61 Bxf4 Nxf4+ 62 Kf3 Nd3 63 Nxf5 Nc1 64 Ne3 Nxa2, the trouble for White is that if 65 Nxd5 b3 he is unable to prevent the black b-pawn promoting.

Chapter Four

The Main Line Sidelines

There is no line in this chapter you should worry about. The main thing is to be familiar with all of them so you don't get surprised.

Game 34

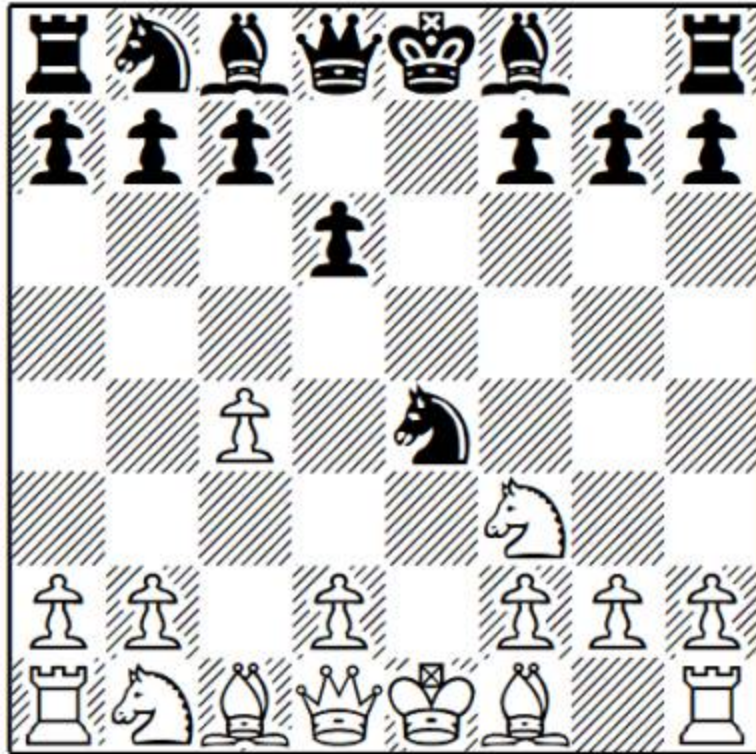
S.Karjakin-F.Caruana

Leuven (rapid) 2018

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6

Caruana returns over and over to his favourite defence with the eyes of an adoring dog. For years I considered the Petroff as a rather nondescript groveller's defence, suited to those without imagination or ambition. Yet at the highest levels it is a line feared by White, since its inherent solidity is not easily broken down without incurring serious risks.

3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 c4!?



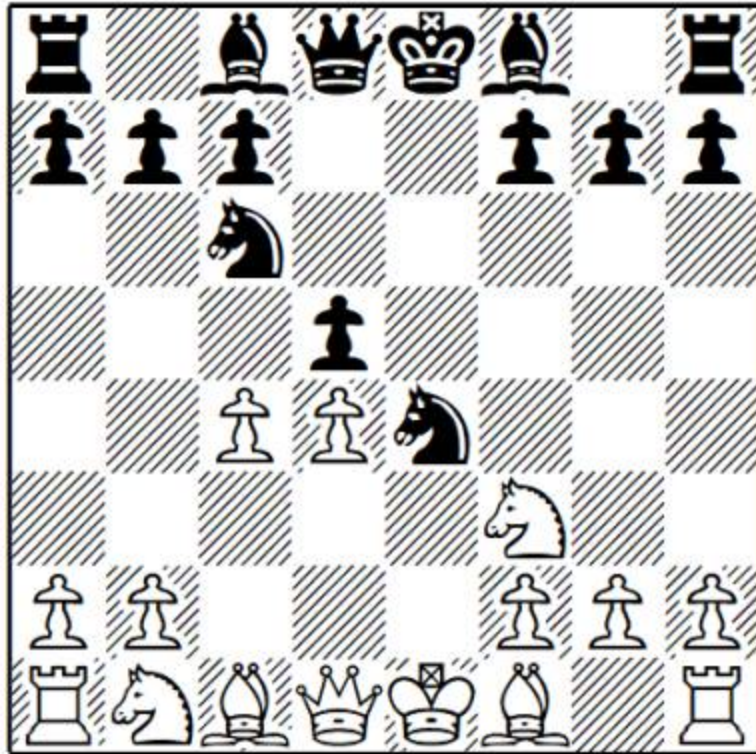
This surprise weapon is played with the idea of discouraging Black's ... d6-d5. Caruana demonstrates an excellent remedy.

5 ... Nc6 6 d4

In the next game we consider 6 Nc3.

6 ... d5!

Black is not about to allow White to overrun him with extra space. Caruana's last move achieves equality.



7 c5

This unprovoked release of central tension allows Black an easy game. However, others are no improvement:

a) 7 Nc3 Bb4! 8 Qb3? (8 Bd2 is better) 8 ... Qe7! 9 Be3 Na5 10 Qc2 dxc4 left White a pawn down and in deep trouble, K.Breznik-S.Vukanovic, Ljubljana 2000.

b) 7 Bd3?! Bb4+ 8 Nbd2 Bf5 (threatening ... Nxd2!) 9 Qc2 (T.Petroczi-H.Penz, Austrian League 2015), and now after 9 ... 0-0 10 0-0 Nxd2 11 Bxd2 Bxd3 12 Qxd3 dxc4 Black holds a clear advantage. White will be a clear pawn down for no compensation.

c) 7 cxd5?! Bb4+! 8 Bd2 Nxd2 9 Nbx2 Qxd5 and Black already stands better with the bishop pair and a weak white isolani, D.Dunaveckis-V.Putka, Latvian Championship, Riga 2013.

7 ... Be7

Black has other options here:

a) 7 ... Bg4 8 Bb5 Qf6! 9 Nc3 Bxf3 10 Qxf3 Qxd4 11 0-0 0-0-0 and Black stood no worse in this sharp position, S.Dvoirys-S.Mamedyarov,

Moscow 2004.

b) 7 ... g5!? is a risky and unplayed idea which is certain to freak White out. The idea is twofold:

1) To fianchetto the dark-squared bishop, where it adds heat to White's d4-pawn.

2) Black can undermine White's f3-knight with a future ... g5-g4.

After 8 Bb5 Bg7 9 Bxc6+ bxc6 10 0-0 0-0 11 Nc3 h6 Black's position looks fine.

8 Bb5 0-0

There is no reason to fear Bxc6.

Nonetheless, 8 ... Bd7 9 0-0 0-0 10 Re1 Bf6 is also equal, S.Dvoiry-J.Bick, Biel 2003.

9 0-0

Or 9 Bxc6 bxc6 10 Qa4 Bf6! and if 11 Qxc6 Bg4 12 0-0 Bxf3 13 gxf3 Bg5! (threatening ... Bxc1, followed by ... Qg5+) 14 f4 Bf6, Black's development lead, superior structure and the fact that White's king's cover is scant is worth more than White's extra pawn.

9 ... Bg4

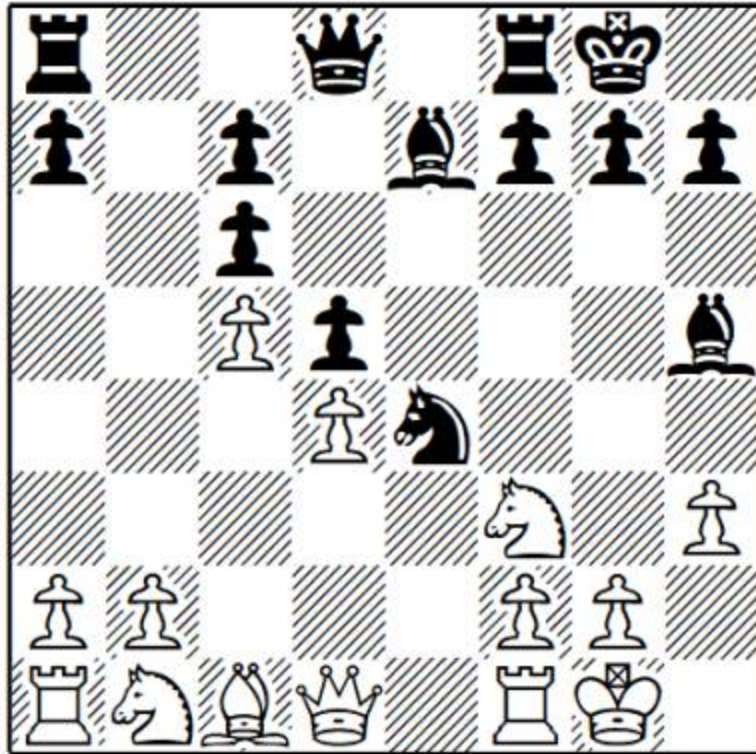
Threatening ... Bxf3.

10 Bxc6

The bishop is the unimportant character who dies in the first few minutes of the movie. However, his presence will be sorely missed. Karjakin will later regret handing over the steward of his light squares.

Better is 10 Nc3!, when 10 ... Bf6! pretty much forces 11 Bxc6 (11 Be3?! allows 11 ... Bxf3 12 Qxf3 Nxd4 13 Bxd4 Bxd4 14 Nxe4 dxe4 15 Qxe4 Qf6 16 Qxb7 Rab8 17 Qa6 Qxa6 18 Bxa6 Rxb2 and White is tied down in the ending) 11 ... bxc6 12 Re1 Re8 13 Bf4. While I still prefer Black, White looks better off than in the game continuation.

10 ... bxc6 11 h3 Bh5!



This enterprising pawn promising pawn offer is an improvement and also proof that the Petroff isn't only for those with a melancholy nature. Black already stands well for the following reasons:

- 1) The f3-pin is annoying for White.
- 2) Black has the bishop pair.
- 3) Black has a lead in development.

4) The weakness of Black's c6-pawn is easily counterbalanced by the weakness of White's d4-pawn.

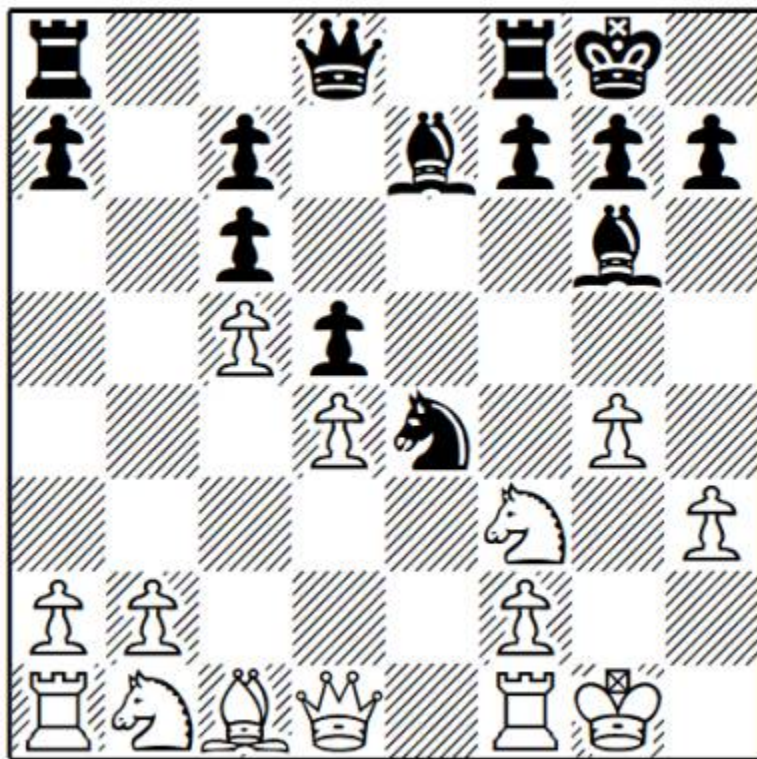
There is no reason to free White's game with 11 ... Bxf3 12 Qxf3 Bf6 13 Rd1, although even here Black stands at least equal, J.Rohl Montes-O.Molale, Bled Olympiad 2002.

12 g4!?

Rage has a way of overpowering more sensible instincts, such as self-preservation. Karjakin comes to the belief that standard plans won't advance his aims and gets side-tracked by his desire to win Black's c6-pawn.

We have seen previous examples of White lashing out with g2-g4 and then later regretting it. Rather than his angsty response, White should consider the meek 12 Qd3. Admittedly, the white position's once confident face now displays a withdrawn look. But remember: it's not such a terrible fate if it is our pride – rather than our actual position – that takes the beating. I still prefer Black after 12 ... Bf6. White's position wobbles from weak light squares but isn't yet undone.

12 ... Bg6



13 Ne5

If you poke the sleeping bear, it will awaken and turn on you. This move is logical – Black's c6-pawn is about to fall – but incorrect. Caruana has correctly observed that his development lead, bishop pair and weakened white king more than compensate the loss of the pawn.

13 Nc3 Bf6 is also dismal for White.

13 ... Bf6 14 Nxc6 Qd7 15 Nb4

White wants to hang on to his extra pawn. Instead, 15 Ne5 Bxe5 16 dxe5 Nxc5 17 f4 Bxb1! 18 Rxb1 Ne4 leaves Black with a clear advantage

for the following reasons:

- 1) The e4-knight is clearly superior to White's bishop.
- 2) Black controls the centre.
- 3) Black leads slightly in development.
- 4) White's king may later get shaky, since he has pushed his kingside pawns forward too quickly.

15 ... Rab8 16 Nc2 Bh4!

Intending ... f7-f5. It becomes clear that White's king is anything but safe.

17 f3

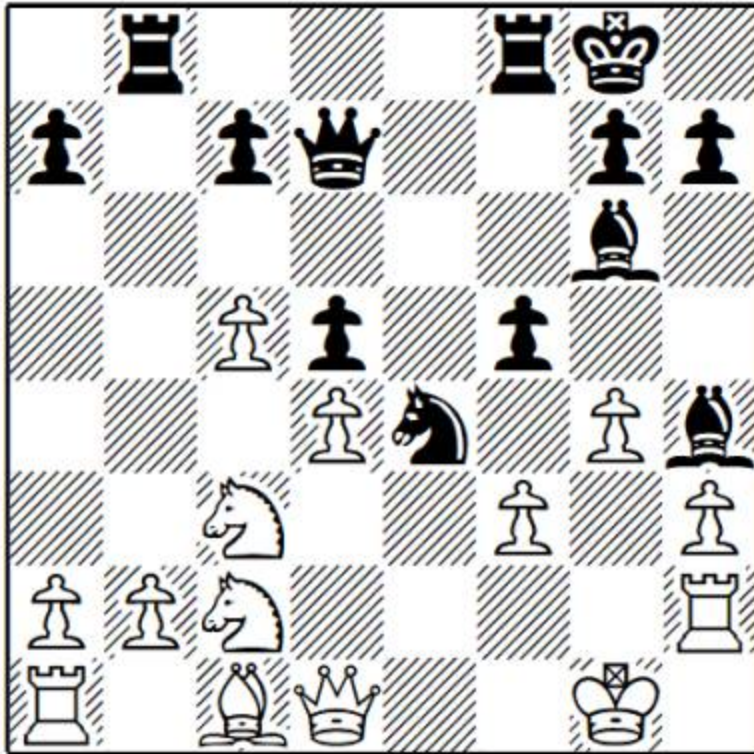
17 f4 f5 also looks grim for White.

17 ... Ng3!

Caruana comes at his opponent from oblique angles. The disruptive knight enters a dark, primeval place, yet is perfectly safe on g3, since Black can back it up with ... f7-f5 and ... f7-f4.

18 Rf2 f5! 19 Nc3 Ne4! 20 Rh2

20 fxe4? Bxf2+ 21 Kxf2 fxg4+ 22 Kg1 gxh3 gives Black a winning attack.



Exercise (critical decision): What is Black's best attacking plan?

20 ... Nxc3

Black is still winning after this, but there was something immediately decisive.

Answer: 20 ... Nf2! 21 Qd2 fxg4 22 hxg4 Rxf3! 23 Rxh4 Rbf8 24 Ne3 Qf7 25 Ng2 Nd3 26 g5 Rf2 27 Qe3 Rxc3+! 28 Kxc3 Qf1+ 29 Kg3 Ne1! and White will soon be mated.

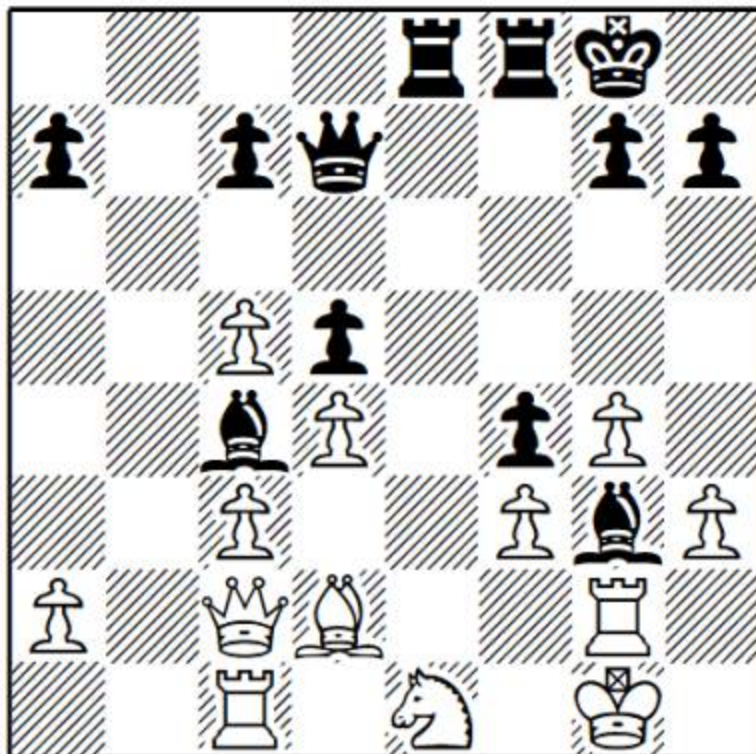
21 bxc3 Rbe8 22 Bd2 Bg3

The bishop digs into the white king's tender flesh.

23 Rg2 f4 24 Rc1 Bd3

White is defenceless on the weakened light squares. Furthermore, his dark squares aren't so hot either.

25 Ne1 Bc4 26 Qc2



Exercise (combination alert): Find one move and White's position collapses.

26 ... Be2!

Black's vast empire is one which even Caesar would have envied.

Answer: Transfer the bishop to e2, after which there is no defence to the threat of ... Bxe1, followed by ... Bxf3.

27 c4

Desperation.

27 ... dxc4 28 Bc3 Bxe1 29 Rxe1 Bxf3 30 Rxe8 Qxe8

Or 30 ... Rxe8! 31 Rf2 Re3 32 Bd2 Qxd4! 33 Bxe3 fxe3! 34 Rxf3 e2+ and Black promotes.

31 Rf2 Bd5

White's position is a garden of lamentations and he is completely busted, a pawn down and helpless on the light squares. Black is profiting

from the principle: *opposite-coloured bishops favour the attacker*, which in this case is painfully obvious.

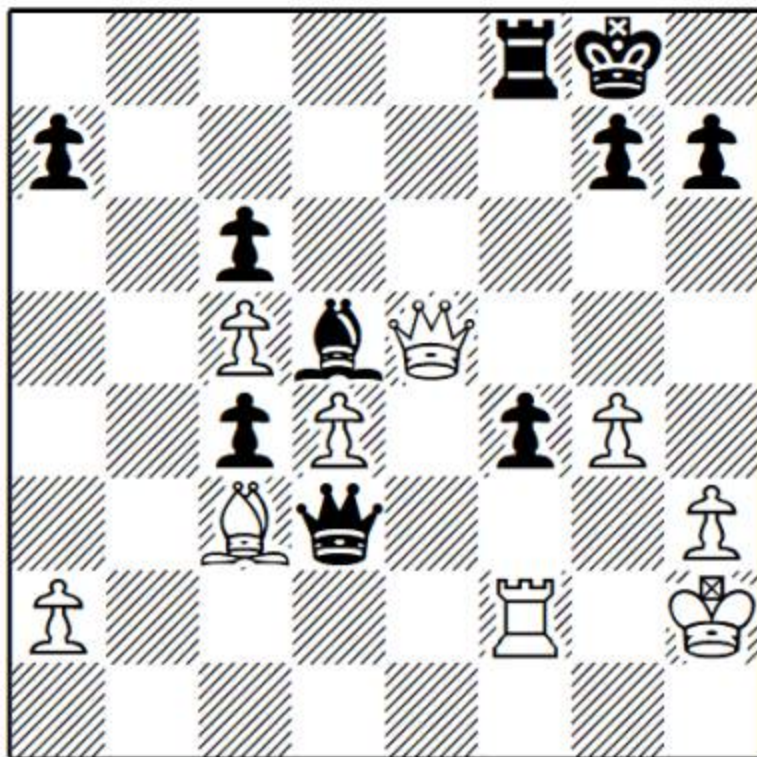
32 Qe2 Qg6 33 Qe5 c6

Karjakin now misses the threat of ... Qd3.

34 Kh2

Allowing ... Qd3 is immediately fatal. However, 34 Qe2 Re8 35 Qc2 Qh6 36 Re2 Rb8 37 Kh2 f3 is also hopeless for White.

34 ... Qd3!



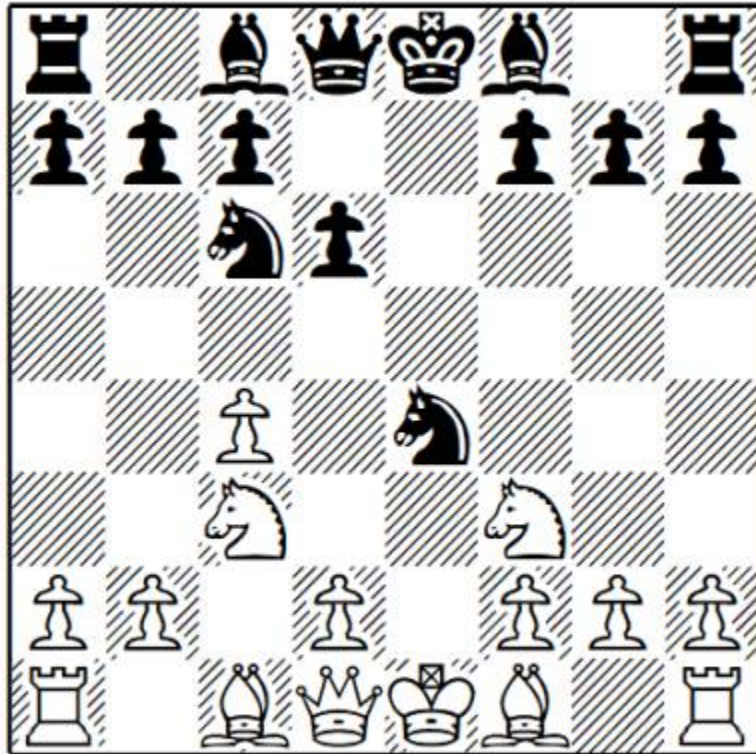
35 Rxf4 Qc2+! 36 Kg3 Qxc3+ 37 Kh4 Rxf4 38 Qxf4 h6 0-1

Game 35

V.Durarbayli-K.Dragun

PRO League, chess.com (rapid) 2017

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 c4 Nc6 6 Nc3



In the previous game we saw the dangers of White playing 6 d4. So this time White opts to develop, while eliminating Black's e4-intruder.

6 ... Nxc3 7 dxc3

The structure is similar to the New Main Line, which we examine later in the book. White captures away from the centre, banking on the open d-file and rapid development.

7 bxc3 is also possible, but 7 ... Bf5 8 d4 Be7 9 Bd3 Qd7 10 0-0 0-0 saw Black equalize without breaking a sweat in M.Antipov-A.Huzman, Jerusalem 2016.

7 ... Bf5 8 Qb3!?

This is a little unusual. More common is 8 Bd3 Qd7 9 0-0 Be7 10 Bxf5 Qxf5 11 Re1 0-0, which is boring and equal.

8 ... Rb8

The computer suggests the rather reckless 8 ... Qd7?!, a sacrifice that looks somewhat unsound. After 9 Qxb7 Rb8 10 Qa6 Be7 11 Be2 0-0 12 0-0 I don't believe Black generated enough for the missing pawn, despite the computer's claim otherwise.

9 Be3 Be7 10 Nd4

Others:

a) 10 Qb5!? is artificial. After 10 ... Qd7 11 Nd4 Be4 Black already stands well, J.Arizmendi Martinez-J.Mellado Trivino, Barcelona 2000.

b) 10 Be2 0-0 11 0-0 Qd7 (or 11 ... Re8) 12 Rad1 b6 and Black is certainly no worse, R.Lau-A.Yusupov, Baden-Baden (rapid) 1995.

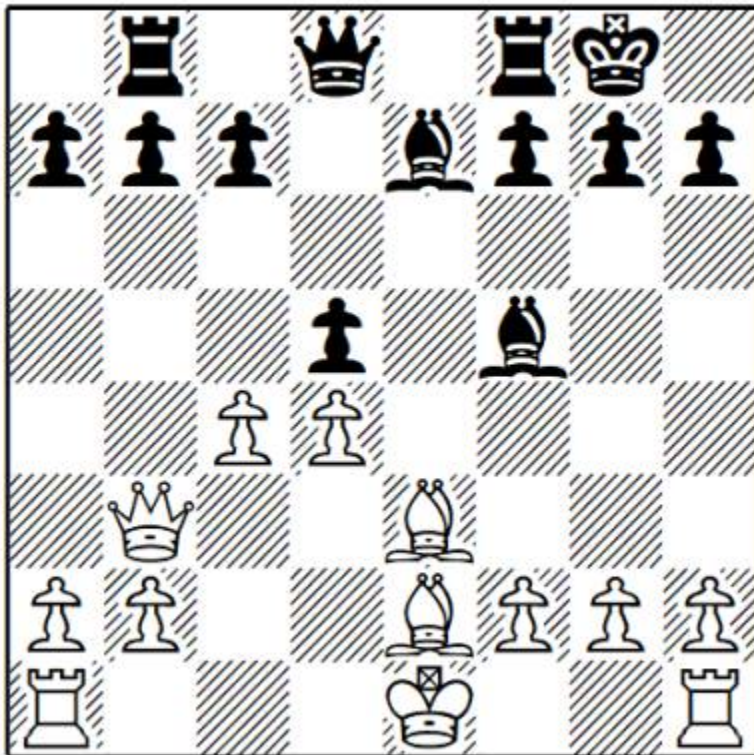
10 ... Nxd4

This is equal. All the same, it is difficult to see a good reason to straighten out White's pawns. I would prefer 10 ... Be4 11 f3 Bg6 12 Be2 0-0 13 0-0 Re8, when Black is slightly better due to the fact that White has been provoked into the weakening f2-f3.

11 cxd4 0-0 12 Be2

12 d5?, preventing Black's next move, allows instead 12 ... Bg5!, when White is lagging dangerously behind in development.

12 ... d5!



This move either saddles White with an isolani, or forces him to release central tension with the undesirable c4-c5.

13 0-0

After 13 c5 Qd7 14 Rc1 c6, the game is even.

13 ... Be6 14 Rfd1

14 c5 now allows 14 ... Bxc5! 15 dxc5 d4 16 Qd3 dxe3 17 Qxe3 Qf6 18 Qa3 Bd5 and, if anyone stands better, it is Black.

14 ... dxc4 15 Bxc4 Bxc4 16 Qxc4 Bd6 17 d5

The game remains dynamically balanced. White's d-pawn creates extra space but this may later turn into a weakness.

17 ... a6 18 Rac1 Re8 19 h3 Qf6 20 Qd4 Qf5

20 ... Qxd4 21 Rxd4 g6 is also equal.

21 Rc4 b5!?

This move is played with the thought, "If I wait passively for something interesting to happen, then it may never happen". Black is tired of remaining passive on the queenside so he pushes forward, at the cost of weakening his queenside pawns. Instead, 21 ... Rbd8 is simple and equal.

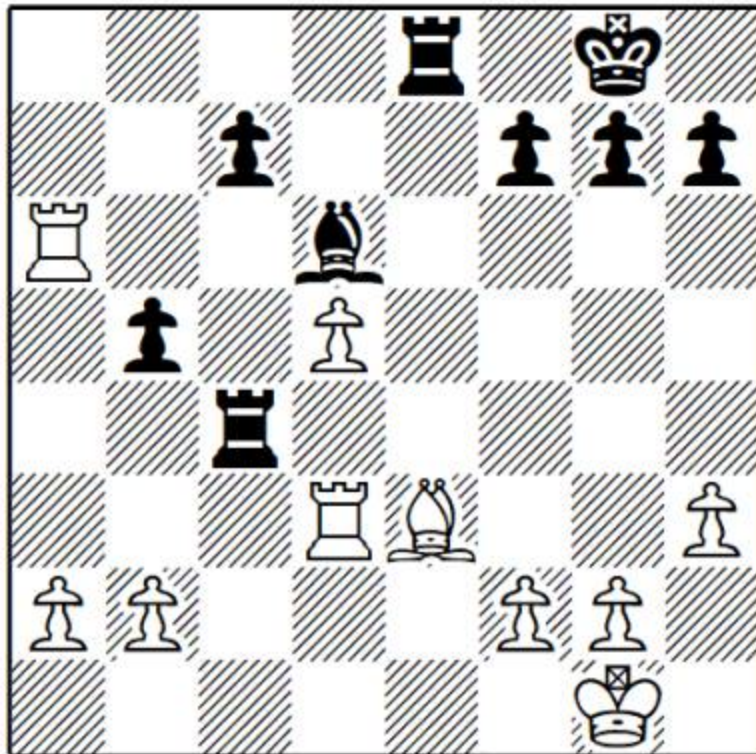
22 Rc6 Re4 23 Qc3 Rbe8! 24 Rxa6 Rc4

Should White's queen now go to d3 or b3?

25 Qd3??

Moving the queen to d3 is the path to damnation. In a single move White's peace of mind evaporates. Grandmaster Nigel Davies once wrote on a Facebook post, "A mouse with only one hole is soon caught." White hasn't fully considered the demands of the position and his response fails to match the level of crisis. Well, it's somehow encouraging when a 2661-rated grandmaster hangs a full queen. This was a rapid game and White must have had virtually no time on his clock. After the correct 25 Qb3! Rb4 26 Qc3 Rc4 27 Qb3 Rb4, the game is drawn by repetition.

25 ... Qxd3! 26 Rxd3



Exercise (combination alert): White to play and force mate in two moves.

I assure you that this one won't strain your brain.

26 ... Rc1+! 0-1

At this point I'm rather certain that for White, the room began to spin.

Answer: Removal of the guard/back rank mate. 27 Bxc1 Re1 is mate.

Game 36

Ma.Carlsen-F.Caruana

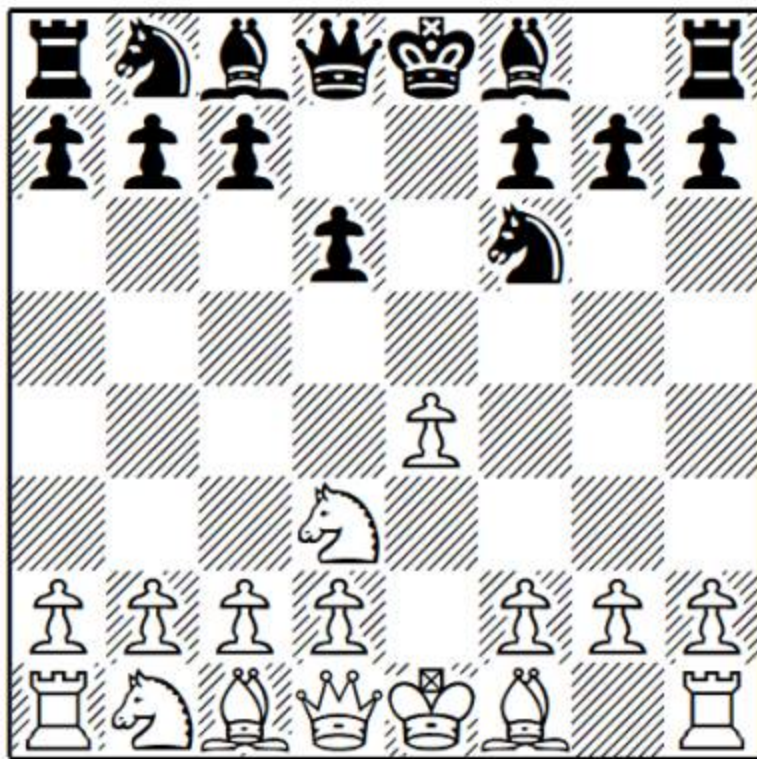
World Championship (Game 6), London 2018

One thing the Carlsen-Caruana World Championship match proved is that the rating system is accurate. The players were only separated by three points which, statistically, is a virtual tie. So the 6-6 draw in the classical

portion of the match was no great surprise. There was not a single decisive game.

This is game six. Carlsen got nowhere with his English and Queen's Pawn openings, so he dared to open with 1 e4, knowing perfectly well that he would face Caruana's Petroff. In this game Caruana equalized effortlessly and almost won the game.

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nd3



It is testimonial to the Petroff's power that Magnus Carlsen threw away a White in order to surprise Caruana with this lame sideline, rather than challenge him with a main line. It's an unwise bet to test Caruana's preparation since he completely blunted Carlsen's surprise variation.

4 ... Nxe4 5 Qe2 Qe7 6 Nf4

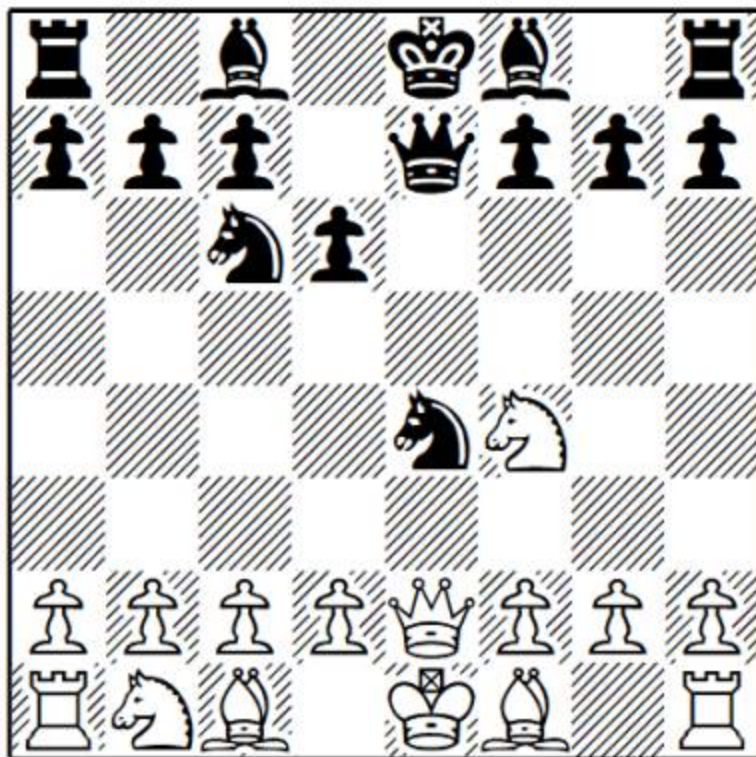
Threatening Nd5. This rare move was Carlsen's prepared surprise. The problem was that Caruana was completely prepared for it and made his response quickly.

More often seen are:

a) 6 Nc3 Nf6! (after this retreat White has nothing) 7 b3 Nc6 8 Bb2 Bf5 9 Nf4 0-0-0 10 Qxe7 Nxe7! (the idea is to keep control over d5) 11 0-0-0 Ng6 (11 ... Ng4 12 Nh3 d5 is also equal) 12 Bd3 Bd7 13 Nxc6 hxg6 14 Ne4 Nxe4 15 Bxe4 g5 and Black has equalized, W.So-F.Caruana, Sinquefield Cup, St. Louis 2018.

b) 6 b3 Nc6 7 Bb2 Bf5 8 Na3 0-0-0 9 0-0-0 d5 and if anyone stands better, it is Black, A.Traxler-S.Ewert, ICCF email 2007.

6 ... Nc6!



This theoretical novelty is a complete equalizer. As it turns out, Black can actually ignore White's Nd5 threat, since his own ... Nd4 is coming.

Previously 6 ... Nf6 had been played, when White looks a microbe better after 7 d4 Qxe2+ 8 Bxe2 Nc6 9 c3, as in A.Motylev-A.Rakhmanov, Yaroslavl 2018.

7 Nd5

At first glance it appears as if Black must resign on his seventh move in a World Championship match. Caruana's next move makes it clear that White's "winning" position is an illusion.

7 ... Nd4

Forced but strong.

8 Nxe7

The cute part of Caruana's idea is that 8 Qc4?? looks completely crushing, since Black is simultaneously attacked on e7, c7 and d4. In truth, White has walked into Black's trap and after 8 ... Nc3+! 9 Be2 (or 9 Nxe7 Nxc2 mate) 9 ... Nxc2+ 10 Kf1 Qxe2+ 11 Qxe2+ Nxe2 12 Nxc7+ Kd7 White can resign.

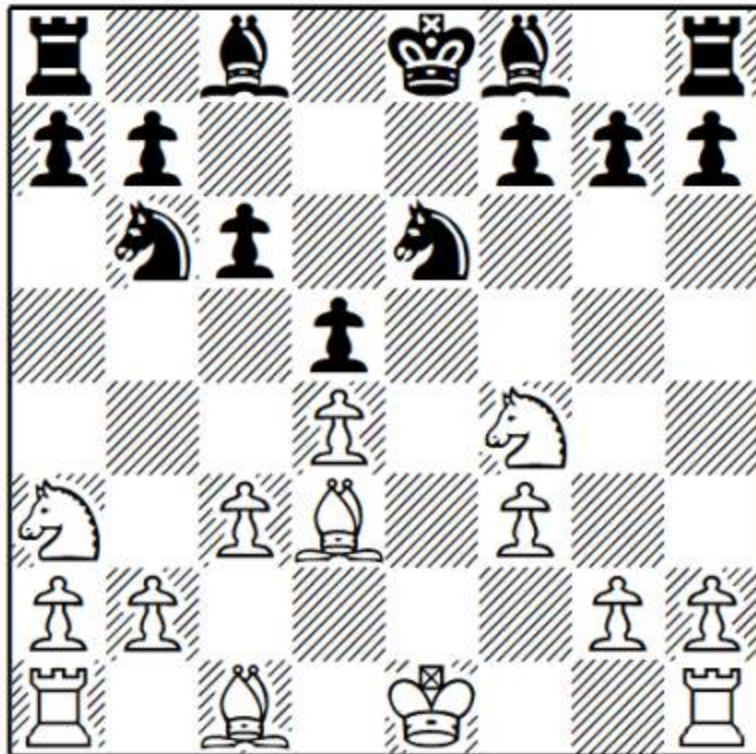
8 ... Nxe2 9 Nd5 Nd4!

This must have been infuriating for Carlsen, since Caruana has consistently ignored threats to his c7-square, by making his own against c2.

10 Na3

Now c7 really is under attack. At first it looks as if 10 Nxc7+ may extract an edge for White. It doesn't. After 10 ... Kd8 11 Bd3 Nxf2 12 Kxf2 Kxc7 Black's isolani isn't really a weakness and the game is even; for example, 13 Nc3 Be6 14 b3 d5 15 Bb2 Nc6 16 Rhe1 Bc5+ 17 Kf1 Nb4! 18 Na4 Bf8 19 Be5+ Kd8, when Black will pick up the bishop pair and has no problems.

10 ... Ne6 11 f3 N4c5 12 d4 Nd7 13 c3 c6 14 Nf4 Nb6 15 Bd3 d5



Carlsen's reward for his unusual try against the Petroff is that he has achieved a queenless Exchange French structure, which already has the look of a boring draw. As it turns out, the coming ending was anything but boring.

16 Nc2

Carlsen avoids the possibility of ... Bxa3, which would pick up the bishop pair at the heavy cost of damaging White's queenside structure.

16 ... Bd6 17 Nxe6 Bxe6 18 Kf2 h5!

Preventing White from expanding later with g2-g4.

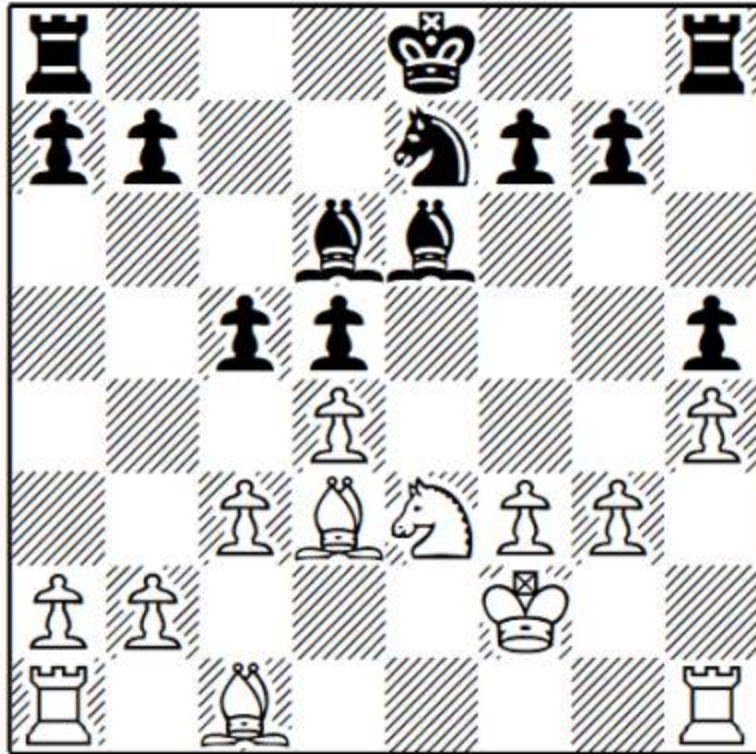
19 h4 Nc8!

The idea of this is to play ... Ne7, after which White must watch out for ... Bf5 which would leave him with a remaining bad bishop after an exchange on f5.

20 Ne3

Carlsen fights for control of f5.

20 ... Ne7 21 g3 c5!



A good, dynamic decision. Normally it's unwise to offer to take on an isolani in a queenless position. Here the decision is strong since White's knight, having been distracted to e3, is not able to fight for control over the d4-square.

22 Bc2 0-0!

Another subtly strong decision. In general, it is better keep the king in the middle in endgames. Here Caruana castles since he realizes that the c-file will open and he wants to quickly connect his rooks.

23 Rd1

Carlsen is slightly tangled up on the queenside and is doing his best to encourage his opponent to resolve the central tension.

23 ... Rfd8

Caruana refuses to oblige.

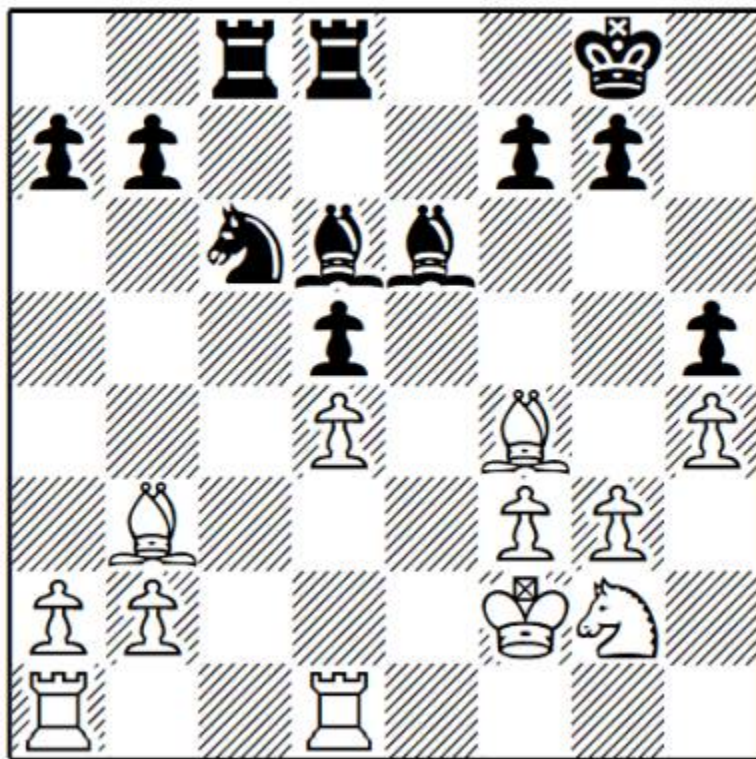
24 Ng2!

Intending Bf4 or Nf4.

24 ... cxd4

Now is the correct moment to exchange pawns, when White's knight is no longer on e3, covering the c2-bishop.

25 cxd4 Rac8 26 Bb3 Nc6 27 Bf4!?



Most of us think of misfortune as something that accidentally happens to us. However, if we examine closely and honestly, a good chunk of our misfortune is something we have created ourselves from past decisions. It isn't easy to pick out the exact spot where Carlsen's position began to sour but I suspect it is right here.

Instead, 27 Nf4! should hold the draw after 27 ... Na5 28 Nxe6 (not 28 Bxd5??, which hangs material to 28 ... Bxf4 29 Bxe6 Rxc1 30 Raxc1 Bxc1 31 Bxf7+ Kxf7 32 Rxc1 Rxd4 and White can resign) 28 ... fxe6 29 Bd2 Nxb3 30 axb3 Rc2 31 Rxa7 Rxb2 32 Rxb7 Rb8 33 Rxb8+ Bxb8 34 b4 Bd6 35 Ke3 Bxb4 and so on.

27 ... Na5!

Threatening to chop on b3 and then infiltrate with ... Rc2+.

28 Rdc1 Bb4

28 ... Rxc1 29 Rxc1 Nxb3 30 axb3 g6 is equal.

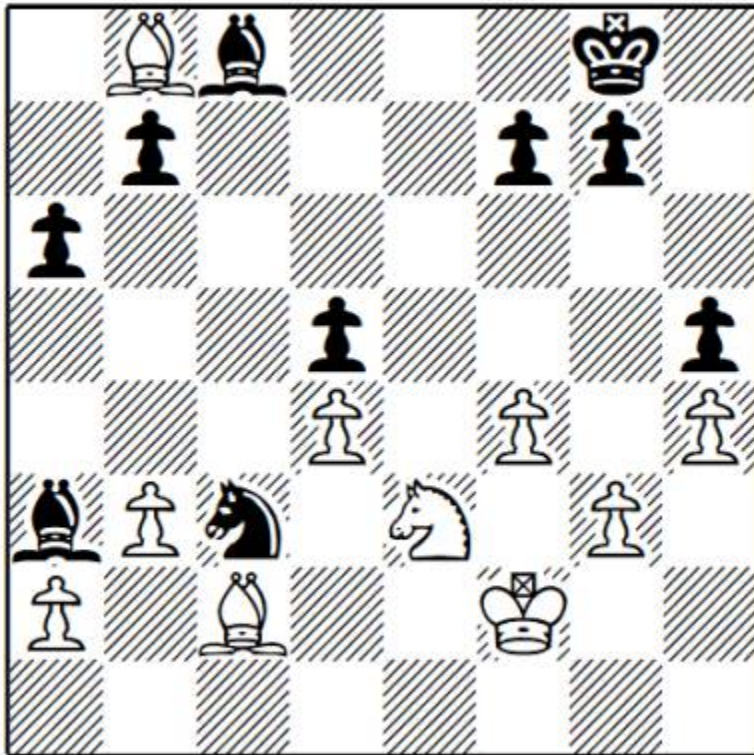
29 Bd1 Nc4 30 b3 Na3!

This is annoying for White. The knight can't be removed and White must keep eternal watch over the c2-square.

31 Rxc8 Rxc8 32 Rc1 Nb5 33 Rxc8+ Bxc8 34 Ne3 Nc3 35 Bc2 Ba3!

I have a feeling that Carlsen may have overlooked this move which dooms his a2-pawn. Carlsen, the greatest endgame player of the current generation, has been outplayed by Caruana and is now fighting for a draw.

36 Bb8 a6 37 f4!



Carlsen is itching to do something and his deep idea here is to generate counterplay, with the following plan:

1) Play the f-pawn to f5.

2) If and when Black plays ... Nxa2, then White replies Bd1!, going after h5.

3) If Black defends the h5-pawn with ... g7-g6, White plays g3-g4, which offers sufficient kingside counterplay for the pawn.

37 ... Bd7 38 f5!?

The idea is to play Bd1, going after h5, the moment Black plays ... Nxa2.

If 38 Ba7 Bc6 39 Bc5 Bxc5 40 dxc5 Nxa2 41 Ke2 Nb4 42 Bb1 a5 43 Bd3, White is struggling a pawn down.

38 ... Bc6

Now that the d5-pawn is secure, White's a2-pawn is ripe for the taking.

39 Bd1 Bb2!

Others:

a) 39 ... g6?! 40 Bc2! offers White sufficient play after 40 ... Kg7 41 Be5+ Kh6; e.g. 42 fxg6 fxg6 43 g4 hxg4 44 Nxg4+ Kh5 45 Kg3 Ne2+ 46 Kf3 Ng1+ 47 Kg3 Ne2+ with perpetual check.

b) 39 ... Nxd1+! 40 Nxd1 f6 leads to a small advantage for Black, who can play to milk his bishop pair.

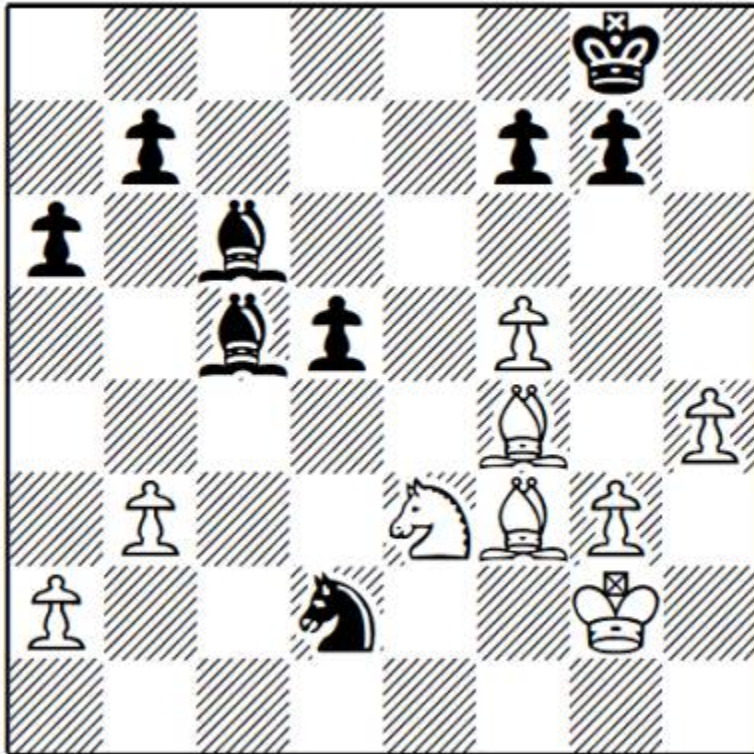
40 Bxh5 Ne4+

It's debatable which pawn Caruana should go after. Also possible was 40 ... Nxa2 41 Ba7 Nc3 42 Bb6 Nb5 43 Nc2 Bd7 44 Bg4 Nd6 45 Bf3 Bxf5 46 Ne3 Be6 47 Bxd5 Bxd5 48 Nxd5 Nf5 and Black will be a pawn up when the d-pawn falls.

41 Kg2 Bxd4 42 Bf4 Bc5 43 Bf3

It becomes clear that Black's d5-pawn is worth more than White's extra one on the kingside. Caruana's next move maximizes Black's advantage.

43 ... Nd2!



44 Bxd5!?

Most of us think of Carlsen as a great grinder/strategist/endgame technician, which is all true. However, there is another, sometimes hidden, element to Carlsen. Now and again he indulges in high-risk gambles, often on a Tal-like scale. Carlsen's vast imagination (like Tal's) has a way of overflowing the actual capabilities of his position. This radical decision was a shocker to the spectators. Carlsen is willing to give away a piece for three pawns. The problem is that in the aftermath White's pawns are going nowhere and Black has all the winning chances.

Carlsen probably feared he couldn't correctly evaluate his drawing chances in the line 44 Nf1 Nxf3 45 Kxf3 d4+ 46 Kf2 Be4 47 g4 Bc2! (if 47 ... Bb1!? 48 Nd2 Bxa2 49 Ke2 Bb4 50 Kd3 Bxd2 51 Bxd2 Bxb3 52 Kxd4, White has good chances to hold the draw) 48 Nd2 b5.

44 ... Bxe3 45 Bxc6 Bxf4 46 Bxb7 Bd6 47 Bxa6 Ne4 48 g4 Ba3!

Now ... Nc3 is coming and White will only get two pawns – not three – for his sacrificed piece. The battle will revolve around the question of

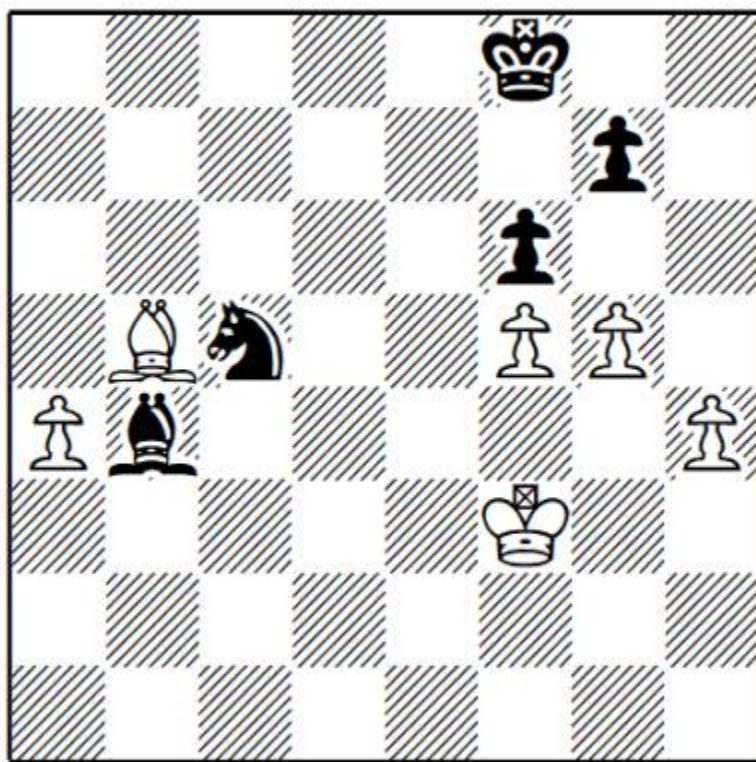
whether White can exchange away at least one, or maybe both, of Black's kingside pawns in order to hold the draw.

49 Bc4 Kf8 50 g5 Nc3 51 b4!

A good practical decision. The remaining a-pawn will be more valuable than the b-pawn, since it is one file further away from Black's king.

51 ... Bxb4 52 Kf3 Na4 53 Bb5 Nc5 54 a4 f6!

Black is willing to exchange one pawn in order to freeze the mobility of White's pawn majority.



55 Kg4 Ne4 56 Kh5!

Black lacks control over the light squares, so Carlsen plans to slip his king to g6, after which Black must watch out for a pawn exchange on f6, followed by h4-h5-h6.

56 ... Be1!

Caruana squeezes maximum efficiency from his bishop, which now:

- 1) Prevents White's king from entry to g6 without hanging the h4-pawn.
- 2) Continues to monitor the a5-square, freezing White's passed a-pawn.

57 Bd3 Nd6 58 a5!

After giving up another pawn Carlsen remains with only a single pawn for the piece. Even though White's position is desperate, Carlsen adds life by this brilliant distraction sacrifice. Only by handing over his a-pawn will White's king slip into g6. The critical idea is to prevent Black's king from moving to the g8-square, which would nullify White's threat to promote his h-pawn.

58 ... Bxa5 59 gxf6 gxf6 60 Kg6 Bd8 61 Kh7!

Preventing ... Kg8.

61 ... Nf7 62 Bc4 Ne5 63 Bd5 Ba5 64 h5 Bd2 65 Ba2

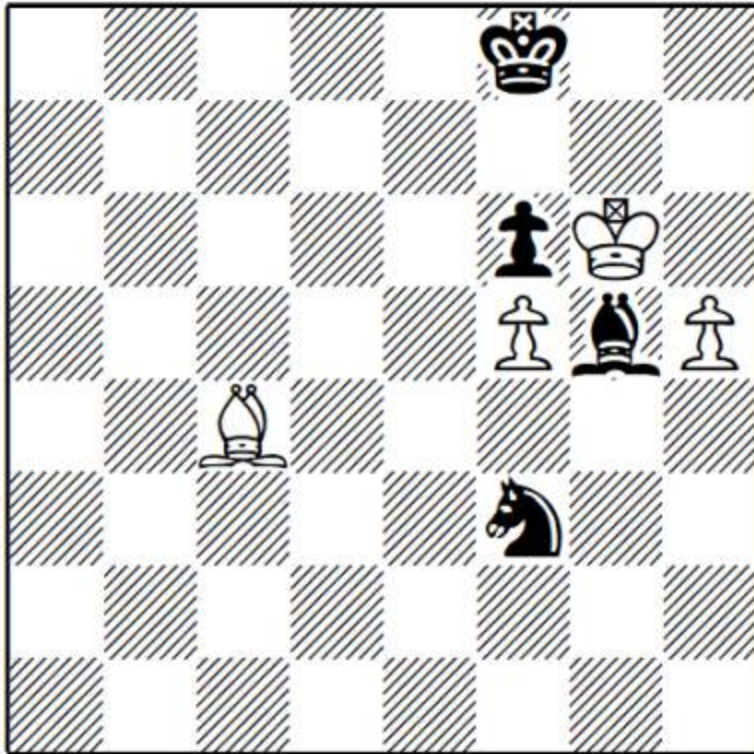
65 h6?? isn't possible: 65 ... Ng4 66 Kg6 Bxh6 67 Kh5 Ne3 wins.

65 ... Nf3 66 Bd5 Nd4 67 Kg6 Bg5 68 Bc4

Carlsen divines his opponent's intention and alertly sidesteps Caruana's devious trap: 68 h6? Ne2 (threatening to fork on f4) 69 Kh7 (or 69 h7? Nf4 mate) 69 ... Nf4 70 Bc4 Ng2 71 Bd3 Ne3 72 Be4 Ng4, when the h-pawn falls and Black wins.

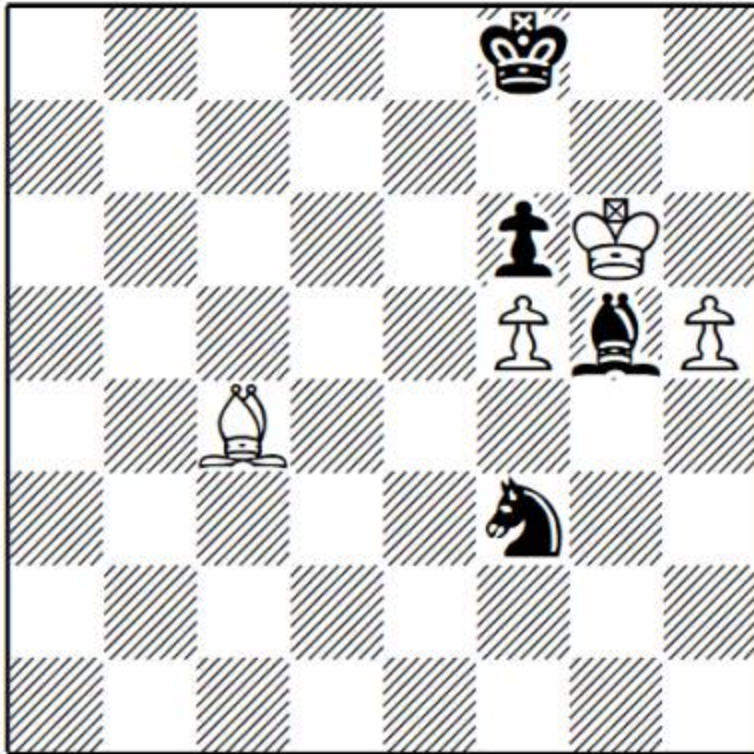
The only problem with Carlsen's move is that it allows a forced mate!

68 ... Nf3?!



We are unable to aspire to that which we cannot even imagine. Here the Norwegian super-computer *Sesse* found the bizarrely brilliant waiting move 68 ... Bh4!! and promptly announced mate in 36 moves!

When we look at the bizarre analysis we feel lost in another country whose language we don't speak. *Sesse's* line runs 69 Bd5 Ne2 70 Bf3 Ng1!!



Astonishing. The super-computer's forced win involves trapping its own knight?

Kasparov tweeted about this analysis, saying that if Caruana had actually found this line over the board, "they would request metal detectors immediately! No human can willingly trap his own knight like that." Play continues 71 Bg4 (or 71 Bd5 Bg5 72 Kh7 Ne2 73 Bf3 Ng3 74 Bg4 Kf7 75 Kh8 Be3 76 Kh7 Bc5 77 Kh8 Bf8 78 Kh7 Ne4! 79 Be2 Ng5+ 80 Kh8 Bg7 mate) 71 ... Kg8!.

The black king has seized control over h7 and h8. Black's mating idea is:

- 1) Transfer the bishop to g5.
- 2) Place both White's king and bishop in zugzwang, which forces the white bishop to move, thus freeing Black's knight.
- 3) Transfer the knight to either f4 or h4, which will deliver mate.
- 4) Finally, to escape this plan White must hand over the h-pawn which leads to an easy technical win for Black.

The chess journalist John Henderson wrote of the computer solution, “Of course, all easier said than done – and if this can flummox an array of elite-level grandmasters doing online commentary, then what chances did Caruana and Carlsen have of spotting all these nuances in the heat of battle over the board?”

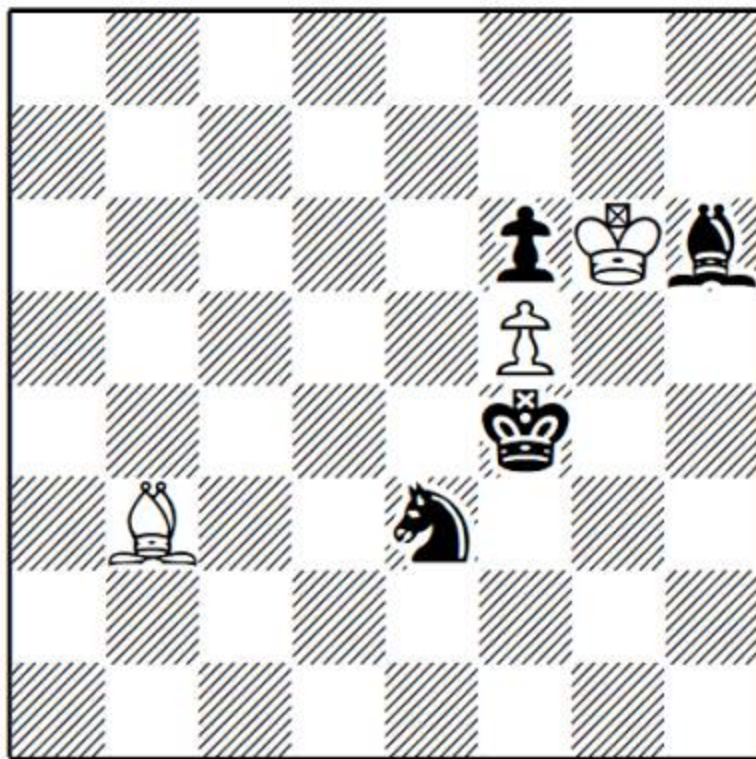
69 Kh7 Ne5 70 Bb3 Ng4 71 Bc4 Ne3 72 Bd3 Ng4 73 Bc4 Nh6 74 Kg6 Ke7 75 Bb3 Kd6 76 Bc2 Ke5 77 Bd3 Kf4 78 Bc2 Ng4 79 Bb3

Black’s big problem is that his pieces are frozen to covering his f6-pawn and White’s h5-h6 push. Caruana got frustrated and played ...

79 ... Ne3

Allowing ...

80 h6 Bxh6 ½-½



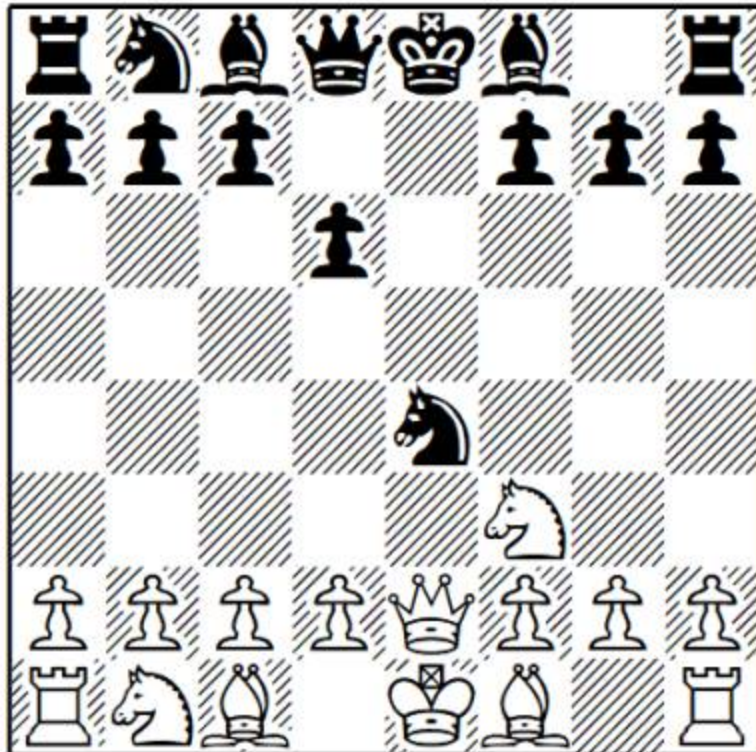
After 81 Kxh6 Kxf5 Black’s extra pawn is useless since White can sacrifice his bishop for it. I watched the video feed at this point and the facial expressions and body language of the players said it all. Caruana looked crushingly disappointed that he didn’t win, while Carlsen appeared overjoyed at holding the draw.

Game 37

L.McShane-Ba.Jobava

World Rapid Championship, Riyadh 2017

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 Qe2



This is the instant endgame line, which in my experience is often used by lower-rated players who want to score a draw with the white pieces. When I wrote my first Petroff book, I got this openly craven move (although as a London and Colle player, I have no right to call anyone craven, since I am guilty of it myself) in virtually every game against lower-rated opponents, who wanted to make the position as dull as possible and hold a draw. I doubt very much that the aggressive grandmaster Luke McShane was grovelling though. He probably played the line just to try and throw Jobava.

5 ... Qe7

This line isn't so exciting for Black, but from a standpoint of avoiding a loss, it's great. An astonishing 47 players in my database replied with the nonchalant 5 ... d5??, which of course hangs a piece to 6 d3.

6 d3

Here 6 Nc3!? Nxc3 7 dxc3 Qxe2+ 8 Bxe2 Nc6 9 Be3 Be7 10 0-0-0 0-0 11 Rhe1 Bf6 is equal, though Caruana went on to win the most exciting game of the 2018 Candidates' tournament from this rather boring position in V.Kramnik-F.Caruana, Berlin 2018. This game is annotated in detail in *Caruana: Move by Move*.

6 ... Nf6 7 Bg5

Threatening Bxf6, inflicting damage to Black's structure. The only difference between the two positions is one extra tempo for White – not enough for an advantage.

7 Nc3 doesn't change much. The game is even after 7 ... Bg4 8 Qxe7+ Bxe7 9 Be2 Nc6, with Black scoring a healthy 53.6% from 56 games in the database.

7 ... Nbd7

Covering against Bxf6, so Black can recapture with the knight, rather than the g-pawn.

8 Nc3

In the next game we consider 8 Nbd2.

8 ... h6

Jobava is looking for a fight. His move invites White to keep queens on the board by retreating the bishop to e3. Less ambitious and equal is 8 ... Qxe2+ 9 Bxe2 Be7, when 10 Nb5 can be met by 10 ... Bd8.

However, 8 ... c6? allows 9 Ne4 intending Nxd6+. So Black is forced into the unpleasant 9 ... Kd8 10 0-0-0 d5 11 Nxf6 Nxf6 12 Qd2, when his wobbly king and development lag is a source of concern.

9 Be3!?

McShane also signals that he is playing for the full point. Others:

a) 9 Bh4 g5 10 Bg3 Nb6 11 0-0-0 (11 Nb5?! can be met by Nfd5! 12 c4 Bd7!, when Black already stood slightly better, B.Xia-C.Lakdawala, Training game 2018) 11 ... Qxe2 12 Bxe2 Bd7 is equal.

b) 9 Nb5 looks scary but isn't. Black can play 9 ... Kd8! 10 Be3 as in S.Velema-B.Beeke, Groningen 2004, and doesn't stand worse after 10 ... Nd5. If White moves the e3-bishop Black simply exchanges queens with

equality. If White keeps the bishop on e3, Black chops it, and follows up with ... c7-c6 and ... Kc7, with the bishop pair and a relatively safe king.

9 ... Nb6

This frees the c8-bishop. Black plans to castle long.

10 h3

This is new. White wants to prevent ... Bg4 or ... Ng4. Instead, 10 0-0-0 Be6 11 Nd4 was seen in V.Onischuk-Y.Kozlov, Alushta 2007. Chances look balanced after 11 ... Bg4 12 f3 Bd7 13 Re1 0-0-0 14 Qf2 Re8.

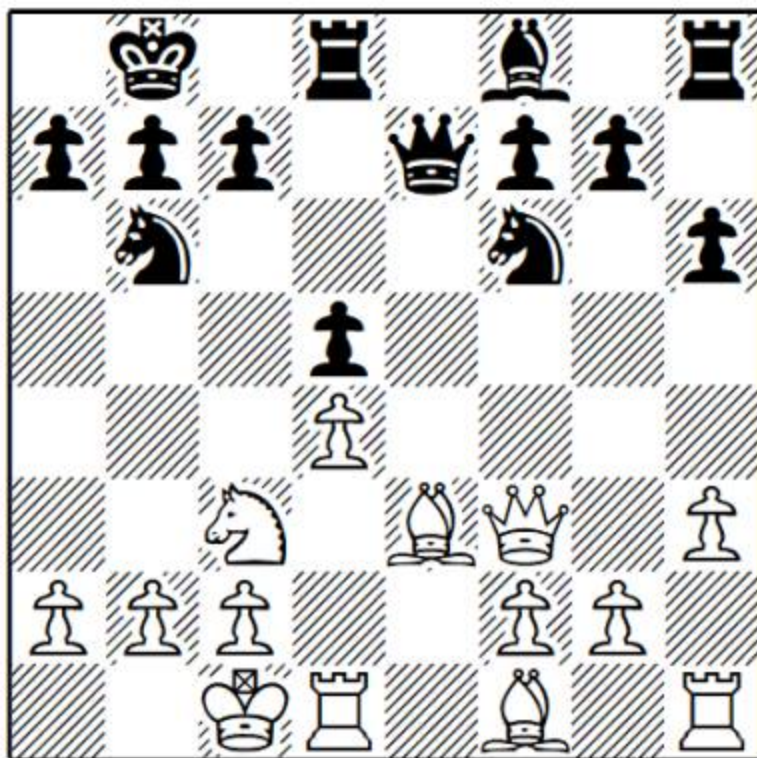
10 ... Bd7 11 0-0-0 0-0-0 12 d4 Bc6!

For the moment Black leaves the d5-square open for a piece, rather than occupy it with a pawn. The position is dynamically balanced.

13 Qd3 Bxf3!?

I don't know about this move, since it hands over the bishop pair, while failing to damage White's structure (in view of White's reply). Safer and probably stronger is 13 ... Kb8 14 Be2 g5 15 Rhe1 Bg7.

14 Qf5+ Kb8 15 Qxf3 d5



Jobava gave up the bishop pair with the idea of generating a structure that favours his remaining bishop.

16 Bf4 Ne4 17 Re1 Qb4

Removing the queen from the e-file and transferring it to the queenside, nearer White's king.

17 ... f5!? is also possible, and if 18 Be5 then 18 ... Qg5+! 19 Qe3 Nxc3 20 Qxg5 Nxa2+ 21 Kb1 Nc3+ 22 bxc3 hxg5, although 23 Bd3 Na4 24 Bxf5 Nxc3+ 25 Kb2 Na4+ 26 Kb3 Nb6 27 Bd3 gives White compensation for the sacrificed pawn, since the strength of the bishop pair has been enhanced and Black's kingside structure weakened.

18 a3 Qa5

White's c3-knight remains pinned, so Black's e4-knight remains safe for now.

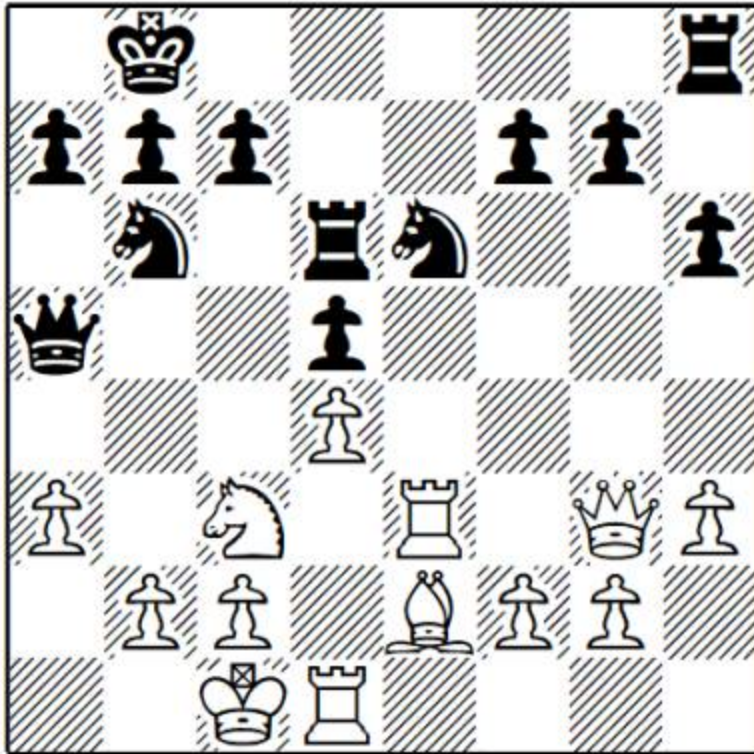
19 Re3 Ng5?!

Black's speculation is clearly in need of adult supervision. I don't understand this. Why did Jobava hand over a pawn? After 19 ... f5! Black's position is fine.

20 Qg3?!

Huh? I don't get it even more. White can safely win a pawn with 20 Bxg5! hxg5 21 Qxf7 Bd6 22 Kb1 Rhf8 23 Qxg7 Rxf2 24 g3, when Black's compensation is hard to see.

20 ... Bd6 21 Be2 Ne6 22 Bxd6 Rxd6 23 Rd1



There are two imbalances here:

- 1) White's bishop and knight versus Black's two knights.
- 2) Black's forces are clustered more on the queenside, while White's gather on the kingside.

23 ... a6 24 f4!

According to the principle: *create play on your strong wing.*

White intends f4-f5 which wins a pawn. If Black's knight plays to g5, then White has h3-h4.

24 ... g5?!

Jobava is getting reckless. His last move weakens his kingside structure. He should settle for 24 ... g6 25 Qf2 Rhd8 26 g4 c5! 27 dxc5 Qxc5 28 f5 gxf5 29 gxf5 d4 30 Rxe6 fxe6 31 Ne4 Qxf5 32 Qxf5 exf5 33 Nxd6 Rxd6 34 Rf1 with an even ending.

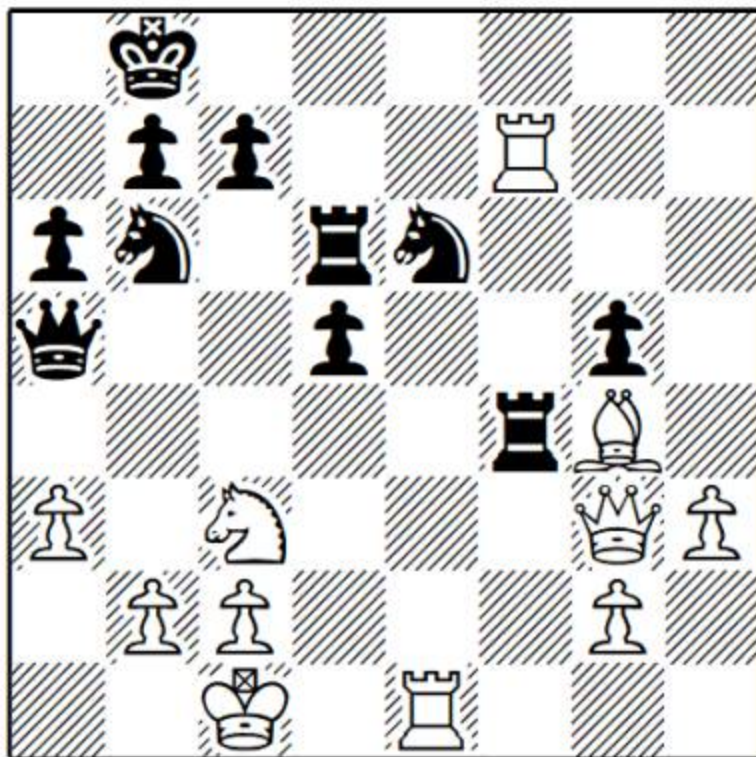
25 fxg5 hxg5 26 Rf3

Black's kingside pawns are under pressure.

26 ... Rh4 27 Rxf7 Rxd4 28 Re1?!

28 Rxd4! Nxd4 29 Bd3 Ne6 30 Rf5 Black's position is under pressure and his g-pawn is unstable.

28 ... Rf4 29 Bg4?



White initiates great complications with his last move, but they are in Black's favour. Once a crazy idea pops up in our head, we are often unable to resist it. Grandmaster McShane goes all out for the win in a situation where White is in no position to issue ultimatums. This exchange sacrifice is unsound. White wants to win Black's g5-pawn and eventually promote his kingside passed pawns; the problem is that his e6-bishop will be awkwardly pinned.

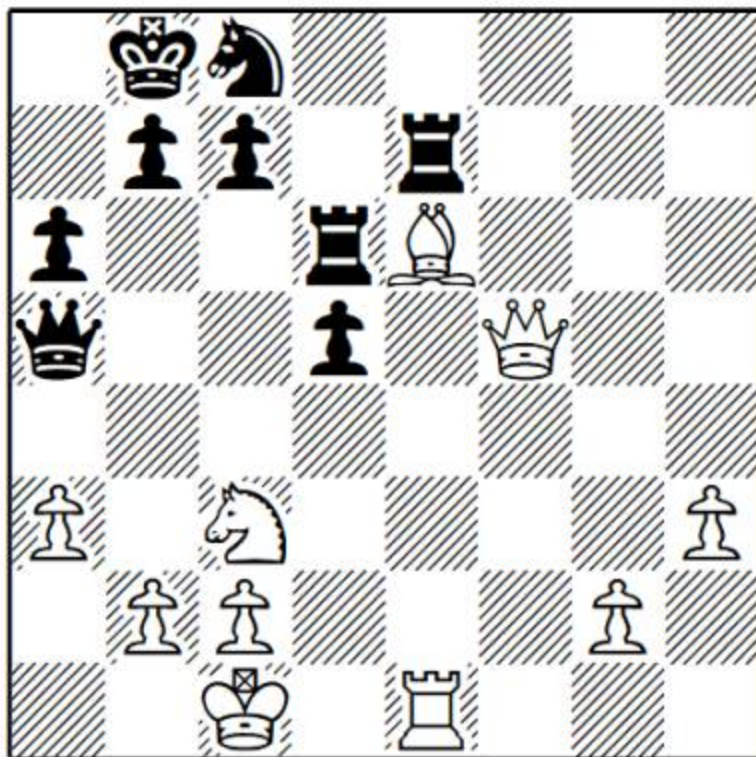
Instead, after 29 Rxf4 gxf4 30 Qf2 d4 31 Ne4 Rc6 32 Bd3 Na4 33 Nd2 Nec5, the game is unclear.

29 ... Rxf7 30 Bxe6 Re7 31 Qxg5

White is also lost after 31 Bg4 Rxe1+ 32 Qxe1 d4 33 Qe8+ Ka7 34 Nd1 Qd5.

31 ... Nc8!

31 ... Rdx6? allows White to regain his material with interest with 32 Rxe6 Rxe6 33 Qg8+ Ka7 34 Qxe6.
32 Qf5



The pinned bishop isn't going anywhere.

Exercise (critical decision): Analyze the ramifications of 32 ... Qb6 33 Nxd5.

Should Black enter the variation? If not, then what is a better move?

32 ... Qb6!

Answer: The line works out beautifully for Black, but only if calculated perfectly.

33 Nxd5 Rxe6!

The calculation battle escalates on all fronts. This faux queen sacrifice had to be factored into your original decision to enter the line.

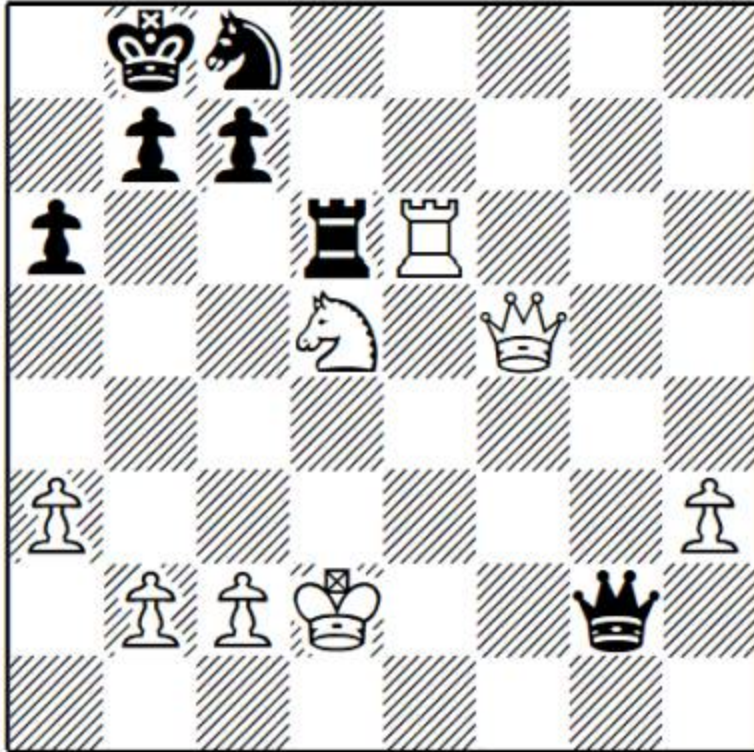
34 Rxe6

Not 34 Nxb6?? due to 34 ... Rxe1 mate.

34 ... Qg1+!

This move also had to be seen beforehand. Not 34 ... Qc6?? 35 Rxd6, when White is two pawns ahead and winning.

35 Kd2 Qxg2+



The position blurs out an unpleasant truth for White. This move is the point of Jobava's decision to enter the line on move 32. White's knight hangs due to the fork.

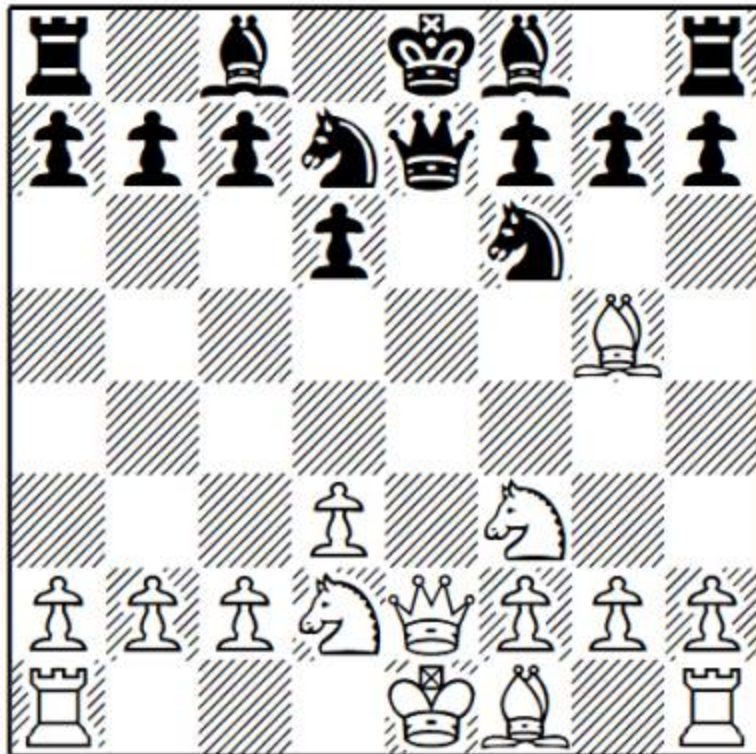
36 Kc3 Rxd5 37 Qh7 Rc5+ 38 Kb4 Rxc2 0-1

Game 38

W.Watson-E.Rozentalis

Mondorf 1991

**1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 Qe2 Qe7 6 d3 Nf6 7 Bg5 Nbd7
8 Nbd2**



This move is even less enterprising than playing the knight to c3.

8 ... h6

Again, this is slightly more ambitious than exchanging queens, which is also even.

9 Bh4

9 Be3 g6 is equal.

9 ... Qxe2+ 10 Bxe2 g5!

This move is a Black secret weapon against White's drawish line. White has scored a remarkably feeble 14% from six games in my database. Tossing in ... h7-h6 and ... g7-g5 is a promising plan, since it's difficult for White to exploit the weakening of f5. By playing ... g7-g5, Black creates a space imbalance and gets to play for the win.

11 Bg3 Bg7

Also possible is to go after the bishop pair with 11 ... Nh5 12 Nd4 Nxc3 13 fxg3 (after 13 hxg3 Bg7 14 N2b3 Nc5! Black stands well) 13 ... Bg7 14 N2b3 Nc5 15 0-0-0 Nxb3+ 16 Nxb3 Be6, when Black is very comfortable, P.Neuman-T.Polak, Czech League 2008.

12 Nc4

White is hoping for time to organize for Ne3, Nd4 and Ndf5.

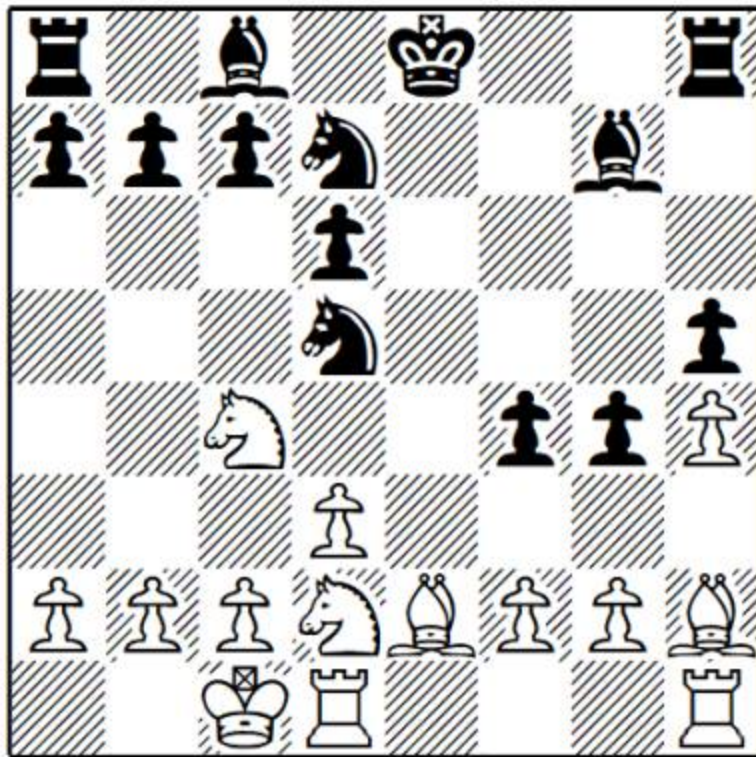
12 ... Nd5! 13 h4!?

This move only benefits Black. White was better off playing 13 0-0-0 f5 14 h3, though Black still stands well.

13 ... g4 14 Nfd2 f5 15 0-0-0 f4 16 Bh2

White begins to feel the constriction from Black's kingside advance.

16 ... h5



White cannot be happy with the outcome of the opening. His dark-squared bishop has been locked into a closet and Black has steadily annexed kingside space, for which White's control over e4 fails to compensate.

17 Ne4 0-0 18 Ncd2

The knight wasn't doing anyone any good on c4.

18 ... Nc5

18 ... b5!, followed by pushing the a-pawn, looks promising. I don't see a useful plan for White to try and untangle, or even improve his position.

19 Nxc5 dxc5 20 Nb3!

White also stands worse after 20 Ne4?! b6.

20 ... Bd4!

You may be wondering just why Black handed his opponent the bishop pair in a semi-open position. The answer is that 20 ... b6?! is well met by 21 d4! and if 21 ... cxd4 22 Nxd4 then Bc4 is in the air.

21 Bg1!?

White should settle for a slightly inferior position with 21 Nxd4 cxd4 22 Rde1 Bf5.

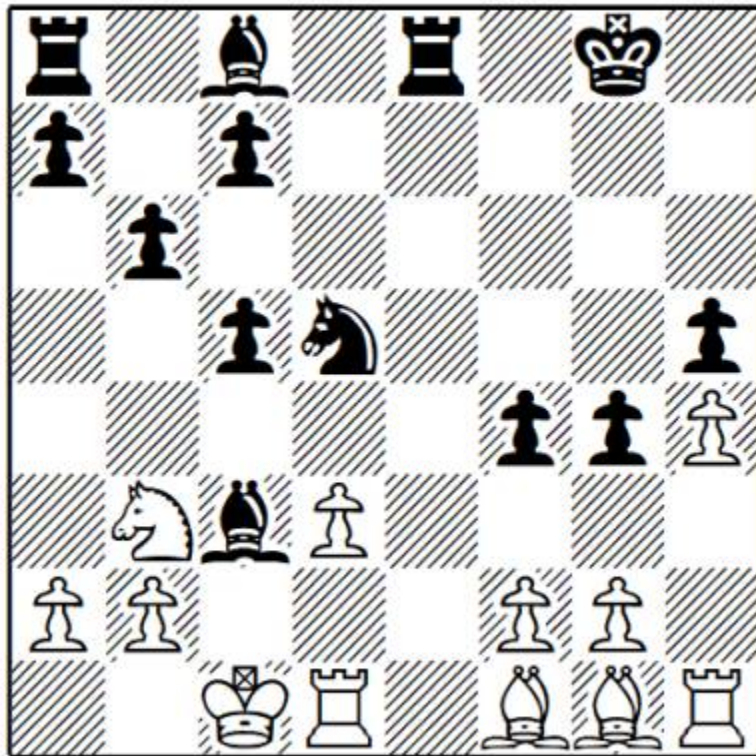
21 ... Re8 22 Bf1?!

White's crunched-up bishops contort like a yoga teacher on a good day. Once again White should play 22 Nxd4 cxd4 23 Kd2 Bf5 with an inferior but playable position.

22 ... b6 23 c3!?

Sometimes taking action is the only remedy to drive out frustration. This pawn on c3 is now a juicy sacrificial target for Black's pieces. But if 23 Nxd4 cxd4 24 Kd2, White fears that his kingside cement courtyard will never sprout flowers again and that his bishops may never see the light of day.

23 ... Bxc3!?



Black cannot resist the temptation. The fact that you either won or lost your game isn't necessarily an accurate arbiter on the soundness of your idea, as Tal proved over and over again. This sacrifice is indeed sound, yet I'm not convinced it's the best move. Rozentalis gives up two pieces for White's rook and two pawns, but after the simple 23 ... Bg7! Black has a very good game and many would prefer this route.

24 bxc3 Nxc3 25 Bh2!

White's rook has nowhere to go, since 25 Rd2?? allows 25 ... Re1+ 26 Kc2 Rxf1 27 Kxc3 Bb7 28 f3 gxf3 29 gxf3 Bxf3 30 Rh3 Bg4 31 Rg2 f3 32 Rgg3 f2 33 Bxf2 Rxf2 with two extra pawns and a winning position for Black.

25 ... Nxd1 26 Kxd1 Rf8

White's jumbled kingside pieces ensure that Black continues to stand better.

27 d4

He must gain freedom for his light-squared bishop.

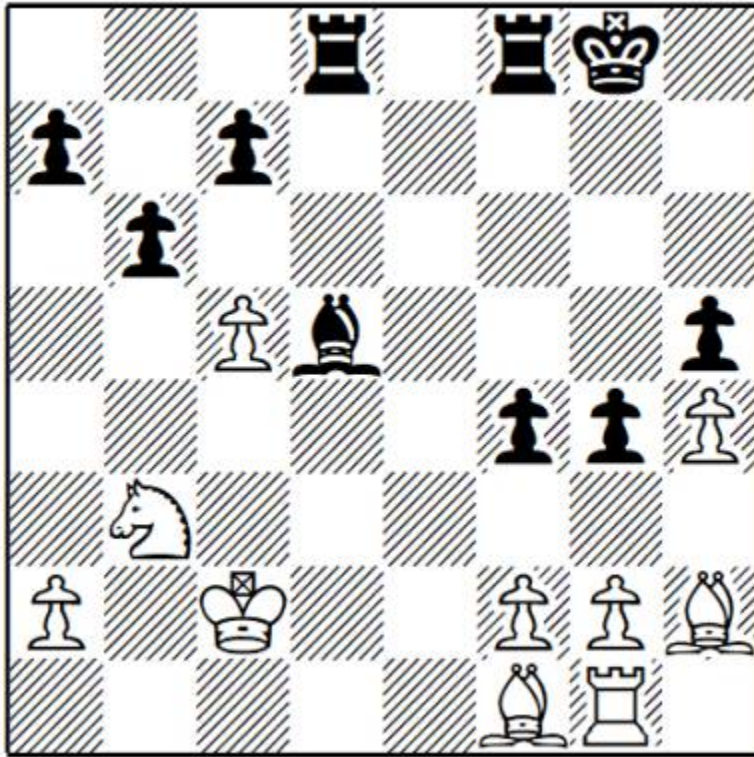
27 ... Be6!

Giving up a pawn is stronger than 27 ... cxd4 28 Bb5 c5 29 Nd2, when White's pieces have managed to unravel slightly.

28 dxc5 Bd5!

Now White's kingside remains bottled up.

29 Rg1 Rad8 30 Kc2?!



White's king should have gone to c1.

Exercise (planning): Find a powerful plan for Black.

30 ... g3!

Answer: Step 1: Push the g-pawn to g3.

31 fxg3 f3!

Step 2: Push the f-pawn to f3, after which Black's pieces threaten to infiltrate White's position, especially via f2.

32 g4

White is desperate to free his long-imprisoned dark-squared bishop.

Others don't help:

a) 32 gxf3?? Rxf3 and both ... Rf2+ and ... Be4+ are coming and White is busted.

b) 32 Nd2 f2 33 Rh1 Rf5 34 g4 hxg4 35 Bxc7 Bxg2! 36 cxb6 Rxd2+ 37 Kxd2 Bxh1 38 bxa7 Kg7 is hopeless for White.

32 ... fxf3 33 Ba6

33 Bxg2 allows 33 ... Rf2+ followed by ... Rxg2.

33 ... Rf2+ 34 Kc3 Rxa2 35 Bxc7

If 35 Bc4 then 35 ... Bxc4 36 Kxc4 Rc2+ 37 Kb5 Rd3 38 Nc1 Rh3 39 Bf4 hxg4 40 c6 Rh1 and Black wins.

35 ... Rd7

This simple double attack wins a piece. 35 ... Rf8 also does the trick as 36 Bd3 is met by 36 ... Ra3 37 Bc2 bxc5 38 Kb2 Ra4 39 gxh5 Rf2 40 Bg3 Ra2+! 41 Kxa2 Rxc2+ 42 Kb1 Bxb3, when White has no chance of saving the game.

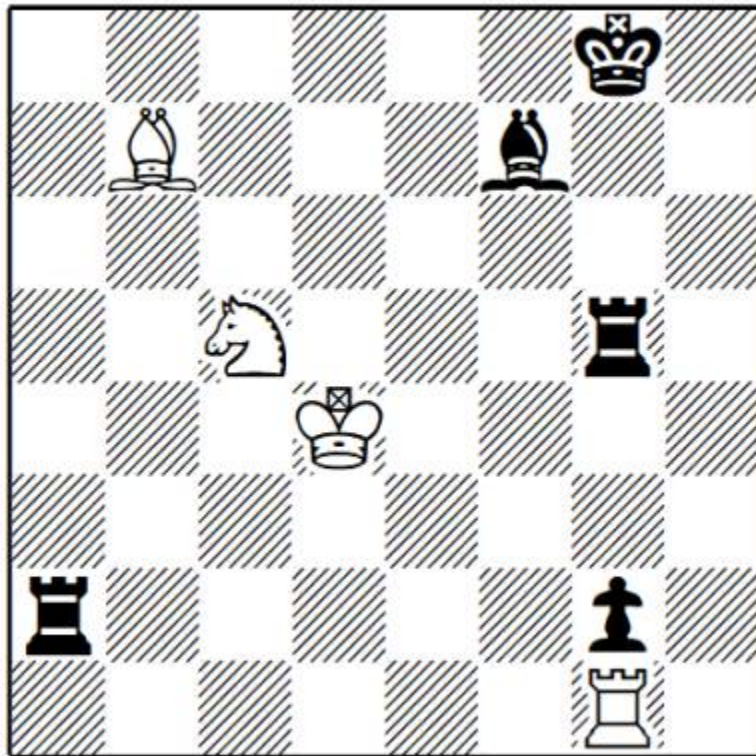
36 cxb6 axb6!

There is no reason to allow 36 ... Rxa6 37 Nc5.

37 Bxb6 Rd6

Complex isn't necessarily better. This move prolongs the game. Instead, Black wins easily after 37 ... Rxa6! 38 Nc5 Rxb6 39 Nxd7 Rd6 40 Ne5 Rf6, when there is no remedy against the coming ... Rf1.

38 Nc5 Rxb6 39 Kd4 Bf7 40 gxh5 Rb4+ 41 Ke5 Rxh4 42 Bb7 Rxh5+ 43 Kd4 Rg5



If White can remove Black's deep g-pawn, he can put up stiff resistance in the pawnless ending. As it turns out, there is no way to capture it and the position is a relatively straightforward technical win for Black.

44 Ne4 Rg6 45 Ke5 Rb2 46 Ba8 Kg7 47 Nc3 Kh6!

The goal is to get the king to either h2 or f2, breaking White's blockade of the g-pawn.

48 Be4 Rg5+ 49 Kf4 Bc4 50 Nd1

Intending Ne3, with a double attack on Black's bishop and g-pawn. Unfortunately, the idea fails tactically.

50 ... Rd2

Threatening ... Rxd1 and ... g1Q.

51 Bf3

Not 51 Ne3?? which walks into 51 ... Rf2+! 52 Bf3 Be2, winning the bishop.

51 ... Ba6 52 Ke3

By now Grandmaster Watson is surely sick and tired of that immovable, grinning halfwit on g2. Once again White is unable to implement his Ne3

idea as 52 Ne3?? Rd4+! 53 Be4 Bd3 wins the bishop another way.

52 ... Ra2 53 Nf2 Bf1

Black always seems to have a way to protect g2.

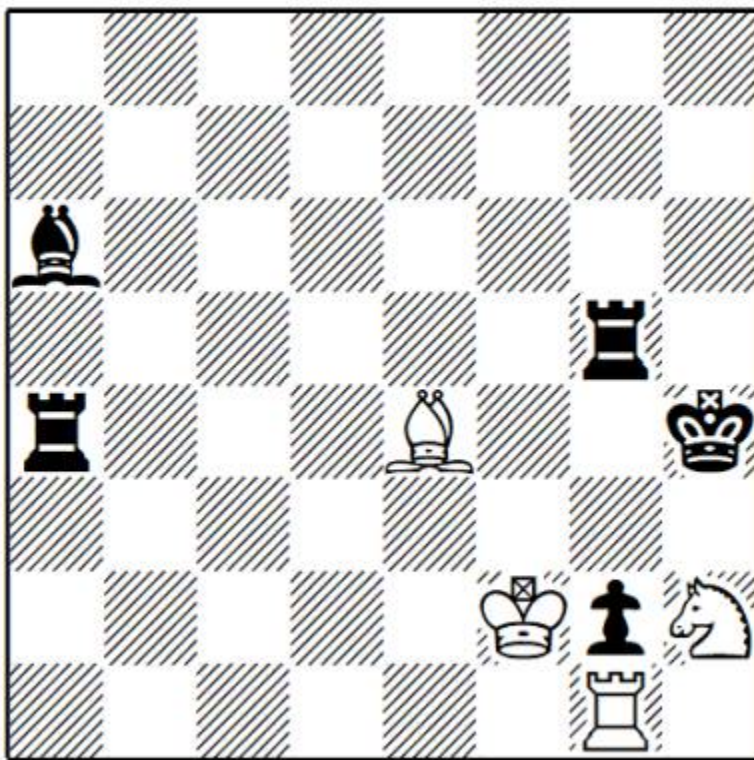
54 Ng4+ Kg6 55 Be4+ Kh5 56 Nh2 Ba6 57 Kf4 Ra4

Threatening to increase the pressure of the pin with either ... Bd3 or ... Bb7.

58 Kf3 Kh4

Threatening ... Kh3.

59 Kf2



Exercise (planning): We reach the dreaded not-quite-there moment, the place where we blow so many of our would-be wins. A giant comet is about to smash into White's planet and there is nothing he can do about it. Work out Black's forced win.

59 ... Ra2+!

Answer: Step 1: Give check on a2, which allows Black's king into g3. After the hasty 59 ... Rxe4?? 60 Nf3+ Kh5 61 Nxg5 Kxg5 62 Kxg2 the ending is a theoretical draw, and Black's hopes are reduced to a few practical chances.

60 Ke3 Kg3 61 Nf3 Ra3+! 0-1

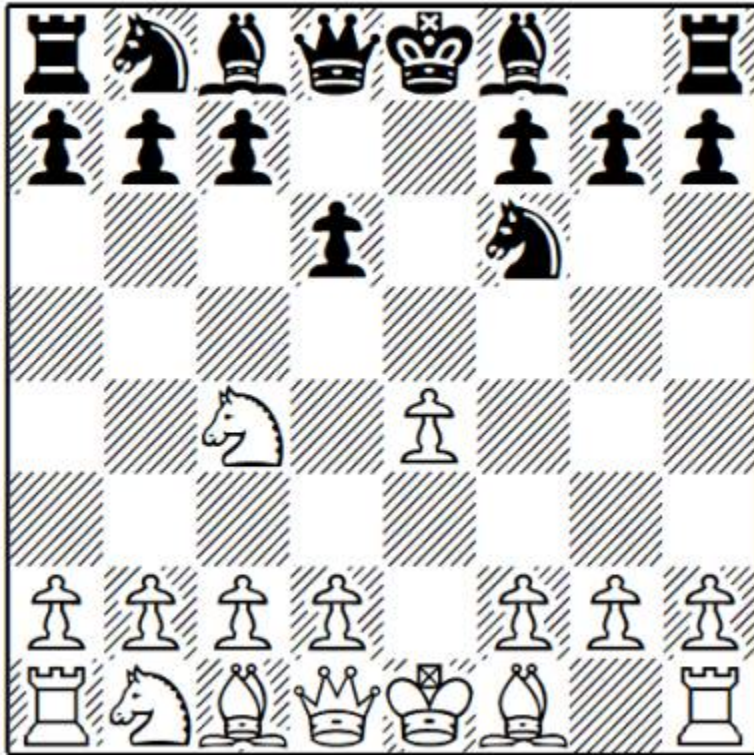
Step 2: Check on a3 and collect the white knight. 62 Kd4 Rxf3 is game over.

Game 39

R.Rapport-Wei Yi

Wijk aan Zee 2017

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nc4



Grandmaster Rapport, one of the most creative players in the world, loves to skate on the outer fringes of theory. This surprise move is harmless

for Black, and the position feels rather lifeless, but just watch what happens in a game where both sides strive to complicate.

4 ... Nxe4 5 Qe2

An alternative is 5 Nc3 Nxc3 6 bxc3 (after 6 dxc3 d5 7 Ne3 c6 8 Qd4 Be6 9 f4 f6 10 c4 c5 11 Qd3 d4 12 Qe4 Qe7 13 Nd5 Bxd5 14 Qxe7+ Bxe7 15 cxd5 Nd7 16 c4 was S.Sulskis-M.Zulfugarli, Bydgoszcz 1999, and now 16 ... dxc3 17 bxc3 0-0-0, the ending looks equal) 6 ... g6! (White was planning d2-d4 and Bd3, taking aim at Black's kingside; this move blunts that plan) 7 d4 Bg7 8 Bd3 0-0 9 0-0 Nd7 10 Qf3 Nb6 11 Ne3 c5! and Black has equalized, Ma.Carlsen-V.Kramnik, Nice (rapid) 2008. This game is annotated in *The Petroff: Move by Move*.

5 ... Qe7 6 Ne3 Be6

Wei Yi decides to develop. Instead, 6 ... c6 7 c4 g6 8 Nc3 Na6 9 Nc2 was R.Felgaer-D.Fridman, Gibraltar 2010, where Black is fine after 9 ... Nxc3 10 dxc3 Nc5.

7 Nc3

Others:

a) 7 g3 Nc6 8 Bg2 d5 9 0-0 0-0-0 10 c3 was G.Cabrilo-D.Marciano, Sabac 1998. I prefer Black's chances in the opposing wing attacks after 10 ... h5!

b) 7 d4 g6 8 g3 d5 9 Bg2 Bg7 10 c3 0-0 11 f3 Nf6 and Black stood at least equal in R.Blodig-F.Roeder, Tirschenreuth 1982.

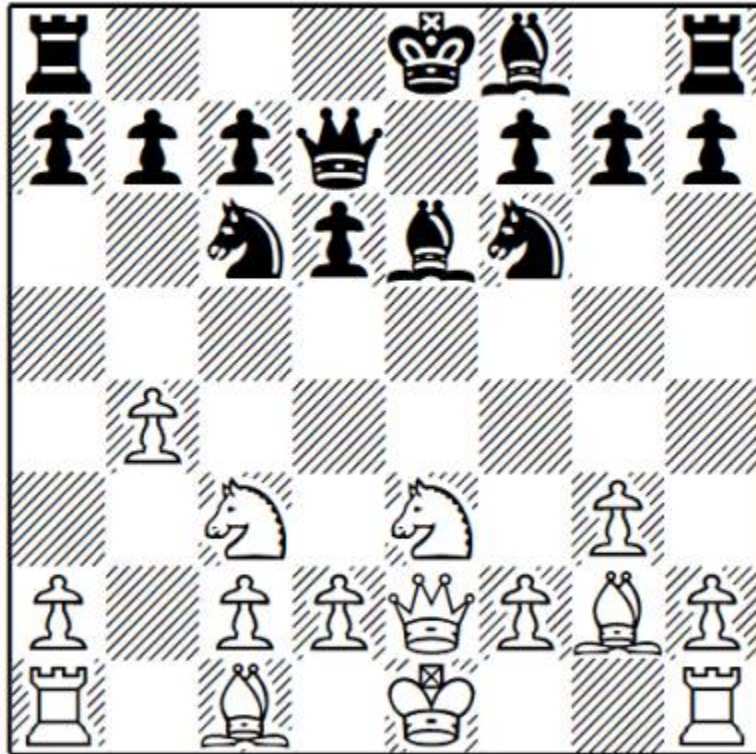
7 ... Nf6!?

Black wants to complicate. 7 ... Nxc3 8 bxc3 g6 is even.

8 g3 Nc6 9 Bg2 Qd7

With this move Black unravels his kingside and prepares for queenside castling.

10 b4!?



The ever-imaginative Rapport attempts to discourage queenside castling with this idea. It looks better than 10 0-0 0-0-0 11 f4 Bh3 12 d3?! (White should exchange bishops and follow up with Ncd5), as in T.Horvath-W.Kastner, Austrian League 2017, where Black has a close to winning position after 12 ... Bxg2 13 Qxg2 d5 (threatening ... d5-d4) 14 Ncd1 h5. His attack is going strong, while White's is stillborn.

10 ... d5

Threatening ... d5-d4.

11 b5 Nd4 12 Qd3 c5 13 0-0

After 13 bxc6 Nxc6 14 Nexd5 Nxd5 15 Nxd5 0-0-0 16 Nf4 Qxd3 17 cxd3 Bf5, chances look balanced.

13 ... 0-0-0 14 Re1 h5 15 h4 g5?

This is a bit too radical. 15 ... Nf5! 16 Ncxd5 Nxd5 17 Bxd5 Nxh4 18 Be4 Qxd3 19 cxd3 f5 20 Bh1 Ng6 21 Nc4 Bf7 is still about equal.

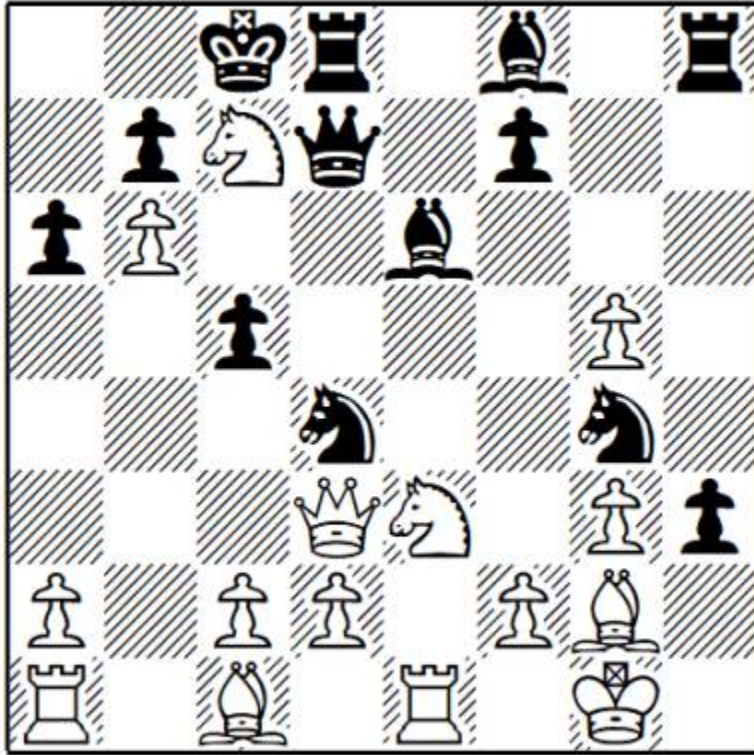
16 b6! a6

Not 16 ... axb6?, since 17 hxg5 Ng4 18 Ncxd5 is completely lost for Black.

17 hxg5 Ng4 18 Ncxd5 h4 19 Nc7?

After 19 Nxc7! Bxd5 20 Nf6 Bxg2 21 Nxd7 Nf3+ 22 Qxf3 Bxf3 23 Bb2 Rh5 24 Nxf8 hxg3 25 fxg3 Rxf8 26 Bf6, Black is two pawns down and busted.

19 ... h3



Exercise (critical decision): White has 20 Bxb7+. Does the sacrifice work?

If not, then what should he play?

20 Bxb7+?

A once recumbent monster attempts to arise. White's attack is insufficiently energized for this to work. Tempting as it looks, the sacrifice is unsound.

Answer: He should have settled for 20 Nxc7 hxg2 21 Nxe6 Rh1+ 22 Kxg2 Rxe1 23 Nxd8 Qxg4 24 Bb2! (Rapport perhaps only analyzed 24 Nxf7?? which runs into 24 ... Qh5! and White is mated) 24 ... Rxa1 25 Bxa1

Kxd8 26 Bxd4 cxd4 27 Qc4, when White has enough for the sacrificed piece.

20 ... Kxb7 21 Qxa6+ Kc6

It looks like there ought to be a mate but it doesn't exist.

22 Nxg4

After 22 b7+ Kxc7 23 Qa5+ Kd6 24 Qb6+ Ke7 25 Nxg4 Qd5 White has no defence to the mating threat on g2, since 26 Ne3 allows 26 ... h2+ 27 Kf1, when Black can choose from no less than three mates: 27 ... Qh1, 27 ... h1Q, and 27 ... h1R.

22 ... Bxg4

Threatening ... h3-h2+ and ... Nf3+.

23 b7+

After 23 Qa4+ Kd6 White's checks run out.

23 ... Kxc7 24 Qa5+ Kb8

It isn't a draw. Black is simply repeating moves to gain time.

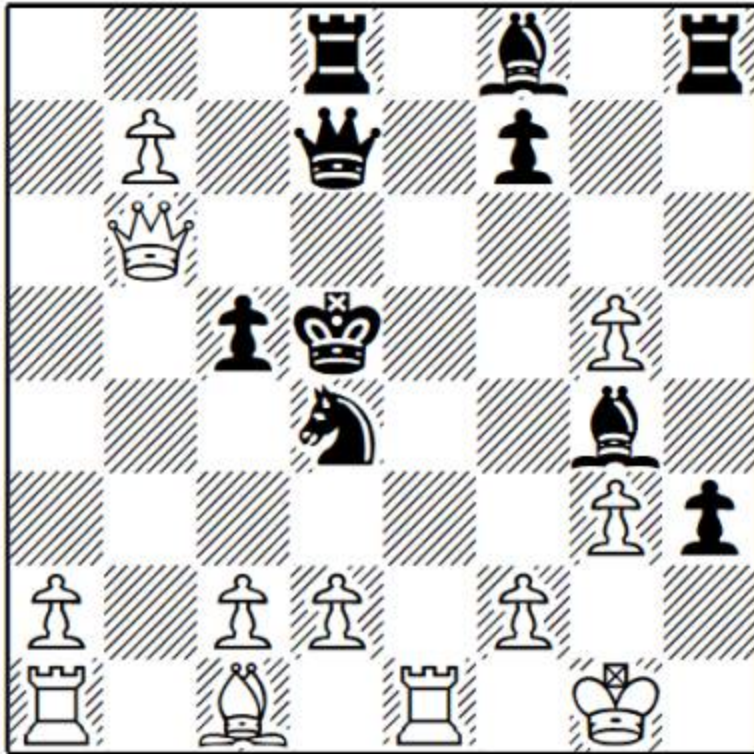
25 Qa8+ Kc7 26 Qa5+

Rapport is unremitting in his intent to deliver the non-existent checkmate.

26 ... Kd6!

Black correctly doesn't fear a queen check on b6.

27 Qb6+ Kd5!!



Even Stephen King might criticize Black's king position as being too scary. And you thought playing Petroff was a dull affair? When Adolf Anderssen and Paul Morphy drove their opponents' kings to d5 on a crowded board, we became accustomed to them forcing a mate. In this instance it is White's king that is in far greater danger while Black's king meanders along, totally immune to the scary threats around.

This move is even stronger than 27 ... Nc6 28 d3 (threatening Bf4+) 28 ... h2+ 29 Kg2 Be6! (this shields Black's king and allows a safe haven on e7) 30 Bf4+ Ke7, after which White is losing, yet can fight on.

28 Re3

White's "threats" are empty. Everything fails. For example:

a) 28 b8Q h2+ 29 Kg2 Bf3+ 30 Kf1 h1Q mate.

b) 28 c4+ Kxc4 29 d3+ Kd5 and White's checks run out.

c) 28 Kh2 Nf3+ 29 Kh1 Nxe1 30 c4+ Ke4! 31 b8Q Rxb8 32 Qxb8 Qc6! (threatening awful discoveries on the h1-a8 diagonal) 33 f3+ Kxf3 34 d4 (intending Qf4+ and also d4-d5, in case Black's king moves and makes a discovered check) 34 ... cxd4 35 Kh2 (or 35 Qf4+ Ke2+ 36 Kh2 Qg2 mate)

35 ... Bd6! 36 Qxh8 Bxg3+ 37 Kg1 Ke2! and White is helpless to prevent mate.

28 ... h2+ 29 Kh1 Qc6

The practical move; but even stronger is 29 ... Re8! (removal of the guard) 30 c4+ (30 Rxe8 is met by 30 ... Bf3 mate) 30 ... Kxc4 31 Rc3+ Kd5 32 Ba3 Qc6 33 b8Q Rxb8 34 Qxb8 Ke6+ 35 f3 Qxf3+ 36 Rxf3 Bxf3 mate.

30 Rb1

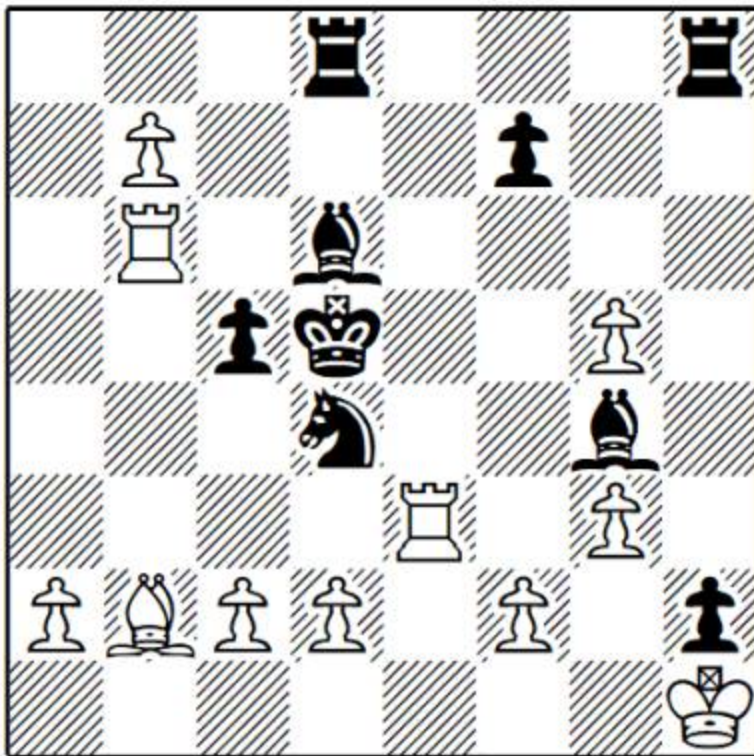
Or 30 b8Q Rxb8 31 Qxb8 Kc4+! (a rather slick winning move) 32 f3 Qxf3+ 33 Rxf3 Bxf3 mate.

30 ... Qxb6 31 Rxb6 Bd6

That is the end of White's promotion threats on b8.

32 Bb2

32 d3, threatening c2-c4 mate, is easily disabled by 32 ... Nxc2.



Exercise (planning): What is the quickest way to finish White off?

32 ... Rde8! 0-1

Answer: Removal of the guard. There is no defence to ... Rxe3 and then ... Bf3 mate.

Game 40

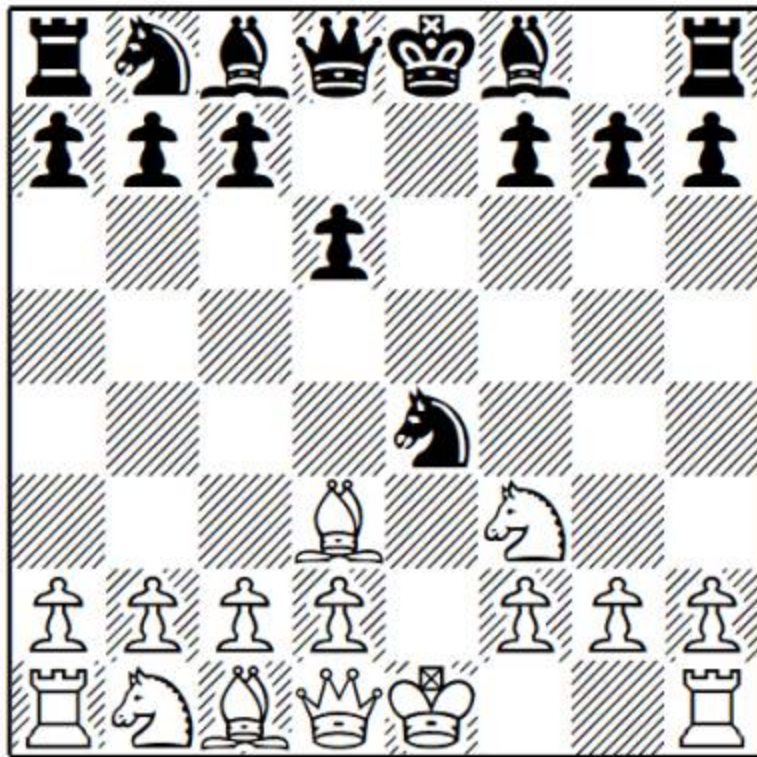
A.Morozevich-V.Topalov

Dortmund 2001

1 e4 e5

White's opening set-up in this game is similar to the Kopec Variation of the Sicilian which runs 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 c3 Nf6 4 Bd3. The idea is to play Bc2 and d2-d4.

2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 Bd3!?



I'm calling this line the Kopec Petroff, even though Danny Kopec never played the line as far as I know. White's development is only temporarily blocked, since after c2-c3, Bc2 and d2-d4, his position will be freed up.

5 ... Nf6

This retreat is the simplest path to equality. 5 ... d5 is playable too.

6 h3

Preventing ... Bg4 and thus leaving Black's light-squared bishop slightly short of squares, since f5 isn't available either. In the next game we analyse 6 0-0.

6 ... Be7 7 0-0 0-0 8 c3 c5

Black seizes central space, while preventing ideas such as Nd4 and Nf5.

A decent alternative is 8 ... b6, when Black's light-squared bishop finds a home on the long diagonal. In D.Navara-B.Gelfand, Wijk aan Zee 2012, Black stood no worse after 9 Bc2 Bb7 10 d4 Nbd7 11 Nbd2 Re8 12 Nc4 Bf8 13 Bg5 h6 14 Bh4 g6 15 Ne3 Bg7 16 Nh2 Qc8 17 Nhg4 Nxc4 18 Nxc4 f5 19 Ne3 Nf6.

9 Bc2

White is now ready for d2-d4.

9 ... Nc6 10 d4 Be6 11 Re1

11 Ng5 is well met by 11 ... Bc4 12 Re1 cxd4 13 cxd4 Nb4! 14 Nc3 (14 Bf5 Qa5! leaves White's f5-bishop in an awkward spot) 14 ... Nxc2 15 Qxc2 Rc8, when Black has picked up the bishop pair and stands at least even, E.Rozentalis-Y.Solodovnichenko, Koge 2013.

11 ... h6

Preventing Ng5. Black has equalized.

12 Be3 Re8 13 Nbd2 Bf8

13 ... Qb6 also looks pleasant for Black.

14 Ne4 Nd5 15 dxc5!?

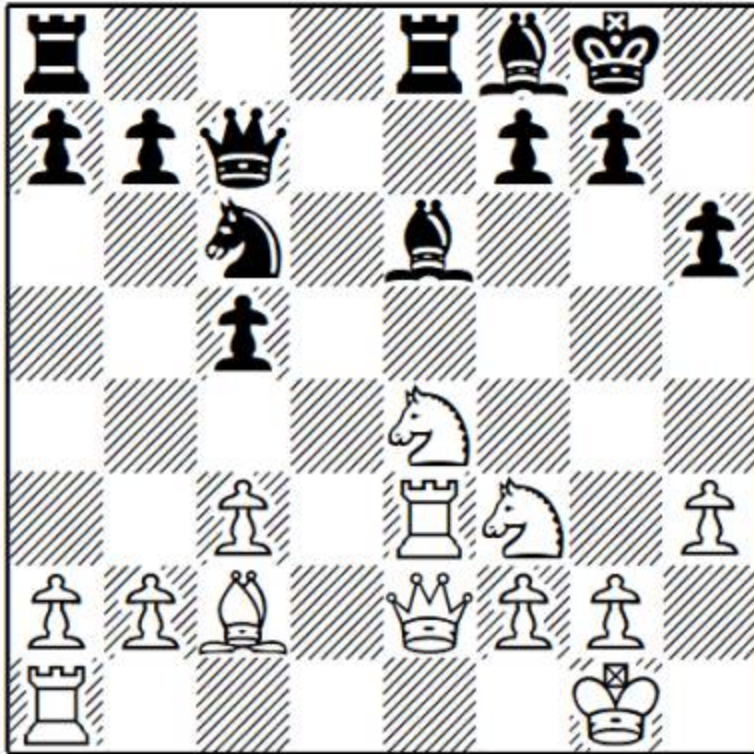
It doesn't look wise to grant Black the bishop pair in a semi-open position, but 15 Bd2 b5! is fine for Black.

15 ... Nxe3 16 Rxe3 dxc5 17 Qe2

White wants to keep queens on the board in the hopes of later generating an attack against Black's king.

17 ... Qc7?

Black doesn't stand worse after 17 ... c4!.



Exercise (combination alert): Black's last move allows a powerful combination.

What should White play here?

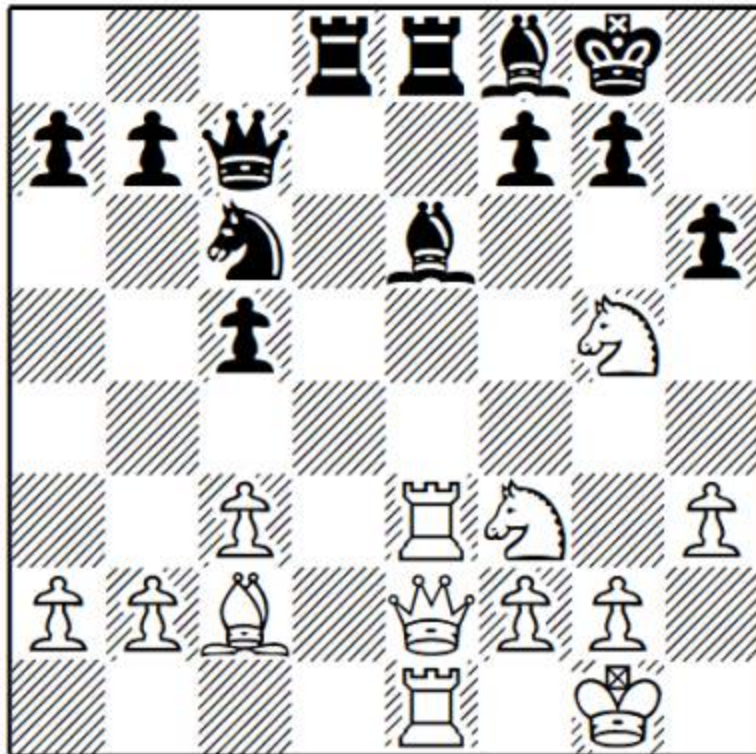
18 Re1?

Answer: Both players overlook 18 Qd3!, threatening Nf6+ and Qh7 mate. This in turn forces 18 ... f5 and now 19 Neg5!! (probably the move both players missed in their analysis). Play continues 19 ... hxg5 20 Rxe6! (the most potent defender of Black's kingside light squares is eliminated) 20 ... Rxe6 21 Bb3! (even stronger than 21 Qxf5? Rh6, after which Black has chances to defend) 21 ... Rae8 22 Nxc5 Nd8 23 Qxf5 g6 24 Qxg6+ Qg7 25 Qxe8 Qxg5 26 Bxe6+ and wins.

18 ... Rad8?

Once again 18 ... c4 was necessary.

19 Neg5!



Black is in deep trouble after this shot. Morozevich and Topalov, along with Kasparov, have a way of imposing their will upon their opponents, who weren't willing to go as far, or sacrifice as much, to get their way. In this instance Morozevich seems to be winning the battle of wills. However, this state flips a few moves later, when Topalov in turn seizes the initiative.

19 ... Rd6

Forced. After 19 ... hxg5? 20 Nxg5 g6 21 Bxg6 fxg6 22 Rxe6 Rxe6 23 Qxe6+ Kg7 24 Qg4! Rd6 25 Ne6+ Rxe6 26 Rxe6 Black has big problems.

20 Ne4

This repetition shouldn't harm White but it does, due to a faulty follow up.

Correct was 20 Bh7+! Kh8 21 Bf5 hxg5 22 Nxg5 g6 23 Nxe6 Rxe6 (not 23 ... fxe6?? 24 Bxg6 Re7 25 Qh5+ with a winning attack) 24 Bxe6 fxe6 25 Rxe6 and White's rook and two pawns are worth more than Black's two minor pieces.

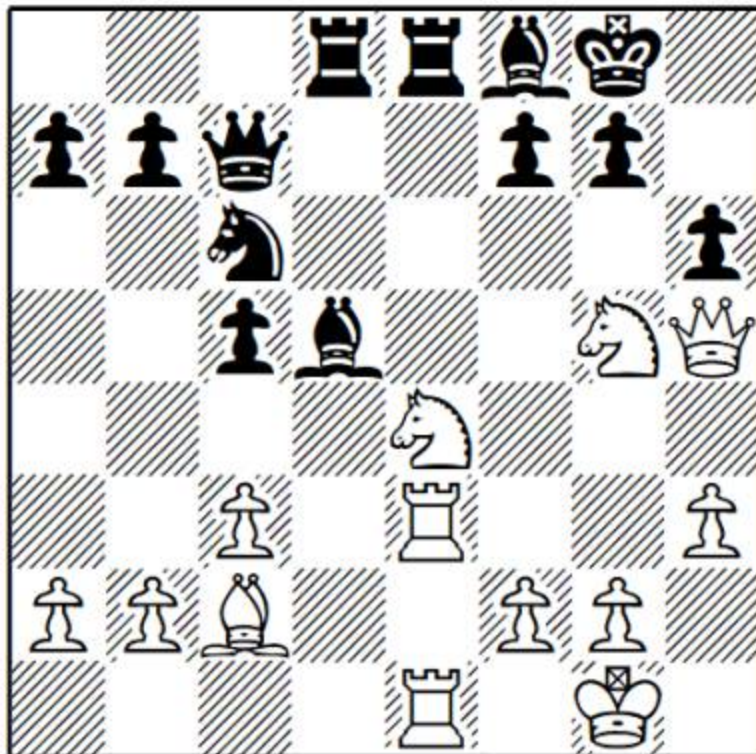
20 ... Rdd8 21 Nfg5?

Right square, wrong knight. White should repeat with 21 Neg5! Rd6 and then play 22 Bh7+! as in the previous note.

21 ... Bd5?!

This is the wrong diagonal for the bishop. Black's king requires help; therefore he should play 21 ... Bf5! which equalizes.

22 Qh5?



Having played the über-talented grandmaster Alexander Morozevich in online blitz, I can tell you that the man is king-obsessed. He plays for mate in virtually every game (or at least he does against me). In this instance, however, he goes too far with his obsession.

Sometimes our best interests require that we disobey our natural instincts, since the demands of the position represent a higher authority over our mere inclinations. Here Morozevich should suppress the powerful attacking impulse and aim instead for strategic superiority with 22 Nh7! Bxe4 23 Nxf8 Re7 24 Bxe4 Rxf8 25 Qh5 Re5 26 Qf3 Rfe8, when White stands slightly better due to his superior minor piece. But this line means

that White must give up on his mating ambitions, which for Morozevich is an anathema.

Exercise (planning): With his last move White flipped a promising position into a losing one. How should Black respond?

22 ... Re5!

Answer: Step 1: Lift the rook to e5 and pin White's knight.

23 f4 Rf5!

The g5-knight remains pinned, and now the f4-pawn is threatened which forces White to weaken further.

24 g3 g6! 25 Qh4 c4!

Step 2: Open the g1-a7 diagonal.

Topalov's move is far stronger than 25 ... hxc5?! 26 Nxc5 Rxc5 27 Qxc5 c4 28 Kh2, when White may still be able to generate play against Black's king.

26 Kh2

Retreating the knight with 26 Nf3?? is impossible due to 26 ... Be7! 27 Qxh6 Bxe4 28 Rxe4 Rh5!, trapping White's queen.

26 ... Kg7!

White's pieces are huddled up and wiggling in helpless terror.

27 Qg4

White's queen must leave the h-file, after which Black can safely grab the knight on g5.

Others:

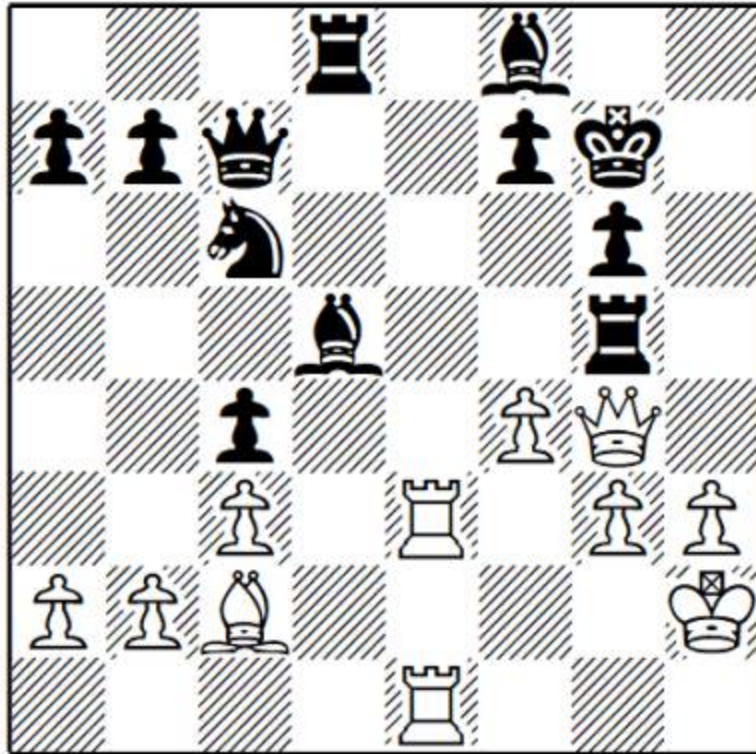
a) 27 Nf3?? fails to another queen trap after 27 ... Be7 28 Qg4 h5.

b) 27 R3e2 (a waiting plan isn't an option for White either) 27 ... Qb6 28 Bb1 Be7 and White is in zugzwang and must move his queen to g4 in any case.

27 ... hxc5

Now it is safe to grab the knight.

28 Nxc5 Rxc5!



White's most potent attacker must be eliminated, after which Black's two minor pieces are overwhelmingly superior to White's rook and pawn.

29 Qxg5

If 29 fxg5 Qb6, the b2-pawn falls and White is busted, having no targets of attack.

29 ... Qb6! 30 f5 Be7!

Topalov cleverly utilizes the fact that White's e3-rook is frozen in place and can't touch the e7-bishop.

31 Qf4

31 Rxe7?? isn't such a great option due to 31 ... Qf2 mate.

31 ... Qxb2 32 Rxe7

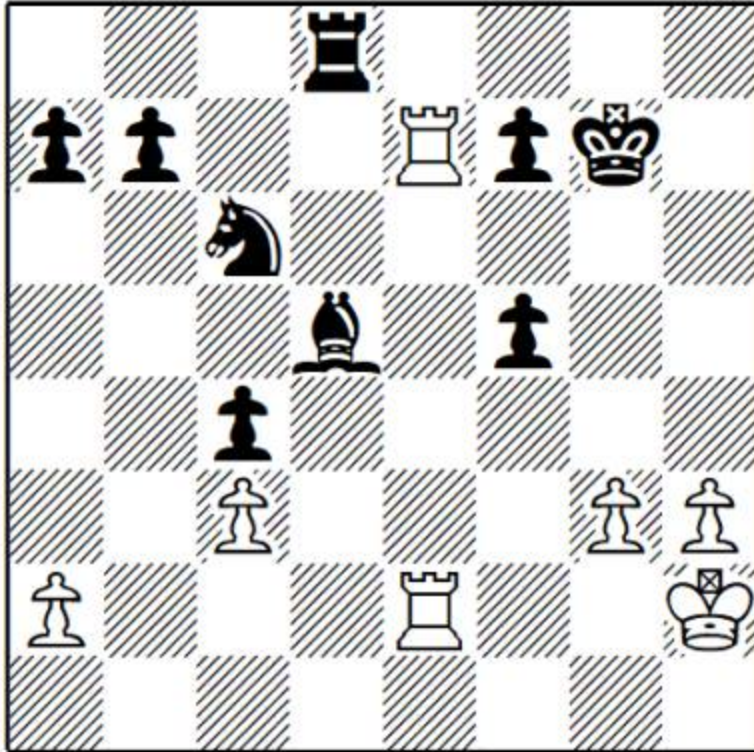
After 32 R1e2 Qc1! White's attack is at an end and he can resign.

32 ... Qxc2+

Topalov goes for the practical, no-nonsense approach.

Also winning is 32 ... Nxe7 33 f6+ Kg8 34 Re2 Qa1! (threatening mate on h1) 35 Be4 Bxe4 36 Qxe4 Nf5 and Black consolidates.

33 R1e2 Qxf5 34 Qxf5 gxf5



White is completely busted in this ending, mainly because his rooks are overwhelmed by Black's minor pieces.

35 Re8

35 Rxb7? allows Black to end the game with 35 ... Nd4, winning yet more material.

35 ... Rd7!

White's king remains insecure, so Black is better off keeping the rook on the board. This also follows the principle that if you have a rook and two minor pieces versus a pair of rooks, then avoid exchanging your remaining rook.

36 Rd2 Kf6!

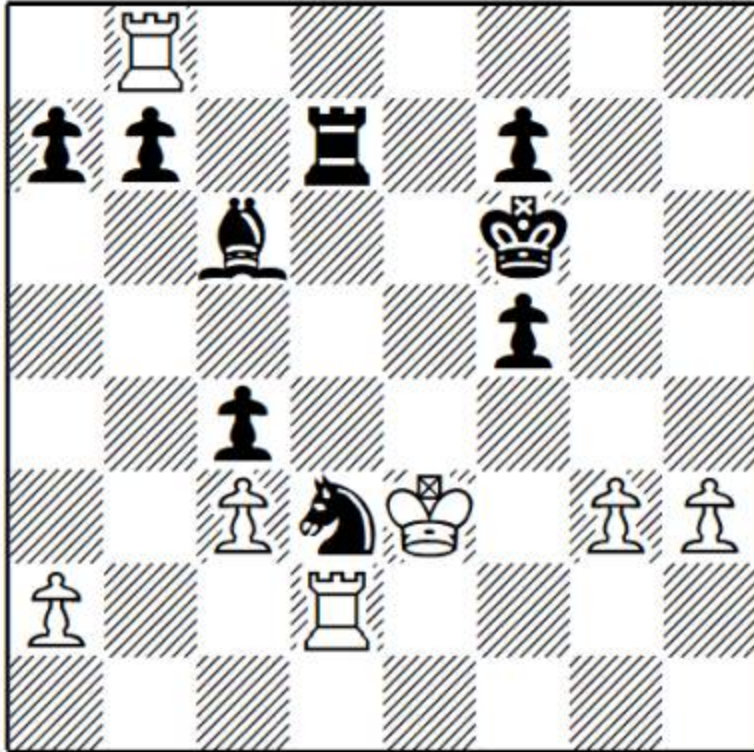
Now ... Ne5 is coming.

37 Kg1

37 Re1? (intending Red1) fails to 37 ... Ne5 38 Re3 Nd3 with a crushing position.

37 ... Ne5 38 Kf2 Nd3+ 39 Ke3 Bc6 40 Rb8?

A final mistake, though 40 Rd1 Rd6 is also completely lost for White.



Exercise (combination alert): White just blundered in a hopeless position.

What did he miss?

40 ... Re7+! 0-1

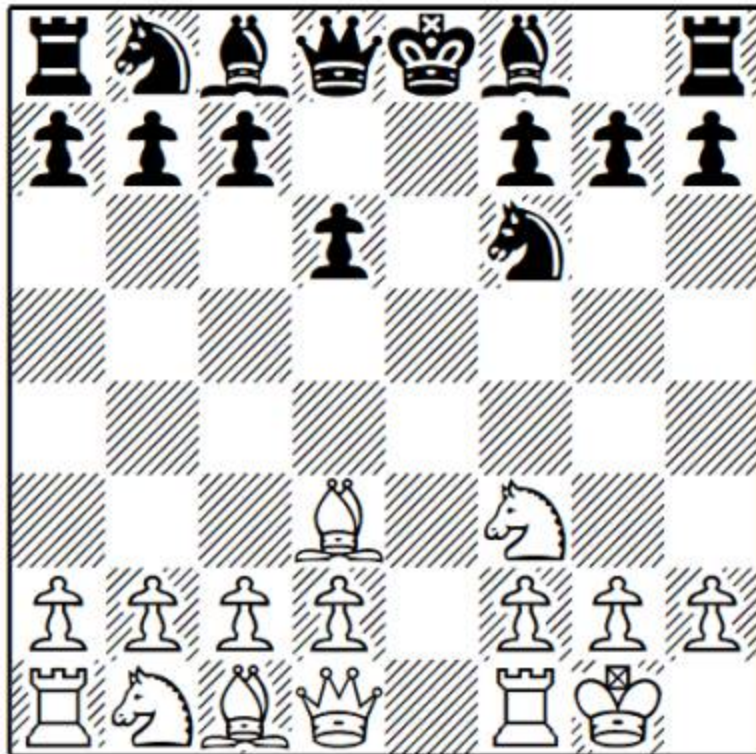
Answer: Mating net; i.e. 41 Kd4 Re4 mate.

Game 41

S.Berndt-L.Fressinet

German Bundesliga 2002

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 Bd3 Nf6 6 0-0



In this version White doesn't bother with (an early) h2-h3 and isn't afraid of ... Bg4. This doesn't affect Black since developing the light-squared bishop to g4 is not necessary anyway. Instead, Black plans to fianchetto this piece in due course.

6 ... Be7

Black keeps developing and gains easy equality.

Instead, 6 ... Bg4 leads to a slight fall behind in development after 7 h3 Bh5 8 Re1+ Be7 9 Qe2. Although this position is certainly playable, Black scored a measly two draws from six games in my database.

7 c3

White is still inviting ... Bg4.

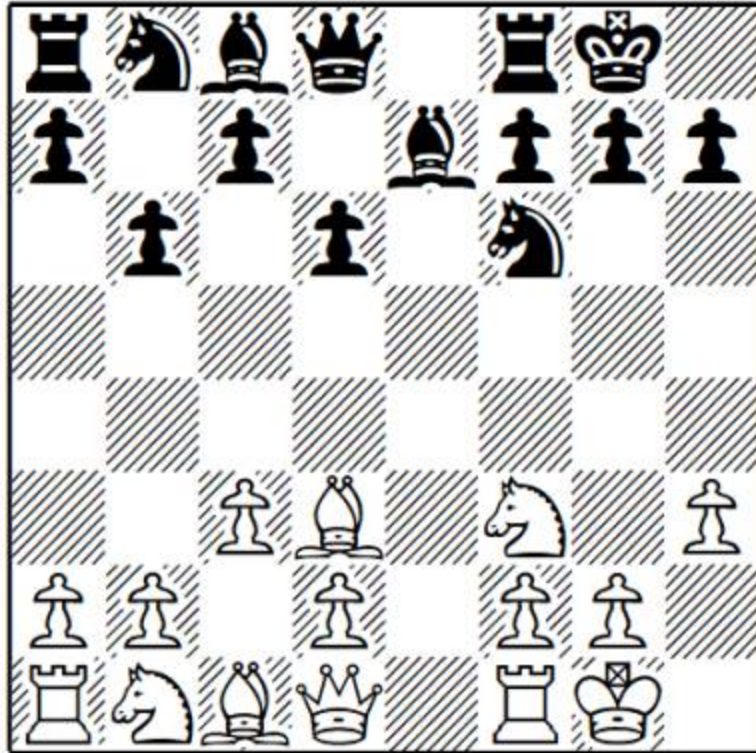
7 ... 0-0

On this turn 7 ... Bg4 is a more decent option; for example, 8 Bc2 0-0 9 d4 Nbd7 10 Nbd2 Re8 11 Nc4 Bh5 12 Ne3 Bf8 13 Nf5 c6 14 a4 d5 15 Bf4 Ne4 16 Ng3 Bg6 and Black has completely equalized, V.Ivanchuk-B.Gelfand, Bazna 2009.

8 h3

White finally prevents ... Bg4.

8 ... b6



Now we see the reason Black avoided ... Bg4. By fianchettoing, Black's light-squared bishop bears down upon the key e4-square and the game looks equal.

9 Bc2 Bb7 10 d4 Re8 11 Re1 Nbd7 12 Nbd2 Bf8 13 Rxe8 Qxe8 14 Nf1 g6!

This is a good defensive move which accomplishes the following:

1) It prevents White's f1-knight from playing to f5, via g3 or e3.

2) Black's dark-squared bishop is best placed on g7. The reason is that if White gets ambitious and plays a future c3-c4, Black's bishop adds pressure to the d4-pawn.

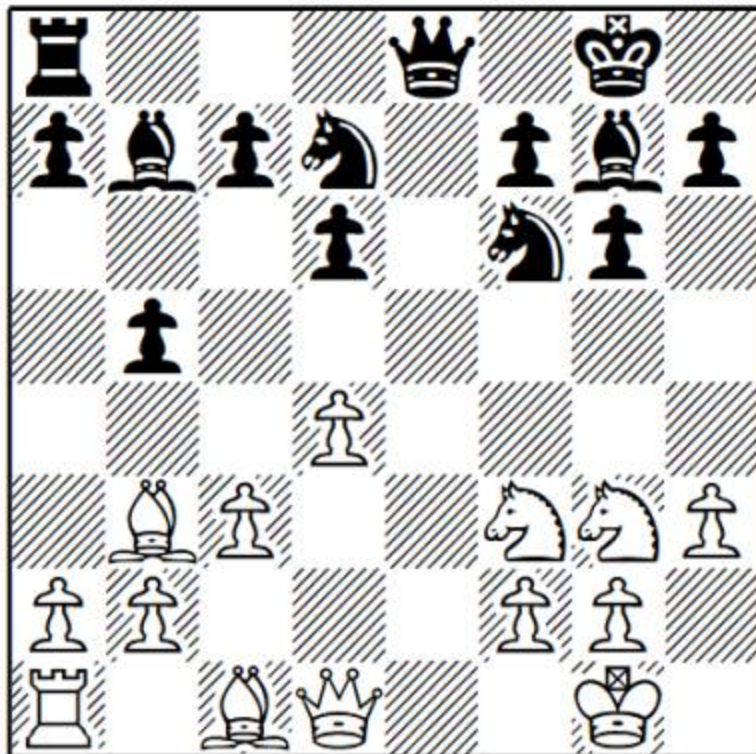
3) At some point White may play Bg5, move the queen and then play Re1, attacking Black's queen. After ... g7-g6! and ... Bg7, Black has the option of meeting White's plan with ... Qf8 and ... Re8, challenging for control over the e-file.

15 Ng3 Bg7 16 Bb3

Intending to go after f7, perhaps in conjunction with Ng5, which isn't really a weak square since Black can easily defend it. This is where theory ends.

A later game ended quietly: 16 Qd3 Qf8 17 Bf4 Re8 18 Bb3 Re7 19 Re1 ½-½ M.Womacka-P.Haba, German League 2009.

16 ... b5!



The only way either side can win in such a symmetrical position is to gain space. Any such space must be tempered with the inherent danger of future overextension. This game is an example of how Black can expand perfectly, while White mistimed his own space gaining and later overextended. The ideas behind this move are:

1) Black plans to meet Ng5 with ... Bd5, when White is denied a c3-c4 option.

2) Black will unravel with ... Nb6, ... Qd7 and ... Re8.

3) Black gains some useful queenside space, to counterbalance White's extra space in the centre.

17 Bg5 Nb6 18 Qd3 Qd7 19 Re1 Re8 20 Rxe8+ Qxe8

I actually slightly prefer Black now, since White has no visible plan, whereas Black can further expand on the queenside or even in the centre with ... c7-c5.

21 h4

This attack isn't really going anywhere since Black's king is well protected.

21 ... a5

Black increases his queenside territorial gains.

22 h5 a4 23 Bc2 Ng4

With the following points:

- 1) Black wants to prevent h5-h6.
- 2) White must watch out for future tactics based on ... Bxf3, followed by ... Qe1+.

23 ... Nfd5 is also a reasonable option.

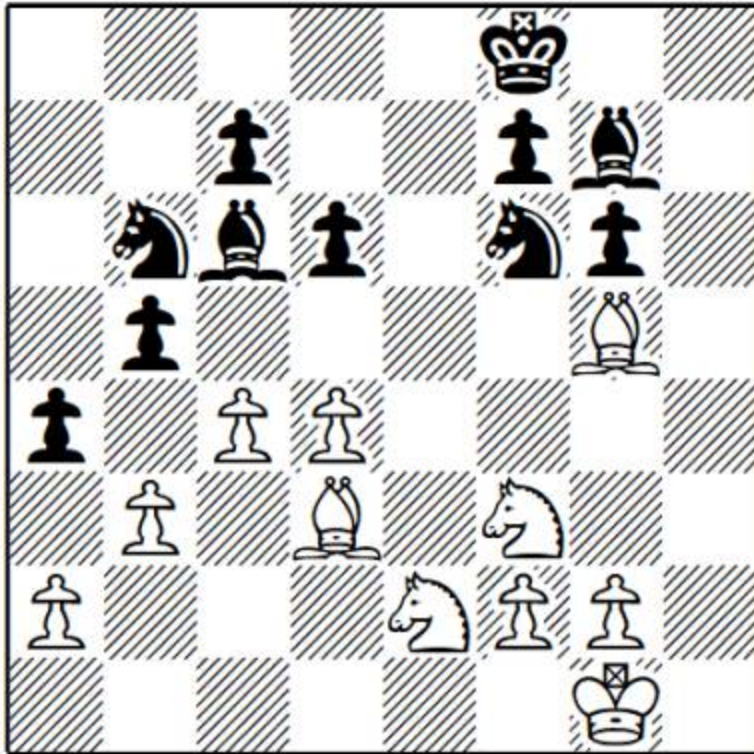
24 hxg6 hxg6 25 Qe2

White allows a potential ... Bxf3. When we deliberately allow our opponent to weaken our structure in exchange for other benefits – in this case the bishop pair and increased control over the light squares – is it a virtuous or non-virtuous action? The answer of course is: it all depends.

25 ... Qxe2 26 Nxe2 Nf6

26 ... Bxf3?! is a misjudgment. After 27 gxf3 White's bishop pair and enhanced control over the light squares are worth more than the merely ornamental damage inflicted upon his kingside structure. Black has no way to exploit the doubled isolanis on the f-file.

27 Bd3 Bc6 28 b3 Kf8 29 c4?



White's ambitious desire to gain space costs him the game. It was headed for a likely draw, until White made this overly optimistic move which weakened his central pawns, without any benefit in return.

Exercise (planning): How did Black take advantage of White's last move?

29 ... bxc4!

Answer: Step 1: Exchange on c4, while leaving the a-pawns on the board.

30 bxc4 Be4!

This is White's light bulb moment: his c-pawn will fall.

Step 2: Removal of the guard. White's only defender of c4 is eliminated.

31 Bxe4

After 31 Bxf6 Bxd3 32 Bxg7+ Kxg7, the c4-pawn falls.

31 ... Nxe4

Once again White's c4-pawn is undefended.

32 Bd8

Only with this move can White maintain material equality. The trouble is his position is quite awful at the end of the sequence.

32 ... Nxc4 33 Bxc7 Ke7!

Step 3: Black threatens to chase and win White's bishop with ... Kd7, ... Kc8 and ... Kb7, which in turn forces White to hand over his d-pawn.

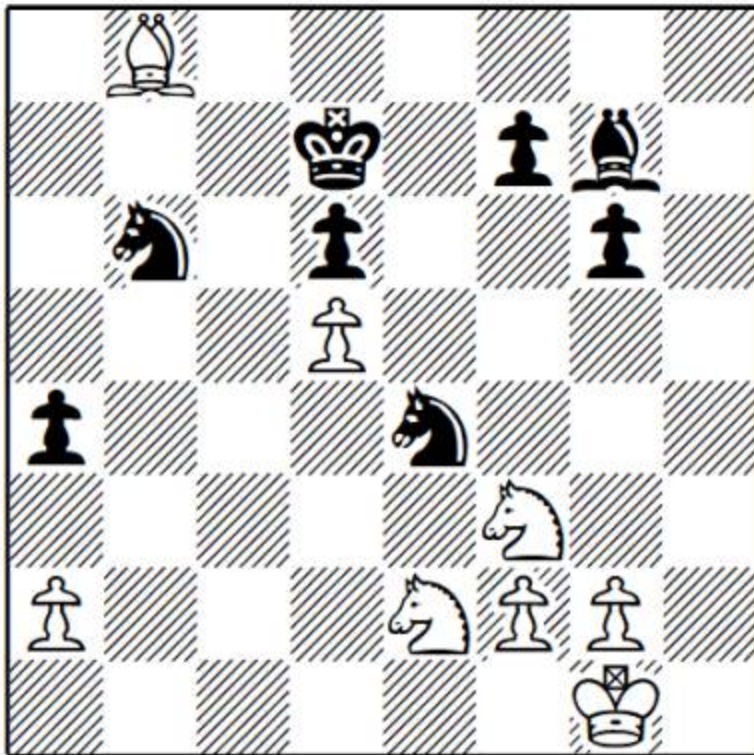
34 Bb8 Kd7!

Duly threatening ... Kc8 and ... Kb7, trapping White's bishop. White must hand over his d-pawn as a ransom payment.

35 d5

The white bishop's period of ostracism concludes, but at too high a cost. This move, which creates an escape hatch, also dooms his own d-pawn. Furthermore White's a-pawn is very vulnerable.

35 ... Nb6



Step 4: Attack and win White's unprotectable d-pawn.

36 Ba7 Nxd5 37 Bd4 Bxd4 38 Nfxd4 Nec3

Now we see why Black avoided the exchange of a-pawns: White's a-pawn is weak, whereas Black's isn't.

39 Nxc3 Nxc3 40 a3 Kc7!

Threatening another king march: ... Kb6, ... Kc5, ... Kc4 and ... Kb3, going after White's now condemned a-pawn.

41 Kf1 Kb6 42 Ke1 Kc5 43 Nc2 Nb5

Nothing can be done about Black's threat to bring his king to b3 and then chop the white a-pawn.

44 Kd2 Kc4 45 Ke1 0-1

Since 45 ... Kb3 46 Kd2 Nxa3 is a simple win for Black.

Game 42

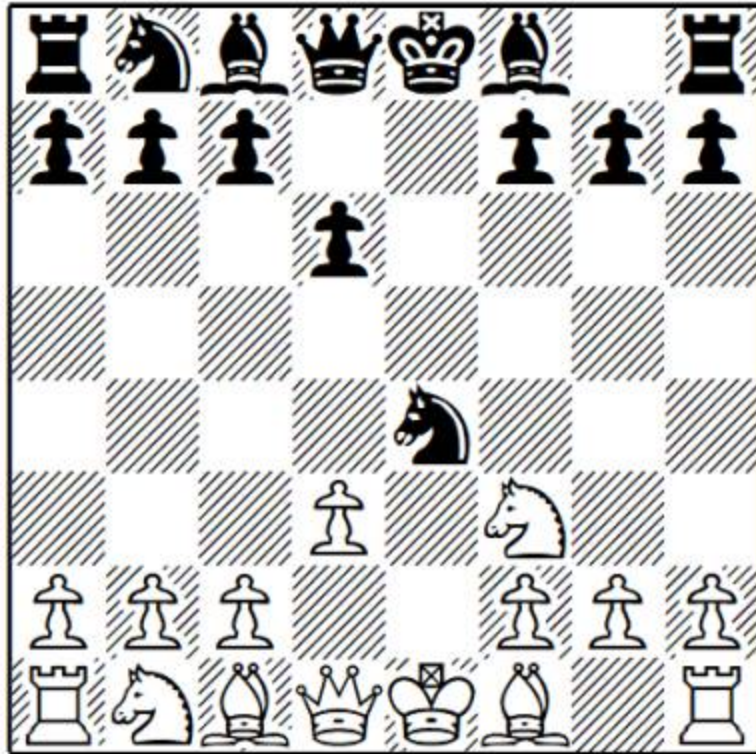
V.Anand-F.Caruana

Stavanger 2018

1 e4 e5

The line seen in this game has the dubious distinction of being even more boring than the Exchange Variation of the French Defence. At least in the French it is possible to break the symmetry with a dynamic version, such as 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 exd5 4 Bd3 Nc6 (rather than 4 ... Bd6 5 Nf3 Nf6 6 0-0 0-0, which transposes to the game) 5 c3 Bd6 6 Nf3 Nge7 7 0-0 Bg4. In the Petroff it is difficult even to break the piece symmetry, let alone structural symmetry.

2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 d3



I don't even know if this boring, non-denominational variation has a name. White's goal is to continue symmetry and hold the draw. To my mind, this is the single most drawish line against Petroff, since we get a lifeless version of the Exchange French. Yet, as Caruana proves in this game, White does *not* get an automatic draw.

5 ... Nf6 6 d4

White can also hold the d-pawn back with 6 Be2 Be7 7 0-0 0-0 8 Nc3 Nc6 9 Re1 d5. Obviously Black has achieved equality. Going after the full point, however, is no simple matter.

6 ... d5

Holding our own d-pawn back is unnecessary. Symmetry aside, Black should push to d5 to seize a fair share of the centre.

7 Bd3

Others fail to disturb the equilibrium:

a) 7 Bg5 Be7 8 Bd3 0-0 9 0-0 Bg4 10 Nbd2 Nbd7 11 c3 c6 12 Qc2 h6 13 Bf4 Nh5! 14 Be5! (14 Be3 is met by 14 ... Bd6 with a decent position for Black) 14 ... Nxe5 15 dxe5!? (White is better off playing 15 Nxe5 Be6 16 f4

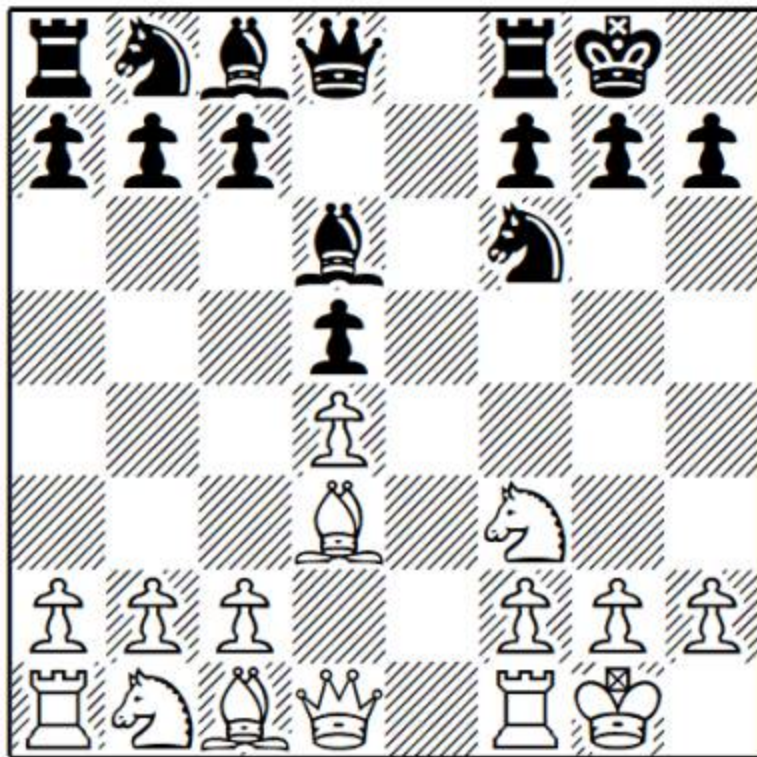
c5) 15 ... Nf4 (15 ... Qc8! is stronger, since it denies White Bf5 ideas) 16 Bh7+ Kh8 17 Bf5 Bxf5 18 Qxf5 Ne6 and chances were equal in A.Grischuk-L.Dominguez Perez, FIDE Grand Prix, Elancourt 2013.

a) 7 c4 sharpens the position, but after 7 ... Bb4+ 8 Nc3 0-0 9 Be2 dxc4 10 Bxc4 Bg4 Black stands no worse and can play against White's isolated d-pawn.

7 ... Bd6

Denying White Bf4. The restrained 7 ... Be7 is another option, examined in Game 44.

8 0-0 0-0



What can I possibly say about this friendly position, which hasn't already been said on a Hallmark greeting card? Are you having trouble keeping your eyes open, despite your best efforts? Well, me too. We reach one of the most boring versions of the Exchange French by transposition. On the happy side of the equation, Black has achieved easy equality. Let's not make the unreasonable demand upon ourselves that all our Petroff

games must be memorable. Instead of memorable, how about efficient? As Black, an equal – even drawish – position isn't such a tragedy.

9 Bg5

9 h3 can be met by 9 ... h6.

9 ... h6

At last, the total symmetry is slightly broken. Black can also continue it with 9 ... Bg4, as we'll see in the next game.

10 Bh4 Nc6

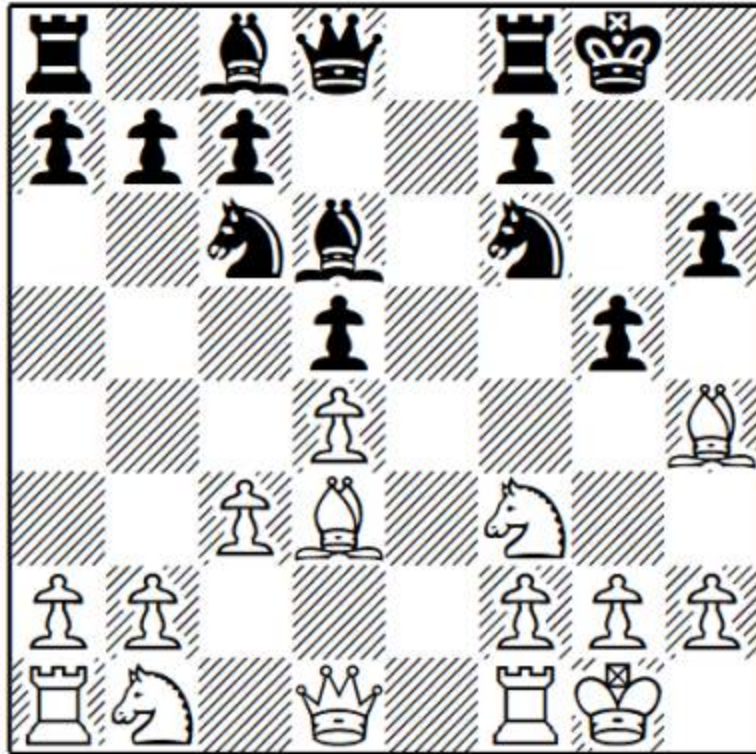
Intending a disruption with ... Nb4, which White prevents.

Instead, 10 ... Bg4 11 Nbd2 Nbd7 12 c3 c6 13 Qc2 Qc7 14 Rfe1 Rfe8 15 Bg3 Bxg3 16 hxg3 Rxe1+ 17 Rxe1 Re8 18 Rxe8+ Nxe8 19 Bf5 Bxf5 20 Qxf5 was all pretty unexciting stuff and you won't be shocked to learn that L.Aronian-F.Caruana, chess.com (blitz) 2018, ended in an uneventful draw. As indeed did 13 other games (out of 15) which reached this position in my database.

11 c3 g5!

This ultra-aggressive response is a reminder that those of us who play the Petroff don't necessarily have to do so with a lack of ambition. Caruana makes a bold attempt to circumvent the natural order of things and actually play for the full point. Black does seize a modest initiative in exchange for the loosening of his kingside structure.

11 ... Re8 is the sensible move if Black is okay with a draw.



12 Bg3

12 N_xg5?! looks somewhat overadventurous. After 12 ... h_xg5 13 B_xg5 K_g7 14 Q_f3 R_h8 15 h3 B_e7 16 Q_g3 B_e6!, White does not have full compensation for the sacrificed material. If he now attempts to gain a third pawn for the piece, he loses the initiative after 17 B_f4+?! K_f8 18 B_xc7 Q_d7, when ... R_g8 is threatened, as is ... R_c8 followed by ... N_h5, and White is in deep trouble.

12 ... Ne4

Caruana's idea is to post his knight on e4 and then back it up with ... f7-f5.

13 B_xd6 c_xd6!?

Remarkable. Caruana is willing to take on even more structural compromise and with this unexpected recapture he seizes control over e5. Safer is 13 ... Q_xd6 14 N_bd2 f5.

14 N_fd2

This is a touch awkward, yet it enables f2-f3, ejecting Black's annoying e4-knight.

Anand may be able to pull out an edge with 14 Qb3!, and after 14 ... Ne7 15 Nfd2 Nf6 (15 ... f5?? allows the tactic 16 Nxe4 fxe4 17 Bxe4) 16 Qc2 White is perhaps slightly better.

14 ... f5 15 Na3!

Intending to drop back to c2. Anand foresees that Caruana may later play ... f5-f4, which in turn will induce White into responding with f2-f3. This creates a hole on e3 which Black may later try and occupy with ... Ne7 and ... Nf5. Anand's knight on c2 will provide cover against this plan.

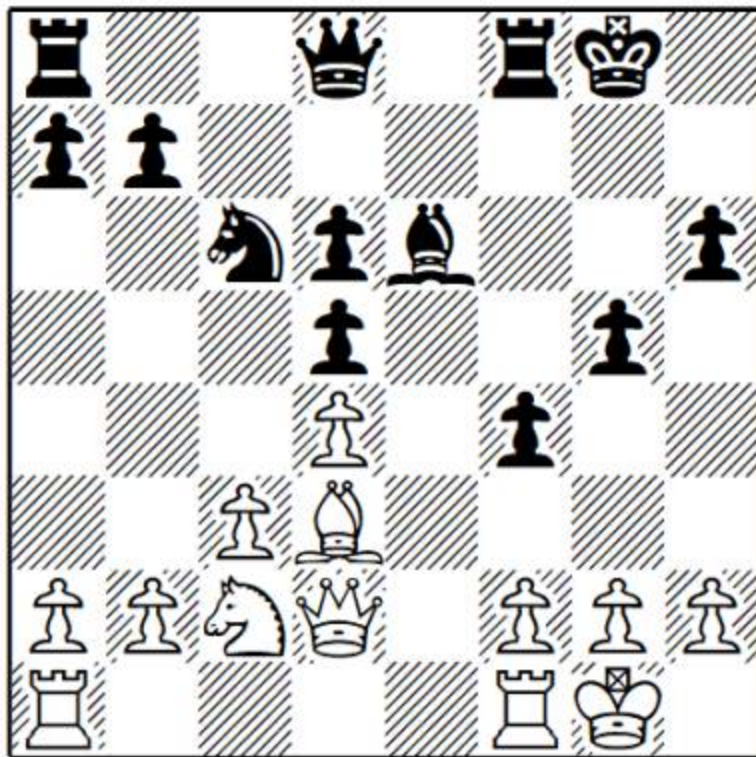
15 ... Be6 16 Nc2 Nxd2

16 ... Qf6 17 f3 forces Black to exchange on d2 all the same.

17 Qxd2

White has eliminated one headache, Black's e4-knight. Now he faces a second one: Black's kingside pawn avalanche.

17 ... f4!



It's important for Black to play this move before White can prevent it with f2-f4.

18 Rae1 Qf6 19 f3 Rf7!?

The idea is to transfer the rook over to g7 and then go after White's king with an eventual ... g5-g4. Caruana isn't interested in simple equality after 19 ... Kg7 20 Rf2 Rae8 21 Rfe2 Bd7.

20 Re2 Raf8 21 Ne1!?

Anand goes uncharacteristically passive. He should probably have applied the principle: *meet the opponent's wing attack with a central counter* and chosen the line 21 Rfe1 Bd7 22 b4 Ne7 23 c4 Nf5 24 Qc3 h5. Even here, it feels as if Black's chances of a successful attack are at least equal to White's chances of a central counter.

21 ... Ne7

Caruana logically transfers his entire army to the kingside, where he plans to go after Anand's king.

22 Bc2 a5

The idea is to discourage White's b2-b4 expansion ideas, as well as Nd3, followed by Nb4.

23 Bb3

An alternative is 23 Bd3 which serves two purposes:

- 1) White seizes control of the b5-square.
- 2) The move clears c2 again for the useless e1-knight, which is important if Black plays ... Nf5, eyeing e3.

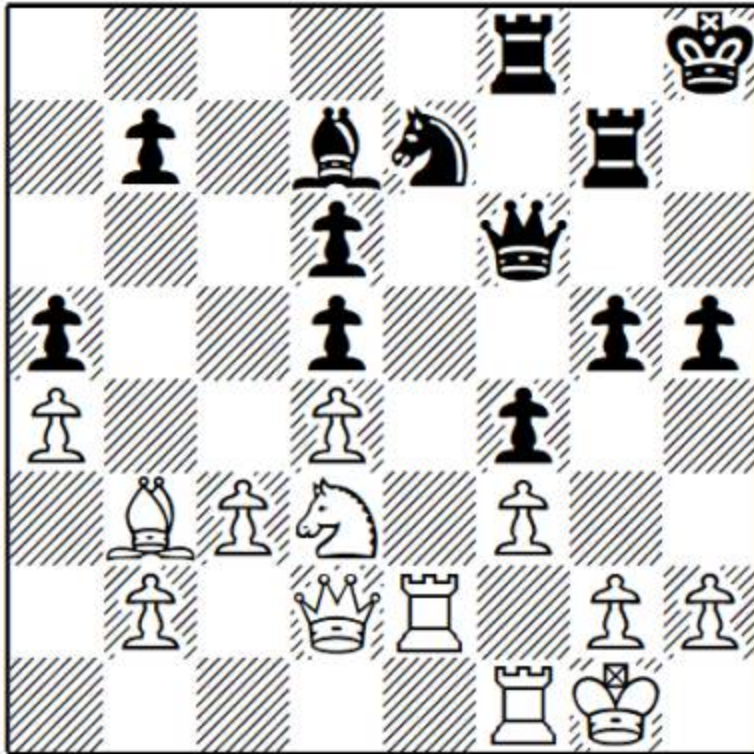
23 ... Rg7 24 Qd3 Bd7 25 a4 Kh8 26 Qd2

This move is a bad sign. It means that White has nothing to do and must simply wait around while Black organizes his attack.

26 ... h5

The logical follow-up to Black's previous play. Another idea is to open up a second front and attack on the queenside with 26 ... b5!?

27 Nd3



Exercise (planning): White's pressure on f4 ensures that Black won't get away with ... g5-g4. So how should Black continue to try and improve his position?

27 ... Nf5!

Answer: Give up the d5-pawn to enter e3 with his knight.

28 Bxd5 Ne3 29 Rxe3

Forced.

29 ... fxe3 30 Qxe3 Bxa4 31 Ra1!?

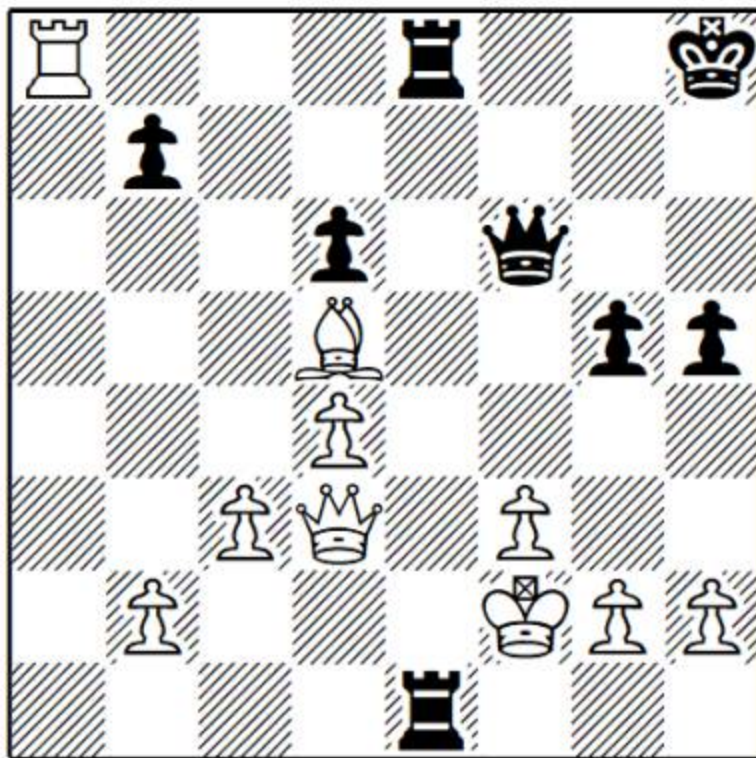
This way Anand gets a second pawn for the exchange. The trouble is that Black also seizes the initiative. 31 b4 may be a slightly better try.

31 ... Re7 32 Qd2 Bb5! 33 Rxa5 Bxd3!

By chopping White's knight, Black seizes control of the e1-square and infiltrates White's position.

34 Qxd3 Re1+ 35 Kf2 Rfe8 36 Ra8?

White had to try 36 Rb5! Qf4 37 g3 Qc1 38 Rxb7 (the threat of mate on h7 forces Black to abandon his attack) 38 ... R1e7 39 Rxe7 Rxe7 40 Be4 Qxb2+ 41 Qc2 Qxc2+ 42 Bxc2 Rc7 43 Bg6 h4 and then pray that he can hold the ending after 44 gxh4 Kg7 45 Bf5 gxh4 46 Ke3 Kf6 47 Bg4 Rxc3+ 48 Ke4.



Exercise (planning): Anand is desperate to reduce material from the board.

In doing so he overlooks Black's next move. Find Caruana's continuation.

36 ... Qf4!

Answer: Slide the queen to f4, after which Black threatens variously ... Qh4+, ... Qxh2, and ... Qc1.

37 Rxe8+ Rxe8 38 Qd1

Forced. After 38 g3? Qc1 39 Be4 Qxb2+ 40 Kf1 Rc8 White can resign.

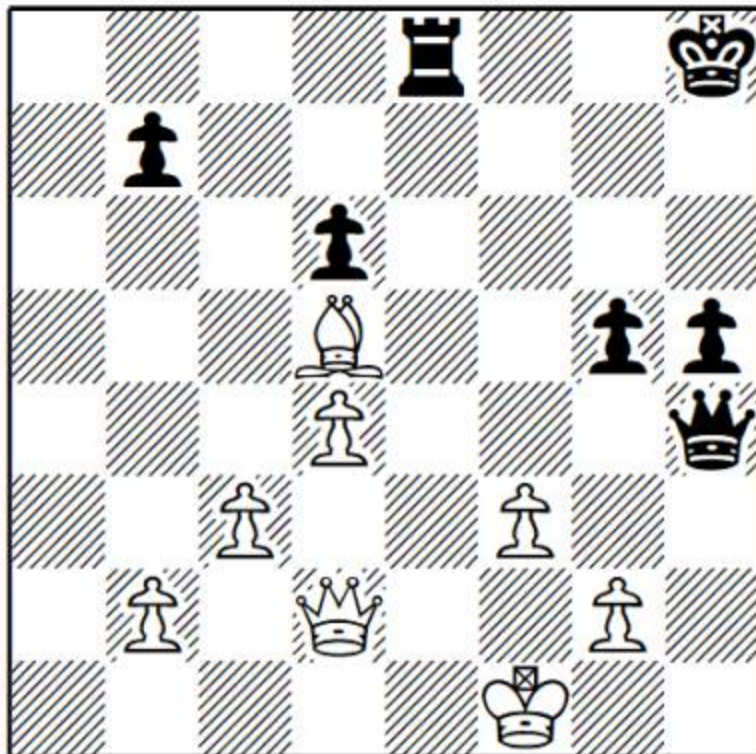
38 ... Qxh2

Stronger is to toss in a check on h4 first and only then chop h2. After 38 ... Qh4+! 39 Kf1 Qxh2 40 Qd2 Qh1+ 41 Kf2 Qh4+ 42 Kf1 Kg7!, Black intends to push his g-pawn to g3 forming a mating net and White is busted.

39 Qd2?!

39 Be4 was forced.

39 ... Qh4+! 40 Kf1 Qh1+ 41 Kf2 Qh4+ 42 Kf1



Exercise (planning): What is Black's strongest plan?

Hint: I already told you what it was, earlier in the notes!

42 ... Ra8?!

Intending to give check on a1, but this isn't all that effective after Anand's next move.

Answer: A better idea is to advance the king to g7, enabling ... g5-g4-g3, and then transfer the queen to f4, after which Black has a won ending; for example, 42 ... Kg7! 43 Be4 Qf4! 44 Qxf4 gxf4 and the ending is hopelessly lost for White.

43 Ke2!

Anand finds the strongest defence, which is to transfer his king to d3.

43 ... Ra1 44 Kd3 b5!

This move cuts off both c3-c4 and Kc4 ideas.

45 c4!?

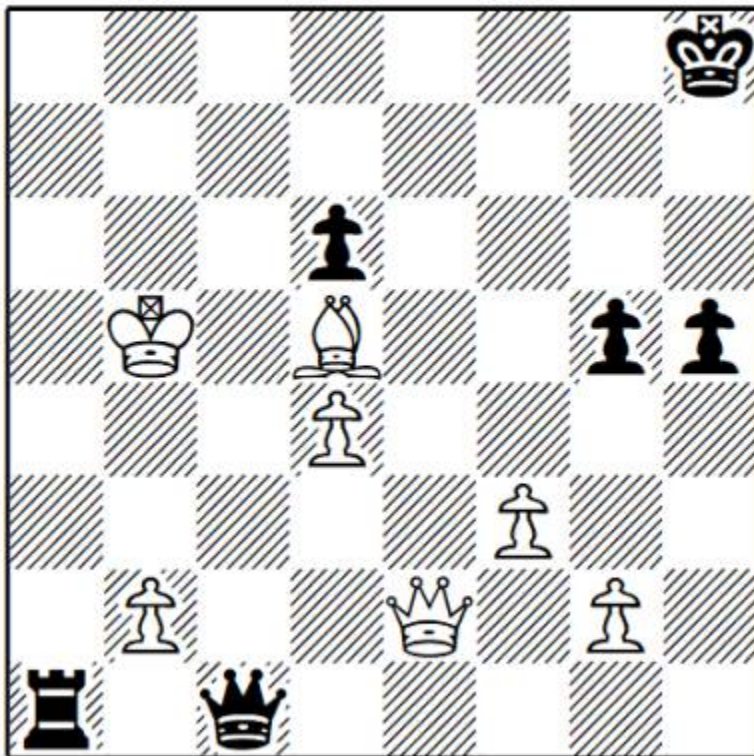
Anand pushes his c-pawn anyway.

Instead, 45 Bc6 is met by 45 ... Qe1! 46 Qxe1 Rxe1 47 Bxb5 Rg1 48 c4 Rxg2 49 c5 dxc5 50 dxc5 Rxb2 51 Bc4 Rb7, when White is busted.

45 ... bxc4+ 46 Kxc4 Qf4! 47 Qe2

Or 47 Qxf4 gxf4 48 Bf7 h4 49 Be6 (this way his g2-pawn is protected via h3) 49 ... Kg7 50 Kd5 Kf6 51 Bc8 Ra4 52 Bg4 Ke7 53 Bh3 Rb4 54 Ke4 Kf6 55 Kd5 Rb6 56 Ke4 Rxb2 and Black will convert.

47 ... Qc1+ 48 Kb5



Exercise (planning): What is Black's strongest way to go after White's king?

48 ... Qc8!

Answer: Step 1: Transfer the queen to c8, threatening ... Qa6+, winning White's queen.

49 Kb6

49 Kb4 Qb8+ 50 Qb5 Qxb5+ 51 Kxb5 Rd1 52 Kc4 Kg7 53 Be6 Rd2 54 Bh3 Rxb2 is also lost for White, while 49 Bc4? leads to the delightful helpmate 49 ... Qb7 mate.

49 ... Qb8+!

Step 2: Give check on b8, forcing White to block with his bishop on b7. Or if not ...

50 Kc6

After 50 Bb7 Qd8+ 51 Kc6 Rc1+ 52 Kb5 Qd7+ 53 Kb6 Qc7+ 54 Ka6 Ra1+ White's bishop falls and he is mated.

50 ... Rc1+ 0-1

Since 51 Kd7 (or 51 Bc4 Qc8+ 52 Kd5 Rxc4 53 Qxc4 Qg8+) 51 ... Rc7+ 52 Ke6 (or 52 Kxd6 Rc2+) 52 ... Qe8+ wins the queen for starters.

Game 43

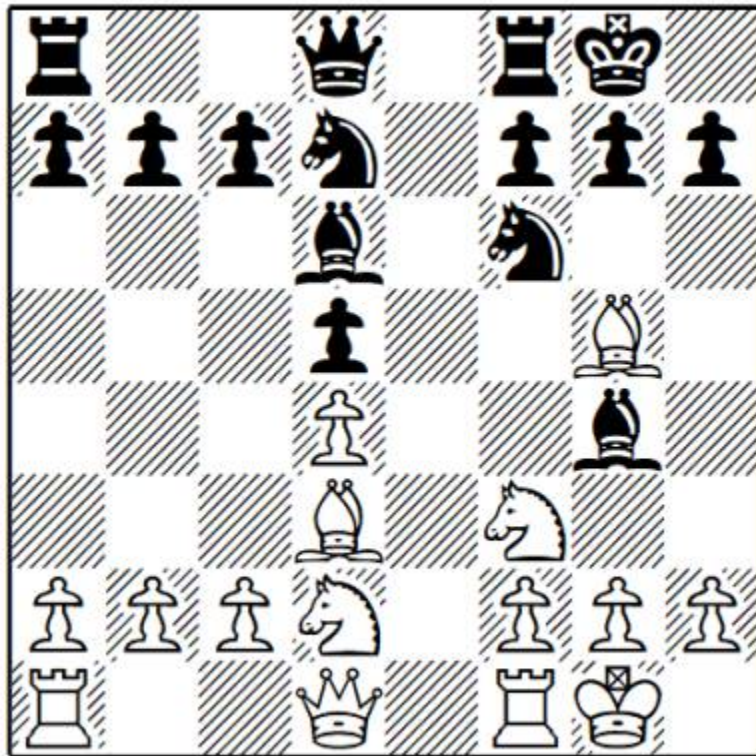
M.Khachiyan-W.So

PRO League, chess.com 2017

1 e4 e6

Everyone please remain calm. The game will soon transpose. The Petroff move order is 1 ... e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 d3 Nf6 6 d4 d5, reaching the same position as after Black's 4th move below.

2 d4 d5 3 exd5 exd5 4 Nf3 Nf6 5 Bd3 Bd6 6 0-0 0-0 7 Bg5 Bg4 8 Nbd2 Nbd7



Here we are again in Dullsville, a town we must sometimes inevitably visit if we choose to play the Petroff. As you can probably guess, this line isn't exactly burdened with reams of theory. The nice thing about being a chess writer is that you are allowed to make stuff up. So, I dub this the Copycat Variation of the Petroff where White's extra move is virtually meaningless in terms of squeezing out an edge. In such situations, trouble only arises when a higher-rated player (Wesley So) needs to beat a lower-rated one, and even more so when the latter (Melik Khachian) is also a grandmaster.

9 Re1

Or 9 c4 dxc4 10 Nxc4 Nb6 with an isolani position, with chances for both sides.

9 ... c6 10 c3

Melik just wants to draw, so he is delighted to keep the game in an eternal state of dull symmetry.

10 ... Qc7 11 Qc2 Rae8

At last, the sides leave a perfect mirror image of each other, albeit not by much. 11 ... Rfe8 is more usual, when the play is pretty much the same as in the game.

12 Bh4 g6

12 ... Bh5 13 Bg3 Bxg3 14 hxg3 Bg6 is super-boring and super-equal.

13 Bg3

Operation hold-the-draw continues. This move was new, yet no earth-shaking novelty. Instead, 13 h3 Be6 was S.Renyi-L.Merenyi, Győr 1906. Here White might go after the bishop pair with 14 Ng5, although I doubt that Black stands worse even there.

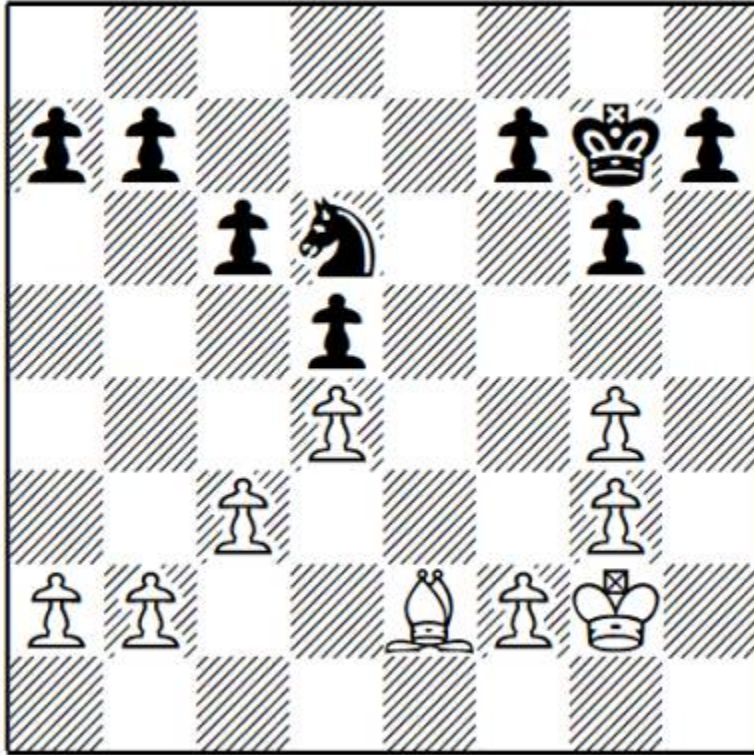
13 ... Bxg3 14 hxg3 Rxe1+ 15 Rxe1 Re8 16 Rxe8+ Nxe8

We have a game between a grandmaster and a world-class grandmaster, yet I'm wondering if two C-class club players would have made the same moves.

17 Nf1 Nd6 18 Ne3 Bxf3

At last a meaningful imbalance arises. The game remains even.

19 gxf3 Kg7 20 Kg2 Nf6 21 Ng4 Nxf4 22 fxg4 Qe7 23 Qe2 Qxe2 24 Bxe2



I actually prefer knights in Exchange French or Petroff structures such as this, where neither side has a pawn majority. It creates opportunities to try to beat lower-rated players who are aiming only for a draw. My wished-for win doesn't always materialize though, since the positions are still rather easy to play for both sides and it's not easy to provoke a mistake from an opponent in an environment of complete placidity.

24 ... g5 25 Bd3 h6 26 f3 Kf6 27 Kf2 Ke6 28 Ke3 b6

Aiming to gain central space with ... c6-c5.

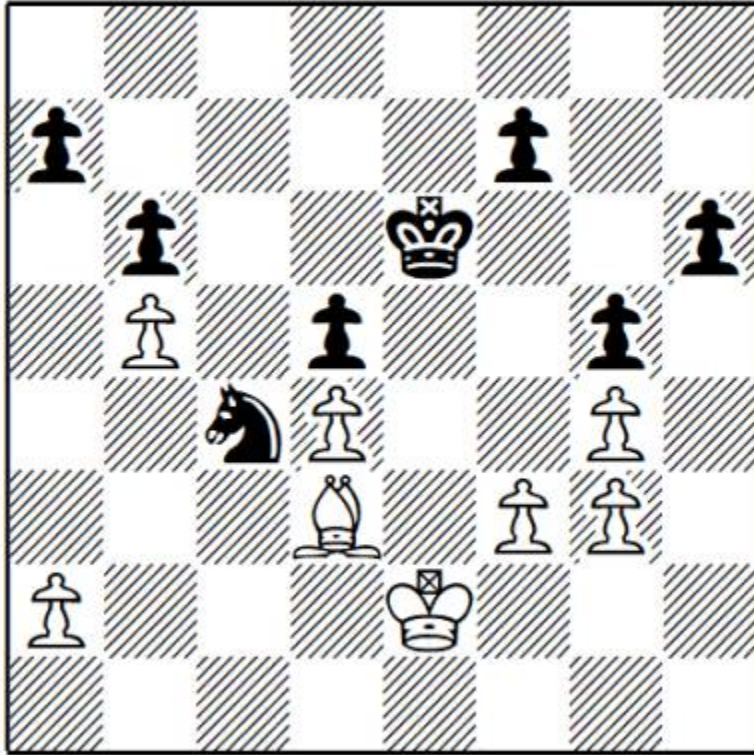
29 b3 c5 30 b4

White just wants to close the position and hold the draw.

30 ... cxb4 31 cxb4 Nc4+ 32 Ke2

Most certainly not 32 Bxc4?? dxc4 33 Ke4 b5 34 a3 a6 (zugzwang). If now 35 f4 gxf4! 36 gxf4 f5+! 37 gxf5+ Ke7, Black's two passed pawns cannot be stopped, while White's are going nowhere.

32 ... Nb2 33 b5 Nc4??

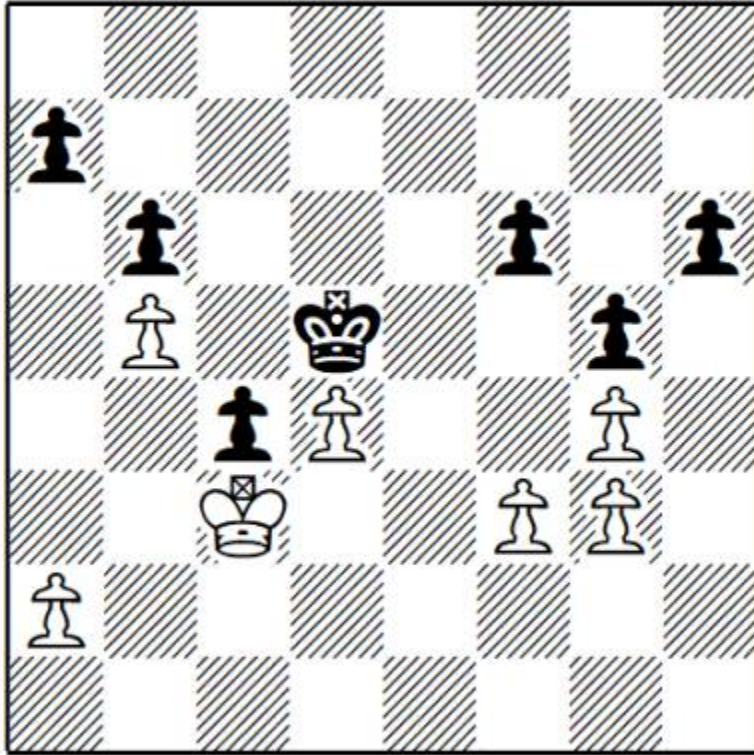


So overpresses and accidentally enters a dead lost king and pawn ending. Obviously 33 ... Nxd3 is drawn.

34 Bxc4!

The knight is removed with punishing effect and White suddenly achieves a won king and pawn ending.

34 ... dxc4 35 Kd2 Kd6 36 Kc2 Kd5 37 Kc3 f6



Exercise (critical decision): White has a choice between 38 a3 and 38 f4.

One move wins, while the other loses. Which one would you play?

38 a3??

Melik, pressed for time, unfortunately turns a win into a loss.

Answer: 38 f4! creates a zugzwang and wins. For example, 38 ... gxf4 39 gxf4 Ke4 40 f5! Kd5 (or 40 ... h5 41 gxh5 Kxf5 42 d5! and White's split pawns are too fast for Black's hobbling king) 41 a3 (zugzwang again) 41 ... Kd6 42 Kxc4 Kc7 43 Kd5 Kd7 44 a4 (zugzwang number three) and White wins.

38 ... f5!

The black king does not have to give way. Instead, this move either leads to White's zugzwang, or a deadly outside passed h-pawn for Black.

39 gxf5

39 a4 f4 40 gxf4 gxf4 leaves White in zugzwang.

39 ... h5

Zugzwang again.

40 f6 Ke6 0-1

After 41 Kxc4 h4 42 gxh4 gxh4 White's unfortunate king is outside the square of Black's passed h-pawn.

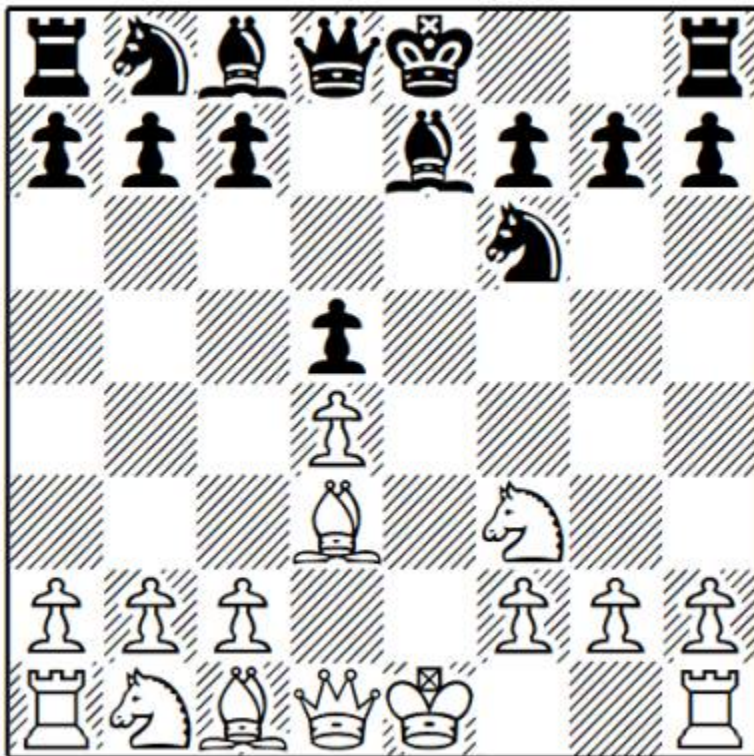
Game 44

Er.Hansen-S.Erenburg

PRO League, chess.com (rapid) 2018

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 d3 Nf6 6 d4 d5 7 Bd3 Be7

This time Black opts to break the symmetry straight away, rather than continuing it with 7 ... Bd6 as in the previous two games.



In our data-driven chess world with constantly shifting information, it's comforting to know that some positions are so boring that computer analysis is pretty much redundant. This is one of them. Yet if we study this

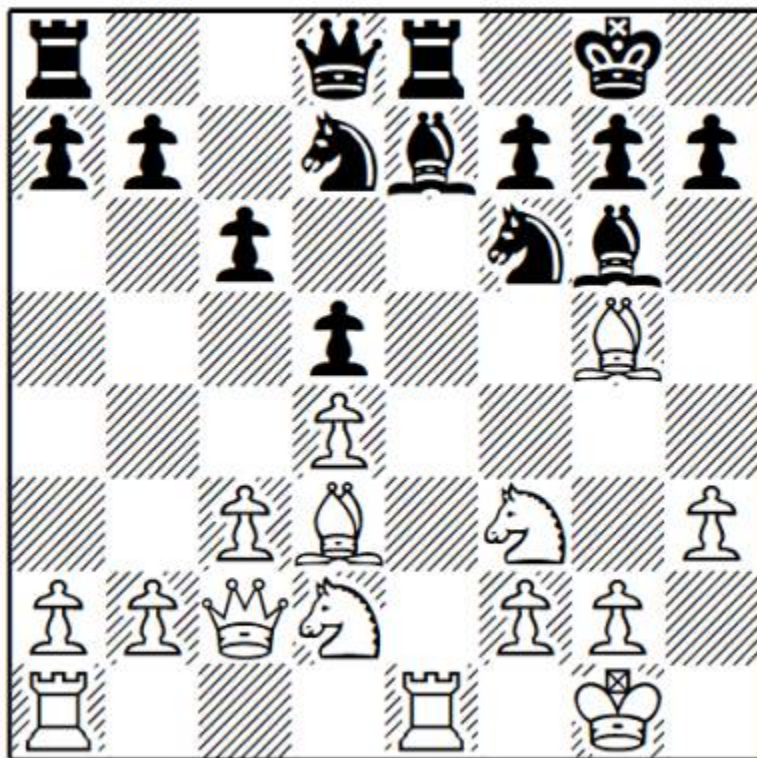
game, it is instructive to observe how Black squeezed something out of nothing and took home the full point.

8 0-0 0-0 9 Re1

In this position, where Black has played ... d6-d5, if White allows ... Bg4 then Black should take that chance and follow up with ... Bh5 and ... Bg6, offering an exchange of the bad bishop for White's good one.

An alternative is 9 h3 (it isn't such a big problem if White blocks ... Bg4 either) 9 ... Nbd7 10 Re1 Re8 11 Bf4 c6 12 c3 Bf8 13 Nbd2 g6 14 Qc2 a5 15 a4 Bg7 16 Nf1 Nf8 17 Rxe8 Nxe8 18 Qd2 Nd6 19 Re1 Be6 20 Ng5 Qd7 21 Nxe6 Nxe6, as in Al.Ivanov-G.Kamsky, US Team Tournament, ICC 2014. As in most symmetrical Petroff/Exchange French structures, the white bishop pair is not an advantage.

9 ... Bg4 10 h3 Bh5 11 Bg5 Nbd7 12 c3 Re8 13 Nbd2 c6 14 Qc2 Bg6



As planned; Black forces the exchange of his bad bishop for White's good one. Black is equal.

15 Bxg6 hxg6 16 Re3 Bd6 17 Rxe8+

Or 17 Rae1 Rxe3 18 Rxe3 Nf8 19 Ne5 Qc7, followed by ... Re8, and again Black is equal.

17 ... Qxe8 18 a4 Qc8

Black wants to play his queen to c7, making room for his rook on e8.

19 Re1 Qc7 20 Nf1

This move allows Black's knight into e4. However, it's hard to see any constructive plan for White.

20 ... Ne4 21 N1d2 Nef6 22 Bxf6

This creates a slight imbalance of bishop and knight versus knight pair, though the game still remains even. The alternative is just to do nothing and wait.

22 ... gxf6

Usefully seizing control over e5.

23 h4

Black's king isn't endangered by this push.

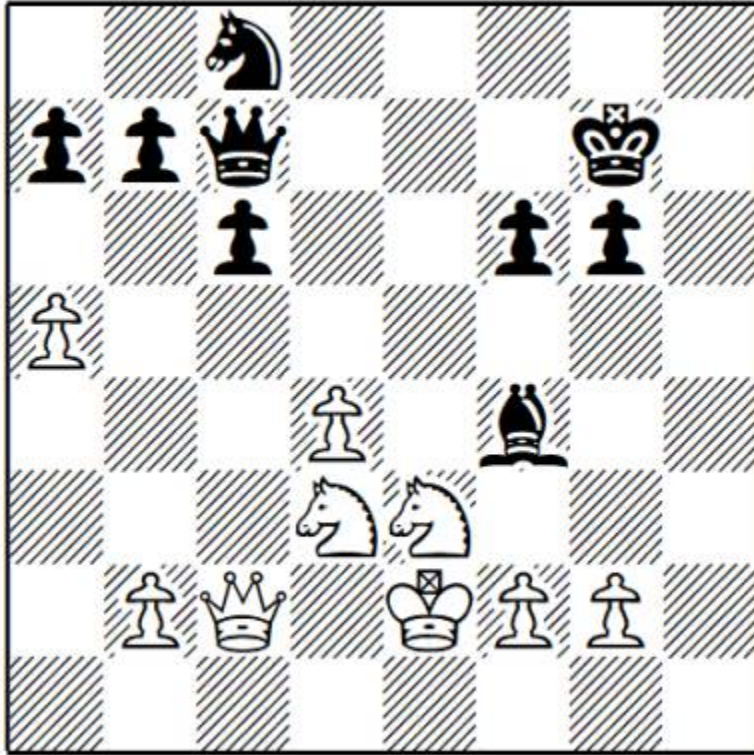
23 ... Kg7 24 h5 Rh8 25 hxg6 fxg6 26 c4!?

White is suddenly unsatisfied with a drawn result and plays to complicate. He weakens his structure to increase his piece activity.

26 ... dxc4 27 Nxc4 Nb6 28 Ne3!?

White is still playing for a win. He can draw if he plays 28 Nxd6 Qxd6 29 a5 Nd5 30 g3 Qd7 31 Nh4 Rxh4 32 gxh4 Qg4+ 33 Kh1 Nf4 34 Qe4 Qxh4+ 35 Kg1 Qg4+ 36 Kf1 Qh3+ 37 Kg1 Qg4+ with perpetual check.

28 ... Bh2+ 29 Kf1 Bf4 30 a5 Rh1+ 31 Ke2 Rxe1+ 32 Nxe1 Nc8 33 Nd3?!



White sacrifices a pawn, unsoundly. After 33 a6 the game remains fairly balanced.

33 ... Bxe3 34 fxe3 Qxa5

As the old saying goes, a dollar in the bank is worth two in your pocket. Black happily takes the bait, confident that his opponent's initiative isn't worth a pawn. He is right.

35 Nf4

Going after g6 but this can be defended. White's "initiative" is unconvincing. He has better chances to hold the draw in the line 35 Qb3! Qh5+ 36 Ke1 Qh4+ 37 Kf1 Nd6 38 Qe6 Qh1+ 39 Kf2 Nf5! 40 e4 Qb1 41 Qd7+ Kh6 42 exf5 Qxd3 43 fxg6 Qxg6 44 Qxb7 Qc2+ 45 Ke3 Qxg2 46 Qxa7 Qxb2.

35 ... Ne7?!

This is inaccurate, so White should once again save the game. Correct was 35 ... f5! 36 d5 Ne7 37 d6 Nd5 38 Qc4 Nxf4+ 39 exf4 Kf6 40 Qd4+ Ke6 41 d7 Ke7 42 d8N (any promotion is fine, since Black will take any

version with his queen) 42 ... Qxd8 43 Qg7+ Ke6 44 Qxb7 Qd7 45 Qa6 and Black is a pawn up with winning chances.

36 g4?!

These simple endings are often much harder to play than appearances suggest.

36 Qb3! should save White; for example, 36 ... Qb5+ (if 36 ... Qb6 37 Qe6! Qxb2+ 38 Kf3 Qa3 39 Qd7!, Black must take a draw with 39 ... Kf7 40 Qe6+ Kg7 41 Qd7 Kf7, repeating) 37 Qxb5 cxb5 38 Ne6+ Kg8 39 Nc5 b6 40 Na6 Nf5 41 Kd3 Nh4 42 g4 Nf3 43 Nc7 b4 44 Nd5 Kf7 45 Nxb4 Nh2 46 g5 fxg5 47 Nc6 and White should save the game.

36 ... Qb4

Here 36 ... Qb5+! 37 Ke1 Kf7 is more accurate.

37 Qe4 Qd6

And now Black should play 37 ... Qc4+! 38 Kd2 Kf7.

38 Kf3

White has better drawing chances by entering a knight ending with 38 Qe6! Qxe6 39 Nxe6+ Kg8 40 e4 b5 41 g5.

38 ... f5

Once again, White gets strong drawing chances. 38 ... b6! is better.

39 gxf5 gxf5

He should have recaptured with his knight.

40 Qc2 b6 41 Qg2+ Kf7 42 Qg5

I think 42 Qh3! was stronger, and if 42 ... Ke8 then 43 Qh8+ Kd7 44 Qa8 a5 45 Qa7+ Qc7 46 Qa8 and Black cannot make progress.

42 ... Ke8 43 Qh5+ Kd7 44 Qf7 a5

Black has a clear plan: create a passed pawn with ... a5-a4, ... b6-b5-b4 and ... a4-a3.

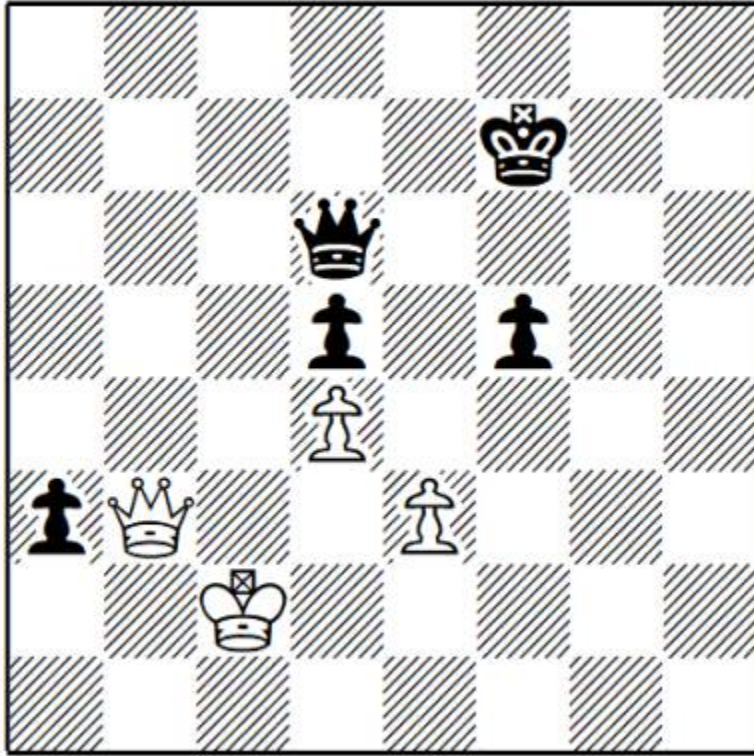
45 b3 b5 46 Ke2 a4 47 bxa4 bxa4 48 Qc4 a3 49 Qa4 Ke8 50 Kd2

50 Nd3! would hold the draw, since White threatens Nc5, blocking the black queen's protection of the a3-pawn. After 50 ... Kf7 51 Ne5+ Ke6 52 Qa8 Qb4 53 Qe8 Qb2+ 54 Kf3 Black must bring his queen back to b7 with a drawn ending. Going for more with 54 ... a2?? produces the opposite result after 55 Qd7+ Kf6 56 Qd6+ Kg7 57 Qxe7+ and mates.

50 ... Kf7 51 Qb3+?

White's king should approach the a-pawn, i.e. 51 Kc3! with good chances to hold.

51 ... Nd5! 52 Nxd5 cxd5 53 Kc2



Exercise (planning): What is Black's winning plan?

53 ... Kg6!

Answer: Step 1: Infiltrate the kingside with his king.

54 Kb1

54 Kd2 allows 54 ... a2! 55 Qa4 Qb8! 56 Ke2 (the a2-pawn is immune due to ... Qh2+) 56 ... Kg5 57 Kf3 Kh4! 58 Qa3 Qg3+ 59 Ke2 Qg2+ 60 Kd3 Qf1+ and Black wins.

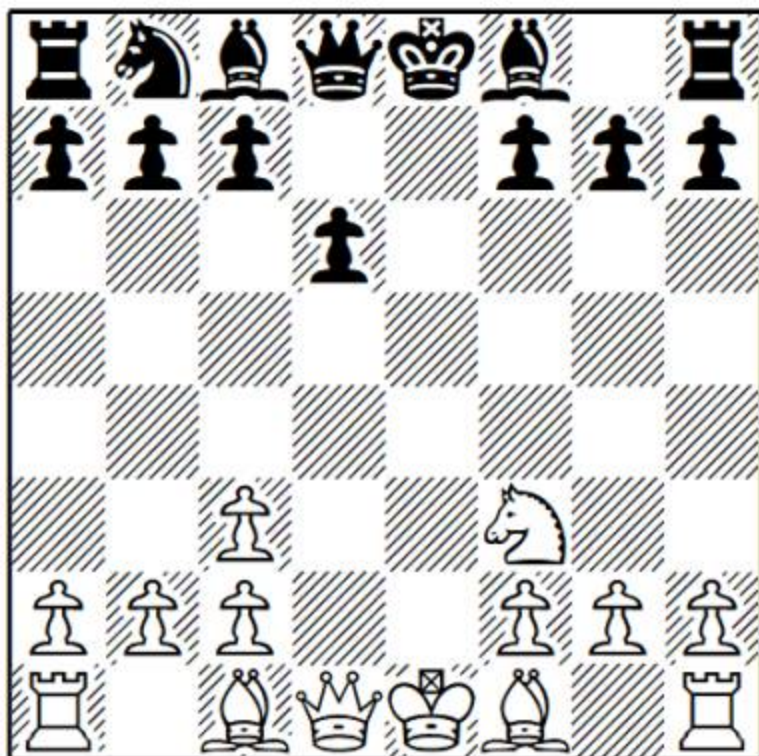
54 ... Kg5 55 Ka2 Kg4 56 Qd1+ Kg3 57 Qc2 Qb4 58 Qe2 Qb2+!

Step 2: Simplification. Black easily wins the king and pawn ending.

59 Qxb2 axb2 60 Kxb2 Kf3 0-1

Chapter Five

The New Main Line



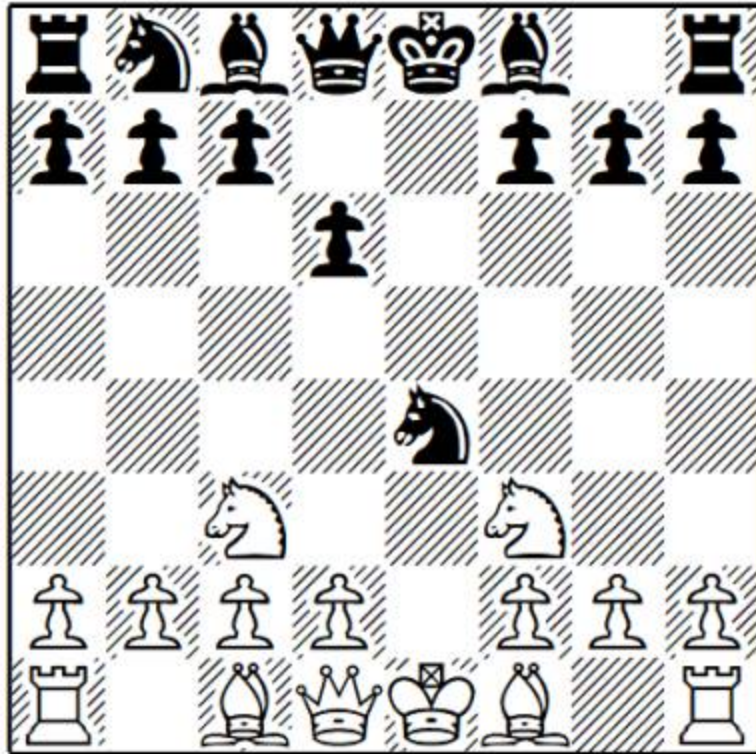
This is the “New Main Line” of the Petroff Defence and nowadays is almost the default setting, at least at club level. I encourage you, whenever possible, to castle kingside and play the lines that lead to opposing wing attacks. The black king is well defended and White players often concede something, allowing Black a dangerous counterattack.

Game 45

Ma.Carlsen-F.Caruana

Sinquefield Cup, St. Louis 2018

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 Nc3



This move is the gateway for the New Main line. White eliminates the pesky e4-knight and will open lines rapidly after 5 ... Nxc3 6 dxc3, capturing away from the centre. White then almost always castles queenside. Black can play it safe and try to castle queenside as well but, as just mentioned, I advocate castling kingside.

5 ... Nxc3 6 dxc3

We will consider 6 bxc3 later in the chapter.

6 ... Be7 7 Be3

7 Bf4 will be seen later in this chapter, while 7 Bc4 Nc6 8 Be3 transposes below.

The natural-looking 7 Bd3 is actually premature since Black can go after the bishop with ... Nd7 and ... Nc5; for example, 7 ... Nd7! 8 0-0 (after 8 Be3 0-0 9 Qd2 Ne5 White must either surrender the bishop pair, lose a tempo by retreating the d3-bishop, or exchange on e5 giving Black a healthy kingside pawn majority; Black stands at least equal in all cases) 8 ... Nc5 9 Bc4 (White decides to hand over a full tempo to preserve his bishop) 9 ... Be6 (9 ... c6, intending ... d6-d5, is also pleasant for Black) 10 Bxe6

Nxe6 and Black has equalized completely, *Leosumant-C.Lakdawala*, online blitz 2018.

7 ... Nc6

The c6-square is the natural spot for Black's knight, yet it isn't obligatory. We'll also look at set-ups where Black doesn't necessarily place the knight here.

8 Bc4!?

This is somewhat unusual. White's bishop isn't normally played to c4 for the following reasons:

- 1) It is vulnerable to exchanges if Black plays a future ... Be6.
- 2) White is again vulnerable to exchanges if Black plays ... Ne5.

The alternatives 8 Bd3 and 8 Qd2 are analysed in the next two games.

8 ... 0-0 9 Qd2

White will never have an advantage unless he castles queenside.

9 ... Bf5

This move is rare and probably an attempt to surprise Carlsen.

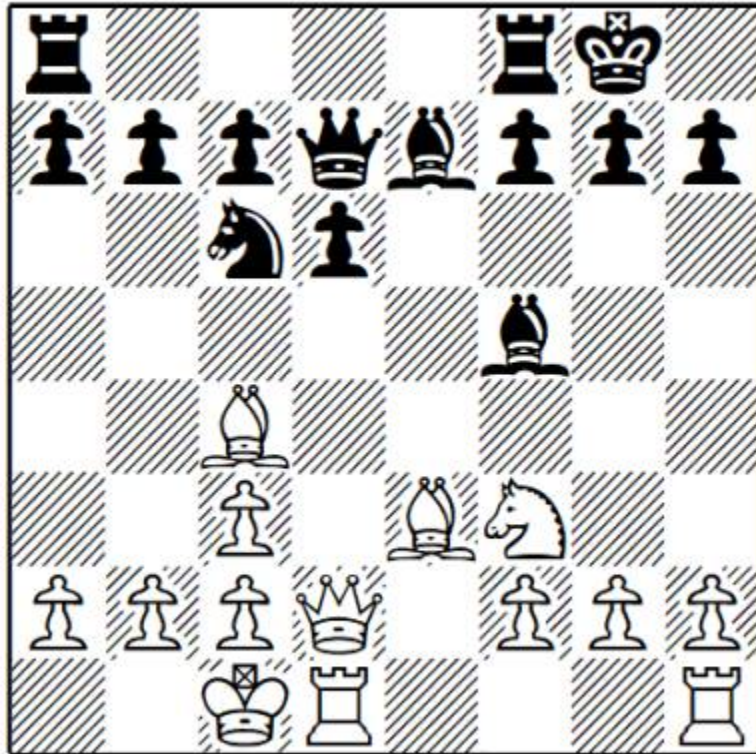
Instead, 9 ... Ne5 is a reliable equalizer; e.g. 10 Nxe5 (10 Be2 is pretty feeble since it gives up a tempo; after 10 ... Re8 Black stands well) 10 ... dxe5 11 0-0-0 Qxd2+ 12 Rxd2 b6, D.Solak-O.Ladva, Batumi Olympiad 2018. Black has a healthy kingside majority, whereas White's queenside one is crippled and his slight lead in development does not fully compensate.

10 0-0-0

Here we go. In this line you will mostly get opposing wing attacks. The good news is that the black king won't be easy to attack.

10 ... Qd7

Caruana connects his rooks.



11 Kb1

This is new, but Carlsen's novelty isn't designed to make his opponent quake in fear.

11 Rhe1 Rae8 12 Bd5 Be6 13 c4 Bf6 14 Bg5 Bxg5 15 Qxg5 h6 16 Qd2 Bxd5 17 cxd5 Ne5 was equal in B.Takacs-I.Horvath, Hungarian League 2008.

11 ... Rfe8 12 h4

Here he comes. 12 Ng5 is a waste of time and is met by 12 ... Ne5 13 Be2 (or 13 Bb3 b5! and Black's knight has access to c4) 13 ... b5! 14 b3 Bxg5 15 Bxg5 a5 and Black's attack is underway while White's hasn't even begun.

12 ... Bf8

You may be wondering why Caruana isn't making preparations to counterattack on the queenside. I think the queenside attack is too slow here, so he is better off countering in the centre.

13 h5 h6

Caruana doesn't want to allow h5-h6, which would weaken his dark squares.

14 Be2

Carlsen admits that his bishop does nothing on c4, so he plays it back to e2, hoping to seize control over g4 later and push his g-pawn forward.

14 ... Bg4!

Now Carlsen must agree to another exchange if he ever wants to move his g-pawn.

15 Nh2

There is no other active plan for White than pushing forward the g-pawn.

15 ... Bxe2 16 Qxe2 Ne5 17 Bc1 Qc6 18 f4!

This weakens e4, but you can't blame Carlsen for wanting to attack.

18 ... Nc4?!

This is where Black's position begins to sour. After 18 ... Nd7!, intending to swing the knight to e4, he should be fine.

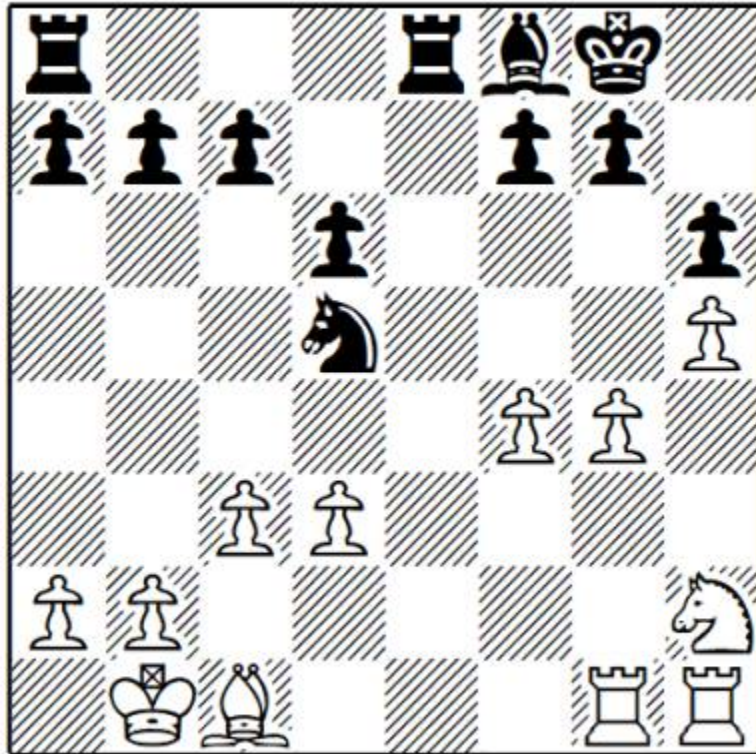
19 Qd3 Qe4

According to the principle: *meet a wing attack with a central counter.*

20 g4 Ne3

20 ... Qxd3 21 cxd3 Nb6 was another option.

21 Rde1 Qxd3 22 cxd3 Nd5 23 Reg1



Carlsen's attack has lost a lot of its force due to the exchange of queens.

23 ... Re6?!

This move looks inaccurate since Black needs to control f5.

Caruana could have improved on the defence with 23 ... Ne7. This discourages White from pushing his pawn to g5, since Black can then seize control over f5 with his knight, though White retains a slight edge after 24 Nf3 c5.

24 g5! Ne7?!

Black's game continues to compress, and Carlsen's kingside initiative becomes serious. Black defends more effectively with 24 ... Kh7! 25 f5 Re2 26 f6 hxg5 27 fxg7 Bxg7 28 Rxg5 Ne7, when White's edge is less than in the game.

25 gxh6! Rxh6 26 f5! Rh7 27 Ng4

Threatening Nf6+ and Nxh7. Also promising for White is 27 f6 Nd5 28 fxg7 Rxg7 29 Nf3 f6 30 Re1 Rg3 31 Nh4.

27 ... Kh8 28 f6 Ng8!

This defensive move isn't exile since the knight can return to play. Black's knight fights for the crucial f6 and h6-squares.

29 fxf7+ Rxf7 30 Be3

Threatening Bd4 and forcing Caruana's next move.

30 ... c5 31 Bf4

This may be where Carlsen allowed Caruana to escape.

Stronger was 31 Bd2, when Black must watch out for c3-c4, followed by Bc3. After 31 ... Kh7 32 Ne3 Rxf1+ 33 Rxf1 Bh6 34 Rf1 Rf8 35 Kc2, Black's position remains solid and he should hold the draw with accurate defence, but it won't be easy.

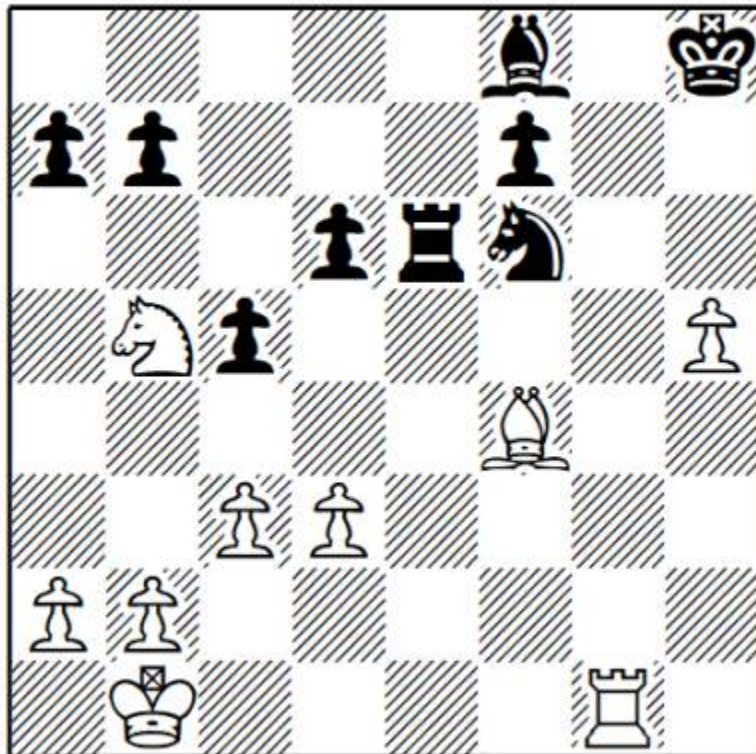
31 ... Re8

Intending ... Re2. Carlsen must now allow exchanges, allowing Caruana to equalize.

32 Ne3 Rxf1+ 33 Rxf1 Re6 34 Nd5 Nf6 35 Nc7!

This wins a pawn but not the game since Black gets sufficient counterplay.

35 ... Re2 36 Nb5 Re6!



Black is about to go down a pawn but can nevertheless hold the game.

37 Rf1

Now it is just equal and Carlsen's chances for a win evaporate.

Sometimes the obvious move is also the best one. Here 37 Nxa7! forces Black to play accurately to hold the draw; e.g. 37 ... Kh7 38 Rh1 Nd5 39 Bd2 Bh6 40 c4 Bxd2 41 cxd5 Re5 42 Rf1 f5 43 Nc8 Rxd5 44 Ne7 Rxd3 45 Kc2 c4 46 Rxf5 (threatening Rb5) 46 ... Be1 47 Rb5 Rd2+ 48 Kc1 c3! 49 Nf5 b6 50 Rxb6 Rf2 51 Rb7+ Kh8 52 Nd4 cxb2+ 53 Rxb2 Rf4 and the game should end in a draw.

37 ... Kg8!

Caruana finds the correct defence. 37 ... a6? 38 Nc7 Re2 39 Bg5 Nh7 40 Rxf7 offers White good chances to win.

38 Nc7

Carlsen decides to take a draw. 38 Nxa7 Nxb5 is also equal.

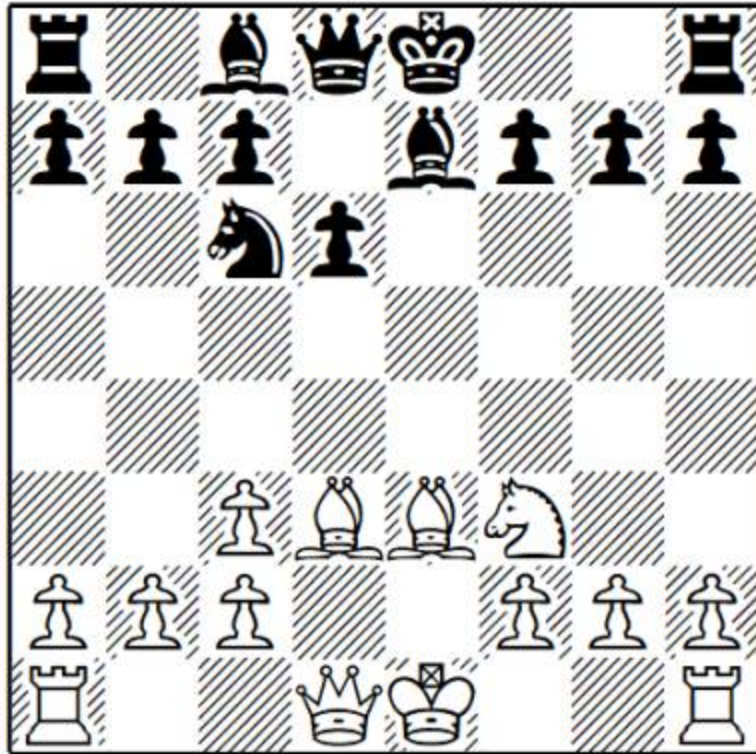
38 ... Re2 39 Nb5 Re6 40 Nc7 Re2 41 Nb5 Re6 ½-½

Game 46

L.Dominguez Perez-Yu Yangyi

PRO League, chess.com (rapid) 2018

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 Nc3 Nxc3 6 dxc3 Be7 7 Be3 Nc6 8 Bd3



White's bishop takes aim at the h7-square. One clear disadvantage for White in posting the light-squared bishop early on d3 is that it allows Black to aim for an eventual ... Ne5, after which White must choose between:

1) Exchanging knights on e5, when recapturing with the d6-pawn will give Black the superior pawn majority.

2) Moving the d3-bishop, losing a tempo.

3) Ignoring the e5-knight, after which Black will pick up the bishop pair with ... Nxd3.

8 ... Bf6

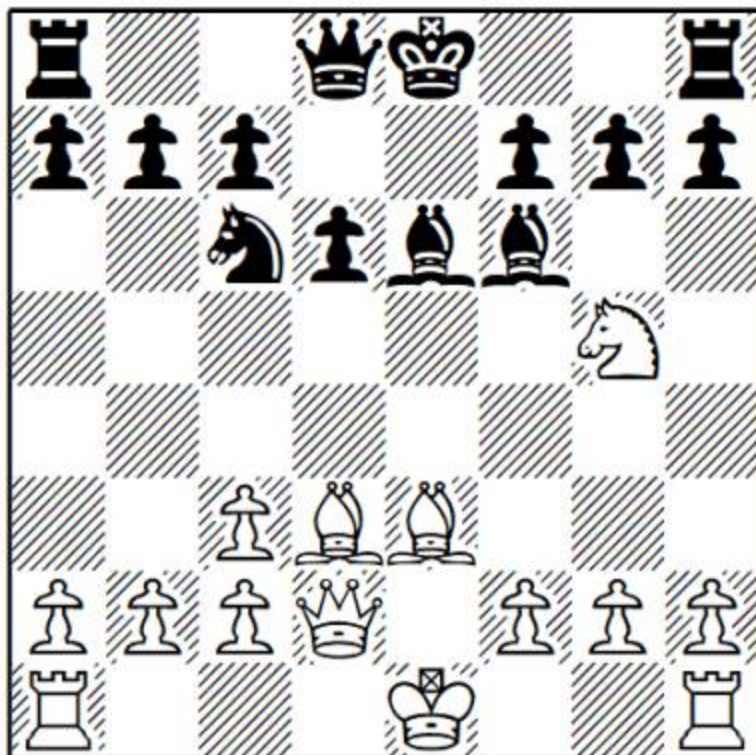
Others:

a) 8 ... Be6 is the safe way for Black to play. The idea is to continue ... Qd7 and ... 0-0-0 after White also castles queenside. This way there will be no opposing wings attacks and after 9 Qd2 Qd7 10 0-0-0 0-0-0, I doubt White can make anything of the position.

b) 8 ... Bg4 9 h3 Bh5 10 Qe2 Ne5 11 Be4 Nxf3+ 12 Bxf3 Bxf3 13 Qxf3 c6 14 0-0-0 0-0 led to opposing wings castling but no advantage for White in Yu Yangyi-Bu Xiangzhi, Ningbo (rapid) 2018.

c) 8 ... 0-0 9 Qd2 Ne5! 10 Nxe5 dxe5 11 0-0-0 Be6 12 Kb1 Qe8 13 Qe2 f5 14 f3 Qf7 15 b3 Bd6 and Black has the superior majority, K.Sasikiran-V.Ivanchuk, Matanzas 2017.

9 Qd2 Be6 10 Ng5



In S.Karjakin-A.Grischuk, Moscow (rapid) 2018, White tried 10 0-0-0. Black should play 10 ... h6!, seizing control over g5, followed by ... Qd7 and ... 0-0-0, with equality.

10 ... Bxg5

Black has equalized. The loss of the bishop pair is not such a tragedy, as the structure is symmetrical, with neither side having a pawn majority.

11 Bxg5 Qd7 12 0-0-0 f6 13 Bf4 0-0-0

In the New Main Line, if you want a safe game, then castle queenside. If you prefer a sharper game, then go for it and castle kingside.

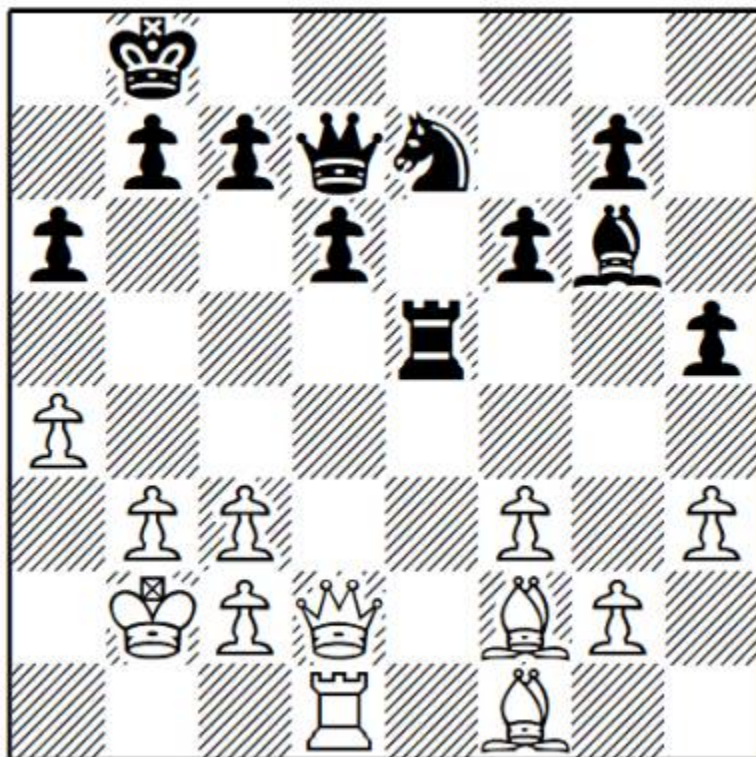
14 b3 Bf5 15 Be2

White wants to do something with his bishop pair and logically avoids a exchange.

15 ... h5!?

Black gains kingside space, so that White can't do so himself. 15 ... Rhe8 is about even.

16 Rhe1 Rde8 17 Kb2 Bg6 18 a4 Re7 19 Bf1 Rhe8 20 Rxe7 Rxe7 21 h3 Kb8 22 Be3 a6 23 f3 Re5 24 Bf2 Ne7?



This knight transfer gets Black in trouble since it limits the scope for his rook. Instead, Black looks fine after 24 ... Qe8 25 c4 b6 26 c5 dxc5 27 Bg3 Re7 28 Bxa6 Nd4 29 c3 Ka7! 30 Bc4 Nf5 31 Bf4 Ne3 32 Bxe3 Rxe3.

25 f4! Re6 26 g4!

Threatening f4-f5. Also strong is 26 Bc4! d5 27 Qd4 Nc8 28 Bd3! Bxd3 29 Qxd3, when Black loses a pawn as 29 ... c6? is met by 30 c4.

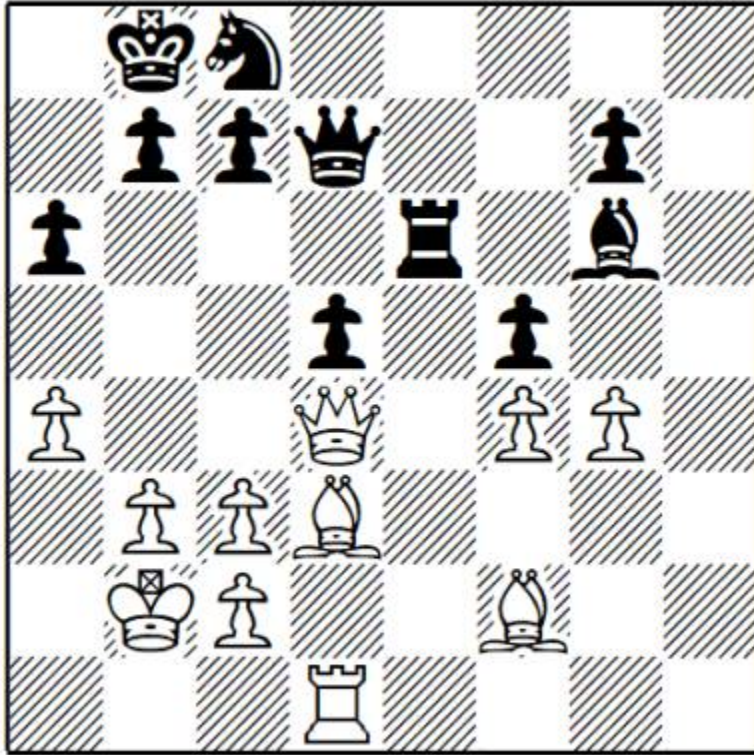
26 ... hxg4 27 hxg4 f5 28 Bc4! d5?!

Black should play 28 ... Re4 29 Bd3 Re6.

29 Qd4!

Threatening mate with Qa7+.

29 ... Nc8 30 Bd3!



Black is paralyzed.

30 ... Re7 31 Rh1

31 a5! is even stronger, since it cuts out Black's ... b7-b6 ideas.

31 ... Re8

After 31 ... b6 32 Bxa6 fxc4 33 Rh8 Re8 34 Bb5 Qf5 35 Bd3 Qf6 36 Rxe8 Bxe8 37 Qxd5, White is a pawn up, since 37 ... Qxf4? fails to 38 Be4 c6 39 Qe6 Qxf2 40 Bf5! with a winning position for White.

32 Rg1!

Threatening g4xf5 and then Rxc7.

32 ... Re7 33 Rh1

Once again 33 a5! is stronger.

33 ... Re8 34 c4

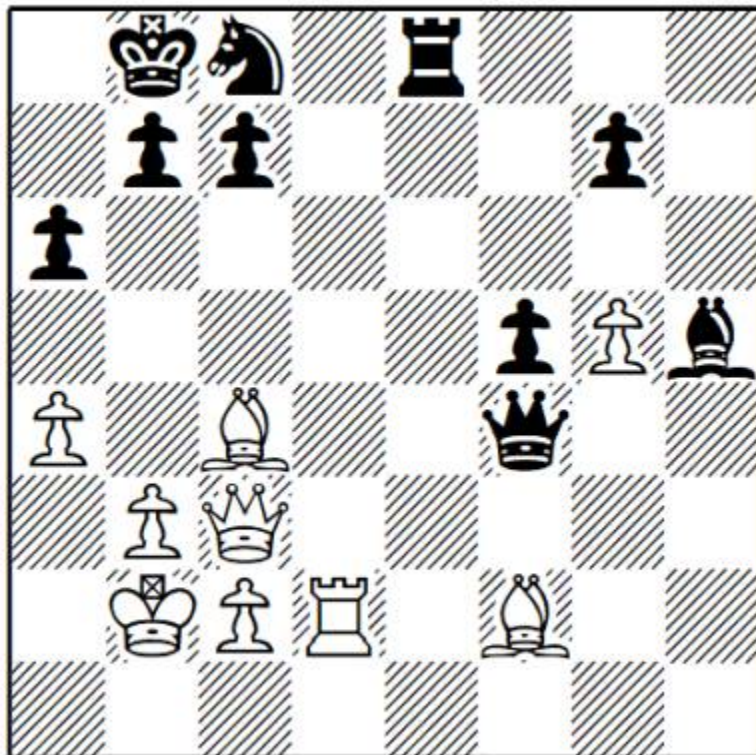
According to the principle: *open the position for your bishop pair.*

34 ... Qf7 35 g5 dxc4 36 Bxc4 Qf8 37 Rd1

37 Bd3! is more accurate.

37 ... Bh5 38 Rd2 Qd6! 39 Qc3! Qxf4!

Retreating with 39 ... Qe7 is rather wretched for Black after 40 Bd4, when he has fewer chances of holding than in the game.



Exercise (combination alert): Sometimes deliberately falling for the opponent's

coming combination is actually the best course. I don't know if Yu Yangyi

saw White's idea and deliberately allowed it, or if he just didn't see it. How does White win material?

40 Bf7!

Answer: Clearance.

40 ... Qxd2!

Black finds the only move to stay in the game. He must sacrifice his queen and play to create a fortress.

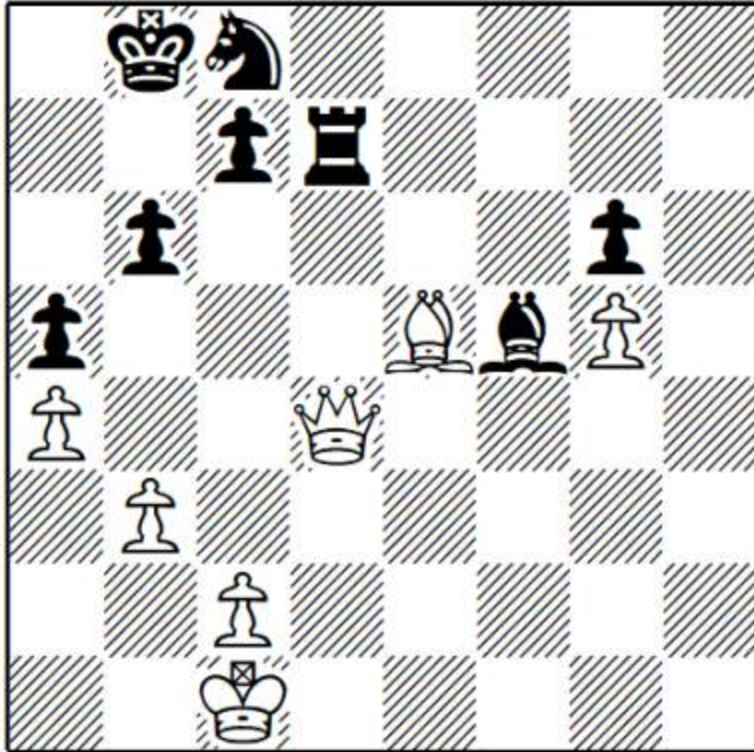
After 40 ... Bxf7? 41 Bg3 Re3 (and not 41 ... Qe4? 42 Qxc7+ Ka7 43 Qb8+ Kb6 44 Rd7 Be6 45 Bf2+ Ka5 46 Qc7+ b6 47 Bxb6+! Nxb6 48 Qc5

mate) 42 Bxf4 Rxc3 43 Kxc3, the ending is hopeless for Black.

41 Qxd2 Bxf7 42 Qd7 Re7 43 Qxf5

As indicated, Black has some chances to hold the game via a fortress.

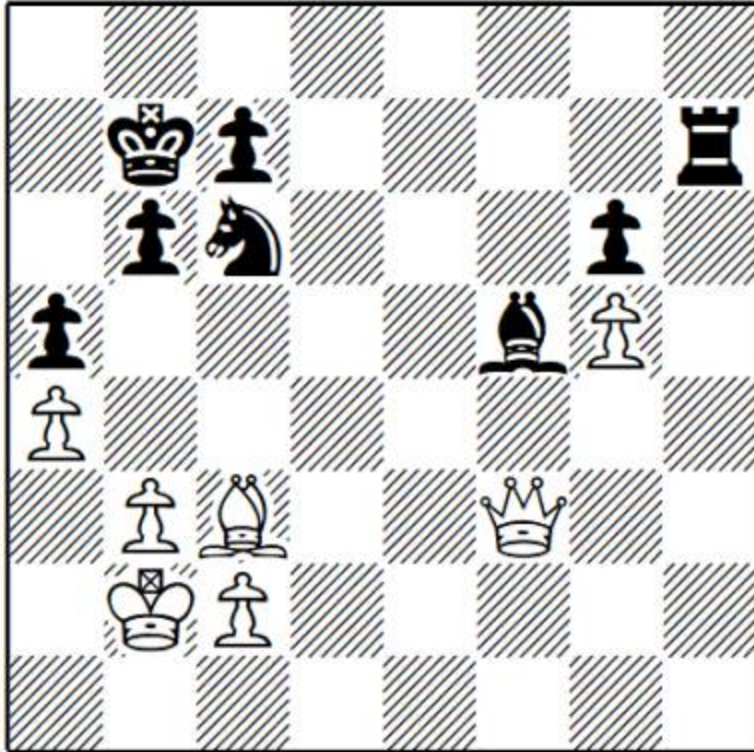
43 ... Be6 44 Qc5 g6 45 Bg3 Bf5 46 Be5 b6 47 Qd4 a5 48 Kc1 Rd7



Now it won't be so easy for White to make progress.

49 Qf4 Ne7 50 Qf2 Kb7 51 Qf3+ Nc6 52 Bc3 Rh7 53 Qf4 Re7 54 Qf3 Rh7 55 Qg2 Re7 56 Kb2 Re4 57 Qf3 Rg4 58 Bf6 Rh4 59 Qf2 Rh3 60 Qg2 Rh4 61 Bc3 Rg4 62 Qd2 Be4 63 Qe3 Bf5 64 Qd2 Re4 65 Qf2 Ne7 66 Qf3 Nd5 67 Bf6 Nb4 68 Bc3 Nc6 69 Bf6 Re1 70 Bc3 Rg1 71 Bf6 Re1 72 Bc3 Re7 73 Bf6 Rh7 74 Bc3?

White can continue to play on and on after 74 Bd4.



Exercise: Dominguez has tripped up and overlooked something. What?

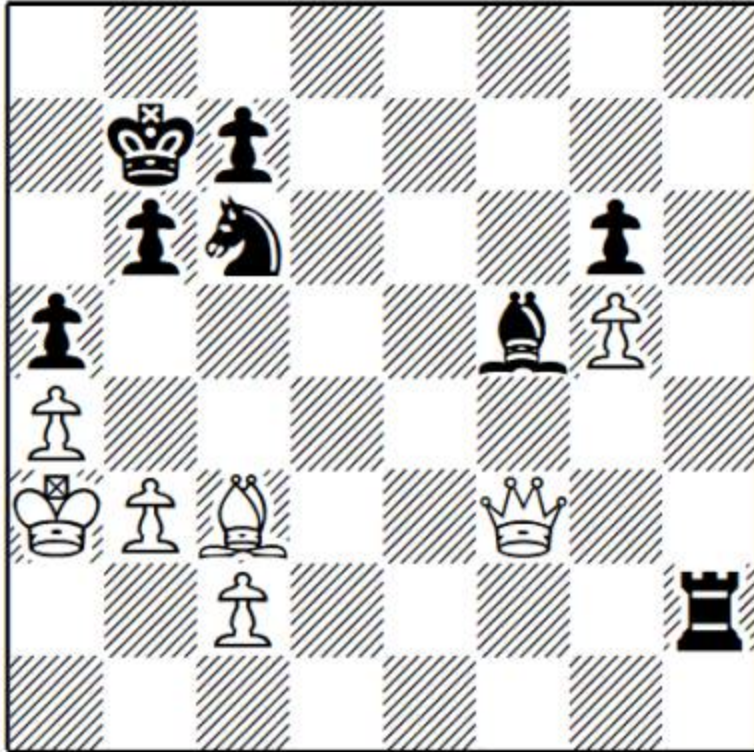
74 ... Rh2

Oops.

Answer: Play the rook to h2, after which White is unable to defend c2. Now Black is the only one who can win the game.

75 Ka3??

This makes matters even worse. After 75 Qg3 Rxc2+ 76 Ka3 Black only has a slight edge.



Exercise (combination alert): White was so focused on the c2-pawn, that he forgot about another tactic. What did he miss?

75 ... Bxc2??

Now the game should be drawn once again.

Answer: Undoubtedly short of time in this rapidplay game, both sides miss the simple 75 ... Rh3!, which wins a full piece and White can resign.

76 Qg3 Re2 77 Qf3 Re6 78 Qg2 Be4 79 Qg3 Rd6 80 Qe3 Bf5 81 Kb2 Rd3 82 Qf2 Ne7 83 Qg2+ Nc6 84 Qf2 Rh3 85 Qf4 Rh1 86 Qf3 Rg1 87 Qe3 Rg2+ 88 Ka3 Rg4 89 Qd2 Re4 90 Qf2 Be6 91 Qc2 Bf5 92 Qg2 Re6 93 Qd2 Ne7 94 Bf6 Nc6 95 Bc3 Re4 96 Qd5 Re2 97 Qf3 Rc2 98 Bb2 Kb8 99 Bc3 Kb7 100 Bb2 Rc5 101 Bd4 Rc1 102 Bc3 Rc2 103 Bb2 Rh2 104 Qd5 Rh3 0-1

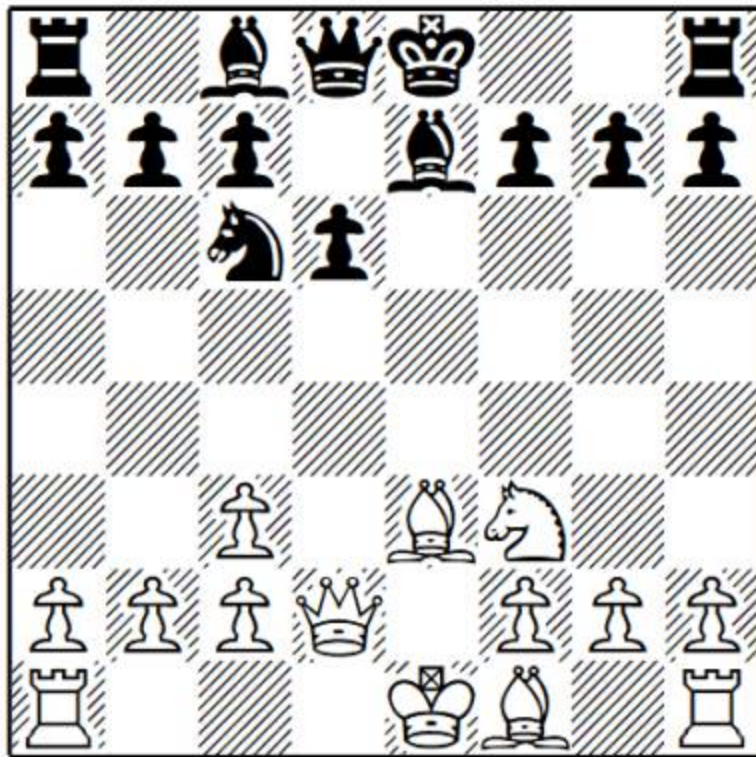
White must have flagged here. Black stands nominally better but the game should still end in a draw.

Game 47

S.P.Sethuraman-Wang Yue

Asian Cup, Abu Dhabi 2016

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 Nc3 Nxc3 6 dxc3 Be7 7 Be3 Nc6 8 Qd2



This is White's main line. It makes sense to play Qd2, castle queenside, and only then decide where to commit the f1-bishop.

8 ... Be6

This is Black's most flexible move, declining to commit the king too early.

Also possible is 8 ... 0-0 which is an open declaration of war, since White will almost certainly castle long. For example, 9 0-0-0 Ne5 10 Nd4 c5 11 Nb5 Qa5 12 a3 Be6!? 13 Nxd6!? Qb6 (threatening to put a rook on d8) 14 f4 Ng4 15 f5 Qxd6 16 Qxd6 Bxd6 17 Rxd6 Nxe3 18 fxe6 fxe6 19

Bd3 was V.Kramnik-G.Kasparov, New York (rapid) 1995. Black is okay in the ending after 19 ... Nxg2 20 Rd7 Nf4 21 Rxb7 Nxd3+ 22 cxd3 Rf7.

9 0-0-0 Qd7 10 Kb1

A reminder: handing over the bishop pair isn't a problem for Black in a symmetrical structure. So, if 10 Ng5, Black can either chop the knight or, if you prefer to hang on to your bishops, then play 10 ... Bf5 with equality.

10 ... Bf6 11 h4

This is not all that scary as Black can still castle queenside.

11 ... 0-0-0

Also possible is 11 ... h6, denying White use of g5. White doesn't have much – if anything at all – after 12 Nd4 Nxd4 13 Bxd4 Bxd4 14 Qxd4 0-0 with dynamically balanced chances, Ding Liren-Bu Xiangzhi, Chinese Team Championship 2015.

12 Bg5

Others:

a) 12 Nd4 Nxd4 13 Bxd4 Be5 14 Be2 Qa4 15 b3 Qa5 16 f4 Bxd4 17 Qxd4 g6 18 h5 Qc5 and White didn't have anything in M.Vachier Lagrave-F.Caruana, Sinquefeld Cup, St. Louis 2018.

b) 12 Ng5 Bf5 13 Qd5 h6! 14 Ne4 Be5 15 Bd3? (15 Bb5 Be6 16 Qd3 is equal) 15 ... Be6! 16 Qb5 f5 17 Nd2 f4 and White was busted, L.Aronian-F.Caruana, St. Louis (blitz) 2018.

12 ... Qe7

There is no reason for Black to take on g5.

13 Qf4

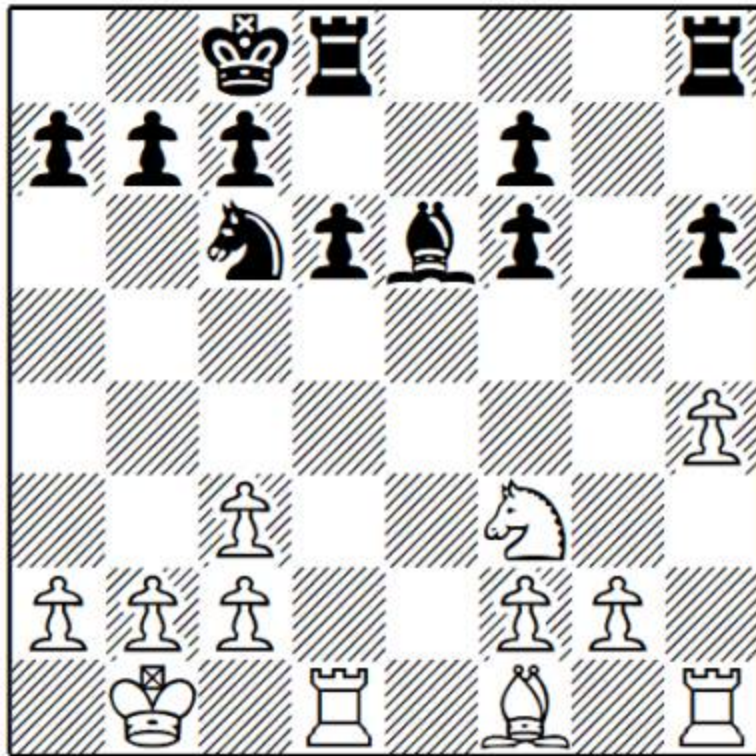
Encouraging Black to trade on g5 ...

13 ... h6!

... or not! Wang Yue correctly realizes that Black's doubled f-pawns are unexploitable.

After 13 ... Bxg5?! (in some positions continuing with "correct play" is a mistake) 14 hxg5, White exerts unpleasant pressure down the h-file.

14 Bxf6 Qxf6 15 Qxf6 gxf6



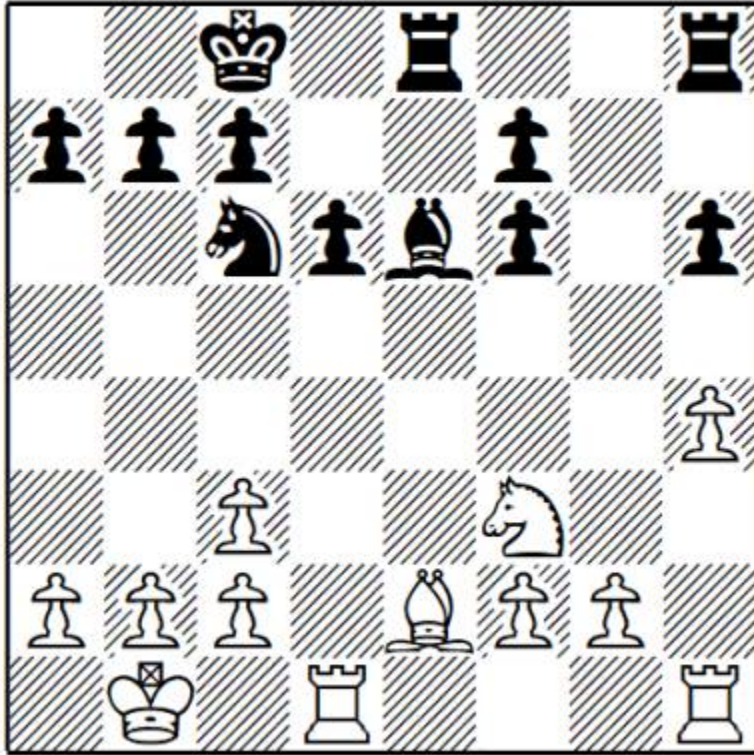
Has Black's structure been dealt an irreparable injury? No. The key principle is: *if your opponent lacks a method to exploit it, then structural "weakness" is a weakness in name only.* Surprisingly, Black's structure is a privilege, more than a liability. Not only does White have no way to create pressure against the doubled f-pawns, the opening of the g-file creates an avenue of counterplay for Black. Hence the position is dynamically even, despite Black's ugly pawn structure.

16 Be2

After 16 Nd4 Ne5 17 f3 Rde8 18 h5 Rhg8 19 b3 Bd7 20 Kc1 a6 21 a4 Kd8! (intending ... f6-f5, ... Ke7 and ... Kf6) 22 Ne2 f5! 23 Kd2 Ke7! 24 Ke3 Kf6, R.Robson-Wei Yi, World Team Championship, Khanty-Mansiysk 2017, despite appearances Black stood no worse in the ending.

16 ... Rde8

The h8-rook will be moved to the g-file. The immediate 16 ... Rhg8 cuts down on White's options and is slightly better.



17 Rhe1 Rhg8 18 Bf1 Ne5 19 Nd4 Bd7

Black is fine here, since his piece play means more than his hard-to-reach kingside pawn “weaknesses”.

20 Re3

White is better off playing 20 Kc1, centralizing his king.

20 ... Ng4

Stronger is 20 ... f5! 21 Kc1 Rg4 22 Rh3, when White is the one struggling.

21 Rf3 f5! 22 Bb5

22 Nxf5?! is met by 22 ... Nh2! 23 Rf4 Rg4! 24 Rxc4 Nxc4 (Black regains the pawn) 25 Bd3 Nxf2 26 Rf1 Nxd3 27 cxd3 Bxf5 28 Rxf5 Re1+ 29 Kc2 Re2+ 30 Kb3 Rxc2 31 Rxf7 Rg4. White will be a pawn down in the rook ending and struggling to hold a draw.

22 ... c6 23 Bd3 Ne5 24 Nxf5

Not 24 Rg3? Rxc3 25 fxg3 Nxd3 26 cxd3 c5 27 Nf3 Rg8, when White loses a pawn and is busted.

24 ... Kc7

Black also gains a clear advantage after 24 ... Nxf3 25 Nxd6+ Kb8 26 Nxe8 Rxc2! 27 Nd6 Be6 28 Be4 Rxf2 29 Bxf3 Rxf3. White is fighting for his life in the ending due to the following issues:

1) Black is, in essence, a pawn up since White's crippled queenside majority is unable to produce a passed pawn, while Black already has a passed f-pawn.

2) Black's bishop is the superior minor piece.

3) Black's rook is more active than White's.

4) White will struggle to defend his h-pawn, which may oblige his rook to play a passive role.

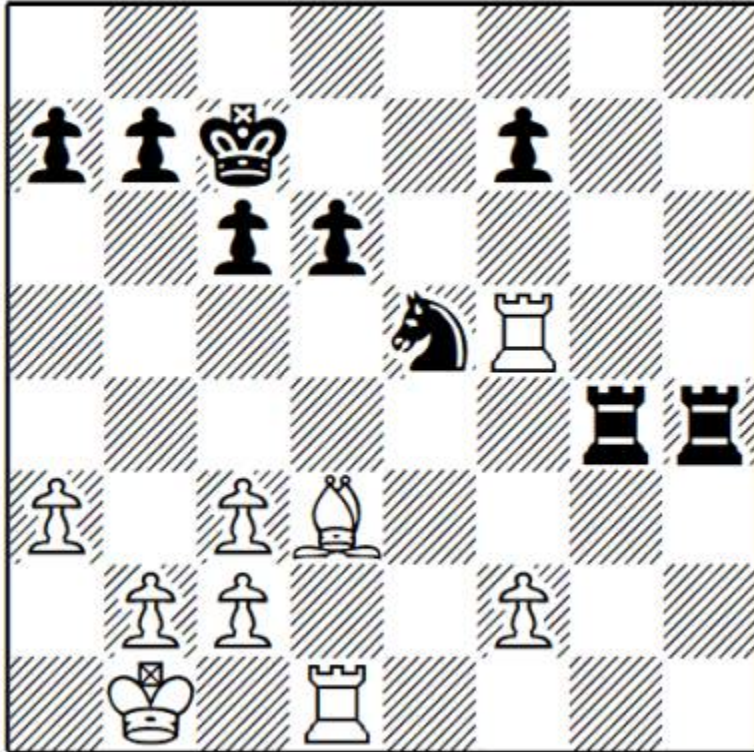
25 Nxf6 Rxc2 26 Rf4 Rh8 27 Nf5

After 27 Rf6 Be6 28 h5 Rh2 29 f4 Nd7 30 Nxf7 Re8 31 Rxe6 Rxe6 32 Bg6 Rh4 33 f5 Re2 34 Nxd6 Nf6, White is again struggling to draw.

27 ... Bxf5 28 Rxf5 Rxc4 29 a3

After 29 f4 Nxd3 30 Rxf7+ Kb6 31 cxd3 Rhh2 32 Ka1 Rd2! 33 Rb1 Rxd3, White will lose his f-pawn and then be forced to defend a four versus three rook ending with pawns on the same side.

29 ... Rgg4!



Denying White the advance f2-f4.

30 Rf1 Rf4 31 Rxf4 Rxf4

White's rook is now tied down to defence of f2.

32 Kc1 d5 33 Kd2 Kd6 34 Ke3 Rf3+ 35 Ke2 c5 36 Rd1

Threatening Be4, exploiting the pin on the d5-pawn.

36 ... Rf4 37 Ke3 Rh4 38 Be2

38 Rg1! is better, when White should hold.

38 ... b6

After 38 ... f5! 39 f4 Ng6 40 Rf1 White is tied down.

39 Rg1! Ng6 40 Bf3 d4+

Black is still a touch better after 40 ... Ke6.

41 cxd4 cxd4+ 42 Ke2

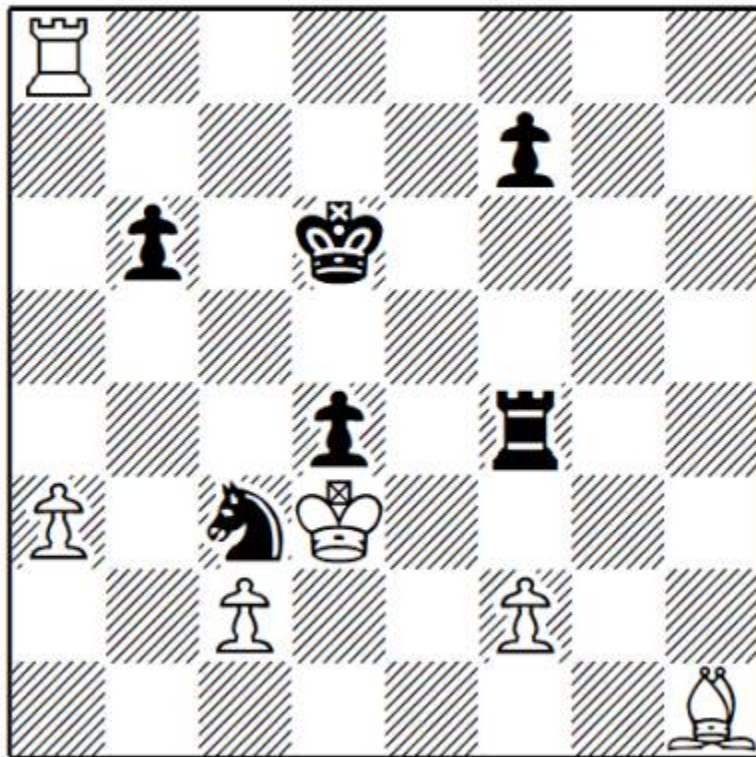
Now it should be a draw.

42 ... Ne5 43 Rg8 Rf4 44 Bh1 Nc4 45 Ra8 Nxb2 46 Rxa7 Na4!

Black's knight navigates the fences and branches with feline agility, always landing feet first. The knight is immune due to a discovered check on d3.

47 Ra8 Nc3+ 48 Kd3?

The king should have gone to e1.



48 ... Nd1!

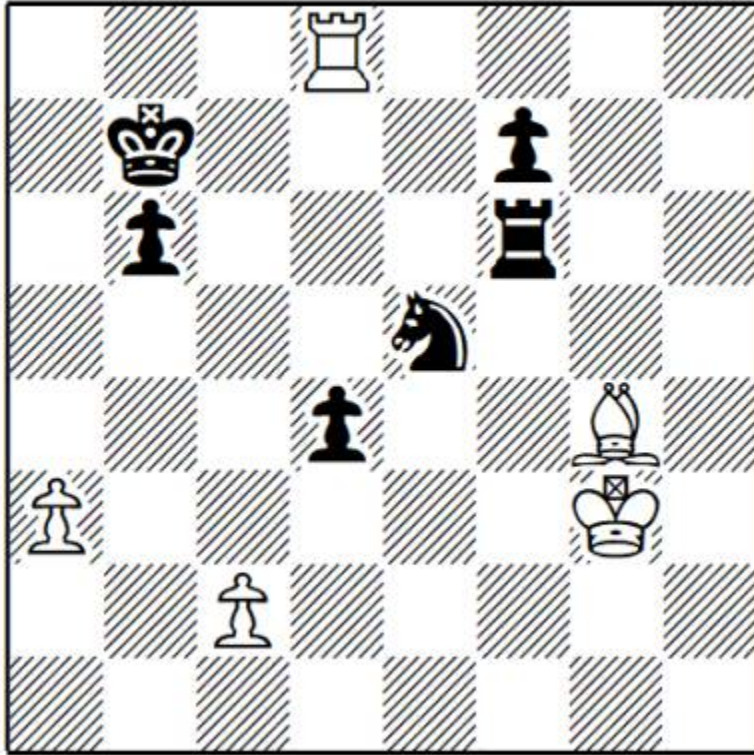
Black wins a pawn.

49 Ke2 Nxf2 50 Bf3 Nh3 51 Rd8+ Kc7 52 Rg8 Rf6 53 Bg4 Nf4+ 54 Kf3 Ng6+ 55 Kg3 Ne5 56 Rc8+

White can put up more resistance with 56 Be2.

56 ... Kb7 57 Rd8??

Here 57 Re8 was forced.



Exercise (planning): White just blundered. How did Black force a win?

57 ... Rg6!

Answer: Simplification. White loses the king and pawn ending due to Black's outside passed f-pawn.

58 Rxd4 Kc6!

There is no reason to capture the pinned piece immediately. White now has to waste too much time squirming to resolve the pin.

59 Kh3 Kc5!

Gaining another precious tempo.

60 Rf4 Rxd4

The correct moment to liquidate.

61 Rxd4 Nxd4 62 Kxd4 Kd4 63 Kf5 0-1

Black wins the king and pawn ending by a tempo, since it takes White's king too long to pick up Black's f-pawn and get back in time; e.g. 63 ... b5 64 Kf6 Kc3 65 Kxf7 Kxc2 66 Ke6 Kb3 67 Kd5 Kxa3 etc.

Game 48

Ma.Carlsen-F.Caruana

World Championship (Game 11), London 2018

Caruana wanted to draw this game and his Petroff got him there smoothly. One news outlet described his play in this game – and by default, the Petroff itself – as “successful suffering”, which, at the elite level at least, is an accurate description of the Petroff.

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6

This was round two with the Petroff in their World Championship match. As we saw in Game 36, Magnus barely escaped with his life in the first game against the Petroff. He did slightly better this time, but did not come close to a win. So Caruana’s Petroff continues to remain intact.

3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 Nc3 Nxc3 6 dxc3 Be7 7 Be3 0-0 8 Qd2

Carlsen leaves his light-squared bishop uncommitted and prepares to castle queenside.

8 ... Nd7

The most flexible square for the knight, where it has access to f6, e5, c5, or even f8.

Naturally, 8 ... Nc6 can transpose if Black wants to play the knight to e5 anyway; i.e. after 9 0-0-0 Ne5, for which see the next note.

9 0-0-0 Nf6

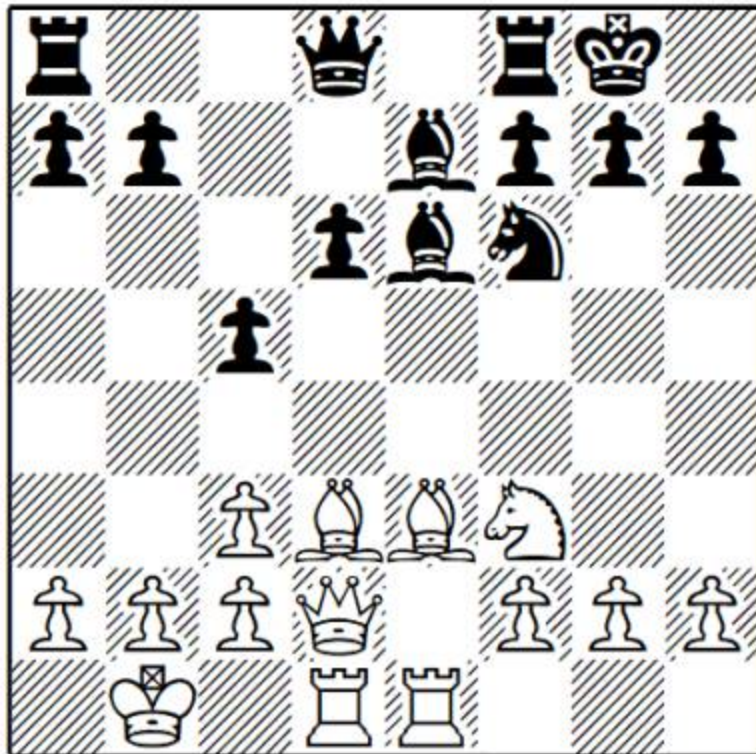
9 ... Ne5 is the main line. S.Karjakin-V.Kramnik, Moscow 2010, continued 10 h4 c6 11 c4 Be6 12 Ng5 Bf5! (12 ... Bxc4?? hangs a piece to 13 Bxc4 Nxc4 14 Qd3 with dual threats on h7 and c4) 13 Kb1 Re8 14 f3 h6 15 Be2! (the h-file is the hill upon which Karjakin is willing to die or win the battle). Here Black looks okay if he declines the offer with 15 ... Qd7 16 g4 Bg6 17 Bd4 Bd8! 18 Ne4 Nxf3! 19 Bxf3 Bxe4 20 Bxe4 Rxe4 21 g5 h5. White has compensation for the sacrificed pawn, but no advantage.

10 Bd3 c5!

This move deprives White of both Nd4 and Bd4.

11 Rhe1 Be6 12 Kb1

Again, Carlsen tries this little move (cf Game 45). In this game Carlsen squeezed out an edge but Caruana never looked likely to lose.



12 ... Qa5 13 c4!

White's best chance is in an ending. After 13 a3 c4! (ceding the d4-square in return for territorial gains on the queenside) 14 Be2 Ne4 15 Qc1 d5, Black has a mild initiative.

13 ... Qxd2 14 Bxd2

14 Nxd2 would be met by the freeing 14 ... d5.

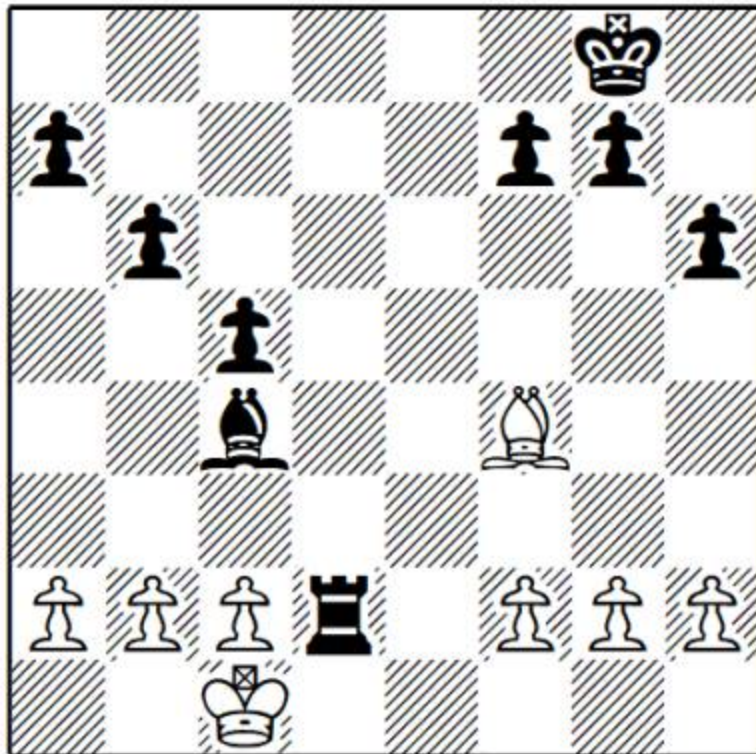
14 ... h6

Caruana covers against Ng5 but in doing so slightly weakens f5. Note that 14 ... d5?? loses material to 15 Ng5.

15 Nh4! Rfe8 16 Ng6! Ng4!

Caruana is okay if he counterattacks.

17 Nxe7+ Rxe7 18 Re2 Ne5 19 Bf4 Nxd3 20 Rxd3 Rd7 21 Rxd6 Rxd6 22 Bxd6 Rd8 23 Rd2 Bxc4 24 Kc1 b6 25 Bf4 Rxd2!?



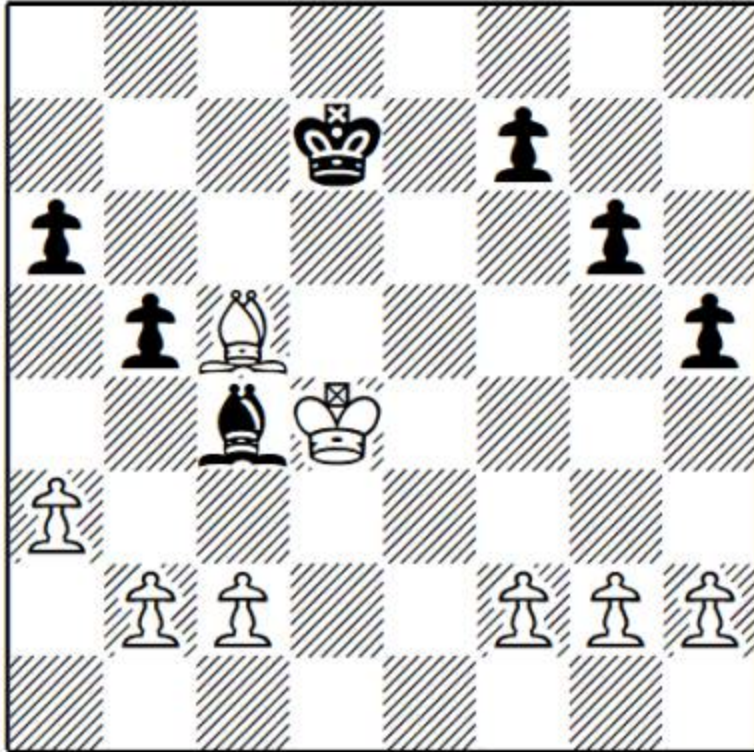
In terms of material, Black's position will soon be on the red side of the ledger. Caruana is correctly banking on the drawing power of the opposite-coloured bishops.

Black also draws if he refuses to hand over the pawn with 25 ... Re8 26 b3 Bf1 27 f3 g5 28 Bc7 f6 29 Rf2.

26 Kxd2 a6 27 a3

Or 27 Bc7 Bxa2! 28 Bxb6 Bd5 29 Bxc5 Bxg2 30 c4 f6 31 Kc3 Kf7 32 Kb4 Bf1 33 Be3 a5+! 34 Kc5 (taking the a-pawn allows Black to blockade: 34 Kxa5 Bxc4 35 b4 Ke6 36 Kb6 g5 37 Kc6 Bd5+ 38 Kc5 Bf3 39 b5 Kd7 is drawn) 34 ... a4 35 Kd5 Ke7 36 Bc5+ Ke8 37 Bb4 Be2 38 c5 Bf3+ 39 Kd6 Kd8 40 c6 Kc8 41 Ba5 g5 42 c7 g4 43 Ke6 h5 44 Kxf6 h4 45 Ke5 h3 and White is unable to make progress.

27 ... Kf8 28 Bc7 b5 29 Bd6+ Ke8 30 Bxc5 h5 31 Ke3 Kd7 32 Kd4 g6



In such endings, the defending side usually holds the draw by following the principle: *place your pawns on the same colour as your remaining bishop*, which is the opposite of the general strategy used in same-coloured bishop endings.

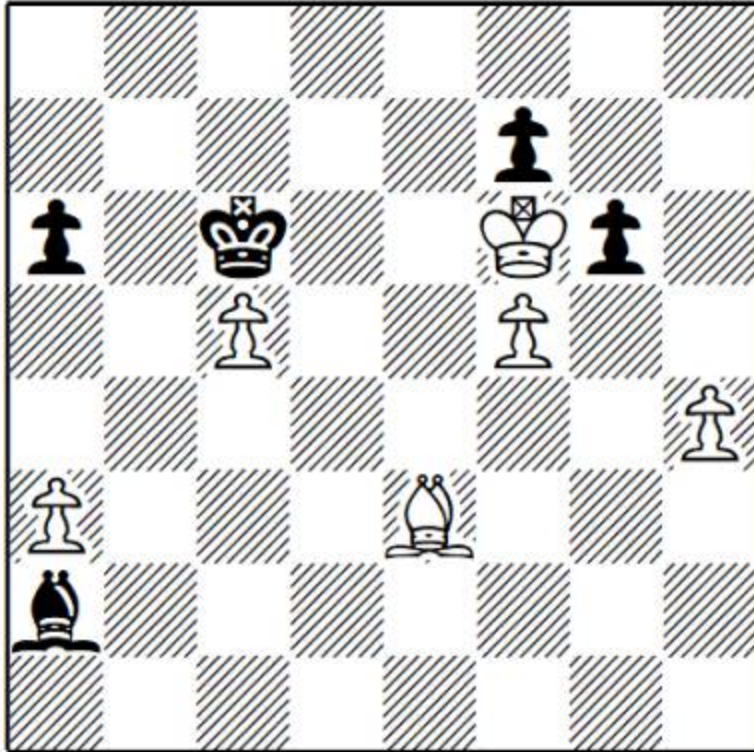
33 g3 Be2 34 Bf8 Kc6 35 b3 Bd1 36 Kd3 Bg4 37 c4 Be6 38 Kd4 bxc4 39 bxc4 Bg4 40 c5 Be6 41 Bh6 Bd5 42 Be3 Be6 43 Ke5 Bd5 44 Kf4 Be6 45 Kg5 Bd5 46 g4!

Carlsen sets one final trap, into which Caruana refuses to fall.

46 ... hxg4 47 Kxg4 Ba2 48 Kg5 Bb3 49 Kf6 Ba2 50 h4 Bb3 51 f4 Ba2!

The one trap Caruana had to avoid was the careless 51 ... Be6?? 52 f5! Bxf5 53 h5!, when Black's position is suddenly a sickly shadow of its former self. By overloading Black's bishop, White creates a passed pawn and wins.

52 Ke7 Bb3 53 Kf6 Ba2 54 f5!



White's f-pawn is the distressed puppy in the pet shop, desperate to get your attention and have you take her home with you.

Exercise (calculation): There can be no “almost” in the equation. What is Black's only path to the draw?

54 ... Bb1!

This proves that White's extra pawn is merely ornamental.

Answer: By playing 54 ... Bb1!, Black prevents White's intention of creating a kingside passed pawn.

55 Bf2

If 55 Kxf7 Bxf5 56 Kf6, intending h4-h5, the threat is easily defused with 56 ... Bb1 and draws.

55 ... Bc2! ½-½

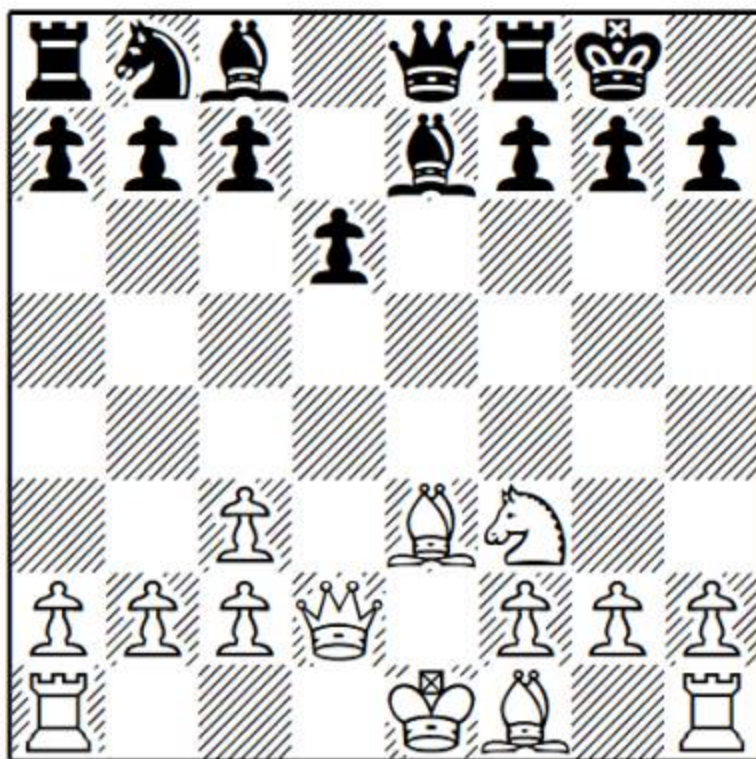
White is unable to make progress. Caruana isn't going to fall for 55 ... Bxf5?? which once again would allow White to create a decisive passed pawn with 56 h5!.

Game 49

L.McShane-D.Fridman

European Rapid Championship, Katowice 2017

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 Nc3 Nxc3 6 dxc3 Be7 7 Be3 0-0 8 Qd2 Qe8!?



A poisonous idea can sometimes be cloaked within a mundane setting. The idea of this move is to bring the queen to a4, where it will harass White's king after 0-0-0.

9 0-0-0

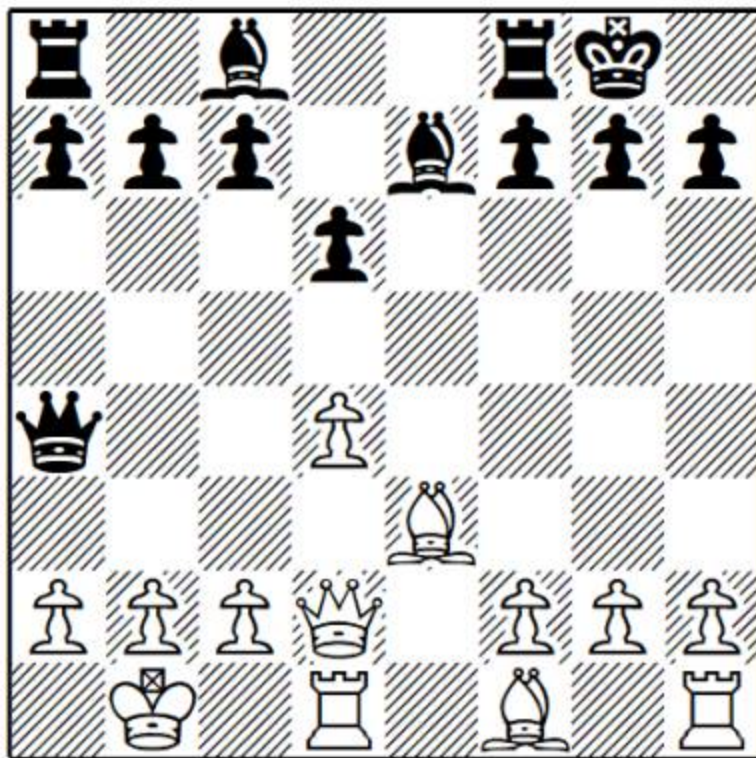
By castling long, White attempts to create conflict in an inherently conflictless position. Trying to hobble Black's plan by castling kingside gives White nothing; for example, 9 Be2 Nc6 10 0-0 Be6 11 Nd4 Nxd4 12 cxd4 c6 13 Bd3 Qd7 14 Rad1 d5 was dead equal in L.Marimoutou-Dav.Müller, Agneaux 2013.

9 ... Qa4 10 Kb1 Nc6 11 Nd4

Or 11 h4 Be6 12 b3 Qa5 13 Nd4 Nxd4 14 cxd4 Qxd2 15 Rxd2 d5 and Black equalized in Hou Yifan-H.Koneru, Women's World Championship, Tirana 2011.

11 ... Nxd4 12 cxd4

Now the main question is: whose attack is faster?



12 ... Bf6

Theory ends here and chances appear equal. Others:

a) 12 ... c5 (Black should probably hold this back and complete development) 13 h4 Be6 14 d5 Bf5 15 f3 h5! 16 Bd3 Bxd3 17 Qxd3 was T.Kosintseva-H.Koneru, Beijing 2014. Here Black looks just fine after 17 ... Bf6 18 Bg5 c4 19 Qd2 Be5 20 c3 Rae8 21 f4 Bf6 22 Bxf6 gxf6 23 Rde1 Rxe1+ 24 Rxe1 Re8. The computer thinks the game is virtually even, since White once again has no way to exploit Black's numerous isolanis.

b) 12 ... Bf5! is risky, since it virtually invites White's g2-g4, yet the computer says it's fully playable. If 13 f3, as in G.Balint-D.Done, Romanian League 2015, then 13 ... Rae8 14 g4 Bg6 15 h4 d5!, and after 16 Bf4! (on 16 h5?? Black has 16 ... Bb4! 17 Qc1 Qxc2+! 18 Qxc2 Bxc2+ 19

Kxc2 Rxe3 with a won ending) 16 ... h6 17 h5 Bh7 18 Rg1 Bb4 19 Qf2 f6!
and Black's chances are no worse.

13 Be2 c6!

The idea is to play ... Be6, without allowing d4-d5.

14 g4 Be6 15 b3 Qa3 16 f4 Bd5 17 Rhg1 Rfe8 18 Bd3

Or 18 g5 Bd8! (threatening ... Ba5!) 19 Bd3 Be4 20 f5 d5 and Black stands no worse.

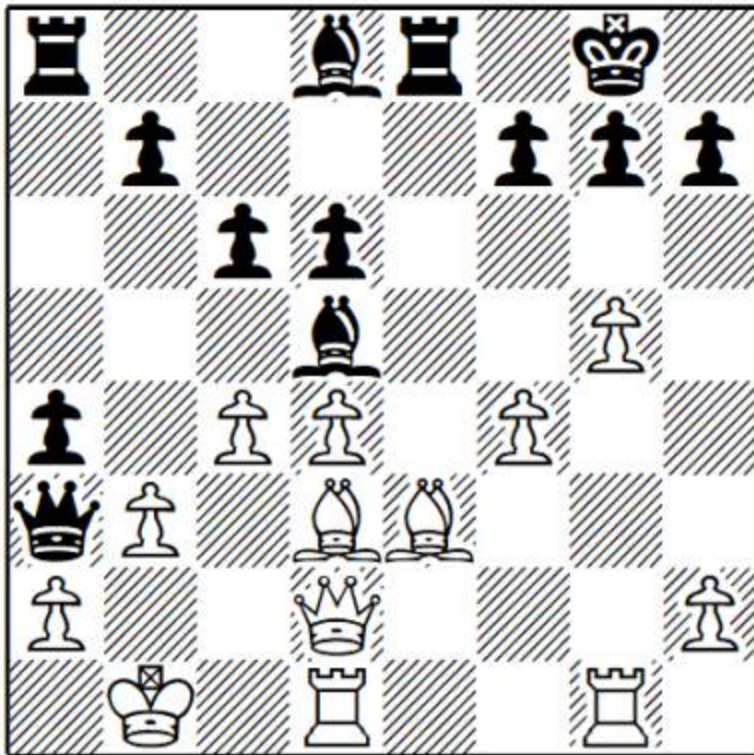
18 ... a5?!

18 ... g6! is preferable, to keep Black's dark-squared bishop on the long diagonal.

19 g5 Bd8 20 c4?!

Similarly inaccurate. After 20 Qf2! Be4 21 Bc1 Qb4 22 a3 Qb6 23 f5 d5 24 f6!, White's attack is the more dangerous of the two.

20 ... a4!



Curses and threats turn to actual blows thrown. Black's last move forces White into a difficult decision.

Exercise (critical decision): Black has just offered White a piece. Should White accept the offer, or should he decline by playing 21 b4 - ?

21 cxd5?

Fridman's sacrifice is absolutely sound and Black gets too strong an attack upon acceptance.

Answer: White should have closed attacking lanes with 21 b4! (it is not physically painful to back down to the opponent; it is losing face that is the tough part) 21 ... Qxd3+! 22 Qxd3 Be4 23 Kc2 f5 24 gxf6 Bxf6, when Black's ambitions are held in abeyance by his position's lack of resources and he stands only a smidgeon better in the coming ending.

21 ... axb3 22 Rg2 Qa4!?

Fridman wants to attack. Black is also winning the technical ending after 22 ... Qxa2+ 23 Qxa2 bxa2+ 24 Rxa2 Rxa2 25 Kxa2 Rxe3 26 Bc4 Re4.

23 Rc1 bxa2+ 24 Ka1 Ba5! 25 Bxh7+

Desperation. 25 Qf2?? loses instantly to 25 ... Qa3, threatening both ... Qxd3 and a devastating bishop check on c3.

25 ... Kxh7 26 g6+ fxg6 27 Qd3

Threatening mate, which is easily parried by Black's next move.

27 ... Kg8 28 f5

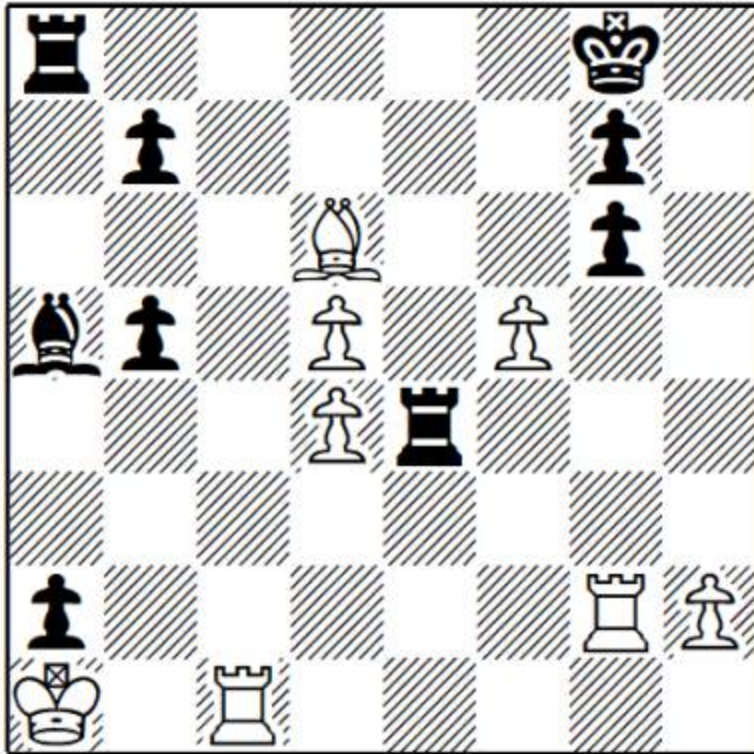
After 28 Qxg6 Re7 29 Qd3 Qb5! White is busted.

28 ... Qb5!

Simplification. White has no way to dodge a queen exchange and is hopelessly lost in the coming ending.

29 Qxb5 cxb5 30 Bf4 Re4 31 Bxd6

White just blundered in an already lost position, but 31 Bg3 gxf5 32 Rxa2 Rxd4 33 Bxd6 Ra6 34 Kb1 Rxd5 is also totally winning for Black.



Exercise (combination alert): Black to play and force mate.

31 ... Bc3+! 0-1

Answer: Overloaded defender/weak back rank.

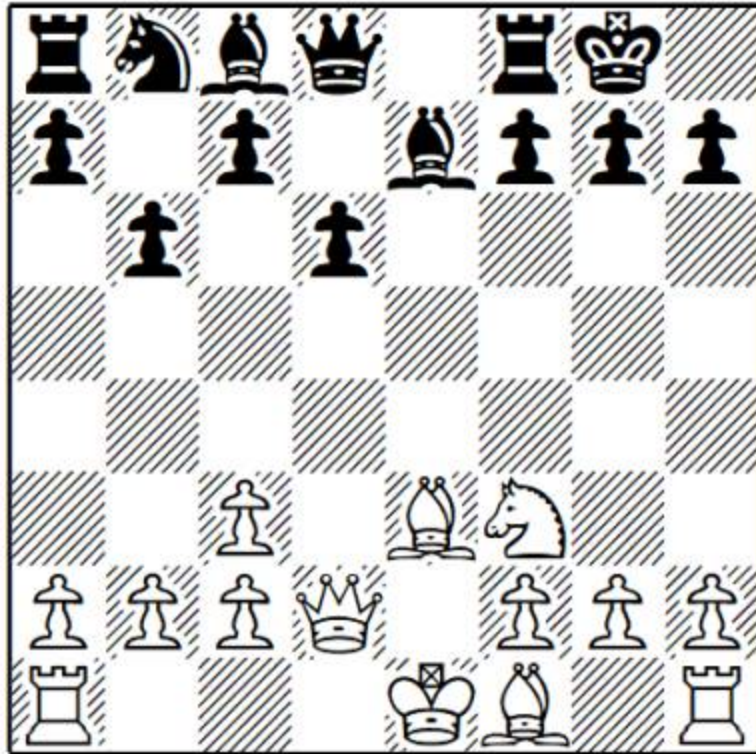
Black's bishop must be taken and yet can't be taken.

Game 50

R.Kotter-A.Yusupov

German Bundesliga 2016

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 Nc3 Nxc3 6 dxc3 Be7 7 Be3 0-0 8 Qd2 b6!?



A useful development scheme for Black against the New Main Line. It has the following benefits:

1) Black's bishop remains safe from attack on b7 and immediately fights for control over the key d5-, e4- and f3-squares.

2) In some cases Black may be willing to play ... Bxf3, if doing so forces White to recapture with the g-pawn, resulting in damage to his structure. Black does not normally go for his plan if queens remain on the board, since White may generate an attack down the open g-file.

3) On g4 Black's bishop is vulnerable to h2-h3 and g2-g4 thrusts.

4) On f5 Black's bishop is vulnerable to g2-g4 pushes, as well as Nd4.

5) On e6 Black's bishop is vulnerable to Nd4, h2-h4, followed by Ng5, as well as White's f2-f4 and f4-f5 push.

6) On d7 the bishop is passively placed.

9 0-0-0

9 h4 was tried in the game *su99-C.Lakdawala*, online blitz2018, which continued 9 ... Bb7 10 Nd4 Nc6 11 h5 Ne5 12 f3? Re8? (my opponent and I both missed the tactic 12 ... c5! 13 Nf5 Bxf3! and Black wins a pawn) 13 0-

0-0 Bf8 14 h6 g6 15 Bg5 Be7 16 f4?! Bxg5 17 fxg5 a6 18 Be2!? Bxg2 (who cares if White gets the g-file since his own g5-pawn blocks attacking lanes to Black's king) 19 Rhg1 Bb7 20 Rdf1 Re7 21 Rf6 Nd7 22 Rf2 b5 23 Rgf1 Qe8 24 c4 Nc5! (threatening a fork on e4) 25 Rf4? (on 25 Bd3 I had planned 25 ... b4! and if 26 Qxb4?? then 26 ... Nxd3+ 27 cxd3 c5, winning a piece) 25 ... Ne4 26 Qd1 Nxc5 27 cxb5 axb5 28 Bxb5 c6 29 Bc4 d5 30 Bb3 (30 Bd3 Rxa2 is also hopeless for White) 30 ... c5 31 Nf3 Ne6 32 Rf6 c4 and White resigned.

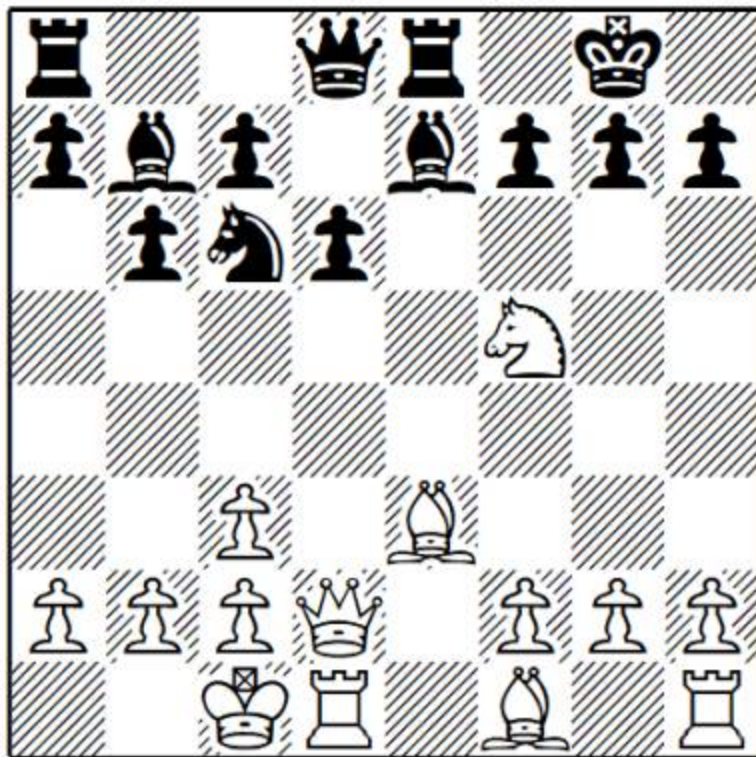
9 ... Bb7 10 Nd4

In the next game we consider 10 h4.

10 ... Nc6

Also possible is 10 ... Nd7, intending ... Nc5, when Black certainly does not stand worse.

11 Nf5 Re8



This move was new. Normally, Black preserves the dark-squared bishop with 11 ... Bf6. For example, 12 Ng3 Ne7 13 Nh5 Nf5 14 Bf4 Be5 15 h4 g6

16 Bd3 as in F.Caruana-Wang Hao, Bucharest 2013, when Black looks fine after 16 ... Ng7. This game is annotated in *The Petroff: Move by Move*.

12 Bc4

12 Nxe7+ Qxe7 13 h4 Qe6 14 Kb1 Ne5 is fine for Black.

12 ... Qd7

I actually prefer to keep the bishop with 12 ... Bf8, even though it's technically "bad". In reality the bishop isn't so bad since it keeps the black king safe.

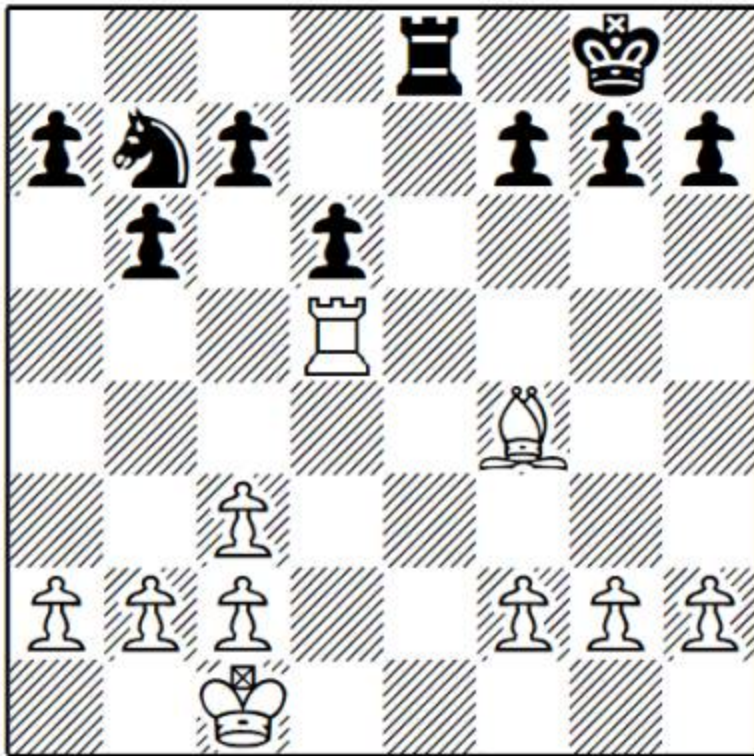
13 Nxe7+

White goes for the bishop pair. As mentioned previously, this doesn't necessarily create a plus for White in a near-symmetrical structure devoid of pawn imbalances.

13 ... Rxe7 14 Bd5

After 14 h4 Ne5 15 Bd5 Bxd5 16 Qxd5 Rae8 Black is fine.

14 ... Na5! 15 Bg5 Re5 16 Bxb7 Nxb7 17 Bf4 Re6 18 Rhe1 Rae8 19 Rxe6 Qxe6 20 Qd5 Qxd5 21 Rxd5



One of the reasons I picked this game was to demonstrate just why a bishop is *not* an advantage over a knight in a position with a symmetrical, balanced pawn structure.

21 ... Nc5 22 Be3 Ne4 23 Rd3 f5

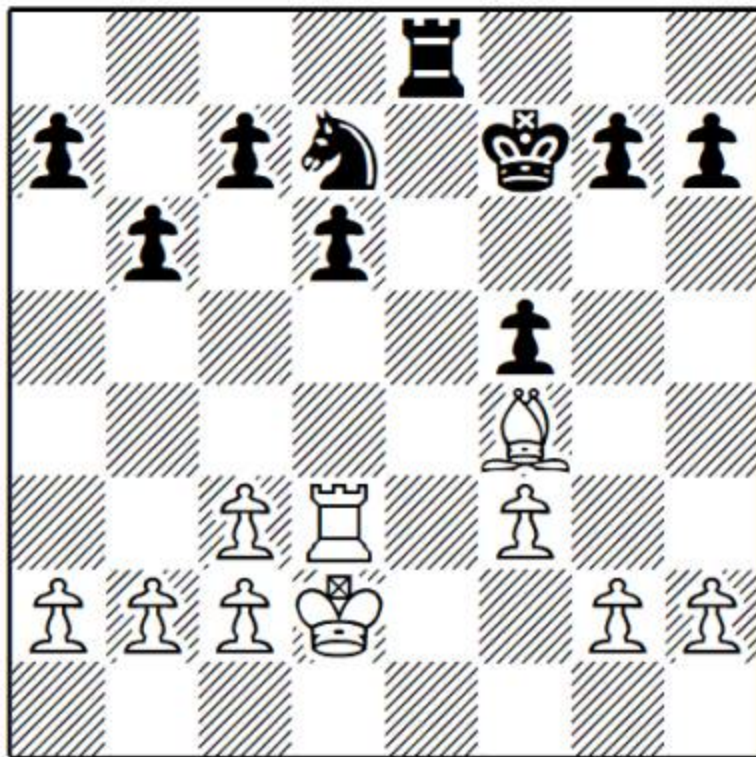
Black begins to gain useful space.

24 f3 Nf6 25 Bg5 Kf7 26 Kd2

26 Bxf6 isn't necessarily a draw. After 26 ... Kxf6 27 Kd2 g5 28 Re3 Re5! Black stands slightly better due to his superior king position.

26 ... Nd7 27 Bf4?!

Correct was 27 Re3 Ne5 28 b3 h6.



Exercise (planning): White's last move was inaccurate. Come up with a plan proving why.

27 ... g5!

Answer: Push the g-pawn two squares. White either loses serious space or allows Black's rook infiltration.

28 Be3

After 28 Bxg5 Rg8 29 h4 Ne5 30 Rd4 h6! 31 Bxh6 Rxg2+ 32 Kd1 Ke6, White's pieces are in a complete tangle and he won't be able to hang on to his extra pawn.

28 ... Ne5 29 Rd4 c5! 30 Ra4 f4!

Black correctly ignores White's threat to take a7 with check. Instead, White must watch out for ... h7-h5, followed by ... g5-g4 ideas.

31 Bf2

If 31 Rxa7+ Kg6 32 Bf2 Nc4+ 33 Kd3 (33 Kc1?? Re2 is game over) 33 ... Nxb2+ 34 Kd2 Nc4+ 35 Kd3 Ne5+ 36 Kd2 h5, then ... g5-g4 is coming and White is busted.

31 ... a5

Now White's laterally-challenged rook is miserably placed and he has to waste time returning it into play.

32 Re4 d5 33 Re1 Nc4+ 34 Kc1 Rxe1+ 35 Bxe1 Ne3

The knight goes for the underbelly on g2, forcing White to loosen his kingside pawns.

36 g3 Ke6!

Yusupov decides to avoid adventures stemming from the line 36 ... Nf1 37 Kd1 Nxh2 38 Ke2 g4 39 fxg4 Nxg4 40 gxf4 Kg6 41 Kf3 Kf5, although White will be hard pressed to save the game since:

1) Black has the superior king position.

2) Black has a dangerous outside passed h-pawn. Yusupov may have feared ideas such as Bh4, followed by Bd8, which forces Black to place all his pawns on light squares, but this doesn't seem to be such a big problem.

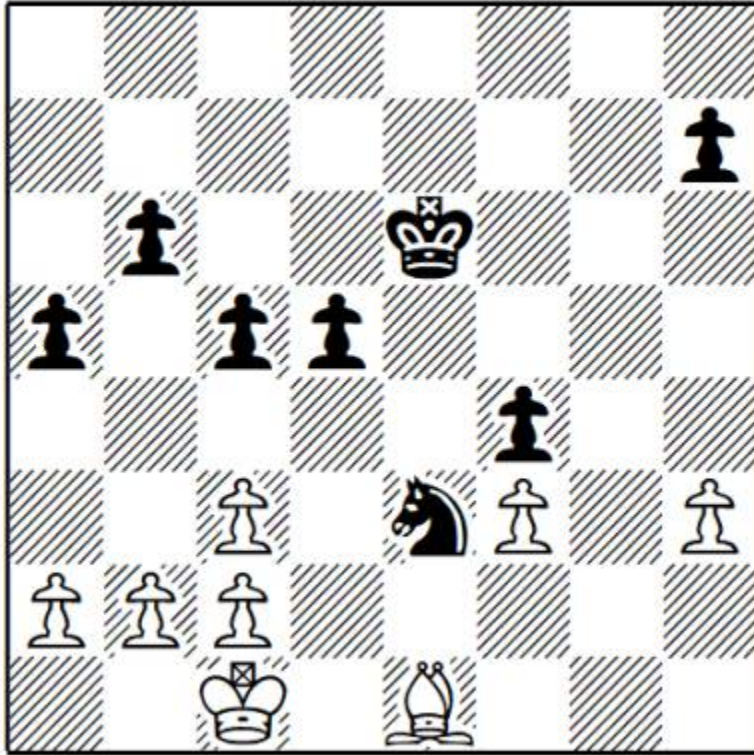
Note that 36 ... Nc4?! would be premature in view of 37 gxf4 gxf4 38 Bh4 Ne5 39 Bg5 and White may save the game.

37 gxf4

After 37 g4?? Nc4 there is no defence to the coming ... Ne5, which wins f2. White must give up b2 to save f3.

37 ... gxf4 38 h3?

White may be able to hold a draw with 38 Bh4 b5 39 b3 a4 40 Bg5 Kf5 41 Be7 c4 42 Bd8, since if he just waits, it won't be easy for Black to penetrate the fortress.



Exercise (calculation): Work out a forcing line where Black wins a pawn.

38 ... Nf1?

Threatening ... Nh2 and ... Nxf3.

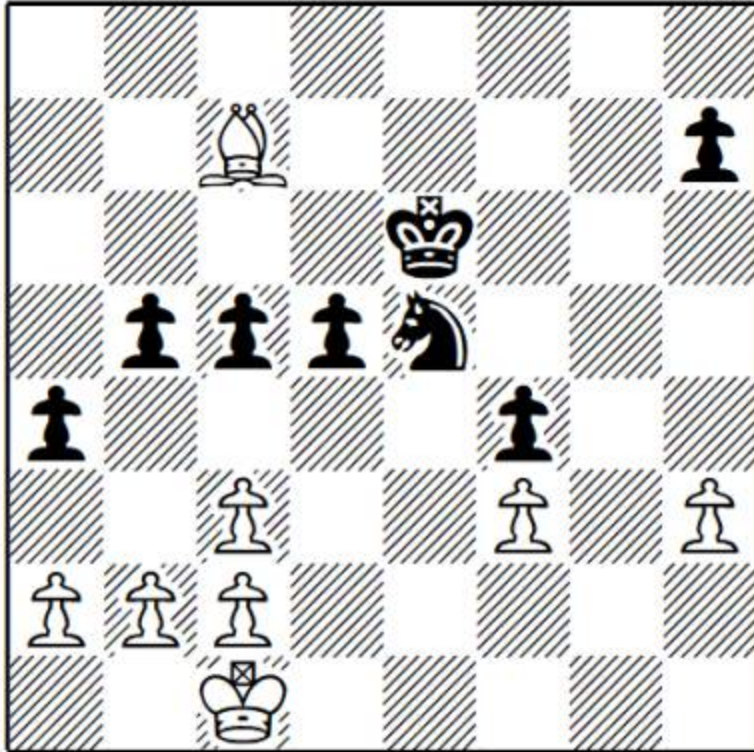
Answer: Black wins a pawn with 38 ... Nc4! 39 a4 Ne5 40 Bh4 (threatening Bd8) 40 ... Kd7 41 Bg5 Nxf3 42 Bxf4 Ng1! due to the dual threats of ... Ne2+ (forking) and ... Nxh3.

39 Kd1 Ne3+ 40 Kc1 Nc4

There is no way to prevent ... Ne5. The trouble is White can hold a draw here.

41 Bh4 b5 42 Bd8 a4 43 Bc7 Ne5

After 43 ... Kf5 44 Bb8 Black can't make progress. If 44 ... Kg5 45 Bc7 Kh4? 46 b3! Ne3 47 Bxf4 Ng2 48 Bh6 Kxh3 49 bxa4 bxa4 50 Kb2!, Black's a-pawn is doomed and it is White who has all the winning chances.



Exercise (critical decision): Should White enter the king and pawn ending
with 44 Bxe5 - ?

44 Kd1?

Answer: The pawn ending is a draw, despite Black's apparently overwhelming king position after 44 Bxe5! Kxe5 45 Kd2 Kf5 46 Ke2 Kg5 47 Kf2 Kh4 48 Kg2 c4 (48 ... b4 49 cxb4 cxb4 50 a3 bxa3 51 bxa3 Kg5 52 Kf2 Kf5 53 Ke2 Kg5 54 Kf2 is still drawn) 49 a3 Kg5 50 Kf2 Kf5 51 Ke2 Ke5 52 Ke1 d4 53 Kd2 h6 54 cxd4+ Kxd4 55 c3+ Ke5 56 Ke2, when Black's king has no way in and the game is drawn.

44 ... Nxf3

Now Black is winning since White is unable to hang on to his h-pawn.

45 Bxf4 Kf5 46 Bd6 c4! 47 Ke2

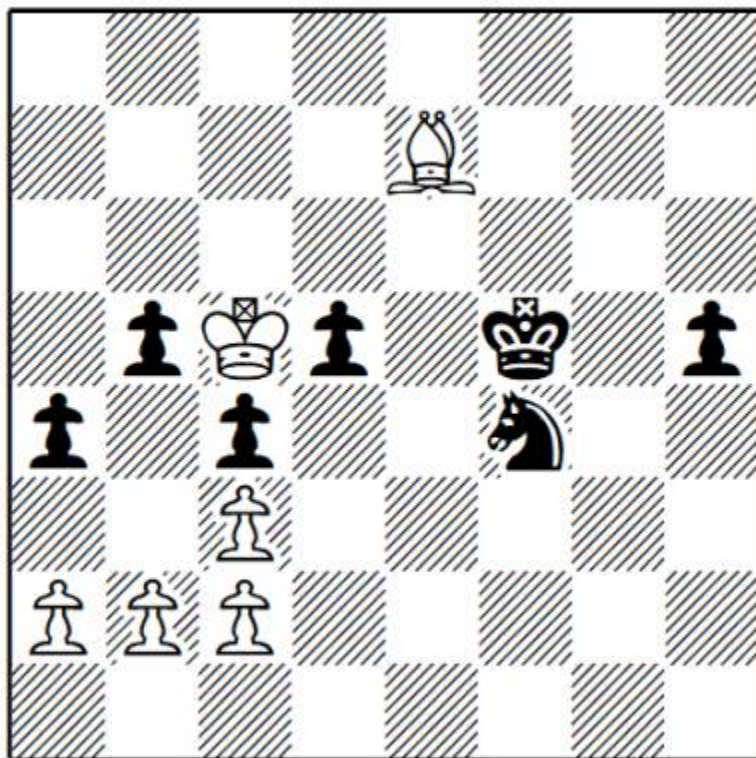
47 Bc7 doesn't help; e.g. 47 ... Ng1 48 h4 h5 49 Bd8 Nf3 50 Ke2 Kg4 51 Ke3 Nxh4 52 Kd4 Nf3+ 53 Kxd5 Ng5! 54 Bc7 h4 55 Kc6 h3 56 Kxb5

Ne4 (threatening ... Ng3, followed by ... h3-h2) 57 Bh2 Kf3 58 Kxc4 Kg2 59 Bc7 Ng3 and Black promotes.

47 ... Ng1+ 48 Ke3 Nxh3 49 Kd4

White's king threatens a raid on the queenside via c5.

49 ... Nf4 50 Kc5 h5 51 Be7



Exercise (combination alert): The position is tricky. If White is able to sacrifice

his bishop for the black h-pawn, he may even win, since Black's queenside

pawns are all sitting targets. Find Black's winning combinational idea.

51 ... Ng6?

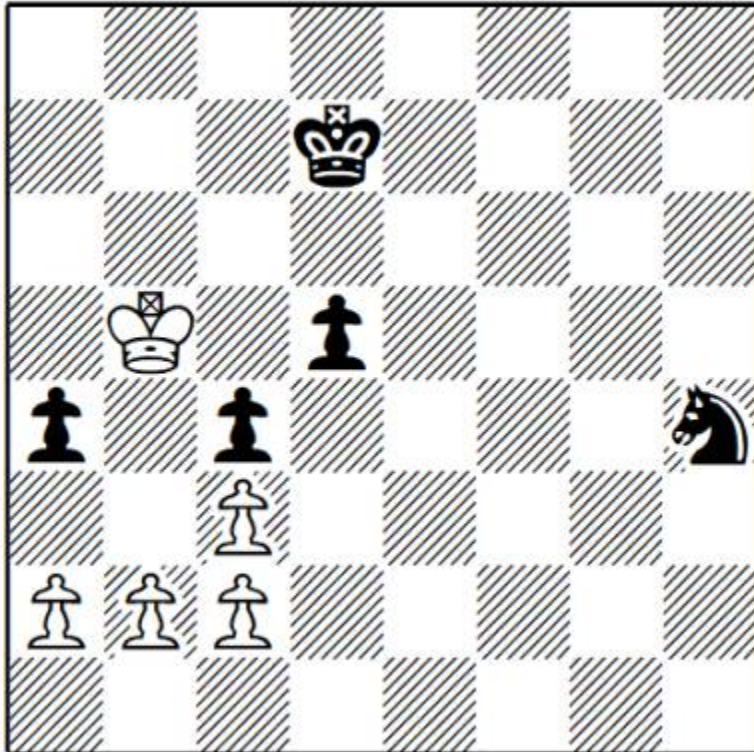
After this mistake Black's winning chances evaporate (at least temporarily) and White should hold the draw.

Answer: Yusupov missed the clever shot 51 ... Nd3+! (White is unable to touch the knight) 52 Kxb5 Nxb2 (now Black hangs on to his a-pawn) 53

Kb4 Kg4 54 Ka3 Nd1 55 Kxa4 Nxc3+ 56 Ka3 h4, which is winning for Black.

52 Bd8 Ke6 53 Kxb5 Kd7 54 Bf6 h4 55 Bxh4 Nxh4

White has no reason to mourn the loss of his bishop. Black has won a piece, yet it shouldn't be enough to win the game since White can liquidate Black's remaining pawns and draw.



Exercise (critical decision): Should White play 56 Kxa4, or should he play for king position with 56 Kc5 - ? One move draws, while the other loses:

56 Kxa4?

The dead thing which came to life is once again dead. Long, unforgiving defence has a way of wearying the mind past mere exhaustion. The a-pawn is a distraction and king position is more important.

Answer: White holds the draw with 56 Kc5! Ke6 57 b3! cxb3 58 cxb3 axb3 59 axb3 Nf3 60 b4 Nd2 61 b5 Ne4+ 62 Kc6! Nd6 (not 62 ... Nxc3??)

63 b6, when Black's knight is unable to catch the b-pawn and White wins after 63 ... d4 64 b7 d3 65 b8Q d2 66 Qd6+ as Black's d-pawn falls) 63 b6 Ke5 64 b7 Nxb7 65 Kxb7 and the game is drawn.

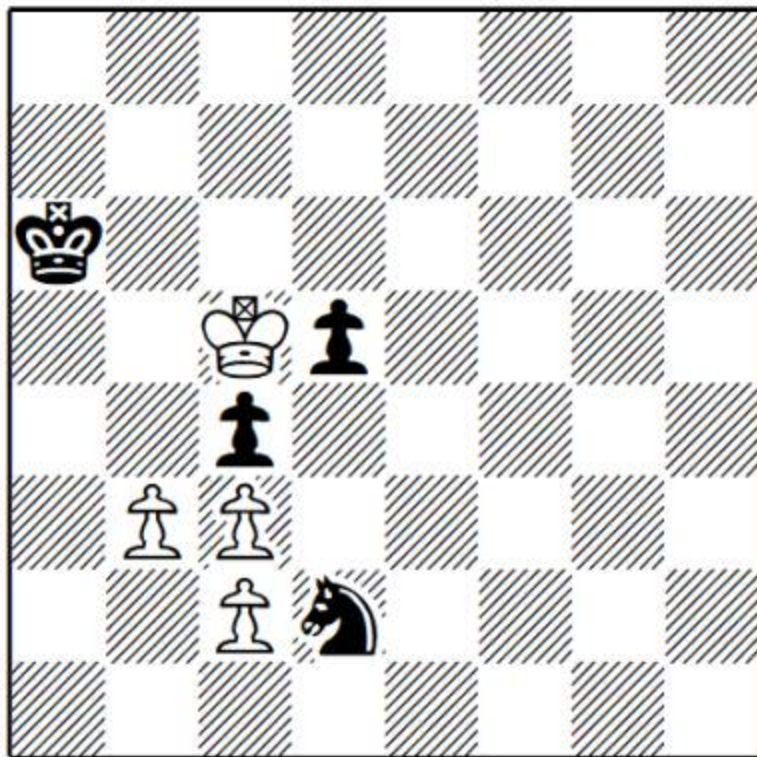
56 ... Kc6 57 b3 Nf3 58 Kb4 Nd2!

Black only requires a single remaining pawn to win the game.

59 a4 Kb6 60 a5+ Kc6 61 Ka4 Kc5 62 a6

After 62 b4+ Kc6 63 b5+ Kc5 64 b6 Kc6, the connected passed pawns fail to help White; for example, 65 Kb4 Ne4 66 Ka4 Nc5+ 67 Kb4 Na6+ 68 Ka4 Kc5 69 Ka3 Kb5 and Black wins.

62 ... Kb6 63 Kb4 Kxa6 64 Kc5



Exercise (combination alert): How did Black force the win?

64 ... Nxb3+!

White is presented with a fresh heartbreak.

Answer: Sacrifice the knight on b3.

65 Kxd5

Or 65 cxb3 cxb3 and Black promotes.

65 ... Nd2 0-1

Black hangs on to his final pawn and wins. After 66 Kd4 Kb5 67 Ke3 Nb3! (the knight still can't be taken) 68 Ke2 Ka4! 69 Kd1 Ka3! 70 Ke2 Na1 71 Kd2 Kb2, White loses both his c-pawns and the remaining black c-pawn promotes.

Game 51

P.Eljanov-F.Vallejo Pons

FIDE Grand Prix, Sharjah 2017

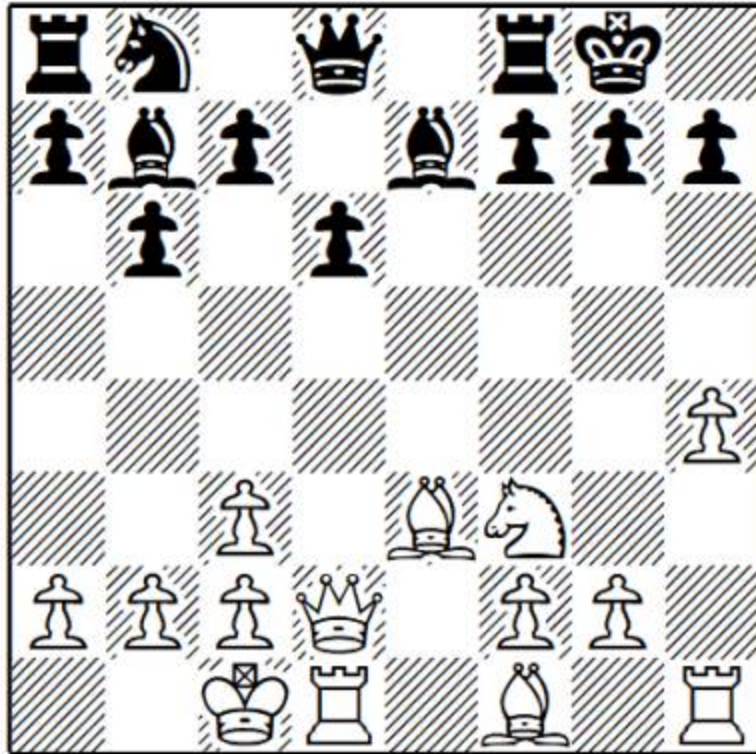
1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6

The Petroff may be the least intimidating opening available, but it is deadly effective if your aim is to equalize with the black pieces. This game is a good example of how Black easily neutralized an ambitious opponent.

3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 Nc3 Nxc3 6 dxc3 Be7 7 Be3 0-0 8 Qd2 b6

This is a good attempt to draw the sting from White's new main line.

9 0-0-0 Bb7 10 h4



White, correctly, doesn't consider ... Bxf3 to be an real threat, so he pushes his h-pawn forward, with the following ideas:

1) When the h-pawn advances again, it will either provoke Black into the weakening ... h7-h6, providing White with a sacrificial target, or ... g7-g6 (if the h-pawn is allowed through to h6), resulting in weakened dark squares around Black's king.

2) With a pawn on h4, White may later play either Bg5 or Ng5. In the latter case, if Black responds ... h7-h6 then White may be able to ignore the threat and offer the knight as bait to pry open the h-file.

3) By pushing the h-pawn to the fourth rank, White's h1-rook may later be lifted into the attack, via h3 and g3.

10 ... Nd7

The knight is most flexible on d7, where it may later move to c5, e5, f6 or f8.

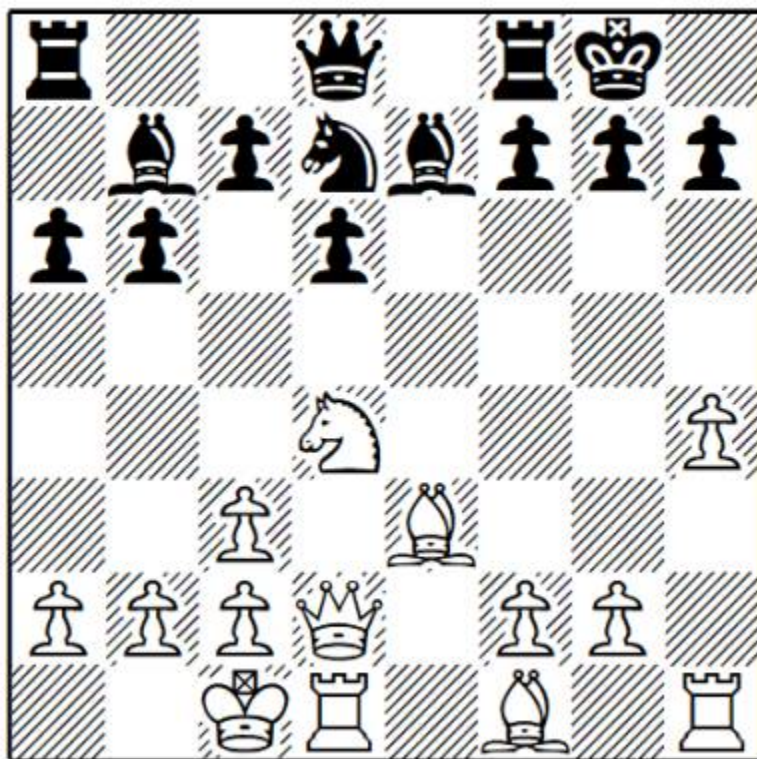
11 Nd4

Others:

a) 11 Bd3 Re8 12 Kb1 Bf6 13 Rh3 Nc5 14 Bxc5 bxc5 15 g4 was F.Caruana-S.Mamedyarov, Stavanger 2018. After 15 ... g6 I slightly prefer Black's position, since the bishop pair and dark square control are worth slightly more than White's kingside attacking chances.

b) 11 h5 Nc5 12 Nd4 Ne4 13 Qe1 Bg5! 14 f4 Bf6 15 Bb5 Qc8 16 h6 g6 17 g4? (17 Kb1 is correct, although Black is fine after 17 ... Qg4!) 17 ... c5! 18 Ne2 Qxg4! 19 Kb1 a6 20 Bd3 Rfe8, D.Horvat-M.Blazeka, Croatian League 2018, and Black was a clear pawn up with the initiative, while White's would-be attack isn't dangerous since Black generates too much central play.

11 ... a6!



A novelty and a good one. Black prevents Bb5 and Nc6.

12 Bg5 Nc5

Of course Black is by no means obliged to chop White's bishop and open the h-file, but now both ... Ne4 and ... Ne6 are in the air.

13 f3 Re8 14 Rh3

Such lifts are risky, since if White's attack doesn't go anywhere, then the rook will be out of play on the third rank. Black also looks fine after 14 Kb1 Qd7 15 g4 Ne6.

14 ... Bf6 15 g4 Ne6

Following the principle: *meet your opponent's wing attack with a central counter*. Black can also pursue his own attacking agenda with 15 ... b5.

16 f4

Maybe White is better off first exchanging knights with 16 Nxe6 Rxe6 17 f4.

16 ... Nxd4 17 cxd4 Bd5 18 a3

18 c4 is met by 18 ... Be4 with equal chances.

18 ... c6 19 f5 b5

Now Black's light-squared bishop is beautifully centralized.

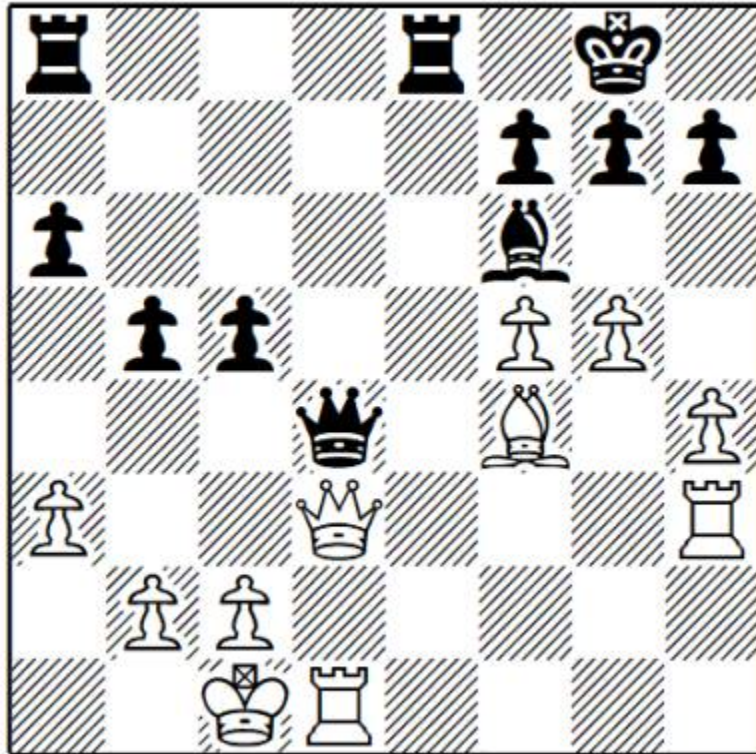
20 Bd3 Bc4

20 ... c5 is also tempting.

21 Bf4 Bxd3 22 Qxd3 c5 23 dxc5 dxc5 24 g5

It appears as if White has generated strong play on the kingside. Black's next move dispels this illusion and White's would-be initiative quickly evaporates.

24 ... Qd4!



The Petroff epitomizes the spirit of negation. Rather than doing something himself, Black prevents the opponent from doing things. Here Vallejo Pons deflects from the issue at hand with a strong central counter, ensuring dynamic equality. White stands very slightly better in the ending after 24 ... Qxd3 25 Rhxd3.

25 Qxd4

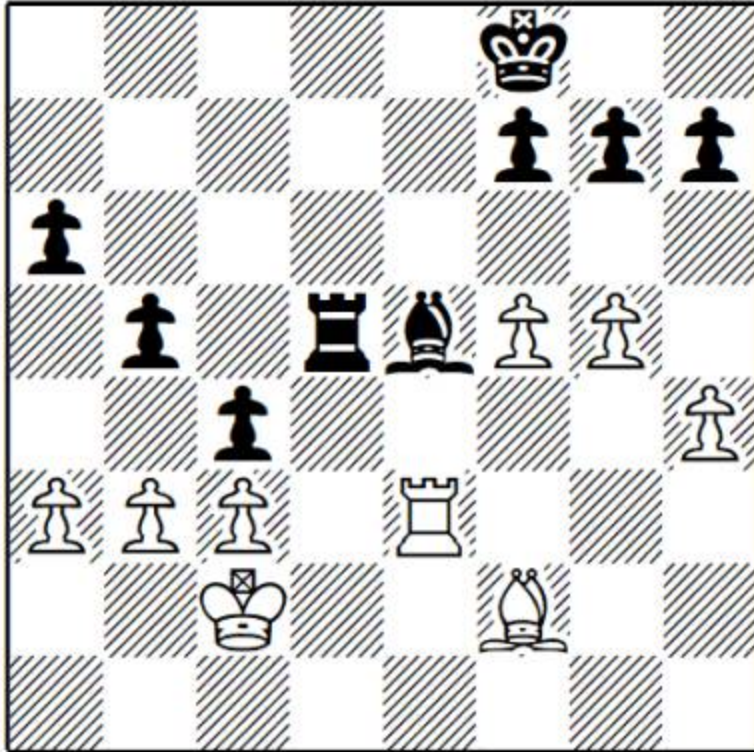
Backing down from the adventure and agreeing that White's initiative has run its course. Eljanov's queen exchange is the equivalent of a draw offer.

After 25 gxf6 Qxf4+ 26 Kb1 Qe5! 27 Rg1 (or 27 fxg7 Rad8 28 Qxd8 Rxd8 29 Rxd8+ Kxg7) 27 ... Qxf6 28 Rhg3 Kh8 29 Rxg7 Rad8 30 Qg3 Qxf5 31 Qc3 f6, Black stands no worse in this sharp major piece position.

25 ... Bxd4 26 c3 Be5 27 Be3 c4 28 Kc2 Rad8 29 Rxd8 Rxd8 30 Bf2 Rd5 31 Re3

White's desultory attempt to squeeze something from his position is easily overcome.

31 ... Kf8 32 b3



Exercise (planning): How did Black force a draw?

32 ... Bf4

Answer: Step 1: play 32 ... Bf4, attacking White's rook, while simultaneously threatening the f5-pawn and a rook check on d2.

Black can also consider keep the game going with 32 ... Bd6.

33 Rf3

Forced.

33 ... Rd2+

Step 2: Give a rook check on d2, forcing perpetual check.

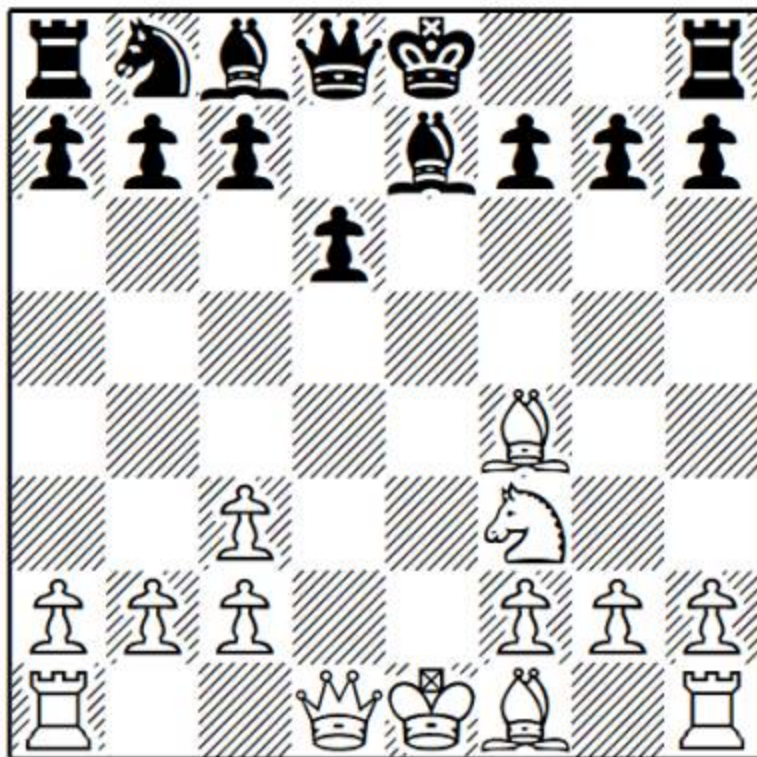
Not 33 ... Rxf5??, when Black loses the exchange after 34 Bg3 Bxg3 35 Rxf5 g6 36 Rd5 cxb3+ 37 Kxb3 Ke7 38 Rd4.

34 Kb1 Rd1+ 35 Kc2 Rd2+ 36 Kb1 Rd1+ 37 Kc2 Rd2+ 38 Kb1 Rd1+ 1/2-1/2

Game 52

R.Hübner-V.Kramnik
Frankfurt (rapid) 1996

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 Nc3 Nxc3 6 dxc3 Be7 7 Bf4



Why put the bishop on f4, when the more stable e3-square is available?
For the following reasons:

1) On f4, White fights for the e5-square. This is important because it makes it harder for Black to play freeing ... Ne5 ideas later on.

2) On e3, the bishop can be vulnerable to Black's ... Nc6, ... Ne5 and then either ... Nc4 or ... Ng4 ideas.

On the flip side, on f4 the bishop is in the way of White's future pawn storm ideas, since it blocks the f-pawn. On e3, White can play Nd4 and then immediately push the f-pawn to the fourth rank.

7 ... 0-0 8 Qd2 Nd7

As in the previous game, 8 ... b6!? is another option. For example, 9 0-0 Bb7 10 h4 Nd7 11 Nd4 (or 11 h5 Nc5 12 Bc4 Bf6 13 Nd4 Ne4 14 Qe3, E.Santarius-D.Eckert, Chicago 2014, and now 14 ... Re8 15 Bb5 Nxc3! 16

Bxe8 Nxd1 17 Bxf7+ Kxf7 18 Qb3+ d5 19 Rxd1 Bxd4! 20 Rxd4 c5 21 Rd1 Qf6 looks fine for Black) 11 ... Nc5 12 Re1 Bf6 13 Bb5 a6 14 Nc6 Qd7!?! (14 ... Qc8! gives Black the advantage) 15 Ne7+ Qxe7 16 Rxe7 axb5 17 Rhe1 Bxe7 18 Rxe7 Rxa2, when Black stood no worse and went on to win in D.Baramidze-V.Akobian, World Team Championship, Antalya 2013. This game is annotated in *The Petroff: Move by Move*.

9 0-0-0 Nc5

Now ... Ne4 is in the air. Alternatively, 9 ... b6!?! is still playable, when 10 h4 Bb7 in fact transposes to the previous note.

10 Nd4

Others:

a) 10 Be3 is analysed in the next game.

b) After 10 h4 c6, Black's d6-pawn isn't really hanging and Bc4 is discouraged. Play can continue 11 Bxd6 (11 c4 is well met calmly with 11 ... Bg4) 11 ... Bxd6 12 Qxd6 Qxd6 13 Rxd6 Ne4 14 Rd4 Nxf2 15 Rg1 Ng4 16 Bc4 Bf5, V.Topalov-B.Gelfand, Wijk aan Zee 2006, and Black stood no worse in the ending.

10 ... Ne6

This move achieves an exchange, thus decreasing White's attacking chances.

11 Be3 Nxd4 12 cxd4

So we reach yet another Exchange French structure, except a slightly revved-up one, since the players have castled on opposing wings.

Instead, 12 Bxd4 c5 13 Be3 Be6 14 Kb1 d5 is just fine for Black.

12 ... Bf5!?!

Kramnik plays his bishop to its optimal square, provoking Hübner into a f2-f3 and g2-g4 pawn storm. Kramnik trusts in the inherent solidity of his position, coupled with the fact that all the knights have been exchanged, so he doesn't have to worry too much about his king's safety.

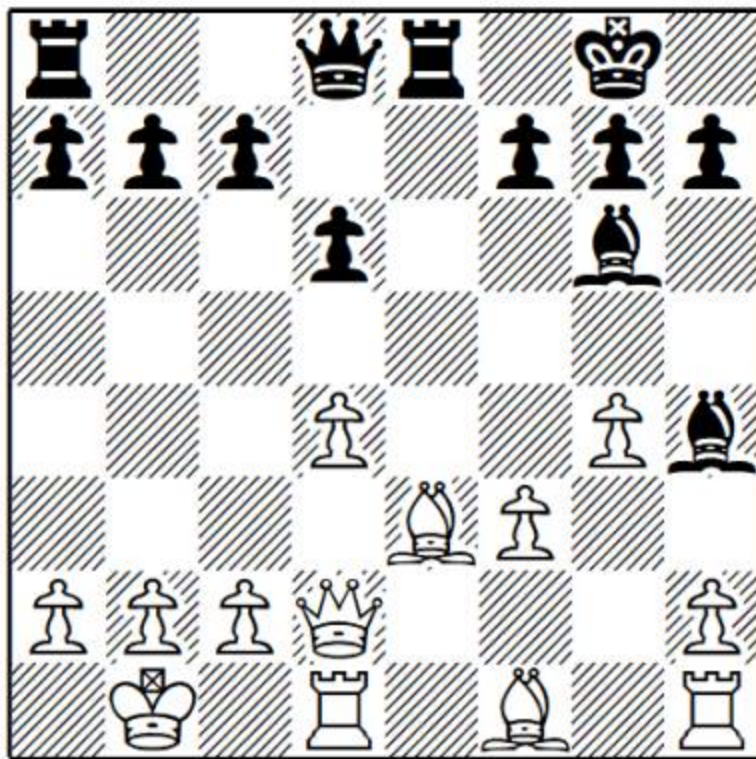
12 ... d5 allows White to seize the best square for his bishop with 13 Bd3, although after 13 ... Be6 14 h4 Qd7 15 h5 it is hard to visualize Black getting mated.

13 f3

Hübner goes for the natural plan in the position. 13 Bd3 Bxd3 14 Qxd3 d5 looks rather drawish.

13 ... Re8 14 g4 Bg6 15 Kb1 Bh4!

I like this move since it frustrates White's plans of pushing his h-pawn to the fifth rank. Black stands no worse and it isn't really clear if White's kingside pawn pushes represent a strength or a potential overextension.



16 Bf2 h6

16 ... Qf6 17 Bxh4 Qxh4 18 Bc4 Re7 is also fine for Black.

17 f4!?

Aggressive. Hübner is willing to go for it, not fearing falling off the cliff.

17 ... Be4

According to the principle: *centralize your pieces when under attack.*

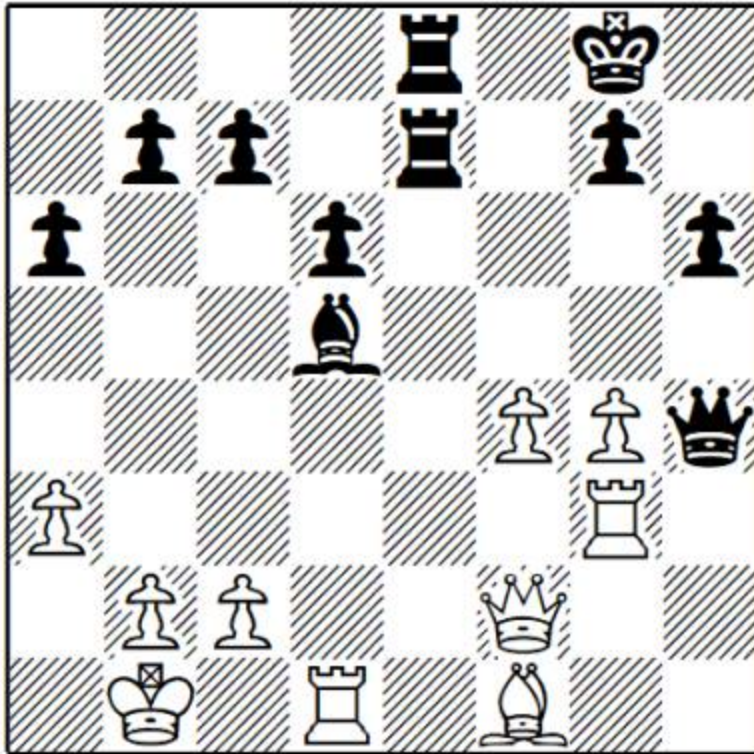
18 Rg1 Qf6 19 Bxh4 Qxh4 20 Rg3 Re7

I don't see any attack for White and his pushes now feel more of a debit than an asset.

21 d5 Rae8 22 a3 a6 23 Qf2 f5!?

Kramnik is clearly going for the full point.

24 h3 fxg4 25 hxg4 Bxd5!?



This clever/risky trick wins a pawn at the cost of allowing White dangerous kingside counterplay. Kramnik would also hold an edge with the calmer yet stronger 25 ... Rf8!, after which White's position is under unpleasant pressure.

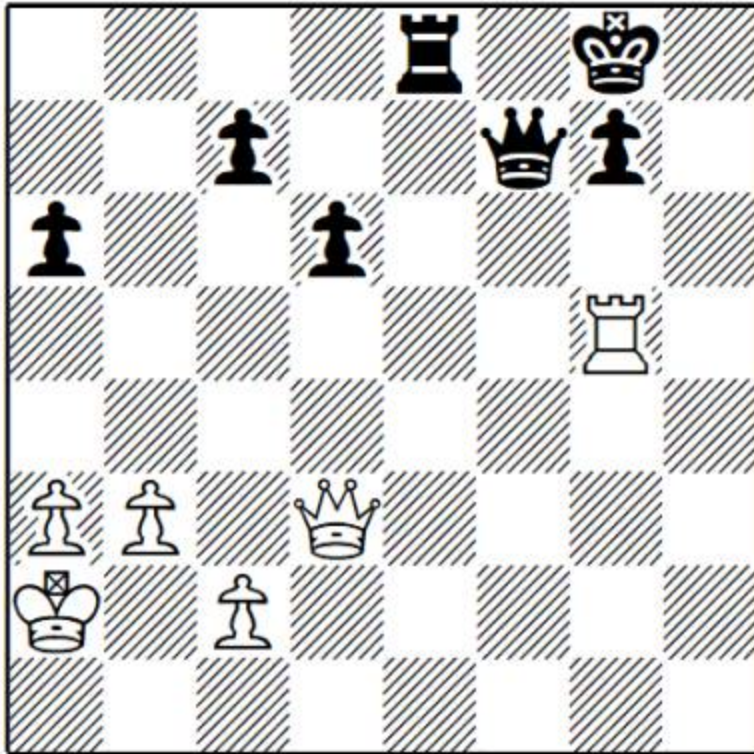
26 Rxd5?!

It stings our pride when our opponent casually dismisses us with a simple idea to which we may have been totally oblivious. I have a feeling Hübner completely overlooked Kramnik's last move and so resigned himself to the fact that he would drop a pawn. However, White looks okay if he finds 26 g5! h5 27 Rxd5 Re1+ 28 Ka2 Rxf1! 29 Qxf1 Qxg3 30 Qc4! Kh7 31 Rf5! with sufficient counterplay for the pawn.

26 ... Re1+ 27 Ka2 Rxf1! 28 Qxf1 Qxg3 29 g5 hxg5?!

It looks more accurate to play 29 ... Re4! 30 gxh6 Rxf4 31 Qc1 gxh6, when the storm is beginning to abate and, even with his exposed king, Black has the better prospects due to his two extra pawns.

30 Rxc5 Qe1 31 Qg2 Qe6+ 32 b3 Qf6 33 Qd5+ Qf7 34 Qxb7 Qxf4 35 Qd5+ Qf7 36 Qd3



Black has emerged a pawn up, but conversion will be a difficult task for the following reasons:

- 1) Black's a-pawn is isolated and therefore weak.
- 2) The further Black pushes his passed g-pawn up the board, the more exposed his king becomes.

White's chances to hold a draw look better than Black's to win.

36 ... Re1

Kramnik doesn't bother protecting his a-pawn and goes after White's king. He intends ... Qf6, with dual threats of mate on a1 and ... Qxg5.

37 Qxa6 g6?

This is going too far. Kramnik should have opted for 37 ... Qf6! 38 Qc8+ Kf7 (after 38 ... Kh7 39 Qf5+ Qxf5 40 Rxf5 Kh6 41 Rf8 g5 42 a4, White doesn't stand worse in the rook ending) 39 Qxc7+ Kf8 40 Qc8+ with perpetual check.

38 Qd3

38 Rg3! is slightly more accurate.

38 ... Re6?!

Black's dismay continues to deepen. He could minimize his disadvantage with 38 ... Qg7 39 c3 Kf7 40 Qc4+ Kf8 41 a4.

39 a4!

Now White's position continues to improve in hard won increments. White now has the advantage for two reasons:

- 1) His a-pawn is faster than Black's g-pawn.
- 2) White has the safer king.

39 ... Qf6 40 Rg1

Covering against ... Re1.

40 ... Kg7 41 Rf1! Qe5 42 Qc4?!

Black is busted if Hübner finds 42 Qf3!.

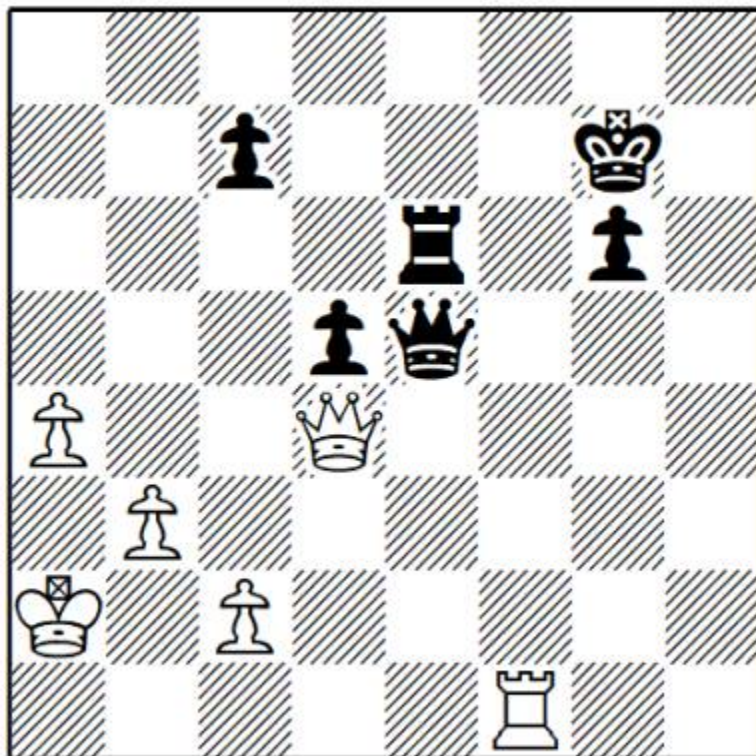
42 ... d5 43 Qc5 Qd6?!

43 ... Re7 was necessary.

44 Qd4+

Simpler is 44 Qf2! Re5 (44 ... Qe7 45 Qd4+ wins the d5-pawn) 45 Qf7+ Kh8 46 Rg1!, which is lost for Black.

44 ... Qe5



Exercise (planning): What is White's best move?

45 Qxe5+!?

Still favourable for White, but he exchanges queens too early.

Answer: He gets a pawn up version after 45 Qf2 Qf5 46 Qxf5 gxf5 47 Rxf5 and Black is already busted.

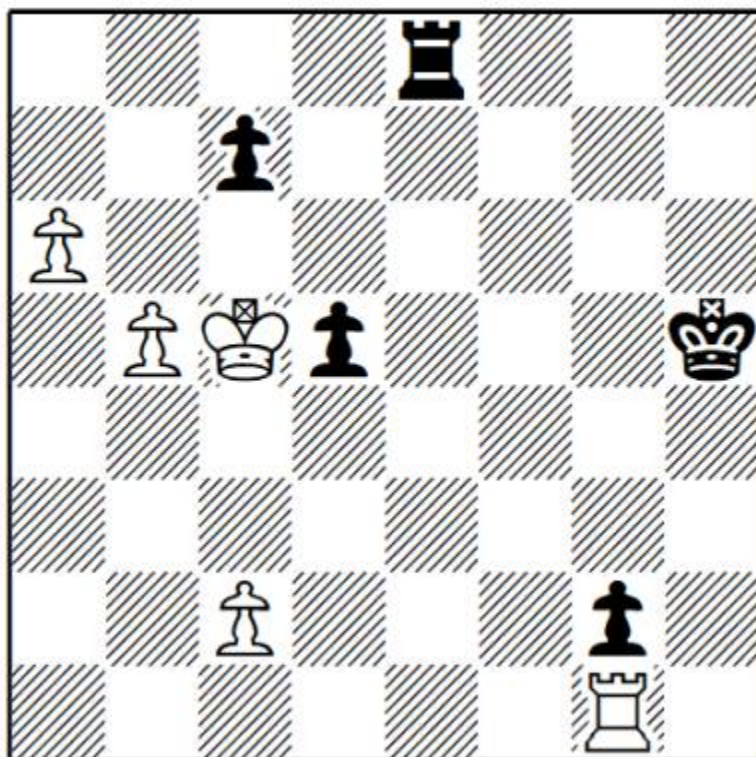
45 ... Rxe5 46 a5 g5 47 b4

Here 47 Ka3! is more precise.

47 ... Kg6 48 Kb3 Re8 49 b5 g4 50 Kb4 Kh5 51 Kc5 g3

Don't you hate it when our opponent teaches us a lesson, yet one which isn't instructive, since we already know exactly where we messed up. There is no doubt that Kramnik knows perfectly well that he is dead lost here, since White's king will win c7, creating a second unstoppable passer.

52 a6 g2 53 Rg1 1-0



After something like 53 ... Re2 54 Kb4! Rxc2 55 Kb3 Re2 56 a7 Re8 57 Rxc7 Ra8 58 Ra2 Kg5 59 Kb4 Kf5 60 Kc5 Ke4 61 Kc6 d4 62 Kxc7, White

wins.

Game 53

N.Short-An.Karpov

Russia-Rest of the World, Moscow (rapid) 2002

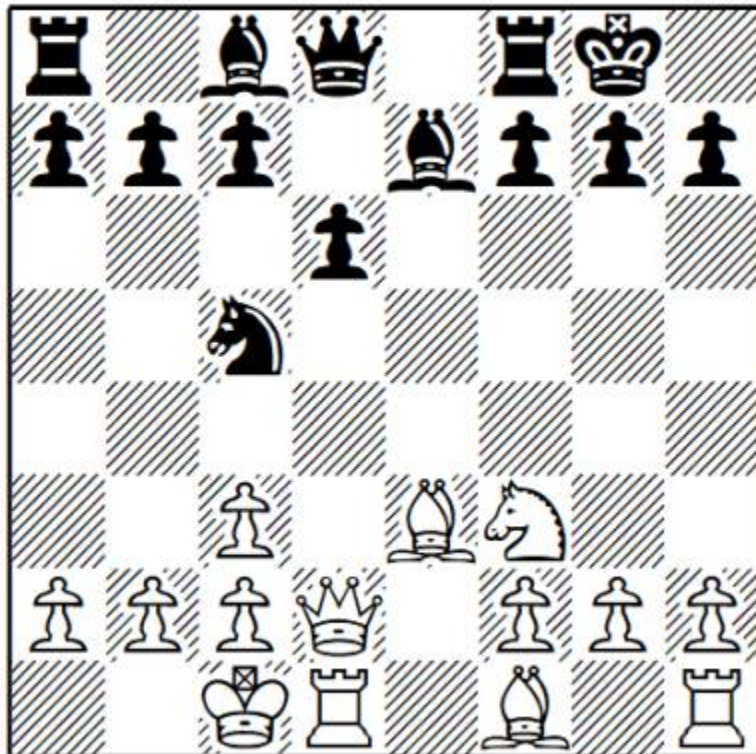
1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6

Before Fabiano Caruana became a devotee there was the great Anatoly Karpov, who employed the Petroff successfully since the 1960s. From 1966 to 2001, Karpov's lifetime score in classical chess was four wins, one loss and 32 draws, so he is the poster child for not losing with the Petroff.

3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 Nc3 Nxc3 6 dxc3 Be7 7 Bf4 Nd7 8 Qd2 0-0 9 0-0-0 Nc5

The c5-square is a flexible one for the knight, where it has access to e6, e4 and a4. White simply cannot afford to play b2-b4, especially since he castled queenside, so it's almost as if the knight is occupying a "hole".

10 Be3



This retreat is White's main line. The simple idea is to dodge the exchanges stemming from Nd4 and ... Ne6, as occurred after 10 Nd4 Ne6! 11 Be3 Nxd4 12 cxd4 in our previous game.

10 ... Re8 11 h4

After 11 Bc4 Be6 12 Bxe6 Nxe6 13 h4 Qd7 14 Qd3 Qc6 15 Qf5 (15 Ng5 is met by 15 ... Nf8) 15 ... Qc4 16 Ng5 Bxg5 17 hxg5 Nf8 18 Kb1 Re5 19 Qf3 Qe4 20 Qh3 Rae8, Black's centralized pieces easily make up for White's not-so-useful open h-file, I.Salgado Lopez-A.Ipatov, Turkish League 2016.

11 ... Bg4

Black is not certain if he wants to chop the knight and open the g-file for White.

12 Be2

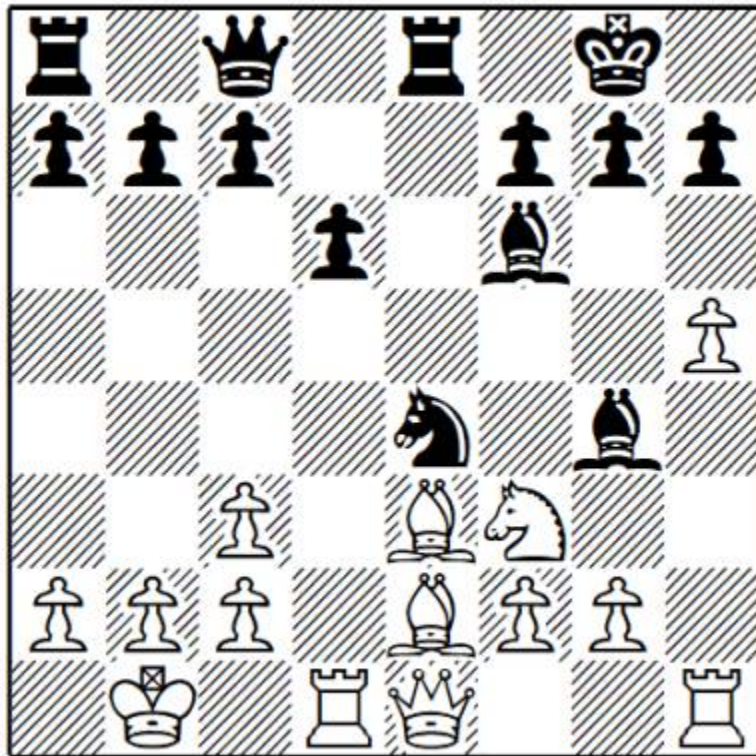
After 12 Bc4 Bf6 13 Rdg1 c6 14 Ng5 d5! 15 Bxc5 (15 Bxd5? cxd5 16 Bxc5 h6 17 Nf3 Qa5 18 Ba3 Bxf3 19 gxf3 Rac8 threatens ... Bxc3, to which there is no good response) 15 ... dxc4 16 Qf4 Bh5 17 Qxc4 Bxg5+ 18 hxg5 Qxg5+ 19 Be3 Qa5, Black had equalized in T.Schwetlick-A.Siikaluoma, ICCF email 2008.

12 ... Qc8

The queen steps prophylactically off the d-file. Alternatively, 12 ... Bf6 13 Bxc5 dxc5 14 Qf4, A.Pourkashiyan-R.Priya Panneer, World Junior Championships, Yerevan 2006, and now 14 ... Qe7! 15 Bd3 Bxf3 16 Qxf3 c6 looks fine for Black.

13 Kb1 Ne4 14 Qe1 Bf6 15 h5?!

After 15 Nd4 Bxd4 16 Rxd4 Bxe2 17 Qxe2 Re5, Black stands at least equal.



Be aware that your piece activity can only be measured in *relation* to that of your opponent. Yes, White is active but with his last move he underestimates Black's even superior activity level, which in turn creates a combinational possibility for Black.

Exercise (combination alert): There is incipient disease within White's outwardly healthy-looking position. White's natural yet incorrect last move allowed Karpov to win material by force. How did he achieve this?

15 ... Qe6!

Answer: White is unable to evade ... Nxf2! next move.

16 h6

Short either overlooks or allows the shot on f2.

If 16 Nd4 Bxd4 17 Bxg4 (17 Rxd4? Bxe2 18 Qxe2 Nxf2! wins a pawn and leads to a lost ending for White) 17 ... Qxg4 18 Rxd4 Qxg2 19 Rg1 Qf3 20 h6 g6, White has minimal compensation for the missing pawn.

16 ... Nxf2! 17 Qxf2 Qxe3 18 Qg3

Short hopes to generate an attack, yet the inherent solidity of the Petroff prevents him.

18 ... Bxf3?!

Black fears a possible h6xg7, opening the h-file. In truth, there is no reason to hand White his pawn back. Correct is 18 ... Be6! 19 Rd3 Bxa2+! 20 Kxa2 Qxe2 (note that Re1 no longer traps Black's queen, since it has an escape via ... Qxc2), and if 21 hxg7? Qxc2 22 Nd4 Bxd4 23 Rxd4? then 23 ... Re5! wins.

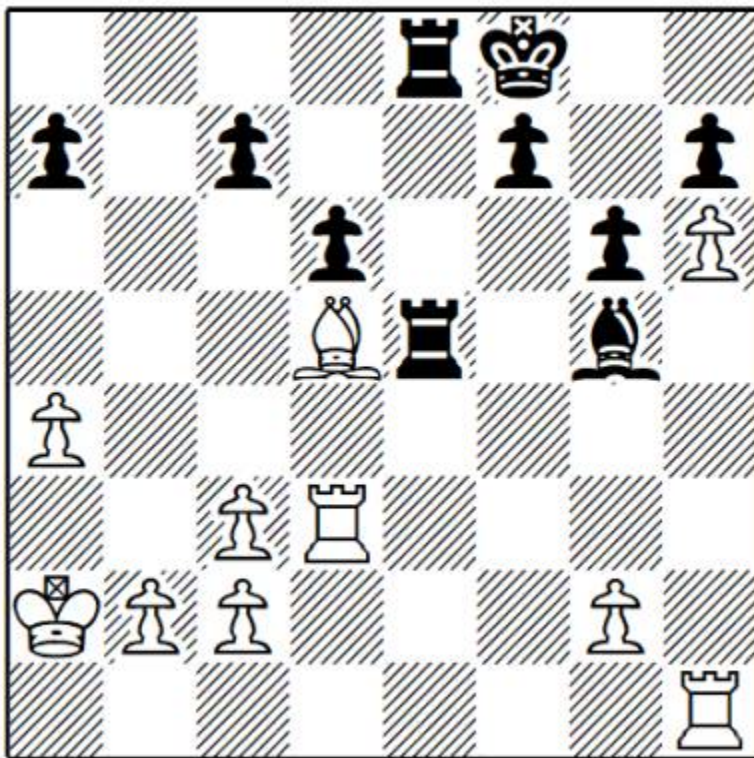
19 Bxf3 g6 20 Rd3 Qg5

This is the second best move. Black still holds an edge after 20 ... Be5! 21 Rxe3 Bxg3. However, Karpov correctly avoids 20 ... Qb6?! 21 Bd5!, when White gets dangerous counterplay along the f-file.

21 Bxb7 Qxg3 22 Rxg3 Rab8 23 Bd5 Re5 24 Rd3

White still stands a touch worse, but he should hold the game.

24 ... Rbe8 25 a4 Kf8 26 Ka2 Bg5!



White's main issue is that one of his rooks must babysit h6.

27 b4 Re1 28 Rhh3 R8e3 29 Kb3 Rxh3 30 Rxh3 Re3?!

Now White should hold the ending since his king can infiltrate on the queenside light squares. 30 ... Re5! maintains an edge for Black.

31 Rxe3!

Short avoids 31 Rh1?! f5 32 Kc4 Re5 33 Rh3 Bd2, when White is tied up and struggling.

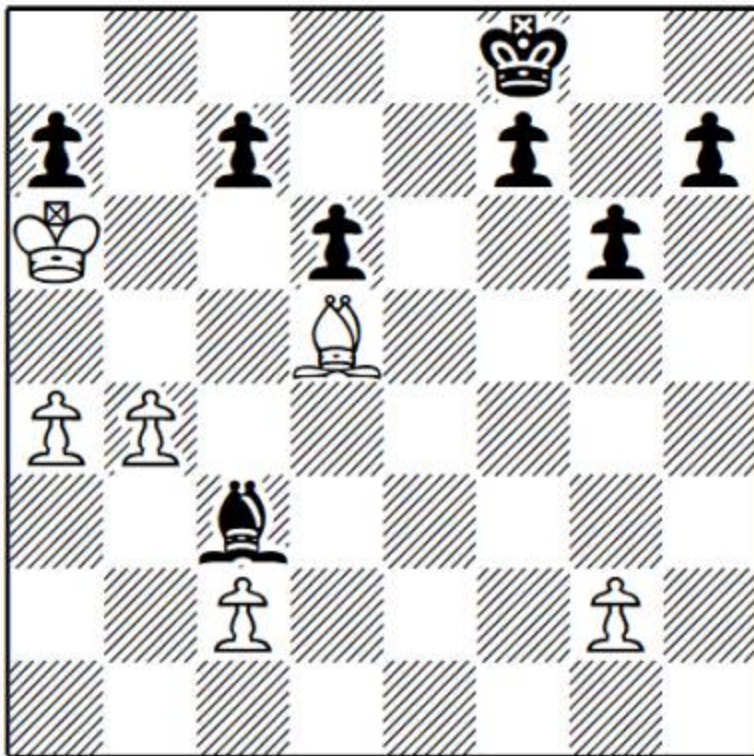
31 ... Bxe3 32 Kc4

While it's true that Miss Congeniality on h6 is about to lose her smile, White can still hold the draw a pawn down.

32 ... Bxh6 33 Kb5 Bd2 34 Ka6

Short continues to systematically rebuild, and now is on the cusp of a draw.

34 ... Bxc3



A single puzzle remains and, if solved, White holds the game.

Exercise (critical decision): Should White play 35 Kxa7, creating a passed

a-pawn, or should he hang on to his b-pawn and play 35 b5, allowing Black to defend the a7-pawn with 35 ... Bd4 - ?

35 Kxa7?

This loses.

Answer: Correct was 35 b5! Bd4 36 c3 Be3 37 a5 Ke7 38 Kb7 Kd7 39 Bxf7, when Black's extra pawn is irrelevant as neither side can make progress.

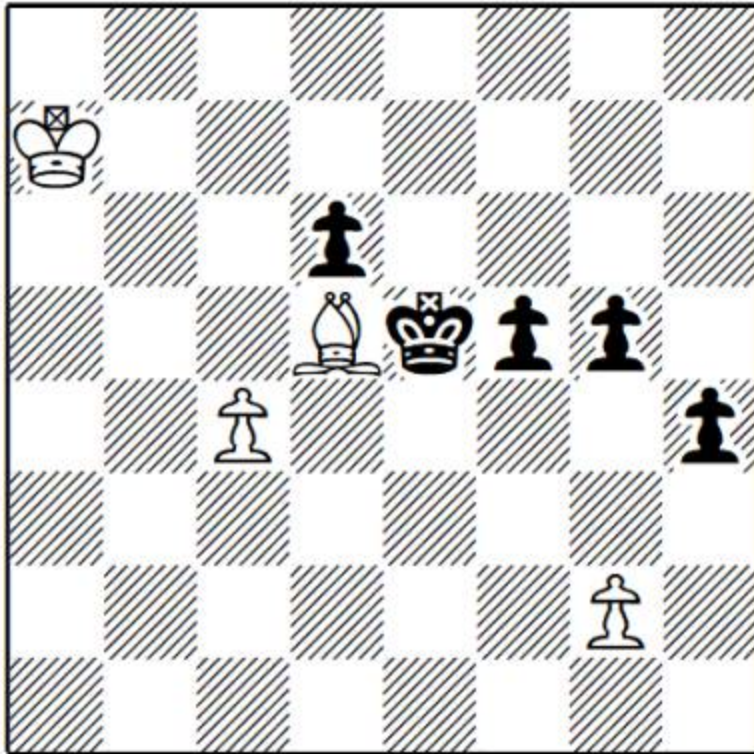
35 ... Bxb4 36 Kb7 h5!

Winning. The position requires detailed analysis to expel doubts.

a) 36 ... Ba5! also wins; e.g. 37 Kc6 Ke7 38 Kb5 Bd2 39 g4 h5 40 gxh5 gxh5 41 a5 h4 42 a6 Be3 43 Kc6 Bb6 44 Bg2 Ke6 45 Kb7 Kf5 46 a7 Bxa7 47 Kxa7 Kg4 48 Kb7 f5 49 Kxc7 f4 50 Kxd6 f3 51 Bh1 h3 52 c4 f2 etc.

b) 36 ... c5? is too slow though, because of 37 Kb6 h5 38 a5 Bxa5+ 39 Kxa5 h4 40 Kb6 Ke7 41 Kc6 f5 42 Bc4! (making room for the white king to reach its optimal square on d5) 42 ... g5 43 Kd5 g4 44 Be2 h3 45 gxh3 gxh3 46 Bf3 h2 47 c4 Kd7 48 Bg2 Ke7 and the game is drawn.

37 Kxc7 Ke7 38 Kb6 Bc5+ 39 Kb7 h4 40 a5 f5 41 a6 Kf6 42 a7 Bxa7 43 Kxa7 Ke5 44 c4 g5



Karpov's judgment proves superior. White's king is too far away and his lone bishop is unable to stop Black's armada on the kingside.

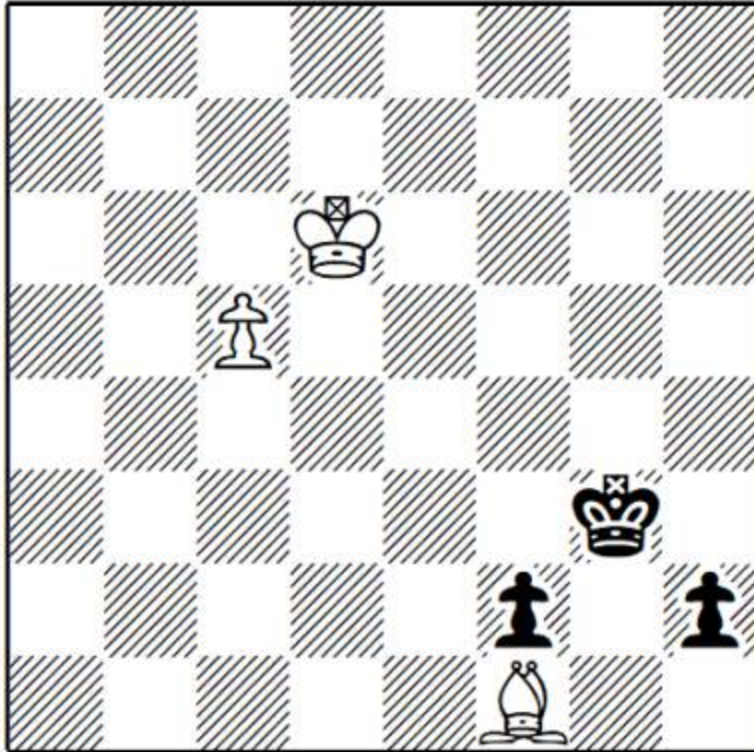
45 Kb6 g4 46 Bb7 f4 47 Bc8

Or 47 Kc7 f3! (interference) 48 gxf3 g3 49 f4+ Kxf4 50 Kxd6 h3 51 c5 g2 52 c6 g1Q 53 c7 Qd4+ 54 Bd5 h2 55 c8Q h1Q and wins, as White lacks a perpetual check.

47 ... f3! 48 gxf3 gxf3 49 Kc6 f2 50 Bh3 Kf4!

Karpov correctly calculates that he is faster in the promotion race.

51 Kxd6 Kg3 52 Bf1 h3 53 c5 h2 0-1



Game 54

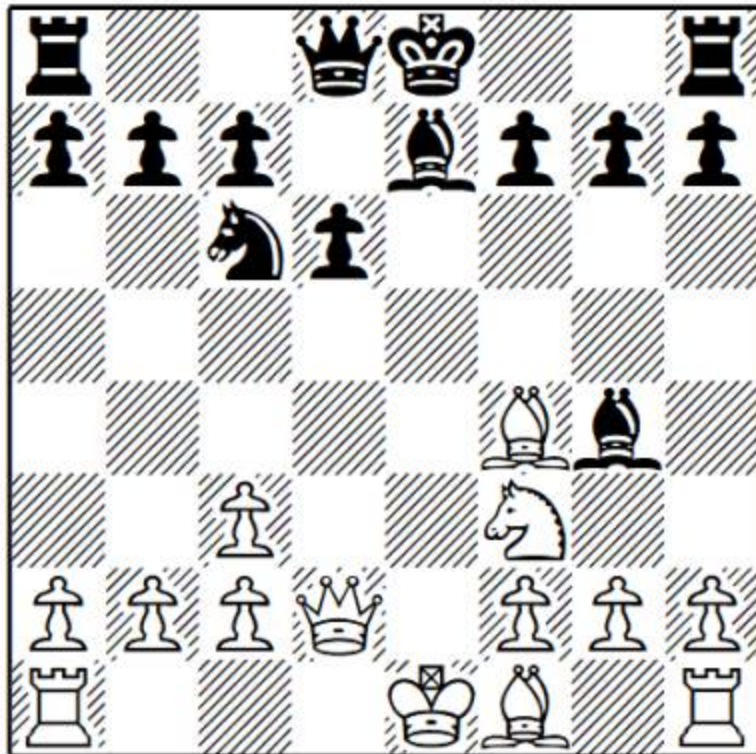
F.Vallejo Pons-R.Ponomariov

Leon (rapid) 2003

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 Nc3 Nxc3 6 dxc3 Be7 7 Bf4 Nc6

In this game Black organizes with ... Nc6 and ... Bg4.

8 Qd2 Bg4



Creating the possibility of ... Bxf3 which seriously damages White's structure at the cost of handing over the bishop pair and opening the g-file. Black has not yet committed the king to the kingside, so this is a playable plan should White allow it.

9 0-0-0

White can also thwart the ... Bxf3 intent with 9 Be2 Qd7 10 h3 Be6 11 0-0-0 a6 12 Ng5 Bxg5 13 Bxg5 f6 14 Be3 0-0-0 15 b3 Rhe8 16 Rhe1 Bf5, as in M.Vachier Lagrave-V.Gashimov, European Team Championship, Heraklio 2007. Sure, White has the bishop pair, but as mentioned previously, this fact isn't such a big deal with a nearly symmetrical structure. Black looks just fine.

9 ... Qd7

Ponomariov decides not to implement the ... Bxf3 threat. Here 9 ... Bxf3!? 10 gxf3 Qd7 11 h4! 0-0-0 is more risky, if also playable.

10 Bc4

This only prevents queenside castling for a single move. 10 Be2 0-0-0 11 h3 Be6 reaches a similar position to that in the 9 Be2 line above.

10 ... Be6 11 Bd3 0-0-0

11 ... h6!, preventing Ng5, looks equal.

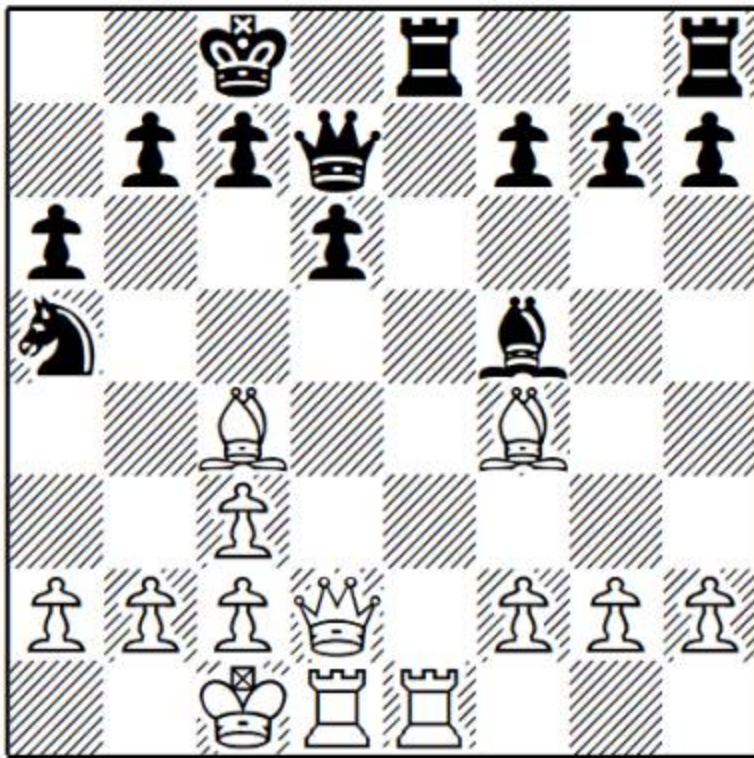
12 Rhe1 a6

Preventing Bb5 ideas.

13 Ng5 Bxg5 14 Bxg5 Rde8 15 Bf4

White prevents ... Ne5. A later game saw 15 Kb1 Ne5 16 Be2 Bc4 17 b3 Bxe2 18 Rxe2 Qf5 19 Rde1 Re6 20 Kb2 and the players agreed to a draw in J.Davis-B.Bredenhof, ICCF email 2012.

15 ... Bf5 16 Bc4 Na5!



Aiming to deprive White of the bishop pair.

17 Bd5

17 Bf1?! would allow 17 ... Qa4!, when 18 Kb1 Bxc2+! overloads White's queen and wins a pawn after 19 Qxc2 Qxf4.

17 ... Be6 18 b3

White must comply with an undesirable bishop exchange.

If 18 Bf3 Qa4 19 a3 Bf5 then ... Nc4 is in the air and it is White who stands worse.

18 ... Bxd5 19 Qxd5 Nc6

White has got nothing from the opening.

20 c4 Rxe1 21 Rxe1 Re8 22 Rxe8+ Qxe8 23 Qf5+

This double attack fails to net a pawn since Black wins it right back with a queen check on e1, followed by ... Qxf2.

23 ... Kb8 24 Qxh7 Qe1+ 25 Kb2 Qxf2 26 Qe4 b6! 27 g4

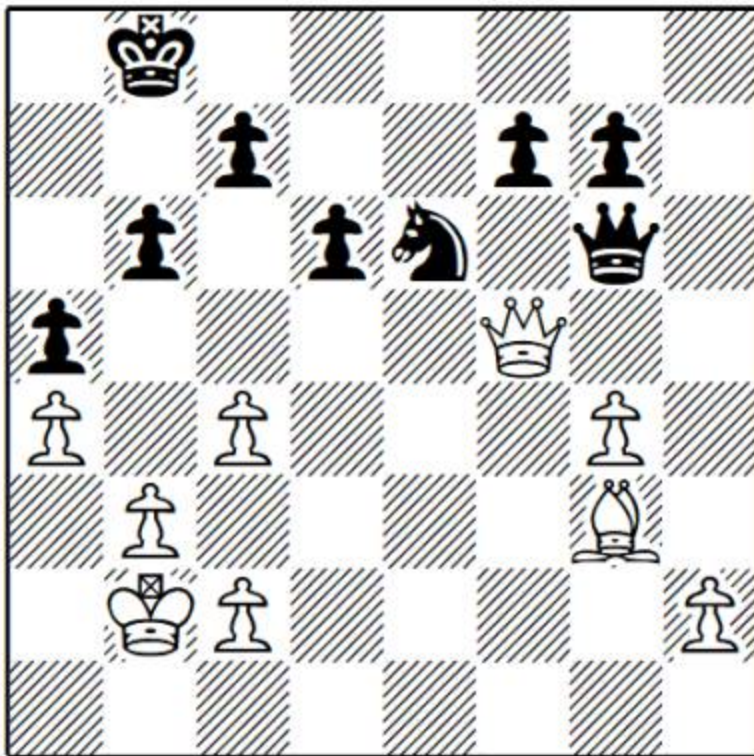
White would love to play h2-h4-h5, g4-g5 and h5-h6, creating a passed h-pawn, but Black isn't going to allow this.

Instead, 27 Qxc6 Qxf4 is equal and almost certainly drawn.

27 ... Nd8 28 Qe3 Qf1 29 a4 a5!

Following the principle: *in knight versus bishop situations, place your pawns on the same colour as your opponent's remaining bishop.*

30 Bg3 Qf6+ 31 Qc3 Qg6 32 Qf3 Ne6 33 Qf5??



Vallejo badly overpresses, and this breaking of the stasis is a disastrous misjudgment. White's obsession to win an unwinnable game consumes him and his convoluted plan of trying to create a passed h-pawn gets the better of his common sense. This move leads to a lost ending. 33 Bf2 is equal.

33 ... Qxf5! 34 gxf5 Nd4 35 f6 g6!

Black has a simple plan to pick off the f6-outlier:

1) Bring the king to e6.

2) Transfer the knight to d7.

Vallejo had probably banked on 35 ... gxf6? 36 h4, when it was Black who struggles for the draw due to White's powerful outside passed pawn.

36 c3 Nc6 37 Ka3 Ne5!

This move ruins White's intent to gain counterplay with a b3-b4 break.

38 c5!?

Desperation.

38 ... bxc5 39 b4 Nc4+ 40 Kb3 Nd2+ 41 Kc2 Ne4

Attacking both g3 and f6.

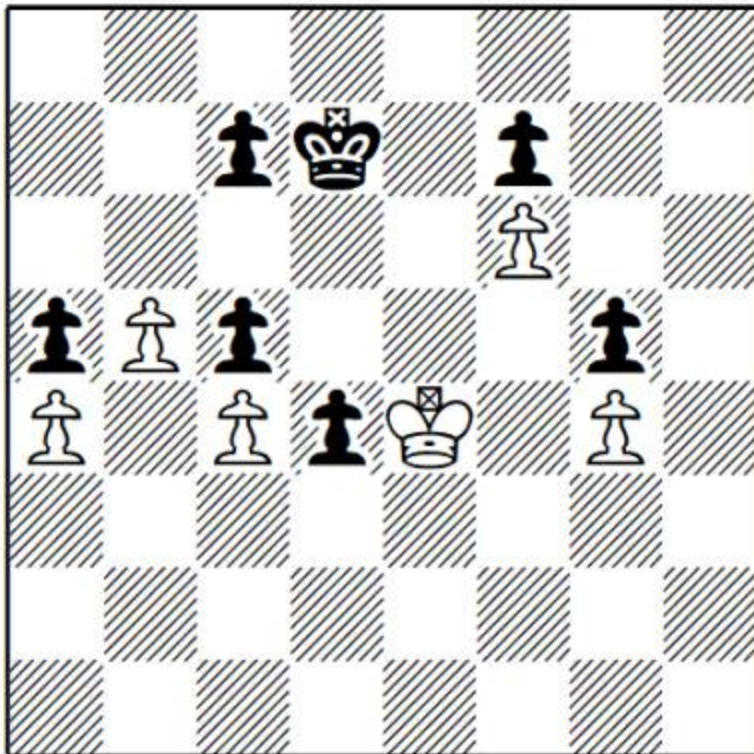
42 b5 Nxb3

The king and pawn ending is an easy win for Black.

43 hxg3 Kc8 44 Kd3 d5

White's king is shut out.

45 c4 d4 46 Ke4 Kd7 47 g4 g5!



This move artificially isolates the doomed f6-pawn, since the white king is unable to advance to the fifth rank.

48 Ke5!? d3 0-1

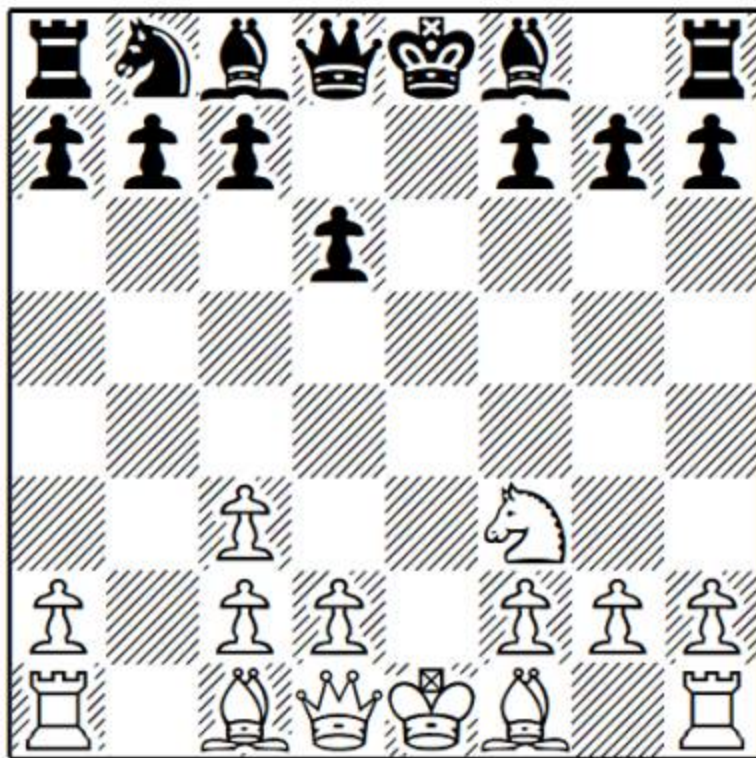
Game 55

T.Upton-Y.Bayram

Moscow Olympiad 1994

This is the only repeated game from my previous book, *The Petroff: Move by Move*, but I have completely re-annotated it. I looked for another game for this book, yet the old one felt to me to be the best example of how to play Black's side, so I've kept it.

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 Nc3 Nxc3 6 bxc3



This line is a rare guest from the White side. In this variation, which is played far less often than 6 dxc3, White follows the principle: *capture towards the centre*. The differences between this version and the main line 6 dxc3 are:

- 1) White doesn't get an open d-file.
- 2) White can't really contemplate castling queenside, which is the norm in the 6 dxc3 version.
- 3) White gets a pawn preponderance in the centre.
- 4) White gets an open b-file for a rook. This means that Black is far less tempted to castle queenside, since it would endanger the king.
- 5) White's a-pawn is isolated and the central structure is vulnerable to ... c7-c5 and ... Qa5 ideas. It is, in general, weaker than in the 6 dxc3 version.
- 6) The inferiority of White's structure means that most exchanges will be in Black's favour, since each one takes the situation closer to a pleasant ending.

6 ... Be7 7 d4 0-0

Faced with White's open b-file, Black is not at all tempted to castle queenside.

8 Bd3 Bf6

Black clears the e-file for the rook, while maintaining a watch over d4. This means White must be aware of future ... c7-c5 ideas.

9 0-0 Bg4

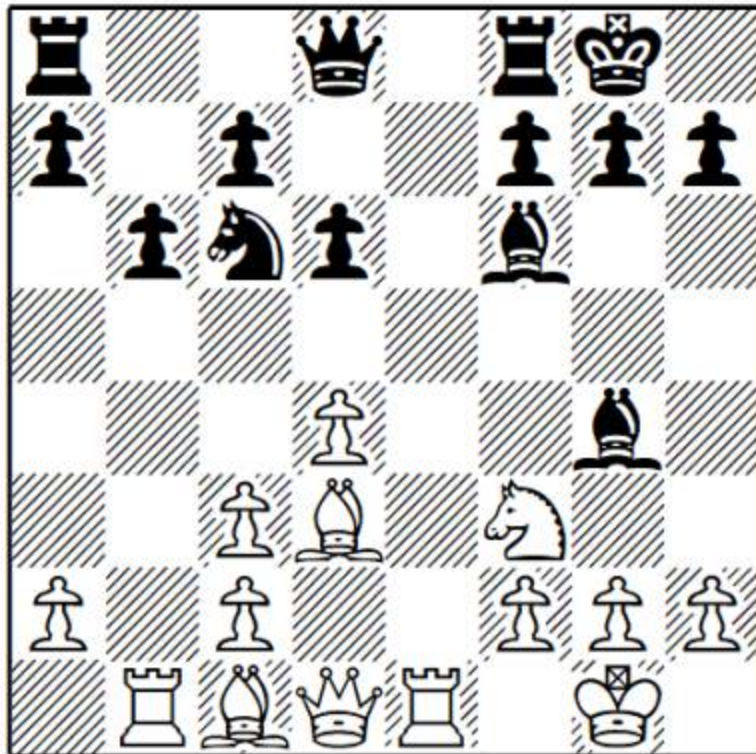
This pin against White's knight is logical. Furthermore, if given time, Black may drop back to neutralize White's attacking d3-bishop with ... Bh5 and ... Bg6.

An alternative is 9 ... c5 10 Be3, as in U.Dibirova-E.Karevin, Moscow 2010, but Black looks just fine after 10 ... Nc6 11 dxc5 dxc5 12 Bxc5 Bxc3 13 Bxf8 Bxa1 14 Bxh7+ Kxh7 15 Qxd8 Nxd8 16 Rxa1 Bg4. White's extra pawn is easily negated by the fact that the queenside structure is weak, especially the c-pawn.

10 Rb1 b6

Black can also taunt White with 10 ... Nd7! 11 h3 Be6, intending 12 Rxb7?! Nb6, when the optimistic rook is trapped and White loses the exchange for a pawn.

11 Re1 Nc6



Now White has trouble playing c3-c4 and we can safely say that Black has equalized.

12 Bf4 Re8 13 Re3 Ne7

Intending ... Nd5. Also possible is 13 ... Rxe3 14 fxe3!? Ne7 15 e4 Ng6 16 Be3 c5, when Black's position is fine due to the more solid structure.

14 h3 Nd5

Slightly inaccurate. Black remains equal after the simple retreat 14 ... Bd7.

15 Rxe8+

Here 15 hxg4 Nxf4 16 g5! Be7 17 c4 also looks slightly better for White.

15 ... Qxe8 16 Bd2 Bd7

I suspect Black originally intended 16 ... Bh5?? and then realized that it lost a piece to the sequence 17 g4! Bg6 18 c4! Ne7 19 g5.

17 Qf1

Upton wants to clear the way for Re1, but in so doing returns his opponent's previous inaccuracy by not finding the most forceful

continuation. After 17 Nh2! White holds a slight yet nagging edge.

17 ... g6 18 Re1 Qf8 19 Be4 c6 20 c4 Nc7

Now Black looks just fine again.

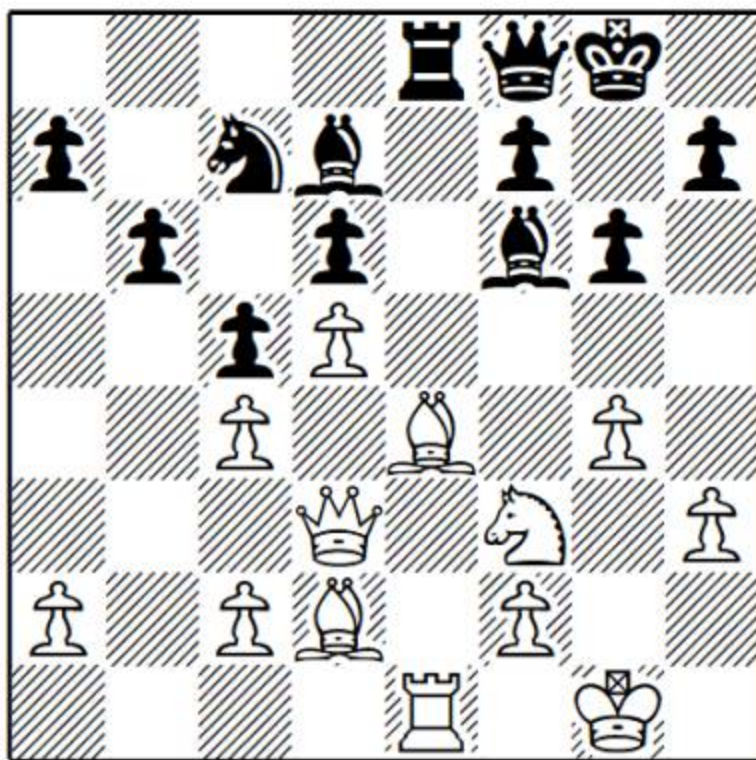
21 d5

White seeks to increase his territorial gains.

21 ... c5

Also possible is 21 ... cxd5 22 cxd5 Bb5 23 c4 Bd7. Black will follow up with ... Na6 and ... Nc5, with a satisfactory position.

22 Qd3 Re8 23 g4!?



It appears logical for White to proceed by attempting to generate an attack. However, he also places himself at risk, since his own king gets exposed in the process. Furthermore, Black's position is extremely solid and not easy to break down.

The not-so-tempting option is to just wait and do nothing.

23 ... Bg7 24 Nh4!?

This move is the point where you debate someone and find yourself losing, so you begin to shout, as if raising the decibel level is somehow

going to alter the logic of your skewed argument. The point is to begin to push the f-pawn, but this only exposes White's position even further.

24 ... Re7

I prefer 24 ... a6!, intending ... b6-b5, going with the principle: *counter in the centre when assaulted on the wing*.

25 Qg3 Be5 26 f4!?

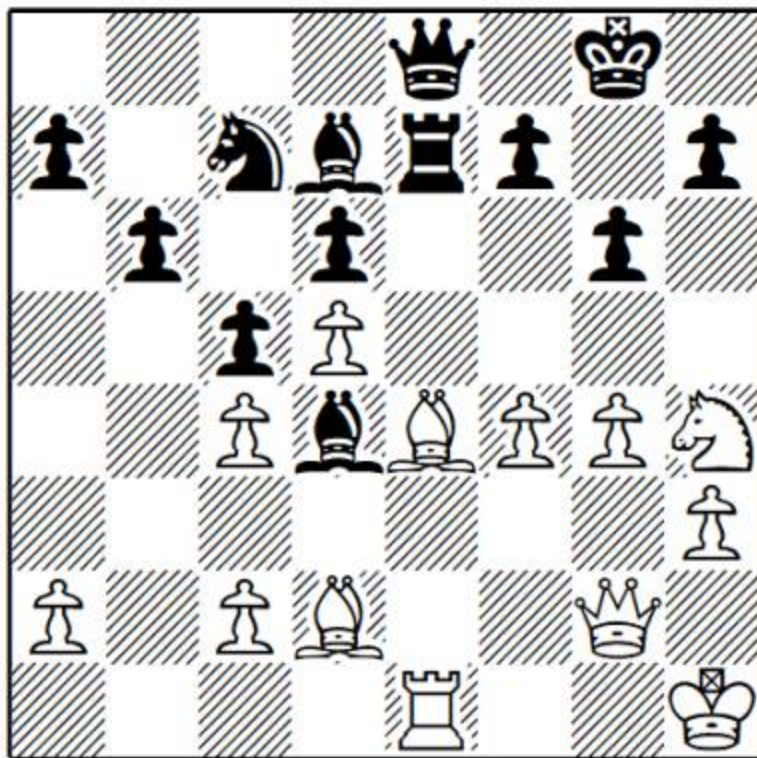
White is in full attack mode, but maybe he should consider just backing down with 26 Qa3 a6 27 Nf3.

26 ... Bd4+ 27 Kh1?!

Inaccurate. The correct square for the king is g2.

27 ... Qe8 28 Qg2?

Again, White should abandon his attacking ambitions and accept a slight inferiority with 28 Bd3.



Exercise (planning): Find a forcing way to overextend White.

28 ... Bf6!

Answer: Step 1: Force White into playing g4-g5.

29 g5

White's structure is now completely overextended.

29 ... Bd4 30 Kh2 Bf5!

Step 2: Play the bishop to f5, creating unbearable pressure on the e4 pin.

However, 30 ... b5! 31 c3 Bg7, threatening ... Bf5, was even stronger.

This forces 32 Qh1 bxc4 33 Bf3 Rxe1 34 Qxe1 Qxe1 35 Bxe1 Nb5 36 Be2 Bxc3 37 Bxc3 Nxc3 38 Bxc4, when White is a pawn down and completely busted in the ending.

31 Bxf5 Rxe1 32 Bd7

32 Bxe1 Qxe1 33 Nf3 Qc1 34 Bd3 Qxf4+ is lost for White.

32 ... Bg1+!

This allows Black to later recapture on e1 with check.

33 Kg3

Not 33 Qxg1? Re2+ 34 Kg3 Qxd7 and White can resign.

33 ... Qe2!

Threatening ... Qxg2+, followed by ... Rb1, when Black remains up a full exchange in the ending. 33 ... Qe7 also wins.

34 Bxe1 Qxe1+ 35 Kg4 0-1

Since 35 ... Bf2! 36 Nf3 Qe2 37 a4 Qxc2 is totally hopeless for White.

Chapter Six

The Three Knights Petroff

In this version White simply defends the e4-pawn with 3 Nc3, attempting to sidestep the Petroff by entering the Four Knights Game. If you know and are comfortable with the Four Knights, then by all means continue 3 ... Nc6. This chapter is for Petroff aficionados who insist on remaining within their realm. White often gets a mild edge, but one that is usually impossible to milk into a full point.

Game 56

Y.Bacallao Alonso-L.Dominguez Perez

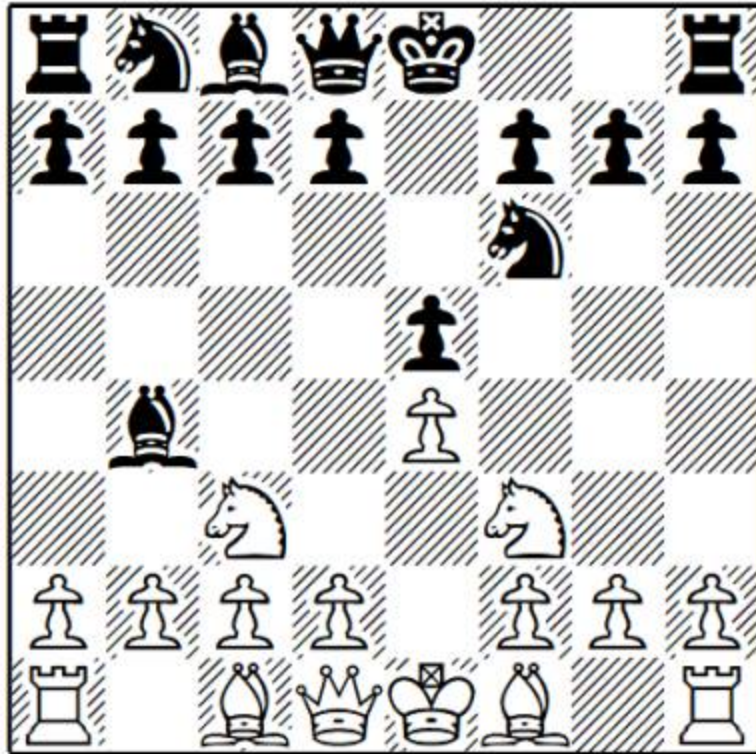
Cuban Championship, Matanzas 2016

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nc3

3 d3 d5 is reversed Philidor. Here is an example of how Black can play: 4 Nbd2 Nc6 5 Be2 Bc5 6 0-0 0-0 7 c3 a5 (preventing b2-b4) 8 b3 Re8 9 a3 d4 10 c4 with equal chances. A.Dragojlovic-A.Savanovic, Venice 2018, continued 10 ... Nd7 11 Kh1 Be7 12 Ng1 Nc5 13 g3 f5! and Black stood clearly better.

3 ... Bb4

When you have played only one set of openings in your entire chess life, how do you know if you like it or not, since you have nothing to compare it to? As mentioned above, this chapter is for Petroff players who do not want to get embroiled in the Four Knights Game after 3 ... Nc6.



4 Nxe5 0-0 5 Nd3

In the next game we consider 5 Be2, which can easily transpose.

5 ... Bxc3

Black gives up the bishop pair to regain the pawn. As has been emphasized consistently in this book, and just to reinforce it, *don't be afraid to hand your opponent the bishop pair if the structure is either symmetrical or near symmetrical*. As long as there are no opposing wing pawn majorities, it's an acceptable imbalance.

6 dxc3 Nxe4 7 Be2

7 Nf4 prevents ... d7-d5, which isn't something Black necessarily wants to play anyway, since it allows White to open the game with c3-c4. Play can continue 7 ... Re8 8 Be2 d6 9 0-0 Nd7 10 Be3 Ndf6 11 Re1 b6!?! (another example of queenside fianchettoing in the Petroff; 11 ... Bf5 also looks about even) 12 c4 Bb7 13 Bf3 Qd7 14 Qd3 was R.Fridman-A.Yusupov, Dutch League 2011. Black looks fine after 14 ... Nc5! 15 Bxc5 Bxf3 16 Be3 Be4.

7 ... d6 8 0-0 Nd7

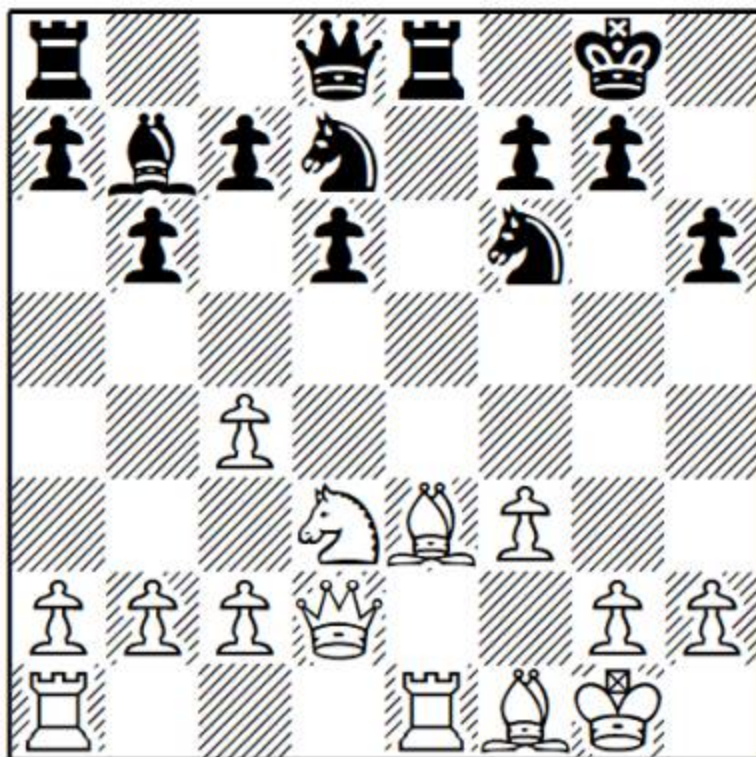
As in the previous chapter, d7 is the most flexible square for the b8-knight.

9 Re1 Re8 10 Bf1 h6

Preventing Bg5.

10 ... b6 is another reliable equalizer, after which White was unable to win a single game from in my database; for example, 11 f3 Nef6 12 Bg5 h6 13 Bh4 Rxe1 14 Qxe1 Bb7 15 c4 was M.Kobalia-Bu Xiangzhi, Chinese Team Championship 2013, when 15 ... Nf8, intending ... Ng6, is a complete equalizer.

11 Be3 b6 12 f3 Nef6 13 Qd2 Bb7 14 c4



On paper White looks better with the bishop pair and a slightly central space edge. In the real world White's bishops fall flat in the dull structural symmetry.

14 ... Ne5

Exchanges invariably help Black, although there is a little potential danger in creating opposing wing pawn majorities.

15 Nxe5 dxe5

15 ... Rxe5?! 16 Bd4 looks slightly better for White.

16 Qxd8 Raxd8 17 h3

If 17 c5, with the idea of straightening out his queenside majority, Black gets sufficient counterplay with 17 ... e4! 18 fxe4 Rxe4 19 Bd3 Re7 20 cxb6 cxb6 21 Bf2 Rde8 22 Rxe7 Rxe7, when White can't make anything of the bishop pair.

17 ... c5! 18 a3

Preparing b2-b4. The more violent interpretation 18 b4!? might also be considered.

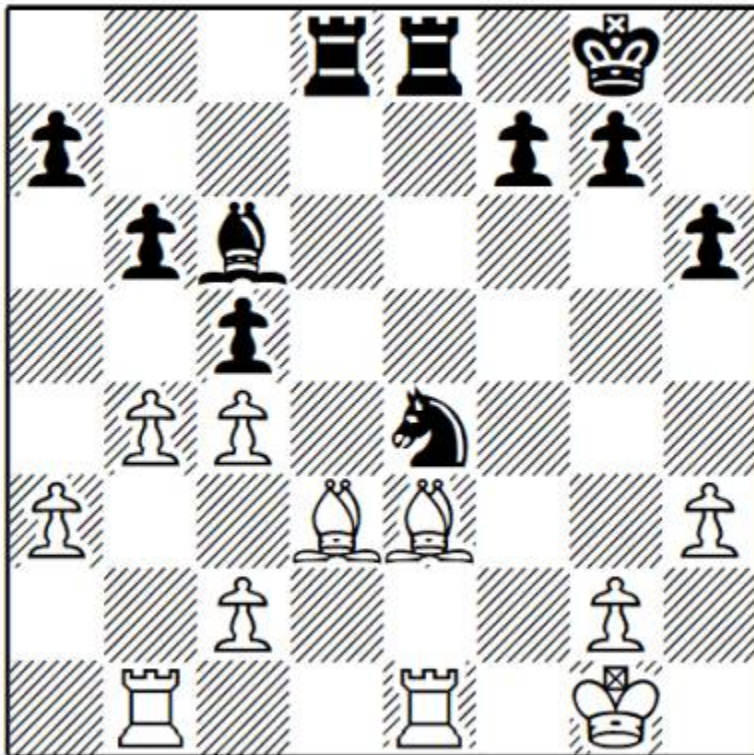
18 ... Nh5

White must watch out for ... Nf4 or ... Ng3.

19 b4 Ng3! 20 Bd3

20 bxc5 bxc5 21 Bxc5 Rc8 22 Bd6 Nxf1 23 Kxf1 Rxc4 24 Rxe5 Rxe5 25 Bxe5 Rxc2 is a likely drawn ending.

20 ... e4! 21 fxe4 Nxe4 22 Rab1 Bc6



The dynamic balance is maintained.

23 b5!?

With this move White has the ideas:

- 1) To gain queenside space with a3-a4-a5 and then exchange on b6.
- 2) If all the rooks are removed, Black's queenside pawns will be endangered if White's dark-squared bishop reaches c7.

23 ... Bb7 24 a4 Re6 25 a5 Rde8 26 Ra1 g5!

There are two points behind this move:

1) This is a reminder to White that Black's kingside majority is fluid and mobile, while White's queenside majority is frozen.

2) Black prevents White's bishop from reaching f4, after which it may head to c7, going for b6.

27 axb6 axb6

Black now must watch out for rook penetration on the a-file.

28 Bc1 f5 29 Bb2 R8e7 30 Ra7 Nd6

30 ... Kf7 is also equal.

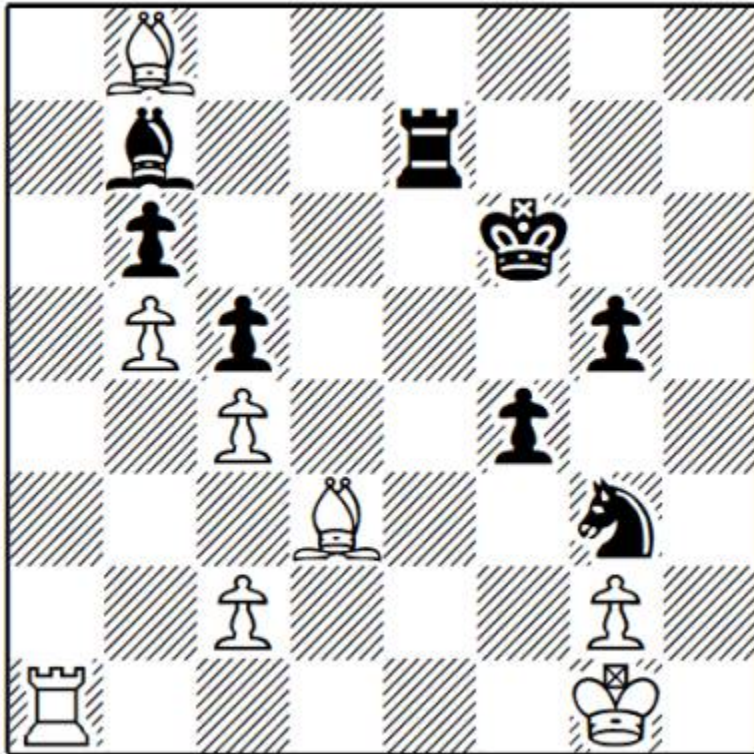
31 Rxe6 Rxe6 32 Kf2 f4

Adhering to two principles: *push your pawn majority as far and as fast as possible*; and *place your pawns on the opposite colour as your remaining bishop*.

33 Ra1 Kf7 34 Bc1 Kf6 35 h4 Ne4+ 36 Kg1 Ng3 37 Bb2+ Kf7 38 Ra7 Re7 39 hxg5 hxg5 40 Kf2 Nh1+ 41 Kg1 Ng3 42 Be5!?

The position is equal, and yet I get the feeling that White incorrectly believed he stood better.

42 ... Ke6 43 Bb8 Kf6 44 Ra1?



This is the moment when White begins to overpress. 44 Kf2 is still equal.

44 ... g4?

Missing 44 ... Be4!, which gives Black a winning position. For example, 45 Kf2 Kf5 46 Ra2 Nh1+ 47 Kf1 Kg4 48 Ba7 Ng3+ 49 Kf2 Re6 50 Rb2 (not 50 Ra6?? Bxd3 51 cxd3 Re2+ 52 Kg1 Re1+ and White can choose how he wants to be mated) 50 ... Nh1+ 51 Kf1 Bh7! 52 Be2+ (forced) 52 ... Kh4 53 Bd3 Ng3+ 54 Kf2 Bf5 55 Ra2 Nh1+ 56 Kf1 Bg4! 57 Ra1 Be2+! 58 Kg1 Bxd3 59 cxd3 Ng3 and if 60 Rd1 Re2 61 Bxb6 then 61 ... f3! 62 gxf3 Kh3 and White gets mated anyway.

45 Ra7?

It's human nature to refuse to react to a slow moving crisis. White refuses to chop Black's f4-pawn and accept a draw. In doing so, White continues to underestimate the danger to his king.

45 Bxf4! Ne2+ 46 Bxe2 Rxe2 47 g3 Rxc2 48 Ra4 is still equal.

45 ... Kg5

Now Black once again has good chances to win.

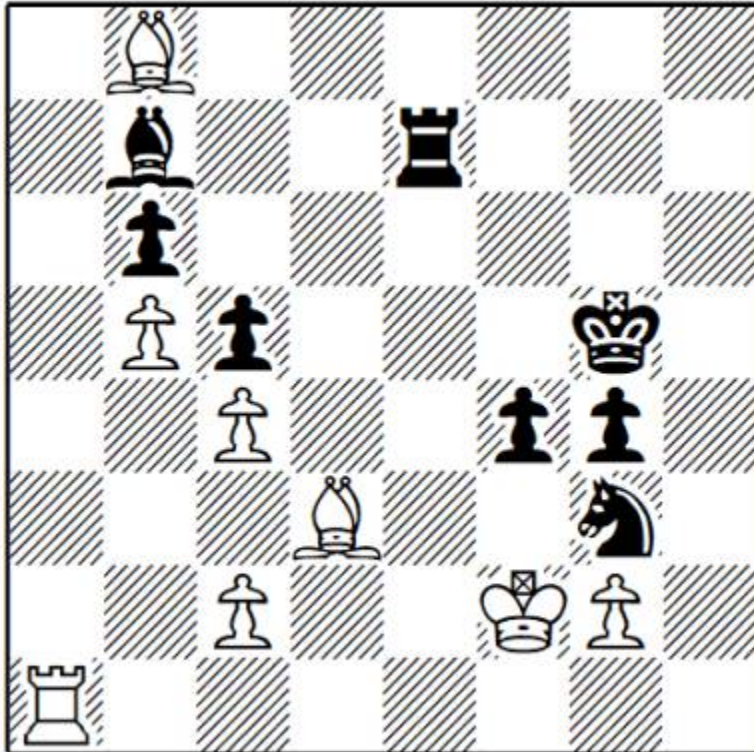
46 Bd6 Rd7 47 Be5 Re7 48 Bd6 Rd7 49 Bb8 Re7 50 Ra1?

Here 50 Bd6 was necessary.

50 ... Ne2+

Even stronger was 50 ... Be4! 51 Re1 Kf5 52 Kf2 Rb7! 53 Bd6 Rd7 54 Bb8 Bxd3, which wins a pawn straight away.

51 Kf1 Ng3+ 52 Kf2



Exercise (planning): Work out a winning plan for Black.

52 ... Nf5?!

Answer: The correct square for the knight is h5, the idea being to follow with, ... g4-g3, ... Kg4, ... f4-f3 and finally ... Nf4, creating a mating net around White's king. For example, 52 ... Nh5! 53 Kg1 g3 54 Bd6 Re6 55 Bc7 f3 56 gxf3 Bxf3 57 Rf1 Kg4 58 Bb8 Nf4 59 Bxf4 Kxf4 and there is no answer to the coming ... Rh6, followed by mate on h1.

53 Ba7??

White walks right back into the mating net by putting his bishop out of play, chasing an irrelevant pawn. 53 Kg1 was forced, so that after 53 ... Nh4 54 g3! fxg3 55 Bxg3 White has good chances to save the game.

53 ... g3+

The g2-pawn is a fixed target and White's king is in grave danger.

54 Kg1 Re6 55 Rf1

55 Bf1 fails to save White. After 55 ... Nd4 56 Bb8 Ne2+ 57 Bxe2 Rxe2, the g2-pawn falls and White can resign.

55 ... Nh4 56 Bb8 Nxe2

Annoyingly for White, Black's knight just happens to cover the f4-pawn.

57 Bc7 Kg4 58 Ra1 f3 0-1

White is mated after 59 Rb1 f2+ 60 Kf1 Re1+ 61 Rxe1 fxe1Q.

Game 57

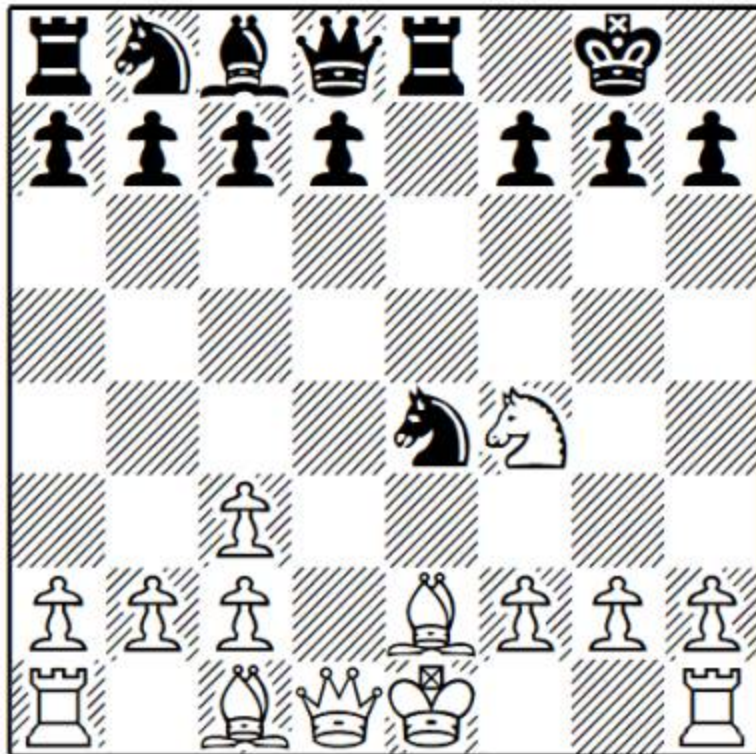
F.Nijboer-J.Piket

Dutch Championship, Amsterdam 1994

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Nxe5 0-0 5 Be2

This is only a cosmetic alteration to the 5 Nd3 of the previous game, since the positions nearly always transpose.

5 ... Re8 6 Nd3 Bxc3 7 dxc3 Nxe4 8 Nf4



There isn't much difference between this move and castling. White's knight regroups to a more aggressive square where it prevents ... d6-d5 (which, as we've seen, Black doesn't necessarily want to play anyway).

8 ... d6 9 0-0 Nd7

Again, d7 is the most flexible square for the knight, since it creates options to transfer later to c5, e5, f8 and f8 and b6.

10 c4

White hopes to squeeze something from his control over d5 and his bishop pair.

10 ... Ndf6

A better square than f8, which feels unnecessarily passive.

11 f3

The e4-knight gets the boot, at the cost of slightly weakening the e3-square.

11 ... Nc5 12 b3 Qe7

Now White must guard against ... g7-g5 tricks, undermining the support for his e2-bishop.

13 Rf2

13 Re1 Qe5 14 Rb1 Bf5 feels a touch contorted for White, since the pin of the e2-bishop is annoying, K.Flaherty-W.Kund, email 2001.

13 ... Qe5 14 Rb1 Bd7

14 ... Bf5 15 Qd2 was E.Najer-S.Mamedyarov, FIDE World Cup, Khanty-Mansiysk 2005. The game looks equal after 15 ... Ne6 16 Nd3 Qd4 17 Bb2 Qb6.

15 Bf1 Ne6

According to the principle: *the side with less space benefits from exchanges.*

16 Nd3

16 Nd5 Nxd5 17 cxd5 Nf4 18 c4 Qf6 was J.Wheeler-H.Abdala, email 2005. White looks just a smidgeon better after 19 Rbb2.

16 ... Qh5

As played in all four database games, but the untried 16 ... Qf5 may be more accurate. The idea is that Black no longer has to worry about Bb2 and Bxf6. After 17 Qd2 h6 18 Re2 a6!, White must watch out for ... b7-b5.

17 Bb2 a5!

Piket is correctly unafraid of the potential damage to his kingside pawn structure. As we have seen in previous games, Black isn't necessarily bothered about Bxf6 which inflicts only optical damage to his structure.

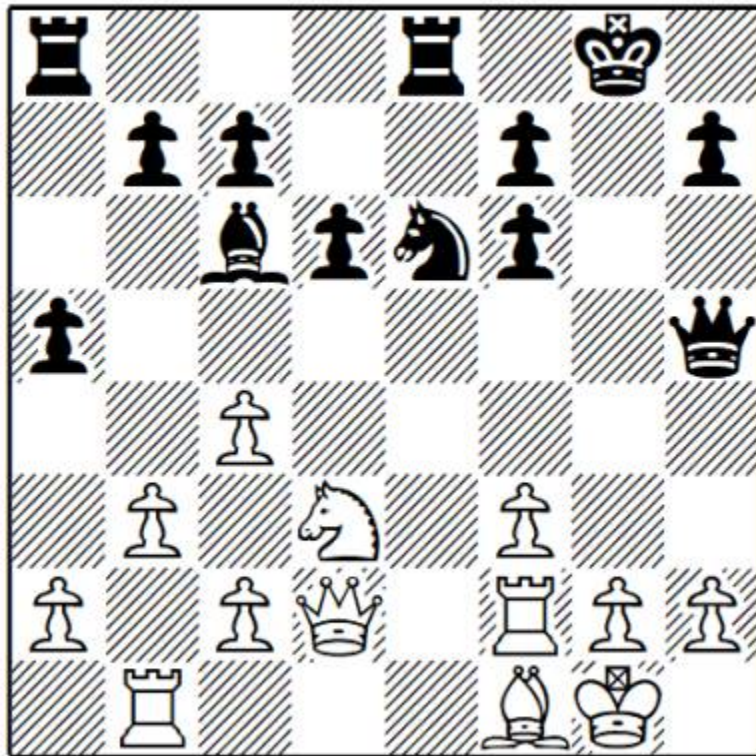
18 Qd2

No one has tried 18 Bxf6 gxf6. Black actually looks perfectly fine after 19 Qd2 Kh8 with play down the open g-file.

18 ... Bc6!? 19 Bxf6

19 Re1 Qg6 was played in three correspondence games. Black looks only slightly worse here, or after 19 ... Nd7.

19 ... gxf6



At first sight it seems as if Black will be destined for a long defensive struggle, but this assessment is incorrect. Black stands just fine here for the following reasons:

- 1) He has promising play on the g-file.
- 2) The dark squares, once White's strength, may become weak.
- 3) Black's "weak" pawns are weak only in appearance, since there is no clear way for White to get at them.

20 Qc3 Qh6 21 Re1 b6 22 f4

This move is aggressive, yet creates a hole on e4. Then again, it is difficult to suggest any other move for White.

22 ... f5

Black isn't seeking emancipation. His last move is designed to clamp on the e4-square.

23 Re3 Nf8!

The knight is effectively transferred to g6, where it keeps Black's king safe by gumming up the g-file, and also applies pressure to White's f4-pawn.

24 Rfe2

After 24 Rg3+ Ng6 25 Qf6 Be4, if anyone stands better, it is Black.

24 ... Re6! 25 Rg3+!?

Black's "weakened" king is an optical illusion and White may actually stand worse now. It's psychologically difficult to opt for a continuation such as 25 Rxe6 Nxe6! 26 g3 Be4 27 Bg2 Qg6, where Black is clearly fine.

25 ... Ng6 26 Rg5!?

The problem with a move such as this is that, if White's attack fails, his rook will be badly out of play.

26 ... Rae8 27 Qd2?!

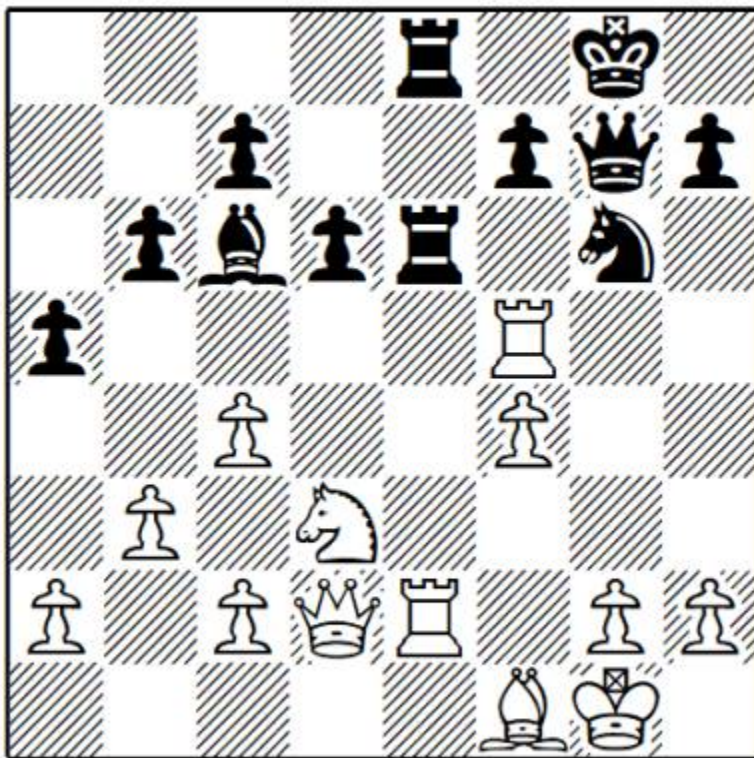
Now White really does stand worse. He should concede there is no attack and play 27 Rxe6 fxe6.

27 ... Qg7!

Piket sets up a trap, and his opponent falls into it.

28 Rxf5??

White can minimize his disadvantage with 28 Rxe6 fxe6 29 c3.



Exercise (combination alert): Until now the game has been rather unremarkable.

With his last move Nijboer gravely underestimated the force of the opposing

current. White's last move loses by force. How?

28 ... Rxe2!

Answer: Step 1: Exchange a pair of rooks.

29 Bxe2 Qd4+!

Step 2: Give a queen check on d4, which forces White's king to a fatal light square.

30 Kf1

30 Kh1 Bxg2+! leads to the same finish.

30 ... Bxg2+!

Step 3: Attraction/knight fork. Lure the white king to g2, after which king and rook get forked on h4.

31 Kxg2 Nh4+ 0-1

Step 4: Knight fork, winning heavy material.

Game 58

A.W.Mohammed-A.Al Saffar

Iraqi Championship, Baghdad 2013

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Bc4

White declines the e5-pawn and continues to develop. Blocking the bishop in with 4 d3 would be feeble, and Black already stands slightly better after 4 ... d5!.

4 ... Bxc3

Castling is Black's main move here, but I prefer chopping the knight immediately. This enables Black to reach a rigid structure for which White's bishop pair is unsuited.

5 dxc3

Capturing away from the centre increases White's lead in development. White now reaches a position similar to the Berlin Defence of the Ruy Lopez, with colours reversed, which should be rather even.

After 5 bxc3 Nxe4 6 Nxe5 d5 7 Qf3 0-0 8 0-0 Be6 9 Bb3 Qd6 10 d4 Nc6 11 Bf4 Nxe5 12 Bxe5 Qc6, White's c3-pawn is in danger and I already

prefer Black.

5 ... d6

Covering the loose e-pawn.

6 Qd3

Others:

a) 6 0-0 Nbd7 7 Re1 0-0 8 a4 Nc5 9 Nd2 a5 10 Qf3!? Bg4 11 Qg3 Be6 12 Bf1?! (White should settle for 12 Bxe6 fxe6) 12 ... Nh5! 13 Qf3 Nf4 14 Nc4? (14 Qd1 Qf6 only gives Black a slight edge) 14 ... f5! and Black had a raging initiative in J.Polgar-V.Ivanchuk, Monte Carlo (blindfold rapid) 1994. This game is annotated in *The Petroff: Move by Move*.

b) 6 Bg5 h6 7 Bh4 Qe7 8 Qd3 Nbd7 9 Nd2 Nc5 10 Qe2 Bd7 11 0-0-0 a6! 12 f3 b5 and Black's chances are no worse, K.Krupa-L.Twardowski, Poznan 1996.

6 ... Be6!?

The principle here is: *deprive your opponent of the bishop pair via an exchange*. This is in effect a pawn sacrifice, since it allows White a queen check on b5, followed by Qxb7.

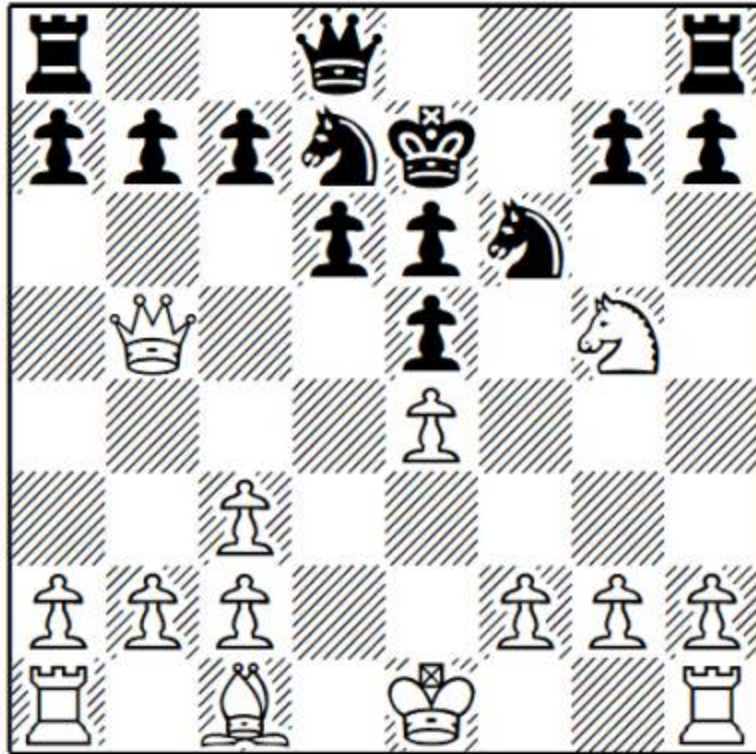
7 Bxe6 fxe6 8 Qb5+!?

The pig approaches the trough. Going after b7 is risky since White falls behind in development. 8 Be3 feels more sensible, when chances are even after 8 ... 0-0 9 0-0-0, as in B.Jovanovic-P.Keevil, email 2010.

8 ... Nbd7 9 Ng5

Black's gesture of irreverence is casually brushed aside. White thinks better of chopping b7 and perhaps wisely so, since after 9 Qxb7!? 0-0 10 Qc6 Rb8 11 Qc4 d5 12 exd5 exd5 13 Qe2 Qe8 14 0-0 c5, Black has enormous compensation for the pawn with a giant centre, development lead and a potential for a kingside attack.

9 ... Ke7!?



The aggressive choice. Black senses that his king isn't in real danger on e7, though his decision still looks risky. Alternatively, he can insist on a pawn sacrifice with 9 ... Qe7!? 10 Qxb7 0-0 11 f3 Nc5 12 Qb5 Rab8 13 Qe2 d5 with good compensation.

10 Qc4

Threatening mate. If 10 Qxb7 Rb8 11 Qa6 h6 12 Nf3 Nxe4 is a good position for Black.

10 ... Nc5!?

This is risky too, since the defender of e6 can easily be dislodged with b2-b4.

Others:

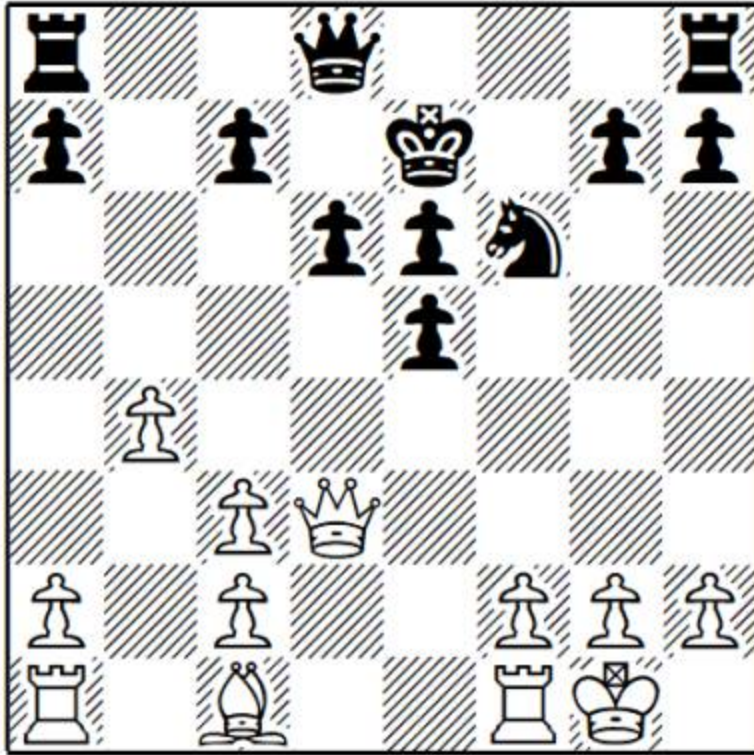
a) 10 ... d5!? 11 exd5 exd5 12 Qb4+ c5 13 Qxb7 Qb6! 14 Qxb6 axb6, when Black's giant centre offers full compensation for the pawn, even with queens off the board.

b) 10 ... Nf8?! 11 f4! looks tough for Black.

11 b4! b5!

The only move. 11 ... h6?! 12 bxc5 hxg5 13 Bxg5 leaves Black a pawn down with a bad position.

12 Qxb5 Ncxe4 13 Nxe4 Nxe4 14 Qd3 Nf6 15 0-0



At first glance it appears Black's king may be in danger in the middle, but this is not so since it can slip away and castle by hand with ... Rf8, ... Kf7 and ... Kg8. In any case, White has no good way to open the centre since f2-f4 can be met by ... e5-e4.

15 ... Rf8 16 a4 Kf7 17 Bg5 Kg8 18 a5 Qd7 19 Bxf6!?

White is worried that Black's knight may actually be the superior minor piece.

19 ... gxf6!

Better than the recapture with the rook, since it both strengthens Black's centre and opens the g-file for a potential counterattack against White's king

20 c4

White hopes to make something of his queenside space.

20 ... Qc6 21 f4

The question now arises: whose king is less secure?

21 ... Kh8 22 fxe5 dxe5!

The game turns into a fight between White's queenside majority and Black's central one. If 22 ... fxe5 23 Rxf8+ Rxf8 24 c3 Rf6, White looks better.

23 c5 Rad8 24 Qe3 Rg8

Threatening mate on g2.

25 Qf3?!

After a queen exchange a sense of need consumes White's position. He was better off keeping queens on the board with 25 g3! Rg6 26 Rad1 Rdg8 27 Rfe1. White looks better here as 27 ... h5 can be met by 28 Qe4!.

25 ... Qxf3 26 Rxf3 f5

Now Black's central majority is the more dangerous.

27 Re1 e4 28 Rfe3 c6!

When ... a7-a6 is played, it will freeze White's queenside majority.

29 g3

White's game may no longer be salvageable. 29 a6! looks more accurate.

29 ... Kg7

Black's king prepares to walk up to e5.

30 c4 Rd4 31 Rc1 Kf6 32 b5 a6!?

After 32 ... Ke5! 33 Rb3 Rd3 34 Rcb1 Kd4 35 b6 Rxb3 36 Rxb3 a6, the c5-pawn falls and White is in deep trouble.

33 b6 Rg7?!

Better is 33 ... f4! 34 Rb3 f3 35 b7 Rb8 36 Rc2 Ke5 37 Kf2 Rd1 38 Ke3 Re1+ 39 Kf2 Rh1 40 Ke3 Ra1 41 Rcb2 Rxa5 42 Rb6 Rxc5 43 Rxa6 Rxc4, and if White wins a rook with 44 Ra8?? he loses after 44 ... Rxb7 45 Rxb7 Rc2! 46 Ra5+ c5, since the only way to prevent mate on e2 is to hand over a rook himself.

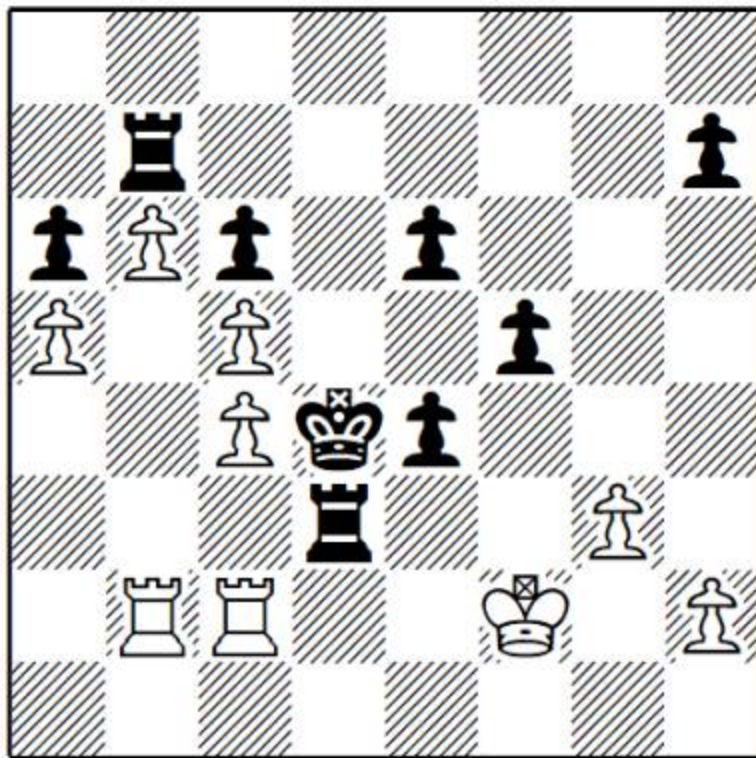
34 Rb3?!

White has better chances with 34 Kf1! Ke5 35 Ke1!, although even here it looks a tall order to save the game.

34 ... Rb7

Black's b7-rook is horribly passive and has the feel of a person standing on the outside, looking in. Yet White is in deep trouble, mainly since there is no way to stop Black's king from eventually moving to d4 and then chopping the c5-pawn.

35 Rb2 Rd3 36 Rcc2 Ke5 37 Kf2 Kd4



It becomes obvious that Black has taken complete control and that White's prospects dim with each passing move.

38 h4 e5

All Black needs is to activate his central pawn majority.

39 Kg2 f4 40 gxf4 exf4 41 Rd2 f3+ 42 Kg3 Ke3

Simpler is 42 ... Rxd2! 43 Rxd2+ Ke3 44 Rd1 Rg7+ 45 Kh2 f2 46 Rb1 Ke2, winning.

43 Rf2 Rc3 44 Rbc2 Rxc2 45 Rxc2 Rg7+ 46 Kh2 f2 47 Rc1 Kf3 48 Rb1 Rb7

Quicker is 48 ... Rg2+! 49 Kh3 (or 49 Kh1 Rg4) 49 ... Rg1 with mate to follow.

49 h5 e3 50 h6 e2 51 Rb3+ Ke4 0-1

Index of Complete Games

[Adams.Mi-Anand.V, Sofia 2005](#)

[Albrecht.M-Tropf.P, Email 2013](#)

[Anand.V-Caruana.F, Stavanger 2018](#)

[Anand.V-Leko.P, Man + Computer, \(rapid\) Leon 2001](#)

[Andersson.U-Bang.E, NBC Millennium email 1999](#)

[Bacallao Alonso.Y-Dominguez Perez.L, Cuban Championship, Matanzas 2016](#)

[Berg.Em-Karpov.An, Tallinn \(rapid\) 2006](#)

[Berndt.S-Fressinet.L, German Bundesliga 2002](#)

[Carlsen.Ma-Caruana.F, Sinquefield Cup, St. Louis 2018](#)

[Carlsen.Ma-Caruana.F, World Championship \(Game 6\), London 2018](#)

[Carlsen.Ma-Caruana.F, World Championship \(Game 11\), London 2018](#)

[Cooper.R-Pecis.G, ICCF email 2013](#)

[De Silva.D-Noire.E, IECG email 2007](#)

[Dominguez Perez.L-Yu Yangyi, PRO League, chess.com \(rapid\) 2018](#)

[Durarbayli.V-Dragun.K, PRO League, chess.com \(rapid\) 2017](#)

[Eljanov.P-Vallejo Pons.F, FIDE Grand Prix, Sharjah 2017](#)

[Fischer.D-Röckendorf.P, Email 2011](#)

[Gashimov.V-Illescas Cordoba.M, Barcelona 2007](#)

[Hansen.Er-Erenburg.S, PRO League, chess.com \(rapid\) 2018](#)

[Hofer.R-Cipka.I, ICCF email 2007](#)

[Hübner.R-Kramnik.V, Frankfurt \(rapid\) 1996](#)

[Ivanchuk.V-Li Chao, Huaian \(rapid\) 2016](#)

[Kanarek.M-Kuzubov.Y, European Championship, Minsk 2017](#)

[Karjakin.S-Caruana.F, Leuven \(rapid\) 2018](#)

[Khachiyan.M-So.W, PRO League, chess.com 2017](#)

[Kharlov.A-Kritz.L, European Championship, Warsaw 2005](#)

[Kotter.R-Yusupov.A, German Bundesliga 2016](#)

[Kovalev.V-Yu Yangyi, World Team Championship, Khanty-Mansiysk 2017](#)

[Lautier.J-Gelfand.B, FIDE World Championship, Las Vegas 1999](#)

[Laznicka.V-Shirov.A, Pamplona 2006](#)

[Leko.P-Anand.V, Monte Carlo \(rapid\) 2005](#)

[Leko.P-Anand.V, FIDE World Championship, San Luis 2005](#)
[McShane.L-Fridman.D, European Rapid Championship, Katowice 2017](#)
[McShane.L-Jobava.Ba, World Rapid Championship, Riyadh 2017](#)
[Mohammed.A.W-Al Saffar.A, Iraqi Championship, Baghdad 2013](#)
[Morozevich.A-Karpov.An, Prague \(rapid\) 2002](#)
[Morozevich.A-Topalov.V, Dortmund 2001](#)
[Movsesian.S-Bu Xiangzhi, World Team Championship, Tsaghkadzor 2015](#)
[Nedev.T-Gustafsson.J, European Cup, Kallithea 2002](#)
[Nijboer.F-Piket.J, Dutch Championship, Amsterdam 1994](#)
[Palac.M-Jovanic.O, Croatian Championship, Zagreb 2004](#)
[Palchun.G-Bocharov.I, Russian Team Championship 2018](#)
[Pirs.M-Kunzelmann.F, ICCF email 2012](#)
[Predke.A-Fedoseev.VI, Moscow 2017](#)
[Quesada Perez.Y-Dominguez Perez.L, Cuban Championship, Matanzas 2016](#)
[Rapport.R-Wei Yi, Wijk aan Zee 2017](#)
[Savic.M-Ivanovic.B, Sozina 2004](#)
[Sethuraman.S.P-Wang Yue, Asian Cup, Abu Dhabi 2016](#)
[Shirov.A-Karpov.An, Prague \(rapid\) 2002](#)
[Short.N-Karpov.An, Russia-Rest of the World, Moscow \(rapid\) 2002](#)
[Spitz.P-Copar.A, ICCF email 2011](#)
[Timofeev.A-Wang Yue, China-Russia match, Ningbo \(rapid\) 2010](#)
[Turgut.T-Moll.R, ICCF email 2013](#)
[Upton.T-Bayram.Y, Moscow Olympiad 1994](#)
[Vallejo Pons.F-Ponomariov.R, Leon \(rapid\) 2003](#)
[Vitiugov.N-Caruana.F, Karlsruhe/Baden-Baden 2018](#)
[Watson.W-Rozentalis.E, Mondorf 1991](#)
[Yaroshenko.Y-Kovac.S, ICCF email 2013](#)