EVERYBODY FEARS RAYMOND
Raymond Song stars in both Doeberl and Sydney International Open

CARLSEN SHINES IN APRIL SUN
Highlights from Shamkir and the Grenke Chess Classic

Bad Chess Puns
IM Trevor Tao

Corner Studies
IM Junta Ikeda

Smith Morra Gambit
GM Moulthun Ly
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Welcome to the June edition of 50 Moves!

In this issue GM Ian Rogers recaps the events from the Gashimov Memorial in Shamkir as well as Grenke Chess Classic where Magnus Carlsen continues his spectacular form.

I will go over one of my favourite gambit against the Sicilian, the Smith-Morra. While IM Junta Ikeda presents six studies on the theme of corners and IM Trevor Tao give us a few more chess puns to solve.

We hope you enjoy this issue.

GM Moulthun Ly
Founder and Editor
50 Moves
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Attacking Chess!

Attacking is something that all players want to perfect. It makes a lot of sense because delivering a checkmate is the ultimate goal of the game. Surprisingly, not many chess players spend time working on the attacking skills. They work on solving tactics, studying openings, drilling endgames but not on “how to attack your opponent to win games”. It sounds contradictory, but it is very true for most club players.

This course includes a powerful toolkit on how to conduct strong and vicious attacks against opponents of any level. We are very delighted to finally bring you a universal system of attack that helped IM Ostrovskiy and IM Shen at beating many strong and very strong opponents.

1.B3 BASH!

Wouldn’t it be great to play the opening that you know well and let your opponent do all the “struggling”?

What if I told you that you could add this kind of weapon to your repertoire in a matter of DAYS not weeks or months?

Introducing the secret weapon for white – the Complete Repertoire with 1.b3
The theme in this issue is a new one for this column—corners! Usually, we focus on the central squares in chess because they are more useful than the corner squares—going to the corners, or controlling the corners doesn’t seem important. But in studies, where we often see the beauty of paradox, as well as unintuitive yet harmonious constructions and ideas, the corners can take centre stage. In these six studies, where the stipulation is for White to move and win in all of them, one or more corners of the board—a1, a8, h1 and h8 will be a key to the composition, whether it be moving a piece there, aiming a piece there, or controlling those squares.

We start off with a couple of light works—in #1 by Bianchetti, we see the kings and rooks all lined up on the a1-h8 long diagonal, with the kings in the corners—how can White force a win? #2 by Fritz focuses on the other two corners—White has pieces on the top left corner, but Black is about to promote on h1! #3 by Guljajaev also sees pieces in multiple corners—can you find the precise path to victory? The starting position is a little bizarre in Gurgenidze’s #4, and White’s king is in check—you’ll have to find several strong moves in a row. The complexity jumps up for the last two studies—the elegant #5 by Chekhover was featured in this column over four years ago, but it is impossible to leave out when the theme is corners. Finally, #6 sees a horde of minor pieces en prise, with White having the two bishops, Black having two knights and a passed pawn—this one is a tough nut to crack, as you’ll have to find the sequence with best moves from both sides. Please keep in mind when solving this one, that two bishops vs. knight is considered a theoretical win, so letting Black escape into that balance is not a failure.

In your next chess game, go back to controlling the centre, but for these six studies—enjoy the view from the four corners of the 64 squares.
1. Bianchetti, R.  
L’Italia Schacchistica, 1924

2. Fritz, J.  
Svobodne Slovo, 1961

3. Guljajev, A. - 3rd Honourable Mention  
Zadatschy & Etudjy, 1929

4. Gurgenidze, D. - Special Commendation  
Gusev JT, 1994

5. Chekhover, V. - 2nd Prize  
Shakhmaty v SSSR, 1937

6. N. Reznov & S. Tkachenko - 1st Prize  
Dvoretsky ’60’ JT, 2007
It is now a decade since Magnus Carlsen vaulted into the world number one position by winning the Nanjing tournament with an incredible two and a half point margin over the then top dog Veselin Topalov.

Since then Carlsen has maintained the top position (apart from two months at the end of 2010 when Anand briefly took over) but rarely has he dominated the opposition the way he did as a teenager. His struggle to retain the World Championship title against both Sergey Karjakin in 2016 and Fabiano Caruana in 2018, also suggested a giant on the decline.

However after Carlsen's stunning feats in April 2019 not only has Carlsen shown that he is still capable of demolishing the world's best but he has also reignited the debate about whether he should be admitted into the debate about who is the greatest player of all time.

In years past, the argument was always between Bobby Fischer and Garry Kasparov: Fischer for the margin between him and the rest of the world, Kasparov for the longevity of his time at the top.

Carlsen has arguments in his favour when up against either of those two legendary giants.

The margin between Carlsen and the rest is still little more than half of the 100+ points which Fischer established at his peak, and Fischer can probably also still lay claim to the highest ever rating once inflation is taken into account. (Inflation, as opposed to rising ratings caused by players' increased knowledge and strength, is generally estimated at around 125 points since the Elo system was adopted internationally in 1970.)

However, Carlsen has already stayed at the top longer than Fischer, while creating a 50+ point buffer between himself and the rest in a number of different years.

Kasparov had five successful world title defences; Carlsen has already had three. Kasparov won more super-tournaments than Carlsen has done so far, but Carlsen tests himself far more often. During most of his reign as World Champion Kasparov averaged only two super-tournaments per year and indeed in the 1980s went for two and a half years without competing in even one. Carlsen plays around four per year, giving less time for preparation for each event. Yet, apart from the Optiebeurs tournament in Amsterdam 1988, Kasparov rarely dominated his opposition the way Carlsen has done recently. (Fischer, like Alekhine, created huge margins of victory with some frequency.)

So Carlsen is probably still some way behind Fischer and Kasparov as the GOAT, but after a few more years of Carlsen at the top, a serious argument will be able to be made for the Norwegian.
Gashimov Memorial was Carlsen’s first outing since his narrow victory in Wijk aan Zee in January. The World Champion had won in Shamkir at his previous three previous attempts and, despite the presence of five other Top 10 opponents, was hot favourite again.

Carlsen’s play in the first six rounds was enough to keep him in the lead, but in the final three rounds he accelerated away with a series of stunning games which left his opponents bemused.

His pawn sacrifices against Anish Giri and Karjakin were for such vague long term compensation that observers compared his play to that of AlphaZero, Deep Mind’s self-learning computer which has established new standards for excellence in attacking play (and general play).

Carlsen himself said the Shamkir tournament was “one of the best tournaments I’ve ever played, both in terms of performance and also the quality of the games.”

1.c4 e5 2. Nc3 f6 3. f3 c6 4.g3 d5 5.cxd5 Qx d5 6. g2 Qc5
Currently Black’s most reliable – and trendy – system against the English Opening.

7. O-O O-O 8.d3 h6!? Varying from 8...e8 which Caruana used twice against Carlsen in their world title match in London.

9. Qxd5 9. N.d2 is more usual.

9... Qxd5 10.a3 a5 11. d2 e6 12. c1 e7 13. c3 d4

14.e3 “...d4 is very normal in these positions,” said Carlsen, “and usually when there are no knights on the board it’s very, very dry. [However] in this case I feel like I’m getting some quick play and at least practically it feels easier to play [with White].”

14... Qf3+ 15. Qxf3 Qd6
“In hindsight, counterproductive,” said Giri. “I was expecting that White would go for the d4 push and try to use his advantage in development but had I known that he would [go for f4], maybe I would start with 15...c6 16. h5 e8 and if 17.d4 Qd6. I didn’t expect f4 to be a particularly dangerous plan.”

16. h5 c6
“You could go 16...f5 and after 17.f4 exf4 18.exf4 c6, maybe it’s not so much,” said Carlsen. Giri concurred, saying, “the structure is OK for me and if I get ...e6 I will be fine.”
Then Carlsen discovered 19. fe1 f7 20. e2 d7 21. f2 when, “it should be possible to solve [Black’s problems] but it is not pleasant.”
“Yes, I am slightly uncoordinated here,” agreed Giri.

17.f4!

17... e5
“It was hard for me to believe it could be difficult with so few pieces,” admitted Giri. “I knew such ideas were possible with knights on the board but without knights?”

Carlsen, Magnus 2845
Giri, Anish 2797
Shamkir Memorial 2019
Carlsen believed that Black should have tried 17...f5 “when I was going to play 18.\(\text{\texttt{h1}}\) Then 18...\(\text{\texttt{d7}}\)
19.\(\text{\texttt{ce1}}\) is not so clear but it is not easy for Black to play.”

18.gxf4!! \(\text{\texttt{xe3+}}\)?!
Carlsen claimed that Black “had no choice here, because after 18...f5 19.\(\text{\texttt{f3}}\) [is too strong].” However Giri pointed out the computer suggestion 18...\(\text{\texttt{h7}}\), admitting, “it didn’t occur to me I thought my position was already very bad.” The players quickly ruled out 19.\(\text{\texttt{f3}}\) because of 19...g6, trapping the queen, and also 19.f5 in view of 19...\(\text{\texttt{xe3+}}\) 20.\(\text{\texttt{h1}}\) \(\text{\texttt{g5}}\).

Giri said that he had assumed 19.\(\text{\texttt{h1}}\) f5 20.\(\text{\texttt{f3}}\) would be terrible, and then refuted Carlsen’s suggestion of 20...g6 (with the idea 21.\(\text{\texttt{h3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{e6}}\)), by pointing out 21.\(\text{\texttt{xh6+!!}}\). Giri challenged the computer’s assessment of equality after 18...\(\text{\texttt{h7}}\), saying, “White has a central pawn majority and the g-file - [I feel he must be better.]”

19.\(\text{\texttt{h1}}\)
“He’s a pawn up,” explained Carlsen, “but it feels like the stakes are higher for him. I am going for mate and he has to survive.”

19...\(\text{\texttt{d8}}\)
“I was hoping to make \(\text{\texttt{xe3+}}\) work
with 19...\e6 20.f5 \d5,“ said Giri, 
“but then I saw that 21.\x5cxd5 \cxd5 22.\c1 was winning by force.” Giri 
had seen the variation 22...
\g5
Analysis Position 
23.\g1!! when Black finishes in a 
desperate endgame after 23...\xh5 24.\xg7+ \h8 25.\xf7+ \g8 26.\g7+ \h8 27.\g5+, etc.

20.\c1 \c5
On 20...\xd3 21.f5 \c4 22.\xg7! launches a winning attack.

21.f5
Now Black's helplessness becomes 
clear as White is free to point every 
piece at the Black king. “I don’t 
think I have any chances,” said Giri. 
“I am just mated.”

21...\f8 22.\e4 \d5 23.\f3

23...\b5
“If 23...\g6 you have 24.f\xg6! \xg3! 25.\xf7+ \h8 and unfortunately 
now 26.\g1!! and it is over,” ex-
plained Giri.

24.\g1 \a7 25.\f6 \g6

26.\h3
"Extremely prosaic", admitted 
Carlsen, who effectively forces a 
winning endgame. 26.\g6+! \xg6 27.\xg6+ \g7 28.\c3! followed 
by 29.f6, was the stylish way to end 
the game.

26...\d6
“If I make a waiting move with 26... 
b4 then 27.\f1! \g5 28.\h3! is the 
killer,” said Giri.

27.\h4! \xf6
Sad but necessary as otherwise 
28.f\xg6 will decide.

28.\xf6 \e7 29.\xc6 \xc6 30.\xc6
The rest is simple technique for 
Carlsen, aided by Giri's need to 
make 10 moves in under a minute.

30...\g7 31.\xf6 \g6 32.d4 \a4 33.d5 \b4 34.\e8 \g5 35.\h4 
\xh4 36.\xg6+ \h7 37.\c6 
\g4 38.\f4 \g7 1-0

Repeating the opening which 
brought him success in his 2018 
world title match. “Compared to 
2014, I feel like I know more and 
I can do more and I have more 
options to use, a wider array of 
weapons than I did back then,” said 
Carlsen.

6.\d5 \d6 7.\d5
“People keep playing 7.\d5 against 
me and I’m always happy to see 
it because it leads to interesting 
chess!,” said a smiling Carlsen. 
7...\xd5 8.\xd5 \e7 “Last time 
against Navara I played 8...\b8 
but I decided to switch it up here,” 
said Carlsen. “I think he was a bit 
surprised by my choice.”

9.\c4 \g6 10.\a4
Following Caruana's recipe from 
last November's world title match. 
Quiet development with 10.\e2 
or 10.\d3 has been shown to offer 
White little.
“Obviously with the tournament situation I didn’t mind a draw,” said Carlsen. “Sergey needed to win, so he played riskily, which allowed me to use my strengths in an open battle. In World Championships I’ve [had] the chance to do that less often; when people take more risks it becomes more open and it’s good for me.”

14.h4
14. xe3 is the other main line.

14...h5 15. g5 b8! 16. e2 a6 17. c3 c7
The first new move - a recent computer v computer game had continued 17... f4.

18.g3 e7 19. e3 e4 20.O-O O-O!

“I think psychology is definitely a huge part of the game,” explained Carlsen after the game. “This particular opening is a typical case. If you turn on the computer early on it will say that White is better but it doesn’t say whether the position is easier to play for White or Black. Once he got out of the opening he [may be] a pawn up but it feels like the stakes are higher for him. I am going for mate and he has to survive.”

21. xh5
Played after 26 minutes thought. There is logic to at least having some material compensation for Black’s coming attack, since 21. d4 e5 22. ad1 f3+ 23. xf3 exf3 could become very ugly for White.

21... e5 22. e2 d7
“There were a lot of alternatives, but I quite liked this one because I am setting up ... g4.”

23. a4 c8 24.c5?! “Not unreasonable,” said Carlsen, but 24. d1! was a better way to give up the c4 pawn.

24...dxc5
“I was thinking about 24... f3+,” said Carlsen, “but after something like 25. xf3 exf3 26. f4 h3 27. cxd6 xd6! 28. xf3! xf1 29. xf1, he would get good compensation for the exchange. I wanted to keep the initiative.”

25. xe4 c4!

“I could also play 25...b5 forcing him to go into this pin with 26. c2. However, I wasn’t so sure,” admitted Carlsen.

26. c3?
“26. c3 was a mistake; he just underestimated my plan,” explained Carlsen. “He should have definitely gone for 26. c2 It looks strange to pin himself, but I don’t think there was a better choice. Then I will play 26... e8 and ... f8 or ... c5. I thought I had excellent compensation, but it’s still a tense position.”

26...b5!
“As far as I can judge by his body language he had resigned [himself] to a draw and expected 26... d3 27. cxd3 f3+ 28. g2 xh4+ 29. gh4 g4+ and perpetual check,” explained Carlsen. “As far as I could see I could not achieve anything better there but 27...b4 was so attractive I thought I should play on.”

27. d1 b4 28. a4
“Very, very ugly,” said Carlsen, “because it’s quite likely that this knight will never move again – that’s what happened in the game! I thought he could try 28... d6 but I play 28... d8 29...
wise he has to try 29...d5 but then 29...xd6 30.b6 c6 31.xa8 h3 and it looks like I am doing very well, e.g. 32.f3 g4 33.f2 xa8 should be great.) 29...xd1 30.axd1 d3 and probably [the queen sacrifice] is insufficient.”

28.e4 29.d4 f5

30.f4?!
“[Now] he is more or less just busted,” said Carlsen. “He’s not
down material, but the difference in strength of the pieces is just too massive. His problem here is 30.f4 f3+ 31.xf3 xf3 32.e3 g4 [and Black is winning].

30.f3 was maybe the best try. I was going to play 30...xf3 31.b6 h5 or maybe 31...f6.”

30...g6! 31.f2 d3 32.h5 f5
Carlsen admitted he was briefly tempted by: 32...xf4 but then shrugged and played the simple
alternative.

33.\(\text{g}4\)
“Now he absolutely had to take on \(d3\),” said Carlsen. “After 33.\(\text{B}xd3\) I have the choice between 33...cxd3 and (33...\(\text{B}xd3\) if 33...cxd3 34.\(\text{Q}e5\) \(\text{B}xe5\) 35.\(\text{fxe5}\) \(\text{Q}xf1\) 36.\(\text{Q}xf1\) I win the exchange but he has at least some hope of getting the knight into play if 33.cxd3) 34.\(\text{Q}e5\) and now probably just 34...\(\text{B}xd3\) 35.\(\text{Q}xe5\) \(\text{B}f6\) 36.\(\text{Q}xf5\) \(\text{B}xf5\) but he can still fight.”

33...\(\text{Q}xg4\) 34.\(\text{Q}xe4\)

34...\(\text{d}6!\)
“Now it is completely lost [for White],” said Carlsen, though Karjakin’s cause was not aided by desperate time trouble as well.

35.\(\text{g}2\) \(\text{ae}8\) 36.\(\text{d}4\) \(\text{hx}5\) 37.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{g}6\) 38.\(\text{h}1\) \(\text{e}4\) 39.\(\text{f}2\) \(\text{fe}8\) 0-1

Karjakin, unable to find a reasonable move to prevent 40...\(\text{e}2\), resigned with 20 seconds left on the clock. “Certainly the last two games [versus Giri and Karjakin] have been fun; I’ve been able to play in an interesting attacking dynamic style and win,” said Carlsen at the post-game press conference. “It’s been a lot of fun – a great ride!”

Grischuk, and Carlsen agreed.

15...\(\text{e}6\) 16.\(\text{e}1\)

16...\(\text{b}5?!\)
“A very big mistake,” said Grischuk, who explained that in a similar position with colours reversed, he knew that \(\text{b}4\) was a normal idea.

17.\(\text{a}3!\) \(\text{xb}3\)
Played, reluctantly, after 27 minutes. “If I play 17...\(\text{a}6\) then you have 18.\(\text{g}5\) or if 17...\(\text{e}7\) 18.a6 followed by \(\text{a}5\) is very strong.”

18.\(\text{xb}3\)
“Now it is clear that White is better and it is very hard to defend,” said Carlsen.

18...\(\text{g}4\) 19.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{d}6\) 20.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{f}8\) 21.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{f}6\) 22.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{a}6\)
23.\(\text{g}2\) \(\text{d}7\) 24.\(\text{c}1\) \(\text{a}7\) 25.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{f}6\) 26.\(\text{h}4\) \(\text{e}8\)
“Here I thought it was possible for Black to [defend with] 26...\(\text{h}5\),” said Carlsen, “but it is still very difficult.”

27.\(\text{h}5\) \(\text{h}6\) 28.\(\text{a}2\)
28...c5!?
‘28...c5 just loses to 29. e3, more or less, but even after other moves it’s difficult, [though perhaps] still defensible,’ said Carlsen.

29. e3! exf4 30. gxf4!
‘I think Magnus played just amazingly well today, because for me this was not clear at all,’ said Grischuk. ‘I suspected it’s bad, but I don’t know, because there are pins, counter-pins, mating nets.’

31. b1 e7 32. f1 f5?
Both players believed this was necessary to gain some freedom, but after 32... b8! White would have strong pressure but nothing clear.

33. xf5 f6 34. f3 d5

35. d2!
‘I thought I should be in trouble, but 35. d2 was a complete surprise for me,’ said Grischuk. ‘Because if not 35. d2 it’s nothing special.’

35... d8
Grischuk used four of his last five minutes on this moves and had only 28 seconds to reach move 40 - with no increment - by the time he made his move. ‘Everything works, said Carlsen, ‘E.g. (35... b8 36. xc5 xe1 37. xd5! e7 and I have 38. e5+! at the end.’)

36. e4 ed7 37. ed1 f6
38. xd7 xd7
38... xd7 39. xd7 xd7 40. b7 b8 41. e4 is also hopeless for Black.

39. d6! 1-0
A week later Carlsen was in Germany meeting an almost entirely new bunch of top players. Carlsen’s predecessor as World Champion, Viswanathan Anand, followed him to Karlsruhe, while top four players Giri and Ding Liren headed to a new super-tournament in Shenzhen, China.

The Grenke tournament is notable for its old fashioned conceit in being split between two cities. The first four rounds are played in Karlsruhe, alongside a massive open tournament which this year contained more than 2,000 players and also next to Karlsruhe Zoo, which features some lively emus. Then, after a rest day, the players finish the tournament in Baden Baden, home of the legendary 1925 tournament, won by Alexander Alekhine with ‘only’ a 1.5 point margin ahead of Rubinstein, Tartakower, Tarrasch, Reti, Grunfeld, Torre, Nimzowitsch, et al – a field which features the names of close to half the opennings in the Encyclopaedia of Chess Openings.

As in Shamkir, Carlsen had to work exceptionally hard during the first five rounds at the Grenke tournament, with all his games lasting 60 moves or more. Having won his first two games and then drawn three, Carlsen had a number of challengers for the lead until he turned on the accelerators and won his final four games. In all four games the result seemed almost inevitable soon after the middlegame began and in the final two rounds his world class opponents appeared hypnotised and played well below their best.

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 e5 4.c4 c7 5.d3 d6

A perfectly normal position, but now comes...

6.d2
A common manoeuvre, heading for the d5 square via f1 and e3. “The [quiet] opening was an attempt to acknowledge that - at least in calculations - I blundered upwards of a full piece every day here,” said Svidler. “This gives me a chance to get a solid position - but you still have to play it!”

6...f6 7.f1 d7 8.d5 b6 9.xb6 axb6 10.c3 O-O 11.e3 g5 12.O-O h8 13.a3
A new move. “13.a3 is useful,” said Svidler, “because if you play ...e6 I can [save time later by not needing to defend my a pawn].” Anand had previously played the computer’s recommendations, 13.d2, without success against Ivanchuk in 2001.

13...f5
“Unexpected,” admitted Svidler. “There is something of a challenge going on here - [Magnus] keeps giving me bishops against [his] knights.”

14.xf5
After the game Svidler suggested 14.exf5 xe3 15.xe3 as a better try but after 15...d5, “it’s certainly not better [for White],” said Carlsen.
14...\(\text{xc1}\) 15.\(\text{xc1}\) \(\text{xf5}\) 16.\(\text{exf5}\) \(\text{d5}\) 17.\(\text{a2}\)

Both players agreed that 17.\(\text{b3}\) was better here, with Svidler commenting, "Then in many lines \(\text{Bd1-f3}\) would become an option which I did not have in the game. [However], having played \(\text{a3}\) I though I should use the [\(\text{a2}\)] square." "Indeed, if White [ever managed to get a setup with] \(\text{g3}\) and a bishop on \(\text{g2}\) he would be just better," added Carlsen.

17...

Played after another 20 minutes' thought. "This was an attempt to avoid 19.\(\text{ce1}\) \(\text{d6}\) followed by 20...\(\text{af8}\) when it is very comfortable to play for Black," said Svidler. "True," said Carlsen, "but it is only a little better for Black."

19...\(\text{exf4}\) 20.\(\text{g5!}\)

"An imaginative idea," said Svidler, "but I noticed 20...\(\text{f8}\) too late."

20...

"Maybe I could also play 18...\(\text{g6!}\)," said Carlsen, "but I rejected it because of 19.f4 \(\text{exf4}\) 20.\(\text{xf4}\) \(\text{e5}\) 21.\(\text{g3}\) \(\text{xf4}\) 22.\(\text{xf4}\) \(\text{xd3}\) 23.\(\text{e3!}\) and if 23...\(\text{xc1}\) 24.\(\text{e5!!}\). Now I see that it is only two checks and after 24...\(\text{g8}\) 25.\(\text{xd5+ f8}\) maybe [White] has some sort of draw but it is not obvious." "It looks like there is no draw," added Svidler.

19.\(\text{f4?!}\)

22.\(\text{f3?!}\)

"I briefly considered 22.\(\text{h5}\) \(\text{xd3}\) 23.\(\text{ce1}\) and looking at it now I can see that keeping the \(\text{c6 knight out is very important}," said Svidler, upon being told that the computer regarded 22.\(\text{h5}\) as equal. "This is 0.00?" queried Carlsen. "Black is still a pawn up!"

27.\(\text{fe2?!}\)

"I don't even know what 27.\(\text{fe2}\) was about, since it creates a threat [for Black] of ...\(\text{f3}," said a frustrated Svidler. "I should play 27.d4 and then \(\text{b1}.\) Black probably still gives mate but [I am in the game]."

Actually I was planning 27.\(\text{d5}\) but then 27...\(\text{e7}\) 28.\(\text{a8}\) \(\text{xd5}\) just wins a piece!"

27...\(\text{g4}\) 28.\(\text{f2}\)

"My problem is that, when taking on \(\text{b7}\), I thought I could play 28.\(\text{d5}\), but then 28...\(\text{b8}\) is winning a piece."

28...\(\text{h6}\) 29.\(\text{c7}\) 30.\(\text{h3}\)

In a hopeless position, Svidler decides to allow Carlsen to end the game in style.

30...\(\text{gxh3}\) 31.\(\text{g3}\) \(\text{fxg3}\) 32.\(\text{xf6}\) \(\text{h2+}\) 33.\(\text{h1}\) \(\text{g2#}\) 0-1
However Carlsen also created points for himself with his legendary persistence, most notably in a rare $R + B$ v $B + N$ endgame against Paco Vallejo in the second round.

"Opposite-coloured bishops and a rook [v knight] is basically always winning," explained Carlsen "but I had no clue how and I was sure that against good defence it would take more than 50 moves. I actually asked the arbiter how many moves I had, because I thought there are some exceptions where you have 75 moves. When he said it was 50 I thought I had my work cut out for me. I guess you get this once in your life and I’ll probably never get to use [the technique I found] again!"

66...$Rf2+$ 67...$d2$?! 67...$f1$ was a far better try, with the same tactical point as in the previous note, although after 67...$c5+$ 68...$g2$ $f2+$ 69...$h1$ $d6$! (69...$xe2$? 70...$d3$+) 70...$g2$ (70...$g1$ $xe2$) 70...$d3$ Black is closing in on victory.

67...$d8+$ 68...$c2$ $e3$! 69...$f3$

Despite his extra pawn Carlsen had been struggling to make progress but now the Norwegian finds a way to break Meier’s resistance...

56...$d4$+! 57...$b3$ $b1$+! 58...$b2$ 58...$e3$ is the best chance, after which Carlsen can still launch a winning attack with 58...$e4$! 59...$d2$ $e5$! and now White has no defence against the deadly threat of 60...$c4$, e.g. (59...$g4$ 60...$c3$ is not so clear) 60...$b4$ $g4$! 61...$c3$ when Black wins a piece after 61...$c2$+ 62...$b3$ $b4$+ 63...$e3$ $xc4$ 64...$xc4$ $xc3$.

58...$e4$! 0-1

After 58...$e4$ 59...$c3$ $f3$+ wins at least a piece.

Carlsen’s best victory came against his old rival Levon Aronian, the Armenian who, after five years as number two behind Carlsen has in recent times struggled to stay within the top 10. Carlsen has dominated their recent encounters and their game in Baden Baden was no exception.
1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. d4 d5 4. c3 c6 5. e4 dxc4 6. b4 g5 7. xc4 xd4 8. xd4 xc3+ 9. bxc3 a5

10. d2!?
An extraordinary new move in a position already seen in high level games more than 100 times.

10...O-O
Played after nine minutes thought. Aronian was unwilling to risk the move which no doubt caused no one else to try 10. d2 in the past - 10... dx e4. Aronian quickly realised that after 11. g4! x d2 12. x g7 x c4 13. x h8+ e7 14. O-O White has plenty of active prospects against Black’s king, and a well prepared Carlsen was likely to mate him before Carlsen emerged from his preparation.

11. e2 e5 12. b3 c7 13. O-O g4
Black may have done better to prevent d5 by a manoeuvre such as 13... c6, intending 14. f3 e6 when Black should be close to equality.

14. f3 c8 15. d5 xd5 16. exd5 h5

17. c4!
"Objectively this isn’t anything,“ said Carlsen, “but if anyone can try it is White. The [bishop on h5] is not great."

17...d7
17...x c4? loses to 18. fc1

18. fc1 b6
When similar pawn structures arise from the 4.e3 Nimzo-Indian they are generally thought to be good for Black because White’s hanging pawns are blockaded. However, Russian GM Tomashevsky has shown that White’s structure can have its advantages and Carlsen in this game makes an even more convincing case that the White central pawns are far from weak.

19. a4 a5
“It is so natural to answer 19. a4 with 19...a5, that you just do it,” said Carlsen, “yet maybe he shouldn’t. But then, what else? It looks like he shouldn’t be worse at all but it quite quickly became very, very unpleasant.”

20. f2 d6 21. e3 g6

22. d2
At this point clock times were about equal, with both players having about an hour remaining, but now Aronian began burning time on the clock.

“22. d2 is basically just a trick,” admitted Carlsen. “I am hinting at 23. c5 and very much hoping that he will play 22...f6. I don’t want to play 22. b2 [immediately] because after 22...d3 23. d2 g6! he gets counterplay with ...h5.”

22...f6 22...c7
23. b2 c7
"Now 23...f5 is too slow; I can employ my plan of a3 and d2. If he doesn’t have counterplay then it’s unpleasant; his problems are not going away and eventually I am getting something on the queenside."

24. d2
[The point behind] 22... c7 is if I play 24. a3 then after 24... x a3 25. x a3 f7! I don’t have time [for my piece reorganisation],” explained Carlsen. “Normally the endgames will always be unpleasant for him.”

24...c5
[Aronian] criticised 24...c5 after the game,” said Carlsen, “but he had thought for a long time [14 minutes IR] and he just panicked as he couldn’t find a decent plan.”

25. a3 d8 26. c3

Carlsen, Magnus 2845
Aronian, Levon 2763
Grenke Classic 2019
Left:
Anand held a comfortable draw with the Black pieces.

Photo: Maria Emelianova

Left:
Carlsen and Caruana had standout performances while Naiditsch’s high risk taking also paid-off.

Photo: Maria Emelianova
“You look at all the possibilities and you cannot see a way to equalise, so eventually you go for something and it turns out not to be good,” explained Carlsen of Aronian’s decision to look for action after using four of his last 10 minutes on this move. 26...cc8

"I know what my moves are going to be and it's much more difficult for him," said Carlsen. Everywhere you see little problems.”

27...e4?
The final error, played with little more than a minute left on the clock. "It’s very strange," said Carlsen. "Black makes all these natural moves and then you’re somehow stuck. "Maybe he had to try 27...f4 because after 28...xc5 xc5 29...b3 he has some tricks with (If I go 29...b2 first. He cannot defend everything but maybe after 29...cc8 30...b3 wc5+ 31...h1 w2f2 he can create some counterplay.) 29...c2! and if 30...b2 xd5!"

28.fxe4 exf4 29...xc5 xc5
"If 29...xc5+ 30...xc5 and now whichever way he takes back I take the b file and play my king to e3 when it should be very bad [for him],” said Carlsen.

30...xe4 e5 31...ce3 cc8

"Perhaps he was relying on this position, because if I move the knight it is not so clear," said Carlsen. "But [I have] a very clever waiting move."

32...h3!
"If [immediately] 32...c5 w6 33...e6 wxa3 34...xa3 d6 then I have some problems with my c4 pawn," explained Carlsen, though the computers are unimpressed and give White a large advantage after 35...f3! f7 36...g5 g6 37...f4!.

32...c7
Played with 4 seconds to spare. "If he plays the most natural move 32...h6 then 33...c5! d6 34...e6 wxa3 35...xa3 d6 36...g3! is different [to the previous variation,” said Carlsen, and indeed after 36...h7 37...f1 Black is defenceless. Carlsen also mentioned 32...d4 33...d6 with a large advantage for White.

33...d2! e8 34...e7 xe7 35...xe7 d8

The fall of another pawn is enough to end Aronian’s resistance.

"I am delighted with the result," said Carlsen after winning his final game against Maxime Vachier-Lagrave in Baden Baden to finish on an incredible 7.5/9, a point clear of world number two Fabiano Caruana. "I had actually dreamed of having such a result after I won the first two games but after three draws I [knew] it would be very tough. I felt very tired here at the halfway point; there is no hiding that. I was really struggling in a lot of games but I managed to pull through at the end.

"I feel the quality of my play in Shamkir was a bit higher, but clearly the trend is very, very positive. I certainly haven’t had a run like this since 2013. [Carlsen set his rating record in 2014. IR]

"I think the quality of my play is very good now; it was also good back then but now it’s a bit richer.
However in general I don’t want to compare; I am just very, very happy to be playing well.”

As this issue is published, Carlsen will be competing in a classical tournament again, at Norway Chess in Stavanger. Sporting a new 2875 rating, gaining ratings points will be a Herculean task but with the ‘new’ Carlsen, anything seems possible.

1.d4 əf6 2.c4 e6 3.əf3 d5 4.əc3 e7 5.əf4 O-O 6.e3 c5 7.dxc5 əxc5 8.əc2 əc6 9.a3 əa5
10.əd1

Carlsen, Magnus 2845
Anand, Viswanathan 2779
Shamkir Memorial 2019

Carlsen preferred 12.O-O in the Caruana game.

12...əxc3 13.bxc3 exd5 14.O-O h6 15.a4

“Clearly I thought there wasn’t too much in it [for me],” admitted Carlsen. “I sort of hoped to be slightly better from the opening but I couldn’t find [any advantage].”

15...d6 16.əxd6 əxd6 17.c4 e6 18.c5 əd8 19.əb1 əc7 20.əb2 əb8

Now Black is ready to play...b6 with dead equality.

21.əd4 əxd4 22.əxd4 b6 23.cx b6 əb6 24.h3 əc8 25.əfd1

“From afar I thought that I could go for 25.əbc1 əxc1 26.əxc1 əxc1+ 27.əh2 and hope that my queen would be stronger than his rooks,” said Carlsen, “but it seems that he creates a lot of counterplay, e.g. 27...əc2 28.a5 əbb2 29.əf3 əxf2 30.əg3 a6 but with such a safe king he should be absolutely fine. I was reconciled to the fact that I didn’t have much at this point and that it was going to be a draw.”

25...əc3?!

“The first blunder,” said Anand. “After 25...əc5 it’s a fairly simple draw. I thought 25...əc3 would be the same.”

“Yes, 25...əc3 is really bad obviously, though I don’t think it is a losing move by any stretch,” agreed Carlsen. “It goes from being a pretty much equal position to one where I can press and he has to defend accurately.”

26.əxc3 əxc3 27.a5 əxb1 28.əxb1 əc5

“A second blunder,” said Anand. “I think 28...əa3 is still a fairly comfortable hold. After 28...əa3 29.a6 g6 30.əb7 and then I do what I did in the game - 30...əa1+ 31.əh2 əa2 32.əb5 əa5 and I just harass his bishop continuously and it’s a draw.”

29.a6!

“29...əc8 was maybe my last chance. What I missed was that after 30.əb1 I thought I had 30...əg7 but then (I could have gone for 30...g6! as 31.əg4 f5 is still holding.) 31.əb7! əc1+ 32.əh2 and I cannot take because after 32...əxb7 33.axb7 əb1 he has 34...əd3+!”

30.əb7 əc1+ 31.əh2 əc2 32.əb5!

“I thought that I could go 32...əxf2 33.əxa7 d4 but after 34.e4 my bishop is somehow dominated.”

“I can also play (34.əa8+ əg7 35.əd1!, added Carlsen.) 33.əg3 əc8 34.əb8 əg7 35.əxc8 əxb5 36.əc7 əa5 “I have to go for this horrible endgame but I knew that it was always lost because of the weak pawn on d5,” said Anand.

37.əxa7 əf6 38.əa8 əa3 39.əh2 h5 40.a7 əa2

“He could play 40...h4,” said Carlsen, “when I would reply 41.g4 hxg3+ 42.fxg3! and not 42.əxg3 d4. Now the basic winning plan, which could also happen in the game, goes something like 42...əg7 43.əg2 əf6 His moves don’t matter. 44.əf2 əg7 45.əe2 əa2+ 46.əd3 əa4 47.əc3 əf6 48.əb3 əa1 49.əb4 əg7”

GRENKE CLASSIC

JUNE 2019 | 23
50. $\text{c5}$ and I win the pawn by force because he cannot play $50\ldots$ 
$\text{a5+}$ because of $51. \text{b6.} 50\ldots\text{a3}$ 
51. $\text{xd5 a1.}$ Now I go for $52.\text{h4}$ 
$\text{a3} 53.\text{e4 a1 54.e5 a3 55.g4}$ 
$\text{a1 56.h5 gxh5 57.gxh5 a3}$ 
58. $\text{h6+ h7}$

$41.\text{h4 f5 42.f3 a1 43.g3}$ An early resignation but “there is nothing he can do,” said Carlsen. 
“Once again I will [bring the king to c5 to] win the d-pawn and then 
create a passed h-pawn with g4, fol-
lowed by winning the pawn on f7 
as in the previous variation.” 1-0

| Rank | Name                  | Federation | Rating | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Score |
|------|-----------------------|------------|--------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|-------|
| 1    | Carlsen, Magnus       | NOR        | 2845   | * | ½ | ½ | 1 | ½ | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1  | 7.5   |
| 2    | Caruana, Fabiano      | USA        | 2819   | ½ | * | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | ½ | 1 | 1  | 6    |
| 3    | Naiditsch, Arkadij    | AZE        | 2695   | ½ | 0 | * | ½ | ½ | 0 | ½ | 1 | 1  | 5    |
| 4    | Vachier-Lagrave, Maxime | FRA      | 2773   | 0 | ½ | ½ | * | ½ | ½ | ½ | 1 | 1  | 5    |
| 5    | Anand, Viswanathan    | IND        | 2774   | ½ | ½ | 0 | ½ | * | ½ | 1 | 0 | 1  | 4.5  |
| 6    | Aronian, Levon        | ARM        | 2763   | 0 | ½ | ½ | ½ | * | 1 | ½ | ½ | ½  | 4.5  |
| 7    | Svidler, Peter        | RUS        | 2735   | 0 | ½ | 1 | ½ | ½ | 0 | * | ½ | 1  | ½  | 4.5  |
| 8    | Vallejo Pons, Francisco | ESP      | 2693   | 0 | ½ | ½ | ½ | 0 | ½ | ½ | * | ½  | 4    |
| 9    | Meier, Georg          | GER        | 2628   | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | ½ | 0 | ½ | * | 0  | 2    |
| 10   | Keymer, Vincent       | GER        | 2516   | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ½ | ½ | 0 | 1  | * | 2    |
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29. \texttt{Rxe6!! Bb8}

"If Black was going to play such a move, he may as well have taken the rook and allowed the queen sacrifice," said Short.

29... \texttt{Rx e6} 30. \texttt{Rxd5+!}

"At least if he wants to play on he had to try 29... \texttt{Nc5} 30. \texttt{dxc5} \texttt{Rxe6} although after 31. \texttt{cx b6} \texttt{cx b6} 32. \texttt{g2} I am winning."

30. \texttt{e7+ g8} 31. \texttt{g2 f8} 32. \texttt{Rxd5+} 1-0

22... \texttt{f3!} 0-1

1. \texttt{c4 d6} 2. \texttt{c3} e6 3. e4

White's sharpest system, which has been used in the past 12 months by both Carlsen and Caruana.

3... d5 4. \texttt{cxd5 exd5} 5. e5 \texttt{Qd7}

The pawn sacrifice 5... \texttt{e4} is far more common, with the idea 6. \texttt{xe4} dxe4 7. \texttt{a4+ c6} 8. \texttt{xe4} \texttt{d4!} with more than enough compensation for Black.

6. \texttt{d4} c5 7. \texttt{f3} \texttt{c6} 8. \texttt{g5?! a5} 8... \texttt{e7} is safer.
9. e2 cxd4  10. xd4  c5?!  
10... dxex5 was the true test of White's gambit, although after 11.O-O White has good compensation for the pawn.

11.O-O  e6 12. b5  c8  
13. xe6  fxe6?  
13... ex6 14. xd5  b4 was necessary.

14. h5+  g6 15. g4  h5  
16. f4  d7  17. xd5!  xb5  
17... exd5 18. e6 was also ugly.

18. f6+  xf6  19. xf6  h7?  
The final error. After 19... g8 20. xe6+ e7 White should continue 21. ad1! and not 21. xe7 c4! when Black can still fight.

20. xe6+ e7  21. xe7  
xe7  22. xc8+ f7  23. f4  
xb6+ 24. h1  c7  25. d8  
1-0

Karthik, V  2505  
Gustafsson, Jan  2663  
Bangkok Open 2019

17... a5  18. xd5!  xe1  
19. d4!  h4  20. g3  e7  
21. f6+!  0-1

Varshini, V  2183  
Sengupta, Deep  2551  
Bangkok Open 2019

10... Nxe5 was the true test of White's gambit, although after 11.O-O White has good compensation for the pawn.

11.O-O  e6 12. b5  c8  
13. xe6  fxe6?

13... ex6 14. xd5  b4 was necessary.

23... h3!!  24. g3  f3  
25. gx3  f5  26. e2  b8  
27. d1  h4  28. e4  e7  
29. xd6  b6  30. f5  bxf5  
31. exf5  f4  32. e1  d6  
33. b3  f3+  0-1

Deshmukh, Anup  2253  
Gustafsson, Jan  2663  
Bangkok Open 2019

23... f2?  xf2+!  0-1

Lalith, Babu M R  2577  
Sarbojit, Paul  1984  
Bangkok Open 2019

26. xd6!  xd6  27. c6+!  
  d6  28. h3+  e4  
29. xg4+  1-0

Zhao Zong Yuan  2529  
Bellon Lopez, Juan Manuel  
Bangkok Open 2019

20. xb6! cxb6  21. g5!  
  bxc5  22. xe6  xe6  23. f4  
  exf4  24. gxf4  a6  25. d4  cxd4  
  26. xc8  xc8  27. e4  e6  
  28. xd4  c6  29. d6  a5  
  30. b8+  f7  31. xb7  1-0

Barua, Dibyendu  2409  
Hug, Mei En E  1780  
Bangkok Open 2019

22. Rxd6!  Qxd6  27. Nc6+!  
  Ke6  28. Bh3  
  Ng4  29. Bxg4+  1-0

Lalith, Babu M R  2577  
Sarbojit, Paul  1984  
Bangkok Open 2019
Luong, Phuong Hanh 2273
Kunte, Abhijit 2485
Bangkok Open 2019

Vijayalakshmi, S 2345
Arpita, Mukherjee 2197
Bangkok Open 2019

35... xe4! 36. xd5 xf3!
37. xe5 dxe5 0-1

30. h2 ad8 31. xb7 h5
32. xd8 xd8 33. g5 d3
34. g3 xh5 35. xh5+ gxh5
36. b6 d4 37. xa5 xf2
38. xe5+ h7 39. xh5+ 1-0

26. g4! g7 27. xe5! dxe5
28. g4! h4 29. xd7 f4

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1.e4 c5 2.d4 cxd4 3.c3 dxc3
4.Nxc3

The Smith Morra Gambit, one of my favourite Anti-Sicilian openings as a junior is still alive and kicking. Many variations and setups have evolved but the core ideas remain the same. White sacrifices an early pawn for a slight development edge and pressure along the semi-open c- and d-files. The good thing about this opening is that it's relatively simple to learn. We play the same setup against almost everything. On the other hand, precision is required to maintain the initiative. Let's start by having a quick look at the typical Morra piece setup as well as discuss some ideas to go along with it.

4...Nc6 5.Nf3 a6 6.c4 e6 7.O-O

10.Qf4
Whenever the Black knight goes to f6, it is often the preferred option for the bishop to head for f4 where it supports the central e5 pawn advance. From here Black has heaps of options but White's ideas remain the same. We want to apply some pressure with c1 followed by ideas of b4, e5 or d5 are all common themes in the position. I will give a few sample variations which could take place from here on.

10...e5
Not allowing White any fun at all!
10...Qc7 11.ac1 O-O We have a variety of playable options here all leading to reasonable positions.
12.Bb3, 12.e5, 12.a3 or 12.b4 e5 13.e3 Qxb4 14.b5 Qb8
15.c7) 12...Qb8
13.h5
Another idea to kick the bishop back from this diagonal as we will see later.
11.e3 Qe7 12.ac1 d7
12...Qf6 13.b4 (13.Qd5!?) 13...Qxb4 14.b5 (14.Qe6 fx6 (14...Qxe6 15.d5 Qbxd5 16.xc7 Qxc7 15.b5 Qb8))
13.Qd5! exd5 14.exd5 Qe5?
14...Qf6 15.dxc6 bxc6
15.Qxa6
16.Qxe5 dxe5 16.Qh5 (16.d6 Qd8 17.Qh5)
11.b3 Qe7 12.ac1 Qb8
13.d4 Qd7 14.g3 O-O 15.f4
15...Qc6 16.h1 Qxd4 17.xd4
1.e4 c5 2.d4 cxd4 3.c3 dxc3 4...xc3
Now we get a few nasty traps which can catch your opponents off-guard early on if they are not aware.

4...c6 5.f3 d6
5...e6 The Siberian Trap is one we need to look out for as White. Also known as the fishing pole, we definitely do not want to be caught out!

6.c4 c7
6...a6 7.O-O ge7 This is one of the specific variations in which we place our bishop tho g5 instead. Trying to provoke on kingside weaknesses. 8.g5 f6 (8...h6 is a better move but we still drop the bishop back to e3. 9.e3)

9.e3 b5 10.b3 g6 11.d5! exd5 12.exd5 ce5 13.d6

7...e2!
It’s important when we notice our opponent going for this setup to delay castling. Instead prefer this move to support an early e5 pawn advance.

7...f6 8.e5
8.O-O g4 What is Black threatening I wonder? 9.h3?? d4 Oops 10.xd4 h2! Would be a tragic way to start out your Smith-Morra career.

8...g4 9.f4 f6
Black hits again the central pawn but White has an interesting option here with the move...

10.b5
10...a5+ 11.d2 d8 12.exf6 xf6 13.xf6+ xf6 14.O-O Seems to be okay for White and despite the material disadvantage should have adequate play.

5...g6 6.h4!? Against this setup I really like this advance of the h-pawn! Not only does it place immediate pressure on Black’s kingside but also leads to the most interesting play.

6...g7
(6...h5 7.c4 e6 8.f4 When there are enough weaknesses in the Black position to give as sufficient counterplay.) 7.h5

6.c4 f6?

7.e5!
This unexpected pawn advance causes problems in the Black camp.

7...dxe5
7...xe5? would lose the queen after 8.xe5 dxe5 9.xf7+ xf7 10.xd8 8.xd8+

8...xd8 9.g5

9.b5! b8 9.e6 10.xe6 xe6 11.c7+

10.xe5!

The threats are difficult to stop.

10...e6 11.c7+ e7 12.e3! is the simplest way to continue since 12.d6 is well met by 13.f4! *
With the insertion of the move ...a6 our opening trick with e5 from before doesn’t quite work anymore.

8. \( \text{B}f4! \) is best here.

8.h3 This is the move I used to recommend but have since decided it’s simply too slow.

8... \( \text{g}4 \)

8... \( \text{e}6 \) Another important alternative we need to consider here.

9.\( \text{w}e2 \text{ e}7 \) 10.\( \text{f}d1 \text{ h}5! \)

Kicking the bishop to a less optimal square at the cost of a slightly off-sides knight. 11.\( \text{e}3 \text{ d}7 \) 12.\( \text{d}4 \)

The only move to keep the initiative going.

12...g6 The most critical line.

(12... \( \text{xd}4 \) 13.\( \text{xd}4 \) \( \text{f}4 \) 14.\( \text{d}2 \text{ e}5 \) 15.\( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{e}3 \))

(12...\( \text{f}6 \) 13.\( \text{xc}6 \text{ bxc}6 \) (13...\( \text{xc}6 \) 14.e5 Wins back the d-pawn with a huge attack.) 14.\( \text{xa}6 \) O-O)

13.\( \text{xc}6 \text{ xc}6 \) 14.\( \text{h}6! \)

The only way to test Black’s play.

14...\( \text{a}5 \) Black wants to play \( \text{g}5 \) and get castled.

15.\( \text{d}5! \) A novelty which I believe to be good! Use it wisely. (15.\( \text{d}5 \)

Was played once in a correspon-dence game where White even went on to win. However, I don’t believe White gets enough compensa-tion here. 15...\( \text{xd}5 \) 16.exd5 \( \text{e}5 \))

15...exd5 16.exd5 \( \text{b}5 \)

(16...\( \text{d}7 \) 17.\( \text{e}1 \text{d}8 \) 18.\( \text{f}3 \) is winning for White.)

17.\( \text{we}3 \)

White is a full piece down but Black has some concrete problems to solve here.

17...\( \text{d}7 \) 18.\( \text{ac}1 \)

A regular move such as 18.g4 or 18...\( \text{h}8 \) is well met by the response 18...\( \text{ac}8 \) 19.\( \text{h}3+ \text{d}8 \) (19...f5 20.\( \text{e}3 \) (19...\( \text{c}7 \)) 20.\( \text{xb}5 \)

19.b4! \( \text{xb}4 \) 20.\( \text{xb}5 \) \( \text{xb}5 \)

21.\( \text{b}1 \) with a winning attack.

9.h3

It’s important to attack the bishop right away.

9...\( \text{xf}3 \)

The simplest way for Black to equalise.

9...\( \text{h}5 \) 10.g4

This is the most forcing option

which I believe is best.

10.\( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{a}5 \) (10...\( \text{d}7 \) 11.\( \text{e}2 \)

(11.\( \text{d}5 \text{ e}5 \) 12.\( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{xf}3 \) 13.\( \text{gf}3 \))

11.\( \text{a}4+ \) \( \text{b}5 \) (11...\( \text{d}7 \) 12.\( \text{e}2 \))

12.\( \text{xb}5+ \) \( \text{xb}5 \) 13.\( \text{xc}5 \) \( \text{c}6 \)

(13...\( \text{d}7 \) 14.\( \text{ac}1 \) (13...\( \text{xf}3 \)

14.\( \text{c}7+ \) ) (13...\( \text{d}7 \) 14.\( \text{c}7+ \))

14.\( \text{xa}8 \) \( \text{xa}8 \) 15.\( \text{c}7+ \text{d}8 \)

16.\( \text{xa}8 \) 10...\( \text{g}6 \) 11.e5! \( \text{dxe}5 \)

12.\( \text{xe}5 \) \( \text{xe}5 \) 13.\( \text{xe}5 \) \( \text{e}6 \) (13...\( \text{xd}1 \) 14.\( \text{fxd}1 \text{ e}6 \) 15.\( \text{f}1 \) The pressure ensures White will win his pawn back with a great.)

14.\( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 15.\( \text{ad}1 \)

10.\( \text{xf}3 \) \( \text{e}6 \) 11.\( \text{f}1 \) \( \text{b}8 \)

11...\( \text{c}7 \) 12.\( \text{ac}1 \) \( \text{e}7 \) 13.\( \text{b}3 \)

\( \text{b}8 \) (13...\( \text{O} \text{O} \) 14.\( \text{d}5 \text{ exd}5 \)

15.exd5 \( \text{ac}8 \) 16.\( \text{dxc}6 \) \( \text{bxc}6 \))

12.\( \text{e}2! \)

Objectively Black is doing okay but White has enough pressure to ensure balanced chances. Next he will play \( \text{g}3 \) since the \( \text{e}2 \) defends against \( \text{h}5 \) ideas.
BAD CHESS PUNS

By IM Trevor Tao

Solutions on page 53 - Check out Trevor’s Facebook page for more!

Deep Sengupta - Hrant Melkumyan
Black to play and win

Unfortunately the Indian GM did not fall for the P V in the endgame

Trevor Tao - Raymond Song
Black to play and win

My mum said if I played with loose too much they would eventually

Jason Hu - Padmini Rout
Find the sickest play for Black

All the planets aligned perfectly when she pulled off a rook

Opening theory quiz
Best move for Black?

For this lacklustre effort in Australia’s most prestigious chess tournament, the anti-war protesters were awarded the
Everybody Fears Raymond

Song stars at both Doeberl Cup and Sydney International

By Ian Rogers
Photos by Sabrina Koetsier and Helen Milligan
With the return of the Sydney International Open after a five year hiatus, the Easter period once again featured two consecutive international Open tournaments in Australia: the venerable O2C Doeberl Cup and the SIO, part of a new Macquarie University Chess Festival.

In 2019, apart from excellent numbers in both events, the common factor was the brilliant form of lowly ranked Raymond Song, who finished second behind top seed Hrant Melkumyan at the Doeberl Cup and shared first place with Padmini Rout at the SIO.

The name Ray Song may ring a bell for older Australian chess fans, and for good reason: at the start of the millennium, Raymond and his sister Angela were the toast of Australian chess.

Poached from New Zealand, the Songs broke records whenever they played. Angela became the first girl and the youngest person at the time to win the Australian Junior Championship, while Ray tied for first in the World Under 10 Championship in Crete, with future big names such as Hou Yifan and Yu Yangyi.

However when Ray was 12 the Song family moved to Shanghai. With chess participation difficult at the time for someone with an Australian passport, plus a Shanghai coach who believed in hitting his students when they made a bad move, Ray turned his attention to swimming (and Angela to school studies and clubbing). Only when Ray returned to Sydney to study at UNSW did his chess career resume in earnest.

By 2016 Song was playing for Taiwan, his father’s home country, and representing Taiwan with success at Chess Olympiads in Azerbaijan and Georgia.

Yet despite success at local tournaments in Sydney, the International Master title remained elusive and Song’s dreams of a career in chess, or a serious assault on the chess circuit, seemed remote. After all, who could take an eight year break from chess during their formative years and nonetheless become a top class player?

However Song’s natural talent - as shown when a prodigious nine-year-old - combined with his phenomenal work ethic and motivation – as shown in both Canberra and Sydney - means that anyone who wrote Song off did so at their peril.

After his April feats Song, 24, has gained 121 Elo points, more than 2000 places on the world rankings, a Grandmaster norm in the bag (which also doubles as an IM norm), and a second IM norm as well. After his Sydney victory Song went so far as to say that he was minded not to apply for the IM title when he achieved his third norm and try to go straight to GM, though that attitude may change when he discovers the financial benefits to being an International Master when playing on the European circuit.

A talented boy named Ray Song
Gave up chess and swam all day long
He returned to Australia
With no thought of failure
Now two trophies go back to Taiwan

With the return of the Sydney International Open after a five year hiatus, the Easter period once again featured two consecutive international Open tournaments in Australia: the venerable O2C Doeberl Cup and the SIO, part of a new Macquarie University Chess Festival.

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First up was the Doeberl Cup, Australia’s largest and most prestigious (long) weekend tournament, at the Southern Cross Club in Woden, to the south of Canberra. The O2C team have been organising the Doeberl Cup for 13 editions and have the running of a large tournament down to a fine art, with just the right number of professionals and volunteers to keep everything running smoothly. (It should be noted that the definition of a large open tournament may need to be redefined after the Grenke Open in Karlsruhe, held simultaneously with the Doeberl Cup, attracted more than 2,000 players in a single division. The lines for registration in Karlsruhe were not pretty.)

At the Doeberl Cup Song produced the best performance of his career, finishing second to top seed Armenian Grandmaster Hrant Melkumyan and securing his first GM norm with a round to spare.

Song’s result, which earned him $2500, included draws with the top two seeds, Melkumyan and Anton Smirnov, as well as a win against Indian GM Abhijit Kunte. Song’s play was notable for his attacking intent, as seen in the following game, annotated for 50 Moves by Song himself.

Top: Top seeded Grandmaster Hrant Melkumyan. A regular visitor to the Doeberl Cup.

Photo: Sabrina Koetsier
Annotations by Raymond Song

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.\(\text{c}3\) c6 4.e5 fd7

5.\(\text{e}2!\)?
Against 1.e4, Padmini mostly plays 1...e5, however she does dabble in the French occasionally. Because it is not her main weapon, while preparing I decided on this sideline, figuring that most of her analysis would be on the main line 5.f4. One of the ideas of this setup is that an early ...f6, which is sometimes desirable, can be met by the highly unpleasant \(\text{f}4\).

5...c5 6.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{c}6\) 7.\(\text{f}3\)
Here it is important that Black immediately exploits White’s slow play in the opening and quickly starts counterplay before White gets coordinated to start a dangerous kingside offensive. 7...b5, 7...\(\text{b}6\) and even a quick ...\(\text{a}5\) are the most common ways of going about this.

7...b6?
Not realising the danger. While the plan of exchanging the light-squared bishops on a6 is strategically desirable in such structures, Black does not have time for this. In fact, after this move Black is already in dire straits.

7...e7 8.a3 a5 9.\(\text{f}4\) O-O 10.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{b}6\) 11.h4 h6 12.\(\text{c}2\) \(\text{a}6\) 13.\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{d}8\) 14.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{f}8\) 15.\(\text{g}5!\)
Occurred in a game I watched live in the 2018 season of the Pro Chess League between Dominguez Perez and Ju Wenjun. Black found her position hopelessly lost after 15 moves.

8.\(\text{f}4\) a5

9.\(\text{b}5!\)

Top:
Padmini Rout, one of India’s top female players.

Photo: Sabrina Koetsier
An important tempo, highlighting the drawback to Black’s 7...b6 move.

9...\text{Q}c7 10.O-O
Remarkably, Black’s position is already lost. c3-c4 is a massive threat, not to mention the thematic idea of \text{N}g5 followed by \text{Q}h5.

10...\text{a}a7
10...\text{B}a6 11.\text{B}xa6 \text{R}xa6 12.c4 dxc4 13.d5 and the Black king will not survive (10...\text{e}7 11.c4 is also devastating)

11.\text{d} d3 c4
Preventing White’s c3-c4 break, but dooming any hopes of counterplay for the rest of the game.

12.\text{c} c2 h6
Trying to fight against \text{g}5.

12...\text{e}7 13.\text{h} h5 O-O 14.\text{g} 5 \text{X}xg5 15.\text{X} xg5 leaves the Black king defenseless.

13.\text{h} h4! \text{e}7
13...g5 14.\text{x} xe6 fxe6 15.\text{h} h5+ \text{d} d8 16.\text{g} 6 \text{X} xg8 17.f4 gxf4 18.\text{X} h4+ \text{e} 8 19.\text{X} xf4 leaves Black without a move

14.\text{h} h6! \text{g} 8
14...fxg 6 15.\text{x} xg6+ followed by \text{X}xe6 picks up the queen.

15.\text{X} x\text{e} 7 \text{X} x\text{e} 7 16.\text{g} 4
With the deadly threat of \text{h} h7, picking up the g7 pawn.

16...f5
This loses immediately, but other options were unenviable, e.g. 16...\text{f} 8 17.b3! opens up another front, or 16...g5 17.\text{h} h5 when, with f2-f4 coming, Black can resign.

17.\text{x}x\text{f}5! ex\text{f} 18.\text{x} xd5+ \text{d} 8
19.\text{g} 5+ 1-0
With massive material losses unavoidable, Black resigned.

Of course with all the hype around Song, one should not forget the winner of the 57th Doeberl Cup – the 12th unique winner in the past 12 years - Armenia’s Hrant Melkumyan.

Melkumyan has been a regular visitor to Australia’s shores since an Olympiad romance turned into a decade-long relationship with multiple Australian Olympian Emma Guo.

Since 2013 Melkumyan has won weekend tournaments in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide but until this week the biggest prize had eluded him.

In 2016 Melkumyan seemed headed for his first Doeberl Cup victory but ran into an inspired James Morris, who brought the Cup back to Australia for the first time in a decade.

However in 2019 Melkumyan was determined to make amends. He started slowly, drawing two of his first three games, but then began a five game winning streak which took him to the outright lead.

The penultimate day was key for Melkumyan, who beat the second and third seeds, GMs Anton Smirnov and Deep Sengupta, in consecutive games.

The win over Smirnov was Melkumyan’s finest moment; a queen sacrifice turning a messy position.

Annotations by Hrant Melkumyan

Prior to this game, I was half a point ahead of the field but was keen to play aggressively to win this game. Previous encounters have not gone smoothly against Anton but I was willing to take a risk.

1.c4 c6 2.\text{f} 3 d5 3.g3 g6 4.\text{a} 4!?
A recent Kramnik idea. IR

4...d4
Black’s other options are 4...e6, 4...dxc4, and 4...\text{d} 7.

5.d3 \text{g} 7 6.\text{g} 2 \text{e} 5 7.O-O \text{e} 7 8.\text{b} 2
Typically for this line, White allows Black to occupy the centre and gains counterplay on the queenside. White’s play is strategically very risky; if he doesn’t manage to break through on the queenside he will be left with no centre and no counterplay.

If Black could only play ...b6 after c5 - even at the cost of sacrificing an exchange - his position would have been perfectly fine. But he has no time.

18.b6! ♔b8 19.♔b5
DOEBERL CUP 2019

19...a5 was also good enough.

19...e6
Smirnov admitted that he had missed that after 19...axb6 20.xb6 attacks too many pieces and gives Black no time to take on a3. IR

20.xc5 d7 21.bxa7!
After 18...b8 I had already decided that I was going to go for the queen sacrifice which looked too tempting to resist.

21...c8

22.xe7!! xb5 23.xf6!
Unlike the first part of the game, after the queen sacrifice White's play is perfect. 23...xd8? xd8 24.xb5 (24.cxb5??) 24...xa7 is nothing for White.

23...c6 24.xc6!
The best and most convincing. It took almost all of my remaining time to spot the 26th move. When you have too many good options it's often when you make a mistake. 24.xb7+ was also winning but less convincing and far more complicated, e.g. 24...xb7 25.xb7+ g8 26.xd8 e4 (26...xd8 27.d5+! h8 28.e7 c6 29.e6 wins.) 27.b8! xb8 28.axb8=wb xb8 29.a5 and White should eventually win.

24...xc6

25.xb7+ d7 26.b6!
Only way to proceed but winning a piece.

26...a4 27.xe6
Now White has a material and positional advantage so the rest of the game is a matter of technique.

27...xa2 28.ef3 g5 29.xe5 g4 30.bb6! a1+ 31.f1 gxf3 32.xh6+ g8 33.bg6+ f8 34.h8+ f7 35.g7+ e6 36.h6+ xe5

Mate is inevitable, although as Anton showed me immediately after the game 37.exf3! xg7 38.f4#! would have been more stylish way to finish the game. 1-0

The final round battle between Melkumyan and Song was epic; a heavy-duty theoretical opening – one of the lines Melkumyan knew well as a result of being a second to Levon Aronian. Song's king was always in danger and Melkumyan pushed hard for the win but Song passed his toughest examination and earned a draw. (Notably, a fortnight later, Aronian did not pass a similar test in that line against Carlsen.) The final round draw left Melkumyan half a point above Song and secured the $4,000 first prize.

Melkumyan at first said that he was unlikely to defend his title but on hearing that no Doeberl Cup winner had managed to win a second title for more than a decade, he mused, “Maybe I’ll have to come back then...”

Plenty of other players made an impression in Canberra, most notably 15-year-old Matthew Clarke who finished behind only 4 GMs and Song. Melbourne’s Jack Puccini also seemed set for a great result until he squandered a winning position against Indian GM Deep Sengupta and lost. His only consolation in the remaining rounds was an unusual zugzwang win using his favourite Morra Gambit against Sydney IM George Xie.
1.e4 c5 2.d4 cxd4 3.c3 dxc3
4.\(\text{\textit{xc3}}\) \(\text{\textit{c6}}\) 5.\(\text{\textit{f3}}\) d6 6.\(\text{\textit{c4}}\) e6
7.O-O \(\text{\textit{f6}}\) 8.\(\text{\textit{e2}}\) \(\text{\textit{e7}}\) 9.\(\text{\textit{d1}}\) e5 10.\(\text{\textit{e3}}\) \(\text{\textit{g4}}\) 11.h3 \(\text{\textit{xf3}}\)
12.\(\text{\textit{xf3}}\) O-O 13.\(\text{\textit{ac1}}\) a6?!

Puccini regarded 13...\(\text{\textit{c8}}\) as slightly more accurate, preventing the White bishop from retreating to a2.

14.a3 \(\text{\textit{c8}}\) 15.\(\text{\textit{a2}}\) b5 16.\(\text{\textit{d5}}\)
\(\text{\textit{xd5}}\) 17.\(\text{\textit{xd5}}\) \(\text{\textit{d7}}\)

17...d4! 18.\(\text{\textit{xd4}}\) exd4 was ugly but necessary, after which any White advantage can likely be kept under control.

18.\(\text{\textit{g4}}\) \(\text{\textit{e8}}\)?
The final error.

20...\(\text{\textit{xc3}}\) 21.\(\text{\textit{bxc3}}\) exd4 22.\(\text{\textit{xd4}}\) g6

23.h4! \(\text{\textit{c8}}\)

Incredibly, Black does not have any constructive moves, since 23...h5 allows 24.\(\text{\textit{xg6}}\)!

24.\(\text{\textit{f4}}\) \(\text{\textit{d8}}\) 25.g3! g5 26.\(\text{\textit{f5}}\)!

An amazing final position where Black can only avoid material loss by 26.a5, after which he simply runs out of moves. 1-0

Padmini Rout, the rising Indian star who won the strong Asian Women’s Championship in the Philippines last December, gave some hints that she would be a threat during the Sydney International Open with two impressive and unexpected tactical coups, which briefly took her to the tournament lead in Canberra.

25...\(\text{\textit{g5}}\)!! 26.\(\text{\textit{xg5}}\)!

Not capturing the knight would allow ...\(\text{\textit{f3}}+,\) when White’s king will be permanently in a net. However this was the best chance as Hu underestimates how difficult it is to rescue the rook on g5.

26...f5! 27.\(\text{\textit{c4}}\)

Hu was now expecting

27...\(\text{\textit{f6}}\) 28.\(\text{\textit{xe4}}\) fxg4 29.\(\text{\textit{xe4}}\)
when White is fine.

27...\textit{ae8}! 28.\textit{f1}?

The only chance lay in 28.\textit{xe4! xxe4 29.xe4 xxe4 30.f3! gxf3 31.xf2! g4! 32.h4! when White may be able to hang on for a draw. e.g. 32...xf6 33.e4! xxe4 34.xf3 and White can free the rook with g4.\n
28...\textit{f6} 29.\textit{xg4} fxg4 30.\textit{e2} \textit{g5} 31.\textit{d1} \textit{d8}!

Giving up the g4 pawn to take over the initiative.

32.\textit{c5+ h6} 33.\textit{g4} \textit{d2} 34.\textit{b5 f7!} 35.f4 exf3 36.e4 \textit{c7} 0-1

In a strong position Padmini had simply blundered an exchange, and now she needed to find a way to keep the game going, since 25.xf5 xc4 would be easy for Black. Suddenly Padmini spotted a trick. She then set about finding the move most likely to cause Xie to fall into it and played...

25.d6!? The d-pawn by itself is doing nothing, and after 25...xf6, Black should win soon. Instead Xie continued pushing forward, missing Padmini’s sneaky idea.

\hspace{1cm} 25...e4? 26.\textit{b2+} g6 27.\textit{e2!} Oops! 27...\textit{xc4} 28.\textit{xf3 exf3} 29.\textit{b3} 1-0

57TH O2C DOEBERL CUP LEADING FINAL SCORES:

1. Melkumyan(Arm) 7.5/9;
2. Song(Twn) 7;
=3. Sengupta(Ind), Smirnov(N), Kunte(Ind) 6.5;
In its first incarnation the Sydney International Open ran for eight years, between 2007 and 2014, hosted at the iconic Parramatta Town Hall. The event folded, unusually, when the venue and sponsorship was available but no organiser could be found to run it.

In late 2018 21-year-old Paul Russell stepped forward. Originally Russell had offered to host a small event at Macquarie University after Easter but was convinced to turn that into the Macquarie University Chess Festival from April 24 to 28, featuring the Sydney International Open as well as a Challenger event and a weekend junior rapid.

Though the 164 players who entered the 2019 SIO were far fewer than the Doeberl Cup’s 250+, the turnout was still the largest ever for an SIO, if far from the strongest; only 3 GMs and 7 IMs participated. (In consequences, earning GM norms was not possible in Sydney.) Playing conditions in the Macquarie University MUSE building were excellent – as good as the Doeberl Cup – but the crazy SIO playing times, 12pm and 6pm, playing through both lunch and dinner times, were generally hated. On the Saturday, when the junior rapid was held, the arbiters were on duty from 8am to 11pm. (It should be noted that the round times were announced before Russell became involved and it was deemed too late to make a change.)

Raymond Song’s extraordinary run of form continued in Sydney. He raced to the lead with 4/4, but then suffered his first and only setback, being comprehensively outplayed by the top seed, India’s GM Abhijit Kunte, in round five.

However Song recovered immediately (with a little help), and in the race to the finish line was able to catch and then overtake Kunte, 42, who seemed exhausted after tough competitions in Bangkok and Can-
berra in preceding weeks.

Song, Raymond 2329
Gong, Daniel Hanwen 2246
Doeberl Cup 2019

Lane, Gary 2359
Song, Raymond 2329
Sydney International 2019

Annotations by Raymond Song

1.e4 e5
The first surprise for my opponent, who immediately started thinking. In both my previous encounters with Gary (from last year’s Doeberl Cup and NSW Open) I had chosen the Caro-Kann. I felt that he would be well prepared this time, hence my choice of 1...e5. I consider the opening phase to be very much a battle of psychology and it is always nice to gain the upper hand early.

2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5

Playing against New Zealand’s Daniel Gong, Song had few hopes of breaking through until Gong tried to liquidate too quickly via 44...g5? and after 45.fxg5+ Nxg5 46.Bxg5+ Kxg5 47.Ke3 Bc2 48.Kd4!!

Gong suddenly realised that he had given White the chance to invade with his king to b6, after which resistance is futile. The game concluded 48...f6 49.c5 e7 50.b6 xb3 51.c5 d8 52.xb7 e6 53.xa6 c8+ 54.b6 d7 55.b7 1-0

4.O-O Qxe4 5.e1
(5.d4 d6 6.xc6 dxc6 7.dxe5 Qf5 8.xd8+ Qxd8 leads to the infamous Berlin endgame, popularized by Kramnik who used it to great effect against Kasparov in their World Championship match in 2000. I’ve always believed that Black’s bishop pair gives him more than adequate compensation for White’s kingside majority. Of course the pawn endgame is lost for Black, but there is a long and complex battle before that.)

5...d6 6.xe5 Qxe5 7.Qxe5+ e7 8.Qh1 O-O 9.d4 Qf6 10.Qe1 Qe8 is a very safe line for White, hence its popularity at Grandmaster level. White has a few tries here such as 11.c3, 11.Qxe8+ and 11.f4, all of which guarantee a microscopic edge, but if Black is precise he shouldn’t struggle too much to hold a draw.

4...c5 5.c3 QO-O 6.O-O d6

I had prepared the Berlin for my last round game against Hrant Melkumyan at the Doeberl Cup, but did not get to use it due to his choice of 1.d4. The Berlin is a logical choice against: a) a higher rated opponent b) an opponent who likes to attack. Gary falls into both categories.

4.d3
As I expected, Gary opts for the Anti-Berlin, trying to keep pieces on the board.

4...Qa4?!
Perhaps it is unfair to label this decision as dubious, as it has been played by some very strong players. But from a practical point of
view, I never understood what White achieves by doing this. As we will see in the game, White essentially gets the type of position that arises out of the Italian (3.\textit{b}c4), but instead he has wasted time with \textit{b}5-a4-c2, allowing Black ...a6 and ...b5 with tempo and achieving a favourable expansion on the queenside. He could have just gone 3.\textit{c}c4! (8.\textit{x}c6 \textit{b}xc6 and here the concrete plan of 9.\textit{c}c2 (9.\textit{e}1 is also logical. The game could continue 9...\textit{e}8 10.h3 \textit{b}6 11.\textit{f}1 a5 12.\textit{g}3 a4 13.\textit{e}3 \textit{xe}3 14.\textit{xe}3 \textit{c}5 15.d4 \textit{exd}4 16.\textit{cx}d4 cxd4 17.\textit{xd}4 \textit{d}7 18.\textit{c}1 \textit{b}8 with a complex game ahead.) 9...\textit{e}8 10.\textit{d}4 forces some precision from Black to not end up worse.)

\textbf{8...b5 9.\textit{c}2 \textit{b}6}
In the spirit of Karpov, who never liked to give his opponents the satisfaction of attacking his pieces with tempo. It is clear the bishop will need to move soon anyway, with ideas like b2-b4 or \textit{d}2-b3 looming.

\textbf{10.a4 \textit{e}6 11.b4 \textit{h}6}
A useful waiting move, controlling the important g5 square and preparing ...d6-d5.

\textbf{12.h3 d5}
Here I felt that the central tension should favour Black. White never wants to take on d5 because after ...\textit{xd}5, the c3 and d3 pawns become critically weak while ...\textit{f}4 is always looming.

\textbf{13.\textit{b}2 \textit{d}7!}
Gary had spent quite a lot of time
on his last few moves, indicating he wasn’t too comfortable. In such situations, one should maintain the tension in the position rather than releasing it. 13...dxe4 and 13...d4 are definitely worth considering, but those options are not going away. 13...\textit{d}7 is stronger because it gives White extra problems to worry about. At a given moment I might sacrifice on h3 or I might not, but I get the luxury of choice while White has to spend time calculating it on every move. And if a Black knight lands on f4, White can quickly find himself mated.

14.b3

14...\textit{ad}8

14...\textit{xh}3 15.gxh3 dxe4 16.dxe4 \textit{xh}3 here White has the important resource 17.h2 followed by \textit{f}3, repelling the attack.

15.exd5?

Capitulation. As mentioned earlier, White cannot afford to do this as after the Black knight lands on f4, the pressure on d3 combined with the kingside threats is decisive. But it is already hard to give good advice to White. I was expecting 15.c5 \textit{xc}5 16.bxc5 dxe4 17.dxe4 \textit{e}7 18.c1 Black is clearly in the driver’s seat, but White’s position is far from hopeless. Here I was intending 18...\textit{h}5 with some advantage. (18...\textit{xc}5 is bad because of 19.a3)

15...\textit{xd}5 16.c5 \textit{xc}5 17.bxc5 \textit{f}4 18.e1
18...e4!? This move by itself cannot be considered a mistake as it doesn’t ruin my advantage, but it is not really necessary. Here the computer points out 18...\textit{Q}d5! intending to take on c5 and chuck the exchange on f8, after which Black is simply winning. For example, 19.\textit{Q}xe4 \textit{Q}c4 and Black wins.

18...\textit{Q}f5 is the natural move, but after 19.axb5 axb5 20.\textit{Q}f3 White can still resist.

19.d4! For some reason this move escaped my attention. I had only considered 19.dxe4 \textit{Q}c4 and Black wins.

19...\textit{Q}c4? Consistent with my last move, but a poor decision. Black nets the exchange, but in doing so concedes all of his positional trumps - the bishop pair, the light square control and the central clamp. All to grab a rook that was hardly participating in the action. Here it was important to forget my last move, look at the position with fresh eyes and try to find the best move. Sometimes this is one of the hardest things to do in chess. Had I done that, I would have immediately played 19...f5, when the difference in the activity of pieces renders White close to lost.

20.\textit{Q}xe4 \textit{Q}xf1 21.\textit{Q}xf1 \textit{Q}e7 As Ian rightly pointed out in the commentary room, Black is probably not even better any more. White has the centre and the bishop pair, his king is now safe and his pieces have a lot more mobility than they did a few moves ago.

21.\textit{Q}f3 \textit{Q}eg6 22.\textit{Q}f1 \textit{Q}e6 So far Gary has fought well, but here time trouble starts to tell.

29.\textit{Q}d3? For better or for worse, White had to close the position with 29.g4 although after 29...\textit{Q}f6 30.\textit{Q}h3 \textit{Q}b3! 31.\textit{Q}d3 \textit{Q}g6 White still faces a lot of problems.

29...\textit{Q}xf3 30.\textit{Q}xg3 \textit{Q}f5
Now White’s position collapses quickly.

31. \( \text{Qh3} \) \( \text{g6}+ \) 32. \( \text{Bg2} \) \( \text{Nh4}! \) 33. \( \text{e5} \) \( \text{Qxg2}+ \) 34. \( \text{Qxg2} \) \( \text{Nh5}+ \) 35. \( \text{Qf5} \) 36. \( \text{axb5} \) \( \text{axb5} \) 37. \( \text{a7} \) \( \text{df8} \) 38. \( \text{f3} \) \( \text{e3+} \) 39. \( \text{h2} \) \( \text{h5+} \) 40. \( \text{Qxg2} \) \( \text{Nh2} \) 41. \( \text{h4} \) 0-1

Someone else was chasing Kunte as well, his compatriot Padmini Rout, who won four Indian Women’s Championships between 2014 and 2017.

Song again defeated Padmini in their individual game, but Padmini bounced back from that defeat with three wins in the final four rounds (plus a lucky escape against second seed Daniel Fernandez from England).

A slightly unusual Ruy Lopez has reached a normal-looking position, but Padmini finds a dramatic and unexpected way to launch a kingside attack.

18...d6 19.bxc5 dxc5 20.b4! would be similar but 18...f5!, however risky, was the only way to change the course of the game.

19. \( \text{d4!} \) \( \text{f6} \) 20. \( \text{f5} \) \( \text{e6} \) 21. \( \text{e4!} \) \( \text{e8} \) 22. \( \text{e3!} \)

Suddenly Black is defenceless against the coming attack.

Fernandez was simply not in top shape in Sydney, missing many opportunities.

Here he played 34... \( \text{Nc6} \) and the game was drawn 29 moves later. Instead, the classic combination 34... \( \text{Nh3+!} \) 35. \( \text{Kg1} \) \( \text{h1+!} \) 36. \( \text{Kxh1} \) \( \text{Nxf2+} \) would have won a pawn and the game. 1/2-1/2

Yet Padmini’s recovery would have been in vain had Song not allowed a dominant last round position against Fernandez to slip to a draw, enabling Padmini to tie for first with an exciting victory over Australian Olympian and third seed Junta Ikeda. The winners shared $4,500 and Song, who had also scored well enough to secure a second IM norm, was awarded the winner’s cup due to a superior tiebreak.

The two third placegetters, Kunte and Fernandez both remained undefeated but conceded five draws each, while the third Grandmaster in the SIO, Australia’s own Darryl Johansen, now 60 years old, had to fight back from a horror start – which included a second round loss against Matthew Clarke - to finish respectably. He at least had the satisfaction of playing the prettiest
Johansen had sacrificed a piece for an attack, but at first sight it seems as if he has reached a dead end. Not so!

29. \textit{Rx}e6! \textit{Bxe6} 30. \textit{Bxe6+ Kf8} 31. \textit{Qh8+!!} 1-0

In his winner’s speech Song thanked retired Australian Grandmaster Max Illingworth for his help with pregame opening preparation, and indeed this was the area where Song stood out, obtaining a clear advantage from the opening in many games, both in Sydney and Canberra.

Song will finish his studies at UNSW in the coming weeks and then head straight to Europe where he will begin a six month stint on the international circuit. If he plays anywhere near the level he has shown in April, Taiwan may soon have their first Grandmaster – one that Australia can perhaps lay claim to as well.
SOLUTION 1

Difficulty: ⭐⭐⭐⭐

1... b2!
A deadly battery is set up—Black can’t avoid material loss.

1... f8
1... h7 2... c7+
1... h6 2... g3+ h7 3... g7+ h8
4... b1! h1+ 5... g1+
1... f1+ 2... c1+

2... c7+ g8 3... g7+ h8 4... a2!
and Black’s rook can go to many squares, but it will be lost.

4... a8+
4... g8 5... f7+

5... a7+

SOLUTION 2

Difficulty: ⭐⭐⭐⭐

1... h1!
 Forced, to prevent the winning 1... h1= !

1... g5? xa6

1... xh1 2... a8= d1!
This covers both of the queen’s checks on d5 and d8, and again threatens ...h1=, but...

3... h1!
 xh1 4... a7 d1 5... a8= + b5
6... b8+ c5 7... xh2 reaching a winning endgame.

1... g1= 2... c1+ and Black’s rook can go to many squares, but it will be lost.

SOLUTION 3

Difficulty: ⭐⭐⭐⭐

It looks like both sides are queen-ing, but will White’s rook be better than Black’s bishop and three pawns?

1... h8! only here, so... 1... b8?
 g1= 2... a8= + a3 and Black will win in short order.

1... g1= 2... a8= + a3 3... g8+ is possible!

3... a1 4... h1! another corner move! Other moves would let Black do a perpetual check, at the least.

4... xh1 5... xg7+ and we have the magical staircase manoeuvre.

5... a2 6... f7+ a1 7... f6+ a2 8... e6+ a1 9... e5+ a2
10... d5+ a1 11... d4+ a2
12... c4+ a1 13... c3+ a2
14... b3+ a1 15... x a3# a great study for this theme, as there was action in all four corners.

SOLUTION 4

Difficulty: ⭐⭐⭐⭐

1... d7 e7+
1... x g8 2... f4#

2... x d8 a7! 3... h8!!
the star move, forcing Black to crawl into the corner with the rook and king.
3... e8? a8+ 4... d7 a7+

3... a8+ 4... d7 x h8 5... f4+ g8
6... h6! and Black’s king is helpless in the corner. 6... e7? h6

6... g5
6... x h6 7... e7 h5 (7... g7
8... x g4#) 8... f6 h6 9... a4 h7
9... h7 10... a8#) 10... a7+ g8
11... g6
7. \( \text{Ke7!} \)
7. \( \text{Rf1?} \)

7...gxf4 8.gxf4 g3 9.f5 g2 10.f6 g1=\( \text{=} \) 11.f7# Just in time.

**SOLUTION 5**

Difficulty: ★★★☆☆

The bottom right hand corner is in a state of mutual zugzwang - Black moving the bishop or knight will be mated quickly, while a move from White will let the bishop move, opening the way for the f-pawn - so it is a battle between White's king on a1 and Black's knight in the other corner, h8. This knight must keep an eye on the h-pawn from f7 or g6, while White wants to breach the knight's defences to help the h-pawn.

1. \( \text{b2} \)
White must avoid light squares which will allow the bishop to move with check, when the f-pawn would queen.

1...\( \text{f7} \) 2. \( \text{c3} \) \( \text{h8} \) 3. \( \text{d4} \) \( \text{g6} \) 4. \( \text{c5} \)
4. \( \text{e3} \) \( \text{h8} \) 5. \( \text{f4} \) \( \text{f7} \) and the knight stops the king advancing any further.

**SOLUTION 6**

Difficulty: ★★★☆☆

Multiple pieces en prise...White must keep the b-pawn at bay, while not Black to get more than an exchange of knights.

1. \( \text{f6!} \)
1. \( \text{x6? b2 2. g5+ f2 and White would have to give up a bishop.} \)
3. \( \text{e4 b1=\( \text{=} \) 4. \( \text{xb1} \) \( \text{xb1} \) 5. \( \text{b3} \) \( \text{e2} \)

1...\( \text{b2!} \)
1...\( \text{xc5+? 2. \( \text{xa3 might look like a draw, but two bishops can overcome a knight—it is especially difficult to defend this successfully in a practical game.} \)

2. \( \text{xb2 c4} \)
Now it’s hard ro prevent Black's knights from extricating themselves...

3. \( \text{h8!!} \)
Safe in the corner...

3. \( \text{c1+? f2! 4. d5 \( \text{xc5+} \) 5. \( \text{b5 \( \text{d3} \)
3. \( \text{a1? \( \text{xc5+} \) 4. \( \text{b4 \( \text{d2 (4...\( \text{a5) \}

3...\( \text{f2! 4. h1!!} \)
Another corner... 4. \( \text{a8?! \( \text{xc5+} \) 5. \( \text{b5 \( \text{d7! 6. \( \text{d4+ \( \text{e3! 7. \( \text{e4 \( \text{f8! 8. \( \text{c6 \( \text{e6 while 4. \( \text{h3? runs into \( \text{xc5+} 5. \( \text{b4 \( \text{g3! \)

4...\( \text{g1!} \)
4...\( \text{xc5+ 5. \( \text{b5 \( \text{e3 6. \( \text{xc5 \( \text{g2 7. \( \text{d4+! \}

5. \( \text{a8!!} \)
And only now, to the opposite corner!

5...\( \text{xc5+} \)
5...\( \text{b6+ 6. \( \text{b5 \( \text{xa8 7. \( \text{xe6 and Black's knight is trapped.} \)

6. \( \text{b5! \( \text{d7 7. \( \text{d4+! and because Black's king had to move to g1 to attack the bishop on h1, there is no more... \( \text{e3 blocking the check.} \)
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