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MACKENZIE MOLNER

FABIANO’S MISSED MATE IN 36 MOVES!
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MAGNUS SCORES HAT TRICK IN FINAL SHOOT OUT
JOHN BURKE

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CLASSICAL EQUALITY
RAPID SUPREMACY

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FAREWELL TO KIRSAN
ENTER ARKADIY DVORKOVICH

Arkadiy Dvorkovich from Russia is the new President of the World Chess Federation, and his election marks the first change in the FIDE leadership for 23 years when Kirsan Iljumzhinov began his long reign. Rather surprisingly, Dvorkovich, a late starter in the Presidential race, won the contest by a big margin after receiving 103 votes cast by delegates at the 89th FIDE Congress held during the Chess Olympiad in Batumi. Pre-election favorite, Georgios Makropoulos from Greece, long-term Vice President of FIDE, collected 78 votes. The third candidate, Nigel Short from England, withdrew his candidacy at the last moment and openly supported Dvorkovich.

In fact the name of Arkadiy Dvorkovich was very well known to delegates, as he had previously served as Deputy Prime Minister in the Russian government and more recently as Chairman of the Organizing Committee for this year’s Soccer World Cup. “FIDE is now my permanent job. We should help federations, not the other way around” – was Dvorkovich’s first statement on taking up his new position.

JU WENJUN – PER ASPERA AD ASTRA

Chinese Ju Wenjun has regained the title of Women’s World Champion, which she first won just six months ago. She defeated Russian Kateryna Lagno 3-1 in a rapidplay tie-breaker after their four game classical match ended level in Khanty-Mansiysk. As Ju was not given the right to defend her title, she had to win it all over again by going through a grueling 64-player knockout tournament! However, from next year the women’s cycle will be conducted along the same lines as the men’s with the Champion defending her title against the winner of the Candidates Tournament.

NICOLAS CHECA – NEW US (TEENAGE!) GRANDMASTER

17-year-old Nicolas Checa has won the Fall 2018 Charlotte Chess Center Invitational, a clear point ahead of his closest rivals (+4−0=5). He thereby achieved his final GM-norm and is now just waiting for the title to be ratified by FIDE at their first quarter 2019 Presidential Board meeting. Nicolas still holds the record as youngest ever New York State Champion at the age of 11 and his great potential has been further enhanced by this new success. He is also a karate black belt and the following game provides us with a good illustration of the strength of his martial arts on the chessboard too!

Nicolas Checa 2495 – Kassa Korley 2453
Fall 2018 CCCSA GM Norm Invitational

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.¤c3 a6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.¤f3 ¤f6 6.¥g5 ¥e6 7.£b3 b5 8.¥fxe6 ¥fxe6 9.a4 b4 10.¤xg5 ¥d8 11.e4 c6 12.¥e3 cxd5 13.exd5 ¥xd5 14.£c1 ¥d8 15.£d3 ¥a7 16.¥e4 ¥b3 17.¥g5+ f6 18.¥a5+ ¥e8 19.¥xb6 ¥e7 20.¥xb8+ ¥f7 21.0-0 ¥xa4 22.¥c6 ¥a2 23.£e1 ¥g8 24.d5

1–0

Internet Chess:
NAKAMURA IS FASTEST CLOCK ON THE PLANET!

Hikaru Nakamura defeated Wesley So 15½:12½ in the final of the Chess.com Speed Chess Championship, but only after winning the bullet phase of the match. In a very close and exciting encounter, Wesley had kept the scores level in both the 5+1 (minutes+seconds) and 3+1 blitz segments, despite a fierce challenge from his opponent. So it all came down to a decisive in Hikaru’s favorite chess discipline – bullet 1+1 – where Naka duly switched to NASCAR mode and proved his superiority at what is the ultimate form of speed chess. Incidentally, in the semifinals he had previously defeated Levon Aronian, while Wesley had proved too strong for the young Polish superstar Jan-Krzysztof Duda.

<table>
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<th>Classical</th>
<th>25m+10s</th>
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<td>Ju Wenjun</td>
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<td>Kateryna Lagno</td>
<td>½</td>
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Ju Wenjun ½ 0 ½ 1 ½ ½ 1 1 5
Kateryna Lagno ½ 1 ½ 0 ½ ½ 0 0 3
LETTER
from the EDITOR

TIE-BREAKS OR NOT TIE-BREAKS?

The last three months could so easily have been a wondrous period for American chess: a time when dreams came true. But the fact that ultimate success was so close at hand, yet just out of reach, has left something of a bittersweet taste.

Caruana has repeatedly shown that he is World Champion material, and this was reinforced yet again by his recent performance in London. Facing one of the greatest players in chess history, Fabi stood his ground, always keeping his cool, and increasing his fan base by the thousands. Magnus, frustrated, was only able to defeat him in the rapid tie-breaks, a specialty in which the Norwegian is clearly superior to anybody else right now, and he is very aware of that. We could argue whether or not a Classical World Championship should ever be decided by a Rapidplay tie-breaker, but those are the present rules and they must be obeyed. Carlsen was a deserved winner, who knew how to take the battle to the ground that favors him most.

“Thanks to my opponent for a great fight. He showed himself to be an extremely strong player, versatile and very, very tough to beat. Obviously, I am very happy with the way the match ended but I don’t think we’ve seen the last from Fabiano in this particular context”. That’s how the World Champion himself summed it all up, and if something distinguishes Carlsen it is the honesty of his statements: he doesn’t say things just to please an audience. As our consulting editor Pete Tamburro wrote, Caruana was the perfect and refreshing model for American chess. He was no “enfant terrible” as Fischer was. He fought hard, never quit and responded to the result as a gentleman. Other than a championship, what more could we ask of him?

As for the members of the US men’s team, they did what had to be done. They were the top seeds, and led by Caruana they tied for first, very much like they did in Baku when they achieved their historic victory. But the same intricate tiebreakers that gave the American players the gold medal in 2016 favored somebody else this time, and they had to content themselves with silver. The women’s team also came very close to making an appearance on the podium, with superb performances by Irina Krush and Jennifer Yu, who won gold and bronze individual medals playing their respective boards.

In the word “bittersweet”, bitter comes first. I am writing this only a few days after Caruana’s defeat, and there is still a slight feeling of disappointment in the air. But I am sure that by the time this magazine reaches its readers, the dust will have settled. And then we will see clearly that apart from the summer of 1972, when Bobby Fischer won the world title, this has been the best three months in the history of American Chess.

As might be expected, the fact that for the second time in a row both the World Championship match and the Chess Olympiad ended in a tie has sparked some debate. Should the format be changed? In one of the press conferences, Carlsen hinted that a 16 or 18 game match might be an improvement, since that would allow for more “experiments”. Some others argue that the time limits have to be shorter, because the quality of modern chess preparation makes the games more prone to end in a draw.

As for the Chess Olympiad, there is general consensus that the tie-break system is too random and complicated, and it should be improved. The moments we lived through in Baku and Batumi, when nobody knew what was going on and who was winning, are incompatible with a modern and commercial sport. With FIDE under a new leadership, I think we can expect some changes to be made. During his two months in office, Arkady Dvorkovich has shown himself to be an accessible President, who listens to opinions on all sides and is not afraid of carrying out reforms.

All in all, I see grounds for optimism about the future of chess, not only at home, but globally.

David Llada, Editor-in-Chief
The world title match between Magnus Carlsen and Fabiano Caruana was quite unusual because it was also one of the few such encounters in chess history that has left more questions unresolved than resolved. Firstly, the question as to who is currently the best classical chess player will probably remain unanswered until the next Elo rating list is published. Secondly, the question arises as to whether a 12-game match is the right format anyway, since even Carlsen suggested that 16 or 18 games might be a better solution to encourage more enterprising chess. Thirdly, although most of the top players in the world agreed that the overall quality of play in the match was extremely high, this is precisely the reason why there has been a 92% draw percentage in the last two World Championships! Finally, there is the most worrying question: will London be remembered as the only contest in which all games ended in a draw – or just the first?
**Spain-Oslo-London**

Based in Spain, I have plenty of alternatives when I want to travel to the UK. However, from all possible options at my disposal, I chose one that included a small detour: I made a two-day stopover in Oslo. The Carlsen phenomenon is big in Norway and so a group of enthusiasts had decided to open a chess pub right in the heart of Oslo, scheduling their launch party a day before the official opening of the World Championship in London. This seemed like a good opportunity to visit the new attraction, savour the atmosphere and see how the world title match was being received in Carlsen’s own territory. Moreover the pub happens to be decorated from wall to wall with my photos so I thought I was entitled to be part of the scene!

‘The Good Knight’, as the pub is called, was absolutely packed. No less a dignitary than the Mayor of Oslo, who also happens to be an avid chess fan, cut the ribbon and during the two inaugural evenings practically all the Norwegian Grandmasters as well as many other chess personalities showed up.

Wait, did I say "all"? Yes, that’s correct: including THE ONE. I was playing a blitz game with Øyvind Von Doren, a friend of the American Chess Magazine, when Tarjei Svensen, the popular Norwegian blogger, muttered: ‘Look who is here!’. I glanced upwards and there he was, the world champion in person, completely relaxed, hanging out in a bar with his buddies, a day before traveling to London to defend his title. I was very surprised because I knew that Carlsen had held his training camp in Spain. Anyway, I went up to Magnus, briefly exchanged greetings, and he confirmed he had indeed been preparing for the match in Spain but had returned to Norway for just a couple of days. I wished him good luck and left him with his friends: after all, he was enjoying his last hours of leisure before going to war!

Incidentally, I knew that Caruana had also carried out his pre-match preparations in Spain: in Marbella, to be precise. Being the closest place to the UK where you can still find decent weather this time of the year, my country seemed like an obvious choice. But, with all that secrecy, just imagine if both players had ended up in the same resort. That would have made for a funny story!

---

**Mackenzie Molner**

This was a world title match that will go down in history as one of the closest of all time. There were near misses by both players, chances for both sides, and it really could have gone either way with just one or two different moves…. When looking back on the contest I think a lot of emphasis will be placed on the opening preparation of the players. It was great to see both of them so well armed with the black pieces, although hopefully in future matches the players will rise to the challenge of taking more risks and creating more chances with the white pieces.

**Joel Benjamin**

In a lot of ways the match went along the lines I predicted. Caruana was not inferior to Carlsen in classical chess. The far more rigorous 2018 schedule had Fabiano more ready and motivated. Carlsen’s disdain of opening theory torpedoed his chances with White. Unfortunately, when Caruana was unable to produce a win, everyone’s prediction came true – the rapid playoff was one-sided.

**John Burke**

This was probably the most accurately played match in World Championship history. The draws were not so much due to lack of effort, but rather because the players canceled each other out at every corner. Sure, we can point to Magnus’ weak opening preparation as White, but obviously the fact that Fabiano had such excellent preparation himself played a major role. Although both players had fleeting chances to win games, overall there were no terrible blunders in the classical portion of the match and the players proved themselves equals. As for the rapid, that’s another story. Magnus is king!

---

**Expert opinion**

By David Llada

**The first move of the World Championship, London 2018.**

Photo by Nadia Panteleva
Magnus Misses the First Shot

GAMES 1-4

AS EXPECTED, IN THE FIRST FOUR GAMES BOTH PLAYERS DISPLAYED A VERY HIGH LEVEL OF OPENING PREPARATION, ESPECIALLY WITH THE BLACK PIECES. IN FACT MAGNUS’ ADVANTAGE IN GAME 1 WAS PROBABLY DECISIVE, BUT SURPRISINGLY HE FAILED TO DELIVER THE KNOCKOUT BLOW...

Annotations by GM MACKENZIE MOLNER

Fabiano Caruana 2832
Magnus Carlsen 2835

Game 1, World Championship Match

1.e4 c5 2.d4 d6 3.e5 Caruana plays this on a regular basis against 2...c6 and Magnus must have been expecting it. However, it would be interesting to see what he had prepared against the Open Sicilian. A Sveshnikov perhaps?

3...g6 Of course, 3...e6 is a serious alternative which deserves due attention. Caruana faced this move twice in the World Cup against GM Luka Lenic late last year, eventually scoring an important win in their match.

4.dxc6 dx6 5.d3 g7 6.h3 f6 7.c3

7...d7 Black has a lot of options at this point but his general idea is to overprotect the d4 square and turn it into a potential stronghold for his knight after the ...f8–e6 maneuver.

7...b6 was Carlsen’s choice against Caruana in a previous encounter at Wijk aan Zee 2015. That game continued 8.e3 e5 9.0-0 0-0 10.a3 f6 11.b4 and Carlsen won after 39 moves.

8.e3 e5 9.0-0 A serious alternative is 9.d2 which may eventually transpose to the game. A likely continuation might also be 9...h6 10.0-0 b6 11.h2 f8 12.f4 exf4 and White can recapture either way. White has achieved better results from this position, even though it’s about even.

9...b6 10.h2 f8 11.f4 exf4 12.xf4 e6 13.f2 h6 14.d2

14...g5! A strong idea, clearing the g6-square for the knight. Black will need a little time to regroup his pieces but if Fabiano doesn’t manage to create some problems over the next few moves, Black will be very well placed.

15.a1 d6 Caruana is on the verge of drifting into an inferior position and he started consuming more and more time from here on. Magnus is behind in development but once he castles queenside and plays ...g6, his pieces will be dominant. White needs to do something at once to avoid getting into trouble.

16.g4?! Caruana’s opening choice was not so bad, but this is the move that is probably to blame for all the problems that he faces in the future. Now Black can safely castle long and gain time for a kingside attack with ...h6–h5. Better is 16.a4! a5 17.gf3. Although it’s tough to go back to the same square he came from, in this position it’s the best way to avoid becoming statically worse. Then if 17...g6 (17...0-0-0 can be met by 18.e5 c7 19.e2 when White’s idea is to play d3–d4 and create a giant mess.) White has the strong 18.d4!, opening the position before Black has managed to castle.

16...0-0-0 17.h6?
An epic battle

The first game of a World Championship match is always something very special. The process of qualification for a world title challenger takes two years, during which there is ever-increasing excitement and expectation. On the day the players finally sit down at the board, the pent up tension is tangible and you can sense an enormous release of energy into the atmosphere. How intense it must be for the two rivals!

Caruana had drawn the white pieces at the opening ceremony. He was in fact the first to arrive at the playing hall and seemed a bit phased by the throng of reporters who had crowded into a very small area, no bigger than a normal size living room. Unlike Carlsen, Fabi had never previously encountered that degree of media attention, although he did seem to adapt to it pretty quickly.

When Carlsen arrived, the protagonists immediately shook hands without any eye contact. A few minutes later, FIDE President Arkady Dvorkovich and Hollywood star Woody Harrelson arrived on the stage, escorted by the arbiter, Stéphane Escafre. On such occasions, it is the celebrity guest who makes the first move, and Woody, who is a more than decent chess player, had prepared a little show. First, he tipped over Caruana’s king; then he pretended to have misunderstood Fabiano’s instructions and played 1.d4 instead of 1.e4. For a moment, the American panicked and asked the arbiter if he could take that move back. Magnus chuckled. But what looked like clumsiness had actually been a pre-planned stunt, and it worked, as it looked like clumsiness had actually been a pre-planned stunt, and it worked, as it gave chess much-needed exposure in the mass media and also released some of the tension. Then both players shook hands again, this time looking each other in the eye and with a friendly smile. At this point, you would have never guessed that they were about to engage in a 7-hour, 122-move battle.

The move that really revealed Magnus’ intentions was 14...g5!. I saw a world champion who was well-prepared and hungry, aggressive and ferocious. For a moment it felt like having Garry Kasparov back at the board. Caruana soon got into deep trouble, but he kept his cool throughout, even when both players were under time pressure, and his stout defense and nerves of steel paid off. It was one of the most breathtaking games we have witnessed at a world title match: it had made me that White has enough compensation to hold the balance. After 26...Ng8! would have been the most practical move and although the upcoming endgame is unclear, it seems to me that White has enough compensation to hold the balance. After 26...fxf4 27.exf4 (Another option was 27...d4+ 28.Ke5 Qb7 29.Kh1 Rdf8 30.Kf5 Ke3 31.Kc1 and the position is roughly equal.) 28.exf4 Rdf8 29.exf8+ Kxf8 30.Kg2 Black is for choice but once White’s knight reaches f5 I think White will be okay.


27...Qxg2+ 28.Kxg2 Ke6 29.Kf2 Kg8 30.Kd4+ Ke8 The only way to remove the knight on g4 is to capture the white h5 pawn and then advance his own rook’s pawn.

31.Kf3 Kh5 32.Kf2 Kc7

17...Nd7! In this way Carlsen secures an edge. He has finally coordinated his pieces and can look forward to opening up the kingside with future moves such as ...g5–g4. On the other hand, White’s pieces don’t have too many prospects.

18.Qh5 Ke5 19.g4 f6 20.b3 Kf7 21.Qd1 Ke8? I think the World Champion could have done slightly better with 21...Nh8. Rather than force things immediately, he has time to make several slight improvements to his position while White is lacking a clear plan. Play could continue 22.Re2 Re6 23.Rg2 f6.

22.Qxf6 Ke6 23.Qh5 Kh5 24.gxh5 Qf4 25.Qxf4 gxf4

26.Qg2?! Caruana begins to veer due to time pressure; he will need to improve his clock management in future games if he wants to get better results! You can’t expect to fall into time pressure this early in the game and survive every time against Carlsen! It’s quite possible that Fabi’s nerves were getting to him and this caused him to burn extra time. I think 26.Qxf4 would have been the most practical move and although the upcoming endgame is unclear, it seems to me that White has enough compensation to hold the balance. After 26...Ng8 27.exf4 exf4 (Another option was 27...d4+ 28.Ke5 Qb7 29.Kh1 Rdf8 30.Kf5 Ke3 31.Kc1 and the position is roughly equal.) 28.exf4 Rdf8 29.exf8+ Kxf8 30.Qg2 Black is for choice but once White’s knight reaches f5 I think White will be okay.

33.Qe2? White’s position continues to get worse. Can he survive? Both sides are getting low on time. Best is 33.e5! In the upcoming positions there are several moments where this move would be helpful. The main benefit is that it cuts off Black’s protection of the f4 pawn and allows White’s queen to gain valuable counterplay against the opponent’s c6 pawn. Play might continue 33.Qh7 34.Qe6 Qh4+ 35.Qe2 Qg3 36.Qxf4 Qxf4 37.Qxf4 Ke5
38.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{xf5}}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{xf6}}} 39.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{xf6}}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{exh3}}} 40.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{xf7}}}+ \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{a6}}} (40...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{b8}}} 41.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{fb8}}}+ \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{c7}}} 42.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{f7}}}+ \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{d6}}} 43.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{xa7}}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{h2}}+} 44.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{c7}}}=). \\

\textbf{33...\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{g5}}}} 34.\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{h2}}} \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{h5}}}?! Carlsen misses 34...\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{f5}}}! when Black threatens \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{g3}}} followed by ...\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{g7}}} with unstoppable threats on the seventh rank. Even after 35.\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{f2}}}! \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{f6}}} 36.\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{d1}}} \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{g3}}} Black remains dominant and should go on to win.

\texttt{35.\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{f2}}} \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{g1}}} 36.\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{f1}}} \texttt{\textbf{h4}}}?

\textbf{37.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{d2}}}}? Perhaps there was too much to calculate with so little time on the clock but now it’s in Carlsen’s hands to win the game.

It’s understandable that Caruana would be thinking defensively but 37.e5! is absolutely essential. If White doesn’t take the opportunity now, he will be doomed to passive defense for the rest of the game. But it seems that Caruana doesn’t want to make any major changes to the position while he is in time trouble.

\textbf{37...\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{b7}}} 38.c3}

\textbf{38...\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{e5}}}?} This move keeps Black’s grip on the position but he misses a more forceful way to conclude the game. 38...\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{g3}}}! would have been an amazing shot! A beautiful exploitation of White’s passive pieces. If Black clears the white knight out of the way, he will be able to round up White’s queenside pawns and escort his own to victory. After 39.\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{xg3}}} \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{hxg3}}} 40.\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{fg2}}} \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{a1}}} White’s queenside will fall. Then 41.d4 (not 41.\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{h4}}}?! \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{xa2}}+} 42.\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{c1}}} \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{xb3}}}+) is White’s best chance for counterplay but it shouldn’t be enough after 41...\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{xa2}}}+ 42.\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{c1}}} \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{xb3}}} 43.d5 b5 as White’s pieces are too passive to cope with Black’s pawns.

\textbf{39.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{c2}}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{g7}}}?!} Carlsen wants to win the c3-pawn but it’s not worth it. Black’s f4 pawn is much more valuable because it keeps White’s pieces contained. 39...\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{b5}}}! followed by ...\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{f4}}} was worth considering.

\textbf{40.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{h2}}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{xc3}}}} Now both players have reached the time control, they can stop and collect their thoughts after what must have been an incredibly tense series of moves. However the damage has already been done to Black’s advantage and although Carlsen does his best to continue to create problems, Caruana defends tenaciously.

\textbf{41.\texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{xf4}}}} \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{d4}}} Caruana correctly decides to go for a forcing sequence which trades off most of the remaining pieces but leaves him a pawn down.

\textbf{42.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{f7}}}+ \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{a6}}} 43.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{gxg7}}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{gxg7}}} 44.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{e2}}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{g3}}} 45.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{g4}}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{xb3}}} 46.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{e5}}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{f3}}} 47.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{e6}}} 48.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{e7}}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{e8}}} 49.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{h6}}}! \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{h3}}} 50.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{f5}}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{f6}}} 51.a3 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{b5}}} 52.b4! \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{xb4}}} 53.axb4 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{xe7}}} 54.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{xe7}}} \texttt{\textcolor{blue}{\textbf{h2}}} 55.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{xb2}}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{xe7}}} 56.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{h6}}} 57.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{c3}}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{d7}}} 58.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{g6}}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{c7}}} 59.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{h6}}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{d6}}} 60.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{h8}}} White also has 60.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{h7}}}+ \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{b6}}} 61.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{h8}}}.

\textbf{60...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{g6}}} 61.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{a8}}}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{b7}}} 62.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{h8}}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{g5}}}
63.\text{h}7+ \text{b}6 64.\text{h}6 \text{g}1 65.\text{c}2 \text{f}1 66.\text{g}6 \text{h}1 67.\text{f}6 \text{h}8 68.\text{c}3 \text{a}8 69.\text{d}4 \text{d}8 \text{Not 69...a5? 70.\text{d}5!}

70.\text{h}6 \text{d}7 71.\text{g}6 \text{c}7 72.\text{g}5 \text{d}6 73.\text{g}8 \text{f}6 74.\text{a}8 \text{h}3+ 75.\text{c}2 \text{a}3 76.\text{b}2 \text{a}4 77.\text{c}3 \text{a}6 78.\text{h}8

\text{An underrated move which gives Black active play and has the potential to lead to wild positions. It’s been fairly standard in recent times to continue instead with 6...\text{d}d7 7.c5 \text{c}6 8.\text{d}d3 \text{b}6 9.b4 \text{a}5 10.a3, leaving Black passive but generally solid.}

7.d4 After narrowly missing victory in the first game of the match, Carlsen decides to try out the queen’s pawn in his first game with the white pieces.

1...\text{a}3+ Following 78...a5 79.bxa5 \text{a}5 80.d5! \text{c}5 81.\text{h}6! \text{a}3+ 82.\text{b}2 White will collect the c5 pawn with a book draw.

79.\text{b}2 \text{g}3 80.\text{c}2 \text{g}5 81.\text{h}6 \text{d}5 82.\text{c}3 \text{d}6 83.\text{h}8 \text{g}6 84.\text{c}2 \text{b}7 85.\text{c}3 \text{g}3+ 86.\text{a}2 \text{g}1 87.\text{g}5 \text{g}2+ 88.\text{c}3 \text{g}3+ 89.\text{a}2 \text{g}4 90.\text{c}3 \text{f}6 91.\text{h}6 \text{g}5 92.\text{f}6 \text{h}5 93.\text{g}6 \text{h}3+ 94.\text{c}2 \text{h}5 95.\text{c}3 \text{d}5 96.\text{h}6 \text{c}7 97.\text{h}7+ \text{d}7 98.\text{h}5 \text{d}6 99.\text{h}8 \text{g}6 100.\text{f}8 \text{g}3+ 101.\text{c}2 \text{a}3 102.\text{f}7+ \text{d}6 103.\text{a}7 \text{d}5 104.\text{b}2 \text{d}3 105.\text{a}6 \text{d}4 106.\text{b}3 \text{e}4 107.\text{c}3 \text{d}4+ 108.\text{b}3 \text{d}4 109.\text{h}6 \text{d}3 110.\text{a}6 \text{e}2 111.\text{e}6 \text{c}3+ 112.\text{b}2 \text{c}4 113.\text{b}3 \text{d}4 114.\text{a}6 \text{d}5 115.\text{e}8

\text{Draw}

And so finally the draw was agreed. A tremendously exciting game! The time pressure and missed opportunities make this game an instant world championship classic.

\text{Magnus Carlsen 2835}
\text{Fabiano Caruana 2832}

\text{Game 2, World Championship Match}

\text{1.d4 After narrowly missing victory in the first game of the match, Carlsen decides to try out the queen’s pawn in his first game with the white pieces.}

\text{1...\text{c}6 2.\text{f}3 \text{d}5 3.\text{c}4 \text{e}6 4.\text{c}3 \text{e}7 Ragozin’s 4...\text{b}4 is another system often seen at the highest levels, but Caruana prefers the most classical and time tested approach.}

5.\text{f}4 0–0 6.\text{e}3 \text{c}5

\text{An underrated move which gives Black active play and has the potential to lead to wild positions. It’s been fairly standard in recent times to continue instead with 6...\text{d}d7 7.c5 \text{c}6 8.\text{d}d3 \text{b}6 9.b4 \text{a}5 10.a3, leaving Black passive but generally solid.}

7.dxc5 \text{x}c5 8.\text{c}2 \text{c}6 9.a3 \text{a}5

10.\text{d}1 10.0–0–0 is an alternative that can lead to many complications! For example, 10...\text{c}7 11.\text{b}1 (Kasparov once won a nice game against Vaganian with 11.h4, but Carlsen was not so lucky when he tried the same move against Ivanchuk in 2008. Carlsen would go on to lose that game despite obtaining a promising position out of the opening. I wonder if that}

\text{Echos from the past}

Most of the people involved in the match – journalists, commentators, and staff – had a problem finding somewhere to eat because of the long duration of the first game, but no one wanted to complain. No one, except Fabiano, who quipped: “It is actually not that easy getting food late at night in London!”

If the first game in London was reminiscent of the 5th game of the 1978 match between Karpov and Korchnoi because of its length, the second brought back memories of a position from the 21st game in the same historic duel. The classical Queen’s Gambit Declined appeared on the board and, just as in that game, Black came up with a surprise 10...\text{d}8.

Carlsen seemed none too pleased, and he thought for almost 20 minutes before choosing the most cautious of all the options available to him. Later, at the press conference, he admitted he had been caught by surprise but also gave evidence of his vast knowledge of chess history: not only did he remember perfectly the theoretical battle between Karpov and Korchnoi – which was to be expected – but also many other little details such as how many moves that game had lasted and how long Karpov had deliberated over that particular move. Something that distinguishes top players is their impressive memory!

I think Caruana made a statement with this game: he showed that he was better prepared than Carlsen. He was undoubtedly still following his homework when he played 15...\text{d}6, a very principled move that poses some questions for the first player. Nevertheless his opponent displayed great survival skills, and headed straight for an endgame in which, despite being a pawn down, he had very good drawing chances. However Caruana was benevolent and didn’t torture Magnus for too long, so that night we were all able to enjoy dinner with our colleagues!
WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP MATCH

game was at the back of his mind when choosing his 10th move.) 11...a6 Overall, this seems to be Black’s best way of generating counterplay as the intention is to force open the queenside after 12.¤d2 (12.g4!?) 12...b5+

On the other hand 10.¤d2 is the more positional approach, although Black still reaches a decent position after 10...¦d8

10...¦d8

This rare move took Carlsen by surprise and he had some spicy words to say about it in the press conference after the game. I won’t repeat them but he was familiar with the important stem game between Karpov and Korchnoi from 1978. In any case, it appears this rook move has been underestimated by theory and represented a worthy surprise. It seems that both players have done a great job in preparing unexpected yet quality openings for Black. I wonder if we will see Carlsen test this idea again in future games.

11.¥e2 I think Carlsen might look for improvements in this line if he intends to repeat it in future games. Maybe he will consider the continuation 11.¤d2 dxc4 12.¤xc4 (12.¤xc4!?) 12...¤e4+ 13.¤e2 ¥b4 14.¤d8+ ¤xd8 as White then definitely has the more pleasant prospects despite the symmetrical pawn structure. Then again, perhaps Caruana feels he can handle the black position despite its passive nature.

11...¤e4! A new move from Caruana!

12.0–0?! Carlsen is a little too cooperative. He needs to strike Black’s center right away in order to do some lasting damage. After 12.cxd5! ¤xd5 13.¤e5! bringing White’s pieces to life, and not fearing 16...f6!? (16...¥d7! 17.c4 ¥xa4 18.£a2 ¤b4 19.£a1∞) 17.¤xd5 exd5 18.¤xf6! which leaves White with the better position.

15.¤e5? Much better is 15.cxd5! ¤xd5 16.¤e5! bringing White’s pieces to life, and not fearing 16...f6!? (16...¥d7! 17.c4 ¥xa4 18.£a2 ¤b4 19.£a1∞) 17.¤xd5 exd5 18.¤xf6! which leaves White with the better position.

15...¤d6 16.cxd5 ¤xd5 17.£f3 ¥xf4 18.exf4 ¥xe5! 19.¤d8+ ¥xd8 20.fxe5 ¥c7 Seeking active play by 20...¤d7!? 21.¤xb7 ¥xb8 22.£e4 ¥a5+ is an enterprising course of action, even if it means giving up a pawn. However 21.¤b1! would keep the game more balanced and is probably the reason why Caruana shunned the bishop move.

12...¥xc3 13.bxc3 h6!? 13...dxc4 was another interesting move as it leads to very imbalanced play. White’s pawn structure is worse but he will have active play in association with a timely ¤g5. Nevertheless chances should be about level.

14.a4 After 14.cxd5 exd5 15.a4 ¥d6! White again has the slightly more comfortable position but nothing Black can’t handle.

14...¥e7!

15.£e4! A new move from Caruana!

12...¥e4! A new move from Caruana!

14.a4 After 14.cxd5 exd5 15.a4 ¥d6! White again has the slightly more comfortable position but nothing Black can’t handle.

21.£b1 Though this looks quite natural Black can easily handle the pressure on his b-pawn. White really should have continued 21.£e4! when his activity along the diagonal and down the d-file would have fully compensated for his inferior pawn structure. Then after 21...¥b8 22.¤d1 b6 23.¤c6 h5 White again has the slightly more comfortable position but nothing Black can’t handle.

14...¥e7!

21...¥b8! 22.£d3 ¤d7 The straightforward 22...b6! is best. Black will continue ...¤b7 next and play against the weak queenside pawns.
23.a5!? Carlsen must have judged Black’s position to be unwinnable after the following forcing sequence, but 23...d4! = was simpler.

23...c6! This is best although not enough to win.

24.d6 e6 25.exd6 dxe6 26.gxf3 xf6 27.c4 e8 28.a6 c6 29.c5 d7 30.cxb6 axb6 31.a7 a8 32.axb6 a7

This is the position that White was aiming for. Even if he loses the d6 pawn, he should still be able to hold because of the difficulty Black has in creating a passed pawn without mass pawn exchanges. Carlsen now holds the endgame quite comfortably.

33.xg2 e5 34.b4 f5 34...xd6 35.f4 exf4 36.e3f4 and White should draw this endgame.

35.b6 e6 36.d7+ xd7 37.b5 e6 38.b6+ f7 39.b5 f6 40.b6+ g5 41.b5 f4 42.b4+ e4 43.xe4 fxe4 44.h3 a5 45.b7 g5 + 46.f1 g6 47.b4 g5 48.b7 g6 49.b4

Draw

Caruana decides not to play 115 moves again. The first two games are a story of night and day for Caruana. In the first game, he barely hung on after a number of inaccuracies from Carlsen. In this game he displayed excellent preparation and almost turned the tables on Carlsen. An exciting start to the match! Both players have had their chances and the future games promise to be very interesting.

![Diagram]

Game 3, World Championship Match

1.e4 c5 2.d3 d6 3.b5 g6 4.dxc6 dxc6 A repeat of game one, but who will be the first to deviate? Given the outcome of that initial encounter, it doesn’t surprise me that Carlsen wanted to repeat the opening.

5.d3 g7 6.0-0 Caruana is the first to try something new! The first game continued 6.h3.

6...c7 Up to here, both players had been blunting out their moves, even this relatively unpopular queen development. But now Caruana paused slightly before continuing with...

7.e1

This looks like a very normal move but it conceals a few nuanced effects. White threatens e4-e5 in some positions, which Black will almost certainly prevent by playing ...e7-e5. With the rook on e1 it will be much harder to carry out the advance f2-f4, which was the main plan in the first game. Therefore White will have to find a new plan for this game. What do Caruana and his crew have in store for us today?

Incidentally, 7.h3 has still been the most popular move in this position as well.

7...e5 8.a3!? And here it is – Caruana’s new way of testing his opponent! White wants to exchange on b4 so as to strengthen his central grip and

Editor’s Diary

They always come in threes...

It felt a bit weird to have a rest day after only two games; indeed there are quite a few organizational matters in the current World Championship format that provoked widespread criticism, and this is one of them. As so often, photos of Magnus Carlsen playing football with members of the Norwegian delegation emerged on social media. The champion also attended the Chelsea-Everton match later in the evening, and that ended – you guessed it – in a draw: 0-0!

The Rossolimo appeared on the board again, and to nobody’s surprise Caruana came up with an improvement on the first game, electing instead for 6.0-0. Also quite predictably, Magnus immediately chose a sideline and reached a non-theoretical position in double-quick time. We might say that has always been his approach to chess, and it wouldn’t make sense to change it here and now, when faced with an opponent famed for his top-notch home preparation.

In any event, the American emerged from the opening with a position that he described as "very pleasant", but then his optimistic projections for the game were dashed when he erred with 15...d2. "It was a bit of a blackout", he explained later. That mistake allowed Magnus to equalize and then even gain the advantage in the endgame. Nevertheless the third game ended in a third draw.

An irrelevant anecdote: if a player says j’adoube in a forest and nobody is around to hear it, does it make a sound? At some point during game three Magnus adjusted his knight on d7. He did say "j’adoube" even though Caruana was not at the board, but that was not audible in the broadcast. The game was rather uneventful, so this gave the journalists something to tweet about for a few minutes. And just in case, NRK (the Norwegian national channel) replayed that moment in slow motion, and Carlsen was heard to mutter something just before touching the knight; that was enough to dispel any doubts.
to activate his rook on a1. Black can certainly try to prevent this idea by playing...a7–a5, but Carlsen shows that this is more or less unnecessary.

8.¥e3 used to be the main continuation, as played in A.Shirov 2690 - M.Illescas 2635, Madrid 1996. There followed 8...b6 9.a3 ¥f6 10.b4 cxb4 11.axb4 0–0 12.h3 ¥h5 13.¤c3 ¥f4 14.¥xf4 exf4 15.¤d2 h6 16.e5 g5. In his comments to the World Championship game, Illescas considers 8.¥e3 a more precise move, because it puts more pressure on c5 and forces Black to capture on b4. In fact, despite the fact that he salvaged a draw, Illescas considers that the outcome of the opening clearly favors White.

8...¤f6 9.b4 0–0!

Clearly Carlsen has done his homework and has a great feel for these positions. I think most players would have played 9...cxb4 without much thought but this would give White better chances than he obtains in the game after 10.axb4 0–0 11.¥e3!².

During the game I wondered seriously about the continuation 10.bxc5! ¥d7 11.a4 which I thought would be most testing, but after 11...¥e8 12.¥e3 ¥f8 Black will collect the pawn with a reasonable position. But believe it or not, 11.¥e3! was a better way to go for the a3–a4 idea. Then the convoluted variation 11...f5 12.a4 f4 13.¥c1 ¥xc5 14.¥a3 b6 15.¥bd2 is suggested by the computer. True, Black now has the option of a possible pawn storm on the kingside but the subsequent damage to his pawn structure will most likely still leave White with the better chances.

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10...¥g4?! Carlsen aims to simplify the game at once with a pair of exchanges. Also 10...cxb4 11.axb4 ¥e6 is a perfectly natural way of playing, when White has the better structure but Black’s bishop pair and lack of serious weaknesses should mean that he is fine.

8...¥g4?! Carlsen aims to simplify the game at once with a pair of exchanges. Also 10...cxb4 11.axb4 ¥e6 is a perfectly natural way of playing, when White has the better structure but Black’s bishop pair and lack of serious weaknesses should mean that he is fine.

11.h3 ¥xf3 12.¤xf3 cxb4 13.axb4 a5 14.bxa5 ¥xa5

The series of exchanges has not helped White. Black proceeds to take control of the open file and White’s chances for an edge have slipped away. Now White even needs to be careful not to drift into the worse position!

21...¥a7 22.¥c3 ¥a2 23.¥b2 ¥xb2 24.¥xb2 f6 25.¥f1 ¥f7 26.¥e2 ¥c5 27.¥c3 ¥e6 28.g3 ¥f8 29.¥d2

37...fxe4 Around here, Fabiano only had about six minutes. I think all Fabiano fans were beginning to hold their breath. You wouldn’t expect him to lose a position like this but with every move that is played and every second that ticks by, you feel that something might be going wrong. 37...f4! 38.¥d2 g5! 39.hxg5 ¥xg5 threatens ...c5–c4 so White needs to find this key defensive move 40.¥e1! which clears the d2-square for the knight in case White needs to protect e4. Then 40...c4 41.¥xc4 bxc4 42.¥d2 Is the idea.

38.dxe4 Now the kingside becomes fixed and Carlsen places his hopes on the queenside majority:
38...c4 39.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{c}5\)

40.\(\text{xc}5\)! After this exchange there is absolutely no way for Black to make progress.

40...\(\text{xc}5\) 41.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{c}6\) 42.\(\text{f}1\) b4 43.\(\text{xb}4\) \(\text{xb}4\) 44.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{c}5\) 45.\(\text{f}4\) exf4 46.gxf4 \(\text{a}5\) 47.\(\text{f}5\) gxf5

48.\(\text{xc}4\) The most expedient way to end the game. There’s no hope of Black being able to win with the wrong colored bishop.

48...\(\text{xc}4\) 49.\(\text{ex}f5\) Draw

This was the most level of the games played so far but there were some nervous moments for Caruana around the time control. Nevertheless, all things considered, it was a relatively balanced game. It will be interesting to see if Caruana heads for this variation again. He was the first to innovate on the previous game, although it seems like Carlsen was prepared anyway.

Caruana? We will have to wait and see.

1...e5 2.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{f}6\) 3.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{c}6\) 4.g3 \(\text{d}5\) 5.\(\text{c}xd5\) \(\text{xd}5\) 6.\(\text{g}2\)

6...\(\text{c}5\) The classical move has always been 6...\(\text{b}6\) in this position, removing targets from the diagonal, and follow up after 7.0–0 with the development of the black bishop to e7. However, Caruana’s move is becoming a trendy choice and he has used it on several previous occasions against the likes of Anand, Aronian, and So. With Caruana’s recent experience in this line, Carlsen should have something in readiness for it. It’s also worth noting that both sides blitzed out these moves quickly and confidently. It appears that they both place their trust in what they have analyzed.

7.0–0 0–0 8.d3 Aronian’s choice in a game against Caruana (St. Louis Rapid, 2017) was 8.\(\text{xd}5\).

8...\(\text{e}8\) I covered this game in a previous analysis. I suggested 8...\(\text{e}8\) as a possible way of playing. In the aforementioned game Aronian went on to win, although it was an extremely complicated game with chances for some extraordinary tactics. Today’s game would not quite follow in those footsteps. Caruana tried 8...\(\text{b}6\) against Anand but the result didn’t go his way (ACM #04, page 30). The bishop is always loose on c5 which helps to explain this move, but I’d rather go with what was played in the game.

9.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{xc}3\) 10.\(\text{xc}3\) 10.bxc3 would help avoid the exchanges that ensue in the game, but it removes some of the dynamism from the white pieces and after 10...h6 Black would have a very comfortable position.

10.\(\text{d}4\) Objectively, this is a good move although it takes the game in a very simplified and peaceful direction. Black has other options but in a match like this the onus is on the player with the white pieces to make more out of his games. 10...\(\text{e}7\) is the move I would go for if I wanted to keep a greater number of pieces on the board.

11.b4! Magnus finds a nice improvement on Caruana’s previous game with Wesley So. 11.\(\text{c}1\) was Wesley’s move, leading to a fairly level position after 11...\(\text{b}6\).

11...\(\text{d}6\) An interesting choice which gives White the chance to make a structural change to the position. But I prefer 11...\(\text{b}6\) as it doesn’t allow White to exchange off Black’s center pawn and thereby retains the tension.

Magnus Carlsen 2835
Fabiano Caruana 2832

Game 4, World Championship Match

1.c4 Carlsen opts for the English! A new choice in the match. Does he have something prepared specifically for
12.\texttt{b1} 12.\texttt{\textd双x}d4! exd4 13.\texttt{\textd双x}d4 \texttt{\textd双}xg3
14.\texttt{\textd双}xg3 \texttt{\textd双x}d4 15.\texttt{\textd双}b1 may not appear like much for \texttt{\textd双} but I think the exchange of the d-pawn for the h-pawn is pleasant for him and represents a small improvement compared to previously. White’s play will then be very easy and he can advance his queenside pawns, trying to create a weakness.

12...\texttt{\textd双}xf3+ 13.\texttt{\textd双}xf3 a6 13...c6 was also reasonable.

14.a4 c6

\begin{center}
\begin{figure}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chess_board.png}
\caption{Chess board with moves 12...\texttt{\textd双}xf3+ 13.\texttt{\textd双}xf3 a6 13...c6 was also reasonable.}
\end{figure}
\end{center}

15.\texttt{\textd双}e1 After this move there’s not much sting left in White’s position. 15.b5!? definitely deserves proper attention. It cranks open White’s light-squared bishop and softens up Black’s queenside. After 15...\texttt{\textd双}xb5?! 16.axb5 White undoubtedly stands better but perhaps Carlsen also didn’t like 15...\texttt{\textd双}xb5, which creates an outside passer for Black after 16.axb5 a5. The a-pawn may indeed be a nuisance but this line would unbalance the game sufficiently to create chances for both sides.

15...\texttt{d}d7 16.e3 \texttt{\textd双}f6 17.\texttt{\textd双}e4 \texttt{\textd双}f5 17...\texttt{\textd双}d8 was also playable.

18.\texttt{\textd双}f3 \texttt{\textd双}xe4 19.\texttt{\textd双}xf6 gxf6 20.dxe4

\begin{center}
\begin{figure}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chess_board_2.png}
\caption{Chess board with moves 15.\texttt{\textd双}e1 After this move there’s not much sting left in White’s position. 15.b5!? definitely deserves proper attention. It cranks open White’s light-squared bishop and softens up Black’s queenside. After 15...\texttt{\textd双}xb5?! 16.axb5 White undoubtedly stands better but perhaps Carlsen also didn’t like 15...\texttt{\textd双}xb5, which creates an outside passer for Black after 16.axb5 a5. The a-pawn may indeed be a nuisance but this line would unbalance the game sufficiently to create chances for both sides.}
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20...b5! Fixing the target on b4. Once this move was played, a draw seemed almost certain. There was no sign of time pressure.

\begin{center}
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\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chess_board_3.png}
\caption{Chess board with moves 20...b5! Fixing the target on b4. Once this move was played, a draw seemed almost certain. There was no sign of time pressure.}
\end{figure}
\end{center}

21.\texttt{\textd双}ed1 \texttt{\textd双}f8 22.axb5 axb5 23.\texttt{\textd双}g2
\texttt{\textd双}ed8 24.\texttt{\textd双}dc1 \texttt{\textd双}g7 25.\texttt{\textd双}e1 \texttt{\textd双}dc8
26.\texttt{\textd双}c2 \texttt{\textd双}a4 27.\texttt{\textd双}f3 \texttt{\textd双}h5 28.\texttt{\textd双}f2
\texttt{\textd双}g6 29.h3 \texttt{\textd双}f5 30.\texttt{\textd双}xf5+ \texttt{\textd双}xf5 31.f3
\texttt{\textd双}e7 32.\texttt{\textd双}d4+ \texttt{\textd双}e6 33.\texttt{\textd双}d2 \texttt{\textd双}d6
34.\texttt{\textd双}bc1

\textbf{Draw}

Almost halfway through the game it seemed like this was destined for a draw. With that being said, White still had some chances for an edge out of the opening. 12.\texttt{\textd双}xg3 would have been an improvement. 15.b5 was also a good way for White to spice up the game. When I see a game like this by Carlsen, it makes me wonder if he is content to make draw after draw as it takes the match step by step closer to the faster time controls.
Experience and quick thinking, Magnus is still the better player. Caruana needed to take more risks and train more at fast time controls.

Vesna Dimitrijevic, Watertown, MA

During the regulation part of the match, Carlsen was almost playing with draw-odds, due to his clearly superior strength at the faster time controls. So Caruana needed to win the match during the regulation games. His one missing ingredient was, I believe, enough self-confidence to play aggressive moves such as 24...h5 in Game 8.

Jon Crumiller, Princeton, NJ

Magnus is the better rapid player.

Reuven Fischer, Narberth, PA

I believe that Fabiano should have taken more risks.

Jose Gaona, New York, NY

Preparation appeared about even in the classical games. But Magnus had much better prep in the tiebreaks, and this was ultimately the difference.

Allan Savage, Kensington, MD

I was ashamed by the lack of risk taking in long games by Carlsen. This match was too short by half.

Nicolas Renault, France

They were equally matched in classical chess, but when it went to rapid play Fabiano had maybe a 30% chance of winning. Magnus was a huge favorite in the rapid stage.

Kenneth Calitri, Mahwah, NJ

Fabiano’s calculation skills are the best there is. Visualization of what can be done with the existing position to get to a winning position is Carlsen’s great strength. Fabiano needs to hone those same visualization skills to be better than Carlsen.

Steven Chilson, Dumfries, VA

Magnus’ intuition. Both players are equal with enough time to calculate, but in rapid games Magnus’ intuition makes the difference. Fabiano should have taken more risks, especially when starting the second part of the match.

Philippe Chappe, France

Caruana needed to take more risks. The challenger must beat the champion decisively to claim the crown.

Timothy Brookshear, Decatur, GA

I think Caruana played in far too safe a way. He knew that Carlsen was stronger than him at the faster time limit. Therefore he needed to force/risk more in the normal time limit games, especially those in which he played White. For example, his decision to play the Rossolimo against the Sicilian was not a great idea. He played too safe, he had to risk more.

Alessandro Marin, Italy

According to French GM Igor Alexandre Nataf, Caruana’s stubbornness in playing for a theoretical advantage in the opening instead of aiming for a playable position with practical chances – especially in the tiebreak – prevented him from winning the match. Magnus is just a monster in rapid play!

Serge Lacour, France

It was decided by Magnus’ greater strength in speed games, but he was not able to show that he is the better player in classical chess. With a bit more luck, Fabiano would have taken the title.

Markus Mock, Germany

Both played at a high level in the 12 classical games. They made very few mistakes and defended well when they had an inferior position – so it wasn’t too surprising that the classical portion ended at 6-6. But once they moved on to the tie-breaks, Magnus’ superiority in rapid chess was the deciding factor. Magnus’ greatest strength was his ability to deal with Fabiano’s excellent opening preparation. In general, Magnus had a better intuitive grasp of the middlegame positions that arose after both players were out of their preparation. Fabiano needed to press a bit harder in the classical games in which he obtained an advantage, particularly in Game 8 where 24...h5 would have maintained a strong attack, instead of the too-slow 24.h3.

Kevin Wilson, San Diego, CA

The system. Magnus took advantage of the tiebreak system. Fabiano’s preparation when playing with the white pieces was unacceptable at this level.

Tal Haimovich, Israel

By playing it safe throughout the classical games, Magnus was then able to perform to his higher rating in the faster time controls. I think Fabi should have tried to take more calculated risks in the classical stage.

Brian Bannon, Saint Charles, MO

With regard to what was missing from Fabiano’s approach, who can say? I have two different answers: My more objective answer is to state that only when we ourselves are prepared to sit down and face the world champion in a match, can we then perhaps pretend to satisfactorily answer the question of how best to approach it to achieve victory. My amateur, fan-based spectator answer is of course to say that I wish Fabiano had taken a few more risks. But I would say the same for both of them. Perhaps then we wouldn’t have witnessed 12 consecutive draws.

Jeremy W. Treadwell, Bakersfield, CA

What decided the world championship match? What was Magnus’ greatest strength? What was missing in Fabiano’s campaign to win the title?
Full-blooded Battle

GAMES 5-8

AFTER HAVING PREVIOUSLY TRIED 1.D4 AND 1.C4, CARLSEN FINALLY EMPLOYED 1.E4 IN GAME 6. IT MIGHT HAVE BACKFIRED BADLY AS CARUANA’S PETROFF EVENTUALLY PROVIDED HIM WITH A STUDY-LIKE WIN – PERHAPS EASY FOR SILICONS, BUT NOT AT ALL FOR HUMANS WITH LIMITED TIME ON THE CLOCK.

Annotations by GM JOEL BENJAMIN

Caruana’s rock-solid Queen’s Gambit performance in Game 7 seemed to leave Carlsen disappointed, as he failed to gain any tangible advantage from having two consecutive Whites. In the next game, jaded fans were finally rewarded with a hand-to-hand struggle – an open Sicilian, as correctly predicted by many. Here Magnus opted for the Sveshnikov variation in the hope of hunting down his opponent in the complexities of a tactically rich opening. However, the hunter almost became the hunted, and it was only after Fabiano took his foot off the throttle that the World Champion was able to get back on solid ground and hold his own.

**A) 7...ge7** 8.axb4 0-0, when 9...xc6 dx6 10.b2 leads to play similar to Game 3. Young Magnus actually recaptured with 9...bxc6 (D.Stellwagen 2534 - M.Carlsen 2553, Wijk aan Zee B 2005), but he has learned over the years. There followed 10.b2 d6 11.d4;

**B) 7...b3 is also quite playable, e.g.** 8.cxb3 ge7 9.b2 0-0 10.d4 (10.b4 a6 11.a4 d5 was played in E.Bacrot 2708 - A.Grischuk 2761, Paris 2017.) 10...exd4 11.xd4 b6 12.xc6 dx6 13.xg7 xg7 14.c4 e6 15.xe6 fxe6 16.c2 ad8 17.c3, with a more pleasant position for White. J.Benjamin 2545 - A.Chuchachenko 2304, Internet 2014.

7.b2 Black cannot defend e5 by normal means.

When I saw this move, which can be found in my own repertoire, I didn’t know if I should be frightened or proud. It certainly leads to more lively play than 6.xc6. Curiously, even top flight commentators like Svidler were not up on this move, though it was soon pointed out that co-commentator Grischuk had defended against it last year.

6...xb4 I always found this to be the riskier capture, not to be played without knowing well what to do next. The safest way to play is 6...cxb4 7.a3, and now:

**A) 7...ge7** 8.axb4 0-0, when 9.xc6 dx6 10.b2 leads to play similar to Game 3. Young Magnus actually recaptured with 9...bxc6 (D.Stellwagen 2534 - M.Carlsen 2553, Wijk aan Zee B 2005), but he has learned over the years. There followed 10.b2 d6 11.d4;

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7.b2 Black cannot defend e5 by normal means.
Gurgenidze lives!

I will admit my ignorance right away; the name of Bukhuti Gurgenidze was only vaguely familiar to me, and I didn’t have a clue he had a variation in the Rossolimo named after him. I did know the line, though, and in fact I witnessed David Bronstein playing it in casual games a couple of times – along with his favorite Wing Gambit. Thank god, the first move in this round was made by the founder of Wikipedia, Jimmy Wales, and we could resort to his brainchild to check some basic facts (how did journalists cope in the age before Wikipedia?).

By a remarkable coincidence, one of Gurgenidze’s most prominent pupils was present in London; to be precise, she was in the very same room where the game was being played!

Nana Alexandria, challenger in two matches for the Women’s World Championship, was taught this opening by the Georgian champion, and she once employed it in an important game against Valentina Borisenko, almost half a century ago.

Anyway, I can tell you Fabiano caused quite a sensation in the venue when he went for this unusual, aggressive-looking line. However, Magnus was not impressed and he reacted quickly, demonstrating once again his vast knowledge of chess: he may not be the one uncorking the most opening novelties, but he is seldom caught off guard.

"It was a weird preparation this 9.b4 by Fabiano", commented Grischuk on Chess24; "It’s not like it’s something new, not even close to it... It’s a little bit cheap to hope that Magnus simply doesn’t know this move".

With a few elegant moves, like 11...c5 12.e3, Magnus defused the devices that Fabiano had brought to the board with his home-prep. And a fifth draw it was, but no one could blame the players for lack of combativeness.

12...b4 13.c4

Though natural, this move misses the mark. The engine suggestion 17.d1 d7 18.d4 may be a better try, but Black holds the balance with 18...g4! 19.d5 d4 20.cxd2 c8 (20...e8 and 20...c7 are also okay.) 21.c4 xf3 22.gxf3 c7 23.xe5+ xe5 24.xd4 f4 25.e2 xe3 26.fxe3 xc2 27.xb1 xc4 28.e5, and we have a strange battle between White’s central armada and Black’s doubled twin passed pawns that is predictably enough called dead equal by the engines.

17...d7 18.cxb4 a8 19.c3

Recognizing he could easily slip into danger, Fabiano thought for half an hour here. When asked what Caruana was thinking about, Grischuk explained that it was some analysis interrupted by thoughts of “why am I in this position?”.

13...a5! Fabi may have banked on 13...c6 14.d4 exd4 15.xd4 b5 (Other continuations can be worse.) 16.xd4 e6 17.b5 0-0 18.e3, where White has the edge.
19...¢xc7 On the surface, White has a stable extra pawn, but he has to sort out his knight, and the b- and d-pawns can become targets. The commentators felt White had more to prove here.

20.d3 20.¤g5 is somewhat preferred by the engines, and for Svidler, the only move "we don’t hate". Fabi probably feared his b-pawn would come under fire if he took pressure off e5.

20...¢b6 Black can solidify an edge with 20...b5!, freezing the b4-pawn for later attention. Magnus went for a direct plan which is more human but doesn’t quite work.

21.¥d2 ¦d8

22.¥e3+ 22.¤c3 ¥xd3 23.¥e3+ ¥c7 24.¤c1 is playable, but the Caruana continuation eliminates any difficulties.

22...¢b5 22...¥c7 23.b5 ¥b4 24.¤c1+ ¥b8 25.¤e1 is, if anything, a bit better for White, as 25...¥xd3 26.¥d1 is inadvisable.

23.¥c3+ ¥xb4 24.¥d5+ ¥xd5 25.exd5 ¥xd5 26.¥b1+ ¥c3 27.¥xb7

27...¥d8 This continuation elicited some oohs and ahhs from Yasser & Co., but 27...¥xd3 28.¥f1 ¥d8 29.¥c7+ ¥b3 hardly makes sense as only White can be better.

28.¥c7+ ¥xd3 29.¥f1 Now Black just has to be alert to potential dangers to his king: 29...e4 30.¥e1 mate is a graphic example, but even 29...h6 30.¥g4! could cause some consternation: 30...¥e4 31.¥d2+ ¥d3 32.¥b3 and Black starts to struggle.) 31.¥xf7 g5 should be sufficient.

29...h5! Not only preventing g2–g4, but ensuring the h–pawn doesn’t hang. The players head straight for the handshake.

30.h3 ¥e4 31.¥g5+ ¥f5 32.¥xf7 ¥xf7 33.¥e7+ ¥f6 34.g4+ Draw

Svidler wisely opined that Caruana was outprepared, but Carlsen slightly outplayed.

If you want to label 6.b4 in the Rossolimo a gimmick, you have to say that here, too. Magnus has been fond of swapping queens early in the Petroff, so Fabiano would have been expected to be prepared for this.

4...¥xe4 5.¥we2 ¥e7 6.¥f4 ¥c6 7.¥d5 ¥d4

Editor’s Diary

Black to move and mate in 36!

It was quite a tense moment when, at the beginning of the sixth game, Caruana chose the Petroff defense. Would he go for any of the lines revealed in the leaked video?

Up until now the outcome of the openings had generally been favorable to Fabiano; however, this time he got hardly anything, and "maybe I was very slightly worse", he admitted later at the press conference. But contrary to what had happened in the other games, this time the challenger outplayed the champion from an equal position. It looked to me as if the tables were turning, because during the game, and especially afterwards, I noticed Caruana was looking extremely confident, whereas Carlsen started to show some signs of frustration: I would even say the Norwegian was no longer enjoying himself.

However, later it looked like it was destined to be another dull draw, with a symmetrical pawn structure and a lot of maneuvering with the knights. But the position quickly became sharp after Fabiano’s 21...c5, and soon Carlsen found himself against the ropes, having to give up a piece for three pawns, hoping to build a fortress. It was the Norwegian supercomputer Sesse that set off alarm bells: Caruana had a forced win with a study-like move that would have led to checkmate in 36!

As both players explained a couple of days later, had they been given the position as a study, knowing there was a precise solution, they would have found it. But in a real game, with limited time, the story was quite different. The "solution" was completely counter-intuitive: "No human can willingly trap his own knight like that", tweeted Kasparov. But apparently Black could force a zugzwang and then release the knight from the trap...
To the fans, this line looks so offbeat that Caruana would surely have to figure things out at the board. But things are different at the elite level. Grischuk related a conversation he had with another grandmaster, who confessed that Black’s knight maneuver busts the whole line, and Caruana played it like it was common knowledge.

8.\(\text{\text{d}}\)xe7 \(\text{\text{d}}\)xe2 9.\(\text{\text{d}}\)d5 \(\text{\text{d}}\)d4 This is the part that had to be foreseen. White can’t take the rook in the corner without losing one of his own.

10.\(\text{\text{a}}\)3 \(\text{\text{e}}\)6

After a supposed World Championship record number of consecutive knight moves, the position quiets down.

11.f3 \(\text{\text{b}}\)4c5 12.d4 \(\text{\text{d}}\)d7 13.c3 c6 14.e4 \(\text{\text{b}}\)6 15.\(\text{\text{d}}\)d3 d5 16.\(\text{\text{c}}\)2 \(\text{\text{d}}\)d6 17.\(\text{\text{b}}\)xe6 Svidler thought Carlsen might keep more pieces on with 17.\(\text{\text{e}}\)e2.

17...\(\text{\text{b}}\)xe6 18.\(\text{\text{b}}\)f2 h5 19.h4 \(\text{\text{c}}\)8 20.\(\text{\text{a}}\)e3 \(\text{\text{e}}\)7 21.g3 To this point, Grischuk had provided comic relief with a number of stories, but groaned at the prospect of having to analyze such a dead position. But now things start to change.

21...c5! Engines like this move, but regardless, I think it’s a fairly significant choice in terms of Caruana’s state of mind. One major reason I predicted Caruana would have a good chance in this match was his ability to play without fear. We tend to frame quiet positions as a question of whether White will be able to get somewhere – even more so when Carlsen is at the helm. But from here it is Black squeezing for the win. Fabi is not looking to grovel for draws; he wants to press wherever he can. This aggressive posture seemed to flummox Carlsen, who gets outplayed from here.

22.\(\text{\text{c}}\)2 0–0 23.\(\text{\text{b}}\)d1 \(\text{\text{f}}\)d8 24.\(\text{\text{g}}\)2 cxd4 25.cxd4 \(\text{\text{a}}\)c8 26.\(\text{\text{b}}\)3 \(\text{\text{c}}\)6 27.\(\text{\text{f}}\)4 \(\text{\text{a}}\)5

28.\(\text{\text{d}}\)dc1 28.\(\text{\text{d}}\)xd6?! \(\text{\text{b}}\)xb3 29.axb3 \(\text{\text{c}}\)2+ offers Black the edge.

28...\(\text{\text{b}}\)b4 29.\(\text{\text{d}}\)d1 29.\(\text{\text{c}}\)7 \(\text{\text{b}}\)xb3 30.axb3 is the computer claim to equality. It’s natural to retain the bishop, but it gives Black a little pull.

29...\(\text{\text{c}}\)c4 30.b3 \(\text{\text{a}}\)a3 31.\(\text{\text{c}}\)c8 \(\text{\text{c}}\)c8 32.\(\text{\text{c}}\)c1 \(\text{\text{b}}\)5 33.\(\text{\text{c}}\)c8+ \(\text{\text{c}}\)c8 34.\(\text{\text{c}}\)e3 34.\(\text{\text{c}}\)e3 \(\text{\text{c}}\)c3 35.\(\text{\text{c}}\)c2 \(\text{\text{a}}\)xa2 36.\(\text{\text{f}}\)4 was discussed in commentary, and shouldn’t face any significant problems.

34.\(\text{\text{c}}\)c3 35.\(\text{\text{c}}\)c2 The computer suggests 35.\(\text{\text{c}}\)e2 but grandmasters are loath to give up the bishop pair so readily.

35...\(\text{\text{a}}\)a3! Caruana keeps the edge with this nice little move, targeting the a-pawn for termination.

36.\(\text{\text{b}}\)b8 a6 37.\(\text{\text{f}}\)4 \(\text{\text{d}}\)7 38.f5 \(\text{\text{c}}\)6 39.\(\text{\text{d}}\)1 \(\text{\text{b}}\)2 Fabiano wants more than two bishops now.

40.\(\text{\text{h}}\)5 \(\text{\text{e}}\)4+ 41.\(\text{\text{g}}\)2 \(\text{\text{x}}\)d4 42.\(\text{\text{f}}\)4 \(\text{\text{c}}\)5 43.\(\text{\text{f}}\)3 The piece sacrifice initiated by this move is a quite remarkable decision. It’s difficult to criticize it because White has no easy path to neutralize the passed d-pawn, but hard to applaud because the piece down ending is far from an obvious draw.

43...\(\text{\text{d}}\)2 44.\(\text{\text{d}}\)xd5 \(\text{\text{e}}\)3 45.\(\text{\text{c}}\)c6 \(\text{\text{f}}\)4 46.\(\text{\text{x}}\)b7 \(\text{\text{d}}\)6 47.\(\text{\text{a}}\)a6 \(\text{\text{e}}\)4 48.g4 White can only preserve both queenside pawns by pitching the g-pawn. But the pawns don’t get very far, so that option is not very appealing.

48...\(\text{\text{a}}\)a3! Once again Black profits from “blockading” the a-pawn. Without this resource Carlsen would have no troubles at all.

49.\(\text{\text{c}}\)c4 \(\text{\text{f}}\)8 50.g5 \(\text{\text{c}}\)3 The conventional
human wisdom of the day agreed that White profits from keeping an a-pawn rather than a b-pawn, as he has a bit more hope of advancing it.

51.b4 ¥xb4 52.¢f3 ¤a4 53.¥b5 ¤c5 54.a4 f6 55.¢g4 ¤e4 56.¢h5 ¥e1 57.¥d3 ¤d6

58.a5 White parts with this pawn with reluctance, as Black will be able to turn the full attention of his pieces to the kingside. But without this tempo-gainer, White’s king will be stuck in an awkward position and Black will find it easier to make progress on the kingside.

58...¥xa5 59.gxf6 gx6 60.¥g6 ¥d8 61.¥h7 ¥f7 62.¢c4 ¥e5 63.¥d5 ¥a5 64.h5 ¥d2 65.¢a2 Black’s pieces are well-entrenched and he can search for a breakthrough. No one was quite sure if Black should succeed, and I’m still not sure.

65.¥f3 66.¥d5 ¥d4 67.¥g6 ¥g5 68.¢c4

68...¥f3? Live commentators, Svidler included, often like to keep a more human perspective by working without engines. But anything goes in the chat channels, and it was impossible to ignore the bold statement put forth by Sesse, a Stockfish program running on a supercomputer. Svidler had been making the point that the engine evaluation was not relevant unless and until it made a substantial jump, indicating it envisioned an actual breakthrough, or at least substantial progress. Sesse went well beyond that by envisioning checkmate in 36, beginning with the star move 68...¥h4!! Though the win is demonstrable, it is not at all obvious on the surface. Caruana would in all likelihood catch it under old school time controls, but there was no obvious cue to take a deep think here, and with about ten minutes plus increment the players were motivated to play relatively quickly.

To make sense of everything, we must understand two proven “theorems.” Firstly, if the pawn advances to h6, Black maneuvers the knight to attack it and takes it off. Secondly, if the black king crosses to g8 and h8, it’s all over. With the white king deprived of squares, the h-pawn must drop or mate will occur. So 68...¥h4 creates a kind of zugzwang where White must inexorably give more and more ground. It works something like this: 69.¢d5 ¤e2 70.¥f3 ¥g1 71.¥d5 (71.¥g4 ¥g8) 71...¥g5!

Now 72.¢h7 and we have another zugzwang (72.¢c4 ¥h3 forces the h-pawn forward, while 72.¢b3 ¤e2 73.¥d1 ¥d4 and White cannot stop...¥f8–g8) 72...¥e2 73.¥f3 ¥g3 74.¥g4 (74.¥g6 ¥g8) 74...¢f7! Covering the g6-square fatally boxes in the white king. 75.¥h8 ¥c1 76.¥h7 ¥a3,

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69.\textit{h}7 \textit{e}5 70.\textit{b}3 \textit{g}4 71.\textit{c}4 \textit{e}3 72.\textit{d}3 \textit{g}4 73.\textit{c}4 \textit{h}6 74.\textit{g}6

This move keeps the center clear and the e7-square open for the queen. The advance ...\textit{d}5–\textit{d}4 is on the table, too. Logical as that seems, it is a new move in a position that has only occurred a handful of times. Caruana has kept the champion off-balanced by choosing sensible moves that have less of a track record.

12.\textit{e}2 Carlsen doesn’t seem prepared to chance a move like 12.0–0–0. 12.\textit{d}1 is the other option, but Black could still play 12...\textit{e}7 as 13.\textit{x}d5 \textit{e}xd5 14.\textit{x}d5 \textit{e}xd5 15.\textit{x}d5 \textit{e}6 looks like a way too risky pawn grab.

12...\textit{e}7 Caruana could try to juice the position with 12...\textit{e}5 13.\textit{g}5 \textit{d}4 14.\textit{d}5 (14.\textit{x}f6 \textit{x}f6 15.\textit{g}5 \textit{g}5) 14...\textit{e}6 15.\textit{x}f6 \textit{g}xf6 16.\textit{x}b6 (16.e4!) 16...\textit{b}6 17.\textit{ex}d4 \textit{ex}d4 but he is looking for a simple equality today.

13.\textit{g}5 \textit{d}xc4 14.\textit{d}2 The World Champion hopes the knight may exert some pressure on c4 after recapturing, but Caruana sees that, too.

Draw

14...\textit{e}5 15.0–0 \textit{d}7 16.\textit{f}4 \textit{g}6 17.\textit{g}3 \textit{c}6 18.\textit{x}c4 \textit{c}7

Black has mobilized all of his pieces without incurring any weaknesses. There is very little hope for excitement from here.

19.\textit{f}d1 \textit{f}d8 20.\textit{x}d8+ \textit{e}xd8 21.\textit{d}1 \textit{e}d1+ 22.\textit{x}d1 \textit{d}5 23.\textit{d}4 \textit{c}3 24.\textit{xc}3 \textit{x}g3 25.\textit{hx}g3 \textit{d}7 26.\textit{d}3

\textbf{Editor’s Diary}

Purely by coincidence, a couple of days before this game was played I had dinner with Ignacio Palacios-Huerta, a professor at the London School of Economics who specializes in game theory and behavioral and experimental economics. Ignacio was one of the first to point out an interesting fact – and he even published a paper about it – that having White in the first game of a chess match gives that player a statistically-demonstrable edge. This phenomenon, which also appears in penalty-kick shootouts in football, is even more noticeable the more equal the strength of the players, and reaches percentages of 60:40.

It is because of these studies that in recent matches the player who suffered the disadvantage of playing Black in the inaugural game was given the advantage of playing two consecutive Whites in the mid-point of the match, and this was the case in the seventh game. Carlsen played his second consecutive White, but again he didn’t get anything from the opening when confronted this time with a Queen’s Gambit Declined.

Once more Caruana was the first to come up with a new idea: a modest queen retreat to its original square, to which the World Champion reacted with extreme caution. “What I played was just too soft”, he admitted. He had a second chance to play actively, with 15.\textit{c}e4, “but I didn’t entirely believe in it”.

At this point in the match I even began to think that Carlsen was losing his self-confidence! His reactions, his statements, and even his body language, all seemed to be pointing in that direction. More than once I saw him reaching out to make a move, only to be paralyzed by second thoughts, and then leaning back in his chair again. And in sport, this dynamic often serves as a conduit: the confidence that a player loses is the confidence that the opponent gains.

10...\textit{d}8 This retreat is less popular than 10...\textit{e}7.

11.\textit{b}3 \textit{b}6
b6 27.f3 \( \text{b7} \) 28.\( \text{xg6} \) Carlsen creates some imbalances that don’t dent the draw potential.

28...hxg6 29.e4 \( \text{c7} \) 30.e5 \( \text{c5+} \) 31.\( \text{h2} \) \( \text{a6} \) White will not enjoy the classic advantage of \( \text{+} \) versus \( \text{+} \).

32.\( \text{d6} \) \( \text{xc3} \) 33.\( \text{bxc3} \) \( \text{f6} \) 34.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{c8} \) 35.\( \text{g1} \) \( \text{e7} \) 36.\( \text{f2} \) \( \text{d7} \) 37.\( \text{e3} \)

37...\( \text{f1} \) Black could probe a bit with 37...\( \text{c6} \) as 38.\( \text{e8} \) doesn’t present a great threat because the knight can become trapped after capturing on \( g7 \). However, it doesn’t look like the position is likely to move far from equality, so Caruana is content to repeat.

38.\( \text{f2} \) \( \text{a6} \) 39.\( \text{e3} \) \( \text{f1} \) 40.\( \text{f2} \) Draw

Carlsen can’t seem to get anywhere with White.

Fabiano Caruana 2832
Magnus Carlsen 2835

Game 8, World Championship Match

1.e4 c5 2.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{c6} \) 3.d4 The prayers of many jaded fans were answered by this decision to switch to the Open Sicilian.

3...\( \text{xd4} \) 4.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{f6} \) 5.\( \text{c3} \) \( \text{e5} \) The Sveshnikov was expected to be Carlsen’s choice. On the surface it is very sharp, but most of the popular lines for White are not immediately dangerous. There is a question of move order for Black. The main line is often reached with an extra move by \( 5...\text{e6} \) 6.\( \text{xc6} \) \( \text{bxc6} \) 7.e5) 6...d6 7.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{e5} \) 8.\( \text{g5} \).

6.\( \text{db5} \) \( \text{d6} \) 7.\( \text{d5}! \)

I think it’s a great decision to go for this important sideline. Not being a Sveshnikov specialist, Carlsen doesn’t have great experience in this line, while Caruana is able to get a preparation advantage. From our point of view, the imbalances created by this move promise a realistic chance of a decisive result.

7...\( \text{xd5} \) 8.exd5 \( \text{b8} \) 9.a4 Another good move that is not the most often played. Magnus has at least faced 9.\( \text{c4} \) a couple of times.

9...\( \text{e7} \) 10.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{0–0} \) 11.0–0 \( \text{d7} \) 12.\( \text{d2} \) This little known option was trotted out by Grigory Oparin in two games against Gelfand. It enables White to push \( a4–a5 \) right away by adding a protector.

12...\( \text{f5} \) 12...\( \text{a6} \) 13.\( \text{a3} \) \( \text{a5} \), tried by Boris Abramovich in one of the games, could be arguably stronger.

13.\( \text{a5} \) \( \text{a6} \) 14.\( \text{a3} \) \( \text{e4} \) After this move, we are already in a new position:

21.\( \text{c5} \) This seems the clear way forward, though Fabiano needed a half-hour to convince himself.

21...\( \text{xf3} \) 21...\( \text{g4} \)?! 22.\( \text{e2} \); 21...\( \text{f6} \) is playable, but Magnus decides that if he will have to face difficulties, he should at least present Fabiano with tricky decisions.

22.\( \text{xf3} \) \( \text{dxc5} \) 23.\( \text{ad1} \) There was a feeling that 23.\( \text{ae1} \) \( \text{f6} \) 24.\( \text{e5} \) was stronger, but it’s hard to prove that Caruana’s move is inferior.

23.\( \text{d6} \)

24.\( \text{h3} \) This “safety first” move shocked most online commentators, and indeed it is too tame to preserve White’s initiative. 24.\( \text{h5} \) would prevent Black from getting a proper arrangement of his pieces: 24...\( \text{g6} \) 25.\( \text{h6} \) \( \text{f7} \) \( \text{f6} \) 26.\( \text{e1} \), leaving Carlsen under major pressure. 24.\( \text{c4} \) would not be easy to deal with either.
A narrow escape

The first open Sicilian was received in the press room with loud exclamations of joy and enthusiasm. I was on the phone when Fabi played 3.d4 and the caller suddenly asked: "Who has scored? Are you in a bar or something?"

The expectation only increased with the following moves. Carlsen chose the Sveshnikov, and Caruana responded with the sideline 7.Qd5 instead of the most common 7.g5. It was clear that the World Champion was walking into the challenger’s preparation, very dangerous territory that he had managed to side-step so far. But Carlsen had faced this move a couple of times before, once even against Caruana’s second and principal theoretical adviser, Rustam Kasimdzhanov, so it was hardly a total surprise. The Norwegian played with great determination this time, and when he went for the aggressive 8.g6, everybody thought this game would be decisive. All the reporters started calling their respective newspapers to put them on red alert: “Reserve some space for chess, today is the day!”

For the first time in the match, White got a tangible edge out of the opening, and the most tense moment came when Caruana had the opportunity of playing 21.c6!, breaking on the queenside and securing a passed d-pawn. According to all the engines, this would give him a decisive advantage. The American thought for more than half an hour before he went for it, even though at the post-game press conference he admitted it was the only move he had considered. But a few moves later he made a big mistake when he decided to play cautiously with 24.h3, after which most of his advantage simply vanished. Carlsen seized his opportunity and lived to see another draw. "Just because you put pressure on Magnus, that doesn't mean he collapses or anything", Caruana said later.

This was the eighth draw in a row, which equaled the record of the Anand vs. Kasparov match in 1995. It was all a bit disappointing - especially for the American fans - and at this point we started to think that the match would once again have to be decided by a tie-breaker. The game was so fascinating that most of us didn’t pay deserved attention to Demis Hassabis, who was the guest of honor that day. Demis is the founder of DeepMind, the Google-owned company that created AlphaGo and AlphaZero, the strongest engines the world has ever seen. He visited the venue regularly - and played blitz with some of the personalities in the VIP area - but in the 9th game he was invited to make the ceremonial first move and join the official commentators for a long and interesting interview. At 13 years of age, Demis was the second-seed player in the World Under 14 Championship behind only his present interviewer, Judit Polgar. But a few years later, still a teenager, he designed a video game that became a big hit, and that changed the course of his life. Nevertheless, Demis has a profound love of chess, and he explained how the self-learning processes that have enabled his creations to master the games of chess and Go, could later be used to solve the bigger, more important challenges in the world, like climate change, design of pharmaceuticals, etc. "I think about AI as a very powerful tool. What I’m most excited about is applying those tools to science and accelerating breakthroughs", he said. As he had previously announced, on 5 December a paper about Alphazero was published by Science Magazine, which includes 200 games in which AlphaZero crushes Stockfish by 155 wins to 6. Kasparov was delighted when he had the chance to take a peek at the games: "I can’t disguise my satisfaction that it plays with a very dynamic style, much like my own!".

Editor’s Diary

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24...e8! The Norwegian was clearly relieved to get in this move, which virtually equalizes the game.

25.¢c4 ¢g6 26.¢xd6 ¢xd6 27.h4

27...gxh4 There is no alternative to split the pawns because 27...h6 28.hxg5 hxg5 29.¢h5 is too risky.

28.£xf4 £xf4 29.£xf4 h5 Indirectly defending the h4-pawn, because 30.£xh4 £g4 leaves the rook stuck badly out of play. White has only a cosmetic advantage.

30.£e1 £g4 31.£f6 £xf6 32.£xf6 £f7 33.£xh4 £e8 32...£f7 was a bit down the computer list because White can maintain an “advantage” by trading rooks here, though humans see that White can never win that way.

34.£f1+ £g8 35.£f6 £e2 36.£g6+ £f8

37.d6!? £d2 Of course Magnus does not fall for 37...£xb2?? 38.£xg4 hxg4 39.d7.

38.£g5

Draw

This was both a huge missed opportunity for Caruana and a big scare for Carlsen. Caruana has managed to create more action with White than Carlsen, though this was the first opening advantage for White in the entire match.
The rapid chess phase of the world championship match was decisive, as the faster time controls are obviously Fabi’s Achilles’ heel. But Magnus’ strength is apparent, irrespective of the time control. Fabi should have varied his choice of openings. Also he failed to take advantage of the few opportunities presented to him. One win could have made all the difference.

Manuel Infante, Oklahoma City, OK

I am not qualified to answer this question but I think Carlsen was able to avoid getting into enough trouble for Caruana to exploit.

Jim Duffy, Gonzales, LA

Obviously the quick chess format. Magnus’ strength seems to have been a bit better than Fabiano’s. In all fairness to Fabiano, his lack of experience in playing a match for the world championship took its toll on him. No shame in that. Hopefully, what he learned here will help him one day to rise to the pinnacle of the chess world.

Benjamin Soto, San Antonio, TX

Magnus won the match with his strategy of prolonging the match until the rapid tiebreaks. Magnus’ main strength is his superiority in rapid play. Fabiano should not have agreed to the rapid tiebreak format.

Omar Aguilar, Sicklerville, NJ

Both players seemed to lack a killer, risk-taking, element. They were very evenly matched in the classical games.

Mike Sakarias, Juneau, AK

It is simple: Magnus and Fabiano are equal in classical chess but Magnus is much better in rapid. Fabiano now knows he needs to really improve at faster time limits if he is to have a chance next time.

Christopher Moscinski, Bronx, NY

Fabiano failed to push when he had the initiative. Carlsen drew until he got to the rapids. Fabi needs Rapid improvement!

Dan O’Hanlon, Huntington, WV

The rapid games decided the match. The classical games were too closely matched to show a clear victor. Fabiano didn’t lack anything obvious in the classical games, but his rapid skills were not strong enough on the last day.

Rob Neal, Olathe, CO

Magnus’ strength at rapid was decisive. Fabi needed to take more chances at the classical time control.

Gary Andrus, Eagle, WI

Magnus is the much better rapid player. Fabiano was often strategically outplayed but held himself together in the complications.

Boris Dimitrijeski, Germany

Magnus’ routine in any competitive situation.

Jesper Knudsen, Denmark

Magnus’ ability to play better at rapid chess time controls. Fabiano missed winning the championship by not winning one of the regulation time control games. He needed to try an opening that Magnus was not so familiar with.

Michael Damey, Land O Lakes, FL

Magnus knew he could retain the title without winning at classical chess. He did not have to take any risks to try and win a game, although opportunities did arise that he missed. Magnus’ biggest strength is that he is almost impossible to beat. I’m not sure Fabi could have done anything differently. He played well enough to win but when you let opportunities pass by there isn’t much else you can do.

Timothy Kuzma, Pittsburgh, PA

Clearly the obvious thing to say is that the title was decided by Magnus’ superiority at the rapidplay time limit. So what was missing was a change in the match format – I suspect a longer match of classical games with no tiebreaks (if there is a draw then the champion retains his title) would have suited Fabi more.

Jeremy Hart, United Kingdom

I believe the biggest influence on the outcome was the existence of the rapid tiebreak and the known rating gap. I felt that Fabiano was the only one pressing for a decisive result for most of the match. Magnus knew he could play for draws and win the rapids.

John Frederiksen, Frisco, TX

Magnus is far better at faster time limits.

Bryan Embrey, Fremont, CA

Analysis.

John Busowski, Winter Springs, FL

For Magnus, it was knowing how not to lose. For Fabi, allowing the match to go to rapid. He might as well have risked more during the classical stage and lose a game there.

Alan Reed, Poland

Rapid chess decided the Classical world champion. Magnus’ strength lies in practical sporting match considerations. Fabiano did not take sufficient risks to create chances.

Mark Warriner, Henrico, VA

I don’t know why so many people are surprised by the classical result (6-6). Never in the history of world championship chess have the two competitors been so closely rated (2835 – 2832). I would have been surprised if
the match you are the world champion. In this way the loser of the
rapids has to push harder in the longer classical games to make the match more
interesting.

Cornelis Klaver,
South Africa

Magnus’ superiority at
rapidplay decided the match. Magnus’ strength was in
recognizing that he’d win the rapid tiebreaker and so he
did not need to take undue risks in games 1-12. Fabiano
started out uncomfortably in the big match, and could
not find a way to break down Magnus before the tiebreaker.
Magnus might just be too strong!

Lawrence Stevens
Beaumont, CA

The match was decided by the strength of Magnus in
rapidplay. He is superior to everyone else in this regard.
Fabiano’s only chance was to have an opening surprise
he could exploit during the classical portion. While
Fabiano did seem to have superior preparation, he was
not able to crack the Magnus’ defense.

Doug White,
Normal, IL

Magnus’ tenacity decided the
match. Fabiano blinked first
in the switch to a faster time
control. Fabiano had to press
harder, take more risks and
introduce more complications
at the slow time control and
grab an early lead. If either
player had won a game earlier
it would have been a different
match.

Brian Hulse,
Austin, TX

Magnus’ greatest strength
(and Fabiano’s greatest
weakness) is rapid/blitz play.
Of course, I find it outrageous
that the world championship
is decided by such play.
There’s got to be a better way.

Dennis Kosterman,
Madison, WI

That Magnus can’t win in
classic chess. He’s good at
rapid and Fabiano isn’t. The
challenger isn’t decided by
winning at rapid chess, is he?

Brian Gain,
Las Vegas, NV

Magnus’ strength is in rapid
games. Fabiano lacked
sufficient strength in rapid
games.

Emilio Zecca,
Italy

Clearly Magnus was much
stronger in the rapids.
Perhaps Fabiano should have
prepared better for this phase,
which was always likely to
feature.

David Halpin,
United Kingdom

Magnus is better in games at
faster time controls.

Dave Arganian,
Seattle, WA

Carlsen’s main strength is
objectivity and no mistakes.
Caruana may need to show a
little more courage.

Axel Eger,
Germany

Fabi certainly put effort
into deep preparation so as
to surprise Carlsen in the
opening. However it was
not enough, since Carlsen is
extremely good in the rapid
format of the game!
As already reiterated,
Carlsen’s strength is his
extremely strong intuitive play
– and raw talent.
The way Caruana could have
won was to assume he was
already a point down and play
a really double-edged and
complicated game! Carlsen
is not necessarily the world’s
best at calculation. With this
approach he might have lost a
game or two at classical but,
practically speaking, would
have had more chance of
claiming the title.

Thirunarayanan Sampath,
India

Both players have put some
fantastic chess on the board,
but Magnus kept his cool in
games 11 and 12 knowing
that he is a better player at
rapid.

Kristof Van Dyck,
Belgium

Magnus is nearly unbeatable
in classical chess, and
although Fabiano has
impressively closed the gap
between them, Magnus is
overpowering at faster time
controls. While Fabi has
improved at rapid and blitz, he
has no significant chance of
matching Magnus’ level.

Ben Crane,
Ithaca, NY

I felt Magnus was a
corporation playing the
match, engrossed more in
spreadsheets for best odds
– draws, then success at
rapids.

Leo Feret,
Gilford, NH
Back to the Drawing Board!

GAMES 9-12

ALTHOUGH THE TENSION WAS PRETTY HIGH EVEN BEFORE THE MATCH STARTED, IT FELT AS IF IT HAD BEEN INCREASING FURTHER AND FURTHER RIGHT UP TO THE VERY END OF THE CLASSICAL STAGE.

Annotations by GM JOHN BURKE

The two rivals continued to pose problems for each other over the board and no spectator could honestly say that the duel lacked chess excitement. Nevertheless, both contestants managed to keep their composure and even set a new record for World Championship matches by drawing every single game!

Magnus Carlsen 2835
Fabiano Caruana 2832

Game 9, World Championship Match

This game set the record for most consecutive draws to start a world championship match, surpassing Kasparov–Anand in 1995. Before a sterile position resulted, the game was full of fight. However, as often happens, things petered out quite quickly...

1.c4 Presumably tired of trying to crack Fabiano’s QGD, Magnus switched back to the English he played in game 4.

1...e5 2.¤c3 ¤f6 3.¤f3 ¤c6 4.g3 d5 5.cxd5 ¤xd5 6.¥g2 0–0 7.0–0 7.0–0 8.d3 ¥e8

The players quickly reached this position, which also occurred in Game 4, in which Magnus failed to get anything from the opening. This was also played in Caruana–Adams at the 2017 London Chess Classic, which I annotated in ACM #06, page 14. I expressed the opinion that Black is doing fine here, and it seems Caruana holds the same view. Here, Magnus decided to deviate:

9.¥g5 This is the first outing of this move in GM practice. It is basically a destabilizing move, intending to provoke a weakness after ...f7–f6, which is what Fabi plays.

Carlsen’s previous attempt was 9.¥d2, but he did not manage to set his opponent serious problems.

9...¤xc3 10.bxc3 f6 10...£d6 was also possible, since the bishop on g5 is left hanging in midair, attacking nothing. Although 9...f6 is by no means the end of the world, I’d prefer to avoid it.

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11.¥c1 This bishop comes all the way back home in order to go to b2, to support d4, and also to leave the d2 square open for the knight. To sum up the opening, Magnus has managed to achieve a new position with plenty of chances for both sides, which must be considered a success for him. Even though this position is technically “equal”, it’s a dynamic equality. Compared to the games where Magnus was neutralized effortlessly in the QGD, this is a major improvement.

11...¥e6 12.¥b2 Magnus goes for the direct plan with d3–d4. Another possibility was 12.¤d2 &b6 13.a4. This is one of many ways to play the position: a bishop will likely go to a3 at some point, and a full game lies ahead. Another idea in some cases is to play &b3, threatening a4–a5.

12...&b6 13.d4 So Magnus has staked his claim in the center. However, as Fischer once said, “to get squares you gotta give squares.” The drawback of this move is the glaring weakness on c4, which is already controlled by Black’s bishop and can also be controlled by a knight on a5 at a moment’s notice.

13...¤d5 Caruana could have gone for 13...¤a5 immediately if he had so wished.
The pawn on e5 will never really be hanging due to the idea of $\text{c}4$. After 14.\text{c}2, though, I don’t see a clear follow up. In any case, I don’t see how Black benefited from putting his knight on a5. It’s better to wait for White to commit before doing something like this.

14.\text{c}2

Now a key decision has to be made – ...\text{exd}4 or ...\text{e}5–\text{e}4?

14...\text{exd}4 The safer option. 14...\text{e}4 would have led to very double-edged play: 15.\text{h}4 $\text{a}5$, grabbing control of the key c4 square (15...\text{d}7, ignoring c4, looks insane but the tactics work out. 16.\text{c}4 $\text{xd}4$ 17.\text{xd}4 $\text{xd}4$ 18.\text{ad}1 $\text{c}6$ 19.e3 $\text{g}5$ 20.\text{xd}4 $\text{e}6$ Black wins back the knight and stands well. However, I don’t think anyone would go for this.) 16.\text{f}5 White should bring the knight back into the game before it’s too late. 16...\text{c}5 17.\text{e}3 $\text{c}8$. Black’s play seems very simple, and I certainly prefer this to the passive position Fabiano ended getting in the game.

15.\text{cxd}4 $\text{e}4$ 16.\text{b}3+ $\text{d}5$

Inviting a repetition.

17.\text{d}1 Magnus won’t surrender the white pieces that easily! The move that was played next surprised me when I saw it, but the more I studied the position, the more I understood the logic.

17...\text{xf}3!? This condemns Black to a slightly worse position and some suffering. Of course Caruana understood this, but it seems he was not satisfied with the alternatives. The logic is basically this – the drawing margin in chess is pretty high, so if it’s possible to accept a slightly worse position with opposite colored bishops and suffer a bit to hold it, why not do it and then enjoy playing the white pieces tomorrow?

17...\text{a}5 was the sort of abstract idea I had in mind for Black. Here, though, it’s not so great, since there’s no pawn on c3 to blockade. Black is no worse, but it’s not so easy to find a clear plan.

18.\text{b}3+ $\text{h}8$ 19.\text{xf}3 $\text{xd}4$

20.\text{xd}4 $\text{xd}4$ 21.\text{e}3 $\text{e}5$ 22.\text{xb}7 $\text{ad}8$

Editor’s Diary

The match heats up

The day after the 8th game was played, Magnus Carlsen posted a photo on his personal Instagram (@magnus_carlsen) sporting a black eye, under the header: “The match is heating up”. But no, it wasn’t Caruana’s 21.\text{c}5 move that had delivered the blow. As usual, the Norwegian decided to play a football match during the rest day, and this time he sustained a minor injury when he clashed with a NRK reporter. There was some blood, but Magnus’ doctor was present at the pitch and he applied some ice, which probably prevented the champion from getting a full black eye.

Another English Four Knights appeared on the board in the 9th game, and for the first time the Champion seemed to have obtained an edge from the opening. At the very least, he reached the kind of position that suits his style completely, very safe but with a microscopic advantage. After a series of “Black is OK” games, the last two encounters showed that White can still do pretty well too. But then, when things were looking a bit dangerous and he was also down on the clock, Fabiano carried out a brilliant defensive plan with 25...\text{gxh}5 26.\text{f}5 and 27.\text{h}4. After some tense moments a ninth draw was agreed, thereby setting a new record in the history of World Championship matches.

At this point in the event I had already given up taking photos at the start of the games: the venue clearly had serious deficiencies, and as my friend John Saunders put it, “as presented by the organizers, WorldChess, the building is about as friendly and welcoming as the Lubyanka in Moscow and totally unsuited for the purpose to which it is being put”. The space in the press room was between half and one third of what I would have considered the minimum, and we often found ourselves sitting on the stairs, or checking our laptops standing up, or trying to occupy other spaces, like a nearby playing area. The organizers reacted in their customary manner, confronting their critics and turning a small issue into a much bigger one, which sparked a PR crisis. The World Championship and the game of chess really do deserve better than this.
The dust has settled and what remains is a slightly better position for White, with a superior pawn structure and safer king (remember that 9...f6 move?). Normally Magnus is able to make his opponent suffer for 100 moves in such a position, and the fact that he was not up to the task indicates to me that he was not in his best form.

23.\textit{d}1 \textit{e}7 24.\textit{h}4 The kingside is where White’s pawn majority and Black’s weak king reside, so it makes sense to play on this side of the board.

24...\textit{g}6

Now Black can breathe a sigh of relief, as his position is absolutely fine. White’s king is far too exposed for him to dream of winning this game.

31.\textit{f}4 \textit{c}5 At last this bishop has brighter prospects than just staring at the e3 pawn.

32.\textit{g}1 \textit{xg}1+ 33.\textit{d}1 \textit{d}6 34.\textit{a}4 \textit{f}4 35.\textit{d}a7 \textit{f}e3 36.\textit{e}3 \textit{h}4 This is slightly scary, especially since Caruana had about six minutes left, but White has no mate.

37.\textit{a}4 After 37.\textit{c}3+ \textit{g}8 38.\textit{d}5+ \textit{f}8 39.\textit{h}8+ \textit{e}7 40.\textit{g}7+ \textit{d}8 the king gets away.

37...\textit{f}6 Technically, the a–pawn could be taken, but it requires nerves of steel! 37...\textit{a}4 38.\textit{c}3+ \textit{g}8 39.\textit{d}5+ (39.\textit{f}6 would leave Black with no checks, and this is the sort of thing that would worry me from afar in time trouble. He can defend in a variety of ways, but why tempt fate?) 39...\textit{f}8 40.\textit{f}6+ \textit{e}8 41.\textit{f}7+ \textit{d}7 42.\textit{e}6+ \textit{d}8 and everything is under control.

38.\textit{d}1 \textit{e}5 The endgame is a simple draw.

39.\textit{e}5+ \textit{e}5 40.\textit{a}5 \textit{g}7 41.\textit{a}6 \textit{d}4

So what we have here is an extremely
Razor sharp

You can’t blame them for not trying. Caruana and Carlsen repeated the same sharp Sicilian that they played in the 8th game, and much to everyone’s surprise Fabiano again adopted the 7...d5 line, demonstrating that this move was not a one-hit-wonder but actually the real deal.

The American was the first one to deviate with 12.b4, a new idea that yielded almost nothing: Carlsen knew – or found over-the-board – the right antidote, neutralized the novelty, and launched counterplay on the kingside. Then it all became double-edged and I would even say it was the only game in the whole match where both sides had real chances of winning at some point. “They can’t possibly make a draw from this position, can they?”, tweeted Nigel Short after 24...b4, a move with which Magnus created total chaos on the board. Even Anish Giri expressed the same opinion in a live broadcast, which I guess sums it all up.

Yes, it ended in a draw, but it was one of the most interesting and exciting games I have witnessed in a world title match in the last decades. I would encourage readers to skip this game for a while – until you have at least one or two hours to go through it! Take a seat in your most comfortable chair, set up your wooden chessmen and inlaid board, have a glass of fine wine at hand, and enjoy John Burke’s detailed move-by-move analysis.

unbalanced position. White will expand on the queenside with a4-a5, and potentially b2-b4 and c4-c5, depending on the circumstances. Meanwhile, Black’s plan is clear – he will try to checkmate White! ...f7-f5 is absolutely necessary, and then Black has a choice. He can play ...e5-e4 and ...£e5 at some point, as in Game 8, or he can play ...£f6 and ...f5-f4, as in this game. I must say I prefer the latter treatment. At first sight, ...f5-f4 looks like the move to play as that pawn chain is imposing! Then e3-e4 would weaken the d4 square (although it must be said the knight will likely be on a3 when this happens) and allow Black the undermining operation ...f4-f3. However, all of this is obviously very situational.

12.b4 I found this a strange moment to deviate from Game 8. 12...d2 was the move played previously, and I prefer it to 12.b4 due to its flexibility. I can only surmise that Fabiano wanted to avoid Magnus’ preparation, but the fact that he got a winning position in Game 8 should have been encouragement enough to repeat this move!

12...a6 13...a3 a5! This is precisely why I prefer 12...d2. White does not get a chance to clamp down with the move a4-a5.

14.bxa5 £xa5 15...c4 £a8

The trade on a5 has led to a number of repercussions, some in White’s favor, and some in Black’s. The first is that the queenside has been blown open, which is clearly something White is happy about. The b-pawn is a sitting duck, and will likely just be jettisoned at some point. Black’s position has its selling points too. The fact that the pawn has not been maintained on b4 means that blasting through with an eventual c4-c5 as in Game 8 will be much more challenging. That means that a queenside breakthrough will likely result in simply winning the b7 pawn. Although that is an achievement for White, it is not likely to disturb Black’s mating attack as much as a c4-c5 breakthrough, since such a breakthrough would completely expose Carlsen’s king.

16...e3 I must also add that one advantage of 12.b4 over 12...d2 is that this bishop did not have to waste a tempo when going to e3.

16...f5 No other move makes sense – checkmate is the aim of the game! With ...f5-f4, ...£f6, and ...£e8-g6 coming, Black’s attack looks scary, especially since all of White’s forces are concentrated on the queenside. That is why in practice I prefer Black, as his position is very easy to play even if objectively White may be doing well.

17.a5! Any other move would be inconsistent with White’s queenside plan of attack.

A common idea is 17.f3, to make a home for the dark-squared bishop. Then after 17...f4 18...f2 £f6, with ...£h6 and ...g4 to follow, White needs to be very careful.

17...f4 18...b6 £e8

Now is the time for White to come up with a plan. The only trouble is there isn’t an obvious one, at least as far as I can see. b7 and d6 are Black’s only weaknesses, but they are securely defended at the moment.

19...a3 This is a good move on general grounds, since the rook on the third rank covers key squares, particularly f3.

19...£g6 20...c7 Increasing the pressure on the d6 pawn and thereby preventing ...£f6.
World Championship Match

20...e4 Onward! ...f4–f3 is an immediate threat.

21.¢h1

21...b5! Just fantastic. Magnus senses the dynamic potential of the position. The first to hint at this move without the help of a chess engine was Judit Polgar, and as Garry Kasparov added shortly afterwards, “If Magnus Carlsen goes for it, he deserves to renew his World Champion title”.

22.¢b6 The first thought is 22.axb6, but the a3 rook is too valuable a piece to give up. 22...¢xa3 23.¢xa3 f3 24.gxf3 ¢xe5 would leave every one of Black’s pieces preparing to deliver a checkmate. Then, after 25.¢g1 ¢h6 26.¢c1 ¢h4, Black would obviously not trade queens as White has no long term defense against the attack.

22...¢xb6 23.¢xb6 By trading off his knight, Magnus has opened up his c8 bishop for action on the light squares.

23...¢g5 Clearing the sixth rank for a rook lift.

24.g3 No sane person would grab the pawn by 24.¢xb5, but apparently White can survive here: 24...¢f6 25.¢e1! Freeing the f1 square for a bishop retreat. 25...¢g6 26.¢f1 ¢f5 27.¢a4! This move, preparing to sac back on e4 (if we can even call that a “sac”), is key. 27...¢g4 28.f3 exf3 29.gxf3 Now the fact that the bishop covers g1 is relevant! This line is just the tip of the iceberg, but White is holding everywhere.

24...b4 Keeping the pawn for at least one more move.

25.¢b3

25...¢h3 Starting with 25...f3 would prevent White’s bishop from going to f1, but the drawback is that it allows ¢e1. The lines that transpire here are truly incredible. 26.¢b5 ¢f6 (Here, 26...¢h3? is just bad because of 27.¢e1 when Black has no follow up.) 27.¢e1 ¢g4

A) 28.¢xe4 Simplifying matters, but by no means forced. 28...¢xe4 29.¢e3 ¢g4 (I assume 29...¢xe3 30.¢xe3 ¢xa5 will somehow end up as a draw, but for now I’d take Black.) 30.¢xe7 ¢f5 is also possible, but it seems to me the worst is over for White.

B) 28.¢f1 ¢f5 29.¢xb4 ¢h6 30.¢xe4!! Again this fantastic move saves the day. 30...¢xe4 31.¢d4 ¢h5 32.h3 ¢f5 33.¢xe7 with a timely mate threat. 33...¢g5 34.¢e3 ¢xh3 35.¢g1

And by a miracle White survives...to an equal endgame. 35...¢xe3 36.¢xe3 ¢h5 37.¢xh3 ¢xh3 38.¢b6 Black’s second rook can never get into the game to mate White. For example, 38...¢c8 can be met with 39.¢c7.

26.¢g1 f3 27.¢f1 I’m sure this was a relief to Caruana, since with the disappearance of the light-squared bishop the likelihood of a mate decreases dramatically.

27...¢xf1 28.¢xf1 ¢xd5 29.¢xb4 White’s passed pawn remains, but his king is still not the happiest camper, especially with that pawn on f3.
29...£e6

30.£b5! A very accurate move to avoid drifting into the worse position: ...£f5 is stymied and the idea of £d1–d5 appears.

30...£d8 Magnus decides to head for more exchanges.

31.£e1 ²xb6 32.axb6 ²ab8 33.£e3 Now the game has turned and as long as the queens remain on the board, White has the better chances due to having the most important pawn on the board.

33...³c4 34.²e1 ²d8! Magnus of course understands the nature of the position and heads for the pure rook ending. And he also set a couple of traps.

36.²e1 Trying to trap the black queen doesn’t work: 36.³b3+? ²h8 37.c4 ²xb6! 38.³xe2 fxe2 39.³c2 ²b2!, while 36.³d4? is met by 36...³e3! 37.c4 exf2.

36...³xe3 37.³xe3 d5 38.h4! Another accurate move, in time pressure I might add. Luft is made for the king before an unhappy accident happens.

42.³a6! It looks slightly strange to put the rook here. Don’t rooks belong behind passed pawns? However, chess is a concrete game. The rook on a6 means that a7 is an important pawn on the board.

42...³e5 43.³g3 h6 44.h5! More precise play, not allowing any chance for Black to play ...g7–g5.

44...³d4? This is when the game almost took a shocking turn. In one move, Magnus goes from pressing to defending. The best chance was probably to try and corral the b6 pawn, say by 44...³d6, but due to the aforementioned ³a7 resource, that will never really happen and a draw would be a fair result.

45.³b5! Now, with the d5 pawn in serious danger, Black is caught completely wrong-footed. Magnus is able to catch himself just in time and save the game.

45...³d6! 46.³a4+ ³e5

47.³b4 The rooks are now in ideal positions for the advance c2–c4. However, it’s not enough to win.

47...³e6 48.c4 dxc4 49.³xc4 ³dxsb6 50.³xe4+ ³f7 White will win a pawn, but more important is the fact that he cannot keep both rooks on the board.

51.³f5+ ³f6 52.³xf6+ ³xf6 53.³f3 ³f7 54.³g3 Draw

If the colors were reversed you can be sure there would be a long game ahead, but in any event 3 vs 2 is an easy draw. In my opinion, this was the most exciting game of the match so far!

Magnus Carlsen                              2835
Fabiano Caruana                              2832

Game 11, World Championship Match

1.e4 Magnus sticks to his pattern of playing 1.d4, followed by 1.c4, and then 1.e4 in his white games. It could be said that it is strange to invite the Petroff, considering how little he got in Game 6 against it, but his other white games have not been spectacular either.

1...e5 2.²f3 ³f6 3.²xe5 d6 4.²f3 No 4.²d3 today! It’s time for some main lines.

4...³xe4 5.²c3 ²xc3 6.²xc3 ³e7 7.²e3

7...0–0 Caruana goes for opposite side castling. The alternative was 7...²c6 8.²d2 (8.²c4 was played in the infamous Carlsen–Caruana game from the 2018 Sinquefield Cup, in which Magnus built up an enormous advantage, made a certain gesture in the confession booth, and had to be content with a draw in the end.) 8...³e6 9.0–0 ²d7 This is a big mainline which has been played many times, including of course by Caruana.
8.\&d2 \&d7 9.0-0-0

So far things have been pretty much normal. Here, though, there is a big diversion. In recent years, two moves have been played much more than any other – 9...c6 and 9...\&f6.

9...\&f6 Caruana chooses this path, which could hardly have been a surprise to Magnus, since in the infamous leaked video there was a file with "Petroff 9...\&f6." It doesn’t take extraordinary deduction skills to determine that this is the line. Jon Ludwig Hammer, for example, did exactly that. Fabiano won a nice game in this year’s US Championship against Robson with 9...c6, which I also annotated for this magazine. He also made an effortless draw in the Olympiad against Aronian.

10.\&d3 c5 So here’s where things start to get a bit strange from a preparation perspective. Magnus blitzed out his moves until this point, when he tanked for 11 minutes. He could not have been surprised by 10...c5, since it is the most common and arguably best move in the position. Either he somehow did not look at this move or was trying to remember his notes.

11.\&he1 \&e6

A musical interlude

There is not much to say about Game 11, the shortest game of the match and probably the only draw which could justifiably be called boring. The previous challenger, Sergey Karjakin, was invited to make the first move, which was a nice touch by the organizers. It also came as a pleasant surprise for the uninformed players, since both Carlsen and Caruana are quite fond of Sergey. The Russian, always with a childish smile on his face, is indeed a very likeable fellow.

Caruana was not looking for trouble and entrusted his last game with the black pieces to his pet defense, the Petroff. Carlsen went for the main line, 5.\&c3, and timidly tried to get some play. No one expected Fabiano to go for 9...\&f6, one of the lines that appeared in the leaked video from the Saint Louis Chess Club, but he did. “He managed to surprise me. If that was indeed some kind of gambit, it worked well!”, said Magnus after the game.

Without any major stories to tell, much of the spotlight was on Juga, the Chilean singer who became a big sensation in the chess world a few months ago when she released her first chess-themed song, “Oh Capablanca”. You must be living on a desert island if you haven’t heard it yet, since it was even performed at the closing ceremony of the Batumi Chess Olympiad.

Juga was in London doing promotional work and also released a new track during the World Championship: it is entitled “Isolated Pawn”.

12.\&b1 This might very well be the objectively best move, but it leads to an endgame which Black should have no trouble holding. The sharp try 12...\&g5 has been played four times before. I’m sure Caruana was ready for it. “It might also be a draw, but it is much more fun”, said Karjakin. 12...d5! (Harikrishna made an instructive blunder against Karjakin: 12...h6?? 13.\&xh6 c4 14.\&xg7 cxd3 15.\&g5 \&e4 16.\&h6 \&g5+ 17.\&xg5 \&xg5+ 18.\&xg5 \&xg5 19.\&xf8 dxc2 20.\&d6 It’s too many pawns! White won many moves later.) 13.\&f4

12...\&e8! This is an accurate prophylactic move which will give the king access to the f8 square if White starts sacking on the kingside. 14.\&b1 h6 (Instead of this, Black has every right to play for an attack here by 14...\&b6.) This position was reached in H.Dronavalli 2535 – A.Kosteniuk 2542, World Team Chess Championship 2017. White should really bail out here. 15.\&xh6 (15.\&xf6?! \&xf6 was the game continuation, Black is slightly better.) 15...gxh6 16.\&xe6 fxe6 17.\&g3+ \&f8 18.\&d6 \&d6 19.\&xh6+ \&g8 20.\&g6+.
13.\textit{c4} There’s no convenient way to avoid the queen trade. After 13.a3 c4! 14.\textit{e2} \textit{e4} 15.\textit{c1} d5 the knight on e4 is very strong, and Black has good reason to be optimistic. White is miles away from drumming up any attack, while Black already threatens ...\textit{xc3+}.

13...\textit{xd2} 14.\textit{xd2} \textit{h6} 15.\textit{h4} This forces matters, but as often happens with forcing moves, the game fizzles out. White retains a slight edge with 15.h3 but I have a feeling that Caruana would hold this without breaking a sweat.

15...\textit{fe8} 16.\textit{g6}

It’s important to note two things here.
1) Black cannot avoid losing a pawn.
2) Black draws easily even down a pawn.

26...\textit{a6} 27.\textit{a3} \textit{b8} 28.\textit{c7} \textit{b5} 29.\textit{d6}+ \textit{e8} 30.\textit{xc5} \textit{h5}

White’s pawn majority is on the queenside, but any passer that he will create there will be firmly blockaded. There’s no way to make progress on the kingside either, since Black will put his bishop on e6, pawn on g6, and hold the fort.

31.\textit{e3} \textit{d7} 32.\textit{d4} \textit{g6} 33.\textit{g3} \textit{xe2} 34.\textit{f8} \textit{c6} 35.\textit{b3} \textit{d1} 36.\textit{d3} \textit{g4} 37.\textit{c4} \textit{e6} 38.\textit{d4} \textit{bxc4} 39.\textit{bxc4} \textit{g4} 40.\textit{c5} \textit{e6} 41.\textit{h6} \textit{d5} 42.\textit{e3} \textit{e6} 43.\textit{e5} \textit{d5} 44.\textit{f4} \textit{e6} 45.\textit{g5} \textit{d5} 46.\textit{g4} \textit{hxg4} 47.\textit{fxg4} \textit{a2} 48.\textit{g5} \textit{b3} 49.\textit{f6} \textit{a2} 50.\textit{h4} \textit{b3} 51.\textit{f4} \textit{a2} 52.\textit{e7} \textit{b3} 53.\textit{f6} \textit{a2} 54.\textit{f5}

8...\textit{e7} Magnus is the first to deviate from 8...\textit{b8} of Games 8 and 10. Now the knight has a new destination: g6.

9.\textit{c4} \textit{g6} 9...\textit{f5} has been played more often than Magnus’ move, but it seems weaker: 10.\textit{d3} \textit{e7} 11.0-0 0-0 12.\textit{f4} The main drawback of the knight’s position is that it invites this move. 12...\textit{a6} 13.\textit{c3} and White is slightly better.

10.\textit{a4} Inconveniencing the king at once is the best way to take advantage of Black’s setup.

\textbf{Fabiano Caruana} 2832
\textbf{Magnus Carlsen} 2835

Game 12, World Championship Match

With the score tied, it’s pretty clear from his postgame press conference and his moves that Magnus went into this game with a safety-first attitude, only focusing on trying to get to tie-breaks.

1.\textit{e4} c5 Before the game, I was quite sure that Magnus would stick to the Sicilian instead of deviating with 1...e5. The logic is this – if Fabiano had killer preparation in the Sicilian, he likely would have revealed it already. However, if Magnus played 1...e5, he might run into a really powerful idea, since he had not forced Fabiano to reveal anything there.

2.\textit{f3} \textit{c6} 3.\textit{d4} \textit{cxd4} 4.\textit{cxd4} \textit{f6} 5.\textit{c3} e5 6.\textit{d5} \textit{b6} 7.\textit{d5} Caruana is a very principled player, so it’s no surprise that he sticks to the same line as in the past couple games. It guarantees an unbalanced position, which is ideal for playing for a win.

7...\textit{xd5} 8.\textit{exd5}

8...\textit{e7} Magnus is the first to deviate from 8...\textit{b8} of Games 8 and 10. Now the knight has a new destination: g6.

9.\textit{c4} \textit{g6} 9...\textit{f5} has been played more often than Magnus’ move, but it seems weaker: 10.\textit{d3} \textit{e7} 11.0-0 0-0 12.\textit{f4} The main drawback of the knight’s position is that it invites this move. 12...\textit{a6} 13.\textit{c3} and White is slightly better.

10.\textit{a4} Inconveniencing the king at once is the best way to take advantage of Black’s setup.

54...\textit{b1} This is required, but obviously both players saw it a mile away. Now White doesn’t get a passed pawn.

55.\textit{f2} \textit{c2} 

\textbf{Draw}

55...\textit{xf5}?? 56.\textit{h5} winning is not something either player would ever fall for!
10...d7 11.b4 f5 The chess world held their collective breaths as a repetition was offered, but Fabiano had other plans.
11...b8 has been far more common, but it’s no surprise that I prefer what Magnus did. After 12.h4!, just as in the game, 12...h5 13.e2 a6 14.c3 e7 15.g3 Black is slightly behind compared to the game continuation, as he would certainly like to have the moves ...c7 and ...f5 included.

12.h4 The most common move, and the most obvious one. Knights on b3, b6, g3, and g6 are often targets for pawn pushes like this.

12...h5 A novelty, but an obvious one. Magnus was still blitzing at this point. 12...a6 was seen in a game by Kramnik at this year’s Olympiad. 13.h5! f4 14.c3 e7 15.e3 d3+ 16.cxd3 cxd3 17.h6 0-0? (17...g6 was necessary, when the position is pleasant for White, but not more than that.) 18.d1 White won a far from perfect game in V.Kramnik 2779 - M.Roganovic 2527, Batumi 2018. However instead, 18.hxg7, connected with the idea of castling queenside, would have given White a clear advantage.

13.a4 d7 14.b4 f5

15.e3 Still no repetition! One of the

A dozen draws... and so on to the rapids

The duel between Caruana and Carlsen now had the dubious honor of becoming the first World Championship match in which all the games ended in a draw. And particularly this draw, played in the last of the 12 scheduled classical games, was anti-climactic in the extreme.

It was the moment of truth for Fabiano: he knew perfectly well that Carlsen is a stronger player than him in rapid time controls, and here the American had the white pieces and one last chance to avoid that dreaded scenario. Fresh in everyone’s mind was the last game of the New York match, two years ago, when Magnus went for general simplification and didn’t hide just how satisfied he was to take the match to tie-breaks. But it shouldn’t have been so easy for him this time.

However, for the first time Carlsen clearly outprepared Caruana in the opening. The Norwegian came up with a new plan starting with 8...e7, following with 11...f5, and finally getting a new position on the board after 12...h5. “This is going to get really dirty really soon”, commented Aronian during his appearance as star guest on the Chess.com broadcast. In the packed press room, we got the impression that Caruana had overestimated his position, and probably 21.h2 was the start of his problems: the move looked interesting and ambitious, but the plan behind it proved to be too slow, and castling queenside was probably not the best of choices. “I had a very clear path with ...a5 and ...e4 which gave me a completely safe position that I could maybe play for a win and it seemed nonsense for me to go for anything else. Everybody could see that I wasn’t really necessarily going for the maximum. I just wanted a position that was completely safe and where I could put some pressure”, explained Carlsen in the press conference. But even being cautious, the World Champion managed to take over the whole board, and you could feel the storm brewing over Caruana’s king. Moreover the American was well behind on the clock too.

And then it happened: all of a sudden we saw the players shaking hands in the video broadcast. Some even thought that Fabiano had resigned! But it turned out it was Carlsen who offered him a draw, which the challenger accepted without a second thought.

“I was relieved, because I thought it was quite close today”, Caruana said a few minutes later: “During the game I was very worried. When you feel like you’re on the brink of defeat, or at least you had a very dangerous position, getting away with a draw is of course quite good.”

Kramnik and Kasparov, who were doing commentary for the Saint Louis Chess Club broadcast, were quite outspoken about their disappointment. Especially Vladimir: “It is a shame. He is just better without any risk. How can you offer a draw? Something is wrong with Magnus. I think he cannot withstand the pressure”. And he went on: “He’s a great chess player but this is not the way you play a World Championship. You have to fight, especially in such positions. It’s frankly showing such a weakness. I can understand if he would be one point ahead, and maybe offer a draw in this position, but maybe not. It’s just absurd. I’m completely shocked”.

Garry was a bit less harsh with his comments but was pointing in the same direction. Minutes after the game had ended, he tweeted: “In light of this shocking draw offer from Magnus in a superior position with more time, I reconsider my evaluation of him being the favorite in rapids. Tie-breaks require tremendous nerves and he seems to be losing his”.

The World Champion couldn’t care less about his predecessors’ criticisms, and he also declared to have no interest on how the engines assessed his position. “At this point I probably was not in the right mindset to go for it”, is how he excused himself. “I made a sporting decision that I felt very comfortable with at the time, and I would have believed it to be the right one regardless of the result in the tie-breaks”, he added later, after retaining the crown.
differences between the line 15.¥e2 a6 16.¤c3 ¤f4 and the one after 11...£b8 is that this becomes promising: 17.¥xf4 exf4 18.£xb7 ¥e7 Black’s quick development and pressure on the h4 pawn give him full compensation.

15...a6 16.¤c3

16...£c7 If Magnus had a reason to go all–out in this game, he may have selected this pawn sacrifice: 16...£e7 17.¥xb7 0–0 18.0–0–0 ¥xh4. It’s a complete mess. What I can predict is that one side will likely mate the other!

17.g3 In the same way that such g6 knights are destined to be attacked by an h–pawn, they are also commonly dominated by pawns in the same way that the g3 pawn does here.

18...£f8 Magnus was still playing quickly at this point. Whether he was just playing natural moves or was still in his preparation is unclear, but this knight should definitely be relocated from g6 in any event. On d7 it will control the c5 and b6 squares, and could jump to f6 if ever necessary.

19.¥e4 ¤d7 20.£d3 0–0

21.¥h2!? This is a clear signal that Caruana is going for it – he wants to castle queenside! It looks very risky to me, as White can come under attack there.

21...£b8 The most natural, preparing f5. 22.¥d2 f5 23.¤e5 ¥xg5 24.¥xg5 e4 (24...b5, immediately striking at the pawns, is probably what I would do, and Black is doing okay.) 25.¥e2 ¤e5 26.¥ac1 and White is slightly better due to Black’s terrible bishop.

21...¥a5 22.0–0–0 ¥g6 23.¤c2 The rook lift has been completed, and the plus side of this operation is that after ...f5–f4 White’s king won’t be on the kingside. The downside is that the king will find itself under a whole new flurry of threats on the queenside!

23...f5

24.¥f2!? If the knight has to go here, something’s clearly off. 24.¤e5 was technically better, but I completely understand why Caruana didn’t go for it. 24...¥xg5 25.hxg5 (25.¥xg5? ¤c5 is basically unplayable, since moving the bishop will run into ...f4.) 25...e4 26.¥f1 (Opening the file by 26.fxe4 can only benefit Black after 26...fxe4 27.¥e2 ¤e5.) 26...f4 27.¥xf4 ¤c5 28.¥xe4 ¥xe4 looks very frightening for White, but maybe it was better to risk it than to accept the passivity of the game. But of course that’s easy for me to say after the fact and from the comfort of my home and with nothing on the line!

24...£c6 25.f4? This puts a stop to Black’s ...f5–f4 forever, but the cure is worse than the disease. The line 25.¥b1 ¥xd3 26.¥xd3 f4 27.gxf4 ¤h4 is an example of the type of thing Caruana was trying to avoid by playing f2–f4. 25.¥xc5 is an absolutely
The game continued:

29.\texttt{h3} \texttt{a4} 30.\texttt{b3} \texttt{xb3} This obviously isn’t forced, and returning to e8 is probably better, but it’s a fun line to look at. 31.\texttt{axb3} \texttt{xb3} 32.\texttt{e1} b5 33.\texttt{c5}! Completely forced, to keep the b-file closed. 33...\texttt{xc5} The game is insane, with all three results possible. Obviously Magnus would never go for this!

26.\texttt{d2} \texttt{e4} 27.\texttt{e2} \texttt{e8} Even here, it’s obvious that Black is still well on top. The main problem isn’t even that White’s position is so bad, but it’s more that he has absolutely zero active ideas.

25...\texttt{a5}? This moment for me is the biggest illustration of Magnus’ mindset during this game. He sees a way to lock things up and reach a safe, unlosable position, but this was already the exact moment to grab the bull by the horns! 25...\texttt{exf4} 26.\texttt{xf4} b5! I am sure that in any other situation, including, say, Game 1 of the match, Magnus would have played this move. It looks so tempting to rip everything open in front of White’s king. 27.\texttt{d2} \texttt{f6}, and the attack is too powerful for White to resist long-term.

28.\texttt{b1} \texttt{f6} 29...\texttt{xb3}+-. There is also a fun line to look at. 31.\texttt{axb3} 32.\texttt{e1} b5 33.\texttt{c5}! Completely forced, to keep the b-file closed. 33...\texttt{xc5} The game is insane, with all three results possible. Obviously Magnus would never go for this!

30...\texttt{g6} 31.\texttt{d1} \texttt{a8} Now everyone, including me, was absolutely shocked by Magnus’ draw offer here. I agree that it is surprising, very surprising in fact, but it’s not insane. The thing is, it is very difficult to change your mindset in the heat of the battle. Before the game, Magnus was satisfied with a draw. As he gradually got an advantage in this game, he continued to play to minimize risk, as he himself admitted at the press conference. In this position, while it is clear that Black stands better, what does this mean without a plan? I am not saying that Black does not have plans and ideas here, but at the very least there’s nothing obvious. So, from Magnus’ perspective, what’s the point of continuing to grind and risk when you can achieve what your goal was going into the game? I’m not saying it’s the right thing to do. In fact, it’s especially surprising that the same Carlsen who declined draws in the final games of the 2013 Sinquefield Cup and World Championship match would offer a draw here. What I am saying is that it makes some degree of sense. How much sense it makes can definitely be debated, but it definitely makes sense. This was a very disappointing end to the classical portion of the match, and may have taken a toll on the public image of chess as a whole, but sometimes you just have to respect that the players do what they feel is best for them.

Draw
A Rapid Defeat!

TIE-BREAK 1-3

AS SOON AS THE LAST CLASSICAL GAME WAS OVER, THE CRITICS CAME OUT IN FORCE TO SLAM CARLSEN FOR AGREEING A DRAW IN A FAVORABLE POSITION. HOWEVER, THIS VERBAL ASSAULT MERELY SERVED TO ROUSE THE LION KING WHO THEN PROCEEDED TO DEMONSTRATE THE MARGIN OF HIS SUPERIORITY AT RAPID PLAY. THE FINAL RESULT WAS NO LONGER IN DOUBT.

Annotations by GM JOHN BURKE

One would think that gambling everything on a single card is too risky. No matter how superior Magnus is in rapid chess, in this brand of chess inspiration and confidence probably play a bigger role. Everybody has good and bad days and this will be reflected all the more in rapid play, making results of games possibly more random. Having to defend your title in rapid would probably be a worrisome scenario for most players, but not for Carlsen: for his second title defense in a row, the World Champion happily proceeded to tie-breaks, without any fear. And the results proved him right.

Magnus played the tie-break games with energy and confidence. He even gave the impression that he was better prepared for the rapid games than those at classical rate, as he seemed to be familiar with the positions that arose in all three of the tie-break encounters. It was quite an exhibition, and those at classical rate, as he seemed to be familiar with the positions that gave the impression that he was better prepared for the rapid games than

![Chess diagram]

1...e5 2.¤c3 ¤f6

1.c4 So it begins! Magnus has arguably gotten the most interesting and novel positions with the English, so why not try it in the rapid.

1...e5 2.¤c3 ¤f6

3.g3 In the previous games Magnus played 3.¤f3 ¤c6 4.g3, but the move order he chooses now prevents the line Fabiano played there: 4...d5 5.cxd5 ¤xd5 6.¤g2 ¤c5 - that’s the difference: this move is not possible in the current game.

3...b4 3...d5 is of course still playable: 4.cxd5 ¤xd5 5.¤g2 ¤b6 has been seen thousands of times and is perfectly viable, but Fabiano adopted a different approach.

4.e4 Magnus is determined to play a reversed Rossolimo!

4...0-0 It makes a lot of sense to double the pawns while the option is still available: 4...¤xc3 5.dxc3 0-0 6.¤g2 would lead to the exact same structure as in Games 1 and 3, with colors reversed. (6.f3 is also an option, intending to put the knight on f2 via h3).

5.¤ge2
5...c6 5...d6 6...g2 ¤c6 7.0–0 ¤c5 8.d3 would have led to a slower type of game, but one which is easy to play for White, as he has a clear plan of playing h2–h3, ¤h2, and f2–f4.

Another option was 5...b5! This insane gambit line was definitely not off the radar. Remember 6.b4 in Game 3? After 6.cxb5 a6 Black gets to have all the fun, even though the position is just equal.

6...g2 a6?! Not the best plan. The idea of playing ...b7–b5 is natural, but the position is already surprisingly difficult for Black.

7.0–0 b5 8.d4 d6 8...exd4 9.cxd4, activating White’s pieces, is no help: 9...d6 10.f4 bxc4 11.c1 and Black’s extra pawn is meaningless in view of his lack of development.

9.a3 bxc3 Possibly 9...a5 was the lesser evil. After 10.b4 ¤c7 11.cxb5 cxb5 (11...axb5 12.d5) Black is cramped, but nothing immediately terrible is happening.

10...xc3 bxc4 11.dxe5 dxe5 12.a4

The position looks dreadful for Black. The c4 pawn cannot survive long term, and once it is gone White will be able to prey on the c6 pawn and use his bishop pair to full effect. However, Caruana begins to defend extremely resourcefully.

12...e6! This walks right into ¤c5, but enables Black to get all his pieces out, which should be priority No.1.

13...xd8 After 13...c5 9.e7 14.e6 9xe6 15.e3 White continues to stand better, but he does have to spend time regaining his pawn. Black can even hamper this task by pressuring the b2 pawn.

13...xd8

14.e3 Magnus decides to slow–play it. Sure, 14.c5 ¤d7 15.e6 fxe6 would leave the doubled pawns ugly, but an extra pawn is an extra pawn. Black has ideas with his knights, too. If we could imagine him getting a knight to d3, he will be very happy. Then 16.e3 ¤ab8 17.eac1 ¤xb2 18.exc4 c5 and White’s advantage is not as large as it appeared previously. Capturing on c5 runs into ...¢c8, and the bishop on g2 is not contributing at all.

14...bd7 15.f3 Putting a stop to ...¢g4 as well as preparing to move the rook away from f1 and then play ¤f1.

15...ab8 16.eac1 ¤b3 17.f1

17...e8 This is the first move Caruana has played since the opening that I don’t really like. I preferred the idea of clarifying the position with 17...¢d8! The point is that when Black plays ...c4–c3, White cannot maintain the integrity of his pawn structure. 18.f1 c3 19.bxc3 (After 19.exc3 ¤xc3 20.bxc3 ¤b3 White still can claim an edge because of the bishop pair, but it’s more symbolic than anything else. His pieces are certainly not superstars, especially that knight on a4.) 19...xb2 20.a6 ¤a8.

18.f1 d6 19.ed1 We reach a critical moment. There are tactics down the d-file.

19...b5? This is a bid for active play, but it is incorrect. 19...¢b7! is incredibly ugly, but it does defend the key c5 square as well as the rook on d8. Black is perfectly fine here, even though optically his position seems odd.

20.c5 ¤xb2 21.e6 fxe6 22.e4 22.g5?? ¤d4 was the point, when ...¢xf3+ and ...¢h2 mate is threatened. After 23.exd4 exd4 24.a6 ¤e5 White is up a piece, yet completely lost in view of Black’s pawns.

22.d4 23.e4 edx4

After a forced sequence White now has a win, but it is rather difficult. Magnus thought long and hard here, but apparently couldn’t activate his prophylactic senses in time.

24.e6+ 24.exd4 is met by 24...¢f7. Black’s idea now is to play ...¢e5, when taking the rook would result in a perpetual check. Based on that, we arrive at White’s next move. 25.¢h1!! Fantastic! This sidestep leaves Black completely tied down. 25...¢f7 26.e1 At some point Black will manage to untangle, but in doing so he will lose a pawn and have to trade all the rooks.
For example: 26...¢b6 27.¤d6 c5 28.e5 ¤xe6 29.¤d6 ³f8 30.¤xd8 ³xd8 31.¤xa6
This is just a sample line, but many other similar continuations exist. Black is toast.

24...¢f8 25.¤xd4 ¢e7 26.¤xd7+

White cannot simultaneously defend the e-pawn and stop the c-pawn.

33...h5! g3-g4 is now stopped so White’s pawns are stuck in their tracks.

34.¤f1

The World Champion is still a pawn up, but this rook ending is very tricky. Black’s passer is dangerous and White’s king remains cut off. It’s much easier to play Black here, since his moves are natural and the onus is on White to find the precise continuations.

28.¤d1+ ¢e6 29.f4 c5

34...¢c3 This isn’t a mistake, but it does force Black to be very accurate. It looked easier just to maintain activity with 34...c3! 35.¢e1 a5! 36.¤xa5 (36.¢d1 ¢d2+ 37.¢c1 ¢e2 and Black will manage to trade most of the pawns off the board.) 36...¢g2.

30.¤d5? Yes, I know “rooks belong behind passed pawns”. But not here! I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again – chess is a concrete game!

Correct is 30.¢c1 ³d6 31.e5+ ³d5 32.e6! ³xe6 (32...³xe6 33.¤xc5 gives White very good winning chances.) 33.f5.

30...¢c2 31.h4 c4 Now the c-pawn becomes very dangerous.

32.f5+ ³f6! This looks slightly unnatural, since it allows the king to be checked again, but it’s very accurate.

33.¢c5 After 33.g4 ³e2 34.g5+ ³f7

34...xe4?? This is the losing blunder. I’m not sure if Fabiano saw the drawing idea and just played the wrong move order. Correct is 37...³a2+! 38.¥h3 (38.¢f3 ³a3+ This leads nowhere.) 38...³xe4 39.³xg7 ³a1!

37...³xe4?? This is the losing blunder. I’m not sure if Fabiano saw the drawing idea and just played the wrong move order. Correct is 37...³a2+! 38.¥h3 (38.¢f3 ³a3+ This leads nowhere.) 38...³xe4 39.³xg7 ³a1!

Brilliant! The f-pawn provides shelter from checks, so ...³f3 is now a threat. 40.¤c7 ³f1! Black will take on f5 with the rook, not the king, completely securing his position.

38.¤e7+! This intermediate move forces Black to take the pawn, which eliminates all the counterplay in the aforementioned line.

38...³xf5 39.³xg7 Now it’s a technical win for Carlsen, although as you will see there are still pitfalls.

39...³f6 40.¢g5 a5 41.³xh5 a4 42.³a5 ³a1

The main thing to realize here is that White should run with his pawns and keep the king at home. This is very counter-intuitive, since it’s natural to advance the king in order to shelter it from checks, but I will say one last time that chess is a concrete game!

43.¢f3 a3 44.¢a6+ 44.¢g4?? couldn’t be more natural, but it gives away the win: 44...a2 45.¢a6+ ³g7 46.h5 ³h7 and Caruana could just wait until an opportune moment to abandon his pawn. 47.¢g5 ³g1 48.³xa2 ³xg3++

44...³g7 45.¢g2 ³a2+ 46.¢h3 ³a1 47.¢h5! This is the way – lead with the pawns!

47...³h7 48.g4
48...g7 Making White’s task easier, since now he gets too far up with the king.
After 48.a2 the threat of ...h1+ forces White back. 49.h2! This is the correct square, as will soon become apparent. 49...g7 50.g5 b1 51.a2 b5 52.g2! Only this! White avoids a blockade and is now easily winning.

49.h4 a2 50.g5 The rest is agony, since White will win the a2 pawn without giving up anything in return.

50.f7 51.h6 b1 52.a7+ g8 53.a2 b5+ 54.g6 b6+ 55.h5 Black resigned

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Fabiano Caruana 2832
Magnus Carlsen 2835

Tie-break Game 2 (rapid), World Championship Match

1.e4 c5 2.d4 cxd4 4.e5 5.e5 6.db5 d6 7.d5 We’ve seen this before...

7...xd5 8.exd5 e7 9.c4 g6 10.a4 d7 11.a4

All of this mirrors Game 12 of the match. Famously enough, Magnus now plays a move I praised him for avoiding in that game!

11...b8 11.f5 was his choice in Game 12.

12.h4 h5 13.e3 I proposed 13.e2 here, but the text move leads to similar positions.

13.a6 14.c3 a5?! This is an interesting idea, but it seems to drive the queen where it wants to go.

19.c1 19.xg4 is a fascinating sharp continuation: 19.xg4 20.e5! dxc5 21.e2. The idea is that White will castle queenside and try to attack, and Black’s king will never be safe on the kingside.

19...e2 20.e2 f5 Here White’s position is quite good by simple means, but Caruana pulls the trigger.

21.c5!? Tempting, but I think keeping the position stable would have offered better chances. 21.0–0 0–0 22.g2±

21...0-0 White’s idea was 21...dxc5? 22.xc5 xc5 23.b5+ d7 24.xc5.

22.c6 After saying “A” you feel the need to say “B”. 22.cxd6 is a depressing looking move, especially after initiating complications with c4-c5. Still, it was probably best.

22...bxc6 23.dxc6 f8 If White were given time to stabilize by castling and putting a knight on d5, he’d be better or even winning, but he simply doesn’t have the time to do that.


24...d8 This clears the way for the knight to go to e7. 24.e6 was also possible, resulting in great complications, but Magnus’ choice was simple and good. 25.d5 a5 26.b6 d5 27.c3 Both rooks are attacked, but the story doesn’t end here. 27.b5! The threat of ...b4 saves the day. 28.c2 b4+ 29.e2 We now come to the reason why I wanted to show this line, despite how unrealistic it is that all this could ever occur.

29.c3!! This is such a cool move!
White is in trouble no matter what he does. 30.\(\text{xc}8\) (30.\(\text{xc}3\) \(d\)); 30.\(\text{f}4\) \(d\) 31.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{e}4+\) 32.\(\text{f}1\) \(e5\) and Black’s pieces are swarming. Or 30.\(\text{bx}c3\) \(x\) \(c6\) 31.\(\text{xc}4\) \(d\) and the attack is incredibly strong.) 30...\(\text{xe}5\).

25.\(\text{d}5\) 25.0-0? \(\text{e}7\)

25...\(\text{e}4\) 25...\(\text{a}5+\) 26.\(\text{f}1\) \(d\) and the attack is incredibly strong.

26.\(\text{c}7??\) This blunder cuts the game short. 26.\(\text{d}4\), stopping ...\(\text{e}5\), is a must, with everything left to play for.

28.\(\text{d}5\) It was definitely worth trying 28.\(\text{d}5\), since the winning move isn’t entirely obvious: 28...\(\text{ab}8!!\) Calmly removing the rook from the attack amidst all the tension. 29.0-0 \(\text{xc}7\) 30.\(\text{xc}7\) (30.\(\text{xd}6\) \(\text{cb}7\) is also lost long-term.) 30...\(\text{f}3+\) 31.\(\text{g}2\) \(\text{xd}5\).

28...\(\text{h}7\) This gets out of the way of \(\text{e}7+\), and so Fabiano resigned. There might have followed 29.\(\text{e}7\) (or 29.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{d}3+\) 30.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{xc}1++\) 29...\(\text{f}3\) 30.\(\text{xc}8\) \(\text{xc}4++\). White resigned

29.28.\(\text{d}5\) 29.0-0\(\text{e}7\)

30.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{c}6\) 4.\(\text{d}4\) \(\text{e}4\) 5.\(\text{d}4\) \(\text{e}4\) \(\text{c}5\) The prescribed way to equalize in this line is 5...\(\text{f}6\) 6.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{b}4\) 7.\(\text{xc}6\) \(\text{bxc}6\) 8.\(\text{d}3\) \(e5\) 9.0-0 0-0, but Caruana isn’t exactly looking for the cleanest equalizer. Instead, he is trying to play for a win in any way possible.

6.\(\text{c}2\) 6.\(\text{b}3\) looks more natural to me.

6...\(\text{f}6\) 7.\(\text{d}3\) 0-0 8.\(\text{e}3\) \(b6\) 9.\(\text{e}2\) \(b7\) 10.0-0 \(\text{e}7\)

Both sides have played natural moves, but Black’s main problem is that he has to wait for White to commit to something. His main idea would normally be to prepare the move ...\(\text{d}7-d5\), but that would likely trade lots of pieces, which cannot be recommended in a must-win game.

11.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{f}8\) 12.\(\text{d}1\) \(\text{e}5\) 13.\(\text{xc}5\) At least now there’s a change in structure. Whether it favors Black or not might be irrelevant. Fabi just wants imbalances!

13...\(\text{xc}5\) 14.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{g}6\) 15.\(\text{e}3\)

24.\(\text{g}4\)! Magnus decides that sometimes the best way to draw a game is to try and win it, and I applaud this decision.

24...\(\text{a}5\) Caruana has done an admirable job of keeping the position alive, and now is close to achieving his dream of ...\(\text{e}6-e5\). Unfortunately for him, Magnus has other ideas.

25.\(\text{a}4\)! The pressure on the \(\text{c}5\) pawn is key. 25.\(\text{g}3\) \(e5\) would have allowed Black to carry out his idea.

25...\(\text{f}7\) 25...\(\text{e}5\)? 26.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{hxg}5\) 27.\(\text{fxg}5\) \(\text{e}8\) 28.\(\text{xc}5\).

26.\(\text{e}5\)! Objectively, this is not best but it

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**World Championship Match**

1.e4 c5

2.\(\text{f}3\) e6

2.\(\text{d}5\) e6 Caruana played the Classical Sicilian in the last round of the 2016 Candidates against Karjakin, but this time he aims for some Taimanov/Kan system. We’ll never know which one he would’ve chosen, since Magnus avoids theoretical paths.

3.c4 \(\text{c}6\) 4.d4 \(\text{d}4\) 5.d4 \(\text{c}5\) The prescribed way to equalize in this line is 5...\(\text{f}6\) 6.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{b}4\) 7.\(\text{xc}6\) \(\text{bxc}6\) 8.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{e}5\) 9.0-0 0-0, but Caruana isn’t exactly looking for the cleanest equalizer. Instead, he is trying to play for a win in any way possible.

15...\(\text{d}6\) As I said before, 15...\(\text{d}5\) equalizes, but won’t win the game. 16.\(\text{ex}d5\) \(\text{ex}d5\) 17.\(\text{xe}7\) \(\text{xe}7\) 18.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{ex}d5\) 19.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{xd}5\) 20.b3 and Black can’t dream of winning this.

16.\(\text{c}2\) a6 17.\(\text{c}1\) \(\text{c}7\) 18.b3 \(\text{h}6\)

19.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{d}7\) 20.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{e}6\) 21.\(\text{f}2\) \(\text{e}7\)

This toys with the idea of transferring the knight to c6, and maybe on a good day playing ...\(\text{e}6-e5\) followed by ...\(\text{d}4\).

22.\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{e}8\) 23.\(\text{g}2\) \(\text{c}6\)

24.\(\text{g}4\)! Magnus decides that sometimes the best way to draw a game is to try and win it, and I applaud this decision.

24...\(\text{a}5\) Caruana has done an admirable job of keeping the position alive, and now is close to achieving his dream of ...\(\text{e}6-e5\). Unfortunately for him, Magnus has other ideas.

25.\(\text{a}4\)! The pressure on the \(\text{c}5\) pawn is key. 25.\(\text{g}3\) \(e5\) would have allowed Black to carry out his idea.

25...\(\text{f}7\) 25...\(\text{e}5\)? 26.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{hxg}5\) 27.\(\text{fxg}5\) \(\text{e}8\) 28.\(\text{xc}5\).

26.\(\text{e}5\)! Objectively, this is not best but it
simplifies the game greatly, exactly what Magnus wants.

26...dxe5 27.¤xc5 £xd2 28.¤xd2 £xd2 29.¤xd2

29...£a8 29...exf4 30.¤xb7 £xb7 31.¤d6 £a7+ saves the piece and maintains equality, but no more. After 32.¢f1 £e7 33.¤xf4 there's still a game to be played. Maybe this was a better try to keep life in the game, but these things are so difficult to judge at the board.

30.fxe5 £xe5 30...£xe5 31.£xe6 fxe6 32.¤xa8 £xc4 is a neat move to secure the draw, but I don’t think I need to mention again that a draw is not the goal. After 33.¤xc4 £a7+ 34.©e3 £xa8 35.£xe6+ £h8 Black will manage only a perpetual at best.

31.£d7! More forcing moves. Magnus is ruthless in positions like this. His short calculations, even in rapid, are always precise.

31...£b2 32.©d6 £xd7 33.£xd7 £xc2 33...£c1+ 34.©h2 £f4+ 35.©h1 doesn’t help Black’s cause.

34.©e8+ £h7 35.©xa8 £d1+ Allowing a queen trade by 35...£c1+ 36.©h2 £f4+ 37.©h1 £d4 38.©e4+ eliminates all Black’s winning chances.

36.©h2 £d6+ 37.©h1 £d4 38.©e4+ £f5 39.gxf5

39...£xf5 39...©xf5 looks nice, but Black can’t checkmate the opponent with only two pieces. Even 40.c5 is possible, drawing immediately, as after 40...£xc5 41.£xe6 the threat of £e4 leaves Black with nothing better than a perpetual.

40.©e3 £e6 41.b4

41...©g5 Under any other circumstances Caruana would have played 41...©f4 42.c5 £d1+ 43.©h2 £xg2 44.©xg2 £d5+ 45.©g3 £g5 46.©e7+ ©g6 47.©e8+ ©g7=.

42.c5 Now White begins to take over.

42...£f6 43.c6 £e6 44.a4 £c7 45.©f4 £e6
46.£d6 46...£e3 would give Fabiano the chance to end the match with a graceful repetition, but you know that Magnus wanted to win 3–0!

46...£a1+ 47.¢h2 ¤d4 48.c7 £c3 49.£c5 £e3 that Magnus wanted to win 3–0!

end the match with a graceful repetition, but you know even won when his opponent overextended.

the game under control the whole way, and in the end White, he took the professional approach of keeping dominated. In this game, needing to force a draw as game, he showed his class in Game 2 and completely be confident in his rapid skills. After a nervy first

He certainly showed that he had good reason to Congrats to Magnus Carlsen on a deserved victory!

Bakersfield, CA

Jeremy W. Treadwell

essentially has that title twice!

Rapid Champion, so now he

world

rapid games more exciting,

To be honest, it was a little disappointing. I found the rapid games more exciting, though I don't like to admit it. Magnus is already the world rapid champion, so now he essentially has that title twice!

Bakersfield, CA

I don't like the classical world championship being decided by rapid and blitz games. I think after playing the 12 classical games, whoever wins the next classical game should be world champion. A kind of sudden death playoff. For the most part, I found the games too sterile and averse to risk. A couple of the games contained enough imbalance to make it interesting, but overall it won't be a match that I will want to review the games again and again.

Saint Charles, MO

Brian Bannon,

Was this match, with so many draws, interesting for you to follow? Do you consider it fair that the classical world championship should be decided by rapid games?

The match was interesting and exciting. I'm not a fan of tie-breaking with rapid games, but I think it's probably necessary because the match logistics (venue, hotels, plane tickets, etc.) can't be reserved open-ended, so there has to be a firm end-date to the match.

Princeton, NJ

Jon Crumiller,

For me it was not interesting. I preferred to follow the women's championship. If the men's championship is not decided by rapid games, it will last months!

New York, NY

Jose Gaona,

The ideal length for the classical portion of the match would be 16 games in this day and age. If undecided then rapid two-game mini-matches until a winner is decided. No blitz. Of course, I would not mind a four-game rapid match then two-game mini matches. However organizers may not agree even though the rapidplay stage passes quickly so not much extra time is needed.

Mahwah, NJ

Kenneth Calitri,

Many of the games were interesting when accompanied by the expert analysis of Seirawan and Ashley. Without that, I would have been clueless. I think new tie-break methods need to be explored as well as a longer match.

Gonzales, LA

Jim Duffy,

Was this match, with so many draws, interesting for you to follow? Do you consider it fair that the classical world championship should be decided by rapid games?

The match did produce a lot of shadow boxing, which also adds tension to the sport. Actually the production of new ideas was a lot higher in comparison with the last world championship.

Denmark

Jesper Knudsen,

Most of the games were very interesting and exciting. I'm not a fan of tie-breaking with rapid games, but I think it’s probably necessary because the match logistics (venue, hotels, plane tickets, etc.) can’t be reserved open-ended, so there has to be a firm end-date to the match.

Germany

Axel Eger,

The match was interesting but I don’t feel that the world championship should be determined in rapid games. Make the match longer, like 18 or 24 games, but make it all classical.

Normal, IL

Doug White,

At least half of the games were without a real fight. I think we should have got a world classical chess championship, we already have a world rapid chess championship...

Israel

Tal Haimovich,

It was interesting. Yes... I like the rapid tie-breaks.

Narberth, PA

Reuven Fischer,

The match was interesting at first, but became a lot less interesting after 10 draws in a row. Wait until the end of the day to find out what happened. It was not “fair” to change the type of chess to decide the match. Have separate championships for classical and rapid. Find a way to adjust the classical match to avoid 100% draws. Go back to 24 games. And consider a 25-game match with the challenger getting White in odd-number games, with a tie going to the champion.

Beaumont, CA

Lawrence Stevens,

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Mahwah, NJ

Kenneth Calitri,

Many of the games were interesting when accompanied by the expert analysis of Seirawan and Ashley. Without that, I would have been clueless. I think new tie-break methods need to be explored as well as a longer match.

Gonzales, LA

Jim Duffy,
I was interested in each one of the games. I think a world champion has to win classical chess games to be declared world champion. A decisive result in classical, rapid and blitz (all three combined) could also be a determining factor in future world chess championships. **Steven Chilison, Dumfries, VA**

Yes, it was really high level chess with very few mistakes and no terrible blunders. Both players knew the rules, Magnus exploited them better. It’s sad for Fabiano as he had the example of Karjakin two years ago... **Philippe Chappe, France**

The match was interesting even if all the games were drawn. I think it would be better to play a greater number of games (at least 16 or 18) at a classical time format, after which a playoff decides with rapid games might be fine. However, a two-point margin should be required for victory. I would not use blitz games. I would continue with the rapid games until one of the two players gets a two-point advantage, even if this means playing over more days. **Alessandro Marin, Italy**

Despite the large number of draws, the match was very interesting to follow! However, in my opinion, playing tie-break rapid games to decide the world classical chess champion is complete nonsense. **Serge Lacour, France**

It was interesting. The alternative proved unworkable in previous K-vs-K matches that went on forever and exhausted the players. Those were more boring. **Brian Hulse, Austin, TX**

There were many interesting games. However, the fact that there were only twelve games pushed both players into reducing risks. Since there are separate world championships for rapid and blitz chess, I think it is absolutely misguided to decide the world championship this way. This needs to be changed—and soon. **Mark Warriner, Henrico, VA**

**Was this match, with so many draws, interesting for you to follow? Do you consider it fair that the classical world championship should be decided by rapid games?**

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**I enjoyed it by following the analysis on Chess Network and GM Huschenbeth. As far as fairness for the world chess championship to be decided on rapid games, I lived through the 48-game Kasparov-Karpov match. THAT got VERY boring. As Magnus said he could live with whatever the rules were.** **Mike Sakarias, Juneau, AK**

Despite the draws the match was great to follow. But I really wish FIDE would change the rules so the title is decided only by classical chess. **Christopher Moscinski, Bronx, NY**

Yes, there were some excellent games. But perhaps 16 classical games would have gotten a result in the regular sessions. **Dan O’Hanlon, Huntington, WV**

Yes, very interesting, but not fair to be decided by rapid games. **Jose Ybarra, Charlotte, MI**

The match was still interesting, even if so closely matched. I would like to see the option of offering a draw removed. Endgame skills are not well revealed with early draws. I would rather not see the rapid time control games in a classical match. **Rob Neal, Olathe, CO**

Yes. No. Doesn’t classical world championship mean world championship at classical time control? Carlsen did not show he was best at classical chess. **Gary Andrus, Eagle, WI**

I was so busy this year, I missed it all! Rapid games sounds fair to me. **Christopher Morabito, Boise, ID**

Wins are obviously more exciting and preferable, but draws can be exciting as well. Remember these are the two best players in the world. There can be a lot to learn from draws as well as wins. Rapid and blitz games can be more entertaining due to the faster time controls, but the classical style is traditional. If there is a tie after the number of games scheduled are completed, then the existing world champion should retain his title. Those addicted to speed can watch NASCAR. **Manuel Infante, Oklahoma City, OK**

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It was very interesting, and I do not know a better tie-break.

Boris Dimitrijeski,
Germany

Yes, even with the many draws it was still interesting to watch. And yes, I think it was fair to decide the championship in rapid games. I just wish that Fabiano had practiced more using the rapid time controls.

Michael Damey,
Land O Lakes, FL

If the chess world really wants to perk up the world chess championship match, I strongly recommend this idea: Games played: 12 to 16; Time for each player: 2:15 for White, 1:45 for Black; Style of game: Special Armageddon: If White wins, White gets 1 point; if the game’s a draw, Black gets 1 point; if Black wins, Black gets 2 points. If the players get through that and are even, then they can play the rapids and blitz. This way, EVERY game from game 1 to the final Armageddon game will be exciting.

Judson T Smalley,
Colorado Springs, CO

Yes of course some of the games were very interesting despite being draws. I saw Game 8 live at the venue in London and enjoyed the whole experience immensely. No, it is not fair.

Jeremy Hart,
United Kingdom

The match was interesting because the draws were hard-fought. If the world championship is a quest for truth, to find the best player, it should never be decided by rapid play which, although exciting, is significantly more prone to error.

Omar Aguilar,
Sicklerville, NJ

As a novice player I found the match a bit disappointing, as I don’t have a deep enough understanding to grasp the nuances of a precisely fought draw. Games 1 and 12 held some interest. While the rapid games were far more entertaining, I would prefer the classical world championship be decided by classical games.

John Frederiksen
Frisco, TX

The match was probably interesting to follow for chess players. Unlike most other sports, chess requires a level of understanding and familiarity; it’s possible to enjoy a soccer game, for example, without knowing that a specific passing sequence might be extremely difficult. I thought the games were deep and hard-fought, but neither player took many risks. Both played like Petrosian. I’d rather it not be decided by rapid play, but continue on under normal time controls.

Bryan Embrey,
Fremont, CA

The classical world championship should never be decided by anything but classical games. Twelve games are too short in these computer-assisted times, given the high number of draws. The old formula of 24 games, where a tie allowed the champion to retain his title, would work best.

Allan Savage,
Kensington, MD

Most of the games were boring, with over-cautious play and rapid queen exchanges. Fabiano defended very well.

Nicolas Renault,
France

I was not surprised by so many draws and yes it was interesting to follow. Due to the fact that each professional player has a rating in 3 categories (classical, rapid and blitz), the final championship result should be determined by computing all three categories.

Kenneth Belger,
Arlington, TX

No, this match was not very interesting to follow for me. No, I do not find it fair that the classical world championship should be decided in rapid games.

Christian Bij,
Netherlands

Yes of course! It is only natural that the classical world championship has been hijacked by rapid play. The same way that football uses the penalty kick from 11 meters after four draws!

Viorel Craciuneanu,
Romania

Don’t like rapid deciding a classical match. Tie goes to the champion.

Edward Gonsalves,
Providence, RI

I don’t like rapid deciding a classical match. A tie should favour the champion. I do not think that something so important should be decided in quick games, there must be another method.

Jon Bilbao,
Miami, FL

No, but play them the other way around for an epic match: first playoffs then classical!

Cornelis Klaver,
South Africa

Yes, the match was interesting. Draws can be exciting, and several of these were. No, it is not fair to decide the championship by rapid games. I would prefer the old way (champion has draw odds), or joint champions (or a vacant championship) in the event of a drawn match. Any tie-break is bound to be arbitrary.

Dennis Kosterman,
Madison, WI

It was a fantastic match that will be long remembered.

Rapid games are also part of chess and it shows that Magnus is the true all-round champion. But maybe 12 classical games are not enough for a player to take more risks.

Kristof Van Dyck,
Belgium

It was very interesting throughout; draws are not boring by definition. On the contrary. A world champion should be able to demonstrate superior competence in both classical and rapid play.

David Halpin,
United Kingdom

No. We need at least 24 games or first to win 6 games, to decide the title, which was the norm from 1951-1990. Nowadays these young players like Carlsen, Karjakin and Caruana can handle longer matches!

Dave Arganian
Seattle, WA

The best in the world should win in classical chess!

Brian Gain,
Las Vegas, NV

Having known the relative strengths of the two players in rapid I would definitely have preferred more result-oriented play from the challenger. Having said that. Caruana was still excellent with his play! Unfortunately, up to now he is only second best in the world.

Thirunarayanan Sampath,
India

While the match was certainly interesting, it fell short of the great world championship matches of the past. At least a few more classical games would have increased the likelihood of avoiding rapid tie-breaks.

Ben Crane,
Ithaca, NY

It was interesting notwithstanding the 12 draws, but is really unfair that the world chess championship has been decided in rapid games: it is not like that in other sports.

Emilio Zecca,
Italy
Radoslaw Wojtaszek wanted his October earnings to be paid in gold. Instead, he had to settle for cash. Only a few weeks after his Polish team became the hard-luck fourth-place finishers at the Chess Olympiad, he finished the month by winning first prize after a messy playoff at the 2018 Chess.com Isle of Man International.

The tournament featured nine of the world’s top 15 players and billed itself as the “strongest open tournament in history.” The tournament took place from October 20–28 and once again filled the Villa Marina, a 100-year-old grand concert hall.

Wojtaszek achieved his goal in the opposite way to that of his national team. Whereas they had blitzed the field in Batumi to start 6–0, Wojtaszek’s Manx odyssey began inauspiciously with a draw in the opening round to a player 300 points lower. Luckily for him, nine of the twenty 2700s on hand suffered the same fate in round one.

That gave him plenty of time to recover. His four straight wins, only interrupted by a purposeful half-point bye, shot him up the leaderboard. Wojtaszek finished on an undefeated 7/9 before beating Arkadij Naiditsch in the third game of the playoff, an Armageddon.

The two both won as White in the twin blitz games, played at 5+2. But neither game was worthy of framing.

In the opener, Wojtaszek lurched forward with his c-pawn in the opening, only to have it captured for virtually no compensation a few moves later. Then he pitched his h-pawn too and managed to create some counterplay along the f-file. The clock times dwindled and with the players below 20 seconds, their heart-rate monitors both spiked in the upper-160s (Wojtaszek said his rate doesn’t even get that high when he runs; his resting rate is 55-60). After a few more drastic evaluation changes, Naiditsch’s king walk proved too profligate and game one went to the Pole.

In the rematch with colors reversed, Naiditsch played a standard Sicilian sacrifice beginning with the offer of a piece by d5. He eventually got a rook and two mobile center pawns for three undeveloped pieces, but couldn’t find the cleanest continuation. The game finally came down to a pawnless ending of rook versus bishop, but Wojtaszek’s king was so poorly placed that it enabled Naiditsch to deliver a forced mate.

A coin toss would determine choice of colors in the Armageddon. Wojtaszek won and picked White, against the thinking of the live commentators.

“It was part of the strategy,” Wojtaszek said. “I remember speaking with some other players and many of us agreed that 5-4 and two seconds only after move 60 favors White (emphasis Wojtaszek’s). Also I liked the position I got in the first round, before I had blundered, so it was rather an easy choice.”
It has to be said that the standard of play in both blitz games was very low and many mistakes were made. In fact it was so low that before the Armageddon I was thinking, “Radek, please will you finally play just one decent game of chess”.

1.d4  ♜f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗f3  ♗g7 4.g3 0–0 5.♗g2 d6 6.0–0  ♕bd7 7.♖c3 e5 8.e4  ♕e8 9.♗e3 c6 10.h3 a5 In our first blitz game my play was linked to the plan of dxe5. Here I decided to try a rather different approach: 11.d5!?

I remembered that I had played many similar structures in my junior days, so I thought it would be a good idea to stick to the basics that I knew best.

11... ♙c5? 11...cxd5 12.cxd5 b6 would be the right execution of the plan that unfolds in the game.

12.♗d2? Although Black has some practical compensation after 12.dxc6 bxc6 13.♖xc5 dxc5 14.♗xd8 ♕xd8 15.♕xe5, I wasn’t sure whether it would be such a great idea going for this position in blitz.

12...cxd5 13.cxd5 b6 So we got what we wanted.

14.a4 ♖a6 15.♕b5! ♕d7
16.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{c4}}}?! After 16.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{x5}}} 16.b5 17.axb5 dxc5 18.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{c4}}} (18.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{a4}}} 19.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{c4}}} 19.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{c4}}} 19.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{c4}}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{e8}}}! would have left Black with an inferior but nevertheless solid position.) 18...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{x5}}} 19.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{d6}}} 20.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{d7}}} 20.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{cxe8}}} 20.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{cxe8}}} Black has quite decent compensation for a blitz game – and even from an objective point of view.

Incidentally, if you’re not concentrating, then 16.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{e2}}}? is something you can easily fall for in blitz. Black would reply 16...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{xa4}}}!

16...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{xb5}}}? Even though White still retains a slight advantage after 16...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{xa4}}}! 17.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{cxd5}}} 18.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{xb5}}} 19.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{xa4}}}, it was definitely the way to go for Black.

17.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{xb5}}} 18.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{ab8}}} 19.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{a4}}} Obviously I was quite happy with what I’d got out of the opening. My position is clearly better and I had more than a minute more on the clock.

19...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{h5}}} 20.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{h4}}} 20.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{h4}}}? An incorrect plan. Of course it’s easy to criticize Black’s active play which is doomed to backfire, but it’s totally understandable – in Armageddon no one wants to sit and wait as it’s all about initiative.

20...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{e7}}} 21.d6 21.d6 22.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{ad1}}} 22.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{ad1}}} 23.f4! 23.f4! would also be very bad for Black.

21.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{ad1}}} g5?! 22.hxg5 22.hxg5 23.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{b3}}} 23.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{b3}}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{g7}}} 24.f4! Now it’s clear that White is better prepared for the fight in the centre.

24...\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{xf4}}} 25.gxf4 25.gxf4 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{h6}}} 26.e5 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{g4}}} 27.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{h3}}} 27.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{h3}}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{h8}}} 28.f5!?

Maybe not the cleanest way to proceed but my thinking process was something like: “Let’s advance those pawns and then good things will surely happen!”

28.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{f8}}} 29.e6 29.e6 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{d8}}} 30.f6 30.f6 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{xf6}}} 31.d6 31.d6 \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{fxe6}}} 32.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{e5}}} 32.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{e5}}} 33.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{g7}}} 33.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{g7}}} 34.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{g4}}} 34.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{g4}}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{hxg4}}} 35.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{e5}}}+ 36.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{g8}}} 36.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{g8}}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{xe6+}}} \texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{h7}}} 37.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\textit{e4+}}} Black resigned with mate on the next move. Of course I was absolutely delighted to win the tournament, but it was also very satisfying to play at a good level in this Armageddon game after my poor play in the blitz!
The tiebreak was needed after Naiditsch and Wojtaszek couldn’t settle matters on board one in the final round of classical. Their repetition kept the door ajar for others. Although three other players could have won to join the tiebreak, Jeffery Xiong and Gawain Jones couldn’t break the impasse one board lower. Their draw meant they each finished a half-point behind.

On board three, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave also could have gotten to 7/9, but he even lost to Alexander Grischuk. Weirdly, despite both being uncompromising players, it was the first decisive classical game of the dozen they have played. Perhaps even more strangely, despite world numbers 5–10 playing on the Isle of Man, that was the solitary game played among them in any of the nine rounds.

Although he beat four total GMs in classical en route to the title (Robert Hess, Suri Vaibhav and Rasmus Svane), the key game for the winner was his novelty against Mickey Adams in round eight. Wojtaszek considered steering for the same position in the final round of the Olympiad against Pentala Harikrishna. Instead he played slightly differently against the Indian GM and the surprise stayed in his pocket a few weeks longer.

There’s no telling how Harikrishna would have reacted, but since Adams went down immediately afterwards, it seems to have ultimately been used against the right opponent.

Just as in his first playoff game, the Polish hero went down two pawns in the opening. The important difference of course is that this wasn’t an accident. It was all preparation.

“I was surprised that it happened”, Wojtaszek said about the top Englishman’s wayward response. “After 16.∞b4 it’s just over.”

Radoslaw Wojtaszek 2727
Michael Adams 2712
Isle of Man Open 2018
Annotated by Radoslaw Wojtaszek

1.d4 ∞f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 In the one game that I had previously managed to beat Mickey I had also played the Catalan. Having this pleasant memory in mind I thought it would also be a good choice for this game.

3...d5 4.g2 dxc4 5.∞f3 c5 I was expecting this as my opponent had adopted it twice before. In our previous encounters I had faced the more classical systems 4...∞e7 and 4...∞b4+.

6.0–0 c6 7.e5 ∞d7 8.∞xc4!? A rather forgotten line, but I remembered having some problems when analyzing it from Black’s perspective, so I thought it could be interesting to try it as White.

8...cxd4 9.∞f4

9...∞e7 9...d5 is the only way to get castled, but White gets nice compensation after 10.∞d6+ ∞xd6 11.∞xd6 ∞de7 12.∞d2! (12.∞b3?! ∞a5f!) 12...0–0 13.∞b3, with complex play.

10.∞d6+ ∞f8 11.∞xb7 ∞b6 12.∞d6 ∞c5 Thanks to this move Black is supposed to be okay, according to recognized theory. Although his position looks quite suspect, it’s difficult to prove this is really the case.

13.∞b3 was the only serious try, then 13...∞xd6 14.∞c1 would pursue a plan similar to the game, but here the difference is that Black now has 14...∞b4! 15.∞xb4 ∞xb4 16.∞xc6 ∞c8 when he is doing fine, as now it is of course irrelevant that he hasn’t managed to castle.

Mike Klein began playing chess at the age of four in Charlotte, NC. In 1987, he became the youngest member of the very first All-America Chess Team, and was on the team a total of eight times. In 1988, he won the K-3 National Championship, and eventually became North Carolina’s youngest-ever master. In 1996, he won clear first for under-2250 players in the top section of the World Open. Mike has taught chess full-time for a dozen years in New York.
13...\texttt{xb4} 14.a3 \texttt{c5}

15.\texttt{b3}!? This is the novelty. I am prepared to sacrifice a pawn to maintain my strong knight on d6, at least for a while. Of course with an engine running it’s easy to prove that objectively Black is fine, but during the actual game, where there are many pieces on the board and with such an insecure king, it’s quite dangerous for Mickey.

In fact there is an underlying funny story connected to this idea... Just before the Isle of Man tournament I had played in the European Club Cup in Greece and, at some point, I thought it best to subject the line to rather more careful analysis. It turned out that all the friends I usually work with were not available, so I decided to ask my wife to check it all for me. Alina wasn’t actually playing in that event, so I guess I rather disrupted her “holiday”, but we both agree that now it has paid off!

15.\texttt{d2} is what had been played before, and even my opponent had faced this move himself in 2008 against Gelfand: 15...\texttt{e5} 16.\texttt{2e4} \texttt{xe4} 17.\texttt{xe4} \texttt{b6} 18.\texttt{b1} \texttt{c7} and White didn’t have enough counterplay in B.Gelfand 2723 – M.Adams 2729, Yerevan 2008.

15\texttt{...a5}?? A losing mistake. It’s easy to criticize such a blunder but with all the pieces on the board it’s not easy to make the right choice. If 15...\texttt{xd6}?, then 16.\texttt{c1}! is the move that explains the whole 13.b4 idea: now the b4 square is not available; 15...\texttt{h5}! is the engine’s first preference, but it didn’t look natural to me so I wasn’t particularly worried about it. Following 16.\texttt{c4} \texttt{d5} 17.\texttt{b7} \texttt{d8} 18.\texttt{c7} \texttt{xc7} 19.\texttt{xc7} \texttt{b5}! 20.\texttt{bd2} \texttt{b8}! Black exchanges queens and limits the damage, although even then over the board 21.\texttt{xb8} \texttt{xb8} 22.\texttt{ab1} \texttt{c8} 23.\texttt{b7} seemed promising.

15...\texttt{b6}!? was the move I most expected. It avoids the \texttt{c1} threat with tempo. Now White has several interesting possibilities but I would just like to mention the tricky 16.\texttt{a2}!? when Black should respond with the brilliant, but also very difficult to find over the board, 16...\texttt{d8}!! (16...\texttt{h5} 17.\texttt{c4}! \texttt{d8} 18.\texttt{d6}!) 17.\texttt{d2} \texttt{g5}! and White has nothing better than a repetition after 18.\texttt{b7} \texttt{c8} 19.\texttt{d6} \texttt{d8}=

I thought 15...\texttt{d5} would be the most likely human response, but after 16.\texttt{c1} \texttt{a5} 17.\texttt{f3}! the position looks dangerous for Black.

16.\texttt{b4}! \texttt{xb4} 17.\texttt{axb4} \texttt{e5} 17...\texttt{b3} 18.\texttt{a3}! is probably what my opponent missed.

After 18.\texttt{d5} 19.\texttt{xd5} \texttt{exd5} 20.\texttt{xb3} \texttt{g5} 21.\texttt{e5} \texttt{f6} 22.\texttt{f3}! would be the cleanest path to victory.

18.\texttt{xa8} \texttt{exf4} 19.\texttt{xa5} \texttt{xd6} 20.\texttt{xa7} \texttt{xb4} Of course White’s position is winning but there is still a technical task ahead. I tried to be precise and not give too many practical chances to my opponent.

21.\texttt{d1}! Activity is much more important than material. If 21.gxf4 \texttt{g6} 22.\texttt{d1} \texttt{g7} 23.\texttt{f3} \texttt{c8} it’s obvious that Black is still fighting.

21...\texttt{fxg3} 22.\texttt{hgx3} \texttt{c5} Not 22...\texttt{e7}?

23.\texttt{c6}. 
23.\(\text{a}5\) \(\text{b}4\) 24.\(\text{a}6\) \(\text{c}e7\)

25.\(\text{c}6!\) Again, I thought that I should exchange one of my opponent’s bishops, and that would make things much easier.

25...\(\text{c}8\) 26.\(\text{x}d4!\) \(\text{c}5\) After 26...\(\text{x}c6\) 27.\(\text{x}b4\) \(\text{e}4\) White is lucky to have the simple 28.\(\text{c}d2\) \(\text{c}1+\) 29.\(\text{f}1!\).

27.\(\text{c}d\) 28.\(\text{e}4+\) \(\text{f}8\) 29.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{g}6\) 30.\(\text{g}2\) \(\text{d}8\) 31.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{e}7\)

32.\(\text{d}4\) Now the rest is simple: 32...\(\text{h}5\) 33.\(\text{c}7\) \(\text{e}5\) 34.\(\text{a}a7\) \(\text{e}8\) 35.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{g}4\) 36.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{h}6\) 37.\(\text{e}4\) \(\text{d}6\) 38.\(\text{c}c6\) \(\text{d}8\) 39.\(\text{d}5\) \(\text{g}7\) 40.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{g}4\) 41.\(\text{b}7\) \(\text{f}8\) 42.\(\text{a}6\) \(\text{c}5\) 43.\(\text{c}7\) \(\text{d}4\) 44.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{g}1\) 45.\(\text{h}4\) and Black resigned. Definitely a crucial win, which gave me the chance to fight for first place in the last round and the tiebreak too, as it turned out.

That Wojtaszek had any energy left to fight the three playoff games was an achievement in itself. That bye he took in round five was as needed as they come. After the Olympiad, he squeezed in the European Team Championship, and immediately after Isle of Man he flew to China for the Shenzhen Masters.

“Playing 34 games within a 45-day period isn’t a piece of cake, so I thought every extra rest day is gold”, Wojtaszek said. (The trip from Poland to Georgia to Greece to Isle of Man to China is more than 10,000 miles as the crow flies, and that doesn’t even count the return home.) Not only did he save enough energy, he also managed to avoid getting jaded. In Batumi, Poland played the top eight seeds, surely something that has never happened before, but they were the first team left off the podium. And then in the sandwich event, the European Teams, he performed above 2800 but his team narrowly lost first place on tiebreaks. “So I had many reasons to be angry at the system”, he said.

But you know what can change a man’s mood? His wife’s success! In fact hers came before his. In round eight, Wojtaszek’s wife Alina Kashlinskaya beat Rinat Jumabayev to score her first GM norm.

That followed two draws to two 2700s in the opening rounds (and not just “any” 2700s: Anish Giri and Vladimir Kramnik). She had never even played a 2700 prior to Isle of Man, so her career record of “even” is mighty impressive. Kashlinskaya destroyed Sam Sevian in the last round just for good measure. In doing so, she also secured the top women’s prize of £7000 and became the highest-finishing non-GM with a 2700+ performance rating.

“So far when one of us was having a good tournament then normally the second would struggle”, Wojtaszek said. “But here something clicked and we over-achieved big time. My victory was of course a surprise but what Alina did was simply amazing.”

Wojtaszek had to win his tiebreak, if only to keep up with his wife’s play. “Especially her game against Sevian made an impact on me”, Wojtaszek said. “The final round, big stakes and she just crushed him.” It was her first-ever win against a 2600.

1.d4 \(d6\) I was surprised by my opponent’s choice of opening, as to my knowledge he had never played 1...d6 or even any other King’s Indian structures.

Alina Kashlinskaya 2447
Samuel Sevian 2634

Isle of Man Open, 2018
Annotated by Alina Kashlinskaya

This game was played on my birthday. I knew that statistically the results of such games are not very positive on the day you become one year older, so I was under no pressure because if something went wrong then I wouldn’t be the first or indeed the last to suffer a defeat on a birthday!
6.0–0 Still inviting Black to enter a KID system with ...¤bd7 after 6...©f6, but Black decided to put his knight on h6.
6.©c3 was also possible when, after ...¤h6, I have the option of h2–h4. Incidentally, upon the alternative 9...©e7 would follow 10.¥e3 and if Black plays the natural 10...f5 then there is a nice idea for White of 11.dxc6 bxc6 12.©d5! cxd5 13.¥xd5+ ¤f7 14.¥xa8+.
If I had continued with 9.¥e3 then 9...f5 is just what Black wants.

9...dxe5 After 9...dxe5 I was planning 10.©d4 (10.©xe5 dxe5 11.b4 f5 leads to an unclear position) and considered this position to be a better version of a ...¤bd7 KID with the “usual” knight on f6 – however, in fact it turns out that here Black actually has strong counterplay thanks to that very knight! For example, he could continue 10...©h4! with the idea of ...f7–f5 or ...¤xh3 at some point, then after 11.¥e3 (11.f4 ¥xh3! 12.fxe5 ¥g3 13.¥f2 ¥xe5 14.¥f1 ¥h2 with two pawns for the piece and a scary attack) 11...¤xh3! 12.gxh3 ¥h3 13.¥f3 ¥xc4 14.¥g2 ¥h4 leads to an unclear position.

10.©e3?! This is inaccurate as after 10...f5! White would have to answer the reasonable question: “What is the bishop doing on e3?”.
10.b4 was perhaps a more accurate way to proceed, as after 10...f5 at least Black is now not threatening ...f5–f4 gaining a tempo, and I can continue 11.c5±. Moreover White is not afraid of 10...a5 to which the reply is 11.b5±.

10...f6?! I think this move is too soft as it gives me time to develop all my pieces and closely monitor Black’s counterplay.
10...f5 was the move I considered as best for Black and wasn’t sure how to react, as I didn’t want to allow ...f5–f4. Most likely I would have stuck to my original intention of 11.exf5 gxf5 12.©g5 ¥e7 13.f4 with active play.

11.c5 ¥f7 12.¥c4 ¥e7 13.b4 ¥e8 14.¥b3 ¥f8

So far all White’s moves had been so natural that I didn’t even consider any other possibilities. That is until this moment when I deliberated for around 10–15 minutes because I couldn’t decide which rook I should put on d1. The point is that most likely Black’s next move will be ...¥e6, to gain more room for his pieces, and I had already seen the ideas connected with ©d5. But while I was trying to understand which rook would be better placed on d1, the funny thing was that in some lines my rook on f1 is hanging, yet somehow my intuition was telling me that I should play ©ad1 :)
But now I had the move 16.\( \text{Nd5} \)! I just couldn’t resist playing it!

16...\( \text{cxd5} \) 17.\( \text{exd5} \) \( \text{f5} \) 18.\( \text{g4} \)

18...\( \text{e4} \) 18...\( \text{c8} \) was the main move that I had to calculate. The line I saw before going in for 15.\( \text{ad1} \) goes like this: 19.d6 \( \text{d7} \) 21.\( \text{exe4} \) 21.f3 \( \text{c6} \) 22.b5 was also possible; 21.b5 wins as well.

20.\( \text{d6} \) \( \text{d7} \) 21.\( \text{exd5} \) \( \text{f5} \) 22.\( \text{b5} \) \( \text{ec8} \) If 22...\( \text{ac8} \) then 23.\( \text{xf7+} \) \( \text{xf7} \) 24.d7 \( \text{xd7} \) 25.\( \text{xd7} \) \( \text{xb3} \) 26.\( \text{axb3} \) leads to a completely winning endgame.

23.\( \text{f3} \) Including the last piece into the game. Black is completely lost now.

23...\( \text{h8} \) 24.\( \text{xf7} \) \( \text{exf3} \) 25.\( \text{xf3} \) \( \text{e4} \)

Of course I was very happy that I had managed to give myself a birthday present, although at the time my game had finished I didn’t know that the real gift would come later that evening with my husband winning the tournament!

“Something clicked and she finally showed her potential”, Wojtaszek said.

“She was just creating constant problems to her opponents and if you do so then they will finally crack.”

Wojtaszek’s haul was £38,000 (£500 more than Naiditsch for winning the playoff bonus). He said that both he and Kashlinskaya earned their largest paydays ever.

That final round was also her birthday. You might think the constellation of her turning 25, scoring a GM norm, and both of them winning big, would warrant an oversized celebration. But then you’d be forgetting about their restless travel schedule. “We had this idea to go out to some fine restaurant”, Wojtaszek said, “but I ended up preparing and then playing the tiebreak. After that we just had a glass of wine and that was it.”

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CANDIDATES 1

CANDIDATES 2

CANDIDATES 3

02 SIMPLE DECISIONS

WEAKNESSES

WORST PLACED PIECE

03 CRITICAL MOMENTS

PROPHYLAXIS

CRITICAL MOMENT

04 STRATEGIC DECISIONS

STRATEGIC DECISIONS
Bu Xiangzhi 2712 – Safarli 2676
Chess Olympiad 2018 (CHN–AZE)

Bu is great at squeezing his opponents, but he is strong at little tactics too. I always had the impression that he could have been a top ten player if he had not lacked the motivation to do the necessary work. Most people have the same kind of problem, no matter how much they like chess.

18.c5! \( \text{¥e6} \)

18...dxc5 loses a piece to 19.e5 \( \text{¤xe5} \)

(19...\( \text{¥h6} \) 20.\( \text{¦e1} \) \( \text{¤xe5} \)

21.\( \text{¤cd1} \)

is even worse.) 20.\( \text{¤e2} \)

Although Black will have three pawns for the piece, his chances in the endgame are not good.

Black could avoid the immediate loss of a pawn by 18...\( \text{¤e8} \), but after 19.\( \text{cd5} \) \( \text{¤xb2} \) 20.\( \text{bxb2} \) \( \text{¥f8} \) 21.\( \text{cd1} \) his position is left in ruins.

19.\( \text{cd6} \) \( \text{exd6} \) 20.\( \text{exd6} \) White has won a pawn and converted it steadily over the next 40 moves.

Nakamura 2763 – Nabaty 2692
Chess Olympiad 2018 (USA–ISR)

When you look at the US Team’s performance at the Olympiad it is clear that no one over-performed greatly.

Caruana and Shankland each had a slight plus score and won important games in tight matches, carrying the weight of the team. Robson did not play much after misplaying a queen ending early in the tournament. He came back in round 10 to give Nakamura a chance to prepare and re-energize before the Round 11 title clash. However, I think it would have been better to let Hikaru rest then and move Shankland up to take the white pieces in the match against China. We shall see later why this is the case. Nakamura lost 17 rating points and finished with a 50% score. His only win came in the first round, whereas just half a point more from this Titan of American chess would have secured the gold medal. However, it was good to see that Hikaru played well at the Isle of Man. Hopefully he can turn his fortunes around and return to full strength in the near future.

Shankland 2722 – J. Van Foreest 2624
Chess Olympiad 2018 (USA–NED)

Black was somewhat worse, but the attempt to solve his problems with 37...\( \text{¥e2} \) was a mistake. After 38.\( \text{¥xb2} \) \( \text{¤c4} \)– 39.\( \text{¥e2} \)\! \( \text{¥xb2} \) 40.\( \text{¥b3} \) the knight is trapped. Black cannot play a pawn ending with fewer pawns, so he tried giving up the knight before resigning.

The ensuing line would be found by a player like Nakamura in seconds:

28.\( \text{¥g5} \) \( \text{¥g6} \) 29.\( \text{¥f6} \) \( \text{¥c2} \) 30.\( \text{¥g5} \)

\( \text{¥g6} \) 31.\( \text{¥f6?} \) 31.\( \text{¥e5!} \) \( \text{¥c2} \) (31...\( \text{¥fe8} \)

32.\( \text{¥xe3} \) gives White a winning position.) 32.\( \text{¥e4!} \) would still have won.

31...\( \text{¥c2} \) 32.\( \text{¥e1} \)? White could still have played for a win with 32.\( \text{¥f1!!} \) \( \text{¥d3} \) 33.\( \text{¥g5+} \) \( \text{¥h8} \) 34.\( \text{¥e4!} \), which is an unnatural version of where we were some moves ago.

32...\( \text{¥e8} \) After this White has no more \( \text{¥e4} \) ideas.

33.\( \text{¥f1} \) \( \text{¥xe1} \) 34.\( \text{¥xe1} \) \( \text{¥g6} \) 35.\( \text{¥e3} \)

\( \text{¥xa2} \) 36.\( \text{¥xc3} \) \( \text{¥xd5} \) 37.\( \text{¥e5} \)

\text{Draw}

\text{CANDIDATES 3}

Caruana and Shankland each had a slight plus score and won important games in tight matches, carrying the weight of the team. Robson did not play much after misplaying a queen ending early in the tournament. He came back in round 10 to give Nakamura a chance to prepare and re-energize before the Round 11 title clash. However, I think it would have been better to let Hikaru rest then and move Shankland up to take the white pieces in the match against China. We shall see later why this is the case. Nakamura lost 17 rating points and finished with a 50% score. His only win came in the first round, whereas just half a point more from this Titan of American chess would have been enough to secure the gold medal. However, it was good to see that Hikaru played well at the Isle of Man. Hopefully he can turn his fortunes around and return to full strength in the near future.

28.\( \text{¥g5} \) + This does not yet spoil anything, but White should have found 28.\( \text{¥e4!!} \) \( \text{¥xd1} \) The only critical move. (28...\( \text{¥xe4} \) 29.\( \text{¥xe4} \) is hopeless for Black. White will win the c3-pawn easily and then the combination of the march of the d-pawn, threats against the fractured black pawns and the open king will be too much for Black to handle. This is certainly not what Black was worrying about.) 29.\( \text{¥g5} \) \( \text{¥h8} \) 30.\( \text{¥f5} \!

40...\( \text{b6} \) 41.\( \text{¥d2} \) \( \text{b6} \) 42.\( \text{¥c3} \) \( \text{¥xa4+} \)

43.\( \text{¥x4} \) \( \text{¥f8} \) 44.\( \text{¥d3} \) \( \text{¥e7} \) 45.\( \text{¥e3} \)

\( \text{¥f8} \) 46.\( \text{¥f4} \) \( \text{¥g7} \)

1–0
Yu Yangyi 2765 – Radjabov 2751
Chess Olympiad 2018 (CHN–AZE)

18.\texttt{\textasciitilde}g4! This would have allowed White to initiate an attack based on the weakness of the pawn being on h6, which gives White attacking chances. In the game Yu played 18.\texttt{\textasciitilde}b2? allowing an immediate draw. 18...\texttt{\textasciitilde}xe5 19.\texttt{\textasciitilde}xe5 \texttt{\textasciitilde}xe5 20.\texttt{\textasciitilde}xe5 \texttt{\textasciitilde}d7= with a draw on move 30.

18...e5 The most critical reply. 18...f6 19.\texttt{\textasciitilde}xh6 gxh6 20.\texttt{\textasciitilde}xf6+ is devastating for Black. 18...f5 19.exf5 exf5 20.\texttt{\textasciitilde}d5+
A) 20...\texttt{\textasciitilde}h8 21.\texttt{\textasciitilde}e5! (21.\texttt{\textasciitilde}xa8 \texttt{\textasciitilde}e6 and Black is okay) is a nice point. After 21...\texttt{\textasciitilde}xe5 22.\texttt{\textasciitilde}xa8 White has won the exchange. Black no longer has 22...\texttt{\textasciitilde}e6 as the rook on f8 is undefended.
B) 20...\texttt{\textasciitilde}h7 21.\texttt{\textasciitilde}xa8 \texttt{\textasciitilde}e6 White is much better. The best way forward is 22.\texttt{\textasciitilde}f6+! gxf6 23.\texttt{\textasciitilde}f3 \texttt{\textasciitilde}xb3 24.\texttt{\textasciitilde}xf5+ \texttt{\textasciitilde}h8 25.axb3 and White is totally winning.

19.\texttt{\textasciitilde}xh6+ gxh6 Upon 19...\texttt{\textasciitilde}h7 20.\texttt{\textasciitilde}d2 and it is clear that White has a big advantage. We can always analyze further, but it is obvious here that things are going well.

20.\texttt{\textasciitilde}d2! White is also much better after 20.\texttt{\textasciitilde}g3+ \texttt{\textasciitilde}h8 21.\texttt{\textasciitilde}d2 f6 22.\texttt{\textasciitilde}d1!, because of 22...\texttt{\textasciitilde}c5 23.\texttt{\textasciitilde}b2 \texttt{\textasciitilde}a7 24.\texttt{\textasciitilde}c1+ when Black has too many problems.

17.e5! This simple move may look wrong, because it makes the white bishop “bad” and gives away the strong d5-square. But this is far less important than the way it limits the scope of the black pieces, giving White a free hand to attack on the kingside. There is also an element of prophylaxis, as Black wanted to play ...e5 for which all his pieces were prepared.

17...\texttt{\textasciitilde}d5 18.g4! With the center closed, White attacks where Black is weakest.

18...\texttt{\textasciitilde}c8 The computer suggests 18...\texttt{\textasciitilde}f7!? but after 19.\texttt{\textasciitilde}xf6 \texttt{\textasciitilde}xf4 20.\texttt{\textasciitilde}xf4 exf6+ 21.\texttt{\textasciitilde}f1 \texttt{\textasciitilde}e4 White has many promising options: 22.\texttt{\textasciitilde}xh5? gxh5 23.\texttt{\textasciitilde}g1± probably being the strongest.

19.\texttt{\textasciitilde}h4!
Training

Aithmidou 2244 – Li Chao 2708
Chess Olympiad 2018 (MOR‒CHN)

Mohamed–Mehdi missed the direct
66.¦xg7! ¢xg7 67.b6 and the pawn
queens.

66.¦f7+?
White has an inferior
version of this win with 66.b6!? ¢xe7
67.b7 ¦a3+ 68.¢e2! (68.¦xf4? ¢xe3
69.¤b5 ¢h5+!! is a surprising draw.)
68...¦e3+ 69.¤d2 ¦xd6 70.b8£+ ¢e6
71.¢f2 (71.£g8+? ¢f6 72.£f8+ ¢g6
73.£xf4 ¢e3+ and Black has managed
to construct a fortress.) 71...¢f5 72.c6
c6 73.¢c5! (73.£c8+? ¢f6 72.£f8+ ¢g6
73.£xf4 ¢e3+ and Black has a full chance of a
draw. The rest of the game was very
interesting, so I will include it even if it
has little to do with our exercise.

66...¢e5!

White has a positional advantage no
matter what, but there is a tactical
chance that has to be explored. And
we have to calculate this accurately, as
White would not want to exchange the
dominating e–pawn and thereby lose
much of his positional advantage, if
there was not a reward down the line.

24.e6! ¢e8 The only move. 24...£xf4
25.£xd8+ ¢h7 26.e7 wins for White,
as essentially proved by the mate that
follows after 26...£f5 27.£g8+ ¢h8
28.£f7+.

25.£xc7! Again this has to be based on
accurate calculation. White also retains
a decent advantage with 25.h4.

25...£xc7 26.£d8+ ¢h7 27.f4!

This idea had to be seen in advance
else White’s advantage would have
been rather minimal.

27...£xe6 28.f5! £f7 The tactical point
of White’s play is 28...£xf5 29.£g8+ ¢h8
30.£xf5 £c8 31.£xc8 £xc8 32.c6! and White ends a piece up.
Black can of course give up a piece with
28...£xf5 29.£xf5 exf5, but the black
pieces are so poorly placed that the three
pawns might just as well be one.

29.£xe6 White’s combination has
produced a towering passed pawn on e6
and thus been a success.

33.£e4! £f5 34.£g5+ £g6 Black now makes more magic with the e–pawn.

35.£e7! £xe7 36.£d6+ £h5 37.£xf5
£hx4 38.£g6 £g3 39.£e6+ £f3
40.£g4 £e3 41.£g3+ £d2 42.£g2+
£d1 43.£c5 1–0

Critical Moment

Radjabov 2751 – Sargissian 2691
Chess Olympiad 2018 (AZE–ARM)

White has a positional advantage no
matter what, but there is a tactical
chance that has to be explored. And
we have to calculate this accurately, as
White would not want to exchange the
dominating e–pawn and thereby lose
much of his positional advantage, if
there was not a reward down the line.

74.£c8! was the only winning move.
As promised, here is the game that could have won the Olympiad. After great preparation, Nakamura had reached a fantastic position, but somehow he miscalculated entirely and rejected the intuitively most natural move in the position: 21.d5!

Nakamura played 21.£c3? £b7! 22.dxc5?! This leads to a draw (22.g5!? would have rolled the dice. I am not sure White is better, but we are a long way from the four draws seen in the match.) 22...bxc5 23.¤xe5 24.¤xc5 £c5+ 25.¥xc5 £xb2+ 26.¢g3 £b4 and the game ended in a draw on move 41.

21...¤xe5 21...exd5 22.£xd5 ¦a7 23.g5 gives White a winning attack. The main line goes 23...hxg5. Yes, this is obviously dangerous, but a little evidence is a good thing all the same. 24.hxg5 £xg5 25.¢g6+ fxg6 26.£xg5 and the pressure down the h-file is deadly. White plays £f4 and £c4 in quick concession, with mate to follow. One can easily imagine the sequence £f4–£f4, £c4–£f8, £xh7+–£xh7, £h1#.

21...£c3? £b7! 22.dxc5?! This leads to a draw (22.g5!?) would have been better.

Black’s situation. 22...£xd3 (22...£a7 23.d6) 23.£xd3 £b4 (23...£xe5 24.£e4 leaves White with an overwhelming advantage.) 24.¥xc4 ¤xc4 25.¤xc4 26.¢e2 exd5 27.£xd5 £c6 28.£c1 £e7 29.£b5 and White wins a pawn.

22.£xe5 £xe5 23.dxe6 fxe6 24.£xe6 £xb2+ 24...£d6 25.£d2 gives White a big advantage as well.

25.£e2 £f6 26.g5!

White’s initiative continues. I cannot imagine a scenario where Hikaru would not win this position.
The early rounds of the 43rd Olympiad were perhaps more difficult than expected for the top-seeded Americans. Wesley So was the main driving force as his back-to-back wins with the white pieces were a major factor in the US team’s respective match wins over young Georgia 3 in Round 2 and then the Netherlands in Round 3.

Then, in the next couple of rounds, it was Fabiano Caruana who took over the reins with two successive wins against powerful opposition. First, in the match against India, Fabi defeated Vishy Anand and this was enough to secure victory for the US team, as all the other games were drawn. Then, in round 5, he outplayed Boris Gelfand, although this time his win was only enough for a drawn result against Israel, as Sam Shankland lost his game.

Two relatively easy match wins followed and in Round 8 the US passed another serious test by defeating the strong Azerbaijani team, since Fabiano and Sam won their games and Hikaru drew.

After eight rounds it seemed that Team USA was heading for a successful defense of their Olympic title as they were one point clear of Poland and two points ahead of a chasing pack of seven teams.

But, in Round 9, the Americans had to face the young Polish side, who by this stage had proved to be the biggest surprise of the Olympiad. Moreover they now produced another sensation by claiming victory in a tight match against the US with a win on board 3 and three hard-fought draws. Though this defeat seriously wounded John Donaldson’s squad, his players hit back valiantly in the penultimate round against Armenia, thanks to Shankland’s win over Melkumyan.

However, the best was saved for last – a direct confrontation between the present and previous Olympic champions! In the final reckoning, this USA-China encounter produced four draws, while Russia’s win over France meant that the top three seeded teams had finished in joint first place. So now it was all down to the controversial tie-break system to decide the medal order. And this time it turned out to be: China, USA, Russia. In fourth place came Poland, missing a medal by one match point. Amazingly, they had played eight top seeds in the last eight rounds(!), scoring 4 wins (USA, Ukraine and France), 3 draws (Azerbaijan, India and Armenia) and suffering only one defeat to China.

And so the 2014 Olympiad winners (China) edged out the 2016 Olympiad winners (USA) and if fate decrees this pattern will be repeated in the next Olympiad in 2020, then Team USA can expect to claim another gold medal!
Round 3, USA vs. Netherlands
Annotated by Bassem Amin

1. e4 e5 2. ∆f3 ∆c6 3. ∆b5 ∆f6 4. d3
d6 The main line here, by far, is 4...c5.

5.0-0 g6 6. d4 An immediate strike in the center. Wesley has played this before, in the Millionaire Chess Open tie-breaks in 2015, and he liked the position he got from the opening so was confident to repeat it, even against a respected theoretician like L’Ami.

The continuation 6.c3 ∆g7 7. ∆e1 0-0 8. ∆bd2 ∆d7 9. ∆f1 would have been more in the spirit of a normal Ruy Lopez.

6...∆d7 Here Erwin deviates. In the aforementioned game, Nakamura went for 6...exd4 7. e5 dxe5 8. ∆xe5 ∆d5 9. ∆e2 ∆e7 10. ∆e1 d3 11. ∆c6+ ∆xc6 12. ∆xd3 ∆d6 13. ∆e2 0-0 14. ∆c3 ∆e6 15. ∆f3 ∆d5 16. ∆h6 and the players agreed to a draw, W.So 2773 – H.Nakamura 2814, Las Vegas 2015.

7. d5 ∆e7 An interesting plan was 7...∆b8 8. ∆xd7+ ∆xd7 (Wesley hinted at 8... ∆xd7 being an alternative, with the idea of playing for ...c7-c6.) 9. ∆e1 ∆g7 10. c4 0-0 11. ∆c3±.

8. ∆xd7+ ∆xd7 9.c4 ∆g7 10. ∆e3 h6 11. ∆fd2 f5 12. f3
This structure bears some similarities to the King’s Indian Defence, but without the light-squared bishops, which usually favors White as Black’s light-squared bishop is so important for a kingside attack.

12...f4 Also possible is 12...c5!? 13.\(\text{c}3\) f4 14.\(\text{f}2\) g5.

13.\(\text{f}2\) g5 14.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{g}6\) 15.\(\text{c}5\)! White decides not to waste any time preparing this break.

15...\(\text{xc}5\) 15...dxc5 is met by 16.\(\text{b}3\)! b6 17.\(\text{d}6\).

16.\(\text{xc}5\) dxc5 17.\(\text{b}3\) b6

18.\(\text{d}6\)? The absence of Black’s light-squared bishop allows this positional sacrifice of two pawns, preventing Black from castling.

18...\(\text{xd}6\) Not 18...cxd6?? 19.\(\text{e}6\)+ \(\text{e}7\) 20.\(\text{c}4+-\).

19.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{c}6\) Very interesting was 19...\(\text{e}6\) 20.\(\text{b}5\) \(\text{e}7\) 21.\(\text{f}d1\) \(\text{f}8\) 22.\(\text{a}4\).

20.\(\text{f}d1\) White has no direct threats, but this is a very unpleasant position for Black to play over the board, as it is not easy to find moves that don’t weaken his position.

20...\(\text{f}8\)?! Dreaming about getting to the d4 square, but that’s too optimistic. 20...\(\text{e}7\) may be a strange looking move, but the idea behind it is to lure White into playing \(\text{d}5\)+, blocking the file of his rook. This shows just how difficult the position is for Black! There is also 20...\(\text{f}8\) 21.\(\text{b}5\)! (21.\(\text{d}2\)?) 21...\(\text{e}6\) 22.\(\text{d}7\) \(\text{e}8\) 23.\(\text{xe}6\) \(\text{xe}6\) 24.\(\text{b}5\).  

21.\(\text{d}5\)!

20...\(\text{e}6\) If 21...\(\text{d}7\) 22.\(\text{ad}1\) 0-0-0, then

21...\(\text{e}6\) 22.\(\text{f}6\) Now we see why the king would have probably been better placed on g8. This check allows for a quick transfer of the rook to the queenside, which will result in decisive material gain. But such nuances are difficult to detect in advance.
28...\textit{g7} 29.\textit{c6} \textit{he8} 30.\textit{xc7+} Also winning was 30.\textit{xc7} \textit{ec8} 31.\textit{c1} \textit{ab8} 32.\textit{xc4}.

30...\textit{g6} Wesley’s great positional double pawn sacrifice led to a very nice victory.

\begin{center}
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\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

31.\textit{h4!} 31.\textit{c1}? would have won the c4 pawn and gained a winning position for White, who not only has an extra pawn but also a monster knight on d5.

31...\textit{ad8} Or 31...\textit{gxh4} 32.\textit{xf4+ g5} 33.\textit{d5+;} 31...\textit{ed8} 32.\textit{c1+}.

32.\textit{h5+! xh5} 33.\textit{f6+ h4} 34.\textit{xe8 e8} 35.\textit{h2} Better was 35.\textit{d1+}. \textit{Bassem Amin} is the first super Grandmaster from the African continent; his current rating is at an all time high of 2710. Born in Egypt 30 years ago, he has managed to successfully combine his chess career with his studies, graduating from the Faculty of Medicine at Tanta University in 2012. He is a five-time winner of the African Championship and has also won a number of Arab and Mediterranean titles.

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35...\textit{g4} Black tries to obtain some counterplay, but White convincingly converts his advantage to a full point.

36.\textit{h1} g3+ 37.\textit{g1+ g5} 38.\textit{f1 d8} 39.\textit{e2 e6} 40.\textit{xc4 d4+ 41.e1 h5} 42.\textit{c7 g6} 43.\textit{c3} You are always liable to spoil a game if you lose focus. Thus 43.\textit{xa7??} would have led to perpetual check after 43...\textit{c2+ 44.e2 d4+}, since 45.\textit{f1} is met by 45...\textit{c8!} Then again, 43.\textit{h4??} would run into 43...\textit{xf3+! 44.gxf3 d1+! 45.xd1 g2}.

43...\textit{g5} 44.\textit{d3 h4} 45.\textit{d1} a5 46.a4 8...\textit{e8} Black’s idea in this setup is to play ...\textit{e7-e5} and bring his knight to e6, then maybe to d4. So ...\textit{e8-c7-e6} is one possible route, while the other would be ...\textit{d7-f8-e6}, for example after 8...\textit{d7 9.e3 e5 10.d2 e8} 11.h2.

9...\textit{e3} The attempt to deter Black from playing ...\textit{e7-e5} by playing 9.\textit{f4} could have been countered by 9...\textit{c7} 10.\textit{d2 f6}! 11.h6 e5∞. 

9...\textit{b6}
10.e5!? Preventing Black from playing ...e7–e5 himself. But in fact this is a strange move, perhaps chosen by Fabi to surprise his opponent, who is renowned as one of the best prepared players in the world.

A more conventional plan would have been 10.£d2 e5 11.£h6 f6 12.£c3 g5 13.£xg7 £xg7=.

10...f6

Black will have to play this move sooner or later anyway, in order to free his position. 10...£c7 would have transposed after 11.£e1 f6.

11.£e1 £c7 It does Black no good to take the pawn: 11...fxe5 12.£g5 £c7 13.£h4 £d6 14.£g3±.

12.£d2 Preparing to play £h6 and trade the dark-squared bishops, which usually favors White in these setups. Another interesting option was 12.exf6!? exf6 13.£d2 g5!? or 13...£e8 14.£h6 £e6=.

13...£xf3!? The only move that justifies the capture on e5, but Black still does not have sufficient compensation. 13...£xh3!? doesn’t seem to work, but it is the kind of line you should calculate during the game: 14.£xe5 £e6 15.£xg7 £xg7 16.£xc6 £d6 17.£e5 £f5 18.£f3±.

14.£xg7! This intermediate move, before taking the rook on f3, is very important. The direct 14.gxf3? would have been a serious inaccuracy as it allows Black to retain his g7 bishop by 14...£h8!£.

14...£xg7 15.gxf3 £xh3 16.£xe5 e6 Black will have to play this move sooner or later, e.g. after 16...£f8!? 17.f4 £e6=.

17.£g5?! This move denies White the opportunity to activate his queen to a much better square with 17.£d5 18.£g3 £f5 19.£ae1±.

17...£f6 The most logical square for the black queen, from where it covers all the dark squares, applies pressure on the f3 pawn and frees the way for the rook to come to f8.

An alternative was 17...£d5 18.£e1 (After 18.£xd5 exd5 19.£e1 £f6 20.£g3 £f5= I think Black has enough compensation for the exchange.) 18...£f6 19.£g3 £f5=.

18.£g3 £f5 19.£g2

19.h5? Unnecessarily weakening his kingside. Black’s position is rather delicate, but there were other moves that allowed him to keep the balance. Probably best was 19...£d5! 20.£h1 £g8
21.\( \text{\texttt{wh6}} \) \( \text{\texttt{w7}} \) 22.\( \text{\texttt{ae4?! e5=}} \). Also interesting was 19...\( \text{f8?!} \) 20.\( \text{wh1 f7=}. \)

20.\( \text{hh1} \) White’s rooks are now much more active than before Black had played \( \text{h7-h5}. \)

20...\( \text{h8} \) 21.\( \text{de4!} \) Fabiano brings all his pieces into the assault against the black king. The loss of queenside pawns is irrelevant, since all the white pieces will now take up dangerous attacking positions.

21...\( \text{xb2} \)

22.\( \text{f4!} \) Finally the queen will manage to break through Black’s defenses. Also interesting was 22.\( \text{g5! d5 23.c3 h4!} \) 24.\( \text{hxh4 fxh4 25.xh4 e2!} \) 26.c4 \( \text{e3+ 27.h1 d1+ 28.h2 f1+ 29.g2 xe4 30.e7+ g8 31.xe6+ g7 32.e7+ g8 33.xe4 xg3 34.xg6+±.} \)

22...\( \text{d5 23.d6} \)

23.e5?? With so many threats for White and so many weaknesses for Black, it’s quite difficult to find good defensive moves for the second player. Gelfand finally cracks under the pressure. 23...\( \text{f8} \) was the best try for Black but White still has a decent advantage after 24.\( \text{g5 f6 25.xh5 e5 26.h7+ g8 27.xf6 e5 28.xa7 h5 29.e4 xg3 30.xg3±.} \)

24.\( \text{h4!} \) This is a good move, but maybe 24.\( g1! \) was even better. Then 24...\( \text{f8} \) 25.h1 ± 26.g5 or 26.g5 are decisive.

24...\( \text{d4} \) Hoping to exchange queens by \( ...f4+, \) An immediate 24...\( f4+ 25.h1 f8 \) loses to 26.g5!+

25.\( \text{g1!} \) A very simple move, but one that is very strong as it side-steps Black’s last resource of \( ...f4+, \) exchanging queens.

25...\( \text{f8 26.h5} \) Now \( f5 \) is a decisive threat.

26...\( \text{xe4 27.d7+! f6 27.d7} \) loses directly to 28.h7+ xh7 29.xf7+ h6 30.f8+ and mate next move.

28.\( \text{xc6+} \) There was also 28.fxe4 f4 29.f5+ gxf5 30.xf5+ e7 31.g7+ e6 32.c8+ d8 33.xc6+ d7 34.xd7 mate.

28...\( \text{g7 29.d7+ f6 30.fxe4 f4} \) 31.f5+ gxf5 32.xf5+ e7 33.g7+ Black resigned

A convincing victory for Fabiano which saved a delicate match situation for the USA, as Wesley and Hikaru had drawn their games and Sam Shankland had lost to Emil Sutovsky.

Fabiano Caruana 2827
Shakhriyar Mamedyarov 2820

Round 8, USA vs. Azerbaijan
Annotated by Robert Hungaski

After blowout wins against England and the Czech Republic, along with a clutch 2½-1½ win over Armenia, it definitely felt like the Azerbaijani team was a serious contender for the title. Therefore, this round 8 matchup was a key moment in the tournament, and this game specifically. Fabiano coming off wins against Anand and Gelfand, and Mamedyarov coming off back-to-back-to-back wins against Adams, Aronian and Navara set the stage for a titanic battle. In fact, not only was Olympic gold at stake, but also the number
two spot in the world ranking, since Mamedyarov has been steadily climbing in the list. After Fabiano locked in the win, and with it the match, it felt like the tournament had taken a new direction.

1.e4 e5 2.¤f3 ¤c6 3.¥b5 a6 4.¤a4 ¤f6 5.0–0 ¤xe4 A specialty of Mamedyarov. The dynamic, unbalanced positions that arise from this line favor his style.

6.d4 b5 7.¥b3 d5 8.dxe5 ¥e6

9.¤bd2 9.c3 ¤c5 10.¤bd2 0–0 11.¤c2 ¥xf2 was first played in Rey Ardid – Cleczynski in 1924 and, more famously, in Smyslov – Botvinnik 1943. But this line has aged quite well, and it still appears in tournament play once in a while. Until somebody proves otherwise, it favors the second player.

9...¤c5 10.c3 ¥e7 Getting rid of the bishop pair may look tempting, but after 10...¤xb3? 11.¤xb3 &e7 12.¤d4! ¥xd4 (If 12...¤xe5? the first player has many tactics at his disposal: 13.¤e1 &g6 14.¤xe6 &xe6 15.¤d4 e5 16.¤e6 ¥d7 17.¤xd5.) 13.cxd4 things look pretty bad for Black on the c-file.

11.¤c2 d4 12.¤b3 d3

13.¤b1 White’s other option is 13.¤xc5 dxc2 14.¤xd8+ ¥xd8 15.¤xe6 fxe6 16.¤e3 ¥d5, thus we arrive at a key position in this endgame. 17.¤ac1 (For a while it was believed that White could achieve a much more pleasant endgame with 17.c4 bxc4 18.¤ac1 ¤b4 19.a3 ¥d3 20.¤xc2 ¥d7= but the powerful knight on d3 makes it very hard for White to ever capture on c4 without losing the b2-pawn. Therefore, the position is dynamically balanced.) 17...¤xe5 18.¤xe5 ¥xe5 19.¤xc2 ¥f7 20.c4 b4 21.¤d1 ¥d8 22.¤xd8 ¥xd8 23.¤f1 ¥g5 and Black had no trouble holding the endgame in Xie Jun - Susan Polgar, Women’s World Championship, Jäne 1996.

13...¤xb3 14.axb3 ¥f5 15.¤e3 0–0

16.¤d4 White would not achieve much by enveloping the d3-pawn with the knight as this would neglect the defense of the already vulnerable e5-pawn: 16.¤d4 ¥xd4 17.cxd4 c5 18.dxc5 ¥c7 19.b4 (19.¤xd3 ¥ad8=) 19...¤xe5 20.¤xd3 ¥ad8 21.¤a3 a5!=.

16...¤d5 17.¤e1

17...¤d2!? This pawn push seems to be all the rage these days. But I like the straightforwardness of the old move 17...¤fd8 18.¤e3 ¥xd4, and now: A) 19.¤xd4 &g6 20.b4 c5 21.bxc5

18.¤e2 18.¤xd2 ¤xb1 19.¤xb1 (19.¤xb1 ¥xd4 20.¤xd4 ¥b4=) 19...¤fd8= and Black will get the pawn back on the next move; White has tried sacrificing the exchange with 18.¤xb1 dxe1¥+ 19.¤xe1 ¥xb3= but I don’t see the appeal of his position. Black will probably follow with something like ...¤d8–e6 and eventually ...c7–c5 when it is his position that has the more potential; 18.¤e3 ¤xb1 19.¤xb1 (19.¤xb1 ¥xd4 20.¤xd4 ¥b4∞ and all of a sudden the d-pawn is alive and well.) 19...¤xd4 20.cxd4 ¤b4 21.¤xd2 ¥xd4 22.¤f3 ¥xd1+ 23.¤xd1 ¥ad8 24.¤e3 ¥xd3 25.¤xd3 f6 and if anyone has to be careful here, it is White. 18.¤xd2 ¤xb1 19.¤xb1 ¥xb3 offers equal chances.

18...¤xb1 19.¤xb1 ¥xd4

20.¤xd4 White should generally avoid taking with the c-pawn on d4, since aside
from a possible ...c5-break White will also have to reckon with the possibility of ...b4, keeping the d2-pawn alive: 20.cxd4? b4 21.axd2 xd4 22.f3 xd1+ 23.xd1 f8.

20...g5 21.g3 Threatening to play f2-f4, shutting out the bishop and hence picking up the d2-pawn.

21...c5 22.f5 d3 23.d6 g6 The only way of preventing f2-f4.

24.h4

24...f4 Last summer, Mamedyarov went for 24...h6 in Saint Louis against Vishy Anand: 25.h5 xh5 26.xd2 xe5 27.d5. It was a draw, but White seemed to be slightly better, so Shak came up with a different plan this time. But the simplest and safest would have been 24...xh4 25.axd2 e7+ followed by f7-f6, as in F.Caruana 2767 - E.L'Ami 2611, Reykjavik 2012. After the opening of the f-file Black should be able to keep the balance due to his safer king.

25.e4! Up until here both Caruana and Mamedyarov had played very fast, but here Fabi stopped and thought for more than ten minutes. Not sure if he found this over the board, or he was just double-checking his preparation, but he came up with a novelty.

25...e5 26.xe5 dxe5 27.dxe5 White is starting to dominate the board.) 27...g5! The key is that after the exchange, Black has weaknesses in a6 and c6, and the bishop is not only completely dominated, but it will also have difficulties in finding a safe outpost. 27...xg5 28.hxg5 d6 29.a1 e7 30.g5.

26.xd2 26.exf6? would have given Shak a strong initiative after 26...e8, and the last thing you want is to give the Azerbaijani that kind of opportunity.

26.ad8

27.a1 It looks obvious to move the rook to a semi-open file, but there is also something else, a little subtlety...

27.fe8 The capture 27...xd2 28.xd2 xd2 f4 doesn’t work, thanks to 27.a1. Now the rook is not hanging on b1, so ...f5-f4 is not a strong threat, and White has the upper hand with 30.a1 f8 31.xc5.

28.e1?! It seems that the most accurate continuation is 28.e2 xe5 29.xe5 (29...xd2 30.xf5 xe5 31.xe5+) 30.d3 b8 31.g2.

29.xd2?! Strange for Mamedyarov to surrender the tension prematurely.

GM Robert Hungaski was born in Stamford, CT, to an American father and an Argentine mother. He moved to Argentina at a very young age, which is where he learned to play chess at the age of six in an after-school program. Soon after achieving the IM title, Robert moved back to the U.S. At this time he began training with GM William Lombardy and, at his coach’s behest, enrolled in the University of Connecticut. Robert, now a Grandmaster, currently resides in New York City, but continues to travel extensively throughout Latin America.
Black could have equalized with 28...\textit{d}d5! 29.\textit{f}f3 (29.e6 \textit{x}xd2 30.\textit{x}xd2 \textit{e}xe6=) 29...\textit{d}d3 30.\textit{g}g5 (30.\textit{g}g2 \textit{c}c6++) 30...\textit{x}xg5 (30...h6 31.\textit{h}h3 traps the bishop.) 31.\textit{x}xg5 \textit{e}xe6 29...\textit{d}3 30.\textit{g}g5 (30.\textit{g}g2 \textit{c}c6+) 30...\textit{x}xg5 (30...h6 31.\textit{h}h3 traps the bishop.) 31.hxg5 \textit{x}xe6 32.\textit{a}a6 f4\textit{f} White must now play with caution. 33.\textit{d}d2 (33.\textit{h}h2? \textit{h}h5+ 34.\textit{g}g1 \textit{f}f3 35.\textit{e}e3 \textit{f}f6 36.\textit{f}f1 \textit{d}d1++) 33...\textit{e}xe5 34.\textit{a}a8+ \textit{f}f7 35.\textit{a}a7+ \textit{f}f8 36.\textit{a}a8+=.

29.\textit{x}xd2 \textit{e}xd2 30.\textit{d}d2 \textit{e}xe5

A key position arises and in a way it feels like the game starts here. Material is even, but Black’s king is clearly more exposed. Fabiano virtuously takes advantage of this strategic nuance.

31.\textit{d}d8+ \textit{e}e8 32.\textit{d}d5+ \textit{e}e6 33.\textit{d}d1

33...\textit{c}4?! Considering the king safety issues at hand, perhaps Black should have cast his lot with the rook endgame, although this would certainly be unappetizing due to the passive situation of the black king after 33...\textit{x}xd5 34.\textit{x}xd5 \textit{e}e2 35.\textit{x}xc5 \textit{xb}2 36.\textit{b}4 \textit{g}6 37.\textit{c}7±. Another try was 33...\textit{f}4?! 34.gxf4 \textit{b}4 35.\textit{f}1 \textit{f}7 with good drawing chances.

34.bxc4 bxc4

35.\textit{b}7 Mamedyarov missed the opportunity to exchange queens, and now Fabi, with good judgment, won’t give him a second chance. The black king is more exposed and White does well to keep the queens on the board. That, added to the weak pawns on a6 and c4, is more than enough to decide the game.

35...\textit{e}7 36.\textit{d}8+ \textit{f}f7 37.\textit{f}f3 \textit{g}6 38.\textit{f}f4 \textit{c}6 39.\textit{d}d1 \textit{e}4 40.\textit{b}6 \textit{g}8 41.\textit{h}5 At this point I would have probably been saying to myself “Maybe I should have traded queens a few moves ago...”

41...\textit{e}8 42.\textit{x}hxg5 \textit{h}xg5 43.\textit{h}1! White must take the e1–square under control so as to activate the rook and not have to worry about back–rank checks.

43...\textit{e}6 44.\textit{h}4 \textit{e}8 45.\textit{d}d4

35...\textit{g}5? The computer goes nuts after this move. But the fact that Black has not yet fallen from his chair after White’s dizzying queen and rook maneuvers deserves a tip of the hat. 59...\textit{g}5 60.\textit{h}5+ \textit{f}f6 61.\textit{e}e8 \textit{f}f8 62.\textit{h}6+ \textit{g}7 63.\textit{d}d4+ \textit{e}5 64.\textit{x}c4+ should be winning for Fabi, but the job is not done yet.

60.\textit{f}4+! \textit{h}5 61.\textit{d}d2 \textit{g}7 62.\textit{h}2+ \textit{g}4 63.\textit{g}2! \textit{g}5 64.\textit{e}8 Simultaneously threatening checkmate on e2 and h5. Black resigned

A great win by Fabiano that secured a 2½–1½ win over Azerbaijan and changed the momentum of the tournament completely.

Hrant Melkumyan 2660
Samuel Shankland 2722

Round 10, Armenia vs. USA
Annotated by Bassem Amin

1.d4 d5 2.\textit{f}f3 \textit{f}f6 3.\textit{c}c4 e6 4.\textit{c}c3 c6 5.\textit{g}5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.\textit{e}5 h6 8.\textit{h}4 g5 9.\textit{x}xg5 hxg5 10.\textit{x}xg5
10...¥e7 This is not the most popular move but it has been tried by many top players, including Aronian and Morozevich. 10...¤bd7 11.exf6 ¥b7 is considered the main variation.

11.exf6 xf6 12.¥e3 ¥b7 13.¥f3 ¥d7 14.a4 a6 (14...¥a5!? 15.¥e2=)

12...¥xf6 13.g3 13.a4!? ¥h4 14.g4 ¥e7 15.h3! (15.axb5 cxb5 16.¥g2 ¥b7 17.d5 exd5+ 18.¥f1 ¥d7 19.¥xd5±) 15...¥b7 16.¥g2=.

13...¥b7 13...¤a6 would most probably transpose to the game after 14.¥g2 ¥b7.

14.¥g2 ¥a6

15.¥e4 15.¥xb5 was not good enough in view of 15...0-0-0, and now:
A) 16.¥a4 cxb5 17.¥xb7+ ¥xb7 18.¥xb5+ ¥a8 19.¥e6+ ¥b8 20.¥b5+= (20.¥xa6?? ¥b3+);
B) 16.¥a3 ¥xd4 17.¥e2 ¥b4 18.0-0 ¥a6=.

15...¥e7 16.0-0 0-0-0

17.h4 The alternative was to advance the pawn on the other side of the board: 17.a4 f5 18.¥c3 ¥b8 19.¥e2 b4 20.¥xc4 bxc3

21.bxc3 ¥a8 22.¥fb1 ¥b8 23.a5 a6=.

17...c5 18.a4! ¥xd4 19.¥e2 b4

18.¥xb7+ ¥xb7 19.¥e7+ ¥b8 20.¥d1 a6

20.¥d5 21.¥fd1 ¥xd1+ 22.¥xd1 White lost a very important tempo by playing 20.¥ac1, which allowed Black to get his bishop to d5, protecting his queenside pawns.

22...¥d8

23.¥c1 Worth considering was 23.b3!? f5 24.¥g5 ¥xg2 25.¥xd8+ ¥xd8 26.¥xg2 cxb5 27.¥xa6 b2 28.¥d3+ ¥d7 29.¥b1 ¥d2 30.¥xe6+ ¥e7 31.¥xc5 ¥d5+ 32.¥h2 ¥xc5 33.¥xb2 ¥b3=.

23...¥b8! Bringing the knight back into the game was in my opinion one of the best moves in this game! Also interesting was 23...¥b7!?.

24.¥e3 ¥c6 25.¥xc5 ¥f6

25...¥xc5 26.¥d3 ¥f5

26.b3? This is simply a blunder, as White does not have enough counterplay to compensate for the protected passed c3 pawn.

White should have gone for 26.¥f1! ¥d4 27.¥e4 ¥f3+ 28.¥g2 ¥d2 29.¥c5+ ¥b8 (29...¥d7?? 30.¥xd5+ exd5 31.¥xf6+ wins) 30.¥b5+ ¥c7 (30...¥a8?? 31.¥xd5+ exd5 32.¥xf6+--) 31.¥c5+=.

26...c3 27.¥e2 White was hoping to be able to attack the black king, but after a couple of
good defensive moves, it is perfectly safe and the c3 pawn is now decisive.

27...£d4! 28.£b5

The black king is not afraid to go to the center of the board.

28...¢c7!

White resigned

Kacper Piorun 2612
Hikaru Nakamura 2763

Round 9, Poland vs. USA
Annotated by Robert Hungaski

After an epic round 8 win, it seemed like the US had everything going in their favor. The Russian team was nowhere in sight and China did not appear to be in top form. Having lost to the Czech Republic by a score of 3-1 a few rounds back, Ding & Co were still trying to claw their way back into contention again. In the meantime, the US was paired against an inspired Polish team. Dangerous? For sure, but the US was a heavy favorite nevertheless.

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 £xd5 3.¤c3 £d8 4.d4 ¤f6 5.¤f3

An interesting variation that became quite popular after Carlsen essayed it against Caruana in the 2014 Tromso Olympiad - and won! However, Hikaru intended to put his own spin on the line...

5...g6!? Not a new idea, but surely what Hikaru was intending as a surprise (if 3...£d8 had not done the job already). Black aims for quick pressure on d4, which is generally the main idea in the Scandinavian as long as the knight remains misplaced on c3, since of course White cannot then play his pawn to that square.

The above mentioned game between the two recent World Championship contenders followed a different path: 5...¤g6 6.h3 ¤xf3 7.¤xf3 c6 8.¢e2 e6
22...g5? Up until now Black had done a great job at cooling down White’s kingside ambitions by provoking complications in the center. This strategy had worked so well that if White was not careful he might even run into some trouble. However, Black now loses the thread. After 22...fxe5 23.cxd5 (23.dxe5? £xe5 24.cxd5 £xe2+) 23...£xh4 (23...exd4?!) 24.£g3 e4 25.£c3 £d7 26.£xc7 £xc7 27.£xe7+ £f7 the position would have remained very complex.

23.£h5? The right move was 24.c5!.

25...£f5?! Sometimes simple is best. For example, now, after 25...£g6! 26.£xg6 hxg6 27.£f3 £f5 28.c5 £f7 29.£xe3 £d5!, White’s kingside attack has been completely disrupted, whereas Black has achieved a dream Scandinavian position where White’s backward d-pawn is a wreck.

26.c5 £d5 27.£f3 £a2 28.£c6 £xc6 29.£xc6 £c4 30.£e4

30...£xe4?! Too optimistic. The white queen should not be allowed to loiter around the black king for so long... Probably the best option was 30...£g6?! 31.£xg6 hxg6 32.£g4 £e8=.

Another possibility was 30...£xd4 31.£xf5 £xd1+ 32.£xd1 exf5 33.h4 £f7 34.£xg5 fxg5 35.£e8. The situation is reminiscent of the Caruana - Mamedyarov game in the previous round, but in this case the situation of Black’s king is nowhere near as compromised. White’s compensation is only enough for equality.

32.h4 Black’s position becomes very delicate again. White’s play is now analogous to Caruana’s from round 8 and is a great example of how to exploit a weakened king’s position.

32...£d5 33.£xd5 £c4 34.£xc4 £c5. If 33...exd4, then 34.h5+, White is also better after 33...£xd4 34.£xd4 exd4 35.£f5!.
34.h5 exd4? The final mistake in an already difficult position. 34...g8!? looks a bit more resilient: 35.g4 g2±. Another option was 34...d7.

35.exd4 f7 36.g4 exd4 37.xd4

Now White will crash through along the d-file or the b1–h7 diagonal. These two fronts are more than what Black’s position can bear.

37...e6 37...f5 38.c6 e8 39.d7 e7 40.xe7 xe7 41.g6+ h8 42.xh6+ wins.

38.d3 f5 39.d7 f7 40.d4+ h7 41.d8 g7 42.f8 c4 43.xc4 bxc4 44.xf5

Black has managed to get the queens off the board, but at a very high price. The endgame is hopeless.

44.c6 After 44.e7 c6 45.c6 g7 46.f1 e4 47.f3 e3 48.a4 b3 49.b5 axb5 50.axb5 b2 51.e1 c3 52.d1 g8 53.d5 White is winning.

45.e5 d7 46.e4 d1+ 47.g2 c1 48.f3 g7 49.e3 f6 50.xd4 c3 51.e8 c2 52.c3 a5 53.xc6 axb4+ 54.axb4 e5 55.xc6 b1 56.xc2 xb4 57.f3 d4

58.xh6 c4+ 59.d2 xc5 60.e6

Black resigned

A heartbreaking loss for the US team since after this game Poland would take the match 2½–1½. Just like when Azerbaijan was stopped in its tracks, here too it felt like the wind had been taken out of America’s sails. Nevertheless, Team USA would come back to win a close match against Armenia and face–off against China in the last round. But little could be done to shake China’s imperturbable spirit after they had orchestrated an epic comeback following a rocky start. In the last round they held the US to a 2-2 draw and took the title on tiebreak.

Ding Liren 2804
Jan Krzysztof Duda 2739

Round 10, China vs. Poland
Annotated by Robert Hungaski

After upsetting the US team in round 9, Poland were in clear first place in what so far had been the biggest Cinderella story in Olympiad history. But their biggest trial of the tournament would come in round 10 against the hungry Chinese team, which had scratched and clawed its way back to board one and had no intention of wasting any more opportunities. After a resounding 3-1 victory over Poland, China would join the USA at the top of the leader board. They would have to battle it out in the last round, lest they left it to chance with the unpredictable tiebreaks in case of a 2-2 draw. But a draw it was, and fortune favored the Chinese.

1.d4 f6 2.c4 e6 3.f3 d5 4.c3 dxc4 5.e4 b5!?

Duda had played this earlier in the year against Wojtaszek in the Polish Championship. I recall this being a specialty of the Argentine team, specifically prepared for the 2016 Baku Olympiad. In fact, Argentina’s top board, GM Sandro Mareco, got the chance to essay this move against none other than China’s top board at that time, Wang Yue. He won convincingly and since then this line has begun to attract much more attention. Perhaps he thought it was a good omen to play this same move against China, but surely after Wang Yue’s painful loss they must have spent a fair amount of time reviewing it...

The “old” Vienna seems to be in a state of shock following the modern treatment of the position: 5...b4 6.xc4 xe4 7.0-0, and White obtains a scary initiative.

6.e5 d5 7.xb5 b6 8.e2 c6 9.0-0 e7

10.d2! This move reminds me of an idea tried in the game Grandelius - Edouard, Porticcio 2016, which began as an offbeat line against the Queen’s Gambit Accepted. In these types of positions, White’s most effective idea is a quick transfer of the queen to the kingside - after all, the pawn structure dictates that you have to attack on that flank!

Wang Yue had played 10.e3 0-0 11.c1 c6 12.c3 c7 13.d1 b8 14.d5 b4 15.dxe6 e8 16.exf7+ xf7 17.d1 and even though White’s position was fine, the f-file was a constant source of concern in Y.Wang 2737 - S.Mareco 2606, Baku Olympiad 2016.

10...0-0 11.xf4 b8 This is the first new move in the game. The precedent here was 11...b4 12.g4 e8 13.d1
12.\textit{c}3 f5!?

Up to this point both players had been blitzing out their moves, but after this pawn advance Ding Liren sunk into deep thought for 22 minutes. He later confessed that he had only prepared for 12...\textit{b}4, but most likely that would have transposed to the game after 13.\textit{g}3 f5.

13.\textit{g}3! A very fine response. White creates some threats that increase the tension, such as \textit{h}6 and eventually \textit{g}5. 13.exf6 \textit{x}f6 14.\textit{e}4 \textit{b}7 15.\textit{g}5 \textit{g}6 16.\textit{x}e7 \textit{xe}7!? would leave Black better and about to seize the initiative.

13...\textit{h}8 Of course, 13...\textit{xd}4 doesn’t work because of 14.\textit{xd}4 \textit{xd}4 15.\textit{h}6 \textit{f}7 16.\textit{h}5.

14.\textit{d}1 \textit{b}4 15.b3! A wise move. Black will get rid of his doubled and somehow weak pawn, but White will get his rook into play.

15...\textit{xb}3 16.axb3 \textit{a}6

17.\textit{c}4 This move is very annoying, because it prevents Duda’s natural development with ...\textit{b}7, and in case of 17...\textit{xc}4 18.bxc4 \textit{b}7 19.\textit{e}2 White has complete control of the center and is ready either to break on d5, or launch operations on the kingside: 19...\textit{d}7 20.\textit{g}5.

17...\textit{c}2 18.\textit{a}2 \textit{b}4 19.\textit{a}1 \textit{c}2 20.\textit{a}2 \textit{b}4 Basically a draw offer. “I was not in a must-win situation, but all the other three games were still being played, so I had no reason to agree to a draw either. I decided to play on”, said Ding after the game.

21.\textit{e}2 \textit{a}5 Making room for the bishop, with the plan ...\textit{xc}4 and then ...\textit{a}6. Here again the Chinese player sunk into deep thought, but if he had rejected the draw just a couple of moves before, it was because he had already decided to take his chances with...

22.d5! We have ourselves a shootout! 22...\textit{exd}5 Allowing the white e–pawn to advance makes me nervous. If White really wants to do that, let him pay the price by trading a few pieces to accomplish it. 22...\textit{exd}5 23.\textit{xd}5 \textit{xd}5 24.\textit{d}4 (24.\textit{xd}5 \textit{exd}5 25.e6
23.e6  $d6!? It looks a bit counter-intuitive to remove the piece blocking the dangerous passed pawn. The best defense seems to be 23...$f6!?.

24.$h3 Apparently Ding wanted to avoid the many exchanges that could occur after 24.$f4  $xf4 25.$xf4 $e7 26.$xd5 $d6 27.$xd5 $xd5 28.$xd5 $xb3. This is a complex position to evaluate over the board, but White has a clear edge here, probably even more so than in the game.

24...$f6

25.$b5! In the midst of an incredibly complicated position, this is the first move that really stands out to me and the point where I begin to realize that Ding has something really nasty up his sleeve. By getting rid of the dark-squared bishops we’ll soon encounter a position where the presence of opposite-color bishops greatly enhances White’s attack. The main alternative, and probably the reason why Ding spent half an hour on this move, was 25...$g5? (After 25...$g6 White is worse but the position still has plenty of fight in it).

28.$g5  $g6 If 28...$h6 29.$h5 is really painful.

29.$xd6 $f4 Of course 29...$xd6?? allows 30.$xh7 mate.

30.$h4 $b1

31.$e1 Keeping things simple seems to be enough to win here. Maybe better, but a lot more complex, was 31.$xf4 $d7 32.$f6! (32.$xb6? $d5!–+) 32...$g8 33.$xb6 $d5 (33...$xf4 34.$f7+ $h8 35.$f8+) 34.$xc4 $xb6 35.$xf4 + $e6 36.$xe6 winning.

26...$xc4? Apparently, Black is doing more than okay after the ice-cold 26...$xe6! 27.$xc4 $xc4 28.$xc4 $xc6!. 27.$e7! $e8 If 27...$d7 28.$exf8 $xf8 $xf8 29.$xc4 $xc4 30.$d4! and White is winning (After 30.$g5 $g6± Black is worse but the position still has plenty of fight in it).

31...$e5?! More tenacious was 31...$d7, but after 32.$d2!, protecting the back-rank and preparing the incorporation of the bishop into the attack by means of $c3. 32...$e5 33.$h5 $xb3 34.$h6! $xh6 35.$f7+ $g7 (35...$g8 36.$xd5++–) 36.$c3+ White wins.

32.$e8 $g6 33.$xb8 $xb8 34.$xf4 $g8 35.$f7+ $xf7 36.$xf7 $d7 37.$e8 $f6 38.$g5

Black resigned

An imperfect game? Yes, as it should be when everything is on the line and it becomes apparent that we are human after all. Just as Fabiano and Shak before him, Ding would be the last to claim the hill, leading the Chinese team to the gold medal and securing himself top honors on first board as well. Bravo!
The Chinese women’s team may have been missing star players Hou Yifan and Tan Zhongyi from their line-up but they were still strong enough to be seeded third at the Women’s Chess Olympiad, behind Russia and Ukraine. Moreover, they exceeded expectations by winning gold – thanks to World Champion Ju Wenjun’s defeat of Russia’s Alexandra Kosteniuk in a dramatic 96 move encounter that was the last game to be completed in the two-week competition! Nevertheless it was a close call, as the undefeated Chinese girls did need their superior tie-break to overhaul Ukraine at the finishing post.
The 43rd Chess Olympiad was indeed a groundbreaking event. Not only did FIDE see major changes in its leadership, but the Women's event, held for the 28th time, had a record number of participants.

Although China, Russia, and Georgia have for many years been traditional favorites for the podium, since 2006 the Ukrainian ladies have also been a member of this elite group.

However, a lot has changed in the last two Olympiads. With the current chess boom in the US, our women's team, although rather underrated, is a force to be reckoned with by any of the aforementioned teams.

Furthermore, progress has also been made by Caucasian neighbors, Armenia and Azerbaijan, who have turned any nationalistic enmity into over-the-board rivalry and invested time and money into women's chess. Central Asian rivals, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, have also taken measures to improve the strength of their women's teams and this has resulted in increased successes.

Then again, chess in India has made great advances over recent years and one cannot ignore the historic and cultural importance of the royal game in its “motherland”. Their team was particularly hopeful this time, as their No.1 woman player, GM Humpy Koneru, announced her return to competitive chess after a behind the scenes hiatus resulting from her parenting duties, as she has a brand-new baby! They also recruited one of the world’s most respected chess coaches, Jacob Aagaard, to hold a couple of training camps well before the start of the Olympiad.

Finally, Poland and Hungary are two strong teams which can always be expected to be in contention for a medal. In fact Poland took silver in the last Olympiad, their best ever result! The Poles are particularly dangerous because of their great spirit of cooperation, which helps them to perform so well when it comes to team events. The top-seeded Russian team became the first major victim of an upset, when they lost in round 2 against Uzbekistan − an early blow to their aspirations and further evidence that there are no longer any clear favorites in this global event. However, the crucial matches actually started in round 6 when the US side – the only team with five victories in the bag − faced India on the top board. Ukraine clashed with China on board two, and Russia suffered a 3–1 defeat on board three.

### CHESS OLYMPIAD-WOMEN, Batumi, Georgia, Sep 24 - Oct 5, 2018

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| 20 | Mongolia14, etc. |

Round 6, USA vs. India
Annotated by Jennifer Yu

Going into round six, we were really on fire after five straight match wins. However, we were paired against the incredibly strong Indian team and therefore expected a tough fight. The goal for my board was to achieve a nice, comfortable position out of the opening and, if possible, strive for an advantage.

1.d4 ¤f6 2.c4 e6 3.¤c3 ¥b4 4.g3

Before the round, captain Melik Khachiyan, coach Robert Hess and I had debated what to do against the Nimzo, the opening my opponent was most likely to play against 1.d4. In the end, we decided on 4.g3. This was definitely a move that she would not expect, because I've never played it before in my life!

4...0–0 I would have been very pleased to get into the endgame after 4...c5 5.£f3 cxd4 6.¤xd4 £e4 7.¥d3 ¥a5 8.¤b3 ¥xc3 (After 8...¥xc3+?! 9.bxc3 ¥xc3+ 10.¥xc3 11.¥b2 ¥a4 12.¥g7

White is slightly better because of the bishop pair and strong dark-squared bishop.) 9.¤xa5 ¥e4+ 10.¤d2 ¥xd2+ 11.¥xd2 ¥xd2 12.¥xd2 ¥c6 13.¤b3. Black has ideas of ...b7-b6, developing the bishop to a6 and then applying pressure on the c-file. However, White is very comfortable and can always advance the c-pawn.

5.¥g2 d5 6.£f3

White is slightly better because of the bishop pair and strong dark-squared bishop.) 9.¤xa5 ¥e4+ 10.¤d2 ¥xd2+ 11.¥xd2 ¥xd2 12.¥xd2 ¥c6 13.¤b3. Black has ideas of ...b7-b6, developing the bishop to a6 and then applying pressure on the c-file. However, White is very comfortable and can always advance the c-pawn.

5.¥g2 d5 6.£f3
6...c5 Another possibility is 6...dxc4 7.0-0 0-0 8.a4 d4 9.g5 a5 10.xf6 xf6 11.a3 xc3 12.bxc3 d8 13.xc4 a4 F.Caruana 2822 – S.Karjakin 2773, Saint Louis 2018.

7.0-0 dxc4 8.dxc5 0-0 At this point, I was on my own because we did not expect both ...c7–c5 and ...dxc4 on Black’s part. If 8...xd1 9.xd1 xc5 10.xe5 and the pawn is recovered with a large positional advantage for White.

9.a4

In other lines that I saw where Black captured on c4, this was a common idea. Even though the queen is stationed on the edge of the board, she still exerts a great deal of pressure because of the loose black bishop and knight. If Black decides to take on c3, White gains the bishop pair and the c4 pawn will soon be won. For these reasons, I felt compelled to play it.

9...e7 This move made the most sense to me. Black immediately threatens the c5 pawn and challenges White to take action. If 9...d7, then 10.ed1, while after 9...xc5 10.xc4 e7 11.ed1 White has lots of space and an easy game.

10.g5 10.e5 at once is also good. Then 10...xc5 (Not 10...xe5? 11.xb4

and the black knight is awkwardly placed on e5 and will soon be kicked out. That places Black in a dilemma how to protect the c4 pawn after 11...a5 12.b5 d8 13.f4) 11.xc6 c6c6 12.xc4. On the other hand 10.a3?! is too slow: 10...xc3 11.bxc3 xc5 12.e3 h5 13.xc4 e5 and Black will soon be developed and ready to exert pressure on the kingside or on the c-file.

10...h6 I think the position after 10...xc5 11.xf6 gxf6 12.e4 e7 13.a3 is much easier to play as White, who will eventually win back the c4 pawn and have obvious weaknesses to attack on the kingside.

11.xf6 xf6

GM Elshan Moradiabadi won the Iranian Chess Championship at the age of 16, ahead of the local legend Ehsan Ghaem Maghami. He moved to the US in 2012, where he became a very active player in the US college chess scene. Representing Texas Tech University, he won the Final Four of Collegiate Chess in 2012 and the Pan-American Intercollegiate Team Championship in 2015. Since February 2017 he has represented the USA.

12.ac1 This is simple and works just as well as 12.d2. If Black now takes on c3, I can recapture with the rook. The rook will also be threatening the c4 pawn if the c3 knight decides to move.

12.d2 is interesting. I did not consider this move at all, but the idea is that after 12...xc3 there is the intermediate move 13.e4! e5 14.bxc3 and White has a super knight on e4. Black cannot win the pawn on c5 by kicking the knight with 14...f5 because of 15.f4 c7 16.d6.

12...e7

My opponent probably played this move to get out of possible xe4 moves attacking her queen. I assume that she missed my next idea:

13.d4! xc5 The knight is untouchable: 13...xd4 14.xb4 and White will pick up the c4 pawn along with an advantage in development.

14.xc6 bxc6 15.e4 Now Black’s b4 bishop is awkwardly placed!
15...\xa5 16.\xa5 \xa5 17.\xc4

This was the position I aimed for when I played 13.\xd4. All of a sudden, I have the c6 pawn as a target. Even though Black is in possession of the bishop pair, my strong knight provides more than enough compensation as it has possible outposts on c5 and d6.

17...\xb8 18.b3 \xe8

I don't know if I'm a fan of this move. My opponent's idea was to give up the c6 pawn and attempt to hold an opposite colored bishop ending. However, with rooks on the board, the ending would be far from clear and I absolutely love to play these kinds of positions where I can grind for hours and hours.

The endgame reached after 18...\xa6?? 19.\xa4 \xe2 20.\xa5 \xf1 21.\xf1 is objectively winning for White whose pieces are ridiculously active and Black will soon lose a couple of pawns. 18...\xb7 would be Black's sad attempt to hold on to the c6 pawn, but after 19.\xc5 Black's bishop on b7 is nothing more than a glorified pawn.

19.\xc6 \xb7 20.\xc2 \xe4 21.\xe4 \bc8 22.\fc1 \xc2 23.\xc2

An important aspect of a team tournament is to keep tabs on the rest of your side's games. Somewhere around here, Team USA was in trouble on boards 1 and 3. That forced me and Irina, who was on board 2, to play for a win. Irina had a slight advantage in a rook endgame and I felt confident that she would manage to convert it to a win. That meant that in order to secure a drawn result in the match, I had to win. Obviously, I have the advantage with my extra pawn but opposite colored bishops are notoriously drawish, except when there are rooks on the board. If I could prevent the trade of rooks, I knew that I would find a way to drum up some trouble on the board.

23...\f8 If 23...\xd2 then what has Black accomplished after 24.\xc8+ \xd8 25.\xc4?

24.\xd3 Shutting down the d-file and preventing ...\xd2 idea to trade the rooks.

24...\d7 Threatening ...\xc7 when I would either have to give up the c-file with \xc4 or else exchange rooks, which would inevitably lead to a draw.

25.\xc8+ \xe7 25...\xd8 was possible but I assumed that she wouldn't want to retreat after intending ...\xc7 with her last move.

26.\g2 Whenever in doubt in an endgame, just bring up the king! This move also anticipates Black taking the c-file and prevents a check on c1.

26...\c7 27.\b6 She did get the c-file but what's there to do? My bishop on c4 guards the black rook's square of entry on c2.

An important aspect of a team tournament is to keep tabs on the rest of your side’s

27...\b6 This is a good move that prevented my gaining a tempo by attacking the bishop with b3-b4. Here, I thought my opponent was happy with the solid fortress-like position she had constructed and was just looking to repeat moves. But I felt my pieces were optimally placed and something needed to change. That meant no more maneuvering for me, it's time to push pawns! If 27...\xd6 28.b4 \b6 29.a4 and Black's bishop is already starting to get into trouble.

28.a4 White has a simple plan of rolling up the queenside pawns.

28...\d7 White must be careful at all times! The idea behind my opponent's move was ...\xd8 so as to trade the rooks.

THE QUEEN'S INDIAN DEFENCE by Michael Roiz

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The Queen's Indian Defence is one of the most reliable defenses against 1.d4, and features in the repertoires of many of the world's top grandmasters. GM Michael Roiz supplies an elite repertoire built on sound positional principles, offering active piece play and a fight for the initiative. From the starting point of 1.d4 \xf6 2.c4 \xe6, the main focus is on 3.\xf3 \xb6 while Roiz also covers 3.g3 (Catalan) and miscellaneous options.
If I play \( \text{b}7 \) in response, she would simply go ...\( \text{d}7 \) and I cannot avoid the exchange – and the draw.

**29.\( \text{b}5 \)** The obvious reasoning behind this move was to prevent the forced exchange of rooks by denying Black access to the \( \text{d}7 \) square. It also secures the \( \text{e}8 \) square for use by my rook or bishop in the future.

**29...\( \text{d}4 \)** \( 30.\( \text{b}7+ \)** Forcing the king to go to the back rank.

**30...\( \text{f}8 \)** If 30...\( \text{f}6 \) 31.\( \text{e}8! \) and the bishop comes in with the clutch! The loss of the \( \text{f}7 \) pawn will be too much for Black to handle.

**31.\( \text{c}4 \)** Relocating the bishop now that it has done its job on the \( \text{a}4-\text{e}8 \) diagonal. The result is that I have managed to kick the black king to the back rank, take the seventh rank, and make Black’s rook look silly on \( \text{d}4 \). My bishop has accomplished a great deal but is now better suited on \( \text{c}4 \) where it puts pressure on \( \text{e}6 \) and \( \text{f}7 \). On this square it also prevents ...\( \text{b}4 \) and protects the \( \text{b}3 \) pawn.

**31...\( \text{d}2 \)** It is hard for Black to find moves here. Her only hope is to move her pieces back and forth and try her best to prevent my potential advances.

**32.\( \text{f}4! \)** This is my favorite move of the game and I don’t think my opponent expected it. I am now preparing to push \( \text{f}4-\text{f}5 \) and undermine \( \text{e}6 \) and \( \text{f}7 \). In addition my king is no longer chained to protecting the \( \text{f}2 \) pawn. Though it seems a very simple move, I didn’t consider it immediately because it felt so unnatural to create a weak dark square on \( \text{e}3 \), whilst also weakening my pawn structure. Once I realized Black couldn’t take advantage of the dark square weaknesses, I was sure this was a winning idea.

**32...\( \text{g}6 \)** Temporarily halting \( \text{f}4-\text{f}5 \).

**33.\( \text{h}3 \)** Preparing \( \text{g}3-\text{g}4 \) and \( \text{f}4-\text{f}5 \). Although an immediate 33.\( \text{g}4 \) \( \text{h}5 \) 34.\( \text{gxh}5 \) \( \text{gxh}5 \) 35.\( \text{f}5 \) is more accurate, I was running low on time and figured that the move I played was safer.

**37...\( \text{d}4+? \)** I had seen all this when I played 33.\( \text{h}3 \) and was most worried about 37...\( \text{g}1 \). What concerned me was that after 38.\( \text{e}5 \) \( \text{d}4 \) 39.\( \text{e}7+ \) \( \text{d}8 \) 40.\( \text{fe}6+ \) \( \text{e}7 \) 41.\( \text{xe}4 \) \( \text{g}4 \) I wasn’t sure if this opposite colored bishop ending was winning.

**38.\( \text{e}5 \) \( \text{d}4 \) 39.\( \text{f}5 \)** Finally!

**39...\( \text{d}4+ \)**

**40.\( \text{f}4 \)** There is nothing wrong with 40.\( \text{e}4 \), but I wanted to take on \( \text{f}7 \) instead of recapturing on \( \text{f}5 \) with the king, which is necessary in this variation because White would be in check: 40...\( \text{xf}5+ \) 41.\( \text{gx}5 \) \( \text{xf}5+ \) 42.\( \text{xf}5 \) \( \text{f}1+ \) 43.\( \text{e}4 \) \( \text{b}6 \). However, in my opinion, this unnecessarily complicates the endgame even though it should also be winning.

**40...\( \text{xf}5 \) 41.\( \text{gx}5 \) \( \text{xf}5 \)** If 41...\( \text{f}1+ \), then 42.\( \text{e}4 \).

**42.\( \text{xe}7+ \) \( \text{e}8 \) 43.\( \text{xf}5 \) \( \text{a}5 \)** This fixes my pawns and removes the bishop from the defense of the \( \text{a}5 \) pawn. However it’s not enough to hold the draw because of the dominance and activity of my pieces. Again 43...\( \text{f}1+ \) is met by 44.\( \text{e}4 \).

**44.\( \text{e}6 \) \( \text{c}5 \) 45.\( \text{c}7 \) \( \text{d}6 \) 46.\( \text{e}5 \) \( \text{a}3 \) 47.\( \text{a}7 \) \( \text{b}4 \)**
48.\text{\texttt{b7}} 48.\text{\texttt{xa5}} is also winning. The reason I played the text move instead is because I thought my opponent would play 46...\text{\texttt{b4}} straight away and I would have been forced to go 47.\text{\texttt{b7}} anyway. When she played 46...\text{\texttt{a3}} I figured it would transpose and so replied 47.\text{\texttt{a7}} and 48.\text{\texttt{b7}} immediately. But right after I played 48.\text{\texttt{b7}} I nearly had a heart attack when I realized I could have taken the a5 pawn. Luckily, my original plan of \text{\texttt{b7}} and capturing the bishop is also completely winning.

48...\text{\texttt{h6}} 49.\text{\texttt{xb4}} axb4 50.\text{\texttt{d5}} She can’t stop me from taking the b4 pawn and rolling the queenside pawns up the board.

50.\text{\texttt{d7}} If 50...\text{\texttt{h5+}}, then 51.\text{\texttt{d6}} followed by \text{\texttt{d5}}, e4, \text{\texttt{c5}}.

51.\text{\texttt{c5}} \text{\texttt{h5+}} 52.\text{\texttt{d5}} \text{\texttt{c7}} 53.\text{\texttt{e4}} \text{\texttt{g5}}

54.a5 Taking the b6 square away from the black king.

54...\text{\texttt{g6}} 55.\text{\texttt{xb4}} \textbf{Black resigned}

The pawns are unstoppable. It’s hard to say where it all went wrong for my opponent in this game. Maybe she shouldn’t have gone 24...\text{\texttt{d7}} and allowed my rook onto the last rank, where it later maneuvered to b7. However, that would have been hard to foresee at the time, especially since the odd-looking f2-f4 was the move that allowed me to make further progress. I was pretty happy with my play in this game, although there were still several places that have room for improvement. With this win, the final match score was 2–2, since a little bit earlier, Irina also won her game. It was a great result for Team USA, since we still had a hand on the lead and managed to draw with a side that outrated us on all boards!

The China-Ukraine match from the sixth round of this Olympiad proved to be decisive. As the final standings show, it happened to be a match between the eventual winner and the runner-up, where only a tiebreak separated the two women’s chess powerhouses. The Ukrainian team is a mysterious case to me: with a full-GM side (the only such team!), two ex-world champions (Mariya Muzychuk, and Anna Ushenina), the 2017 world championship finalist (Anna Muzychuk on board one), and a seasoned GM like Natalia Zhukova on board four, the Ukrainians must always be counted among the favorites. In fact, ever since they won their only gold in 2006, they have managed to stay on the podium right up to the present day. However, over the past eight years they have always been short of a game or two to give them a shot at the gold. Nevertheless they will remain among the favorites to win the title for years to come, particularly if they manage to seal the deal at critical moments. It is these moments that are preventing them from gaining the gold medal.

In this match against the Chinese team, everything was decided in the endgame! Anna Muzychuk did not achieve anything against Ju Wenjun’s Petroff (but who gets anything against Petroff these days?)! and things fizzled out rather quickly into the following endgame, where Black’s superior rook on g2 and advanced h-pawn gives Black the upper hand, although with careful play a draw is well within White’s reach. For some reason, unbeknownst to your author, Anna now started to play with fire...
39.a5? Seemingly a sacrifice for the initiative, but it is more like a case of a “giving up a pawn and seeking compensation later” move to me. I think it is losing. White should have gone for 39...b8! b4 40.d3 g1+ (40...b4 41.xa7 doesn’t promise anything for Black since the h-pawn is contained.) 41.e2 g2+ 42.d1 is a draw.

39...xa5?! Better is 39...bxa5 when A) 40.d7+ f6;
B) Or 40.xa5 xa5 41.xa5 f6 42.xa7 xf5 is completely winning. Black has a very active king and is two tempi up when it comes to the pawn race. As the h-pawn would promote first with mate, this costs White a second tempo;
C) If 40.d8, then 40...f6.

40.e5 White is still fighting for her life.

40...h4?! The notorious 40th move. Now White can fully equalize. 40.f2 41.g3 f3 (41...f1+ 42.e2 c1 43.c4 c3 is still better than the game.) 42.d6 c3 and Black has a lot more chances here!

41.c3! With Black’s bishop dead on a5, White is back to the safety zone, but extreme caution is still required.

41...h3 42.b4 xh4 43.xh4 h2 44.xh2 xh2 45.d7+ f6 46.xa7 b2 47.b7 b4

After a more or less forced line, the players reached this drawn endgame, where White has to find an ‘only move’! It is one of those occasions where a human’s heuristics fail to comprehend nuances in a chess game!

48.d2?? This move loses, along with many other king moves except 48.e2!! b3 49.d2 b5 50.c2 b4 51.d3 (51.c3?? c4+ and then ...c5 which leads to a win for Black.) 51.b2 b5 52.c3 f2 53.b5 d5 54.b1! The best method! 54...d5 55.c4 d7 and now White adopts the distant check method to maintain the draw. 56.f1+ g5 57.g1+ f4 58.f1+ g3 59.g1+ f2 60.g6 f3 61.g1! and Black cannot make any progress.

48...b1?? Returning the favor. I think that the incumbent World Champion thought it might not matter where the rook is placed. 48...b3!! was the right square!
49.¢e3 b5 50.¢e4 ¦b4+ 51.¢e3 ¦b2
52.¢e4 ¦e2+ 53.¢f4 ¦f2+ 54.¢e4 ¦e2+ 55.¢f4 ¦f2+ 56.¢e4 ¦xf5
57.¦xg7 ¢xg7 58.¢xf5 b4 59.¢e4

Draw

One can call this “A study in an over-the-board rook endgame”!

While Anna was struggling to hold her game against Ju Wenjun, Mariya reached the following equal endgame. A bishop is indeed a better piece than a knight in endgames with pawns on both sides, but Black’s bishop is pinned on the back rank. Even after its release, it is hard to conceive a good target for it. A draw is a reasonable outcome for this endgame too, but in a few moves Shen Yang started to complicate matters, just like Anna did!

Shen Yang 2464
Mariya Muzychuk 2533
Round 6, Ukraine vs. China

33.¢e3 ¦xh3 34.¢b8 ¦h6 35.¢d5 ¢g7 36.¢xb6 ¦g6+ 37.¢h1 ¢c5
38.¢c4 ¦xf2 39.¢xa5 Nothing too dramatic so far, Black’s kingside pawns are not connected, but the presence of a powerful bishop outweighs the pawn structure. Black is more comfortable, but if White pushes her pawns in time she has no problem with maintaining equality.

39...h5 40.¢c4 h4

41.¢b7?! Harmless but already a bad sign! 41.a5 ¦g1+ 42.¢h2 ¦e1 43.¢f3 ¦g3 44.¢b5 ¦g6 45.a6 f5 46.¢g2 ¦g5 47.¢f3 h1+ 48.¢e2 h3 49.a7 50.¢d3 51.¢e2 52.¢e3 h2 53.¢e5+ 54.¢f3 and White will soon pick up the h2-pawn. Of course this line was not forced but it shows that pushing the passed pawn and moving the king out of the mating zone would secure White the draw.

41...¢g3 42.¢b6 ¦g4 43.¢b5 43.a5 ¦e4 44.¢b5 could transpose.

43...¢e4

44.¢d5? This is too much. I believe White should still be able to make a draw but now Black has a dangerous initiative which requires a lot of care.
44.a5 ¦g6 45.¢g2 ¦e2+ 46.¢f3 57.¢e1+ 58.¢e2 59.¢e3 h2 51.¢a6 h2 52.a7 and White is fine.) 50.¢xh2±.

44...¢g6 45.¢g2? Now Shen Yang is close to losing but she still might be able to hold. She should have played 45.a5 or 45.¢d1.

45...f5! Practical play! 45...¢e2+ 46.¢f3 57.¢e1+ 48.¢f3 49.a7 f5 only looks more convincing, as it prevents White’s rook from getting behind the h-pawn. Yet White has a study-like save!

50.¢d2 f4+ 51.¢e4 ¦e1+

52.¢f5!! h3 53.¢f3 h2 54.¢xh2 55.¢e5!! A study-like move! 55...¢f3 (55...¢a5 56.¢b4 ¦a4 57.¢f7+ ¦g6 58.¢d8!! and surprisingly Black has to go down to a ¦ vs. ¦+¢ endgame.) 56.¢g4 f2 57.¢g5+ and Black loses her last pawn.

46.¢f3?? But this loses by force. 46.¢d8 was White’s last chance to hold. 46...¢e2+ 47.¢f3 57.¢e1+ 48.¢e3 49.¢h8 I believe White should be able to reach some sort of ¦ vs. ¦+¢ endgame and salvage a draw after 50 moves of agony!

46...¢f4+ 47.¢e3 57.¢f1 48.¢e5+
48...¥xe5! The key move: ...£e1 check is impossible to meet!

49.¢e2 ¥a1! 50.¦d3 If 50.¥xe5 then 50...h3 and even if White’s rook could make two moves, and get behind the h-pawn, ...h3–h2 was still winning because of the skewer on the second rank!

50...¥g5 51.¥f2 ¥g4 52.¥g2 h3+ White resigned

An important victory, which almost clinched the match for Ukraine, but it was just a mid-term drama!

Now here comes the last act of this dramatic match. Anna Ushenina had misplayed the middlegame and found herself in serious trouble. What followed next is another example of severe time pressure and stress in a high caliber match.

Anna Ushenina                                    2451
Qian Huang                                            2446
Round 6, Ukraine vs. China

37.¥a7?? 37.exd4 is a must and gives White good drawing chances.

37...¥b5?? Letting White off the hook! 37...dxex3! 38.¥xb7+ ¥g6 39.¥g4+ ¥h6 40.¥h3+ (40.¥f4+ ¥g5 leads to the same catastrophe in the same fashion.) 40...¥g5 and White is out of checks.

38.exd4 ¥d5?? Trading queens only increases White’s chances of making a draw. Black should have preserved the b-pawn with 38...¥b2.

39.¥f3 ¥xf3+ 40.¥xf3 ¥xd4+

58.¥e3?! The first of many inaccuracies. The way to go was 58.g4 ¥f4 59.¥b6+ ¥e5 60.¥g6 ¥d3+ 61.¥f2 ¥e4 62.¥xg5 ¥d2+ 63.¥e1 ¥a2 64.¥b5, with a fundamental draw.

58...¥d6 59.¥b8 ¥a6 60.¥b5 ¥a3+ 61.¥f2 ¥a2+ 62.¥f1 ¥d2 63.£a5 ¥d4 64.£f2 ¥e6 65.£e3 ¥c4 66.£a8 ¥c3+ 67.£f2 ¥c2+ 68.£e3 ¥c3+ 69.£f2 ¥d3 70.£e8+ ¥f7 71.£e5 ¥g6 72.£a5 ¥d2+ 73.£f1 ¥f6 74.£b5 ¥a2 75.£e1 ¥a4 76.£f2 ¥e6 77.£e3 ¥c4 78.£f2 ¥d4 79.£e3 ¥d5 80.£b8 ¥a5 81.£g8

Qian Huang is relentlessly and patiently trying to win, but nothing changes! A draw is a draw!

104.£b8 ¥a6 105.£b5 ¥f6 106.£f2 ¥g4! Now, it is time to try something else. White is tired after a long defense, therefore it is time to take advantage of her fatigue!

107.£f1 ¥e6 108.£f2 ¥d6 109.£e3
\[ \text{WINTER 2018/2019} \]
\[ \text{I} \]
\[ \text{AMERICAN CHESS MAGAZINE} \]

\[ \text{89} \]

\[ \text{d5} 110. \text{b8} \text{ d1} 111. \text{b6}+ 111. \text{f4} \text{ f1}+ 112. \text{g5} \text{ f3} 113. \text{a8} \text{ xg3} 114. \text{a6}+ \text{e5} 115. \text{a5}+ \text{e4} 116. \text{xf5} \]

and White will win Black's last pawn.

\[ \text{111...e5} 112. \text{b5}+ \text{f6} 113. \text{b6}+ \text{e5} 114. \text{b5}+ \text{d5} 115. \text{b8} \text{ a5} \]

\[ \text{116...a2} 117. \text{b5}+ \text{f6} 118. \text{b6}+ \text{g5} \]

\[ \text{119.b8??} \text{ An unbelievable blunder. Caissa had definitely chosen China for this event (You will see Ju Wenjun’s game against Kosteniuk later here!). The right way is 119.b3 g2 120.d4 d2+ (120...f4 121.b5+) 121.e3 and White can hold on to her last pawn and draw the game!} \]

\[ \text{119...g2!} \text{ Now g3 falls, and so does White’s position.} \]

\[ \text{120.g8+ f6} 121.f8+ g6 122.f4 f2+ 123.e5 \]

\[ \text{123...e2+! An important in-between check which safeguards Black’s pawn, and earns her a valuable tempo. Now Qian Huang does not let go of her advantage and converts it masterfully.} \]

\[ \text{124.d4 Or 124.f4 e4 mate.} \]
124...¥g2 125.¤e5 ¥xg3 126.¥xf5
126...¥f3! The easiest way.

127.¥f4 ¥g5 128.¥a4 g3 129.¥a8 ¥e3+ 130.¥d4 ¥e1 131.¥d3 ¥g4 132.¥d2 ¥e7 133.¥g8+ ¥h3 134.¥h8+ ¥g2 135.¥g8 ¥e5 136.¥g7 ¥h2 137.¥h7+ ¥g1 138.¥g8 ¥h5

138...g2 Now comes the Lucena position, which has been known since 1497!

139.¥g8 ¥h5 140.¥e2 ¥h2 141.¥f2 ¥f5+ 142.¥e2 g1¥ 143.¥h8+ ¥g2 144.¥g8+ ¥h1

White resigned

A painful loss for Ushenina and her team, but a great comeback for the Chinese ladies!

Round 7 meant the first defeat for the American team, who won both their white games and drew on the second board, Krush-Mkrtchian. Sabina Foisor had been feeling unwell, and that was reflected in her play: in this important match, she lost her third game in the competition.

On the other hand, Jennifer Yu achieved her sixth victory: having played all seven games, she had only conceded one draw!

8.¥g5 After this move, my opponent thought for quite a bit of time. There are a fair number of games with this move, although 8.¥f4 is the more popular option. However I inferred that she was out of book here. 8...¥h5 9.¥g5 ¥e7 10.¥h4 ¥b7 11.0–0–0 ¥c6 12.e4 ¥f6 13.e5 ¥g4 14.¥f4 ¥e8 15.¥b1 f5 16.exf6 ¥xf6 17.¥g5 ¥e8 18.¥b5 e5 19.¥d3 e4 20.¥e2 h6 21.¥d6 ¥xd6 22.¥xd6 hxg5 23.¥xg5 ¥h7 24.¥xh7 ¥xh7 25.¥xf8 ¥xf8 26.¥xe4+
I preferred this move, preparing to fianchetto the bishop, to 13...e2 because it takes away the f4 square from that annoying black knight on h5, which now looks quite lackluster. Moreover I also have ideas of e4–e5 and trapping that knight.

13...a6 This move makes lots of sense because it prevents possible knight jumps to b5 and then d6. However, personally, I prefer the developing move 13...b7. I could see why she decided not to play it, because it makes an attack on d7 easier and she can’t position her queen on c7 like she did in the game. However, her chosen development caused her issues a few moves later, so this would have been an interesting way to avoid that. 14.g2 (14.b5 is not the best move here because of 14...f5! and Black has a lot of counterplay on the light squares.) 14.f6 15.0–0 e8 and White retains a slight advantage, although this is better for Black than what she played in the game.

14.g2 c7 This was the setup she planned with her previous move. The issue is that I am fully developed whereas she will have difficulties with her misplaced h5 knight and backward d-pawn.

15.d3 Here I spent some time debating whether to play 15.e2 or 15.d3. Initially, I had planned on playing 15.d3 because it hampers the development of the c8-bishop, since the d7 pawn is in danger. But 15.e2 looked so tempting because of the loose knight on h5. However, after looking at some lines, including 15.e2 b7 16.e5 g6 17.0–0, I decided it was simpler just to prevent the development of the bishop. An interesting move that I briefly looked at during the game but didn’t seriously consider was 15.e5. Then 15...b7 (15...xc4?? 16.d2!) 16.0–0 f6 Obviously, White is still much better here but my logic was if I didn’t need to play this way then I should just squash any possible black counterplay resulting from the development of the c8-bishop.

15.g6 16.0–0 b8 17.b3 17.e1, intending e4–e5, is also great for White, e.g. 17...f6 (17...b7 18.e5) 18.e5 e8. 17.b3 was not the prettiest move to play but Black’s idea was to continue 17...b7! 18.xd7 xc4 when my advantage disappears.

17.d8 18.d6 I wanted to play 18.e1 to prepare for e4–e5 but my opponent would then have most definitely gone 18.f6 19.xd6 xd6 20.xd6 e8 and I’d have to retreat which is quite annoying.

18.a7 After this move I was completely shocked but also delighted! I didn’t seriously consider anything other than 18.xd6 because now my queen is absolutely dominant on d6 and it’s so hard for Black to find counterplay. I was 95% sure she would trade queens and so prepared to go down this variation: 19.xd6 f6 20.f1 when I have an extra tempo compared to the 18.e1 line. I’m better because of my space advantage but it certainly isn’t as simple to handle as the game.

19.e5 Locking the d6 square and once and for all stopping the h5 knight from retreating to f6.
19...b7 20.\textit{d4}, Threatening \textit{g4} and forcing...

20...f5

Here, my dream plan was to play g3–g4 and punish the black knights. The obvious problem with all this was the fact that I couldn’t play g3–g4 without weakening f4, and the knights would happily prance into that square! Another thing I had to keep in mind was that she has the idea of ...\textit{a8} to apply pressure down the long diagonal.

21.\textit{e2}

I went ahead with my g3–g4 idea by relocating my knight to defend f4. But maybe the more patient 21.\textit{fe1} \textit{a8} 22.\textit{e3} would have been safer and more solid than the game continuation.

21...\textit{a8} 22.\textit{e1} This is what I expected and initially I wanted to play 22.\textit{d3} e4 23.\textit{e3} but didn’t like how awkwardly placed the rook would then be – not to mention that annoying black bishop.

22...d6! The reason I’m giving this move an exclamation mark is because it’s a brilliant idea by my opponent to create practical chances. If she hadn’t played this move, then I would just have to work on my simple plan of pushing g3–g4 and I should be able to convert to a win.

24.\textit{xb7}?! 24.\textit{d3} is better. I shouldn’t trade the bishop because after ...e5–e4, my light squares became really weak. Then could follow 24...e4 (24...\textit{g2} 25.\textit{ggxg2} e4 26.\textit{ggd4+}) 25.\textit{g4} \textit{f6} 26.\textit{ggxg6}.

24...\textit{xb7} 25.\textit{xd3} e4 26.\textit{d4} f6

I still have an advantage but I was starting to get rather frustrated because I knew I would end up walking into the lions’ den, as I was running out of time and my light squares are so weak.

27.\textit{g2} \textit{e8} 28.\textit{h1} In anticipation of ...\textit{e5} and for want of a better move.

29.\textit{g1}? I regretted this move immediately after I played it because it essentially traps my king in the corner. 29.\textit{e3} may seem unnatural, but 29...\textit{f3} is not a real threat to be worried about because after 30.\textit{c3}, although Black’s f3 knight looks like a monster, my opponent can’t capitalize on it. For example, 30...\textit{f7}, threatening ...\textit{h5}, can be ignored. 31.\textit{b4} \textit{h5} 32.\textit{h4} Although this looks perilously risky, Black does not have any 32...\textit{xf4??} resources because of 33.\textit{f4}!

31.\textit{c5}? This move gives away any advantage I have left. I have to go 31.\textit{c3} \textit{xd6} 32.\textit{xd6} \textit{xd6} 33.\textit{e2} and surprisingly I am better here because my knights have better outposts and my queenside majority will become more useful than her kingside majority.

31...\textit{xc5} 32.\textit{xc5} \textit{e5} 32...\textit{xb3} is simple and may even give a tiny advantage for Black because my pieces have lost their coordination and my d6 pawn is awfully loose.

33.\textit{c3} \textit{b5} Perhaps 33...\textit{d5} 34.\textit{b4} \textit{f4} 35.\textit{c4} \textit{e6}.

34.\textit{b4} \textit{xd6} 35.\textit{xd6} \textit{xd6} 36.\textit{d1} \textit{f7} 37.\textit{e2} \textit{g4} 38.\textit{g2} \textit{xe3+} 39.\textit{xe3} I decided against taking back with the queen because I wanted to permanently rid myself of the issue with the long diagonal. Upset about messing up the solid advantage I had earlier, I’m also preparing for the best chance I have for a win, which can be seen in the next few moves.
39...<$h7$Getting out of possible back rank checks.

40.$<d$f4$And here comes my idea! For the first time in almost 20 moves, I had time for a good think but I didn’t need it.

40...<$g5$39...<$h7$Getting out of possible back rank checks.

40.$<d$f4$And here comes my idea! For the first time in almost 20 moves, I had time for a good think but I didn’t need it.

40...<$g5$XIIIIIIIIY

41.h4! This is the plan I was aiming for after 39.fxe3. It seems strange that I’m forcing the black knight to go to a dream square but I saw a forced win and if that means sacrificing a square then so be it!

41...<$f3$? 41...<$f7$ is unnatural but offers more resistance than the game continuation because after 42.$<e$e6 $<e$e5 the move 43.$<d$d7 is no longer winning because of 43...<$b$b5! when Black has a surprising perpetual. However, instead, 43.$<c$c7 is a winning endgame for me although it does prolong the game.

42.$<e$e6!

The surprising idea is $<d$d7! The rook is untouchable because if ...<$x$xd7, then $<f$f8+. Now Black is in trouble...

42...<$g6$ For a solid minute after she played this move I was completely flabbergasted. She had spent over 20 minutes and I couldn’t understand why she would advance her king, which was tantamount to a certain death sentence. However, she had a tricky idea up her sleeve because 43.$<d$d7 would have fallen into the rabbit hole! If 43.$<d$d7?? $<x$xd7 44.$<f$f8+ $<g$g5 45.$<x$xd7 $<d$d5, even though White has a queen for a rook, I cannot stop ...<$d$d2+ and then an amazing perpetual would occur after $<f$f1 ($<h$h1?? $<h$h2 mate) $<h$h2+ followed by $<f$f3+. I would have to sac my queen back for the rook when, technically, the knight endgame should still be winning for me although it unnecessarily complicates everything.

42...<$e$e5 (42...<$e$e5 43.$<d$d7!) was the main line I calculated. Then:

A) 43.$<d$d8 $<e$e7 (43...<$d$d5 44.$<f$f8+ $<g$g8 45.$<b$b3+) 44.$<c$c8 $<f$f7 45.$<g$g8! $<d$d6 46.$<h$h8+ $<g$g6 47.$<f$f4+ $<f$f7

B) 43.$<d$d7 $<c$c6 (43...<$x$xd7?? 44.$<x$g7#) 44.$<x$g7+.

43.$<d$d6 Immediately after realizing her knight and rook perpetual idea, I stopped looking at $<d$d7 and played the text move, which I calculated to mate:

43...<$e$e7

44.$<h$h5+! $<x$hx5 45.$<f$f4+ $<g$g4 46.$<g$g6+ $<g$g5 47.$<c$c2

Black resigned

48.$<e$e2 mate is unstoppable. I almost wish that she hadn’t resigned and allowed me to play this on the board, because how often do you see a checkmate like that? After the game I was delighted with the finish but at the same time disappointed with how I mishandled my advantage. There’s lots to learn about every encounter and in this one the biggest mistake that almost cost me the game was my time management. That was an invaluable lesson because I’ve been plagued with this problem for years,
although I’d been handling it relatively well at the Olympiad prior to this game. So even though this was not my cleanest game, it did give me a much-needed slap on the face.

In their penultimate and crucial match, the underrated US team faced China. Despite our past results, we were in good spirits and ready for a close match. While the US had serious winning chances on board two, where Irina Krush’s bishop pair endgame looked winning, I believe this is where the US team came closest to winning the match.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.¤c3 ¥b4 4.e5 £d7!?

A fighting choice. It shows that Tatev is ready to struggle for the initiative from the early stages of the game.

5.a3 ¥xc3+ 6.bxc3 b6 7.a4 ¥c6!? I am not that familiar with this idea. 7...åa6 8.åxa6 £xa6 9.£d3 ¥b8 10.£g3 f5 11.a5 ¥c6 12.axb6 cxb6 13.åe2 is considered the main “tabiya”.

9.åa3 Since Black is going to castle long, this move seems like a waste of time to me. 9.¥h3 a6 10.åd3 0-0-0 11.¥e2 a5 12.0-0 f6 13.f4 (13.exf6 gxf6 14.åf4) 13...åh6 looks more interesting.

9...a6 10.åd3 0-0-0 11.¥e2 a5 12.åb5 ¥ge7 I believe for the entire game Lei had overestimated the power of her bishops and the pin on the a4–e8 diagonal.

13.åf3 f5 This is played in accordance with the spirit of the opening but I am not sure if its timing is correct. 13...f6 14.0–0 ¥g6 15.¥ae1 fxe5 16.dxe5 ¥b8 looks more appealing.

14.c4?! This is definitely only helping Black. Instead 14.h4 h6 15.h5 g5 16.hxg6 ¥xg6 17.åc1 ¥g7 18.åd2 ¥dg8 would have led to a complex position.

14...åxc4 15.c3 h6 16.0-0-0 ¥d5 16...¥e8 17.¥xc4 ¥f7 seems like it solves Black’s problem with the pin once for all.

17.¥xc4 g5 18.¥e1 g4 19.¥d3 h5 20.¥d2 ¥dg8 21.¥e1 h4 22.g3 hxg3 23.hxg3

White has a good grip on the queenside, but it is hard to find a plan to improve

23...¥h2 24.¥c2 ¥gh8 25.¥ee2

Now computers do agree that Black is fine.

25...¥h1 26.¥b3 ¥b1+ 27.¥c2 ¥bh1 28.¥b2 ¥bh3 29.¥b3 ¥g1 30.¥f4 ¥h6 31.¥d3 31.¥xd5 exd5 32.¥d3 ¥e6 33.¥d1 would have shut down the “French bishop” once again.

31...¥h3 32.¥a2 ¥hh1 33.¥ac2 ¥b8 34.¥c1 ¥xc1 35.¥xc1 While it may seem that neither side is able to improve their position, a storm breaks...

35...f4! This move does not change the game much since most of Black’s pieces cannot move, but the only way for White to keep her position together is to play 36.¥b2, which she failed to find in time pressure.

36.gxf4?? Now Black is winning!

36...¥h7! The cunning move Tatev had cooked up when she played 35...f4.

37.¥e1
37...\(\text{Qe7}??\) This throws away the win. Instead she could play 37...\(\text{Qh3}\). Although this is actually not the computer’s first choice, it is closest to human intuition. 38.\(\text{Bd1}\) (After 38.\(\text{Bxc6}\) \(\text{Bxc6}\) 39.\(\text{Bd1}\) \(\text{Bxb4}\) 40.\(\text{Bc4}\) \(\text{Bxe4}\) with complete domination.)

38.\(\text{Bxh1}\) \(\text{Bxh1}\) 39.\(\text{Be1}\) \(\text{Bxb5}\) 40.\(\text{Bxb5}\) \(\text{Bxe4}\) with complete domination.

Once again Black is winning but this time the move is less intuitive.

39...\(\text{Bf1}??\) Missing the given opportunity – once again! 39...\(\text{Bh2}\) was the right move, with the decisive threat of advancing the g–pawn:

40.\(\text{Ba3}\) g3 41.\(\text{fxg3}\)

41...\(\text{Qe3}!!\) Not an easy theme to see in time pressure.

A) 42.\(\text{Bxe3}\) \(\text{Bd5}\) wins the queen.

B) 42.\(\text{Bxa2}\) \(\text{Bc2}+ 43.\(\text{Bb3}\) \(\text{Bxd4}+ 44.\(\text{Ba3}\) \(\text{Bc2}+ 45.\(\text{Bb3}\) \(\text{Bd5}+ 46.\(\text{c4}\) (46.\(\text{c4}\) \(\text{Bxc4}\) \(\text{g2}\) 48.\(\text{Bb3}\) \(\text{Bd5}\) 49.\(\text{Bb2}\) \(\text{Be3}\) 50.\(\text{Bb1}\) \(\text{Be1}\) and Black is up a piece!) 46...\(\text{Bd4}+ 47.\(\text{Bc3}\) \(\text{Bxc5}\) 48.\(\text{Bxb5}\) \(\text{Bxa2}\) 49.\(\text{Bxc2}\) \(\text{Bh2}\)+ 50.\(\text{Bh2}\) \(\text{Bd3}\)

B) 44.\(\text{Ba3}\) \(\text{Bd7}\) 45.\(\text{c4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 46.\(\text{Bb3}\) g3 47.\(\text{Bc4}\) \(\text{Bc5}\) 48.\(\text{Bb5}\) \(\text{Bd6}\) 49.\(\text{Bc4}\) \(\text{Bd5}\) 50.\(\text{Bc2}\) \(\text{Be4}\) 51.\(\text{Bb3}\) \(\text{Bc6}\) 52.\(\text{Bb2}\) \(\text{Bd4}\)+ 53.\(\text{Bb2}+\)

67...\(\text{Bf1}\) 68.\(\text{Bxf1}\) \(\text{Bd6}\) 69.\(\text{Bc2}\) \(\text{Bxe7}\) 70.\(\text{Bb2}\) \(\text{Bc5}\) 71.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bc7}\) 72.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd2}\) 73.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Be3}\) 74.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 75.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 76.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 77.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 78.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 79.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 80.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 81.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 82.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 83.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 84.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 85.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 86.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 87.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 88.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 89.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 90.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 91.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 92.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 93.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 94.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 95.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 96.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 97.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 98.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 99.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 100.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 101.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 102.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 103.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 104.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 105.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 106.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 107.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 108.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 109.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 110.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 111.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 112.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 113.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) 114.\(\text{Bb4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) \(\text{Bd4}\) \\

A well–fought game by the players and a new trend for the French Winawer which I hope to see in more tournament games!

The last round was tense. The US team was soon out of contention, since the Muzychuk sisters defeated Anna Zatonskikh and Irina Krush on the first two boards. Tatev won against Ushenina, but Zhukova managed to inflict upon Jennifer Yu her first loss in the whole tournament, and suddenly the Ukranians found themselves very close to the gold.

The crucial match was the one between the two powerhouses, Russia and China. The Russian women were in a must–win situation, whereas a draw could secure “almost gold” for the Chinese team, who had a far superior tie–break to Ukraine – although, in its current form, the tiebreak system could astound anyone at any point!

The current World Women’s Champion, Ju Wenjun, was one of the pillars of the young Chinese team on their way to victory, despite lacking several of their top players such as Hou Yifan and Tan Zhongyi. In this game, she once more came through by rescuing her team at the last minute!
1.e4 e5 2.Qf3 Qf6 A move you can expect to see in a team competition, where it is not uncommon for players with the black pieces to try and dry out the game. The Petroff is a well-known opening for such occasions.

3.Qxe5 d6 4.Qf3 Qxe4 5.d4 d5

6.Qd3

6...Qf5!? A rare line, which shows that Ju Wenjun does not intend to play solely for a draw. 6...Qc6 is considered to be the most popular continuation, to which White can react in three principal ways.

A) 8.Qe1 Qg4 9.c3 f5 10.Qb3;

9.Qb3 0-0 10.Qf4 Qxd3 11.Qxd3 Qd7 12.Qe1

12...Qe4 A bit reckless but still playable. 12...Qe8 13.Qe5 a5 14.Qh3 Qf6 15.Qc5 Qc8 looks very solid and close to full equality.

13.c4 14.Qe2 Qd6 14...Qxd6 15.Qae1 c6 16.Qbd2 doesn’t seem much either.

13...Qd6 14.Qe5 14.Qe5 Qxc4 15.Qxc4 Qe6 16.Qc5 Qxc5 17.Qxc5 c6 18.Qg5 Qxe5 19.Qxe5 h6 leads to nothing.

14...Qxc4

15.Qxc4 Qe6 16.Qd1 seems a plausible way to maintain a slight edge.

15...Qxb3 16.Qxb7 Qxa2 17.Qxd6 Qxd6 18.Qxa2 a5 19.h3 h6 20.Qe3

Now the position is balanced. At this point it seemed that the Russian team was at the verge of a great victory since their second board Goryachkina was completely winning against Shen Yang, while Russia’s board four Girya was completely winning against Lei Tingjie.

20...Qf6 21.Qa3 Qe8 22.Qb5 Qc7 23.Qc3 Qb8 24.Qb3 24.Qxb8 Qxb8 25.Qca3 Qb5 26.Qd2 was the easiest way to make a draw but I think at this point Kosteniuk was confident of her team’s overall victory in the Olympiad and started to make fine but less forcing moves.

24...Qc8 25.Qc3


25...Qe4?! This move only exhausts the possibilities in the position. 15.Qxc4
31...c6 32.c2 b7 33.c7 d5 34.c8 xc8 35.xc8+ h7 36.c2 g6 37.d2 g5 38.c4 f5 39.c2 g7 At this point the result was 1½–½ in favor of Russia – and Girya was still winning!

40.e3 d5

41.h4 The first move after the end of time pressure is not in accordance with White’s defensive mechanism as it allows Black to proceed with a clear-cut pawn advance. 41.h2 e6 42.f3 g5 43.xd3 h5 44.g1 g4 45.hxg4 hxg4 46.h4 would have held the position.

41...e6 42.f3 g5 43.hxg5 hxg5 44.h2 g6 45.d3+ f5 46.c3 e4 47.c8 f6 48.c3+  

f6 54.h3+ e7, White does have to defend against the passed d–pawn.

50.g1 b1+ 51.h2 e4 52.g1 f5 53.h8 So the queen is back to an active square and White is now in the safe zone. At this point Girya had already blown her chances and her game was already drawn. Therefore suddenly Ju Wenjun was in a position where she could save both her team and the title while Kosteniuk was no longer in her comfort zone.

53...g4 54.h2 f5 55.h7+ d8 56.f1 xd4 57.e3 c8 58.g8+ d7 59.f7+ e7 60.d5 e5 61.b7+ 61.f7+ c6 62.g8 would have exposed Black’s king to more checks.

61.e6 62.c8+ f7 63.c4+ e6 64.g3 g6 Black has gained a pawn but the d–pawn is a long way from doing anything constructive, while her vulnerable king should give White enough counterplay to make a draw.

61...f6 62.c8+ f7 63.c4+ e6 64.g3 g6 Black has gained a pawn but the d–pawn is a long way from doing anything constructive, while her vulnerable king should give White enough counterplay to make a draw. However, in time pressure with an Olympic title at stake, nerves start to play a more important role than mere logic!

65.c8 d4 66.g8+ g7 67.e8+ f7 68.c8 f3+ 69.g2 g5 70.f1 e6 71.d8 f3  

72.b8? It is hard to understand why Kosteniuk chose to let the d–pawn advance. Again, this is easier said than done in time trouble. Alternatives were 72.g2 and 72.a8.

72...d5! Now the d–pawn starts running.

73.g2?? But this move loses. 73.c2 d4 74.b5 f4 (74...g5 75.b7 h6 76.b4 d7 77.b6+ g7 78.b4 and I don’t see how Black can improve.) 75.xf4 d5 76.b2 f5 77.b5+ xf4 78.b8+ e5 79.f8+ and White again has many checks.

73...d4 74.c2
74...d3?? Throwing away almost everything! 74...g5! would have sealed the deal.

75.e3 d2 76.d8 Now White is back in the safe zone.

87.f4?? This is the move that decided the Women’s Olympiad. Instead, 87.e3 h7 88.f1 and we are back to what we said few moves earlier.

87.h7! The key move. Now White is in zugzwang since 90.d8 would be met by 90...g7.

88.e6 d1 Not the best move but good enough!

And here the Olympiad comes to an end. The Chinese team had survived narrow escapes in the last two rounds against USA and Russia to clinch the coveted title, thereby duplicating the achievement of their open section team where their men edged US on tiebreak.
In his first volume of two, GM Alexander Ipatov shares his experience and provides practical advice to help players succeed over the board. In this user-friendly and detailed book, he largely draws on his own games and presents dynamic and rich opening variations which have accompanied him in his successful chess career. This book is a must-read for modern chess players, who are overwhelmed with piles of information and endless databases, and who often struggle to find promising and unexplored positions.
PERUVIAN GM JORGE CORI IS THE HIGHEST PERFORMING PLAYER IN BATUMI

WHO’S WHO?

WHILE CHESS OLYMPIADS ARE PRIMARILY ABOUT TEAMS, STRONG INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCES ARE ALSO RECOGNIZED AND REWARDED WITH MEDALS FOR EACH BOARD, AS WELL AS THE BEST OVERALL RESULTS IN TERMS OF RATING FOR THE WHOLE EVENT. TEN-TIME MEDALLIST SUSAN POLGAR HIGHLIGHTS THE TOP PERFORMERS IN THE OLYMPIAD – AND THEIR BRILLIANCES.

by GM SUSAN POLGAR
this was the tenth time I have attended a Chess Olympiad (four as a player and others in various capacities) and on each occasion it has been a wonderful experience.

Naturally, in the Olympiads in which I competed I was fully focused on preparation for my games. Incidentally, always playing on board one and without sitting out any game, I had a record 56-game undefeated streak, which resulted in 10 medals – 5 Gold, 4 Silver and 1 Bronze. In the Olympiads where there was no pressure on me to fight for medals, I had opportunities to enjoy more of the Olympic spirit, catching up with old friends and making new ones.

In the Open Olympiad, the star in Batumi was clearly the 23-year old Peruvian GM Jorge Cori. He won two gold medals, for best performance on Board 3 as well as the overall highest performance rating (2925) of the entire Olympiad. He finished well ahead of Ding Liren, Caruana, Girı, Mamedyarov, Anand, Nepomniachtchi, Radjabov, Vachier-Lagrave, Bu, Kramnik, So, and Le Quang Liem, just to name a few.

He currently studies in the United States at Webster University and is a member of the SPICE program. This presented him with an extra challenge between rounds at the Olympiad, as he had to keep up with his school assignments.

While this was Jorge’s dream event, to be fair his captain did give him seven Whites out of the eight games. However, unlike some theoretically well prepared players who often gain (some) opening advantage with White, Jorge did not benefit much from this as he is not an opening expert. He usually just develops his pieces and “plays chess”.

Yes, Jorge is well known for his unambitious approach to openings and his games were no different at this Chess Olympiad. A good example of his style of play is his early upset win against the Chinese Star GM Wei Yi in round 3:

At this point the position is balanced or as modern chess lingo calls it “0.00” – based on an evaluation of the various commonly used chess software programs. Surprisingly the game ended in only ten more moves, without any obvious blunder by Black.

31...be1 £c8?! Not an optimal square for the queen.

32.¥d6! The beginning of a nice bishop maneuver, with the idea of exchanging Black’s most important defensive piece: the bishop on g7.

32...£c7? Wei underestimated the strength of White’s next move. Better was 32...£e8 and if 34.f4 Black has the very interesting hard-to-find idea 34...b6! (34...gxf4? 35.¥xh6 gxf4 and the point is that if now 36.£xf4 then 36...£b8! followed by 37.¥c5 ¥xh4 38.exf4 ¥xe1+ 39.¢h2 fxg4 40.¥d2 A) 40...g3+ 41.¥g2! (41.¥xg3? ¥h1)

Susan Polgar is an Olympic and World Chess Champion, a top-notch coach, prolific writer and savvy promoter.

Some of the notable achievements in her chess career include: Being the first woman in history to earn the Grandmaster title, becoming the #1 ranked female player at 15, and remaining in the top 3 for 25 years, being the first in history, male of female, to win the Chess Triple Crown (World Blitz, Rapid, Classical World Championships), as well as winning 10 Olympiad medals (5 gold, 4 silver, 1 bronze) while recording a record 56 consecutive game scoring streak without a loss on board 1.

Since retiring from chess competition, she became one of the top chess coaches in the world, leading her SPICE chess program to an unprecedented 7 consecutive Collegiate Division I Final Four Championships. She also founded the Susan Polgar Foundation which has awarded more than $5 million in chess prizes/scholarships to young players, and www.ChessDailyNews.com, one of the most popular personal chess websites in the world.
41...e6 42.b4 and White’s a-pawn will be fast;
B) 40...e8 41.g6 gxh3 42.xf7+ xf7 with drawing chances, although after 43.d1 it is White who is pushing.

34.f4! Finally there is a direct clash between the two sides and the white pieces are better placed for this change in the character of the position.

34...fxg4? It would be no better to capture the other way: 34...gxf4 35.xf4 fxg4? 36.h7+. The best option Black had was to settle for a queen and rook endgame a pawn down after 34...b6 35.d4 c5 36.xg7 xg7 37.xg5 xg5 38.xf5 xf5 39.xf5 e7.

35.fxg5 is a pawn up, while maintaining the kingside attack.

37...e5 38.xf7

38...xf7? Even after 38...xf7, which puts up more resistance, the black king cannot get out of trouble: 39.f1+ e8 40.h3 g5 41.g3 xg4 42.f2! h5+ 43.g1.

39.g5! Naturally the pawn could not have been taken due to the pin along the g-file.

39.f8 40.d4 e6 41.h2 and Black resigned as there is no defence against the dual threats on h7 and h8.

When someone wins nearly every game (like Jorge, who scored seven wins and a draw against Nepomniachtchi) some luck is usually required. After an unfortunate opening attempt Jorge reached the following position in round 7:

36.gxh6 xh6 37.xg4 Now White

Here Black inexplicably did not play the simple and natural 19...xe2 20.xe2 (20.fxg7 g4+ 21.f2 g8) 20...gxh6 when White would have been in serious trouble after, for example, 21.e4 (or 21.b5? g8+ 22.f2 b+ 21...g8+ 22.g3 h5.

Instead Pelletier let the queen run by playing 19...gxh6?

Of course, White now saves his queen: 20.f1! g8+ 21.f2
21...£f5? There is already a case for salvaging something by 21...£xh2+ 22.¢e1 (of course not 22.¢xf3? ¦g3+ 23.¢e4 £f5+ 24.¢e4 £d8+ 25.¢d5 £xd5+ 26.¢xd5 £xb2+ 27.¢c4 £b3+ 28.¢d4 £xd5 mate) 22...£e5+ 23.¥e2 ¥xe2 24.¤xe2 £xc5 25.£xf6 £e3, with still a complicated game.

22.¢e3! Black probably missed this very strong move.

22...£xc5+ 23.¢xf3 £f5+ 24.¢e3 £e5+ 25.¢d2 £xh2+

26.¥c1 The king runs away and Black’s attack is over, while White has a significant material advantage.

26...£g2 27.¥e2 ¥c8 28.£b1 £f5 29.£f3 £f8 30.£b7 £b3 31.£xa6 £g7 32.£d3 £b3 33.£a6 £g3 34.£d4+

Black resigned

In Batumi he played quite creatively. I really liked his game against Duda, despite numerous imperfections on both sides.

Here is his victory against the Peruvian GM Emilio Cordova:

Emilio Cordova 2609
Ding Liren 2804

Chess Olympiad, Batumi 2018
1.£f3 g6 2.d4 £f6 3.g3 £g7 4.£g2 0–0 5.0–0 d5 6.c4 c6 7.£bd2 a5 8.b3 a4 9.£b2 £e4 10.£xe4 dx4 11.¢e1 c5 12.¢c2 £c6 13.e3 f5 14.£c3 £c7 15.£a3 cxd4 16.£b5 £b8 17.exd4

22...£a6! 23.£xa6 bxa6 24.c5 £e3 25.£f1 f4 26.£f1 g5 27.£d3 £xg3 28.£h3 £f4 29.£g2 ¥xh3+

White resigned

World title challenger Fabiano Caruana came third among the overall best performers with a 2859 rating and a solid undefeated 7/10 score. In the article related to the Men’s Olympiad, you can learn more about Fabiano’s showing in Batumi.

On board 2, the Vietnamese GM Nguyen Ngoc Truong Son won gold with a convincing performance of 8½ out of 10. The following game nicely illustrates the style in which he was capable of outplaying his opponents.

Nguyen Ngoc Truong Son 2620
Nico Georgiadis 2522

Chess Olympiad, Batumi 2018
1.d4 £f6 2.£f3 d5 3.c4 e6 4.£c3 £b4 5.£g5 h6 6.£xf6 £xf6 7.e3 0–0 8.£c1 dxc4 9.£xc4 c5 10.dxc5 £d7 11.0–0
White clearly has the initiative thanks to his more active pieces and most importantly a rook on the seventh rank. It is time to introduce a little tactic to increase the advantage:

22.f4! $\text{\textdagger}$fc8 Naturally 22...exf4? would be a blunder because of 23.$\text{\textdagger}$xe7. If 22...f6, then White continues improving the position with 23.$\text{\textdagger}$fc1 — but not 23.$\text{\textdagger}$xb7 because of 23...f5 24.$\text{\textdagger}$g2 $\text{\textdagger}$xb7 25.$\text{\textdagger}$xb7 exf4 26.exf4 $\text{\textdagger}$c8 with compensation for the pawn, given White’s unattractive pawn structure on the kingside.

23.$\text{\textdagger}$fc1

23...$\text{\textdagger}$xc7 23...f6 would just make things worse by weakening too many light squares. White can respond with 24.$\text{\textdagger}$g6 followed by $\text{\textdagger}$f5.

24.$\text{\textdagger}$xc7 $\text{\textdagger}$d6 If 24...$\text{\textdagger}$d6 White would make the intermediate move 25.f5 prior to capturing the pawn on b7.

25.$\text{\textdagger}$xe5 White has won a pawn, but it was important to see why Black’s trick does not quite work...

And now 27.$\text{\textdagger}$d7! not only escapes the fork but, by creating a pin, forces the exchange of queens which results in a technically winning endgame for White.

27...$\text{\textdagger}$xe5 28.$\text{\textdagger}$xd1 $\text{\textdagger}$f6 29.$\text{\textdagger}$d7 And the rook is back to the magic seventh rank!

In addition to White having an extra pawn it is impressive how the white pieces dominate their counterparts.

30...$\text{\textdagger}$b6 If 30...$\text{\textdagger}$e8 White can win a second pawn with 31.$\text{\textdagger}$xb7 $\text{\textdagger}$xb7 32.$\text{\textdagger}$d6+ $\text{\textdagger}$d7 33.$\text{\textdagger}$xb7, although 31.$\text{\textdagger}$c7 may be even more accurate.
31.e4 h5 32.e5 d8 33.f3 g6 34.d6 e7 35.e4 xd6 36.exd6 e8+ 37.d5 e2 38.d8+ g7 39.a8 d2+ 40.c6 c2+ 41.xb6 d2 42.c7 c2+ 43.d8

Black resigned

The highest achiever on Board 4 was Daniel Fridman of Germany with a performance rating of 2814, scoring 7½/9. On “Board 5”, which essentially is the reserve player, Anton Korobov of Ukraine led the score chart with a 2773 performance, scoring 6½/8.

Based on number of points scored (as well as highest percentage) the unrated(!) Mashala Kabamwanishi of Congo won with 9½ out of 10 games. Naturally the playing strength of his opponents was not as high and so, in spite of his impressive score, his performance rating was only 2043.

Mashala Kabamwanishi
Byron Small 1721
Chess Olympiad, Batumi 2018

1.e4 e5 2.d3 c6 3.b5 a6 4.a4 d6 5.0–0 xe4 6.d4 b5 7.b3 d5 8.dxe5 c6 9.c3 e7 10.bd2 c5 11.c2

11...0–0 A more critical way to play with Black is 11...d4 12.b3 d3 13.b1 xb3 14.axb3 f5.

12.d4 d7 13.f4 Now White has a clear path for a kingside attack.

13.e6 Black could not liberate his position with 13...f6 because of 14.h5.

14.2b3 Better was the more direct

14.xc6 xc6 15.f5.

14...cxd4 15.xd4 c5 And now the f–pawn continues to march forward.

16.f5 xfd4 17.cxd4 b6 18.f6 g6

Now that the f–pawn has accomplished its mission to provoke the weakening of the dark squares around Black’s king, it is time for the final storm!

19.d2 b8 20.h6 g8

21.f4! f8 And here a typical but always pretty queen sacrifice: 22.xh7+

In the Women’s competition, the overall best performer (TPR 2661) was the
reigning Women’s World Champion Ju Wenjun of China, who scored 7 out of 9 to help her side win the team gold medal.

Here is the final part of her round 7 win against Holland:

**Ju Wenjun**  2561
**Zhaoqin Peng**  2367

Chess Olympiad, Batumi 2018

Upon a superficial look at this position, it seems that White is slightly better and there is a long endgame ahead. However, White has an unexpectedly forceful way to decide the game quickly:

35.\(\text{\textdollar}d3\) \(\text{\textblacksquare}f8\) If 35...g5 36.\(\text{\textdollar}h5\) or 35...f5 36.\(\text{\textblacksquare}xg6\)!

And now 36.\(\text{\textdollar}xg6\) 37.\(\text{\textdollar}xg6\) 38.\(\text{\textdollar}xf5\) \(\text{\textblacksquare}f5\) and Black resigned because after 38.\(\text{\textdollar}xf5\) \(\text{\textdollar}xg6\) 39.\(\text{\textdollar}d7\) decides.

Ju Wenjun showed remarkable fighting spirit throughout the Olympiad. In her final game in round 11 against Russia, she defeated the former Women’s World Champion Alexandra Kosteniuk in a 95 move game which was one of the very last to finish in the entire event. Moreover this proved the deciding game which gave China the team gold medal.

Second best performer was GM Hoang Thanh Trang, representing Hungary, and scoring 8½ out of 10 with a 2636 TPR. Her biggest win was against Humpy Koneru of India in round 8.

**Hoang Thanh Trang**  2423
**Humpy Koneru**  2557

Chess Olympiad, Batumi 2018

1.d4 \(\text{\textblacksquare}f6\) 2.\(\text{\textdollar}f3\) d5 3.e3 e6 4.\(\text{\textdollar}d3\) b6 5.\(\text{\textdollar}bd2\) \(\text{\textdollar}b7\) 6.b3 \(\text{\textdollar}d6\) 7.\(\text{\textdollar}b2\) 0–0 8.0–0 \(\text{\textdollar}e4\) 9.\(\text{\textdollar}e5\) f6 10.\(\text{\textdollar}ec4\) \(\text{\textdollar}xd2\) 11.\(\text{\textdollar}xd2\) f5 12.f4 \(\text{\textdollar}d7\) 13.g4 g5

...and here Black has only one move to save the game! 21...\(\text{\textdollar}a3\)! 22.\(\text{\textdollar}e5\) (22.\(\text{\textdollar}xf6\)\? \(\text{\textdollar}xf6\) 23.\(\text{\textdollar}xf6\) \(\text{\textdollar}xf6\) 24.\(\text{\textdollar}xf6\) \(\text{\textdollar}b2\) 25.\(\text{\textdollar}xf1\) \(\text{\textdollar}c3\)! and White is in danger.) 22...\(\text{\textdollar}d6\) 23.\(\text{\textblacksquare}c3\) \(\text{\textdollar}b4\) with an endless pursuit of the bishop;

**B)** 19.\(\text{\textdollar}xh7\) \(\text{\textdollar}xh7\) 20.\(\text{\textdollar}e6\) \(\text{\textdollar}g7\) 21.d5+ \(\text{\textdollar}f6\) 22.\(\text{\textdollar}xf6\) \(\text{\textdollar}xf6\) 23.\(\text{\textdollar}h1\) (23.\(\text{\textdollar}xf1\) ends in the same result after 23...\(\text{\textdollar}xb2\) 24.\(\text{\textdollar}g4\) \(\text{\textdollar}h7\) 25.\(\text{\textdollar}h3\) \(\text{\textdollar}g8\) 26.\(\text{\textdollar}e6\) with a perpetual check.)

So far there is complete symmetry! However the more open the position gets, the more it usually favors White.

14.\text{\textdollar}xf5\text{\textdollar}xf5\) If Black continues to play “copy-cat” with 14...\text{\textdollar}xf4
23...hxh2! A spectacular saving move! On 24...xf6 follows 24...g4+ h7 26.h5+ g7.

18.exf4 xf5 19.xf5 c8!

Despite being a pawn down, Black happily trades queens and goes for the endgame, as it is only a matter of time that the white f-pawn will fall.

20.xc8 bxc8 21.a1 h5 21...ce8 was perhaps a more accurate way to win the pawn back.

22.f5 f4 Again 22...ce8 was a good alternative.

23.e3 f7 25.e5

25...xe5?! A poor choice. Perhaps Humpy wanted to avoid the repetition of moves by 25...f6 26.d7 f7 27.e5, which of course would have been a lot better than entering a pawn-down rook endgame, as happens in the game.

26.e5 xf1+ 26...f6 27.e5 g7 28.c4 would lead to a very unpleasant endgame for Black due to the pin along the f-file.

27.xf1 f6 28.e7 f7 29.xf6 xf6 30.d5

From here on White showed remarkable technique to convert her minimal material advantage to a win.

30...f8 31.e2 e6 32.h5 e7 33.e3 c6 34.c4 a5 35.h6+ d7 36.d5 e7+ 37.d4 cxd5 38.cxd5 e2 39.xh7+ d6 40.h6+ c7 41.a4 b2 42.c4 c2+ 43.b5 c5+ 44.a6 d6 45.xb6 h5 46.b5 xh2 47.xa5 h8 48.c5+ d6 49.b4 b8 50.c3

Black resigned

The third highest achiever was GM Mariya Muzychuk of Ukraine, also with a GM-level performance of 2616, after scoring 8 out of 10. She scored an important win in the last round for her team against the American GM Irina Krush, who also had a great event apart from this loss.

Based on most points scored, GM Ketevan Arakhamia-Grant was on top with an impressive 10½ out of 11. In her younger days, Ketevan used to be a contender for the women’s world title, and at her peak had a respectable 2506 rating. In her debut Olympiad in 1990 in Novi Sad, representing the old Soviet Union (as a reserve player) she scored a perfect 12 out of 12. Years after moving to the UK, she started representing Scotland in the Chess Olympiads, often as a member of the Open Team.

In many of her games in Batumi, she clearly outclassed her less experienced opponents. Here is her game from round 3:
Ketevan Arakhamia-Grant 2345
Patricia Castillo Pena 1810

Chess Olympiad, Batumi 2018

1.e4 c5 2.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{f}3\) d6 3.\(\text{\textit{b}}\text{b}5+\) \(\text{\textit{d}}\text{d}7\) 4.a4 \(\text{\textit{g}}\text{f}6\) 5.\(\text{\textit{c}}\text{c}3\) a6 6.\(\text{\textit{c}}\text{c}4\) g6 7.a5 \(\text{\textit{g}}\text{g}7\)?

At first sight it appears that White’s king is more vulnerable than its counterpart. However, the Swedish Grandmaster is known for his extreme creativity and decided to use his king to aid the attack against Black’s king!

8.\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{f}7+!\) Quite surprisingly, in the same position the Indian superstar Praggnanandhaa missed the very same combination! However, to be fair that was a shorter time-control game. He played 8.d3 0–0 9.0–0 \(\text{\textit{b}}\text{b}8\) 10.e5 \(\text{\textit{e}}\text{e}8\) 11.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{d}5\) \(\text{\textit{c}}\text{c}6\) 12.\(\text{\textit{b}}\text{b}6\) \(\text{\textit{b}}\text{b}8\) 13.\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{c}8\) \(\text{\textit{x}}\text{c}8\) 14.e6 f6 15.\(\text{\textit{e}}\text{e}1\) d5 16.\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{b}3\) \(\text{\textit{d}}\text{d}6\) 17.\(\text{\textit{a}}\text{a}4\) \(\text{\textit{c}}\text{c}7\) 18.\(\text{\textit{f}}\text{f}4\) \(\text{\textit{e}}\text{e}5\) 19.\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{e}5\) \(\text{\textit{x}}\text{e}5\) 20.\(\text{\textit{c}}\text{c}4\) e4 21.dxe4 \(\text{\textit{d}}\text{d}6\) 22.\(\text{\textit{e}}\text{e}4\) \(\text{\textit{e}}\text{e}8\) 23.\(\text{\textit{a}}\text{a}3\) \(\text{\textit{x}}\text{e}6\) 24.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{d}4\) \(\text{\textit{c}}\text{c}7\) 25.\(\text{\textit{b}}\text{b}3\) \(\text{\textit{d}}\text{d}8\) 26.\(\text{\textit{e}}\text{e}4\) \(\text{\textit{x}}\text{a}5\) 27.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{d}7\) \(\text{\textit{b}}\text{b}8\) 28.\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{d}5+\) \(\text{\textit{h}}\text{h}8\) 29.\(\text{\textit{g}}\text{g}5\) \(\text{\textit{c}}\text{c}7\) 30.\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{h}4\) b5 31.\(\text{\textit{h}}\text{h}3\) \(\text{\textit{h}}\text{h}6\) 32.\(\text{\textit{g}}\text{g}6\) \(\text{\textit{x}}\text{e}6\) 33.\(\text{\textit{f}}\text{f}5\) \(\text{\textit{x}}\text{e}6\) 34.\(\text{\textit{f}}\text{f}5\) \(\text{\textit{h}}\text{h}6\) 35.\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{e}8+\) checkmating.

30.\(\text{\textit{f}}\text{f}4!\) \(\text{\textit{x}}\text{f}2+?\) This natural capture was already a decisive mistake. 30...\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{a}1\) was essential.

31.\(\text{\textit{g}}\text{g}5\) \(\text{\textit{g}}\text{g}7\) If 31...\(\text{\textit{e}}\text{e}1\) 32.\(\text{\textit{f}}\text{f}4\) \(\text{\textit{x}}\text{h}2\) 33.\(\text{\textit{h}}\text{h}6\) \(\text{\textit{x}}\text{c}6\) 34.\(\text{\textit{f}}\text{f}7+\) \(\text{\textit{x}}\text{f}7\) 35.\(\text{\textit{e}}\text{e}8+\) checking.

32.\(\text{\textit{f}}\text{f}4\) \(\text{\textit{x}}\text{h}2\) 33.\(\text{\textit{f}}\text{f}6+\) \(\text{\textit{h}}\text{h}7\)

34.\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{g}6+!\) A pretty queen sacrifice! If Black accepts it, checkmate follows after 35.\(\text{\textit{e}}\text{e}7+\).

34...\(\text{\textit{h}}\text{h}8\) Or 34...\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{g}6\) 35.\(\text{\textit{e}}\text{e}7+\) \(\text{\textit{g}}\text{g}8\) 36.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{d}5+\).

And now the final elegant touch... 35.\(\text{\textit{h}}\text{h}6\), which forces checkmate on the following move. **Black resigned**

33.\(\text{\textit{d}}\text{c}5!\) A spectacular knight sacrifice, based on the attractive checkmate idea of 34.\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{c}5??\) \(\text{\textit{b}}\text{b}1\) mate.

Here is another fun moment. The following game won the brilliancy prize for round 2:

Tiger Hillarp Persson 2544
Tomas Laurusas 2484

Chess Olympiad, Batumi 2018

36.\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{e}6\) \(\text{\textit{x}}\text{e}6\) 27.\(\text{\textit{h}}\text{h}8+!\) Black resigned

A thematic combination: 27...\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{h}8\) 28.\(\text{\textit{h}}\text{h}1+\) \(\text{\textit{g}}\text{g}8\) 29.\(\text{\textit{h}}\text{h}8+\) \(\text{\textit{x}}\text{h}8\) 30.\(\text{\textit{h}}\text{h}1+\) \(\text{\textit{g}}\text{g}8\) 31.\(\text{\textit{h}}\text{h}7\) mate.

As regards the women, we had to wait until the last round to witness “the” game of the event.

It was less spectacular than the above game by GM Hillarp Persson, which is certainly hard to match, but it surely had far more competitive importance. It was being played on board 1 of the final round where medals were at stake.

Shen Yang 2464
Aleksandra Goryachkina 2535

Chess Olympiad, Batumi 2018

33...\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{c}5!\) A spectacular knight sacrifice, based on the attractive checkmate idea of 34.\(\text{\textit{x}}\text{c}5??\) \(\text{\textit{b}}\text{b}1\) mate.
34.dxc5  e5! And a second sacrifice to deflect White's queen.

35.a6  35.xe5 would allow a simple checkmate in two: 35...xb3  36.c1 b1 mate.

35.xa6  36.xe5 d3+  37.c1 xb3  38.a1

38...d4! While this may not be the only road to victory, it is certainly the most stylish one!

39.exd4 e3  40.xe3 If 40.fxe3 e4.

40...b4  41.g1 c4+ and White resigned, as after 41...c4+ 42.d2 c2+ 43.e1 e2 mate.

Black nicely exploited White's back rank weakness: 23...xe3  24.fxe3 g4!

Another game that came under consideration for the honor of “Game of the Olympiad” was the following effort, which won the special prize for round 8:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anne Haast</th>
<th>2345</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alexandra Kosteniuk</td>
<td>2559</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chess Olympiad, Batumi 2018

25.xg3!  26.e2 g4! And White resigned as on 27.e1 follows 27.xg2.

Congratulations to all the individual medal winners as well as the members of the Chinese teams who made history by winning double gold and the Gaprindashvili Cup!

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The 12th annual SPICE Cup took place at the Plaza Hotel in Clayton, a small city near St. Louis. It is just a short ride from Webster University’s main campus in Webster Groves, Missouri. The dates, 23-28 October, were intentionally chosen to coincide with the Fall Break for the Webster University students, like my teammates and myself. It was a very strong Open with 14 GMs and 7 IMs participating out of a total 38 participants.

Hungarian GM Benjamin Gledura took an early lead with a powerful 4-0 start. On the other hand, I had begun slowly, suffering a painful second round loss to the young American star GM Awonder Liang in a game which he annotates at the end of this article. But then the good fortune that I had experienced at the Batumi Chess Olympiad returned...
Here is the first example of how Lady Luck smiled on me...

Yuniesky Quesada                           2622
Jorge Cori                                               2664

SPICE Cup Open, Clayton 2018

In this critical position, we were both under time pressure. Fortunately for me, my Webster University teammate GM Yuniesky Quesada continued with 59.\f4?.

Instead, 59.\f2! would have gained a tempo by targeting Black's rook. Then, after 59...\h5, swinging the rook over to the queenside with 60.\b2 \f5 (or 60...\d7 61.\b7) 61.\b8 would have been the way to the win.

In this critical position, we were both under time pressure. Fortunately for me, my Webster University teammate GM Yuniesky Quesada continued with 59.\f4?.

Instead, 59.\f2! would have gained a tempo by targeting Black's rook. Then, after 59...\h5, swinging the rook over to the queenside with 60.\b2 \f5 (or 60...\d7 61.\b7) 61.\b8 would have been the way to the win.

My luck continued in the critical penultimate round as well. This time it was against another Webster University teammate.

Vasif Durabayli                                2629
Jorge Cori                                              2664

SPICE Cup Open, Clayton 2018

I had really misplayed the opening phase and after my opponent's next move, I realized that I was already in big trouble.

14.\g6! \f6 15.\g1 \c7 16.\d3 \e5 17.\gx7 \f7 18.\d5 \e7 19.\f4 \e4 20.\d4 \f8 21.\x4 I was glad to see this move by my opponent. I was expecting 21.\xe7 \xe7 22.e5! \xe5 23.\xe5 \xe5 24.\g1, when it would have been practically game over.

33.\f1? This move instantly gave the game away. White was still clearly better after 33.\h3.

33...\f5!! All of a sudden the tables have turned. I now have a winning endgame!

34.\x6+ \f6 35.\e1 \d6 And the white king is too far away from the kingside to hold back the black pawns.

36.\e2 \h4 37.\c1 \g5 38.\e5 \dxe5 39.\xe5+ \f4 40.\h5 \h3

21...\g5! Vasif completely missed this idea. While my position is still pretty bad, Black can at least hang on for now.

22.\d5? The idea was that if 22.\e6? \g4; but if White first trades with 22.\x6 \x6 and then plays 23.\e6 \g6 24.e5!

41.\d2 \e4 42.\h8 \d3 43.\x3 \f3 44.\g8 \f4 45.\e6 \g2 46.\e3 \f3 47.\e4 \xh2 48.\x4 \g3 49.\h4 \g2 50.\d4 \h2 51.\x2 52.\d5 \x3 53.\d6 \a1 54.\e5 \d1 55.\e6 \g3 White resigned
At the end of the tournament, GM Illya Nyzhnyk, another teammate of mine at Webster University, and I finished with 6½ out of 9 to become co-champions. Although the cash prizes were shared, we had to play an Armageddon game to decide who would be awarded the trophy since there is only one! After winning the draw for colors I chose White, so as to have more time on the clock, and in the end managed to win a nerve-wrecking tough battle.

The event was co-sponsored and organized by Webster University and the Susan Polgar Foundation, and I would like to thank them for the great organization and for providing excellent playing conditions in the event.

Awonder Liang                                  2572
Jorge Cori                                              2664

SPICE Cup Open, Clayton, 2018
Annotated by GM Awonder Liang

This game was played in the second round of the SPICE Cup. It was a morning session so I didn’t have much time to prepare. Before the game I had decided to just play chess and thought that we would have an interesting duel.

1.e4 c5 2.¤f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.¤xd4 ¤c6 5.¤c3 £c7 6.¥e3 a6 7.£f3 ¤f6 8.0–0–0 d6!?

An interesting line which is rarely seen. During play, I confused it with the line 8...¥e7, which would have likely transposed to the game, for example after 9.¥e2 0–0 10.h4 d6.

9...¤f5 9.wg3 was also played at this same event. So you see this line was very popular at the SPICE Cup! 9...d7 (9...¤xd4 10.¤xd4 e5 11.¤e3) 10.¤b1 £c8 11.¤xc6 ¼xc6 12.¤d3 b5 13.¤f3 h5 14.h4 b4 15.¤e2 ¤b7 16.e5 dxe5 17.¤xe5 £e7 18.¤f4 0–1 (29) was A.Ostrovskiy 2423 - Y.Quesada 2622, Saint Louis 2018. 9.¤xc6 is more accurate.

9.¥e2!

A1) 10.b5?? 11.e5–
A2) 10...¥e7 11.¤b1 0–0 12.h4 e5 13.¤g5 £e8 14.¤xf6 £xf6 15.¤d5 £d8 16.g4 £e6 17.g5± F.Sucess 2225 - R.Leemans 2349, ICCF email 2014;
A3) 10...¤f7 11.g3 b5 12.ªe3 £b7 13.ªf4 e5 14.ªe3 £c8 15.ªd2 £c7 16.ªxd1 £f6 17.ªf3 £d7 18.ªb1 £e6 19.ªd5± A.Tari 2532 - S.Movsesian 2666, Reykjavik 2015.
B) 10.g4 b5 11.g5 õd7 12.a3 õf7 13.ªh3 £c8 14.g6 £f6 15.ªg1 £c7 16.ªd3 e5 17.gxf7+ £xf7 18.ªd5 £e7 19.f4 exf4 20.ªd4 £f8 21.ªxf4 g5 22.ªd5 V.Durarbayli 2629 - J.Cori 2664, Saint Louis 2018.

10.£g3

Now we are back in the line with 8...£e7.

10...0–0 11.ªh8 12.ªb1 õd7 13.ªf3 14.ªe3 £c8 15.ªd2 £c7 16.ªxd1 £f6 17.ªf3 £d7 18.ªb1 £e6 19.ªd5± A.Tari 2532 - S.Movsesian 2666, Reykjavik 2015.
continuation. There are a few predecessors to this position, which I wasn’t aware of at the time.

A) 13.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{ac}8\) 14.\(\text{he}1\) \(\text{a}5\) (14...\(\text{b}5\)) \(\text{e}5\) \(\text{c}8\) 16.\(\text{a}1\) E. Blomqvist 2506 – A. Fier 2570, Barcelona 2014;

B) 13.\(\text{h}1\) \(\text{ac}8\) 14.\(\text{e}5\) \(\text{dx}5\) 15.\(\text{fx}5\) \(\text{xe}5\) (15...\(\text{e}4\)) 16.\(\text{xe}4\) \(\text{xd}4\) 16.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{a}5\) 17.\(\text{xc}6\) \(\text{xc}6\) 18.\(\text{e}5\) \(\text{e}8\) 19.\(\text{a}3\) \(\text{d}8\) 20.\(\text{de}1\) 16.\(\text{e}5\) 15.\(\text{f}6\) 22.\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{xd}3\) 23.\(\text{cx}d3\) \(\text{d}8\) 24.\(\text{c}1\) I. Valles Moreno 2418 – S. Del Rio 2498, Montcada 2015.

13...\(\text{ac}8\) A logical move, which prepares to meet \(\text{e}4\)–\(\text{e}5\) with ...\(\text{d}5\).

14.\(\text{d}2\) I had many options which lead to interesting play. During the game I thought I had to protect the \(\text{c}2\)–pawn. Although the computer gives its trademark ‘0.00’ after 14.\(\text{e}5\) \(\text{d}5\) 15.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{ex}d5\), I think in practical play Black’s attack is more dangerous.

13...\(\text{ac}8\) Threatening \(\text{g}2\)–\(\text{g}4\), \(\text{d}3\), or \(\text{g}5\), while keeping an eye on Black’s activities. For example, if 16...\(\text{a}5\) 17.\(\text{xd}5\), or 16...\(\text{b}4\) 17.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{h}6\) (17...\(\text{f}5\) 18.\(\text{xf}6\) \(\text{d}xf6\) 19.\(\text{xf}7\)±) 18.\(\text{f}5\) with a decisive advantage in both cases.

16...\(\text{f}5\) 17.\(\text{g}4\) \(\text{fx}g4\) 18.\(\text{wx}g4\) \(\text{b}4\) The only serious try.

19.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{e}7\) 20.\(\text{h}5\) \(\text{h}6\) 21.\(\text{f}7\) At this point, I was pretty certain I was going to win. I didn’t see any other choice except for 21...\(\text{fx}7\), after which White wins the exchange and continues the attack.

21...\(\text{g}8\)! This move doesn’t save the game, but requires accurate calculation on my part. However, I didn’t see a clear win and was getting frustrated. 21...\(\text{fx}7\) would have been met with 22.\(\text{xf}7\) \(\text{f}5\) 23.\(\text{d}4\)++.

22.\(\text{h}6\) \(\text{g}xh6\) 23.\(\text{g}1\) + \(\text{g}7\) 24.\(\text{x}g7\) Intuitively I believed that this sacrifice should be winning. Moreover my opponent only had ten minutes left, so I thought he would make a blunder at some point.

24.\(\text{d}3\)! was the right way to go. I felt that this should be the correct path but could not work out all the details. 24...\(\text{e}5\) 25.\(\text{xf}5\) \(\text{xf}6\) 26.\(\text{hx}f6\) \(\text{f}8\) 27.\(\text{g}2\) \(\text{e}8\) (Obviously 27...\(\text{f}7\) 28.\(\text{g}4\) would not allow Black to survive.) 28.\(\text{xe}6\) I missed this neat shot, after which everything collapses. (28.\(\text{c}5\) also wins.)

24...\(\text{g}7\) 25.\(\text{d}3\) Here I had calculated the nice line 25...\(\text{g}8\) 26.\(\text{hx}f6\) \(\text{g}6\) 27.\(\text{g}2\) \(\text{f}6\) 28.\(\text{hx}f6\) \(\text{g}7\) 29.\(\text{h}5\) \(\text{f}6\) 30.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{hx}g5\) 31.\(\text{hx}g5\) \(\text{f}7\) 32.\(\text{fx}e6\) \(\text{xe}6\) 33.\(\text{h}2\) after which White wins. But Jorge found a more resilient defense:

25...\(\text{h}8\)! A strong idea by my opponent, who
refuses to go down without a fight. In fact, in this tournament he survived other lost positions in similarly resourceful fashion! Only now did I realize that f4–f5 would not have the same effect. I started to get low on time and was upset with myself for suddenly getting into a complicated position.

26.£h4! This backward move threatens £f6+, which can only be stopped by one move.

After 26.f5 £xe5 27.¦g2+ (27.¦g4+ £f8 28.f6=) 27...£f8 (27...£f6 28.£h4+ £f7 29.£d4!–) 28.£xh6+ £xh6 29.£xh6+ I had missed that Black can simply run away by 29...£e8!. Despite what the engine says, over the board the position was not as simple as it appeared, especially against such a resourceful opponent.

26...¤g8 Played instantly. Now we were both starting to get into serious time pressure, with about ten minutes apiece.

27.¦g2+ £f8 28.£g4 The engine simply suggests 28.¤e2, continuing to play on a rook down. However, during the game I was not sure if there was enough to win, as I was uncertain about how much compensation I had.

28...£e8? If 28...£c6 I had planned 29.£d4 with the idea of f4–f5. Then 29...£f7 30.f5. However the engine says that 30.£g6 is more accurate, to be followed by f4–f5, e.g. 30...£g7 31.£h3 £e7 32.f5+.

29.a3? 29.f5!, with the same idea as in the game, wins. I was so fixed on the idea that the only purpose of f4–f5 was the opening of the f-file that I didn’t realize that it also attacks the bishop! 29...£xc3 30.£c5+ (30.£xe6 £xc5 and Black defends everything successfully,) 30...£xb3 31.£g7 mate.

29...h5 Or 29...£xc3 30.£c5+ £xc5 31.£g7 mate.

30.£g5

30...£xa3?! Objectively, not the best. However the move gave me a scare, as even though I had seen it on the previous move I had completely forgotten it was playable now! 30...£e7 31.axb4 £xg5 32.fxg5 or 32.£xg5 leads to a difficult endgame for Black. My opponent decided to keep pieces on the board.

31.£xd5! I decided that deflecting the e6-pawn was the most important duty for my knight!

31...exd5

32.£f5+? I had underestimated the move 32.bxa3. The threat of £c5+, together with the activity of the white pieces, is crushing.

32...£e7 33.£b7 £f6 34.£a6 £e7 35.£g7 £xe8 36.£g6+ £f8 37.£xe8

37...£e7? In this rollercoaster of a game, my opponent finally makes one last mistake. Instead, a draw could be achieved by 37...£xe8 38.£d4 £f6 39.£g5 £f8 40.¥g7 £g8 41.bxa3 £f7.

With limited time, it was hard to judge the ensuing pawn endgame, but it turns out to be a draw. After 42.£g5 (42.£h2 £xg7 43.£xg7+ £xg7 44.£c3 £f6 45.£d4 £e6! 46.£c5 £h4 47.£b6 £f5 48.£xh7 £xf4 49.£xa6 £f3 50.a4 £g2 51.a5 £xh2 52.£b5 £g3 53.a6 £h3 54.£a7 £h2 55.a8£ £h1£=) 42...£xg7 43.£xh5 White has a slight advantage, but the game should end in a draw.

38.£d7 £h6 39.f5

The activity of my pieces makes life unbearable for Black.

39...£h7 40.£e6 £f6 Or 40...£g7 41.£xg7 £xg7 42.£xd5.

41.£g6 £e8 42.£d4 £d7 43.£g8

Black resigned

Only at this moment did I feel I could breathe easy as the game was finally over. This win got me off to a good start and eventually I tied for 3rd place. Meanwhile, to his great credit, Jorge came back and eventually gained first place.
FRESH IDEAS IN THE CLOSED RUY LOPEZ

THE BREYER LABYRINTH

A GRANDMASTER EXAMINES THE RARE LINE 11...c5, IN PLACE OF THE CUSTOMARY 11...b7 IN THE BREYER VARIATION, AND REVEALS HOW A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT MOVE ORDER CAN SURPRISE EVEN A THEORETICALLY WELL-PREPARED OPONENT BY INTRODUCING NEW METHODS OF PLAY NOT USUALLY SEEN IN THE WELL-TRODDEN PATHS OF THIS EVER-POPULAR OPENING.

By GM ALEXANDER IPATOV

About a century ago the Hungarian master Gyula Breyer came up with an eccentric opening idea in the Ruy Lopez: a retreat of an already developed knight from c6 to b8, in order to find new and effective employment for this piece on the d7 square. However it was not until Boris Spassky adopted the line in the 1950s that the latent power of the knight manoeuvre was truly appreciated and thereafter exploited by other great players, including Kasparov, Kramnik, Anand and Carlsen, making this one of the most deeply analyzed of all opening variations. Yet, astonishingly, even today there remain new paths to explore in the Breyer, especially when creative players such as former Junior World Champion Alexander Ipatov take a particular interest...

The Breyer Variation in the Ruy Lopez is a popular opening line notorious for its maneuvering style of play and the deeply analysed theory. The objective of this article is to introduce an alternative and fresh way to play the Breyer with the black pieces by continuing 11...c5, postponing the development of the light-squared bishop.

Born in Ukraine 25 years ago, Alexander Ipatov won the World Junior Championship in 2012, ahead of Ding Liren, Rapport, Yu Yangyi and Wei Yi. He was very close to repeating this success the following year – but he had to settle for silver. He played under the Turkish flag for a number of years and won their national championship in 2014 and 2015. Currently, he is a full-time MBA student at Saint Louis University, as well as a member of SLU Collegiate Chess Team.
which has appeared in just 450 games according to the Mega Database 2018. Black doesn’t show his cards too early as the bishop may sometimes be better placed on c8 than on b7. The “normal” Breyer Variation is 11...b7 which has 9713 recorded games on the database.

12.\b1 The alternatives were 12.d5 and 12.\c2. Let’s have a look at them:
The advantage of not developing the light-squared bishop to b7 too early can be illustrated by the following variation: 12.d5! This move is dubious as it releases tension from the center prematurely, thereby facilitating Black’s ...f7–f5 push. Black’s light-squared bishop no longer needs to be restricted by the white e4 and d5 pawns. 12...c4 13.\c2 \c7

A) 14.\c1 a5 (14...\c5 15.\h2 \a5 16.a3 \b8 17.\d2 \f7 18.\g3 \b8 19.\f5 \b6 20.\xe7+ \xe7 21.\e3 \b4 22.\b1 \f3+ V.Topalov 2752 – M.Carlsen 2837, Astana 2012.) 15.\g3 \c5 16.\b3 \xc3 17.\e3 \d7! 18.\e3 \f8 19.\d2 \a4† C.Dai 2427 – V.Kramnik 2803, Tbilisi 2017;

B) 14.a4 \b8 15.\f1 \c5 16.axb5 \xb2 17.\d2 \f7 18.\g3 \b6 19.\h2 \h4 20.\h1 \d8 21.\e3 \g6 22.\f1 \g5 23.\e2 \d7? 24.\h2 \d3 25.\xd3 \xd3 26.\c1 \f5+ Similarly to the game Topalov - Carlsen, the c8-bishop played an important role in the ...f7–f5 push. D.Sadzikowski 2551 – A.Ipatov 2657, Izmir 2016; A better alternative is 12.\c2, when:

A) 12...\b7 transposes into the normal Breyer;

B) 12...\xd4 13.\xd4 \xd4 14.\xd4

\b7 15.a4! and White is getting an edge here. (15.\f5 \e8 16.\h3 \f8 17.\xd6 \xd6 18.\xd6 \xe4 19.\xe4 \xe4 20.\f4 \dc5 21.\xd8 \xd8= E.Sutovsky 2646 – R.Ponomariov 2712, Minsk 2017) 15...b4 16.\f5 \e8 17.\f1 \c5 18.\g3 \e8 19.\g5± P.Leko 2679 – M.Panchanathan 2481, Douglas 2017;

C) 12...\e8

C1) 13.\f1 \f8 14.\xd5 (14.\c3 transposes into 12.\f1 \e8 13.\g3 \f8 14.\c2) 14...\xe5 15.c4?! \b7 16.\e2 \b6 17.\d1

C1a) 17...\h6? 18.\e3! \g6 19.a4 \bc4 20.\xc4 \c7 21.\d2 \ab8 22.\a5+ L.Hansen 2106 – R.Nixon, corr. 2011;

C1b) 17...\b8 18.\g5 \h5 (18.\c6 \g6 \e6 20.\e3 with initiative) 19.\e5! \e5 20.\xb5 h6 21.\f4;

C1c) 17...\ad8!!N 18.\a4 \b4 19.\a5 \c7 20.\e3 \xe4 21.\d5 \xd5 22.\c5 \c5 23.\xa6 \e4+; 18...\e8 21.\d4 \e8 22.\d4 \e8 23.\e4 \e4 24.\g4 \c2=;

12...\e8 13.\g3 \f8?!

Black makes useful moves waiting for White to push d4–d5. As argued above, in that case the light-squared bishop would be better placed on c8 rather than on b7.

14.\g5 Forcing Black to release pressure on the d4-pawn.

14.d5?! Is premature as the black bishop is still on c8. Black’s play is much easier after 14...c4 15.\c2 \c5? 16.\e3 \f7 17.\h2 \c5 18.\b3 \b8 19.\d2 \f6 20.\f1 \g7 21.\f3 h5 and here Black is even slightly better, as seen in Z.Severiukhina 2318 – L.Kurnosov 2606, Belgorod 2008;

14.\d2 \xd4 has been played in only 10 games. (14...\b7 is likely to transpose into the normal Breyer after 15.d5 \c4 16.a4 \g6 17.\g5 and suddenly we find ourselves with 2199 games in the database! 15.\xd4 exd4)

A) 16.a4 \d3 17.\xd3 \b4 \bc4 18.\c2 \b7 \f6 19.\xa5 \c5 20.\a4 \bc6 21.\d2 \b6 22.\b3 was seen in the game S.Sevian 2587 – A.Ipatov 2660, Saint Louis 2017, when Black could have equalized by 22...\c5 23.\d4 (23.\c2 \d5?) 23...\d6=;

B) 16.\xd4

B1) 16...\b7 17.\f4 \bc4 18.\g5 \b7 19.\e4 \bc4 20.\c6 \xc6 21.\d5 \f6 22.\xe4 \xc4 23.\c5 \xf6 24.\c4 \b6 P.Harikrishna 2743 – Y.Gonzalez Vidal 2543, Tbilisi 2017;

B2) 16...d5! I think this is the most straightforward way to equalize.

B2a) 17.\g5 \b7? 18.\e5 \e5 19.\xe5 \f5 20.\c5 \d7 21.\f3 (21.\d3 \g6?) 21...\h6 22.\xe6+ (22.\h4? \g5 23.\g3 \c6 24.\c6 \f6 25.\f3 \f4+ V.Veys 2109 – J.Glud 2514, Cappelle la Grande 2013) 22...\xc6 23.\xc6 \xf6 24.\xc6 \xf6 25.\d1 \f6 White should be able to equalize despite being a pawn down;

B2b) 17.\f4 \xe4 18.\xe4 \b7 19.\g5 \xe1+ 20.\xe1 \b6 21.\d1 \e8!
(21...h6 is not a mistake yet, but is a bit careless as it allows 22.¢xf7 2.xf7 23...c7! R.Kevlishvili 2450 – R.Ris 2410, Netherlands 2018) 22...d2 h6 23...gxf3 (23...xf7? no longer works because of 23...c7f7 24.b3+ c5d5+) 23...¢e4; B2c1) 17.exd5 ¦xe1+ 18...xe1 c7!

B2c1) 19.g5

B2c11) 19.h6 20.c6! (20.e3 ¦xd5 21.a3 ¦xe3 22...xe3 26+ M.Vontina - J.Van Mechelen, corr. 2012) 20...c7 21...xf6 ¦xf6 22.b3 c5 23.c1 c8 24.d2 c6 25.d5± A.Huerga - J.Van Mechelen, corr. 2012;

B2c12) 19 ¦b6?!N 20.d5 ¦xd5=; B2c2) 19.c6 27c1; B2c3) 19.g5

B2c31) 19... ¦xd5 is also possible 20.e3 (20.e3 28c8 21.a4 bx4 22...a4 ¦xe3 23.dxe3 d4 24.d2 c5= J.Granda 2699 – J.Schroeder 2507, Helsingor 2016) 20...e8 21.d1 ¦e8 22.b1 c4= A.Grischuk 2763 – V.Ivanchuk 2769, Astana 2012;

B2c32) 19... ¦b6!!N

Black wants to recapture on d5 after bringing the rook into play via e8. 20.d1 (20.e3?! 26f5) 20... ¦xd5 21.d4 2h8=; 14.dxe5 is completely harmless for Black after 14...dxe5 15.h2 c4= M.Yilmazyerli 2454 – Z.Efimenko 2641, Baku 2014;

A) 15...c4 16.c2 d5 17.e5 2e4

A1) 18...xe4 dxe4 19...xe4

A2) 19... ¦xe5! 20...xe5 (20...h6+ 2xh6 21...xe5 2a7 22...c6 2h4 23...xa7 2xe4 24...xe8 2xe8 25.e3 2g7=) 20... ¦xf5 21.xf5 2e5 22.e6 2xh7 23.c5+ 2g8 24.dxe5 2d4= I.Zaitsev – Y.Averbakh, Alma Ata 1968;

B2) 15... ¦b7!? 22...f6!! A spectacular AlphaZero-like move! 22... ¦g7 23...xe7! 2xe7 24...g5+= threatening 2h5+ or 2xg6) 21.f1 b6 (21... ¦g7 22.e6 fxe6 23...xe7±) 22...h2+ and White has excellent prospects on the kingside;

B) 15... ¦b7!? 20...g6! (20...c4?= D.Navara 2737 – R.Ponomariov 2709, Czech Republic 2017) 21...h6+ 2xh6 22...xf6 2d5 23...xf5 gxf5 24.gxf8 2xd8 2xd8; B2) 16...g3 2xd4 17...xd4 c5 (17...e5 18...g5#) 18...g5 2xb3 19.axb3 2e6

PRACTICAL CHESS BEAUTY
by Yochanan Afek

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Solving studies is well established as an effective method of chess improvement. In Practical Chess Beauty one of the world’s greatest study composers shares his finest creations. Fire your imagination, gain a greater appreciation of chess geometry, and develop a finer feeling for the pieces’ potential by trying to find the ideas hidden in the hundreds of studies in this book. Or simply wonder at some of the most stunning chess moves ever conceived.
15...g6!? This rare move allows White to break the center with f2-f4. On the other hand, Black doesn’t weaken his kingside with ...h7-h6. 15...h6 is a more common option. Then, upon 16.f3
A) 16...c7 17...e3 g6 (17...b7 transposes into 16...b7 17...e3 c7) 18.d2 h6 One of the drawbacks of 15...h6 is that the black kingside is now exposed. 19.h2 d5? is a typical breakthrough, but the timing is wrong. White is simply better prepared for the open battle. (Better is 19...g7+) 20.dxe5 exe5 21...d4! ed7 22.e5 exe5 23...f4 fd7 24...g4 ag7 25.h5 B.Vuckovic 2576 - F.Berkes 2661, Montenegro 2017; B) 16...b7

B2a) 20...ac1
B2a1) 20...h6 21...xf6 (21...f4 xe8 22...d7 ecx1 23...e7 Black has an edge thanks to the bishop pair.) 21...xf6 22...h5 xe6 23...f4 xe8 24...d5 e8=;
B2a2) 20...e7 21...c2 h6 22...f4 ec8 23...xc8 ecx8 24...f5 ef8 25...xd6 edx6 26.gxd6 edx4 27.e4 edx4 e4=;
B2b) 20...h5 e7 21...f4 edx4 22...x4 edx4 edx4 23...e7 edx7 24...d5 edx5 25...xd5 ec8 26...xa6

The position is objectively equal but both sides need to play precisely.

14...c4 15...c2

B1a) 18...dxe5 exe5 19...f4 +f5+ 20...f1 c7!N (20...g6 M.Essemman 2426 - N.Grandelius 2603, Reykjavik 2015) 21.fxe5 (21...e3 xe3 22...xe3 g6 23...f4 xf4 24...f3 af8=) 21...xe5 22...f3 +d6 23...f5 (23...f2? dxe4+) 23...exe5 24...xd6 edx6 25...e5 exe5 26...f4 exe1+ 27...exe1 exe6;
B1b) 18...dxe5 exd4 19...xe8 edx8 20...xd4 ef1+ 21...h1 ef5+ G.Szabo 2514 - A.Filippov 2531, Bucharest 2008;
B2) 17.b3 ed7 (17...d5!?N 18...xe5 exe5 19.dxe5 edx4 20...g4 edx5 21...xe4 dxe4 22...h6 cxb3 23...xb3 edx6=) 18...d2 protecting the c3-pawn and preparing the closure of the center with d4-d5. (18.d5? can’t be played away right as the c3-pawn is hanging; 18...cxb3 19.axb3 ecx3) 18...ac8?!(18...d5!N As we can see, this is a typical center breakthrough for this line. 19...xe5 exe5 20.dxe5 edx5 21...f4 ec7 22...e5 ed4 23...xe4 dxe4 24...e2 cxb3 25.axb3 f5 26...f6 xf6+ 27...e3 edx6+) 19.d5! cxb3 20.axb3 g6 21...d3 ec5 22...f1 wb6 23...e3 cd7 24...d2 h5 25.b4+ White has achieved a great deal on the queenside, whereas Black is way behind with his counterplay on the kingside. A.Pichot 2565 - Z.Almasi 2707, Douglas 2017;
B3) 17...e3
B3a) 17...e3 18...d2 ad8 (Perhaps 18...d5! is possible.) 19.d5 There is now a long game ahead, but I would give a slight preference to White because Black’s light-squared bishop and d8-rook are misplaced. However this may not be too important because the position is closed and so Black can spend a few tempi on improving his position. M.Tseitlin 2420 - E.Postny 2592, Israël 2011;
B3b) 17...exd4?!N
My suggested novelty. Black opens up the center before White closes it with d4–d5. 18.¤xd4 ¤e5 (18...¤c5 19.¤xc5 dxc5 20.e5 ¤d5 21.¤e4) 19.a4 ¤fd7∞ with the idea of ...g6.

B4) I think that 17.d5!? deserves attention. The b7–bishop is now restricted by the white central pawns, while the presence of the h6–pawn makes it more difficult to make the ...f7–f5 break. If White waits with this push, then it is Black who may open up the center with ...d6–d5. 17...g6 18.¥e3 £c7 19.£d2 h5 20.¤g5 ¤c5 S.Galdunts 2415 – M.Bartel 2649, Biel 2016, 21.b4!? cxb3 22.axb3²

16.f4 This push isn’t that dangerous with the black pawn still on h7. 16...¤g7 17.¤f3 17.fxe5 dxe5 18.d5 £f8! liberating the e8-square for the knight. 19.¤e3 £e8 20.¤d2 £d6= 17...¤c7

18.f5, as played in T.Kriebel 2489 – K.Dragun 2599, Poland 2016. The alternatives to 18.f5 were: 18...¤xe7 dxe5 19.d5 £b8! with the same idea of ...£e6–e8–d6. 20.a4 £b8 21.axb5 axb5 22.¤e3 £e8=; 18.d5 exf4!? not allowing White to make the f4–f5 advance. 19.¤xf4 £e5 20.¤xe5 dxe5 21.¤e3 a5 (An immediate 21...£e8 allows 22.a4) 22.¤d2 (22.a4 b4!)

22...¤d7 23.£f1 £f8 24.£g5 £a6 25.£f2 £c5 26.£f1 £e8∞ 18...d5!! 19.¤xe5 £xe5 20.£f4 £b6+ 21.£e3 £c7 22.¤xe5 £xe5 23.£f3 ¤d4 24.£xe4 24.£xe4 £xe4 25.£xe4 (25.£xf6 hxg6 26.£xe4 £g4=) 25...£xe4 26.£f2 £xf5 27.£xe4 £xe4= 24...¤xe4 25.£d4

25...£d6 25...£c7 26.£xe4 £xf5 27.£f6+ £xf6 28.£xf6= The engine claims that Black is OK, but I wouldn’t feel confident playing this position over the board.

26.£xe4 26.£xe4 £xd4+ 27.£h1 £b7 28.£xd6 £e1+ 29.£xel £xf3 30.£xd4 £d8 31.£xc4 £xc4 32.£xf3 £xd4=; 26...£xg7 £xg7 27.£xg7 £h6+ 28.£xh6 hxg6 29.£xe4 £b7 30.£f1 £f8 31.£e3 £xe3 32.£xe3=

26...£xe4 27.£xe4 27...£xg7 £b6+ 28.£h1 £e3 29.£xa8 £xg7 30.£xc8 £xg3 31.£f1 £f6= 27...£xd4+ 28.£xd4 £b8 29.£f1 29...£e8+ £g7 30.£e3 £xf5 31.£xf5+ £xf5 32.£f1 £d8 33.£c5+ £h8 34.£f4 b4= 29...£d7 30.£f3 £xd4+ 31.£h1 £d3 32.£f4 £e8 33.£xg6 fxg6=

CONCLUSION:
The continuation 11...c5 seems to be a viable alternative to the mainline Breyer starting with 11...£b7. In my opinion, White’s best chance to fight for an opening advantage is 12.£f1 £e8 13.£g3 £f8 14.£g5 £c4 15.£c2. Here my suggestion is to play the less common 15...g6 keeping the kingside pawn structure safe in comparison to 15...h6.
IM HANS NIEMANN WINS THE 2018 RAPID OPEN IN CENTRAL PARK

AN ENGLISHMAN IN NEW YORK

JUST LIKE EVERY SEPTEMBER, OVER THE PAST 18 YEARS HUNDREDS OF PARTICIPANTS GATHERED AROUND THE BETHESDA FOUNTAIN IN CENTRAL PARK FOR THE CHESS IN THE PARK EVENT, RUN BY CIS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH NYC PARKS DEPARTMENT. CHESS JOURNALIST LEON WATSON, FROM LONDON, WAS VISITING THE CITY FOR THE FIRST TIME AND TOOK AN UNEXPECTED OPPORTUNITY TO PLAY IN THE EVENT AND EXPERIENCE CHESS LIFE IN NEW YORK CITY.

By LEON WATSON
It is typically British to bang on about the weather. But in this case, it may be justified. In September I went on a brief visit to New York – my first, as it happens, and mainly to see my brother who lives there. The trip had nothing to do with chess, but... it unexpectedly turned into a bit of an impromptu pilgrimage and I even found myself duking it out in a tournament: the Chess In the Park rapid. I am a rather gentle, out of practice 1600+ player and thought "why not" after it was suggested to me on Twitter. So I jumped on a subway train and got there, albeit very late but thankfully the organizers squeezed me in. As one New Yorker said to me as I sat down for my first game – I think he was called Mitch, or Rich – "it's always sunny when Chess In the Park is on". And so it was – not that the weather helped me, I had rushed there just in time to enter Round 4 and was hot and bothered when I hit the clock for my first game playing Black. My opponent trotted out a London System, which was slightly misplayed, and I quickly gained a pawn. However, my lack of preparation caught up with me and time trouble soon followed, leading to a decisive loss. A bad start, my opponent took full advantage and deserved the win.

For the final round I was paired against a pleasant junior by name of Chance Deas from Medgar Evers College Preparatory School in Brooklyn. He played a Tarrasch in a game I won. We chatted before and afterwards. In fact, I chatted with everyone either side of me before and after.

They were mostly juniors, or old New Yorkers, perhaps interested by my London accent but more likely just friendly people. There were also plenty of women and girls, although as it happened not sat near me. The participants were a range – broadly representative of New York society, I would hope. This, it may surprise you, was something quite new to me. In England chess just isn't like this. Across the water the game is a pursuit that takes place in dark and draughty church or community halls in the depths of November – not in bright sunshine in the middle of Central Park. Chess is also a pursuit that is all too often rather anti-social. Anti-social people like me play it, people who are often a little odd (hopefully not me) and

Leon Watson is a London-based journalist who writes regularly for one of the oldest surviving newspapers in the United Kingdom, The Daily Telegraph, as well as one of the newest chess-learning websites, Chessable. Apart from chess, he has some other typically British hobbies, like watching cricket and supporting his favourite Premier Division soccer team, Tottenham Hotspur.

The Bethesda Fountain in Central Park.
Photo by Erik Bardin

GM Maxim Dlugy & GM John Fedorowicz.
Photo by Kimberly Doo McVay
really only older people, older men to be specific. Your average chess player in England is also often very secretive about their openings – I’m never sure why this bothers people unless they’re a master – and also, I hate to say it, frequently very bad losers who go off in a sulk if they have a bad game. If you’ve ever seen the 80s classic movie *American Werewolf in London*, walking into a chess club is a bit like the scene where the protagonist walks into a country pub and all the locals turn around and stare at him for being an outsider. Which brings me onto my main point – chess is in no way representative in England. You may see different minority groups playing, but you will never walk into a chess competition and find as many women or girls. For example, I helped organize a league over the summer called the Summer Chess League and we made a real effort to be as inclusive as possible, but still only managed three female players out of 112. We have a problem, a real problem. Junior competitions also tend to be separate, in part because most league matches take place in the evenings – way past bedtime for most children on a school night. Only really good youngsters find themselves playing adults. By comparison, Chess in the Park – while I am sure most events in the US aren’t exactly like this – was a breath of fresh air, literally. We have nothing like this in the UK. After this revelation, I couldn’t help but feel pretty chesy. So I continued the odyssey and dropped into the Marshall Chess Club via a quick glimpse at the hustlers in Washington Square Park. And then after that, on another Twitter suggestion, I stuck my head into the Chess Forum shop. Both the Marshall and Chess Forum are obviously part of the fabric of chess in your country. I visited the Marshall because, hey, you have to but also because my fellow chess-obsessed national newspaper journalist Stephen Moss wrote about it with such wonder in his book *The Rookie*. But even at the grand old Marshall, with its wall-mounted paintings and deep sense of history, it was mostly juniors. I felt old – which is a good thing, for chess. Readers may know the dusty little Chess Forum shop is a little different – but what a wonderful place, it’s like it has stood still in time preserved in aspic. We had book shops like that in London once, Charing Cross Road used to be full of them, but not now.

But back to Chess in the Park. When I left, the closing speeches were being made and the prizes given out. The overall championship was won by 15-year-old master Hans Niemann. Afterwards, he said: “I just got my IM title and I would just like to inspire all the young chess players here to continue working hard and playing chess, and to continue the passion (...). I really appreciated everything Chess in the Schools is doing to promote youth chess.” The passion Niemann refers to that made Chess in the Park possible was certainly obvious to me. However, as a Brit I have to point out one more ingredient that makes it possible - the weather. Unfortunately for us Brits, our reliably unreliable weather would make planning an event such as this in Hyde Park dicey to say the least, and it certainly wouldn’t run for 18 years without getting rained off. But that does not stop me taking off my new New York Yankees hat to you: in my limited and brief experience, chess in the US is done very well. As the tournament began, Debbie Eastburn, President and CEO of Chess in the Schools, described it as a “gift” to New York and it certainly seemed that way. With organization like this you will always find champions. No wonder you win Olympiad medals you lucky, lucky things.
Neumann, Hirschfeld and Suhle. *19th Century Berlin Chess Biographies with 711 Games*. Hans Renette and Fabrizio Zavatarelli. 2018, $75 library binding (21.9 x 28.5 cm), 382 pp., 66 photographs, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, 978-1-4766-7476-0. Around 1860 a wave of young Berliners, including Berthold Suhle, Philipp Hirschfeld and Gustav Neumann, came to rank among the world’s best. Little has heretofore been written about their lives (richly revealed) and games (analyzed in detail).

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**Fred Reinfeld. A Chess Biography.** Alex Dunne. $45 softcover (17.8 x 25.4 cm), bibliography, index, 978-1-4766-7654-8. Fred Reinfeld’s name is known to almost every chess player in the United States. But his accomplishments are not so well known. He was an accomplished author, respected numismatist and an editor or major contributor to almost every major chess magazine of the thirties through the forties. IN PRODUCTION.

**British Chess Literature to 1914. A Handbook for Historians.** Tim Harding. 2018, $49.95 softcover (17.8 x 25.4 cm), 399 pp., 72 photographs, 23 games, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, 978-1-4766-6839-0. Exhaustive coverage of almost 600 chess columns and periodicals from 1813 on and 150 years of books. “Seldom a chess book has impressed so much...a must have”—Chessbook Reviews.

**A World of Chess. Its Development and Variations through Centuries and Civilizations.** Jean-Louis Cazaux and Rick Knowlton. 2017, $49.95 softcover (17.8 x 25.4 cm), 408 pp., 71 illus., 297 diagrams, 9 maps, notes, bibliography, index, 978-0-7864-9427-9. The Persian and Arab game familiar for 500 years; similar games going back 1500 years still played; evolution of strategic board games especially in India, China and Japan; more recent chess variants (board sizes, new pieces, 3-D etc.). “Definitive”—IM John Donaldson (JeremySilman.com); ”impressive...one of the most interesting reads on the history of chess!”—Chessbook Reviews; thoroughly researched...a wonderful and unique reference”—Mind’s Eye Press.


**Vera Menchik. A Biography of the First Women’s World Chess Champion, with 350 Games.** Robert B. Tanner. 2016, $49.95 library binding (18.4 x 26 cm), 328 pp., 21 photographs, appendices, bibliography, index, 978-0-7864-9602-0. The first woman to compete on an equal basis with the top male players. She dominated women’s chess for 17 years and was killed by a Nazi bomb. “Impressive...fantastic”—Chessbook Reviews.

“Very interesting studies...McFarland puts out more scholarly chess books than any other”—Chess Life
BIG CHESS IN BIG APPLE

THE USA CHESS TOUR HAS ARRIVED AS A NEW PLAYER ON THE AMERICAN TOURNAMENT CIRCUIT! AS THE AMBITIOUS NAME OF THE PROJECT SUGGESTS, ITS ORGANIZATIONAL TEAM, LED BY GM VLADIMIR ROMANENKO AND IM MILOS SCEKIC, HAS THE AVOWED INTENT OF CREATING A NEW CHESS EXPERIENCE – WITH AN INITIAL SCHEDULE OF NO LESS THAN SIX OPEN TOURNAMENTS. MOREOVER THEIR IDEA OF BRINGING BIG CHESS TO THE BIG APPLE HAS ALREADY PASSED ITS FIRST TEST WITH A HIGH APPROVAL RATING. HERE WE PRESENT AN INTERVIEW WITH THE ORGANIZERS AND THREE INTERESTING GAMES FROM THIS EVENT.

By DUSAN KRUNIC

The inaugural tournament was held at the very end of September. For the venue the organizers had chosen the Stewart Hotel, just across from Penn Station and Madison Square Garden – in the very heart of Manhattan. With a guaranteed prize fund of $21,000 and a field of 124 players from seven different countries (USA, Russia, Mexico, Cuba, Canada, China and England) there was a great deal of chess action in eight sections over the course of three days. The eventual tournament winner was GM Gil Popilski followed by GMs Kudrin and Fishbein (all tied with 5 points from 7 rounds).

USA Chess Tour – New Kid on the Block

Both of the USA Chess Tour organizers, Vladimir and Milos, have been teaching chess to kids in New York City for over ten years. They can often be seen traveling with their students to events all over the States, including Nationals and State scholastic tournaments. They have already won seven national titles in various categories with their NYC elementary advanced learner school Speyer.

This was the first time you found yourself being “on the other side” – in the role of an organizer of a chess tournament. Was it a challenge for you?

For sure it’s a lot different from Europe where you often have different institutions and organizations helping the organizers. Also it is very difficult to find sponsors or donations, but with determination and passion any goal can be achieved. Here we cover all costs out of our own pockets and this means perhaps even ending up with a big minus! So it not only involves taking a risk, but also has to be carefully planned in advance. I believe that in the US at the moment we’re having a kind of “chess boom”, which has made an impact on the organization of chess tournaments, as lately more and more of them have been popping up.

Our next two tournaments are just around the corner: MICO (Manhattan International Chess Open) will take place on December 7-9 and the Manhattan Classical Chess Championship is scheduled for

Vladimir Romanenko (32) is an American GM, born in Belarus. He lives in NYC and his biggest success so far was winning the Manhattan Open in 2011, where he obtained his final GM norm.

Milos Scekic (41) is an American IM, residing in New York. He was born in Serbia where he became a Master at the age of 14 and International Master at the age of 20. Since 2007 he has acted as a certified FIDE Trainer.
January 19-21, 2019. Both tournaments will have the same $21,000 prize fund.

How difficult is it to organize tournaments like yours?
► Oh my Gosh, it’s definitely not easy! Now I’m able to see what it looks like from a different perspective. As a player it is easy, you just sit down and play! But when you are organizing there is lot of physical work to be done, so as to have everything running smoothly. Not to mention the anxiety before the tournament starts – will every little detail be in place? I was very happy to see legends like GMs Fishbein and Kudrin enter – that was such a relief for me as an organizer.

Encouraged by the results from the inaugural event, we are planning at least five more tournaments in 2018 and 2019! Any interested players can find more information on our website www.usachesstour.com.

When putting together the concept of the USA Chess Tour, what were the key elements that you wanted to include?
► Since we both have vast experience of playing chess in Europe and America, we decided to incorporate into our Tour all the good things we have found in the methods of tournament organizers in both these continents.

What are the most vital goals that you’re aiming to achieve?
► Our goal is simple, we want to show chess players how chess tournaments should be organized and hopefully then other organizers will follow suit and try to do the same. American chess players deserve to play in a great atmosphere and with excellent playing conditions!

Do you have any relationship with the USCF?
► Our relationship is still at a basic level. We collaborate with the USCF on advertising our chess tournaments and questions related to rules and ratings.

What kind of a support for your activities you would expect from the USCF?
► So far everything we have done with the USCF has gone smoothly and we hope this relationship will grow even more in the future.

What was the feedback like that you received from the participants after the first tournament?
► People were satisfied and most importantly wanted to come back to our next tournament. We are open to new ideas and still have homework to do, as more preparations need to be made for our next MICO tournament in December. American Chess Magazine wholeheartedly supports our quest to establish ourselves as successful organizers and provide US players with excellent tournaments in which to participate.
► GMs Fishbein and Kudrin greatly enjoyed our first tournament and are almost certain to participate in the next one. Alex Fishbein posted a very nice comment on Facebook:

“I have only good things to report about the first USA Chess Tour. There will be more events, and I recommend them to everyone who may not yet be familiar with the new organizers!”

Also, young and talented players Ryan Peterson, Kiren Nasta, Brewington Hardaway and James Oh were very excited and promised to come back to the next tournament. In the future we will be looking for a new American GM among these talents. Chess players are our religion. What they think is of ultimate importance to us. Those who received copies of ACM as gifts were delighted with the gesture and we thank you for your support and donations.

USA Chess Tour in its format reminds us of the Continental Chess tournaments? Do you see yourself as their competitors?
► Everyone knows about CCA and Bill Goichberg. His chess organizational skills are hard to match, but we are willing to learn and improve so that we can hopefully reach his high standard at some point. But I’d rather say that we are offering an additional choice to the chess community. People want to play chess more frequently!

Across the US, are there successful chess organizers that inspire you?
► I have to praise the work of chess organizers from the Charlotte Chess Center – Peter Giannatos and Grant Oen, who are doing some amazing work.

What are your plans for the future besides these five more tournaments?
► We hope to grow with time. Hopefully we’ll get experience that will further help us deliver extraordinary conditions for players of all levels in our future tournaments.
► Our dream is to organize a really big one! Last but not least, goodwill sponsors are always welcome to support and help us.
In the Open section, there was a three-way grandmaster tie for first place. The prizes were distributed evenly, but the trophy was claimed by GM Gil Popilski who had a better tiebreak than his two colleagues Kudrin and Fishbein.

A37

Lev Paciorkowski 2498
Gil Popilski 2586

1st Brooklyn Classical Championship, New York 2018
Annotations by
GM Vladimir Romanenko

1.¥f3 c5 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ¥g7 4.¥g2 ¥c6 5.¥c3 d6 6.0–0 ¥f5 7.d3 ¥d7 8.¥d5 ¥c8 The purpose of this move is clear – Black intends to attack White’s kingside with the standard ...¥h3 idea and therefore needs to protect against any ¥c7+ in case White captures with ¥xh3. Overall, Black’s whole idea looks very aggressive, but readers will understand what level of risk it takes to play for a win with Black and eventually win an open tournament. And, indeed, Gil has won many of these!

9.¥b1 ¥h3

Similar patterns are often seen in tournament practice – and mostly with colors reversed! In numerous positions against the Sicilian or even the Pirc Defense, White sets up a ¥d2+¥e3 (or g5) battery with the principal idea of worrying the opponent, who is obviously used to playing positions with a fianchettoed bishop.

10.a3

This move is by no means weak, but it is rather slow. Here White failed to react in the most energetic way. Having a slight advantage in development, White should have immediately showed his cards with 10.¥xh3 ¥xh3 11.b4!, when his pieces are beautifully coordinated and his last move highlights the well-known rule that you should strike on the flank opposite to the one where your opponent is conducting his operations. Here Black’s attempt to create kingside play will soon evaporate due to his under-development, so his queen will eventually need to go back to camp and assume a defensive role instead. Upon 11...cxb4 12.¤xb4 it is obvious that White’s queenside play is more concrete as he quickly creates threats against the pawns on a7 and b7, thereby increasing the scope of his pieces. ¥a4 and ¥e3 are candidates for the next moves and it seems that White’s position will then play itself with ease. Incidentally, for those who prefer aggressive play, typical Benko Gambit ideas starting with 12.a3!? are also possible here.

10...¥xg2 11.¥xg2 e6 12.¥f4 a6 13.¥a4 ¥f6 14.b4 0–0 15.bxc5 dxc5 16.¥b3 ¥b8 17.±e3?! Probably a better alternative was 17.¥b2.

17...¥d6 18.±fc1 ¥fd8 19.±d2 ¥g4
Now Black’s position is already slightly preferable. The bishop on e7 is a very good piece which controls many squares and gives Black definite chances of playing for a win.

27.\( \squarec3?! \) Lev wants to prevent ...\( \text{b6-\text{b5}} \), after which Black would have very strong pawns on the queenside. However, moving the knight to c3 creates other problems for White. White’s pieces are passive and it is hard for him to create any threats against Black’s position. A better option was 27.a4! when, after 27...\( \text{h6} \) 28.\( \squared2 \) \( \squarec6 \) 29.\( \squaref3 \) \( \squareb4 \), we would reach a fairly level position.

27...\( \text{h5} \) 28.\( \text{\text{c}g3} \) \( \text{hxg4} \) 29.\( \text{hxg4} \) \( \text{\text{g7}} \) 30.a4 \( \text{\text{h8}} \) 31.\( \text{\text{h1}} \) \( \text{g5} \) 32.\( \text{\text{h5}}\)? At first sight this looks like a good move; however it is not. The knight on h5 is not really doing anything and blocks its own rook.

Lev had an interesting alternative: 32.\( \text{\text{e}h8} \) \( \text{\text{e}h8} \) 33.\( \text{\text{h}h3} \) \( \text{\text{h7}} \) 34.\( \text{\text{e}e4} \) \( \text{\text{g6}} \) 35.\( \text{\text{f}h2} \) and the position is close to even.

32...\( \text{\text{g6}} \) 33.\( \text{\text{e}e4} \) \( \text{\text{f}6} \) 34.\( \text{\text{b}b3} \) \( \text{\text{d}6} \) It is not difficult to see that Black is not only clearly better here, but also that White finds it painfully difficult to come up with decent moves.

35.\( \text{\text{f}h3} \) \( \text{\text{c}7} \) 36.\( \text{\text{d}d1} \) \( \text{\text{h7}} \) 37.\( \text{\text{e}e3} \) \( \text{\text{b}b8} \) 38.\( \text{\text{g}g2} \) a5?! A rather strange move by Gil. Obviously he overestimated the power of White’s threat of a4-\( \text{a5} \) followed by b7.

The game could have finished more quickly after 38...\( \text{\text{g}g4}! \) 39.\( \text{\text{g}xg4} \) \( \text{\text{e}xh5} \) 40.\( \text{\text{e}xh5} \) \( \text{\text{e}xh5} \) 41.\( \text{\text{a}a5} \) \( \text{\text{b}h4} \) 42.\( \text{\text{f}f3} \) \( \text{\text{h3+}} \) 43.\( \text{\text{g}g2} \) \( \text{\text{bxa5}} \) 44.\( \text{\text{b}b7} \) \( \text{\text{h7}} \) with the threat of ...\( \text{\text{g}g3+} \).

39.\( \text{\text{f}f1} \) \( \text{\text{f7}} \) This was the last critical moment in this game. The position is very unpleasant for White, although it was still possible for him to put up more resistance.

40.\( \text{\text{g}g3} \) After 40.\( \text{\text{f}f1}! \) \( \text{\text{g}xg4} \) 41.\( \text{\text{g}xg4} \) \( \text{\text{e}xh5} \) 42.\( \text{\text{e}xh5} \) \( \text{\text{e}xh5} \) 43.\( \text{\text{e}xh5} \) \( \text{\text{e}h7} \) 44.\( \text{\text{e}e6} \) it is not so easy for Black to win the endgame. Of course, compared to what he actually played, White would then have far better chances of saving the game.

40...\( \text{\text{h}h4}! \) 41.\( \text{\text{h}h1} \) \( \text{\text{g}xg4} \) Black has won a pawn and so now it is virtually game over.

42.\( \text{\text{g}gf1} \) \( \text{\text{e}xh1} \) 43.\( \text{\text{c}ch1} \) \( \text{\text{h7}} \) 44.\( \text{\text{g}g2} \) \( \text{\text{e}e5} \) 45.\( \text{\text{g}g3} \) \( \text{\text{c}c6} \) 46.\( \text{\text{c}c2} \) \( \text{\text{g}g4} \) 47.\( \text{\text{c}c3} \) \( \text{\text{g}g5} \) 48.\( \text{\text{b}b1} \) \( \text{\text{h}h3} \) 49.\( \text{\text{g}g1} \) \( \text{\text{e}e7} \) 50.\( \text{\text{e}e5} \) \( \text{\text{f}5} \) 51.\( \text{\text{b}b5} \) \( \text{\text{c}c6} \) 52.\( \text{\text{c}c2} \) \( \text{\text{e}e5} \) 53.\( \text{\text{d}d4} \) \( \text{\text{c}c4} \) 54.\( \text{\text{d}d4} \) \( \text{\text{f}6} \)

White resigned

Our regular contributor, GM Alex Fishbein, shares one of his games that may explain the significance of psychology at crucial moments. This encounter illustrates very well how often chess players’ emotions interfere with clear thinking, leading them into dire straits through incorrect evaluation of positions, combined with time-pressure, a strong desire to win and the need to cope with ongoing twists and turns on the chessboard.
All of this is well known, except with the pawn on b3 (see above). White has an advantage here with better piece development, an active bishop, a more active rook, and should be playing for two results here, but we’ll see about that later...

13. ¤f3 Trying to take advantage of the b3 retreat square for my bishop, and keep more tension on the board, I avoid the “main line” 13. ¤xf5 ¥xf5 14. ¥e7 ¥xc2 15. ¤a3.

13... ¤d6 14. ¥b3 ¥d7 15. ¤c3 ¤f6 16. ¤e5 ¥f5 17. h3 ¥fe8 18. g4 ¥e6 19. f4 a6 20. ¤ad1 ¤xb3 21. axb3 ¥ad8 22. ¤g2 g6 23. ¥f3 ¥g7

28. f5 Now I am in full “how do I escape” mode, but here 28. ¤d3 would have been more solid.

28...gxf5 29. gxf5 ¤d4 30. ¥g1+ ¥f8 31. ¥g4 ¤xg4+ Black misses a good chance here with 31... ¤e4+! 32. ¥e3 ¤g5, and White cannot defend all the pawns.

32. hxg4 ¤xc2 33. ¤c5 ¥d2+ 34. ¥f3 ¥d5 35. ¤e4 h5

Now time is starting to become a factor (the time control here was G/90). Having totally missed his last move, I reply carelessly.

36. ¥c1? 36. ¥f4! hxg4 37. ¥c1 ¤d4 38. ¥xc7 is the right move order, with a draw.

36...hxg4+? 36... ¤e3+ first wins because I cannot go to f4 because of the fork, and 37. ¥e3 hxg4 38. ¥xc7 ¤xf5+ 39. ¥f4 ¥e7 is hopeless for me.

37. ¥xg4 ¤e3+ 38. ¥f4 39. ¥xf5 39. ¥xc7

24. ¥a4? My desire to play without risk got the better of me here. I didn’t want to weaken my pawn structure, but after 24. g5 ¥h5 25. ¥d5 ¥c8 I can play 26. c4 or 26. c3 with still a more pleasant position, where Black’s stranded knight on h5 and my space advantage compensate for any potential pawn structure issues I may have.

24... ¥b5! I immediately realized after I released that knight from a4 what I had done. The threat is ... ¥c4+, and I don’t have time for any ¥c5 or anything, and my own knight might now get stranded. I knew now that I had to readjust to playing for equality, and that was easier said than done.

25. ¥f2? This is how one mistake follows another. I am still in the wrong frame of mind of trying not to create any weaknesses. 25. g5 again was better, and even 25. c3, while leaving me with a bad knight, at least stops Black from doing any real damage.

25... ¥d4! 26. ¥d2 ¥e6 27. ¥xd8 ¥xd8

39... ¥d6?? Now it is Black’s turn to make a psychological mistake. Leif realizes that his advantage is gone, and every line leads to a draw. This is an especially important moment to watch for any surprises. He is saying “okay, I will settle for a draw since there is nothing else”, a very dangerous emotion since that is how you miss an opponent’s resource.

39... ¥b5 40. ¥c3 is also not good for Black, as he will have to make a draw a piece down. 39... ¥e7 40. ¥xb7 is equal.

40. ¥d7! And now White is winning! Black must lose either a piece or an exchange.

40... ¥f5+ 41. ¥g4
41...Bb5 A better try, but still losing, is 41...e8 42.Qxd6+ (42.Qxd6 Qb5 43.Qd2 also wins.) 42...Qxd7 43.Qxf5 Qc6 44.Qf3 Qc5 45.Qe4 Qb4 46.Qd4 a5 47.Qd5 b5 48.Qc6 a4 49.Qd5! and Black cannot eliminate White's last pawns.

42.Qxd6 f5+ 43.Qg5 Qxb3 44.Qf7+ Qg8 45.Qxb7 Qh3 46.Qxh5 Qh2 47.Qh6 Qg7 48.Qf6 a5 49.Qh6+ Qh1 Mate. White resigned

Black resigned

Last but not least, here's a game by the winner of the U-1800 section that somehow resembles the first game given in this article. Again, White misses the opportunity to take more energetic measures in the opening and is punished for his lack of a sense of danger.

A27

Gregory Keener 1780
Morgan Mairaj 1777

1st Brooklyn Classical Championship (U-1800), New York 2018
Annotations by GM Vladimir Romanenko

1.c4 e5 2.Qc3 Qc6 3.Qf3 Qc6 4.g3 Qe6 5.b3?!
Not a good choice by White.

1...Qe7 6.Qg2 £d7 7.0–0 h5 8.d4 h4 10.dxe5? It seems like Gregory underestimated his opponent's kingside attack.


10...hxg3 11.Qd5??

A blunder! White still hoped that the attack would not be too dangerous, however there is a forced checkmate in six moves! Morgan was up to the task and played very well to the end of the game!

After 11.fxg3 £xg2 12.Eg2 £h3+ 13.Qg1 0–0–0 Black is better, but at least White does not lose right away.

11...gxh2+! 12.Qh1 £xg2 13.Eg2 £h1+ 14.Eh1 £g4+ 15.Qf1 £xh1+ 16.Qg1 £xg1 mate. White resigned
KING AND PAWN ENDINGS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY (AND BEYOND)

We often hear that today’s chess elite doesn’t sport the same knowledge of the endgame as did masters of the past. While this claim is debatable, one thing is beyond question: the era of adjournments is long gone and time controls are significantly faster. This not only affects the quality of the play in the final phase of the game, but also the decision-making process: the practical player will often need to rely more on intuition than on pure calculation.

By GM ALEX FISHBEIN

I wrote my first book in 1992, and it was about king and pawn endings. Since then, pawn endings have been much better researched. Dvoretsky’s pawn ending chapter of his Endgame Manual is excellent, and I especially liked Joel Benjamin’s book, Liquidation on the Chess Board. Here, the three-time US Champion emphasized, in his words, the “human element” of the decision whether to enter into a pawn ending (and of playing pawn endings in general).

I would like to expand on this topic here and provide a few guideposts for evaluating and handling pawn endings. It seems to me that we live in a time when the approach to pawn endings needs to be re-evaluated a little.

Let me explain. In the introduction to my aforementioned book, I wrote: “Pawn endings can almost always be calculated to the end. The evaluation of a position should be White is winning, Black is winning, or Draw – nothing in between”. I was definitely not the first, nor the last, to express this thought. In fact, Andy Soltis, in Grandmaster Secrets: Endings (another of my favorite books), stated it much more eloquently: “Thou Shalt Not Trade Down to King+Pawn Unless You Can Safely Bet Your First-Born Child On The Result.”

This rule was unquestioned in the 20th century, but now, with faster time controls, it is no longer as clear-cut. The game has changed. By the time you get to the king and pawn ending (or a decision to trade into one), you often have 10-15 minutes left on the clock; sometimes even less. You might be playing on a 30-second increment. Can you realistically expect to calculate the ending?

Today, the practical player needs intuition more than ever. Now, I am not saying that you should not calculate; pawn endings still require more calculation than other endings. But often you only have time to work through some of the variations, and you have to make a practical, almost instinctive, decision. Let’s discuss three good instincts for king and pawn endings:

**PAWN ENDING INSTINCT #1:**
Use the process of elimination.

**PAWN ENDING INSTINCT #2:**
Have more pawn tempo moves than your opponent.

**PAWN ENDING INSTINCT #3:**
Contain the opposing king.

I will present some examples from my own games, where I often failed to follow these instincts, as well as some examples from the play of Magnus Carlsen.
Black wins a crucial tempo with 65...h5! (Not 65...¢xc6? 66.¢e5 £b6 67.¢xf5 £xa6 68.¢g6 £b5 69.¢xh6 a5 70.¢g7 a4 71.h5 a3 72.h6 a2 73.h7 a1£ +

...and we have a draw, because of the rook pawn. I saw this, couldn’t quite believe it, checked it again, with the same result, and now had to make a decision quickly.) 66.c7 (66.¢e3 makes no difference: 66...¢xc6 67.¢f4 £b5 68.¢g5 f4! Otherwise Black loses! 69.¢xf4 £xa6 and as in the main line.)

66...£xc7 67.¢e5 £b6 68.¢xf5 £xa6 69.¢g5 £b5 70.¢xh5 a5 71.¢g6 a4 72.h5 a3 73.h6 a2 74.h7 a1£+

And this time, because the queen covers the queening square, and White is a tempo short with his king on g6, Black wins.

64.¢d4

Unfortunately, I had not followed Instinct #1: Use the process of elimination. I saw myself a tempo short in the pawn race, did not notice the importance of 65...h5! (A tempo move, by the way, an example of Instinct #2, which we will examine more closely in a bit.), and played the only other option. But I should have done the reverse: it was easy to see that the other option gave me no chances at all: the knight is threatening two forks, on f5 and on b5. That required seeing only one move ahead. Yes, it’s easier said than done, but upon seeing this, and realizing that the pawn ending is at least close (and certainly gives no losing chances), I should have traded down into the pawn ending with the hope of finding an improvement there.

The game ended with:

64...£b6 65.¢f5+ £xc6 66.¢xh6 £d6 67.¢g4 £e6 68.h5 £f5 69.h6 £g6 70.¢d5 £c7 71.¢e4 £h7 72.¢f5 £d6 73.¢e4 £c7 74.¢f5 £d6 75.¢e4

Draw
Now let’s see some examples from the play of much stronger players.

Peter Svidler                                       2756  
Magnus Carlsen                                2839  
European Clubs Cup, Porto Carras 2018

9-+-+-+-+0  
9zp-mk-snpzp-0  
9-+-+-+-zp0  
9+-zPLmK-+-0  
9-+-+-+-zP0  
9zP-+-+-zP-0  
9-+-+-+-+0  
9+-+-+-+-0  
XIIIIIIIIY

Black is clearly worse, as White is further advanced, already has a passed pawn, and has a bishop vs. knight. With his last move, Peter Svidler has given Magnus Carlsen a chance to trade into a pawn ending. Should he take it?

40...¤xd5!

A move that should be made automatically. Black’s pawn holds two, and he has more pawn moves available to him now. If 41.a5? White advances his pawns on the kingside, making them much more dangerous: 42.g4! ¤d7 43.h5 ¤c7 44.c6 a4 45.¤c5 g6 46.g5.

42.c6 a6 43.a4 a5 44.¤c5 f6 45.¤d5 g5 46.ªe6 ¤xc6 47.ªxf6 gxf4 48.gxf4 Rook pawn races have their own idiosyncrasies: the queen covers the other queening square (We saw this in the previous example as well.), the pawn can draw if it reaches the seventh rank, but also, an outside passed pawn sometimes does not win if the rook pawns are blocked on the other side. Therefore, Black should consider two potential attempts to save himself.

48...¢d6! 48...¢c5? 49.ªg5 ¢b4 50.ªxb5 ¢a4 51.ªg6 h3 52.h5 a4 53.h6 a3 54.h7 a2 55.h8£ and Black is a tempo short.

49.ªg5 ¤e5 50.ªxh5 ¤f5 51.ªh6 ¤f6

Black has used our Instinct #3: he has pinned down the opposing king and made it difficult for White to reach the a-pawns. It is well known that the king needs to reach c8 to draw this position, and here Black can do it in time.

52.h5 ¤f7 53.ªg5 ¤g7 54.h6+ The main line is 54.ªf5 ¤h6 55.ªe5 ¤xh5 56.ªd5 ¤g6 57.ªc5 ¤f7 58.h5 ¤e7 59.ªxa5 ¤d7 60.h6 ¢c8

And here comes a well-known breakthrough: 47.g5!

Alex Fishbein is an 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.
This is a 20-move variation starting with 40...¤xd5. Not every mortal has the ability to calculate this, especially with modern time controls. But even if you are not Magnus Carlsen, you can still see that in the pawn race you are one tempo behind, yet the knight vs. bishop situation looks hopeless. Remembering that pawn endings are complicated and have hidden resources, you can decide to enter the pawn ending and try to find something there.

54...¢h7 55.¢h5 ¢h8 56.¢g6 ¢g8 57.h7+ ¢h8 58.¢h6 ½–½ Stalemate.

In this game, Black had more pawn moves, but technically they were not really “tempo moves”. Let’s look at a couple of good examples of pawn tempo moves.

A) 46...h5 is the simpler way, although she does have to note the correspondence of squares in the end: 47.bxa5 h4 Eliminating any possible tempo moves on the kingside. 48.¢d4 ¢e6 49.¢d3! (White is trying to triangulate.) Then:

A1) Not 49...¢d7? 50.¢c3! and the black king must move which would allow White to reach either e5 or a6: 50...¢e7 (50...¢c7 51.¢d4 ¢d7 52.¢e5) 51.a6 bxa6 52.¢b4 ¢d7 53.¢a5;

A2) But 49...¢e7!

50.¢c3 ¢d7=;

B) 46...axb4+ 47.¢xb4 ¢d8!! (47...¢c7? 48.¢c3 ¢d7 49.a5 ¢e7 50.a6 bx a6 51.¢b4 ¢d7 52.¢a5 ¢c7 53.¢a6) 48.¢a5 (48.¢c3 ¢e7!) 48...¢c7 49.c3 He is forced to use up his last tempo move. 49...¢c8 50.¢b6 ¢b8 51.a5 h5 52.h4 ¢a8 53.a6

53...¢b8! 54.axb7 d4 55.cxd4, stalemate.

46.¢b4 ¢c8 47.¢a5 ¢c7 48.h4 ¢b8 49.¢b6

The king has penetrated, but still White is winning only because of one minor detail.
49...c8 50.b4 b8 51.b5 c3?? c8 would be a draw.

51...cxb5 52.axb5 axb5 53.c3? c7

54.c3! 1-0 The tempo move at last. Black resigned.

Alexander Fishbein 2550
Ernest Colding 2200

Empire City Open 2016

This example, although played by mere mortals this time, is very complicated. White is better here because of a potential outside passed pawn. I had just made the time control and now had a half-hour for the rest of the game (10-second delay but no increment) and a difficult decision to make. There was a forced transition to a + vs. + ending, which is theoretically drawn but certainly offered practical chances. There was also a way to stay in the pawn ending, which looked like it should be winning, but I couldn’t work out a clear win. I couldn’t spend most of that half-hour here, realizing that if I chose the queen ending it would take some work.

41.c5? So, can I blame myself for not finding all of this? I don’t know. My intuition told me the king and pawn ending was winning. I should have trusted my instincts!

I saw that I could shut down his last tempo move with 41.f5!! h6 42.e4 e6 43.e3 and now Black can play the tempo game with:

A) 43...d6 44.d3

This critical position is lost with Black to move: 44...d7 (44...d6 45.d3 c6 47.b5) 45.c5 c6 46.e4 c8 47.b5 cxb5+ 48.xb5 c7 49.b4! c6 50.c4

49.b5 (But on no account 49.e4?? c6 and Black wins.) 49...d5 b6 cxb6 51.axb6 c6 52.e4 with the outside passed pawn again.

41...c6 42.e5 b5 43.f6 xb4 44.xg5 xc5 45.h6 d4 46.xh7 c5 47.g5 c4 48.g6 c3 49.g7 c2 50.g8+ c1 51.h4 Draw
This is indeed a tablebase draw. In fact Ernest Colding, an experienced master, was able to hold a draw against me here, for which he deserves full credit, even though at one point he erred, allowing me a tablebase win. The conclusion of this is certainly outside the scope of this article.

46...\texttt{g}5+ 47.\texttt{x}xg5 \texttt{hxg}5 48.\texttt{g}3 \texttt{h}6 49.f4?! After this Black has too many tempo moves. Tougher resistance was offered by:

49.\texttt{g}4 \texttt{f}5! (49...\texttt{f}6? 50.f4 \texttt{gx}f4 51.\texttt{x}xf4

Now, perhaps surprisingly, this is a draw as Black runs out of tempo moves: 51.\texttt{h}5 52.\texttt{g}3! \texttt{g}5 53.f4+! \texttt{f}5 54.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{e}6 55.\texttt{e}4=) 50.\texttt{h}3!

51.\texttt{h}3 \texttt{f}4! 52.\texttt{g}2 \texttt{g}4 53.\texttt{fx}g4+ \texttt{x}g4 54.\texttt{f}3+ \texttt{f}5 55.\texttt{f}2 \texttt{e}5 56.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{d}4 57.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{g}5!++)

A) 50...\texttt{h}5? is now a draw after 51.\texttt{g}3
The most thematic, but not the only way.
52.\(\textcolor{#2f800}{\text{c}}\)h3 (The white king is hopelessly confined: 52.\(\textcolor{#2f800}{\text{c}}\)g2 \(\textcolor{#2f800}{\text{c}}\)f6 53.\(\textcolor{#2f800}{\text{c}}\)f1 \(\textcolor{#2f800}{\text{c}}\)e5 54.\(\textcolor{#2f800}{\text{c}}\)e2 \(\textcolor{#2f800}{\text{c}}\)f5 55.\(\textcolor{#2f800}{\text{c}}\)f1 \(\textcolor{#2f800}{\text{c}}\)g4) 52.\(\textcolor{#2f800}{\text{c}}\)f7 53.\(\textcolor{#2f800}{\text{c}}\)g2 \(\textcolor{#2f800}{\text{c}}\)e6 54.\(\textcolor{#2f800}{\text{c}}\)h2 \(\textcolor{#2f800}{\text{c}}\)f5 55.\(\textcolor{#2f800}{\text{c}}\)h3 \(\textcolor{#2f800}{\text{c}}\)e5 56.\(\textcolor{#2f800}{\text{c}}\)h2 \(\textcolor{#2f800}{\text{c}}\)d4 57.\(\textcolor{#2f800}{\text{c}}\)h3 \(\textcolor{#2f800}{\text{c}}\)d3

58.\(\textcolor{#2f800}{\text{c}}\)f1 58.\(\textcolor{#2f800}{\text{c}}\)h2 \(\textcolor{#2f800}{\text{c}}\)d3 59.\(\textcolor{#2f800}{\text{c}}\)h3 \(\textcolor{#2f800}{\text{c}}\)e2 60.\(\textcolor{#2f800}{\text{c}}\)g3 \(\textcolor{#2f800}{\text{c}}\)g5

58...\(\textcolor{#2f800}{\text{c}}\)d3 59.\(\textcolor{#2f800}{\text{c}}\)e1 \(\textcolor{#2f800}{\text{c}}\)c2 0–1 I had only foreseen some of the variations, but I had a strong feeling this ending was winning, and the alternative (a queen ending) was not clear at all.

Here is an example of a long calculation that is necessary, but not too difficult. White, facing a really bad queen ending, hopes to find relief in a pawn ending.

52.\(\textcolor{#000000}{\text{c}}\)c4 \(\textcolor{#000000}{\text{c}}\)xc4 Black could stay in the queen ending with 52...e4, which is winning; therefore, calculation is required here before you trade into the pawn ending. However, here there is just one line to see, because neither side has any reserve pawn moves.

53.\(\textcolor{#000000}{\text{c}}\)xc4 \(\textcolor{#000000}{\text{c}}\)e4 54.\(\textcolor{#000000}{\text{c}}\)f4 \(\textcolor{#000000}{\text{c}}\)e3! 55.\(\textcolor{#000000}{\text{c}}\)f3!

Trying to take the opposition when Black plays ...\(\textcolor{#000000}{\text{c}}\)e5, but Black has his own trickery:

55...\(\textcolor{#000000}{\text{c}}\)e6 56.\(\textcolor{#000000}{\text{c}}\)e2 \(\textcolor{#000000}{\text{c}}\)f6! 57.\(\textcolor{#000000}{\text{c}}\)f3 \(\textcolor{#000000}{\text{c}}\)g5

Of course, we didn’t come close here to covering all the main themes of pawn endings. But I hope that we have explored some intuitive methods you can use, or that at least we have raised the question of when and how an instinctive decision can be made in a pawn ending. Without question, this skill is becoming more and more important.
First, New in Chess has posted an archive that permits anyone to assemble a comprehensive database of the games that have appeared in its Yearbooks back to #62.

The files are posted a variety of formats, but there are PGN files throughout.

It took a while, but I downloaded every year. The result is a single database with every game, albeit unannotated.

For me, this is all a blessing, because I now have an index to the entire New in Chess Yearbook series. For any opening position, I instantly know which volumes of the yearbook I need to consult. This archive is a vast improvement to the old method, which required that I manually peruse each yearbook. It’s also a great idea for New in Chess, since more folks will have an incentive to buy the book they need.

Now if only the Informant publishers did the same thing for the Informants. That would also be worth writing about! I do have a complete run of the New in Chess Yearbooks and a complete run of the Informants. They really ought to make it easy for loyal subscribers to find relevant games without having to buy the Paramount database and individual DVDs.

ChessBase is releasing its version 15. I am working with a beta copy and enjoying the new features. I expect to review these as we progress in this column.

Of particular interest to me is the faster search, which provides instantaneous results on capable machines even very early in the opening tree.

Game replay is a notable improvement. In the past, there was a training mode to shield future moves. Now you can guess and enter the moves. Hints are provided, including a cool radar view that shows, during the opening phase, what the position will be in three moves. I have already found that this approach is an effective training experience. The radar turns off when you reach the end of opening theory, but the hints remain.

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 web site, Chess is Fun, provides free chess instruction.
I have been happily married for more than 25 years and so I can honestly tell you that I know nothing about the dating scene or the various dating apps. But now we have mates.worldchess.com which claims to be the Official Chess Dating App. Use the site, which works on iOS and Android, to locate a chess playing partner near you. And so, if you are tired of just playing online and long for human contact, there may be a technical solution for you.

You will be asked to snap a good photo of yourself, preferably of you at the board and then select the kind of chess you enjoy playing. The app will do the rest.

Ilya Merenzon, CEO, World Chess, said: “Our goal was to find a way to connect millions of fans and make chess social again...We want to create an on-demand experience, where finding an opponent doesn’t take forever. We want everyone to spend less time on their phones and more in front of their chessboards”.

The app will show you other players, ranging them by distance, and permit you to invite them over for a game. So far, there are more than 1,000 players signed up worldwide. Please report your chess-dating experiences back to me.

The app is free and available at the Apple Store and for Android devices. So finally, there’s a dating app that I can use.

My reviews of LiChess brought in some mail. A few of you love one additional LiChess feature, their studies.

UNDER LEARN STUDIES

LiChess members have posted hundreds of free training exercises! Finally, live analysis by Lc0 (aka Leela Chess Zero), the neural network project based on ideas of Alpha Zero by Google DeepMind, will highlight the Carlsen-Caruana World Championship match. The broadcast will be available at https://tcec.chessdom.com/live.html. The program is expected to be rated around 3500 and should bring some natural intuition and positional feel to the match analysis.

Here is ChessBase 15 in its new Replay Training mode, with the radar position in the lower right.
FRESH LEAVES from the BOOKSHELF

by FM CARSTEN HANSEN

Carlsten 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

01 Under the Surface
by Ian Markos (Quality Chess 2018)

02 Fabiano Caruana
by Alexander Kalinin (New In Chess 2018)

03 Understanding before Moving: Part 1
by Herman Grooten (Thinkers Publishing 2018)

04 Neumann, Hirschfeld and Suhle
by Hans Renette and Fabrizio Zavatelli (McFarland 2018)

05 The Bishop
by Sergey Kasparov (Russell Enterprises 2018)

06 The definitive book: Encyclopaedia of Chess Problems
by Milan Velimirovic & Kari Valtonen (Chess Informant 2018)

07 Queen’s Gambit Declined: Vienna
by Jacek Ilczuk & Krzysztof Panczyk (Everyman Chess 2018)

08 Applying Logic in Chess
by Erik Kislik (Gambit Publications 2018)

09 Emanuel Lasker – Volume 1
edited by Richard Forster, Michael Negele and Raj Tischbierek
(Exzelsior Verlag 2018)

10 The Thinkers
by David Llada (Quality Chess 2017)
just as the chess season began after the summer break, it now seems that we are heading at breakneck pace toward the holiday season. In between, however, there have been several spectacular events and while these words are being written, the countdown to the Carlsen–Caruana match is closing in on 0. This time around, there have been an amazing selection of books to choose between, some of which have been truly great. We will cover some of them in this article. Additionally, I should add that my own book, The Full English Opening – Mastering the Fundamentals (New In Chess 2018) was released in the US a couple of months ago. If you like the English Opening or would like to know more about it, please check it out and send me your thoughts.

01 Under the Surface
by Jan Markos

Quite recently this book won the English Chess Federation’s “Book of the Year Award.” The title refers to the fact that the most significant difference between a grandmaster and a club player is that the grandmaster thinks more deeply and calculates more accurately. So here the author, a strong grandmaster in his own right, invites you to look at chess from a grandmaster’s perspective, to see what’s under the hood and how a grandmaster evaluates specific features on the board and understands why certain decisions are made and why others are not.

The book is divided into no less than 34 chapters, although many of these are rather short. True, in some cases, these short chapters are quite sufficient to cover a particular topic, but on other occasions I found myself wishing that the author had provided further examples to demonstrate his “thesis” more clearly to the reader, who by his own definition is the club player.

That being said, there are a number of fascinating chapters in this book. Particularly revealing is Part IV, where over the course of several chapters he discusses computers, their strengths, weaknesses, their use and what not to use them for, what they can teach us and so forth. In this section, the author also includes an interview with the world’s highest rated correspondence chess player, Roman Chytilek, who, despite the fact that computer engines are an everyday presence in his games, has managed to set himself apart from other players in the kind of choices he makes at the board, which openings he adopts, etc. It is a truly enlightening read and a great inclusion in this book. It brought home to me how much I would love to see more books written by correspondence masters as they often delve much deeper into positions than even very strong over-the-board players.

This is a magnificent book that truly delivers on its stated objectives. In fact it could have been much longer, even though it does tick in at 285 pages, and some topics could have been covered in more detail. It is my sincere hope that the author and publisher jointly agree that it would properly serve their readership if they provided it with a further look beneath the surface, when certain subjects can be uncovered in even greater depth.

02 Fabiano Caruana – His Amazing Story and His Most Instructive Chess Games
by Alexander Kalinin

With the world championship match underway there has been frantic activity in certain publishing houses to release books on the challenger, particularly since he is American and the US book market is substantial. The champion has, of course, already been well-covered in books ahead of his previous matches with Anand and Karjakin as well as in Tibor Karolyi’s work on Magnus Carlsen’s endgame prowess that we reviewed last time.

The book I have chosen to discuss has been written by Russian Grandmaster Alexander Kalinin, but I should point out that Everyman Chess also has a book by Cyrus Lakdawala in the move-by-move series. Kalinin’s book is just over 200 pages and attractively priced at just under $20, whereas Lakdawala’s is 365 pages – single column, which adds a considerable amount of “white space” to the pages whereever diagrams are present – and ticks in at $26.95. The books are very different in both style, analysis and presentation. The Kalinin book is broken up into two parts, and here I’m paraphrasing: ‘Get to know Fabiano’ and ‘Learn from his Games’. The first part takes us up to tournament play in May 2018 and although Fabiano played a considerable amount of chess after that, it is still pretty impressive to include such recent material in a book released only a couple of months ago. That being said, while it does have some biographical aspects, snippets of interviews and statements from coaches, all of which are fairly interesting, I am left with the feeling that I still don’t know him particularly well. I think I have learned more about him as a person from the photos and sit-downs with commentators at various tournaments over the last few years, where you see him in a less-filtered way. Moreover, I’m not overly keen on the depth of the annotations in Part 1 as they are a little superficial. However, that does change in the second part of the book where the author really digs in, explains things in depth, provides analysis of key positions...
and even quotes some of Fabiano’s own comments to reveal the thoughts of the players.

In fact I really enjoyed this second part a lot more than I thought I would have done. Overall, I like what I see and I’m sure a lot of players and readers will find joy in getting better acquainted with the challenger and perhaps even a future world champion. As for the book by Lakdawala, I will say that if you have been entertained by some of his other books in this series, then you will definitely also find this one to your liking. It is trademark Lakdawala!

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**03 Understanding before Moving: Part 1 – Ruy Lopez – Italian Structures**
*by Herman Grooten*

“Book of the Year Award” from ChessCafe.com back in 2009 while his follow-up volume *Attacking Chess for Club Players* was also well-received by both readers and reviewers. This is easy to understand because Grooten delves deeply into his subject and breaks it down in such a way that his audience is left with the feeling of knowing more than they did when they started out. That of course is the desired objective of this book, which is the first in a new series from Thinkers Publishing.

In its pages the author discusses the structures that arise from the Ruy Lopez and Italian Game. First, he gives the background to individual key variations, then provides an overview and guidelines of typical play in selected lines and structures, followed by illustrative examples of why the game should be conducted in this or that fashion. In many ways, the book is the counter-argument to Willy Hendriks’ bombastic, interesting but also somewhat ridiculous *Move First, Think Later*. Grooten wants you first to understand a position, which will then help you lay the foundations for making good moves more easily.

I really enjoyed this book, I found it enlightening and I think that its intended readership of club players will feel exactly the same way and that their understanding of the structures under discussion and chess thinking in general will have increased. I’m looking forward to seeing the next volumes in this series.

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**04 Neumann, Hirschfeld and Suhle – 19th Century Berlin Chess Biographies with 711 Games**
*by Hans Renette & Fabrizio Zavatarelli*

The American publisher McFarland (McFarland Books.com) has gained quite a reputation for producing important biographical and historical chess works and the present book is the latest addition to its long running series. I have to admit that other than knowing their names from tournament tables and match scores, the three Berlin players covered in this book, each having their heyday in the mid to late 1800s, I knew almost nothing about. While I do enjoy chess history, that period is one I have never found particularly interesting. However, this book certainly has done something to sway my opinion as it is quite detailed when describing the period leading up to the three Berliners’ emergence in Berlin chess circles as well as the duration of their relative splendor and noteworthy results. The three chess musketeers played matches and games against the leading players, including Anderssen (who for some reason is referred to as both K.E.A. Anderssen and K.A.E. Anderssen, with no given explanation), Zukertort and many other top players of the time. Neumann in particular saw action against the upper echelons of the chess world, competing in some of the strongest tournaments of that era.

All of the games and partial games are annotated, some by contemporaries, pulled from an impressive variety of sources, and some by the authors and frequently a mixture of both when corrections are made to the most serious mistakes of the annotators of yesteryear.

Although this book is designed principally for chess historians and those with an interest in chess history, for either group it represents a wonderful achievement, finally giving deserved extensive coverage to three very strong players and pioneers from a bygone age.

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**05 The Bishop**
*by Sergey Kasparov*

This is the first volume in a new series, “The Power of Pieces”, by Grandmaster Sergey Kasparov, who has previously authored *The Exchange Sacrifice* and *Doubled Pawns* for Russell Enterprises. The present book explores many aspects of the role of the bishop, both in the middlegame and endgame and in a variety of constellations together with other pieces, such as The King’s
Indian Bishop, The French Bishop, The Attacking Bishop, Bishop vs. Bishops, Bishop vs. Rook, Bishop Pair vs. Knight & Bishop etc. There are 15 chapters in all, each exploring a different topic, although inevitably games sometimes merge from one chapter into another as the situation on the board develops.

I found the idea and the selection of examples, which is a combination of games by top grandmasters and those of Sergei Kasparov himself, interesting, but I often found myself wishing that the author had taken the time and space to write more in-depth annotations to some of the key positions. From time to time it feels like that he has forgotten the level of his intended audience as he fails to explain key plans — why he evaluates a position as he does, why one plan is inferior to another and so forth. This could easily have been included without increasing the number of pages by reducing the great number of diagrams.

Overall, however, I think this is a solid work that deserves an attentive audience, even if the author could have presented his material in a somewhat better fashion.

**06 The definitive book: Encyclopaedia of Chess Problems**

*by Milan Velimirovic & Kari Valtonen*

For many years I completely and deliberately ignored the problem columns of any chess magazine I would come across. I didn’t appreciate nor did I care much for this department of the game and never really tried to understand why anybody would find these bizarre puzzles of any interest at all. Then a friend of mine invited me to take part in a Danish Facebook group devoted to chess problems and that changed something for me. While I’m still utterly pathetic when it comes to solving these puzzles, I can now appreciate why others find such brain-teasers so intoxicating both to compose and to solve.

The present book is now in its 3rd edition and while I have always been aware of its existence, I never got around to turning the front cover. However, to quote the publisher’s website, I understand that the current volume is primarily “a polished reprint of the original edition”. And now, having finally looked at its pages I have discovered an incredibly detailed and fascinating selection of problems, full of accompanying text explaining in detail the many and various themes, so that even as a bystander you get a feel for what needs to be accomplished by the composer as well as what should be sought by the solver. Moreover, for ease of reference everything is classified in alphabetical order.

The production standards of this volume are top notch, in line with the content which will provide countless hours of joyful fascination for those interested in this branch of chess solving.

**07 Queen’s Gambit Declined: Vienna**

*by Jacek Ilczuk & Krzysztof Panczyk*

Nowadays, the various ...b4 systems against the Queen’s Gambit Declined are all the rage and the number of books written on these lines is constantly increasing.

Most, however, tend to focus on lines involving ...b4 without the capture of the c-pawn. This book, however, is devoted to the very sharp and incredibly theory-heavy and messy Vienna Variation, which arises after 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.d3 c5 4.g3 dxc4 5.g5 b4 or any number of transpositional move orders.

The authors of this particular volume, two strong Polish theoreticians, have previously written other thorough opening works for Everyman Chess on the Cambridge Springs Variation and some specialty lines in the King’s Indian, and their style has typically been: lots of material, plenty of analysis and an abundance of new ideas, but very little text. This volume does in fact contain more text, albeit far from the chatty style of the move-by-move series, and fully delivers in all the other categories.

So who should buy this book? Well, I would say that it is unsuitable for any player rated below 2000, mostly because they will never encounter 99% of the lines covered in its pages and so will be wasting a great deal of time on largely incomprehensible theory with lengthy forced lines where frequently one misstep, as often happens even at grandmaster level, can lead either to sudden death or a hopeless ending. However, those players rated above 2000 who enjoy sharp play and have the capacity to retain numerous long lines and sequences of moves in their head will undoubtedly find pleasure in this opening and therefore also in the book.

**08 Applying Logic in Chess**

*by Erik Kislik*

This is easily one of the most ambitious and fascinating non-biographical/non-historical chess books I have read in a long time. It is incredibly ambitious, has an abundance of truly fascinating ideas and runs down
paths which to my knowledge have rarely, if ever, been discussed at length in a chess book. That being said, it is a very complex work that covers a lot of ground, perhaps sometimes too much ground. Frankly, I wish the book had been split up into two volumes and then the author would have been able to dive deeper into the various topics, provide more examples, and then break down these into elements so that the reader can better understand what is going on.

The author, American IM Erik Kislik, lives in Budapest where he coaches players of many levels from 1400 upwards and assists grandmasters with opening preparation. And I think he has by far and away written the most thought provoking chess book of the last few years. What he lays down in this book is truly impressive, although I do feel it could have been tightened up somewhat so as to get across the instructive material more succinctly. From an editorial perspective, I think it would have been a good idea to have highlighted some of the key points and recommendations in a larger font, so as to prompt the reader to keep these in mind. Indeed, by breaking up the text in such a way the book would have been made far more reader-friendly. Many times the reader will encounter several jam-packed consecutive pages of text with no practical chess examples and only a few textual breaks – all of which can even make the book a little frightening.

I don’t agree with everything the author puts on the table, neither all of his statements nor what works for which levels, but that’s okay. Personally, I think the book is for ambitious players and their coaches, whereas everyone else will find the book a little, or a lot, too much and too heavy. However, those who are signing up for the long haul will be richly rewarded for their study and will learn a lot about chess improvement, chess teaching, chess logic and how to maximize their results through the use of the right books, the right tools and better methods. Bottom line: a very important book.

**09 Emanuel Lasker – Volume 1: Struggle and Victories, World Chess Champion for 27 Years**

Edited by Richard Forster, Michael Negele and Raj Tischbierek

This book arrived just a few days before my deadline but is so extraordinary that I simply had to include it in this issue, if for no other reason than 2018 is the 150th anniversary of the birth of the German former world champion. Back in 2009, Exzelsior Verlag published *Emanuel Lasker – Denker, Weltenbürger, Schachweltmeister*, edited by Richard Forster, Stefan Hansen (no relation to me) and Michael Negele. However this celebratory work of almost 1100 pages, 700 games, 1600 diagrams and more than 500 pictures and other illustrations was only available in German, whereas the present volume is the first of a projected three and represents a greatly expanded version translated into English. A considerable amount of fresh material has since been unearthed from archives and collections and this has necessitated previous contributions to be revisited and contextualized alongside entirely new submissions.

While I haven’t had the time to absorb the full contents of this huge book, I can categorically state that what I have read and enjoyed so far is head and shoulders above anything else previously written on Lasker. I can’t wait to see what the next volumes will bring, but the present one, with its extensive coverage and photographs of his family, his contemporaries, his life, his travels, make for a rich experience such as is difficult to compare with reading any other biography on any other chess player. For those with an interest in chess history and those who are looking for the definitive Lasker biography this is the book to own – and treasure.

**10 The Thinkers**

By David Llada

Occasionally, we encounter books that are quite unlike anything we have seen before. *The Thinkers* decidedly falls into this category. If you are a reader of chess magazines and websites, you will undoubtedly have come across David Llada’s work. He is the man behind a number of the most iconic chess photographs over the last few years. If you are on twitter, do yourself the favor of following him (@davidllada) and you will be rewarded by a gallery of pictures from many important chess events, even as recent as the Chess Olympiad in Batumi, but also smaller events where he has captured great shots of little-known players.

This book is not as recent as the other titles featured in this article, in fact it was released towards the end of last year. However, I have chosen to include it for several reasons: 1) I have just received my review copy, 2) It would make a fabulous present for the holiday season and 3) After having been well received in Europe, it is only now beginning to gain well-deserved momentum here in the US.

In itself, this hardback book is a great production with a dust jacket and an oversize format as in traditional coffee table books. But inside is where the magic starts. Page after page of stunning pictures, in color or black...
and white, snapped at just the right moment to capture a glint in the eyes of the players, the reflection in their glasses, that sweet smile they give when they make a good move or know somebody is watching them. And, then again, simply shots of players considering their moves in a way they all do in their games.

In this book you will find photos of several world champions and top grandmasters, both men and women, but there are also many intriguing images of players that you will not otherwise have heard of or seen pictures of before. Each photo and each page tells a little story, not in words but in images. I found all this intoxicating, getting goose bumps when I felt I was sharing a moment that was otherwise exclusive to the player captured by Llada’s lens and shutter.

For chess fans who have all the opening and endgame books their shelves can hold, this book is the book to get for the holidays. I know I will treasure my copy for years to come.

Finally, I want to briefly mention a title that I had intended to review in this month’s column: Mikhail Zinar’s Difficult Pawn Endings, which is a fascinating book by Sergei Tkachenko (Elk & Ruby 2018) and of the same pocket-size as his series A [Piece] saves the Day. It opens with a rather interesting but also painful story of brilliance, restrained by hardship, and then re-emergence. Most of us will never have heard of Mikhail Zinar, but he contributed the chapter on corresponding squares in the book on pawn endings in Averbakh’s multi-volume endgame series. Corresponding squares is not easily explained, but Zinar managed to do that extremely well and this little book with its 100 pawn ending studies will encourage you to delve deeper into the subject. These studies are not easy to solve but working on them will be extremely rewarding.
Igor's Chess Doubles

For each pair
1. See who is to move.
2. Answer the question - Does Black prefer position A, position B or indifferent? Explain why.

1A HARD 1B

Black to Move Black to Move

Solutions on page 149

by IM IGOR KHMELNITSKY

2A MODERATE 2B

White to Move White to Move

3A EASY 3B

White to Move White to Move

4A EASY (Extra) 4B

White to Move White to Move

5 points 3 points

8 points

2 points
TOURNAMENT REVIEW

SEPTEMBER – NOVEMBER 2018

ALBANY, NY
August 31 - September 3, 2018
140th Annual New York State Championship 2018 (5 rounds)
1. Lev PACIORKOWSKI 5
2-3. Jay R BONIN, Jimmy HEISERMAN 4½
4-10. David BRODSKY, Bryan G SMITH, Max GEDAJLOVIC, Matan PRILLELTENSKY, Alan ZHANG, Jacob CHEN, Tyler Taira TANAKA 4

JACKSONVILLE, FL
September 1-3, 2018
Florida State Championship 2018 (6 rounds)
1. Jorge Leon OQUENDO 5½
2-3. Arslan OTCHIYEV, Bryan TILLIS 4½
4. Benjamin FINEGOLD 4
5-11. Corey ACOR, Ravindra WIJESUNDERA, Raghav VENKAT, Goran MARKOVIC, Alex SINNOTT, Bach NGO, Benjamin L.J. CHEN 3½

CINCINNATI, OH
September 1-3, 2018
2018 Ohio Chess Congress (6 rounds)
1. Mika BRATTAIN 6
2. Elton CAO 5
3-4. Scott RAMER, Adam GERVER 4½
5-7. Madhavan NARKEERAN, Justin STORN, Michael JOELSON 4
8-13. Logan WU, Aristo LIU, Hans MULTHOPP, Blake BAUMGARTNER, Russell WILSON, Drew HOLLINBERGER 3½

PORTLAND, OR
September 1-3, 2018
68th Annual Oregon Open (6 rounds)
1. Matt ZAVORTINK 5
2-7. James Edward TARJAN, Nick RAPTIS, Anthony BI HE, Seth TALYANSKY, David ROPER, Daniel SHUBIN 4½

8-12. Shunkai PENG, Joshua GRABINSKY, Jason YU, Joseph LEVINE, Eric M ZHANG 4

SAN DIEGO, CA
September 1-3, 2018
Southern California Open 2018 (6 rounds)
1. Timur GAREYEV 5½
2-3. Keaton KIEWRA, Robert SHYAKHTENKO 4½
4-10. Thomas DIEM, Alexander COSTELLO, Gabriel SAM, Gordon McNEILL, Nicky KORBA, Alex KOLAY, Ming LU 4

SAINT PAUL, MN
September 21-23, 2018
4th Golden Gopher Open (6 rounds)
1-2. Timur GAREYEV, Ashwin JAYARAM 4½
3-4. Fidel CORRALES, Andrew TANG 4
5-13. Andrew Lewis TITUS, Samrug NARAYANAN, Ashton JIN, Isaac WIEBE, Dane ZAGAR, Andrew SHEEHAN, Josiah Israel JORENBY, Alice LEE, Samartha RAM 3½

FALLS CHURCH, VA
October 4-8, 2018
10th Washington Chess Congress (9 rounds)
1. Samuel SEVIAN 7½
2. Sergey ERENBURG 7
3. Carlos Antonio HEVIA ALEJANO 6½
4-10. Vladimir BELOUS, Kacper DROZDOWSKI, Joshua RUIZ, Tianqi WANG, Arthur GUO, Leif PRESSMAN, Abhimanyu MISHRA 6

WHEELING, IL
October 5-7, 2018
27th Midwest Class Championships (5 rounds)
1-5. Mika BRATTAIN, Ben LI, Justus WILLIAMS, William GRAIF, Awonder LIANG 4
6-17. Aaron GRABINSKY, Jason WANG, Mauro AMPIE, Samrug NARAYANAN, Julian PROLEIKO, Nikola MITKOV, Tom POLGAR-SHUTZMAN, Dmitry GUREVICH, Scott RAMER, James Alex NEAL, Arshaq SALEEM, Joseph St PIERRE 3½

ACM would like to invite tournament organizers 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
TOURNAMENT REVIEW

ANDREWS AFB, MD
October 6-8, 2018
2018 Armed Forces Open (5 rounds)
1-3. Larry LARKINS, Michael ADARLO, Dharim BACUS 4½
4-8. Andrew PERAINO, Narciso VICTORIA, EigenWANG, PaulCHOATE, DanielTANCO 4½
9-10. Gordon RANDALL, Abiye WILLIAMS 3½

SAINT LOUIS, MO
October 10-18, 2018
Fall Chess Classic 2018 (round-robin)
Group A
1. Aleksey DREEV 5
2-4. Varuzhan AKOBIAN, Eric HANSEN, Lazaro BRUZON 4½
5-7. Alex LENDERMAN, Yuriy KUZUBOV, Ray ROBSON 3½
8. Jon-Ludvig HAMMER 3
9. S.P. SETHURAMAN 2½
10. Dariusz SWIERCZ 2

Group B
1. Hovhannes GABUZHYAN 6
2-4. Ashwin JAYARAM, Elshan MORADIABADI, Conrad HOLT 4½
5-6. Brandon JACOBSON, Denes BOROS 3½
7-8. Steven ZIERK, Sergei AZAROV 3
9-10. Akshat CHANDRA, Christopher YOO 2

RENO, NV
October 19-21, 2018
36th Annual Sands Regency Reno - Western States Open (6 rounds)
1. Fidel CORRALES 5
2-4. Sergey KUDRIN, Enrico SEVILLANO, Andrew ZHANG HONG 4½
5-8. Derek O’CONNOR, Ezra Paul CHAMBERS, Dale HAESSEL, Rochelle WU 4½
9-11. Eugene YANAYT, Joshua GRABINSKY, David BRAGG 3½

PRINCETON, NJ
October 26-28, 2018
22nd Eastern Chess Congress
1. Fidel CORRALES 4½
2-5. Alexander SHABALOV, John M. BURKE, Alexander KATZ, David BRODSKY 4½
6-7. Sergey ERENBURG, Alexander FISHBEIN 3½
8-17. Lev PACIORKOWSKI, Justin SARKAR, Daniel CREMISI, Vincent UMAYAN, Boris PRIVMAN, Andrew ARDITO, Alan ZANG, Yefim TREGER, Terry LUO, Alexander HU 3
4-6. Nikolas THEODOROU, Lucas VAN FOREEST, Robby KEVLISHVILI 4½
7-9. Cemil Can ALI MARANDI, Joel BENJAMIN, Eugene PERELSHTEYN 4½
10. Timur GAREYEY 3½

SAINT LOUIS, MO
November 5-13, 2018
Winter Chess Classic 2018 (round robin)
Group A
1. Yuniesky QUESADA PEREZ 7
2-5. Krishnan SASIKIRAN, Hrant MELKUMYAN, Jeffery XIONG, Samuel SEVIAN 5
6. Dariusz SWIERCZ 4½
7. Ray ROBSON 4
8. Aleksandr SHIMANOV 3½
9-10. Alexander MOTYLEV, Evgenij MIROSHNICHENKO 3

Group B
1-2. Zaven ANDRIASIAN, Victor MIKHALEVSKI 5½
3. Aram Hakobyan 5

BLUE ASH, OH
November 9-11, 2018
27th Kings Island Open (5 rounds)
1-2. Andrey STUKOPIN, Hovhannes GABUZHYAN 4½
3. Alexander SHABALOV 4½
4-12. Elshan MORADIABADI, Vladimir GEORGIEV, Nikolay MITKOV, Mika BRATTAIN, Bryan SMITH, Ben LI, Deepak AARON, Scott RAMER, Archit MOKASHI 3½

DALLAS, TX
November 18-21, 2018
2018 UT Dallas Fall FIDE Open (9 rounds)
1. Akshat CHANDRA 7
2-3. Danny RAZNIKOV, Gil POPLIISKI 6
4-11. Ruieng LI, Omer RESHEF, Anton KOVALYOV, Kacper DROZDOWSKI, Timur GAREYEY, Razvan PREOTU, Irakli BERADZE, Angel ARRIAS LOPEZ 5½

CHARLOTTE, NC
November 21-25, 2018
Fall 2018 CCCSA GM Norm Invitational (round-robin)
1. Nicolas CHECA 6½
2-3. Alexander KATZ, David BERCZES 5½
4. Kassa KORLEY 5
5-6. Tanguy RINGOIR, Joel BANAWA 4½
7-8. Kevin WANG,
Angel ARRIBAS LOPEZ 4
9. Brandon JACOBSON 3½
10. Tianqi WANG 2

COSTA MESA, CA
November 22-25, 2018
54th Annual American Open (8 rounds)

1-2. John BRYANT, Danial ASARIA 6
3-5. Melikset KHACHIYAN, Philip WANG, Keaton KIEWRA 5½
6-11. Cameron WHEELER, Keaton KIEWRA 5½
3-5. Melikset KHACHIYAN, Philip WANG, 1-2. John BRYANT, Danial ASARIA 6
3-5. Melikset KHACHIYAN, Philip WANG, Keaton KIEWRA 5½
6-11. Cameron WHEELER, Keaton KIEWRA 5½

SAN JOSE, CA
November 23-25, 2018
2018 California Class Warfare Championship (6 rounds)

1-3. Zviad IZORIA, Tejas BAKRE, Enrico SEVILLANO 5
4-9. Richard KELSON, Rochelle WU, Vinesh RAVURI, Oliver WU, William SARTORIO, Anthony HUNG 3½

PHILADELPHIA, PA
November 22-25, 2018
National Chess Congress 2018 (6 rounds)

1-4. Andrew TANG, Sergei AZAROV, Sergey ERENBURG, Aleksandr LENDERMAN 5
5-7. John M BURKE, Michael ROHDE, Alexander SHABALOV 4½
8-13. Irina KRUSH, Ben LI, Oliver BARBOSA, Mackenzie MOLNER, Evelyn ZHU, Isaac MARTINEZ 4

Igor's Chess Doubles

SOLUTIONS

1. HARD - 8 POINTS
Based on A. Malevinsky 2200 - B. Kataymov 2415, USSR Ch., Rostov on Don, 1976. Black prefers the black pawn on a5 (A) and not on a4 (B). Black has compensation for a pawn, since the bishop and the rooks are targeting the pawn on g2. With his move, Black has a strong tactical idea, 1...£xh4, eliminating one of the defenders of the g2-pawn. After 2.£xh4 (2...£xg7+ 3...£d8=+) 2...£xg2+ 3...£xg2 4.£h1 there comes 4...£g4+ discovered check, so Black regains the queen and ends up with an extra bishop. One ‘little’ problem that needs to be accounted for – the black rook on h4 has extremely limited mobility. In fact, after 5.£h2 £xh4 6.£g3, the rook has only one escape square – a4. If a4 is occupied by the black pawn (B), Black would lose the rook and, therefore, should only play 1...£xh4 if he is okay with the draw via a perpetual check (after 5...£g2+). On the other hand, with the black pawn on a5 (A), Black can play 1...£xh4, winning the knight, as his rook is able to escape after 6.£g3 £a4+.

2. MODERATE - 5 POINTS
Black prefers to have the white bishop on b1 (B) and not on c2 (A). Black is active on the kingside, but it is White who has a strong tactical blow in the middle. After 1.£xe5, Black can’t play 1..dxe5 due to 2.£x7. However, Black has an interesting counter idea – 1...£g4!, threatening both 2...£xg2 mate and 2...dxe5. The only way not to lose the queen is to play 2...£e4. Now, with the bishop on b1 (B), Black has 2...£h3+ 3.£xh3 2...£f2+ and White is lost because after 4.£xf2 his rook on d1 is unguarded – 4...£xd1+ and mate in 2. Hence White shouldn’t play 1.£xe5. On the other hand, with the bishop on c2 (A), White can play 1.£xe5 since the rook on d1 is guarded and Black has no counterplay after 1...£g4 2.£e4, and is just down a knight.

3. EASY - 2 POINTS
Black prefers the black rook on c5 (A) and not on c3 (B). Both sides must have ‘forgotten’ to give their kings an escape square. It is White who starts first and can try to take advantage of the weak back rank via 1.£d4! With the queen and the rook under attack and £a8+ looming, Black is in trouble. The only move that addresses all three is 1...£c8. But what about the white queen capturing the rook, continuing with the decoy theme? This is where Black should be thrilled with having the rook on c5 (A) and not on c3 (B). 2.£xc3 (B) wins the rook, 2...£xc3 3.£a8+ £c8 4.£xc8 mate, while 2.£xc5 doesn’t: 2...£xc5 3.£a8+ £f8 4.£xf8+ £xf8, and Black is winning.

4. EASY (EXTRA) - 3 POINTS
From a game between Siegbert Tarrasch and Joseph Blackburne. Black prefers to have the black bishop on e8 (B) and not the knight (A). The unguarded black queen becomes an easy target for White’s discovered attack. Tarrasch instantly won the exchange after 20.£h6 £xh3 (20...£e7 21.£xe6 £xe6 22.£f7+ £g8 23.£xd8+) 21.£xf7+ £g8 22.£xh3++. Black would have been safer if he had the bishop on e8 (B) protecting the f7 square. After 20.£h6 £e7, White can’t play 21.£f7+ and Black maintains the material balance.
TOURNAMENT REVIEW

TOURNAMENTS from ABROAD

SATKA, RUSSIA
August 24 - September 6, 2018
71st Russian Championship (round-robin)

1-2. Dmitry JAKOVENKO, Dmitry ANDREIKIN 7
3. Evgeny TOMASHEVSKY 6½
4-6. Erneste INARKIEV, Vladimir FEDOSEEV, Ian NEPOMNIACHTCHI 6
7. Grigory OPARIN 5½
8-9. Alexey SARANA, Danil DUBOV 5
10-11. Mikhail KOBALIA, Nikita VITIUGOV 4½
12. Denis KHISMATULLIN 3

Tie-break:
Dmitry ANDREIKIN 1½
Dmitry JAKOVENKO ½

SATKA, RUSSIA
August 24 - September 6, 2018
68th Russian Women’s Championship (round-robin)

1-2. Olga GIRYA, Natalija POGONINA 7½
3-4. Alina KASHLINSKAYA, Aleksandra GORYACHKINA 7
5-6. Valentina GUNINA, Alexandra KOSTENIUK 6½
7. Alisa GALLIAMOVA 6
8. Polina SHUVALOVA 5
9. Oksana GRITSAYEVA 4
10. Elena TOMILOVA 3½
11. Anastasia BODNARUK 3
12. Anastasiya PROTOPOPOVA 2½

Tie-break:
Natalija POGONINA 1½
Olga GIRYA ½

MANAVGAT, TURKEY
September 4-16, 2018
36th World Junior Girls U-20 Championship (165 players, 11 rounds)

1-2. Aleksandra MALTSEVSKAYA, Gulrukhsbegim TOKHIRJONOVA 8½
3-7. Nino KHOMERIKI, Nazerke NURGALI, Dinara DORDZHIEVA, Stavroula TSOLAKIDOU, Jiner ZHU 8
8-11. Bibisara ASSAUBAYEVA, Gabriela ANTOVA, Bai XUE, Sila CAGLAR 7½

DOUGLAS, ENGLAND
October 20-28, 2018
chess.com Isle of Man Masters (165 players, 9 rounds)

1-2. Radoslaw WOJTASZEK, Arkadij NAIDITSCH 7

Tie-break:
Radoslaw WOJTASZEK 2
Arkadij NAIDITSCH 1

PORTO CARRAS, GREECE
October 11-19, 2018
34th European Team Championship Open (61 teams, 7 rounds)

1-2. Mednyi Vsadnik St.Petersburg, AVE Novy Bor 12
3-6. Molodzehka, Obiettivo Risarcimento Padova, Valerenga Sjakklubb, Alkaloid 11
7-8. Itaka, CC Gambit Asseco SEE 10

PORTO CARRAS, GREECE
October 11-19, 2018
34th European Team Championship, Women (12 teams, 2-group 5 rounds + SF + final)

1. Cercle d’Echecs de Monte-Carlo 13
2. Nona 12
3. Ugra 9
4. SSHOR 7

PORTO CARRAS, GREECE
October 20-30, 2018
World Youth Open U18 Championship (11 rounds)

1. Viktor GAZIK 8½
2-6. Igor JANIK, Szymon GUMULARZ, Luca MORONI Jr, Ashot PARVANYAN, Zhandos AGMANOV 8
7-8. Kirill SHEVCHENKO, Leon LIVAIC 7½

PORTO CARRAS, GREECE
October 20-30, 2018
World Youth Girls U18 Championship (11 rounds)

1. Polina SHUVALOVA 10
2-5. Alexandra OBOLENTSEVA, Teodora INJAC, Sagar TEJASWINI, Aleksandra DIMITROVA 8
6-8. Mukherjee ARPITA, Goyal TARINI, Alicja SLIWICKA 7½

PORTO CARRAS, GREECE
October 20-30, 2018
World Youth Girls U16 Championship (11 rounds)
1-2. Annmarie MUETSCH, Honorata KUCHARSKA 8½
3. Goyal SANSKRITI 8
4-11. Jovana SRDANOVIC, Govhar BEYDULLAYEVA, Aashna MAHILIA, Maria BERDNYK, Michalina RUDZINSKA, Thalia CERVANTES LANDERO, Lara SCHULZE, Assel SERIKBAY 7½

PORTO CARRAS, GREECE
October 20-30, 2018
World Youth Girls U14 Championship (11 rounds)
1. Kaiyu NING 9
2-3. Yuxin SONG, Divya DESHMUKH 8½
4. Yelyazeta HREBENSHCHYKOVA 8½
5-14. L JYOTHSNA, Leya GARIFULLINA, Dehankar MRUDUL, Maria EIZAGUERRI FLORIS, Eva STEPANYAN, Evelyn ZHU, Miruna-Daria LEHACI, Beloslava KRASHTVA, Parva BEHZAD NAZ, Martyna WIKAR 7½

SHENZHEN, CHINA
November 4-15, 2018
2nd Du Te Cup (double round-robin)
1-3. Maxime VACHIER-LAGRAVE, Anish GIRI, Ding LIREN 5½
4-5. Yu YANGYI, Nikita VITIUGOV 5½
6. Radoslaw WOJTASZEK 3½

KOLKATA, INDIA
November 9-14, 2018
Tata Steel India Rapid (round-robin)
1. Hikaru NAKAMURA 9
2-3. Pentala HARIKRISHNA, Levon ARONIAN 5½
4-5. Wesley SO, Shakhriyar MAMEDYAROV 5½
6. Sergej KARJAKIN 4½
7-8. Viswanathan ANAND, Santosh VITITIT 4½
9. Nihal SARIN 3½
10. Surya Shekhar GANGLIY 2½

KOLKATA, INDIA
November 9-14, 2018
Tata Steel India Blitz (double round-robin)
1-2. Hikaru NAKAMURA, Viswanathan ANAND 12½
3. Levon ARONIAN 12½
4. Wesley SO 10
5-7. Shakhriyar MAMEDYAROV, Pentala HARIKRISHNA, Santosh VITITIT 8½
8. Sergey KARJAKIN 7½
9. Surya Shekhar GANGLIY 6½
10. R. PRAGGANANANDHAA 5½

Tie-break:
Viswanathan ANAND 1½
Hikaru NAKAMURA ½

ZAGREB, CROATIA
November 12-23, 2018
Tournament of Peace 2018 (round robin)
1. Baskaran ADHIBAN 7½
2-3. Etienne BACROT, Vassily IVANCHUK 7½
4-5. Ivan SARIC, Ivan CHEPARINOV 6½
6-7. Vladimir MALAHOV, Bassem AMIN 6½
8. Robert ZELCIC 5½
9. Hrvoje STEVIC 4½
10-11. Zdenko KOZUL, Mladen PALAC 4½
12. Zoran JOVANOVIĆ 2½

KHANTY-MANSIYSK, RUSSIA
November 3-23, 2018
Women’s World Championship Knockout 2018
1/4 Final
Ju WENJUN (CHN) 1½
Gulruxkhdyn TIMOKHJONOVA (UZB) ½
Mariya MUZICHUK (UKR) 4½
Zhansaya ABDUMALIK (KAZ) 3½
Kateryna LAGNO (RUS) 2½
Lei TINGJI (CHN) 0
Alexandra KOSTENIUK (RUS) 2½
Anna MUZICHUK (UKR) 1½

1/2 Final
Alexandra KOSTENIUK (RUS) ½
Ju WENJUN (CHN) 1½
Mariya MUZICHUK (UKR) 1½
Kateryna LAGNO (RUS) 3½

Final
Ju WENJUN (CHN) 5½
Kateryna LAGNO (RUS) 3½

BLED, SLOVENIA
November 17-30, 2018
2018 World Senior 50+ (11 rounds)
1-2. Karen MOVSIZIAN, Giorgi BAGATURAV 8½
3-6. Zurab STURUA, Klaus BISCHOFF, Ram SOFFER, Mark VAN DER WERF 8½
7-12. Evgenij KALEGIN, Ketevan ARAKHAMIA-GRANT, Keith ARKELL, Francois VAREILLES, Dale HAESSEL, Sandor BIRÓ 7½
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?

Just as in any undertaking, starting young does give someone an edge over latecomers. It is best to start as soon as the child shows a willing interest in learning the game. The earlier the better. But never force a child to take up chess. One should try to stimulate their curiosity and enthusiasm for the game without imposing it. History has shown that a few world-class players like Akiba Rubinstein and Mikhail Chigorin were late learners — but that was before the age of computers! And so, for those who might be late in learning the game today, becoming a titled player is definitely achievable as long as there is the passion and dedication to achieve such a goal. Nowadays preparation and practice are doable in the comfort of your own home.

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? All these departments are important. First the opinion and advice of an expert should be sought to assess one’s overall chess knowledge. It is only after a player realizes their strengths and weaknesses that it is logical to spend more time on the department in which they are most vulnerable.

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? In the opening, the classical symmetrical approach, 1.e4 e5, 1.d4 d5, or 1.c4 c5, etc. are all worth studying. In the endgame, it is a must to know by heart the subtleties of king and pawn endings and their winning and drawing methods. Equally indispensable are the decisive themes in rook and pawn endgames, such as the Lucena position, and also the various concepts involved in surviving in difficult positions. Similarly, studying and understanding the numerous motifs in knight, bishop and queen endings are all important.

Not everyone can be a chess world champion. But how can chess be of benefit in life and business? There are countless benefits one can derive from chess and some of these can be found by googling “the benefits of chess”. Many of our mental attributes are enhanced by playing chess. Lots of imagination is required to get the most out of the game. In fact Albert Einstein once said, “Imagination is more important than knowledge”. We can also try to identify our “kings” in life and business: family, health, education, profession and integrity. We should protect them and make sure they will not be checkmated! Vices and bad habits are the blunders and pitfalls of life. Many chess concepts can be very usefully applied in life: control of the center, time and space, harmonious positioning of pawns and pieces, and Philidor’s famous statement “Pawns are the soul of chess”, are just a few of the numerous instructive principles that are embedded in chess. Once appreciated by a practitioner on the chessboard, the real challenge is then to apply these in life.

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 would recommend chess to youngsters because just as we need regular physical exercise, so do we also need regular mental exercise. To be fully healthy, our body cannot do without the mind — and vice-versa. Chess is also one wholesome diversion that is easily accessible to everyone and can be an effective deterrent to the temptations of hazardous vices like drug-taking. In chess, as long as you give your honest best before, during and after a game in a tournament, the outcome is predictable. It can be sweet memories or a learning experience. Either way you come out a winner!
Change the Game

www.QualityChessAcademy.com

8-14 May 2018

4* all inclusive hotel with on-site waterpark

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Your Coaches GMs RB Ramesh & Jacob Aagaard

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<th>May 2019 Camp Schedule</th>
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<td><strong>Theme of the day</strong></td>
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<th>Daily schedule, 9-13 May</th>
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<td>10-11.30 Training with group coach</td>
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<td>11.45-12.45 Workshop</td>
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<td>12.45-13.15 Feedback on workshop</td>
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<td>14.45-16.15 Assembly lecture</td>
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<td>16.30-18.00 Group training with rotating coach</td>
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<td>20.00 – Evening activity</td>
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<tr>
<th>Plausible evening activities</th>
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<td>Wednesday 8th May</td>
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<td>Monday 13th May</td>
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| Tuesday 14th May             | Pool party for those who will extend their stay :)

Change the Game

www.QualityChessAcademy.com

8-14 May 2018

4* all inclusive hotel with on-site waterpark

400 meter private Mediterranean beach

Your Coaches GMs RB Ramesh & Jacob Aagaard

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>May 2019 Camp Schedule</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme of the day</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday 14th May</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daily schedule, 9-13 May</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-11.30 Training with group coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.45-12.45 Workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.45-13.15 Feedback on workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.45-16.15 Assembly lecture</td>
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<td>16.30-18.00 Group training with rotating coach</td>
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<tr>
<td>20.00 – Evening activity</td>
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<tr>
<th>Plausible evening activities</th>
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| Tuesday 14th May             | Pool party for those who will extend their stay :)

Change the Game

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NEW: CHESSBASE 15

TRAIN LIKE CARLSEN, CARUANA & Co!

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• “Instant Analysis”: Any unannotated game is analysed almost without delay immediately on loading (optional). Blunders and tactical motifs are recognised. An evaluation profile is created.
• “Replay Training”: Playing through a game with the notation hidden and automatic training questions with tips for each individual move. In addition, a closing award of points scored.
• Improved search mask with tactical motifs (skewer, fork, discovered attack, etc.) and examples for manoeuvres and material distribution.
• Extended reference search for openings shows increase/decrease in popularity and typical recurring endgames.
• Improved search booster delivers more precise results for positions and material. Completely new search booster for patterns and plans.
• Game analysis with tactical motifs and recognition of tactics.
• Crisp new 3D-boards thanks to Raytracing technology.

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MEGA PACKAGE $ 329
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NEW: Mega Database 2019
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NEW: Mega Database 2019
Update service through end of 2019
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