AMERICAN CHESS MAGAZINE

AMERICAN GM IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Wesley
Winner of Wijk aan Zee & London

THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

THREE GRANDMASTERS EXPLAIN THE DRAMATIC RISE OF WESLEY SO:

IVAN SOKOLOV
WHY WESLEY WON WIJK

LEINIER DOMINGUEZ
WESLEY AHEAD OF MAGNUS

ALEX LENDERMAN
LAURELS IN LONDON

EXCLUSIVE: WOMEN’S WORLD CHAMPION HOYIFAN ON NAKAMURA’S WIN IN GIBRALTAR

NEW YORK
CARLSEN VS KARJAKIN
ANNOTATED BY ERNESTO NAKRIEV EUROPEAN CHAMPION

ALSO STARRING

JOEL BENJAMIN
Yasser Seirawan
Baadur Jobava
Rafael Leitao
Mackenzie Molner
Jaan Ehlvest
Denis Boros
Nikola Mitkov
Alejandro Ramirez
Carsten Hansen
Danny Rensch
Jon Edwards

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MIHAIL MARIN

THERE IS CHESS IN COLORADO!
Brian Wall & Lior Lapid

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World Rapid Champion

TEXAN LONE STAR SHINES IN EUROPE
Jeffrey Xiong
World Junior Champion

7 TIPS HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR CHESS!
Pontus Carlsson

QUEEN ENDINGS DEMYSTIFIED
Alex Fishbein

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PLAY IT AGAIN, SAM

Team USA member, GM Sam Shankland, has won the 3rd Chinggis Invitational tournament in Burlingame, CA. Sam topped the field of 10 with 7/9 leaving behind Shimano, Izoria, Xiong, Gareyev and other strong players. The final standings can be found in the Tournament Review section but here we present an interesting attacking game by the winner.

MATCH of the MILLENNIALS

The Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis (CCSCSL) will host a unique chess event where eight of America’s best juniors will face opponents from the rest of the world. In the event which takes place from July 26-29 there will be four players U-17 teamed up with two boys and two girls U-14. A respectable prize fund of $30,000 has been provided by the Saint Louis Chess Club.

ANNIVERSARY of the KCF

More than 2000 kids took part in three tournaments organized in New York, Chicago and Baltimore to celebrate the 15th year anniversary of the Kasparov Chess Foundation. Garry Kasparov himself visited the event in New York where he made the honorary first-move on several top boards. At KCF tournaments, everyone is a winner and all receive medals. The lessons learned at these events extend way beyond the chess board, as children carry the memories with them for life.

MAGNIFICENT TEN TO PLAY IN NORWAY

For the fifth edition of Altibox Norway Chess tournament, to be staged in Stavanger in June 5-17, the organizers have announced a line up of the world’s top ten players. This is certainly an achievement and will probably be the strongest tournament in several years with Carlsen, Caruana, So, Kramnik, Vachier-Lagrave, Anand, Aronian, Nakamura, Karjakin and Giri.

BLINDFOLD KING

GM Timur Gareyev set a new world record in Las Vegas by simultaneously playing 48 chess games blindfold. The record was previously held by German master Marc Lang who played two boards fewer in 2011. For 18 and a half hours, 28-year-old Gareyev never stopped pedaling his exercise bike and finished the simul scoring 38.5 points.

SAMFORD FELLOWSHIP FOR JEFFERY

World Junior Champion, GM Jeffery Xiong, has been awarded the 2017 Samford Fellowship, starting effectively from July 1. The purpose of the Fellowship is to assist the best young American chess masters by providing top-level coaching, strong competition and access to study materials. The total value of the Fellowship has been increased several times over the years and is now $42,000 annually. The prize is awarded for one year and can be renewed for a second year.
THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN’

Winning the gold medal at the recent Chess Olympiad may not have been the absolutely highest peak of US chess achievement but it has signalled the beginning of a new era. Hikaru Nakamura and Fabiano Caruana have already had the satisfaction of fully establishing themselves as top ranking world class players, but now it is Wesley So who is making a giant step forward. His successive elite tournament wins in London and Wijk aan Zee represented the big breakthrough he had been waiting for and which has now elevated him to superstar status. In the latter of these two events for the first time we witnessed an American player finishing ahead of the current world champion, not by pure chance but by sheer skill and steely determination. There is widespread opinion that the humble Wesley, guided by his Christian faith, has now emerged as a very serious rival to the world champion.

One thing is for sure: the chess world order has changed significantly over the past two or three years. Now we can realistically anticipate that there will not be just one American grandmaster challenging Magnus Carlsen in forthcoming events – but three! With his current heightened performances, Wesley has added a further rich ingredient to the Hikaru-Fabiano cocktail which has already provided such a boost of energy to US chess. Whether or not these two grandmasters really wanted another rival to join their ranks, such a phenomenon can only be good for all of them, as has been confirmed so many times before in other sports. In fact this was already borne out by Hikaru’s victory in the mighty Gibraltar Masters, which followed immediately after Wesley’s triumph in Wijk aan Zee. Whether they can all be friends as well as rivals, is another question. But undoubtedly when it comes to national pride this trio will never fail to put in maximum joint effort when competing for the US in any team events, as they did so brilliantly in Baku. Yet we must never forget that chess is first and foremost a competitive sport – one on one. And we all know both the joys and heartbreaks of full and honest competition.

The very fact of having three players in the world top ten, as well as custodians of the Olympiad trophy, makes the United States today’s leading chess superpower. There must be good work and smart decision-making behind every success, but until now American diplomatic influence has been rather estranged from the world chess family, with FIDE going its own way and doing its own thing for 22 years now – exactly the same length of time that Kirsan Ilyumzhinov has held the Presidency. However an American voice has at last been heard. In an open letter, Gary L. Walters, President of the US Chess Federation, has expressed growing disquiet at FIDE’s lack of responsiveness to America’s concerns as a member nation. He also questions FIDE’s economic health and even the problematic status of its president. The letter is concluded with a warning that “US Chess will not stand by and quietly watch as FIDE’s corporate and presidential conduct damages the game of chess”.

Yes, the times they are a-changin’ – and for the benefit of American chess.

Josip Asik, Editor-in-Chief
Born in the Philippines in 1993, Wesley So learnt chess when he was six, started competing when he was nine and became a grandmaster at the age of 14 – the ninth youngest GM in history. After moving to the US in 2012, the opportunity to play more and participate in stronger chess tournaments led to a marked increase in his playing strength. Today he is among the most serious contenders to threaten the supremacy of world number one, Magnus Carlsen.
IN THE SPOTLIGHT

THE RISE OF WESLEY SO

By winning the super-tournaments in Wijk aan Zee and London, the American grandmaster is now ranked world No.2.

By Josip Asik and Milan Dinic

From last December to January, while frenzied post mortems on the games of the recent world title match were still echoing around the world, Wesley was calmly winning two of the strongest elite tournaments in the annual chess calendar. There had already been a number of tell-tale signs over the preceding months that Wesley was significantly raising the level of his play, most notably by his performances in the Sinquefield Cup and Baku Olympiad — and even by virtue of his brutal 25 move sacrificial demolition of Garry Kasparov in the Ultimate Blitz Challenge in St.Louis. But who would have expected him within such a short space of time to score even greater successes which have unquestionably thrust him into the forefront of potential challengers for Magnus Carlsen’s crown.

In December, at the London Classic, which fielded a full complement of elite grandmasters, the 23-year-old took command with apparent ease and almost as if he had no real competition. This success was also rewarded with a rich prize for his overall victory in the annual Grand Chess Tour. By now, any doubters who thought that such extraordinary results were a fluke, just something that will inevitably happen every now and then, were given an almighty final wake-up call when Wesley raised the bar even higher by taking first prize, a point ahead of the world champion, in the traditional super-tournament in Wijk aan Zee.

We asked three grandmasters to explain the dramatic rise of Wesley So, based on analyses of his recent games. Ivan Sokolov is a former world class player, but nowadays a highly respected trainer and author. Leinier Dominguez is a very active grandmaster, presently ranked amongst the top twenty players in the world. Alex Lenderman was the coach of the victorious Team USA at the Baku Olympiad, where Wesley also won an individual gold medal for best overall performance on his board.

Wesley, Fabiano and Hikaru — fans across the USA believe now they have a trio that will bring a new wave of glory to American chess in years to come. Would you agree with such views?

Let’s hope it happens but how anyone can confidently predict the future surprises me. Life changes from day to day. No one can say what is coming tomorrow, never mind years from now. Anyway, in fact I think there will be more than just the three of us. We have many promising juniors.

How would you describe your professional relations with the other two great US representatives — in terms of playing together under the same flag and from the natural sporting and competitive side?

We have no problems with each other that I am aware of. We are chess professionals and respect what we do for a living. We go to work and do the best we can. It’s not personal.

What is your opinion about the playing styles of Fabiano and Hikaru?

They play to win and can play whatever “style” it takes to get the job done.

Have you noticed any new young players in the USA who could rise in the near future?

A lot of them. But much can happen to a player as he develops. At the very least they may find out that they can make more money using their skills in another job like finance. There is a lot of sacrifice in chess and it doesn’t suit everyone even if they have the skill set.
You have had astonishing results in recent tournaments. What is the source of all your energy?
I take good care of my health and have a disciplined lifestyle of work, study, exercise and good rest. Plus, I am well taken care of so I can focus primarily on chess.

Is your tremendous progress in chess due to what you learned in the Philippines or more recently in the US?
Neither, since I have had minimal chess instruction most of my life. I am not saying no one ever showed me things but I am hard to teach, so I studied mostly by myself until mid-2016, when I started working with coach GM Vladimir Tukmakov. We formalized that arrangement only in January 2017.

You were awarded the Samford Fellowship in 2016. How much difference has this made for you? Do you feel accepted in the US chess community?
It made a HUGE difference for me because it gave me confidence that other people believed enough in me to help me financially. Before Samford I supported myself by playing weekend tournaments whenever I could. The Samford Fellowship has helped me in every way not just financially. And yes I do feel accepted in the US. I am a Filipino-American who is proud of his birth culture and grateful to his adopted culture.

When preparing for games, do you rely solely on a computer or do you prefer to look at a chessboard?
I work with both of course, but I find I spend more time with my board. I like to feel the pieces in my hand and work out the lines by myself. It takes more time obviously but I enjoy playing chess so it’s not a problem. I basically use the computer just to check certain lines and maybe confirm my ideas. I think computers are what you make of them. They are inanimate objects until you turn them on. If you want to spend hours of the only live you have on them that is your decision. I just feel people should control their computers and not allow their computers to control them.

I am glad that more people can watch chess games from wherever they are but the computer age also brings out the worst in people. I don’t like it when anonymous cowards make nasty remarks about people they have never met and couldn’t play a 3 minute game if their life depended on it.

On average, how many hours a day do you spend on chess? How important is detailed preparation?
About 8 hours a day. Hmmm... sometimes it can feel like too much detailed prep is useless. You spend hours preparing and then the opponent chooses something you never even looked at. Better to spend time learning how to play chess well in any circumstance.

Do you feel ready to take on Magnus Carlsen?
I never feel ready to take on anyone. I go into each game just hoping for the best no matter who I’m playing! Sometimes lower rated players can pull unpleasant surprises. Sometimes higher rated players aren’t in form. Life is strange and weird things happen all the time. Better just to live the part you’re in, instead of wondering about parts of it you may never reach.

What can chess stars do to popularize chess in a wider way?
Well, chess players aren’t by nature the most socially mature people but I guess most of us try our best. I am always willing to visit schools and do whatever organizers ask for in tournaments. I do believe it is important to help the sponsors and also encourage the next generation of chess kids. Chess might be the tool to develop them and raise their ambitions in life.

How do you like the American Chess Magazine?
Absolutely! I saw a copy of this in London and it was really excellent. We were amazed at how nice it was.
Why Wesley Won Wijk
He delivered it all—And when things went wrong he put them right!

By GM Ivan Sokolov

Wijk aan Zee 2017 ended in a deserved win by a one point margin for Wesley So, thereby marking his first triumph at perhaps the world’s toughest chess contest.

This 13 round tournament is longer than most other such events and to deliver a top-class result requires energy, first rate preparation, mental and physical endurance, as well as other positive aspects of strong character.

And Wesley So delivered it all, performing even more effectively than he did in his already successful showing here the previous year. Winning the tournament a full point ahead of the world champion definitely places Wesley in the ranks of the very few other serious challengers for the world title.

Opening preparation by the top guns in Wijk frequently revealed offbeat ideas to exploit the element of surprise, e.g. 6.a3 against the Najdorf Sicilian played in Carlsen–Wojtaszek; 8.a3 Catalan in Aronian–Giri, 9.e1 against the Queen’s Indian in Aronian–Rapport, etc. Wesley himself adopted a similar approach in the following game:

As a former top player, grandmaster Ivan Sokolov has won many tournaments, his most notable success on US soil being a win in the World Open in Philadelphia 2012. In Moscow 1994, he won the silver Olympiad 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.

He has authored a number of best selling chess books: Winning Chess Middlegames, Sacrifice & Initiative, Ivan’s Chess Journey and the latest one Chess Middlegame Strategies.
I guess that after this game, the other main line, 7...cxd4, will now grab the attention of top players. It is another logical continuation which has been seen in a number of recent high level games where White has had difficulty in proving he has anything special to offer. Probably Wesley had found a small improvement somewhere that was good enough for pressure in a one-off game. For readers interested in the theory of this position, I will present a few recent top class games. 8...dxd4
A) 8...e5 had previously been Black's main move and indeed was the world champion's choice in a fairly recent rapid game. Black occupies space in the center, but in doing so concedes some squares.
Play then becomes rather dynamic: 9...f5 d4 10...xe7+...xe7 11...g5 h6 12...xf6...xf6 13...d2 &f5 14...h3...d7 15...d5 b6 16...c1...c8 17.b4 a5 18.c5!

This probably leads to an advantage for White. After 9...xc6 bxc6 10.b3...a6 11...b2...c8 12...d2 White will push e2-e4, so Black needs to react in the center by 12...d4.
B1) One spectacular top level rapid game went 13...e1 e5 14.g3 e5 15...f3...d5 16...d1...c8 17.exd4 cxd4 18...g5
B1a) 18...g6? Now White displays textbook play in launching a winning attack and leading to a spectacular finish: 19.f4!...e5 20...d2...b6 21.fxe5!+-...h4 (21...d3+ 22...h1...g4 23...e4++)
22...f2...xe1 23...xe1

Now Black is at a crossroads, having to choose between two main lines.
7...c6 Radek chooses the same move against which he himself, playing White, could not achieve anything in a recent game against Kryvoruchko. It is quite possible that because of that game Wesley had anticipated his opponent's choice.

A1) And in this highly tactical position Magnus made the losing error 18...a6??, after which White gained a decisive material advantage by 19...c4...e6 20...d6 in L.Aronian (2826) - M.Carlsen (2872), Zurich 2014.
A2) But instead 18...b5! was the way to go. It leads to an exchange of tactical blows: 19...c4...xb4 20...d5...xc5! 21...xf5 e4! (21...e5a8 22...a4!...bxa3 23...c6...c4 24...xd7+ a2?? 25...b7) 22...xe4 (22...h3...c6/7 and because of the pin on the c-file Black gets his piece back with advantage: 23...xe4...xe4 24...xd7+...c8 25...xf7+...xf7 26...d6+...e6 27...c5...xf6 28...xb8...xe2 22...xc4 23...xc4...xc4 24...xb7...b8 and a draw looks the most likely outcome.
B) 8...c6
The diagonals leading to the black king are open and White has a mating attack! 23...d3 24.d4 e8 25.cxf7!+ g4 (25...gxf7 26.d5+) 26.f4 a5 27.f1 b8 28.e6 h5 29.xg4! 1-0 V.Ivanchuk (2740) - V.Kramnik (2790), Monte Carlo 1998.

B1b) But 18...b6∞ is an improvement on Black’s play.

B1b1) 19.d5 is a blank shot: 19.e8 (20.d3 20.e5 h6 20.g6.

B1b2) Then 19.e5 19...b7 20.xb7 e8 21.f4 e5 22.dxe4 dxe4 23.xe4 e4 24.e4 exf4 and if anyone is better, it is Black.

B2) 13.e3 c5 14.e3 dxe3 15.a6! Now White has a strong initiative...

C) 8...b6! 9.d1 (The material imbalance resulting from 9.e3 c5 10.d3 d4 11.e4 dxe3! 12.xb6 d6 b6 suits Black fine) 9...c6 10.c6.


C2) 10...c6

C2a) Now 11.a3 a3 12.bxa3 xc4 13.xc4 dxc4 14.a4 (It looks like 14.d4 leads to a draw after 14...c3 15.e4 d7 16.xc3 d5=) 14...d7 15.a3

How should Black recapture?

C1) In fact either way looks okay, taking with the queen being the modern choice, although Khalifman preferred 10...c6 11.d3 a6

C1a) However, as the only way for White to obtain an edge is to maintain the central pressure, he could try to improve here with 12.a4 b4 (12...b7 13.b3) 13.b5 dxc4 14.d2 b5 15.b2! cxb3 16.axb3 d6 17.c4.

C1b) 12.e3 b7 13.cxd5 cxd5 and the game is dead equal 14.d4 a8=

8.dxc5 Upon 8.cxd5 Black is fine after either 8...dxd4 or 8...b4.

8...d4

8...a5 10.d1 The pin on the d-file provides White with pressure and different motifs. 10.e3 d3 has been seen in grandmaster practice and is good for Black.

10...e5 After 10...c5 White seizes the initiative with 11.e3 d7 11.b4 e4 12.b5 c5 13.exd4 cxd4 14.dxc5 15.e2 d8 16.e3 f6 17.e5 (17.g5 g6 18.b2∞), for example, 17...d8??

9.a3 The above-mentioned Wojtaszek game with the white pieces went 9.g5 d7 10.e6 d7 11.e7 e7 12.b4 e4 12.b5 c6 13.e4 14.xd4 e3 15.b2 d8 16.e3 f6 17.e5 (17.g5 g6 18.b2∞), R.Wojtaszek (2729) - Y.Kryvoruchko (2682), Poland 2016.

9...a5 10.d1 The pin on the d-file provides White with pressure and different motifs. 10.e3 d3 has been seen in grandmaster practice and is good for Black.

10...e5 After 10...c5 White seizes the initiative with 11.e3 e7

12.e4! (12.b5 has been tested in practice with an unclear game arising after 12...e5 13.g5 h6 14.b6 f6 15.c7 f5∞ in A.Baryshpolets (2540)

- P.Smirnov (2611), Baku 2014) 12...e5 12...e5 16.b3 c4 17.f4 g5 18.b5 and the complications look favourable for White: 18.e7 19.d7 20.b5 21.e4 d7 22.d1 13.c5 a7 14.d2 h6 15.axf6 xf6 16.c5 11.e3 c5 12.e5 h6

13.d2! A novelty 13.b3 e6 14.e4
15...\*xa4! 16.\#dc1 b5 17.\#xa8 \#xa8\# was L.Aronian (2780) - V.Anand (2804), Stavanger 2015, which Black eventually won.

**C2b** 11.\#g5 also does not seem to bring White any advantage. 11...h6! Anand sacrifices a pawn to obtain the bishop pair and active play: 12.\#xf6 \#xf6 13.\#a3 \#d7 14.\#b1 \#c8 15.\#d3 \#d8 16.cxd5 \#a4 17.\#d2 (17.d6 b5\#)

17.b5 18.\#bd1 exd5 19.\#xd5 \#c6 20.e4\# was H.Nakamura (2793) - V.Anand (2803), London 2015. But instead Black could get sufficient compensation for the pawn by 17...exd5! 18.\#xd5 \#e6 19.e4 \#c5 20.\#f3 \#xd5 21.exd5 b5\#.

It would be interesting to know what Wesley had prepared in these 7...cxd4 lines!

\#g4 15.\#f1 \#c8 16.\#d3 \#e8\# led to a dynamically balanced position in V.Mikhailovsky (2523) - L.Gerzshoy (2245), Tel Aviv 2001.

13...a4 13...a7 14.e4\!, with \#e1-\#d3 to follow, looks good for White.

14.\#b4

A critical moment. Wesley was playing quickly and was definitely still in his

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**Individual focus on chess study, with few distractions, and apparently without much assistance. Reminiscent of Bobby Fischer.**

**Carry on, please, with what you have been doing!**

**Outstanding game commentary, based on in depth understanding, with occasional explanations for players below master strength.**

*Paul G. Matthews, Bridgewater, NJ*

**Hard work plus a false sense of empowerment based on his religious beliefs.**

**A World Championship!**

**Just continue doing what he is doing now.**

*Peter Cuneo, Albuquerque, NM*

**Relaxed concentration and a great relationship with God.**

**I want to see him play for the World Championship.**

**Must get TV time and large sponsorship.**

*Greg Cimmarrusti, Woodstock, GA*

**Hard work, persistence, humility.**

**Keep on being a good guy!**

**Win more tournaments and conduct clinics for children and youth.**

*Brad Victoriano, West Hills, CA*

---

**He has made several wise decisions, especially seeking support from the United States.**

**You've developed a careful style that seems to be working, but part of your charm is your ability to play sharply and entertain the fans.**

**Winning the World Championship would do the trick.**

*Ben Crane, Ithaca, NY*

---

**Well deserved. He has an explosive style and finds novelties in positions that have already been extensively analyzed.**

**Not to focus on the World Chess Championship, but instead in playing exciting games that inspire other players to work on their game.**

**Simultaneous matches are always exciting.**

*Andrew Slaughter, Ladson, SC*

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**His dedication to the game, the support of Rex Sinquefield and Mr. So's religion.**

**The road is long and rocky. Don't get discouraged by setbacks or disappointments, it will just make the ultimate victory sweeter.**

**Lots of simul! That is by far the best way to get the news out. The public is fascinated by them.**

*John R. Teixeira, Charlottesville, VA*
home preparation. White is developing an initiative and so Black now has to make difficult over-the-board choices! 14...@xb4?! It may sound strange, but this will prove to be a serious mistake. Well, that's the way it seems to me anyhow. Wesley duly takes the initiative and with a steady hand simply grinds down his opponent! From now on it is hard to give Black any worthwhile advice.

14...@d6? maintaining the center, was an option. Though it may look a bit passive, it is far from easy to achieve something tangible with White. Upon 15...a2d6 @xd6 16...a2d2 comes 16...@e8 with ...@e6 to follow, although it is interesting that my computer engine is not worried about the kingside pawn structure and evaluates the position equal even after the immediate 16...@e6 17...xf6+ gxf6=. Undoubtedly Wesley had done some homework on this line!

Another option for Black was to seek dynamic counterplay with 14...@xb4 15.axb4 @d6 16.@xa4.

Then 16...@f5 17...xf6+ @xf6 18.@b3 @d4=.

15.axb4 @xd5 16.bxc5 @b4 17...@d2 @c6

18.b4! White's intended pawn push to b5 becomes an ongoing and nasty threat!

18...@e7 19...@b2 @g4 20...@e1=\+

Preparing @d2.

20...@d8 20...f5, intending to push ...e5-e4 and close the h1-a8 diagonal, was a possibility, but it is a long way from solving Black's problems, providing White proceeds correctly.

True, Black gets what he wants upon 21...@d2 e4 22...f3?! @h5 23...xe4 @f4=, a standard Benoni-type pawn sacrifice giving Black a kingside attack; or 21...@b5 @d8 22...e3 @xf3 23...xf3 e4! 24...x@e6 @xf6 to follow, recovering either the d4 or c5 pawn and seizing the initiative.

But after 21...@h4! @h7 22.b5 @d8 23...h5 24...@a3 White has different motifs ranging from @xf5 or c6, and Black's position remains difficult.

21...@d2 @e6 21...@d3 22.e3 doesn't solve anything for Black, as his passed d-pawn is going nowhere.

22.b5 @e8 23...@e4 @f5 23...@d7 simply loses a pawn for nothing 24...@b7 @x@a7 25...@c6 @xc5 26...@xa4=.

24...@b3!

31...@c1! The move Wesley needed to see when playing 26...@a4=!. Now White ends up with an extra piece.

31...@e6 32...@e8 @xc8 33...xc8 @xc8 34...b6 White's passed b-pawn will cost Black his bishop.

Black resigned

Of course any tournament winner needs a slice of good luck and Wesley was certainly blessed with this in his game against Richard Rapport, whose brilliant play did not receive its just reward.

E18

Wesley So 2808
Richard Rapport 2702

Round 3, Wijk aan Zee 2017

1...@f3 @f6 2.g3 b6 3.d4 @b7 4.c4 e6 5...g2 @e7 6.0-0 0-0 7...c3 @e4 8...d2 @f6 9...c1 @d1 10...xd2 @d6
11...e5 @e7 12...@d7 13...d4 a5 14...@c3 @c5 15...@g2 @c8 16...@h1 @xh3+ 17...@xh3 @d7

A standard pawn structure for this type of Queen's Indian. Wesley gets hold of the wrong idea to advance his g-pawn, as in certain King's
Indian type of positions. Related to this plan, White's problem is that his dark-squared bishop has been traded for a black knight and so his own dark square weaknesses will be acutely felt! Once White pushes g3-g4 Black's dark-squared bishop will dominate the h5-c1 diagonal.

18...h2 18...e1 e7 19.d3 would have been positionally more sound.

18...h5

19.f3 Most likely Wesley pondered over 19.e2 g6 20.g4 hxg4 21.exg4 g7∞ but could not find a good way to develop his kingside attack.

19...g6 20.g4

With his last three moves White has taken a huge positional risk. The dark squares in his camp are weak and should the black bishop get active it will become a monster. The next part of the game Rapport plays excellently and in very instructive text book style.

20...h7 21.h1 g8 22.d1 g7!

Bringing the bishop to an active position or else provoking White to push g4-g5.

23.f1 h6 24.f2 In the case of 24.g5 f8 (or 24...g7 and 25...f6) 25.e3 e7 with ...f6 to follow, a white pawn on g5 or h4 will become a target and Black will also take control of the f-file.

24...c1!
Now comes a nice pawn sacrifice. 28...f5! 29.hxg6+ hxg6 30.Qxf5 Qag8. For the price of a pawn, Black has full control of the g-file, and is ready to penetrate White’s second rank with ...Qg2.
31.Qf1

Faced with a bad situation, Wesley sacrifices a pawn in the hope of creating confusion on the kingside.
25.Qg3 25.b3 would have led to a strong Black attack after 25...b2 26.Qb5 (26.Qe2? hxg4) 26...f5, when the f-file opens in Black’s favor, after which the white king becomes an easy target.
25...Qxb2 26.Qb5

Now comes a star move, keeping up the momentum of the attack!
31...b5!!++ New diagonals leading to the white king will be opened or else White will have to move his knight back to b5, far away from the defence of his king. On the other hand, 31...Qg2 would have allowed White to consolidate with 32.Qe2! b5 33.Qxf4 exf4 34.Qh2∞.
32.Qxb5 32.Qxb5 loses to 32...Qg2 33.Qc3 Qd2 and 34.Egg2; or 32.Qe2 bxc4 33.Qxf4 exf4++ with ...Qb5 to follow.
32...Qg2 33.Qb1

26.Qc1! Keeping control of the important h6-c1 diagonal. Most probably Richard had already seen 28...f5! here and went for it! From a player as reckless as Rapport, one could have easily expected 26...Qa8 27.Qxb5 f5 28.Qxg6+ Qxg6 29.exf5 Qxf5, 30.Qc2 (30.Qxf5 Qxf5+) 30...e4 31.Qxe4 Qxe4+ 32.Qxe4 Qe5=. 27.Qxb5 Qf4! White needs pieces to defend his king, so he brings back his knight from b5.
28.Qc3

Richard Rapport, Wijk aan Zee 2017. Photo by Maria Emelianova

After totally outplaying So, Rapport fails to deliver the final deadly blow...
33...Qf7? The relatively straightforward and rather logical 33...Qd2, threatening 34.Egg2, was an easy win: 34.Qe2 (34.Qg1 Qg1+ 35.Qg1 Qg8+ 36.Qh1 Qd3) 34...Qd3 (threatening 35...Qxb5!) 35.a4 35...c6++ and the black queen decisively joins the attack.

There was also a visually beautiful win with 33...Qb1!!

This allows the black queen to decisively enter the fray! 34.bxc6 (34.Qxc6 Qa7 35.b6 Qa6+ 36.Qb5 Qd3! 37.Qxa6 Qf2; 34.Qe2 Qa7 35.Qxf4 Qd3++ 36.Qxd3 Qg1+ 37.Qxg1 Qxg1+ 38.Qe2 Qg2+) 34...Qa7 with 35...Qd3 and a quick mate to follow.
34.Qe2!
34...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{\textit{g6}}} Once given a chance, Wesley quickly turns the tables! Black could still have played 34...c6\textcolor{red}{\textbf{\textit{x}}}. 35.e7!+\textcolor{red}{\textbf{\textit{xf2}}} 36.e2f2 \textcolor{red}{\textbf{\textit{g2}}} 37.e1g3 38.e3g3! \textcolor{red}{\textbf{\textit{xd1}}}+ 39.e1g1 \textcolor{red}{\textbf{\textit{xf3}}} 40.e5f4! \textcolor{red}{\textbf{\textit{e3}}}+ 41.e2f3 d3+ 42.e3d3! 42.e1f2+ 43.e1d3+. 42...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{\textit{xd3}}} 

43.e8! Black now suddenly finds his king in a mating net! 43...\textcolor{red}{\textbf{\textit{f3}}} 44.h5! e8 45.g6 h1+ 46.d2 e4 47.f6 b4+ 48.e3 Black resigned

The other game where Wesley was in danger featured the evergreen King’s Gambit. His opponent, Baskaran Adhiban, came well prepared for the first super tournament of his career, played interesting dynamic chess and scored a great result.

\textbf{C33}

\textbf{Baskaran Adhiban} 2653
\textbf{Wesley So} 2808

Round 6, Wijk aan Zee 2017

1.e4 e5 2.f4!? Surprised by the King’s Gambit, Wesley reacts just like most other top players would... 2...exf4 3.f3

Working with Vladimir Tukmakov has helped him improve and given him greater confidence, and now he’s not afraid of anybody!

Maintain his confidence / fearlessness, so that he can win the Candidates tournament, and challenge Magnus for the world title!

He has already done a lot... if he can continue to improve, and become the #1 ranked player in the world, and/or win the world championship, that will definitely promote the popularity of chess in the United States.

\textbf{Kevin Wilson, San Diego, CA}

Dedicated to improving results; outstanding character traits; faith in the LORD.

Upgrade in coaching to achieve the next level; getting even better in rapid and blitz; endgame and positional understanding.

Just winning and winning. We always like winners.

\textbf{Rafael Cuellar, Fullerton, CA}

Hard work and dedication paying off.

Whatever training techniques you’re applying – keep 'em up!

Become the next World Champion from the U.S.

\textbf{Jorge Amador, Doylestown, PA}

Good training and natural talent.

World champion.

More access in open events.

\textbf{Frank Johnson, Atlanta, GA}


Keep up his great progress and maturity and evaluation of complex positions. Win won games.

Visit chess clubs. Offer signed photos of Wesley and framed signed photos of team from recent Chess Olympiads 2016. Fans would buy these.

\textbf{Frank Tortorice, Burlingame, CA}

So stays away from the limelight that distracts other players. That keeps him focused on his game.

Magnus' brilliance is undeniable, but don't get distracted by it. Trust in your own brilliance, focus, and be ready for the big showdown.

The biggest thing any of the three Americans in the Top 10 could do to promote chess in the US is become world champion. It's going to take success at that level to capture top-level media.

\textbf{Dallin Atkinson, Kaysville, UT}
A critical moment. Though White is a pawn up, Black is hoping to recoup his material deficit by exploiting the fact that the white king is still in the middle of the board. Nevertheless it seems that White now misses his chance for a serious advantage.

11...\(\text{d3}\) By playing 11...\(\text{d3}\), which prepares \(\text{d2}\) with 0-0-0 to follow, White could have remained a sound pawn up and made it hard for Black to save the game after 11...\(\text{fxe5}\) (11...\(\text{c6}\) 12.\(\text{d2}\)) 12.\(\text{dxe5}\) \(\text{b4}\) + 13.\(\text{d2}\) \(\text{xd2}\) + 14.\(\text{xd2}\) \(\text{a5}\) + 15.\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{d8}\) + 16.\(\text{d3}\).

11...\(\text{fxe5}\) Black still has to be careful, but the worst is probably over for him.

6...\(\text{d6}\) Protecting the f4-pawn by 6... \(\text{g5}\) has also been tested in practical play and proved to be better for White after 7.\(\text{h4}\) \(\text{e6}\) 8.\(\text{hxg5}\) \(\text{xd5}\) 9.\(\text{exd5}\) \(\text{wxg5}\) 10.\(\text{xf3}\) \(\text{a6}\) 11.\(\text{d4}\) \(\text{b4}\) 12.\(\text{xf4}\) \(\text{f5}\).

A) Now, instead of 13.\(\text{e5}\) \(\text{xc2}\+) 14.\(\text{d1}\) (14.\(\text{f2}\)+) 14...\(\text{g8}\) 15.\(\text{xf5}\) \(\text{xe3}\+) 16.\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{xf5}\), as seen in A.Pridorozhni (2523) - L.Fressinet (2706), Moscow 2013, White could have already obtained a winning advantage with:

B) 13.\(\text{h5}\) \(\text{g6}\) 14.\(\text{f6}\) \(\text{xc2}\) 15.\(\text{e5}\+) \(\text{e7}\) 16.\(\text{d1}\)++ as the black king is stuck in

16.0-0 Adhiban was probably in no mood to delay casting any longer,
although 16...\texttt{c}c5?! could also have been considered, e.g. 16...\texttt{b}b5 17.\texttt{x}xb5 \texttt{c}xb5 18.\texttt{xb}7\texttt{z}.
16...\texttt{a}a6 17.\texttt{a}ad1 \texttt{d}d7 18.\texttt{d}d4 \texttt{c}5

19.\texttt{f}2 The flashy 19.\texttt{g}5?! does not promise much after 19...\texttt{g}6! when it is probably advisable for White to force a draw with 20.\texttt{e}e3 \texttt{d}d3 21.\texttt{b}xd3 \texttt{e}xe5 22.\texttt{f}f7! \texttt{d}d7 23.\texttt{d}d4+ \texttt{h}h8 24.\texttt{f}f7+ \texttt{g}8 25.\texttt{h}h6+ =.
19...\texttt{c}xe5 20.\texttt{h}xe5 \texttt{c}xe5 21.\texttt{f}f3 \texttt{e}4

Now it is actually Black who is doing the pressing! However, more pieces are about to be exchanged, leaving the position rather arid and this very interesting game ending peacefully.
22.\texttt{h}h3 \texttt{d}xd3 23.\texttt{b}bxd3 \texttt{e}xa2 24.\texttt{d}xc5 \texttt{w}xb2 25.\texttt{d}xa7 \texttt{d}xc3 26.\texttt{d}d2 \texttt{e}e5 27.\texttt{b}b1 \texttt{a}a2 28.\texttt{h}xb7 \texttt{f}f8 29.\texttt{f}f3+ \texttt{w}xb3 30.\texttt{f}f3+ \texttt{a}a2 31.\texttt{f}d3 \texttt{f}f3 32.\texttt{f}f3 \texttt{f}f7 33.\texttt{d}d4+ 34.\texttt{d}d1 \texttt{d}d2 35.\texttt{f}f4 \texttt{e}e2 36.\texttt{d}d1 \texttt{c}3 37.\texttt{d}d3 \texttt{b}4 38.\texttt{d}d4 \texttt{c}5 39.\texttt{d}d2

**Draw**

It seems comparatively unprecedented to improve so much in such a short time. Such a big jump to world class player seems to occur in a player’s teens these days.

Don’t relax, but play in more open events in the US so your fans can get to know you.

Give simul / lectures.

Edward Frumkin, New York, NY

I don’t know enough about him, but would like to see him take the title of World Champion.

We have not had an American Champion since Bobby Fischer, so I am wanting to see more Americans reach the upper pinnacles of Chess.

Do simultaneous exhibitions around the country and do promotional speeches as well around the country. Get the American media more involved. There is more to sports than just football, baseball and basketball.

Martie M. Watkins, Brandon, MS

Immense talent, hard work, faith in God….not necessarily in that order.

A humble World Champion!

For now, keep winning! After becoming World Champion, a simul/lecture tour across a USA!

James V. Rohrbaugh, Kerrville, TX

He is a relatively unknown great player.

Remain calm and collected about what’s going on right now and keep focusing on improving.

Play simul and interact more with his fans.

Steve Chilson, Dumfries, VA

Dedication, skill and trusting Jesus.

Keep on learning – never give up on learning.

Needs to be addressed in school curriculum more like it is happening in Africa.

John Walsh, La Crescenta, CA

It reminds me of Bobby Fischers’ statement when he remembered his age between 12 to 14 years old, "one day I just got good!"

Study the classics especially the world championships. Dvoretsky's books with his pupils Yusupov and Aagaard. Particular attention should be paid to the works of Kasparov, especially his matches with Karpov.

When possible, go to the major tournaments and speak of the greats and why they were great and give simul and lectures.

Rick Rome, Lancaster, CA

Talent and hard work.

Stay single. Seriously.

Tell kids that chess is super exciting.

Pawel Meczzen, Gold River, CA
2016 was a formidable year for Wesley So, the best in his career to date. Now 2017 has begun in the best possible way. Will he be able to keep up his pace and consolidate his position in the Top 3? Let's wait and see, but I think he will!

All my chess encounters with Wesley took place in 2014. We alternated victories, I was able to win in Wijk aan Zee while some months later he beat me in the Capablanca Memorial, in a game that was perhaps the most interesting of the three we have played. This game was also decisive for his final victory in the tournament.

I always considered him a player of exceptional talent and a quite original style of play, that's why I was not surprised when he began moving up in the world rankings until arriving at the super-elite.

From our games in 2014 I had the impression that, if he improved his openings which were perhaps not completely solid (at least for the highest level), he could become one of the strongest players in the world. And this is something that has actually happened – most noticeably in the last year.

I read that only recently had he begun to devote himself completely to chess and to work with a trainer. It appears quite clear that this has borne fruit very quickly for the young grandmaster.

I also read with great pleasure that he always gives glory to God for his accomplishments and that he wants to honor him with his chess career and his life in general. Being a Christian myself I think that we share not only a passion for chess, but also a much greater passion for the glory of Christ.

I invite the reader to take a look at two of his wins in Wijk aan Zee 2017...

Leinier Dominguez is a Cuban grandmaster, currently world #21 in classical, #6 in rapid, and #11 in blitz chess. He has played in all the Chess Olympiads since 2000, winning silver medal on 1st board in Baku 2016. He has won the Cuban Championship five times. He was World Blitz Champion in 2008 and has won many international tournaments such as the Capablanca Memorial in 2004, 2008 and 2009, and Thessaloniki Grand Prix in 2013, among others. He reached the quarter finals of the World Championship in Tripoli 2004 and had highest ever ranking as #10 in the world in 2014.
Being a Christian myself, I read with great pleasure that Wesley always gives glory to God for his accomplishments.

Leinier Dominguez
D73

Wesley So  2808
Pentala Harikrishna  2766

Round 5, Wijk aan Zee 2017


Nepomniachtchi played 14...Nd4 to defend the pawn on d6. After 15.Rac1 a5 16.Qb5 b6 17.Bb2 Qc7 18.Nc3 bxc3 19.bxc3 b6 20.Qa4 White’s advantage was beyond any doubt, Kramnik converted to a win after 55 moves.

15.a5! Of course.

15...Nbd7 16.a4 c4 So quietly completes the mobilization of his whole army before taking concrete action. He is in no hurry to capture the pawn as it will fall anyway. Whether it was the way Nepomniachtchi played, or the way Harikrishna is playing in this game, Black’s pieces have clear problems getting properly coordinated.

16...Nd8 17.Nc5 Nbc6 18.Qe2 Nde5 already is probably stronger.

18...Qc5

19.Qxd5! Non-standard concrete play. It surrenders the bishop pair, but the knight arriving at d5 will be able to finally land on c7 with strong threats. In case of 19.Qxc5 Qxc5 20.Qxe5 Qxe5 21.Qxe5 White’s prospects of obtaining an advantage are less clear.

19...Qd6 20.Qxd6 Qe4 Now one of the main differences can be appreciated: 20...Qd7? 21.Qb6! Qxd6 22.Qxe8.

After a series of exchanges the position has stabilized. The material balance is quite unusual: two bishops, one knight and one pawn vs. rook and two knights. In such an open position, the bishops are particularly effective. Perhaps objectively it can be said that the compensation should be enough for drawing the game, but in practice Black has to be very careful and avoid many tactics before bringing home half a point.

When seeing this position I could not help recalling my game vs. Buhmann in Dortmund last year. After 20 moves we reached the following position:

Rainer Buhmann  2653
Leinier Dominguez  2713
Dortmund 2016

The material balance is similar although here the white pieces are more actively placed. I had to defend for a very long time, finally achieving a draw 57(!) moves later. 21.Qe6 Qxa2 22.Qxe7 Qb4 23.Qd7 Qd5 24.Qd6 a5 etc.

28.Qb4? A mistake. The knight was perfectly placed on c6 where it attacked the weak pawn on a5 and prevented
the penetration of the white rook to the seventh rank. Moves like 28...f5 or 28...c2 were good enough.

29...b6 30.e4 c6 31..xb7 
\(\text{32...d7!}\)

32...c6 After 32...xb6 33..xd3 Black will lose the a-pawn by force. Then the endgame, \(\text{\textbullet+\textbullet} \) vs. \(\text{\textbullet+\textbullet}\) with three pawns each on one flank, should be a technical win, although a good amount of work would still be needed.

33...b3 f5? This makes things easier for White. Playing 33...xb6 34..xd3 \(\text{b8}\) (or 34...\(\text{b4}\)) would have made White work harder to get the full point.

34..xd4 \(\text{xd4}\) 35..xd4 \(\text{d3}\) 36..g2 \(\text{f8}\) 37..f3 \(\text{e7}\) 38..e3 f1 39..f3 \(\text{d6}\) 40..e4 f6 41..d2 \(\text{d2}\) 42..d5 \(\text{f5}\) 43..c3 \(\text{h5}\) 44..c4+ \(\text{e6}\) 45.f4 \(\text{d7}\) 46..c5 h6 47..d5 \(\text{e6}\) 48..c7+

Black resigns

Earlier this year Van Wely had used this system successfully in an encounter vs. Bluebaum. In general it does not look very ambitious, but the position is actually rich in possibilities.

8...\(\text{b6}\) Simplest. Bluebaum played 8...\(\text{bd7}\) which is also okay, as taking on b7 is bad due to 9...\(\text{c5}\), when the white queen faces serious problems. L.Van Wely (2632) - M.Bluebaum (2580), Netherlands 2016.

9.cxd5 A game L.Gonda (2563) - Z.Varga (2464), played in 2014, went 9..\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{xb3}\) 10..\(\text{xb3}\) \(\text{a6}\) 11..\(\text{d2}\) \(\text{bd7}\)

12..\(\text{f5}\) 13..\(\text{g4}\) \(\text{g6}\) 14..\(\text{f6}\) h6 15..\(\text{a4}\) and the opponents agreed a draw, even though the position is still full of life.

9...\(\text{xb3}\) 10..\(\text{axb3}\) \(\text{exd5}\) 11..\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{a6}\)

12..\(\text{xf3}\) 13..\(\text{xf3}\) \(\text{bd7}\) 14..\(\text{f6}\) \(\text{f8}\) 15..\(\text{g2}\) \(\text{g6}\) 16..\(\text{h6}\) \(\text{e4}\)

17..\(\text{ad1}\) f5 18..\(\text{h4}\) \(\text{df6}\) 19..\(\text{e3}\) a5!

This gains some space, but more importantly it makes possible an eventual attack on the weak pawn on b3 with a rook on b6.

20..\(\text{h1}\) \(\text{a6}\) 21..\(\text{a1}\) \(\text{ea8}\) To defend the a5 pawn in preparation for ...\(\text{eb6}\). In case of 21..\(\text{d2}\)? White would reply 22..\(\text{d1}\).

22..\(\text{xe4}\) \(\text{exe4}\) 23..\(\text{xe4}\) \(\text{dxe4}\) The other capture was also feasible, as after 23...\(\text{fxe4}\) 24..\(\text{h5}\) \(\text{h6}\) 25..\(\text{hgx6}\) \(\text{hxg6}\) 26..\(\text{g5}\) \(\text{f8}\) (26...\(\text{xb3}\) 27..\(\text{f6}\) \(\text{f7}\) 28..\(\text{h7}\)+ \(\text{xe6}\) 29..\(\text{g7}\) 27..\(\text{f6}\) \(\text{g7}\) 28..\(\text{xg7}\) 29..\(\text{a3}\) \(\text{d4}\) \(\text{b4}\) Black’s position is preferable too.

24..\(\text{d5}\) \(\text{c5}\) 24...\(\text{cxd5}\) 25..\(\text{bd1}\) would lead to an approximately equal endgame.

25..\(\text{h5}\)! A very sharp endgame has arisen.

25...\(\text{b6}\) 26..\(\text{hxg6}\) \(\text{hxg6}\) 27..\(\text{g5}\) \(\text{e5}\)

Capturing at once by 27..\(\text{xb3}\) allows 28..\(\text{f6}\) with a very active position of the bishop and serious threats of penetration along the h-file.

28..\(\text{ad1}\) \(\text{exb3}\) 29..\(\text{d6}\)! The tension increases.

29...\(\text{d3}\) 30..\(\text{d7}\) Van Wely skips the line 30..\(\text{xd3}\) \(\text{exd3}\) 31..\(\text{d7}\)
move that frees the h1-rook with tempo due to the threat on Black’s c5-pawn. Then might follow 31...b6 32...hxg6+ hxg6 33...hxg6+ hxg6 34...c6!

31...b5 A rare instance where So does not show patience. Blocking the passed pawn with 31...d8! removes any threat of promotion and does not weaken Black’s structure on the queenside. Then 32...f4 (32...h4 dxd4) b6 with a clear advantage for Black in the endgame.

32...e7 Again the best idea seems the activation of the rooks by 32...c6!

32...c4 33.bxc4

33...bxc4 There was another possibility deserving serious consideration: 33...b4, which enables Black to obtain a couple of connected outside passed pawns, albeit at the same time allowing White to connect his own passed pawns in the center. The game would become extremely sharp in that case.

So decides to keep it simpler and safer.

34...xc1 bxc1 35...e3 b5 36...c4 a4 37...c6 b3 38...c5 a3

39...g6+ 39...xgb1 was an interesting defensive try. After 39...dxb3 40...xg6+ 41...f7 the idea is that Black has problems defending his pawn on f5. 41...g3! 42...h8+ (42...h4 is also interesting as 42...xf8 is followed by 43...f4!) 42...xf4 43...xg4! fxg4 44...xg4 with excellent drawing chances as soon there will be no black pawn on the board.

39...f7

40...g5?? The final mistake. The only way to continue the fight was to involve all the pieces in an attack against the black king. This could be achieved by 40...c6! 41...h7+, when the situation is quite complex. There are several lines, but I do not intend to go into a deep analysis of these variations, I just want to underline the fact that there was no other option to stay in the game.

40...a2 41...xf5+ 42...xg5+ 43...d4! b4

Here White resigned. This was justified, in view of 44...xd4+ 45...a1 46 when the white rook will be lost.

White resigned
initially met Wesley in the Chicago Open, May 2013. I also got the chance to play him there for the first time. Right away I got a very favorable impression of him. He was not in any way arrogant and seemed like a player who really enjoyed chess and was always seeking to improve his skills, despite already having an Elo rating above 2700 at the time. I also realized that he was someone with whom I would be pleased to work. Then, three years later I played him in the last round of the 2016 US Championship. It was a fighting game in which I was lucky to survive a difficult endgame and eventually draw. As he was always friendly towards me, afterwards I suggested playing some blitz practice games to help him prepare for the 4-player 2-day Round Robin blitz tournament in which the legendary Garry Kasparov and top US players, Hikaru Nakamura and Fabiano Caruana, were competing. As it happened he did well in that tournament, gaining 2nd place, after which he asked me to apply for the position of coach at the Chess Olympiad in Baku. At first I didn’t want to do it, but normally, when I’m asked something, I don’t like to refuse without a very good reason. Therefore I applied and by a miracle I got voted in by the players. The Olympiad coaching job is something I took very seriously and which made it very important for me to prepare as much as I could in advance, especially in terms of the openings.

Since I knew Wesley wanted me as a coach, I offered to work with him a little on and off before the tournament. This included general preparation and playing training games. Of course I really enjoyed working with such a strong player since, besides acquiring specific chess knowledge, I was able to gain a greater understanding of how a top player thinks about certain positions as well as his general approach to analysis and decision making during a chess game. Also I wanted to get a better feeling of how I might help Wesley in the best possible way during the Olympiad itself. In fact it worked out well since Wesley played great chess there, winning 6 games and drawing 4, and in the process also won gold medals in recognition of both the US team’s overall victory and his own individual top rating performance on board three.

I also realized that he has probably the best discipline of any chess player that I know personally. He does everything according to a very strict routine and doesn’t feel sorry for himself when things don’t go his way but always tries to perform to his maximum ability. Even after winning a major tournament, the following day he will still do chess training, such as going over his games deeply, or practicing tactics, rather than just relaxing. I don’t know anyone else who has such discipline, which I feel will help Wesley go very far in any future challenge for the World Championship.

Aleksandr Lenderman is an American grandmaster from Brooklyn, NY. He won the World Youth Championship U16 in 2005. He became an IM in 2005 at 16 years of age and a GM at 20. Alex won the National Open in 2012 clear first, tied for 2nd-3rd in the 2014 US Championship, losing in the playoffs, won the gold medal on board 2 for US Team in 2015 in the World Team Championship in Armenia, won the World Open in 2015, got to the Millionaire Monday in 2015 Millionaire Chess Festival, and coached the gold-medal winning team in the 2016 Men’s Olympiad in Baku.
Wesley has probably the best discipline of any chess player that I know personally.

Alex Lenderman, Team USA coach
I wasn’t sure how Wesley would do in the London tournament, since he had just had a great run and even top players will suffer setbacks after major successes. Chess can be a humbling experience. However I was pleasantly surprised by how well Wesley did there. To go +3 without any losses in such a field, after winning the Sinquefield Cup three months earlier with +2 and no losses against an equally tough field, really says a lot.

He was very well prepared in the openings and whenever he got a chance in some game, he would almost always take advantage of it. When things go his way, especially in the opening, he will almost always convert those games into wins. However, the two games I want to focus on here are cases where the opening didn’t necessarily go his way, and where he was put under pressure. Where I think the super grandmasters differ from other top players is their ability to defend tough positions very well and without losing their composure. Indeed, in the two featured games things could have gone terribly wrong for Wesley, easily resulting in scoring no points at all if he hadn’t reacted resourcefully at critical moments. Yet he scored 1½/2 in these two encounters, which was a total clincher for him in terms of winning the tournament.

So now, without further ado, let’s proceed to an analysis of these games.

A34

**Levon Aronian** 2785

**Wesley So** 2794

Round 3, London Classic 2016

This was a very important game for Wesley. He had continued his previous great form by starting the London Classic with 2/2. However, it is very easy to relax after you get off to a great start in a tournament, especially when you have just reached a milestone 2800 Elo rating! However, great kudos to Wesley for not only refusing to sit back on his laurels, but also being able to stave off some very dangerous preparation by Levon Aronian and hold his game together. This was particularly important since Levon was only half a point behind Wesley at this stage, and a win for him in this game would have given him the chance to snatch the lead and even perhaps change the course of the whole tournament.

1.e4 c5 Wesley can play practically any decent move after 1.e4, but against Aronian he has already played 1...c5 before, even though his principal choice is 1.e5.

2...e3 d6 3...c3 d5 4...xd5 5...e5 6...d4 Of course this is the only logical move and it has been played many times before. The alternatives give White a free hand. Nevertheless 5...dxc3 is still considered playable, although I get the sense that White should be able to gain an advantage with either pawn recapture 6.bxc3 or 6.dxc3!!.

5...dxe5?? is not good because of 6.d4, while after any other move of the knight, besides to b4, White will naturally assume a slight but enduring advantage.

6...d4 Now 6.d4 isn’t as effective because of concrete tactics: 6...cxd4 7...b5+(7...xd4?? 8.cxd4 8.a3 dxc3 9...xd8+ 8...xd8 10.axb4 although this might still be playable for White. 6.d3 would prevent 7...d3+, but at the same time hinder White’s development and after 6...d4 Black will already have a comfortable game.

6...d3+ Otherwise White will just castle.

7...e2 7...d3 8...d3 is nothing special for White, and might even lead to a draw by repetition after 8...e5 9.d4 9.d3=. 7...f1 d6 is even worse for White, since he has not only forfeited his right to castle but failed to deal with the annoying black knight on d3.

**LONDON, England, December 9-18, 2016 cat. XXII (2785)**

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7...\textit{\texttt{Q}}f4+ 7...\textit{\texttt{Q}}xc1+ is a serious alternative which has recently been tried at high level. But recent practice shows that it can be rather dangerous for Black, since White is after all ahead in development and therefore has every chance of seizing the initiative. After 8.\textit{\texttt{Q}}xc1 a6 9.d4 b5 10.\textit{\texttt{Q}}d5 \textit{\texttt{Q}}a7 there are the following possibilities:

\textbf{A)} 11.\textit{\texttt{Q}}e5?! which leads to complete insanity, e.g. 11...e6 12.\textit{\texttt{Q}}c6+ \textit{\texttt{Q}}e7 13.\textit{\texttt{Q}}d2 f6

14.\textit{\texttt{Q}}d5+! exd5 15.\textit{\texttt{Q}}xc5 dxe4 16.\textit{\texttt{Q}}h1 \textit{\texttt{Q}}e6 17.\textit{\texttt{Q}}e3 (17.\textit{\texttt{Q}}d5?!?) 17...\textit{\texttt{Q}}d6 18.\textit{\texttt{Q}}xe4 (18.\textit{\texttt{Q}}d5 \textit{\texttt{Q}}f5 19.\textit{\texttt{Q}}xb5) 18...\textit{\texttt{Q}}d8 with a rather unclear game. After more adventures Black finally won the game.

D.\textit{\texttt{J}}akovenko (2712) - E.\textit{\texttt{S}}utovsky (2622), Poikovsky 2016.

\textbf{B)} 11.dxc5 e6

14...\textit{\texttt{Q}}a5?! (Probably a dubious plan and 14...\textit{\texttt{Q}}b5 was better.) 13.\textit{\texttt{Q}}h4 \textit{\texttt{Q}}c8 16.\textit{\texttt{Q}}d5 \textit{\texttt{Q}}b5+ 17.\textit{\texttt{Q}}g1 h6 18.\textit{\texttt{Q}}h2 g5 19.\textit{\texttt{Q}}d1 \textit{\texttt{Q}}f8 20.\textit{\texttt{Q}}g1 \textit{\texttt{Q}}d8 21.\textit{\texttt{Q}}xg5 hxg5 22.\textit{\texttt{Q}}xg5 \textit{\texttt{Q}}xg5 and White won in a few more moves. L.\textit{\texttt{A}}ronian (2788) - V.\textit{\texttt{T}}opalov (2803), London 2015.

9.\textit{\texttt{Q}}e2 Of course Aronian avoids a draw and plays to rid himself at once of the annoying black knight.

9...\textit{\texttt{Q}}xc1 10.\textit{\texttt{Q}}xc1 e6 There is probably nothing wrong with playing ...\textit{\texttt{Q}}a6 at once.

11.h4 We are still following the main line. Since White's king cannot castle, he has to find a way to get his king's rook into the game, and this is the most effective way to do so.

11...\textit{\texttt{Q}}a6 11...\textit{\texttt{Q}}c6 might have given White the option of 12.\textit{\texttt{Q}}b5.

15.\textit{\texttt{Q}}e4 Ultimately the point of White's e4-e5 move was to place his bishop on e4, where it occupies a powerful diagonal. At the time the game was played, as far as I can tell this move was a novelty. On the other hand, 15.\textit{\texttt{Q}}e4 16.\textit{\texttt{Q}}xd4 \textit{\texttt{Q}}xd4 isn't as effective for White.

15...\textit{\texttt{Q}}d7 15...\textit{\texttt{Q}}b6?! is a very serious alternative, which was tried by a strong American IM (and GM-elect) Justin
Sarkar against a promising young German grandmaster, Matthias Bluebaum. This move needs serious investigation: 16...e3 d8 17.h5 h6 (Perhaps this move wasn’t necessary and 17...e7? 18.h6 g6 should have been preferred.)

16...g6 17.g1 e7 18.g3 0-0-0
The most logical human move but probably the first inaccuracy of the game, after which the f7 pawn will come under attack – and the black king won’t be totally comfortable on the queenside either. Upon 18...d8 19.h5 (19.g4 d8 20.d3 has long term dangers for Black as White controls a lot of space on the kingside in which he can launch an attack.) 19.g4 d4 20.xb7 e5 21.e2 (21.e4! xb7 22.xb7 dxb7 23.e4 c7 24.f4! 21...xb7 22.e4 c4 23.g3 f8 24.xg3 d5 25.b3 exb3 26.axb3 e7 27.xg7 xb3 28.d4 f8= and later on Black ended up winning

19.g4! A very elegant maneuver to get the white rook into its optimal position.

19...b8 20.f4 h8 21.a4! 21.xc6 xg6 22.e4 xe4 23.xe4 d3=.

21.b4 21...b4?! was an alternative, but here too Black is under pressure: 22.axb5 axb5 23.a1 d3 24.a5!! h4 25.a4 xg4 26.xf4 xe4 27.xe4 d5 28.xf41 with an ongoing initiative for White.

22.xc6! The bishop has done its job, now it’s time for White’s knight to occupy the strong e4 square.

22...xc6 23.d4 xe4 23...xa4? 24.xc5, is obviously far too dangerous for Black.

24.xe4 a5 Now the seemingly attractive 24...d3 would be met by a rude shock, which is precisely why the inclusion of the moves 21.a4 b4 was so important for White.

25.xb4+! cxb4 (25...d8+?) 26.b6+ a8 27.c7+ with mate in a few moves. 24...xa4 was possible, but again from a practical standpoint it would prove too dangerous: 25.xc5! (25...e4? d7) 25...d3 (25...xc5 26.axc5 ->) 26.xd3 xxc5 27.xf4± (or 27.e4).
25.\textit{c}c4 A very interesting position. Aronian’s choice here is logical and the most straightforward. However, he also had an interesting alternative in 25.\textit{d}d4!!.

What a mysterious move! It is hard to figure out right away what the point of it is. To do this, it’s important to first look at White’s other alternatives. It turns out that the rook on f4 serves as prophylaxis against 25...\textit{d}d3, which can now be met by \textit{x}xc5, since the rook on c4 is no longer hanging. Even if not objectively the best, psychologically it is very difficult to play against such a non-committal move.

After 25.\textit{f}f4, there are the following possibilities:

\textbf{A) } 25...\textit{b}b7 26.\textit{d}d4 \textit{xa}4 27.b3 \textit{c}c6 28.dxc5 \textit{d}d5 29.\textit{x}d4 \textit{c}c7 30.\textit{b}b5 \textit{xe}5 31.c6+ and the black king is poorly placed on b7;

\textbf{B) } 25...\textit{c}c8 26.b3\textit{c}c6 Now there is no longer any possibility of...

C) 25...\textit{x}xa4 is presently unplayable because of 26.\textit{xc}5! after which it is hard for Black to find a useful move, e.g. 26...\textit{x}xc5 27.\textit{xc}5 \textit{c}c8 28.\textit{b}b6+ \textit{a}a8 29.\textit{d}d4+;

D) 25...\textit{h}h5 can be met simply by 26.b3\textit{c}c6;

E) 25...\textit{d}d3 26.\textit{xc}x5! \textit{xe}3 (26...\textit{xc}5 27.\textit{xc}5+ 27.\textit{b}b5+\textit{d}d4); 

F) Black can adopt a waiting strategy with 25...\textit{h}h6, which also stops any ideas of \textit{g}g5.

However, practically any move Black plays has a drawback, and here it is:

\textbf{F1) } 26.\textit{f}f4! Now Aronian’s idea is much more effective, since after 26...\textit{x}xa4 (26...\textit{d}d3 27.\textit{xc}h6\textit{d}4) 27.\textit{d}d4 

\textbf{F1a) } 27...\textit{d}d5 White can take the rook’s pawn: 28.\textit{xc}h6;

\textbf{F1b) } while after 27...\textit{c}c6 28.dxc5 (not now 28.\textit{xc}h6\textit{g}5) 28...\textit{d}d5 White again has 29.\textit{xc}h6 making things difficult for Black.

\textbf{F2) } 26.b3 is also possible since after 26...g5 27.\textit{fc}4 \textit{d}d3 28.\textit{xc}x5\textit{a}a5 29.\textit{xc}x5 \textit{a}a6 30.\textit{c}c7+ \textit{a}a8 31.\textit{e}e5 32.\textit{xc}x5 33.\textit{xc}x5\textit{c}c8 34.\textit{xc}x5 35.\textit{xc}x5 or 35.\textit{b}b5+ it is White who has all the winning chances.

Finally, we could mention that 25.\textit{d}d4 \textit{xa}4 would lead to something similar to the game, while 25.b3?! could be countered by 25...\textit{d}d3! when 26.\textit{xc}x5? is met simply by 26...\textit{xc}x5.

25...\textit{x}xa4! Timing is everything. Wesley grabs the pawn at the best possible moment. On 25...\textit{d}d3?! 26.\textit{xc}xh6 \textit{b}b7 27.\textit{f}f4 Black is still under annoying pressure.

\textbf{26.\textit{d}d4 } 26.\textit{g}g5!? was also worth a try but I think Black can defend with very accurate moves: 26...\textit{d}d5 27.\textit{e}e4 \textit{c}c6 28.\textit{xc}x5 \textit{xc}x5 29.\textit{xc}x5 \textit{xc}x5 30.\textit{xc}x5 (30...\textit{xc}x5 31.\textit{xc}x5 \textit{d}d8=) 30...\textit{a}a6 31.\textit{d}d3 \textit{d}d8 (31...\textit{c}c8? 32.\textit{d}d5) 32.\textit{e}e4 \textit{b}b6! 33.\textit{xf}f7 \textit{xe}4 34.\textit{e}e1 (34.\textit{c}c2 \textit{d}d8=) 34...\textit{d}d2 35.\textit{b}b3 \textit{d}d8! 36.\textit{xc}x6

36...\textit{xf}f2! 37.\textit{xf}f2 (Black should almost certainly save the game after 37.\textit{c}c4 \textit{d}d2 38.\textit{e}e6 \textit{d}d4+ 39.\textit{xc}x4 \textit{xc}x4 40.\textit{e}e1 \textit{e}e8 41.\textit{e}e5 \textit{c}c7 42.\textit{xa}a5 \textit{d}d6 43.\textit{b}b5 \textit{xc}x6 44.\textit{xb}b5 \textit{f}f5 37...\textit{d}d2+ 38.\textit{e}e3 \textit{xc}x1 39.\textit{g}g8+ \textit{c}c8 40.\textit{xc}x8+ \textit{xc}x8 41.\textit{e}e4 \textit{d}d7 when it turns out this endgame is a draw by one tempo: 42.\textit{d}d4 \textit{c}c6
43.\texttt{c5} \texttt{dxe5} 44.\texttt{b5} h5 45.\texttt{xa5} f4 46.\texttt{xb4} g5 47.\texttt{hxg5} \texttt{xg5} 48.\texttt{c4} f4 49.b4 \texttt{g3} 50.b5 \texttt{dxe2} 51.b6 h4 52.b7 h3 53.\texttt{b7} h2--.

26...\texttt{d5} 27.\texttt{dxc5} \texttt{d6}! 28.\texttt{d4} \texttt{c7} A very precise maneuver.

29.\texttt{f3)!} \texttt{d8} 30.\texttt{b5!} \texttt{xe5} 31.\texttt{c6} \texttt{f8}

32.\texttt{xf7}?! After applying pressure for the whole game, White finally errs. 32.c7!! would maintain the pressure after 32...\texttt{b7} by 33.\texttt{d4} \texttt{d6} 34.\texttt{c6!} \texttt{h2}+ 35.\texttt{f1} \texttt{c7} (35...\texttt{a6} 36.g3 \texttt{c7} 37.\texttt{e2} and Black still doesn’t have an easy life) 36.g3.

32...\texttt{f6} 33.\texttt{f4} \texttt{xf7} 34.\texttt{xf7} \texttt{xb5} 35.\texttt{xe7} \texttt{c7} 36.\texttt{xe6} \texttt{a7} 37.\texttt{f1} Draw

This game showed why Wesley So is really the best of the best now, even amongst the elite. The trademark quality of super grandmasters is their ability to defend tough positions when under pressure and when the opening doesn’t go according to plan. It is not easy to maintain your composure when your opponent is blitzing out his moves while you are having to solve difficult problems over the board. Wesley So passed this test with distinction here and yet I feel that specific quality is often completely overlooked by the chess world. When a top player catches another top player in a position of their own particular preference, there is a very good chance of a successful outcome. However, defending tough positions, particularly when facing up to an opponent’s initiative, is not something to everyone’s taste, but it is precisely what makes Wesley such a strong and universal player.

\textbf{C54}

\textbf{Veselin Topalov} 2760

\textbf{Wesley So} 2794

Round 6, London Classic 2016

After starting with two wins in the first two rounds, Wesley drew his next three games. But in round six he was up against the tail-enders, Veselin Topalov, who had been having a very tough tournament up to this point. However these kinds of games are often quite dangerous, because players who are out of the running will often play daring chess, since they have nothing to lose anyway. In such cases it’s especially important not to underestimate the opponent, even one who is in generally bad form.

1.e4 e5 Calmly sticking to his customary repertoire, Wesley doesn’t want to experiment in the opening, even against an off-form player.

2.\texttt{f3} \texttt{c6} 3.\texttt{c4} \texttt{c5} 4.e3 \texttt{d6} 5.d3 White goes for the slow Italian game which has become very popular of late.

5...\texttt{a6} 6.a4 The first uncommon move. Usually White plays \texttt{b2}, \texttt{b3}, or 0-0 here, reserving \texttt{a2}-\texttt{a4} for later.

6...\texttt{d6} 7.\texttt{g5} \texttt{a7} 8.\texttt{d2} h6 9.\texttt{h4} 11.\texttt{h7}?! The idea of course is to prepare ...h5, etc. This was played on several occasions later, but at the time of the present game it was a novelty. This was good preparation by Wesley, as there was another game where White won convincingly by demonstrating just how dangerous it can be to enter a sharp line that has not been prepared thoroughly. Black continued instead 11...g4 with the idea of playing ...\texttt{h5} next move, but he was in for a nasty surprise... 12.\texttt{f4}! \texttt{g7} (12...\texttt{xg3} 13.\texttt{xg3} \texttt{g7} 14.\texttt{e1})

13.\texttt{h1}!! gxf3 Black is practically forced to accept the sacrifice, otherwise White claims the initiative for free. (13...\texttt{e6} 14.\texttt{e1} or 13...\texttt{d7} 14.\texttt{g1}, either followed by f2-f3 to open the f-file and exploit the pinned knight on f6.) 14.\texttt{xf3} \texttt{b8}? (After allowing the computer to think for some time 14...\texttt{g8}! seems to be the only move that holds for Black.) 15.g4 Already here the attack is unstoppable. 15...\texttt{d7} 16.\texttt{g1} \texttt{h8} 17.\texttt{f1} \texttt{e8} 18.g5 and White won in a few moves. A.Demchenko (2589) - D.Howell (2671), Gjakova 2016.

12.h3 12.b4! and 12.\texttt{e1}! are both equally possible and need to be tested in practice.

12...\texttt{h5} 13.\texttt{d4}!? Against a flank attack it’s normally a good rule to try to open up the center. 13.\texttt{e1} g4 (13...\texttt{h4} 14.\texttt{h2} g4) 14.h4 \texttt{g7} (After the strong 14...\texttt{e7} the computer already prefers Black.) 15.d4 15.\texttt{e5} \texttt{f5}+ This position is unclear, but in the end, in the complications, White ended up winning. M.Bartel (2641) - A.Brlic (2569), Zurich 2016.

13...\texttt{exd4}?! 13...g4! 14.hxg4 hxg4 15.\texttt{h4} \texttt{d7} was an alternative, essentially winning the pawn on d4,
and might also be objectively better. However then White has good chances of obtaining long-term compensation, therefore it’s better not to give a great attacker like Topalov such an initiative. Instead a general rule when facing attacking players is to try to attack yourself, since they don’t usually like defending! 16...hxh2 (16...e1?!) 16...exd4 17.cxd4 18.h8 (17...xd4 18.h1= White can get in f3 and it can be tricky playing with somewhat uncoordinated pieces.) 18...e2 g8 19.b3 f5=.

14...xd4 14...xd4 was also possible and might also be interesting since then Black would still have to worry about h4 if he played ...g5-g4.

14...g4?! An interesting decision by Wesley, he will try to play for the initiative instead of against it. I really like this approach from the psychological point of view. However in this position it shouldn’t work very well. Still, I am all for making correct psychological decisions based on the style of your opponent and on what kind of form they are displaying. From my experience, players in bad form don’t usually like to defend against an opponent’s initiative. Also 14...xd4 15.cxd4 h4 (15...g4 16.hxg4 hxg4 17.e2 xd4 18.a3!) 16.h2 xd4 16...g4 17.hxg4 17.h1= is quite dangerous for Black.

15...hxg4?! After Black’s inaccuracy, Topalov doesn’t react in the best way: 15...hxh1= White! I think this simple and straightforward response would have cast doubts on Black’s whole strategy, because now it’s not clear how he can pursue his initiative. After 16...e8 17.h1 d5 18.a3 f8 19.c2= White is clearly in control.

15...hxg4 Now Black will have a strong initiative, and again Topalov doesn’t react in the best way.

16...xc6 bxc6 17.e5 In my opinion this is already a risky move. I think 17..e1 (or 17.a5?! b7 18.e1?) should have been played, to try to get his knight on d2 into the game: 17...g5 18.f1 f6 19.a5 b5 20.xc1 xc1 21.axc1 xg3 22.xg3=.

17...d5

18..e2? And this is already a losing mistake. He should continue 18...d3 g5 when Black still has the initiative but it looks like White can defend himself, since his bishop is much better on d3 than on e2. For example: 19.h3

20...xf6! The final accurate move. Now Black’s attack runs smoothly without much chance of White being able to do anything about it. 20...xf6? 21.a4 was White’s point, when he is just in time to defend thanks to the threatened g4 pawn.

21.a4 f7 22.e1 h5 23.xg4 xg3 24.e8+ g7 25.xc8 xf2+ 26.h2 xe5 27.h3 e2

White resigned

And so, after a very interesting opening, where both players seemed to be quickly out of their preparation, Wesley, despite being ahead of the field, was ready for a full-blooded fight and was willing to go for uncompromising play, not shying away from taking risks and playing for the initiative.

The trademark of a great chess player is to know what risks can be reasonably taken, and it seems that Wesley also knows exactly when to take risks and when to restore stability to the game – so as to ensure he doesn’t lose! The combination of these factors, in addition to his great discipline both at home and at the board, as well as his recent great form, has led to great results for him. This was the last really key moment for Wesley in the tournament. He then wrapped up the proceedings with three relatively smooth draws and won the event convincingly.
01 Levon Aronian 2780 – Loek Van Wely 2695

1.f5!+– ²xd2 1...²xd5 2.²xd5 ²xe1
3.²xe1 ²f6 4.²d1++–.

2.²xd2 ²xd5 3.²xe4! ²xe4 4.²xe4
8d8+ ²g7 5.f6#

4.²f6 ²xg2+ 5.²g1 1–0

02 Pavel Eljanov 2755 – Radoslaw Wojtaszek 2750

1...e4! 2.²xe4 f3!=– 3.²xf3 ²xd5
4.c7 ²e5+ 5.²g3 5.²h1 ²e1+ 6.²h2
²e5+–.

5...²xg3 6.²xg3 ²h5+ 7.²h3 ²e5+
½–½

03 Dmitry Andreikin 2737 – Pavel Eljanov 2755

1...²xf4! 2.²e7+ 2.gxf4 ²g1+ 3.²xc4
²f1+ 4.²c5 ²g1+–.

2...²g6 3.²e8+ ²g7 4.²e7+ ²h6
5.²f8+ ²h7 6.²f7+ ²h6 7.²f8+
²h7 8.²f7+ ²h6 9.²f8+ ²h7
10.²f7+
½–½
TEXAN LONE STAR SHINES IN EUROPE

By GM Jeffery Xiong
World Junior Champion

The participation of reigning World Junior Champion, American GM Jeffery Xiong in his first major European tournament was eagerly awaited by the Wijk aan Zee organisers. And the 16-year-old Texan gave due evidence of his rich talent by achieving third place in the 13-round Challengers group, where he won 7 games, including a crucial encounter against the tournament winner.

This year in the traditional Wijk aan Zee chess festival there was a very competitive Challengers Group, fielding players with an average rating close to 2600. After making a bad start, the following game signalled a change in my fortunes.

The move looks crushing, but as so often happens in technically winning positions: the longer it takes to win, the harder it gets.

B01

Nils Grandelius 2643
Jeffery Xiong 2667

Round 4, Wijk aan Zee Challengers 2017

1.e4 d5 Hoping to catch my opponent off guard.
2.exd5 wxd5 3.c3 xd6 4.d4 Qd6 5.Jg5!? A decent practical decision to get me out of any preparation I might have done.
5...g6 I thought I had seen something like this before but I was mistaken. 5...a6 was stronger: 6.\_d2 b5 7.0-0 0 8.b7 8.f3 \_bd7 9.\_h3 \_b6 10.\_d3 0-0 0 11.\_b1 e6 12.\_e4 \_xe4 13.\_xe4 \_e7 14.\_f4 \_c4 15.\_e2 \_b6 16.c3 h6 17.\_d3 \_d5 18.\_c1 g5 19.\_f2 c5 20.\_xc5 \_xc5

6.\_d2 \_g7 7.0-0 0-0 8.\_h6 An aggressive way of playing, but I thought 8.h4 made more sense in order to avoid the game continuation. Then play would have probably continued 8...\_d8 9.\_f3 \_g4 10.\_e2 \_c6.

8...\_xh6 9.\_xh6 \_c6 it is still the best. If 10.h3, to stop ...\_g4 or ...\_f4, then 10...\_b4 when ...\_f5 is a serious threat. However not 10...\_xd4 because of 11.\_b5 \_f5 12.\_xf8+! winning material.

10.\_g4 11.\_c2

21.b3 \_a3+ 22.\_a1 \_xc3+ 23.\_b2 \_a5 24.\_e4 \_e8 25.\_g4 f5 26.\_xd5 exd5 27.\_e6+ \_b7 28.\_xf5 \_b4 29.\_d3 d4 30.f4 \_c3 31.\_e5 b4 32.\_h7+ \_c7 33.\_e4+ \_b6 34.\_c1 gxf4 35.\_h1 \_d6 36.\_xc3 dxc3 37.\_xa3 \_xe5 0-1 was Z.Varga (2473) - A.Kovchan (2585) Zalakaros 2015.

I was quite pleased with this solution. It’s difficult for White to get his attack going because of the pressure on his d4 pawn. As they say: a flank attack is best met by a reaction in the centre!

10.\_f3 Nils spent a long time before settling for this “tame” solution. However

11.\_fd8? I had trouble deciding which rook to put on d8 and made the wrong choice, 11.\_ad8 would be absolutely fine for Black. It was a real pity that I chose the wrong rook and quite shocking what a huge difference it makes. After the queen’s rook goes to d8, there can follow 12.d5 \_e5 13.\_xe5 (13.\_he1 \_xf6
14...xf3 15.gxf3 e8) 13...xe2
14...x7 f7 – the whole point! Moreover I could have met 12...e3 with 12...d4.
12.d5±

12...b8? Now I realized what a dreadful mistake I had made. In fact I wasted 30 minutes here just feeling bad! The move itself isn’t exactly great either. But I was also very dissatisfied with the position I would have reached after 12...e5 13...xe5 fxe5 14.f3 d7 15...e1. How awful my game was as a consequence of 11...d8 shows just how cruel chess can be.
12...a5 is met by 13.d4 and I had overlooked that 12...d4 is countered by 13.a3 when I can’t take on d5. For a fleeting moment I considered 13...a5 but White can reply 14...xb4 axb4 15...b1 b3 16.c3 a1 17.d4, or even just 14.d2 when it is hard to explain what my knight is really doing on b4.

13.h3 Simplest. Soon it will become clear that White has an irresistible attack. Yet 13...e1 was even more powerful, after which I would have had to reply 13...d7 14.g5 fxe2 15...xe2 f8.
13...xf3 14...f3 b7 15.h4 e5 16...c4 A decent-looking practical attempt, but in fact it just loses. However even 16...f4 17...xg4 f4 18...d2 would be bad.

17...d4?! This also looks crushing, but as so often happens in technically winning positions: the longer it takes to win, the harder it gets. White should have played 17...xg6 f8 18.fx7+ when my king has nowhere to run after 18...f7 19.a4 (19.d3 also works) 19...xa4 20.f5+ g8 21.f6, while upon 18...h8 19.a4 f4 I think Nils just missed that 20.e4 would be lethal.
17...b4? If 17...d5 then 18.f4 is winning, for example after 18...b4 19.d1 f2+ 20.h1.

18...c4? Nils was confident that he could clinch the win by forcing play, but the correct path to victory was in fact 18...d1 c5 19.f4 e5 20.xf6 exf6 21.xg6 fxg6 22.g5 e8.
18...c4 19.xg6 fxe6 20.e4

20...d7 The key move, which is difficult to spot from afar. Nils was anticipating something like 20...d4 21.xf6+ xg6 22.xf7+ g8 23.g4 when he would likely wrap things up in a few moves.
21.g5?! Now it’s equal. 21.b1 was better and would have been a huge challenge for me. The only move then would be 21...f8 but I’m by no means sure I would have found it during the game as 21...d8?? looks far more natural, even though it loses...

...to 22.b3 when the black queen has no good squares, as 22...d4 is met by 23.g5 d6 24.e4.

WIJK AAN ZEE II, Netherlands, January 14-29, 2017 cat. XIV (2593)
The 79th Tata Steel Challengers

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On the other hand, after 21...\texttt{\texttt{f8}}, White can continue either:

\textbf{A)} 22.\texttt{c5} to counter 22...\texttt{f4} with 23.\texttt{xf8+} \texttt{xf8} 24.\texttt{e6+} regaining the queen with interest. Black would instead have to try 22...e5 23.dxe6 \texttt{e7}, or

\textbf{B)} 22.\texttt{h3} to keep up the pressure. After 22...\texttt{f7} 23.\texttt{g5} \texttt{d6} 24.\texttt{xf7} \texttt{xf7} White is better but Black is still very much in the game.

21...\texttt{f4} This way was 21...e5 22.dxe6 \texttt{e7} but I was quite optimistic about my chances after the queen check.

\textbf{22.\texttt{b1}} \texttt{ad8} Around here Nils began to realize that things had gone terribly wrong and he proceeded to use up much of his remaining time.

\textbf{23.g3} \texttt{d2}

\textbf{24.c4??} A massive blunder in time pressure. 24.\texttt{e1} allows 24...\texttt{xd1+} 25.\texttt{xd1} \texttt{xd5}.

After the better 24.\texttt{g4!} \texttt{xd5} 25.b3 \texttt{d6} 26.f4

\texttt{...we reach a very strange position. Currently White has no threat because \texttt{xf7} will be met by \texttt{xc4}. But if I continue 26.b5, stopping any potential \texttt{e2-c4} as well as preparing \texttt{a5-a4}, there follows 27.f5l, forcing 27...\texttt{fx5} as Black can’t afford to allow \texttt{fx6}. But then comes 28.\texttt{f3!}, dislodging the queen, and after 28...\texttt{e5!}, the most natural and best square, 29.\texttt{h5}

\texttt{...threatening mate in three moves by 30.\texttt{f7+} \texttt{h8} 31.\texttt{xf6+} \texttt{xf6} 32.\texttt{h7#}.}

\textbf{A)} Black can defend against this by sacrificing his queen, but will suffer in the endgame following 29...\texttt{xd5} 30.\texttt{f7+} \texttt{xf7} 31.\texttt{xf7} \texttt{xf7} 32.\texttt{f4}.

\textbf{B)} So better is 29...\texttt{e8!}, dodging the mate. Thankfully, then 30.\texttt{h7} doesn’t work on account of 30...\texttt{e1+} but White does have a knight check on the same square. However 30.\texttt{f7+} will leave White with nothing better than to repeat moves following 30...\texttt{xg8} 31.\texttt{g5+} \texttt{h8} 32.\texttt{h6+} as after 32.\texttt{d8} \texttt{d8} 33.\texttt{h6+} \texttt{g8} 34.\texttt{g6} \texttt{d6} 35.\texttt{h7+} \texttt{f7} 36.\texttt{g6+} \texttt{e6} the black king turns out to be quite safe on d7, where it cannot even be checked.

Finally there is 24.b3?! \texttt{xd5} 25.\texttt{xd5+} \texttt{xd5} 26.f4 \texttt{e5} 27.\texttt{f1} \texttt{d6} 28.\texttt{h3} \texttt{e6} when Black is able to keep the extra pawn. Then 29.\texttt{c6} \texttt{d6} 30.\texttt{e1} \texttt{d4} is critical.

24...\texttt{e6} Now White’s position completely collapses.

\textbf{25.\texttt{b1} exd5} 26.cxd5 If 26.\texttt{d1} \texttt{xf2}.

26...\texttt{xd5} 27.\texttt{xd5+} \texttt{xd5}

\texttt{White resigned}

So this eventful game ended dramatically in my favor. It was certainly a great feeling to have luck on my side, particularly as it came just before the first rest day, which
I could now enjoy to the full. Due to inexperience, my performance in the first four games had undoubtedly been below expectations. However, my coaching team was relieved to see I had recovered from a first round loss by scoring 2½ points from the next 3 games. I now had the chance to relax and recharge before rejoining the second leg of this long tournament with full fighting spirit!

Meanwhile Austrian GM Markus Ragger had made an outstanding start to the tournament, winning his first four games. But by the end of the eighth round, English GM Gawain Jones had already caught up with him, and I too had made up a lot of ground, only lagging behind them by one point. The Kasparov Chess Foundation had assigned my opening coach, Vladimir Georgiev, to travel with me to the Netherlands and we really worked effectively so I was best prepared for each game.

A62

**Jeffery Xiong** 2667

Gawain Jones 2665

Round 9, Wijk Aan Zee Challengers 2017

1.d4 ☐f6 2.c4 ☐g6 3.☐c3 ☐g7 4.g3 ☐g4 5.☐g2 ☐d6 6.☐f3 ☐c5 My opponent had never played this before, at least not in any games I could find on the database. But I am glad we managed to prepare for this variation during the rest day. Previously Gawain had played 6...☐c6 exclusively.

7.d5 I had never previously adopted g3 against the Benoni, so I doubt if Gawain would have conducted any targeted preparation against me on this line. Upon 7.0-0 ☐c6 8.dxc5 dxc5 9.☐f4 or 9.e3 White can hope for a small edge.

7...e6 8.0-0 cxd5 9.cxd5 ☐e8 10.☐e1 Less forcing than the main lines with 10.☐f4 or 10.☐d2.

10...☐e4 10...a6 11.a4 ☐bd7 is another way, meeting both 12.☐f4 and 12.e4 with 12...☐g4.

11.☐xe4 ☐xe4 12.☐c2 &f5 A novelty, but luckily I had checked it out during my preparation. On 12...☐e8 13.☐g5! would gain an important tempo: 13...☐b6 14.☐ab1 ☐g4 15.☐d2.

13.☐h3 A very strong idea, it's actually quite hard for Black to find a satisfactory move now.

13...☐a6 This further's his development but makes a serious concession. 13...☐f6 14.☐b1 is nice for White, since 14...h6 can be met by 15.☐d2.

The engine-like 13...☐g4! was the most interesting option, as Black has sufficient compensation for the exchange after the sequence 14.e4 ☐xe4 15.☐xe4 ☐xh3 which leads to forcing play: 16.g4 h6 17.☐b3 ☐d7 18.☐d2 f5 19.☐e6 ☐h4.

13...☐e5 is another type of exchange sacrifice: 14.☐xf5 ☐xf5 15.g4 ☐xf3 16.☐xf3 ☐d6 17.☐f4 etc.

14.☐xf5 ☐xf5 Black's kingside pawn structure is now very ugly.

15.☐g5+ ☐e5 instead 15...☐b4 would oblige me to find the correct 16.☐b1. If 16.☐b3 ☐e7.

16.☐f4 ☐b4

17.☐b3?! I spent quite a bit of time deciding between the b1 and b3 squares. But I was scared off 17.☐b1 by the reply:

A) 17...☐f6 as after 18.☐xe5 dxe5 (if 18...☐xe5 19.a3 ☐xd5 20.☐a2) I simply overestimated Black's initiative, when in fact White is winning after 19.☐c1 h6 20.☐f3.

After 17.☐b1 I could also have handled Black's other alternatives:

B) 17...h6 18.☐xe5 dxe5 19.a3 ☐d6 20.☐h3;
C) 17...☐xd5 18.a3 ☐c6 19.☐a2;
D) 17...☐d7 18.☐xe5 dxe5 19.a3 ☐xd5 20.e4 fxe4 21.☐xe4 c4 22.☐d1.

17...a5?
Trying to solve problems tactically, but it all seems rather suspect. Though 17...e7 18.cf3 fd7 19.a3 da6 20.ad1 af6 looks awkward for Black, it is in fact not so easy to attack the f5 pawn, and in the meantime Black can start pushing his queenside pawns. But then 21.h1± is an interesting idea, preparing h4, when double edged play continues.

18.a3 The strongest move, although 18.xe5 was my first intention. But it's not so simple. For example: 18...xe5 (on 18...dxe5 could follow 19.a3 a4 20.c4) 19.a3 a4 20.c4 xg5 21.axb4 xb2 22.a2 a3 23.bxc5 d2.

18...a4 18...c4 19.f4 will probably be similar.

19.c4 This seems the most straightforward. I wasn’t completely sure about the position after 19.f3 c2 20.h5

37.h4+ It was probably wiser to avoid the ridiculous situation which occurred in the game altogether with the simple approach 37.f2 h5 38.h4+ f5 39.gxf4

For instance:

A) 20...f7 21.xe5 xxe5 22.xh7+ f8 23.xf5;
B) 20...f6 21.xe5 dxe5 22.xh7+ f8 23.h5 g6 24.e6+ g8 25.xg6 fxg6 26.e4;
C) 20...d7 21.xh7+ f8 22.xe5 dxe5 23.e4.

However now it becomes clear to me that White is just a pawn up.

19.b5 20.xb5 c2 21.xe5 dxe5 21...xe5 22.b7 is even worse.

22.b7 e8 On 22...f8 comes 23.d7.

23.d7 f7 24.b8 25.b7 25.b7 c7 Knowing I was in a winning position, I realized the most important thing was not to get flagged.

26.c8 27.c6 d7 28.xe8 d7 29.xg7 xg7

30.f1 This wins the second pawn in a slower way. 30.xc1 would have been lights out immediately.

30...xal 31.xal d5 32.c1 Black won’t be able to stop e1 and c4-a4.

32.a2 33.xc5 f6 34.c6+ g5 35.b6 c3 36.f3 f4

Gawain Jones. Photo by David Llada
exf4 \(40.\varepsilon b4\) when I can capture a third pawn.

37...\(\varepsilon h5\) 38.gxf4 exf4 39.\(\varepsilon b4\) \(\varepsilon x h4\)

40.\(\varepsilon x f4\)+

So far everything was going smoothly. I anticipated king somewhere, when I’d play \(\varepsilon x a4\), \(\varepsilon a8\), push to \(a7\) and then the e- or f-pawn would decide.

40...\(\varepsilon g3\) 41.\(\varepsilon g4\)+ \(\varepsilon h3\) However now I realized he had a devious plan to try and self-stalemate himself on \(h1\).

42.\(\varepsilon x a4\) \(\varepsilon x b2\) 43.\(\varepsilon f2\) \(h5\) 44.\(\varepsilon a8\) \(h4\) 45.\(\varepsilon a4\) \(\varepsilon h2\) 46.\(\varepsilon a5\) \(\varepsilon b7\) I thought this was a nice idea, bringing the rook to \(g7\). But actually it doesn’t change anything. Going full steam ahead with 46...\(\varepsilon h3\) falls to 47.a6 \(\varepsilon a2\) (47...\(\varepsilon b6\) 48.a7 \(\varepsilon b7\) 49.f4) 48.a7 \(\varepsilon a4\) 49.e4 when Black is stuck.

47.\(\varepsilon h8\)? This complicates matters tremendously. After 47.a6 \(\varepsilon g7\), the simple idea I missed was 48.\(\varepsilon b8\). Then if 48...\(\varepsilon g2\)+ (48...\(\varepsilon a7\) 49.\(\varepsilon b4\) is just like the game except I am three or four tempi up.) 49.\(\varepsilon x e3\) \(\varepsilon g7\) 50.\(\varepsilon b7\) \(\varepsilon g1\) 51.\(\varepsilon a7\) \(\varepsilon a1\) 52.\(\varepsilon x f2\) \(h3\) 53.\(f4\) etc.

47...\(h3\) 48.\(\varepsilon h4??\) Officially blowing the game when 48.a6 \(\varepsilon a7\) (48...\(\varepsilon g7\) 49.\(\varepsilon b6\) 49.\(\varepsilon x h6\) \(\varepsilon g7\) 50.f4 would have kept things under control: 50.\(\varepsilon g2\)+ 51.\(\varepsilon x e3\) \(\varepsilon g3\)+ 52.\(\varepsilon d4\) \(\varepsilon g2\) 53.\(f5\) \(h2\) 54.\(f6\).

49.\(\varepsilon h1??\) Gawain played this with a loose hand, accepting defeat. Both of us had made laughable mistakes. I will look forward to seeing this game in the tragicomedy section of an endgame book! Though it was tougher than the first draw,

it is really quite ridiculous how I could let slip so many chances from what was a completely dominant position. The game should have continued 49...\(\varepsilon a1\) 50.\(\varepsilon h4\) \(\varepsilon x a5\) 51.\(\varepsilon f4\) \(\varepsilon a4\) 52.\(\varepsilon f3\) \(\varepsilon a1\)

48...\(\varepsilon b1??\) Wrapping up my gift and mailing it back to me. After 48...\(\varepsilon g7\) my idea was actually 49.\(\varepsilon g4\), but it doesn’t take a genius to see there’s a stalemate by 49...\(\varepsilon x g4\) 50.\(f x g4\) \(\varepsilon h1\) 51.\(a6\) \(h2\) 52.\(a7\).

I guess it was some kind of illusion because Gawain rejected \(\varepsilon g7\) for the exact same reason! Therefore I have to go instead for 49.a6 \(\varepsilon g2\)+ 50.\(\varepsilon x e3\)

...when my advance is too slow. Possible lines are:

A) 53.\(e4\) \(\varepsilon f1\)+ 54.\(\varepsilon g4\) \(\varepsilon g1\)+ 55.\(\varepsilon x f5\) (55.\(\varepsilon h5\) \(\varepsilon g8\) 55...\(\varepsilon x g3\) 56.\(\varepsilon x g4\)+ \(\varepsilon f2\); 55.\(f5\)) 53...\(\varepsilon f1\)+ 54.\(\varepsilon g4\) \(\varepsilon g1\)+ 55.\(\varepsilon x h5\)

B) 53.\(f5\) 53...\(\varepsilon f1\)+ 54.\(\varepsilon x g4\) \(\varepsilon x g1\)+ 55.\(\varepsilon x h5\) \(\varepsilon g3\) 56.e4 d2 57.\(\varepsilon x h2\) \(\varepsilon x h2\) 58.\(f6\) \(\varepsilon f1\) 59.\(\varepsilon g6\) \(\varepsilon g3\) 60.e5 \(\varepsilon f4\).

50.a6 \(h2\) 51.\(a7\) \(\varepsilon f1\)+ 52.\(\varepsilon x e3\) \(\varepsilon g2\)

53.\(\varepsilon g4\)+ \(\varepsilon h1\)

54.\(a8\) \(\varepsilon x f3\)+ 55.\(\varepsilon x f3\) mate.

With this fortunate finale, I managed to catch up with Gawain and remain only half a point behind the leaders, GMs Markus Ragger and Ilia Smirin.

I fully expect to receive some serious criticism from my coach GM Alex Chernin, since this kind of careless mistake in the endgame is absolutely unacceptable to him.

I should mention that Gawain was able to recover from this loss and eventually win the tournament, demonstrating his strong mindset and skill! Congratulations to him on a well deserved victory.
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CHAMPION ON THE ROPES

By GM Ivan Sokolov

AND OTHER SHORT STORIES

There were other tales to tell in Wijk aan Zee as well as those relating to Wesley’s dazzling performance.
How Aronian continually directed his openings away from well trodden theoretical paths to confuse his opponents and gain an early advantage.

How the world champion’s tournament was wrecked by the unpredictable danger man Richard Rapport.

How the game between Carlsen and Karjakin turned out. It was the first classical encounter between these rivals since their bruising world title match in New York.

Early Opening Surprises

PART 1

Levon Aronian played interesting chess, rich in ideas, and had it not been for losing a level game to Karjakin, in which he had the opportunity of a more or less forced draw, he could have finished shared second with Magnus. Levon’s strategy for this tournament was to surprise his opponents by adopting novel opening ideas at a very early stage of the game. And in the following two encounters this plan worked to perfection!

E11

Levon Aronian 2780
Anish Giri 2773

Round 8, Wijk aan Zee 2017

1.d4 əf6 2.c4 e6 3.əf3 d5 4.g3 əb4+ 5.əd2 əe7 6.əg2 0–0 7.0–0 əc6

8.əa3!? Just as in his game versus Rapport two rounds later, Aronian goes for an early opening deviation so as to force Giri to think for himself! In my database, which is far from perfect, there is not a single game with 8.əa3?!. I do not think that Aronian’s novelty will bring about any fundamental changes to this popular Catalan line, but it is a fresh idea and poses some problems Giri needed to counter in over-the-board fashion. əa3 in itself has been seen in different Catalan lines, but mostly after Black has already taken ...dxc4. Now if Black does not react in the center White would need to find a use for his əa3.

8...əbd7 9.əc1 əe4 Analyzing this game, my first thought was “what happens if Black continues with the regular plan of 9...b6?” Well, in this case White can make efficient use of an open c-file (since the white knight is now on a3, instead of c3) and his knight still has the capability to jump to b5 and gain an advantage. After 10.cxd5 cxd5 11.əb3 Black remains passive whereas White definitely has pressure, e.g. 11...əa6 (11...əb7 12.əf4 əe4 13.əc2; 11...əa6 12.əf4 b5 13.əc7 əb8 14.əb1=) 12.əb5 əe4 13.əf4=.

10.əe3

Getting back to my comment on Black’s 9th move, the question is: “Can Black carry out the standard plan in a now improved version since the moves 9...əe4 10.əc3 have now been included and the bishop is less active on e3 than f4?” My answer is “Yes” After 10...b6!

I do not see any advantage for White and would expect this line to be played in future games.

Possible continuations are:

A) 11.cxd5 cxd5 gets White nowhere: 12.əb5 (12.əf4 just leaves White a tempo down compared to the note on 9...b6; so then 12...əd6=) 12...a6 and the white knight finally gets to c3 after a roundabout route: 13.əc3 əe6=;

A critical position. Anish goes for a forcing sequence, probably overlooking or underestimating White’s positional exchange sacrifice on move 13.

10...əxa3 Nowadays news travels fast and a couple of days later there was an internet game which went 10...əd6 11.əf4 əf5 12.əd3 əf6 13.əf1 b6 and White had the advantage in A.Lesiege (2521) - S.Mareco, (2645), Internet 2017.
B) 11...c2, with the original idea of manoeuvring this knight via e1 to d3, does not work because of the simple 11...e6!—But it would have worked well in the case of 11...a5 12...c1! e6 13...d3+! since the white pawn on c4 is taboo due to 14...d6;
C) Being smart with 11...a4 b7 12.b4

...might backfire on White after 12...b5! (12...dxc4 13...xc4 b5 14...c2+) 13.cxb5 a5! and Black is better! In fact 12...b5 followed by 13...a5 is a nice idea to remember — you can use it in similar situations! 14...bxc6 (if 14...bxc6 2...a6 and Black regains his material with advantage) 14...xb4 15...c2 2...xc6 16...xc6 2...xa3 favours Black since the white bishop on g2 is now a really bad piece;
D) 11...e5 looks natural but after 11...c6 12.dxe5 2...c5 I do not see any advantage for White.

11.bxa3 2...d6 12.c5! 2...c4 The point behind Giri's decision to play 10...a3 is that 12...f5 13...f4 is obviously better for White.

13...xc4! A beautiful positional exchange sacrifice for which White obtains in return long term compensation and pressure. It is important to mention that Aronian played 13...xc4 more or less instantly, so was likely still in his home preparation! On the other hand, Anish had probably reckoned on 13...f4 b6 (or 13...e5?) 14...xc4 which is less effective. (Black is also fine after 14...d2 2...xd2 15...xd2 2...c5 16...d6 2...e8 with 17...a6 to follow) 14...xc4 15...a4 (15...d2 e5! 16...d5 2...c5 and Black is at least okay) 15...b5 16...c2... 13...dxc4 14...c2! An important move creating threats of 2...g5 and so more or less forcing Black's next move.

14...h6 The first moment in the game that Levon took some time to think, as he was faced with a difficult choice.
15...xc4 White has very good compensation, but Black can obviously put up a fight. Frankly, I was surprised by the speed of Giri's subsequent collapse! He went down without really offering any resistance. Being present in the Wijk aan Zee playing hall that day, watching the game live, I expected 15...d2 with strong White pressure. Due to the powerful a2, now directly hitting the c6 pawn, Black is boxed in and has problems developing his pieces. There could follow 15...c3 (or 15...e5 16...xc4 exd4 17...d4) 16...c4 2...e6 17...d6 2...d5 18...c1 2...a5 19...e4?
15...b6 Black badly needs a pawn break, even sacrificing a pawn or two in order to free his pieces. And in that respect 15...e5?

19...c5! A tempo move. 19...b1 may look clever, but Black then generates counterplay by 19...b6! 20...xc5 g4! 21...xc6 2...d7 22...e7+ 2...h7.
19...bxc5 20.xc5 a5 21...b1 2...a7 22...c3 Forcing Black to weaken his kingside.
22...f6 23...d6 White's bishops are dominant, whereas Black's pieces remain terribly passive.

23...a8

24...e4! The potential c2-d3 battery will force Black to further weaken his kingside pawn structure.
24...f5 25...c2 2...b7 26...d1 Naturally White keeps his rook on the board.
26...d7 Now the time has come for
White to open paths towards the black king.
27.e4!± 28.c4 Aronian resists the temptation to grab material, although 28.exa5± was definitely possible.
28...h6 29.e1 f7 30.d3 Quick material gain by 30.exf5 exf5 31.exf8+ xf8 32.axf5 would have also traded a pair of rooks and thereby increased Black’s drawing chances: 32...f7
33.e4 b7. But 30.ee3!

...removing the rook from the risk of being captured with check creates the deadly threat of 31.exf5. I guess Levon was worried that after 30...ed8 31.exf5 exf5 32.f4 xd6 33.cxd6 c5 34.xf5 xf5 35.xf5 c6± Black may get drawing chances.

...and White obtains a winning attack on the kingside. Moreover White can be considered to be material up. Black’s a8 is totally out of play, so effectively White has an advantage of two bishops versus one rook!
32...xd6 or 32...g6+ 33.g3 xg3+ 34.hxg3 xf4 35.gxf4+ and the avalanche of white pawns will decide.
33.cxd6

Which pawn should Black take?
33...g6+ 33...xf4 was arguably a better choice.
34.g3 xd6 35.d1+ c5 or
35...c7 36.xe5 xe5 37.f4 c5 (37...e8 38.e5+) 38.b3+-
36.d7 g8 36...f8 37.fxe5.
37.b3 xf4

Nobody is good at defending bad positions. Most probably Anish had just had enough and so now makes a desperate bid for freedom.
30...f4? The passive 30...dd8± was most likely forced.
31.gxf4 Black does not in fact get any counterplay for his sacrificed pawn.
31.e5 h3 32.f5 was also winning:
32...ed2 33.h1 b7 34.g1

38.g6! Aronian is not afraid of ghosts. Black will only be allowed a few checks before dying.
38...f3 39.h4 c3 40.xg8 e1+ 41.h2 xf2+ 42.h3 f1+ 43.g4 Black has run out of checks and his bishop is effectively nothing more than a big pawn on a8. Moreover, apart from being a rook up, White threatens mate in one! A painful loss for Gir.
Black resigned
**Early Opening Surprises**

**PART 2**

**E18**

Levon Aronian 2780  
Richard Rapport 2702

Round 10, Wijk aan Zee 2017

1.d4 2.f6 2.c4 e6 3.d3 b6 4.g3 b7 5...g2 6.e7 6.0-0 0-0 7...c3 d4 8...d2 7.f6 One of the main lines for Black here. 8...f5 or 8...d5 are the other two popular moves.

9...e5?! Surprised by Aronian’s choice of opening, Rapport does not react well and his mistaken view of the forthcoming events sets the stage for his early demise.

9...d6 10...c2 11...x3 11...xe3 is to the kind of position White probably wanted to achieve, as it reaches a good version of the regular lines.

9...c5 is a logical reaction, but does not seem to solve Black's opening problems after 10.d5! 11.xc3 11...x3 12.xbxc3 13.cxd5 d6 14.e4 leads to a better for White Benoni-type structure.) 13.dxe6! 14.e4 d6 and the d-pawn is now a problem for Black!

14...d5 15.cxd5! (15.xad1 16.Gunina (2520) - A.Ushenina (2458), Hancheng (blitz) 2016) 15...exd5 16.e5 17.e4 e6 18.e4 c7 19.e4 10.c2

10...d5?! This is now a serious mistake. Rapport must have miscalculated something in the complications arising after White’s next move. Black had to accept a slightly worse position after 10...xe3 11...xe3 d5 or ...d6.

11...xe4? dxe4 12...d2 Superb judgement or home preparation by Aronian? Tactics are clearly supporting White and Black’s situation has already become critical.

12...xd4 12...xd4 does not solve Black’s problems after 13...e4 c6

A) Here 11...e5 transposes to my comment on 9...e5. Then 11...xg2 12...xg2
White enjoys a pleasant advantage.

B) But also there is 14.\textit{xc3} offering a promising pawn sacrifice after 14...\textit{xc4}.

\textbf{11.\textit{d}d1!} Levon wants to extract the maximum out of the position! There is also 13.\textit{xf6+} which seems to win at least a pawn by force: 13...\textit{e}7 15.\textit{e}3 &e5
\begin{itemize}
  \item 15...\textit{xf6+} 16.\textit{xf6} 17.\textit{a}4
  \item 18.\textit{d}7 18.\textit{d}5
  \end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
  \item 20.f4+ 16.\textit{f}4.
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
  \item 15...\textit{f}5\textit{..}g6 would not have been a happy choice for anyone in such a position:
  \begin{itemize}
    \item 16.\textit{c}3 \textit{xe}2 17.\textit{xe}2 18.\textit{f}3 \textit{e}7
    \item 19.\textit{f}4.
  \end{itemize}
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
  \item 16.\textit{xb}7 \textit{xb}7 Once he has seized the initiative, Aronian does not give Rapport a break! He is playing with a lot of power, which reminds me of Garry Kasparov's games.
  \begin{itemize}
    \item 17.\textit{c}3? \textit{f}8 17...\textit{h}6?? 18.\textit{xe}6+--.
  \end{itemize}
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
  \item 18.\textit{e}4! \textit{h}6
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
  \item 22.\textit{f}5+\text-- Precision until the end! Timely blows on the h1-a8 diagonal, in conjunction with a mating attack, will now decide the game. Black's problem is that he is simply not in time for the development ...\textit{xc6--d}4. On the other hand, 22.\textit{xf}7 now, compared to the 20...\textit{c}6 line, does not quite work for White, as Black can develop his knight to \textit{c}6. And so Black can fight on by 22...\textit{xe}7 23.\textit{xe}7 \textit{e}6.
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
  \item 22.\textit{gx}f6 White wins after both 22...\textit{e}5 23.\textit{fx}e6 \textit{xe}5 24.\textit{f}6+ and 22...\textit{ex}f5 23.\textit{fx}e6 \textit{xe}5 24.\textit{f}6+.
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
  \item 23.\textit{fx}e6 \textit{h}7 After 23...\textit{xe}6 24.\textit{g}6+
The Only Defeat of the World Champion

The reigning world champion undoubtedly expected more from himself in this event. Magnus’s only loss came surprisingly as a consequence of a positional mistake.

Richard Rapport 2702
Magnus Carlsen 2840
Round 8, Wijk aan Zee 2017

24.g2! A known theme – attacking and defending! Black is effectively a rook down as his g8 and b8 are sleeping on the wrong side of the board, while the black monarch is being subjected to a crushing attack. A beautiful example by Aronian of the art of generating an initiative, followed by accurate timing, calculation and execution!

24...a6 25.d7

25...h5 25...g6 26.xf6 b1+ 27.xf6 g5 28.d5+ 26.xf6 d8 27.xf8+ xf8 28.f1+

As is usual with Richard Rapport, after original and non-theoretical opening play a balanced middlegame is reached. White’s principal asset is his active rook on b7, however Black also has his trumps (more space, potential pressure on the white e2 pawn, etc) and the position may therefore be considered balanced. White’s threat is 23.a7 and Black’s most obvious way of dealing with this is to try to trade rooks in order to eliminate the pressure along the seventh rank. Magnus decides to go for direct kingside counterplay, thereby making an unusual positional mistake – well, by his standards anyway!

22...d3? After this serious positional error White no longer need worry about the weakness of his e2-pawn, while at the same time his 4 vs 3 kingside pawn majority now becomes mobile! White’s knight on d2 is an excellent blockading piece, so Black’s passed pawn on d3 is going nowhere. White has the simple plan of rolling forward his kingside pawn majority – and Black is in serious trouble! Magnus’ decision to play 22...d3? must have been the product of some tactical miscalculation in the forthcoming complications. He must have judged that his direct tactical possibilities would justify what is an overall positional blunder.

On the other hand 22...b8 would maintain the dynamic balance:

A) 23.h5 releases White’s pressure along the seventh rank, allowing Black to generate counterplay with 23...e8, hitting the weak white pawn on e2. Then could follow:
24.a5 xe2 25.xd7 xd7 26.b5+ e8 27.xc5 e7;
B) 23.a7 xe7 24.xb7

24...g5! and Black is fine. In fact White has to be careful if he is to maintain the balance: 25.xd7 xd7 26.e4 xe4 27.xe4 b8.

C) 23.xb8+ xb8 24.a5 e5 leads to this dynamic position

...where Black is not worse, e.g.
25.d8+ f8 26.f1 x2 27.xf3
(27.e8 d67) 27...h5 28.a5 e4.
Smelling blood and not afraid that the world champion might pull a rabbit out of the hat, Rapport goes in for the kill!

23.e3 23.e4±, immediately advancing his kingside pawn majority, also looks better for White.
23...æe5 24.æg2 ìc8

Smelling blood and not afraid that the world champion might pull a rabbit out of the hat, Rapport goes in for the kill!
White’s kingside pawn advance will cost Black a piece.
25.f4 òeg4 26.e4± Black has no good moves here and so Magnus sacrifices a piece, hoping to muddy the waters.
26...èe8 After 26...ìe6 comes 27.ìa7 and, depending on Black’s reply, 28.ìb8 or 28.ìc7 winning.
27.e5 ìxe5 28.fxe5 ìxe5

29.ìb6!+- èe7 Also losing is 29...ìc7
30.ìc6+--
30.ìb8+ ìe8

Richard now produces an elegant finish.
31.ìc6! ìe1+ 32.ìe1 ìxe1+ 33.ìf1 and because of the mating threat on e8, White emerges a full piece up.

Black resigned
The Minister of Defense!

Driven by a pure desire to win, Magnus kept alive his chances of a tournament victory right up to the very last round. Facing Sergey Karjakin, Magnus pressed hard for win. With Wijk aan Zee coming soon after New York, one would have expected both players to thrive on the opening preparation they carried out for their world title match. Yet Karjakin’s opening preparation in Wijk was nothing short of a disaster. Already being hit in the opening phase by Wei Yi and Adhiban, Karjakin also fell victim to Magnus’ opening preparation, making one wonder what lines of play Sergey and his team really worked on prior to their match.

The game itself was similar to those in New York, with Magnus dominating the proceedings and Sergey displaying heroic defense, as his supporters would call it.

C54

Magnus Carlsen 2840
Sergey Karjakin 2785

Round 13, Wijk aan Zee 2017

1.e4 e5 2.f3 c6 3.c4 c5 4.c3 d6 5.d3 0-0 6.g5

6...d6 Since the black pawn is still on d7, breaking the pin with a retreat of the black bishop to e7 has been seen in a number of games, although it is not clear if this is enough to equalize for Black.

7.d2! A well thought out move order. By delaying casting while defending his e4 pawn, Magnus, apart from having a tactical possibility that we are about to see, rules out Black’s plan of ...e7 as a way of breaking the h4-d8 diagonal pin. In the event of 7.0-0 Black does not need to compromise his kingside and can resolve the pin on his king’s knight by means of 7...e7 with ...g6, ...h6 to follow. Then, after 8.d4 b6, White’s e4 pawn hangs, and Black need not fear the damage to his kingside pawns after 9.xf6 gxf6, as his bishop pair, g-file for his rook on g6, and the potential for a ...f6-f5 pawn push, will provide sufficient compensation.

7...h6 Here the idea of unpinning by 7...e7 does not quite work as White gets an enduring advantage after the simple 8.d4. Now Black is forced to take on d4 early, which he does not want to do. Play would therefore continue 8..exd4 (with White’s e4 pawn defended, 8...b6?! simply drops a pawn after 9.dxe5 dxe5 10.xe5 d6 11.xd3) 9.cxd4 b6 10.xf6 gxf6 11.0-0 or 11.b3.

8.h4 g5 The pin is so annoying that Karjakin chooses the most radical way to break it.

9.xg5! Blazing his moves, Magnus goes for a well known tactical theme, albeit one that is a novelty in this particular position. Most likely it was part of his recent world title preparation.

On the other hand Karjakin was taking his time, begging the question: what did he prepare for their match?

9.hxg5 10.xg5 As is the usual outcome of this thematic sacrifice, White has already grabbed two pawns for his sacrificed knight and Black will probably be forced to give back a little more material to rid himself of the annoying pin.

10..g7 11.f3 e6 12.b4 b6

13.d5! An unpleasant move! Going for the 13..xh5 14.exd5 transaction is not really an option for Black here, as White will obtain a great outpost on d4 for his d2, even reinforcing the existing h4-d8 diagonal pin, while the standard ...b8-b7 plan will cost Black the pawn on b7. Nevertheless Karjakin decides to jettison this pawn in order to improve his chances of breaking the pin.

13.a5 14.b5 b8 15.xb7 White has got a third pawn for his knight, so he now has material parity but the pin still persists...

15..a7 A critical moment!

16.d6!? was an interesting alternative in order to eliminate the b8, making it harder for Black to break the pin. Magnus obviously had his reasons for not inviting this exchange, but it really does look promising for White.

A) Then 16..d7? does not work
for Black after 17.h4+-  xc6 (or 17...hxh8 18.c4+) 18.bxc6 xc6 19.h3 followed by g3 with a decisive advantage for White.

B) Or 16...xc6 17.bxc6

24...c5 25.e3 d7! Trying to get active will only leave this knight stranded after 25...a4 26.d4±.

26.d4

...when the only way out for Black from the pin seems to be to give up the exchange by 17...hxh8 18.h4 h6. If White does not take on h6, Black plays either ...h8 or ...g6. There follows 19.xh6+ xh6 and after 20.c4 White has a small material advantage.

So I think we may see 16...c6!? being tested in future games. It is quite possible that Magnus did not see a clear follow-up for himself here or that he simply overestimated the power of his forthcoming knight maneuver to f5, where it lands on the 21st move.

16...bd7 17.c4 xd5

18.exd5 e8 The pin has finally broken! Other options here were 18...g8 or 18...h6.

19.e3 White’s knight is heading for the excellent f5 square as eliminating it with 20...xe3 21.fxe3, opening the dangerous f-file, is not really an option for Black here.

19...g8 20.0-0 h7

21.f5+ It is quite possible that when playing 16...d5, instead of 16...c6, Magnus simply overestimated the power of his knight. There is now material parity, although White is exerting pressure and any Black counterplay is limited. However it is difficult for White to break through.

21...h8 22.h4 a8

23.e1 f6 24.e4 An immediate 24.d4 would have led to a similar position. Carlsen simply wants, and gets, an improved version of it.

26...g6! A clever move! Karjakin correctly judges that (a) White’s f5 is definitely worth a rook, (b) a queen swap would help his defense and (c) grabbing the pawn on d4, which comes out of this transaction, will open a diagonal for his bishop on b6.

27.e7 g4 28.xg8 xg8 29.xg4 xg4 30.g3 exd4 31.cxd4 xd4 32.e8+ g8 33.e7 g7 34.e4 After some changes in material balance, technically we have material equality again. White’s h4 now turns out to be misplaced and White cannot make any easy progress.

34...e5 35.g2 b6 36.f4 g6 37.h3 Trading a pair of rooks first by 37.e8+ g8 38.xg8+ xg8 and only then playing 39.h3, with the idea of advancing g3-g4, was an option to consider. Magnus wanted to keep his two rooks piled up on the e-file, maintaining his dominance there, although a one rook trade in such positions often helps the rook and two pawns when faced with a bishop and knight.

37...g8 38.e1 f7 39.e6 39.g4 f5! 40.gxf5 xf4 41.e7+ g8 42.xf7+ xg7 43.e7+ f6 44.xf4 xh5 45.e5 39...g8 40.e1 45.e7+ g8 42.a4 g7 The offside position of White’s bishop on h4 is now really being felt and so Magnus sacrifices the exchange, worried that the tables may easily turn here.

43.xg6+ xg6 44.e6+ f7 45.e7+ g6 45...g6 was perhaps a winning attempt 46.e6+ h5 47.e7 46.g2 47.f8 47.g5 h7 48.e8 47.f7

49.d8 Keeping the black knight on f8 in the box! Upon 49...e7+? g6 50.e8 47.f7 Black successfully regroups.

49...g8 50.e8 47.f7 51.h6! Not allowing ...g7–g6. Black has a minimal material advantage, White has an eighth rank pin. The position is balanced.

51...f6 Or 51...d4 52.a8 b6.

52.g5 47.f7 53.h6 Draw

So Wijk aan Zee hosted another exciting event with many beautiful, dynamic and well fought games, a few of which we have been pleased to show here.

Photo by Maria Emelianova
An Explosion of Openings in Wijk aan Zee

By GM Jaan Ehlvest

When I delved into the openings played in the Wijk tournament I was surprised to see so many interesting opening battles. Nowadays the online commentators usually do not have enough time to study the games and at the end of the game they mostly only point out the mistakes made by the players.

I hope that this column helps to show what was going on in the opening phase of the games and also the trends of modern openings. The once popular Grunfeld Defense is declining in popularity, mainly because of the 3.f3 move, after which White has had good results in recent practice and Black needs to come up with precise play just to make a draw. Three times this was White’s choice in Wijk and in all these games we saw a transposition to the King’s Indian Defense.

The Slav is still a solid but passive opening and nothing seems to change in it.

Jaan Ehlvest is an American grandmaster and former world no.5 (in 1991). He was a member of the gold-medal winning Soviet Union team at the Chess Olympiad in 1988 after which he represented Estonia in Chess Olympiads from 1992–2004. In 2006 he moved to the USA. His tournament victories include the 1980 USSR Junior Championship, the 1983 European Junior Championship, the 1986 Estonian Championship, the 1994 New York Open, the 2003 World Open in Philadelphia and the 2008 Pan American-Continental Championship.
**Open Games**

**BERLIN WALL**

There are some openings which are a must for the elite tournaments. One of these is of course the Berlin system. White started with 1.e4 most of the time, 40 times out of 90 games to be exact, and it was not a big surprise that the principal answer was 1...e5.

Karjakin was the defender and the loser. In most of the games White did manage to avoid the Berlin wall.

**C65**

Pavel Eljanov 2755  
Sergey Karjakin 2785  
Wijk aan Zee 2017

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♗c6 3.♗b5 ♗f6 4.d3  
In the game D.Andreikin (2736) - W.So (2806), Wijk aan Zee 2017, we saw 4.0-0 ♗xe4 5.♗xe1 ♗d6 6.♗xe5 and it seemed that Andreikin did not have any new ideas and the game quickly ended with a friendly handshake.

4...♗c5 Karjakin has had a lot of experience in this position, playing it also with the white pieces and winning a crucial game against Onischuk in the 2015 World Cup in Baku.

5.♗xc6 The alternative is 5.c3.  
5...♗xc6 6.♕e2 ♗d7!? Karjakin is now definitely revealing his preparation against Carlsen. The main move here is 6...♖e7 when after 7.♗bd2 ♗g4 8.h3 ♗h5 9.a3!? Magnus went on to win a nice game against Wesley So last July.

7.♗c3 A novelty! 7.♗bd2 is the main move here, but it is precisely when Black’s bishop is still on c8 that Eljanov’s move makes more sense. The point is that if White is not exerting any pressure on the center Black can freely develop his bishop later on f7 via e6, without taking the roundabout route g4-h5-f7. Nevertheless the position is very closed and it is too early to draw any conclusions which move is better: ♖bd2 or ♗c3. 7...♗e3!? ♗d6 8.d4 (8.♖c3 0-0 9.0-0 is also possible since then the move order is not relevant, 7...♗e3 or 7...♗c3) 8...0-0 9.♗bd2 exd4 10.♖xd4 ♖h6! and White won in a game G.Oparin (2617)-V.Fedoseev (2665), Russia (ch) from last year, but Karjakin would have surely prepared for this as well.

7...0-0 8.♗d1 With this move Eljanov avoids any preparation, but it is too deep. I would prefer 8.♗e3 ♗d6 (If 8...♗e8 9.0-0 ♗d6 10.h3 ♖f8 11.d4 and as always Black needs to take great care. This is the drawback of the Berlin system - it is very solid, but there is no room for error. This is probably the reason that it does not suit everybody, even though knowledge of the Berlin system is somehow tantamount to showing your chess intelligence.) 9.0-0 ♗c5 10.♗d2 ♗b8 11.♗c4 ♗c6 12.♖xd6 ♖xd6 13.f4 and White has a slight pull.

8...♗e8 9.♗e3 ♗f8 10.g3 ♗e6! 10...♖h3 11.♗d2 ♖f6 12.♖g1 ♖e6 13.0-0-0 is complicated.

11.♗f5 ♖f8 12.h4 ♗c5 13.h5 This is not really an attacking attempt, White just wants to secure the f5 square.

13...♗f6 13...♗d4 14.♖xd4 ♖xd4 15.g4 ♗c5 looks also very fine for Black.

14.c4?! 14.g4!  
14...♗b5 and Black has the advantage.

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**KARJAKIN’S $1,000,000**

A few months ago world champion Magnus Carlsen defended his title against Sergey Karjakin. There were rumors in the social media that Karjakin had supposedly been given one million US dollars by the sponsors for his match preparations. I was curious to see Sergey’s preparations in this tournament and he did not disappoint.
C65

Wei Yi 2706
Sergey Karjakin 2785
Wijk aan Zee 2017

1.e4 e5 2.\( \text{Qf}3 \) \( \text{dxc6} \) 3.\( \text{bxc6} \) \( \text{Qf}6 \) 4.d3 \( \text{Qc}5 \) 5.e3 0-0 6.\( \text{axc6} \) bxc6 7.\( \text{Qxe5} \) d5 8.d4 \( \text{Qb}6 \) 9.0-0 \( \text{dxe4} \)? 9...\( \text{Qxe4} \) was played in a game between Wesley So and Fabiano Caruana last year, when after 10.\( \text{Qxc6} \) (10.\( \text{Qd2} \) might be annoying move giving White risk free small advantage) 10...\( \text{f6} \)?! 11.\( \text{Qb}4 \) White eventually won, but firstly this was a blitz game and secondly, instead of 10...\( \text{Qf6} \), 10...\( \text{Qd}6 \) is stronger.
10.\( \text{Qg}5 \) c5 11.\( \text{Qd}2 \)

ITALIAN GAME

C55

Dmitry Andreikin 2736
Richard Rapport 2702
Wijk aan Zee 2017

1.e4 e5 2.\( \text{Qf}3 \) \( \text{dxc6} \) 3.\( \text{bxc6} \) 4.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{Qf}6 \) 4.d3 \( \text{Qe}7 \) 5.0-0 0-0 6.\( \text{Qc}3 \) d6 7.a3 \( \text{Qe}6 \) 8.\( \text{Qd}5 \)

In the post mortem Karjakin was lamenting that he had just forgotten his home analysis. This is the point, there are dozens of lines in the Berlin which you need to know precisely. Any slight loss of memory and you are lost.

11...\( \text{Qxd4} \)? The computer promises some advantage for White after 11...\( \text{Qb}7 \) 12.\( \text{Qxc5} \) \( \text{Qxc5} \) 13.\( \text{b}3 \), but I am sure that the two bishops are sufficient compensation for the pawn weaknesses, however this might not be to everybody’s taste.

12.\( \text{Qxe4} \) \( \text{dxc3} \) 13.\( \text{Qf}3 \) \( \text{Qb}7 \) 14.\( \text{Qxf6} \) \( \text{Qxe4} \) 15.\( \text{Qxe4} \) \( \text{Qxf6} \) Upon 15...\( \text{Qxf6} \) 16.\( \text{Qg}4 \)? is very strong. For some reason this has not been mentioned by other commentators: 16...\( \text{Qxb2} \) 17.\( \text{Rd1} \) f5 18.\( \text{Qh6} \) \( \text{Qh8} \) 19.\( \text{Qc6} \) \( \text{Qe}7 \) 20.\( \text{Qd7} \) \( \text{Qh4} \) 21.\( \text{Qg3} \).

16.\( \text{Qd7} \) \( \text{Qg6} \) 17.\( \text{Qxg6} \) \( \text{hxg6} \) 18.\( \text{Qxf8} \) \( \text{cxb2} \) 19.\( \text{Qab1} \) \( \text{Qxf8} \) 20.\( \text{Qd1} \) Restricting the b6 bishop, White went on to win this endgame easily.

15...\( \text{Qxe5} \) = the game was level and led to a draw in 45 moves in I.Nepomniachtchi (2767) - R.Rapport (2702), Wijk aan Zee 2017.

9.\( \text{Qg}5 \) \( \text{Qxd5} \) 10.\( \text{Qxd5} \) \( \text{Qd}4 \) 11.\( \text{Qxd4} \) \( \text{Qxd4} \) 12.\( \text{Qf}3 \) \( \text{Qae8} \) A new move, but the position is unpleasant for Black and though Rapport eventually drew the game he had to suffer a lot in the process.

13.\( \text{Qae1} \)

C54

Wesley So 2808
Pavel Eljanov 2755
Wijk aan Zee 2017

1.e4 e5 2.\( \text{Qf}3 \) \( \text{dxc6} \) 3.\( \text{bxc6} \) 4.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{Qc5} \) 4.0-0

The alternative 4.\( \text{c3} \) \( \text{Qf6} \) 5.d3 0-0 6.\( \text{g5} \) d6 7.\( \text{Qd2} \) h6 8.\( \text{h4} \) g5?? is too extravagant. Yes, it is a novelty, but a losing one: 9.\( \text{Qxg5} \) \( \text{hxg5} \) 10.\( \text{Qg5} \) \( \text{Qg7} \) 11.\( \text{Qf3} \) \( \text{Qe}6 \) 12.\( \text{Qd4} \) (Returning the favor, much stronger was 12.\( \text{Qd5} \)±) 12...\( \text{Qb}6 \) 13.\( \text{Qd5} \) a5! 14.\( \text{Qb}5 \) \( \text{Qb}8 \) 15.\( \text{Qxb7} \) \( \text{Qa}7 \) 16.\( \text{Qd5} \)? (16.\( \text{Qc6} \)?) 16...\( \text{Qbd7} \) 17.\( \text{Qc4} \) \( \text{Qxd5} \) 18.\( \text{Qxd5} \) \( \text{Qe8} \) M.Carlsen (2840) - S.Karjakin (2785), Wijk aan Zee 2017. Black got let off the hook.

[See Page 52 – Ed.]

4...\( \text{Qf6} \) 5.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{d6} \) 5...0-0 Karjakin prefers this move order, keeping ...\( \text{Qd7} \)-\( \text{d5} \) as an
6.c3 a6 7.a4 a7 8.Qa3 h6 9.Qc2 Qe7?

A most curious incident occurred in the following game.

C54

Sergey Karjakin
Levon Aronian
Wijk aan Zee 2017

1.e4 e5 2.Qf3 Qc6 3.Qc4 Qc5 4.0-0 Qf6 5.d3 0-0 6.h3 d5 7.exd5 Qxd5 8.Qe1 Qe6 9.Qc3!? A novelty!
9...Qb6 10.Qb3 f6?? Correct is 10...Qe8 11.Qa3±

11.d4?? 11...Qd4! Qde7 12.c5 would have won a piece.

Nevertheless later White managed to win anyway!

B96

Wei Yi
Ian Nepomniachtchi
Wijk aan Zee 2017

1.e4 c5 2.Qf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Qxd4 Qf6 5.Qc3 a6 6.Qg5 e6 7.f4 h6 8.Qh4 Qb6 9.a3 Qbd7

Nepo tried to defend this position twice. Wei most likely was unprepared and played a less ambitious move.

10.Qe2 10.Qc4 e5 (10...g5 11.Qf2 Qc7 12.Qf2 Caruana (2711) – M. Vachier-Lagrave (2722), Biel 2011 and White has a clear advantage.)
11.fxe5 dxe5 12.Qf5 A novelty after which Nepo will now probably need to find an improvement for Black. 12...g6 13.Qd5 Qxd5 14.Qxd5 Qh7 15.0-0-0 gxf5 16.exf5 Qe7 17.Qxe7 Qxe7 18.Qf1 ½–½. White has a very strong attack but this is typical case where the computer likes Black’s position, although I am sure White is better here. B.Adeliban (2653) – I.Nepomniachtchi (2767), Wijk aan Zee 2017.
10...Qe5!? 10...Qe7 is a good option.
11.Qf3 g5 11...Qxf4?
12.Qf2 Qc5 13.b4 gxf5 14.0-0 14.bxc5?
14...Qxe4 15.Qxe4 Qxe4 16.bxc5 dxc5 17.fxe5 instead 17.Qd5! would have left White virtually winning.
17...Qe6 with an unclear position.
Closed Games

ENGLISH OPENING

A34

Anish Giri 2773
Pentala Harikrishna 2766
Wijk aan Zee 2017

1. e4 e5 2. f4 c5 3. d3 c6 4. e5 d5 5. e4 Or 5. e3 e6 6. d4 exd5 7. b4

A novelty which Giri had probably prepared for his game against Nepo.

12. b5 d7 13. c4 d4 14. a3 c6 15. a2 a5 16. e3 0-0 19. f1 c7 20. e2 a6 21. g1 a7 22. c5 edx5 23. edx5 b4 24. e3 d8 25. c4 bx4 c4 26. d6 f6 27. c6 c5 28. fxe3 xeb2 29. c2 x3 30. c7 c8 31. x5 0-1 D.Jakovenko (2741) - I.Nepomniachtchi (2707), Moscow 2012.

12... b4 13. c5! c4 13... e7 was a better move, but Hari was not prepared at all.

14. a4 exd5 15. exd5 and White has a huge advantage.

6... a6 is more flexible than 6... c6 7. e3 b7d7 8. d2 a6 9. c5, which is considered better for White, and Loek did not find any improvement. 9... b5 10. cxb5 axb5 11. a5 12. f1 f7 13. 0-0 a6 14. x a6 xa6 15. c2 a8 16. e1 c h1 R.Wojtaszek (2750) - L. Van Wely (2695), Wijk aan Zee 2017 and White has an easy game.

6. a6 is more flexible than 6... c6 7. e3 b7d7 8. d2 a6 9. c5, which is considered better for White; and Loek did not find any improvement. 9... b5 10. cxb5 axb5 11. a5 12. f1 f7 13. 0-0 a6 14. x a6 xa6 15. c2 a8 16. e1 c h1 R.Wojtaszek (2750) - L. Van Wely (2695), Wijk aan Zee 2017 and White has an easy game.

6... a6 is more flexible than 6... c6 7. e3 b7d7 8. d2 a6 9. c5, which is considered better for White; and Loek did not find any improvement. 9... b5 10. cxb5 axb5 11. a5 12. f1 f7 13. 0-0 a6 14. x a6 xa6 15. c2 a8 16. e1 c h1 R.Wojtaszek (2750) - L. Van Wely (2695), Wijk aan Zee 2017 and White has an easy game.
EXCHANGING CAN BE EXCITING

By GM Rafael Leitao

Often important games for the development of opening theory are not the prettiest ones on the tournament circuit, nor are they always even noticed by the audience. Here I am not talking about spectacular opening novelties, but improvements in the games that featured fashionable lines which will certainly be played again in the near future. This is theory on the factory production line!

The Exchange Slav is usually associated with boring play, more often than not when the first player is aiming for a draw. Of course Mamedyarov, one of the most creative and aggressive players around, has his own view on the matter.
D10

Shakhriyar Mamedyarov 2761
Richard Rapport 2752

Round 3, Azerbaijan-Hungary, Baku Olympiad 2016

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.cxd5 cxd5 4...c3 f6 5...f4 dxc6 6.e3 f5 Black has many other ways of playing, but this is the main line.
7...b3 d5 8.a4+ d7

Now Shakh plays a rare move.

9...d1!? A curious retreat! It2 looks more normal and is most often played. So, what is the advantage of going back to d1? In some cases (when White's queen goes to e2) the position can transpose but I think this move is directed against Black's counterplay with ...e8 followed by ...b5. Since White gained an spectacular victory in this game, it is probable that this move will be tried again in the future. It looks like White has lost many tempi, but actually things are not so clear. The a5 knight and the d7 bishop are not very well placed. 9...c2 e6 10...d3 d5 11...f3 f7 12.0-0 0-0 13...e5 b5! is one line that would not work if White's queen were at d1.

9...c8 A natural move. 9...f5? of course is too optimistic: 10...f3 e6 11...e5+ exploits the badly placed knight on a5; 9...e6 10...d3 d4 11...e2 f5?! as tried in a correspondence game and deserves serious attention. The point is the spectacular 12...xc4 fxe4! The game continued 13...e3 fxe3 14...f1 d4 15...f3 0-0 16...e5 fxe8 with a big fight ahead. S.Kolpak (2339) - A.Hauff (2357), ICCF 2014.

10...f3

fxg6 20...d3± Li Chao (2711) - A.Shirov (2691), Germany 2014.

11...d3

11...c4 After 11...e7 12...e5 0-0 13.0-0 we can see the advantage of having the queen on d1. Black doesn’t have the immediate ...b5 advance and maybe the queen on d1 can go immediately to f3 or support the g2-g4 thrust. Whether these pluses are substantial, however, remains to be seen.

12...e2 f5 12...b4 is a very natural developing move and should be seriously considered. 13...xc4 fxe4 14.0-0, allowing ...xc3 and sacrificing a pawn, is a typical idea of this line. 14...xc3 15.bxc3

13...c4! 13.0-0!? is another possible pawn sacrifice: 13...xb2 (13...b4 14...e5) 14...xb2 fxc3 15...e2 but the compensation is hardly enough for an advantage. 15...e7 16...b1 f6 17...f1 d3 18...e5 0-0.

13...xc4 14.0-0 b4 15...e5 c8
16...h6 Necessary prophylaxis against \g5 or h6. 16...\xc3? 17.h6! 0-0 18.\xd7d7 \xd7d7 19.\gc3 g6 20.\xf8 wins the exchange; or 16...0-0 17.\g5 with a deadly attack.
17.\f1 \xc3 18.\xc3 \xc3

Now White has a couple of tempting continuations, but it is not clear how great his advantage is: 21.g5 (21.hxh6!? \xh6 22.g5 \h7 23.\xf6 \xf6 24.\xf6 \e7 and Black somehow holds.) 21...\e4 22.\xh6 \xh6. White has clear compensation, but Black is by no means lost.
20.g5

White has plenty of compensation for the sacrificed pawn. His pieces are well placed and Black’s king has no shelter. But how to increase the initiative? Mamedyarov’s play provides a textbook example.
19.g4! It is necessary to create targets on the kingside. The move is also helpful to give an escape square for White’s king.
19...\b5 19...\e4 looks very dangerous after 20.\xh6 and although the computer says Black’s position after 20...f5 is still playable, this would certainly not be to a human’s taste. 19...\a3! was a good move, preparing to retreat the queen if necessary. 20.\cb1 b6

20...hxg5 20...\e4 was probably better, although White has a dangerous initiative after 21.\x7f7? \xc1+ 22.\xc1 \d2–+) 21...\xh6 22.\g3.
21.\xg5 Now White is firmly in control and Mamedyarov went on to win a great game. I will only point out a few moments where he could have won even faster.
21...\g8 22.\h1! \c7 23.\xc3 \xc3 24.\g1 \f8 25.\xf6 \xf6 26.\xf6 \f3 27.h4 \e4+ 28.\h2 \c7

29.h5 29.\g7 \e7 30.\f4–.
29...\f5 29...\e7 30.\xe7 \xe7 31.\g7–.
30.h6 30.\g7–.
30...\c2 31.\h4 \e4

32.\xe4 32.\g4–.
32...\xe4 33.\g7 16 34.\g6 \xg6 35.\xg6 \h8 36.\g3 \f7 37.\g7+ \h8 38.\xh6 39.\xh6 \h1 40.a4 e5 41.a5 \g1+ 42.\h2 \a1 43.a6 \a3 44.\e2 \e8 45.\xe5 \xe5 46.f4 d4 47.\exd4 \xf4 48.d5

Black resigned

Shakriyar Mamedyarov.
Photo by David Llada
NAKAMURA TOP of the ROCK in Gibraltar Masters

Gibraltar hosts one of the most prestigious open tournaments and provides high-class conditions for the players. The festival atmosphere is particularly appreciated by the large number of participating female players and certainly promotes women’s chess in general. This year’s tournament also attracted many elite players to a fiercely competitive event which saw surprising results in every round.

Looking back on the tournament, Spanish Grandmaster David Anton Guijarro produced a fantastic performance and deserved to be one of the winners, although Hikaru Nakamura did show his superiority in the playoff. Congratulations to Hikaru for his third victory in a row and his fourth in total – this is definitely an amazing achievement! Not only the playoff, but the whole tournament went quite smoothly for Hikaru. Most of the games he won were beautiful and short, averaging only about 30 moves, including his crucial last round game against French GM Edouard Romain in which he displayed very effective preparation. Another one of his games that particularly attracted my attention came in round six and I would like to share it with readers here...

A34

Hikaru Nakamura 2785
Maxime Lagarde 2594

Gibraltar Masters 2017

1.d4 c5 2.c4 e6 3.±c3 d5 4.cxd5 ±xd5

5.g3 Probably Hikaru deliberately picked a line that has not been the most
popular recently and also one which he himself hadn’t played for seven years. Not long ago, in last year’s Corsica Open, Maxime faced 5.d4 and the game continued 5...\textit{\textit{x}}c3 6.bxc3 cxd4 7.cxd4 e5 8.dxe5 \textit{\textit{xd}}d1+ 9.\textit{\textit{xd}}d1 \textit{c}6 10.e3 \textit{g}4 11.\textit{b}5 0–0–0+ 12.\textit{e}2 \textit{xe}5 13.h3 \textit{xf}3+ 14.gxf3 when the endgame is clearly in White’s favor thanks to his bishop pair. Although Maxime successfully transposed the position into one with opposite-colored bishops, his opponent Benjamin Gledura eventually won the game with fine technique. There are two other main variations: 5.e3 is the latest trend, while 5.e4 has also undergone much development in recent years.

6...\textit{\textit{x}}c3 We have reached another important moment in the opening, where Black needs to decide what type of position he would like to achieve. The move played is one of the latest trends. Many top grandmasters have also experimented with 6...g6. Hikaru himself has also played this line with which he won a nice and purely technical endgame against Caruana in Stevanger 2015. 6...\textit{c}7 is considered to be the classical variation, with ...e5 to follow, but this hasn’t attracted much interest over the last few years.

7.bxc3 e5 8.d3 \textit{e}7 9.0–0

Chinese grandmaster \textit{Hou Yifan} is only the third woman to be rated among the world’s top 100 players, after Judit Polgar and Maya Chiburdanidze. She is widely regarded as the best active female chess player. Yifan remains undefeated in Women’s World Chess Championship match play and is currently the top-rated female player.

9...\textit{e}6 I’m not sure exactly what is the idea of playing an early ...\textit{e}6. 9...0–0 seems much more natural to me, and
only after 10..isNotEmpty I follow up with ...e6 and ...d7 and maintain the centre. Delaying the positioning of the bishop might also leave some flexibility for Black to continue ...b6 and ...b7 in certain circumstances.

10..b1! An important tempo. If 10.c4 then 10...e4 works: 11.e1 exd3 12.xd3 exd4 13.b1 0-0! 14.xb7 d4 with active pieces and direct threats, as a consequence of which White may not be able to gain anything out of the opening. Probably the move he played was all part of Maxime’s preparation and the reason why he decided to go for a similar idea but with the inclusion of b1 and b8, which makes a huge difference.

10...b8 A small trap: 10...d7? 11.xe5 xe5 12.xb7+.

11.c4 e4

12.e1! I wonder how much further Hikaru calculated before he played e1, but obviously this is the move White should go for if he wants to fight for an advantage. Now Black has essentially two options:

12...exd3 12...xc4 looks very suspect, although objectively speaking it’s the way to create complications, as each of the following continuations is tempting but not yet decisive.

A) 13.xe4 exd3 14.xb8+ d5 15.xb7 dxe6 16.xe6 dxe6 17.d3 leads to a quite unbalanced position where speed will be the deciding factor. If the three passed pawns on the queenside can be stopped, White will have a crushing advantage with his centre pawns and extra material. However, during actual play it is not easy to judge such a position before deciding to go in for this line.

B) 13.b2? xxa2 14.xg7 xg8 15.b2 xg7 16.xxa2

16...a5! (16...exd3 17.xc6+ bxc6 18.xxa2) The kingside is already weakened so it is very important for Black to keep alive his hopes of creating counterplay. 17.xe4! (17.xe4 b4 followed by ...b5 and ...a4) 17...xe6 (After 17...f3 18.xe4 the pawn structure has been fixed and Black might already be lost.) 18.c1 and with very accurate play White may hope to obtain more from this position, but again tempi remain the key factor.

13.xd3 d7 13...xc4? 14.xb7 was the reason for including the moves b1 and b8.

14.e3 b6 15.xc5 xc5 16.xc5 xxd1 17.xf6 xf6+ e7
After a series of forced exchanges the game has immediately transposed from opening to endgame, where White has an extra pawn but it is not easy to convert this into a winning advantage. Here Hikaru found the best move...

19.\(\text{B}b3\)! ...returning the pawn so as to make best use of White’s active pieces. On the other hand, protecting the \(c4\) pawn cannot bring White anything, e.g. 19.\(\text{Bd}5\) (Always be alert when putting a piece in an inactive position!) 19...\(\text{B}d8\) 20.\(\text{B}g2\) \(\text{B}b6\); or 19.\(\text{B}d5\) \(\text{B}xb1\) 20.\(\text{B}xb1\) \(\text{B}xd5\) 21.\(\text{cx}d5\) \(\text{B}d6\) 22.\(\text{B}d7\) \(f5\) and the rook endgame with a passed c-pawn offers Black sufficient drawing chances.

19...\(\text{B}xc4\) 20.\(\text{B}d7\)+ \(\text{f}6\) 21.\(\text{B}f3\)+ \(\text{B}g6\)

22.\(\text{B}d6\)+! Again Hikaru finds a move to create as many difficulties as possible for Maxime. Winning back the pawn directly would have been less promising: 22.\(\text{B}c3\) \(\text{B}xa2\) 23.\(\text{B}xa7\) \(\text{B}e6\) 24.\(\text{B}xc5\) and although theoretically White has great winning chances, in actual play it requires subtle technique to convert it into a whole point.

22...\(\text{B}e6\) 23.\(\text{B}e4\)+ \(\text{h}5\)

24.\(\text{B}a6\) This is the most natural move as it attacks the \(a7\) pawn and in the meantime protects White’s own weakness on \(a2\). The computer suggests 24.\(\text{B}c3\) \(\text{B}hc8\)! (After 24...\(c4\) 25.\(f4\), the black king could find itself in a quite dangerous situation on \(h5\).) 25.\(\text{B}d5\) 2\(\text{B}xd5\) (Sometimes the simplest way can save a game so not 25...\(\text{B}b2\)!) 26.\(\text{B}xe6\) \(\text{fxe6}\) 27.\(\text{B}xe6\) \(c4\) 28.\(\text{B}g2\)! with a little trick: 28...\(\text{B}xa2\) 29.\(g4\)+! \(\text{B}hg4\) 30.\(\text{B}e5\)+) 26.\(\text{B}xd5\) 2\(\text{B}g6\) 27.\(\text{B}dxc5\) \(\text{B}xc5\) 28.\(\text{B}xc5\) \(\text{B}b2\) 29.\(\text{B}a5\) \(\text{B}xe2\) 30.\(\text{B}xa7\) \(h5\) and with accurate defense the game should end in a draw, admittedly after many more moves.

24...\(\text{B}b2\) 25.\(\text{B}c3\) \(\text{B}c8\) 26.\(\text{B}f3\)+ \(\text{B}g5\) 27.\(h4\)+ \(\text{f}5\) This is fine but simpler is 27...\(\text{B}f6\), not worrying about 28.\(\text{B}g4\) \(\text{B}c7\) 29.\(\text{B}xe6\) \(\text{fxe6}\), as the \(b2\) rook could go back to the sixth rank and defend easily. Then the equal material should result in a drawn game.

28.a4

28...\(\text{B}c7\)? So far Black has done very well and he just needed to find one more precise move to hold the game, but that is always difficult when under pressure! The actual move played is also evidence

**A CONTROVERSIAL LAST ROUND INCIDENT**

Hou Yifan’s controversial protest action in the last round completely overshadowed every other detail of the Gibraltar Masters, including Nakamura’s triumphant success! But now, in a positive sense, Yifan’s column somehow puts things back where they belong, in a chess only frame.

What happened was that Yifan resigned her final round game in only five moves as a protest at being paired with other women in seven of her nine games. She arrived half an hour late against Indian Babu Lalith and played a sequence of moves that had never been seen before: 1.\(g4\) \(d5\) 2.\(f3\) \(e5\) 3.\(d3\) \(\text{B}h4\)+ 4.\(\text{B}d2\) \(h5\) 5.\(h3\) \(hxg4\) after which she immediately resigned. This naturally came as a big shock to everyone and was actually quite upsetting when bearing in mind that Yifan is well-known for her sporting conduct.

By protesting in this way and not by simply forfeiting the game, Yifan intentionally sacrificed valuable rating points. Moreover her act made a powerful impact on the chess public and provoked intense discussion about whether or not there is evidence of fixings pairings in chess.

Photo by David Llada
that starting with 19...b3 White was continually finding the best practical move to give Black problems to solve. 28...c4!, giving up the a7 pawn, is a bit scary as the passed a-pawn seems unstoppable, but Black can make good use of his active pieces, including his king, to connect with the passed c-pawn. After 29.exa7 ba5 30.e3 xe8, with a direct threat against f2, White has nothing better than a perpetual along the a-file. 31.a5+ xe6 32.e6 xe5. 29.e5 Suddenly the c5 pawn is lost and it is Black's a-pawn that will remain on the board.

29...d7 Tougther is 29...fx6 30.axc5 bx5 31.axc5 ed2, at least trying to save the a7 pawn. 30.axc5+ bx5 31.axc5+ xe6 With the idea of defending the queenside, but it's already too late.

32.e5 b4 33.a6+ An important tempo.

33...e7 34.a5 Black resigned.

An awesome attack and a fearsome firestorm

Back to the Baku Olympiad! Here are two examples that made a great impression on me and hopefully will on you too! By GM Alejandro Ramirez

Baadur Jobava was one of the more prominent players of the Chess Olympiad in Baku. Not to present the following example by Georgia’s top board would be an unforgivable sin:

16...wh8 17.e5+ is unpleasant.

I have never had the pleasure of playing against Baadur Jobava, but I know that his style is fearsome and creative. When he is on fire, it seems like nothing can stop him. With his fantastic performance in the Olympiad, and a gold medal winning score on board one, this game exemplifies just how scary he can be.

14...f6?! Based on a miscalculation which Jobava doesn’t forgive. Correct is 14...e8 and the game goes on, with about equal chances.

15.f5 exf5 16.e7 Of course Ponomariov saw this far, and he was counting on the next move.

16...e6 It seems that White’s rook has ventured a little too far into the enemy camp. However, things aren’t so easy.
she thinks she can push back Muzychuk’s pieces. 23.f4? 23...d1! h2 24.d2 f4! leads to an extremely complex game, with all three results possible. 23...xe4! 23..e6 24.xc5 dxc5 25.f1 is certainly not what Black signed up for.

24.fxe5 White was counting with the automatic recapture on d2, but of course this is not forced. 24...xe4 dxe4 would just drop a key pawn.

24...h2! White has no good way of covering the queening square in this variation. 24...xd2 25.xd2 h2 26.c1 h1 27.xh1 xh1 28.exd6 exd6 29.h6 is probably better for White.

25.d4 25...f3 xd2 is a key difference, now the f3 bishop is simply hanging and unfortunately for White, after 26.xd2 x7, so is the e3 bishop! 27.xh2 xe3++.

25...h1+ 26.g1

26.f2! What a nice finishing touch! White is getting mated.

27.xe4 g1+ 28.d2 xe2+

White resigned
How can a player gain the advantage with the black pieces in a slow positional game? Well, here Vassily Ivanchuk shows that the key factor is patience. The first step is to get to the point where Black has assured himself of comfortable equality, without yet embarking on any special adventures, and then proceed from there...
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?

**4...h6** Here it's just a matter of taste... Besides the text move, there are two other possible options for Black: 4...c5 and 4...e7. I decided to prepare the development of my dark-squared bishop to g7, for which it is necessary to take control of the g5-square.

**5.0-0 d6 6.a4** White has many choices of different game plans and, apart from ...g6 and ...g7, also needs to reckon on the possibility of ...a5. Frequently played is 6.c3 g6 7.d4 e7 8.bdd2 g7 9.ee1 0-0 10.h3 but apparently Fedorchuk wanted to leave the c3-square available for his knight.

**6...g6**

...with the following possibilities:

A) 10...e4 11.e6!? 0-0 12.exf7+ g7;
B) 10...c5 11.exd6 xd6 12.e1+ (also possible is 12.e2) 12...e6 13.e2 0-0 14.e4 b4;
C) or even 10...g4?! 11.e6 f5 (11...d5 12.xg4 xex6 13.e3 dxc4 14.exc6 is White's favor.)

When calculating these lines I came up against quite complex variations and concluded that the arising positions were not to my liking.

**9.exd4 g7 10.d5** During the game I calculated that 10.e5?!
why a much more convincing option for Black is:
B1) 11...0-0 Now White can feel his center is being undermined, and that
12...dxe5 or 12...d4 can even be met by
12...dx5, as 13...dxe5?? is then very bad
because of 13...d5!, which wins a piece
for Black.
B2) 11...dx5 12.fxe5 0-0 13...d4 also
needs examination. Here Black can try
either 13...dxe5 14.b4x8 bx8d8 15...dxe5
16...f7+? or 13...d7 14...c3
dxe5 15...d5 d6!?
Nevertheless there is a more reliable
setup for White: 10...d2? 0-0 (10...d5??
11...d2 12...d7+ 11...d3 f8 12...d2 d6
13...e1 after which he
neutralizes the g7-bishop and easily
equalizes the game.
10...0-0 11...d3 d8

Here it can be said that Black’s pieces are
deployed more harmoniously than those
of White, who still needs to take care if
he is to equalize the game.
14...d3? Was it really necessary
to weaken the counterpart?? In the Russian
game shashki – that is what they call the
g1-a7 and h2-b8 diagonals. [Shashki is
a variant of draughts (checkers) –Ed]
It would have been more circumspect
to develop the bishop to d2 or f4 but it
is quite possible that also after 14...d4
15...d4 d8 16...d7 17...d1 d5 18...d5
dxe5 19...d5 d8 20...d3 there
is nothing wrong with White’s position.
14...d6 15...d4!
Here the initiative
already lies in Black’s hands. But if White
had played 15...d1! d5 16...d5
17...d5 cxd5 18...d3 he could have
preserved firm chances of a successful
defense.
15...d5 16...d5?! Here I prefer the idea
of 16...d1 d8 16...d6+(16...d7??) 17...d3
dxe4(17...d4 18...d5 cxd5 19...d5
cxd5 20...d2; 17...dxe4?? 18...d1 b4
19...dxe4 dxe4 18...d4 d8 19...d4
d4 20...d1 d7 21...d5.
16...d8 17...d5 cxd5 18...d1 It is
difficult already for White to protect all
his weaknesses, but maybe it was worth
trying 18...d3 d8 19...d2 dxe8 20...d1.
18...d6 19...d2 dxe2 20...d1 d2 21...d7

21...d8! I decided to play for the attack.
On the other hand, 21...dxa4 22...d5
dxc2 23...d7?! appealed far less to me.
22...dxa7 22...d3 d4! 23...d4 d8c2 24...d4
dxe2 (or 24...d6 e2) also looks extremely
dangerous for White.
22...dxc2 23...d4 d62? I simply
didn’t want to take on g2 immediately
as after 23...dxe2 comes 24...d1 or
24...d5. However there was also the
strong move 23...d6!, which for some
reason I didn’t even consider.

24...d4. This was one of the main ideas
behind the move...d8. Now my queen
protects the important f7-square from
afar.
25...d8+...d7 26...d8+ g5 27...d8+
d6 28...d6+.
VASSILY IVANCHUK AND ANNA MUZYCHUK ARE THE NEW RAPIDPLAY ROYALS

GAME OF THRONES

We knew it all along, but it was just a matter of time till he was crowned. He entered the chess elite by winning the Linares super-tournament in 1990, when Carlsen had just been born. We are talking about Vassily Ivanchuk, of course!

By GM Denes Boros

He was always considered one of the brightest talents in the chess world, yet he wasn’t able to make his final ascent to the throne.

But in Doha he finally won a world title! He came, saw and conquered, even defeating Carlsen in their individual game, and remained confident to the end, winning his last round game against Melkumyan to edge out both Grischuk and Carlsen.

It was a difficult tournament for all the players, with the leader board changing quite a lot from round to round. In the first half, Pantsulaia and Korobov were the early heroes with Pantsulaia defeating Carlsen and finishing on 4 out of 5, but even more surprisingly, with Ukrainian Anton Korobov topping the rankings with 5 out of 5.

However after their miraculous start, they were both then defeated by Mamedyarov on Day 2.

Enter Ivanchuk!
Denes Boros is a Hungarian grandmaster, residing in Saint Louis. He was third at the Hungarian Junior Championship at age 14 and became an U16 Olympic Champion in Denizli. He is proud to have made 10 out of 11 when he scored his first GM norm. Denes, a graduate psychologist, provided expert grandmaster commentary for the New York Times during the World Championship Match in New York last year.

Chucky had started with 3½ out 5, but then steadily climbed up the ladder by beating Dreev and Carlsen back-to-back in the 5th and 6th rounds.

D30

Vassily Ivanchuk 2747
Magnus Carlsen 2840

World Rapid Championship, Doha 2016

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.d4 f6 4.f3 c6 5.e3 d5 6.c3 e5 7.dxc5 Qxc5 8.a3!

The start of a deep plan. Ivanchuk uses his extra tempo to develop an initiative by first developing his queenside pieces. 8...0-0 9.b4 e7 10.b2 c7 11.b3 b7 12.e4! b5 13.a5! Inviting Carlsen to exchange queens as Ivanchuk’s only concern is his king’s safety. When that is out of the way, his position will be superior.

13...cxb2 14.axb2 a4 15.bxa5 c6 16.b6 b8 17.0-0 d6 18.d1!

Notice how cramped Carlsen’s position is. Though Magnus has managed to exchange queens, Chucky’s monster knight on a5 remains dominant!

18...d8 19.a5 f6

20.a7! Backward moves are always the hardest to detect, now the a5-knight is ready to jump into action.

20...f5 21.axb6 cxb6 22.axe7+ fxe7 23.b5! Precisely calculated by Ivanchuk.

23...c4 24.axc4 dxc4 25.a6! cxb6 26.axc6 Carlsen tries to complicate matters here, but, unfortunately for him, Ivanchuk has exchanged off all his aggressive pieces and is now winning.

26...d5 27.b6+ d6 28.a6 c8 29.b4 Creating luft for the king.

29...c7 30.a4 e5 31.a5!

This clinches the game as a second pawn is about to fall. The rest is a matter of technique for Ivanchuk.

31.d6 32.axe5 c4 33.axe5+ d7 34.exf6 fxe5 35.e5 d6 36.e2 b5 37.f4 c1+ 38.f2 f7 39.exf3 c2+ 40.g3 a4 41.d3+ e7 42.c3 d8 43.g4 d2 44.c6 d3 45.e6 d6+ 46.e5 d7 47.g4 e8 48.f5 hxg5 49.hxg5 d6+ 50.g6 b5 51.e5 d4 52.f4 Black resigned.
He then drew from a superior position against Korobov before pulling off another 2 out of 2 against Pansudilak and Mamedyarov. The game against Mamedyarov was crucial as by this time Shakriyar was fast gaining momentum with wins against Aronian and Korobov. Here is this encounter, where Chucky’s king literally takes matters into his own hands...

**Rapid**

1-3. Vassily IVANCHUK, Alexander GRISHCHUK, Magnus CARLSEN 11, 4-7. Shakhrisyar MAMEDYAROV, Yangyi YU, Ian NEPOMNIATCHI, David ANTON GUJARRO 10, 8-13. Santosh GUJARATI VIDIT, Leonov ARONIAN, Leinier DOMINGUEZ PEREZ, Ngoc TRuong Son NGUYEN, Farruh AMONATOV, Ivan CHEPARINOV 9½, etc (106 players, 15 Rounds)

25...c6+ and White wins.

**42...e5!** Like a Swiss clock, Chucky’s monarch arrives precisely on time, as it now threatens to assist in the promotion of the d6 pawn, while also eliminating ideas of $6e6 and a2,

42...$6d8 43.$6e6 $6b1 44.$6d7 $6b2 45.$6d5! Nothing is as strong as mate!

45...$6e2 and Black resigned in view of 45...$6c5 and an eventual pawn promotion.

**Black resigned**

After this win Ivanchuk took the lead. In Rapid, luck plays a role and sometimes miracles do happen — even in games played by world champions! Take a look at the dramatic encounters, Carlsen - Ganguly and Anand - Ivanchuk. Carlsen found himself on the edge of a precipice, but would you have found the winning move for Ganguly?

**Viswanathan Anand** 2779

**Vassily Ivanchuk** 2747

World Rapid Championship, Doha 2016

36...$6a4 thereby missing a golden opportunity to checkmate the world champion in three moves by 36...$6g4+! 37.$6xg4 $6g2+ 38.$6h5 $6f3# There followed 37...$6c4?

25.g4! Ivanchuk counters Mamedyarov’s active play by expanding on the kingside. 25...$6g6 26.h4! $6c1+ 27.$6g2 $6c3 28.h5 $6b1 29.a3 $5 An active move, which however is slightly inaccurate.

30.$6xf5 $6xf5 31.$6e5 $6e8 32.$6c6 $6a6 33.$6e3 $6e4 34.$6xe4 $6xe4 35.$6b8 $6a5 36.$6d6 $6d1 37.$6b3 $6c1 38.$6d4!

Pinpointing the drawback of move 29. Now Ivanchuk is ready to march up the board with his king.

38...a4 39.$6b2 b4! Looking for counterplay.

40.axb4 a3

41.$6d2!! Ivanchuk is not afraid of ghosts.

41...$6b5 41...a2 fails to 42.d7+ $6d8 36.$6g6+! To which Ganguly replied falling for 38.$6d8+! $6xd8 39.$6e8+ $6h7 40.$6g6+ $6g8 with a draw by perpetual check!

On the other hand, Anand had gained a commanding position but Ivanchuk was holding on tight. Then the unexpected happened...

**Magnus Carlsen** 2906

**Surya Ganguly** 2631

World Rapid Championship, Doha 2016

Here Carlsen set a dastardly trap for the Indian Grandmaster, but it could have cost him dearly...

Anand had held the initiative for quite a while, but now he relaxed and played 61.$6f5??, which ran into Chucky’s 61...$6xe5!, as the rook cannot be taken because of ...$6f3+, winning the rook back with interest, so White resigned.

**White resigned**

Hikaru Nakamura came to Doha with great ambitions, but did not manage to live up to his own expectations. He tried to play his trademark aggressive chess, but
it didn’t work out too well this time as can be seen from the following game where he ran into trouble against the in-form Levan Pantsulaia.

Hikaru Nakamura 2779
Levan Pantsulaia 2607
World Rapid Championship, Doha 2016

C) 42...\texttt{w}d7 43.\texttt{w}xd7 \texttt{\textbf{x}}xd7 44.\texttt{\textbf{d}}xc6 \texttt{\textbf{c}}7 45.\texttt{\textbf{d}}xc5 \texttt{\textbf{d}}xc6 46.\texttt{\textbf{d}}xb3 \texttt{\textbf{x}}xb2 47.\texttt{\textbf{d}}5; D) 42...\texttt{\textbf{a}}6 43.\texttt{\textbf{d}}xh5.

The remaining moves were: 41.\texttt{\textbf{a}}5 \texttt{\textbf{g}}xh5 42.\texttt{\textbf{a}}xh5 \texttt{\textbf{d}}c6 43.\texttt{\textbf{f}}2 \texttt{\textbf{x}}f2 44.\texttt{\textbf{f}}x2 \texttt{\textbf{f}}6 45.\texttt{\textbf{f}}13 \texttt{\textbf{e}}7 46.\texttt{\textbf{d}}d2 \texttt{\textbf{d}}d4 47.\texttt{\textbf{c}}1 \texttt{\textbf{h}}8 48.\texttt{\textbf{g}}5+ \texttt{\textbf{g}}8 49.\texttt{\textbf{g}}4 \texttt{\textbf{f}}6 50.\texttt{\textbf{d}}f6 \texttt{\textbf{x}}f5 51.\texttt{\textbf{d}}xh7+ \texttt{\textbf{x}}xe7 52.\texttt{\textbf{e}}1+ \texttt{\textbf{d}}6 53.\texttt{\textbf{a}}5 \texttt{\textbf{d}}1+ 54.\texttt{\textbf{f}}5 \texttt{\textbf{g}}d5+ 55.\texttt{\textbf{g}}4 \texttt{\textbf{d}}6+

White resigned

Such fateful moments are often game-changers. Nevertheless Carlsen kept on fighting even after his losses against Pantsulaia and Ivanchuk, and he even caught up with the leaders after Ivanchuk had suffered an unexpected defeat against Nepomniachtchi.

Let me tell you from my own personal grandmaster experience that some defeats can have a profound effect on the quality of your play. What makes the elite players stand out is the way they manage to cope with losses. The last round was a perfect illustration of this, since a drama was about to unfold...

The situation was tense before the last round since Ivanchuk, Carlsen and Grischuk each had 10 points, with Chucky having the best tiebreak. At first it seemed a pretty good scenario for Carlsen and Grischuk, as they each managed to outplay their opponents, Mamedyarov and Nepomniachtchi, while Ivanchuk’s position was only slightly superior. But then Ivanchuk showed everyone how to score the full point in a must win situation by creating a masterpiece of a game against Melkumyan.

Vassily Ivanchuk 2747
Hrant Melkumyan 2633
World Rapid Championship, Doha 2016

23.\texttt{d}xe5! A wonderful psychological decision by Ivanchuk! The computers desperately advocate 23.\texttt{\textbf{d}}xe5, but that would lead to mass exchanges, which is precisely what Ivanchuk doesn’t want!

23...\texttt{\textbf{c}}5 24.\texttt{\textbf{d}}xd7 \texttt{\textbf{x}}a3

25.\texttt{e}6! Ivanchuk goes for an attack and has an idea in mind...

25...\texttt{\textbf{e}}7 26.\texttt{\textbf{e}}7+ \texttt{\textbf{f}}7 27.\texttt{\textbf{d}}xe8! \texttt{\textbf{x}}xe8 28.\texttt{\textbf{x}}xe8+ \texttt{\textbf{x}}xe8 29.\texttt{\textbf{d}}b3+ \texttt{\textbf{f}}7 30.\texttt{\textbf{d}}b5!

An opposite colored bishops queen-ending! But Chucky knows the old adage; the bishop with mating threats is stronger than the one facing a brick wall!!

30...\texttt{\textbf{c}}6 31.\texttt{\textbf{f}}4 \texttt{\textbf{c}}6 32.\texttt{\textbf{g}}5! \texttt{\textbf{h}}6 33.\texttt{\textbf{d}}8+ \texttt{\textbf{f}}7 34.\texttt{\textbf{f}}3! Spoiling all the fun for Black’s bishop!

34...\texttt{\textbf{c}}5+ 35.\texttt{\textbf{h}}2 \texttt{\textbf{h}}5 36.\texttt{\textbf{d}}6 \texttt{\textbf{c}}8 37.\texttt{\textbf{e}}7+ \texttt{\textbf{g}}8 38.\texttt{\textbf{e}}5! and White’s bishop+queen combination triumphs.

Black resigned

This crucial last round win brought Vassily Ivanchuk a deserved Rapid World Championship title, with Alexander Grischuk coming second, and Magnus Carlsen third on tiebreaks.

At the end, Ivanchuk really stood out from the crowd by taking a little break from chess by playing checkers! You
could tell just how great a champion the Ukrainian is by watching him after winning his last round game – he just walked straight up to the next interesting game being played and switched to the role of keen spectator!

**Rapid**

1. Anna MUZYCHUK 9½,
2. Alexandra KOSTENIUK 8½,
3. Nana DZAGNIDZE 8,
4-6. Sarasadat KHademalsharieh, Ju Wenjun, Zhansaya ABDUMALIK 7½, 7-11. Kateryna LAGNO, Antoaneta STEFANOVA, Dinara Saduakassova, Humpy KONERU, Zhao Xue 7, etc.
(34 players, 12 rounds)

**Blitz**

1. Anna MUZYCHUK 13, 2-3. Valentina Gunina, Kateryna Lagn 12½,
(34 players, 17 rounds)

Anna Muzychuk claimed both the Women’s Rapid and Blitz World Championships. Photo by David Llada

Doha was in fact a huge success for the Ukrainians as not only did Ivanchuk win the Men’s, but Anna Muzychuk took the Women’s section.

Here is a snippet from her crucial game against Alexandra Kosteniuk, where she was winning as early as the seventh move!

**C48**

Anna Muzychuk 2558
Alexandra Kosteniuk 2555
World Rapid Championship, Doha 2016

1.e4 e5 2. d3 d6 3. c3 c6 4. b5
A standard variation, but from here on the position takes a surprising twist!

4... d4! 5. exd4 exd4 6. d5?! An extremely rare idea, first played by Vassily Ivanchuk.

unusual double pin on both the d- and f-pawns.

9. e2 c5 10. c4!

An attempt to refute the audacious knight move, but it runs into Anna Muzychuk’s beautiful...

7. h5!! A move that clinches the game!

Black faces one major problem here, how to stop the threat of e5+?

7... d6 8. e5! g6 8... f6 loses to 9.e6! exploiting the second retreat.

After this move Anna won the d4 pawn and later also the game.

Black resigned

Talk about domination – Anna Muzychuk claimed both the Women’s Rapid and Blitz World Championships in Doha!
CARLSEN ALLOWS A KNIGHT FORK AND KARJAKIN TAKES THE WORLD (BLITZ) TITLE! ANNA MUZYCHUK DOES THE DOUBLE BY WINNING THE WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP

Blitz and Blunders

By GM Baadur Jobava

It was Jobava’s blunder against Karjakin in the last round that decided the championship in favour of his opponent. Blitz and blunders go very well together, don’t they?

At the end of what had been a pretty successful year for me, I travelled to Doha, Qatar, in the holiday season of December, to test my skills and try my luck. Many strong grandmasters had also come there to enjoy the hot weather as well as a lot of fast and furious chessboard battles.

As allotted thinking time in tournament play is becoming shorter, so is chess becoming more interesting for non-professional chess players. Rapid and Blitz chess are primarily fun – even for the top grandmasters. Of course, just as in any other game, no one likes to lose and so all players try to train appropriately for what is still an important event. In general, the greater the difference in strength of a higher-rated player in normal, classical games, the lesser that difference becomes in rapid and blitz. There are players who have a distinct preference for one or other time control, whereas others do not seem to mind at all and effortlessly adapt their play accordingly.

In classical games, unless you make some terrible blunder, there is almost always enough time to get back into the game – even if you are tired or not able to concentrate properly for whatever reason. On the other hand, fast chess competitions demand maximum concentration and effort on every move and for hours and hours on end. However, one small consolation is that your opponent is also faced with the same problem!

Ever since the time increment was introduced into chess tournaments, the need for wide-ranging and profound technical knowledge of the game has increased. For example, in the recent world title match we were able to see typical drawn endgames where the weaker side had to hold their position right up to the last second and without making mistakes – until the 50 move draw rule could be invoked. Then again, we should mention that in fast time controls it is easier to confuse an opponent with some gambit line or other unexpected opening.

After playing twenty-one games over two days in a tournament where every second of every round might bring about a chance to change the course of events, Sergey Karjakin took the title on tie break from Magnus Carlsen. So, with a bit of luck, after missing out on the world title for classical chess, the erstwhile challenger got some sort of compensation in blitz play!

In Rapid and Blitz you will find a host of interesting ideas, ingenious tactics, shocking blunders, exemplary endgame technique... It is even worthwhile conducting deep analysis on such games. However, here I prefer to present two of these encounters with brief comments, because somehow it is not really appropriate to spend days analyzing games which took at most only one hour to complete.

A WORD ABOUT IVANCHUK

After three days of battle, five serious games per day, and a fair proportion of good and bad luck for the contestants, the Rapid saw a popular winner. For 2016, the title of World Rapid Champion went to a man who seems more fascinated by chess and/or draughts than by life itself! Put quite simply, Vassily Ivanchuk not only has enormous chess talent, knowledge and experience, but also an enormous love of chess. Whether he wins or loses, he will invariably remain the same and just carry on thinking about the positions in the game and analysing them whilst accepting fate without question.
Better was 14...\textit{xe6} followed by \textit{xd5}. 15.\textit{f3} \textit{a5} 16.\textit{e5} \textit{xc2} 17.\textit{xc1} \textit{d6} 18.\textit{xc6} \textit{e4} 19.\textit{xe1} White gains better piece activity by 19.\textit{xe4} \textit{xe4} 20.\textit{xe6} \textit{cxd6}. 19...\textit{xf3} 20.\textit{xe8+} \textit{xe8} 21.\textit{gxh3} \textit{f5} 22.\textit{xd6} \textit{cxd6} 23.\textit{e1} a6 24.\textit{d1} \textit{e6} 25.b3 d5 26.\textit{d4} g6 27.\textit{c1} \textit{d7} 28.\textit{c6} a5 29.\textit{d6} \textit{e5} 30.\textit{xd5} \textit{d3} 31.\textit{e2}

\textbf{C42}

\textbf{Sergey Karjakin} \hspace{1em} 2785  
\textbf{Baadur Jobava} \hspace{1em} 2702

World Blitz Championship, Doha 2016

1.e4 e5 2.\textit{f3} \textit{d6} 3.\textit{xe5} d5 As we said before: in blitz, confuse your opponent! 4.\textit{xd5} \textit{xd5} 5.d4 \textit{xc6} 6.\textit{d3} \textit{xd4} 7.\textit{xc6} \textit{xd1+} 8.\textit{d1} \textit{bxc6} So material remains equal — although it is true that Black does not have an ideal pawn structure! 9.\textit{xe2} \textit{e6} 10.\textit{e3} 0-0 11.0-0 \textit{e8} 12.\textit{f3} \textit{d7} 13.\textit{c4} \textit{c5} 14.\textit{f4} \textit{d5}

\textbf{Leading Final Scores (Open)}


This game decided the World Blitz Champion. What else can I say other than “Congratulations Sergey!” — and just hope that next time I will be the lucky guy to win the title!
Being incurably nostalgic I cannot hold back a marked feeling of disappointment when I compare the titanic clashes of the past with some of the recent world championship matches. First and foremost is the fact that nowadays there are only 12 classical games, compared with 24 or more in earlier times.

One might expect that in such short matches the opponents would give their best, as the overall effort is smaller, but it is in fact the opposite that frequently happens. In long matches a player can afford to go wrong in one or more games and yet retain chances of a come-back, whereas in short matches the pressure is higher and this can have a seriously inhibiting effect.

by GM Mihail Marin

I will try to summarise the last world title match in a few sentences, looking at it from an old-fashioned grandmaster point of view. Carlsen tried very hard to win the classical stage of the match, but due to his sub-optimal form could not achieve this. In fact Karjakin might even have won the match but, with very few exceptions, he did not give any indication of trying to do so. Looking at games 7 and 8 one might wonder why players of the past were able to stockpile a reliable and varied repertoire to last them for 24 games or more, whereas nowadays they seem to have difficulty coping with this task for half that length of time.

However, to finish on a positive note, it was admirable that the games were played right up to the time when all realistic resources were exhausted, with the exception of course of the last encounter, when the players were satisfied with safely reaching move 30 in order to agree a draw and enter the tie-break phase.

The fight for world chess supremacy has excited particular interest for followers of the royal game, ever since the early centuries of European chess life. On first thoughts, circumstances might seem to have been different one or more centuries ago, but in fact the essential features of chess have always been the same. Our beloved game is not financially productive in any way, so the careers of the brightest figures in chess history have always depended largely on sponsors, or, as they used to call them a long time ago, Maecenas.

During the Middle Ages, the Royal Majesties’ main entertainment was listening to music or hunting. However, as fate would have it, in 1737 King Louis XV let it be known how much he enjoyed a choral work written by a 11 year old boy and
An anecdotal review of the world title matches

that is how the very young François André Danican Philidor, later one of the founders of Comic French Opera, started his musical career. Later the king even rewarded the young composer with a lifetime pension for his creative work.

But Philidor also had enormous chess talent and he would often make money by playing for stakes. In those times there were no proper conditions for organized chess life and Philidor’s chess thinking and achievements became known principally from his books and not from published games, although historians are unanimous in considering him the first unofficial world chess champion. One thing in particular that Philidor wrote long ago remains valid to this very day: “Pawns are the soul of chess!”

Philidor’s most colorful successor was Alexandre Deschapelles, a somewhat controversial French military officer whose life seems shrouded in mystery. While serving in Napoleon’s army Deschapelles lost his right arm, resulting in the nickname Monchot (one-armed). He didn’t write any chess books, so we know little about his true standard of play, but his contemporaries seemed to consider him the unofficial world champion round about the period 1800-1820. The most precise testimony is offered by Deschapelles himself, but there is a certain Munchhausen spirit in his words. He says he learned how to play chess at the age of 18 and only three days later he was able to give odds of the f7-pawn and win
against his teacher, a certain Bertrand, author of a chess manual. “Three days were quite enough to show my chess talent. If you are not successful after this interval of time you should not play chess at all.” During his visits to the Berlin chess club in 1806–1807 he used to give the same odds against consulting partners and already in his very first game, after only 11 moves, he announced “a beautiful mate in 7.”

However, the unofficial world title started to gain in legitimacy only in 1834 when the first match between Europe’s strongest players took place.

During the previous years, Deschapelles’ pupil Louis Charles De Labourdonnais was considered by many to be the champion, but this did not make his life any easier. His annual salary of 1200 Francs as the secretary of the Paris chess club was barely sufficient for a very modest life. Just like Philidor, Labourdonnais had to play chess for stake money but Caisa smiled on him when voices were raised, claiming that the Irish player Alexander McDonnell was stronger.

McDonnell was a wealthy merchant who also earned 1200 a year, but... pounds sterling, which meant about 25 times more!

The two rivals met in London where they contested a series of six matches, all won by Labourdonnais, the first and fourth with crushing scores. After this there remained little doubt about the French player’s supremacy, after which perhaps his standard of living improved a little...

It is worth mentioning that some of his games featured certain threads of modernism. Labourdonnais achieved great success with the white pieces, starting from the following tabiya:

1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.e3 e5 4.c5 c6 5.exd4 6.e4 e6 7.d4 d6 8.c3

True, this line is no longer fashionable (even though I find it entirely viable) but it bears the contours, with reversed colors, of one of the main lines of the Tarrasch French, advocated by such great classical players as Korchnoi and Uhlmann.

3.dxe5 c5 4.exd5 exd5 5.b3 f3 6.dxe5

Almost always followed by either dxe5 or...xd4 reaching a mirrored version of Labourdonnais’ favorite structure.

The list of unofficial world champions continues with such glorious names as Howard Staunton, Adolf Anderssen and Paul Morphy.

The next truly historic moment was the first official world championship match disputed in 1886 in three American cities: New York, Saint Louis and New Orleans.

The Austrian player Wilhelm (later, after moving to the USA, William) Steinitz achieved his first major success as a talented attacking player, much in the spirit of his époque. But later this ceased to satisfy him and he tried to understand the subtle reasons why a player would gain the upper hand. This is how he reinvented himself and became known as the father of modern chess strategy. In some respects, Steinitz went too far, even denying the merits of tactics and dynamic play. Also the stubbornness he displayed in defending his sometimes exaggerated assertions was to give rise to many unpleasant moments during his later matches.

In the world title match he was faced with Johannes Zukertort, a multi-talented man who had abandoned a promising medical career to become what we would nowadays describe as a professional chess player. He started the match emphatically, winning four games in a row after losing the first. But Steinitz gradually came back and eventually won with a convincing score of 12½–7½. Demoralized and exhausted by the long match, Zukertort suffered serious health problems and passed away two years later at the age of 46.
Once again I would like to point out that some of their encounters were imbued with traits of modernism. Here is a typical position from the ninth game:

Black’s flexible regrouping against the isolated queen’s pawn could well have taken place in a game today.

From 1886 until 1948 the official title of world champion had a somewhat different meaning from how we understand it today. There were no qualifying tournaments or matches and the champion had the right to choose an opponent if and when he so wished. Of course, things were not that one-sided, since the system lasted for more than a half a century. The title would have little meaning to successive world champions if it didn’t yield any financial benefits, so they had good reason to accept challenges every now and then. Moreover, in order to attract the interest of sponsors, chosen challengers needed to be credible and they usually were.

Nevertheless the system did allow the reigning champion to side-step difficult opponents, a situation which occurred more than once over the coming decades.

However, much to his credit, Steinitz was not that kind of person. After conquering the supreme crown he was prepared to accept any challenge and relished the opportunity to defeat even the most dangerous opponents.

Steinitz retained his title after hard fought matches with Mikhail Chigorin in Havana 1888, Isidore Gunsberg in New York 1890 and again with Chigorin in Havana 1892. In the latter match he was in fact on the verge of defeat due to his obstinacy in believing he could refute the Evans Gambit by holding on to his material advantage, even if it meant retreating his pieces to the back rank. Who knows how the match would have ended had Chigorin not blundered into a simple mate in a virtually won position in the last game.

Towards the end of the 19th century Siegbert Tarrasch, known as the Nuremberg Doctor, was being regarded as Europe’s strongest player. But, busy with his medical practice, Tarrasch did not have time to cross the Atlantic Ocean and challenge Steinitz. In the meanwhile, little attention was being paid to a fast improving young player who, together with a number of minor events, won a moderately strong tournament in London 1892. This was Emanuel Lasker. Encouraged by his result, Lasker sent a letter to Tarrasch challenging him to a match. The Nuremberg Doctor declined in acid terms, claiming that Lasker should first win some first class tournaments before being given such a privilege.

However, Lasker was not discouraged and soon dispatched a similar letter to Steinitz who, faithful to his principles, accepted.

The match was disputed in 1894 with the first eight games taking place in New York, the next three in Philadelphia and the remainder in Montreal. Much to public astonishment the young challenger won, thereby becoming the second official world champion.

The new champion agreed to defend his title against the winner of a tournament in St.Petersburg 1895/96, effectively the only Candidates’ style event held until shortly before the Second World War. It was a 6 round all-play-all with the participation of Lasker, Steinitz, Chigorin and the new rising star from America, Harry Nelson Pillsbury. The winner (or if Lasker finished first, the runner-up) was entitled to be the new challenger.

Pillsbury dominated the first half of the tournament, but, being a man who lived life to the full and engage with the local ladies of the night, suffered the first symptoms of syphilis somewhere in the middle of the tournament. This led to a deterioration in his play.
personal relations with Lasker, Tarrasch stated before the first match: “I have only two words to say to him: Check and Mate!” But this was not destined to happen very often...

The 1910 match with the Austrian Karl Schlechter was a completely different affair. Schlechter had reached the peak of his career a few years earlier, but Lasker made sure to compete against more “comfortable” opponents. When he finally accepted Schlechter’s challenge he imposed a series of severe and, from the human point of view, unfair conditions. He would retain the title in case of an equal score (something not unheard of before) and Schlechter would be the new champion if he managed to win by... two points! If he won by one point, a jury would decide who had played better. This point is clouded with some uncertainty, since for the first time in the history of world title matches the rules were not published in the newspapers. But grandmaster Jacques Mieses remembers that before the last game, when Schlechter was leading by one point, he told him: “If the game ends in a draw, what can I do?”

Lasker showed himself ready to play as many games as his challenger wished, on the condition that he raised from sponsors 800 to 1000 German marks, which was then to be included in the prize fund. The match was eventually set at only 10 games. In other words, Schlechter was forced to gain a considerable advantage in a limited number of games.

Schlechter lost that last fatalistic game. Being a cautious player by nature, he treated the Slav variation now bearing his name in uncharacteristic style, throwing his pawns forward and ruining his own structure. But somewhere after move 25 Lasker lost control and the game was adjourned on move 30 with excellent winning chances for the challenger. Probably affected by the significance of the result, Schlechter played badly on resumption of play and lost. He could not hide his frustration when the expensive watch, meant as an additional prize for the winner, was awarded to Lasker. Was there a winner at all? A few years later Schlechter died in abject poverty, not unusual for unfortunate chess professionals of that time. Lasker, on the hand, had accumulated quite a fortune as world champion, but he saw his savings ruined by inflation after the First World War. In 1921 he gladly accepted the challenge of a talented Cuban, José Raúl Capablanca. Capablanca would have been a credible challenger even before the war, since in 1909 he crushed Marshall in a long match and in 1911 won the San Sebastian super-tournament. But in those years his negotiations with Lasker failed to achieve any tangible result... The contest took place in Havana and was planned for 24 games. But after losing the 14th game and reaching the score -4 =10 +0, Lasker resigned the match. For the first time in history, the champion did not win a single game! But at the same time Lasker entered history as the most long-lasting world champion by retaining his title for 27 years!

One year later, Capablanca confirmed his class by winning the London tournament. On the last day he invited all the participants to his suite in order to inform them about his
conditions regarding a possible world title match, which is ever referred to in chess history as the “London Protocol.” The most important points were that matches should be continued until one of the opponents had won six games (draws not counting) and that the challenger had to raise a prize fund of 10,000 US dollars which, according to Internet sources, is the equivalent of $136,000 in today’s money.

It was not until 1927 that a challenger, the Russian emigré Alexander Alekhine managed to fulfil these steep financial requirements. The match took place in Buenos Aires and many expected Capablanca to win. The Cuban’s outstanding technique and the rarity of his losses had brought him fame as a “chess playing machine.” But Alekhine proved the effectiveness of his thorough preparation and ambition by claiming victory with a score of 6-3 after 34 games.

For the first time since Steinitz, a world champion was prepared to openly admit he was a professional chess player. A close friend of Albert Einstein, Lasker considered himself a philosoper (even though specialists consider that his merits as a mathematician were more notable) while Capablanca posed as a diplomat (in fact, it looks as if the Cuban government had awarded him this title as a form of hidden professionalism, something which became prevalent much later in Communist countries).

Alekhine adopted the London Protocol which put Capablanca on the other side of the financial barrier which he had himself established. The personal relations between these marvelous players had become very strained ever since Buenos Aires and whenever a re-match looked probable Alekhine took refuge by crossing swords with less dangerous opponents. He convincingly defeated Efim Bogoljubow in 1929 and 1934, but didn’t hide the fact that this was not a serious challenge. In his comments to a game from the second match he writes: “This game proves the futility of organizing this match...” There is also an amusing anecdote. During the opening ceremony of the second match, Alekhine gave a short speech going more or less like this:

**Last night I had a dream. Alekhine passed away. He went up to heaven’s door and asked St. Peter to give him a saintly halo and wings. The Saint explained that chess professionals were not allowed in heaven. But just when he was about to accept his fate, Alekhine saw Bogoljubow waving his wings and playing his harp on a puffy cloud and said “But what about him, St. Peter?” The Saint erupted into laughter. “Why, do you call him a professional chess player?”**

The 1935 match with the Dutch mathematics professor Max Euwe was probably meant to be in the same category. But by that time Alekhine was already a victim of his own myth of invincibility. He had become addicted to alcohol and superstition. He brought with him an astrologist and a cat named Chess. He sometimes allowed it to prowl on the board and chose his first move depending on the flank which seemed to interest the cat the most. Despite an excellent start (6-3) Alekhine could not withstand the pressure for the scheduled 30 games and in the end lost by a point.

Things were different in the 1937 return match. Alekhine had given up drinking alcohol, replacing it with milk. He even bought a Swiss cow and seriously considered bringing it to Holland during the match. And indeed, after a hesitant start, he showed his former strength and won by a large margin.

This was Alekhine’s last match, as the outbreak of the Second World War put an end to major chess events and put paid to any chance of playing the winner of the AVRO tournament of 1938, which was designed to produce his next challenger. He passed away in 1946, thus becoming the first world champion to retain the title until his dying day.

Starting from this moment, FIDE took over the organization of an officially recognized three-year world championship cycle, consisting of Zonal
Interzonals, Candidates' tournaments (which became individual matches after 1965) meant to provide the most appropriate challenger for the reigning champion. This system lasted until 1993.

However such a historic decision required the establishment of a world champion as soon as possible, hence the holding of the first FIDE World Championship in 1948. It was a five-circuit all-play-all event, fielding the strongest players of the day: Mikhail Botvinnik, Vassily Smyslov, Paul Keres, Samuel Reshevsky and former world champion Max Euwe. The first circuits took place in The Hague and the remaining three in Moscow.

Botvinnik was clearly the Soviets' favorite, as he was an influential member of the Communist Party and conducted himself beyond reproach in matters of politics. For instance, he used to send letters of gratitude to Stalin after his major international successes. In view of this, there was much speculation about Botvinnik's four consecutive wins against Keres. There is some evidence that Keres was told that if Botvinnik failed to win the tournament, it must not in any way be the fault of the Estonian grandmaster. However, in an interview conducted in Holland in the early '90s Botvinnik revealed his own version of events.

During the break between The Hague and Moscow, Botvinnik was summoned to a secret meeting with high ranking Soviet officials. They asked him whether it would be appropriate for Smyslov and Keres to lose to him on purpose. Botvinnik was outraged, complaining that this was an attempt to diminish his achievements as he was by now in the lead and confident he would keep it that way. In view of this, it would seem that if Keres really was forced to lose on purpose, then Botvinnik had nothing to do with it.

With four rounds to go, Botvinnik needed just one draw in order to secure the title. His 22nd round game against Euwe reached the following position:

![Chess Diagram]

In the early '60s Fischer stated that he would defeat Botvinnik, giving him a 2-0 start, and the woman world champion Nona Gaprindashvili the odds of a piece in each game.

White played the obvious 14.b4 and offered a draw. Black declined but shortly after playing 14...f4e8 made a reciprocal offer, thus sealing the name of the new champion.

The organizers decided that 14..b4 should be immortalized and asked the cameraman to video-record Botvinnik's hand while playing the move again. Unfortunately the champion had already left the playing venue, but someone noticed that the young man operating the huge demo boards had a suit of the same color as Botvinnik's, thereby making him a suitable substitute. That pawn must have had a magic power since years later, in 1972, the same young man, Yakov Estrin, became a correspondence chess world champion...

Botvinnik's aforementioned outrage must have been such that he "forgot" to send his customary letter of appreciation to Stalin. This cost him his entire political capital which can be inferred from the following incident. In 1952 he was excluded from the Olympiad team on the basis of arguments put forward by Smyslov and Keres! that he was no longer capable of playing high quality chess!

Botvinnik retained his title until 1963 with two one-year breaks. In 1957 he lost the match with Smyslov but regained it in the return match the following year. In 1960-61 history repeated itself in his matches against the brilliant tactician Mikhail Tal. Up to 1969 the protagonists in the world title matches were all
Soviets, and there are virtually no anecdotes surrounding them. Quite simply it was politically incorrect in the Soviet Union to broadcast any of them!

Much has been said and written about the Match of the Century in Reykjavik 1972, where world champion Boris Spassky faced the genial American challenger Bobby Fischer. The reader must be aware of most of the details of this famous encounter so I will just allow myself a little speculation.

In the early '60s Fischer stated that he would defeat Botvinnik, giving him a 2-0 start, and the woman world champion Nona Gaprindashvili the odds of a piece in each game. With hindsight, these things effectively happened at the beginning of the 1972 match. Fischer allowed his bishop to be trapped on h2 and lost, and then proceeded to forfeit the second game. So there you are: the odds of 2-0 and a piece... I do not believe this was intentional, as prior to the match Fischer had a bad result against Spassky and he could not afford to lose on purpose. It looks more like he had foreseen his fate when making these extravagant statements...

In 1975 Fischer refrained from meeting his challenger, Anatoly Karpov. The new champion did his best to prove his strength and for ten years he dominated the world chess arena as very few before. But his 1978 Baguio match with Viktor Korchnoi was a dramatic affair ending after 32 games in a win for Karpov by 6-5.

Korchnoi left the Soviet Union in 1976, defecting to the West and thereby becoming an enemy of the regime. In his books Anti-Chess and Chess is My Life he complained about numerous underhand ways the Soviets disturbed him during the match. Having lived for almost a quarter of a century in a communist country I wouldn't be surprised if some of his claims were true, but here I will only mention a seemingly amusing incident.

Korchnoi had made an official protest to the match officials that Karpov was being served yoghurt during each game. Since the flavors and the timing varied this could well have been an encoded hint from his seconds on how to treat the position. As a consequence of the protest, Karpov's delegation henceforth had to indicate before each game the exact time the yoghurt would be served and the flavor...

One Soviet songwriter and singer described the match tension like this:

- On the right it's him, the people's hero,
- Eating yoghurt only at a critical moment,
- On the left him, without any history and motherland,
- With the deprecatory name "Pretender"

The last verse hints at the fact that whenever referring to Korchnoi, Soviet magazines refused to mention his name, merely calling him "Pretender" which means challenger.

The Merano 1981 match was far more one-sided with Karpov defeating Korchnoi decisively. However, then followed the titanic five matches between Karpov and Kasparov... After the abandoned 1984/85 contest, Karpov finally lost his title in a re-match the following year and subsequently never managed to exact his revenge. But it is remarkable that out of the 144 games played in these matches, the score favors Garry Kasparov by only two points.

This ends the history of the classical world title matches, as things became chaotic after the Kasparov-Short breakaway from FIDE during their match in 1993. I find this is a good moment to end my story, too. We have just seen Magnus Carlsen defeat Sergey Karjakin in a clash which had no less political significance than the 1948 tournament – and of course the 1972 match, where Fischer, just like Carlsen, denied the Russians the world chess title.
NEW YORK 2016
CARLSEN vs KARJAKIN
6:6; 3:1

By GM Ernesto Inarkiev
European Champion

Moscow— evening of November 28. That night I was supposed to take part in a program shown by the main Russian television station. Many people in Russia, including yours truly, were looking forward to the decisive game of the match for the title of world chess champion between Magnus Carlsen and Sergey Karjakin, and the country’s main sports channel “Match TV” invited guests to the studio, in order to broadcast the game live.

This was not a unique case — other TV channels and radio stations were also preparing to cover this game live. It felt like that there was no one in Russia who would not have known that on that day the most important chess game for the next two years was taking place.

The game started at 10 p.m. Moscow local time and I was expected to come to the studio around midnight. Quite logical, as usually the most interesting part of a chess game with a classical time control begins after about two hours of play.

As it turned out, that day Magnus had other plans and I did not even have time to leave my home before the game ended in a draw. I was so surprised, but those who had prepared the chess show just could not hide their disappointment. Nevertheless, they had to urgently come up with something to show to the audience!
Here is that game:

**C67**

**Magnus Carlsen** 2853  
**Sergey Karjakin** 2772

World Championship match (12)


Ernesto Inarkiev is a Russian grandmaster, who scored the best result of his career in May 2016 by winning the European Individual Chess Championship. He was born in Kyrgyzstan, under which flag he won the U16 Asian Youth Championship and competed in the 1998 and 2000 Chess Olympiads. Then he transferred to the Russian Chess Federation and moved with his family to Elista by invitation of FIDE President Kirsan Ilyumzhinov. In 2002 he won the Russian Junior Championship. His most notable successes, besides the European Championship title, are wins in the Moscow Open 2010 and 2015 as well as the Baku Open 2014.

One of the most simplifying variations against the Berlin. The position is symmetrical and further exchanges are inevitable. Carlsen has already played like this before, especially when he wanted to make a draw.

14.d3 g6 15.a3 A novelty, but not one that is particularly significant as it changes almost nothing. This reminded me of the game from his match with Anand, played at the moment when Carlsen was in the lead: 15.d2 c7 16.ge2 c6 17.ge1 f5 18.axf5 Bxf5 19.d3 g7 20.f5 d6 21.axf6 Bxf6 22.g5 e6 23.d4 Bg6 24.d5 Bg7 25.dxe8+ Bxe8 26.dxe8+ Bxe8 27.d6+ Bf8 28.dxe8 Bxe8 B.c6 16.d2 17.d5...

17...f5 Black trades his only potentially bad piece and the position is rapidly simplified. This position arose on the board 20 minutes after the start of the game, while the game itself lasted only 40 minutes in total.

18.dxf5 dxf5 19.d3 c3 Bc6 20.dxe3 e7 21.Bxe7 Bxe7 A draw is becoming evident.


Draw

Carlsen came to the game to make a draw, and Karjakin was just playing the black pieces in his usual fashion — with minimal risk — which is why it led to such a quick outcome.

In the chess of today, the sporting element is valued much higher than before, and therefore a player first and foremost has to get a result. Formally White has to fight for the initiative, but Carlsen did not break any rules and his overall victory achieved in the tiebreaks underlines the correctness of his policy.

All the same, this game leaves some residue. In my opinion the problem is not that it quickly ended in a draw, but the fact that the players’ preparation immediately reduced the position to a basic level after which the contestants just followed their teamwork without having to play a single move beyond that.

In recent years, more and more frequently I have seen games in which good opening preparation and the desire to play in a more steady fashion has led to simplification of the position and the players just needing to demonstrate a few basic things to steer the game to a draw. In this match we have seen five more of the same kind. These games can be found in the PART TWO of this article. [ACM 03 -Ed.]
Exchange of Blows or Exchange of Gifts

The decisive games of the match left the audience with mixed impressions. On the one hand we saw a very high level of tension, a mighty battle. On the other hand there were very serious errors which do not correspond to the generally high level of play in the match. Perhaps that's how it should be - when the game goes beyond normal limits, errors are very likely to occur.

After the 5th game, there was an overall impression that the match was not going Carlsen's way. If in games 3 and 4 Karjakin's salvation was entirely in the hands of Carlsen, then in the 5th game Karjakin played a lot better and deservedly had a real chance of success. At the same time, the position reached in game 5 proved to be extremely insidious, so looking at the games from this point of view I do not get the impression that Magnus was not in good shape.

In games 6 and 7 Karjakin played with the white pieces, but Carlsen displayed some neat preparation and both games quickly ended in a draw. Seven games without a win - this was an unusual situation for the champion and in the 8th game we were able to watch a fierce battle.

E14

Magnus Carlsen 2853
Sergey Karjakin 2772

World Championship match (8)

1.d4 ²f6 2.²f3 d5 3.e3 A surprise by Carlsen. Karjakin has to think as early as the third move.
3...e6 4.²d3 c5 5.b3

The Zukertort system has not been seen recently at the top level. White avoids any immediate conflict in the center, allowing Black to comfortably complete the development of his pieces.
5...²c7 6.0-0 0-0 7.²b2 b6 8.dxc5

Here it is possible to take a different direction. 8.²bd2 ²a6 9.c4 ²c6 10.²c1 ²xc8 T.Gelashvili (2005) - N.Dzagnidze (2536), Kavala 2009.
8...²xc5 There's also nothing wrong with 8...bxc5!? 9.c4 ²b7 10.²c3 ²bd7

All the pieces are still on the board, and although the center is open, there are no direct exchanges in sight. The position is cluttered so it's amazing how the players have reached a setup where pieces cannot be traded and are all optimally placed.

16.²ac1 It is possible to occupy the b5 square immediately with 16.²b5!? ²f8 17.²e5 ²g6 18.²g3 ²d5=. Also interesting is 16.²c2!? preparing the b3–b4 break. Upon 16...e5! 17.e4 ²e5 18.²b4 ²b8 19.²f3 ²c6 20.²e3 ²a4 21.²d2 ²b8= the position contains chances for both sides.
16...²f8 White's pieces are placed beautifully, but have no objects to attack. The position is completely equal.
17.²e1 ²g6 18.²f1

18...²g4!? A very good move, creating tension that looks unpleasant for White. Other moves were also possible, for example: 18...²e4!? 19.²f3 ²d6.
19.²b5!? Played now, this move allows Black to seize the initiative. The simplest way to protect the queenside was by 19.²e2 ²e5 20.²xe5 ²xe5 21.²b5=. 19.²f3!? was also interesting.
19...²c6!? Missing the opportunity to seize the initiative. There are many possibilities here and after the game Karjakin did not present any variations on 19...²g5. It is likely that he just rejected it in view of the invasion on d6 by the white knight. In fact, upon the correct 19...²g5!

very interesting complications arise.
It’s obvious that the black queen is more active than its counterpart. The only thing that remains to be checked is what happens in case White lands his knight on d6.

A) 20...\text{d}6? loses because of the straightforward 20...\text{h}4! 21.\text{x}b7 (21.\text{h}1 \text{g}2++)

recapture looks risky, at the same time it maintains the tension. 24.\text{x}c4 leads to a simplification of the position: 24...\text{e}e5 25.\text{c}2 \text{f}6+.

24...\text{f}6 On the surface, Black doesn’t want to lose control of the d-file, even if it is completely harmless. More to my liking is 24...\text{e}e5!!

21...\text{f}3+! 22.\text{g}xf3 \text{xd}1!! 23.\text{xd}1 \text{e}5+!+ exploiting the unfortunate placement of the white queen. Then 24.\text{g}2 \text{xf}3+ 25.\text{f}1 \text{xe}1 26.\text{xe}1 \text{xe}1+;\n
B) Also bad is 20...\text{h}d6? \text{xd}6 (20...\text{h}4! is just as strong but leads to far more complicated play.) 21.\text{xd}6 \text{g}4+=

B1) If 22.\text{h}1 Black has 22...\text{xc}1! 23.\text{xc}1 (23.\text{xc}1 is beautifully refuted by 23...\text{b}3!++) 23...\text{d}3+!

B2) Also not helpful for White is 22.\text{f}4 \text{g}3+ 23.\text{h}1 \text{h}5! 24.\text{g}3 \text{xc}1 25.\text{xc}1 \text{xd}6 26.\text{e}2 \text{f}6+;

B3) 22.\text{xe}5 \text{xe}5 23.\text{e}2 \text{xc}1 24.\text{xc}1 \text{f}3+ 25.\text{h}1 \text{d}6 26.\text{gf}3 \text{h}6= Here Black enjoys all the benefits: safer king, better pawn structure and more active pieces.

C) 20.h3! Defense is called for and after 20...\text{e}4 the very serious threats force White to part with his bishop: 21.\text{xe}5 \text{xe}5 22.\text{xe}5 (22.\text{h}1? \text{d}3+!) 22...\text{exe}5+ and Black enjoys a comfortable edge.

20.a4 \text{d}5 21.\text{d}4 As Black now has no threats on the kingside, White poses questions on the other flank.

21...\text{xc}4 21...\text{xc}4 also leads to equality: 22.\text{xd}4 (If 22.\text{ex}4 then 22...\text{e}6=; or if 22.\text{d}4 then 22...\text{e}6=, since the pawn is untouched: 23.\text{xb}6? \text{h}4++ 24.\text{h}3 \text{xc}1 22...\text{c}7 23.g3 \text{e}5=+) 22...\text{xc}4 22.\text{xc}4 \text{f}6=.

22...\text{xc}4 23.\text{d}xd4 23.\text{d}xd4 \text{xd}4=.

23...\text{xc}4 24.\text{bxc}4!? Although this

Though Black feels somewhat uncomfortable, White’s initiative is only sufficient for equality. 28...\text{fd}7 (It was also possible to transfer the other knight: 28...\text{d}7?! 29.\text{a}3 \text{d}5 30.\text{d}2 \text{c}7 31.\text{c}4 \text{g}6 32.\text{e}5 \text{b}6 33.\text{b}5 \text{c}4 34.\text{c}6 \text{c}3 35.\text{c}2 \text{d}4) 29.\text{a}3 \text{c}7 30.\text{b}5 \text{g}6 31.\text{d}7 \text{d}7 32.\text{c}4 and White will eventually capture the a5 pawn, but its remaining counterpart can hardly be transformed into a real force: 32...\text{d}7 33.a5 \text{a}6=.

25.\text{b}2 \text{b}8 26.\text{g}3 \text{e}5 This allows White some tactical chances. The committal 26...\text{e}5? is something that Black simply wishes to avoid, as it weakens his control of the d5 square. However, White cannot immediately exploit this: 27.\text{d}3 \text{f}8 28.\text{g}2 (28.\text{h}3 \text{e}4 29.\text{d}1 \text{h}4=) 28...\text{e}6 29.\text{e}6 g6= Simplest was the modest 26...\text{f}8! 27.\text{g}2 \text{h}6= Here Black is unable to transfer his knight to c5, but White also lacks productive ideas, and 28.h3 \text{e}8 looks balanced. (But not 28...\text{b}7? 29.\text{f}7 \text{c}5 30.\text{f}4=).

27.\text{g}2 \text{h}6 28.f4! Competently played (28.h3 could have been met by ...\text{c}5?). White’s queenside is weakened, but his pieces are more active. It is necessary to exploit this factor, otherwise Black will gradually improve his position and the weakness of the flank will begin to be felt. The game is complicated, both players had spent a lot of time and at this moment they were left with 8 minutes each and having to make more than 10 moves to reach the time control.

28...\text{d}7 29.\text{a}7 \text{d}3 Black has to seek activity, so as not to fall under a clamp. Following the same idea, it was possible to try 29...\text{c}5 30.\text{c}6 (30.h3? \text{c}5=+) 30...\text{c}8 31.\text{xe}7 \text{d}7 32.\text{xe}7 \text{xe}3+ 33.\text{f}1 \text{c}1+ 34.\text{f}2 \text{c}2 35.\text{f}3 \text{xc}1 36.\text{xc}6 \text{d}1+ with perpetual check: 37.\text{f}2 \text{d}2+ 38.\text{g}1 \text{c}3+ 39.\text{f}1 \text{c}1+.

30.\text{d}6 After 30.\text{xe}7 \text{d}7 31.\text{xe}7 \text{xe}3+ 32.\text{f}1 \text{c}1+ 33.\text{f}2 \text{xc}4 Black’s rook is passive, therefore White could have some initiative, although his king does not feel too safe and Black might be able to give perpetual check, e.g. 34.\text{f}1 \text{c}2 35.\text{g}1 \text{c}5 36.\text{g}2 \text{c}2=.

30...\text{b}8 31.\text{h}3?! Avoiding simplification. White has a great advantage in view of the activity of his pieces, so he can afford to sacrifice a-pawn. 31.\text{xe}7 leads to a draw upon 31...\text{d}7 32.\text{xe}7 \text{xe}3+ 33.\text{f}1 \text{c}1+ 34.\text{f}2 \text{xc}4 35.\text{f}1 \text{c}5 36.\text{g}2 \text{c}2=.
31...@c5 32.@h2! The position is very interesting and, in spite of some aggravating moments, both sides have taken care of their security and retained various options to maintain the balance. 32...@d8? is premature because after 32...@xd8 33.@xd8+ @h7— Black will be first to launch an attack.

32...@xa4 Keeping an eye on the e3 pawn, whilst connecting his queen and rook. White's threats would look more serious in the event of 32...@xa4 33..@d8 @cd7

34.@xf8+!? (Upon 34..@xd7 @xd7 35..@xc4 White has various options to maintain equality. For example: 36..@a7 @b3 37..@e5 @xe3 (or 37...@a4 38..@d7 @d8 39..@e5=) 38..@d7 @c8 39..@e5 @f8 40..@d7=) 34...@xf8 35..@d6+ @g8 36..@e7 and White's initiative is enough only for a draw. 36...@c2 37.e4 (If 37..@d8? Black is just in time with 37...@g6=/²)

37..@f2 Here it is possible to go 38.e5!? @e4 39..@e8+ @h7 40..@e7 @xg3+ 41..@h1 @f2+ 42..@e1 @xh1+= and Black has nothing more than perpetual check.

33..@d8 White has no serious threats, but also it is not clear which move for Black is clearly useful. In practice, this position is easier to play as Black – he just needs to protect himself against direct threats, while White should take care not to miss any moment when he might force a draw. Here Magnus was left with two minutes and Karjakin with about three minutes on the clock. The following forced line here is very interesting: 33.e4

B) 33..@c5 34.e5 Here Black faces a choice: 34..@h5 (Also possible is 34...@e4!? 35..@e4 @h5 36..@c3 @a2+ 37..@g2 @xd4 38..@d4 @e4∞ and Black has sufficient counterplay in view of his passed a-pawn, although the position is still quite complicated.) 35..@f2 g6 36..@g4 @g7∞

The g7-knight is a bad piece, but the activity of the black queen and the passed a-pawn should guarantee sufficient counterplay: 37..@d2 @h7 38..@d8 @xd8 39..@xd8 @e3=.

C) 33...@b2!? is the most practical of choices. Black should not be afraid to put his knight on h7. After 34..@xb2 @xb2 35.e5 @h7∞ this knight is placed offside, but the a-pawn will march forward.

33..@g6 In order to give his king more breathing space.

34..@d4 It seems to me that already here Magnus was able to foresee the combination that actually occurred in the game. As previously explained, it would have been interesting to try 34.e4!? @g7 (If 34..@h5 then 35..@d3 @h2 36..@d1 with sufficient compensation. For example: 36...@c5 37..@d8 @f2 38..@e7+ @g7 39..@xf8 @xf8 40..@h1 @xf8 41..@d8+ @g7 42.e5 @e4+ 43..@h2 @g3+=) 35..@e5 @g8 36..@d6=. The poor placement of the knight on g8 is some compensation for White's pawn deficit.

34...@g7

A) Black is worse after 33..@c3 34..@xc3 @xc3 35.e5 @h5 36..@f3 g6 37..@g4 @g7 38..@d7† Black's a-pawn is going nowhere and the knight on g7 is a horrible piece.
35.c5? This move looks beautiful, but it is actually a blunder. White burns all his bridges. To maintain the balance, it was necessary to adjust to long-term compensation by 35...ed7! (Or 35...e5 36...e5 edx4 37.exd4 d7=+) 38...cd7+= 39...d6 Black has 39...b4! — the only move, but one that is sufficient.

38...xe6+! fxe6 39...e7+ g8 40...xf6 Thanks to the idea of e3-e4, White now has adequate counterplay.

40...a4

From this square the rook prevents advance of the a-pawn and at the same time keeps on the offensive. The position then remains within the boundaries of equality, e.g. 36...h5 (Or 36...d3 37...e5 edx4 38.exd4 b3 39...c6xg8 37...e5 a2! 38...d6 f2 39...g6 e8 40...e5 ce4 40...xg3+? 41...xg3 ce4+ 42.xe4 xxe4+ 43...f3 edx6 44...d7z+) 41...xh7+ g8 42...xb6 xg3+ 43.g1 f2=+.

35...xd8 Forced, but still strong. If 35...bxc5 36...d6 xd8 37...xd8=+

36...d8 xe5 37...d6

37...d3?! A reciprocal mistake in time trouble. A double miscalculation as Sergey not only did not see ideas related to the e3-e4 advance as occurred in the game, but also failed to see how to defend after 37...a4 38...xb6. In time pressure everyone makes mistakes. Upon 37...a4! Black refutes White’s attack and retains a passed pawn and with that a decisive advantage. The important thing is that after 38...xb6 (38...e7

44...c6 During the game, it looked like this was played to avoid a repetition of moves, but I think Magnus knew that here White needed to play accurately. After all, if he believed that after 44...g6+ Black would repeat moves (indeed he could settle for a draw at almost any moment: 44...g7 45...e8+ f8=) he could have repeated once and then continued the game. But on the surface it seems that after 44...g6+ h8, the white queen is misplaced and needs to waste a few tempi in order to stop the passed a-pawn, and intuitively this might not be to everyone’s liking. However here White can avail himself of some nice geometry which allows him to force a draw. 45.e5 a3 46...b1! Attacking the b6-pawn. 46...d8 (Or 46...e8 47...xb6 a2 48...a7 a4 49...xc5 a1= 50...b8+! 47...g6! a2 48...xb6+ g8 49...g6+ f8 50...f6+ with a draw.

44...d8 45.f5! a2 46...xe6 g7+! Now Black is threatening ...a3-a2 and that is why White needs to further simplify matters. But not immediately: 46...a2? 47.e7 xe7 48...a8+ g7 49...xa2+ and White is slightly better. Also 46...f8? is no good because after 47.e5 e7 48...f3+ xe6 49...xa3 again White is slightly better.

47.e7 Also possible is 47...b5 but in general, it is clear that the a3-pawn is more dangerous than the e6-pawn, so it can only be White who feels in any danger: 47...xe6 48...b3 xd6 although, objectively speaking, the position is equal after 49.e5.

47...xe7 48...xb6

48...d3! Forcing White to display some accuracy: 48...xe4 49...xe4 xe4 50...a7+ g6 51...xa3 e2+=

49...a5?! A serious practical mistake that at first is difficult to explain. But having now analyzed the position, I think that here White has an uneasy task and, after such a long and stressful game, Magnus was unable to solve it. In my opinion the clearest and indeed called-for continuation was 49.e5!, activating the bishop. Then 49...a2 (49...xe5 50...d5= and with his active bishop White has nothing to fear) could be dangerous, which is why White needed one more accurate move: 50...d4! (It is also possible to play 50...a5 but after 50...b4 the variations are a lot more complicated.)
Here the variations are not so difficult. 50...d4 (If 50...e6 then it's an immediate draw after 51.a7+ f8 52.a8=++; and upon 50...f8 there is the sufficient 51.d5 b4 52.xd3 b2+ 53.g2! a1= 54.d8+ f7 55.d7+=) 51.e6+

A cute blockade, as now the white bishop is out of play and the a-pawn becomes even more dangerous. I would not be surprised if the position is already lost for White here. Anyway he manages to create counterplay just in time. 51.e6? This move follows the correct idea, though with a tactical flaw. White could hold the position with the accurate 51.b7+! as it turns out that with his queen on c5 Black is unable to avoid the perpetual. Therefore he needs to cover the checks with the knight, whereupon White is able to activate his bishop. 51.f6 52.a6+ e7

A) 51.f6 52.xb4 a1= 53.b7+ e8 (If 53...g8 then 54.e7 f7 55.d5+ e8 56.c6+ and Black has to give up his queen: 56...xc6 57.bxc6+ e7=) 54.c8+ g7 55.d7+= with a repetition.

B) Otherwise Black cannot hide his king away from the perpetual: 51.g8 52.g4+ h8 (or 52...f8 53.f4+ g8 54.g4+=; but not 52...g7? 53.e7+=) 53.d4+--;

49.c5! 50.a6 e5

53.b7+ (53.xh6 also does not lose, but here White's task gets more complicated.) 53.d7 (If 53...d8 then 54.b8+ d7 55.b7+=) 54.e5! xexe5 (or 54...a2 55.a6=) 55.b4+ d6 56.e4+ e5 57.b7+ f6 58.a8= and now, with the bishop ready to engage, White can hold.

51.h5! A precise move, as now White is unable to do anything to save the game. However White's 51st move would have been justified if Black had continued 51...c3? 52.e7+ f7 53.a7=.

52.h4 The final test for Black. Other moves also offer no salvation for White. For example, 52.a6 h4! 53.gxh4 c3 54.a7+ f7 55.e5 cxe5+ 56.h1 a1+ 57.h2 a2--; or 52.h1 h4! 53.gxh4 c1+ 54.h2 b2=++.

52.a2! An important nuance. It's nice to finish such an important game with a pretty combination. Now after 53.axd5 g4+ 54.h3 g1 there is clearly no perpetual check for White: 55.b2+ g6. White resigned

This was a powerful game. Carlsen tightened up his play in a very interesting way, but as a consequence he was not able to withstand the tension.

He played this match as the World No.1,
created scoring chances, but failed to score, and now found himself trailing his opponent. However, he was to bounce back fairly quickly.

**C65**

**Magnus Carlsen** 2853

**Sergey Karjakin** 2772

World Championship match (10)

This game can be seen as an excellent example of how to outplay an opponent positionally, as Carlsen managed to set Karjakin some extremely difficult problems. The mutual tactical lapses that occurred from moves 19 to 21 fuel the impression that this was perhaps the weakest moment of the match. Indeed, these mistakes indicate very well that the level of both tasks and tension over the board was higher than the players' capabilities during that particular phase.

1.e4 e5 2.REFERRED TO 3.b5 4.b3 c5 5.c3 6.g5 At top level, we haven't recently seen such an approach. The main move here is considered to be 6.0-0.

6...h6 7.g4 e7 Preparing a trade of bishops which is generally more favorable for Black.

**8.0-0** Another option was to transfer the knight before castling: 8.REFERRED TO d6 9 REFERRED TO 10 REFERRED TO when, for example, Black can continue 9...h7! 10.g3 f5 F.Nijboer (2528) - P.Leko (2732), Rhodes 2013.

8...REFERRED TO d6 9.b2 h5 10 REFERRED TO e7 A natural move, but still a novelty. 10.g3 looks odd after 10.xg3 11.hxg3 f5=+, S.Fedorchuk (2650) - A.Delorme (2492), Paris 2011.

10... REFERRED TO 11.c4

15.c4 This move, in conjunction with the one that follows, looks rather slow. Nevertheless it is strong enough as it prevents Black from developing his lightsquared bishop, which causes difficulties for the second player. However, in similar positions, it is often necessary to vary one's plans. Perhaps by playing 15.c4 Carlsen had one particular idea in mind, but upon seeing Karjakin's reply other ideas emerged too. The most natural continuation was 15.e4 d5= 16.e4! (16.e4 d5= 17.e4 d4 18.cxd4 exd4 19.e5 g6 20.xd4 b8 21.g3 g6 3 16...g6 17.xe6 fxe6 18.g1 h1. It is likely that this slight edge was not enough for Magnus.

If he wished to avoid an attack on his bishop with gain of tempo, then more logical was an immediate 15.a4=!

15...c6 A good decision. The only problem is that Karjakin spent over 40 minutes on this and the next two moves. Black has a good position, but his knight on h3 and queen on f6 are comittally placed and accurate play is required so that these pieces do not turn out to be out of play. Here it is necessary for Black to choose the correct plan and that is not so obvious. Generally speaking it is important to trade the light-squared bishops, but here this is not too good: 15...e5= 16.xe6 fxe6 17.h4 f4

16.b3 Perhaps Magnus did not want to constantly have to reckon with the possibility of a...d6-d5 break. 16.e2 looks more logical, see the above comments to 15.c4.

16...g6 After this move, White has the more pleasant game. The alternatives also have their disadvantages and so Sergey chose a practical solution, since it doesn't require much calculation.

The standard idea here is 16...b5!= as in this kind of position Black tends to advance his queenside pawns, thus activating his rook on a8. However here Black's pieces lack the necessary harmony for such sharp play and so it is not surprising that White is able to take the initiative: 17.d4!

White has the more comfortable position and it's easier for him to activate the rooks, but otherwise the symmetry on the board makes the position close to equal. 11...f4 From a theoretical point of view, the most principled move is 11...f5=...but over the board, it's difficult to play like this against a clearly well-prepared opponent. 12.e3 (It is important that 12.e6x6! doesn't work here, as upon 12...bxc6 13.e6x5 the there is the very strong 13...f4= 14.xc6+= e8= when Black wins back the pawn on e4 after 15.b4 fxe4=, and retains very serious threats on the kingside.) 12...f4 13.g3 (13.exf5 xfx5 14.g3 h3+= 15.xh2+= d7= 13...h3+= 14.xg2 fxe4 15.dxe4 f5=)

12.e3 f6 However, this is a concession and it is from this moment that the difficulties for Black begin. Clearly, if it is possible to advance...f7-f5 immediately and at the same time activate the rook on f8, then this simply has to be played. So for 12...f5= refer back to the annotations to 11...f5 given in the previous note.

13.g3 h3+= 14.h1! A move which relates to the idea of playing f2-f4, for which the white king is better placed on h1.

14...e7

17...xex4 (if 17...a5 then 18.a4=). Upon 17...h4? 18.dxe5 fxe5 19.xe2 Black's position is quite unpleasant. For example: 19...e6= 20.exd4 f8= 21.g3 h6= 22.g3 g5= 23.xg5 h6= 24.g4 h6= 25.xh5 f6= 26.axb5 axb5 27.h4= and White's pieces are more active and his impending threats on the h-file quite dangerous.) 18.xd4 c5 19.g2 b8 20.c1 c4 21.e2= The position is complicated, but I would prefer to take White's side.
16...d5?  

17.exd5! cxd5 18...xd5 and he would actually stand worse if he recaptured with the knight: 18...xd5 cxd5 19...xd5 e6 20...e4 g4! 21.g2 g5 22.e1 a6 and Black wins back the pawn whilst retaining the initiative.) 18...xd5 19...xd5 d6 20.b3 d8 21.c4 e6=  

B) 17.a2 e6. Intuitively, with the rook still on a8 the position might seem dangerous for Black, but objectively he should be okay. For example, 18.exd5 (18...e1 b6!? 18...exd5 19.d4 e4 20...d2 g5=) 17...d7 18.a1 e8 19.g1.  

18.a4 e6  

19...xe6? A crude blunder. Magnus made this move quickly, almost without checking it out, and guessed wrong. Also not so convincing is 19...c2 as it can be met by 19...d5! and suddenly Black’s pieces display some harmony. For example, after 20.d4 exd4 21.axe4 eae8=. The correct sequence was 19.a2! a6 (Upon 19...xb6 20.xb6 g5 21.f3 Black's knights look so awkward. Moreover White will gradually gain more space, e.g., 21...f8d8 22.d4 e7 23.h4 e6 24.h5x) and only now 20...xe6 fxe6 21.f3 with the same pattern as in the game.  

19...fxe6 20.d2  

20...d5? At this point, Karjakkin had little more than 20 minutes for another 20 moves before reaching the time control and he made this move quickly. The lines are not so complicated, but when deciding to play faster, players try to skip any supplementary calculations. This is exactly what Karjakkin did, believing that Magnus would have been obliged to check a pawn break like this. The time he had spent previously on moves 15-17 would then be very useful. It is clear that upon quiet play White would stand better, which is why Black needed to force a draw: 20...xf2+! 21.g2 (After 21.g1 h3+ 22.g2 h4+ 23.gxh4 f2x+ 24.exf2 exf2 and only Black can be better.) 21...h4+! This is the move that Karjakkin missed. Now after 22.g1 (22.gxh4? g6+–) comes 22...h3+ 23.h1 f2+ with a repetition of moves.  

21.h5?! Offering Black another chance to force a draw. Without any doubt White is better after 21.f3=.  

21...g5? Reconciling himself to an inferior position. Also here 21...xf2+! works, although the lines are more complicated: 22.g2 f7! 23.g1 f6! Another move that Karjakkin missed. Not a simple one, but Carlsen saw it, and so  

Karjakkin could have found it too. Black threatens ...g5, so a repetition of moves would be the logical conclusion: 24.g2 (24.eae1 g5 25.exg5 h3–) 24...f7=  

22.h4 Establishing a small plus. I believe that Carlsen decided to play in a rather simple fashion, because he realised that he had allowed a forced draw on the previous moves. However, stronger was 22.e1! f3 (Or 22...ad8 23.h4 f3 24.g4 f7 25.axf3 xf3+ 26.g1 f2 27.g8 28.e3) 23.g4 g5 (Worse is 23...f7 24.xf3 xf3+ 25.g1) 24.xg5 hxg5 25.xf3 xf3 26.xd1=.  

22...f3 23.xf3 xf3+ 24.xf3 xf3 25.g2 f7 26.e1 h5 I guess Sergey didn’t really want to make such a move, but otherwise it would be difficult for him to protect the e5-pawn. He could have set a nice trap by 26.e4!? when upon the natural reply 27.e2!? (Correct is 27.e1! h5=) follows 27...dxe4 28.c4! (But obviously not 28.xe4 due to 28...f4+! 29.gxf4 exf4=) 28...exd3 29.xd2 d7 (29...e4 30.e1) with complicated play after 30.h5 b5=  

27...f1  

Black has two weaknesses: the e5 pawn and the g5 square, and no active ideas in prospect. It is extremely difficult to hold this position, although objectively it is likely that eventually Black will make a draw rather than White will win.  

27.e8 28.e2 e7 29.xe2 d6 30.f3 d8 31.g5 e7 32.ae1 efe8 Otherwise Black would need to take into account the impending d3-d4.  

33.f3 h8!? With the king coming to d6, Black has strengthened his position. The transfer of the knight to f7 seems logical, in order to cover the g5 square. At the same time, White can derive no real benefit from the g5 square and so it is not absolutely clear whether the black
knights is better placed on f7 or on g6. In my view, it was correct to first improve the position on the queenside by 33...b6!? after which White needs to find a way to press further, as direct attempts do not make any progress. 34.d4 (34.b4? axb4 35.axb4 a5=) 34...exd4 35.cxd4 
36.d7+.
34.d4 With the black knight on h8, White starts a brawl in the center!
34...exd4 35.cxd4 g6 White threatened to capture on d5.
36.e3?! Intending to infiltrate the weak squares in Black’s camp. Also strong was the immediate 36.b4!? e5 37.c2 axb4 38.exd5 cxd5 39.e4.
36...d7 37.e5+ d7

38.f3?! Very practically, Magnus tries to get the most out of potential ideas on the kingside before he switches his activities to the other flank. It turns out that White cannot create any serious threats on the kingside and his venture merely gives Black time to protect his queenside. Again the immediate 38.b4! was much stronger: 38.axb4 38.a8 39.b3 39.cxb4 b6 40.b3 f5 41.d3 with a similar pattern to that seen in the game.
38.h6?! Missing the opportunity he has just been given. Correct was 38...c5! 39.b3 b6. Black has the same problems on the kingside as before, but at least his queenside is now out of danger. 40.d2 (40.h6 d8!+) 40...h8! (40...g8!? 41.f6 g7?? 41.c4 f7= and the worst is over for Black.
39.f6 g7 Now that White has achieved all he can on the kingside, it is necessary to open another front.
40.b4! Also strong was 40.c4! (40...g5 41.h3 c7 42.cxd5 exd5 43.axa5?? 41.cxd5 exd5 42.d6+ c8 43.d4=.
40.axb4 cxb4+

The time control has now been reached with White having increased his advantage. He has more space, Black’s pawns on e6 and g6 are weak and there is a threat of advancing on the queenside. All indications are that the position is very bad for Black, so it is interesting to see how Karjakin defended when in such dire straits.
41.g8 42.f3 h6 43.a5 f5 44.b3 Black has managed to remove White’s pieces from their attacking positions on the kingside, so now White is preparing a breakthrough on the other flank. I could not find a suitable setup for Black. Due to his space advantage, White’s pieces are more mobile and Black is simply unable to transfer his pieces to protect both flanks. This is a very good example of how to exploit two weaknesses.
44...c7 It is too early for Black to think about counterplay: 44...g5? 45.c5+ c8 46.a6! b6 (46...bxa6 47.bxa6 bxa6 48.bxa6++)
Here White again needs to combine threats on the kingside h5-pawn with a5-a6 and b4-b5 breaks on the queenside. For instance: 49...gxe6 (or 49...c7 50.c5) h4 51.bxh4 c7 52.g5++ 50.a1 c8 51.g1 h8 52.c2! Necessary preparation. 52...a7 53.c3! aa8

And now the time is right for 54.b5! ++, e.g. 54...a5 55.bxc6 bxc6 56.ac6+...
45. \( \text{c5?!} \) It doesn't feel right to place a question mark after this move as White still retains a significant advantage, while over the board it is not obvious whether White should go for forcing measures, or if it is possible to win with simple maneuvers. However, the move played is a serious mistake after which White's task is severely complicated. White missed the straightforward 45. \( \text{xc1!} \) when suddenly it is very difficult for Black to cope with the threats of b4-b5 and a5-a6. For example: 45... \( g5 \) (45... \( \text{b7} \) 46. \( \text{a6+} \); 45... \( \text{f7} \) 46. \( \text{hxg5} \) \( \text{hgx5} \) 47. \( \text{h3} \) \( \text{e7} \) (Or 47... \( \text{g4} \) 48. \( \text{b5} \) \( \text{eb4} \) 49. \( \text{b6+} \)) 48. \( \text{b5} \) \( \text{exe5} \) 49. \( \text{c5++} \) has managed to organize his defense on the queenside, so White again needs to create a second weakness! Now he contemplates playing \( g3-g4 \).

50. \( \text{h6} \) \( \text{f3?!} \) A natural move which pursues the idea of \( g3-g4 \). Another try was 51. \( \text{d3!} \) ...the idea being to tie down the enemy rooks with a knight on f4, and then to break through on the queenside. 51... \( \text{f5} \) (Just how dangerous are White's threats can be seen in the following lines: 51... \( \text{f7} \)?! 52. \( \text{c1!} \) \( \text{f5} \) 53. \( \text{a6=} \) and White breaks through. Or 51... \( \text{g7} \)?! 52. \( \text{c1!} \) \( \text{f5} \) 53. \( \text{a6=} \) 52. \( \text{f4} \) \( \text{g8} \)?! 52... \( \text{g7} \) 53. \( \text{a6} \) \( \text{b6} \) 54. \( \text{c1} \) \( \text{b7} \) 55. \( \text{exg5} \) \( \text{c5} \) 56. \( \text{bxc5} \) \( \text{bxc5} \) 57. \( \text{f4} \) \( \text{g7} \) 58. \( \text{f3=} \) 53. \( \text{c3} \) \( \text{e7} \) and Black has prevented any possible breaks.

51... \( \text{f7} \) When defending for a long time, it is extremely important to correctly assess the right time to commence counterplay. Karjakin continues to forestall White's ideas, but by now it was time to think about his own play: 51... \( \text{g7} \)!

Black has won a-pawn, but White's threats are more dangerous. For example: 49... \( \text{d4} \) (49... \( \text{xb5} \) also doesn't help after 50. \( \text{d3} \) \( \text{d6} \) 51. \( \text{exe5} \) \( \text{exe5} \) 52. \( \text{exe1=} \) \( \text{d6} \) 53. \( \text{b3=} \) 50. \( \text{b6=} \) \( \text{d8} \) 51. \( \text{b3=} \) 45. \( \text{b8=} \) 46. \( \text{b1} \) \( \text{a7} \) The transfer of the black king is a classy solution. Here it covers the queenside and does not interfere with the coordination of his rooks. Karjakin has seriously improved his position. However, if White can open files on the kingside, the black king will now turn out to be a long way from the battlefield.

47. \( \text{d3} \) \( \text{c7} \) 48. \( \text{a3} \) The attempt to break through at once does not prove so fruitful: 48. \( \text{b5=} \) \( \text{xb5} \) 49. \( \text{xb5} \) \( \text{exe7=} \).

48. \( \text{d4} \) 49. \( \text{d1} \) \( \text{f5} \) 50. \( \text{h3=} \) Black can play 52... \( \text{g5=} \) opening the position in his favor.

C) 52. \( \text{b1} \) \( \text{f5=} \) Resuming the threat. (But not 52... \( \text{g5=} \) 53. \( \text{hxg5} \) \( \text{xg5} \) because of 54. \( \text{b3=} \) \( \text{xb5} \) 55. \( \text{exe5} \) 56. \( \text{exe5} \) \( \text{gg7} \) 57. \( \text{b6=} \) 53. \( \text{g4} \) \( \text{d4=} \).

D) So White continues 52. \( \text{b3} \).

52. \( \text{d4} \) A curious example of practical play. Here Karjakin was in time trouble, although he did take a few minutes left on the clock, and so Carlsen should have played more concretely. Instead, he does not immediately put his rooks on their projected positions, but first of all rapidly makes a few moves that change nothing on the board. Karjakin also speeds up, starts to play quickly, and then, in the same rapid manner Carlsen positions his rooks so they pose a direct threat. In such a situation...
it is not so easy to figure out whether or not it's just a random rook move, and so Karjakin refrains from any direct pawn break.

52...\textit{Qf5} 53.\textit{Ed2} \textit{Eh7}?! The waiting strategy is not working here: 53...\textit{Fg7} 54.g4+. Waiting with the knight on h6 also fails: 53...\textit{Gh6} 54.\textit{Eb2} \textit{Eg7} 55.\textit{Fab3} \textit{Ec7}!

55.\textit{Ed3}?! (55.g4! is not so strong now: 55...\textit{Dh6} 56.\textit{Dg3} \textit{hxg4} 57.\textit{fxg4} \textit{Ef1}. This looks dangerous but Black has sufficient activity here: 58.\textit{Dg2} \textit{Eg7} 59.\textit{Ee3} \textit{g5} 60.\textit{h5} \textit{Dh6} 61.\textit{Eb3} \textit{Exb3}+ 62.\textit{Exd3} \textit{b6}=) 55...\textit{Dh6} 56.\textit{Dh2} (If 56.b5 then 56...\textit{Exb5} 57.\textit{Exb5} \textit{Ec7} is unclear)

\textbf{A1} If 56...\textit{Df5}

The advance of the b-pawn was already a threat, but now that the black rook has switched to the queenside, it was time to break on the other flank by 56.g4! \textit{Df7}! 57.\textit{Ec2}+

It was necessary to go 53...\textit{Eg8}! threatening ...\textit{g6}-\textit{g5}. Finally, if he wants to prevent any counterplay, White is obliged to play f3-f4 which will greatly facilitate Black’s defense: 54.f4± (54.g4 \textit{Dh6}+; 54.\textit{Dxe6}? \textit{Ee7}–; 54.\textit{Df3} \textit{g5}–; 54.\textit{Dg2} \textit{Dd4} 55.g4+; 54.\textit{Df3} \textit{b6} The logic of this move is clear: it is designed to prevent g4. Black decided to keep one rook on \textit{h7} and his knight on f5, as his other rook needed to protect the \textit{e6}-pawn. The only moves that remain are those playing with rooks along the \textit{e}- and \textit{h}-files respectively. Waiting with the knight on \textit{h6} does not work, as already seen in lines after 53...\textit{Dh6}. Thus 54...\textit{Dh6} 55.\textit{Ddb2} (55.\textit{g4}? \textit{Df7}–) 55...\textit{Ec7} 56.g4± \textit{Df7} 57.\textit{Ee2}. However more stubborn was 54...\textit{Df7}

56...\textit{Dhh7}? The game is decided by a blunder, which is quite sad. As Carlsen had missed a number of moments and Karjakin had conducted his defense in a competent manner, chess fans would have loved to see a more sophisticated end to the game. At the press conference Karjakin noted that it was necessary to play 56...\textit{Dh6}.

\textbf{A1} Magnus replied that he could then break with 57.g4? but this was not the correct move order, because of 57...\textit{g5}! ...and the position is equal. 58.gxh5 (58.
h×g5 h×g5+ 59. f×g4 f×f7+ =) 58.. f×f7 =.
B) Should White decide to wait longer with 57.. b2 then Black has 57... f×f7+

C1) ... by means of 60.. g×h4! 61. g×g1? (Black is absolutely fine upon 61.f4
g×f8=/∞) 61... h×h6 62. g×g7 h×h5 63.f4 h×h8

is ready to put his rook on b6 and capture the e6 pawn.
58... d4 Or 58.. e×e8 59. b5 c×c7 60. d×c6 c×c6 61. f×f4+.
59. b×c7 c×c7 60. f×e6 f×e6 61. f×f4+--
White has a decisive advantage and, although tension remains in the position,
Black has no real chances to save the game.
61... h×c7 62. d×d5 d×d3 63. c×c7
b×b8 64. b×b5 c×c8 65. d×g6 f×f3
66. g×f2 h×b3 67. d×d6+ d×d6 68. e×d6

64.b×b (or 64. c×b 65. e×e6 e×e6
66. f×f7+ a×a6) 64... c×b 5 65. b×b
5 a×a6 66. b×b e×e8 67.f5 e×f5 68.e6 e×e6
69.h×f7 d×d4= The pawn on a5 will soon be destroyed.

C2) Too slow is 60.. h×h8? 61.f4! g×g4+
(or 61... g×h4 62. d×c5 h×h5 63.b5
b×b5 64. d×b5 d×d8 65.a6=) 62. g×g2!
(62. f×g4 h×h6+ 63. g×f3 f×f5=)
62... h×h5 63. c×c5! h×h4 64.b5! c×b5
65.h×b5 d×d8 66.a6=--.

68... e×e3 Upon 68... c×c7 the easiest way is 69.h×d4 b×b5 70.e6 a×a5 71.e7 e×e5
72. d×d5 e×e7 73. h×h5=--.
69.e6 c×c7 70. h×d4 a×e6 71. a×d5 h×h6
72. b×f3 b×b8 73. f×f4 a×a7 74. g×g5
h×h8 75. h×h6 1–0
A very intense game with numerous errors on both sides. At the same time,
it carried on with two possible results throughout, as Karjakin was not better at
any stage, so it can be said that Carlsen fully controlled the game.

57.b5! c×b5 58. b×b5 Here Black’s rooks fail to get on to the c-file and White

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Champion’s Tie-break

This was not the Champion’s tie-break only because it was played for the title, but also because in the games with a shortened time control the champion proved to be clearly superior. Carlsen played very strongly and Karjakin had no chance of winning even a single game.

In the 1st game of the tie-breaks Karjakin played White, the position again quickly simplified and ended in a draw.

In the 2nd game Carlsen developed a strong initiative, had more time on the clock and could have won by force on several occasions. But then Karjakin managed to find a nice combination to save the game.

White has to settle for a draw! The corner square is simply the wrong color for White ever to promote his h-pawn.

81...g8 82. d3 h8 83. f8 g5 84. hxg6½-½

At this point, Karjakin had already constructed a solid defense, but the game could still continue for a long time. Therefore the saving combination came wonderfully in time to stop White from pressing further.

78...h5! 79.gxh5 In case of 79.g5 fxg5 80.hxg5 h4+ the king on h8 will no longer be disturbed.

79...f5! All the same, it’s better to get rid of this pawn.

80. fx5 ex7+ 81. xe7

Despite having an extra piece and pawn,

---

13.g5!? Though this looks tempting, it turns out to be a punch in the air. The serious advantage of this move was the fact that Magnus gave it deep thought, meaning it was pretty much new for him. What the difference is, in comparison with the 11th game of the match, can be seen in the following recent encounter:

13. exd4 exd4 14. xf6+ fxe6 15. xe6 xe6= 16. a4 h7 17. a2 c5 18. a5 axb5 19. a4 c4 20. f3 e5? and already it is White who has to demonstrate certain accuracy. D.Andreikin (2737) - D.Anton Guijarro (2650), Tallinn 2016. If 21.f5? c3 22. axa8 axa8 23. c1 a2+.

13...xd5! Other moves give White the initiative.

14.exd5 d7 15. xe4 f5 16. d2 I don’t like this move as it gives Black some tempi. More promising was 16.c3!? fxe4 17. cxd4 exd4 18. dxe5 (18. xd3?!) 18... fxe5 19. c1 as here White can fight for the initiative. For instance, 19. d7 20. a2 f6 21.f4 c4 22. xd3 g6∞ but objectively the position is unclear: 23.f5 (or 23. xe2 aeb 24. xe2 xe2 25. xe2 xe2 26. xe5 xe5 27. xf5 xe5 28. e6+ h6∞).

16...f4 17. c3 f5 This is a complicated position, where each side has his trumps. Although Black suffers from weak light squares, it is not clear how White can make use of this, whereas it is easier to understand how Black can create pressure on the kingside.

18. e4 e8 19. b3 g6
20.\(f3\) Of course, White does not want to make such a move, but in a rapid game it is quite difficult to calculate everything, especially when there is an extremely unpleasant and constantly overhanging threat. Therefore, at the price of a concession, the weakening of the e3 square, Karjakin radically cuts off Black’s threats against the g2 and f3 squares. White also had various other moves, all leading to unclear play: 20.\(\text{h1}\)?; 20.\(\text{a2}\)?; 20.\(\text{a4}\)?.

20.\(\text{h4}\) 21.\(a4\) \(\text{f6}\) It is Black’s threats that are the first to appear on the board. 22.\(\text{e2}\) 22.\(\text{d2}\) also has its disadvantages: 22...\(\text{h5}\) (not so convincing is 22...\(\text{xe4}\) 23.\(\text{dxe4}\) \(\text{e3}\) 24.\(\text{exe3}\) \(\text{fxe3}\) 25.\(\text{wxe2}\) \(\text{f2}\) 26.\(\text{h1}\)=) 23.\(\text{e2}\) and at a minimum Black can try 23...\(\text{xe4}\) 24.\(\text{dxe4}\) \(\text{g3}\) 25.\(\text{h3}\) \(\text{e3}\) 26.\(\text{exe3}\) \(\text{fxe3}\) 27.\(\text{xa1}\) Here Karjakin had 5 minutes remaining, against 12 minutes for Carlsen, who made his last move without hesitation. Any invasion along the a-file is a way too lengthy operation for White. 27.\(\text{xa1}\) also doesn’t solve White’s problems after 27...\(\text{w8}\)! (But not 27...\(\text{a8}\) because of 28.\(\text{exe5}\)± and at least in one line White’s light-squared bishop proves to be formidable force: 28...\(\text{dxe5}\) 29.\(\text{d6}\)++.)

28.b6? (28.\(\text{c6}\)? fails to 28...\(\text{dxe4}\)! 29.\(\text{dxe4}\) \(\text{f6}\)++ with a strong attack for Black. White also stands worse after 28.\(\text{xc4}\) \(\text{h8}\)?) 28...\(\text{exe4}\) 29.\(\text{dxe4}\) \(\text{cxb6}\) 30.\(\text{xc3}\) \(\text{b5}\) 31.\(\text{d2}\) \(\text{g5}\) 32.\(\text{c6}\). Of course the position is unpleasant for White, but it should still be tenable. 27...\(\text{w8}\)! 28.\(\text{c4}\) \(\text{h8}\)

29.\(\text{xf6}\)?? Sergey spent a full half of his remaining 5 minutes on this move. I think he wanted to simplify the position. It is hard to understand why he wavered over playing the natural 29.\(\text{w2}\). Perhaps he didn’t like the fact that Black would then be able to maintain the tension by means of 29...\(\text{w8}\) 30.\(\text{h1}\) \(\text{h5}\)? when it is not clear what White should do next.

29.\(\text{xf6}\)? After giving it a little thought, Magnus decided to maintain a clear perspective. In my opinion his advantage on the clock influenced this decision as at this point he had about ten minutes left against Karjakin’s two minutes. I guess Magnus believed that not having enough time to play such a position would be difficult for White and so he did not want to provoke complications. Black has a big advantage upon 29...\(\text{gx6}\) 30.\(\text{d2}\) (even worse for White is 30.\(\text{h1}\) \(\text{g6}\)?) 30...\(\text{c2}\) 31.\(\text{b1}\) (if 31.\(\text{d2}\) then 31...\(\text{d4}\) 32.\(\text{w1}\) \(\text{e5}\)++) 31...\(\text{d4}\) 32.\(\text{d1}\) \(\text{h5}\) and Black’s attack develops all by itself, e.g. 33.\(\text{w2}\) \(\text{f5}\) 34.\(\text{b6}\) \(\text{xc6}\) 35.\(\text{bxb6}\) \(\text{g7}\) 36.\(\text{h3}\) \(\text{g8}\).++.

30.\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{e4}\)! Activating all the black pieces.

31.\(\text{dxe4}\) The intermediate 31.\(\text{xf6}\) is in Black’s favor, as after 31...\(\text{gx6}\), in addition to all the advantages that he already has, he now also gains control of the g-file: 32.\(\text{exe4}\) (32.\(\text{exe4}\) \(\text{g8}\)++) 32...\(\text{w5}\)++ 33.\(\text{h1}\) \(\text{g8}\) 34.\(\text{f4}\) \(\text{xf4}\) 35.\(\text{wxe3}\) \(\text{g2}\). 31...\(\text{xc3}\) 32.\(\text{xc3}\) \(\text{w6}\) The black knight is a much better piece than the white bishop, and it is only his extra pawn that allows White to keep the balance. Objectively, the position is unclear, but it is much easier to play as Black.

33.\(\text{d1}\) Another possible setup is 33.\(\text{d2}\)?, covering the d4-square. After 33.\(\text{b8}\) 34.\(\text{e2}\) it is not obvious how Black makes progress after 34...\(\text{a1}\)++.

33.\(\text{a8}\) 34.\(\text{h3}\) \(\text{h6}\) Another sign of top class play! Prior to going forward, Carlsen makes some useful moves.

35.\(\text{h2}\) 36.\(\text{w1}\)? Having thought for a minute, Karjakin makes a move that worsens his position. The correct idea was to activate the bishop. The only way to do this was to give back the e-pawn at an appropriate moment. It was possible to pursue that idea by playing 36.\(\text{d3}\) and if, for example 36...\(\text{e5}\), then 37.\(\text{h1}\). Also possible was the immediate 36.\(\text{exe5}\)?? \(\text{wxe5}\) 37.\(\text{d3}\) with good chances of saving the day.
In the last tie-break rapid game, Karjakin chose the Najdorf variation of the Sicilian Defense in an attempt to complicate the fight, but also here he was faced with a surprise, 5.f3, adopted by Magnus for the first time in his career. Karjakin then chose an incorrect setup and around move 20 was already in a strategically difficult position. Later on, Magnus was enjoying a great advantage, although some tension remained in the position. The final part of the game was brilliant!

**White resigned**

36...b2

37...f1? After this move, the position becomes difficult for White, but to find a means of rescue with just a minute on the clock is practically impossible. In order to preserve his chances of saving the game, it was necessary to find 37.e2! Surprisingly, White is then able to hold on, e.g. 37...a2 (If Black waits with 37...a7 then White chases the black queen: 38.b1 d4 39.e1) 38.e5!

A) It is harder to detect what to do after 38.dxe5 39.d6! cxd6 40.e8+ h7 41.d3+ g6

Here it is necessary to have foreseen 42.c2!! (Upon 42.xc2? Black even loses - 43.e4++) 43.e4 xc2 44.e7+=

B) 38...xe5 39.b6! g5 (Black cannot take 39...xb6? because of 40.e8+ h7 41.b1+ ++) 39...g2 also leads to a draw after 40.b7 xe1 41.b8+ h7 42.b1+ g8 43.xa2 g5 with a perpetual check.) 40.f2 and it is already Black who has to force a draw by 40...g3+ 41.xg3 fxg3+ 42.h2 xe2 43.bxc7 xg2+ 44.h4 xd5+ 45.ed4 xc7 46.xc7=.

37...a2

38...xc7? Karjakin thought over 1½ minutes and, when there were only a few seconds left, made his last mistake in this game. The only way to continue fighting was 38.b1! f6 39.e2! Objectively this position is bad for White, but very precise play will be required of Black if he is to secure the full point.

38...a1 The simplest. Black wins the ineffectual bishop and with it the game. All this was very strongly played by Magnus. Of course, in time trouble Sergey committed blunders starting with 36.e1, but as regards serious mistakes up to that point, we were only able to note the exchange of pleasantries on move 29. (29.h6? xf6?). All in all, quite an impressive level of play for rapid chess!

**Black resigned**

50.h6+! and checkmate on the next move. What a great pleasure for Magnus to be able to defend his title of World Champion with such a striking queen sacrifice!

**World Championship, Rapid (4)**

Here White can realise his decisive advantage in a number of different ways, but Carlsen ends the game and the match in spectacular style.

50.h6+! and checkmate on the next move. What a great pleasure for Magnus to be able to defend his title of World Champion with such a striking queen sacrifice!

**Black resigned**

**end of part one**

to be continued in ACM 03
Queen Endings DEMYSTIFIED

By GM Alex Fishbein

It seems that grandmasters do not like to play them or analyze them. I wonder why?

Queen endings have always been relegated somewhere to the back room of the basement. These endings actually occur more often than one might think. I have witnessed several important queen endings and played three myself, just in the last few months.

Then I thought about the history of queen endings and realized why they are so maligned. In the past, $\text{Q}+\text{A}$ vs $\text{Q}$ endings were a forum for people to show off their analytical skills with a 35-move proof of a victory where you force a trade of queens at the end. Botvinnik could not contain his pride in finding the win in analysis of his famous game against Minev. The subject matter and method of delivery seemed too intimidating. Also, by the time games got that far, they were adjourned and analyzed at home.

Now it is all different. You cannot access endgame books during the game. Also, computers have solved $\text{Q}+\text{A}$ vs $\text{Q}$ so you will not impress anyone with your long mathematical illustrations. And maybe today’s faster time controls actually increase the likelihood of the queen ending appearing; I had to play two $\text{Q}+\text{A}$ vs $\text{Q}$ endings recently because I failed to find a win in the pawn ending.

Therefore, I would like to help you navigate the queen ending when it occurs next in your game. I offer five tips you can use in $\text{Q}+\text{A}$ vs $\text{Q}$ endings.

Tip #1

Think where the next check will come from and where your opponent wants to escape to. Here, White’s only escape is to move the king to the a-file and interpose with the queen on b3 or b2. The text move fails to prevent this, because the queen has limited options from e1.

The correct sequence was: 61...$\text{Be}3+$. If instead White played:

A) 62.$\text{b}2$ $\text{Bd}4+!$

How many squares does the queen attack from the center of the board? The answer is 27 – approaching half the board. If you give a check from there, you are likely to have a good check on the following move (or even attack a pawn, as here).

Now after 63.$\text{b}3$ (63.$\text{a}3??$ $\text{Aa}1+$ and Black wins) 63...$\text{Bd}1+$! draws immediately: White either loses the a-pawn or much worse.

B) 62.$\text{b}4$ then Black has an effective check from behind: 62...$\text{Be}1+$! The key is to stop the king from going to the a-file (Here 62...$\text{Bd}4+??$ 63.$\text{a}5$ does not work.) 63.$\text{c}5$ $\text{Be}3+$ 64.$\text{d}5$ $\text{Bd}3+$ 65.$\text{Bc}6$ $\text{Be}4+$, draw.

62.$\text{Bb}2$ Now Black has no perpetual check.

62...$\text{Bd}2+$ 63.$\text{a}3!$ $\text{Bc}3+$ 64.$\text{Bb}3$ $\text{Bd}1+$ 65.$\text{b}4$

Although the position is drawn (rook
Alex Fishbein is American grandmaster, residing in New Jersey. He was the winner of the inaugural Denker Tournament of High School Champions in 1985. He won several national and international tournaments in the 1990s, including in Denmark and Norway, and became a Grandmaster in 1992. He then began a career in finance but continued to compete in his spare time, including four times in the U.S. Championship in the 2000s. He is known for his endgame knowledge, having won the Best Endgame Prize in the 2004 U.S. Championship and written a well-received book on pawn endings in 1993.

59...g2+ 60.h3 f1=?? The wrong check! Again, it is all about centralizing the queen. White’s queen is in the center now, but Black could have displaced it with: 60...h5+! 61.h4 d5!

...with a draw, surprisingly enough, according to the Tablebase. Black is threatening all sorts of perpetual checks and the a-pawn can easily be attacked. Again, the lesson is: if the opposing king is near the corner, try to put your queen in the center.

61.h4 h7 62.e4+ White wins relatively smoothly from here with the two extra pawns. Note that the queen always stays in the center or very close to the center.

53.g2! No stalemate! Now White is winning, although it is still far from easy. 53...e7 54.xh5+ g8 55.g4+ f7 56.f4+ g8 57.c4+ g7 58.d4+ g8 59.a4? A mistake! White needs to have his queen on g4. After 59.g4+ followed by 60.a4, White wins. With best defense, it will take 85 moves.

Here is another example. White is up a pawn, but it is hard to win. I traded pawns on the queenside here, blundering into a perpetual check.

43.d7+ h8 44.xa4? xb2+

45.g1 c1=?? Check where you check! The correct square was a1—eyeing e5! After 45...a1+! 46.h2 e5+ (look for checks from the center when the opposing king is near the corner)
47.h3 e6+ 48.h2 e5+ 49.g3 e2+ is an immediate draw by perpetual.
46.h2 c7+ 47.g3 e7 48.d4+ h4 49.b2 e4 50.a2 a4?
Black is trying to catch White in a stalemate trap, but it does not work.
51.f7+ h8 52.xg6 xh4+

83.h3 g6 84.a8 h1=?? 1-0 A. Fishbein (2487) - T. Bryant (2115), Liberty Bell Open 2014.
Tip #2

A center pawn wins:

When you are trying to win, also try to centralize your queen, and defend your pawn with it.

This is a typical example with the center pawn about to queen. The center pawn is almost always a win. The winning technique here is very instructive. White forces a trade of queens in only about 10 moves.

1. 车h6 车c4+ 2. 象e6 象f4+ 3. 象f6 车c7

Pinning the pawn is often the best try. If 3... 车c4+ 4. 象g7 车g4+ 5. 车h6 (Black is running out of checks) 5... 车h3+ 6. 象g7 车d7 (6... 车g4+ 7. 车g6+) 7. 车f8

Note than when both queens are close to the king, there are fewer checks.

4. 车g6+ 象c1 5. 象e4!

Tip #3

When facing an advanced rook or knight pawn, keep your own king far away!

66... 车h4! Wrong in principle is 66... 车h6? Here, the king will be subject to checks on the 6th and 7th rank: 67. 象a7! (the only winning move, but it is not for us to know why) 67... 象g7 68. 车e6 车d4+ 69. 车e6 and Black is out of checks. It is very difficult for White to get his king out of there; the win takes 58 moves.

67. 象f3 象b6 68. 象h1+ 象g4 69. 象b7 象d8+ 70. 象a7 象d4+

Centralizing the queen.

5... 象a7 If 5... 象b2 6. 车d4+ 象c1 7. 象f8 and Black already cannot stop the promotion. Note that the white queen takes away the c5, d6 and f4 squares from the black queen.

6. 象e5 象a2+ 6... 象b1 7. 象g8 象g1+ 8. 象g7 象e3 9. 象g6+

7. 象f6 象f2+ 8. 象g6! The white king does not need to be right next to its pawn. Here, Black has no pin defense. It is only

Now, however, the black king is almost immune from checks (the best squares against the a-pawn are h3 and h4). There are very few places where the queen can interpose with check. Black already has a fairly straightforward perpetual. Note that the rook pawn is the worst pawn: the white king cannot hide on the other side of it.

71. 车b6 车d7+ 72. 象b8 象e8+ 73. 象c7 象e7+ 74. 象c6 象e6+ 75. 象b5 象c3+ 76. 象c6 象f6+ 77. 象b7 象e7+ 78. 象c7 象b4+ 79. 象c8 象f8+ 80. 象d8 象c5+ 81. 象b7 象b6+ 82. 象a7 象c5+ 83. 象c6 象e7+ 84. 象b8 象e5+ 85. 象b7 象e7+ 86. 象c7 象b4+ 87. 象a8 象e4+ 88. 象b7 象e8+ 89. 象a7 象e3+ 90. 象b8 象f4+ Not 90... 象e4+?? 91. 象c8+ 91. 象c8 象f8+ 92. 象d7 象f7+ 93. 象c6 象c4+ 94. 象d6 象d3+ Unless the pawn is not far advanced and there is some chance to reach a drawn pawn ending, it is a really bad idea to approach the enemy pawn with the king. Many players, however, have made this mistake, including GM Prasad in the aforementioned game. I was lucky to have found the right defense here. 1/2-1/2

C. Wu (2219) - A. Fisherstein (2487), Liberty Bell Open 2014.

You are familiar with our Tip #3 and so you already know where to go.

64. 象c3? Not here! After 64. 象g5 the position is drawn. With the black pawn on b2 and the white king on h7 (far away), Black, in general, cannot win (although the defense is not easy). But after the text, White’s position is beyond salvation.

64... 象b4 65. 象a5 象b2 66. 象d2 象c3+ 67. 象d1 象d4+ 68. 象e2 b3 69. 象a6 象e4+ 70. 象d2 象c2+ 71. 象e1 象b1
72. ♗a4 b2 73. ♗a3? Loses very quickly—Black gets to centralize the queen, and the pawn is only one step away. After 73. ♗d4 the win would take much longer. 73... ♗e4+ 74. ♗d2 ♗d4+ 75. ♗e2 ♗c2

76. ♗a2 The white queen is on the wrong side of the pawn and has almost no checks. This is another reason why the defending king should not be too close.

76... ♗f4 76... ♗d3+ 77. ♗f2 ♗b3 is quicker.

77. ♗e1 ♗b4+ 78. ♗e2 ♗c1 0-1 R. Salimbagat (2266) - A. Fishbein (2474), Millionaire Open 2016.

**Tip #4**

We come to tip #4: When you have a rook or knight pawn, and the opposing king is far away, don’t keep your king near the pawn, but try to line it up on the same, or neighboring rank as the enemy king. In this position already, Black has no checks that cannot be answered with an immediate queen trade. Using the fact that his queen will defend the pawn, Botvinnik now approaches the opposing king with his own king, reaching a beautiful final position:

82... ♗h6 83. ♗e5+ ♗a4 84. g7 ♗h1+ 85. ♗d4 ♗d1+ 86. ♗c5 ♗c1+ 87. ♗d6 ♗d2+ 88. ♗e6 ♗a2+ 89. ♗d5 ♗e2+ 90. ♗d6 ♗h2+ 91. ♗c5!

1-0 M. Botvinnik - N. Minev, Amsterdam (ol), 1954.

**Tip #5**

You already know where to go: away! Minev did not know this.

77... ♗a5? Correct was 77... ♗a3 78. ♗d4 ♗e2+ 79. ♗g5 ♗g2+, and, unlike the variations later in the game, the white queen cannot stay in the center very long because the g6 pawn is not defended.

78. ♗d2+ ♗a4 79. ♗d4+! ♗a5 It was again better to play 79... ♗a3, but now (somewhat surprisingly), it is already too late to save the game (although only a computer can prove this). Black quickly runs out of checks and the pawn moves to g7, after which it is defended by the queen and the king is free to line itself up with the black king, similar to the game:

80. ♗g5 ♗e7+ 81. ♗f5! (81. ♗f5? ♗e3+ would draw) 81... ♗h8+ 82. ♗g4 ♗c8+ 83. ♗h4! followed by 84. g7.

80. ♗g5 ♗e7+ 81. ♗f5 ♗f8+ 82. ♗e4

very easy to fall into a stalemate (or worse). 1... ♗f2?? 2. ♗d1+ ♗f2 3. ♗c2+ ♗e2 wins immediately.

Now, however, White could have played:

2. ♗f4+! ♗xf4, stalemate! In the game J. Neal (2110) - Y. Norowitz (2429), US Open 2016, however, White had less than a minute left, did not see the stalemate, and resigned. Another tip: if you have almost no time, do not resign—just let your clock run out. Who knows—you might see something!
Is Tradition Too Boring?

Shoot the Rapids?

The comments I have seen from chess fans indicate that Carlsen – Karjakin will not go down in history as one of the greatest World Championship matches. My fellow New Jersey grandmaster Alex Fishbein lamented that there wasn’t a single mating attack until the last move of the match. In our social media driven world, we can expect fan disappointment to lead to calls from tweaking the system to giving it a major overhaul.

The world title passing in a head-to-head classical match is of course the most traditional method. The match could be augmented to sixteen games without much controversy. It would seem to increase the likelihood of seeing more decisive games. However, if the players follow a strategy that leads to tedium, we would only see more boring games. In this case, Carlsen pursued his patented “Seinfeld” strategy of winning by (seemingly) doing nothing. It makes sense for him; he doesn’t like to rely on opening theory, he wins a lot of simple positions, and he rarely loses them unless he overpresses. Sergei Shipov had speculated that Karjakin could be a tougher challenge for Carlsen because unlike Anand, he would not be concerned about his place in history but would go all out for the title. In this respect we were all disappointed. Karjakin seemed to play not to lose and occasionally counterpunch. It was only his remarkable defensive play (as Walt “Clyde” Frazier would say, he had to “get down to get up”) that sent the match the distance.

While most of us enjoy Carlsen as a champion, he isn’t an exciting match partner. However, the next situation could be very different. Fabiano Caruana, the man most of
us expected to be there, could produce
a much more interesting match, if the
bright lights don’t turn him conservative,
too. Certainly there would be more
excitement in the home country. As an
American, I imagine our two other bites
at the apple. Could Nakamura overcome
his dismal history against Carlsen to
make it interesting? Or could Wesley So
use his creative and unique take on chess
positions to frustrate Carlsen?

But whatever the matchup, there will
always be the specter of the draw. We
have a draw problem at the elite levels
of chess. It isn’t because players are lazy
or don’t care, as some fans occasionally
suggest. Players are well-taken care of
and have every reason to fight. [I grew
up in the 70s, when Eastern Europeans
played tournaments for no money. That
was the heyday of the grandmaster
draw.] The problem is twofold: First,
technique is so strong now – players
understand so many openings and
defend worse positions so well – that it is
extremely hard to break them down. The
other problem is a conservative trend
in openings. Players aren’t going for
the sharpest openings as much, or their
opponents are avoiding them because
they are holding up too well (e.g. the
Marshall Attack). All the Berlines and
anti-Berlines are not pleasing on the eye.

So you will always have draws. Some
pundits think draws shouldn’t count in
matches. Of course that only makes sense
if you believe in speeding up the replayed
games – more on that shortly. And you are
likely to have ties – then what? In the old
days, it seemed normal for champions to
retain their titles with a drawn match. But
today, the world is literally watching –
not just the handful in an auditorium, but
fans on their computers around the world.
There is a feeling that chess can only grow
its audience if it behaves like a proper
sporting competition, with a winner and
a loser.

Unless you want to choose the
winner by aggregate pawns captured,
you need to involve some kind of quick
play. Yasser Seirawan suggested having
the rapid portion before the match,
with the winner getting the tiebreak
advantage. This does avoid the match
literally decided by rapid playoff, but
causes more problems:

1. Now rapid chess is guaranteed to
impact the result
2. The rapid winner is motivated to play
more to avoid losing
3. You still can have the match end with
a draw, just like when the champion
automatically retains the title.

The Carlsen - Karjakin playoff
suggested the gap between their
ratings is larger at that rate of play. Rapid is a
qualitatively different kind of chess, and
the players who excel the most at one do
not always excel the most at the other. It
was good fortune to end the match with
a spectacular move in a game that was
otherwise a mop-up against a desperate
opponent. If fans believed Karjakin had
done more to try to win the match there
may have been more grumblings about
the outcome.

I believe there is no perfect format,
but the traditional head-to-head match
has tradition and charm that no other
system can offer. Perhaps it is best
to keep the World Championship
match traditional, but nurture other
competitions to promote chess, like the
Grand Chess Tour.

A League Of Our Own

Chess Leagues in the US do not have
the tradition you see in the rest of
the world, particularly in Europe. Part of
the problem is the absence of vibrant
sporting clubs (our sports franchises are
not rooted in communities in the same
way), part is the immense size of our
country, making travel expensive and
problematic. Some local and regional
leagues have flourished for a long time,
but we have never had a professional
chess league with face-to-face play.

Still, there was the quaint National
Chess League of the 70s and 80s. The
old NCL league played their games
by telephone, an expensive proposition
with the cost of long distance calling
back then. Before I was allowed to join
the team as a player, I worked a match
as a “runner” for the New York Threats
(one of the all-time great names in team
sports; why hasn’t it been revived?).
I would get the moves from the phone
person, play them on the board, and give
our moves to the phone person to send
back. It led to a great comical moment in
chess history.

Leonid Shamkovich was playing
board one for us. I think he was playing
John Grefe of San Francisco. I’m not
sure of the move order, but it went
something like this:

Leonid Shamkovich – John Grefe
San Francisco 70’s or 80’s

1.e4 c5 2.c4 d6 3.d4 cxd4
4.exd4 f6 5.Qc3 g6 6.g3 Qg7
7.g2 0-0 8.0-0 d6 9.a6 bc6 10.xc6

This move quite perplexed Shamkovich’s
opponent. The San Francisco runner had
played 2.e4 on the board, and only now
did everyone realize the two cities had
different games going all along. A lot of
time had already gone by so they resolved
the situation by agreeing to a draw!

No one would argue to play chess
by telephone in the 21st century, but the
camaraderie of the teams (especially the
1980s juggernaut Manhattan Chess Club
team) was something special. So when Greg
Shahade created a more modern version,
he revived a much needed tradition. The
USCL opened in 2005 with eight teams,
expanding to twenty teams by 2015.
The USCL used a system modified from the U.S. Amateur Team Championship; four board matches with the average rating not exceeding 2400. The matches were played over the Internet, for most of the seasons over the Internet Chess Club (ICC). Each team would have a designated location where all four players would play with an arbiter present. For some teams, match night was a spectator event.

In 2007 I helped organize the New Jersey Knockouts, which participated for nine seasons. The 2400 limit actually made our team more popular with the community. Our bottom boards were naturally manned by our rising juniors, and many of them gathered useful experience, learning about preparing for games and working side by side with grandmasters. The league took on special meaning for me, as I started raising a family and found myself with less time to compete in tournaments. [I was shocked to find that I had recently fallen off the active list in FIDE!] It was an oasis for me, a chance to prepare for one game at a relatively slow time control. In 2014, I did some nice preparation in an opening I never played before, and defeated GM Holden Hernandez in a game that won second prize in the best game of the season contest.

In most years modest corporate sponsorship enabled the league to pay stipends to all the teams. Throughout there were best game and MVP prizes, all-star teams, and general contentment throughout the league.

**PROs and Cons**

Then Greg Shahade blew it all up.

Greg saw the emptiness in the glass. The league was stable, but he didn’t see growth potential. Not enough people watched the games, and the matches didn’t generate enough buzz to reach a larger audience. Sponsors weren’t easy to find.

Hoping to create something that would popularize chess to another level, Shahade, with the enthusiastic participation of chess.com, morphed the USCL into a new entity, now known as Professional Rapid Online, with the catchy acronym PRO. The first major change was to open the league up to the rest of the world. PRO ballooned up to 48 teams in its inaugural year, 20 of them located in the U.S. The teams were split into four divisions, blue, red, green, and orange. Teams with similar time zones were grouped together to make scheduling smoother. The old 2400 USCF limited was scrapped, in the initial stages altogether, eventually replaced with a 2500 FIDE cap, which maintains a level of competitive balance. This opens the door for very powerful, big name players to participate, and you don’t get bigger than Magnus Carlsen of the Norway Gnomes, Fabiano Caruana will play for the Montreal Chessbears. Hikaru Nakamura and Wesley So are in as well, with perhaps slightly less fanfare as they both played in the USCL. Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and Shakh Mamedyarov round out the top drawer talent this year.

Teams are comprised of players with local connections and “free agents,” who can come from anywhere. That isn’t really a departure from previous seasons. But to make any free agent a realistic target, players no longer have to congregate in the same location, but can play (unsupervised) from home, whatever city that may be in. In an era where people are often brazen enough to venture electronic cheating in person, chatter naturally fixated on this potential problem. Shahade addressed the issue in his interview from ACM 01:

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.

Chess.com has also made it clear that rule breakers will be subject to expulsion from the league. I’m not so
will run live commentary in all four groups with staggered start times. I’ve done a lot of live commentary for the ICC, and we almost never tried to cover rapid chess. The moves come in too quickly to analyze any variations, or to be able to switch between games. [I’ll be happy if I’m proved wrong about these limitations; the fans will surely voice their opinions.] The product will be more popular when Magnus is playing, though we don’t know how many matches he (or any of the other big stars for that matter) will play.

Despite the big stars, PRO still has a bit of the old vibe. Some teams have, by my unofficial count, four or five free agents, but only one can be used per round in any match. A number of teams are made up entirely or almost entirely of amateur players, in it for the good time and the possibility of playing a grandmaster or two. [The Scheveningen format enables even a low rated player to play several GMs.] The teams do not receive stipends from the league, though several are likely to have private sponsorship. Prize money is a major development, with $50,000 total, including $20,000 to the top team. Though welcome, of course, it will spread thin among the numerous grandmasters in the league. Weekly prizes will include best game awards (how good will the games be?). PRO has placed an emphasis on self-promotion from each team. $600 in prizes will be distributed per week for blogs, videos, FaceBook posts and tweets. Teams that have young, tech-savvy personnel with time on their hands will probably be motivated to compete for these awards; teams with busy dads, not so much.

So is it all worth it? Some players and support personnel will be gone for good, missing the quality of the slow games and the intimacy of a smaller league. [In a uschessleague.com poll on the format changes, “Greg should be fired immediately for coming up with something so insane” led with 42% of the vote.] But others, particularly the younger ones I suspect, will like the changes. I think the first year will be rough. Greg and the chess.com guys are scrambling to get all preparations done for the season’s start (I write this shortly before the first round.). Logistical issues worry me more than potential cheating. With so many players logging on from individual sites (though some teams may choose to play from a common site), in so many countries, it seems that disconnections are likely. In the USCL this was an occasional nuisance. In 15 minute chess disruption of continuity is a major downer. The rules, which are being disseminated just before the season starts, seem to indicate forfeitures will occur if a player is not logged on for more than a few minutes.

How big will PRO get? I think those expecting chess on television soon are wildly optimistic. But I will keep an open mind. If it is successful enough to attract some outside sponsors, chess.com can increase the prizes, and perhaps directly support the teams. Heck, as long as chess.com is happy with the return on its investment, it can at least establish a niche and have a long healthy life.

I think another important question is, will it be fun? I enjoyed the old league immensely. It was like playing in a very long round a day tournament. But Joel, now you can play as many as three grandmasters in one night! And maybe even Magnus Carlsen (though he isn’t on our schedule; Norway is playing a lot of cities I’ve never heard of, but there is a potential Carlsen – Caruana matchup down the line)! Well, that could be great. But I generally find online blitz very stressful, and making instant moves with a mouse much harder than with my hands on a board. And four of these games in a row… I’m looking for relaxation, not heart-stopping action. Fifteen minute chess allows for little contemplation in the opening; it rewards the speed of your preparation more than the quality of it. Of course, blitz specialists will have a field day. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

The USCL/PRO story highlights the same issues we see in the World Championship match. Our desire to expand the market in this interconnected world reduces the opportunities for players to produce their best quality chess. As in the world of established sports, those who watch are served as much, if not more, than those who play. Speed kills, but it also sells. Tradition vs. innovation, quality vs. excitement – for good or bad, these issues will be continually played out in future chess events.

impressed by the “proctor” plan, as it will be at least quite difficult to get an impartial observer present for some of the games. The other idea of moving suspected players to public sites may be more feasible. All playing sites have cheat-detection, but the high claims of chess.com are bolstered by a number of glowing testimonials. All that talk has to be something of a deterrent as well. I don’t know if players are as concerned as fans are about all this. We’ll see when we start to get to the money rounds!

Online cheating is considered to be harder to get away with in faster games, but I don’t think that’s the main reason for the switch to substantially faster games. Shahade has long been a strong proponent of speeding up play, and he likes what he sees in the new 15 minute + 2 second increment time control. Very little dead time between moves, constant time pressure, blunders, reversal of fortunes, will all be features of the new league. I am quite a bit less sanguine about the spectator appeal. Chess.com
There is Chess in Colorado!

By NM Brian Wall & NM Lior Lapid

For 40 years I have been screaming at Chess Life and Review that Colorado has significant chess games that might interest the rest of the country. I screamed so loud and long that I was finally heard – in the ACM!

NM Brian Wall, the doyen of Colorado chess, is a seven time state champ and runs a very popular yahoo groups display of opening theory and all sorts of other chess topics. A few years back, he personally wreaked havoc in the opening theory of the Ponziani with 1.e4 e5 2.♕f3 ♗c6 3.c3 ♗f6 4.d4 ♗xe4 5.d5 ♗c5 6.dxc6 ♘xf2+ 7.♕e2 ♘b6!! 8.♕d5 ♘xf2 9.♕g1 0-0 10.cxb7 ♘xb7 11.♗xb7 ♘f6. In 2006, he was a frequent commentator for the ICC.
One of my longtime readers of BrianWallChess@YahooGroups.com is the managing editor of American Chess Magazine. Pete Tamburro saw the Canney-Lapid game and got in touch, after which we talked a bit about what’s going on in Colorado chess. It’s never dull!

The Denver Chess Club has sponsored some unusual tournaments which might catch on internationally.

Clones Wars:
Tournament participants can decide each round if they want to play one, two or three boards, in effect, giving a simul each round. At 4 rounds I end up playing 12 games of Chess.

Zombie Apocalypse:
Anyone who has not played for 5 years gets free USCF, state dues and entry fee. They just play and try to win a prize. We brought 15 sheep back into the fold this way.

Chess Variant Tournaments:
960 tournament, Bughouse tournament, Senior Championship, State vs. State matches.

The state match is Colorado vs. New Mexico. This becomes significant to understanding how the wonderful game below came about. On Board 1, I drew twice with 2300 Lior Lapid from New Mexico. Then, Lior moved here and started winning the Colorado Closed. Twice I handed Lior his only defeats. This spurred Lior to subject the French to deeper study. Senior Master Randy Canney is a 10 time Colorado State Champion. IM John Watson schooled Randy as a child in the French and even included a Canney game in his first edition of Play the French, so these two players are well-versed in the French. However, there is more backstory to our featured game.

I like to come up with TNs and try them out when we play chess outdoors in Denver at concrete chess tables on the 16th Street mall downtown. For months I tried a trap in the French against local chess bums with zero results. Nobody bit. It occurred to me that some traps are only for 2300+ players.

Later on, I was giving another simul, that is, playing in the Colorado Closed and the Colorado Senior tournaments at the same time. I had already won the Closed in a simul earlier. Since I was playing two games at once, it was easy to convince Lior that I wasn’t paying sufficient attention to his game. Imagine his shock when I whipped out 20 book moves instantly while he was racking his brain and eating up time on the clock. By then he was too drained to put up much resistance. After the game Randy Canney told me this opening is called the Jackal.

Brian Wall 2230 – Lior Lapid 2296
Colorado Closed, Boulder 2014

1.e4 e6 2.d4 c3 d5 3.d3 f3 d6 4.e5
1.0-0 e5 2.dxe5 dxe5 3...f6 4.e4
1.d4 d5 2.c3 e6 3.d3 f3 d6 4.e5
1.0-0 e6 2.dxe5 dxe5 3...f3 d6 4.e5
1.d4 d5 2.c3 e6 3.dxe5 dxe5 4.e5

17.0-0 0-0 18.0-0 g8 19.xc8
18.0-0 0-0 19.xc8
g8 20.xf7+ xh8 19.xc8
18.xf7+ xh8 19.xc8
g8 20.xf7+ xh8 19.xc8
18.xf7+ xh8 19.xc8

Black resigned

As Lior mentions in his notes to the game, he was determined not to be caught again as a result of this experience. His revenge came, though, against Randy Canney. I immediately dubbed this brilliant game the Colorado Game of the Year.
C11

Randy Canney 2238
Lior Lapid 2268

Colorado Closed State Championship, Lone Tree 2016
[Annotations by Lior Lapid]

1.e4 e6 2.d4 f3 d5 3.d3 f6 4.e5 df7 5.d4 c5

6.dxc5 In the 2014 Colorado Closed Championship, Brian Wall demolished me in a wild and spectacular variation: 6.g5 b6 7.dxc5 xc5 8.d2 xf2+ 9.xf2 xb2 10.d2 xa1 11.b5 xh1 12.xc5 xg2+ 13.c1 xc6 14.xc6 xg5+ 15.xg5 bxc6 16.xc6 a8 17.xd5. Brian blitzed out all of these moves in mere seconds. My confidence was shattered as I was certain that I had walked into a deadly trap and that Black’s position was already lost. With my next move, 17...0-0??, my premature conclusion was turned into reality and I had to resign a few moves later. The game motivated me to study the French Two Knights Variation quite thoroughly, so the next time I faced it (in this game two years later) I was much better prepared. As with all losses, there was a silver lining: had that loss not happened, this win would never have happened either.

6...c6 7.b4 a6 8.d3 xc5 This is more fun and dynamic than ...xc5 because sets up an unorthodox plan involving ...e7 and ...g5?

9.0-0 e7 10.d2? This innocuous-looking move (the second most popular move in this position) unexpectedly causes some headaches for the first player. White would love to play 11.d4, e3, etc., but timing is everything and for a brief moment his pieces are uncoordinated. After this move the e-file is temporarily blocked, and g2 is impossible, so Black must strike at once. There is no time to delay!

10...g5 From this point on nearly all of Black’s moves are energetic and aimed at one goal above all: maintaining the initiative.

11.g3 h5 12.h3 b6 13.b1 d7! Four knight moves in the opening, the last two being from d7 to c5 and back are not common, but sometimes it’s better to forget general principles and focus on concrete gains. Due to the threat of ...g4, White’s e5-pawn (the pride of his opening setup) is already lost.

14.e1 g4 15.xg4 xg4 16.h2 dxe5 17.df4? 17.b4 at once is stronger, since if Black now tries 17...h4 White has 18.b5 axb5 19.axb5.

17...h4! White’s immobile bishop on g3 is actually the best and most important minor piece on the board. The pressure it has along the g3-b8 diagonal is nice, but far more important are the defensive functions it serves in protecting the h2-knight and the f2-pawn. It is the glue that’s holding White’s position together. By comparison, Black’s dark-squared bishop looks good but really isn’t doing much.

18.df1 d7 19.b4 xg3 20.xg3

20...d4?? It was on this move that I began to conceive of the notion of a rook sacrifice on h2. But I knew that
White’s f4-knight would need to be on e2, creating disharmony among White’s pieces, in order for the sacrifice to have any chance of success. So with this move I was trying to provoke \( \mathcal{f}e2 \), at which point the hope was that retreating my queen back to ...b6 or ...a7 would lull my opponent into a false sense of security and dissuade him from returning his knight to f4.

21. \( \mathcal{f}e2 \) On 21. \( \mathcal{d}d2 \) \( \mathcal{c}c4 \) 22. \( \mathcal{w}c1 \) \( \mathcal{g}e5 \) is very strong.

21...\( \mathcal{a}7 \) 22.\( \mathcal{a}4 \)

22.\( \mathcal{f}4 \) was probably best. But perhaps the seesaw movements ...\( \mathcal{d}7-c5-d7 \) and ...\( \mathcal{b}6-d4-a7 \) had persuaded my opponent to play for more, as he played the natural 22.a4 rather quickly. At this point I became obsessed with the idea of sacrificing my pieces, any or all of my pieces – the more sacrifices the better! I admit that even while playing my next move, I was still a bit concerned that I had overlooked something obvious. But my reasoning was simple: If I do play it and it turns out to be a blunder, I can live with that. But if I don’t play it and then discover it would have won, I’ll never forgive my cowardice. The choice was clear.

22...\( \mathcal{h}2!! \) The threat is 23...\( \mathcal{f}3+ \) 24.\( \mathcal{f}1 \) 0-0-0 with a crushing attack.

23.\( \mathcal{x}h2 \) It seemed that Randy was calling my bluff, as he captured the rook surprisingly quickly. But the sacrifice is sound. 23.\( \mathcal{f}1 \) was necessary here, but Black maintains an attack and the more pleasant position after 23...\( \mathcal{h}4 \).

23...\( \mathcal{f}3+ \) 23...\( \mathcal{x}f2 \) first is also winning.

24.\( \mathcal{h}1 \) On 24.gxf3 follows 24...\( \mathcal{x}f2+ \) 25.\( \mathcal{h}1 \) gxf3 26.\( \mathcal{f}4 \) 0-0-0 27.\( \mathcal{g}h5 \) \( \mathcal{h}8 \).

24...\( \mathcal{x}f2 \) 25.\( \mathcal{f}1 \) 25.gxf3 gxf3 transposes to the line above.

25...0-0-0! 26.\( \mathcal{h}7 \) \( \mathcal{h}8 \) 27.\( \mathcal{d}3 \) f5

28.\( \mathcal{f}4 \) On 28.\( \mathcal{x}f3 \) follows 28...\( \mathcal{x}h7+! \)

29.\( \mathcal{h}5 \) \( \mathcal{x}h5+ \) 30.\( \mathcal{h}3 \) \( \mathcal{x}h3+ \) 31.\( \mathcal{g}xh3 \) \( \mathcal{x}e2 \).

28...\( \mathcal{x}h7+ \) 29.\( \mathcal{g}h5 \) \( \mathcal{x}h5+ \) 30.\( \mathcal{x}h5 \) \( \mathcal{h}4=\# \)

White resigned

National Master Lior Lapid is the founder of PALS Chess Academy (http://palschess.com). He is a former two-time National Champion in the K-9 and K-12 divisions, and a three-time New Mexico State Champion overall in addition to the mentioned Colorado successes.

As you can see, Colorado has an active chess scene with exciting games and tournaments. You can check out tons of Colorado tournament reports and games at Colorado-Chess.com or DenverChess.com.
While the aim of this column is to look at 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. *Najdorf x Najdorf* by Liliana Najdorf (Russell Enterprises 2016) – (review below)
2. *Dynamic Decision Making in Chess* by Boris Gelfand (Quality Chess 2016)
3. *Chess Informant 130 Knocker-Up* by CI Editorial Team (Chess Informant 2016)
4. *King’s Indian Warfare* by Ilya Smirin (Quality Chess 2016)
8. *Understanding Rook Endgames* by Karsten Müller and Yakov Konoval (Gambit Publications 2016) – (review below)
9. *Timman’s Titans* by Jan Timman (New In Chess 2016)
10. *Is Your Move Safe?* by Dan Heisman (Mongoose Press 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.
Najdorf x Najdorf
by Liliana Najdorf, Foreword and annotated games by Jan Timman
(Russell Enterprises 2016), paperback, 208 pages

The market for chess biographies is steadily being filled with new books. Most recently, Everyman Chess has released volumes on just about every world champion and the major contenders. But what is interesting is that many biographies, especially on those players that are no longer active or have died a long time ago, contain no new material from the chess side, only discoveries can really be made on the biographical side. Yet that is often left mostly ignored. Beyond these top player biographies or autobiographies, the amount of books in this category is very limited. For example, prior to the World Championship match in New York, there were several biographies on the current World Champion, but none on the challenger, Karjakin. Sure, he is a young player, but in many ways he is also a very remarkable player: still the youngest player to become a grandmaster, winner of many tournaments including the most recent World Cup and Candidates tournament. Once we get away from the top group of players, both present and in the past, Najdorf falls into the category of historically great players that have only been covered sporadically if at all.

This Najdorf biography is different from almost any other chess biography I have ever read. For starters, it is neither written by the player himself or another chess player, but rather the subject’s daughter who is not a chess player.

In the preface, Liliana Najdorf writes that she always wanted to write the biography of her father. There was a consensus that the story of his life needed to be told. She also tells us that there were several attempts that eventually lead to nothing. (The book by Thomas Lisowski notwithstanding, but he had not interviewed Najdorf personally). However, she only came to the point of writing after her father had died in 1997. It was then that the Spanish language version of the book came to be published.

The book is not a single-minded adoration of her father, but rather it describes the person he was outside the chessboard. Successful and generous, but just as much, a temperamental, flawed man. At the end of the book, there are contributions from fellow Argentine Grandmasters Panno and Quinteros as well as some people who worked for him. Thankfully these accounts are very honest and bring us more pieces in the overall puzzle that makes up the complete portrait of Najdorf.

The original Argentinean edition of this book only contained one game, the Polish Immortal, but that is not the case in this new English-language version. The foreword has been written by Dutch Grandmaster and former World Championship challenger Jan Timman, who also selected and annotated a number of games for illustrative purposes. The book is translated from Spanish and expertly edited by Taylor Kingston, who many will know from his writings on chesscafe.com, in Chess Life, in New In Chess and many other places. In addition to the original material, he has also added appendices including an article on what happened and led up to Najdorf not being included in the line-up for the 1948 match tournament that decided the World Championship. The back story was entirely new to me, as I’m sure it will be for most readers.

Part of the back story is the game from Groningen 1946 where Najdorf was taking bets on whether he would beat Botvinnik in their last round game. Here we jump to White’s 23rd move (the notes given below are selected from those by Timman in the book):

Miguel Najdorf – Mikhail Botvinnik
Groningen 1946

Part of the back story is the game

\[ \text{23.} \text{e1!} \text{ A strong maneuver. White swings his queen around to the kingside.} \]

\[ \text{23...d7 24.} \text{h4} \text{f8} \text{25.} \text{e4} \text{ Finally White executes the thematic push in the center.} \]
25...f6 26.g4 g6 27.wh5 f7 Botvinnik is aiming for the exchange of queens.

28.ae1 abb8 29.de3 A very strong post for the knight.

29...de7 The final mistake, after which White takes the enemy position by storm. Black's position was very difficult anyway (CH: then Timman proceeds to analyze the alternatives).

30.h4 f5 31.g4 Inviting Black to open the f-file.

31...f4 This loses a piece, but the consequences of other moves were gruesome as well.

32.exd5 dg6 33.dxe6 exe6 34.xg6 hxg6 35.gg2 be8 36.e6 ex6 37.xf4 xf6 38.xg5 xc3 39.xc3 xf4 40.g2 Black resigned

Overall, this book is a phenomenal read on someone who for most of today's generation of chess players will only be known for lending his name to that popular, sharp line in the Open Sicilian.

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**The Agile London System**

by Alfonso Romero & Oscar de Prado

(New in Chess 2016), paperback, 335 pages

MSRP $ 29.95

A few years ago, you would have been able to find me groaning audibly and repeatedly by the current trend in opening play today. You may well have read that I considered it bordering on unsportsmanlike conduct to wheel out these dull and innocuous openings instead of playing real chess. In the World Championship match in New York, we saw the World Champion play the Trompowsky and the Colle as White. He has also played the London several times.

So, what is causing this trend? Do Carlsen and Kramnik and other players not care about obtaining an advantage as White? I believe the thinking behind the concept of using these openings is well explained by Carlsen's coach, Danish Grandmaster Peter Heine Nielsen who after the match in New York said that nowadays opening preparation goes in the direction of finding solid play as Black and then ideas as White where you can play for the initiative. As the stronger player, it can be attractive to ask your opponent to demonstrate that you can play chess instead of testing your opponent's ability to repeat memorized theory-heavy lines that may lead to a more or less forced or dead drawn position.

That's where the London comes in. It used to be the tool of theory-shy players, but nowadays it seems that everybody is playing this opening.

So, is there material to write a 335-page book about the London System? Yes and no. It all boils down to what you decide to include in the book. In addition to the traditional lines of how to play the London against the King's Indian set-up, the Queen's Indian set-up and against set-ups with ...d7-d5, there are also repertoire suggestions against the Benoni, the Dutch, and the Slav, and not all of these recommendations remain in the territory of the actual London System. For instance, in the Benoni coverage, the following line is explored: 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c5 3.d5 g6 4.g4 e4 5.e5. This is in fact, as the authors do point out, the so-called Vaganian Gambit from the Trompowsky. In the chapter on the King's Indian, we find coverage of the Barry Attack, that's 1.d4 d5 2.c4 g6 3.g3 e5 4.e4. Speaking of the latter, there is a peculiar dedication to an Argentinean correspondence chess player, Manuel Pereyra Puebla, who played a special variety of the London System. I'm not entirely sure why the coverage of his system wasn't simply included in the study of the other lines, but the authors evidently felt that it made sense to make it a separate chapter.

However, for our entertainment, I will include one of the games by Pereyra (I have only borrowed the punctuation from the book).

**M. Pereyra Puebla – O.Sande**

World Correspondence Chess Final 1984

1.d4 d5 2.c4 g6 3.g3 f5 4.e4 h6 5.d5 d6 0-0 6.e5

c5 7.dxc5 d4 8.0-0 0-0 9.e5 f5 10.exf5 exf5 11.g4!!

g7 12.exd4 xg4 13.dxe5 xd1 14.dxd1 f6

15.xg1 d3 16.xf6 exf6
17.e6 h6 f7 18.e5 xd5
19.exf7+ xf7 20.xg7+ and Black resigned because of 20...e8 21.e8+ d7
22.d7+ c6 23.e8#

Another problem I think deserves a mention is the fact that there are no page numbers listed to guide the reader when referencing the index of variations.

That being said, this is a very good monograph on the London. But from the look of the book, it cannot be considered as being an anti-theory approach much longer.
The rook ending is the most frequently occurring type of endgame and therefore the study of it is easily what pays the biggest dividends. Over the years, many books have been written on the topic. Some of my favorites are “The Survival Guide to Rook Endings” by Emms (Gambit 2008), “A Practical Guide to Rook Endgames” by Minev (Russell 2004), “Practical Rook Endings” by Korchnoi (Edition Olms 2002) and “Secrets of Rook Endings” by Nunn (Gambit 1999), the latter coincidentally being the first book I ever reviewed. In addition, more general books such as Mueller & Lamprecht’s “Fundamental Chess Endings” (Gambit 2013 – 2nd edition) and “Dvoretsky’s Endgame Manual” (Russell 2014 – 4th edition) have excellent sections on rook endgames. So, with these truly excellent works, does the world need another book on this topic? Honestly, I find it very difficult to answer yes to that question.

Here we are being told, “Black’s forces are not in full harmony.” If I told that to one of my students, I would be met with the question: What does that even mean, ‘not in full harmony?’ Frequently throughout the book, we are met with very, very long variations without any kind of comments. Several examples out of many can be found at the end of the first chapters where, for some reason, the authors find it interesting to show the longest wins with the various pawns (for example in rook + 2 pawns vs rook endings). These wins are presented with no annotations aside from punctuation according to a special annotation convention where there is a particular distinction when using ‘!!’ and ‘!’ . One example with g+h pawns is 86 moves long. This is not enjoyable reading, but I’m sure satisfactory for some. The actual practical value, however, especially for less than very advanced players or readers escapes me. You really have to be a rook endgame or database nerd to find this appealing.

If the book had been written for more average players, explanations would have been much more plentiful and considerable, rather than just a beginning diagram and then a lot of bare game score. There is a lot of awesome content in the book and a study of the material presented will take your rook ending skills to a whole different level, and the promise of “[N]ew insights, deep understanding, and helpful guidelines” hits the nail right on the head.
Chess is now an e-sport! 2017 will be the biggest and best year in the history of online chess – perhaps since the invention of chess playing software itself? – Especially for professional players. Why?

By IM Danny Rensch

Chess is not a “video game” in the purest sense of the term. And it certainly doesn’t bring wizards or machine guns to mind (well, at least not the chess I think of). But with modern chess software improving to the level which it has done, and with so many different chess websites offering amazing piece animations, fun graphics and sound effects to enjoy while playing, tools and features that truly “gamify” the learning experience, and phenomenal coverage with webcams on players and big personalities doing play-by-play – viewing chess on a screen has become more like watching a TV show or video game than it’s ever been before.

Chess doesn’t need to be “on TV”. Stop with the poker and chess comparisons! What is TV these days anyway? The modern world accesses entertainment and content when and how it wants, exactly when and how it wants it. Hulu, Netflix, YouTube, etc – that’s where the viewers are and what chess is now catering to. What’s undeniable is that through the web, the game of kings is engaging a larger, more diverse audience than any of our “chess forefathers” could have possibly imagined.

But what’s more, it’s precisely what chess lacks to define it as a true video game that can, and I believe will, lead chess to having a solid e-sport’s career. There is real potential to become a new, hip and engaging follow for fans of online sports/games, looking for something “different” and not just another simulation of reality. While game developers clamber to try and invent the latest take on “wizards and warcraft”, “war simulation and alien battles”, and new graphics to make gamers really feel they are Lebron James crossing-over Kevin Durant, chess remains in its simple way, the same game online that it is in serious, over the board tournaments.

While you play and enjoy yourself “as a gamer” with chess, you are indeed playing the same critically acclaimed game for improving memory and focus, increasing a child’s early cognitive development, and
advancing overall critical thinking skills as much if not more
than any board game in history. Chess is online, what it is in
real life. No fantasy here.

The missing element for years, i.e., the gamification
for fans on the fence about whether chess can hold their
attention, is being addressed just as I said above (a great play
experience, fun commentary, ways for fans to “guess the
move” while watching a top GM blitz on Chess.com, etc).
The game is being packaged and delivered to fans in ways
that spikes and now keeps their interest. With the new PRO
Chess League, more than 500 players, 100 grandmasters and
48 teams from around the world have given all demographics
of people something to root for. And who said chess players
don’t like having cheerleaders?

Almost every PRO team on chess.com is actively creating
content (videos, blogs, etc) engaging with their fans via social
media, and earning more love and support than the chess
professional has ever had before by providing real insight with
interviews and articles via their official fan clubs on Chess.
com. The amateur and professional are connecting in more
ways than ever before. Chess.com also just announced the
increased prize fund and player field for the 2017 Speed Chess
Championship (formerly known as the Grandmaster Blitz
Battle Championship that brought us the epic final between
Magnus Carlsen and Hikaru Nakamura last October). If this
year’s event is followed with half the interest that last year’s
was, we expect viewership to more than double!

So, as I said, perhaps it will be our “boring game” that
helps break the mold into the e-sports environment and
business (an estimated $500 million dollar market) for more
“brain sports” and less fantasy videos. After all, our game
engages demographics, like young children and school
teachers in the classroom where video games are not allowed,
not to mention the elderly, in ways that video games may
never. It is precisely the virtues our game possesses over video
games that just might catapult it further than people ever
believed possible as an e-sport.

As I bring my column to a close here and go back to my
“regular Chess.com work” – currently confirming Wesley
So, Anish Giri and Maxime Vachier-Lagrange as the latest
additions to the 16-player Speed Chess Championship this
year and looking forward on my calendar to the looming PRO
Chess League match between the Montreal ChessBrahs (will
Fabiano Caruana play?) and the Norway Gnomes (Is it time
for Magnus Carlsen to make his debut?) – I leave all of you,
my dear readers, with a question: Did you ever think the Gods
of our game would be able to have as much fun and make
so much cash while playing blitz chess at home, still in their
pajamas while eating mom’s leftovers?
Didn’t think so...
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.

Decades ago, you could only hope to improve quickly if you lived in or near a large metropolitan area. How else to compete regularly and to watch the great players? Today, with internet access, we can all play online whenever we want, we all have easy access to databases of millions of tournament games, and indeed, we can all take full advantage of many excellent chess services for watching live broadcasts of important tournaments and matches. By Jon Edwards

This month, I want briefly to review some of the choices we had to watch the 2016 World Championship match between Magnus Carlsen and Sergey Karjakin. There were a great many online efforts, but I have focused upon four: The World Chess service that the organizers of the match assembled, as well the existing chess website at ChessBase/PlayChess, Chess24, and at the Internet Chess Club. I recognize that many other chess sites covered the match and, in my humble view, such competition is a healthy thing.

World Chess led the way. They produced both a website and an app permitting us to watch the match from any networked device. Performance was uneven on day one but encountered only a few glitches thereafter. Unlike the other sites, they began their broadcasts early, ten to fifteen minutes before the start of play.

No payment was required to watch the games. All were welcome to watch a broadcast limited only to a screen like that just the next one, the moves and the clock in real time.

Premium subscribers received live commentary from Judith Polgar and steady
stream of chess and non-chess celebrities. Trying to take advantage of all their features required substantial scrolling, but World Chess tried to compensate by switching views in the main viewing area shown just below. Sometime we would be the players, as here, and sometimes the current position with the ongoing analysis to the right.

At the tournament site, special glasses permitted users to view the match quite spectacularly in virtual 3-D that gave users the feeling of being right in the room with the players, but very few attendees made the effort. Some watched the players from behind one-way glass, while crowds flooded two large areas with seating where they could watch monitors projecting the game and carrying the live commentary. The premium experience online provided nice video feeds of the players. No special glasses were required to enjoy views which were, in fact, closer to the players than spectators in New York could personally see. The World Chess web site was also the place to go for the live press conferences after each match game. Like most of you, I was far more interested in the quality of the commentary. In that regard, the World Chess site was well done but aimed more at beginning and intermediate players and the non-chess-playing public.

In such technological efforts, we all gained a taste of the future of chess, if not in the chess itself, then certainly in its coverage. But for every step forward, there are, from time to time, in chess as in other sports, several steps backward. As is so often the case, technological advance and innovation sometimes outstrips the law. Agon sponsored the match and, in their view, to justify their substantial investment, they worked hard to reserve broadcast rights. In that, there should be no argument. Their coverage is substantially similar in scope to other sporting events in which sponsors reserve such broadcast rights. But here, they went one step further, trying to reserve the rights over the moves themselves. Here at the match, all spectators and online viewers had to agree not to disseminate the moves over the web. And so, without access to the moves, how could other chess sites on the web provide live commentary?
The result was litigation that reached the New York City courts just two days before the match began. “It’s not an athletic sport”, Agon argued “The moves are the very essence of the event. It isn’t fair that some websites can steal what his client spends millions of dollars to develop.”

The judge, who emphasized that he well understood this branch of the law, ruled against Agon and World Chess. “I am not persuaded that organizers of the $1 million, 12-game tournament have a legal right to block the websites from disclosing the moves until after each game, which can last several hours.”

But the suit itself had its effect. Rather than provide audio or video commentary themselves during the match, ChessBase/PlayChess and Chess.com had agreed to join the World Chess effort. Their only independent coverage for their premium users were the after-game textual summaries they placed on the ChessBase site and video summaries on their server.

Above, Yan Pelletier’s wonderful summary of game 10, perhaps the most exciting game of the match. And below, a snapshot of Wesley’s So’s written commentary on that same game. Having such easy access to such quality is truly remarkable and much appreciated.

Despite these legal obstacles, the technology itself shone brightly, suggesting that future coverage may be very promising indeed if we can collectively get past the squabbling.

Unable to get a real time feed of the moves, most of the web servers experienced some lag throughout the match. But that didn’t prevent them from providing an awesome experience to their subscribers.

In my view, Chess24 won the match. Peter Svidler and Jan Gustafsson provided fantastic live coverage with detailed analysis that stood in stark contrast to the somewhat lighter coverage on World Chess. The Chess24 broadcast was marred only by the lag in receiving moves, especially late in games and during the rapid portion of the match.

During many encounters, the players seemed to depend upon moves being relayed by viewers of the broadcast. The Chess24 web site is simple to navigate and contains a wonderful feature, engine feedback on every position and on any move you input. And so, if you are wondering about a possible try, you can play it on the board and receive immediate feedback.
Chess24 also offered a daily email newsletter and a dedicated web site with video clips and additional content, including video summaries from Peter Svidler.

Joel Benjamin, Alex Yermolinsky, Mark Crowther, and Miguel Illescas headlined the Internet Chess Club’s coverage with audio coverage that was also aimed at higher rated players. John Fedorowicz provided overviews of each game. The lag at the ICC site was especially marked during the rapid phase of the game and, because the commentators had one board for both the current position and for their analysis, there was no way to know how much time the players had used or had remaining. I had no issue because I was also running the match on the World Chess site, but ICC users had little sense of the urgency of Karjakin’s time trouble in those rapid games. At one critical moment, the ICC clocks were off by more than two minutes.
These experiences pale in the face of the technological efforts that underlie these web sites. The future for chess on the web is bright indeed and will truly flourish if all involved become more willing to share real-time feeds of the moves from all chess events.

For those who adore computer analysis, Steinar H. Gunderson shared Stockfish’s run on a mainframe at http://analysis.sesse.net/. Svidler won my award for the best human analysis, but Sesse is one impressive machine!

My technological star of the match goes not to the web sites or the cool 3D glasses but rather to Twitter. Those of you who have explored this branch of social media may well have been entertained by the many chess stars who offered their views. I close out this month with a brief look at some of the comments. It’s moments like these that might actually draw more of the chess world to Twitter, or perhaps more of the Twitterverse to chess.
HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR CHESS!

By GM Pontus Carlsson

I think this is a question that most chess players wonder about, but it is quite complex since there is no miracle method that works for everyone. The truth is that different things work for different people and different ages. As a grandmaster and chess trainer with more than 20 years playing experience, I have accumulated a lot of knowledge, tips and techniques that I would like to share with readers of this column.

Pontus Carlsson is a Swedish grandmaster, living and working as an economist in Prague, Czech Republic. He has played for the Swedish national team in several Chess Olympiads and European Championships. Fluent in several languages, Pontus names as his idols the following personalities – on the chess board Kasparov, off the board Nelson Mandela, on the soccer field Ronaldinho. He has been nine times Swedish Team Champion, twice Swedish Junior Champion, Nordic Junior Champion, Swedish Individual Champion, and winner of many international tournaments such as Soller GM, Vitoria Open, Open Balatonlelle, Swedish Easter Open, Pankrac Cup...
HERE ARE MY 7 TIPS FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. DEVOTE TIME TO TRAINING!

This is the first and very important step, since you cannot improve by just doing one hour of training per week. It is necessary that this hour is followed up with more training. A classical rule in sport is that if you want to get good at anything then you need to devote 10,000 hours to training, which means if you allocate one hour per week it will take you 208 years before you can secure the GM-title. But of course this would require not only immense patience but also the elixir of youth!

Then again, if you train 8 hours per day then it will take 3.43 years before you can reap the rewards of your efforts. Even if you have a full time job and a family, there is still no reason to demotivate yourself as you can get really good at chess by simply doing the right things. This is far more important than how much you train, though of course the best way to progress is to train a lot AND do the right things!

So try to train at least 1 hour per day so the brain can get used to studying chess.

However, whether you are a kid, teenager, student; adult or even a senior citizen, try to train much more than that. Even though work, family and increased responsibilities will all make their presence felt as you get older and eat up time you would prefer to spend on chess. The more time you can spend on training, the greater the benefit it will have on your play, and it should not be a chore because chess is fun!

2. CONSTRUCT A PLAN FOR SELF-DEVELOPMENT

It is important to form a structure for your training, otherwise it might easily prove to be ineffective.

**Trap 1:** I remember a club player who was training extremely hard, around 8-12 hours a day. The only problem was that his idea of training was to read the five volumes of Encyclopaedia of Chess Openings from the first page to the last. However, by the time he had finished the fifth volume of this gigantic series, he had forgotten what he had learned from the other four volumes, as well as half of the fifth, and he had to start all over again...

**Trap 2:** Another common trap is that you try to do a little bit of everything and train yourself on combinations, endgames, strategy, etc., at the same time as you are "just going to play one online blitz game..."

All these things are good but only when carried out separately in a well structured format. If you try to do everything at the same time, it usually results in not learning anything properly.

So make a short or long list of what you think you need to study in your training sessions. Also write down what you think is absolutely the most boring aspect of chess, as most likely that should be added to your personal development plan too! Remember, a chessplayer’s greatest weakness is often what he or she finds to be the most tedious.

3. USE THE RIGHT REFERENCE MATERIAL

This is probably the most difficult point of all my tips, since the supply of chess books, DVDs, blogs, internet pages and newsletters has exploded over the last few years.

How can you know which sources to trust and which to study?

My advice is to get help from strong players, like grandmasters and international masters, and ask them which books and sources they recommend. The logic behind this is that those players have already made the journey of self-development and so they can easily sort out the worthwhile sources from those that should be avoided.

I always give recommendations to students that I train as to which books will best suit them and will give them what they want and need to know.

**Trap 3:** "I will buy all books on the market about the French Defence, read them and then I will know everything there is to know about this opening!"

This is a terrible idea since nowadays so many books have been written on the French and other openings. Some of them are good and some are bad, and you would just get in a muddle if you read all of them. In fact it is very hazardous to read bad books since you will run the risk of picking up mistaken ideas. Rather you should have one good book as your main source so that you do not get confused.

However if you want to use several books as source material then I would recommend that you create a file in Chessbase, Fritz or Houdini, whatever chess program you are using, then first analyze the arising positions without an engine and only consult it to verify your analyses. If you have trouble reading books, then try DVDs or a good online source such as Chess24. For tactical training I would recommend the chesstempo website.
4 PLAY AND PLAY RIGHT!

Play live!
In order to improve and utilize your chess training you have to play real life tournaments. You cannot just train and expect to improve, you have to transfer all your training into knowledge and experience, and that can only be done by competitive play. If you have problems playing onsite tournaments, then play online, but make sure you play serious games of at least five minutes duration and not just hundreds of one minute bullet games which will not help your development at all.

Where should you play?
So which tournaments should you play in? Well, my advice is to aim for tournaments that stimulate you and are not just local competitions that contain the same people week in and week out. In such clubs the balance of power is often very static and clear-cut, which is why they do not promote much development at all and can be very demotivating. So get out there and play in tournaments!

Play in a higher category
A good way to improve is to play in a higher rating or age category competition, because then you will have to push yourself much more to score points. Since you will be playing against stronger players, your abilities will be challenged to a far greater extent and so you will gain further experience and be forced to raise your standard of play to score any points! Very important also is to analyse the games you play properly with a stronger player in order to draw the right conclusions from them and not to lose confidence if your early attempts do not turn out well. That is what happens when you move up to a higher category.

Play out your games
This is very important advice since far too many games end prematurely because one or other of the opponents (or both!) does not dare to play out a certain position. So see every game as an important chance to gain experience and improve your play. Rejecting draw offers and playing to the end will increase your chess knowledge and mental strength, which needs to be high for you to be able to win tournaments.

So play frequently, since practical competition transfers your training into knowledge and experience. Play in the right tournaments, i.e. those that stimulate you, and one way to get this stimulation is to play in a higher category. Play out your games and do not accept any draw offers in a position where you think you stand better – just play on!

6 ANALYSE YOUR GAMES BUT JOINTLY WITH STRONGER PLAYERS

One of the most common pieces of advice given on how to improve is to analyze your own games. Well, this can be great advice but it can also be very hazardous.

The advantage of analyzing your own games is that you get the chance to explore many different kinds of positions, as well as being able to try out all sorts of ideas without losing any games! By doing so you can appreciate the vast scope of chess and deepen your understanding of the game, BUT! You need to carry out the analysis first without computer support and, secondly, you need to draw the right conclusions.

Very often club players analyze their games with a computer program and then draw wrong conclusions from its evaluations. These wrong conclusions can then become a prejudicial source of reference in your decision making, which of course will have a very negative influence on your results.

Chess prejudices can be very difficult to change or eliminate at a later stage, because a player has been brainwashed into believing that he knows how to handle a certain position well, simply because he has analysed it beforehand with the computer.

A tip is not to allow Fritz or Houdini to annotate your games. Rather you should analyze them jointly with stronger players and base your conclusions on your own personal observations and deductions.

So always analyze your own games BUT jointly with a stronger player so that you can draw the right conclusions.

7 DO PHYSICAL TRAINING

It is very important for a chessplayer to be in good physical shape so as to have enough energy to maintain concentration throughout the whole game. If you get tired than you run the risk of making losing mistakes or spoiling favourable positions. Going to the gym is of course an excellent way to keep in shape but personally I do not like it. I prefer to play ball or racket sports like soccer or tennis, where I tend to run for a much longer period of time than in a gym (of course without realizing it... since I really enjoy practising these two sports). Everyone needs to find the form of exercise that works best for them but, most importantly, do not hesitate to get going. Start today!

So do not forget physical training, since you will need to be in good shape to reach your full potential at the chessboard. This is at least as important as the specific chess training itself.

8 JUST DO IT!

So start training right away – today! Do not delay. Just do it.
A BIG OPEN ADVENTURE

By GM Nikola Mitkov

In this column we will examine key elements of tournament success from the perspective of one of the norm-hunters, IM Andrew Tang. Every young player that is ready to “conquer the world” should be aware of specific open tournament characteristics.

17 years old Andrew Tang was the only American representative at the 25th Kavala International Chess Tournament in Greece. The event was extremely strong with 15 grandmasters participating and ended in a seven-way tie for first. Andrew had to endure a real walk of fire to achieve his aim; seven out of nine of his opponents were grandmasters.

I started coaching him as a talented seven-year-old player. After one year he moved from Illinois to Minnesota, but with the advancement of the online coaching resources, we started working again a couple years ago. We set a goal for him to become a grandmaster.

With the talent he has, the hard work he puts in and the endurance he has shown over the past couple of years I see him becoming a GM in the course of one year.

Andrew has been making steady progress since gaining the IM title in the 2014 North American Junior Championship. He chose to play the tournament in Greece both because the dates worked well, and it is a perfect destination for a family vacation. The Kavala tournament followed after the Dayton Masters in Ohio, where Andrew was very close to getting a GM norm. That he was in the best playing mode along with a relaxed vacation mode helped him play at his best.

Grandmaster Nikola Mitkov is the first Macedonian GM (1993), who led his national chess team to numerous Chess Olympiads and European Championships. He resides and works in the US since 2005. GM Mitkov is the VP of GM Chess Academy, a company that provides chess programs to schools and communities in the Chicago metro area. He is a personal chess coach to many successful chess playing youngsters in the US.
KAVALA, Greece
July 30 - August 6, 2016
The 25th International Tournament

1-7, Zaven ANDRIASIAN, Andreas KELIKES, Constantin LUPULESCU, Karen H. GRIGORYAN, Momchil NIKOLOV, Marco CODENOTTI, Yakov GELLER 6½, B-13, Evgeny POSTNY, Antonios PAVLIDIS, Alexandr PREDKE, Andrew TANG, Bogdan-Daniel DEAC, Ivaio ENCHEV 6, etc. (95 players, 9 rounds)

AMBITION

A key element for ambitious players in open tournaments is just that – ambition. It was decided before the tournament that a draw can only be agreed upon in case of securing first place or the norm. In any other case it is necessary to play to the end.

Imagine yourself sitting across the board from a 2600-plus GM, you stand very comfortably, perhaps even slightly better with Black. However, with plenty of pieces still on the board and with a lot of play left he offers you a draw, how do you react? Most people would leap at such an offer with both hands; however, this isn’t the right approach. By cutting the game short so suddenly you limit your chances not only to succeed but to learn.

With such a brave attitude, even if you go on to lose the hypothetical game in question you can be assured of several future wins because of this uncompromising attitude. Plus, think about it from your opponent’s perspective: when they realize that they can’t bail out of a tough situation with a draw offer, you demonstrate that you like to beat them and psychologically this is very difficult to deal with.

In Andrew’s 7th-round game with Andriasian, his declining of the GM’s draw offer had a great effect. Andrew gradually became better and better and even missed a win. After a nervy battle (with White missing a win later on!) the game ended up as a draw after all. But a lot more was gained than if the game had ended much earlier.

C90

Zaven Andriasian 2621
Andrew Tang 2421
Kavala Open 2016

1.e4 e5 2.Đf3 ćc6 3.Đb5 a6 4.Đa4 ćf6 5.0-0 će7 6.d3 b5 7.Đb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.Đe1 ća5 10.Đc2 c5 11.Đbd2 će8 12.Đf1 g6 13.d4 ćc7 14.Đg5 ćc4 15.b3 ćb6 16.Đe3 će6 17.h3 ćh5 18.Đh6 ćad8 19.a4 ćf8 20.Đxf8 ćxf8 21.ćg5 ćf4 22.a5 će8 23.h4 će7 24.g3 ćh5 25.b4 ćc8 26.bxc5 dxc5 27.d5

White offered a draw. However, it is very important for the ambitious player to try to play all positions to the end, regardless of color or rating of the opponent.

27...f6 28.Đf3 c4 29.će2 ćd7 30.ćh2 ćc8

A textbook example of a knight blockading a passed pawn, especially effective in this position when one takes into account how limited in scope the bishop on c2 is. The engine evaluates this position as around even but Black has slightly easier play.

31.ćg2 ćc5 32.g4 ćg7 33.ćh1 ćd6 34.ćg1 ćb8 35.f4 exf4 36.ćxf4
Now that the e-file is open, Black relocates the rook, exerting unpleasant pressure down the e-file. The other rook is kept on f8 to prophylactically defend f6.

37.\texttt{h}5 g5 37...f5!?.

38.\texttt{h}6 gxf4 39.\texttt{hxg}7 \texttt{f}7

\texttt{\texttt{d}xe}4 "Here I spent the rest of the move looking for a win but couldn't find one and instead blundered" – Andrew.

43.\texttt{\texttt{d}f}3 \texttt{\texttt{d}xg}7 43...\texttt{f}xg5 44.\texttt{\texttt{e}d}x7 \texttt{\texttt{e}x}x7 45.\texttt{c}x4 \texttt{\texttt{e}x}g7?! (Andrew only considered this natural recapture. 45...\texttt{\texttt{e}x}e4 46.\texttt{\texttt{d}x}g5 \texttt{\texttt{f}x}f7 47.\texttt{\texttt{f}x}f7+ \texttt{\texttt{f}x}f7 48.\texttt{\texttt{e}x}x7+ \texttt{\texttt{e}e}e6=).

44.\texttt{\texttt{d}xe}4 \texttt{\texttt{d}xe}4 45.\texttt{g}x\texttt{f}6 \texttt{\texttt{c}x}g1+ 46.\texttt{\texttt{c}x}g1+ \texttt{\texttt{e}h}8

47.\texttt{g}2?! This computer-like move is the only way to win: breaking the pin in an unusual way, White threatens \texttt{\texttt{f}x}f7 without allowing the f3-knight to fall with check.

46...\texttt{\texttt{f}x}f5 47.\texttt{f}7+ \texttt{\texttt{f}x}f5 48.\texttt{\texttt{f}x}f5+ \texttt{\texttt{f}x}f5 49.\texttt{\texttt{d}x}d7+ \texttt{e}6 50.\texttt{\texttt{a}a}7 \texttt{\texttt{d}d}5 51.\texttt{\texttt{d}d}d7+ \texttt{e}5 52.\texttt{\texttt{f}f}h7 \texttt{\texttt{e}e}3 53.\texttt{\texttt{d}x}d2 \texttt{\texttt{c}c}6 54.\texttt{\texttt{e}h}6+ \texttt{\texttt{d}d}5 55.\texttt{\texttt{a}a}6 \texttt{\texttt{c}c}3 56.\texttt{\texttt{e}b}6 \texttt{\texttt{a}a}3 57.\texttt{\texttt{b}b}5+ \texttt{\texttt{c}c}6 58.\texttt{\texttt{b}b}8

58...\texttt{\texttt{d}x}a5 After 58...\texttt{\texttt{c}c}4 the position will be clarified into an easier draw.

59.\texttt{\texttt{c}c}4 \texttt{\texttt{a}a}2 60.\texttt{\texttt{g}g}8 \texttt{f}3 61.\texttt{\texttt{d}d}2 \texttt{\texttt{a}a}5 62.\texttt{\texttt{f}f}2 \texttt{\texttt{a}a}5 63.\texttt{\texttt{c}c}8+ \texttt{\texttt{d}d}7 64.\texttt{\texttt{c}c}2 \texttt{\texttt{e}e}6 65.\texttt{\texttt{a}a}2 \texttt{\texttt{f}f}5 66.\texttt{\texttt{e}e}1 \texttt{\texttt{a}a}4 67.\texttt{\texttt{a}a}8 \texttt{\texttt{e}e}6 68.\texttt{\texttt{a}a}5 \texttt{\texttt{a}a}5 69.\texttt{\texttt{a}a}4 \texttt{\texttt{b}b}5 with a draw on move 120!

### Preparation for the Course of the Game

One advantage of playing open tournaments in virtually anywhere but the US is the leisurely one round per day schedule. This obviously gives plenty of time to relax and tour the area as opposed to spending 30 minutes or less scrambling for food in between rounds that many participants in American tournaments are all too familiar with.

Another advantage of playing a single round per day is the chance to engage in thoughtful and deep preparation. An example of this can be seen in the fourth round when Andrew had White vs. Korniotis. Coming off two draws as Black vs. 2600+ GMs Postny and Lupulescu it was important to step into a higher gear with a win as this was going to be comparatively speaking one of the easier pairings.

When less experienced players prepare they often do so in a superficial manner by only checking the openings of their prospective opponent. However, looking deeper into the character or style of the opponent's play will bring great rewards. In the preparation for this game we noticed that while the opponent Andrew was facing was a solid opponent with a decent grasp on theory, he seemed to handle endgames in an unsure or indifferent manner. Therefore, the decision was made to deviate from Andrew's normal repertoire to try to head directly to an endgame.

Never mind the fact that the ending in question offers less than nothing for White, in the end our hero got the desired result. Coincidence? Yet another piece of luck? Maybe, but you're welcome to draw your own conclusions below.

### E32

Andrew Tang 2421
Filippos Korniotis 2180
Kavala Open 2016

1.d4 \texttt{\texttt{d}d}6 2.c4 \texttt{c}6 3.\texttt{c}c3 \texttt{b}4 4.\texttt{b}b4 \texttt{c}e7 0-0 5.\texttt{\texttt{a}a}5 \texttt{d}xc5 6.dxc5 \texttt{a}6 7.a3 \texttt{\texttt{c}c}3+ 8.\texttt{\texttt{a}a}x\texttt{c}3 \texttt{\texttt{d}d}5 9.\texttt{\texttt{c}c}6 \texttt{\texttt{f}f}6 10.\texttt{\texttt{c}c}6 11.\texttt{b}b4 \texttt{\texttt{a}a}4 12.e3 \texttt{\texttt{e}e}8 13.\texttt{\texttt{f}f}3 \texttt{b}6 14.\texttt{\texttt{c}c}1 \texttt{\texttt{a}a}6

15.\texttt{d}2? The plan to play an endgame
as early as possible for this specific game almost backfired when Andrew made a superficial decision connected with a bad idea (\(\mathcal{D}e4\)). Black confidently took over the initiative and gained a protected passed pawn in the next few moves. 15.\(\mathcal{D}c2\) 16.\(\mathcal{D}c4\) looks a bit unnatural because of 16...\(d5\), but White is just fine after 17.\(\mathcal{D}xd5\) 18.\(\mathcal{D}d4\)\(\mathcal{D}\).

15...\(\mathcal{D}ac8\) 16.\(\mathcal{D}e4\) d5! 16...\(\mathcal{D}g7\) 17.\(\mathcal{D}d6\) 18.\(\mathcal{D}d1\).

17.\(\mathcal{D}xf6\) \(\mathcal{D}g7\) 18.\(\mathcal{D}h5\) \(\mathcal{D}h6\) 19.\(\mathcal{D}f4\) dxc4 20.\(\mathcal{D}c2\) b5 Black has conducted the game very powerfully up to now. The last few moves saw a brief struggle for the initiative where Black’s talent for active play showed. However once the game stabilized and he had emerged with a huge endgame advantage, he was unable to switch gears and use slow, restrictive play to consolidate his advantage. 20...\(e5!\), giving White the unappetizing choice between 21.\(\mathcal{D}h3\) \(\mathcal{D}h7!\) (this nice move highlights White’s underdeveloped kingside; it is also connected with pushing the powerful queenside passer forward after 22.\(\mathcal{D}f3\) \(\mathcal{D}d5\)). This is a much better location for the bishop than \(a6\) as now Black menaces \(c3\) followed by \(\mathcal{D}b3\) or allowing 21...\(\mathcal{D}d3\) in the event of 21.\(\mathcal{D}e2\).

21.\(\mathcal{D}f3\) \(\mathcal{D}c7\) 22.\(\mathcal{D}e2\) \(\mathcal{D}cd7\) 23.\(e4\) \(\mathcal{D}g5\) 24.\(\mathcal{D}g3\) \(\mathcal{D}b7\) 25.\(\mathcal{D}f2\)

The last few moves have seen Black play moves not connected with any specifically dangerous plan. While he still holds the advantage, it is considerably less than before. White has managed to consolidate by creating some semblance of communication between his pieces while also restricting the bishop on \(b7\), which had a lot more potential as illustrated earlier. By now the momentum has clearly gone in White’s favor; very often in such situations the side holding the advantage continues to drift, unable to psychologically cope with the change of course.

25...\(\mathcal{D}d2\) 26.\(\mathcal{D}xd2\) 27.\(\mathcal{D}d1\)

27...\(\mathcal{D}a2??\)

Still continuing to play actively, Black makes a huge error. Preferring a “more complex” position with the rooks on the board than a “simple” position without the rooks (27...\(\mathcal{D}xd1\) 28.\(\mathcal{D}xd1\) \(\mathcal{D}b6\)=) lands him in trouble as after the next move Black finds his king in a mating net.

28.\(\mathcal{D}d7\) The first active move that White makes spells disaster for Black.

28...\(\mathcal{D}c8\) 29.\(\mathcal{D}xf7\) \(\mathcal{D}c3\) 30.\(h4+\) \(\mathcal{D}h6\) 31.\(g4\)

Black resigned

---

**LUCK**

It is no secret that in any kind of chess tournament, open or otherwise, a little luck never hurt anyone. This is especially true in open tournaments, whether it be luck with pairings/colors or snatching an extra half point or point from a situation where a positive result seemed unlikely. Nine-round opens can be grueling events. Very often, being the recipient of some sort of luck can give one a surge of energy to keep going when things seem tough and the finish line is so far away.

This was certainly the case with the present game; played in the 3rd round, Andrew finds himself facing off vs. top seed Lupulescu. A trendy line of the London System ensues and after Andrew misses a marvelously hidden subtlety, he finds himself in a lost position.

**DO2**

**Constantin Lupulescu** 2628

**Andrew Tang** 2421

Kavala Open 2016

1.\(d4\) \(d5\) 2.\(\mathcal{D}f3\) \(\mathcal{D}f6\) 3.\(\mathcal{D}f4\) \(e6\) 4.\(e3\) \(c5\) 5.\(\mathcal{D}bd2\) \(\mathcal{D}c6\) 6.\(c3\) \(\mathcal{D}d6\) 7.\(\mathcal{D}g3\) 0–0 8.\(\mathcal{D}b5\) \(h6\) 9.\(\mathcal{A}a4\)

A very deep move with a poisonous, camouflage idea of creating an attack on the kingside. This is surprising considering Black only has a slight weakness on \(h6\) and White seems to be concentrating on the queenside with his last two moves.

9...\(\mathcal{D}xg3\) 10.\(\mathcal{D}xg3\) \(\mathcal{D}b6??\) As Black normally keeps the pawn structure fluid in this line, Black’s last move falls in place with that plan. However, since White’s lovely idea can be demonstrated in
full after the text, it is better to clarify the situation in the center in order to deny the white queen the influence she gets in the game on the kingside. Hindsight shows that 10...cxd4! is a much safer move as White will not be able to start such a sudden attack after 11.exd4 \d d7=.

11.dxc5 \xc5

12.g4!! One exclamation point for originality, one for strength. White uses the “hook” on h6 to start an unexpected attack. Black must play with extreme care now.

12...\xd8 Stronger is 12...e5! 13.g5 (after 13.\xc6 \xc6 14.\xc6 bxc6 15.\xe5 c5 Black should regain the pawn with approximate equality: 16.f3 \e8) 13...hxg5 14.\xg5 e4. The difference between the game and this variation is that Black is able to exclude the white queen from directly participating in the kingside attack.

13.g5 hxg5 14.\b3 \b6 15.\xg5 \e5 16.\xe2 \d7

17.\h4 \g6 18.\h2 \b5 19.\h5 \xh5 20.\xh5 e5 21.0-0 a5 22.\d2 e4?! Stopping \d3, but allowing White access to d4 with the knight while also giving White a chance to open the game in the future with f3. 22...d4? 23.exd4 exd4?? 24.\d1 Black’s search for counterplay has only led to him getting mated; 22...a4 23.a3 \ac8 24.\xd3 with ideas like \xf7 or \h4, so Black’s next is forced: 24...\e2 25.\d2 \f3 26.\xf3 \f6. This is still an unpleasant position, but maybe contains better practical chances to hold.

23.\b3 a4 24.\d4 \d7 25.a3 \ac8 26.f4 \xf3 27.\xf3 27.\d6f1.

27...\e5 28.\f4 \f6

29.\h4? White is still much better after this move, but misses a valuable opportunity to win immediately. Such a lapse could be avoided through prophylactic thinking, a valuable reminder to maintain full concentration until the end of the game. After 29.\h2! the defense in the game is impossible due to the hanging knight on e5.

29...\h6 30.\g3 \d6 31.\h2 \f8 32.\g3 \c4 33.\h8+ \e7 34.\h4+ \f6 35.\g5 \h8 36.\f4 \xf4 37.\xf4 \g4 38.\d1+ \f6 39.\h7+ \g6 40.\h4 \xh7 41.\xg4+ \f6 42.\g5 \d8 43.\f5+ \g6 44.\g5+ \f6 45.\f3 \g6 46.\e5 Draw
PRESSURE

Putting pressure on your higher-rated opponents is a key element to succeeding in the chase for the norm. In order to achieve your desired title, it is important to beat players rated a couple of hundred points higher than you, that may also have the title you are aiming for. By constantly posing problems for your opponent and never giving them easy decisions, creating positions with plenty of possibilities of tension, you maximize your chances for success.

Navigating these complications is never easy for either side, but if you aren’t afraid of such positions, you put yourself in a good position to create high quality games in any tournament.

E81

Andrew Tang 2421
Christos Banikas 2600
Kavala Open 2016

White is much better, but with ...\b4 coming next, Black has annoying counterplay.

24.\xb5 An unpleasant move to play, but it is not possible to withstand the pressure anymore. Protecting d6 with ...\e8 loosens control of f5 and allows White to play f4-f5 himself, thus giving him a second front on the kingside.

25.\xb5 The reward for not immediately cashing in his chips shows as Black has to make some sort of unappetizing concession with no counterplay.

25...\b4 26.\xa7 \f7 27.\c3 \h6 28.\g4 h\xg3 29.\xg3 \xc3 30.\xc3 \f6 31.\xg6 \xe6 32.\xb4 \xb4 33.\b6 \f5 34.\b1 \g7 35.\e3+ \e4 36.\f2 \d5

21.\f6 22.\xb5! \a6 22...\xb5 opening the a-file is unpleasant for Black: 23.\xb5 \a8±.

23.\d3! Trying to trade the light-square bishop to weaken the e6-square.

23...\d7

24.\e4! Keeping a firm grip on the position; Black’s weaknesses on a7 and d6 aren’t running away. That was the other option: 24.\c6 \xb5 25.\xb5 \d5 26.\e3\h6 after 24.\b6 \d4+

25.\a5! An accurate move to continue the pursuit of the king.

25...\xe3 26.\xe3 \d5 27.\e4 \f6 28.\d3 \c2 29.\e6 \d5 30.\a4 \g6 31.\g6 \c2 32.\d5 \a6 33.\c7 \d4 34.\g6 \e5 35.\e5 \f5 36.\c3 \d4 37.\e6 \d5 38.\e5 \f6 39.\e6 \f4 40.\f5 \d4 41.\f5 \c3 42.\f5 \d4 43.\f5 \c3 44.\f5 \d4 45.\f5 \e6 46.\f5 \e6 47.\e6 \f5 48.\f5 \b4 49.\e4 \d3 50.\f6 \d5 51.\e4 \b2 52.\f1 \e8+ 53.\f1 \e2 54.\g6 \d5 55.\d1+ \c6 56.\g7

Black resigned

THE LAST ROUND

The last round is often filled with tension and nervousness as prizes and norms are frequently decided then. For many players it’s difficult to decide on the best way to play when only a draw is necessary. However, the following game illustrates a healthy approach and mentality for such a scenario.

C92

Dmitry Frolyanov 2563
Andrew Tang 2421
Kavala Open 2016

18.\b5 axb5 19.\d4 \xa3 Here we have a very sharp, theoretical position, well known from the Zaitsev Variation of the Ruy Lopez. While preparing for this game it was easy to see that Frolyanov plays in a very aggressive and forcing way, especially with White. As Andrew needed only a draw for this game in order to achieve the norm, it was decided to go in turn for a very aggressive and forcing line!

For some people this might sound like a very strange decision, especially in such an important game where safety is a concern. However, experienced players know the danger of adopting a “safe” mindset when trying to steer the games into calmer waters; such a mentality often leads to concessions and allows the opponent to play with less risk on their part. Therefore, by playing aggressively you will be prepared to make the most of your chances.
19...b6 20.f5.
20.bxa3 d3 21.exd3 exd3 22.e3
c5 23.b2 a5 24.g3

24.g6! A very calm move, killing
White’s attack. The diagonal is open but
White’s pieces are unable to cooperate
effectively on the kingside.

25.h2 g7 26.b3 b3
27.xb3 a4 The game is heading
towards a forced draw.
28.xg7 xg7 29.a1+ g8
30.d2 c2 31.f6 xd2

32.g6+ fxg6 33.xg6 f8 34.f6+
Draw

To sum up, any and all of the above
points covered will do the prospective
norm hunter or even a regular
tournament player good. However, the
most important thing to keep in mind
is the vigor and energy needed to take
chances when they come to you. Modern
chess is a very stressful game and players
seeking higher titles are no strangers to
encountering stressful situations. In the
end, all you can hope to do is to try your
best and use every last drop of energy to
keep going.
The worst thing that can happen is you
bust out a few times or lose some key
games, but the key concept to keep in
mind is a long-term picture of learning.
As some of our games show, sometimes
our path to improvement is a bit hazy, but
the best thing we can do is to confidently
proceed forward anyway.

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Fabulous Finishes in AMERICAN CHESS

By Pete Tamburro

The nine positions below are by American players from the 1800s to 1900s. Some may be familiar. Others won’t be. If you have a personal game or suggestion for a great American finish, send them to ptamburro@aol.com and we’ll put them up!

Solutions on page 151
In my previous article, I concentrated on the Millionaire Open. But for this issue I’m adopting a different approach, focusing on action from across the country with tournaments ranging from New Jersey to Las Vegas and even action online between American PRO Chess League teams.

For the first game I’m covering my last round encounter from a local New Jersey tournament which fielded several grandmasters. By winning this game I won first prize.

The second game between Robert Hess and Joshua Ruiz focuses on action taking place in one of the hottest new chess events, the PRO Chess League. The league features top players from around the world, including Carlsen, Caruana, Nakamura, and many others. Hess plays for the Montclair New Jersey Sopranos and the game highlights some of Hess’s creative abilities.

The third and fourth games go from east to west and cover the west coast’s biggest chess event, the North American Open. GM Josh Friedel, GM-elect Ruiyang Li, and GM Taimur Rasulov tied for first, with Josh taking first on tiebreaks. New Year’s Eve in Las Vegas is an attraction that chess players have a hard time turning down, but with many interesting games, there was plenty of excitement at the boards as well.

So let’s start with the game that I played in a tournament hosted by Diana Tulman in Hackensack, New Jersey. My opponent here is a talented young player who has played for the NJ Knockouts in the United States Chess League.

**C95**

**Mackenzie Molner** 2520  
**Aaron Shlonsky** 2278  
Hackensack 2017

1.e4 e5 2.±f3 ±c6 3.±b5 a6 4.±a4  
±f6 5.0-0 ±e7 6.±e1 b5 7.±b3 d6  
8.c3 0-0 9.h3 So far we have played the mainline Spanish and here my opponent opts for the reliable Breyer variation.

9.±b8 10.d4 ±bd7 11.±bd2 ±b7  
12.±c2 ±e8 This position has been reached thousands of times.

13.±a4 ±f8 14.±d3 14...c6 Later the same week, my opponent from the PRO Chess League, Richard Francisco, continued with the interesting 14...d5!? 15.exd5?! (15.±xb5 would be a clear improvement for White!) 15...±xf4! 16.±xd4 ±xd5  
17.±xb5 ±xb5 18.±xa8 ±xe1+ 19.±xe1 ±xa8— and Black had solved all his opening problems.

15.±c2 I have played this line before against a number of other promising young Americans. White’s main plans involve playing b2-b4, ±b2, ±b3, or c3-c4, once the bishop has arrived on b2.

15...±c7 16.±b4 Worth considering is 16.±b3!?  
16...g6 During the game I considered 16...±b6, with the idea of trying to force White to resolve the tension on the queenside. But then comes 17.a5! ±bd7 (17...±a4 18.c4±) 18.±b2 ±d5  
19.±xe5 ±xe5 20.±xe5 ±xe5 21.±f4± with a nice attack.

17.±b2 17...±g7? Now 17...±b6! makes more
sense and may well be Black’s best bet to improve upon the game. Play might then continue 18.axb5 (18.a5 is met by 18...c4, in order to trade off White’s bishop on b2 and thereby take the sting out of any c3-c4 advance. White might then even consider preserving the bishop by 19...cxb5 19.d5.

18.c4! White’s queenside pressure becomes quite energetic after this move.

18...bxc4 19.bxc4 Also there is 19...cxb4?.

19...c4? 20.dxe5 dxe5 Maybe 20...dxe5 was better, keeping the knight for defense.

21...e5 dxe5 Now Black’s queenside structure is crippled and White can choose between many promising plans.

22.b3 a5! is met by 22...d5!.

22..d7

23.a5 23...c3 is an interesting plan, looking to exploit Black’s weakness on f7. Then 23...d8 24.a3 e7 25.a5 c5 26.xb7 xxb7 27.e2+

23.f8 It would be nice to play 23...c5 but there is a tactic that helps prevent this: 24.xc5 xc5 25.bxc5 xxc5 26.xf7+ 27.f7+ b3--

24.c3 b8 25.e2 d6 26.ac1 c8 27.xa6 xb4 28.xb4 xxb4 30.xc5

29.c4! Considering that Black’s bishop on c8 is very bad and his f7 square weak, it’s a slam dunk to keep the light-squared bishop for White.

29...b6 30.c3 c7 31.a1 a8 32.d3 b8 33.c2 b7 34.a6 a8 35.c5 xc5 36.xc5 The computer thinks less highly of this position for White, compared to other lines, but from a practical point of view Black’s position is lost.

36...d8 37.c1 b6 38.xe5

38...xd3? Black resorts to tactics in time pressure, but they are faulty and only make White’s task easier.

39.xd3 b2 40.c3 xc3 41.xc3

Black resigned

The following game between GM Robert Hess and IM Joshua Ruiz took place in the PRO Chess League, which is short for Professional Rapid Online. The format of the Professional Rapid Online League is to play games with 15 minutes per player and a 2 second increment. Teams from all over the world play against each other in a Scheveningen style format, meaning every member of each team will play all of the opposing team members. The rapid element of the league has caused controversy with some players preferring classical time controls, while others loving this new approach. I personally am a big fan of these faster time controls. Each game is intense to the very end which makes the event very exciting to watch.
E32

Robert Hess 2571
Joshua Ruiz 2331

PRO Chess League, Internet 2017

Robert Hess plays for the Montclair, New Jersey Sopranos and Joshua Ruiz for the Rio Grande Ospreys.

1.d4 ²f6 2.c4 e6 3.²c3 ²b4 4.²c2 0-0 5.a3 ²x3+ 6.²xc3 b6

7.²f3 The standard move is 7.²g5, which has been played by Kasparov, Carlsen, Kramnik and many other top players. Then can follow 7...²b7 8.²f3 or 8.²e3 d6 9.²e2 ²bd7 10.²d3.

7...²b7 8.²f4 In the opening Hess likes to avoid theoretical debates and prefers to reach playable middlegame positions with lots of life in them. And so, instead of going for the mainlines with 7.²g5, he opts for the less explored 8.²f4.

8...d6 9.e3 ²bd7 10.²e2 ²e4 11.²c2 f5 11...g5? 12.²g3 f5 13.²xd2 ²xd2 14.²xd2 ²xg2 15.²g1 ²b7 16.²h4=. But 11...²e7 is better than 11...f5 since Black keeps all options open and takes time to prepare a number of different plans – but primarily ...e6-e5. He also further prepares the plan actually carried out in the game.

12.h3 g5!? Very ambitious. In a 15 minute game it is very hard to find White’s key move in this variation, so it is understandable why Black wanted to go for such a continuation. However I would prefer 12...²e7 upon which Black retains a very flexible position. ...²ac8 and ...c5 is an option. ...e6-e5 is another good plan. Depending on how White reacts, Black can also consider the plan that we see in the game.

13.²h2 g4? But this move ruins an otherwise perfectly playable position.

14.hxg4 fxg4 At first sight this position looks promising for Black as White’s knight on f3 can’t move because of the pressure on f2. But Black finds a radical solution.

15.²d3! 15...²g1 also comes into consideration but then Black has a strong response in 15...²h8.²f.

15...²df6 15...²xf3 16.²xe4 fxg2 17.²g1± is hardly an improvement on the game continuation.

For the next encounter, we shift gear and take off to Las Vegas on the west coast. The two players featured in this game have polar opposite styles. Dionisio Aldama is a wild attacking player, similar to myself when I was battling for my GM norms. Black is the strong GM Zviad Izoria who plays extremely solid and positional chess. When playing Aldama complications happen no matter what, it’s just a matter of who can navigate them better. After living on both sides of the US and playing these two guys on both coasts, I can say each of their respective styles creates problems for their opponents. The following game is an up and down battle that is not without its mistakes, but still extremely exciting and original.

B23

Dionisio Aldama 2375
Zviad Izoria 2604

North American Open, Las Vegas 2017

1.e4 c5 2.²c3 ²c6 3.f4 g6 4.²f3 ²g7 5.²c4

The Grand Prix attack is not a frequent guest in high level games. White ties his hopes to the kingside attack which

A truly picturesque position! As a chess

coach who teaches players of all levels, I find myself constantly harping on about the importance of fundamentals, such as building a powerful pawn center. Robert has taken this to the next level here!

22...²e8 23.²h4 ²g6 24.²h2 exd4 25.²xf6+ ²xf6 26.e5 Faced with the threat of material loss or mate, Black is hopelessly lost and so decided it was time to throw in the towel.

Black resigned
experienced Sicilian players can usually repel.

5...e6! Black plans ...Qe7 and ...d5 to immediately challenge White’s bishop. 6.d3 Qe7 7.0-0 d5 8.Qb3 0-0 9.Qe1 Qa5 10.e5 a6 11.a4?! Strictly speaking, this move is probably not the best but it provokes complications that suit Aldama’s style. Handling the position in a more conservative fashion would leave White with a passive position and allow the opponent an uncontested opening advantage, which of course Aldama does not want. 11.Qd2 is objectively best, relying on a tactical solution to Black’s threat of 11...c4, i.e. 12.dxc4 dxc4 13.Qe4! (attacking the Qa5) 13...Qec6 14.Qd1 cxb3 15.axb3±

intending ... Qb7, leaves Black slightly better.

18...Qg7 19.Qae1 Qc6 20.Qe2 Heading towards f4.

20...Qe6?! With 20...Qd6! 21.Qf4 Qd7 22.Qg5 Qf7 23.h4 (intending h4-h5) 23...Qh6! Black could take the sting out of White’s attack, set about coordinating his forces and then capitalize on his advantage.

21.Qf4 Now White’s attack gathers momentum.

21...Qg8 22.Qg3! Qh8! 23.h4? A typical attacking idea, using the g6 pawn as a hook to open the h-file, but there was a stronger alternative: 23.Qf2 was a nice idea, preparing Qe2 with e-file domination and good compensation for the two pawns.

23...Qd6 24.Qe5?! d4 24...Qxe5 25.Qxe5 Qxe5?! should of course be avoided at all costs due to the discovered attack on the queen by 26.Qxg6++–.

25.Qxe6 bxc6

Incredibly, White is better here despite being a piece down. His domination of the dark squares will prove more than enough compensation for the material deficit. Sample variations are

A) 15...Qb5 16.Qe3! Qd7 17.Qf6+ Qxf6 18.Qxf6± or

B) 15...Qh6 16.Qe3 Qc7 17.Qf6+ Qh8 18.Qe5 Qxd8 19.Qe6!! Qxh1 20.Qxh1 b5 21.Qg5!! with a fearsome attack. Black cannot open the h-file with ...Qxg5 or complete his development.

11...Qxb3 12.axb3 Qc6 13.a5?! An original idea that clamps down Black’s queenside and tempts him to take the rook pawn.

13...Qxa5? Izoria accepts the challenge. Positionally speaking, White is not doing well and will be happy to invest some material for entering kingside play.

14.f5! Without this move White would be completely busted.

14...exf5 15.Qg5 f6 16.Qxf6 Qxf6 17.Qxf6 Qxf6 Not 17...Qxf6?? 18.Qxa5.

18.Qf4 The imaginative sacrifice 18.Qxa5? Qxa5 19.Qxd5 Qxe1 20.Qxf6+ Qf7 21.Qxe1 Qxf6 22.Qe8 b5, 26...Qe5! A beautiful move, leaving the rook en prise in order to double on the e-file as well as apply pressure on the c5-pawn, and interfere with Black’s pressure on f4.

26...Qxb3?! Black is pushing his luck but more importantly just than grabbing another pawn, Black now has potential counterplay that can stem from the pawn break ...c5-c4, breaking the blockade White has on the position.

27.Qf1 Qf7 If 27...Qf8 28.Qg5= intending h4-h5. Though White is three pawns down he has an irresistible initiative due to his superior coordination and attacking chances. The computer gives this incredibly unclear position an evaluation of 0.00 but I think any human player would prefer to be White here.

28.Qg5!

Black’s position is becoming critical. Throughout the game, Black has had many opportunities to maintain his advantage or preserve equality, but here he needs to play very precisely.

28...Qf8 The strange looking move 28...Qa7?! helps to keep Black’s position in a more cohesive state. White’s contemplated Qe7 is prevented and although he still has an intimidating attack, there is no immediate way to crash through. For example 29.Qe6 Qxe6 30.Qxe6 Qxe6 31.Qe6+ Qg8 32.Qxe6 Qf8 33.Qe5 Qd8 (the only move) 34.Qe7 and the game is likely to end in a perpetual after Qf6+ and Qg5+.

29.Qe7 c4 30.Qd7 Black’s lack of coordination leads to a quick demise and this after only one serious misstep. Following 30...Qxd7, White will penetrate to the seventh and play Qe6 with deadly effect.

Black resigned

The North American Open is one of the strongest tournaments of the year on the west coast. Typically, it attracts some of the best competition from around the country. The next game features American GM and eventual tournament winner Josh Friedel playing against Vietnamese Grandmaster Anh Nguyen. This was the penultimate game which helped propel Josh to a tie for first.

E32

Anh Nguyen 2482
Josh Friedel 2510

North American Open, Las Vegas 2017

1.d4 Qf6 2.c4 e6 3.Qc3 Qb4 4.Qc2 0-0 5.a3 Qxc3+ 6.Qxc3 d6 7.Qf3 Even now, 7.Qg5 is still the most popular
move. Then 7...\(\text{b}d7\) 8.e3 can transpose back to mainlines beginning with 6...b6. 7...\(b6\) Here we have a practically identical opening to that which was seen in the game between Hess and Ruiz, but it will have a very different outcome.

8.e3 A quiet setup. Usually White will aim to play \(\text{d}e2\), 0-0, b2-b4 or b2-b3, with \(b2\) to follow. White is hoping to exploit the long-term advantage of his bishop pair and slight edge in space. Black, on the other hand, will remain solid and with plenty of room to manoeuvre his pieces.

8...\(\text{b}7\) 9.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{d}d7\) 10.0-0 \(\text{e}4\) As mentioned in the Hess game, here Black has very flexible play with a choice of multiple pawn breaks.

11.\(\text{d}3\)

11...f5 In comparison to the Hess - Ruiz game, the f5 plan, introducing kingside play, seems much more appropriate here as White has already committed himself to castling on that side of the board. Black may choose to unleash a pawn storm with \(g7-g5\) or else adopt aggressive piece play, e.g. by \(f6-h6\).

12.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{h}4\) 13.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{g}5\) 13...\(\text{xd}2?\) 14.\(\text{xd}2\) would allow White to untangle himself too easily by trading off a potentially useful attacker. Then after 14...e5 15.d5 White’s space advantage would guarantee him the more pleasant position.

14.f4! Not the move White wants to play positionally, but nevertheless one which shows he is alert to the potential dangers awaiting him. On the other hand, if White continues in nonchalant, careless fashion by 14.b3? Black would be all ready to launch a powerful attack by 14...\(\text{f}6\) intending \(\text{h}6\). Then the knight on \(g5\) would clearly show its effectiveness. White cannot defend against \(\text{h}h6\) by playing \(h2-h3\) as then Black will simply

play ...\(\text{x}h3+\) with an irresistible attack. There follows 15.g3 (the only move) 15...\(\text{h}5\) 16.h4

And now 16...f4!! with the key variation going 17.exf4 (17.hxg5? \(\text{x}g3++\) 17...\(\text{h}3+\) 18.\(\text{h}2\) \(\text{xf}4\) 19.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{xe}2\) 20.\(\text{xe}2\) \(\text{a}8\) with a crushing attack.

14.\(\text{e}4\) 15.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{e}7\) Worth considering is 15...\(\text{h}6!\).

16.\(\text{d}2\) The bishop is better placed on \(b2\) and in fact this could have been prepared by playing 16.b4!.

16...\(h6\) 17.\(a4\)! \(a5\)! Showing the defects of White’s previous move. Now, to break through on the queenside, White would have to ruin his queenside structure by playing b2-b4.

18.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{g}5\)! A great decision. Black is well prepared for this break.

19.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{xd}2\) 20.\(\text{xd}2\) \(\text{h}7?!\) Correct is 20...\(\text{f}6\)!

21.d5? Instead 21.\(\text{d}3!\) would have been a big help to White. Then comes 21...\(\text{f}6\) as Black would love to plant his knight on \(e4\), although after White’s next move, this will not be so easy: 22.d5! \(\text{e}4\) (22...\(\text{g}8\) 23.\(\text{x}g5\) hxg5=- and Black’s weakness on \(f5\) makes any opening of the long diagonal for his bishop very difficult.) 23.\(\text{xe}4\) \(\text{fxe}4\) 24.\(\text{g}3\). Now that the \(a8-h1\) diagonal is closed, White is no longer in danger.

21...\(\text{c}5\) 22.\(\text{a}3\) \(\text{g}4\) 23.\(\text{w}c2\) \(\text{h}5\) 23...

exd5 is also good, e.g. 24.\(\text{d}xg4\) \(\text{e}4\) 25.\(\text{xe}4\) \(\text{dxe}4\).

24.\(\text{dxe}6\) \(\text{xe}6\) 25.\(\text{b}4\) \(\text{axb}4\) 26.\(\text{xb}4\) \(\text{h}4\) 27.\(\text{c}x\text{c}5\) \(\text{bxc}5\) 28.\(\text{e}b1\) \(\text{c}6\) 29.a5 \(\text{h}3\) 30.g3

30...\(\text{xa}5!\) A crushing blow. If White does not accept, Black is winning both on material and position.

31.\(\text{xa}5\) \(\text{xe}3\) 32.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{g}2\) 33.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{e}4!\) The only move that maintains a winning edge.

34.\(\text{c}1?!\) White makes a mistake in a tough position. A better defense would have been 34.\(\text{b}2!\) \(\text{g}1+\) 35.\(\text{xd}2\) \(\text{xb}1++\) 36.\(\text{e}7\) \(\text{f}7\) 37.\(\text{e}8\) \(\text{d}4\) 38.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{xd}4\). This endgame is clearly winning for Black but it is nevertheless White’s best chance.

34...\(\text{g}1+\) 35.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{d}4\) 36.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{xb}1\) 37.\(\text{xb}1\) \(\text{g}1+\) 38.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{e}8\) 39.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{xa}2+\) 40.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{x}g\) 41.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{g}6\) 42.\(\text{a}1\) \(\text{xf}4\) 43.\(\text{b}5\) \(\text{e}3\) 44.\(\text{d}1\) \(\text{h}2\) 45.\(\text{b}8\) The game ended here but Black has many ways to win. 45...\(\text{f}3\) is the easiest, with the idea of running the black king to \(g3\) in the event of White’s queen checks. Eventually White will be unable to deliver any more checks, whereupon he will have to concede defeat.

White resigned
ACM would like to invite tournament organisers and players to submit announcements, results and games to be featured in Tournament Review section. Send your submissions to office@acmchess.com or visit www.acmchess.com/submit. Information published here is free of any charge. For advertising space, visit www.acmchess.com/advertise

If not otherwise stated, games in this sections are lightly annotated by IM Goran Arsovic.

Only the results of the top rating tournament groups are presented here. Whenever submitted, full information will be published.

**STAMFORD, CT**
November 4-6, 2016
Stamford Open (5 rounds)

**ONTARIO, CA**
November 4-6, 2016
11th Los Angeles Open (5 rounds)

**DULLES, VA**
November 5-6, 2016
21st Northern Virginia Open (5 rounds)
1-4. Praveen BALAKRISHNAN, Tegshuren ENKHBAT, Sahl SINHA, Alex JIAN 4½, 5-11. Christopher SHEN, Vishal KOBLA, James

**RICHARDSON, Richard TAN, Brandon QU, Mark HYLAND, Ian BARRUEL 4, etc.**

**CAMBRIDGE, MA**
November 10-13, 2016
Boynton Fall Festival (7 rounds)

**SAINT LOUIS, MO**
November 10-14, 2016
The Champions Showdown

**Rapid**
1. Viswanathan ANAND 4½
2. Hikaru NAKAMURA 3½
3. Fabiano CARUANA 2½
4. Veselin TOPALOV 1½

**DULLES, VA**
November 5-6, 2016
21st Northern Virginia Open (5 rounds)
1-4. Praveen BALAKRISHNAN, Tegshuren ENKHBAT, Sahl SINHA, Alex JIAN 4½, 5-11. Christopher SHEN, Vishal KOBLA, James

**ONLINE TOURNAMENT REVIEW**
November 10-14, 2016 cat. XXII (2785)
The Champions Showdown: Classical

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21...hx2+! 22. fxh2  #c7+ 23. gh1 #xg5+ 22. #e5 23. #d4 #xd4 24. #xe8+ #xe8 25. #xd4 #d7 26. #e1 #c8 27. #xf4 b6 28. #a2 #c7 29. #e5 #f8 30. #g3 #d7 31. #xf4 #e4 32. #b1 #g5 33. #e3 #c3 34. #d3 #a3 35. #e2 #xc4 36. #xe4 #xe4 37. #xe4 #xd4 38. #e8+ #g7 39. #e8 #a2 40. #f3 #b2 41. #e7 #f6 42. #e3 #xb5 43. #c7 #e5

Blitz

Final Standings

CINCINNATI, OH
November 11-13, 2016 25th Kings Island Open (5 rounds)
1-2. Alexander SHABALOV, Julio Catalino SADORRA 4½, 3-4. Aleksandr SHIMANOV, Alex FISHEIN 4, 5-16. Rui Feng LI, Priyadharsh Pan KANNAPPAN, Manuel LEON HOYOS, Mika BRATTAIN, Nikola MITKOV, Walker Kyle GRIGGS, Todd ANDREWS, Maggie FENG, Arvind JAYARAMAN, Yuri BARNAKOV, James MILLS, Maximillian ZINSKI 3½, etc.

BURLINGAME, CA
November 11-13, 2016 The 2016 US CLASS CHAMPIONSHIPS (5 rounds)

CORAL SPRINGS, FL
November 11-13, 2016 The 15th Turkey Bowl (5 rounds)

SAINT LOUIS, MO
November 17-22, 2016 The Saint Louis Autumn Invitational

St. Louis Autumn IM cat. IX (2452)

Akshat Chandra 2509
Ben Finegold 2493
St. Louis Autumn GM

1.d4 #f6 2.c4 c5 3.#f3 #xd4 4.#xd4 #c6 5.#c3 g6 6.e4 d6 7.f3 #g7 8.#e3 0-0 9.#e2 #xd4 10.#xd4 #d7 11.#xg7 #xg7 12.#d2 a5 13.0-0 #c5 14.b3 #e6 15.#h1 f6 16.#ab1 #e8 17.#d5 #xd5 18.#exd5 e5 19.#xe6 #e8 20.f4 #xe6 21.#f3 #b6 21...#c7 22.#bd1 #e8 23.#d4+ 22.#g4 f5 23.#d4+ #h6 24.#f3 #ce8 25.#d5 #e3

26.g4! fxg4 27.f5 #d7 28.#xg4 #f6 29.#h4+ #h5 30.f6 #f8 31.#f5 #e1+ 32.#xe1 #g5 33.#f3 1-0

St. Louis Autumn IM cat. III (2318)

Konstantin Kavuftshy 2344
Seth HOMA 2329
St. Louis Autumn IM

1.d4 d5 2.c4 #xc4 3.e4 #c6 4.#f3 #g4 5.#e3 #f6 6.#c3 #e6 7.#xc4 #b4 8.#b3 #xf3 9.gxf3 0-0 10.f3 #a5 11.#g1 #h5 12.#xg5 g6 13.0-0-0 #b6 14.e5 #d7

15.#xh5! gxh5 16.#g5 #d7 17.#f6 #fd8 18.#e3 #e8 18...#f8 19.#h6+ #e8 20.#xh7 #g6 21.#g8+ #f8 22.d5+-
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TOURNAMENT REVIEW

DALLAS, TX
November 18-23, 2016
The UT Dallas Fall FIDE Open (9 rounds)


Samuel Sevian 2590
Jeffery Xiong 2660
UT Dallas Fall Open

1.e4 c5 2.d3 d6 3.d4 c6 4.d3 c3
cxd4 5.cxd4 a6 6.f3 e5 7.d3 d5
8.e3 dxe3 9.dxe3 d5 10.g5
d1.a4 d3.d3.b3 12.cxb4 13.d1.d1 0-0
14.0-0 d5 15.exd5 c5 16.d6 cxc6
17.d1.d1 d5 18.g5 dxc3 19.dxc3
10xe8 20.dxe4 dxe4 21.xc4 dxe7 22.h4
10.h8 23.d3 d8 24.xa6

19.xh6 xf8 20.g1+ g6 21.xg6+ fxg6 22.xe6+ 27g7 23.g7# 1-0

COSTA MESA, CA
November 24-27, 2016
The 52nd AMERICAN OPEN (8 rounds)

1-2. Timur GAREYEV, John Daniel BRYANT 6½ 3-5. Alex YERMOLINSKY, Andranik MATIKOZIAN, Keaton KIEWRA 5½ 6-12. Melkset KHACHIAN, Tatev ABRAHAMYAN, Craig HILBY, Dayron TUERTAS, Albert LU, Alexandre KRETCHETOV, Camilla BAGINSKAIYT, etc.

PHILADELPHIA, PA
November 25-27, 2016
47th National Chess Congress (6 rounds)


SCHAUMBURG, IL
November 25-27, 2016
The Seven Muradian Memorial (5 rounds)

1-6. Vladimir GEORGIEV, Andrew TANG, Dmitry GUREVICH, Eric ROSEN, David Tianjian PENG, Alex BETANELI 4, 7-16. Sam SMICKEL, Vishwanath ARJUN, Rachel J. ULRICH, Matthew James STEVENS, Arshaq SALEM, Akhil KALGHAJTI, Daniel BRONBEYN, Dritan ZEKAJ, Rishi NARAYANAN, Mark HAMILTON 3½, etc.

SAINT LOUIS, MO
November 25-27, 2016
Thanksgiving Open (6 rounds)


27.xf6! gxf6? 27...xe5 28.d5! d6
29.d5 (29.cxb5?? e2++; 29.xb5 a6
30.bxc4?? e2++) 29...cxb4 30.xe4
d4 28.xe4

29.xh6 xh6 30.d5 c3 31.d4 c6
32.xxc3 xxc3 33.xc3 xxc3 34.xe1
f5 35.xh5 fxg4 36.xe7 xh1+ 37.xe7
2g3+ 38.xg3 xg6+ 39.fh2 1-0

NEW YORK, NY
December 9-16, 2016
The 100th Edward Lasker Memorial (9 rounds)


Raven Sturt 2421
Leif Pressman 2274
100th Edward Lasker Memorial

1.d4 d5 2.c3 d6 3.c4 c6 4.e3 e6
5.b3 c5 6.d3 cxd4 7.exd4 d4+ 8.d2
d6 9.0-0 0-0 10.d6 c3 b6
11.b2 d7 12.e2 c6 13.e1 a3 14.b1
d1 15.0-0 d6 16.h3 h6 17.b2 c7 18.e5
dfd8 19.4a5
19.b1 a4 21.d1 xbd8 22.e3 e7
23.f5 dxf5 24.e5 exf5

19.xh6 f8 20.g1+ e6 21.xg6+ fxg6
22.xe6+ 27g7 23.g7# 1-0

27.xf6! gxf6? 27...xe5 28.d5! d6
29.d5 (29.cxb5?? e2++; 29.xb5 a6
30.bxc4?? e2++) 29...cxb4 30.xe4
d4 28.xe4

29.xh6 xh6 30.d5 c3 31.d4 c6
32.xxc3 xxc3 33.xc3 xxc3 34.xe1
f5 35.xh5 fxg4 36.xe7 xh1+ 37.xe7
2g3+ 38.xg3 xg6+ 39.fh2 1-0

27.xf6! gxf6? 27...xe5 28.d5! d6
29.d5 (29.cxb5?? e2++; 29.xb5 a6
30.bxc4?? e2++) 29...cxb4 30.xe4
d4 28.xe4
December 25-30, 2016
The 26th North American Open (9 rounds)


1.d4 9f6 2.c4 e6 3.d3 9b4 4.9f3 c5 5.g5 6.9g2 d5 7.cxd5 9xd5 8.9b3 9c6 9.dxc5 9xc3 10.bxc3 9xc5 11.0-0 e5 12.9g5 h6 13.9e4 9e7 14.9e3 9b8 15.9e1 9c7 16.9xe7 9xe7 17.9d6 9g4 18.9d2 a6 19.a4 b6 20.9ad1 9e6 21.9b4 f5?! 21...9d8 22.h4 9c6 23.9e4 9a5! 24.9xe5 9b3 25.9e3 9e7 26.9d4 9b3 27.9c4(+) 26.9b2 9c5 27.9d4 9b3= 22.9h3 9f6 23.e4 g6 24.exf5 gxf5 25.9f1 a5 26.9h4 9bf8

27.9e8! 9xe8 28.9xf6 9b3 29.9d7 9c5 30.9d6

1-0

Tamaz Gelashvili 2568
Craig HIlby 2347
26th North American Open

1.d4 9f6 2.9f3 e6 3.c3 c5 4.9d3 d5 5.b3 9c6 6.0-0 9d6 7.9b2 0-0 8.9bd2 b6 9.9e5 9b4 10.9e2 9b7 11.a3 9c6 12.9d3 9c8 13.9e2 9e7 14.f4 9e4 15.9xc5 9xc5 16.9xh7+?! 16.9d3 f6 16...9h3 17.9f5+ 9g8 18.9f3 f6! 19.9h3 fxe5 20.9f3

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1524 LeClaire St, Davenport, IA 52803 USA
NEW YORK, NY
December 27-29, 2016
The 35th Empire City Open (6 rounds)

1-2. Levy ROZMAN, David BRODSKY 5, 3-6. Alex STRIPUNSKY, Sergey KUDRIN, Jörg WEGERLE, Aleksandr OSTROVSKY 4½, 7-15. Alex FISHEIN, John BURKE, Jay Richard BONIN, Brandon JACOBSON, Richard SHTIVELBAND, Ernest COLDING, Cesar APALLA, Robert SULMAN, Daniel YEDIDIA 4, etc.

KENNER, LA
December 27-30, 2016
2016 Pan-American Intercollegiate Team Chess Championship (60 teams, 6 rounds)

Final Team Standings:
1. Webster University (B) 5½.
2. Webster University (A) 5½.
3. Saint Louis University 5.
4. Texas Tech University (A) 5.
5. Webster University (C) 5, 6-7. UT Dallas (A), University of Toronto (A) 4½, etc.

Angel Arribas Lopez 2515
Alejando Hervia 2496
Pan-Am Intercollegiate Kenner

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.©c3 ©b4 4.exd5 exd5 5.©c3 ©c6 6.a3 ©e7 7.©ce2 ©g4 8.e3 ©d7 9.©c2 ©d6 10.©b3 ©ge7 11.©xb4 ©xb4 12.©a6 0-0 13.b3 ©f5 14.©f3 ©xf3 15.©xf3 ©xf5 16.©d4 ©d2 17.©e2 ©e1 18.©xb3 ©xb3

19.©a2!+ - 19.0-0 ©xb2 20.©xc2 ©xc2 21.©e1±

BETHESDA, MD
December 27-30, 2016
The 43rd Eastern Open (7 rounds)


Aleksandr Lenderman 2581
Teghshuren Enkbat 2405
43rd Eastern Open


22.©e8+ 23.©e8 24.©e8+ ©e8 25.©f3 ©f8 26.©e8+ ©e8 27.©e8 ©e8 28.©g4 ©h6 29.©a5 ©f6 30.©d3 ©f6 31.©e6 ©e6 32.©c5 ©b6 33.©xa6 ©xc7 34.©c7 ©f7 35.©a8 36.©c7 ©b4 37.axb4 ©e7 38.©e8 39.©d6 40.©e3 ©g6 41.©b5 ©f4 42.©b6 ©f4+ 43.©f2 ©f7 44.©b5+ 1-0

KENNER, LA
December 28-30, 2016
2016 New Orleans Open (5 rounds)

1-3. Renier GONZALEZ, Dex WEBSTER, Alain CIERNA 4, 4-6. Neo ZHU, Thalia CERVANTES, James Eryk HARGROVE 3½, 7-13. Nicholas MATTA, Clay POLK, Jacki LIU, Eli KARP, Miles TISSERAND, Rannan HUO, Kai Aaron TABOR 3, etc.

CHAMBLEE, GA
December 28-30, 2016
The 46th Atlanta Open (5 rounds)


FORT MYERS, FL
January 6-8, 2017
The 3rd Gulf Coast New Year's Open (5 rounds)

1. John LUDWIG 4½, 2-3. Ayram ABREU DELGADO, Nat KELLEHER 4, 4-5. Sandro
POZO VERA, Miguel RECIO 3½, 6-14. Eric COOKE, Jindrich ZAPLETAL, Yan MIELLIER, Joshua Alan HARRISON, Raghav VENKAT, Mel GOSS, Cesar Jose VALIDO BOUZA, Theo SLADE, Oscar MALDONADO 3, etc.

SAN JOSE, CA
January 6-8, 2017
The 2017 New Year Championship (6 rounds)

BOSTON, MA
January 6-8, 2017
The 5th Boston Chess Congress (5 rounds)

CONCORD, CA
January 13-16, 2017
The 8th Golden State Open (7 rounds)

PHILADELPHIA, PA
January 13-16, 2017
The 49th Liberty Bell Open (7 rounds)

Alex Shabalov
John Burke
Liberty Bell Open
2563
2494


ROCKVILLE, MD
January 13-16, 2017
The 9th Chesapeake Open (7 rounds)
1-2. Julio Catalino SADORRA, Mark PARAGUA 6, 3-6. Levan BREGADZE, Alex FISHEIN, Praveen BALAKRISHNAN, Sahl SINHA 4½, 7-11. Oliver BARBOSA, Tegssuren ENKHBAT, Lokesh PALANI, Andy APPLBEAUM, Christopher YU-SHUO SHEN 4, etc.

Julio Catalino Sadorra
Oliver Barbosa
9th Chesapeake Open
2587
2518

25...Qxe6! 26.bxc6 Qc6 27.Qxc6 28.Qxc5 29.Qd6 10...Qe7 30.Qe7 31.Qd8 32.Qd8 c5 33.Qf7+ Qxf7 34.Qe8+ Qe8 56...Qx5+ 57...Qxe4 58.Qf5 Qe7 59.Qg6 1-0

SAN DIEGO, CA
January 14-16, 2017
The Dreaming King Open (6 rounds)
ASHEVILLE, NC
January 27-29, 2017
30th The Land of the Sky (5 rounds)
1. Alexander IVANOV 4½, 2-4, Elshan MORADIABADI, Tiangi WANG, Peter BERELOS 3½, 5-7. Daniel Josef CREMISI, Aaron BALLEISEN, David Alan JUSTICE 3, etc.

MAYFIELD, OH
January 27-29, 2017
The 2017 Cardinal Open (5 rounds)
1-2. Alex SHABALOV, Dmitry GUREVICH 4½, 3. Scott RAMER 4, 4-7. Fidel CORRALES JIMENEZ, Maggie FENG, Akshita GORTI, Aristo LIU 3½, 8-15. Mika Andrew BRATTAIN, Jennifer YU, Arvind JAYARAMAN, Christopher YU-SHUO SHEN, Rohan TALUKDAR, Rachel ULRICH, Vincent Jingwei BAKER, Surya PARASURAMAN 3, etc.

ORLANDO, FL
January 27-29, 2017
The Central Florida Class Championship (5 rounds)

ROCKVILLE, MD
February 10-12, 2017
The 55th Baltimore Open (5 rounds)

FORT WORTH, TX
February 16-20, 2017
8th Southwest Class Championships
Master Section (9 rounds):

1-6. Samuel SEVIAN, Vladimir BELOUS, Ruifeng LI, Gil POPILSKI, Holden HERNANDEZ CARMENATE, Pavel VORONTOV 6½, 7-12. Denis KADRIC, Sergei MATSENKOV, Carlos Antonio HEVIA ALEJANO, Carlos MATAMOROS FRANCO, Zurab JAVAKHIDZE, Craig HILBY 6, etc.

SAINT LOUIS, MO
February 16-20, 2017
The Saint Louis Winter Invitational
St. Louis Winter GM cat. IX (2469)

Nikhil Kumar 2479
John Burke 2495
St Louis Winter GM

1.d4 ♜f6 2.c4 ♞e6 3.♗c3 ♞d5 4.cxd5 ♚xd5 5.e4 ♕c6 6.bxc3 ♗b6 7.♕a4+ ♜d7 8.♗e3 ♗c5 9.♘e2 0-0 10.0-0 ♕b6 11.♕a3 e5 12.♗d1 ♕xd4 13.♗xd4 ♘b7 14.e5 ♖xh3 15.♗g5 ♗xb8 16.♖e1 ♖e8 17.♖d6 ♖f8 18.♗b5

36.♗b3 ♖xf2 37.♖g1 ♖xe2 38.♖c4 ♖b2 39.♖b2 ♖xf3 40.♖xb2 ♖xd1 41.♖f2 f5 42.♖xf1 a4 43.h3 ♖f6 44.h4 ♖b3 45.axb3 ♖xb3 46.♖d3 b2 47.♖b1 ♖e8 48.g2 f4 49.h5 ♖xh5 50.♖h3 ♖d1 51.♖f1 ♖e2 0-1

St. Louis Winter IM cat. III (2320)

BURLINGAME, CA
February 22-28, 2017 cat. XI (2524)
The 3rd Chinggis Invitational

FALLS CHURCH, VA
February 24-26, 2017
The 2nd George Washington Open (5 rounds)
1-2. Sergey ERENBURG, Alex SHABALOV 4½, 3-5. Jennifer YU, Mohammed DILSHAD, Trung NGUYEN 3½, 6-11. Praveen BALAKRISHNAN, Lawrence Charles KAUFMAN, Sahil SINHA, Macon SHIBUT, Tan NGUYEN, Evan LING 3, etc.
TOURNAMENTS from ABROAD

TEKIRDAG, Turkey
November 2-12, 2016 cat. XI (2502)
The Suleymanpasa Municipality
1. Vitaly SIVUK 7, 2. Ekaterina ATALIK 6, 3-4.
Lubomir FTACNIK 5, Alex YERMOLINSKY 5, 5.
Eugenio TORRE 4½, 6-8. Branko DAMLJANOVIC, Thomas LUTHER, Nenad
SULAVA 4, 9. Suat ATALIK 3½, 10. Silvio DANAILOV 2

MEDIAS, Romania
November 28-30, 2016
The 10th Kings Rapid and Blitz Match

Rapid:
Vladimir KRAMNIK 5½
HOI Yifan 2½

Vladimir Kramnik 2810
Hou Yifan 2635
10th Kings Rapid Match

1.d4 2.e6 2.f4 e6 3.e3 c5 4.c3 c6 5.b3 d5 6.e3 7.e6 g6 0-0
8.d3 d6 9.e2 f6 10.e4 e7 11.0-0 12.a4 xxd6 13.a4 c6 14.b3 c6 15.a4 d6 16.e7
17.a4 c6 18.a4 d6 19.a4 b5 19.a4 xdx6 20.b4 xdx6 21.b4 xdx6 22.a4 c6
22.a4 xdx6 23.a4 xdx6 24.a4 c6 25.a4 xdx6 26.a4 xdx6

Alex Yermolinsky 2486
Chanda Sandipan 2593
1st Haian Open

1.e4 c5 2.d3 d6 3.d5 e7 4.d4
1.e4 c5 2.d3 d6 3.d5 e7 4.d4
cxd4 5.cxd4 a6 6.e2 xg6 7.e0

Zc8 31.xe1 1c7 32.h4 exd4 33.exd4
e5 34.dxe5 f6 35.f8+ e7 36.e8
c7 37.e8

Blitz:
Vladimir KRAMNIK 6
HOI Yifan 4

MARIANSKE LAZNE, Czech
Republic
November 18-December 1, 2016
The 26th FIDE World Senior Chess
Championship (11 rounds)

Senior 50+
1. Giorgi BAGATUROV (GEO) 9½
Zurab STURUA (GEO) 8½, 4-9. Henrik
DANIELSEN (ISL), Nikolai VLASSOV (RUS),
Georg MOHR (SLO), Alexander IVANOv
(USA), Marek VOKAC (CZE), Evgenij
KALEGIN (RUS) 8, etc.

Senior 65+
1-5. Anatoly VAISSER (FRA), Vladimir
JANS (CZE), Evgeny SVESHNIKO
(RUS), Vladimir ZHELINA (RUS), Clemens
WERNER (GER) 8½-6, 9. Boris MARYASIN
(ISR), Craig PRITCHETT (SCO), Nils–Gustaf
REINMAN (SWE), Vladimir OKHOTNIK
(FRA) 8, etc.

DANZHOU, China
December 7-16, 2016
The 1st Hainan Open (9 rounds)

1. YU Yangyi 8, 2-3. Jianchao ZHOU,
Rinat JUMABAYEV 6½, 4-10. Yang WEN,
Zhiyong TAN, Xiongian PENG, Tsegmed
BATCHULUU, Shanglei LU, Yi XU, Yankai
LI 6, etc.

G6 8.e3 c6 9.d1 0-0 10.e5 d6 11.h4
dxe5 12.h5 13.xe7 g6 14.c4 e8
15.e4+ g5 16.xg5 f6 17.xh4
18.xf7+ xf7 19.xd6+ xd6 20.xd6 4.e4 21.xh4 1-0

LONDON (open), England
December 9-16, 2016
The 8th London Chess Classic Open (9 rounds)

1-2. Etienne BACROT, Sebastien MAZE 7½,
3-9. Ilia SMIRIN, Eduardo ITURRIZAGA
BONELLI, Abhijeet GUPTA, Benjamin BOK,
Andrei ISTRATESCU, Sebastian BOSNER,
Murali KARTHIKEYAN 7, 10-21. Hrant
MELKUMYAN, Robert HOVHANNISYAN,
Jonathan HAWKINS, Jules MOUSSARD,
Chithambaram ARAVINDH, Fabien
LIBIszewski, Daniel SADZIKOWSKI,
Florian HANDKE, Mark HEBDEN, DEEPAK
CHAKKRAVARTHY, Deimante DAULYTE,
Gabriel BATTAGLINI 6½ etc.

LONDON (rapid), England
December 17-18, 2016
The 8th London Chess Classic Super Rapidplay
(10 rounds)

1. Valentina GUNINA 9, 2. Eltaj SAFARI 8½,
3-12. Etienne BACROT, Laurent FREISINGER,
David HOWELL, Andrei ISTRATESCU,
Gawain JONES, Matthieu CORNETTE,
Jules MOUSSARD, Rasmus SVANE, Erik
BLOMQVIST, Tamas FODOR Jr. 8, etc.
Chithambaram Aravindh 2566
John Nunn 2600

London Classic Rapid

1.e4 c5 2...e2 c6 3.f4 g6 4...f3 g7
5.c3 d5 6.e5 d4 7.d3 f6 8...a4 e6
9.b4 cb4 10...d4 d5 11.c4 d7
12.b5 b5 13.g2 g1 b3 14.g3 f5
15.b2 b6 16.h3 h3 17.h7
18.a8 a8 19.d2 e4 20.f3 f5 21.d4 g4 22.0-0-0 e3 23.e2
d8 24.b3 g6 25.a3 a5 26.d3 g4
27.e4 e4 28.a4 b4 29.a3 e8
30.c5 e5 31.b4 b4 32.c4
33.h3 h3 34.h2 g4 35.h4

Josep Manuel LOPEZ MARTINEZ, Gata KAMSKY 7.5-10. Daniele VOCATURO, Julio GRANDA ZUNIGA, Krishnan SASIKIRAN,
Marc NARCISO DUBLAN, Evgeny VOROBOV, Alexander ZUBOV 6.5, 1

STOCKHOLM, Sweden
December 27, 2016-January 5, 2017
The 46th Rilton Cup (9 rounds)

PAVLOVIC, Kaido KULAOTS, Ivan SOKOLOV, Mikhail ANTIPOV, Sundar SHYAM 6.5, etc.

Hans Tikkanen 2521
Gata Kamsky 2661
46th Rilton Cup 2016-17

1.e4 c5 2...f3 c6 3.d4 xdx4 4.xd4
b6 5.b3 b6 6.e4 e6 7.e2
b4 8.d2 0-0-0 a5 7.e7 10.0-0 d5
11.e5 e7 12.f4 c5 13.xc5 xcx5
14.e1 e1 15.f2 a5 16.f5

MERIDA, Mexico
December 15-20, 2016
The 28th Carlos Torre Memorial (9 rounds)

1. Lazaro BRUZON 7.5, 2-3. Aleksandr SHIMANOV, Deivy VERA SIGUENAS 7, 4-14. Darlusz SWIERCZ, Alexander ONISCHUK,
Cristian CRUZ, Vasilif DURABAYLI, Ernes ESPINOSA VELOZ, Juan Carlos GONZALEZ ZAMORA, Andrey GOROVETS, Francesco
RAMBALDI, Emilio CORDOVA, Lelys STANLEY MARTINEZ, DUANY, Isan Reynaldo ORTIZ SUAREZ 6.5, etc.

SITGES, Spain
December 16-23, 2016
The Sunway Sitges Festival (9 rounds)

1-4. Evgeny ROMANOV, Romain EDOUARD,

16...xa3! 17.xd3 d4! 18.xb1 xdx4
19.f6 xe5 20.xg7 xf8 21.xd4
xe2 22.xe2 d4 23.xd4 d5
24.b3 c6 25.xd1 xdx3 26.x3d3
xe2 27.xd2 xdx6 28.xf3 xg8
29.xc6 xdx6 30.xe4 xg7 31.xd7
xe3+ 32.xb1 g6 33.d6 d5
34.xb7 f4 35.xd8 xdx6 36.xf7 e5
37.xd8 xd5

Awonder Liang
Oskar Von Bahr 2495
2357
46th Rilton Cup

MOSCOW, Russia
January 28 - February 5, 2017
The 13th Moscow Open (9 rounds)

1-2. Dmitry GORDIEVSKY, Vladislav

Awonder Liang.
Photo by David Llada.
ARTEMIEV 7½, 3-7 Boris GRACHEV, Denis KHISMATULLIN, Gata KAMSKY, Maksat ATABAYEV, Evgeny A. LEVIN 7, 8-17. Saveliy GOLUBOV, Sergey VOLKOV, Alexandr PREDEKE, Dmitry KOKAREV, David PARAVYAN, Hinal GUSAIN, Sanan SJJUGIROV, Boris KHARCHENKO, Maksim VAVULIN, Vasily USMANOV 6½, etc.

TEHRAN, Iran
February 11 - March 4, 2017
The FIDE Women’s World Chess Championship (64 players, 6 rounds)


SHARJAH, UAE
February 18-27, 2017
The 1st stage of the World Chess Grand Series 2017 (18 players, 9 rounds)


QUARTER-FINALS:
JU Wenjun (CHN)-TAN Zhongyi (CHN) ½;1½, Dronavallari HARIKA (IND)-Nana DZAGNIDZE (GEO) 2½;1½, Anna MUZYCHUK (UKR)-Antoaneta STEFANOVA (BUL) 1½;½, Alexandra KOSTENIUK (RUS)-Ni Shiqun (CHN) 1½;½

SEMI-FINALS:
TAN Zhongyi (CHN)-Dronavalli HARIKA (IND) 5;4, Anna MUZYCHUK (UKR)-Alexandra KOSTENIUK (RUS) 2:0

FINAL:
TAN Zhongyi (CHN)-Anna MUZYCHUK (UKR) 2:2, 1½;0,5

MOSCOW, Russia
February 21 - March 1, 2017
The 15th Aeroflot Open (9 rounds)


Fabulous Finishes
IN AMERICAN CHESS

01 1...g2+ 2. fxg2 Exg3#, Smyth - Helms, New York 1915 0-1

02 1. Exh7+ Exh7 2. Exf6+ Exh6 3. Exg4+ Exh5 4. h4+g7 5. g5+ g8 6. h5+ g8 7. h7+ g8 8. g7+ h7 9. g6# 1-0

03 1. f2 Exf2 stalemate! Pilnich-Restheisky, US Ch NY 1942 ½-½

04 Pillsbury - Judd, St. Louis, 1899, went 1.d3+ 1. exg5 1...f5 2. ex6 Wc7 3. f4 f3 4. e4 f2 5. b3 Wc6 6. d5 Qa5

05 Benjamin - Gufeld, US Open Ch, Kona, 1998: 1. Exe4+! fxe4 2. Wd6+ Wh8 3. Wxh8+ Wf5 4. We6+ Wg8 5. Wxd5 After 5...exe6 6. e5+ Wf7 7. Wxf8 Wxf8 8. Wb7 1-0

06 Curdo - R. Byrne, US Open Ch, Chicago, 1994, 1. Exh7+!! Wh7 2. hxg5+ Wg8 3. gx6 It's mate in 2, 5 or 12! 1-0

07 Horowitz - Martin, US Open Ch, Boston, 1938, 1. Wf5+! gx5 2. Wxh7+! Wh7 3. Wh5+ Wh6 4. Wh6+ Wh7 5. Wh6+ Wh7 6. We3 It's mate in two. 1-0


09 J. Donovan - S. Bernstein, Ventnor City, 1942, 1...Wh2+ 2. Whh6+ Wg6# 0-1
**5x5 Q&A**

**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? The ideal time to learn chess is between five and seven years old. At that age your mind is like a sponge and you easily absorb knowledge. It is crucial to instill within yourself a love of the game, a passion. If that doesn’t happen you will easily turn to other distractions. Coming back to chess at a later age is far more problematic. Will you have the time to spend learning? Will the pressures of everyday life interfere? Are you financially secure? These are all tough issues. But, I repeat, if your interest is great and you are willing to put in the time and have the ability to focus, mastery is attainable.

**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? It depends on your perspective! If you are a GM, you are going to work very hard on your openings. If you are a club player you are going to focus on your middlegame play. If you are a beginner, it is the endgame. The endgame is by far the most important. Learning endgames is like cheating on an exam. You just know you are going to get asked certain questions, but will you have the answers ready?

**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? Isolated Queen Pawn (IQP) positions occur in so many openings that it would be a very good idea to learn the ins and outs of these pawn structures for both sides. Of all the endings, those with rooks are by far the most common. Spending an extensive amount of time studying these endings is a very good idea.

**04** Not everyone can be a chess world champion. But how can chess be of benefit in life and business? Chess teaches us many things: reasoning, responsibility, discipline, patience, critical thinking, competitiveness and the rewards of studying and working hard. The mix of sport, art and creativity is enormously satisfying and these benefits remain with us in whatever field we go. One thing I’m extremely conscious of is excellence. Chess taught me what true excellence really is and how difficult it is to achieve. Now whenever I see excellence I stop to admire those who really excel — no matter what their field.

**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? I’d tell them that some of the most brilliant people who ever lived, past and present, have played chess or at the very least admired those who do. I’d ask these youngsters if they too would like to be considered brilliant? And would they like to reach their highest thinking potentials? If a youngster does decide to go into competitive tournament play I’d give them a stern warning; chess is an emotional roller-coaster ride, as thrilling and devastating as any sport. Be prepared: one day you are the professor giving lessons, the next day the pupil. Do not lose sleep over a loss, rather be critical of your own play and see where you might have played better.

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- 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

*Available middle of November 2016