

GRANDMASTER PREPARATION

POSITIONAL PLAY

Jacob Aagaard



QUALITY CHESS

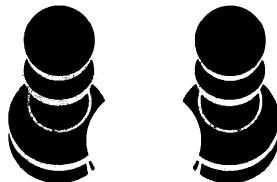


Grandmaster Preparation

POSITIONAL PLAY

By

Jacob Aagaard



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Grandmaster Preparation – POSITIONAL PLAY

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20 Balvie Road, Milngavie, Glasgow G62 7TA, United Kingdom

Phone +44 141 333 9588

e-mail: info@qualitychess.co.uk

website: www.qualitychess.co.uk

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Contents

Key to Symbols used	4
Foreword by Artur Yusupov	5
Series Introduction	6
My Intentions with this Book	7
Visualizing the Three Questions	11
The Three Questions in Practice	15
1 Weaknesses	23
2 Pieces	71
3 Prophylaxis	119
4 Exercises	153
5 Solutions	179
Name Index	308

Key to symbols used

‡	White is slightly better
§	Black is slightly better
†	White is better
‡	Black is better
+—	White has a decisive advantage
—+	Black has a decisive advantage
=	equality
≈	with compensation
⇄	with counterplay
?	unclear
?	a weak move
??	a blunder
!	a good move
!!	an excellent move
!?	a move worth considering
?!	a move of doubtful value
#	mate
△	White to move
▼	Black to move

Foreword

First of all I would like to congratulate the readers of this book on making a very good choice! As with all books by Jacob Aagaard, this is a quality work! It combines clear explanations and carefully selected material, mainly from very recent games, which you won't find in other books. As a chess trainer, I know how difficult it is to find good positional exercises. (On the contrary it seems a relatively easy task to look for tactical positions – computers are a big help in showing us how poorly we can play chess!) The examples from this book will make the life of chess trainers a little bit easier and the life of their students and readers much more interesting!

Because you are holding this book, it means that you want to improve your positional skills and perhaps to make an important step towards grandmaster level (or to brush up your positional play if you are a grandmaster already). Then you may be interested to learn the answer to the popular question: "What is the difference between an amateur player and a grandmaster?"

Many might think that it's mainly the ability to calculate that helps grandmasters fathom the depths of the position. In some cases this is true, but it also true that grandmasters have generally better opening knowledge; they know more typical plans and pawn structures as well. Perhaps they are better (at least some of them) in endgames too. Still, I would put certain other qualities in first place. By working with amateur players, I have noticed that very often, even if they have the necessary knowledge about the position, they can't use it properly. Grandmasters are trained to make decisions and have much more practical skills.

The second factor that struck me was seeing how much energy amateur players waste analysing or calculating moves that a stronger player would simply ignore.

This hints of a huge difference in the levels of positional understanding. As a result, an amateur player may spend too much time on weak moves and ideas; meanwhile a grandmaster concentrates on the heart of the position and looks for much better solutions.

It is not easy to improve positional understanding. One way is to work on good books with the games of strong players, and to pay special attention to their explanations. Also the careful analysis of your own games may help you to improve your evaluations and to correct some mistakes. Although Aagaard's "approach with this book is not to teach positional understanding, but to teach positional judgement and decision-making", I am sure that solving the many positional exercises from this book will help readers to raise their positional level too.

The tools that Aagaard uses in this book look simple. But his method of three questions and his rather modest approach shouldn't deceive readers – if you follow the instructions carefully and concentrate on these important questions, you will most likely focus on the central elements of the position, which will help you to find the solutions of the exercises. Working with this book will train your positional judgement and develop your chess intuition. You will improve your decision-making process and learn some new practical skills. And maybe you will be able to make another step forwards...

Artur Yusupov
Twice Candidates Finalist

Series Introduction

Ever since I was a junior I have been a chess trainer. At times my dissatisfaction with the conditions for trainers has caused me to be a player as well; and not without some success. But at the end of the day I have had to accept that my destiny is not to feel comfortable on the stage, but rather in the anonymity of the locker room. I have always cared more for the results of my students than my own, just as I have always had lots of passion for training others, but none for training myself.

Over the years I have developed some of the skills necessary to become a decent trainer, not least of all the ability to earn a living by other means! Among other things this means I have become a chess writer. From the moment I started taking pride in my work, I have developed into a not entirely bad one, to the degree where I am finally comfortable enough to publish this series of books, which I have been dreaming about for years.

The series title *Grandmaster Preparation* is of course a little joke, as the five books originally planned do not include any coverage of the opening. But it is also a serious point at the same time. Grandmaster play does not occur in a vacuum, and it consists of much more than opening preparation, random intuition and even more random calculation. There are rules and methods that have been successful for many decades and will continue to be so in the future. One of my main objectives with this project has been to merge this classic understanding of chess with my own ideas and create a serious training plan for ambitious players.

This is the most ambitious project I have undertaken in my professional life, and there is no escaping the unavoidable imperfection of the execution. I hope the reader will forgive me in advance for any mistakes, but at the same time offer me the confidence to believe in most of what I claim throughout these books. They are heavily researched and based on my experience of working with close to a thousand individuals over the years: from my own daughters, who recently discovered the joy of capturing a piece, to friends who have been involved in World Championship matches. So, please develop your own understanding of chess by questioning everything I say, but at the same time, please never disregard anything I say as unfounded.

When I was a young man I had no access to a classical chess education, and many other grandmasters have had the same experience. It is my hope that this series will help to change this picture in the same way that Mark Dvoretsky's books have, and the way that Artur Yusupov's series of nine books (*Fundamentals*, *Beyond the Basics* and *Mastery*) have given juniors and amateurs a clearly-structured method of improvement.

The ultimate goal for this series is to show a path towards playing chess at grandmaster level for those who do not have access to a good trainer. I have worked with some grandmasters who had the kinds of holes in their chess understanding that would baffle the average man on the street. Obviously they excelled in other aspects of the game simultaneously, but over time their weaknesses became obvious to their opponents and their results duly suffered. This series is meant to help those players as well.

Jacob Aagaard, Glasgow 2012

My Intentions with this Book

There are a lot of good books on the market that will help you to improve your understanding of positional and technical chess. Mainly I would recommend games collections for the person with all the time in the world, but there are also other books that cut positional play into small pieces and explain them well. Sure, this has been done in different ways, but all of them in ways that makes sense and stick in the mind. I absolutely believe that this is a never-ending process and that more books with better explanations are always needed and will therefore always be written. But this book is not one of them.

My approach with this book is not to teach positional understanding, but to teach positional judgement and decision-making. My goal is not to make you understand chess better – although I admit that might come as a side-effect none the less – but to use the extensive knowledge you will no doubt already have of chess if you are reading a book in the *Grandmaster Preparation* series.

So rather than providing you with answers, this book presumes that you have already been supplied with plenty of those and that what you need are the right questions. Actually, I would go so far as to say that in order to train your positional judgement:

All you need are three questions!

It is probably a decade ago that I sat down and tried to make a list of all the relevant questions I could ask my students to make them pay attention to nuances in the training positions I provided them with. I think I had about nine. But some of them I felt were not really relevant to a lot of the positions I looked at; so I ditched them. Others tended to have very similar answers to each other in otherwise quite different positions; merging them seemed reasonable. And bam! All I was left with were three questions.

1. *Where are the weaknesses?*
2. *Which is the worst-placed piece?*
3. *What is your opponent's idea?*

I have since used these questions in training with club players of average level (and below) and strong grandmasters. They are equally useful for all levels for a simple reason:

The purpose of the three questions is to direct your focus

Whether we are talking about a strong grandmaster with a great international reputation as a dangerous attacker or a junior with no reputation at all, both need to focus on the same things in order to make better decisions on the board. After all, the pieces move in the same way for everybody, even Kasparov (despite Bareev's claim to the contrary).

We will look at the three questions one by one and look at positions in each section. But as always in my books, what I am looking for is not that you understand the theory, but that you can drive the vehicle. Theoretical comprehension is not enough; you need to be able to do it, before you can fully understand it.

**The difference between theory and practice is that
in theory there is no difference, but in practice there inevitably is**

True knowledge is skill – all other types of knowledge are fakes. As an example, I am quite well-read in nutrition, but my severe addiction to chocolate meant that no one would ever have paid any attention to what I said, had I decided to lecture about it. (Now that I have rid myself of this addiction and look more like a man than a balloon again, I no longer feel any pressure to lecture. Funny that, but that is another story, of course.)

So what I wish for you to get from this book is the practical ability to make better decisions at the board, so that you can play better moves. This on its own does not separate my approach from many others.

**What makes this book a bit different from most of the other
books on the market is that the emphasis is on the decision,
more than on the understanding behind it**

The prevailing view in Anglo-Saxon chess literature is that good chess comes from calculation, opening preparation and good intuition; the latter clearly being the factor dealing with positional judgement. This is a model that sums up the practice of already strong players in action.

Those of us who focus more on general principles as a model for explaining chess and what is going on, are searching for a model that can replicate good play consistently. By breaking wins at the board down into a high number of small skills or principles, we feel that we can communicate and replicate the process that leads to strong moves at the board with a higher frequency.

While the first model has a Western bias, the second used to have an East European bias. I would claim that the Soviet domination of chess in the 20th century would be a strong endorsement for the idea of a “classical chess education” with lots of general principles and division of chess skill into small chunks that can easily be explained. Modern examples of this are the books by Mark Dvoretsky and Artur Yusupov.

But you do not have to agree with this stance in order to get the full benefit from this book. This book is not seeking to theorize chess, but to make it practical. And for those interested in the argument for general principles, I recommend reading *Thinking Inside the Box*, which is the theoretical arm of this project.

To make chess practical we need to make it simple

This is my number one teaching principle. This does not mean that the exercises cannot be painstakingly difficult for some people. Chess is like that – it is difficult to find the various connections in a position when we look at it, tactical, positional and otherwise. But once we know what the best move is, we cannot turn it off and somehow it is easy to understand. This is certainly one of my goals with the solutions written in this book: to give you exactly what you need to know to understand the position *after you have struggled to solve it.*

Another goal is to make the process as simple as possible. You would think that it would be easy to remember three small questions, but experience tells me otherwise. And even if a pupil is able to remember the three questions, he is often unable to remember the bigger question, which should spark these three questions in his mind: *What am I looking for in this position?* Instead, most players and students will just start calculating.

Calculation is a very important skill, but still, it's only one of the analysis tools available

The purpose with the three questions is for you to look at the positions in front of you differently. I want you to start looking at the pawn and pieces differently. It is a process and there are a few things I want to state about this that might be obvious, but none the less are good to keep in mind (because have you noticed how often we do not pay attention to obvious things, despite being highly intelligent creatures?).

In order to get the most out of this book I would like you to focus on style over speed. Please take the time to ask yourself the three questions, answer them out loud (or maybe even better, on paper) before you start applying the knowledge by looking for the best move. If you do this, you will soon see how focusing your mind on the three important parts of chess that these questions relate to, makes a big difference.

Doing it right is more important than getting it right

Please remember that although we want to solve the positions, what we are doing here is building your intuition, by repeating these questions to your subconscious so frequently that it will pay attention to these three aspects of chess and their nuances.

What level is this book supposed to be aiming at?

This book is a part of the *Grandmaster Preparation* series and therefore aims at developing the skills needed for grandmaster performance. However, the level of the chess is not extensively difficult in this book. The positions in *Strategic Play* are more elaborate and will probably be more suited for players over 2300. Having said this, some of the positions in this book do offer grandmasters a bit of resistance. One interesting experiment I did with a GM who at the time was rated 2625 or thereabouts, was to give him 12 of these positions and use half an hour on them. He scored 9/12.

He did not want any feedback or help with his own play, so the knowledge that the three exercises he had failed at were quite similar from where I was standing did not impress him.

However it does underline an important benefit you can get from this book, even if you have reached a high level of positional play already.

Pay attention to the exercises you fail to solve

As the exercises in this book to a great extent are constructed with the idea of there being a simple solution, failure to solve an exercise will give you important feedback about your own positional judgement. I would encourage you to write down the mistakes you make and when you repeat them (as we all do), note it down as well. In general I do not believe we pay enough attention to our mistakes if we keep the realization of them purely in our heads.

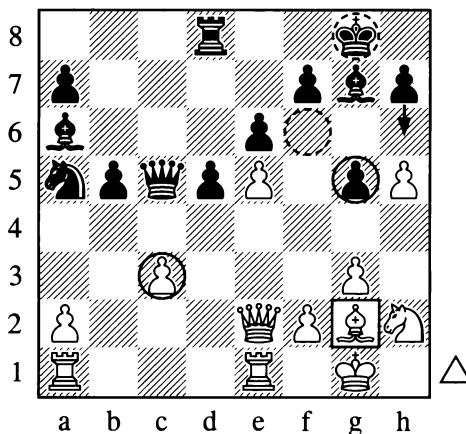
Visualizing the Three Questions

Throughout this book I shall use a simple graphical system to illustrate the three questions. I shall use circles to identify weaknesses and dotted circles to identify potential weaknesses. I shall use squares to identify the worst-placed pieces and dotted squares to identify pieces that might have problems later on. Finally, I shall use arrows to illustrate the opponent's ideas and dotted lines to illustrate potential ideas that may lie far into the future.

Let us look at an example.

Hikaru Nakamura – Vladimir Kramnik

Istanbul (ol) 2012



The circles indicate that c3 and g5 are immediate weaknesses, while it is easy to believe that the f6-square and the king will be weak later on (hence the dotted circles).

White's worst-placed piece is the bishop on g2, but because this is not especially relevant here, I have chosen not to give it a square. Black's pieces are all fighting for the "honour" of being worst-placed, so again I have chosen not to give a square to one (or all) of them, as it would just be confusing.

Finally, Black's idea in this position definitely has to be ...h6 to protect his biggest weakness; hence the arrow. Obviously he has other ideas in the position – 99.9% of all positions will contain a multitude of ideas –but what we are looking for is *the* idea, the one that we should take most seriously.

In fact, Black would have a decent position with reasonable compensation for the exchange if he had time to play a couple of useful moves, ... $\mathbb{Q}c4$ and ...h6. The latter can be prevented with a nice little move:

32.h6! ♕xh6

Black cannot live with the white pawn placed here.

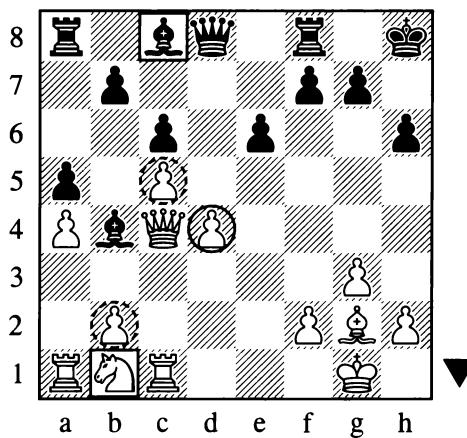
33. $\mathbb{W}h5 \mathbb{Q}g7$ 34. $\mathbb{W}xg5 \mathfrak{Q}c6$ 35. $\mathfrak{Q}g4\pm$

White won on move 80 after various adventures on the way.

Let us take another example.

Anish Giri – Levon Aronian

Istanbul (ol) 2012



The pawn on d4 is weak and the pawns on b2 and c5 are potential weaknesses later on. White is intending $\mathbb{Q}c3-e4-d6$. Black's worst piece by far is the bishop on c8 (and White's the knight on b1). All of this inspires Black to strike at the main weakness with a pawn sacrifice that opens up the position before White has managed to get his pieces out. From looking passive and about to be behind in development, Black becomes very active and solves the problems with his pawn structure that were making the c8-bishop bad. The pawn will be regained soon enough.

18...e5! 19.d5

19.dxe5 $\mathbb{W}e7$ 20.f4 $\mathbb{Q}d8!$ and it is hard for White to make progress. 20. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ is possibly better, but Black has solved all his problems and should be looking for a way to play for an advantage.

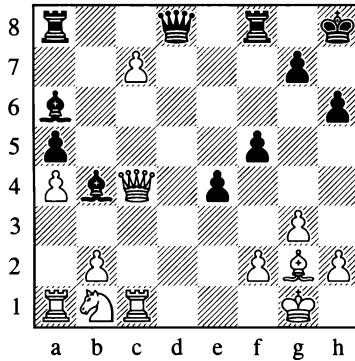
19...f5?!

Stronger is 19...cxd5 followed by ... $\mathbb{W}e7$, when White would find the both c5-pawn and the b2-pawn to be unpleasantly weak.

20.dxc6 e4 21.cxb7 ♕xb7 22.c6 ♕a6 23.♗b3?!

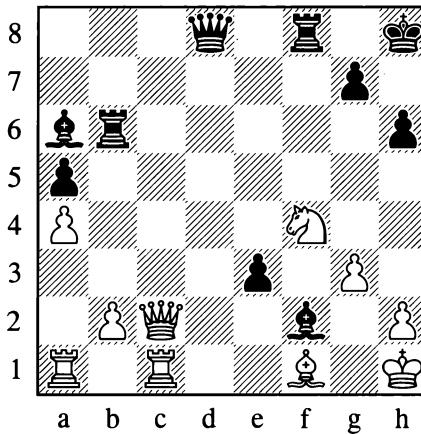
Passive play is not a good idea in a position like this, where your opponent seems to be holding all the trumps.

It seems that 23.c7!? was better.



After 23... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ e3 25. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ exf2 26. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ the position is desperately unclear.

23... $\mathbb{Q}c8\#$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}c5\#$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ f4 27. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2\#$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ e3



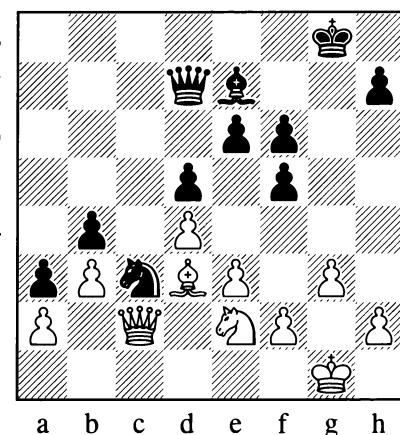
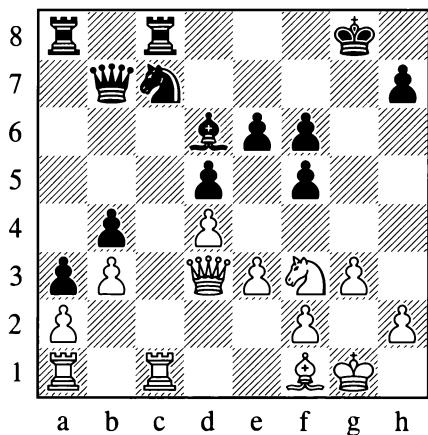
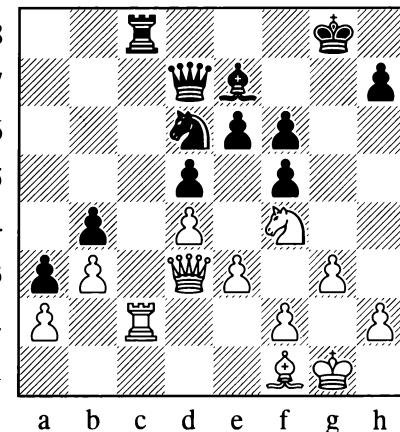
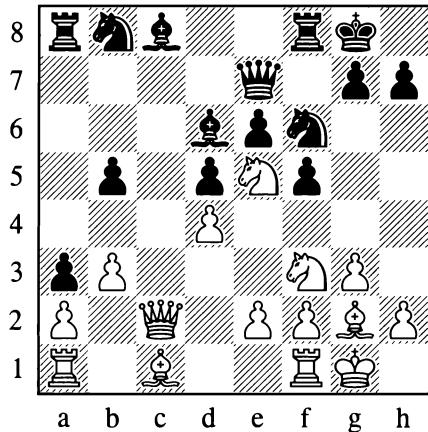
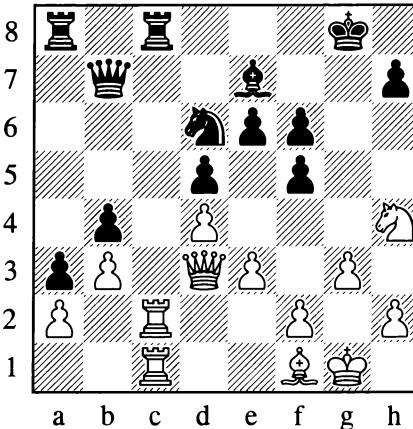
Black's advantage is colossal and led to a victory on move 48.

The Three Questions in Action

Please have a look at the following five positions for 5-10 minutes each and decide what you would do.

Remember to ask yourself the following questions:

- 1) Where are the weaknesses?
- 2) Which is the worst-placed piece?
- 3) What is my opponent's idea?



These five positions all come from one of my own games. The game is in no way a pretty sight: two active players decided to use the other player's weaknesses by playing a technical game. While the game is lacking in the beauty of its ideas, it is rich in instructional potential. It is a game revolving around the basics and how things destabilize when the players make simple mistakes.

I had played against Surya once before, in 2008 in the Spanish league. I had pleasant memories of this game, not least because I made my only draw in an otherwise abysmal five rounds. At the closing dinner my team captain expressed deep sympathy for my $\frac{1}{2}/5$ against five 2600+ grandmasters. He knew how it felt, having made the same score on Board Four. At the end of the evening I was fired with a toast, a handshake and the trophy for worst score as a souvenir. I was very pleased; it is maybe the prettiest of my trophies and no one checks the plaque anyway!

Surya Shekhar Ganguly – Jacob Aagaard

Helsingør 2010

1.d4!?

I was expecting 1.e4, which suits his style better. My plan was to aim for solidity.

1...f5

Okay, missed solidity on move one. At the moment I am playing the Leningrad.

2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.g3

I recalled that the Leningrad sucks, so time for a change of heart.

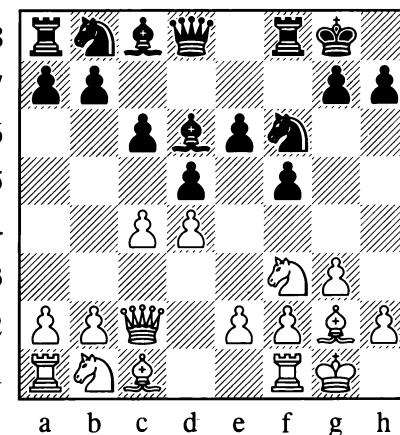
3...e6 4.♗g2 d5

The Stonewall. I wrote a book on it in 2000 and updated it for the German edition in 2007. This is solid.

5.0–0 ♜d6 6.c4 c6 7.♗c2

I got a bit nervous. Surya might actually have done his homework – in this case I am about to play against my own creation, as White's only real try for an advantage at this point is probably to follow *Grandmaster Repertoire 2: 1.d4 – Volume Two* by Boris Avrukh.

7...0–0



8.b3?!

This is what I call an aesthetic move. And that is not a compliment. To me, aesthetic moves are moves that look good, but are played without an idea. Obviously White is intending to put his bishop on b2; which is sort of what White usually does in this kind of position, right? The problem is, once you have put your bishop on b2 and your knight on d2, then what?

These sort of “good-looking” moves without a plan are what aspiring players’ games are full of until they learn to analyse a position through other prisms than “I go there and he goes there”.

The worrisome line starts with: 8.♘c3 ♛e7 9.♗b1! with the idea of b4-b5 with lots of play on the queenside. In this set-up the queen has a function on c2 – it protects the knight and plans to invade the c-file. It is not so easy for

Black to continue with a sensible move and White is happy to follow up with $\mathbb{Q}f4$ at an opportune moment.

8... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}b2$

I took some time to look at the position and my opponent's body language. He did not look at home in the position (nor did he look nervous) and his set-up did not look threatening.

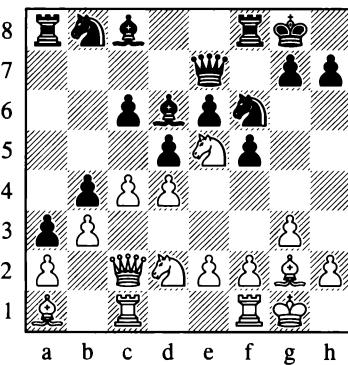
Standard play would be 9... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ followed by 10... $b6$ or ... $\mathbb{Q}d7-e8-h5$. But his feeble set-up inspired me to try a more ambitious plan I had seen in some of Artur Yusupov's games.

9... $b5!$? 10. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $a5$

Black is seeking to dominate the queenside and get the bishop active on $a6$.

11. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $a4$ 12. $cxb5$

Hilariously, the computer thinks White is a bit better after 12. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $a3$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ $b4!$.

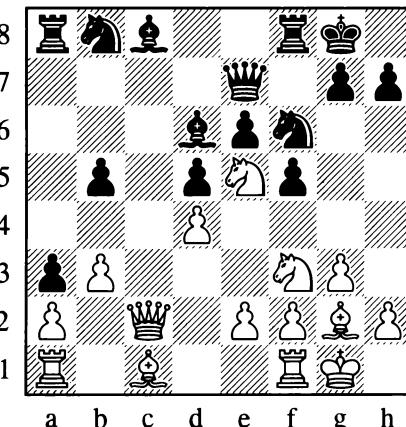


Ask the bishop on $a1$ what he really thinks about this evaluation!

12... $a3$

Here I offered a draw. I thought I was maybe already better, but I really had these warm feelings towards Surya because of this draw in 2008. I owed him. However, he did not want to draw with me quickly again and decided to face the music.

13. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $cxb5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}df3$

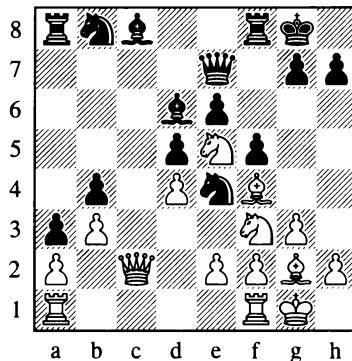


Here I was thinking: Just don't allow $\mathbb{Q}g5$, just don't allow $\mathbb{Q}g5$... The bishop is decreasing in value and White has a serious problem with the $c3$ -square; especially once I play ... $b5-b4$. It would be moronic to let him prevent me from bringing a knight to $e4$.

14... $b4$?

Okay, so I am a moron. It will now take forever to fight for the $c3$ -square. This is how it goes; understanding what you need to do is not enough, you actually have to do it. Practice beats theory once again...

14... $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $b4$



and either ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ or ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ leads to at least even chances for Black.

15.♗g5!

Now there is a long way from b8 to c3. Against normal play it should be impossible to make it so far without being stopped, blocked or shot down; even if you are a fine prize-winning stallion.

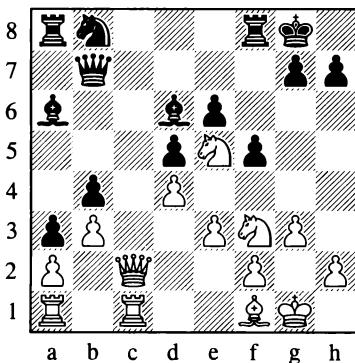
15...♝a6 16.♝fc1 ♜b7

This move is explained by the realization that 16...♝c8? 17.♛xc8† is not best.

17.♝xf6 gxf6!?

This decision might look sound, but fracturing my pawn structure is a long-term annoyance. That's the negative. The positive is that it fights convincingly for the e5-square. I instinctively felt compelled to play this, because my development is lacking and because the rook would be misplaced on f6.

Specifically I was worried about 17...♝xf6 18.e3! ♜f8 19.♝f1±, when White is able to exchange the right bishops.



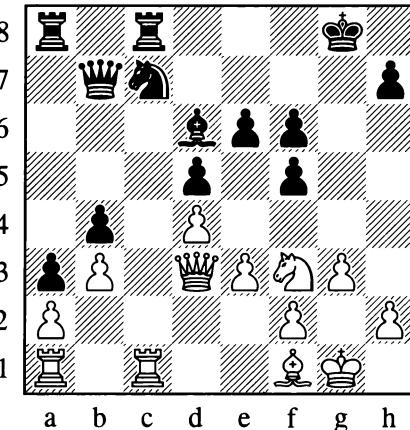
The position is only a bit better for White, but still felt uncomfortable. I think a different player might have avoided accepting the extra weakness, and been equally right to do so.

18.♞d3 ♜xd3

18...♜e7?! 19.♞c5 ♜b5 was possible, but again I was not happy with e2-e3 and ♜g2-f1.

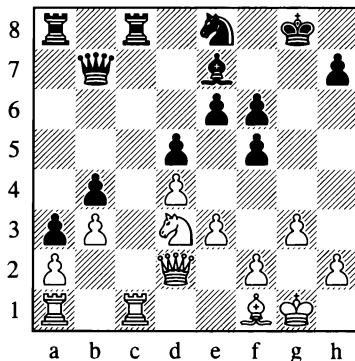
19.♛xd3 ♜a6

It might seem ridiculous, but the position is of such a slow nature that the knight is heading for c3. If it gets there, I will be okay.

20.e3 ♜fc8 21.♝f1 ♜c7**22.♝c2?**

This is the second moment where Black's strategy of choosing a mud-fight is rewarded. Black is planning ...♞c7-e8-d6-e4-c3. White can of course stop this with f2-f3 when we get that far, but he would prefer not to commit his pawns in any way, and not to weaken his dark squares.

Obviously I expected Surya to play f3 at some point, but here I really expected him to find 22.♞e1! ♜e7 23.♝d2 ♜e8 24.♞d3±.

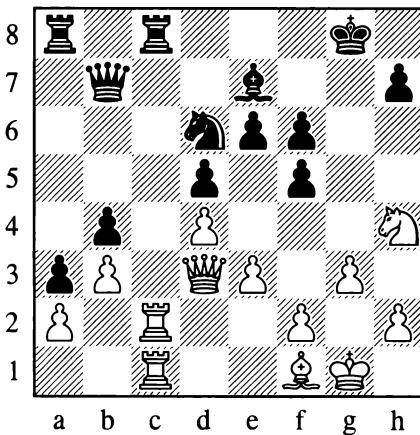


Here I cannot play ... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ for a number of reasons. White can then start his regrouping and look forward to some active play. This is elementary positional play and, like me, he sort of understood it, but his thought process did not support him ending up playing it! A clear example of excessive calculation.

22... $\mathbb{Q}e7?$

Making space for the knight; however, the choice of square, at the beginning of time trouble, is wrong. I wanted to protect f6, which is too abstract. The option of playing ... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ is much more important, as I quickly realized. 22... $\mathbb{Q}f8!$ is thus right.

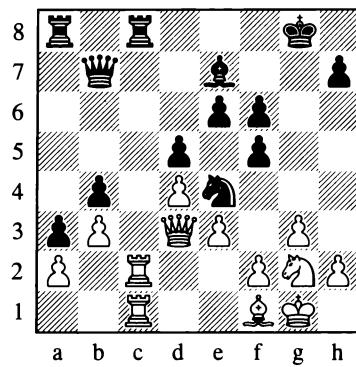
23. $\mathbb{B}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$



25. $\mathbb{Q}g2?$

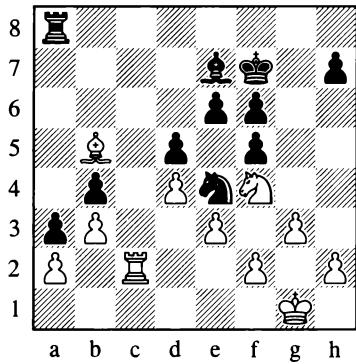
This was actually the move I expected, but it is a serious mistake. Obviously the knight is well-placed on f4, but we should not forget that the black knight is on its way to c3. This is the most important single aspect of the position and White should be very sure that the knight is not well placed on e4 before he allows it to go there.

But as can be understood, we both missed that I could play 25... $\mathbb{Q}e4!$.



We thought that 26. $\mathbb{W}b5$ was a major problem, but 26... $\mathbb{W}xb5$ 27. $\mathbb{B}xc2$ $\mathbb{W}e8!$ is equal. The power of the c3-square and the weakness of the a2-pawn are very important. As so often in chess, this is a positional mistake based on a tactical oversight.

White can also try 26. $\mathbb{Q}f4$, but it is not a serious problem: 26... $\mathbb{B}xc2$ 27. $\mathbb{B}xc2$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 28. $\mathbb{W}b5?$ (28. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{B}c8$) 28... $\mathbb{W}xb5$ 29. $\mathbb{B}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$



30. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c3!$ 31. $\mathbb{B}xc3$ $\mathbb{B}c8$ and the ending is drawn.

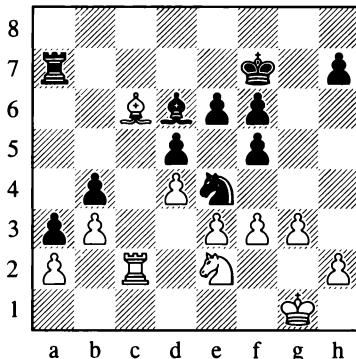
For this reason, it was time to play 25.f3 to keep a slight edge. The e3-pawn is weakened, but this is far less serious than the alternative.

25... $\mathbb{W}d7?$

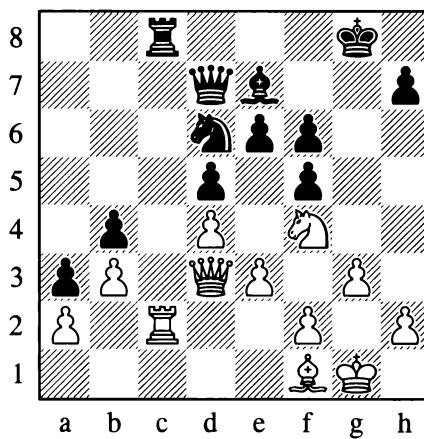
I understood the demands of the position; I was just in poor form. Practice over theory...

26.♕f4 ♜xc2 27.♗xc2 ♜c8

I would of course like to play 27...♝e4, but after 28.♗b5 ♜xb5 29.♗xb5 ♜f7 30.♗d7 ♜a6 I would not have time to play 31...♝c3. After 31.♗e2 ♜a7 32.♗c6! ♜d6 33.f3



White is a bit better. Thus I preferred to keep the queens on the board for the moment.

**28.♗d1?**

This is absolutely incredible. Who would have thought that a player of this level, who works for the world champion, would allow a knight to come from b8 to c3 in such a position?

28.f3± was perpetually better for White, although it would of course not be so easy to actually win it.

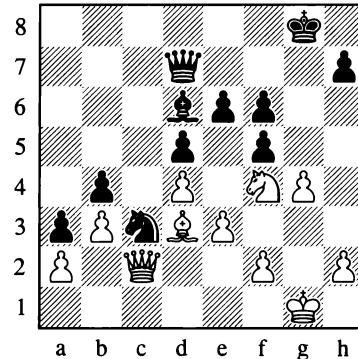
28...♜xc2 29.♗xc2 ♛e4 30.♗d3 ♛c3

Yes! I made it. I sort of relaxed here, with very little time on the clock.

31.♗e2

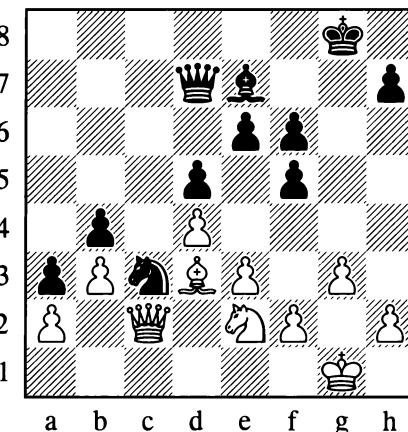
White does not have any tactical options here.

After 31.g4? Black will reply 31...♜d6! with the following lines:



32.♗h5 ♜f7! and Black is already much better. I will play ...♞f8-e7, ...fxg4 and ...f5.

32.gxf5 ♜xf4 33.exf4 ♜g7† 34.♗h1 exf5 35.♗xf5 ♜h6† and White will not benefit a lot from winning the h7-pawn; the queen and bishop are the wrong way around. However, the exchange of queens (h6-f4-f3-d1) would mean the immediate end of the game, as the a2-pawn falls.

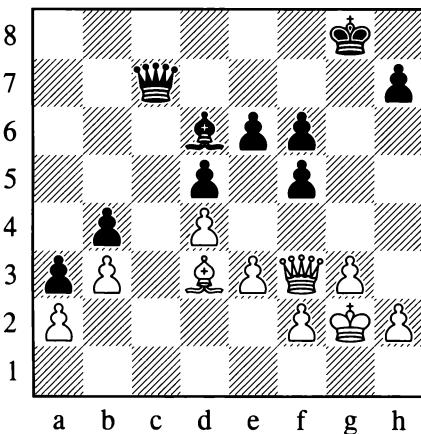


31... $\mathbb{Q}xe2\#?$

This does not make a lot of sense. I did not play ... $\mathbb{Q}b8-a6-c7-e8-d6-e4-c3$ simply to exchange the knight and give away all of my counterplay.

31... $\mathbb{W}c6$ was a good deal better. I am not aiming to do anything at all, except take back on c3 with the pawn. He of course will put the bishop on c2, but it will be sort of occupied, and the position is a dead draw.

32. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$
35. $\mathbb{W}f3$



During the game and in the post mortem analysis, I was of the opinion that White had good chances to win this ending, and I managed to convince Surya and some other strong players. But a technically inclined player like Sabino Brunello was much better at evaluating this position than I. With precise defensive moves (with the queen) he proved that it was impossible for White to penetrate to the weaknesses on e6 and h7, and thus a not too difficult draw, had I only made it past the time control... So, Surya's belief during the game that the position was a draw was accurate, and it was entirely justified to simply play for tricks.

35... $\mathbb{W}g7??$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}xf5!$

Which instantly worked. Here I lost on time, unable to find a move. After 36... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 37. $\mathbb{W}h5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 38. $\mathbb{W}xh7$ $\mathbb{W}xh7$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ there is no hope. For example: 39... $f5$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}g8!$ and the bishop is not trapped, but rather ideally placed.

1–0

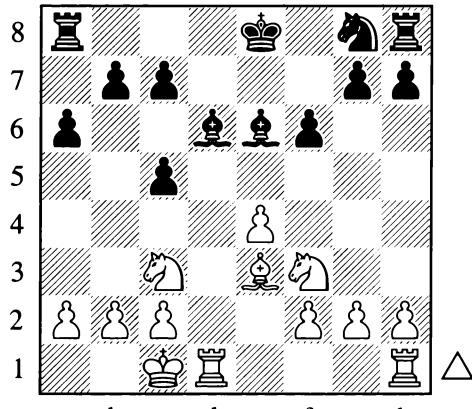
Not pretty, but very instructive. Chess is far easier to understand than it is to play, so please do go through the exercises and get these simple things under control!

Chapter 1

Weaknesses

Baskaran Adhiban – S.P. Sethuraman

World U-16, Vung Tau 2008



White to play

White has a lead in development; in return for this Black has the two bishops. White has several tempting options, but which one will allow him to fully exploit Black's weaknesses: his pawns, the king and the hook created by the pawn on f6?

If I had to point to one part of positional chess that is essential, it would be having a reasonable understanding of weaknesses. When I went to a lecture by Mark Dvoretsky in 2000 I was already a reasonable player. My highest rating had been 2445 and I had been one game away from a grandmaster norm. Still, looking back to some discussions he had there, it was clear that I had the energy of a young man and decent tactical skills, but no understanding of weaknesses and the consequences of them.

If you fear this might be you, then hopefully this book will be fantastic for you. Obviously we are not starting from scratch, but if you have reached a level where you think a book called “Grandmaster Preparation” might work for you, maybe what you need is to get some practical dimensions added to your understanding of weaknesses.

Before we go through the basic forms of weaknesses like a firestorm, I would like to share a simple game where the result is decided by small weaknesses escalating over time. What I intend to show with this game is how simple the positional aspects really are – and how difficult they are to handle. Aronian does not make any obvious positional mistakes. What happens is that he takes a few liberties to make the game a bit more lively (7...g6), then he finds himself in a slightly unpleasant position and needs to find a way to solve his problems. This is not so easy and in the end it all falls down because of a tactical oversight. But the beginning of all the problems came from the weakening of the queenside (6...a6), which was fully justified, but came with some obligations. These increased until eventually Black had more problems than he could handle.

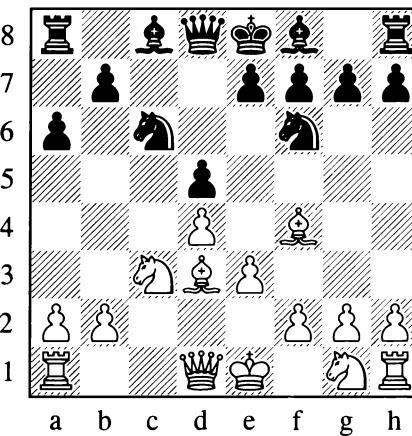
Vladimir Kramnik – Levon Aronian

Istanbul (ol) 2012

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.cxd5

This game was played on Board One in the Olympiad between the two favourites and later joint winners (with Armenia taking gold on tie-break). Kramnik seems to think that a 2–2 result would not be a disaster and that Russia are favourites on the last three boards. In reality the 2–2 was only achieved by Kramnik’s win in this game, but the players had no way of knowing this at this point.

4...cxd5 5.♗f4 ♘c6 6.e3 a6 7.♗d3



7...g6

A bit too creative for my taste. The bishop is just not well placed on g7 in this system, where it can only come alive if Black plays ...e5 later on. The plus side is of course that this move prepares the exchange of the light-squared bishops. 7...♗g4 is the main line with a sound score here. I do not follow the theory, but nor do I think that Kramnik had anything seriously venomous ready here.

8.h3

Kramnik clearly wants to put the knight on f3 without allowing ...♗g4.

8...♝f5 9.♗f3

I wonder if Aronian was intending to play 9.♗xf5 gxf5 10.♗f3 ♛g8?!? and leave the king in the centre? This is the only reason I can find for taking on d3 on the next move – barring indecision. I am not sure this would be fully sound, but in any case I already prefer White ever so slightly.

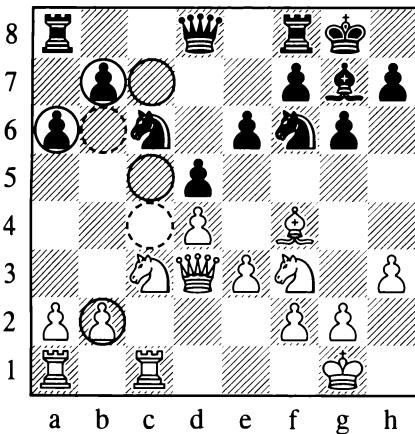
9...♝xd3

9...♝g7 10.♗xf5 gxf5 would not give Black control of the g-file immediately, but ...0–0, ...♚h8 and ...♜g8 could be considered. However, I am not sure Kramnik would have taken on f5.

10.♗xd3 ♛g7 11.0–0 0–0 12.♗fc1 e6

It is fair to say that the opening is over. The minor pieces are out and the kings are safe. A long-term strategy for the middlegame should be devised.

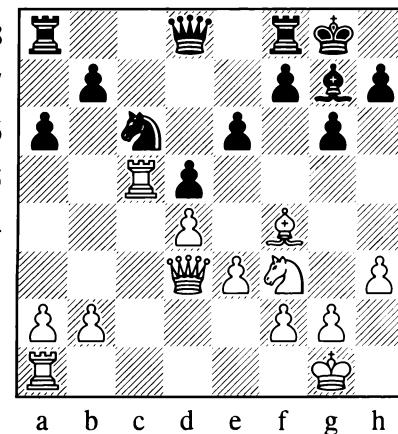
To be able to do so successfully, we need to take into consideration the weaknesses in the position. Despite some artificial debate relating to the e4- and e5-squares, it is my opinion that the real weaknesses are the following:



The reason for the c7-square being weak and not the c2-square is obvious – the bishop on f4 and the slight lead in development White possesses. Also, the c5-square is weaker than

the c4-square, simply because White can get there faster. The b2-pawn is undefended, but it is not easy for Black to deliver a serious attack on it at the moment. The b6-square is slightly weakened by the advance of the a-pawn, but it is not high on our current list of priorities, even if it does come into play in some variations.

White's plan is to aim at the b7- and c7-weaknesses by moving his pieces in that direction.

13.♘a4 ♘e4 14.♘c5 ♘xc5 15.♗xc5

White might not have an advantage, but his position is visibly more active. He arrives first to the c-file and his minor pieces are well placed. At the moment the only real weakness in the black position is the c7-square, but there is also the b7/a6-constellation, which it is terribly difficult for Black to deal with.

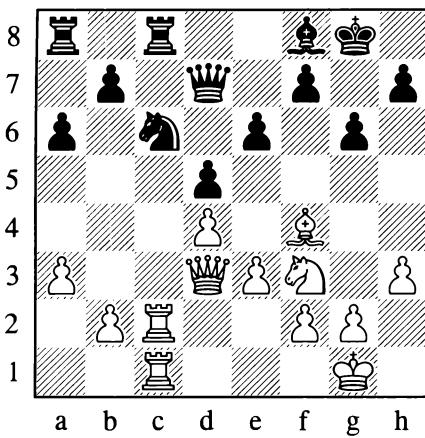
15...♝d7

Black is preparing to fight for the c-file. 15...♝b6 would threaten the trick ...e5!, but White has 16.♗c2!±.

16.♗ac1 ♘fc8

The first phase of the mobilization has ended. Now White needs to pay attention to the idea of ...♝f8 followed by ...♞b4.

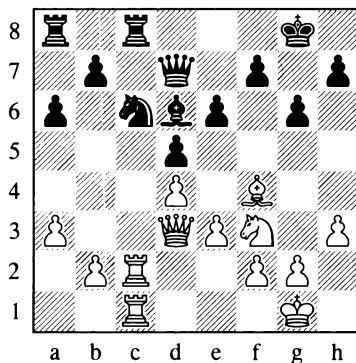
17.a3! ♕f8 18.♕c2



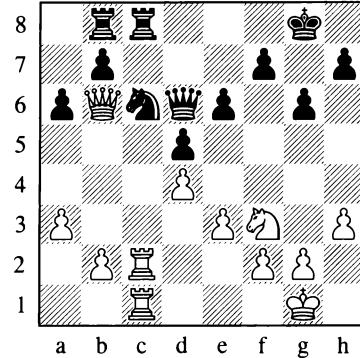
18...f6

In the press conference right after the game, Kramnik said that maybe this move was partly to blame for Black's downfall. I think this is too harsh. Certainly this move (intended to reinforce the e5-square) weakens the pawn on e6, adding some responsibilities for Black. However, the benefits are worth it. These extra responsibilities needed to be dealt with rapidly and with accuracy; and it seems that Black did not find the right way to do so in the game. This is always the case with positions that are under a bit of pressure. You need to play accurately at some moments, and if you don't, your position can rapidly become worse and worse.

18...♞d6 was an alternative.

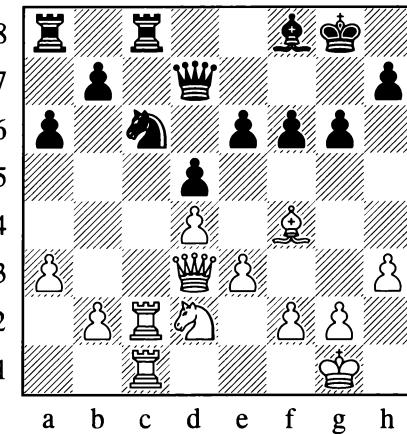


In this case we see that the b6-square is a weakness, and Black is under a bit of pressure after 19.♗xd6 ♕xd6 20.♔b3! ♜ab8 (20...b5 21.♘c5 ♔e7 22.♔c3± is also unpleasant) 21.♔b6±.



Can Black hold after 21...♝c7 or 21...♝d8, you might ask? I would think so, but the pressure would continue. White has ideas like ♘f3-e5-d3, waiting for the right moment to jump to c5. Black is never fully forgiven for playing ...a6 early on!

19.♘d2

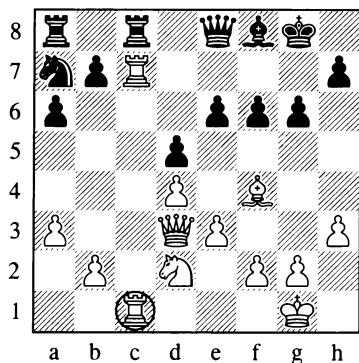


19...♞d6?

This move works poorly in combination with ...f6. Black's positional problems required a more radical solution, which he might not have felt entirely happy with during the game

– or dare I suggest – he may not even have seen.

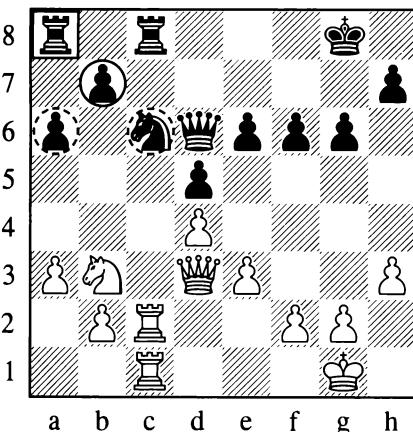
The right way to play was to fight for the c-file immediately, like a boxer attacking with his head first: 19... $\mathbb{Q}a7!!$ If Black has time to play ... $\mathbb{Q}xc2$, he will be fine. So the only danger is 20. $\mathbb{Q}c7 \mathbb{W}e8$.



But White has no strong follow-up. Black will play ... $\mathbb{Q}b5$ on almost anything, with or without taking on c7 first. For example: 21. $\mathbb{Q}b3 \mathbb{Q}b5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}7c2 \mathbb{Q}xc2$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xc2 \mathbb{Q}d6$ and Black has managed to coordinate his pieces and defend his weaknesses successfully.

20. $\mathbb{Q}xd6 \mathbb{W}xd6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}b3$

We can see how the exchange of the dark-squared bishops has increased the weakness of the dark squares in the black position. Black has to do something about this quickly.



21... $\mathbb{Q}c7?$

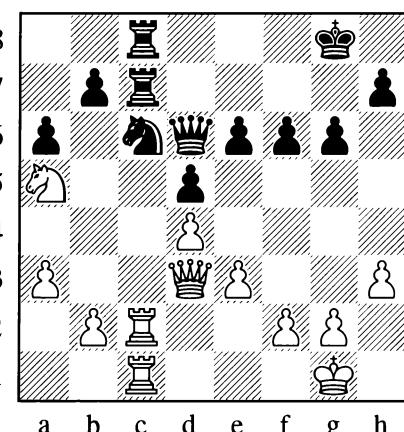
Quite a natural move, which would have been successful had White not had a tactical way to punish it. It is understandable that Aronian did not want to play 21... $b6$, when you look at the way it weakens the a6-pawn and in the case of a later ... $a5$, the b5-square. However, the prospect of the white knight coming in to pressurize the a6/b7/c6-constellation should have spooked him. White is still better of course, but the advantage is long-term and only small. White can play something like 22. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$ and then try to create further weaknesses elsewhere on the board.

22. $\mathbb{Q}a5! \mathbb{Q}ac8$

This is probably a bit naive of Black. He may have been expecting White to take a zillion times on c6 and then shake hands at move 30.

22... $\mathbb{W}d7$ was necessary, but after something like 23. $\mathbb{Q}c5 \mathbb{Q}ac8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}c3\pm$ White's advantage is serious.

We have reached a typical moment in chess strategy. White has mobilized all of his forces. It is time to look for a revolution (a violent change of the status quo) as he is perfectly placed for it. If it does not exist, he will have to manoeuvre and try to outplay his opponent slowly. But if it exists, it is most likely to exist right here, right now.



23.♕xb7!! ♜xb7 24.♗xa6 ♜bc7 25.b4

Black is tied up completely.

25...♝d7 26.♝b6!

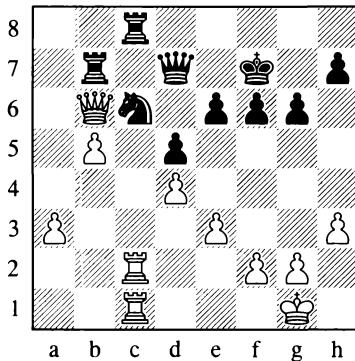
Accurate, although White should also win after 26.b5 ♔e7 27.♜xc7 ♜xc7 28.♜xc7 ♜xc7 29.♝xe6† ♔g7 30.a4 with best play. This line indicates that Aronian failed to see the knight sacrifice completely (and thus was expecting the game to just end in a draw), as he would never have allowed this either, had he seen it. And there is no subtlety to miss in this line at all.

26...♝e8

Black is just lost.

26...♝d6 is best met with 27.♜c3! followed by b4-b5.

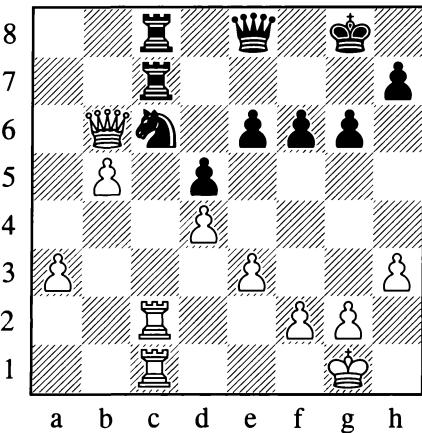
26...♚f7 is objectively best according to my PC, but Black will not hold a draw after: 27.b5 ♜b7



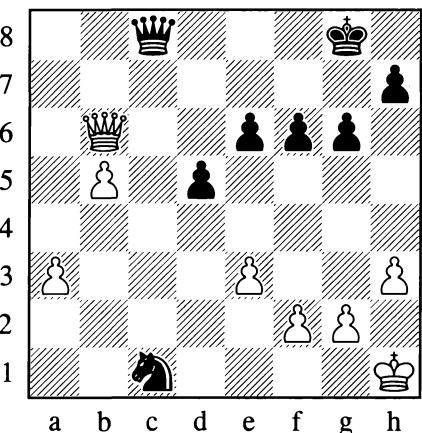
28.♝xc6! ♜xc6 29.♜xc6 ♜xc6 30.bxc6
White will break through on the kingside while pushing the two pawns forward on the queenside to distract his opponent. Still, Black could have tried this, with the idea of ...♚f7-e7-d8 and then ...♜a7 – but it should never ever work.

27.b5

Forcing a win.



27...♞xd4 28.♜xc7 ♔e2† 29.♚h1 ♜xc1
30.♜xc8 ♜xc8



31.♝c6! ♜d8 32.b6! ♚f7 33.♝c7† ♚e8
34.♜a7! d4 35.b7
1–0

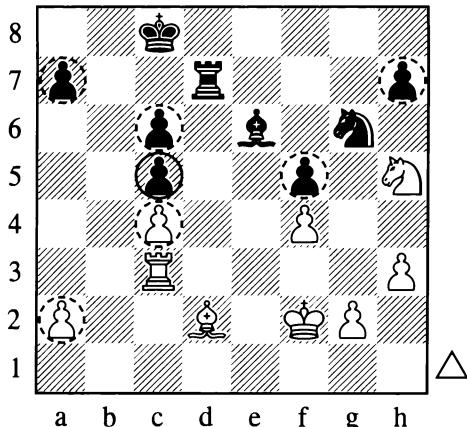
Everyone knows what a weakness is, but it is not so easy to define. My attempt at a definition would be:

A square of importance, which is poorly defended (if at all), and which can be exploited. This square can be unoccupied, or occupied by a pawn or piece.

Let us look at some examples of this.

Alexander Grischuk – Dimitrios Mastrovasilis

Istanbul (ol) 2012



The c5-pawn is a serious weakness in the black position, and after 35.♗e3! Black was in trouble.

The pawns on a7, c6, f5 and h7 are also a bit weak, but in reality they are much harder to attack and therefore of less importance. And that is what is important about weaknesses – the ease or difficulty of defending them in the short term and in the long term.

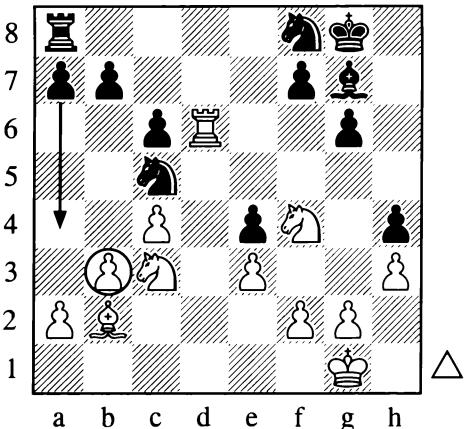
Pawns

In the next example we see Kramnik in a different scenario; this time he is under pressure. His way to deal with it is, however, rather unfortunate. He tries to get active, at the cost of weakening his pawns on the queenside. Unfortunately, because of the long-term weakness of his kingside, eventually it becomes clear that this is a very dangerous strategy.

What I want you to pay attention to is the combination of short-term and long-term pawn weaknesses and how they affect each other; and how together they create extra problems.

Vladimir Kramnik – Vassily Ivanchuk

Istanbul (ol) 2012



White came out of the opening in poor but not desperate shape. He has a weak square on d3 and is under pressure down the long diagonal.

We also see that the pawns on e4 and h4 are seriously limiting the white pawns, leading f2 and g2 to be long-term weaknesses.

But the big problem at the moment is that Black is planning to exploit the hook (more about this later) on b3 to open up the a-file to come in and attack f2, which can easily become weak; and indeed this is what happened in the game.

White needs to solve these issues, and preferably sooner rather than later. He could try 23.♔f1 simply to improve the king, although there are some moves that would give White problems.

23.♘a4?

Kramnik certainly had a tactical idea behind this move. The problem is that the weakening of the a-pawns is considerable and no amount of calculation can make up for this subsequently. So why did Kramnik play this? Did he go insanely deep and decide that he could draw the ending? Or more realistically,

did he have a bad day and overlook something? I believe the latter.

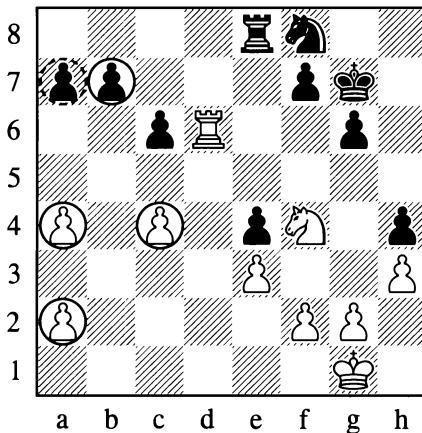
23.♕a3 would not fully work: 23...♝xb3 24.♛xe4 ♜a5 25.c5 ♜c4 26.♝d3 ♜e5†

So for this reason 23.♝d1?! is a decent move. The main point behind this move is that the rook is no longer in the way of ♜a3xf8. The idea is that after 23...a5 White can play 24.♕a3! ♜xc3 25.♕xc5 with full equality.

Thus 23...♝fe6 seems to be the strongest option. Black is certainly a little more comfortable after 24.♛xe6 ♜xe6 25.♞a4 ♜xb2 26.♝xb2 ♜f8†. Black has more space and White will have to use a few moves to bring the knight back into the game.

23.♝d1 is better than the game, if nothing else. After 23...♜xb2 24.♝xb2 a5† we have a position that Ivanchuk could have chosen in the game (after 23.♞a4 ♜xb2 White could not play 24.♕xc5? ♜a3!). I guess that Kramnik wanted his knight to be on a4 in other lines, but the value of this is seriously in doubt.

23...♜xa4 24.♝xg7 ♛xg7 25.bxa4 ♜e8



26.a5

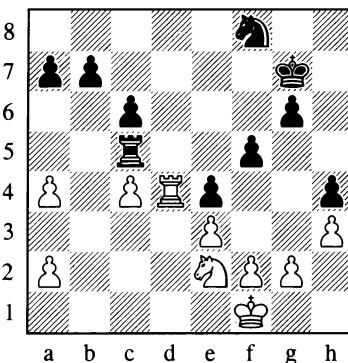
I think this is the best option. Kramnik had probably found that there was something

wrong with what he had intended, and decided to go for a dangerous, though not hopeless, ending.

26.♚f1

This was the alternative. Best play might look something like this:

26...♜e5 27.♝e2 ♜c5 28.♝d4 f5



Black is threatening ...♝f6 followed by ...♝e6, when he would win a pawn, so White has to act immediately.

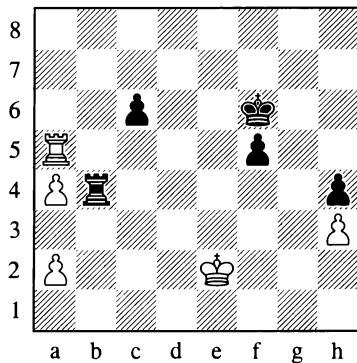
29.f3 exf3 30.gxf3 g5 31.f4

Forced again, to avoid ...♝f6 and ...♝e6.

31...♝e6 32.♝d6 ♜f7 33.♝d7†

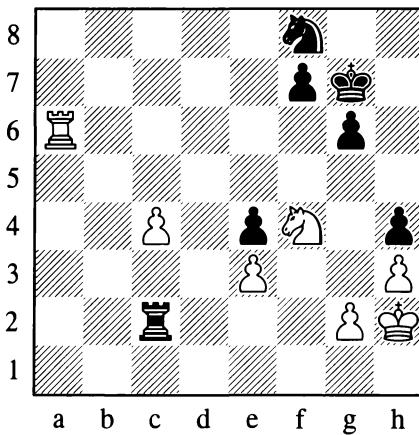
33.fxg5 ♜e7 34.♝d2 ♜xg5† looks very dangerous.

33...♝f6 34.♝xb7 gxf4 35.exf4 a5 36.♝a7 ♜xc4 37.♝xa5 ♜xf4 38.♝xf4 ♜xf4† 39.♝e2 ♜b4



White will have a tough job trying to draw this rook ending.

26... $\text{a}6$ 27. $\text{d}2$ $\text{e}5$ 28. $\text{b}2$ $\text{x}a5$ 29. $\text{b}7$
 $\text{x}a2$ 30. $\text{c}7$ $\text{a}1\#$ 31. $\text{h}2$ $\text{f}1$ 32. $\text{x}c6$
 $\text{x}f2$ 33. $\text{x}a6$ $\text{c}2$



34. $\text{d}6$

34. $\text{c}6$ $\text{d}7$ 35. $\text{c}7$ $\text{e}5$ does not save the c-pawn. The threat of mate makes life quite unpleasant for White here.

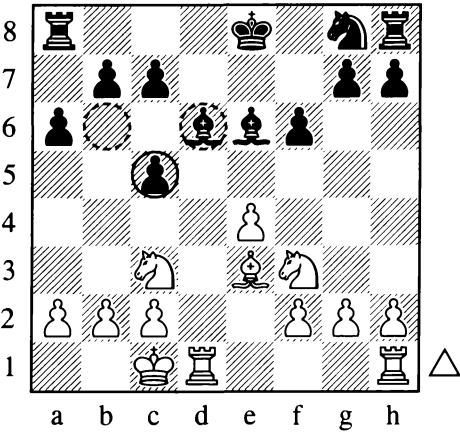
34... $\text{x}c4$ 35. $\text{g}1$

In *Chess Today*, Alexander Baburin called this a “winnable ending”. I am not entirely certain about this, but it is clear that Black is very close to the full point with his extra pawn. In the end Ivanchuk could not find a plan to create the greatest difficulties for his opponent, and the game was drawn on move 77.

The next example is also somewhat dynamic, but then most high-level chess is. It illustrates the weakness of the c5-pawn in combination with the weakening of the b6- and e6-squares, created by the advance of the pawns (once again those moves had good functions; all moves will weaken the control over at least one square).

Baskaran Adhiban – S.P. Sethuraman

World U-16, Vung Tau 2008

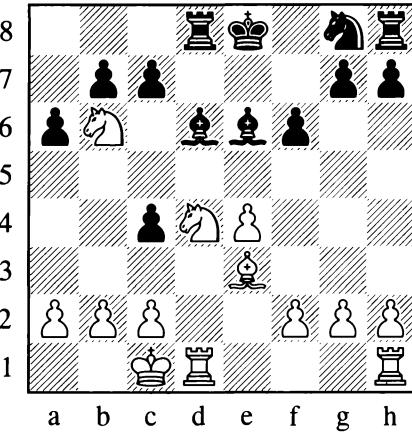


Black has the two bishops, but has paid a high price for them. His knight is still stuck on g8 and his c-pawn is weak. It was these factors that inspired White to go for a creative idea based on attacking the c5-pawn as well as exploiting the weakened squares discussed above.

11. $\text{a}4!$? $\text{c}4$ 12. $\text{b}6$

White is continuing with his idea. 12. $\text{c}5\pm$ was also reasonable.

12... $\text{d}8$ 13. $\text{d}4!$



This was the point. Everything is hanging and Black has problems defending the c4-pawn.

13... $\mathbb{Q}f7?$

This loses a pawn without a fight; there was only one way to battle on.

13... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$

Black wins an important tempo, making it possible to take the knight on b6 and save the pawn on c4.

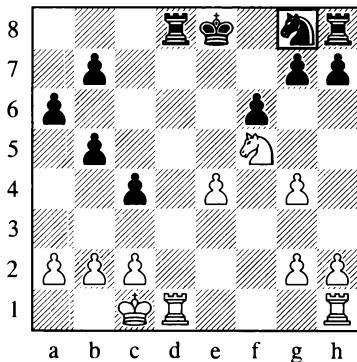
14.f3 cxb6 15.fxg4 $\mathbb{Q}c5!$

This pin is essential to slow White down.

16. $\mathbb{Q}f5$

This is the only consistent move, although Black is also fighting for equality after 16.c3 b5 17. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 18.g5±.

16... $\mathbb{Q}xe3\#$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ b5 18. $\mathbb{Q}f5$



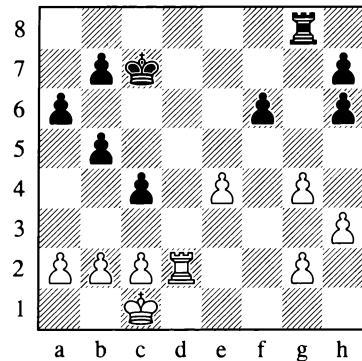
White's position is apparently overwhelming, but if you look at the basic elements (the worst-placed piece is the g8-knight, the g4-pawn is weak and White is planning to win a pawn) we can see that Black can fight back with an active move:

18... $\mathbb{Q}h6!$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd8\#$

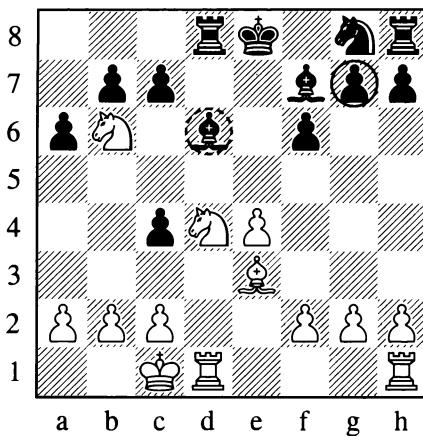
White goes for a better rook ending.

Black would also have reasonable drawing chances after 19. $\mathbb{Q}xg7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}df1$ $\mathbb{Q}d6\pm$.

19... $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d1\#$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ $gxh6$ 22.h3 $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$



White is planning $\mathbb{Q}f2-f5$ with enduring pressure. Black would have to play really well to hold this ending. Still, this is much better than the game.



14. $\mathbb{Q}f5!$

Once again exploiting the overloading of the c7-pawn. This time Black is thoroughly forked.

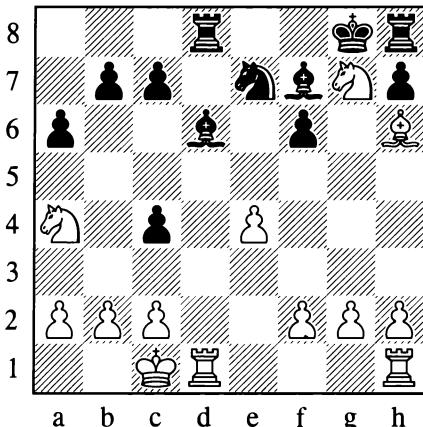
14... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

14... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ does not work here. Simplest is probably 15. $\mathbb{Q}xg7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}hd1$ and the extra pawn should be enough.

15. $\mathbb{Q}xg7\#$

15. $\mathbb{Q}xd6\#$ $cxd6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ would have won a pawn, but White did not want to exchange knights after 16... $\mathbb{Q}c8?!$, when there might later be technical difficulties because of the opposite-coloured bishops.

15... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}a4\#$



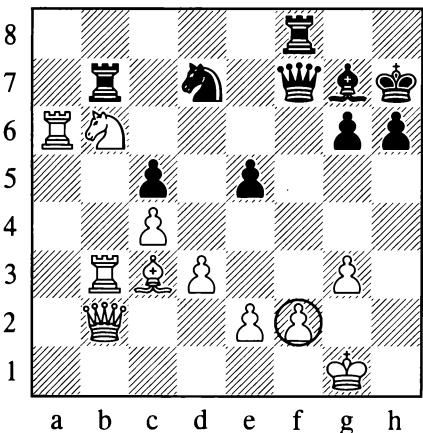
White won on move 38.

Squares

We have already touched a little on weakened squares with the above example. The main difference between weak pawns and weak squares (looking beyond the price tag here) is probably that weakened pawns are generally static in nature, while weakened squares usually create dynamic possibilities. This is well illustrated in the following example:

Peter Heine Nielsen – Alexander Arshchenko

Germany 2011



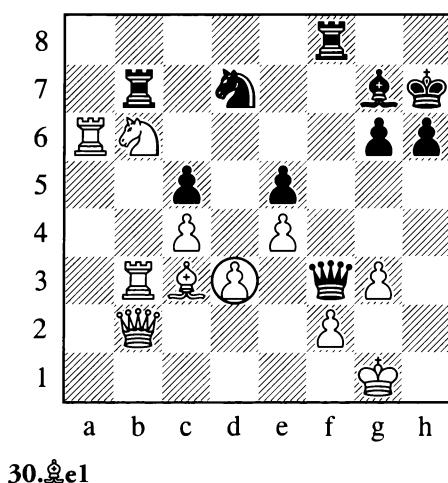
White has succeeded greatly on the queenside, while Black has not established more than a threat to f2 on the kingside.

If White now had played 29.f3!, he would have left Black with great problems and more or less no counterplay; the g3-pawn is slightly weakened, but this is in the long term as there is no quick way to get to it. Instead he weakened the f3-square (as well as the d3-pawn) in his efforts to defend f2, giving Black the counterplay necessary to survive.

Moving the f-pawn might at first feel a bit artificial, but once you start looking at it seriously, it becomes very attractive. Therefore I suspect that Peter did not seriously look at this non-standard move. If he had, he probably would have played it. Chess is like that sometimes, you decide to save time for later decisions (unless you have already spent it on prior ones), not suspecting that this was the right moment. Getting better at understanding when we have to make a serious choice is one of the most elusive, but at the same time most important, skills for a strong chess player to develop.

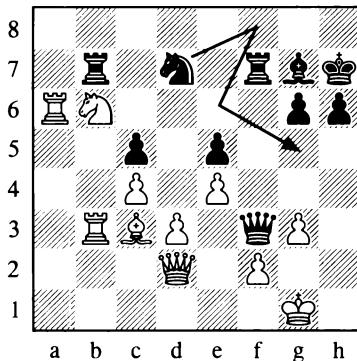
29.e4? $\mathbb{W}f3$!

There is an immediate threat to the d3-pawn.



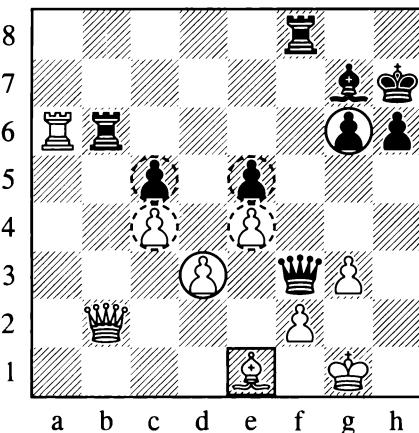
30. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

After 30.♗d2?! Black has a fantastic idea: 30...♝f7!! (Instead, 30...♞xb6 31.♜axb6 ♜xb6 32.♜xb6 ♜d8 33.♝b7! offers White enough counterplay to draw, although even this might have been disappointing for him after being so much better.)



Black's idea is either ...♝f8-e6-g5 with a strong attack, or taking twice on b6 and playing ...♝d7.

30...♞xb6 31.♜xb6 ♜xb6



32.♜xb6?

It was essential to force the exchange of rooks in order to survive. 32.♜xb6 ♜f6 33.♝a7 ♜xa6 34.♝xa6 ♜xd3 35.♝b5 would have been the right way to play, as after 35...♜xe4 36.♝d2 White can still hold the balance.

We could look at this conceptually and say

that the f2-pawn and the white king are only weak if the rooks remain on the board. Without them the white bishop has more potential and White will make the draw. But this is rationalizing after the fact; something that is really useful to do when we analyse games – to develop our understanding/intuition – but not of much help when you have a few minutes to choose between two seemingly unattractive options.

32...♜xd3 33.♝b7?!

A better chance to defend would have been 33.♝b1 ♜xc4 34.♝b7!, but once things start going against you, it is very hard to find the best chances.

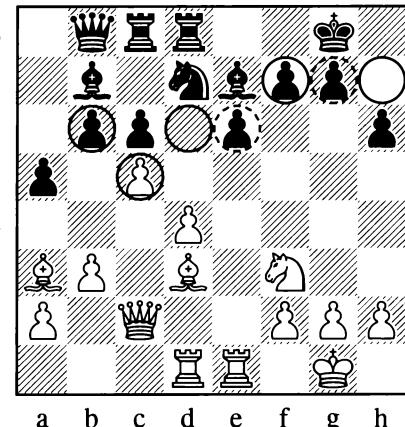
33...♜xe4??

Black is in full control. He won on move 55.

The next example is really interesting when it comes to discussing the weakness of squares and to what extent this can help you find the right plan.

Garry Kasparov – Francisco Vallejo Pons

Linares 2004



There are a few weaknesses in the black position (and an obvious weakness on d5

in the white position). The weakness of the constellation b6/c5/d6 is in my opinion rather obvious, but of course there is also the slight weakening of the black kingside through the ...h7-h6 advance.

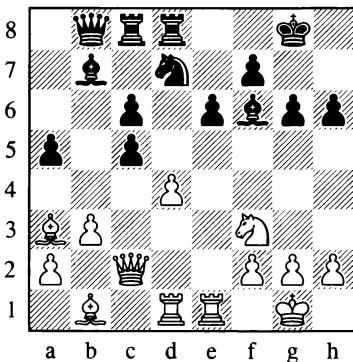
I seriously doubt whether I would have believed the latter to be the more important before I saw this game, but reading Dokhoian's variations (the words below are mine, the lines his) in *New in Chess Magazine* actually convinced me that this was the case.

22.♘c1

Dokhoian was full of praise for this move. The idea is quite stunning – White spends time rearranging his queen and light-squared bishop to give the duo a bit more bite. As things transpire in the game, it seems as if Black cannot get his defence organized in time.

22...bx_c5 23.♗b1 ♘a7

23...♗f6? 24.♘c2 g6 might look like a natural way to defend against the threat of mate. But once again we see the effect of the slight weakening of the kingside by the initial advance of the h-pawn. The e6/f7/g6-constellation sorely lacks the support of the h-pawn.



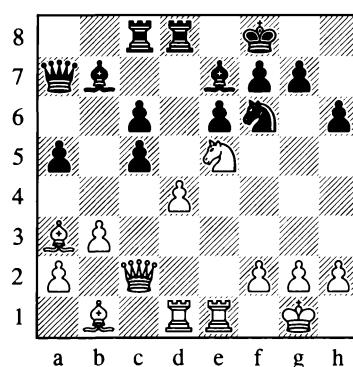
White strikes with 25.♗xe6!, when Black's various options do not work. He cannot accept the sacrifice as White brings in reinforcements after the initial checks (as always, the concept

of evolution/revolution/evolution must be understood in order to play attacking chess) with ♜h4-g6. So, if Black is not to end up with a pawn less, he needs to try 25...cx_d4. Here White establishes his superiority with: 26.♗d6 ♘a7 27.♗xd4 ♕e8 28.♗xe8† ♕xe8 29.♗f5!±

24.♘c2 ♜f6 25.♗e5 ♘d5

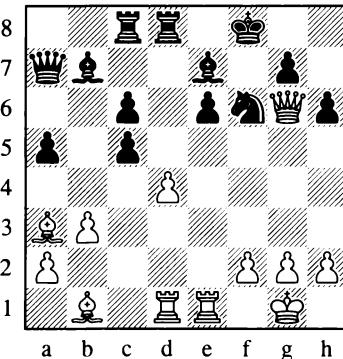
The white knight is obviously heading for g4, but this is not the only bad thing that can happen to the black position. Knights can go backwards, but in the hands of great attackers, they usually go forwards:

25...♗f8



26.♗xf7! ♕xf7 27.♗g6† ♕f8

The king has to retreat to this square to support the bishop. After 27...♗g8 28.♗xe6 Black can only resign. White has ideas with ♘xc5 followed by ♘xf6, with mate. Also ♘de1 is on the way.



28.♕f5!! ♜a6

If Black were to accept this second sacrifice, he would find that after 28...exf5 29.♖xe7 ♕xe7, White does not rush to take on c5, but plays more brutally with 30.♗xg7† ♔e6 31.♖e1† ♔e4 32.♕xc5, with a winning attack.

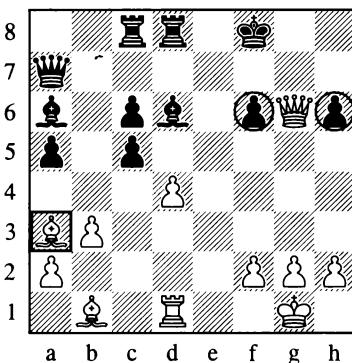
29.♖xe6 ♜d6 30.dxc5 ♜b8 31.♖b2

Black has not succumbed immediately, but he will not last forever either.

25...♝d6 also fails to solve all of Black's problems, but maybe it was the lesser evil.

White can play 26.♛c4 ♜e7 27.♕xc5 ♜xc5 28.dxc5 ♜xc5 29.♝d6±.

But he can also be more adventurous: 26.♞xf7!! ♜xf7 27.♗g6† ♜f8 28.♖xe6 ♜a6 29.♖xf6† gxf6



30.♜c1! Again the revolution/evolution thing!

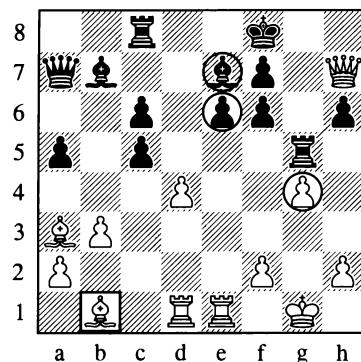
30...♝f7 31.♖xh6† ♜e7 32.♖e1† ♜e5 33.dxe5 ♜xg6 34.♜xg6±

26.♝g4 ♜f5 27.♞xf6† gxf6

Forced. 27...♜xf6 is refuted by 28.g4 and 29.♜xc5.

28.h4!?

White still has a considerable advantage after this move, but as Dokhoian points out, White had a convincing and direct way to end the game in: 28.g4! ♜g5 29.♗h7† ♜f8

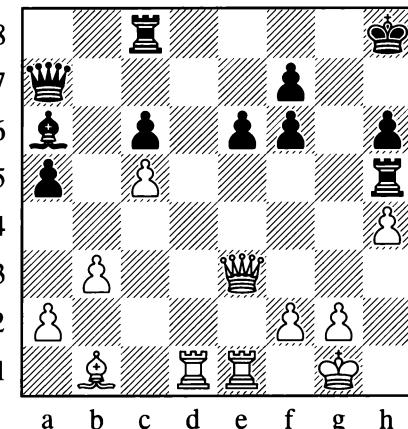


30.♕f5!! ♜d6 (30...exf5 31.♖xe7) 31.♗xh6† ♜g7 32.♖xe6 fxe6 33.♖xe6 and wins.

In addition to this, engines now point out the more brutal and less intuitive 28.♖xe6! fxe6 29.♗e2!. Black seems unable to defend himself, even with an extra rook; the position of the pieces on the queenside is too poor. A possible line is 29...♝f8 30.♖xe6 ♜g5 31.♜xc5 ♜xc5 32.♗xf6† ♜g8 33.♗e6† ♜f8 34.dxc5 and there is no real defence against the rook coming to d7.

In the game Black had some chances to defend a little better, for example by putting the king on f8 rather than h8.

28...♝h8 29.♗e2 ♜a6 30.♗e3 ♜h5 31.♜xc5 ♜xc5 32.dxc5



32... $\mathbb{W}xc5$

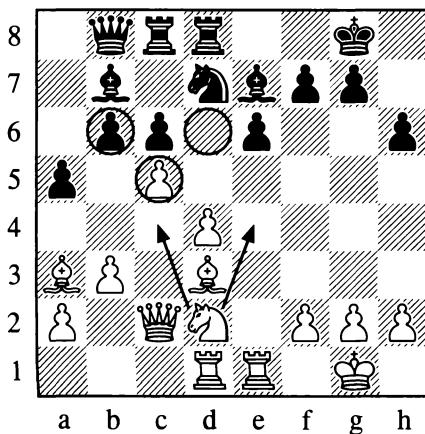
32... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 33. $\mathbb{W}e4$ f5 34. $\mathbb{W}e5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 35.g3+–

33. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 34. $\mathbb{W}g4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 35. $\mathbb{E}d7$ $\mathbb{E}g8$
36. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{E}e5$ 37. $\mathbb{W}xf6\#$

1–0

Does this mean that our first impressions were wrong? I believed so initially and gave the position to Sabino Brunello to solve, telling him that it was “special”. However, he did not find anything special about it, but rather emphasized the weakness of the b6/c5/d6-constellation.

22. $\mathbb{Q}d2$



In order to take advantage of the weak squares, Sabino transfers the most inactive piece towards squares where it can control two of them, either e4 (c5/d6) or c4 (b6/d6).

22... $\mathbb{b}xc5$

This feels like a good test of White’s plan, and as this was the move Vallejo played in the game, I decided that this should be the right way of dealing with my positionally-inclined student’s reluctance to play for mate.

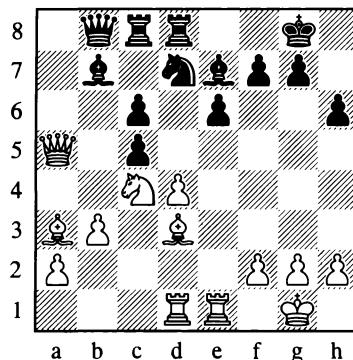
Another reasonable move is:

22... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

But this weakens the b6-square and thus allows White to demonstrate his advantage.

23. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 24. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$

24... $\mathbb{b}xc5$ 25. $\mathbb{W}xa5$ is also good for White.

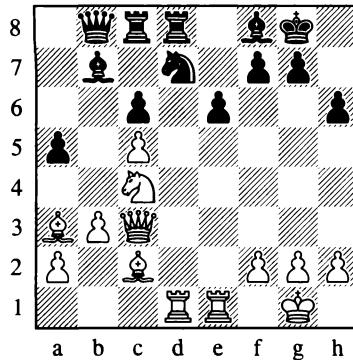


The following long lines show the kind of problems Black is facing here:

a) 25... $\mathbb{W}f4$ 26.g3 $\mathbb{W}f6$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}b2!$ $\mathbb{cxd4}$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}g5$ 29. $\mathbb{W}a7$ $\mathbb{E}c7$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}b5$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}xd8\pm$

b) 25... $\mathbb{W}a8$ 26. $\mathbb{d}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xa5$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 30. $\mathbb{E}xd8\#$ $\mathbb{E}xd8$ 31. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{E}d5$ 32.b4 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{E}xd3$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}f1\pm$

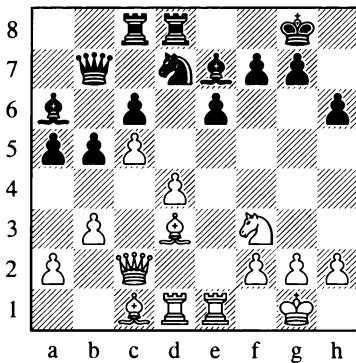
25. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{b}xc5$ 26. $\mathbb{d}xc5\pm$



The c5-pawn is immune due to $\mathbb{Q}b6$ tricks. White now has a considerable number of options, all of them leaving Black in big trouble.

Maybe, at the end of the day, Black would be

relatively better off after 22... $b5\pm$, although this would leave him with various positional defects. A logical way of continuing is: 23. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}b7$

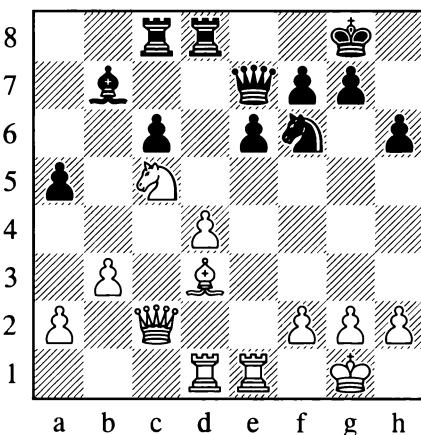


25. $\mathbb{W}e2!$ $\mathbb{R}a8$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 27. $\mathbb{W}xe5$ $b4$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ White has a strong attacking position and Black's pieces are weaker in just about every case.

23. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$

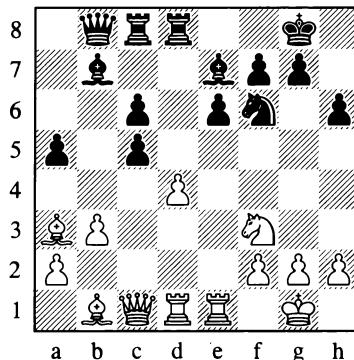
23... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 24. $dxc5$ is awful for Black.

24. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}c5$



White has a great advantage; it is very difficult for Black to get rid of the knight from c5 and the c6- and a5-pawns are perpetual problems. I agreed that White's play was indeed quite convincing at this point.

Returning to the game continuation, I realized that Black's 23rd move was rather artificial. What is the queen meant to be doing on a7? Dokhoian does not discuss the natural 23... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$, when the knight immediately defends the h7-square, as well as clearing the way for the other pieces.



White cannot attack in the same way as in the game. Black will play ... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ after putting the rook on d5, and compared to the game the black king will have an escape square on e7, eliminating the $\mathbb{Q}g4$ -ideas.

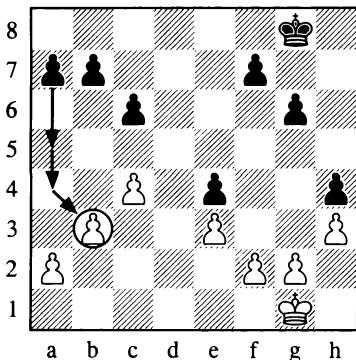
And if White tries to occupy the dark squares on the queenside he will find that he has wasted important time. After something like 24. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 25. $dxc5$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ White's advantage is less dramatic, if it is there at all. The knight will not make it to d6, as it did in Sabino's variation.

So, although Kasparov's play was majestic indeed, his 22nd move was probably more interesting than great. A plan based on taking advantage of the biggest weaknesses was objectively more justified.

Hooks

The concept of hooks is something that even some grandmasters have not come across, but which still constitutes an important part of the understanding of what a weakness is.

A hook is a pawn, usually advanced, which can be challenged. An example is the Kramnik – Ivanchuk game from above.

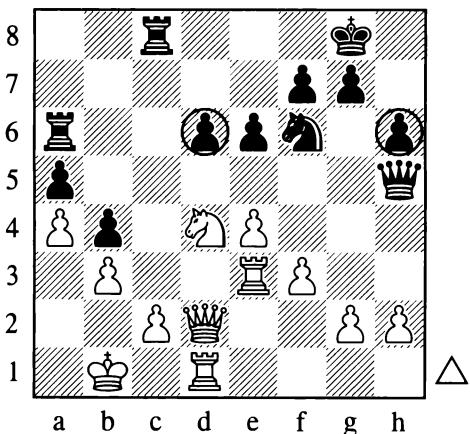


By advancing his a-pawn, Black will be able to create a weakness out of the b3-pawn. Taking on a4 would not reduce this effect.

As another example, here is a more tactical situation, in which the hook is the h6-pawn.

Heiner Matthias – Davit Shengelia

Germany 2005



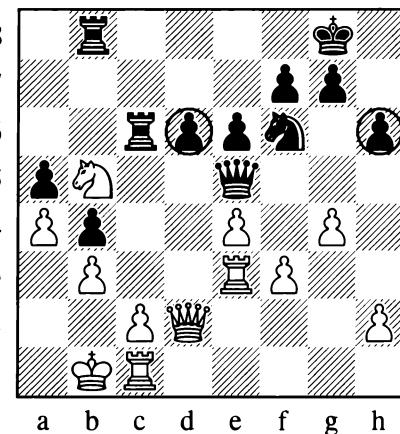
White has no advantage whatsoever. The weakness of the d6-pawn is not detrimental and is easily balanced by the possibility of counterplay with ...d5 and down the c-file. On the other hand, White has no reason to

be worse either. He is fairly active and Black has no obvious way to bring his knight to c3. There is one other defect in the black position, the advanced h-pawn. This has the advantage of providing the king with an escape route, in the event of a revolt, but has at the same time weakened the foundations of his castle. In the game, White was successful in exploiting this in classic style.

28.g4 $\mathbb{W}e5$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{E}ac6$ 30. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{E}b8?$!

This seems a bit planless; Black is not realistically going to sacrifice on b5. Shengelia was probably looking for a way to complicate matters, in order to outplay his lower-rated opponent.

30...d5 was sensible. Black is not worse.



31.h4!±

White takes a serious step forward towards exploiting the h6-hook. We can now see that the pawn would have been better on h7 as things have turned out. As always, the problem is not that Black played ...h6 once upon a time, but that he did not meet the challenges that followed from there.

31... $\mathbb{W}g3$ 32. $\mathbb{E}d3$ $\mathbb{E}bb6?$!

This is a bit artificial. Better was 32... $\mathbb{Q}e8\pm$, when Black can consider taking the h4-pawn, if allowed.

33.g5± ♜d7

Relying on ...♝e5 to come and save the day, but White avoids this easily.

33...hxg5 34.hxg5 ♜h5 35.♝h1 g6 would have been a better chance to resist.

34.f4! ♜xh4 35.gxh6 ♜c5

35...♜xh6 36.♛xd6± was the lesser evil.

36.♝g2 ♜xh6?!

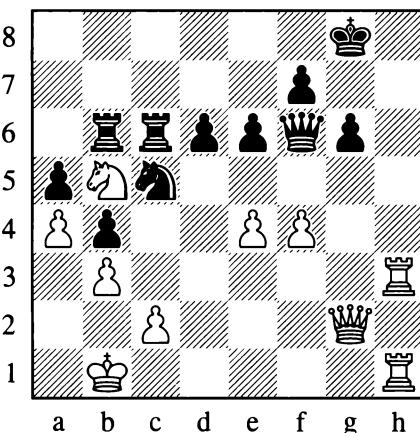
This loses quickly, but 36...g6 37.♝h3 ♜e7 38.f5! would also have left Black under a strong attack.

37.♝h3 ♜f6

After 37...♜xf4 38.♝ch1 g6 39.♝h8† ♔g7 40.♝1h4! White will soon give a winning check on the f-file: 40...♜e3 41.♝4h7† ♔f6 42.♝xf7†! with mate to follow.

38.♝ch1 g6

38...♝f8 39.♛xd6! with a winning attack.



39.♛xd6! ♜xa4 40.e5 ♜g7 41.♝e8 ♜c3†

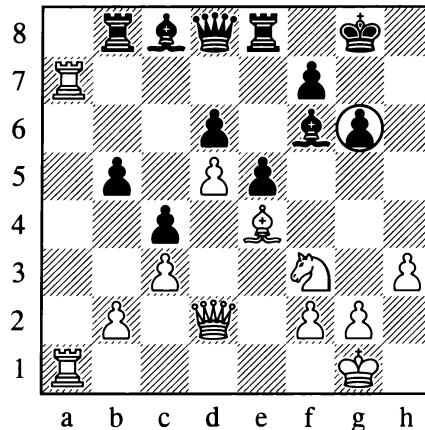
42.♝xc3 ♜xc3 43.♝xg7 ♔xg7 44.♛a8

1–0

The following example is also quite standard for how to exploit a weakened pawn structure. The g6-pawn is a hook, but it is also a slightly weakened point.

Michael Adams – Giorgi Giorgadze

Groningen (2.1) 1997



Black's kingside has been slightly weakened by the exchange of his h-pawn for the white e-pawn. After the advance of the white h-pawn, Black will have significant problems with his structure, which would not be the case if the pawn was still on g7.

29.h4! ♜e7

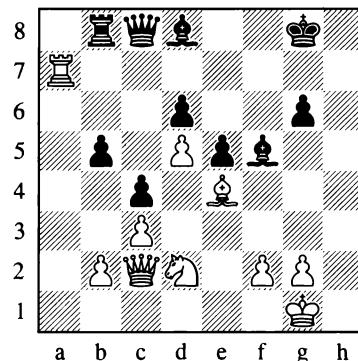
29...♜g7 30.♛g5 f5 31.♜c2±

30.h5 ♜f5

30...♝xa7 31.♝xa7 ♜b6 32.♝a1 ♜f5
33.♛c2±

31.♛c2 ♜c8 32.hxg6 fxg6 33.♝d2± ♜f8?!

Black's last real chance to save the game came through 33...♝xa7 34.♝xa7 ♜d8!.



Black is aiming to get the badly-placed bishop to the c5-square, where it would help the position somewhat. White is still better, but Black can resist quite a lot.

I would guess that Giorgadze failed to see this option simply because the idea of leaving the white rook unchallenged on the 7th rank seemed dangerous. And certainly it is dangerous, but the dangers connected with doing nothing are considerable too.

34. $\mathbb{E}7a6!$

With this move, White keeps control over the a-file, leaves Black with the poorly-placed rook on e7 and delays/prevents the bishop on f6 making it to b6 in the (near) future.

34... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}f1\pm$

35. $\mathbb{Q}xf5?$ was perhaps stronger at this point. Black would have more difficulties defending the pawn on f5 than he would have on g6. But Adams prefers to keep the control that comes with having a good knight against a bad bishop.

35... $\mathbb{E}f7$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$

36... $\mathbb{Q}h4$ is refuted by 37. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $gxf5$ 38. $\mathbb{E}a7!$ $\mathbb{W}xa7$ 39. $\mathbb{E}xa7$ $\mathbb{E}xa7$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$, and next the queen comes in to finish off the weakened black king.

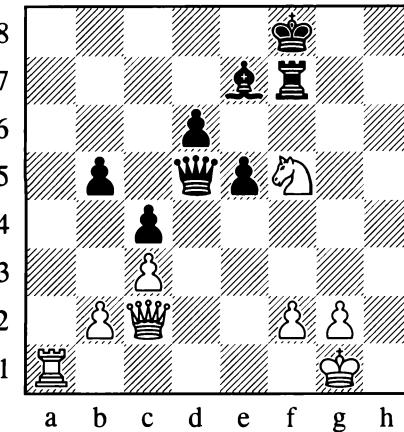
36... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ was probably the best chance, but this is of course quite desperate.

37. $\mathbb{E}a7$ $\mathbb{E}b7$

A final small tactical mistake in a bad position.

37... $\mathbb{W}c8$ was necessary. However, White has a great advantage after 38. $\mathbb{W}d2$, while it is even stronger to force matters with 38. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $gxf5$ 39. $\mathbb{W}d1!$, followed by $\mathbb{E}1a6$ and $\mathbb{W}h5$, with a winning attack.

38. $\mathbb{E}xb7$ $\mathbb{W}xb7$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $gxf5$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$



41. $\mathbb{W}d2!$ $\mathbb{W}c6$

41... $\mathbb{W}xd2$ 42. $\mathbb{E}a8\#$ 43. $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 43. $\mathbb{E}xd8\#$

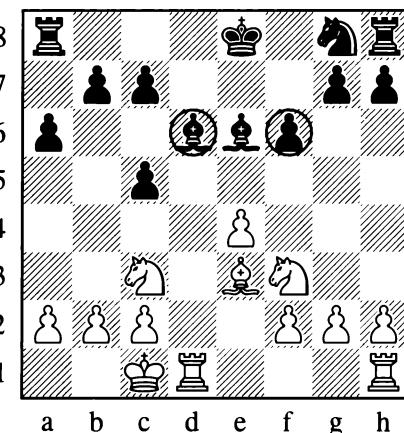
42. $\mathbb{W}h6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 43. $\mathbb{W}e6$

1-0

Let's now return to a position from earlier in the chapter.

Baskaran Adhiban – S.P. Sethuraman

World U-16, Vung Tau 2008



This time around we shall concentrate a bit more on the weak king in the centre (despite the exchange of queens, the king is still unsafe),

and the hook that the pawn on f6 represents. Looking at these we can see that there is a much more aggressive continuation:

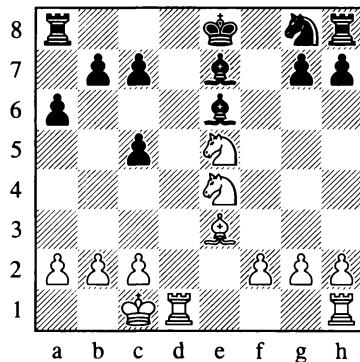
11.e5!! fxe5

The computer recommends that Black should play 11... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ fxe5, when after 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ it has no real defence against $\mathbb{B}he1xe5$ (or f2-f4xe5). Maybe this is Black's best option, but in that case White's strategy is definitely right!

12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$

With the idea of $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ should Black defend the bishop, which would lead to a quick deterioration of the black position.

12... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$



Black is still struggling desperately with his development. The next moves are likely to be $\mathbb{B}he1$ and $\mathbb{B}f4$, after which it will be very difficult for Black to avoid losing something.

King's position

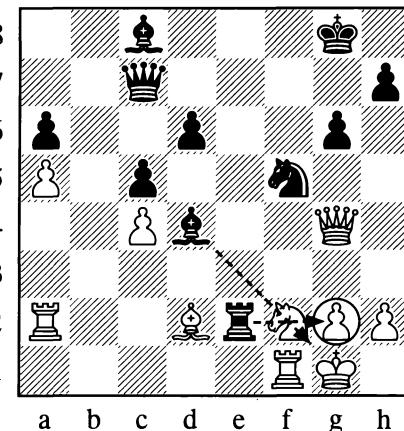
We all play for mate; some just do it in a more indirect way than others – Peter Heine Nielsen

We have a tendency to focus on static factors when we talk about positional play, but we must not neglect dynamic factors. The safety of the king is always a factor, and when we talk about weaknesses it would make no sense not to include weaknesses around the king.

Take the following example:

N.N. – Finn Nohr

Aarhus 1992

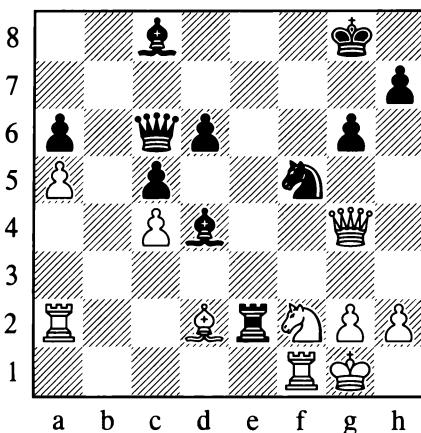


White is of course unpleasantly pinned on f2, which makes the defence of the g2-square more difficult. In a chaotic position like this, with pins from d4 to g1 and e2 to a2, an X-ray from c8 to g4, and where Black has sacrificed material, it is hard to think about positional factors; but they are still there.

In this case the weakest square in the vicinity of the white king is not h2, although that is the least defended square, because we also need to take into account the potential of the attacking pieces. Here only the black queen can reasonably reach h2. On the other hand, all of the black pieces can attack the g2-square, and on top of this the bishop on d4 is tying White down and eliminating the planned defence along the second rank.

Black managed to exploit this quite beautifully in the game.

1... $\mathbb{Q}c6!!$



The weakness of the g2-square suddenly becomes very pressing. Black is threatening ...Qe3.

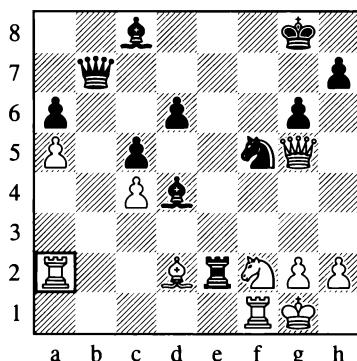
2...Bg5

2.Qxe2 Qh4! with mate on the way, is the nice point to Black's combination.

2...Bg7

0–1

There was actually a less natural but equally good way of winning the game. 1...Bb7!! would have the same main point and threats, but after 2.Wg5 an additional way to win the game exists:

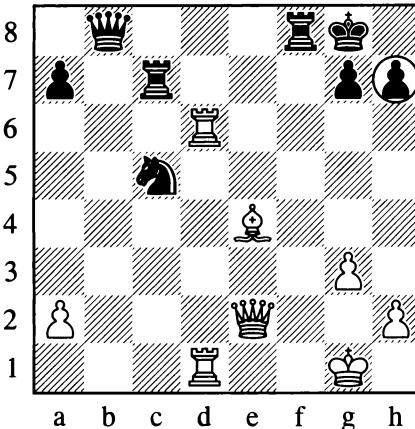


2...Rxf2† 3.Rxf2 Wb1† Black exploits that the rook on a2 is unprotected.

Although spectacular, this example was not conceptually challenging in any way. The next one is a bit more complex.

Ivan Cheparinov – Stelios Halkias

Helsingør 2012



While it may not be realistic to expect White's attack to be successful against the best defence, it is possible to use the weakness of the h7-pawn (only defended by the king, who does not really count) and the long-term weakness of the a7-pawn to create serious threats.

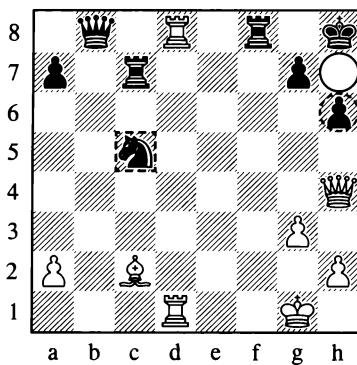
In the game White focused exclusively on the queenside and had only a modest advantage:

32.Qc6?!± Qh8 33.Wh5 Wb4 34.Wf5 Qd7
35.We6 Qf6 36.Rd8 h6 37.Rxf8† Wxf8
38.Wd6 Wf7 39.Rd2 Re7 40.Wd8† Qh7
41.Wd3†
½–½

The correct continuation, on the basis of the weaknesses mentioned, would have been:

32.Qc2!

This would have created the strong threat of 33.Wc4† Qg8 34.Wh4 h6 35.Rd8.



White is winning on account of 35... $\mathbb{E}c8$ 36. $\mathbb{E}xf8$ $\mathbb{E}xf8$ 37. $\mathbb{W}e7!$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 38. $\mathbb{E}d6!$ and there is no defence against $\mathbb{E}xh6$.

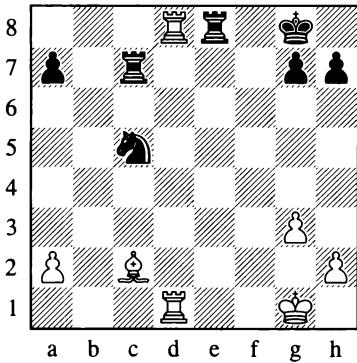
32. $\mathbb{B}b1?$ is a weaker version of this idea, as there will be checks on e1 to look out for, as well as the knight coming to c3. The bishop is simply not well placed here.

32... $\mathbb{W}e8$

An undesirable move, but unfortunately also the only move.

32... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 33. $\mathbb{E}d7$ $\mathbb{E}xd7$ 34. $\mathbb{E}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 35. $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{W}b6\uparrow$ 36. $\mathbb{B}h1$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 37. $\mathbb{W}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{E}f6$ 39. $\mathbb{E}c7$ and White should win this endgame.

33. $\mathbb{W}xe8$ $\mathbb{E}xe8$ 34. $\mathbb{E}d8$



White has a clear advantage, for example:

34... $\mathbb{E}ce7$ 35. $\mathbb{E}xe8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{E}xe8$ 36. $\mathbb{E}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 36... $\mathbb{E}c8$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ $\mathbb{E}c7$ 38. $\mathbb{E}c8\uparrow$ and White wins a pawn.
37. $\mathbb{E}d7\pm$

So remember to take notice of the weakness of your own and the opponent's king's position.

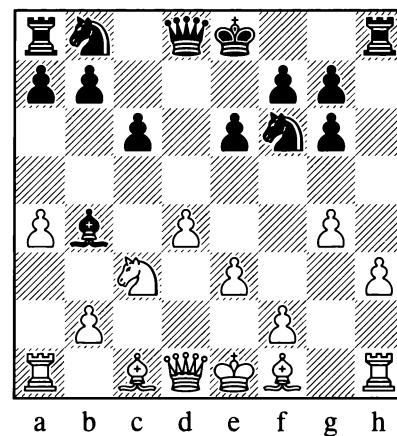
Creating weaknesses

Accountancy – this is what a friend of mine calls a certain style of chess, one to which he subscribes personally. What he specifically likes to do is to create and fix weaknesses in his opponents' positions, manoeuvre around a bit, and eventually win something.

We do not have to play like this of course, but it makes lots of sense to create a weakness and then exploit it later on. Here are two examples of the creation of weaknesses.

Magnus Carlsen – Boris Gelfand

Moscow 2006



12... $\mathbb{W}d5!$

This creates a weakness on the dark squares in the constellation f2/e3/d4. While this is by no means decisive, it still causes problems that White must pay attention to for a long time.

13.f3 $\mathbb{W}a5$ 14. $\mathbb{B}g2$ c5!

Black puts extra pressure on the weakened dark squares.

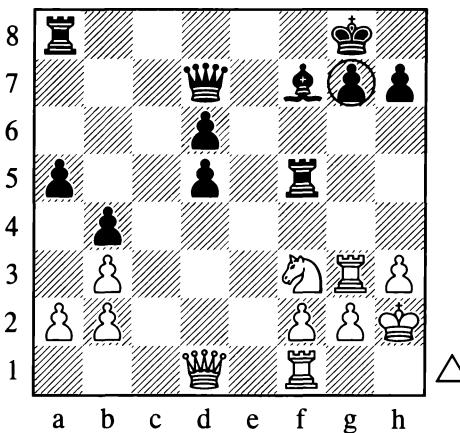
15.dxc5 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16.0–0 0–0

Black was slightly better and won the game on move 38.

In the next example it is clear that White is better, but he can improve his position considerably by weakening the opponent's structure.

Ruslan Ponomariov – Viktor Korchnoi

Donetsk (3) 2001



White has a fine position with a good knight against a very bad bishop, though it is not obvious that this is enough to win. With his next move he provokes a weakening in the black king's position that soon leads to further problems for Black. Although the attack may not be decisive, it will demand much of Black's attention, meaning that he will find it difficult to defend other aspects of his position, such as the queenside.

27.♗d4!

27.♗d4 ♜f6 28.♗d2± is less clear.

27...g6

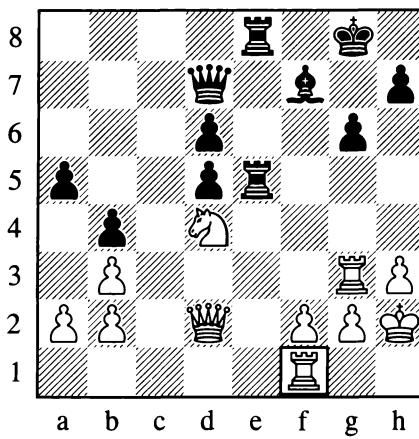
A painful move to play, but what else should Black do?

After 27...♝g6? 28.♞h4 it is already time to consider resignation.

And after 27...♝e6 28.♗e1 ♜e8 29.a3± Black is in a bad way.

28.♗d2 ♜e8 29.♗d4 ♜fe5

The most active move. After both 29...♝h5 30.♗c1± and 29...♝f6 30.♗c1±, White would be able to put pressure on the queenside more or less undisturbed.



30.f4!

White is able to exploit the weakening of the black kingside with this pawn advance.

30...♝e4 31.f5 ♜h8

31...♛a7 32.♗h6 ♜xd4 33.fxg6 hxg6 34.♗xg6† and White wins.

32.♗h6 ♜e7

The only move; 32...♝g8 33.♗f3! and White wins.

33.♗f3 ♜f8 34.♗g5 ♜g7 35.f6?!

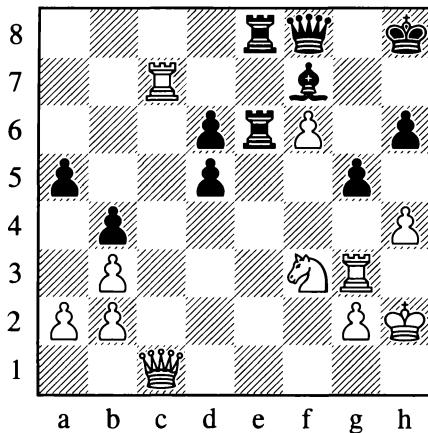
This succeeds in the long term, but in the shorter term it blocks the open files that White is attacking along. 35.fxg6 ♜xg6 (35...♝xg6 36.♗c1! and White wins material) 36.♗xd5 ♜xb2 37.♗xd6± with an extra pawn was stronger.

35...♝f8 36.♗c1 h6 37.♗d2 g5?

A decent idea, wanting to prepare ...♝h5, but played at the wrong time.

Black should prefer 37... $\mathbb{E}e2$ 38. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{E}2e3$ 39. $\mathbb{W}a6$ $g5\pm$, with ideas such as 40. $\mathbb{W}xa5$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$.

38. $\mathbb{E}c7$ $\mathbb{E}e2$ 39. $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{E}2e6$ 40. $h4!$



The black kingside disintegrates.

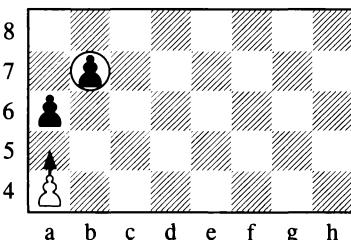
40... $\mathbb{E}xf6$ 41. $hxg5$ $\mathbb{E}g6$

41... $\mathbb{E}fe6$ 42. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{E}g6$ 43. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ also gives White a winning attack. Here is a possible line: 43... $\mathbb{E}e6$ 44. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{E}g7$ 45. $\mathbb{E}f3$ $\mathbb{W}g8$ 46. $g6!$ $\mathbb{E}xc7$ 47. $\mathbb{W}xh6\#$ $\mathbb{E}h7$ 48. $gxh7$ $\mathbb{W}xh7$ 49. $\mathbb{Q}g6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 50. $\mathbb{E}f8\#$ $\mathbb{E}xf8$ 51. $\mathbb{W}xh7\#$ and White wins.

42. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 43. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{E}g7$ 44. $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 45. $\mathbb{W}d3\#$
1–0

Fixing weaknesses

Usually when we talk about fixing weaknesses, it refers to a situation like this:

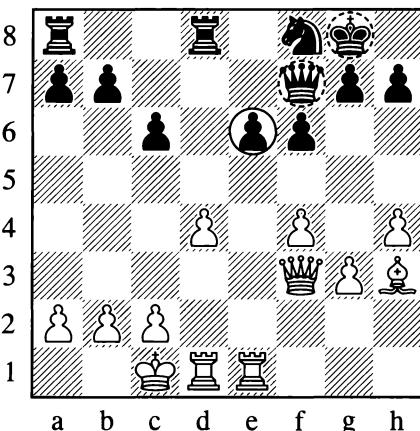


White moves the a-pawn to a5, in order to fix the weakness on b7 and create a long-term issue with the a6-pawn as well.

In the following example, the weakness is fixed through constant pressure on it, and then devoured!

Boris Spassky – Jan Hein Donner

Leiden 1970



Black has a weak pawn on e6, but at the moment it seems that it can be protected without any significant concessions. However, the weakness is all the way down the a2-g8 diagonal and White can make use of this by transferring his bishop. As a result, Black will find it very difficult to ever get rid of the weakness.

21. $\mathbb{Q}f1\!+\!$

The bishop is strong at h3, but on c4 it has the potential to be deadly.

21... $\mathbb{E}d6$

Black could have tried 21... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 23. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{E}e8$, which would have solved one big problem. But White would get free rein to advance his pawns on the kingside and probably win the game in a brutal attack.

21...a5!? would make some sense, planning to advance his pawns and at the same time kick the white bishop. However, after 22.♗c4 b5 23.♗d3 ♜ac8 24.♗b1±, Black's position has not really been improved by the advance of the pawns on the queenside.

22.♗c4 ♜ad8?!

22...f5 was better, but White has a serious advantage anyway.

23.f5 ♜xd4

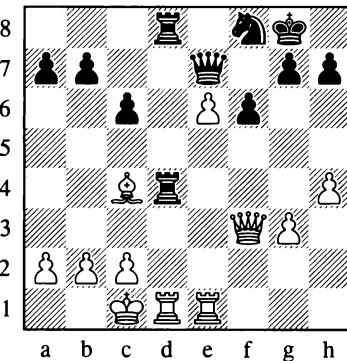
This loses by force, but by this stage probably everything does.

23...b5 would be an attempt to avoid ♜a3 tricks: 24.♗b3 ♜e8 (24...♜xd4 25.♜xd4 ♜xd4 26.♗xe6! ♖h8 27.♗d6 and White wins material) 25.fxe6 ♖xe6 26.d5 This break in the centre wins. 26...cxd5 27.♗xd5 ♜b6 28.♗d2 There is no defence against ♜de2 and ♜d5, winning the knight.

23...♜e8 24.♗a3! and White wins.

24.fxe6 ♜xd1†

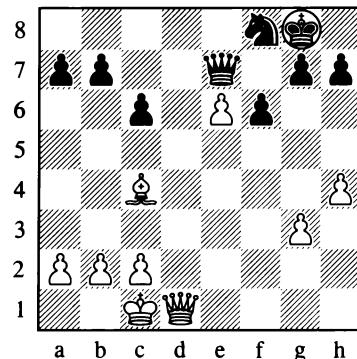
The “only” move was 24...♜e7, but here White can win the game with a simple double threat:



After 25.♗a3! Black loses something.

25.♗xd1 ♜xd1† 26.♗xd1

Donner resigned, realizing that 26...♜e7 is met conclusively with:

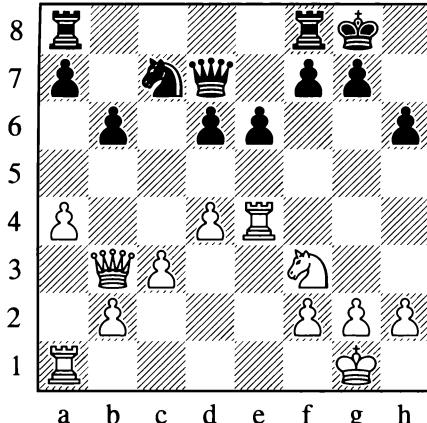


27.♗d8!!

1–0

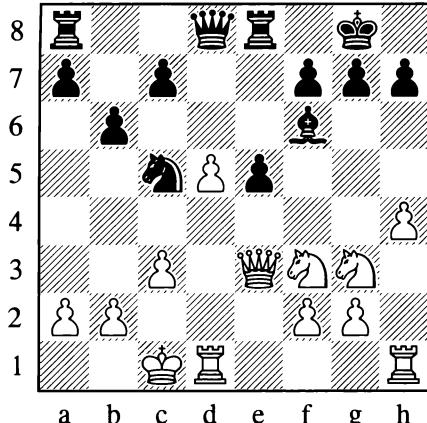
Having a keen sense of weaknesses is important for your development as a player, both before and after you become a grandmaster.

Salov – Karpov, Alma-Ata blitz (1) 1995



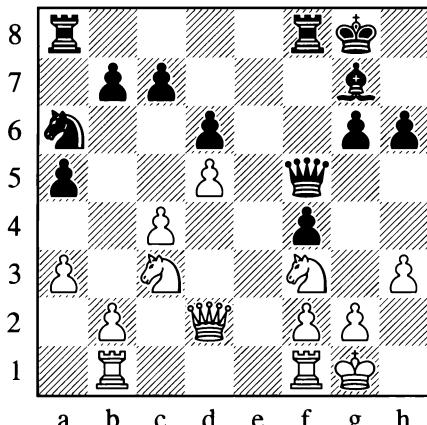
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Leko – Khalifman, Budapest 2000



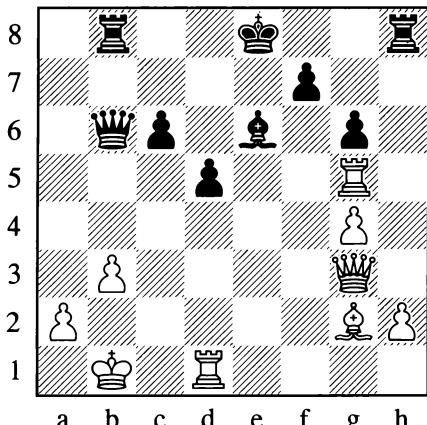
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Pogonina – E. Paehtz, Krasnoturinsk 2007



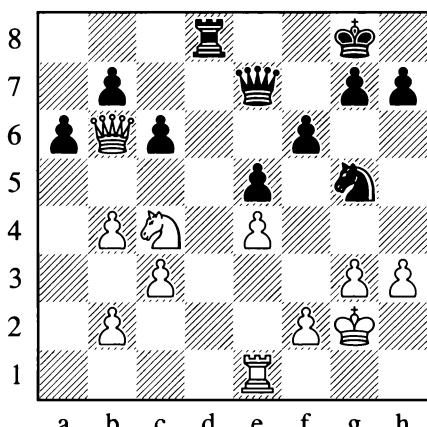
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Leko – Morozevich, Wijk aan Zee 2001



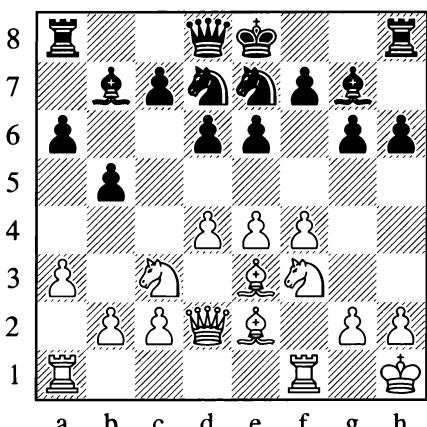
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Klinova – Ferguson, Isle of Man 2007



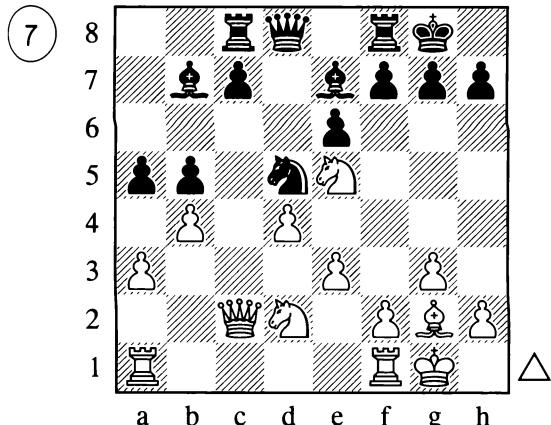
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Horn – Howell, Stockholm 2006

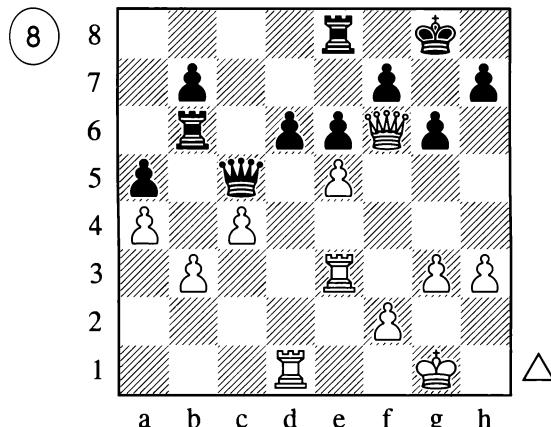


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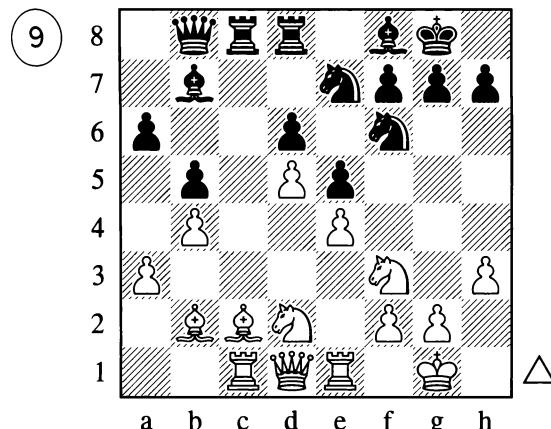
Kramnik – Carlsen, Dortmund 2007



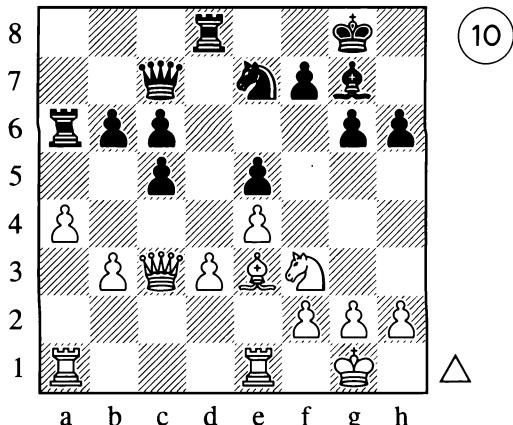
Adams – Cheparinov, Baku 2008



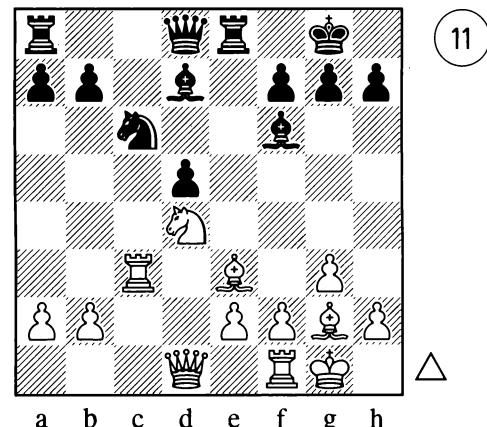
Adams – Koneru, Merida 2008



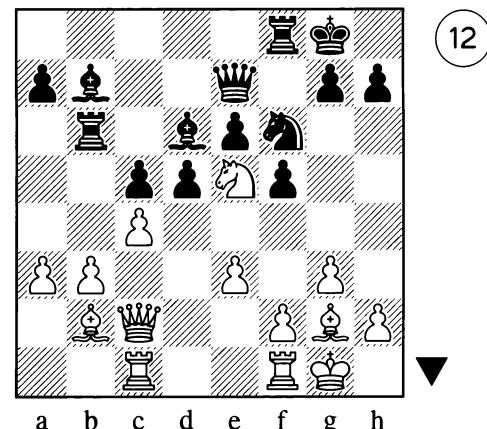
Kamsky – Al Modiahki, Sochi 2008



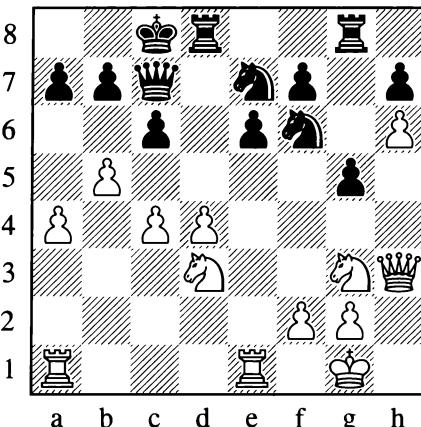
Grebionkin – Kirusha, St Petersburg 2001



Razuvaev – Klinger, Palma de Mallorca 1989

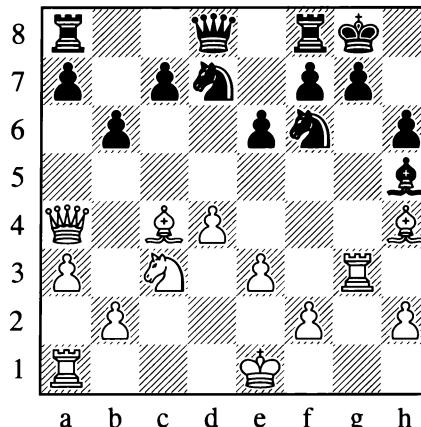


Hess – Postny, Ningbo 2011



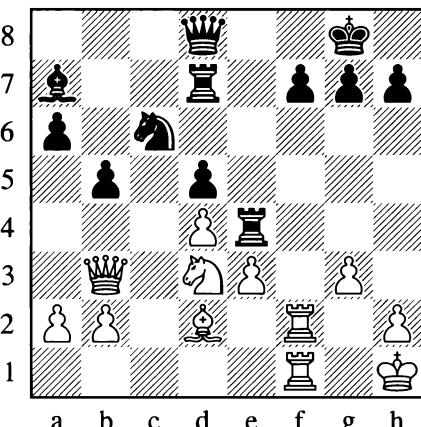
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Lysyj – Wells, Plovdiv 2008



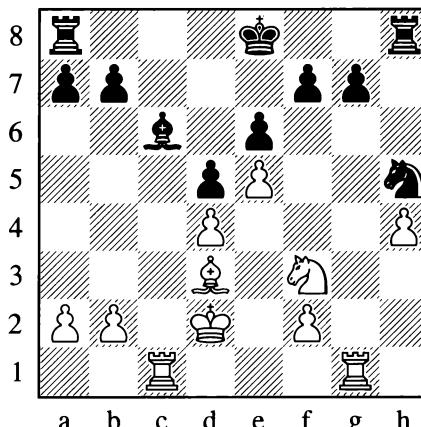
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Tomashevsky – Svidler, Moscow 2007



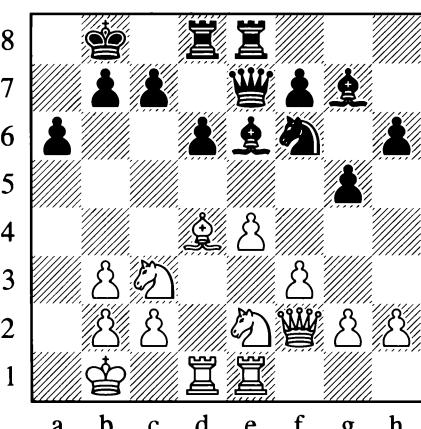
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Kramnik – Leko, Brissago (14) 2004



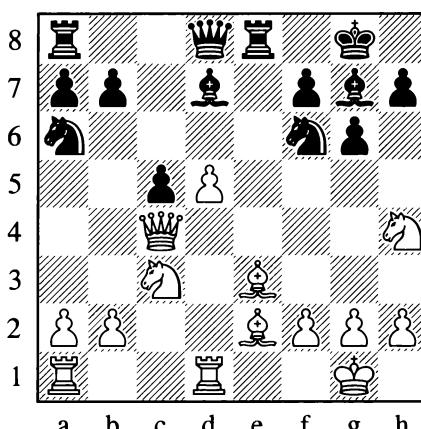
17

Nakamura – Sasikiran, Malmo/Copenhagen 2005



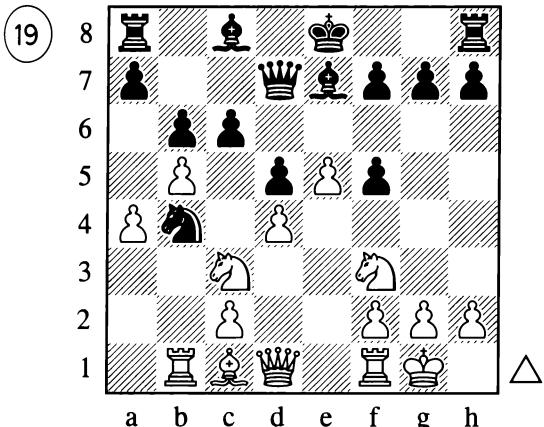
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Edouard – Le Roux, Caen 2011

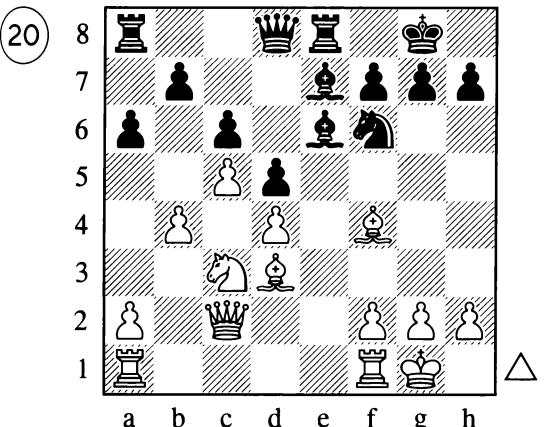


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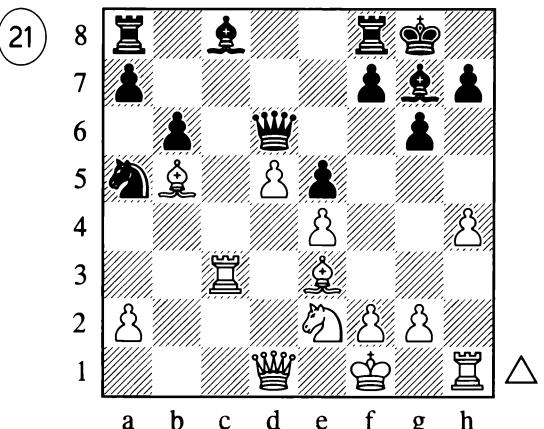
Leko – Ki. Georgiev, Dubai 2002



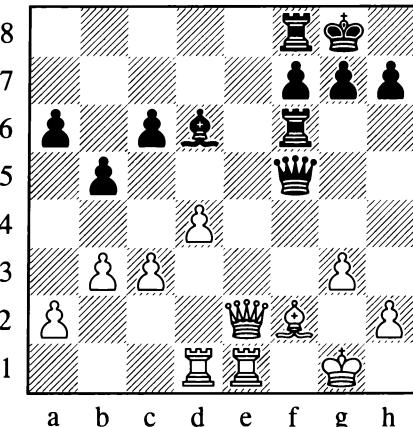
Leko – Bormida, e-mail 1997



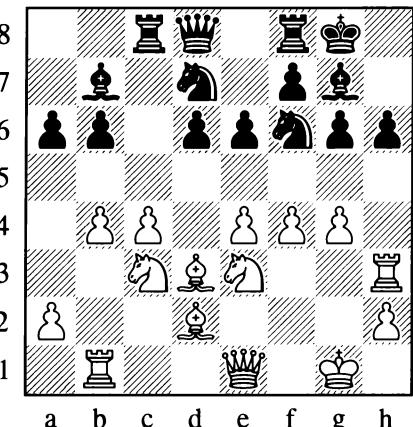
Hawkins – Knott, Liverpool 2008



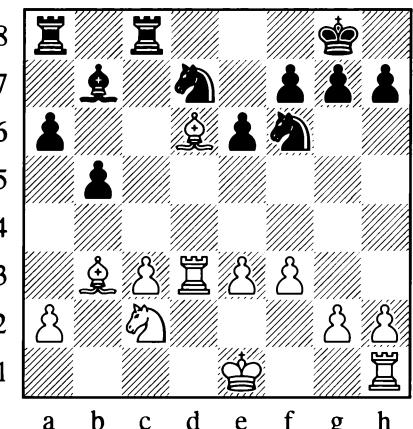
Anand – Ivanchuk, Bilbao 2008



Art. Minasian – Malakhov, Feugen 2006

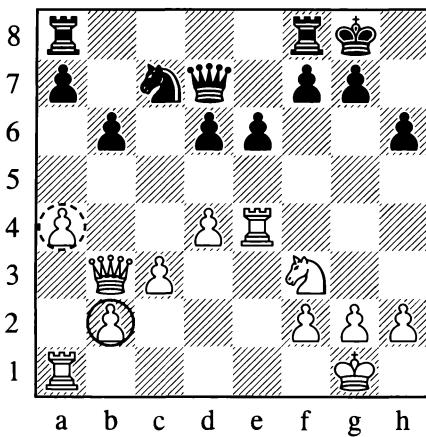


Spraggett – Ubilava, Ampuriabrava 1997



1. Salov – Karpov

Alma-Ata blitz (1) 1995



This position is of course essentially equal, but quite often equal positions are won with good moves, so it is important to play the best moves for Black. Here the only reason why White should have any problems is that the b2-pawn is a bit weak, and that he has advanced the a-pawn. Were the a-pawn on a2, Black would not have the chance to make the advances he did in the game.

16... $\mathbb{E}fb8!$

The correct rook, as the other rook needs to keep an eye on the a-pawn.

17. $\mathbb{E}ae1$

17.c4 will lead to a knight being established on d5 once Black deflects the c4-pawn. White might have a temporary initiative, but long term the d5-square will mean that the position is a bit more pleasant for Black.

17...a6! On the next move comes 18...b5!, and although the position is not terribly frightening for White, it is certainly not entirely equal.

17...d5?! would be risky. White suddenly has three pieces attacking on the kingside. After 18. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 19. $\mathbb{E}g4!$ Black has to play

non-script moves such as 19...f6?!, when the position is simply unclear.

17. $\mathbb{Q}e1!$ as suggested by Andrew Greet was probably the most prudent move. White manoeuvres the knight to d3 in order to keep all his pieces covered. In this case White probably holds equality without too much trouble.

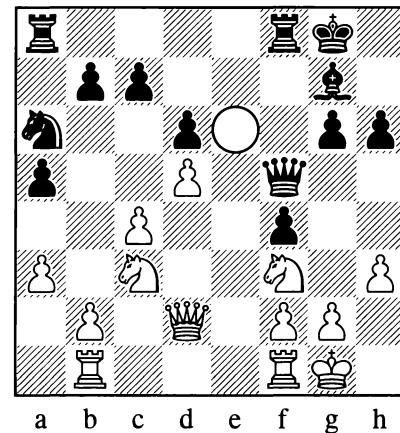
17...b5 18.axb5 $\mathbb{E}xb5$ 19. $\mathbb{W}a2$ a5# 20. $\mathbb{E}4e2$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 21. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{W}b7$ 22. $\mathbb{W}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 23. $\mathbb{W}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 24. $\mathbb{E}d2$

Black eventually won this blitz-game on move 40, but at this point he overlooked the chance to win the game instantly with either 24... $\mathbb{E}g5$ or 24... $\mathbb{Q}xg2!$.

...0-1

2. Pogonina – E. Paehtz

Krasnoturinsk 2007



White has a pleasant position after various decent moves, but the clearest plan by far is to transfer a knight to the weak e6-square. This is what White did in the game.

21. $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ g5

21... $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}bd4$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ has the idea of replying to 23. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ with 23... $\mathbb{Q}c5!$, when Black would be okay, but it can be met with either

the greedy 23. $\mathbb{W}xa5!?$ or the more restrained 23.b4, in each case with a great advantage.

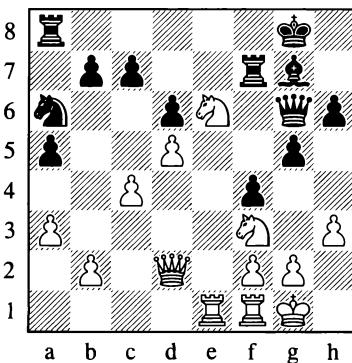
22. $\mathbb{Q}bd4 \mathbb{W}g6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e6$

We could actually stop here. When you play positional chess, you do not have to be able to see anything beyond transferring the ineffective knight from c3 to e6. White has many ways to follow up, with some probably better than others, but it is not something we gain a practical advantage out of determining in advance.

23... $\mathbb{E}f7$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xa5?$

This move looks very tempting, but it allows Black to come back into the game with counterplay on the kingside. The correct way to play was to make the most out of the remaining inactive pieces.

After 24. $\mathbb{E}be1!$ White's advantage is very clear.



It has to be the b1-rook, as it was under threat from the queen, and so moving the other rook would deny White the option of doubling on the e-file. If Black plays 24... $\mathbb{Q}c5$, the knight can be exchanged and then the rook enters the position on e6 with a clear superiority. And if Black plays 24... $\mathbb{g}4$ White can play 25. $hxg4 \mathbb{W}xg4$ 26. $\mathbb{E}e4!$ with $\mathbb{E}fe1$ on the way. The black position is full of weaknesses and White's dominating pieces will secure her a clear edge in all lines. In the game, matters were less clear.

24... $\mathbb{g}4$ 25. $hxg4 \mathbb{W}xg4$

The g-file is opened and the position is not as clear as it once was.

26. $\mathbb{W}e1!$

The queen is urgently needed on the kingside.

The computer thinks White also can win with 26. $b4!?$, with the idea that 26... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 27. $b5 \mathbb{E}g8$ 28. $bxa6 \mathbb{Q}d4$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}e1 f3$ allows White to play 30. $\mathbb{W}d2!$. This is a very complicated line, and an example of a machine not being able to do a human's job. After 30... $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ Black has enough counterplay and it is White who has to look for a draw: 31. $g3 bxa6$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}xf3 \mathbb{W}xf3$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}d4 \mathbb{E}xg3\#$ 34. $fxg3 \mathbb{W}xg3\#$ 35. $\mathbb{W}g2 \mathbb{Q}xd4\#$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}h1 \mathbb{W}h4\#$ 37. $\mathbb{W}h2 \mathbb{W}e4\#$

26. $\mathbb{W}b5!?$ is another computer favourite. It takes a human to discover the correct riposte: 26... $\mathbb{Q}h8!$ 27. $\mathbb{W}xb7 \mathbb{E}g8$ Black has some counterplay here. The critical line starts 28. $\mathbb{Q}h2!$ (28. $\mathbb{W}xa6!$ $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ and White is mated) 28... $\mathbb{W}g6$ 29. $\mathbb{W}b3 f3!$ 30. $g3 \mathbb{Q}c5$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}xc5 \mathbb{Q}d4!$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}h1 \mathbb{Q}xf2$ 33. $g4 \mathbb{Q}xc5$ 34. $\mathbb{W}c3\# \mathbb{Q}h7$ 35. $\mathbb{E}be1 f2$ with chances for both sides.

26... $\mathbb{Q}h8?$

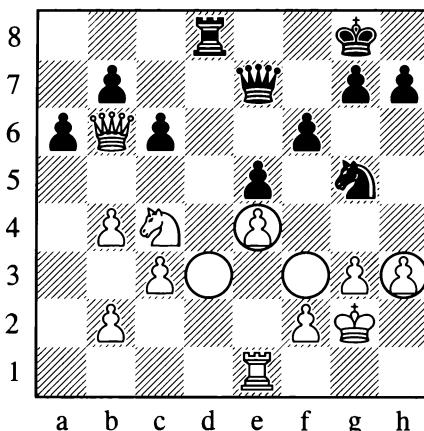
Black misses her opponent's defensive resource. 26... $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ was much better, and after 27. $\mathbb{Q}xc5 dxc5$ 28. $b4!$ $cxb4$ 29. $axb4 \mathbb{E}f6$ 30. $\mathbb{W}e4 \mathbb{E}g6$ Black has a lot of counterplay. I would guess that White is still minimally better with correct play, but it is definitely easier to play the black position, making the result rather unpredictable.

27. $\mathbb{W}d1! \mathbb{E}g8$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}fg5! \mathbb{W}f5$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xf7\#$ $\mathbb{W}xf7$ 30. $\mathbb{W}f3$

And White won.

3. Klinova – Ferguson

Isle of Man 2007



White's weaknesses are h3 and e4. Black can organize an attack on both of these quite easily. The thing to look out for is how to increase the pressure on the white position without giving White any counterplay.

28... $\mathbb{W}d7!$

The obvious first move. White only has one reply.

29.g4 h5!

This is the key move. The white pawns are put under increased pressure as the pawn joins in the attack.

The common mistake here is to think that Black has a decisive double attack with 29... $\mathbb{W}d3?!$, but actually, because of the slightly exposed nature of the rook on d8, White can repulse the attack with 30. $\mathbb{E}e3!$.

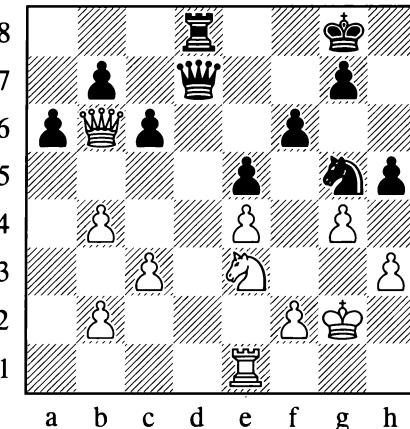
It should be said that 29... $\mathbb{Q}e6!?$ would also give Black a great game.

30. $\mathbb{E}e3$

White can also call in reinforcements from his own pawn base, but it would weaken the king's position on the second rank, which

can be seen from the line: 30.f3 $\mathbb{W}d3!$ 31. $\mathbb{E}e3$ $\mathbb{W}c2\#$ with a winning attack.

30. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ would lose to 30... $\mathbb{W}d3\#$ 31. $\mathbb{E}e3$ $\mathbb{W}d1!$ with a decisive attack.



30... $\mathbb{W}d3!$

The e-pawn falls with check. The game is decided.

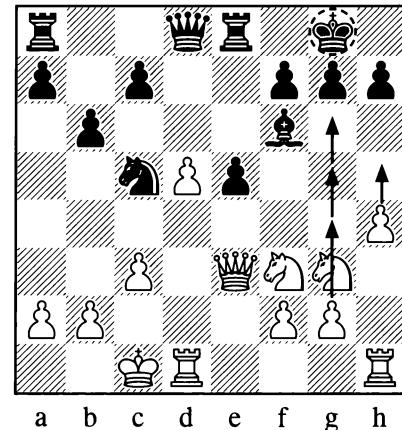
31.h4 $\mathbb{W}xe4\#$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}h1\#$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}f3\#$

34. $\mathbb{Q}f1$

0–1

4. Leko – Khalifman

Budapest rapid (4) 2000



18.♘e4!

This move is the best for two reasons, and should thus be relatively easy to find. First of all it prevents Black from playing 18...e4 and activating the black bishop on f6. Secondly, it exchanges the knight on c5, giving White the advantage of good knight against somewhat inactive bishop. There is of course a lot of play in the position, but this still secures a slight plus.

18...♞xe4

After this normal-looking move Black is entirely without counterplay. However, it is not easy to cook up something better.

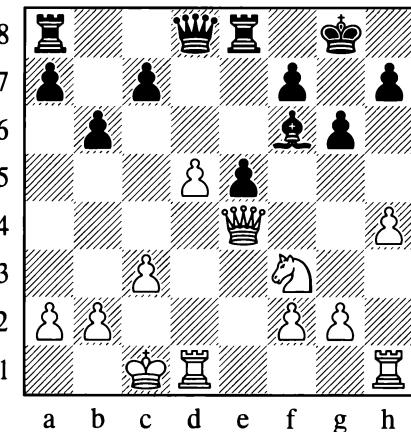
Maybe it was necessary to play 18...♝e7, when White is still happy after 19.g4±, but his queen is not nearly as dominant as in the game.

19.♛xe4

White is ready for g2-g4-g5; Black has no counterplay.

19...g6

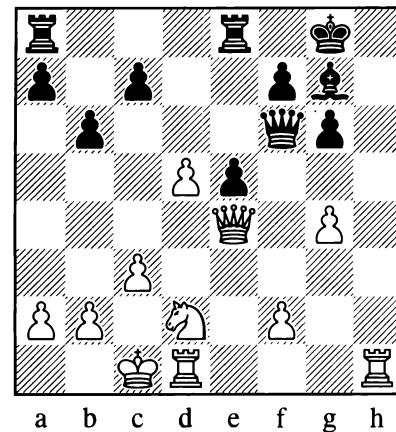
19...h5 20.♝hg1! would give White a strong initiative on the kingside.

**20.g4**

This move does not make a lot of sense to me. It seems more natural to play 20.h5± and keep the future of the g-pawn open.

20...♝g7 21.h5 ♜f6 22.hxg6 hxg6 23.♘d2±

White could have tried a lot of other moves here, but nothing was really clear-cut.

**23...c6?**

White's only problem is the d-pawn. Exchanging it does not open a file for attack against the white king, it merely exchanges this weakness.

23...♝xf2? would allow White to start a winning attack with 24.♝df1, and then:

a) 24...♝g3 is somewhat complicated, but clear enough once you see the idea: 25.♘c4!! ♜ad8 26.♘e3 and the threat of ♜f3 is devastating. Black can try 26...♝d6 27.♝f3 f5??, but it is not enough. 28.♘xf5! gxh5 (28...♝g2 29.♘g3! with ♜f8† coming.) 29.♝xf5 and the queen is lost.

b) 24...♝c5 25.♝f3! ♜e7 26.♘e4 ♜ed8 (26...♝f8 27.♝h7! followed by ♜h3 is equally decisive) 27.♝h3 and Black cannot survive. For example: 27...♝xd5 28.♝h7† ♜f8 29.g5 ♜d6 30.♝f6 ♜xf6 31.gxf6 ♜xf6 32.♝xf6! ♜xf6 33.♝h8† ♜xh8 34.♝xh8† ♜e7 35.♝xa8 and the ending is won.

23...♝ad8!± was natural and sensible. White plays something like 24.f3 and prepares to put the knight on e4 with a slight but enduring edge.

24.dxc6 $\mathbb{W}ac8$ 25.f3 $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 26. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}e6$
27. $\mathbb{Q}b1\pm e4?$

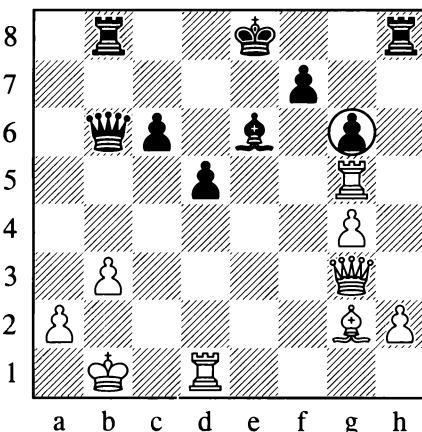
Black tries something desperate; his position is very unpleasant.

28. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 29. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 30. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$
31. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1\uparrow$ 32. $\mathbb{W}xd1$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 33. $\mathbb{W}d3$ a5
34. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 35. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$
37. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}d7$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ 39.a4 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 40. $\mathbb{W}d5$
 $\mathbb{W}f4$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 42. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 43. $\mathbb{W}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$
44. $\mathbb{Q}b7$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 45. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ 46. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$
47. $\mathbb{Q}a6$ $\mathbb{W}d2$ 48. $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 49. $\mathbb{Q}a7$ g5 50. $\mathbb{Q}a2$
 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 51. $\mathbb{W}d4\uparrow$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 52.cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 53. $\mathbb{Q}b3$

1–0

5. Leko – Morozevich

Wijk aan Zee 2001



White's pieces are basically placed as he would like them to be. Both players have unsafe kings, but that cannot be exploited immediately.

29.h4!±

White's only asset is his potential passed pawn. In order for it to have any value, it must be pushed immediately.

The alternatives do not offer White any advantage. 29. $\mathbb{W}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 30. $\mathbb{W}e5$ 0–0 gives

White little. Black is ready to play ... $\mathbb{W}f2$ or ... $\mathbb{Q}fe8$. White can of course force a draw, but nothing more is available.

29. $\mathbb{W}e5$ can again be answered with castling, but it is also possible to play 29... $\mathbb{Q}d7?$, when the black king looks safe as houses in the middle.

29. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ can also be answered with a king move, or 29...0–0?, as White has no particular compensation after 30. $\mathbb{W}xe6$ $fxe6$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}xg6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$.

29... $\mathbb{Q}a8$

29... $\mathbb{Q}d7?$ 30.h5 $\mathbb{Q}bg8\pm$ looks a more natural defence, but Black is still on the defensive.

30.h5 $\mathbb{W}a7$ 31.a4

31. $\mathbb{Q}d2?!\pm$ was also possible.

31...gxh5

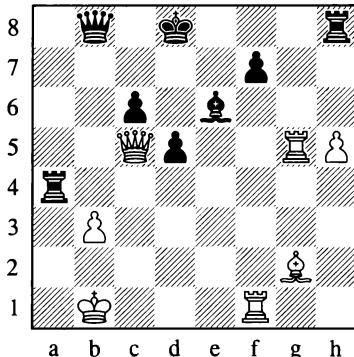
This looks like a concession. The g-file is a great asset for White. On the other hand, Black wins a tempo.

32.gxh5 $\mathbb{W}b8$ 33. $\mathbb{W}c3$

33. $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ appears stronger.

33... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}e1?!\infty$

34. $\mathbb{Q}f1\uparrow$ was perhaps the right move. White is a little better, as can be shown by this line: 34... $\mathbb{W}xa4?$ 35. $\mathbb{W}c5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$



36.♗xd5!! cxd5 37.♗xd5† ♖e8 38.♗c6† ♖f8
39.♗b5!± and White finishes an exchange up in the ending.

34...♗f4

34...♗xa4! would leave White with only a draw.

35.♗ge5 ♖d6 36.♗h3 ♖xh3 37.♗xh3 ♗ab8

38.♗e7 ♗hd8?

38...♗xh5! 39.♗d7† ♖c5 40.♗c3† ♖b6
41.a5† ♖b5 42.♗d3† ♖b4 43.a6±

39.♗c3?

39.h6!+–

39...d4?

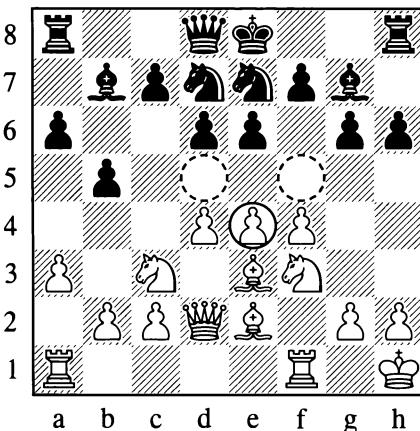
39...♗h8±

40.♗c4 ♗f5† 41.♔a2 ♗d5 42.♗c2!

1–0

6. Horn – Howell

Stockholm 2006



White's centre looks great, but it is not stable. Black can with a few good moves create some attractive squares for his pieces. One of the surprises to some is that Black does not have to worry too much about the safety of his king

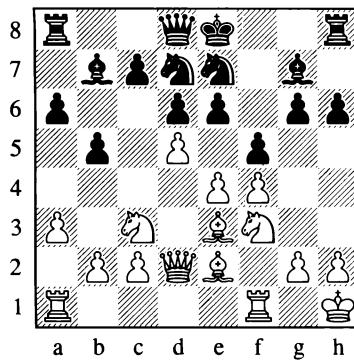
in this position. The way the white bishops are pointing, they are a danger to no one.

The essence of the position is the way White is clinging on to the light squares, only supporting those in the centre with the knight on c3. It is for this reason that Black can undermine the centre.

11...f5! 12.e5?

This is very compliant. Black now has three pieces that are thriving, while the bishop on g7 is not significantly worse than the bishop on e3, and despite everything has a long-term future.

12.d5! was a natural move. White is fighting for the light squares as well.



After 12...fxe4 White can either choose the calm line with 13.dxe6 exf3 14.exd7† ♗xd7 15.♗xf3 ♗xf3 16.♗xf3 0–0 with more or less even chances, or he can try the more aggressive 13.♗d4? ♗xd5 14.♗xd5 ♗xd5 15.f5??. However, I think Black is not worse after 15...0–0, although nothing is certain, of course.

12...♗b6 13.b3

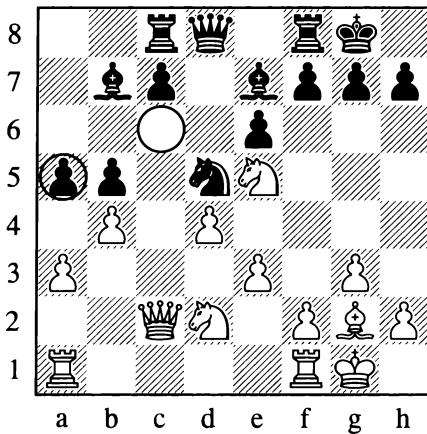
I find it difficult to suggest a plan for White here. Black is very solid and the white pieces are poor, yet not easy to improve.

13...♗d7 14.a4 b4 15.♗a2 a5 16.c3 bxc3
17.♗xc3 ♖f7 18.♗b5 ♗ed5†

Black is better and won on move 54.

7. Kramnik – Carlsen

Dortmund 2007



This is an example of opening preparation gone completely wrong. Carlsen must have thought that he was in time to challenge the bind on the black position created by the pawn on d4, before the weakness of the c6-square and the problems with the backward pawn started to emerge. Kramnik must have wanted his knight on d2 to do something. Both his rooks are inactive, but they cannot assist in the fight for c6 easily. So, once again, the solution is to play the piece which is prime for improvement towards the weakness.

17. $\mathbb{Q}b3!$

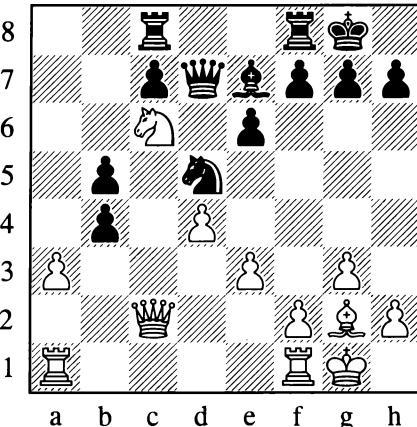
The computer points out that there is a more tactical solution to the position. White is also much better after 17.e4!?, $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}b3!$ $a\text{xb}4$ 19. $a\text{xb}4 \pm$, based on the following tactical point: 19... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}a7$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xa8!$ $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ and the bishop is lost as well. This is objectively neither better nor worse than Kramnik's solution, but I have to say that I like the clarity of Kramnik's play more.

17... $a\text{xb}4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}a5$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}ac6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$

After this move, all hope is gone. Black should not exchange this bishop, after which

he is forced to accept a bad bishop versus good knight position. Instead he should have hoped that the bishop on a8, however ineffectual it is at the moment, could one day make something of itself.

20. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}d7$



21. $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$

Seals the deal. Black is paralysed.

21... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 22. $a\text{xb}4$

White is essentially winning already. Black's pawns are too weak and the knight is too strong.

22... $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 23. $\mathbb{E}a5$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 25. $\mathbb{E}xb5$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 26. $\mathbb{E}xb8$ $\mathbb{E}xb8$ 27. $\mathbb{W}xc7$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 28. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$

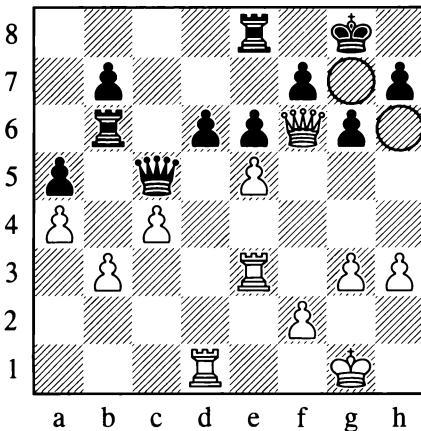
Just a way to end it all, I guess.

29. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 30. $\mathbb{W}a4$

1–0

8. Adams – Cheparinov

Baku 2008



Black's weaknesses are all on the kingside. As the centre is very stable there is plenty of time for White to start a kingside attack.

32.h4! d5

This loses by force, but the position is not tenable.

32...h5

This weakens the kingside. Among other possibilities, White might consider the following direct approach:

33.g4! hxg4 34.h5! gxh5 35.Wg5† ♕f8
36.Wh6†!

An important check. If the king goes to g8, White takes time to take on h5, planning further attacks on the black king. The critical line is thus:

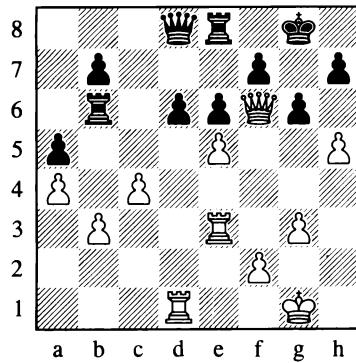
36...♔e7 37.Wf6† ♔d7

37...♔f8 38.♕d5! is a neat finish. After 38...Wxe3 39.fxe3 exd5 40.exd6 ♔g8 41.d7 White wins.

38.Wxf7† ♔e7 39.Wxh5

White should win this position, where he will soon be a pawn up with a great attack.

32...Wc7 33.h5 Wd8 looks like it should be the best defence.



But after 34.Wf3!, preventing ...d5 and continuing to set up an attacking position, Black is not going to survive anyway.

32...dxe5 33.♕d7 Wf8 34.♕f3 and White wins.

33.♕f3 ♔e7 34.Wxe7 ♕xe7 35.cxd5 exd5
36.♕xd5 ♕be6 37.♕xa5 ♕xe5 38.♕xe5 ♕xe5
39.♕e3! ♕d5 40.♕e8† ♔g7 41.♕b8 ♕d7
42.♕g2 h5 43.b4 ♕f6 44.a5 ♕e6 45.b5
♕d6 46.♕c8 ♕e7 47.b6 ♕e5

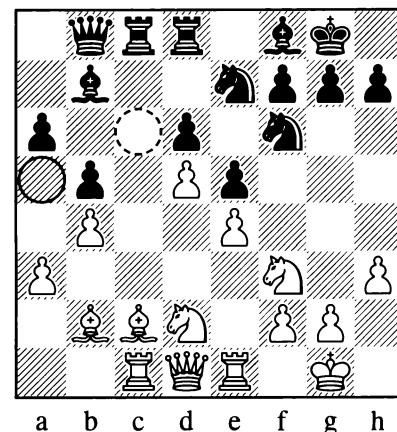
A small mistake in a lost position.

48.a6!

1–0

9. Adams – Koneru

Merida 2008



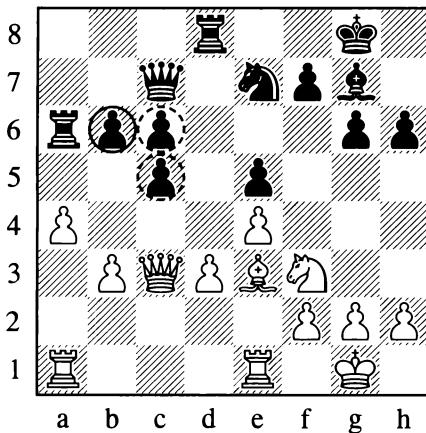
The great weakness in the black position is the c6-square, which White would love to dominate. For this reason the knight belongs on a5. It is actually no more difficult than that in this case.

**20.♘b3! ♘d7 21.♘a5 ♘b6 22.♗b3 h6
23.♗d3±**

White has a huge advantage and won safely on move 44.

10. Kamsky – Al Modiahki

Sochi 2008



Destruction of the opponent's pawn structure.

19.a5! ♜xa5 20.♗xa5 bxa5 21.♕xc5±

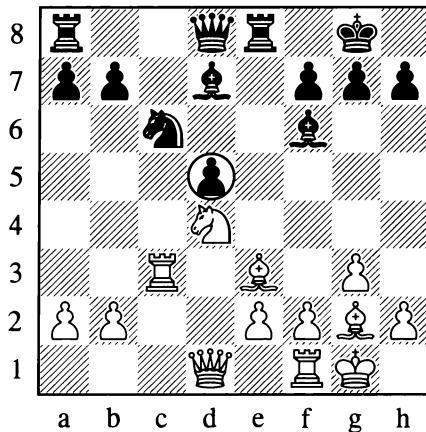
Black has three weak pawns, on a5, c6 and e5. White is simply better, especially as he controls the important c4- and c5-squares.

21...♘c8 22.h4?!

22.♗a1 ♘a7 23.♗e1! would have won the a-pawn, though White managed to squeeze out a win on move 52 anyway.

11. Grebionkin – Kirusha

St Petersburg 2001



White has achieved quite a promising position from the opening and could even consider sacrificing the exchange with 16.♗xd5 ♘h3 17.♗xc6 bxc6 18.♗xc6 ♘xf1 19.♗xf1. However, I do not think Black would be too unhappy about this turn of events, as he has rid himself of his weaknesses, and has some chances of proving that the exchange is more important than the two pawns.

Another interesting move is 16.♗e1, simply defending the e2-pawn and stepping out of the ...♘h3 shot. But here I am not so sure about the consequences of dynamic play with 16...♗e7?!, intending to meet 17.♗xd5 with 17...♗ad8, when the position has become a bit more complicated than I would like. It is possible that this is objectively as strong as the game continuation (although I doubt it), but from a practical point of view, it definitely makes less sense. The correct move was played by Grebionkin.

16.♗c5!

The attack on d5 with the rook forces Black to clarify his position in the centre.

16... $\mathbb{W}e7!$?

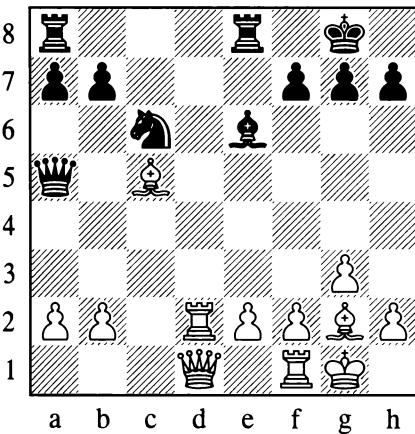
Black gives up a pawn in the hope that he will get some activity.

If Black plays simple chess, such as 16... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 18.e3 or 16... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 18.e3, then White has a clear edge, with a permanent target on d5. With the exchange of a pair of minor pieces, the activity of the black position has disappeared.

Black could try the sneaky 16... $\mathbb{Q}e6!?$. White does not have any clear way to put Black away, but the position after 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 19. $\mathbb{W}d3$, with ideas such as $\mathbb{Q}a6$, $\mathbb{Q}d1$ or $\mathbb{Q}c5$, is still very uncomfortable for Black.

17. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

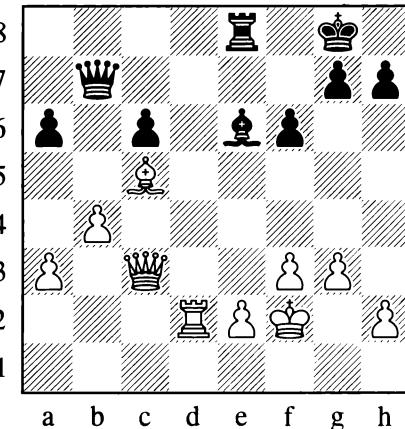
17... $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$
20. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ appears to be a pawn up for nothing.

18. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ **21. $\mathbb{Q}xc6!$ bxc6 22.b4**

White should be winning here. The extra pawn and the brilliant position of the bishop on c5 are enough to win. It is true that opposite-coloured bishops can be a strong drawing factor, but in certain positions, such as this one, they can actually make matters worse. The fact that White did not win the

game is down to poor technique, or perhaps simply a bad day.

22... $\mathbb{W}a6$ 23. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2$
25. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{W}b7$ 26.f3 a6 27. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{W}b5$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}f2$
f6 29.a3 $\mathbb{W}b7$

**30. $\mathbb{W}d3$**

30. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ is much more natural; White is just winning.

30...h6 31. $\mathbb{W}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 32.e4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 33.g4 $\mathbb{W}c8$
34. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 36.h4 $\mathbb{W}f7$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}c3$
 $\mathbb{Q}xd2\#$ 38. $\mathbb{W}xd2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ c5

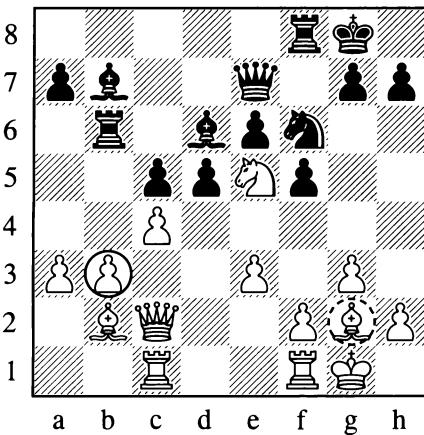
Black should never have been allowed to play this.

40. $\mathbb{W}e3$ cxb4 41.axb4 $\mathbb{W}c6$ 42. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{W}c7\#$
43. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 44. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}b5$ 45. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{W}c6$
46.g5 hxg5 47.hxg5 f5 48. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ fxe4 49.fxe4
 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 50. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 51. $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 52. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}h3\#$
53. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{W}h2\#$ 54. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{W}g3\#$ 55. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}g4\#$
56. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}xg5\#$ 57. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}e7$

½–½

12. Razuvaev – Klinger

Palma de Mallorca 1989



White has a weakness on b3 and Black has weaknesses in the centre. Black is able to take advantage of the white weakness, rid himself of his own weaknesses and exchange the bishop on g2 – creating new weaknesses on the light squares around the white king – all with a simple move.

19...d4! 20.exd4

White has no choice.

**20...♝xg2 21.♝xg2 ♕b7† 22.♔g1 ♜xb3
23.♔a1**

Forced. White does not have serious chances of saving the ending after 23.♕d3 ♜xd3 24.♗xd3 ♕xb2 25.d5 exd5 26.♗xf5 ♕e5 27.♗xe5 ♜xe5 28.cxd5 ♜d4. On top of this, 23...♝e4 with the idea of ...♝g5 is also dangerous for White.

23...♝xe5!

A great positional decision. The bishop on a1 is stone-cold dead, and Black is just winning.

24.dxe5 ♜e4 25.h4

25.♗b1 ♜g5 and Black wins.

25...♜d8

25...f4! would have been immediately destructive.

26.♝cd1

Klinger thought that 26.♗b1 ♜xb1 27.♗xb1 was a better defence, but missed that 27...♝d2! is decisive.

26...♜xd1 27.♝xd1 ♜xg3!

A nice finish.

28.♚h2

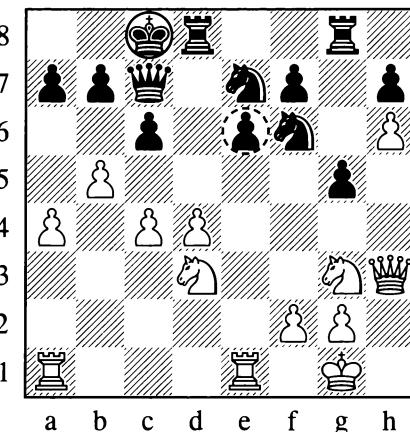
28.fxg3 ♜xg3† 29.♚h2 ♔f3 leads to mate.

28...♔f3 29.♔d2 ♔f1†

0–1

13. Hess – Postny

Ningbo 2011



Black has two sets of weaknesses: the f7/e6 pawn constellation and his king, which is being threatened by the advancing white pawns. The weakness in the white camp is obviously the d-pawn, which would be apparent after 27.bxc6?! ♜xd4! with an unclear position. Putting these facts together, it is not difficult to come up with the strong move Hess played in the game.

27.d5! ♖b8?!

This just loses, but Black's position is poor in any case.

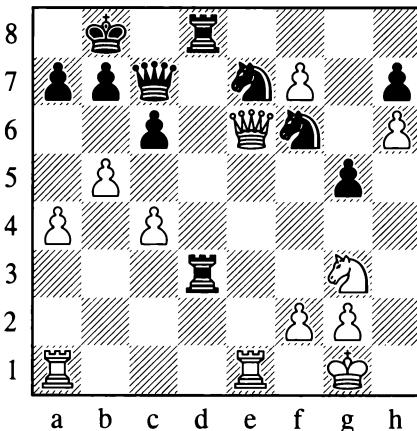
27...cxd5?! 28.cxd5 ♖b8 is not really different. (28...♝xd5 29.♝ac1 ♜xd3 is obviously good for White if he takes the queen, but even stronger is 30.♝xe6! with a direct win.) 29.♝ac1 Taking the pawn on e6 next will lead to a winning endgame.

27...g4? 28.♔h4 and White wins.

27...♝g6! was the only move. Black is still under great pressure, but at least he does not lose directly. Probably White is best off playing 28.bxc6 g4 29.♔h2 bxc6 and now either 30.♝b4 or 30.♝ab1 with great pressure on the black position.

28.dxe6! ♜xd3 29.exf7 ♜gd8 30.♔e6

White wins back the piece and is easily winning.

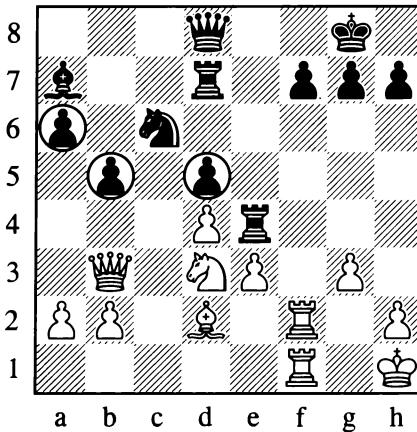


30...♝eg8 31.fxg8=♛ ♛xg8 32.♝e4 g4
33.bxc6 g3 34.♝ab1 b6 35.fxg3 ♛a8 36.a5

1–0

14. Tomashevsky – Svidler

Moscow 2007



Black has a weakness on d5 and is under pressure on f7. At the same time Black is not really able to put pressure on e3, where the bad bishop is defending a good pawn, as Suba would say. The main reason for this is of course that Black's minor pieces are rather out of play. White is able to increase his advantage by putting further pressure on the black position and creating an additional weakness.

26.a4!

After both 26.♔a3 ♜e6!± and 26.♝c1 ♜e6 27.a4 ♜b7± Black is of course worse, but his position can still be defended.

26...bxa4

A sad decision, but it was very difficult to find the only chance available to Black:
26...♜b8 27.axb5 axb5 28.♝c1 ♜b7!

28...♜e6 is met with 29.♝c5 ♜xc5 30.♝xc5 and White wins a pawn.

29.♝c5! ♜c8!

29...b4 30.♔a4 and Black will soon lose the b4-pawn.

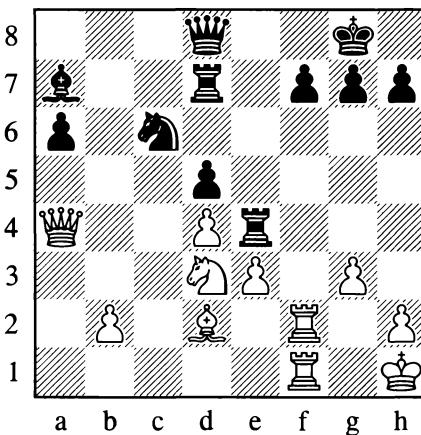
Against this tactically-based defence, White can play 30.♝c3 with a solid advantage, or enter the tactics with:

30. $\mathbb{Q}xb5!?$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$
33. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

Where White has an extra pawn, but the technical job is quite complicated.

After 26... $\mathbb{Q}a5?$ White has a simple but attractive combination: 27. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xf7!$ (28. $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ is more human, and also wins.) 28... $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}xd5+$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}e5\#!$ and White wins on account of 31... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}f3\#$ with mate to follow.

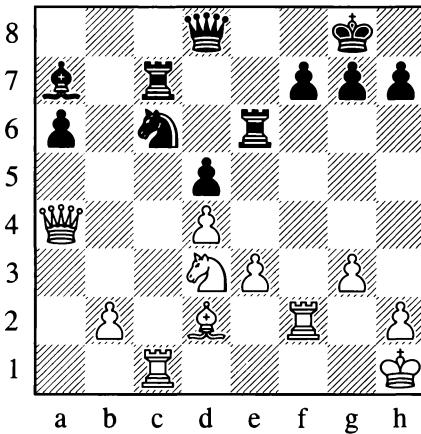
27. $\mathbb{Q}xa4\#$



27... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}c1$

Black cannot avoid losing material, the a6-pawn being most likely to fall.

28... $\mathbb{Q}c7?$

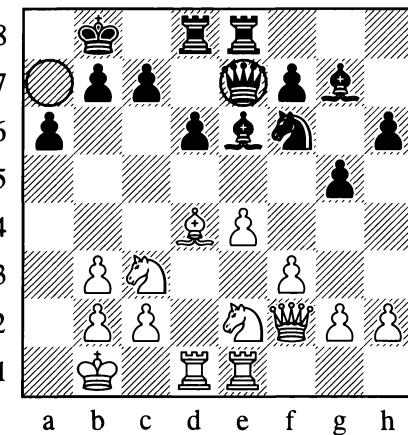


29. $\mathbb{Q}f4!$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}a5!$

White wins the exchange and duly won the game on move 45.

15. Nakamura – Sasikiran

Malmo/Copenhagen 2005



Nakamura missed his chance when he played 23. $g4?!$ and later on lost in 87 moves. Instead White had the chance to exploit the X-ray from d4-g7 and the pressure down the d- and e-files with:

23. $e5!$ $dxe5$

23... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 24. $g4$ and White wins material.

24. $\mathbb{Q}a7\#$!

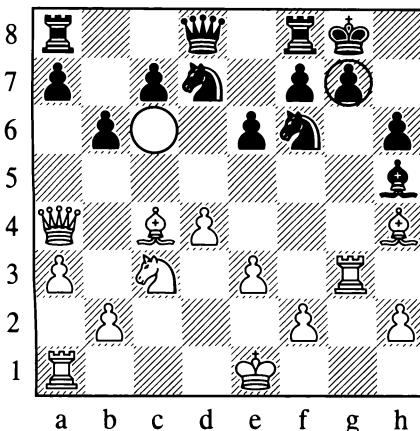
It is quite often good to either push the king into the corner or create an entry point on a7 for the queen

24... $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}c5$

White wins the exchange and would probably have won the game as well.

16. Lysyj – Wells

Plovdiv 2008



The weakness of the c6-square is the dominant feature of this position. If Black had time to play ...c7-c5 he would be absolutely okay, but by reacting quickly White can condemn him to passivity.

18.♕b5!

This is the best way to exploit the weakness. The queen is a poorer blockader and after 18.♕c6 a6! it is not so easy for White to improve his position. Black will continue with ...♔h8 and ...♗g8 in order to get White to declare his intentions. White still has compensation for the pawn, but Black is starting to free himself and should not be significantly worse, if at all. A point worth noticing is 19.♗g2 g6 20.e4 c5!, when the white centre is being undermined. This is what can happen if Black is given the space he would like. Here White has to enter terrible complications with 21.♕xe6! fxe6 22.♗xg6†, which should end in a draw with best play.

18...♗g6

It is difficult for Black to find a move.

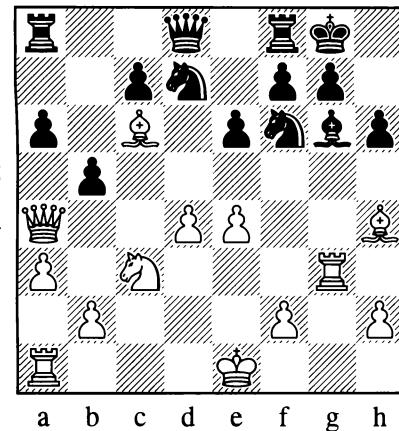
A tactical point is that 18...c5? loses instantly to 19.♗xd7 ♕xd7 20.♗xf6.

18...♕c8 19.♗c6 a6 is met with 20.e4! and White dominates. Obviously winning the exchange is less attractive than keeping control.

19.♗c6 a6 20.e4

This is an even worse version for Black than after 18...♕c8. White is just winning.

20...b5



21.♕d1?

This natural move throws away a lot of the advantage. After 21.♕b3! Black does not have any defence against e4-e5. For example 21...♕c8 22.e5 ♔h5 23.♗xg6! and after 23...fxg6 24.♗xe6† ♔f7 25.♗d5 White eventually wins material.

21...♕c8! 22.♕f3?!

It was time for White to cash in his advantage and take the exchange. Now Black develops counterplay; but probably Pete was already in serious time trouble.

22...♗b8 23.e5 ♔h5 24.♗g4 b4?

24...♗e8! is a very difficult move to find. Black wants to play ...b5-b4, but has to prevent the h4-bishop from joining the game via e7. Had Black played this, he would have been more or less okay.

25.axb4 ♜b6

25...♜xb4 26.♕e7 is hopeless. Probably Black only now realized that after 26...♜xb2 White wins with 27.♕xd7 ♜xd7 28.♕xf8 ♜xf8 29.♕xg6.

26.0–0–0?

26.♕e7 ♜e8 27.♕c5 and White wins.

26...♞b8?

26...♝e8! would have equalized here too.

27.♕e4! ♜xb4

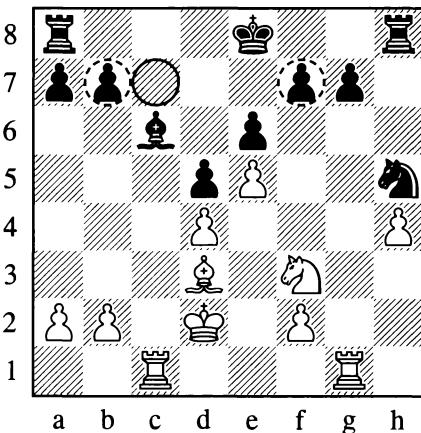
27...♝e8 comes too late now. White wins after 28.♗dg1 ♜c6 29.♗h3! with serious threats to the black king.

28.♕e7

1–0

17. Kramnik – Leko

Brissago (14) 2004



In the long term White will have no advantage on the kingside. Black will play ...g6, after which his structure cannot be penetrated easily – the f7-pawn is too easy to defend. All of White's advantage is therefore on the queenside.

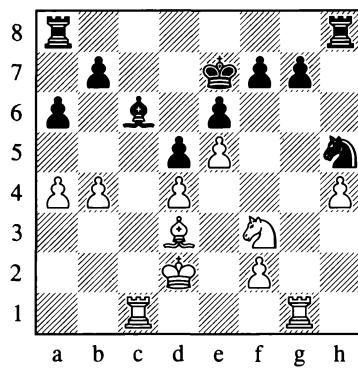
21.b4!

The weakness is the c7-square, and White needs to get his rook in there in order to attack all the other weaknesses on the 7th rank.

21...a6 22.a4 ♔d8?

22...♜xa4 23.♜c7 favours White. He will win back the pawn immediately. For example: 23...♝c6?! 24.♗g5 ♜f8? 25.♗xf7! and White wins.

Kramnik gave a way for Black to handle the pressure: 22...♚e7!



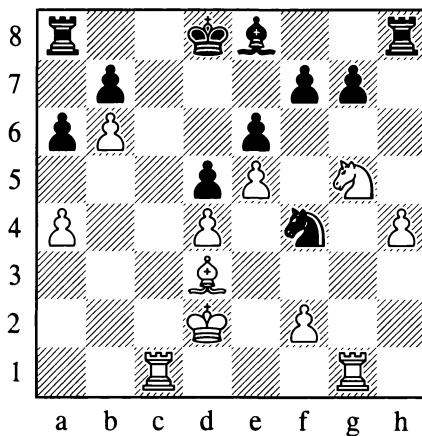
23.b5 axb5 24.axb5 ♜d7 25.♜c7 b6 White of course has some advantage here, for example 26.♗b7 ♜hb8 27.♜xb8 ♜xb8 28.♜a1, but it is not a great deal. Black should be able to defend this and take the crown; but alas, it was not to be...

23.♗g5 ♜e8 24.b5± ♜f4

Kramnik's point is that after 24...axb5 White will play 25.♜xb5!± and Black cannot defend the f7-square in any suitable way. An illustration of this is 25...♜f8? 26.♜xe8 ♜xe8 27.♜c7 ♜xa4 28.♜b1! and White has a winning attack. Therefore 25...b6 26.♜xe8 ♜xe8 would be the best defence, when Black can still fight.

25.b6!+–

White clamps down on the black position. Space is about to become an issue.



25... $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 27. $\mathbb{E}xc8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xc8$
28. $\mathbb{E}c1\#$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ $\mathbb{E}xh4$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}d6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$
31. $\mathbb{E}g1\#$

White changes his point of entry with great force.

31... $\mathbb{E}h3\#$

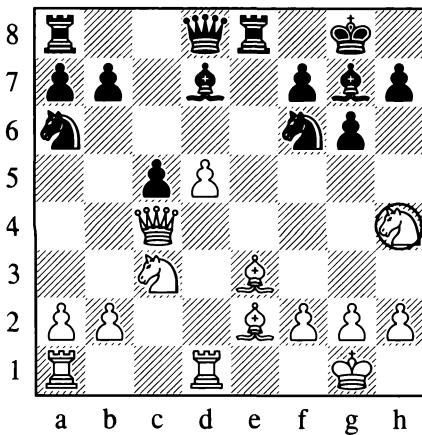
Passive defence with 31... $\mathbb{E}h7$ would just mean more suffering. White plays 32.a5 and then improves his position gradually, before striking hard.

32. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{E}a3$ 33. $\mathbb{E}xg7$ $\mathbb{E}xa4$ 34.f4 $\mathbb{E}a2\#$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{E}a3\#$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{E}d3$ 37.f5 $\mathbb{E}xd4\#$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{E}xf5$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ $\mathbb{E}g4$ 40. $\mathbb{E}c7$ $\mathbb{E}h4$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}f7\#$

1–0

18. Edouard – Le Roux

Caen 2011



White's knight on h4 is poorly placed and this in turn means that White's queen on c4 is a bit exposed. The image of ... $\mathbb{E}e4$ must have been beautiful in Black's mind.

14... $\mathbb{b}5!$ 15. $\mathbb{W}f4$

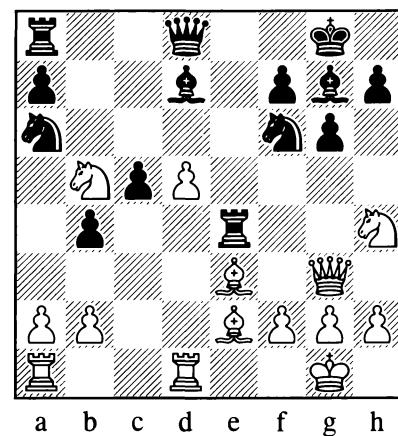
15. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{E}e4\rightarrow$ needs no further calculation.

15. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $c4$ 16. $\mathbb{W}a3$ is also hopeless. Black has various good ways to play, most convincingly the sweeping tactical stroke 16... $\mathbb{E}xe3!$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xa6$ (17.fxe3 $\mathbb{W}b6\rightarrow$) $\mathbb{E}e8$ and White has no decent defence against both ... $b4$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}e4$. For example: 18. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xb6$ $axb6$ 20.g3 g5 21. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ g4 22. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ b4 and Black wins a piece.

15... $\mathbb{b}4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b5$

16. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $bx3$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{E}e4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ costs White a piece.

16... $\mathbb{E}e4$ 17. $\mathbb{W}g3$



17... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$

White's position collapses entirely.

18. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

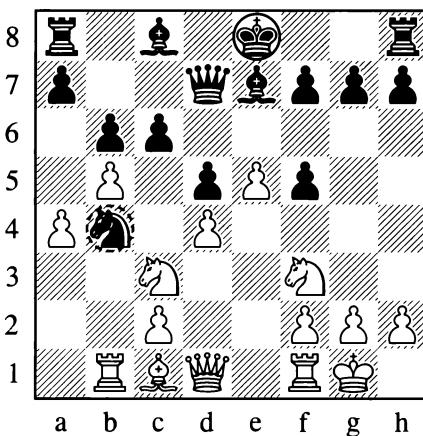
Objectively best was 18. $\mathbb{Q}d6$, but Black is winning with either 18... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ or 18... $\mathbb{E}xe3!$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 20.fxe3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ with a devastating attack, e.g. 21. $\mathbb{W}f3\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 22.g3 $\mathbb{Q}xh2!$.

18...♝xe3 19.fxe3 ♜xe3

Black dominates the dark squares. White could have saved himself a bit of agony and resigned here. Instead he fought on till move 47 without ever getting back in the game.

19. Leko – Ki. Georgiev

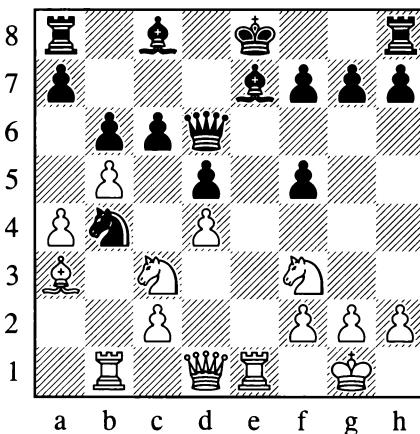
Dubai 2002



White has a very decent move in 14.♗g5, seeking to exchange the strong bishop on e7. However, Leko found a stronger and even more natural move.

14.e6! ♜xe6

14...fxe6 allows 15.♘e5 followed by ♜h5† and White wins.

15.♜e1 ♜d6 16.♘a3**16...c5**

16...a5 does not ultimately save the knight. White's simplest approach is probably to bring his knight to the b5-square: 17.bxc6 0–0 18.♘b5 ♜f6 19.♗xe7 ♜xe7 20.c3 and White wins material.

17.dxc5 bxc5 18.♗xb4 cxb4 19.♗xd5!

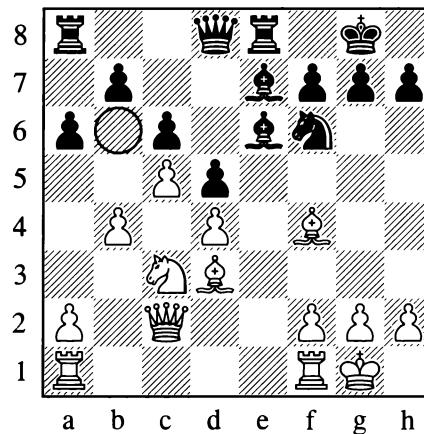
The simplest solution; White will win the exchange.

19...♜xd5 20.♗xd5 ♜e6 21.♘c7† ♔d7 22.♗xa8 ♜xa8 23.♘e5† ♜e8 24.♘c6

Leko converted the advantage to a full point on move 54.

20. Leko – Bormida

e-mail 1997



Black has a weakness on the b6-square, which allows White to force the rook on a8 to a poor square before then taking action on the kingside.

14.♘a4!

14.♗fe1 would be imprecise. After 14...g6 15.♘a4 ♘d7± Black is only a little worse.

14.♗e5 h6± 15.f4 ♘g4!→

14...g6 15.Qb6 Ra7 16.Qfe1!?

I believe it was stronger to bring the other rook to the kingside. White has a serious advantage after 16.Qae1! with ideas such as: 16...Qf8 17.Qg5 Qg7 18.f4!±

16...Qf8

16...Qd7? does not work at this point: 17.Qxe6! fxe6 18.Qxg6 Qf8 19.Qxh7† Qh8 20.Qxd7 Qxd7 21.Qh6 Qf6 22.Qg6 and White has a strategically winning position, although a bit of fight remains.

17.Qd2

17.Qg5!? Qg7 18.Qe2± was also interesting.

17...Qd7 18.Qg5 Qe7 19.Qxe7 Qxe7 20.Qxd7 Qxd7?!

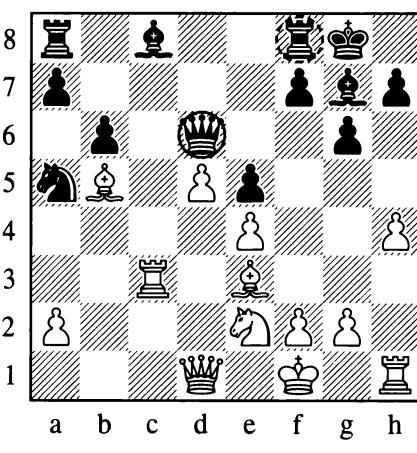
A very odd move. After 20...Qxd7 21.Qxe7 Qxe7 22.Qe1 Qf6 23.Qe5 Qa8 24.Qe2± White is also better, but Black would have better chances of conducting a successful defence.

21.Qe5 b5 22.f4±

White won the game on move 44.

21. Hawkins – Knott

Liverpool 2008



White obviously has a great attack with 17.h5, but he can do even better by rerouting his bishop to the a3-f8 diagonal.

17.Qc1! Qd8

Black tries to hold on to his material, but it cannot be.

17...Qf6 18.Qa3 is hardly an improvement for Black, giving him the miserable choice between transposing to the game with 18...Qd8 or giving up the exchange for no compensation.

18.Qa3 Qf6

18...Qb8 19.Qe7 and White wins.

19.Qf3!

The queen is embarrassingly out of squares.

19...Qf5

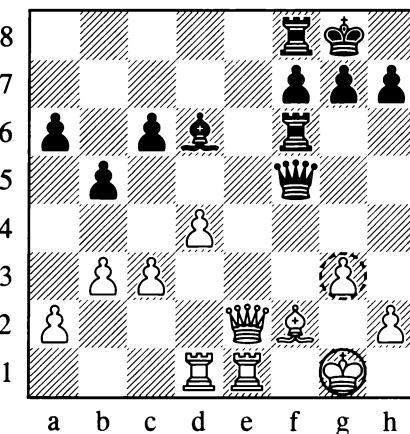
19...Qe6!? was another attempt, but White wins all the same. For example, 20.Qc2 Qg4 21.Qxf7! and White has a winning attack: 21...Qxf7 22.f3 Qh5 23.Qc7† Qd7 24.Qxd7 Qg8 25.Qe6† Qh8 26.g4 Qh6 27.g5 Qh5 28.Qg4 White wins the queen.

20.exf5

White won on move 30.

22. Anand – Ivanchuk

Bilbao 2008



White's weakness is the g3-pawn and the king it protects. Ivanchuk rightly decided to soften up this defence.

25...h5! 26.Qd3

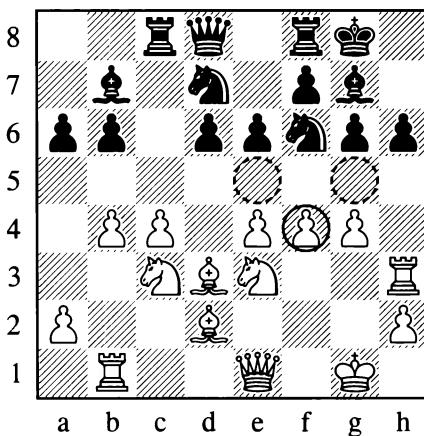
26.h4 g5!+ would only create extra problems for White.

26...h4#

Black later won a pawn, although he eventually agreed a draw in time trouble on move 58.

23. Art. Minasian – Malakhov

Feugen 2006



21...g5!

This strong move exploits the weakness of the f4-square to take control of the dark squares. White will forever struggle against the power of the black pieces as they transfer through the e5-square. The g4-pawn will always be weak.

22.fxg5 hxg5 23.Qc2?!

White tries to solve his problems with tactics, but fails. 23.Qe2 was better, but after 23...Qe5# White's life would be anything but easy.

23...Qxg4 24.e5 Qxe5!

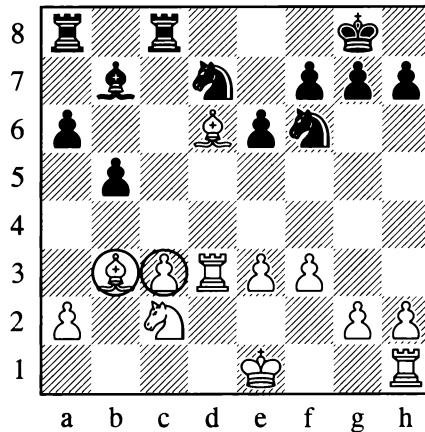
White has no compensation. The rest is a humiliation.

25.Qh5 Qxh2# 26.Qxh2 Qxh2 27.Qxh2 Qe5 28.Qe2 Qxc4 29.Qg3 Qf6 30.Qg1 Qxc3#

0–1

24. Spraggett – Ubilava

Ampuriabrava 1997



White has three problems. His pawn on c3 is weak, and his bishop on b3 and rook on d3 are both inconveniently placed. Black managed to exploit this with a logical pawn thrust.

17...a5#! 18.a4

18.Qd4 Qa6 and Black wins the c-pawn.

18...Qa6

A bit more accurate was 18...bxa4! 19.Qxa4 Qa6 20.Qd2 Qb6!—+ and everything goes with tempo.

19.axb5 Qxb5 20.c4 Qxc4 21.Qxc4 Qxc4#

Black won the ending.

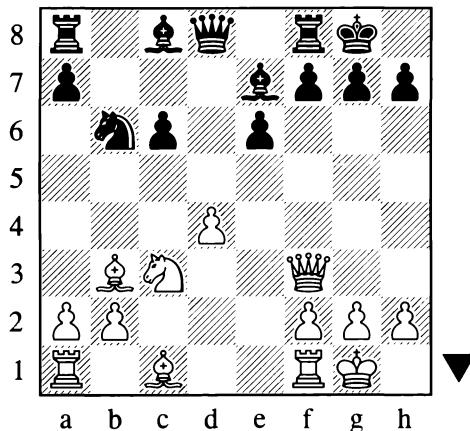
Chapter 2

Pieces

One poorly-placed piece makes your whole position bad – Dr Siegbert Tarrasch

Jakob Aabling-Thomsen – Jacob Aagaard

Helsingør 2012



Black to play

Black can probably equalize by exchanging weaknesses, but he seeks a long game, where the d4-pawn might be a bit more exposed than the pawn on c6. How should he play in order to get the most out of his pieces?

If pawns are the skeleton of a position, or “the soul of the game”, then the pieces must be the flesh and blood, with the king being the heart and brains of the operation. Yet how well do most chess players really know their pieces? And how well do they treat them?

Pieces certainly work like bees for the sake of the hive, but they are not workers like the pawns; staying with the terminology of the beehive, they are the drones.

I personally like to think of the dynamics in a position as being a measurable quantity, where a piece can have a rather low value if it is poorly placed, while it can have quite a high value if it is excellently placed. Likewise, a piece can have low or high potential, based on the pawn structure and other factors. No doubt computer programmers work hard at refining these evaluations, though my limited knowledge suggests that they are at least equally interested in making the most out of the extra cores our computers are starting to have.

The worst-placed piece

While a programmer has to work out a quantifiable value to attribute to the pieces, in order to communicate with the machine, the human brain works in a more intuitive way. Looking at our pieces, it should not be too difficult to work out which of our pieces is worst placed.

Ideal squares

In *Excelling at Chess*, I introduced the idea of *Looking for ideal squares for our pieces*. Here we are not talking about their current dynamic value, but about their potential value. At times a poorly-placed piece will not have an obvious ideal square. The piece can be said to have low potential, at least for the time being.

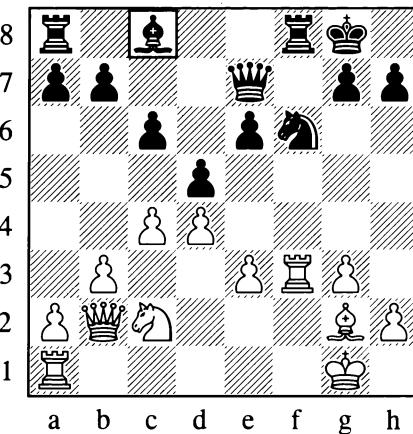
But at other times the ideal square can be quite attractive, although quite far away.

As one of my *three questions* is “Which is the worst-placed piece?”, the concept of ideal squares is certainly an important one to assimilate (and the way we do this is by paying attention to it again and again in training, or when we feel lost during a game).

Here is a simple example of looking for the worst-placed piece and manoeuvring it to a decent square.

Alexander Vaulin – Eduard Prandstetter

Pardubice 1996



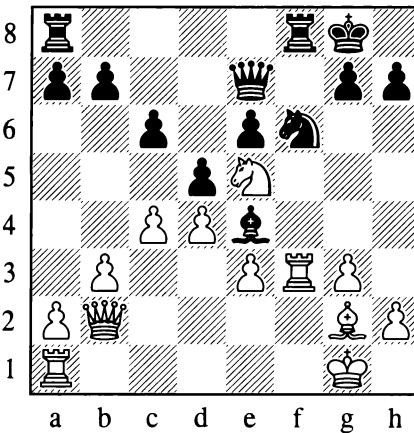
It is quite obvious to me that the bishop on c8 is the worst-placed piece; it is not only devoid of any positive function, it is also in the way of the rook on a8! The ideal square for the bishop is in my opinion e4. Prandstetter clearly agreed with me, as he decided to manoeuvre it there.

17...♝d7

White is in a similar situation, looking at his pieces and trying to find out which ones should be performing much better. At the moment the knight on c2 looks more active

than the rook on a1, but it is an illusion. The rook on a1 is only one move away from a good square (f1), while the knight is painfully far from a good square. As nothing concrete is happening at the moment, Vaulin decided to put his knight on its ideal square.

18.♘e1 ♕e8 19.♘d3 ♕g6 20.♘e5 ♕e4

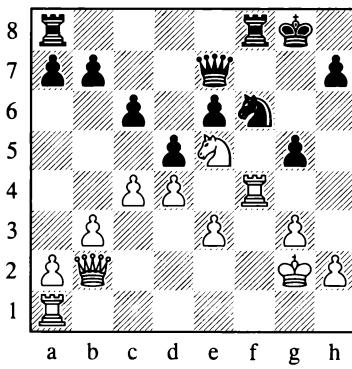


Both players have achieved their aim and the position can be said to be in balance.

21.♗f4 ♕xg2 22.♕xg2 ♘d7

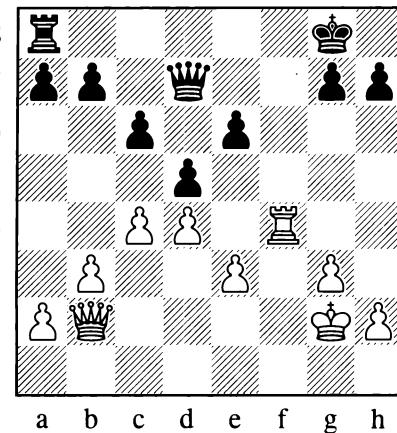
Black decides to neutralize the strong white knight instead of having a strong knight of his own. Maybe this is slightly inaccurate, but in practice it does not make a great deal of difference.

Most natural to me would have been 22...g5!?



23.♗f3 ♖e4 24.♗af1 ♗xf3 25.♗xf3 ♖f8 and the position is completely level.

23.♘xd7 ♕xd7 24.♗af1 ♗xf4 25.♗xf4

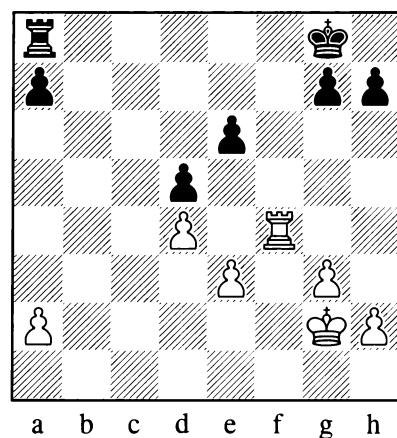


The only consequence of having played 22...♘d7 is that Black has to find the correct plan here. If White were given the chance to play e3-e4 he would have a slight edge. However, Black is focused and creates a good square for his queen on d5:

25...dxc4! 26.bxc4 b5! 27.♗b3

27.♗c3?! has the idea of continuing 27...bxc4 28.e4!. It should instead be met with 27...♗c8!=, preparing ...c5 and making use of the rook.

27...bxc4 28.♗xc4 ♗d5† 29.♗xd5 cxd5



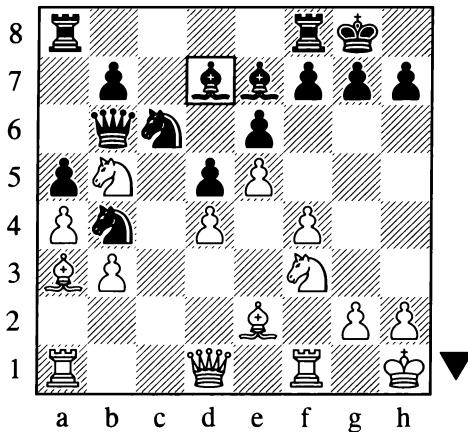
Black's rook will come to c3 like a rocket, so he has no reasons to worry.

$\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

This example of a bad bishop becoming good is of course very simple. Most people would have played this manoeuvre without thinking; if nothing else then because that is what you are supposed to do in the Stonewall. But the bishop manoeuvre makes sense also in more complicated scenarios, still based on the principle of putting the worst-placed piece on the ideal square. The following game is far from flawless, which just shows how difficult chess is, but Black's positional ideas are quite clear and powerful, when faced with an inconsequential opponent.

Mikhail Kozakov – Zlatko Topalovic

Varazdin 2003



In this position it looks natural to put a rook on c8, and maybe to repel the white knight from its advanced position on b5 with ... $\mathbb{Q}a7$ at some point – White then replies $\mathbb{Q}c3$ and Black probably returns his knight to c6, inviting a draw. But the question is what this actually does to help Black with his real problem, which is what to do with his bishops and rooks.

In the game Topalovic decided on a more active plan, which proved successful in practice. Whether it is stronger is hard to say, but it certainly makes a lot of sense.

17...f6!?

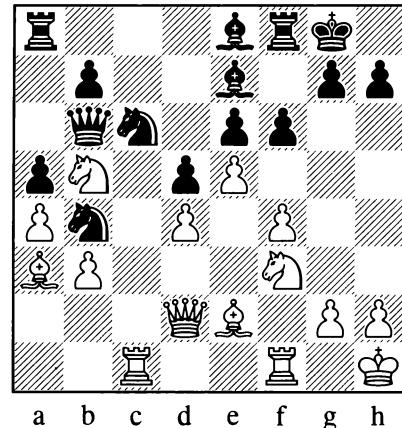
This move has two purposes. First of all it aims to open the f-file (or at least to have this possibility available). But it is the second option which is really attractive: the inactive bishop on d7, which has little prospect of coming alive by being the key player behind a ...b5-break, is offered a route to freedom.

The downside to playing ...f6 is the weakening of the e6-square. White should definitely have tried to use this more forcefully than he did in the game. The outcome would then have been significantly in doubt.

18. $\mathbb{W}d2$

It is always worth considering whether White should take on f6. Black can consider taking back with the rook (most natural) or with the g-pawn (somewhat risky in my opinion). In general, White plays this phase of the game as if he has no idea what the function of his pieces should be.

18... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 19. $\mathbb{B}ac1$



19...♝g6?!

Black gives the impression of thinking that White will not do anything active – and he is right. I have the feeling that sometimes there are signs in our body language that are picked up subconsciously by our opponents and which help determine the direction of the game. If a player feels indecisive and uncertain, he will pass this impression on to his opponent, who will then naturally be more confident. This can in turn lead to increased uncertainty for the first player. (If you want to turn this into something more than pop psychology, the advice would be to be confident at the board and hope that this gives you a small extra edge. Obviously, if your moves are bad, this may not do you much good!)

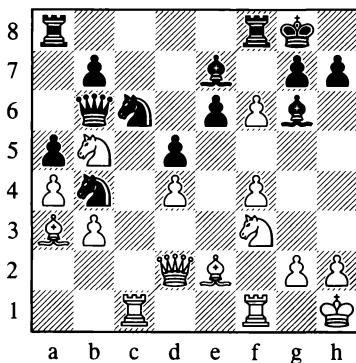
19...fxe5! seems more accurate. After 20.fxe5 ♘g6 Black has fully equalized.

20.♘e1?!

This passive move is hopefully better explained by my dodgy psychology than by Kozakov's understanding of chess. The intention is to attack the e6-pawn, but very little is achieved by this; and in turn the knight is poorly placed on e1.

20.exf6!

This was the correct move.



Black should play 20...gx f6 21.♕e3 ♘e4

followed by ...f5, with perhaps a slightly inferior position.

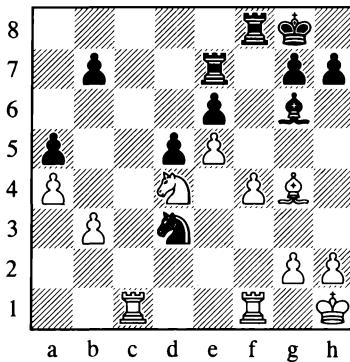
Otherwise he could quickly find himself in a worse situation:

20...♝xf6? 21.♘e5!

Black has to defend against ♘d7, either with the passive ...♝e8 or with:

21...♞xe5 22.dxe5!

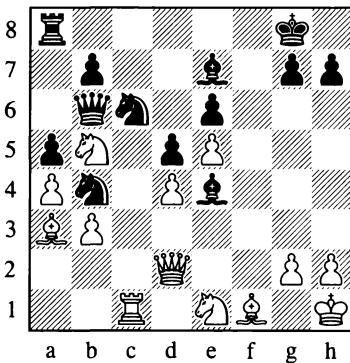
Freeing the d4-square for the knight and queen.

22...♝ff8 23.♗g4 ♜ae8 24.♗d4 ♜xd4 25.♗xd4 ♘d3 26.♗xe7 ♜xe7**27.♘xe6!**

White is close to winning in these complications.

20...♝e4?!

20...fxe5! was stronger. It will be a very long time before White can compete for the f-file, so opening it is in Black's interest. 21.fxe5 ♜xf1† 22.♗xf1 ♘e4



White is rather passive. After 23.♗e2 ♘f8 it is very hard to arrange to play ♗g4 while the knight is poorly placed on e1, weakening the first rank (allowing mate, for example).

21.♗g4?

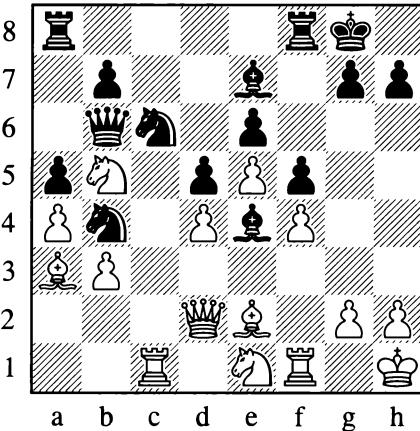
It was the last chance for 21.exf6!, when White would still not be worse.

21...f5

Having established the bishop on e4, it is quite natural to fix the pawns on light squares behind it. The only possible objection is that there was another interesting possibility here, which may be even stronger.

21...fxe5! was attractive; after all, the pin down the f-file means that the pawn is hanging. White would probably have to play something along the lines of 22.♗xe6† ♖h8 23.dxe5 ♖xe5†.

22.♗e2



At this point Black clearly looked for a way to bring the rooks into the game. The most natural way is to play on the side of the board where he is stronger, which is the kingside. However, this entails weakening the king and should not really work against the best defence. But with an opponent who is

simply waiting for you to advance, we often see that the strongest continuation is to play as aggressively as possible.

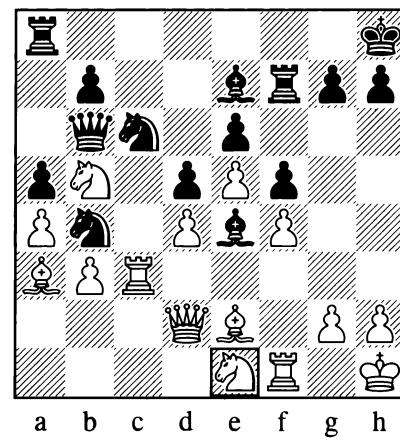
22...♝f7!?

22...♛a7 23.♕c3 ♜ac8† was more standard, and would not have involved the risks Black took in the game.

23.♖c3!

The rook is well placed here, looking towards both sides of the board.

23...♝h8



24.h3?

This is a horrible move in many ways. First of all it does very little for the white position; you can only surmise that White may have thought he would have to play ♖h1-h2 soon.

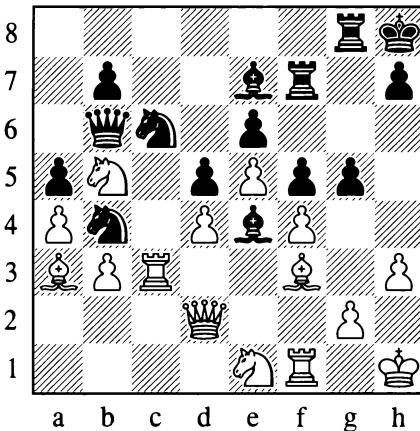
One better option was to carry out a little prophylaxis against Black's plan with 24.♕f3 h6 25.♖fc1, when Black is prevented from playing ...g5 and the white pieces are back in the game. The tactical point behind these moves is that 25...♝g8?? is punished with 26.♗g5!, when Black is in deep trouble. But if Black does not commit suicide then the position is just equal.

24. $\mathbb{Q}d3!$ was possibly even stronger. The knight is going to c5, exploiting that the d4-pawn is immune because of $\mathbb{W}e3$ tricks. The board catches fire after: 24...g5 25. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ gxf4 26. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$, when I assess the complications as leading to a strange form of balance.

24... $\mathbb{E}g8$

White is no longer able to stop ...g5 and his position must be worse. But this does not justify his reaction, where he eliminates the e4-bishop with devastating structural consequences. “Lost for moves” are the words that spring to mind.

25. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ g5+



Black won the game without much difficulty. White could maybe have offered more resistance, but his position is quite bad already.

26. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ dxe4 27. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ gxf4 28. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$
29. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{E}fg7$ 31. $\mathbb{E}g1$ f3 32. g3
f4 33. g4 h5
0–1

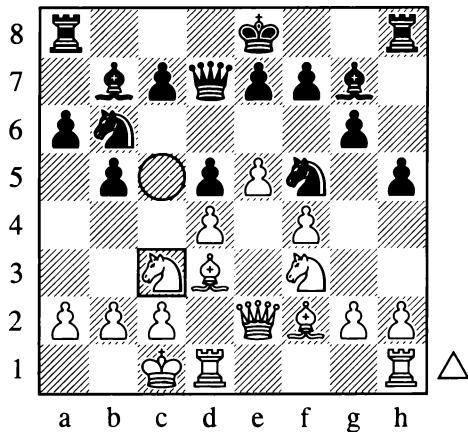
The various strategic aspects of the ...f6-move were no doubt confusing for the players, just as they are for the writer and his engine. But games are won by the player with the best

plan and the best moves, not by the analyst. By first putting his bishop on the best possible square and then launching an attack, Black won the game. White had the chance to fight against these ideas all the way, but failed to do so. We refer him to the chapter on prophylaxis.

Let us have a look at a different manoeuvre, this time with the author on the receiving end.

Daniel V. Pedersen – Jacob Aagaard

Denmark 2012



Somewhat I had messed up the opening horribly. Basically I had been daydreaming rather than thinking. ▲

The big weakness in the black position is the c5-square, prompting my opponent to play a logical move.

14. $\mathbb{Q}b1!$

Not the only good move in the position, but its simplicity only increases my admiration for it.

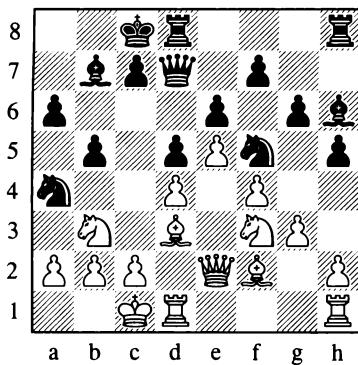
14...e6

Eventually I felt I had to play this unpleasant move.

14... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 15.g3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ was the other way of playing I considered, but 16. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ would have been very unpleasant for Black. The ideas f4-f5 and $\mathbb{Q}d2-b3-a5/c5$ are debilitating.

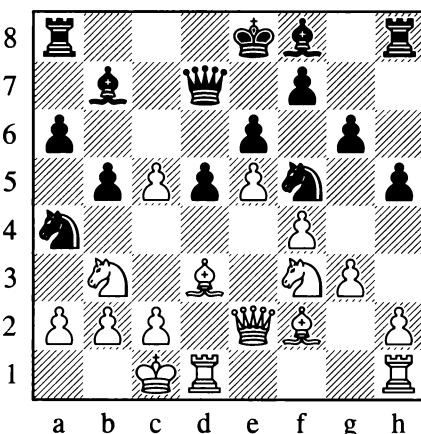
15. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 16.g3 c5?

Desperation. 16...0–0–0 17. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$ was better...



Although my position still stinks.

17.dxc5 $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$



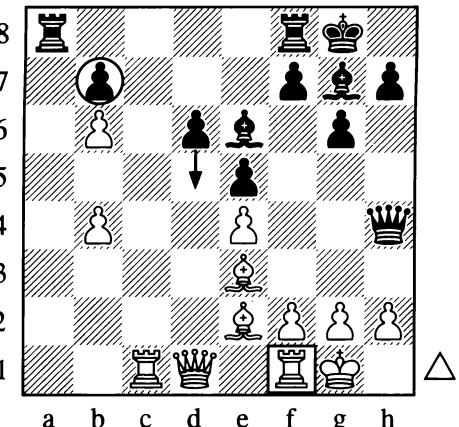
I offered a draw, which to my surprise was accepted. I was hoping to generate counterplay, but do not believe I would have succeeded, had the game continued. A short and relatively painless off-day.

$\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

The final example in this section could have been solved if I had only paid attention to my worst-placed piece. However, I did not think along those lines at all.

Jacob Aagaard – David Isonzo

Arco 2005



Black is threatening the e4-pawn, but White should protect it in a way that makes sense. As Black's active options are ...d5 and ...f5, the white bishop is ideally placed on the passive looking f3-square. Another classic case of a bad bishop defending good pawns (Suba). The difference from a truly bad bishop is that this one has prospects, while a really bad bishop would have none.

20. $\mathbb{Q}f3$!

20.f3? would allow Black to play 20... $\mathbb{Q}h6$! with almost immediate equality.

20. $\mathbb{Q}d3$? would allow Black to play 20... $\mathbb{Q}fd8$.

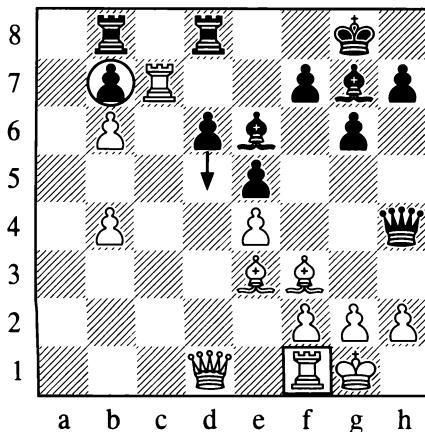
A key idea is 21. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5 22.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$, when Black is in the game.

And after 21. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ d5 22. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ d4 23. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}ab8$ Black has some counter-chances, though White is still better because of his passed pawn on the queenside.

20...♝fd8

20...♝h6? would now drop a piece to 21.g3!.

21.♝c7 ♜ab8



This is the critical position (in the sense that I got it wrong!). Basically White's poorly-placed piece is the rook on f1. My main cop-out is that I was a considerably weaker player back then and did not pay as much attention to my poorly-placed pieces as I should have. Even in my notes to the game in my private files, I do not pay any special attention to the inactive rook.

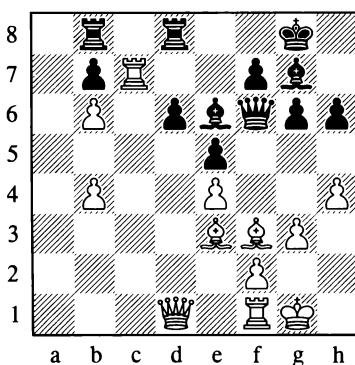
The correct continuation was therefore:

22.♛d2!

The immediate threat of winning the queen wins valuable time.

In the game I played weakly with:

22.g3?! ♛f6 23.h4 h6±



This was what I was hoping for, and I assumed that my next move would be really strong. However, it does nothing about bringing my worst-placed piece into the game.

24.h5?

I am not sure if I am going too far when I say that this is a positional blunder. But it is certainly not a good move.

24.♝g2 would still have kept a real advantage.

24...gxh5!

Somehow I had not considered this natural move. I have to recapture or Black will play ...h4.

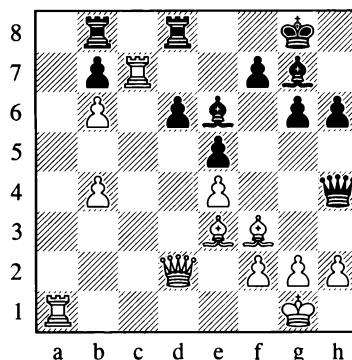
25.♝xh5 d5

Black has counterplay. White is maybe a bit better, but there is a lot of work needed to win this game, and it took until move 64 to do so.

22...h6 23.g3!

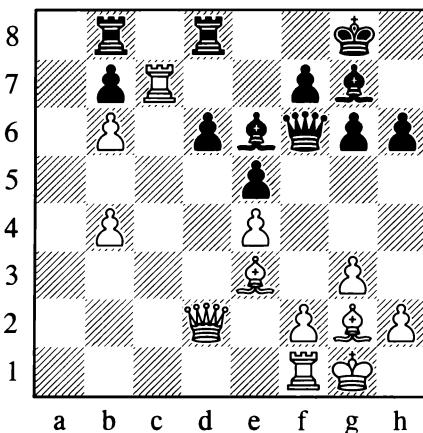
Prophylaxis against the ...d5-break.

23.♝a1?



23...d5! would give Black a lot of unnecessary counterplay, based on the point that 24.exd5? e4 not only wins back the d-pawn, but also creates a double threat to a1 and f3. White could struggle on with 25.♝c1+, but it would hardly be fun.

23...♛f6 24.♝g2



The bishop returns to safety, allowing White to follow up with $\mathbb{B}a1-a7$ with a close to decisive advantage. Black will not be able to play ...d5 in a meaningful way, as the ...e5-e4 tricks are gone.

Creating squares for the pieces

The purpose of pawn play is to a great degree to create good squares and possibilities for our pieces. This is a huge part of chess and something we think about all the time. Chess strategy is very preoccupied with pawn play.

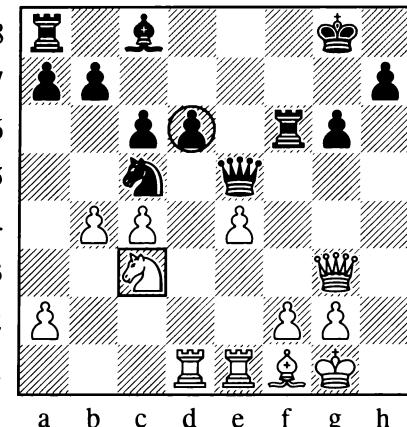
Here I just want to give a simple example of how pawn play can benefit the pieces – nothing too fancy. The first example includes a pawn sacrifice, but if we disregard this, we can see that it is really all about finding good squares for the pieces, or in making the most of them in other ways.

Boris Gelfand – Tomasz Markowski

Polanica Zdroj 1998

1.d4 d6 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 3.c4 g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5.e4 0–0 6. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 7.0–0 e5 8. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ c6 9. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ exd4 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 11.h3 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 12.hxg4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 14.g5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ f6 18.gxf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$

19. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 20.b4



Black's weakest square is certainly the d6-square, at the moment occupied by a pawn, which in turn is a bit weak. White's worst-placed piece is the knight on c3, which obviously would like to be on e4. On top of this, White is leading in development and would like to use this actively.

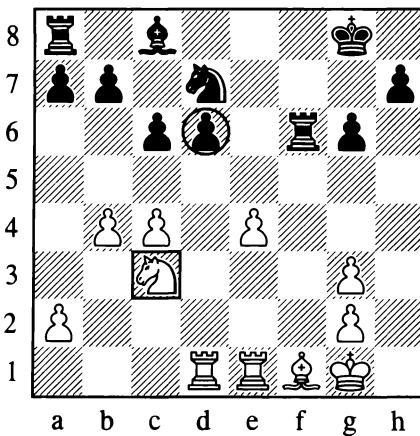
20... $\mathbb{Q}xg3?$

Markowski is doubling White's pawns and preparing to put his knight on e5. When you look at how the game went, this might seem foolhardy, but it was not at this point that the big mistake occurred. Still, I find it a bit risky.

It was quite natural to play 20... $\mathbb{Q}d7$, but White would then have a chance to play 21. $\mathbb{Q}e3$, when after 21...a5 22.b5 $\mathbb{Q}c5$, the position would be unclear.

21.fxg3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$

Naturally, if Black were given an extra move to play 22... $\mathbb{Q}e5$, he would be on top of the world. With the queens gone, it would be no problem moving the king to e7 to defend the d6-pawn and White would have to spend half the game bringing his knight to a decent square.



An example of this can be found should White play 22.c5, when Black manages to get all his pieces out with 22... $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ 23.cxd6 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ and then the rook to d8. White is clearly fighting for equality in that case, not having solved his problem with the c3-knight.

Faced with this prospect, White has no choice but to sacrifice a pawn:

22.e5!

The pawn is let go so that the knight will have a future.

22...dxe5

22... $\mathbb{Q}xe5?$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ would allow White to win the pawn back without giving up any of his advantages.

23. $\mathbb{Q}e4 \mathbb{B}f7$

Black has to play passively. If he tries to get his pieces out with something like 23... $\mathbb{B}f8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d6 \mathbb{Q}f6$, then after 25. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ he has no real way to deal with the invasion on e7.

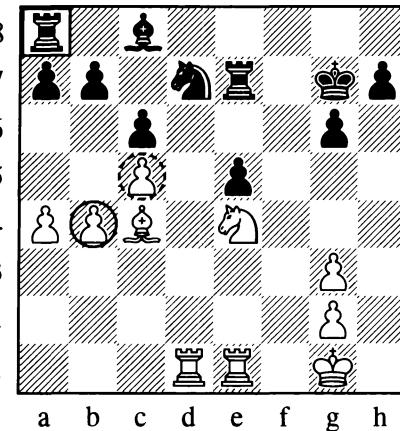
The game is not lost, but it is certainly unpleasant.

24.c5

Another benefit of the pawn sacrifice is that White has time to activate the bishop. White's

advantage would be decisive if he could either win his pawn back or bring the queens back onto the board. But in this slightly simplified position he lacks targets to some degree.

24... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}c4 \mathbb{B}e7$ 26.a4



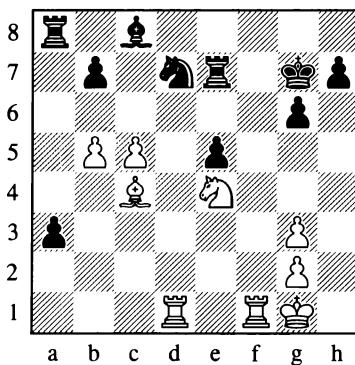
The crucial moment of the game and closely related to our topic. What should Black focus on? Making something of his bishop and rook certainly.

In his book Gelfand proposed that Black should play 26...b6, when after 27. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ bxc5 28.bxc5 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}xd5\pm$ he quite clearly favours White in the endgame. This is undeniably better than what was played in the game:

26... $\mathbb{Q}e8??$

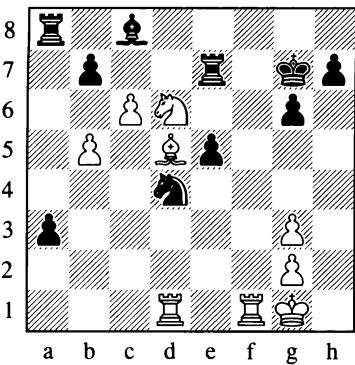
I am not quite sure what the idea is behind this move, but I am sure that Markowski had one. Unfortunately there is a big downside to this move; White now finds a target to aim for with his active pieces.

The correct move is 26...a5!, which challenges the white pawns and makes something out of the rook on a8. The critical line goes like this: 27.b5 cxb5 28.axb5 a4 29. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ a3



How should this position be evaluated? I am honestly not certain. White has a strong knight on e4 and bishop on c4, but as said before, he lacks targets. Black on the other hand has managed to get a passed pawn and activate the rook on a8.

I have analysed the active 30... $\mathbb{Q}d5$, where Black ends up fine in the following complicated line:
30... $\mathbb{Q}f8!$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 32.c6 $\mathbb{Q}d4!?$

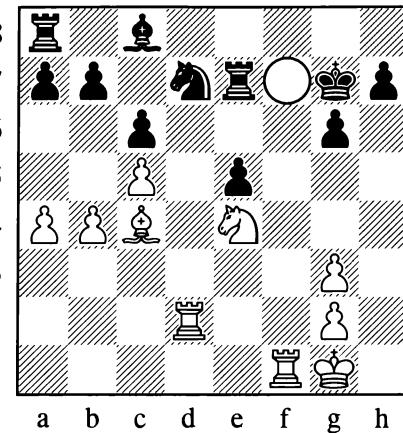


33.cxb7 $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}e2\#$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ e4 A draw is the most likely outcome.

So I think White should follow my more human thinking and play 30... $\mathbb{Q}a2$. I find White's position more attractive, but that said, I am not really sure what I am intending to do with it. In a practical game this would no doubt be felt as pressure by the black player, but I am not sure it is anything significant objectively.

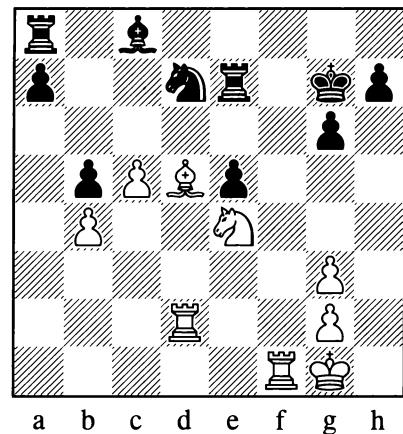
No matter what, it is clear that this is the way Black should have played.

27. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$



Sealing the deal; White will invade on f7. It amusingly takes the computer quite a while to understand that it is all over.

28... $b5$ 29. $axb5$ $cxb5$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}d5$



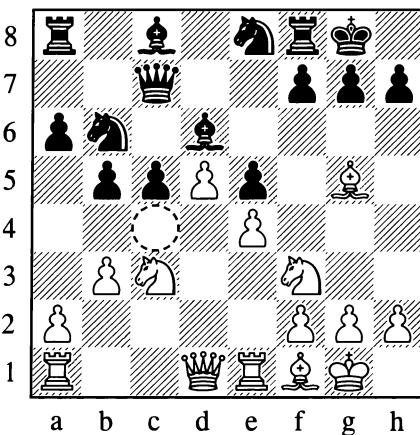
1-0

In the following game we shall see that creating a square for a piece does not necessarily mean that you have to occupy it. At times the threat of using the square is enough to secure certain advantages, in this case tying down

the opponent's pieces to the defence of the c4-square.

Lajos Portisch – Jens Kristiansen

Skopje (ol) 1972



16.a4!

This strong move fixes the pawn structure on the queenside to White's advantage.

16...b4 17.♘b1 a5

In general Black would love to play 17...c4, but White has 18.a5! in reply, giving Black no compensation for the pawn whatsoever.

18.♘bd2

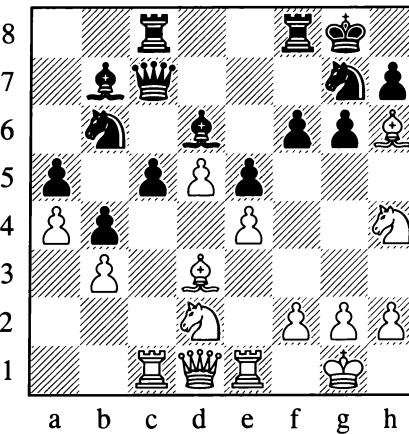
White has control over the c4-square, but he will not rush to play his knight there and allow exchanges.

In the game Black neglects his kingside and White launches an attack there, meaning that he never gets round to occupying the c4-square. Still the usefulness of the square is dominant in many lines, as Black has to defend it vigorously.

18...♗b7

Perhaps Black considered ...f5, but this would only leave his position with multiple weaknesses.

19.♗c1 ♗c8 20.♕h4 f6 21.♗e3 g6 22.♕h6 ♘g7 23.♗d3



As long as the black knight is on b6, the d2-knight will wait and might consider going to the kingside as well.

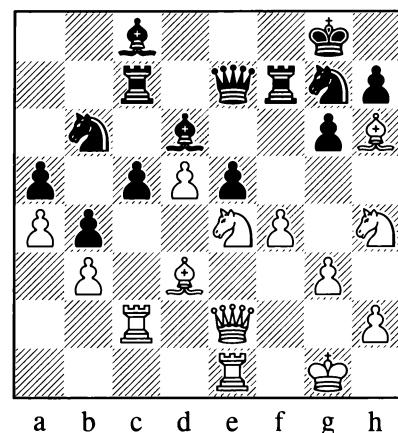
23...♗e7 24.♗g4 ♘f7 25.♗c2 ♘c7 26.g3! ♘c8 27.♗e2

At this point Black should probably stay passive, but psychologically this is hard.

27...f5 28.f4!

White is threatening ♘hf3, which would win the battle for the e5-square.

28...fxe4 29.♗xe4



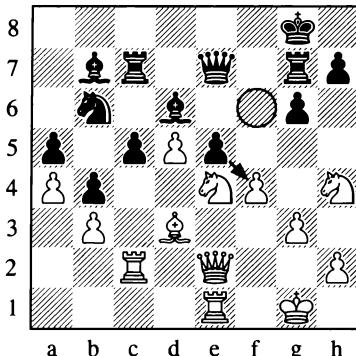
29...exf4

29...Nb7

This looks natural, but White has a brilliant continuation that brings the knight on h4 back into the game.

30.Nxg7! Nxg7

30...Nxg7 31.f5 gxf5 32.Qxf5† is even worse.



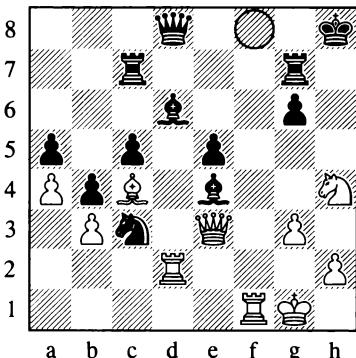
31.f5! Nd8 32.fxg6 hxg6 33.Qf1

The threat of Qf6† is devastating.

33...Qxd5 34.Nc4!

Finally, after 18 moves, the control over the c4-square comes in handy, albeit only in a sideline!

34...Nh8 35.Bd2 Qc3 36.Qe3 Nxe4



37.Bxd6 Ne2†

37...Qxd6 38.Qh6† Bh7 39.Bf8† and mate.

38.Nxe2 Qxd6 39.Qd1

Black will have to allow either 40.Qxe4 with a winning position, or:

39...Qc6 40.Qh6† Ng8 41.Qc4†

With a mating attack.

30.Qxd6 Qxd6 31.Qxf4 Qxf4

After 31...Qxd5 32.Qxc7 Nb7 33.Qe4 Qxe4 34.Qxe4 Nxe4 we can improve on Portisch's original annotations with 35.Qxc5!, winning immediately.

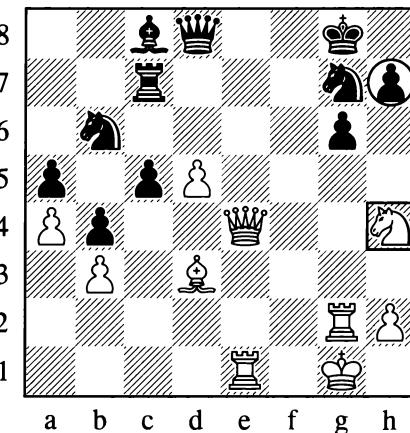
32.gxf4 Qxf4

32...Qxd5 33.Qe5 and White wins the ending.

33.Qe4

White is winning in the long run, but Black accelerated the process with his next move.

33...Qg5†?! 34.Qg2 Qd8



35.Qxg6!

1-0

Exchanges

Hopefully all readers of this book will know that you should exchange your bad bishop for the opponent's good bishop and that you should focus on which pieces remain after exchanges more than on the ones you exchange. But beyond these basic ideas, exchanges in chess is a theme that deserves

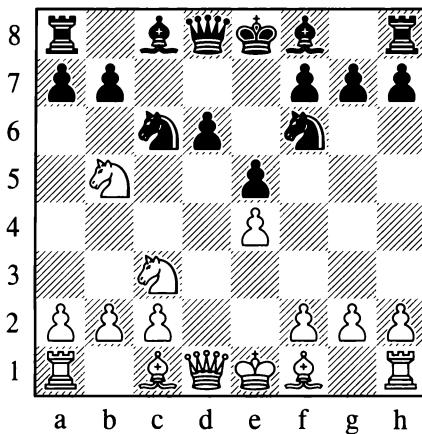
a longer investigation than I am able to give it right here. My only angle on this occasion will be related to the worst-placed piece, as I think this is a good way of looking at things.

The following game illustrates this nicely.

Jacob Aagaard – Enamul Hossain

Dresden (ol) 2008

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6
5.♘c3 e5 6.♗db5 d6

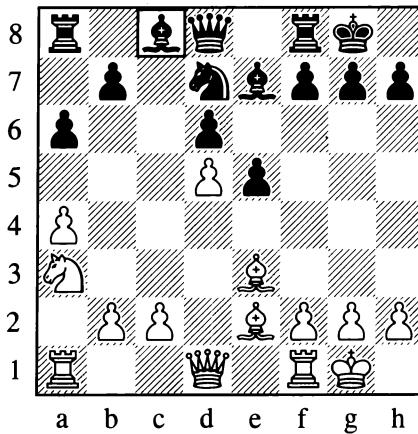


Preparing for this game I saw that my opponent had played a number of games in long theoretical lines and done well out of them. The prospect of having to find a novelty on move 32 of the Sveshnikov was not appealing to me, so I decided to play a less critical move, which would quickly lead to an independent game.

7.♗d5 ♘xd5 8.exd5 ♘b8 9.a4

This line is not especially dangerous for Black. The idea is ♘b5-a3-c4-b6, but this rarely happens in practice; and if it does, then only after Black has made great gains on the kingside. On the other hand the move is not bad and White is not worse.

9...♗e7 10.♗e2 0-0 11.0-0 ♘d7 12.♗e3 a6
13.♗a3



This is the critical position of the game. Black needs to find his path forward. Most of his pieces are not well placed and need to find a function (note that finding a function/future is not necessarily the same as moving!). A good strategy for this position would include a vision for all of the black pieces. This is what you would usually expect from a strong grandmaster.

13...♗g5?

If you think too superficially, this is a great-looking move. Black seeks to exchange his bad bishop before developing his queenside. But as you have probably gathered, the problem is not in the first part of this sentence, but in the second part. Beyond the exchange of bishops, Black has no plan for the rest of his pieces, nor any idea of what will happen after the exchange. I was quite pleasantly surprised by this move, as it gives me extra time to expand on the queenside.

13...f5 has been played in a number of games, with Black starting action on the kingside. This is certainly the right way to play. The bishop is likely to stay on c8 for a very long time, until a good square is available for it. However, it would

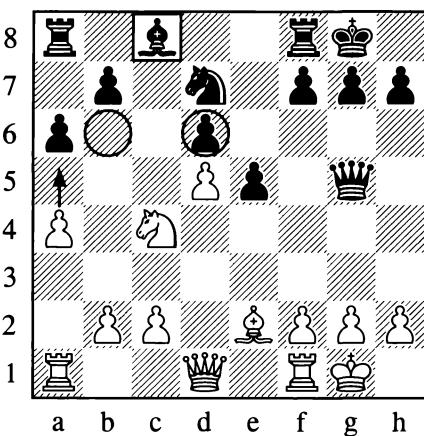
have a future. As the game goes, there is no function available for the bishop until eventually it is exchanged for White's bad bishop.

14.♗xg5!

Apparently this was a novelty, but it is the only move that makes sense.

14.f4? exf4 15.♗xf4 ♜e8 16.♕c4 ♗xf4 17.♗xf4 ♜e5= was played in Muhren – Kalinitschew, Dieren 2004.

14...♗xg5 15.♕c4



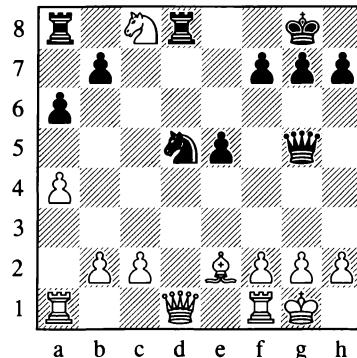
Black has not managed to do anything to get the c8-bishop into play and is now faced with an attack on the d6-pawn. Already things are getting more difficult for Black and the right move is no longer easy to find.

15...♝e7?!

Black is playing as if he has achieved something and has all the time in the world, but the contrary is the case. He has no active counterplay and White is progressing rapidly on the queenside. The white knight will land on b6 and the pawns will come rolling forward to support it.

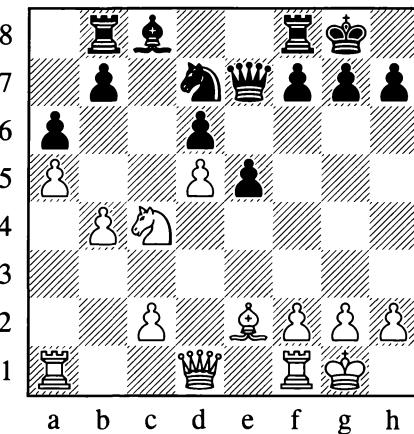
The more active 15...♞f6! was the right way to play, whether or not it is entirely correct. The

point is 16.♗xd6 ♜d8 17.♗xc8 ♜xd5!, when in order to keep the advantage, White has to play:



18.♗g4! h5 19.♗f3 ♜f4 20.♗d6 ♜e7 21.♗e1±
Not an easy line for White to find.

16.a5 ♜b8 17.b4±



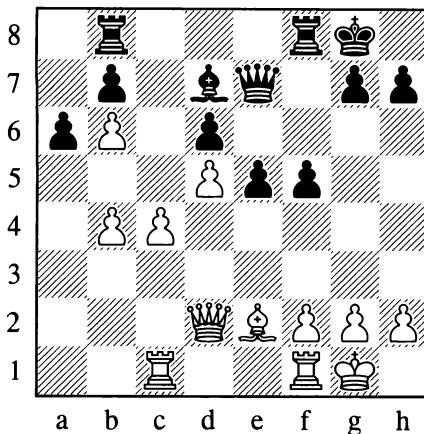
17...♞f6

White is also better after 17...f5 18.♗d2 ♜f6 19.♗b6 f4 20.c4, but maybe this was a better chance than the game?

18.♗b6 ♜d7?

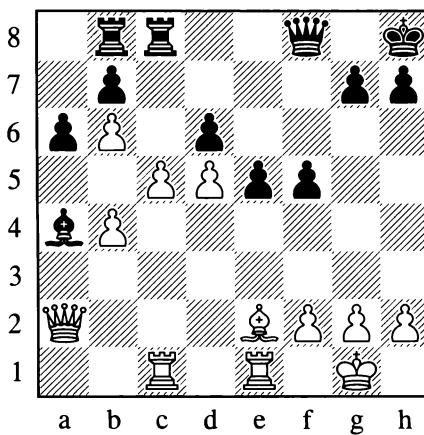
18...♝f5 was necessary, even though White is better after 19.c4±.

19.c4 ♜xb6 20.axb6 ♜d7 21.♗d2 f5 22.♗ac1



White has a clear advantage. There is no way he is going to be mated on the kingside. The remainder of the game was quite easy; I think my opponent was dispirited by this point.

**22...♝fc8 23.c5 ♘h8 24.♝fd1 ♗a4 25.♝e1
♛f8 26.♝a2!**



26...♝b5

26...♝e8 27.c6 and White wins.

**27.♛xb5 axb5 28.♝a7 ♘e8 29.c6 ♘a8
30.♛xb7 ♘eb8 31.♝c7**

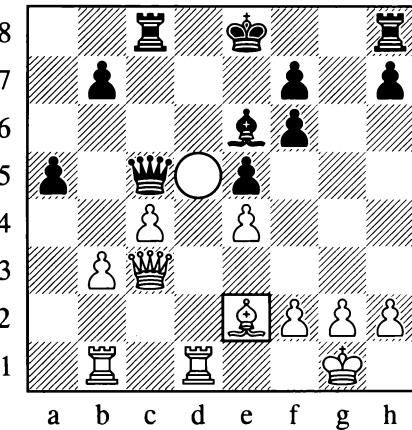
Black resigned without giving me the chance to play 31...♝c8 32.♝xc8!?, when the pawns will win.

1–0

The following game illustrates how we can improve our position by exchanging our most weakly-placed piece, thus staying within the theme of this chapter.

Alexander Khalifman – Judit Polgar

Las Vegas (5.1) 1999



Black's king is unsafe, no matter where she decides to put it. This factor causes the computer to wildly overestimate White's advantage, even if he does nothing.

22.h3!±

This excellent move prepares to exchange the strong defender on e6 for the inactive bishop on e2. Black will either have to weaken her kingside further (...fxe6) or the d5-square.

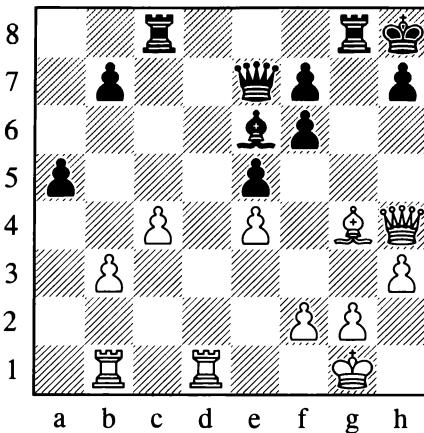
22...0–0

22...♚e7 was suggested by Ribli. This changes things greatly and should encourage White to open the queenside immediately to take advantage of the exposed position of the king in the centre: 23.b4! axb4 24.♝xb4 b5 (24...♝c7 25.♝db1 and the b7-pawn seems to be impossible to defend.) 25.♝db1 ♛d7 26.♝f3 bxc4 27.♝xc4 Black is struggling to defend her two weaknesses on f7 and h7.

23.♕g3†

I am not really sure that transferring the queen to h4 improves White's position.

I rather like 23.♗g4 ♕fd8 24.♕f3 ♔g7 25.♕xe6 fxe6 26.♗bc1 ♕e7 27.♗c3±, though in other lines Black is under pressure as well.

23...♔h8 24.♕h4 ♕e7 25.♗g4 ♕g8**26.♗d3??**

Khalifman is deliberately waiting before taking on e6; maybe he can avoid ...fxe6.

26.♕xe6 fxe6 27.♗d3 ♕cd8± does not seem too dangerous for Black.

26...♗g5?!

Polgar is dreaming of action on the g-file, when neutralizing the pressure down the d-file should have been her priority. From here on things go downhill.

26...♗cd8± was necessary, with the point 27.♗bd1 ♕xd3 28.♗xd3 ♗xg4 (But not 28...♗d8? 29.♗d5!!±, based on 29...♗xd5? 30.♗f5+-.) 29.hxg4 ♗g6 and Black seems to be okay.

27.♕xe6 ♕xe6

27...fxe6 28.♗bd1±, with the threat of ♗d7, is highly unpleasant for Black.

28.♗bd1± ♕cg8?

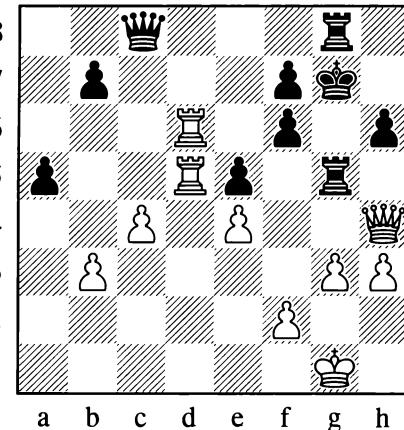
Black continues her “attack” on the kingside. Better was 28...♗b6! although Black's position is still extremely shaky.

29.♗d6 ♕c8

Black does not have time to take on g2, which exposes the flaws with her strategy: 29...♗xg2† 30.♗f1 ♕e7 31.♗d7 ♕f8 32.♗d8 ♕e7 33.♗1d7 ♕e6 34.♗d6 ♕e7 35.♗8d7 ♕f8 36.♗xf6† and White will win the subsequent ending.

30.g3 ♔g7 31.♗1d5

White is winning no matter what. His domination is total and Black's position is riddled with weaknesses. If Polgar now intended to let the pawn go, I do not know, but it does not increase her chances.

31...h6?

32.♗xe5! ♕d8 33.♗ed5 ♕xd6 34.♗xd6 ♕g6 35.♗f4 a4 36.bxa4 ♕xc4 37.♗d8 ♕c3 38.♗g2 ♕b4 39.♗a8 h5 40.♗b8 ♕xe4† 41.♗h2 ♕g5 42.♗h8† ♕g6 43.♗g8† ♕f5 44.♗h7†

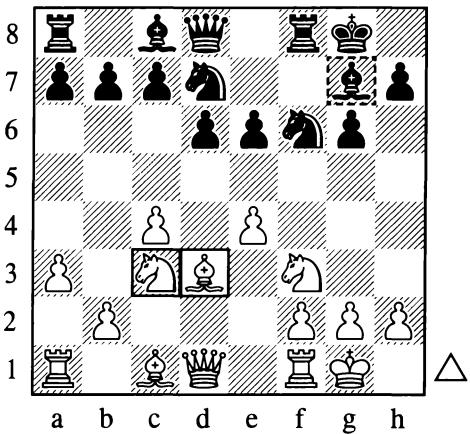
1–0

Sacrifices to improve certain pieces (positional sacrifices)

The positional sacrifice is a big theme and requires more than one book to cover it fully. I have already given one example above (Gelfand – Markowski), but I would like to give a few more. If this does not satisfy your hunger, I would refer you to Mihai Suba's book on this theme, *Positional Chess Sacrifices*.

Vadim Milov – Alexander Yermolinsky

Las Vegas 2006



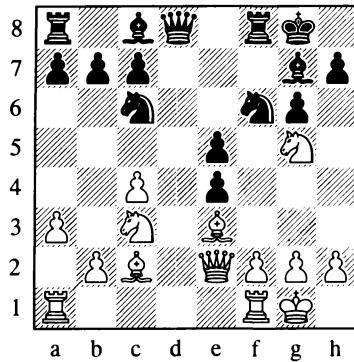
11.e5!

A typical pawn sacrifice. White loses a pawn, but the control over the e4-square and the death of the dynamics of the black position are more than worth it.

11... ♔xe5??

Black has to accept the sacrifice, as 11...Bg4 12.Bg5! followed by Bb5 would be a disaster.

But maybe Black should have aimed for more murky waters with 11...dxe5?!, when the knight on d7 could become active. For example: 12.♗c2 e4 13.♗g5 ♗e5 14.♗e2 ♗c6! 15.♗e3 e5

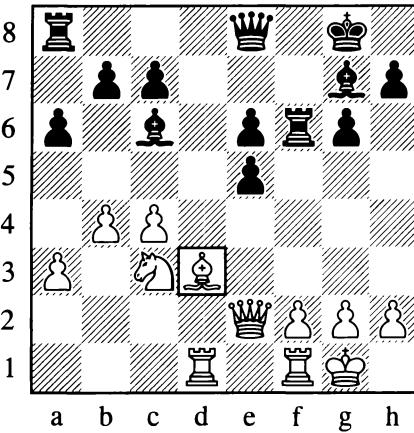


Black is planning to occupy the d4-square and is not significantly worse.

12. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $dxe5$ 13. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$

White is ensuring that he keeps control of the e4-square.

14... $\mathbb{W}e8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16.b4 a6 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$
 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$



18. $\text{K} \rightarrow e4$! ±

Another useful exchange, securing the e4-square for the knight. Black's position is somewhat worse objectively, and incredibly hard to defend in practice.

18... $\mathbb{E}f8$ 19. $\mathbb{E}d2$ $\mathbb{E}xe4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}a4$ 21. $\mathbb{W}d3$
 $\mathbb{W}c6$ 22. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 23. $\mathbb{E}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 24. $h4$ $\mathbb{E}f4$
25. $g3$ $\mathbb{E}f5$ 26. $b5!$

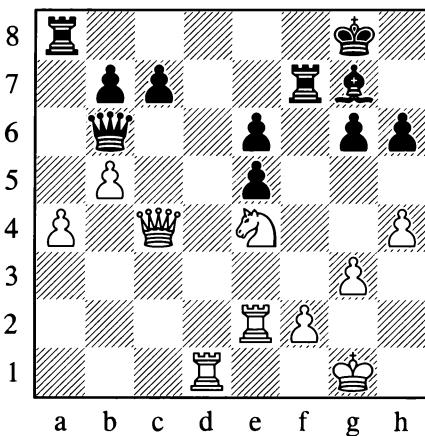
White is trying to create additional weaknesses in order to gain targets.

26...axb5 27.cxb5 $\mathbb{W}b6!$

After this passive move Black is pushed over the edge.

27... $\mathbb{W}d5$ was better, although White keeps an edge after 28. $\mathbb{W}b1$ $\mathbb{W}c4$ 29. $\mathbb{E}e3\pm$. But the fact that he has not managed to stabilize his queenside makes the outcome uncertain.

28. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{E}f7$ 29.a4 h6 30. $\mathbb{W}c4$



White is more or less winning. There is no defence against $\mathbb{E}ed2-d7$.

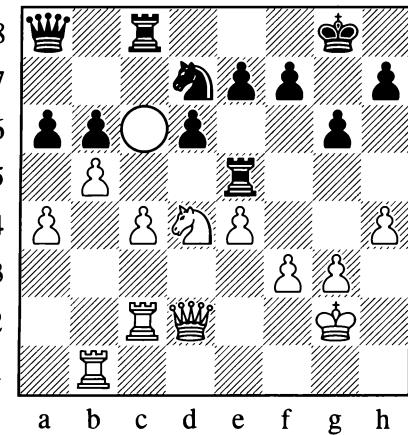
30... $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 31. $\mathbb{E}d3$ $\mathbb{E}e7$ 32. $\mathbb{E}ed2$ c6 33. $\mathbb{W}b4$ $\mathbb{E}f7$ 34. $\mathbb{E}d7$ $\mathbb{E}af8$ 35. $\mathbb{W}d6$ $\mathbb{E}xd7$ 36. $\mathbb{W}xd7$ cxb5 37.axb5 $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 38. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{W}a7$ 39. $\mathbb{W}e7$

1–0

The following example touches on this issue from a different angle.

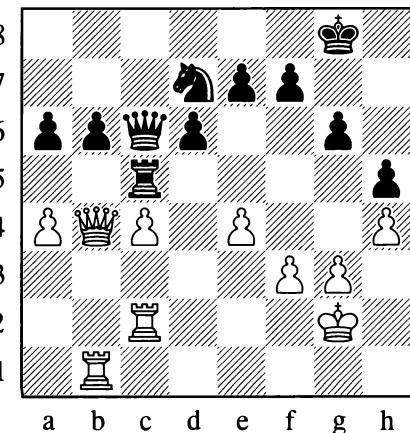
Teimour Radjabov – Vladimir Kramnik

Istanbul (ol) 2012



One matter I will not delve too far into in this book is the dynamic exchange of values that takes place when we sacrifice a piece or the exchange. What usually happens is that a structural improvement is exchanged for material investment, as in the following example. Here Kramnik gives up the exchange in order to take control of the c6-square. This time around the sacrifice does not come with any active possibilities, but as the position is fairly closed, it is hard for White to do anything with his rooks and for this reason the game was agreed drawn almost immediately.

26... $\mathbb{E}ec5$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{E}8xc6$ 28.bxc6 $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 29. $\mathbb{W}b4$ h5



30.♗b3 ♔g7 31.♔f2 f6 32.♔g2 ♔e5
 33.♕bc1 ♔h7 34.♕c3 ♔h8 35.♕c2 ♔g7
 36.♕c3 ♕a5 37.♕a1 ♕c5
 ½-½

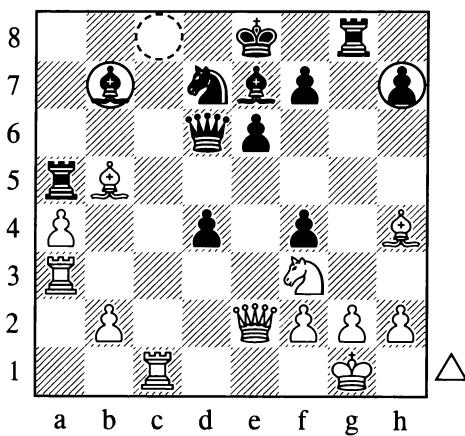
Loose pieces drop off

I am not going to go deeply into this concept, but just mention it briefly. The phrase was first used in print by John Nunn. The idea is pretty simple – undefended pieces are weaknesses, just as undefended pawns are. Usually we would put this theme under tactics, but we should also remember that basically all positions have some tactical element.

So rather than go into a long speech about this, I will show a simple example and ask you to get used to being aware of which pieces are undefended from time to time. Who knows, maybe you will get a chance like the following and not let it pass?

Murtal Kazhgaleyev – Yaroslav Zhrebukh

Cappelle la Grande 2010



In this complicated middlegame position, White played 22.♘d3?, after which the position was unclear and the game was won on move 39 by Black. Usually we would put a position

like this in a book on tactics or calculation (candidate moves), but it illustrates our example quite well. Because of the undefended nature of the bishop on b7 and the pawn on h7, White could have taken a big step towards winning the game with a nice little tactic:

22.♗e4!

As the queen is immune, Black has to defend the bishop on b7, allowing White to take on h7 with a decisive advantage.

Final note – a practical example

The key thing I want you to take away from this chapter is the power of the question: “Which is the worst-placed piece?” Even with such a simplistic tool you can play quite reasonable chess. Here is a recent example from one of my own games. My opponent will no doubt be an IM within a few years and has already beaten several strong grandmasters with his aggressive style.

Jakob Aabling-Thomsen – Jacob Aagaard

Helsingør 2012

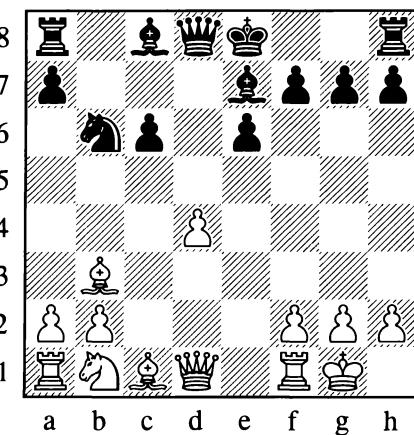
1.e4 c5 2.d4 cxd4 3.c3 ♔f6!

With a dangerous book just out, there was no way I was going to take the risk of accepting the Morra!

4.e5 ♔d5 5.♘f3 d6 6.♗c4 ♔b6 7.♗b3 dxe5 8.♗xe5 e6 9.0–0 ♔c6

Black gets an isolated pawn as well as White, but rids himself of the only attacking asset that White has. The future is quite safe now! Besides, Black's isolated pawn is not as weak as White's at the moment, as Black can force an exchange of them with ...c5, a possibility White does not have.

10.♗xc6 bxc6 11.cxd4 ♔e7



The opening is over and it is time to lay out a plan for the middlegame. From Black's perspective, it is all about solving problems one by one. Putting it simply, he wants to obtain good squares for the bishop on c8 and the knight on b6, and to put pressure on the d4-pawn.

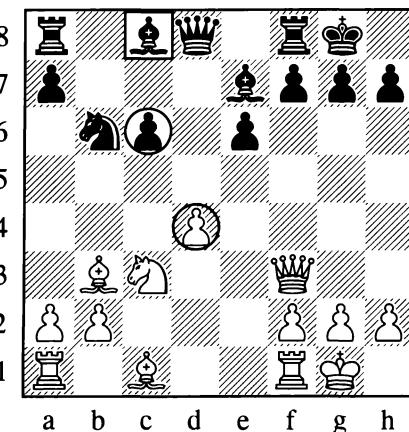
I decided to put the bishop on d5 and the knight on f5 (I was already anticipating that I would have to play ...g6 to defend my king). I quickly rejected all ideas of an early ...c5. The main downside I could find to this plan was that the bishop on d5 could be slightly in the way; but then I was not trying to prove anything, just to put my pieces on decent squares and see how my opponent decided to react.

I am happy if this sounds like very simplistic thinking, because then it can be replicated. Good positions are generally built on a foundation of staying friends with all of your pieces, as well as keeping an eye on what is important and what the opponent might be up to.

12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

White had the chance to play 12. $\mathbb{W}f3$, leading to an exchange of the isolated pawns after 12...0–0. The position is equal, and White would have to give up all ambition to play like this. Maybe it was something he should have considered!?

12...0–0 13. $\mathbb{W}f3$



White is heading for h3 with the queen, wanting to checkmate me. Unfortunately he has lost his strategic argument for this plan – the knight on e5. Against best play the attack should not be dangerous for Black.

So instead of worrying about getting mated, I wondered about how to put my inactive pieces on the right squares. I saw no reason not to progress with the plan I had laid down a few moves previously and went for the first obvious step.

13... $\mathbb{Q}a6$

Having castled, Black has this extra option. The regrouping starts.

14. $\mathbb{E}d1$

14. $\mathbb{E}e1$ was more logical in some ways, aiming to place the other rook on d1, but the computer points out that 14... $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xc6$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$ is pleasant for Black.

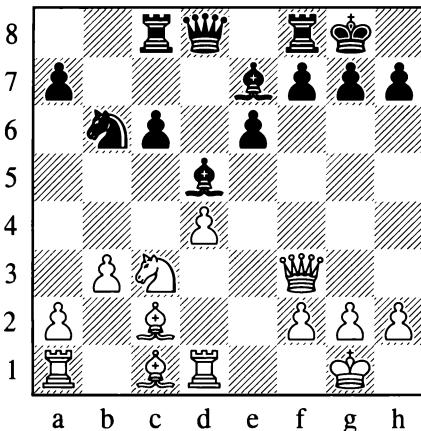
14... $\mathbb{E}c8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$

Strategically this was the only move; the bishop transfers to d5 before White has time to play b2–b3, preventing it.

16. $b3$

Played to dominate the b6-knight, but it also weakens some squares. All moves are a bit like that.

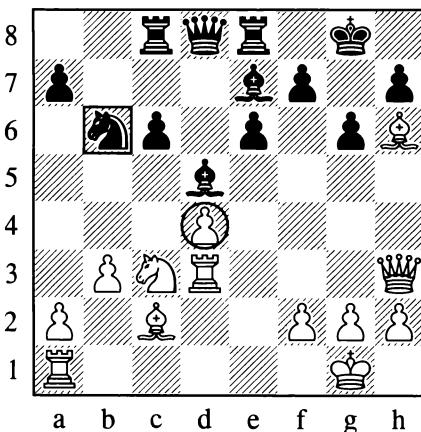
16...♝d5



The first step of the plan has been accomplished. I could not really work out how strong the bishop was on d5. As mentioned, it does feel like it is a bit in the way and not so easy to move. But at the same time it does control a lot of the board, and even though there are no serious weaknesses there now, there is no guarantee for White that these will not appear in the future.

White continued with his plan, not yet doubting its validity.

17.♗h3 g6 18.♗h6 ♜e8 19.♗d3



After a few forced moves it was finally time for me to return to my own plan. I wanted to put pressure on the d4-pawn and bring the knight in from the cold on b6 and put it on the highest tower (f5) like a beacon, visible at the edge of the board (h6, for example) and in control of the centre (d4, for sure!).

In order to do so I had to reorganize my pieces in a sensible way.

19...♜c7

The rook is going to d7 to put pressure on the d4-pawn, as well as freeing the c8-square for the knight.

20.♗ad1

Jakob is starting to lose his way. It was time to play 20.♗f4 ♜d6 21.♗e5! forcing some kind of concession. In this way the struggle would have remained tense, though Black's chances should not be worse.

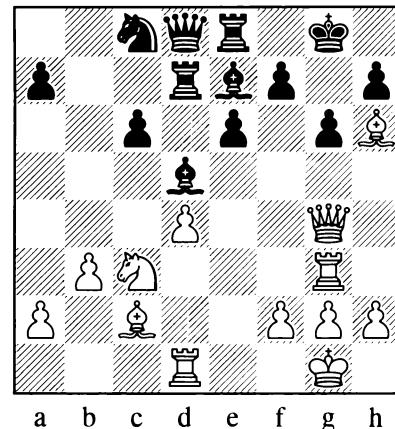
20...♜d7 21.♗g4

To deliver mate you usually need something extra – a very solid centre, a good knight or pawn on e5, or maybe a serious weakness on the kingside. Here there are none of those things, so White's attacking pose is over-optimistic.

21...♞c8

The knight is coming to f5.

22.♗g3



22...♞f6!

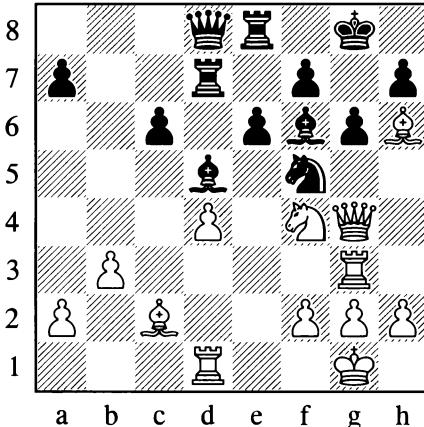
It is good to have a simple plan, but you should implement it with a certain level of intelligence and attention to the opponent's options. Here I wanted to put the knight on f5, without having to think about the pawn structure which would arise after 22...♝d6 23.♞xd5 cxd5. This is probably good for Black, but I wanted to keep the advantages I had, rather than exchange them for different ones – especially since my opponent was doing so poorly in dealing with the problems he had.

23.♝e2??

Clearly White is losing his grip. After 23.♝f4 ♝c7 24.♝e5 ♞f5 25.♝h3 ♜g7 I like my position, but I am not sure if I am objectively better. But now White's position disintegrates.

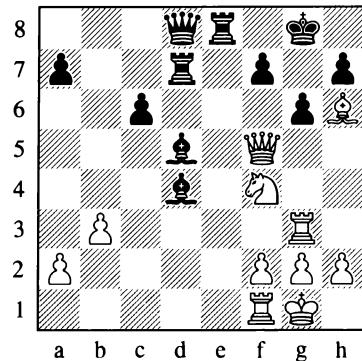
23...♝d6† 24.♝f4?

24.♝g5 was the last chance.

24...♝f5!**25.♝h3**

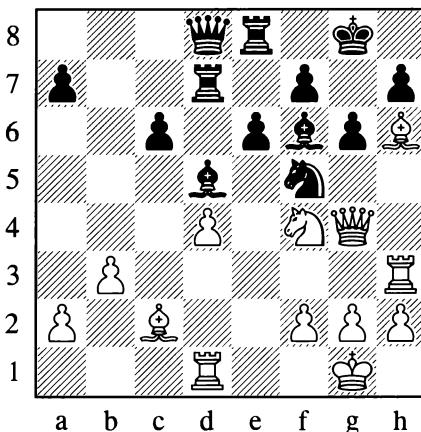
After 25.♝xf5 exf5 26.♝xf5 I was planning the simple 26...♝e4, followed by taking on d4.

But even more accurate is 26...♞xd4! with a winning position. The obvious threat is ...♝e4 followed by ...♝xf2†, but we should also notice what the idea is against 27.♝f1:



27...♝xf2† and White can only resign.

Now we had a moment where it clearly makes sense to calculate. Black can take on h6 and have a nice and safe advantage – but there is also the pawn on d4. From afar I was sure that I could take it, yet I still checked everything carefully, looking for plausible faults, but found none.

**25...♞xd4! 26.♝xg6**

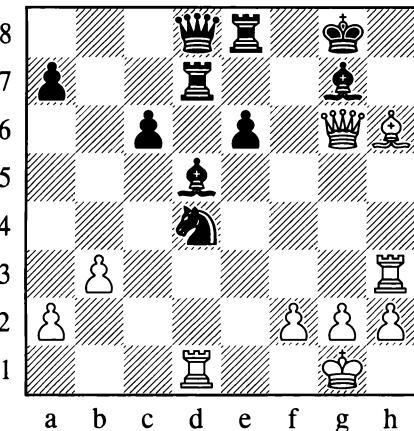
White has to do something. Looking for possible ideas, I also saw 26.♝xg6 fxg6 27.♝xd4 ♜xd4 28.♝xd4, which initially looks plausible, but where Black can win either by taking on g2 or with the move I had planned: 28...♝e4!

26...fxg6 27.♝xg6 hxg6

Simplest, eliminating the attacker.

27... $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 28.gxf3 $\mathbb{Q}e2\#$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ also looked promising, but unlike computers, I find the position to be quite unclear!

28. $\mathbb{W}xg6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$



29. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

Jakob was running out of time and could find nothing.

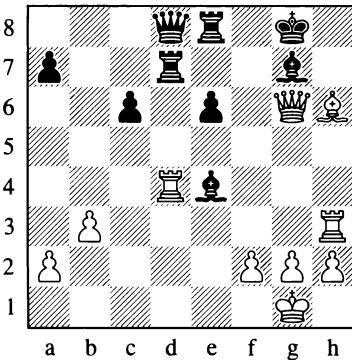
This was actually a good day for me, and right back at move 23 I had seen how to deal with:

29. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

Indeed, the only winning move is:

29... $\mathbb{Q}e4!$

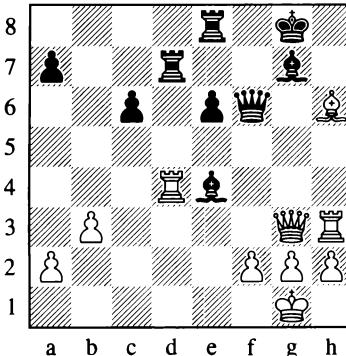
29...e5 30. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ cxd5 31. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ and White has a real attack going. Black will have to defend accurately to survive.



30. $\mathbb{W}g3$

I found this to be the most challenging and it took me some time to find the right answer. 30. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ is objectively better, but it leads by force to an endgame where Black has a great bishop against two weak pawns.

30... $\mathbb{W}f6!!$



Black wins.

29... $\mathbb{Q}e4!$

Easiest against everything. White has a last spite check before the game can conclude.

30. $\mathbb{Q}h8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xh8$ 31. $\mathbb{W}h5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}exd8$

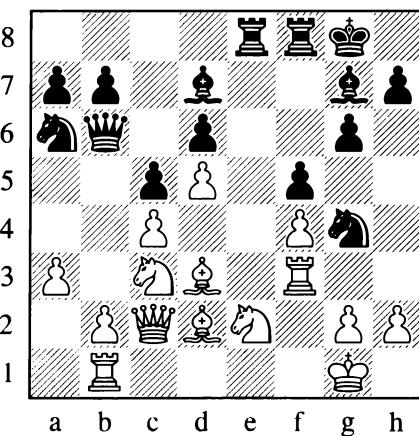
With four pieces for the queen, victory will be easy.

0–1

Conclusion

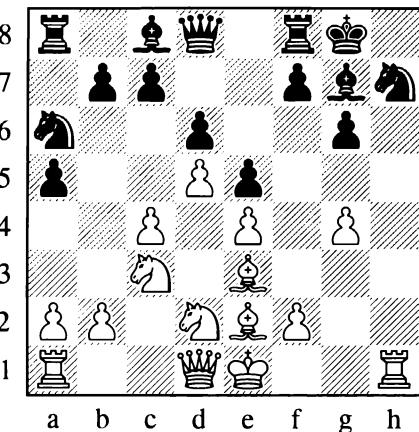
There are obviously many factors relating to piece play, but if I were to give you one thing to focus on (and this is the whole point of this book), then it would be to look at the worst-placed pieces and see where they belong. It will always be important information, although it will not always be something you can use actively on the next move.

M. Rasmussen – Ziska, Helsingør 2007



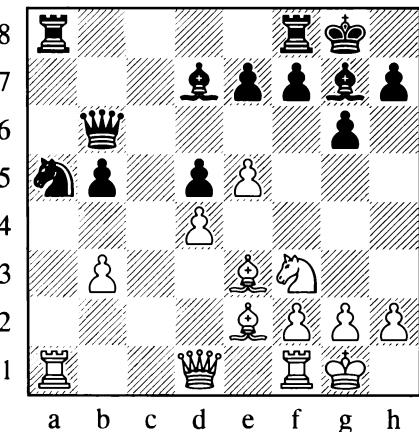
1

Shaw – Hebden, Liverpool 2006



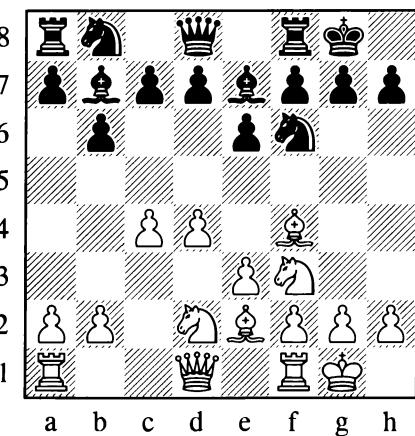
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Kramnik – Shirov, Wijk aan Zee 2007



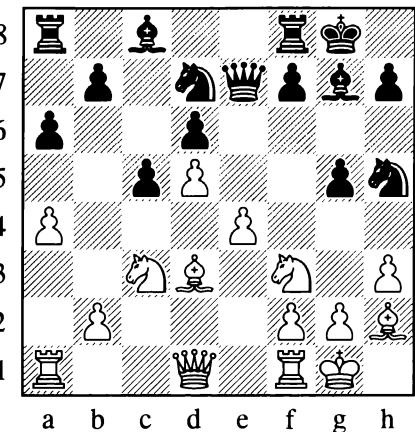
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Vallejo Pons – Leko, Monte Carlo 2004



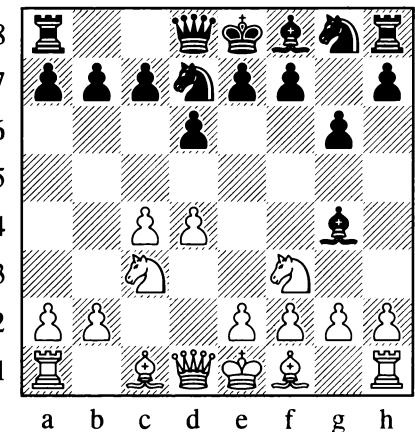
4

Van de Griendt – Van der Heijden, Netherlands 2009



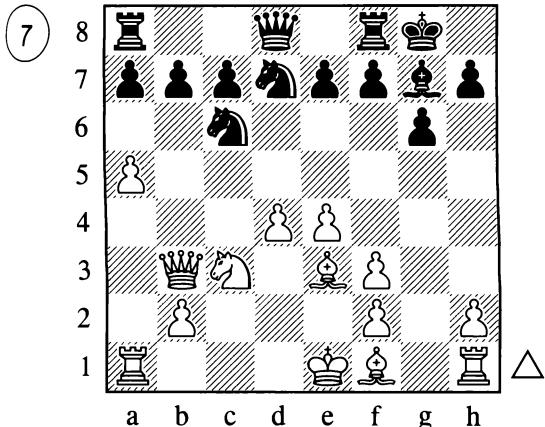
5

Roiz – Piscopo, Trieste 2010



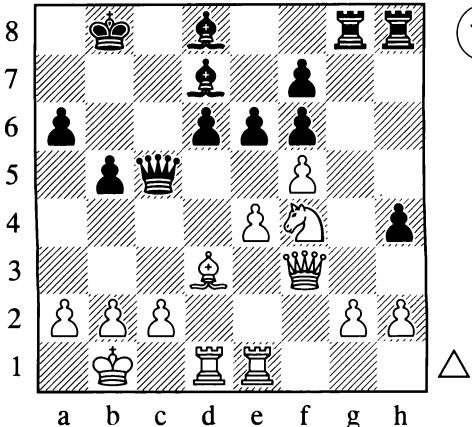
6

Roiz – Bobras, Germany 2010

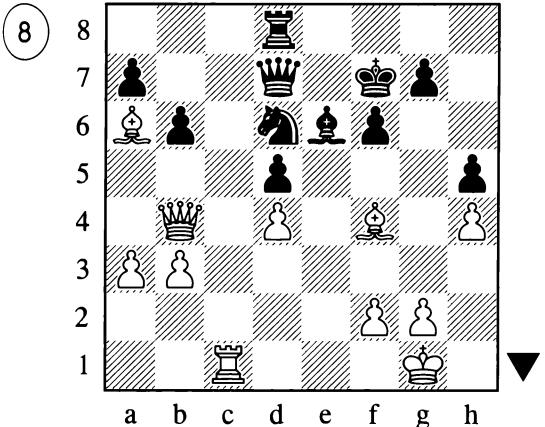


Jakovenko – Eljanov, Wijk aan Zee 2007

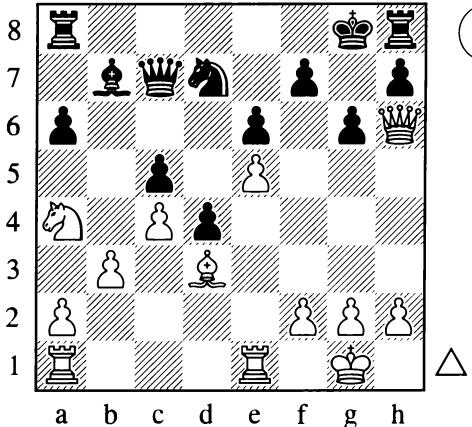
Gashimov – Mamedyarov, Elista 2008



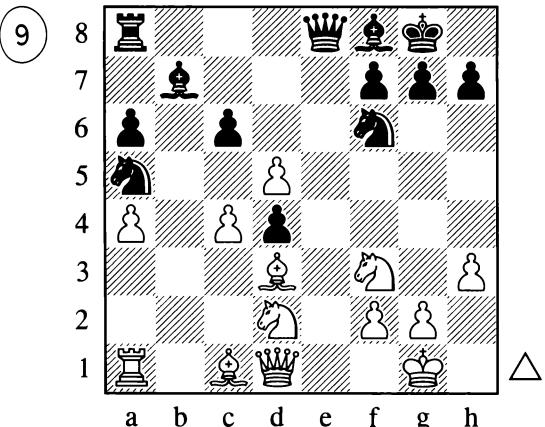
Adams – Werle, London 2007



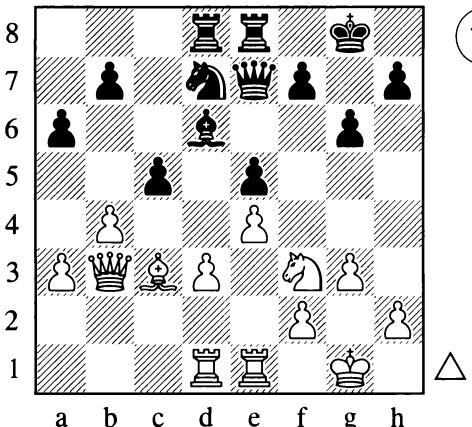
Ivanchuk – Miton, Sochi 2007



Razuvayev – Stohl, Germany 1992

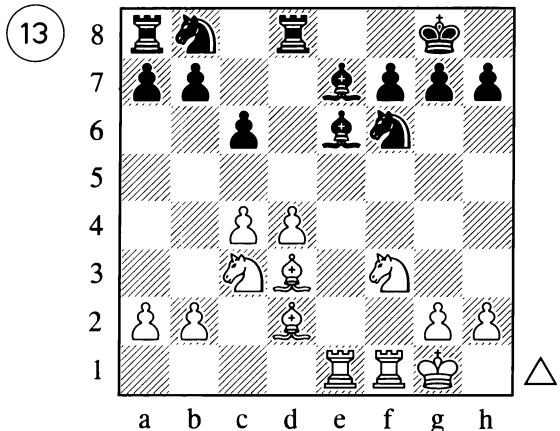


Ivanchuk – Miton, Sochi 2007

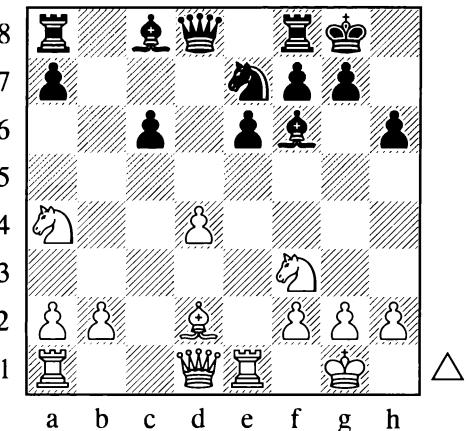


Razuvayev – Stohl, Germany 1992

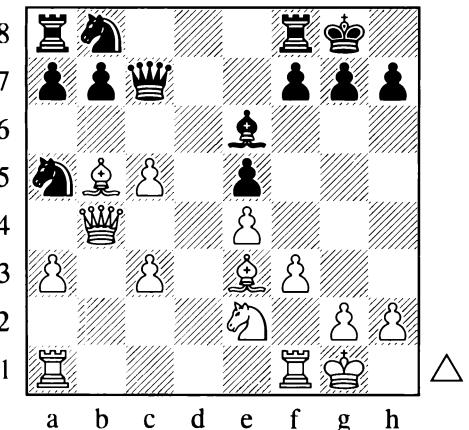
Zvjaginsev – Wang Hao, Taiyuan 2007



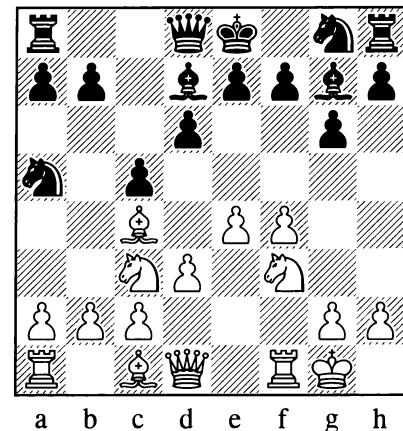
Shomoev – Sebag, Moscow 2010



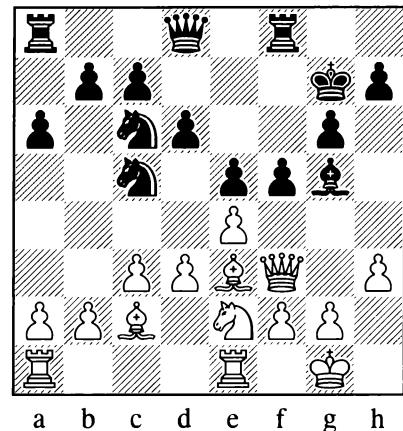
Anand – Wang Hao, Wijk aan Zee 2011



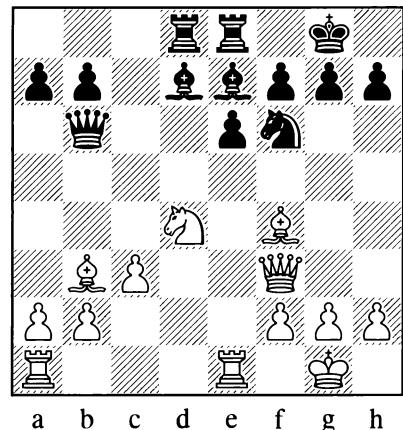
Carlsen – Anand, Monaco (blindfold) 2011



Nepomniachtchi – Mamedyarov, Dortmund 2008



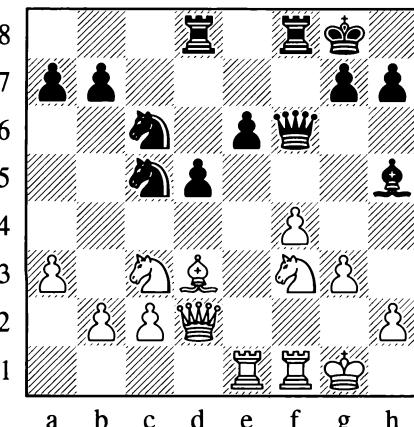
Aagaard – I. Almasi, Budapest 1996



Leko – Volkov, New Delhi/Teheran 2000

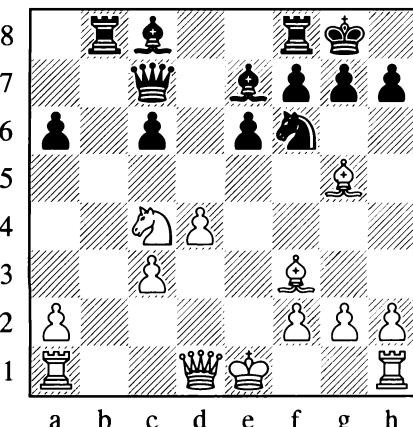
Wells – Van Wely, Warsaw 2005

19



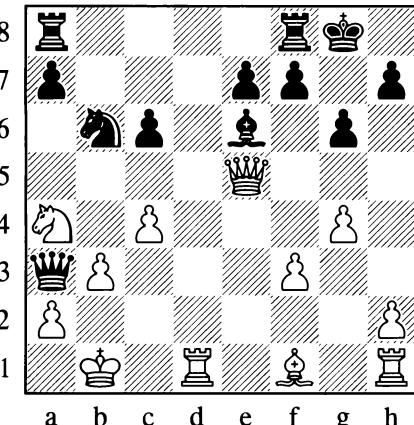
Leviczki – Porat, Budapest 2008

22



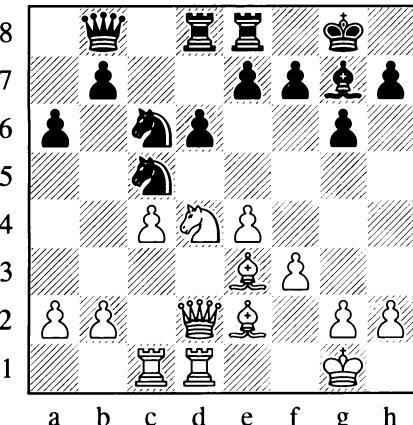
Danstrup – Aabling-Thomsen, Denmark 2008

20



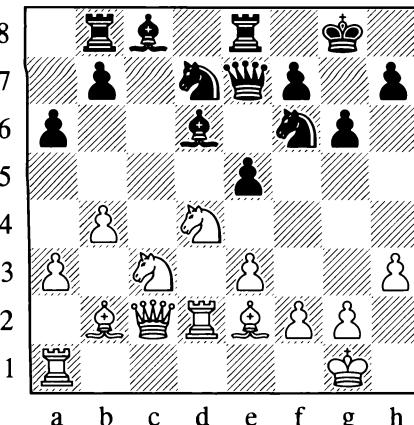
Ibragimov – Kazhgaleyev, Sochi 2007

23

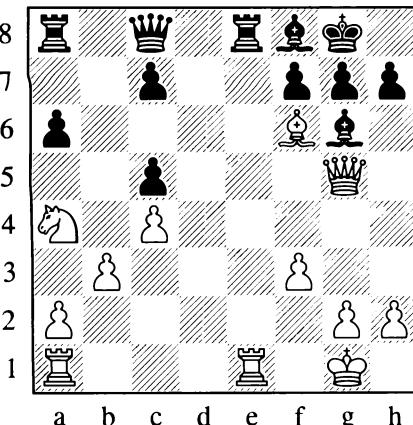


Ciuksyte – Safarli, Internet 2008

21

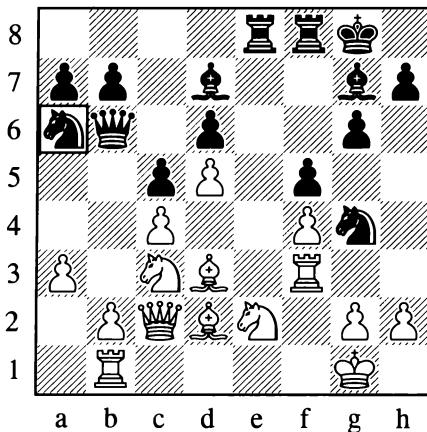


24



1. M. Rasmussen – Ziska

Helsingør 2007



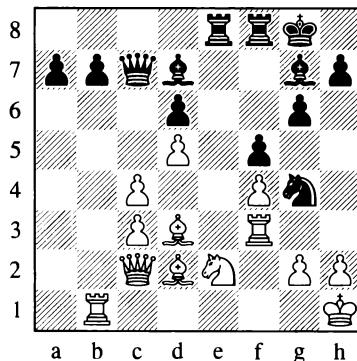
Black's worst-placed piece is the knight on a6. He is able to bring it into play by a simple tactic.

20...♞b4!

20...♞d4† was also possible, but is more double-edged. After 21.♞xd4 cxd4 22.♝d1 ♜c5 23.b4 ♞e4 24.♛e1 both players can find good things to say about their position, and it is not obvious which side to support.

21.♝d1?

White had to play 21.axb4 cxb4† 22.♝h1 bxc3, when because of the threat of ...♞f2†, White has to accept a worse position after 23.bxc3 ♜c7†.



In the long term the a-pawn and the c5-square are great assets for Black.

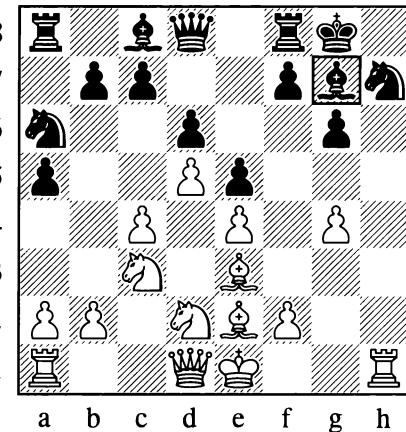
21.♝b3? is bad for two reasons. The tactical 21...♝xd5! immediately nets a pawn, or Black may prefer the more positional 21...♝xd3?!? 22.♝xb6 axb6 23.♝xd3 b5! and the white position is collapsing because of 24.cxb5 ♜xe2 25.♝xe2 ♜xb5 26.♝c1 ♜e8! with a strong attack. The latter line is the one I came up with in order to answer a pupil who asked why the queen move was no good. However, had I spotted the hanging d-pawn, I would not have gone into such elaborate measures. That said, I still like the positional line because it shows the potential in the black pieces, and objectively it is at least as strong as simply grabbing the pawn.

21...♝xd3 22.♝xd3 ♜a6! 23.b3 b5†

Black has a fantastic attack on the light squares and won in 51 moves.

2. Shaw – Hebden

Liverpool 2006



White wants to play ♜g1 and g4-g5, in the long term, to cramp the black pieces. He might also want to exchange the light-squared bishops at some point with ♜g4. Black's worst

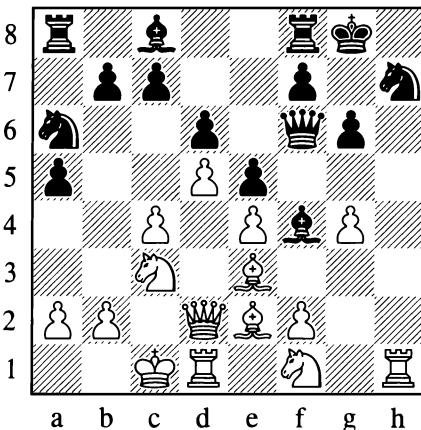
pieces are the h7-knight and g7-bishop. Both have been moved, but are unhappy where they are. The weakness in the white position is the dark squares, especially f4, so it is natural to seek an influence there, which is exactly what Black did.

12...♞f6! 13.♝f1

13.♝h6 does not achieve anything. Black is just as happy with the rook on e8 as f8, as he intends to play ...♝h8 eventually anyway.

13...♝g5 14.♗d2 ♘f6 15.0–0–0 ♞f4!

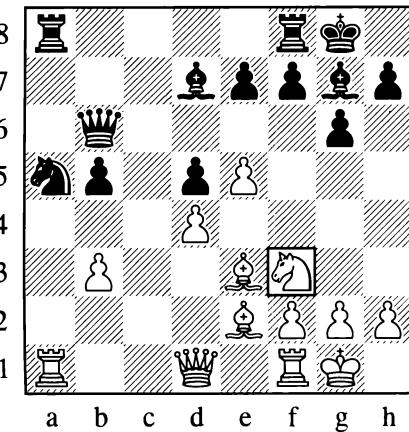
Making room for the knight on h7 to enter the game. Black is already a little better, I think. White's disadvantages are long term, so it will not become absolutely apparent immediately.



16.♝xf4 ♘xf4 17.♝e3 ♘g5 18.♝g2 ♘xd2†
 19.♚xd2 ♘g7 20.♝e3 ♘d7 21.♝h2 ♘b4
 22.♝d2 ♘h8 23.♝dh1 ♘xh2 24.♝xh2 c6!
 25.♝e1 cxd5 26.cxd5 ♘a6 27.♝xa6 ♘xa6
 28.f3 b5 29.♝e3 ♘a8 30.♝b1 b4 31.♝c2
 ♘h8 32.♝d2 ♘h1 33.♝g2 ♘b5 34.b3
 ♘g1 35.♝c4 ♘xc4 36.bxc4 a4 37.f4 exf4†
 38.♝xf4 f6 39.♝e3 ♘h1 40.♝b2 ♘h3 41.♝f2
 b3 42.axb3 axb3 43.♝d1 ♘d3
 0–1

3. Kramnik – Shirov

Wijk aan Zee 2007

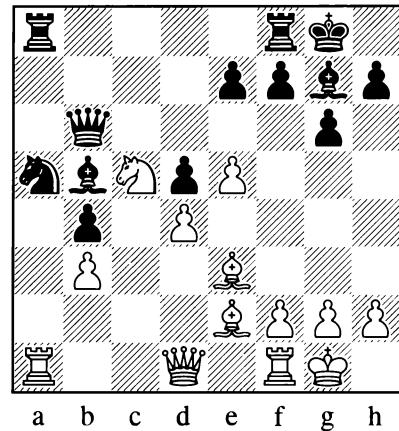


White's knight on f3 is inactive and the c5-square is very attractive. As there are no real targets in the position, going there is a great first step.

18.♞e1! b4

18...♝c6 19.♝d3!± still favours White, on account of 19...♝xd4? 20.♝xa8 ♘xa8 21.♝h1! and the pin will eventually cost Black a piece for insufficient compensation.

19.♝d3 ♘b5 20.♝c5±



20...♞b7

The knight is immediately challenged. However, the black knight is not pretty on b7 and White is able to achieve a series of small positional gains because of the strong knight on c5.

**21.♝xa8 ♜xa8 22.♝xb5 ♜xb5 23.♛d3! ♜c6
24.♞a4!**

The knight is not allowed to stay on c5, but it remains a powerful force, even from this slightly decentralized square.

24...♞d8 25.♝c1 ♜b7 26.♛c2

Taking control over the c-file. Black's defence is very difficult.

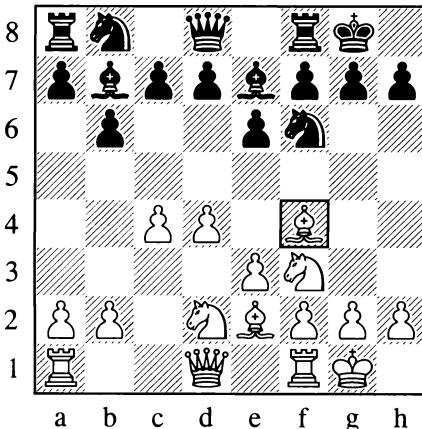
**26...f6 27.f4 ♜h6 28.g3 fxe5 29.dxe5 ♜e6
30.♛c6± ♜xc6 31.♝xc6 ♜f7 32.♝f2 ♜b8
33.♝e2 ♜f8 34.♝d3 ♜b7?**

Black resigned before White was able to play 35.♝xe6!.

1–0

4. Vallejo Pons – Leko

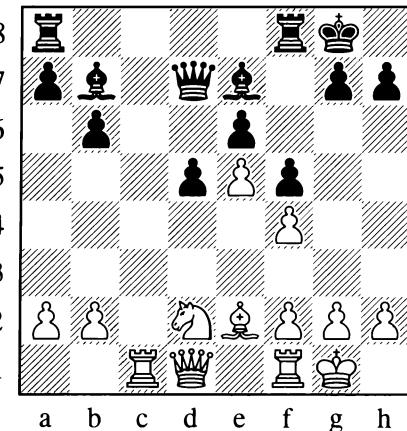
Monte Carlo (rapid) 2004



This position is of course not greatly complicated, and the solution is simple. There are no weaknesses and nothing in particular is

going on at the moment, but Black does have the chance to acquire the two bishops. All things being equal, it is better to have them than not, so this is what he should do.

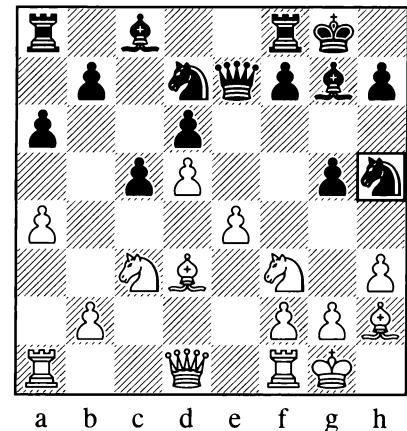
**8...♞h5!= 9.♝e5 ♜xf4 10.exf4 d6 11.♝f3
c6 12.♝g4 ♜d7 13.♝c1 d5 14.cxd5 cxd5
15.♝e2 f5 16.♝e5 ♜xe5 17.dxe5 ♜d7+**



Black enjoys long-term prospects on the dark squares. He eventually won, although this is of course not inevitable from this position.

5. Van de Griendt – Van der Heijden

Netherlands 2009



White is able to use all his advantages to bring his currently restricted pieces on d3 and c3 to life. Black has three obvious weaknesses, d6, g5 and h5, and a less obvious weakness on h7. If he had the time to play ... $\mathbb{Q}f4$, he would be laughing, but it is White to go.

14.e5!

A typical move for the Modern Benoni, forcing Black to put a pawn on his beloved e5-square, opening up lines for the white pieces and clearing the way for the d-pawn's advancement.

14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ looks tempting, but Black can gain some counterplay and practical chances with: 14... $\mathbb{Q}f4$! 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $gxf4$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ (17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $f5\text{?}$) 17... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}h6$ $f5\pm$ White is of course better, but the e5-bishop is strong, so proving this advantage will not be altogether easy.

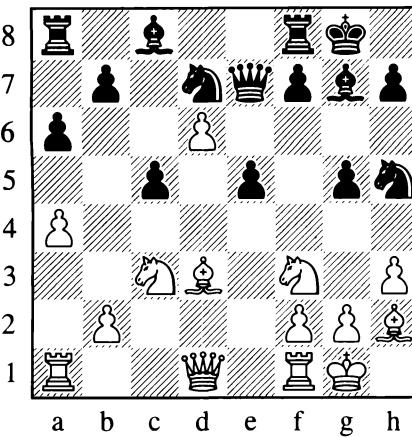
14. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ is a funny move, but it does not really solve the issue with the dark squares. Black has several tempting replies, for example: 14... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xh5$ $gxh4$ 17. $\mathbb{W}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ with the idea of ...b5 with counterplay. Again the extra pawn counts for something, but how much is hard to tell.

14...dxe5

Forced. 14... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ does not work. White plays 15.exd6, when Black cannot recapture. And after 15... $\mathbb{W}f6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{W}a3$ White can choose between 18. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ and 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $gxf4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}eg5$ $h6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e6$!, in both cases with a winning position.

14... $h6$ 15. $e6$!— results in the total disintegration of the black position.

15.d6!



15... $\mathbb{W}d8$

15... $\mathbb{W}e6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xh7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ is a disaster, of course...

16. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e7$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$

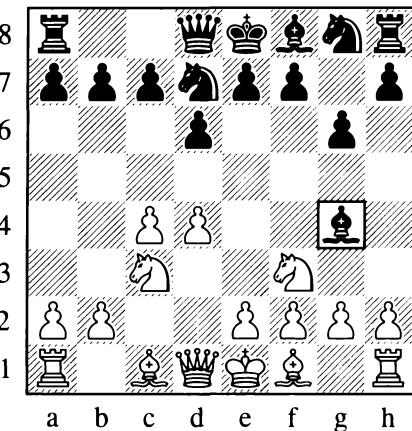
Black could defend a bit better, but he is still lost.

18. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $h6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c4!$ $hxg5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$

1–0

6. Roiz – Piscopo

Trieste 2010



Black's last move, 4... $\mathbb{Q}d7$, has left the bishop a bit exposed on g4. It seems innocuous, as an escape square can be arranged rather quickly.

But the problem is that White will enjoy having his knight on g5 just fine, while Black has to place his pieces awkwardly.

5.♘g5! ♘df6

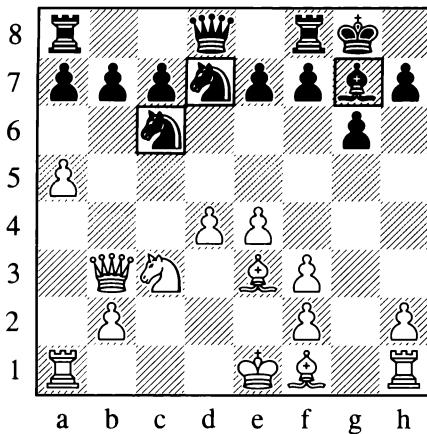
Not the ideal square for the knight, but the alternatives 5...♝b6 6.h3 ♜c8 7.e4 and 5...h6 6.♞xf7! ♜xf7 7.h3 are even more awkward.

6.h3 ♜d7 7.♗b3±

White won on move 29.

7. Roiz – Bobras

Germany 2010



12.e5!

With this simple move White dominates all of the black minor pieces. The remainder of the game should have been Black suffocating slowly (or quickly), but instead he got off the hook when White misplayed a pawn-up endgame in very uncharacteristic fashion.

12...♝b8

12...b6 is the only move requiring a bit of calculation. Even after exchanging on b6 or playing 13.a6 White is better, but the refutation is quite something: 13.♗a4! ♜xa5 14.b4 ♘b7 15.♗a6 ♘b8 16.♗c6 and White wins material. The pawns take care of the

dark squares and the queen and bishop wins material on the light ones.

13.f4 e6 14.d5?!

14.♕g2! made more sense; there is no great need for White to hurry. The proof of the pudding comes after eating the a7-pawn: 14...♞e7 15.d5 exd5 16.♕xa7±

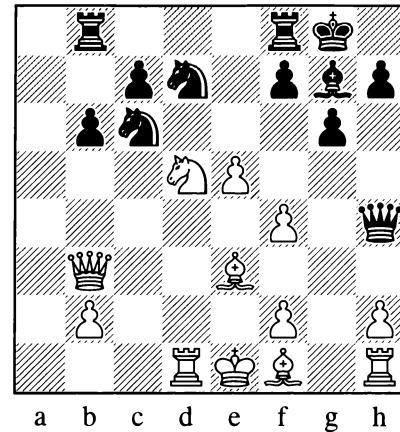
14...exd5 15.♘xd5 b6 16.axb6

16.♗d1!? is Roiz's suggestion, but I am not wholly convinced by his variations and evaluations. I think White is better, but it is not entirely clear.

16...axb6

16...♞xb6!±

17.♗d1 ♜h4

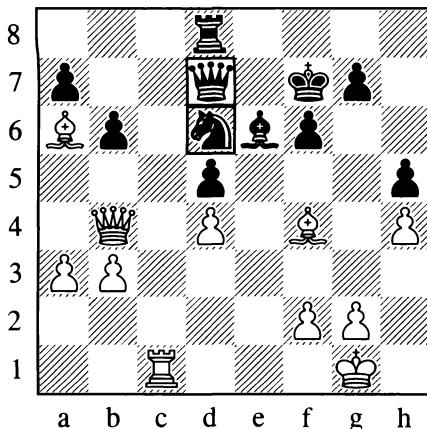


We shall leave the game here, noting that it was drawn in 57 moves.

But here Roiz missed a nice tactic in 18.♗c4! winning the c7-pawn, with the point 18...♞e7? 19.f5!! ♘xf5 20.♗xh4 ♘xh4 21.♗e7† and White wins a piece.

8. Jakovenko – Eljanov

Wijk aan Zee 2007



White's position looks visually better. He has two bishops and his pieces are active. On top of this his king is safer – slightly passive, but safer. Of course, if the queens were exchanged, Black's king position would change from exposed to active. And the three slightly exposed pawns on a3, d4 and h4 would become more important. This is the reason for Eljanov's next move.

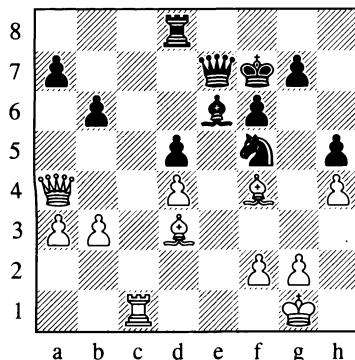
27... $\mathbb{Q}e7!$

Preparing ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ and the exchange of queens. This will not solve all of Black's problems at once, but it goes a long way towards making Black's position playable.

28.g3

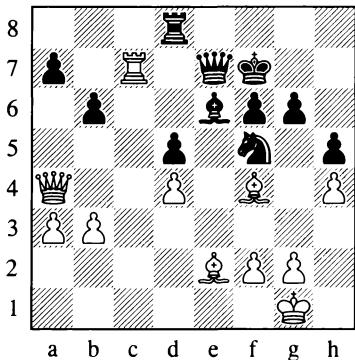
Not the most dangerous; White can retain a slight edge, though it is not easy to see how.

28. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}a4!$ produces some problems for Black, but they can all be solved.



First he neutralizes the pressure down the c-file with 29... $\mathbb{Q}c8!$ and after the only dangerous idea 30. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ he then plays: 30... $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}c3!$ (An important move. After 31... $\mathbb{Q}g6?$ White gains an advantage with 32.f4!± with a strong attack. The main tactical point is 32. $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 33.f5!! $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ and White wins the exchange after 34... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}a6$ with serious winning chances in the resulting endgame. The weakness of the a7-pawn is a crucial factor.) 32. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ (White has nothing after 32. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}xh5†$ $g6=$) 32... $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ White has a tiny edge in this ending, but with decent play Black should hold comfortably.

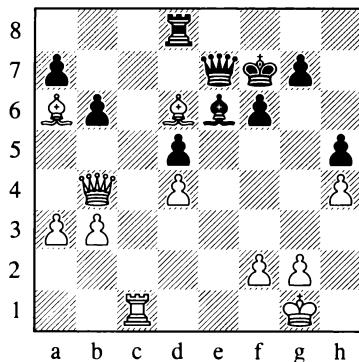
A very natural idea is 28. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $g6$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ to get the queen to an active square with tempo. But there are downsides too – it does not solve the problem with the pawns, and the bishop is a bit exposed on e2. 29... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ looks almost equalizing to me. 30. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ and now:



a) 30... $\mathbb{E}d7$?! is punished by 31. $\mathbb{W}xa7$! and the ghost of the passed a-pawn will haunt Black for a long time. A possible line is: 31... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{B}xc7$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 34. $\mathbb{W}xb6$ $\mathbb{W}c5$ (34... $\mathbb{Q}d2$? 35. $\mathbb{Q}d8!$ \pm and the f6-square/pawn is a target.) 35.a4 \pm Maybe Black can draw this, but it is certainly uncomfortable, and White has other options on the way.

b) 30... $\mathbb{Q}d7$! A nice tactic based on the ... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ -e6 threat. White has only one reasonable way to react: 31. $\mathbb{Q}b5$! (31. $\mathbb{W}xa7$? $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 31... $\mathbb{W}e1\uparrow$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 33. $\mathbb{W}a6$ (33. $\mathbb{W}xa7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 34. $\mathbb{W}a6!$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 35. $\mathbb{W}xb6$ $\mathbb{W}xf1\uparrow$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{W}xf2$ 37. $\mathbb{W}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}f3\uparrow$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ miraculously offers White a draw!) 33... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}e4$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6\infty$

28. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$! is a very clever idea.



The main point is that the exchange of queens would be followed by $\mathbb{Q}b5$! and the rook entering the game on c7, when Black would be under some technical pressure. 28... $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 29. $\mathbb{W}d2\pm$ White manages to hold on to some of his advantages, mainly the more active rook and better king position. Black should be able to defend successfully, but had this happened, there would definitely have been scope for another exercise!

28... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}c7$

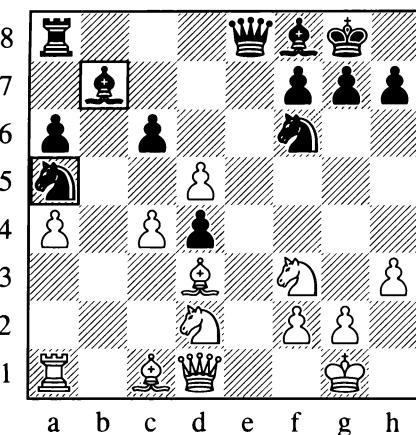
29. $\mathbb{W}xe7\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ offers Black okay chances.

29... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 31. $\mathbb{W}xe7\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$

Black has solved his problems and he made his draw on move 41.

9. Ivanchuk – Miton

Sochi 2007



If nothing happens immediately, the centre will disappear in a cascade of exchanges, for example after 21. $\mathbb{Q}b2$. The way to success lies in exploiting the lack of stability of the knight on a5 and the bishop on b7.

21. $\mathbb{Q}b3!$

21. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ cxd5 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ dxc4 23. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ and Black holds.

21... $\mathbb{W}d8$

21... $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xb3$ is not much better. Black will lose a pawn after 22... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 23.dxc6 and 24. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$. There is no way to avoid this, as something silly like 22... $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 23. $\mathbb{W}b6$ $\mathbb{W}a8$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ cxd5 allows White to win the exchange with 25. $\mathbb{Q}e3\!+-$.

22. $\mathbb{Q}b1!$

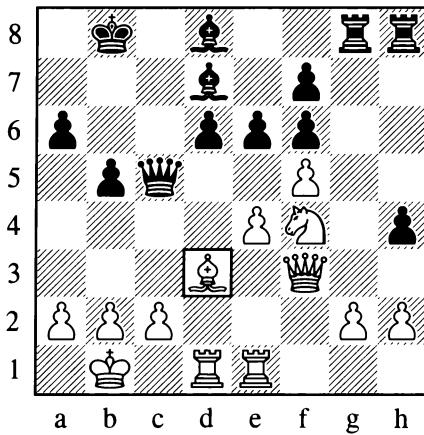
Putting further pressure on the bishop. Black collapses.

22... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ $\mathbb{W}xa5$ 24.dxc6+– $\mathbb{Q}c5$

25.♕f4 ♔e6 26.♗g5 ♕e8 27.♗xe6 fxe6
 28.♕e5 ♕b6 29.♕xf6 gxf6 30.♕xh7† ♔xh7
 31.♗xb6 ♕xb6 32.♗h5† ♔g7 33.♗xe8 ♕b1†
 34.♗h2 ♕e4 35.g3 d3 36.♗d7† ♔g6 37.c7
 1–0

10. Gashimov – Mamedyarov

Elista 2008



White has an inactive bishop on d3. The great weakness in the black position is the pawn on e6 (and the light squares in general as a consequence of the earlier exchange of White's dark-squared bishop for the f6-knight). So the solution is to bring the bishop to b3, from where it can put pressure on e6. Simple chess, but very effective.

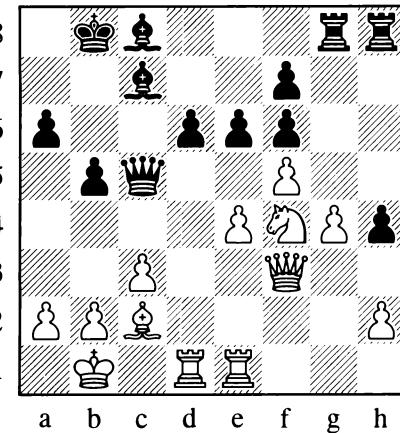
21.c3!± ♕c7 22.♕c2 ♕e5 23.g3

A bit slow. 23.♔e2?! was perhaps even stronger. Black would be lost after 23...d5?! 24.♗d3! ♕xh2?! 25.exd5 ♕g3 26.♗f2 because of 26...exd5 27.♗b4+, so he would need to play 23...♕c6 24.♗b3?! exf5 25.♗d5 ♕d7 26.h3, when White dominates the light squares and his bishop is fantastic. Who cares about a pawn?

23...♕c5?

23...♕c6!± was better.

24.g4! ♕c8



25.h3

25.♗b3! was strongest and would have completed the manoeuvre with strong pressure on e6.

25...♕e5 26.♗h5 ♕b6 27.♗f1!? ♕e8 28.♗f4 ♕hg8 29.♗e2 ♕c7?!

White was winning anyway, but now it finishes abruptly.

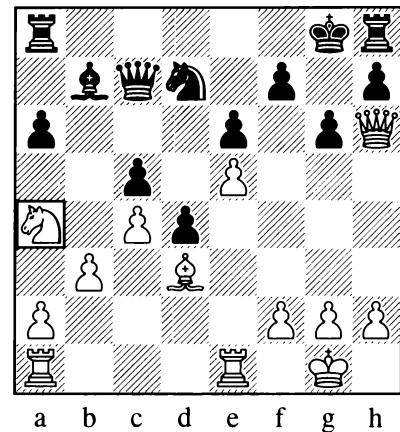
30.♗d3! ♕g3 31.♗f4 ♕b6 32.♗de1

The queen is trapped.

1–0

11. Adams – Werle

London 2007



White needs to sort out the problem with the knight on a4. This piece would be well placed on d3, which explains Adams' play.

19.♕e4!± ♜b8

Black is freeing the queen by protecting the bishop once more.

20.♘b2?!

This is maybe a bit too rushed, as Black has a reasonable counter available.

20.♘ad1!± is more flexible. White retains the option of ♘b2-d3, but prefers to wait for Black to play ...♝b6 first. And in the case of 20...♛a5 White can switch his play to the other side of the board with 21.h4!→.

20...♛d8?!

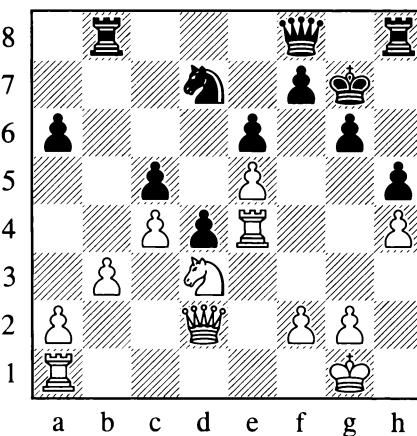
20...♝xe4 21.♕xc4 ♛a5! looks like a better defensive try. After 22.♕c1 ♛a3! Black would be ready for ...a6-a5-a4 with counterplay, so White should instead return to a4 with the knight, but clearly time has been lost.

21.♘d3 ♛f8 22.♕d2 ♜xe4 23.♕xe4 ♔g7

24.h4

Creating an air-hole and at the same time threatening h4-h5 – a nice little tempo gain.

24...h5



25.b4!

White is active, which means that his c-pawn will be stronger than Black's potential passed b-pawn.

25...cx b4 26.♗xd4 ♛e7 27.♗d6± ♜hc8

28.♗e3 ♜b7

28...♗xc4 29.♗a7 ♜d8 30.♗d1 and White wins a piece.

29.♗d4 ♜b8 30.c5 a5 31.♗d1 ♜c6 32.♗e4?!

The beginning of a tactical operation, but unfortunately there is a minor flaw. 32.♗f4!± was better.

32...♝a7?

32...♗bc7! 33.♗f4 ♜a7!± with the idea of ...♝b5-c3 with counterplay was a better defence.

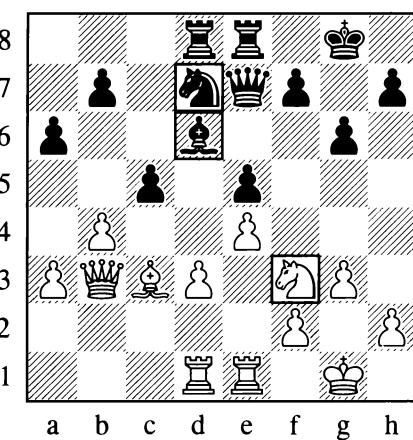
33.♗f4! ♜xc5 34.♗xe6 fxe6 35.♗xg6† ♔h8

36.♗h6† ♔g8 37.♗g6

1–0

12. Razuvayev – Stohl

Germany 1992



This position is relatively easy to understand. Black has a bad bishop on d6. White secures an advantage by taking control of the light

squares around it, and condemns the black pieces to passivity.

23.b5!†

Had it been Black to play, maybe ...b5 would have been his move.

23...axb5 24.♗xb5 b6

Other moves are possible, but it is clear that White's little operation has been a success.

25.♘d2

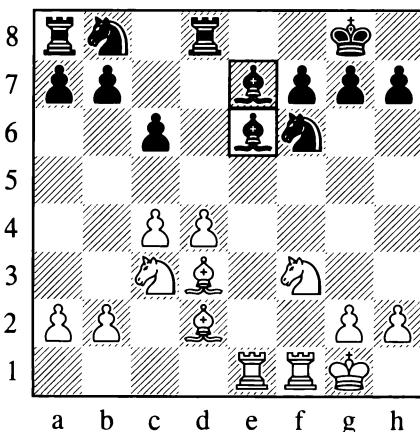
Bringing the knight to the lovely c4-square, which Black finds hard to contest.

25...♕c7 26.♘c4 ♔e6 27.♗g2 h5 28.h4 ♘f6 29.a4

White's advantage is by no means overwhelming, but his position is pleasant and the pressure long-lasting. White won on move 69.

13. Zvjaginsev – Wang Hao

Taiyuan 2007



White has achieved quite a comfortable position out of the opening, but needs to breathe more life into his pieces in order to make something of it. To do so he will have to advance his pawns on the queenside eventually, while also putting some pressure on

Black in the centre and making it hard for him to mobilize his forces. Looking at the black position, we can see that the bishops are a bit exposed. Combine these factors and we have an obvious candidate.

15.♘e2!†

A nice multipurpose move that aims to harass the black bishops, at the same time clearing the way to reinforce the d4-pawn with ♘d2-c3 and preparing to advance with b2-b4.

15...♗bd7

In a bad position there are no good moves. Black decides to give up his bishop in order to get his pieces out. Had he chosen otherwise, he might have been criticised for neglecting his development. The fact of the matter is that he was facing an unpleasant choice.

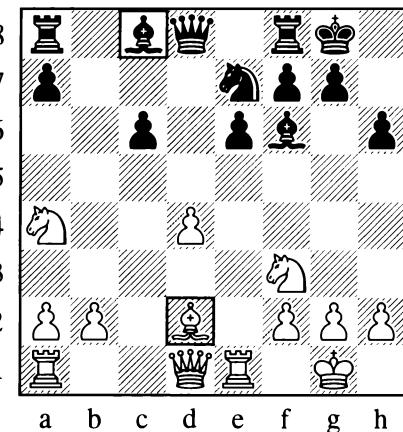
15...♗f8 is probably best answered by the simple 16.h3 followed by ♘f4 with a serious advantage.

16.♘f4 ♘f8 17.♘c3 ♘d6 18.♗xe6 ♘xe6 19.♕f5

White is dominating and won on move 36.

14. Shomoev – Sebag

Moscow 2010



This position could be a little controversial. The computers I have asked do not fully agree about the power of Shomoev's move. Hopefully I will be able to explain it convincingly.

14.♗b4!

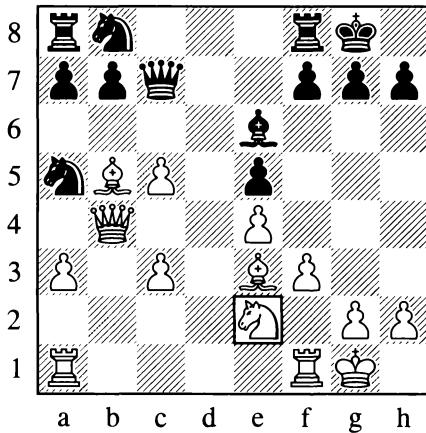
The point of this move is two-fold. First of all White is ridding himself of his bad bishop, a general positional idea. Secondly, by exchanging it for the knight, he is creating a position where the bishop on c8 will always be bad. This is a simple case of good pieces and bad pieces. I do not want to make it any more complicated than this, though of course it is more complicated than this in practice.

14...♝e8 15.♝xe7 ♜xe7 16.♞c5 ♘d8 17.♜c1 ♘b8 18.b3 ♘b7 19.♝c4±

White won on move 45. My evaluation here is "close to winning", albeit with a lot of practical problems to overcome.

15. Anand – Wang Hao

Wijk aan Zee 2011



This theoretical position was considered decent for Black until this game. But actually Anand's novelty is not so difficult to work out.

Black has sacrificed a pawn in order to split White's pawns and get active play against them.

The hint as to the solution to this position is the lame goat on e2. It is almost impossible to find a good square for this knight, no matter how far you manoeuvre it around, so the idea of just giving it up should pop into your mind sooner or later – it just takes a little imagination.

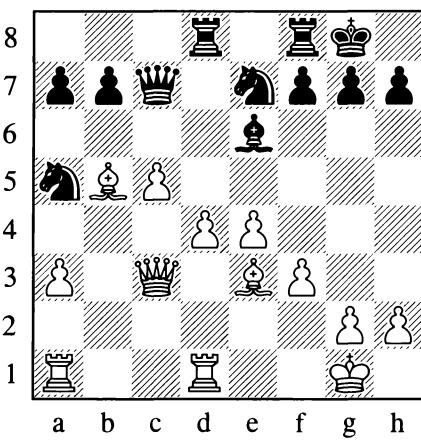
16.♘d4! exd4 17.cxd4 ♜bc6

This leaves the knight on a5 out on a limb to some extent, but there is not really any alternative – Black needs to get into the game quickly and must be prepared to give back the piece.

18.♗c3 ♜e7

A necessity. 18...♝ad8 19.d5 ♘xd5 20.exd5 ♘xd5 21.♝ad1 is poor for Black. The two bishops are simply too much for Black to deal with over time.

19.♝fd1 ♘ad8



20.♝f2!

The bishop is heading for greener pastures. The lack of his dark-squared bishop is deeply damaging for Black.

20...a6

20...f5 was a better defence, but Black has problems no matter what. 21.d5 ♘xd5 (21...♝xd5 22.exd5 ♘xd5 23.♝c2±) 22.exd5

$\mathbb{B}xd5$ 23. $\mathbb{B}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 24. $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}d3\pm$ puts Black under serious pressure. The knight is in trouble on a5 and the black position generally feels a bit open and fragile.

21. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}f1$

The knight on a5 is out of its depth. White wins.

22... $b6$ 23. $\mathbb{B}ab1$ $\mathbb{Q}b3$

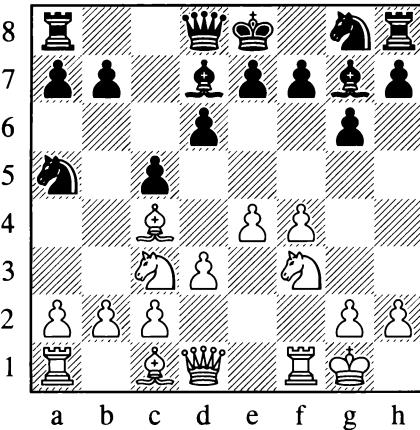
23... $bx c 5$ 24. $d5$ is winning for White.

24. $\mathbb{B}xb3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 25. $\mathbb{W}xb3$ $bx c 5$ 26. $d5$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$
 27. $\mathbb{W}b6$ $f5$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{W}f7$
 30. $ex f 5$ $\mathbb{W}xf5$ 31. $\mathbb{W}xc5$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 32. $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$
 33. $a4$

1–0

16. Carlsen – Anand

Monaco (blindfold) 2011



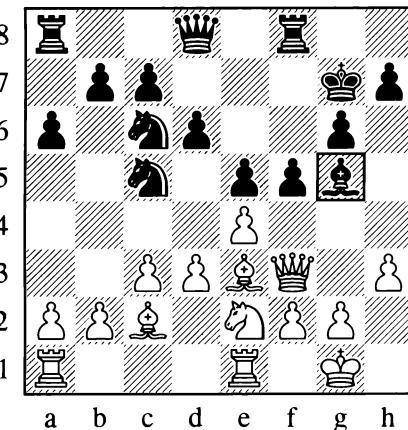
Black is offered the chance to give White tripled pawns. The question is whether this is a good thing or not – and the answer is yes, although it is quite double-edged. The main swaying factors are that the bishop on d7/c6 will find little resistance on the light squares and that the white bishop will find it difficult to live up to its full potential, as the pawns on c3 and c5 prevent it using the long diagonal.

8... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 9. $dxc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3!$ 10. $bxc3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6\mp$

The reasons for Black's advantage are given above. The World Champion won a nice game in 45 moves.

17. Nepomniachtchi – Mamedyarov

Dortmund 2008



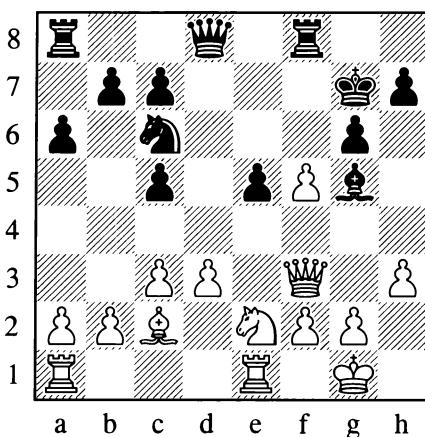
It is apparent that White will have to exchange his bishop in a moment. The question is of course for which minor piece. The easiest way for us to determine this is to investigate the positions arising from the various options and look at their positional features one by one. This can be time-consuming and grandmasters will not do this consciously, but they will do it subconsciously.

19. $\mathbb{Q}xc5!$

19. $\mathbb{Q}xg5?$ $\mathbb{W}xg5$ gives White nothing. For example, 20. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{W}xg3$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ $f4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $a5$ and Black is by no means worse.

19. $ex f 5?$ is the wrong move order. After 19... $\mathbb{E}xf5$ 20. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ Black will either exchange the bishops or gain strong counterplay against f2 after 21. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ (21. $d4$? $\mathbb{Q}h4$! 22. $\mathbb{W}h2$ $exd4$ 23. $cx d 4$ $\mathbb{E}xf2$ 24. $dxc5$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2\ddagger$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ 27. $\mathbb{E}xe1$ $\mathbb{E}xe2+$) 21... $dxc5$.

19...dxc5 20.exf5



20...fxe5

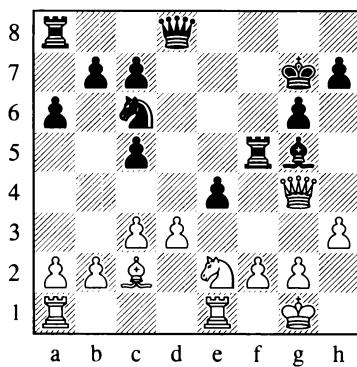
This looks anti-positional, but Black is absolutely in need of the counterplay on the f-file in order to stay in the game.

After 20...gxf5 21.Qg3 Wd7 22.Qb3± Black's position is intensely unpleasant. His dark-square control by no means matches his opponent's lockdown on the light squares. All the black pawns are targets, while the white pawn on c3 easily dominates the black pieces.

21.Wg4 Wh4

Aimed partly at the f2-pawn and partly at the g3-square, to prevent the white knight transferring to the e4-square.

21...e4?!



22.Qg3!! exd3 23.Qxd3 Wxd3 24.Qad1 Wc2
 (After 24...h5 White can claim a slight structural edge with 25.Wxg5 if he wants a safe option, or he can go for the more aggressive 25.Wa4!, when Black is forced into the following sequence: 25...b5 26.Qxd3 bxa4 27.Qxf5† gxf5 28.Qd7† Qf6 29.Qxc7 and the endgame is very close to winning for White.) 25.Qxf5† Wxf5 26.Qd7† Qg8 White can now choose between a good ending or the highly attractive option of pushing Black backwards. 27.Qc4† Qh8 28.Qf7! Wc8 (28...Qf6 29.g4 Wg5 30.Qe6!) and White wins because of the double threat of taking the bishop and We8†. For example: 30...We7 31.Qd7 Qd8 32.Qxe7!+–) 29.h4 Wh6 30.h5 and Black is facing a serious attack.

22.Qf1

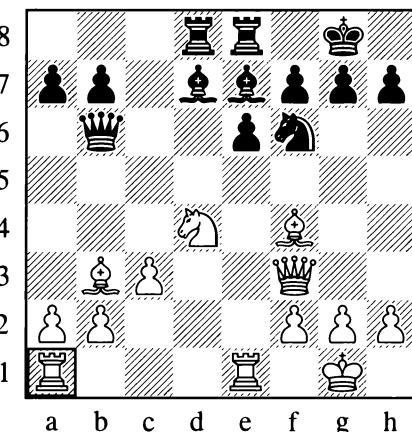
The position is quite desperate for Black; I have no good advice to offer.

22...Qh8 23.Qa4 b5 24.Qb3 Qa5 25.Qe6?!

Instead of pushing the clumsily placed rook back from f5 with this move, White should have played 25.Qe4!± with lovely control over the position. Following the move played, the game was drawn on move 40 after good defence from Mamedyarov.

18. Aagaard – I. Almasi

Budapest 1996



The worst-placed piece is the rook on a1, so we need to find a square for it. I instinctively disliked placing it on the d-file, where I could see nothing other than exchanges. Actually there is also a cold shower in 17...e5! followed by ...Bg4! White's main superiority as far as I could see was on the kingside and for this reason I decided to double on the e-file.

17. $\mathbb{N}e2!$

17. ♕e5 a5!?

17...a6

A rather passive move with no plan at all. Istvan had seen a game where Black played very similarly to our game, but this is not enough. You have to react to your opponent's moves and intentions; playing according to general ideas without understanding the undercurrent of positional considerations and ideas is a poor strategy.

17... $\mathbb{Q}c6\pm$ was probably the best move. White will take the bishop (to prevent it from coming to d5 and offering Black enough defensive resources) and have a slight edge in a rather technical position. Now he has time enough to generate an attack.

18. ♜ael ♔h8?

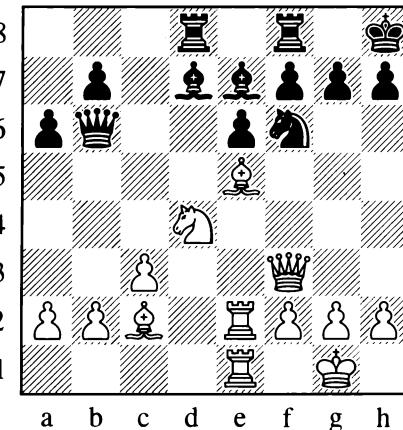
Black felt forced to play this because of the threat of $\mathbb{Q}xe6$. But it is really an ugly move and he should not have allowed himself to play it.

18... $\mathbb{A}c6$ was worse than on the previous move, of course, as the a-pawn might have preferred to be on a7 in many lines, but nevertheless this was necessary.

19. e5 ♕f8

19... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 20. $\mathbb{W}g3$ now gives White serious attacking chances. It is too late for 20... $\mathbb{A}d5$ on account of 21. $\mathbb{Q}c7$, so Black needs to try 20... $\mathbb{B}d7$, when 21. $f4!?$ \pm looks attractive.

20. c2



20... g^8

I do not believe the black position can be saved. 20... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ can be refuted by 21. $\mathbb{W}h3$ g6 22. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$! and the attack cuts straight through.

Also after 20... $\mathbb{E}c8$ White will win. This time with 21. $\mathbb{W}h3$ $h6$ 22. $g4!$ and there is too much pressure on the kingside. For example: 22... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 23. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $f5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $exf5$ 25. $\mathbb{W}xg7+$ and the black king has entered the hunting season as the rear end of a donkey.

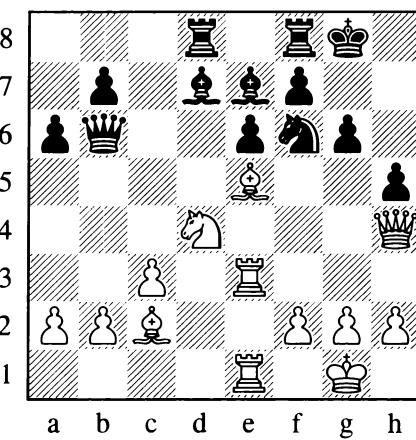
21. $\mathbb{W}h3$ $g6$

21...h6 is also met by 22.♗e3! with a winning attack: 22...♗fe8 (22...♗xb2 23.♗g3 ♖h8 24.♗xg7! and White wins. Black cannot defend h7 after ♗g4† and ♗e4.) 23.♗g3 ♖f8 24.♗xg7! ♖xg7 25.♗g3† ♖f8 (25...♖h8 26.♗e3! ♖g7 27.♘f5† and wins) 26.♗h7 and White's attack is irresistible. The black pieces are packed too tightly in the centre to do anything against 27.♘f5! and 28.♘xf6, with mate to come.

22. e3

Black cannot prevent mate. First the knight will be pushed away, then comes $\mathbb{W}xh7\ddagger$.

22...h5 23.♔h4!

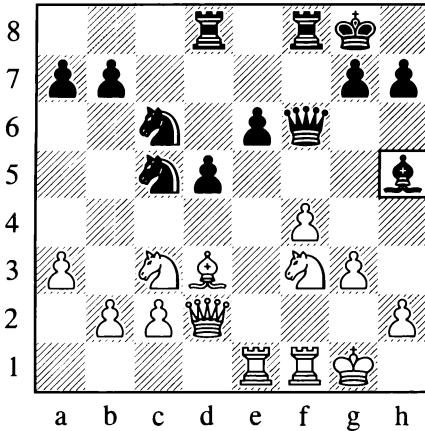


Black resigned. 23... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xh5$ is mate.

1–0

19. Leko – Volkov

New Delhi/Teheran (2.2) 2000

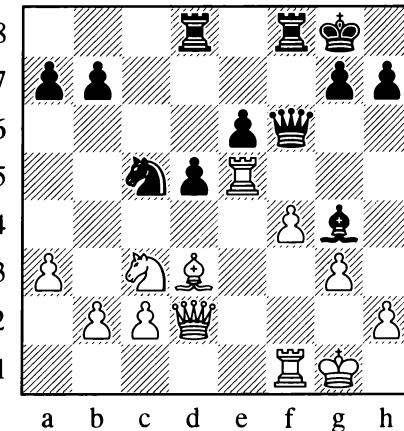


This is a relatively easy position for White to play. Should Black be allowed to take on f3 and d3 he would have equalized. The e6-pawn might be weak in White's dreams, but it will only be a reality if he has the right pieces left – ideally knight against bishop. For this reason his first move is easy:

17. $\mathbb{Q}e5!$

Avoiding the exchange ... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$. Black is very welcome to take on d3, bringing White closer to knight vs. bishop.

17... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 18. $\mathbb{B}xe5\pm \mathbb{Q}g4$



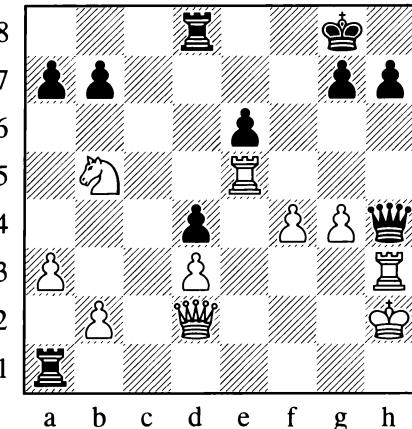
19. $\mathbb{W}g2??$

But this is an inaccuracy. White could have retained an advantage with 19. $\mathbb{Q}b5?!$, heading for d4. The following line is double-edged, but seems to favour White: 19... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 20. $\mathbb{B}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}h3$ 21. $\mathbb{E}e1$ h6 22. $\mathbb{B}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 23. $\mathbb{B}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 24.b4±

Also strong is the simple: 19.b4! $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 20.cxd3± White now intends $\mathbb{Q}b5-d4$, and after 20...a6 21. $\mathbb{Q}a4!$ he has a pleasant position.

19... $\mathbb{B}c8$ 20.h3 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 21.cxd3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 22. $\mathbb{B}f3$ d4 23. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{B}c1\uparrow$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{B}d8$ 25. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{B}a1$ 26.g4 $\mathbb{Q}xg4!$
26... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 27. $\mathbb{W}f2\pm$

27.hxg4 $\mathbb{W}h4\uparrow$ 28. $\mathbb{B}h3$



28... $\mathbb{E}h1\#?$

After having successfully complicated matters, Volkov makes a tactical mistake. Correct was 28... $\mathbb{W}xg4!$, when Black has enough compensation for a draw. For example: 29. $\mathbb{E}g5$ $\mathbb{E}h1\#$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}xh1$ $\mathbb{W}xh3\#$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ a6 32. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{W}g3\#$ with perpetual check.

29. $\mathbb{Q}xh1$ $\mathbb{W}xh3\#$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{W}xg4\#$ 31. $\mathbb{W}g2$ $\mathbb{W}xf4$

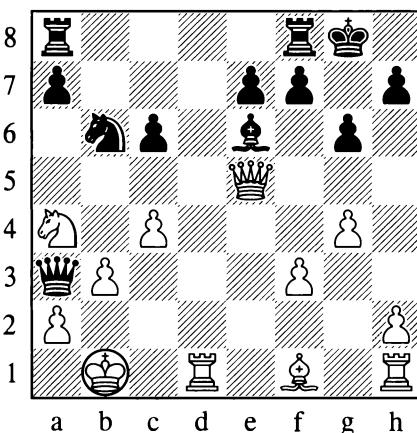
31... $\mathbb{W}d1\#$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 33. $\mathbb{W}g4!±$

32. $\mathbb{W}g5!±$

The ending is bad news for Black, who resigned on move 39.

20. Leviczki – Porat

Budapest 2008



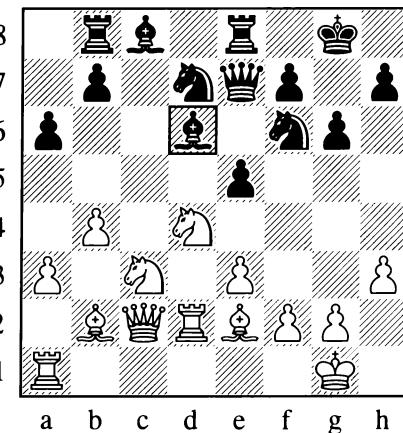
White is not happy in the middlegame where his exposed king is a problem. But in an ending he is simply better because of his superior pawn structure and the way his pawns limit the scope of the opposing pieces – it is easier to do this when sacrificing a piece is no longer an option for the opponent.

20. $\mathbb{W}c5!$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xc5\#$

White converted this superior ending on move 76.

21. Ibragimov – Kazhgaleyev

Sochi 2007

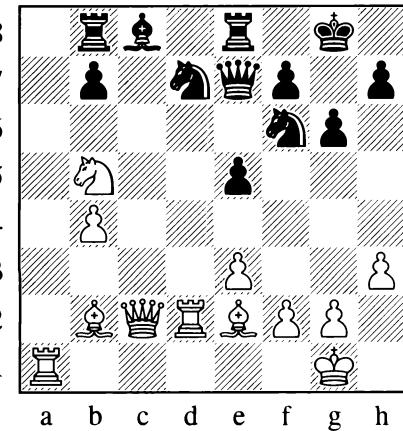


We also need to pay attention to badly-placed pieces in the opponent's position. Here it is the d6-bishop.

19. $\mathbb{Q}db5!$

This just wins.

19...axb5 20. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 21.axb4

**21... $\mathbb{Q}f8$**

21... $\mathbb{W}xb4$ does not do Black any good. White invades the black position with great force: 22. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{E}f8$ 23. $\mathbb{E}a4$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 24. $\mathbb{E}c4$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 25. $\mathbb{E}c7$ and White wins. For example:

25...b6 26.Qc4! Ra8 27.Qxf7† Rxf7 28.Wc4 Wf8 29.Qxf7 Wxf7 30.Qxc8† and so on.

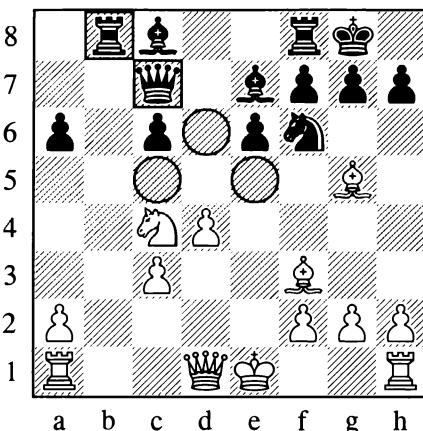
22.Qd6 Qf5

22...Qd8 does not work out either. White has several good moves, for example 23.Wc5! attacking the e5-pawn. 23...Qg6 24.Qad1 Qh8 26.Qd6 Qg7 27.f4 h6 28.Qb5 Qh4 29.Wxe5 Wxe5 30.fxe5

1–0

22. Wells – Van Wely

Warsaw 2005



17.Qh4!

This strong move exploits the lack of good squares for the black queen as well as the main problem behind Black's last move (16...Qb8?). Maybe the best reply would be to return with 17...Ra8, but this is hardly inspiring, of course.

17...Qe8

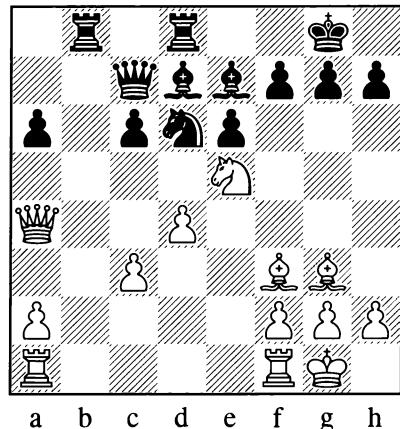
17...Qd5 18.Qg3 Qf4 19.Qe5† is bad.

18.Qg3

18.Qxe7 Wxe7 19.Qe5 would also give White strong pressure on the black position.

18...Qd6 19.0–0 Qd8 20.Qe5
20.Wa4?†

20...Qd7 21.Wa4†



Usually in this variation Black equalizes quite easily by exchanging his c-pawn, but here, because of Black's unfortunate 16th move, White has gained enough time to put strong pressure on the pawns. Here 21...c5? is met with 22.Qxd7 and dxc5, winning a decisive amount of material.

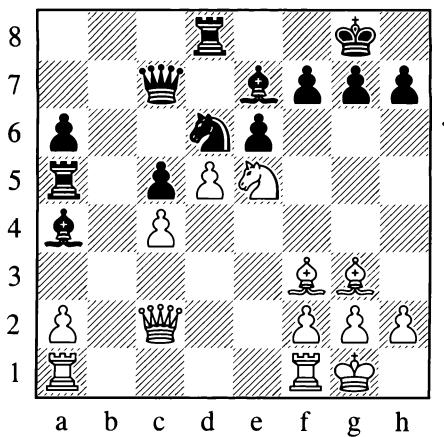
21...Rb5 22.c4?

It is understandable that Wells could not resist forcing the black rook to a5, but the simple 22.Qxd7 Rxd7 23.Wxa6 Ra5 24.We2 with an extra pawn and the two bishops should also give White fantastic winning chances.

22...Ra5 23.Wc2 c5 24.d5 Qa4?!

It is as if White is moving the pieces for both players here. With this move Black is trapping his own rook, a factor that decides the game in just a few moves time.

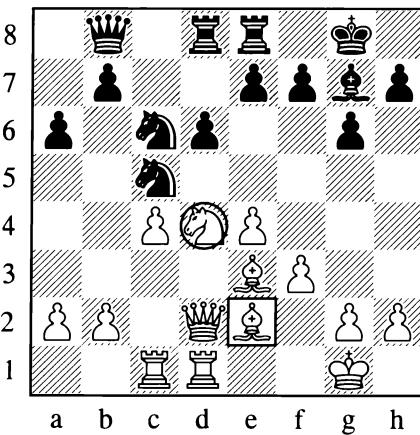
The best move was 24...Ra3, even though White would still have a clear advantage after 25.Qae1. It is because of this variation that I believe 22.Qxd7 was more convincing.



25. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 26. $dxe6$ $fxe6$ 27. $\mathbb{B}ab1+$
White won the game on move 44.

23. Danstrup – Aabling-Thomsen

Denmark 2008



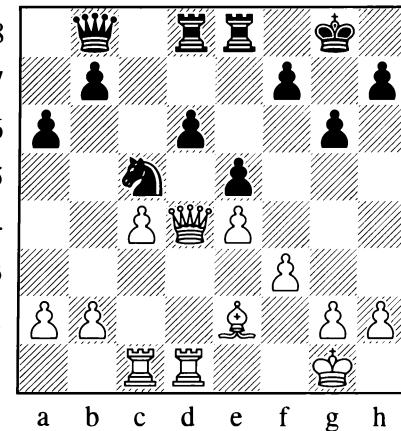
20... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4\#$

A typical idea. Besides getting rid of White's good bishop and his bishop pair at the same time, his only knight is also exchanged, which allows Black to commit what might superficially appear to be a strategic "blunder".

22. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $e5!$

The d5-square is not weak, because it cannot be occupied. However, the d4-square really

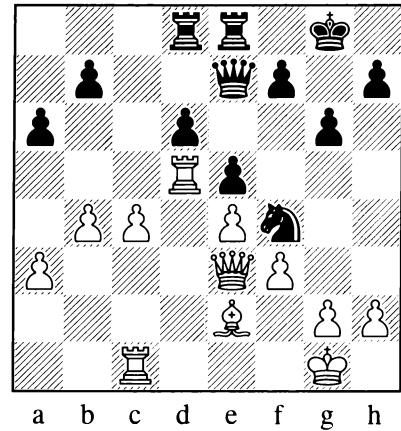
is weak, because it can be occupied! Black's play is easier because his knight is superior to the bishop, but the advantage is slight at this point, of course.



23. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6\#$ 24. $b4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 25. $a3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$

The game would be hard for Black to win against good defence, but now White blunders.

26. $\mathbb{B}d5?$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$



27. $\mathbb{Q}f1$

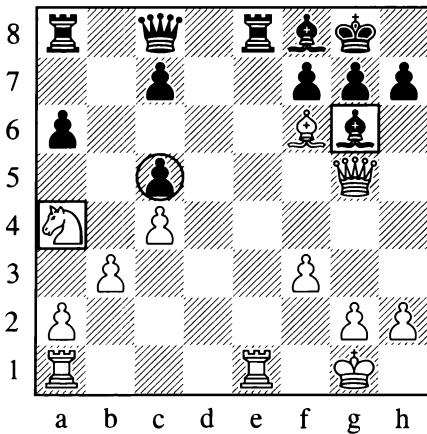
27. $\mathbb{B}dd1$ loses to 27... $\mathbb{W}g5$, when to avoid dropping his queen, White would have to resort to the rather ridiculous 28. $\mathbb{Q}f2$.

27... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

0–1

24. Ciuksyte – Safarli

Internet 2008



For some reason White refrained from playing:

26. $\mathbb{Q}e7!$

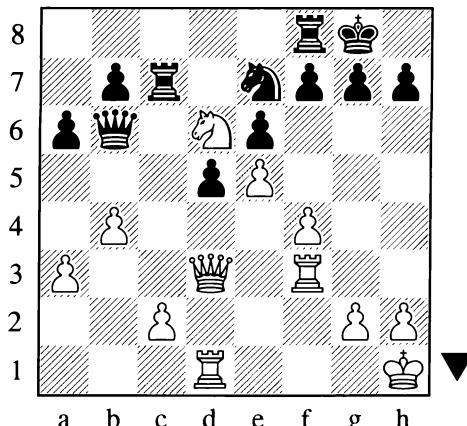
This would exchange the f8-bishop, thereby relieving Black of his bishop pair and all chances of defending the dark squares (and in particular the c5-pawn). I guess that she simply missed the idea completely. White's advantage would be considerable. Instead she went on to lose in 58 moves.

Chapter 3

Prophylaxis

Nadezhda Kosintseva – Lilit Mkrtchian

Jermuk 2012



Black to play

In a game between two of the top women players in the world, White is looking for an attack on the kingside as well as a small positional trick. How should Black address this?

Chess is played with pieces, and games are won by attacking the opponent's weaknesses. But it is not enough to focus on our own ambitions; we have to remember that our opponent has every second move. This is why it is important for us to include prophylactic thinking in our arsenal of thinking tools.

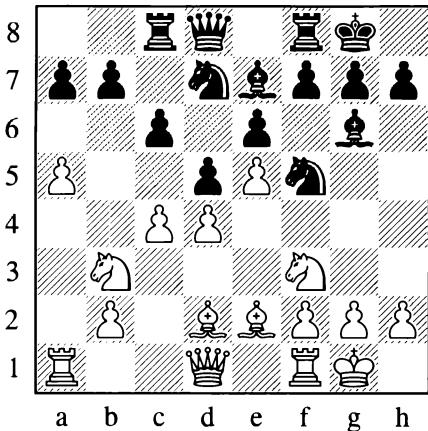
In this chapter we will look at some of the most common aspects of prophylactic thinking.

The idea behind the last move

Prophylactic thinking is best described as *attention to the opponent's ideas*. It is not the reaction to them or the prevention of them; it is simply taking them into account. One of the ways to do this is to think about the point of your opponent's last move.

Jacob Aagaard – Davit Shengelia

Porto Carras 2011



With my last move, 12... $\mathbb{Q}c1-d2!$, I had anticipated my opponent's obvious break, but had not seen far enough. It transpires that the bishop needed to be on f4, when White was probably a bit better.

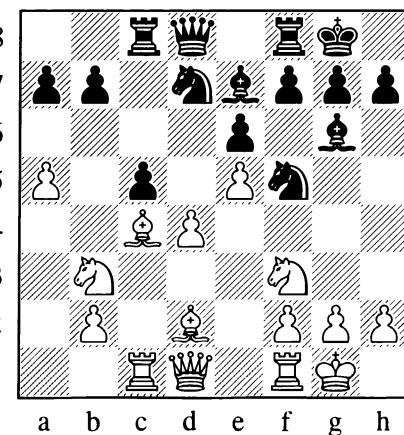
12...dxc4! 13... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ c5!

After he played this, I sank into deep, desperate thought. My opponent had anticipated my planned reply to this break, 14.d5 exd5 15... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$, which gave him the chance to look deeper and see that 15... $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$ would give him a significant advantage.

So instead I decided to complete my development with the aid of a tactical idea.

14... $\mathbb{Q}c1?$

In retrospect, it would have been better to fight for equality with 14.dxc5 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 15... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 16.a6 b6 17... $\mathbb{Q}c1$, when White is probably still sort of okay.



Again it makes sense for Black to ask himself what White intended with his last move. It appears that taking twice on d4 and then e5 is not possible, as White can then play 17... $\mathbb{Q}xe6!$ with an advantage.

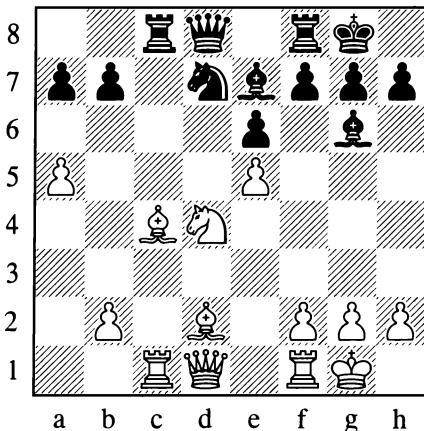
Armed with this knowledge, my opponent looked for a flaw in my thinking – and found it.

14... $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$

I now played 15... $\mathbb{Q}c3$ and managed to create some resistance before I blundered again at move 40.

The main point of my opponent's play becomes visible only after:

15.♕bx d4 cxd4 16.♕xd4



As said, Black will not fall for 16...♕xe5? 17.♕xe6! when White has the advantage. He no doubt intended to play:

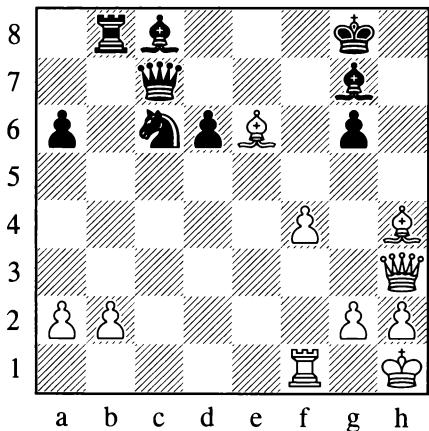
16...♗xc4! 17.♗xc4 ♕d3

And the e5-pawn will be lost.

But of course prophylaxis can at times be far more basic. In the following example Black failed to look for his opponent's idea carefully enough, and went down in a very painful way.

Karen Grigoryan – Yaroslav Zherebukh

Athens 2012



Prophylaxis exists in tactics as well, of course. The following is a good example of how we need to look a bit deeper into our opponent's thoughts and ideas.

29...♔f8??

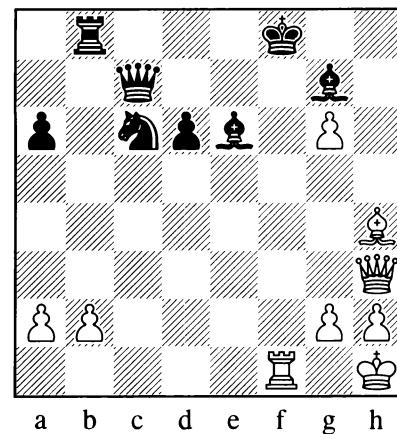
Seemingly a winning attempt, but actually it loses directly.

After 29...♔xe6 30.♔xe6† ♔h7 31.♔h3 ♔c8! White would struggle to prove compensation for his sacrificed piece.

30.f5 ♔xe6

30...g5 was not the intention, of course. White wins after 31.♔xg5 ♔xe6 32.fxe6† ♔g8 33.e7 ♔c8 34.♔g3 ♔e6 35.♔f6 ♔f7 36.♔xd6 with total domination.

31.fgx6†!



This must have come as a complete shock to poor Zherebukh. White would much rather have a pawn on g6 than on e6. But in reality it was not so difficult to predict this move if you took the time to look carefully for it.

31...♔g8 32.♔xe6† ♔h8 33.♔f5

White does not close the deal in the most effective way, but wins anyway.

33.♔f5! was immediately decisive.

33... $\mathbb{B}b5$ 34. $\mathbb{W}h3$ $\mathbb{B}h5$ 35. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{B}h6$ 36. $\mathbb{W}e6$
 $\mathbb{W}b8$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$

37... $\mathbb{W}g8$ 38. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{B}h5$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ gives White a winning attack, but it takes a bit of effort. For example: 39... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 40.g4! $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}xg7†$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 42. $\mathbb{B}f7†$ and White wins.

38. $\mathbb{W}f7$ $\mathbb{B}h5$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}f6$

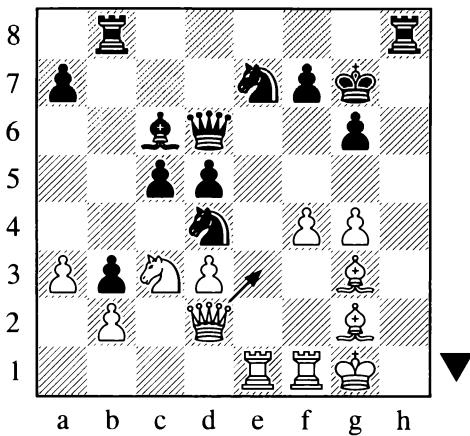
1–0

What would your opponent do now if he was to move? (What are his short-term goals?)

One of the questions you might find useful is: *What would my opponent do if he was to move?* Looking at the position from the other side of the board (though not physically – that would be weird!) can help you to understand the position better; or at least to avoid accidents like the following...

Nasir Ahmed – John Shaw

Edinburgh 2003



Had John looked for his opponent's threat, he would have seen it quite quickly and played 29... $\mathbb{B}be8!$, when he probably would have won the game. However, John focused only on his own threats and ideas and tried to provoke

White into advancing his g-pawn, so that he could put a knight on f5 with complete domination.

The punishment was swift and brutal.

29... $\mathbb{Q}d7?$ 30. $\mathbb{W}e3!±$

We now see that White wants to play f4-f5 to activate his bishop and maybe improve things with f5-f6† next. This is possible because of the threat down the e-file. Had Black placed his rook on e8, ideas like this would not have worked.

30... $\mathbb{Q}xg4?$

This is rubbish, but John is in trouble anyway.

Necessary was 30... $\mathbb{Q}df5$ 31. $\mathbb{gxf5}$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 32. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$, when Black has some compensation for the piece and practical chances (to swindle).

31.f5 $\mathbb{Q}exf5$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}e5†$

This is good enough, but even stronger was 32. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}e5†$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 34. $\mathbb{B}xe3$ and Black is losing everything.

32...f6 33. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 34. $\mathbb{B}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 35. $\mathbb{B}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}xb8$ d4 37. $\mathbb{B}e7†$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}f4†$ g5
39. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ dxc3 40. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$

1–0

Your opponent's long-term goals

Prophylaxis can be quite deep, of course, but it is always a question of style. For example, Petrosian was famous for preventing his opponents' ideas long before they ever got the chance to have them. And Karpov probably spent more of his time looking for ways to eliminate his opponent's possible desires than any other World Champion, which explains why he drew so often with Black. With White, he would prevent his opponent from equalizing and keep the pressure on, until a

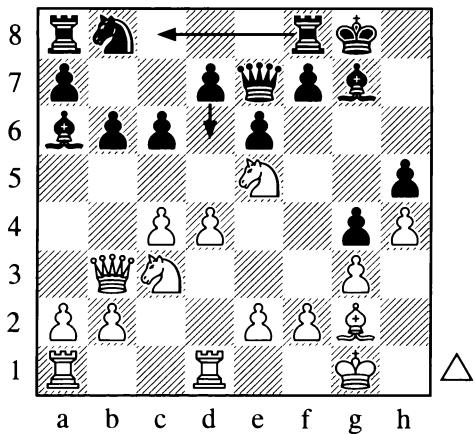
pleasant ending would arise. With Black, he would prevent the opponent from gaining an advantage, rather than looking for ways to gain one himself.

Is this you? If you are an attacking player, then probably not. On the other hand, if you are more like an accountant than an axe-wielding madman, maybe this is you.

In general, prophylaxis becomes more important when you have a static advantage. In endgames, following the advice, "Do not hurry!" and preventing counterplay are the key technical tools. But the principle seems sound in all phases of the game. Here is a good example straight out of the opening.

Pavel Eljanov – Gata Kamsky

Kallithea 2008



Black is under slight pressure down the long diagonal and will have to free himself with ... $\mathbb{E}c8$ and ... $d6$, as after 14... $d5?$ 15. $cxd5$ $cxd5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$ White wins material. Black's weakness is the $h5$ -pawn, so Eljanov decided to prepare the $\mathbb{Q}e5-d3-f4$ manoeuvre to put pressure on it.

14.e3!

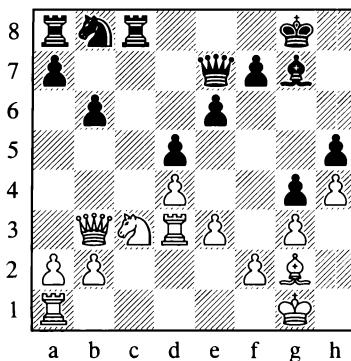
Defending the d4-pawn in advance. White

could have reversed his 14th and 15th moves, but this is more human and maybe a bit more flexible.

14... \mathbb{Q} c8 15. \mathbb{Q} acl!

Eljanov again prevents his opponent's idea.

It is slightly less important that White also would be much better after 15.筈d3 d5, because of 16.cxd5 筈xd3 17.筈xd3 (Eljanov only considers 17.d6, which also gives White some advantage.) 17...cxd5



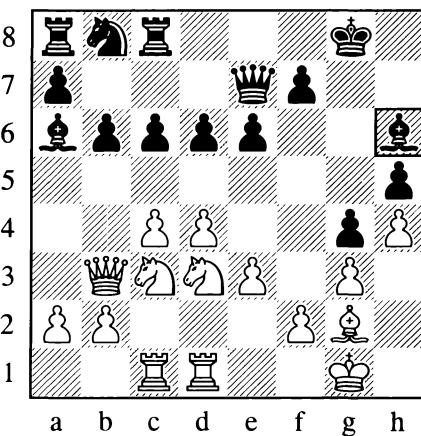
18. $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$ $exd5$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xh5\pm$
 White will also grab the g4-pawn with a huge advantage, as Black would shed more material after 20... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 21. $\mathbb{W}e5!$. The game is of course not decided yet, but Black is going to struggle to prove his compensation.

Still Eljanov's solution is simply better; it involves no risk and leaves Black with no easy choices.

15...d6 16.♘d3 ♘h6

I do not particularly like this move; it relies too much on White putting his knight on f4, as the bishop will otherwise be entirely out of play.

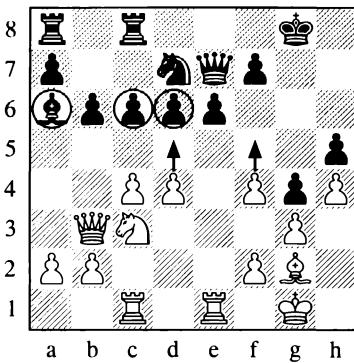
After 16... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e4\pm$ Black would find defending the h5-pawn very difficult.



17.♘a4!?

Again a beautiful practical decision by Eljanov. White is preparing d4-d5 and an assault on the light squares, now that the dark-squared bishop is out of play on h6.

Having said that, we should note that 17.♗f4 was perfectly fine as well: 17...♝xf4 18.exf4 ♗d7 19.♗e1!



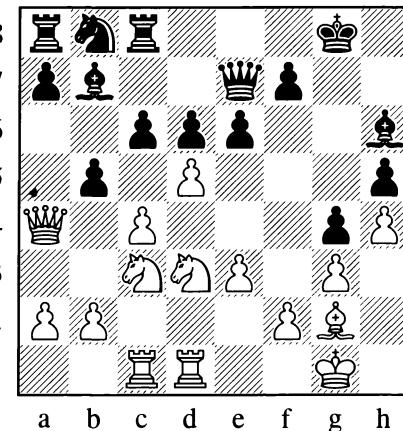
There is no way for Black to defend against the threats of f4-f5 and d4-d5, as White is planning to play ♘a3 or ♘a4, forking important squares. I think White is more or less winning already.

17...♞b7 18.d5

White continues with his plan. Putting the knight on f4 was still a serious option.

18...b5

Desperation. 18...cxd5 19.cxd5 e5 also does not work. White would play 20.♗b4!± and ♜e4-f5 with close to complete domination.



19.dxc6!

A nice little tactic that effectively wins the game.

Again there was a plausible alternative: 19.cxb5 cxd5 20.♗xd5! ♜xc3 21.♗xb7 ♜xc1 22.♗xa8 ♜xd1† 23.♗xd1 and White has an extra pawn. On the other hand, Black has managed to solve some of his problems and he might have a chance of saving the ending.

19...♜xc6 20.♗xb5 a6 21.♗xc6 ♜xc6 22.♗c3

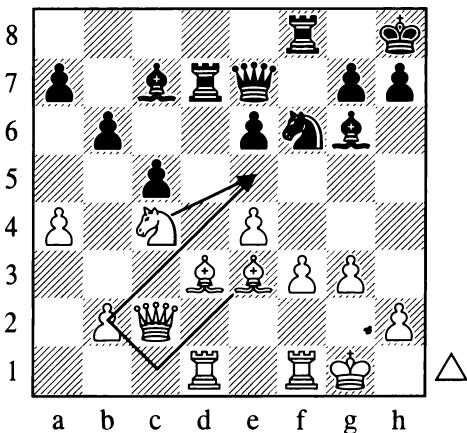
White has won a pawn and won the game on move 53.

Good prophylactic play by Eljanov in a position where many would have looked too soon for a dynamic way to exploit the advantage.

The next example shows how we should be careful not to allow our opponents even small improvements; something we can only do if we pay sufficient attention to their intentions. In this example we shall discuss various aspects of prophylactic thinking – armed with the power of hindsight.

Svetozar Gligoric – Wolfgang Unzicker

Bath 1973



We join the game in the middle of the middlegame, in a position where White is evidently better. His pawn structure is preferable and his pieces are better placed. Still, it is no catastrophe, and Black should be able to save the game with good play.

27.b3

Played for several reasons, but primarily in order to regroup the bishop from e3 to b2, to take control of the e5-square, which will enable White to gain the two bishops, and put pressure on the black kingside down the long diagonal.

27... $\mathbb{B}fd8$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}c1$

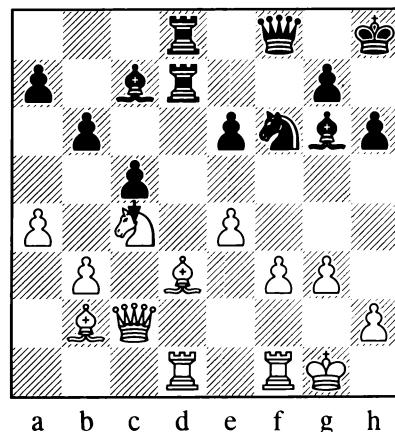
This is the critical moment where Black does not have an easy move, but has to think hard about how to counter his opponent's idea.

28... $\mathbb{W}f8?$

At first I was not entirely sure what the idea was behind this move. Usually grandmasters have an idea behind their moves (always, according to Mark Dvoretsky), but here it took me a long time to see it. It seems that Black is clearing the e7-square to create a route for his knight to get to c6/d4 to fight for the

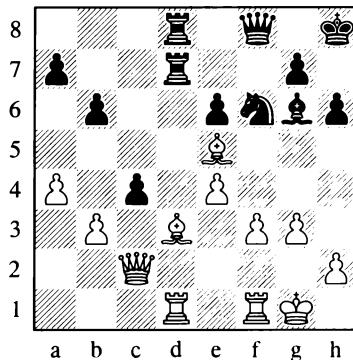
dark squares. This manoeuvre takes a lot of time and not surprisingly fails by a tempo.

29. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ h6



30. $\mathbb{Q}g2!$

Fabulous technique by Gligoric. He saw the possibility of 30. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ being met with 30... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ c4?!, and decided not to allow unnecessary counterplay.



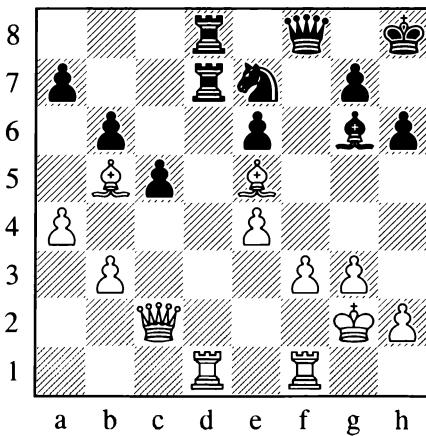
Whether or not this actually works is beside the point. Calculating long lines here would not be practical, while the move in the game can be played without calculation. Anyway, the consequences of the sacrifice are: 32. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 33. $\mathbb{W}a6$ $\mathbb{W}c5\#$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{E}cd8$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $gxf6$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{E}d2$ 37. $\mathbb{E}xd2$ $\mathbb{E}xd2$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{E}b2$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}f1\#$! White has won a pawn and the black king is somewhat exposed. But the position

still has some random character, and it was entirely unnecessary to allow that.

30... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}e5!$

Relying on the coming tactics. 31. $\mathbb{Q}e5?$ was also possible, but Gligoric certainly had everything mapped out at this point.

31... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}b5!$



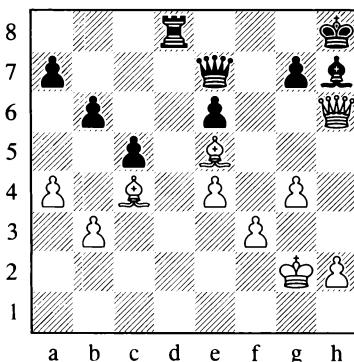
Otherwise Black would come to c6 and d4 with the knight and have a respectable position. But Unzicker had planned a tactic.

33... $\mathbb{Q}d5?$ 34. $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}e3\#$ 35. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{R}xd1$ 36. $\mathbb{R}xd1$ $\mathbb{R}xd1$ 37. $\mathbb{W}xh6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

Gligoric had correctly assessed this position. Black has won an exchange but is entirely lost.

38... $\mathbb{W}f7$

38... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 39. $g4$ $\mathbb{R}d8$



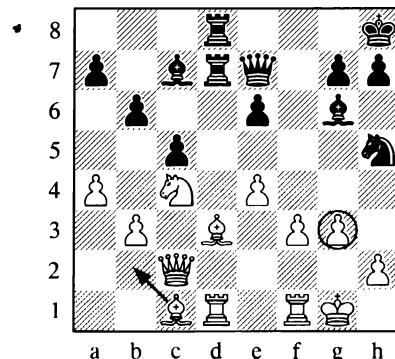
40.g5 $\mathbb{W}f7$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}g6$ 42. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ White keeps the pressure on and will win the game. Black has no reasonable defence against the advance of the h-pawn.

39. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}g6$ 40. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{R}d8$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}f7!$

41... $\mathbb{W}c6$ 42. $\mathbb{W}g5$ wins the house.

1–0

So, with the benefit of hindsight, we can see that Black should have fought against the occupation of the e5-square with all his might. This would have been a difficult task, but I think it was possible with 28... $\mathbb{Q}h5?!$



White plays 29. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ with some advantage, and eventually Black will feel that the knight is poorly placed on h5. But in the meantime White finds it difficult to occupy the e5-square, and his king is a bit iffy.

The key point is the line:

29. $\mathbb{Q}b2?!$ $\mathbb{W}g5!$

Black suddenly has threats against the white king.

Now 30. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}f4!$ secures Black even chances, And otherwise Black may be able to sacrifice:

30. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3?!$ 31. $hxg3$ $\mathbb{W}xg3\#$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$
32... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{R}df7\#$ is risky, but may be playable.

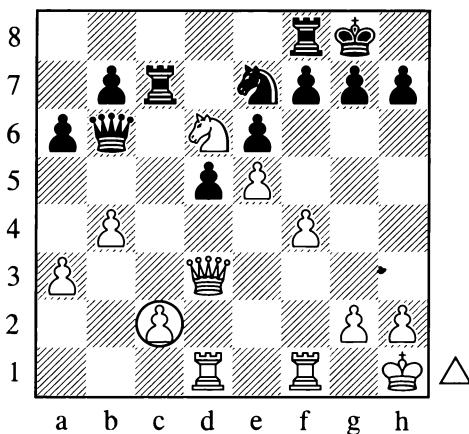
33. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}h3\#$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{W}g3\#$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}f1$

With perpetual check.

The next example could just as well have been placed in the weaknesses chapter; but then almost every interesting position could be explained in terms of that paradigm!

Nadezhda Kosintseva – Lilit Mkrtchian

Jermuk 2012



If this position had been in Chapter 1, it would have been under the headline of *Eliminating your own weaknesses*. At the moment White has no problems with the c2-pawn, but Black is planning ... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ to eliminate the disturbing knight and bring the f8-rook into play. For this reason the best move here is 21.c4!, after which Black keeps even chances with accurate play.

Instead she played:

21. $\mathbb{Q}f3?$ $\mathbb{W}c6!$

The ideas above are pretty simple and Kosintseva of course understood them perfectly. She was no doubt planning to meet 21... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ with 22.c4, taking advantage of the misplacement of the black knight. By first attacking the c-pawn, all ideas with c2-c4 die, and White has to do more to get rid of her weakness.

22.c3 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}h3?!$

This is a shot in the dark. Black easily defends her kingside.

It was necessary to change the course of the game, and this could have been done with 23.f5! $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 24.exd6 $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 25.c4! \mathbb{Q} , when I think White would still have managed to keep the balance more or less; even if it is less fun to have compensation for the pawn here, than it is to have the extra pawn.

23...h6?

Black has a better structure and won the game on move 44.

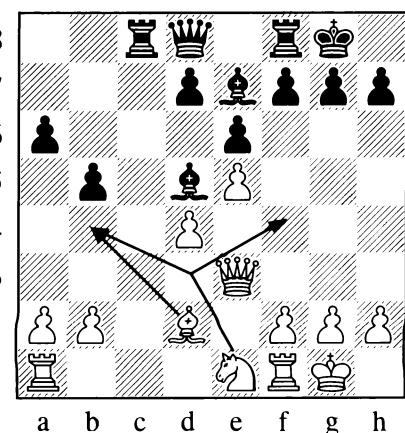
Prophylactic thinking in action – combine it with your own ideas

Up to this point we have repeatedly seen how sound prophylactic thinking can be combined with achieving our own goals.

In the following position Black is looking for ways to complete his development and get rid of his potentially weak pawn on d7 (as well as take control over the d-file). At the same time he managed to look out for his opponent's ideas.

Ed Ferry – Jacob Aagaard

Bearsden 2007



White is struggling a bit. His pieces are not well placed and Black has managed to obtain the two bishops. However, if he can play $\mathbb{Q}d3$ and either $\mathbb{Q}f4$ or $\mathbb{Q}b4$, things would change quite quickly and the advantage Black has at the moment could quickly disappear. To counter this plan is Black's main objective in this position. I managed to do so by assaulting the centre at the same time.

16...d6!

Lines I looked at during the game were 16... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{B}c2$ 18. $\mathbb{B}fc1$ $\mathbb{B}fc8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}b4!=$ and 16... $f6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $fxe5$ 18. $dxe5$ $\mathbb{B}c4$ 19. $f3\infty$, although not with the detail, accuracy and confidence I can attach now after looking at the game with computer assistance.

My main idea with the game move is that 17. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $dxe5$ would force White to play 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$, because of 18. $dxe5?$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$.

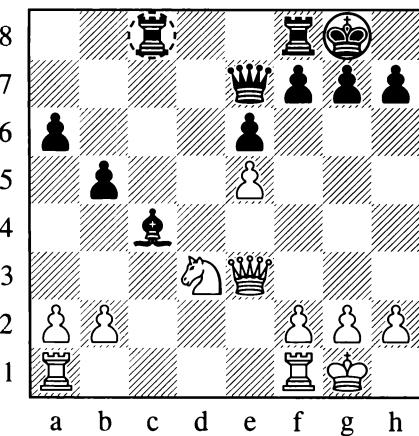
17. $\mathbb{Q}b4$

This is of course the apparent problem with my move. But I had something special planned here.

17... $dxe5$

17... $a5\mp$ was also very strong, but I like my move best.

18. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 19. $dxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d3$



This is the second moment of prophylaxis in the game. I correctly evaluated the “main” defensive option, the one he went for in the game. But we both missed that he had another option that would have held his position together.

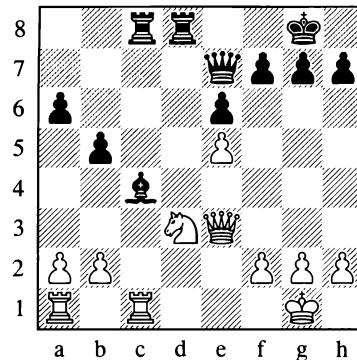
20... $\mathbb{B}fd8?$

The game was played with only one hour for the first thirty moves, which is the excuse for this inaccuracy.

20... $\mathbb{W}d7!$ 21. $\mathbb{B}fd1$ $\mathbb{B}fd8$ would transpose to the game.

21. $\mathbb{B}fd1?$

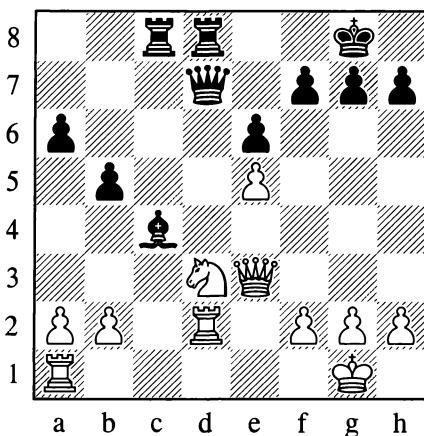
White misses a great tactical defence. He should have played 21. $\mathbb{B}fc1!$, when Black only has traces of an advantage due to the exploitation of the back rank.



The best try is probably 21... $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 22. $\mathbb{B}xc8$ $\mathbb{B}xc8$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{W}g5$ 24. $\mathbb{B}e1$ $\mathbb{B}d8$ 25. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{W}d2$ 26. $\mathbb{W}c1\mp$, but it is not much.

21... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 22. $\mathbb{B}d2$

This looks like the best chance, but I was ready for it.



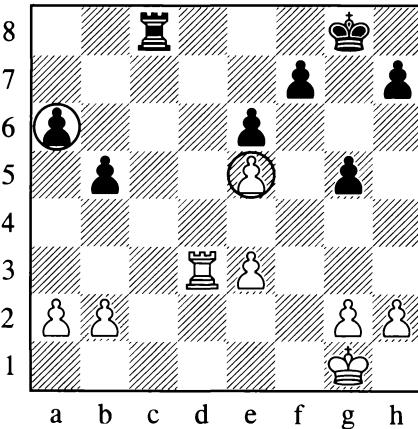
22...♝d4!!

I cannot force the win of a piece, but I can create a pawn weakness in the white position.

23.♝ad1 ♜xe3 24.fxe3 ♜xd3?

This is entirely unnecessary. The bishop outshines the knight in each and every way. Somehow I had the idea that the rook ending was just winning, which is more than a bit optimistic.

25.♜xd3 ♜xd3 26.♜xd3 g5†/†



White might still have some fighting chances in the endgame, especially if he manages to keep out the black king on the kingside by putting a pawn on g4. However, this is not the only problem in the position. If Black manages to play ...a5 and ...♝c5, it seems very unlikely that White will be able to hold. For this reason the only move was 27.♝a3!?.

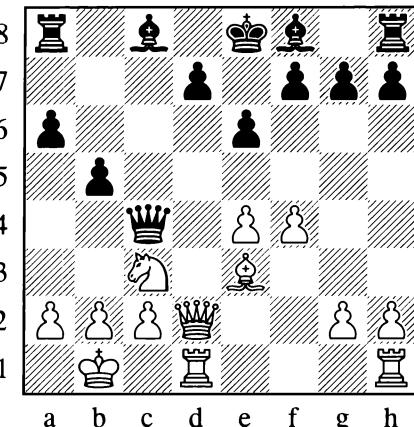
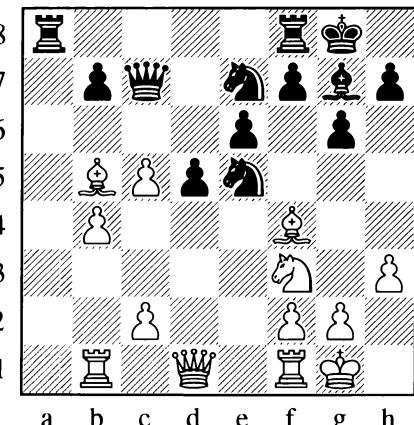
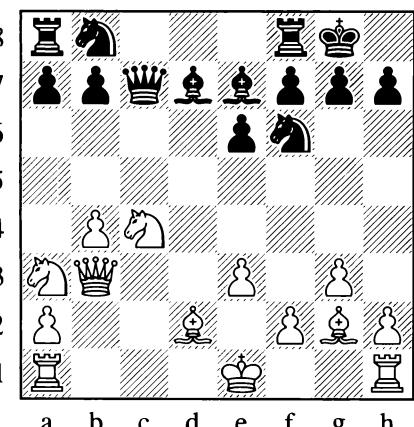
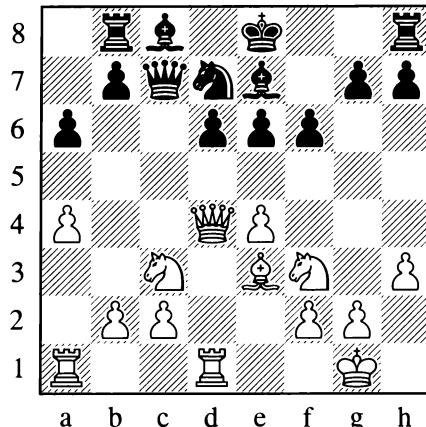
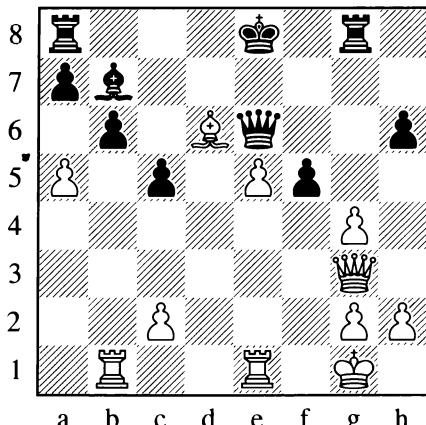
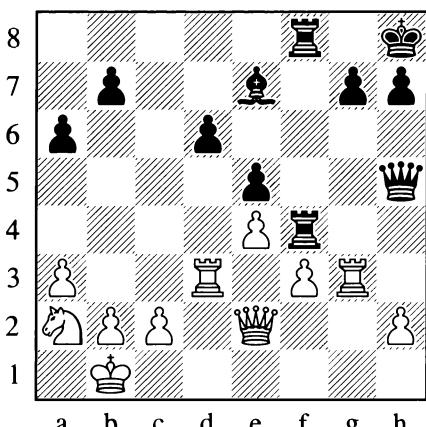
27.♝d6?

After this the ending is lost.

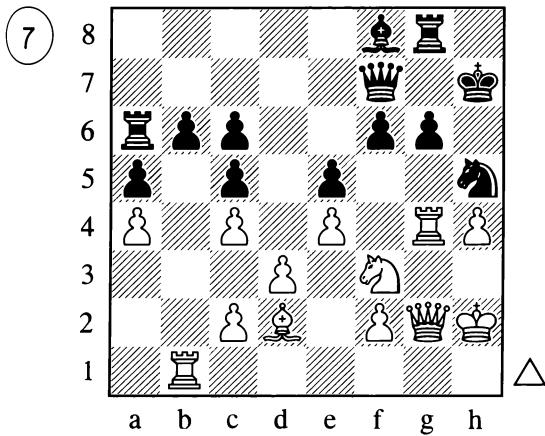
**27...a5 28.♝a6 a4 29.b3 axb3 30.axb3 ♜c3
31.♝f2 h5 32.♝f3 ♜xb3 33.h3 ♜c3 34.♝b6
♜c5 35.♝e4 h4 36.♝d4 ♜c2 37.♝xb5 ♜xg2
38.♝b1 ♜g3 39.♝h1 ♜g7 40.♝e4 ♜g6
41.♝h2 ♜h5 42.♝f2 ♜xh3 43.♝xf7 ♜g3
44.♝f6 h3 45.♝f8 ♜g4**

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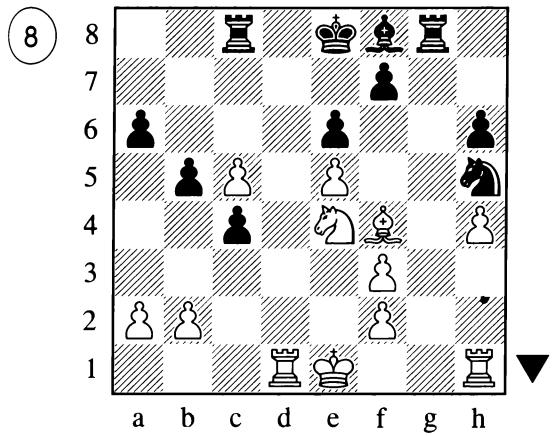
Prophylactic thinking is essential for playing at grandmaster level and is at the same time very difficult. I hope the exercises in this book will help you to hone this skill.

Short – Pogorelov, Gibraltar 2004**Ivanchuk – L.B. Hansen, Skanderborg 2005****Schwing – Becking, Merzig 1996****Skripchenko – Benmesbah, Pau 2008****P. Carlsson – A. Smith, Stockholm 2007****Anand – Morozevich, Mexico City 2007**

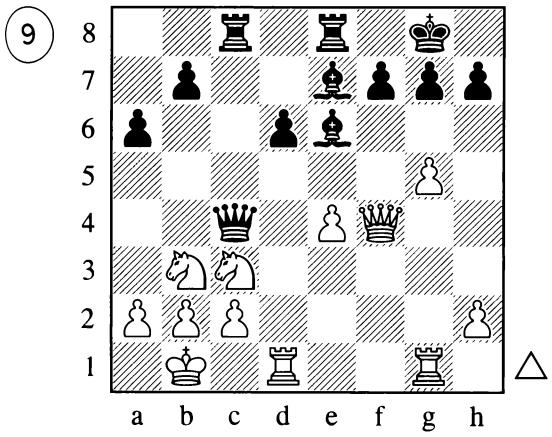
Gelfand – Van Wely, Plovdiv 2003



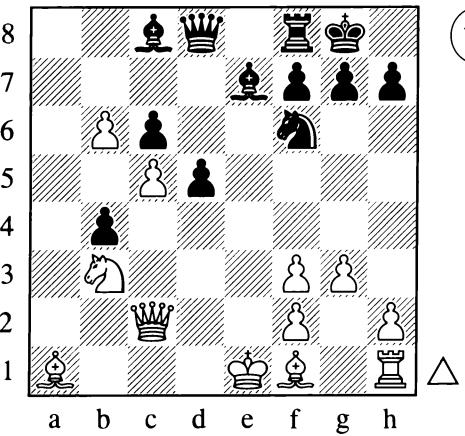
Gelfand – Leko, Miskolc (rapid) 2010



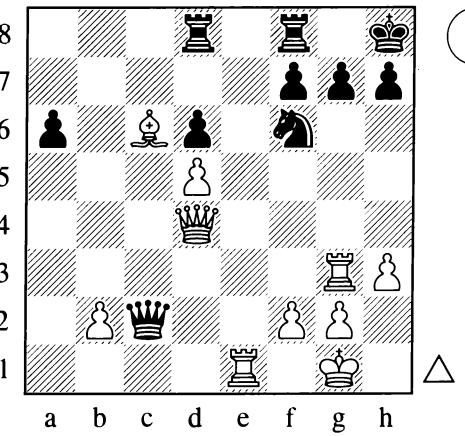
Karjakin – Kramnik, Dortmund 2004



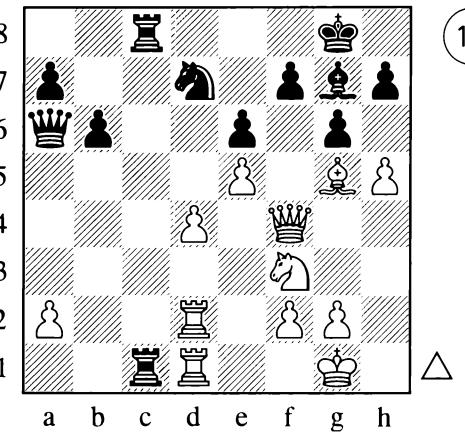
Razuvaev – Sveshnikov, Moscow 1995



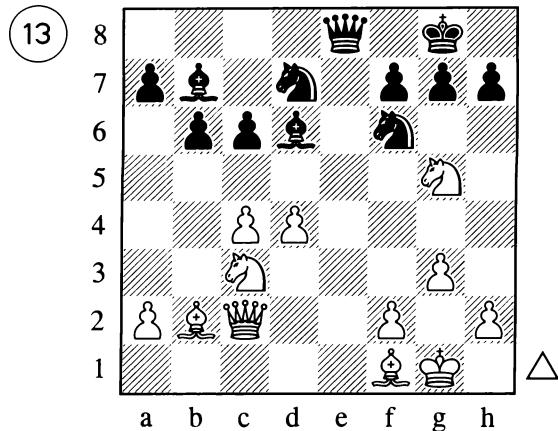
Gulko – Pogonina, Prague 2011



A. Matthiesen – Schandorff, Denmark 2010

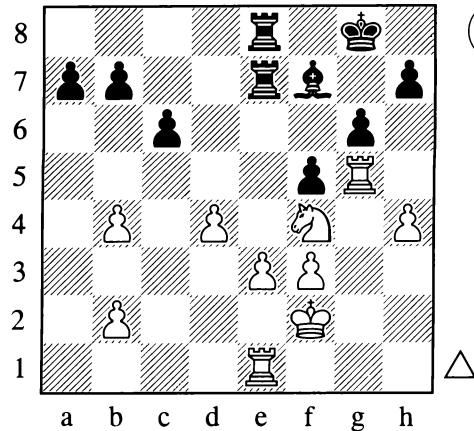


Gasanov – Lastin, Dagomys 2009

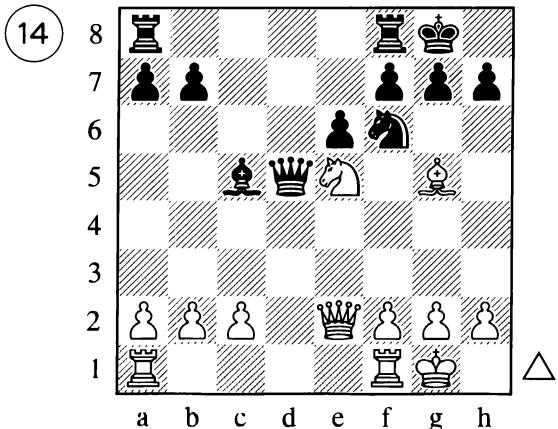


Leko – Korchnoi, Wijk aan Zee 2000

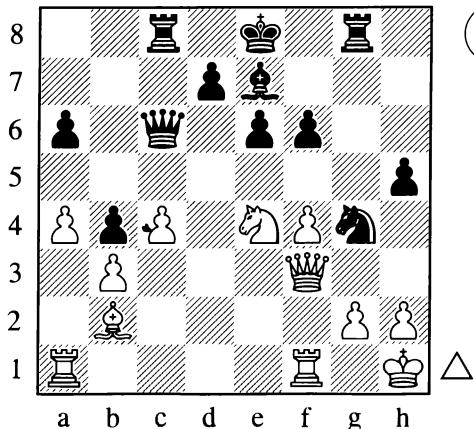
Van Wely – Wade, London 2008



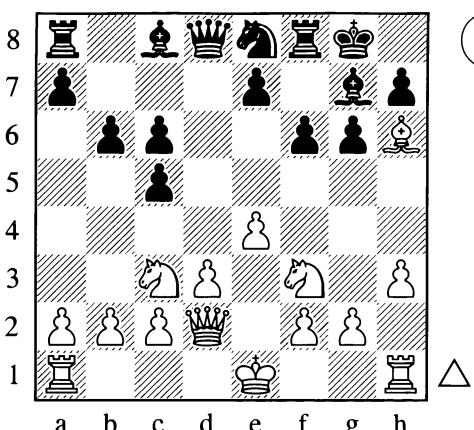
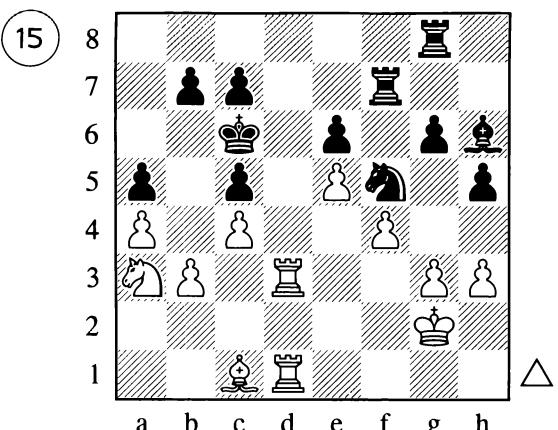
Milliet – Collas, Pau 2008



Volokitin – Eljanov, Foros 2008

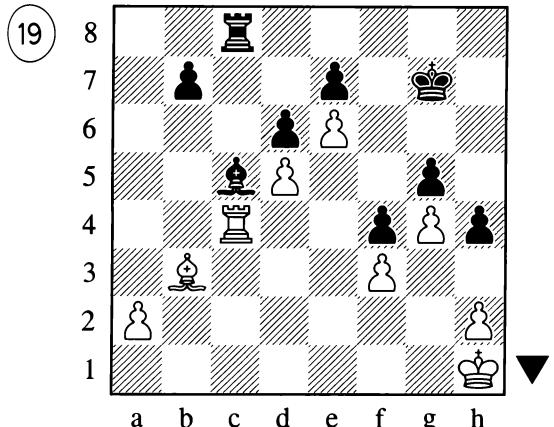


Cossin – Collas, Pau 2008

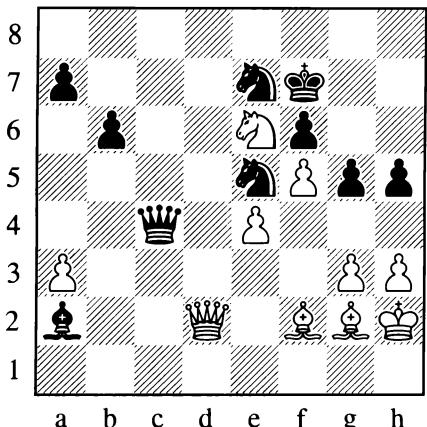


De Groote – Ondersteijn, Netherlands 2008

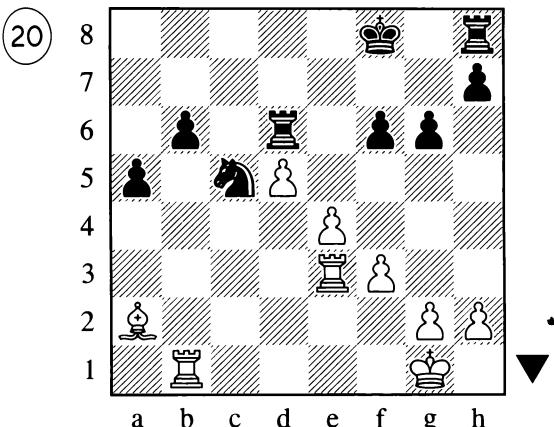
Topalov – Kamsky, Kazan (1.4) 2011



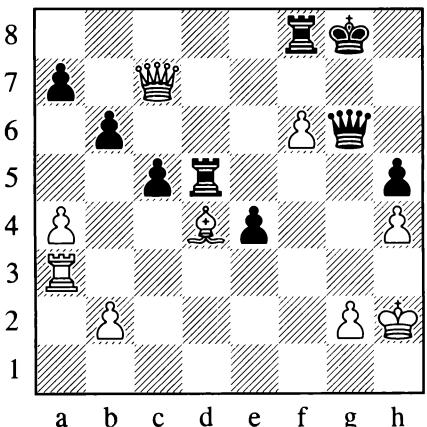
Kramnik – Ivanchuk, Nice (blindfold) 2009



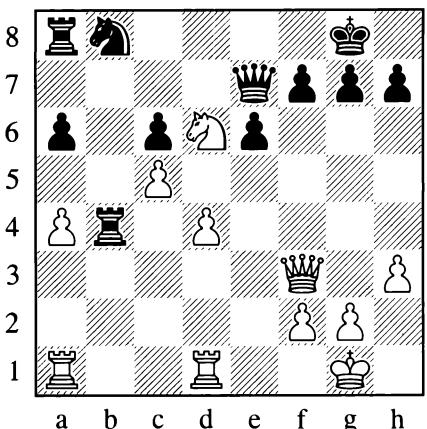
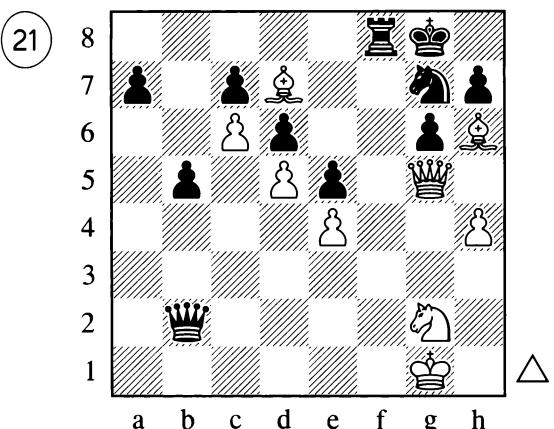
Sargissian – E. Berg, Rijeka 2010



Wells – P. Littlewood, Canterbury 2010

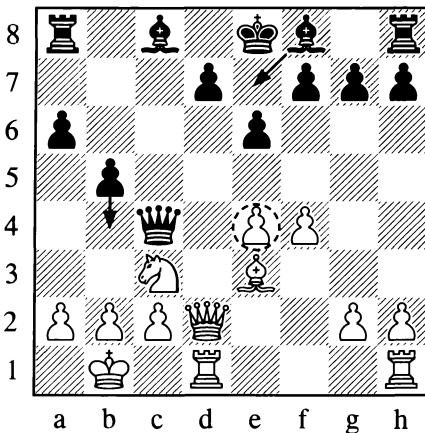


Roiz – Rodshtein, Beersheba (rapid) 2007



1. Short – Pogorelov

Gibraltar 2004



The most important feature of this position is that Black has not yet managed to develop his pieces and bring his king to safety. With a simple move White makes this very difficult to accomplish, and he has already half won the game.

14.♕d4!±

Simple, but deeply annoying. 14.f5 ♕e7 gives Black decent counterplay. The two bishops will have an effect in the long run.

14...f6

What else should Black play? 14...d6 leaves White with many tempting moves – such as 15.♕e5?! – but probably it is best to play 15.f5! with various threats to the black kingside.

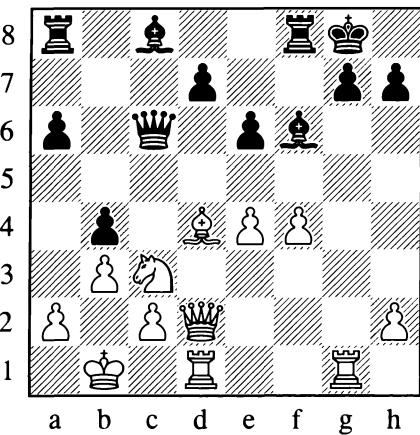
15.g4!

Apparently this logical thrust was a new move.

15...♗e7 16.g5 0–0?

This is suicidal. 16...fxg5 17.♗xg7 ♗g8 18.♕e5 is uncomfortable for Black, but it seems to be his only chance.

17.b3 ♘c6 18.gxf6 ♘xf6 19.♗hg1 b4



20.♗d5!! exd5 21.e5 ♘e7

21...♗d8 loses to some brilliant lines after 22.e6:

a) 22...g6 23.f5! ♘xf5 24.♗h6 ♘f6 25.♗gf1 ♘xe6 26.♗de1 ♘f7 27.♗xf6 ♘xf6 28.♗xf6!+–

b) 22...♗f6 23.f5 h6 24.e7!! ♘xe7 25.♗de1 and now 25...♗f8 26.♗g2! wins for White, the same being the case with 25...♗d6 26.♗xe7 ♘xe7 27.♗xf6 ♘xf6 28.♗xd5† and the rook falls.*

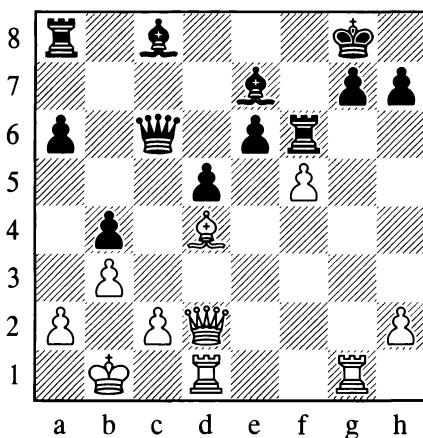
22.e6 ♘f6

22...♗f6 loses to both the prosaic 23.e7 and the poetic 23.♗xg7†.

22...g6! was the best defence. 23.f5! ♘xf5 24.♗h6 ♘f6! 25.♗gf1! looks very like the lines from the previous note, but this time Black can play 25...dxе6?! 26.♗xf6 ♘f8 and lose in the long run, rather than immediately.

23.f5 dxе6

23...h6 is a clever try, with the idea of playing ...g5 against just about anything. Unfortunately White can play 24.h4! followed by 25.♗g2, winning.



24. $\mathbb{E}xg7\#!$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 25. $\mathbb{W}g5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 26. $\mathbb{E}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$

26... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 27. $\mathbb{E}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 28. $\mathbb{W}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ sees the king trying to flee, but White wins with 29. $\mathbb{E}g7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 30. $\mathbb{W}e7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 31. $f6\#$, when there are several lines, all leading to the same result. One of these is 31... $\mathbb{W}c3$ 32. $\mathbb{E}g5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 33. $\mathbb{E}g1$ and everything is as White would like it to be.

27. $\mathbb{W}xf6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 28. $\mathbb{E}g8$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 29. $fxe6$ $\mathbb{W}e7$

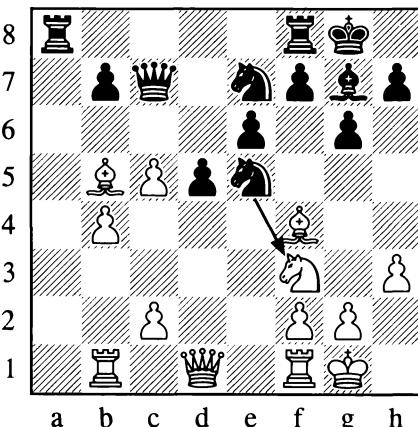
29... $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 30. $\mathbb{E}xf8\#!$ and White wins. •

30. $\mathbb{W}h6$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 32. $\mathbb{E}xf8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$
33. $\mathbb{W}g7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{E}b7$ 35. $\mathbb{W}h8\#$

1–0

2. Ivanchuk – L.B. Hansen

Skanderborg 2005



White needs to make the most out of the pin and to rid himself of his worthless pawn on c2. This can be done with simple moves:

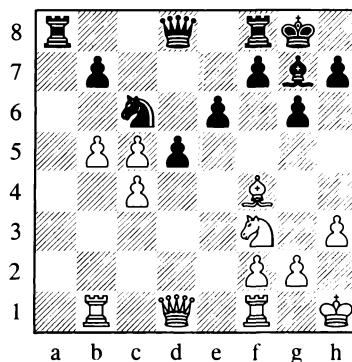
16. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}7c6$

16... $f6$ 17. $c4\pm$ does not look much of an improvement to me.

17. $c4!$ $dxc4?!$

This is a bit compliant, although it is fair to say that Black had no easy solutions available to him. After 17... $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 18. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $f6$ 19. $cxd5$ $\mathbb{E}xd5$ 20. $\mathbb{W}b3$ he finds himself pinned in three directions.

The best option should be to run from the pin, but after 17... $\mathbb{W}d8!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 19. $b5$

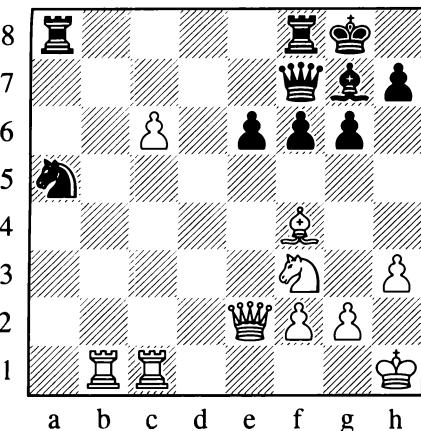


White keeps the initiative, having taken the chance to advance on the queenside. Best play seems to be: 19... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 20. $cxd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $exd5$ 22. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d6\pm$ I am not sure how difficult it will be for White to untangle his pieces after he wins the d5-pawn, so I don't want to call it a clear advantage just yet, but it is fair to say that we are closer to that than to equality.

18. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $f6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc4\pm$

White has a very big advantage; there is not much positive to say about the black position.

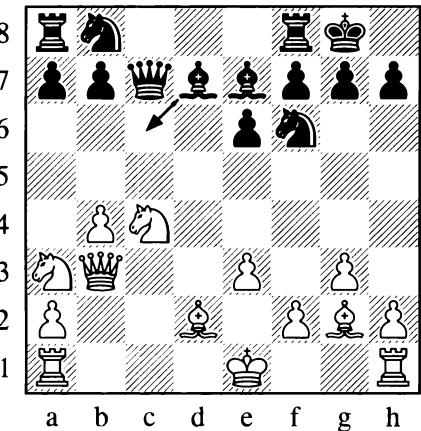
19... $\mathbb{W}f7$ 20. $b5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 21. $bxc6$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 22. $cxb7$ $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ 23. $c6$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 24. $\mathbb{E}fc1$



24...e5 25.♗e3 ♗b3 26.♗c3 ♗d4 27.♗xd4 exd4 28.♗xd4 ♗fe8 29.♔f3 ♗ac8 30.♗bc1 f5 31.♗xg7 ♗xg7 32.c7 ♗e4 33.♗d3 ♗e7 34.♗d1 ♗e6 35.♗d4† ♗f7 36.♗c6 ♗e4 37.♗d2 ♗g7 38.♗d6 ♗e2 39.♗d4† ♗h6 40.♗d7 ♗e1† 41.♗h2 ♗e5† 42.♗xe5 ♗xe5 43.♗d8
1-0

3. Schwing – Becking

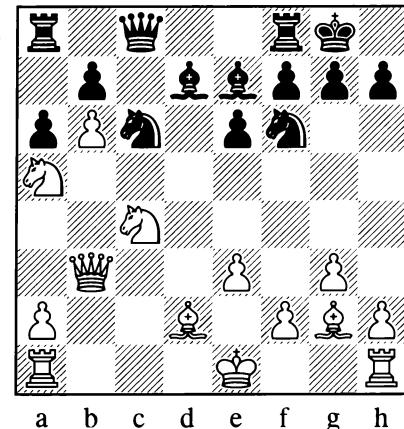
Merzig 1996



In the game White played 14.0–0? and after 14...♗c6= Black did not face any problems.

In his book *Grandmaster Repertoire 1 – 1.d4 Volume One*, Israeli Grandmaster Boris Avrukh

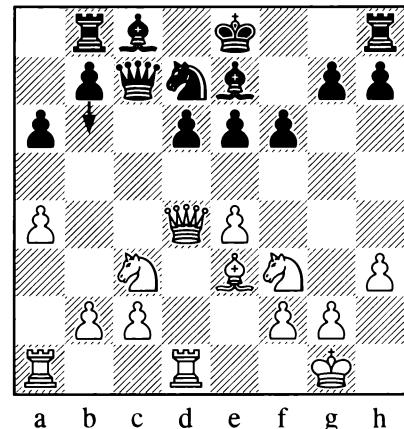
points out that White could have prevented his opponent's rather obvious idea with 14.b5!, when it is much harder for Black to complete his development. It seems that the only move with a fighting chance is 14...a6, when White can play 15.0–0 with a slight edge, or be more optimistic and play 15.b6! ♗c8 16.♗a5 ♗c6 17.♗3c4±.



It is clear that Black will have problems with the b7-pawn for a very long time; his position is truly unpleasant.

4. Skripchenko – Benmesbah

Pau 2008



Black wishes to finish her development with ...b6, when the disadvantage of having played ...f6 is more or less cancelled out by the two bishops. The other manoeuvre to be considered is ... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ -c6, with a tenable position.

In the game White prevented this by simple means.

13. $\mathbb{W}a7!$

The most precise move. White is not only preventing Black's two main ideas, but may also carry out plans involving $\mathbb{Q}b6$.

13.a5± would not really prevent Black from advancing the b-pawn, although that would make a weakness out of the a6-pawn.

And 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 14.f4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15. $\mathbb{W}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xc7$ $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 18.a5± is of course unpleasant for Black, however it is by no means terminal.

13...0–0

13...b6 is prevented, and 13... $\mathbb{Q}e5??$ would simply lose a rook.

13... $\mathbb{Q}d8!$ was the best defensive try. White is better, but there is no overwhelming advantage after 14.a5 b6 15.axb6 $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xc7$ $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ 17.b3±, although the position is definitely unpleasant for Black.

14.a5±

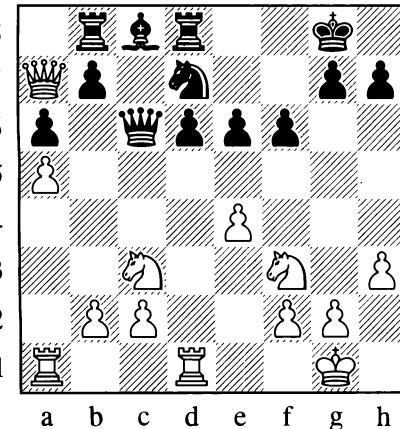
14. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ was also very strong.

14... $\mathbb{Q}d8$

This move arrives too late and offers fewer chances than on the previous move.

14... $\mathbb{Q}c5?!$ may be Black's best try, though 15. $\mathbb{Q}a3\pm$ preparing 16.b4 is promising for White.

15. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$

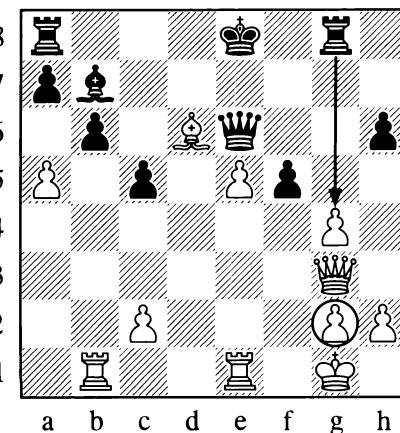


17. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{W}c4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}a4$

White won the game convincingly.

5. P. Carlsson – A. Smith

Stockholm 2007



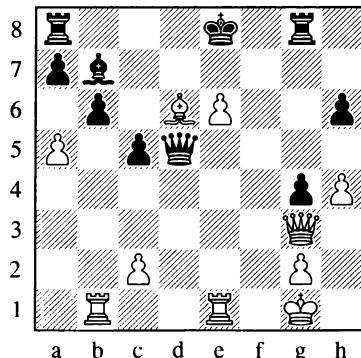
The black king is obviously weak in the centre, but it will take some time for White to get through to it. In the meantime Black is threatening to break through on the kingside, specifically on g4 and g2. White found a simple and elegant way to keep the g-file closed, turning the immediate mess into a long-term initiative without significant counterplay.

29.h3! fxg4 30.h4!

White has successfully closed the g-file and is simply winning.

30...♝d5 31.axb6?!

Probably 31.e6! was even stronger, as it would be hard for Black to become active.



For example: 31...0–0–0 32.♞c7!, with the idea 32...♝de8 33.axb6 ♜xe6 34.♜xe6 ♜xe6 35.♞d8! and White wins.

31...axb6 32.♜xb6 ♜a2?!

I think that 32...♝a3 33.♝b3 ♜xb3 34.cxb3 ♜g7 was the correct way to play. White is probably winning, but the threat to g2 makes the conversion a bit less smooth than White might have hoped a few moves back.

33.♝eb1 ♜g7

33...♛c8 34.e6! would lead to similar devastation.

34.e6!

Closing in on the king and threatening things such as ♜f1.

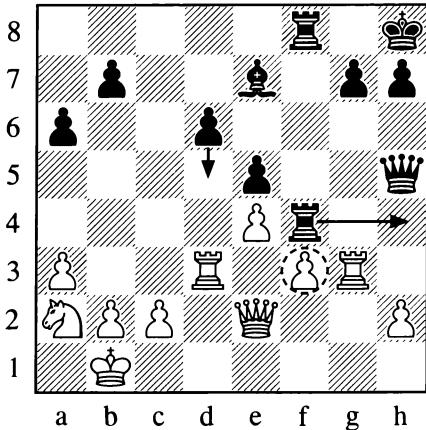
34...♝xc2 35.♜xb7!

The final combination.

**35...♜xb7 36.♜xb7 ♜xb7 37.♝xg4
1–0**

6. Anand – Morozevich

World Championship, Mexico City 2007



White has a very pleasant position from a static point of view. His knight will make it to d5 and control the position, while he will be able to put pressure on the black queenside once he is fully organized. The only thing to watch out for is that Black should not be allowed to create counterplay.

27.♝g2?

After 27.♞c3?! Black would be able to push White backwards with 27...♝h4 28.♝g2 ♜h3. White still has the better chances after 29.♞d5 ♜h4 30.♝b3±, but the game has entered a more random phase that might very well include a pawn race towards the end.

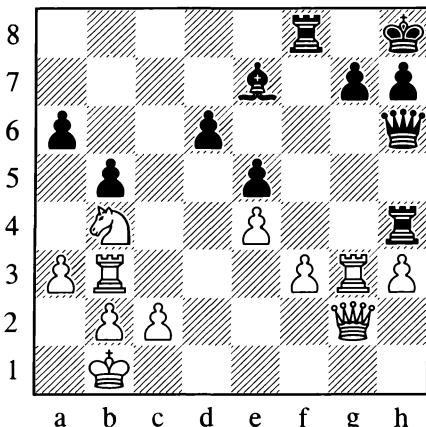
27.h3?! also allows Black to solve one of his problems, the backward pawn on d6. 27...d5! This pawn is immune because of 28.♝xd5 ♜h4 or 28.exd5? e4. So White has to play 28.♞c3 d4 29.♞d5 ♜f4f7 30.♝g2±. Obviously it is still a bit more pleasant to be White, but the change in the pawn structure is a definite improvement for Black.

27.♞b4 ♜h4 28.♝g2 h6±

27...♝h4

Black no longer has any great breaks.

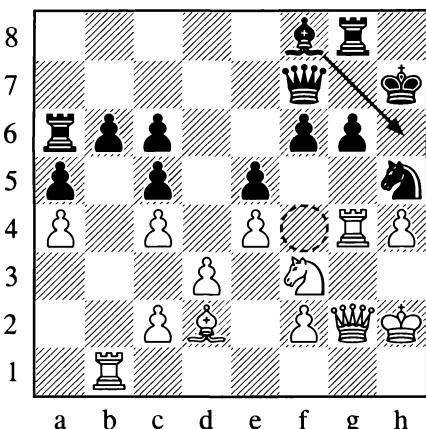
28.h3 ♖h6 29.♗b3! b5 30.♕b4±



White is in complete control and won the game on move 56.

7. Gelfand – Van Wely

Plovdiv 2003



Black is about to exchange his weak bishop on f8 for White's bishop on d2 in order to gain control of the f4-square. If Black is successful in this, he will be okay and not suffer too badly from the pressure he is feeling down the half-open files. White therefore has to take control of the f4-square urgently.

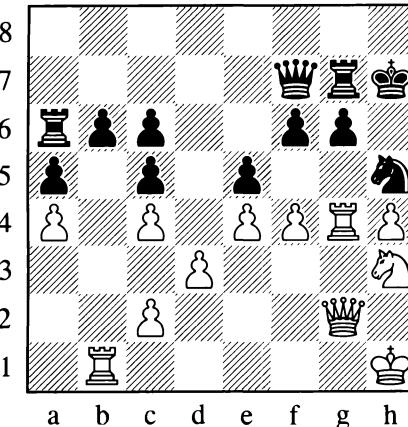
38.♔g1! ♖h6 39.♕xh6 ♔xh6 40.♔h3

40.♔e2!? is also a reasonable move, but the knight is very well placed on h3. To decide between them is quite hard.

40...♔h7 41.♔h1

41.f4?

41...♗g7 42.f4±

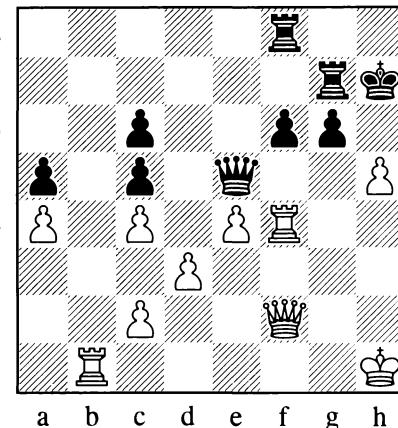


White is in full control.

42...exf4

Black is in deep trouble. For example:
42...♗e8 43.♔g1 ♖aa7 44.fxe5 fxe5 45.♗b1 ♖ab7 46.♗g5† ♖g8 47.♗f3 ♖bf7 48.♗g5 ♗f4 49.♗g4 and White wins a pawn.

**43.♗xf4 ♗xf4 44.♗xf4 ♖a8 45.♗f2 ♖f8
46.♗xb6 ♖c7 47.♗b1 ♖e5 48.h5**



48...gxh5

48... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 49.h6 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 50. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ and White still has a technical job ahead of him, but the advantage is close to decisive.

49. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 50. $\mathbb{W}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 51. $\mathbb{Q}bf1$ $\mathbb{W}g6$

52. $\mathbb{W}e3\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 53. $\mathbb{W}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 54.e5 $\mathbb{Q}gf7$

55. $\mathbb{W}e3\#$

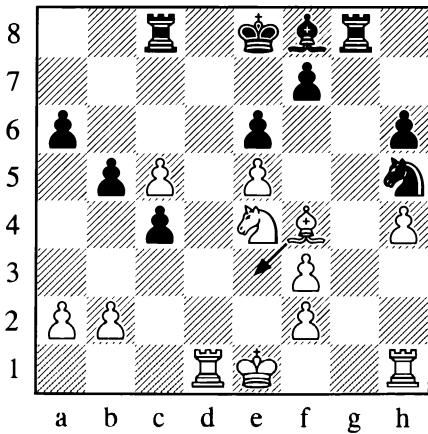
55. $\mathbb{Q}g1$!

55... $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 56. $\mathbb{W}f3$

1–0

8. Gelfand – Leko

Miskolc (rapid) 2010



If White is given time to play $\mathbb{Q}f4-e3$ and maybe $b2-b3$, breaking up the strong black pawn chain, he will be clearly better. Black must therefore find an immediate way to make the threat to the bishop on f4 real.

20... $\mathbb{B}f5!$

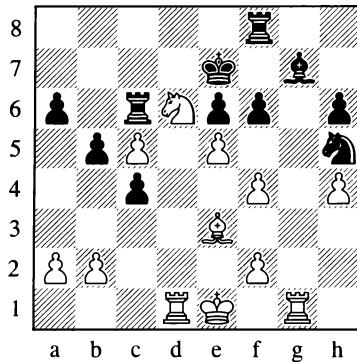
The only move – the other options are worse:

20... $\mathbb{B}xc5?$ is quite optimistic, but after 21. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xa6\pm$ Black does not have enough targets and activity to compensate for the exchange.

20... $f6\text{?}!$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 22.b3 $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}axb3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$

24. $\mathbb{Q}d6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xd6\pm$

Slow play also fails to solve Black's problems. The moment White is organized, Black's position becomes too fragile: 20... $\mathbb{Q}e7?$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 22.f4 f6 23. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$

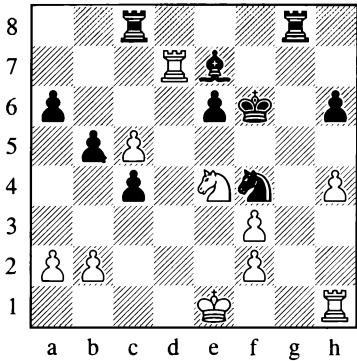


25. $\mathbb{Q}g6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 26.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ and White is in control.

20... $\mathbb{B}c6?$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e3\#$

21. $\mathbb{Q}d6\#$

21.exf6? does not work. After 21... $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 22.f7# $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e4\#$



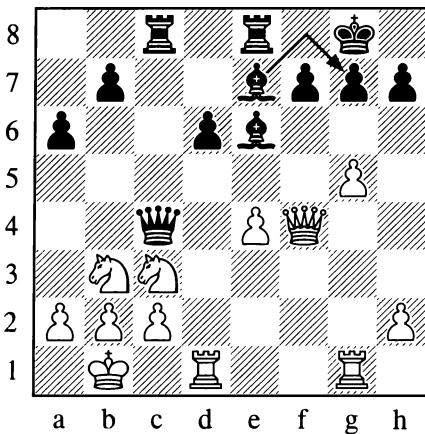
White does not have a perpetual check. Black steps away from it with 25... $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}d3\#$, when the ending is very dangerous for White.

21... $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 22.cxd6 $\mathbb{E}c5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ $\mathbb{E}xe5\#$
24. $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{Q}d7=$

Black has equalized, although he later lost the game in 86 moves.

9. Karjakin – Kramnik

Dortmund 2004



Black looks a little worse, mainly because he is not able to make anything out of his dark-squared bishop. You could easily imagine that the evaluation would be entirely different if the bishop was on e5! If we look carefully we will see that Black's only route for the bishop is from e7 to g7 via f8. By energetic play White was able to prevent this.

20.h4!!

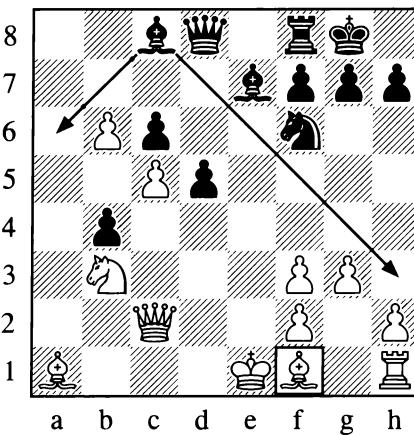
A great move for a 14-year-old to play. Maybe he was lucky and just found move 22 when he got there? Probably not; players this great do not rely on luck and neither should you.

20... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 21.h5 g6 22.h6±

Black is left in a very passive situation. Kramnik survived only by a miracle and because of his opponent's youth and inexperience.

10. Razuvayev – Sveshnikov

Moscow 1995



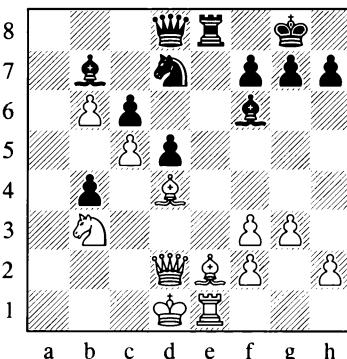
If White were able to complete his development he would be strategically winning. The b6-pawn is fantastic and the c6-pawn is likely to come under a devastating attack.

17.h4!

This prepares the development of the bishop to the obvious square d3 after which White is just much better.

17. $\mathbb{Q}d3?$ $\mathbb{Q}h3!$ would be irritating, and reduce White's advantage to not very much.

There was a serious alternative for White in 17. $\mathbb{Q}d4?$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d1$, which looks decidedly odd, but the white king is not especially exposed. You can believe that 18... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 20. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 21. $\mathbb{E}e1$



would give White great winning chances. But why have the king on d1, when you can hide it in safety on g1?

17. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}h3!$ \Rightarrow

17...d4?!

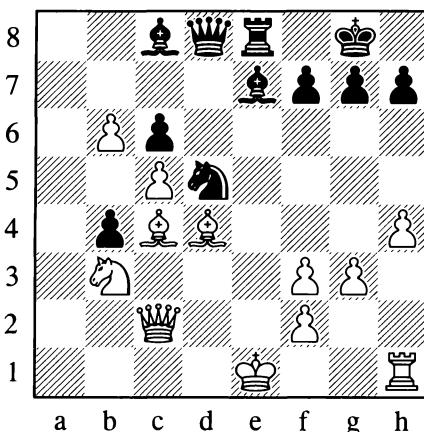
Now the bishop can come to c4 instead of d3.

17... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ was more normal, but White has a great advantage. For example: 19. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 20. 0–0± $\mathbb{W}e7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xe2$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}a2$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ f6 27. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ and it feels as if the black position is on the verge of a collapse.

18. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

Probably White is already winning here.

18... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}e8$



20. $\mathbb{Q}f1!$

20. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ should be avoided, but luckily that is not hard.

20... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $cxd5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d4

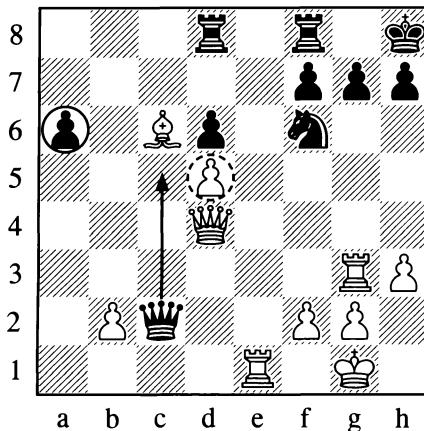
Desperation, but it makes no difference.

24. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 25. $\mathbb{W}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}h3!$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ $\mathbb{W}xf3$ 27. $\mathbb{W}c2$ d3 28. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{W}xf2$

1–0

11. Gukko – Pogonina

Prague 2011

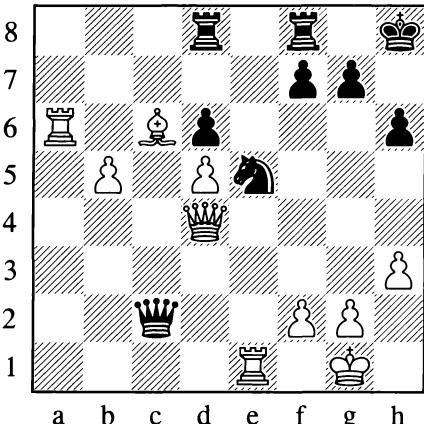


White can immediately pin down the weak pawn on a6 and at the same time take away the control of the c5-square from Black.

27. $\mathbb{B}4!+$

27. $\mathbb{B}a3?$ is of course very tempting, but here we see Black's intention. After 27... $\mathbb{W}c5!±$ her position is only bad, it is not yet lost!

27... $\mathbb{h}6$ 28. $\mathbb{B}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 29. $\mathbb{B}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 30. b5



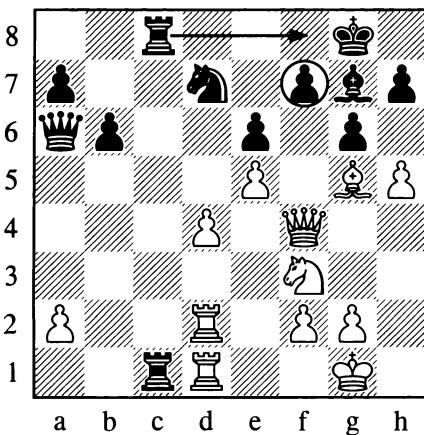
White wins easily.

30... $\mathbb{B}b8$ 31. $\mathbb{B}a3$ f6 32. $\mathbb{B}a7$ $\mathbb{W}b3$ 33. $\mathbb{B}aa1$ $\mathbb{B}fc8$

34.♗ec1 ♗xc6 35.bxc6 ♘b4 36.♗d1 ♗xd1†
 37.♗xd1 ♘b5 38.♗a7 ♘d8 39.♗d7
 1–0

12. A. Matthesen – Schandorff

Denmark 2010



The biggest weakness in the black camp is the f7-pawn, which of course can be defended by ...♘f8. But White prevents this defence and wins the game.

23.♗e7!

From this point Black can try a lot of things, but essentially he is outplayed.

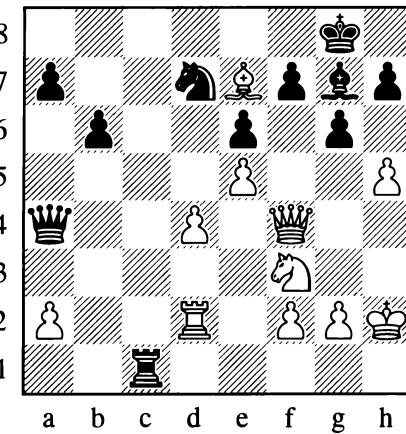
23...♗a4

23...♗xd1† 24.♗xd1 ♘e8 25.♗d6 is a typical horror scenario.

After 25...♗xa2 26.h6 ♘h8 27.♗c1 White dominates completely.

And after 25...gxh5 26.♗c1 ♘c8 27.♗xc8† ♘xc8 28.♗g5 ♘e8 the weakness of the h7-square is used to penetrate Black's position. 29.♗e4 f5 30.♗b7 ♘h6 31.♗f3 Black is paralysed and will not survive for long. White is planning d4-d5 and later ♘f3-d4-e6/f5.

24.♗xc1 ♘xc1† 25.♗h2



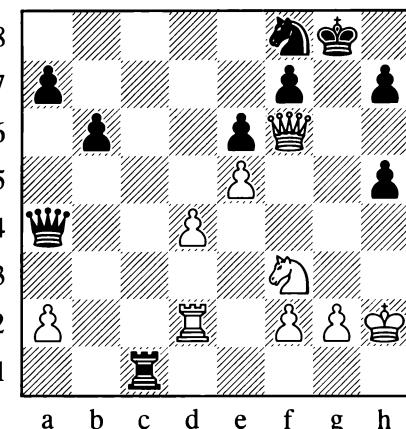
25...gxh5

25...h6 weakens the light squares and is no better: 26.hxg6 fxg6 27.♗g4 ♘f7 28.♗g5! The threat of ♘f4† forces Black to make a concession. 28...hxg5 (28...h5 29.♗f4† ♘g8 30.♗f6 and the weaknesses are too many) 29.♗xg5† ♘e7 30.♗xe6† ♘d8 31.♗g8† ♘f8 32.♗e6† ♘e8 33.♗d3 White wins.

26.♗f6!

Now Black is murdered on the dark squares.

26...♘f8 27.♗xg7 ♘xg7 28.♗f6† ♘g8



29.d5!

The final nail in the coffin. White will play ♘f3-d4-f5 and ♘d3-g3 with a deadly attack.

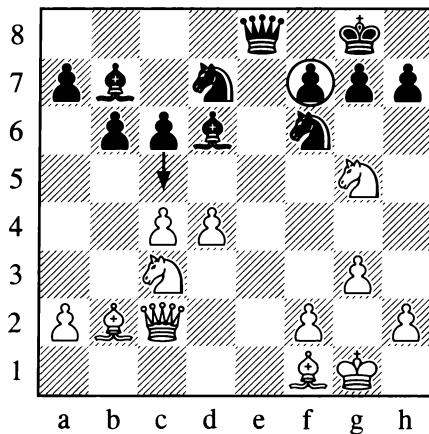
29...exd5 30.♕d4 h4 31.♕d3 ♕g6 32.♕d8†

♕f8 33.♕g5† ♕g6 34.♕xc1

1–0

13. Gasanov – Lastin

Dagomys 2009



The weakness in the black position is the pawn on f7, White's worst-placed piece is probably the bishop on f1 and Black's idea is to play ...c5. All this spells only one solution:

20.c5!

20.♕ce4 ♕f8 21.c5 is too slow. Black has time to play 21...♕xe4 22.♕xe4 h6, when White has only a slight advantage.

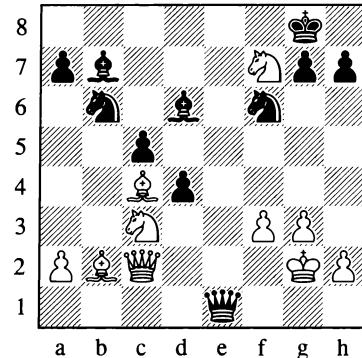
Black is completely fine after 20.♕d3 h6! 21.♕ce4 ♕c7 22.♕xf6† ♕xf6 23.♕e4 ♕xe4 24.♕xe4 ♕c8 with more or less even chances.

20...bxcc5

This is basically forced, otherwise White plays ♕c4.

21.♕ce4!

21.♕c4? does not work here because of tactics: 21...♕e1† 22.♕g2 cxd4 23.♕xf7 c5† 24.f3 ♕b6!



25.♕xd6† ♕xc4 26.♕xc4 ♕xf3†! 27.♕xf3 ♕f1† 28.♕f2 ♕xc4 29.♕e2 ♕f7! Black either wins back the piece with an extra pawn, or has a strong attack after 30.♕a4 ♕d5† 31.♕f2 h5, when the black pawns are very impressive.

21...♕xe4

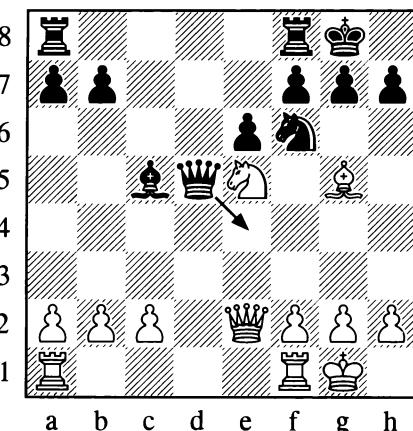
21...♕e7? is even worse; after 22.♕xf6† ♕xf6 23.♕c4 White just wins.

22.♕xe4 ♕f8 23.dxc5±

White won a good game on move 37.

14. Leko – Korchnoi

Wijk aan Zee 2000



Black's idea is to play ...♕e4! to simplify the position and immediately solve the problems of his exposed queen. I do not think White

can count on any real pressure in the endgame resulting from this.

14.♘fe1!

Combining development and prophylaxis.

14...♞d7

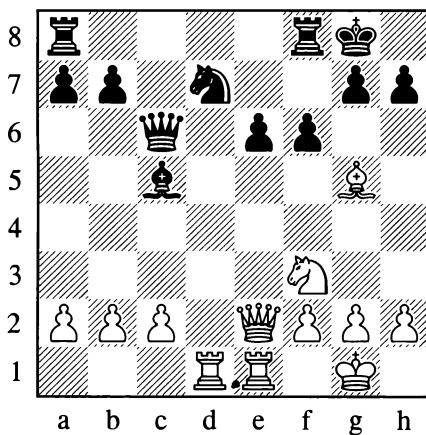
The only move.

15.♝f3 f6?

A tactical error that comes close to losing the game all on its own.

15...♝b6! was best, though White can claim a slight edge with 16.b3, when the knight on b6 is out of play. This is not a great problem for Black of course, but at times all we can hope for is to cause the opponent minor inconvenience.

16.♗ad1 ♜c6



17.♗xe6†!

An attractive combination.

17...♜xe6 18.♗xe6 ♜xg5 19.♗xd7 g4
20.♗e5!±

The point of the combination – if Black moves or defends the bishop, White will continue with 21.♗g5!.

20...♗ad8 21.♗xd8 ♜xd8 22.♗e1 ♜d4

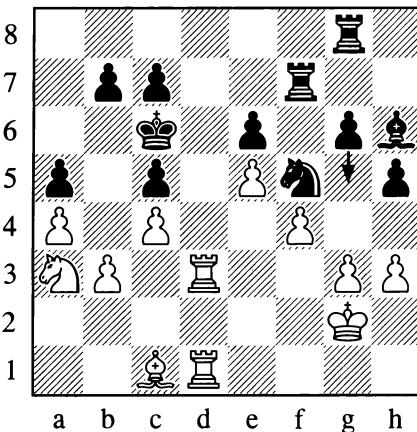
The engines suggest 22...♝d1 23.♗f1 ♜b4 24.c3 ♜d6 as an improvement. After 25.♗e4 ♜b1 26.♗e2± White has good winning chances, though Black can fight with 26...b5!?.

23.♗b5 ♜b6 24.c4 ♜d1 25.♗f1 ♜c1 26.b3±

White is in control and won the game on move 43.

15. Volokitin – Eljanov

Foros 2008



In this typical Berlin-structure White usually achieves his aims by playing g3-g4, but this time around that is not going to work out. Instead it is Black that is planning to advance on the kingside with ...g5.

29.♗b5?!

White could kill all Black's play on the kingside with 29.h4!. A possible continuation could be 29...b6 30.♗b5 ♜e8, when I do not see any easy way for White to make progress, but in this rather stale position at least he can manoeuvre with more ease than Black. Although a draw is likely, that is certainly a great improvement on the game. Sometimes we need to avoid losing first of all!

29...g5# 30.g4?!

Clearly Volokitin was relying on this idea – unfortunately it leads nowhere. 30.♗d8 ♗xd8 31.♗xd8 gxf4 32.gxf4 ♖h4† and ...♗g6 also leads to an advantage for Black.

30...gxf4 31.♗f3 ♖h4†

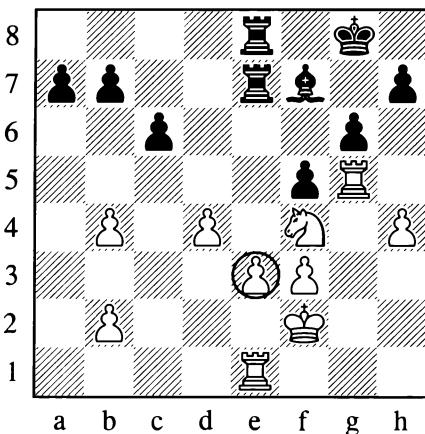
It was even more decisive to flick in ...hxg4† first, but Black is on his way to winning the game anyway.

32.♗e4 b6

Black won on move 48.

16. Van Wely – Wade

London 2008



White has a typical good knight against bad bishop, but he is lacking in targets and Black has decent pressure down the e-file, which occupies one of the white rooks. The only real weakness in the black camp is the g6-pawn, but rather than attacking this immediately, White should use the fact that Black is not planning anything active to improve his position first of all.

25.♘d3!

The knight goes to e5 where it is more active and blocks Black's counterplay on the e-file. Only after this should White consider active options.

25...♗g7

25...b6 26.♗g2 ♗g7 27.♕e5 c5 28.bxc5 bxc5 29.♗xf7 ♗xf7 30.dxc5 favours White.

26.♕e5 ♗f6 27.e4!?

It is not necessary to make this active decision yet, but it is not a poor choice either.

27...h6!?

This weakens the black pawn structure unnecessarily.

Better was 27...♗d8 28.♗d1 ♗b3 29.♗d3 ♗e6 when Black is just waiting. White has a slight edge, but will it be enough to win the game?

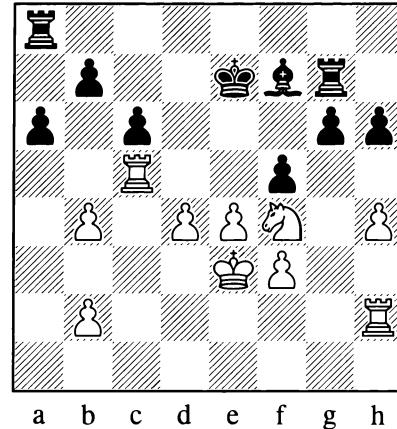
28.♗g2 ♗g8 29.♗e3 ♗e6 30.♗h2

Preventing ...g5.

30...♗eg7 31.♗c1 ♗a8 32.♗c5 a6 33.♗d3

Having fulfilled its function on e5, the knight returns to f4.

33...♗e7 34.♗f4 ♗f7



35.e5!?

To me this is a strange decision. Black can be happy that the pressure on his pawn structure is reduced.

35.exf5 gxf5 36.♗xf5 was tempting, although opening the position up does give Black some activity as well.

35... $\mathbb{Q}e6?$

This allows a nice sequence.

The more natural 35...g5! was the right move: 36.hxg5 hxg5 37. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ f4† 38. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{E}d8$ and Black looks fully okay.

36.d5! $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}xd5†$ cxd5 38. $\mathbb{E}c7†!$

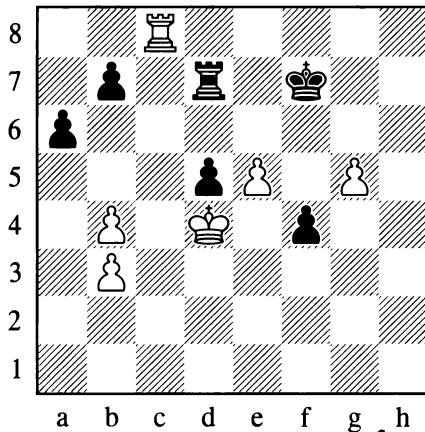
White values activity over material.

38... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 39. $\mathbb{E}hc2$ $\mathbb{E}xc7$ 40. $\mathbb{E}xc7$ $\mathbb{E}e8$
41. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{E}e7$ 42. $\mathbb{E}c8†$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$

42... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 43. $\mathbb{E}xe8†$ $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ 44.f4! and the pawn ending is winning for White.

43.f4 $\mathbb{E}d7$ 44.b3

White has serious pressure. Black's best chance is probably 44...h5 followed by passive defence.

44...g5?! 45.hxg5 hxg5 46.fxg5 f4**47.g6†?**

Missing a direct win by 47. $\mathbb{E}h8$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 48.e6!, based on 48... $\mathbb{E}e7$ 49. $\mathbb{E}h6!$ and 48... $\mathbb{E}c7$ 49. $\mathbb{E}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 50. $\mathbb{E}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 51. $\mathbb{E}f8$, when the black king is cut off.

47... $\mathbb{Q}xg6?$

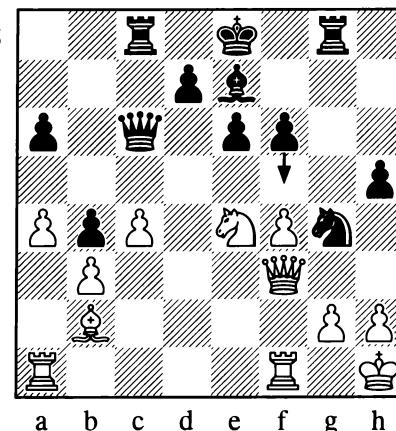
This loses by force. The last chance was 47... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 48. $\mathbb{E}f8$ $\mathbb{E}g7$ 49. $\mathbb{E}f6†$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 50. $\mathbb{E}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$. This looks bad for Black, but only

extensive analysis can determine whether it is already too late for him to save the game.

48.e6 $\mathbb{E}h7$ 49. $\mathbb{E}f8$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 50. $\mathbb{E}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$
51. $\mathbb{Q}d6$
1–0

17. Milliet – Collas

Pau 2008



Black would solve a lot of her problems if she were allowed to play ...f5.

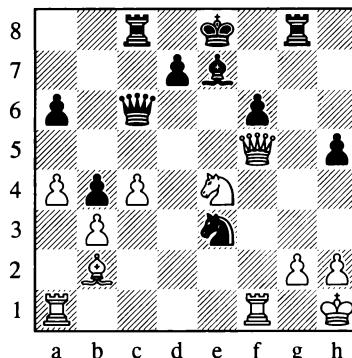
22.f5!

Keeping the knight on the great e4-square.

22...e5

Pure resignation, but Black cannot save her position anyway:

22...exf5 23. $\mathbb{W}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$



This was the obvious tactical reaction. Here the consequences of 24. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$ $\mathbb{W}xf6!$ are not as clear as White would like, but she has a more complicated forced win at her disposal:

24. $\mathbb{W}h7!$ $\mathbb{E}g4$

24... $\mathbb{E}xg2$ loses to 25. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xf6!$ $\mathbb{E}xh2\#$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xh2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4\#$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 29. $\mathbb{W}g6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 30. $\mathbb{W}g7\#$ and White ends up with an extra piece.

25. $\mathbb{W}h8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 26. $\mathbb{W}xh5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$

26... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ and White wins.

27. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{E}xe4$

27... $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 28. $\mathbb{E}xe3!$ $\mathbb{W}xe3$ 29. $\mathbb{W}d5\#$

28. $\mathbb{E}e1$

With threats such as $\mathbb{W}h3\#$ and $\mathbb{E}fxe3$, White is winning.

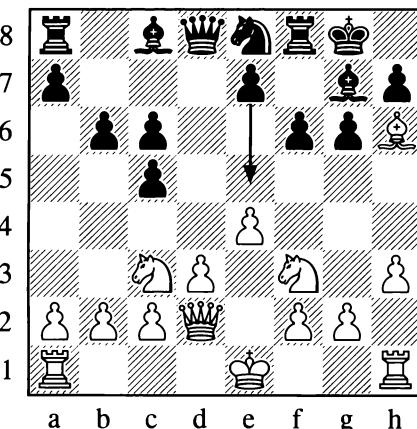
22... $d5$ was maybe the best chance, but after 23. $cxd5$ $exd5$ 24. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ White has a winning attack all the same.

23. $\mathbb{E}ad1$

White is strategically winning and went on to win the game in 36 moves.

18. Cossin – Collas

Pau 2008



This position is fairly quiet. White could of course consider sharpening it by playing

11.0–0–0, but the idea of $h4-h5$ does not work so well when time has been invested in placing the pawn on $h3$ in the first place. The way for White to secure a small plus is by playing:

11. $\mathbb{E}e5!$

Preventing Black's standard plan of playing ... $e5$ followed by bringing his knight to $d4$.

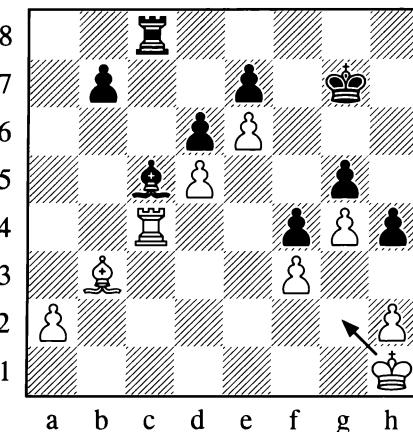
11... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 12.0–0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13. $\mathbb{E}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$

14. $h4$ $h5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b1\#$

White is simply a bit better, although the advantage is nothing spectacular. Still, better is better.

19. De Groote – Ondersteijn

Netherlands 2008



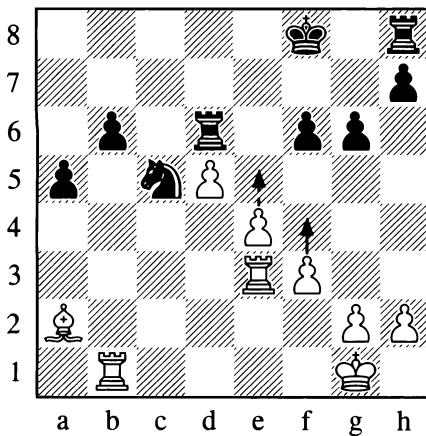
We should never miss ideas as simple as this one. Black has the chance to trap the white king in the corner for a long time.

29... $h3!$ 30. $\mathbb{E}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 31. $\mathbb{E}c4$ $b5$ 32. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 33. $\mathbb{E}c2$

At this point it is hard to understand why Black refrained from 33... $\mathbb{Q}d4$, which would quickly win – perhaps he overlooked that 34. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$ is immediately decisive. Instead he made it all complicated and delayed the victory until move 102.

20. Kramnik – Ivanchuk

Nice (blindfold) 2009



White's big threat is f3-f4 followed by e4-e5, which could quickly bring Black to his knees. Black is able to reduce the impact of this.

30...g5!

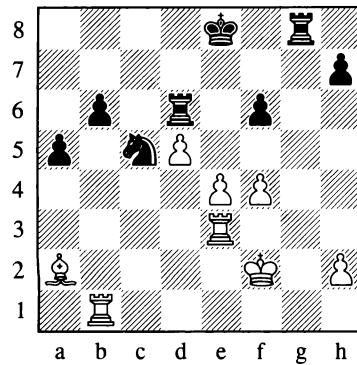
30... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 31.f4 g5 would be worse. After 32.fxg5 $\mathbb{E}e8?$! 33.gxf6† $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 34. $\mathbb{E}f1†$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 35. $\mathbb{E}h3!±$ Black is under great pressure.

31.e5?!

This move throws away all chances of an advantage.

31. $\mathbb{Q}c4!$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}b5!±$ is a safe way to retain a small plus.

31.g3?! is of course possible, but reveals another point to Black's last move – the opening of the g-file will let Black show his position's potential: 31... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 32.f4?! White should go back to $\mathbb{Q}c4-b5$ and fight for an edge. 32...gxf4 33.gxf4 $\mathbb{E}g8†$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}f2$



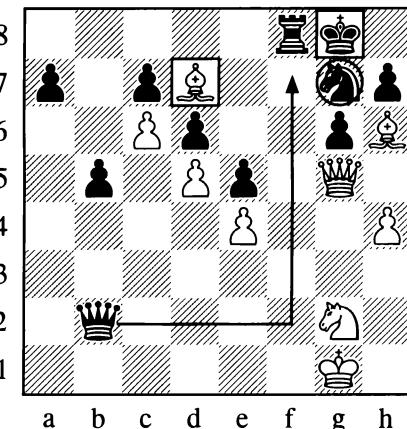
34...f5! 35.e5 $\mathbb{E}h6!$ 36.h3 $\mathbb{E}hg6$ The ending is very sharp, with chances for both sides.

31...fxe5 32. $\mathbb{E}xe5$ h6 33. $\mathbb{E}be1$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 34. $\mathbb{E}e7†$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 35. $\mathbb{E}c7$ a4

Although the position is about equal here, Black's task is easier in the endgame, and he eventually won on move 73.

21. Wells – P. Littlewood

Canterbury 2010



We join this game in what I assume is a standard Pete Wells time scramble. White is awfully close to delivering mate, but he fails to take into account Black's defence.

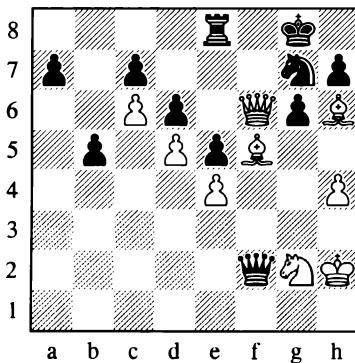
The solution is **37. $\mathbb{Q}f5!!$** , when there is no good defence against $\mathbb{W}e7$. The closest Black

has to a defence is 37... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ (37... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 38. $\mathbb{W}f6$ and White wins), but White is winning after 38. $\mathbb{Q}e6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 39. $\mathbb{W}g4!$, with the threat of mate in four starting with 40. $\mathbb{Q}f7\#$.

The game went less successfully for White:

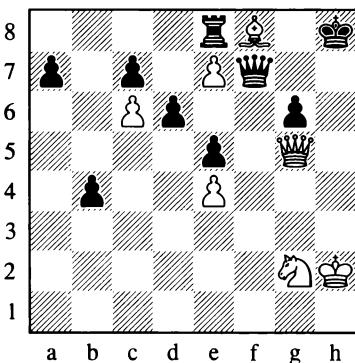
37. $\mathbb{W}e7??$

37. $\mathbb{Q}h2?$ is also a worse version. After 37... $\mathbb{W}f2$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ Black can play 38... $\mathbb{E}e8!=$ on account of: 39. $\mathbb{W}f6$



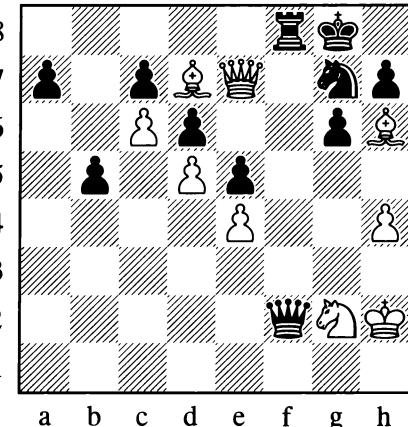
39... $\mathbb{W}g3\#!!\#$

The following long and complicated line is truly breathtaking: 37. $\mathbb{Q}e6\#?$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 38.dxe6 $\mathbb{W}f2\#$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 40.h5 $\mathbb{Q}h8!$ 41.hxg6 hxg6 42.e7 b4 43. $\mathbb{Q}f8$ $\mathbb{W}f7$



44. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}f4\#$ 45. $\mathbb{W}xf4$ exf4 46. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ b3 47. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ b2 48. $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ b1= \mathbb{W} 49. $\mathbb{Q}g7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 50. $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 51.e8= \mathbb{W} and it ends in perpetual check.

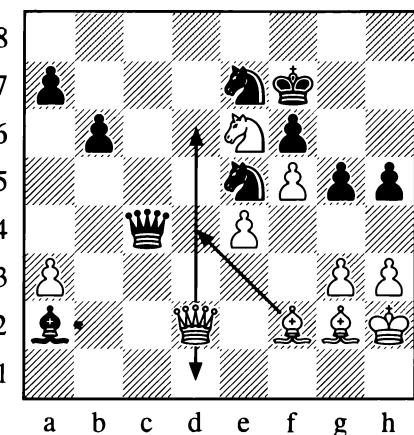
37... $\mathbb{W}f2\#$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}h2$



Here Black gave White extra chances with 38... $\mathbb{W}f6\#!$ and the game was eventually drawn on move 59 after further mistakes from both players. The correct move would have been 38... $\mathbb{W}f7\#!$, defusing all threats to the king.

22. Topalov – Kamsky

Kazan (1.4) 2011

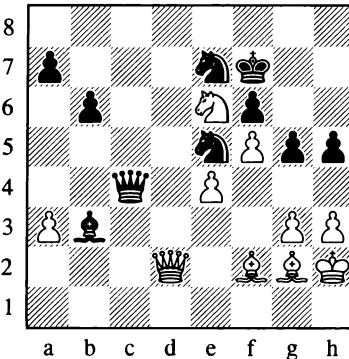


Black's weakness is obviously his king and the main threat against it is seemingly $\mathbb{W}d8-f8\#$. Black has to defend against this, but must do so intelligently. However, we should check whether the main threat is

genuinely threatening! Here $\mathbb{W}d8$ can be met with ... $\mathbb{W}c8$ and Black is fine. Rather White is really threatening $\mathbb{W}d1$ or $\mathbb{Q}d4$, both leading to desperate problems for Black. Kamsky defended against both of these, but opened up another avenue of attack for White.

38... $\mathbb{Q}7c6?$

The solution is: 38... $\mathbb{Q}b3!!$

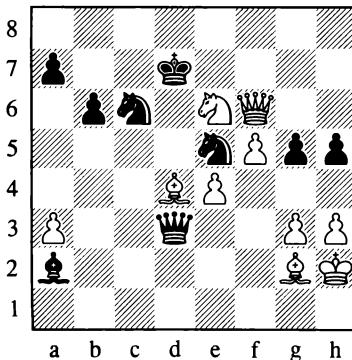


The main point of this move is simple. Black wants to be able to meet 39. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ with 39... $\mathbb{W}d3!=$ without the bishop hanging on a2. Note that as mentioned above, 39. $\mathbb{W}d8$ is not a problem; Black has 39... $\mathbb{W}c8\#$ forcing the exchange of queens.

38... $\mathbb{Q}b1?$ is refuted by 39. $\mathbb{W}d1!=$.

39. $\mathbb{W}d6!$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}c7\#?$!

40. $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ was stronger. After 40... $\mathbb{W}d3$ 41. $\mathbb{W}f8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 42. $\mathbb{W}xf6$



Black is totally lost. For example: 42... $\mathbb{Q}f3\#$ 43. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}xf3$ 44. $\mathbb{W}f7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 45. $\mathbb{Q}f8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 46. $\mathbb{W}xa2!$ and White wins.

40... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}d5$

Repeating the position with 41. $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ was best, but Topalov is looking elsewhere for the win.

41... $\mathbb{W}e2$ 42. $\mathbb{W}xf6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 43. $\mathbb{W}e6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 44. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{W}d1\#$ 45. $\mathbb{Q}f1?$

White was still winning: 45. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{W}e2$ 46. $\mathbb{W}f6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 47. $\mathbb{W}h8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 48. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}f3\#$ 49. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 50. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}cd4$ 51. $\mathbb{W}xh5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 52. $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 53. $\mathbb{Q}f7$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 54. $\mathbb{Q}d6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 55. $\mathbb{W}g6$ and mate is imminent.

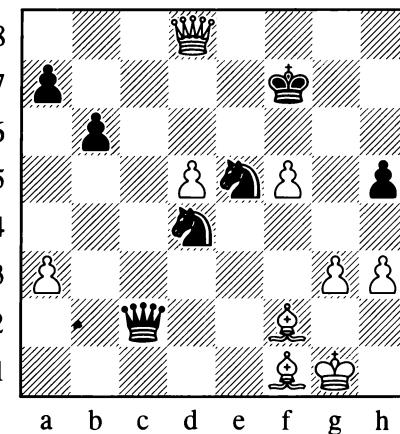
45... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 46. $\mathbb{W}xd5$

46. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 47. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7\pm$

46... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 47. $\mathbb{W}f6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 48. $\mathbb{W}xg5\#$

48. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4\#$ 49. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{W}d1\#$ 50. $\mathbb{W}xg5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 51. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{W}xd5\#$ 52. $\mathbb{Q}g1\pm$

48... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 49. $\mathbb{W}d8$ $\mathbb{W}c2\!=$

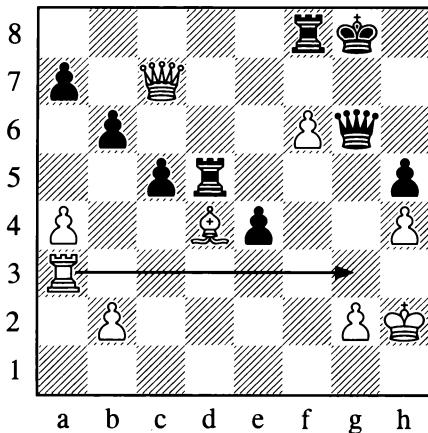


50. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}c1\#$ 51. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{W}c2$ 52. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}df3\#$ 53. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}e1$ 54. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{W}xf2$ 55. $\mathbb{W}c7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 56. $\mathbb{W}d6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 57. $\mathbb{W}c7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 58. $\mathbb{W}d6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$

½–½

23. Sargissian – E. Berg

Rijeka 2010



White has been playing with his back against the wall for a while and has now decided to put all his hope in the $\mathbb{E}a3-g3$ manoeuvre. Unfortunately there is a move he did not anticipate:

38...e3!!

A nice pawn sacrifice that improves Black's coordination.

39. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$

The main point is of course that after 39. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ Black is able to block the pin and win the game.

39. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ e2 is equally hopeless, even though the game would continue for a bit longer.

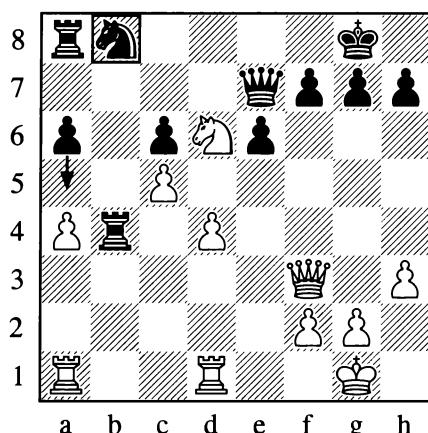
39... $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$

White resigned. I am sure that there are those that would have put this position in the *Calculation* book in the section on Intermediate Moves, but this only underlines the fact that often there are many ways to solve a chess problem and that the definitions are only useful to us as ways to organize our thinking.

0–1

24. Roiz – Rodshtein

Beersheba (rapid) 2007



White is on top. He has a fantastic knight on d6 and the black pieces are almost as poorly placed as they could be. However, even winning positions need to be won. In this case there are two easy ways arrive at the solution. The first is to aim to restrict Black's play. Black would like to get his knight into play – he wants to play ...a5, ... $\mathbb{W}c7$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$, when he would be fine, the knight soon making it to d5. White can of course prevent this plan.

The other way to find the right move is to focus on penetrating along the b-file. In the game White did not find the right way to do this, playing 24. $\mathbb{Q}db1?$, and after 24...a5!† Black was suddenly in with a shout. It should be mentioned that Black actually made a strong comeback and even won the game some 60 moves later. If White had looked for a way to take this resource away from Black, he would have found the right move as well.

The correct move is of course 24.a5!, when Black is completely paralysed and will lose material quite soon.

Chapter 4

Exercises

In this chapter you will find 150 exercises with a positional slant. In all of them it will make sense to ask the three questions to direct your focus and to make sure you do not rush into assumptions.

You will find all sorts of positions here, but all of them are to some extent simple, even though in some cases strong grandmasters got them wrong, either over the board or when trying to solve them in training sessions that I have organized. But as always, chess is simple to understand, just as music is. But that does not mean that you can listen to a tune, hum it and then just sit down and play it on the piano.

Chess is about skill; it is about practice more than it is about understanding, although of course understanding is needed as well. How often have we heard our friends complaining about losing to someone who “understood nothing”? I am as guilty of uttering those words as anyone else. But in the end it is the strength of the moves we play that matters.

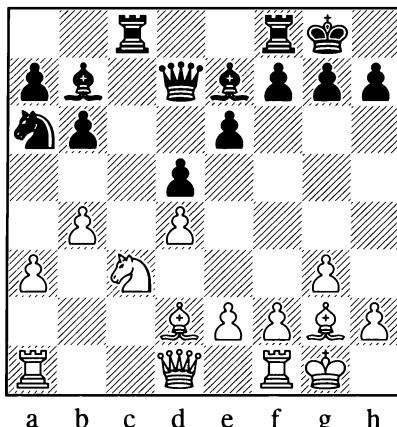
It is for this reason I hope that you will go through these 150 exercises seriously. Aim to solve them all, of course, but also train yourself in making decisions. If your rating is above 2200, do not invest more than 10 minutes in a position; if your rating is below 2200, make it 15 minutes.

If you like to challenge yourself, take 35 minutes to solve 6 exercises. (First look quickly at them, to see if you can pin one or two of them down quickly.) If your rating is below 2200, make it 45 minutes.

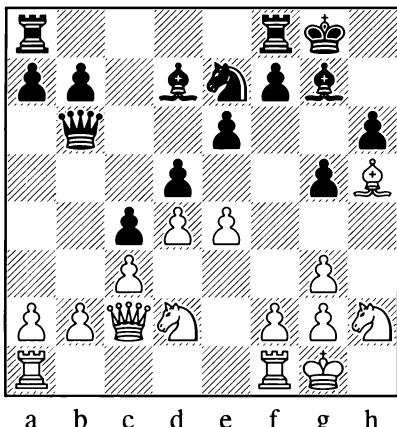
If you want a suggested training plan, I would propose that you do six pages of exercises a week, allowing yourself one day of rest. This means it will take you a month to go through this section. If you follow the training program and ask the three questions religiously, you will arrive at the other end with a transformed intuition and feeling for positional play.



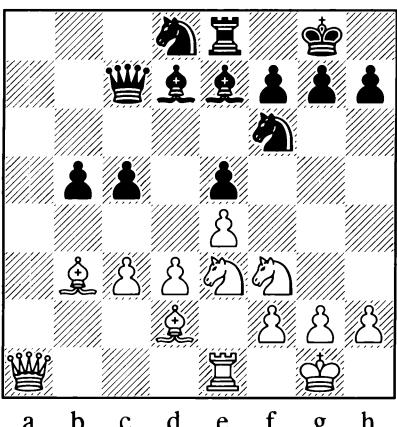
Wislez – Tiviakov, Eupen 2000



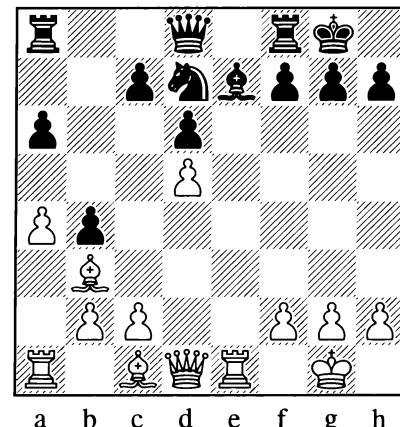
V. Kovacevic – Pinter, Plovdiv 1983



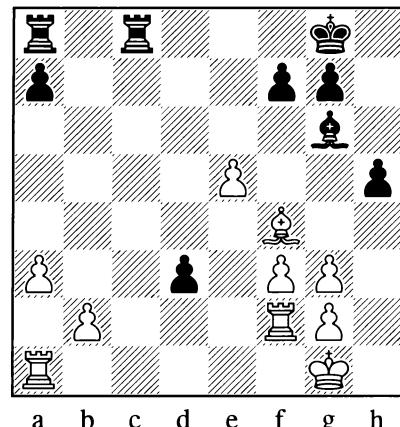
Leko – Ivanchuk, Morelia/Linares 2006



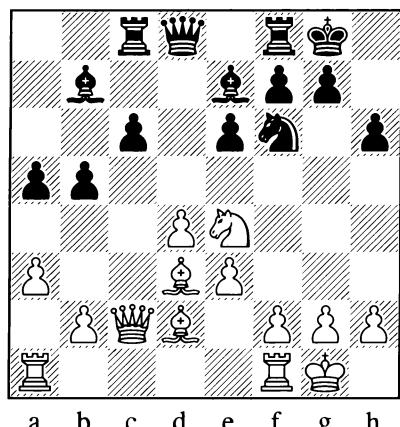
Leko – Mamedyarov, Wijk aan Zee 2006

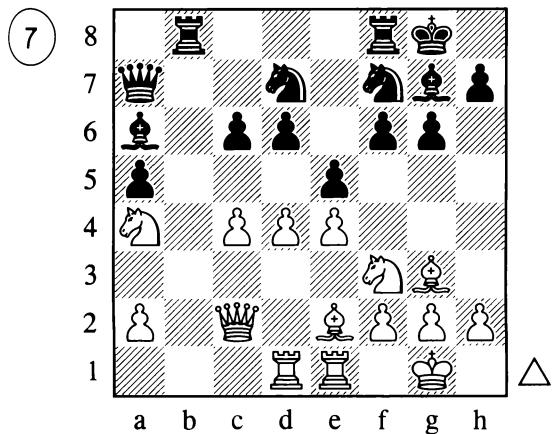
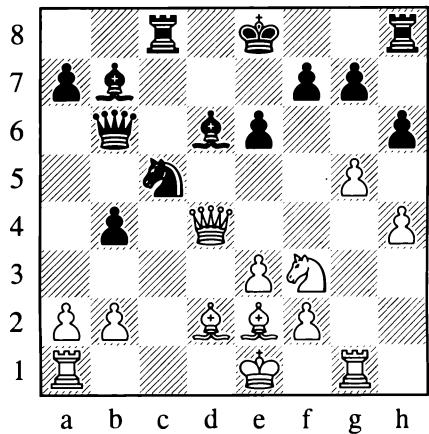
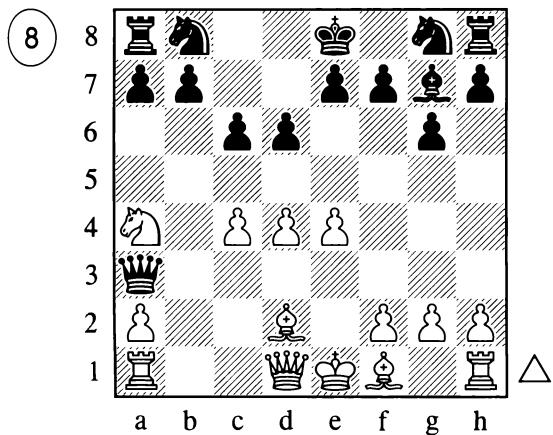
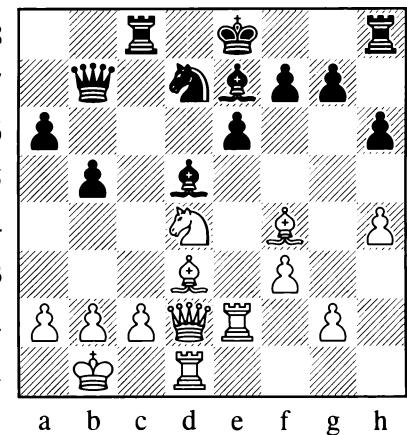
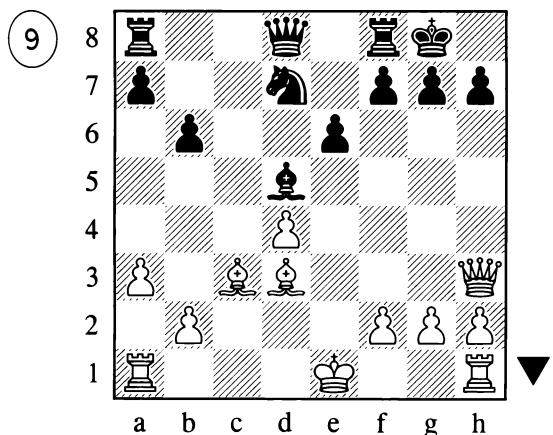
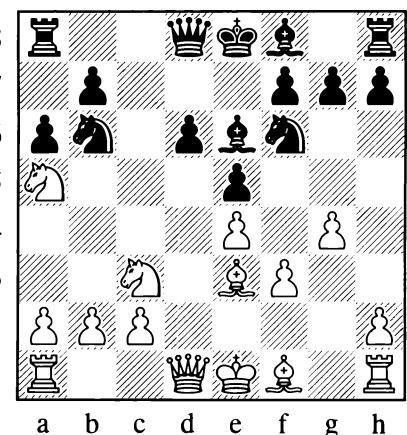


Leko – Shirov, Linares 2004



Onischuk – Jakovenko, Foros 2008

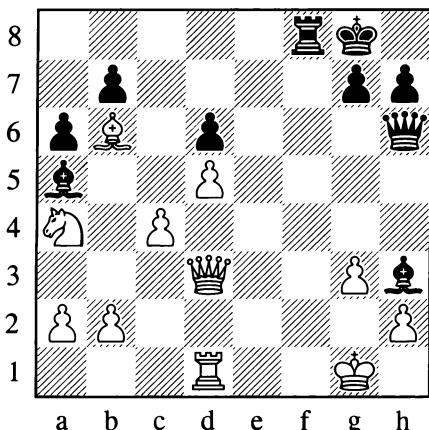


Karavade – Castaneda, Philadelphia 2008**Adly – Sebag**, Hoogeveen 2008**Gelfand – Morozевич**, Moscow 2008**Galkin – Khalifman**, Moscow 2005**Hammes – Akopian**, Kallithea 2008**Solovchuk – Neverov**, Poltava 2008

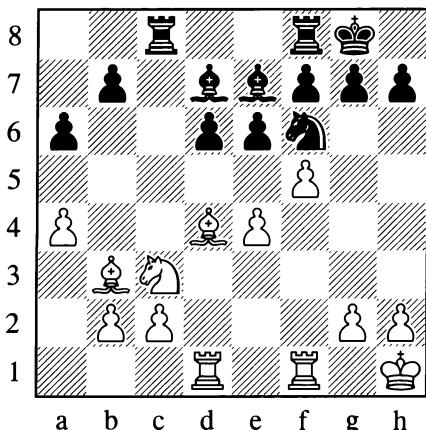
Prujssers – S. Zhigalko, Enschede 2009

Kostromin – Areshchenko, Rogaska Slatina 2011

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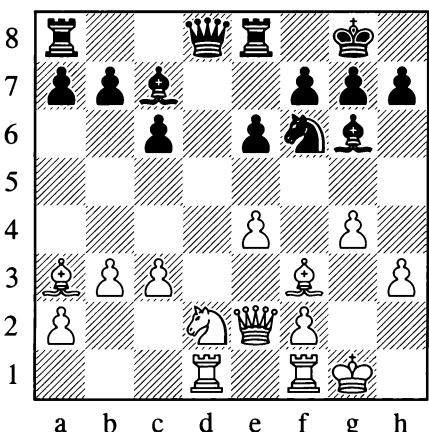
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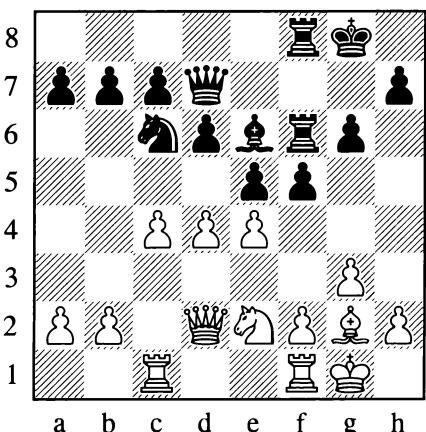
Norwood – Collins, England 2002

McNab – A. Tate, Edinburgh 2009

(14)



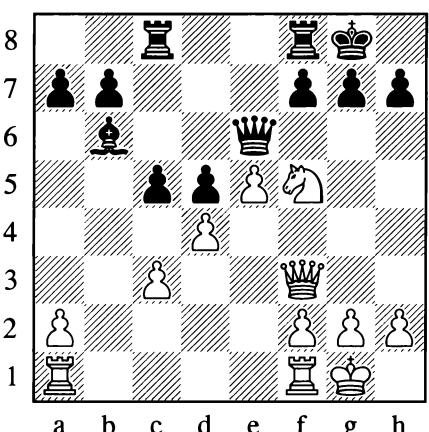
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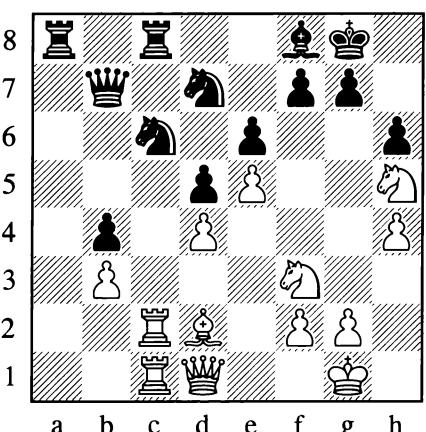
G. Jones – Howell, Sheffield 2011

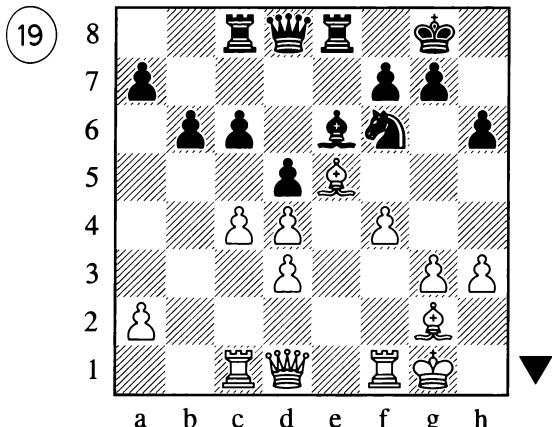
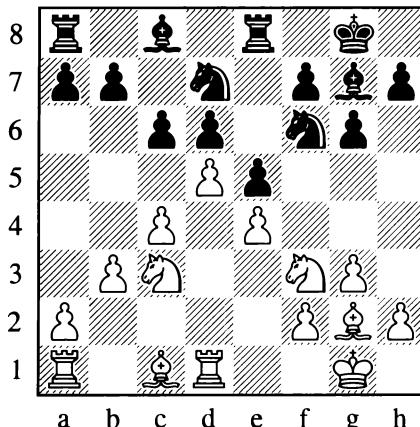
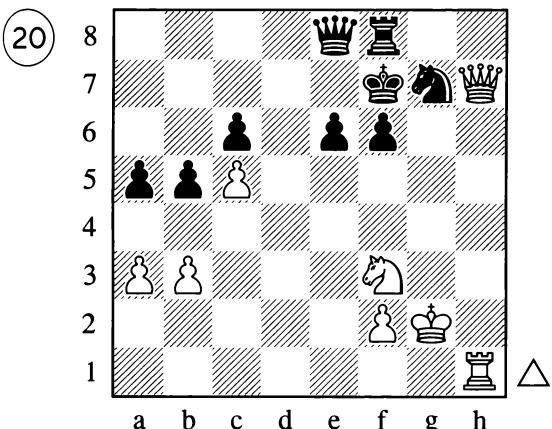
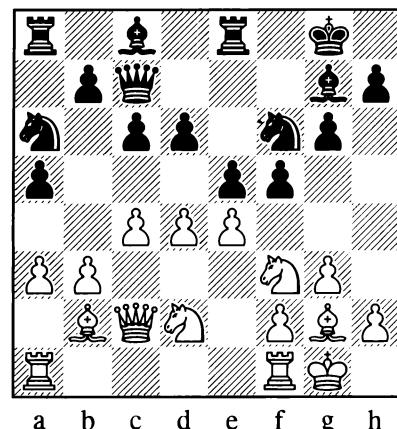
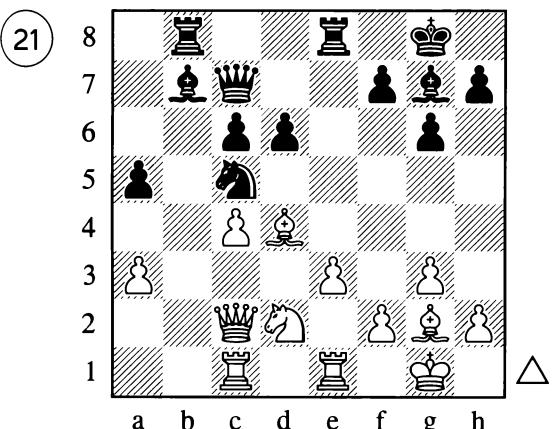
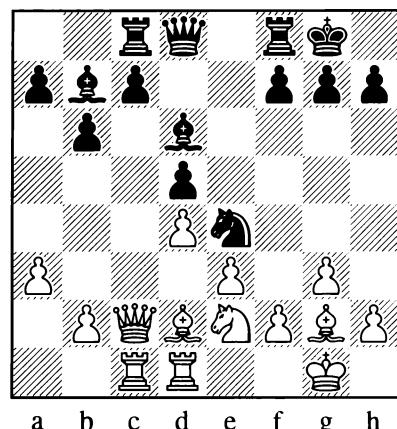
Adams – Bareev, Sarajevo 1999

(15)

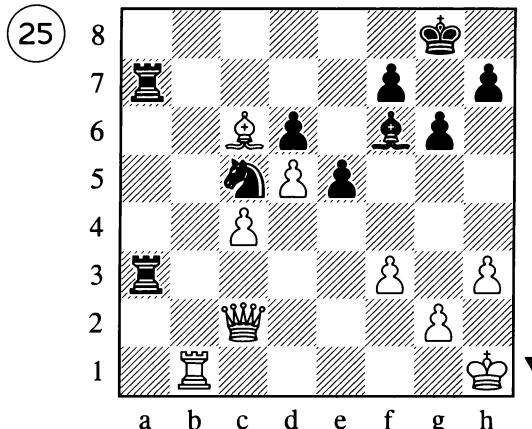


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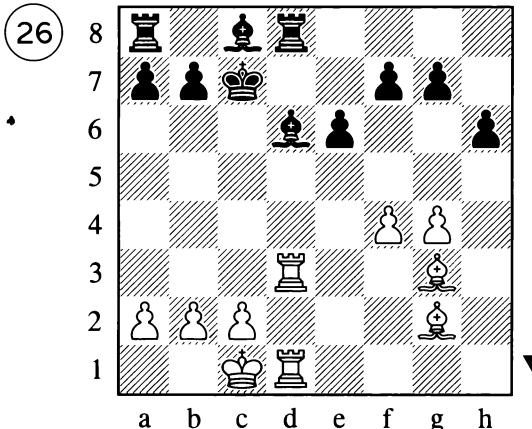


Aronian – Gelfand, Dresden (ol) 2008**Drasko – Trois**, Arco 2010**Carlsen – Topalov**, Morelia/Linares 2007**Bosboom – Timmerman**, Netherlands 1992**Timman – S. Williams**, London 2009**Ponomariov – Kramnik**, Wijk aan Zee 2003

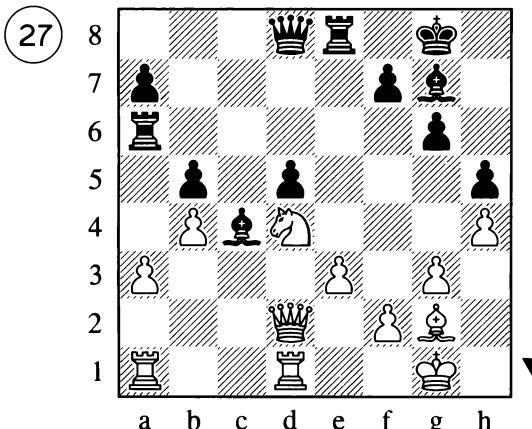
Firat – Yalim, Kemer 2011



Gashimov – Giri, Monaco (blindfold) 2011

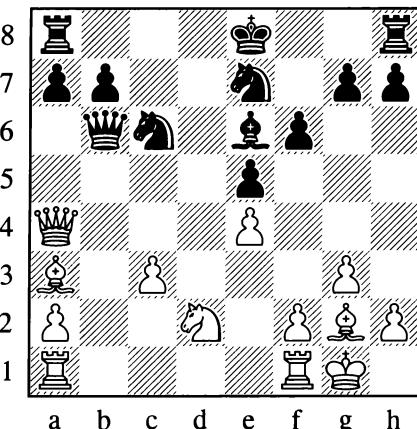


Karpov – Anand, Leon (5) 1999

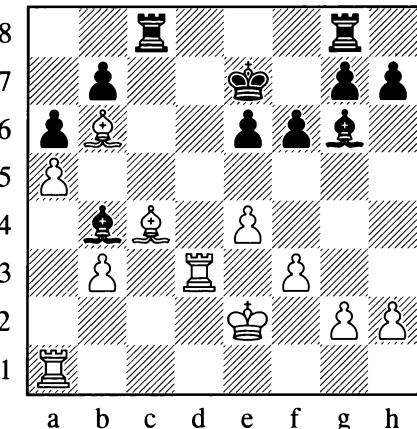


Morozevich – Jenni, Dresden (ol) 2008

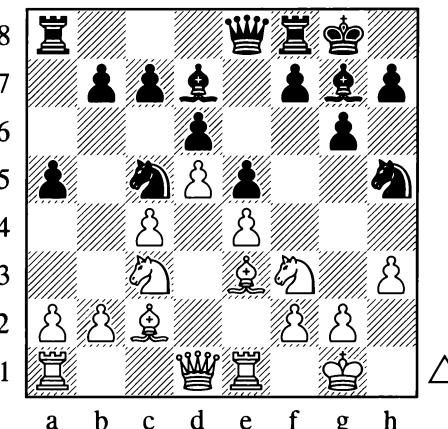
Zhu Chen – Korchnoi, Marbella 1999



Topalov – Kramnik, Elista (6) 2006

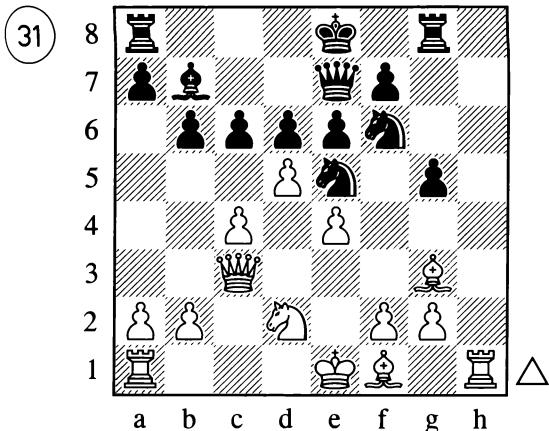


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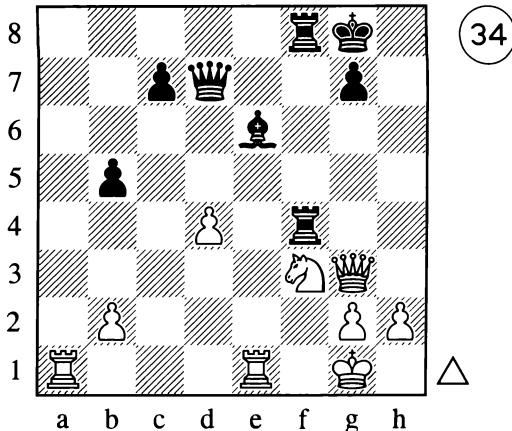
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Gagunashvili – Monroy, Sautron 2008

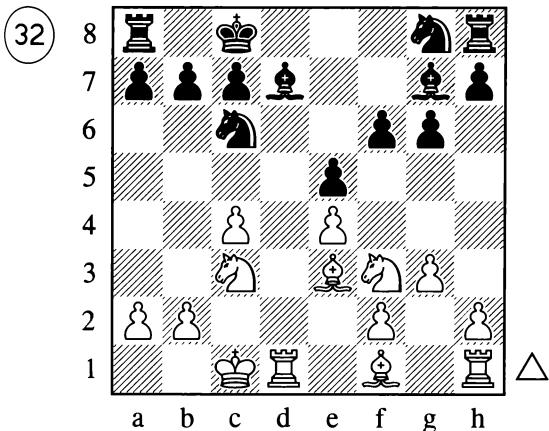


Benkovic – Salami, Martigny 2008

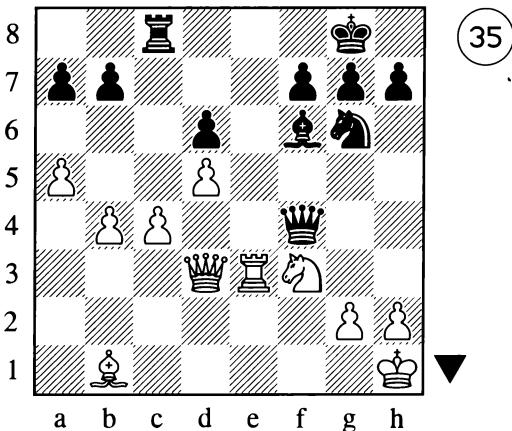
Motylev – S. Ernst, Wijk aan Zee 2012



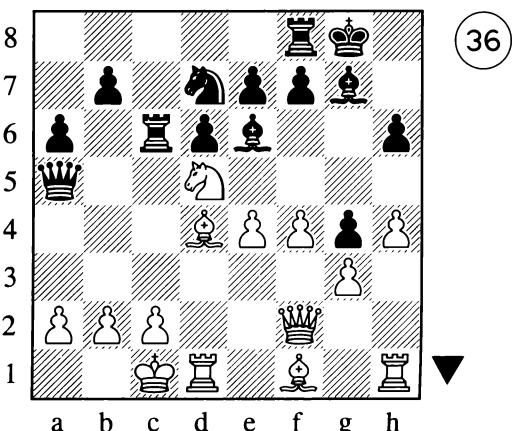
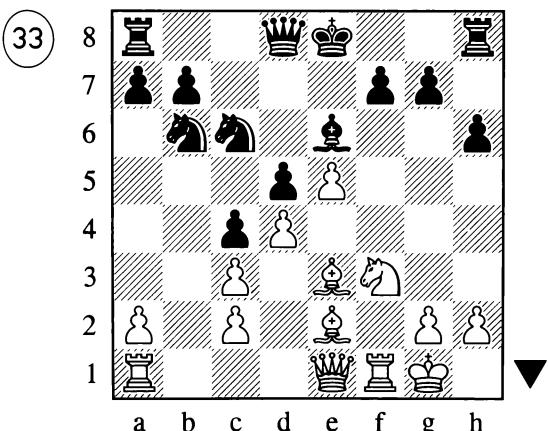
Tiviakov – S. Ernst, Wijk aan Zee 2012



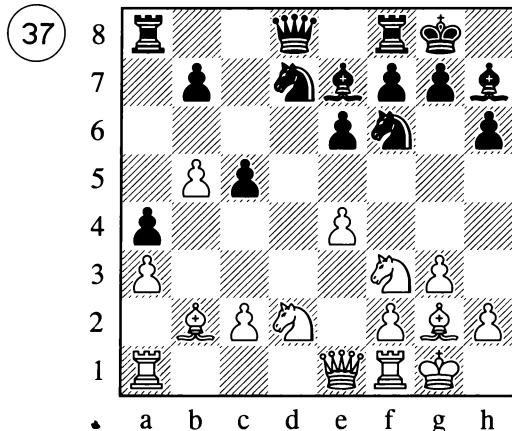
Nohr – P. Andersen, Denmark 2012



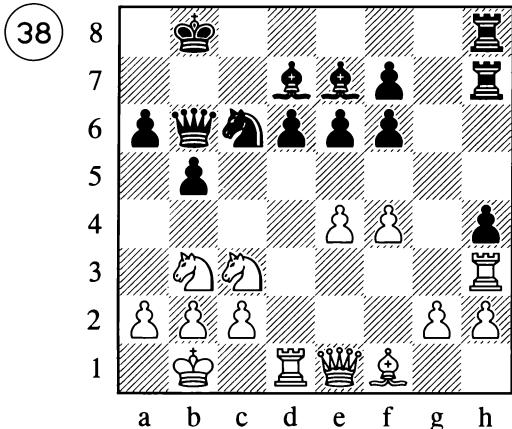
Karjakin – Gelfand, Wijk aan Zee 2012



Chibukhchian – Gvetadze, Jermuk 2011

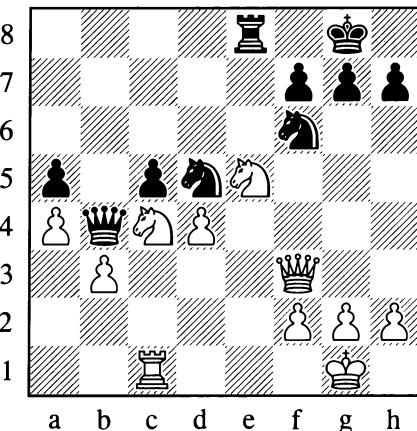


Kulon – Kazimova, Chennai 2011

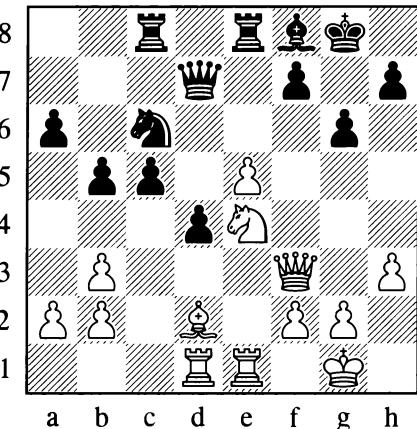


Gogonov – Khismatullin, Moscow 2012

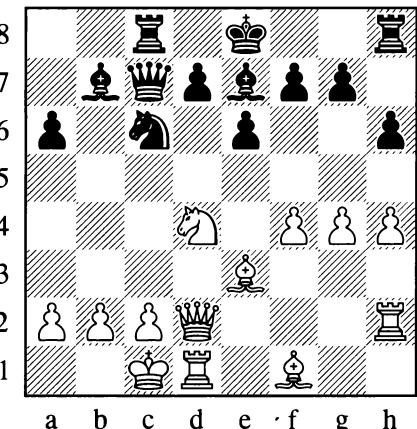
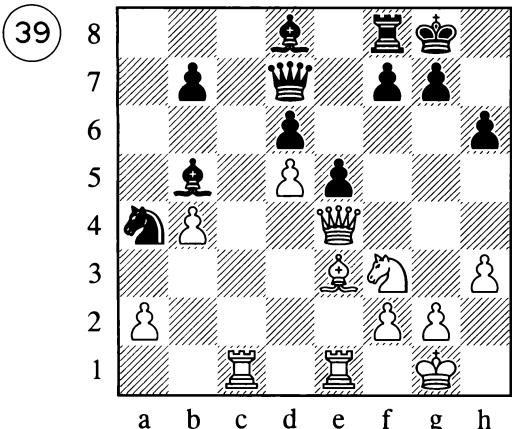
E. Atalik – Krasenkova, Moscow 2012



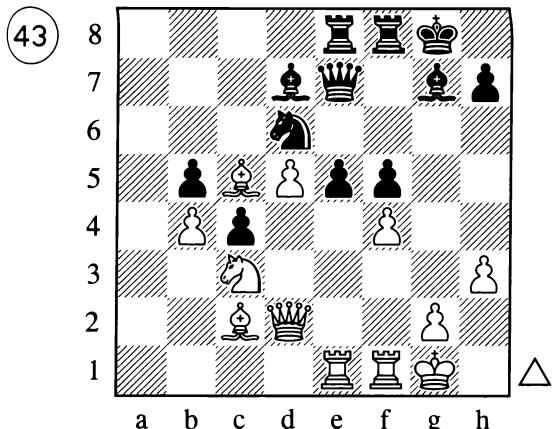
Ziaziulkina – Severina, Moscow 2012



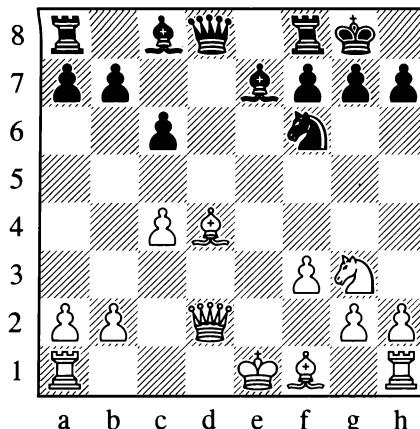
Aagaard – A. Rasmussen, Odense 2011



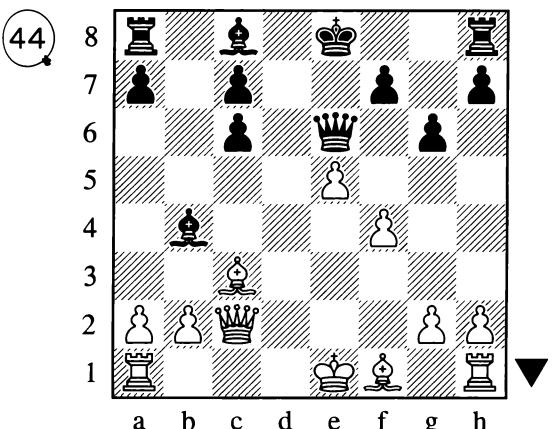
Ding Liren – Ezat, Ningbo 2011



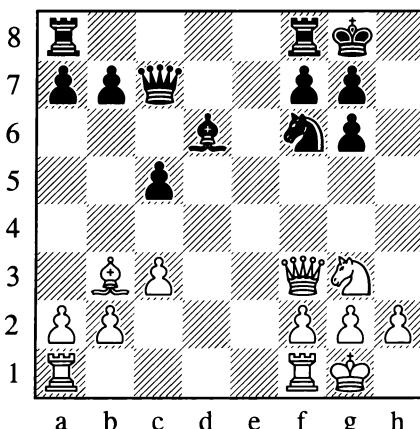
Mecking – Vescovi, Campinas 2011



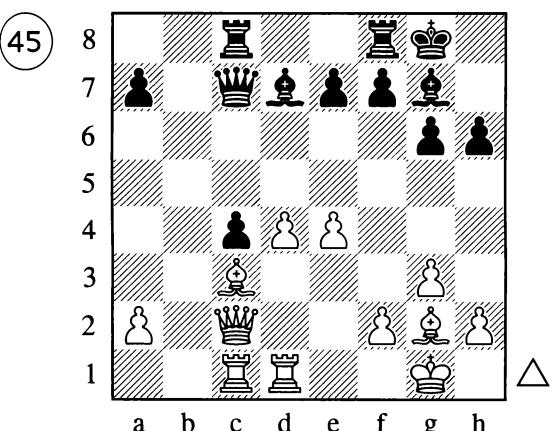
Pavasovic – S. Atalik, Valjevo 2007



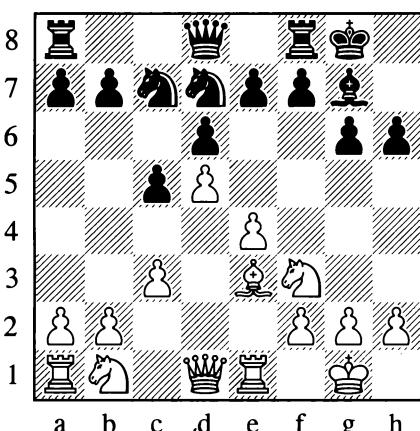
Tiviakov – Lenderman, Hoogeveen 2011



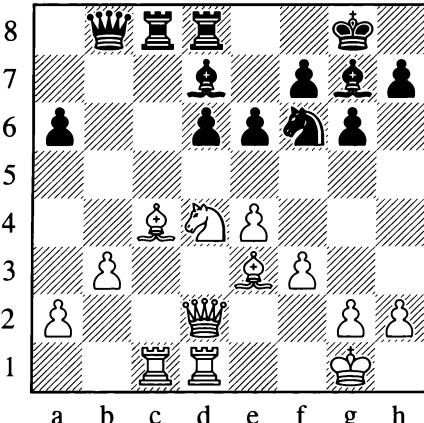
Erdos – Oparin, Trieste 2011



McShane – Bologan, Pamplona 2003

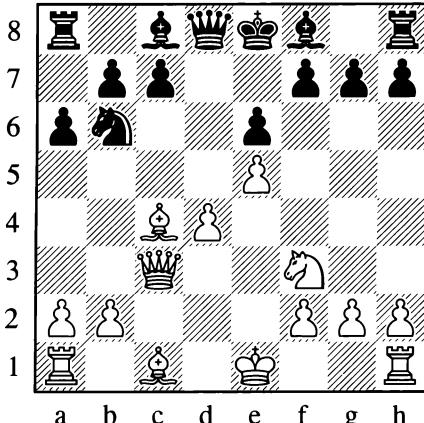


C. Pedersen – Aagaard, Helsingør 2012



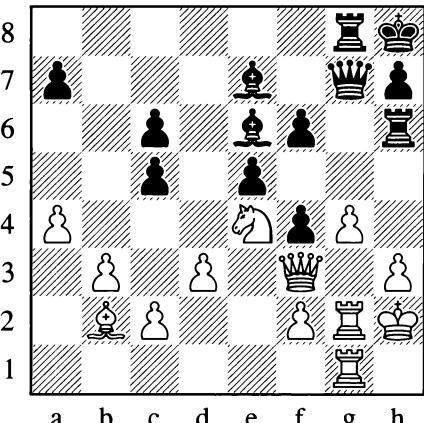
49

Ivanchuk – Eljanov, Foros 2008



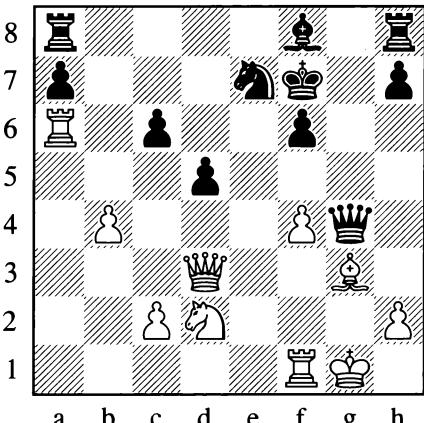
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McShane – Radjabov, Moscow 2012



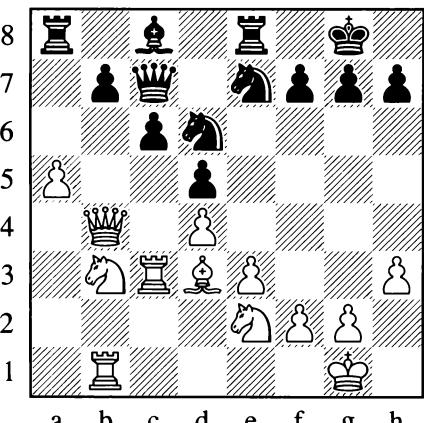
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Reinderman – Vallejo Pons, Wijk aan Zee 2009



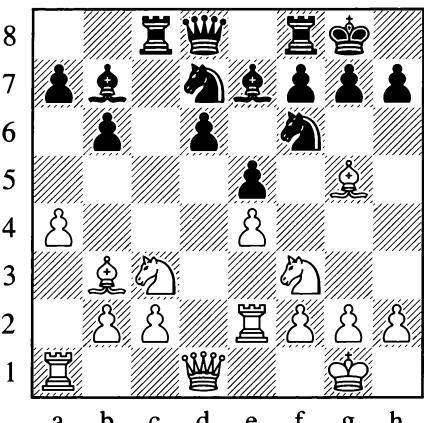
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Karpov – Kharitonov, Moscow 1988



51

Balogh – Azmaiparashvili, Beijing 2008

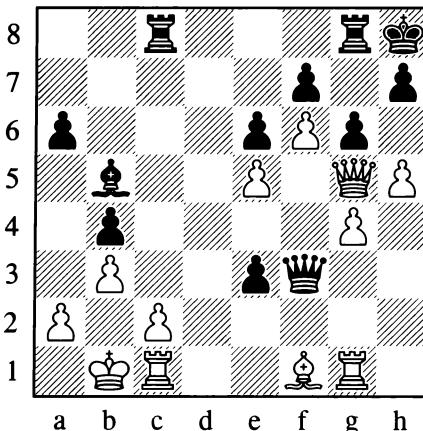


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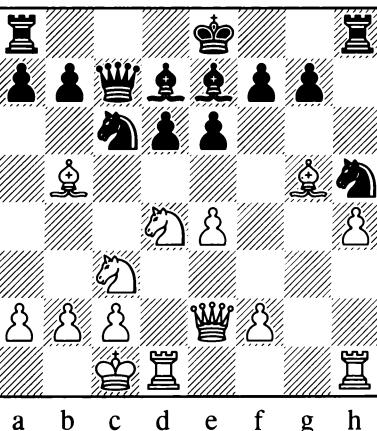
Van Delft – Polaczek, Netherlands 2008

Shirov – Salov, Buenos Aires 1994

55



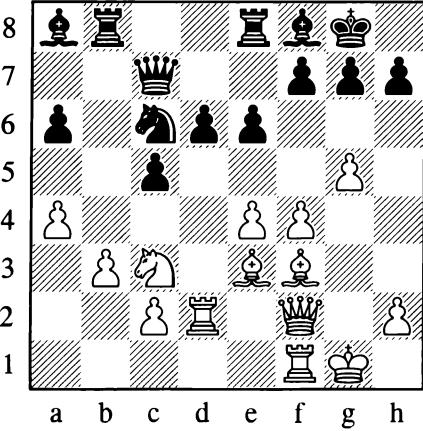
Boey – Jansa, Arvier 2006

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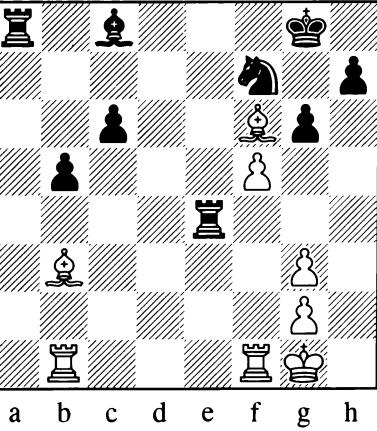
Svidler – Karjakin, Baku 2008

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56



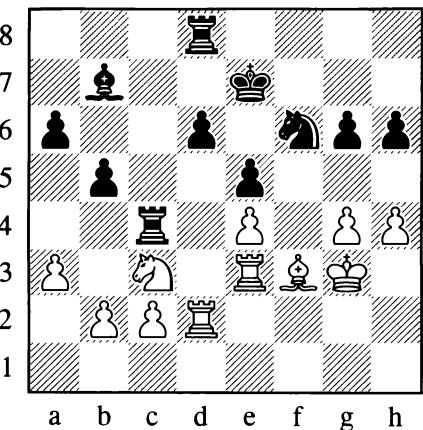
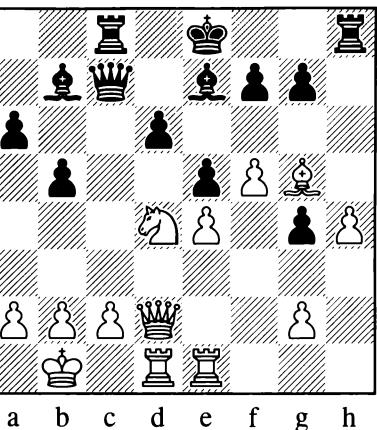
Santiago – Diamant, Rio de Janeiro 2007

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Spitz – Chambers, e-mail 2002

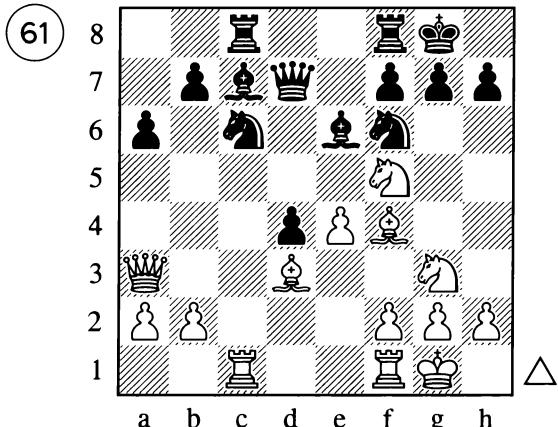
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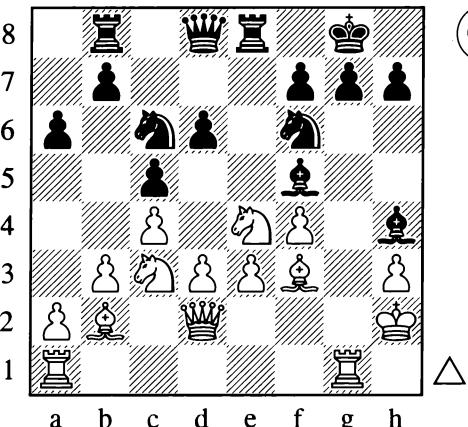
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I. Sokolov – Glud, Helsingør 2012

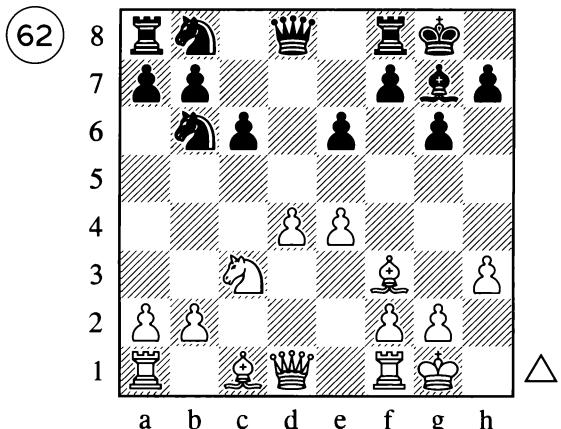


Rowson – Motwani, Edinburgh 1999

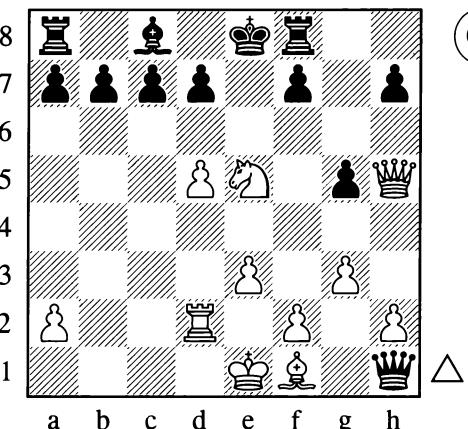
Bronstein – G. Kuzmin, USSR (ch) 1972



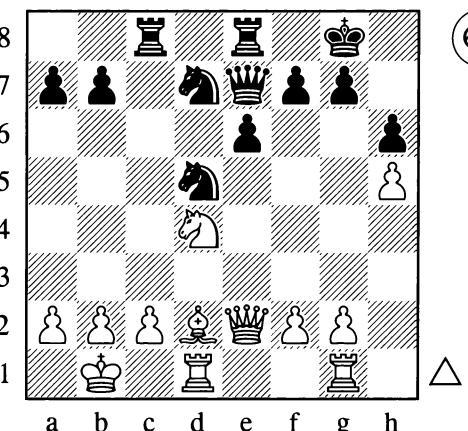
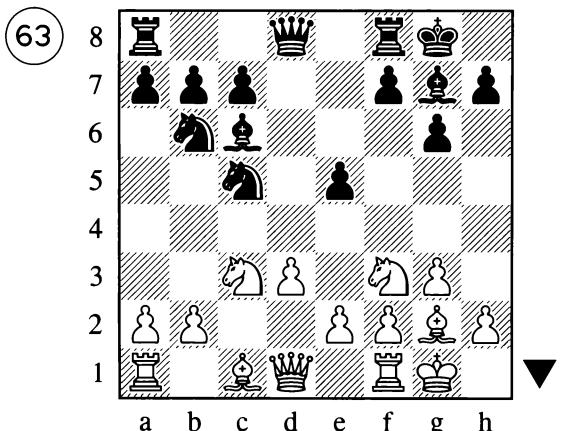
Gheorghiu – Joita, Romania 1972



W. Schmidt – Portisch, Skopje (ol) 1972



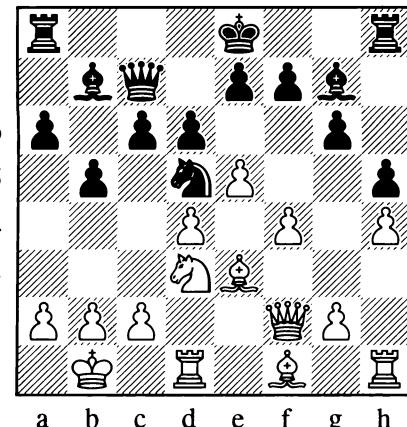
E. Berg – Hillarp Persson, Lund 2010



E. Berg – Almeida Quintana, Montcada 2009

Svidler – Karjakin, Wijk aan Zee 2007

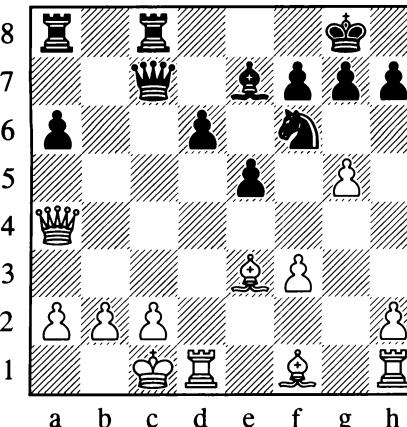
67



Dubov – Potkin, Tyumen 2012



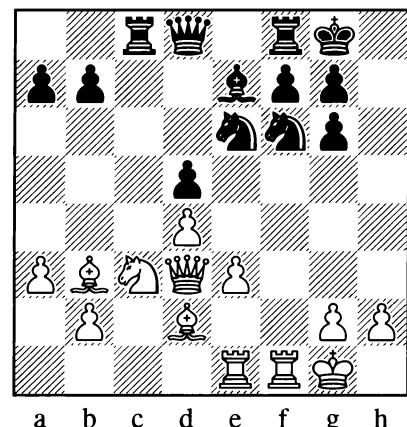
70



Karjakin – Van Wely, Foros 2007



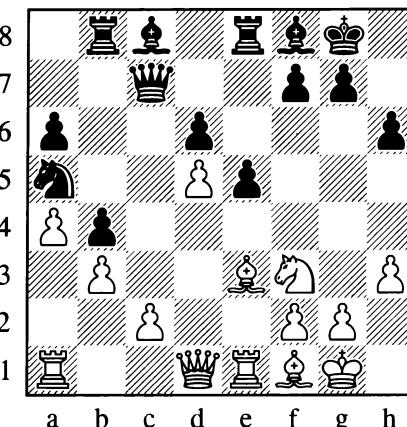
68



Carlsen – Adams, Baku 2008



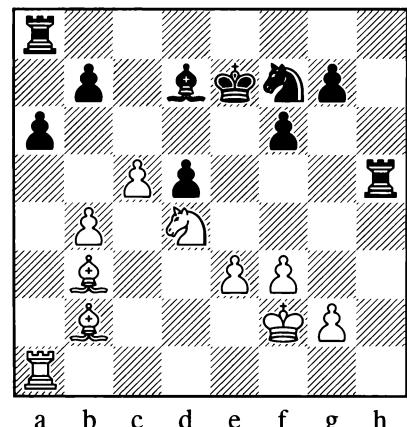
71



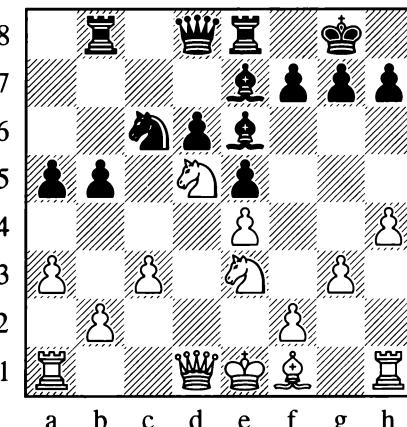
Karjakin – Shirov, Heraklio 2007



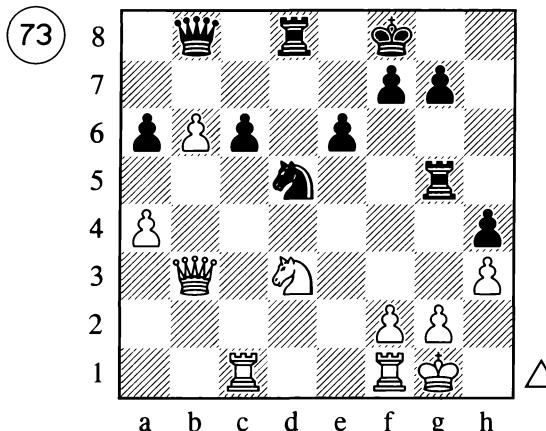
69



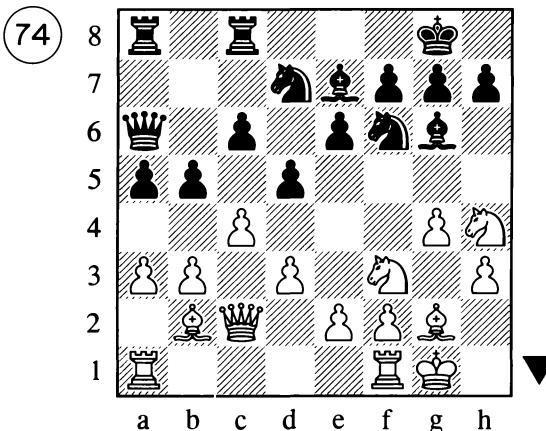
72



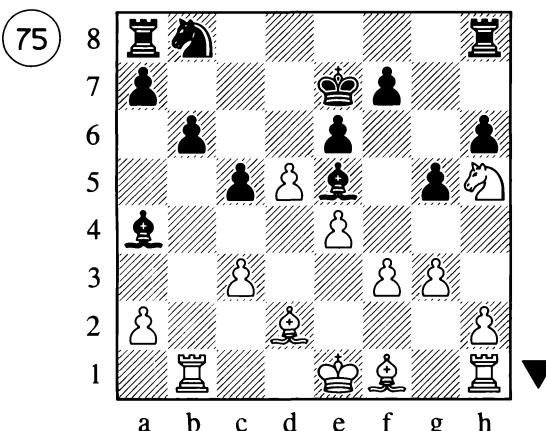
Karjakin – Navara, Khanty-Mansiysk 2009



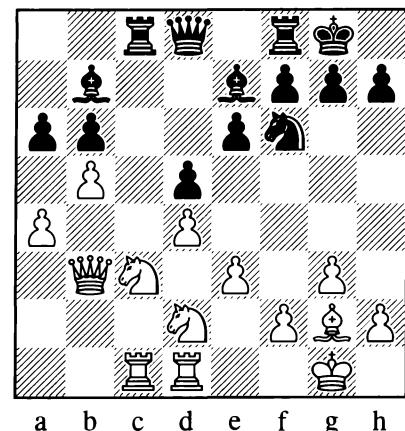
Gelfand – Karjakin, Nice (blindfold) 2008



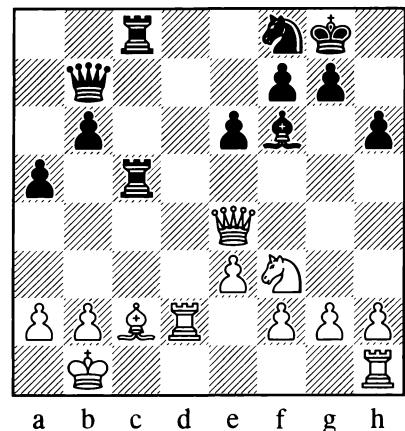
Carlsen – Svidler, Kallithea 2008



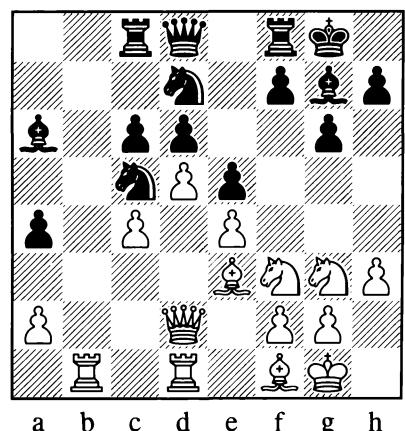
Pelletier – Sasikiran, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010



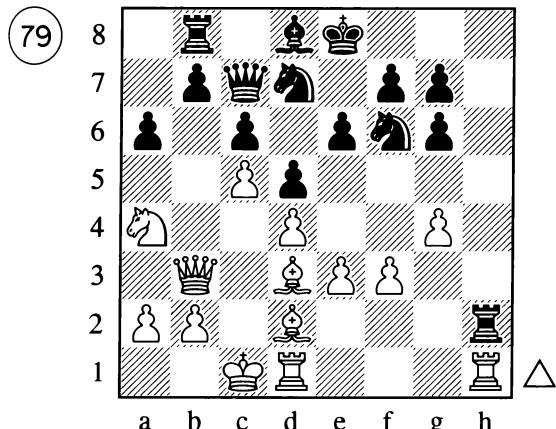
Mamedyarov – Short, Dresden (ol) 2008



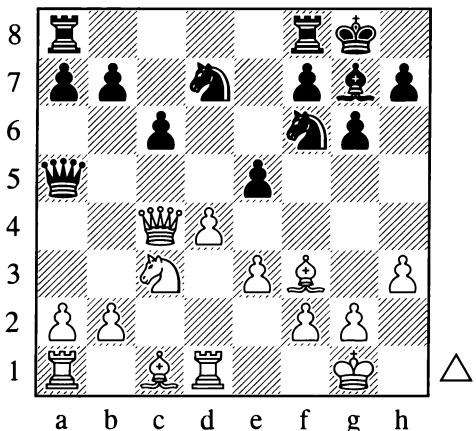
Vachier-Lagrave – Harikrishna, Dresden (ol) 2008



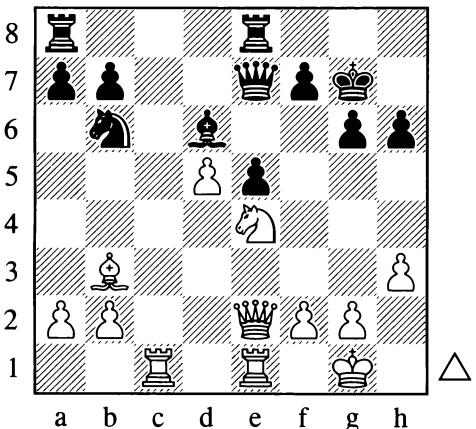
Wang Yue – Eljanov, Astrakhan 2010



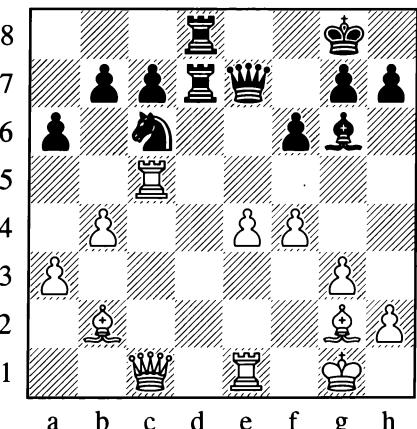
Eljanov – Smeets, Germany 2011



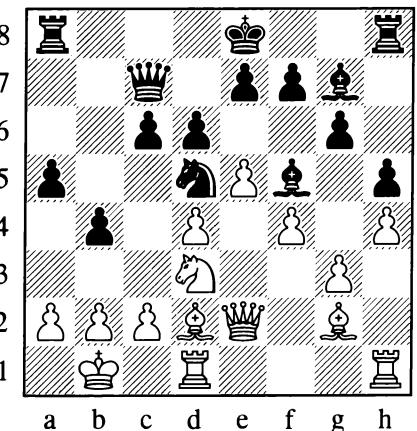
Topalov – Aronian, Linares 2010



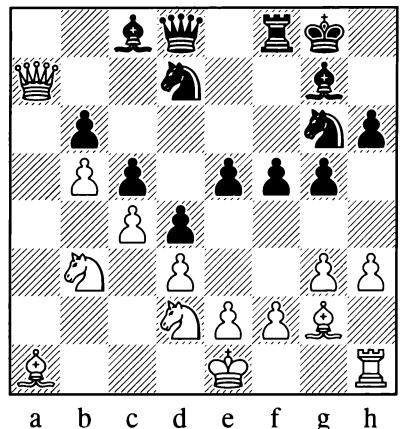
Erdos – Istratescu, Patras 2012



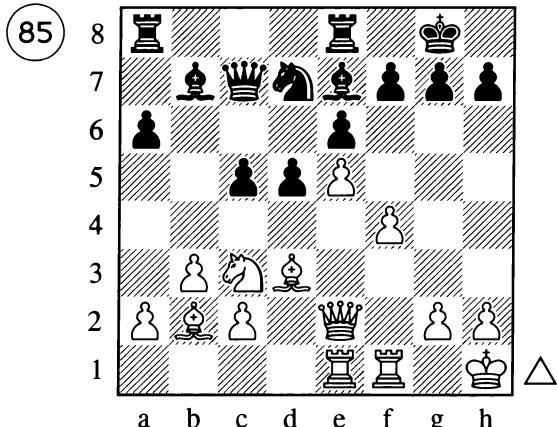
E. Berg – Almeida Quintana, Montcada 2009



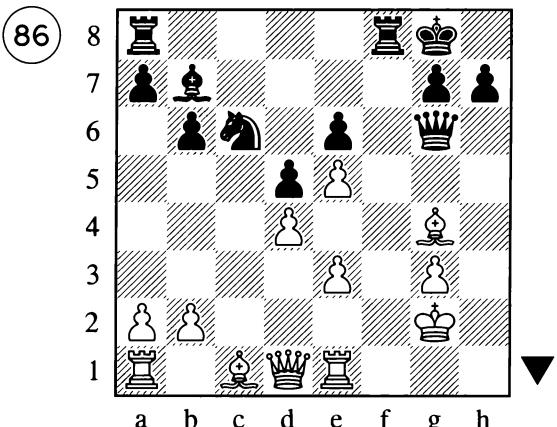
Koukoufikis – Berelowitsch, Patras 2012



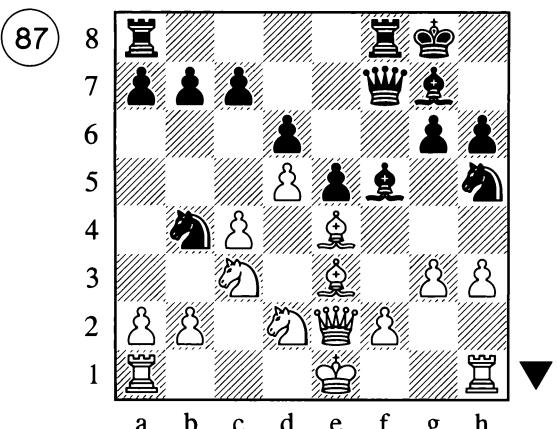
Zawadzka – Papadopoulou, Patras 2012



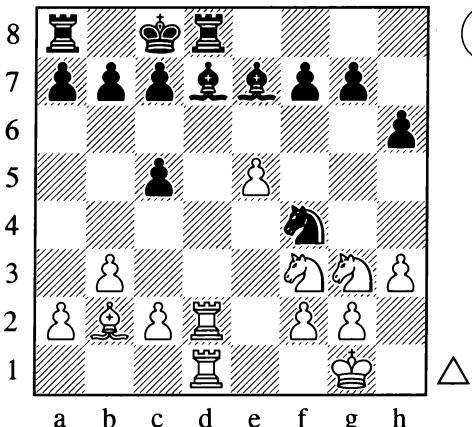
Robertson – Aagaard, Grangemouth 2005



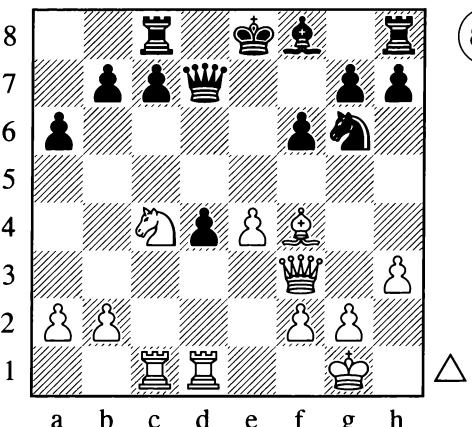
Arnaudov – S. Novikov, Plovdiv 2008



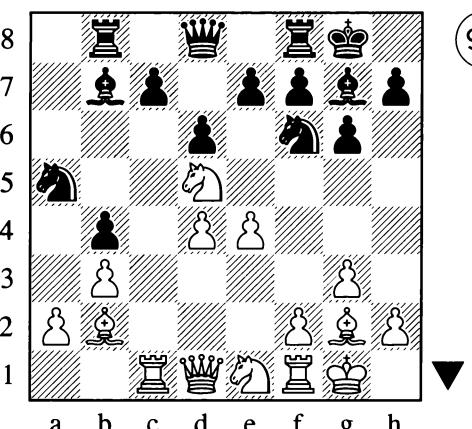
Sjugirov – Sakaev, Novokuznetsk 2008

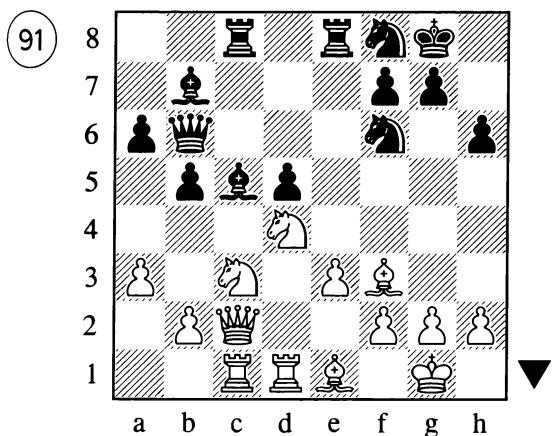
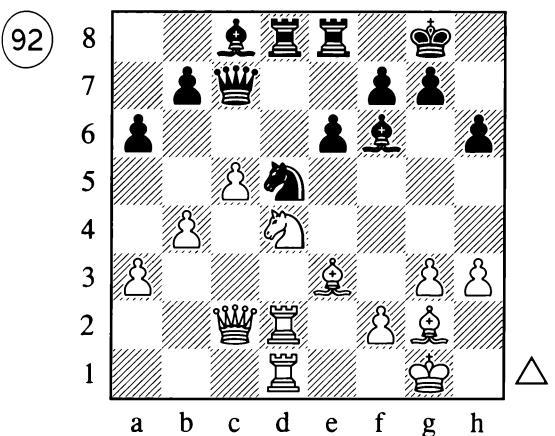
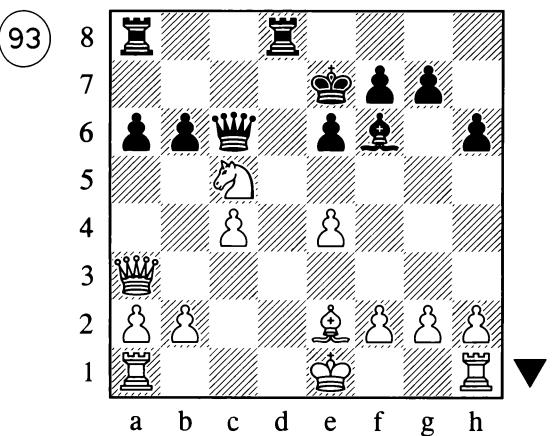
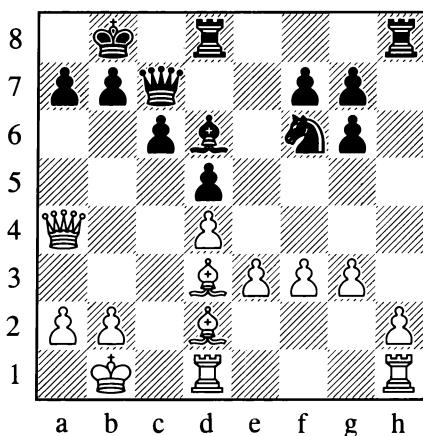
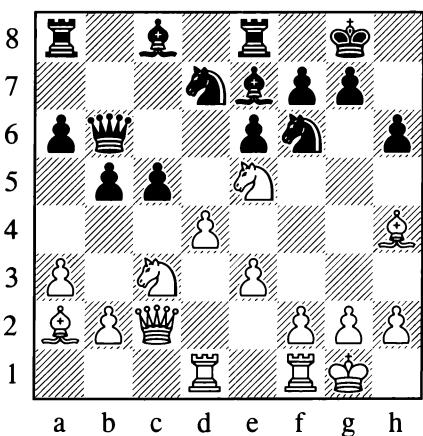
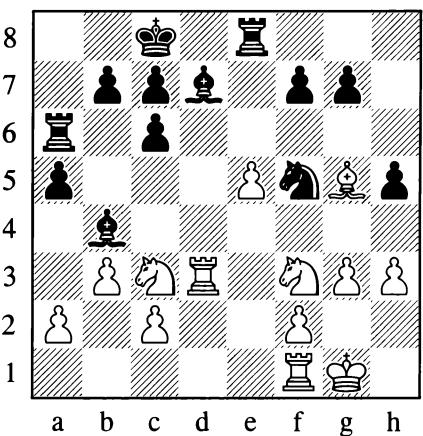


Swinkels – Ragger, Germany 2008

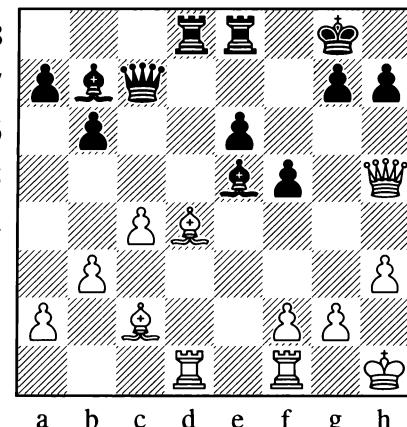


Nyzhnyk – A. Vovk, Konya 2011



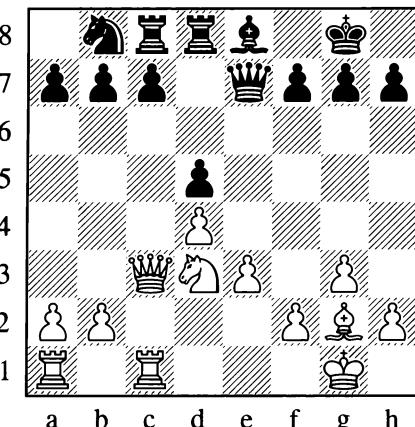
Huzman – Aronian, Plovdiv 2010**Ivanchuk – Nogueiras**, Yucatan 2004**Jobava – Ivanchuk**, Havana 2005**Nyback – I. Schneider**, Germany 2010**Dreev – Chirila**, Richardson 2010**Shirov – Kramnik**, Monaco (rapid) 2001

E. Paehtz – Zawadzka, Antakya (1.3) 2010



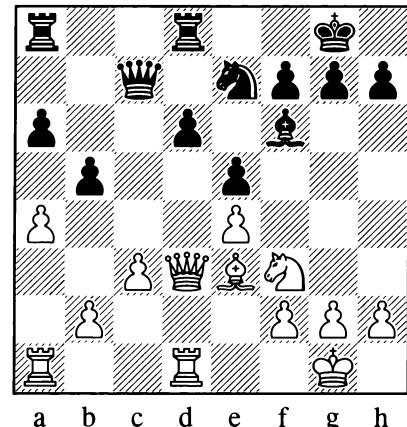
97

P.H. Nielsen – Miezis, Copenhagen 2004



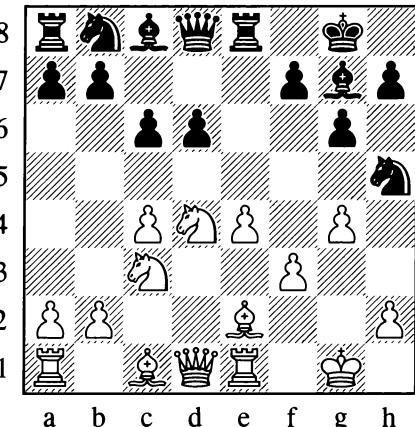
100

Karjakin – Nepomniachtchi, Moscow 2010



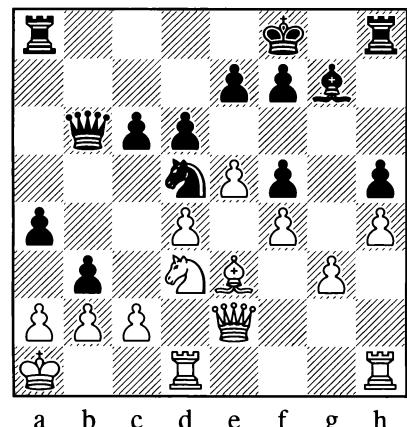
98

Michalik – Zhrebukh, Groningen 2011



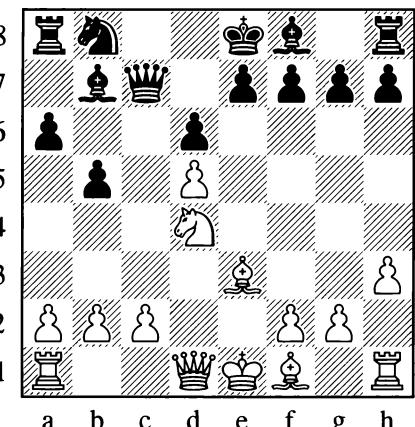
101

E. Berg – Almeida Quintana, Montcada 2009



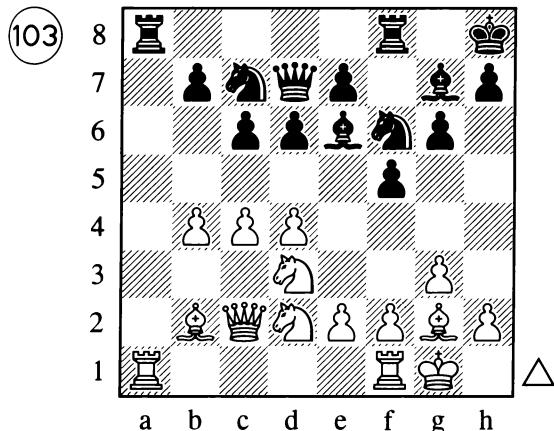
99

Shyam – Edouard, Hastings 2012

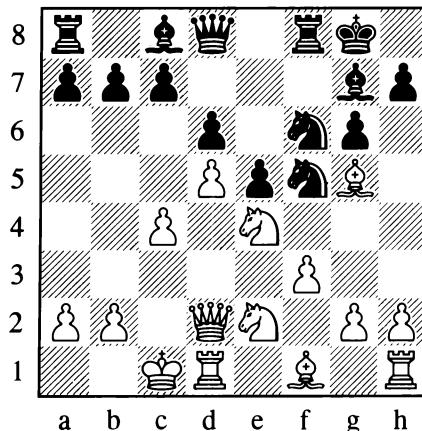


102

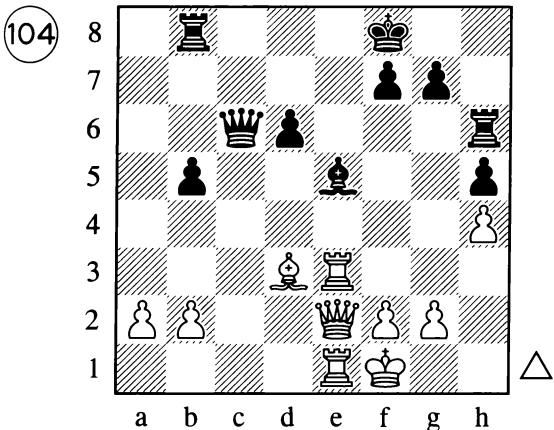
Lautier – M. Gurevich, Clichy 2001



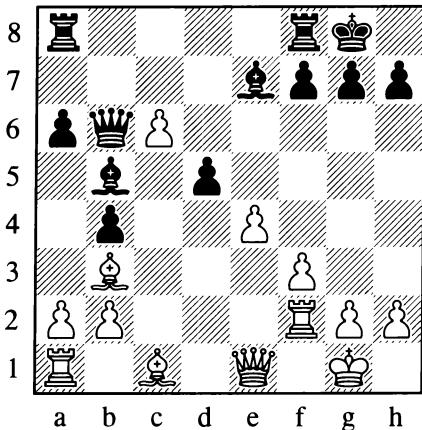
Carosso – Porter, Dublin 2008



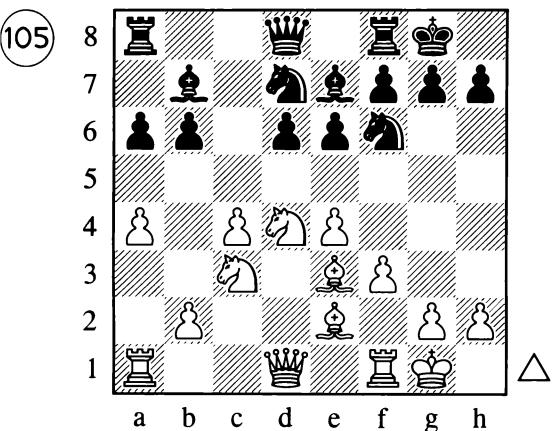
Motylev – Shariyazdanov, Tomsk 2004



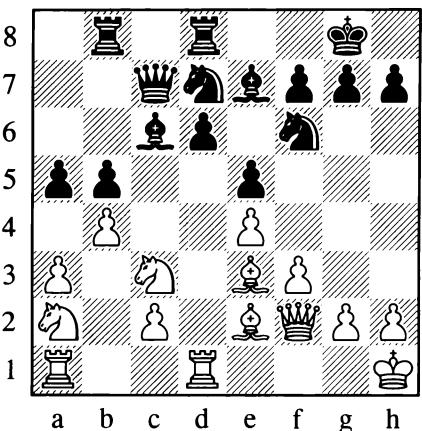
Ivanchuk – Hübner, Munich 1994



Short – Cvitan, Leon 2001

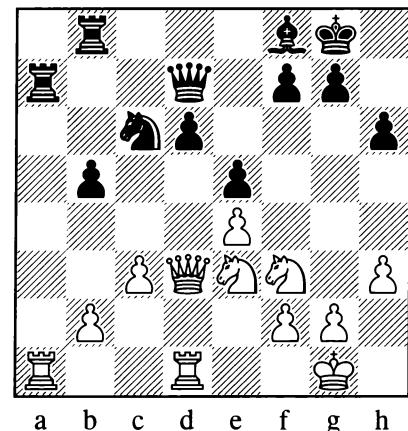


Anand – Gelfand, Monte Carlo (rapid) 1999



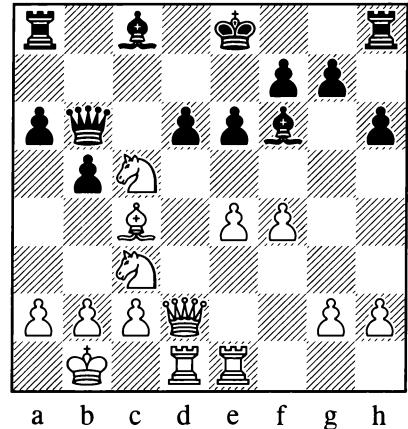
Karjakin – Beliavsky, Amsterdam 2007

(109)



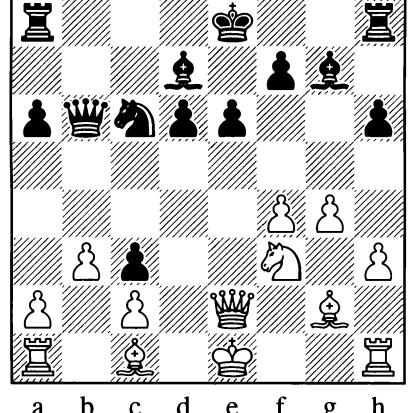
Van Kampen – Andriasian, Groningen 2010

(110)



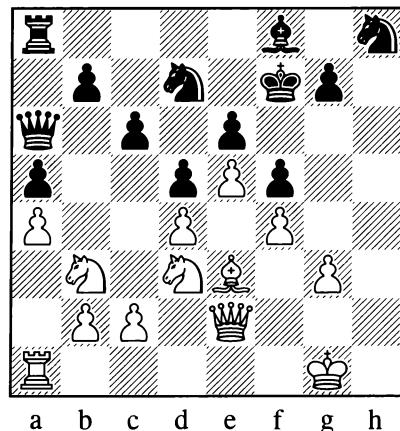
Savon – Razuvaev, Palma de Mallorca 1989

(111)



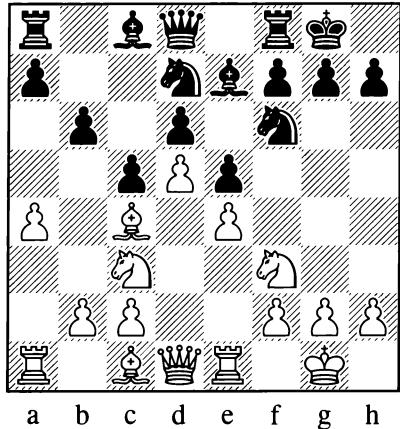
Wang Hao – Shengelia, Rogaska Slatina 2011

(112)



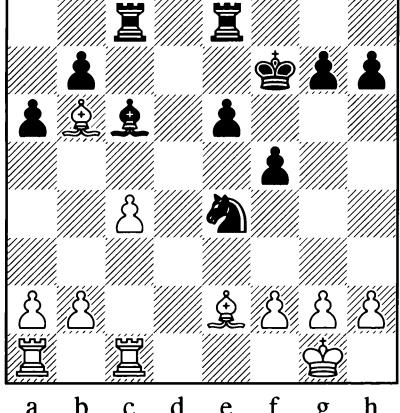
Leko – Campora, Buenos Aires 1994

(113)

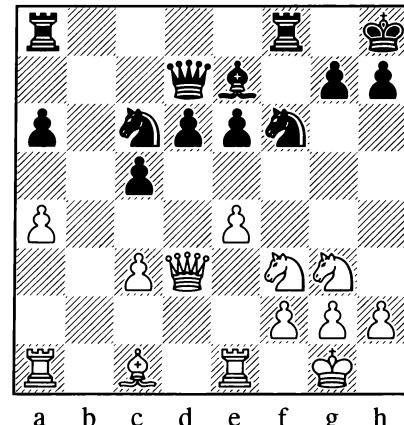


Aagaard – Bjerring, Denmark 2004

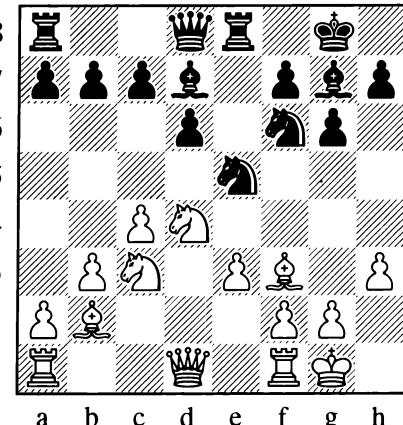
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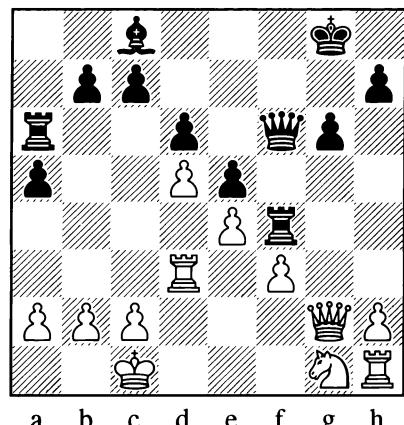
Leko – Grischuk, Mexico City 2007



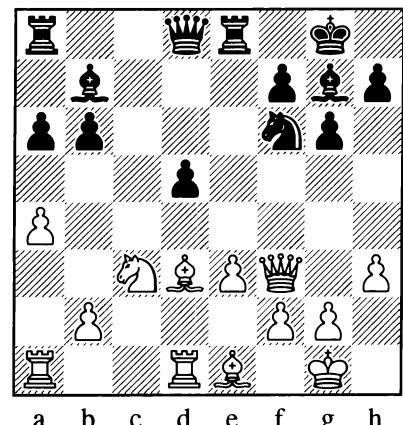
Muhic – Mlacnik, Bled 2008



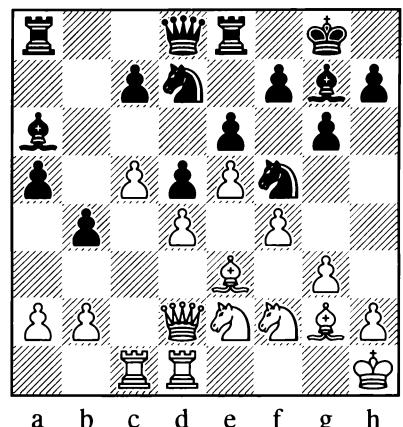
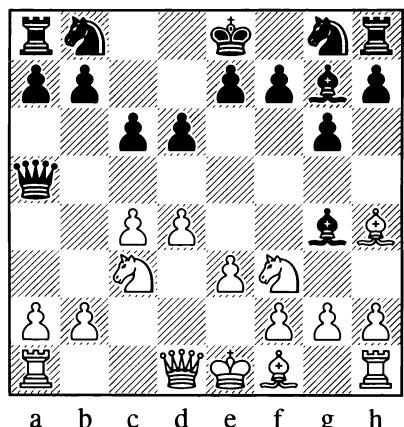
Aronian – Anand, Moscow 2011



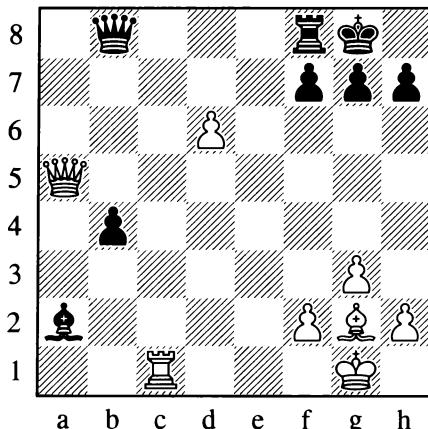
Blomqvist – Howell, Stockholm 2006



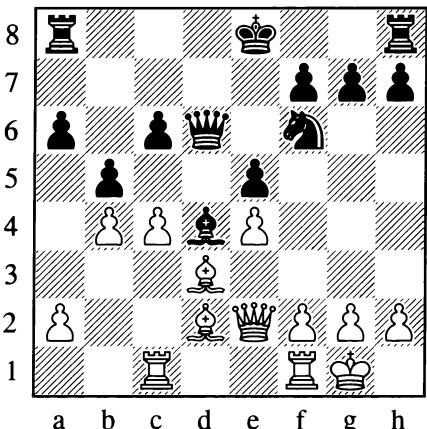
Vitiugov – Ganguly, Khanty-Mansiysk (ol) 2010



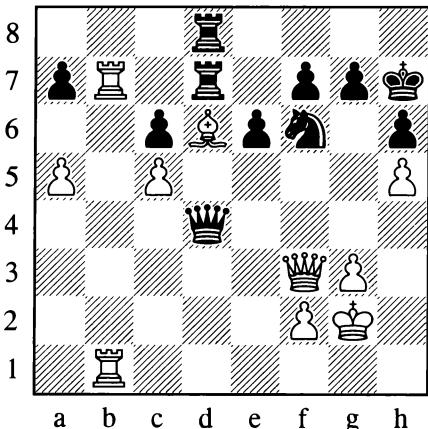
P.H. Nielsen – Ivanchuk, Beijing 2011



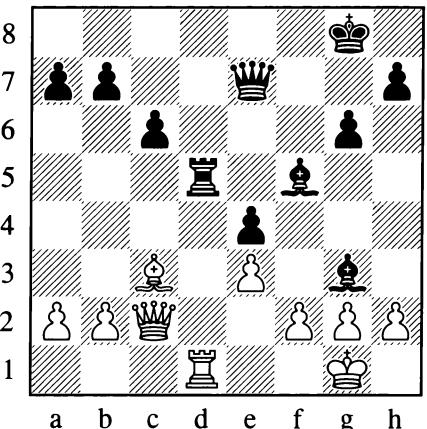
Leko – Khalifman, Budapest (rapid) 2000



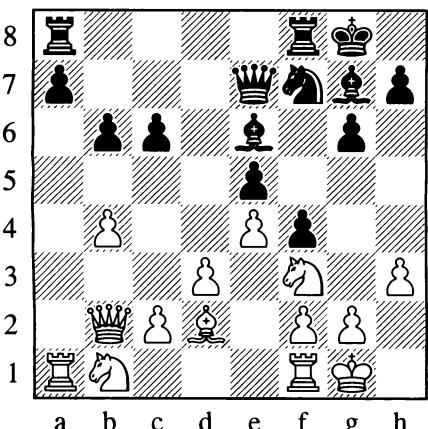
Muzychuk – Stefanova, Beijing (rapid) 2011



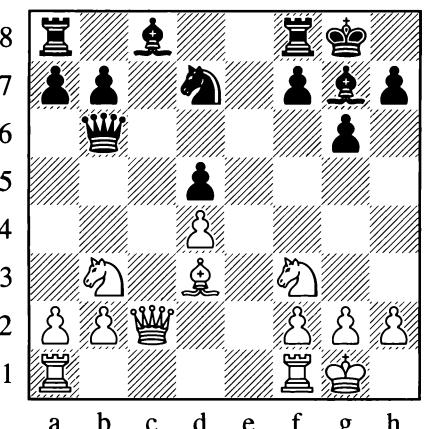
Seirawan – Tal, Montpellier 1985



Cherniaev – Kotronias, Hastings 2003

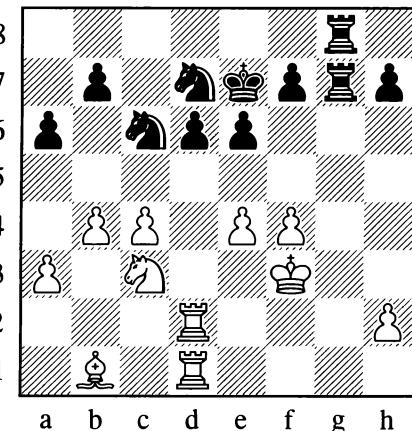


Sedlak – Gustafsson, Aix-les-Bains 2011



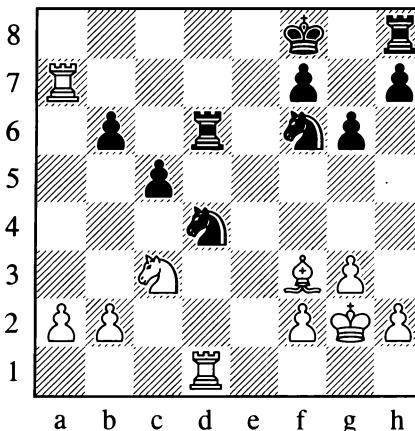
A. Kristjansson – Nataf, Reykjavik 2008

(127)



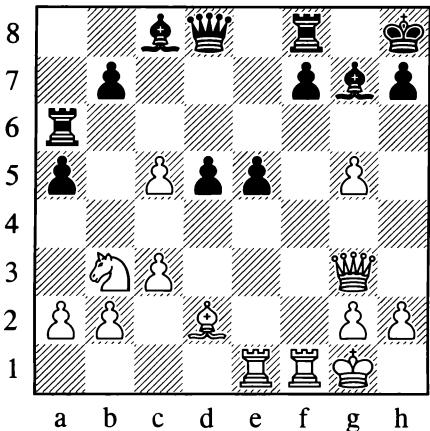
Bareev – J. Polgar, Elista (2) 2007

(130)



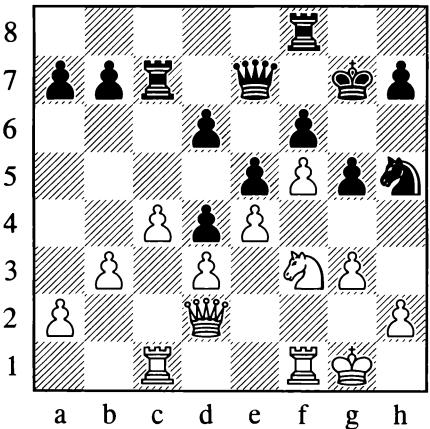
Berelowitsch – Madan, Coulsdon 2008

(128)



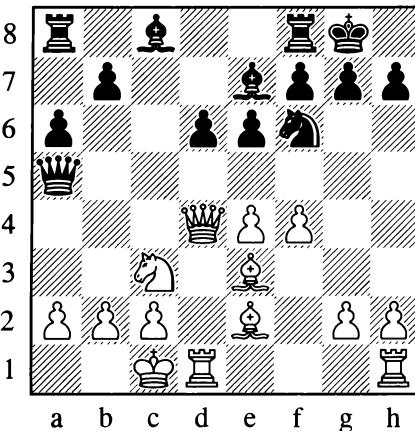
Paichadze – Mamedov, Baku 2007

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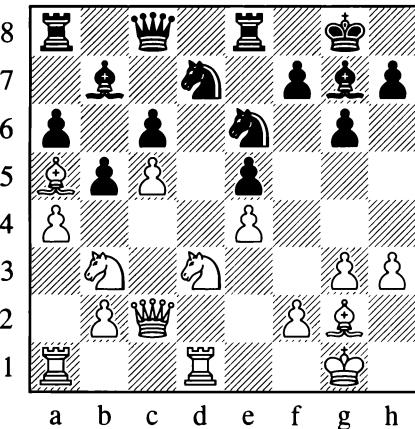
Anand – Kamsky, Las Palmas (11) 1995

(131)

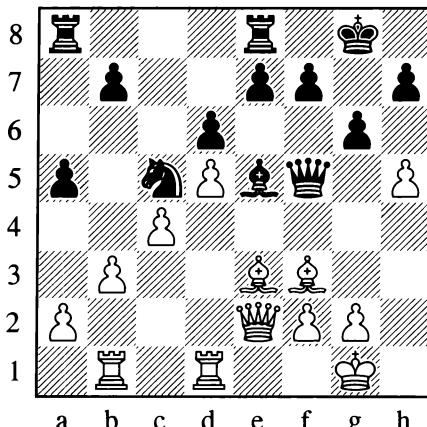


Korchnoi – Penrose, Palma de Mallorca 1969

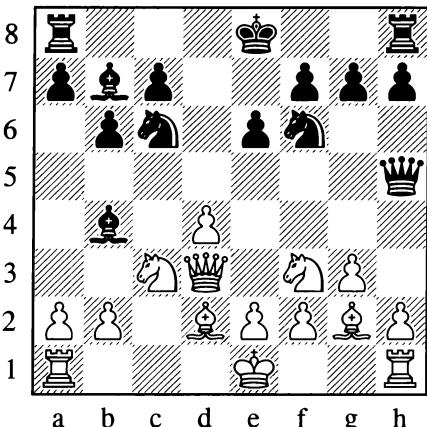
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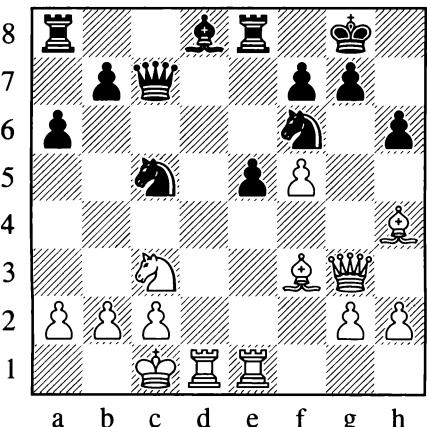
Ivanchuk – Anand, Buenos Aires 1994



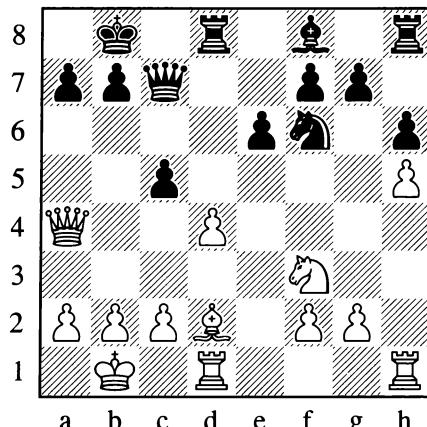
Van Wely – Leko, Moscow 2004



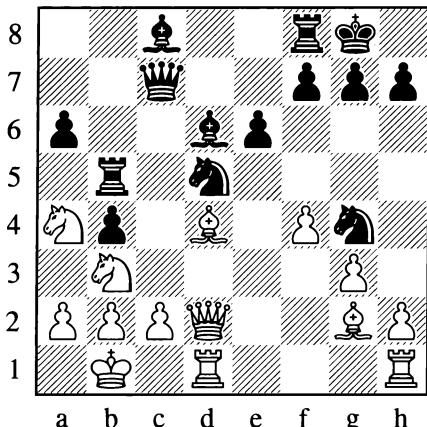
Stellwagen – Kempinski, Germany 2011



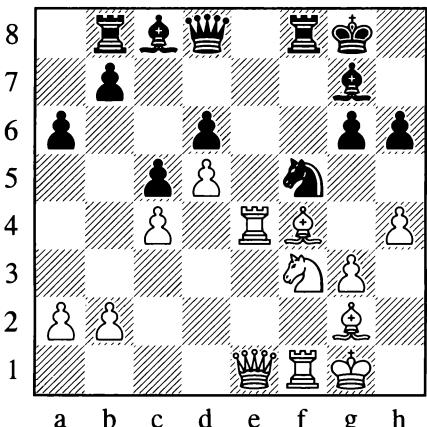
Van der Wiel – Portisch, Budapest 1986



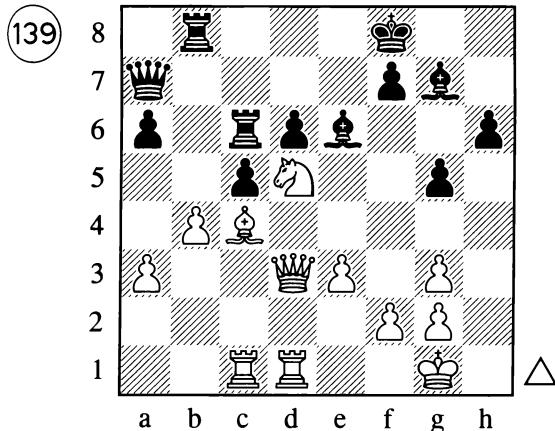
Adams – Razuvayev, London 1997



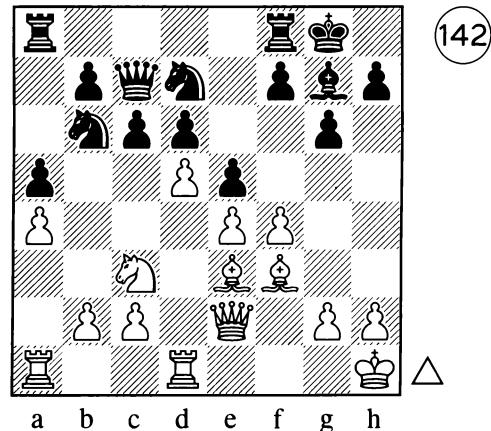
Bu Xiangzhi – Nijboer (after 21...c7-c5)



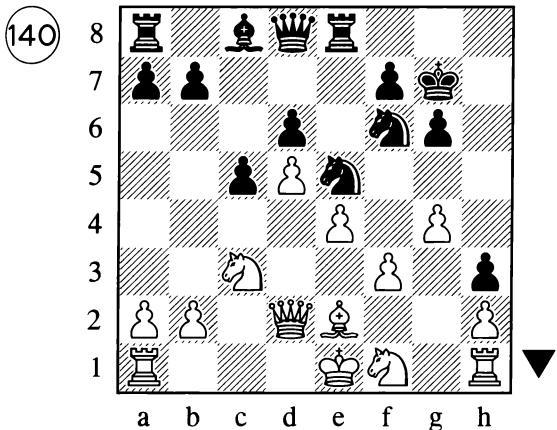
Hillarp Persson – Stellwagen, Malmo 2006 **Morovic Fernandez – Seirawan** (after 16...e7-e5)



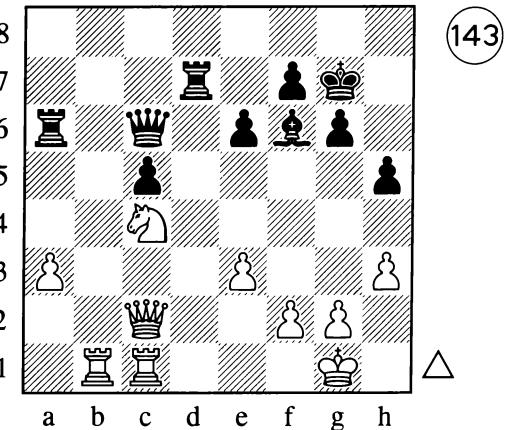
Li Shilong – Zhao Jun, Xinghua Jiangsu 2011



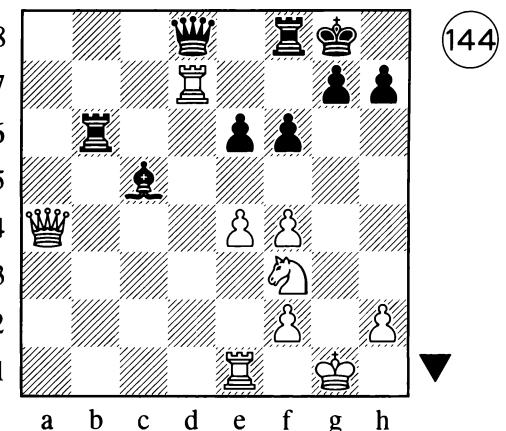
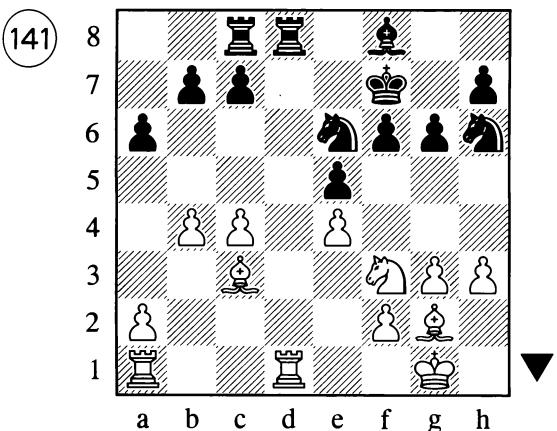
Gheorghiu – Rajkovic, Lone Pine 1980



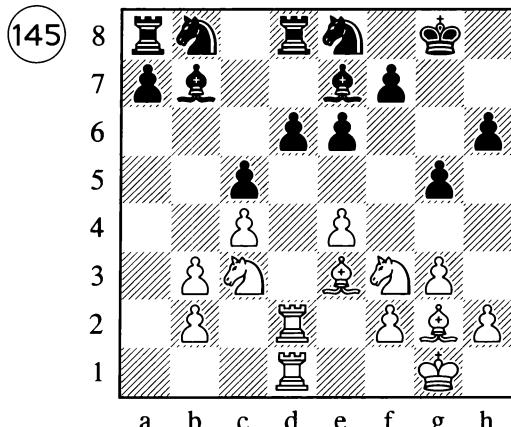
Morrison – Rowson, Edinburgh 1999



Speelman – Short, London 1980

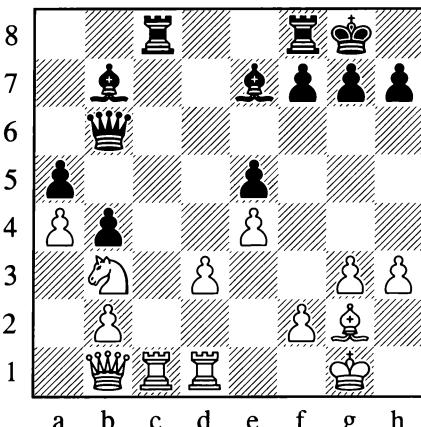


Nyzhnyk – Werle, Groningen 2010

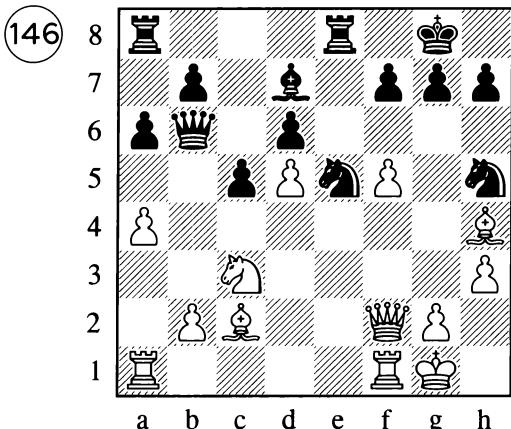


Zhu Chen – Koneru, Doha 2011

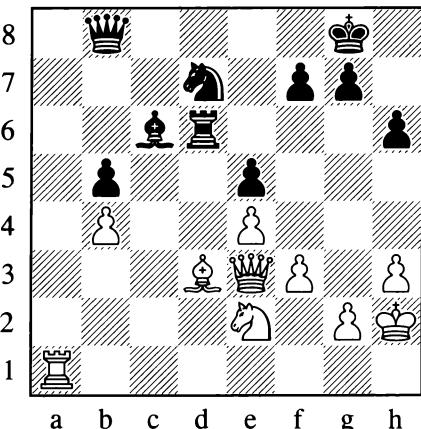
Tikkanen – Leko, Malmo 2012



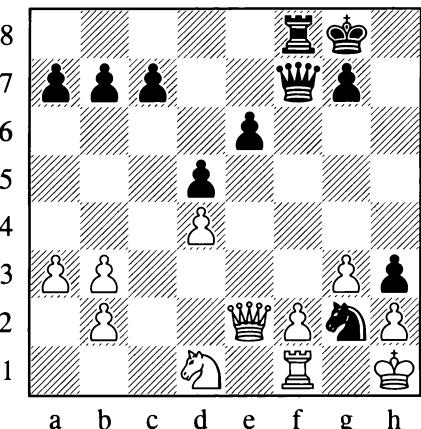
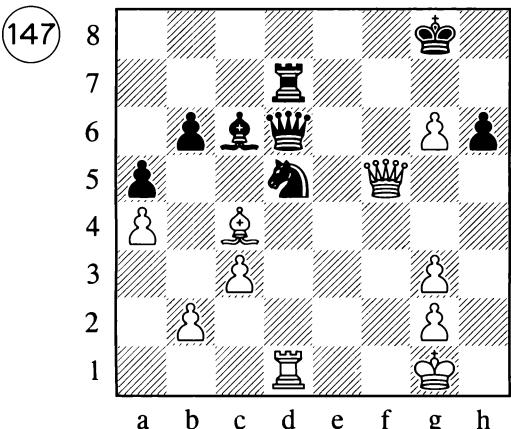
Karjakin – Inarkiev, Baku 2008



Shaw – Meier, Liverpool 2008



Roussel-Roozmon – Nakamura, Montreal 2008



Chapter 5

Solutions

When John Shaw and I were putting together the *Quality Chess Puzzle Book* (available on our website!), we looked through the fifty or so books on tactics that we have in the company library. In the end we decided that the best way to present the solutions to the puzzles was to have them overleaf. We used this system again in *Chess Tactics from Scratch* and *Grandmaster Preparation – Calculation*. It is by far my favourite way of presenting the solutions, but it requires that they are relatively short; or that you have fewer than six puzzles on each page. If you have very long solutions, which tends to happen when things are complicated, then you may be able to fit six solutions over two to three pages, as I did in the last of the works mentioned above. But once you have solutions that are more than a full page long, this system more or less collapses.

So in this book we have returned to a less ideal system, which is however practicable. In the previous chapter you had the exercises; in this one you have the solutions. I suggest that you find an additional bookmark!

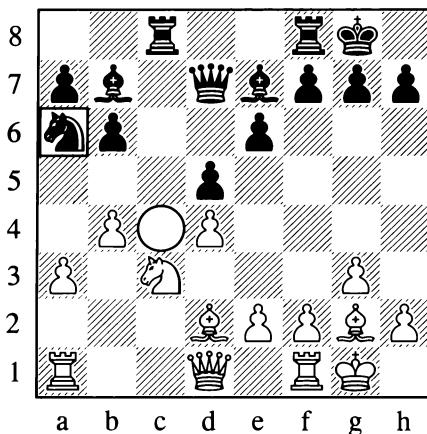
In some of the diagrams in this chapter I have added a few graphics to show my approach to the positions. They illustrate what I think is important. They should not be seen as the final say, only as gentle guidance.

The same is the case with the solutions. In the process of selecting the 222 exercises for this book, I have been through far more than a thousand potential positions, which I initially believed would make good exercises; but many turned out to be unconvincing and simply unsuitable as exercises. This does not mean that I am necessarily right in all cases. There will be positions where there is more than one way to play. I have indicated what I think is the best way to play and put in a lot of work to make sure that I am right. But some people might disagree with me. That is no problem; I would just advise you to consider the arguments for my solution. You may even find that you disagree with me quite often, but again this is not a problem, as long as you objectively analyse the position.

I hope you have enjoyed the exercises and solved more than you believed possible!

1. Wislez – Tiviakov

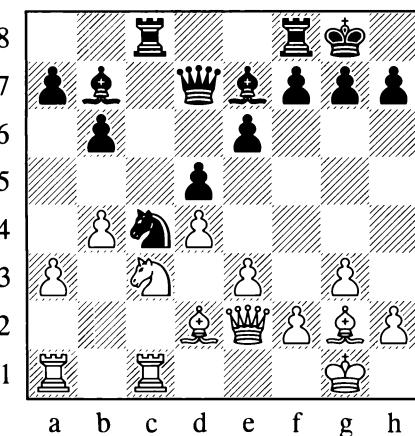
Eupen 2000



It should be quite obvious that Black has done okay out of the opening. White is not about to launch an offensive anywhere, and he has some pawn weaknesses on the queenside. However, Black also needs to form a plan to seize the initiative. The way to play this position is to realize that White has a weak square on c4 along with the weak pawns on a3 and b4, and that the knight on a6 is out of play and could do much better. By transferring this knight to c4, Black makes White's existence very difficult.

14...♝c7! 15.e3 ♝e8 16.♗e2 ♝d6 17.♗fc1 ♝c4†

Black is better, but White has played sensibly, so he retains drawing chances.



18.♗e1!

The bishop is bad in the short term, but later in the game can become active again. White realizes that although it looks poor at the moment, the bishop is protecting important squares.

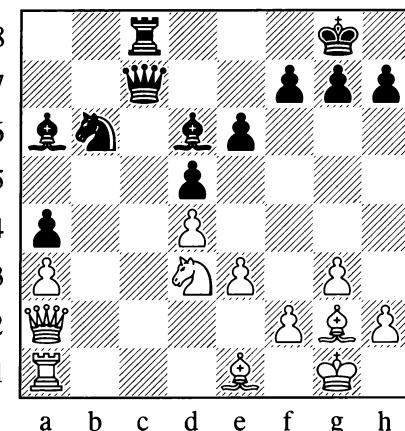
18...♜c7

The rook on f8 is inactive and needs to join in; I see no other way of doing this.

19.♔a2

19.a4!? was a worthy option, though after 19...a6! Black is still slightly better.

19...♜fc8 20.♗e2 ♜d6 21.♗c3 a5 22.bxa5 bxa5 23.♗f4 a4 24.♗d3 ♜e7 25.♗b2 ♜b6 26.♗xc7 ♜xc7 27.♗d3 ♜a6



28.♗b4?

28.♔f1!†

28...♜c4 29.♗b2 ♜b3 30.♗e2 ♜c4

Black has made advances against White's stubborn defence. It is likely that there are small improvements for both players along the way, but the general impression is that Black has outplayed his lower-rated opponent.

31.h4

White had to give up a pawn with 31.♗a6

$\mathbb{W}b6$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ in order to hold the a3-pawn. Although the two bishops will offer some compensation, it is not likely to be enough.

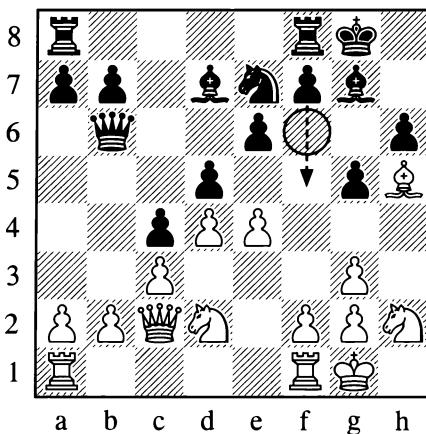
31... $\mathbb{W}b6$

The a-pawn is now doomed.

32. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 33. $h5$ $h6$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 35. $\mathbb{E}xa3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$
0–1

2. V. Kovacevic – Pinter

Plovdiv 1983



The weakest point in the black position must be the f6-square, though one could argue for the f7-pawn to be included on the list of weaknesses. Black also has a traditional bad bishop on d7 and a misplaced queen on b6. His main ideas are to play ...f5 or ...dxe4, in both cases solving some of the problems with his pawn structure as well as aiming to activate the bishop. White wants to find something for his knights to do, as well as keep his advantages. For this reason the correct move is to advance the e-pawn.

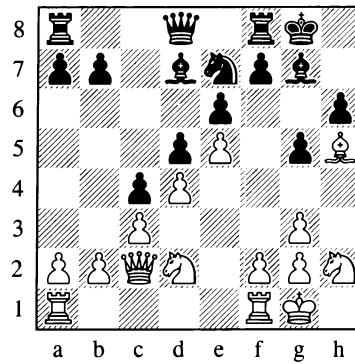
18.e5! f5?

After this move White's advantage is obvious, as his pieces flow easily to e5 and

other attractive squares. I was more interested in what would have happened had Black decided to play on the queenside, where he is stronger. The best move is:

18... $\mathbb{W}d8!$

Besides clearing the way for the b-pawn, the queen is ready to come to g5 and h4 in many lines involving the thrust f2-f4. It took us some time to work out the correct plan for White to prove an advantage, and even after this work, it feels as if the resources of the position have by no means been exhausted. The following is certainly not something you would need to see in order to solve the original problem, but it is very interesting and instructive.



19. $\mathbb{Q}g4!$

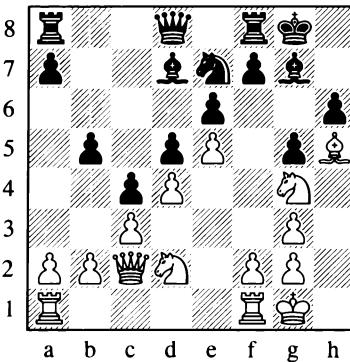
After trying various plans, we decided to rely on this one, which tries to make use of the poorly placed knight in an active capacity. This is a rather slow plan, but White has a head start on the kingside, so he can afford the slow manoeuvring.

19...b5

The most natural move.

It turns out that 19... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ is premature. Rather than being active on f5, the knight is a target there. White plays 20. $\mathbb{E}fe1$ b5 21. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ b4 22. $\mathbb{Q}fe3\pm$ and now Black is in a tight squeeze. Either he allows White to take on f5 and play $\mathbb{Q}e3$, which is very dangerous for him, or he exchanges the knights,

allowing White to start an attack on the kingside: 22... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 23. $\mathbb{B}xe3$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 24. $\mathbb{B}f3!$ $bxc3$ 25. $bxc3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ It might look as if Black will be just in time with ... $\mathbb{W}b2$, but the counterplay fails to a nice tactic: 26. $\mathbb{Q}xf7\#!!$ $\mathbb{B}xf7$ 27. $\mathbb{W}g6$ $\mathbb{B}xf3$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}f6\#+-$



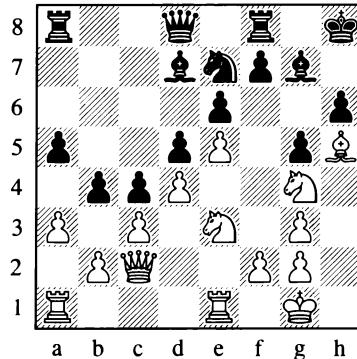
20.a3!!

This deep move was found by John Shaw. The idea was at first to make Black play ...a5 to support the advance of the b-pawn, because ... $\mathbb{W}a5$ had been irritating us in several lines. Analysis then suggested other, unforeseen advantages of this move. 20. $\mathbb{B}fe1$ b4! turns out to give Black enough counterplay. After 21. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}fe3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 23. $\mathbb{B}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}h8!$ it is not easy to make progress with White. The last move is important because of these $\mathbb{Q}xf7\#$ combinations which keep popping up all over the place.

20...a5 21. $\mathbb{B}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$

The immediate push on the queenside falls prey to another tactic. After 21...b4 22.axb4 axb4 23. $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 24. $\mathbb{B}xa8$ $\mathbb{W}xa8$ 25. $\mathbb{B}xf6$ White's advantage is obvious. Black has several ways to play, but none of them satisfactory. The key point is that he cannot play 25... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}d8$, which would otherwise be the logical thing to do, as White once again wins with: 27. $\mathbb{Q}xf7\#!!$ $\mathbb{B}xf7$ 28. $\mathbb{W}g6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 29. $\mathbb{W}xh6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 30. $\mathbb{W}h8\#$ $\mathbb{B}f8$ 31. $\mathbb{W}h5\#$ $\mathbb{B}f7$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ $\mathbb{W}xf7$ 34. $\mathbb{W}xd5!$ and the black position is not going to last.

22. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ b4 23. $\mathbb{Q}fe3\pm$



White has an edge. He is intending to play $\mathbb{Q}f1$ and f2-f4 with action on the kingside. There is still a lot to play for, but the general outlook for Black is not great. Here is one possible line:

23... $\mathbb{B}b8$

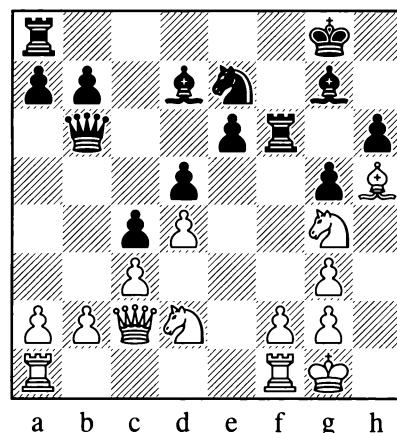
23... $bxc3$ 24. $bxc3$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ would allow White to play 25. $\mathbb{B}ab1\#$. White can successfully challenge Black for the b-file, because the possibility of jumping in with $\mathbb{Q}f6$ keeps the black queen occupied on the kingside.

24.axb4 axb4 25.f4 gxf4 26.gxf4 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 27.f5±

White's idea is that Black cannot play:

27... $\mathbb{W}g5?$ 28.f6 $\mathbb{W}xh5$ 29.fxg7† $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}f6$
And the bishop on d7 hangs.

19. $\mathbb{B}xf6$ $\mathbb{B}xf6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}g4\pm$

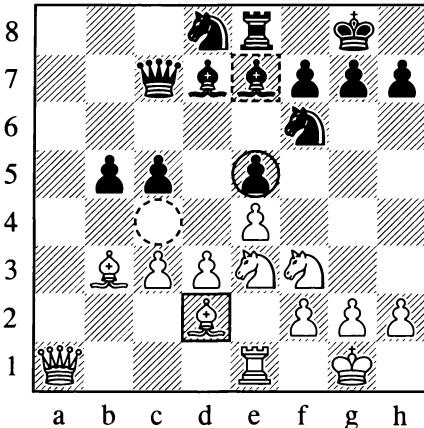


20... $\mathbb{B}f5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 22. $\mathbb{B}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xe8$
 $\mathbb{B}xe8$ 24. $\mathbb{B}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}ael$ $\mathbb{B}e7$ 26. $\mathbb{B}xe6$
 $\mathbb{B}xe6$ 27. $\mathbb{W}xf5$ $\mathbb{B}xe1\uparrow$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 29. $\mathbb{W}f3$
 $\mathbb{W}g6$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ b5 31. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 32.a3 a5
33.g4 b4 34.axb4 axb4 35. $\mathbb{Q}1c2$ b3 36. $\mathbb{Q}b4$
 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 37.cxd4 c3 38.bxc3 b2 39. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{W}e4$
40. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

1–0

3. Leko – Ivanchuk

Morelia/Linares 2006



By employing a short-term tactical threat, White manages to create a great square for his knight on c4.

21.c4!±

Black does not have time to play 21...b4, as the e-pawn is hanging.

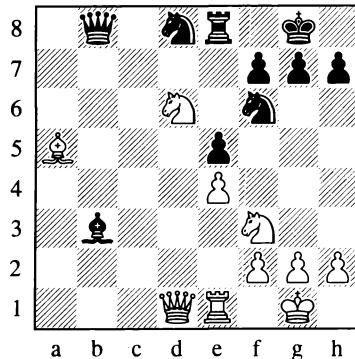
21... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}a5!$?

I like this move a lot. White is intending to exchange his so-called good bishop for the apparently very poor knight on d8. However, in only two moves the knight can be on d4, whereas the bishop has no real targets in the long term.

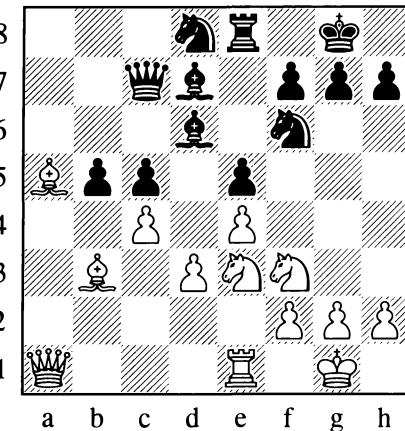
It was of course also possible to play 22.cxb5. After 22... $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ I rather like the idea 23. $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ ±,

although it is by no means the only good move in the position.

I especially like the tactical justification for this move, which is that 23... $\mathbb{Q}xd3?$ loses to a line involving a beautiful desperado: 24. $\mathbb{Q}a5$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 25. $\mathbb{W}d1$ c4 26. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}b3!$



28. $\mathbb{Q}c7!!$ and White wins material because of 28... $\mathbb{W}b4$ 29. $\mathbb{W}d2!!$.



22... $\mathbb{W}b8?$

22... $\mathbb{W}a7$ 23.cxb5 $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7!$
25. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{W}xa1$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}a6$ puts Black in a very awkward position, but there is no reason to lose material immediately.

23.cxb5 $\mathbb{Q}xb5$

After 23... $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 24. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{W}a6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ Black is not able to defend the e-pawn.

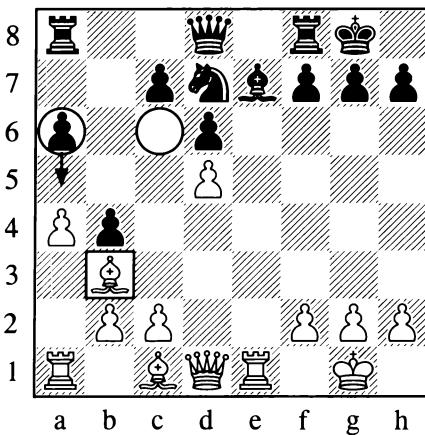
24.♗b1!

Black is losing a pawn and his pawn structure is in ruins, so Ivanchuk decided it was not even worth trying to defend his position for another moment.

1–0

4. Leko – Mamedyarov

Wijk aan Zee 2006



The weaknesses in the black position are all on the queenside, and the advantage of the white position naturally has to do with the two bishops, especially the one on b3. However, at the moment this piece is a bit passive.

15.a5!±

This move fulfills two objectives. It brings the bishop to c6, from where it will disrupt Black's coordination, and it splits the black pawns on the queenside into effectively three pawn islands, all of them vulnerable.

15...♝c5 16.♗a4 ♜b8

Black cannot take the bishop. After 16...♜xa4 17.♗xa4 ♜b8 18.♗d3 ♜b5 19.♗d2 it is not easy for him to hold on to his pawns.

17.♗c6 ♜f6

17...♝g5!± was another plan.

18.♗e2 ♜d4 19.♗b1 ♜f6 20.♗d1 h6 21.♗d2

White could consider 21.g3!± or 21.h3!±.

21...♝fe8?

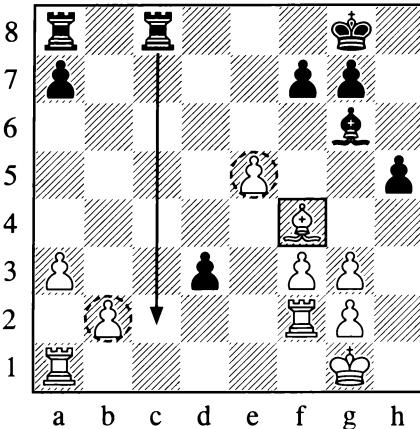
This exchange sacrifice does not make a lot of sense. 21...♝c3 22.♗e2 ♜d4 was necessary, when White would have to come up with an active plan to make progress.

22.♗xe8 ♜xe8 23.♗f4 b3 24.c3 ♜e7 25.♗d2 ♜e5 26.♗g4 ♜e4 27.♗e3 g6 28.g3 ♜g7 29.♗e1 h5 30.♗e2 h4 31.♗xa6 f5 32.♗b5 ♜e5 33.a6 hxg3 34.fxg3 ♜f7 35.a7 ♜h8 36.♗b8 ♜xh2 37.a8=♛

1–0

5. Leko – Shirov

Linares 2004



White is of course better. He has won a pawn and has no great problems beyond the doubled pawns on the g-file, which can hardly be called weak. However, his position is not entirely stable. Black is about to play ...♝c2 and ...♝ac8, creating counterplay against the b2-pawn and on the second rank in general. It is important for White to first minimize this counterplay, before he thinks about how to convert his advantage.

25.♗d2!

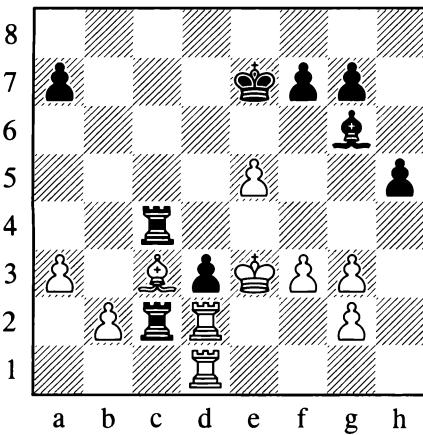
And this is the way to do it. Once the bishop is on c3, it will achieve the double whammy of blocking the c-file and stabilizing the position.

25... $\mathbb{E}c2$

Black has to get the rook into the white position before it is too late.

**26. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 27. $\mathbb{E}d2$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 28. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$
29. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{E}c4$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}e3$**

White has made it through the first stage; the position is completely stabilized. He can now look for ways to convert his advantage.



30... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 31. $\mathbb{E}h1$ $g6$

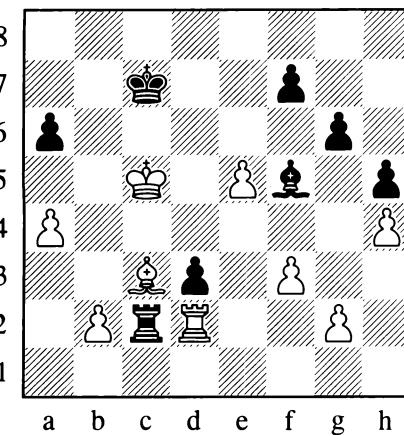
In opposite-coloured bishop endings it is common for the player without ambitions to put his pawns on the same-coloured squares as his bishop, as this makes them easy to defend, though impossible to advance. For the player wanting to win, the opposite is usually the case. He will try to challenge the opponent's bishop and seek to advance his pawns, so he has to fight for the squares that his own bishop does not control.

32. $\mathbb{E}h4$

White offers an exchange of rooks, which is attractive to Black, but also unravels White's doubled pawns.

32... $\mathbb{E}xh4$ 33. $\mathbb{G}xh4$ $a6$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 36.a4

Black is almost in zugzwang. He could exchange rooks on d2, but probably felt that his chances to draw this ending would be slim. White can aim to obtain a passed pawn on b6. Then he will put his king on g5 or f6 and play g2-g4. This will either create a weakness on h5, or it will force Black to play ...hxg4, when after fxg4, White is ready to advance the h-pawn to create a second passed pawn and claim the bishop for it. From a practical point of view, this ending did not attract Shirov, but maybe it was the best chance.



36... $\mathbb{E}c1?$

Black should have played 36... $\mathbb{E}xd2$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7!$, making it very difficult for White to advance his b-pawn. Remember, if White plays 38.a5? Black can always defend his queenside with the bishop on the b5-f1 diagonal, and the king can rush to the kingside and prevent any concessions there. White can try 38. $\mathbb{Q}b4!?$, but after 38... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}e3\dagger$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}a5$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 41.b3 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ the game is sharper than White would want it to be. Although it is obvious that it is White who is trying to win here, I think Black should draw. This does not necessarily mean that White has done anything wrong up to this

point, or that the initial evaluation needs to be revised. To be better simply means that if you make a small mistake, or if the opponent defends perfectly, the game is likely to revert to equilibrium. And to be worse simply means that you have to defend well not to lose, that the margin for error is limited. In this game Shirov did not defend perfectly. I believe that this move was the critical mistake, but these endings are very difficult to understand, so I shall not feign certainty.

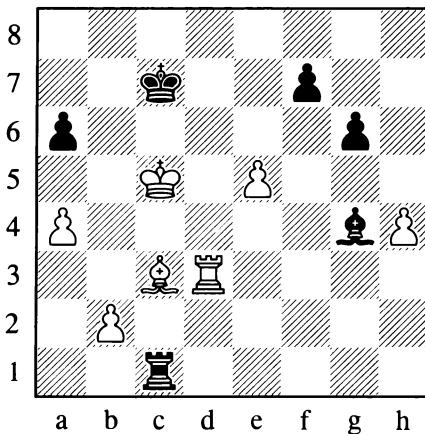
37.g4!

White is now able to free himself of all the issues haunting him, as they all involved the d-pawn.

37...hxg4 38.fxg4 ♖xg4

38...♗e4? 39.♕f2 would not work out for Black.

39.♖xd3±



39...♖h1

39...♗d7?! might have been a better defence.

40.♗a5†! ♖b7

After 40...♖c8 41.♖d4! ♖xh4, White can transpose to the game with 42.♗c3 g5 43.♗e1, but maybe he could find something even more convincing?

41.♗b3† ♖c8 42.♗b4 ♖xh4

42...♗e6± was better. The game would still be difficult for Black, but maybe not yet lost.

43.♗d4 g5 44.♗e1 ♖h1 45.♗xg4 ♖xe1

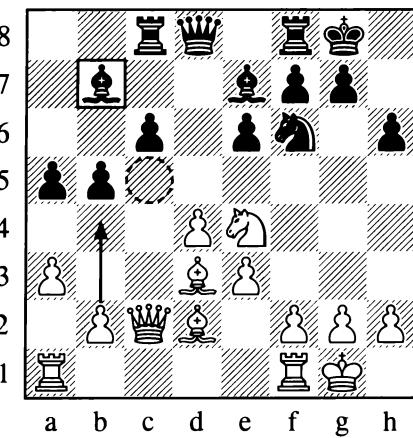
46.♗xg5 ♖d7 47.♗f5 ♖e7

47...♗e6 48.♗f6† ♖xe5 49.♗xf7! ♖b1 50.♗e7† ♖f6 51.♗b7 and White wins.

48.b4 ♖a1 49.a5 ♖c1† 50.♗b6 ♖c4 51.b5 axb5 52.a6 ♖e6 53.♗f6† ♖xe5 54.♗xf7 1–0

6. Onischuk – Jakovenko

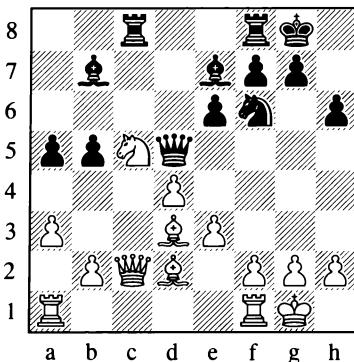
Foros 2008



White wants to play b2-b4, clamping down on the c6-pawn and leaving the bishop on b7 stuck. Black therefore has to calculate the freeing move, and look for a way to make it work.

16...c5! 17.♗xf6†

The only move. The great trick is that 17.♗xc5?? is answered not with 17...♗xc5 18.dxc5 ♖d5 19.e4!, leading to a better position for White, but with 17...♗d5!.



Black wins after both 18.e4 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ followed by 20... $\mathbb{Q}g4$, and 18.f3 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 19.dxc5 $\mathbb{Q}fd8$.

17... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 18.dxc5 $\mathbb{Q}xb2$

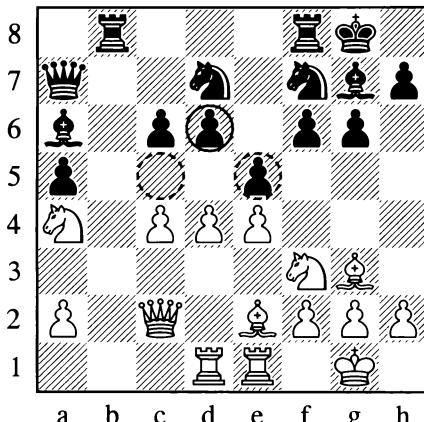
18... $\mathbb{W}d5$ 19.e4 $\mathbb{W}xc5=$ was another option.

19. $\mathbb{Q}h7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}xh7=$ 21. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 22.f3 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ f6 24. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ $\mathbb{E}fd8$ 25. $\mathbb{E}d6$ $\mathbb{E}xd6$ 26.cxd6 $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{W}d3$ 29. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xd2$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 31. $\mathbb{E}xc8\#$

½-½

7. Karavade – Castaneda

Philadelphia 2008



White is in general a little better, but here he is able to create a lot of weaknesses in the black position with a nice pawn sacrifice.

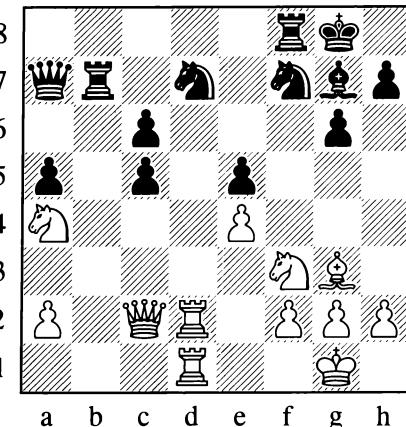
19.c5!

The point of this move is that White is active in the centre. He would of course like to open it without shedding material, but this is not an option. Instead he offers this pawn in order to destroy the opponent's pawn structure.

19... $\mathbb{Q}xe2$

19...dxc5? 20. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{W}xa6$ 21.dxe5 would be a disaster for Black. After the exchanges on e5 White would play $\mathbb{Q}a4xc5-d7$, winning the exchange.

20. $\mathbb{E}xe2$ dxc5 21.dxe5 fxe5 22. $\mathbb{E}ed2$ $\mathbb{E}b7$

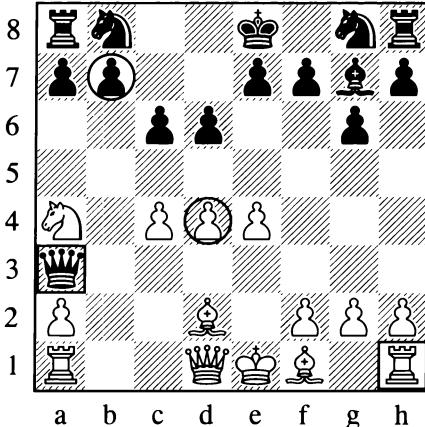


Up to this point White has managed to change the position through his aggressive positional operation and now he had to find a way to exploit the weaknesses created in the black position. He did not do a great job of this in the game; after 23. $\mathbb{W}c4?$! $\mathbb{Q}b6$ his advantage was minimal.

A better option would have been 23.h4! (or 23. $\mathbb{E}d3$ first, as the mysterious computer suggests). The big positional threat is $\mathbb{Q}g5$, which would undermine the defence of the d6-square. This encourages Black to play 23... $\mathbb{Q}h6$, but after 24. $\mathbb{E}d3\pm$ he is badly coordinated. White will play $\mathbb{Q}f3-d2-c4$, or h4-h5 and after ...gxh5 then $\mathbb{Q}f3-h4-f5$, in both cases with a big advantage.

8. Gelfand – Morozevich

Moscow 2008



White decided to repeat the position with 13... $\mathbb{Q}c1?$ $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$, being unable to find any reasonable way to continue the game. Had he spent time thinking about activating his worst piece, the rook at h1, he might have come upon the solution:

13.h4!!

This move, originally suggested by Sergey Shipov, seems to be more or less winning by force.

13...d5

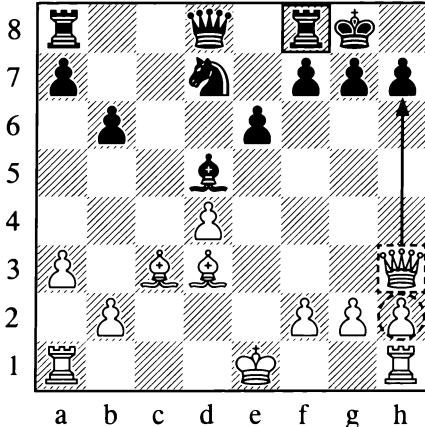
13... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 14. $\mathbb{B}h3$ $\mathbb{W}xa4$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xa4$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1$
16. $\mathbb{B}b3$ and Black cannot defend the queenside.

14.e5 e6 15. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 16.cxd5 exd5 17. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

White's initiative should be decisive. Black cannot easily get his bits out, and White is attacking on both flanks with a fully mobilized army. Obviously the game has a long way to go, and Black does have an extra pawn, but the chances are still entirely with White at this stage.

9. Hammes – Akopian

Kallithea 2008



The position seems relatively quiet and Black's next move might seem obvious to most, as I am sure it was to Akopian. However, we might not necessarily be talking about the same move. The solution to this position is the move that combines the necessary defensive obligations (avoiding mate in one) and active possibilities.

15...f5!

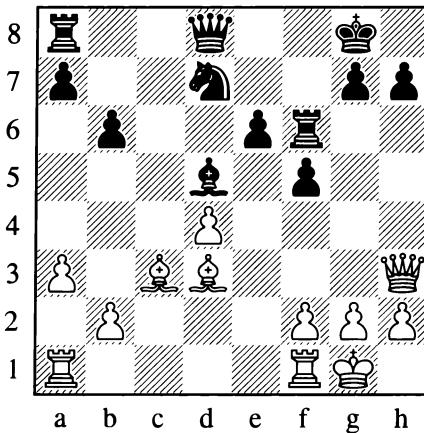
The reason some might hold back from this move is that it weakens the e6-pawn. However, that is not relevant in this position. After the advance of the f-pawn, the black king is absolutely safe and White is likely to have to play a more defensive role than he would wish, due to the weakness of the d4-pawn.

The other automatic move was 15...h6?!. After 16.0–0 the position is roughly balanced, but it would be Black who had to play accurately over the next ten moves.

16.0–0 $\mathbb{B}f6!?$

This aggression on the kingside is of course very attractive, but it was not the only way

to play the position. Black could also have improved his standing in the centre first, by ... $\mathbb{E}c8$ or by rerouting the d7-knight.



17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

White is struggling for a plan and thus falls down quickly. The idea of this move is to prevent ... $\mathbb{E}h6$, but in itself that might not be devastating.

He should of course avoid automatic moves such as 17. $\mathbb{E}ad1?$, because after 17... $\mathbb{E}h6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{W}h4$ 19. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{E}g6!$ Black is already winning.

17. $\mathbb{E}f1$ also looks a bit suspicious. Black plays 17... $\mathbb{E}g6$ 18. $\mathbb{E}f1$ $\mathbb{W}g5$ followed by ... $\mathbb{E}f8$, ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ or ... $f4$, with a terrible attack.

The best option might be to play 17. $\mathbb{W}e3?$ to bring the queen into the game. Black would of course have options such as the most flexible 17... $\mathbb{E}h6$, and 17... $f4?$ 18. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $f3$, in both cases with an initiative for Black. However, I do not see why White should not be able to hold his position together.

17... $\mathbb{E}g6$ 18. $f3$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$

A very natural regrouping of the knight. However, the more creative 18... $\mathbb{Q}b7?$ was worth considering. The main ideas are ... $\mathbb{Q}c5!$

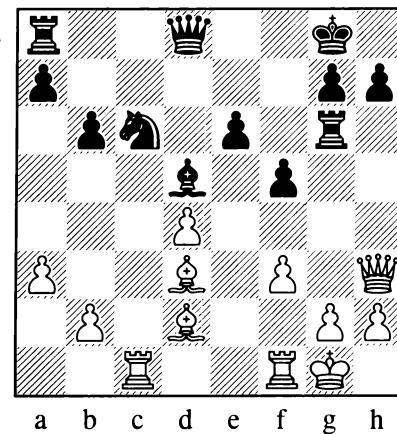
or ... $\mathbb{Q}e5?$, though playing ... $\mathbb{Q}f6-d5$ also becomes an option. The thinking behind the retreat is that the bishop is less useful on d5 once White has closed the long diagonal, whereas a knight on that square may demonstrate that f2-f3 has compromised the white position.

19. $\mathbb{E}ac1?$

This simply blunders a pawn. After the correct 19. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 20. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ the position remains complex. I would consider Black's chances to be slightly better and his position easier to play, with ideas such as ... $\mathbb{W}f6$, ... $\mathbb{E}c8$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}a5$. But with accurate play, there is no doubt that White will be able to neutralize this slight pull.

19... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

White cannot easily defend the d-pawn.



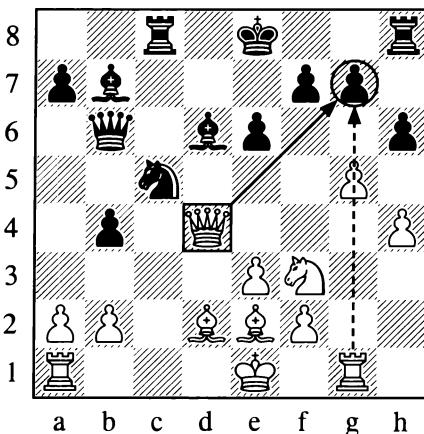
20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c4?$

White is in the midst of a complete collapse. Better was 21. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}h1$, playing with a pawn less, but having activated all his pieces – with the exception of the queen, of course.

21... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $exd5$ 23. $\mathbb{E}cd1$ $\mathbb{Q}e2\#$
24. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 25. $f4$ $\mathbb{Q}g3\#!$ 26. $hxg3$ $\mathbb{E}xe3$
0-1

10. Adly – Sebag

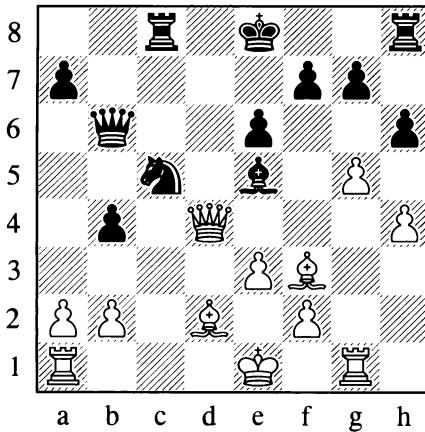
Hoogeveen 2008



The bishop on b7 looks good, as bishops on long diagonals usually do. However, because of the way the game has evolved, there is nothing of great importance on that diagonal; it is all on the other long diagonal. Black realized this and exchanged the “good” light-squared bishop for the great dark-squared diagonal.

17...♝xf3! 18.♝xf3 ♜e5!

The bishop is obviously immune, and now combines defending the black kingside with attacking the white queenside. The position is essentially winning.



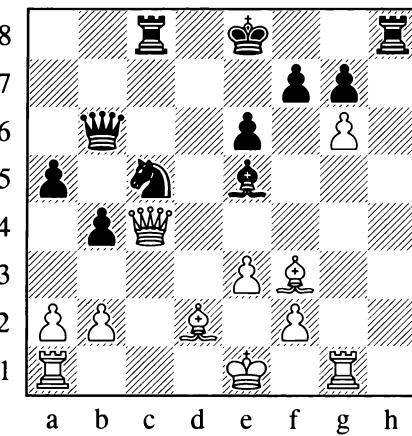
19.♛c4 hxg5 20.hxg5

After 20.♝xg5 Black can take it easy with 20...♝f6! 21.♝g4 a5 with a distinct positional advantage. This might very well be the best option.

However, she can also go for concrete action with: 20...♝xb2?! 21.♝b1 ♜f6 22.♝xb4 ♜xh4! (22...♝d6 23.♝b5† ♜e7 24.♝gg4 ♜hd8 25.♝bd4?! is better for Black, but seems unnecessarily complicated.) 23.♝g4 ♜xg4 24.♝xg4 ♜d6 and Black is a pawn up with a safer king. Although the position may not be completely winning, it can be said to be close.

20...a5 21.g6

The best way to fight back was: 21.a3! ♜xb2 (21...b3 22.♝c3 would do a lot to relieve the pressure on White’s position, although there would still be some problems to solve along the way.) 22.axb4! ♜xa1 23.bxc5 ♜b1† 24.♝d1 ♜e5 Black is decidedly better, but White has serious prospects for counterplay, both through the passed pawn and against the open black king. We can see the reason for the exchange sacrifice – the knight was invaluable in defence.



21...f6?!

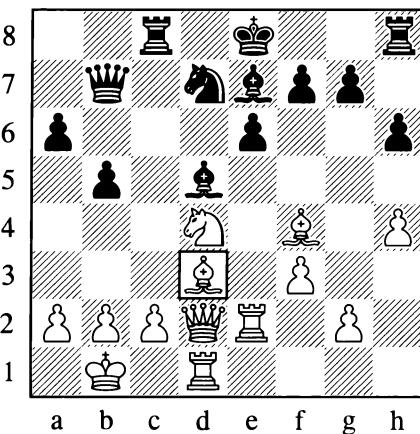
After this Black keeps a good position, but White still has some counterplay. Instead she should have played fearlessly with 21...0–0!,

when Black's lead in development is very important, and the risk of getting mated on the kingside is minor. 22.♕e2 (22.♕h5 f5 23.♕e2 ♕fd8 24.♕h4 might have been what Black feared, but the bishop on e5 is so strong that the king will be absolutely safe.) 22...fxg6 23.♕xg6 ♕b7 Black has a strong attack. For example: 24.f3?! ♕xf3!—+

22.♕h1 ♕xh1† 23.♕xh1 ♕e7 24.f4 ♕xb2
 25.♕b1 ♕d6 26.♕e2 ♕h8 27.♕f3 f5 28.♕g2
 ♕f6 29.♕c1 ♕e4 30.♕e1 ♕c3 31.♕b5 ♕d5
 32.♕xd5 exd5 33.♕e2 ♕xe1 34.♕xe1 ♕c3
 35.♕c2 ♕h6 36.♕d2 ♕d6 37.♕d3 ♕c5 38.a3
 ♕xg6 39.axb4† axb4 40.♕h3 ♕g3 41.♕xf5
 d4 42.♕h2 dxе3 43.♕h1 e2† 44.♕d2 ♕d4
 45.♕c2 ♕f3 46.♕e1 ♕xf4 47.♕b3 g5 48.♕g1
 g4 49.♕d2 ♕f1 50.♕xg4† ♕e5
 0–1

11. Galkin – Khalifman

Moscow 2005



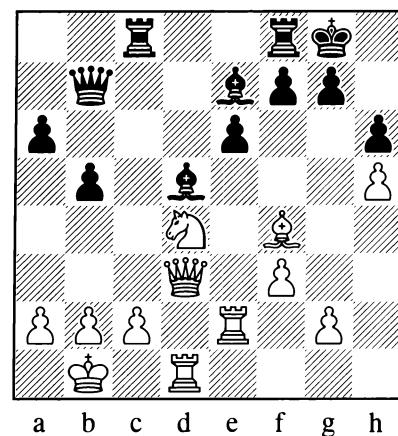
White has not achieved an attacking stance on the kingside and has no pressure in the centre. It is quite clear that Black has no problems, but he too has no direct way to launch an attack. However, he can ensure himself the long-term advantage of the two bishops by simple means.

20... ♕c5! 21.h5

21.♕e4 was also possible, but after 21...♕xe4 22.fxe4 ♕xe4 23.♕e3 ♕g6 White does not have sufficient compensation for the pawn.

21... ♕xd3 22.♕xd3 0–0?

Black's advantage is not in doubt; the bishop on d5 is better than the knight.



23.♕e3 ♕c5 24.♕c1

White is playing without a plan. It is not our task to find one here, but this is certainly not it.

24.♕xh6 gxh6 25.♕xh6 ♕fd8 does not offer White anything.

24... ♕fd8? 25.♕e3 a5 26.♕ee1 a4 27.♕e2 ♕b4

Black does not want to part with the two bishops.

28.♕h1 e5 29.♕g3 ♕c6 30.♕h4

White has made no improvements in his position and is now finally lost.

30... ♕e7 31.♕hh1 ♕e6! 32.b3?

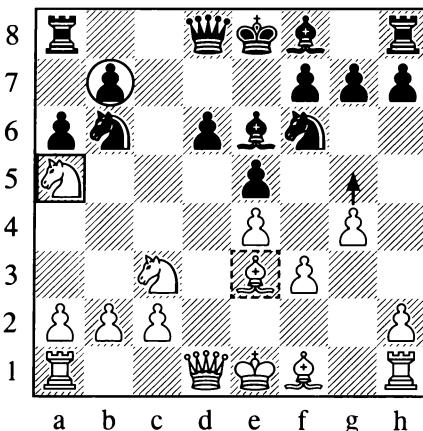
This loses immediately, but 32.a3 b4 would have continued the attack remorselessly.

32... axb3 33.axb3 ♕xb3!

0–1

12. Solovchuk – Neverov

Poltava 2008



White has clearly overextended himself by putting the knight on a5 too early. His lack of coordination and development can be exploited by a strong push in the centre.

10...d5!!

Playing into a long forced line does not work: 10...Qa4? 11.Qxb7 Qxc3 12.Qxd8 Qxd1 13.Qxe6 Qxe3 14.Qc7† Qd7 15.Qxa8 Qxc2† 16.Qd2 Qxal 17.Qxa6±

11.g5

What else should White play? After 11.Qxb7 Qc7 White will end up losing a piece, and 11.exd5 Qbxd5 suffers a similar disaster.

11...d4 12.gxf6 gxf6

12...Qxf6 looks simpler, when Black should just be winning.

13.Qb5?

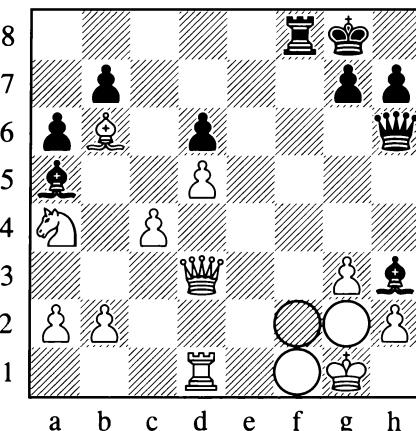
This loses immediately. White had the option of making the position somewhat murky with 13.Qxb7!? Qc7 14.Qxd4 exd4 15.Qxd4 Qxb7 16.0–0–0.

13...axb5 14.Qxb5† Qd7 15.Qxd7† Qxd7

16.Qd2 Qxa5 17.Qxa5 Qxa5† 18.Qf2 Qh6
19.a3 Qe3† 20.Qg2 Qg8†
0–1

13. Pruijssers – S. Zhigalko

Enschede 2009



This is about domination. Black wins with a simple series of moves:

28...Qxb6†

A natural exchange; there is no reason to look for anything too inventive.

29.Qxb6 Qf6

The ideal square for the queen, with threats to f1, f2, b2 and d4.

30.Qe2

The only square that keeps everything under control. White is covering exactly the four threats mentioned, but he will not be able to withstand an additional one!

White has no alternatives. After 30.Qh1 Qf2 31.Qg1 Qe8 he is quickly mated.

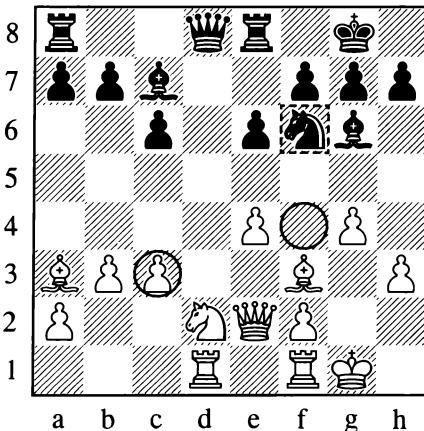
30...h5!

The threat of ...Qg4 is decisive.

0–1

14. Norwood – Collins

England 2002



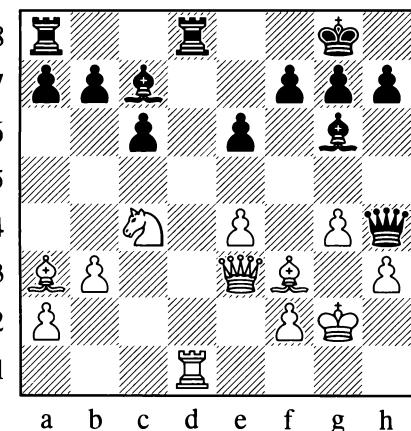
The weaknesses in White's camp are on f4 and c3, Black's knight is not doing much on f6 and there is an X-ray towards the queen on e2. Together these factors stack up to:

17...Qd5! – 18.Qc4??

White tries a creative sacrifice. 18.Qc4 Qf4 19.Qg2 Wh4 would lose the kingside, and probably all hope. (19...Wf6 also wins.)

18.exd5 exd5 is devastating, of course.

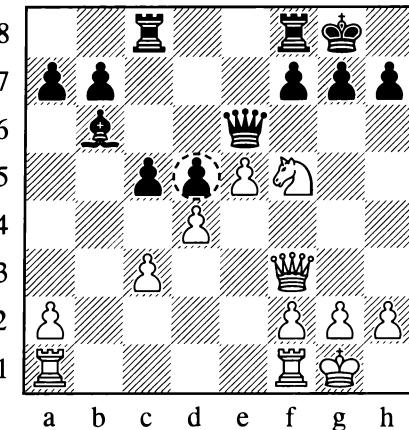
18...Qxc3 19.We3 Qxd1 20.Qxd1 Wh4 21.Qg2 Qed8



Black is in complete control and should have won. However, after 63 moves he allowed his grandmaster opponent to get off the hook and escape with a draw.

15. G. Jones – Howell

Sheffield 2011



20.c4!

White should not miss the chance to take control of the d5-square.

20...g6

The critical move. 20...cxd4 21.cxd5 Wxe5 22.Qae1 and White wins – a simple but essential variation.

21.Qh6† Kg7 22.cxd5 Wd7 23.Qg4†

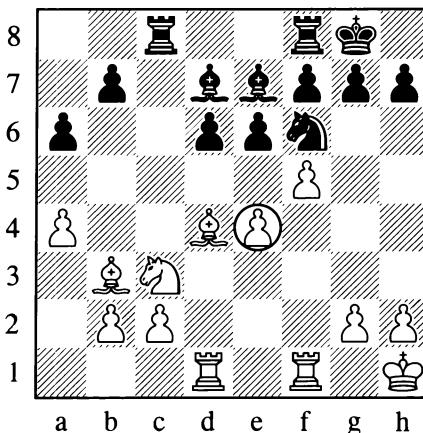
White is threatening mate in two, and Black is forced to allow further damage to his position.

23...Wf5□ 24.Wxf5 gxf5 25.Qe3 Kg6 26.Qc4 cxd4 27.Qxb6 axb6 28.Qfd1 f4 29.Qxd4 Qf5 30.Qe1 Qfe8 31.g3 fxg3 32.hxg3 Qc5 33.g4† Kg5 34.d6 h5 35.e6 fxe6 36.Qxe6 Qd8 37.d7 Qc7 38.Qe5† Kg6 39.Qd6† Kg7 40.Qg5†

1–0

16. Kostromin – Areshchenko

Rogaska Slatina 2011



Black has nothing much to fear, but he is able to fight for the initiative with a thematic exchange sacrifice.

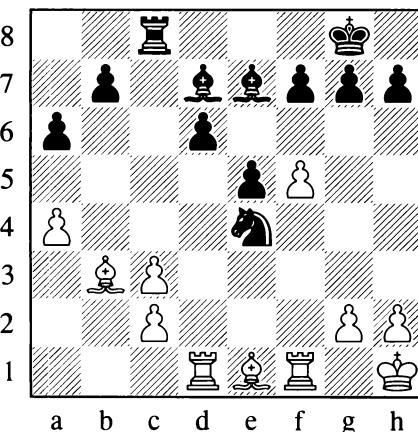
17...e5! 18.Qf2

18.Qe3 may also be met by the exchange sacrifice, although it gives Black the extra option of 18...h6, followed soon by ...Qc6 and ...b5, which also looks promising.

18...Bxc3!

Because the bishop went to f2 (wanting to come to h4 no doubt), this makes perfect sense. The knight arrives on e4 with gain of tempo.

19.bxc3 Qxe4 20.Qe1 Bc8



21.Qd5!?

21.c4 would leave the bishop on b3 entirely out of play. After 21...b6?? with the idea of ...a5, Black has sensational compensation for the exchange and is dominating the light squares.

21...Qxc3 22.Qxb7?!

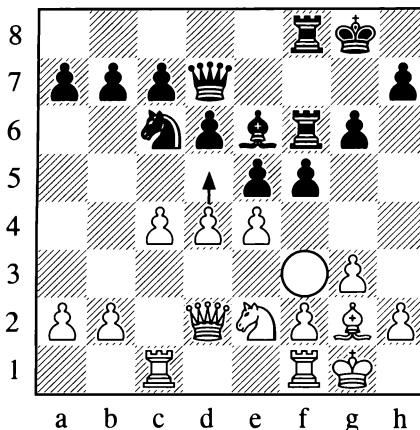
22.Qxc3 Bxc3 was also in Black's favour, but after 23.a5?? White can fight.

22...Qxd1 23.Qxc8 Qxc8 24.Qd2 f6 25.Qxd1 Qxf5

Black has a clear edge in this ending, and won the game on move 44.

17. McNab – A. Tate

Edinburgh 2009



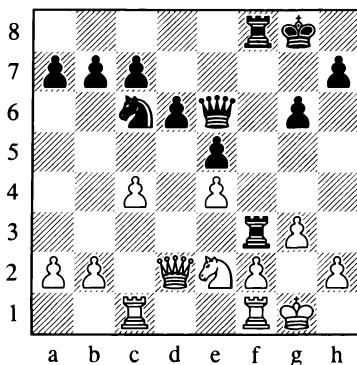
In the game Black conceded White a slight advantage almost without asking if there were any alternatives.

15...Qxd4?!

15...f4! was the correct move.

If White plays 16.f3, Black can take on d4 or put his bishop on h3.

It is more likely that White would play 16.d5 f3 17.dxe6 Bxe6 18.Qxf3 Bxf3??.



Black's counterplay down the f-file guarantees him a good game. It is not a lot, but it is certainly far better than the game.

16.♕xd4 exd4 17.exf5!

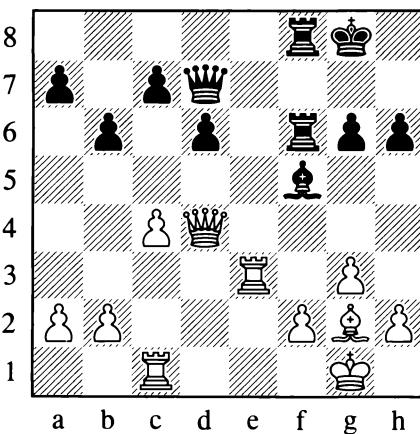
A good move to throw in. Now the pawn structure favours White slightly.

17...♝xf5

17...♝xf5 18.♛xd4 b6± seemed safer. Black does not allow White to threaten his king as easily. Still, his position is unpleasant.

18.♛xd4 b6 19.♝fe1 h6 20.♝e3!

White initiates a final assault.



20...c6 21.♝ce1 ♜f7 22.♛h4!

This double threat decides the game.

22...♝g7

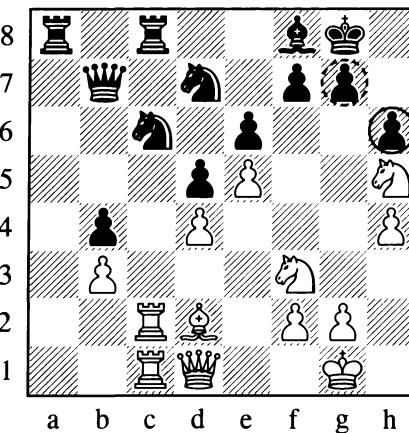
22...h5 23.♝e7 ♜c8 24.♛d4 would also leave Black unable to defend his pawns.

23.♝e7 ♜c8 24.♛d4†

1–0

18. Adams – Bareev

Sarajevo 1999



It looks as if White is playing on the queenside with his doubled rooks, but the only real weakness in the black position is the hook created by the h6-pawn. White should therefore play on the kingside and only use his threats on the queenside to sidetrack his opponent.

25.g4! ♜e7

25...♝a5 26.g5 is very dangerous for Black.

25...♜e7 26.g5 hxg5 27.hxg5 ♜a6 28.♝g2 with threats of migrating to the h-file is also very unpleasant for Black.

26.♝xc8 ♜xc8 27.♝xc8 ♜xc8 28.g5

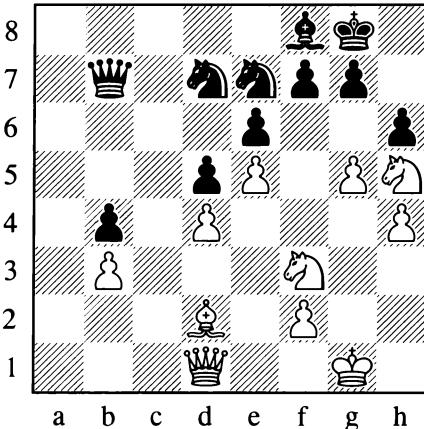
Black is in big trouble.

28...♝e7

28...g6 29.gxh6! gxh5 is most easily refuted by 30.h7†! ♜xh7 31.♝g5† ♜g6 32.♛f3, when

it is impossible for Black to defend f6 and f7 at the same time; White just wins.

28... $\mathbb{W}a6$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xg7!$ would also give White a devastating attack.



29.gxh6?

Adams misses a great chance to decide the game in his favour. After 29. $\mathbb{Q}xg7!$ White gets two pawns for a piece and a winning attack. 29... $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ (29... $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 30.gxh6† $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ also gives a winning attack) 30.gxh6 $\mathbb{Q}h8$ (30... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 31.h7†! $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ is devastating for Black. The threat is $\mathbb{W}h5$ as well as the direct $\mathbb{Q}xf7†$. The only attempt at a defence is 32... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 33.dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}f5$, when Black can play on, but it looks objectively lost.) 31. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ Black has no defence against $\mathbb{W}g4$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}xe6$. 31... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ (31... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 32. $\mathbb{W}h5!$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}xe6†$ with a winning attack) 32.h7† $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 33. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 34.h5 and White wins.

29...gxh6 30. $\mathbb{W}c1\pm$ $\mathbb{W}c6!?$

This concrete solution had been accurately calculated by Bareev.

Other possibilities were 30... $\mathbb{Q}f5?!$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}g3!?$ or 30... $\mathbb{Q}h7\pm$.

31. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$

31. $\mathbb{W}b1!?\pm$

31... $\mathbb{W}xc1\pm$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

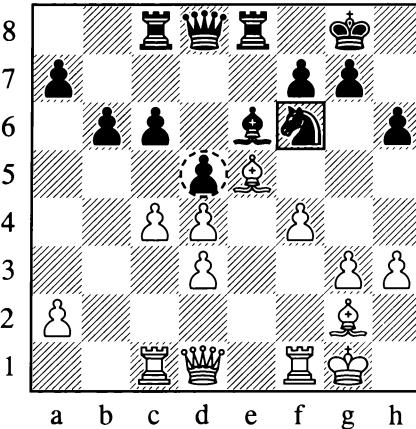
33. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ also leads to a draw: 33... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 36.hxg5 $\mathbb{Q}b8!$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}bc6$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ and White's extra pawn has no practical use at all.

33. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ with the idea of 33... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}h3\pm$ was the last chance to fight for an advantage.

33... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$
 $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

19. Aronian – Gelfand

Dresden (ol) 2008

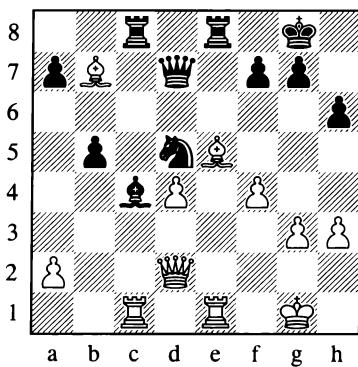


Black correctly decided to fight for the d5-square with:

17...dxc4! 18.dxc4 b5 19.d5!?

This is the standard positional decision. Rather than having his bishop floating in the air on e5, exposed to all kinds of tricks, and giving Black the control over c4 and d5, Aronian decides to give up a pawn.

19.cxb5 cxb5 20. $\mathbb{W}d2$ (20. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ $\mathbb{W}xc8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ leaves White with hanging pawns on both flanks.) 20... $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}b7$ $\mathbb{Q}d5?!$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$

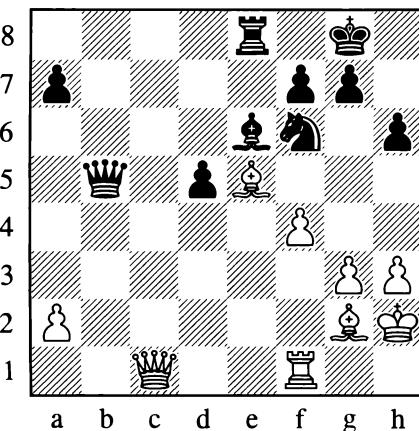


Black will have fantastic compensation for the exchange, with White's bishop entirely impotent. I personally would not like to enter such madness with White either.

19...cxd5 20.cxb5 $\mathbb{E}xc1$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xc1$ $\mathbb{W}b6\#$

Gelfand has a tendency to prefer birds in the hand rather than in the bush. 21... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ was a bit more complicated, but White holds the balance through counterplay against the a7-pawn.

22. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{W}xb5$



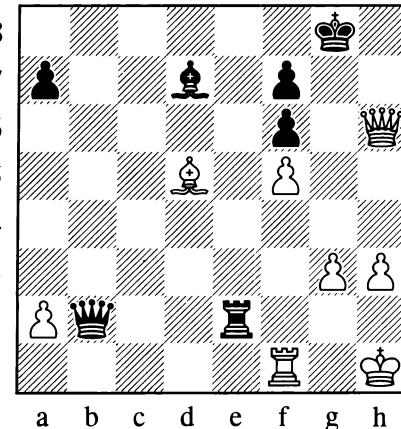
23. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$

23... $\mathbb{W}a1$ also leads straight to a draw. For example 23... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $gxf6$ 25. $\mathbb{W}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 26. $\mathbb{W}xh6$ $\mathbb{W}e2$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ and White should give a perpetual check soon.

23... $gxf6$ 24.f5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 25. $\mathbb{W}xh6$ $\mathbb{W}b2$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{E}e2$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xd5?$

The decisive mistake. I do not think the endgame can be salvaged after this, even though that is a very tough judgement to make.

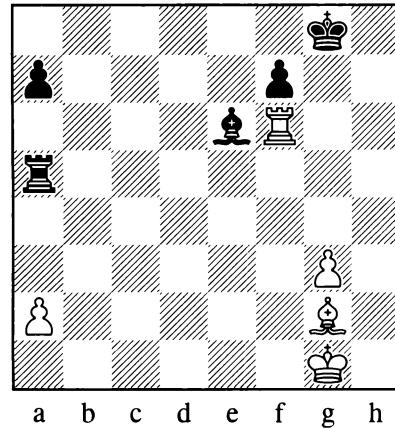
27. $\mathbb{E}f4$ was the best move. The main point is that after 27... $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 28. $\mathbb{E}xf5$ $\mathbb{E}xg2$ 29. $\mathbb{E}g5\#!$ White escapes with a perpetual check.



27... $\mathbb{Q}xf5!$ 28. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{E}h2\#$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{E}xh3$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}g2$

31. $\mathbb{E}f2$ $\mathbb{W}a1\#$ 32. $\mathbb{E}f1$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ should also win for Black.

31... $\mathbb{E}h5$ 32. $\mathbb{W}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 33. $\mathbb{E}xf6$ $\mathbb{E}a5$



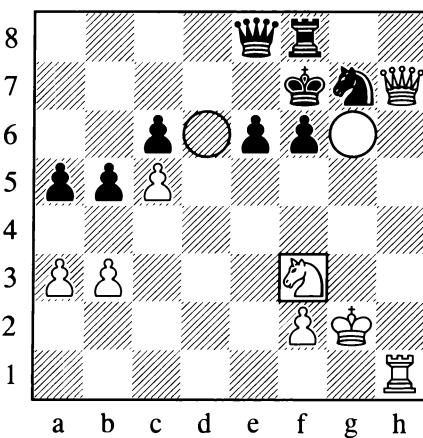
Gelfand plays this ending absolutely fabulously.

34.♕f4 ♜xa2 35.♕d4 a5 36.♕d5 ♜a1†
 37.♔f2 a4 38.♕d2 a3 39.♕xe6 fxe6 40.♔e3
 ♔f7 41.g4 ♜b1 42.♕f2† ♔e7 43.♕a2 ♜b3†
 44.♕f4 ♜b4† 45.♔g5 ♜a4 46.♔h6 e5 47.g5
 ♔f7 48.g6† ♔g8 49.♔g5 e4

0–1

20. Carlsen – Topalov

Morelia/Linares 2007



The three weaknesses in the black position are d6, f6 and g6. White's worst-placed piece is the knight on f3, even though it is of course possible to improve the rook's placement as well.

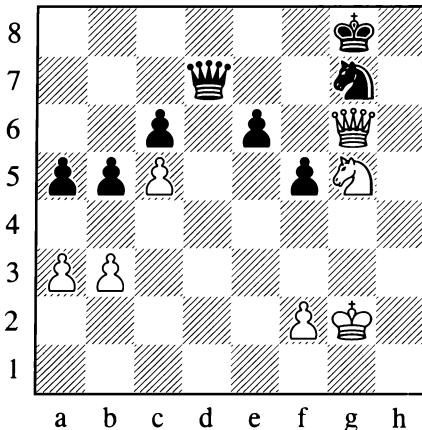
55.♕h6?

55.♕d2! would have won the game quickly. The knight will arrive at d6 with check almost immediately. A possible line is 55...e5 56.♘e4 ♔e6 57.♕d6 ♜e7 58.♕g6. White threatens ♜h7 followed by either ♘f5 or ♜g4†. For example: 58...♜g8 59.♕g4† f5 60.♘xf5! and White wins.

55.♕h3? ♜g8 56.♕h4!± was also quite strong, but there is something artificial about it, so it

should not be a surprise that it was suggested by a computer program.

55...♜d8 56.♕g6† ♔g8 57.♕h7† ♔f7
 58.♕g6† ♔g8 59.♕h7 ♜d7 60.♘d2 f5
 61.♘f3 ♜f6 62.♕xf6 ♔xh7 63.♘g5† ♔g8
 64.♕g6

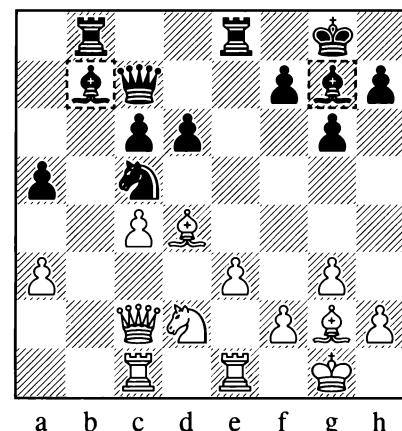


Here Topalov resigned, overlooking that he can defend with 64...♜d5† 65.♔h2 e5!, when the possibility of ...♜g8 will be an important resource. White can force a perpetual check, but nothing more.

1–0

21. Timman – S. Williams

London 2009



20.♘xc5!

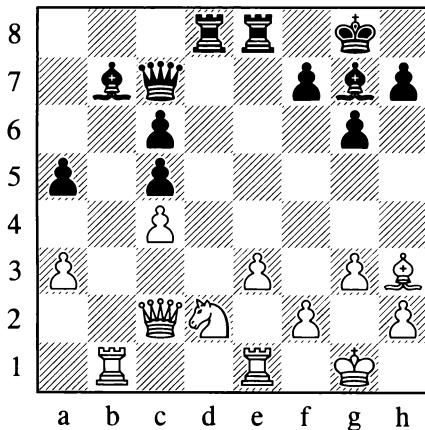
After 20.♘xg7 ♕xg7 21.♗b1 White's advantage would have been minimal. The d6-pawn is a bit weak, but Black's knight on c5 is strong, so he would not fear this development greatly.

20...dxc5 21.♗b1±

White's advantage is maybe not earth-shattering, but if we look at all of the elements individually, we can see that the black position is quite unpleasant. First of all, he has three weak pawns on the queenside, which are all unable to improve themselves greatly. White may consider ♘b3 with an attack on the c5-pawn and there will be no convenient way to defend it. Then there is the bishop currently on b7. Although it can be activated, this will take time and simultaneously leave the c6-pawn more exposed. Finally, what should have been an asset for Black, the g7-bishop, is shooting into a complete void. There is nothing of interest to anyone on the a1-h8 diagonal. The game is simply decided elsewhere.

21...♗bd8 22.♘h3!?

Anticipating ...♘c8 and hoping to exchange another pair of minor pieces, with the intention of having a strong knight against a useless bishop.

**22...♘a6 23.♗ed1 ♖e5?!**

This gives up material without getting real compensation, but Black was clearly desperate and thinking that he would eventually lose a pawn or two on the queenside anyway.

24.♗a4

24.♗g2!± was the most accurate move, though White had many tempting options.

24...♖h5

Black had a last chance to resist a little with 24...♔h6! 25.♗f1 ♖c7± and White is not winning anything immediately. But Simon Williams had clearly already given up on any passive ideas.

25.♗g2

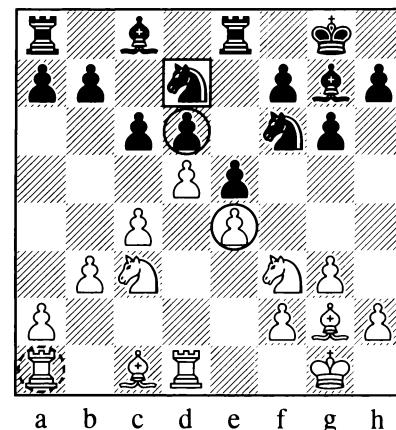
White wins.

25...♘c8 26.♗xc6 ♗f8 27.♗f3 ♖e5 28.♗xa5 ♖f5 29.♗b5 ♖c2 30.♗c1 ♖f5 31.e4 ♖f6 32.♗xc2 ♗xd2 33.♗xd2 ♖xf3 34.♗xc5

1–0

22. Drasko – Trois

Arco 2010



13...cx d5?

Black was no doubt planning to follow up with ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$, when he would have a decent position, but White can attack the weaknesses on c7 and d6 immediately.

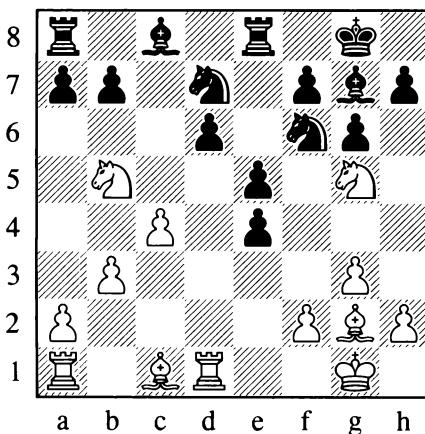
13... $\mathbb{Q}c5$! is the move Black wants to play for positional reasons. Here White may be able to put Black under a small degree of pressure with 14.dxc6 bxc6 15. $\mathbb{Q}e1$, when Black has to organize the defence of the d6-pawn. This would be acceptable to Black, as long as White cannot just take on d6.

Indeed, this would be ill-advised, as after 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$?! $\mathbb{Q}cxe4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ Black has the nice blow 17... $\mathbb{Q}xf2$!, when the position becomes very sharp and complicated – and probably also slightly favourable for Black. The e-pawn looks very strong and all the black pieces are coming to life quite effortlessly.

14. $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ $dxe4$?

Black's best chance was probably 14...d4 15. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ $\mathbb{Q}xe8$, when he does not have enough compensation for the exchange, but the closed nature of the position would make it tough for White to convert his plus in practice.

15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$!



Black can still avoid losing the exchange here, but White will be only too happy to take on d6 and e4 and play $\mathbb{Q}c1-a3$ with all kinds of threats.

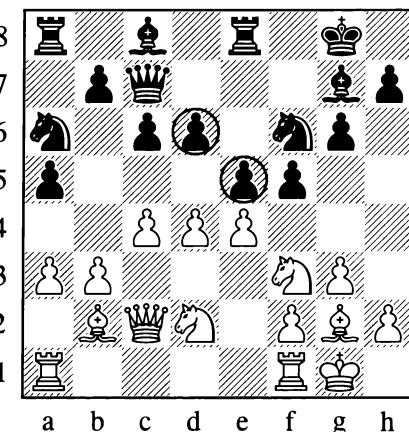
15... $h6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c7$

White wins.

16... $hxg5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}b5$
a6 20. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d5$
1–0

23. Bosboom – Timmerman

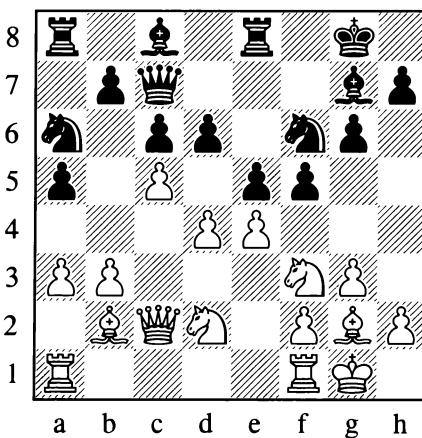
Netherlands 1992



Coming from a Leningrad Dutch, we have a very fluid pawn structure in the centre, which can be transformed at any moment. Black's structure is slightly weakened on the dark squares, and it is underpinned mainly by the queen and is under some pressure from the white pieces. White managed to secure himself an edge by undermining the defence of the e5-pawn.

13.c5!±

White needed to take some action in order to claim anything significant. After 13. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ Black would play 13... $exd4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $fxe4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f7$ followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$, when he would have nothing to fear.



13... $\mathbb{Q}xe4?$

Not the most successful decision, but Black's position was under a lot of pressure. The necessary evil was 13...dxc5, when 14.dxc5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ might not be too bad for Black.

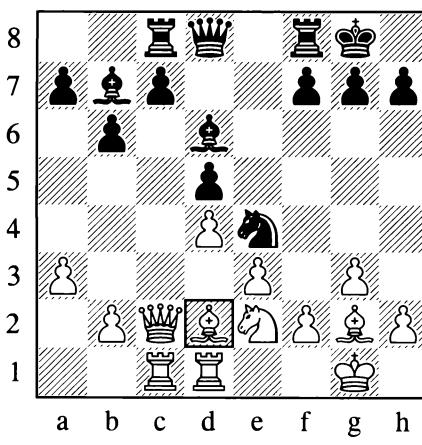
White would instead opt for 14.dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ (14... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ is good for White too) 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ fxe4 16. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}e3\pm$ with a firm grip on the centre. The position is still quite dynamic, but White's structural advantage cannot be denied.

14. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ fxe4 15.cxd6 $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

White wins a pawn and on move 41 he also won the game.

24. Ponomariov – Kramnik

Wijk aan Zee 2003



This is a simple question of good pieces and bad pieces. The bishop on d2 is not very useful and the bishop on d6 is rather decent. An exchange of the two is in White's favour.

16. $\mathbb{Q}b4!\pm$ $\mathbb{W}f6$

It is of course important to work out that 16...c5? 17.dxc5 bxc5 18. $\mathbb{Q}e1\pm$ is undesirable for Black. White will play $\mathbb{Q}c3$ and $\mathbb{W}b3$, when the pressure against the black centre will be very unpleasant.

16... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 17.axb4 would benefit White. The doubling of the pawns is not a great problem, but the pressure down the a- and c-files would be a permanent nuisance for Black.

17. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

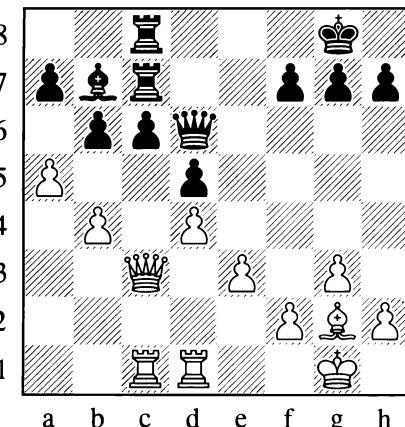
Another interesting approach would be 17. $\mathbb{Q}f4!?$, when Black might consider 17...c5 18.dxc5 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$, although White is obviously to be preferred after a simple move such as 19. $\mathbb{W}b3\pm$.

17... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xc3$

Ponomariov is quite happy to head for a rather stale technical position. Taking with the pawn in order to play c3-c4 was a serious alternative.

18...c6 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 20.b4 $\mathbb{E}c7$ 21.a4 $\mathbb{E}fc8$ 22.a5!

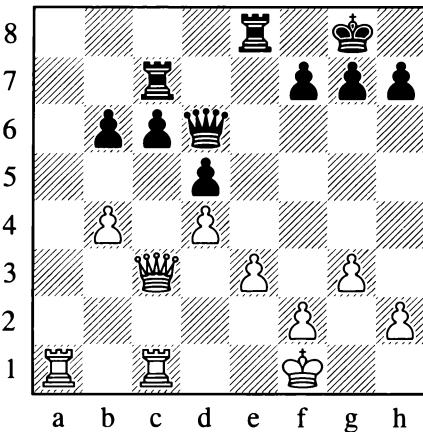
Creating further weaknesses in the black camp by opening the a-file.



22...♝a6

22...c5? is simply not possible. White would win by force with 23.bxc5 bxc5 24.♛a3!, when ideas such as e3-e4 will come in many variations. Ponomariov gave 24...♝f8 as a Black try, as well as the refutation: 25.dxc5 ♜xc5 26.♜xc5 ♜xc5 (26...♝xc5 27.♝b3! and White wins a pawn) 27.♝b3 ♜a8 28.e4!. Exploiting potential back-rank problems. Now after 28...♝xa5 he only considered taking the pawn on d5, which is very strong, but simpler is 29.♝b1! and White just wins a piece.

**23.♝a1 ♜b5 24.♝dc1 ♜e8 25.axb6 axb6
26.♝f1 ♜xf1 27.♝xf1±**



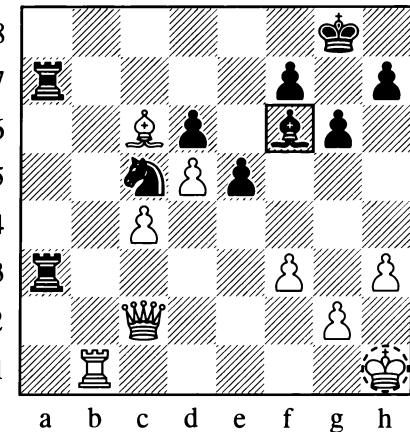
White is slightly more active and has some pressure on the black pawns. It is not devastating for Black, but it is inconvenient and in the game Kramnik did not manage to hold the position.

**27...♝b8 28.♝a6 ♜d7 29.♝g1 h6 30.♛a3
♜cc8 31.h4 ♜f5 32.♝a7 g5 33.h5 ♜f3
34.♛d3 ♜h8 35.♛a6 ♜g7 36.b5 c5 37.dxc5
bxc5 38.♛g6†**

1–0

25. Firat – Yalim

Kemer 2011



In positions with compensation for a material deficit, it is often a great advantage for the player who has given up material to have opposite-coloured bishops. This position is no exception. Black is doing well on the dark squares, but still needs to find a way to activate his bishop. This is achieved with a standard pawn sacrifice.

37...e4!

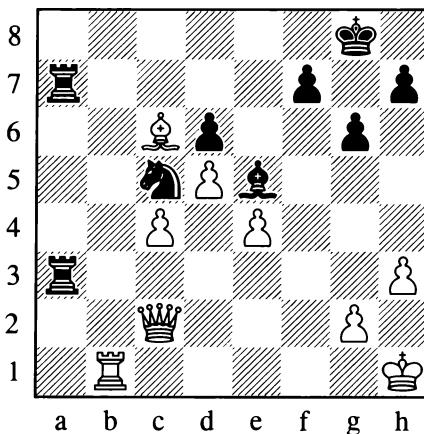
Black's position is generally excellent and so other moves, such as 37...♝a2 or 37...♝g7, would win as well. But these moves are really just delaying the main idea of ...e4, which should definitely be played at some point.

38.fxe4

White has to take the pawn to prevent it becoming a decisive factor: 38.♛d2 e3 39.♛e2 ♜d4 and it is time to resign.

38...♝e5

Black is completely winning. White played a few more moves, but he was probably playing on due to inertia.



39.♔g1 ♜a2 40.♕c1 ♔g7

Black is in no hurry. The difference between the two bishops is obvious.

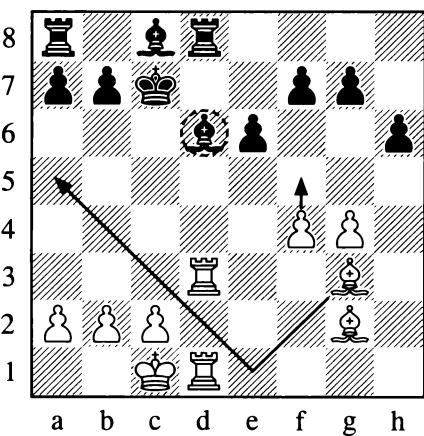
41. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{B}a1$ 42. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{B}7a2\ddagger$ 43. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{B}a3\ddagger$
 44. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{B}3a2\ddagger$ 45. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{B}a3\ddagger$ 46. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{B}1a2\ddagger$

White could not face the prospect of the knight joining the hunt as well.

0-1

26. Gashimov – Giri

Monaco (blindfold) 2011



Black is under pressure and needs to find a way to deal with it. If he does so successfully, then White will have to force a draw quickly before his initiative evaporates and he finds

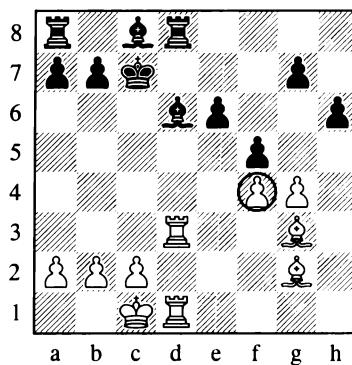
himself in an ending a pawn down.

20...f6?

This passive move immediately runs into great difficulties.

After 20...a5?! 21.f5 $\mathbb{B}a6$ 22. $\mathbb{B}c3\uparrow$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 23. $\mathbb{B}f1$ $\mathbb{B}b6$ 24. $\mathbb{B}c5\pm$ Black should probably be able to hold the position with decent play, but it is inconvenient and holds certain risks. Certainly this should be avoided.

20...f5! was the correct move.

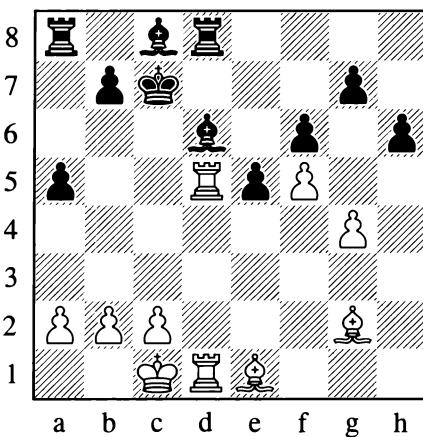


The difference to the game is that White does not get full control over the d5-square and the freedom to swing the bishop around. Another structural point is that the f4-pawn is fixed as a weakness. This might sound irrelevant when we are in a defensive position, but it is not so. We should always aim to create weaknesses in our opponent's position; even for defensive purposes. After 21.gxf5 exf5 White should already think about repeating the position with 22.♗c3† ♖b8 23.♗cd3. Notice that 22.♗e1 does not work this time around, as the bishop needs to hold on to the f-pawn.

21.f5 e5 22.♔e1!

The bishop pops up on another diagonal, creating great problems for Black.

22...a5 23.¤d5±



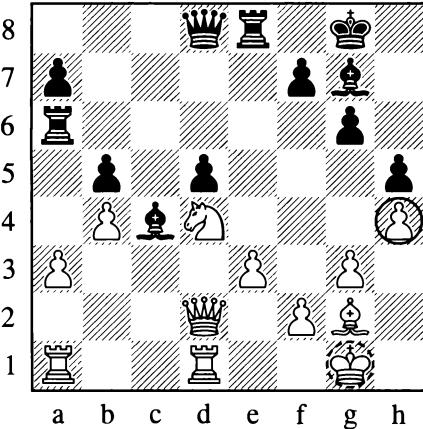
Black is already in big trouble. White will take on a5, and all the black pieces are poorly placed, running and diving to avoid capture.

23...e4 24.Qb1 e3 25.Qf1 Qe8 26.Qxd6 e2
 27.Qxe2 Qxe2 28.Qg3 Qg2 29.Qf4 Qxg4
 30.Qd7† Qc6 31.Qd6† Qb5 32.a4† Qxa4
 33.Qb6 Qxf4 34.Qa2

1–0

27. Karpov – Anand

Leon Man+Computer (5) 1999



The centre is stable and White has no active plans on the queenside. It is therefore logical that Black should start an offensive on the kingside, where he has more influence and a chance to include more pieces in the attack.

35...g5!

This weakens both players' king positions, but only Black can bring pieces quickly to the kingside. When this match was played, the computers did not appreciate this move – today they do.

36.hxg5 Qxg5 37.Qf3 Qg4 38.Qc1

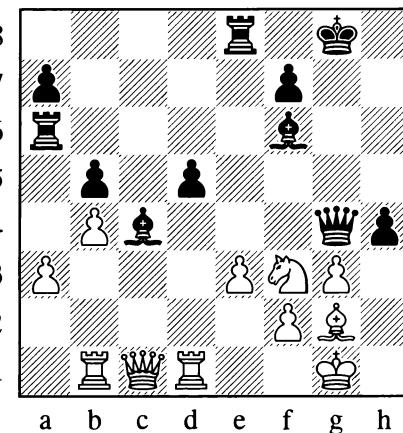
White is not seriously bothered about the prospect of losing the exchange. Why should he be? Anything to support the dark squares would offer him some chances to resist.

38...Qf6

Black prepares ...h5-h4, further opening the kingside.

39.Qb1 h4

39...Qc8 was also very strong, but I expect that at this point Anand was simply checking that there was nothing wrong with his moves and following his intuition.



40.Qh2

Black crashes through on the g-file after both 40.Qxh4 Qxh4 41.Qd4 Qe4! and 40.gxh4 Qg7. It is not necessary for us to concern ourselves with all the details, but let us just take a quick look, extending the latter line with 41.Qh1 Qg6 42.Qg1 Qh6! and we can see that White is done for.

40...♝g7

Again Black has other moves, but Anand is preparing to break through in the centre.

41.g4 d4 42.exd4 ♘xd4 43.♗f1

White is dead lost. For example 43.♗f3 ♘xf2†! 44.♔xf2 ♕e2† 45.♗g1 ♕xg2† 46.♗xg2 ♘xg4† and White is mated after a lot of checks.

43...♛e5 44.♗xc4 ♕xf2†!

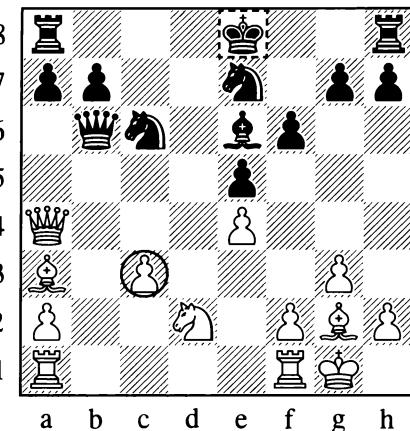
The final touch.

45.♗g2 h3† 46.♗f1

0–1

28. Zhu Chen – Korchnoi

Marbella 1999

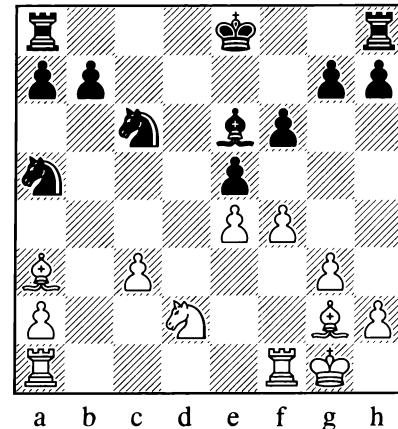


White has a number of things going for her. She has the two bishops, pressure against the black king and open files for her rooks. Black has to deal with all of these as well as finding an orderly way to complete his development. It transpires that all he has to do is to exchange queens, after which White will have no targets (as the black king is then fully safe) and is left with a poor structure with weak pawns and an inactive bishop on g2.

15...♛a5!† 16.♛xa5 ♘xa5 17.f4

In my understanding this only makes things worse. Rather than creating active options, it leads to pawn weaknesses.

17...♝ec6



18.fxe5

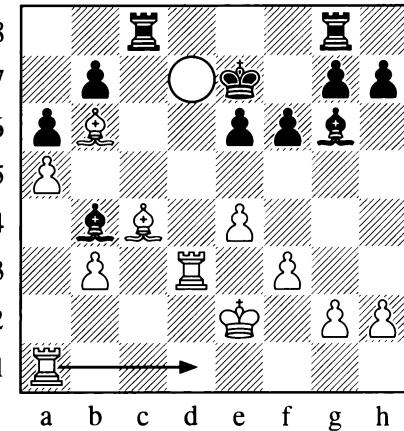
After 18.f5?! ♘f7 White has nothing to do with all of her activity. Black will play ...0–0–0, ...♝d7 and ...♝hd8 with a nice advantage because of his superior structure.

18...♝xe5 19.♗f3 ♘ac4

Black is in full control and won the game on move 59.

29. Topalov – Kramnik

Elista World Championship (6) 2006



Black is close to equality. But if he played the natural 21... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$, he would have to sit quietly and wait for White to advance his pawns in an attempt to squeeze Black off the board.

21... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$

A fine defensive move that equalizes immediately. Not only does it prepare to bring the rook to the d-file to neutralize the pressure, it also frees a meaningful square for the g8-rook to go to.

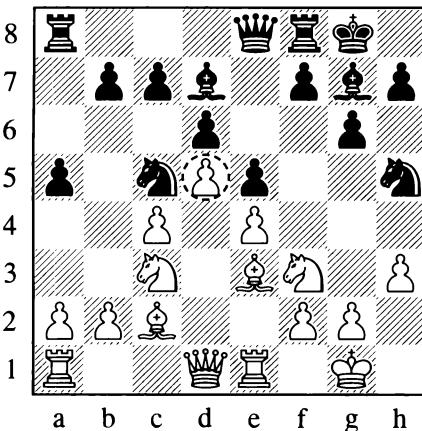
22.h4

22. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ with equality.

22... $\mathbb{Q}gc8$ 23.g4 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}d7\#$
 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 26.axb6 $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}1d6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$
 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 30.b4 e5 31. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$
 $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

30. Morozевич – Jenni

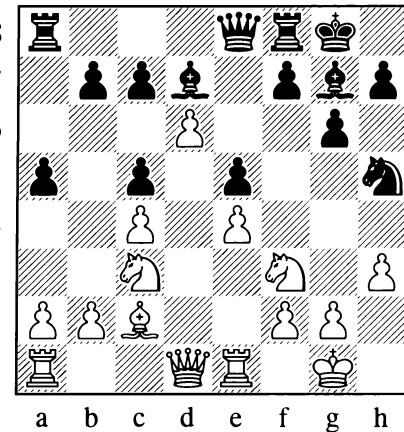
Dresden (ol) 2008



White practically never takes the knight on c5 in the King's Indian, even though it doubles Black's pawns. Basically the control over the dark squares is more important and Black's dark-squared bishop is liable to become good in the long run. However, this position is an

exception because White is able to push his pawn to d6 and obtain a fantastic square on d5 for his knight. Even if it is taken, a lot of light squares will remain weak in the black position.

13. $\mathbb{Q}xc5!$ $\mathbb{Q}dx5$ 14.d6



14... $\mathbb{Q}xd6$

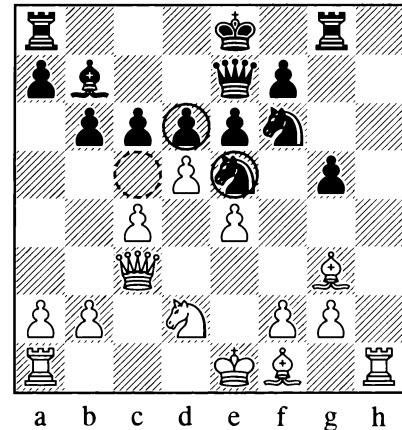
14...c6 15. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ is just useless.

15. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$
18. $\mathbb{Q}d5$

White has the advantage, though it is open for debate how big it is.

31. Gagunashvili – Monroy

Sautron 2008



A classic example of what I call the absent bishop. A bishop can be absent either by having gone to another diagonal or, as in this case, by being exchanged. White is able to benefit from the lack of a dark-squared bishop by undermining the dark squares with a typical push.

16.c5!

Black has excellent control over the light squares in his position; it is on the dark squares he is suffering.

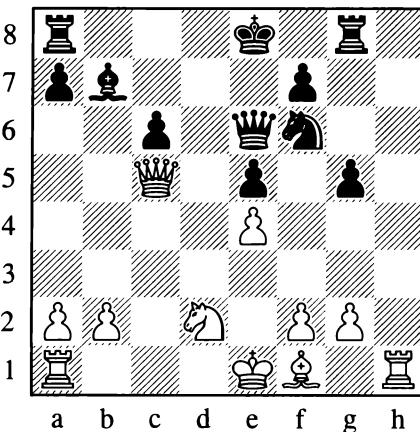
16...bxc5

Black has no alternatives.

17.Qxe5 dxe5 18.dxe6

White wins back the pawn while Black's position is left in ruins.

18...Qxe6 19.Qxc5



19...Qd7?!

19...0–0–0 would be an energetic try, but White can keep his advantage as well as full control with 20.Qc4+–.

20.Qa5

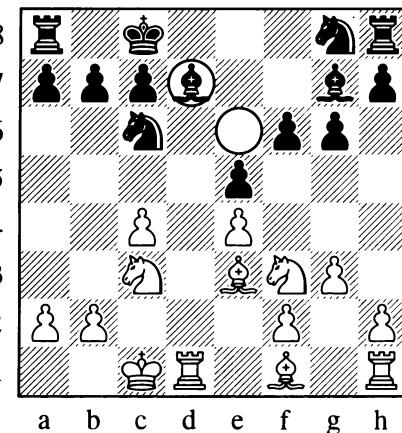
Black is running out of moves.

20...Qb6 21.Qb3 Qe7 22.0–0–0

White is in complete control and won the game on move 41.

32. Benkovic – Salami

Martigny 2008



White has a lead in development, but in principle Black has a better structure. Should Black get all his pieces into play there is a good chance that he would equalize without too much trouble. For this reason the best exploitation of the lead in development is to give up the exchange and bring in the remaining pieces rapidly.

11.Bxd7! Qxd7 12.Qh3† Qe7

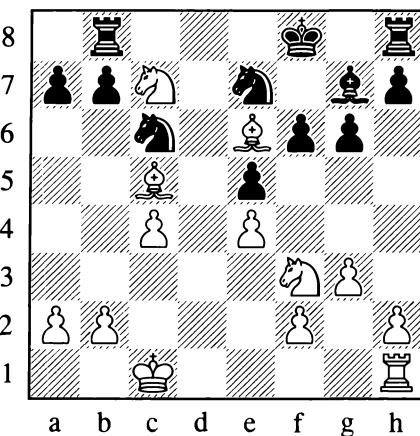
12...f5 13.exf5 only makes things worse.

12...Qe8 13.Qd5 simply transposes to the game.

13.Qd5† Qf7 14.Qxc7 Bb8

14...Bd8 is best met with: 15.Qe6† Qf8 16.Qc2!± This is prophylaxis against 16...Qh6, when White can play 17.Qxg8 Qxe3 18.Qe6† Qxg8 19.Qxd8 Qxd8 20.fxe3 and enjoy an extra pawn in the ending.

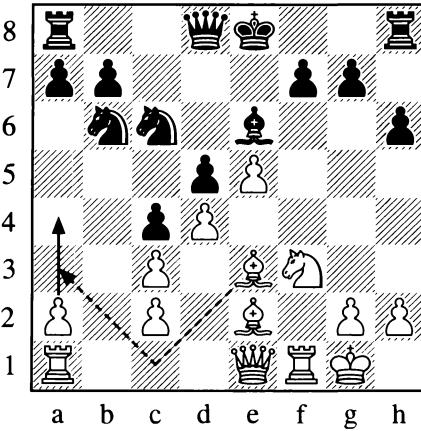
15.Qe6† Qf8 16.Qc5† Qge7



White has a clear advantage and won on move 30, even if he did not find the strongest continuation at this juncture. White should play something simple, such as 17.♖d1 or 17.♕c2 b6 18.♕a3 ♜b7 19.♕b5 ♜d8 20.♕c8 ♜b8 21.♕h3, when Black should not be able to get organized before White has a rook on the 7th doing dentistry with a wrecking ball.

33. Nohr – P. Andersen

Denmark 2012



This position is entirely about prophylaxis. White has a strong positional threat that he was able to execute in the game. Black simply must not allow this idea. He should have played 13...♞a4, when it is not obvious that

he is seriously worse. But he did not see it and was quickly run over.

13...♝e7?

Besides not paying attention to White's idea, this even encourages it.

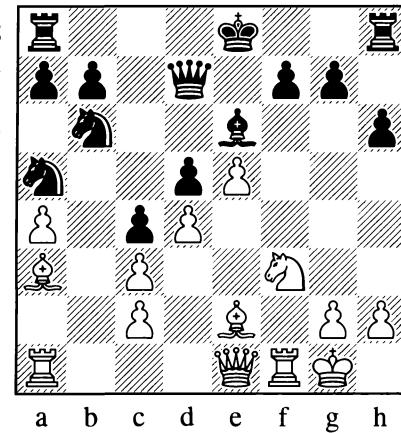
14.♘a4!

White will play ♜e3-c1-a3 with a great attack. Black decided he needed to get something in return for this, which was probably too risky an approach.

14...♞a5?!

It was necessary to play 14...0–0 15.♗g3 ♜h8, when White might have played 16.♕h4 with serious attacking chances.

15.♕c1! ♜d7 16.♕a3



16...♞xa4?

16...0–0–0± was the last chance, but I doubt whether the position can be held.

17.♕b4! b6 18.♗h4

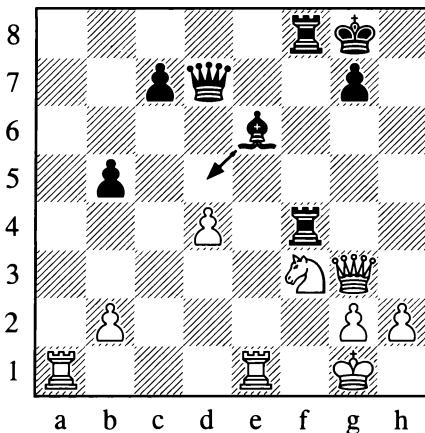
Black's position has collapsed.

18...g5 19.♕xg5 0–0–0 20.♕xe6 fxe6 21.♗h5 ♜b7 22.♗e7 ♜dg8 23.♗f7 ♜g7 24.♗f6

1–0

34. Motylev – S. Ernst

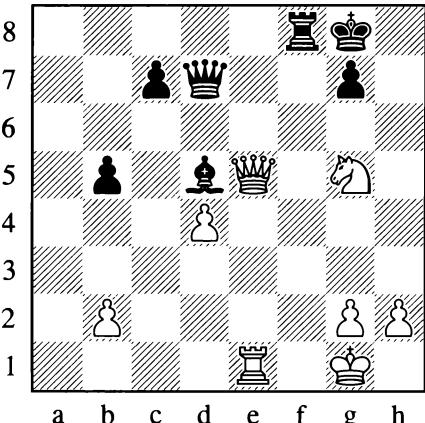
Wijk aan Zee 2012



White has an extra pawn, but Black has some counterplay on the kingside, soon to be made a little more serious with ... $\mathbb{Q}d5$. Motylev for this reason correctly decided that he should exchange a pair of rooks immediately.

27. $\mathbb{R}a8!$ $\mathbb{R}xa8$ 28. $\mathbb{W}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{R}f8$ 30. $\mathbb{W}e5\pm$

White is in full control of the position, and the danger of being mated has evaporated.



30... $\mathbb{W}c6$ 31. $h3!$ $\mathbb{W}c4$

31... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 32. $\mathbb{W}e6\uparrow$ loses the exchange on account of 32... $\mathbb{Q}h8?$ 33. $\mathbb{W}e7!$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}e6+-$.

32. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $c6$ 33. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{W}f1$ 34. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{W}b1$ 35. $\mathbb{W}e7$ $\mathbb{W}g6$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{W}xg3\uparrow$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ $\mathbb{W}f1$

It is difficult to play something like 37... $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 38. $\mathbb{W}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ in time trouble, even though this was definitely the last chance to stay in the game. White would continue 39. $\mathbb{W}e4$ and most likely the extra pawn would be enough to win, but there is still some uncertainty.

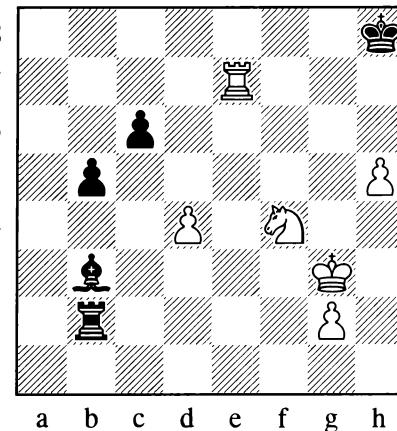
38. $\mathbb{W}xg7\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 39. $\mathbb{W}e7$ $\mathbb{B}b1$

39... $\mathbb{B}e1?$ 40. $\mathbb{W}e8\uparrow$ and White will pick up the rook.

40. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}b3$

40... $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $cxd5$ 42. $\mathbb{W}d7$ and White wins.

41. $h4$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 42. $h5$



42... $\mathbb{Q}g8$

42... $\mathbb{Q}c2$ was the only move, but White wins anyway by paralysing Black with 43. $h6$ and $\mathbb{Q}f4-e6-g5$.

43. $h6$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$

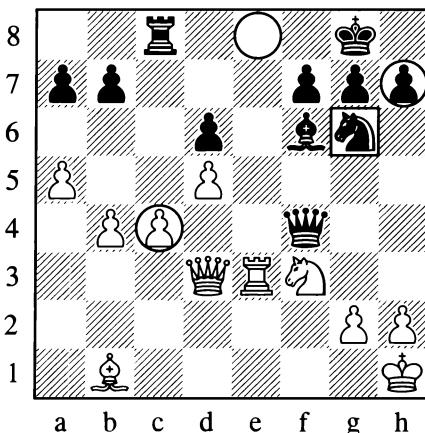
White was threatening 44. $h6\uparrow$ and 45. $\mathbb{Q}g6\#$.

44. $\mathbb{Q}h5$ $\mathbb{B}b1$ 45. $\mathbb{W}g7\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 46. $h7$ $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ 47. $\mathbb{W}xh7$ $\mathbb{B}h1$ 48. $\mathbb{Q}g4$

1–0

35. Tiviakov – S. Ernst

Wijk aan Zee 2012



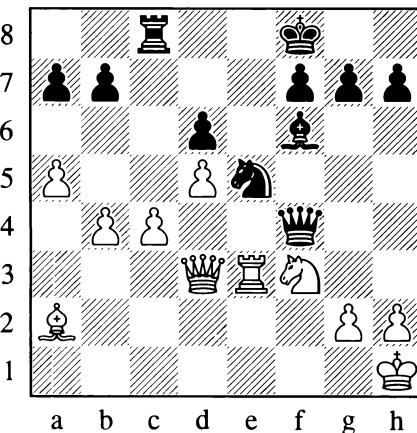
White's idea is to take on h7 with check. It is not an effective offensive idea, as he can do nothing to make it happen; but as a defensive idea it is valid. For this reason, Black's worst-placed piece is his king. Ernst solved this elegantly.

33...♞f8!!

Besides reducing the impact of ♜xh7 (no longer check) this also defends against the back rank mate. White now has a serious problem with his weakness on c4.

34.♕a2 ♔e5

Black could also take the activity out of the white position with 34...♝e8!?, when the ensuing endgame is very advantageous.



35.♗e4?

This loses material by force. Necessary was 35.♕xe5 ♕xe5 36.g3 ♛f2 37.♗e2 ♛xe2 38.♗xe2 ♖c3 39.b5 ♖xa5†, when White can fight in this horrible ending where he is a pawn down and everything is misplaced.

35...♛xe4 36.♗xe4 ♖d3

Threatening the b4-pawn.

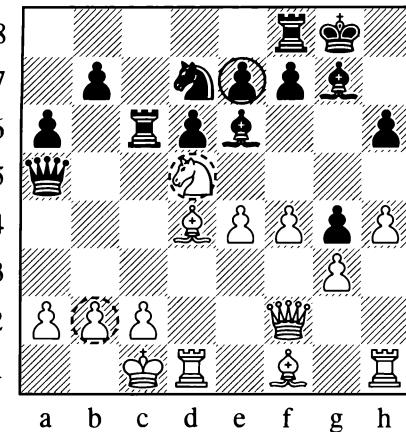
37.b5 ♖f2†

Oh yes, and a fork.

0–1

36. Karjakin – Gelfand

Wijk aan Zee 2012



20...♜xd5

The knight on d5 has to be eliminated immediately.

21.exd5 ♛c5!

The rook is much more comfortable on this active square than on c7. White now has to take into account that his d-pawn is in trouble.

22.♗xg7

Really the only move in the position. 22.♗xc5?? ♗xc5 is a disaster for White; Black has threats of ...♗a4, ...♛xa2 and ...♛b4.

22... $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}b1!?$

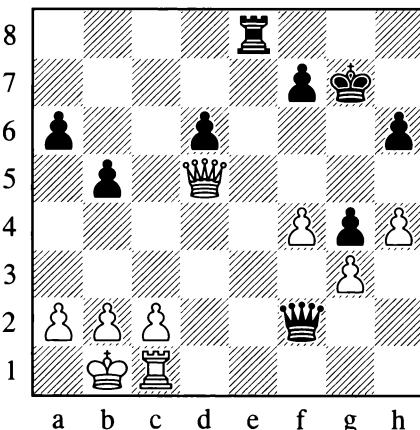
23. $\mathbb{W}d4\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}b4$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 26. $\mathbb{B}xd4$ $\mathbb{B}fc8$ 27. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{B}8c7$ White is not really worse in this ending, but his bishop is slightly inferior to the knight, so he would have to be careful.

23... $\mathbb{B}xd5$ 24. $\mathbb{B}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}c5$
26. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6\uparrow$ 27. $\mathbb{W}xe7?!$

After this White has no counterplay. The material equality is not as important as the weaknesses in White's position, especially g3.

27. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ was the correct move. Karjakin probably greatly disliked the following variation: 27... $\mathbb{B}b8$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{W}d4!$ (28... $\mathbb{W}a3$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{W}xg3$ 30.a4 leads to the kind of randomness that White should welcome at the moment.) 29.b3 $\mathbb{Q}e4\uparrow$ with a very serious attack on the white king. I believe that Black should win here, but even the engines do not give a direct win. Some uncertainty and complications persist, and this is all that White could hope for at this point.

27... $b5$ 28. $\mathbb{W}b7$ $\mathbb{B}e8$ 29. $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{W}f2$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 31. $\mathbb{W}xd5$



31... $\mathbb{B}e1!$

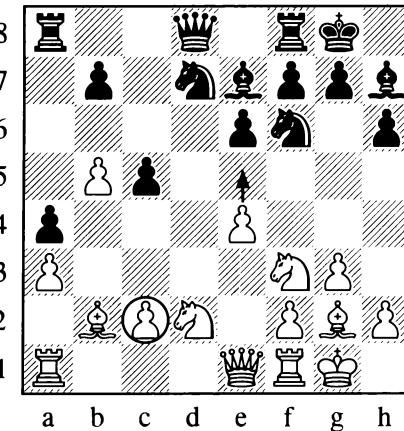
Eliminating all counterplay. There will be no perpetual.

32. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xg3$ 33. $\mathbb{W}d4\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 34.b3 $\mathbb{B}xc1\uparrow$
35. $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ $\mathbb{W}xh4$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ g3 37. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}g4$
38. $\mathbb{W}d8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 39. $\mathbb{W}d4\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 40. $\mathbb{W}d8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$
41. $\mathbb{W}d3\uparrow$ $\mathbb{W}g6$ 42. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ g2 43. $\mathbb{W}xg6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}xg6$
44. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ b4

0–1

37. Chibukhchian – Gvetadze

Jermuk 2011



White is about to play e4-e5, c2-c4 and $\mathbb{Q}e4$ with a nice advantage. Black needs to get a square of her own. She ensured this with an excellent move in the game:

14...c4!

A standard move like 14... $\mathbb{W}c7$ would land Black in a worse situation after: 15.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 16.c4 $\mathbb{Q}5b6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}e2\pm$ The e4-square is a pleasant possession for White.

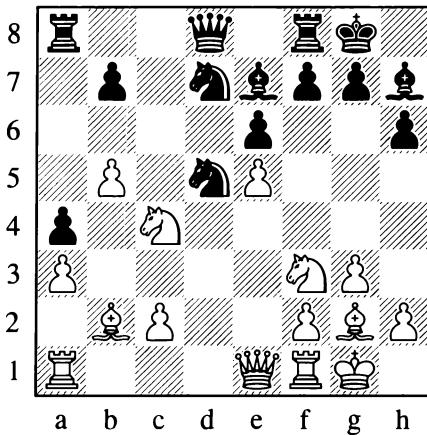
15.e5?

White is overstretching and the weakness of the c2-pawn becomes a real problem.

Better was something like 15. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{B}c8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 17. $\mathbb{B}fd1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ with fairly even chances. Here Black has the c5-square, whereas White does not have the e4-square. Still, White is not suffering from any great problems.

15...Qd5 16.Qxc4

Black won the game in 74 moves after lots of twist and turns. At this point her best option was to bring in the rook with:



16...Rc8! 17.Qe2 Q7b6 18.Qfd2

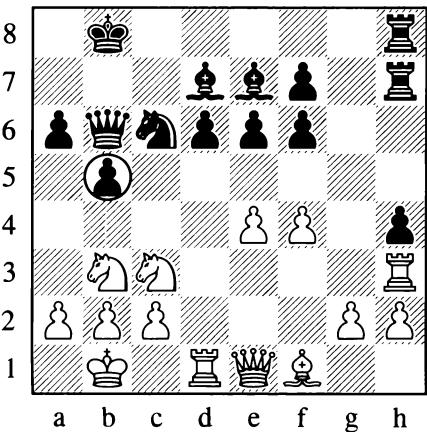
18.Qxb6? Rxc2

18...Qxc4 19.Qxc4 Rd7#

White's position is close to a complete collapse.

38. Kulon – Kazimova

Chennai 2011



A fairly standard-looking Sicilian position where the engines probably overestimate

White's chances on principle because the b5-pawn would be better placed on b7. This is indeed the main problem in the black position and White should target this immediately:

23.a4!± b4?!

This allows White to execute her idea and is therefore a bit compliant.

23...bxa4 24.Qxa4 Rb4 is not something anyone would want to play, but here it was necessary. White can now play 25.Qc3 and keep the pressure on, or she can win a pawn with 25.Qbc5?! Rxe1 26.Qxd7+ Rc7 27.Rxe1 Qxd7 28.Rc3 and Black cannot save her a-pawn. White should win, but some complications remain.

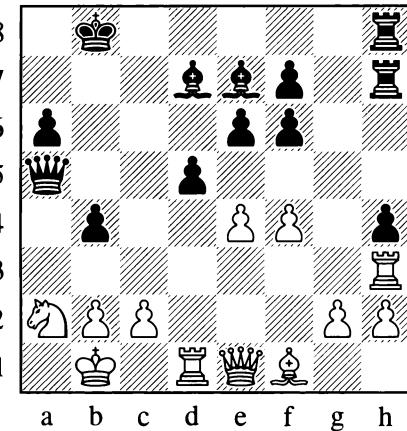
24.a5!

A typical idea. White uses the extra tempo to open lines to the black king (or to gain access to the a4-square).

24...Qxa5

24...Rb7 25.Qa4 is also devastating. White will most likely just play Qb6, Qd4 and Rb3. But she has all kinds of ideas, for example: 25...Rxe8 26.e5?! fxe5 27.fxe5 Qxe5 28.Qac5! dx5 29.Qxc5! Rc8 30.Rxe5+ Ra8 31.Qxa6 and White's position looks winning.

25.Qxa5 Rxa5 26.Qa2 d5



27. $\mathbb{Q}a3!$

A nice move. 27.exd5 was also conclusive. White will play d5-d6 and win. For example: 27... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 28.d6! $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}hd3$ and so on.

27... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{W}c5$

28... $\mathbb{W}b7$ is a bit more resistant, but after 29. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ White is still winning.

29. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $exd5$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 31. $\mathbb{W}xe7$

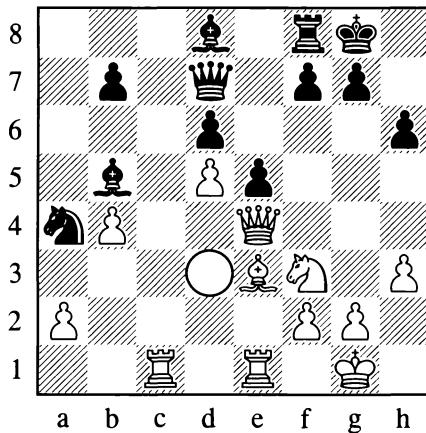
The threats are many, for example $\mathbb{Q}d6$.

31... $\mathbb{W}b7$ 32. $\mathbb{W}d6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}b6$

1-0

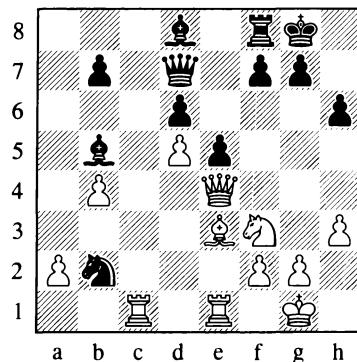
39. Goganov – Khismatullin

Moscow 2012

**26... $\mathbb{Q}b6??$**

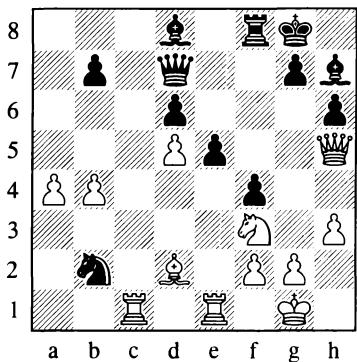
A horrible move by an otherwise very strong grandmaster. This knight is Black's best piece and he should never allow White to get rid of it. The weakness in the white position was definitely the light squares and the removal of the knight makes protecting them quite a bit easier.

Of the light squares, it is the d3-square that is weakest of them all. For this reason, Black should have taken the chance to play 26... $\mathbb{Q}b2\#$.



The threats of ... $\mathbb{Q}d3$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}d3$ are very real. If Black wins back the exchange then material will be equal, but Black will then enjoy his better pawn structure and the chances he has on the kingside by advancing the pawns there.

Should White try to save the exchange, he can land in big problems: 27.a4 (27. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}ed1$ does not save anything. Black wins with 28...f5, trapping the queen.) 27... $\mathbb{Q}d3!$ Here White should give up the knight on e5 with a bit of counterplay. If he moves out of the way, he will soon be overrun. 28. $\mathbb{W}g4$ f5 29. $\mathbb{W}h5$ f4 30. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}h7!$



Black has a winning attack. The combination of ... $\mathbb{Q}d3$, ... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ and ...e5-e4 is too much to handle.

27. $\mathbb{Q}xb6!$

I am sure Goganov did not take too long to make this exchange. Sure, it is a bishop for

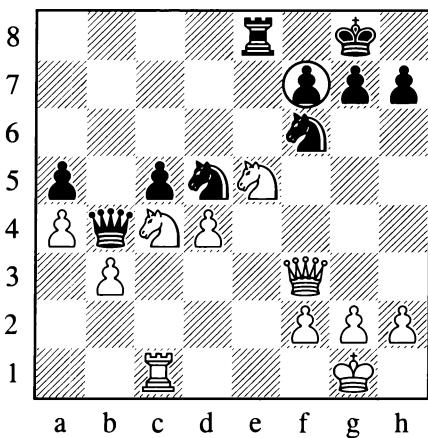
a knight, but it is a dubious bishop against a Derby-winning stallion!

27...♝xb6 28.♗d2±

White could have decided the game in his favour on move 39, but tripped and had to concede a draw on move 44.

40. E. Atalik – Krasenkova

Moscow 2012



34.dxc5?!

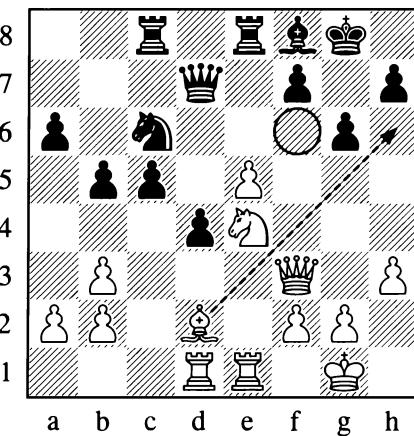
Missing the two biggest weaknesses in the black position – the f7-square and the knights' reliance on each other. White could have won immediately with 34.g4!, when there is no way for Black to deal with the further advance of the g-pawn. For example: 34...h6 35.h4 g5 36.hxg5 hxg5 37.♔f5 and Black loses something big.

34...♛xc5 35.♗d3

White has an extra pawn and should still win with optimal play. But this is hardly ever what happens and in this game White made additional mistakes and had to console herself with a half point after 140 moves.

41. Ziaziulkina – Severina

Moscow 2012



White is obviously threatening ♔f6†. Black needs to decide how to deal with this. As it forks the whole family there are really only two possible moves. If this was a book on calculation I would put this exercise under Elimination, which is another way of saying “Pay attention to your opponent’s ideas.” Black apparently did not do so in this game and was quickly taken down.

26...♝g7?

26...♝e7! was the right move. The position would be quite unclear, with both players needing to be careful. This is illustrated by the following “natural” moves by White, which lead straight to a 0–1 result: 27.♗f6†?! ♛xf6 28.♕xf6? ♜e6 and the e-pawn is lost.

27.♗h6!

White wins material as Black has to contend with both ♔f6† and ♔d6, and she cannot defend against both.

27...f5

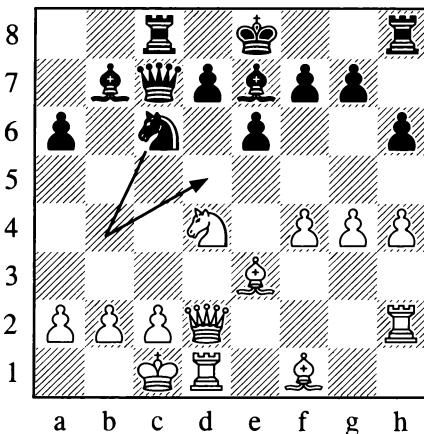
Not the best move, but Black should lose no matter what.

28.♘xc5

White won on move 45.

42. Aagaard – A. Rasmussen

Odense 2011



Here White incorrectly assumed that Black did not have any good positional ideas and that for this reason there was time to improve the position of the king.

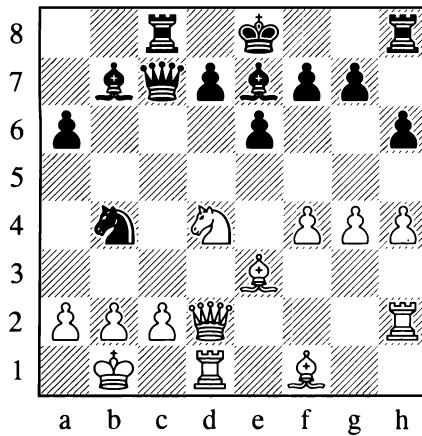
17.♔b1?!

Actually this was the first independent move out of preparation.

During the game I considered what would happen after the fairly natural 17.♘xc6! ♘xc6 18.♗d4. I believed that Black should play something like 18...f6, but in fact it is stronger to play 18...♗f3?! with a sharp position with even chances. The main point is 19.♗e2 ♗d6 20.♗e3 ♗d5 and Black is certainly not worse – but neither is White.

17...♗b4!?

Suddenly it is obvious that Black did have a plan and that after ...♗d5 he will have the advantage.



18.♘b3?

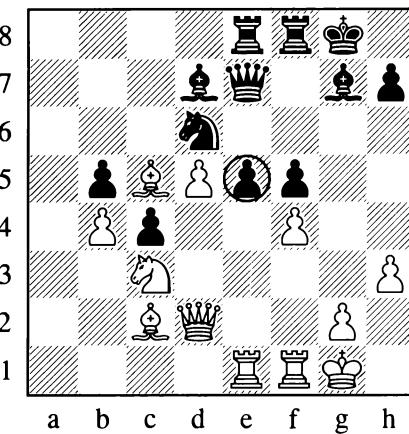
The second move out of preparation is also a mistake. I believe that I did play a lot of good moves in the remainder of this event, but this was horrible.

18...♗f3

Another deeply unpleasant move to face, and from here on it just got worse until I managed to set a great trap for my opponent and steal half a point from him on move 49.

43. Ding Liren – Ezat

Ningbo 2011



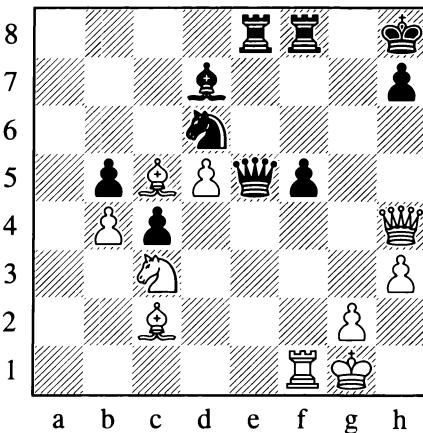
With a simple exchange sacrifice White is able to take full control over the dark squares.

As Black already has a wide-open king position, he will not manage to survive this.

25.fxe5 ♖xe5 26.♖xe5!

Simply eliminating the defence of the dark squares.

26...♗xe5 27.♗g5† ♔h8 28.♗h4!



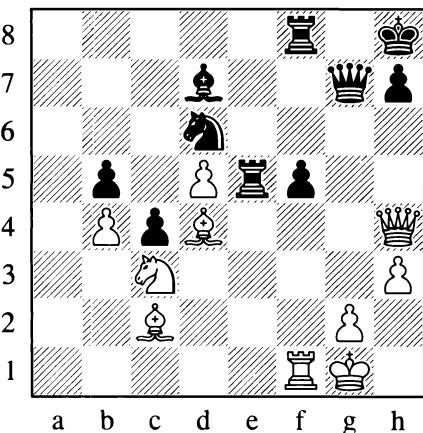
28...♗g7

The only defensive try. 28...♔g8 29.♗d4 and White wins.

29.♗d4

White also wins after 29.♗f3 ♗g8 30.♗d4 ♗e5 31.♗g3!, when the e5-rook cannot be defended.

29...♗e5



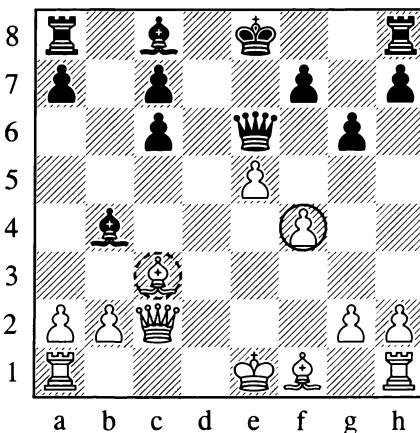
30.♗f3! ♗fe8 31.♗g3 ♗e7 32.♗h6 ♖c8 33.♗g6!

A nice conclusion to the game; Black's position is collapsing.

1–0

44. Pavasovic – S. Atalik

Valjevo 2007



Unless something happens, White will have quite a clear advantage due to his better structure. Black's c-pawns are permanently weak and White's presence in the centre is powerful. But this is all static thinking. If we look at the dynamics, we can see White is struggling a bit with his development. Usually this would encourage Black to attack, but it is quite limited what he can do – he lacks targets and active pieces. Surprisingly, matters look better for Black the moment he forces the exchange of queens.

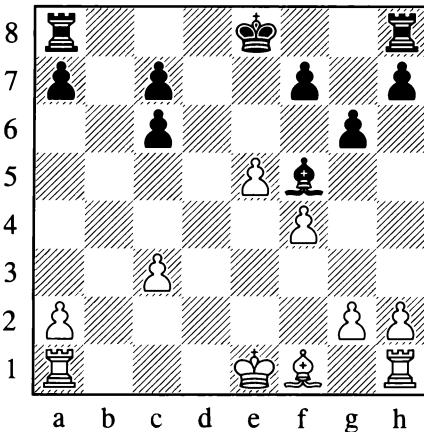
15...♕f5! 16.♕xf5

16.♗d2? would be a desirable move, were it not for the reply 16...♕e4†, winning something.

16...♗xc3† 17.bxc3 ♕xf5

The dust has cleared and we can see clear improvements for Black. The c-pawns are still weak, but it is now very difficult to attack

them. Black can instead get some benefits from the open files, especially the b-file, where Black is controlling White's entry square.



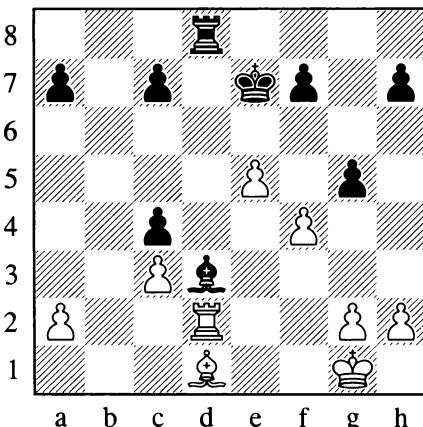
18.♕c4

18.0–0–0 ♜b8 19.♕d3 was another logical way to play. Black should not exchange bishops, but rather keep even chances with 19...♝e6.

18...♝e7 19.0–0 ♜hd8

Black has clearly equalized.

20.♖ad1 ♜c2 21.♖xd8 ♜xd8 22.♖f2 ♜d3
23.♖b3 c5 24.♖d2 c4 25.♖d1 g5!?

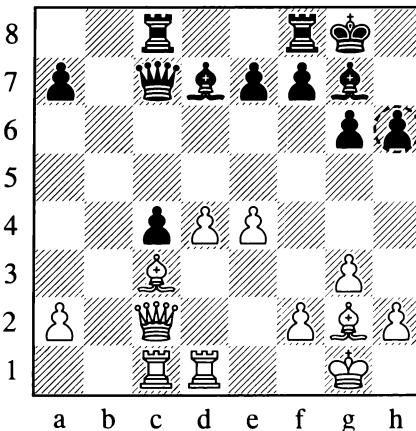


Atalik decided to play ambitiously for a win, although he is not better. The game ended in

a draw on move 59. He could also have played 25...♜b8 26.♕f2 ♜b1 27.♕e3 c5 when it is clear that Black has no problems.

45. Erdos – Oparin

Trieste 2011



White's correct plan is to exchange the bishop on g7 and advance his pawns quickly before Black manages to blockade them.

20.d5!± ♜xc3 21.♖xc3 ♜c5

21...e5 would be ideal for Black positionally – but White would have 22.d6, winning the e-pawn.

22.♖d4 ♜b5 23.e5 ♜fd8

23...f6 24.♖e1!± and White keeps a strong position.

24.h4 h5 25.♖cd1 a5 26.g4 hxg4

26...♛b4 27.♛e3 does not improve Black's situation.

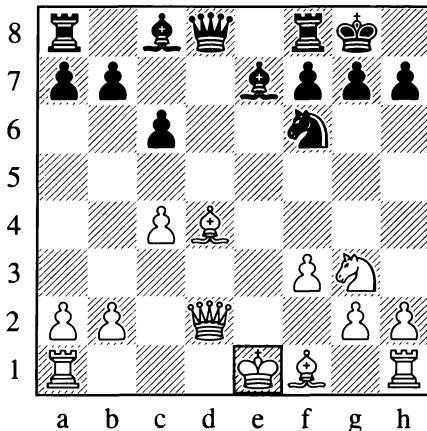
27.h5 gxh5 28.♛e3!

White has a winning attack.

28...f6 29.♛h6 fxe5 30.♕e4 ♜d6 31.♕h7† ♜f7 32.♖xh5† ♜f8 33.♖xg4
1–0

46. Mecking – Vescovi

Campinas 2011



Black has an excellent chance to take control of the dark squares in the white position by exchanging the dark-squared bishops. Of course the c8-bishop is not a strong piece, but the f1-bishop is even worse. This combined with the weakening of the e3-square makes this operation highly desirable for Black.

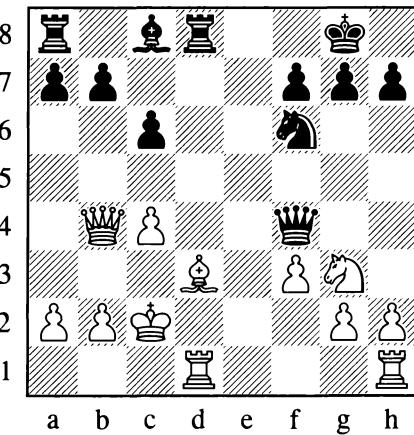
13...♝b4! 14.♗xb4

This loses a lot of control over the dark squares. But modest play has its problems too: 14.♕c3 ♛xc3 15.♗xc3 ♜e8† 16.♗e2 If White were given a couple of moves to complete his development he would be happy, but he is suffering after both 16...♘d6!? and 16...h5! 17.♗d1 ♜e7, where White lacks a good way to defend against ...h4. For example, 18.♗d4 h4! 19.♗xh4 ♘d5 and Black is almost winning.

14...♗xd4 15.♗d1 ♜e5†?!

15...♜e3† 16.♗e2 ♜e8† was even stronger. White has no easy way of finishing his development, and ...h5 may come next.

16.♗d2 ♜d8† 17.♗d3 ♜f4† 18.♗c2



18...♝d5

18...♝e6†

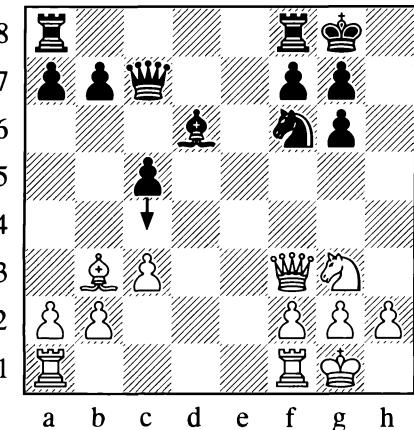
19.♗d2 ♘e3† 20.♗b1 ♘e6 21.♗he1 ♜xd3

22.♗xd3 ♘xd1 23.♗xd1

The position is more or less equal, though Black managed to win on move 67.

47. Tiviakov – Lenderman

Hoogeveen 2011



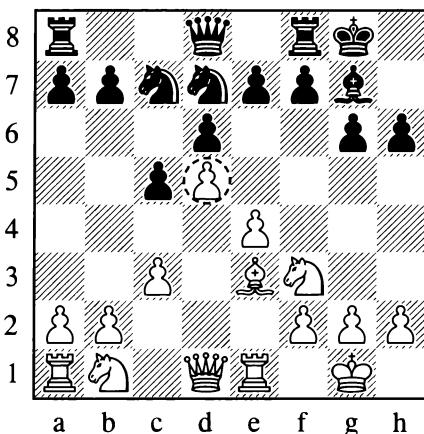
Black's primary weakness is f7, so he would love to shut out the white bishop with ...c5-c4. For this reason Tiviakov played:

17.♗c4†

White keeps some faint pressure, and managed to win on move 67.

48. McShane – Bologan

Pamplona 2003



If it were White's move, he would play $\mathbb{W}d2$, followed by c3-c4 and $\mathbb{Q}c3$ with a slight edge. Instead Black is able to undermine the white centre with a powerful punch.

12...f5!

A sharp move that undermines the d5-pawn. White is suffering somewhat from the missing bishop syndrome. The fact that he has not yet fully developed the queenside exacerbates his problems.

13.exf5

White has a difficult choice here. In the game he hoped to get some counterplay on the light squares, but with the knight on c7 so strongly in charge of them, this proved difficult.

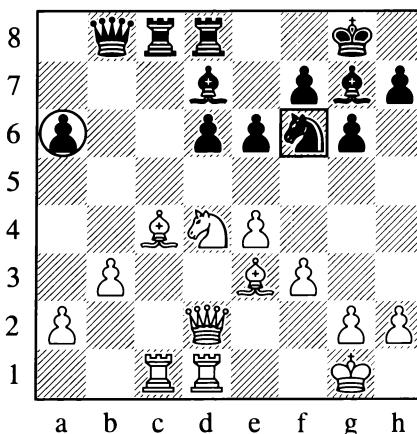
13. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ fxe4 14. $\mathbb{B}xe4$ also runs into trouble after 14...g5!. Black's idea is ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$, and his intention is to meet 15.c4 with 15...b5! 16.cxb5 $\mathbb{Q}f6$, when White is probably a little bit worse.

13... $\mathbb{B}xf5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{B}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}c2$ g5 16. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{W}f8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{W}f7#$

White does not have enough compensation for the pawn and lost on move 60.

49. C. Pedersen – Aagaard

Helsingør 2012

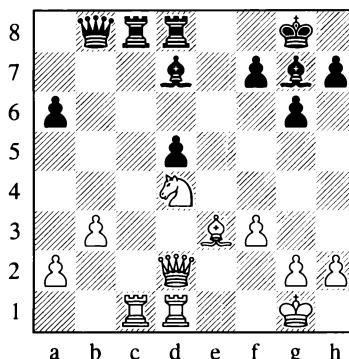


There are many factors that can cloud our minds when we sit at the board. I felt that I had done okay out of the opening and I really wanted to win the game, but these are just emotions. In reality the position is just edging on being worse for Black after something like 21... $\mathbb{W}a8$. But I completely blew it in the game:

21...e5??

A grave mistake, from which Black will not recover. I was vaguely aware of this, but being in poor shape and wishing that I could somehow get some activity was stronger than rational thinking when it came to making a decision. Not unfairly, I was crushed.

21...d5! was the correct move: 22.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ exd5



Even though Black is left with a bad bishop, he is not worse. For example, 24.♕e2 ♕b5 and White does not get a good knight versus bad bishop scenario.

22.♕c2± ♕b5 23.♕xb5 ♕xb5 24.♕a3!

A strong regrouping.

24...♕b7 25.♗xc8 ♕xc8 26.♕c4

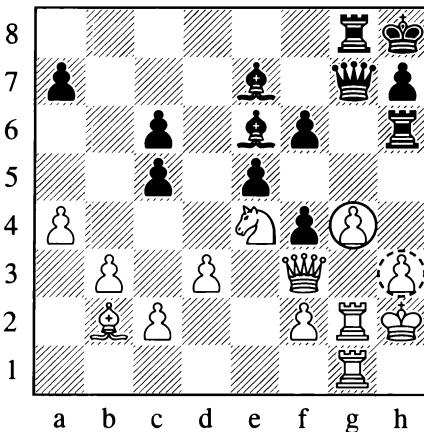
White just wins.

26...♕b7 27.♕a5

1–0

50. McShane – Radjabov

Moscow 2012



White's great weakness is the h3/g4 constellation, and more generally everything about the light squares. If he had the time, he would play ♘h1! in order to be able to defend himself with ♘h2. But it is Black to move and he can put extra pressure on the light squares with an accurate move:

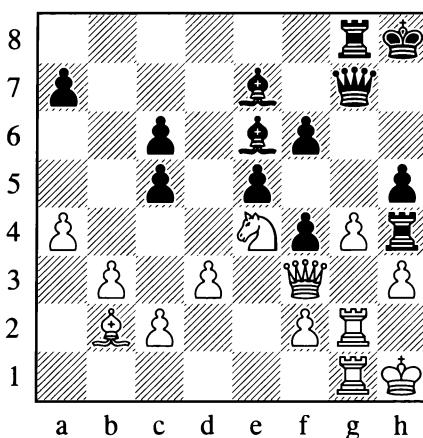
40...♗h4!

Preparing ...h5 and ...♗h6 and at the same time putting direct pressure on the g4-pawn.

41.♘h1

White has nothing better.

41...h5



42.♗h2

42.g5! would have been the best chance. Black wins the queen with 42...♗xh3† 43.♕xh3 ♘xh3, but after 44.♗h2 fxg5 45.♗xh3 ♗f7 46.♗xe5† ♘h7 47.f3 Black's advantage does not translate to an automatic victory; a bit of work will be needed.

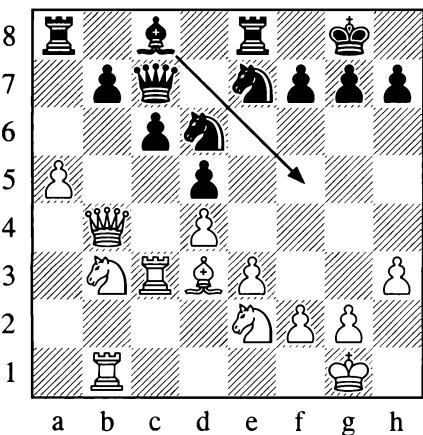
42...hxg4 43.♗d1

43.hxg4 ♗h7! 44.♗gg2 ♘xg4 and White must resign.

**43...♗h7 44.♗gg2 ♗g6 45.♗g1 ♗gh6
46.hxg4 ♘xg4 47.♗d2 f3 48.♗xh4 fxg2†
0–1**

51. Karpov – Kharitonov

Moscow 1988



Black is about to improve his position slightly by getting rid of his bad bishop on c8. Karpov decides not to allow this.

28... $\mathbb{Q}g3!?$

White's advantage might not seem like a lot, but Black is always going to find life difficult with a bad bishop against a decent knight. He decides to push the white knight away, but this only helps it regroup – and White has enough time to rearrange his pieces so that he does not have to allow the exchange of the bishop.

28...g6

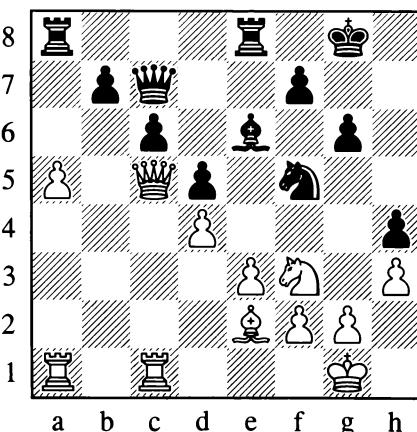
28... $\mathbb{Q}ef5$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xf5!?$ would leave White with knight against bad bishop. Again it is not a lot – and certainly not something you can explain to a computer, but in reality it would be a little uncomfortable for Black.

28... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ on the other hand would leave Black with the equally undesirable knight against good bishop after 29. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}exf5$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}c5!?$.

29. $\mathbb{Q}cc1$ h5 30. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ h4 31. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$

33... $\mathbb{Q}a7$ was maybe a bit better, but White keeps an edge with accurate play: 34. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}ea8$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}b3!?$

34. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}f3$



36... $\mathbb{Q}d8?$

This loses a pawn and seals Black's fate. Life was still uncomfortable after 36... $\mathbb{Q}e7!?$, when White keeps an edge with almost any move, but at least he cannot win anything directly.

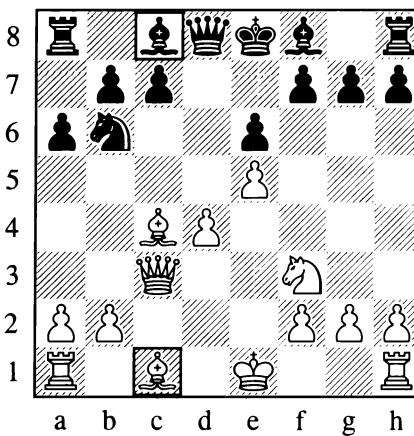
37.a6 $\mathbb{B}xa6$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$
40. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 42. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

Black still has some drawing chances, but faced by the prospect of endless torture by perhaps the greatest technical player in history, Kharitonov decided to head for the bar.

1–0

52. Ivanchuk – Eljanov

Foros 2008



If Black had all the time in the world, he would play ... $\mathbb{Q}c8-d7-c6$ and enjoy the lovely d5-square. From White's point of view, he has some satisfaction from the way the d4/e5 pawns restrict Black's freedom.

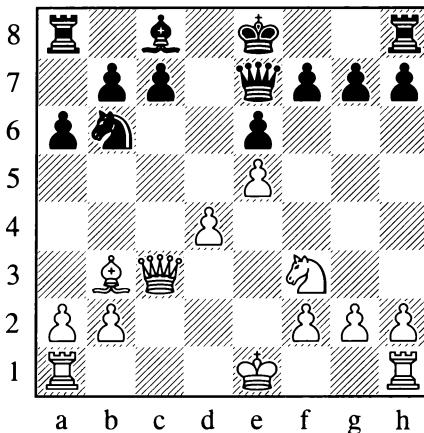
10. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$

This leads to the exchange of Black's good bishop.

10. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ is just equal.

10.♗b3 ♗d5 11.♗xd5 ♜xd5! is pleasant for Black. He has great compensation after 12.0–0 ♗d7 13.♘xc7 ♗b4 14.♗e3 0–0, when his “bad” bishop will be fantastic in times to come.

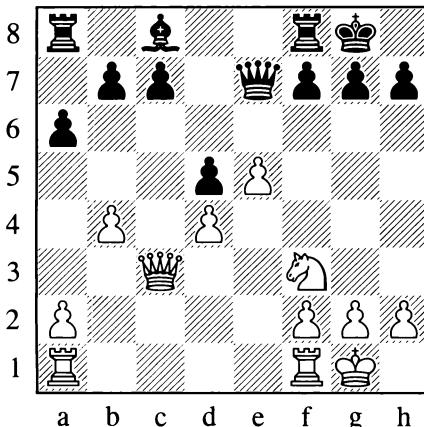
10...♝e7 11.♗xe7 ♜xe7 12.♗b3



12...♝d5?!

This leads directly to a bad structure, but also after 12...0–0 13.0–0 followed by ♘ac1 Black finds himself in a position with a bishop inferior to White’s knight.

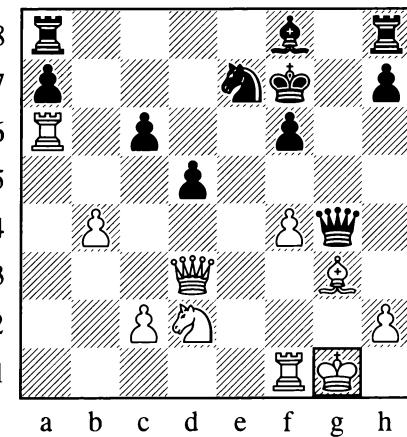
13.♗xd5 exd5 14.0–0 0–0 15.b4†



Ivanchuk won the game on move 60 after displaying great positional play.

53. Reinderman – Vallejo Pons

Wijk aan Zee 2009



Black claimed a great advantage by pushing the h-pawn to h3 to strangle the white position.

22...h5! 23.♔h1

23.♗f3 ♜g8 does not improve things for White.

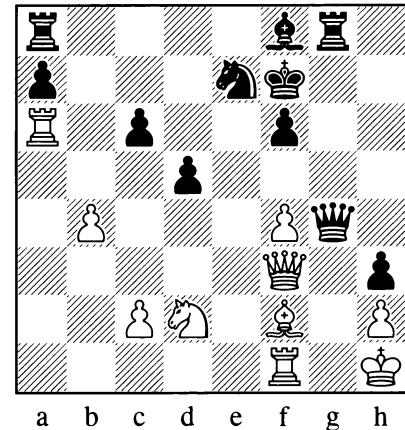
23...h4 24.♗f2

24.♗e1 may be slightly better, but Black has a fine position all the same.

24...♜g8 25.♗f3

25.♗g1 ♜xf4 does not generate any compensation for White.

25...h3

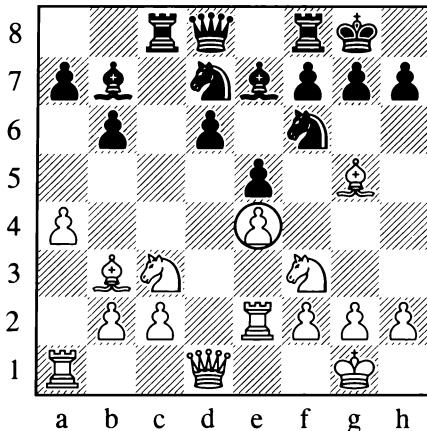


26. $\mathbb{W}xg4$ $\mathbb{B}xg4$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 28. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$
 29. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{B}xf4$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

Here Black could have underlined his advantage with 30... $a5!$ 31. $b5$ $a4$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{B}ag8$, when he is close to winning. Instead he played less incisively, but still won on move 59.

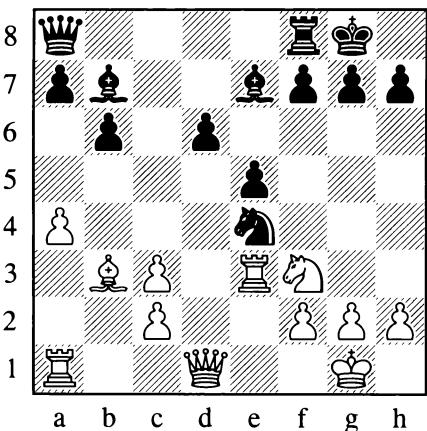
54. Balogh – Azmaiparashvili

Beijing (rapid) 2008



You should never miss the chance to create weaknesses in the opponent's position and win an important centre pawn – at the cost of only an exchange.

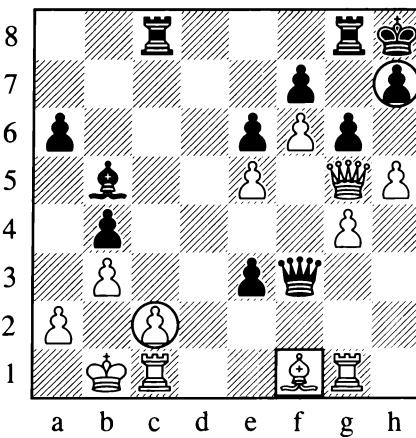
- 13... $\mathbb{B}xc3!$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 15. $bxc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$
 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}a8\#$



Black has easier play; his pieces are simply better and there are no open files for the rooks. He won on move 30.

55. Van Delft – Polaczek

Netherlands 2008



White's weakness is the c2-pawn and Black's weaknesses are the g6- and h7-pawns, even more than the g7-square. Transferring the poor bishop from f1 to e4 naturally decides the game.

31. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}f2$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}e4!$

32. $\mathbb{W}h6??$ $\mathbb{B}xc2+$

- 32... $e2$

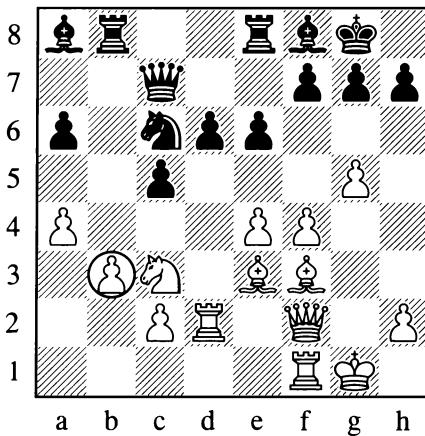
Black cannot challenge the bishop as after 32... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ White wins with 33. $hxg6$ $fxg6$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{B}xc6$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ and 36. $f7$.

33. $hxg6!?$

This makes White's task a bit more difficult, although he still won on move 60. Instead White could have won immediately with 33. $\mathbb{W}h6!$, when Black has no defence against $hxg6$ followed by $\mathbb{W}xh7\#$ and mate on the h-file.

56. Boey – Jansa

Arvier 2006

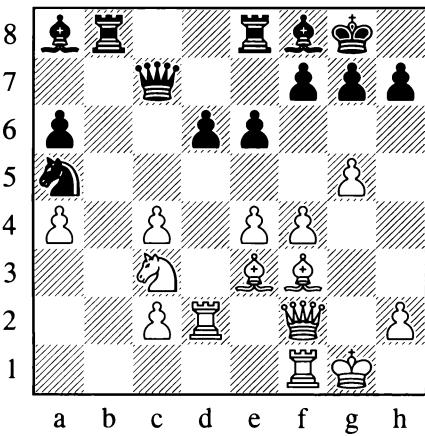


In a seemingly harmless position, Black cracked a hole in the white position by punching straight at the “hook” on b3.

22...c4! 23.bxc4

23.♗b1 does not work out well either. After 23...cxib3 24.cxb3 ♜a5 White cannot hold on to the b3-pawn. For example: 25.♗c2 ♘xb3 26.♗b6 ♘xb1† 27.♗xb1 ♗b8†

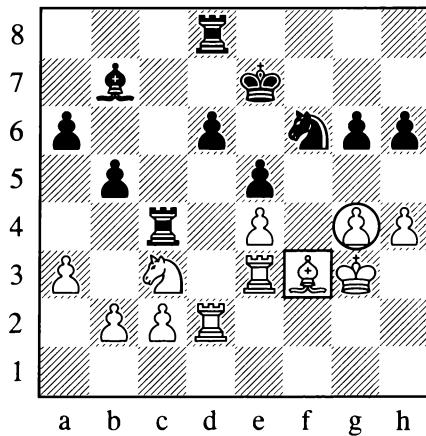
23...♜a5†



Black won on move 45.

57. Santiago – Diamant

Rio de Janeiro 2007



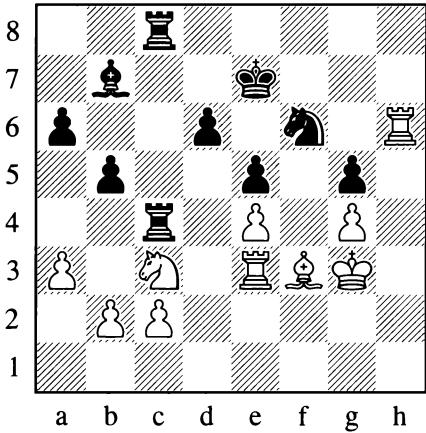
This position is all about good pieces and bad pieces. White would love to play g4-g5 to activate his bishop. He is not allowed to do so.

26...g5!

Fixing the white g-pawn as a target as well as restricting the bishop.

27.hxg5 hxg5 28.♗h2 ♘dc8 29.♗h6!

This is a better defensive try than 29.♗d3, when Black can put further pressure on White: 29...♝c6 30.♗hd2 b4 31.axb4 ♘xb4 32.b3 ♘xe4 33.♗xe4 ♘xe4! 34.♗xd6 ♘e3 35.♗g2 ♘xc2 36.♗xc2 ♘xd6 37.♗c6† ♘e7† Black has real winning chances.



29...♞f7

Black could have played more accurately with 29...b4! 30.axb4 ♜xb4 31.b3 ♞f7±, when the lack of stability for the c3-knight is likely to pay off later on.

30.♗d3 ♞g7?!

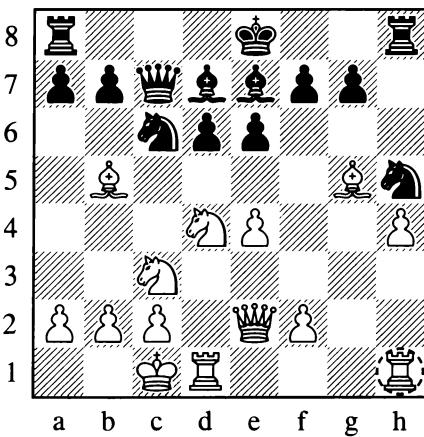
Black decides to allow White's defensive try of sacrificing the exchange. He could instead play 30...♝d8± with some advantage.

31.♝xd6! ♜xh6 32.♝xf6† ♞g7

Here White could have played 33.♝f5! with sufficient counterplay to make a draw. Instead he misplayed his position and lost on move 44.

58. Shirov – Salov

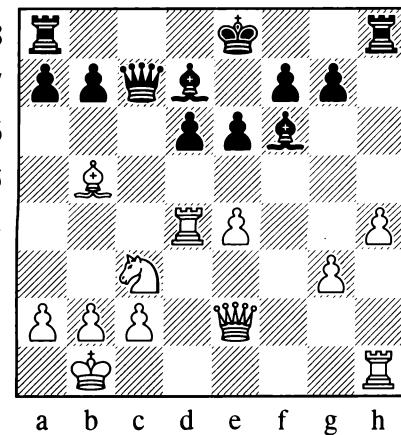
Buenos Aires 1994



Black solved all his problems with a cute tactic. Just because we are looking at positional aspects of the situation, that does not mean we are absolved from looking for tactics.

13...♝xd4! 14.♝xd4 ♜g3! 15.fxg3 ♜xg5† 16.♚b1 ♜f6

Black has a strong dark-squared bishop and certainly no long-term problems.



17.♝c4 ♜xb5 18.♝xc7

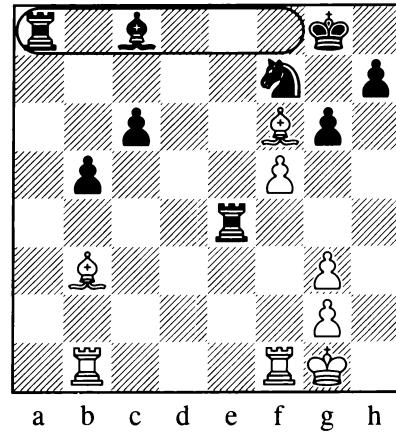
18.♝xb5 ♜b6 19.c3 0–0 would make life slightly easier for White, but Black is still in a pleasant situation.

18...♜xe2 19.♝xe2 ♜b8

The endgame is in Black's favour, though it ended in a draw on move 47.

59. Svidler – Karjakin

Baku 2008



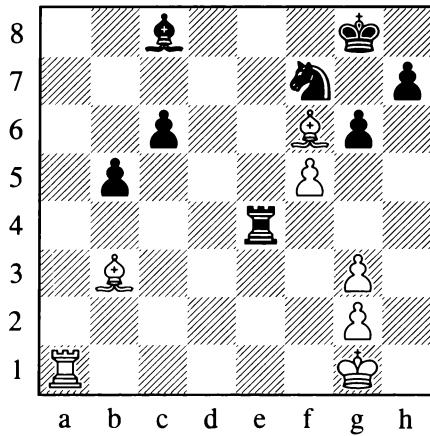
It is easy to stare yourself blind down the f-file in this position, but if you ask the three questions, you will inevitably ask yourself how to make more use of your rook on b1. Having

already moved four steps closer, the idea of swinging your rook to the a-file is now much easier.

30. $\mathbb{R}a1!$ $\mathbb{R}xa1$

30... $\mathbb{R}b8?$ would lose immediately to 31. $f\times g6$ $h\times g6$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}xf7\#$ and 33. $\mathbb{Q}e5\#$.

31. $\mathbb{R}xa1$



31... $\mathbb{Q}f8?$

Black's only chance was to see if he could generate enough counterplay with his queenside pawns in the ending arising after 31... $g\times f5$ 32. $\mathbb{R}a7$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 33. $\mathbb{R}a8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}xe6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 35. $\mathbb{R}xd8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$, although I am doubtful whether he can. Still, chess is not decided by evaluations, but by the best moves. And here White will still have to make a number of those before he can win the game.

32. $\mathbb{R}a7!$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 33. $\mathbb{R}xh7!$

White wins.

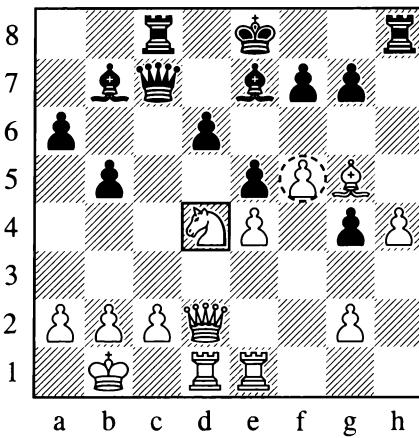
33... $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 34. $f\times g6$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{R}e2$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{R}e3$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{R}e8$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}d7$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$

40. $\mathbb{Q}g7\#$

1–0

60. Spitz – Chambers

e-mail 2002



Black is relying on tactics. If the knight retreats he will play ... $f6$ and then take on $e4$. White's position would be in ruins. But White can win time in order to get the knight to a decent square.

22. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$

22... $exd4$ 23. $f6!$ is an important move. Black is in terrible trouble on the dark squares and should not be able to hold the game.

23. $f6!$

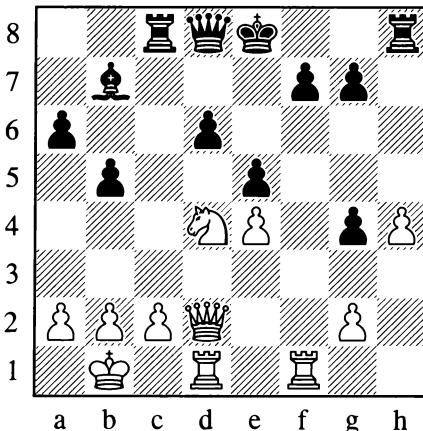
The point. The knight will now appear on $f5$ and go from being downtrodden and banished to jumping over fences and walls in search of plunder.

23. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{R}xh4$ would see White fighting for equality.

23... $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 24. $\mathbb{R}f1$ $\mathbb{W}d8$

Black's situation is very serious, which can best be illustrated by the fact that his only chance was 24... $\mathbb{W}h6$ 25. $\mathbb{W}f2$ 0–0, although he loses material after 26. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 27. $\mathbb{R}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ (27... $\mathbb{W}e8$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xg7!$ and wins) 28. $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$ (28. $\mathbb{Q}xg7?$ does not work here on account

of 28... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$ 28... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ $\mathbb{Q}xc8\pm$, though he can continue to fight.



25. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 0–0 26. $\mathbb{W}e2!$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 27. $h5$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$

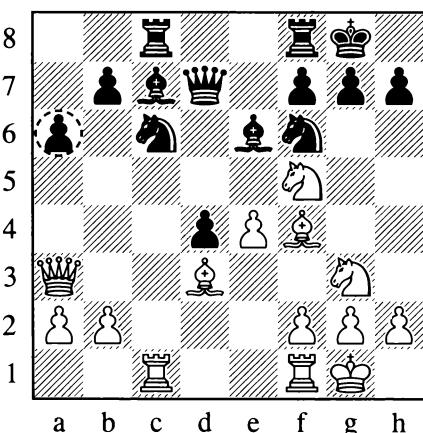
27... $\mathbb{Q}cd8$ relieves the pressure against the c2-pawn, and allows 28. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 29. $\mathbb{W}xg4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ with a winning attack. For example: 30... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 31. $\mathbb{W}f5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 32. $h6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 34. $h7$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 35. $\mathbb{W}g6$ and so on.

28. $\mathbb{W}xg4$ $f6$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}fd2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$
31. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 33. $\mathbb{W}g6$

1–0

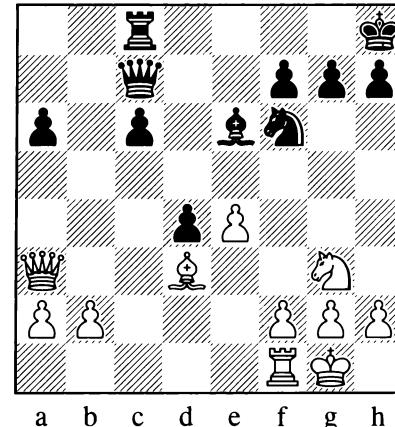
61. I. Sokolov – Glud

Helsingør 2012



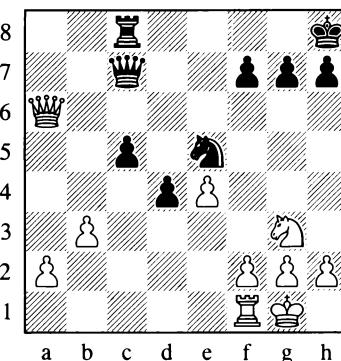
White has the opportunity to weaken Black's pawn structure and should certainly take it!

19. $\mathbb{Q}xc6\pm$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ $\mathbb{W}xc8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ $\mathbb{W}xc7$



23. $\mathbb{W}c5!$

A typically impressive move from a strong technical player. I do not see any great argument for 23... $\mathbb{W}xa6$ being considered objectively weaker. After 23... $c5$ 24. $b3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 26. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 27. $\mathbb{W}a6\pm$



I do not think Black has enough counterplay. But from a human perspective it is much nicer to keep control than to win a pawn.

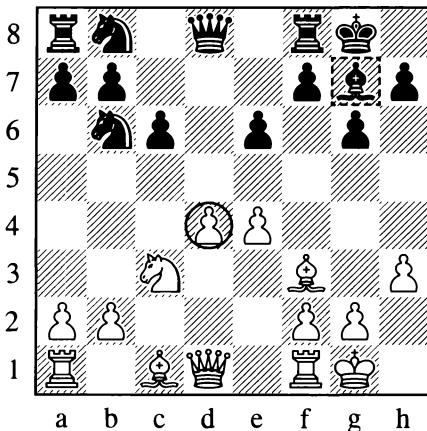
23... $\mathbb{Q}d8$

Black absolutely had to play: 23... $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xa6\pm$

Although White won the game on move 41, at this point he missed the best continuation. He should either keep the pressure with 24.♗d1!? or be adventurous with: 24.♕xa6!, when play may continue: 24...♕xa2 25.♗d1 ♜b8 26.♗xd4±

62. Rowson – Motwani

Edinburgh 1999



Black's idea is ...♗xd4. Besides that he wants to develop the knight from b8 and play either ...c5 or ...e5.

12.e5!

Black is missing his light-squared bishop, so White is happy enough to make this concession. His next target is an attack on the light squares.

12.♕e3 ♜c4 13.e5 would simply be a worse version of the game.

12...♝d7

After 12...f6!? White can take the pawn with an edge, although he has the additional option: 13.♕e4! fxe5 14.♗g5 ♜e7 15.♗g4 exd4 16.♗xe6 ♜d8d7 17.♗xf8 ♜xf8 and Black's compensation for the exchange does not look sufficient.

I think 12...f5 is more accurate. White should probably exchange pawns: 13.exf6 ♜xf6 Black has solved some of his problems, but White looks better all the same. For example: 14.♗e3± with the intention of ♜e4 and ♜b3.

13.♗e4 ♜c7

13...♝d5± was a better defence.

14.♗g5!

Threatening to go to e7.

14...f5?!

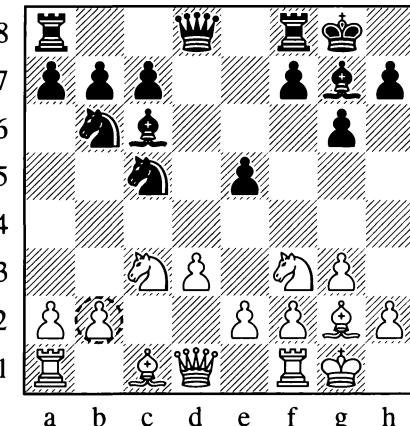
14...♝d5 looked better again.

15.exf6 ♜xf6 16.♗c5±

White won the game on move 41.

63. W. Schmidt – Portisch

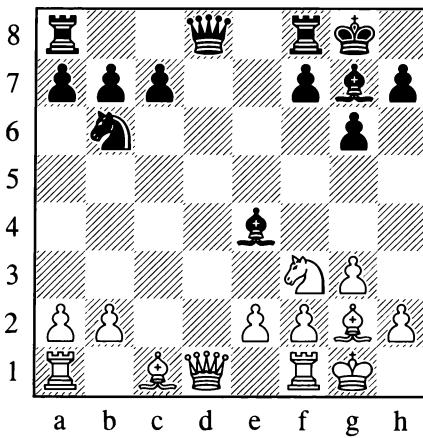
Skopje (ol) 1972



There is not anything structurally wrong with the white position, so as long as nothing happens over the next few moves, he should be absolutely okay. However, Black can react immediately and secure a preferable structure.

13...e4! 14.♗xe4 ♜xe4 15.dxe4 ♜xe4

Black's structure is now slightly favourable; White is the one with problems to solve.

**16... $\mathbb{W}b3$**

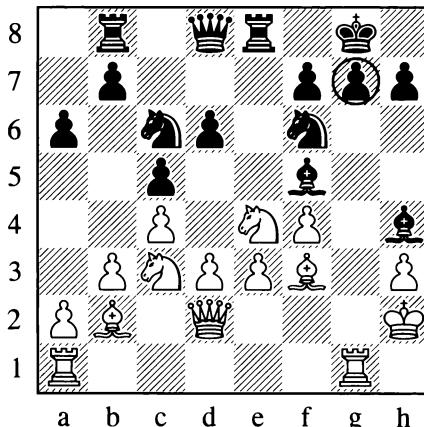
The extent of White's problems can be seen by lines such as: 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 18. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{W}d5\#$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}c4!$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 21.e3 $\mathbb{Q}a3\#$ and it is by no means easy for White to bring his pieces into the game.

16... $\mathbb{W}f6$ 17.a4 a5#

Black has some pressure, though White managed to untangle himself eventually, drawing the game on move 41.

64. Bronstein – G. Kuzmin

USSR (ch) 1972

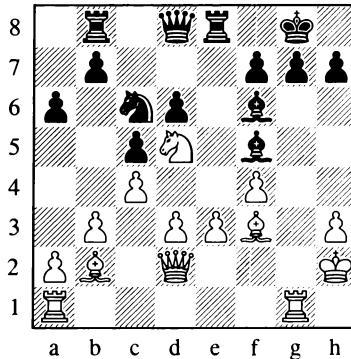


There is great pressure down the b2-g7 and g1-g7 lines, making the g7-pawn perhaps the

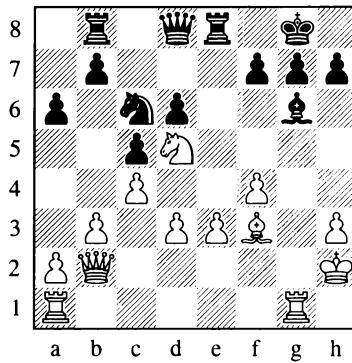
biggest weakness in this book. Why a strong tactician like Bronstein did not use this to his advantage immediately is hard to understand:

22. $\mathbb{E}af1?!$

Instead White could quickly win with simple play, eliminating the defenders: 22. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d5$



23... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ (There is nothing else. Moves like 23... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ are refuted in any number of ways, but most brutally with 24. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $gxf6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $bxc6$ 26.e4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 27. $\mathbb{W}g2$ $\mathbb{E}g8$ 28. $\mathbb{W}xg7\#$ and mate is near.) 24. $\mathbb{W}xb2$ With the exchanges of all of Black's defensive pieces, White is just winning. The only way to defend the g7-pawn is 24... $\mathbb{Q}g6$,



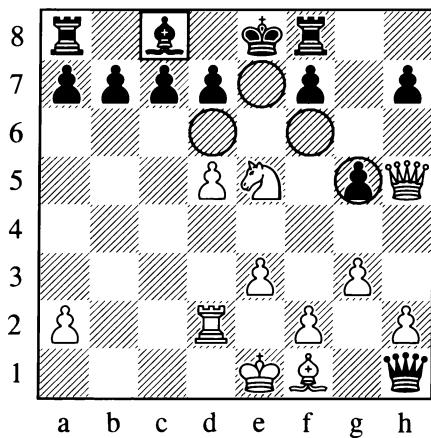
when White can play many things, among them the human 25.f5, winning a piece, and the computer move 25. $\mathbb{Q}e4!$, which avoids giving Black any counterplay.

22...♝e7†

White no longer has a direct win, although he won on move 36 anyway.

65. Gheorghiu – Joita

Romania 1972

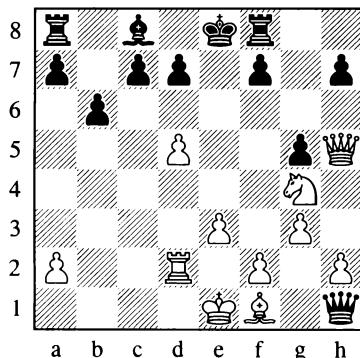


Black's idea is evidently ...d6 to let the bishop into the game.

18.d6!

18.♝g4? is very tempting, as Black has only one move to survive. For example, 18...d6? 19.♛f6† ♜d8 20.♝h6! or 18...♝f3 19.♝xg5, in both cases with a ravenous attack.

But Black can defend with 18...b6!!.



The position is just wildly unclear after something like 19.♝h6?.

The main point is of course that White does not win quickly with 19.♛f6† ♜d8 20.♝h6 (20.♝xg5? would be winning if Black did not have 20...♜a6† creating space for the king) 20...♝e8 21.♝xe8 on account of 21...♜a6, when it would be sensible for White to force a draw with 22.♝xg5† ♜xe8 23.♝g8† ♜e7 24.♝g5†.

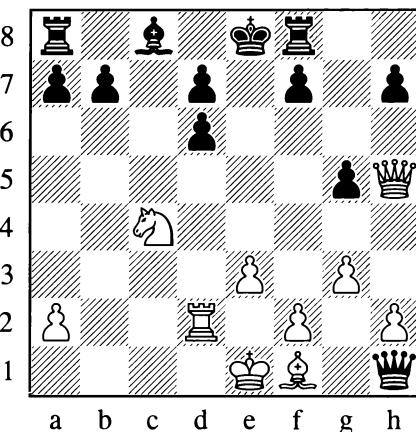
18...cx d6

18...♝e4 was perhaps the best try. Still, White's attack is enduring. 19.♝xg5 leaves Black with no ideas other than 19...♝b1† 20.♛e2 f6. Here White forces an advantage with 21.♝h5† ♜d8 22.♝d3 ♜b6 (22...cx d6 23.♝b2 ♜a1 24.♝h6 ♜e7 25.♝g2 with the idea of ♜d5 leaves Black defenceless.) 23.♝f4 cx d6 24.♝xh7, when White should win the game. Black is nowhere near to getting his pieces into the game; White will have plenty of time to generate threats before this happens.

19.♞c4

Obviously it is the knight which heads to d6.

19.♝xd6? ♜e4! would generate counterplay for Black. Checks on b1 and b4 should secure a draw.



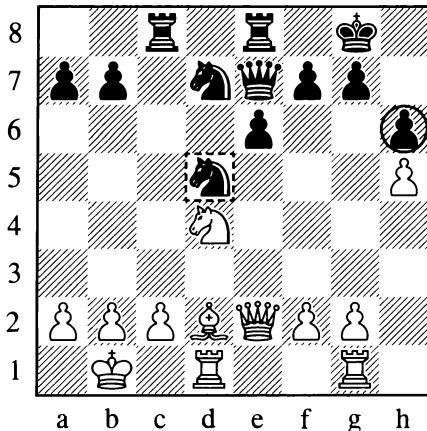
19...d5

19... $\mathbb{W}c6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xg5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$
22. $\mathbb{Q}b5\#$ and White wins.

20. $\mathbb{Q}d6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 22.g4 $\mathbb{W}g8$
23. $\mathbb{W}xh7$ b6 24. $\mathbb{W}h6\#$! $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 25. $\mathbb{W}h8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$
26. $\mathbb{W}e8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 27. $\mathbb{W}e7\#$

66. E. Berg – Hillarp Persson

Lund 2010

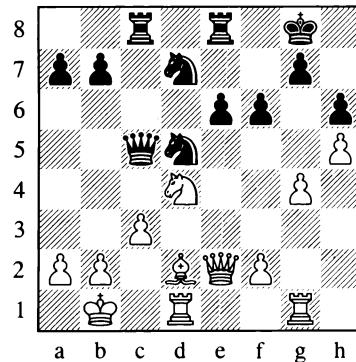


If Black were given all the time in the world he would play ... $\mathbb{W}c5$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}d7-b6-c4$ (maybe with ...b7-b5 included) with a great game. The problem is that White can fight this set-up of the black knights by taking control of their two ideal squares, c4 and d5, with some simple moves.

20.c4!

The apparent weakening of the king's position is an illusion. Black is not able to use it in any way. Even if he were given time to play ...a6 and ...b5, the white king would not face serious threats for many moves to come. Meanwhile White would have time for g2-g4-g5 and so on.

20.g4 would allow Black to fight for the important squares with 20... $\mathbb{W}c5$! 21.c3 f6.

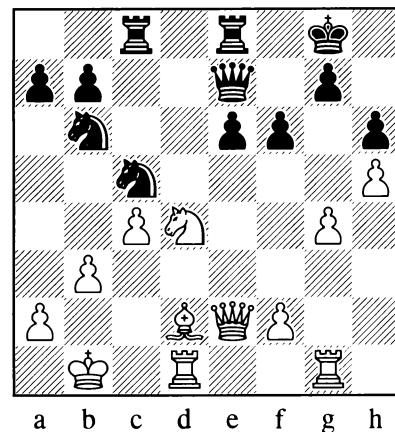


White may have the easier play, but he has no clear way to continue his attack quickly, on account of 22.f4?! e5! 23. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{W}c6\#$, energizing the black pieces.

20... $\mathbb{Q}5b6\?$

20... $\mathbb{Q}5f6\pm$ was probably more prudent. Here White can choose to consolidate his position first with 21. $\mathbb{Q}c1$! or go on the immediate attack with: 21.g4? $\mathbb{W}c5$ 22.g5 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ (22...hxg5? is weaker because of 23. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{W}xc4$ 24. $\mathbb{W}f3$ with threats of h5-h6 and $\mathbb{Q}h6$, as well as simply taking twice on f6. The only attempt at a defence is 24... $\mathbb{W}d5$, but White has 25. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf3$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xg7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 28.h6! with a winning position. The combination of $\mathbb{Q}dg1$ and $\mathbb{Q}g5$ is too strong to face.) 23.gxf6 $\mathbb{W}xf3$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ $\mathbb{W}xh6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xd7\pm$ Black is in some trouble here, but the game is not yet decided.

21.b3± $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 22.g4 f6



23.♗b4!

Adding further pressure to the black position. The pin is rather unpleasant and White is threatening ♗b5 as well.

23...a6 24.♗ge1

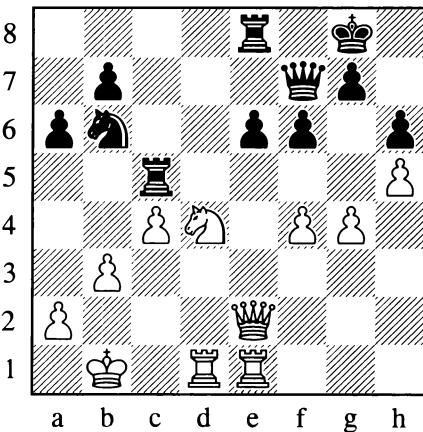
Berg switches his attention to the weak pawn on e6. Black is essentially lost here.

24...♘f7

24...♗c7 25.f4! would increase the pressure as well. White is preparing g4-g5 and after 25...♗xf4?! 26.♗xc5 ♘xc5 27.♗xe6 ♗b8 28.♗xc5 ♘xe2 29.♗xe2 Black will not be able to defend easily against the invasion of his position. The knight on b6 is crucially still completely out of play.

25.♗xc5 ♘xc5 26.f4

Threatening to take on e6.

**26...e5 27.♗f5 ♘c8 28.♗d2 ♗f8**

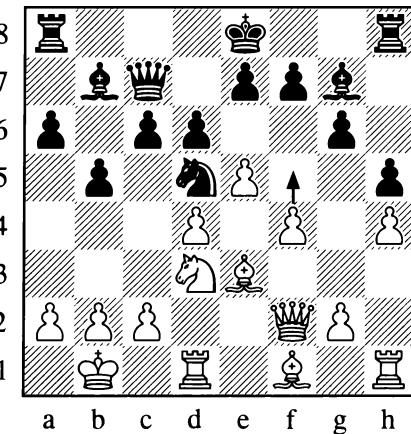
28...b5 offered slightly more resistance, but after Berg's planned 29.♗d1! White would still have won the game.

29.♗d7 ♘e7 30.♗d6 ♘b8 31.b4 ♘c6 32.fxe5 ♘c8 33.c5 ♘xd6 34.exd6 b6 35.♗e4

1–0

67. Berg – Almeida Quintana

Montcada 2009



All of White's dreams of counterplay are associated with a break on the light squares on the kingside.

This means that Black should fight for the control of e6/f5/g4 immediately.

16...♗c8!

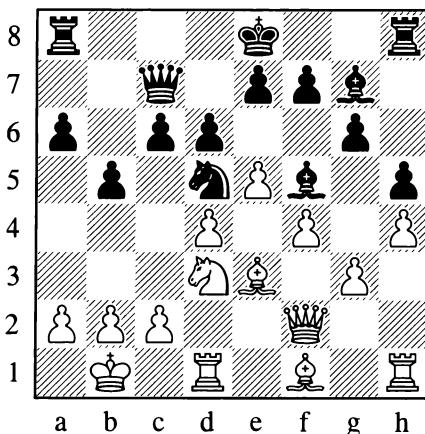
The position has changed since the bishop was developed on b7 – it no longer has a function there and so returns to c8. Other options are weaker:

16...0–0?! 17.♗d2 prepares an opening of the kingside with ♘e2 and g2-g4. I prefer White here.

16...a5 17.exd6 exd6 18.f5!± also looks great for White.

17.g3 ♘f5

17...a5! seems to be more accurate, anticipating that White might want to play ♘h3. It is harder for him to find a good waiting move than it is for Black, so the stand-off is likely to end with White playing ♘g2 and Black replying ...♗f5.



18...g2

18...h3! would have saved some time over the game. Black might play 18...a5 with a similar structure to the game.

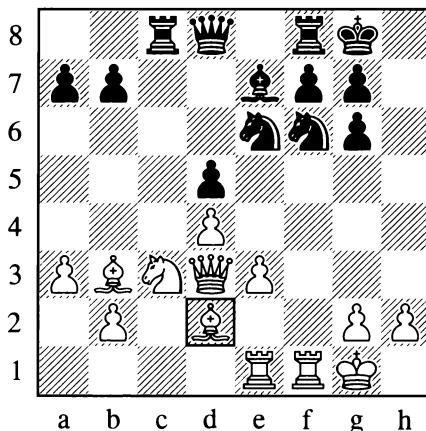
18...a5 19.♗e2 b4 20.♗d2

Threatening exd6.

For the continuation, see Exercise 83 on page 167.

68. Dubov – Potkin

Tyumen 2012



White's two inactive pieces are the rook on e1 and especially the bishop on d2. He therefore improves them both quickly:

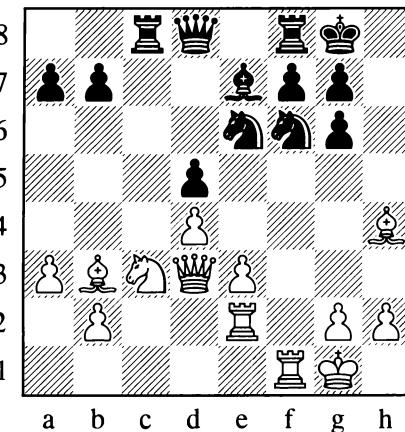
18.♗e2! ♜g5

The former European Champion was clearly struggling for a plan here. So is the annotator! 18...♗d6 19.♗e1 ♜b8 20.♗h4 ♜d6 looks like an obvious way for Black to activate his bishop and invite White to exchange it with ♜g3. But White can act with great vigour here and claim a great advantage after 21.g4!!±, when the pressure against d5 pays off in full.

19.♗e1 ♜e6?!

19...♗d7 has the intention of meeting 20.♗h4 with 20...♗g4, and would probably limit White's advantage. However, Black would still have to face enduring pressure after a continuation such as: 20.♗b5 ♗xb5 21.♗xb5 ♜c6 22.♗c3 ♜d8 23.♗h4± The two bishops and the weaknesses in the black camp ensures White's advantage.

20.♗h4±



20...g5

This causes further weakening of the black position, but 20...♗c7 would not be a pleasant move to play.

21.♗g3 g6 22.♗ef2 ♜g7 23.h3

White prepares his next move by preventing ...♗g4, although there was actually no need for this; 23.♗e5 ♜g4 19.♗xd5 would be crushing. Still, White's approach is very practical.

23...Qgh5

23...Qf5 24.Qxf5+–

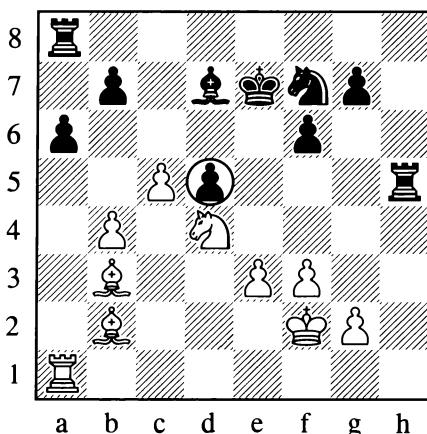
24.Qe5 g4 25.Qxd5! Qxd5 26.Qxf7

Potkin resigned, facing 26...Qxf7 27.Qxg6† Qg7 28.Qxh5 followed by 29.Qxg7.

1–0

69. Carlsen – Adams

Baku 2008



White has sacrificed an exchange to enjoy better piece placement. To be able to justify this he needs to continuously put his opponent under pressure with aggressive, accurate moves.

27.Qe2!

Going to the f4-square to attack the d5-pawn. If Black had time for ...Qah8 and ...Qh1 he would have a significant advantage.

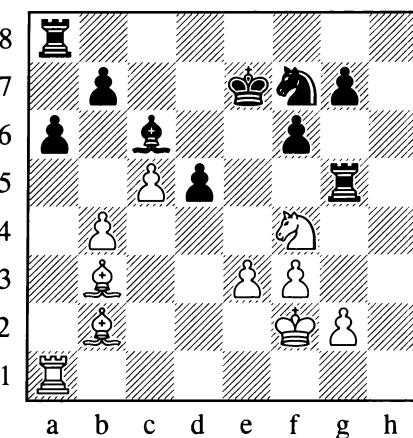
27...Rc6

Now White gets the initiative. 27...Qd8 28.Qf4 Qh6 29.Qxd5† Qf8 30.Qc7# would have given an unbalanced game.

28.Qf4 Qg5

28...Qh7 was also possible, though White has the more pleasant position after 29.Qxd5† followed by Qc7-e6 or 29...Qxd5 30.Qxd5

Qb8 31.b5! Qh5 32.e4 axb5 33.c6 Qd6 34.Qa7. White has considerable pressure, but Black should be able to hold.

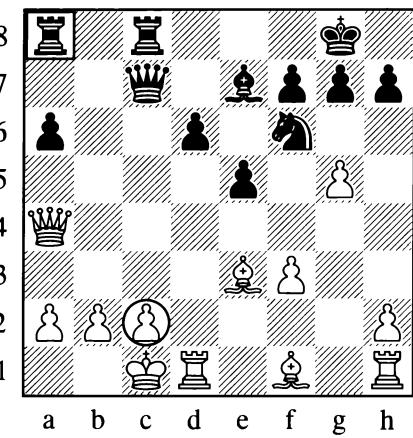


29.b5! Qxb5 30.Qxd5† Qf8 31.Qc7 Qd8 32.Qe6†±

White's pressure grew and grew until he won on move 56.

70. Svidler – Karjakin

Wijk aan Zee 2007



Obviously White is threatening to take on f6, and he also wants to play h2-h4 and Qh3. Usually Black would decide between ...Qh5 and ...Qd7 in such a position, but we should also ask if our opponent's threats can be met

with a more serious counter-threat. That is the case here:

19... $\mathbb{E}ab8!!$

19... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ would give White time to organize himself. Both 20. $\mathbb{Q}h3?$ and 20.h4 $\mathbb{E}ab8$ 21. $\mathbb{W}e4\infty$ do not look bad for White.

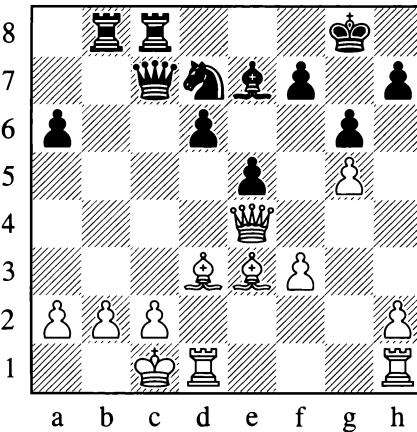
20. $\mathbb{Q}d3?$

The bishop is acting solely as an aggressive unit from this square, which suggests that Svidler was too optimistic. According to Karjakin, 20. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ was the best chance. Black can of course take on c4 and claim a slight edge. But I think Black can even play for more with 20...a5? 21. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{E}b4$ 22. $\mathbb{W}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7\bar{t}$ and Black has a nice attacking position, even if there is no immediate breakthrough available.

20.gxf6? $\mathbb{E}b4!$ is elementary.

20... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 21. $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{g}6\bar{t}$

White's pieces are not well placed to fight on the dark squares, or on the queenside in general.



22. $\mathbb{Q}xa6?!$

This loses by force; Black does not have to waste time reorganizing his forces as most of his moves are made with gain of tempo.

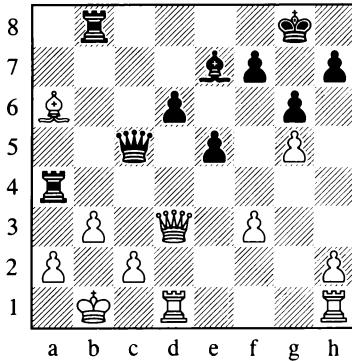
Anticipating the black attack with 22.b3 was possibly the last chance.

22... $\mathbb{E}b4!$ 23. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{E}cb8$ 24.b3

24. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ only makes things worse.

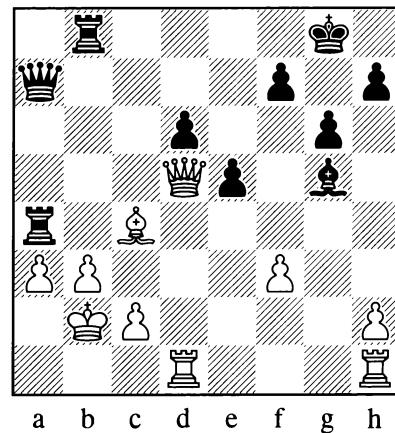
24... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 26. $\mathbb{W}d5$

After 26. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{E}a4!-+$



Black threaten both ... $\mathbb{W}c6$ and ... $\mathbb{W}a3$.

26... $\mathbb{W}a7$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5\bar{t}$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{E}a4$ 29.a3



29... $\mathbb{E}a5!$

The final finesse. Obviously not 29... $\mathbb{E}xa3??$ 30. $\mathbb{W}xf7\bar{t}$!

30. $\mathbb{W}e4$

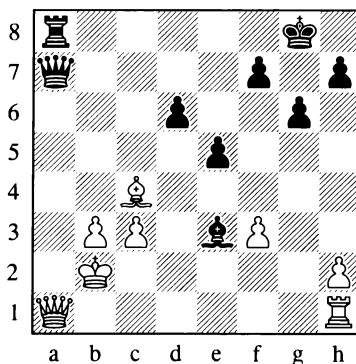
White is also losing after 30. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 31. $\mathbb{W}d7$ $\mathbb{Q}xa3\bar{t}$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{E}b7!$ 33. $\mathbb{W}e8\bar{t}$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$, when Black's attack is irresistible.

30...♝e3!

The bishop joins the attack with decisive effect.

31.c3 ♜xa3 32.♝a1 ♜a8

33.♛b1 loses to the brilliant: 33...♜xa1
34.♛xa1

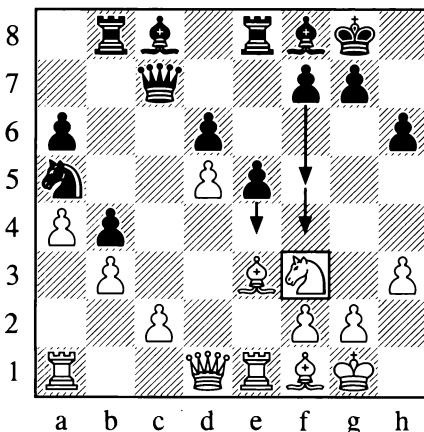


34...♞c1†!!

0–1

71. Karjakin – Van Wely

Foros 2007



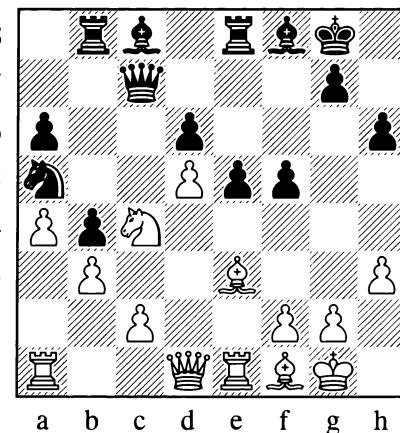
Black is on his way with ...f5, which will pose some inconvenient questions to the white pieces. Obviously a further ...f4 would leave the f-pawn hanging, but after ♜xf4 Black would have ...♝f5 with an attack on c2 (and b3), setting the board alight. White had better

prepare himself rapidly to deal with such challenges.

22.♝d2 f5 23.♝c4

This has the disadvantage of exchanging Black's stupid knight on a5, but at the same time it gets rid of White's lame horse and secures the bishop a great square on c4, where it blocks counterplay down the c-file.

23.♛h5 ♜f7 looks about even to me.



23...♞e7?

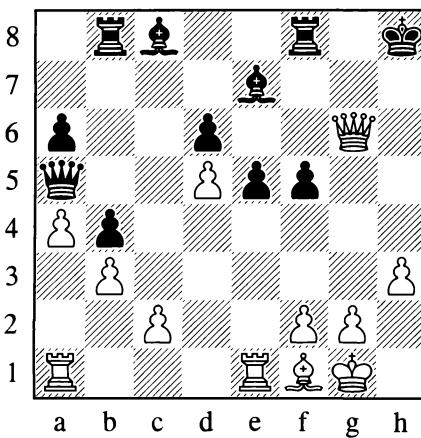
A bad blunder, allowing White to carry out a decisive attack.

23...♝xc4 24.♝xc4 ♜f7 with chances for both sides, was suggested by Maxim Notkin. Karjakin thought that White was perhaps a little better, but in reality the position is probably just balanced.

24.♛h5 ♜f8 25.♝xa5 ♜xa5 26.♝xh6! gxh6?!

26...♝d7± was a better fighting chance of course, but Van Wely wanted to see the proof rather than suffer in a position with a pawn less. Maybe this is one of the reasons why he never reached the absolute top – not resistant enough?

27.♛g6† ♜h8 28.♛xh6† ♜g8 29.♛g6† ♜h8



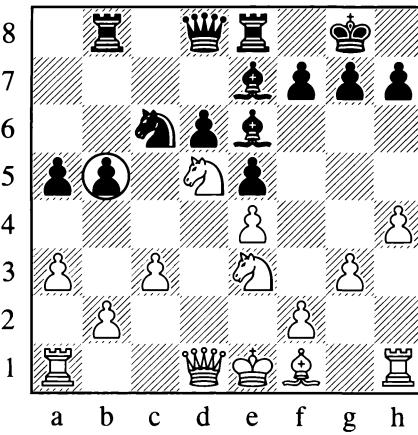
30.♕e3

This idea must be what Van Wely overlooked. I wonder why; it does not look that difficult to me.

**30...f4 31.♕xe5! dxe5 32.♔h6† ♔g8 33.d6
♔f7 34.♔c4 ♔f5 35.dxe7**
1–0

72. Karjakin – Shirov

Heraklio 2007



The position looks more or less harmless, but there is a slight weakness in the black position that White can take advantage of – the weakened light squares on the queenside.

17.a4!

17.♔h3 is one of those moves that look right, but isn't. Black need not be afraid of ♕xe6 and after 17...♛d7 18.♕f5 ♔d8 19.♕g4 ♔h8 20.h5 h6, Black is ready to play ...♔b6 with reasonable chances.

17...b4

Black has no pleasant options here. White also has a great advantage after 17...bxa4 18.♕xa4 ♔d7 19.♔b5±.

18.♔b5±

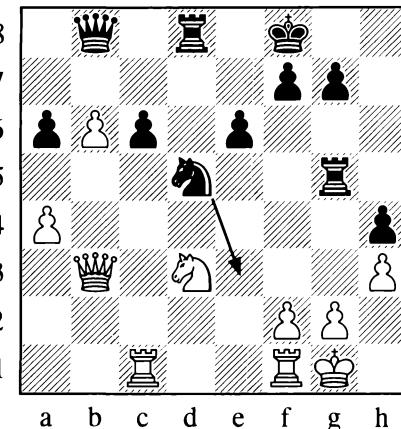
Black's position is desperately unpleasant. Shirov never got back in the game.

**18...♔d7 19.0–0 bxc3 20.bxc3 ♔f8 21.♔d3
♔a7 22.♔xd7 ♔xd7 23.♔a6 ♔c6 24.♔ab1
♔ed8 25.♔b6 ♔xb6 26.♔xb6 ♔a7 27.♔xa7
♔xa7 28.♔bc4 ♔c8 29.♔b1 ♔c5 30.♔b8
g6 31.♔a8 ♔c6 32.♔b6 ♔e7 33.♔d7 ♔c8
34.♔xc8 ♔xc8 35.♔c4**

1–0

73. Karjakin – Navara

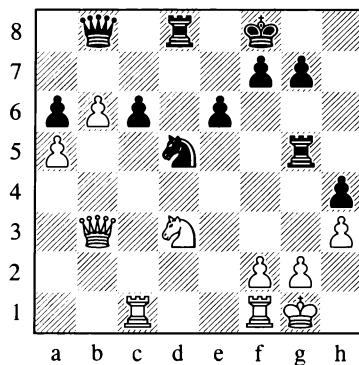
Khanty-Mansiysk (3.2) 2009



Black has not one, but two ideas. The first is obvious – he wants to capture White's glorious passed pawn on b6. But the other is more devious.

27... $\mathbb{Q}c5!!$

27.a5?



27... $\mathbb{Q}e3!!$ 28.fxe3 $\mathbb{Q}xg2\#!$ was Black's second idea, escaping with a perpetual check.

27...e5 28.a5

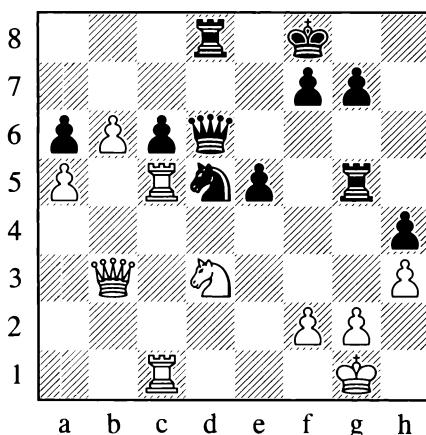
White has a winning advantage with his great pawn. Black did not manage to create counterplay.

28... $\mathbb{W}d6$

28...e4 is the sharpest line, but this does not work for Black either: 29. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 32. $\mathbb{W}b4!$ $\mathbb{W}xb4$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2\#$ (33... $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}bb1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 35.b7 and White wins) 34. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ and the b-pawn decides the game.

29. $\mathbb{Q}fc1$

White is winning.



29... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

29... $\mathbb{W}e6$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ does not allow Black any counterplay.

30. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 32. $\mathbb{W}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}d3!$

The final touch.

33... $\mathbb{W}xd3$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}a2$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

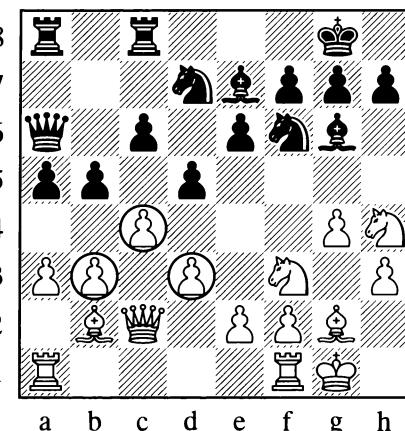
35... $\mathbb{Q}b1$ was also clear enough.

35... $\mathbb{Q}dd2$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}dxc2$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 38.b7 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}d7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}b6$

1–0

74. Gelfand – Karjakin

Nice (blindfold) 2008



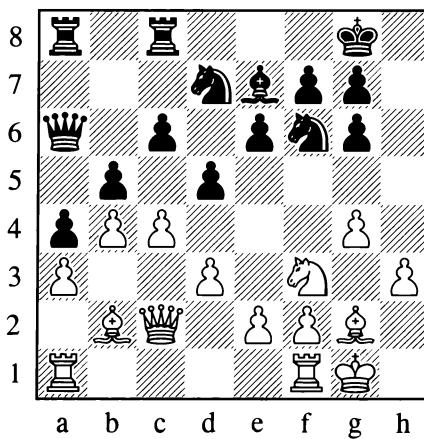
Black is ready for action on the queenside and can open the position to his advantage by undermining the white pawn structure.

16...a4! 17. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$

17.b4 c5# is not too dissimilar from the game.

17.cxb5 cxb5 18. $\mathbb{W}d1$ axb3 19. $\mathbb{W}xb3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 20. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}fd7\#$ also favours Black.

17...hxg6 18.b4



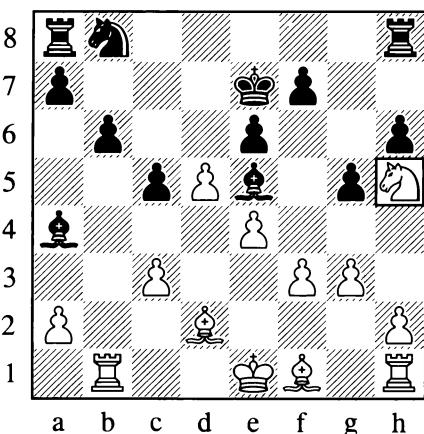
**18...c5! 19.bxc5 ♜xc5 20.cxb5
20.d4 ♜b3 21.c5 ♜xa1 22.♖xa1 ♜e4†**

20...♗xb5 21.♘ab1 ♜b3†

Black's advantage is apparent. He won the game on move 46.

75. Carlsen – Svidler

Kallithea 2008

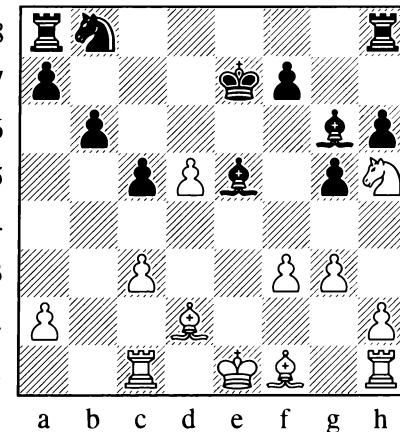


It is standard to focus on the development of the b8-knight, but we should also pay attention to our opponent's pieces. In this case the h5-knight is quite badly placed. Svidler took advantage of this with:

19...exd5! 20.exd5

20.f4 loses material to 20...♜c2!.

20...♜c2 21.♝c1 ♜g6



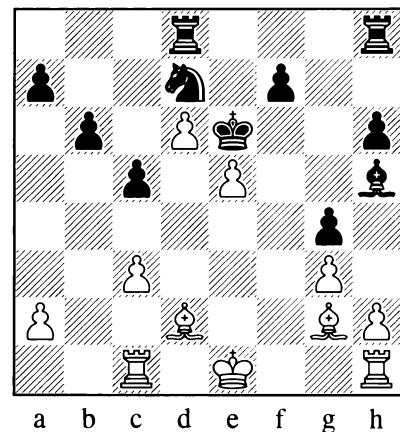
22.f4

This eventually leads to the loss of a pawn, but gives the best counter-chances.

After 22.g4 ♜xh5 23.gxh5 ♜d7† Black has a great advantage on the dark squares, while White is fighting for dear life on the light squares.

**22...♜xh5 23.fxe5 ♜d7 24.d6†
24.♗g2 ♜ae8 25.0–0 ♜xe5†**

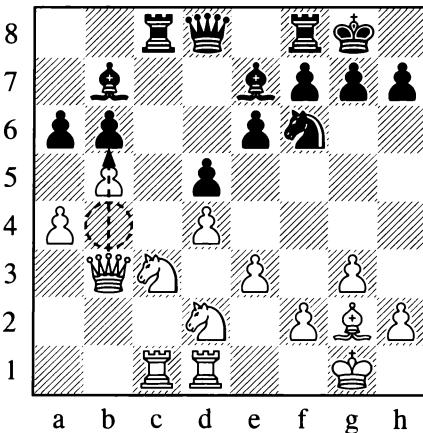
24...♚e6 25.♗h3† g4 26.♗g2 ♜ad8†



Black has a clear advantage and had an opportunity to win the game later on, but he blew it and conceded a draw on move 55.

76. Pelletier – Sasikiran

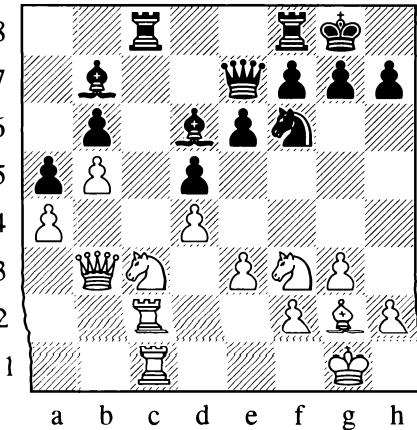
Khanty-Mansiysk (ol) 2010



18...a5!

A logical decision. Black takes control of the b4-square, at the same time preventing the white knights getting into action via the b5-square. In the long term the a4-pawn is in more danger than the b6-pawn. The b7-bishop might look poor now, but it is not really worse than the bishop on g2. It will eventually come into the game on the c8-h3 diagonal.

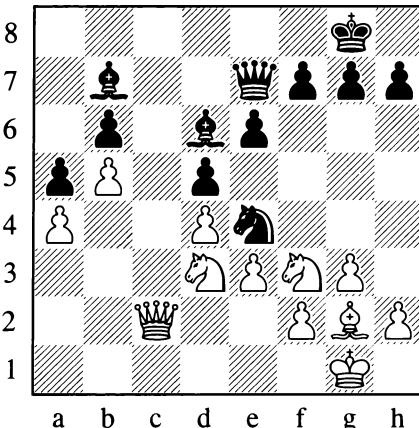
19.♗c2 ♜b4 20.♗dc1 ♜e7 21.♗f3 ♜a3 22.♗a1 ♜d6 23.♗ac1 ♜a3 24.♗a1 ♜d6 25.♗ac1



25...♝c7!?

Sasikiran declines the draw as he can play for a win without any risk.

26.♗e2 ♜fc8 27.♗f4 ♜e4 28.♗d3 ♜xc2 29.♗xc2 ♜xc2 30.♗xc2



30...♝c7!

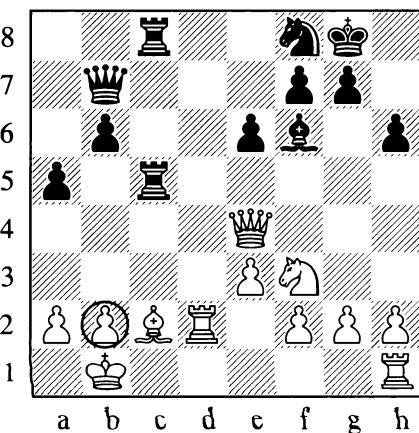
The ending gives Black freedom to build up his position slowly; White has no active ideas.

31.♗xc7 ♜xc7†

Black won on move 84 in an eventful game.

77. Mamedyarov – Short

Dresden (ol) 2008



20... $\mathbb{Q}c7!$

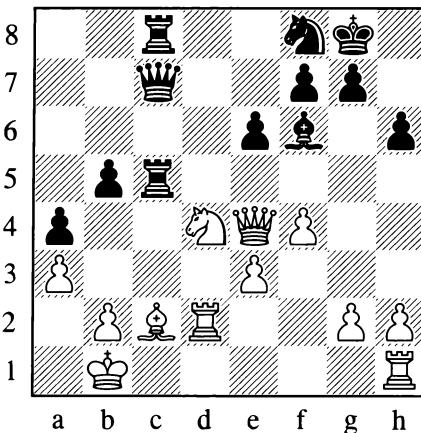
Black declines the exchange of queens, as the white king is weaker than the black king. The game was decided rather quickly.

21. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ a4 22.a3

A disagreeable move to have to make, but it was not pleasant to allow the black pawn to reach a3 either.

22...b5 23.f4

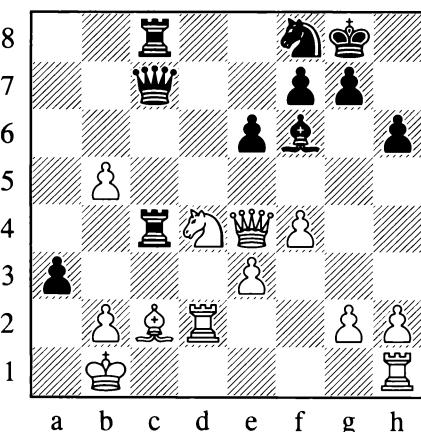
23. $\mathbb{Q}hd1$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ has the idea of ...b4 with a growing attack.



23...b4

Breaking up the queenside.

24.axb4 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 25.b5 a3!

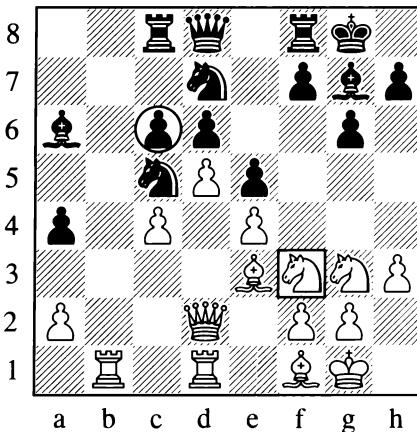


With his king about to be stripped bare, White resigned. A possible finish could be: 26.bxa3 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 27.exd4 $\mathbb{W}a5$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}hd1$ $\mathbb{W}xa3$ followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}b4\#$.

0–1

78. Vachier-Lagrave – Harikrishna

Dresden (ol) 2008



Black is planning to play ...f5 in the long term. White will have to meet this with f2-f3 (as it would be a bit naive to expect Black to allow $\mathbb{Q}f3-g5-e6$. The c6-square is the main weakness in the black position. This inspired White to perform an obvious manoeuvre:

27. $\mathbb{Q}e1!$

The knight is heading for b4.

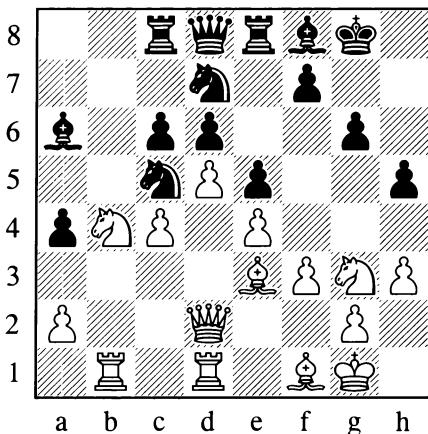
27...h5 28.f3 $\mathbb{Q}e8$

This passive idea is just never going to work. Probably 28...h4 29. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ cxd5 30. $\mathbb{W}xd5\pm$ was a better chance, though it is still quite uncomfortable for Black.

29. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$

Black's last chance to fight back was 29...cxd5 30.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ (31...h4 32. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ only seems to help White), but the weakness on c6 is serious: 32. $\mathbb{Q}b4\pm$

30.♕b4

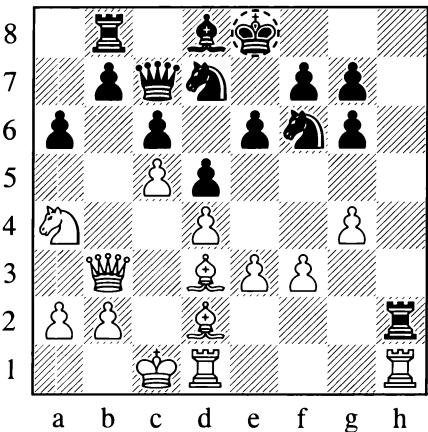


30...♚b7 31.♕e2±

White won the game on move 56.

79. Wang Yue – Eljanov

Astrakhan 2010



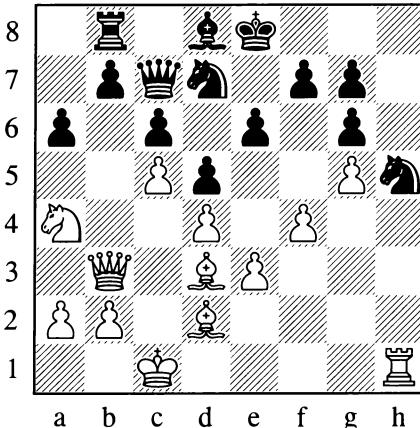
White has an obvious idea with which he can eliminate Black's best-placed piece, take over the h-file and greatly limit Black's remaining pieces.

16.g5! ♕h5 17.f4

For some mysterious reason, Eljanov had missed this idea entirely.

17...♜xh1 18.♝xh1

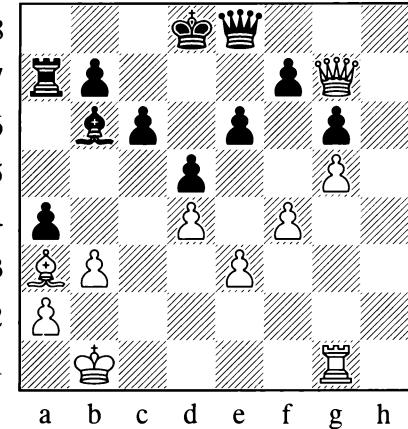
If we look at the black position and want to talk about the worst-placed piece, I cannot really make a choice – they are all awful! Eljanov considered his position strategically lost.



18...♞f8 19.♝g1 ♜c8 20.♛c2 ♛c7 21.♝b1 ♛e7 22.♝c1 ♜e8 23.b3 ♜d7 24.♝c3 a5 25.♛a3 ♜a8 26.♝a4 ♛f8

My engine proposes 26...♝b8 27.♛e2 ♜a7!? but I don't believe in it. Maybe the engine could hold it, but for a human it's too much!

27.♛h2 ♛e7 28.♝b6 ♜a7 29.♛e2! ♛d8 30.♛xh5 gxh5 31.♛xh5 g6 32.♛h7 ♜xb6 33.cxb6 ♜xb6 34.♛g7 a4

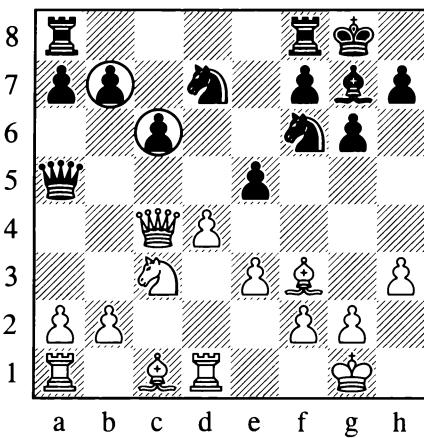


35.♕b2?

Missing a great opportunity. This was the start of a long series of blunders in which White missed several immediate wins and eventually even lost. White had a relatively simple win by 35.♕h1 axb3 and now the simplest is 36.♕c5!, when the black king and queen are too exposed.

80. Eljanov – Smeets

Germany 2011



Black's weakness is the b7/c6 constellation. White is able to make use of his strong bishop on f3 to put these pawns under pressure. Obviously, the light squares are the weakness (and maybe to some extent the b7-pawn), with the c6-pawn being the hook.

13.b4!

Eljanov suspected that his opponent had missed this idea somehow. It is not completely standard, but when you look for weaknesses in the black position, it becomes very logical.

13...♛c7 14.b5

Black is under definite pressure, even if it is a good way from being decisive.

14...♝b6 15.♛b3 exd4 16.exd4

In theory this pawn is isolated; but to call it a weakness is a stretch. It is easier to defend than to attack and the real pressure is from f3 to b7.

16...♜ac8 17.♕g5±

Black found it very difficult to deal with the pressure he was under, and lost without ever having a real chance.

**17...♝d6 18.♕h4 ♜bd5 19.♕g3 ♜d8
20.bxc6 bxc6 21.♜ac1 ♜xc3 22.♜xc3 ♜d5
23.♜c5 ♜e7**

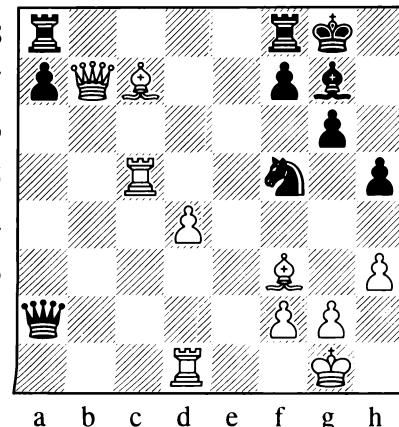
The sad 23...♝b6 was the last chance, but after 24.♕xd5 White would of course have an extra pawn and excellent winning chances.

**24.♕g4! ♜a8 25.♛b7 h5 26.♕c7! ♜e8
27.♕f3**

Black is completely dominated and lost quickly.

27.♕f5 28.♕xc6 ♜e2 29.♕f3?!

29.♛b1 ♜ac8 30.♕e5 was much simpler, preventing all counterplay. Now Black gets a few counter-chances.

29...♛xa2**30.♕xf5! gxh5 31.d5?!**

Very logical, but not strongest. 31.♕d6! is a mysteriously strong computer move, based on

$\mathbb{Q}f3-d5$ ideas. White would win rather quickly, I suspect.

31...a5 32.d6 $\mathbb{Q}e5?$

This loses instantly. White would probably also win after 32...a4 33.d7 a3, but the way there is tangled and murky: 34. $\mathbb{W}c6$ $\mathbb{W}b2$ 35. $\mathbb{W}d6$ a2 36. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{B}xa8$ 37.d8=+ $\mathbb{B}t$ $\mathbb{B}xd8$ 38. $\mathbb{W}xd8t$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 39. $\mathbb{W}g5$ a1=+ \mathbb{W} 40. $\mathbb{W}xf5t$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 41. $\mathbb{B}xa1$ $\mathbb{W}xa1t$ 42. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ and the technical process is far from easy.

33. $\mathbb{W}b5!$

Immediately decisive.

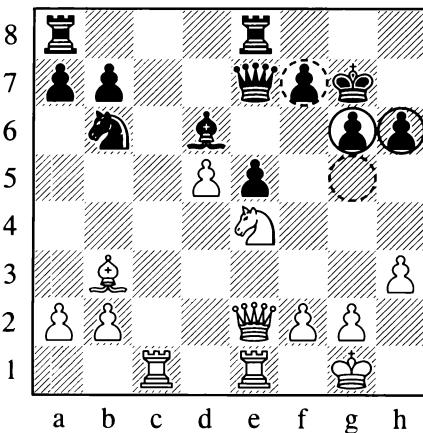
33... $\mathbb{W}e6$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{B}xa8$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

Black resigned. 35... $\mathbb{Q}h2t$ can be met with either 36. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ or 36. $\mathbb{Q}xh2$ $\mathbb{W}xe1$ 37.d7 $\mathbb{W}e7$ 38. $\mathbb{W}d5$ $\mathbb{B}d8$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{W}xd8$ 40. $\mathbb{W}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 41. $\mathbb{W}c5t$ followed by 42. $\mathbb{W}c8$, and White wins.

1-0

81. Topalov – Aronian

Linares 2010



White has a slight edge because of his superior pieces, but the game still has to be won – and this can only be done by good moves. In positions like this where there is a small but clear structural advantage (passed

pawn and better pieces), it is usually important to increase the number of advantages in order to get anywhere. Here this happens by creating additional weaknesses, as all of White's pieces are already placed on good active squares.

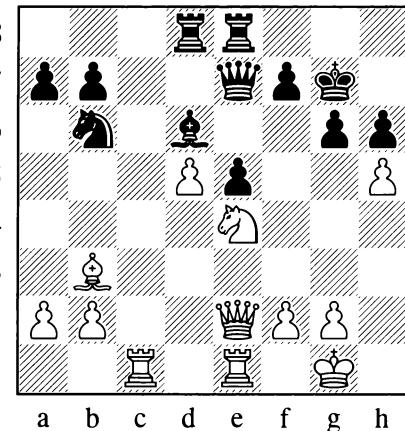
24.h4!

White threatens to play h4-h5, taking advantage of the slight ways the black kingside has been compromised. Black may now play 24...h5, when White replies 25.g3, and the weakness of the g5-square combined with the X-ray from b3 to f7 increases Black's discomfort a little. Or he can allow White to advance the pawn. Personally I would probably have played 24...h5, but the fact that Aronian, now the solid No. 2 in the world, chose not to, shows that the choice is by no means easy.

24... $\mathbb{Q}ad8?$

As mentioned, I do not fully trust this move. 24...f5?! would on the other hand be the wrong track entirely. Black is passive and worse and will find that “active” lunges like this only create weaknesses. After the natural moves 25. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 26.h5 g5 27. $\mathbb{W}c2!$ White is threatening to check on c7 as well as to take on f5. And after 27... $\mathbb{W}f6$ White can play either 28. $\mathbb{W}d3!$? or 28.d6, in both cases with a clear edge.

25.h5



25...f5!

This is now forced. The main point is that after 25...g5 26.♗g4 White will soon establish a knight on f5.

26.♘xd6 ♕xd6

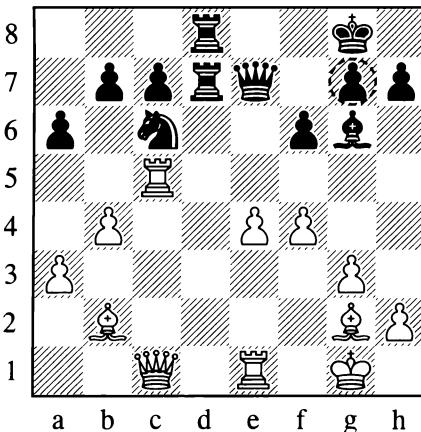
26...♛xd6 27.hxg6 gives a pleasant advantage for White.

27.♗c5±

White has the better chances and later could have won, but he missed the moment and the players drew the game on move 45.

82. Erdos – Istratescu

Patras 2012

**26.e5!**

This would have been incredibly strong. The white king's position is quite open, but there is no way for Black to get his bishop to work together with the heavy artillery to take advantage of this. On the other hand it is quite easy to see that the white bishop on b2 will provide real support to the attack against g7. On top of this the black queenside will fracture, pawns will drop and weaknesses persist. If White is not winning after this, he is at least close.

The game ended in a draw after: 26.♘d5?!± ♘f7 27.♗f3 ♘e6 28.♗xd7 ♘xd7 29.♗d1 (29.f5±) 29...♗xd1† 30.♗xd1 ♘d7 31.♗f2 h6 32.♗e2 ♘g4 White might have some reason to play on here, but he probably felt that the trend was moving against him.

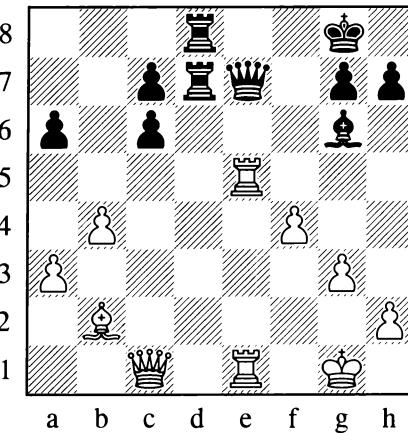
26.♗f3!± is also a decent move, but it only postpones the decision time and gives Black a chance to try and prepare a little for White's imminent break.

26...fxe5 27.♗xc6!

This is the concept. You can maybe delay taking here, but there is no point in doing so.

27...bxc6 28.♗cxe5!

To me this is most natural, though 28.♗xe5 is also decent, intending to continue with ♗xc6. White has a significant advantage, for example: 28...♗h5 29.♗c4† ♘f7 30.♗xa6 ♘d1 31.♗c1± and the extra pawn means a lot.

**28...♛d6**

Black has no good moves. 28...♛f8 29.♗xc6 ♘d3 (White should be winning after something like 29...♛d6 30.♗xd6 cxd6 31.♗e7 d5 32.♗d4, when he will get a strong passed pawn and can dream about attacking g7 later on.) 30.a4 h6 31.♗c3 and White is ready to play ♛c5 then, if allowed, ♘e7.

28... $\mathbb{W}f7$ 29. $\mathbb{W}xc6$ $\mathbb{E}d6$ 30. $\mathbb{W}c5$ lets White stay in control as well. He is immediately threatening an invasion on e7.

29. $\mathbb{W}c4\ddagger$

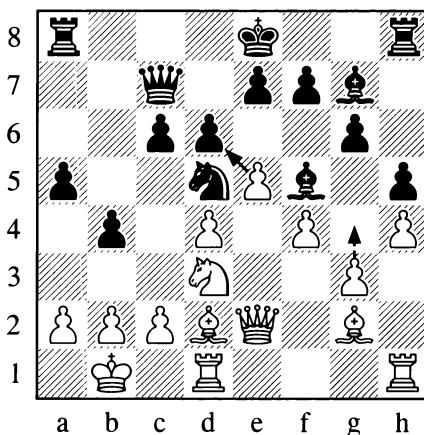
29. $\mathbb{W}c3\text{?}$ is also very strong. White has f4-f5 ideas as well as posing the simple question: what is Black going to play on the next move?

29... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 30. $\mathbb{W}xa6$

Black has hardly any compensation for the pawn. His only chance is to play 30...c5 and try to draw the ending. White can choose between several continuations, all of them featuring a passed pawn on the queenside and strong pressure against g7.

83. Berg – Almeida Quintana

Montcada 2009

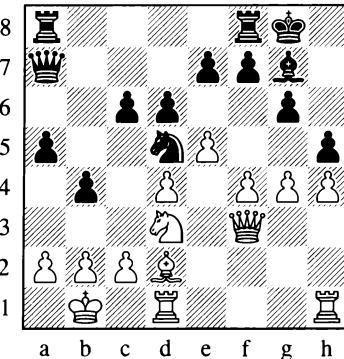


20... $\mathbb{Q}f8!!$

A strange-looking move, which I reckon is absolutely correct. Although his king is in need of safety, Black does not want to give away the control of the h-file too soon.

Berg speculates that his opponent was unhappy with 20...0–0 on account of 21. $\mathbb{Q}e4$!, which seems reasonable. Berg gives the following (computer-inspired) line: 21... $\mathbb{Q}g4$

22. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}a7$ 24. $\mathbb{W}e4$ b3! with interesting play. But spending time to defend the d4-pawn makes little sense. White should attack on the kingside immediately with 24.g4!.



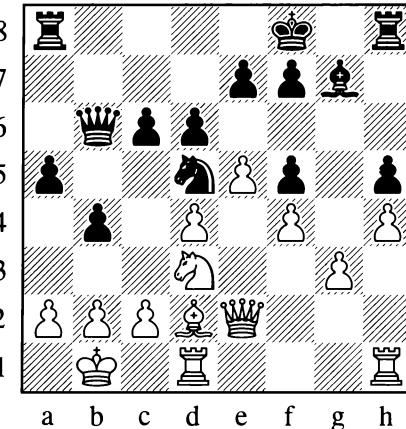
Black needs to seek counterplay absolutely immediately, but I fear that it is already too late: 24...b3! (24...hgx4 25. $\mathbb{W}xg4$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 26.h5 b3 27. $\mathbb{W}h3$! also gives White a strong attack.) 25.gxh5 bxc2† 26. $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 27. $\mathbb{E}hg1$ with the idea 27... $\mathbb{E}ab8$ 28. $\mathbb{E}g4\ddagger$.

Maybe Black can sidestep a lot of this with 21... $\mathbb{Q}e6$! and it will take White a bit more time to break through on the light squares.

21. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}b6$

One of the advantages of the previous move – the h5-pawn is not a target.

22. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $gxf5$



23.♗e3?

The bishop is not well placed here and does nothing to slow down Black's advance on the queenside.

23.♗e1! was suggested as better by Berg in his annotations. But Black may play either 23...a4? or the more natural 23...♝xd4 24.♗f3 ♜b6 (24...♝e4?! 25.♝f1!) 25.♝d3, when he can fight for the initiative with 25...a4!?, because White cannot play: 26.♝xf5?! ♗c3†! 27.♔a1 e6+–

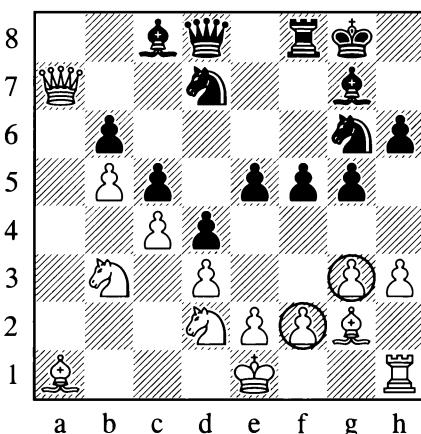
23...a4 24.♔a1 b3?

24...a3 was probably stronger, but Black may not have been sure how to continue after 25.b3!, when winning the exchange is not the end of the story.

For the continuation, see Exercise 99 on page 170.

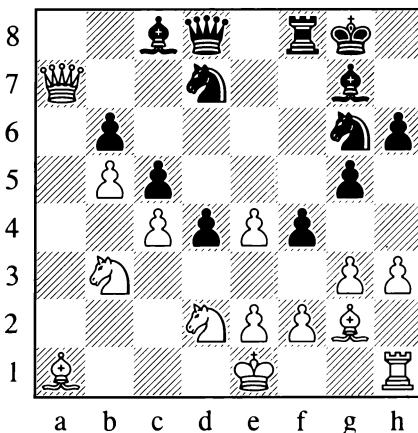
84. Koukoufikis – Berelowitsch

Patras 2012



Black wants to take advantage of the weak dark squares on the kingside, but does not want to give away the e4-square in the process. He achieves this with a typical pawn sacrifice:

19...e4! 20.dxe4 f4

**21.g4**

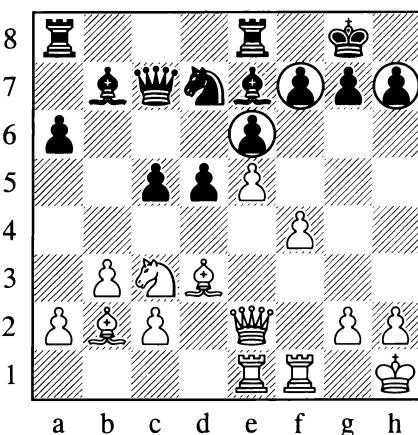
21.e5 is the natural reply, but the weakness of the dark squares is considerable. Black plays 21...fxg3 22.fxg3 ♗xe5 and his position is very close to winning.

21...♗de5†

Black is strategically winning, and duly won the game on move 36.

85. Zawadzka – Papadopoulou

Patras 2012



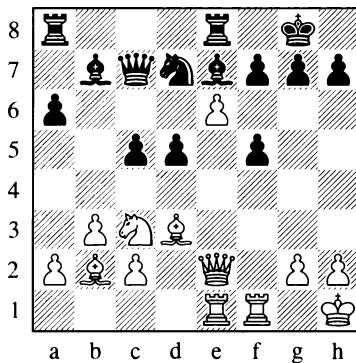
White's pieces are all well placed so she should attack now, otherwise she may see her slight dynamic advantage on the kingside evaporate quickly.

16.f5! exf5?!

A very natural reply, but it should have lost quickly. Black's only option was 16...g6, when after 17.fxe6 fxe6 18. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8\pm$ the position is holding, but all her pieces are poorly placed. White now has time to manoeuvre her bits into threatening positions, for example with $\mathbb{Q}c3-d1-e3-g4$, with $\mathbb{W}g4-h3$ included at some point.

17. $\mathbb{Q}xf5??$

A horrible move, allowing Black to come close to equalizing. Instead White should have exploited the weakness of the light squares with 17.e6!.



After this Black will lose the d5-pawn and the f7-pawn's disappearance will lead to great problems on the light squares. 17... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (17... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ may be relatively the best option, but after 18.exf7† $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 19. $\mathbb{W}h5\#$ White will take on h7 and the black king will be unhealthily exposed. If 17...fxe6 then 18. $\mathbb{W}xe6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ is hopeless for Black. A plausible end to the game would be 19... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xf5$ and it is time to resign.) 18.exf7† $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 19. $\mathbb{W}e6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xf5$ White is winning because of the double threat to d5 and h7, and because of the nice combination 20... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xd5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 24. $\mathbb{W}f5$ and more damage is imminent. For example: 24... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 25. $\mathbb{W}xh7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 26. $\mathbb{W}xf6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 27. $\mathbb{W}g6\#$

17... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}a4??$

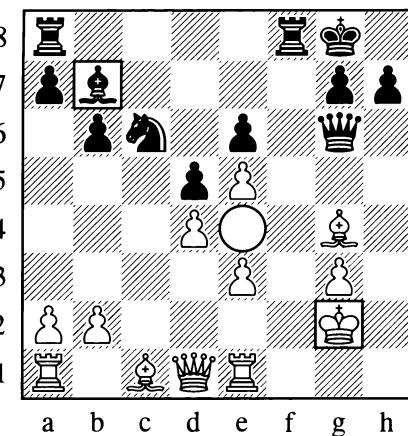
A second tragic blunder. White would have retained some chances after: 18. $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ dxe4 19.exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}a4\pm$

18...d4

0–1

86. Robertson – Aagaard

Grangemouth 2005

**19... $\mathbb{Q}a6\#$**

The bishop is heading for the e4-square.

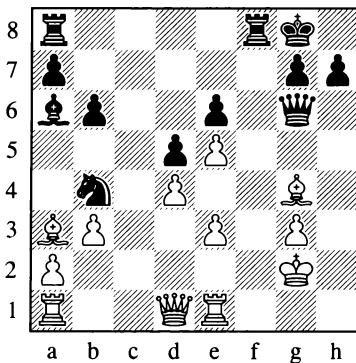
19... $\mathbb{B}ac8??$ looks natural, but White is not without his chances either: 20. $\mathbb{Q}h5!$ $\mathbb{W}f5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{W}f2\#$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ The white king is not that easy to get at, even though Black still appears to be better.

19... $\mathbb{Q}xe5?$ would be too aggressive. After 20.dxe5 d4† 21.e4 Black's initiative proves short-lived: 21... $\mathbb{Q}xe4\#$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}xe4\#$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}f4\pm$

20. $\mathbb{Q}d2!!$

White's defence is very difficult, as is illustrated by the following lines:

20.b3 $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ The knight also needs an active role. 21. $\mathbb{Q}a3$



21... $\mathbb{Q}d3!$ + And this role is to assist the bishop in getting to its ideal square, from where it will start a winning attack.

20. $\mathbb{Q}h5$ $\mathbb{W}f5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{W}f2\#$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ sets up the threat of ... $\mathbb{Q}f1\#$. And if White plays 23. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ Black can end the game with 24... $h5!$, when White is beyond salvation: 25. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ (25. $\mathbb{Q}xe6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 26. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $h4!$ and Black wins) 25... $hxg4\#$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7+$

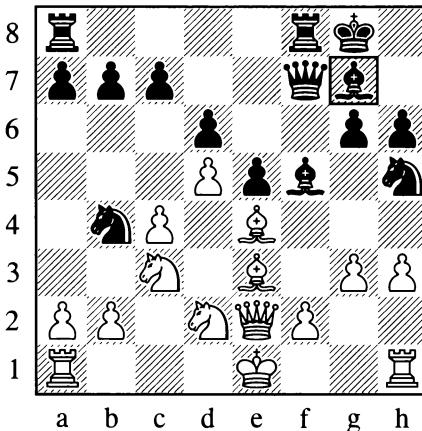
20.a3 keeps the knight out of b4, but Black has many good moves here. For example, 20... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ should prove decisive.

20... $\mathbb{Q}d3$

0–1

87. Arnaudov – S. Novikov

Plovdiv 2008



Black is doing well, but needs to bring his pieces to life, especially the rook on a8, the bishop on g7 and the knight on h5. Luckily he can solve the issue for two of these pieces with a simple tactical swing.

16... $\mathbb{Q}f4\#$

Black manages to exchange his “dominated” knight for White’s good bishop, leaving the g7-bishop to rule the world, especially as it is no longer blocked in by the e-pawn. An easy choice, actually.

17. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 18.0–0–0

18. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ is the main point. Black regains his piece and has a healthier pawn structure, safer king and better pieces.

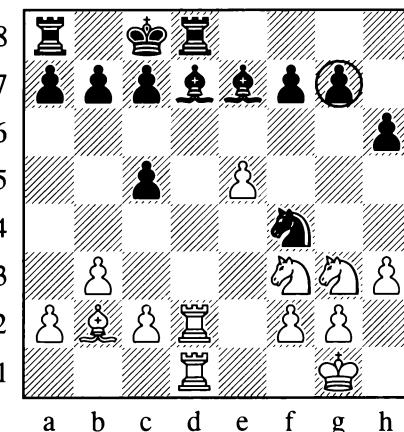
18... $fxe3$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ 20.f3 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 21. $fxe4$ $\mathbb{W}f2$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$

22. $\mathbb{Q}he1$ was better, but after 22... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2\#$ Black is on top anyway.

22... $\mathbb{Q}d3\#$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}h2$
0–1

88. Sjugirov – Sakaev

Novokuznetsk 2008



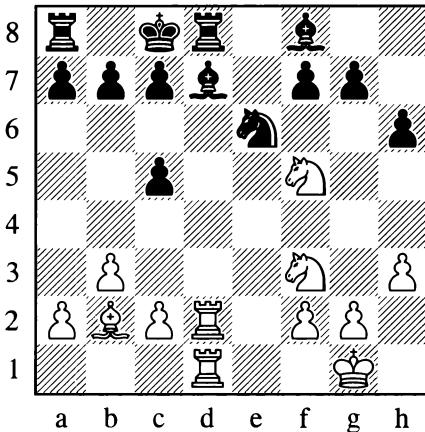
White has made the most out of the Berlin endgame. At this point he has the chance to get

rid of his slightly limiting pawn on e5 (which is usually blockaded and in the way of the white pieces) and take on g7. Such an option to use tactics for positional gains should not be missed.

18.e6! ♜xe6

Otherwise White simply takes on g7.

19.♕f5 ♜f8



20.♗xg7!

The brilliant point. Black will not be able to defend the d7-bishop.

20...♝xg7 21.♝e5 ♜d6

The best try. White cannot be allowed to enter the position on the 7th rank.

22.♝xd7 ♜e6

The ending after 22...♝xd7 23.♝xg7 h5 24.♝d5 ♜c6 25.♝f1! also looks very promising for White. He has an active rook on the 5th rank, a pawn majority that matters on the kingside, and Black has two weak and split pawns there.

23.♝e5 ♜xe5 24.♝xd8† ♜xd8 25.♝xe5

The ending looks rather hopeless for Black, and in the game it was only moments before he lost a pawn.

25...a5 26.♝f6 ♜e6 27.♝f4 a4

27...♜a6 28.f5 ♜d4 29.♝xd4 ♜d6 30.c3 is also winning for White. The extra pawn counts.

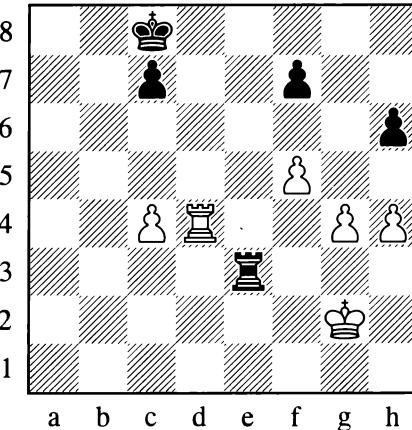
28.f5 ♜d4 29.♝xd4 cxd4 30.♝xd4 axb3 31.axb3 ♜a2 32.♝d2 ♜a5 33.g4 ♜c5 34.c4 b5 35.♝d4 bxc4 36.bxc4 ♜a5 37.♝g2

It is possible that White could have played the ending more accurately, but I do not think Black was close to making a draw at any point.

37...♜a3

37...♜a2† 38.♝g3 ♜a3† 39.♝h4 ♜c3 was another defensive try, but White is winning anyway: 40.c5! ♜xc5 41.♝h5 ♜c6 42.♝f4! ♜f6 (Or 42...♝d7 43.f6 ♜c3 44.♝xh6 ♜xh3† 45.♝g7 and White wins after 45...♝e6 46.♝e4† ♜d5 47.♝a4!.) 43.h4 ♜d7 44.g5 hxg5 45.hxg5 ♜a6 46.g6 fxg6† 47.fxg6 The pawn is on the way to the finishing line.

38.h4 ♜e3



39.♝f2

It is generally not a good idea to sacrifice pawns in time trouble, but here it would be quite effective: 39.g5! hxg5 40.hxg5 ♜e5 41.♝d5 is absolutely decisive. The critical line might be 41...♜e4 42.♝f3 ♜xc4 43.g6 fxg6 44.fxg6 ♜c1 45.♝g5 ♜f1† 46.♝e4 ♜f8 47.g7

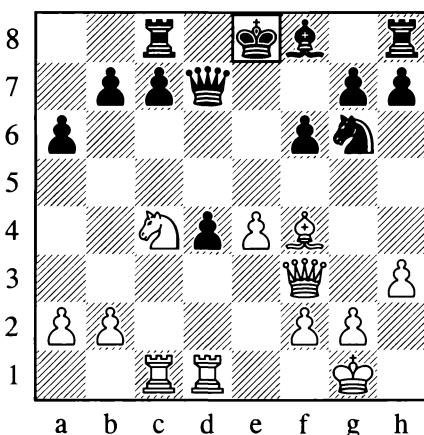
$\mathbb{E}g8$ 48. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 49. $\mathbb{Q}f6$, which is an easy way to win.

39... $\mathbb{E}h3$ 40. $g5$ $hxg5$ 41. $hxg5$ $\mathbb{E}h5$ 42. $\mathbb{E}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 43. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 44. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{E}h1$ 45. $g6$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 46. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{E}e1\uparrow$ 47. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ $\mathbb{E}d1$ 48. $g7\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 49. $c5$ $\mathbb{E}a1$ 50. $\mathbb{Q}e7$ $\mathbb{E}e1\uparrow$ 51. $\mathbb{Q}d7$ $\mathbb{E}e5$ 52. $c6$ $\mathbb{E}xf5$ 53. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ $\mathbb{E}f1$ 54. $\mathbb{Q}d6$

1–0

89. Swinkels – Ragger

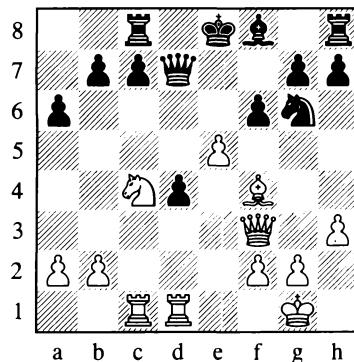
Germany 2008



A simple principle concerning a lead in development is that if you do not increase it or use it for immediate action, you are destined to lose it. This is exactly what Steinitz said back in the day. Only he used the word ‘advantage’, which of course could only be an attack back in the romantic days of the 19th century...

17. $\mathbb{Q}e3?$

A grave error that should have cost White all of his advantage. The correct plan was to open the centre before Black had time to finish his development. 17. $e5!$ was therefore the correct move. Lines are not necessary to understand this logic, but they don’t damage it, so here they are:



a) 17... $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 19. $exf6$ 0–0 20. $f7\uparrow$! $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 21. $\mathbb{E}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 22. $\mathbb{E}e4$ $\mathbb{W}xf7$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xf7$ $\mathbb{E}xf7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{E}f6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}g6\uparrow$ $hxg6$ 26. $\mathbb{E}xe7\pm$

b) 17... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 18. $exf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ (18... $gxf6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ [19. $\mathbb{Q}h6\?!$] 19... $\mathbb{W}c6$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xc6\uparrow$ $bcx6$ 21. $\mathbb{E}xd4\pm$) 19. $\mathbb{E}e1\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xb7\pm$

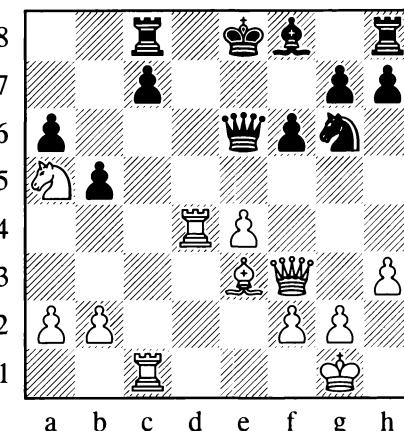
c) 17... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 18. $exf6$ 0–0 19. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $gxf6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}f4\pm$

17... $b5\?!$

The best defence involved focussing on finishing development. After 17... $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ 18. $b4$ (or 18. $e5$ $b5$ 19. $exf6$ 0–0=) 18... $\mathbb{Q}a7$ 19. $e5$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 20. $exf6$ 0–0 Black would have solved his opening problems and fully developed his pieces.

18. $\mathbb{E}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}e6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}a5!$

The knight is on its way to some important squares on the queenside.



19...c5

19... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 20. $\mathbb{W}f5!$ $\mathbb{W}xf5$ 21. $exf5$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 22. $f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ would have left Black in a sad and passive position. After the only move, 23... $\mathbb{Q}d6$, White has several good replies, such as 24.a4! and 24. $\mathbb{Q}a7!?$ $\mathbb{B}a8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}c8!\pm$.

20. $\mathbb{B}d5$ c4 21. $\mathbb{Q}b7!$

White is closing in on the vital dark squares.

21... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 22. $\mathbb{W}f5$

The exchange of queens relieves the pressure a little. More natural was 22. $\mathbb{Q}c5\pm$ or 22. $\mathbb{Q}c5\pm$.

22... $\mathbb{W}xf5$ 23. $exf5$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}f4?!$

24.a4! was the last chance to play for a win.

24...0–0! 25. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $fxe5$ 26. $\mathbb{B}xe5?$

26. $\mathbb{B}d7$ was necessary to keep the balance.

26... $\mathbb{B}c7$

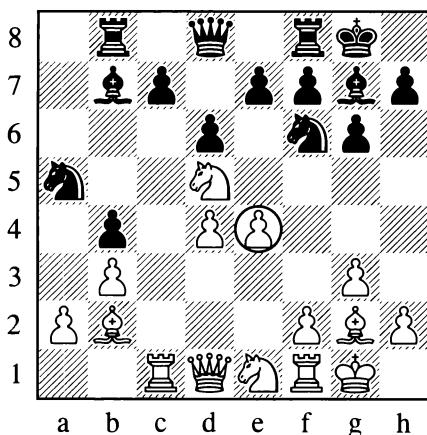
Suddenly the knight is trapped.

27. $\mathbb{B}ce1?$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$

0–1

90. Nyzhnyk – A. Vovk

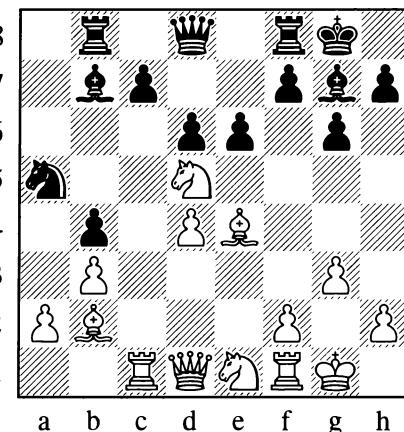
Konya 2011



Black is struggling a little with the b4-pawn and his poorly-placed knight on a5. At the same time his only asset is the pressure from b7 towards e4, assisted by the knight on f6. There is only one way for him to exploit this – with tactics!

14... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ e6

Black will regain the piece after which White has a weak pawn on d4 and Black has two well-placed bishops. Nyzhnyk now chooses to accept the real pawn sacrifice that Vovk's pseudo piece sacrifice involved. Although it feels very dangerous, it is understandable that he chooses to do this rather than face the loss of a pawn.



16. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $hxg6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ c5!

Black would have decent compensation even without this move, but it is a nice option to have.

18. $\mathbb{Q}bd3?!$

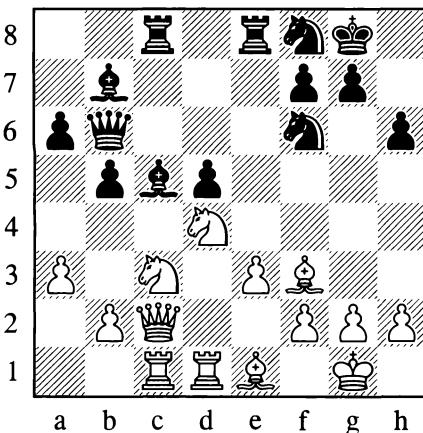
18. $\mathbb{Q}bc2\mp$ was necessary, though obviously White's position is very unpleasant.

18... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 19.f4 e5

Black is clearly winning and clinched the full point on move 35.

91. Huzman – Aronian

Plovdiv 2010



White has a solid position, while Black is very active. If White had time to consolidate his position, he would not have any problems. But at the moment his hold on d4 is not so strong because of the X-ray attacks down the c- and e-files. This is the only real weakness in the white position, and it can be exploited tactically.

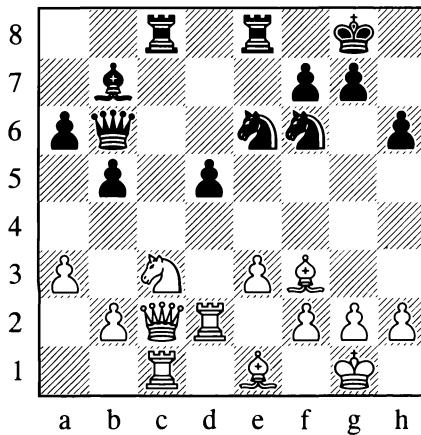
18... $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$ 19. $\mathbb{B}xd4$

After 19.exd4? $\mathbb{Q}e6$ the d4-pawn would simply fall. The main tactical point is that 20. $\mathbb{W}d3$ does not protect the pawn on account of 20... $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{B}xe1\#$, when Black just wins.

19... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 20. $\mathbb{B}d2?$

20. $\mathbb{B}d2?$ would not leave the rook exposed on d2 as in the game, but it would weaken the defence of the second rank. Black is strategically winning after 20...d4 21. $\mathbb{B}xb7$ $\mathbb{W}xb7$ 22.exd4 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 23.f3 $\mathbb{Q}d5$, when White has been completely outplayed.

It was necessary to try 20. $\mathbb{B}h4\#$, although that takes the rook to a silly square. But it would not be faced with an immediate refutation like in the game.



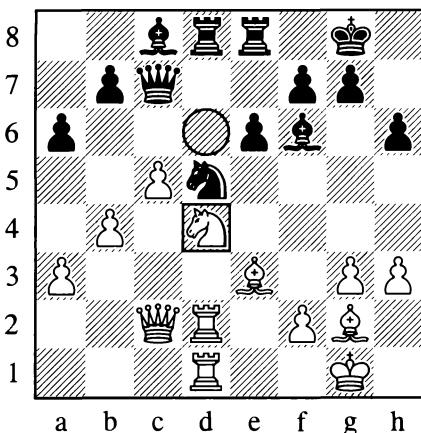
20...d4 21. $\mathbb{B}xb7$ $\mathbb{W}xb7$ 22.exd4 $\mathbb{Q}e4$
23. $\mathbb{B}dd1$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 24.d5 a5!

White's position is crumbling. There is no decent reply to the advance of the b-pawn. Of course Black can also take on c3 and give a check on e2, winning the exchange.

25. $\mathbb{W}b3$ b4 26.axb4 axb4 27. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}e2\#$
28. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 30.d6 $\mathbb{W}c6$
31. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 32. $\mathbb{B}xb4$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 33.f3 $\mathbb{W}f2$
0–1

92. Ivanchuk – Nogueiras

Yucatan 2004



White's pawns on the queenside are quite impressive and might in the long term give

him the chance to create a passed pawn. But more important is the weakness of the d6- and b6-squares and the pressure the b7-pawn can come under.

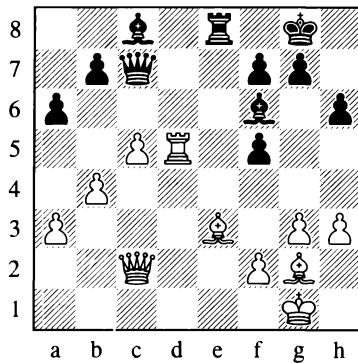
31.♗f5!

Less energetic play, such as 31.♗b3, would allow Black to liquidate the pressure with 31...♝xe3 32.♗xe3 e5 33.♗e2 ♜xd2 34.♗xd2 e4 35.♗c3 ♜xc3 36.♗xc3 e3 37.♗e2 exf2† 38.♗xf2 ♜xe2† 39.♗xe2 ♜d7 followed by ...♝c6, with an ending that Black can hold without any great problems.

31...♝xe3?!

This is a very natural move to play, but not a fortunate one.

31...exf5 32.♗xd5 ♜xd5 33.♗xd5 leads to an obvious advantage for White.



But Black can fight on with 33...♝xe3! 34.fxe3 ♜xg3 35.♗f2 ♜c7† and try to hold this position through dynamic defence. This looks pretty desperate, but such is his position.

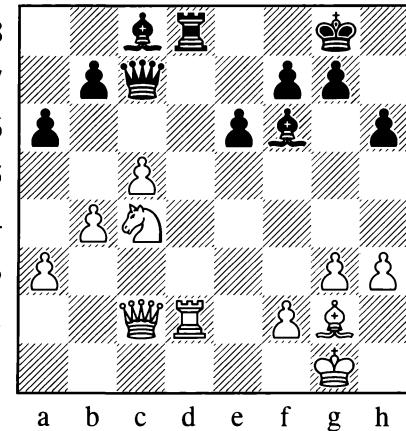
32.♝xe3 ♜xd2 33.♗xd2 ♜d8

33...b6 34.c6 also gives White a huge advantage.

Maybe it was best to get rid of the c8-bishop with 33...♝d7 34.♗c4 ♜c6, but White is still close to winning after 35.♗xc6 ♜xc6 36.♗d1, when his control of the d-file is excellent.

33...♝g5 34.f4 ♜e7 does not really succeed in creating a weakness in the white position. White would play 35.♗c4† with the threat of ♜e4 followed by ♜b6xc8 and ♜xb7. Black is in considerable danger, for example: 35.♗d8 36.♗xd8† ♜xd8 37.♗b6 f5 38.♗c3 ♜f6 39.♗f3 and Black's position is pretty desperate.

34.♗c4



34...♝d4

White also seems to be winning after 34...♝d7 35.♗d1! ♜b5 36.♗xd8† ♜xd8 37.♗xd8† ♜xd8 38.♗b6! (38.♗d6 b6 might actually give Black real drawing chances), when White wins a pawn. The main point is of course that 38...♝c6 39.♗xc6 bxc6 40.♗c8† would lead to the win of the c6-pawn.

34...♝d4 35.♗d6 ♜f6 was Black's best chance to stay in the game, although he is sitting on a knife's edge.

35.♗b6 a5 36.♗xd4 ♜xd4 37.♗a4 ♜xg3?

37...g6 was the last practical chance: 38.♗e8† ♜g7 39.♗f1! (39.♗xc8?? ♜xg3 would of course be a horrible turn of events) 39...axb4 40.axb4 ♜e5 41.♗d8, based on: 41...♝c3 42.♗d1 ♜xb4 43.♗xc8 ♜xc5 44.♗xb7 ♜f5 45.♗f3 ♜xh3† 46.♗e2 I think Black may

be able to draw the game with exceptional defensive play.

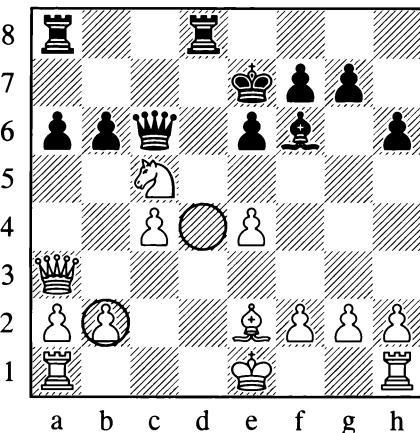
38. $\mathbb{W}e8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 39. $\mathbb{W}xf7$

The f2-pawn is defended, the bishop on c8 trapped and the black king exposed.

1–0

93. Jobava – Ivanchuk

Havana 2005



17... $\mathbb{W}xc5!$

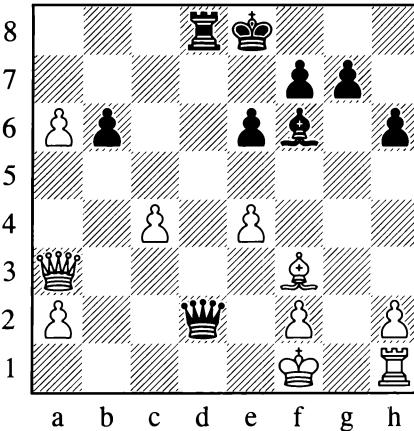
17... $bxc5$ is weaker. White can castle and be only a little worse. But even better is 18.e5!, leading to a drawn ending by force: 18... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ And now come a few flashy moves. 21. $\mathbb{B}b1$! $\mathbb{B}d1\#$! 22. $\mathbb{Q}e2$! $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 23. $\mathbb{B}xb6$ $\mathbb{B}xh1$ 24. $\mathbb{B}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 25. $\mathbb{B}a7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 26. $a4$ The a-pawn is strong and offers White at least even chances.

18.b4?!

Not a pleasant move to play, but Jobava clearly did not like the alternative. Necessary was 18. $\mathbb{W}xc5\#$ $bxc5$ 19. $\mathbb{B}d1$ to try to hold the position through passive defence. This is quite foreign to Jobava, but none the less this was what he had to try. After 19... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 20.0–0, White has big problems of course, but he will find the opposite-coloured

bishops a drawing factor, rather than a further pressure factor. Still, I like Black after 20... $\mathbb{B}db8\#$.

18... $\mathbb{W}g5!$ 19. $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{W}xg2$ 20. $b5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$
21. $\mathbb{B}xd8\#$ $\mathbb{B}xd8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}g5$ 23. $bxa6$ $\mathbb{W}d2\#$
24. $\mathbb{Q}f1$



24... $\mathbb{Q}d4$

24... $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$ was even stronger. Once the bishop arrives on c5, White is in trouble. The following long variation illustrates the state of play: 25. $\mathbb{W}a4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 26. $\mathbb{B}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 27. $\mathbb{B}f1$ $\mathbb{W}g5\#$ 28. $\mathbb{B}h1$ $\mathbb{W}f4\#$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 30. $e5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 31. $\mathbb{W}a3\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 32. $\mathbb{W}h3$ (32. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{W}xc4$ is worse) 32... $\mathbb{W}xc4$ 33. $a7$ $\mathbb{W}xa2$ 34. $a8=\mathbb{W}$ $\mathbb{B}xa8$ 35. $\mathbb{B}xa8$ $\mathbb{W}xa8\#$ White has some chances to defend this position of course, but it will be quite hard with Black's three pawns for the exchange and superior pawn structure.

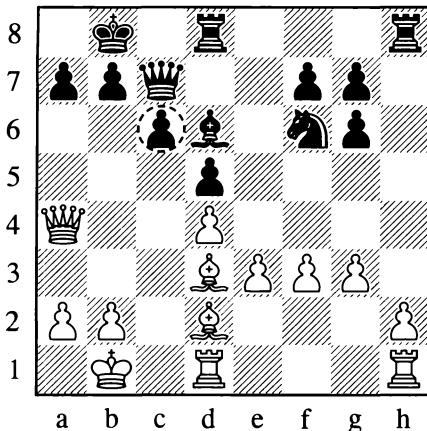
25. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 26. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{W}xa2$ 27. $\mathbb{W}xg7?$

White had no choice but to play 27.a7, with some chances. After 27... $\mathbb{W}xa7$ (27... $b5\#$) is also interesting) 28. $\mathbb{W}xg7$ $\mathbb{W}a2$ 29. $\mathbb{W}f6$ $\mathbb{B}d2\#$ Black is well ahead, but the game is still a bit away from being decided.

27... $\mathbb{B}d1\#$! 28. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{B}xh1$ 29. $\mathbb{W}h8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$
30. $a7$ $\mathbb{W}xe2$
0–1

94. Nyback – I. Schneider

Germany 2010



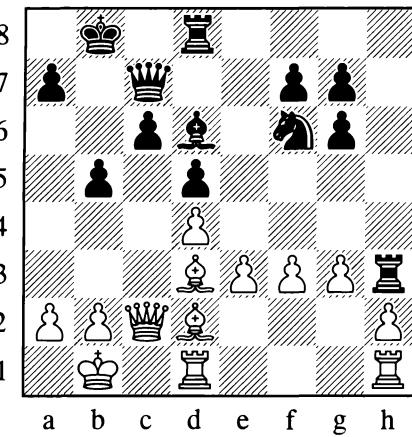
Coming from a modest variation of the Slav where White is aiming for a slight technical advantage, it is not always easy to create big problems for Black. Therefore it is necessary to create small but lasting problems! At this point White puts a bit of pressure on Black by forcing him to weaken his pawn structure a little. In the long term this is quite unpleasant, especially as the weakening is of the light squares, which Black must defend with a knight versus the white bishop.

18.♗a5! b6 19.♗d2± b5?!

This creates a further weakness in the black position. I think 19...♗d7 was slightly more accurate. White is still better after 20.♗c2! ♗c8 21.♗c3± with a long-term advantage, which is certainly assisted by the slight weakening of the black queenside.

20.♗c2 ♗h3?!

20...♗b6 21.♗c1 ♗c8 was the best defence. White has various plans from this point and would have to choose. One of these options is ♗c2-d1-e2 followed by e3-e4 or ♗g2 and playing on the kingside. White is still to be preferred of course, but his advantage is not too great yet.



**21.e4! dxе4 22.fxe4 ♗g4 23.♗c1 ♗dh8
24.e5 ♗e7 25.♗e4 f5?**

This only loses time and creates weaknesses. Better was 25...a6, although 26.♗d2 leaves White on the verge of winning.

26.exf6 ♗xf6

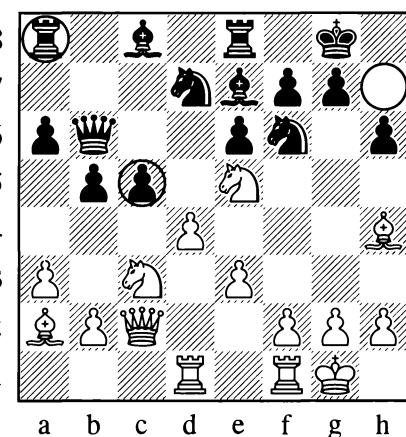
26...gxsf6 is no better. White is winning after 27.♗e2!, based on 27...f5 28.♗g2 ♗xh2 29.♗xh2 ♗xh2 30.d5! with an overwhelming attack.

**27.♗xc6 ♗c8 28.♗g2 ♗xc6 29.♗xh3 ♗d5
30.♗f4† ♗xf4 31.gxf4 ♗f6 32.♗d3 ♗d5
33.♗he1**

1–0

95. Dreev – Chirila

Richardson 2010



15. $\mathbb{Q}xd7!$

White has a very similar solution in 15.dxc5 $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}b1$, though after 18...g6 19. $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ Black's plight is slightly less severe as the rook on e7 is defended and White does not win a pawn. Nevertheless, after 20. $\mathbb{W}f4\pm$ White has an excellent position and good winning chances.

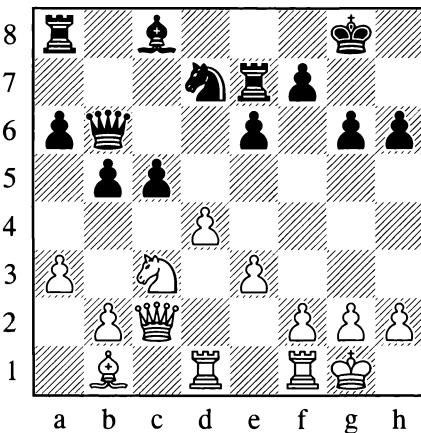
15... $\mathbb{Q}xd7$

15... $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 16.dxc5 would leave the bishop on d7 exposed.

16. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ g6

17... $\mathbb{Q}f6?$ 18.dxc5! would win White a pawn, as 18... $\mathbb{W}xc5$ loses directly to 19. $\mathbb{Q}d8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e4!$.

17...f5 was the only sad alternative available for Black, but after 18.dxc5 $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 19.e4!± White has a great position.

**18. $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 19. $\mathbb{W}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xh6$ e5?!**

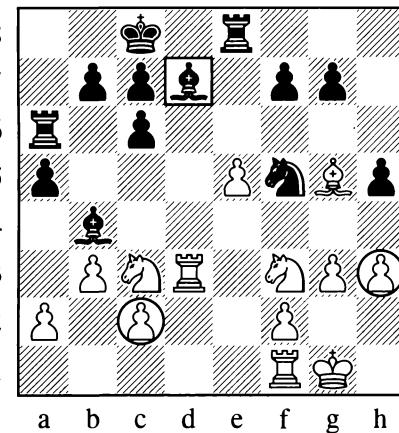
The last chance was 20...c4±, where the game goes on, but with a pawn more for White.

21. dxc5 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 22. b4

White is winning due to the ideas h2-h4-h5 and $\mathbb{Q}b1-a2$.

**22... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 23. h4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 25. h5
1–0****96. Shirov – Kramnik**

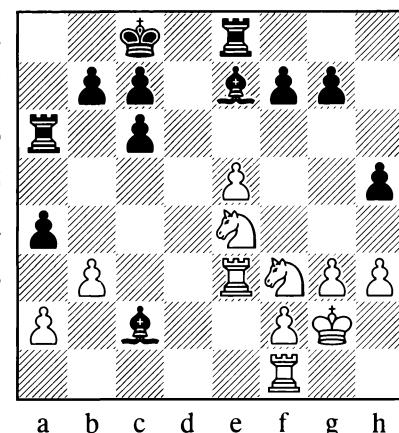
Monaco (rapid) 2001



White has two serious weaknesses, on h3 and c2. Black is able to exploit this immediately by freeing the f5-square for the bishop, at the same time gaining a tempo by attacking the h3-pawn.

**17... $\mathbb{Q}e7!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$
20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$**

20. $\mathbb{Q}d2?$ would lose immediately to 20... $\mathbb{Q}b4$.

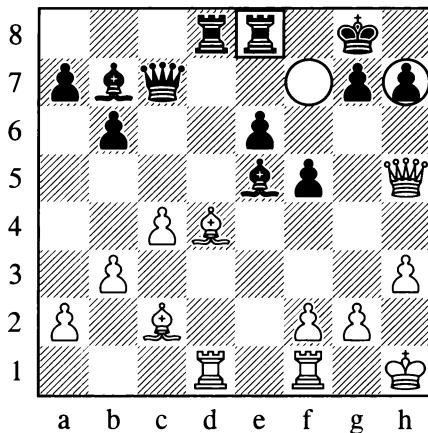
20... $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ a4

0–1

Shirov threw in the towel a bit early. After 22.♗c1 ♗xe4 23.♗xe4 axb3 24.axb3 ♗a3 25.♗c3 Black certainly has great winning chances with his extra pawn, but White has some activity and for this reason some practical chances for a draw.

97. E. Paehtz – Zawadzka

Antakya (1.3) 2010

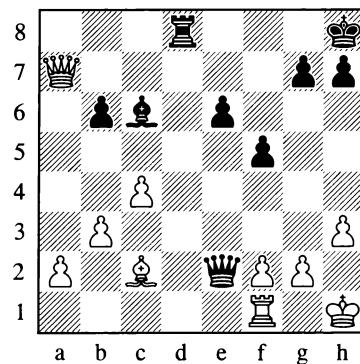


The weaknesses in the black position – the exposed nature of the e8-rook, the weakness of the light squares, such as f7, around the king, and the pressure on the c2-h7 diagonal – have quite a temporary nature. White has to react aggressively to ensure that these do not just disappear, for example after ...g6.

22.♗xe5 ♗xe5 23.♗fe1?!

The second-best option, giving Black the chance to reach an endgame with a higher chance of survival than she deserves.

23.♗d7! immediately was the best move. Black has virtually no choice, and after 23...♗c6 24.♗f7† ♗h8 25.♗xd8 ♗xd8 26.♗xa7± she would be facing a horrible uphill struggle. I guess that the reason Paehtz did not choose this line is that she saw the double threat 26...♗e2?! and simply stopped here.

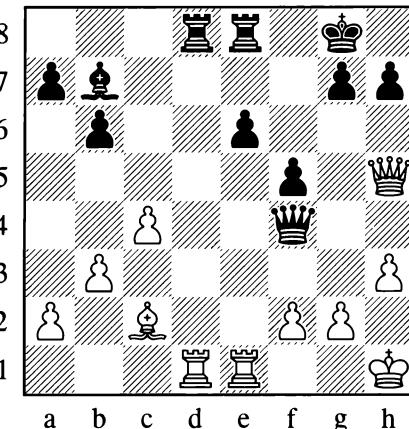


A forgivable reaction, but actually White is just winning on account of 27.♗g1 ♗xc2 28.♗c7 and the piece is regained and the black pawns exposed.

23...♗f4?

23...♗c7? is easily refuted with 24.♗xd8 followed by 25.♗xf5!. The X-ray towards e8 is decisive.

But Black had a serious chance to get in 23...g6!, when the situation is inconclusive. White is better, but she will face serious technical challenges: 24.♗xh7† ♗xh7 25.♗e5 ♗xd1† 26.♗xd1 ♗g7 27.♗c2 ♗f6 28.♗e2 (28.♗e1 ♗d8 29.♗d1 looks attractive until you see the speed of the black king: 29...♗xd1† 30.♗xd1 ♗e5 and Black's strongest piece is a big force.) 28...♗d8 29.♗g1 e5±



24.♕d7!

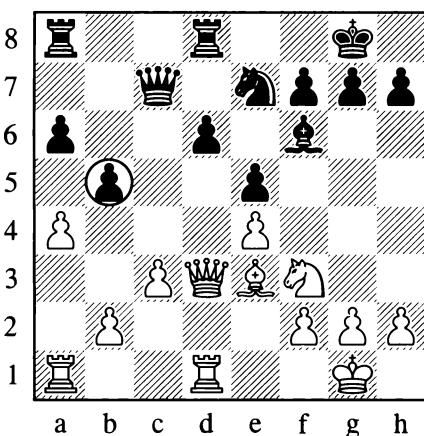
Now White wins.

24...♚f8 25.♕xb7 ♕d2 26.♕d1 ♕xf2 27.♕f3
 ♕xa2 28.♕e7 ♕c2 29.♕1xe6 ♕c1† 30.♕e1
 ♕h8 31.♕e8 ♕g8 32.♕d5†

1–0

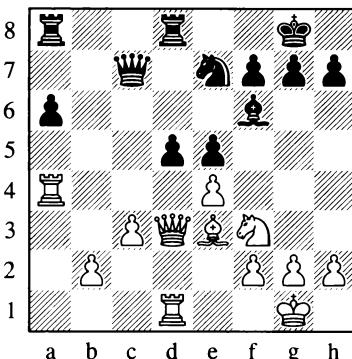
98. Karjakin – Nepomniachtchi

Moscow 2010



18...♛c6?

Karjakin called this pure carelessness on the part of his opponent, admitting that he had nothing prepared against: 18...bxa4! 19.♕xa4 (19.c4?! would be too optimistic. After 19...♛c6 20.♕c2 Black can still equalize with 20...d5, but stronger is 20...♜ab8 and it is White who will have to look for ways to equalize.) 19...d5



Black has essentially equalized. He is ridding himself of the weak d-pawn and he will have counterplay against b2, outweighing the weakness of his a-pawn.

19.axb5 axb5 20.♕xa8 ♕xa8

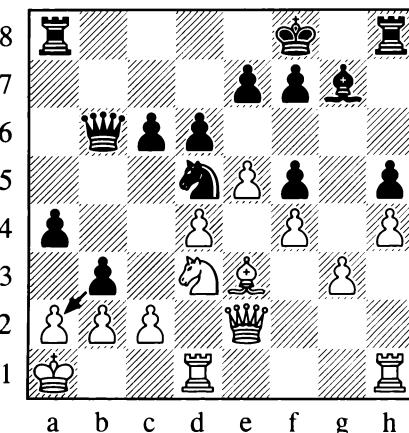
At this point Karjakin fell in love with a little tactical idea on the kingside.

21.h4?!

Even after this inaccuracy White retains a slight advantage, and he still managed to win the game on move 49. However, his position would have been considerably more attractive had he played the simple manoeuvre 21.♕e1! with the idea of ♔c2-b4, with an obvious positional advantage. Black would suffer a lot with his two pawn weaknesses.

99. Berg – Almeida Quintana

Montcada 2009



25.a3?

After 25.c4? a3! the white king is in deep trouble.

25.♕f2!! was the right move. The idea is to meet 25...bxa2 with 26.c4∞, when White is fully in the game. Other replies, such as 25...♜h6

26.a3 bxc2 27.♗xc2± would be acceptable for White, of course.

25.cxb3 axb3 26.a3? was possible as well, though things are a bit unpleasant for the white king. Black can try 26...♗b5 with various tactical ideas, for example 27.♗he1? ♗c3! 28.bxc3 ♘xa3† 29.♔b1 ♘a4 and White loses something.

25...bxc2 26.♗de1

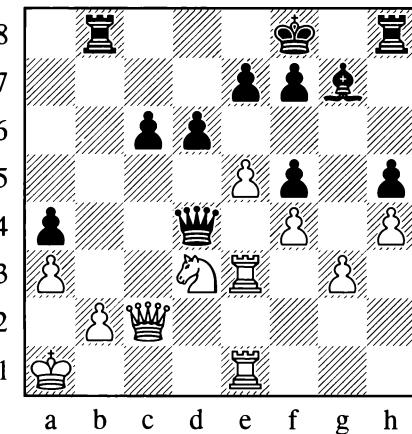
Better was 26.♗c1, but Black has a clear path to an advantage in the ending: 26...dxe5 27.fxe5 ♗xe3 28.♗xe3 ♘d8 29.♗xc2 ♘xd4 30.♗xd4 ♘xd4 31.♗xc6 ♗g8? White is rather passive here and will only hold the game with perfect play.

26...♗b8?!

26...♗b3! 27.♗c1 ♘xe3 28.♗xe3 ♗xe3 29.♗xe3 c5? was more accurate.

27.♗xc2 ♗xe3 28.♗xe3 ♘xd4 29.♗he1?!

29.♗e2! followed by 30.♗d1 would have given White decent counterplay.



29...c5?!

29...♗b3! was very strong. Black has a clear advantage after 30.exd6 e6!, when his bishop is very strong. White is even worse off after 30.♗xc6?! ♗xe5! and Black wins.

30.♗f2

30.♗e3 e2!?

30...c4!?

30...dxe5? 31.♗d3! ♘xb2†!±

31.♗d1 dxe5 32.fxe5 e6 33.♗c3 ♘c8 34.♗e3 ♘xe5 35.♗e2 ♘xg3 36.♗xc4 ♘xc4 37.♗xc4

37.♗xc4 ♗g8 38.♗xa4 ♗h7 39.♗a7?! would not hold for White either.

37...♗g8 38.♗xa4 ♗h7 39.♗a7?!

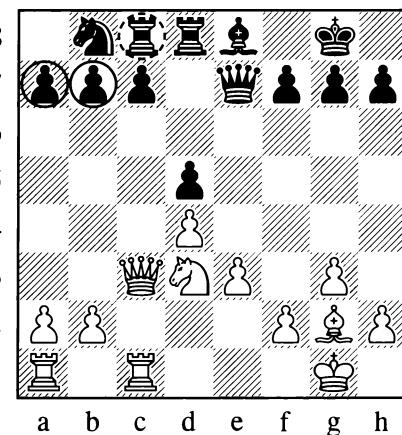
This cuts the pain short.

39...♗d3 40.♗e1 ♘xc4 41.♗xf7 ♘a8

42.♗xh5† ♗g8 43.♗f3 ♘xb2†! 44.♔b1 ♘c8
0–1

100. P.H. Nielsen – Miezis

Copenhagen 2004



If Black had time to play ...c6 he would be a bit worse, but solid. White would push his pawns forward on the queenside and try to create a weakness in typical style. Black would try to create some counterplay on the kingside, but his chances would be worse, for the obvious reason that he has not yet started his counterplay there.

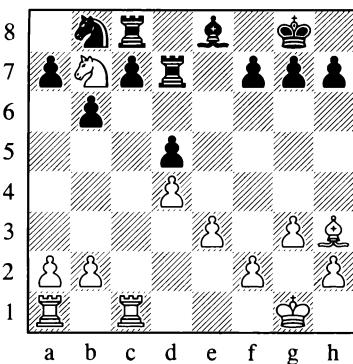
17.♕c5!

Taking advantage of the fact that the a7- and b7-pawns are undefended. White is forking the black queen and the a7-pawn.

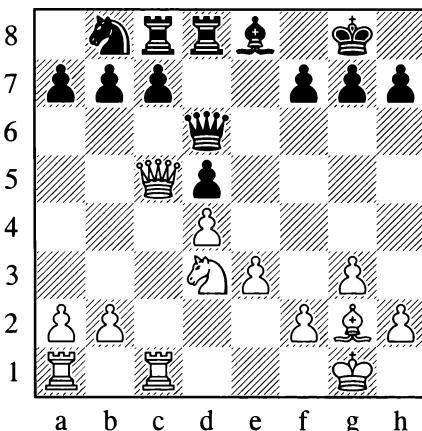
17...♗d6

17...♕xc5 18.♘xc5 would be devastating for Black. For example, after 18...♗c6 White has 19.♗h3! winning material.

And after 18...b6 Black has not only weakened his pawn structure on the queenside, he is also losing an exchange after 19.♗b7! ♗d7 20.♗h3.



The knight is not trapped as White can play 21.♗d6! against most moves, saving the knight without allowing Black to save the exchange.



18.♗h3?!

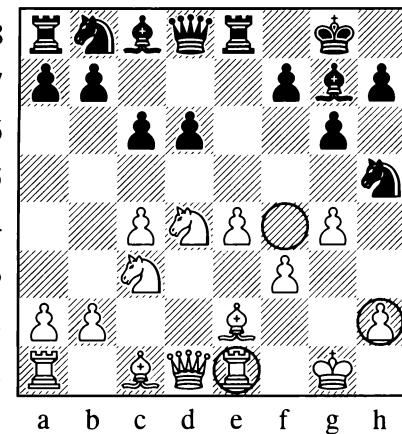
White decides that he prefers a superior structure to anything else. He could also have ensured his advantage with 18.♗xa7.

18...♗d7 19.♗xd6 cxd6 20.♗g2±

White won on move 50.

101. Michalik – Zhrebukh

Groningen 2011



The big weakness in the white position is of course the f4-square, but it seems that White has been able to push the knight backwards and will retain full control over the dark squares in his position (which are all weakened by implication). However, Black has a strong idea, which can be executed in two different ways, that takes advantage of these weaknesses.

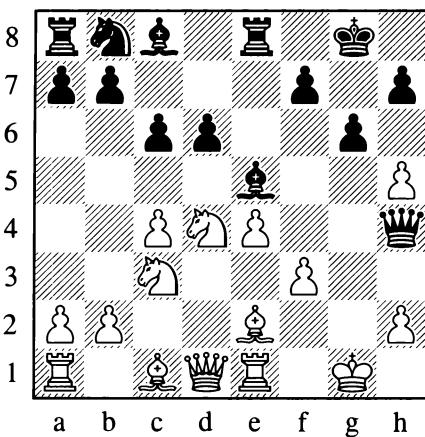
11...♗e5!!

11...♗h4 followed by ...♗e5 leads to a transposition in all lines. But the text move is more natural, threatening ...♗f4 immediately.

12.gxh5?!

This loses by force, but then again, 12.♗f1 ♗f4+ is everything Black could ever hope for in the King's Indian.

12...♗h4



13.f4

The only move to avoid mate.

13...Qxd4† 14.Qxd4

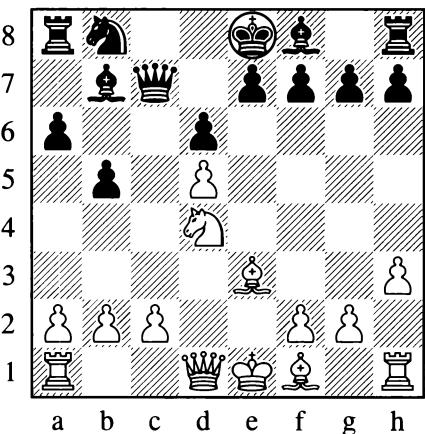
White tries an exchange sacrifice, realizing that the position after 14.Qh1 Qa6 followed by ...Qc5 is overwhelming for Black. For example: 15.Qf1 Qxc3 16.bxc3 Qc5 and White is probably just lost.

14...Qxe1† 15.Qg2 Qh4 16.Qe3 Qg4 17.h6 f6

Black won on move 31.

102. Shyam – Edouard

Hastings 2012



The obvious weakness in the black position is the advanced b-pawn, which constitutes a hook. If we were looking at it solely from this point of view, we might be tempted to play 10.a4!?, which would give some advantage. But we should not forget that Black has neglected his development and thus exposed his king to a quick attack. Combining these two features gives White access to a powerful idea. Obviously many GMs will choose the right move quite quickly, simply because this kind of thinking is automatic in their heads, though it may not even be conscious.

10.c4!

I believe that White is already winning.

10...bxc4

The best chance. All the alternatives fail as well.

10...e5 11.dxe6 d5 is a strange idea. Black is playing for rapid development. Unfortunately White is just winning after 12.exf7† Qxf7 13.Qe2!, preparing to escape to the queenside with the king.

10...Qa5† 11.Qd2 Qb6 12.Qb3 bxc4 13.Qxc4 is even worse. How is Black going to bring his bishop out?

10...Qd7 11.cxb5 Qa5† 12.Qd2 Qb6 also does not work. White wins quickly after 13.Qc6 axb5 14.Qe3 Qa6 15.a4 Qxc6 16.dxc6 Qxc6 17.Qc1! Qb7 18.Qxb5, and Black should resign before he is humiliated any further.

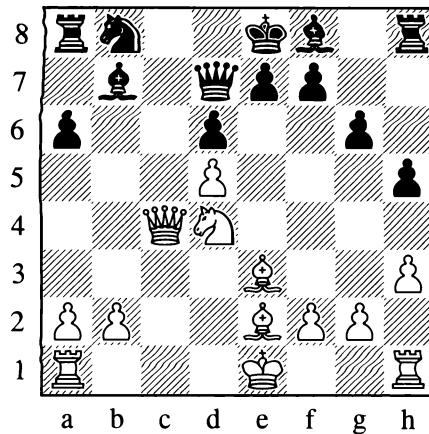
11.Qa4† Qd7 12.Qxc4

White's advantage is massive. Black cannot develop his pieces in time.

12...g6 13.Qe2 h5?!

13...Qg7 was better, but White still has

a more or less winning advantage. A very plausible line would be 14.♗g4 ♖d8 15.♗c1 0–0, when Black has very little chance of survival. White has many options, for example: 16.♕c6 ♕e8 17.♔a5 h5 18.♗d1 ♔c8 19.b4 with an overwhelming advantage.

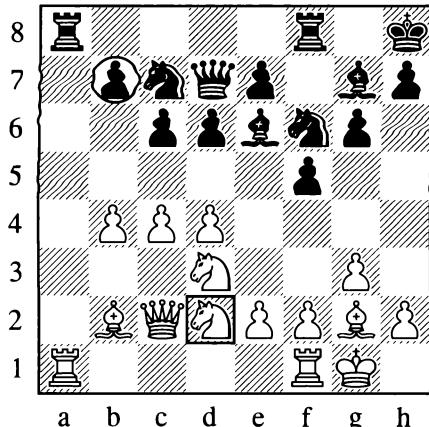


14.♗d1!

Not the only strong move in the position, but this decides the game at once. Black could have resigned here, but struggled on to move 21.

103. Lautier – M. Gurevich

Clichy 2001



The most important weakness in the black

position is the b7/c6 complex. For this reason the passive knight on d2 is sent to the a5-square.

15.♘b3!

After 15.♔a5?! ♔f7 16.♕fa1 ♕xa5 17.♕xa5 ♕a8 White's advantage is kept to a minimum.

15...♕xa1

15...♗e4 with the idea of blocking the long diagonal has its own problems: 16.f3 ♘f6 17.e4 with an edge for White.

16.♕xa1 ♕a8

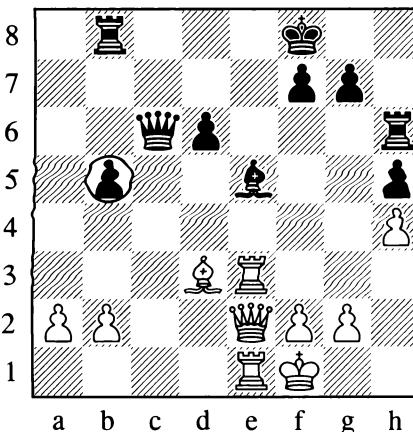
16...b5 is met strongly with 17.d5! (17.cxb5 ♕xb3 18.♕xb3 ♘xb5 19.♗f4 d5±) 17...cx d5 18.c5±, when the use of the a-file and the d4-square secures an edge.

17.♔a5±

White won on move 42. The pressure on b7 and c6 kept Black permanently on the defensive.

104. Motylev – Shariyazdanov

Tomsk 2004



The b5-pawn is terribly weak. Sometimes we should realize that this means that we can simply win it.

25. $\mathbb{E}e4!$ g6

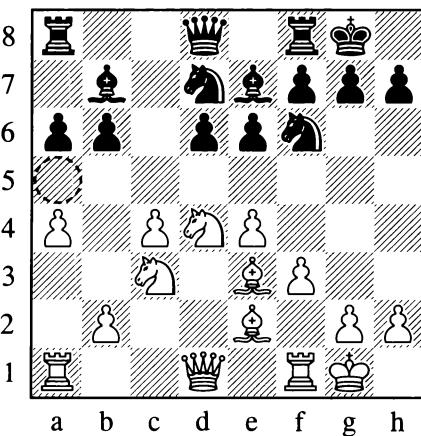
There is no time for 25...b4, when White has 26.f4! pointing to the other weakness in the black position, the e8-square: 26... $\mathbb{E}f6$ (26... $\mathbb{E}f6$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}b5!$) 27. $\mathbb{W}xh5$ $\mathbb{E}h6$ (27... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 28. $\mathbb{E}xe5!$) 28. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{E}f6$ 29.g3 and White is winning.

26. $\mathbb{E}b4\pm$

White won a pawn and eventually the game on move 64.

105. Short – Cvitan

Leon 2001



White has a great chance to create a weak pawn on a6, and at the same time try to take control of the a5-square.

12.a5! bxa5

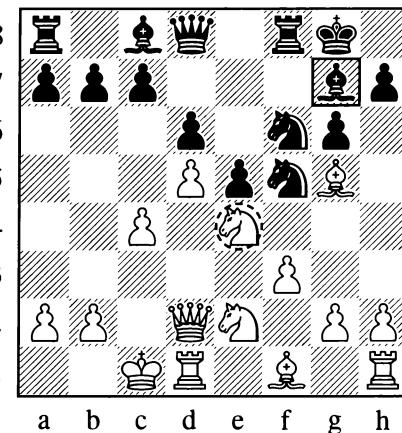
12... $\mathbb{W}c7$ may be slightly better. White has a number of interesting options, from which I instinctively prefer 13. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 14. $\mathbb{E}a3\pm$, with the idea $\mathbb{W}c2/d2$ followed by $\mathbb{E}fa1$.

13. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d2\pm$

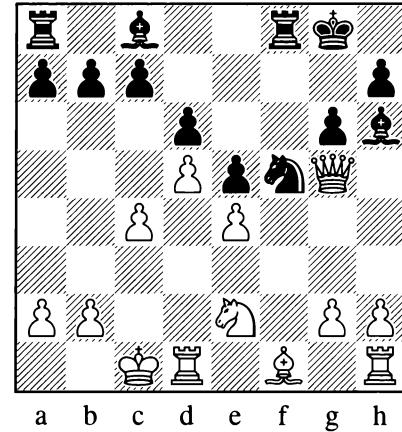
White has an obvious advantage and won the game on move 45.

106. Carosso – Porter

Dublin 2008



White is trying to claim a slight edge by having a good knight on e4; he may later advance the h-pawn to create inconveniences on the kingside. Black decided to rid himself of his inferior bishop and open the inviting f-file with a small combination.

12... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 13. $fxe4$ $\mathbb{W}xg5!$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xg5$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ **15. $\mathbb{W}xh6$**

You might wonder whether 15. $\mathbb{W}d2$ would be more precise, as the white king is probably better placed on d2 than c1. On the other hand the black knight is not forced to retreat to h6 – it can also go to g7, which may look an

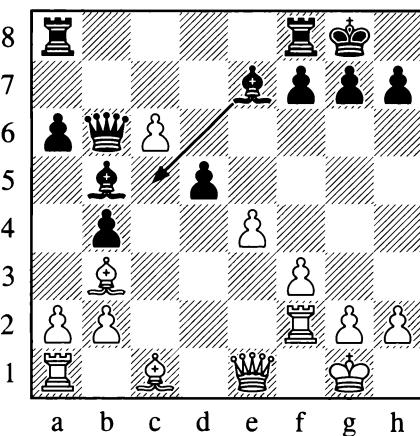
odd square, but once the knight arrives at h5, all will be going according to plan.

15... \mathbb{Q} xh6# 16.h3 \mathbb{Q} d7 17. \mathbb{Q} g1

White won this game on move 60 after Black spectacularly misplayed an equal ending. In this position I find it attractive to try to activate the knight on h6, rather than advancing the g-pawn as Black did in the game. The way I envisage this happening is 17... \mathbb{Q} g7!? followed by ... \mathbb{Q} h6-g8-f6-h5 and Black's position is very pleasant to play. A follow-up could be ... \mathbb{E} f6 and ...c6!? to open a second front. Black is simply a little better, nothing dramatic.

107. Ivanchuk – Hübner

Munich 1994



Sometimes the opponent's idea can be disregarded as unimportant. Paying attention to the opponent's plans is not the same as being subservient to them. Here White takes the offered pawn, confident that he will win back the exchange later.

18. \mathbb{Q} xd5! \mathbb{Q} c5 19.c7!

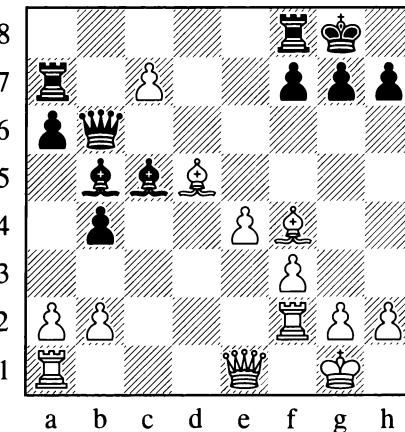
An important little tempo.

19... \mathbb{E} a7

After 19... \mathbb{E} ac8 20. \mathbb{Q} f4 Black will have to give back the exchange sooner or later.

19... \mathbb{Q} xf2† 20. \mathbb{W} xf2 \mathbb{W} xc7 21. \mathbb{Q} xa8 \mathbb{E} xa8 22. \mathbb{Q} e3 also gives White a winning position. The opposite-coloured bishops do not help Black as much as he might hope, because his bishop cannot find any real scope.

20. \mathbb{Q} f4



20... \mathbb{E} c8 21. \mathbb{Q} c1 \mathbb{E} axc7

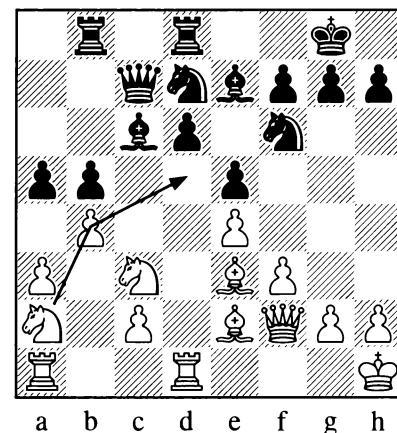
Hübner has no illusions.

22. \mathbb{Q} xc7 \mathbb{E} xc7 23. \mathbb{Q} xc5 \mathbb{W} xc5 24.g3

White is virtually winning and took the full point on move 89 after a long fight.

108. Anand – Gelfand

Monte Carlo (rapid) 1999



White's worst piece is the knight on a2; it is indeed rather silly. The biggest weakness in the position is, as so often in the Sicilian, the d5-square. At least this is the one that all of the play usually revolves around (there are also weaknesses for Black on d6 and b5, and for White on a3, c2 and c4 – and even f4 if you insist!).

19... $\mathbb{Q}f8?$!

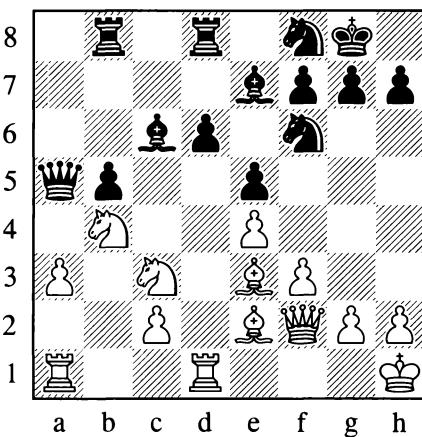
Allowing White the chance to carry out the most obvious strategy, the transfer of his worst-placed piece in the direction of the greatest weakness in the opponent's position.

19...a4! 20. $\mathbb{Q}a7$ $\mathbb{B}b7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{B}c8?$! 22. $\mathbb{W}f1$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ h6 prepares ... $\mathbb{Q}d8-b6$, with an interesting strategic fight ahead.

20.bxa5!

20.a4! $?\pm$ was also interesting, but Anand's strategy makes perfect sense.

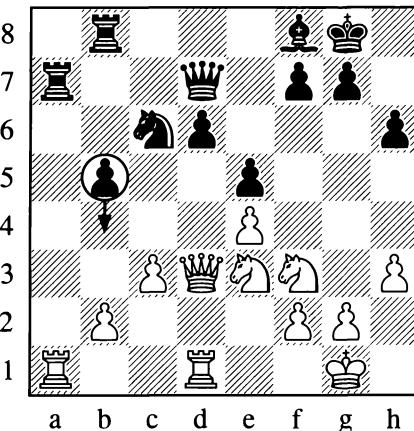
20... $\mathbb{W}xa5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}b4\pm$



White won a nice game on move 38.

109. Karjakin – Beliavsky

Amsterdam 2007

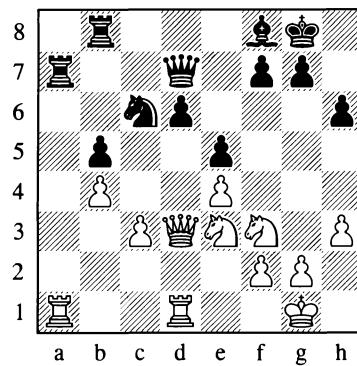


White's position is so fantastic that it might seem impossible to misplay it. Nevertheless, Karjakin's advantage reduces considerably over the next few moves.

24. $\mathbb{Q}d5$

24. $\mathbb{W}d5$ $\mathbb{B}xa1$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ b4 also gives Black decent fighting chances, though White remains better after 26.c4.

24.b4! \pm was in my opinion the best move.



The pawn is fixed on b5 as a target and Black will have to remain passive in order to defend it. White will put a knight on d5 and manoeuvre the other knight around via el-

c2-e3 or similar, securing a close to decisive advantage.

24...b4!

Black should always play this move if possible.

25.Qd2

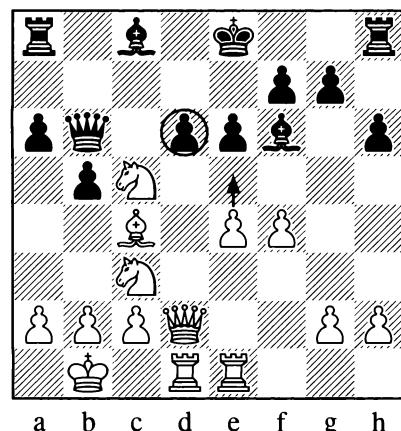
This shows that Karjakin was unhappy with his own play. If he had intended to allow ...b4, then he would surely have prepared to answer it with 25.c4, which does seem better than the move played. But it is clear that Black's existence has been made just a little bit easier by weakening of the d4-square, as well as the fact that it is easier to defend the b-pawn. Black could even consider playing 25...b3!?, making the position a little more double-edged. White is a good deal better, but he is not enjoying the level of control that he should have been.

25...bxc3 26.bxc3 Qxa1 27.Qxa1†

Despite the reduction in his advantage, White still managed to win the game on move 57.

110. Van Kampen – Andriasian

Groningen 2010



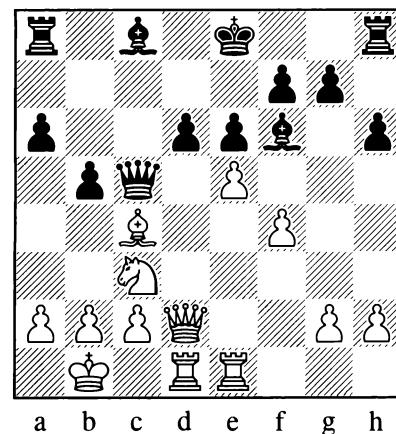
15...Qxc5?

It is quite hard to explain how a strong grandmaster like Andriasian can play a move like this, but it is safe to say that he did not fully take his opponent's ideas into account.

After the forced 15...dxc5, White may play 16.e5 Qe7, but because there is no pawn hanging on d6 and no tempo gained with Qc3-e4, it is by no means obvious that White has any advantage.

16.e5!

If a GM sees a move like this, he will definitely decide not to allow it; the complications can only favour White.



16...dxe5

The only move.

16...Qxc4 loses to 17.exf6. There is no real way to avoid the pain coming from Qe4 and Qxd6.

16...Qh4 is refuted both by 17.g3, and the more pleasingly direct 17.Qe4!? Qxe1 18.Qxe1 Qc7 19.Qxd6† Qf8 20.Qb3, where the exchange matters very little in comparison with the ease with which White will be able to generate threats against the black king. One line could be 20...g6 21.f5! gxf5 22.g4! fxg4 23.Qb4 a5 24.Qxg4 and Black collapses quickly on the dark squares.

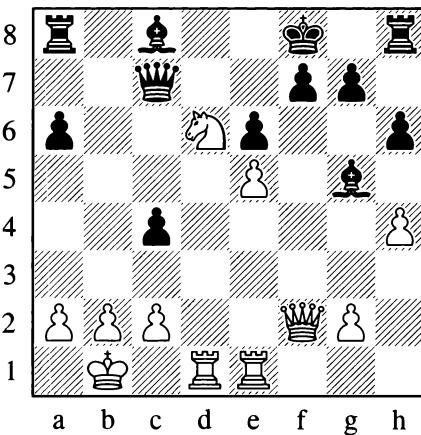
17.♕e4 ♜c7?

A further sign that Black was having an off-day. White now wins easily.

17...♜e7 was necessary in order to defend the f6-square so that he can later play ...f7-f5. White still has tempting options, but not a directly decisive one. 18.♕d6† (18.♕d5?! also leads to a clear edge, but in a more technical position where Black is under less practical pressure.) 18...♝f8 19.fxe5 ♜g5 20.♗c3 bxc4 21.g3± White follows up with h2-h4 and either wins the piece back or manages to break through to f7.

18.♕d6† ♜f8 19.fxe5 ♜g5 20.♗f2

White can win in many ways, for example: 20.♗d4 bxc4 21.♗f1 f5 22.exf6 ♜xf6 23.♗xf6† gxf6 24.♗xf6† ♜g8 25.♕f7! ♜h7 26.♗d8† ♜xd8 27.♗xd8 with a winning position.

20...bxc4 21.h4**21...♝xh4**

A sad move to play, but everything else leaves the black position in ruins.

21...f5 22.hxg5 hxg5 would only mean that the attack is redirected from the f-file to the h-file: 23.♗h1 ♜h6 24.♗f3 ♜b8 25.♗xh6 gxh6 26.♗h5 and Black is dead lost.

21...♝d8 loses immediately to 22.♗xf7!.

22.♗xh4

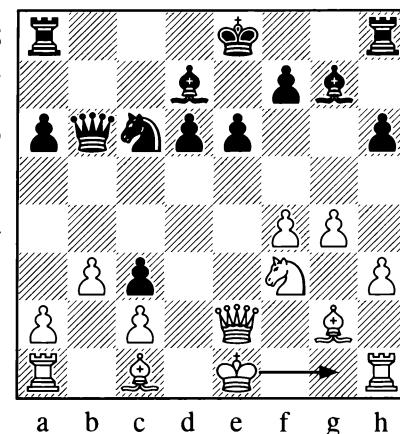
White has won back the piece and takes the full point without great difficulty.

22...♝d7 23.♗d4 c3 24.♗c4 ♜d8 25.♗f2 f5 26.exf6 gxf6 27.♗xc3 ♜b8 28.♗f3 f5 29.♗c5 ♜g8 30.♗xf5 ♜h7 31.♗h3 ♜b5 32.♗xh6† ♜g8 33.♗xh8† ♜xh8 34.♗c3†

1–0

111. Savon – Razuvaev

Palma de Mallorca 1989

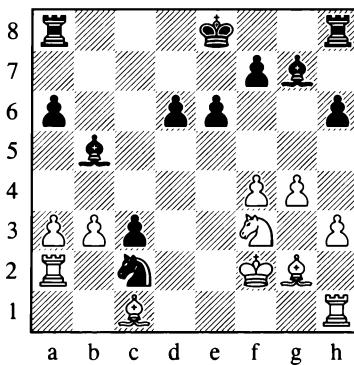


Black has a lead in development, but should White manage to play ♜e3 and 0–0, he would not be worse. Black therefore has to prevent this in order to play for an advantage.

15...♝b4! 16.♛e5?!

16.a4?! ♜c6 is also very pleasant for Black.

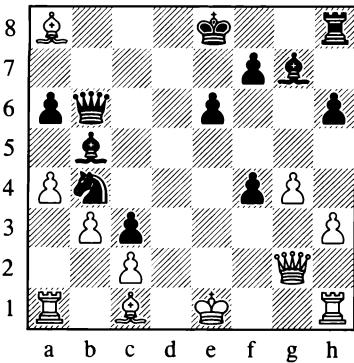
However, White should have tried 16.a3! in order to get some counterplay. Black should of course play his trump card with 16...♝b5, though White surprisingly has a temporary pawn sacrifice: 17.♗f2 ♜xf2† 18.♗xf2 ♜xc2 19.♗a2



Now 19... $\mathbb{Q}d4$?! would lose a lot of the advantage, as the c-pawn cannot be held after the dark-squared bishops are exchanged. So Black should prefer 19... $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 20. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 21. $\mathbb{E}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ with just a modest advantage.

16... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ 0–0

Rather than saying at every turn that 17... $\mathbb{Q}b5$?! would also be very strong, it makes sense to choose just one point to investigate the possible lines: 18. $\mathbb{W}g2$ (White loses after 18. $\mathbb{W}e4$ 0–0 19. $\mathbb{W}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ 20.a4 $\mathbb{W}b7$ 21. $\mathbb{E}h2$ $\mathbb{W}f3$ 22.axb5 $\mathbb{E}d8$, when the attack is absolutely devastating. The pawn on c3 is making a big contribution.) 18... $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 19.a4



19... $\mathbb{Q}d3$! 20.cxd3 c2 21.a5 (21. $\mathbb{E}a3$ is convincingly met by 21... $\mathbb{Q}b2$!! 22. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{W}e3$ 23. $\mathbb{W}e2$ c1=+= 24. $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ $\mathbb{W}xc1$ = 25. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{W}xa3$ +, when Black ends up with a clear positional advantage) 21... $\mathbb{W}b5$ 22. $\mathbb{E}a4$ (22.d4 does not

work out well for White. 22... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 23. $\mathbb{E}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$ = 24. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ = 25. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ = This is forced. 26... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ fxe3 28. $\mathbb{W}xc2$ 0–0 29. $\mathbb{W}c4$ $\mathbb{W}b8$! Black penetrates on g3 with a deadly attack.) 22... $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ = 23. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 0–0 24. $\mathbb{W}b7$?! This allows Black a very nice win. 24... $\mathbb{W}e5$!! 25. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ $\mathbb{E}d8$ = 26. $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ $\mathbb{W}c3$ = 27. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{E}d2$! and the attack is conclusive.

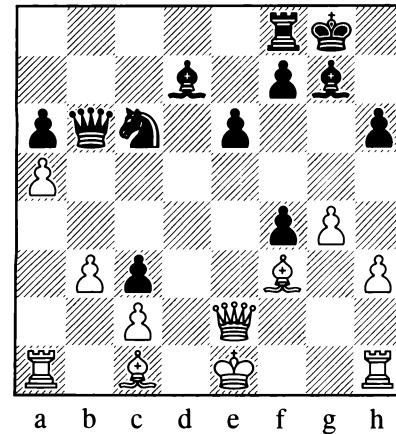
18. $\mathbb{Q}f3$?

18. $\mathbb{Q}e4$! was a better defensive option. The position is chaotic after 18...f5 19.gxf5 exf5 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 21.a3 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 22. $\mathbb{W}h2$ fxe4 23.axb4 exf4 24.0–0–0, but Black should have the better chances after 24... $\mathbb{E}f7$??.

18... $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 19.a4

Finally White feels compelled to prevent ... $\mathbb{Q}b5$, which would now be deadly.

19... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 20.a5



20... $\mathbb{W}d8$?

Missing the chance to take the full point immediately. The accurate move was 20... $\mathbb{W}c7$!, which gives a decisive attack. The main point of the move arises after 21.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 22. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ = 23. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ = 24. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 25. $\mathbb{W}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$, and Black wins.

21. $\mathbb{E}a4$?

This just loses. Also after 21... $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 22. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $f5!$, White would have been under attack.

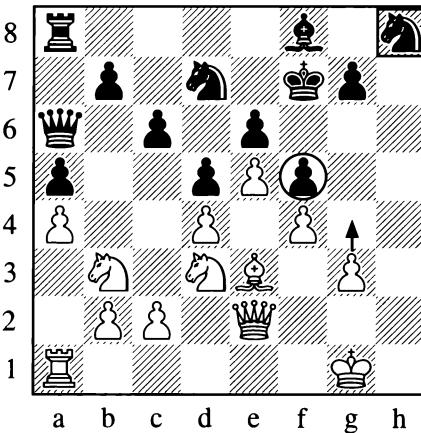
Probably his best chance was 21.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 22. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{W}g5$, when his position is uncomfortable, but everything is still up in the air.

21... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 22. $\mathbb{B}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$

Black is completely winning and took the full point on move 45.

112. Wang Hao – Shengelia

Rogaska Slatina 2011



Black has a poorly-placed knight on h8 and White is about to advance the g-pawn to put pressure on the e6/f5 constellation. Black has to be ready to defend against this and it is common sense that if you can use your worst-placed piece for this purpose, then that is indeed a very attractive option.

21... $\mathbb{Q}e7?$

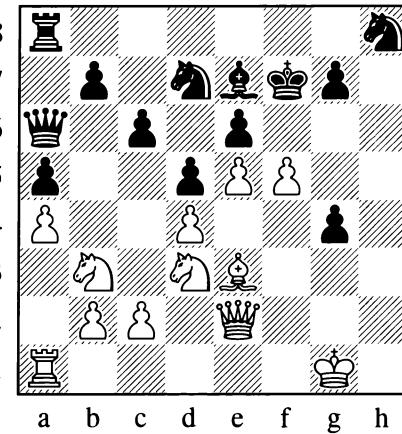
This has an automatic feel to it – the bishop was on its original square and is therefore being included in the game. But the move is not pertinent to the circumstances on the board, and so constitutes poor positional play.

Instead the correct move was 21... $\mathbb{Q}g6$!, when after 22.g4 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ the game is about equal.

22.g4†

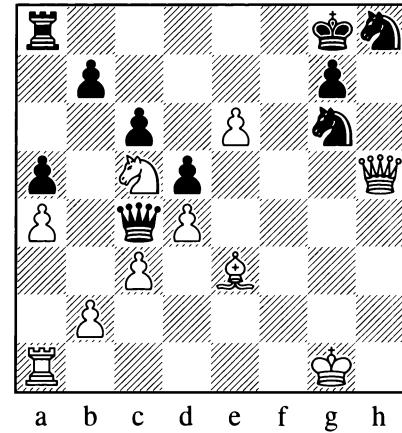
White's attack is now quite serious, and it turns out that Shengelia had missed a simple tactic.

22...fxg4?! 23.f5!



The point. After 23...exf5 24.e6†! White wins a piece. Black decided to try to defend in another way, but his hold on the light squares has been broken and his position collapses.

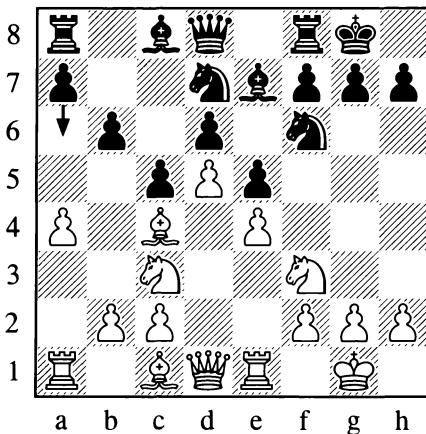
23... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 24.fxe6† $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 25. $\mathbb{W}xg4$ $\mathbb{W}c4$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}bc5$ $\mathbb{Q}fg6$ 27.c3 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 29. $\mathbb{W}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}eg6$



30.♕d2! b6 31.b3 ♕f4 32.♗xh8† ♔xh8
33.bxc4 ♕e2† 34.♔f2 bxc5 35.♔xe2
1–0

113. Leko – Campora

Buenos Aires 1994



Black would love to have time to play ...a6 followed by ...♝e8-c7 and ...♝b8, building up to an inevitable ...b5-break. Leko prevents this with simple play.

10.a5!

It is clear that without the a-pawns White can simply occupy the b5-square, so Black's main idea is dead and buried.

10...bxa5

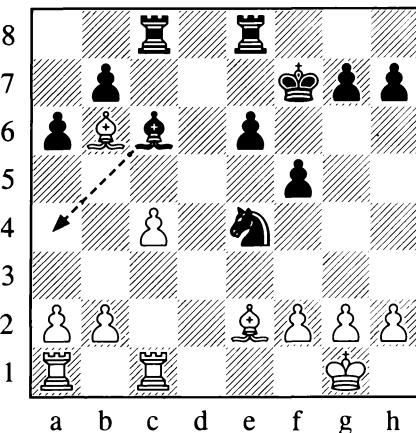
After 10...a6 11.axb6 ♕xb6 White needs to consider whether he is better off with 12.♕f1 or with 12.♕d2?!, both of which lead to a pleasant position.

11.♕d2 ♕b6 12.♕b5 ♕g4 13.h3 ♕h6

White is close to being positionally winning and can play the position in many different ways. I would personally prefer the simplicity of 14.♕b3, but Leko was much better after a more complicated approach, though he later lost control and had to work until move 73 before finally winning the game.

114. Aagaard – Bjerring

Denmark 2004



22.b4?

The advance of the pawns on the queenside is the right positional idea. Unfortunately this move allows Black to play 22...♝a4!, when any further advance on the queenside would be nearly impossible, and White has no advantage at all.

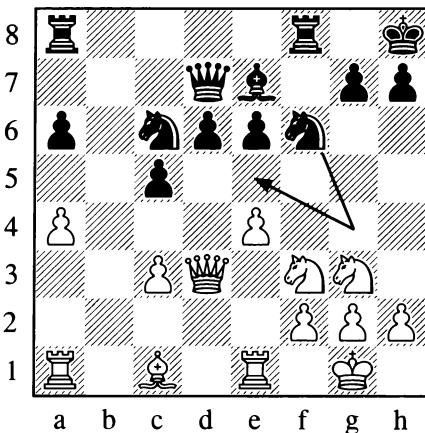
For this reason the correct move was 22.a4!, preventing Black's blockading idea and intending to play 23.b4 next. 22...♝f6 (White is also better after 22...e5 23.b4 ♜e6 24.a5±) 23.b4± White is better and will put Black under real pressure with his extra pawn on the queenside and his two bishops. The following variation shows how things could go: 23...♝d7 24.♝e3 e5 (24...♝e5 25.f3!± and White dominates the black pieces) 25.b5 axb5?! It is probably better to accept a weakness on a6, but Black is in trouble none the less. 26.axb5 ♜e4 27.f3 f4 28.♔f2 ♜f5 29.♔a7 ♜b8 30.c5 White should win.

22...♝f6? 23.b5 axb5 24.cxb5 ♜d5 25.a4±

I later won the game on move 45 after a lot of tactical confusion.

115. Leko – Grischuk

Mexico City 2007



White should be a little better on account of his freer play and the pressure down the d-file. The safest way to secure this edge is by taking into account Black's intentions. At this point his bishop on e7 is not very well placed and the knight on f6 is also somewhat restricted. Therefore his most natural plan is ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$, ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}ge5$. Leko prevents this with a simple move.

19.h3!

"Now Black's situation will automatically become very unpleasant, not because the position is so bad, but simply because White has a much easier game and can slowly build up the pressure." – Leko.

19.e5 does not look convincing. 19... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $dxe5$ 21. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ gives Black at least even chances. White of course has compensation for his pawn, but Black has an extra pawn and decent play on the dark squares.

19. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2!?$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $g5\infty$

19... $\mathbb{W}c7$

19... $d5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ puts Black under a lot of pressure. Next comes $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ and the black centre will look rather fragile. For example, 20... $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ 21. $exd5$! $exd5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xe5\pm$ and it is obvious that Black is in an unpleasant situation.

20. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

I personally think that 20. $\mathbb{Q}g5!\pm$ looks stronger.

20... $\mathbb{Q}e5$

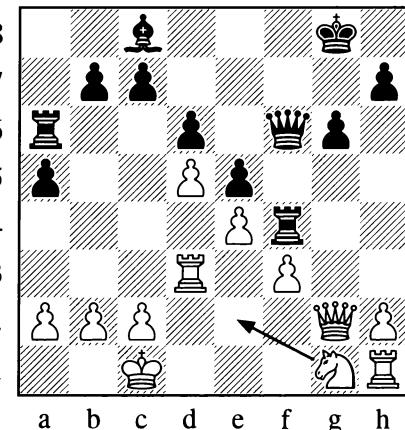
20... $\mathbb{W}d7$ looks a better defence. White can try 21.f4?!, but his strongest option may well be 21. $\mathbb{Q}f3$, repeating the position before going another way.

21. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 22.f4 $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f3\pm$

White was better and won on move 60.

116. Muhic – Mlachnik

Bled 2008



Black has a good structure, but he is about to be pushed backwards with $\mathbb{Q}e2$ or $h2-h4-h5$. The bishop on c8 is ineffective and the rook on a6 is simply badly placed. However, by obstructing White's development, Black can stay on top.

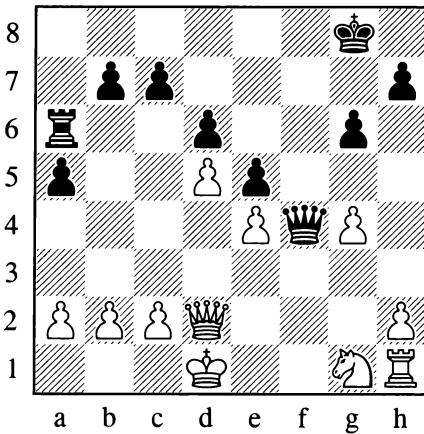
19...♝g4!

This prevents White from bringing his pieces out. In the game White decided to check the details, only to be disappointed.

20.fxg4?

After both 20.♔e2 ♛h5 21.♗b3 ♜a7 22.♗c3 b6† and 20.h4! ♛h5† Black keeps an edge, but these were the sensible options.

20...♝f1† 21.♗d1 ♛f4† 22.♗d2 ♞xd1†
23.♗xd1

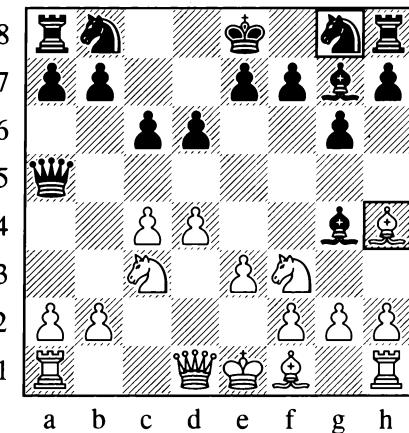
**23...♛xe4!**

This move is easy to miss, as it is not a check nor otherwise violent. However, it does win the rook on h1 and thus decides the game.

24.♗g5 ♞a8 25.c4 ♛xh1 26.♗e3 ♘f8
27.♗d2 ♛xh2† 28.♗e2 ♘f2 29.b3 ♛xe2†
30.♗xe2 ♛xe2† 31.♗xe2 ♛g7 32.♗d3 ♛f6
33.a3 h5 34.g5† ♛f5 35.c5 h4 36.b4 axb4
37.a4 h3
0–1

117. Blomqvist – Howell

Stockholm 2006



The most important thing for Black to do in this position is to get closer to completing his development. It is not always necessary to finish it at top speed, other things are important too, but you should at least leave flexibility to do so. The worst-placed piece is the knight on g8, as not only is it not taking part in the game, but it also prevents the king from getting to safety. The best square for this knight is f5, from where it can both attack the centre and irritate the misplaced bishop on h4.

7...♞h6!

This knight would have no function on the more “aesthetic” f6-square, but will be excellently placed on f5. When I have given this exercise to students they have far too often (80%) chosen an active plan in the centre, for which they were ill-prepared. The two standard ones are pushing the c- and e-pawns.

7...c5 is the lesser evil, as it does not open the position fully. However, Black’s pieces are not playing, and following 8.♗e2 I think White is in general better mobilized. After 8...♝c6 9.0–0! White is happy to give up the d-pawn

for the centre to be opened, and Black will not escape easily.

Thus the best move is: 8... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 9. $\mathbb{W}b3!$
A strong exploitation of the bishop's early deployment to g4. 9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10. $\mathbb{W}b5! \pm$

7...e5? is even worse. White can ask Black what he is up to: 8.h3! $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 9. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ exd4 10.exd4 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 11.0–0–0 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xc3!$ $\mathbb{W}xc3 \dagger$ 13.bxc3± and the two bishops dominate.

8. $\mathbb{Q}e2?$

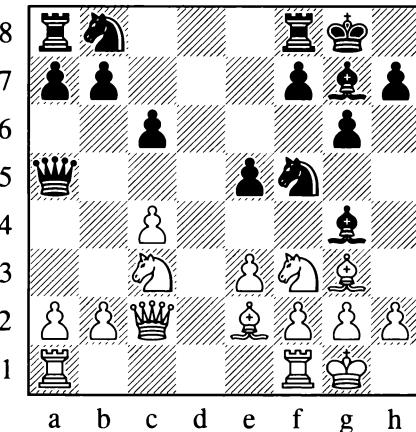
Too passive. Better was 8. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ to give up the bishop for the knight.

8.e4 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 9.gxf3 $\mathbb{W}b6\infty$ feels uncomfortable for White... but maybe I just don't like to lose pawns.

8... $\mathbb{Q}f5$

White might appear to have an extra minor piece in action, but they are not really "in action".

9. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ e5!? 10.0–0 0–0 11.dxe5 dxe5 12. $\mathbb{W}c2$



12...h5!

Around here things start to fall apart for White. He could still survive with moves like 13. $\mathbb{Q}h4!?$, when he is only a little worse. Instead he allows his structure to fall into disrepair.

13.h3? $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 14.fxg3 $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 15.e4

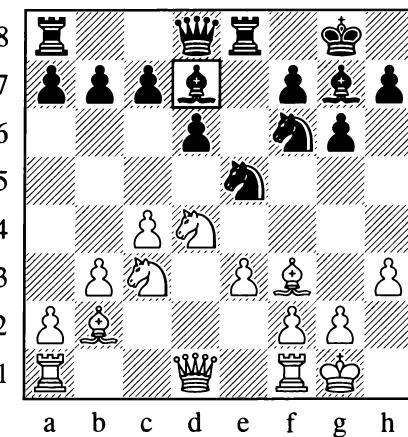
This adds to the injury.

15... $\mathbb{Q}e6\#$

Black has a great position with a real fun ride on the dark squares awaiting. He won on move 49.

118. I. Sokolov – Mamedyarov

Villarrobledo 2008



White's set-up is a bit artificial; the bishop is not great on f3, and the bishop on b2 is worse than the one on g7, simply because it is unprotected and thus more likely to end up in an unpleasant pin. However, rather than just taking the bishop pair at once, Black decides to launch an attack in the centre, forcing White to put his pieces on inferior squares.

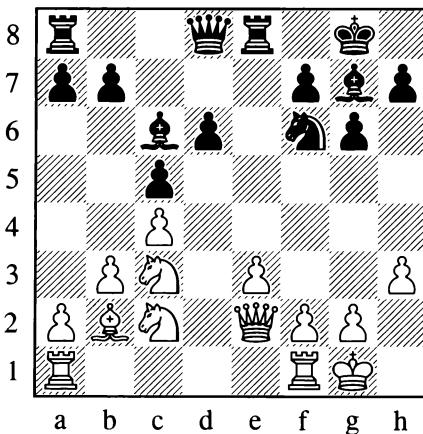
14...c5! 15. $\mathbb{Q}c2$

15. $\mathbb{Q}db5$ is no better. Although not vital for the evaluation of the position, it is worth noticing that after 15... $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}d1$ Black can play 17...a6!, as after 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ the knight is trapped.

15... $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$

This bishop did not want to be in front of the c-pawn.

17. $\mathbb{W}e2$

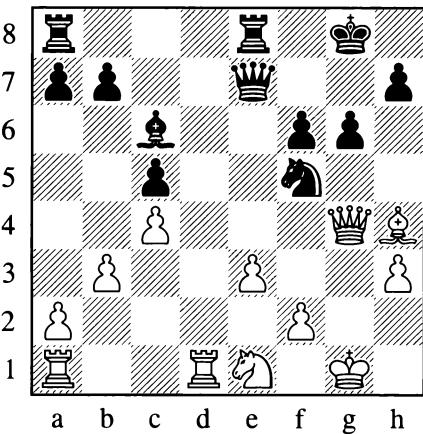


17...d5

17... $\mathbb{Q}e4\#$ was also very strong.

18. $\mathbb{Q}xd5 \mathbb{Q}xd5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xg7 \mathbb{Q}f4$ 20. $\mathbb{W}g4 \mathbb{Q}xg2$
21. $\mathbb{E}fd1 \mathbb{W}e7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}h6 \mathbb{Q}h4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e1 \mathbb{Q}f5$
24. $\mathbb{Q}g5 f6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}h4$

25. $\mathbb{Q}f4\#$ was better. Now it is all over.



25... $\mathbb{W}g7$

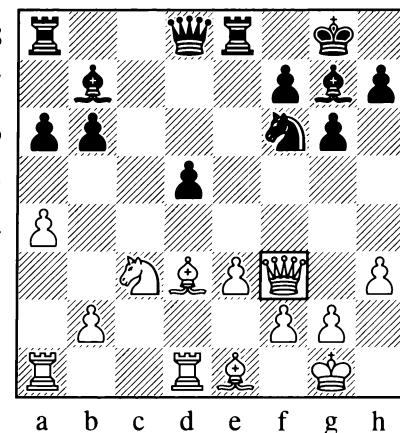
This is still good enough to win the game, but 25... $\mathbb{Q}h6!$, with the double threat of ... $\mathbb{W}e4$ and ... $g5$, won a piece.

26. $\mathbb{Q}g3 \mathbb{E}e4$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}f4 h5$ 28. $\mathbb{W}e2 g5$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}d6 g4$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}h2 \mathbb{E}ae8$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}xc5 g3\#$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}g1 gxf2\#$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}xf2 \mathbb{W}g3\#$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}f1 \mathbb{E}xe3$

0-1

119. Aronian – Anand

Moscow 2011



White's pieces are not especially poorly placed, but if we look at them carefully, we can see that the queen is a bit uncomfortable in view of the possibility of ...d4. Obviously it has available squares and Aronian clearly was not worried about this. But once Anand made his move, the size of the problem became apparent.

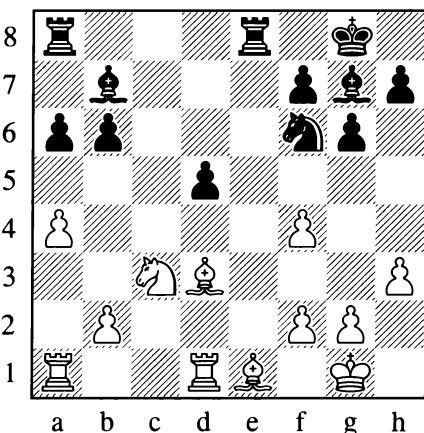
16... $\mathbb{W}b8!\#$

This move has multiple functions. Besides protecting the bishop it reduces the value of White's escape squares for the queen. The threat of ...d4 is now very real. A standard developing move like 16... $\mathbb{E}c8?$ would have led to a more or less equal game, but would not be reacting to the positional factors of the position.

17. $\mathbb{W}f4$

17. $\mathbb{Q}e2 d4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}f4$ is no improvement. Black takes on e3 and has ideas such as ... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ on the way.

17... $\mathbb{W}xf4$ 18.exf4



18... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$

It was of course tempting to play 18...d4, but then the white knight has the e2-square for the retreat. Now the threat of ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ is very strong and White's opportunities seriously limited.

19.a5

This does not really help White, but it probably no worse than any other move. Aronian is simply testing if Anand will be lazy and allow 19...b5? 20. $\mathbb{Q}xb5!$, when White has enough counterplay.

19... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f1$

White is also in a bad way after 20.axb6 $\mathbb{E}xe1\#$ 21. $\mathbb{E}xe1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 22. $\mathbb{E}e7$ $\mathbb{E}b8$.

20...b5 21.f3

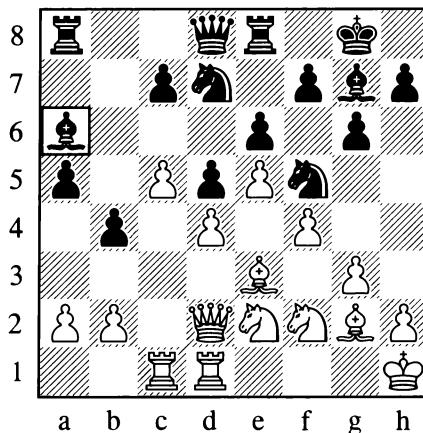
21.b4 would save the a-pawn, but it lets go of many other pieces in the process. Black can play 21... $\mathbb{E}xe1$ or the simpler 21... $\mathbb{Q}e6$, which has the ideas 22. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ and 22. $\mathbb{E}a3$, d4 23. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ with complete domination. Like most grandmasters, Aronian prefers to have some activity and a pawn less, rather than being wrapped into a ball of yarn.

21... $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 22. $\mathbb{E}ab1$ $\mathbb{Q}xa5$

Black won on move 48.

120. Vitiugov – Ganguly

Khanty-Mansiysk (ol) 2010



a b c d e f g h

In slow, closed positions like this, computers are of little help. The point here is that with the centre almost hermetically sealed, all the play will happen on the kingside. Black is going to find himself in a minority there and should maybe have considered giving up the strong-looking but relatively ineffective bishop on a6 for the white knight. Instead White regroups it before going ahead with the planned kingside invasion.

20. $\mathbb{Q}g1!$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$

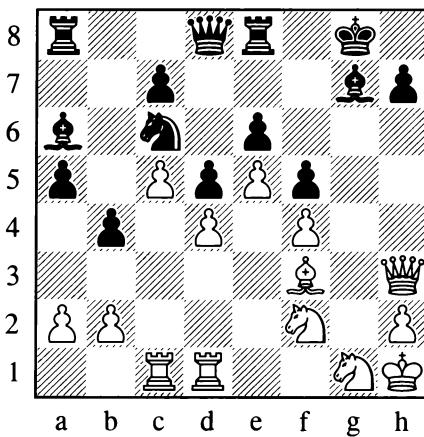
Black plays like he has all the time in the world, but in reality he needed to try to do something quickly, before White is too well organized. 20... $\mathbb{Q}c4$ with the faint hope of provoking b2-b3 could be tried, but it is not apparent what he should do after 21. $\mathbb{E}a1!$, delaying the decision for later.

21.g4 $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xe3\pm$ f5?!

This attempt at closing the kingside ends poorly. White is quite well set up to invade down the g-file. 22... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ would have been a better defence.

23.gxf5 $\mathbb{G}xf5$ 24. $\mathbb{W}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}f3\pm$

White's play towards the end is very nice.

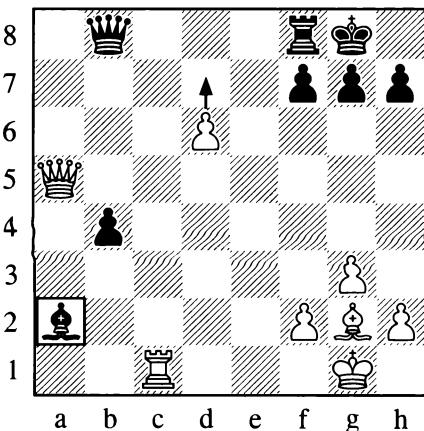


25... $\mathbb{E}e7$ 26. $\mathbb{E}d2$ $\mathbb{W}f8$ 27. $\mathbb{W}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}fh3$
 c6 29. $\mathbb{Q}h5$ $\mathbb{E}aa7$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 31. $\mathbb{E}g1\uparrow$ $\mathbb{E}g7$
 32. $\mathbb{Q}fg5$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{E}g6$ 34. $\mathbb{E}dg2$ $\mathbb{W}e7$
 35. $\mathbb{W}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{W}g7$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}xh7$

1–0

121. P.H. Nielsen – Ivanchuk

Beijing (rapid) 2011



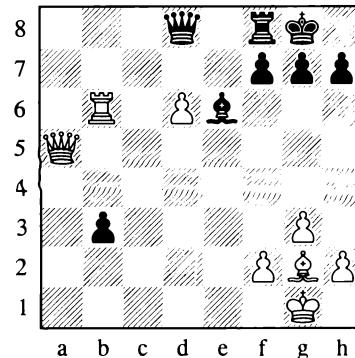
28... $b3?$

This is a horrible move, and it is difficult to understand how a player like Ivanchuk can make it – even in a rapid game. The bishop is left entirely out of play with a naive dream of assisting the promotion of the b-pawn. As White is much more actively placed, this is unrealistic. White is now able to push

his own pawn with the assistance of all his pieces.

28... $\mathbb{Q}b3$ is wholly unnatural and it is not surprising that White has a simple way to an edge. Here both 29. $\mathbb{E}c6$ and 29. $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 30. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ are good, when White will win the b-pawn and hold on to the d-pawn. Winning will still not be trivial, but Black's defence will be very difficult.

28... $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ was the correct move. The bishop looks to support the b-pawn from a stable square and keeps an eye on the d-pawn at the same time. The threat to the d6-pawn is now very real. To be honest, nothing more is needed to make this decision, but it is nice to check a few lines anyway. 29. $\mathbb{E}c6$ (29. $\mathbb{E}c7$ b3 30. $\mathbb{Q}b7$ is not dangerous. The easiest way to secure a draw is probably 30...b2 31. $\mathbb{W}b6$ $\mathbb{E}d8$ followed by ... $\mathbb{E}xd6$, although many other ideas are good enough as well.) 29...b3 30. $\mathbb{E}b6$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ The queen would also be decently placed on c8, but pinning the rook makes a lot of sense.

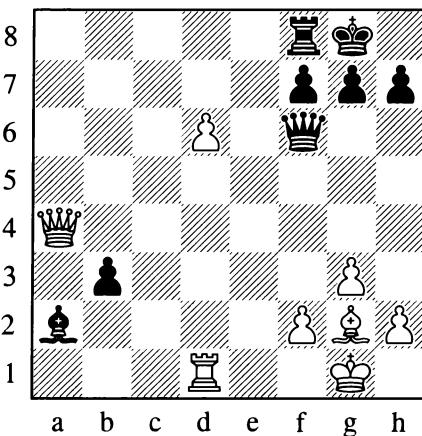


31. $\mathbb{W}b4$ $\mathbb{W}g5$ 32.h4 $\mathbb{W}c1\uparrow$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ g6 Black has no problems.

29. $\mathbb{E}d1!$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 30. $\mathbb{W}a4!$

A nice move. The pawn will be pushed to d7.

30... $\mathbb{W}f6$



31.♘d5?!

31.d7! ♘d8 32.d7 ♘e7 would have won even more quickly. There are various mating ideas with ♘e8† combined with ♜b4-f8 or ♘e4 and so on. But the move played in the game is clear enough as well.

31...♗c3?

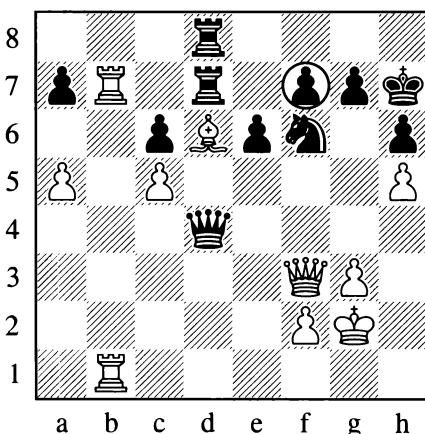
31...h5 32.d7 ♘e7 33.♕xb3 ♘xb3 34.♕xb3 h4 might have offered Black some chances of a draw, even if White is very close to winning.

32.d7 ♘d8 33.♗f4! ♗f6 34.♗e1!

1–0

122. Muzychuk – Stefanova

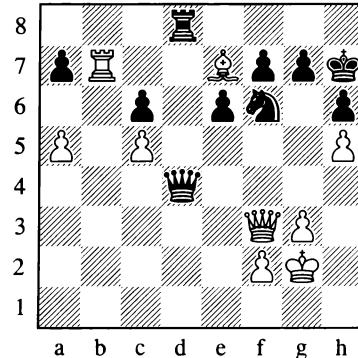
Beijing (rapid) 2011



White has a nice-looking position.

41.♗xc6?

The way for White to secure an advantage was to take control of the 7th rank. This could be done with: 41.♔e7! ♘xb7 (41...♗c8 is easily refuted by 42.♕xf6 gxf6 43.♖xd7 ♗xd7 44.♗xf6. This is convincing enough, though White may have even better with 42.a6.) 42.♖xb7



42...♗d5 (42...♗d7 43.♕xf6 gxf6 44.a6! leaves Black unable to defend c6 and with nothing to do but resign.) 43.♕xf6 ♗xf6 44.♗xf6 gxf6 45.♗xf7† ♔g8 46.♗xf6 ♘xh5 47.♗xe6 ♘xc5 48.a6 The double threat of ♘xh6 and ♘e7 decides the game.

41...♘xb7

Not the best defence, but still good enough. More accurate was 41...♗e4! 42.♗xd7 (42.♗1b2 ♘xb7 43.♗xb7 f6 followed by ...♗xd6 even favours Black slightly.) 42...♗xf2† and as 43.♔h3? ♔g5† leads straight to mate, White has to agree to a draw with 43.♔h1 ♗f3† 44.♔g1.

42.♗xb7

42.♗xb7† was slightly more dangerous, but Black still holds after 42...♗e4.

42...♗e4 43.♗xf7 ♘xd6 44.♗g6† ♔h8 45.cxd6 ♗xd6 46.♔g1

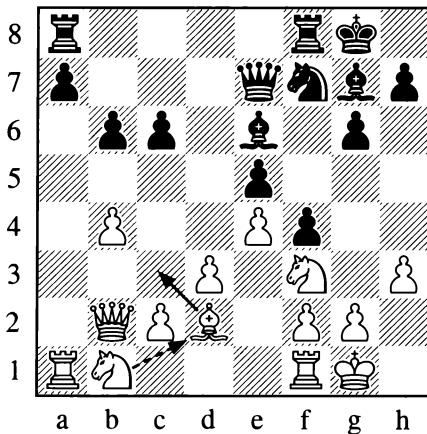
46. $\mathbb{W}f7$ $\mathbb{W}d5\#$ 47. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{W}xa5$ 48. $\mathbb{B}b7$ $\mathbb{W}g5$
 49. $\mathbb{B}xa7$ is the closest White can get to an advantage...

46... $\mathbb{W}d5$ 47. $a6$ $\mathbb{B}c8$ 48. $\mathbb{B}e1$ $\mathbb{B}c6$ 49. $\mathbb{W}e8\#$
 $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 50. $\mathbb{W}g6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 51. $\mathbb{W}e8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 52. $\mathbb{W}g6\#$
 $\mathbb{Q}h8$

½–½

123. Cherniaev – Kotronias

Hastings 2003



There are a few obvious features of this position – White is playing in the centre and on the queenside, whereas Black is aiming for a mating attack on the kingside, presumably by rolling the pawns forward. Because we have this contest between static play (slow pressure on the queenside and the hope of eliminating dynamics) and dynamic play (speed being of the essence in the attack), it is very important to take into account all aspects of the position, for example, the weakness of the e5-pawn and the need for White to reinforce his defence of the kingside with $\mathbb{Q}bd2$. Combining all of these factors, Kotronias came up with a good way to inject energy into the attack.

17... $\mathbb{Q}g5\#$

17... $g5?$ looks natural, but does not take

into account the important features of the position. White plays 18. $\mathbb{Q}c3\!±$ with the idea of $\mathbb{Q}bd2-c4$ (if allowed), when he hopes to tie White down before playing $\mathbb{B}a6$ and $\mathbb{B}fa1$. If Black plays 18... $g4$ 19. $hxg4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ White has time for 20. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ with a very pleasant position. It will take Black quite some time to create a real attack.

18. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$

Another advantage of Black's last move is that White has no choice but to exchange the knights. Instead of being passive on f7, the black knight has exchanged the only defender White has on the kingside.

18... $\mathbb{W}xg5$

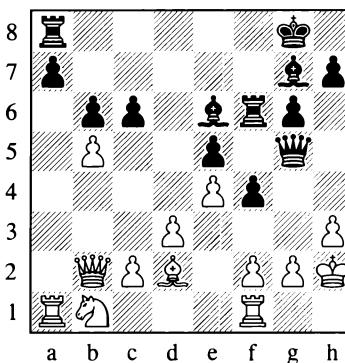
The threat to the h3-pawn wins another tempo.

19. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{B}f6$

True to his style, Kotronias plays very aggressively. More moderate was 19... $\mathbb{B}f7$ with the idea of ... $\mathbb{B}af8$, ... $\mathbb{W}h5$ and ... $g5-g4$.

20. $\mathbb{B}h1$

It is hard to say which is the best defensive try, but easy to determine that White has to be very careful. One lovely variation goes: 20. $b5?$



Too nonchalant; White deserves to get punished for this. 20... $\mathbb{W}h4!$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xe5$ The only critical try. 21... $g5$ Black is already threatening

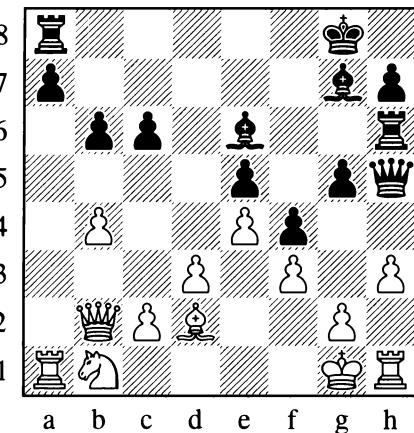
... $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ followed by ... $\mathbb{E}h6$. 22. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{E}g6$ 23. $\mathbb{W}c7$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 24. $\mathbb{W}e7$ And now that the white queen can no longer go to the g3-square, 24...f3 just wins.

20... $\mathbb{W}h5$ 21.f3 g5 22. $\mathbb{Q}g1$

Black's attack is very dangerous. For example, 22. $\mathbb{Q}c3$?! g4! 23. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ gxf3 24. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ fxg2 and mate is not far away: 25. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{W}e2\#$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ f3

22... $\mathbb{E}h6$!

Black prepares to open the g-file without allowing White to get the h1-rook into the game.



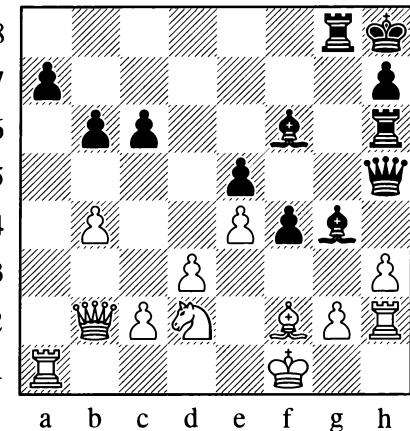
23. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ g4 24.fxg4 $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$!

I like this multi-purpose move more than the computer's preference, the committal 25...f3, which leads to lots of complications and lots of chances to make mistakes. From f6 the bishop is ready to go to h4 when needed and Black is one step closer to putting the a8-rook on g8.

26. $\mathbb{Q}f2$

Objectively a mistake, but White's position is miserable. Maybe a better chance was 26. $\mathbb{E}h2$?! $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}c4$, though Black remains much better after 27... $\mathbb{Q}e6\#$.

26... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 27. $\mathbb{E}h2$ $\mathbb{E}g8$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}f1$



28... $\mathbb{Q}e6$?

A very understandable mistake to make. Black was just winning after the slightly unnatural 28... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{E}hg6$, when the g2-pawn falls. It looks as if it is falling anyway because of ... $\mathbb{E}xg2$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}xh3$, but the issue is that White can create counterplay against the bishop on e6.

29. $\mathbb{Q}e1$?

White misses his chance. After 29. $\mathbb{W}c3$! he could fight on. The idea is to get the queen to c6, where she will cause enough annoyance to force a draw. So Black's best is perhaps 29...c5?!, but White can hang on with 30.bxc5 $\mathbb{E}hg6$ 31.cxb6 $\mathbb{E}xg2$ 32. $\mathbb{E}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$, and White is more or less okay after 34. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ axb6 35. $\mathbb{Q}d2$.

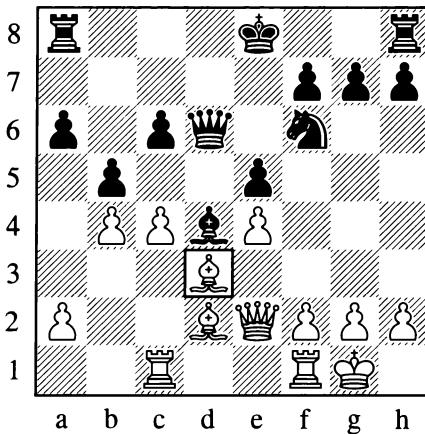
29... $\mathbb{E}hg6$ 30. $\mathbb{E}xa7$

30. $\mathbb{W}c3$ is too late: 30...c5 31.bxc5 $\mathbb{E}xg2$ and Black crashes through.

30... $\mathbb{E}xg2$ 31. $\mathbb{E}xg2$ $\mathbb{E}xg2$ 32. $\mathbb{E}a8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 33. $\mathbb{W}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}h4$ 34. $\mathbb{W}a7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 35. $\mathbb{W}b8$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2\#$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}d1\#$ 37. $\mathbb{W}xg2$ $\mathbb{W}g1\#$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}h5\#$

124. Leko – Khalifman

Budapest (rapid) 2000



The opening has been just a modest success for White. He has gained the two bishops, but Black has a very powerful bishop on d4 and a solid pawn structure. Any advances have to be incremental and based on accuracy. The first thing to determine is that White should not go for any immediate action on the queenside with 18.cxb5. The second thing is to understand that exchanging the bishop on d4 too quickly would weaken the dark squares throughout the white position, and even though we do not anticipate the knight making it to d4, we could imagine having to exchange our good bishop for the knight, and maybe a black rook reaching d4 eventually.

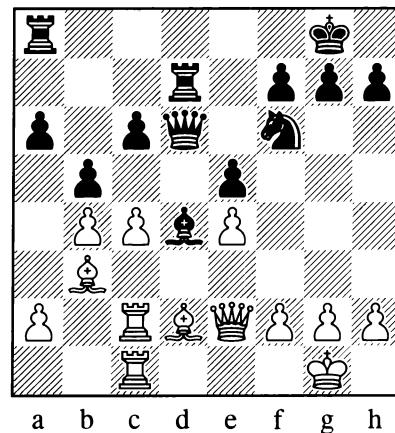
Black's only weakness is the b5-pawn (a hook) and the complex of pawn it fronts. The push a2-a4 will be in the air. Therefore the light-squared bishop belongs on b3, both because it is rather restrained where it is, and because we need this pawn push. But we also need to determine where the rooks belong. As the a1-square is unavailable, the only open line where we can imagine having any fun is the c-file. The d-file is blocked and falls under our opponent's influence. We have two rooks and they should be doubled where they can

do some good. However, doubling the rooks immediately would block the transfer of the bishop to b3, so the correct move order is to improve the bishop first.

18.Qc2!

18.cxb5 cxb5 19.a4 bxa4 is too much too early. White can have an interesting equal position after 20.b5 or 20.Qc2, but he should not be tempted by tactics. Black would win after 20.Qxa6! Qxa6! 21.Qxa6 Qxa6 22.Qc8† ♕e7 23.Qxh8 a3 24.Qe3 a2 25.Qxd4 exd4 26.Qa1 ♖xe4 and the forced sequence has been bad for White indeed. You could imagine the game ending with 27.Qc8 ♖c3 28.Qf1 ♖a3 followed by the decisive 29...♖b3.

18...0-0 19.Qb3 ♖fd8 20.Qc2! ♖d7 21.Qfc1±



White has managed to put a little pressure on Black on the light squares. It is not a lot, but we have to make the most out of the positions we land in and then take it from there. I am sure that it was only when he got here that Leko spent any time thinking about what to do next.

21...Qc7 22.g3 h6 23.Qg2 ♖ac8 24.a4 ♖e6

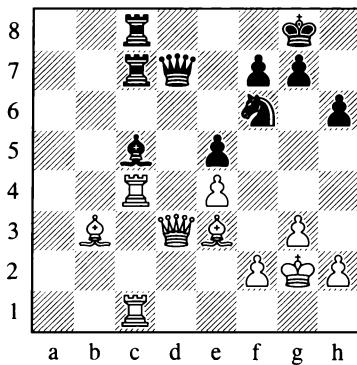
24...bxa4 does not work. White has 25.c5! ♖d7 26.Qxa4±.

25.axb5

This releases the tension and gives Black a chance to equalize. It was stronger to play 25.a5!±, when Black is still under a little bit of pressure.

25...axb5 26.♗d3 bxc4 27.♕xc4 ♗d7 28.♔e3 ♔e3?

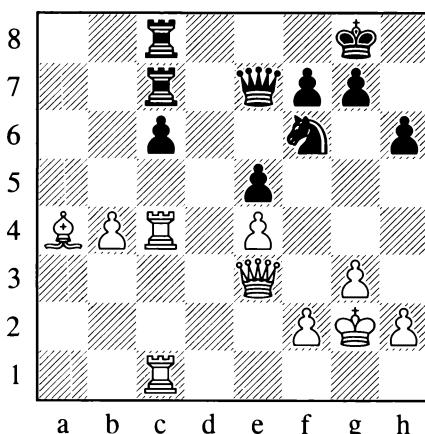
The pin down the c-file looks awful after 28...c5 29.bxc5 ♔xc5.



But there is no way for White to exploit it. Did Khalifman reject this on principle, or did he just think there was no reason to allow such an uncomfortable pin, even if the discomfort is only optical?

29.♔xe3 ♔e7 30.♔a4

It is hard to guess what Khalifman overlooked. White wins a pawn and eventually the game.



30...♗b8 31.♗c3 ♕cb7 32.♗b1 c5 33.♗xc5 ♕xe4 34.♗c8† ♔h7 35.♔c2 f5 36.♗f3 ♕xc8

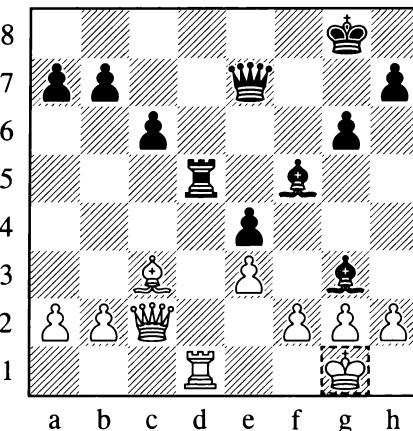
This leads to a lost ending, but after 36...♔d6 37.♗xb8 ♕xb8 (37...e4 38.♗xe4! fxe4 39.♗f8 and wins) 38.♗xf5† g6 39.♔e4 ♕xe4 40.♗xe4, Black should also be lost with his various weaknesses. Still, a bit of accuracy would be required.

37.♗xf5† g6 38.♗xc8 ♕f6 39.♗c3 ♕b6 40.♗c5 ♕xc5 41.bxc5 ♕xb1 42.♗xb1 ♔g7 43.♔f3 ♔f7 44.c6 ♔e8 45.♔e3 ♕f6 46.♔e4 ♔e8 47.♔d3 ♕c7 48.♔c4 g5 49.♔f5 h5 50.♔c5 ♔e7 51.f3 h4 52.♔d7

1–0

125. Seirawan – Tal

Montpellier 1985



It is rather obvious that the rooks are going to be exchanged in the very near future. After this we will have a scenario where White dominates the dark squares and Black the light squares. It is also clear that Black's king is more exposed and that a draw would be a satisfying result for Black. For this reason, White needs to think about his own king's protection, not from mate, but from perpetual check. The only place the king can hide is on h2, so this determines the recapture.

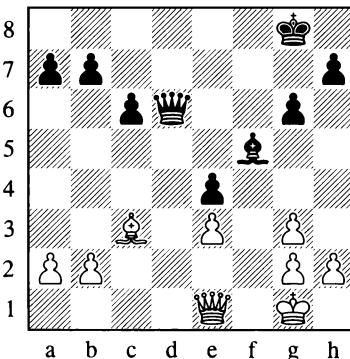
25.fxg3!

This is the most dangerous approach. Black should be able to hold the game without too much trouble, but it requires some accuracy and as we shall see, this is not something that even such a great player as Mikhail Tal could manage over the board.

After thinking about the probability of a perpetual check, it is useless to contemplate taking with the h-pawn. But it is worth having a quick look at the consequences of 25.♗xd5? ♕xh2† 26.♔xh2 cxd5 27.♕a4, when White will win the pawn back shortly. But the problem is that after the exchange of pawns, the draw is closer and the white king is a bit less safe than in the game. I do not believe that the draw is too far away. 27...b6 28.♕d4 h5 29.♕xd5† ♔h7 I find it difficult to imagine that White would be able to overcome a reasonably played black defence.

25...♗xd1† 26.♕xd1 ♕d7 27.♕e1 ♕e6

The first inaccuracy I could detect. Tal is trying to be active on the queenside where he has a majority, but passive defence would have a far greater chance of success. The best move was 27...♕d6!



This anticipates White's plan of h3 and ♔h2, and also prevents the white bishop from appearing on e5 too soon. After 28.h3 h5 there

is no reason to believe that Black would not be able to conduct a successful defence.

28.b3 c5

I also do not like this move much. Black is being too active, when passive defence would be more appropriate. The main problem with this move is that it weakens the b5-square, which results in an entry point into the black position.

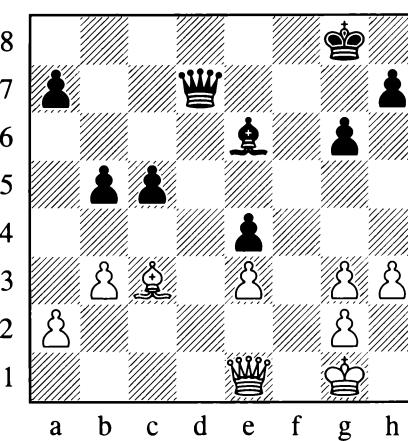
28...♕d3 29.h3 would also lead to an advantage for White. You could imagine a line like 29...b6 30.♕e5 h5 31.♕f2 ♕f5 32.♕f4 with some advantage.

29.h3 b5?

This is too optimistic.

29...h5 also fails to work, for very similar reasons to the game continuation: 30.♕f1! ♕f7 31.♕b5! and Black is under a lot of pressure. There are too many weaknesses in the black position for it to be anything but seriously unpleasant.

The best defence was probably 29...♕d3 30.♕e5 h5, though White has a long-term edge.



30.♕f1!

White is probably winning now. The queen will penetrate the position, and Black is suffering from the weaknesses he has inflicted on himself.

30...b4 31.Qe5 Qd8

31...Qe7 32.Qb5 Qf7 would offer a bit more resistance, but after 33.Qb8 Black is still in serious trouble.

32.Qb5! Qc8 33.Qh2 Qd5

Black cannot defend this position in my opinion. 33...Qf7 34.Qa5 a6 35.Qb6 Qe6 36.Qa7 Qf7 (36...Qf8 37.Qxa6 and the black pawns are all going down) 37.Qe7 Qc6 38.Qd6 Qe8 39.Qc7 and so on.

34.Qd6

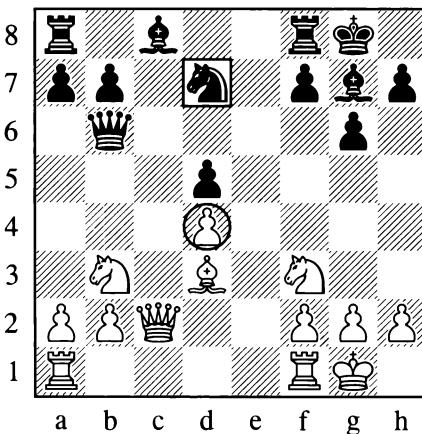
White will win two pawns on the queenside and then obtain a passed pawn to push at the same time as he is creating threats to the black king.

34...a6 35.Qa5 Qf7 36.Qxc5 Qc6 37.Qxb4 Qe6 38.Qd4 h5 39.Qb8 Qe7 40.Qe5 Qd5 41.Qf6†

1–0

126. Sedlak – Gustafsson

Aix-les-Bains 2011



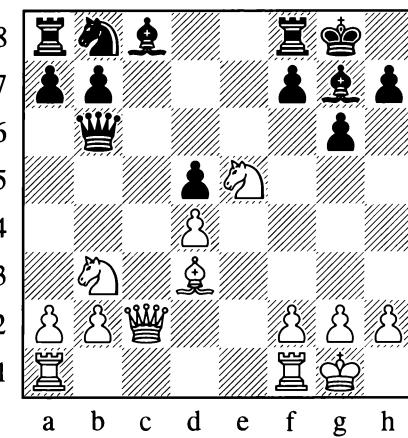
This position is rather simple; Black needs to get the bishop on c8 into the game quickly so he can enjoy his bishop pair. In order to do this he needs to get the knight out of the way. But obviously he should not just mechanically put it on f6, where it would be going nowhere.

15...Bb8!

The other option was 15...Qd8 to play ...Qd7-f8-e6, but this has two minor downsides – it is a bit slower and the knight could easily be in the way of the c8-bishop again. Sure, you can bring the bishop out first, but this would decrease Black's flexibility. From c6 the knight will shoot instantly at d4, causing White to have serious concerns straight away.

16.Qe5!?

A radical move, following which it will be very difficult to hang on to the pawn, but what else should White play? After something like 16.h3 Qc6 17.Qad1 Black will come out of the box in a very scary way: 17...Qe6 18.Qfe1 a5† and White's position is very difficult to keep together.



16...Qxe5!?

The simplest solution. Black will attack the pawn immediately.

16...f6 would keep the tension and aim at a long-term advantage, and was also good.

17.dxe5 ♜c6 18.♗ae1 ♜e8 19.♗d2

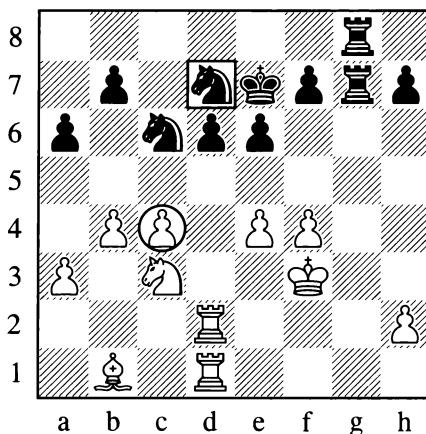
19.♗c3 ♜d7 20.♗c5 ♜ad8† is also deeply problematic for White; the e5-pawn is very weak.

19...♜xe5 20.♗xe5 ♜xe5†

Black is a pawn up and won on move 37.

127. A. Kristjansson – Nataf

Reykjavik 2008



White has obvious pressure against d6 and Black has some counterplay down the g-file. However, Black can gain a winning advantage through giving up his knights for a white rook. We need to pay attention to this kind of tactic as well.

32...♝de5†! 33.fxe5 ♜xe5† 34.♔e3

34.♔e2 ♜g2† is even worse.

34...♜xc4† 35.♗f3 ♜xd2† 36.♗xd2

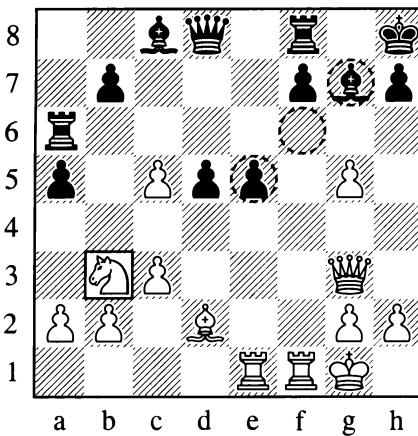
We can now see that White's minor pieces are rather poor with no scope, while the black rooks will penetrate the white position quickly.

36...♜g1†

This led to Black winning on move 49, but 36...♜g4?! followed by ...♜h4 is even stronger, and is probably just winning for Black.

128. Berelowitsch – Madan

Coulsdon 2008



This should be a reasonably easy decision for most (I hope).

18.♗xe5! ♜xe5 19.♗xe5† ♜g8 20.♗d4

White's advantage is overwhelming. Black is being slaughtered on the dark squares.

20...♜g6 21.h4 f6 22.gxf6 h6?

Trying to cover the g5-square, but it is actually just a blunder.

22...♜gxf6 23.♗f3 is close to winning for White, but it may take a while to work out the details.

23.♗xh6! ♜fxh6

23...♜xh6 24.♗g5† leads to mate.

24.♗xf6 ♜xf6 25.♗e8† ♜h7 26.♗g5

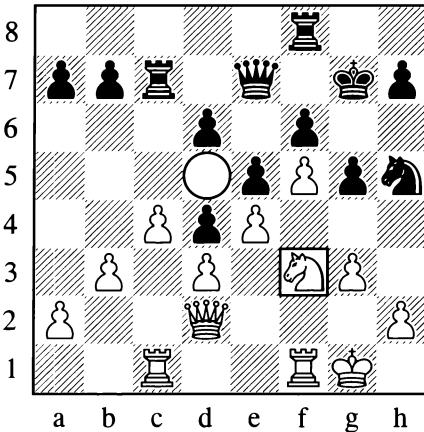
White had a more accurate win with 26.♗xc8 ♜xh6 27.♗xb7† ♜g6 28.♗xd5. For example: 28...♜xh4 29.♗g8† ♜h5 30.♗h7† ♜g4 31.♗d7† ♜h5 32.c6 and we are only a few moves from the end.

26... $\mathbb{W}h8$ 27. $\mathbb{W}e3$

White is still winning and took the full point on move 68.

129. Paichadze – Mamedov

Baku 2007



The knight on f3 is not very well placed, but there is a great square for it on d5!

24. $\mathbb{Q}e1!$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$

24... $b6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $a5$ was of course possible, but after 26. $\mathbb{Q}a3\pm$ and $\mathbb{Q}b5$, White can play $a2-a3$ and $b3-b4$ with a strong initiative on the queenside.

25. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}fc8$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}b4\pm$

It is obvious that White has a great advantage here.

26... $\mathbb{W}f7$

26... $\mathbb{W}g7?$!!

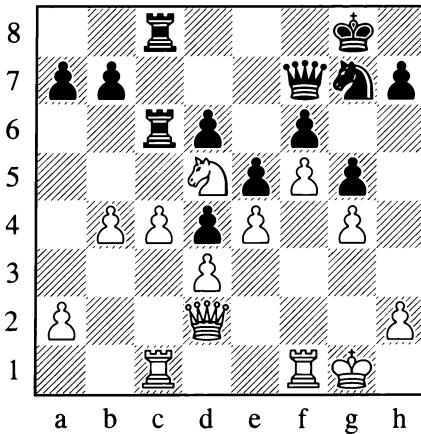
27. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 28. $b4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$

White has many good options here. The one I emotionally wanted White to play is:

29. $g4!$

Preparing an attack on the kingside – why limit yourself to one side of the board?

In the game, the less convincing 29. $h4$ $g4$ was played. Although this is still good for White, he later blundered and lost on move 58.



29... $\mathbb{Q}e8$

29... $h5$? is refuted by 30. $h4!!$, when the black position collapses.

30. $h4$ $h6$ 31. $hxg5$ $hxg5$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}f3!$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$

The only move. Black has to get rid of the knight, but it is not enough.

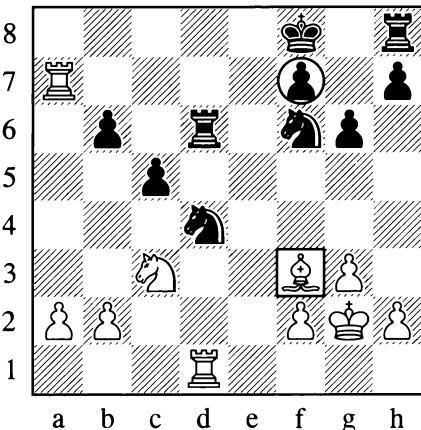
33. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 34. $\mathbb{W}h2$ $\mathbb{W}g7$ 35. $exd5$ $\mathbb{Q}6c7$

36. $\mathbb{Q}h6$

White wins.

130. Bareev – J. Polgar

Elista (2) 2007



The weakness is the f7-pawn and the bishop on f3 has no great function at the moment. For this reason, Bareev decided to transfer it to c4.

25.♗e2! ♖g7

25...♝d7? 26.♝xd7 ♖xd7 27.♝b5! would lead to an invasion on the 7th rank.

26.♗c4 ♘d7

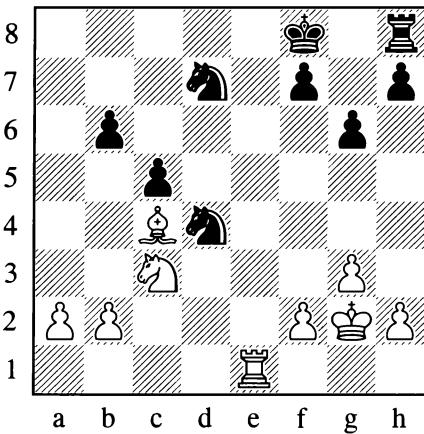
Forced. 26...♝f8 27.♝b7!± would create lasting pressure.

27.♝xd7 ♖xd7 28.♝e1!±

Black finds it impossible to get rid of the pressure.

28...♝f8

After 28...♝f5 29.♗d3 ♖d6 30.♗b5 ♖xb5 31.♗xb5 ♖f6 32.♗d1! the weakness of the b6-pawn is going to be very unpleasant for Black.

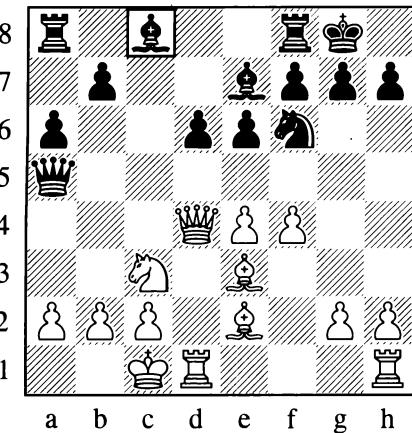


29.a4!±

White won the game on move 64, but could probably have made the journey shorter with 29.♗d5!, when the threat of ♘e7 is troublesome for Black. 29...b5 30.♗f1 Black's position is getting looser. A possible line is 30...♝g7 31.♗c7 ♘b8 32.♗d1 ♘e5 33.♗a6± and White wins a pawn.

131. Anand – Kamsky

Las Palmas (11) 1995



This looks like a typical Sicilian position, but in this case White has a strong unconventional option.

12.♗b6!±

A devastating move for Black. Once the queens are exchanged, Black is left with passive pieces and problems defending the d6-pawn.

12.e5!? is also interesting, but ultimately leads to a defendable position for Black: 12...dxe5 13.♗xe5 ♖b4 14.♗xa5 ♖xa5 15.♗d4 (15.♗f3 ♖xc3 16.bxc3 ♖d5! is okay for Black. He can hold the opposite-coloured bishop ending.) 15...♖xc3 16.♗xc3 ♖d5 17.♗d2 b5± White is a bit better, but I would not feel that I was in desperate trouble if I was Black here.

12...♖xb6 13.♗xb6

White's advantage is considerable as Black cannot become active. If he did not have a weakness on d6, he would not be in such a bad situation, but it is there.

13...♘e8

It is hard to find a good move for Black. Kamsky is one of the great defenders of our time, but his position is horrible.

13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ is answered strongly with: 14.e5 dxe5 (14... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ and wins) 15.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ exd5 17. $\mathbb{Q}f3! \pm$

13...e5 can be met with 14. $\mathbb{Q}c7$, looking for an advantage by using the lead in development. However, Anand was intending 14.f5 with the idea of 14... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15.g4 h6 16. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{B}ac8$ 17.h4± with a strong attack on the kingside.

14.e5!

Dominating the knight on e8.

14...d5

14...f6 15.exd6 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}he1$ would not solve any of Black's problems.

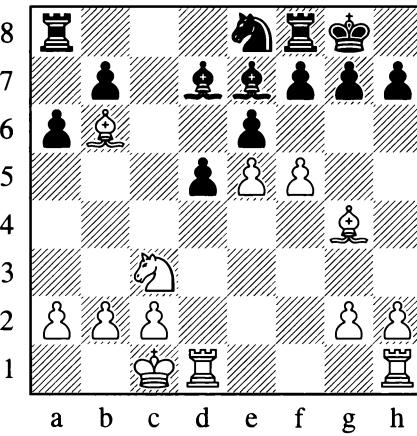
14...dxe5 15.fxe5 f6 16.exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ is also awful for Black.

15.f5! $\mathbb{Q}d7$

15...exf5? 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ is just bad for Black.

15... $\mathbb{Q}g5! 16.\mathbb{Q}b1 \mathbb{Q}f4 17.\mathbb{Q}d4 \pm$

16. $\mathbb{Q}g4!$



16... $\mathbb{Q}c8$

This just shows how desperate Black's position is.

16... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ was recommended in some places, but White wins after 17.fxe6 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d4$, when the extra pawn will prove handy.

16... $\mathbb{Q}c8?$ is refuted by 17.f6! gxf6 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$, winning for White.

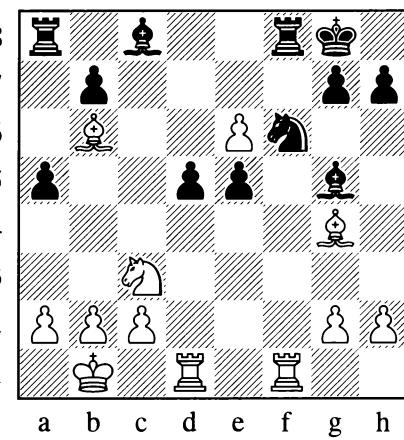
16... $\mathbb{Q}g5! 17.\mathbb{Q}b1 \mathbb{Q}c8 18.fxe6 \mathbb{Q}xe6 19.\mathbb{Q}f3 \pm$ and White wins a pawn.

17. $\mathbb{Q}hf1! a5 18.\mathbb{Q}a4! f6 19.fxe6 fxe5 20.\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}g5! \pm$

20... $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf1 \mathbb{Q}f6$ does not solve Black's problems. White plays 22. $\mathbb{Q}xf6!$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}xd5$, with a winning position.

21. $\mathbb{Q}b1 \mathbb{Q}f6$

21... $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xf1 \mathbb{Q}f6$ is refuted by 23. $\mathbb{Q}xf6!$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$, and Black has no good way to meet White's many threats.



22. $\mathbb{Q}xd5! \mathbb{Q}xg4 23.\mathbb{Q}xf8\#$

23.e7 also wins.

23... $\mathbb{Q}xf8 24.\mathbb{Q}c7 \mathbb{Q}a6$

24... $\mathbb{Q}b8 25.\mathbb{Q}a7\#$

25. $\mathbb{Q}c5\#!$

Pushing the king back before giving up the control of the e8-square.

25...♝g8 26.♛xa6 ♜xe6

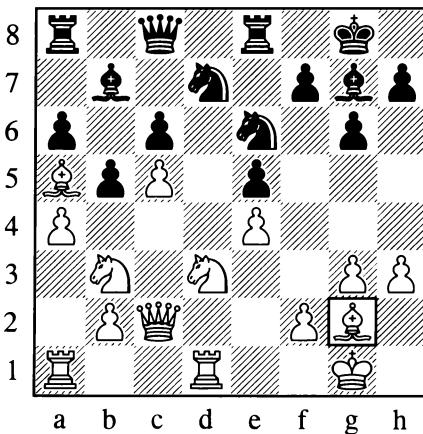
26...bxa6 27.e7 and wins.

27.♝c7

White converted his material advantage on move 50.

132. Korchnoi – Penrose

Palma de Mallorca 1969



White has an excellent position with complete control, but in order to improve it, he needs to make the most of all of his pieces. At this point, White's least active piece is the bishop on g2, which is staring straight at the immobile pawn on e4. Korchnoi wanted more from the bishop and created a new diagonal for it.

23.h4!

The bishop prepares to come to h3 and put the black centre under pressure.

23...♝f8

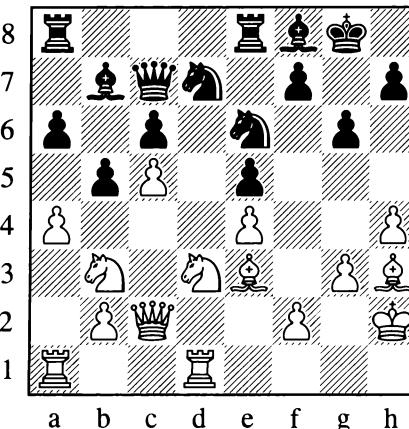
It is quite possible that Black would have been better off trying to change the symmetrical structure in the centre with 23...♝d4 24.♝xd4 exd4, although White would have the option of playing 25.f4! with control over all the important squares. He would probably follow

up with ♘h2, ♜f2, ♞d2 and similar moves that simply improve the position without committing to a specific action.

24.♝h3 ♜b8 25.♞h2 ♜c8

It is clear that White has improved his position, albeit only slightly. Now he redirects his bishop to e3, overprotecting the pawn on c5 and freeing the knight to go to a5.

26.♝d2 ♜b7 27.♝e3 ♜c7



28.♝c3!

Keeping the a5-square under control.

28...♜ad8 29.f3 ♜a8

Black is playing without a plan. White therefore decides to improve his position even further.

**30.♝d2 ♜ad8 31.♝g2 ♜a8 32.♝dd1 ♜ad8
33.♛a5 ♜xa5**

33...♜c8 34.axb5 axb5 35.♛a7 would not have led to a different result.

34.♝xa5 ♜a8 35.♝xe6! ♜xe6

35...fxe6 was necessary, but White wins anyway, of course.

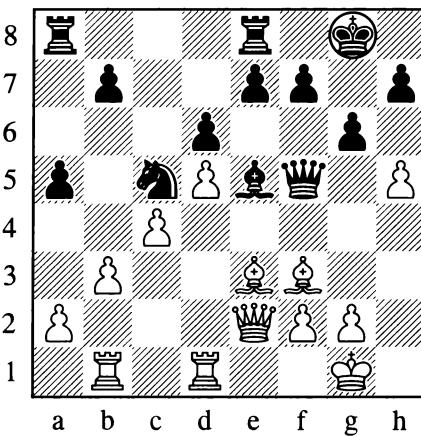
36.♝b4 ♜g7 37.♝xa6

37. $\mathbb{E}d2$ would win a piece, but this forced resignation, so it can hardly be considered worse.

1–0

133. Ivanchuk – Anand

Buenos Aires 1994



White has no advantage to speak of on the queenside; nor does he have any real chance to develop one against decent play. However, it is possible to develop an attack on the kingside where both of White's minor pieces can attack, while the knight on c5 will find it difficult to join the defence. At the same time it will be easier for White to activate his rooks.

22. $\mathbb{Q}g4!$

Banishing the queen from its active post.

22... $\mathbb{Q}c8$

22... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 23. $g5!$ would force the black queen back to g7 or h8, where it would be in the way rather than helping with the defence, as after 23... $\mathbb{Q}f5?$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 25. $f3$ it is trapped.

23. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 25. $hxg6$ $hxg6$

26. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $a4$

Black is arriving way too late.

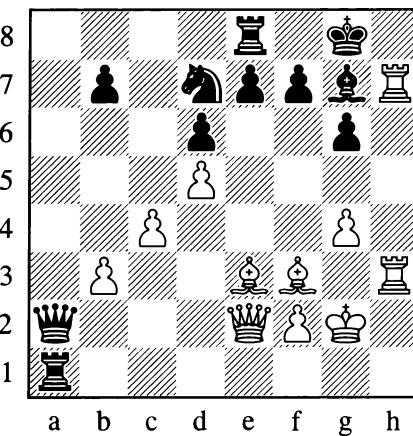
27. $\mathbb{Q}bh1$ $axb3$ 28. $axb3$ $\mathbb{Q}a1$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}1h3$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$

30. $\mathbb{Q}h7$

White has prepared his attack as well as could be expected.

30... $\mathbb{Q}a2$

30... $\mathbb{Q}a2$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ does not help greatly; $\mathbb{Q}h1$ is threatened, and after 31... $\mathbb{Q}a1$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ Black will be mated.



31. $\mathbb{Q}xg7\#!$

A nice conclusion to the game.

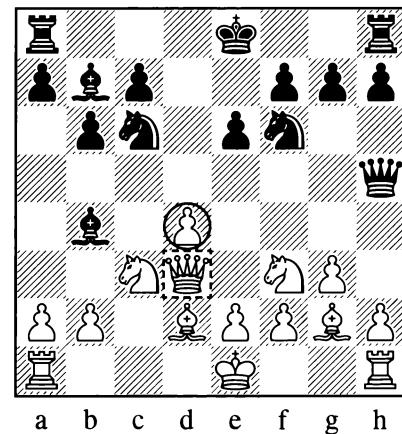
31... $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$ f6 33. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}h8$

White will play $\mathbb{Q}h6$, $\mathbb{Q}xf8\#$ and $\mathbb{Q}xg6\#$.

1–0

134. Van Wely – Leko

Moscow 2004



There do not seem to be any real weaknesses in either side's position, with the exception of the d4-pawn, which is a target only because White has fallen a little behind in development. Black was able to exploit this by energetic play:

11...0–0–0! 12.0–0

12.♗b5 is the only way to hang on to the d4-pawn. But Black is nevertheless winning after 12...a6! 13.♗a7† ♜xa7 14.♕xb4 ♜c6 15.♗c3 e5.

12...e5!†

The d4-pawn cannot be sufficiently defended.

13.♗ac1

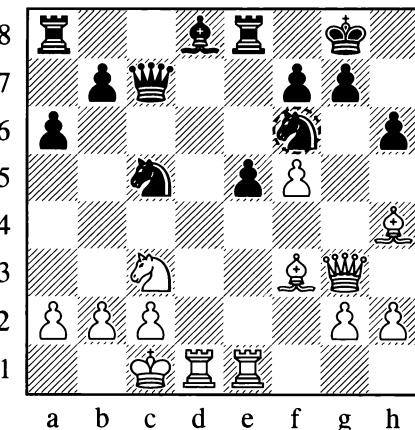
13.e3 ♜c5!†

13...♝xd4 14.♗b5?! ♜xb5 15.♗xb5 ♜xd2
 16.♗xd2 ♜xg2 17.♗xg2 ♜xd2 18.♗a6† ♜b8 19.♗xc7 ♜xc7 20.♗xa7† ♜d6
 21.♗xb6† ♜e7 22.♗c1 ♜hd8

0–1

135. Stellwagen – Kempinski

Germany 2011



The following sacrifice should be automatic for everyone, as I am sure it was for Stellwagen.

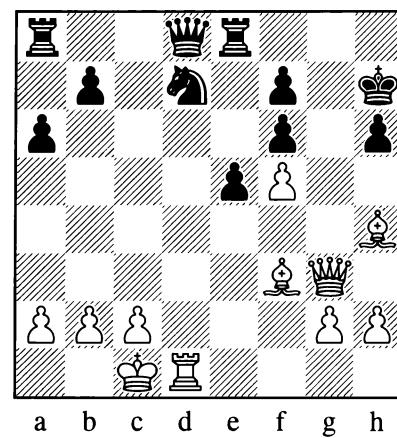
Not because the bishop on d8 is a great piece, but because of the resulting pin of the f6-knight and the way the knight on c3 and the rook on e1 can put pressure on the black position.

18.♗xd8! ♜xd8 19.♗d5† ♜cd7?

This loses by force, as does: 19...♝h8? 20.♗d1 ♜fe4 (20...♜ce4 21.♗h3! also wins) 21.♗xd8 ♜xg3 22.♗b6 and Black loses material.

The only defence was 19...♝f8, when both 20.♗xe5 and 20.♗d1 gives White an edge, although it is not yet conclusive. The long forced line after the second option goes: 20...♜ce4 21.♗xe4 ♜xe4 22.♗a3† ♜d6 23.♗e3! ♜g5 (23...♜c5? 24.♗f6 and wins) 24.♗xg5! This is the accurate move, as will be explained in a moment. 24...hxg5 25.♗b6 ♜e7 26.♗d7 ♜f6 27.♗xa8 ♜xa8 28.♗c5† ♜g8 29.g4 Had White not exchanged on g5 earlier, Black would gain some counterplay with ...h5!, but as it is, this is not an option.

20.♗d1 ♜h7 21.♗xf6† gxf6



22.♗h5?!

White misses a direct win with: 22.♗xb7 ♜a7 (22...♜b8 23.♗c6 ♜e7 is also awful. White can of course take on f6, but even clearer is the reintroduction of the queen into the action – which has now moved to the centre

and queenside – with 24. $\mathbb{W}a3!$, when the black position simply collapses.) 23. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ White regains the exchange and will have a great positional advantage as well as an extra pawn.

22... $\mathbb{E}g8$ 23. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}e7?$

23... $\mathbb{E}c8$ was an improvement. White is better after 24.c3, but not overwhelmingly so.

24. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ $\mathbb{E}gd8?!$

24... $\mathbb{E}g7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}g6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 26. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ also wins for White, but it might take a while.

25. $\mathbb{W}e6!$

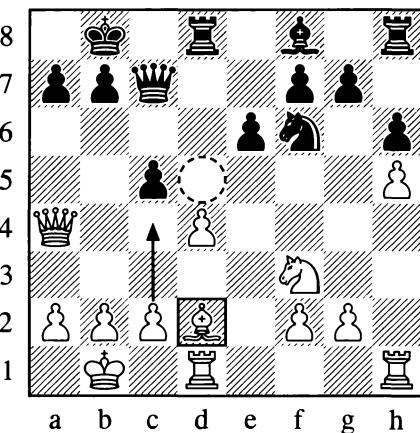
A nice final assault.

25... $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 26. $fxe6$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}h5$

1–0

136. Van der Wiel – Portisch

Budapest 1986



Black has a potentially good square on d5, but at the moment White would be able to kick the knight away with c2-c4. As there are few things as wonderful as a stable knight in the centre, Black's next move is almost automatic; I seriously doubt that Portisch hesitated before playing it.

17... $c4!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e5$

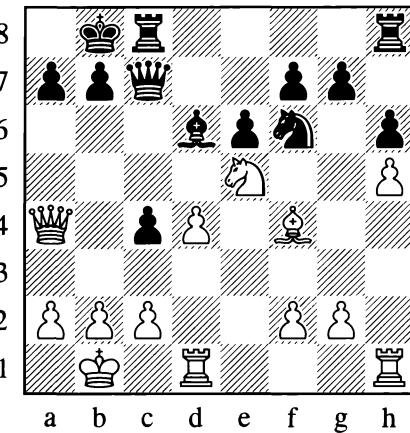
It is not entirely without value to spend a tempo provoking a weakness with 18. $\mathbb{Q}a5$, though unlike elsewhere in this book, the weakening of the c6-square after 18...b6 is not so critical here. White no longer has his light-squared bishop and Black does not have any problems protecting the light squares in the short term. He might have some problems securing his king in the long term, but at the moment this would not extend to much more than a minor annoyance.

18... $\mathbb{E}c8!=$

Black should of course not fall for 18... $\mathbb{E}xd4?$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$, when White has a very strong attack based on: 19... $\mathbb{E}xd1\#$ 20. $\mathbb{E}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 22. $\mathbb{E}xd7$ $\mathbb{W}h2$ 23. $\mathbb{W}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 24. $a4\pm$

19. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$

Van der Wiel is not a great fan of technical positions, so here he took the rather unfortunate decision to unbalance the position.

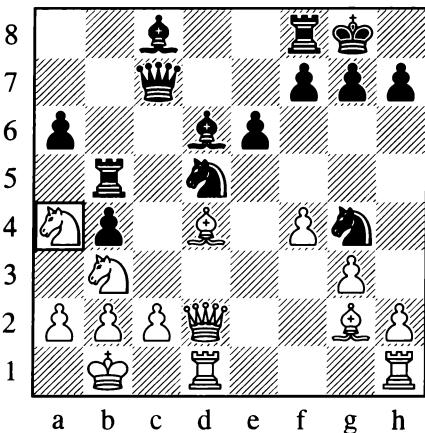


20. $\mathbb{Q}xf7?!$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xh8$ $\mathbb{E}xh8$ 22. $\mathbb{E}de1$ $\mathbb{W}c8\#$

Black won on move 41.

137. Adams – Razuvayev

London 1997



White's worst-placed piece is beyond doubt the knight on a4, while the black knight on d5 is sensational. Exchanging the two makes perfect sense.

18.c4! bxc3

18... $\mathbb{Q}xc4?$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c1+-$

19. $\mathbb{Q}xc3 \mathbb{Q}xc3\#$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$

White's pieces gravitate to great squares with tempo.

20... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d4?!$

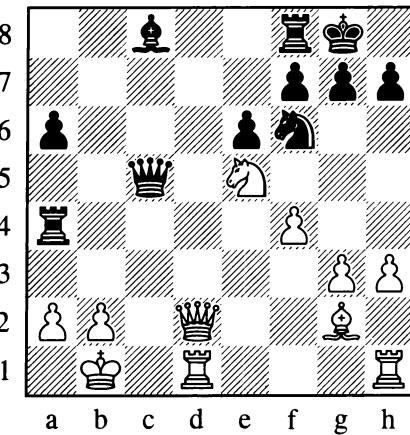
21. $\mathbb{W}e2\pm$ would have been absolutely gruesome for Black. The point is tactical and arises after 21... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d4$, when Black cannot continue as in the game with 22... $\mathbb{Q}c5?!$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ $\mathbb{Q}c4?$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xe7+-$. Black would instead have to play something dubious like 22... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}hd1$, where White's advantage is considerable,

21... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 24.h3

24. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}c5!?$ might be what Adams missed when he made his 21st move?

24... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{W}c5$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}e5?!$

26.b3 would of course be riskier. I expect that Adams was unsure about 26... $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (26... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 27.bxc4 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 29. $\mathbb{W}d4\pm$ on the other hand probably did not worry him.) 27. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc1\#$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}a3$, but after 29. $\mathbb{W}b4$ this results in a favourable endgame for White, very much to his taste.

26... $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}c6?!$

This leads to a position which I feel does not favour White much.

27. $\mathbb{Q}he1!?$ would have tried to take advantage of the passivity of the black position. But there are still a lot of details to take care of. 27... $\mathbb{W}b6!$ (27... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 28.f5±) 28. $\mathbb{W}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 29. $\mathbb{W}xb6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}d6\pm$ I should think Adams would have been happy enough with this endgame.

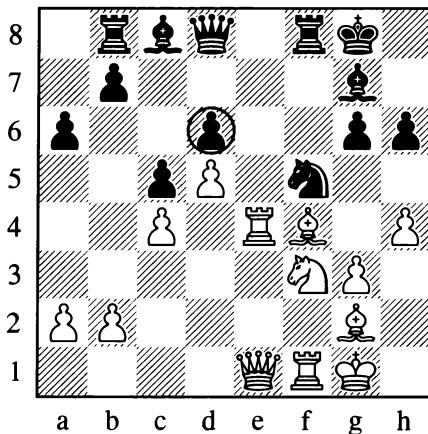
27. $\mathbb{W}d6!$ looks best though. After 27... $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}c1\pm$ White has a fine game. For example: 30...f6 31. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ e5 35.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}a7\pm$ and it is hard for Black to justify his pawn "sacrifice".

27... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2\#$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{W}a8\#$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}a1\#$

White has a very slight advantage on objective merits, but in practice the position is hard to play. Adams made some mistakes approaching the move 40 show-down, before securing a draw on move 44.

138. Bu Xiangzhi – Nijboer

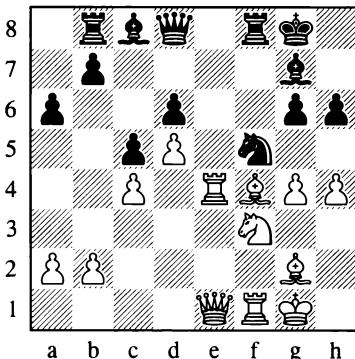
Wijk aan Zee 2007



The two most important aspects of this position are the weakness of the d6-pawn and the poorly-placed knight on f5. Bu tried to trap the knight, but went completely astray, only winning the game due to a blunder by his opponent. I believe that he did not fully appreciate how weak d6 really is.

22.dxc6?

Although this does not lose all the advantage, it is decidedly inferior to the direct win with 22.g4!.



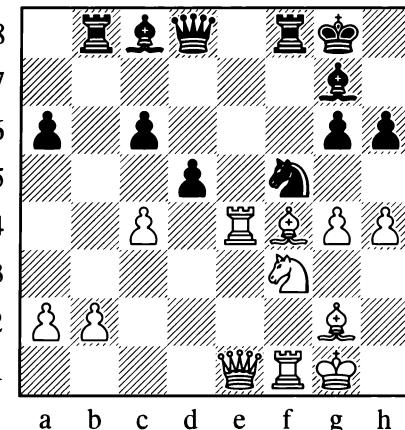
This has the simple idea 22... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 23. $\mathbb{W}g3$, and it is time to resign. Black can try something desperate, of course, but after 22...b5! 23.gxf5 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$, White will play 24. $\mathbb{E}e6$! and Black is simply a piece down. There are some complications, but the position is won for White.

22...bxc6 23.g4!

Belated, but not too late to be effective. The knight is after all trapped.

23...d5

After 23... $\mathbb{E}xb2$ 24.gxf5 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 25. $\mathbb{E}e2\pm$ White is a piece up, though there are still some complications remaining.



24.cxd5?

This is truly feeble; Bu misses another great option. Here White could have invaded his opponent's position with 24. $\mathbb{E}e6$!, leading to all kinds of threats. The forced line goes: 24... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 25. $\mathbb{E}xg6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$! and Black cannot recapture on d4 because of 27. $\mathbb{W}e5$!, but has to play 26... $\mathbb{E}xf1\#$, when after 27. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ the only move that keeps the game going is 27... $\mathbb{W}f8$!. Here White has many tempting options, all leading to good winning chances. But after 15 minutes of probing, I still have not found a knock-out blow. Black seems to have many defensive resources. I allowed Fritz12 to

speculate for a while; every minute it decided on another favourite, always claiming an advantage, but not a win, for White.

24...cxd5 25.♗a4!?

White is drifting badly. It was better to retreat with 25.♗e2, when after 25...♝d4 26.♕xd4 ♛xd4† 27.♔e3 the position is quite equal. A possible tactical end to the game would be: 27...♝xe3† 28.♗xe3 ♜xf1† 29.♗xf1 ♜xb2 30.♕xd5† ♛xd5 31.♗e8† ♔h7 32.♗e7† ♔g8 and so on.

25...♗e8 26.♗c1

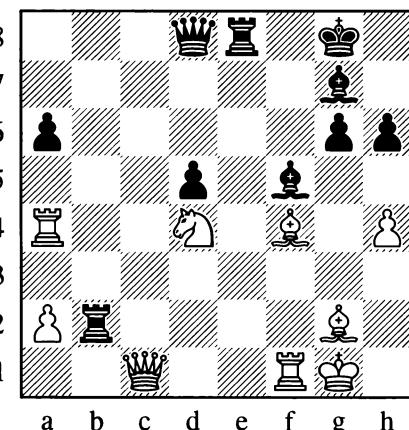
White is also a little worse after 26.♗a5 ♛xa5 27.♗xa5 ♜b4! 28.gxf5 ♜xf4 29.fxg6 ♜b7, when Black's bishops have come to life.

26...♗xb2?

A completely needless sacrifice. After the simple 26...♗b6† 27.♔h1 ♜e3! Black was simply a little better. I am not sure why Friso refrained from this pleasant option. It could be that he did not fully feel in control of the position after 28.♗xb8, but Black plays 28...♝xf1 29.♗xf1 ♜xb8 with an edge, and ideas such as 30.♗c6 ♜b7! 31.♗xg6 d4, when White would be subjected to a fierce attack.

27.gxf5 ♜xf5 28.♗d4

White has many other options, but I am not sure if any are better.



28...♛d7??

A horrible move that is hard to explain. Black had several alternatives that would have kept him in the game.

28...♛b6 is playable, though it does not solve all Black's problems: 29.♗xd5† (29.♗e3 ♜d3! equalizes) 29...♔h7 30.♗c7 ♛xc7 31.♗xc7 ♜e4! 32.♗e1! Black cannot fully equalize, but after both 32...♗g2† 33.♗f1 ♛f8† 34.♗f3 ♜xd5 35.♗xg2 ♛xf3 36.♗g1 and 32...♜xd4† 33.♗xd4 ♛g2† 34.♗h1 ♛e2† 35.♗xe4 ♛xe4 36.♗xe2 ♛xe2, Black has respectable drawing chances. I would personally hope to draw these endings about 80% of the time.

The best option is the speculative sacrifice 28...♗xg2†! 29.♗xg2 ♜xd4 30.♗xd4 ♛xh4, giving Black a lot of threats. I do not think White can gain a substantial advantage. For example: 31.♗f2 ♛g4† 32.♗f1 g5! and a drawable ending is in the cards. Or 31.♗c3! ♜h3†? (31...g5 32.♗g3 ♜e4† 33.♗xe4 ♛xe4† 34.♗h2 ♛f8 is another good drawing chance. White should probably keep the rooks on and try to deliver mate, but it will not be so easy.) 32.♗xh3 ♛e2† 33.♗f3 ♛xh3† 34.♗xe2 g5 and the pawns are probably strong enough to generate sufficient counterplay.

29.♗xf5

White is winning.

29...♛xa4!?

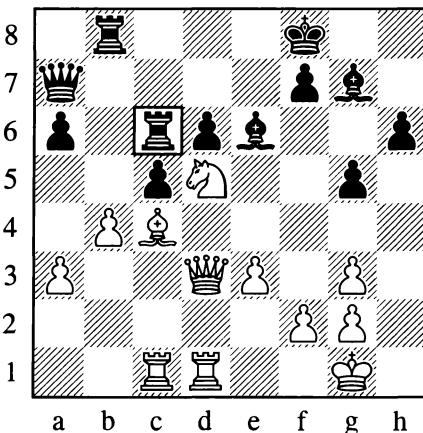
29...♝ee2 30.♗f3 ♛xa4 may have been Black's intended idea, but White plays 31.♗xg7! and Black does not have an attack without the all-important bishop.

30.♗xg7 ♛d4† 31.♔h1 ♛xg2 32.♗xe8 ♛e2 33.♗b1

1–0

139. Hillarp Persson – Stellwagen

Malmo 2006



Black has a lot of weaknesses on the light squares, but there is no easy way to exploit this. Tiger Hillarp found a fine tactical solution, with purely positional aims.

31.a4!!

White would like to make this advance if at all possible. Playing b4-b5 would give him a huge positional advantage, so Black has to take up the challenge.

31... $\mathbb{E}c2\pm$ is a non-move.

31.b5 axb5 32. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{E}cc8$ 33.a4 \pm is natural enough, and White is a bit better. But Black still has the two bishops and a chance to fight for the light squares.

31... $\mathbb{W}h7$? cxb4 32. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ simply does not work:
 32... $\mathbb{E}xc4!$ 33. $\mathbb{W}g8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 34. $\mathbb{W}xg7$ $\mathbb{E}xc1$
 35. $\mathbb{E}xc1$ b3!–+

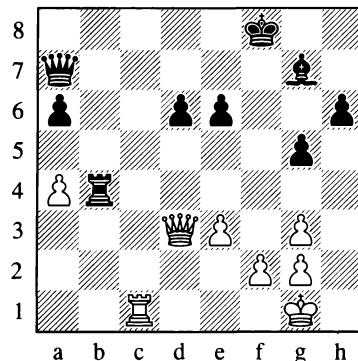
31...cxb4

31... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{E}c7$ 33.bxc5 dxc5
 34. $\mathbb{Q}c4\pm$ gives White a more or less winning positional advantage. Control of the light squares is a far more important factor than the

opposite-coloured bishops. It is easy to imagine that Black will struggle greatly with his weak a- and c-pawns, as well as the permanently soft spot on f7.

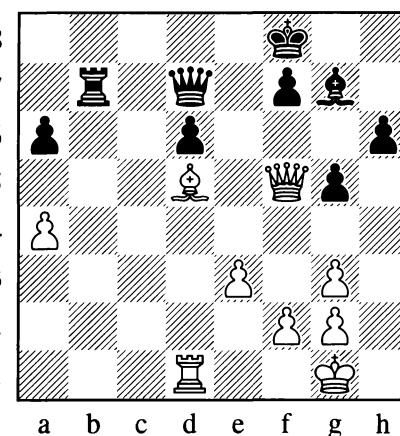
32. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{E}xb4$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}c7!$

33... $\mathbb{E}xc1?!$ 34. $\mathbb{E}xc1$ fxe6? reveals Tiger's brilliant tactical idea:



35. $\mathbb{W}xd6\#$ $\mathbb{E}e7$ 36. $\mathbb{E}c8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 37. $\mathbb{E}c7+-$

34. $\mathbb{E}xc6$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 35. $\mathbb{W}f5\pm$ $\mathbb{E}b7$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}d7$



37. $\mathbb{W}f3?!$

White could have obtained a bigger advantage with 37. $\mathbb{W}d3!$ $\mathbb{E}b4$ 38.a5 $\mathbb{E}b5$ 39. $\mathbb{E}b1\#$, but in time trouble it is hard to play absolutely accurately. What is important is that the pressure never lifted, and it proved too much for Black to deal with.

37... $\mathbb{E}c7$ 38. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{W}c8$

38... $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ ±

39. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}b7$

40. $\mathbb{W}h5$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 41.f4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 42. $\mathbb{E}b6$ ±

40... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 41.a5 $\mathbb{W}a4$

41... $\mathbb{E}c5$ 42. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 43. $\mathbb{W}e4$ ±

42. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}d7$

42...d5!? 43. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xa5$ 44.e4±

43. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 44. $\mathbb{W}e4$ f5 45. $\mathbb{W}a8$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 46. $\mathbb{W}f3$

h5 47. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 48. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ f4 49.gxf4 gxf4

50.exf4 $\mathbb{W}xf4$ 51. $\mathbb{W}xf4$! $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 52. $\mathbb{Q}b7$ $\mathbb{E}c5$

53.a6 $\mathbb{E}a5$ 54.g3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 55. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 56.f4

$\mathbb{Q}f6$ 57. $\mathbb{E}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 58. $\mathbb{E}d5$ $\mathbb{E}a3$ 59. $\mathbb{Q}h2$

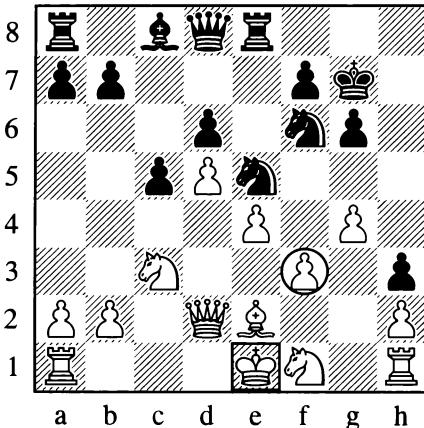
$\mathbb{Q}g6$ 60. $\mathbb{E}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 61. $\mathbb{Q}e4$! $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 62. $\mathbb{E}e6$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$

63. $\mathbb{E}d6$

1–0

140. Li Shilong – Zhao Jun

Xinghua Jiangsu 2011



If White had time to consolidate with $\mathbb{Q}f1$ - $e3$ he would be very happy. For this reason, Black needs to react absolutely immediately.

17...b5!

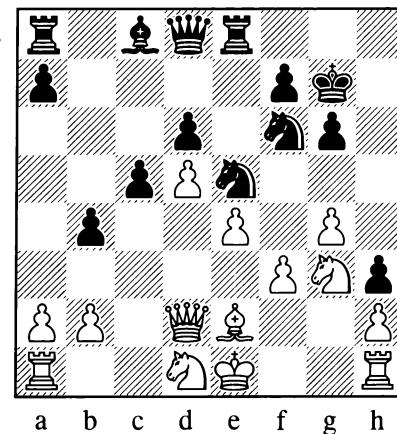
Taking advantage of the weakness of the e4-f3-g4 constellation.

18. $\mathbb{Q}g3$

The only move, but hardly a refutation of the black advance!

18. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$? would be a disaster. The knight sacrifice on f3 looks strong, but even better is making some use of the passive bishop with 18... $\mathbb{Q}xg4$!, when Black wins. For example: 19.fxg4 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 20. $\mathbb{W}f4$ (20. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{W}h4$! 21. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}f3$! 22. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}xh2$!) and White will soon be sent to Sardinia in small tins.) 20... $\mathbb{W}c3$!! A fantastic move. (20... $\mathbb{W}a5$! 21. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$! also wins, but in a more complicated way.) 21. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ Black is just winning.

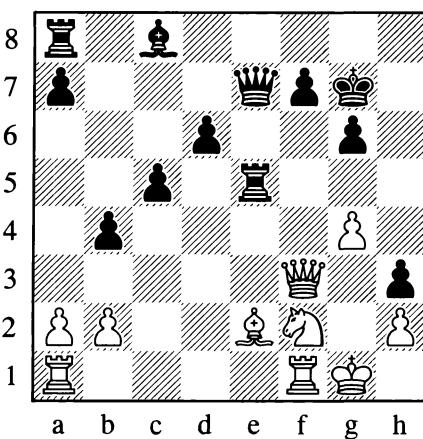
18...b4 19. $\mathbb{Q}d1$



19... $\mathbb{Q}exg4$!?

This sacrifice borders on being too optimistic, but it is also characteristic of Zhao Jun's love of complications. 19... $\mathbb{Q}a6$! must be the correct move if you ask me – which in a way you did by buying this book! After 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{W}b6$, the only thing that stops Black being better is that White can play 22. $\mathbb{Q}ef5$! $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 23. $\mathbb{W}h6$. Then it is advisable for Black to immediately secure the draw with 23... $\mathbb{W}a6$! 24. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}d3$! 25. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}c4$! with a perpetual check.

20.fxg4 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{E}d4$
23. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{E}xd5$ 24.0–0 $\mathbb{E}e5$ 25. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$!



26.♕b5?

26.♕xa8 was the only move. After 26...♕b7 27.♕xa7 ♕xe2 Black has enough compensation for a draw. For example: 28.♕ad1 ♕xb2 29.♕d3 ♕xf2! 30.♕xf2 ♕h4† 31.♕g3 ♕f6† and Black has a perpetual check.

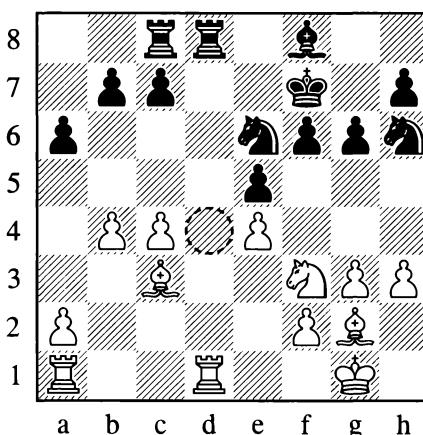
26...♕b8† 27.♕c6?! ♕a6! 28.♕fc1 ♕e3 29.♕d5 ♕c8 30.♕d1 ♕e2

Black is just winning now.

31.♕f1 ♕e5 32.♕f3 ♕e2 33.♕h1 ♕xf1 34.♕xf1 ♕e3 35.b3 ♕f6 36.♕d1 ♕c7 37.♕d5 ♕ce7 38.♕b5 ♕e5 39.♕c6 ♕e6 40.♕d3 ♕xg4 41.♕f2 ♕f4 42.♕h1 ♕f3
0–1

141. Morrison – Rowson

Edinburgh 1999



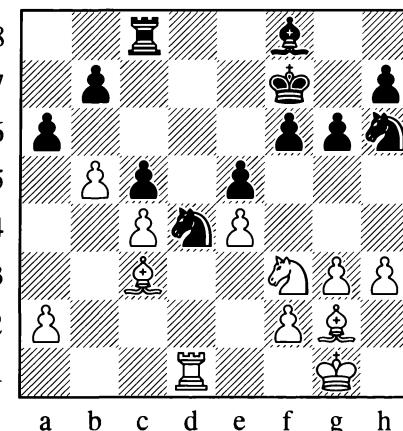
If Black does not do anything then White will have quite a nice position with his bishop pair. For this reason, Rowson decided to fully establish control over the d4-square.

19...c5! 20.b5

20.bxc5 may have been better, but 20...♕xd1† 21.♕xd1 ♕xc5= would give Black other advantages (the split white pawns), as a substitute for not getting the d4-square.

20...♕xd1† 21.♕xd1 ♕d4

21...axb5!? 22.cxb5 ♕e7 23.a4 ♕f7 would be sharper. White obtains the c4-square, but has no target on a6 to play against. My engine prefers Black, but I really think the position is satisfactory for White.



22.♕xd4?

A horrible move. After this White has no play and Black is well placed on the dark squares.

Correct was 22.♕xd4!?, when the safest reply is 22...exd4=, but where Rowson undoubtedly would have gone for 22...cxd4!?. 23.♕d2 ♕e6 (23...♕xc4 24.♕f1 gives White excellent counterplay. The only winning chance for Black is 24...axb5!? [24...♕a4? 25.♕c1±] 25.♕xc4† bxc4, but if White

reacts cautiously, he will be fine: 26. $\mathbb{B}b1!$ c3 27. $\mathbb{B}xb7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xc3!$ dxc3 29. $\mathbb{B}b3$ and he will never lose.) 24. bxa6 bxa6 25. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 26. $\mathbb{B}b6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 27. $\mathbb{B}xa6$ $\mathbb{B}xc4$ Both players have their advantages here, but I would be seriously surprised if White were to lose this position.

22...cxd4#

Black now governs the dark squares.

23. $\mathbb{Q}f1$

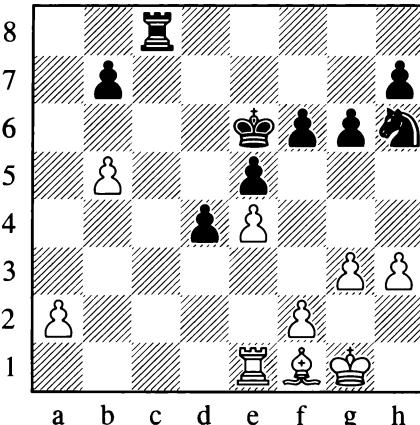
23. bxa6 bxa6 24. $\mathbb{B}b1$ looks more logical. Black is better, but White should manage to hold the position with active play.

23...axb5 24.cxb5 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe1$

Avoiding any opposite-coloured bishop endings, just in case.

26. $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6\#$

Black has some advantage, but accurate play might still have saved the day.



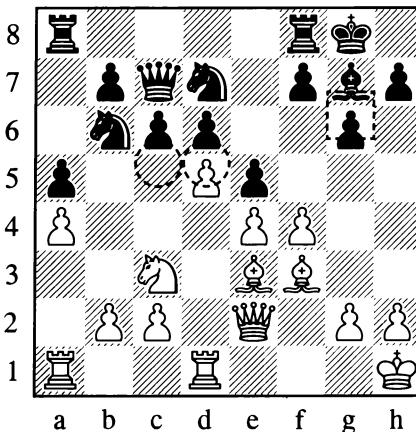
27.a4 b6 28.a5 bxa5 29. $\mathbb{B}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 30. $\mathbb{B}xa5$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 31. $\mathbb{B}a6$ $\mathbb{B}c3$ 32.b6?

This pawn now becomes a liability rather than an asset. I have a feeling that from this point the position can no longer be held with best play.

32... $\mathbb{B}b3$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{B}b2$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{B}b4$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 36. $\mathbb{B}a7$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}a6$ $\mathbb{B}xb6$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}c4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{B}b1\#$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ f5 41. f3 d3 42. $\mathbb{B}a2$ $\mathbb{B}c1$ 43. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{B}c2\#$ 44. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ f4# 0-1

142. Morovic Fernandez – Seirawan

Novi Sad (ol) 1990



(Position after 16...e7-e5)

Black would love to bring his pieces into play with ...exf4 and ... $\mathbb{Q}e5$. He would not significantly mind if White played (the legal) 17. dxe6 fxe6, when ...d5 is in the air and the e6-pawn is not really weak. And 17.g3?! exf4 18.gxf4 $\mathbb{B}ae8$ would give Black a target for counterplay.

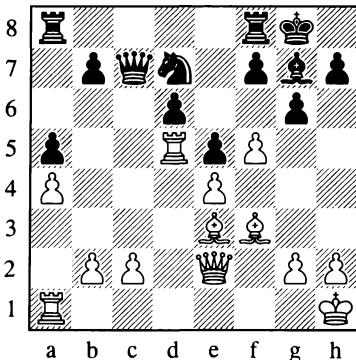
17. $\mathbb{B}f5!$ cxd5

17... $\mathbb{B}ad8$ 18. $\mathbb{B}d2$ does not diminish the white advantage. Eventually he will threaten dxc6 and Black will have to play ...cxd5 anyway.

18. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$?

This leads to an attack that is only good enough for a draw.

Correct was 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 19. $\mathbb{B}xd5$.

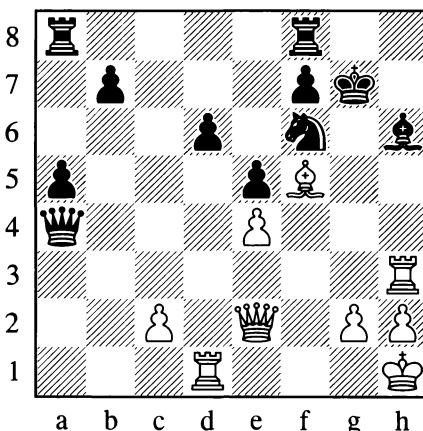


And now the best is probably 19...gxf5 20.exf5 ♜fe8±, as after the natural 19...♝f6 White has the powerful move 20.♜b5!, where the rook is looking at the important a5-, b7-, d5- and e5-squares. In such a scenario, White's advantage is probably quite close to being decisive.

**18...♛xb6 19.♝xd5 ♛xb2 20.fxg6 hxg6
21.♜ab1 ♛a3 22.♝g4 ♛f6 23.♜b3 ♛xa4
24.♝e7† ♜h7 25.♜h3† ♜h6**

At this point White no doubt started looking for the exit. This could have happened with 26.♛f3 ♜g7 27.♜xh6 ♜xg4 28.♛xg4 ♜xh6 29.♝f5† with a perpetual.

26.♝f5?! gxf5 27.♜xf5† ♜g7



28.♜xh6?!

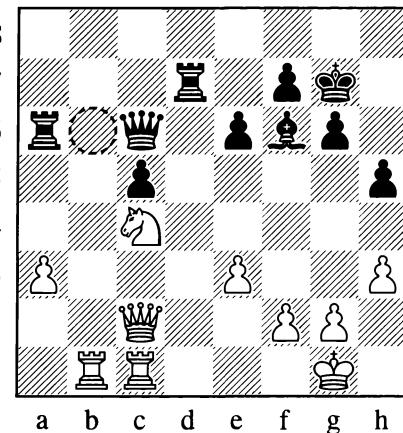
And here, continuing with 28.♜g3† ♜h8 29.♜h3 would have forced a repetition.

28...♜h8!

Black now took over the initiative, though White managed to draw the game on move 59.

143. Gheorghiu – Rajkovic

Lone Pine 1980



27.a4!

This is the correct move. White wants to put his pawn on a5 and is aided by tactics.

In the game White played 27.♜b8?!, which threw his advantage away (although he won on move 47 anyway). After 27...♜d8! 28.♜xd8 ♜xd8 White would not manage to advance his a-pawn. For example: 29.♜a1 ♛a4=

27...♜da7

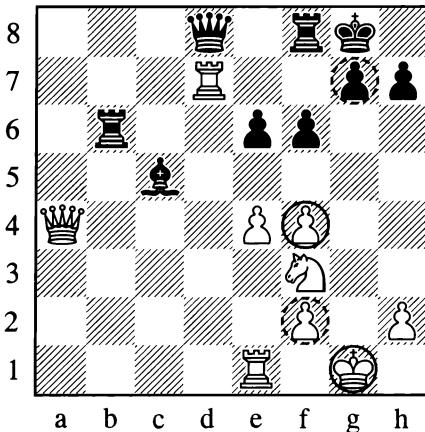
Black has to go into defensive mode. 27...♜xa4? 28.♝b6 would give White a technically winning endgame.

28.a5 ♜d8 29.♜a1±

Whether White can win this ending is not obvious, but he could certainly have a fair go.

144. Speelman – Short

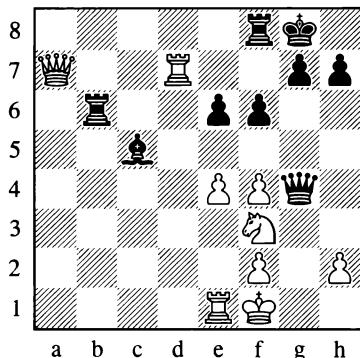
London 1980



The weaknesses in the white camp are f4 and f2 (and to some extent also g4). In the black camp the weakness is g7. White intends to play $\mathbb{W}a7$ to generate counterplay, something that worked very well for him in the game! Black's worst piece is most certainly the queen!

31... $\mathbb{W}b8!!$

In the game Short played less strongly: 31... $\mathbb{W}e8?!$ 32. $\mathbb{W}a7$ $\mathbb{W}g6\uparrow$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ And here he blundered, indicating time trouble. 33... $\mathbb{W}g4??$ (33... $\mathbb{E}fb8?$)



34. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ Black resigned. There was a spectacular attempt at a defence in 34... $\mathbb{Q}h8?!$ 35. $\mathbb{E}xg7$ $\mathbb{W}e2\uparrow!$, but after 36. $\mathbb{E}xe2$ $\mathbb{B}b1\uparrow$ 37. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{E}xe1\uparrow$

38. $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ $\mathbb{B}xa7$ 39. $\mathbb{E}xh7\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 40. $\mathbb{E}xa7$ $\mathbb{F}xg5$
41. $f\text{x}g5$ White has too many pawns in the endgame for it to make any difference.

32.e5

32.f5 $\mathbb{E}b2$ 33. $\mathbb{E}f1$ $\mathbb{W}f4$ and White is lost.

32. $\mathbb{W}a7$ $\mathbb{W}xa7$ 33. $\mathbb{E}xa7$ $\mathbb{E}b2$ and Black wins the exchange at least.

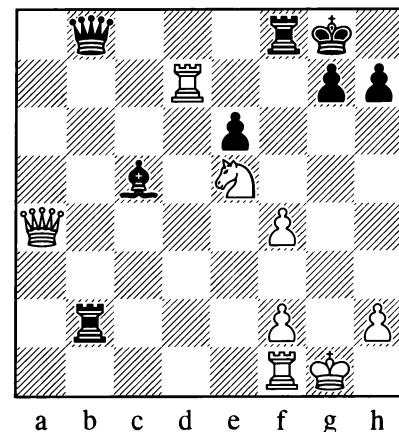
32. $\mathbb{W}c4$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ and White loses the f4-pawn.

32... $\mathbb{E}b2$

32... $\mathbb{E}b4$ followed by ... $\mathbb{W}b6$ would also give Black an extra pawn.

White is now forced to play 33. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ with a close to lost position. If he defends his f-pawn things only get worse:

33. $\mathbb{E}f1$ $f\text{x}e5$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}xe5?$



34... $\mathbb{E}xf2\uparrow!$

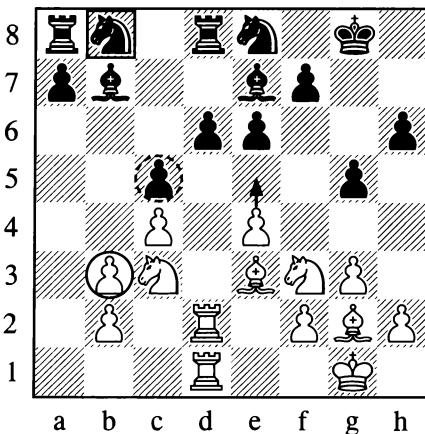
34... $\mathbb{E}xf2?$ 35. $\mathbb{E}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2\uparrow$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}g2?!$ would allow White to hang on to his strong knight.

35. $\mathbb{E}xf2$ $\mathbb{E}xf2$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$

Black wins.

145. Nyzhnyk – Werle

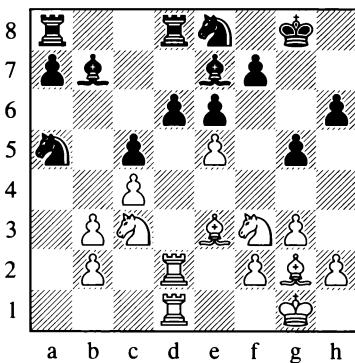
Groningen 2010



Black is under some pressure down the d-file and it would be quite natural to look mainly at defensive ideas. But if we do our three-point analysis we notice that there is indeed a weakness of importance in the white position and that our worst-placed piece can attack it in only two moves. Had Werle thought in terms of the three questions, he would probably have drawn this game quite easily. Instead he swam like an axe, to use a Russian idiom.

17... Qd7?

17... Qc6! was the correct response. The main line goes 18.e5 Qa5! with counterplay.



In my opinion White does not have any

advantage here. He has a few options, but really what we need to play like this with Black is only to check the absolutely concrete stuff: 19.exd6 Qxd6 20.Qxc5 Qxb3 21.Qxd6 Qxd2 These kinds of desperado moves where you have to make the right captures with the right pieces can be a bit confusing, but here it works out beautifully. 22.Qxe7 (22.Qxd2? Qxd6 23.Qxb7 Qad8† is all wrong) 22...Qxf3 23.Qxd8 Qxd8 24.Qxf3 Qxf3† 25.Qg2 Qxd1 26.Qxd1 Qe5 Black has no problems in this ending.

White can also try 18.h4, but it does not make any difference, Black will respond with the same idea of 18...Qa5! with sufficient counterplay.

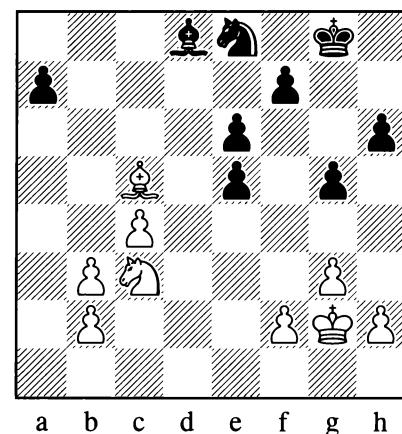
18.e5!

The decisive break, taking advantage of the lack of stability in the black pawn structure. Black's response is forced.

18... Qxe5 19.Qxe5 Qxg2 20.Qxg2 dxе5 21.Qxd8 Qxd8

21...Qxd8 might have given a few more practical chances, but White's pawn majority on the queenside would still give him a solid edge.

22.Qxd8 Qxd8 23.Qxc5



23...a5

I would probably have tried 23...a6, not allowing White to undouble his pawns so easily, but the position would still be very difficult.

24.b4 axb4 25.Qxb4 f5 26.c5 Qf7 27.c6 e4 28.Qb5 Qb6?!

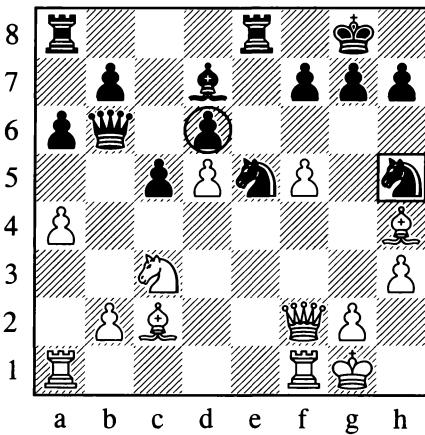
Black should have tried 28...Qe7 29.Qa5 Qf6 as a last practical chance. The ending arising after 30.c7, where Black has two pawns for the knight, is of course winning for White; but he would have to prove this in practice.

29.Qd6

1–0

146. Zhu Chen – Koneru

Doha 2011



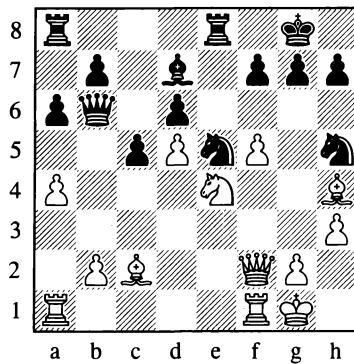
The most important factor in the position is the badly-placed knight on h5. White would love to push it with g2-g4, but at the moment Black can meet 24.g4? with 24...Wxb2! 25.Qe4 Qf4!, when she would have the advantage. White's job is thus to prepare for this tactic – this can be by preventing it or through having a way to deal with it when it comes. An interesting move is 24.b3?!, simply preventing ...Wxb2. White should certainly

have the advantage after this. But there is an even stronger way to deal with it, taking advantage of the weakness of the d6-pawn as well.

24.Qa3?

This move makes little sense beyond trapping the queen if it takes on b2. Black now has time to activate her queen.

24.Qe4! was the perfect way to take advantage of Black's problems; g2-g4 is now a huge threat.



Black's only attempt to obtain play is to go through with her plan with 24...Wxb2, when the simplest is 25.Qxd6. Black's pieces are all hanging, and it is hard to come up with a recommendation. The best try seems to be 25...Qf4, but White wins with accurate play: 26.Qxe8 Wxe8 27.Qfe1 Qfd3?! (27...f6 may be a more practical approach, but White has a winning advantage after 28.Qad1 c4 29.Qb1!, when Black is missing her usual ...Qd4 resource.) 28.Qxd3 Wxf2† 29.Qxf2 Qxd3 30.Qxe8† Wxe8 31.Qb1 b5 32.axb5 Wxb5 (32...axb5 33.Qa1! and White wins) 33.d6 Qf8 34.Qxc5! and White wins on account of 34...Qxc5 35.Qc1 and the endgame is trivially won.

24...Wb4! 25.Qb3

25.g4 can be met with either 25...Qd4!, where Black is probably a bit better, or with

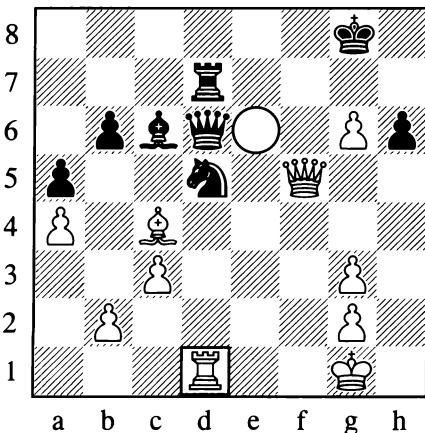
25... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 26. $\mathbb{W}xf4$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 27. $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}f3\#$ and the position is wildly unclear, with about even chances.

25... $\mathbb{W}d4$

Black has overcome her immediate problems with the knight and is now a little better. She won the game on move 49.

147. Shaw – Meier

Liverpool 2008



Black's weakness is the king. The weakest squares in his position are e6 and e8. It is too easy to get deluded into thinking that the pin is important, when in fact Black is very well placed to deal with it. For this reason, the worst-placed white piece is ironically the rook, which would be much better checkmating the black king, rather than hitting its head against a brick wall.

35. $\mathbb{B}e1!$

Black is immediately done for. In the game John blew his chance, playing 35. $\mathbb{B}h2?$, when Meier seized the advantage with 35... $\mathbb{B}g7\#$ and won on move 48.

35... $\mathbb{B}g7$

35... $\mathbb{B}b7$ 36. $\mathbb{B}e6$ $\mathbb{W}c5\#$ 37. $\mathbb{B}h2$ $\mathbb{W}f8$ and

White wins after both 38. $\mathbb{B}f6$ and 38. $\mathbb{W}e5$ $\mathbb{B}d8$ 39. $\mathbb{B}e7$, with death and destruction.

Black would find no hope in 35... $\mathbb{B}e7$ 36. $\mathbb{B}xd5\#$ $\mathbb{B}xd5$ 37. $\mathbb{B}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 38. $\mathbb{W}xd5\#$, when White wins quickly with $\mathbb{W}f7$ on the next move.

35... $\mathbb{W}c5\#$? 36. $\mathbb{B}h2$ $\mathbb{W}xc4$ leads directly to mate: 37. $\mathbb{B}e8\#$ $\mathbb{B}g7$ 38. $\mathbb{W}f8\#$ $\mathbb{B}xg6$ 39. $\mathbb{B}e6\#$ and so on.

35... $\mathbb{B}c7$ prepares a check on c5 for real, but White can sidestep it in many ways, including moving the b-pawn, the king or the bishop – all of them winning.

36. $\mathbb{B}e6$ $\mathbb{W}f8$ 37. $\mathbb{W}e5\#$

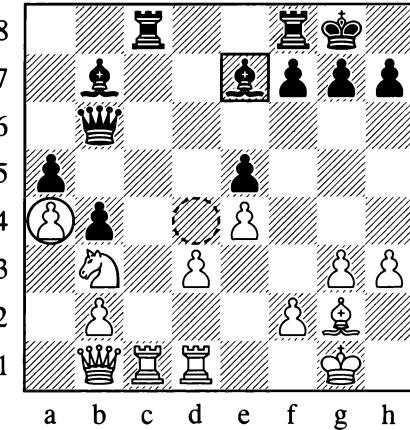
Exchanging the queens would also work.

37... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 38. $\mathbb{B}xc6$

White wins.

148. Tikkanen – Leko

Malmo 2012



There are a few weaknesses in the white position – the a4-pawn, the d4-square, the f2-pawn and maybe even the d3-pawn, though it is hard to see how Black will be able to attack

it at the moment. Black would like to get more out of his bishops, without allowing too many exchanges, and relieve himself of the pressure against a5.

27... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$

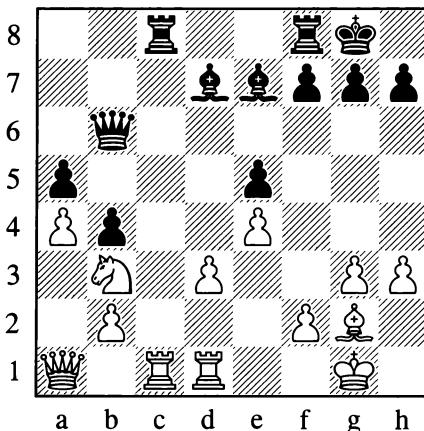
Using the attack on the a-pawn as a way to gain time.

28. $\mathbb{W}a1?!$

28.h4! would have been a very interesting defensive attempt. The main point is that White has some play on the light squares after 28... $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ 29. $\mathbb{W}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 30. $\mathbb{W}xb3$, though Black remains better with 30... $\mathbb{Q}c5$.

28... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$

The bishop is on the way to e6, where it will have a real target in the b3-knight.



29. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc1?$

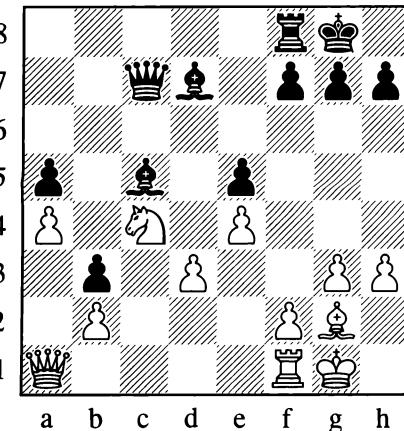
Leko misses the chance to win a pawn with 29... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}h6! \mp$, which would have fully crowned his strategy. 31. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}xe5?$ is refuted by the immediate killer 32... $\mathbb{Q}xf2!!$.

30. $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ b3

31... $\mathbb{W}h6$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}c4!$ is not the same anymore: 32... $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ 33. $\mathbb{W}c1!$ $\mathbb{W}h5$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ leaves White no worse.

It was worth considering 31... $\mathbb{Q}e6!?$, with the intention of 32. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}d8\mp$, but White's position should be defensible.

32. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$



33. $\mathbb{W}d1!?$

At this point White had an almost unbelievable resource in 33. $\mathbb{W}e1!!$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 34. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}h2$, when the black bishops find themselves tied down defending the queenside pawns and the advantage is elusive.

33... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 34. $\mathbb{W}h5$

34. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4\mp$

34... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 36. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 37. $\mathbb{W}d2$ g6 38. $\mathbb{Q}c1?$

This loses the game. White should have played 38. $\mathbb{Q}f1!\mp$ and simply waited. The position looks very unpleasant, but there is no direct way for Black to do anything. If he plays ... $\mathbb{Q}xa4$, it is impossible for him to untangle his pieces, and the same goes for 38... $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}g2!$, when Black's advantage is close to gone. For example: 40... $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 41. $\mathbb{W}xa5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ 42. $\mathbb{W}d8\mp$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 43. $\mathbb{W}d6$ f6 44. $\mathbb{W}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 45. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 46. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ and White can hold a draw in this marginally unpleasant ending. Instead of taking on a4 immediately, Black would need to get things going on the kingside

and attempt to create a second weakness. This is not easy, but winning a game of chess against the best possible defence is quite difficult.

38...♝xa4 39.♛e3 ♜b4 40.♛e2

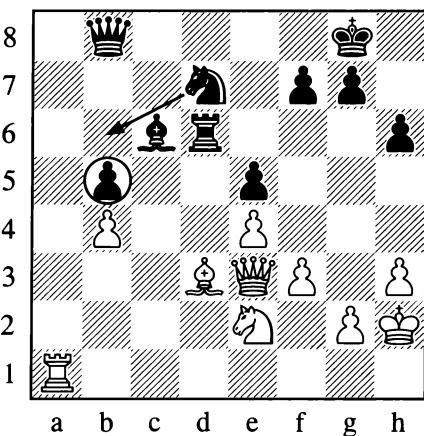
40.♛xb4 axb4 41.♝b1 ♜a2 42.♝d1 would not have held either, even though there is no immediate knock-out punch.

40...♜a2

0–1

149. Karjakin – Inarkiev

Baku 2008



White should be better because of the pressure against the b5-pawn, but he has to decide how to deal with Black's two possible plans for improving his position: ...♝b6 and ...♝f8-e6. The correct move is based principally on meeting the second of these options.

37.♝a5!

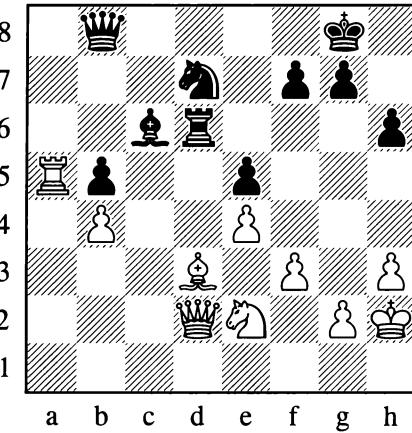
37.♝a6!± is weaker. Black can fight for counterplay with 37...♝f8! 38.♛c5 ♘d7 with the idea of 39.♛c2 ♘b6!?. White has not managed to control the knight. The main point comes in the following line: 40.♞c3 ♘c4 41.♚xc4 bxc4 42.b5 ♚b7 43.♝a4 ♜c7 44.♝e2 ♜b6 45.♛xc4 ♜f2 46.♝a1 h5 47.♝c2 ♜h7≈

White still has some challenges in proving his advantage at this point.

37...♝d4

Black clearly found it hard to come up with a sensible move. 37...♝b6 is obviously out of the question, and Black is also in serious trouble after 37...♝f8 38.♝c3±, when White wins a pawn. The following line shows a plausible way for the game to continue: 38...♝d4 39.♛xb5 ♜b7 40.♝e2 White keeps his extra pawn, as Black cannot take the b4-pawn. 40...♜xb4?! 41.♛a3 ♜b1 42.♝c3 ♜e1 43.♛e7! The simple ♜e8! is threatened. 43...♝g6 44.♛d7! Now ♜d2! is the threat. 44...♝e3 45.♛c4! Black loses material and his structure fails. The key tactical point is 45...♝xc3 46.♝xf7† ♚h7 47.♚xg6† ♜xg6 48.♛f5#.

38.♛d2 ♜d6



39.♝g3! ♜f8

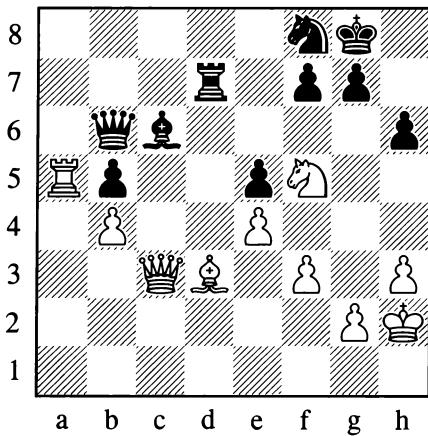
39...g6 was the most stubborn defence, but White has a great advantage after he wins the b5-pawn with 40.♛e2!±.

40.♛c3

40.♝f5 may be a bit more accurate, but White is winning all the same.

40...♜b6 41.♝f5 ♜d7

41...♝e6 42.♛c5 also wins for White. The main point is that Black's problems only accelerate after 42...♝xc5 43.bxc5 b4 44.♝c4.



42. ♕xb5! ♖d1

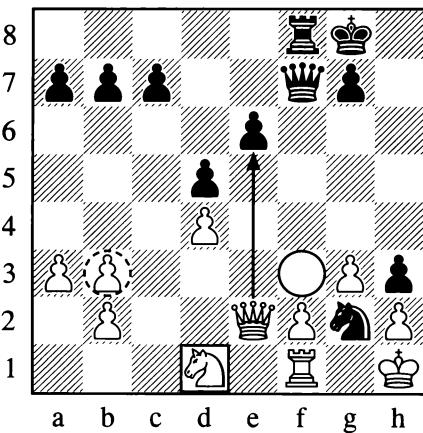
42... $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 43. $\mathbb{W}xe5$ and wins.

43. De^3

1-0

150. Roussel-Roozmon – Nakamura

Montreal 2008



It is not clear at first glance how to judge Black's unusual set-up with the pawn on h3 and knight on g2 – is it an effective invasion of the white position, or is the knight misplaced?

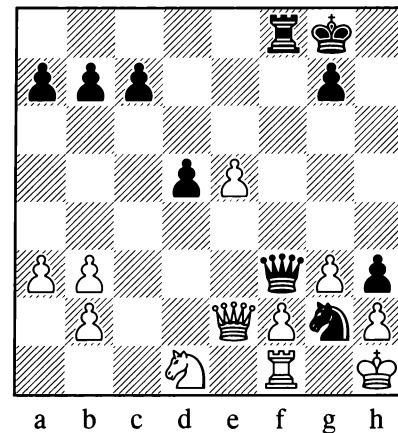
This is a common phenomenon in modern chess. Being able to evaluate which factor is the most important is what many games are all about. Having said this, usually it is possible to cut complicated positional questions down to some simple basics. The white knight on d1 and the rook on f1 are poor. The knight on g2 may be good or bad, depending on circumstances. The f3-square is weak. The pawn on e6 is exposed. Black is able to solve all of these issues with a simple stroke.

25...e5!! 26.dxe5

White has no real alternatives. 26. $\mathbb{W}xe5$ $\mathbb{B}e8$ followed by 27... $\mathbb{W}f3$ wins quickly.

26.f3 exd4 is also hopeless.

26... ♔f3



27. ♗c3

One of the main points becomes apparent after 27. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{E}xf3$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ d4!, when the white pieces are totally dominated.

27... $\mathbb{Q}e3\#$ 28. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{E}xf3$ 29. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{E}xf2$
 30. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 31. $\mathbb{E}xd1$ $\mathbb{W}f7$
 0-1

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Name Index

A

Aabling-Thomsen	71, 91, 99, 117
Aagaard	6, 16, 71, 77, 78, 85, 91, 98, 112, 120, 127, 160, 162, 168, 172, 215, 219, 248, 271
Adams	40, 41, 49, 59, 97, 107, 156, 165, 176, 195, 196, 234, 293, 294
Adly	155, 190
Ahmed	122
Akopian	155, 188
Almasi	98, 112
Almeida Quintana	165, 167, 170, 232, 246, 259
Al Modiahki	49, 60
Anand	51, 69, 98, 110, 111, 130, 138, 158, 171, 173, 175, 176, 204, 205, 265, 266, 275, 276, 287, 288, 290
Andersen	159, 208
Andriasican	172, 267
Areshchenko	33, 156, 194
Arnaudov	168, 249
Aronian	12, 24, 25, 27, 28, 157, 167, 169, 173, 196, 244, 253, 275, 276
Atalik	160, 161, 214, 216, 217
Avrukh	16, 136
Azmaiparashvili	162, 223

B

Baburin	31
Balogh	162, 223
Bareev	7, 156, 175, 195, 196, 286, 287
Baskaran Adhiban	23, 31, 41
Becking	130, 136
Beliavsky	172, 266
Benkovic	159, 207
Benmesbah	130, 136
Berelowitsch	167, 175, 247, 285
Berg	133, 152, 164, 165, 167, 170, 231, 232, 246, 247, 259
Bjerring	172, 271
Blomqvist	173, 273
Bobras	97, 104
Boey	163, 224

Bologan

161, 219
51, 68

Bormida

157, 200

Bosboom

164, 229

Bronstein

37

Brunello

176, 294

C

Campora

172, 271

Carlsen

44, 49, 58, 98, 111, 157, 165, 166, 198, 234, 239

Carlsson

130, 137

Carosso

171, 264

Castaneda

155, 187

Chambers

163, 226

Cheparinov

43, 49, 59

Cherniaev

174, 279

Chibukhchian

160, 211

Chirila

169, 256

Ciuksyte

99, 118

Collas

132, 147, 148

Collins

156, 193

Cossin

132, 148

D

Danstrup

99, 117

De Groote

133, 148

Diamant

163, 224

Ding Liren

161, 215

Dokhoian

35, 36, 38

Donner

46, 47

Drasko

157, 199

Dreev

169, 256

Dubov

165, 233

Dvoretsky

6, 8, 24, 125

E

Edouard

50, 67, 170, 262

Eljanov

97, 105, 123, 124, 132,

145, 162, 167, 221, 242, 243

Erdos

161, 167, 217, 245

Ernst

159, 209, 210

Ezat

161, 215

F

Ferguson 48, 54
 Ferry 127
 Firat 158, 202

G

Gagunashvili 159, 206
 Galkin 155, 191
 Ganguly 16, 173, 276
 Gasanov 132, 144
 Gashimov 97, 107, 158, 203
 Gelfand 44, 80, 81, 89, 131, 139, 140,
 155, 157, 159, 166, 171, 188,
 196, 197, 198, 210, 238, 265
 Georgiev 51, 68
 Gheorghiu 164, 177, 230, 300
 Giorgadze 40, 41
 Giri 12, 158, 203
 Gligoric 125, 126
 Glud 164, 227
 Gogonov 160, 213
 Grebionkin 49, 60
 Greet 52
 Grigoryan 121
 Grischuk 29, 173, 272
 Gulko 131, 142
 Gurevich 171, 263
 Gustafsson 174, 284
 Gvetadze 160, 211

H

Halkias 43
 Hammes 155, 188
 Hansen 130, 135
 Harikrishna 166, 241
 Hawkins 51, 69
 Hebden 96, 100
 Hess 50, 62
 Hillarp Persson 164, 177, 231, 296
 Horn 48, 57
 Hossain 85
 Howell 48, 57, 156, 173, 193, 273
 Hübner 171, 265
 Huzman 169, 253

I

Ibragimov 99, 115
 Inarkiev 178, 306
 Isonzo 78
 Istratescu 167, 245
 Ivanchuk 29, 30, 31, 39, 51, 69, 70, 97,
 106, 130, 133, 135, 149, 154,
 162, 169, 171, 174, 176, 183, 184,
 221, 222, 253, 255, 265, 277, 290

J

Jakovenko 97, 105, 154, 186
 Jansa 163, 224
 Jenni 158, 206
 Jobava 169, 255
 Joita 164, 230
 Jones 156, 193

K

Kalinitchew 86
 Kamsky 49, 60, 123, 133, 150, 151, 175, 287
 Karavade 155, 187
 Karjakin 131, 141, 159, 163, 165, 166,
 170, 172, 178, 210, 211, 225, 234,
 235, 236, 237, 238, 259, 266, 267, 306
 Karpov 48, 52, 122, 158, 162, 204, 220, 221
 Kasparov 7, 34, 38
 Kazhgaleyev 91, 99, 115
 Kazimova 160, 212
 Kempinski 176, 291
 Khalifman 48, 54, 87, 88, 155, 174, 191,
 281, 282
 Kharitonov 162, 220, 221
 Khismatullin 160, 213
 Kirusha 49, 60
 Klinger 49, 62
 Klinova 48, 54
 Knott 51, 69
 Koneru 49, 59, 178, 303
 Korchnoi 45, 132, 144,
 158, 175, 205, 289
 Kosintseva 119, 127
 Kostromin 156, 194
 Kotronias 174, 279
 Koukoufikis 167, 247

Kovacevic	154, 181	Monroy	159, 206
Kozakov	74, 75	Morovic Fernandez	177, 299
Kramnik	11, 24, 25, 26, 29, 30, 39, 49, 50, 58, 66, 90, 96, 101, 131, 133, 141, 149, 157, 158, 169, 201, 202, 205, 257	Morozevich	48, 56, 130, 138, 155, 158, 188, 206
Krasenkova	160, 214	Morrison	177, 298
Kristiansen	83	Motwani	164, 228
Kristjansson	175, 285	Motylev	159, 171, 209, 263
Kulon	160, 212	Muhic	173, 272
Kuzmin	164, 229	Muhren	86
L		Muzychuk	174, 278
Lastin	132, 144	N	
Lautier	171, 263	Nakamura	11, 50, 64, 178, 307
Leko	48, 50, 51, 54, 56, 66, 68, 96, 99, 102, 114, 131, 132, 140, 144, 154, 172, 173, 174, 176, 178, 183, 184, 271, 272, 281, 290, 304, 305	Nataf	175, 285
Lenderman	161, 218	Navara	166, 237
Le Roux	50, 67	Nepomniachtchi	98, 111, 170, 259
Leviczki	99, 115	Neverov	155, 192
Li Shilong	177, 297	Nielsen	33, 42, 170, 174, 260, 277
Littlewood	133, 149	Nijboer	176, 294
Lysyj	50, 65	Nogueiras	169, 253
M		Nohr	42, 159, 208
Madan	175, 285	Norwood	156, 193
Malakhov	51, 70	Novikov	168, 249
Mamedov	175, 286	Nunn	91
Mamedyarov	97, 98, 107, 111, 112, 154, 166, 173, 184, 240, 274	Nyback	169, 256
Markowski	80, 81, 89	Nyzhnyk	168, 178, 252, 302
Mastrovasilis	29	O	
Matthias	39	Ondersteijn	133, 148
Matthiesen	131, 143	Onischuk	154, 186
McShane	161, 162, 219, 220	Oparin	161, 217
Mecking	161, 218	P	
Meier	178, 304	Paehtz	48, 52, 170, 258
Michalik	170, 261	Paichadze	175, 286
Miezis	170, 260	Papadopoulou	168, 247
Milliet	132, 147	Pavasovic	161, 216
Milov	89	Pedersen	77, 162, 219
Minasian	51, 70	Pelletier	166, 240
Miton	97, 106	Penrose	175, 289
Mkrtchian	119, 127	Pinter	154, 181
Mlacnik	173, 272	Piscopo	96, 103
		Pogonina	48, 52, 131, 142
		Pogorelov	130, 134
		Polaczek	163, 223
		Polgar	87, 88, 175, 286

Ponomariov	45, 157, 201, 202	Shirov	96, 101, 154, 163, 165, 169, 184, 185, 186, 225, 237, 257, 258
Porat	99, 115	Shomoev	98, 109, 110
Porter	171, 264	Short	130, 134, 166, 171, 177, 240, 264, 301
Portisch	83, 84, 164, 176, 228, 292	Shyam	170, 262
Postny	50, 62	Sjugirov	168, 249
Potkin	165, 233, 234	Skripchenko	130, 136
Prandstetter	72	Smeets	167, 243
Pruijssers	156, 192	Smith	130, 137
R			
Radjabov	90, 162, 220	Sokolov	164, 173, 227, 274
Ragger	168, 251	Solovchuk	155, 192
Rajkovic	177, 300	Spassky	46
Rasmussen	96, 100, 160, 215	Speelman	177, 301
Razuvaev	49, 62, 97, 108, 131, 141, 172, 176, 268, 293	Spitz	163, 226
Reinderman	162, 222	Spraggett	51, 70
Ribli	87	Stefanova	174, 278
Robertson	168, 248	Stellwagen	176, 177, 291, 296
Rodshtein	133, 152	Stohl	97, 108
Roiz	96, 97, 103, 104, 133, 152	Suba	63, 78, 89
Roussel-Roozmon	178, 307	Sveshnikov	85, 131, 141
Rowson	164, 177, 228, 298	Svidler	50, 63, 163, 165, 166, 225, 234, 235, 239
S			
Safarli	99, 118	Swinkels	168, 251
Sakaev	168, 249	T	
Salami	159, 207	Tal	174, 282, 283
Salov	48, 52, 163, 225	Tarrasch	71
Santiago	163, 224	Tate	156, 194
Sargissian	133, 152	Tikkanen	178, 304
Sasikiran	50, 64, 166, 240	Timman	157, 198
Savon	172, 268	Timmerman	157, 200
Schandorff	131, 143	Tiviakov	154, 159, 161, 180, 210, 218
Schmidt	164, 228	Tomashevsky	50, 63
Schneider	169, 256	Topalov	133, 150, 151, 157, 158, 167, 198, 205, 244
Schwing	130, 136	Topalovic	74
Sebag	98, 109, 155, 190	Trois	157, 199
Sedlak	174, 284	U	
Seirawan	174, 177, 282, 299	Ubilava	51, 70
Sethuraman	23, 31, 41	Unzicker	125, 126
Severina	160, 214	V	
Shariyazdanov	171, 263	Vachier-Lagrave	166, 241
Shaw	96, 100, 122, 178, 179, 182, 304	Vallejo Pons	34, 96, 102, 162, 222
Shengelia	39, 120, 172, 270	Van Delft	163, 223

Van der Heijden	96, 102	Y
Van der Wiel	176, 292	
Van Kampen	172, 267	
Van Wely	99, 116, 131, 132, 139, 146, 165, 176, 236, 237, 290	Yermolinsky Yusupov
Vaulin	72, 73	Z
Vescovi	161, 218	
Vitiugov	173, 276	Zawadzka
Volkov	99, 114, 115	Zhao Jun
Volokitin	132, 145, 146	Zherebukh
Vovk	168, 252	Zhilgalko
W		Zhu Chen
Wade	132, 146	Ziaziulkina
Wang Hao	98, 109, 110, 172, 270	Ziska
Wang Yue	167, 242	Zvjaginsev
Wells	50, 65, 99, 116, 133, 149	
Werle	97, 107, 178, 302	
Williams	157, 198, 199	
Wislez	154, 180	

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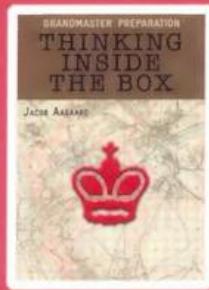
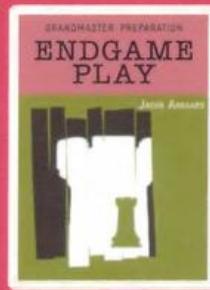
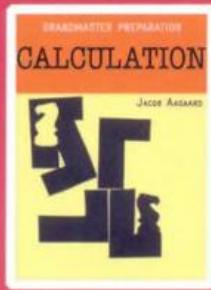
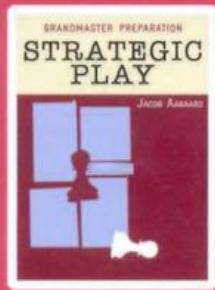


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