“I AM SO PROUD OF TEAM USA!” — ANNOTATIONS BY JEFFERY XIONG, 2016 WORLD JUNIOR CHAMPION

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US 2016 Chess Olympiad

GOLDEN DREAM TEAM

MY OLYMPIAD DIARY
Sam Shankland

Victory Over Russia Catapulted Us To The Top...
Irina Krush

WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH
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GREAT EXPECTATIONS!
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MUSINGS OF AN AMERICAN GRANDMASTER
Joel Benjamin

THE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP MATCH
MAGNUS CARLSEN

VS

CHALLENGER
SERGEY KARJAKIN

NEW YORK 10-28 NOVEMBER 2016

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Isle of Man Open: 
CARUANA TIES FOR 1st PLACE

With a last round win over Michael Adams, Fabiano Caruana achieved a first place tie at the Chess.com Isle of Man International Open (UK, October 1-9). However Ukrainian GM Pavel Eljanov was declared the overall winner on tiebreak – he maintained his lead with a final-round fighting draw against Wesley So, who finished the tournament in 4th place, a point behind the winners. Team USA members Hikaru Nakamura and (coach) Alex Lenderman were 8th and 17th respectively, each scoring 6 points from 9 rounds. The sensation from the last round was the following quick win by 11-year-old Indian IM R. Praggnanandhaa, who tore apart a 2600 grandmaster opponent – in just 18 moves!

Axel Bachmann 2645–
Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa 2442
Isle of Man International 2016
1.d4 2.f6 2.e4 g6 3.d3 e5 4.d2 c7 5.f6 h6 6.bxg7 7.0-0 0 c5 8.e2 c6 9.f3 c4 10.e4 b5 11.cxb5 d6 12.axb5 d5 13.b1 Bxd5 14.axc3 cxd5 Bxb5 Bb8+ 16.d1 a5! 17.d2 d5 18.e2 e6 0-1

2016 World Youth Championship: 
BRONZE FOR USA’S ANNIE WANG!

American Annie Wang earned a Bronze medal at the World U-14 Girls Chess Championship, held in Khanty-Mansiysk, Russia (September 20 to October 4, 2016). Wang, who was only the 14th seed, scored 8/11, just half a point behind that of winner Zhu Jiner from China whom she beat in their personal encounter. She lost out on the silver medal on tie-break to Russian Aleksandra Maltsevskaya. The extraordinary chess talent of the girl from Los Angeles was already confirmed as early as 2014, when at the National Junior Chess Congress, at 11 years of age she became the youngest American in history to hold the master title.

Queen of Katwe – TWO WINS AT BAKU

OLYMPIAD

Uganda’s Phiona Mutesi played and won the two games she played in the Baku Chess Olympiad – but then she had to leave Baku to attend the Toronto Film Festival for the world premiere of Queen of Katwe. The blockbuster movie, produced by Walt Disney and ESPN Films, is about a young girl from the slums of Katwe, in Uganda’s capital Kampala. It was released across the USA on September 30 to more than 1,000 cinemas and reached over $2.5 million gross after only the first week! Queen of Katwe is a biographical sports drama film, directed by Mira Nair and written by William Wheeler. The character of Phiona is played by Lupita Nyong’o. This is a must-see movie for every chess fan!

Tal Memorial: NEPOMNIACHTCHI CLEAR FIRST

Russian Ian Nepomniachtchi achieved the biggest success of his career by winning the 10th Tal Memorial in Moscow (September 26 to October 6). 26-year-old Nepomniachtchi was only seeded ninth among the ten participants but the odds didn’t stop him demonstrating convincing play with three wins and six draws. Second-place Dutch GM Anish Giri missed his chance to realize a winning position in the last round against Li Chao – and qualify for a blitz tie-break with Nepomniachtchi for the title. At the bottom end of the scoreboard, Boris Gelfand will probably try to forget this tournament as one of the worst results of his long and successful career – he made just four draws and five losses.
LETTER from the EDITOR

MAKING AMERICAN CHESS GREAT AGAIN

The American Chess Magazine comes to you on the crest of a wave that has provided the biggest boost to the US chess since the early 1970s, when Bobby Fischer claimed the world title from Boris Spassky.

A few weeks ago, a dream team of US grandmasters won the gold medal at the World Chess Olympiad, ahead of Ukraine, Russia, India, and over 160 other nations, while 15-year-old Texan, Jeffery Xiong, became the new World Under-20 Champion! And now the ACM has been launched to help American readers keep in touch with all the most significant happenings in the exciting world of present day chess, both at home and abroad.

This quarterly magazine is designed to record not only the exploits of those men and women who fulfill their varied roles as star players, trainers and sponsors, but also the endeavors of the many unsung heroes who work behind the scenes in national organizations, clubs and institutions supportive of chess. Such a broad-based movement will surely play its part in “making American chess great again,” and the ACM will be committed to promoting even wider recognition and greater popularity of our beloved game.

Two distinctive results came out of a recent survey we conducted among chess enthusiasts in the USA. First, they were overjoyed with the recent successes of American chess but, second, they had serious doubts as to whether the achievements of American chess players would ever be recognized at their true worth by the general public in the USA.

Therefore, our goal is simple; it is also one which has been amply proven in other fields of sport: We want to make chess attractive in terms of both its creative content and visual presentation. We can then hope that mainstream channels will recognize its inherent qualities and untapped potential. Let’s make chess a game that can be understood by everyone, yet without sacrificing either substance or quality!

For my part, the ACM represents the greatest challenge of a 25 year career in sports journalism. It is quite simply the desire to fulfill an American dream. The international team that has in the last six years restored the legendary Chess Informant to its former glory, and more recently revamped the 135-year-old British Chess Magazine, has now been encouraged to celebrate the resurgence of US chess with the help of some of the finest American authors and editors. We hasten to add that we also welcome readers’ contributions and letters, whether they are critical or supportive!

Naturally, the success of the USA team at the Chess Olympiad comes under the spotlight in our first issue, as does Jeffery Xiong’s capture of the world junior title. There is also an in-depth preview of the forthcoming world championship match between Magnus Carlsen and Sergey Karjakin, to be staged in New York during November. Nevertheless, readers might be surprised at the number of contributed articles by writers from foreign lands. But here the ACM is only mirroring how dynamic and how global the chess scene is today.

At this point, I cannot resist quoting the following lines, written by William Borsodi of New York, a publisher of the ACM way back in 1897!

“While the first issue of the American Chess Magazine does not in any degree approach the excellence which will mark future issues, you will admit that it is far superior to any chess periodical ever offered before, yet neither the reading matter nor the illustrations are satisfying to the high ambitions of the editor and publisher. A vast improvement in the future numbers is assured. Already we have on hand such excellent material for the next issue that we no longer regard our undertaking as an experiment.”

So, to conclude, our new magazine has arrived and is here to stay. And we will consider it a great compliment if readers find it worthy to share the ACM with both their chess and non-chess friends, exhibiting the same pride they feel in being members of the American – and indeed worldwide – chess community!

Josip Asik, Editor-in-Chief
A MAGIC CARPET RIDE!

by FM Sotirios Logothetis
USA WINS GOLD AFTER NAIL-BITING FINISH!

CHINA'S WOMEN RETURN TO THE TOP AFTER 12 YEARS.

In what was perhaps the most exciting last round in an Olympiad since Dubai 1986, the United States of America narrowly edged out a determined Ukrainian side on tie-break to win their first Olympic gold medals in the Open section since Haifa 1976. However, if we take into account the long list of countries boycotting that particular event, which included the abstention of the Soviet Union and other chess superpowers, their wait for victory in a full-blown Olympiad actually extended all the way back to Stockholm 1937.

Having entered the 2016 event cherishing particularly high hopes and fielding three of the world’s top seven players, the American team performed consistently throughout and, with only minor hiccups, fended off the challenge of perennial favorites Russia, beat Ukraine in what would prove to be the decisive clash for gold, and went through the whole event undefeated. All this would have made their eventual victory appear smooth and seamless in most other events, but in Baku they had to contend with a fierce challenge from an inspired Ukrainian team, which bounced back from their loss against the USA and won all their other matches, including a politically significant one against principal rivals Russia, keeping up the pressure on the Americans until the very end.

The complicated tie-break system of the Olympiad rendered any last-round predictions futile, and even after both teams had concluded their matches it was still unclear on which side of the Atlantic the gold medal would eventually reside. It was only after the last moves of the Olympiad had been played, the last scoresheets signed, the last results accounted for, that the Americans’ victory was finally confirmed – by the narrowest of margins but also fully deserved.

The US team led the Olympiad from start to finish and, though their march towards the gold medals was not always plain sailing, having three elite players in their team provided the necessary stability and firepower to overcome most opponents. Moreover, it should not be overlooked that the other two members of the team, Ray Robson and Sam Shankland, also contributed significant points in crucial matches.
There was some criticism, not least by the World Champion, about the inclusion of Caruana and So in the US team, although one can certainly argue that it wasn’t wholly justified, as Fabiano was, after all, born and raised in the US (a country which he had represented in the past as well), while Wesley had been resident in the States for a number of years and in fact developed into an elite player while on US soil.

In any case, the significant growth of chess in the USA is clearly evident in all departments, including the very top level. Whereas Nakamura used to be the only home-grown world class American player, nowadays the US can boast several really strong indigenous Grandmasters (Robson and Shankland being two of them) and a very promising generation of young talents hard on their heels, of whom Samuel Sevian and World Junior Champion Jeffery Xiong are currently the most prominent examples. The future of American chess looks very bright indeed; it would hardly be a surprise to see the USA dominating the Olympiads for some years to come.

NO GOLD MEDAL FOR THE RUSSIAN TEAM

When it came to pre-tournament predictions, the US team, fielding Fabiano Caruana, Hikaru Nakamura and Wesley So, could justly entertain hopes of winning the Olympiad. But the same applied to the Russians, who have consistently been the number one rating favorites but have nevertheless failed to win an Olympiad since Bled 2002, which was also the last time they were headed by Garry Kasparov.

Experiencing mounting pressure and increasing frustration, year after year, it was understandable that this time the Russians were taking the event more seriously than ever, with Russian Chess Federation president Andrey Filatov personally responsible for captaining the team. Nevertheless, once again, they would not be taking home any gold medals...

Already in their first heavyweight contest, against Ukraine in the 4th round, Russia faltered badly and lost. The tension of the match mirrored that of the real life conflict between the two nations over the Crimean Peninsula, and indeed the Ukrainian expressions of sheer joy after claiming victory contrasted starkly with the defeated faces of the Russians. Despite this initial disappointment, the Russian team did recover to win several matches and keep up with the pace of the leaders, but two further drawn matches in the closing stages of the Olympiad ended all their hopes of an admittedly unlikely triumph. Instead they had to content with third place and the bronze medals, a result that can hardly be called a failure for any other team, but for the Russians that elusive gold will continue to haunt them for the next two years.

Former World Champion Vladimir Kramnik put in a strong performance in the second half to win the individual gold medal on board two, and Ian Nepomniachtchi’s remarkable string of seven consecutive wins at the start, when his teammates did not seem to be in particularly good form, helped keep Russia near the top. However, ironically, it was Ian’s loss against Wesley So in the crucial match against the USA that eventually put paid to Russia’s ambitions. As for World Championship challenger Sergey Karjakin, perhaps the forthcoming match in New York weighed too heavily on his mind; his performance was hardly sub-standard, but it was also nothing special. The wait for gold continues...

THE RISE OF UKRAINE

In place of a rather lackluster Russia, it was Ukraine that provided the tournament intrigue. Despite the absence of their natural leader for many years, Vassily Ivanchuk, who decided to skip the Olympiad and went off to a draughts tournament in Poland instead, all the other stalwarts of the team were in Baku and in good shape.

Pavel Eljanov deserves commendation for the way he handled the responsibility of playing on top board, but the brightest star of the team was Ivanchuk’s replacement, Andrei Volokitin. Already an Olympiad gold medalist since Calvia 2004, Volokitin returned to action with a bang, winning all his games but one and registering the highest rating performance of any player in Baku; his contribution to the success of the Ukrainian team was immense, although it should also be emphasized that none of his teammates balked under the pressure and each made his own significant contribution. Particularly impressive was the determination the Ukrainians displayed in the last round. Needing a big win against Slovenia any hope of overtaking the Americans, they dug in and eventually conceded only one draw. Indeed, for a moment, right after Eljanov’s distinguished opponent Alexander Belavsky resigned, it seemed that they had actually won the Olympiad again. But it turned out that, due to the complicated tie-break system, an otherwise unimportant individual win in the Germany-Estonia match had sealed their fate and condemned them to ‘only’ second place. While nobody could conceivably say that the Americans’ victory was in any way undeserved, particularly since they did beat Ukraine in their individual encounter, a Ukrainian Olympiad win would have felt no less justified.
HEROES

Naturally, there were quite a few success stories in this huge event, certainly too many to mention in a single article. But in an attempt to single out the most inspiring of them, one might start with the very successful performances of the young Indian team, which claimed fourth place, one lower than their bronze medal performance in Tromso 2014. It seems that the non-participation of chess legend, Vishy Anand, does not hamper their team too much, and it only remains to be seen how much more they could achieve with him on board too.

The even younger team of Iran was also a pleasant surprise. They fielded a bunch of very young players alongside experienced Grandmaster Elshan Ghaem Maghami, who jokingly described them as “my sons”. This delegation included the youngest player of the Olympiad in the Open section, 13-year old Alireza Firouzja, who has already won the International Master title and is well on his way to greater heights.

Peru, another youthful team, finished in 10th place, despite the absence of the legendary Julio Granda Zuniga. Meanwhile Canada scored their best ever result by finishing 11th and got to play on the first table in the last round, against the US, while even greater was the achievement of the Turkish team, with an unprecedented 9th place.

Another team that outdid all its previous outings was Norway, Carlsen, who in recent years has performed rather weakly (by his colossal standards, of course!) when playing for his national team, put in a very decent effort and led his home country to a remarkable 5th place.

And one could certainly not overlook the remarkable feat of the admittedly underrated Greek team: with only four won matches, but seven drawn, they were the only other team in the Open section, apart from the US, to go through the Olympiad undefeated!

And finally, what shall we make of the Filipino Grandmaster Eugenio Torre? Playing in his 26th Olympiad (an incredible record!) he scored perhaps his best ever result: ten points from eleven games! It seems as if his career is only just beginning...

IN THE SHADOWS

Naturally, there were some not-so-successful stories as well. One could only be amazed to see defending champions China play the Faroe Islands somewhere in the hall, as late as the 9th round. The Chinese had an uncharacteristically poor tournament, by no means a reflection of their true strength and standing, strewn with errors and misfortunes, and only a strong finish allowed them to salvage some pride and finish 13th.

Poland, an ambitious and very talented team, had a similar fate – though to a lesser extent, falling behind early on and never challenging for the medals they surely had at the back of their minds. However, both these countries have a steady stream of young and very talented players striving for a place in their national team, which practically ensures that they will bounce back in the immediate future.

The same applies to hosts Azerbaijan, a very strong team with lots of ambition, but never seeming fully at ease with the responsibility of representing the host country. While they appeared to handle it efficiently in the first half, they eventually buckled under the pressure in the second, with Mamedyarov alternating between his brilliant and his erratic self, Radjabov somewhat out-of-sorts due to inactivity, and the recent addition Naiditsch following a series of four wins with four consecutive losses, the last one in a crucial match against England that sealed the Azeri’s fate. Though their 12th place cannot be called an outright failure, they would surely have been justified in expecting so much more...
Trophy for Coach D

The US players and coach Alexander Lenderman are all young in years, yet it was the vast experience of their veteran captain that they valued so highly in Baku. What popular Mike “Coach K” Krzyzewski is for US basketball, so John Donaldson is for US chess. “Coach D” has captained the national team for twelve Chess Olympiads, since Dubai in 1986, also six World Team events (Gold, 1993) and one Pan American tournament (Gold, 2013)! But receiving the Olympiad trophy was surely the high point in the career of the modest IM from San Francisco and its Mechanics Institute Chess Club, the nation’s oldest, founded in 1854.

Q&A with IM John Donaldson, Captain of the US team

The US team with Caruana and So was certainly stronger than in Tromso 2014. But how confident were you that the team could win the gold medal?

The US team selected for the Baku Olympiad was significantly stronger than the one that played in Tromso. Not only were Fabiano Caruana and Wesley So playing for the United States for the first time, but Sam Shankland and Ray Robson both improved a great deal the past two years. However there were no guarantees of success. There were several other very strong teams with average ratings over 2700 – Russia, China, Azerbaijan and Ukraine. Also keep in mind the Olympiad is shorter than it used to be – only 11 rounds – and the number of teams taking part is constantly increasing. All this means there is little room for error. We were optimistic going in, but took nothing for granted.

Was there a particular moment during the event when you realized the gold medal was within your grasp?

We played consistently well throughout and were never in serious danger of losing a match, but it was only after we beat Ukraine and India and drew with Russia in rounds 6-8 that things started looking really good.

What were the biggest strengths that Team USA showed in Baku and to what extent were these a result of team spirit?

All players were in decent form and the team didn’t lose a single individual game through the first seven rounds. Fabiano, Hikaru and Wesley are, of course, serious competitors most of the time; but, in Baku they were all on the same page. They are professionals who have a lot of respect for each other.

How tough was it for you personally to follow the critical moments in USA’s matches, e.g. with Canada?

My biggest worry before the match with Canada was whether Hikaru and Wesley would be healthy enough to play well. Both had colds the last few days of the tournament, but battled through it. Wesley and Fabiano won their games in the last round fairly quickly, and we were up 2-0. Not long after, Hikaru drew and Sam ran into amazing preparation and lost. Things happened so quickly there wasn’t much chance to get nervous during the match, but the tie-break was something else! There is something to be said about using head to head as the first tiebreak.

Can you identify any particularly outstanding contributions and characteristics of the US team members?

The results of the first three speak for themselves. Collectively they lost only a single game among them. Sam and Ray were in an awkward situation in that they were both strong players nearing 2700 FIDE – first board material for most countries. They understood going in they would not play so much, but it was still hard for them to find a rhythm. Sam and Ray never complained and supported each other throughout the event.

Could you give a brief comment about the play of other pre-Olympiad favorites: Russia, Ukraine, China, and India?

Ukraine played fantastically, and it was unfortunate that only one team could win. This was the first Olympiad since the change from game to match points in 2008 that a team reached 20 points. Going in I would have thought it extremely unlikely that one let alone two teams would have scored 20 out of a possible 22 points.
It’s true that Russia was seeded number one and finished third but I would not characterize their performance as a failure. Look at their result closely and you will see they gained 12 rating points collectively, performing close to 2800 as a team.

China’s failure was perhaps the biggest surprise of the Olympiad, but, after back to back wins in the 2014 Olympiad and the 2015 World Team Championship, maybe a letdown was inevitable. I’m sure they will be back at the top soon.

Azerbaijan was another top seed that failed to meet expectations. They started out great but losing to India in round 5 by 3-1 slowed them down and later they had to face Russia when the latter was playing really well. Sometimes playing at home is not so easy.

India showed their performance in 2014 (bronze) was no fluke, and one might argue their result in Baku was even better. Keep in mind they did this with only four players, as their reserve didn’t see action after the first two rounds.

What impact on US chess, in general, do you hope this extraordinary success will have?

Things have never looked better for American chess. Currently we not only have three players in the top ten, but also the two highest-rated players in the world under 16, Jeffery Xiong and Samuel Sevian. One challenge is for more American players to cross 2700 FIDE. Sam and Ray are getting close, and Xiong might be there in two years. We should have the nucleus for success for the next decade, if not longer.
As an outsider who was nevertheless following the games inside the playing hall in Baku, I am able to provide some first hand and objective observations on the US team’s performance in the Olympiad. Beforehand, in common with many others, I had tipped the US team as a favorite to win the gold medal, based on the following considerations:
A) Their top three boards had the highest average Elo rating.
B) Their players had all showed themselves to be in excellent form recently, and
C) When it came to the crunch, I believed these top three American players would be able to perform better than any other team.

These factors proved to be valid. However, the majority of observers, including myself, expected more from Nakamura. In some respects, Olympiad playing conditions resemble a big US Open – something Hikaru grew up with and would make him feel quite at home. Being hardened by the nerve racking street fighting of American Opens, I certainly did not expect Hikaru to lose with the white pieces, or indeed either color, in the penultimate round against Mchedlishvili of Georgia. Nevertheless Nakamura still delivered an overall 2762 Elo performance.

Wesley So had an amazing 8½/10 result, with a tournament performance rating of 2896, winning make-or-break games in matches against Russia and also in the last two rounds. Excellent opening preparation and a steady hand was Wesley’s trademark at the Olympiad.

Caruana was a true team leader, performing at 2838 and not losing a single game. Keeping your head when the chips are down is the trademark of a true champion in any sport and we saw that clearly in Fabiano’s last round game versus Bareev.

Sam Shankland and Ray Robson alternated on board 4, where they each had their ups and downs. But for this article, I have selected two games by Wesley So, demonstrating his excellent opening preparation and proficiency in execution, and also the impressive last round win by Fabiano Caruana who not only displayed fine play but also most definitely the steely nerves of an elite grandmaster.

Grandmaster Ivan Sokolov has been a regular participant in Chess Olympiads since 1988. In Moscow 1994, he won the silver medal as a member of the Bosnian team, while in Bled 2002 he represented his adopted country of the Netherlands for the first time. In the latest two Olympiads, at Tromso 2014 and Baku 2016, Ivan, a FIDE senior trainer, attended as team captain for, respectively, UAE and Iran. As a player, he has won many top tournaments, his most notable success on US soil being a win in the World Open in Philadelphia 2012. He has authored a number of best selling chess books: Winning Chess Middlegames, Sacrifice & Initiative and the latest one, Ivan’s Chess Journey.

At the present time Ivan resides in the Netherlands.
C54

Ian Nepomniachtchi 2740
Wesley So 2782

Round 8, Russia-USA

1.e4 e5 2.d3 c6 3.c4 c5 4.0-0 d6 5.d3 0-0

The Giuoco Piano or Italian game has been very popular of late. One reason is White’s desire to avoid the massive theory attached to the different Ruy Lopez variations, while the other is simply that it achieves good practical results for White. Objectively, White has very little, although in most games he has obtained some pull at very little risk. In keeping with his general approach to openings, Wesley So has his favorite lines in the Italian Game and usually sticks to them.

6.a4 This is a more recent attempt. White seizes space on the queenside, while ensuring he has a retreat for his bishop. He also remains flexible, which is why he is not yet willing to place his knight on d2 or a pawn on c3. In fact White is waiting for Black to push ...d7-d6 before playing c2-c3 himself.

Black cannot then successfully carry out his projected ...d5.

The main reason White has chosen the text lately is that after 6.c3 d5 7.exd5 exd5 he had not been able to prove any advantage. However, Black had initially been under pressure after 8.a4.

That is, until Jon Ludwig Hammer showed the way and Wesley So
successfully copied and pasted it into his game against Anand: 8...cxb6 9.axb5 cxe7! 10.a5 c6! 11.axb6 cxb5 12...xa7 exa7 13...xa7 axa7 14...xe5 f5

This position reveals Hammer's opening idea. For the price of a single pawn, Black obtains the bishop pair and a harmonious development. In certain respects, this sacrifice bears some similarity to the Marshall gambit:
A) 15...e3 brought White success in the Azerbaijani - Hungary match in Baku; however, Black's play can be improved: 15...b4! (15...b8 16.d4 f6 17...d3± R.Mamedov (2666) - C.Balogh (2614), Baku (ol) 2016) 16.cxb4 f6 17...f3 exd3 18...xd3 1...xd3. With an active bishop pair, Black obviously has compensation for a minimal material investment here: 19...d1 e2 20...d7 c6

(2770) - W.So (2771), Saint Louis 2016 - C1 129/110.

6...d6 6...a6, trying to remain flexible in readiness for the ...d5 pawn push, did not end well for Black after 7...g5! h6 8.h4 gxe7 9.g3 d6 10.c3 c6 11...e6 fxe6 12.b4 e8 13...d2 b6 14...b3 g7 15.d4 exd4 16...d4 c8 17...c1± A.Demchenko (2600) - V.Fedoseev (2670), Abu Dhabi 2016. In the case of 6...d5, the situation is indeed different, as after 7.exd5 cxd5 8...b2 the white pawn is still on c2 and hence d3 is not a weakness, although perhaps White will later play c2-c3 at a moment of his choosing.

7.c3 a6

White should not push too hard:
A1) 21.b5? c5 22...xb7 (22...xe5?? fxe5++) 22...d8=; A2) 21...xb7 cxb7 22...d2 d4=; A3) 21...e3 cxe3 22.fxe3 f7=

B) The stem game, played some months before Anand - So, went 15...e3 b8 16.d4 g6 16...f6 17.g3 17...f3 c5 18.exg6 hxg6 18...e2 d6 19.g3 cxd5 S.Millet (2346) - J.Hammer (2689) Drancy 2016;
C) 15.f1 b8 16...a3 b4 17.cxb4 dx5 18...c4 dx5 (18...c6) 19...e7 c4 20...xd5 exd5 21...d7 c6= V.Anand

8.h3 Less than a month after this game we saw 8...g5?! at the Isle of Man Open. This pin, as I know from my own experience, is always unpleasant for Black in practical play. You cannot let the bishop remain there, but then again you are not really inclined to weaken your kingside by chasing it away! In the cited game, Leko, playing the black pieces, went for the chase with 8...h6 9.h4 g5 10.g3 f7 11...d2 e7 12.g1 b7 (12...g4 13.h4 c6 14.d1 g5 15.e3+)

Now 13.d4!
A) 13...dx4 14...xd4 cxd4 15.cxd4 exd4 16.f3 axb2 (16...d6 17.e5 dxe5 18...c2+) 17.axb2 c3 18.d3 and White has great compensation in return for the two pawns.
B) 13...g4 14.\(\text{\_}\text{h}4\) exd4 15.cxd4 \(\text{\_}\text{xd}4\)
16.\(\text{\_}\text{f}1\) \(\text{\_}\text{f}6\) 17.\(\text{\_}\text{f}5\) \(\text{\_}\text{x}5\) 18.exf5 h5
19.\(\text{\_}\text{f}4!\) \(\text{\_g}5\) 20.\(\text{\_}\text{g}3\) \(\text{\_h}6\)

J.van Foreest (2615) - P.Leko (2709), Isle of Man 2016.

8...\(\text{\_}\text{a}7\) 9.\(\text{\_}\text{e}1\)

21.\(\text{\_}\text{c}1!\) \(\text{\_}\text{x}1\) 22.\(\text{\_}\text{xc}1\) \(\text{\_}\text{e}5\) 23.\(\text{\_}\text{a}2\)
\(\text{\_}\text{f}6\) 24.\(\text{\_}\text{d}2+\) \(\text{\_}\text{h}7\) 25.\(\text{\_}\text{g}5\) \(\text{\_}\text{g}6\) 26.\(\text{\_}\text{h}4\)
\(\text{\_}\text{f}7?\) (26...\(\text{\_}\text{g}7\) is arguably Black’s best. However, White has a nice exchange sacrifice idea here: 27.\(\text{\_}\text{b}3!\), preparing \(\text{\_d}1\) after an exchange sacrifice on e5, e.g. 27...\(\text{\_}\text{g}8\) 28.\(\text{\_}\text{xe}5\!\!\) \(\text{\_}\text{exe}5\) 29.\(\text{\_}\text{d}1\) \(\text{\_d}7\) 30.\(\text{\_}\text{hx}5\) \(\text{\_}\text{e}7\) 31.\(\text{\_}\text{e}4\)
\(\text{\_}\text{b}4\) 32.\(\text{\_}\text{d}5\) \(\rightarrow\) 27.\(\text{\_}\text{xe}5+\) \(\text{\_}\text{g}7\) 28.\(\text{\_}\text{f}6+\)
\(\text{\_}\text{xf}6\) 29.\(\text{\_}\text{xc}7\) \(\text{\_}\text{f}8\) 30.\(\text{\_}\text{xb}7\) winning in

This position was the subject of serious theoretical discussions in Baku and the very next day Wesley So tried it – from the White side!

9...\(\text{\_}\text{e}7\) 9...\(\text{\_}\text{e}6\) was the reply of Wesley’s opponent, Aryan Tari. Wesley then gained some advantage after

10.\(\text{\_}\text{bd}2\) \(\text{\_}\text{e}7\) 11.\(\text{\_}\text{xe}6\) \(\text{\_}fxe6\) 12.\(\text{\_}\text{f}1\) \(\text{\_}\text{g}6\)
13.\(\text{\_}\text{g}3\) \(\text{\_}\text{d}7\) 14.d4\# Such positions are by definition better for White, but after 14...exd4 15.cxd4 h5 16.\(\text{\_}\text{e}3\) (16.b4?)
16...\(\text{\_}\text{c}5\) 17.\(\text{\_}\text{axb}5\) \(\text{\_}xb5\) 18.\(\text{\_}\text{xc}5\) \(\text{\_}\text{xc}5\)
19.\(\text{\_}\text{b}3\) \(\text{\_}\text{exe}3\) 20.\(\text{\_}\text{exe}3\) \(\text{\_}\text{e}5\) 21.\(\text{\_}\text{ad}1\)
(21.\(\text{\_}\text{f}6\)) 21...\(\text{\_}\text{h}8\) the game was later drawn, W.So (2782) - A.Tari (2570), Baku (ol) 2016.

10.d4 Another possibility is 10.\(\text{\_}\text{bd}2\)
\(\text{\_}\text{g}6\) 11.d4
It seems quite clear to me that Black’s counterplay should be linked to the central ...d6-d5 pawn break. However, Radjabov refrains from this and I think that is what cost him the game: B1) In case of an immediate 13...d5 Radjabov probably did not like the position arising from 14.exd5 e4 (14...exd4 15...xd8 16.c4 15...h2 16...c4 (16...c4) 16...d8 17...h1; B2) However, 13...c6, preparing the ...d5 push, should equalize for Black, e.g. B2a) 14...c2 d5 (14...c6); B2b) 14.b4 d5; B3) 13...d7 14.b4

B3a221) 18...e4 fxg4 19.xf2 xf3+ 20.gxf3 (20...xf3 xe1 21.xb2 xe3) 20...xf2+ 21.xf2 wh4+ 22.g2 xe1 23.wd4 wd4 24.xd4 w6d1 25.xf2 xd4+; B3a222) 18...e2 fx2 leads to a peaceful end (by perpetual check): 19.exf2 (g4 20.d4 w4 21.g3 wg3+ 22.g2 we3+ 23.wd1 w3+; B3b) But not 14...c6? as in Kramnik - Radjabov

...as this invites Kramnik to do something he probably wants to do anyway: grab more space for White! – and why not? 15.d5! d7 16.c4 if4 17.c5! and now:

B3b1) Your computer may suggest 17...dxc5; however, human grandmasters would instinctively prefer White after 18.b2 (or 18.c4 cb4 19.xe5) 18...cb4 19.xe5; B3b2) 17...g5 18.c4+ was the continuation in the game but Radjabov was getting rather short of time and his position quickly collapsed: 18...w7 19.xe3 (19.xe6 w6 20.w3) 19...b5 20.c1 xe4 21.cxd6 w3d6


B3a22) 17.hxg4

22.xf4 gxf4 (22...xe4 23.xe5 23.xf1 24.xf1+ 24.wd5 w6d2 26.w4 27.wf4 xxe5 28.xe5 29.xg7+ xg7 30.g4 rh3 31.xe2 xf3 32.xf3 rh8 33.e5 34.gxb6 1-0 V.Kramnik (2088) T.Radjabov (2722), Baku (ol) 2016.

Incidentally, Azerbaijan’s defeat against Russia dashed any hopes of medals for the host country.

10...g6 11.d3 11...xd2 transposes to the Kramnik game.

11...c6 12.c3 f5 12...b6 14...f1 exd4

13...b4 d5 15.dxe4 xg4 16.xf2 w4 17.wd3 w3d5

A critical moment. How should White recapture on d4?! Well, more or less à tempo, just like he played the whole opening, Nepo blitzed out...

15.xd4 15.exd4 has its merits, since after 15...d5 16.b4 White can maintain the central tension, for example, 16...dxe4 17.xe4 d5 18.d2+ with 19.c5 to follow, White appears to have a small plus.

15...xd4 16.cxd4 d5 16.exd4 The other strategic way for Black was 16...f5!? 17.c4+ h8 18.e5 d5 (18...dxe5? 19.xe5 e5 20.xe5 21.xe5 with d6 to follow) 19.xf1 a5.

17.e5 f6 18.a3 fxe5

This is the critical moment which demands an important strategic decision but, true to form, Nepo blitzed out his next move too.
19...\textcolor{red}{dxe5}?! However here White takes a huge strategic risk! Black now has four pawns vs. two on the queenside, and the black pawns will at some stage roll. On the other hand, White’s four vs. two on the kingside face a strong light square blockade on e6 and f5 and will not roll that easily – or not roll at all! The speed with which Nepo made such important decisions can only be explained by his complete lack of nerves during this crucial match.

On the other hand 19.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{dxe5}} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{dxe5}} 20.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{dxe5}} looks equal: 20...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{g6}} (20...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{a5}}) 21.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{c1}} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{f5}}.

19...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{a5}} Wesley decides to fix the white a-pawn on a light square – which is a good strategic decision from which he can benefit later.

In case of an immediate 19...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{c5}}, it is quite possible that Wesley did not like the consequences of 20.b4! b6 (20...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{cx}b4} 21.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{ae}3} with \textcolor{red}{\textbf{b3}} and \textcolor{red}{\textbf{d4}} to follow, looks like compensation, though your computer engine may tell you otherwise) 21.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{c3}} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{e6}} 22.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{b3}} (or 22.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{h}3}).

20.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{c1}} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{e7}} 21.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{b3}} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{f5}} 22.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{d4}} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{e6}}

This is the third and final critical moment! Yet Nepo continues to play very fast.

23.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{xf5}}? In a higher sense this is the losing blunder, after which White’s game can no longer be saved, especially against someone like Wesley So. Instead 23.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{xe6}} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{x}xe6} 24.g3, with f2-f4 to follow, was very much needed here.

23...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{xf5}} 24.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{d3}} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{f4}} 25.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{xg6}} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{hxg6}}

The smoke is starting to clear. Black has a strategically won game, while White has plenty of time on his clock! The pawn on a4 is a weakness, the four black queenside pawns are mobile and ready to roll, and the knight on e6 is a fantastic blockading piece. All this adds up simply to a strategically won position for Black.

26.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{d1}} 26.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{g}3} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{xa4}} 27.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{c}2} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{b}4} 28.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{exe}6} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{xf}6}.

26...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{af8}} 27.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{f}3} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{b}4} 28.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{xf}4} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{xf}4} 29.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{xf}4} Black has various ways to win this position; Wesley chooses the one that gives White the least possible counterplay.

29...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{xa}4} 29...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{xb}2} was also possible, but so prefers to keep the b-file closed.

30.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{d}3} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{f}5} 31.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{b}1} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{f}4} 32.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{c}2} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{h}7} 33.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{e}3} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{c}4} 34.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{d}1} 34.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{c}3} is met by 34...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{e}4}.

34...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{f}4} 35.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{c}3} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{b}4} 36.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{c}1} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{a}4} 37.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{h}4} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{g}8} 38.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{b}1} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{e}4} 39.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{d}1} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{d}4} 40.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{e}3} 40.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{xd}4} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{xd}4} is winning for Black.

40...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{xf}3}+ 41.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{gf}f}3 \textcolor{red}{\textbf{xf}5} 42.e6

42...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{xf}4}! Execution is always tactical!

43.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{xe}4} 44.e7 runs into mate. After 43...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{h}3} 44.e8\textcolor{red}{\textbf{w}+} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{h}7} even an extra queen does not help White: 45.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{xf}6}+ \textcolor{red}{\textbf{xf}6} 46.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{c}2}+ \textcolor{red}{\textbf{h}7}.

43...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{xe}4} 44.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{fxe}4} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{xe}4} 45.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{d}2} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{xe}6} 46.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{a}5} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{g}4}+ 47.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{f}1} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{b}5} 48.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{c}7} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{g}5} 49.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{b}8}+ \textcolor{red}{\textbf{h}7} 50.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{d}6} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{b}4} 0–1

\textbf{B12}

\textbf{Fabiano Caruana} \hspace{1cm} 2808
\textbf{Evgeny Bareev} \hspace{1cm} 2675

Round \textbf{11}, USA-Canada

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 \textcolor{red}{\textbf{xf}5} 4.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{d}3} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{e}6} 5.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{e}2} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{d}7} 6.0–0

6...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{g}6} 6...h6 and 6...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{e}7} had been the most frequently played moves here.

This bishop retreat, favored by David Navara, is not considered to be the main line here. The general idea behind Black’s move is to vacate the f5 square for his g8-knight. For readers who are interested in new theoretical ideas for Black in this position, I would advise investigating 6...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{b}4}!?; played in the Baku Olympiad by Mamedyarov. This move actually stems from Caro–Kann expert Alexey Dreev, team captain of the Azeri side at the Baku Olympiad! Black’s idea is very logical. He develops his bishop and does not mind if it is eventually chased to c7, as from there it will be well placed to support ...f6, trying to open the center in Black’s favor.

Then might follow 7.\textcolor{red}{\textbf{bd}2} \textcolor{red}{\textbf{a}5} 8.c3
A) The original game went 8...c7
  9...e1 h6 10.f1 g6 11.g3 c5 12.d3
e7 13.xg6 hxg6 14.h5 0–0

15.d2! (creating a deadly threat of
gxg7?) 15...h4 16.f4 xf3+ 17.xf3
(17.gxf3??) 17...h4!± M.Adams
(2738) - S.Mamedyarov (2761), Baku
(ol) 2016;
B) 8...h6 is Dreev’s improvement on
Mamedyarov’s play and which he tried
immediately after the Olympiad. Black
makes a useful move, while waiting for
White to spend time on b2–b4 which will
only help him by sending the bishop to c7,
where it wants to go anyway. 9.b4 This
helps Black. Playing like Adams with
9...e1, and ...f1, looks more logical to me.
9...c7 10.a4 e7

14.g3 c4= 14.g3 g4 15.h4
xe2 16.xe2 f5 17.hxf5 exf5
18.f3

21.xf4 b8 22.g3 g5 23.g4 f6
24.f5 gx4 25.gfx6+ f8 26.xh6+
g8 27.g6++;
B2) 11.b3 0–0 12.h4 h7 13.f4 a5
14.d3 e4 15.a3 f5 16.bxa5 f7
17.b4

Black needed to play 18...f4! (18...h8
19.h5 f7 20.f4 J. van Foreest
(2615) - P.Basso (2428), Isle of Man
2016) with a likely draw by perpetual
check after 19.h5 f7 20.xf4 a6
17...g5! 18.xg5 hxg5 19.f3 g6
20.d2 xd3 21.wd3 g4 22.fxd2
and Black had an excellent game in A.Kosteniuk (2537) - A.Dreev (2660), Sochi 2016.

7.a4

I would not be surprised if readers were wondering: “Is this advance of the a-pawn really the most useful move for White here?” Well, initially, I wondered the same thing! In such Caro-Kann positions, White often advances his a-pawn, grabbing space on the queenside, and the merits of this strategy will definitely be revealed in this game! Black is not in the frame of mind to play a move like 7...a5 because that would weaken his control of the b5 square, since later he will want to push ...c5. So Bareev will allow the white pawn to advance to a5 and, as a consequence, the space Caruana seizes on the queenside will prove advantageous for him. Caruana has huge experience as White in this line and until now had chosen 7...bd2 8...h6 8...b3, usually obtaining an opening advantage.

A) Previous Caruana games went 8...h5 after which White indeed had an opening advantage: 9..d2 9...d4 e8 10...a5 h5 11...g3 e7 12...f4 a6 13...c4 dxc4 14...xc4 0-0 15...e2! F.Caruana (2779) - E.Tomashevsky (2703), Paris 2013. Or 9...c3 e7 10...g4 h4 11...xh4

Black is quite happy to let White damage his pawn structure with ...xh6 and thereby part with his bishop pair. In reality, the black kingside pawn structure will prove to be quite all right, whereas White will miss his bishop pair! Navara’s idea of keeping his knight on h6 is to prevent any g2-g4 push by White, as seen in Caruana’s games against Sjugirov and Fernandez. 9...c3 (9...h6 gxh6 10...d2 b6 11...c3 a5 12...c1 c5 13...d3 h5 14...c5 15...xc5 16...c5 16...a4 0-0 17...h5 18...h7! A.Areschenko (2661) - D.Navara (2728), Muelheim 2016) 9...h6 10...xh6 gxh6 11...e1 c5 12...d2 c4 13...c1 f6? J.Tomczak (2588) - D.Navara (2744), Lublin 2016.

7...e7 Less convincing now is 7...h6, compared to the Navara games given above, as after 8.a5 a6 9...f4 e7...

...the black knights cannot easily come to the d5-square, if it is vacated, so White has an advantage after 10.c4! (the white knight can now develop to c3) 10...f5 11.h3 0-0 12...c3 and in M.Vachier-Lagrave (2719) - A.Shabalov (2546), Tromso (m/1) 2013, though this is much better for Black than what Bareev got himself into!

8.a5 If Black does not stop White’s a-pawn advance, then the pawn will push on to a6; then later on, Black will be saddled with a weak b5-square if he advances ...c6-c5.

8...a6 9.b4 For the time being Caruana prevents Black’s ...c5 pawn push and seizes more space on the queenside. Black’s counterplay is now centered on first of all pushing ...f6, challenging the white center.

9...f5 10...c3 f6 Bareev is using a standard plan of counterplay in such positions. It is quite impressive how convincingly and quickly Caruana achieves a great advantage here.

11...f4 fxe5

This is an important moment. Caruana correctly judges that he should create a kingside pawn majority, setting the stage for a later kingside pawn advance.

12.dxe5! 12...xex5 13...xe5 d6 14...xd6 cxd6 15...d2 0-0 16...f3 c7 is least acceptable for Black.

12...e7 Black has covered the g5-square and is ready to push ...h7-h5, ensuring a long life for his f5-knight, but it is White to move! An immediate 12...h5, preventing the g2-g4 push, does not work because of 13...g5+ e7 14...d2
0–0–0 15.\(\textnormal{dx}f3\).

13.g4! \(\textnormal{h}h4\) 14.\(\textnormal{dx}d4\) \(\textnormal{xf}7\) 15.\(\textnormal{g}3\) \(\textnormal{h}5\) Bareev is hoping to open the h-file and gain counterplay against the white king. 15...\(\textnormal{e}5\), searching for counterplay on the other side, will not really work for Black, as after 16.\(\textnormal{bx}c5\) \(\textnormal{xc}5\) 17.\(\textnormal{dx}d2\) 0–0 (17...\(\textnormal{c}e4?\) 18.\(\textnormal{dx}e4\) \(\textnormal{exe}4\) 19.\(\textnormal{fa}4+\) \(\textnormal{d}d7\) 20.\(\textnormal{f}b1\)+–) 18.\(\textnormal{f}4\) with 19.\(\textnormal{f}5\) to follow and White has a clear advantage.

16.\(\textnormal{gxh}5\) \(\textnormal{xc}7\) 17.\(\textnormal{g}4\) \(\textnormal{h}6\)

18.\(\textnormal{f}4\)! A multi-purpose move. It protects the e5-pawn, prepares the f4–f5 push, and creates the very unpleasant threat of \(\textnormal{e}1\). White already has a very large and probably winning advantage, and Caruana exploits it with computer-like precision.

18...\(\textnormal{c}5\) 19.\(\textnormal{bx}c5\) \(\textnormal{xc}5\) 19...\(\textnormal{xc}5\) does not help, as after 20.\(\textnormal{f}5\) Black does not have a good move: for example, 20...0–0–0 21.\(\textnormal{fxe}6\) \(\textnormal{exe}6\) 22.\(\textnormal{f}7\) wins.

20.\(\textnormal{h}1\) 0–0–0

21.\(\textnormal{d}2\) Caruana is in no hurry and calmly develops his last minor piece, safely building on his already huge advantage. Black has been totally outplayed and has no good moves here. The h-file related counterplay is Black’s only hope. The direct 21.\(\textnormal{e}1\) also wins, as Black loses significant material without any compensation: 21...\(\textnormal{dh}8\) 21...\(\textnormal{f}8\) 22.\(\textnormal{xf}5\) \(\textnormal{exe}4\) 23.\(\textnormal{e}6+\)+– 21...\(\textnormal{hx}5\) 22.\(\textnormal{hx}5\) \(\textnormal{ex}h5\) 23.\(\textnormal{g}xh6\) \(\textnormal{c}e6\) 24.\(\textnormal{f}d8\) \(\textnormal{xd}8\) 25.\(\textnormal{g}2\) \(\textnormal{d}2\)+– 22.\(\textnormal{hx}4\) \(\textnormal{hx}4\) 23.\(\textnormal{f}4\) \(\textnormal{hx}5\) 24.\(\textnormal{f}xh6\)+–.

21...\(\textnormal{dh}8\) 21...\(\textnormal{f}8\), protecting the e6-pawn, loses to 22.\(\textnormal{hx}4\) (22.\(\textnormal{e}1\)! \(\textnormal{hx}5\) gives Black hopes) 22...\(\textnormal{hx}4\) 23.\(\textnormal{f}5\)+–

White is a pawn up, has two mobile connected passed pawns on f5 and e5, and total domination. The black pieces piled up on the h-file cannot create any threats. Total annihilation! Bareev plays a few more moves.

26...\(\textnormal{e}7\) 27.\(\textnormal{e}3\) \(\textnormal{b}8\) The white pawns now simply march on.

28.\(\textnormal{f}6\) \(\textnormal{f}8\) 29.\(\textnormal{g}4\) \(\textnormal{h}6\) 30.\(\textnormal{g}3\) \(\textnormal{f}7\) The black e6-bishop needs to move, whereupon White will push e5–e6, so Black decided to put an end to his agony.

1–0

Impressive play by Caruana! In team competitions, wins on Board 1 (the benefit of having a strong team leader!) are always important and this one would also prove decisive for the USA’s gold medal win.

E99

Wesley So (2782)
Federico Perez Ponsa (2585)
Round 3, USA-Argentina

1.\(\textnormal{f}3\) \(\textnormal{f}6\) 2.\(\textnormal{c}4\) \(\textnormal{g}6\) 3.\(\textnormal{c}3\) \(\textnormal{g}7\) 4.\(\textnormal{e}4\) \(\textnormal{d}6\) 5.\(\textnormal{d}4\) 0–0 As we saw in his game versus Nepomniachtchi, Wesley is usually eager to follow his own lines and either try to improve on his previous play or find something new further down the road. Here we see him reviving an old idea of Croatian Grandmaster Zdenko Kozul. Against the King’s Indian Defense Wesley normally goes for the Mar del Plata set-up, arguably the sharpest KID of them all, and this game is no exception.

6.\(\textnormal{xe}2\) \(\textnormal{e}5\) 7.0–0 \(\textnormal{c}6\) 8.\(\textnormal{d}5\) \(\textnormal{e}7\) 9.\(\textnormal{e}1\) \(\textnormal{d}7\) 10.\(\textnormal{e}3\) \(\textnormal{f}5\) 11.\(\textnormal{f}3\) \(\textnormal{f}4\) 12.\(\textnormal{f}2\) \(\textnormal{g}5\)
White is at something of a crossroads here. But Wesley heads for the same continuation he had already played previously in his games against Nakamura and Ding Liren.

13.\textit{\textit{Bc1}} This is the second time Wesley chose this move. I wonder whether a year ago, while playing Ding Liren (see the following comments on 13...\textit{\textit{g6}}), he already wanted to play the text continuation. 13.\textit{\textit{Bd3}} \textit{\textit{g6}} 14.\textit{\textit{c5}} was seen in another very well-known Wesley game: 14...\textit{\textit{f6}} 15.\textit{\textit{c1}} \textit{\textit{f7}} 16.\textit{\textit{h1}} \textit{\textit{h5}}

17.\textit{\textit{cxd6}} (If my memory does not deceive me, the suggested improvement for White was 17.\textit{\textit{b5}} a6 18.\textit{\textit{a3}} in order to deny Black an immediate ...\textit{\textit{b5}} push as Nakamura played on his 19\textsuperscript{th} move) 17...\textit{\textit{cxd6}} 18.\textit{\textit{b5}} a6 19.\textit{\textit{a3}} b5! 20.\textit{\textit{c6}} g4 \textit{\textit{W.So}} (2779) - H.Nakamura (2814), Saint Louis 2015 - CI 125/201, and Black later won with a brilliant attack. I suggest readers locate this beautiful game and play it over. 13.\textit{\textit{g4}} is another approach by White, aimed at first stopping Black’s advances on the kingside. Wesley tried this two years ago and after 13...\textit{\textit{h5}} 14.\textit{\textit{h3}} \textit{\textit{f6}} 15.\textit{\textit{d3}} \textit{\textit{h6}} 16.\textit{\textit{c5}} \textit{\textit{xc5}} 17.\textit{\textit{dxc5}} \textit{\textit{dx}c5} 18.\textit{\textit{dxc5}} \textit{\textit{g6}} 19.\textit{\textit{e1}} \textit{\textit{f8}} 20.\textit{\textit{b5}} \textit{\textit{d6}} he went on to win a messy game, W.So (2719) - L.van Wely (2672), Wijk aan Zee 2014.

13...\textit{\textit{f7}}

13...\textit{\textit{g6}} was Ding Liren’s choice versus Wesley. 14.\textit{\textit{c5}} \textit{\textit{xc5}} 15.\textit{\textit{b4}} \textit{\textit{a6}} 16.\textit{\textit{d3}} is a standard type of sacrifice for White here. For the sacrificed pawn White has displaced the black knight on a6, and also has pressure on the c-file. Black’s kingside attack is not that dangerous, because he is missing an extra attacking piece (his misplaced knight on a6).

16...\textit{\textit{h5}} 17.\textit{\textit{b5}} b6 18.\textit{\textit{e1}} \textit{\textit{f7}} 19.\textit{\textit{d2}} \textit{\textit{f6}} 20.\textit{\textit{f2}} and White went on to win in W.So (2760) - Ding Liren (2782), Bilbao 2015.

14.\textit{\textit{c5}}! This pawn sacrifice is the point behind 13.\textit{\textit{e1}}. Black needs to take the pawn, otherwise, White’s queenside attack develops too quickly after 15.\textit{\textit{cxd6}} \textit{\textit{cxd6}} 16.\textit{\textit{b5}}.

14...\textit{\textit{xc5}} Black correctly goes for the white bishop pair. 14...\textit{\textit{dxc5}} is inferior, as after 15.\textit{\textit{d6}} \textit{\textit{xd6}} 16.\textit{\textit{c4+}} White’s f2-bishop is a useful piece, whereas Black’s d7-knight obviously gets in the way of the protection of the d-pawn.

15.\textit{\textit{xc5}}!? An idea devised 26 years ago at the Novi Sad 1990 Olympiad by the then Yugoslav, now Croatian grandmaster Zdenko Kozul. White was not successful and the result of the game obviously played a role in it being overlooked. However, Wesley dug deeper into it and found Kozul’s idea was worth repeating! After 15.\textit{\textit{b4}} \textit{\textit{a6}} (15...\textit{\textit{d7}}? 16.\textit{\textit{b5}} ± shows the
advantage of having the white rook already developed on c1) 16.b5 was another possibility for White and is a standard type of pawn sacrifice here, also seen in So – Ding Liren, given above.

15...dxc5 16.c4 White’s idea becomes clear. He wants to push 17.d6 next and win the exchange thanks to the pin on the a2-g8 diagonal. However, Black will gain the bishop pair and also have an extra pawn or two. The position looks very unclear to me and there are two critical moments I will point out, both of which would be interesting to sneak into Wesley So’s laptop for reference!

16...f8 The first critical moment. Here, with 16...a6!, Black could prevent the knight jump to b5, and threaten ...d6, blocking the a2-g8 diagonal and forcing White to push 17.d6 cxd6

Now Black will lose the exchange, however he has the bishop pair and also two extra pawns. Should White decide to recover one of the pawns with 18.b3 b8 19.d1, then after 19...c6 20.xf7+ f7 21.xf7+ xf7 22.xd6 f8, the position looks fine for Black. A bishop pair plus a pawn majority, an extra pawn on the queenside, provides Black with excellent play. I like Black here and this is definitely not what Wesley would want! So, the question remains: “What did he want?”

17.d6 cxd6 17...xd6 is better for White, as Black’s pieces are poorly coordinated after 18.b3.

18.xf7 xf7 19.b5 d5?! In our stem game (from 26 years ago!), Black reacted better with 19...e6! and so this is the second critical moment. I assume that Wesley analyzed 20.xc5! (Kozul went wrong and got the worse position after 20.b3+ f6 21.d1 e6 22.c3 c8 23.d3 c4 24.f2 a6 25.a3 f7. For the exchange, Black has the bishop pair, two extra pawns, good piece coordination, and went on to win in Z.Kozul (2560) - M.Wahls (2525), Novi Sad (ol) 1990) 20...b6 21.c7+ f6
Here, however, I assume that Wesley found a White advantage in:

A) 22.b4 dxc5 (22...bxb5? 23.c8=+(-) 23.cxb5 cxb4 24.c8=+; or
B) 22.cxb5 cxb5 23.f2 c6 24.c8=+

From the perspective of theoretical research, I think that 16...a6, which would have been a novelty, and the stem game move 19...bxa6, are ideas that KID aficionados need to focus on.

20...c5 Now White is better.

20...c6 21.c7 dxe4 22.c2 d4+ 22...b6; sacrificing a second exchange, was probably Black's only and indeed last chance to stay in the game: 23.c4 e3! 24.c8=+ a8

With precise play, White takes advantage of Black's exposed king and the overall poor coordination of the black pieces.

27...d6 Or 27...f6 28.g3! a6 29.h4+ f7 30.xd7 xxd7 31.xh7 winning.

28.c2 After 28.c1 the black king finds himself in a mating net: 28...xe4 29.a4 29.c7 29.f3! gx3 30.xd1+ d5 31.gxf3

28...a4 29.c3 e6 30.e1 a6 30...d7 31.xd7 xxd7 32.b4+-

31.b4 d6 32.d5 d7

25.c7 f6 with 26.d5 to follow and Black is still in the game, but not 25...f8 26.d3 c5 d5? 27.a3+ which wins for White.

23.h1 d8 Now 23...b6 is no longer the same with the black queen on d4 since then 24.xe6 xxe6 25.c4 d7 26.xe4 wins.

24.fxe4 Another way for White to win is 24.xe6 xxe6 25.xe4 g4 26.g3 (or 26.c7 like in the game) 26...f3 27.exf3!+ gxf3 28.b3+ d6 (28...f6 29.xf3+) 29.c4.

24...g4 25.c6 The black king is too exposed. White has many tactical motifs, and Wesley So executes with a steady hand!

26.xc7 b5 27.d3+

As stated earlier, an execution in chess is always tactical!

33.exf4+ efx4 34.d6+ e5 34...f6 35.e5+ xxe5 36.dxe5.

35.xb5+! After first collecting an extra pawn, so liquidates into a won endgame.

35...e6 36.d3+ e5

The storm is over and White has managed to liquidate into a won endgame.

40.e5 41.b1 c6 42.b7 f3 43.gxf3 xf3 44.c7 1-0

This game was an early signal that it was going to be a great Olympiad for Wesley So!
The last few Olympiads have proved to be very different experiences for the winning teams. Sometimes, a team just cruises straight through with clean chess the whole way. This was definitely the case for China in 2014, when they only lost one individual game over the course of the entire tournament. Other times, teams have much more up and down swings, as was the case for me and the rest of Team America at this year’s Olympiad in Baku.

Right from the get-go, we had a tougher time than expected. For instance, I got into serious trouble in our Round 2 match with Scotland:

A34

Colin McNab  2434
Sam Shankland  2679

Round 2, Scotland-USA
13...\(\texttt{d5}\)? A terrible move, based on an elementary oversight. Black has a very pleasant position and only has to watch out for one thing—the b3-b4 advance. And I blundered right into it! Black is pleasantly better after a simple move like 13...\(\texttt{e}b8\).

14.b4! and here I realized that my intended...e4 fails.

14...\(\texttt{cxb4}\) Not a good move, but it’s hard to suggest anything else. I thought Black was completely winning here, by 14...\(\texttt{e}e4\) 15.\(\texttt{dxe4}\) \(\texttt{dxe4}\) 16.\(\texttt{axb4}\) \(\texttt{AXB4}\) 17.\(\texttt{Wb3}\) \(\texttt{Be6}\) since \(\texttt{Wa3}\) fails to \(\texttt{Bc2+}\), and otherwise the a4 knight cannot be saved. But I missed that after the rather simple 18.\(\texttt{Wxb4}\)! it’s time to resign.

14...\(\texttt{e}b8\) might have been the lesser evil, but after 15.\(\texttt{bxc5}\) \(\texttt{b5}\) 16.\(\texttt{Bc3}\) \(\texttt{xf3}\) 17.\(\texttt{exf3}\) \(\texttt{cxc3}\) 18.\(\texttt{Bxc3}\) \(\texttt{xc5}\) 19.0-0 I thought White would easily deliver mate along the h1-a8 diagonal.

15.\(\texttt{Wxc6+}\) \(\texttt{xc6}\) 16.\(\texttt{Bxc6+}\) \(\texttt{d}b7\) 17.\(\texttt{xc4}\) \(\texttt{xf3}\) 18.\(\texttt{xf3}\) \(\texttt{b5}\)

19.axb4! I missed this when I went for \(\texttt{cxb4}\).

19...\(\texttt{bxa}4\) By some miracle I held this position. 19...\(\texttt{bxc4}\) 20.\(\texttt{dxc4}\) would win for White.

20.\(\texttt{d}d2\) \(\texttt{a}a6\) 21.\(\texttt{x}d5\) \(\texttt{xd5}\) 22.\(\texttt{c}c3\) \(\texttt{xb5}\) 23.\(\texttt{Ec7}\) \(\texttt{Ed6}\) 24.\(\texttt{Ec5+}\) \(\texttt{d}b6\) 25.\(\texttt{a}a1\) \(\texttt{b7}\) 26.\(\texttt{axa4}\) \(\texttt{Bb6}\) 27.\(\texttt{xd5}\) \(\texttt{d}d6\) 28.\(\texttt{b}b5\) \(\texttt{d}d8\) 29.\(\texttt{e}c4\) 29.\(\texttt{d}d4\) would have been decisive.

29...\(\texttt{e}e7\) 30.\(\texttt{xd8}\) \(\texttt{xd8}\) 31.\(\texttt{a}a5\) \(\texttt{d}d6\) 32.\(\texttt{xd8}\) \(\texttt{xd8}\) 33.\(\texttt{d}d3\) \(\texttt{d}d6\) 34.\(\texttt{b}b4\) \(\texttt{d}d6\) 35.\(\texttt{h}h4\) \(\texttt{h}5\)

36.\(\texttt{g}g3\) \(\texttt{xe}1\) and Black even wins! And after 65.\(\texttt{e}e3\) \(\texttt{c}c2\)! Black takes the c7 pawn and holds easily.

65...\(\texttt{xe}2+\) 66.\(\texttt{e}f1\) \(\texttt{e}h2\) and Black has a perpetual, just in time to save the day.

67.\(\texttt{g}g1\) \(\texttt{e}g2+\) 68.\(\texttt{f}f1\) \(\texttt{h}h2+\) 69.\(\texttt{g}g1\) \(\texttt{e}e2+\) 70.\(\texttt{h}h1\) \(\texttt{h}h2+\) \(\texttt{Draw}\)

Once again, an American drew a hopelessly lost position, and the rest of his team bailed him out. We won the match 3–1, spearheaded by fine victories by Wesley So and Fabiano Caruana.

Moving on to Round 4, we ceded our first match point. The Czech Republic played an excellent match, holding level on all four boards throughout. I was particularly frustrated never to get anything going on board 4 with Black against a 2500 player, but my opponent essentially played a perfect game!

In Round 5, we dispatched Serbia. This time Hikaru was the hero of the match, winning quickly against Robert Markus when the latter overlooked a tactical strike:

21...\(\texttt{d}d8??\) After 21...\(\texttt{h}h6\) Black seems to be absolutely fine as he has no major weaknesses and his pieces are very active and well placed.

22.\(\texttt{e}xg6!\) and Black resigned on the spot, since if the knight is taken 22...\(\texttt{e}xg6\) then 22...\(\texttt{g}g3\), whereupon 23.\(\texttt{d}d5\) is met by 24.\(\texttt{xe}5\), and 23...\(\texttt{e}h7\) by 24.\(\texttt{e}5!\)
We clinched the match by \(2\frac{1}{2}\) reasonably early, but the last game really dragged on for a long time. This time, it was Fabiano who made a miraculous escape.

**A40**

Ivan Ivanisevic 2650  
Fabiano Caruana 2808  
Round 5, Serbia-USA

44...\(\text{B}a7\)? This is asking for trouble. After 44...\(\text{B}a7!\) 45.\(\text{B}b5\) \(\text{B}a2+\) 46.\(\text{B}c3\) \(\text{B}h8\) Black is rather passive but his position should hold together pretty easily.

45.\(\text{B}xh7!\) \(\text{B}xh7\) 46.\(\text{B}xa1\) White is winning here, but he misses his chances.

**D87**

Anton Korobov 2675  
Sam Shankland 2679  
Round 6, USA-Ukraine

46...\(\text{B}b7\) 47.\(\text{B}b2\) \(\text{B}b8\) 48.\(\text{B}c2\) \(\text{B}b7\) 49.\(\text{B}b1\) \(\text{B}d5\) 50.\(\text{B}d2\) \(\text{B}c7+\) 51.\(\text{B}d3\) \(\text{B}b7\) 52.\(\text{B}c3\) \(\text{B}c7+\) 53.\(\text{B}c4\) \(\text{B}b7\) and I each saved unpleasant positions. My game in particular looked really bad at some point, but I managed to find a precise sequence to hold on.

54.\(\text{B}d2\) 54.\(\text{e}4+!\) would have ended things rather quickly: 54...\(\text{B}e6\) (54...\text{fxe}4 55.\(\text{B}xg}5\) \(\text{B}xg}5\) 56.\(\text{B}xh}8\) 58.\(\text{g}7\) 55.\text{fxe}5\ 56.\(\text{g}xh}4\) 57.\(\text{B}xh}8\) 56.\(\text{g}6\) \(\text{B}f6\) 57.\(\text{g}7\) \(\text{B}b8\) 58.\(\text{B}xh}4\) \(\text{g}6\) 59.\(\text{B}xf}4\)++.

54...\(\text{B}c7+\) 55.\(\text{B}d3\) \(\text{B}c1\) 56.\(\text{B}b4\) \(\text{B}d1\) 57.\(\text{B}e}2\) \(\text{B}h}1\) 58.\(\text{B}f1\) \(\text{B}c}4\) 59.\(\text{B}f2\) \(\text{B}x}4\) 60.\(\text{B}g}2\) \(\text{B}h}5\)

33.\(\text{B}b}7!\) Black seems to be in serious trouble here. The \(\text{B}6\) pawn is about to fall and the \(\text{d}1\)-pawn is ready to advance. However, I was able to find a precise way to fight back and hold a draw.

33...\(\text{B}g}5+!\) 33...\(\text{B}a}5\) 34.\(\text{d}6\) \(\text{B}a}5\) 35.\(\text{B}x}d5\)

**Hikaru Nakamura (b. 1987)**

Board 2 / Rtg: 2789 / Rp: 2762  
Score: 7½ out of 11 (+5=5−1)

61.\(\text{B}h}2?\) Missing the last chance for a full point. 61.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{B}h}4\) 62.\(\text{e}4!\) \text{fxe}4 63.\(\text{f}5\) \(\text{gxf}5\) 64.\(\text{B}x}5\) \(\text{B}h}5\) (64...\(\text{B}g}4+\) 65.\(\text{B}g}3!\) \(\text{B}xf}4\) (65...\text{Bxg}5\) 66.\(\text{h}7\) 66.\(\text{xe}4!\) and White wins. However this is very hard to find when playing on the time increment.

61...\(\text{B}c}5\) 62.\(\text{B}f}3\) \(\text{B}d}5\) 63.\(\text{B}g}3\) \(\text{B}e}6\) 64.\(\text{B}d}4+\) \(\text{B}f}7\) 65.\(\text{B}b}5\) \(\text{B}e}7\) 66.\(\text{B}g}2\) \(\text{B}h}4\) 67.\(\text{B}c}7\) \(\text{B}f}7\) 68.\(\text{B}d}5\) \(\text{B}g}4+\) 69.\(\text{B}f}3\) \(\text{B}g}1\) 70.\(\text{B}e}2\) \(\text{B}a}1\) 71.\(\text{B}c}3\) \(\text{B}a}5\) 72.\(\text{B}d}3\) \(\text{B}c}5\) 73.\(\text{B}d}4\) \(\text{B}a}5\) 74.\(\text{B}c}4\)

Draw

Next up in Round 6 was Ukraine. While Caruana won the only decisive game of the match [Page 34], I think it was really won on boards 2 and 4, where Hikaru
Exd5 36. Exb6 looked lost to me.

34. h3 Wh5+! And it’s not so easy to find a hiding place for the king.

35. g3 35. g4 a5! and here we see the difference — the king will be vulnerable on g4. 36. d6 a5 37. Exd5 38. Exd5 38. Exb6 d4+! An important resource. Black wins the a4 pawn and holds easily.

35... h5+ 36. h2 Wh5+ 37. g1 a5 38. d6 a4 39. Exd5 40. Exb6 d6 and here the white king is a little too far away so Black should not lose.

36... e5 37. e2 e8+

38. f1 38. d3 was the last chance to play for a win, but it was definitely very risky. 38... Wh2 39. d6 a5 40. Exb6 h5 and things get very messy. Whose pawns are better or faster? I have no idea...

38... Wh4! And White cannot stop... e4, saving the game.

39. g3 White would be really asking for it after 39. f3 Wh4 40. g2 Wh2 41. f3 h5 42. Exb6 d4 43. d6 e4 44. g2

42. Wh4 43. d6 e4 44. g2

Draw

After six rounds, there was only one team left on a perfect score of 12 match points — India. We got our chance to take a crack at them in Round 7, and realistically it should have been a tied match. Fabiano and I both got into massive trouble, and Hikaru and Wesley both won clean games. But this is where resilience and tenacious defense paid off — in two lost positions, Fabiano and I scored 1½/2! A match that should have been drawn turned into a blowout.

C83

Pentala Harikrishna 2752
Fabiano Caruana 2808

Round 7, India-USA

21... a5 22. bxa5 a5 22... b4 looks like a better move to me. Also it stops White playing b2-b4.

23. a4 b5 24. f4 f5 25. exf6 xf6
26. a2! c4 Perhaps 26... b4 27. f5 e8 28. d4 b3! and Black is fighting back.

27. xc4! bxc4

28. g5! Seemingly out of nowhere, the f6 bishop is lost.

28... Wh3 29. Wh3 h5 30. Wh2 e2 31. gxh6 gxh6 32. Wh2 Wh6 33. Wh2 e2 34. Wh3 looks winning to me.

34... Wh6 35. Wh4? Letting Black off the hook. Chess is a tough game in time trouble.
36...exf3! And now the d-pawn becomes a problem.

37.exf3 37.d2 Eh6+ 38.f1 Eh1+ 39.f2 fxg2+

37...d2 38.xd1 Hh6+ 39.xh4 d1=Q 40.xd1 Qc7 41.g3 Hh8 42.f5 Hc2 43.Bxc7 Hh3 44.Bc5 Hf5 45.Bxf5 Hxf5 46.Hxf5

34.f1? White must not allow his queen to become passive 34.e5! should just be a draw.

34...e4! Already White’s position looks very difficult.

36.gxf4! White has to allow the black queen to invade.

37.gxf4 37.gxf4 Hxd4 is even worse.

37...Hh4! 38.exf4? Losing immediately, but the position was already very tough to defend. White can struggle on with 38.Bh3, but I do not envy his situation.

38.fxe4 39.f2 Hxf2+ 40.Bxf2 Hf6 41.Bg3 Hf5 42.Bb3 Hh5 43.Bb3 e3 44.Bf3 e2 45.Bxe2 Hxf4 46.Bd3 Hg4 White resigned

This was our first loss, but definitely not our last. Each time one of us came up short, his teammates picked up the slack. This time, Wesley was the hero, scoring a fine win over Ian Nepomniachtchi.

At this point, our confidence was not at its highest. We had been in trouble so many times over the course of the event and somehow emerged unscathed, that it felt like we were holding on to a thread just before finally crashing down. But this despair was short-lived, as our shakiest spot so far, board 4, rapidly turned things around the next day. I won a fine game over Frode Urkedal in Round 9 to help us reach a 3-1 win over Norway.

B94

Frode Urkedal 2537
Sam Shankland 2679

Round 9, Norway-USA

1.e4 A bit of a surprise. Urkedal has been a 1.d4 player all his life, and while he had experimented with 1.e4 in this...
event, somehow I did not think he would play it against me.

1...c5 2.gf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.gxd4 g5 5.gc3 a6 6.gc5 gc7?! A double-edged move, trying to retain more play on the board with less forcing lines. 6...e5 is far more common.

7.他e2 h6 8.gf4 g6?!

An interesting move. Surprisingly, the point is not to develop the bishop to g7, but rather to control the f5 square and prepare...e5.

9.0-0-0?! This is inaccurate. 9.f4! now and only now! If White does not play this here, he will never be able to do so. Following 9...e5! (9...g7? 10.e5 leaves Black in a bad way) 10.fxe5! dxex5 11.0-0-0!

...the position is very complicated, but I believe White can fight for an advantage. I actually won a nice game here with colors reversed in Biel just last month. Black can continue 11...g7 but not 11...exd4? 12.e5+.

9...e5! 10.gf3! It's too late for 10.f4?, e.g. 10...exd4 11.e5 dxex3! and since White has not been able to get in fxe5, Black has an additional resource: 12.exf6+ gc6?! This would not be possible in the 8.f4 line. Then after 13.fxe5 g7+ White is in big trouble.

10...g7

Now we have a reasonably standard looking English Attack, but with a couple of exceptions. Firstly, White's pieces look a bit strange - the gh4 and ge2 are not really effectively placed compared to their normal positions on the e3 and d2 squares. Secondly, Black still has his bishop on c8 instead of e6. Normally this would mean White can play a4, to freeze the queenside and castle short, but since he has already castled long, this is not possible. The position is about equal but I would prefer to be Black.

11.gf1 11.a4 would be the strategically desirable move, greatly restricting the c8 bishop by preventing...b7-b5. But since White has already committed his king to c1, Black can happily go...b7-b5 anyway, sacrificing a pawn: 11...b5! 12.axb5 axb5 13.axb5 (13.axb5 0-0 14.g6 ga7 with fine compensation for the pawn) 13...g5 14.g3 gc5 and White's position is coming under fire.

11...b5 12.a3

12...gc7! Black was not yet ready to develop the bishop. 12...b7? 13.xf6! xf6 14.gc5! gc6 15.gd3 and White has solved the problem of the b3 knight, which will soon come to b4 and d5.

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Round 4

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Round 6

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13.\text{f}3  \text{\textit{f}8}\text{!} The king will be best placed on \text{g}7, and the rook on \text{h}8. After 13...0-0 I would have to play ...\text{\textit{g}7} anyway, and the rook will not be so well placed to stop moves like \text{g}4, \text{h}4, \text{g}5.

14.\text{\textit{f}2}  \text{\textit{g}7} 15.\text{h}4

This was my first move out of preparation, and the first critical moment of the game. I had to decide where to put my pieces.

15...\text{\textit{b}6}\text{!} Once I played this move I knew ...\text{\textit{b}7} would always be met by \text{\textit{a}5}. So, it was quite committal! But ultimately it seems \text{e}6 will be a better square for the bishop. 15...\text{\textit{b}7} 16.\text{g}4 \text{\textit{x}d}8 looked less effective to me. I don’t think it will be easy to carry out the ...\text{\textit{d}6–\textit{d}5} advance, and I’m not really pressuring the queenside.

16.\text{g}3? This feels way too slow. White wants to play \text{\textit{h}3} and trade the light-squared bishops, but in concrete terms Black is too fast. 16.\text{g}4! is best. Of course White has to fight on the kingside, although I don’t envy his position after A) 16...\text{\textit{c}4}!. Better is 17.\text{\textit{d}3}! (If 17.\text{\textit{e}1} 18.\text{\textit{c}3} \text{\textit{d}7}! stopping \text{\textit{g}5}, and Black is much better.) 17...\text{\textit{e}6} 18.\text{\textit{d}5} \text{\textit{x}d}5 19.\text{\textit{c}3} \text{\textit{d}7} when I would take Black, although there is a lot of play left.

B) Upon 16...\text{\textit{e}6} 17.\text{\textit{h}3} B1) 17...\text{\textit{f}d}7 White is definitely fighting since if B2) 17...\text{\textit{c}4}!?, which I wanted to make work during the game but did not quite manage, then 18.\text{\textit{e}1}! and White holds everything together. (However other moves fail, e.g. 18.\text{\textit{a}d}4? \text{\textit{x}d}4 19.\text{\textit{d}2} \text{\textit{x}b}8 and it looks like death for White; or 18.\text{\textit{x}d}5? \text{\textit{x}d}5 19.\text{\textit{e}5} \text{\textit{c}3}! winning.)

16...\text{\textit{b}8}\text{!}

Simple and strong. Now 17.\text{h}3 is too slow since Black is ready to start pouncing with moves like ...\text{\textit{a}4} or ...\text{\textit{c}4}.

17.\text{\textit{c}b}6 17.\text{\textit{h}3} \text{\textit{c}4} and 18...\text{\textit{x}a}3 is a serious threat. 18.\text{\textit{e}1} is then met by 18...\text{\textit{a}5}!, the point of ...\text{\textit{b}8}. The pawns are rolling and White’s king will soon perish.

17...\text{\textit{x}b}6

18.\text{\textit{h}3} 18.\text{\textit{e}1} is a little more resilient, but White is still much worse, e.g. 18...\text{\textit{b}4} 19.\text{\textit{a}b}4 \text{\textit{x}b}4 20.\text{\textit{d}5} \text{\textit{x}d}5 21.\text{\textit{e}x}d5 22.\text{\textit{b}f}4 \text{\textit{x}b}4 23.\text{\textit{e}3} \text{\textit{f}6}.

18...\text{\textit{a}5}! Now White is absolutely crushed. Black’s queenside attack plays itself.

19.\text{\textit{d}c}8 20.\text{\textit{d}5} \text{\textit{x}d}5 21.\text{\textit{x}d}5 \text{\textit{b}4} 22.\text{\textit{c}1} \text{\textit{b}4} 23.\text{\textit{a}b}4 \text{\textit{b}4} 24.\text{\textit{c}3} \text{\textit{c}3} 25.\text{\textit{c}1} \text{\textit{c}4} 26.\text{\textit{h}2} \text{\textit{a}3} 27.\text{\textit{b}x}a3 \text{\textit{w}a}2 28.\text{\textit{d}1} \text{\textit{b}1} 29.\text{\textit{c}1} \text{\textit{a}3} 30.\text{\textit{d}2} \text{\textit{x}f}3+ 31.\text{\textit{b}4} \text{\textit{g}3}

White resigned

In the penultimate round against Georgia, we stumbled again. Hikaru lost
a tough game to the much lower-rated Mchedlishvili, and with the white pieces [Page 52]. But, once again we were able to pick up the slack when one of our teammates lost. I won almost straight out of the opening, and Wesley clinched the match for us with a victory almost as trivial.

**Levan Pantsulaia** 2601

**Wesley So** 2782

Round 10, USA-Georgia

12...f6 13.d2? Black already had a very comfortable position, but this is a big step in the wrong direction.

13...a4! 14.b2? 14.b4? e4! is the point. White could instead play 14.e4! with a view to following up with d2-d4. I would still prefer Black but objectively it’s close to equal.

14.axb3 15.axb3 b5! 16.e3

We did not play perfectly and everyone stumbled at some point, but this just inspired others to work even harder to make up for the deficit.”

16...a5! and White loses a pawn for absolutely nothing. Wesley’s conversion was clean and merciless:

17...b4 exb3 18.g5 hxg5 19.xa8 c5 20.xc5 wxa8 21.exb5 c6 22.d6 f6 d4 23.xd4 exd4 24.b2 xdd8 25.b6 f5 26.fx e1 27.c4 e4 28.e3 fxe3 29.fxe3 exd3 30.exd3 xc4 31.xd6 xd5 32.f2 xd4 33.b2 e5 34.bd2 xd6 35.f5 e1+ 36.xf1 xd2 37.c8+ f4

White resigned

The final round was very stressful for us. With a massive score of 18 match points from 20 possible, in any other year we would easily have been clear first, going into the final game. But this year was different. After losing to us, Ukraine had really stayed focused on the gold medal throughout and won match after match to reach the same 18 points as us – and a tie for first. Our tiebreaks were better, but this can change in the blinking of an eye.

I lost to Eric Hansen in a dreadful game which will give me nightmares for a long time to come and in fact ended my 17-game undefeated streak at two Olympiads [Page 45]. While I had more than pulled my weight before, often carrying the team through tough rounds, this time it was my turn to be carried. Wesley and Fabiano both won excellent games, and Hikaru’s heroic defense on board 2 clinched a 2½-½ victory for us.

When all was said and done, we were finally true World Champions after a 79 year hiatus. We did not play perfectly and everyone stumbled at some point, but this just inspired others to work even harder to make up for the deficit. Ultimately every individual member on the team came through when it was required of them, and I think we got the medal we deserved.
I am so proud of Team USA!

In an almost fully representative world class field, the American team has made a major historical breakthrough by winning the gold medal at the Chess Olympiad. Our grandmasters performed extraordinarily well in key matches and topped the table despite meeting some extremely tough opposition. I am so proud of Team USA and it has been so inspiring to have had the opportunity of interacting with these great players and learning from them. I know how hard it was for the Americans to win in Baku, even though they were one of the favourites, but their Olympiad triumph has now sent a powerful message that US Chess is destined for a most promising future.

In Round 6, USA faced Ukraine, who were in a three way tie with India and the Netherlands, all on a perfect score of 10/10 match points. Ukraine had already beaten both Russia and China and proved to the chess world that they were unquestionably serious contenders. If Ukraine could hold off the Americans, their hopes of a gold medal would be bright as they had already played the top three seeded teams. It was difficult to predict at the time, but this sixth round showdown turned out to be the most important match of the Olympiad.

1.e4 c5 Perhaps this surprised Caruana, as Eljanov had opted for 1.e5 or 1...c6 in recent practice.

2.\textit{f3} \textit{c6} 3.b5 g6 4.\textit{x}c6 bxc6

More popular nowadays than 4...dxc6. 5.0-0 \textit{g7} 6.\textit{e}1 \textit{h6} There was a debate regarding this position in an Inarkiev - Gelfand match game. On the other hand, 6...f6 was chosen by Kasparov in blitz. 7.e5 \textit{e}5 8.c4 \textit{c}7 9.d4 cxd4 10.e3 \textit{x}d4 \textit{e}6 11.\textit{h}4 d6 12.\textit{c}3 (12.\textit{x}d6 \textit{x}d6 13.\textit{c}3 And White’s game is preferable in view of Black’s poor bishop on c8.) 12...dxe5 13.\textit{x}e5 \textit{d}6

14.\textit{f}3 h6 15.\textit{e}3 g5 16.\textit{e}4 0-0 17.\textit{c}2

8.h3 8.d4 cxd4 9.cxd4 d5 10.e5 f6

11.exf6 (White might have more hopes...

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chess_board.png}
\caption{Chess board setup for the match between Caruana and Eljanov.}
\end{figure}
Do you see yourself as a member of the US Olympiad team in two years? I followed every round of the Olympiad tournament closely and have certainly fantasized about representing Team USA myself—and scoring points in every game! Each place in the team has to be earned and with Ray Robson and Sam Shankland being so strong, as well as other possible contenders, the competition will be fierce. But this is a good thing as we are pushing each other to become better and better and anybody who eventually makes the team will inevitably be extremely strong. Anyway I will do my best to achieve my ambition.

What steps do you intend to take to achieve your goal of becoming one of the very top rated players in the world? I am in the Young Star Program that former world champion Garry Kasparov and his team developed and which is managed under the sponsorship of the St. Louis Chess Club and Scholastic Center. GM Babakuli Anakov has been coaching me since I was seven years old and there are several other GMs and very capable chess players who have always been there to help me. So I am in good hands and all I need to do is to bear down and consistently work hard, then good things will happen.

To what extent do you think all these latest successes will impact on US chess in general? What expectations for the future do you and your chess community have? These successes have certainly generated new momentum for American chess. But this is the result of many years effort by many people. Jean and Rex Sinquefield have made a huge difference. Also Bill Goichberg and all the universities have been instrumental in the development of the game in the US. Of my 3 IM norms and 3 GM norms, I got 4 from Continental Chess Association tournaments and 2 from UT Dallas. This is a very different situation from that of many years ago when American players felt they had to go to Europe for norm opportunities.

However, American chess is still lagging behind. There is a lot of work to be done. If more people with vision, like the Sinquefields, invest in chess, a sport with outstanding educational benefits, then I think it will play its part in making America a better society.

of achieving something here with 11.\(\text{b}d2\) 11...\(\text{exf6}\) 12.\(\text{bd}2\) \(\text{ae}8\) 13.\(\text{b}h3\) \(\text{ef7}\) 14.\(\text{c}e5\) \(\text{hg4}\) 15.\(\text{xe}8\)+ \(\text{xe}8\) 16.\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{xf3}\) 17.\(\text{xf3}\) \(\text{e}1\)+ 18.\(\text{h}2\) \(\text{g}5\) 19.\(\text{e}8\) 20.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{e}2\) = was E.Inarkiev (2730) - B.Gelfand (2734), Magas (m1-rapid) 2016.

8...\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{e}5\) \(\text{f}7\)

10.\(\text{d}3\) 10.\(\text{d}4\) allows Black to open up the b7-g2 diagonal, after which White’s light-squared bishop will suddenly be dearly missed: 10...\(\text{xd}4\) 11.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{b}7\) 12.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{c}5\) 13.\(\text{dxc}5\) \(\text{xc}5\) 14.\(\text{d}4\) \(\text{xc}5\) 15.\(\text{xf}7\) \(\text{xf7}\) 16.\(\text{xf3}\) \(\text{xf3}\) 17.\(\text{e}4\) \(\text{e}6\) 18.\(\text{e}4\) \(\text{ex}f7\) 19.\(\text{d}5\) \(\text{g}5\)+ 20.\(\text{b}1\) \(\text{e}5\) 21.\(\text{e}8\) \(\text{xf}8\) 22.\(\text{e}4\) \(\text{c}8\) 23.\(\text{e}4\) \(\text{b}7\) 1.Nepomniachtchi (2703) - G.Kamsky (2670), Sochi 2016.

10...\(\text{b}8\) Upon 10...\(\text{a}6\), 11.\(\text{c}4\) blocks the bishop but also creates weaknesses. (However, Caruana was probably intending the same approach, 11.\(\text{a}3\), as he adopts in the game after 11...\(\text{a}6\).) Then 11...\(\text{e}6\) (if 11...\(\text{d}6\) 12.\(\text{e}5 \\text{a}5\) 13.\(\text{dxe}5 \\text{dxe}5\) 14.\(\text{d}2\) is a very clever idea by Mamedov who was going for a kingside attack after 12.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{g}5\) 13.\(\text{e}3\) 13...\(\text{g}4\) (13...\(\text{h}4\) 14.\(\text{a}4\) 15.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{xe}5\) 16.\(\text{xc}5\) \(\text{xg}4\) 17.\(\text{g}7\) \(\text{e}8\) 18.\(\text{a}6\) \(\text{xh}7\) 19.\(\text{x}f4\) \(\text{a}6\) 20.\(\text{a}3\) \(\text{b}7\) 21.\(\text{b}4\) \(\text{a}6\) 22.\(\text{a}3\) \(\text{b}7\) 23.\(\text{b}4\) 1/2–1/2 Inarkiev - Gelfand) 14.\(\text{hxg}4\) \(\text{fxg}4\) 15.\(\text{h}2\) \(\text{g}3\) 16.\(\text{fxg}3\) \(\text{xe}5\) 17.\(\text{dxc}5\) \(\text{d}6\) 18.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{b}8\) 19.\(\text{d}2\) c5\(\text{R}\) Kasimdzhanov (2703) - R.Mamedov (2655), Almaty (blitz) 2016.
11.\(\Delta a3\) 11.c4 d6 12.e6 \(\Delta e5\) 13.\(\Delta xe5\) dxe5.
11...\(\Delta a6\) 12.\(\Delta c4\) \(\Delta xc4\) 12...d6 13.e6 transposes.

13.\(\Delta xc4\) d6 The safer option, which is more suited to this type of competition. On the other hand 13...e6?!, as in Kasimdzhanov - Mamedov, was a more ambitious attempt. Then after 14.\(\Delta d2\) (14.\(h4\) \(h6\)) 14...h6 15.\(\Delta g3\) (15.\(h4\) d6 16.exd6 e5 is an idea for Black in some cases.) Eljanov may have been concerned about a rapid attack on \(c5\), but White's king is far more precious. 15...\(\Delta g5\) (15...\(\Delta c7\) 16.\(\Delta b3\) would indeed leave Black in trouble.) 16.\(\Delta xec5\) g4 17.\(\Delta xg4\) fxg4
A) 18.\(\Delta h2\) \(\Delta xe5\) and unfortunately this is almost curtains for White.
B) Personally, I think it is very unnatural to cut off the white queen from the defense by the alternative line 18.\(\Delta d4\) \(\Delta h4\) 19.g3 \(\Delta h5\)

B1) 20.\(\Delta xa7\) B1a) 20...c5 21.\(\Delta b5\)\(g5\); B1b) 20...\(\Delta xe5\) 21.\(\Delta xe5\) \(\Delta xe5\) (21...\(\Delta xe5\) 22.\(\Delta xd7\)) 22.\(\Delta f4\) \(\Delta xf4\) 23.\(\Delta xg4\) \(\Delta xg4\) 24.\(\Delta xd7\); B1c) 20...\(\Delta xh2\) appears to be a brutal cold shower. However White can survive with a flurry of only moves: 21.\(\Delta xb2\) \(\Delta g5\) 22.\(\Delta e3\) (the only move) 22...\(\Delta h3\) 23.\(\Delta f1\) \(\Delta f2\) 24.\(\Delta e1\) \(\Delta xh2\) 25.\(\Delta e2\) \(\Delta xe2\) 26.\(\Delta g5\) 27.\(\Delta d1\) \(\Delta f3\) 28.\(\Delta f2\) \(\Delta xe5\) 29.\(\Delta f4\) \(\Delta f5\) 30.\(\Delta h8\) + \(\Delta f7\) 31.\(\Delta xh1\) \(\Delta xh1\) 32.\(\Delta xh1\) \(\Delta xc4\)–. B2) 20.b4. Now there are two interesting continuations: B2a) 20...\(\Delta e8\)!!

A very nice computer idea, 21.\(\Delta f4\) (21.a4 \(\Delta xe5\) 22.\(\Delta f4\) d6 23.\(\Delta xh4\) \(\Delta f3\) + 24.\(\Delta xg3\) \(\Delta f3\) \(\Delta xg3\) leaves the rook ideally placed for this operation since 25.\(\Delta e3\) can be met by 25...e5) 21...\(\Delta g5\) 22.\(\Delta xg5\) hxg5 Here Black is just threatening to double rooks on the f-file. 23.\(\Delta b5\) White must create

quick counterplay on the queenside. 23...\(\Delta xe5\) 24.\(\Delta xb5\) \(\Delta f7\) 25.\(\Delta xh5\) \(\Delta f8\) 26.\(\Delta ab1\) \(\Delta h3\) (26...\(\Delta xd6\) 27.\(\Delta xd6\) \(\Delta e8\) 28.\(\Delta e5\) 27.\(\Delta xa7\) \(\Delta h7\) 28.\(\Delta h7\) \(\Delta xh6\) 29.\(\Delta exd6\) \(\Delta xh2\) + 30.\(\Delta f1\) \(\Delta f8\) 31.\(\Delta g2\) \(\Delta xf2\) 32.\(\Delta xf2\) \(\Delta f7\) 33.\(\Delta xh8\) + \(\Delta g7\) 34.\(\Delta xf7\) + \(\Delta xh7\) 35.\(\Delta d8\)–; B2b) 20...\(\Delta xh2\) leads to a forced draw after 21.\(\Delta h4\) \(\Delta f4\) (21...d6 22.\(\Delta xh6\) and the \(e6\) pawn is hanging.) 22.\(\Delta xg4\) g3 23.\(\Delta xg3\) \(\Delta h3\).

14.e6 The structure obtained after 14.exd6 exd6 is harmless for Black, without even mentioning the attempt 14...e5.

14...\(\Delta e5\) 15.\(\Delta xe5\) \(\Delta xe5\) 16.\(\Delta h6\)
but he must be very careful not to get mated. 19.h4 (19.g3) 19...g7 20.h5 f4. The alternative 16...e6 can be met by 17.d2.

17.xg7 xg7 The engine evaluates this as dead equal but I disagree. I find White’s position far more preferable with his space advantage and, more importantly, a safer king.

18.b1 b3 a5.

18...a5 A nice move by Black which forces the opponent to make a decision about his a2 pawn.

19.a4 19...d3? is the most energetic way. But then after 19...xa2 20.b4 d5 Black will most likely liquidate the game into a draw.

Black is now placed in an awkward situation. He would really like to play ...a7-a5 but it’s impossible as any queen move is met by b2-b4.

19...f6 Eljanov finds another way to achieve ...a7-a5. Here at least he assures himself that he won’t lose by being checkmated. It would be natural for Black to double rooks on the b-file, starting with 19...f7, however White will counter this with a timely kingside assault: 20.b4 (20.e3 fb8 21.g4 is another possible way to attack. Then 21...a6 22.d3 is quite scary) 20...fb8 21.b4 cb4 22.d4 g8 23.h5 and it’s extremely difficult for a human to manage this position for Black.

20.e3 A must, otherwise the e6 pawn would die.

20...a6 21.b3 c8 22.e1 a5 Mission accomplished for Black. ...a7-a5 has been achieved and it seems White has run out of ideas. But suddenly a shot came out of nowhere.

23.b4! axb4 24.cxb4 cb4 25.xb4 a8 It would be almost impossible for a human to enter the line 25...xb4 26.xb4 xe6. But the engine has no
issues, seeing that Black can then make a forced draw: 27.a5 $\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash x}e3}$ 28.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash f}xe3}$ $\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash f7}}$
29.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash g}b6}$ $\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash h}h8}$ 30.a6 $\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash a}a1}$+ 31.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash h}h2}$ $\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash e}e5}$+ 32.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash g}3}$ $\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash a}a1}$.
26.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash d}d5}$ Caruana decided to handle the situation in a straightforward manner.
26.c5 looked good for White. 26...d5 (26...$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash d}xc5}$ 27.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash f}c4}$) Black can try to sit like this doing nothing. h3-h4 is met
by ...h7-h5. But White has numerous ideas at his disposal so Black's task is certainly unpleasant.
26...f4 After 26...$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash g}g8}$ comes 27.a5 and faced with such a passed pawn Black could be practically lost.
27.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash e}e4}$ f3 Or 27...$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash g}g8}$ 28.a5 $\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash x}e6}$
29.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash x}e6}$ $\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash x}e6}$ 30.a6.
28.g4 $\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash g}g8}$ Black has got a very dangerous looking pawn on f3, however it turns out to be more of a weakness than a nuisance.
29.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash d}d1}$

![Hikaru Nakamura. Photo by David Llada.](image)

counterplay after 31.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash e}e3}$ c5 32.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash b}b6}$
$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash e}e4}$ 33.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash b}b3}$ e6.
31.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash x}e4}$ $\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash c}c7}$ 32.c5±. Now the situation is really dire for Black.
32...$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash d}xc5}$ 33.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash g}g4}$+ $\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash g}g7}$ 34.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash c}c3}$ $\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash g}g8}$ 35.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash c}c4}$+ $\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash g}g7}$ 36.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash x}c5}$
$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash d}d6}$ 37.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash c}c3}$+ $\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash f}f6}$ 38.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash e}e3}$

Black is better off not trading e6 for f3 and either playing ...$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash f}f8}$ immediately, allowing White another chance to play c4-c5, or first playing ...e6-c5 but letting White advance his a-pawn another step. Now that White’s king has been compromised, this idea of 29.a5 is a bit of a stretch and 29...$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash x}e6}$ can follow.
However, after three moves the idea of 29.c5 is still quite unpleasant for Black: 29...$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash x}c5}$ (29...$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash d}d5}$ 30.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash e}e3}$ $\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash x}e6}$ 31.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash f}f3}$)
30.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash b}c4}$
29...$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash x}e6}$? I believe this is the first mistake by Black in the entire game, as now he opens up the floodgates for White to harass him in every way he pleases. Instead Black could play either 29.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash f}f8}$ 30.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash x}c5}$ $\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash b}b7}$ $\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash h}h6}$, or 29...c5 30.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash b}b5}$ $\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash f}f8}$ 31.a5 $\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash h}h6}$ 32.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash h}h2}$ $\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash f}f8}$ which seems like a fortress.
30.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash x}f3}$ $\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash x}e4}$? In fact it was better to keep four rooks on the board by 30...$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash f}f6}$,
so that Black can at least hope for some

The position is already nearly lost, if not practically lost. Two weak pawns +
weak king + passed pawn = bad news for Black.
38.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash f}f8}$? A decisive mistake in time pressure. Black’s last chance was to try
and hold with the rook on d5 by 38...$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash a}a5}$
39.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash e}e4}$ e5. But again White will pick up one of the pawns: 40.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash b}b6}$ $\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash d}d5}$ 41.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash c}c7}$
$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash h}h6}$ 42.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash a}a5}$ $\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash f}f3}$ 43.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash g}g5}$+!
39.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash e}e4}$ $\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash f}f7}$ 40.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash e}e5}$+–
With the fate of the team on his shoulders, Caruana now converts this with surgical precision.
40...$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash d}d6}$ 41.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash a}a5}$ $\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash d}d1}$+ 42.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash g}g2}$ $\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash a}a1}$
43.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash e}e2}$ Continuing to escort the a-pawn.
43...$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash e}e6}$ On 43...$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash d}d4}$ 44.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash f}f3}$ is the most solid.
44.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash e}e6}$ $\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash d}d4}$ 45.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash x}e6}$

45...c5 Losing by force but there was hardly any consolation. If 45...$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash d}d5}$+,
then 46.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash g}g1}$.
46.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash e}e7}$ $\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash d}d5}$+ 47.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash f}f3}$ c4 48.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash x}f7}$+$
$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash x}f7}$ 49.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash e}e5}$+ $\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash h}h6}$ 50.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash e}e3}$+ $\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash g}g7}$
51.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash d}d4}$+ $\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash h}h6}$ 52.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash a}a7}$ $\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash b}b7}$ 53.$\textsf{\texttt{\textbackslash h}h4}$
Black resigned.

A beautiful win by Caruana which turned out to be the only decisive result of the match. In this way the US team knocked
the leaders off the top of the table and took control of the tournament.

After eight rounds of play the Olympiad was a three horse race between Ukraine, India, and USA. In round 9 we were paired with Norway while Ukraine and India met on board 1.

**E60**

Jon Ludvig Hammer 2651

Hikaru Nakamura 2789

Round 9, Norway–USA

1.d4 Qf6 2.c4 g6 Nakamura already displays ambition with his choice of opening.

3.Qf3 Qg7 4.g3 Hammer adopts the most solid approach.

4...0-0 5.Qg2 d6 6.0-0 After 6.Qc3, against his teammate the previous year, Nakamura tried 6...Qc6 7.0-0 a6 8.b3 Qxb8 9.d5 Qa5 10.d2 c5 11.Qxc6 Qxc6 12.Qc1 Qf5 13.Qe1 Qd7 14.Qd5 Qh3 15.Qc3 Qxd5 16.Qxd5 Qe5 17.f4 Qxf2 18.Qxg2 Qg4 19.Qxg7 Qxg7 20.Qd4+ Qd8 S.Shankland (2656) - H.Nakamura (2814), Baku (m/2) 2015.

6...c5 This probably didn’t come up in Hammer’s preparation. 6...Qc6 would have been expected.

7.dxc5 Qxc5 is the main line.

7...dxc5 8.Qe5!? 

This attempt has recently become rather popular, but it doesn’t seem all that impressive.

8.Qc7 8.Qfd7 9.Qxd7 Qxd7 10.Qb3 would perhaps give White a very tiny edge.

9.Qd3 Qe6 Forcing White to make a decision about his c4 pawn.

10.Qf4?! Already after this move I think Black’s game is to be preferred. Stronger

What impressed you most about the achievement of Team USA?

What positive impact on US chess, in general, would you expect this success to have?

The fact that the US had not had a gold medal in decades.

Public schools here in the US will finally start to teach more advanced chess principles.

Christian Filippone, Lancaster, PA

Caruana and So going undefeated.

There will probably be more scholastic players achieving higher ratings.

Joe Byrnes, Long Island, NY

So few draws, when draws have a good effect in a team competition. I hope future teams have a similarly large % of the top players join the team.

James Clancy, Kelseyville, CA

Winning the Gold Medal was a very difficult achievement, the first time since the 1930’s in a mostly fully represented Olympiad. Perhaps exciting and inspiring the scholastic and amateur chess scene.

Aldo Lopez, Miami, FL

The most impressive part of the United States team victory was their ability to overcome incredible odds against some of the best chess players from around the world.

I expect this achievement to bring an additional boost to an already growing US chess culture.

Wesley Surber, San Antonio, TX

That they defeated mighty Russian team.

Not much.

Wilson Nino, Lewes, DE

This is the first time the Team USA won in a long time. This is the most impressive collection of chess players in the history of American Chess.

Not much. It is a pleasant story, but it will not do much for the state of American chess. To a certain extent this team is the consequence of the great work of American chess organizers.

John Kato, Honolulu, HI

They went undefeated.

I don’t expect much impact at the grassroots level, since most local papers don’t even report it.

Darryl Hartman, York, PA

Been a very long time. 1976 does not really count. 1937 does.

Very little, but for those that really care. A good positive feeling.

Scott Chadwick, Phoenix, AZ
was 10.\(\text{\texttt{a3}}\)! waiting for Black’s reply.

A) Black could test the option of sacrificing the pawn for a huge initiative by playing 10...\(\text{\texttt{c6}}\), although it would seem unclear whether Black can obtain sufficient compensation after 11.\(\text{\texttt{xxc5}}\) \(\text{\texttt{f5}}\) 12.\(\text{\texttt{a4}}\). (On the other hand if 12.e4 then 12...\(\text{\texttt{g4}}\) 13.\(\text{\texttt{f3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{ad8}}\) 14.\(\text{\texttt{we1}}\) \(\text{\texttt{d7}}\) is probably enough for Black to maintain the balance);

B) 10...\(\text{\texttt{c8}}\) 11.\(\text{\texttt{e3}}\). Here White can bother Black, since 11...\(\text{\texttt{d7}}\) would block the \(\text{\texttt{f8}}\) battery and ...\(\text{\texttt{a6}}\) seems dubious as it allows White’s knight to make a home on b5. And if 11...\(\text{\texttt{h3}}\) 12.\(\text{\texttt{xc5}}\);

C) 10...\(\text{\texttt{f5}}\) 11.\(\text{\texttt{e3}}\) a6

A nice computer idea making a couple prophylactic moves before finishing his development. 12.\(\text{\texttt{b3}}\) (12.\(\text{\texttt{xc5}}\) \(\text{\texttt{g4}}\) 12...\(\text{\texttt{xd3}}\) 13.\(\text{\texttt{exd3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{g4}}\) 14.\(\text{\texttt{xb7}}\) \(\text{\texttt{a7}}\) 15.\(\text{\texttt{g2}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xe3}}\) 16.\(\text{\texttt{fxe3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{c6}}\)

10...\(\text{\texttt{c8}}\) 11.\(\text{\texttt{d2}}\) White would still be better off developing his knight on c3, say, after 11.\(\text{\texttt{a4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{h3}}\) 12.\(\text{\texttt{c3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xg2}}\) 13.\(\text{\texttt{xg2}}\) b6.

11...\(\text{\texttt{h3}}\) Black trades off White’s best piece.

12.\(\text{\texttt{f3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{h2}}\) 13.\(\text{\texttt{xg2}}\) \(\text{\texttt{b6}}\) 14.\(\text{\texttt{e1}}\)

With the idea of e2-e4, but even this isn’t so fearsome as Black would then gain complete control of the d4 square and could operate with no risk whatsoever. White should definitely consider trading pieces by 14.\(\text{\texttt{xb8}}\) as his position can quickly become cramped, although this might not be the right way to do it. After 14...\(\text{\texttt{xb8}}\) 15.\(\text{\texttt{de5}}\) \(\text{\texttt{c7}}\) White currently has control of e5 but not for long. Eventually Black will boot the knight away with ...\(\text{\texttt{f7}}\)-\(\text{\texttt{f6}}\) and achieve something similar to the game.

14...\(\text{\texttt{b7}}\) Nakamura decides to deny White even this possibility.

15.\(\text{\texttt{c1}}\) \(\text{\texttt{d8}}\) Very precise play by Nakamura, still delaying the development of his final piece in order to preserve his dark-squared bishop.

16.\(\text{\texttt{h6}}\) \(\text{\texttt{h8}}\) Here it’s simply difficult to suggest a plan for White.

17.\(\text{\texttt{de5}}\) Any counterplay on the kingside, say by 17.\(\text{\texttt{h4}}\), is quickly brushed aside following 17...\(\text{\texttt{c6}}\), as Black’s play in the center comes much quicker.

17...\(\text{\texttt{e4}}\)! Nakamura continues his positional brilliancy by avoiding trades, thereby making White’s position harder and harder to play.

18.\(\text{\texttt{f4}}\) 18.\(\text{\texttt{c2}}\) is an alternative, in order to prevent ...\(\text{\texttt{d6}}\), but this can be met by something else: 18...\(\text{\texttt{f6}}\) 19.\(\text{\texttt{ad1}}\) \(\text{\texttt{a6}}\) and again the resulting position is close to lost for White.

18...\(\text{\texttt{f6}}\) 19.\(\text{\texttt{ad1}}\) 19.\(\text{\texttt{g4}}\) f5 20.\(\text{\texttt{f4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{c6}}\).

19...\(\text{\texttt{d6}}\)! On the surface this looks unnecessary, since it seems White can generate some form of attack. In fact Nakamura has everything completely under control.

20.\(\text{\texttt{g4}}\) White’s last hope was to try 20.\(\text{\texttt{g4}}\), but after 20...\(\text{\texttt{c8}}\) 21.\(\text{\texttt{xd6}}\) (if 21.\(\text{\texttt{xc8}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xc8}}\) 22.\(\text{\texttt{d3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xc4}}\) White has absolutely zero compensation) 21...\(\text{\texttt{xd6}}\) 22.\(\text{\texttt{e4}}\)

A) 22...d5 doesn’t quite work for Black: 23.\(\text{\texttt{exd5}}\) \(\text{\texttt{b7}}\) (23...\(\text{\texttt{f5}}\) 24.\(\text{\texttt{d6}}\) 24.\(\text{\texttt{c4}}\) (24.\(\text{\texttt{xc6}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xc6}}\) 25.\(\text{\texttt{dxc6}}\) \(\text{\texttt{f7}}\)) 24...\(\text{\texttt{xd5}}\) 25.\(\text{\texttt{d1}}\) which was probably what Hammer missed.

B) 22...\(\text{\texttt{xc5}}\) 23.\(\text{\texttt{xa8}}\) \(\text{\texttt{d7}}\) Black has to enter this line, but while White’s task now is much more manageable than in the game, e.g. 24.\(\text{\texttt{e4}}\) f5 25.\(\text{\texttt{b1}}\) e4 26.\(\text{\texttt{d2}}\) \(\text{\texttt{c6}}\) 27.\(\text{\texttt{f1}}\).

20...\(\text{\texttt{c6}}\)

Suddenly all of White’s “active” pieces will provide Black with tempi to advance his pawns.

21.\(\text{\texttt{g1}}\) 21.\(\text{\texttt{e4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{f7}}\) keeps any desperate attempts from White at bay.

21...\(\text{\texttt{f7}}\) This final subtle move turns
out to be completely decisive.

22.h3 Giving White's knight the square on h2. Upon 22...c1 White can't even back up now, while 22.e3 can be met by 22...d4, which is far more brutal than ...g6-g5 allowing a piece sac. 22...f5

23.Qh2 On 23.e3 Black can grab the b2 pawn to seal White's fate. 23...e5 Completely suffocating White is far more appealing. 23...xb2 might allow a last chance with 24.e4.

24.c1 e4 25.h4 d1 26.d1 d4 27.e1 a6

Attacking the a2 pawn and I don't think White's three minor pieces lined up on the h-file can do anything about it.

28.e3 Or 28.a3 cxb6 29.cxb6 xe4 28.g4 f6 29.gxf6 xh4 30.fxg6 hxg6 31.f4 xf5 32.xe4 db8. 28...xa2 29.g4 f6 30.e2 h6 31.gxf5 gxf5 32.f1 f1 believe Hammer flagged before completing this move, but the position is completely hopeless anyway. 0-1

A very convincing victory by Nakamura, and a full point with Black for the US team, allowing them to win comfortably as Shankland added another point for insurance. Nevertheless the tournament was far from over, as Ukraine kept pace with a win over India.

They played serious, meaningful games. This should encourage more strong young players to play for their country in other events outside the US.

Michael Vidaurri, San Antonio, TX

The level of play. Chess will become more popular.

Michel Behna, Torrance, CA

They maintained focus, lived up to their potential and took care of business. This increases the visibility of chess in the U.S. and encourages the younger generation. Chess no longer is considered a nerd activity, but is something the cool, smart kids do.

Al Myatt, Little Rock, AR

What impressed me was the strength of the US team. Chess will become more popular.

IM William Morrison, Baltimore, MD

The earnest efforts to excel in the chess art exhibited by the team brought success because of positive team spirit. All of the players have the championship drive. When successful outcomes are produced and sustained all benefit; it becomes contagious to see others from your environment excel. More chess education and exposure will bring future champions from the US.

B. P. Rice, Jamaica, NY

Team USA played each game with a calm focus, each as an end in itself, and with solid determination. Now, with successful role models and a competitive pride, an increased seriousness could strike some amateurs.

Iame Manucci, Bridgeport, CT

Remarkable achievement considering the overall strength of European and Asian players. Gives the USA bragging rights. Everyone loves a winner!

Jeffrey Rymuza, Warner Robins, GA

The fact that they did not lose a match was impressive. Also, the performance of So. Unfortunately, very little. Few outside chess circles will know anything about it. Very sad.

Paul Castle, Stafford, VA

I am highly impressed. I hope it increases US chess players; we could have a channel just on chess.

Alfredo Garcia, San Antonio, TX

They lived up to the expectations and delivered. More interest.

John Walsh, La Crescenta, CA

Wesley So is playing like a champion. Some, but Americans won't notice or care much.

Brian Lee Morris, Auburn, CA
was quite happy to be a part of the young Indian side consisting of Adhiban, Vidit, Sethuraman, Murali and myself. It's no mean feat to be one of the youngest of the top ten teams! Grandmaster Ramesh was our coach/captain and not only assisted with chess preparation but also did his best to keep up team morale, using his experience to help players recover after defeats.

Looking back I have to say that all the team members displayed their best form in Baku. We supported each other during tough times and one of our most noticeable characteristics was that we were always in an upbeat mood, no matter what happened in the games, and we really did enjoy playing at the Olympiad. As is the case in any team sport, I feel that our great camaraderie was one of the prime reasons for achieving such a good result. We showed the world that we weren’t to be taken lightly and could even fight for the gold medals.

In the final tally, our two match defeats were against only the champions and the runners up. Seen with the benefit of hindsight, both these matches were quite closely fought and we had a chance to draw our match with the USA and win against Ukraine. Although simply contemplating various ifs and buts never produces anything tangible, it is nevertheless good to know that we could have done even better and that we really do have the potential to make it to the very top of the podium! After all, in this Olympiad we did face all the strongest teams and played excellent chess.

Last but not least, I want to thank the Baku organisers for a very well organised event. We had a nice hotel, close to the playing venue, and the tournament hall itself was quite good. Towards the end of the tournament I wasn’t too impressed with the food, but this is probably my only small niggle in an otherwise great event – on all counts!

One final thought on the much debated anti-cheating measures that were put in place for the entire Olympiad, In my opinion it is essential to have these, whether we like it or not. Quite simply it has become a sad necessity in today’s computer world. It even sometimes makes sense to check a player during play. True, there are pros and cons and it is not easy to consider all of these in just a few short lines. Of course there is no point in checking every player who is going to or from a toilet. As for myself I was tested for both anti cheating and anti doping 🙌.
Anyway let me now give you my thoughts on the game that I liked most in Baku.

E01

Shakhriyar Mamedyarov 2761
Pentala Harikrishna 2752

Round 5, Azerbaijan 1 - India

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.©c3 ©f6 4.©f3 c6
5.g3 ©c5 6.©g2 b5 7.0-0 ©b7 8.©e5
a6 9.b3 b4 10.©c4 ©xe4 11.©xe4 c5
12.a3 a5 13.axb4

15.©d7 15...c5? is interesting, then
16.©e4 (16.©g6 0-0 17.©h7+ ©h8 18.g4
©h4 19.©e4 ©d5x) 16...0-0 17.©xb7
(17.d5 ©d8 18.©xe6 ©xd3 19.exf7+ ©xf7
20.©g6+ ©xf7 21.©e7 ©xe4 22.©xd3
©xd3) 17...©xb7 18.©xc5 ©c7 is equal.
However, not 15...g5? 16.©xg6 fxg6
17.©xg6+ ©xf8 18.©g5 when White wins.

16.©e4 ©xe5 17.dxe5 ©d8 17...b8?! 18.h4 c5 19.©d1 0-0 20.©g5 ©c7 is unclear.

18.©f3

15...©d5?! I had this position in mind
when I decided to play 15...©d7 and felt
it would give me decent chances.

19.©g4 19.©f4 can be met by 19...c5
20.©g4 ©f6 when Black's idea is to play...

20.©xh7+ ©xh7 11.©xh7 22.©f5 23.©xf6 gxf6 slightly favors Black.

20...exd5 21.©a4 c5 21...©g8?! is the engine's top choice as it avoids the exchange of bishops.

22.©a3 ©h6 23.©xb4 axb4 24.©c1
©e8 25.©a7 ©c6 26.©g5 ©e6

27.©d8+ ©e8 28.©d6+ ©g8

29.©xb7? This sacrifice was
accompanied by a draw offer! Here
the engine gives everything as 0.00!! I
think either 29.©a5 or ©f3 would hold
for White, e.g. 29.©a5! ©c2 30.©a1 ©d4
31.©xc6 ©xc6 32.©c1 ©xe5 33.©a2
©e4; or simply 29.©f3!. But not 29.©xc6
©xc6 30.©c7 c4 winning for Black nor
29.f4 ©e4+.

29...©xb7 30.©xc5 ©e5 31.©a7

31.d4! 32.©xd4 ©d5 33.©xb7 ©xd4
34.©g2 ©d1 This move was missed
by Shakh and after some thought he
resigned.

0-1

At this point Vidit was also winning and
so we defeated the strong Azerbaijan
team by a 3-1 margin. It was a nice
experience for me to play in the Chess
Olympiad, which gave me a chance to
meet people from all over the world.
My heartiest congratulations go to Team
USA for winning the gold medal. They
played fantastic chess throughout the
tournament!
I'm happy to have the opportunity to write about the Olympiad in Baku because it signals the first time that I'm not just writing about myself but about the whole Canadian team. Canada finished in 11th place with +7–1–3 in what is widely regarded as our best Olympiad showing ever. But how did a team of five inactive, non-professional players do it? Let’s see....

Eric Hansen is a Grandmaster and member of the Canadian national team. When he is not competing he works as a commentator for both the St.Louis Chess Club and chess.com. Eric is also active in the chess community through his “chessbrah” YouTube channel where you can often see videos of him and some friends playing blitz and bullet chess.

The Canadian team changes almost every Olympiad cycle due to new immigrants and also the sad fact that many of our players eventually quit the game. The only returning players from last time were GM Anton Kovalyov and yours truly. Anton is a student in Texas where he is on a chess scholarship. We were reinforced with Evgeniy Bareev, Alexandre Lesiègue, and Tomas Krmánek.

Bareev needs no introduction, only to mention that he moved to Canada a couple of years ago and spends most of his time teaching these days. Having a player of his level on the team is unprecedented for Canada. Lesiègue was another big story. He was making a comeback to chess in this Olympiad after more than ten years away from the game. Lesiègue is one of the strongest and most talented Canadian players ever. However, the question mark with Alexandre was not whether he was capable of playing at strong grandmaster level but whether his play had suffered any particularly adverse effects due to his ten year
absence. Rounding off the team was IM Tomas Krmn, who is the reigning Canadian champion and an accountant by profession.

So the line-up was 1.Bareev 2.Kovalyov 3.Lesiege 4.Hansen 5.Krmn. I was on board 4 so that I could get many Whites by alternating between boards 3 and 4. This was a little bit of strategy devised by our captain FM Victor Plotkin. Anton did very well on board 1 in the previous Olympiad, so it looked like Canada could be quite dangerous with Anton and I on boards 2 and 4, if Lesiege, Bareev, and Krmn were solid.

How to summarize what happened? It would be appropriate to use a golfing phrase “the bounces went in our favor.” Bareev had to hold a very difficult board 1 and he did a reasonable job. If it had been a usual Canadian Olympiad performance he would probably have gone undefeated, but this time we did so unexpectedly well that he ended up facing many elite opponents in games where it was difficult for him to handle their level of opening preparation. Kovalyov was simply spectacular on board two. He was rewarded accordingly with an individual silver medal. When you look at his tournament, the critical game that made everything possible was his win against England’s David Howell, after he had earlier been totally lost. Lesiege not only overperformed on board three but he also took the black pieces in six out of eight games. Krmn similarly performed well above his rating, despite taking Black whenever he could. As a result, I had the luxury of having White in nine out of my eleven games and I took advantage of this to achieve one of the best results of my career.

The team atmosphere was the best out of all my Olympiad experiences and I can only thank our captain and my teammates for that. I hope with this result we made our presence well and truly felt and set a new standard for Canadian chess.

So here I was: round 11, table 1, board 4, playing our neighbours USA. The whole situation felt like a dream.

**C65**

**Eric Hansen** 2582

**Sam Shankland** 2679

**Round 11, Canada-USA**

1.e4 e5 I was expecting Sam to play either the Najdorf or Berlin. Because the final round took place in the morning, I decided sleep was more important than preparation. The US had big advantages on boards 1 and 3 with White, so they would probably just want to keep it solid on boards 2 and 4. That meant we took a gamble and only looked at the Berlin beforehand.

2.d3 d6 3.h5 d6 4.d3 The possibility of 4.0-0 and 5.e1 came into my mind, but it just as quickly disappeared when I looked to my right and saw my teammates playing Black against Caruana and So. Therefore, going into the match, I decided to retain the tension as it was on my board where we had our best chances.

4...c5 5.c3 0-0 6.0-0 d6 7.h3 d7 8.d4 b6 9.d3 g6 10.e1 e8 11.b2 c6 12.f1 d5

14...h6 Here 14...f5 is best met by 15.e1 d3 16.xf6, as White needs to free up e1 for the other rook. This is an improvement on the previously played 15.e1 d3 16.xf6 h6 17.xf6 xf6 18.g3 d4 19.xf5 xf5 20.xf5 exd4 21.xd4 d3= Z.Efimenko (2706) - R.Ponomariov (2764), Khanty-Mansiysk (m3-rapid) 2011.

15.xf6 xf6

16.e1 An attempt to improve on 16.e3 d5 17.xf5 xf5 18.g5 e7 19.xe5 xe5 20.xe5 xe5 21.xe5 xf6 22.xh5 g6 23.g3 d4 S.Karjakin (2773) - W.So (2770), Bilbao 2016. The difference between e1 and e3 is that e1 allows White the option of dxe5 which keeps an extra pair of rooks on the board.

16...f5 17.xf5 xf5 18.g3 f6 19.h5 f5

Black immediately tries to clarify the position instead of developing his pieces further. Interestingly enough, out of the eleven games I played in Baku this was the only one where I correctly guessed what my opponent would play. Sam is a very well prepared player so it made sense to test me in something theoretical.

13.g5 dxe4 The alternative 13...exd4 14.e5 h6 15.xh6 gxh6 16.xe4 fxe5 17.dxe5, followed by f1 and g3, seems to give White chances on the kingside.

14.xe4
20...\textit{g}3 I knew \textit{g}4 was the suggested computer move but I needed to calculate it and see the consequences for myself. The other factor was that Sam was playing incredibly fast and had already built up his time to 97(!) minutes, which made me second guess.

20...\textit{f}6 The continuation 20...\textit{d}7 21.\textit{x}e5 \textit{xe}5 22.\textit{d}xe5 is an example of where \textit{e}1 proves to be beneficial.

21.\textit{h}5 \textit{f}5 22.g4

I looked at the other boards and already felt uncomfortable with our positions as Black. Considering my teammates gave me White throughout the whole tournament, it was time to try and repay them. For all the time I spent calculating here, I couldn’t see easy equality for Black.

22...\textit{c}8 23.\textit{c}5 \textit{xe}5 24.\textit{d}xe5 \textit{c}7 25.\textit{e}2 The exchanges brought about by 25.\textit{d}6 \textit{d}8 26.\textit{xc}7 \textit{xc}7 27.\textit{ad}1 \textit{dx}d1 28.\textit{ex}d1 \textit{xe}5 29.\textit{d}7 \textit{g}5 30.\textit{g}3 \textit{b}5 31.\textit{xa}7 \textit{x}g3 32.f\textit{x}g3 \textit{e}2 lead only to a draw.

25...\textit{ad}8

This position has never been reached before but it was likely in Sam’s preparation. Actually, computers think the pawn sacrifice equalizes the position completely, but the subsequent moves are not the natural choices nor are they easy to find.

26.\textit{f}4 The natural 26.\textit{g}2 allows Black far too much activity: 26...\textit{d}5 27.\textit{f}4 \textit{d}8 28.\textit{d}1 \textit{d}7 29.\textit{d}5+ 30.\textit{g}3 \textit{xa}2 31.\textit{f}5 \textit{c}7=.

With only a queen in the attack this should just be a draw. Another very serious alternative is 26...\textit{e}6?!, with the idea of ...\textit{a}7 and ...\textit{b}8.

27.\textit{g}2

26...\textit{d}7?! Sam makes a mistake in his first think of the game. A good line for Black was 26...\textit{e}7 27.\textit{g}2 (27.\textit{c}4 \textit{d}2 28.\textit{d}3 \textit{f}6 29.\textit{e}5 \textit{xe}5). The hard move to find in this sequence is 27...\textit{c}5 (not 27...\textit{h}4 28.\textit{f}3 \textit{e}2 29.\textit{e}2 \textit{xe}2 30.\textit{xe}2=) when White lacks good moves, for example 28.\textit{ac}1 \textit{c}7 29.\textit{f}3 \textit{xe}5= or 28.\textit{e}6 \textit{g}5 29.\textit{ex}f7+

\textit{xf}7 30.\textit{c}2 \textit{xf}4 31.\textit{h}7+. With only a queen in the attack this should just be a draw.

27...\textit{h}8 Another inaccuracy, after which the position becomes very difficult. Following 27...\textit{de}7 28.\textit{xd}3 \textit{c}5 29.\textit{c}4 \textit{a}5 30.\textit{ed}1 \textit{f}6, the problem for Black is that equality is only achieved...
White has now comfortably consolidated his extra pawn.

31...\(\text{e}d2\) During the game, I felt that the endgame reached after 31...\(\text{de}7\) 32.e6 (or 32.\(\text{f}d3!?)\) preparing \(\text{e}4\) and \(\text{f}4\) 32...\(\text{x}f4\) 33.\(\text{xf7}\) \(\text{xe}2\) 34.\(\text{fxe}8\) \(\text{e}8\) 35.\(\text{exe}8+ \text{xe}8\) 36.\(\text{xf}4\) would be close to losing for Black. The weakened king position does not help his cause.

32.\(\text{xd}2\) \(\text{xd}2\) 33.\(\text{e}2\)

33...\(\text{d}7?!\) Not a good move but it’s hard to suggest alternatives, e.g.

33...\(\text{d}8\) 34.\(\text{c}d3\) \(\text{e}7\) 35.\(\text{e}4\) \(\text{ed}8\) 36.\(\text{e}4\) \(\text{d}7\) 37.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{e}8\) 38.\(\text{e}3++\); or 33...\(\text{d}1\) 34.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{xd}2\) 35.\(\text{xd}3\) \(\text{b}6\) 36.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{d}8\) 37.\(\text{e}4++\).

34.\(\text{e}6!\) \(\text{fxe}6\)

Now a second pawn will fall after 42...\(\text{xe}4\) 43.\(\text{xe}4\) \(\text{ed}8\) 44.\(\text{xb}7\), while 42...\(\text{xc}5\) loses to 43.\(\text{e}8\) \(\text{h}7\) 44.\(\text{g}6+ \text{g}8\) 45.\(\text{e}8\) \(\text{xf}8\) 46.\(\text{e}6\) \(\text{f}7\) 47.\(\text{xf}8+ \text{xf}8\) 48.\(\text{xc}8++\). So Sam resigned and presumably joined the rest of the US team in figuring out the tiebreaks.

1-0

I’d say the nervous tension in the match created an atmosphere which was more difficult to handle than the game itself. But it was the only time in my Olympiad where I gained an advantage with White, so I was quite pleased. But at the same time Sam certainly had an off day, so my task was easier than it would otherwise have been. All in all, this victory was bittersweet since the team’s defeat in the match knocked Canada back from 4th to 11th place.
How an Aussie held “the gun on one”

NEXT TIME I’LL TAKE ON h7!

by GM David Smerdon

When I was first asked to write about my game with Magnus for ACM, I felt a bit hesitant. Perhaps “guilty” is even more appropriate. After all, in a team event, and especially one as esteemed as the Olympiad, a draw with the white pieces is not something to be overly celebrated – even if one’s opponent is the World Champion.

I had received a surprising amount of attention due to this result, something I must admit was flattering, but also overshadowed what in my opinion were more significant achievements of the players involved in the Norway-Australia match. For one, it was already clear by this round that 15-year-old Anton Smirnov, our Board 4, was on the road to something special, and indeed he went on to earn himself a double GM norm (and 32 extra ELO points) with a round to spare.

But to me, an even more impressive achievement was Norway’s performance overall, finishing fifth. This is an unbelievable accomplishment given the team’s average rating, which itself was inflated by having Magnus on Board 1, and the world champion deserves a lot of credit for this. It’s one thing to be an amazing individual competitor, but it’s another to be able to inspire, motivate and support your teammates to achieve their best.

I know that Magnus put a lot of time and resources into the players for the tournament, something for which he hasn’t really received much credit in the chess media. But perhaps he should; after all, Norway’s was by far the most remarkable team performance at the Olympiad, with
the possible exceptions of Iran and Chinese Taipei.

So it was with some feelings of guilt that I received accolades about my game, which, while certainly a large personal milestone, was rather small in the scheme of the two teams in the event. Fortunately, the online trolls were quick to ensure that I remained grounded, and were especially brutal with regard to my decision to take the draw. (The best of these was a suggestion that my tombstone should read “Here lies David Smerdon, the man who could have beaten the World Champion.” Even I had to laugh at that one.)

While trolling is a nasty business, I have to concede that the critics weren’t without some justification here, and the “invisible” 21.\texttt{gxh7+} is certainly the most instructive moment of the game from a chess perspective. As GM Ivan Sokolov remarked to me some days later, “You’ll be famous for a day because of the draw, but if you’d won, you’d be a hero!” There’s some exaggeration here of course, but as with all good embellishments, also some truth beneath.

I eventually realized that there was one somewhat unselfish reason for writing about the game, and that is that I can provide a unique perspective of what it’s like for an amateur to play against Magnus. Chess is not my profession, and while I can claim to be a reasonably strong amateur, I would never have the opportunity to play one of the world’s top ten were it not for the Olympiad. In fact, I bet all of the firstboards at the Olympiad were like me in praying for the hallowed “Us versus Norway” pairing (with the exception perhaps of Russia).

That exact moment happened to me while I was out at night in Baku at, of all places, a shisha lounge. Some local Azeris had taken me to a famous café to drink tea and smoke a water pipe. When the pairing came through on my phone, I excused myself from the group, explaining that I had a big game the following day and should better have an early night.

But I didn’t walk straight back to my hotel; instead, I took a long detour along the famous Baku Boulevard, which kisses the Caspian shore. I didn’t bother preparing that night. If there’s one lesson I’ve learned from balancing a job with chess, it’s that while you only use your preparation for a game some of the time, you need sleep all of the time.

David Smerdon is a Grandmaster and seven-time Olympiad representative for Australia. He has written for many chess periodicals and websites, and recently published his first book entitled Smerdon’s Scandinavian (Everyman Chess 2015). David works as an economist at Bocconi University in Milan and is finishing his PhD at the University of Amsterdam. He writes a blog at www.davidsmerdon.com.

The first real sense of what it’s like to play Magnus appeared when I arrived at the venue. Even though there was still half an hour until the round, photographers and fans had already begun to gather expectantly around my table. A bunch of my friends wandered over to wish me good luck. I knew Magnus was approaching not because I saw him, but because the horde of cameras turned in unison and started clicking in a certain direction; spectators and journalists rose on their toes, leaving me feeling very small sitting in my chair.

As we waited for the round to begin, the clicking of camera shutters cackled like a swarm of cicadas, and it would continue for the first 15 minutes of the game until most (but not all) were escorted out of the playing area. Despite the buzz, Magnus seemed impervious to the attention. I guess by now he must be immune to it.

Because the Australian team was the subject of an independent documentary at the Olympiad, we had our “own” camera crew as well, so at least we could feel like one of the cicadas was officially there to click at us – though even their lens was suspiciously pointed at the other side of the table.
B22

David Smerdon 2531
Magnus Carlsen 2857

Round 4, Australia-Norway

1.e4 c5 As Magnus has a reputation for despising openings, I was a bit surprised to find in the database that he almost always plays 1...e5 or 1...c5 against 1.e4. Given the myriad of forced draws in my repertoire in the open games, the Sicilian wasn’t really a surprise.

2.c3 But what was a surprise was Magnus’ thinking after this move. I shot a puzzled look at my captain, who responded with a confused grin of his own. Manuel Weeks has known me since I was 10 years old, and has been trying since then to convince me to give up the 2.c3 Sicilian. Magnus later told me he had expected a 3.d4 system, something I’ve been dabbling in of late. But I find that against strong GMs, it’s generally best to stick to my “old faithful.”

2...d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.d4 Qf6 5.Qf3 e6 This system has become quite popular lately among grandmasters. One of the new ideas has been to delay capturing on d4 so as to take away the c3-square from the white knight. Black should equalize comfortably with just a little care, but then again, this holds for pretty much all of Black’s defenses against 2.c3. On the other hand, that doesn’t worry us devotees of the system; after all, one of the main points of playing 2.c3 is that it’s extremely difficult for Black to win if White digs in his heels.

6.d3 I like this variation, which the Dutch GM Sergei Tiviakov has really made his own. The knight prepares dxc4 and hits at d5. In many of the lines, White will avoid the isolated pawn by capturing on d4 with a knight or by playing dxc5 himself, leading to positions that are in principle just a touch more comfortable for White.

Against Maxime Vachier-Lagrave in a later round, I switched back to the more traditional 6...d3. Unfortunately, I walked into some of the Frenchman’s famous preparation (or more accurately, preparation delivered by one of his seconds). After 6...e7 7.0-0 0-0 8.Qe2 cxd4 9.Qxd4 Qc6 10.Qe3?! Qd4 I was already fighting for equality and went on to lose a horrible game. D.Smerdon (2531) - M.Vacher-Lagrave (2813), Baku (ol) 2016.

6...d8 I faced 6...a6 in the last Olympiad, and after 7.Qc4 Qbd7 8.4f4+ cxd4 9.Qxd4 Qc5 10.Qxd5 exd5 11.Qe3 0-0 12.Qd3 Qb8!= Black rerouted his knight to its proper home on c6, equalizing. D.Smerdon (2513) - A.David (2565), Tromso (ol) 2014.

7.Qc4 7.Qc2 is more common, but I prefer the more active continuation. 7...Qbd7 8.Qd3 Qe7 9.0-0 0-0 10.Qf4 b6 11.Qe2 Qb7 is solid for Black. I.Salgado Lopez (2628) – P.Svidler (2739), Gibraltar 2015.

7...e7 The first new move to me (more usual is 7...Qc6, but then White can consider 8.Qd5!?).

8.Qe3 Played after a super long and super unnecessary think. 8.Qd3 is more logical. In general, I feel that White should delay moving his queen’s bishop in these systems until an obviously good square appears (a mistake I made in the Vachier-Lagrave game).

8...Qxd4 9.Qxd4?! I think most spectators saw this as cowardice – certainly the commentators thought so. But actually White would have a slight advantage if Black exchanged queens here. Don’t worry; the cowardice comes later.

9.Qxd4 0-0 10.Qf3 is also interesting, and perhaps stronger, preparing Qd1. Black would probably be advised to head for an endgame with 10.Qd5.

9...e0 9...Qxd4 10.Qxd4 Qd5 11.Qd3+ 10.0-0-0!? This was my “idea,” Black is a little behind in development, so I figured that in theory I should have a head start in any attacking race. Besides, I was already half an hour behind on the clock and I wanted to shock Magnus into thinking for a change.

On the other hand, 10.Qxd8? Qxd8+ would exemplify a typical mistake players make when facing a strong opponent: being too eager to swap off pieces.

10.Qd5 11.Qg4 Qxe3 12.fxe3?! Manuel and my Australian teammates like to say that I have the unusual “ability” (and here they use the word loosely) to play ugly moves. While this move weakens White’s structure, there are more concrete considerations in play. For one, White’s knight is far more active (and restrictive) on c4, where it controls the key e5-square. And secondly, it defends f4. Why, you ask?

12.Qc7 13.Qf3 Qd7

14.Qf4! This is not as wimpy as it appears. (I told you: the cowardice comes later.) The queen was going to get kicked anyway, so why not gain control of e5 with a gain of time? In fact, the queen exchange would not only fix White’s structure, but lead to a quite uncomfortable endgame for Black.

14.Qc5! 14.Qxf4 15.Qx4 Qxc5 16.Qc2 b5 17.Qe5+ leaves Black with some work to do; 14...Qd6?! 15.Qh1!! is already starting to look very dangerous.

15.Qb4! Please forgive another favorable annotation. If 12.fxe3 is ugly, then this move really shouldn’t be allowed out in public. But again, the play has suddenly become sharp and concrete calculations are the order of the day. Black cannot be allowed to complete his development in peace. As this move leads with best play to a draw, perhaps an exclamation mark is a bit strong, but I figure I can get away with it given the particular opponent.

15.Qc6! 15...Qh5 only hastens White’s attack after 16.g4.

16.Qd4 Qxg2?! It’s hard to give any questionable annotation to one of Carlsen’s moves, and objectively it’s probably not fair. But there’s no doubt that Black risks a lot by accepting the gift.
Magnus later admitted that he’d seen the repetition after the tempting 16...\texttt{wa4} but didn’t feel like “begging for a draw.” And who can blame him, since my calculation skills were hardly on point: I had thought I was trapping his queen after this alternative, but I was sadly mistaken. After 17.\texttt{c6} (17.\texttt{c4}!\texttt{f6} 18.\texttt{e4} is double-edged and perhaps more interesting.) 17...\texttt{xa2} 18.\texttt{c4} \texttt{a3} 19.\texttt{g5} (19.\texttt{c2}?? \texttt{e5}++; 19.\texttt{c2}?? \texttt{xc3}+++) 19...\texttt{a6} 20.\texttt{c7} \texttt{c3} 21.\texttt{c2} \texttt{xf6}!! it turns out White has nothing better than a repetition with 22.\texttt{b5}--; There was also 16...\texttt{d5} to consider, when my thinking was that “at worst, I have 17.\texttt{d3} with a likely repetition.” In fact, this is probably best play for both sides.

17.\texttt{g1} \texttt{h3}!! Played immediately. 17...\texttt{xa2}?? leads to a forced mate after the brutal 18.\texttt{xe7}+! \texttt{xe7} 19.\texttt{g1}+ \texttt{h8} 20.\texttt{h6}++.

18.\texttt{g3} \texttt{h4}!! In the post-mortem, after 18...\texttt{h5} I meekly suggested that the shot 19.\texttt{d1} g6 20.\texttt{e6}!!

Finally, the moment has arrived! 21.\texttt{g1}!! I guess I should attempt to explain myself, as the game will shortly end. At this moment there was a large crowd watching my board, including the other six players in the match and both captains. After all, it’s not every day somebody dares to hack the world champion.

Unfortunately, nerves had really affected my time management and I was down to 20 minutes for the remaining 20 moves of the time control. I hadn’t felt entirely confident with the game up to this point and given that my job in the match was to hold their “gun on one,” my hand basically jumped for my rook. I saw that Magnus would have to accept a very difficult endgame if he wanted to keep the game going, something I—irrationally—thought he would do.

Before making the move, I briefly considered the alternative 21.\texttt{xh7}+, and my thinking went as follows: “After...\texttt{h8} I’ll play bishop somewhere with check, probably to e4, and he’ll play...\texttt{h6}. Then I can play \texttt{d6}, but he has...\texttt{f6} with ideas of...\texttt{e5}. And if I play \texttt{xb7} there, he swaps and goes...\texttt{g4}, threatening...\texttt{xe3} and...\texttt{f2} and I’m probably worse. Okay, I’m playing 21.\texttt{g1}.”

Of course, now I know that a fair bit of that thinking was wrong. But, given the time situation, that I couldn’t see a forced win, and had even spotted a line where I was in trouble after \texttt{xb7}+, and that I seriously thought Magnus might eschew the draw after \texttt{g1}, I picked up the rook.

Would I have taken on \texttt{h7} and found 22.\texttt{c2}+ with a bit more time? I think the answer is yes, even in a team event, but for practical reasons rather than anything to do with courage, I probably would have spotted that afterward.

After 21.\texttt{xh7}+ \texttt{h8} 22.\texttt{c2}+ \texttt{h6}?! 23.\texttt{d6}! White is just winning, as 23...\texttt{xe5} 24.\texttt{f3} threatens \texttt{xf7}+. So Black is forced to play 22...\texttt{g8}, after which White can take a draw any time he wants to over the next few moves. Having gotten to this point on the board, I’d back myself to find that White can immediately force a winning endgame with 23.\texttt{f3}! \texttt{e7} 24.\texttt{h7}+ \texttt{h8} 25.\texttt{e4}+ \texttt{g8} 26.\texttt{xb7} \texttt{xb7} 27.\texttt{d7} \texttt{xf3} 28.\texttt{xe7}++, in which he risks nothing. There’s still a lot of work to be done, of...
2016 CHESS OLYMPIAD

I SPRUNG A TRAP FOR NAKAMURA

by GM Mikheil Mchedlishvili

This was the the penultimate round of the Olympiad and we were paired against an extremely strong USA team. Still, we were happy that the Georgian team was playing on Board 1 near to the Olympiad end, as the last time this happened was many, many years ago. We wanted to fight and use our chances in case of any overoptimistic play from our strong opponents – which actually happened in this game!

D78

Hikaru Nakamura 2789
Mikheil Mchedlishvili 2609
Round 10, Georgia-USA

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3...f3 f6 4.g3

12...dc4 13.d5 In other cases the compensation is not obvious.
13...b2 14..b2 cd5 14...c3 is also possible with equality.

15.fd1? After this strange move, Black is clearly better. It's hard to

course, but the chances of a successful conversion, even for me, are very good.

21...h6

22.xg5 hxg5 23...h7+...h8 24.d3+...g8 25...h7+...h8 26.d3+

Draw

To my surprise, Magnus didn’t seem at all disappointed after the game; I think he felt a bit lucky to escape the worst, and we later discovered that his instincts were right. We had a short post mortem in the analysis room, which gave the media the chance to remerge for another photo opportunity.

I wouldn’t say that I know Magnus after this, but one thing that really struck me was how gracious he was to the spectators and fans. I never saw him say no to a request for an autograph or selfie by a fan, not once, even at the Bermuda party. Certainly not all top players are so enduring, and even many of us amateurs can become irritable after a game, particularly one that cost ELO points. It was one thing to play against Magnus, but I also enjoyed the small insight into his temperament, something most of us don’t get to see.

As for me, my 15 minutes of fame weren’t to last very long. In later rounds my c3 Sicilian was summarily demolished first by Polish star Radoslaw Wojtaszek and then by Maxime Vachier-Lagrave. I was also beaten in the same opening in an earlier round by the Croatian GM Ivan Saric. So in fact I only scored a mere ½/4 with my faithful variation, even if the only draw came against special opposition!

Perhaps Manuel was right after all. Truth be told, I’m too old and too busy these days to change my chess repertoire, so I guess you know what to expect if you ever sit opposite me with the black pieces in your hands. Just be warned: Next time I’ll take on h7. I promise.
Twice champion of Georgia
Mikheil Mchedlishvili.
Photo by Andreas Kontokanis.

explain what White was counting on. Normal is to accept the fact that the position is equal and play 15...e5 16...d5 c3 17...c3 e6 18...d5 ed5 19...c5, when White regains his pawn with dead equality.

15...d4 16.b4 16...d4 b6
16...c6 17...b7 c8?! 17...d7 is most accurate, Black will play ...e5 and is much better strategically. Also good is 17...c8?.
18...b5 b8 19...c5 b7 I wanted to put rooks on c7 and d8, and then try to push ...d3, which worked in the game. But I chose an inaccurate way. 19...d8? was better.

20...f3 d8 21...d2 d3?

This is a weak move, allowing e4-e5 with counterplay.

It was necessary to make prophylactic moves first. 21...c7! does not allow 22.f4 (22...e5 c6) because of 22...b4+; Interesting is 21...g4!? with the idea of closing off the white bishop if White plays 22.f3 (22...db1 c7) 22...e6.

22...ab1? 22.e5 was necessary:
22...c7 23...c6 f5 24.a5 c6 25.a4 and White will have chances.
22...c7 Black is again in full control.
23...b6? This is too optimistic. 23...f1 ...g4 24.f3 (24...dc1 ...e2) 24...e6?.

23...d4+

29...d2 29...d1 30...d8 g7 31...f1 d2 was the quickest way to win, but I didn't want to make things complicated in time trouble, and chose the simplest way to win.
30...d8 g7 31...c1 dc1 32...a5 c3 Now Black is completely winning and there are many ways to finish the game.
33...f3 e1 34.g2 h5 35...b4 a2 36...e7 c4 37...e5 h7 38...h3 f2 39...c3 f1 White resigned

Now the d3-pawn, supported by all the black pieces, will be too strong and White will have no way to stop it.

24.a5 c4 25.f3 e2 26.h1

This was a memorable win, but unfortunately we still lost the match 1½–2½ and the USA team went on to win the Olympiad after they won their last match.
In Baku I scored what was probably the best ever result in my chess career. After deeply analysing my games from the Olympiad, I would say that I was lucky in a few games, especially against Hansen, but also against Babula, Gelashvili and even in the first round. I made mistakes, also my opponents made mistakes, but the reason I came out on top was that I didn’t allow the mistakes of my opponents to go unpunished, apart from my last round encounter with Sebenik. Whoever exploits the opponent’s mistakes will win the game.

My team, Ukraine, took the silver medal but of course we hoped for the gold right up to the end of the last game of the tournament. Quite simply we had no luck with the tiebreaks, as almost all our opponents who might have contributed to our points total had lost their matches, like China and Georgia. The decisive match was in fact Estonia against Germany. If this had ended 2-2, then we would win the gold. But Germany won by 2½-1½.

Anyway, here I would like to show you not some nice win but a game which illustrates precisely why you need to have strong nerves in chess. In the following hopeless position I managed to catch my opponent in a devilish trap...

WITH 8½/9 ANDREI VOLOKITIN WAS THE HIGHEST PERFORMING PLAYER OF THE OLYMPIAD!

B51

Eric Hansen  2582
Andrei Volokitin  2647
Round 7, Canada - Ukraine

35...d7 36.xd5?? Simply incredible! My opponent gets caught in the net that I had cast. He must have thought that this move was immediately decisive, since 36...xd5 37.xh8+ g7 38.h6+ xh6 39.xf8 mates. Of course, there was an easy win after 36.h6! e6 37.g4+–.
36...h6!= And we start all over again.
37.xa5 hxg5 38.f3?
Still not able to recover from the shock, Eric again blunders in time trouble. Upon 38.d5! e6 there is a clear draw.
38...g4! 39.xd5! g3! 40.xf1! In case of 40.a1? gxh5! 41.xc4 xc6! 42.xf1 h4 Black wins by force.
40...g4!

41.f3? The decisive mistake. The only move was 41.a1! Theoretically,
White should be able to make a draw here, provided he finds all the “only moves”. From a practical point of view I think that Black’s winning chances are over 50%. Now Black has two options: A) 41...gxh5 42. axc4 In order to make a draw White needs to exchange his three pawns on f4, e5 and c3 for just one black pawn – that on f7. A1) 42...b6 An interesting idea, but in any case White manages to destroy the black e6-pawn. 43.axe6 fxe6 44. g6! With the idea of 45.f5 and f5. 44...f7 45.e1! f2 (45...g6 46.c4=; 45...h4 46.f1 h4 47.g5=) 46. f1=; A2) 42...f2+ 43.g1 b2 (43...xf4 44.d5 with an easy draw) 44.b3 bxc3 45.d1! 46.dxe1 b2! This move prevents the trade of the f5 and e6 pawns. 47.e1! e4 (47...g7 48.g6=) 48.e1! exf4+ 42...xh5! (42...gxh5? 43.a8+ g7 44.e7=) 45.e6 Logically, White tends to exchange as many pawns as possible. This endgame is very difficult for a human to defend, as it is necessary to find computer-like “only moves”. Now Black has two possibilities: B1) 43...e2+ 44.f1 fxe6 45.e4 46.e3! (Bad is 46.e3? 47.e2+! 47.g1 d3=) 46...fxe4+ 47. g1! Here Black has some practical winning chances, but objectively the position is drawn. 47...f6 (47...f6 48.e1 e2 49.e2+ 49.e3 50.e1 e4 51.e1 e5 52.e3 e5 53.e4 e5 54.e5 e5 with a draw) 48.e4 49.e2 49.e3 e2 50.e2 d3=; B2) 43... fx e6 44.a8+ 45.d5 45.d5 The only move. B2a) 45...g4! 46.e8+ e7

49.e2! White can successfully defend this rook endgame, for example: 49...g7 50.e3 f2 51.e2 f1 52.e3 53.e4+ g5 54.e5! f5 55.a8! A2a) 55...f2 56.e5 g6 (56...e2 57.e6=) 57.e4+ g5 58.a8 f7 59.e2 g6 60.e6 f6! =; A2b) 55...e5+ 56.e3 h4 57.g8+ e7 58.g5+ 58.e6 59.g8+=. 

B) 41...e2+!

47.ea5!! A study-like move, the idea of which will be clear shortly. 47...e2+ 48.e1 ea5 49.ea5! e5 50.cf5+ d6 51.e5 e5 52.e5 f3 53.e5 e5 54.b6 55.b6+ b6 56.b6= Now, upon 50...f5, White has the check 51.ee5+ which holds White’s position and at last reveals the idea behind 46.e8=. The position is drawn after 51...e6 52.e2! fxe2 53.e2 e2 54.e3 c5 55.f1 fx e4 56.e2; B2b) 45...ea7

This is the move I was going for during the game, as it looked the most dangerous for White. 42.e1 (42.g1?? gxh5=+)

46.e5! With the idea of e4c4 and e5. 46...e2+ 47.f1 d2 48.e3! d2+

49.g1! e2 (49...e2 50.xf5 e1xf5 51.xf5 e5 52.g1 e4 53.g1 e4 54.e4 e3 55.e3 d3 and White should achieve a draw here. 41.f2!! I spent 20 minutes on my moves before playing this move and came to the conclusion that Black is winning in all lines. 42.g1! Upon 42.e1 Black decides the game in style: 42...e4 43.e3 e4 44.e6

44...f6! 45.e5 (45.xh5 fxe6+) 45...e5 46.e5 d2 47.e2+ 48.e7 d3 49.e7 e3 50.e7 e5 winning.

42...e1! 43.axf3 44.xf3 g5 45.e6 fxe6 46.e5 g4 47.e7 e7 48.e7 e4 49.c2 40.c2 41.c2 e4 42.e7 d7=; B1) 43...fxe6 44.e8= 45.e8= and according to the Nalimov tablase Black wins in 45 moves.

43.e7 44.e1

44.gxh5! Accuracy is required to the very end! My opponent had set a last trap: 44...e3?? 45.h6+= with a draw. 45.xg4 hxg4 46.e5 e2! Skillfully played.

47.e6 fxe6 48.fxe6 f6 49.f1 f2+ 50.g1 xe6 51.d1 e5! Not 51...d5?? 52.e3. 52.e1 f2+ 53.e2 e4 54.e4 e4 wins.

52...e4 0-1
The big story on the women’s side of the Baku Chess Olympiad was the end of Russia’s three-Olympiad reign as Champions. To put their streak in perspective, we can note that their colleagues on the men’s side, always beginning the tournament in top position, haven’t captured gold since 2002. The Russian women managed it three consecutive times despite twice starting out as second seed to China.

Two players on Russia’s team in 2016 were part of that initial gold medal winning team of 2010: GM’s Alexandra Kosteniuk and Valentina Gunina, although Alexandra had been playing for Russia a long time before that.

Russia was on track to win a fourth gold medal when they faced the USA in round 8. Our pairing was extra symbolic as there was the exact same pairing on the men’s side, so the USA was playing Russia across eight boards in round eight! [See photo on Page 11 -Ed]

At that moment, there were five teams tied for first place, China, Russia and three “underdogs”: Azerbaijan 1, USA, and Netherlands. Russia had played the strongest field and had by far the best tiebreaks. They just needed to get past the weaker teams and not lose to China, whom they still hadn’t faced.

The match against us started off shakily for Russia, as Olga Girya lost quite quickly to Katerina Nemcova on board four, on the Black side of an
Advanced Caro-Kann. However, their potential to compensate for that seemed quite promising: Natalia Pogonina seemed to be slightly pressing against Anna Zatonskikh, Valentina Gunina had the upper hand versus Nazi Paikidze, and Alexandra was certainly much better against me. This game, which was the last of the match to finish and one of the last of the entire round, was the game on which the result of the match pivoted.

**B42**

Alexandra Kosteniuk 2538

Irina Krush 2444

Round 8, Russia-USA

1.e4 c5 2.\(\text{d}3\) e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\(\text{c}xd4\) a6 5.\(\text{d}3\) e5 6.0-0 e7 7.\(\text{c}2\) d6 \(\text{b}4\)?

I hadn’t seen this approach here before. Most likely Black should just continue with \(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{d}}7}\) and not worry about a5.

8...b6 9.f4 \(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{b}}7}\) 10.b4!?

This move was a big surprise. It’s not exactly typical for the Sicilian, and to do it when the entire queenside is undeveloped makes it all the more unusual. Alexandra thought for a while before playing it, so it looked like over the board improvisation, but she’d also tried this idea in different positions in other games, so she was certainly aware it existed. The idea is simple: take away the c5 square from the knight, develop the bishop to b2, \(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{b}}2}\) to d2, \(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{c}}3}\) to e1. There are even \(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{c}}3}\)-\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{c}}}3\) ideas. I could not believe such a move was correct, and tried to find its weakness... the problem is, it didn’t have any particular weakness and there was no “refutation”.

10...d5? While logical looking (“an attack on the flank should be answered with a counterattack in the center”), this move is just a mistake and gives White a big advantage. All the subsequent problems just stem from this move. 10...e5? I didn’t even consider this strike in the center, giving up the f5 square to White’s knight. It seems to be quite dangerous for Black. 11.\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{e}}5}\) \(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{e}}5}\) 12.\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{e}}5}\) \(\text{g}5\) 13.\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{a}}3}\) \(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{c}}6}\) \(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{b}}4}\) 14.\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{c}}4}\) \(\text{f}8\) 15.\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{g}}5}\); 10...e7?!

11.\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{a}}3}\) \(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{b}}7}\) 12.\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{c}}3}\) \(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{b}}8}\).

11.e5! In my calculations, I had been more concerned with 11.\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{e}}5}\) \(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{e}}5}\) and active moves like 12.\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{e}}6}\), 12.f5, or 12.\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{c}}4}\), trying to exploit my king’s position in the center. However, Black is fine everywhere there so White was correct in taking space with 11.e5.

11...\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{d}}4}\) When going for this, I thought it resembled a French with my knight actively posted to e4. But unfortunately, that’s the only thing going for Black in this position.

12.\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{a}}3}\) 12...c3? and this pawn can’t really be taken: 12...\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{e}}3}\) 13.\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{e}}3}\) \(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{b}}3}\) 14.\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{e}}3}\) is just a horrible position for Black, no matter with one or two extra pawns. Of course I wasn’t worried about White trying to win a pawn with 12.\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{e}}4}\) dxe4 13.\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{g}}}4\) since Black gets it back with 13...\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{b}}7}\) 14.\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{e}}}1\) \(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{c}}}4\).

12...\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{a}}5}\)? Still continuing the “active” strategy I began with 10...d5. The \(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{b}}7}\) and \(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{c}}8}\) are poor pieces, and this move is an attempt to improve them, as Black is fighting for the c5 square. I was still completely misjudging this position, thinking I was doing fine.

13.\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{b}}5}\) Alexandra finds a concrete solution. 13.c3?!

13...\(\text{f}6\) 14.bxa5 On general grounds, I hadn’t been worried about this, as it gives me the c5 square, but my opponent is not playing it on general grounds – she is very specifically planning to get their knight to d6. Because of that, there’s no way for Black to avoid losing a pawn. I spent a long time here trying to find a way out, but didn’t find anything convincing.

14.\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{e}}5}\) 14...\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{a}}3}\) 15.\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{d}}}3\) \(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{a}}5}\) 16.\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{e}}}4\) dxe4 and the d6 square has been uncovered.

15.\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{b}}}5\) \(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{d}}}5\) 16.\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{a}}}7\) \(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{c}}}7\) 17.axb6 Apparently White can win a second pawn with 17.\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{c}}}6\) \(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{b}}}6\) \(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{b}}}4\) 18.\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{g}}}4\) \(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{c}}}4\) 19.\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{b}}}5\) a line that I guess neither of us saw.

17...\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{b}}}6\) 18.\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{e}}}6\) \(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{c}}}8\) 19.\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{b}}}5\) +\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{d}}}7\) + 19...\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{f}}}3\) with the idea \(\text{\textcolor{red}{g}}5\) \(\text{\textcolor{red}{g}}7\) would have been better.

20.\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{f}}}1\) \(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{e}}}7\) Despite just being down a pawn, Black is not completely lost. There are still redeeming “positional” factors in the position, such as the strong pawn structure and the position of the \(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{f}}}4\).

21.\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{f}}}3\) \(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{d}}}5\) 22.\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{e}}}3\) \(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{c}}}7\)? Just a horrible move which left me disgusted with my play. 22...\(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{a}}}8\) would have done the same thing (defended the queen) without stepping into the \(\text{\textcolor{red}{\text{b}}}5\) fork and losing two tempi. As a way of explaining such a poor move, I can only say that the
problems I’d been solving the past ten moves had tired me, and I was definitely discouraged by the way the game had went—losing a pawn straight out of the opening. 22...\textit{a}a8.

23.\textit{a}a3 Now Black has to go into contortions to avoid the fork.

23...\textit{a}a5 24.\textit{b}b5 \textit{c}8 Amazing that being down a pawn and giving White some free moves to put the knight from b1 to b5, I can still fight on. But I was very pessimistic about my position here.

25.\textit{d}d4 A reasonable move, but once Black completes development, it will not be so easy to crack his position. The more concrete 25.\textit{x}e4! \textit{x}e4 26.\textit{a}a3 was stronger. Black will have to pay the price for not having castled yet.

25...0-0 26.\textit{b}b5 \textit{a}a8 27.\textit{f}f3 \textit{b}b4 I began to have some hope again. The \textit{d}d4 cannot move for example because of ...\textit{xb}5. Meanwhile Black is threatening ...\textit{xa}4.

28.\textit{c}c6 \textit{a}a6 29.f5! I had a couple of minutes left to make time control at move 40 after Alexandra played this. I don’t know how I survived such a dangerous position with so little time.

29...\textit{c}c8 30.\textit{b}b5 \textit{a}a8 31.\textit{c}c4! dxc4 32.\textit{f}xe6 fxe6 33.\textit{c}c6+- \textit{xb}5 34.\textit{g}e7+ \textit{h}8 35.\textit{x}c8 \textit{b}b2 36.\textit{h}8#; 31.\textit{c}c6 was apparently possible, but also unclear enough to deter White. 31...\textit{xb}5 32.\textit{e}e7+ \textit{f}f8 33.\textit{c}c8 \textit{b}b2 34.\textit{f}af1 \textit{xc}8 35.\textit{f}xe6 \textit{c}7.

31...\textit{b}b2 32.\textit{a}a1 \textit{d}d2 I could tell Alexandra started to get nervous around here; it just wasn’t obvious how to put Black away. And she was getting low on time as well.

33.\textit{f}xe6 \textit{f}xe6 33...\textit{d}d6 34.\textit{d}xe6 \textit{f}xe6 35.\textit{d}7.

34.\textit{c}c6 \textit{c}c7 35.\textit{d}d4 h6 36.\textit{b}b4 \textit{g}5 37.\textit{g}3 \textit{d}d2 38.\textit{d}d4 \textit{g}5 39.\textit{c}c6 \textit{d}d2 40.\textit{c}c4 \textit{g}5 Here the following episode occurred: we had repeated the position a couple of times, and it seemed to me that with my move 40...\textit{g}5 it may be a three move repetition. I had less than a minute, so there was no way I could sit there trying to ascertain whether this was in fact the case, but if I made my 40th move without making a claim, she’d have time to think and perhaps deviate on the next move. In a team match, where a draw here meant the team would draw, it seemed inexcusable to leave it chance, so I made the claim. We checked and it turned out this position had occurred only twice; only if White goes \textit{c}c6 again would that position occur three times. Two minutes were added to Alexandra’s clock for my incorrect claim and we resumed play. She thought for a long time, but I wasn’t worried as I thought White didn’t have a good way to avoid the repetition. However, she came up with something I wasn’t expecting...

41.\textit{c}c6!? 41.\textit{f}f8+!? was a scary looking move that I’m lucky doesn’t just win for White! 41...\textit{f}f8 42.\textit{f}f8+ \textit{h}7 43.\textit{a}a5 (43.a5 \textit{xe}5 44.a6 \textit{d}6)

34...\textit{g}g3+! It’s a little tricky to see that this leads to perpetual, but hopefully I’d’ve found it. 44.\textit{h}xg3 \textit{g}xg3 45.\textit{d}xg7+ 46.\textit{g}g1 \textit{g}g4+! (46...\textit{g}g3+?? 47.\textit{g}f1) 47.\textit{g}f1 \textit{d}d1+ 48.\textit{f}f2 \textit{e}e4+ 49.\textit{g}g2 \textit{g}g4+=.

41...\textit{ac}8 42.\textit{c}4
white elected to go for this endgame, with a couple of pawns for the exchange. However, it’s clear that unless Black makes a big mistake, we are playing for two results: draw or Black wins. The tide had finally turned.

46...\(\text{h7}\) 47.\(\text{f4}\) 47.e6 \(\text{d8}\) (47...\(\text{xa4}\) is also possible.) 48.\(\text{f5}\) was better.

47...\(\text{d7}\) 47...\(\text{d8}!\) 48.\(\text{e6}\) \(\text{xe6}\) 
49.\(\text{xe6}\) \(\text{e7}\) 50.\(\text{f5}\) g6 51.\(\text{c2}\) \(\text{xe5}\) was stronger.

48.\(\text{c4}\) g5 49.e6 49.\(\text{f7+}?!\) \(\text{xf7}\) 
50.\(\text{xf7}\).

49...\(\text{gx f4}\) I thought a little about taking this rook; it simplifies the position, will Black have enough to win? Seeing the time and match situation, I decided it’s a better idea to keep it 100% safe without any losing chances.

50.\(\text{exd7}\) \(\text{xd7}\) 51.\(\text{d3}\) \(\text{h8}\) 52.\(\text{f5}\) 
\(\text{c1+}\) I didn’t see that 52...fxg3! was possible as after 53.\(\text{exd7}\) \(\text{e1}\) 54.\(\text{g2}\) gxh2 55.\(\text{hxh2}\) \(\text{d1}\) Black wins one of the pieces.

53.\(\text{g2}\) \(\text{c5}\) 54.\(\text{gxf4}\) \(\text{xa4}\)

The point of White’s \(\text{c6}\) move. I didn’t see this coming at all. White doesn’t defend the e5 pawn because she plans to make a weakness of the d5 pawn. And Black can’t even take the bishop on c6! 42.\(\text{xc6}\) \(\text{xc6}\) 43.\(\text{xd5}\) \(\text{e5}\) Black holds on.

42...\(\text{d2}!\) On move 42 comes my first good move of the game! \(\text{d2}\) finally hit on it through elimination of all other possibilities...it was funny that my queen once again came back to this square, for the fourth time.

You would think Black should be able to play 42...\(\text{xc6}\) 43.\(\text{xc6}\) \(\text{xc6}\) but White just invades the back rank: 44.\(\text{f8+}\) \(\text{h7}\) 45.\(\text{h8}\) Black has no defense here to \(\text{h8}\) \(\text{e8}\). I stubbornly checked this line a few times, but had to accept that White could just leave his bishop on c6 “hanging”. 42...\(\text{xe5}\) 43.\(\text{xd5}\) \(\text{exd5}\) 44.\(\text{f5}\) is White’s other point.

43.\(\text{xd2}\) I was expecting 43.\(\text{f8+}\) \(\text{h7}\) 44.\(\text{xd2}\) \(\text{xd2}\) 45.\(\text{xc8}\) \(\text{xc8}\) and thought the endgame was balanced: 46.\(\text{a1}\) (46.\(\text{d1}\) \(\text{xe4}\) 46...\(\text{dxc4}\) I’m not sure if Alexandra missed the \(\text{f8}\) idea entirely, or just didn’t like the ensuing position, but it’s hard to see how her chosen continuation was better than this.

43...\(\text{xd2}\) 44.\(\text{xd5}\) \(\text{xf3}\) 45.\(\text{xf3}\) 
\(\text{exd5}\) 46.\(\text{xd5}\) I really didn’t envy White’s task here. It’s easy to play for Black; White is the
one who needs to do all the thinking, and we were down to playing on little more than the 30 second increment. It’s also very difficult to adjust psychologically to go from winning the entire game to fighting for a half point from this kind of prospectless position.

55...\textbf{g}3 \textbf{c}5 56...\textbf{e}e6 \textbf{d}d7 I decided I can always trade knights, but for now, it may still cause White some problems. That turned out to be a good decision.

57...\textbf{d}d4 \textbf{f}f6 58...\textbf{f}f3 \textbf{c}c3 59...\textbf{h}h3 \textbf{g}7 60...\textbf{b}b1 \textbf{c}c4 61...\textbf{e}e5 \textbf{b}b4 62...\textbf{g}g6 \textbf{d}d5 There goes the f-pawn.

63...\textbf{f}f5 If 63...\textbf{f}f7 Black will get the pawn anyway.

63...\textbf{x}f4 64...\textbf{g}g4 \textbf{e}e2+ 65...\textbf{h}h4 \textbf{d}d4 This was the first moment I spotted the 65...h5 idea, but was disappointed that it didn’t work... 66...\textbf{x}xh5 \textbf{b}b5 67...\textbf{g}g5 \textbf{d}d4 68...\textbf{e}e3 \textbf{e}e5 69...\textbf{f}f4= 66...\textbf{e}e4 \textbf{e}e6 Black is going for the h3 pawn next (\textbf{g}5, \textbf{b}3, etc).

67...\textbf{g}2 This speeds up the process, but Black was winning anyway.

67...h5! Even annotating this game a month later, I still feel the cycle of emotions I went through during it. One thing that was really clear from the game is the strong-willed character of my opponent, who preferred to play for a win with considerable risk rather than agree to a draw after move 40. There’s no doubt that the context of the situation influenced her decision – obviously a draw with the USA was not what Russia had come into this match hoping for.

0–1

Of course, team USA was exultant after this match. It had been a tense, long, and hard fought match, with three games continuing well into the second time control. To defeat the reigning Olympiad Champions on board one of the Olympiad is certainly one of the most memorable Olympiad experiences you can earn yourself, apart from a team medal.

The victory over Russia catapulted us into a tie for first place with China, whom we faced in the following round. We lost that match with a minimal score, which doesn’t look bad when you’re outrated on every board again, but I think that underneath the score the reality was that we simply didn’t have the same energy to bring to the match; recovery time, even after a success, is crucial. Physically and emotionally, the Olympiad is grueling. That none of us are full time chess professionals, accustomed to the intensity and energy outlay of such battles, was just a limitation of our team.

China took sole lead after their victory against us in round nine, and determinedly held on to it through the last two matches against Poland and Russia. Ultimately, they won nine matches, drew two, and lost none, with a convincing margin of 1½ points over Poland and Ukraine. The final score was dominant, but it’s hard to say that China dominated the event. They gave up draws to much lower ranked Vietnam and Romania, and barely squeezed past Latvia when Hou Yifan unexpectedly lost to WGM Dana Reizneice, a nearly 400 point underdog. However, in all the matches against their main rivals, Ukraine, USA, Poland, and Russia, they notched 2½-½ victories. Their competition made mistakes, and they won when it mattered.

Our final two matches, against Mongolia and India, finished in disappointing draws, and some spectacular examples of self-destruction.
A completely drawn position has been reached. It was the last game of the match, and a draw would have given us the team win. Black can choose between the solid 48...\texttt{xc8} (stopping c5) and the sharper 48...\texttt{xa3+}.

48...\texttt{d7?} 49.c5 I thought this move wasn’t possible because of the pin on the c-file, and I played my next move without much thought.

49...\texttt{c8??} 50.\texttt{xd6+} Oops. The rook can still take the pawn. An unbelievable case of blindness. I really wanted to dissolve into the floor as I sat there looking at what I did. Not only a pawn, it gives up the game as well – Black has no chance after this blunder.

\begin{center}
\textbf{E36}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
Anna Zatonskikh 2449
Tania Sachdev 2402
\end{center}

Round 11, USA-India

A similar tragedy awaited us in the final match. Anna had been defending for a number of dubious positions. One gets the impression that she is not too troubled by objective evaluations and is comfortable with highly risky positions, as long as they contain some counter-chances. This fragment against IM Lela Javakhishvili illustrates her walk-on-the-edge style:

\begin{center}
\textbf{E12}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
Lela Javakhishvili 2486
Valentina Gunina 2520
\end{center}

Round 10, Russia-Georgia

There are some perfectly normal moves here, like 13...\texttt{e8} or 13...\texttt{f6}. Valentina goes for the most aggressive and risky option!

13...g5?! 14.\texttt{xe3} f5 15.h4 g4 16.\texttt{g5}

\begin{center}
\textbullet Tania Sachdev (India)
\textit{Photo by Andreas Kontokanis.}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
\textbullet Valentina Gunina (Russia)
\textit{Photo by Eteri Kublashvili.}
\end{center}
I don’t think many people would be comfortable with Black’s position here $\Box$. 16...$\&d6$ An exchange sacrifice, which White declines.

17.$\&b5$ $\&e7$ 18.0-0 $f4$ 19.$\&c1$ $\&e5$

20.$\&e1$ $g3$


21...fxg3 22.$\&e4$ $c4$ 23.$\&f4$ $\&c5+$

24.$\&h1$ White’s second chance to win the game: 24.$\&e3$ $\&ac8$ 25.$\&xc5$ $\&xc5$


24...$\&d3$ Now things get murky.

25.$\&xe7$ $\&xe7$ 26.$\&xe7$?? In a complicated position where everything is hanging, White had to find 26.$\&d6$ which still leaves them with an edge.

26...$\&xf4$ 27.$\&xb7$ $\&f2+$ Now Black is just winning.

28.$\&bl$ $\&xh3$ 29.$\&xh3$ $\&xh1$ 30.$\&e7$

$\&xh3$ 31...$\&d7$ 32.$\&xg3$ $\&e4$ 33.$\&d6$

$\&h8$ 34.$\&e6$ $\&xd6$ 35.$\&xg3$ $\&e4$

36.$\&e3$ $c3$ 37.$\&h3$ $\&d8$ 38.$\&f3$ $\&g4$

39.$\&h2$ $\&g7$ 40.$\&f7+$ $\&h6$ 41.$\&e7$

$\&d2$ 42.$\&e6+$ $\&g7$ 43.$\&e7+$ $\&g6$

44.$\&e6+$ $\&f5$ 0-1

Anna Muzychuk, Ukraine’s board 1, did not lose a single game and won the gold medal on board 1 with a 2629 performance. Here she’s sacrificed a piece for a dangerous h-pawn.

23.$\&f4$? Apparently the best move was 23.$\&f4$ with the idea 23...$\&h2$ 24.$\&d2$.

23...$\&xe4$ 24.$\&xe5$ $\&h2$ Black is temporarily down a queen (but winning).

24...$\&d2$ 25.$\&d2$ $\&h2$ 26.$\&c1$ allows White to stop the pawn.

25.$\&d4$ $\&h1+-$ 26.$\&g1$ $\&f2$ More little tactics.

27.$\&xe4$ $\&xg1+ 28.$\&d2$ $\&xe2+$

0-1

Leading Final Scores

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10-18. Georgia, Iran, Lithuania, Serbia, France, Bulgaria, Hungary, Belarus, Cuba 15; 19-23. Romania, Mongolia, Netherlands, Uzbekistan, Sweden, Slovenia, Malaysia, Estonia, Ecuador, Peru, Austria 14, etc.
40...\texttlb{\texttt{xa6}} 41.f6 \texttlb{\texttt{b5}} 42.f7 \texttlb{\texttt{a4}}
43.f8=\texttlb{\texttt{c3}}+ 44.\texttlb{\texttt{b1}} d3 45.\texttlb{\texttt{a8+}}
\texttlb{\texttt{b4}} 46.\texttlb{\texttt{e4+}} \texttlb{\texttt{a3}} 47.\texttlb{\texttt{xd3}}

1-0

\textbf{D30}

\texttt{Ju Wenjun} \quad 2583

\texttt{Jolanta Zawadzka} \quad 2429

Round 10, Poland-China

Poland had a fantastic result, grabbing the silver medal with a 3 1/2-1/2 rout of Hungary in the final round, which gave them the edge over Ukraine on tiebreaks.

\texttt{Jolanta Zawadzka} (Poland). Photo by Andreas Kontokanis.

Though they lost this encounter with China in the penultimate round, their second board scored a nice victory with the Black pieces. She seized her chance with the typical breakthrough...

21...\texttt{d4}! which is based on a tactical point:

\texttt{22.exd4 f4 23.e1} there is no time to move the rook because of 23.\texttt{b1 xf2}!
23...\texttt{xc1} 24.\texttt{xc1} and Black converted the extra exchange. 0-1

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FIND THE RIGHT MOVE!

Solutions on page 151

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Jorge Cori Tello 2609

03 Kacper Piorun 2681
Jose Fernando Cubas 2470

04 Chao Li 2746
Diego Flores 2595

05 Ante Brkic 2584
Blazo Kalezic 2457

06 Moulinth Ly 2513
Zdenko Kozul 2622

07 Anish Giri 2755
David Navara 2742

08 Kacper Piorun 2681
Vojtech Plat 2519

09 Zhong Zhang 2637
Ioannis Papaioannou 2631

White wins

Black wins

White wins

Black draws

Black wins

Black wins

White draws
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Carlsen vs Karjakin
New York 2016

The 2016 world title match, taking place from 11 to 30 November, is the final event of the World Championship cycle. The two participants are world champion Magnus Carlsen (Norway) and his challenger Sergey Karjakin (Russia). The winner will be declared World Champion for the period 2016-2018.
The contest will consist of 12 games and, if necessary, tie-breaks. The winner will be the first player to score 6½ points or more. The venue is the historic Fulton Market building situated in the Seaport District in Lower Manhattan, New York City, one of the world’s most popular tourist destinations, with its great view of the famous Brooklyn Bridge.
Historically, world championship matches have great interest not only as contests between the mightiest intellects, but also as political events.”

The chess world as a phenomenon of high culture arose as the result of the world championship matches. Competitions between geniuses recognized by the chess public – Lasker and Steinitz in 1894, Lasker and Capablanca in 1921, Capablanca and Alekhine in 1927 – demonstrated the highest capabilities in the human intellect and spirit. These matches were important milestones in the history of chess and incredibly promoted them as a creative mind sport. Traditionally, the title of the world champion belonged to the World Champion. This was the case with Lasker, Capablanca, and Alekhine. Botvinnik gave up his title to FIDE on the condition that they would accept a perfect system of competition that he developed and which went into effect at the end of the 1940s. This better system for the quasi-sport engaged all chess players of the world into the competition for the title of world champion. The golden age of chess, which started in 1948 after a brilliant conquest of the championship title by Botvinnik, ended with the 1993 match Kasparov-Short and the collapse of a clear system of competition for the highest title. The current match for the title of the strongest in the world between Magnus Carlsen and Sergey Karjakin, beginning on November 11 in New York in the Fulton Market building, bears testimony to the fact that the tradition stretching from 1886 onwards, with the first such match between Steinitz and Zukertort, is still alive.
A WORLD CHAMPION
Magnus Carlsen is one of those chess geniuses who towers head and shoulders over the other strongest grandmasters in the world – his contemporaries. These margins are rare in our game. It may be comparable to the first two world champions, Steinitz and Lasker, who in their best years were clearly dominant in chess, to Bobby Fischer, who crushed everybody in his conquest of the title in 1969-72, and to Garry Kasparov, who had no equals from 1985 until the voluntary end of his career in 2005. Carlsen has an “absolute ear for chess.” His intuition is flawless. If necessary, he is willing to take any risk, and in complications he is just as inventive as he is in a strategic game. The World Champion sometimes, when caught in very bad positions, commits errors. He has lost a few drawish endings that could have been saved. But Carlsen hardly ever gets into such situations.

SIGNIFICANCE
Historically, world championship matches have great interest not only as contests between the mightiest intellects, but also as political events.

For example, two matches between World Champion Steinitz and challenger Chigorin in 1889 and 1892 became a prologue to the 20th century – the century of rivalry of two young civilizations: America and Russia. Leo Tolstoy, a great fan of chess, in one of his letters, reported that his patriotic feelings made him crave victory for Chigorin. But, with the same feeling, proud American Wilhelm Steinitz (who once, as a poor Jew of Prague, went by the name Wolfe Schaynitz) twice defeated Russian giant Mikhail Chigorin. The twentieth century demonstrated the triumph of the individualistic American civilization over the collectivist Russian society to emerge in 1917.

The Russian revolution of 1917 claimed to create for the world a role model for society, but, the World Championship of Alexander Alekhine, who had to flee from his homeland, from 1927 until his death in 1946, incriminated the squalor of the “exemplar” society. Fischer’s triumph in the 1972 match against Boris Spassky at the height of the Cold War foretold imminent victory for the United States in this war. Potholes on the road of the titanic struggle between Kasparov and Karpov followed the swift collapse of the Communist regime in the USSR. Finally, the arrival of Karjakin in the United States will underscore the current crisis in relations between the United States and Russia. America severely condemned the annexation of Crimea by Russia. Karjakin by his personality symbolizes the crisis around this annexation. He was born and grew up in Crimea, perfected as a chess player in Kramatorsk–Donbass, which is now still a battlefield of the bloody war between Russia and Ukraine. Subsequently, Karjakin emigrated from Ukraine to Russia and wholeheartedly supports the annexation of Crimea into Russia. His success in the match would be a big political victory for Russia.

A CHALLENGER
The rival to the world champion, Sergey Karjakin, also was a chess prodigy. He, like Carlsen, won the title of Grandmaster at the age of 12. Karjakin knows, understands, and is fully capable of doing everything in chess that can be learned. Sergey has extraordinary perseverance. In what looks like a heroic deed, he snatched victory from the jaws of defeat after losing the first two games in his World Cup match against Peter Svidler in 2015. His triumph in the Candidates Tournament was also heroic, and it gave him the right to play Carlsen. But Karjakin has not yet demonstrated the genius that distinguishes the greatest. Will other factors counterbalance the perfect natural talent of Carlsen in this match?
didn't withstand the pressure of such a match. After a remarkable victory in one of the most exciting matches in the history of the world championships, he managed to bring himself to the board only once again – 20 years later. His state of health after the match, apparently, was rightly defined as a mental illness. The only exception to the laws of nature seems to be the nervous system of Anatoly Karpov. Karpov permanently demonstrated his best play in competitions for the world championship, in which he participated for many years.

In the summer of the year 2000, on my way from Spain to China, I stopped for a week in Moscow. There I was consulting on opening preparation with Garry Kasparov for the world championship match with Kramnik. I was familiar with Garry for a quarter of a century. Usually, being beside him, I felt a powerful radiation of energy – as if from a nuclear reactor. Admittedly, in two of his previous title matches (with Anand and with Short), Garry played much weaker than he did in tournaments in those same years. In the Moscow meeting, I felt that Garry was not ready for the crushing pressure of such matches. It seemed that Garry was psychologically tuned to pass his title to his successor. The champion seemed tired of his title, subconsciously seeking to get rid of it. Garry lost the title to Kramnik, without winning a single game in the match, losing two, and miraculously avoiding two more inevitable defeats. Having lost the championship, in the remaining five years of his career, Garry continued to dominate the chess world.

The greatest psychological burden of the match usually falls on the world champion. The candidate considers such a match as the highest point in his life and does his best. The champion feels injustice – the opponent is trying to take away his legitimate title. Bovvinik's results are typical in this regard. As a world champion, he played five matches: he lost three and two ended in a draw; however, he exacted revenge in two return matches.

Carlsen has already played two matches for the title. It looks like he has started to tire of this struggle. The evidence of this is his proposal to abandon tradition and contend for the title of world champion in a tournament. In such a tournament competition, compared to a match, there will be a significant element of chance. Prospects of a champion to retain the title will be diminished. Also, his monetary reward would decline. But the excessive psychological stress of the match struggle would also be reduced. If my interpretation of Carlsen's proposal is correct, the psychological situation of Karjakin in the New York match may be preferable.

PREPARATION
A very important aspect of the struggle in the match is the quality of the preparation. In our day and age, analysis with computers represents the major component of the preparation. It reduces the factor of talent and increases the factors of man-hours spent on analysis, the quantity and quality of assistants, and the memory of the player. Here, too, the advantage must be with Karjakin. He has behind him a powerful Russian chess machine and the support of their authorities.

Carlsen's approach to preparation distinguishes him from almost all of his colleagues. The World Champion often aspires to get just a fuzzy uncertain position, and due to his talent he hopes to outplay his opponents. In finding such positions he can possibly receive help from a former world champion as rumors exist of a renewed cooperation of Carlsen with Kasparov. But if such cooperation has not been renewed, such rumors can be useful for the world champion. Let the opponent be nervous.

In general, the upcoming match may demonstrate to what extent modern intensive preparation, resulting from exhaustive computer analyses, determines the outcome of the fight at the highest level.

LET THE GAMES BEGIN
The World Chess Federation in recent decades has carried out many reforms to the detriment of chess. One of them – instead of the usual 24, or at least 16-18 games, is that the World Championship match will consist of just 12 duels. This will increase the tension of the participants and generally increase the element of chance. Moreover, chess fans would like to see such a feast as a world title match last longer.

So, the advantage of the world champion in this match is his immense natural talent. Factors in favor of the pretender may be his outstanding fighting qualities, higher motivation, the resources of numerous brigades of assistants in preparation, and possibly higher psychological reserves depleted by previous matches for the title. It will be a fierce fight, which could make this match one of the most outstanding in the history of chess.
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CARLSEN & KARJAKIN IN 2016
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS
by GM Mauricio Flores Rios

We are so close to the World Championship match, in which the defending champion, Magnus Carlsen from Norway, will face the challenger Sergey Karjakin from Russia. I believe many of us expect to see a memorable event with plenty of excitement. After all, this match is, in many regards, the beginning of a new era, in which two former child prodigies, born the same year (1990) will face each other on the biggest stage in the chess world. The match will take place in New York, between the 11th and 30th of November, and will feature a prize fund of more than one million dollars.

THE CONTENDERS
I suppose many of us still remember late 2002, when Karjakin stunned the chess world by becoming the youngest grandmaster in history at 12 years and 7 months of age. Almost fourteen years later, this amazing record still stands. Karjakin continued to rise until breaking the 2700 mark in the January 2008 rating list.

Later, Karjakin’s career began to plateau, and while he has been one of the best ten players in the world for many years, his peak rating of 2788 is lower than the peak rating achieved by many other top players nowadays, such as Vachier-Lagrave, Caruana, Anand, Kramnik, Topalov, Aronian, Nakamura, So or Giri. In fact, Karjakin’s victory in the Candidates Tournament surprised many players and spectators, who believed Caruana to be the rightful contender for the title, but his play in this event was very convincing, and he will surely be a dangerous opponent.

Carlsen, often referred to as the Mozart of chess, had a slightly slower beginning. By the time Karjakin earned his GM title, Carlsen (who is 10 months younger) had a FIDE rating of only 2250, and managed to obtain the GM title at age 13 years and 4 months. Back then, one could have imagined that Karjakin would soon become a world champion, and the rising star Magnus Carlsen would be a worthy contender years later. It would have been difficult to predict how this story was going to unfold.

Unlike most other players, Carlsen’s improvement did not slow down much after obtaining the GM title. He was the youngest player ever to surpass 2700, at the age of 16 years and 7 months, although this record was later broken by Wei Yi, at 15 years and 9 months. Carlsen also became the youngest player ever to cross 2800, at 18 years and 11 months, and 2 months after that Carlsen became the youngest ever world No.1. Over the next couple of years, Carlsen continued to consolidate, and since 2011 he has completely dominated the chess world. In May of 2014, he reached a peak rating of 2882.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, MATCH STRATEGY
The fact that Magnus Carlsen is a big time favorite in this World Championship match should not come as a surprise to anybody. Aside from the rating difference,
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he has already had two successful experiences in World Championship matches, as a challenger and a defender of the title. In addition, Carlsen’s career (in the last 5 years at least) has been almost entirely based on defeating (or trying to defeat) players of Karjakin’s strength. In order to maintain his rating, he is constantly forced to seek opportunities and create imbalances. He has to play for a win, with both colors, against the very best players in the world, and he consistently manages to put his opponents under pressure, even if the final result is a draw.

Karjakin, on the other hand, can afford to draw most games against the elite, by virtue of his lower rating. For this reason, his main focus on the chess board is to make what we might call *objectively correct moves*. His decisions and opening choices are fairly standard, and he has no trouble holding an equal position against the very best players. However, Karjakin would struggle to create the type of imbalance needed to go for a straight win against Carlsen. I could imagine that, if Carlsen wanted to draw every game against Karjakin, he could do so with relative ease, and extremely low risk.

As we have been able to see in previous Chess Olympiads, Carlsen’s performance is sometimes shaky against weaker players, precisely because he is willing to take risks in order to create imbalance, and sometimes he goes too far. I believe that Karjakin may get some winning chances if he is able to hold Carlsen to several draws, and if eventually Carlsen takes too great a risk, and self-destructs due to a miscalculation. I might be biased or pessimistic, but I actually believe this approach would be Karjakin’s best chance to take the crown from the champion.

So what exactly makes Carlsen the superior player? I believe that his ability to press for a win in virtually equal positions is absolutely unparalleled in the chess world. He often manages to turn microscopic advantages into full points, and it is this characteristic that gives him the greatest edge. Because of his ability to win apparently drawn endings, many strong players struggle to make proper middlegame decisions against him. For example, a top ten player might usually be willing to play a slightly inferior ending, and have no problems achieving a draw against an opponent of equal strength. But this player knows that the same ending against Carlsen could bring unexpected difficulties, and therefore he may decide to go out of his comfort zone, or play an inferior middlegame just because he is afraid of Carlsen’s endgame technique. I often see top players lose miserably in the middlegame against

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**KARJAKIN IN 2016**

Total Points 31/58 (53.45%)
Rating performance (Rp) = 2769

Wins 11
Draws 40
Loses 7 (Ding Liren, Adams, Anand, Svidler, GirI, Carlsen, Harikrishna)
CARLSEN vs KARJAKIN

Carlsen, and many of us might think they have self-destructed. This is not far from the truth, but of course there’s a reason for everything, and the reason is that these players were trying to avoid losing a long and ugly ending.

Aside from his endgame prowess, Carlsen has proved to be excellent in calculation, and has shown to have an unmatched ability to evaluate complex and imbalanced middlegames. While I do not expect this match to be decided by a mere tactical shot, I do expect Carlsen to show more consistency in his calculation, and I certainly expect any of his wins to come from a very complicated middlegame.

PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS
When attempting to make a prediction for this World Championship match, the mental strength of each player should definitely be taken into consideration. This is perhaps the point on which we can find the most controversial opinions. On the one hand, Carlsen has dominated the chess world for so long that winning this event should not even be such a big deal for him. I would not expect him to get too nervous. But on the other hand, everyone expects him to win, and this additional pressure could affect him.

For Sergey Karjakin, this match may be the only opportunity he ever gets to become World Champion. After all, he was not even a favorite to win the Candidates Tournament. Having had such a wonderful career as a child prodigy, this match could be his chance to redeem himself for a decade of wonderful results that, nevertheless, did not live up to the original expectations the world had placed on him. Will this opportunity give him more strength? Or simply add to his nervousness?

PREDICTION
Previous matches between Carlsen and Karjakin have seen 4 wins for Carlsen, 1 win for Karjakin, and a total of 16 draws in classical games. I expect Carlsen will play in a very cautious way, avoid excessive risks, but still manage to press for a win early in the match. Nevertheless, I believe Karjakin will manage to hold many games to a draw.

I expect Carlsen to win one game near the halfway stage, and then his superiority, coupled with Karjakin’s conservative style, will probably make every other game go into a draw. Perhaps some of these draws will be hard fought, but I certainly would not expect Karjakin to go all-in as Anand did in his final loss in 2014, in which he was better, but lost pressing for a win. For this reason, my prediction is for the match to end at 6½-5½, with Carlsen retaining the title.
After years of analyzing Carlsen’s games, my own conclusion is that he approaches opening preparation with a mindset that is quite different from other leading players. Most grandmasters, including the very best, aim to obtain an advantage in the opening, and whenever they play White, they often hope to secure a position where they can play for only two results. Their mindset is: if I play well, I want to win, otherwise, I want to be completely sure I can obtain a draw. This kind of mindset can be quite effective in team events, and also work well when our opponents are substantially stronger.

Carlsen, on the other hand, knows he is the strongest player in the world, and therefore he does not mind taking some risk, because after all he knows he will be able to survive an inferior position, should he get into one. The problem with following theoretical lines with White nowadays is that our opponent might be so well prepared that he will be able to play over twenty moves he had previously analyzed, and reach a very simplified middlegame, where it would be difficult to pose any real problems. Carlsen circumvents this issue by simply aiming for complex middlegames, where early simplifications are avoided. He knows that his strength should tell in the long run.

The following game is a perfect example of his approach to chess. He starts with an uncommon sideline, avoids early simplifications, and later exploits his better understanding of the position, which leads to a crushing attack.

1.e4 c5 2.d3 d6 3.c3 dxe4 4.dxe4
5.0-0 e5 6.d5+ c6 7.d4
b6 8.a4 cx d4 9.cxd4 0-0 10.d5
Carlsen has deviated from the main lines, but somehow still forces Karjakin to make difficult positional decisions early in the game.

10...b8
This position had only occurred once before, when Black chose to play the more precise 10...a5 and after 11.e1 d7 12.a3 c6 13.h3 he had indeed equalized, but the position is nevertheless in a state of imbalance.

On the other hand, in the case of 10...dxe5? 11.dxe5 dxe5 12.d3, the resulting pawn structure is simply inferior for Black, for example after 12...d7 13.dxd7 xd7 14.c4 ffd8 15.a5 Black must make the unpleasant choice between 15...
16.d5+ c6 17.cxd6 18.c3= or 15...c6 16.b5 a6 17.b4 with many promising targets.

11.d3 g4
If Black had attempted to retain the pair of bishops and develop his forces with 11...c6 12.d3 c5 13.g3 d8 then his position would be a little cramped, and after 14.e1 e8 15.b4 c6 16.e2 a6 17.e1 e5 18.e1 White will follow with c3, providing him with a comfortable spatial advantage.

12.b3 e5 13.g3 Black has given up the pair of bishops under favorable circumstances, since now he will have fewer spatial problems and all his pieces can be utilized for pursuing a queenside initiative. In addition, the bishops on a4 and c1 are not well coordinated anyway.

13...bd7

14.e1?! Protecting the b2-pawn, so as to develop the bishop, but also wasting an important tempo. After this slight imprecision, Black is able to equalize. More accurate was the immediate 14.e4 since 14...e4 is met by 15.e4c1 and after the relatively forced line 15.e4b4 16.e1 a5 17.cxd7 xd7 18.xb7 e5 19.xc5 e5 20.d5 e5 21.xc7 ecx3 22.b1 ecx4 23.bxc4 e6 24.d3 White stands a little better, although the position is very close to equality.

14...e4 15.e2 e5 16.e2 ffd7 17.g5 h6! 18.h4 The e7-pawn is taboo, since after 18...hx5? g6 the bishop is trapped, and 19.g6 g6 20.cxd6 (or 20.cxd6 c6 21.e3 g6 22.xa8 e7 23.xc8) 20...hx5 21.g5 c6

18...e5 leaves Black with a small but dominant advantage.

18...g5 While the move ...g6-g5 often creates weaknesses, the pros outweigh the cons in this position, since now Black is able to control the dark squares very well, and has secured a strong square for his knight on e5.

19.g3 f6 20.d1 Upon 20.ea6 bxa6 Black would have excellent prospects, since the doubled a-pawns are not really weak and the break f2-f4 does not bring anything good without queens on the board.

20.e4? The beginning of an incorrect plan. It was necessary to prevent White from achieving a favorable f2-f4 break. It made more sense to play 20.c3c4, exerting pressure along the a1-h8 diagonal and threatening to capture on b2, winning a pawn. Then, after 21.c5 c5 22.c2, Black would need to make some critical decisions based on accurate calculation. Since there is no way to improve the activity of his pieces, he must accept the challenge and capture on c3, with possible material gains at the cost of weakening his king: 22...c3c3! (in case of 22...b5?! 23.xc4 bxc4 24.f4
25.xf4 gxf4 26.xg4 Black would feel quite uncomfortable) 23.bxc3

A) Now not 23...e4?, which is strongly met by 24.d3! c6 (24...xg3?...
25. \( \text{h}5 \) \( \text{g7} \) 26.\( \text{f}4\)++ 25.\( \text{f}4\)!± with a powerful attack, but...

27.\( \text{dxe5!} \) A very good positional decision by Carlsen. The pair of bishops was unlikely to give him an advantage, since the bishops are currently unable to cooperate. The pawn on e5 will condemn Black’s bishop to passivity, whereas the bishop on b3 is quite likely to come around sooner or later. After 27.\( \text{xe3} \) \( \text{b4} \) White would not have any obvious way to continue, for example

28.\( \text{bd1} \) (the a7-pawn is untouchable, since 28.\( \text{x}77? \) loses to 28...\( \text{b}6\)++; or 28.\( \text{g}4?! \) \( \text{d}7 \) 29.\( \text{f}4? \) \( \text{h}5\)!+) 28...\( \text{d}7 \) 29.\( \text{f}4\)\( \text{e}5\) and Black is close to equality.

27...\text{dxe5} 28.\( \text{bd1} \) \( \text{d}7 \) 29.\( \text{f}3 \)

29...\( \text{b4} \) Black may have had better chances with 29...\( \text{xd}1 \) 30.\( \text{xd}1 \) \( \text{b}5 \) (In case of 30...\( \text{x}4 \) the attack just follows naturally: 31.\( \text{g}4 \) \( \text{d}4 \) 32.\( \text{h}4 \) \( \text{d}2 \) 33.\( \text{g}5 \) and Black’s nice trick 33...\( \text{x}5 \) is met by 34.\( \text{g}1 \) \( \text{x}5 \) 35.\( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{xe}1 \) 36.\( \text{xd}1 \) \( \text{g}4 \) 37.\( \text{f}2 \pm \) when Black will have a very hard time surviving the exchange down.) 31.\( \text{xe2} a5 \), planning to meet \( \text{b3} \) with...\( a4 \). 32.\( \text{g}3 \) \( e6 \) 33.\( \text{xe2} \)! It is best for White to retain the tension and find the optimal moment to capture on e6 (Black plans to respond to 33...\( \text{dxe6} \)!) with 33...\( \text{xe6} \), covering the f5-square, when White’s advantage is not so convincing.) 33...\( \text{b4} \) 34.\( \text{d}1 \)

30.\( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{f}8 \) Black has nothing better than this passive move, protecting the f7-pawn, in view of White’s intended plan of \( \text{g2} \- \text{g4} \- \text{g5} \). Attempting queenside counterplay with 30...\( \text{b5} \) 31.\( \text{g4} \) \( a5 \) 32.\( \text{g}2 \) \( a4 \) is refuted directly by 33.\( \text{g}5 \) \( \text{hxg}5 \) 34.\( \text{xe}5 \) \( \text{bx}3 \) 35.\( \text{h}1 \) \( \text{h}8 \) 36.\( \text{e}7 \) \( a2 \) (or 36...\( \text{e}7 \) 37.\( \text{a}5 \) \( \text{d}8 \) 38.\( \text{d}6 \)!) 37.\( \text{h}5 \) \( \text{a}4 \) 38.\( \text{d}6 \) mate.

31.\( \text{g}4 \)±

Carlsen begins a well justified kingside attack. He has good control of the center and well-coordinated pieces, whereas Karjakin must deal with his misplaced rook on \( b4 \) and his virtually useless bishop on \( g7 \), blocked in by its own pawns. Even though the bishop on \( b3 \) is currently out of the game, the latent threat of \( d5 \- d6 \) will be a crucial resource in many key variations.

Attempting a pawn sacrifice with 31.\( \text{d}6? \) is simply met by 31...\( \text{e}6! \), but not 31...\( \text{exd}6 \) 32.\( \text{d}2 \)\( ± \) with a practically winning position, as the light-squared bishop is far stronger than its counterpart and Black’s kingside is full of weaknesses. Then after 32.\( \text{d}1 \) \( \text{d}8 \) White is left with nothing to aim for.

31...\( \text{a}5?! \) Perhaps this move was prophylaxis against a possible \( \text{e}3 \- \text{xe}7 \), or maybe the idea...\( \text{a}5 \- \text{a}4 \) seemed like a viable attempt at counterplay. In reality it is just a waste of time, after which Carlsen will secure a risk-free kingside attack.

A better defence was 31...\( \text{b}6 \) 32.\( \text{g}2 \) (a promising alternative was 32.\( \text{e}3? \) \( \text{h}7 \) 33.\( \text{e}5\)\( ± \), preventing Black’s...\( \text{f}6 \) idea) 32...\( \text{d}7 \) and now White does not have time to play \( g4 \- g5 \), preventing...\( \text{f}6 \). 33.\( \text{e}3 \) Planning \( b3 \- h4 \) followed by \( g4 \- g5 \), but now Black has the key move 33...\( \text{b}6 \), activating the bishop.

34.\( \text{f}5 \) Of course not 34...\( \text{c}6 \)\( ?? \) \( \text{g}5 \). 35.\( \text{h}5 \) \( \text{f}6 \)\( → \) 34...\( \text{g}5 \) 35.\( \text{f}2 \) \( \text{d}4 \) 36.\( \text{h}4 \) with the follow-up \( \text{e}2 \- \text{xf}4 \),
when after (36...\texttt{De}2?! \texttt{Dg}5=) 36...\texttt{e}6 37.dxe6 fxe6 38.\texttt{De}2\texttt{f} 39.\texttt{g}5\texttt{f} 39.\texttt{g}4\texttt{f} 39.\texttt{h}6\texttt{f} 39.\texttt{h}5\texttt{f} when White maintains the advantage, although the position is quite complex and he will eventually face some counterplay.

32.\texttt{Fg}2 With the immediate threat of 32.g4-g5.

32...\texttt{Dh}7 33.h4 \texttt{Db}6 Black is unable to stop White’s g4-g5 break by 33...\texttt{f}6 as this move would lock in the dark-squared bishop for a long time to come. White can make the most of this situation by playing 34.\texttt{Df}3! \texttt{Dd}6 (in case of 34...\texttt{Dxf}5 35.gxf5 Black’s bishop is simply lost after 35...\texttt{Dh}8 36.\texttt{Ff}g1 \texttt{Dg}8 37.\texttt{d}6! when the worst part for Black is that after 37...\texttt{Fxh}3 38.\texttt{axb}3 \texttt{exd}6 White’s attack just continues with 39.\texttt{Dd}5! followed by \texttt{Dxh}7) 35.\texttt{a}4 when Black’s weaknesses on the light squares and the awkward position of his minor pieces leave him completely paralyzed. White would win easily after, say, 35...\texttt{Bb}8 36.\texttt{b}5! locking in the rook. 36...\texttt{h}8 37.a3 \texttt{Dd}4 38.\texttt{e}1 \texttt{b}8 39.\texttt{f}1 followed by \texttt{b}5, winning the exchange and later the game.

34.\texttt{g}5 Just in time to prevent ...\texttt{f}6, when trades would help Black to ease his cramped game, as well as reduce White’s attacking chances.

34...\texttt{Dh}8 It is only White who profits from opening the h-file after 34...\texttt{hxg}5 35.\texttt{hxg}5 \texttt{Dg}6 36.\texttt{h}5, when there are many deadly threats, such as \texttt{Df}5 followed by \texttt{Dh}2.

35.\texttt{Ff}1

35...f5?! Karjakin decides passive defence will not lead to anything good, so makes a final bid for counterplay. However, in doing so, he also creates new targets for Carlsen to exploit. The g6-square now lacks protection, and the f5-pawn itself will be vulnerable in many variations. Black could have put up more resistance with 35...\texttt{g}6 but White is still winning after a precise sequence such as 36.\texttt{a}4 \texttt{Dd}6 37.\texttt{Ff}5 \texttt{Cc}5 38.\texttt{Wh}3!, (but not the tempting 38.\texttt{Df}8? \texttt{Dxe}8 39.\texttt{Dxf}7 which would only be enough for a draw, due to 39...\texttt{Wh}8 40.\texttt{Dxg}6 \texttt{Wh}3+ 41.\texttt{Dh}2 \texttt{Df}3=). Also, the direct 38.\texttt{Dd}1?! hoping for \texttt{h}5, is imprecise, since Black obtains a little counterplay after 38...\texttt{hxg}5 39.\texttt{hxg}5 \texttt{We}3! with the point that 40.\texttt{Wf}5? is strongly met by 40...\texttt{Dxg}5 41.\texttt{Dxg}5 \texttt{Dxg}5 42.\texttt{Dxg}5 \texttt{e}6! 43.\texttt{Dg}4 \texttt{Df}6= and suddenly the rook is lost.) However, after 38.\texttt{Wh}3!, covering the e3-square and preparing either \texttt{Dd}1-\texttt{h}5 or \texttt{Dd}7-\texttt{f}5 with decisive effect, the game could have continued 38...\texttt{Dg}8 39.\texttt{Dd}7 \texttt{f}8 40.\texttt{f}5 \texttt{Dg}7 41.\texttt{Dd}1?!±

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chessboard.png}
\end{center}

\textcolor{red}{\textbullet} Caricature by Jovan Prokolidjevic.
CARLSEN vs KARJAKIN

A picturesque position, since Black’s kingside is completely locked. Now the knight can decide the game by the manoeuvre 36...h5! 37...g4 38.hxh6.

36...h5! Carlsen does not rush, and instead continues to heighten the tension, forcing his opponent to find a good move in a position without any evidently useful moves.

On the other hand the direct 36.gxh6?! is premature, since after 36...hxh6 37...h3 is necessary anyway (but of course not 37...g7?? 38.g2 g7-+).

36...h4?! This only accelerates his defeat. Black’s best defence was 36...g6 but now White has a pleasant choice, with perhaps the nicest approach being 37...a4! (37...h6 36...g3 37...g4+ with a complicated, but nevertheless winning position) 37...c8 38.b5 g6 39.g6! Opening the a2-g8 diagonal is the key, and now the game could be over after 39...exg6 40...a7 trying to divert a defender away from defence of the f5-pawn. 40...h6 41.b3 g7 (41...d5 42...d5 g7 43...h6+) 42...xh6 43...xh6 43...g7+ 43...g7+ 44...g7+! This is the point. 44...hxg8 45...xg8 mate.

37...h6 Carlsen opens up the game under optimal conditions. Since the rook no longer protects the sixth rank, the rest is easy.

37...h6 38...g3 Threatening mate on g8.

38...f6 39...g6 g4 40...h5, threatening hxg8, and after 40...d6 41.d6+ cuts off the sixth-rank defence, while also allowing the d3 to decisively attack the knight on g8.

40...g4 Black resigned

Overall, this was a very interesting and complex game, in which Carlsen’s strengths were quite evident. I expect the match to be decided by a game like this. Carlsen may deviate from opening theory early on, keep many pieces on the board, and eventually obtain a dynamically balanced position, where his superior tactical and strategic ability will tell.

Having lost against Carlsen earlier in the tournament with the black pieces, Karjakin doubtless hoped their next encounter would provide an opportunity for him to get something out of the opening and later press for a win. Unfortunately for him, he was unable to secure any advantage instead of going in for a long fight, he decided to take an early draw by repetition.

D38

Sergey Karjakin 2773
Magnus Carlsen 2855
9th Masters Final, Bilbao 2016

1.d4 f6 2.c4 e6 3...f3 d5 4...c3 b6 5...e4 6.d3 7.g5 e5 8.dxe5 dxe5 9.d2 a6 10.a3 d3 11.d7

Previously Black had tried 10...e5 in order to equalize after 11.d1 dxe4 12.dxe4 e5, as in the game Nakamura (2790) - Aronian (2786), Moscow Candidates 2016.

11...dxe5 White has traded on d5 in very similar positions, but I am not very keen on this decision, since the central pawn formation is thereby transformed into a Carlsbad structure, which with White having left his dark-squared bishop behind the pawn chain, which greatly limits his chances for active play. At this point, the only reasonable way to utilize the bishop would be to trade it on b4, but this will not be too easy.

If 11...d1 dxe4 12.dxe4 then 12...e5? does not work well because of 13.g5 e8 14.d5 g6 15.dxf6+ e8 16...e4 e7 17.dxe6+ gaining the pair of bishops without making any concessions. However, after 11...d1 Black can respond instead with 11...e5 12.dxe5 dxe5 13.dxe5 c6 14.dxe5 c6+= which is very close to equality.

11...dxe5 12.d3 a7

Compared to the line with 10...h6, now Black is one move ahead, since playing ...h7-h6 no longer seems necessary.

13.b3 The critical continuation was 13.e4 14.e5 dxe5 15.dxe5 e8 16.dxe7+ e8 17.d3 c6= and we reach a balanced position with chances for both sides. This type of game has usually been Carlsen’s strong suit, and I suppose Karjakin chose to forfeit a draw instead of playing the long game that would have inevitably ensued from this position, and where he might have even eventually lost.

13...d6 Carlsen could have avoided the draw by playing 13...c6!? but the bishop does not really belong on this square, for example 14.e4 e5 15.dxf6 e7 16.dxe7 dxe7, preparing ...d5, although after 17...c2 g6 18.d3+ White would continue with d5 with some pressure.

14.b6 Of course White must grab the pawn, since after 14.e4 d4 Black is very comfortably placed in the center, and White’s dark-squared bishop remains passive.

14...e5 15.dxe5 The alternative 15.e5 dxe5 16.dxe5 e7 17.dxe6 e6 18...e8+ e8 only gives White a rook and minor piece for the queen.

15...e5 Now the queen is trapped.

16...e5 d8 17.d4 a8 18.d7 e8 19.a6 d8 Most players would consider a quick draw against Carlsen to be quite an achievement, but I imagine that Karjakin must have felt pretty disappointed with this game. After all,
he is the world title challenger and will need to press for a win sooner or later. In this game he just could not obtain an opening advantage, and decided to secure a draw instead of playing on.

**Draw**

The next game is an excellent example of what we might term the “Carlsen effect.” After an early deviation from theory on the 11th move, Kramnik could have chosen to play a slightly inferior ending with opposite colored bishops. He decided against that, and instead pursued a very questionable active plan on the queenside which led to a very humbling defeat. I dare say that against any other opponent Kramnik would have just chosen to play the inferior ending, and then he would have made a draw without any problems.

**D35**

Magnus Carlsen 2851
Vladimir Kramnik 2801

4th Norway Chess, Stavanger 2016

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3...c3 5.f6 4.cxd5 exd5 5...g5 c6 6.e3 5.f3 7...g6 8...xf6 5.gxf6 9...xf6 5.f6 10.d3 5.d7 11.d4 5.e7 12.d2

16...g3 5.e6 17.f3=. Carlsen could press for a win without risk.

13.d3

13...b4+ An alternative was to play 13...c8 14...g5 5.d6 15.d3 5.d7 (Heading for an opposite colored bishop ending with 15...xf5 16...xf5 5.xf5 17...xf5 does not improve Black’s chances, as the presence of rooks still allows White to press for a win, but without any risk at all. The doubled pawns and the weak f5-square give White a lasting advantage) 16...e2 5ag8 17...ag1 and White is capable of controlling the f5-square, while keeping the bishop on e7 passive, for example 17...xe6 18...h6 5xe8 19...g4+.

14.d1 a4?

Surprisingly, this move, which is the computer’s first choice, had never been played before this game. The idea is to transfer the knight to g3, in order to gain control of the f5-square. White often chooses to play 12.g3 but after a sequence such as 12...b6 13.0-0-0 5.c8 14.d3 5.d6= the f5-square is well covered.

12...b6 In case of 12...f5 13.g3 5.xh4 14.gxh4 5.f6 15...h3 the f5-pawn would be vulnerable, and after 15...e7

This move is partially based on a miscalculation, but there is also an important strategic mistake involved: the knight was needed to protect the f5-square, and now it is three moves away from the e7 and d6 squares. Hence White will gain control of that crucial square and also the board, whereas Black fails to achieve anything concrete with his questionable queenside plan.

So it made more sense to play 14...c8, followed by ...d6, to fight for the f5-square. Then, after 15...g5 5.d7 16.d3 5.e7 17...e2 5xf5 18...xf5 h5=, White
will struggle to play g2-g4, whereas Black seems to have enough resources
to hold. Nevertheless I believe many top
players would be somewhat afraid to
engage in a long battle against Carlsen,
starting from this position.
15...gx5! It is quite possible that
Kramnik missed this move, which simply
ignores the threat against the b2-pawn
while taking control of the f5-square.
The knight on a4 and the bishop on b4
are simply not taking part in the game.
Perhaps Kramnik was expecting the
weaker 15...c1? when Black can aim
for complications after 15...e1!. Here
one forced line is: 16...a6 bxf2 17...xg6
hxg6 18...xc2 fxg6 19...xb7 d7
20...xa8 dxd4! 21...ad1 e5 with the
point that White can’t save the bishop,
and after 22.b3 (22...b7?! b8 23...a6?
xb2+ 24...d3 c5+ 25...e3 bxe6--)
22...c5 23.b4 e6 24...xc6+ (After
24...b7?? b8 25...a6 xb4# Black will
soon win a fourth and maybe even a fifth
pawn for the rook, and has much better
coordination.) 24...xc6+ when Black
has some compensation for the exchange.
15...d7 The point being that
15...xb2+?! is met by 16...c4
(or 16...d4? 17...b3 c3 18...c1 b5
19...xc3 c3 20...xc3--) 17...xc4
dxc4 18.bxb1 winning the b7-pawn and
destroying Black’s queenside: 18...c5
19.a3 d5 20...xb7.
16...b1 e6 17...d3

17...h8? This move is intended to
support the questionable pawn break
...c6-c5, but it also takes the c8-square
away from the knight.
The immediate 17...c5? loses the
exchange after 18...x2! c4 (even worse is
18...b6 19.a3 a5 20.b4++) 19...g7+
xe7 20.h5+ e8 21.axa4 g8
22...c2 hXg7 23...xg7 Xg7 24.g4++. It
was best for Black to admit his previous
mistake and play 17...b6, aiming for
...d8-d6, and after 18.x3 c6 19.g4
d7 20.f3 f8 (or 20...e7 21...h6!) 21.f4!? d6 22.g3 d3+ 23.xd3+ when White has a pleasant long term
advantage, but at least Black has not
created any new weaknesses.
18...e2 f8 The direct 18...c5? allows
White to trap the bishop after the funny
sequence 19.a3 a5 20...g7+ e7
21.h5+ f8 22...b5 b6 23.b4+ and
later White can simply play h2-h4-h5,
forcing Black to take on f5, and hence
retrieve the knight from g7. It was still
preferable to play 18...h8 to continue with
...b6-c8-d6, with some chances.
19.g4±

White has achieved undisputed control
of the critical f5-square.

19...c5? This is the natural consequence
of Black’s last five moves. The king had
to move from the back rank, then get
away from the check on b5, the rook
had to come over, the bishop go back,
and in the end all he has achieved is the
possibility of opening the c-file, which
he will not be able to utilise anyway. On
the flip side, the d5-pawn is now very
vulnerable, something Carlsen might
easily exploit.

Attempting to undermine the knight
on f5 with 19...h8? only helps White
after 20.xh5 8xh5 21.f3, to be
followed by h7-g1-g8. Sooner or later
White can convert his h2-pawn into a
dangerous passer. Once again, it was
better for Black to admit his mistake and
play 19...b6 though White has a big
advantage after 20...g2 8d6 21.h4 8h8
22.h5 8xf5 23.8xf5+ 8e7 24.8f4±.
20...g2 Threatening 21.f4 8d7
22...b5 winning the knight on a4.
20...cxd4 21.exd4 8e6 Even worse is
21...h5? 22...f4+ 8d7 23...h5++. 22.h4 Threatening h4-h5, winning the
exchange after 23...xf5 and 8xf5-8xc8.
22.h5 Black could have made a final
tempt to survive by 22...8h8, although
after 23...f3 there are too many threats,
such as 24.e1+ 8d7 25...b5 winning
the knight. 23...xf5 (23...b6 also loses
on move 11, he achieved a decisive advantage in only nine moves, and the rest was very simple. Kramnik certainly contributed to his own demise, but I certainly do give credit to Carlsen for creating the conditions that pushed his opponent down this path.

The following game showcases Carlsen's tactical ability and his attacking flair.

**C65**

**Magnus Carlsen** 2855

**Wesley So** 2770

9th Masters Final, Bilbao 2016


Giri's last move was ...Ba8, how did Carlsen punish this mistake, to score his first win against him?

13...f8? A strange decision, considering that White will likely capture on a5 regardless, but the a3-pawn will not be vulnerable. In retrospect, Black might have preferred to play 13...f7 since after 14.bxa5 (the alternative 14.Bb1 axb4 15.axb4 0-0 is nothing special for White) 14...dxe5 we transpose into the game, with an extra move for Black.


16.a4 d5 Unfortunately for Black, he cannot provide security for his king with 16...0-0? due to 17.Bh6+= winning the g7-pawn.

48.d7+! A final touch, diverting the enemy knight to secure promotion.

48...Bxd7 49.h7 Bc5+ 50.Be2

Black resigned

Overall, this seemed like a very easy win for Carlsen. After departing from theory...
17.\textit{b}1 b6?! There was no need to leave the rook on a5, and now Carlsen will find a very convincing way to exploit the tactical opportunities in the position. Black can’t take the pawn with 17.\textit{\&}xa4\_ 18.\textit{\&}xa4 \textit{\&}xa4 since after 19.\textit{\&}a5 the knight is lost: 19.\textit{\&}b6 20.\textit{\&}xd6+ \textit{\&}xd6 21.\textit{\&}x6+-. It was much better for Black to play 17.\textit{\&}a8\_ and after 18.d4 exd4 19.g4 (or 19.\textit{\&}xd4 \textit{\&}g6) 19...\textit{\&}g6 20.e5 \textit{\&}xf5 21.\textit{\&}xd6+ \textit{\&}e6 he is fine.

18.\textit{\&}d2 \textit{\&}xa4 Practically forced.

19.\textit{\&}c4

19...\textit{\&}f8? Wesley So probably rejected the idea of castling short, because of the recurring idea of meeting ...0-0 with \textit{\&}h6!, but still, placing the bishop on f8 just will not work here, as it keeps the rook on h8 out of the game. Of course not 19...\textit{\&}xa1 20.\textit{\&}fxd6+ cxd6 21.\textit{\&}xd6++; but better was 19...\textit{\&}e7! 20.\textit{\&}a3 (or 20.\textit{\&}e3 \textit{\&}d7) 20...\textit{\&}d7 21.f4 with a complicated position. White is probably better, but so far Black seems to have a defensible game.

20.\textit{\&}e3

20...\textit{\&}d7? The position is complex, and it is hard for Carlsen’s opponents to avoid making mistakes. In the present case, the seemingly natural text move turns out to be the decisive mistake. White was threatening to continue with 21.\textit{\&}xc5 \textit{\&}xa1 22.\textit{\&}xa1 \textit{\&}xc5 (or 22...\textit{\&}xc5 23.\textit{\&}d8+ \textit{\&}d7 24.\textit{\&}f1+) 23.\textit{\&}a8+ winning the rook. Black’s best defence against the aforementioned threat is 20...\textit{\&}g8! 21.f4 (Now Black is fine after 21.\textit{\&}xc5? \textit{\&}xa1 22.\textit{\&}xa1 \textit{\&}xc5 23.\textit{\&}d8+ \textit{\&}d7= since the rook is no longer hanging.) 21...\textit{\&}xf4 22.\textit{\&}xf4 \textit{\&}xf4 23.\textit{\&}g6\_ when White is certainly better, but still has to convert his advantage into something more tangible.

21.\textit{\&}c3!+

Karjakin has been able to secure a small opening advantage, and now he proceeds to steamroll his opponent by means of precise and very direct play.

14...\textit{\&}b5? It is understandable that Black would want to prevent b4-b5, but this move actually creates more problems than it solves. The c5-square is permanently weakened, and Black is no longer able to play ...d5-d4xc3 without turning the c7-pawn into a weak backward pawn. In many variations the knight on c6 will also be quite vulnerable.

It was better to play 14...\textit{\&}e7 but after 15.exd5 \textit{\&}xd5 16.c4 \textit{\&}d6 17.\textit{\&}c5! White is able to secure a small advantage after, say, 17...\textit{\&}xc5 18.bxc5 \textit{\&}xc5 19.\textit{\&}a3 \textit{\&}a5 20.d4! \textit{\&}g6 21.\textit{\&}b2 e4 22.d5 \textit{\&}e8 23.\textit{\&}d2 \textit{\&}c5 24.\textit{\&}xe4+.

15.\textit{\&}e3! Aiming to trade the bishops, in order to gain full control of the c5-square.

15...\textit{\&}xe3 Black is much worse after 15...d4? 16.cxd4 exd4 17.\textit{\&}d2 since now the c-file is open, and the backward c7-pawn will become a target, whereas the bishop on a7 has nothing to do.

16.\textit{\&}xe3 \textit{\&}d6 Black is also struggling after 16...d4 17.\textit{\&}e1 dxc3 18.\textit{\&}xc3 \textit{\&}d6 19.\textit{\&}c5+.

17.\textit{\&}c5 \textit{\&}c8 18.\textit{\&}e1! This is the strongest move in the position, creating serious problems for Black. On the other...
hand, an imprecise move like 18.exd5?! would allow 18...\text{\textit{cxd5}} 19.\textit{\textit{e}xe4} \textit{\textit{g}6} with some counterplay.

18...\textit{\textit{h}h5}?! It was probably better for Black to play 18...\textit{\textit{dxe4}}, although after 19.\textit{\textit{e}xe4} \textit{\textit{dxe4}} 20.\textit{\textit{e}xe4} \textit{\textit{g}6} 21.\textit{\textit{e}ae1} he will either lose a pawn or face serious problems in the center, for example 21...\textit{\textit{w}e8} 22.\textit{\textit{w}a2} \textit{\textit{e}7} 23.\textit{\textit{d}d4}! \textit{\textit{dxe4}} 24.\textit{\textit{d}xe7} \textit{\textit{dxe7}} 25.\textit{\textit{axb5}} \textit{\textit{dxc3}} (the point is that 25...\textit{\textit{axb5}}? loses to 26.\textit{\textit{dxe7}!}) 26.\textit{\textit{d}xax6}! and the a-pawn is very dangerous. The try 18...

19.\textit{\textit{e}xd5} \textit{\textit{dxd5}} 20.\textit{\textit{\textit{w}a2}} \textit{\textit{d}f4} A last bid for activity, in an already desperate position. White’s advantage is also decisive after 20...\textit{\textit{w}e8} 21.\textit{\textit{\textit{w}e5}} \textit{\textit{dxe5}} 22.\textit{\textit{\textit{w}xd5}} \textit{\textit{d}xe6} 23.a5?!+--. 21.\textit{\textit{axb5}} \textit{\textit{d}d6} 22.\textit{\textit{bxc6}} \textit{\textit{e}g6}

23.\textit{\textit{d}d7}! Keeping the queen out of the game is the simplest way to neutralize the attack.

23...\textit{\textit{d}xg2} 24.\textit{\textit{\textit{w}xg2}} Black resigned

This was a very convincing victory for Karjakin. The ease in which he managed to defeat his opponent properly explains why he is a world title challenger. His play was very precise and direct, and gave no chance for his opponent to get back into the game after a bad opening.

SOLUTIONS

Pages 79 and 81

1. 35.f5! The threat is \textit{\textit{\textit{g}f2}} winning the queen, so Black is forced to play 35...\textit{\textit{\textit{g}xf5}} 36.\textit{\textit{\textit{g}xf6}} 37.\textit{\textit{\textit{g}xe8}} attacking both the queen and the rook on e7. 37...\textit{\textit{\textit{w}xe2}} The point being that 37...\textit{\textit{d}f7} is losing after 38.\textit{\textit{\textit{w}xe7}} \textit{\textit{dxe7}} 39.\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{w}xe7}} 40.\textit{\textit{w}xh5}+--. 38.\textit{\textit{d}xg6} 39.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}xe5}} 40.\textit{\textit{\textit{w}xe5}} 41.\textit{\textit{\textit{w}xh5}} 42.\textit{\textit{\textit{w}d6}} 43.\textit{\textit{\textit{w}d6}} 44.\textit{\textit{\textit{w}e6}} 45.\textit{\textit{\textit{w}c7}} 46.\textit{\textit{\textit{w}c5}} and White is winning, as his king is safe, whereas Black’s king is very exposed.

2. 27.\textit{\textit{d}h6}+! \textit{\textit{d}h8} The point being that 27...\textit{\textit{\textit{w}xg6}? loses the queen to 28.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}xh6}+}.

28.\textit{\textit{\textit{w}xe8}} 29.\textit{\textit{\textit{w}xg7}} and Harikrishna eventually won the game.

3. 31...\textit{\textit{d}d5}?! The idea is to continue with \textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{d}d}d6}, when the d-pawn can be rather unpleasant to deal with, so Aronian decided to capture it by 32.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}xd5}?!} but after 32...\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{d}c1}+} 33.\textit{\textit{g}g2} \textit{\textit{\textit{d}c2}+} 34.\textit{\textit{\textit{h}h3} \textit{\textit{\textit{d}xb2}} 35.\textit{\textit{a4}} the a4-pawn will be lost, and the pawn race that results after the next four moves is favorable for Black. 36.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}xe5}+} 37.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}d6} 38.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}f5}} 39.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}g5}} 40.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}e6}} 41.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}f7}} 42.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}f6}+} 43.\textit{\textit{e}h7} 44.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}d4} 45.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}d6}} 46.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}d6}} 47.\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{d}d8}+} 48.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}d8}+} 49.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}d5}} 50.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}d7}+--}. 51.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}d7}+--}

4. 38.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}xf5}} 39.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}xf6}} 40.\textit{\textit{d}xf6} 41.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}xf6}+} 42.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}xf6}+} 43.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}d8}+} 44.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}d8}+} \textit{\textit{d}d8}+-. 45.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}d1} 1-0}

5. There is a direct mate by 37.\textit{\textit{d}h7}+ 38.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}d7+}! Carlsen missed 38.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}d7}, and he finished the game with 38.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}d7} 39.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}d6} 40.\textit{\textit{\textit{d}d7}+} winning immediately. 1-0
SERGEY KARJAKIN:
FIRST TIME IN THE USA FOR THE UPCOMING MATCH

IT AIN'T OVER TILL IT'S OVER

A day with the Challenger in Moscow. Who is Karjakin?

While we know all about the world champion Magnus Carlsen, his challenger in the forthcoming match in New York is still something of a puzzle. Is he a hard-line Russian nationalist, as suggested by some sections of the media, or just a 26-year old addicted to chess? To get to know him better, the ACM team visited Sergey Karjakin in Moscow and spent a day in his company, away from any chess tournament. So what is this young grandmaster really like?

Text by Josip Asik   Photos by David Llada
here we were at the Chess Museum in Moscow, looking at the permanent display of the original table used by Karpov and Kasparov in their first world title match in 1984. “Let’s play a friendly game...and take a photo!” I asked Sergey. It happened that he was standing much closer to Kasparov’s chair than I was, but then, after readily agreeing to my proposal, he suddenly walked all the way around me to take the seat on Karpov’s side of the board! Well, I guess we were now both satisfied with our respective positions...

Anyway, while the Sicilian Defense was rapidly unfolding on the chessboard, I couldn’t resist asking for some sort of confirmation: “So, do you prefer Karpov’s playing style, or is it just that you know him better than Kasparov?” and waited eagerly for his response. And though by now deeply immersed in our game, Sergey came back with the nonchalant statement: “Yeah, I know Karpov quite well but I’m not so fond of his particular style. That’s more Magnus’s territory.” He didn’t mention Garry at all.

Of course this only goes to show that Karjakin is living not only on planet chess but also in real-life Russia, where he is well aware that the royal game is not just art for art’s sake but also has wider political implications. After all, Kasparov is unofficially a persona non grata in Russia today, due to his fierce political opposition to Vladimir Putin. And a week before our meeting Karjakin was the guest of honor of the Russian president!

Earlier that day I had taken every opportunity to find out if Karjakin’s name is known to ordinary people in Moscow, so I asked taxi drivers, waitresses, shop staff, the hotel receptionist, a few kids—anyone I happened to come across in my travels. And the great majority of them knew that he was a chess player! True, his chess success has been well covered by the mainstream media, but all the same I couldn’t fail to feel a sense of pride, I genuinely appreciated the fact that here the general public knew at least something about chess.

The first time I met Sergey was a long time ago, in the press center of the Chess Olympiad in Majorca, 2004. I took a photograph of him there too, as I also did many times in the future. Interestingly, in tournament halls he always seemed to have the same facial expression and it was one that displayed no emotion whatsoever. Though he would look directly at the camera, he gave the impression that his thoughts were miles and miles away. I wondered who was the real Sergey Karjakin? He certainly had given nothing away from the few emails we exchanged prior to arranging our meeting.

We had agreed to rendezvous at the gleaming café in the five star Four Seasons hotel, near Red Square. During the Candidates Tournament, where he earned the right to challenge Magnus Carlsen for the world title, this hotel was his home base, so I guess it could only bring back good memories for him.

And...there he was! The young grandmaster showed up with a big smile on his face and with sincere apologies for his late arrival due to parking problems. His courtesy was greatly appreciated since, while waiting for him, photographer David Llada and I had already had more than enough time to get to know the faces of just about all the staff and guests on the ground floor of the hotel!

Sergey was wearing a casual shirt with jeans, and on his wrist a brand name watch with a shining steel bracelet. Simple but effective, he could easily dress like that on more formal occasions or to go out in the evening. I noticed a lot of style here.

“Oh, it’s all due to my wife Galia—she does care about me! I am not so much into fashion,” he laughed. Galia and Sergey are a young family with a one year old son. Together, as I found out, they also manage Karjakin’s new chess school for aspiring children.

“So, did Magnus congratulate you on your Candidates’ win and your complimentary ticket to New York City? What do you think about Carlsen? What advantages do both of you have in the upcoming match?” Yes, I was hurriedly unloading a barrage of questions, as I did not want to miss the opportunity of an outdoor photo shoot under the clear skies that had suddenly appeared on an otherwise rainy day.

“He congratulated me, actually,” he said, while drinking a cup of espresso, “I think on Twitter or Skype. We have known each other for many years and often there was the question of who is better; at any one particular moment...
When everyone wrote me off. So it's fine by me to see Carlsen as a favorite.

I was the strongest sometimes it would be me, sometimes it would be someone else. But I'm happy being the favorite.

In 1580, Magnus was also a favorite to win the Candidates Tournament. But only the best players played in the Candidates Tournament, so I think it's fair to say he's the strongest player in the world, even now.

I'm working hard every day, I'm writing down notes, I'm reading books... But I'm also having fun. I like to travel and explore new cities. I think it's important to have a balance between work and leisure.

Carlsen is very strong, but I think I'm just as strong. I'm not afraid of anyone. I'm confident in my abilities.
interest in an outdoor environment but what impressed me most was seeing how Sergey handled the pressure in a professional manner – all smiles and without any sign of discomfort.

Later, our chat in a nearby garden restaurant was continuously disrupted by loud music from an open concert. It was a Russian Orthodox music festival. That reminded me of a scene a few months before when I was sitting with my colleagues in McDonalds, just across the entrance to the venue of the Candidates Tournament. It was the day of the last round, moments before the decisive game against Caruana was about to start. And, significantly, we saw Karjakin making the sign of the cross on his chest before entering the building. So many things you can see from a McDonalds window! Are you religious? I asked. “We could say I’m a believer. I do believe in God and it’s my personal choice since I chose to believe only when a grown man. I am trying to find time to read the Bible and gain further knowledge, to go to church...”

It is known that Sergey grew up in what is now known as the troubled Crimean peninsula. But though he is a southerner from the Black Sea, he now lives in the cold northern climate of Moscow. In the West he is often portrayed as a hard line Russian nationalist, but with his baby face somehow it is hard to imagine that. It is true that he has given many indications for such speculation, for example by publicly wearing T-shirts displaying Putin’s face and posting messages of support on social media for Russian actions in Ukraine and elsewhere.

Is there any intention to provoke a response from the general public with your statements outside of chess? Does it harm you in any way and, if so, how do you react? – “No, I really don’t want to provoke anyone. Sometimes I am even offended by certain views about me in the media but I usually choose not to comment. My beliefs should not be considered as a threat to anyone. I am simply a Russian patriot, just like any American displaying the national flag on his house, or anyone else anywhere. When I support my people, it is just my personal feeling at the moment that I want to freely express.”

Karjakin talked gently about his first chess classes in Crimea, about his father who taught him chess, his first trainers. Our conversation then moved on to chess themes, variations, his signature Queen’s Indian...and then inevitably we came back to the subject of the match. What would be the deciding factor in the world title match? “Chess is a battle, a fight in which you can win and prove you are better. I think that chess is a sport for real men! So I am ready to do my best. It will be the match that determines my chess future, one way or the other. There are situations where you know you have one chance only. Yes, I could play at a high level for years to come, but I want to seize the moment. In difficult situations, some players would simply give up, others do exactly the opposite. I think I have already proved that I can be a winner. Self-confidence will be one of the major factors for success in New York.” How come this will be your first time crossing the Atlantic to the USA? “Well, it’s not that I’m afraid of flying! I don’t know really, it just never happened so far.”

New York is an exciting city. Will you try to do some sightseeing? What would you like to visit? “So many things, but mostly, I would like to see Niagara Falls!”

There is a revival of media interest in your country, such as it was many years ago in the times of Karpov and Kasparov. It would be a great thing for the popularity of chess in Russia if you won the title. Do you expect direct and substantial government support?

“Every boost in the popularity of chess is welcome. Wherever there is the interest of major countries and governments, it is always followed by strong sponsors. I say this not only as a chess professional but also as a person who loves chess. In the same way, I believe it’s great for us that chess is
gaining popularity in America. If it leads to fair sporting competition in the coming years that can only be a win-win situation for global chess.”

Deep into the afternoon it was time for us to visit the beautiful Chess Museum where we started our story. Sergey suggested we go in his car, instead of using a taxi, which came as a surprise because from my experience – and I don’t know why it is – the great majority of chess pros are not drivers. And so we set off on what seemed a never-ending walk through the city streets to reach the car. The truth now dawned on us that Sergey wasn’t making an excuse when he said he had parking problems!

On top of all that, we had to carry some pretty heavy photographic equipment. But this is where I formed my ultimate opinion about the kind of person Sergey Kariakin really is. He didn’t wait to be asked but simply insisted on carrying his share of the load, despite our objections. So here we were, three guys carrying tons of stuff. Who would have believed that the youngest of us was not an assistant in the magazine crew but a challenger for the world chess title? He certainly gave no hint whatsoever that he was a sporting star!

Finally Sergey got in the driver’s seat of his big Toyota Land Cruiser. Forget the fancy stuff. He needed a car for cross country driving! “Oh yes, most of all I enjoy nature... I love to drive through the mud! I am a person who likes tents, a campfire by the river, a bit of fishing and hunting.”

In the beautiful ambience of the museum which had opened after hours, just for this occasion, Sergey was discovering books and other bits and pieces housed in an original cabinet once belonging to the great Botvinnik.

It was exactly the right time and place to ask the following question:

So, if you win the big match, what are you going to do first?

He laughed like a boy – “Hands up!” – and, giving the V-sign, then let out with a loud cry of victory! It was just like a scene from one of Sylvester Stallone’s Rocky movies... It ain’t over till it’s over...

Looking in a cabinet once belonging to Mikhail Botvinnik, “Patriarch of the Soviet Chess School.”
CHUCKY’S SQUARES

WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGHER...

Playing on the second board for our team, GM Mustafa Yilmaz told me after the game that he had seen the look of uncontrolled horror on my face...”

Photo by David Llada.
by GM Vassily Ivanchuk

There is only one Chucky in the world of chess. And here the living legend from Ukraine, a true chess genius, offers us a rare and exciting opportunity to follow his imaginative train of thought, as he takes us step by step through a recent game in which he came back from the abyss to create something of beauty. Vassily Ivanchuk entered top level chess in 1991, when, at the age of 21, he won the prestigious Linares tournament ahead of Garry Kasparov, even defeating the world champion himself in the very first round. The incredibly creative career that followed brought him numerous tournament victories, peaking in 2002, despite an unexpected defeat to Ponomariov in the FIDE World Championship Final, and in 2004 when he won the European Individual Championship. With Chucky, it's all about emotions. He never seems to hide them. Maybe it was this sensibility that cost him the world title but, then again, isn't that why he has won the hearts and minds of chess fans all over the world?

For a long time now, I have not commented on games. I often did so in the distant days of my carefree youth, and I hope readers will also be interested in becoming acquainted with my present day thoughts and ideas. The game that I want to bring to your attention was played this summer in the Turkish league.

C84

Boris Savchenko 2633
Vassily Ivanchuk 2728

Turkish Super League, Izmir 2016

1.e4 e5 2.d4 f6 3...b5 a6 4.a4 d6 5.0-0 e7 My opponent Boris Savchenko is an excellent tactician and therefore I tried to play as solidly as possible in the opening.

6.d3 I recall those old days when 6.d3 was considered a passive move, meaning that White does not lay claim to any opening advantage but tries to shift the center of gravity of the main struggle to the middlegame. Back then the continuation that was exclusively considered as being the most principled was 6...e1!=.

6...d6 6...b5 7...b3 d6 or 7...0-0 is often played here, but as they say nowadays – it's all a matter of taste.

7.c3 0-0 8...c2

After this move we should make a point of pausing for a moment. Up to now there have been no significant events on the board and the position has been seen many times. So what had I expected? Well, either 8...bd2 or 8...e1 or 8...h3, and indeed without any contemplation by White. Quite often Black then drives back the white bishop with ...b7-b5 and if it retreats to c2, then he carries out the break ...d7-d5. Of course, there are other plans of play as well. But here my opponent was immersed in thought for more than 20(!) minutes. What was he looking at? I don't know, but perhaps he wanted to drum up something special, and just play the position in his own original style. From a creative point of view, such an approach should be welcomed, but from a sporting aspect – that would be unlikely. Nobody can justly dispute the benefits of an economical expenditure of time in the opening.

8...d5 This looks logical. Black gets active play in the centre, exploiting the withdrawal of White's attack on the knight on c6.

It was also possible to play in a different way. For example 8...h6

A) 9...bd2 h7 10.d4 g5 (or 10...f6);

B) 9.d4 g4 10.d5 b8 but that would be a completely different kind of game.

9...bd2 I also considered the central counter-break 9.d4, but then, apart from many possible trades, there is the very solid looking 9...g4 which is quite a standard idea nowadays.

9...e8 A strange move, whereas 9...b5 would lead us to a familiar theoretical position, but now that the white light-squared bishop has voluntarily retreated to c2, I did not want to weaken my queenside.

10.a4 f8 It was possible to consider a prophylactic move like 10...b6!? but I did not think the pawn push to a5 was in any way dangerous for me.
11.a5

11...b5 During the game White’s play seemed to me in some way passive. I thought that I should be able to seize the initiative by quickly placing my bishop on b7, the queen on c7 or d7 and the rook from a8 to d8, but this was neither so easy nor as pleasant as I might have expected...

12.axb6 cxb6 13.exd5 Perhaps somewhat more flexible was first to put the rook on e1 - 13...e1, but I had not excluded the possibility that my opponent did not want to allow me the option of 13...b5 14.exd5 dxd5 and therefore exchanged in the center at the precise moment when recapturing with the queen looked rather suspect due to 14...c4.

13...xd5 14.e1 b7?! I had almost no ideas when placing my bishop here, I was just consistently pursuing my previously devised plan. The thought that with his next move White could start to create very specific threats never entered my head. And it should have... since both 14...b5 and 14...f5 were better than the text move.

15.b3! My opponent had a long enough think over this bishop move. Meanwhile I was expecting to see 15.e4. Anyway he picked up the bishop and put it on b3. And then, as if he suddenly got frightened by something or other, he put his bishop back on c2. At that moment I could not resist thinking about the possibility of ...f4 attacking the white pawns on d3 and g2. But after a few minutes he finally played his bishop to b3. What was all that about? I have no idea. At a very low playing level (especially in children’s tournaments) sometimes they set traps in this way. An opponent, overcome with joy and without double checking, makes the obvious move and goes exactly where you want him to go... into the trap... I don’t know if Boris was really thinking something along those lines during our game, but nevertheless I’m not so naive as to play 15...f4 without checking a single option... Even if it were in a blitz game. After all, I not only had enough time but also the desire to think it over and work it all out.

15...e7 What can I say?? I’d been thinking for quite a long time and I really did not want to make this awkward move. I started to calculate 15...f4 16.e4 xd3 (If 16...xd3 17.g5!; while also worth checking was 16...a5 although it looks rather dangerous...) 17.xf4 xd1 18.axd1 exf4 19.e5 xe1+ 20.xe1 d8 21.e5
What was all that about?
I have no idea.
At a very low playing level (especially in children’s tournaments) sometimes they set traps in this way.”

Boris Savchenko.
Photo by Harald Fietz.

And, assessing it as dangerous for myself, I would have preferred to continue instead...

15...b5 16. dxe4 Wd7 with quite a normal sort of game.
In fact at this point I even made a hand movement towards the b6-pawn, when suddenly I realized that I was threatened with 16.d4!
It was impossible to start with 15...d7 because of 16.c4 Wc7 17.d5, although here after 17...e7! Black shouldn’t lose... But I was scared... I also considered 15...d5 endeavoring to give up a pawn, but at the same time gaining the advantage of the two bishops. I briefly verified 16.e5 xb3 17.xb3 xc3? (Undoubtedly, better options are either 17...f6; or 17...c7 with certain compensation for the pawn.) 18.bxc3 Wd5

19.f3! Axe1+ 20.xe1 when White has an extra piece and all of his men are well protected.
So, after checking all these lines, how could I avoid losing at once? Well, I opted for rook to e7, reassuring myself that at least I should not then lose by force...

16.c4 c7

17.e3?! A surprise!
I was convinced that my opponent would choose 17.g5! Axe8 (Upon 17...f6 comes the killing 18.e3! but I still didn’t want to put my rook on e6.) 18.e3! Axe3 19.xe3 when the white knight is ready, willing and able to jump to g5. On the other hand, upon 19...h6 White would seriously have to reckon on 20.d2 and 20.h4 with a subsequent transfer of the white queen to g4. Black’s position should be defensible, but it is still rather unpleasant...

17...f6! Apparently, my opponent thought that after 17...xe3 18.xe3 my rook on e7 is worse than if it were on e8.
Probably the best for Black then is either 18.axb8 or 18.g4 with some degree of consolidation, but I just preferred to take a backward step with my knight, thereby preventing any trade of pieces.
(I cannot put my other rook on d8, 18...d5?, due to 19...g5 when White wins the exchange, whereas upon 18...h6 19.h4! the threats of both f5 and g6 come with tempo.)

18.g5 d8 White was intending 19.e4, so here and on the next move I had to defend against this threat.

19.e2 a5 20.a2 h6 21.b4 This move looks slightly adventurous and was not what I expected from my opponent, who at this moment had less than five minutes on his clock to reach the 40th move time control... Although with the modern Fischer clocks there is a 30 seconds increment, it is nevertheless still quite dangerous to play on the increment...
True enough, upon 21.f3 Axe8 I already liked my position. On the other hand 21.e4 Axe4 22.dxe4 Axe4 23.g4 (23...xa6 b3! 24.c4 certainly cannot be good for White.) 23...c6! 24.f5 fxe5 25.xf5 b5 (if 25...c4 then 26.d6!) would have led to a position where White has yet to prove he has sufficient compensation for the pawn.

21...hxg5 22.bxa5

22.b5! I did not want to take on c3 – 22...xc3 – because of 23.b2 Wxd3 24.axb6, although I did not exclude the possibility that my opponent would have opted for d5 instead of d2. Also I did not want to take on a5, because control of the important c4-square
seemed to me a more vital factor than an extra doubled pawn.

23.\textit{f}f5  \textit{Ed}d7  24.\textit{x}xg5  \textit{Ec}6! Back when I played 22...b5 I had foreseen this checkmating attack, which is very unpleasant for White. But certainly Black had to avoid the temptation to carry out the same idea with a different move order – 24...\textit{Ex}d3? 25.\textit{x}xf6  \textit{Ec}6 because of 26.\textit{h}h6+!.

25.f3  \textit{Ex}d3  26.\textit{Ex}e5

At first glance Black has a very nice position... No wonder I was trying to find a win here... Moreover my opponent had only about a minute left on his clock,... Nevertheless I tried to calmly calculate lines, paying no attention to the time factor... However this failed to do me any good, as the reader will see from the further course of my story...

Strangely enough, the computer assesses this position as roughly equal and suggests it is best for Black to go with his rook to d5 – 26...\textit{Ed}d5. Shamefully, during the game I didn’t spot this idea, although after the forced 27.\textit{Ex}xd5  \textit{Ex}d5  28.\textit{Ex}xf6  \textit{Ex}e5  29.\textit{Ex}e5 it is not clear why Black should be any better here. So I focused on giving a check on c5 with my bishop, or taking on f3 with my rook. In the first case I could not find anything special for me after 26...\textit{Cc}5+ 27.\textit{Cc}3  \textit{Ex}e3  28.\textit{Ex}xe3  \textit{Ed}8  29.\textit{Ff}4 (or 29.\textit{Gg}5) and so I turned my attention to the rook sacrifice, trying to calculate as deeply as possible and without missing anything along the way...

26...\textit{Ex}f3  27.gxf3  \textit{Ex}f3

Now White is threatened with a mate in one, and I thought that it can only be prevented by 28.\textit{Gg}3 or 28.\textit{h}h4. In the first case, I was intending to just take the knight, 28...\textit{Ex}f5, obtaining a pawn for the exchange and leaving White with an extremely weakened king.

On the other hand, upon 28.\textit{h}h4 I outlined the contours of an amazing beauty! 28...\textit{Cc}5+ 29.\textit{Xxc}5  \textit{h}h1+ 30.\textit{Ff}2  \textit{xh}2+ 31.\textit{f}f1 (31.\textit{Cc}3  \textit{Ed}2 mate) 31...\textit{h}h3+ 32.\textit{Gg}1 (32.\textit{Cc}2?  \textit{Ed}3+ 33.\textit{Gf}2  \textit{Ed}4+). There is already a perpetual check, but I persevered with finding a win... And behold a miracle!! It seems I found it!!
There is already a perpetual check, but I persevered with finding a win... And behold a miracle!! It seems I found it!!"

32...g4?! 33.\texttt{x}f7+ h8! 34.g6+ h7. I checked my calculations here several times to make absolutely sure that White’s checks had inevitably come to an end and that my opponent would eventually get checkmated. Only after doing all this work, did I cheerfully capture the f3-pawn with my rook!

28.\texttt{x}f7+? But what is this?? For a moment I gave it a thought... It is very strange that such a capture of a pawn, and with a check too, I had not even considered in my calculations... But pretty quickly I discovered that the bishop cannot be taken due to the simple 29.e6+ g6 30.h4+ with a win. You can only imagine how I felt at that moment...

Playing on the second board for our team, GM Mustafa Yilmaz told me after the game that he had seen the look of uncontrolled horror on my face... But then again... I had to make a move... my king is in check...

I also realized that playing 28.h7 is just silly due to 29.g6+ and the bishop again remains untouched because of the fork, and also in some lines the bishop will be able to control the important e4-square. So I played 28.h8 thinking at the time that after 29.g3 I would be completely lost...

29.h8!

29.h4?! After the game the engines helped me to see a not so difficult draw

after 29.g3! h1+!. Of course, taking a white knight after the inclusion of f7+ h8 is not good. 30.f2

30.g4+! 31.xg4 (31.e2 e4+) 31...h2+ 32.f1 (only not 32.e3 because of mate in one by 32.d2) 32.h1+. I’m not completely sure that I would have found this, as I was still in a state of shock after being surprised with the unexpected 28.f7+. However, I’d like to believe that by coping with my nerves, I would have unravelled it.

White can save himself with a spectacular queen sacrifice – 34.h8+! (I dare say the gallery would have been even more entertained by the preliminary 34.e8+? h8 and only then 35.h8+ with the same idea.) 34.f8 35.g6+ h7 36.xf8+ h8 37.g6+ with a perpetual check.

30.h1+ 31.f2

31.d2+ 32.e2 e4+ Now, after 33.xe4 e2+ 34.e2 e4, the bishop on c5 does not allow White to deliver a perpetual check. White resigned
Top class grandmasters such as Baadur Jobava and Richard Rapport may be counted among the chess world’s most original players. From the very first moves, their independence of thought and unconventional ideas are invariably placed on full display to an astonished chess world. They are today’s trend-setters, taking chess in new directions and redesigning and redefining opening theory as we know it.

It takes courage to depart from standard chess principles in such an extreme fashion and, indeed, Baadur Jobava’s employment of experimental and even odd-looking opening moves has in the past cost him many Elo points. But this was not the case in Baku, where he proved that few could match him when navigating uncharted waters, as he won the gold medal for the best result on board one with a score of 8/10 and a tournament performance rating of 2926!
Hit the less traveled road through the wilderness of chess opening theory with an extraordinary player who won bronze at the European Individual Championship earlier this year and then added the Midas touch by a brilliant individual display in the Olympiad.

by GM Baadur Jobava

If we regard chess as a sport, then it has one big advantage over its more physical counterparts – in the royal game we do not have any traditional age limit for professional players. However, even in my early thirties I find myself having to remain forever young to keep up with the great changes the computer era has brought upon us and the way we work at the game and prepare for tournaments in today’s world.

I still have the feeling that I have come from the last days of the era of chess romanticism and part of me has remained there; those good old days when we spent time looking at a board and not a screen, when we used books and chess magazines in the process of chess preparation, when assessments of positions came not from the evaluations of chess engines but from the brain power of three or four expert chess analysts. My basic weapon, called an “opening book”, was manufactured by Chess Informant, five hefty theoretical reference works, A to E, entitled Encyclopedia of Chess Openings (ECO), which I regularly updated by recording novelties extracted from each new edition of Chess Informant – oh yes, on paper, written by hand in a notebook.

Many chess beginners, lovers and amateurs believe that grandmasters are born with a creative and innovative spirit, for example such world class players as Botvinnik, Tal, Bronstein, Smyslov, Fischer, Gligoric, Ivkov and many others from their epoch. There is a widely held belief that we either have these qualities or we don’t. However, if we examine this topic more closely, we will find that highly inventive players are the embodiment of perpetual work in progress and are forever in the process of questioning and examining themselves and the chess world around them. Therefore, far from just being something we are born with, chess creativity is something we can all acquire by developing our chess character.

One of many typical problems we find in the present day study of chess openings, and in fact not just chess openings but all stages of the game, is that modern chess engines have both good and bad aspects, which are more like the two sides of one and the same sword: the plus is that the engine will make deep calculations without mistakes and the minus is that the engine cannot understand certain specific strategical motifs, so we get a combination of an almost faultless tactician and a player whose strategical cognition is rather weaker than that of a middle strength grandmaster. There is a burning question, which grows more important day by day, due to the rapid advancement of computer technology and chess engines: when is it right to believe the choice of the engine and when is it right to trust one’s own chess intuition instead?

Innovative thinking in the chess openings is about creating new blueprints, discovering new possibilities for existing ideas in the variations and/or lines of play, and improving established tabiyas and/or transpositions, all of which in the end will result in greater profit for the chess player. When a player bases his or her plans on the way the chess openings have been conducted in previously played games, these are only open to innovation in respect of increased efficiency. However, those who are inventive will always ask themselves: “Can I find a different way to conduct the game, one that will result in a fresh way of playing this type of position or opening?” Experimentation in chess, as in life, is the process by which people become creative or improve their creativity. When you decide to conduct an experiment, you don’t know with certainty what will be the outcome, you can only make a calculated guess, which may be more or less accurate. Often, experimentation in chess openings leads to a surprise – something you didn’t expect or couldn’t predict. This is the true power of chess creativity.

Working on this article was a difficult task – on the one hand it was a great pleasure to analyse the selected games but, on the other, I found the enormous number of possibilities less confusing when it came to determining which of such a large variety of opportunities would be the most promising and enduring for the future development of this or that opening. Of course, the “best” for me can only be a subjective choice but nevertheless I hope that you, the reader, will like my ideas and find a way to implement them in your own chess games and future chess career.
A Caro-Kann with 2...e2!

What was the big news in chess opening lore during 2015? Of course, the meeting between the Sicilian Defence and 2...e2. And what has 2016 brought us? A Caro-Kann with 2...e2?

B10

Vladislav Kovalev 2562
Evgeny Postny 2662

European Championship, Gjakova 2016

1.e4 c6 2...e2?

An interesting line, which nowadays is actively employed by Vladislav Kovalev and Vladimir Fedoseev. In my opinion, this opening variation will become very popular in the near future. The idea is to take the opponent into a deep dark forest, and draw his attention away from the typical Caro-Kann to some kind of French Defence, with a f4/d3 pawn structure in White's setup. Here we see a slight improvement on its parallel use against the Sicilian Defence, since there at least Black already has a pawn on c5 - although whether this tempo is enough to make a big difference we will have to wait and see in future tournament practice.

2...d5 3.e5

3...c5 3...f5 4.f4 e6 5.d3 d6 0-0 d7 7.e1 c5 8.d4 (8.d3?) 8...c6 9.a3 cxd4 10.b4 a6 11.h3 b2 b8 12.d3 a3 d3 13.a3 d3 etc was played only once, W.Armstrong - K.Altinok, Durham 2007.

4.f3 d6 5..f3 Here it is not so good for White to wait passively with 5.d3? d4 6.f3 e2 7.e2 e6 as then Black has the advantage of the bishop pair.

5...g4 In the setup reached after 5...f5 6.d3 e6 7.0-0 Black has problems developing his kingside pieces.

6.0-0 c6?

6...e6 7.d3 d6 8.e3 d5 leads to the same position as in the game.

8..f5 9..f2 h5N Can we call this an innovation? Perhaps, even though this position has only occurred in one previous game: 9...e7 10.b2! h5 11.c3 (11.h3 g6=) 11...g6 (11...h4?) 12.c4 13.c1 b4 14.cxd5 exd5 15.b4 c5 16.b1 b5 17.bxc4 bxc4 18.xc4 19.c4 20.f4 21.b4 a5 22.e6 d4 23.cxd4 24.e6+ h7 25.b6 d6 26.f1 axb4 27.e4 xg7 28.exf4 Exe8 29.c6+ c6 30.w5+ c7 31.w6+ b8= is just one example of the possibilities resulting from the dynamic opening position. As a postscript, 11...d4 also needs investigation.

12.g3 The most principled move. Also possible is 12.wf3.

12.g4

13.xd4 13.xd4 xd4 A) 14.a4+ b5! 15.c6 (15.cxb5?! b6=) 15..b8=; B) 14.cxd5 x3+ (14...exd5?! 15.g3! d8 16.d3 0-0 0-0 18.f5)
15.\texttt{xf3} \texttt{xd5} 16.\texttt{xd5} \texttt{exd5} and Black is OK!

or 13.\texttt{d4!}? \texttt{xf3}+ (13...\texttt{d7}) 14.\texttt{xf3} \texttt{d7} 15.\texttt{cxd5}

\textbf{A) 15...\texttt{exd5} 16.\texttt{c2} \texttt{d4} (16...\texttt{b6} 17.\texttt{d4} c4 18.\texttt{b3} b5 19.\texttt{e6} fxe6 20.\texttt{ad4}+) 17.\texttt{h4} \texttt{e7} 18.\texttt{xe7} \texttt{xe7} 19.a3+;}

\textbf{B) 15...\texttt{xd5} 16.\texttt{ac1} a6 (16...\texttt{e7} 17.\texttt{d4} c4 18.\texttt{xc4} \texttt{d8} 19.a3+) 17.\texttt{g5} \texttt{e7} 18.\texttt{e4} b6 19.\texttt{f3} d7 20.\texttt{c3} \texttt{d7} 21.\texttt{d4}}

\textbf{cxd4 22.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{b7} 23.\texttt{dd1} \texttt{dd8}=.}

13...\texttt{e7}?! Better to exchange knight for bishop, e.g., 13...\texttt{xf3+}

\textbf{A) 14.\texttt{xf3} \texttt{d4} (14...\texttt{dxc4} 15.\texttt{xc4} \texttt{d5} 16.a3 \texttt{d8} 17.\texttt{xc3} \texttt{e7} 18.\texttt{c1} 0-0 19.\texttt{d1} b6 20.b4 a5 21.bxc5 b5 22.d4 \texttt{dd8}) 15.\texttt{h4} \texttt{e7} 16.\texttt{xe7} \texttt{xe7} 17.\texttt{d2}+;}

\textbf{B) 14.\texttt{xf3} \texttt{d4} (14...\texttt{b6} 15.\texttt{d4} \texttt{exd4} 16.\texttt{xd4} cxd4 17.\texttt{xd5} \texttt{xd5} 18.\texttt{xd5} exd5 19.\texttt{c3} \texttt{e7} 15.\texttt{xe4} \texttt{e7} and White has an easy game.}

13.\texttt{cxd5} \texttt{exd5} 14.\texttt{xf3}+ 15.\texttt{xf3} \texttt{xf3} 16.\texttt{xd5} exd5 17.\texttt{xc5}.}

15.\texttt{b3} 15.\texttt{xd4}+ \texttt{xd4} 16.\texttt{b4!} \texttt{d7} 17.\texttt{c3} \texttt{f3}+ 18.\texttt{xf3} 0-0 0 19.f5 \texttt{b8} 20.\texttt{ce1}+.

15...\texttt{f3}+ 16.\texttt{xf3} \texttt{b6}

17.\texttt{d4} 17.f5 \texttt{d7} 18.e6 fxe6 19.fxe6 \texttt{xe6}

\textbf{Vladislav Kovalev. Photo by Paul Truong.}
20.\text{xe}1 \text{hf}5 21.\text{wg}3 0-0 22.\text{xc}5 \text{h}4
23.\text{cg}7 \text{ec}8 24.\text{ch}8 \text{xc}5+ 25.\text{dc}5
\text{ex}c8=.

17...c4

18.\text{xc}4!? A practical decision.
18...\text{d}a1 \text{b}4! 19.f5 \text{xf}5 20.\text{dc}2 \text{xc}2
21.\text{xc}2 \text{b}8 22.\text{xf}5 \text{wd}7 23.\text{wd}3 \text{we}6
24.\text{ae}3 \text{hh}7=;
Objectively stronger was 18.\text{dd}2
A) Now 18...b5 19.\text{db}1

\text{dxc}4
A1) 19...b4 20.\text{dd}2 \text{ec}8 21.\text{xc}4! \text{dxc}4
22.d5 \text{dd}7 23.\text{xc}4 \text{eb}8
(23...\text{a}5 24.\text{xc}8+ \text{xc}8 25.\text{ec}3
\text{d}7 26.\text{ec}4 0-0 27.\text{d}6 \text{ed}8 28.\text{xb}4
\text{ec}6 29.\text{e}4 \text{e}4=) 24.b3 0-0 25.\text{d}6 \text{dd}8
26.\text{xb}4=;
A2) 19...\text{d}7 20.\text{d}c3 \text{eb}4
21.a3 \text{d}d3 22.\text{xd}5 \text{ed}8 23.\text{xc}7
\text{xc}1 24.\text{h}4 \text{dd}3 25.e6! \text{fxe}6 26.\text{xc}6
(26.d5 \text{hh}7 27.f5 \text{ef}5 28.\text{xc}6 \text{ff}7
29.\text{ee}7=) 26...\text{eh}7 27.\text{f}5 \text{xd}4+ 28.\text{he}1=.

B) 18...\text{d}7? 19.\text{xc}4 \text{dxc}4 20.\text{xc}4
\text{ec}8 21.\text{f}c1+–;
C) 18...\text{ec}8 C1) 19.\text{db}1 \text{wd}7 20.\text{dc}3
\text{db}4 21.a3 \text{dd}3 22.\text{xd}5 \text{ex}c1 23.\text{ec}1
0-0 24.\text{ee}7+ (or 24.\text{e}4) 24...\text{xe}7
25.d5=; C2) 19.f5 \text{gf}5 20.\text{db}1 \text{wd}7
21.\text{f}3 \text{d}4 22.\text{e}3.

18.\text{d}x\text{c}4!

19.d\text{xc}5?! 19.\text{fxe}5 \text{dxc}4 20.\text{dd}2 0-0 21.\text{d}5 \text{ed}4 (21...\text{dd}7? 22.d6 \text{ge}5
23.\text{e}4 \text{dd}8 24.\text{xc}5 \text{bx}c5 25.\text{xa}8+-)
22.\text{e}4! (22.\text{xc}4 \text{ed}8 23.\text{e}4 \text{ce}5
24.\text{xc}5 \text{xc}5 25.\text{dd}6 \text{ed}7 26.\text{xf}7
\text{xf}7 27.\text{xe}6+ \text{ff}8 28.\text{he}6+ \text{gg}8=)
22...\text{f}5! 23.\text{f}6+ (23.\text{ec}3 \text{ee}7 24.\text{e}6
\text{ad}8 25.\text{xc}2) 23...\text{xf}6 24.\text{h}4 \text{ee}7
25.\text{xf}6 \text{dx}f6 26.\text{gg}3 \text{ff}7 27.\text{xf}6
\text{xf}6 28.\text{c}7+ \text{ee}7 29.\text{c}4=.

19...\text{dxc}4 20.\text{dc}6+ 20.\text{dd}4 0-0 21.\text{f}5
\text{ec}8 22.\text{fx}6 \text{fx}6 23.\text{e}4 \text{ee}8 24.\text{e}6
\text{ef}5 25.\text{dd}4 \text{he}8 26.\text{ee}6=.

20.\text{dd}8 21.\text{d}d4 21.\text{xc}4 \text{ed}7
22.\text{d}4 \text{ec}6 23.\text{ee}2 \text{ec}5 24.\text{e}6 \text{dd}5
25.\text{dd}1 \text{dd}8=.

21...\text{ec}8 22.\text{ee}4 \text{ec}5! 23.\text{f}5 \text{ed}5
24.\text{ec}2 \text{gx}f5 25.\text{xf}5

Everything was more or less forced up to now and I guess Black makes a serious mistake here, probably because he was in time-trouble.

25.\text{dd}3? 25...\text{ec}7! was only way to fight for the advantage: 26.\text{ed}1 \text{ee}6
27.\text{exe}4 \text{gg}8 28.\text{eh}3 \text{cc}6 29.\text{xc}6 \text{xc}6
30.\text{ed}7 \text{ee}6 31.\text{ea}7 \text{cc}5 32.\text{ec}5+ \text{bx}c5
33.\text{dd}6 \text{dg}5 34.\text{xf}7+ \text{gg}8 and Black has some winning chances.

26.\text{xd}3 \text{xd}3 27.\text{exe}7 \text{xe}7
28.\text{xc}5+ \text{bx}c5 29.\text{f}6+ \text{g}6 30.\text{dd}3
Somewhere around here Vladislav offered a draw (I was playing on the adjacent board and heard him) but for some reason Postny declined the offer and overestimated his position. Anyway, bravo to him for his fighting spirit!
30...f8 31...d2 e7 The first step in the wrong direction. 31...g8 32.g3 h4 33...xd3 hxg3 34...xg3 e3+ 35...c4 e2 36.f6+ xe5 37...xf7 xb2 38...xa7=.

32...f4 e5 33...h4 f5 34.b3 a5?! The second step, which causes some small problems.

35...xh5 35...c4?! f4! (35...d5 36...g3 e6 37...h4=) 36...c5+ e4 37...c4+ e5 38...a4 d5 39.g3 fxg3 40...xg3 d6 41.a3 e5 42.d4+ c5 43...xd3=.

35...g7?! The third step, which causes real problems for Black 35...a4! 36.g4 axb3 37...xf5+ e4 38.axb3 a7 39...c5+ a2+ 40...d1 xh2=.

36.g3 e4 37...h8?! 37...h4+ g4 38...h8 f4 (38...a4? 39...e6+ d5 40...d8+ e6 41...xd3+ 39...e8+ d5 40...d8+ c6 41...xd3 and, though White has some practical chances, I guess objectively it's a draw.

49...h5 50...d2 e6 51...g2 Black resigned

A sharp approach in the Symmetrical English

The English Opening has a very rich tradition and has even showed its worth in World Championship matches. It is a solid opening, used to reach both classical and hypermodern positions, and sometimes as a transpositional device. In the following interesting game, we will see a sharp approach to one of the most original and popular lines around today in the Symmetrical English.

A34

Alessio Valsecchi 2494
Alexander Beliavsky 2624
European Championship, Gjakova 2016

1...f3 c6 2.c4 c5 3.c3 d5 4.cxd5 cxd5 5.e4 d4 Also played are 5...xc3; 5...c7; 5...e6; 5...b6.

6...c4 6...d5+ c6 (6...d7 7.a3 4c6 8.d4 cxd4 9...d4 10.xd4 10...d4 7.d4 8.a3 dxc3 9.xd8+ xd8 10.axb4 cxb2 11...xb2 is another main line.

6...d3+ 6...e6 7...xe6 8...f1 fxe6 9...g5.

39...d8+ (39...a8 axb3 40.axb3 h7 41.h4 4e4 42...a4+ c3 43...f4+ 7...e2 7...f1 c6 8...c2 cxc1 9...c1 e6 (9...g6).

7...f4+ 7...c1+ 8.xc1 c6 has also been played in many games.

8...f1 c6 8...e6 9...b5+ (9...xe6
\( \texttt{gxe6} 10. b4 \texttt{g6} 11. \texttt{bxc5} \texttt{e5} 7. g7) 9... d7 10. d4.

9. \texttt{De}5 \texttt{Cc}6 The last time this move was played was in a game H.
Nakamura (2789) - A. Giri (2734), Wijk aan Zee
2014 - CI 120/20.

10. \texttt{Wf}d6 10. \texttt{Wf}a4+

10. \texttt{Wf}x7 \texttt{expression x}7 11. \texttt{e}x6+ \texttt{e}6 12. \texttt{Wf}b3+ \texttt{f}6 (12... \texttt{g}d6 13. \texttt{d}4 \texttt{e}4 14. \texttt{dxe}c5+ \texttt{e}7 15. \texttt{g}g5+ \texttt{g}6 16. \texttt{e}5 \texttt{f}f7 17. \texttt{e}6f \texttt{g}6

18. \texttt{e}3+) 13. \texttt{e}d5+ \texttt{e}f7 14. \texttt{e}c7+ \texttt{g}6 15. \texttt{e}6+-

11. \texttt{Dxc6} \texttt{bxc6} 11. \texttt{d}3 Here Nakamura

played 11. \texttt{a}4.

9... g6

10. \texttt{a}4+ \texttt{d}7 11. \texttt{e}d7 \texttt{e}xd7 12. \texttt{e}x6\texttt{e}6 fxe6 13. \texttt{w}xe6+ \texttt{e}xd7 14. \texttt{e}g7 15. \texttt{e}e4

b6 16. \texttt{f}4 \texttt{f}8 17. \texttt{d}4

This natural move is also the strongest.

10. \texttt{Wf}x7 \texttt{e}x7 11. \texttt{f}x6+ \texttt{e}6 12. \texttt{Wf}b3+ \texttt{f}6 (12... \texttt{g}d6 13. \texttt{d}4 \texttt{e}4 14. \texttt{dxe}c5+ \texttt{e}7 15. \texttt{g}g5+ \texttt{g}6 16. \texttt{e}5 \texttt{f}f7 17. \texttt{e}6f \texttt{g}6

18. \texttt{e}3+) 13. \texttt{e}d5+ \texttt{e}f7 14. \texttt{e}c7+ \texttt{g}6 15. \texttt{e}6+-

This is the idea behind White’s play: to

kill the black bishop. Something similar
had occurred in a Vallejo Pons game a

long time ago. [F.

Vallejo Pons (2629) – E. Fernandez
Romero (2347), Dos Hermanas 2002 – Ed.]

9... \texttt{Wd}d4 10. \texttt{Wf}d4+ \texttt{d}7 11. \texttt{e}d7 \texttt{e}d7 12. \texttt{e}x6 \texttt{fxe6} 13. \texttt{e}d7+ \texttt{e}d7 14. \texttt{e}5

(14. \texttt{d}3 \texttt{e}5 15. \texttt{e}e3) 14... \texttt{e}c6 15. \texttt{e}e4;

10. \texttt{e}d7?\]

13... 0-0? Though this seems quite

natural it is in fact a waste of time. It

reminds me of why such a great and

original-thinking grandmaster as David

Bronstein always took his time before
deciding whether or not to castle.

Best was 13... \texttt{Wf}a5!, preventing

the knight jump to a4 and at the same
time preparing to initiate counterplay by

... \texttt{Wb}6 and ... \texttt{Wf}a6!

14. h4! h5 15. \texttt{e}c1 \texttt{h}7 This move

shows that Black doesn’t have any

plan or useful idea and is just playing a

waiting game. 15... \texttt{Wf}a5 leads nowhere

16. \texttt{b}3 (16. \texttt{g}4!?) 16... \texttt{d}d4 17. \texttt{a}4.

16. \texttt{g}1? A very strange move. For

absolutely no reason, White imitates
the opponent’s play. Everything was ready
for active play. 16. \texttt{e}a4 \texttt{d}d4 17. \texttt{e}c5

\texttt{d}6 18. \texttt{b}3+; 16. \texttt{e}a5 \texttt{e}6 17. \texttt{b}3 f5

What else? 18. \texttt{g}1. Here this move is
far more logical and after White picks up
the c5 pawn I do not see how Black has
sufficient compensation for it.

16. \texttt{d}d4 17. \texttt{e}4 One more illogical
move. 17. \texttt{e}a4 \texttt{d}6 18. \texttt{f}3 \texttt{b}8 19. \texttt{b}3=\texttt{e}6.

17. \texttt{a}5 17... \texttt{e}6 18. \texttt{e}6 \texttt{e}6 was

interesting, as after this bishop exchange
the d3 pawn becomes weaker.
18.e5 Bluff! After 18...g5 f6 19.e3 e5 20.h2 I still prefer White.

18...b8 18...ex5 19.h6 g7 20.xg7 xg7 21.exf7 wxf7 22.g5 e6 23.exc5 (23.e4 f5 24.exf6+ h6=) 23...xc4 24.dxc4 f5 25.e1 (25.e4 b6 26.exb6 axb6 27.g3 ffd8 28.g2 g6 29.h1 d6 30.f4 c2=) 25...e5 26.e8 wxe5 27.h6 h8=.

19.g5 c7 20.f4 f5?! 20...e6 21.e4 xc4 22.dxc4 e6 23.g5+ xg5 24.hxg5 ffd8 25.c2 g8 26.c1 e6 27.f4± 20...a5 21.e6 xe6 22.xb8 xb8 23.xe6 g6 24.e4 h7=.

21.e4? A positional mistake. Knights are much more useful in closed positions than bishops.

21...xf4 22.exf4 exf7 24.exf5 25.e3 (24..f1 e3 25.gxf3 xf3 26.h2 xxd3+ 27.xd3 xxd3+ 28.xd8 xe3 29.xe7 e4+ 30.e2 xf7=) 24...xf6 25.h3 h6 26.e6 f6 27.xd3 g6 28.c4=.

But 21...d4 could make Black’s life harder: 21...d7 22.b3 b4 23.xb4 cxb4 24.e6 bxc4 25.exf7 e6 26.e5 xf7 27.xg7 xg7 28.c5=.

21...xe4 Of course! 22.ex4 e6 23.b3 a5 24.d1 a4
An immediate 24...h6 was better.

25.g4 axb3 26.axb3 h6 26...h5

27.xg4 h6 28.h5 g5 29.e3.

27.xh6 xh6

28.h3 28.b4 hxg4 (28...xb4?? 29.axd4++) 29.bxc5 f5 30.xg2 g7 31.d4 f5 32.exf6+ xxf6

A) 33.xg4?! b2 34.e2 (34.h5 h2 35.xg6+ xg6+ 36.hxg6 e4 37.e2 d2 38.xe2 39.xe2 40.xh2 e4+ 41.xf3 xg6 42.xh8 xf3+ 43.xxf3 e5 44.e8 xc5 45.e4 f6 46.e7=) 34...d2 35.xf3 xdx1 36.xd1=;

B) 33.wc1 b8 34.xg4 e5 35.dxe5 xe5 36.ew3 exf3 37.fxe3 b8=.

28...b8 29.g4 29.bh5 b5 30.xf1 h8=.

29...bg8?! 29...hxg4 30.xg4 g7 31.h5 h6 32.xg6 xg6 33.xf4 x7=.
30.\text{h4}\? 30.\text{gxh5} \text{gxh5} 31.\text{d2+} \text{h7} 32.\text{f1}.

30...\text{hxg4} 31.\text{gxg4}

31...\text{f5}?! Probably both opponents were in time-trouble. Best is 31...\text{g7} 32.\text{bx5} \text{e7} 33.\text{d4} \text{e7} when Black's knight is much stronger than the bishop and also White's central pawns are very weak. 32.\text{bx5}\? 32...\text{d2+} \text{g7} 33.\text{g5} \text{d8}

37...\text{xg4}+ Correct is 37...\text{h3} 38.\text{xc6} \text{a3} 39.\text{e1} \text{e7} 40.\text{g2} \text{a7} 41.\text{f1} \text{a1} 42.\text{we2} \text{a3} 43.\text{f3} \text{xf1}+ 44.\text{exf1} \text{a1}+ 45.\text{g2} \text{h1#} Beautiful geometry! 38.\text{xg4} \text{b8} 39.\text{d1} \text{b5} 40.\text{e4}

40...\text{d8}\? 40...\text{b2} 41.\text{xc6} \text{d8} 42.\text{e4} \text{xd4} 43.\text{g2} \text{c6} 44.\text{c2} \text{xc2} 45.\text{xc2} \text{e5}+

41.\text{xc5}= \text{exf5} 42.\text{h4} \text{c4} 43.\text{d2} \text{h8} 44.\text{g5} \text{xb4} 45.\text{f6+} \text{g8} 46.\text{d8+} \text{g7} 47.\text{f6+} \text{g8} 48.\text{d8}+ An interesting and creative game, despite its numerous mistakes! Draw

\textbf{Veresov's Cousin}

Always when I start to talk about the \text{d4/c3/f4} setup, the first thing that springs to my mind is the amount of tricks concealed in it. I like the wide range of possibilities which this deployment offers and I will try to show examples of these from a personal and subjective viewpoint, pointing out the moves that I prefer.

\textbf{D01}

\begin{tabular}{ll}
Baadur Jobava & 2661 \\
Anton Demchenko & 2589 \\
\end{tabular}

European Championship, Gjakova 2016

1.d4 \text{g6} 2.\text{c3} d5 3.\text{f4} In my opinion, this system or variation with 3.\text{f4} (Let's call it Veresov's cousin) is very annoying for players whose main weapon

is the King's Indian or Grunfeld Defence.

3...\text{g6} Usually my opponents have played other moves: 3...\text{c5}; 3...\text{e6}; 3...\text{f5}; 3...\text{a6}, but the text wasn't a surprise for me because once before, in a blitz game, Ukrainian GM Alexander Kovchan adopted it against me.

4.\text{d2}! Of course only like this! 4.e3 c6! (4...\text{g7} 5.\text{b5!} 6.\text{a3} f3).

4...\text{g7} 5.\text{h6} \text{xe6} 6.\text{wxe6} \text{d5}

7.\text{e2}! If I remember correctly, I played 7.\text{f3} vs Kovchan, but after the game I understood that 7.\text{e2} is much stronger. Then 7...\text{xc5}! (7...\text{c5}) 8.g4 c5 9.e3 \text{c6} 10.c1 \text{bxc4} 11.exd4 \text{xd4} 12.b5 \text{g5} 13.\text{xd4} (13.g5 \text{xe5} 14.\text{g2} \text{g6}+) 13...\text{a5+} 14.\text{e2} (14.\text{g2} \text{b6}+) 14...\text{a6}+ 15.\text{f2} \text{xe4=}; After 7.0-0-0 \text{g4}

There are the following possibilities:

\begin{itemize}
\item A) 8.\text{h4} e6 9.\text{g3} \text{b6} 10.\text{h3} \text{d3} 11.e3 \text{a5+} 12.\text{h3} \text{e7}\text{e7};
\item B) 8.\text{h4} \text{d6} 9.\text{h3} \text{c6} 10.\text{h3} \text{c6} 11.e3 0-0-0;\n\item C) 8.\text{h3} g7 d7?! (8...\text{g8} 9.\text{h3} e6 10.\text{e2} \text{f6} 11.\text{xf6} \text{xf6}) 9.e4 (9.\text{h3} \text{e6} 10.e4 \text{g8} 11.\text{h7} \text{h8=} 9...\text{xc4} 10.\text{d2} (10.f3 \text{f2} 11.\text{fxe4}\text{g4} 12.\text{e2} \text{xe2} 13.\text{xe2})
\end{itemize}
14.\[\text{hxh}1\text{e}5\] 10...\[\text{f}8\] 11.\[\text{x}f8\] \[\text{x}f8\] 12.\[\text{h}3\] e3 13.\[\text{fxe}3\] \[\text{gxe}3\] 14.\[\text{f}3\] c6 15.\[\text{g}4\] \[\text{e}6\] 16.\[\text{d}3\] \[\text{d}5\] 17.\[\text{e}1\] e5.

7...c5 8.e3 cxd4N 9.exd4 \[\text{c}6\] 10.f3 h5?!

I guess this move is a positional mistake. Of course, it has the idea of halting White’s offensive in the event of any forthcoming g2–g4, but it creates weaknesses too, both in the g6 and h5 pawns themselves and the surrounding dark squares. Maybe it would have better to somehow prepare queenside castling, whilst first waiting to see which side the white monarch will choose to take up residence.

10...\[\text{b}6\]!?! 10...a6?!

11.\[\text{b}5\]! In this pawn structure, the two white knights are much stronger than the opponent’s passive bishop and knight, which do not have very good prospects of occupying any important squares.

11...\[\text{d}6\] 12.\[\text{g}e2\] a6 13.\[\text{x}c6\]+ \[\text{xc6}\] 14.0–0

14...h4?! This move hits the g3 square, but at the same time the pawn on h4 needs continual attention; thus, for example, if Black castles kingside it can be captured by the white queen from g5 or f4.

15.a4! Preventing any active plan associated with the thrust ...b7–b5 and at the same time intending to take control of the dark squares after a4–a5.

15...a5 Worth considering is 15...b6!? because after the text move the b5 square remains weak, which indeed will become a serious factor in the near future.

16.\[\text{f}1\] \[\text{f}8\] 16...0–0?! 17.\[\text{ac}1\] \[\text{d}6\] 18.\[\text{g}5\].
White has two plans here: the first is what actually happens in the game and the second is to play b2-b3 and move the knight from c3-d1-e3 and then push c2-c4. So Black has to do something, and Demchenko tries to activate his knight, but this doesn’t work so well tactically.

18...\(\textit{De}8\) 19.\(\textit{Db}5\) \(\textit{Dd}6\)

26.\(\textit{Ec}1\)! 26.\(\textit{Exd}5\) offers some counterplay: 26...\(\textit{Cc}7\) 27.\(\textit{Dc}5\) \(\textit{Ed}8\)
28.\(\textit{Dxe}6\) \(\textit{Dxf}6\) 29.\(\textit{Dxf}6\) \(\textit{Dg}7\) 30.\(\textit{Db}6\)
\(\textit{Dad}8\) 31.\(\textit{Dxb}7\) \(\textit{Dxd}4\) 32.\(\textit{Dc}e7\) \(\textit{Df}8\).

26...\(\textit{Dd}8\) 26...\(\textit{Df}8\) 27.\(\textit{Dc}8\) \(\textit{Dd}6\)
28.\(\textit{Dc}7\) \(\textit{Dh}7\) 29.\(\textit{Dxf}8+\) \(\textit{Dxf}8\) 30.\(\textit{Dd}7\) --.

27.\(\textit{Dxd}8+\) \(\textit{Dxd}8\) 28.\(\textit{Dc}7\) \(\textit{Dg}7\)

29.\(\textit{Dxb}7\) 29.\(\textit{Db}8\) 30.\(\textit{Db}8\) \(\textit{Dxb}8\) 31.\(\textit{Cc}6\) \(\textit{Df}6\)
32.\(\textit{Df}2\) \(a4\) 33.\(\textit{Dc}6\) \(\textit{Ba}8\) 34.\(\textit{Dc}4\)
35.\(\textit{Dc}5\) \(\textit{Dc}7\) 36.\(\textit{Dc}2\) \(\textit{Dd}6\) 37.\(\textit{Dc}3\) \(\textit{Dc}6\)
38.\(\textit{Dc}4\) \(\textit{Dc}7\) 39.\(\textit{Dc}5\) \(\textit{Da}6\) 40.\(\textit{Dc}5+\)
\(\textit{Dh}7\) 41.\(\textit{Dc}5\) \(\textit{Dc}8\) 42.\(\textit{Dc}7+\) \(\textit{Db}8\) 43.\(\textit{Df}7\)
\(\textit{Cc}2\) 44.\(\textit{Da}6\) Black resigned

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**Early Sicilian surprise 2...a6**

The O’Kelly variation of the Sicilian has its roots from way back in the 1950s. It is named after the Belgian GM and third ICCF Correspondence World Champion, Alberic O’Kelly de Galway. It can be adopted as a one-off surprise or be included in a regular repertoire — usually Black obtains a fine, stable position after the opening phase is over.

B28

**Baadur Jobava**

**Sebastian Bogner**

European Championship, Gjakova 2016

1.e4 c5 2.\(\textit{Df}3\) a6

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White has various decent lines after Black’s second move, such as 3.c4 with a kind of Maroczy or Paulsen structure, 3.c3 with the idea of switching to Sveshnikov’s variation, and of course 3.d4 endeavoring to transpose to main lines. I decided to go into a little-known theoretical line where the accent is on the middlegame.

3.\(\textit{g}3\) b5 The most logical move: “Having said ‘a’ you must say ‘b’!”

4.a4 \(\textit{Df}7\) 5.d3 e6 6.\(\textit{Dg}2\) d6 7.0-0 \(\textit{Dd}7\) 8.\(\textit{Da}3\) \(\textit{Dg}6\) Up to here everything was played more or less consistently. But now I thought for about ten minutes and decided to make a small provocation, which suddenly worked perfectly.

9.\(\textit{Df}4\)? Of course, 9.\(\textit{Dd}2\) was possible at once.
9...e5?! That’s it! Black had to play 9...b6 and not be afraid of any illusory break on e5. 10.e5 (10...e2!? 10...d5! 11.d2 dxe5 12.axb5 axb5 13.c4 c7 14.cxb5 a7 and Black has good play. Naturally I would have chosen another way.

10. d2 c6 11.b4? c7 Not 11...hxax 12...xc5 13.d4 dcd7 (13...cxe4? 14.dxe5 dxe5 15.cxe5 b7 16.c3! with a very strong initiative) 14...e2 c7 15.d5 b7 16.b1 c5 17.c4 and after the bishop penetrates to the a5 square White achieves complete domination. 11...cxb4

17...c4d7 17...cxe4 18.a4 d7

19...h5+ ; 17...b3 18.dxe5 dxe5

19.cxe5!! Even though almost all his pieces are under attack, White doesn’t win. It’s just a case of bang, bang – and win! (19.b1 xdx 20...xax5 xf1 21.xd8+ xdx8 22.xd5 xdx5++) 19...a1

A) 19...xax2 20.c6+ ;

B) 19...xaxd 20.b8+ xdb8 21.c4? xdx1 22.xdx1+ ;

C) 19...0-0

20.c5 e8 21.g4! g6 Better is 21...g6! 22.g5 g6 23.a8 xax8 24.axb5 but Black still has troubles.

22.h6+ g7 23.g5

23.h5 23.g8 24.a8 xax8 25.xb5 e7 26.xb3 d8 27.xd3 ex4 28.b2 g5 29.g5 29.xd4? xdx6+ 30.xg8 fxg5 31.a6+ ;

24.axb5 xax8 25.xb5 a8 25...d8? 25...b4 26.h4! f4 27.xf4 exf4 28.a1+ ;

26.a5 Black resigned
I’d like to present a couple of endgame examples from the Mikhail Tal Memorial tournament, held September-October in Moscow.

This was won by Ian Nepomniachtchi ahead of Anish Giri, followed by Viswanathan Anand and Levon Aronian. And it is the latter two who are featured here in hard battles from the fifth round, against Boris Gelfand and Vladimir Kramnik respectively.

We begin with Anand against Gelfand, who was desperately out of form but still, of course, fighting for his life. Anand annotated the game immediately afterwards and I’ve respectfully built on his ideas but also added to them considerably.

B31

Viswanathan Anand 2776
Boris Gelfand 2743

Tal Memorial, Moscow 2016

After studying mathematics at Oxford University and earning the GM title in 1980, Jonathan Speelman switched to a professional chess career in which he eventually joined ranks with the top players in the world, reaching #4 in 1989. The three-times British champion participated in two Candidates cycles, reaching the semi-finals in 1989. He also was a member of the English team that won the silver medals in the 1984, 1986 and 1988 Olympiads. Apart from being a very creative and highly original player, Jonathan is also renowned as a chess author, with a special interest in endgames. He has also been involved in coaching, as well as seconding top players; most famously Vishy Anand in the 1995 World Championship match against Garry Kasparov.

White’s idea in this position is to try to get a position with opposite-colored bishops and rook(s) in which the permanent weakness of c5 is the overriding factor. On e3 the bishop will not only menace c5 but also render it extremely difficult for Black to mobilize his kingside majority, culminating in ...f4.

25...hxh4?! Obvious but rather cooperative. Instead 25...exd5! 26.cxd5 exd3 27.xh6 c4 28.bxc4 xc4 29.d6 xa1 30.xa1 e6 31.f4 d3 leaves White a pawn up but with the c5 weakness dissolved and Black’s pieces so active that he seems okay.
26.\texttt{hxh}6 h\texttt{b}7 27.g\texttt{g}3 \texttt{f}6 If 27...\texttt{xd}5, Anand intended 28.g\texttt{x}4 (28.c\texttt{x}5 \texttt{f}6 29.c\texttt{c}4 was vaguely suggested by Anand as “speculative” but engines instantly note that 29...g5! is infinitely stronger than ...\texttt{x}a1) 28...h\texttt{e}6 when he wanted to use the queenside pawns as “a wall against the black bishop.” 29.\texttt{d}d1 \texttt{d}d3 30.\texttt{x}d3 \texttt{exd}3 31.\texttt{g}5 He not unreasonably assessed this as being very favourable, but in fact 31...\texttt{a}5! 32.\texttt{d}d1 a4 33.\texttt{f}4 \texttt{axb}3 34.\texttt{x}b3 \texttt{h}8 keeps matters within bounds.

28.\texttt{xf}6 \texttt{xf}6 29.\texttt{e}3 \texttt{d}d3 30.\texttt{e}1

\textbf{Anand:} “Why did I play \texttt{e}1? Because suddenly I wasn’t sure about 30.\texttt{ac}1 \texttt{h}8 31.\texttt{f}1. It looks winning, but surprisingly after 31...\texttt{xe}3 32.\texttt{f}xe3 (32.\texttt{f}xe3 \texttt{h}1++) 32...\texttt{g}2

30...g5 31.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{xc}3

32.\texttt{ac}1 It’s a really difficult decision whether to exchange a pair of rooks, and Anand wasn’t sure:

“I could have tried 32.\texttt{d}d2 \texttt{d}d3+ 33.\texttt{c}2. The point is that now I am secure on e3, I can go to the h-file. With two rooks he cannot stop me from entering. With one rook it is possible to stop it with ...\texttt{g}6, and that is what he did in the game.33.\texttt{d}c6 34.\texttt{h}1 \texttt{e}8 35.\texttt{h}8 \texttt{cd}8 36.\texttt{f}8+ \texttt{f}7 37.\texttt{x}d8 \texttt{f}d8 38.\texttt{x}c5.”

Now my own first thought was to play 38...\texttt{f}4, but after 39.\texttt{gx}f4 \texttt{gx}f4 40.\texttt{xa}7 must be winning since White can always simply sacrifice the bishop with an even better version than the game. Therefore 38...\texttt{a}6 has to be tried. Then 39.\texttt{xe}3 \texttt{g}6, threatening to come in via h5-\texttt{g}4 to support ...\texttt{f}4, 40.\texttt{h}1 to prevent this.

37.\texttt{xe}3 38.\texttt{xe}3 \texttt{c}8

\textbf{Anand:} “I would most likely lose the f-pawn somewhere along the way, but the advantage for White is that in the meantime if I build up the pawn structure, let’s say a6-c4, then I can just chop the f-pawn.”

39.\texttt{xc}2 \texttt{f}5 40.\texttt{d}d2 \texttt{a}8 41.\texttt{d}4 \texttt{e}6

\textbf{Anand:} “41...\texttt{e}3 is a good sample line to understand this. 42.\texttt{d}3 (I guess I don’t want to play 42.\texttt{b}2, because he use this chance to slide over to the queenside.) 42...\texttt{h}1. He is not threatening to take because of \texttt{b}2, but at the same time I cannot make progress. Then I found 43.\texttt{b}4 \texttt{xa}2 44.\texttt{xa}2 \texttt{xa}2 45.\texttt{d}d3 \texttt{d}1 46.\texttt{d}d4 \texttt{d}6 47.\texttt{b}4 \texttt{d}6 48.\texttt{b}5 \texttt{f}5

37.\texttt{xe}3 38.\texttt{xe}3 \texttt{c}8

\textbf{Anand:} “It would most likely lose the f-pawn somewhere along the way, but the advantage for White is that in the meantime if I build up the pawn structure, let’s say a6-c4, then I can just chop the f-pawn.”

Of course White is much better here but he still has to mobilize the queenside to make the advantage decisive.

32.\texttt{xc}1 33.\texttt{xc}1 \texttt{d}8

\textbf{Anand:} “What I am threatening is \texttt{h}1, and when he stops it with ...\texttt{g}6, I can go \texttt{d}1, and things should break down. There is this alternative: 33...\texttt{g}6 34.\texttt{d}1 \texttt{h}5 35.\texttt{d}7 \texttt{c}6. Before he can play ...\texttt{g}4 and ...\texttt{f}4, I hammer it, 36.\texttt{g}7, so, it is difficult to execute this plan. The rook will loop around all over

A) After 49.f4? he will never be able to stop both pawns. I was gonna double...
pains to avoid unnecessary counterplay. The finish, with the white king walking towards b7, reminded me of a much closer run ending with a rook and rook's pawn v rook in which I blundered against Mark Hebden.

44...f8 Of course not 44...c5??
45.e2 c6 46.exc5.
45...exd4 exd4 46.b3! This is better than 46.exd4 c6 when White must still take care, since Black's rook and knight combine quite well.
46...e6 47.exd4 cxd4+ 48.exd4 e7 48...c2+ 49.e2 e1 attempts to prevent White from controlling the rook with d2. Then 50.e3 e7 51.b5 f6 52.b2 f1 53.a5 f2+ (53...e1?) 54.c2 f1 55.e5 fxe5 56.xe5+ f6 57.f5+ g6 is a bad version for Black in which White has a lot of control) 54.e6 e6 55.b3 a5 56.b4 b2 and this looks okay as after 57.b5 (57.a4 bxa4 58.bxa4 would more or less transpose into the game) 57...a6 58.xa5+! equalizes.
49.d2 e6

The correct move here is 54...a5! 55.d4 (or 55...h6 g7 56.b6 h7) 55...e7 56.b4 d7 with a draw.
Instead I relaxed a move too soon:
54...e7?? 55.a7 a5 56.b6 h6 There is no defence against 57.b7! forcing 57...xa7 58.h8a7.

50.a4 An absolutely critical decision. This looked right to me when I was watching the game live but it seems that 50.a5 f6 51.b4 is more challenging. After 51...c6 52.f5 a sample line goes 52...xc8 53.e5 fxe5 54.bxe5 d5 when:
A) 55.f4! d4 56.fxe5+ 56.fxe5 57.e6 58.f6+ dxe4 59.f6 d5, B) 56...xc4 57.e6 A1) 57...e8 58.c6 c4 59.a5 60.b4 60.axb4 59.a3 a5 (59...a7 60.b3) 60.b5; A2) 57...bxc4 58.a6

In a nasty position, Kramnik was able to bail out to an unpleasant rook ending in which his practical chances of drawing were round about 50%.

...is drawn according to the Lomonosov tablebases: 58...d5! 59.b6 (59.a5
\( \texttt{b6f6} 60.\texttt{axb5 axa8} \) \( 59...\texttt{b8+}1 \) \( 60.\texttt{xc3} \) \( \texttt{b5} \) \( \texttt{c6} \) \( \texttt{xe5} \) and White can’t make progress, notably if \( 62.\texttt{ec5 xc5+} \) \( 63.\texttt{xc5 d5} \) \( 64.\texttt{b4} \) \( \texttt{c6} \) draws immediately;

\( B) \) \( 55.\texttt{g6f6} \) \( 64.\texttt{f6xe4+} \) \( \texttt{xe4} \) \( 57.\texttt{xa6} \) \( \texttt{xb8} \) \( 58.\texttt{xc2 c8+} \) \( 59.\texttt{b3} \) \( \texttt{g8} \) \( 60.\texttt{g5} \) \( \texttt{f3+} \) \( 61.\texttt{c2} \) \( \texttt{d5} \) \( 62.\texttt{g6} \) and White should win here. He can bring his king over the kingside and if Black tries to unlock with his king it will end up too far away from the queenside. \( 62...\texttt{d4} \) \( 63.\texttt{d2 f2+} \) \( 64.\texttt{e1} \) \( \texttt{g2} \) \( 65.\texttt{f1} \) \( \texttt{g5} \) \( 66.\texttt{f2} \) \( \texttt{e4} \) \( 67.\texttt{b6} \) \( \texttt{f4} \) \( 68.\texttt{g7f7} \)! Perhaps you would try to do better in a game but this brings it within the realm of tablebases, which confirm that White is winning. \( 68...\texttt{exg7} \) \( 69.\texttt{axb5} \) and it’s still hard work but, crucially, with the king on \( f4 \), \( 69...\texttt{a7} \) \( 70.\texttt{a5f5} \) is now possible.

\( 50...\texttt{bxa4} \) \( 51.\texttt{xa4} \) \( \texttt{c6} \) \( 52.\texttt{b3 f6} \) \( 53.\texttt{a5 b6} \) It looks at first glance as though White should be able gradually to improve his position but in fact with the b-pawn weak and rather a long way away from the f3 pawn Black is able to hold.

\( 54.\texttt{c3 c6+} \) \( 55.\texttt{b4 b6+} \) \( 56.\texttt{c4 c6+} \) \( 57.\texttt{c5 d6} \) \( 58.\texttt{a5 c6+} \) \( 59.\texttt{b4 d6} \) \( 60.\texttt{d5 b6+} \) \( 61.\texttt{c3 c6+} \) \( 62.\texttt{b2 c8} \) \( 63.\texttt{xa5} \) \( 64.\texttt{e5 fxe5} \) \( 65.\texttt{xg5 f7} \) should hold. Of course White doesn’t need to play this, and really shouldn’t, but other lines should also be defensible.

\( 63...\texttt{c6} \) \( 64.\texttt{b4 d6} \) \( 65.\texttt{c3 c6+} \) \( 66.\texttt{b3 d6} \) \( 67.\texttt{c4 c6+} \) \( 68.\texttt{c5 d6} \) \( 69.\texttt{c3 b6} \) \( 70.\texttt{b3 d6} \)

After considerable manoeuvring, Aronian reconciled himself to a race where Kramnik was able to draw fairly comfortably. \( 71.\texttt{a4} \) \( 71.\texttt{c3 e5} \) \( 72.\texttt{a4 f4} \) \( 73.\texttt{a5 g3+} \).

\( 76.\texttt{b6} \) \( 76.\texttt{c4+} \) \( \texttt{d5!} \) \( 77.\texttt{c3 f5} \) \( 78.\texttt{gxh5} \) \( \texttt{xf5} \) \( 79.\texttt{b6} \) \( \texttt{f8} \) \( 80.\texttt{b5} \) \( 80.\texttt{g3} \) \( 80.\texttt{c6} \) \( 80...\texttt{e5} \) and the king joins up with the passed pawn to force an easy draw.

\( 76...\texttt{f5} \) \( 77.\texttt{c3 a1+} \) \( 78.\texttt{b4} \) \( 78.\texttt{a3} \) \( 79.\texttt{b3 a1+} \) \( 80.\texttt{c5} \) \( 81.\texttt{b4+} \) \( \texttt{c5} \) is also drawn.

\( 78...\texttt{a6} \) \( 79.\texttt{xb5} \) \( \texttt{xb6+} \) \( 80.\texttt{b6} \) \( \texttt{fxg4} \) \( 81.\texttt{c5} \) \( \texttt{f4} \) This would also be drawn without the g5 pawn.

\( 82.\texttt{c4+} \) \( \texttt{f3} \) \( 83.\texttt{c3+} \) \( \texttt{f4} \) Draw
Best Team, Period

Congratulations to the U.S. Olympic team who brought the gold medal back from Baku, Azerbaijan. It was the first gold medal in the Olympics for a U.S. squad since 1976, when the Soviet Union and satellite countries did not participate. The first voyage for the big three — Fabiano Caruana, Hikaru Nakamura, and Wesley So — produced nine match wins and two draws, taking first on tiebreaks over an impressive Ukraine team.

There has been some chatter about the way this team was put together. Some have called it “the best team money can buy.” It is true that Caruana and So had to switch their representation from Italy and the Philippines, respectively. But it is entirely appropriate that both of them represent the United States.

Caruana grew up in Brooklyn, NY. When Fabiano was about eight, Bruce Pandolfini, who was his first coach, invited me to give the boy a chess lesson. I was 90% player and 10% coach at the time, but I agreed to meet at the Marshall Chess Club and work with Fabiano. I remember he was quite stubborn; when we reached a position in analysis that was bad for him, he would keep playing, rather than admit something had gone wrong. But he already had a new coach in Miron Sher, and he was sticking with him. And too many cooks spoil the broth, so that was that.

Since then, Fabiano represented the U.S. in many youth competitions before his parents decided to move to Europe for better chess opportunities. It turned out to be a brilliant move, and representing Italy enabled Caruana to play board one in the Olympiad and compete in the European Championship and other strong events. But he had outgrown that arrangement, and it was time for the young man who doesn’t speak Italian to come home. Wesley So’s parents had already immigrated to Canada when he came to the U.S. for college. He wasn’t going back to the Philippines, so it only made sense for him to switch his federation.

The only rub is the relatively new FIDE condition that member federations must be compensated for the loss of a player to a new federation. And if someone else pays that fee, and perhaps something else, who cares? I certainly don’t.

Of course, it’s nothing new for the U.S. to have immigrants on the national team. All of the teams I played on were “mixed” with a combination of home-grown and Russian born players. As long as a player was genuinely integrated into the culture and community he was a good teammate to me. Guys like Alex Yermolinsky and Gregory Kaidanov were as much a part of the memories as Yaz, Larry, Nicky D. and Fed.

With the big three in place, and with the involvement of the Saint Louis Chess Club, likely to be happy to participate for the foreseeable future, there are only two spots up for grabs on the team. Olympic team selection has been at times controversial. Strange things have happened when subjective criteria were put into play. Currently we use a modified rating formula that gives weight to young players. I only wish that youth was valued as much in 1984 when I was left off the team, but better late than never. Sam Shankland and Ray Robson were the right men for the job. They are already very strong and will only get better.
Shankland has been piling up good results this year. In Baku he notched four winners before suffering his first loss in the final frame (indeed, the entire team only lost three games). Shankland looks like a solid fourth board. Robson played the fewest games (five) sitting out the remainder after an eight round loss to Alexander Grischuk. Robson’s talent has always been obvious; to me the biggest question mark is his clock management — historically, he has frequently been in terrible time pressure. I admit I’m casting from my glass house (I never really solved my time pressure problems), but I have noticed how the most successful players avoid time pressure, especially in this era of faster controls and sudden death.

There will always be speculation about younger players, waiting in the wings to replace “old” players like 25-year-old Shankland and 22-year-old Robson. The current brightest light is Jeffery Xiong, just turning sixteen. Earlier this year he became the youngest clear winner in World Junior history. The tournament was missing a lot of the stronger European players, but Xiong completely dominated.

Who wants to be a Millionaire?
Jeffery (yes he uses that rather unusual spelling) was in action at the recent Millionaire Open. While he didn’t take the top prize, he did provide some nice aesthetics in the sixth round. In my youth I was impressed by Larry Evans’ “Knight’s Tour” brilliancy:

Larry Evans – Haakon Opsahl
Dubrovnik (ol) 1950

41...ec5+ ef6 42...ed7+ ef6 44...eh7+ ef7 45...eg5+ ed6 46...b7 ef7 47...e6 ef8+ ef7 49...xg6

And White went on to win in the endgame. Now check out Jeffery Xiong’s “Bishop’s Tour.”

Jeffery Xiong 2647 –
Kaiqi Yang 2392
Millionaire Chess Open 2016

White can maintain a sizable advantage with several continuations, but Xiong finds a pretty way to win.

28...a5 eb2 29...c7 e4 30...d8 ef8 31...a5 eb8 32...c7 eb4 33...a3
Breaking the streak of seven bishop moves in a row, but that piece will be back shortly to scoop up two pawns.
33...d2 34...xb2 xb2 35...xd6 ef6 36...c5 ed4 37...xa7 ef8 38...c5 xe2 39...xe2 xe2+ 40...g2
41...b6 exa3 42...c6 ef3 43...d7 ed6 44...a1 d4 45...a7 1-0

Xiong’s tournament came crashing down when he blundered a rook in an equal position.

Emilio Cordova 2637 –
Jeffery Xiong 2647
Millionaire Chess Open TBI 2016

20...e4 21...xc8 1-0
Blunders like that should not happen, but they are certainly more likely in rapid chess.

The Millionaire Open utilizes an experimental format that was used in the 2010 U.S. Championship and recently proposed by Greg Shahade for the Olympiad. The first seven rounds were played by Swiss system, but at that point the top four finishers were to be whipsawed off to play semi-final and final matches, while the rest of the field continued on for the last two rounds of the Swiss. The advantage of the format is that the winner will defeat the second-place finished in a head-to-head contest. There is a disadvantage in that rapid, blitz, or the dreaded Armageddon game may be needed to produce a champion. Since so many open tournaments end in ties, the likelihood of needing playoffs to produce a sole winner is pretty high anyway. It’s a good system when you want one player to take home the winner’s check.

I do however, have the feeling that the atmosphere for the players in the last two rounds of the Swiss would be a little grim. I remember in the U.S. Championship feeling very strangely in the last two rounds. Here GMs were battling each other for what promised to be a small payout, with the first four prizes off the table.

This year five players tied for the last three places and had to contest a rapid playoff after the seventh round on Sunday. The Monday field was set only after a five-man round-robin, and an additional playoff when Swiercz and Mamedov were still tied for the final spot.

Gawain Jones was able to rest up Sunday evening, so tiredness may not be an excuse for his shock loss in the first game of the final. The Caissa gods can indeed be capricious. Jones earned the top seed when Adhiban pressed for ages in a drawn position, eventually falling to even hold it. On the cusp of taking the lead in the final match, Jones became the victim of a remarkable turnaround. [See annotations on Page 135 – Ed] Swiercz won the second playoff game as well to take first prize, while Zhou Jianchao defeated Emilio Cordova to take third prize. It was the third year in a row a Chinese player took third place, and the first year an American did not take the top prize.
Millions Lost
On September 18, Grandmaster Maurice Ashley released this statement on Facebook:
“As it’s looking more and more as though Millionaire Chess 3 will be the last one, I want to deeply thank my partner Amy Lee for being such an amazing blessing to chess. To have such a rock of support is more than I could have asked for.”
We also take this opportunity to thank all the MC fans, players and everyone else who have supported Millionaire Chess and continue to support us. It means a great deal to us. You guys rock!
LET’S DO IT ONE MORE TIME at MC3, Harrah’s Resort Atlantic City, October 6 to 10, 2016.

I don’t know if there has been any official word since then, but after a disappointing turnout, it looks like there won’t be #4. The tournament attracted a lot of attention since Ashley and entrepreneur Amy Lee announced the first event held in 2014. Millionaire had its share of detractors; chessplayers can be quite cynical after all, and it is a fair point to mention that nobody became a millionaire from winning the tournament. The first prize, at its height, was $100,000, which is still quite a bit higher than any other open tournament in the U.S. But any American tournament with large prizes has to be considered a positive development, and its failure is a sad turn that makes us contemplate why the many supporters did not turn into a sufficient number of players to keep the Millionaire Open going.

Held for the first two years in Las Vegas and this year in Atlantic City, Millionaire brought a “poker” mentality to it. For the $100,000 first prize (with smaller but still large prizes for the class sections), players had to lay out a hefty $1,000 entry fee. Although the organizers expected an initial loss and subsidized it, the tournament was run on the “Goichberg” model, where entry fees are expected to cover costs and turn a profit. Running chess tournaments is not a lucrative business, and only Bill Goichberg has been able to make it work, mostly due to the success of his flagship tournament, the World Open.

Others have tried of course, and for the most part failed. Maurice Ashley had a track record of organizing big events, but it didn’t necessarily work in his favor. In 2005 Ashley teamed up with the HB Global company for a big open tournament in Minneapolis. The HB Global Open presented a $500,000 prize fund with $50,000 to the winner. As a more active player back then (no kids yet, had just moved into my house with my bride), I participated and liked what I saw. There was a higher than usual entry fee in the open section, but grandmasters could have the fee waved by performing a tournament service, usually by giving a chess lesson to someone from the lower sections. It was a good deal all around; the GMs felt wanted, and the ordinary players got a special experience.

While HB Global paid out the prizes without a hitch (often a concern for players with new tournament organizers), they did not sponsor a second edition. Apparently HB Global was convinced that because their tournament was superior to the World Open (and arguably, it was) it would outdraw the World Open by a substantial margin. It was a lot to expect from a first time event in a less ideal location than Philadelphia, central to the enormous chess community in the Northeast. We don’t know exactly what factors went into the corporate decision. The tournament went beautifully except for a substantial net loss. Effectively it was the Goichberg model, with the bottom line determining the tournament’s existence.

Poker is by nature a gambling game. Poker players shell out large sums of money to play in tournaments with much larger prizes. It’s what they do. There is a lot of overlap in the two games — many chessplayers are avid poker players — but not all chessplayers have that poker mentality. They don’t handle that kind of risk in chess, or their usual business (if they are amateurs), so it may not be an easy attitude to adopt.

Grandmasters are used to doing a lot of calculations, but would they calculate in Millionaire’s favor? Every grandmaster had a reasonable expectation of at least earning back their entry fee, and perhaps all their expenses, if they had an ordinary but not winning (or top four) finish. But there is an additional factor. Grandmasters are not used to entry fees. Outside of the US grandmasters never pay entry fees, and occasionally get some level of conditions, be it appearance fees for top drawer GMs or free hotel rooms for lesser ones. In the U.S., grandmasters get free entry to many events (USCF nationals like the U.S. Open and various independent tournaments). Even in the World Open, grandmasters only have an entry fee deducted if they win a larger prize. [Goichberg eventually figured out he should offer lots of small prizes to be able to collect as many grandmaster entry fees as possible] In the World Open grandmasters have to fend for their own travel and accommodation. There are of course ways to economize there, but I should point out that a large number of the grandmasters, despite being professional players, are students subsidized by their college programs.

World class players can play for big money without the indignity of having to pay for the privilege, so it wasn’t a big surprise that few of them came. Thankfully Wesley So, just on the cusp of breaking out into a full-time playing career, and Nakamura, long comfortable in the American open tournament milieu, lent a degree of prestige to Millionaire I and II. Although I am well past being a top 100 player, I still hate the idea of paying an entry fee. I would like to think my presence in the tournament is
worth something to the prestige of the event. I was a little tempted to jump into Millionaire III, with lower expenses and less travel, but I don’t feel in very good shape for such a high intensity grind. And why did Maurice have to make the tournament clash with my son’s birthday?

Grandmaster turnout may have some effect on the decision of other players to enter, but of course no tournament, not even the World Open, makes their money from grandmaster fees. Despite large prizes for several rating sections, the class players did not turn out for Millionaire in sufficient numbers. The break-even point was around 1000 players. Millionaire I and II drew 560 and 643 players, respectively. The stripped down Millionaire III, with a $500,000 prize fund based on 600 entries, drew only 400. The $306,000 in prizes given out still exceeded the World Open prize fund of $225,000. The 2016 World Open, however, drew 1226 entrants.

Why didn’t people come? I think Millionaire Chess erred during the announcement of the first tournament (December 2013) when they set a proviso that the tournament could be cancelled if a certain number of entries were not received by March 31, 2014. It seems to me that the best way to torpedo your advanced entries would be to tell people that the tournament might not actually occur! Reportedly only about 70 players entered in the first four months. In April 2014, Lee and Ashley announced the tournament would indeed go on as planned, with the prize fund fully guaranteed. Some level of confidence in the tournament was established, with most of the entries coming close to the October start of the tournament.

Even so, Millionaire II could have been expected to do better. And the backtracking (change of site, smaller scale) in Millionaire III suggested the handwriting was on the wall. One might hope that players would see it as a last chance to participate, but the numbers dipped again. I don’t think Las Vegas as a site can be faulted; the National Open has drawn well in that city. Perhaps the early October time slot didn’t help, but of course it is not easy to find a good weekend that does not clash with another major tournament (the Isle of Man Masters conflicted, and actually drew the American big three there). Perhaps American chessplayers are only prepared
to invest so much in a tournament. The gamblers, those who turn out for the World Open every year and even re-enter to chase the big prizes, probably came out, but not enough average players. Maybe chess tournaments for profit are just not the way to go, and we won’t have another mainstream big open tournament without finding good corporate sponsors along the lines of the European model.

**FIDE’s Tehr-ible Decision**

FIDE got more than they bargained for when they awarded the next Women’s World Championship to Tehran, Iran. The U.S. Women’s Champion Nazi (pronounced nah-zee) Paikidze-Barnes immediately publicly announced her objection and intention to boycott the event. Her objections are based on the special rules for women imposed by the strict Muslim country, which include mandatory wearing of headscarves and restrictions on being alone in a room with male coaches (unless they are married to them). Nazi’s bold move not only made the rounds of social media but attracted some attention in the mainstream press.

The reaction has been a mixed bag, with some players and pundits suggesting that enforcement will not be as strict, some suggesting players should go and test the system (not a great idea – the risks are too great). I strongly support Paikidze-Barnes’s stance and actions. FIDE should not award events to places that make the players feel uncomfortable about attending. Though not many people are talking about this aspect, Israelis and lesbians would have to sit this one out.

I’ve put my money where my mouth is before; I boycotted the 1986 Olympiad in Dubai and the 2004 World Championship in Libya. I know from experience that people who are shocked at FIDE’s decision are not familiar with its history. It’s an organization run by people who are looking to profit from it. They don’t care about players, and the players have never managed to develop any real power. There are, of course, well-meaning representatives, but they are overmatched.

I read that no FIDE delegates protested the Iran decision. Not even Israel? But then again, they were fine with Dubai 1986. I was invited to a protest tournament in Jerusalem for players whose teams were boycotting or were personally boycotting the Olympiad. The Israeli Federation sent me a letter urging me to support the Olympiad and not play in Jerusalem. (I went anyway)

So here are a few things our ladies should understand:

1) Those players who are not boycotting, but asking for exemptions at the tournament, forget it. FIDE may pay lip service to you, like the phony alternate site in Malta that was surely never seriously considered in 2004. They will not move the tournament even if another perfectly good bid showed up tomorrow.

2) Those who are boycotting, don’t expect many to join you. Chessplayers are rarely bold enough to take a risk to stand up for what they believe in. Follow your conscience, do the right thing, but expect you will have to sacrifice in the end.

Perhaps there is more hope in this era of social media, but I fear Paikidze-Barnes’ stand will not be rewarded. I think we must salute Nazi (who I have never met but seems really nice), have a celebration for her, some kind of Nazi party. Wait, that didn’t come out right...
FRESH LEAVES from the BOOKSHELF

While the aim of this column is to look at the some of the most interesting recent publications, far more books are being published than there is room for in this column, therefore the following list is an overview of some of the more noteworthy recent releases. The books are not selected because they are the best, but rather for their noteworthy attributes. By FM Carsten Hansen

Carsten Hansen is a FIDE Master and chess enthusiast residing in Bayonne, New Jersey. He has written twelve books, mostly on openings, the most recent The Sicilian Dragon – move by move (Everyman Chess 2016). From 2000 to 2014, he wrote the book review column, Checkpoint at ChessCafe.com. You can find his blog on all areas of chess at carstenchess.com.

10 NOTEWORTHY BOOKS

1. Positional Decision Making in Chess by Boris Gelfand assisted by Jacob Aagaard (Quality Chess 2016) – (review below)
2. Maneuvering – The Art of Piece Play by Mark Dvoretsky (Russell Enterprises 2016) – (review below)
3. Chess Informant 128 Far Cry by CI Editorial Team (Chess Informant 2016) – (review below)
4. New In Chess Yearbook volume 118 by NIC Editorial Team (New In Chess 2016)
5. The Power of Pawns by Joerg Hick (New in Chess 2016)
6. Tal move by move by Cyrus Lakdawala (Everyman Chess 2015)
7. The Big Book of World Chess Championships by Andre Schulz (New In Chess 2016)
8. Revision and Exam 1 – The Fundamentals by Artur Yusupov (Quality Chess 2016)
9. A Simple Chess Opening Repertoire for White by Sam Collins (Gambit Publications 2016)
10. Attacking Chess for Club Players – Improve Your Skills to Overpower Your Opponents by Herman Grooten (New In Chess 2016)

Of course the rating of a chess book is completely subjective, but I have tried to measure each book on how it delivers on its promise to its intended audience.
Positional Decision Making in Chess
by Boris Gelfand, assisted by Jacob Aagaard
(Quality Chess 2016), paperback, 284 pages

Books on positional chess are near and dear to my heart. Having written a book myself on the subject, I'm always curious to see which examples another author has used to explain concepts and how the thinking behind the positional decision making is presented. Therefore, it was with great anticipation I ordered this book.

Who are the authors? Well, Grandmaster Boris Gelfand hardly needs an introduction. He has been an elite grandmaster since the late 1980s, beaten just about anybody worth mentioning and narrowly lost the 2012 World Championship match in the play-off. He is in other words incredibly accomplished. As far as I know he has only written one other book, on his most memorable games (Olms 2005). His co-author or ghost writer, if you like, is Grandmaster Jacob Aagaard, who is without a doubt one of the finest authors around. His Grandmaster Preparation series is nothing short of excellent and the same can easily be said about Attacking Manual 1 + 2 and Practical Chess Defence, all of which have also been published by Quality Chess, of which Aagaard is one of the founders. An impressive duo.


Naturally there is a focus on the author's own games and this is quite important, because it gives the book an entirely different feel that any other book I have ever picked up on the topic of positional chess. Gelfand delivers a personal narrative to each of the games, his thinking behind the decisions he made, how long he spent on the moves and in some cases what was discussed with opponent after the game. That makes this book special. It is not unusual that Gelfand ponders a particular position with a quarter page worth of text regarding important factors in its evaluation and what should be considered before proceeding.

Maneuvering – The Art of Piece Play
by Mark Dvoretsky
(Russell Enterprises 2016), paperback, 215 pages

Writing a review of Mark Dvoretsky's last book to be published while he was alive leaves me both nostalgic and incredibly sad. When I was lot younger I remember visiting my good friend Grandmaster Peter Heine Nielsen's tiny apartment where he had the old Batsford editions of Dvoretsky’s books lying around in the most random places. Not particularly appreciating the books back then, I didn’t pay them much heed. However, Peter was among the first generation of westerners to get a glimpse into what solid training methods they were working with in Russia. I only really came in contact with his works some years later when a student of mine gave me his copy of Training for the Tournament Player because it was way over his head.

While the examples are complex and the course of the games not without errors, the annotations make it possible for a relatively broad audience to follow the flow and grasp a better understanding for the subject at hand.

I will not provide any examples from this book, but I will assure you that if you are interested in improving the positional aspect of your game, then you will not regret studying the material in this book, it is some of the finest writing I have seen on this subject.

Reading that book opened a whole new world to me, it was as if the pieces started moving differently, that they had secret powers and strengths that I had previously been unaware of. That, I’m sure, was a feeling I’m sharing with many of his students. Coach, may you rest in peace, you will be forever in our minds.

Moving on the book that is the subject of this review, I will start with a word of warning: this is not a book for the average club player who wants to get better at chess. It may seem almost cliché to throw such a statement on the table, but nevertheless it is true. It will quickly
become an unsettling experience that you will not be able to solve any of the puzzles, and the feeling of never having a chance of mastering chess will settle over you like a dark raincloud.

Of course setting up the positions on a board and then studying the solutions afterwards will enhance your understanding somewhat, but there are many books that are worth reading before you should pick up this fine little volume. An increase in your understanding should come in measured increments not in gigantic leaps across large territory.

That being said, this is a phenomenal book, even if the exercises are often frighteningly difficult. I suppose most readers are aware of Dvoretsky’s reputation as the world’s leading chess trainer, having worked with a long list of leading grandmasters over the course of four decades. The majority of the exercises in this book originate in Dvoretsky’s famous card index. For a position to be included means that it has been put through extensive examination to ensure that Dvoretsky has reached a verdict on what works and what should not work in that particular exercise.

The next example is quite frightening for the uninitiated:

23.\texttt{f2}!!

The explanation goes as follows: “White prepares his knight’s retreat to e2 with a subsequent rook invasion on c7. If necessary, the king will find shelter on g3, where it is going to be more secure than on the first rank. On the other hand, after exchanges, Black’s position becomes worse, as in the endgame the approach of the king to the center will make itself felt.”

If the move and its explanation seems like something you will possibly find and understand, this book could be for you.

The book is meant for self-training and is presented by an initial set of diagrams under a particular topic and then a chapter with the annotated solutions. The only thing I don’t understand is why the author found it necessary to have the names of the players and the location of the game when presenting the exercise. From my point of view, recognizing these will in some cases aid the solution of the exercise because I know the game. Having a position without this added information will more closely resemble what you will encounter in a game.

I mentioned earlier that this book most certainly isn’t for everybody, but for somewhat advanced, serious players, it is an excellent tool to enhance your understanding on the subject at hand.

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**Maneuvering**
The Art of Piece Play

**Ponomariov-Svidler**
Soča 2005

This looks like a pretty average position, but before moving on, consider what you would play as White here.

My first thought went in the direction of 23.h4, intending to meet 23...h5 with a Short-Timman-like king-walk via h2-g3-f4-g5 to h6. The problem is that Black simply plays 23...b4, and equalizes.

Dvoretsky tells us that White has nothing or close to nothing and also informs us that 23...d5 doesn’t work on account of 23...exd5.

So what did Ponomariov play?
Over the last few years Chess Informant has gone through a radical change. Each cover has a different theme, which is not terribly important, but it does give every Informant its own distinctive appearance. Compared to the older volumes where the only difference was the color, it makes a nice change. The current volume is called “Far Cry” why is quite appropriate because the recent volumes are a far cry from your dad’s volumes.

So what is so different? The older volumes were in essence game collections, the games mostly annotated by the players themselves and these were often the best players in the world. Of course this was great, but the wordless annotations are not to everybody’s taste and the lack of other frills limited the audience they appealed to. The recent volumes are a LOT different... The familiar

Best Game of the Preceding Volume, The Most Important Theoretical Novelty, Games Section, Endgame, Combination, and Tournament results are still there, but the games section is a lot less prominent than it once was. There are 200 games in this volume and many, if not most, are annotated by someone other than the players who played them. So then why even bother with this book, you may reasonably ask. Well, funny you should ask, ahead of the game section is an almost magazine-style block of columns, 175 pages, covering all sorts of subjects by a talented bunch of writers.

The column section in this volume opens with a massive article by Grandmaster and 2016 European Champion Ernesto Inarkiev on the World Champion Challenger Sergey Karjakin.

The other contributors are Grandmasters Aleksandar Colovic (on Opening Duels at the Candidates), Sarunas Sulskis (on the 2016 European Championship), Michael Adams (on d2-d3 in the Ruy Lopez), Mauricio Flores Rios (on the 2016 US Championship), Surya Ganguly (on his win in Bangkok Open), Ivan Sokolov (on the 2016 Dubai Open), Ketevan Arakhamia-Grant (on the Women’s World Championship match), Evgeny Najer & Sergey Rublevsky (on the Russian Team Championship), Mihail Marin (on sacrifices in the Sicilian Scheveningen) and finally Karsten Mueller (on zugzwang in the endgame).

There is an incredible amount of interesting material that matches and exceeds anything of the best you will find in any chess magazine. Incidentally, in these columns, however, is my only point of criticism: the formatting of the game annotations. From the use of brackets in particular, it is quite obvious that the games were copied and pasted from ChessBase, and that format is not the best look. It is something that is easily remedied, and ultimately that’s probably why it bothers me even more.

There are many fascinating moments in these columns. The surprising element of the following example is probably what attracted me most to it:

31... \text{Qf7!}

Sulskis writes: “In the heat of battle, Inarkiev displays his best colors. Even the king enters the combat zone, immobilizing the enemy pawn on f6 while defending the f7 square. From now on the deadly ...\text{Qg4} is in the air.”

32. \text{Qe4} \text{h6!} 33. \text{Qh4} \text{xe4} 34. \text{xe4} \text{Qg4+} 35. \text{Qg4} \text{Qxg4+} 36. \text{d5+} \text{xf6} 37. \text{Qxg6+} \text{Qxg5}, and White resigned.

I’m a long-time fan of Chess Informant, but my faith was tested some years back when the quality seemed to be fading. That is certainly no longer the case. While certain sections, particularly the game section, using languageless annotations will mostly appeal to the serious players, there is a variety of material that will satisfy chess players at almost any level.
THE FUTURE IS HERE

Latest developments by ChessBase and Chess24 in the field of web chess databases suggest the direction away from stand-alone applications running on personal computers and towards the development of comprehensive online environments for chess. Imagine apps and data that are always working well, always up-to-date, and always available. By Jon Edwards

Jon Edwards is an ICCF Senior International Master living in Pennington, NJ. He won the 10th US Championship and is now competing in the World Correspondence Candidates. He has written more than 40 chess books, notably the Chess Analyst (1999), Sacking the Citadel (2010), and ChessBase Complete (2014). He is regular columnist for Chess Life for Kids. His website, Chess is Fun, provides free chess instruction.

Welcome to Chess Tech. Like so many of you, I love new chess technologies for their positive disruption. If your chess is already at a very high level, the tools here may be gloriously helpful; at the very least you will see what your opponents are doing! If you are an aspiring club player, new software is likely to help you to improve faster than any other alternative.

Many of you already know me as the author of ChessBase Complete, a book that explored how best to take advantage of ChessBase version 12. So typical for me, version 13 came out just weeks after my book hit the market. In future columns, I will explore the range of interesting possibilities within version 13, notably their remarkable integration of cloud computing.

For this first column, I want to explore ChessBase’s new commitment to the web. Their efforts there closely mirror those at Chess24 [www.chess24.com], whose features will be reviewed in an upcoming column. These web developments suggest the direction for the future, away from stand-alone chess applications running on personal computers and towards the development of comprehensive online environments for chess. Imagine applications and data that are always working well, always up-to-date, and always available from any device, large or small. That future is here.

Many players find chess technology daunting because there is a large learning curve and perhaps also a substantial cost. In this first column, I want to show you how to take advantage of some cool technology at little or no cost. This is not about technology for technology’s sake. Perhaps the most important way
to improve is to play through grandmaster games. Masters have played through thousands. Club players rarely look at them. If indeed, playing through master games is the fastest key to self-improvement, where you find them and how do you review them as efficiently as possible? I assume only that you have a computer or a tablet or smart phone. Start by going to [www.chessbase.com](http://www.chessbase.com) and in the tabs near the top of the screen, select database.

Getting an account and logging in is optional. Accounts are free and easy to set up if you don’t already have one. For experienced ChessBase users, your PlayChess account is your log in.

So what are we actually looking at here? On the left is a list of recent games in the Online Database including results from recent GM events. The game I have selected, Carlsen-Giri in Bilbao Masters 2016, appears in the central game window. We can easily play through such games by using the arrow keys on our keyboard. I have settled on a position before White’s 10th move. The web site provides an up-to-date look at LiveBook, almost certainly now the largest opening book in the world, an accumulation of computer runs and users’ moves made within ChessBase. I have added an engine simply by clicking on the engine tab at the top of the screen. Previous web implementations provided Let’s Check, a summary of engine evaluations for the board position, but that feature was not present as I prepared this article.

They have added a capability called “search board” which provides a list of games that have reached the current board position.

By itself, this “Live Database” provides a useful learning environment, an opportunity quite easily to play through recent games even from an Android tablet or on your smart phone. But there is so much more here. Click on the More apps tab and you will see the following menu.

**PLAY AND WATCH**

It takes you to a web version of PlayChess where you can play casual games, play in tournaments, or to watch live chess. If you enjoy what they have here, check out their link here to the full-featured Windows version of PlayChess.
THE “TACTICS TRAINER”
The interface is pleasant and self-explanatory. Unlike so many tactics trainers, there's no running clock. Find the solution and your tactics rating grows a bit. Get it wrong and watch your rating drop precipitously. Thus, you have an incentive to double- and triple-check your work. Pretty good advice there. My “rating” there shows that I’ve solved a few puzzles. I’m now off and running. The site offers a Rating List, encouragement for young learners, and for those so inclined, a competitive experience that permits you to compete against other solvers.

TRAINING VIDEOS
For Premium members of PlayChess, a full collection of videos is available here from Daniel King, Simon Williams, Karsten Mueller, Lubomir Ftacnik, Mihail Marin, and many others. I appreciate having the material so well organized in a single location. I have always found access to the videos through the PlayChess interface to be poorly organized. I find myself using this site often enough to justify my Premium membership.

OPENING TRAINING
This web module permits you individually to establish, save, and then drill on your opening repertoire. The web app provides access to LiveBook, so that you can click your way through until you reach your main variations, which you then load into your White or Black repertoire. As you enter in your main variations, perhaps in great depth, your moves will be highlighted in blue within LiveBook. You can then Drill White or Drill Black to practice your repertoire.

The present online environment is not as pleasant as ChessBase itself, but it's absolute heaven if you happen to be traveling with only your tablet.

Not all of this is good news. I logged in and everything worked well with this online environment using my laptop computer and my Android tablet, but I could not successfully log in to the My Games web site from my dated iPad 2 or with my iPhone v4.

The web site is clearly a work in progress, but it is a wonderful step forward, a promising marriage of cloud and mobile computing. There are issues with the current implementation, but improvements are coming daily, and ChessBase is certainly to be congratulated for moving in this direction.
“It’s not the size that counts, but how you use it!” — a phrase used in reference to many, unspeakable, things, but I’m perhaps the first one to use it in regards to a website or domain name? Let’s hope so!

Chess.com is the “Cars.com” of the chess world, so by all accounts, we should be big and we should be doing good things for chess. And don’t get me wrong, we are! Weighing in currently in the top 1500 global websites on Alexa.com (includes things like Facebook, Google, etc), we’re operating daily with more than 15 million registered accounts, 4.7 million “active members” (defined as logging in at least every few months), a large number of premium subscribers thrilled by the opportunities they are given to learn and enjoy chess, a massive following on social media, and more than 1 million games played every day.

I ask that you please forgive me for listing these seemingly “boastful numbers” and give me the benefit of the doubt that, at least for the purposes of writing this column, I’m just a chess enthusiast like yourself who is happy that so many people want to play our game! For our lovely magazine here, I’m an International Master, and former professional chess coach/player first, Chess.com businessman second, and those figures are shared simply to tell us that chess is doing well. It goes without saying that my site is not the only great place to play and learn chess.

But what exactly is it that Chess.com and its nearly 60 salaried employees do with their lives? How are we helping to lead the industry to greater heights? Where are we going next and, most importantly, what exactly are we doing for the chess world and you, the chess fan? You might also ask “Why in the world did this physical magazine ask Rensch to write this article?” and that too would be a fair question!

So before I get into more about my company, I’ll take a guess at answering the last one and allow myself the right to speak on behalf of this magazine’s editor and founder: Whether anyone likes it or not, Rapid and Blitz, and the most convenient way to play a few of those games, is the future of chess. Classical chess is never going to be replaced (so put your swords down, people), but the truth is that fast, online chess is more relatable to the masses, it’s something that can be packaged and “sold” to online advertisers (where, the last time anyone checked, companies like Facebook and Google are doing pretty well), and chess, unlike other “game simulations” online, is the same on the web as it is over the board. Meaning you can play Madden 2017 at home on your Xbox, but guess what, you’re not Peyton Manning. Sorry to break the news to you...

So the fact that our game is, well, the same game online as it is over the board, makes it much easier to settle in and enjoy it from the comfort of your own home without feeling “icky” about yourself. You’re not playing a different game even if you do travel to a tournament. Combine that with the fact that online chess companies (like ours) are doing more and more to pour real money into the game (see our Grandmaster Blitz Battles where a $50k – okay, that’s not World Championship kind of money, but it only asks a few hours of Magnus’s time – attracted the likes of Carlsen, Nakamura, Grischuk, Maxime Vachier-Lagrange, Aronian and others) and the writing is on the wall (or the website).

The big picture? Our game is not going backwards. It’s evolving. The age of information and technology is here to stay. Online chess is amazingly easy, fun and entertaining, and Chess.com, at least I’d like to think so, is doing its part in making the game available to even more people around the world.

So anyway, when Josip asked me if I’d be interested in writing a regular column that speaks for the web as an “update” on the happenings of online chess and the world’s largest chess community, I figured it was a topic people might be interested in and agreed despite the fact that I see no available time on my schedule — But before we can really dive into the nuts and bolts of the online chess world, we both agree that it made sense for my first contribution to be one that
explains a little bit about who we are and hopefully, along the
way, answer some of the questions I posed above.

Back to the point: What’s the deal with Chess.com?
Though our product/website is far from perfect – believe me,
I don’t think a single person on the planet, besides perhaps
our CEO Erik, could list more flaws and shortcomings of
our current service – we do have reasons for all 60 of those
salaries, we are working hard, and we do have big goals to
improve the global cultural, social and financial status of the
game of kings and everyones involved with it.

We will not stop until we’ve helped to get chess into
more homes, more schools, more offices (help more people
play blitz secretly while their boss isn’t looking), get more
eyeballs/viewers and implant chess in more consciousnesses
than the game has ever been in before.

Chess.com the business is really 5 Departments:

Development
The first thing I can say is that like most software companies, our
developers (the people who write the code that makes the internet
work for us non-techie types) spend most of their working hours
sharing cat GIFs in Slack, posting the most awkward memes,
getting yelled at by our CTO to focus, and every once a while,
fixing a bug that’s been ticketed for 2 months.

Just kidding! Our full team of almost 30 developers –
which along with other members of the team I will mention
here can be seen at chess.com/about – have been working on
the following for the last few years:
• Internationalizing (18m as we say) the site into more than 30
different languages (that’s just the User Interface or UI)
• Building tools for internationalizing the content (so
that soon news, videos, articles, etc will be available in
numerous languages)
• Redesigning/Rewriting our PHP code platform from Qcodo
to Symphony 2 (that’s lots of tech words for something
that basically amounts to remodeling a 747 Plane while it
remains in flight)
• Building a whole host of new features to make learning
and playing chess better! Just this year we’ve launched,
including but not limited to, real-time engine analysis
with instant saving and “self-annotating” capabilities
(ChessBase like tools), learning features that improve
calculation and visualization, completely rebuilding and also
Internationalizing a site that won’t be “unknown” for much
longer in ChessKid.com, launching live play for Bughouse,
Crazyhouse, other Chess Variants and much, much more.
Our “dev team” is the backbone of body that is Chess.com.
They hold it all together and make all our “crazy ideas”
come to life. They are the reason so many people enjoy chess
around the world on Chess.com.

Product and Design:
This group of people (about 5-7 team members total), led
by our CEO Erik (who’s really just a Lego building kid at
heart) and our Head Designer Dallin, with a few contributions
here and there from people like me, spend most of their time
coming up with crazy ideas to keep the developers busy
writing code! Among other things, in a given week they might:
• Design the look and functionality of some new features or
learning tools
• Spec and confirm bugs or improvements requested by

Chess.Com 2016 Meetup in Fort Lauderdale, Florida
members on existing features

• Work on ways to optimize the user experience to get to what our analytics and tracking tells us are the things people want most
• Prioritize the “roadmap” of requests and long waiting list for crazy ideas we’ve been wanting to try for years
• And write about 1000 emails

Product is the hands, arms (and maybe legs?) of the body that is Chess.com. They shape and mold the look, feel and direction of the site.

**Content and Marketing:**

This group of people consists of probably the most recognizable (to the regular user) names in our company. It includes video and live broadcast hosts like yours truly and GM Robert Hess, journalist like Peter Doggers (formerly of ChessVibes.com) and Mike Klein, Pete Cilento (our Senior Editor and regular article author) and even though none of our more than 150 contributors are considered in my “60 salaried employees”, all the many titled players and non-titled who have ever written an article, recorded a video, hosted a show or done anything for our members to learn from on our site, have contributed “content” and are managed by this group of people in one way or another. In a given week this team will:

• Record Videos
• Write News and Articles
• Create Lesson and Study Plans for our members to follow
• Edit and Manage a bunch of other people doing those same things
• Organize and manage our big events (GM Blitz Battles, Simuls, ChessTV Show schedules, the PRO Chess League, etc)
• And much, much more!

Content is the face of the body that is Chess.com. We are the first thing people see when they come to the site, we are the regular things that “speak for the Chess.com brand”, and we are in charge of managing how all written and visual works go out into the world on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and other places around the web (basically, we are creating, editing and socializing the chess world on a daily basis).

**Customer Support and Member Experience:**

Truly, these team members (about 10) are the underappreciated heroes of Chess.com. Really, this is true about any company (especially online business – where, with anonymity, humanity often proves to be that much more ruthless, rude, confrontational and complains about, well, everything). Also included here is our small group (3 employees) of Statistical Analysis and Cheat Detection experts. In any given week they might answer more than 2000 “tickets” that range from topics including but not limited to:

• Another member being rude;
• A bug a member found;
• New feature requests;
• Billing issues;
• Closing accounts for Fair Play violations (cheating)
• And much, much more.

Support is the heart and soul (I often call them the Pawn Structure) of the body that is Chess.com. They are dealing with the everyday issues and at the center of what the members feel, think, love, hate, talk about, don’t talk about, and do on a daily basis.

**Management:**

This small group of people that luckily enough includes myself, our CEO Erik, CTO Jay, VP of Operations Brenan, and a few other “equity holders” that likely wish to remain nameless (though they do contribute) are just working hard to do all the stuff that nobody cares about – Balance budgets, set bigger picture goals, look for worthy partnerships, assess areas that could use more attention and would deliver a good ROI (Return On Investment), etc, etc, etc.

Basically the silly stuff that always seems important to us when we discuss it, but in hindsight, teach us all that meetings are just time spent not doing what you talk about doing in meetings – Though I’d say it’s all silly besides the important HR (Human Relations) decisions made. Like adding health and dental benefits (which we provide!) and other cool things we can do for our employees, including but hopefully not limited to organizing our annual Chess.com Meetup (see picture of the team this year, all brought into Ft. Lauderdale, Florida in September 2016).

Management, I guess you could say, is the brain of the body that is Chess.com. Though as they say, “credit and blame smell the same”, so as awesome as it’s been to be a part of the chess market growing globally, with that growth, the weight of all our decisions (what to build and not to build, invest in or not invest in, etc) increases too. We’ve made some big mistakes in our time, and we’ve made some good decisions, but the game continues... and leads to fun, headaches and longer, non-important meetings!

And that my dear readers, is the behind the scenes of what keeps all those found at chess.com/about busy. Hoping to see you around on Chess.com
The PRO (Professional Rapid Online) Chess League is an exciting new league that pits cities from all over the world against each other on the Internet, via Chess.Com.

Nowadays not many sports can take such big benefit out of the Internet like our noble game can. Putting together distant cities all over the world and bringing the attraction to thousands of spectators seems like a huge challenge, but significant prize money — $20,000 for the winner and $10,000 for the runner-up may prove to be the winning approach of this “Chess NBA” attempt. The event is scheduled to start on January 11, 2017 and a single round will be played on every 7th day for ten consecutive weeks before entering the semi-finals on March 22. Eventually, the finals will be played on March 26. In order to prevent a randomly created “all-star” team, the rules are set for a team’s average rating below 2500 FIDE and three of four team members should be based locally. Wishing to learn more about this interesting project, we asked League Commissioner IM Greg Shahade:

What is the PRO Chess League?

The PRO Chess League is an exciting new league that pits cities from all over the world against each other on the Internet, via Chess.Com. New York could play London, Dallas could play Montreal. This is the first attempt, outside of the Olympiad, to take team chess global.

Why do you think this type of league will work?

I am sure this league will work. We have only announced the league a few weeks ago and already have 20+ teams registered. They come from places like New York, London, Montreal, Argentina, Norway and Nigeria! We already have some of the top players signed up to play, and the $50,000 in prizes is encouraging even more teams to register. This is a chance for players from around the world to represent their home towns. And they won’t just be representing their hometown against other local teams, but instead they will be fighting to be the best team in the world. On top of it all, we are going to have high level commentary all day as the teams from Europe play first, then Eastern North America/South America play, followed by the West Coast USA teams. There may even be an Asian division as well! This league is going to be an incredible chess spectacle.

Wow, that sounds pretty exciting! How do the matches work?

Each team brings four players to their team and the two teams play using an all play all format at a rapid time control. So every player on Team A would play every player on Team B. This results in a total of 16 games, and whoever gets to 8.5 points first is the winning team.

Wait, so they are playing on the Internet right? What’s to stop people from cheating with computer assistance?

I am sure this will be the biggest challenge for us; however, we have a few measures in place. First off, Chess.com has an incredibly complex and powerful cheat-detection system in place. I cannot reveal any details of how it works, but let me assure you that it takes things into account that I wouldn’t have ever thought about. Secondly, anyone with any results or play that are way above their rating level would be required to have a proctor to observe the games. We plan to be very proactive about cheating as we know that it’s one of the more serious concerns that people will have.
Every chessplayer dreams of having an opportunity to sacrifice a queen or any piece and finish his game in beautiful style. You belong to this group of players, don’t you? Unfortunately, if you are not Mikhail Tal you don’t often get the chance to become a hero. Even when we follow current tournaments from all over the world it is very difficult to discover a pearl amongst the thousands of games. In most cases we find ourselves a spectator of an opening battle that starts, let say, at move 20 or 25. Maybe that’s interesting for professionals, but not casual players and ordinary chess fans.

For those chess lovers who are hungry for beautiful ideas on the board, I have good news! There is a wonderful world of chess composition where you can see a large number of unique and paradoxical motifs. Your brain will never cease to come across unexpected moves that you can hardly believe will lead to the desired objective. In my book Secrets of Chess Solving: Solve with the champion of the world, published in 2009, I compared the practical chess game to prose and the chess composition to poetry. If you want to know the reason for such a comparison, please follow my column. Here, in the author’s opinion, readers will find a selection of the most beautiful problems ever composed.

Are you ready to start?

**Mate in two**

Let’s have a first glance at the position. It seems White is prepared for each possible black move and the only task is to make a waiting move. Indeed if the black $\text{Re}$2 moves anywhere then White can mate by 2.$\text{d}$1$\text{f}$3#; if the rook tries to make a correction by 1...$\text{Re}$3+, or 1...$\text{Ex}$f2 then follow the moves 2.$\text{g}$3# and 2.$\text{Ex}$f2# respectively. Each move by the black $\text{Q}$f1 is met by 2.$\text{g}$3#. Both pawn moves 1...$\text{d}$2 or 1...$\text{b}$4 are met, respectively, by 2.$\text{c}$2# and 2.$\text{c}$4#. On the other hand the black $\text{c}8$ can’t make a move to c7 due to 2.$\text{a}$8#. How about the remaining piece ($\text{e}$7)? If it moves anywhere along the rank then 2.$\text{e}$6# follows. So maybe 1...$\text{e}$5 brings rescue? No way, because of 2.$\text{g}$5#! But wait a moment. Black can make one last attempt, 1...$\text{e}$6. No mate? That is unfortunately the case. This brings us to the conclusion that we can’t wait with any quiet move, we have to do something about this rook move. So the reader is requested to do it by himself. If you want a clue then read the text below.

**Hint**: try to focus on the longest moves.

**Mate in three**

I am a great admirer of this composition and have won many bets after challenging chess players, even strong ones, to solve it. Those who gave up couldn’t believe the solution can really be as it is. Indeed the author’s idea is amazing. I will not deny you the pleasure of solving it, but if you want a clue then again just read the text below.

**Hint**: Look at all four corners of the board, maybe it will help you to find out how to deliver mate.

---

**Piotr Murdzia** is an International Master (with 3 GM norms) and Solving Grandmaster. He has won the World Chess Solving Championship seven times and the European Chess Solving Championship eight times. In 2009 he published his first book entitled Secrets of Solving – Solve with the champion of the world. Piotr works in the Polish Chess Federation as a sport director and manager of coaching.
As part of his preparation for the World Junior, Jeffery participated in the 2016 U.S. Junior Closed Championship, where he finished first. Right after that he left for China to acclimatize, and then traveled to India. Jeffery’s dad would have loved to take me to India, but as we had not yet obtained sufficient sponsorship, further preparation had to be carried out long-distance, since I had to remain in Chicago while Jeffery and his father were in India. As there was a time difference of 10½ hours, the sessions took place immediately after they finished breakfast, which was close to midnight in my time zone. Therefore I stayed up late to make sure I would be able to immediately answer any questions arising from our preparation.

As it turned out, everything went smoothly. Jeffery was very pleased with our opening preparation as he was obtaining positions he liked from them and furthermore he was able to utilize his superb endgame skills to convert any arising opportunities into full points. Each of our training sessions was between one and four hours long, depending on how he felt about the preparation.

by GM Vladimir Georgiev

Vladimir Georgiev is a Grandmaster who has represented both Macedonia and Bulgaria in many Olympiads. He is currently living in Chicago and working as a chess coach. In 18 years of coaching experience, he has trained and helped many world class players in their pursuit of success. Among them are Nurgul Salimova (World Girls U12 Champion in 2015), Antoaneta Stefanova (Woman World Champion 2004), Natalia Pogonina (Russian Woman Champion 2012), Jeffery Xiong (current U20 World Champion). He has published two books –

A course of chess tactics and 20 years and 20 days to the chess crown."
ambitious move. Now White cannot play 11.a4 with the idea of maintaining the bishop on the a2-g8 diagonal. In another recent encounter against Kadric, Jeffery had gone for 10...a5 11.\(a\)e2 \(\text{c}6\) 12.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{a}5\) and agreed a draw. 11.\(\text{h}4\)? Before the game, we focused mainly on the moves 11.e5 and 11.\(\text{x}d4\). We analyzed mainly the logical 11.\(\text{x}d4\) and, after 11...\(\text{c}xd4\), 12.e5 seemed the only way to fight for equality as 12.\(\text{d}1\) 0-0 would leave Black with the better game. But Jeffery was happy with his position after 12...\(\text{d}xc3\) 13.\(\text{e}f6\) \(\text{xf6}\) 14.\(\text{d}xc3\) 0-0. 11...b5!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paulo Bersamina</th>
<th>2402</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jeffery Xiong</td>
<td>2633</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

World Under-20 Championship, Bhubaneswar 2016

1.e4 c5 2.\(\text{d}c3\) d6 3.f4 \(\text{c}6\) 4.\(\text{f}3\) g6 5.\(\text{b}5\) \(\text{d}7\) 6.0-0 \(\text{g}7\) 7.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{a}5\)! 7...\(\text{d}4\) 8.\(\text{x}d4\)! (Better is 8.a4?! so as to maintain the bishop on the a2-g8 diagonal) 8...\(\text{c}xd4\) 9.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{c}6\) 10.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{h}5\) was played in P.Bersamina (2380) - M.Antipov (2524), Pune 2014.

8.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{f}6\) 9.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{c}6\) 10.\(\text{c}4\)

10...\(\text{d}4\)! This is by far the most

A good decision. Jeffery told me that he didn’t want to move his knight away from d4, which surprised his opponent who expected 11...\(\text{c}x\)c2. Now White has no choice, he is forced to exchange the knights. 12.\(\text{x}d4\) \(\text{c}xd4\) 13.\(\text{b}5\) \(\text{b}6\) 14.a4 \(a6\) 15.\(\text{a}3\) \(\text{a}3\) was a reasonable alternative. Nevertheless, after 15...\(\text{x}e4\) 16.d3 \(\text{f}6\) 17.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{d}5\) Black is better. 15...\(\text{c}6\) 16.\(\text{a}3\) \(\text{x}e4\) 17.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{f}6\) 18.\(\text{b}1\) \(\text{d}5\) More logical would be 18...0-0!? simply completing his development. 19.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{c}5\)!

| 20.\(\text{e}1\) For now White could have played the better 20.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{g}4\) 21.\(\text{f}3\)
winning due to his excellently placed knight on e6.

23...e5 A good move. Black’s rook enters the action.

24...f4 It looks like White is afraid of 24...d5.

24...c6 Now all the black pieces are active.

25...h3 f5 Black is simply improving the positions of his pieces!

26...xe3 White decides to exchange the strong knight but now Black’s dark- squared bishop becomes powerful.

26...dxe3 27...xe3 fxe3 28...f3 h5 A useful move which restrains the opponent’s kingside pawns.

30...e5 White develops his last piece.

30...c3 31...f2 e6 Another useful move. Black not only limits the mobility of the b3-bishop, but at the same time deve frees the queen from which she needs to defend the central pawn. All Jeffery’s pieces are on their optimal squares and he is now ready for decisive action.

32...xc5 c5 33...f1 c2 34.c2 a5 Not only winning a pawn but leaving the way clear for an advance of his newly created passer on the a-file. Now all he needs to do is promote that pawn!

35...e2 c3 36.g3 a5 The pawn starts its journey.

37...e3 b4 To enable the further advance of the pawn.

38.g4 White finds the only way to activate his pieces and to deal with the a-pawn.

38...hxg4 39.hxg4 d3 40.g2 a4

41...xa4 41.a2 doesn’t work either: 41...c4 42...xc3 a2.

41...e4 Jeffery decides to keep his light-squared bishop because the c2- pawn will then remain under attack.

42...xc3 a4 43...e1 This is the only move that allows White to save the f4-pawn. Nevertheless, the mobility of his knight is thereby very restricted.

43...e1 44...e3 45...e2 45...f3 changes nothing. Black’s king will travel to c4 and win that pawn.

45...f1! Bringing the last piece into the battle.

46...g3 47.g5 48.d6 48...d2

48...f5 A waiting move. Better is 48...e1 with the idea of advancing the king via c5. On the other hand, the immediate 48...e5?! would allow White to improve the position of his rook and go in counterplay by 49...e1 (49...e2?? 50...f5) 50...e5 51...f3 f4 (49...e2?? 50...e3) 50...e5 51...f6. This idea was gaining some activity. Then follows 49...e2 50...e5 50...f4 51...e3 52...e5 53...e2

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66.\texttt{g6+} \texttt{d6} 67.\texttt{h4} \texttt{c5} 68.\texttt{fx5} \texttt{xc4} 69.\texttt{d2} \texttt{d5} 70.\texttt{e3} \texttt{e6} 71.\texttt{g3} \texttt{e5} 72.\texttt{f1} \texttt{f5} 73.\texttt{g3+} \texttt{g5} 74.\texttt{f1} \texttt{h4} 75.\texttt{f2} \texttt{h3} 76.\texttt{e3} \texttt{g3} 77.\texttt{d2} \texttt{g2} 78.\texttt{f2}

White resigned

So finally the opponent resigns, which means Jeffery is the winner of the tournament and becomes the Under-20 World Champion, at the tender age of 15.

Jeffery was really happy to achieve his goal of winning the title and to qualify for the World Cup next year. In fact he was so cheerful that he did not even want to prepare for his last round game!

I am very happy for him. But we have already got back to work, since with such strong capability at such a young age, he has the potential to do even greater things.

In the first game of the tournament Dariusz Swiercz got off to a smooth win in convincing fashion over a local U.S. Chessleague teammate of mine, Dmitry Volkov.

### B90

| Dmitry Volkov | 2281 |
| Dariusz Swiercz | 2639 |

Round 1, Millionaire Chess 2016

1.e4 e5 2.d4 f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.exd4 f6 5.d3 a6 6.h3 A currently trendy line.

6...e5 7.dxe2 b5 A move recommended in Andrasic’s book on the Najdorf. It may not be the most popular choice but it seems to work well.

8.g4 b4 9.d5 \texttt{x}d5

10.exd5 The only way for White to test Black in this variation is 10.\texttt{x}d5!, met by 10...\texttt{a}7. Though this looks like a clumsy square for the rook, after 11.\texttt{e}3 \texttt{e}6!
...the black rook has a choice of squares along Black’s second rank. Thus 12...d3 can be met by 12...d7, to support the pawn break ...d7-d5, while after 12...d2 Black has either the natural 12...e7 with approximately equal chances, or the more ambitious 12...d7!! 13.exb4 d5 with compensation for the pawn. 10...h5! Loosening White’s kingside. 11.g5

11...h4! Preventing White from reinforcing the g5-pawn with h3-h4. Also 11...e7? 12.h4 g4 was a decent alternative. 12.a3! Typically in this variation White endeavors to exploit the space he has gained on the kingside, but in this case White has no prospects on that flank and so must open a second front if he is to commence active operations. 12...bxa3 13.bxa3 e7 14.g1 f5 15.c3 c8

Targeting the h3-pawn and restricting White’s knight. 16.f3?! The tricky move 16.e4 would have placed Black on the defensive and given him the opportunity to go wrong with 16...xh3?! 17.c4 d7 18.xh3 +xh3 19.g4! +xg4 20.gxh4 f3 21.b4 when White gains the upper hand. 16...xc2

17.b5? White’s best chance was to play 17.b5+ in order to create as much chaos on the board as possible, e.g. 17...d7! (17...d8? 18.g6! +f5 19.e2 leaves a very unclear position) 18.c6 +b6 19.g4 g6 20.e4 with chances for both sides. 17...e0 18.c3 f5 19.wxf5 dxf5 20.c7 This knight excursion costs White several tempi and only leads to more problems. 20...e7 21.e3 d8 22.a6 d6 23.a6 d6 c8 Black converts his positional superiority without difficulty. 24.c1 e2 25.d3

25.e8! This rook trade is very effective because afterwards White cannot protect his h3 pawn. 26.e8+ c8 27.f4 27.h1 can be met by 27...a1 followed by ...xg5. 27...xf4 28.xf4 xh3 29.d2 xh2 30.c3 b6 31.h1 g2 32.xh4 f2+

White resigned

Now for the battle of the Sams! Two of America’s best young players squared off, with Sam Shankland fresh from winning a team gold medal at the recent Olympiad in Baku. We pick up the action on the 39th move, just as the position is becoming critical for Black.

Sam Sevian decides to shed the e-pawn rather than have to face a dangerous passed b-pawn. 39...d4! 40.xe5 e7 41.b7

Though 41.dxe7 results in massive simplification after 41...f6 42.g4 c2 43.g5 hxg5 44.hxg5 dxe4 45.gxf6 gxf6 46.fxg6 fxg5 47.xe5 c2, White would still have good winning chances. The move played in the game is a better practical try. 41...c2 42.d3 d7 43.f4 d8 44.e5 c6 45.d3 f6 46.d6

Better is 46.e4f 5f 47.exf6 gxf6 48.f3 49.e6, preventing ...e6, with good winning chances for White. 46.f6 47.xb5 fxe5 48.c7+ d6 49.a6 49.e6—1? is an interesting try, e.g. 49...d5 50.fxe5 dxe5+ 51.xe5 xe5 52.xg7 xb4 53.g4 f6 54.h5+ although Black’s chances have improved now that White only has a 2 to 1 majority on one side of the board. 49...f4 50.xf4 g6 51.d4 e2d4 52.e7 f5 53.xc6 xc6

54...d9

White resigned
the b-pawn in time.  
55.\(\text{b}5\) \(\text{e}7\) 56.\(\text{f}7\) \(\text{f}5\) 57.\(\text{x}h6\) \(\text{x}h6\) 58.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{f}5\)

59.\(\text{h}5\)! Black’s defenses collapse.  
59...\(\text{x}g3\) 60.\(\text{h}6\) \(\text{f}5\) 61.\(\text{d}6\) 62.\(\text{x}g6\) No doubt there will be many more stirring battles between these two young players.  
\(\text{Black resigned}\)

In the final round of the classical stage of the event, Gawain Jones had been pressed hard throughout the following game, but after nearly 80 moves of defense he finally managed to turn the tables.

A24

\(\text{Gawain Jones}\) 2647  
\(\text{Baskaran Adhiban}\) 2689  
Round 7, Millionaire Chess 2016

88.\(\text{c}5\)?! 88.\(\text{d}5\) is the only guaranteed pathway to victory. If 88...\(\text{b}5\) then 89.\(\text{e}6\) \(\text{g}7\) 90.\(\text{x}h5\) is decisive.  
88...\(\text{g}7\) 89.\(\text{x}h5\)

89...\(\text{c}2\) Black should play 89...\(\text{b}3\)!.  
90.\(\text{d}6\) \(\text{d}4\) 91.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{h}7\) 92.\(\text{h}5\) \(\text{b}5\)+ 93.\(\text{c}6\) \(\text{c}3\) 94.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{b}1\) 95.\(\text{d}7\) \(\text{d}2\) 96.\(\text{g}2\) \(\text{b}3\) 97.\(\text{h}6\) \(\text{c}5\)+ 98.\(\text{d}6\) \(\text{d}3\) 99.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{f}4\) 100.\(\text{d}1\) \(\text{h}3\) 101.\(\text{b}3\)+ \(\text{f}8\) 102.\(\text{e}6\) \(\text{g}5\)+ 103.\(\text{x}f6\) \(\text{x}e4\)+ 104.\(\text{g}6\) \(\text{c}5\) 105.\(\text{h}7\) A grueling game that left Gawain Jones as the only player not needing to play a rapid playoff
the next day in order to qualify for Millionaire Monday. **Black resigned**

We have already seen Dariusz Swiercz’s first game of the tournament, and now we show his final game. Needing only a draw to win the title and the 30,000 dollar first place prize, he played a solid opening and at several points in the game used the threat of perpetual check to force his opponent to worsen his position, rather than accept a match defeat.

**A42**

**Dariusz Swiercz** 2636

**Gawain Jones** 2647

Final (rapid), Millionaire Chess 2016

1.d4 d6 2.c4 f5 3.c4 g6 4.e4 e5 5.dxe5 A harsh choice for Black, immediately entering the endgame.

5...dx5 6.exd5 f6 6...dxe5 7.dxe5 fxe4 8.dxe5 fxe5 9.e3 dxe1 10.e4 fxe4 11.e5 dxe5 12.dxe5 e5 13.d6 d6 Black cannot liberate his game by 13...f5?! 14.exf5 dxe5 15.dxe5 c5 16.dxc6 bxc6 17.e3! c5?! as then comes 18.dxe5 gx5 19.d5! and, with ...d7 being met by ...a3, Black would be in very bad shape.

14.exd4 14...e8? But now 14...f5! is possible as, after 15.d1 fxe4 16.d2 f5 17.0-0 (17.e4?! b6 18.0-0 a6! allows good counterplay), 17...d4 comes just in time! Therefore this would have been an improvement for Black on the game continuation.

15.e2 f5 16.d1 fxe4 17.0-0 f5 18.g4 b6 19.e1

19...h5?! Objectively 19...d5! 20.cxd5 (20.cxd5 a6 again!) 20...e7 21.d6 cxd6 22.d5 maintains a balanced game, but it will be hard for Black to generate winning chances. Nevertheless this may have been better than the move Gawain played,

20.b3 a6 21.e4 exb5 22.e7+ b7 23.e6+ a3 24.e5 gx5 25.cxb5 a2 26.g3 a8 26...f8 27.e6 e6 e6 28.h8+ a7! 29.e6+ c5! was definitely the way to go, as Black is still in the game and in a time scramble anything might happen. But now Dariusz will not give his opponent another chance.

27.d7

27...f8? 27...e8! is better but White still dominates after 28.d6 d6 29.d5+.

28.c6! A powerful blow that gives White a winning position in which his opponent has no counterplay — an ideal situation given the state of the match at this time.

28.a1+ Also losing is 28.e7 29.c7+ e7 30.e7 e7 31.e7.

29.g2 e7 30.c7+ h8 31.b7+

“Threatening” a perpetual check.

31...a8! Objectively worse but the only way to keep fighting. 31...c8 32.b1? c7+ c8 33.b7+ would lead to a repetition of moves in a situation where a draw was equivalent to a loss for Gawain.

32.e7 e7 33.xe7 a1 34.xe6 c5 35.xb5 h7 36.xh7+ c8 37.xf3 b5 38.xf4 c5 39.xf7 d2 40.xe3 e5 41.e4

41.d4+ Once again Black must avoid the perpetual but now White’s king’s position is improved.

42.xe3 e4+ If 42...d5 43.xd4, again threatening to draw!

43.d3 xe5 44.d4 c5 45.h4 d8 46.b7 b5 47.h5 f4 48.h6 fxg3 49.fxg3 c8 50.d8 h7 51.h7 b5 52.g8+ d7 53.h8 c8 54.h8h8 Down a rook, Black had no choice but to resign, leaving Dariusz 30,000 dollars richer.

1-0

Although most of the attention was focused on who would win the first place prize, there were many tough battles going on in the other sections, and even for other prizes in the Open itself, GM Ioan-Cristian Chirila went on to win
Jones can finish smartly with 66...h7+! gxh7 67.e7 and a queen shows up on the board. His continuation should have been good enough just the same.

66...e8 f4+ 67...f2 d2+ 68...g1?? Black’s can only hope to form a mating net in time, so the king needs to have room to run. 68...f1 (68...e1 wins, too) 68...h4 69.e7 g3 70...d8 with an easy win.

68...h4 69.e7 g3

70...d8?? I wasn’t able to watch this game live but I can surmise Jones must have been very short of time. The use of time delay rather than increment may have played a decisive role here. The mate is not hard to see; instead 70...f1 xg2 and now 71...h6, 71...e1, and 71...h6 are all good enough to draw.

70...xg2+ 71...f1 xf3 72...d2 xxd2 73.e8 f2+ 0-1

the U-2550 prize and this was one of his finer performances along the way. His round 5 opponent is a young and improving player from New York.

D85

Raven Sturt

Ioan-Christian Chirila

Round 5, Millionaire Chess 2016

1.d4 d6 2.c4 g6 3...c3 d5 An opening near and dear to my own heart! 4.cxd5 cxd5 5.e4 c6 3...c3 6.bxc3 g7 7...e3 An approach popularized by Kramnik. It aims to remove all potential targets along the a1-h8 diagonal, leaving White in a position to play a quick d4-d5.

7...c5 8...c1 a5 9...d2

13...xg7 doesn’t look appetizing, so he must find a better alternative.

13...c4? After 13...xf5! 14...e2 Black has the choice between several moves, two of which are reasonable of which are 14...c4?! and 14...h6 15...f3 e8 16.e4 d7. On the other hand 13...d7?! 14.f3 f5 15.g4 h6 16.gxh5 gxh5 17.fxg6 e5 18...e2 fxg6 19.e0 favors White.

14.f3? Simple and effective is 14...xc4! xg7 15...b3 which leaves White with a clear advantage.

14...f5 15...xc4 e8!

Now Black develops a dangerous initiative.

16...e2? d7! Premature is 16...xc3+? 17...f2+.

17...d1 e5 Now White has the choice of several unappetizing moves and eventually settles on...

18...b3 d3 19...d2 This makes Black’s task easier. 19...d1! 20...e1 would have promised White some counterplay, for example: 20...xc3 21.d6 e4 22...d2

...when Black has to decide whether to give back the exchange and remain a pawn up after 22...xd6 23...e4! b4 24...xc3 dxc3 25...d3 d3 f3, or keep his rook and contend with the passed pawn on d6 after 22...xd6 23...xd6 h6 24...f4.

19...d4! 20...e1 d4 Parting with
the light squared bishop opens the c-file for Black and kills White's counterplay so Surt decides not to exchange on c4.

21...\(\text{d}3\)

21...\(\text{xd}5\)! A nice simplifying tactic, which secures a winning advantage for Black.

22.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{xe}3+\) 23.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{xd}5\)

24.\(\text{e}8+\) If on any king move, Black will play \(\text{e}5\), causing tactical problems for White's pieces on the fifth rank.

25.\(\text{e}4\) One example of a tactical problem appears in the line 25.\(\text{xf}2\) \(\text{e}5\) 26.\(\text{xf}7+\) \(\text{f}8\) 27.\(\text{h}4\) \(\text{b}6\) when White is helpless.

25.\(\text{Rad}8\) 26.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{h}6\) 27.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{g}7\) 28.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{f}5\) 29.\(\text{c}5\) \(\text{xe}1+\) 30.\(\text{xe}1\)

30...\(\text{e}8+\) Simple was 30...\(\text{xd}2\).

31.\(\text{d}1\) \(\text{b}6\) 32.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{f}6\) 33.\(f4\) \(\text{g}5\) 34.\(\text{fx}g5+\) \(\text{xf}5\) 35.\(\text{e}5\) \(\text{e}3\) 36.\(\text{c}2\) \(\text{e}2+\) 37.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{d}2\)

38.\(\text{b}4\) If 38...\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{xa}2\) or 38...\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{hx}g2\).

38...\(\text{a}5\) and Black wins a piece. 0-1

\[\text{INDIANAPOLIS, IN}\]
\[\text{July 30 - August 7, 2016}\]
\[117th Annual U.S. Open Chess Championship, (9 rounds)\]

\[\text{Final (Armageddon game):}\]
\[\text{SHABALOV 2542 – POPILSKI 2569} 1:0\]

1-2. Alex SHABALOV, Gil POPILSKI

3-4. Ruifeng LI, Fidel CORRALES JIMENEZ 7½, Illya NYZHNYY, Vasif DURABAYLI, Alex LENDERMAN, Yaroslav ZHEREBUKHK, Kayden W TROFF, Joel BENJAMIN, Akshat CHANDRA, Zurab JAVAKHADZE, Keaton F. KIEWRA, Michael A. MULYAR, John P. FEDOROVICZ, Craig HILBY, Aaron GRABINSKY 7, 18-32.

Andrey GOROVETS, John Daniel BRYANT, Alexander FISHBEIN, Roland FENG, Bryce TIGLON, Dennis MONOKROSSOS, Gopal S. MENON, Chao ZHANG, Walker K. GRIGGS, Nicky KORBA, Gabriel SAM, Bovey LIU, Manis DAVIDOVICh, Abhimanyu BANERJEE, Jimmy METZGER 6½, etc.

\[\text{ATLANTIC CITY, NJ}\]
\[\text{October 6-9, 2016}\]
\[The 3rd Millionaire Chess Open, 9 rounds\]

\[\text{Semi Finals:}\]
\[\text{Jones - Zhou ½ : ½; Cordova - Swiercz ½ : ½}\]

\[\text{For 3rd place:}\]
\[\text{Cordova - Zhou 0 : 2}\]

\[\text{Final:}\]
\[\text{Jones - Swiercz 0 : 2}\]

1. Dariusz SWIERCZ,
2. Gawain JONES,
3. Emilio CORDOVA,
4. Jianchao ZHOU, 5-9. Rauf MAMEDOV, Jeffery XIONG, Varuzhan AKOBIAN, Lazaro BRUZON BATISTA, Yaroslav ZHEREBUKHK 6½,
10-15. Samuel SHANKLAND, Alexander STRIPUNSKY, Magesh Chandran PANCHANATHAN, Eugene PERELSHTEYN, Aman HAMBLETON, Alexander KALIKSTEYN 6, etc.

\[\text{Photo by David Llada.}\]
TOURNAMENT REVIEW
AUGUST - OCTOBER 2016

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If not otherwise stated, games in these sections are annotated by IM Goran Arsovic.

Only the results of the top rating tournament groups are presented here. Whenever submitted, full information will be published.

for his professional courtesy and help in making available the information and games from the U.S. Open Championship presented on our pages.

STAMFORD, CT
August 5-7, 2016
22nd Northeast Open. (5 rounds)

1. Nicolas D. CHECA 4½, 2-3 Niaz MURSHED, Igor KHMELNITSKY 4, 4-7 Sergey KUDRIN, Ian HARRIS, Michael ISAKOV, Joseph ZELTSAN 3½, 8-15 Jay R. BONIN, Yoon-Young KIM, Efim TREGER, Lev PACIORKOWSKI, Andrew HOY, Zachary C. TANENBAUM, Jorge REYNALDO, Sam BARSKY 3, etc.

SAINT LOUIS, MO
August 5-16, 2016 cat.XXXII (2779)
The 4th Sinquefield Cup

Wesley So 2771
Hikaru Nakamura 2791
Saint Louis 2016

1.d4 e6 2.c4 d6 3.©f3 c5 4.g3 e7 5.©g2 0-0 6.0-0 dxc4 7.©e5 ©c6
8.©xc6 bxc6 9.©a3 ©xa3 10.bxa3
©a6 11.©d2 ©b5 12.©a5 ©c8 13.a4
©d8 14.©e3 ©xd4 15.©f1 ©b6

Tournament Review 2016

1.c4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.©f3 ©f6 4.e3 ©f5 5.©c3 e6 6.©h4 ©e4 7.©f3 ©g6 8.©b3 b6 9.cxd5 exd5 10.g3 ©d6 11.©g2 0-0
12.©xg6 hxg6 13.0-0 ©bd7 14.©d2 ©e8 15.©h1 b4 16.©a4 c5 17.©xc5 ©xc5 18.©xh6 ©xc5 19.©e1 ©b6
20.©ad1 ©e7 21.©c1 a5 22.©d3 ©e8 23.a4 ©a7 24.©e2 ©b6 25.©h3 ©a6
26.©d1 g5 27.©f1 ©a7 28.©b3

28...g4! 29.©g2 29.©xg4 ©xe4 30.©d2 ©e5 31.©e1 ©e7 32.©h3 (32.©xd5? ©b7+) 32...©e6 33.©g1 ©c6+
29...©d4 30.©e4 ©xf3 31.©xf3 ©xe4 32.©g2 ©c3 33.©xc7 ©xc7 34.©c2 ©e6 35.©d2 ©e4 36.©d1 ©c3
37.©c2 ©c8 38.©xc3 ©xc3 39.©d1 ©e8 40.©f1 g6 41.©c1 ©e7 42.©d1

34.©e2! ©d7 34...©d5 35.©f6+ ©xf6
26.©xg6 h5 27.©h5+ ©h6 28.©xf6 ©e8

25.©f6 ©f6 26.©xf6 27.©xh5+ ©e8 28.©f4 e5 29.©xe5 ©xe5 30.©f5 ©h5 31.©f4
TOURNAMENT REVIEW

SAINT LOUIS, MO, August 5-16, 2016 cat. XXII (2779)

The 4th Sinquefield Cup

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<td>½</td>
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<td>0</td>
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16...c5  d7 17.d1 h6?! 17...d5 18.e4  f6 19.exd7  dxd7 20.xb6  cxb6 21.d2  c5 18.xd7  dxd7 19.xb6  cxb6 20.xd2  c5 21.d1  f6 22.xf1  h7 23...c2  f8 23...g8 24.xd2  h7 25...d8! 26.xd8  c3 27.e1  c4 28.d1  xa2 29.c2  c4 30.e3 b5 31.xc3  a6 32.a8  d5+ 33.xd5 exd5

34.a5! b4+ 35.xd2  f1 36.xc8 c4 37.xb8 b3 38.xc3 1-0

Wesley So
Veselin Topalov
Saint Louis 2016

1.c4 e5 2.g3  f6 3.xg2 d5 4.cxd5 0-0 5.d4 5.c3 6.f3  c6 7.0-0 8.d3 0-0 9.a3  e6 10.e3 0-0 11.d5  x5 12.xd5 13.xa6 14.d2 15.xg2 16.xd4 17.xb3 18.e4 dxe3 19.fxe3  f8 20.xe4

32...xh7 33.d5 33.d5 5 34.xc6  f7= 35.b4  xg5 36.xf6 37.xd7  a8 38.xd5  g5 39.c6  h4 40.xd2  e1 41.d4  1-0

PISCATAWAY, NJ
August 6-11, 2016 cat. III (2321)
North Eastern Masters Invitational

1. Magesh Chandran PANCHANATHAN 7
2-3. Praveen BALAKRISHNAN, Jayaram ASHWIN 6½
4. Farai MANDIZHA 6
5. Michael A. ROHDE 5
6-7. Aravind KUMAR, Brandon JACOBSON 3½
8. Akshita GORTI 3
9. David BRODSKY 2½
10. Ekaterina BOGDAN 1½

47...g1 48.xg3  f2+ Draw
STURBRIDGE, MA
August 11-14, 2016
46th Annual Continental Open, (6 rounds)

CLEVELAND, OH
August 12-14, 2016
9th Annual Cleveland Open, (5 rounds)

ROCKVILLE, MD
August 13-17, 2016
5th Washington International, (9 rounds)

Nicolas Checa 2405
Ilya Smirin 2687
Rockville 2016
1.d4 d6 2.c4 g6 3.c3 g7 4.d3 d6 5.e4 0-0 6.ee2 dbd7 7.0-0 e5

8.e3 h6 9.dxe5 dxe5 10.h3 c6 11.c3 d5 12.0-0 e7 13.c5 h5 13...dxc5 14.c3 dxc5 15.dxc5 15.e3 c6 16.c4 c6 17.e4 e4 17.e4 dxe4 18.c3 b6 19.c5 d5 20.e5 c7 21.e4 c4 22.c3 e4 dxe4 22.e4 e4 f5 23.c3 h4 eae8

12.c2 d6 13.f4 d5 14.gxf4 bxc4

15.d4 e5 16.e5 dxe5 16...dxe5 18.dxe5 h5 19.e4 f4 17.dxc5 e5 18.dxc5 dxe5 19.f4 e7 20.g5 d7 21.f4 dxe4 22.e3 a5 23.c3 d8 24.c3 f7 25.f4 e4 26.d3 e5 27.b1 e7 28.dxe5 29.c3 e4 30.dxe5 30...e4 31.c3 e3 32.c3 e3 33.c3 e3 34.c3 e3 35.e3 e3 36.c3 e3 37.c3 e3

Gata Kamsky
Jayaram Ashwin
2638
2465
Rockville 2016
1.g3 e5 2.c4 d6 3.c3 b6 4.d3 f6 5.g2 d5+ 6.d5 e7 7.g5 dxe7 8.d7 e8 9.d7 e7 20.d7 e8 30.d7+ e8 1-0

Sam Sevian 2600
Ilya Smirin 2687
Rockville 2016

21..dxe4! 22.c7 e3 g6 23.g7+ h8 24.fxe4 dxe7 25.c3 d6 26.f3 h7 27.xd2 dxc5 28.bxc5 d5 29.d3 22.c3 d6 23.d4 d6 24.d2 d4 25.d2 d2 d4 26.c8 d4 27.d4 d4 f6 28.xc1 exd4 29.c6 d7 30.d3 b6 31.b7 32.e5 b5 33.e5 d5 34.e5 e5 35.c5 d3 36.f4 f4 37.d4

Photo by Harald Fietz.

2016

Eishan Moradiabadi.
FRESNO, CA
August 19-21, 2016
7th Central California Open (5 rounds)

ATLANTA, GA
August 19-21, 2016
47th Southern Chess Congress (5 rounds)
Julio Sadorra 2558
Andrey Stukopin 2586

Notes by GM J.Sadorra

1.d4 2.f6 2.c4 e6 3.d3 b4 4.g3 0-0 5.g2 d5 6.f3 d6 7.b3 c5 7...a5 8.0-0 c6 9.f4 b6 10.cxd5 exd5 11.a3 2.e7 12.exd5 b7 13.exd5 14.0-0 exd5 15.d3 2.e7 15...h6 16.h4!
16.2.f1 17.2.c7 2fd8 17...b5 18.2.h3!

18.2.h3! After seeing all my candidate ideas, I thought that this gives most pressure and I like it because I improve a passive piece.

18...2xb4 18...2xb4 19.2xe7 2xb4 (19...2xd7 20.2g5++; 19...h6 20.2xe5++) 20.2g5++; 18...2a4 19.2xb6 axb6 20.b3++

19.2xd7 If the attack doesn’t work, I go for a path with nice positional advantage!

19...2xd7 20.2f5 These moves suggest themselves as their forcing and improve my position bit by bit.

20...2d6 21.2ac1 Last piece to

chess.com
BLITZ CHAMPIONSHIP
August 23-24, 2016

SEMIFINAL
CARLSEN – GRISCHUK 16:8

Alexander Grischuk 2754
Magnus Carlsen 2857
chess.com Blitz 5m+25pm

1.d4 2.f6 2.c4 e6 3.d3 f5 4.g3
a6 5.cxd5 exd5 6.f4 2.d6 7.2xd6
2xd6 8.e3 2.f5 9.2b3 0-0 10.2h4
2e4 11.2xe4 2xe4 12.2d3 2c6
13.a3 2f3 14.2f3 2h8 15.0-0 2ab8
16.2ac1 2e7 17.2c2 2c6 18.2e5
2e6 19.f3 2d6 20.f4 2g8 21.2e2
2f6 22.2f3 2g8 23.2c2 g6 24.2h1
2g7 25.2f3 2bg8 26.b4 2fe4 27.a4
g5 28.fgx5 2xg5 29.2h6 30.2g2
2h5 31.2h1 2e6 32.2f4

32...2xg3+! 33.hxg3 2xh1 34.2xe4
2h6 35.2h4 2h4 36.2xh4 2g7+
37.2h2 37.2f1 2xe4 38.2h2 2e7
39.2d3 2d6 40.2f1 2f3 2g8 39.2f4
2f6 40.2d3 2d6 41.2c5 2xf4+ 42.2xf4
2e7 43.2xb7 2xb7 44.2f5 2d3
45.2xc6 2b3 0-1

Magnus Carlsen 2857
Alexander Grischuk 2754
chess.com Blitz 1m+1spm

1.g3 2.f3 c6 3.d3 f6 4.0-0
2.f5 6.2xe6 7.d3 2bd7
8.2e3 2c5 9.2xc5 2xc5 10.2a3 2a5
11.2d2 0-0 12.2f1 2fd7 13.2c3
2h6 14.2ab1 2g5 15.2b3 2xc6 16.2a3
2f6 17.2b4 2xb4 18.2xb4 2d7
19.2xd8 20.2h5 2e6 21.2xc6 2b6
22.exd5 2xd5 22...exd5 23.2e5 2c5 23.2xc8 2xc8 24.2xc8+ 2h7
25. \texttt{xc}2 \texttt{wd}6 26. \texttt{ff}1 \texttt{e}5 27. \texttt{d}1 \texttt{wb}4
28. \texttt{de}3 \texttt{wa}4 29. \texttt{cc}1 \texttt{wa}5

8. \texttt{wx}f3 \texttt{h}6 9. d4 \texttt{dxd}4 10. \texttt{w}h5+
\texttt{g}7 11. \texttt{xf}4 d6

12. e5+! If 12... dxe5 13. \texttt{ff}7#
1-0

SEMINAL
NAKAMURA - VACHIER-LAGRAVE 2½ - 1½

Hikaru Nakamura 2791
Maxime Vachier-Lagrange 2819

1. \texttt{d}3 \texttt{g}6 2. \texttt{dd}2 \texttt{g}7 3. \texttt{g}3 d6 4. \texttt{g}2 e5
5. \texttt{gf}3 \texttt{e}7 6.0-0 0-0 7. \texttt{c}c4 \texttt{e}4 \texttt{bc}6

16. \texttt{h}4 \texttt{f}3 17. \texttt{f}1 \texttt{e}6 18. \texttt{c}4 \texttt{w}d7

19. \texttt{dxf}3! \texttt{c}8 19... \texttt{gx}f3?? 20. \texttt{xd}7+ 20. \texttt{xb}3 \texttt{xc}4 21. \texttt{wb}3+ \texttt{h}7 22. \texttt{dd}2
\texttt{a}5 23. \texttt{b}5 \texttt{a}6 24. \texttt{e}2 \texttt{xc}5 25. \texttt{a}4
\texttt{c}8 26. \texttt{a}3 \texttt{ac}6 27. \texttt{c}4 \texttt{w}e6
28. \texttt{xb}6 \texttt{ed}8 29. \texttt{d}5 1-0

Maxime Vachier-Lagrange 2819
Hikaru Nakamura 2791

1. \texttt{e}4 \texttt{e}5 2. \texttt{c}3 \texttt{c}6 3. \texttt{f}4 \texttt{ex}f4 4. \texttt{f}3 \texttt{g}5
5. \texttt{c}4 \texttt{g}4 6.0-0 \texttt{gx}f3 7. \texttt{xf}7+

Greensboro, NC
August 25-29, 2016
US Chess Masters (9 rounds)

1. Andrey STUKOPIN 7. 2-5.
Yaroslav ZHEREBUKH, Alejandro RAMIREZ,
Yuniesky QUESADA PEREZ, Timur GAREYEV 6½, 6-13.
Gata KAMSKY, Aleksandr SHIMANOV, Akshat CHANDRA, Samuel SEVIAN, Kannappan

Andrey Stukopin.
Photo credits: European Ch. 2015.

22. \texttt{d}d3+! 22. \texttt{dxf}6? \texttt{fx}g3 23. \texttt{d}d2
\texttt{d}d3 (23... \texttt{fx}g2+ 24. \texttt{h}1 \texttt{g}6 25. \texttt{f}3
\texttt{bb}8+) 24. \texttt{d}b3 \texttt{g}3 25. \texttt{h}1 \texttt{fx}g2
26. \texttt{xe}5 \texttt{g}5 27. \texttt{w}x\texttt{h}7 \texttt{w}g6 28. \texttt{dd}1+
\texttt{e}8 29. \texttt{h}8+ \texttt{g}8 30. \texttt{w}xg8+ \texttt{w}g8
31. \texttt{d}d4 \texttt{d}d8+
22... \texttt{d}d5 23. \texttt{ex}d5 \texttt{ex}g5 24. \texttt{dxe}6+
\texttt{xe}6 25. \texttt{w}e4 \texttt{g}6 26. \texttt{bx}b7
\texttt{wxd}3 27. \texttt{w}c8+ \texttt{f}6 28. \texttt{h}4 \texttt{g}6
29. \texttt{h}5 \texttt{g}5 30. \texttt{a}6+ \texttt{g}7 31. \texttt{h}6+
\texttt{f}8 32. \texttt{w}a7 \texttt{fx}f3 33. \texttt{b}8+ \texttt{e}7
34. \texttt{w}e5+ 1-0

Alejandro Ramirez 2561
Alex Shabalov 2542

Greensboro 2016

1. \texttt{d}f3 d5 2. b3 c5 3. e3 a6 4. c4 d4
5. exd4 cxd4 6. g3 \texttt{g}6 7. \texttt{g}2 \texttt{g}7 8.0-0
\texttt{h}6 9. d3 0-0 10. \texttt{eb}1 \texttt{e}6 \texttt{c}1 11. a3 a5
12. \texttt{d}bd2 f6 13. \texttt{f}1 \texttt{f}7 14. c5 \texttt{d}e5
15. \texttt{d}xe5 \texttt{d}xe5

AMERICAN CHESS MAGAZINE
16. b4! axb4 16... cxd3? 17. wb3++; 16... b6 17. c2 axb4 17.axb4 d5 19. xe5 fxe5 20. xb7+ 17.axb4 b8 18. c2 b8 18. f4 b4 20. c4 e5 21. h3 b6 22. fxe5 fxe5 23. xe5 f5 24. a2 c6 25. f4 f3 26. xe3 dxe3 27. xe3 xe5 28. d5 1-0

INDIANAPOLIS, IN
August 26–28, 2016
11th Indianapolis Open (5 rounds)

ARLINGTON, VA
August 26-28, 2016
48th Annual Atlantic Open (5 rounds)

IRVING, TX
September 1-5 2016
2016 North American Junior U-20
Open Chess Championships
Open: (22 players, 9 rounds)


Girls: (14 players, 9 rounds)

Advait Patel
Awonder Liang
2398
2477

1.e4 c5 2.d3 f3 d6 3.b5+ d7 4-0 0 5.d3 g6 6.e1 e6 7.c3 c6 8.c2 b5 9.d4 c7 10.b2 d7 11.e5 dxe5 12.dxe5 c6 13.c4 e4 14.e5 g5 15.f3 e3 16.xe3 c5 17.xf6 gxf6 18.xe6 c5 19.xg5 f3

Joshua Sheng
Ruifeng Li
2385
2555

1.e4 c5 2.f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.xd4 e5 5.c3 a6 6.b5 d7 7.xe2 c7 8.f4 c6 9-0 0-0 10.a4 c4 11.g4 c7 12.b1 c8 13.h1 h6 14.c4 g5 15.xg5 h5 16.xg5 b6 17.xg3 c8 18.h4 c5 19.a2 c4 20.b3 c4 21.axb4 a4 22.f1 a7 23.d3 c7 24.g5 a5 25.h5 a4 26.a2 c4 27.d2 c2 28.b4 a5

NASHVILLE, TN
September 2-4, 2016
Tennessee Open (5 rounds)

ALBANY, NY
September 2-5, 2016
13th Annual New York State Championship (6 rounds)
1-2. Aleksandr OSTROVSKY, David
TOURNAMENT REVIEW

BRODSKY 5, Jay R. BONIN 4½, 4-8.
Olivier-Kenta CHIKU-RATTE, Anthony RENNA, Lev PACIORKOWSKI, Zhi QU, Megan LEE 4, 9-13. Effim TREGER, Zachary TANENBAUM, Robert SULMAN, Ben DEAN-KAWAMURA, Shawn RODRIGUE-LEMIEUX 3½, etc.

Aleksandr Ostrovski 2377
Shawn Rodrigue-Lemieux 2058
Albany 2016

1.d4 d5 2.f4 f6 3.e3 e6 4.Qd2 c5
5.c3 c6 6.Qf3 Qc7 7.Bf4 e5 8.dxe5 dxe5 9.h4 f5
10.h5 Qf8 11.f3 d5 12.g4 Qg8 13.Bxc2 Qe6 14.Qxe6
Qxe6 15.c4 Qc6 16.Bg1 Qh8 17.Bxd5 Qxd5
18.Bxe4 fxe4 19.Qxe4 Qg8 20.g5 Qxe4
21.Bxe4 Qa5+ 22.Bd2 Qc7 23.f4 0-0 0-0 24.0-0-0 Qb6

MORRISTOWN, NJ
September 3-5, 2016
New Jersey Open (6 rounds)


SAN DIEGO, CA
September 3-5, 2016
Southern California Open (6 rounds)

John L. WATSON 3½, etc.

TAMPA, FL
September 2-5, 2016
Arnold Denker Florida State Championship (6 rounds)


Dionisio Aldama Degurnay 2379
Timur Gareyev 2619
San Diego (rapid) 2016

Notes by GMT. Gareyev

1.e4 c5 2.Qc3 e6 3.f4 d5 4.Qf3 d4
5.Qb5+ 6.Qd7 5.Qxe2 d6 6.Qxd3 Qd6
5...Qc6 6.a4 6.Qb5+ Qe7
6...Qf6 7.d3 e5 8.fxe5 Qg4 9.Qf4
c4 10.dxc4 Qb6 11.Qd3 11.Qbd2 d3
12.Qc1
20...Qf5! 21.Qxe3 fxe4 22.Qe2 Qxe4
22...Qc6
23.Qf1 b6
27.Qxe6 Qxe6 28.Qh3 Qxh1
29.Qxh1 axb6 30.Qc1 Qxc8 30...Qa1
31.Qd3 Qxc2 32.Qd1 Qf1 33.Qxc2
Qxh1 0-1

BURLINGTON, MA
September 3-5, 2016
76th New England Open (6 rounds)


PORTLAND, OR
September 3-5, 2016
Oregon Open (6 rounds)

1. Christopher CHASE 5½, 2. Jason CIGAN 5,
3-7. Justin SARKAR, James E. TARJAN, Nick RAPTS, John DOKNJSAS, Josh SINANAN

Timur Gareyev.
Photo by Josip Asik.

20...Qf5! 21.Qxe3 fxe4 22.Qe2 Qxa4
22...Qc6
23.Qf1 b6
27.Qxe6 Qxe6 28.Qh3 Qxh1
29.Qxh1 axb6 30.Qc1 Qxc8 30...Qa1
31.Qd3 Qxc2 32.Qd1 Qf1 33.Qxc2
Qxh1 0-1
King's Indian Warfare
Ilya Smirin, Quality Chess
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328 pages, hardcover
$75

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$179.95
The best chess database in the world just got a whole lot better. Find out why the world champion and every top player doesn’t leave home without it.
TOURNAMENT REVIEW


SANTA CLARA, CA
September 3-5, 2016
Caltech State Championship (6 rounds)


HARTFORD, CT
September 23-25, 2016
7th Hartford Open (5 rounds)


ORLANDO, FL
September 23-25, 2016
14th Southern Class Championships (5 rounds)

1. Yans Richard GIRONES BARRIOS 4, 2-3. Aryam ABREU DELGADO, Rafael Felipe PRASACOSA SOKA 3½, 4-6. John G. LUDWIG, Jorge LEONOGUENDO, Ulises De COZAR 3, etc.

ARLINGTON, VA
October 5-10, 2016
3rd Washington Chess Congress (9 rounds)


Julio Sadorra 2573
Nicolas Checa 2420

Hartford 2016

1. d4 d5 2. c4 c6 3. cxd5 cxd5 4. dxe4 dxe5 6. f3 d6 7. wb3 4b4 8. a3 4xc3 9. bxc3 w7d7 10. w3f3 5e7 11. w3h4 4g6 12. w3xh6 4xg6 13. w3g3

33. wxf5+ exf5 33... wxe5 34. f6+ 34. exf6 35. h3 fx5 36. fx5 36. 4xg3 37. f4 38. xf4 39. wxe8 40. wxe8 1-0

CHESS.COM
BLITZ CHAMPIONSHIP
October 27, 2016

FINAL
CARLENS - NAKAMURA 14½: 10½

TOURNAMENTS from ABROAD

BIEL, Switzerland
July 23 - August 3, 2016
The 49th Biel Chess Festival (9 rounds)


Sam Shankland 2661
Ivan Saric 2660

Biel 2016

23. exf5 exf5 24. dxe6 w7f7 25. w7c2 w4g4 26. h3 w6h6 27. d4 wxe1 28. wxe1 wxe8 29. wxe8 w8c8 30. b5 w7f1 31. w7h4 w8g8

24. fxg6 w2d2 25. w7e7±
BOURNEMOUTH, UK
July 25 - August 5, 2016
The 103rd British Chess Championships
(11 rounds)

1. Michael Adams 10, 2. David Howell 8½,

CALGARY, Canada
July 27 - August 1, 2016
The Calgary International, (9 rounds)


Gata Kamsky 2660
Michael Bodek 2408
Calgary 2016

VLISSINGEN, Netherlands
August 6-13, 2016
The 20th Hogeschool Zeeland Tournament
(9 rounds)


Look Van Wely 2657
Eric Rosen 2385
Vlissingen 2016

RIGA, Latvia
August 8-14, 2016
The Riga Technical University Open (9 rounds)


Daniel Naroditsky 2646
Filip Cukowski 2381
Riga 2016

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.c3 b6 4.a3 bbd7 5.e3 6.0-0 0-0 7.bbd2 cxd4 8.exd4 e6 9.a4 d6 10.axb5 axb5 11.bxc6 dxc6 12.d4 d4 13.c3 0-0 14.b3 d5 15.a3 e5 16.b4 c7 17.c5 c6 18.a6 b8 20.e3 d6 21.f2 e7
TOURNAMENT REVIEW

Agen, France
August 13-21, 2016 cat. XIV (2587)
The 9th French Chess Championship

1. Matthieu CORNETTE 2581
   Christian Bauer 2620
   Agen 2016


BRUGES, Belgium
August 14-18, 2016
The Bruges Masters (9 rounds)

1. Vladimir EPISHIN 2557
   2. J. Alberto DAVID
   2557

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.d3 f6 4.e4 d3 5.c2 e7 6.b3 c6 7.b3 d6 8.b3 e5 9.c4 e7 10.d3 d7 11.e3 g4 12.f4 e5 13.g4 h5 14.e5 e7 15.e3 e5 16.xe5 dxe5 17.f2 e4 18.d2 d4 21.e1 c4 22.c2 d5 23.e4 24.e5 25.e5 26.e5 27.e5 28.e5

ABU DHABI, UAE
August 21-29, 2016
23rd Abu Dhabi Masters (9 rounds)

1. Dmitry ANDREIKIN 2573
   2. Baskaran ADHIBAN
   3. Alexander FREDIKE
   4. Saleh A. R. SALEEM
   5. Alexander ARESHCHENKO
   6. Bassem AMIN
   7. Alyaksandr LALITH
   8. Babu M. R.
   9. Eduardo ITTURRIZAGA BONELLI
   10. Andrey KASIMOV
   11. Andrey ZUZOV
   12. Boris SAVCHENKO
   13. Chopra ARYAN
   14. Hao WANG
   15. Peter PROHASZKA
   16. Ahmed ADLY
   17. Tamas BANUSZ
   18. Adwon LIANG
   19. Steven GEIRNAERT
   20. Lucas VAN FOREEST
   21. Thiabaud CARTIER
   22. Denis LUMINET
   23. Jan VANDENBERGHE
   24. Ben DECROPS
   25. Pieter TOLK
   26. Tijs ROCQUY

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.d3 f6 4.e4 d3 5.c2 e7 6.b3 c6 7.b3 d6 8.b3 e5 9.c4 e7 10.d3 d7 11.e3 g4 12.f4 e5 13.g4 h5 14.e5 e7 15.e3 e5 16.xe5 dxe5 17.f2 e4 18.d2 d4 21.e1 c4 22.c2 d5 23.e4 24.e5 25.e5 26.e5 27.e5 28.e5

35... f5? 35... b1+ 36. b2= 36. c3 b1+ 37. c4 f1+ 38. c5 f2+ 39. d5 h7 40. c7+ h6 41. xe5 xf3+ 42. d6 h7 43. b5 e4 44. e7+ 0-1

1. Vladimir EPISHIN 2557
   2. J. Alberto DAVID
   2557

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.d3 f6 4.e4 d3 5.c2 e7 6.b3 c6 7.b3 d6 8.b3 e5 9.c4 e7 10.d3 d7 11.e3 g4 12.f4 e5 13.g4 h5 14.e5 e7 15.e3 e5 16.xe5 dxe5 17.f2 e4 18.d2 d4 21.e1 c4 22.c2 d5 23.e4 24.e5 25.e5 26.e5 27.e5 28.e5

35... f5? 35... b1+ 36. b2= 36. c3 b1+ 37. c4 f1+ 38. c5 f2+ 39. d5 h7 40. c7+ h6 41. xe5 xf3+ 42. d6 h7 43. b5 e4 44. e7+ 0-1

1. Vladimir EPISHIN 2557
   2. J. Alberto DAVID
   2557

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.d3 f6 4.e4 d3 5.c2 e7 6.b3 c6 7.b3 d6 8.b3 e5 9.c4 e7 10.d3 d7 11.e3 g4 12.f4 e5 13.g4 h5 14.e5 e7 15.e3 e5 16.xe5 dxe5 17.f2 e4 18.d2 d4 21.e1 c4 22.c2 d5 23.e4 24.e5 25.e5 26.e5 27.e5 28.e5

35... f5? 35... b1+ 36. b2= 36. c3 b1+ 37. c4 f1+ 38. c5 f2+ 39. d5 h7 40. c7+ h6 41. xe5 xf3+ 42. d6 h7 43. b5 e4 44. e7+ 0-1
Grandmaster Insides  
Maxim Dlugy  
258 pages  € 27.95 - £ 24.00 - $ 31.50

Grandmaster Maxim Dlugy presents an overview of his Life in Chess and explains how he reached the World elite of Chess. He guides the reader into his kitchen of Chess and explains his way of thinking. We are convinced that his training methods will help many players to improve their level in Chess.

New Weapons in the King’s Indian  
Milos Pavlovic  
255 pages  € 27.95 - £ 24.00 - $ 31.50.

Grandmaster Milos Pavlovic investigated one of the most popular openings: the King's Indian. He focused on little explored and dynamic ways to counter the basic White systems. This is his second book for Thinkers Publishing and we are convinced that his new creative ideas will suit the Black player, avoiding all well-trodden paths.

The Correct Exchange in the Endgame  
Eduardas Rozentalis  
156 pages  € 19.00 - £ 15.00 - $ 21.00.

In his book GM Rozentalis looks at some of the most important questions: the connection between the opening and the endgame, when to exchange, bishops against knights, be patient or just simplify. He presents many examples from his own experiences where the reader is well guided and eventually is provided with a clear solution. This book is highly recommended to all players as well as anyone who is coaching.

The Taimanov Bible  
A complete manual for the Sicilian Player  
Ivan Ivanisevic, Milos Perunovic & Robert Markus  
358 pages  € 29.95 - £ 22.00 - $ 31.95.

The Taimanov has become one of the most popular and complicated Sicilian variations. Nearly all top players have made good use of this flexible and positional way of handling this Sicilian. Our Serbian authors have provided a complete manual with their extensive ‘over the board’ experience. Their many interesting combative new ideas tackle the most dangerous but also boring lines you may encounter.
Zaven ANDRIASIAN, CRG KRISHNA, Sergei AZAROV, Suri VAIBHAV 6, etc.

AMSTERDAM Netherlands
August 22-28, 2016 cat. XIV (2591)
The Dutch Championship


Baku, Azerbaijan
September 18-26, 2016
The Baku Open (9 rounds)


KHANTY-MANSIYSK, Russia
September 20 - October 4, 2016
The World Youth Championships

Open U-18 (65 players, 11 rounds)
1. Manuel PETROSYAN (ARM) 9, 2. Maksim VAVULIN (RUS) 8 1/2, 3-4. Shahin LORPARIZANGENEH (IRI), Dmitrij KOLLS (GER) 8, 5-7. Fy Antennaine RAKOTOMAHARO (MAD), Valentin DRAGNEV (AUT), Seyed Khalil MOUSAVI (IRI) 7 1/2, 8-12. Bilal BELAHCENE (FRA), Vahap SANAL (TUR), Alexander TIMERKHANOV (RUS), Lukasz JARMULA (POL), Brian ESCALANTE RAMIREZ (PER) 7, etc.

Open U-16 (88 players, 11 rounds)
1. Haik M. MARTIROSYAN (ARM) 9, 2. Olexandr TRIAPISHKO (RUS) 8 1/2, 3-7. Minh Thang TRAN (VIE), Timur FAKHRUDINOV (RUS), Robby KEVLISHVILI (NED), Leon LIVAIC (CRO), Mihnea COSTACHI (ROU) 8, 8-17. M. Amin TABATABAEI (IRI), Bahadir OZEN (TUR), Parham MAGHSAOODLOO (IRI), Zhandos AGMANOV (KAZ), Kaumandur SRIHARI RAGHUNANDAN (IND), Craig HILBY (USA), Arash TAHAZ (IRI), Paulius PULUTUREVICIUS (LTU), Saidakbar SAYDALIEV (UZB), Sergey LOBANOV (RUS) 7, etc.

Open U-14 (75 players, 11 rounds)
1-2. Semen LOMASOV (RUS), Andrey ESIPENKO (RUS) 9, 3-4. Nodirbek YAKUBBOEV (UZB), Sharif SARSEYAN (ARM) 8, 5-7. Pawel TECLAF (POL), David T. PENG (USA), P. INIYAN (IND) 7 1/2, 8-14. Chenvi ZHAO (CHN), Artur DAVTYAN (ARM), Felixiro FELIX (BEL), Kirill SHEVCHENKO (UKR), Viachaslau ZARUBITSKI (BLR), Danila PAVLOV (RUS), Velimir IVIC (SRB) 7, etc.

Girls U-18 (52 players, 11 rounds)
1. Stavroula TSOLAKIDOU (GRE) 9, 2-4. Alexandra OBOLENTSEVA (RUS), Michal LAHAV (ISR), Irina DROGOVOZ (RUS) 8, 5-6. Nino KHOMERIKI (GEO), Uurtsaikh UURIINTUYA (MGL) 7 1/2, 7-8. Khanim BALAJAYEVA (AZE), Ioana-Georgiana STANCIU (ROU) 7, 9-17. Siranush GHUKASYAN (ARM), Josefine HEINEMANN (GER), M. MAHALAKSHMI (IND), Sofiya KRASNOUKUSTSKAYA (UKR), Bakhor ABDUSATTOROV (UZB), Zalina LINGUR (RUS), Lilia Ivanova FUENTES GOYOD (MEX), Laura UNUK (SLO), Rahnedda FIADOSENKA (BLR) 6 1/2, etc.

Girls U-16 (58 players, 11 rounds)
1. AAKANKSHA HAGAWANE (IND) 9, 2-3. Mobina ALINASAB (IRI), Polina SHUVALOVA (RUS) 8 1/2, 4-5. Anna-Maja KAZARIAN (NED), Lan YAO (CHN) 8, 6-9. Danitza VAZQUEZ MACARRINI (PUR), Hong Ngoc NGUYEN (VIE), K. PRIYANKA (IND), Viktoria RADEV (BUL) 7, 10-18. Nilufar YAKUBBAEVA (UZB), Ivana HRESCAK (SLO), Battoojoo AMINA (MGL), Alicja SLIWICKA (POL), Arpina GRIGORYAN (ARM), Desiree DI BENEDETTO (ITA), Olena MARTYNYKOVA (UKR), Fiona SIEBER (GER), Anna AFONASIEVA (RUS) 6 1/2, etc.

Girls U-14 (71 players, 11 rounds)
1. Jiner ZHU (CHN) 8 1/2, 2-5. Aleksandra MALTSYEVSKAYA (RUS), Annie WANG (USA), Olga BADEVKA (BLR), VANTIKA AGRAWAL (IND) 8, 6-8. Gabriela ANTOVA

MOSCOW, Russia, September 26 - October 6, 2016 cat. XXI (2760)

10th Mikhail Tal Memorial

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DOUGLAS, UK
October 1-9, 2016
Isle of Man International, (9 rounds)

SOLUTIONS

Page 64

Two-mover:
1. ก a2! creates a zugzwang.
There is no threat after the key, but each one of Black's moves creates a weakness in his position.

Three-mover:
You are on your own and there are no witnesses, so you can be honest! You solved it? Great! You can be proud of yourself. If not, don't worry, many GMs couldn't do it either. Even an hour was sometimes not enough time for them.
The key move is: 1. ก a8! (first corner) White creates a threat of 2. ก b5+ ก b5 3. ก a1# (second corner). There is only one real defence against this:
1... ก c1! How has the position changed after this move?
2. ก h1!! (third corner) with the threat 3. ก h4#. What's going on? This is the first impression. Now we see if Black's queen takes our queen then the weakness of the e2 square plays a role (as the ก e1 no longer defends it). Of course, Black is not so naive, so he tries to avoid the danger by a safe move:
2... ก f4 Is it really safe? I guess you can see a mate from a fourth corner and you are now closer to understanding why I class chess compositions as poetry!

Page 127

01 1. ก h6! ก xh6 1... ก f8 2. ก xg7+! ก eg7 3. ก f6+ ก xh6 4. ก g6+ ก g6 5. ก d5+ ก h6 6. ก e4+ ก h5 7... ก xh5 2. ก h5 5. ก d5+ ก g6 6. ก f5+ ก g6 7. ก h5 дxe5 8. дd1 дd7 9. дe6 дe6 10. дд5+ дh6 11. дd5 дd8 12. дe5 дf7 13. дd6 1-0

02 1... дd8! -- 2. дg4 дh4 2... дf6 3. дf3 дd8 4. дh5 дf4 5. дg5 дf6 6. дxh6 дh1+ 7. дf2 дh2+ 8. дf1 дg3+ 9. дf1 дf4 0-1

03 1... дb3! 2. дg6 2. дxb3 дd3++ 2... дc3! 2... дb7 3. дe6! дa6 3. дe6! дe3 (3... дe3)? 4. дe6 5. дg8 6. дh6 7. дf5+ дd8 8. дd6 9. дd7 10. дf5+ дd8 11. дf6 12. дf7 13. дf6+ дd8 14. дf7+ дd8 15. дd7+ дd8 16. дd8 17. дf5+ дe8 18. дe8 19. дe8 20. дe8 21. дe8 22. дe8 23. дe8 24. дe8 25. дe8 26. дe8 27. дe8 28. дe8 29. дe8 30. дe8 31. дe8 32. дe8 33. дe8 34. дe8 35. дe8 36. дe8 37. дe8 38. дe8 39. дe8 40. дe8 41. дe8 42. дe8 43. дe8 44. дe8 45. дe8 46. дe8 47. дe8 48. дe8 49. дe8 50. дe8 51. дe8 52. дe8 53. дe8 54. дe8 55. дe8 56. дe8 57. дe8 58. дe8 59. дe8 60. дe8 61. дe8 62. дe8 63. дe8 64. дe8 65. дe8 66. дe8 67. дe8 68. дe8 69. дe8 70. дe8 71. дe8 72. дe8 73. дe8 74. дe8 75. дe8 76. дe8 77. дe8 78. дe8 79. дe8 80. дe8 81. дe8 82. дe8 83. дe8 84. дe8 85. дe8 86. дe8 87. дe8 88. дe8 89. дe8 90. дe8 91. дe8 92. дe8 93. дe8 94. дe8 95. дe8 96. дe8 97. дe8 98. дe8 99. дe8 100. дe8 101. дe8 102. дe8 103. дe8 104. дe8 105. дe8 106. дe8 107. дe8 108. дe8 109. дe8 110. дe8 111. дe8 112. дe8 113. дe8 114. дe8 115. дe8 116. дe8 117. дe8 118. дe8 119. дe8 120. дe8 121. дe8 122. дe8 123. дe8 124. дe8 125. дe8 126. дe8 127. дe8 128. дe8 129. дe8 130. дe8 131. дe8 132. дe8 133. дe8 134. дe8 135. дe8 136. дe8 137. дe8 138. дe8 139. дe8 140. дe8 141. дe8 142. дe8 143. дe8 144. дe8 145. дe8 146. дe8 147. дe8 148. дe8 149. дe8 150. дe8 151. дe8
01 What is the advantage of someone starting to play chess at an early age? When is it best to start? And for those who might be late in learning the game, are they able to get back on track to becoming a titled player? I think the biggest advantage is that youngsters start to enjoy chess as soon as possible! In terms of improving at the game, the earlier you learn, clearly the better your chances of fulfilling your potential, but I don’t think it is ever too late to start.

02 If there are three main departments of the game—opening, middlegame and endgame—what portion of our time should we spend on each? And what is the most important? You may find answers to these questions if you read my book, The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Chess! I am quite proud of this book: I put a lot of effort into writing it and, even though I say so myself, I really do believe that it is one of the best basic chess tutors out there. But to answer your question directly, there is no easy way to determine the amount of time you should spend on each phase. For the endgame, there is basic knowledge that is important to acquire and which can be learned with effort. Any serious player must eventually master essential endgame principles and procedures. For the opening, the most important thing is to have a complete repertoire and scheme of play that enables you to obtain positions in the middlegame which you like and can play well. Then you should improve your understanding of these middlegame positions in order to get the most out of them. One of the best ways to do this is to play through the games of top grandmasters who adopt the same openings as you. I remember, almost 25(1) years ago, I was working on the Meran Slav and I asked Anand how to master it. He told me to study the games of Ivanchuk and Bareev. Note that he did not tell me simply to copy them! He said study them in order to learn from them. I think that is very good advice. Then, once you have gained the necessary knowledge of opening and middlegame positions so as to play them well, it is up to you to figure out how to expand and/or deepen that knowledge. But keep studying endgames for the rest of your life, because you can never be too good at playing them!

03 From your own experience can you recall any specific type of opening position or endgame theme that an aspiring chess player should be sure to study because of its particular importance? You should feel comfortable with your choice of openings. Some people will do well to play the Dragon Sicilian, others the French Defense or the Petroff, for example. The most important thing is to recognize which opening variations best suit your style and then study them as diligently as you can. And, of course, your opening repertoire should be both sound and complete. As for the endgame, you just have to learn all of it! Endgames with king and pawn, rook and pawn, minor pieces, etc.

04 Twice US Champion GM PATRICK WOLFF

Not everyone can be a chess world champion. But how can chess be of benefit in life and business? Chess is very unusual in that it is completely fair. As Lasker famously said, “On the chessboard lies and hypocrisy do not survive long. The creative combination lays bare the presumption of lies; the merciless fact, culmination in checkmate, contradicts the hypocrites.” If you excel at chess, you will be more conscious of integrity. Your character will be further developed by your respect for the truth of chess and your acceptance of the real reasons why you win and lose at the game, as you look objectively at both the strengths and shortcomings of yourself and of others. Then, entering the wider world, you will see that lies and hypocrisy not only survive but often decide. This fact—that lies and hypocrisy are so prevalent in our world—necessarily causes a great deal of distress to all of us. But, because you have played chess, you will have a clearer perception of truth and fairness. When you experience the wonders of chess and understand that it is a beautiful fantasy—but only a fantasy—this can make it easier to cope with the limitations of living in the real world. Perhaps then you can accept life and business for what they really are. Of course, everyone knows, chess also strengthens your mind and increases your fighting spirit.

05 Why would you recommend chess to youngsters? What joys may they expect to experience on this thrilling journey, in addition to those you have mentioned in your previous answer? It is an endless arena of intellectual challenge, aesthetic beauty, and competitive excitement. That’s not bad for a game that at first sight seems so simple!
DON’T JUST PLAY, GET BETTER

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“I stay sharp using the tactics trainer on Chess.com.”

GM Hikaru Nakamura
From "A" for analysis to "Z" for zugzwang: there are in the new ChessBase 14 program a whole heap of improvements which make the entry and analysis of games all the more easy, as they do the production of training or practice material. The new function "Assisted Analysis" is an outstanding example: as you enter a game, whenever you click on a piece an evaluation is produced for all its possible target squares and this is highlighted on the board in colour. Thus even before you play it you can see whether there is a better move than the one you planned. This not only makes entering moves easy, but it also invites you to participate in subtle and continuous calculation training.

Also new in ChessBase 14 is the access to annotated games in the Live Database. In conjunction with a Premium Account you can even find complete analysis of many topical games from the elite tournaments. And because the Live Database has become more and more important in the search for comparable games, now as you play through a game ChessBase 14 updates the search results automatically on every move.

Other improvements: new game notation with diagrams and coloured highlighting in encapsulated variations, one login for all ChessBase servers (playchess, ChessBase Cloud, Let’s Check, ChessBase Accounts), analysis of a whole game with rapid error search, saving of the search mask, export of the diagram list as a Word document produces training material in a jiffy, automatic analysis jobs from correspondence games, simplified production of training questions, the search for similar structures now made interactive, replacing games in big databases considerably speeded up, improved search for doubles, easy use of tool to activate Fritz-Trainer and Engines, and much more.

THE NEW CHESSBASE 14 PACKAGES*

STARTER PACKAGE $215/189,90 €
- ChessBase 14 Program with access to the Live-Database (8 million games)
- Big Database 2017
- CBMagazine subscription for half a year (3 issues)
- Database-Update-Service through end of 2017
- Six months Premium membership for playchess and for the ChessBase Accounts

MEGA PACKAGE $315/279,90 €
- ChessBase 14 Program with access to the Live-Database (8 million games)
- Mega Database 2017
- CBMagazine subscription for a full year (6 issues)
- Database-Update-Service through end of 2017
- Full year Premium membership for playchess and for the ChessBase Accounts

PREMIUM PACKAGE $430/379,90 €
- ChessBase 14 Program with access to the Live-Database (8 million games)
- Mega Database 2017
- CBMagazine subscription for a full year (6 issues)
- Database-Update-Service through end of 2017
- Full year Premium membership for playchess and for the ChessBase Accounts
- Corr Database 2015
- Endgameturbo 4

UPDATE FROM CHESSBASE 13 TO CHESSBASE 14 $112/99,90 €
- ChessBase 14 Program with access to the Live-Database (8 million games)
- Three months Premium membership for playchess and for the ChessBase Accounts